

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHILOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, AND SUFISM:  
TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF TANḤUM HA-YERUSHALMI'S EXEGESIS AND  
THOUGHT, WITH A FOCUS ON HIS COMMENTARIES ON JONAH, THE SONG OF  
SONGS, AND QOHELET

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For Dalit, my love, who has crossed oceans for me.

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## Abstract

The present dissertation aims to present a detailed intellectual portrait of Tanḥum b. Joseph Ha-Yerushalmi (d. 1291, in Fustāt, Egypt). Tanḥum was an accomplished exegete and lexicographer, who engaged profoundly with the intellectual currents of his day. A late heir of the Andalusian exegetical tradition of biblical exegesis, and an avid Maimonidean, Tanḥum also exhibited an interest in Sufi discourse. Indeed, an engagement with Sufism emerged as one of the distinguishing features of Jewish life in Egypt and the Levant in the thirteenth century. While the bulk of earlier research has focused extensively on his linguistic (*peshat*) exegesis, the present study aims to take a broader view of Tanḥum as a thinker and exegete. His works are hermeneutically sophisticated and replete with philosophical material, both as it directly informs exegesis, and in introductions and excurses.

Tanḥum's philosophical commentaries constitute the primary focus of this work, namely, his commentaries to the Book of Jonah, Qohelet, and the Song of Songs. In the cases of Jonah and the Song of Songs, Tanḥum presents allegorical interpretations of the biblical text in addition to his philological analysis. In contrast, he reads Qohelet primarily as a Solomonic discourse on the theoretical sciences. After revisiting the basic biographical data concerning Tanḥum, this study aims to articulate the hermeneutical principles underlying Tanḥum's exegesis, and to examine his reception and transmission of Judeo-Arabic and Islamic thought across a range of subjects and genres. This is achieved through a detailed study of each of Tanḥum's philosophical commentaries, identifying his overall approach to the texts that he interpreted, and identifying elements in each work that may serve to situate the author in his cultural and intellectual context.

The overall picture of Tanḥum that emerges is one of a polymath, aligned primarily with the Andalusian tradition in linguistic exegesis, and with a distinctly Peripatetic philosophical orientation. His integration of elements of Sufi discourse often reflects the earlier appropriation of such themes and terminology by philosophers within the Peripatetic tradition (such as Ibn Sīnā), but occasionally points to a direct engagement with Sufi sources (perhaps via oral informants). Ultimately, Tanḥum’s philological project is profoundly linked to his program of philosophical cultivation. According to Tanḥum, philosophical insights profoundly shape the language of Scripture, and they are in turn accessed through rigorous philological engagement with the text. Tanḥum thus emerges from this study not only as a rigorous *peshat* exegete and a linguist, but as a religious thinker of remarkable breadth.

## Acknowledgments

I have been tremendously fortunate to have encountered teachers and colleagues who challenged me, enriched my life, broadened my intellectual horizons, and directly or indirectly enabled me to reach the milestone that this dissertation marks. I use the term “fortunate” deliberately, for I have very rarely known or expected what awaited me when embarking on the next stage in my studies.

My first expression of gratitude belongs to my doctoral advisor, Professor James T. Robinson. I could not have wished for a better advisor. Professor Robinson achieves the rare feat of balancing availability and a deep investment in his students’ work, with real respect for their independence as emerging scholars. He has guided me throughout my doctoral studies, despite the added difficulty of my prolonged physical absence from Chicago. With tremendous erudition and infectious curiosity, he initiated me into the world of Judeo-Arabic thought and literature. He has been a thoroughly dependable guide through the labyrinthine terrain of medieval Jewish philosophy and exegesis. Professor Robinson has remained supportive well beyond the call of duty. I cannot but remain forever grateful.

The University of Chicago brought me into contact with many fine teachers and fellow students, and I cannot do them all justice in the present context. However, I must thank Professor Michael Sells in particular, whose wisdom and kindness were always a tangible presence in his seminars and in conversation. Professor Sells truly encourages every participant in his seminars to contribute their own insights and expertise, rendering the discussion exponentially more enriching. Textually grounded, methodologically rigorous, open to new horizons, and expertly

guided by a learned and compassionate teacher – these are the seminars of Professor Sells. It was a privilege to participate in them. Professor Tahera Qutbuddin initiated me further into the world of Arabic literature and poetry, demanding devotion and rigor from her students. I thank her for her attentive instruction. I am sure that all of her students emerge from her classroom with a heightened appreciation for the subtlety and richness of the Arabic language. I thank both Professor Sells and Professor Qutbuddin for agreeing to join my dissertation committee. I am also grateful and humbled to have had the opportunity to study with Professor Michael Fishbane. Any opportunity to study with a scholar of such stature is to be treasured, and it was a particular honor to take one of my qualifying examinations with him. I thank him for his guidance and encouragement.

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I was introduced to the academic study of the Hebrew Bible and its interpretation at Sydney University, and I offer my thanks to my teachers from that period. Associate Professor Ian Young, Ms. Lucy Davey, and Professor Dr. Shani Tzoref laid foundations that would serve me

well in the years to come. In particular, I thank Professor Dr. Tzoref for her friendship and support over the years and across continents.

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Strikovsky, who embodies Torah, humility, and love for his students. I would also like to express my gratitude to my high-school *Tanakh* teacher, who – incredibly, in retrospect – introduced his students to the basic elements of comparative semitics, masoretic studies, and the medieval Jewish exegetical tradition. *Ribbi u-mori* Michael Benstock remains a unique figure in Sydney's Jewish community, and has introduced generations of students to the finer points of biblical thought and exegesis.

Finally, I express my gratitude to my family. I thank my parents, Karen Loblay and Sorin Dascalu, for always encouraging my intellectual curiosity, even when the focus of that curiosity has seemed more than a little curious. My step-mother, Doina Dascalu, has been my interlocutor on a tremendous range of matters, both lofty and mundane, for as long as I can remember. I thank her for her love and support, which has never waned. My parents have provided material support, logistical support, and wise counsel. And they have waited long years to see what fruit all of this study would bear. Here is a piece of fruit. My in-laws, Judy and Albert Kaplan, have followed my progress assiduously, and know my work in more intimate detail than anyone might wish. They have been extremely supportive since our return to Australia, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

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מודה אני לפני החונן לאדם דעת, שזיכני לסיים עבודה זו, ושם חלקי מיושבי בתי מדרשות וספריות. יהי רצון

מלפני מי שאמר והיה העולם שאזכה ללמוד וללמד, לשמור ולעשות.

Raphael Dascalu

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## Introduction

Tanḥum b. Joseph Ha-Yerushalmi (d. 1291, in Fuṣṭāṭ) has become the focus of growing scholarly interest over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. After centuries of obscurity, he has been rediscovered as a rigorous linguist and philologist, and an exegete of singular breadth. Not only does his considerable oeuvre provide us with a window into the intellectual life of its author, but it sheds light on a chapter of Jewish history which has only in recent years received the scholarly attention that it deserves: Egypt and the Levant in the post-Maimonidean period. The present study seeks to situate Tanḥum in his historical and cultural context, and through a close and attentive study of his works, to present a coherent portrait of this rich and eclectic exegete.

In approaching Tanḥum's exegetical works, one must be cognizant of two distinct but deeply enmeshed cultural traditions from which they emerge: The Islamicate context, and the Jewish context. As shall become clear throughout the present study, neither of these elements should be reified into a monolithic entity. These were cultures in flux, internally heterogeneous, and constantly interacting with each other and with any intellectual traditions with which they came into contact. The Jewish encounter with Islamic civilization in particular engendered a profound transformation in Jewish cultural production. Arabic linguistics and literary theory enriched Jewish exegesis, and inspired the systematic study of the Hebrew language for the first time. Both Karaite and Rabbanite Jews applied Arabic literary paradigms to scriptural exegesis, read the Hebrew Bible through the lens of systematic theology and philosophy, and developed new

interpretive strategies that would forever transform the Jewish engagement with the Bible. The new methodologies flourished among the Jewish communities of Iraq, Palestine, North Africa and Islamic Spain (*al-Andalus*), and came to their fullest fruition with the development of the school of Spanish *peshat*.<sup>1</sup> The understanding of *peshat* that this school promoted entailed “an empirical, contextual reading of Scripture that adheres to the rules of language, biblical literary conventions and historical context.”<sup>2</sup> Judeo-Arabic exegesis of the Hebrew Bible would be represented in the great works of tenth century grammarian Judah Ḥayyūj, and the eleventh century scholars Jonah Ibn Janāḥ, Judah Ibn Bal‘am, and Moses Ibn Chiquitilla. These methodologies also transformed Jewish scholarship in Western Christendom, both via the dissemination of texts and through contact with living scholars, such as Abraham Ibn Ezra (d.1164).

With the decline of Andalusian Jewry in the twelfth century and the translation of key Judeo-Arabic works into Hebrew, a chapter of medieval Jewish history began to come to a close. The population centers of world Jewry shifted from the Islamic world to Western Christendom, and a new literary and intellectual tradition began to flourish in Spain and Occitania, primarily in the Hebrew language. However, Judeo-Arabic literature continued to be produced in Islamic lands, as Jews engaged in Islamic culture in new and innovative ways.

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<sup>1</sup> The term *peshat* is usually understood to refer to the “plain meaning” of the biblical text. The nominal form *peshat* is cognate with the biblical Hebrew and Aramaic root *p-sh-t*, signifying “stripping” in the former context and “stretching out” or “extending” in the latter. (See *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, eds. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs [Hendrickson Publishers: 2010], 832-833.) In a rabbinic context, it also carries a sense of simplicity, among other valences. Cf. the talmudic usage of the term *peshit[a]*, in Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition; Bar Ilan University Press/The Johns Hopkins University Press: 2002), 453; Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (Bar Ilan University Press/The Johns Hopkins University Press: 2002), 943. See also Mordechai Z. Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation* (Brill: 2011), xii-xix. For the rabbinic expression *en miqra yotze mi-yde peshuto* (“a biblical verse does not leave the realm of its *peshat*”) and its transmission and interpretation in medieval sources, see Cohen, *Opening the Gates*, 347-381. My translation of the principle is taken from Cohen, for which see *ibid.*, xvii. For Cohen’s own discussion of his translation, see *ibid.*, 495-499.

<sup>2</sup> Mordechai Z. Cohen, *Three Approaches to Biblical Metaphor: From Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides to David Kimhi* (Brill: 2003), 3. See also *ibid.*, 3-4, fn. 10.

Tanḥum was a late heir to the Andalusian exegetical tradition, and has been described as “the last known exegete (*mufassir*) of the “rationalistic” school who wrote in (Judaeo-)Arabic.”<sup>3</sup> However, this description does not do Tanḥum full justice. While it is true that he drew heavily on the Spanish *peshat* tradition, Tanḥum was also a representative of what David Blumenthal has called “the Eastern Maimonidean tradition,” in which authors in the Islamic world combined Maimonidean philosophy with non-Peripatetic intellectual currents.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, like many Jews in Egypt and the Levant during this period, Tanḥum was deeply drawn to elements of Sufi discourse and practice. Therefore, Tanḥum might better be described as a philologist, a philosopher, and a mystic. He stood on the cusp of the culture of old *al-Andalus* and the emergent, vibrant culture of the Jewish communities of Egypt and the Levant in the post-Maimonidean period.

In the present study, I aim to present a broad intellectual portrait of Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi. Such an endeavour not only necessitates the synthesis of much past scholarship, but a fresh study of the extant parts of Tanḥum’s considerable oeuvre. As has been mentioned, Tanḥum’s works must be understood against the backdrop of the linguistic and philological (*peshat*) methodology that emerged in Islamic lands, and particularly in the Maghrib and the Iberian Peninsula, in the centuries preceding him. He was also a post-Maimonidean and post-Avicennan thinker, participating in the intellectual currents of his time, both within a Jewish context and without. In the first chapter, I locate Tanḥum in his historical and cultural context, present an overview of the available biographical data, and introduce his works. The discussion of his works leads to the question of Tanḥum’s sources, and while this remains a topic of central importance throughout

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Wechsler, *Strangers in the Land: The Judaeo-Arabic Exegesis of Tanḥum ha-Yerushalmi on the Books of Ruth and Esther* (Magnes Press: 2010), 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> See David R. Blumenthal, “Was there an Eastern Tradition of Maimonidean Scholarship?” in *Revue des Études Juives* 138 (1979), 57-68.

the study, the first chapter concludes with a broad survey of those of Tanḥum's sources that have been identified by earlier scholars.

Chapter 2 entails a general study of Tanḥum's exegetical methodology as it emerges from a broad reading of his commentaries on the Prophets and Hagiographa. After locating his methodology within the history of Jewish exegesis, I note the scope of his exegetical concerns, and focus on some of the key features of his methodology. In this context, I discuss the place of Islamic modes of exegesis in Tanḥum's commentaries, his relationship with traditional rabbinic exegesis, and his understanding of the relationship between Hebrew and cognate languages. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Tanḥum's hermeneutical dualism and his understanding of the relationship between his linguistic-philological mode of exegesis and philosophical allegoresis.

Chapters 3-5 each represent a study of Tanḥum's commentary to a specific book of the Hebrew Bible. I have selected Tanḥum's commentaries to Jonah, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, mainly due to the fact that they are his only extant commentaries that are self-consciously philosophical. (One may argue that his commentaries to Proverbs and Job had a distinctly philosophical character, but to this date no copies have been identified.)

Chapter 3 focuses on Tanḥum's commentary to the Book of Jonah. This commentary is unique insofar as the author makes a very clear distinction between the literal and allegorical strata of the commentary, presenting a concise allegoresis only after he has treated the entire book according to his usual philological method. In this chapter, I focus on Tanḥum's commentary to Jonah both as a concrete example of his linguistic and philological exegesis, and as an initial study of his philosophical allegoresis. This affords me an opportunity to explore a range of themes and motifs as they arise in the context of the commentary. In each case, I attempt to

identify Tanḥum's sources in the Peripatetic philosophical tradition and in non-Peripatetic thought.

Tanḥum's commentary to Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) is rich in philosophical and scientific material; indeed, he understood that work primarily as a collection of discourses on the theoretical sciences in general, and physics in particular. In chapter 4, I situate this commentary in the context of the reception and interpretation of Qohelet, present an overview of Tanḥum's commentary, and discuss a range of themes as they arise from this work. Some elements of this chapter focus more locally on aspects of Tanḥum's philosophical and scientific thought (e.g., his conception of the nature of time), while others afford us an opportunity to trace the broadest outlines of his philosophical worldview (e.g., his conception of ethics, his program of philosophical self-cultivation).

Finally, chapter 5 is a study of Tanḥum's commentary to the Song of Songs. Although it precedes Qohelet in the traditional masoretic codices of the period, as well as according to some older rabbinic understandings of the Solomonic corpus, Tanḥum understood the Song of Songs to be the epitome of all of Solomon's wisdom. As in his commentary to Jonah, he applies an allegorical methodology to the interpretation of the Song of Songs, interpreting it both in historical and psychological terms. In this chapter, I once again situate Tanḥum's commentary in the history of Jewish exegesis of the Song of Songs, present an introduction and overview of the work, and treat a range of important themes as they arise from the commentary.

The dissertation concludes with a succinct overview of some of the more central conclusions of the study, articulating some of Tanḥum's exegetical and philosophical positions, and broadly situating him in historical context. In three appendices I present original annotated translations of

Tanḥum's introduction and allegorical commentary to Jonah; the introduction to his commentary on Qohelet; and the introduction to his commentary on the Song of Songs.

In this study, I hope to present as rich a portrait of Tanḥum as possible, both as an exegete and as a thinker in the fullest sense of the term. Apart from warranting scholarly attention in his own right, Tanḥum presents us with an opportunity to shed further light on the intellectual and cultural world of Egyptian and Levantine Jewry in the post-Maimonidean period.

## Note on Transliteration

This study includes significant portions of transliterated material from Arabic and Hebrew. While there is certainly something to be said for uniformity in transliterating the two languages, and particularly for reflecting the Hebrew pronunciation of Judeo-Arabic authors, such a system would be burdensome for most readers familiar with Hebrew. Such readers are generally more comfortable with an orthography in Hebrew transliteration that reflects contemporary Israeli (“Sephardic”) pronunciation. (Notably, some of the finest manuscripts of Tanḥum ha-Yerushalmi’s commentaries reflect the historically Babylonian pronunciation of Hebrew, which is quite foreign to most contemporary readers of Hebrew.) Therefore, when transliterating Arabic, I have generally followed the norms of *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān* (Brill: 2001); Hebrew transliterations are based primarily on the Society for Biblical Literature general-purpose style. In both cases, I have made minor exceptions, but have tried to remain consistent throughout. For example, I depart from *The Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān* in my preference to indicate an elided *ālif* where this reflects classical Arabic orthography (e.g., *wa-’l-shams* rather than *wa-l-shams*); I depart from the SBL style by transliterating the Hebrew ז as *tz* (as opposed to *ts*, *ṣ*, or *z*). The basic system that I follow in transliterating the two languages is as follows:

### *Arabic*

ا = ’ (when marking a *hamza* or eliding *ālif*); ب = b; ت = t; ث = th; ج = j; ح = ḥ; خ = kh; د = d; ذ = dh; ر = r; ز = z; س = s; ش = sh; ص = ṣ; ض = ḍ; ط = ṭ; ظ = ḏ; ع = ‘; غ = gh; ف = f; ق = q; ك = k; ل = l; م = m; ن = n; ه = h; و = w; ي = y; ء = ’ (not marked at the beginning of a word). Case endings are not reflected in my transliterations from Arabic; vowel length is indicated.

## Hebrew

א = ' (where consonantal – not marked when quiescent or at the beginning of a word); ב = b; ג = g; ד = d; ה = h; ו = v; ז = z; ח = h; ט = t; י = y; כ/כּ = k/kh; ל = l; מ = m; נ = n; ס = s; ע = ' ; פ/פּ = p/f; צ = tz; ק = q; ר = r; שׁ = sh; שׂ = s; ת = t. Among the consonants with a dual plosive/fricative pronunciation (known by the acronym *begad kepat*) I have distinguished only between *k/kh* and *p/f*. In Hebrew I have adopted a five vowel (“Sephardic”) system, consistently marking a mobile *sheva* as an *e*; vowel length is not indicated in Hebrew. Gemination is indicated, except following the definite article. I have adopted further distinctions in Hebrew transliteration only when absolutely required to do so by the subject matter (e.g., in the case of Tanḥum’s detailed analysis of the pronunciation of the lexeme *[i]shtayim*, where I have indicated fricative *tav* as *th*, and differentiated between *sheva* and *tzere* as *ě* and *ē* respectively).

## Chapter 1: Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Life and Works

### General Historical Context

The period during which Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi lived was characterized by considerable political turbulence.<sup>1</sup> During the Faṭimid period, Egypt saw the emergence of a vibrant economic and cultural life, characterized by a largely free market economy and international trade.<sup>2</sup> The rise of the Ayyubid dynasty in 1171 marked the introduction of increasingly conservative social policies, the end of open Ismaili activity in Egypt, and the establishment of increasingly centralized Sunni madrasas and Sufi lodges.<sup>3</sup> They would rule Egypt and much of the Levant until 1250, when they were replaced by the Mamluks,<sup>4</sup> who in many ways continued to develop

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<sup>1</sup> My discussion here focuses on Egypt and the Levant, as it is in that region that Tanḥum lived (see discussion below). For the period of the Maimonidean dynasty's prominence in Egypt (from c. 1165 to c.1414) as a troubled one, see Menahem Ben-Sasson, "The Maimonidean Dynasty – Between Conservatism and Revolution," in *Maimonides after 800 years: Essays on Maimonides and His Influence* (Harvard University Press: 2007), 1. On the lack of clarity surrounding Maimonides' official position and titles, see J. Mann *Text and Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (Hebrew Union College Press: 1931), vol. 1, 416-418 (where it is argued that he did not hold the title of *nagid*, but rather *ra'īs al-yahūd*); and Herbert A. Davidson, *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works* (Oxford University Press: 2005), 54-64 (where it is argued that his precise position is rather unclear, and that it is likely that he held neither position). The title of *nagid* was held by his son Abraham (d.1237) and his descendants until the early fifteenth century. For a general treatment of the Maimonidean *negidim*, see Mann, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 1, 416-429; and Ben-Sasson, "The Maimonidean Dynasty."

<sup>2</sup> See S. D. Goitein's magisterial treatment of the economic and social life of Egypt during this period, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (University of California Press: 1967-1978), vol. 1, 29-74, and in particular 32-33. For a concise historical overview of the Fatimid period in North Africa, Egypt, and southern Syria, see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A chronological and genealogical manual* (Columbia University Press: 1996), 63-65. Egypt's economic situation through the Fatimid period is described in Yaacov Lev, "The Fāṭimid Caliphate (358-567/969-1171) and the Ayyūbids in Egypt (567-648/1171-1250)," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 2: The Western Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge University Press: 2010), ed. Maribel Fierro, 222-227.

<sup>3</sup>For a concise historical overview of the Ayyubid period, see Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 70-75.

<sup>4</sup> For a broad discussion of the Mamluk period in Egypt and Syria during Tanḥum's lifetime, see Amalia Levanoni, "The Mamlūks in Egypt and Syria: the Turkish Mamlūk sultanate (648-784/1250-1382) and the Circassian Mamlūk sultanate (784-923/1382-1517)," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 2: The Western Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge University Press: 2010), ed. Maribel Fierro, 237-248. A more concise historical overview of the Mamluk period may be found in Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 76-80. On the self-perception of the Mamluks and their origins, and on the terminology used in referring to distinct periods within the Mamluk sultanate, see Koby Yosef, "Dawlat al-atrāk or dawlat al-mamālik? Ethnic origin or slave origin as the defining characteristic of the ruling élite in the Mamlūk sultanate," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 39 (2012), 387-410.

upon the Sunni conservatism that had been established by the Ayyubids.<sup>5</sup> Protracted conflict with the crusader states had lasted since their establishment in the late eleventh century, and during Tanḥum's lifetime the crusaders retained outposts in Antioch, Caesaria, Jerusalem, Tyre and Acre.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the establishment of Mongol rule in the heart of Islamic lands ushered in a period of warfare between the Mamluks and the newly established Ilkhanate.<sup>7</sup> These geopolitical upheavals left their mark on Tanḥum's exegesis, particularly when treating eschatological themes.<sup>8</sup>

This period also came in the wake of a significant re-drawing of the map of world Jewry. In the second half of the twelfth century, the Jewish communities of the Maghrib faced a period of increased hardship and repression under Almoravid and Almohad rule.<sup>9</sup> Some migrated to

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<sup>5</sup> See Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, 38. For a broad treatment of the educational practices of Mamluk Cairo, see Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton University Press: 1992).

<sup>6</sup> The crusader states were in existence for total of just under two centuries, being established in Antioch in 1098 and lasting until the fall of Tyre and Acre in 1291. However, the individual states were shorter lived: Antioch from 1098 until 1268; Tyre from 1124 until 1291; Caesarea from 1101 until 1187, and from 1191 until 1265; Jerusalem from 1099 until 1187, and then from 1229 until 1244; and Nablus from 1099 until 1187. See Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The Subjected Muslims of the Frankish Levant," in *Muslims under Latin Rule, 1100-1300* (Princeton University Press: 1990), ed. J. M. Powell, 135. For a broad study of the establishment of the crusader states, their inner political and cultural life, and Muslim reactions to this reality, up until Philip VI of France's final and unsuccessful attempt at renewing the Christian conquest of Palestine in 1336, see Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and The Crusader States* (Pearson/Longman: 2004). See also Malcolm Barber, *The Crusader States* (Yale University Press: 2012); and Jean Richard, *The Crusades c.1071-c.1291* (Cambridge University Press: 1999).

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed account of the military conflict between the Mamluks and the Ilkhanate during Tanḥum's lifetime – including the major battles at 'Ayn Jalut (1260) and Homs (1281) – viewed within the broader framework of Mamluk and Mongol relations with the Latin West, Byzantium, and the crusader states, see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Īlkhānīd War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge University Press: 1995). For a broad overview of the founding of the political and military life of the Ilkhanate from its establishment into the 1290's, see Beatrice Forbes Manz, "The rule of the infidels: the Mongols and the Islamic world," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 3: The Eastern Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge University Press: 2010), eds. David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid, 144-150.

<sup>8</sup> For Tanḥum's actualizing interpretation of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38:2 as "the tribes of the Turks and Tatars and their towns (*qabā'il al-turuk wa-'l-tatar wa-bilādihim*)," see Tal, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it," 136. This interpretation almost certainly represents Tanḥum's own experience of the upheavals of this period (*ibid.*, 137-139). In addition, Tanḥum follows earlier exegetes (including Saadia Gaon) in identifying Christendom as a whole with the Edom of Isaiah and Jeremiah; see *ibid.*, 135-136. Continuous war between the crusader states and Muslim states is likely to have colored this interpretation.

<sup>9</sup> For the effects of Almohad rule on Spanish and North African Jewry, see Joel Kraemer, *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds* (Doubleday: 2008), 92-98. See also Robert Chazan, *The Jews of*

Christian territories, joining existing Jewish communities such as those of Occitania.<sup>10</sup> Others, including Moses Maimonides (d.1204) and his family, fled the Almohad-ruled Maghrib and sought a more tolerant environment within the lands of Islam.<sup>11</sup> Although the situation in the Maghrib improved under the Marinids,<sup>12</sup> there was a sense that Jewish culture of Islamic *al-Andalus* had come largely to an end.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the Judeo-Arabic heritage of the Iberian Peninsula would continue to shape Jewish literary output the world over.<sup>14</sup>

The changes in policy towards Jews in the Maghrib combined with the continuing Reconquista in generating a shift of the Jewish centers of scholarship from the lands of Islam to those of Christianity.<sup>15</sup> Among other things, the widening contacts between the Jews of Islamic *al-Andalus* and those of Western Christendom facilitated the development of Spanish Kabbalah,

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*Medieval Western Christendom, 1000-1500* (Cambridge University Press: 2006), 93-95; Davidson, *Moses Maimonides*, 9-16.

<sup>10</sup> Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 40. For the immigration of members of the Andalusian Jewish cultural elite to Occitania, see Chazan, *Jews of Medieval Western Christendom*, 80-82. For Occitanian Jewry in general, see Isadore Twersky, "Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provençal Jewry," in *Journal of World History* 11 (1968), 185-207.

<sup>11</sup> Davidson, *Moses Maimonides*, 28; Kraemer, *Maimonides*, 124, 145.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Jews of Islam* (Princeton University Press: 1984), 148-149; Ross Brann, *Power in the Portrayal* (Princeton University Press: 2002), 117-18.

<sup>13</sup> Chazan, *Jews of Medieval Western Christendom*, 95-96.

<sup>14</sup> For Judeo-Arabic culture in the Spanish tradition as an important force in Provence see James T. Robinson, "The Ibn Tibbon Family: A Dynasty of Translators in Medieval "Provence"", in *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. Jay M. Harris (Harvard University Press: 2005), 195-199; Mordechai Z. Cohen, *Three Approaches to Biblical Metaphor: From Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides to David Kimhi* (Brill: 2003), 5, 15-16; L. V. Berman, "Judeo-Arabic Thought in Spain and North Africa: Problems and Prospects," in *Judeo-Arabic Studies*, ed. Norman Golb (Harwood Academic Publishers: 1997), 36. For the continued influence of Judeo-Arabic culture under Christian rule in the Iberian Peninsula, see Yom Tov Assis, "The Judeo-Arabic Tradition in Christian Spain," in *Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity*, ed. Daniel Frank (Brill: 1995), 115-116. An interesting and late example of the continued presence of Judeo-Arabic culture in Christian Spain may be found in the figure of Joseph b. Abraham Ibn Waqār, a fourteenth century Kabbalist living in Toledo who still wrote in Arabic. His work, *Al-maqāla al-jamī'a bayn al-falsafa wal-sharī'a* (Hebrew: *Sefer haskamat ha-pilosofim ve-ha-itzganinim ve-ha-mequbbalim*), is an attempt to bridge contemporary Spanish Kabbalah with Greco-Arabic philosophy and astrology. See Paul Fenton's edition, *Principles of the Qabbalah* (Cherub Press: 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition* (Harvard University Press: 1982), 1-2; Robert Chazan, *Fashioning Jewish Identity in Medieval Western Christendom* (Cambridge University Press: 2004), 9, 93. For a discussion of the significance of the opening up of new channels of cultural exchange between Spanish Jewry and the Jewries of Provence, Northern France, and Ashkenaz in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, see Assis, "Judeo-Arabic Tradition," 117-122.

and more broadly, the production of a highly distinctive Hispano-Jewish culture.<sup>16</sup> These developments were not unidirectional: The same cultural interactions that brought Franco-German influences into Iberian Jewish intellectual discourse were most likely responsible for the emergence of a new philologically oriented school of biblical exegesis in Northern France, similar in many ways to Spanish *peshat*.<sup>17</sup> In the late twelfth century significant numbers of Jews from Byzantium and Western Christendom began to migrate to Palestine, and many of them sojourned or settled in Egypt.<sup>18</sup> Under crusader rule in Acre there flourished a community of Western-European Jewish scholars, who were ultimately killed in the Mamluk conquest of the city in 1291.<sup>19</sup> Jerusalem too served as a meeting point for diverse Jewish cultures,<sup>20</sup> at least until Jews were banned from dwelling therein under Crusader rule between the years 1229 and 1244,

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<sup>16</sup> For the impact of Franco-German Jewish culture on the halakhic and kabbalistic traditions of Spain, see Assis, “Judeo-Arabic Tradition,” 117-119. For the Franco-German and Provençal origins of the foundational kabbalistic work *Sefer ha-bahir*, and its circulation in Provence and Spain, see Daniel Abrams, *The Book Bahir: An Edition Based on the Earliest Manuscripts* (Cherub Press: 1994), 1. For the importance of the Franco-German and Provençal mystical traditions in general and *Sefer ha-bahir* in particular as constituting fundamental sources for the *Zohar*, which first circulated in the 1290’s, see Arthur Green’s introduction to *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition* (Stanford University Press: 2004), trans. Daniel Matt, vol. 1, xxxvii-xliii. The *Zohar* itself exhibits elements of Ashkenazic religious praxis, for which see Israel Ta-Shma, *Ha-nigleh she-ba-nistar* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad: 2001), 25-37; *ibid.*, “A Note on the ‘Zohar,’” in *Tarbiz* 60 (1991) 664-665; *ibid.* “The Penetration of Ashkenazi Custom-Law and Folklore into the Zohar: The Phenomenon and its Historical Origin,” in *Creativity and Tradition: Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Scholarship, Literature and Thought* (Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies/ Harvard University Press: 2006), 184-193.

<sup>17</sup> Avraham Grossman, “The School of Literal Jewish Exegesis in Northern France,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* 1/2, ed. Magne Sæbø (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 2000), 321–371.

<sup>18</sup> See Elisha Russ-Fishbane, *Between Politics and Piety: Abraham Maimonides and his Times* (PhD dissertation, Harvard University: 2009), 67-97. For the situation of Jews in the crusader states, see Joshua Prawer, *The Crusaders’ Kingdom: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (Praeger Publishers: 1972), 233-251. For the increased frequency of pilgrimage among Western European Jews to crusader Palestine, see Prawer, *The Crusaders’ Kingdom*, 238.

<sup>19</sup> See Eitan P. Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn: The Inner World of a Medieval Kabbalist* (Stanford University Press: 2009), 20-33; Prawer, *The Crusaders’ Kingdom*, 241-242; Andreas D’Souza, “The Conquest of ‘Akkā (690/1291): A Comparative Analysis of Christian and Muslim Sources,” in *The Muslim World* 80/3-4 (1990), 234-250. For the establishment of important centers of rabbinic learning in Acre by Rabbi Samson of Sens and Jehiel of Paris and his followers in the mid-late thirteenth century, see *ibid.*; Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn*, 25; and Norman Roth, *Medieval Jewish Civilization: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge: 2003), 494. See also Kraemer, *Maimonides*, 128-134, 514 n. 25.

<sup>20</sup> See Judah al-Ḥarīzī’s (d.1225) account from the early thirteenth century, where he describes the Jewish community of Jerusalem as comprising three distinct cultural groups: The Western Europeans (*al-ifranjiyya*), the North Africans and Andalusians (*al-maghribiyya*), and the Levantines or Palestinians (*al-shāmiyya*). (*Kitāb al-durar: A Book in Praise of God and the Israelite Communities by Judah Alharizi* (Ben-Zvi Institute: 2009), trans. Paul Fenton, eds. Joshua Blau, Paul Fenton, and Joseph Yahalom, 120-124 (Arabic and Hebrew text), 82\*-83\* (English translation.)

from which period the Jewish community of Jerusalem appears to have remained small.<sup>21</sup> In Egypt, French Jewish scholars served as rabbinic judges (*dayyanim*), often enjoying the support of the *nagid*.<sup>22</sup> Thus, not only did the Jewish communities of Western Christendom encounter the Judeo-Arabic traditions of Andalusia in this period, but Egyptian and Levantine Jews came into contact with the Jewish cultures of “the lands of the Franks.”<sup>23</sup>

As was most often the case, Jewish scholars were in lively dialogue with their broader cultural environment. Towards the end of the Fatimid period, Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) appears to have drawn on Ismaili thought in developing his own approach to esotericism, although he produced his most influential works after the shift to Ayyubid rule.<sup>24</sup> The Ayyubid period saw the cultivation of local Sufi brotherhoods and institutions,<sup>25</sup> while in the Mamluk period the Sufi collegia-lodges (*khawāniq*; sing. *khānqāh*) became increasingly institutionalized and

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<sup>21</sup> Prawer, *The History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Clarendon Press: 1988), 251-254.

<sup>22</sup> Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 2, 406; Russ-Fishbane, *Between Politics and Piety*, 81-82; Blau et al, *Kitāb al-durar*, 18\*-19\*.

<sup>23</sup> A fascinating chapter in this cross-cultural process is the encounter between Nahmanidean theosophical Kabbalah, Jewish Sufism, Abulafian ecstatic Kabbalah (which was itself a synthesis of Ashkenazic mysticism and Maimonidean theory and contemplation), and Ashkenazic pietism in thirteenth century Palestine; see Moshe Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (SUNY Press: 1988), 91-96; Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn*, 28-30. For the centrality of both the Franco-German tradition and Maimonides in Abulafia’s thought, see Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia* (SUNY Press: 1989), ix-xi, 16-17. For Abulafia’s student Isaac of Acre (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries) as a bridge between Sufi-colored Abulafian “eastern” Jewish mysticism and Spanish Kabbalah, see Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn*, 4-6.

Despite the many positive interactions between Jews of different cultural backgrounds in the Eastern Mediterranean, the encounter between these cultures was sometimes marked with hostility. For the characterization of French Jews as anthropomorphists, and for a terribly scathing caricature of their cultural habits, see Russ-Fishbane, *Between Politics and Piety*, 85-88.

<sup>24</sup> See Alfred L. Ivry, “Neoplatonic Currents in Maimonides’ Thought,” in *Perspectives on Maimonides: Philosophical and Historical Studies* (Littman/Oxford: 1991), 115-117, 138-139; *ibid.*, “Isma‘ili Theology and Maimonides’ Philosophy,” in *Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity* (Brill: 1995), ed. Daniel Frank, 271-299.

<sup>25</sup> See J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford University Press: 1971), 18. The first *khānqāh* in Egypt was established in 1173, soon after the shift to Ayyubid rule. See *ibid.*, 18; and Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: The Khanqah* (Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin: 1988), 21. For a discussion of the *khānqāh* as distinct from the *zāwiya* and *ribāt*, see Fernandes, *Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 10-19.

influential.<sup>26</sup> In direct conversation with these trends, and possibly already during Maimonides' lifetime, Egypt and the Levant witnessed the emergence of a Jewish pietist movement that drew deeply on Sufi thought and practice.<sup>27</sup> The earliest prominent representatives of the Sufi-influenced Jewish pietist movement in Egypt were Abraham He-Ḥasid (d.1223) and the *nagid* Abraham b. Moses Maimonides (d.1237), both active in Egypt.<sup>28</sup> Active engagement with Sufism would persist for an extended period both within the Maimonidean dynasty, and in Egypt and the Levant in general.<sup>29</sup> Jews adopted certain Sufi practices, classical Sufi texts circulated

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<sup>26</sup> See Fernandes, *Evolution of a Sufi Institution*, 1; and Th. Emil Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls: The *Khānqāh* and the Sufi Duty in Mamluk Lands," in *Mamlūk Studies Review* III (1999), 59-83. Fernandes (*ibid.*, 2, 96-103) is of the opinion that the state-sponsored *khānqāh* was intended to counterbalance the subversive potential of the popular *zāwiya*. While accepting Fernandes' account of state supervision of the *khānqāh* (including the requisite Sunni affiliation for residency therein), Th. Emil Homerin rejects her dichotomy between state-controlled orthodoxy and "popular" religion. See Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls," 75.

<sup>27</sup> See Elisha Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt: A Study of Abraham Maimonides and His Times* (Oxford University Press: 2015); Nathan C. Hofer, *Sufism, State, and Society in Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1309* (PhD dissertation, Emory University: 2011); Paul Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool: Al-Maḳāla al-Hawḍiyya* (The Octagon Press: 1981), 4-20; Nathan C. Hofer, "Scriptural Substitutions and Anonymous Citations: Judaization as Rhetorical Strategy in a Jewish Sufi Text," in *Numen* 61 (2014), 367-369. For evidence of Jews adopting Sufi practices during Moses Maimonides' lifetime, see his attack on typical Sufi practices the fourth chapter of *Eight Chapters*, in *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, ed. Raymond L. Weiss with Charles E. Butterworth (Dover: 1975), 69-70; and cf. Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to Maimonides' Code (Mishneh Torah)* (Yale University Press: 1980), 463. Cf. also Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 48-49. However, in the *Mishneh Torah* Maimonides explicitly associates the same practices with Christian monasticism, which may or may not be a rhetorical trope (see Laws of Character Traits, 3:1). These two passages are reflected in Tanḥum's commentary to Qoh. 7:16. See MS Pococke 138a; cited and discussed in Arye Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes: Edited and Translated from Arabic to Hebrew* (self-published, Jerusalem: 2013), 16. This is a complete and reworked version of Zoref's MA thesis (including a critical edition), *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes: Ch. I-V, Ch. XII and Additional Sections* (unpublished MA thesis; Hebrew University of Jerusalem: 2007). I will cite all references according to the pagination of Zoref's full edition.

<sup>28</sup> For Abraham He-Ḥasid, see Paul Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments of Rabbi Abraham He-Ḥasid, the Jewish Sufi," in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, XXVI (1981), 47-72. For additional fragments of Abraham He-Ḥasid's commentary to Song, see *ibid.*, "A Mystical Commentary on the Song of Songs in the Hand of David Maimonides II," in *Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects in Judaeo-Arabic Culture* (Brill: 2006), eds. Benjamin Hary and Haggai Ben-Shammai, 43-53; and *ibid.*, "Perush misti le-shir ha-shirim be-yado shel R. David b. Yehoshua Maymuni," in *Tarbiz* 69 (2000), 580-583.

For Abraham Maimonides, see Paul Fenton, "Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237): Founding a Mystical Dynasty," in *Jewish Mystical Leaders and Leadership in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century* (Jason Aronson: 1998), eds. Moshe Idel, Mortimer Ostow, 127-154; Samuel Rosenblatt, *The High Ways to Perfection (Kitāb Kifāyat al-'Ābidīn)*, 2 vols. (Columbia: 1927); Russ-Fishbane, *Between Politics and Piety*; Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*.

<sup>29</sup> See Fenton, *Treatise of the Pool*, 7-25. It appears that Tanḥum and his son Joseph were personally acquainted with Abraham Maimonides' son, David. See Hadassa Shy, "AlKulliyat. The General Introduction to Tanḥum haYerushalmi's Commentary on the Bible," in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, volume 1, eds. Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos (Brill:1999), 539.

among Jews, and original Jewish works were authored that reflected and actively appropriated elements of Sufi discourse.<sup>30</sup> This movement flourished in the midst of material hardship and the cultural conservatism of the Ayyubids and then the Mamluks in the thirteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

This, then, was the world into which Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi was born. As an exegete, a philosopher, and a spiritual practitioner he drew upon the rich cultural resources at his disposal: The Andalusian and geonic exegetical traditions;<sup>32</sup> the Peripatetic philosophical tradition, particularly as represented by Ibn Sīnā and Maimonides;<sup>33</sup> elements of Ismaili hermeneutics, transmitted via the works of Maimonides and his heirs;<sup>34</sup> and through his participation in the cultural life of thirteenth century Egypt and the Levant and their Jewish communities, he

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<sup>30</sup> For the circulation and production of Sufi and Sufi-inspired works among Jews in this period, see Paul Fenton, “Judaeano-Arabic Mystical Writings of the XIIIth-XIVth Centuries,” in *Judaeano-Arabic Studies* (Harwood Academic Publishers: 1997), ed. Norman Golb, 87-101. For the adoption of Sufi practices, see Fenton, *Treatise of the Pool*, 13-19. Particularly notable is Abraham Maimonides’ reference to the master’s bestowal of the *khirqā* upon the disciple as a practice of the biblical prophets, preserved by the Sufis, and practiced only by the elect among the Jews of his own time (presumably Abraham and his circle) – see Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 2, 266-267. See also *ibid.*, 48-53.

<sup>31</sup> For the uneasy position of *ahl al-dhimma* during the Ayyubid period, see Kurt J. Werthmuller, *Coptic Identity and Ayyubid Politics in Egypt (1218-1250)* (Cairo/New York: The American University in Cairo Press:2010), 62-63. See Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol.1, 29. Although it not clear how long Tanḥum resided in Egypt prior to his death, the situation in Egypt itself in the thirteenth century presents a striking example of the period’s deep uncertainties. For a detailed account, see Russ-Fishbane, *Between Politics and Piety*, 34-66. For the increasingly dire economic situation in Egypt, which continued and worsened through the thirteenth and into the fourteenth centuries, see *ibid.* 65-66; Mark Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton University Press: 2005), 31. For the Mamluk period as marking a turn towards greater intolerance, see Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol.1, 38. For local anti-Jewish riots and decrees during Mamluk rule, see Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press: 1994), 169-170; Avi Tal, “Parshanuto ha-madda‘it,” 121 and fn.6.

<sup>32</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 21-22.

<sup>33</sup> For Tanḥum’s declaration that he relied chiefly on Ibn Janāḥ in philological and grammatical matters and Maimonides in philosophical matters, see Shy, “*AlKulliyat*,” 537-8. Cf. also the somewhat problematic discussion of Tanḥum’s relationship with the ideas of Maimonides in Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 19- 23. For his reliance upon Ibn Sīnā, see Arye Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles: Studies in its Tendencies and its Jewish, Sufi-Islamic and Christian Sources, with a Critical Edition* (PhD dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: 2012), vol. 1, 102-103. For his reference in *Al-kulliyāt* to Ibn Sīnā’s *Shifā’*, *Najāṭ*, *Ishārāt wa-tanbihāt*, and ‘*Uyūn al-ḥikma*, see Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 23.

<sup>34</sup> See p.13 and fn. 24 above.

engaged with Sufi thought and practice.<sup>35</sup> Tanḥum ultimately synthesized the various branches of learning and intellectual currents that he encountered into his own coherent system.<sup>36</sup>

### Biographical Data

Despite scholarly attempts to cull biographical data from his works, little can be said about the life of Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi with any certainty. Indeed, we know more about his death than his life: According to the heading of a poem recorded in his son's *diwān*,<sup>37</sup> Tanḥum died in Fustāṭ on Wednesday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of Tammuz, 5051 AM (June 27, 1291 CE):<sup>38</sup>

His father (*may the memory of the righteous be a blessing*) died in *miṣr*<sup>39</sup> on Wednesday, the 21<sup>st</sup> day of Tammuz, [in] the year 5051 *anno mundi*,<sup>40</sup> and he elegized him. It happened a few days after the news arrived of the slaughter of the group of *sages* who dwelled in Acre, with the rest of its people, during its conquest by the Ishmaelites. He thus set his mind upon lamenting them (may their memory be a blessing) altogether and said...<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Paul Fenton, "Judaean-Arabic Mystical Writings of the XIIIth-XIVth Centuries," in *Judaean-Arabic Studies: Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Society for Judaean-Arabic Studies*, ed. Norman Golb (Harwood Academic Publishers: 1997), 90-91 and fn.15.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Avi Tal, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it ve-ha-re'alistit shel rabbi tanḥum ha-yerushalmi mi-tokh be'urav le-sifre melakhim b, yesha'yahu, yirmiyahu vi-yeḥezqel," in *Mi-tuv Yosef* (The Center for Research of Jewish Culture in Spain and Islamic Lands, Haifa University: 2011), vol. 3, eds. Eilat Ettinger and Dani Bar-Ma'oz, 124.

<sup>37</sup> For Joseph b. Tanḥum's poetry, see Judith Dishon, *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds by Joseph ben Tanchum Hayerushalmi* (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press: 2005).

<sup>38</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 4. The Christian date given by Mann (*Texts and Studies*, vol. 1, 435) and accepted by Shy (*Perush*, נ\*) is according to the Julian calendar (Wechsler, *Strangers*, 4 fn.7).

<sup>39</sup> Although *miṣr* can refer to Egypt as a whole, it also refers to Fustāṭ in a more restricted sense (as makes most sense in context here). See Wechsler, *Strangers*, 4; André Raymond, *Cairo* (Harvard University Press: 2000), trans. Willard Wood, 11. Note that *miṣr* here lacks the definite article (*bi-miṣr*), making clearer its sense here as a toponym (see note below).

<sup>40</sup> Arabic: *wa-tuwuffiyya wāliduhu z[ekher] tz[addiq] l[i-berakhah] bi-miṣr yawm al-d {al-arba 'ā', i.e. Wednesday – RD} al-k' {al-wāḥid wa-'ishrūn} min tammuz shenat hn' la-yetzirah {5051 AM – RD}...*

<sup>41</sup> Mann, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 1, 437-8. Based on this account, Hadassa Shy suggested a causal connection between Tanḥum's death and the events in Acre, namely that the shock of the news may have killed him or hastened his death; see Shy, "Tanḥum ben yosef ha-yerushalmi," in *Peraqim ba-'ivrit li-tequfoteha: asufat zikkaron le-shoshannah bahaṭ* (Academy for the Hebrew Language: 1997), ed. Moshe Bar-Asher, 198. Although the passage allows for such an interpretation, it does not necessitate it, but merely states that the events were near to one another temporally.

The date of Tanḥum's birth is not known.<sup>42</sup> Regarding the gentile Ha-Yerushalmi – in Arabic *al-Qudsī*, *al-Muqaddasī*, or *al-Maqqdasī* – it is not clear whether it was applied to him personally or inherited patrilineally.<sup>43</sup> Based on the abundance of references to realia from *al-shām*, Bacher surmised that Tanḥum was of Palestinian birth,<sup>44</sup> but subsequent scholars have pointed to a lack of evidence for this position.<sup>45</sup> Yosef Qafih stated that Tanḥum was a native of Palestine and migrated to Egypt in the year 5020 A.M. (1259-60 C.E.).<sup>46</sup> Although he provided no source or reasoning for this statement, it seems that Qafih's position is based on Graetz's suggestion that Tanḥum witnessed the Mongol siege of 1260.<sup>47</sup> Qafih's conclusion is based on three

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<sup>42</sup> Tal gives the year 1219 as that of Tanḥum's birth; see Avi Tal, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it ve-ha-re'alistit shel rabbi Tanḥum ha-yerushalmi mi-tokh be'urav le-sifre melakhim b, yesha'yahu, yirmiyahu vi-yehezqel," in *Mi-tuv Yosef*, vol. 3, eds. Eilat Ettinger and Dani Bar-Ma'oz (The Center for Research of Jewish Culture in Spain and Islamic Lands, Haifa University: 2011), 120. Although Tal suggests that it was Mann who provides this date (Tal, *Rabbi Tanchum Hayerushalmi's Exegetic Methods Based on His Commentary on the Books of Joshua and Judges* (MA thesis, Bar-Ilan University: 2002), 6-7), nowhere does the latter make such a claim. See Mann, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 1, 435-438. However, Tal also refers to Barukh Toledano for this birth date; see Tal, *Rabbi Tanchum Hayerushalmi*, 7 fn.4. In fact, it appears that Tal bases this date on a slight miscalculation of the Gregorian equivalent of Toledano's suggested date; see Toledano, "R. Tanḥum ha-yerushalmi," in *Sinai* 42 (1957-8), 341-2. Here, Toledano writes as follows: "If we estimate that R. Tanḥum lived approximately seventy years (and there is some support for this from what he wrote at the beginning of the poem at the end of the book *Al-murshid*... for he composed it in his youth, and from this we may see that at the time that he completed his book *Al-murshid* he was already old, approximately sixty-seventy) then his birth would have been in the year 4981 [A.M., i.e., 1220-1 C.E. according to the Gregorian calendar], seventeen years after the death of Maimonides." (Maimonides appears to have died in 1204. See Davidson, *Moses Maimonides*, 73; Kraemer, *Maimonides*, 471.)

Toledano makes it very clear that this is an estimation based only on Tanḥum's introductory words to the poem with which he concluded his *Al-murshid al-kāfi* (his lexicon to the *Mishneh torah*), that seem to imply that Tanḥum lived a long life. The formulation to which Toledano refers is that Tanḥum composed this poem "in the days of [his] youth." (*Wa-kuntu fi zamān al-shabība raṣṣa 'tu abyāt shi'r tataḍammanu asmā' ajzā' al-ḥibbūr ma'a dalālat al-ḥā'irīn...* See Shy, *Al-murshid al-kāfi [ha-madrikh ha-maspiq]: Milono shel Tanḥum ha-yerushalmi le-mishneh torah la-rambam* (Israeli National Academy of the Sciences/Keter: 2005), 656.)

<sup>43</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 4 and fn.10; Shy, *Perush*, 87.

<sup>44</sup> See Wilhelm Bacher, *Aus dem Wörterbuch Tanchum Jeruschalmi's* (Karl J. Trübner: 1903), 6-7, 7 fn.1.

<sup>45</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 87. A reference to Palestinian geography in Tanḥum's commentary to Joshua 11:5 may actually serve to emphasize the role of informants in Tanḥum's collection of geographical data: "[Merom] is that which is called Meron today, which is a water spring. And it is related (*wa-yuhkā*) that the waters are very abundant for the pilgrims..." (For this citation, see Avi Tal, *Rabbi Tanchum Hayerushalmi's Exegetic Methods Based on His Commentary on the Books of Joshua and Judges* (MA thesis, Bar-Ilan University: 2002), 6.)

<sup>46</sup> Qafih, *Daniel*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> See Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden (von Maimuni's Tod (1205) bis zur Verbannung der Juden aus Spanien und Portugal)* (Leipzig, Oskar Leiner: 1894), vol. 7, 132 fn. 1; Hebrew translation in *Sefer dibre yeme yisra'el* (Warsaw, Hed-hazman: 1908), trans. Sha'ul Pinḥas Rabinovitz, vol. 5, 131 fn.1. Here Graetz understands a passage from *Al-murshid al-kāfi* that attributes the decline of scholarship to the tribulations of the exile to refer to the Mongol conquest of Jerusalem. (For the passage, see Shy, *Murshid*, 4-5.) Against Graetz, see Bacher, *Aus dem Wörterbuch*, 11. Although Bacher is certainly correct that the passage to which Graetz refers contains no reference

assumptions: (1) That Tanḥum was a native of Jerusalem; (2) that he remained there until the time of the Mongol siege; and (3) that the siege resulted in the death or expulsion of all of the city's Jewish inhabitants. Only the final point is anchored in contemporaneous sources, and even that is not beyond doubt.<sup>48</sup>

Barukh Toledano rejected the theory of Tanḥum's Palestinian birth, suggesting instead that he resided first in Damascus before moving to Egypt in order to be closer to his son (who had apparently moved there in order to work as a poet in the *nagid's* court). Toledano bases this position on two pieces of evidence: (a) The proliferation of descriptions of realia as practiced in *al-shām*, interpreted by Toledano to refer specifically to Damascus (as opposed to the entire Levant); (b) the discovery of a Mishnah commentary containing selections from Tanḥum's lexicon *Al-murshid al-kāfi* in Jawbar, on the outskirts of Damascus. Based on the antiquity of the manuscript, Toledano suggested that it may be an autograph copy.<sup>49</sup>

Several problems arise from the evidence cited by Toledano. Although the term *al-shām* can certainly refer specifically to Damascus, it also refers to the Levant as a whole.<sup>50</sup> Toledano was well aware of this this, and understood Tanḥum's reference elsewhere to *bilād al-shām* as providing clear enough evidence that, when otherwise unqualified, *al-shām* refers specifically to the city of Damascus.<sup>51</sup> Toledano's reading of the evidence here is far from certain.<sup>52</sup> More

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to the Mongol invasions (it is in fact a historiographical trope that is employed by Maimonides long before those events in his introduction to the *Mishneh torah*), Tanḥum does mention *qabā'il al-turuk wa-'l-tatar wa-bilādihim* ("the tribes of the Turks and Tatars and their towns") in his commentary to Ezekiel 38:2. See Tal, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it," 136. Tanḥum would have been quite aware of these events, whether he resided in Palestine or Mamluk Egypt at the time.

<sup>48</sup> For the Mongol siege of Jerusalem in 1260, and the lack of clarity concerning its nature and impact on the inhabitants, see Michael Shterenshis, *Tamerlane and the Jews* (Routledge: 2007), 91-92. Here the author also cites Nahmanides' famous account of the state of Jerusalem's Jewish community after the Mongol siege.

<sup>49</sup> Toledano, "R. tanḥum ha-yerushalmi," 342-343.

<sup>50</sup> See Suleiman A. Mourad, "Damascus," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Josef W. Meri (Routledge: 2006), vol. 1, 191.

<sup>51</sup> Toledano, "R. tanḥum ha-yerushalmi," 343.

importantly, Tanḥum's actual use of the term *al-shām* does not fit Toledano's interpretation. For example, in his commentary to Jonah, Tanḥum describes the port of Jaffa as the place from which one departs for abroad from *al-shām*.<sup>53</sup>

The very basis for Toledano's second claim is highly questionable. Toledano explicitly made his suggestion based on the (undetermined) antiquity of the manuscript.<sup>54</sup> In addition, Shy identified an autograph of Tanḥum's extensive introduction to his commentaries to the Prophets and Hagiographa, entitled *Al-kulliyāt*, in the Firkovitch collection at the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg, much of which originated in the Cairo Genizah,<sup>55</sup> and an autograph of Tanḥum's lexicon in the same collection.<sup>56</sup> A more likely interpretation of Toledano's evidence is that the selections from *Al-murshid* were integrated into a commentary to the Mishnah by a later author or copyist.<sup>57</sup>

Tanḥum's son Joseph appears to have been well acquainted with the *nagid* David b. Abraham Maimonides (c.1222-c.1300), as can be seen from his letters to the latter and the poems that he

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<sup>52</sup> Indeed, from Tanḥum's reference to *bilād al-shām*, we may be inclined to deduce precisely the opposite: Rather than positing a dichotomy between *al-shām* and *bilād al-shām*, one could argue that his use of the latter expression merely proves that when Tanḥum uses the former term he is referring to the Levant as a whole.

<sup>53</sup> Commentary to Jonah 1:3 (Shy, *Perush*, 113). Further evidence may be found for this in Tanḥum's commentary to Jeremiah 2:18, where he once again appears to use the expression *al-shām* to refer to Palestine, while the restricted sense of "Damascus" makes little sense; see Tal, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it," 130.

<sup>54</sup> Toledano, "R. tanḥum ha-yerushalmi," 343.

<sup>55</sup> See Shy, "*AlKulliyat*," 536-7. MS Pococke 320 was copied in Tripoli (Lebanon) in the late thirteenth-early fourteenth centuries, by Solomon b. Eleazar ha-Rofe b. Obadiah ha-Rofe. See Wechsler, *Strangers*, 17-18. For the Genizah as a major source for the Firkovitch collections, see Paul Fenton "Daniel Ibn Māshiṭa's *Taqwīm al-Adyān*: New light on the oriental phase of the Maimonidean Controversy," in *Genizah Research after Ninety Years: The Case of Judaeo-Arabic*, eds. Joshua Blau and Stefan Reif (Cambridge University Press: 1992), 74-75.

<sup>56</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 1, טכ-הכ.

<sup>57</sup> On the identification of Tanḥum's hand, see Shy, "Ha-devarim ha-me'afyenim ketav yado shel meḥabber: ketavav shel Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi," in *Kiryat Sefer* 68 (1998), 191-204. On *Al-murshid* as a general reference tool for the study of Oral Torah – and in particular for the language of the Mishnah – beyond its immediate intention as a dictionary to the *Mishneh torah*, see Tanḥum's introduction to the work in Shy, *Al-murshid*, 8-9. It is thus unsurprising that sections from *Al-murshid* should be integrated into a commentary on the Mishnah. Cf. also the integration of elements of Tanḥum's lexicon into a Mishnaic reference work composed in North Africa in the fourteenth century, discussed in Shimeon Brisman, *History and Guide to Judaic Dictionaries and Concordances* (KTAV Publishing House: 2000), 30.

composed in his honor.<sup>58</sup> In 1277, at the age of 15, Joseph composed a major collection of poetry entitled *'Arugat ha-besamim*.<sup>59</sup> He also sought the *nagid*'s assistance on his father's behalf.<sup>60</sup> Based on this correspondence, Shy states that Tanḥum was personally acquainted with David b. Abraham Maimonides.<sup>61</sup>

The most suggestive sources for either a Palestinian origin for Tanḥum, or at the very least indicating that he spent a significant period there, pertain to his son. In his *maqāma* entitled *Al-tajnīs*, Joseph presents a fictional narrative in which a Spanish poet named Aḥitub b. Ḥakhmoni travels to Egypt and resides in the house the *nagid*, Obadiah.<sup>62</sup> A young poet sends the *nagid* some verses, and the latter encourages Aḥitub to participate in a competition of verses. In the course of the exchange, the youth writes as follows:

If you say, "We are the sons of the Exile of Jebus,"/

My land and my birthplace is Jerusalem (*artzi u-moladti yerushalayim*)<sup>63</sup>

In this verse, the young competitor uses his Palestinian birth to gain prestige over his Spanish rival.<sup>64</sup> Although the young poet is a fictional character, it is implied that he stands in for the author. Indeed, it has been suggested that the *maqāma* is intended as a playful response to the

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<sup>58</sup> Mann, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 1, 420, 436-7, 439-442; Hayim (Vitaly) Sheynin, *An Introduction to the Poetry of Joseph Ben Tanhum Ha-Yerushalmi and to the History of its Research: A Study Based Primarily upon Manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah*, (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania: 1988), 8-9.

<sup>59</sup> Mann, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 1, 436.

<sup>60</sup> Judith Dishon, *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds by Joseph ben Tanhum Hayerushalmi* (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press: 2005), 12.

<sup>61</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 539. Shy bases herself upon Mann, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 1, 420. David b. Abraham Maimonides ascended to the nagidate in 1237 at the age of sixteen and held the position until c.1300 (S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society* (University of California Press: 1967-1981), vol.2, 32, 164).

<sup>62</sup> Joseph writes: "I found one of [Egypt's] honored inhabitants/ And one of her *negidim* (*ve-nagid mi-negideha*)/ [...] Obadiah the Prince is his name (*ha-sar 'obadyah shemo*)..." For the Hebrew verses, see Judith Dishon, *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds by Joseph ben Tanhum Hayerushalmi* (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press: 2005), 412. It appears that the Obadiah to which he is referring is Obadiah b. Abraham Maimonides, Moses Maimonides' grandson (*ibid.*, 407). For Obadiah, see Fenton, *Treatise of the Pool*, 24-46.

<sup>63</sup> See Judith Dishon, *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds by Joseph ben Tanhum Hayerushalmi* (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press: 2005), 418.

<sup>64</sup> See Dishon, *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds*, 419, notes to line 78.

Spanish poet Judah al-Ḥarīzī (d.1225) and his work *Taḥkemoni*.<sup>65</sup> Al-Ḥarīzī was a Spanish poet who traveled to the East, and the very fact that the fictional competition transpires in Egypt in the house of the *nagid* hints at Joseph's own place in the elite circles of Egyptian Jewry. It would thus not be surprising if the young fictional competitor mirrors elements of Joseph's own biography, pointing to his own Palestinian origin as a point of pride.<sup>66</sup> If this is indeed the case, Tanḥum must have at least resided in Jerusalem for some period of time, and emigrated to Egypt at some point following his son's birth in 1262.<sup>67</sup>

Another source that suggests a Palestinian origin for Tanḥum and his family is Joseph's letter to Abraham, "the community leader (*rosh ha-qehillot*)". In one letter, he asks for Abraham's support in returning to Jerusalem on his father's behalf, stating that somebody (God?) "drove me out (*va-yegarsheni*)" of the city.<sup>68</sup> The letter implies that Tanḥum had at least temporarily resided in Jerusalem at some time prior to the correspondence and left against his will.

At the very least, this letter confirms two aspects of Tanḥum's biography: (a) That he resided in Egypt for some time prior to his death; and (b) that before relocating to Egypt, he resided for a significant period in Jerusalem. Whether or not he was actually a native of Jerusalem remains undetermined.

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<sup>65</sup> Dishon, *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds*, 11 fn. 1. For an edition of the work, with an introduction and critical notes, see *Taḥkemoni or The Tales of Heman the Ezraḥite*, eds. Joseph Yahalom and Naoya Katsumata (Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi: 2010). For an English translation, see *The Book of Taḥkemoni: Jewish Tales from Medieval Spain*, trans. David Simha Segal (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization: 2003).

<sup>66</sup> For Dishon's suggestion to this effect, see *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds*, 11, and fn. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Wechsler's statement (*Strangers*, 4 fn. 8) that if "the gentilic in [Tanḥum's] son's name is *not* a carry-over from the father [...], it may be further inferred that Tanḥum emigrated to Fustat sometime after his son's birth in 1262." For Joseph's date of birth, see Dishon, *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds*, 11.

<sup>68</sup> The text may be found in MS Evr. IIA 291/1 at the Russian National Library of Saint Petersburg, 35a-b; microfilm F64575 at the National Library of Israel. See Dishon, *The Book of the Perfumed Flower Beds*, 12 and fn. 4; Sheynin, *An Introduction to the Poetry of Joseph Ben Tanhum Ha-Yerushalmi*, 10.

In sum, it may be said that efforts to prove that Tanḥum was of Palestinian birth have so far proven inconclusive.<sup>69</sup> However, that he resided in Jerusalem before moving to Egypt may be confirmed on the basis of his son's correspondence with Abraham "the community leader". Furthermore, based on suggestive allusions in Joseph b. Tanḥum's poetry, it is likely that the author was born in Palestine. This would point to Tanḥum's emigration to Egypt after his son's birth in 1262.<sup>70</sup>

In response to Bacher's attempt to identify Tanḥum's profession based on his familiarity with the specialized terminology of medicine, Shy pointed out that Tanḥum in fact employed the technical terminology of other fields as well, such as astronomy, physics, and even carpentry.<sup>71</sup> Tanḥum's broad familiarity with trades, arts, and sciences may be partly explained by the powerful argument presented in *Al-kulliyāt* in favor of studying all disciplines, no matter how humble they may seem.<sup>72</sup>

Shy states that "[f]rom his full name we know that Tanhum was a Rabbi, as was his father Rabbi Yosef. Maybe he was as well the head of a congregation in Fustat, because he explained in the introduction of *alKulliyat* that he had not much time to write, because he was occupied with necessary things which he had to do."<sup>73</sup> Shy's interpretation of the sources raises some problems. Firstly, Tanḥum appears not to have applied the title to himself at all (although he did apply it to

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Shy, *Perush*, 87; Shy *Tanhum ben Yosef*, 197; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 4.

<sup>70</sup> Although it is not conclusive, there is a particularly suggestive geographical reference in Tanḥum's commentary to Song 6:11: "I went down to the nut grove (*el ginnat egoz yaradti*)." In his commentary to this verse (MS Pococke 320, 58b; Zoref, *Tanhum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 70), Tanḥum states that the verse is referring to the area of *Wādi al-jawz*, outside Jerusalem (in today's East Jerusalem). Although this information could easily have been gleaned from informants, Tanḥum's subsequent comment that the area must have been comprised of gardens and groves (*jannāt wa-basā'īn*) at the time of the composition of Song takes it for granted that in his own time the area did not fit this description.

<sup>71</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 87.

<sup>72</sup> See Tal, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it," 123-124, 139-140.

<sup>73</sup> Shy, "*AlKulliyat*," 539. For a more extensive discussion of the sources, see Shy, *Tanhum ben Yosef*, 198-199. Here she states that Tanḥum was occupied with "the needs of the general [populace]" (*tzorkhei ha-kelal*), but does not provide a citation from Tanḥum himself.

his father). Rather, it seems that his son and others applied it to him after his death.<sup>74</sup> Secondly, it is unclear to what extent use of the title “rabbi” (מֹרֵבֵּי, הַרְבֵּי, רַבִּי) denoted formal ordination in this period, or that the bearer of the title held a communal post.<sup>75</sup> It may have been prefixed merely as

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<sup>74</sup> Tal, *Tanchum Hayerushalmi*, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Although the title “rabbi” – *rabbi/ribbi/rabban* in the Mishnah, and *rabbi/ribbi/rav* in the Talmud – was employed in classical rabbinic literature, the ancient practice of *semikhah* (resting of the hands of the elder in order to confer authority to the disciple) was discontinued in the talmudic period. See Simon Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History of the Rabbinate* (Blackwell: 1993), 1-4. For a more critical reading of the traditional historiography, see Yohanan Breuer, “*Rabbi is Greater than Rav, Rabban is Greater than Rabbi, the Simple Name is Greater than Rabban,*” in *Tarbiz* 66/1 (1996), 41-59. The title “rabbi” was again applied to communal leaders in recognition of their local legal authority in the Rhineland and the Champagne region in eleventh century (see Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History*, 10-12). Abraham Ibn Daud (d.c.1180) does apply the title to figures who lived in the mid-tenth century (Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History*, 65, 158 n. 2). However, as late as the late fourteenth century, Isaac b. Sheshet Perfet (d.1408; known by the acronym *Rivash*) stated that ordination as rabbi (*semikhah ba-rabbanut*) was only the Franco-German usage, and he sought to limit the authority of those who bore the title (*She’elot u-teshuvot ha-rivash* (Mefitze torah: 1954), #268-#272, 146-152; Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History*, 27, 66). Although Schwarzfuchs harmonizes between Ibn Daud and Perfet by arguing that formal ordination was introduced early to Spain and North Africa and discontinued (Ibn Daud makes this claim regarding North Africa, and Schwarzfuchs extends it to Spain; see Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History*, 66), such a reading may take Ibn Daud’s account at face value to too great an extent. In support of this position, Schwarzfuchs refers to Judah b. Barzilai of Barcelona (al-Bargeloni), who asserted in the late eleventh/early twelfth centuries that certificates of ordination conferred in Spain are not equivalent to the ancient *semikhah* (*Sefer ha-shetarot* [Tzvi Hirsch b. Isaac Itzkovski: 1898], ed. Shelomo Zalman Hayyim Halberstam, 132-133; Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History*, 31). Schwarzfuchs understands this to confirm that ordination was practiced in Spain in that period (Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History*, 66). However, Barcelona was under Christian rule since the ninth century; Perfet lived his entire life under Christian rule; and Ibn Daud was active in Toledo, also under Christian rule since the late eleventh century. (For Ibn Daud’s background and cultural context, see Gerson D. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition (Sefer Ha-Qabbalah) by Abraham Ibn Daud* (The Jewish Publication Society of America: 1967), xvi-lxii.) A more skeptical (and simple) reading of the sources might lead us to the conclusion that formal ordination for the rabbinate was not established in the Islamic Maghrib, but was projected into its past by Ibn Daud. In fact, this is entirely in accordance with Ibn Daud’s purpose in relating the foundational myth of the establishment of Spanish Jewry, the story of the four captives (see Gerson D. Cohen, “The Story of the Four Captives,” in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 29 (1960-1961), 55-131; see also Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, 2). Just as Ibn Daud sought to anchor the Jewish traditions of the Iberian Peninsula in geonic authority with the narrative of the four captives, he may have wanted to emphasize the continuity of ordination in the region, which was actually practiced in Christian territories under the influence of the neighboring Franco-German traditions. For Ibn Daud’s account of the establishment and succession of the Spanish and North African rabbinate, see Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, 63-90 in English translation/46-66 in Hebrew edition. For Ibn Daud’s use of the expression *nismekhu ba-rabbanut* and his description of the establishment and discontinuation of such transmission of authority in North Africa, see *ibid.*, 57-58 in Hebrew edition (translated variously by Cohen, apparently in conscious avoidance of the term “ordination”; 77-78 in English section). For Ibn Daud’s awareness of the rabbis of France (*tzarefat*) and his admiration of their scholarship, see 88-89 in English/66 in Hebrew. It is therefore possible that ordination for the rabbinate (*semikhah ba-rabbanut* or *semikhat morenu*) was practiced in the territories of Western Christendom, but not in Muslim territories. See also Mordekhai Breuer, “The “Ashkenazi Semikhah,”” in *Zion* 33 (1968), 15-46.

For an illuminating case study regarding the encounter between the Franco-German rabbinic traditions of the North and the Judeo-Arabic rabbinic traditions of the South in thirteenth century Catalonia, see Gidon Rothstein, “Working Towards Accommodation: Rabbenu Yonah Gerondi’s Slow Acceptance of Andalusian Rabbinic Traditions,” in *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, 12 no. 3 (2003), 87-104. Here the author argues that R. Yonah (d.1263) was entirely immersed in Franco-German rabbinic culture, and only gradually began to introduce elements of Islamicate Spanish Jewish discourse into his later works. In contrast, R. Yonah’s relative and fellow Catalanian

an honorific, even if it may imply that the bearer of the title is a scholar.<sup>76</sup> That an individual who bore such a title must have stood at the head of a congregation in some formal capacity, or even (as is more likely the case) have sat on a rabbinic court, is far from a foregone conclusion.

In addition to the data surveyed above, the sheer proliferation of realia from *al-shām* in his works suggests that he traveled widely in the Levant. However, informants almost certainly played a role in Tanḥum's collection of data concerning geography and realia, so even this remains inconclusive.<sup>77</sup> It may also be the case that Tanḥum's interest in the material culture of the Levant stemmed primarily from exegetical motives: He might have understood Palestine and the neighboring territories to simply be the most relevant source of information regarding realia due to their historical link to the sacred texts that formed the basis of his scholarly project.

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Moses b. Naḥman (Nahmanides; d.1270) achieved a high degree of synthesis between these divergent traditions (*ibid.*, 87-88). Although Girona was only under Islamic rule for a relatively brief period, the fact that the rabbinic culture of northern Iberia – south of the Pyrenees – was so overwhelmingly tied to the rabbinic cultures and institutions of Western Christendom is telling. (Note that Judah b. Barzilai's Barcelona is much closer to Girona, and was under Muslim rule for a similarly brief period. Indeed, this was not the only time that Judah pushed against encroaching Franco-German practices; see Ta-Shma, "A Note on the 'Zohar'," 663-664.) And although Toledo during Ibn Daud's lifetime was a bastion of Arabic scholarship and Islamicate culture, it was also an important meeting point between the cultures of Western Christendom and Islamic Spain; see Thomas E. Burman, "The Cultures and Dynamics of Translation into Medieval Latin," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature* (Oxford University Press: 2012), 92-93; Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, 15, 18. For the close ties between northern Spain and southern France, and the basic cultural coherence of Languedoc in the twelfth century, see Frank E. Talmage, *David Kimhi: The Man and the Commentaries* (Harvard University Press: 1975), 9.

In Muslim territories, judges (*dayyanim*) were appointed, and scholars were recognized based on their affiliation with established *yeshivot* or on the basis of their erudition. Thus far, no evidence has surfaced that Tanḥum served as a rabbinic judge. It is possible that the title *rav* in the Islamic cultural sphere was applied primarily as an honorific on the basis of one's scholarship, not official appointment (cf. Kraemer, *Maimonides*, 228; Davidson, *Moses Maimonides*, 57). The seats of authority in the *mashriq* were the geonates of Babylonia (which issued *pitqe de-dayyanuta* or "certificates of judgeship"; see Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History*, 4) and Palestine (where the scholars of the *yeshivah* were known as *haverim*; see *ibid.*). See also Maimonides' critique of the use of grand titles by individuals unworthy of them, wherein he makes no mention of the title *rav* (Commentary to the Mishnah, Tractate Bekhorot 4:4). In addition to the ambiguity of the term *rav*, in Tanḥum's case it is not at all clear that the title was applied to him in his lifetime (see previous note).

<sup>76</sup> The use of the title *ha-rav* or *rabbenu* appears to have been honorific in many cases – indeed, Davidson (*Moses Maimonides*, 54-64) has argued that, contrary to widely held belief, Maimonides never held an official position as leader of Egyptian Jewry, neither as *ra'īs al-yahūd* nor as *nagid*. Yet he was known by the honorific *ha-rav* (Kraemer, *Maimonides*, 227-230). For a less skeptical reading of the sources referring to Maimonides' titles and honorifics, see Kraemer, *Maimonides*, 216-230.

<sup>77</sup> See p.17, fn.45 above. Cf. also Tanḥum's references to the languages and customs of the Maghrib (Shy, *Tanḥum ben Yosef*, 198). Of course, it is possible that Tanḥum actually visited the Maghrib, but the scarcity of such references and the absence of all other evidence seem to preclude the possibility either of *maghribī* origins or an extended period of residence in the Maghrib.

## Works

Tanḥum produced at least two major works: A commentary to the Prophets and Hagiographa entitled *Kitāb al-ījāz wa-’l-bayān* (The Book of Simplification and Elucidation),<sup>78</sup> and an Arabic lexicon to Moses Maimonides’ *Mishneh torah* entitled *Al-murshid al-kāfī* (The Sufficient Guide).<sup>79</sup> Hadassa Shy has suggested that Tanḥum’s literary works be viewed through the lens of Maimonides’ own project: Maimonides states that once a Jew has studied the Hebrew Bible, he<sup>80</sup> is obliged to study the Oral Law, of which the *Mishneh torah* is a complete summary.<sup>81</sup> According to Shy, Tanḥum’s works are intended to render these twin pillars of the Torah – the Hebrew Bible and the *Mishneh torah* – accessible to their readers.<sup>82</sup> Shy provides no specific source for this interpretation, which may be based on her reading of the manuscripts of *Al-kulliyāt* or her own reasoning. However, some support may be found in the introduction to *Al-murshid al-kāfī*, where Tanḥum writes of the obligation of every Jew to study the Written Law and then Oral Law,<sup>83</sup> but that the Oral Law remains inaccessible to the vast majority of Jews due to its language, which is both specialized and abounds in unfamiliar loanwords.<sup>84</sup> This passage is reminiscent of the introduction to Maimonides’ *Mishneh torah*, in a number of respects: Its

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<sup>78</sup> For this rendition of the title, see see Hadassa Shy, “Ha-signon ha-ishshi ba-‘arabit ha-yehudit bi-yeme ha-benayim,” in *Hiqre ‘eber va-‘arab: muggashim li-yehoshua’ bla’u ‘al yede haberav ve-talmidav bi-melot lo shib ‘im*, ed. Haggai Ben-Shammai (Tel-Aviv University/The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: 1993), 583-584; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 6. Against this understanding, it might be suggested that by employing the term *ījāz*, Tanḥum is also alluding to his objective of summarizing the relevant exegetical observations of a wide number of earlier authors (for which see below). Indeed, Shy (*ibid.*) points out that Tanḥum also uses the term *ījāz* to refer to succinctness.

<sup>79</sup> Tanḥum occasionally directed his readers from one of these works to the other; see Hadassa Shy, “Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva’ah le-millono le-mishneh torah ‘al pi daf she-nimtza mi-perusho li-tehillim (katub bi-khetab yado),” in *Hebrew Language Studies Presented to Professor Zeev Ben-Ḥayyim*, eds. M. Bar-Asher, A. Dotan, G. B. Sarfatti, and D. Téné (The Magnes Press: 1983), 535-536.

<sup>80</sup> My use of the gendered pronoun is deliberate, as this more accurately reflects Maimonides’ own attitude. For Maimonides’ opinion concerning the exemption/exclusion of women from studying Torah, and the Oral Law in particular, see *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Study of Torah, 1:1 and 1:13 (1:16 in Qafih’s edition, based on the division attested in MSS).

<sup>81</sup> See Maimonides’ introduction to the *Mishneh torah* (cited in Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (Yale University Press: 1980), 30).

<sup>82</sup> Shy, *AlKulliyat*, 537.

<sup>83</sup> Shy, *Al-murshid*, 2-5.

<sup>84</sup> Shy, *Al-murshid*, 4-9

repetition of the obligation to study the Written and Oral Law, its historiographical focus, and its stated purpose of rendering material previously intelligible to only a small elite accessible to a considerably broader readership.

It has also been suggested based on several fragmentary manuscripts that Tanḥum composed a commentary on the Pentateuch,<sup>85</sup> although Wechsler has expressed his skepticism concerning the attribution of these texts.<sup>86</sup> In any case, Wechsler notes that a commentary on the Pentateuch must be considered a separate work from *Kitāb al-bayān*, as Tanḥum states explicitly that *Al-kulliyāt* precedes his commentaries to the Prophets.<sup>87</sup>

1. *Kitāb al-ījāz wa-'l-bayān*

Tanḥum's commentary consists of two distinct parts: The extensive introduction entitled *Al-kulliyāt*, and the commentary itself.<sup>88</sup> Why earlier biblical commentaries did not suffice for Tanḥum cannot be stated with certainty at this point. However, some suggestions can be made:

(1) The earlier Judeo-Arabic commentaries tended either to be lacunose, often selecting very few expressions to discuss from within an entire chapter,<sup>89</sup> or excessively long winded;<sup>90</sup>

(2) the geonic commentaries may not have been perceived by Tanḥum to have been truly philosophical;<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> See Poznanski, *Tanhoun*, 129; Abraham E. Harkavy, *Hadashim Gam Yeshanim*, Vol. 10 (1896), 21-23; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 7, and fn.19. Here Wechsler also notes a fragment of a commentary on Leviticus that has been ascribed to Tanḥum (MS Oslo-London, Schoeyen 1862).

<sup>86</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 7 fn.19. For two other works falsely attributed to Tanḥum, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 5 fn.13.

<sup>87</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 7.

<sup>88</sup> For a list of extant MSS, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 6-8.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Samuel Poznanski, "The Arabic Commentary of Abu Zakariya Yaḥya (Judah ben Samuel) ibn Bal'am on the Twelve Minor Prophets," in *The Jewish Quarterly Review New Series*, Vol.15, No. 1 (July 1924), 1-53. For example, in the third chapter of Jonah, Ibn Bal'am makes a single, brief comment (on 3:4; *ibid.* 36).

<sup>90</sup> For the Geonim (among others) as excessively long-winded and prone to irrelevant excurses, see Ibn Ezra's introduction to his commentary on the Pentateuch (the first of the five approaches discussed).

(3) Maimonides' exegetical approach had yet to be applied systematically in a commentary in Arabic;<sup>92</sup>

(4) Tanḥum's stated purpose was to save readers the burden of consulting "many books."<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Tanḥum synthesized much earlier in his commentary, in addition to offering his own interpretations and linguistic, historical, and theological observations. In addition, the inclusion of grammatical and exegetical principles in *Al-kulliyāt* (for which see below) is consistent with Tanḥum's project of providing readers with the basic tools to facilitate their own informed study of the sacred texts. Many of the topics treated at length in *Al-kulliyāt* are discussed locally within the commentaries themselves.

(a) *Al-kulliyāt*

Unfortunately, only fragments of *Al-kulliyāt* have been edited and published.<sup>94</sup> It remains at least partially extant in manuscript, in the Russian National Library at Saint Petersburg. The text was thought lost, but was identified by Harkavy in 1891.<sup>95</sup> Shy later located two incomplete

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<sup>91</sup> For Maimonides' opinion of *kalām* (apparently including that of the Geonim) as not truly philosophical, see *Guide* I.71 (Shlomo Pines, *The Guide of the Perplexed (Moses Maimonides)* (University of Chicago Press: 1963), 177-9). See also Eliezer Schweid, *The Classic Jewish Philosophers: From Saadia through the Renaissance*, vol. 3, trans. Leonard Levin (Brill: 2007), 162; and Warren Zev Harvey, "Why Maimonides was not a Mutakallim," in *Perspectives on Maimonides: Philosophical and Historical Studies*, ed. Joel Kraemer (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization: 1996).

<sup>92</sup> However, Maimonidean biblical commentaries had been produced in Western Christendom, most notably by members of the Ibn Tibbon dynasty of Provence. See James T. Robinson, "We Drink Only from the Master's Water: Maimonides and Maimonideanism in Southern France, 1200-1306," in *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. 40 (2007-2008), Epigonism and the Dynamic of Jewish Culture (2007-2008), 27-60; *ibid.*, "The Ibn Tibbon Family: A Dynasty of Translators in Medieval "Provence"," in *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. Jay M. Harris, 193-224.

<sup>93</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 537-8.

<sup>94</sup> For which see Tal, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it," 122-124. For a general discussion of *Al-kulliyāt*, see Shy, *Perush*, 10-11.

<sup>95</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 546.

manuscripts of this text, one of which she identified as an autograph,<sup>96</sup> and a Geniza fragment in Cambridge that contained a list of chapter headings (apparently incomplete).<sup>97</sup>

Tanḥum referred to *Al-kulliyāt* by this name, as well as *ṣadr al-kitāb*, *awwal al-kitāb* and *al-juz' al-awwal*.<sup>98</sup> Wechsler notes one instance in which Tanḥum explicitly equates *al-juz' al-awwal* with *ṣadr al-kitāb*.<sup>99</sup> We may add a similar instance concerning *ṣadr al-nebi'im* and *awwal al-kitāb* in the introduction to Tanḥum's commentary Qohelet (MS Pococke 320, 76a): "... as we explained in the introduction to the *Prophets* in the beginning of the book (*kamā bayyannā fī ṣadr al-nebi'im fī awwal al-kitāb*)." Here, it may be that Tanḥum is equating "the introduction to the *Prophets*" with "the beginning of the book." However, his precise formulation also allows for the possibility that he is referring to a specific section of *Al-kulliyāt*.<sup>100</sup>

*Al-kulliyāt* was accompanied by its own introduction, and consisted of at least thirty chapters, treating a wide range of linguistic and exegetical topics.<sup>101</sup> He claimed to have written the work for his descendants in order to prepare them for study of the Bible, but also hoped that it could assist others and minimize their need for many books on the Hebrew language and Bible.<sup>102</sup> He presented an overview of the principles of Hebrew grammar, which he entitled *Muqaddimāt laḡhawīyya ḍarūriyya wa-uṣūl mukhtaṣara min uṣūlihīm* (Necessary Linguistic Prolegomena and

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<sup>96</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 536-7. See also Shy, *Perush*, 7<sup>a</sup>-7<sup>b</sup>; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 6, fn.18.

<sup>97</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 538.

<sup>98</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 7<sup>a</sup>; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 14.

<sup>99</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 14 fn. 54: "...as I explained in the introduction of the book – by which I mean, in the first section (*alā mā bayyannā fī ṣadr al-kitāb a 'nī fī al-juz' al-awwal*)." (I have slightly altered Wechsler's formatting, and transliterated the Judeo-Arabic.)

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Shy ("AlKulliyat," 538), who implies that there was a separate introduction to the Prophets. As we have stated, Tanḥum's formulation here seems to frame it as a subsection of *Al-kulliyāt*. Cf. also Wechsler, *Strangers*, 7 fn. 23.

<sup>101</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 538.

<sup>102</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 537-8.

Some of Their Concise Principles).<sup>103</sup> He also provided a list of sources that he consulted or of which he was aware.<sup>104</sup>

Although Tanḥum referred to *Al-kulliyāt* extensively in his biblical commentaries and in *Al-murshid al-kāfī*, Shy suggests that he wrote the work after completing his other works:

It seems that Tanhum wrote *AlKulliyat* many years after having finished his commentary on the Bible and his lexicon to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*. He summed up in it some of the subjects which he mentioned in his works, and added the description of the Biblical language, its features and the exegetical and philosophical issues which he did not explain in his commentary.<sup>105</sup>

Shy was aware that Tanḥum discussed *Al-kulliyāt* in his biblical commentaries and in *Al-murshid*.<sup>106</sup> It thus seems that there are two ways of understanding her position on the late composition of *Al-kulliyāt*: Either she believed *Al-kulliyāt* not to have been composed entirely after the completion of his other works, but rather reworked; or she believed that he had long *planned* to compose the work, but waited until after the completion of his other works in order to gather data and actually execute his plan. While the former position is plausible (if not necessary), the latter is less likely in light of Wechsler's extensive work, in which he shows Tanhum to have been consistent in describing the composition of his commentaries following the order of the scriptural canon according to the Spanish and Oriental manuscript tradition.<sup>107</sup> *Al-kulliyāt* is mentioned regularly in Tanḥum's commentaries, and treated as a complete work several times in *Al-murshid*.<sup>108</sup> Thus, *Al-kulliyāt* was at the very least partially composed at the

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<sup>103</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 7.

<sup>104</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 537.

<sup>105</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 540.

<sup>106</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, 70-71.

<sup>107</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 8-14.

<sup>108</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 8.

time that Tanḥum was writing his commentaries, and was certainly complete by the time he authored his lexicon.

(b) *Commentary to the Prophets and Hagiographa*

*Kitāb al-tjāz wal-bayān* (or simply *Kitāb al-bayān*),<sup>109</sup> is a commentary on most or all of the Prophets and Hagiographa. Although Tanḥum translates isolated verses into Arabic as part of his commentary, the commentary in *Kitāb al-bayān* is generally not accompanied by a translation. This places him more in the Andalusian tradition than the Geonic and Karaite traditions of the West.<sup>110</sup>

Following the conventions established by Saadia and adopted throughout Judeo-Arabic literature in both the East and the West,<sup>111</sup> Tanḥum wrote introductions (*ṣudūr*) to several of his commentaries, but by no means all of them. He prefaced his commentaries to the Song of Songs and Qohelet with extensive introductions,<sup>112</sup> and provided a lengthy introductory discussion in the opening passage of his commentary to Jonah;<sup>113</sup> however, he did not follow this practice in the cases of Esther, Ruth, Lamentations, or most of the Minor Prophets. Nonetheless, the opening passages of some of his commentaries do occasionally have an introductory quality to them, insofar as they discuss the historical context of the work and its general concerns.<sup>114</sup> By calling it *ṣadr al-kitāb*,<sup>115</sup> Tanḥum also makes clear that *Al-kulliyāt* serves as a programmatic

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<sup>109</sup> Shy, *Perush*, ב.

<sup>110</sup> The commentary to Qohelet by Isaac Ibn Ghiyāth (1038-1089) of Lucena is a notable exception to this trend, being one of the few Spanish commentaries accompanied by a translation into Arabic. Ibn Ghiyāth's commentary is published in *Hamesh megillot: shir ha-shirim, rut, qohelet, ester, ekhah* (Ha-agudah le-hatzalat ginze teman: 1961), ed. Yosef Qafih, 155-296.

<sup>111</sup> See James T. Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes: The Book of the Soul of Man* (Mohr Siebeck: 2007), 28.

<sup>112</sup> These introductions are discussed at length in chapters 4 and 5, and are translated in Appendices B and C.

<sup>113</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, 108-113.

<sup>114</sup> For example, see Tanḥum's lengthy discussion of the historical context of the Book of Esther; in Wechsler, *Strangers*, 175-180, טז-טז.

<sup>115</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, ג; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 14.

introduction to the entire corpus of his commentaries to the Prophets and Hagiographa.<sup>116</sup>

However, Tanḥum's introductions are generally freer in their scope and structure than those that closely follow the conventions of the philosopher's prooemium, and he does not pose and respond to a fixed set of questions regarding the work in question.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to his introductions, Tanḥum included at least one largely free-standing original work in *Kitāb al-bayān*, which unfortunately appears not to be extant. It was entitled *Kitāb al-fīkr fī al-makhlūqāt wa-‘tibār ḥikmat al-ṣāni‘ fī al-mawjūdāt* (The Book of Reflection upon the Created Beings and Contemplation of the Wisdom of the Artisan in Existent Things), and Tanḥum states that he “composed it<sup>118</sup> at the end of the *Book of Job* as a conclusion to its concise meanings (*itmām li-ma‘ānīhi al-mukhtaṣara*).”<sup>119</sup> Here, he implies that the theme of the contemplation of the cosmos is treated briefly in the Book of Job, but not fully developed in a way that will help the devotee on his/her path to human perfection, as his treatise is intended to do.<sup>120</sup> The title echoes that of al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb al-ḥikma fī makhlūqāt allāh* (Book of Wisdom in God's Creations),<sup>121</sup> as well as strikingly recalling a passage in Ibn Rushd's *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl* (Decisive Treatise):

If the activity of philosophy is nothing more than reflection upon existing things and consideration of them (*al-naẓar fī al-mawjūdāt wa-‘tibārihā*) insofar as they are an indication of

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. Wechsler, *Strangers*, 7. On the unity of *Kitāb al-bayān* as a work, see Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 17.

<sup>117</sup> For the origins of the philosopher's prooemium and its transmission into Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, and Hebrew literature, see James T. Robinson, “Samuel Ibn Tibbon's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* and the Philosopher's Prooemium,” in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. III, eds. Isadore Twersky and Jay M. Harris (Harvard University Press: 2000), 83-5.

<sup>118</sup> Or: placed it, set it; Ar. *waḍa‘nāhu*.

<sup>119</sup> MS Pococke 320, 100a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 47. See also what appears to be a reference to this work in MS Pococke 320, 14a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 15.

<sup>120</sup> See also his first commentary to Song 5:16, where he seems to allude to this work (MS Pococke 320, 28a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 31).

<sup>121</sup> For an edition of this work, see *Al-ḥikma fī makhlūqāt allāh*, ed. Muḥammad Rashid Riḍa al-Qabbani (Dār iḥyā' al-‘ulūm: 1978).

the Artisan (*al-ṣāni*‘) – I mean insofar as they are artefacts (*maṣnū‘āt*), for existing things indicate the Artisan only through cognizance of the art in them, and the more complete cognizance of the art in them (*ṣinā‘atihā*) is, the more complete is cognizance of the Artisan – and if the Law has recommended and urged consideration of existing things (*i‘tibār al-mawjūdāt*), then it is evident that what this name indicates is either obligatory or recommended by the Law.<sup>122</sup>

Here, Ibn Rushd makes his famous claim that the Law (*al-shar‘*) requires one to engage in the study of philosophy, insofar as the latter is merely contemplation (*i‘tibār*) of the cosmos in order to come to know something of its Creator. The close parallel between Ibn Rushd and Maimonides in identifying contemplation (*i‘tibār*) as a religious obligation has been noted and studied.<sup>123</sup> The parallels between this passage and Tanḥum’s title are striking: Ibn Rushd refers to the Creator three times as the Artisan (*al-ṣāni*‘), employing the root ṣ-n-‘ five times in total; he uses the term *i‘tibār* twice in this passage, and several times in the following passages; and this term is used in specific connection with “existent things (*mawjūdāt*)”. That Tanḥum’s reference to “Contemplation of the Wisdom of the Artisan in Existent Things (*i‘tibār ḥikmat al-ṣāni‘ fī al-mawjūdāt*)” reflects his awareness of Ibn Rushd seems likely. Tanḥum thus represents another link in the chain of thinkers who took up this theme and developed it, including Pseudo-Jāḥiẓ, al-Ghazālī, Baḥya Ibn Paqūda, Ibn Rushd, and Maimonides.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> English translation and Arabic text in Averroës: *The Book of the Decisive Treatise Determining the Connection between the Law and Wisdom & Epistle Dedicatory*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Brigham Young University Press: 2008), 1-2.

<sup>123</sup> Warren Zev Harvey, “Averroës and Maimonides on the Obligation of Philosophic Contemplation (*i‘tibār*),” in *Tarbiẓ* 58 (1989), 75-83.

<sup>124</sup> For Pseudo-Jāḥiẓ as a common source for al-Ghazālī and Baḥya on the topic of *i‘tibār*, and for a study of the theme in Baḥya, see Diana Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Baḥya Ibn Paqūda’s Duties of the Heart* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2007), 117-145. For an English translation of Baḥya’s chapter on *i‘tibār*, see *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart: From the original Arabic version of Baḥya ben Joseph Ibn Pakuda’s Al-Hidāya ilā Farā‘id al-Qulūb*, trans. Menahem Mansoor (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization: 1973), 150-175. For the parallels between Maimonides and Ibn Rushd regarding this topic, see Harvey, “Averroës and Maimonides on the Obligation of Philosophic Contemplation”; Seeman, “Reasons for the Commandments.” For Ibn Masarra’s earlier and distinctly neoplatonizing treatment of this theme in his *Risālat al-*

Although the work has not yet been identified among extant manuscripts (along with the remainder of Tanḥum's commentary to Job), from both the context of the reference and the title of the work it may be stated that Tanḥum took some inspiration from Maimonides, who devoted considerable attention to the theme of contemplation (Arabic *i'tibār*, Hebrew *hitbonenut*). In his *Sefer ha-mitzvot* (Book of Commandments), Maimonides writes as follows:

The third *commandment*, is the ordinance concerning His love (*bi-maḥabbatihi*), may He be exalted, insofar as we consider and contemplate (*nata'ammalu wa-na'tabiru*) His laws and ordinances and works, so that we should apprehend Him, and delight to the utmost degree in apprehension of Him.<sup>125</sup>

Here, we encounter theme of contemplation (*i'tibār*) of the wisdom reflected in both the Torah and the cosmos as a means of attaining love of the Divine.<sup>126</sup> In another well-known passage from the *Mishneh torah*, Maimonides expands upon this theme:

This God, honoured and revered, it is our duty to love and fear; as it is said, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God* (Deut. 6:5), and as it is further said, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God* (Deut. 6:13).

And what is the way that will lead to the love of Him and the fear of Him? When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures, and from them obtains a glimpse of His wisdom which is incomparable and infinite, he will straightaway love Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and long with an exceeding longing to know His great Name; even as David said, *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God* (Ps. 42:3). And when he ponders these matters, he will recoil frightened, and realize that he is a small creature, lowly and obscure, endowed with

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*i'tibār*, see Michael Ebsstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-'Arabī, and the Ismā'īlī tradition* (Brill: 2014), 228-229.

<sup>125</sup> *Sefer ha-mitzvot le-rabbenu mosheh ben maymon*, ed. Joseph Qafih (Mossad Harav Kook: 1971), 59. For a discussion of this passage, see Don Seeman, "Reasons for the Commandments as Contemplative Practice in Maimonides," in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 103:3 (Summer 2013), 302-305.

<sup>126</sup> For the Torah and commandments as an object of such contemplation see Seeman, "Reasons for the Commandments." For the theme generally in Maimonides, and its parallels in Ibn Rushd, see Harvey, "Averroes and Maimonides on the Obligation of Philosophic Contemplation."

slight and slender intelligence, standing in the presence of Him who is perfect in knowledge. And so David said, *When I behold Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers... what is man that Thou art mindful of him?* (Ps. 8:4-5) In harmony with these sentiments, I shall explain some large and general aspects of the works of the Sovereign of the universe, that they may serve the intelligent individual as a door to the love of God, even as our Sages have remarked in connection with the theme of the love of God, “Observe the universe, and hence you will realize Him who spoke and the world came into being.”<sup>127</sup>

It would appear that Tanḥum picked up on the centrality of the theme of contemplation (*i'tibār*) in Maimonides and other writers – most notably Ibn Rushd – and saw fit to devote an entire monograph to the subject.

Echoing Poznanski's suggestion,<sup>128</sup> Toledano stated that Tanḥum may have never completed his commentary on the entire of the Prophets and Hagiographa, since no fragments of Tanḥum's commentaries to Ezra-Nehemiah or Chronicles have thus far been identified.<sup>129</sup> However, in addition to emphasizing Poznanski's explicit skepticism regarding this argument *a silentio*, Wechsler has argued against this conclusion in particular in the case of Chronicles.<sup>130</sup>

In his commentaries, Tanḥum generally favored the grammatical, lexical, and literary approach of the Spanish “literalists” (*pashṭanim*).<sup>131</sup> Indeed, Wechsler emphasizes Tanḥum's place as “the

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<sup>127</sup> *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:1-2. Translation from Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides*, 215-216.

<sup>128</sup> Poznanski, “Tanhoum,” 130.

<sup>129</sup> Toledano, “R. tanḥum ha-yerushalmi,” 245.

<sup>130</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 6 fn.15. Since Wechsler has proven that Tanḥum composed his commentaries following the order of the Spanish and Oriental MS tradition (*Strangers*, 8-14), it follows that although none of his commentary to Chronicles has thus far been identified, he did indeed complete it since Chronicles appears at the beginning of Hagiographa in that tradition (e.g., in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices).

<sup>131</sup> For a broad treatment of the most prominent of the Spanish *pashṭanim*, see Uriel Simon, “Spanish School of Biblical Interpretation,” in *Moreshet Sepharad - The Sephardi Heritage* (Magnes: 1992), vol. 1, 115-136. See also Aharon Maman, “The Linguistic School: Judah Ḥayyūj, Jonah ibn Janāḥ, Moses ibn Chiquitilla and Judah ibn Bal'am,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (I/2)* (Vanderhoeck and Ruprecht: 2000), 261-281.

last known exegete (*mufassir*) of the “rationalistic” school who wrote in (Judaeo-) Arabic.”<sup>132</sup> In interpreting the literal stratum of the biblical text, he was often daring enough to reject earlier interpretations – whether they were medieval or rabbinic in origin – often in biting terms.<sup>133</sup> Tanḥum also paid particular attention to *realia* in his attempt to clarify the meanings of biblical passages.<sup>134</sup>

## 2. *Al-murshid al-kāfi*

*Al-murshid al-kāfi* has been edited and translated into Hebrew by Hadassa Shy.<sup>135</sup> Unlike *Kitāb al-ijāz wa-l-bayān*, *Al-murshid al-kāfi* was studied and transmitted until the twentieth century among the Jewish communities of the Yemen.<sup>136</sup> Due to constant editing, copying and transmission, it exists in multiple recensions.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 14-15.

<sup>133</sup> See *ibid.*, 26-27. A particularly biting criticism of an interpretation offered in the work *Rasā'il al-rifāq* (attributed to Samuel Ha-Nagid) is presented in Tanḥum's commentary to Song: “The author of *Rasā'il al-rifāq* derived *sahar* here from the statement of the ancients, *a barn or a pen* (Heb. *der/dir o sahar*; cf. Mishnah 'Erubin 2:3, 4:1 – note *sahar/sahar* variant), [referring] to a place for locking up cattle and sheep. But this is the ugliest simile possible, comparing a girl's navel to a cattle pen! For *R. Solomon the Young* b. Gabirol was astounded at how *Solomon* in his wisdom could compare the beloved's teeth to a flock of sheep, by which I mean his statement, *Your teeth are like a flock of ewes* (Song 4:2). He said, *I am astounded at Solomon, who in his wisdom likens pearls to flocks!* How much more so [would he be astounded], were he to hear a comparison between the navel and a [cattle] pen.” (MS Pococke 61b-62a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 73.) For Ibn Gabirol's verse, see *Shire ha-hol li-shelomoh ibn gabriol*, eds. Ḥayyim Brodi and Ḥayyim Shirman (Schocken: 1974), 132. The verse is also cited by Ibn 'Aqnīn in his commentary to Song, for which see *Inkishāf al-asrār wa-zuhūr al-anwār/hitgallut ha-sodot ve-hofa'at ha-me'orot/Divulgatio Mysteriorum Luminumque Apparentia*, ed. A. S. Halkin (Meqitz Nirdamim: 1964), 324.

For the attribution of *Rasā'il al-rifāq* to Samuel Ha-Nagid, see Arie Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry* (Brill: 1994), 54; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 47.

<sup>134</sup> See Tal, “Parshanuto ha-madda'it,” 125-134; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 38-40.

<sup>135</sup> Shy, *Al-murshid al-kāfi [ha-madrikh ha-maspiq]: Milono shel Tanḥum ha-yerushalmi le-mishneh torah la-rambam*, (Israeli National Academy of the Sciences/Keter: 2005).

<sup>136</sup> Shy, *Perush*, נ.

<sup>137</sup> Shy, “Beḥinat ha-nosaḥ ha-meqori shel al-murshid al-kāfi le-r. tanḥum br. yosef ha-yerushalmi,” in *Leshonenu* 41 (1977), 29-40.

Despite the fact that *Al-murshid al-kāfī* is generally described as a lexicon to the *Mishneh torah*, the scope of this work is broader than Maimonides' code, as Tanḥum explicitly states.<sup>138</sup> Tanḥum makes it clear that his inclusion of mishnaic terms *not* attested in the *Mishneh torah* is driven by the desire to enable proper study of Maimonides' work, since its language is primarily based on that of the Mishnah. However, he adds that it is also motivated by the desire to instruct the reader in the Hebrew language, in which the Mishnah is written.<sup>139</sup>

Tanḥum states his reasons for composing *Al-murshid* in the introduction to the work. According to his own account there, his primary intention was to equip readers who already possessed a knowledge of Arabic and some knowledge of Hebrew with the tools to decipher the terminology of rabbinic texts, i.e., the Oral Law. According to Tanḥum (following Maimonides and the classical rabbinic tradition), every Jew must study the Oral Law after the Written Law.<sup>140</sup> However, the classical sources of the Oral Law have become foreign and inaccessible in their language and style to most Jews.<sup>141</sup> Even the one high quality reference tool that might facilitate effective talmudic study – Nathan b. Jehiel of Rome's *'Arukh*<sup>142</sup> – is such a cumbersome work that it is difficult to find, and if found it is almost as difficult to understand for Tanḥum's contemporaries as the Talmud itself.<sup>143</sup> According to Tanḥum, Maimonides largely remedied this situation by composing his legal code, the *Mishneh torah*, which he (and Tanḥum) regarded as a

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. Brisman, *History and Guide to Judaic Dictionaries*, 162; Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, "The Science of Language among Medieval Jews," in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, ed. Gad Freudenthal (Cambridge University Press: 2011), 390.

<sup>139</sup> See Shy, *Murshid*, 8-9.

<sup>140</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 4-5. For Maimonides' prescription of the study of the Oral Law as a legal obligation, see the first chapter of "Laws of Torah Study" in the *Mishneh Torah*.

<sup>141</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 4-5.

<sup>142</sup> The *'Arukh* is an extensive dictionary of rabbinic language, completed in 1101 by the Roman-Jewish scholar Nathan b. Jehiel (d.c.1110). A critical edition was published by Alexander Kohut, as *Sefer 'arukh ha-shalem/ Aruch Completum* (Vienna: 1878-1892). For Nathan b. Jehiel and his work in its literary and historical context, see Joanna Weinberg, "Midrash in a Lexical Key: Nathan ben Yehiel's *Arukh*," in *Midrash Unbound*, eds. Michael Fishbane and Joanna Weinberg (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization: 2013), 213-231.

<sup>143</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 4-5.

complete summary of the Oral Law.<sup>144</sup> However, even the clear mishnaic Hebrew of the *Mishneh Torah* is not readily accessible to most readers, particularly as it is full of unfamiliar loanwords (from Greek, Latin, Persian, etc.).<sup>145</sup> Therefore, the reader must have recourse to reference tools that will explain unfamiliar terminology. This is the purpose of Tanḥum's lexicon.<sup>146</sup>

Beyond its enormous scope and its rarity, Tanḥum identifies three further shortcomings of the *'Arukh* that he attempts to remedy in *Al-murshid al-kāfī*:

(1) It is written in Hebrew, and assumes a thorough knowledge of Hebrew that the reader may not possess. Indeed, the reader may find that he must “seek an explanation for the explanation.” In contrast, *Al-murshid al-kāfī* is written in Arabic, which is more readily understood by Jews in Tanḥum's cultural milieu.<sup>147</sup>

(2) Numerous difficult terms are omitted from the work, either because the author believed them to be readily understood, or through simple oversight. Tanḥum attempts to fill the gaps left by Nathan b. Jehiel.

(3) The format of the *'Arukh* is based on a linguistic system that posits the existence of biliteral (or even uniliteral) verbal roots in cases of weak or assimilated radicals.<sup>148</sup> This approach reflects the linguistic theory that prevailed before Judah Ḥayyūj (fl. 10<sup>th</sup> century) discovered the trilateral root, and had become largely obsolete by Tanḥum's

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<sup>144</sup> See Maimonides' introduction to the *Mishneh torah* (cited in Isadore Twersky, *Introduction*, 30); Shy, *Murshid*, 4-7.

<sup>145</sup> On Maimonides' decision to write the *Mishneh torah* in Hebrew, see Twersky, *Introduction*, 26, 325, 329-333. For a striking example of an educated Jew who found the *Mishneh torah* inaccessible due to his lack of fluency in mishnaic Hebrew, see Maimonides' Arabic correspondence with Joseph b. Abī al-Khayr Ibn Jābir, accompanied by a Hebrew translation and introduction, in *The Letters and Essays of Moses Maimonides*, vol. 1, ed. Itzhak Shailat (Shailat Publishing: 2005), 402-418.

<sup>146</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 8-9.

<sup>147</sup> Tanḥum was not alone in sensing that the language of the *'Arukh* posed insurmountable challenges for many contemporary readers. Compare Shraga Abramson's study of a medieval dictionary that integrated considerable segments of the *'Arukh* in Arabic translation, apparently to increase accessibility – see Shraga Abramson, “R. Nathan b. Yehi'el's *He-'Arukh* in Arabic (from a Trilingual Dictionary),” in *Lěšonénu* 58:1 (1993), 59-86.

<sup>148</sup> Weinberg, “Midrash in a Lexical Key,” 215.

time.<sup>149</sup> More importantly, Nathan b. Jehiel's use of this system results in a highly disorderly editorial method and confuses the reader familiar only with the post- Ḥayyūjan grammatical system.<sup>150</sup>

Tanḥum's attitude towards the *'Arukh* is complex. On the one hand, he admires it for its scope and erudition. Indeed, he considers it to be the most useful reference tool for the study of the Oral Torah,<sup>151</sup> and he explicitly states that it served as his primary source in composing *Al-murshid al-kāfī*.<sup>152</sup> On the other hand, Tanḥum's very composition of his lexicon represents a critique of the *'Arukh* and its utility.

Tanḥum's relationship with the *'Arukh* must be viewed against the backdrop of the encounter between the Jewish cultures of the Islamic world and Western Christendom in Egypt and the Levant during his period. Apart from the fact that he composed his work in Arabic, by (a) asserting the primacy of the Spanish and North-African grammatical and philological

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<sup>149</sup> Although it postdates the work of Judah Ḥayyūj (10<sup>th</sup> century) and Jonah (Abū al-Walīd Marwān) Ibn Janāḥ (11<sup>th</sup> century), the *'Arukh* reflects the earlier grammatical method attested in Franco-German and geonic sources. For Saadia Gaon's grammatical system, see Roger Jay Kaplan, "More on Sa'adia Gaon's Perspective of the Grammatical Root," in *Hebrew Studies* 36 (1995), 25-33. For the biliteral verbal root in Franco-German Hebrew linguistics prior to the introduction of the Ḥayyūjan system, see Mayer I. Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms* (Jewish Publication Society: 2007), 48. For the biliteral root in pre-Ḥayyūjan Spanish Hebrew grammar, see Angel Sáenz-Badillos, "Early Hebraists in Spain: Menaḥem ben Saruq and Dunash ben Labraṭ," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (I/2)*, 105. Apart from those who remained unaware of the Ḥayyūj's method, some resisted its introduction due to their fidelity to earlier traditions, such as the Karaite Abū al-Faraj Hārūn (11<sup>th</sup> century); see Aharon Maman, "The Linguistic School: Judah Ḥayyūj, Jonah ibn Janāḥ, Moses ibn Chiquitilla and Judah ibn Bal'am," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (I/2)*, 267. An account of Ḥayyūj's innovations and influence may be found in Roger Jay Kaplan, "Derivational Processes: Underlying Forms and Analogies in Ḥayyūj's Linguistic Works," in *AJS Review* 20/2 (1995), 313-332. For Ḥayyūj's work in the context of the major linguistic developments in North Africa and Spain, see Aharon Maman, "The Linguistic School," 261-281.

<sup>150</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 8-9. Precisely this problem has resulted in the neglect of the *'Arukh* as a reference tool today, even after the publication Kohut's edition (which utilized recently discovered works, variants from MSS, and R. N. Rabbinowicz's *Diqduqe soferim* [1868-1897], but retained the old format). See Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 15.

<sup>151</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 4-5.

<sup>152</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 8-9.

tradition,<sup>153</sup> and (b) affirming the supreme authority of Maimonides' *Mishneh torah*, Tanḥum clearly aligned himself with the Andalusian-Maimonidean tradition. But in setting his own work so clearly against the backdrop of the *'Arukh*, and by openly declaring his dependence upon that work, he also self-consciously engaged with the Jewish traditions of Western Christendom.<sup>154</sup> The *'Arukh* not only drew upon geonic sources, but also native Italian and Franco-German traditions of scholarship, including the talmudic commentaries of the academies of Worms and Mainz.<sup>155</sup>

Beyond his reliance upon the *'Arukh*, Tanḥum asserts that he frequently consulted Maimonides' commentary to the Mishnah, geonic works, the works of other exegetes (*shāriḥīn*), and the Aramaic Targum.<sup>156</sup>

## Sources

Throughout his works, Tanḥum draws on the works of a broad range of exegetes, grammarians,<sup>157</sup> lexicographers,<sup>158</sup> and translations,<sup>159</sup> in addition to classical rabbinic literature.<sup>160</sup> However, he relatively rarely cites them by name.<sup>161</sup> Wechsler lists the following authors referred to in *Kitāb al-bayān*: Saadia Gaon, Sherira Gaon, Aaron (Khalaf) ben Joseph Ibn

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<sup>153</sup> For the emergence of Spanish grammatical and philological approaches, see Shelomo Morag, "The Jewish Communities of Spain and the Living Traditions of the Hebrew Language," in *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Heritage* (Magnes: 1992), vol. 1, ed. Haim Beinart, 103-114; Aharon Maman, "The Linguistic School."

<sup>154</sup> For such an approach, which views the Judeo-Arabic literary productions of Moses Ibn Ezra (d.c.1140) and Judah al-Ḥarīzī (d.1225) through the prism of the encounter with the Jewish cultures of Western Christendom, see Rina Drory, "Cultural Contacts and Where to Find Them: On Arabic Literary Models in Medieval Jewish Culture," in *Poetics Today* 14/2 (1993), 277-302.

<sup>155</sup> See Aryeh Grabois, "Political and Cultural Changes from the Fifth to the Eleventh Century," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (1/2)*, 53-54; Weinberg, "Midrash in a Lexical Key," 216-217; Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary*, 47.

<sup>156</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 8-9.

<sup>157</sup> See Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 45-46.

<sup>158</sup> See Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 46-47.

<sup>159</sup> For Tanḥum's use of written translations and oral traditions of translation, see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 43-44.

<sup>160</sup> For Tanḥum's sources and his use thereof, see Shy, *Perush*, טז-כז.

<sup>161</sup> Poznanski, *Tanhoum*, 140.

Sarjada, Samuel ben Ḥofni, Hai Gaon, Isaac al-Fāsī, Dunash ben Tamim, Ḥefetz ben Yatzliaḥ, Dunash ben Labrat, Judah Ḥayyūj, Jonah Ibn Janāḥ, Samuel Ha-Nagid (ibn Naghrela), Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Moses Ibn Chiquitilla, Judah Ibn Bal‘am, Isaac Ibn Barūn, Moses Ibn Ezra, Judah Ha-Levi, Abraham Ibn Ezra, Jacob ben Eliezer, Moses Maimonides, and Joseph Ibn ‘Aqnīn. In addition, he refers to the Karaite authors Sahl ben Matzliaḥ, Yefet ben Eli, Benjamin al-Nahāwandī, Daniel al-Qūmisī, and David ben Boaz Ha-Nasi.<sup>162</sup> In his commentary to Esther, Tanḥum also makes use of Josippon (*Kitāb yosef ben guryon*).<sup>163</sup>

Of particular note is Tanḥum’s own declaration that he relied chiefly on Ibn Janāḥ in philological and grammatical matters, and Maimonides in philosophical matters.<sup>164</sup> As noted above, Tanḥum’s openly states his dependence upon Nathan b. Jehiel of Rome’s *‘Arukh* in composing *Al-murshid al-kāfi*. Tanḥum was also familiar with the dictionary composed by Jacob b. Eleazar of Toledo (d. mid-13<sup>th</sup> century), *Kitāb al-kāmil*.<sup>165</sup> In addition, there is some evidence that Tanḥum employed David Qimḥi’s lexicon, *Sefer ha-shorashim*.<sup>166</sup>

The sources for Tanḥum’s broader philosophical and hermeneutical positions shall be a central subject of the subsequent chapters. At the outset, however, it may be confidently stated that he relied heavily upon Ibn Sīnā,<sup>167</sup> and that he was acquainted with contemporary Sufi discourse.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 55.

<sup>163</sup> See Wechsler, *Strangers*, 55, 177, 178.

<sup>164</sup> Shy, *AlKulliyat*, 537-8.

<sup>165</sup> Neḥemya Allony, *Ya‘aqov ben El‘azar: Kitāb al-Kāmil* (Central Press, Jerusalem: 1977), 113-114.

<sup>166</sup> Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 46-47. See also Wechsler, *Strangers*, 55 fn.106; Avi Tal, *Rabbi Tanḥum Ha-yerūšalmī’s Exegetic Methods in his Commentary on the Books of II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel according to Manuscripts from the Bodleian Library and St. Petersburg Library* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Bar-Ilan University: 2007), 99.

<sup>167</sup> For Tanḥum’s familiarity with Ibn Sīnā’s works, see Shy, “*AlKulliyat*,” 538. Tanḥum’s words in the name of an anonymous scholar in MS Pococke 320, 7a, and in his introduction to *Al-murshid al-kāfi* (Shy, *Murshid*, 2-3), are a citation from Ibn Sīnā’s *Risālat al-tayr*. For the passage, passage see Heath, “Disorientation and Reorientation,” 67; Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 191-192. For the passage in Arabic, see M. A. F. Mehren, *Traités Mystiques d’Aboū Alī al-Hosain b. Abdallāh b. Sīnā ou d’Avicenne* (E. J. Brill: 1889-1899), fasc. 2, 47.

<sup>168</sup> Paul Fenton, “Judaean-Arabic Mystical Writings of the XIIIth-XIVth Centuries,” in *Judaean-Arabic Studies: Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Society for Judaean-Arabic Studies*, ed. Norman Golb (Amsterdam,

## Conclusions

Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi lived in the wake of tremendous social, cultural, and political upheavals. The period of his lifetime was characterized by uncertainty. It witnessed continuing shifts in Jewish population centers and encounters between their distinct cultural and intellectual traditions. In Mamluk Egypt, Sufi institutions grew and experienced increased prestige. The Jewish communities of Egypt and the Levant engaged with Sufi discourse, even as their religious and intellectual life was shaped by the legal works of Maimonides and the Aristotelian philosophy that he espoused. Although we know little about the impact of the political and military events of his time upon Tanḥum's own life – if only due to the dearth of biographical information – we can hear the echoes of these developments more clearly when it comes to his literary production.

Tanḥum's commentaries demonstrate a broad familiarity with rabbinic literature and a truly staggering command of the biblical corpus. His knowledge of Hebrew linguistics extended beyond the Spanish and North African tradition and into geonic sources and those of Western Christendom, at the very least via his familiarity with the *'Arukh*. In addition, his location in Egypt or the Levant would have afforded him ample opportunity to encounter the living heirs of diverse Jewish intellectual traditions, many of whom had settled in Palestine and Egypt during this period. Still, Tanḥum aligned himself quite clearly with the Andalusian intellectual tradition. Judah Ḥayyūj and Jonah Ibn Janāḥ were his guiding lights in matters of Hebrew linguistics, Ibn Ezra a major source of biblical exegesis, and Maimonides represented the pinnacle of rabbinic

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1997), 90-91 and fn.15; and Arye Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 80-100. For an overview of Sufi terminology employed by Tanḥum in his commentary to the Song of Songs, see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 78-100.

scholarship and philosophical perfection. Finally, Tanḥum was familiar with Sufi discourse and practices, which had by that period achieved wide circulation among rabbinic Jews in Egypt.

## Chapter 2: Tanḥum's Biblical Exegesis in Context

### Background

Living in the wake of the great intellectual movements of Judeo-Arabic thought and exegesis, Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi was in a position to draw richly on the full breadth of this literary tradition. In his *peshaṭ* exegesis, Tanḥum shares strong affinities with the Spanish tradition of biblical interpretation.<sup>1</sup> He openly declares his general dependence upon Jonah Ibn Janāḥ,<sup>2</sup> and frequently utilizes the commentaries of Ibn Bal'am and Ibn Ezra.<sup>3</sup> He acknowledges his debt to Judah Ḥayyūj, upon whose works he drew for guidance in grammatical matters.<sup>4</sup> In contrast with Saadia Gaon and his Karaite contemporaries in the East, Tanḥum provides no systematic Arabic

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wechsler, *Strangers*, 21-22. For Tanḥum's use of Andalusian rhetorical terminology in his biblical commentaries, see Paul Fenton, "The Post-Maimonidean Schools of Exegesis in the East: Abraham Maimonides, the Pietists, Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi and the Yemenite School," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (I/2)*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Vanderhoeck and Ruprecht: 2000), 452.

<sup>2</sup> See Hadassa Shy, "Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva'ah le-millono le-mishneh torah 'al pi daf she-nimtza mi-perusho li-tehillim (katub bi-khetab yado)," in *Hebrew Language Studies Presented to Professor Zeev Ben-Ḥayyim*, eds. M. Bar-Asher, A. Dotan, G. B. Sarfatti, and D. Téné (The Magnes Press: 1983), 533; Shy, "AlKulliyat," 537-8; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 45-46.

<sup>3</sup> For editions of Ibn Bal'am's commentaries, see Poznanski, "The Arabic Commentary of ibn Bal'am"; Ma'aravi Perez, *R. Judah Ibn Bal'am's Commentary on Ezekiel* (Bar-Ilan University Press: 2000); and the editions listed in *ibid.*, 163. Although Tanḥum drew on a very wide range of sources, the frequency of his reliance on these specific exegetes may be gauged to an extent by consulting Shy's notes to the commentary to Jonah in *Perush*, 108-129. This also emerges from our study of Tanḥum's exoteric commentary to Jonah in chapter 3 below. For an extensive study of Abraham Ibn Ezra's exegetical methodology, see Uriel Simon, *Ozen millin tibḥan: meḥqarim be-darko ha-parshanut shel r' abraham ibn 'ezra* (Bar-Ilan University Press: 2013). For these exegetes in general and their place in the Andalusian tradition, see also Uriel Simon, "Abraham Ibn Ezra," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (I/2)* (Vanderhoeck and Ruprecht: 2000), 377-387; Maman, "The Linguistic School," in *idem.*, 267-275, 277-281. It should be noted that even Abraham Ibn Ezra's work does not fit unproblematically into the Spanish tradition, as he is the first Andalusian exegete to seriously engage with the Franco-German tradition (and in turn to shape it); see Nahum M. Sarna, "Ibn Ezra as an Exegete," in *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra: Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth Century Jewish Polymath* (Harvard University Press: 1993), 2, 6-7, 16. (Similarly, the Arabic works of Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah al-Ḥarīzī have been interpreted by Rina Drory in the light of their encounter with dominant non-Arabic cultures; see Drory, "Literary Contacts and Where to Find Them: On Arabic Literary Models in Medieval Jewish Culture," in *Poetics Today* 14:2 (1993), 277-302.)

<sup>4</sup> Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 45; and the list of references in Wechsler, *Strangers*, Index 4, 414. In *Al-kulliyāt*, he declares that "this is what I can collect of the principles [of verbal roots] with two like [radicals] from the words of Abū Zakariyya [Ḥayyūj] and Abū al-Walīd [Ibn Janāḥ]" (Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 45 and fn. 5).

translation of the biblical verses to accompany his commentary.<sup>5</sup> Once again, this is consistent with general Andalusian practice.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Poznanski identified Tanḥum as an important source of information regarding the interpretations of Moses Ibn Chiquitilla (11<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>7</sup> a major Andalusian *peshat* commentator whose works have largely been lost.<sup>8</sup>

From the Eastern tradition, Tanḥum often cites Saadia's interpretations,<sup>9</sup> and he was familiar with the interpretations of Samuel b. Ḥofni Gaon.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Saadia is accorded the title *al-mufassir* without further qualification.<sup>11</sup> Despite his frequent reliance on Saadia, Qafih asserted that one of Tanḥum's motivations in composing his commentary to Daniel was the refutation of

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<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the emergence and development of the Karaite and geonic traditions of Bible translation, see Meira Polliack, *The Karaite Tradition of Arabic Bible Translation* (Brill: 1997), xv-xvii, 10-17; James T. Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy: The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Salmon ben Yeroham on Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)* (Brill: 2012), 36-38. See also Richard C. Steiner, *A Biblical Translation in the Making: The Evolution and Impact of Saadia Gaon's Tafsir* (Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies/Harvard University Press: 2010). The Iraqi philosopher and convert to Islam Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. after 1164) also produced an Arabic translation of the Hebrew verses to accompany his commentary to Qohelet; see Shlomo Pines, "Le-ḥeqer perusho shel abū al-barakāt al-baghdādī 'al sefer qohelet: arba'ah ṭekstīm," in Pines, *Studies in the History of Jewish Philosophy and the Transmission of Texts and Ideas* (The Bialik Institute: 1977), 68-83.

<sup>6</sup> I thank Professor James T. Robinson for drawing my attention to this point. An exception to the Spanish tendency to omit the Arabic translation may be found in Isaac Ibn Ghiyāth's commentary to Ecclesiastes, published in Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 155-296. On Qafih's misattribution of the commentary to Saadia Gaon, see Sarah Katz, *Rabbi yitzḥaq ibn giyat: monografiyah* (Reuven Mas: 1994), 122.

<sup>7</sup> See Samuel Poznanski, "Tanhoum Yerouschalmi et son commentaire sur le livre de Jonas (suite et fin) [Appendice: Tanhoum Yerouschalmi et Moïse Ibn Chiquitilla]," in *Revue des Études Juives*, 41 (1900), 45-61.

<sup>8</sup> See Maman, "The Linguistic School," 275-277. Ibn Chiquitilla's commentaries are known to us primarily from citations, but fragments of his commentary to Psalms have been identified and published; see Ma'ravi Perez, "Qeṭa' genizah mi-perush r. mosheh ibn giqitillah li-tehillim," in *Sinai* 106 (1990), 12-22; *idem*, "Qeṭa' aḥer mi-perush r. mosheh ibn giqitillah li-tehillim," in *Sinai*, 108 (1991), 32-44; José Martínez Delgado, "El Comentario a Salmos de Mošeh Ibn Chiquitilla [The Commentary on Psalms by Mošeh Ibn Chiquitilla]," in *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*, 52 (2003), 201-241. His commentaries were held in high regard by Maimonides (as were those of Ibn Bal'am; see Fred Rosner, *Moses Maimonides' Treatise on Resurrection* (KTAV: 1982), 37; Joshua Finkel, *Maimonides' Treatise on Resurrection (Maqāla fī Teḥiyat ha-Metim)* (American Academy for Jewish Research: 1939), נב-נכ).

<sup>9</sup> See Wechsler, *Strangers*, 26-27, 55-62; Keren Anfang, *Parshanuto shel r' tanḥum ha-yerushalmi le-sefer daniyyel* (unpublished MA thesis; Bar-Ilan: 2004-2005), 60-75.

<sup>10</sup> See Avi Tal, *Rabbi Tanḥum Ha-yerūšalmī's Exegetic Methods in his Commentary on the Books of II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel according to Manuscripts from the Bodleian Library and St. Petersburg Library* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Bar-Ilan University: 2007), 106.

<sup>11</sup> See Shy, "Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva'ah le-millono le-mishneh torah," 534; and Tanḥum's commentary to Esther 3:2 (English translation in Wechsler, *Strangers*, 233; Arabic in *ibid.*, נב). See also *ibid.*, 26. This title may be derived from Saadia's widely distributed Judeo-Arabic translation of the Hebrew Bible, referred to as *al-tafsir*. For this work, its authorship, methods, and influence, see Steiner, *A Biblical Translation in the Making*.

Saadia's interpretations.<sup>12</sup> Against Qafih, Keren Anfang pointed out that in that commentary Tanḥum either endorsed Saadia's positions or offered them as a viable alternative in thirteen places, and rejected them in sixteen. It thus appears that he adopted neither a polemical nor a defensive stance regarding Saadia.<sup>13</sup>

According to Hadassa Shy, Tanḥum did not consult Karaite works directly, though he was aware of them via rabbinic sources.<sup>14</sup> However, Wechsler points to compelling evidence that Tanḥum relied on Yefet b. Eli's commentaries for his discussions of the biblical "narrator" or "editor" (*mudawwin*),<sup>15</sup> and that his commentary to Ruth 1:17 was *directly* dependent upon Yefet's treatment of the same verse.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Scope of Tanḥum's Concerns in *Peshaṭ* Exegesis**

As discussed in the first chapter of the present work, *Kitāb al-bayān* is eclectic in nature, functioning as a sort of compendium of grammar, exegesis, and even basic philosophy. This is consistent with Tanḥum's declared intention to save readers the burden of consulting "many books."<sup>17</sup> According to Tanḥum, the study of Scripture should ideally constitute the basis for a broad education, including providing the fundamental elements of philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Qafih, *Daniel*, דן-א'.

<sup>13</sup> Anfang, *Parshanuto shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi le-sefer daniyyel*, 75.

<sup>14</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 537.

<sup>15</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 40-53.

<sup>16</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 42. Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 51-53.

<sup>17</sup> Shy, "AlKulliyat," 537-8.

<sup>18</sup> See Tanḥum's statement in the introduction to his commentary to Qohelet that Scripture teaches theoretical philosophy "according to the method of tradition and in the way of exhortation (*'alā ṭarīq al-akhbār wa-'alā sabīl al-tanbīh*)."<sup>18</sup> (MS Pococke 320, 74a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 25.) In the same work, he states that Solomon composed Proverbs as the first installment in his philosophical trilogy, as it treats practical philosophy, and Qohelet afterwards, as it teaches "many principles of theoretical wisdom (*uṣūl kathīra min al-ḥikma al-nazariyya*)" and concludes with a treatment of asceticism (*zuhd*). (MS Pococke 320, 75a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 26.) This reflects the order of Tanḥum's own classification of the sciences, which form the basis of a full philosophical education, as discussed below in chapter 4, pp.190-230.

Tanḥum's primary foci in explaining the biblical text are linguistic and grammatical,<sup>19</sup> and more specifically lexical,<sup>20</sup> morphological,<sup>21</sup> and syntactic.<sup>22</sup> He also demonstrates an interest in historiographical matters<sup>23</sup> and material *realia*,<sup>24</sup> and a sensitivity to narrative context and coherence.<sup>25</sup> Tanḥum outlined his philological approach in *Al-kulliyāt*:

It has already been stated in the previous chapter that terms should not be explained via the similarity of letters or conjugation, but rather through knowledge of the root of that word (*bi-ma'rifat aṣl tilka al-kalima*), knowledge of the purpose (*bi-ma'rifat al-gharaḍ*) that it generally serves, knowledge of the context (*al-ma'nā*) with which it is associated – before it and after it – and knowledge of the conventions of the grammarians concerning the abridgement or omission of a letter, or the omission of a word by means of which the context of the statement might be understood, as has been [explained] in a general sense above.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For Tanḥum's methods of grammatical clarification in his commentaries to Ruth and Esther, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 94-104. For his interest in phonetics, see Tal, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it," 124-125.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of Tanḥum's methods of lexical clarification in his commentaries to Ruth and Esther, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 82-93.

<sup>21</sup> See Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 45-53. Here Tal shows Tanḥum to follow most closely in the footsteps of Ibn Janāḥ (as opposed to David Qimḥi) in matters of morphology; see especially *ibid.*, 53. For the question of Tanḥum's familiarity with Qimḥi's works, see p.40 above.

<sup>22</sup> For Tanḥum's interest in syntactic matters in *Al-kulliyāt* and his commentaries to 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel – including transient and intransient verbs, ellipsis, and metathesis of words – see Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 64-92.

<sup>23</sup> For the *zāhir/peshaṭ* as the "historically" or "tangibly" accurate factual interpretation, and the *bāṭin* as the "theologically-philosophically" correct interpretation, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 33. See also the opening passages of Tanḥum's commentary to Esther for an example of his historically conscious method (*ibid.*, 175-185). It appears that Tanḥum refrains from exploring the historical context of Jonah in great depth due to his discomfort with the narrative, although he does draw on such an argument in order to emphasize the fragmentary nature of the book, as noted above.

<sup>24</sup> See Tal, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it," 125-134; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 39-40. For a discussion of Tanḥum's treatment of botanical *realia*, as well as geographical material, see Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 70-77.

<sup>25</sup> Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 122-127. Note Tanḥum's discussion of the identification of animals based on context in *idem.*, "Parshanuto ha-madda'it," 127; and his contextual-psychological explanation of Haman's and Esther's behavior in his commentary to Esther 6:6 and 5:10, in Wechsler, *Strangers*, 38-39 (for commentary see *ibid.*, 272; נב). Wechsler (*Strangers*, 38-40) discusses Tanḥum's concern with the relevant "aspects of culture, history, geography, and psychology" that he considered to be "interpretively significant" under the shared rubric of "narrative *realia*".

<sup>26</sup> Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 122.

He thus explicitly rejects associative interpretation, and asserts the central importance of (1) establishing the etymological derivation of a term, (2) knowing its common uses, and (3) determining its precise application within a given literary context.<sup>27</sup> From this passage it is clear that Tanḥum developed a self-conscious and systematic philological method. The extent to which he applied this method within his commentary will become clearer in the course of our study.

Arye Zoref has questioned Tanḥum's originality as an exegete,<sup>28</sup> although he acknowledges the latter's originality in the allegorical stratum of his commentaries.<sup>29</sup> Putting aside the problematic premises upon which a judgment of unoriginality might be based,<sup>30</sup> it should be pointed out that even in cases in which Tanḥum clearly incorporates the work of his predecessors, he often significantly expands and reformulates the material that he cites. Tanḥum's use of earlier material will be explored in depth in our study of selections from his commentary to Jonah, but a simple example of his conscious and deliberate integration of earlier material is not out of place here.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Wechsler, *Strangers*, 84-93

<sup>28</sup> Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 8; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 5, 47, 53-54, 60.

<sup>29</sup> Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 60.

<sup>30</sup> Concerning the identification of the sources upon which Giovanni Pico della Mirandola relied, Paul Oskar Kristeller wrote: "The entire problem of Pico's sources is also linked in an obvious manner with the question of his originality. [...] [T]he dependence on sources does not exclude the originality of a thinker, and a precise and reliable determination of his sources will even help us to gain a clearer understanding of his originality." ("Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and His Sources," in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Edizioni di Storia e di Letteratura: 1993), vol. 3, 231.) In addition, he noted that "we cannot even talk of Pico's sources without touching upon the range of his interests and the content of his main ideas." (*ibid.*, 228.) I maintain that the same observations apply to Tanḥum – namely, that reliance on earlier sources does not preclude originality; and that by virtue of the breadth of his scholarship and interests Tanḥum warrants our attention. Furthermore, Tanḥum's work can provide us with an insight into his intellectual world, in a period and region that remains somewhat marginal in contemporary scholarship.

A useful illustration may be found in his commentary to Hosea 1:6, where Tanḥum’s treatment is directly dependent on both Ibn Janāḥ and Ibn Bal’am.<sup>31</sup> Here, the ambiguous Hebrew phrase *ki naso essa lahem*<sup>32</sup> is translated by Ibn Janāḥ as “I shall pull them up and uproot them (*aqla ‘uhum wa-asta ‘saluhum*).” He adds a further comment, asserting that the phrase *lahem* – usually meaning “to them” – is here used to indicate the direct object: “It is as if it said *I shall pull them up (wa-ka ‘annahu qāla ki naso essa ‘em)*.”<sup>33</sup> Following Ibn Janāḥ, Ibn Bal’am glosses the expression as “I shall surely pull them up (*innī aqla ‘uhum qal’an*).”<sup>34</sup> Ibn Bal’am’s translation closely reflects the Hebrew text, apparently rendering *ki* followed by the first person singular imperfect as *innī*, and attempts to reproduce the repetitive quality of the Hebrew infinitive absolute.<sup>35</sup>

Tanḥum combines the formulations of Ibn Janāḥ and Ibn Bal’am, translating the verse as “I shall surely pull them up and uproot them (*aqla ‘uhum qal’an wa-asta ‘saluhum*).” He adds Ibn Janāḥ’s gloss on *lahem*,<sup>36</sup> and offers another example of this use of the root from Malachi 2:3. He then provides an expanded paraphrasis of the verse from Hosea in Arabic, adopting the voice of the prophet directly addressing his listeners: “That is to say, he will pull you up from your places

<sup>31</sup> For this passage, see Shy, *Perush*, 2-5.

<sup>32</sup> The JPS Tanakh (2003) renders this as “or pardon them,” and offers the emendation “but will disown them,” based on the possibility of metathesis (*s-n-’ > n-s-’*) and comparison with Hosea 9:15. If nothing else, the effort to emend the verse highlights its difficulty.

<sup>33</sup> *Kitāb al-uṣūl [The Book of Hebrew Roots]*, ed. A. Neubauer (Oxford: 1875), 458, entry for root *n-s-’*.

<sup>34</sup> See Poznanski, “The Arabic Commentary of ibn Bal’am,” 14.

<sup>35</sup> Understanding his adding of the Arabic *maṣḍar* as emphatic, attempting to mirror biblical Hebrew usage. Note also that Ibn Bal’am reverses the order of the repetition in order to render it less awkwardly into Arabic. He thus occupies a middle ground between Saadia’s usual method of translation and that of the medieval Karaite translators: While Saadia usually rendered the infinitive absolute with Arabic enclitic forms or the verb alone, Karaite authors typically adopted a hyper-literal formulation that directly mimicked the biblical Hebrew. (However, Saadia does on occasion employ a formulation with the *maṣḍar* following the verb.) The usual method employed by the Karaite translators was to render the Hebrew infinitive absolute followed by a verb with the Arabic *maṣḍar* followed by the verb, privileging loyalty to the Hebrew text over clarity in Arabic. See Steiner, *A Biblical Translation in the Making*, 21-22, 49; Polliack, *The Karaite Tradition*, 124-126. Cf. also the translations of Hosea 1:6 cited in note 37 below.

<sup>36</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 3.

(*yaqla 'ukum min mawāḍi'ikum*).<sup>37</sup> This is followed by a further example of this use of the root from Job 32:22.<sup>38</sup> By including Ibn Janāḥ's rendition of the root into more than a single term, Tanḥum clarifies the precise sense of the root *n-s-*' as denoting removal from one's place; by retaining Ibn Bal'am's formulation, he mirrors the repetitive quality of the biblical infinitive absolute. Furthermore, by providing examples of this usage of the Hebrew root *n-s-*', he ensures that the reader will internalize a less frequently employed sense of the term. Thus, even when incorporating and editing earlier material, Tanḥum demonstrates his literary sensitivity and pedagogical awareness.

### Taqdīr

Tanḥum's adoption of Islamic exegetical terminology has attracted scholarly attention, and in particular his use of the term *taqdīr*.<sup>39</sup> *Taqdīr* is a term that medieval Arabic grammarians applied primarily to syntactic emendations, when a particular formulation did not unambiguously fit its intended meaning (and that meaning may be clear, e.g., based on context).<sup>40</sup> It is often used interchangeably with the formulation "it is as if he said (*ka-annah qāla*)", and occasionally one

<sup>37</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 5. Tanḥum's expansion here echoes similar formulations in earlier translations, notably that of Yefet b. Eli: "But I shall surely bear them [away] from the land (*bal ḥaml aḥmiluhum min al-balad*).” See *Yefet Ben 'Eli's Commentary on Hosea*, eds. and trans. Meira Polliack and Eliezer Schlossberg (Bar-Ilan University Press: 2009), 149; see also 273 fn. 64. Cf. also the version in preserved in MS Huntington 206 (copied in Iraq in 1196), which renders the verse thus: "for I shall surely bear them to [foreign] lands (*bal ḥaml aḥmiluhum ilā al-bilād*).” See Yitzhak Avishur, *A Medieval Translation of the Latter Prophets into Iraqi and Syrian Judaeo-Arabic: Ezekiel and Minor Prophets* (Archaeological Center Publications: 2000), 77. (Emphases mine.) For a discussion of MS Hunt. 206, see below, p.101-102, fn.93.

<sup>38</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 19-21; Shy, *Perush*, 77-78; Hadassa Shy, "Taqdīr and its counterparts in mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic," in *Genizah Research after Ninety Years: The Case of Judaeo-Arabic*, eds. Joshua Blau and Stefan C. Reif (Cambridge University Press: 1992), 150-151. Cf. also Shy, *Murshid*, 77. For *taqdīr* in general, see Aryeh Levin, "The Theory of *al-taqdīr* and its Terminology," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 21 (1997), 142-166; Aryeh Levin, "TAQDĪR," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 10, eds. P. J. Bearman *et al.* (Brill: 2000), 119-121.

<sup>40</sup> See Levin, "The Theory of *al-taqdīr*," 142-143; Levin, "TAQDĪR," 119. For a summary of scholarly approaches to the sense of this term in an Islamic exegetical context, see Shy, "Taqdīr," 144-146. Cf. also Wechsler, *Strangers*, 73.

finds the fuller formulation “its *taqdīr* is as if he said (*taqdīruhu ka-annahu qāla*).”<sup>41</sup> Of particular interest is a statement in *Al-kulliyāt* in which Tanḥum categorizes *taqdīr* distinctly from *taqdīm wa-ta’khīr* (*hysteron proteron* or *anastrophe*),<sup>42</sup> which might suggest that he uses the term in its narrower sense to indicate a “supplementary insertion”, employed in response to syntactic ellipses:<sup>43</sup>

You know that they express themselves using expressions containing substitution, ellipsis, and alteration of the familiar formulation (*‘iwad*<sup>44</sup> *wa-ḥadhf wa-taghayyur ‘an al-‘ibāra al-mashhūra*), particularly when they knew that the meaning is [readily] understood or that the intention is clear. They thus permit the expression, though the statement requires *taqdīr*, or *taqdīm wa-ta’khīr*.<sup>45</sup>

It is tempting to read *taqdīm wa-ta’khīr* here as a response to substitution in word order (*‘iwad*), and to therefore understand *taqdīr* as a response to ellipsis (*ḥadhf*).<sup>46</sup> While this may fit the local context of the passage, a survey of Tanḥum’s actual use of the terminology of *taqdīr* in exegesis does not bear out this conclusion.<sup>47</sup> Although Tanḥum does frequently employ the term to

<sup>41</sup> See Levin, “The Theory of *al-taqdīr*,” 151; Levin, “TAKDĪR,” 121. Cf. also the interchangeable use of these expressions in the examples from Ibn Janāḥ, Ibn Chiquitilla, and in Shy, “*Taqdīr*,” 148.

<sup>42</sup> Unlike many other Arabic exegetical terms, it has been argued that this one originated in a Jewish context and was thereafter adopted by Muslim exegetes of the Qur’ān. See Richard C. Steiner, “*Muqdam u-Me’uḥar* and *Muqaddam wa-Mu’ahḥar*: On the History of Some Hebrew and Arabic Terms for *Hysteron Proteron* and *Anastrophe*,” in *Journal for Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 66, no. 1 (2007), 33-46.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 20.

<sup>44</sup> In the MS, the reading is *‘iwad*; see Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 21 fn. 14.

<sup>45</sup> For this passage, see Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 21.

<sup>46</sup> For the use of *taqdīr* as an explicit response to ellipsis, see Tanḥum’s commentary to Qohelet 2:2, where he writes that the subject of the Hebrew adjective/participle (*šiffa meholal* “is omitted (*maḥdhūf*), [and] its *taqdīr* is: *Of the one who revels, I said, “He is ignorant.”* [...]” (MS Pococke 320, 85b; Zoref, , 34. For the interpretation of *meholal* as “ignorant (*jāhil*)”, see Tanḥum’s commentary in *ibid.*) Here he supplements the phrase *li-seḥoq* with the noun *ba’al*, rendering the phrase *le-ba’al ha-seḥoq* and introducing a human addressee. Cf. also the citations of Maimonides’ *Guide* and discussion in Shy, “*Taqdīr*,” 144, 146. Cf. also Ibn Janāḥ’s comment on Ps. 27:13, where *taqdīr* is explicitly used to complete an ellipsis (*ḥadhf*); in *ibid.*, 146.

<sup>47</sup> In contrast with Tal’s method (*Exegetic Methods*, 21), I do not consider it productive to base the discussion on all cases in which interpretive moves that might be considered to fit the definition are used, whether or not Tanḥum employs the term. It seems to me that when defining *taqdīr*, the discussion must be limited to Tanḥum’s actual use of this terminology.

indicate a supplementary insertion,<sup>48</sup> he also applies it to alterations of word order<sup>49</sup> and the substitution of prepositions.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, *taqdīr* might be applied to any interpretive syntactic emendation,<sup>51</sup> or even morphological reconstructions.<sup>52</sup> These emendations are often based on the broader context of the textual gap in question.<sup>53</sup>

## Comparative Semitics

Among Jewish authors in the medieval Islamic world, there existed a range of approaches to the relationship between Hebrew and other languages, and in particular the Semitic languages to

<sup>48</sup> See his commentary to Esther 3:7 (English in Wechsler, *Strangers*, 238 – see also fn. 155; Arabic in *ibid.*, כד); 5:13 (*ibid.*, 270; כו). See also his use of the term *taqdīr* to describe the (rejected) insertion of an implied subject (*ishtekha*) in his commentary to Micah 6:14 (Shy, *Perush*, 177-179; against Ibn Ezra *ad loc.*). See also his commentary to Song 4:15 (MS Poccocke 50b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 60); 5:6 (MS Poccocke 52b; Zoref, *ibid.*, 62); 7:5 (MS Poccocke 62b; Zoref, *ibid.*, 74); 8:6 (MS Poccocke 67b; Zoref, *ibid.*, 80).

<sup>49</sup> See his commentary to Esther 6:8 (English in Wechsler, *Strangers*, 274-277; Arabic in *ibid.*, כה). See also his commentary to Song 8:12 (MS Poccocke 34a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 39).

<sup>50</sup> See commentary to Song 2:14 (MS Poccocke 37b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 43). Here there is a supplementary insertion, but focus is the interchangeability of the prepositions *be-* and *min*.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. John Wansbrough's definition of *taqdīr* as the "reconstruction or restoration (*Wiederherstellung; restitutio in integrum*), namely, of a scriptural context or passage." See Wansbrough, "*Majāz al-Qur'ān: Periphrastic Exegesis*," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 33:2 (1970), 247. For Tanḥum's use of the term *taqdīr* to describe a (rejected) change of person, see his commentary to Micah 6:14 (Shy, *Perush*, 177). The interpretation that Tanḥum rejects here is the second offered by Ibn Bal'am, for which see Poznanski "The Arabic Commentary of Ibn Bal'am," 42. In his commentary to Qohelet (Poccocke 320, 105b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 51), Tanḥum follows Ibn Janāḥ (citing him by name) in deriving *baram* from *bera'am*, and in offering the *taqdīr* of *le-baram ha-elohim* as '*al asher bera'am ha'elohim*. Here the *taqdīr* substitutes a form without an assimilated *alef*, substitutes a preposition, and supplies a missing pronoun (as discussed explicitly by Tanḥum; when he repeats the *taqdīr* in the subsequent discussion [MS Poccocke 320, 106a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 51], he retains the form *baram*).

<sup>52</sup> For example, see Tanḥum's commentary to Qohelet 5:5, in which he repeatedly employs the terminology of *taqdīr* when offering the regular *hif'il* forms for cases in which the *he* is dropped in the infinitive construct. (See MS Poccocke 320, 120a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 60.) For more examples of Tanḥum's use of this term and its cognates, see Shy, "*Taqdīr*," 150-151.

<sup>53</sup> An example in which this is made explicit is in Tanḥum's commentary to Zech. 8:12: "Its *taqdīr* according to its context [is] (*taqdīruhu bi-ḥasab al-ma'nā*)..." See Shy, *Perush*, 295. Cf. also his commentary to Qoh. 4:7 (MS Poccocke 320 111a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 55). For *ma'nā* as "context", see above, p.46. See also Tanḥum's statement in his commentary to Qoh. 3:15 that "it has already been stated that the ancient ones, *may their memory be a blessing*, used the term *kebar* in the sense (*bi-ma'nā*) of "already" (*qad*), and this is also clear from its context (*min ma'nāhā*) here..." (MS Poccocke 320, 104a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 50. Zoref [*ibid.*, 136] translates *ma'nā* according to its more common meaning, rendering the sentence rather awkward.) A more ambiguous example of this usage in the context of an explicit *taqdīr* may be found in his commentary to Qoh. 12:14 (MS Poccocke 320, 193a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 113.)

which Hebrew bears an immediately identifiable similarity. Some scholars maintained the primacy of Hebrew, insisting that Arabic and Aramaic (and possibly all other languages) were fundamentally derived from Hebrew.<sup>54</sup> Such an attitude did not necessarily preclude comparison to other languages – Saadia subscribed to such views,<sup>55</sup> although he exhibited a considerable degree of openness towards the comparison of Hebrew with cognate languages.<sup>56</sup> In the Maghrib (particularly in Spain) there appears to have been both a widespread discomfort with comparative linguistics, and a widespread adoption of the method. Interestingly, it was there – in the more polemically charged context of Spain and North Africa – that the comparative philological method truly flourished and achieved its most mature expression.<sup>57</sup>

Ibn Janāḥ and Judah Ibn Quraysh (North Africa, late 9<sup>th</sup>-mid 10<sup>th</sup> century) made significant contributions to the comparative method of study in Hebrew linguistics.<sup>58</sup> Ibn Quraysh noted the profound relationship between Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic vocabulary, even providing Berber

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<sup>54</sup> For such a view, see Judah Ha-Levi's *Kuzari*: Arabic text in *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl fī al-dīn al-dhalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, ed. David E. Baneth (The Magnes Press: 1977), 79-80; trans. in *Kitab al-Khazari by Judah Hallevi*, trans. Hartwig Hirschfeld (Bernard G. Richards: 1927), 124-125. For a discussion of the origin of language and the place of Hebrew among the languages in Judah Ha-Levi's thought, see Yochanan Silman, *Philosopher and Prophet: Judah Halevi, the Kuzari, and the Evolution of His Thought*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm (State University of New York Press: 1995), 89-94 (in particular 90-91 fn. 29), 291-285. For a discussion of this passage, see Esperanza Alfonso, *Islamic Culture through Jewish Eyes: Al-Andalus from the tenth to twelfth century* (Routledge: 2008), 23-24. Abraham Ibn Ezra shared this view. See Nahum M. Waldman, *The Recent Study of Hebrew: A Survey of the Literature with Selected Bibliography* (Hebrew Union College Press: 1989), 194-195. Even Maimonides – whose statement concerning the closeness of Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic is discussed below – shared the view that Arabic is derived from Hebrew, as reflected in his correspondence with Samuel Ibn Tibbon; see Itzhak Shailat, *The Letters and Essays of Moses Maimonides* (Shailat Publishing: 1995), vol. 2, 531.

<sup>55</sup> See for example Saadia's attitude as discussed in Robert Brody, *Rav Se'adya Gaon* (The Zalman Shazar Center: 2006), 101-103. For Hebrew as the language of Eden in Saadia's commentary to Genesis, see *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis*, ed. Moshe Zucker (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: 1984), 67 (Arabic), 278-279 (Hebrew translation).

<sup>56</sup> See Aharon Maman, *Comparative Semitic Philology in the Middle Ages: From Sa'adiyah Gaon to Ibn Barūn (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> C.)* (Brill: 2004), 162-179.

<sup>57</sup> Maman, *Comparative Semitic Philology in the Middle Ages*, 17-18, 403-404.

<sup>58</sup> For an overview of sources concerning the time and geographical location of Ibn Quraysh, see Dan Becker, *The Risāla of Judah ben Quraysh* (Tel-Aviv University: 1984), 10-11. See also Maman, *Comparative Semitic Philology in the Middle Ages*, 180-181, 404. It is likely that the work of Ibn Quraysh informed the comparative method of the pioneering Karaite lexicographer David b. Abraham al-Fāsī (10<sup>th</sup> century); see *The Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary of the Bible Known as Kitāb Jāmi' al-Alfāz (Agrōn) of David ben Abraham al-Fāsī the Karaite (Tenth Cent.)*, ed. Solomon L. Skoss (Yale University Press: 1945), vol. 1, lix-lxi.

etymologies for certain Hebrew lexemes. He was a pioneer of comparative Semitic philology, despite the discomfort of some authors with his approach,<sup>59</sup> particularly in Spain.<sup>60</sup> He noted the traditional genealogical affinity between Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic speakers, as well as the contiguity of the geographical areas in which the languages were spoken. Ibn Janāḥ refined Ibn Quraysh's observations, noting the close linguistic affinity between Hebrew and Aramaic in particular, and the somewhat lesser (but still readily identifiable) relationship with Arabic.<sup>61</sup>

Echoing the positions of earlier philologists, Tanḥum adopted the comparative method.<sup>62</sup> He defended this position by asserting that Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic are in fact variants of a single language:

Scholars (*al-ḥukamā'*) have explained that variation among climates necessarily creates variation in the constitutions of their inhabitants from one climate to another, and variation in constitution necessarily creates variation in dispositions, appetites, and languages (*ikhtilāf al-akhlāq wa-'l-shahwāt wa-'l-lughāt*). Every language requires certain letters according to the needs of that language, and the place of pronunciation of those letters within the mouth varies. Therefore, their languages are very similar, and their eloquence is analogous, and the pronunciation of their letters is very close. For this reason the Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic languages are a single language, or very close, to one who knows their roots<sup>63</sup> and conjugations (*fa-bi-hādhā al-sabab kānat al-*

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<sup>59</sup> Becker, *The Risāla*, 18-20, and fn.7.

<sup>60</sup> Maman, *Comparative Semitic Philology in the Middle Ages*, 18.

<sup>61</sup> Maman, *Comparative Semitic Philology in the Middle Ages*, 18-21.

<sup>62</sup> For the comparative method in his commentaries to Esther and Ruth, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 89-93; in his commentaries to 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, see Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 105-121; in his commentary to Song, see Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 69-70; in his commentary to Daniel, see Anfang, *Parshanuto shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi le-sefer daniyyel*, 17-20. For his identification of Persian loanwords in his commentary to Esther, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 86-87. A particularly striking example of this method is Tanḥum's observation that the lexeme *sh-b-ḥ* (praise) exists both in Hebrew and Aramaic (see MS Pococke 320 110a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 54). This observation serves no exegetical purpose whatsoever, other than as an expression of Tanḥum's interest in comparative linguistics.

<sup>63</sup> Arabic: *uṣūlahā*. Alternatively: "principles".

*lugha al-‘ibrāniyya wa-’l-‘arabiyya wa-’l-siryāniyya*<sup>64</sup> *lugha wāḥida aw qarība jiddan li-man ‘alima uṣūlahā wa-taṣārīfahā*). [This is] also [true of] the Greek language, which is close to them due to their geographical proximity (*li-qurbihim ayḍan fī al-maskin*), although their language tends towards wetness and is thus further from eloquence, [...] just as the language of the Arabs tends towards dryness and is thus more eloquent, and their speech stronger.<sup>65</sup>

Tanḥum’s immediate source for this passage may be located in one of Maimonides’ medical epistles,<sup>66</sup> in which he refers to the works of Galen and al-Fārābī in asserting that languages (and personal dispositions and capabilities) are shaped by the climes in which they are spoken.<sup>67</sup> The widely accepted Galenic theory of the climes maintained that since they vary in humidity, temperature, and other features, they must therefore exert an influence upon the development of a population’s organs and physical and mental capabilities.<sup>68</sup> It follows that climate may determine the phonetic range of a language. Maimonides maintains that most of the languages of

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<sup>64</sup> For the Judeo-Arabic *siryānī* as referring to the several varieties of biblical, targumic, and talmudic Aramaic, see Joshua Blau, *A Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, (The Academy of the Hebrew Language/The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities: 2006), 295.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in Tal, *Rabbi Tanḥūm Ha-yerūšalmī’s Exegetic Methods in his Commentary on the Books of II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel according to Manuscripts from the Bodleian Library and the St. Petersburg Library* (unpublished PhD dissertation; Bar-Ilan University: 2007), 105-106.

<sup>66</sup> See Maimonides’ epistle in *Iggerot: Letters*, edited with Hebrew translation by Joseph Qafih (Mossad Harav Kook: 1972), 149-50; English translation in *The Medical Aphorisms of Moses Maimonides*, eds. and trans. Fred Rosner and Suessman Muntner (Yeshiva University Press: 1971), vol. II, 201-3. For a discussion and English rendition of the passage according to Qafih’s text, see Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides’ Confrontation with Mysticism* (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization: 2006), 166-167.

<sup>67</sup> There has been some disagreement surrounding the question of whether Maimonides’ reference to al-Fārābī’s *Kitāb al-ḥurūf* is connected to that which precedes it or follows it in the epistle, and hence whether the discussion of the effects of the climes on physical appearance and mental development is to be attributed to al-Fārābī or Galen. See Steven Harvey, “A New Islamic Source of the *Guide of the Perplexed*,” in *Maimonidean Studies*, vol. 2, ed. Arthur Hyman (Yeshiva University Press: 1991), 39 fn. 25. As noted by Harvey, these conceptions are discussed by al-Fārābī. See *Alfarabi’s Book of Letters (Kitāb al-ḥurūf)*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Dar el-Mashreq: 1970), chapters 20-22, 134-149.

<sup>68</sup> See Harvey, “A New Islamic Source,” 39-40. See also Ian B. Straughn, “Climate, Theories of,” in *Medieval Islamic Civilization*, ed. Josef W. Meri (Routledge: 2006), vol. 1, 158. For the wide influence of this Galenic concept in Arabic and Persian thought, see Travis Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers Across Medieval Islam: Geography, Translation and the ‘Abbāsīd Empire* (I. B. Taurus: 2011), 85-87. For the climes as discussed in the works of Ibn Ezra, see Shlomo Sela, *Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science* (Brill: 2003), 107-112. The influence of the climes on the mental development of their inhabitants is also discussed by Ibn Ezra in his commentary to Qohelet 1:12, s.v. *bi-yrushalayim*; this is then adopted by Tanḥum in his own commentary to Qohelet – see MS Pococke 75b, 78b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 26, 29.

temperate climes are phonetically similar: Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic.<sup>69</sup> Regarding the relationship between Hebrew and Arabic, Maimonides asserts that “it is accepted by everyone who knows these two languages that *they undoubtedly are a single language (lugha wāḥida bi-lā shakk)*, and the Aramaic language<sup>70</sup> is very close to them.”<sup>71</sup> In addition, “Greek is close to Aramaic, and the place of pronunciation of the letters of these four languages is the same – apart from a few letters, perhaps three or four letters.”<sup>72</sup> Although here Maimonides observes the genuine proximity between the Semitic languages, his inclusion of Greek is somewhat artificial, and his primary intention is to broaden Galen’s statement regarding the superiority of Greek to include the Semitic languages.<sup>73</sup>

Qafih suggested that this epistle demonstrates that Maimonides’ attitude to the origin of language underwent diachronic development: Whereas in the *Guide* he maintains that language is conventional,<sup>74</sup> in this earlier epistle he seems to suggest that it is natural.<sup>75</sup> However, an alternative reading of the sources might suggest that while Maimonides held the prevalent usage and ascription of meaning in a language to be conventional, he allowed for the possibility that

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<sup>69</sup> Persian is an exception to this rule which Maimonides mentions but does not endeavor to explain. See Kellner, *Maimonides’ Confrontation*, 167.

<sup>70</sup> Arabic: *wa-’l-lugha al-siryāniyya*.

<sup>71</sup> Qafih, *Iggerot*, 150; Rosner and Suessman, *Medical Aphorisms of Moses Maimonides*, vol. II, 202-3; Kellner, *Maimonides’ Confrontation*, 167. Emphasis mine.

<sup>72</sup> Qafih, *Iggerot*, 150; Rosner and Suessman, *Medical Aphorisms of Moses Maimonides*, vol. II, 202-3; Kellner, *Maimonides’ Confrontation*, 167.

<sup>73</sup> Qafih, *Iggerot*, 148-150.

<sup>74</sup> See *Guide* II:30 (Pines, 357-358).

<sup>75</sup> Qafih, *Iggerot*, 149 fn.10. In this, Qafih is followed by Langermann; see “Maimonides and miracles: The growth of a (dis)belief,” in *Jewish History* 18:2 (2004), 171 n.31. Qafih appears to base this reading on Maimonides’ rejection in this passage of al-Razi’s critique of Galen, which assumes that the equal value of languages follows naturally from their conventionality. Maimonides rejects this critique, asserting that the climes affect phonetic range and may result in more or less articulate speech. However, he may have rejected al-Razi’s conclusion, rather than the premise that languages are conventional.

Indeed, the dispute over whether language is conventional or natural (and possibly revealed) is one that was widely debated in the medieval Islamic world. See Kopf, in *Studia Islamica* 5 (1956), 33-59; John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford University Press: 1977), 103-104. See also Mustafa Shah, “The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawqīf-istiṣlāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy – Part I,” in *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 1:1 (1999), 27-46; Shah, “The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawqīf-istiṣlāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy (Part II),” in *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 2:1 (2000), 43-66.

phonology is constrained and shaped by climate.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, this appears to have been al-Fārābī's position.<sup>77</sup>

Tanḥum makes subtle but highly significant modifications to Maimonides' formulation. Reflecting the attitudes of earlier philologists, he removes Maimonides' statement to the effect that the proximity between Hebrew and Arabic is closer than that between Hebrew and Aramaic. He also tempers the assertion that they are a single language by removing the phrase "undoubtedly (*bi-lā shakk*)" and adding the qualification "or very close (*aw qarība jiddan*)."<sup>78</sup> What might look at first glance to be a radical pronouncement concerning the fundamental unity of the Semitic languages now seems, in light of Maimonides' formulation, to be a more moderate version of the latter's account of linguistic variation.

However, Tanḥum also broadens one element significantly: Whereas Maimonides appears to have limited himself to the question of the languages' phonetic range, Tanḥum extended his discussion to "their roots [or: principles] and conjugations."<sup>78</sup> He thus posits a structural affinity between Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic. However, his inclusion of Greek in this enumeration now appears even more artificial than it does in Maimonides' epistle. It is notable that Tanḥum's

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation*, 166 fn. 43. For a broad discussion of Maimonides' attitude towards language, including its origins, see Joseph Stern, "Maimonides on Language and the Science of Language," in *Maimonides and the Sciences*, eds. Robert S. Cohen and Hillel Levine (Kluwer Academic Publishers: 2000), 173-226. For his attitude towards Hebrew and its origins, see Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation*, 159-178.

<sup>77</sup> For the language as being shaped by a combination of convention and natural factors, see *Al-Farabi's The Political Regime: Al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya also known as the treatise on the principles of beings*, ed. Fauzi M. Najjar (Imprimerie Catholique, Beyrouth: 1964), 70, lines 5-7: "Nations are distinguished from one another by two natural factors: By natural constitution and natural temperament (*bi-'l-khilaq al-ṭabī'iyya wa-'l-shiyam al-ṭabī'iyya*). And [they are distinguished] by a third conventional factor that has a certain element of the natural factors, and that is the tongue – by which I mean the language by means of which expression takes place (*wa-bi-shay' thālith waḍ'ī walahu madkhal mā fī al-ashyā' al-ṭabī'iyya wa-huwa al-lisān a'nī al-lughā allatī bihā takūn al-'ibāra*)."<sup>78</sup> See also Maḥdi, *Book of Letters*, chapters 20-21. For the role of the environment (*maskin, balad*) in forming the physiological and mental constitution of the speakers of a language, see in particular chapter 20, paragraph 114 (p.134). For the role of convention in determining usage and meaning in language, see chapter 21, paragraph 120 (p.137-138). Cf. also David Winston, "Philo and Maimonides on the Garden of Eden Narrative," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (Eisenbrauns: 2008), vol. 2, 999-1001.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Maimonides' statement that Arabic is "Hebrew that has been slightly corrupted (*lashon 'ibri she-nishtabbeshah me'aṭ*)."<sup>78</sup> See Shailat, *The Letters and Essays of Moses Maimonides*, vol. 2, 531.

comment on the proximity of Greek to the Semitic languages is immediately followed by climatic-phonological observations, allowing for the possibility that in the case of Greek he limited the similarity to phonology, as did Maimonides.

Given his openness to interpreting Hebrew in the light of cognate languages, it is not surprising that Tanḥum considered the interpretation of Scripture in the light of rabbinic terminology to be a legitimate approach.<sup>79</sup> Tanḥum's positive attitude towards rabbinic Hebrew was not limited to the recognition of its utility in biblical exegesis. In contradistinction with some authors who maintained the superiority of biblical Hebrew,<sup>80</sup> Tanḥum subscribed to the opinion that Hebrew was always characterized by linguistic variation. He believed rabbinic Hebrew to reflect ancient features, and thus to be an authentic form of the language, ranking alongside biblical Hebrew.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, it is significant that Tanḥum's aim in composing *Al-murshid al-kāfī* was not only to render authoritative rabbinic texts accessible, but also to provide his readers with a basic education in rabbinic Hebrew.<sup>82</sup>

At this point, we may point to two suggestive parallels – if not in form, then in substance – between Tanḥum's positions and those of Judah Ha-Levi in his *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl fī al-dīn*

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<sup>79</sup> For comparison to rabbinic Hebrew in his commentaries to Esther and Ruth, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 89-91; in his commentaries to 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, see Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 97-104; in his commentary to Song, see Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 70; in his commentary to Daniel, see Anfang, *Parshanuto shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi le-sefer daniyyel*, 18.

<sup>80</sup> For biblical Hebrew as the model for Hebrew eloquence (Hebrew: *tzaḥot*; Arabic: *faṣīḥ, faṣāḥa*), see Neḥemya Allony, *Ha'egron: Kitāb 'uṣūl al-shi'r al-'ibrānī by Rav Sē'adya Ga'on* (The Academy of the Hebrew Language: 1969), 26-30. It should be noted that although Saadia's dictionary is predominantly devoted to biblical Hebrew, it also treats non-biblical elements of the Hebrew (and to a lesser degree Aramaic) language (see *ibid.*, 63-75). Even when defending the utility of rabbinic Hebrew in biblical interpretation against Karaite deriders, Saadia referred to it as "common speech" (*al-kalām al-'āmm*), as opposed to the high literary style of the Hebrew Bible; see Neḥemya Allony, "Haqdamat "shib'im millim bodedot"," in *Studies in Medieval Philology and Literature: Collected Papers I, Sa'adia's Works*, eds. Yosef Tobi and Robert Attal (Ben Zvi Institute: 1986), 78.

<sup>80</sup> Allony, "Haqdamat "shib'im millim bodedot"," 77.

<sup>81</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 16-17; Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 98-99. It should also be noted that there is some evidence that Tanḥum recognized diachronic development in the language, as he described mishnaic Hebrew as written "according to the language as they used it at that time ('*alā mā kāna musta'mal 'indahum ḥīna 'idhin min luḡhatihim*)." See Shy, *Murshid*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> See Shy, *Murshid*, 8-9.

*al-dhalīl* (*Kuzari*).<sup>83</sup> This first similarity is that Tanḥum’s reformulation of Maimonides’ statement of the linguistic affinity between Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic echoes a passage in the *Kuzari* in which the character of the Jewish scholar (*al-ḥabr*) states that due to their common origin, these languages possess shared phonetic and structural elements:

[...] Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic are similar to each other in their vocabulary, syntax, and conjugations (*fa-ṣārat hādhihi al-thalāth lughāt mutashābiha al-siryāniyya wa-’l-’arabiyya wa-’l-’ibrāniyya fī asmā’ihā wa-anḥā’ihā wa-taṣārīfihā*).<sup>84</sup>

The lack of distinction in the degree of similarity between the three languages is a notable common feature of Judah Ha-Levi’s and Tanḥum’s respective formulations. This is in contrast with Ibn Janāḥ’s position, which supposes a closer relationship between Aramaic and Hebrew, and Maimonides’s position, which supposes a closer relationship between Arabic and Hebrew. Judah Ha-Levi’s mention of the similarity between the languages in their conjugations (*taṣārīfihā*) is also notable.

The second parallel lies in Tanḥum’s assertion of the non-derivative nature of mishnaic Hebrew. Tanḥum maintains that “the Hebrew language is not limited to the [biblical] texts that we have (*al-lugha al-’ibrāniyya mā inḥaṣarat jamī’uhā fī nuṣūṣ al-mawjūda ‘indana*).”<sup>85</sup> Mishnaic Hebrew does not need to follow the conventions of biblical Hebrew because it occupies the same status and reflects ancient linguistic forms. This position is foreshadowed in Judah Ha-Levi’s emphasis of the presence of “pure Hebrew which is not derived from the Bible (*min faṣīḥ al-lugha al-’ibrāniyya mā lam yashtaqq min lughat al-miqra*)” in the Mishnah, proving its ancient

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<sup>83</sup> For Ha-Levi’s attitude towards the Hebrew language in general, see Wilhelm Bacher, “The Views of Jehuda Halevi Concerning the Hebrew Language,” in *Hebraica* 8:3 (1892), 136-149. For his attitude towards cognate languages in particular, see *ibid.*, 139.

<sup>84</sup> Arabic in Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-’l-dalīl* (*al-kitāb al-khazarī*), 80; alternative English translation in Hirschfeld, *Kitāb al-Khazari*, 125.

<sup>85</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 16.

provenance.<sup>86</sup> Judah Ha-Levi thus emphasized that the presence of non-derivative language in the Mishnah proves its ancient provenance, while Tanḥum argued that linguistic variation in ancient Hebrew accounts for the presence of non-biblical forms and terminology in rabbinic Hebrew.

Apart from the absence of any direct textual parallel, there are several significant differences between Judah Ha-Levi's positions and those of Tanḥum. For example, while Judah Ha-Levi applies an argument closely based on the Islamic conception of *i'jāz* to the Mishnah, asserting that no reader of its pure language and beautiful style could deny its divine provenance,<sup>87</sup> Tanḥum makes no such claim. In addition, the two thinkers differ in their understanding of the *cause* of similarity between the Semitic languages: Whereas Tanḥum held the climes responsible for shaping variants of a single language or linguistic family, Judah Ha-Levi offered a genealogical interpretation.<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, the parallels to the *Kuzari* remain suggestive, though admittedly not demonstrative of dependence.

Tal identified the background to Tanḥum's defense of rabbinic Hebrew in Saadia Gaon's *Kitāb al-sab'īn lafẓa*, in which the author makes the argument that rabbinic Hebrew preserved ancient forms and vocabulary.<sup>89</sup> However, Tanḥum's own formulation in the *Murshid* draws most directly on Ibn Janāḥ's introduction to his *Kitāb al-luma'*, which provides specific examples of

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<sup>86</sup> See Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 141; English translation in Hirschfeld, *Kitāb al-Khazarī*, 191. See also Waldman, *Recent Study of Hebrew*, 193-194.

<sup>87</sup> See Arabic in Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 141-142; English translation in Hirschfeld, *Kitāb al-Khazarī*, 191-192. For Judah Ha-Levi's dismissal of the Muslim claim of *i'jāz*, and his subsequent adoption of this trope in connection with the Mishnah, see Alfonso, *Islamic Culture through Jewish Eyes*, 21-22. For a general treatment of *i'jāz*, see Sophia Vasalou, "I'jāz," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Literature*, ed. Kees Versteegh (Brill: 2007), vol. II, 302-307.

<sup>88</sup> Hirschfeld, *Kitāb al-Khazarī*, 124-125.

<sup>89</sup> Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 99. For an edition of Saadia's work, see Neḥemya Allony, "Kitāb al-sab'īn lafẓa la-rav se'adyah ga'on," in *Studies in Medieval Philology and Literature: Collected Papers I, Sa'adia's Works*, eds. Yosef Tobi and Robert Attal (Ben Zvi Institute: 1986), 27-74.

rabbinic usage<sup>90</sup> that are directly appropriated (and elaborated upon) by Tanḥum.<sup>91</sup> In fact, Tanḥum’s emphasis on the legitimacy of rabbinic style and terminology in and of itself in the context of a lexicon of rabbinic Hebrew contrasts both with Saadia and Ibn Janāḥ: Saadia defends the use of rabbinic Hebrew to interpret biblical *hapax legomena*<sup>92</sup> within the explicitly polemical context of the Karaite derision of rabbinic Hebrew;<sup>93</sup> and Ibn Janāḥ defends the use of rabbinic Hebrew for general comparison to biblical language.<sup>94</sup> Tanḥum’s defense of rabbinic Hebrew contrasts in particular with Saadia’s attitude, who still regarded biblical Hebrew as far superior to rabbinic Hebrew, despite his defense of the latter.<sup>95</sup>

### Tanḥum and Rabbinic Tradition

As has been stated, Tanḥum regularly cites the targumim and rabbinic literature for their lexical value,<sup>96</sup> generally referring to the rabbis as *al-awā’il* (the ancients).<sup>97</sup> His commitment to the clear elucidation of rabbinic literature in the *Murshid*, his defense of the validity of rabbinic

<sup>90</sup> Arabic in *Le Livre des Parterres Fleuris: Grammaire Hébraïque en Arabe d’Abou’l-Walid Merwan Ibn Djanah de Cordoue* [Kitāb al-luma‘ wa-huwa al-juz’ al-awwal min kitāb al-tanqīh], ed. Joseph Derenbourg (F. Vieweg: 1886), 9; Hebrew translation in *Sefer ha-riqmah (kitāb al-luma‘) le-r’ yonah ibn janāḥ be-targumo ha-‘ibri shel r’ yehudah ibn tibbon*, ed. Michael Wilensky (Akademie-Verlag: 1928), 19-20. See also discussion in Waldman, *Recent Study of Hebrew*, 194.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Shy, *Murshid*, 15.

<sup>92</sup> For which, see Allony, “Haqdamat “shib‘im millim bodedot’,” 78. Saadia was followed in this method regarding *hapax legomena* by Ibn Bal‘am; see Waldman, *Recent Study of Hebrew*, 200. For a general treatment of methods for interpreting *hapax legomena* in medieval Jewish biblical exegesis, see Frederick E. Greenspahn, *Hapax Legomena in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of the Phenomenon and its Treatment since Antiquity with Special Reference to Verbal Forms* (PhD dissertation, Brandeis University: 1977), 96-132.

<sup>93</sup> Allony, “Haqdamat “shib‘im millim bodedot’,” 77. Indeed, Tanḥum frames his own discussion as a critique of “the new grammarians (*al-muḥdathīn min al-laghawīyyīn*)”; for which see Shy, *Murshid*, 14. It is not clear to me if this is a literary trope echoing the polemical tone of Saadia and Ibn Janāḥ, or whether Tanḥum had specific contemporary or near-contemporary grammarians in mind.

<sup>94</sup> See Derenbourg, *Le Livre des Parterres Fleuris*, 9; Wilensky, *Sefer ha-riqmah*, 19.

<sup>95</sup> See Waldman, *Recent Study of Hebrew*, 198.

<sup>96</sup> Poznanski, *Tanhum*, 140. Cf. Jonah 1:11 (Shy, *Perush*, 114-115) for his use of the familiar text of Abot 1:17 (...*ve-lo matzati la-guf tov ella shetiḡah*) in explaining the expression *ve-yishtoq ha-yam me-‘alenu*. For Tanḥum’s comparative treatment of biblical and rabbinic Hebrew in his commentaries to Ruth and Esther see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 89-91. For the same approach as employed in *Al-murshid al-kāfi*, see Shy, *Perush*, ٣. For comparisons to Aramaic and Arabic as attested in Ruth and Esther, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 92-93.

<sup>97</sup> See Wechsler, *Strangers*, 55, 89. For examples of this usage in Tanḥum’s commentary to Jonah, see Shy, *Perush*, 127, 137. For examples of this term in Tanḥum’s commentary to Song, see MS Pococke 320, 13a, 15a, 16a, 34b, 35a 36b; Zoref, *Tanhum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 14, 16, 18, 39, 40, 42. See also p.393-394 and fn.498 below.

Hebrew, and his frequent citations from rabbinic literature in his commentaries are a testament to his commitment to Rabbanite Judaism. Indeed, he often endorsed midrashic interpretations of the biblical text, and seems to have viewed the midrashic method as valid *in addition to* the linguistically and contextually determined sense of the text (the *peshat* or *zāhir*).<sup>98</sup> In adopting this stance regarding midrashic hermeneutics, Tanḥum was following closely in the footsteps of Ibn Janāḥ.<sup>99</sup>

However, notwithstanding his clear Rabbanite affiliation and frequent reliance upon rabbinic literature for his interpretations, Tanḥum did not defer to rabbinic positions when they conflicted with the conclusions of his own philological analysis. A powerful example of this may be found in his discussion of Mordecai's refusal to bow before Haman (Esther 3:2).<sup>100</sup> Here Tanḥum rejects the traditional rabbinic interpretation, and that of Saadia Gaon, which maintained that Mordecai refused to prostrate himself before Haman because it was idolatrous worship (rather than a display of deference). He does so based on his own systematic analysis of the Hebrew lexeme *k-r-* (in the verse, *kore'im* and *yikhra'*), from which he concludes that the biblical use of this term often refers to non-worshipful prostration, and that this seems to be the most fitting interpretation in this context.<sup>101</sup> Other examples of Tanḥum's scholarly independence and willingness to deviate from rabbinic interpretations include his rejection of the talmudic

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<sup>98</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 27-31. For Tanḥum's use of this terminology, and for his hermeneutical dualism, see the subsequent section of this chapter, pp.62-75.

<sup>99</sup> See Derenbourg, *Le Livre des Parterres Fleuris*, 8; Wilensky, *Sefer ha-riqmah*, 18-19. Cf. also the attitudes of Saadia and Samuel b. Ḥofni Gaon; Robert Brody, "The Geonim of Babylonia as Biblical Exegetes," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (I/2)*, 86-88.

<sup>100</sup> For the English translation of this passage, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 233-237; for the Arabic, see *ibid.*, 77.

<sup>101</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 25-27.

identification of the lands of *Hoddu* and *Kush* as neighboring territories,<sup>102</sup> and for Esther's motivation for inviting Haman to the banquet with Ahasuerus.<sup>103</sup>

### **Hermeneutical dualism: *Al-qaṣd al-awwal*, *aṣl al-gharaḍ* and *ta'wīl***

Tanḥum frequently employs the term *zāhir* in connection with the biblical text. In its nontechnical sense, the term refers to that which is “apparent”, “obvious”, or “explicit”.<sup>104</sup> However, Tanḥum also uses it in two subtly distinct technical senses. The first is to describe the literal, unembellished sense of the text as the reader encounters it. A completely literal mode of interpretation may sometimes be misleading from a theological or philosophical viewpoint, it might contradict other scriptural statements, or it might not sufficiently take into account idiomatic expressions or metaphorical speech.<sup>105</sup> In this sense, the *zāhir* is distinct from the *pешaṭ*,<sup>106</sup> insofar as the latter is the contextually and rationally determined (but not necessarily literal) sense of the text.<sup>107</sup> Wechsler notes that – despite their conceptual distinctiveness – the *zāhir* and the *pешaṭ* are usually “held in alignment”.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> For this position (which is disputed) see the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah 11a. For the passage in Tanḥum's commentary, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 180-183 (English); *ibid.*, פ"א (Arabic).

<sup>103</sup> See Wechsler, *Strangers*, 27. For the passage, see *ibid.*, 266-267 (English), טז (Arabic). In the passage, he goes so far as to say that the rabbinic interpretations exhibit a degree of carelessness (*tasammuh mā*; for the interchangeability of reflexive forms [in this case *tafa'ul* in place of *tafā'ul*], see Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic* [The Magnes Press: 1995], 78).

<sup>104</sup> For this nontechnical usage by Tanḥum, cf. his statement that “it is obvious (*wa-zāhir huwa*) that this entire discourse in this passage” is a metaphor for the soul's yearning to reach the supernal realm. (MS Pococke 320, 12a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 13.) This example is particularly striking, since he is describing the text's esoteric meaning as *zāhir*.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Wechsler, *Strangers*, 23-25; Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 41-42, 46 and fn. 56. For the *zāhir* as the “widely understood (*mashhūr*)” sense of the text (as opposed to the rare and sometimes idiomatic *majāz*) in Saadia's works, see Haggai Ben-Shammai, “Saadya's Introduction to Isaiah as an Introduction to the Books of the Prophets,” in *Tarbiẓ* 60/3 (1991), 380-382. For this sense of the term as used by Tanḥum, see his commentary to Qohelet 4:17, where he notes that the three interpretations that he has offered are all an attempt to render the text meaningful, “for the literal formulation is not in conformity [with its context] (*zāhir al-lafẓ ghayr muṭābiq*).” (MS Pococke 320, 118a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 59.)

<sup>106</sup> Tanḥum tends to employ the Aramaic formulation *pешateh di-qera* in preference to the Hebrew *pешuṭo shel miqra*. See Wechsler, *Strangers*, 22.

<sup>107</sup> A distinction between *zāhir* and the *pешaṭ* was originally tentatively suggested by John Wansbrough (*Quranic Studies*, 152). Mordechai Z. Cohen has since extensively explored and refined this distinction, for which see Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*; *ibid.*, *Three Approaches*, 46 and fn. 56. Wechsler (*Strangers*, 21-25) has noted

The second sense in which Tanḥum uses this term is rooted in his hermeneutical dualism, according to which the biblical text communicates an exoteric or literal sense (*ẓāhir* or *pешaṭ*), and an esoteric or inner stratum (*bāṭin*).<sup>109</sup> Echoing Maimonides' terminology in his introduction to the *Guide*,<sup>110</sup> Tanḥum calls the exoteric sense of the text, accessed through philological and contextual analysis, *al-qaṣd al-awwal*, the text's "first" or "initial intention".<sup>111</sup> According to Wechsler, this expression refers to the "the biblical text as rationally and primarily intended."<sup>112</sup> Although this formulation leaves room for speculation concerning Wechsler's understanding of

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that the same basic distinction applies in Tanḥum's writings. For *pешuṭo shel miqra/basit al-nasq* (or: *al-nasq*) as the contextually sound reading in Saadia, see Ben-Shammai, "Saadya's Introduction to Isaiah," 382-383. In contrast, Samuel b. Ḥofni Gaon equated the *pешaṭ* with the *ẓāhir* as the literal sense of the text, regardless of whether that sense is problematic (Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 46 fn. 56).

<sup>108</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 25. Cf. also Tanḥum's entry for the root *p-sh-ṭ* in the *Al-murshid al-kāfi*: "The plain sense of the verse; the verse does not depart from its plain sense (*pешuṭo shel miqra en miqra yotze mi-yde pешuṭo*). The literal sense of the verse (*dāhir* [sic] *al-nasq*). That is to say, it does not depart from that which its explicit formulation indicates (*mā dalla 'alayhi lafzuhu al-dāhir* [sic])." (Shy, *Murshid*, 490. Cf. Wechsler's citation and translation of this passage in *Strangers*, 24 and fn. 22. For the conflation of *dād* and *zā* in Judeo-Arabic, see Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic* (The Magnes Press: 1995), 39.)

<sup>109</sup> The *ẓāhir/bāṭin* dichotomy originates in a passage in the Qur'an (57:3, Sūrat al-Ḥadīd), in which God is described as "the First and Last, the Outward and the Inward (*al-awwal wa'l-ākhir wa'l-ẓāhir wa'l-bāṭin*)." (English from Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford University Press), 564.) In a hermeneutical context (and as a broad ontological stance), the distinction became widespread among Sufi and Ismaili exegetes and thinkers; see Joel Kraemer, "The Islamic context of medieval Jewish philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, eds. Daniel Frank and Oliver Leaman (Oxford University Press: 2003), 60-61. For the importance of this dichotomy in the Ismaili milieu, see Farhad Daftary, "Intellectual Life Among the Ismailis: An Overview," in *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, ed. Farhad Daftary (I. B. Tauris: 2000), 89-90; Azim Nanji, "Shi'ī Isma'īlī Interpretations of the Qur'an," in *Tafsīr: Interpreting the Qur'ān*, ed. Mustafa Shah (Routledge: 2013), vol. 3, 220-222. For this terminology as used by Moses Ibn Ezra, and its transmission into Hebrew in the works of Abraham Ibn Ezra, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 47, 49-51. For the *ẓāhir/bāṭin* dichotomy in Maimonides' exegesis in the *Guide*, see *ibid.*, 119-126. For this dichotomy in Tanḥum's exegesis, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 25, 33-37. See also Tanḥum's usage in his commentary to Esther 9:31 (for English see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 317, and fn.372; for Arabic see *ibid.*, 9:29 316 and fn.368/33).

<sup>110</sup> Writing about his former intention to author two that respectively explained difficult prophetic parables and rabbinic midrashim, Maimonides' states that he realized that "if we should adhere to parables and to concealment of what ought to be concealed, we would not be deviating from the primary purpose (*fa-mā nakūnu kharajnā 'an al-gharaḍ al-awwal*)." (Pines, *Guide*, 9; Arabic in Salomon Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn (sefer moreh nevukhim) le-rabbenu mosheh ben maimon* (Yunovits: 1930), 5, lines 23-24.)

<sup>111</sup> Tanḥum's terminology is somewhat variable. In the introductory section of his commentary to Jonah 1:1 he thrice declares that the exoteric stratum of meaning is the book's "initial intention" each time employing a slightly different formulation: *Al-qaṣd al-awwal* (Shy, *Perush*, 109); *al-maqṣūd awwalan* (*ibid.*, 111); and *al-gharaḍ al-awwal* (*ibid.*, 113).

<sup>112</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 24.

the precise sense of the expression, he elsewhere clarifies that it refers to the meaning with the greatest accessibility, and hence the most universal utility.<sup>113</sup>

Aviva Shussman understood the expression differently, apparently based on her interpretation of the term *awwal* as denoting primary importance as opposed to the secondary and somewhat problematic allegoresis (*ta'wīl*), which Tanḥum employs when he is unable to present a fuller literal-philological interpretation.<sup>114</sup> In light of Tanḥum's description of the exoteric stratum of Song as "the initial intention (*awwal al-qaṣd*)" of the book – despite his clear discomfort with its eroticism<sup>115</sup> – Shussman's understanding seems highly doubtful.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, Tanḥum makes it clear that the *zāhir* primarily benefits the masses, while the *bāṭin* is reserved for the elect:

*We shall make wreaths of gold for you.* (Song 1:11) The secrets of the religion and its inner truths (*asrār al-sharī'a wa-ḥaqā'iqhā al-bāṭina*).

*With spangles of silver.* (*Ibid.*) The exoteric senses of the *commandments* (*zawāhir al-mitzvot*),<sup>117</sup> which benefit all of *Israel*, just as silver is used by all people, but the elite possess the gold (*wainnamā al-dhahab 'inda al-khawāṣṣ*).<sup>118</sup>

This formulation is powerfully reminiscent of Maimonides' interpretation of Proverbs 25:11 in his introduction to the *Guide*: *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 32 fn. 43.

<sup>114</sup> Shussman, "Qavvim," 91 and fn.17.

<sup>115</sup> See the citation from his commentary to Song immediately below, p.65.

<sup>116</sup> MS Pococke 320, 10b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 11: "It remains for us to explain the difficult expressions from the point of view of their etymological derivation and linguistic form (*min jihat al-ishtiqāq wa-'l-taṣrīf al-laghawī*), for that is the initial purpose of composing of this book (*li-anna dhālika kāna awwal al-qaṣd min waḍ' hādhā al-kitāb*), and discussing these two interpretations [i.e., the historical-allegorical and philosophical-allegorical interpretations of Song] is [also] unavoidable..."

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Abraham Maimonides' discussion of the "common way (*al-sulūk al-'āmm*), consisting of "external performance of the commandments (*a'māl al-mitzvot al-zāhira*)," versus the "special way" (*al-sulūk al-khāṣṣ*) which accesses the "purposes of the commandments and their secrets (*ghāyāt al-mitzvot wa-asrārihā*)." For the former, see Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, 132, line 5; for the latter, see *ibid.*, 134, lines 13-14. See also our discussion below, p.90.

<sup>118</sup> Commentary to Song, MS Pococke 320, 18a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 20.

According to Maimonides, the verse maintains the value of the literal sense of prophetic parables by comparing them to the silver settings, while asserting the superiority of their inner or esoteric meaning by likening the latter to the apples of gold concealed by the fine filigree of the settings.<sup>120</sup> In contrast to the readily accessible exoteric meaning, the esoteric meaning is accessible only to the elect.<sup>121</sup>

According to Tanḥum, the biblical text encodes the esoteric meaning beneath the surface of the literal sense. Concerning his allegorical interpretation of Song, he states that

I did not follow this path with respect to the biblical books apart from this one, for it is of tremendous worth and lofty meaning, and its true purpose is very hard to understand, and very difficult to conceptualize, other than for a few individuals (*wa-ḥaqīqat aghrāḏihi ṣa'bat al-fahm 'usrat al-taṣawwur illā 'alā āḥād*). As for its exoteric sense (*wa-zāhiruhu*), it is not fitting that it should be the root of [its] purpose (*aṣl al-gharaḏ*). Therefore, I considered it proper to tread a middle path between the purely literal sense (*al-zāhir al-maḥḏ*) and the true meaning (*al-ḥaqīqa al-ma'nawīya*). Thus, the masses (*al-jumhūr*) may benefit from this, and the elect (*wa-'l-khawāṣṣ*) from that. And it may be entirely excluded that Solomon intended (*arāda*) in this book that which the exoteric sense (*zāhiruhu*) indicates – poetic statements, rhetorical expressions, and

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<sup>119</sup> See *Guide*, Pines, 11-12.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Sara Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter* (Academic Studies Press: 2011), 27-28, 137.

<sup>121</sup> See *Guide*, Pines, 11-12; Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 8-9, 125-126.

erotic episodes. True is their statement, *may their memories be a blessing: All of the Prophets*<sup>122</sup> *are holy, but the Song of Songs is holy of holies.* (Mishnah Yadayim 3:8)<sup>123</sup>

In this passage, Tanḥum maintains that although the exoteric meaning of the text (*ẓāhir*) may be necessary and beneficial for the masses (*al-jumhūr*),<sup>124</sup> it cannot be “the root of [its] purpose (*aṣl al-gharaḍ*).” We are thus left with two formulations, referring to two distinct facets of the text: The exoteric stratum of the text is *awwal al-qaṣd*, but it is not *aṣl al-gharaḍ*.<sup>125</sup> The “root of the purpose” is the text’s underlying intent and *telos*, the final destination to which the exoteric sense must lead the reader. It is the underlying intention that shapes the surface of the biblical narrative. The surface of the text, its readily understood sense, is the *ẓāhir* – the apparent meaning. This is the “initial” face that the text presents to the reader, and it is thus *hermeneutically* primary.

Tanḥum calls the method by means of which he accesses the esoteric stratum of meaning *ta’wīl*.<sup>126</sup> His conception of *ta’wīl* is rooted in Islamic hermeneutical methods that came to be widely adopted by Jewish authors in the Islamic world. The term itself is of qur’anic origin,

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<sup>122</sup> So read all versions of the citation in Tanḥum’s commentary. This is in contrast with the virtually universally attested reading “all of the Hagiographa (or: [Scriptural] Writings; *ketubim*)”, for which see MSS Kaufmann and Parma (Biblioteca Palatina 2596 and 3173/Di Rossi 138), and the *editio princeps* (Naples: 1492). Note that this appears as 3:9 in the MSS. In addition, there is a variant in *Midrash shir ha-shirim* (also known as *Midrash hazita* and *Shir ha-shirim rabbah*) 1:11, that reads “all of the songs (*kol ha-shirim*)”, for which see Saul Lieberman, “Mishnat shir ha-shirim,” in Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: 1965), 118; Daniel Boyarin, “Two Introductions to the Midrash on the “Song of Songs,”” in *Tarbiz* 56/4 (1987), 493-496.

<sup>123</sup> MS Pococke 320, 34a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 39. For minor textual variants and an alternative translation into Hebrew, see Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 127. For an alternative translation into English, see Paul Fenton, “A Mystical Commentary on the Song of Songs in the Hand of David Maimonides II,” in *Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects in Judaeo-Arabic Culture*, eds. Benjamin Hary and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Brill: 2006), 26.

<sup>124</sup> See p.73-74 below.

<sup>125</sup> Fenton’s translation (“Mystical Commentary,” 26) of *aṣl al-gharaḍ* as “primary intention” is thus somewhat misleading in this context (however understandable).

<sup>126</sup> For Tanḥum’s use of this term in his commentary to Jonah, see Shy, *Perush*, 109, 111, 113, 129. For this term in his commentary to Song, see MS Pococke 320, 29a, 37a, 63a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 33, 42, 75. See also Shy, *Perush*, כז-ל; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 25, 30-32.

where its precise meaning is not entirely clear.<sup>127</sup> Traditional interpreters have understood it to be etymologically related to the term *awwal* (beginning, first), and thus to signify a return to some original intent.<sup>128</sup> Although it originally referred broadly to qur'anic exegesis, and was largely synonymous with the term *tafsīr*, *ta'wīl* soon came to refer more specifically to the allegorical or symbolic interpretation of Scripture.<sup>129</sup>

In its sense as allegorical exegesis, *ta'wīl* was advocated by the Mu'tazilites in cases in which revelation and reason were thought to be in conflict, such as qur'anic verses that contained anthropomorphisms.<sup>130</sup> Such usage of *ta'wīl* may be found in the works of Saadia Gaon (d.942) and Samuel b. Ḥofni Gaon (d.1013), whose works demonstrate a familiarity with Islamic *kalām*.<sup>131</sup> Allegorical *ta'wīl* was more broadly applied by mystically and philosophically inclined interpreters of the Qur'ān,<sup>132</sup> and particularly among the Ismailis, who favored this approach to such an extent that they became known derisively (and somewhat misleadingly) as the *bāṭiniyya*.<sup>133</sup> Sufi exegetes also employed *ta'wīl* in this sense, often in a highly associative

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<sup>127</sup> For examples, see Qur'ān 12:6 (Sūrat Yūsuf); 3:7 (Āl 'Imrān); 18:78 (Sūrat al-Kahf).

<sup>128</sup> See Azim Nanji, "Ismā'īlī Philosophy," in *History of Islamic Philosophy* (Routledge: 1996), ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, 147. For the early use of this term see Kees Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Brill: 1993), 63-64; Wansbrough, *Qur'anic Studies*, 154-156.

<sup>129</sup> See Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Schools of Qur'anic Exegesis: Genesis and Development* (Routledge: 2010), 104-105.

<sup>130</sup> Kraemer, "The Islamic context," 58.

<sup>131</sup> See Sarah Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish *kalam*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, eds. Daniel Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge University Press: 2003), 71-90; Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Jewish Thought in Iraq in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Judaean-Arabic Studies: Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Society for Judaean-Arabic Studies*, ed. Norman Golb (Harwood Academic Publishers: 1997), 23; *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis*, ed. Moshe Zucker (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: 1984), 191; Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 2. For Samuel b. Hofni's dependence upon the thought and literary conventions of Mu'tazilite *kalām* see Ben-Shammai, "Jewish Thought in Iraq," 27.

<sup>132</sup> Kraemer, "The Islamic context," 60-61.

<sup>133</sup> For Ismaili use of *ta'wīl* see Ismail Poonawala "Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Clarendon Press: 1988), ed. Andrew Rippin, 199-222; and Paul Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge University Press: 1993), 124-133. In his *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya wa-faḍā'il al-mustazhiriyya* (or *Kitāb al-mustazhiri*), al-Ghazālī's uses the terminology of *al-bāṭiniyya* in anti-Ismaili polemics. See Farouk Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam* (I. B. Tauris/The Institute of Ismaili Studies: 2001). While most branches of the Ismailis affirmed the *ẓāhir* along with the *bāṭin*, there were those who considered the *bāṭin* to replace the *ẓāhir*, such as the Nizaris.

manner.<sup>134</sup> The associative quality of Sufi esotericism is implicit in their frequent references to the Qur'an's "allusion" (*ishāra*) to the intended esoteric meaning or "secret" (*sirr*).<sup>135</sup> In the case of Sufi and Ismaili esotericism, the method of *ta'wīl* reflects the very hermeneutical dualism discussed above, according to which the outer stratum of meaning (*ẓāhir*) benefits the entire religious community, while the inner stratum (or strata) of meaning (*bāṭin/bawāṭin* or *sirr/asrār*) is reserved for the elect.<sup>136</sup>

In a Jewish context, allegorizing *ta'wīl* was employed by Maimonides,<sup>137</sup> echoing the Ismaili hermeneutics that he would have encountered in Faṭimid Egypt.<sup>138</sup> He was particularly concerned with the philosophical exegesis of passages that he identified as prophetic allegories, although they might not seem as such to those whom he regarded as less enlightened readers.<sup>139</sup>

As a rule, he held the inner sense of Scripture to be essentially consonant with Peripatetic philosophy.<sup>140</sup> Whereas some late antique Christian and Hellenistic Jewish dualistic approaches

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<sup>134</sup> For Sufi hermeneutics, including the use of *ta'wīl*, see Kristin Zahra Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qur'an in Classical Islam* (Routledge: 2006), 7-14, 15; William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (State University of New York Press: 1989), 199-202. For the use of *ta'wīl* as attributed to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and transmitted by al-Sulamī, see Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (Paulist Press: 1996), 76-77. For al-Ghazālī's hermeneutical dualism, see Muhammad Abdul Quasem, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Qur'an Exegesis According to Personal Opinion," in *Tafsīr: Interpreting the Qur'an*, ed. Mustafa Shah (Routledge: 2003), vol. 2, 142-157.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries*, 3, 15, 35-36, 128. For allusion as distinct from metaphor proper, see J. F. Procopé, "Greek Philosophy, Hermeneutics, and Alexandrian Understanding of the Old Testament," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament* ed. Magne Sæbø, vol. 1, part 1 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 1996), 465.

<sup>136</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (University of North Carolina Press: 1975), 41; Daftary, *Intellectual Life*, 90-91.

<sup>137</sup> For Maimonides' hermeneutical dualism see Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in his World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton University Press: 2009), 75-76; Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 118-121. For examples of his use of the term, cf. *Guide* I:28 and I:29 (see Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 41, line 19; 42, line 15).

<sup>138</sup> See Alfred L. Ivry, "Neoplatonic Currents," *ibid.*, "Isma'ili Theology and Maimonides' Philosophy," in *Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity*, ed. Daniel Frank (Brill: 1995), 271-299.

<sup>139</sup> See his statement that the second purpose of the *Guide* is to explain "very obscure parables occurring in the books of the prophets, but not explicitly identified there as such. Hence an ignorant or heedless individual might think that they possess only an external sense, but no internal one (*annahā 'alā ẓāhirihā wa-lā bāṭin fihā*)." (Pines, *Guide*, 6; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 2, lines 24-26.)

<sup>140</sup> Sara Klein-Braslavy, "Bible Commentary," in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. Kenneth Seeskin, (Cambridge University Press: 2005), 245-272; *ibid.*, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 8.

devalued the exoteric sense of the text,<sup>141</sup> Maimonides was careful to assert the inherent value of the *ẓāhir* even as he maintained the fundamental epistemic superiority of the *bāṭin*.<sup>142</sup> In so doing, he adopted the Ismaili stance of viewing the outer stratum of meaning as necessary for the communication of basic truths in a comprehensible manner and establishing correct praxis, while the inner stratum is reserved for the elect and revealed through careful analysis and contemplation.<sup>143</sup> Maimonides' adoption of this method was of tremendous importance for philosophically inclined Jewish exegetes who followed him, including Tanḥum.<sup>144</sup>

Generally, Tanḥum refrains from discussing the esoteric sense of Scripture, preferring to elucidate difficult Hebrew terms or clarify linguistic difficulties.<sup>145</sup> In cases in which the *ẓāhir* of an expression or passage openly contradicts philosophical truth – e.g., when a verse appears to convey an anthropological conception of God – Tanḥum employs the terminology of *majāz/isti'āra* (metaphor or figurative attribution),<sup>146</sup> although he also occasionally describes the

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<sup>141</sup> See Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel* (University of California Press: 1993), 8-9.

<sup>142</sup> See Maimonides' introduction to the *Guide* (Pines, 10-12). However, note the devaluation of the parable (*mashal/mathal*) expressed in the same passage once its denotatum has been identified, in Maimonides' discussion of the rabbinic comparison of the *mashal* to a taper or wick (*ibid.*, 11). In his subsequent discussion of Prov. 25:11, he does forcefully assert the worth of the *ẓāhir* (*ibid.*, 12).

<sup>143</sup> See Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge University Press: 2007), 167-168.

<sup>144</sup> For the impact of Maimonidean philosophical exegesis in medieval Jewish communities the world over, see Robinson, "Philosophy and Science." Philosophical allegoresis was also transmitted within the Maimonidean dynasty – for Abraham b. Moses Maimonides' use of allegorizing *ta'wīl*, see his commentary to Genesis 1:26, in *Perush rabbenu avraham ben ha-rambam za"l 'al bereshit u-shmot*, trans. Ernest Wiesenberg [Hebrew], ed. S.D. Sassoon, (London: 1959), 4-5. See also his *ẓāhir/bāṭin* distinction in a legal-ritual context, discussed on p.90 below. The revolution of Maimonidean philosophical allegoresis even alienated certain philosophically inclined exegetes from the *peshat* school of interpretation, such as Samuel Ibn Tibbon; see Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 34-35, 69-70, 167.

<sup>145</sup> See Shy, *AlKulliyat*, 539; Wechsler, *Strangers*, 35-36.

<sup>146</sup> See Tanḥum's commentary to Jonah 1:6, where he describes an anthropomorphic expression (*ulay yit'asheet ha-elohim*, for which he offers three possible interpretations) as *isti'āra majāziyya*; Shy, *Perush*, 115. See also his use of the phrase *majāz wa-tamthīl* in his commentary to Qoh. 2:11, in MS Pococke, 89a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 37. For *isti'āra* in general, see *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (Brill: 2006-2009), vol. 2, 441-447. For extensive studies of the terms *isti'āra* and *majāz*, their use and development, see Wolfhart Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of Isti'āra in Arabic Poetics* (Franz Steiner: 1977); *ibid.*, "On the Genesis of the *Haqīqa-Majāz* Dichotomy," in *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984), 111-40. For Moses Ibn Ezra's use of this terminology, and subsequently by Abraham Ibn Ezra's apparent adoption of *isti'āra* as one type of *mashal* in an exegetical context, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 55-62. For

practice of neutralizing philosophically problematic passages as *ta'wīl*.<sup>147</sup> This is essentially a local solution, appealing to the principle that “the Torah speaks in human language (*dibberah torah ki-leshon bene adam*).”<sup>148</sup>

However, there are contexts in which Tanḥum does adopt the method of *ta'wīl* in a more extensive allegorizing fashion, most notably in his commentaries to Jonah and Song.<sup>149</sup> It is tempting to view Tanḥum’s restraint in his application of *ta'wīl* as indicative of the method’s essentially apologetic function. However, this view would be overly reductive. Rather, it seems that Tanḥum’s reticence stems primarily from his belief that not all readers are equally equipped or able to grasp profound philosophical insights,<sup>150</sup> and from his general intention to render the literal sense of Scripture accessible to a minimally educated reader.<sup>151</sup>

Taking the full range of his terminology into account, we might propose the following simple scheme of Tanḥum’s conception of prophetic authorship (i.e., the production of Scripture) and biblical interpretation (i.e., accessing its meaning as a reader):

1. There is an underlying prophetic intention or purpose (*aṣl al-gharaḍ*), consistent with philosophical truths, that should remain hidden from those unprepared for it. These are

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Maimonides’ use of the term, see *ibid.*, 98-101. In his translation of Maimonides’ *Guide*, Pines renders *isti'āra* either as “derivative term” (cf. p.5) or as “figurative” (cf. p.27; see also Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 99 fn.6).

<sup>147</sup> Cf. the passage from *Al-kulliyāt* in Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 90; translated below. For a similar usage, cf. Maimonides’ statement that had he wished to, he could have interpreted the verses of the Creation narrative to support the Aristotelian view of the eternity of the world, just as he did concerning the verses that imply divine corporeality (*bal kāna yumkinunā ta'wīl dhālika kamā fa'alnā fī nafy al-tajsīm*). (For this passage, see Pines, *Guide*, 327-328; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 229, lines 11-12.)

<sup>148</sup> For a broader discussion of this maxim and Tanḥum’s use thereof, see below, p.111-112, and fnn.124-127.

<sup>149</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, ל-ל; Paul Fenton, “Mystical Commentary,” 25; and Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*.

<sup>150</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 35-36. Cf. also Shy, *Perush*, 110-111: “Know that true knowledge (*al-tahqīq*) of this is not able to be unveiled to everyone (*lā yumkin kashfuhu li-kull aḥad*).”

<sup>151</sup> See Tanḥum’s commentary to Daniel 2:6, where he states that his primary intention in his commentary is not to present a rigorous analysis of every word or verse, but to elucidate the meaning of difficult and expressions that might not be clear even to a reader who is quite familiar with Hebrew and Aramaic (Qafīḥ, *Daniel*, 36). Contrast this with Isadore Twersky’s suggestion that Tanḥum’s commentaries were intended for readers with minimal or no knowledge of Hebrew (Twersky, *Introduction to Maimonides’ Code*, 333, fn. 22).

“the secrets of the Law and their inner truths (*asrār al-sharī‘a wa-ḥaqā‘iquhā al-bāṭina*).” This stratum of meaning is reserved for the elite (*al-khawāṣṣ*).

2. The esoteric meaning is encoded within a narrative that benefits the masses due to its accessibility and applicability: This is Scripture’s *zāhir* or *pashaṭ*. *From the point of view of the reader* – even the enlightened reader – this is the point of entry, i.e., the “initial intent (*al-qaṣd al-awwal*)”. This stratum of meaning is beneficial to all readers, and the unenlightened do not progress beyond it.
3. After understanding the “initial intent”, the process of recovering the underlying purpose is *ta’wīl*.

Tanḥum partly models his method of *ta’wīl* on his understanding of the methods of Targum Onqelos.<sup>152</sup> He devoted an entire chapter of *Al-kulliyāt* to the Targum and its methods, entitling it *Fī tabyīn aghrād al-mutarjim*<sup>153</sup> *fī sharḥihi* (Explaining the Purposes of the Translator in his Interpretation).<sup>154</sup> According to Tanḥum, the Targum demonstrates the possibility of rationalist exegesis, and admirably models the interpretation of Scripture according to a philological method, as well as according to its esoteric-philosophical stratum:

From this [...], his superiority<sup>155</sup> (may peace be upon him) is apparent to any fair person, and his perfection in both languages, and his immersion [in the text] in order to retrieve [its] meanings, as well as his strength in the other sciences (*fī sār al-‘ulūm*), and his skill in all branches of

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<sup>152</sup> For the targumim in general, see Paul V. M. Flesher and Bruce Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Brill: 2011). For Targum Onqelos in particular, and its relationship to other targumim, see *ibid.*, 109-129. For the anonymity of the targumists – including the author/s of Targum Onqelos – see Luis Díez Merino, “Targum Manuscripts and Critical Editions,” in *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in their Historical Context*, ed. D. R. G. Beattie and M. J. McNamara (Sheffield Academic Press: 1994), 51. For the interpretive methods of the targumim, see Joseph Ribera, “The Targum: From Translation to Interpretation,” in *ibid.*, 218-225.

<sup>153</sup> Or: *al-metargem*. The orthography of the Arabic and Hebrew is not easily distinguishable, as it rests on a single diacritic.

<sup>154</sup> Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 86. Here the title contains its number, *Al-faṣl al-rābi‘ wa-‘ashrīn fī* [...], but the order and numbering of the chapters varies among the MSS (see *ibid.*, 86-87).

<sup>155</sup> This word is missing from one MS; see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 90 and fn. 7.

knowledge (*fī jamī' al-ma'ārif*): In transmission,<sup>156</sup> jurisprudence, the purpose of verses, prophetic allegories, philosophical wisdom, theoretical examination, true opinions; the methods of prophecy and their nature, and its truth, its various levels; the metaphors of the prophets in their depictions and their rhetorical discourses; and in general in other types and kinds of sciences, whether natural or conventional (*min naql wa-fiqh wa-gharaḥ al-nuṣūṣ wa-amthāl al-anbiyā' wa-'l-ḥikma al-falsafīyya wa-'l-mabāḥith al-naẓariyya wa-'l-ārā' al-ḥaqīqiyya wa-fī turuq al-nubuwwa wa-māhiyyatihā wa-ḥaqīqat amrihā wa-ikhtilāf marātibihā wa-isti'ārāt al-anbiyā' fī tamthilātihim wa-khaṭābatihim wa-fī al-jumla fī sā'ir ajnās al-'ulūm wa-anwā'ihā min ṭabī'ī wa-min waḍ'ī*).

Therefore, I find it most strange – as any intelligent individual who has contemplated [the Targum's] interpretation, and understood its meanings, and considered its explanations should – how after [studying the Targum] one can consider any of these meanings problematic when one hears it, or how one can deny any of the true meanings (*al-ḥaqā'iq*), or how one can remain ignorant of the negation of [any] corporeal attribute with respect to God (exalted is He) or the angels, or that one's soul could avoid interpreting the speech of the prophets allegorically when their literal meaning is not in agreement with reality, according to that which we have explained (*aw tanfur nafsuhu min ta'wīl shay' min kalām al-anbiyā' idhā lam yakun ḡāhiruhu muṭābiq li-'l-mawjūd 'alā mā bayyannā*).<sup>157</sup>

<sup>156</sup> Or: revelation. The term *naql* may refer to the transmission of authoritative traditions, in which case Tanḥum is asserting the Targum's awareness of rabbinic tradition – cf. Zoref's Hebrew translation, *masoret [torah she-be-'al peh]*, Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 91. Cf. the use of this term by Saadia, Samuel b. Ḥofni, and Maimonides in Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 35, 53, 88, 114-115, 118, 261-262, 270-273, 290-291, 303, 335-336, 346, 424, 430, 460, and elsewhere. (For the relationship between Targum Onqelos and rabbinic tradition, see Bernard Grossfeld, "Targum Onqelos, Halakha, and the Halakhic Midrashim," in *The Aramaic Bible*, 228-246.) Alternatively, it may be used in the sense of the common *naql/'aql* dichotomy, referring to the opposition between revealed and transmitted truth versus rationally derived truth, for which see Oliver Leaman, "The developed *kalām* tradition (Part I: Sunnism)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology* (Cambridge University Press: ), 84.

<sup>157</sup> Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 90.

As we can see in this passage, the Targum provides Tanḥum with a compelling demonstration of the legitimacy of philosophical *ta'wīl* of Scripture, particularly when something is at stake – such as belief in principles that are not reconcilable with Peripatetic philosophy or Maimonidean theology. Once again, Tanḥum's model for this stance is Maimonides, who used Targum Onqelos to model his own hermeneutical approach to biblical passages that appeared to ascribe anthropomorphic or anthropopathic qualities to God.<sup>158</sup> Following Maimonides' account, Tanḥum declares Onqelos' "perfection in the two languages (*kamāluhu fī lughatayn*),"<sup>159</sup> which facilitates his authoritative interpretation of figurative speech into conceptually sound Aramaic discourse for the masses. Tanḥum's account ascribes even greater erudition and philosophical sensitivity to the targumist, who is said to apply the full range of his philological, scientific, and religious knowledge to the interpretation of Scripture – as Tanḥum will do in the course of his own exegetical project.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, Tanḥum would insist that the underlying esoteric meaning of Scripture is accessible to the reader only after rigorous philological analysis.<sup>161</sup>

We may now more fully understand the philosophical implications of Tanḥum's philological project, particularly in connection with Maimonides' application of Proverbs 25:11 to scriptural

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<sup>158</sup> See in particular *Guide* I:27 (Pines, 57-59), and I:48 (*ibid.*, 106-108).

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Maimonides statement that "Onqelos the Proselyte was very perfect in the Hebrew and Aramaic languages (*onqelos ha-ger kāmīl jiddan fī al-lugha al-'ibrāniyya wa-'l-siryāniyya*)..." (Pines, *Guide*, 57; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 38, line 24.)

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 89-92.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Tanḥum's rejection of an allegorical interpretation of the figure of the sun in his commentary to Qohelet, after which he makes the following statement: "And we have made a general statement concerning *ta'wīl* in the introduction to the book (*fī ṣadr al-kitāb* [i.e., in *Al-kulliyāt*]), [concerning] that which one is required to know of things when resorting to *ta'wīl* and removing expressions from that which they indicate. And in addition to this, we have mentioned in the beginning of the *Book of Job* that to one who frees oneself of fancies and contemplates that which we have elucidated, the truth will become plainly apparent (*fa-man tajarrada 'an al-hawā wa-nazara mā bayyannāhu thumma zahara lahu al-ḥaqq 'iyān*)." (MS Pococke 320, 89b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 37.) See also Tanḥum's critique of the Targum to Hosea 1:2-3, in which the latter interprets the prophet's marriage to the "wife of harlotry" (*eshet zenunim*) Gomer bat Diblaim and the subsequent births of their children in an allegorical fashion: "And the targumist (may peace be upon him) made it explicit that the entire narrative is a parable (*mathal*), but he removed it entirely from its literal sense (*lākinnahu akhrajahu 'an al-zāhir jumlatan*), and took it in an allegorical sense (*wa-dhahaba bihā ilā wajh min al-ta'wīl*). [...] And he even interpreted the names allegorically (*wa-ta'awwala ḥattā al-asmā'*). [...] And let his declaration that it is not a factual story in the literal sense suffice you. And the truth will reveal its path." (Shy, *Perush*, 3; also discussed in *ibid.*, טכ).

hermeneutics. By identifying the external silver filigree with exoteric meanings that establish desirable political norms and cultivate ethical dispositions, and the interior golden apples with esoteric philosophical truths, Maimonides’ effectively articulates two stages in the individual’s engagement with Scripture.<sup>162</sup> His hermeneutical dualism thus corresponds with his dual conception of human perfection as articulated in the *Guide*, according to which the social and ethical concerns represent the first perfection, while intellectual perfection is the culmination of the entire program of one’s religious and philosophical training.<sup>163</sup> Thus, the *zāhir* instructs the reader concerning ethical perfection and positive social norms, while the *bāṭin* speaks to the more advanced reader in pursuit of intellectual perfection. Tanḥum’s “initial intention (*al-qaṣd al-awwal*)” thus parallels Maimonides’ first perfection, while “the fundamental purpose (*aṣl al-gharaḍ*)” remains the perfection of the intellect through philosophical investigation and contemplation, corresponding with the second perfection. By applying a dualistic hermeneutical model to much of Scripture, and insisting that sound *ta’wīl* may only follow rigorous lexical and literary analysis, Tanḥum imbues the philological project with philosophical significance. For Tanḥum, philology becomes a gateway to intellectual perfection.

In light of the above discussion, the precise nature of Tanḥum’s self-conscious reliance upon Ibn Janāḥ and Maimonides becomes clear. As he states explicitly in *Al-kullīyyāt*: “I depend primarily and rely chiefly on two [authorities]. The first of them is Rabbi Moses [Maimonides], *may the memory of the righteous be a blessing*, in anything pertaining to opinions, doctrines, or prophetic

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<sup>162</sup> For the association of the exoteric sense of Scripture with the establishment of political stability and positive interpersonal norms, and the esoteric sense with the attainment of philosophical truth, see Maimonides’ introduction to the *Guide* (Pines, 12). For the pairing of political and ethical concerns under the rubric of bodily welfare (as opposed to welfare of the soul), see *Guide* III.27 (Pines, 510-512).

<sup>163</sup> For the silver filigree, see . For a first and second perfection, which aim at the welfare of the body and soul respectively, see *Guide* III.27; Pines, 510-511. (Note that the order is reversed in the opening sentence of the chapter, which describes a first and second aim [*qaṣd*] of the Law [*al-sharī‘a*], which pertain to the soul and body.)

secrets. [...] The second is Abū al-Walīd b. Janāḥ, in linguistic matters and forms.”<sup>164</sup> Each of these figures allows Tanḥum to orient himself vis-à-vis one aspect of the text. While Ibn Janāḥ provides the initial basis for Tanḥum’s philological analysis, Maimonides serves as his model for allegorical *ta’wīl* of Scripture. In neither case does Tanḥum follow his predecessor slavishly. In his *peshat* exegesis, he draws on a tremendous breadth of sources, and regularly presents highly independent interpretations. In his allegorical exegesis he regularly demonstrates his originality and creativity,<sup>165</sup> and even differs from Maimonides on certain fundamental points of psychology and soteriology.<sup>166</sup> However, the importance of the Andalusian tradition in shaping Tanḥum’s approach to the text is clear, and Ibn Janāḥ was its central founding figure.<sup>167</sup> In addition, Tanḥum’s acknowledgment of Maimonides as his model for philosophical exegesis is no mere attempt to anchor his authority in that of his illustrious predecessor. His allegorizing *ta’wīl* is profoundly shaped by “the Great Eagle”, even as he looked increasingly to new intellectual currents to enrich his reading of Scripture.

### **Between Ibn Janāḥ and Ibn Maymūn: Tanḥum’s hermeneutical terminology**

As noted above, Tanḥum employs the Arabic literary terminology of *majāz/isti’āra* (metaphor or figurative attribution) to neutralize theologically problematic biblical formulations.<sup>168</sup> More

<sup>164</sup> Arabic: *fa-inna awwal i’timādī wa-quwwat istinādī ‘alā ithnayn minhum awwaluhum rabbenu mosheh z[ekher] tz[addiq] l[i-berakhah] fī mā yataḍammanuhu min ārā’ wa-i’tiqādāt wa-asrār nabawiyya [...] wa-thāniyuhum abū al-walīd bin janāḥ fī al-mā ‘ānī al-laghawiyya wa-taṣārīf al-laḥẓiyya.* (See Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 45 fn. 8. See also Shy, “AlKulliyat,” 537-8; *ibid.*, “Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva’ah le-millono le-mishneh torah,” 533.

<sup>165</sup> See Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 60.

<sup>166</sup> See below, pp.130-133, p.272-273, p.325.

<sup>167</sup> Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 57. Ibn Janāḥ’s work was largely enabled by that of Judah Ḥayyūj; see Maman, “The Linguistic School.” For Tanḥum’s awareness of Ḥayyūj’s centrality in informing Ibn Janāḥ’s work, see Shy, “Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva’ah le-millono le-mishneh torah,” 533.

<sup>168</sup> See above, p.69-70. For *isti’āra* and *majāz* in general, and the *majāz/ḥaqīqa* (figurative/literal) dichotomy in Arabic literature, see Heinrichs, *Hand of the Northwind*; *ibid.*, “On the Genesis of the *Ḥaqīqa-Majāz* Dichotomy.” Formally, *majāz* and *isti’āra* are distinct: The former denotes any irregular or nonliteral formulation, while the latter more narrowly denotes metaphor (understood either in its poetic sense of imaginative application of attributes or states, or in its Aristotelian sense of the substitution of meaning). See Mordechai Z. Cohen, “A Poet’s Biblical

frequently, he uses these terms in order to explain the etymological derivation of a term, or Scripture's use of figurative language.<sup>169</sup> In this practice, Tanḥum follows closely in the footsteps of the Spanish *peshat* tradition. The terminology of *majāz/isti'āra* was employed by Ibn Janāḥ,<sup>170</sup> and used and discussed by Moses Ibn Ezra in his exegetical work *Maqālat al-ḥadīqa fī ma'nā al-majāz wa-'l-ḥaqīqa* (The Treatise of the Garden on Figurative and Literal Language).<sup>171</sup> In fact, one may point to two distinct understandings of metaphor (*isti'āra*) in the Spanish *peshat* tradition, both emerging from earlier Islamic sources: One informed by the Aristotelian conception, favored in logical works, and largely adopted by qur'anic exegetes; and another emerging from the poetic tradition and being primarily employed in literary criticism. While advocates of the Aristotelian/logical approach understood metaphor as the substitution of one word for another in naming a thing, the poetic tradition had a simpler understanding of

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Exegesis," in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 93:3 (2003), 545-551. However, Tanḥum appears to use them interchangeably, and often pairs them together. See for example MS Poccocke 320, 48b (Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 58), 50b (Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 60), 123b (Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 62), and his use of the formulation *isti'āra majāziyya* in his commentary to Jonah 1:6 (Shy, *Perush*, 115).

<sup>169</sup> For *isti'āra* and *majāz* used together in such a context in Tanḥum's commentary to Qohelet, see MS Poccocke 320, 123b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 62. For similar use of *isti'āra* in the same commentary, see MS Poccocke 320, 79b, 146b, 157b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 30, 78, 86. For Tanḥum's use of *majāz* in a *peshat* context in his commentary to Song, see MS Poccocke 320, 48b, 67a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 58, 80. For similar use of *isti'āra* in the same work, see MS Poccocke 320, 48b, 67b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 58, 80.

<sup>170</sup> For example, see his use of *isti'āra* and/or *majāz* in verbal roots beginning with the letter *alef* in Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 16 ('-b-h), 17 ('-b-l), 24 ('-h-l), 38 ('-y-l), 43 ('-k-l), 57 ('-m-n). See also Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 161.

<sup>171</sup> For this translation of the title, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 3. For an extensive study of Moses Ibn Ezra's *Maqālat al-ḥadīqa fī ma'nā al-majāz wa-'l-ḥaqīqa*, see Paul Fenton, *Philosophie et exégèse dans le Jardin de la métaphore de Moïse Ibn 'Ezra* (E. J. Brill: 1997). See also Stephen (Shemu'el) Harvey's review essay on Fenton's aforementioned book, "Terumato ha-filosofit shel mosheh ibn 'ezra," in *Pe'amim* 73 (1997), 147-152; and Mordechai Z. Cohen's review essay, "A Poet's Biblical Exegesis." See also Mordechai Z. Cohen, "The Aesthetic Exegesis of Moses Ibn Ezra," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* 1/2, ed. Magne Sæbø (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 2000), 282-301. As yet, there is no complete edition of *Maqālat al-ḥadīqa fī ma'nā al-majāz wa-'l-ḥaqīqa*. Moses Ibn Ezra's other major work, on the topic of Hebrew poetics and based extensively on Arabic literary models, has been published in two critical editions: With a Hebrew translation, see *Kitāb al-muḥādara wa-'l-mudhākara: Sefer ha-'iyyunim ve-ha-diiyunim*, ed. and trans. Abraham Halkin (Mekize Nirdamim:1975); for an edition in Arabic script with a Spanish translation, see *Kitāb al-Muḥādara wal-Mudākara*, ed. and trans. Montserrat Abumalham Mas (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Filología: 1985-1986), 2 vols.

metaphor as the imaginary ascription of an attribute to something that does not possess it.<sup>172</sup>

While Ibn Janāḥ's usage reflects the former approach, Moses Ibn Ezra may be regarded as the chief promoter of the latter conception in a Jewish context.<sup>173</sup> Tanḥum's usage of the terminology in philological (*pешaṭ*) exegesis indicates his adoption of the Aristotelian-exegetical sense as attested in Ibn Janāḥ.<sup>174</sup> In a general sense, *majāz* and *isti'āra* featured among the preferred exegetical lexicon in the Andalusian exegetical tradition. In adopting this terminology in *pешaṭ* exegesis, Tanḥum once again demonstrates his close alignment with that intellectual milieu.

In his allegorical exegesis, Tanḥum combines the terminology of *majāz/isti'āra* with the Alfarabian logical formulations that were most famously applied to Scriptural exegesis by Maimonides, most notably *ism mushtarik/ishtirāk al-ism* (equivocal term/equivocality).<sup>175</sup> This

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<sup>172</sup> See Heinrichs, *Northwind*; Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 55-62.

<sup>173</sup> Cohen, "A Poet's Biblical Exegesis," 547-551; *ibid.*, *Three Approaches*, 56, 80-81.

<sup>174</sup> See for example his commentary to Song 4:16, where Tanḥum states that the term *yizzelu* (flow,  $\sqrt{n-z-l}$ ) – a term properly or originally applied only to liquids – is here applied to scents, and calls this technique "nonliteral and metaphorical (*majāz wa-isti'āra*)". (MS Pococke 320, 48b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 58. Song 4:16 is not discussed by Ibn Janāḥ in his entry for the root *n-z-l* – see Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 421-422.) See also his commentary to Song 8:6, where he states that the terminology of "sparks" is here applied (*ustu'āra*) to arrows. (MS Pococke 320, 67b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 80.) The latter example is particularly informative, as Ibn Janāḥ states in connection with it that "they liken (*shabbahū*)" arrows to sparks in using this lexeme (a formulation adopted by David Qimḥi's lexicon in Hebrew translation), but does not use the terminology of *isti'āra*. (See Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 690.) Indeed, according to the Aristotelian conception of *isti'āra*, every term that is employed metaphorically must share some property with the thing to which it is applied, technically called the *wajh al-shabah* – which is to say that metaphor is based on an implicit simile. (Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 53; *ibid.*, "A Poet's Biblical Exegesis," 549; and cf. Kamal Abu Deeb, "Al-Jurjānī's Classification of *Isti'āra* with Special Reference to Aristotle's Classification of Metaphor," in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 2 [1971], 61-62.) Tanḥum here frames Ibn Janāḥ's observation in more technically precise language: It is a case of *isti'āra* according to the "name transfer" (Aristotelian-Alfarabian) model, based upon an implicit simile.

<sup>175</sup> In particular, see Maimonides introduction to the *Guide*: "The first purpose of this Treatise is to explain the meanings of certain terms occurring in books of prophecy. Some of these terms are equivocal (*asmā' mushtarika*); hence the ignorant attribute to them only one or some of the meanings in which the term in question is used. Others are derivative terms (*musta'āra*); hence they attribute to them only the original meaning from which the other meaning is derived. Others are amphibolous terms (*mushakkaka*), so that at times they are believed to be univocal and at other times equivocal." (Pines, *Guide*, 5; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 2.) On the background of Maimonides' exegetical terminology in al-Fārābī's logical works (including the *ism mushtarik*, *ism mushakkak*, and *isti'āra*), and for discussions of his particular usage of this set of terminology, see Arthur Hyman, "Maimonides' Use of Religious Language," in *Perspectives on Maimonides*, ed. Joel L. Kraemer (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization: 2008), 175-191; Mordechai Z. Cohen, "Logic to Interpretation: Maimonides' Use of al-Fārābī's Model of Metaphor," in

exegetical vocabulary became particularly popular in Hebrew translation among post-Maimonidean exegetes in Christian Spain and Occitania (e.g., *ism mushtarik* > *shem meshuttaf*, *ism mushakkak* > *shem mesuppaq*).<sup>176</sup> Indeed, Maimonides himself employed the earlier terminology of *isti'āra* in its distinct Aristotelian-Alfarabian sense, slightly reformulating the concept in the process,<sup>177</sup> but homonymity became his preferred method for resolving problematic passages.<sup>178</sup> Whereas Maimonides used these terms to harmonize anthropomorphic and anthropopathic formulations in Scripture with his own apophatic theology, and restricted allegoresis to passages that he identified as prophetic parables (*amthāl*), Tanḥum applied the tools of both homonymity and metaphor widely in philosophical allegoresis.<sup>179</sup> In an allegorical context, Tanḥum's usage of *majāz/isti'āra* terminology becomes looser, sometimes appearing to echo the poetic conception of imaginary attribution more than the Aristotelian model of word substitution.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, in this context, he invokes *isti'āra* when stressing the aesthetic value in presenting lofty subjects in an attractive and compelling manner.<sup>181</sup> Insofar as Maimonides' use

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Zutot 2002 104-113; *ibid.*, “Moses Ibn Ezra vs. Maimonides: Argument for a Poetic Definition of Metaphor (*Isti'āra*),” in *Edebiyât: Journal of Middle Eastern and Comparative Literature* 11 (2000), 1-28; *ibid.*, *Three Approaches*, 98-136. For Abraham Ibn Daud's use of this terminology prior to Maimonides, see Resianne Fontaine, “Was Maimonides an Epigone?” in *Studia Rosenthaliana* 40 (2007-2008), 17-18.

For Tanḥum's use of *isti'āra* and *majāz* in allegorical exegesis, see his commentary to Song, in MS Pococke 320, 8a, 40a, 46a, 48a, 48b, 50b, 56b, 58b, 67a-68b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 8, 46, 55, 57, 58, 60, 67, 70, 80-81. Cf. also 10a-b, 43a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 10-11, 51. See also the example from Tanḥum's allegorical commentary to Jonah, discussed below, p.126.

<sup>176</sup> See Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 100-104, 112-114; Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 112-114. For the *ism mushakkak* as occupying a more minor role in the *Guide*, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 101, fn. 11.

<sup>177</sup> Cohen, “Logic to Interpretation.”

<sup>178</sup> Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 112-114.

<sup>179</sup> See in particular the usage in his commentary to Song, MS Pococke 320, 11b, 12a, 17a, 21a, 35b, 49a, 55a, 56a, 62a, 62b, 63a-b, 69a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 12, 13, 19, 23, 41, 58, 65, 66, 74, 75, 82.

<sup>180</sup> Particularly notable is Tanḥum's statement that familiar pleasures are metaphorically attributed to an experience after death that is indescribable – see MS Pococke 320, 68a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 81. Note also his account of Solomon's methodology in Song as one of borrowing “poetic attributes and rhetorical, arousing, beautiful – or *murdhila mub 'ida mukarraha* – metaphors (*al-ṣifāt al-shi'riyya wa'l-isti'ārāt al-khuṭubiyya al-mushawwiqa al-murghiba al-muḥsina aw al-murdhila al-mub 'ida al-mukriha*),” depending on the subject matter.

<sup>181</sup> See MS Pococke 8a, 10a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 8, 10.

of this logical terminology represents a linguistic argument for philosophical exegesis, he might be understood to be applying Alfarabian logical terminology after the method of the Andalusian *peshat* school, presenting a Peripatetic reading of Scriptural theology, psychology, and prophetology based on semantic analysis.<sup>182</sup> For Tanḥum, the deep link between *peshat* and *ta'wīl* warranted an expanded application of these exegetical tools, which he used in order to expose the allegorical sense of Scripture. In this sense, such linguistic features of the text are indeed an *ishāra* (indication, allusion), pointing the reader towards the inner meaning of Scripture.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 104, 129-133; and cf. Cohen, “Logic to Interpretation,” 111-112. Cf. also Moses Ibn Ezra’s similar identification of *majāz* in philosophically problematic cases, discussed in Cohen, *A Poet’s Biblical Exegesis*, 537. In at least one case, Tanḥum uses the term *ism mushtarik* in the service of *peshat*, reducing the tension between different verses in Qohelet that alternatively condemn or apparently extol *ka’as* (usually understood to refer to anger or misery). For a broad discussion of the background to this interpretation, which is not Tanḥum’s primary means of resolving this contradiction, see below, p.237 and fn.330.

<sup>183</sup> For Tanḥum’s use of the terminology of *ishāra* in an allegorical context, see Shy, *Perush*, 109. See also Tanḥum’s commentary to Song 4:15, in which he states that the term “mountain” is applied metaphorically (*ustu’ira*) to the Temple, as the figure of the mountain is an allusion (*ishāra*) to the divine or intellectual realm (MS Poccocke 320, 48a-b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 57).

## Chapter 3: Tanḥum's Commentary to the Book of Jonah

Tanḥum's commentary to the Book of Jonah has been the focus of a number of studies. This scholarly interest is largely due to the fact that it is in this work that Tanḥum presented an extended allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the Jonah narrative as a whole. The earliest study was published in Russian by Kokovtsov in *Festschrift for Baron Rosen* (1897), and soon followed by Poznanski's studies in the *Revue des Études Juives*.<sup>1</sup> More recently, Aviva Shussman offered a reading of Tanḥum's use of *ta'wīl* as a tool in both Jewish-Muslim and inner-Jewish polemics.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Shy discussed the commentary to Jonah in the introduction to her edition of Tanḥum's commentary to the Twelve Minor Prophets,<sup>3</sup> as did Wechsler in his discussion of Tanḥum's use of literal and allegorical methods.<sup>4</sup> The present chapter constitutes a broad study of Tanḥum's commentary to Jonah as a whole, covering his introduction to the work, significant selections from the literal-philological section of the commentary, and the allegorical commentary.

### **Tanḥum's Commentary to the Book of Jonah: The Introduction**

The commentary opens with a lengthy introductory passage, quite uncharacteristically for Tanḥum's commentaries to the Minor Prophets. This very fact attests to his discomfort with the narrative, as we shall presently see. We may isolate the following four elements in the introduction, in the order that they are presented by Tanḥum:

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Poznanski, "Tanhoum Yerouschalmi et son commentaire sur le livre de Jonas," in *Revue des Études Juives*, 40 (1900), 129-153; *ibid.*, "Tanhoum Yerouschalmi et son commentaire sur le livre de Jonas (suite et fin) [Appendice: Tanhoum Yerouschalmi et Moïse Ibn Chiquitilla]," in *Revue des Études Juives*, 41 (1900), 45-61.

<sup>2</sup> Aviva Shussman, "Allegorical, Theological, and Polemical Elements in Rabbi Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary to the Book of Jonah," in *Pe'amim* 59 (Spring 1994), 85-102.

<sup>3</sup> Shy, *Perush*, לב-ב.

<sup>4</sup> Wechsler, *Strangers*, 31-37.

- A. The prophetological/theological problem raised by Jonah's flight from God and his mission;
- B. The problem of Jonah's historical context;
- C. Tanḥum's solution to these two problems;
- D. A statement of the overall message of the book, first according to its literal sense, and then according to its esoteric sense.

### A. Jonah's flight

Jonah's attempt to escape to Tarshish did not greatly disturb the rabbinic sages. Rather than seek to frame Jonah's flight as anything other than an act of disobedience, the rabbis offered various motivations for his behavior. One rabbinic tradition held that Jonah knew that the nations are "near to repentance", and that if they repented and were forgiven, the people of Nineveh were destined to oppress Israel.<sup>5</sup> Another startling interpretation asserted that Jonah simply faced a choice between the interests of Israel and those of God, and that in the end he "sought the son's honor rather than the father's honor."<sup>6</sup> The force of this interpretation appears to be that Jonah did not want the people of Nineveh to appear to be more pious than the Israelites when they willingly repented.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the rabbinic interpreters of late antiquity were sometimes openly critical of Jonah's actions, and exhibited little anxiety in expressing this position.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Palestinian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin, 11:5. Cf. also *Pirqe de-rabbi eli'ezer* chapter 10, which develops upon this tradition. See the critical Hebrew text in Rachel Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Brill: 2009), 299; English in *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*, trans. Gerald Friedlander (Hermon Press: 1970), 65-66.

<sup>6</sup> See *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el*, ed. Jacob Z. Lauterbach (JPS: 2004), Tractate Piṣḥa I, 6-7; *Avoth de-Rabbi Nathan*, ed. Schechter (JTS: 1997), version B, #47, 129.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el*, Tractate Piṣḥa I, 5; Rashi's commentary to Jonah 1:3.

<sup>8</sup> For example, see the talmudic interpretations of Mishnah Sanhedrin 11:5, where Jonah the son of Amittai is named as an example of one who suppresses a true prophecy (*ha-kobesh et nebu'ato*), and is hence regarded as liable for a punishment of death by the hands of heaven (*mitah bi-yde shamayim*). That is to say that, while that prophet is not to be executed by an earthly court, she/he is considered to have committed a very grave sin. (See Tosefta Sanhedrin 14:15; pTalmud Sanhedrin 11:5, which appears as 11:7 in MS Leiden and *editio princeps*; bTalmud Sanhedrin 89a.

The problem of Jonah's flight was widely discussed by medieval exegetes. The Karaite scholar Daniel al-Qūmisī (late 9<sup>th</sup>-early 10<sup>th</sup> century) raised this issue, citing and rejecting the opinion that Jonah did not in fact *flee* but *rushed* to perform his mission.<sup>9</sup> It seems that this approach may have been inspired by Muslim interpretations of the qur'anic narrative of Yūnus. Al-Ṭabarī (d.923) cites a *ḥadīth* according to which Yūnus is urged to board a ship rather than a riding beast due to the urgency of his mission. Indeed, the mission is so urgent that the angel Jibrīl does not leave Yūnus time to put on shoes.<sup>10</sup> Moshe Zucker interprets this *ḥadīth* as a way of explaining Yūnus' escape not as a flight *from* his mission but as a flight *to* it (as well as explaining his anger, mentioned in the Qur'ān 21:87).<sup>11</sup> In rejecting this interpretation, al-Qūmisī does not seem to be deeply concerned with the theological or prophetological problems that might arise from his more straightforward reading of the text. His critique did not, however, entirely determine the course of future Karaite exegesis: Yefet b. Eli (10<sup>th</sup> century) adopted a moderate version of this reading in his own commentary.<sup>12</sup>

Several medieval Rabbanite exegetes demonstrate acute discomfort with Jonah's flight. Saadia Gaon poses the question as a problem of God's omniscience: If God is all-knowing, why would He reveal Himself to an individual whom he knows will disobey His command? Saadia suggests that Jonah received at least two prophetic revelations, and Scripture omitted Jonah's fulfillment of his first mission. This, according to Saadia, does not prove that Jonah did *not* fulfill his mission. On the contrary, Scripture regularly relates that God commanded Moses to speak to the

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Note that the order of the tenth and eleventh chapters of the tractate are reversed in the Babylonian tradition; see *Shishah sidre mishnah*, Order of Torts (*Neziqin*), ed. Hanokh Albeck (Bialik Institute – Dvir: 1953), 168.)

<sup>9</sup> See his commentary to Jonah 1:1; *Pitron Shenem 'Asar*, ed. Yitzḥaq Dov Markon (Meqitze Nirdamim: 1957), 41. I have not encountered this opinion in Rabbanite sources.

<sup>10</sup> See Moshe Perlmann, *The History of al-Tabari*, Vol. IV: The Ancient Kingdoms (SUNY: 1987), 161.

<sup>11</sup> Moshe Zucker in "Can a Prophet Sin? On the Problem of 'ismat al-anbiyā' in Islam and Judaism," in *Tarbiz*, 35/2, 5726 (1965-6), 168. See also Shussman, "Qavvim," 96.

<sup>12</sup> Jessica Andrus, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary on Jonah by the Karaite Japheth ben Eli: Introduction and Translation* (unpublished MA thesis; Ohio State University: 2007), 28.

Israelites or perform certain tasks, and omits Moses' execution of the commandment. Therefore, we may assume that Jonah fled in order to avoid any further commandment concerning Nineveh, since he was afraid that if the inhabitants of Nineveh were to repent and were not destroyed it might make God's earlier warning seem like an empty threat or a lie.<sup>13</sup>

Ibn Ezra's central concern is the problem of Jonah's flight insofar as it implies the limitations of the prophet's own conception of God. That is to say that Jonah, who as a prophet must have attained some grasp of the nature of the Divine, appears to believe that he can outrun an omnipresent and omniscient being.<sup>14</sup> In this sense he more closely foreshadows Tanḥum's discussion than does Saadia, and it is probably Ibn Ezra's treatment that most directly informs that of our author. Ibn Ezra cites a traditional rabbinic solution to this problem, namely that Jonah "sought the son's honor rather than the father's honor."<sup>15</sup> This solution emphasizes that his escape was more from his *mission* than from God. Ibn Ezra then offers his own esoteric solution, apparently alluding either to Jonah's flight in a vision only,<sup>16</sup> or to his attempt to stop the revelation in rejection of his mission. Ibn Ezra's commentary addresses the problem of Jonah's motivation for disobeying God's command (for, as he points out, even Moses was reluctant to accept his mission) and clarifies that Jonah's flight is not so much an attempt to evade a God whom he knows to be omnipresent and omniscient as it is an attempt to evade the consequences of the revelation.

As noted, Tanḥum's formulation of the problem most closely mirrors that of Ibn Ezra. However, he does not accept Ibn Ezra's solutions. Tanḥum does state that according to the literal stratum of

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<sup>13</sup> *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, treatise 3, chapter 5 (Samuel Rosenblatt, *Saadia Gaon: The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (Yale University Press: 1948), 153-4; Yosef Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot/Kitāb al-mukhtār fī al-amānāt wal-i'tiqādāt le-rabbenu sa'adyah ben yosef fayyūmī zatza''l* (Sura: 1970), 129).

<sup>14</sup> See Ibn Ezra's commentary to Jonah 1:1.

<sup>15</sup> See above, p.81.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Tigay, "The Book of Jonah and the Days of Awe," in *Conservative Judaism* 38/2 (Winter 1985-86): 70.

the text's meaning, Jonah does not wish Israel's enemies to have an opportunity to attack them.<sup>17</sup> However, it is clear from the opening passage of his commentary that this is not a sufficient solution to the theological problems raised by Jonah's disobedience.<sup>18</sup> It seems that a large measure of Tanḥum's discomfort with the explanations for Jonah's disobedience stems from his prophetology, rooted in the Arabic philosophical tradition. According to Maimonides (based ultimately on al-Fārābī),<sup>19</sup> prophecy is the result of a long process of self-perfection, both morally and intellectually.<sup>20</sup> According to this view, prophecy is not merely the product of God's "selection" of an individual to bear a message; a prophet *by definition* has grasped the necessity and correctness of whatever is decreed by the divine will. The notion that a prophet might willfully disobey a divine command is thus highly problematic, and understanding Jonah's motivations for refusing to execute his mission in no way mitigates that problem. In addition to this, the medieval Islamic concepts of prophetic infallibility (*'iṣmat al-anbiyā'*) and the corruption of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures (*tahrīf*) would have made Tanḥum particularly sensitive to the negative portrayal of a biblical prophet.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 120-121.

<sup>18</sup> See Tanḥum's remark that the reader's "perplexity is not removed by that which is stated with respect to the story in the manner of the *derashot* (rabbinic interpretations), or other metaphorical or allegorical [modes of interpretation]..." (Shy, *Perush*, 109)

<sup>19</sup> Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy: The History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Kluwer Academic Publishers: 2001), 242-247; Richard Walzer, "Al-Fārābī's Theory of Prophecy and Divinization," in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77:1 (1957), 142-148. For a detailed study and comparison of philosophical and non-philosophical approaches to prophecy among Muslim writers, see Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (University of Chicago Press: 1958).

<sup>20</sup> See *Guide* II:32 (Pines, 361-362); and cf. *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 7:1-5. For an extensive study of Maimonides' prophetology, see Kreisel, *Prophecy*, 148-315.

<sup>21</sup> For the concept of *'iṣma*, see Georges C. Anawati, "'Iṣmah" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Macmillan: 1987), vol.7, 464-466; Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (University of North Carolina Press: 1985), 56; Gerald R. Hawting, "The development of the doctrine of the infallibility (*'iṣma*) of prophets and the interpretation of Qur'ān 8:67-69," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 39 (2012), 141-163; Moshe Zucker. "Can a Prophet Sin?". For *tahrīf* in the context of Muslim anti-Jewish polemics, particularly as applied to the problematic portrayal of biblical prophets, see Jacques Waardenburg, "The Medieval Period: 650-1500," in *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey* (Oxford University Press: 1999), 52-53. Shussman ("Qavvim," 95-97) questions whether Tanḥum had the concept of *'iṣma* in mind while attempting to clear Jonah of sin. I am not suggesting that Tanḥum adopted this concept as a doctrine as such, but merely that he (along with other Jewish authors in the Islamic world) had a heightened sensitivity towards sinful behavior on the

Despite his discomfort with the literal stratum of the text, Tanḥum is not willing to interpret the narrative *solely* as an allegory and to dismiss its literal sense, since this method of interpretation “destroys the very foundations of religion (*wa-dhālik hādīm li-arkān al-sharī‘a*).”<sup>22</sup> First he points out that the circumstances of the narrative are obscure, since it was generally assumed that readers and listeners who were historically closer to the events themselves were already familiar with them. But this is not sufficient to excuse Jonah’s actions, since what *is* clear from the narrative is that he fled his mission. At this point Tanḥum has not only clearly articulated the theological and prophetological problems that arise from the text, but has already asserted the virtual impossibility of truly solving them.

## **B. Jonah’s historical context**

Here Tanḥum points to a statement in 2 Kings 14:25, which mentions the prophecies of a certain Jonah ben Amittai of Gat Ha-Ḥefer who was active during the reign of King Jeroboam ben Joash of Israel. Tanḥum was not the first to note the verse in 2 Kings in connection with the Book of Jonah: It is mentioned in *Pirqe de-rabbi eli‘ezer*,<sup>23</sup> and subsequently by both Yefet b. Eli and Abraham Ibn Ezra in their commentaries to Jonah.<sup>24</sup> However, Tanḥum takes the implications of this observation further than his predecessors. He enlists the verse in 2 Kings as further evidence for his theory of the redactional history of the Minor Prophets, according to which the complete Book of Jonah was originally lost in the course of the Babylonian exile, as were several non-

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part of prophets. For a similar implicit concern for the problem of *‘isma* in Yefet b. Eli’s commentary to Jonah, see Andruss, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 27-28.

<sup>22</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 109.

<sup>23</sup> See Hebrew text in Adelman, *Return of the Repressed*, 299; English translation in Friedlander, *Pirqê de Rabbi Eliezer*, 65. For the dating of *Pirqe de-rabbi eli‘ezer* to no later than the early 9<sup>th</sup> century, see Adelman, *Return of the Repressed*, 35-42. For a detailed philological study and partial synoptic edition of the text of *Pirqe de-rabbi eli‘ezer* (excluding the passages on Jonah), see Eliezer Treitl, *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer: Text, Redaction and a Sample Synopsis* (The Hebrew University Department of Talmud and Halakha/The Institute for Research of Eretz Israel: 2012).

<sup>24</sup> See Yefet’s commentary to Jonah 1:1 in Andruss, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 31-32. And see the opening passage of Ibn Ezra’s commentary to Jonah 1:1.

extant books mentioned in the Bible (such as *The Book of the Upright*, and *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah*).<sup>25</sup> Unlike those works, the Book of Jonah was recovered, albeit only partially. Indeed, the verse in 2 Kings refers to material that is nowhere mentioned in the extant book of Jonah. Tanḥum thus surmises that other prophecies were revealed to Jonah, but were not preserved.<sup>26</sup> We must therefore assume that the text of Jonah remains fragmentary in its present form.<sup>27</sup>

### C. Towards a solution: Narrative fragments, fragments of allegory

In a truly ingenious twist, Tanḥum's problem contains within it the seeds of its very own solution: If only the complete text were rediscovered we might be able to understand more of Jonah's motivation in fleeing his mission, and the literal stratum of the text (*zāhir*) would make sense. In the absence of such a possibility, Tanḥum's only choice is to interpret the *zāhir* according to his usual method, and then present the text's inner, allegorical meaning.<sup>28</sup>

It should be emphasized that Tanḥum's assertion of the fragmentary quality of Jonah is not limited to that particular work, but rather reflects his broader understanding of the nature of the Twelve Minor Prophets. In the opening passage of his commentary to Obadiah, Tanḥum states as follows:

Also, only this prophecy of his remains extant. It is highly unlikely that a great prophet who had grasped the matter of Edom in the same manner as Isaiah and Jeremiah [...] would nonetheless receive absolutely no revelation concerning any other matter. From this it becomes clear that he

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<sup>25</sup> For a list of these non-extant extra-biblical works and a brief discussion, see Sid Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Archon Books: 1976), 17-19.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ibn Ezra's commentary to Jonah 1:1.

<sup>27</sup> Tanḥum treats the theme of lost and fragmentary texts at length in his commentary to Qoh. 12:9, and mentions the Book of Jonah explicitly (MS Pococke 320, 189b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 194-195). Cf. Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's (d. after 1164) articulation of a similar position in his commentary on Qohelet, in Shlomo Pines, "Toward the Study of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Commentary on Qohelet: Four Texts," in *Tarbiz* 33 (1964), 198.

<sup>28</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 108-111.

had prophecies other than this one, but they were lost and are no longer extant. Thus, only what remained<sup>29</sup> of his [prophecies] was written down. This is the case concerning most of these *Twelve* [Minor Prophets], as we shall explain and demonstrate concerning *the Book of Jonah*, may *peace be upon him*.<sup>30</sup>

This position resolves a number of problems for Tanḥum: The lack of chronological order among the Minor Prophets, the brevity of certain prophetic books despite their resemblance of more extensive ones, and of course local exegetical problems such as those posed by the narrative of Jonah.<sup>31</sup>

Aviva Shussman frames Tanḥum's approach somewhat differently, stating that the fragmentary nature of the book is an additional *problem* that the commentator faces. According to her understanding, Tanḥum assumes (based on 2 Kings 14:25) that Jonah's prophecies are not completely represented by this book, and that a comprehensive interpretation according to the literal meaning is thus impossible. He is thus forced to add the allegorical interpretation in order to supplement the limited literal interpretation.<sup>32</sup> In contradistinction, I am suggesting that Tanḥum's statement concerning the fragmentary nature of the book is for Tanḥum merely a fact of the redactional history of the Minor Prophets. Locally, there is no true textual problem here,

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<sup>29</sup> Or: "what was found".

<sup>30</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 101. See also Tanḥum's commentary to Qoh.12:9: "... *He devised many proverbs*. (Qoh. 12:9) It is stated, *He composed three thousand proverbs*. (1 Kings 5:12) {Cf. Ibn Ezra's commentary *ad loc.* - RD} These may have been literary compositions in thematic order like the books of the philosophers (*kutub muṣannaḥa fī ma'nā ma'nā shabīh bi-kutub al-ḥukamā'*), or they may have been [intended to] instill [ethical] dispositions and rectify them, a single work containing many such [proverbs]. The first [case] is like *The Song of Songs*, and the second [case] is like *Proverbs* and *Qohelet*. And you know that many of our books have been lost, and we have only their names – such as *The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel* and *The Chronicles of the Kings of Judah* to which [the reader] is referred when their narratives are alluded to in the *Prophets* – and *The Book of Jashar*, and *The Book of Iddo the Prophet*, and *Gad the Seer*, and other prophets. And there are some that are partially extant, such as *The Book of Obadiah*, who simply cannot have only prophesied a single prophecy concerning *Edom* throughout his entire life, and then had his prophecy discontinued. The same is true of *Jonah*. Similarly, it may be that Solomon had books other than these, but they are no longer extant." (MS Pococke 320, 189b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 110.)

<sup>31</sup> For Tanḥum's use of what appears to be a similar solution to Saul's consultation with the witch of En-Dor in 1 Sam. chapter 28, see Shy, "*AlKulliyat*," 539.

<sup>32</sup> Shussman, "Qavvim," 89.

but rather a theological and prophetological one. Thus, the fragmentary nature of the text is not really an additional *problem* that the commentator faces, but rather functions as a *solution* to the problems that arise from the Jonah narrative: Jonah’s actions cannot be taken at face value, and we do not know anything about his background or his fate. Tanḥum thus absolves himself of the duty to present a comprehensive solution to a problem that he does not believe to have been fully resolved by any of the earlier commentators.

#### D. The message of the Book of Jonah: External and internal

Tanḥum now states succinctly what he believes to be the central message of the Book of Jonah:

The scholars and commentators (may God be pleased with them) are in accordance – and it is very obvious when one considers it – that God’s intention, exalted is He, in this narrative is to rebuke Israel for their failure to accept the guidance towards the good<sup>33</sup> which was brought to them by the prophets from Him, exalted is He, and their lack of vigilance in repentance when they heard the exhortations and warning of punishment. But the nations – who do not have a connection between themselves and God (exalted is He) like [Israel’s] connection [to God] – are better than them in this respect, insofar as when they are exhorted and scolded for the slightest thing, it leaves its mark upon them immediately and they turn away<sup>34</sup> from disobedience, so the result is positive, and their punishment is removed. But as for Israel, this has no salutary effect on them, though it may be repeated frequently. This is the explanation of the narrative as a whole

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<sup>33</sup> Arabic: *al-istiṣlāḥ*. This is to say that the prophets prescribed *istiṣlāḥ*. In its technical sense, the Islamic term *istiṣlāḥ* (“seeking what is correct, wholesome”) dictates the consideration of the public and individual best interests when making legal decisions, and is characteristic of the *Mālikī* school; see “Istiṣlāḥ,” in Cyril Glassé, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers: 2001), 232; Th. W. Juynboll, “ISTIḤSĀN,” in *E. J. Brill’s First Encyclopedia and Islam, 1913-1936* (Brill: 1987), vol. III, 561. Tanḥum is not employing the term in its technical sense, but his usage is similar insofar as the prophets dictated seeking the good. Compare Shy’s Hebrew translation *she-yeṭibu darkam* (“that they [i.e., the Israelites] should improve their way[s]”); Shy, *Perush*, 110. Cf. also Saadia’s Arabic title to the Book of Isaiah (or according to Qafīḥ, to his commentary thereon), *Kitāb al-istiṣlāḥ*. See Henry Malter, *Saadia Gaon: His Life and Works* (The Jewish Publication Society of America: 1921), 317; *Mishle ‘im targum u-ferush rabbenu sa’adya ben yosef al-fayyūmī zatzal [kitāb ṭalab al-ḥikma] ve-ḥeleq ha-diqduq la-maharitz*, ed. Yosef Qafīḥ (Ha-va’ad le-hotza’at sifre rasag: 1972), 4.

<sup>34</sup> Lit. “return.”

according to its literal sense (*'alā al-wajh al-zāhir*), and it is in truth the initial intention (*wa-huwa al-maqṣūd awwalan bi-'l-ḥaqīqa*).<sup>35</sup>

As for that which it contains in addition to this, regarding its allegorical interpretation (*al-ta'wīl*) according to the method of allusion and exhortation (*'alā ṭarīq al-ishāra wa-'l-tanbīh*) which benefits humans and demands constant recollection and intellectual contemplation, it concerns the state of the human soul as it dwells in the sensible world (*ḥāl al-naḥs al-insāniyya fī ḥulūlihā fī 'ālam al-ḥiss*), and the illumination of the intellect's light upon it (*wa-ishrāq nūr al-'aql 'alayhā*), and its attainment of perpetual felicity (*wa-ḥuṣūl sa'ādātihā al-dā'ima*) through receiving it,<sup>36</sup> and its wretchedness in the absence of this. There is therefore, if you reflect upon it, a powerful analogy to the general and particular aspects of the state [of the soul] (*li-kulliyāt ḥālihā wa-juzwiyyātihā* [sic]<sup>37</sup>) in this narrative.<sup>38</sup>

Both the inner and outer strata of the work call for repentance, and as we shall see, repentance itself is a twofold process entailing an external aspect (*ẓāhir*) and an internal aspect (*bāṭin*). Thus, in the concluding passage of his commentary on Jonah, Tanḥum will tie these two aspects together. Discussing the custom of reciting the book of Jonah in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement,<sup>39</sup> Tanḥum writes as follows:

At that time, the soul has usually become supple and it is ready to receive insights,<sup>40</sup> and to choose freedom from the darkness of the appetites. For it is to this end – by which I mean for the

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<sup>35</sup> For Tanḥum's use of the term *al-qaṣd al-awwal* and its cognates, see p.63 with fn.111.

<sup>36</sup> I.e., the illumination or light. The Arabic employs the partative *min*; thus, more literally, “though receiving [something] of it.”

<sup>37</sup> I.e., *juz'īyyātihā*. See Blau, *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, 88.

<sup>38</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 111.

<sup>39</sup> See Maimonides' *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, 13:11.

<sup>40</sup> Arabic: *ma'ārif*. Shy translates *li-qubūl al-ma'ārif* as *leqabbel et ha-ḥasadim*, apparently understanding the expression *qubūl al-ma'ārif* to mean “to receive the countenance” in the sense of receiving Divine favor. It seems more likely to me that Tanḥum is employing the term in its more widely attested sense as “knowledge” or “insights”. Compare his use of the term in MS Pococke 320, 26a, 53b, 69b, and 70a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 29, 64, 82, 83. For the concept of *ma'rifa* as experiential knowledge of the Divine in Sufi discourse, see John Renard, *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism* (Mawah, N.J., 2004).

purpose of guidance towards the benefits of *repentance* and the lesson of the people of Nineveh – that *our Rabbis of blessed memory* established this book as the *haftarah* at this time [i.e., Yom Kippur afternoon]. And if that [practice] also connects to this inner interpretation [of the book], then even greater the benefit. *Repentance* is assured and accomplished both inwardly and outwardly as a result of this interpretation...<sup>41</sup>

His statement that “*repentance* is assured and accomplished both inwardly and outwardly (*zāhīran wa-bāṭinan*)” is particularly notable in this context. This appears to mean that while the public recitation of the Book of Jonah on Yom Kippur facilitates repentance on a practical level, accompanied by fasting and prayer and with a focus on the literal stratum of meaning, Tanḥum’s exposition of the allegorical message of the book leads the reader to inner contemplation and the pursuit of human perfection. The reference to *zāhīr* and *bāṭīn* in a legal or performative context is reminiscent of Abraham Maimonides’ discussion of the “common way” (*al-sulūk al-‘āmm*) versus the “special way” (*al-sulūk al-khāṣṣ*) in his *Kitāb kifāyat al-‘ābidīn* (Sufficient Guide for the Servants [of God]). The “common way” is defined as consisting primarily of “external performance of the commandments (*a‘māl al-mitsvot al-zāhira*),”<sup>42</sup> while the “special way” accesses the “purposes of the commandments and their secrets (*ghāyāt al-mitsvot wa-asrārihā*).”<sup>43</sup> In this case, the intellectual heritage of thirteenth century Egyptian Jewry provides an illuminating context for Tanḥum’s dualistic conception of Torah and the commandments.

### **Modelling the method: An analysis of Tanḥum’s *pashaṭ* commentary to the Book of Jonah**

What follows is a study of significant selections from Tanḥum’s exoteric commentary to the Book of Jonah. Through such an analysis, I hope to arrive at a fuller appreciation of Tanḥum’s

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<sup>41</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 137-139.

<sup>42</sup> Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 1, 132, line 5.

<sup>43</sup> Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 1, 134, lines 13-14.

work, its scope and depth, the degree and nature of its dependence on earlier material, and its originality.

## Passage I

### Jonah 1:3

*[And Jonah arose] to flee Tarshishward (tarshishah)... (1:3)*

[A] Like *to Tarshish (el tarshish)*.

[B] Here *tarshish* is the name of the sea.<sup>44</sup> [The term] *tarshish* was originally applied to sapphire (*li-l-yāqūt al-azraq*), [as in the verse] *sapphire (tarshish), lapis lazuli, and jasper*. (Ex. 39:13; Ez. 28:13) From this, it was applied to the sea due to its similarity to [sapphire] in its blue coloration from afar. Similarly, *He found a ship bound for Tarshish (ba'áh tarshish)*, (Jonah 1:3) “entering the sea,” that is, departing dry land, determined to set out on its journey into the depths of the sea.

[C] Therefore, [the word] *ba'áh* has its *stress on the ultimate syllable*, for it is a participle,<sup>45</sup> like *coming (ba'áh) with the flock*. (Gen. 29:6) And if it were a verb in the past, it would have had its *stress on the penultimate syllable*, like *And Rachel came (bá'ah)*. (*Ibid.* 29:9)

[D] Like this *tarshish* in meaning is his statement, *constructed Tarshish ships*. (1 Kings 22:49)

[E] There are those who say that this term is applied figuratively to the sky, referring to its blueness due to distance as well, in the verse, *And his body was like tarshish*. (Daniel 10:6) And there are those who say that *tarshish* refers in some places to a certain tribe, *Elisha and Tarshish*, (Gen. 10:4) and that *tarshish* here is such a case, referring to the country of that tribe. But this is implausible, and the first interpretation is more appropriate.

[F] Similarly, the Targum reads, *to flee to the sea (leme'raq le-yama)*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Compare the Targum *ad loc.* and one possibility offered by Ibn Janāḥ - see Ibn Janāḥ's *Kitāb al-uṣūl [The Book of Hebrew Roots]*, ed. A. Neubauer (Oxford: 1875), 689, root *r-sh-sh*.

<sup>45</sup> Or: adjective (*šifa*).

*And he descended to Joppa...*<sup>47</sup>

[G] It has been interpreted as “sailing dock” (*mashra‘a*),<sup>48</sup> that is, the place where ships are docked (*mawḍi‘ wuqūf al-marākib*), that being a port (*wa-huwa al-mīnā‘*). And if it is claimed that this is the name of the city known as Jaffa (*yāfā*), there is no harm in this: It is a port, to which one goes if one wishes [to embark on] a journey by sea from the Levant (*min al-shām*),<sup>49</sup> since it is on the coast. As it says, *floats on the sea of Joppa* (2 Chron. 2:15).<sup>50</sup>

*Discussion:*

After [A] explaining the use of the directive *he* in place of more the more common and widely understood preposition *el*,<sup>51</sup> Tanḥum [B] defines the lexeme *tarshish* as signifying the sea in the present context. He first establishes the most likely original use of the lexeme as a term for sapphire, which is then applied to the sea due to its color from afar (and [E] according to some, to heaven, and even a tribe and its homeland). All of these senses are offered by Ibn Janāḥ,<sup>52</sup> although the derivation of one meaning from another is generally not discussed.<sup>53</sup> Ibn Janāḥ’s own discussion of the term *tarshish* strongly echoes a passage in the commentary of Yefet b. Eli on Jonah 1:3.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Targum Jonathan *ad loc.* Shy divided these two words in the MS incorrectly, rendering the unintelligible phrase *lema‘er qalima*, which she reproduced both in the Judeo-Arabic text and her translation.

<sup>47</sup> Hebrew: *yafō*.

<sup>48</sup> Derived from the term *shirā‘* (sail); compare Shy, *Perush*, 112.

<sup>49</sup> Or: Palestine. For *al-shām* as referring to Palestine (*eretz yisra‘el*) in Judeo-Arabic sources, see Blau, *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, 322. Cf. also Tal, “Parshanuto ha-madda‘it,” 130.

<sup>50</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 113.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Tanḥum’s commentary to Daniel 2:6, where he states that his primary intention in his commentary is not to present a rigorous analysis of every word or verse, but to elucidate the meaning of difficult and expressions that might not be clear even to a reader who is quite familiar with Hebrew and Aramaic (Qafih, *Daniel*, 36). See also Shy, “*AlKulliyat*,” 539.

<sup>52</sup> See Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 689. Ibn Janāḥ offers our verse in Jonah as an example of the sense “sea”, possibly informed by the Targum.

<sup>53</sup> With the exception of the implied derivation of the geographic location from the name of the nation.

<sup>54</sup> See Lawrence Marwick, *Retribution and Redemption: Yefet Ben ‘Eli on the Minor Prophets – A Lost Work of Lawrence Marwick* (2000), 139; English in Andruss, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 38. Cf. also David b. Abraham al-Fāsi’s interpretation, with which Yefet’s interpretation shares many common elements, in Skoss, *The*

Tanḥum now introduces [C] a tangential note on the distinction between the *qal* singular feminine participle form of roots with a weak second radical, and their perfect third person singular feminine form. These two forms are distinguished only by stress: The participle is stressed on its final syllable, while the perfect is stressed on its penultimate syllable. Although the stress is not indicated in the verse as cited in the Bodleian manuscript, it is indicated in MSS of the Hebrew Bible that are replete with cantillation markings (*ta'ame miqra*).<sup>55</sup> The stress is usually placed on the syllable that is marked with the cantillation sign,<sup>56</sup> or sometimes with a small vertical line below the syllable now commonly called a *meteg*, and classically a *ga'ya*.<sup>57</sup> In this case the term *ba'ah* is marked with a *munah/shofar holekh* (בִּאֵה), unambiguously indicating where the stress falls. In the proof-text from Gen. 29:6, the same form is marked with a *tippeḥah* (בִּאֵה), similarly indicating that its stress is on the ultimate syllable. In the case of Jonah 1:3, the stress is also noted in the *masora parva*.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Tanḥum could easily determine the correct stress. Finally, Tanḥum provides an illustration of the *qal* perfect 3sf of this root from Gen. 29:9, which is marked with *rebia'* (בִּאֵה) on its penultimate syllable. Tanḥum's analysis is basic, and it is not unlikely that he treated these principles more extensively in the grammatical section of *Al-*

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*Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary of the Bible Known as Kitāb Jāmi' al-Alfāz (Agrōn) of David ben Abraham al-Fāsī*, vol. 2, 753.

<sup>55</sup> For a general discussion of the cantillation markings and their functions, see James D. Price, *The Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible* (Edwin Mellen Press: 1990); Geoffrey Khan, *A Short Introduction to the Tiberian Masoretic Bible and its Reading Tradition* (Gorgias Press: 2013), 37-41. For Tanḥum's consciousness of the *ta'ame miqra*, to which he refers in Arabic as *lahn/alhān* (melody), see Shy, "Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva'ah le-millono le-mishneh torah," 536-537.

<sup>56</sup> For the cantillation markings as indicating stress, see Price, *The Syntax of Masoretic Accents*, 11-12; Khan, *Short Introduction*, 37.

<sup>57</sup> This may be the case when a word is connected to that which follows by a hyphen or *maqaf*, and thus has no cantillation marking of its own; Price, *The Syntax of Masoretic Accents*, 3-4. The *ga'ya/meteg* also indicates secondary stress, often resulting in vowel lengthening (Khan, *Short Introduction*, 5, 89-90, 101-102).

<sup>58</sup> Although the version printed in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1997) does not explicitly mention the stress, the *masora parva* as it appears in the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices reads simply: יָמֵי מַלְרַע ("eleven times with ultimate stress"). In the Rabbinic Bible (*Miqra'ot gedolot*, 1525 edition), the note also reflects this version, albeit somewhat expanded.

*kullīyyāt, Muqaddimāt laghawīyya ḍarūriyya wa-uṣūl mukhtaṣara min uṣūlihim.*<sup>59</sup> We are thus left to conclude that Tanḥum’s purpose here is pedagogical, and that his intention was for the reader to revise the basic principles of Hebrew grammar in the course of studying *Kitāb al-bayān*.<sup>60</sup>

In section [E], Tanḥum rejects another widespread interpretation of the lexeme *tarshish* in this context that is offered by earlier exegetes: That it is a proper noun referring to a specific geographical location.<sup>61</sup> It is quite probable that he selected the reading that he did based on allegorical considerations, the sea being a more useful metaphorical figure in this case than a geographical location.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, in the allegorical (*ta’wīl*) section of his commentary to Jonah, Tanḥum writes as follows:

[The soul’s descent into the body in order to attain the fullest perfection] is the cause of its distance from [God’s] presence, exalted is He, commensurate with the veiling [or: separation] of matter [i.e., that matter causes]. This is the motion *to flee to Tarshish from before the Lord*, that is, to sink in the sea that is called Tarshish, that is the natural world and the sea of matter, coarse

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<sup>59</sup> For which see Shy, *Perush*, 7.

<sup>60</sup> A further example of Tanḥum’s concern with Hebrew pedagogy within his commentary – and not only in *Al-kullīyyāt* – is his frequent repetition of the fact that the prefix *she-* is used in some biblical books to mean *asher*. See for example his commentary to Jonah 1:7 (Shy, *Perush*, 114-115). See also his commentary to Song 1:7 (Pococke 13b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 14), 3:4 (Pococke 39b; Zoref, *ibid.*, 46); 5:9 (Pococke 52b; Zoref, *ibid.*, 63); 8:6 (Pococke 67b; Zoref, *ibid.*, 80). Compare Ibn Bal’am’s commentary to Jonah 1:7 (Poznanski, “The Arabic Commentary of ibn Bal’am,” 35).

<sup>61</sup> See Ibn Ezra *ad loc.*, where he states that Saadia interpreted the name here to refer to Tarsus, on the southern coast of Asia Minor. He also cites an interpretation in the name of Rabbi Mebasser, who maintained that *tarshish* refers to “the city of Tunis in Africa.” Cf. also Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 689; and Yefet b. Eli’s translation of the verse, in which he renders *tarshish* as *tarsūs* – see Marwick, *Retribution and Redemption*, 139 line 65; English in Andrus, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 37. As usual, MS Hunt. 206 faithfully reflects Yefet’s commentary (see below, p.101-102, fn.93); see Avishur, *A Medieval Translation of the Latter Prophets: Ezekiel and Minor Prophets*, 109. Cf. also Skoss, *The Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary of the Bible Known as Kitāb Jāmi’ al-alfāz (Agrōn) of David ben Abraham al-Fāsī*, vol. 2, 753.

<sup>62</sup> See also Tanḥum’s treatment of the expression *memula’im be-tarshish* in his commentary to Song 5:14 (MS Pococke 320, 53b-54a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 64; published in Naḥum, *Mi-yetsirot sifrutīyyot*, 6).

and dark, which is considered [to have] in its dark recesses a clarity similar to the color blue, as we explained concerning the naming of the sea *Tarshish* due to its blueness.<sup>63</sup>

The likelihood that this is the case is further increased by three additional factors: 1. In cases in which there are multiple interpretations that do not affect the fundamental meaning of the passage, Tanḥum often offers them both as valid options;<sup>64</sup> 2. The exegetes that propose the alternative interpretation rank among Tanḥum's most prominent sources – indeed, the outright rejection of this reading despite its plausibility in context is peculiar for a *peshat* commentator; 3. Tanḥum's Arabic gloss and elaboration of the phrase *bound for Tarshish* (*ba'āh tarshish*) in [B] serves less as convincing proof of the valence of *tarshish* than it evokes his allegorical interpretation of Jonah's descent into “the sea of hylic matter.”<sup>65</sup>

Tanḥum's use of the Targum [F] to define the term *tarshish* is also highly selective. For while it is true that the Targum to Jonah 1:3 thrice renders the term *tarshish* into Aramaic as *yama* (“the sea”),<sup>66</sup> this is not so in the case of Tanḥum's proof-text [D]: There, the Targum clearly understands *tarshish* to refer to a geographic location, and translates *the ships of Tarshish* as *sefinat afriqa* (“the ships of Africa”).<sup>67</sup> It is notable that Tanḥum does not refer to Rashi here, who is the only other major medieval exegete (apart from Ibn Janāḥ and the Targum) who defines *tarshish* as the name of a sea. Although it is an argument *ex silentio*, this strongly

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<sup>63</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 131.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. his comment on Jonah 1:3 (in the present passage) that the term *yafo* may either mean “port” (*mīnā'*) or be the name of the city of Jaffa; and his treatment of the lexeme *heṭil* in Jonah 1:4 (Shy, *Perush*, 112-113). Both are discussed below.

<sup>65</sup> For which see Shy, *Perush*, 133. For possible background to this formulation, see below, p.145, fn.287.

<sup>66</sup> See Alexander Sperber's critical edition with Babylonian vocalization, *The Bible in Aramaic* (Brill: 1962), vol. 3, 436.

<sup>67</sup> “Africa” here referring either to the Roman province in North Africa, or more narrowly to the city of Carthage; cf. Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Judaica Press: 1989), 108. It is possible that the Targum to 1 Kings 22:49 reflects a historical memory of the grandeur of the Carthaginian maritime fleets (merchant and military) prior to their destruction in the Punic Wars; see Serge Lancel, *Carthage: A History* (Blackwell Publishers: 1995), 120-133. Cf. also the Septuagint's repeated understanding of *tarshish* in Isaiah 23 as Carthage.

suggests that Tanḥum was unaware of Rashi's interpretation, or at least that he did not consider his commentary to be of any particular note.

Finally, Tanḥum [G] discusses the meaning of the Hebrew term *yafo*, offering two alternatives that he presents as equally valid: (a) That the term *yafo* refers generally to a port; or (b) that it is the proper name of a specific port city, i.e., Jaffa (Arabic: *yāfā*). Since this matter has no bearing on either the literal or allegorical sense of the narrative, Tanḥum allows his readers to select whichever meaning they wish. The possibility of rendering the Hebrew *yafo* as *yāfā* had been embraced by Yefet b. Eli,<sup>68</sup> but once again we cannot demonstrate direct dependence, since the Targum may have also served as the source of this interpretation.<sup>69</sup>

Tanḥum's central concerns in this passage are lexical and morphological, and in these matters draws closely on Ibn Janāḥ and refers selectively to the Targum. When it does not affect the thrust of the literal narrative or its allegorical sense, Tanḥum is content to offer two alternative exegetical possibilities, as in the case of the term *yafo*. In establishing the specific derivation of the term *tarshish* and its range of applications, Tanḥum expands upon Ibn Janāḥ and adheres to the method that he outlined in *Al-kulliyāt*: He establishes the etymological origin of the root, its semantic range, and the most appropriate meaning in context (taking into account, as we have suggested, its esoteric sense in addition to its literal meaning). Here, the Targum supports Tanḥum's reading against Ibn 'Ezra, one possibility in Ibn Janāḥ, and Yefet b. Eli, although Tanḥum understands the term *tarshish* in 1 Kings 22:49 in context against the Targum's interpretation.

## Passage II

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<sup>68</sup> See Marwick, *Retribution and Redemption*, 139 line 66.

<sup>69</sup> The Targum leaves *yafo* untranslated, indicating that it is a proper noun.

## Jonah 1:4

*And the Lord cast (heṭil) [a mighty wind].*

[A] Cast and threw (*ṭaraḥa wa-ramā*). Also derived from this is [the verse], *lift me and cast (va-haṭiluni) me into the sea*; (Jonah 1:12) *and they cast (va-yaṭilu) [their] belongings*. (*Ibid.* v.5) The intended sense here is “setting in motion the wind and moving it about.”<sup>70</sup>

[B] There are those who say that it (i.e., *heṭil*) is a different root, with the meaning *because he has taken it (naṭal) upon him* (Lam. 3:28), which is related to the Targum of *he took (nasa)*, [which is translated as] *neṭal*. So its meaning would be “raised and carried (*rafa‘a wa-ḥamala*).” Thus did the Targum translate, *And the Lord raised a great wind (arim ruaḥ rab)*, as if it were written *and the Lord took up a great wind*.

*And there was a great tempest (sa‘ar gadol).*

[C] “Commotion (*hayajān*) and disturbance (*iḏṭirāb*).”

[D] The verb<sup>71</sup> (*wa-‘l-fi‘l*) from it is *continuing to rage (holekh ve-so‘er)* (Jonah 1:11, 13); *and their kings raged exceedingly (sa‘aru sa‘ar)* (Ez. 27:35)

*And the ship considered [to break into pieces].*

[E] Like *was considered (neḥshebah)* in meaning. That is, “it was thought that it would break apart, and it almost did.”<sup>72</sup>

### *Discussion:*

Tanḥum once again begins his discussion of the verse with [A] a lexical discussion concerning the precise sense of the term *heṭil*, for which he offers two interpretations. Since they do not

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<sup>70</sup> Shy (*Perush*, 113) translates the Arabic *tahrīk al-rīḥ wa-athārātuhā* into Hebrew as *hana‘at ha-ruaḥ ve-has‘aratah*. My own translation is based on a minor emendation from *athārātuhā* to *athāratuhā*. According to both translations, the final term is a *maṣdar* with the wind as its object. Thus, the plural form in this context is somewhat awkward (indeed, it is not reflected in Shy’s translation either).

<sup>71</sup> A scribal gloss offers the emendation: “the participle (*al-fā‘il*).”

<sup>72</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 113.

fundamentally affect the narrative, he leaves the choice between them to the reader. However, it seems that he prefers the first interpretation, since he offers it authoritatively at the outset, in contrast with the second interpretation, which is framed as a divergent opinion (*wa-qīla*). Thus, following Ibn Janāḥ, Tanḥum implicitly identifies the root of this verb as *ṭ-y-l*.<sup>73</sup> Tanḥum explicitly identifies the root of the verb thus in the *Murshid*, and offers an almost identical translation into Arabic: *al-ṭarḥ wa-'l-ramy*.<sup>74</sup> This is in agreement with Ibn Ezra *ad loc.*, who explains *heṭil* as synonymous with *hishlikh* (“cast”).<sup>75</sup> However, Tanḥum does not refer to Ibn Ezra’s subsequent interpretation, which implicitly explains the Hebrew’s use of the preposition *el* (usually meaning “to”) in the phrase *cast a mighty wind upon the sea (el ha-yam)*: God “cast” the wind from the land in the direction of the sea, thus thwarting the sailors’ attempt at returning to land.<sup>76</sup> Here Tanḥum is concerned exclusively with the sense of the verb, while Ibn Ezra reads it in a broader narrative context.

The second interpretation [B] of the verb *heṭil* that Tanḥum offers – namely, that it means “to take up” – appears to be based on Ibn Janāḥ’s entry for the root *n-ṭ-l*, although the latter does not identify the phrase in our verse with this etymology.<sup>77</sup> Tanḥum’s reading of Lamentations 3:28 is in harmony with that of Ibn Ezra *ad loc.* Once again, Tanḥum looks to the Targum for support in this interpretation: *Neṭal* is a standard translation for the Hebrew verb *nasa*.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 262. A gloss to this entry in one MS further defines the meaning as *ramā wa-ṭaraḥa wa-taraka* (threw and cast and dropped). This formulation bears a strong resemblance to that of Tanḥum, which might suggest reliance on a common source. See *ibid.*, fn.27 in critical apparatus.

<sup>74</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 222, entry for root *ṭ-y-l*.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Also Daniel al-Qūmisī’s *Pitron shenem ‘asar*, *ad loc.* (42), where he translates *hishlikh* as *ṭaraḥa*.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn Ezra also suggests that this was in a place where a river and a sea met, making the return to land even more difficult (based on Jonah 2:4). In contrast, the Targum renders *el* as *‘al* (“upon”).

<sup>77</sup> Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 431. Ibn Janāḥ defines the verb as signifying *al-raf‘ wa-'l-ḥamal* (“raising and carrying”).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Targum Onqelos to Ex. 10:13, where *nasa et ha-arbeh* (“carried/took up the locusts”) is rendered into Aramaic as *neṭal yat goba*.

Here again, Tanḥum offers [C] a lexical gloss: The root *s-‘-r* signifies “commotion and disturbance (*hayajān wa-idṭirāb*)”. Here too, Tanḥum appears to be basing the interpretation on Ibn Janāḥ, but refining the latter’s formulation: *ḥaraka wa-idṭirāb* (“movement and disturbance”) becomes the more specific *hayajān wa-idṭirāb*.<sup>79</sup>

The participle of the nominal form *sa‘ar* (“tempest”) is now [D] offered for comparative reasons, reflecting Tanḥum’s interest in conveying the principles of Hebrew grammar and morphology to the reader. A notable feature of the manuscript edited by Shy here is a marginal note of the copyist, Solomon b. El‘azar b. Obadiah Ha-Rofe.<sup>80</sup> In it, he notes that in his opinion the Arabic of his *Vorlage* – which reads *al-fi‘l* (“the verb”) – should really read *al-fā‘il*, as the form in question is actually the active participle.<sup>81</sup> However, he refrained from altering the text of the commentary, which is a testament to his care in accurately transmitting the commentary as he received it.<sup>82</sup> Shy refrains from making a clear judgment between the body of the manuscript and

<sup>79</sup> See Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 487. Contrast Yefet b. Eli, who translates *sa‘ar gadol* as ‘*āṣif ‘aẓīm*. This is very close to the translation of David b. Abraham al-Fāsī, who offers ‘*āṣif kabīr* for the Hebrew *sa‘ar gadol*; see Skoss, *The Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary of the Bible Known as Kitāb Jāmi‘ al-Alfāz (Agrōn) of David ben Abraham al-Fāsī*, vol. 2, 339. Tanḥum’s formulation in *Al-murshid al-kāfi* is closer to Yefet and al-Fāsī – he translates the root *s-‘-r* as *al-rīḥ al-‘āṣif*; see Shy, *Murshid*, 384.

<sup>80</sup> For the identity of the copyist, see the colophon in Shy, *Perush*, 350-351. For a description of the MS, see Shy, *Perush*, ㄨㄛ-ㄒ, ㄱㄛ-ㄷㄛ.

<sup>81</sup> The precise formulation, cited in Shy, *Perush*, 113 (critical apparatus to 1:4) is as follows: “It seems [that the better reading would be] *al-fā‘il*, for the *fi‘l* [form] is *sa‘ar*.”

<sup>82</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, 113, critical apparatus to 1:4. This note is discussed by Shy in *ibid.*, ㄒ. There, she suggests that the vocalization of the biblical text attested in the Bodleian MS may reflect Tanḥum’s own vocalization of the text. I consider this highly unlikely. See for example MS Pococke 320 of Tanḥum’s commentary to Qohelet 2:8 *I appointed male singers and female singers (sharim ve-sharot)*, where the scribe vocalizes the text as *sarim ve-sarot*, rendering the phrase *male officials and female officials* (MS Pococke 320, 87a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 35 [Zoref does not provide vocalization for the Hebrew lemma]). Tanḥum’s commentary demonstrates that this was not the reading that he had, as he immediately translates the phrase as “male choristers and female choristers, meaning singers and musicians (*munshidīn wa-munshidāt ay aghānī wa-muṭribīn*).” See also the lemma from Qoh. 4:10 (MS Pococke 320, 112a), which the scribe vocalized *ve-ilu*, where it is clear from Tanḥum’s paraphrase (*al-wayl li-man saqāṭa*) that he had the version preserved in the standard masoretic bibles, i.e., *ve-ilo*, interpreted as *ve-i* [i.e., *ve-oy*] *lo* (cf. the commentaries of Ibn Ezra and Rashi *ad loc*). Further evidence may be found in Tanḥum’s commentary to Song 8:6 (MS Pococke 320, 67b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, 80), where he takes the lexeme *shalhebetyah* to be a contraction of *she-lehabat/she-lehebet yah*, with the construct with a divine name resulting in amplification (*ta‘zīm*), meaning “which is a mighty flame.” He also cites an opinion that the *shin* belongs to the root, following Ibn Ezra *ad loc*. Here, it seems that a copyist actually emended the text based on Tanḥum’s commentary: He separates the two words and

the copyist's suggested emendation, but she translates the passage according to the gloss.<sup>83</sup> If we wish to uphold the version reflected in the body of the MS, we might suggest that Tanḥum's use of the form *fi'l* may be more general, denoting that the root is also used as a verb and participle, and not only in a nominal sense.<sup>84</sup> In other passages he is generally careful to employ the precise terminology,<sup>85</sup> and indeed the citation of Ezekiel 27:35 that Tanḥum provides as an example employs the root as a *qal* verb – not the participle. We may thus affirm that the text before us does not require the copyist's proposed emendation.

Tanḥum [E] continues in a morphological vein as he suggests that the *pi'el* form *ḥishshebah* may be used in a passive sense. He provides no other examples of this use of the form. Implicit in his interpretation is the rejection of another position, according to which the ship is here personified. The verse would then be translated, *the ship considered breaking*. Ibn Bal'am follows Janāḥ in this reading,<sup>86</sup> and they are followed by Ibn Ezra.<sup>87</sup> Ibn Bal'am explicitly notes the figurative ascription (*majāz*) of the verb to an inanimate and non-rational subject.<sup>88</sup> This interpretation is also supported by the Targum *ad loc.*<sup>89</sup> Interestingly, Tanḥum's phraseology is very close to that

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places a *mappiq* in the *he*, hence contradicting Tanḥum's explicit comment that the *he* is quiescent, but clarifying its status as a divine name. It seems most likely to me that – unlike Ibn Ezra *ad loc.* – Tanḥum did not intend to divide the lexeme into two words, but rather to explain the suffix (although this is admittedly ambiguous). Tanḥum's view concerning the quiescence of the *he* reflects the Aleppo and Leningrad codices; they read *shalhebetyah* as a single word. This was not a universal practice – see Ibn Ezra's commentary *ad loc.*; and the *masora magna* to Exodus 17:16 in *The Masorah Magna to the Pentateuch by Shemuel ben Ya'aqov*, vol. 1, ed. Mordechai Breuer (Manfred and Ann Lehman Foundation: 1992), 338 and critical notes.

<sup>83</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, 113 and note.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Tanḥum's commentary to Song 4:3 (MS Pococke 320, 45a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 53): “Your temple is like a piece of pomegranate (*ke-felaḥ ha-rimmon raqqatekh*). “Your temple (*šudghuki*).” And it is a root with two like radicals, and the *hā* which converts to a *tā* is in order to render the noun feminine, and *no verb is derived from it* (*wa-lā yatašarraḥ minhu fi'l*).” Tanḥum's purpose here is to emphasize that this root appears only as a noun.

<sup>85</sup> For example, see the citations in Hadassa Shy, “Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva'ah le-millono le-mishneh torah,” 531 fn.14 and fn. 15.

<sup>86</sup> See Poznanski, “The Arabic Commentary of ibn Bal'am,” 35; Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 253 (*ḥ-sh-b*).

<sup>87</sup> See Ibn Ezra's commentary to Jonah *ad loc.*, where he compares our verse to the formulation “when a land sins against me (*eretzi ki teḥeta li*).” (Ezekiel 14:13)

<sup>88</sup> Poznanski, “The Arabic Commentary of ibn Bal'am,” 35.

<sup>89</sup> Which reads: *we-ilfa ba'aya le-itebara*. (See critical text in Sperber, *Bible in Aramaic*, vol. 3, 436.) The verb *b-'-y* possesses a broader valence in Aramaic, and can signify “to be due, to be about to do s.t.” See Sokoloff, *Dictionary*

of Ibn Janāḥ, but he reframes his Arabic paraphrase to replace the ship with the sailors as the subject.<sup>90</sup>

Tanḥum's preference for reading the verb as passive bears a suggestive parallel to Rashi's interpretation *ad loc.*, but its strongest antecedents lie in two earlier Arabic renditions of the term. The first is Daniel al-Qūmisī's commentary to the verse, in which he glosses the form *ḥishshebah* with the Arabic form *ḥusibat*.<sup>91</sup> The second is in Yefet b. Eli's Arabic translation of the verse: "... and the ship was reckoned to [be about to] be destroyed (*inḥasabat li-l-in 'iṭāb*)."<sup>92</sup> A third source – a medieval Judeo-Arabic translation of Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets copied in Iraq in 1196 – is in fact a reworked version of Yefet's translation.<sup>93</sup> Both Arabic forms represent precise parallels for the Hebrew form *neḥshebah* offered by Tanḥum.

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*of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 108; Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 225. Still, in this context the participle is active and the ship is clearly its subject.

<sup>90</sup> Tanḥum's precise formulation in Arabic is: *ḥunna bi-hā al-kasr wa-kādat an taṣīr ilayhi*. Compare this formulation with that of Ibn Janāḥ: *hammat bi-'l-inkisār wa-kādat*. Ibn Bal'am reverses (and thereby somewhat refines) Ibn Janāḥ's phraseology as follows: *kādat al-inkisār wa-hammat bihi*. Ibn Bal'am then notes that this is a figurative personification of the ship. Tanḥum slightly modifies Ibn Janāḥ's formulation here, so that the active *hammat bi-'l-inkisār* becomes the passive *ḥunna bi-hā al-kasr*.

<sup>91</sup> *Pitron shenem 'asar*, 42.

<sup>92</sup> See Marwick, *Retribution and Redemption*, 140 line 96. Jessica Andruss' translation, (*The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 39) does not closely reflect the Arabic syntax in this case.

<sup>93</sup> See Avishur, *A Medieval Translation of the Latter Prophets: Ezekiel and Minor Prophets*, 109. For Tanḥum's reliance on medieval translations into Arabic, both oral traditions and written texts, see Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 43-44. Avishur's text – based on Bodleian MS Hunt. 206 – warrants further discussion, since it is an important witness to trends within Judeo-Arabic translation in the medieval period. Avishur originally posed the question of whether the translation belongs to Saadia, and concluded that it does not. He established the *terminus ad quem* of the translation's authorship based on his dating of the MS to 1196, and identified typical features of Iraqi Judeo-Arabic reflected its orthography. See Yitzhak Avishur, *A Medieval Translation of the Latter Prophets into Iraqi and Syrian Judaeo-Arabic – Book 1: Isaiah and Jeremiah* (Magnes Press: 1998), 35-40; Avishur, *A Medieval Translation of the Latter Prophets: Ezekiel and Minor Prophets*, 9. He also presented an extensive discussion concerning the relationship between this translation and those of Saadia; see Avishur, *A Medieval Translation of the Latter Prophets – Book 1: Isaiah and Jeremiah*, 15-20. However, in his review of Avishur's edition, Eliezer Schlossberg pointed out that the translation in MS Hunt. 206 is a reworked version of Yefet b. Eli's translation of the Twelve Minor Prophets, which accompanied the latter's commentary. (See Schlossberg, "An Ancient Targum of the Later Prophets into the Judeo-Arabic of Iraq and Syria," in *Pe'amim* 83 (2000), 147-158.) As Schlossberg notes, Philip Birnbaum had already identified MS Hunt. 206 as a version of Yefet's commentary (see Philip Birnbaum, "Yefet ben 'Ali and his Influence on Biblical Exegesis (Continued)," in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 32:3 (1942), 264-271). Avishur rejected Schlossberg's conclusion, but without presenting a systematic analysis of the data. (See Yitzhak Avishur, *Studies in Judaeo-Arabic Translations of the Bible* (Archaeological Center Publications, Tel Aviv – Jaffa: 2001), (5) 76-77.) In contrast, Schlossberg's analysis is systematic, and his critique highly cogent.

In neither of these cases can we demonstrate direct dependence. Tanḥum was familiar with the works of al-Qūmisī and Yefet, at least indirectly.<sup>94</sup> But we must acknowledge three alternative possibilities: (1) That Tanḥum’s interpretation here is inspired by a trend among exegetes and translators rather than a single source; (2) that his interpretation is based on a source unavailable to us or no longer extant; or (3) that Tanḥum arrived at an original conclusion that was coincidentally shared by other exegetes.

In this passage, Tanḥum’s focus is overwhelmingly lexical and morphological. The sources upon which he draws most closely are Ibn Janāḥ, Ibn Bal‘am, the Targum, and possibly Ibn Ezra. There are some suggestive parallels to Rashi, al-Qūmisī, and Yefet b. Eli, but they are not sufficient to demonstrate dependence.

Once again, Tanḥum follows his usual procedure of identifying the sense of the verbal root, its general usage, and its sense in the local context (albeit in a more truncated manner in the present passage). When not essential to understanding the narrative, Tanḥum does not explicitly

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My own view is that a comparison between Lawrence Marwick’s edition of Yefet’s commentary on the Minor Prophets leaves no doubt that Schlossberg’s conclusion is correct. (See Lawrence Marwick, *Retribution and Redemption: Yefet Ben ‘Eli on the Minor Prophets – A Lost Work of Lawrence Marwick* (2000). Marwick’s version is based on seven MSS of Yefet’s commentary; see Andrus, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 29, and fn.39. A medieval Byzantine translation of Yefet’s commentary into Hebrew is also extant, for which see *ibid.*) Throughout the course of their exchange, neither Avishur nor Schlossberg appear to be aware of Marwick’s edition, published the same year.

Apart from the obvious resemblance between the translations – albeit with systematic changes, such as *rabb al-‘ālamīn* > *allāh* for the Tetragrammaton – there are *swaths of Yefet’s commentary interspersed with the translation*. See for example the passage in MS Hunt. 206 that follows the translation of Jonah 1:3 (in Avishur, *A Medieval Translation of the Latter Prophets: Ezekiel and Minor Prophets*, 109); and compare with Marwick, *Retribution and Redemption*, 139, lines 68-70. See also MS Hunt. 206 following the translation of Jonah 1:6 (Avishur, *ibid.*); and compare with Marwick, *Retribution and Redemption*, 141, lines 130-132. See also the fragment of commentary to Hosea 4:14 (Avishur, *ibid.*, 79); and compare with the edition of Yefet’s commentary in Meira Polliack and Eliezer Schlossberg, *Yefet ben Eli’s Commentary on Hosea* (Bar-Ilan University Press: 2009), 173 (with significant differences, but clearly dependent). See also the fragments in MS Hunt. 206 to Hosea 6:9 (Avishur, *ibid.*, 81); and compare with Polliack and Schlossberg, *Yefet ben Eli’s Commentary*, 189. This last example was already noted in Birnbaum, “Yefet ben ‘Ali,” 267-268. The examples go on.

It is important to emphasize that Avishur is right to see differences between the translations, and some of these are significant. But Schlossberg was precise in his formulation, and there is no denial that this is indeed a reworking (*‘ibbud*) of Yefet’s commentary (Schlossberg, “An Ancient Targum,” 149, 150).

<sup>94</sup> See Wechsler, *Strangers*, 55. For Tanḥum’s indirect awareness of Karaite works, see Shy, “*AlKulliyat*,” 537. For Tanḥum’s direct dependence on Yefet ben Eli in his commentary to Ruth 1:17, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 42.

determine between alternative interpretations, although he implies his preference for one over the other.

### Passage III

#### Jonah 2:4

*You cast me [into] the depths (va-tashlikheni metzulah).*

[A] That is to say *into the depths (bi-metzulah)* or *to the depths (el metzulah)*, unless one understands the subject of *cast me* as being the *depths* rather than [God],<sup>95</sup> exalted is He. In that case, the *depths* would be the subject – which is to say that they<sup>96</sup> cast him into the very *heart of the seas*. (*Ibid.*)

[B] By *seas* it means the tributaries that come out of the ocean (*al-alsun al-khārija min al-baḥr al-muḥīt*). For each of them is called a *sea*: *The Sea of Suph*, *The Sea of Joppa*, and so on.

*All of your breakers and waves (kol mishbarekha ve-gallekha).*<sup>97</sup>

[C] *Breakers*. Colliding waves are called this since they appear to break apart upon one another. And like it is [the verse], *more majestic than*<sup>98</sup> *the breakers of the sea (mishbere yam)*. (Ps. 93:4)

[D] *Waves (gallim)*. Waves without further qualification are called this because they heap up and are elevated, and thus resemble mounds (*akdās*) that are called this:<sup>99</sup> *A great mound (gal gadol)*

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<sup>95</sup> The subject of *cast me* is implied by its form, which is common to the 2p masculine singular and the 3p feminine singular forms.

<sup>96</sup> I.e., the depths themselves. Lit. “she”, since *metzulah* is a feminine singular form.

<sup>97</sup> The Hebrew *mishbarekha* is derived from the root *sh-b-r* (break).

<sup>98</sup> So translates the JPS Tanakh (2003). The verse is somewhat elliptical. Cf. Ibn Ezra’s commentary *ad loc.*, where he appears to prefer a coherent reading of the consonantal text to total fidelity to the masoretic cantillation markings (*ta’ame miqra*). Qimḥi’s interpretation fits the masoretic division of the verse more closely, but he is forced to supply a missing preposition.

<sup>99</sup> I.e., that are called *gallim*.

of stones. (Joshua 7:26; 2 Sam. 18:17) Similarly, *and its waves are stirred up* (*va-yehemu gallav*). (Isaiah 51:15)<sup>100</sup>

### Discussion

Tanḥum first [A] supplies what appears to be a missing preposition in the verse, implying that God is the subject of the act of casting. This interpretation follows the Targum (to which Tanḥum does not refer),<sup>101</sup> and is accepted by virtually all the medieval exegetes who expressed a view on the matter.<sup>102</sup> Tanḥum does propose an alternative interpretation, which in itself is a most original move, and will serve to highlight his profoundly dramatic reading of the verse as a whole: That the subject of *va-tashlikheni* is the singular feminine *metzulah* (depth[s]). Apart from offering an alternative explanation for the absence of a preposition, Tanḥum's reading serves to enrich the narrative itself, as we shall see.

In [B] discussing the plural form of *seas* (*yammim*), Tanḥum rejects the interpretation of Ibn Ezra in his commentary *ad loc*. The latter first ascribes the use of the plural form to any large body of water – just as the Nile is referred to as *ye'orehem* in Ex. 7:19.<sup>103</sup> Ibn Ezra then cites Yefet b. Eli to the effect that the plural is used here because Jonah is cast into the depths at the point where the *suf* and *yafo* seas meet.<sup>104</sup> Yefet would thus understand “heart” (*lebab*) to refer to the meeting point of these large bodies of water. In the extant version of Yefet's commentary, he does not

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<sup>100</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 115-117.

<sup>101</sup> The Targum reads: *u-remetani be-'umqaya*. Note the plural *'umqaya* (depths); see Sperber, *Bible in Aramaic*, vol. 3, 437.

<sup>102</sup> Neither Ibn Bal'am nor Ibn Ezra address this syntactic issue. Yefet b. Eli supplies the missing preposition in his commentary, rendering the phrase *wa-alqaytanī ilā al-qa'r* (Marwick, *Retribution and Redemption*, 145 line 24; Andrus, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 51). Qimḥi in his commentary *ad loc*. also glosses the phrase *bi-metzulah*.

<sup>103</sup> For other examples of the use of the plural form of *ye'or*, see 2 Kings 19:24; Isa. 7:18, 19:6, 37:25, and Ezekiel 29:3. For the *ye'or* as the Nile, see Ezek. 29:3-5; Ibn Janāḥ in Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 271, entry for *y-'-r*; and cf. Ibn Ezra's commentaries to Ex. 7:19.

<sup>104</sup> This opinion is also cited by David Qimḥi (with a minor adjustment) in Ibn Ezra's name in his commentary *ad loc*.

specify *which* rivers meet the sea at this location, stating merely that “the rivers that pour into the sea encircled him.”<sup>105</sup>

Tanḥum takes his interpretation of “the heart of the seas” a step further, introducing a novel geographical element which further dramatizes the narrative: The *seas* are the familiar and navigable bodies of water, while the *baḥr muḥīṭ* is the great ocean that surrounds the inhabited world, from which the seas emerge.<sup>106</sup> This is the *heart of the seas*, and it is into this great deep that Jonah is cast. This novel interpretation is enriched further by Tanḥum’s aforementioned suggestion that the subject of our verse may be the depths themselves. According to this reading, Jonah is first thrown overboard, and then the currents carry him ever deeper, finally taking him into the furthest reaches of the primordial *okeanos*.

The [C] interpretation of the phrase *your breakers* (*mishbarekha*) is closely based on Ibn Bal‘am, who himself appears to be expanding Ibn Janāḥ’s Arabic rendition of our verse: “*All of your breakers and waves swept over me*, meaning ‘the waves of the sea crashed (*takāsara amwāj al-baḥr*)’.”<sup>107</sup> Ibn Janāḥ appears to be allowing the sense of *mishbarekha* as derived from the root *sh-b-r* (“break”) to color his translation of ‘*alay ‘abaru* (“swept over me”) at the end of the verse in order to convey the mood of the Hebrew verse. Following Ibn Janāḥ, Ibn Bal‘am translates the phrase *mishbarekha ve-gallekha* as “the current and waves (*al-tayyār wa-’l-amwāj*)”, and only then does he explicitly raise the possibility of the derivation of *mishbarekha* from the tendency of large waves to crash together: “And it may be that waves (*al-amwāj*) are called *mishbarim*

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<sup>105</sup> See Marwick, *Retribution and Redemption*, 146, lines 29-30: *wa-kānat al-anhār allatī taṣubb ilā al-baḥr tadūr bihi*. Andrus (The *Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 51) translates the Arabic *anhār* as currents, but it seems that Ibn Ezra’s interpretation is more fitting.

<sup>106</sup> See *Medieval Science, Technology, and Medicine: An Encyclopedia*, eds. Glick, Livesey, and Wallis (Routledge: 2005), 190. See *ibid.* 365 for the identification of the Atlantic Ocean with *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ*. Tanḥum’s account may reflect an awareness of the surface inflow from the Atlantic into the Mediterranean, for which see John H. Pryor, *Geography, technology, and war: Studies in the maritime history of the Mediterranean, 649-1571* (Cambridge University Press: 1988), 13.

<sup>107</sup> See Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, entry for root *sh-b-r*, 700.

from the sense of breaking (*min ma'nā al-kasr*), meaning that the waves are shattered whenever they meet, or that they break each other into pieces (*takassara al-amwāj mā luqyatihā aw yukassir ba'ḍuhā ba'ḍan*).<sup>108</sup> Tanḥum's own interpretation owes its formulation to that of Ibn Bal'am: "Colliding waves (*al-amwāj al-mutalāṭima*) are called this since their appear to break apart upon one another (*li-mā yuḡhar min takassur ba'ḍihā 'alā ba'ḍ*)." Tanḥum thus applies this term specifically to colliding waves, and confidently provides the etymological analysis of the lexeme *mishbarim* that was first more tentatively offered by Ibn Bal'am.<sup>109</sup>

Neither Ibn Bal'am nor Ibn Ezra discuss the term *gallim* in their commentaries to our verse. However, Ibn Janāḥ offers the sense of *gal/gallim* as "heaps" or "mounds" (*akdās*), as well as waves in our verse "by way of comparison and metaphor (*'alā sabīl al-tashbīh wa-'l-isti'āra*), like a pile of mighty water (Hab. 3:15)."<sup>110</sup> All of the basic components of Tanḥum's treatment [D] of this term are thus present in Ibn Janāḥ, including the derivation of the term in our verse from the sense of a heap.<sup>111</sup> The final verse cited by Tanḥum, from Isaiah 51:15, demonstrates the regular use of this noun in the context of the sea's waves.

<sup>108</sup> Poznanski, "The Arabic Commentary of ibn Bal'am," 36.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. also David Qimḥi's commentary *ad loc*.

<sup>110</sup> Hebrew: *ḥomer mayim rabbim*. See Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 134 entry for root *g-l-l* (*g-l*). For this interpretation of Hab. 3:15, see Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 235, entry for root *ḥ-m-r*. Here he states that the term *ḥomer/ḥomarim* in these verses means "mounds and storehouses (*akdās wa-anbār*)." See also *ibid.* fn. 37 for variants. It appears to me that *anbār* was corrupted to *anbādḥ* as a result of a scribal error due to the similarity of the *resh* and *daleth* in the Hebrew script. This interpretation of Hab. 3:15 is offered by Ibn Bal'am (Poznanski, "The Arabic Commentary of ibn Bal'am," 48), and adopted by Qimḥi *ad loc*. (For the precise sense of Qimḥi's interpretation, cf. also Rashi's commentary to Ex. 15:8, where he rejects the interpretation that *ned* refers to a flask, and asserts that it means "heap"). This also seems to have been Yefet's interpretation of the verse, as reflected in a fragment of commentary to Hab. 3:15 copied in MS Hunt. 206; however, the translation and fragment of commentary also offer the Arabic *kūs* (drum) for *ḥomer* – see Avishur, *A Medieval Translation of the Latter Prophets: Ezekiel and Minor Prophets*, 127. For the dependence of this MS on Yefet's translation and commentary, see above, p.101-102, fn.93. Marwick's edition does not include Yefet's commentary to Habakkuk. For this interpretation within the Karaite tradition, see also Skoss, *The Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary of the Bible Known as Kitāb Jāmi' al-Alfāz (Agrōn) of David ben Abraham al-Fāsī*, vol. 1, 560-561. Tanḥum thus had significant precedents for adopting this interpretation in his own commentary to Hab. 3:15 (see Shy, *Perush*, 236-239).

<sup>111</sup> See note above. Cf. also Shy, *Murshid*, 100-103.

Tanḥum’s interpretation of this verse is highly original. Not only does he expand upon existing lexical material, but he introduces both novel syntactic suggestions and contemporary geographic data. These elements serve to further dramatize the verse and enrich the narrative. Jonah is swept by the sea currents into the deepest reaches of the ocean, and it is from here that he repents and recites his prayer.

Once again, Tanḥum employs his systematic philological methodology. He identifies the roots of terms, their usual sense, and their local application. In this case, he also offers analysis for why the terms are applied in a particular context. His analysis of the application of the term *mishbarekha* is based upon Ibn Bal‘am, while his analysis of the application of the term *gallim* is based upon Ibn Janāḥ. Finally, he demonstrates the application of the lexeme in a similar context elsewhere in Scripture.

#### **Passage IV**

##### Jonah 4:10

*[The Lord said,] “You cared (attah ḥasta) [about the plant, which you did not work for and did not grow, which appeared overnight and perished overnight].”*

[A] The meaning of this expression is “compassion” and “regret” (*al-ishfāq wa-'l-asaf*) for something. And from [the same root is the verse], *And let your eye care not (ve-lo taḥos 'eynekha)*. (Deut. 13:9; 19:13) And it is used frequently.

[B] And the meaning of his statement *which you did not work for and did not grow* is not to compare it with Him. For His condition, exalted is He, is not the same as that of created beings. Rather, the truth is that He, exalted is He, *never grows faint or weary, His wisdom cannot be fathomed*. (Isaiah 40:28) But when a human being grows weary due to a certain activity that he has taken upon himself, one ascribes weariness to that activity. Thus, the meaning is “...although

you have not [performed] any activity in bringing it into being. How then shall the same [pity] not exist in my justice, that I should destroy that whose being and life I generated, and which I governed in a beneficial manner – humans and animals?”

[C] And the principle upon which one relies here and in all similar cases is, *the Torah speaks in the language of human beings*.<sup>112</sup>

### Discussion

As usual, Tanḥum begins his discussion of our verse with [A] a lexical comment. Yefet b. Eli translates the the Hebrew *aḥus* with two different lexemes: *rathayta* (you mourned/lamented) for Jonah, and *ushfiq* for God.<sup>113</sup> Thus, for Yefet there is a qualitative difference between the “care” or “pity” that Jonah expresses, and that which God expresses: Jonah laments, while God has compassion.<sup>114</sup> Tanḥum makes no such distinction, but does soften the anthropopathy of the verse in the following passage by means of [B] a periphrastic translation.

The problem of [B] the description of the toil and weariness that the verse negates concerning Jonah, and by extension seems to attribute to God, was raised by Ibn Ezra *ad loc*. He writes as follows:

*And [the Lord] said [...] The Torah spoke (ha-katub dibber) in such a way that the listeners will understand (derekh she-yabinu ha-shome'im). For God does not “toil” in any of the creations (ki ha-shem lo ya'amol be-khol ha-beri'ot). So the meaning is, “You cared about something that you*

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<sup>112</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 127-129.

<sup>113</sup> Marwick, *Redemption and Retribution*, 158 lines 107-109; Andruss, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 73, and fn. 215 and 218.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. also the definition *rithā'* given for the biliteral root *h-s* by David b. Abraham al-Fāsī, in Skoss *The Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary of the Bible Known as Kitāb Jāmi' al-Alfāz (Agrōn) of David ben Abraham al-Fāsī*, vol. 1, 566. Both roots are used to translate the Hebrew second person *hasta* (i.e., in connection with Jonah) in MS Hunt. 206: “... You had compassion for the gourd plant and lamented it (*anta shaffaqa 'alā shajarat al-qar' wa-rathayta lahā*)...” (For the IV>II form shift in Judeo-Arabic, see Blau, *Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic*, 74.) Only the root *sh-f-q* is used in the first person (i.e., with God as the subject). See Avishur, *A Medieval Translation of the Latter Prophets: Ezekiel and Minor Prophets*, 111.

did not make (*dabar lo 'asita*), so how shall I not care about my handiworks (*ekh lo aḥus ani 'al ma 'asay*)?”

Ibn Ezra states that the “listeners” will “understand” this formulation better than the alternative, presumably due to its rhetorical force. However, his own paraphrase is perfectly intelligible, and even preserves the rhetorical force of the *a fortiori* argument.<sup>115</sup> Why then would the verse introduce the notion of divine toil? Tanḥum offers a linguistic response to this question: “...when a human being grows weary due to a certain activity that he has taken upon himself, one ascribes weariness to that activity.” Thus, according to Tanḥum, “toil” is introduced merely to describe the act of creating, with no bearing on the state of the Creator. It is a dead metaphor, an idiomatic convention.<sup>116</sup> Tanḥum’s solution echoes elements of Maimonides’ attitude towards anthropomorphism and anthropopathism in prophetic discourse,<sup>117</sup> and the ascription of human attributes to God based on the usual human motivation for performing similar acts.<sup>118</sup> Although the precise problem and its solution differ, Tanḥum approaches Maimonides in the sense that he dissociates the ascription of weariness from God and attaches it to the act of creation as performed by a human subject.

In order to clarify the precise meaning of this verse, without drawing on metaphorical language, Tanḥum provides a periphrastic translation. A comparison between his Arabic paraphrase and the Hebrew one presented by Ibn Ezra brings its novel elements into sharper relief:

Tanhum

Ibn Ezra

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<sup>115</sup> For the argument *a fortiori* in the Hebrew Bible, see Louis Jacobs, “The *Qal Va-homer* Argument in the Old Testament,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 35:2 (1972), 221-227; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1985), 419-420.

<sup>116</sup> For a discussion of “dead metaphor”, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 24-25.

<sup>117</sup> For prophetic *isti'āra* as “dead metaphor” in Maimonides’ *Guide*, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 110-111.

<sup>118</sup> E.g., see *Guide* I:54 (Pines, 1963, 124-125).

“...although you have not [performed] any activity in bringing it into being. How then shall the same [pity] not exist in my justice (*fa-kayfa lā yujad dhālik fī ‘adlī*), that I should destroy that whose being and life I generated, and which I governed in a beneficial manner (*mā awjadtuḥu al-wujūd wa-’l-ḥayāt wa-dabbartuḥu bi-’l-tadbīr al-nāfi‘ lahu*) – humans and animals?”

“You cared about something that you did not make (*dabar lo ‘asita*), so how shall I not care about my handiworks (*ekh lo aḥus ani ‘al ma‘asay*)?”

In contrast with Ibn Ezra’s conservative Hebrew paraphrase, Tanḥum’s terminology here is unabashedly philosophical. By employing the passive *yujad* and speaking of the existence of compassion “in [God’s] justice,” rather than using active forms, he softens the verse’s anthropopathy. The roots that are typically used to describe the act of creation in most Judeo-Arabic translations of the Bible,<sup>119</sup> and indeed most frequently in the Qur’ān, are *bara’a* and *khalaqa*.<sup>120</sup> However, when describing the creation or fashioning of Nineveh and its inhabitants, Tanḥum employs the IV form of the root *w-j-d* (*awjada*), which is widely used in Arabic

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Saadia’s translation of Genesis 1:1: *Awwal mā* [sic] *khalaqa allāh al-samawāt wa-’l-arḍ*. In Joseph Derenbourg, *Œuvres Complètes de R. Saadia ben Iosef al-Fayyūmī, Volume Premier: Version Arabe du Pentateuque* (Librairie de la Société Asiatique de l’École des Langues Orientales Vivantes: 1893), 4 line 1. See also Saadia’s commentary to Genesis, in which he uses both roots based on context, but tends to use *khalaqa* when directly addressing the creation narrative; see Judeo-Arabic text in *Saadya’s Commentary on Genesis*, ed. Moshe Zucker (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: 1984), 26-27. Yefet uses the same root to translate the Hebrew root *b-r-’* in Ps. 104:30 – here he renders *be-ḥibbare’am* as *fī inkhilāqihim*; see Blau, *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, 194, entry for form VII of the root *kh-l-q*. See also *ibid.*, 195, entries for *khalīqa* and *makhlūq*.

<sup>120</sup> See entries for the roots *b-r-’* and *kh-l-q* in Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage* (Brill: 2008), 83-85 and 282-284 respectively. Tellingly, the nominal form *wujūd* is never used in the sense of “being” in the Qur’ān, although the form *wujd* is used in the context of “financial means” (cf. also the Hebrew formulation of Lev. 12:8). See entries for the root *w-j-d* in Badawi and Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, 1012.

philosophical discourse<sup>121</sup> as well as in later Sufi discourse.<sup>122</sup> The reference to divine governance (*tadbīr*) also evokes philosophical sources.<sup>123</sup>

The problem of biblical anthropopathy now affords Tanḥum the opportunity to draw on [C] a well-worn formula, which features repeatedly in his writings:<sup>124</sup> “The Torah speaks in human language (*dibberah torah ki-leshon bene adam*).” This formulation was appropriated by the medieval exegetes from classical rabbinic sources.<sup>125</sup> In its rabbinic context, the dictum referred to the biblical use of the repetitive infinitive absolute (e.g., *shamoa’ tishma’*, *shamor tishmor*), employed for emphasis. According to some rabbinic exegetes, such repetitions were significant and expounded; others stated that “the Torah speaks in human language” and employs repetition when convention requires it.<sup>126</sup> In the medieval period, this maxim was employed in order to soften or neutralize biblical anthropomorphism and anthropopathy.<sup>127</sup> It was particularly

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<sup>121</sup> Cf. entries for this root in Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī’s Lexicon*, vol. 1, 502-510. For the relationship between Arabic philosophical and *kalām* terminology regarding essence and existence (including *wujūd* in al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā), see Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics in Context* (Cornell University Press: 2003), 145-160.

<sup>122</sup> For the appropriation of philosophical terminology in Sufi literature from al-Ghazālī (d.1111) onwards, see Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur’an, Mi’raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (Paulist Press: 1996), 24-25. For Ibn al-‘Arabi’s use of this terminology, see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Cosmology* (State University of New York Press: 1998) – in particular xix-xxi, 12-16, 72-76, 227-241.

<sup>123</sup> Compare usage in Qur’ān 10:31 (*Sūrat yūnus*). This usage become standard in philosophical and theological discourse. Cf. the terminology in Mubahat Türker (ed.), “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-mantiq* de Mūsa Ibn Maymūn,” in *Review of the Institute of Islamic Studies* 3 (1960), 109; Israel Efros (ed.), “*Maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-mantiq*,” in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 34 (1966), 82-2. See also Maimonides’ use of the term to describe divine governance in the *Guide*, discussed in Joseph Stern, *The Matter and Form of Maimonides’ Guide* (Harvard University Press: 2013), 252-254.

<sup>124</sup> For example, see his commentaries to Jonah 1:6 (in Shy, *Perush*, 114-115); Nahum 1:2 (in *ibid.*, 188-189); Song 6:5 (MS Pockocke 320, 56b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 67). See also Shy, “*Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva’ah le-millono le-mishneh torah*,” 539-540.

<sup>125</sup> See *Sifre* to Numbers, in *Siphre d’Be Rab*, ed. H. S. Horowitz (Wahrmann Books: 1966), *pisqa* #112, 121; English in Azzan Yadin, *Scripture as Logos* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2004), 18. Also Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot 31b, Yebamot 71a, Baba Metzi’a 31b.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. J. N. Epstein, *Mebo’ot le-sifrut ha-tanna’im: mishnah, tosefta, u-midreshe halakhah* (Magnes Press: 1957), 521-522.

<sup>127</sup> Richard C. Steiner, *A Biblical Translation in the Making*, 137-141; and cf. Haggai Ben-Shammai, “‘The Torah Speaks in a Language of Humans’: How Much ‘a Language of Humans’? – Comparative Observations on the Approaches of R. Saadia Gaon and His Contemporary Karaites,” in *To Settle the Plain Meaning of The Verse: Studies in Biblical Exegesis*, eds. Sara Japhet and Eran Viezel (The Bialik Institute: 2011), 59-69. Notably, the dictum was employed beyond the confines of Rabbanite circles: It was employed by the Karaite exegete Jacob al-Qirḳisānī, but specifically identified as Rabbanite. See *Qirḳisānī Studies*, ed. H. Hirschfeld (Jews College: 1918), 45-46; Daniel Frank, “Karaite Exegesis,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation (Vol. 1*

popular within the Spanish exegetical tradition, and was often cited by Ibn Ezra.<sup>128</sup> Notably for our purposes, it was widely cited by Maimonides in his works.<sup>129</sup> By applying this principle to the interpretation of theologically problematic verses, Tanḥum was participating in a well-established medieval Jewish exegetical tradition.

In this passage, Tanḥum touches only briefly upon lexical matters. As is his custom, he addresses both the sense of the root *h-w-s* and its usual application. Since its use in the present context is so standard, there is no need for Tanḥum to discuss it in detail. Beyond the usual linguistic discussion, Tanḥum raises and addresses a theological problem first noted by Ibn Ezra. He expands upon it significantly, explaining the development of the biblical expression and drawing upon the principle that “the Torah speaks in human language.” Here Tanḥum demonstrates a keen sensitivity to theological problems, an ingenious ability for linguistic argumentation, and a trained eye for problems that earlier exegetes left unaddressed.

## Passage V

### Jonah 4:11

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*part 2: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages – the Middle Ages* (Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht: 2000), ed. Magne Saebo, 118, fn.37. It was also employed without ascription or comment by the Karaite Salmon b. Yeroḥam (10<sup>th</sup> century); see Daniel Frank, *Search Scripture Well: Karaite Exegetes and the Origins of the Jewish Bible in the Islamic East* (Brill: 2004), 152. In a Rabbanite context, the expression is employed early in this sense in Ibn Quraysh’s *Risāla*; see Shy, “Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva’ah le-millono le-mishneh torah,” 539. It is possible that the origins of this formulation lie in pre-rabbinic usage, and were applied differently in different ideological and cultural contexts – cf. Romans 6:19 for Paul’s suggestive statement that “I speak to you after the manner of humans (*anthrōpinon legō*) because of the infirmity of your flesh.” I thank my friend and teacher Haggai Resnikoff for this observation. The concept that the Torah speaks in concrete language due to the inability of the human listener to understand divine discourse is also reflected in tannaitic midrashim in the expression *leshabber/leshakkeh et ha-ozen* [or: *mashmi ‘in et ha-ozen*] *mah she-hi yekholah lishmoa’* (for the expression *leshabber/leshakkeh et ha-ozen*, see Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma ‘el*, Tractate Ba-ḥodesh III, 306, several examples in Ba-ḥodesh IV, and variants in critical apparatus; see also Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1574, entry for *pi’el* form of the root *sh-k-k*).

<sup>128</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 73-74, 90-91; Mordechai Z. Cohen, ““The Best of Poetry...”: Literary Approaches to the Bible in the Spanish *Peshat* Tradition,” in *Torah U-Madda* 6 (1996), 34-37.

<sup>129</sup> See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 1:12; *Guide* I:26 (Pines, 56), I:29 (*ibid.*, 62), I:46 (*ibid.*, 100), I:53 (*ibid.*, 120), and many others. See also Shy, “Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva’ah le-millono le-mishneh torah,” 540.

“[And should I not care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are] more than twelve [ten-hundred]<sup>130</sup> (*harbeh mi-shtem ‘esreh ribbo*) persons]...”

[A] The [usual] rule is to geminate the *shin* due to the assimilation of the *nun* of *min*<sup>131</sup> into it, but they placed the *hireq*<sup>132</sup> with a *ga’ya* on the *mem* so that it might be realized as quiescent<sup>133</sup> in place of the gemination.<sup>134</sup> They<sup>135</sup> preferred this here to softening the *tav*, as would have been unavoidable had the *shin* been doubled, as we explained the matter in *Al-kulliyāt*, [namely] that the Hebrews do not permit [placing] a *dagesh*<sup>136</sup> in [the letters] *BGDKPT* after a mobile *sheva*.<sup>137</sup>

[B] Concerning that which the ancient *scribes* and *masoret*s (*al-sofrim al-qudamā’ aṣḥāb al-masoret*) transmitted concerning the word “two” (*shte*),<sup>138</sup> as we explained, they did not see fit to make the *tav* fricative, so that it would not resemble the imperative “drink” (*shetheh*),<sup>139</sup> as in *And she said, “Drink, my lord (shetheh adoni).”* (Gen. 24:18) But they did not consider it appropriate to disregard the rule that a *dagesh* cannot follow a mobile *sheva*, so they preferred to lend it an *alef* with a *hamza* vocalized with a *kasra* vowel when read (*alefan mahūmuza muḥarraka bi-’l-kasra fī al-qirā’a*), although this is not written, and to leave the *shin* without a vowel.<sup>140</sup> Thus, the *tav* is left with a *dagesh*.<sup>141</sup>

But when the *mem* was prefixed to it, which carries the meaning “from” (*min*), they had two possible options. The first was to weaken the *tav*, not confusing it with the verb which is *shete*

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<sup>130</sup> I.e., 120, 000.

<sup>131</sup> “From.”

<sup>132</sup> [i] vowel.

<sup>133</sup> I.e., so that the syllable will be closed by a *shin* that is “at rest” (*sākin*), without a mobile *sheva*.

<sup>134</sup> A *sheva* under a geminated consonant must always be mobile. See Khan, *Short Introduction*, 88.

<sup>135</sup> I.e., the masoret, mentioned below.

<sup>136</sup> A point, which would here indicate that the letter is to be pronounced as plosive rather than fricative.

<sup>137</sup> That is to say that after a mobile *sheva* the letters *BGDKPT* are realized as fricative. For this rule, see Khan, *Short Introduction*, 94; and William Chomsky, *David Kimḥi’s Hebrew Grammar (Mikhlol)* (Bloch Publishing Company: 1952), 18.

<sup>138</sup> In construct form. When not in construct (*semikhut*), the form is *shtayim*.

<sup>139</sup> Although these two terms are distinguished by their final letter – the former concluding with a *yod* and the latter with a *he* – they are indistinguishable to the ear, as the final letters of both words are *matres lectionis*.

<sup>140</sup> Lit. “and render the *shin* immobile.” Arabic: *wa-yusakkinū al-shin*.

<sup>141</sup> I.e., a *dagesh qal*, which usually follows a quiescent *sheva*. For this rule, see Khan, *Short Introduction*, 94; Chomsky, *David Kimḥi’s Hebrew Grammar*, 18-19.

due to the addition of the *mem*, and they would then geminate the *shin* [which would be] vocalized with a [mobile] *sheva*. That [approach] is [attested] in his statement *and let me take revenge, [if only] for one of my two eyes (mi-shsheṭe ‘enay)* (Judges 16:28), which has a geminate *shin* and a soft *tav*. The second [option] was to halt the *mem* in order to leave the *shin* without a vowel.<sup>142</sup> The *tav* would thus remain pointed with a *dagesh*,<sup>143</sup> the *mem* sufficing in lieu of a borrowed *hamza*,<sup>144</sup> as they did with *more than twelve [ten-hundred] (mi-shtem ‘esreh ribbo)* (Jonah 4:11), considering that this was the easiest of [the two options].

[C] This is proof of the delusion of those who read *shte* with a *geminated tav* and a vocalized *shin*,<sup>145</sup> rather than a borrowed *hamza*. In this [matter], one relies on that which they<sup>146</sup> transmitted concerning recitation (*al-qirā’a*), and investigation (*al-istiqrā’*) confirms it, that there is in the language no *dagesh* after a mobile *sheva*.<sup>147</sup>

### *Discussion*

Tanḥum’s commentary to Jonah 4:11 consists of a lengthy discourse on morphology and the principles of masoretic vocalization.<sup>148</sup> The primary focus of the passage is the correct pronunciation of the word *shtayim* (“two”) according to his understanding of the Tiberian masoretic vocalization, with an initial quiescent *sheva*.<sup>149</sup>

Tanḥum first observes [A] that according to masoretic tradition, a *shin* following the prepositional prefix *mi(n)* would usually be doubled due to the assimilation of the final *nun*. However, this is not the case in our verse, in which the *shin* is not geminated (as attested in the

<sup>142</sup> Lit. “in order that the *shin* might remain immobile.” Arabic: *li-taskun al-shin*.

<sup>143</sup> I.e., a *dagesh qal*.

<sup>144</sup> That is to say, the *hireq* of the prefix *mi(n)* serves to break up the consonant cluster, removing the need for a prosthetic *alef*.

<sup>145</sup> I.e., a *shin* pointed with a mobile *sheva* rather than a quiescent one.

<sup>146</sup> The masorettes.

<sup>147</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 129.

<sup>148</sup> For an introduction to the Tiberian masoretic tradition, see Khan, *Short Introduction*.

<sup>149</sup> For a brief discussion of this passage, see Shy, “Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva’ah le-millono le-mishneh torah,” 531-532.

Leningrad and Aleppo codices).<sup>150</sup> According to Tanḥum, this is due to the desire of the vocalizers to preserve the quiescent *sheva* under the *shin*. The pronunciation of the word *shtayim* with an initial quiescent *sheva* – against the norm – would usually be enabled by prefixing an *alef* (*alefan mahmūza*), just as the eliding *ālif* facilitates the pronunciation of initial consonant clusters in Arabic. In our verse, the unusual vocalization of *mi-shtem* ‘*esreh* without a geminated *shin* points to such a realization of the initial *sheva*, enabled by the *hireq* under the prefixed *mem*.<sup>151</sup> Interestingly, Tanḥum suggests that the *ga’ya* beneath the *mem* (קשתים־עשרה) indicates that the following *sheva* is quiescent, against the common understanding of the function of the *ga’ya* in contemporary reading traditions.<sup>152</sup> However, it appears that Tanḥum’s understanding of the masoretic use of the *ga’ya* reflects the historical Tiberian practice,<sup>153</sup> and his suggestion should not be dismissed.<sup>154</sup>

Tanḥum now offers [B] an account of the masoretic motivation for departing from their usual practice when vocalizing the word *shtayim*. His account is utilitarian rather than etymological: The construct form *shte*, if realized with a fricative *tav* and a mobile *sheva*, would sound identical to the imperative *shetheh* (“drink”), and the masoretes wished to avoid confusion.

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<sup>150</sup> The Cairo Codex is vocalized identically. Cf. Also David Qimḥi’s commentary to Jonah 4:11, in which he affirms this vocalization. This vocalization has become standard in non-Yemenite traditions due to the authority accorded to it by Jedidiah Norzi (c.1560-c.1626) in his work *Minḥat shay*, *ad loc.*

<sup>151</sup> The assimilation of the *nun* of the prefixed preposition *min* (“from”) results in the doubling of the following consonant, if possible. If the consonant cannot be doubled, the result is often a compensatory lengthening of the short [i] vowel. Thus *min* ‘*olam* becomes *mē-’olam*. Here, the *shin* may easily be doubled, and yet it is not – apparently because the reading tradition wishes to retain the quiescent *sheva* and plosive *tav*.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Aharon Dotan, “Masorah,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Keter Publishing House: 1972), vol. 16 (Supplementary Entries), 1450-1453. It seems to me that Dotan’s treatment is colored by Norzi’s later positions on the matter, for which see his *Ma’amar ha-ma’arikh*, in Zvi Betser, *The Addenda to the Minḥat Shay* (World Union of Jewish Studies: 1997), 97-118.

<sup>153</sup> Khan, *Short Introduction*, 89-90, 101-102.

<sup>154</sup> See Price, *The Syntax of Masoretic Accents*, 3. For the less-than-systematic pronunciation of the *sheva* in different contexts, see the medieval Tiberian Judeo-Arabic work *Kelale ha-sheva* (Rules of the *Sheva*) in Neḥemya Allony, “Mi-diqduq ha-masorah,” in *Studies in Medieval Philology and Literature: Collected Papers II, The Schools of Vocalisation and Massorah*, ed. Yosef Tobi (Ben Zvi Institute: 1988), 93-103; and cf. Khan, *Short Introduction*, 102.

As a final proof that this is indeed the correct pronunciation, Tanḥum compares the vocalization of our verse in Jonah with a verse from Judges 16:28, which contains the phrase “one of my two eyes (אַחַת מִשְׁתֵּי עֵינַי; *aḥath mi-shshēthē ‘ēnay*).” There, the masoretic tradition *does* double the *shin*, and consequently the *tav* becomes fricative. This confirms Tanḥum’s assertion that the masoretes generally realized the initial *sheva* of *shtayim* as quiescent and the *dagesh* (point) as *qal* (i.e., merely indicating that the consonant is plosive, not doubled). This is not the only passage in *Kitāb al-bayān* in which Tanḥum treats this topic: In his commentary to Judges 16:28, Tanḥum states that one who pronounces *shte* with an initial mobile *sheva* by analogy to the masculine *shene* “knows nothing of the principles of linguistics,” since there is no case in which a *dagesh* follows a mobile *sheva*.<sup>155</sup>

In his final word on this topic – articulated with great rhetorical force – Tanḥum [C] declares his analysis to constitute “proof of the delusion of those who read *shte* with a *geminated tav* and a vocalized *shin*, rather than a borrowed *hamza*.”<sup>156</sup>

The length to which Tanḥum goes to prove his point suggests that he is aware that not only are there those who *pronounce* the word differently, but there are those who *argue that the alternative pronunciation is the correct one*. Although Tanḥum’s position had already been prescribed in the highly influential *Kitāb hidāyat al-qāri’*, an 11<sup>th</sup> century guide to the accurate recitation of the Torah,<sup>157</sup> Ibn Ezra made precisely the opposite case in his grammatical work

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<sup>155</sup> See Shy, “Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva’ah le-millono le-mishneh torah,” 532. For the Arabic of this passage, see *ibid.*, fn.22. It is notable that there is also no other case of an initial quiescent *sheva*. This rule is also not entirely consistently reflected in all MSS: In the Leningrad Codex, a *dagesh* follows a *ḥaṭef pataḥ* in Jeremiah 50:11, a *sheva* in Ezekiel 18:29, and a *ḥaṭef pataḥ* in Ezekiel 40:25. However, none of these forms appear in the Aleppo Codex.

<sup>156</sup> Arabic: *wa-hādhā dalīl ‘alā wahm man yaqra’ shte bi-dagshut al-tav wa-taḥrīk al-shīn min ghayr hamza musta’āra*. Shy, *Perush*, 129.

<sup>157</sup> See Ilan Eldar, *The Study of the Art of Correct Reading as Reflected in the Medieval Treatise Hidāyat al-Qāri’ (=Guidance of the Reader)* (The Academy of the Hebrew Language: 1994), 165-166. For the author as the Karaite grammarian Abū al-Faraj Hārūn (11<sup>th</sup> century), see *ibid.*, 32-43. For the wide influence of the treatise – in particular

*Tzaḥot*. There, he promoted the view that the *sheva* in *shtayim* is mobile, and the *tav* geminate (thus *shěttayim*), deriving the word from the root *sh-n-h/y* and understanding it as a contraction of the form *shintayim*.<sup>158</sup> Thus, Ibn Ezra understands the *dagesh* in the *tav* to indicate an assimilated *nun*, doubling the consonant. In fact, he provides *precisely* our verse – Jonah 4:11 – as proof, vocalizing it מִשְׁתַּיִם-עֶשְׂרֵה (mi-shshěttēm ‘*esrēh*). It appears that Ibn Ezra had seen an alternative vocalization of the text. Indeed, divergent traditions are reflected in extant manuscripts,<sup>159</sup> although both the Leningrad and Aleppo codices have מִשְׁתַּיִם-עֶשְׂרֵה (mi-shtēm ‘*esrēh*), as attested by Tanḥum. Ibn Ezra’s position is partially adopted by Qimḥi, who nevertheless asserts that the *dagesh* in the *tav* does not render the consonant geminate (a *dagesh ḥazaq*), but merely plosive (a *dagesh qal*).<sup>160</sup>

In this case, Tanḥum’s emphasis on the “delusion of one who reads” the word differently suggests that his concern may be the establishment of what he views to be correct liturgical

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in its second, abbreviated recension – see *ibid.*, 9-10; Khan, *Short Introduction*, 77. For the position of Jedidiah Norzi (1560-after 1626), whose *Minḥat shay* has been central to the standardization of the vocalization of the masoretic biblical text in the modern period, see his comments to Gen. 4:19; *Minḥat Shay on the Torah*, ed. Zvi Betser (World Union of Jewish Studies: 2005), 70.

<sup>158</sup> See *Sefer Tzaḥot*, ed. Gabriel Hirsch Lippmann (Fürth: 1827), 29a-b, 40a. For the possibility that this was also Ibn Janāḥ’s position, and for the vocalization *shitte/shittayim* in Babylonian MSS, see Chomsky, *David Qimḥi’s Hebrew Grammar*, 325 n.594.

<sup>159</sup> See for example MS Urbinati 2, which accords with Ibn Ezra’s version. However, it appears that this MS dates from 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century Italy (despite being dated to 979 C.E. in a colophon!), and the scribe may even have been aware of Ibn Ezra’s opinion. In addition, the scribe appears to have been somewhat liberal in applying *degeshim*. For this version, see *Pentateuch, Prophets and Hagiographa Ms. Urbinati 2* (Makor Publishing: 1979), vol. 5, 264. For the probable forgery of the colophon and the basis for a later dating, see *ibid.*, introduction to vol. 1, section *xvi*. David Qimḥi’s assertion (in his comments to Jonah *ad loc.* and Judges 16:28) of the authority of the vocalization attested by Tanḥum and in the codices also implies that alternative vocalizations circulated in Provence and possibly Spain during or shortly before Tanḥum’s lifetime. In addition, Jedidiah Norzi’s comments to Jonah 4:11 in his *Minḥat shay* attest to the persistence of these variants into the early modern period.

It is also notable that the Yemeni tradition has remained divided on this issue. For the addition of a prosthetic *alef* to facilitate the retention of the initial quiescent *sheva*, see the medieval *Maḥberet ha-tījān* (28) and cf. Yaḥya Ṣāliḥ’s (d.1805) *Ḥeleq ha-diḡduq* (59a) to Jonah 4:11, in *Qobetz diḡduqe torah*, ed. Ariel Yitzḥaq Ha-Levi (Jerusalem: 2001). For the general adoption of Ibn Ezra’s and Qimḥi’s pronunciation of the initial *sheva* in the contemporary Yemeni reading tradition, see *Pereq ba-shir* (94-95, fn.18) in *ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> See Qimḥi in his *Mikhlol* (Lyck: 1842), 185; Chomsky, *David Qimḥi’s Hebrew Grammar*, 322. However, see his treatment in *ibid.*, 18.

practice. It is likely that Tanḥum saw much at stake in correct pronunciation, as Maimonides was highly stringent in requiring the utmost precision in the public reading of the Torah and the recitation of the *Shema*’, prescribing the correct pronunciation of the quiescent *sheva*, as well as plosive, fricative, and geminate consonants.<sup>161</sup>

It is notable that Tanḥum could assert the precise vocalization and masoretic markings of these verses with such confidence. As our discussion above highlights, the manuscripts are often in disagreement on such points of vocalization, particularly in the Prophets and Hagiographa.<sup>162</sup> Once again, it may have been Maimonides who facilitated such an attitude: His promotion of the Aleppo Codex as the most authoritative biblical manuscript would have allowed Tanḥum to consult either that text itself or codices copied from it, and to determine which readings were authoritative.<sup>163</sup> It is particularly striking in this regard that Tanḥum does not refer to an earlier authority such as *Kitāb hidāyat al-qāri*’, but rather makes his decision based on a close comparative analysis of the authoritative masoretic vocalization.<sup>164</sup> It is unlikely that he would

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<sup>161</sup> See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, 12:6; and Laws of the Recitation of the *Shema*’, 2:8-9. With the exception of some Yemenite communities, this ruling does not generally dictate contemporary Jewish liturgical practice. Cf. the much more lenient position of the Abraham b. Nathan of Lunel (c.1155-1215) cited by Jacob b. Asher (c.1270-1340) in his later code, the *Arba’ah turim* (*Oraḥ ḥayyim* #142); and the conciliatory ruling of Joseph Caro (1488-1575) in his commentary *Bet yosef*, *ad loc.*

<sup>162</sup> On variation in orthography and vocalization among masoretic bibles, see Christian D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (Ktav Publishing House: 1966). See also Yosef Ofer, “The History and Authority of the Aleppo Codex,” in *Jerusalem Crown Companion Volume*, ed. Mordechai Glatzer (Old City Press, Jerusalem: 2002), 33-5.

<sup>163</sup> For Maimonides’ promotion of the Aleppo codex as authoritative, see *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Torah Scrolls, 8:4; Ofer, “The History and Authority of the Aleppo Codex,” 37-39. However, the MS most likely does not accurately reflect the masoretic traditions upon which Tanḥum relied. Although *mi-shtem ‘esreh* is vocalized in accord with Tanḥum’s commentary here, it is written (somewhat oddly) without the *yod mater lectionis*, thus מַשְׁתֵּם-עֶשְׂרֵה instead of מַשְׁתֵּם-עֶשְׂרֵה. This is against the reading of the Aleppo and Leningrad codices. On the degree to which the MS may reflect Tanḥum’s own vocalization of the text, see above, p.99-100, fn.82.

<sup>164</sup> A further example of Tanḥum’s reliance upon authoritative manuscripts rather than simply accepting the accounts of later grammarians may be found in his commentary to Qohelet 5:11 (MS Pocke 320, 124b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 63), in which he writes as follows: “And [the letter *nun* in the expression] *the worker’s sleep* (*shenat ha-‘obed* [Qoh. 5:11]) is necessarily [vocalized] with a *pataḥ*, because it is in a construct. But as for *I will not give sleep to my eyes* (*shenat le-‘enay* [Ps. 132:4]), there are those that say that it is [with a] *qametz* [and] not in construct, since the *lamed* is not part of a construct with [the word *shenat*]. And there are those who say that it is vocalized with a *qametz* because it is derived from [lit. “it’s root is”] *my sleep* (*shenati*).

have been able to do so with such authority before Maimonides had identified which manuscripts should be consulted to determine the correct reading.

## Passage VI

### Jonah 4:11 (Continued)

“... *who do not know their right hand from their left, and many beasts (u-behemah rabbah).*”

[A] By this it does not mean that they were ignorant, because this is not compatible with the occurrence of [divine] mercy among them. Rather, it means that in addition to this enumeration, there are children who do not understand anything, and that they are guiltless. And the perfection *in potentia* of those of them who are perfect has not yet been brought into full actuality. And this is not to mention the others.<sup>165</sup>

[B] [Concerning] his statement *and many beasts*, it is as if He said *and there are in it twelve ten-hundred*, and *and many beasts* is attached to *twelve ten-hundred* which are *in it*.<sup>166</sup>

[C] *Beasts (behemah)*<sup>167</sup> here is a name of the genus of animals, like *these are the creatures (zot ha-hayah)*<sup>168</sup> *that you may eat from among the animals (mi-kol ha-behemah) that are upon the*

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[...] And I have found a few expressions with construct forms that are vocalized with *qemetzin*. [...] But Abu al-Walid [Ibn Janāh] stated that it is with a *pataḥ*, since it retains something of a construct form [lit. “it has a fragrance of the construct”]. [...] And this is how I have found it in the codices to which I have access, i.e., that it is with a *pataḥ* (*wa-ka-dhālik wajadnāhu fī al-maṣāḥif allatī ‘indanā a ‘nī bi-fataḥ*.)” Cf. Ibn Ezra’s commentary to Qoh. 5:11; Chomsky, *David Kimḥi’s Hebrew Grammar*, 288; and see discussion in *Minḥat shay* to Ps. 132:4. Indeed, Tanḥum’s observation is consistent with the vocalization attested in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices. Another apparently original morphological observation based on the evidence of authoritative biblical manuscripts is his suggestion that the *dagesh* in the *mem* of the word *ha-meqareh* in Qohelet 10:18, and the lack thereof in the same word *ha-meqareh* in Ps.104:3, is due to the former being a noun and the latter a participle. This interpretation appears to be otherwise unattested. See Shy, “Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva’ah le-millono le-mishneh torah,” 530-531.

<sup>165</sup> Who have presumably attained some level of perfection through their repentance.

<sup>166</sup> I.e., the many beasts are in addition to the large number of people, rather than being grouped with the children.

<sup>167</sup> This is a singular feminine collective noun.

<sup>168</sup> Also a singular feminine collective noun.

land. (Lev. 11:2) And *many* (*rabbah*) functions as its attribute, meaning “and many animals (*wa-ḥayawān kathīr*).”<sup>169</sup>

### Discussion

Immediately striking in this passage is Tanḥum’s use of philosophical terminology and his interpretation of the verse through a philosophical prism. He first isolates [A] a philosophical problem: Our verse implies that the inhabitants of the city deserve to be spared *because they are ignorant*.<sup>170</sup> However, according to the Aristotelian position articulated most notably by Maimonides, divine providence is predicated upon intellectual perfection.<sup>171</sup> How, then, is an appeal to the ignorance of the inhabitants of Nineveh an argument in favor of sparing them from destruction? Tanḥum’s answer is that those “who do not know their right hand from their left” are children, and therefore deserving of divine mercy. This answer is attested in the commentaries of Yefet b. Eli,<sup>172</sup> Rashi, and Qimḥi *ad loc.*,<sup>173</sup> once again raising the question of Tanḥum’s familiarity with these exegetes. However, the manner in which Tanḥum frames both

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<sup>169</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 129.

<sup>170</sup> Such an interpretation is implied in the rabbinic understanding of *u-behemah rabbah* as referring to the ignorant and idolatrous human inhabitants of Nineveh. See Qohelet Rabbah 3:18 (English in *Midrash Rabbah: Ecclesiastes*, trans. A. Cohen (The Soncino Press: 1983), 106). See also the Tanḥuma to Deut. 31:14 (*Ve-zot ha-berakhah*; English translation in *Midrash Tanhuma: Translated into English with Introduction, Indices, and Brief Notes*, vol. 3 (Numbers and Deuteronomy), trans. John T. Townsend (Ktav Publishing House: 2003), 373). This interpretation is offered by Rashi in his commentary to our verse.

<sup>171</sup> See Maimonides’ *Guide*, III:17 (Pines, 471-472); III:51 (Pines, 624-628); Herbert Davidson, *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works* (Oxford University Press: 2005), 373-377.

<sup>172</sup> See Andruss, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 74-75.

<sup>173</sup> For Qimḥi’s frequent reliance on Rashi, see Frank Ephraim Talmage, *David Kimhi: The Man and the Commentaries* (Harvard University Press: 1975), 72. For his dependence on Rashi for midrashic interpretations (as opposed to direct reliance on the midrashim), see Naomi Grunhaus, “The Dependence of Rabbi David Kimhi (Radak) on Rashi in his Quotation of Midrashic Traditions,” in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 93:3 (2003), 415-430. For his familiarity and (infrequent) reliance on Yefet b. Eli, see Birnbaum, “Yefet ben ‘Ali,” 261-264. For his familiarity with Arabic, see Talmage, *David Kimhi*, 63-64.

the problem and the solution reflects his Aristotelian intellectual milieu, and neither Rashi's nor Qimḥi's respective commentaries demonstrate such concerns.<sup>174</sup>

In formulating the problem, Tanḥum appears to subscribe to a highly impersonal theology, referring to “the occurrence of [divine] mercy (*wuqū‘ al-raḥma*)” rather than depicting the deity as an active subject. Here, he echoes Maimonides' assertion that divine attributes are applied to God based on how we experience natural processes, which may be described as divine actions insofar as God is their ultimate cause.<sup>175</sup> This is consistent with Tanḥum's phraseology in his periphrastic rendition of our verse in his commentary to Jonah 4:10 discussed above, in which he paraphrases God's rhetorical question: “How then shall the same [pity] not exist in my justice (*fa-kayfa lā yujad dhālik fī ‘adlī*)?” Rather than describing God as a caring and nurturing agent, Tanḥum describes a “(divine) justice” which has an element of nurturing or compassion encoded within it. Once again, Tanḥum's theology appears starkly Maimonidean.<sup>176</sup>

In formulating the solution, Tanḥum refers to the potential of guiltless children to achieve intellectual perfection. His terminology here refers to the existence of this perfection *in potentia* (*bi-’l-quwwa*), while when attained it exists *in actu* (*bi-’l-fi’l*). This conception of the actualized human intellect is common to all thinkers within the Islamic Aristotelian tradition with some variations,<sup>177</sup> and although he does not state it here, Tanḥum also shared in the belief that the cause of this process was the Active Intellect.<sup>178</sup> Here we see Tanḥum interpreting the biblical

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<sup>174</sup> Rashi simply states that they were minors and declines to elaborate; while Qimḥi connects the verse to the biblical injunction that children not be punished for the sins of their parents (Deut. 24:16).

<sup>175</sup> See Maimonides' discussion of the “thirteen attributes of mercy” and the ascription of other attributes to God, in *Guide* I:54 (Pines, 124-128).

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Tal, *Exegetic Methods*, 148-172.

<sup>177</sup> See Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect* (Oxford: 1992), in particular pages 4-5, 53-58, 103-105.

<sup>178</sup> For the Active Intellect as that which leads the human intellect from potentiality to actuality, see Davidson, *On Intellect* (Oxford: 1992), 4. For the intellectual soul as being guided towards perfection by an angel (who is to be identified with the Active Intellect), see Tanḥum's allegorical commentary to Jonah 1:6 (Shy, *Perush*, 132-133).

verse through the prism of Peripatetic psychology in order to argue that the children of Nineveh were sufficiently deserving of divine mercy, and that they are in fact those who are described as those “*who do not know their right hand from their left.*”

Tanḥum’s next observation is [B] a syntactic note, which once again responds to a philosophical problem. The verse implies that animals are particularly deserving of compassion, apparently due to their blamelessness. Indeed, this interpretation is explicitly adopted by some medieval exegetes.<sup>179</sup> But in the medieval Aristotelian scheme described above, an irrational beast (*ḥayawān ghayr nāṭiq*) is not subject to divine providence in the particularized manner that a human who has attained (or can attain) intellectual perfection is.<sup>180</sup> To a medieval reader with a philosophical background, the conclusion of the verse (and indeed the book) with the mention of beasts is strange and undermines its rhetorical force. By linking this phrase back to the original enumeration, Tanḥum significantly reduces the alienness of the biblical account.

The final elements [C] of Tanḥum’s commentary to this verse are linguistic. He first notes that the Hebrew term *behemah* (beast) may be employed to signify the genus of animals (*jins al-ḥayawān*) as a whole, and thus includes both domesticated animals (Hebrew: *behemah*) and wild animals (Hebrew: *ḥayah*) within its valence, as is the case in Leviticus 11:2.<sup>181</sup> It is notable that Tanḥum employs philosophical terminology in formulating this interpretation, *jins* (Greek:

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Maimonides identified the Active Intellect (along with the other emanated intellects) as an angel; see *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:3-8. In this he followed Ibn Sīnā; see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, (State University of New York Press: 1993), 238.

<sup>179</sup> See Yefet b. Eli, in Andruss, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 74-75; Qimḥi’s commentary *ad loc.*

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, III:17 (Pines, 471-472); III:51 (Pines, 625).

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Temurah 9a, where the verse is used to prove that the singular form *behemah* may function as a plural. For a parallel in the Tosefta, see Tractate Temurah 1:7 (in Zuckerman edition); English in *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew*, trans. Jacob Neusner (Ktav Publishing House: 1979), vol. 5 (Qodoshim), 214. If Tanḥum’s interpretation was informed by any rabbinic source at all, it is most likely the Babylonian Talmud, as he rarely cites the Tosefta – see citations listed in Shy, *Perush*, 366; and note the absence of citations from the Tosefta in Wechsler, *Strangers*, 407. However, this is not a very strong antecedent, for while the talmudic interpretation seeks to illustrate the use of the singular noun to indicate the plural, Tanḥum’s interpretation seeks to determine the term’s scope.

*genos*) being one of Porphyry's *quinque voces*, which were adopted into medieval Arabic logical terminology (Arabic: *al-alfāz al-khamsa*).<sup>182</sup> Ibn Janāḥ used the terminology of the *quinque voces* to explain the Bible's purported use of lexical substitution,<sup>183</sup> but it was Abraham Ibn Ezra who pioneered the direct use of these categories in biblical exegesis in cases in which there was apparent inconsistency their usage, just as Tanḥum would later do in our passage.<sup>184</sup> It is possible that Ibn Ezra's interpretive strategies in this case may reflect his adopted Western Christian context.<sup>185</sup> If this is the case, it would seem that Tanḥum's approach here was indirectly informed by the interpretive traditions of Western Christendom, via the works of Ibn Ezra.

In the above passage, we once again see Tanḥum's sensitivity to philosophical and theological problems, and his ability to propose original solutions to these problems. In this case, his syntactic solution – connecting the “*many beasts*” to the enumeration of Nineveh's population – appears to be unattested in earlier sources. In fact, an awareness of the philosophical problems raised by Tanḥum in connection with this verse is almost entirely absent from earlier commentaries.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> See Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, vol. 1, 53-55. This terminology in al-Fārābī is derived in particular from Arabic translations of Porphyry's *Isagoge*; see Shukri B. Abed, *Aristotelian Logic and the Arabic Language in Alfarābī* (State University of New York Press: 1991), 2, 10, 43. For the study of logic among Jews in the medieval period, see Charles H. Manekin, “Logic in Medieval Jewish Culture,” in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, ed. Gad Freudenthal (Cambridge University Press: 2011), 113-135.

<sup>183</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 80. Ibn Ezra rejected this method; see *ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> See Joseph Cohen and Uriel Simon, *Yesod mora ve-sod torah: The Foundation of Piety and the Secret of the Torah* (Bar-Ilan University Press: 2002), 27-28, 88-91; and cf. Ibn Ezra's commentary to Deut. 11:11. See also Sela, *Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science*, 13, 191. For Maimonides' use of Alfarabian logic in his exegesis, see Modechai Z. Cohen, “Moses Ibn Ezra vs. Maimonides: Argument for a Poetic Definition of Metaphor (*Isti'āra*),” in *Edebiyāt: Journal of Middle Eastern and Comparative Literature* 11 (2000), 1-28; *ibid.*, *Three Approaches*, 98-136.

<sup>185</sup> For the use of logic in Christian exegesis in High Medieval Western Christendom, see G. R. Evans *Language and Logic of the Bible* (Cambridge University Press: 1984).

<sup>186</sup> In his commentary *ad loc.*, Ibn Ezra makes a brief statement to the effect that destruction of Nineveh would have been as total as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and therefore even animals would not have been spared. He thereby implies that the phrase “*and many beasts*” is not to be included in the enumeration of Nineveh's population, but rather as another example of those who were deserving of divine mercy.

## “This is the state of the soul”: The allegorical stratum of Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s commentary to Jonah

After concluding his literal-philological interpretation of Jonah 4:11, Tanḥum turns to the book’s allegorical sense.<sup>187</sup> As we have seen, Tanḥum understands the story of Jonah to be both a fragment of a historical narrative, and a prophetic revelation possessing a deeper stratum of meaning.

We have already noted Tanḥum’s reliance on the hermeneutical methods of Maimonides. As has been demonstrated by Mordechai Z. Cohen, Maimonides understood the necessity of maintaining the integrity of the literal stratum of meaning when interpreting a narrative that he identified as a prophetic parable (*mathal*).<sup>188</sup> Each significant detail of the pericope must be interpreted, and must fit within a narrative whole.<sup>189</sup> In extended *amthāl* (plu. of *mathal*), much

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<sup>187</sup> In structuring his commentary in this way, Tanḥum also echoes Ibn Bal’am’s commentary on Jonah, in which a discussion of the theological problems raised by the narrative follows his standard lexicological-grammatical treatment. Ibn Bal’am poses the question, and cites Hai Gaon’s responsum to the community of Qābis in response; see Poznanski, *The Arabic Commentary of ibn Bal’am*, 36-38. Poznanski refers to Solomon Aaron Wertheimer’s suggestion in the latter’s *Qohelet Shelomo* (1899) that Hai Gaon is referring in his responsum to Saadia Gaon’s treatment of the topic in his *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, but rejects this based on Hai’s reference to these solutions as belonging to the *mutakallimūn*, it being unlikely that Hai would “quote Saadya as among the Mutakallimun.” The fact remains, however, that the first of the two solutions offered by Hai matches that of Saadia, being only somewhat expanded. In the absence of another explanation, then, Wertheimer’s suggestion must be considered quite plausible. Indeed, it is accepted by Moshe Zucker in “Can a Prophet Sin,” 168). For Saadia considered as a *mutakallim*, see Sarah Stroumsa, “Saadya and Jewish *kalam*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press: 2003), eds. Frank and Leaman. For Saadia explicitly considered as the “first and foremost among speakers everywhere,” where the Hebrew *medabberim* at the very least alludes to Saadia’s status as a *mutakallim*, see *ibid.*, 71. For important qualifications regarding this understanding of Saadia, see *ibid.*, 76. Hai’s second solution also responds to the problem of divine foreknowledge. According to this solution, God may not select a prophet who will *change* the nature of his mission or misrepresent the divine message, but it is still possible that the prophet may attempt to *escape* his mission. Indeed, Moses himself was apprehensive to perform his mission to lead the Exodus from Egypt. However, God may still select that prophet despite this. God’s willingness to select an unwilling prophet applies particularly in the case of Jonah, whose flight provided occasion for the performance of miracles such as his deliverance from the belly of the fish. According to the second solution, Jonah did indeed sin. (For a more accurate Hebrew translation of Hai’s responsum, see Zucker, “Can a Prophet Sin?” 169-170.)

<sup>188</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 118-134.

<sup>189</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 133.

of the detail merely serves to enrich and embellish the literal stratum of the text, increasing the impact made on the reader but adding nothing to its allegorical sense.<sup>190</sup>

Tanḥum appears to adopt this method in his commentary to the Book of Jonah, as his *ta'wīl* ignores considerable portions of the text and focuses only on those figures or scenes that he deems significant. For example, Tanḥum takes no interest in the allegorical significance of the three days and three nights spent within the belly of the fish, or in the substance of Jonah's prayer within the belly of the fish (beyond the fact that it indicates his repentance).<sup>191</sup> The Maimonidean background to Tanḥum's hermeneutical method offers a refutation to the claim that the quantitative disparity between Tanḥum's literal and allegorical interpretations of the text reflects a hierarchy of importance.<sup>192</sup> The likelihood that Tanḥum adopted the Maimonidean method of ignoring much of the detail in an extended *mathal*, combined with his own declaration that he is revealing only a minimal allusion (*ishāra*) to the inner meaning of the book in order to facilitate the further contemplation of those worthy to grasp it, render such a reading highly improbable.<sup>193</sup>

Despite the Maimonidean background to his allegorical method, Tanḥum applies different techniques from Maimonides when interpreting literary units within the narrative. Maimonides interprets figures within the *mathal* as elements of a scene to be decoded as a whole, a phenomenon described by Cohen as “metaphorical thought” as opposed to “metaphorical language”.<sup>194</sup> In contrast, Tanḥum employs a linguistic method of “translation” when interpreting

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<sup>190</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 182-188. For Maimonides' statement to this effect, see his introduction to the *Guide* (Pines, 12-14).

<sup>191</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 134-135.

<sup>192</sup> For this claim, see Shussman, “Qavvim,” 90. Shussman understands the fact that Tanḥum's allegorical interpretation comprises only one quarter of the length of his commentary to be indicative of the relative lack of importance of this component of his work.

<sup>193</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, 110-111.

<sup>194</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 134.

the esoteric meaning of the Book of Jonah. That is to say, paranomasia or etymological derivation serve for Tanḥum as indicators of the text's underlying esoteric meaning.

The first method of allegorical exegesis that Tanḥum employs is that of metaphor (*isti'āra*).<sup>195</sup>

Tanḥum states that the name “dove” (Hebrew: *yonah*) is a well-known metaphor for the soul, the properties of the former aptly characterizing those of the latter.<sup>196</sup> Thus, Jonah's name (*yonah*) is itself the key to understanding his allegorical role, and provides an opportunity for Tanḥum to reflect on the nature of the soul:

We state that it is due to this that he is named Jonah. For, as you will know from our explanation of the *Song of Songs*, this is a name that is applied metaphorically to the human soul.<sup>197</sup> This is due to the qualities that inhere in the dove, that correspond with [the soul's] condition. They include delicacy, the beauty of its appearance, its watchfulness, its integrity, which are not found in any other bird. Likewise – if it is raised in a [particular] place and becomes accustomed to it, and then it is sent away from there to some faraway place – it is in [the dove's] nature to remember [its place of origin], and to return to it to the best of its capability. [This is true to the extent] that even if one clips its wings or imprisons it in a cage, and it remains there for a long time, as soon as it finds

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<sup>195</sup> See *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (Brill: 2006-2009), vol.2, 441-447. For an extensive study of *isti'āra*, its use and development, see Heinrichs, *Hand of the Northwind*. For Moses Ibn Ezra's use of the term, and subsequently by Abraham Ibn Ezra's application of the theory of *isti'āra* as one type of *mashal* in an exegetical context, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 55-62. For Maimonides' use of the term, see *ibid.*, 98-101. In his translation of Maimonides' *Guide*, Pines renders *isti'āra* either as “derivative term” (cf. p.5) or as “figurative” (cf. p.27; see also Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 99 fn.6).

<sup>196</sup> The shared characteristic of the metaphor or simile and the denotatum is known in Arabic as *wajh al-shabah* (Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 53).

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Tanḥum's commentary to Canticles 2:14, in the MS Pococke 320, 37b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 43. There, on Canticles 2:14, Tanḥum states (after presenting one interpretation of the verse as applying to Israel): “Similar also is the state of the soul according to the second interpretation {like Ibn 'Aqnīn, Tanḥum interprets Canticles as an allegory *both* for the sacred history of Israel and for the soul's encounter with the Divine – RD}, since it is from a world lofty in rank, [a world] sublime in its position. But now it dwells in a lowly body, of the most utterly debased rank and place, though it may be His decree.” Cf. Ibn 'Aqnīn's commentary to Canticles, in Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 100-101. Here, in his commentary on Canticles 2:14, Ibn 'Aqnīn identifies the speaker as the Active Intellect and the “dove” as the “rational [soul]” (*al-nāṭiqa*) imprisoned in the gross and dark matter of the body. For the relationship between Ibn 'Aqnīn's commentary to Song and that of Tanḥum, see the discussion below in chapter 5.

a means of deliverance from its imprisonment and its wings heal, it will not remain thus without moving towards its homeland. It rises, ascending, until it can see [its homeland], and thither it returns. This is the state of the soul...<sup>198</sup>

Implicit in Tanḥum's interpretation is the notion that a term's etymological derivation (*ishtiqaq*) may point to its esoteric valence.<sup>199</sup> This becomes clearer as Tanḥum moves on to explain the esoteric sense of the proper noun Amittai. His reading of the proper noun Amittai in Jonah 1:1 as being derived from the Hebrew stem *'-m-t* (truth) is a clear example of this method.<sup>200</sup> "True" existence, i.e., ontologically primary and necessary existence, belongs to the intellectual or angelic realm from which the soul emanates. Hence the latter is described as a "child" of this realm. Tanḥum's interpretation here is dependent on Ibn Sīnā's distinction between necessary and contingent existence, followed by Maimonides.<sup>201</sup> Employing the same method, Tanḥum derives Nineveh from the root *n-v-h* (dwell), understanding the name to be an allusion to the physical world or body in which the soul must dwell.<sup>202</sup>

In sum, Tanḥum's allegoresis is informed both by figurative readings of significant elements within the narrative – the dove as the human soul, the sea as the dark physical world – and etymological derivation (sometimes bordering on paranomasia). These point the exegete towards the text's intended esoteric meaning.

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<sup>198</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 129-131.

<sup>199</sup> For an extensive treatment of *ishtiqaq* in Arabic, see *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, vol. 2, 447-451. However, contrast Tanḥum's implicit critique of the targumist for employing a similar method in his commentary to Hosea 1:2-3 (Shy, *Perush*, 2-3). A likely explanation for this apparent contradiction is that in this case the Targum's allegorical interpretation does not fit the text's *ẓāhir* closely enough. For Tanḥum's belief in the *ta'wīl*'s close dependence on the *ẓāhir*, see above, pp.62-74.

<sup>200</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 130-131.

<sup>201</sup> See Pines, *Guide*, xciv. Tanḥum's formulation is also bears similarities to that of al-Ghazālī in his *Mishkāt al-anwār*; see David Buchman, *Al-Ghazālī: The Niche of Lights* (Brigham Young University Press: 1998), 16, lines 6-10 in Arabic/lines 10-17 in English.

<sup>202</sup> Tanḥum writes: "And this name contains an etymological derivation from *naveh*, which is "dwelling-place" (*maskan*). That is to say that [the soul's] purpose is to dwell in this domain – that is, the domain of the [physical] world (*dunyā*), in order to contemplate something of His handiwork, and to acquire those of the sciences that it may make use of in order to attain its perfection *in actu*..." (Shy, *Perush*, 131)

## Constructing a Coherent Allegorical Narrative

Once the allegorical identities of the central figures are established, Tanḥum is able to construct a coherent narrative in which the conditions of the soul, its journey, trials, and ultimate salvation are richly described. In a broad statement concerning the esoteric meaning of the Book of Jonah, Tanḥum states that it is an allegory for

the condition of the human soul while it dwells in the sensory world, and the illumination (*ishrāq*) of the light of the intellect upon it, and the attainment of its perpetual felicity by receiving it [i.e., the illumination] from Him, and its suffering in the absence thereof.<sup>203</sup>

The allegorical narrative unfolds as follows. The soul (Jonah) becomes distant from its point of origin, the angelic-intellectual realm (Amittai, dry land). Cast into the lowly material world (the turbulent sea of Tarshish) the soul is housed in a body (the ship) with various faculties (the sailors). The soul's mission is to contemplate the divine wisdom of the cosmos and acquire true knowledge, arousing its yearning for the Divine and perfecting itself so that it might attain full intellectual realization and eternal bliss in the hereafter.<sup>204</sup> If this is achieved, the soul will be “saved from the sea of hylc matter and its darkness, and arrive at the world of light and eternal felicity.”<sup>205</sup> If the soul fails in this mission, it will suffer terrible torments and forever miss the opportunity to attain perfection. The corporeal faculties are unable to provide any solution for the soul's yearning for the Divine, each appealing only to “his [own] god”,<sup>206</sup> i.e., the faculty superior to it that guides it.<sup>207</sup> Finally, the angel responsible for the perfection of the intellectual soul (the ship's captain) arouses it from its slumber: “Wherefore dost thou slumber? Arise and

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<sup>203</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 111.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>206</sup> Jonah 1:5.

<sup>207</sup> For the concept of the organism as a quasi-political hierarchy in which various faculties and organs rule others, see al-Fārābī's account in Richard Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārībī's Mabādi' ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* (Clarendon Press: 1985), chapters 10-11 (164-187).

call to thy God!”<sup>208</sup> Despite this renewed awareness, the soul flees even further from the path of devotion and asceticism that would lead to the attainment of true happiness, drowning itself in a sea of materialistic hedonism.<sup>209</sup>

Only a profound yearning for the Divine that persists in the depths of the soul arouses it to repentance, upon which it receives the intellectual emanation that enables it to properly govern that which it must govern (at the very least, the body). The body – its highest and lowest faculties (the human and the animal) – now obeys the soul, which has been imbued with the emanation flowing from its source (dry land).<sup>210</sup> Finally, two interpretive possibilities are offered for the conclusion of the narrative: Either soul is instructed to make its peace with the body, which previously led it astray but now obeys the former’s directions; or the fully realized intellectual soul may guide the people of Nineveh, those souls endowed with reason who are still embedded in matter but who are receptive to exhortation and instruction.<sup>211</sup> Tanḥum prefers the first interpretation.<sup>212</sup>

At this point, it should be noted that there is some ambiguity in Tanḥum’s account of the allegorical valence of Nineveh: At first, it is stated to be the sublunar, physical world,<sup>213</sup> but later it appears to represent the physical body.<sup>214</sup> Finally, it potentially takes on the character of a

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<sup>208</sup> Jonah 1:6; Shy, *Perush*, 132-133.

<sup>209</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 134-135.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-135.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-137. Here Tanḥum follows Maimonides in understanding that the fullest realization of the perfected individual lies in the guidance of others towards perfection (see *Guide* II.37; Pines, 375).

<sup>212</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 136-137. For more discussion of these two interpretations, see below, p.143-144.

<sup>213</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, 130-131, where Nineveh is described as “the dwelling place (*maskan*), that is to say that [the soul’s] purpose is to dwell in this domain, that is, the domain of the [physical] world (*dunyā*), in order to contemplate something of His handiwork, and to acquire those of the sciences that it may make use of in order to attain its perfection *in actu*...”

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-135. Nineveh’s span of “a three day walk” is understood as an allusion to the three loci of the body’s faculties: The heart, brain, and liver. However, Jonah enters the city only a single day’s walk, indicating that only one of the three loci (the brain, which is the locus of conceptualization/*taṣawwur* and cogitation/*mufakkira* located in the brain) is primary. See our discussion below, pp.138-143.

community or society of human souls who stand in need of the guidance of a perfected intellect.<sup>215</sup>

### Peripatetic Elements in Tanḥum's Commentary to Jonah

#### A. *Origin and Nature of the Human Soul*

Describing the soul's origin in the intellectual realm, and its descent into the world of matter, Tanḥum writes as follows:

It emanates from His light, exalted is He, from the intellectual world, then it dwells in the body in order to govern it. It becomes immersed in the physical world, and the filth of sensible things. If it remained in such a state it would perish, after its felicity is extinguished – and that is the *life of the world to come*. But if it seeks out the true sciences, it remembers its place of origin and yearns for it. And if it persists in laboring for this [end] by acquiring rational and moral virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-nuṭqiyya wal-khulqiyya*), it is capable of freeing itself from its cage, and it departs from the darkness of the body in the [state of] connection (*īṣāl*) to its point of origin, and it attains eternal life, subsistence (*baqā'*) and felicity (*sa'āda*), the peak of which cannot be grasped, as it is written, *No eye has beheld God save Yours; He acts for one who awaits Him.*<sup>216</sup> (Isaiah 64:3) For this reason the *sages* (*al-ḥakhamim*), *peace be upon them*, have named it *dove* (*yonah*) in the verse, *My dove in the clefts of the rock*, (Cant. 2:14) [and] *my dove, my perfect one* (*Ibid.* 5:2; 6:9), and others, as we shall explain in its [proper] place when we get to it, *with the help of Shaddai*. Likewise regarding [Jonah's] descent<sup>217</sup> from *Amittai*: [The soul] is from the light of the intellectual world, whose existence is of abiding

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<sup>215</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 136-137.

<sup>216</sup> Although *elohim* may be read as vocative in this verse, I have translated it as the direct object, as this appears to be more consistent with Tanḥum's own reading.

<sup>217</sup> Lit. "Likewise, the *nisba* to Amittai..."

certainty through the existence of the First Reality, blessed and exalted is He.<sup>218</sup> That is to say that His existence, exalted is He, is true existence in its essence, by which I mean that His necessity is part of His essence. Everything other than Him is deficient in essence, since its existence emanates from His existence, exalted is He. So nothing possesses true existence other than He, and He is real in essence. This is the meaning of His statement: *And the Lord God is true, He is the living God and eternal king.* (Jer. 10:10) The first existence that emanates from His existence is the world of *angels* (*'ālam al-mal'akhim*) – I mean the world of forms denuded of matter<sup>219</sup> – and from them emanates the existence of the souls that govern bodies. Their existence – I mean the existence of the intellects – is of greater reality than the existence of the souls, since [the intellects] are the medium between [the souls] and [God], exalted is He. So this ascription [i.e., *the son of Amittai*] corresponds with this meaning, as you see.<sup>220</sup>

This passage is highly informative regarding Tanḥum's psychology. Unlike Maimonides (following in the tradition of al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājjā), Tanḥum does not believe the intellect to originate in the individual human being as an entelechy of the organism.<sup>221</sup> Rather, the soul is

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<sup>218</sup> Arabic: *fa-innahā min nūr al-'ālam al-'aqlī al-ladhī wujūduhu ta'ālā* {lit. whose existence, exalted is it (!)} *thābit al-tahaqquq bi-wujūd al-ḥaqq al-awwal tabāraka wa-ta'ālā*. If the referent of the pronominal suffix of *wujūduhu* is taken to be God – which is strongly implied by the expression *ta'ālā* – this seems to imply a distinction between God and “the First Reality” (*al-ḥaqq al-awwal*), the latter which undoubtedly refers to God. The only resolution seems to be that the referent is “the intellectual world” (*al-'ālam al-'aqlī*), and the expression *ta'ālā* is used due to the divine or angelic nature of that realm, or is a scribal error born of habit. I have thus omitted the expression *ta'ālā* from my translation.

<sup>219</sup> For the identification of angels with the “forms denuded of matter” (i.e., the ten emanated intellects) in Islamicate philosophical tradition, see below, p.134, p.216, and p.221, fn.273.

<sup>220</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 131.

<sup>221</sup> For this as al-Fārābī's position, see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 62-63; for his position on the afterlife as possibly not wholly consistent, see *ibid.*, 72-73. For a summary of Ibn Bājjā's psychology and soteriology, see Matteo di Giovanni, “Averroes and Philosophy in Islamic Spain,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford University Press: 2012), 110-111. For Maimonides' psychology and soteriology as informed by Ibn Bājjā, see Pines, *Guide*, ciii. See also Maimonides' introduction to Tractate Avot, *Eight Chapters*, Chapter 1 (Weiss and Butterworth, *Ethical Writings*, 61-64); *Guide* I.70 (Pines, 173-174); Davidson, *On Intellect*, 200. According to his conception, the human intellect can attain some kind of union (*ittiḥād* in *Guide* III:51) with the Active Intellect, and by means of this union, a kind of impersonal immortality (*Guide* I:74, [Pines, 221]; Pines, *Guide*, ciii-civ; Davidson, *On Intellect*, 203; Stroumsa, *Maimonides*, 162, 181). For Maimonides' general admiration for Ibn Bājjā (along with al-Fārābī, Ibn Rushd, and to a degree Ibn Sīnā), see the letter cited in Pines, *Guide*, lix-lx.

apparently derived from the Active Intellect, emanating from “the light of the intellectual world”. Pointing to parallels in Plotinus’ *Enneads*, Zoref has argued that Tanḥum’s psychology and soteriology are fundamentally Neoplatonic.<sup>222</sup> In fact, virtually all medieval Arabic philosophy was informed by Neoplatonic sources, including the major representatives of the Peripatetic school.<sup>223</sup> Indeed, the widely circulating “Theology of Aristotle” was a version of Plotinus’ *Enneads*, incorrectly attributed to Aristotle.<sup>224</sup> Not only did the attribution of the Arabic Plotinus texts ensure the introduction of Neoplatonic elements into Peripatetic discourse,<sup>225</sup> but the very texts themselves reflect the influence of Aristotle’s psychological theory upon the translator and editor.<sup>226</sup> Thus, without denying Zoref’s observations concerning the Plotinian affinities of Tanḥum’s account,<sup>227</sup> it seems that positing a simple typological dichotomy between Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism in this period does not accurately reflect the complexities involved in the reception and transmission of philosophical sources in the medieval Islamic world. What may be said is that by predicating the survival of the soul upon the development of moral virtues along with the pursuit of theoretical philosophical knowledge, Tanḥum aligns himself with the Peripatetic school (which had long integrated Neoplatonic elements).<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 100-101. Zoref (*ibid.*) further suggests that Tanḥum’s conception was inspired by Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s commentary to Song. I see no reason to make such an assumption, as there are countless sources that Tanḥum could draw upon in formulating such a position.

<sup>223</sup> See Davidson, *On Intellect*, 44. Referring to this phenomenon, Josef Stern describes Maimonides’ philosophy as “Neoplatonized Aristotelian[ism]” (*Matter and Form*, 1).

<sup>224</sup> For a detailed study of the Arabic Plotinus texts, see Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus* (Duckworth: 2002). For a concise overview of the texts, their salient features, and related works, see *ibid.*, 5-23. See also Cristina D’Ancona, “Pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, Chapter I: Structure and Composition,” in *Oriens* 36 (2001), 78-112; F. W. Zimmermann, “The Origins of the So-Called *Theology of Aristotle*,” in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*, eds. Jill Kraye, W. F. Ryan, and C. B. Schmitt (The Warburg Institute: 1986), 110-240; Franz Rosenthal, “Al-Šayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source,” in *Orientalia* 21 (1952), 461-492; 22 (1953), 370-400; 24 (1955), 42-66.

<sup>225</sup> See Davidson, *On Intellect*, 8.

<sup>226</sup> See Peter Adamson, “Aristotelianism and the Soul in the Arabic Plotinus,” in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62:2 (2001), 211-232; and Adamson, *Arabic Plotinus*, 49-63.

<sup>227</sup> In addition to the sources identified by Zoref, cf. the passage in Franz Rosenthal, “Aš-Šayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source (Continued),” in *Orientalia* 23 (1954), 363, paragraph 44.

<sup>228</sup> For the source of this distinction in Aristotle, see *Nicomachean Ethics* I.13 1103a5 – II.1 1103a20; in Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe, *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics: Translation, Introduction, and Commentary* (Oxford

Similarly, by adopting an emanationist view of the soul's origin, Tanḥum follows Ibn Sīnā, for whom this position also solved internal problems in al-Fārābī's model.<sup>229</sup>

Tanḥum shared the Avicennan position on the origin of the human soul with other post-Maimonidean Jewish thinkers in Egypt, most notably Abraham Maimonides.<sup>230</sup> It should be emphasized that direct dependence upon Abraham Maimonides cannot be established here, and that elsewhere Tanḥum clearly relied directly on Ibn Sīnā's works.<sup>231</sup> Thus, the parallel to Abraham Maimonides is primarily helpful in pointing to a tendency among post-Maimonidean thinkers in the Islamic East to engage with Avicennan thought.<sup>232</sup>

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University Press: 2002), 110-111. For the reception of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the Islamic world, and particularly among Peripatetic philosophers therein, see Anna Akasoy, "Arabic and Islamic reception of *Nicomachean Ethics*," in *The Reception of Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Jon Miller (Oxford University Press: 2012), 85-106. For the centrality of Aristotle in Maimonides' ethics, see Kenneth Seeskin, "Maimonides' appropriation of Aristotle's ethics," in *idem.*, 107-124. For the Aristotelian distinction between moral and intellectual virtues among Muslim Peripatetics, see Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue* (State University of New York Press: 1975), 39. Cf. also Tanḥum's statement "that [the soul's] purpose is to dwell in this domain – that is, the domain of the [physical] world (*dunyā*) – in order to contemplate something of His handiwork, and to acquire those of the sciences that it may make use of in order to attain its perfection *in actu*..." (Shy, *Perush*, 131) For the Arabic phrase *al-'ulūm al-ḥaqīqiyya* ("the true sciences") as signifying philosophical sciences, cf. Maimonides' use of *'ulūm ḥaqīqa* to denote knowledge derived from philosophical inquiry (Introduction to the *Guide*; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 6 line 11; Pines, 10 and fn.25). For Tanḥum's positive attitude towards philosophy, see Shy, "AlKullīyyat," 539. Shussman ("Qavvim," 101) points out that Tanḥum's basis for permitting philosophical inquiry is stated in his commentary to Jonah: Ancient Jewish books containing all branches of learning were lost in exile and studied by the Gentile nations; this knowledge must thus be retrieved by recourse to non-Jewish philosophy (see Shy, *Perush*, 110-111).

<sup>229</sup> Davidson, *On Intellect*, 47, 80-82. For a broad discussion of Ibn Sīnā's psychology as expressed in distinct literary contexts, see Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā): With a Translation of the Book of Muḥammad's Ascent to Heaven* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 1992), 53-79. For Ibn Sīnā's conception of the soul as a simple substance that governs the physical body, see Shams C. Inati, *Ibn Sina's Remarks and Admonitions: An Analysis and Annotated Translation* (Columbia University Press: 2014), 96-97, 101-102. For his conception of the Active Intellect as the emanating cause of the soul, see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 76, 94. For Tanḥum's familiarity with Ibn Sīnā's works, see Shy, "AlKullīyyat," 538; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 23. For al-Kindī's emanationist theory of the human soul, see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 33.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Samuel Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 1, 66-67. Abraham Maimonides states that "[t]he human soul is created in a spiritual, heavenly world [*min 'ālam rūḥānī malakūtī*], whereas the human body is created out of an earthy, dusty matter [*madda*]." (see *ibid.*, 306-7; translation Rosenblatt's.)

<sup>231</sup> See Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 23; and see p.153 fn.319, and pp.324-342 below.

<sup>232</sup> See Gad Freudenthal and Mauro Zonta, "The reception of Avicenna in Jewish cultures, East and West," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge University Press: 2013), 216-219; Gad Freudenthal and Mauro Zonta, "Avicenna Among Medieval Jews: The Reception of Avicenna's Philosophical, Medical and Scientific Writings in Jewish Cultures, East and West," in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 22 (2012), 217-287; Steven Harvey, "Some Notes on 'Avicenna Among Medieval Jews'," in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 25 (2015), 249-277.

## B. *Active Intellect*

Although it is not stated explicitly, when Tanḥum refers to the angel responsible for the guidance of the rational soul (*al-malak al-mutawallī hidāyat al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*),<sup>233</sup> it seems that he is referring to the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘‘āl*). According to medieval Peripatetic philosophers, the Active Intellect was the lowest of the ten emanated intellects, and it leads the human intellect from potentiality to actuality.<sup>234</sup> In addition, following Ibn Sīnā,<sup>235</sup> Maimonides identified the ten emanated intellects as angels, including the Active Intellect.<sup>236</sup> These developments constitute the background to Tanḥum’s allegorical depiction of the Active Intellect.

It is clear that Tanḥum embraced a Peripatetic position in connection with these elements of his cosmology and psychology. Indeed, elsewhere he refers to the ten emanated intellects,<sup>237</sup> as well as specifically to the Active Intellect.<sup>238</sup> When he states that the soul calls out to the angel that leads it to its perfection, Tanḥum is thus interpreting the narrative through the prism of Peripatetic psychology. In this case, there is a structural hierarchy in which the Active Intellect emanates the intellectual soul; the soul is intended to govern the body; and the body possesses its

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<sup>233</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 133.

<sup>234</sup> See Davidson, *On Intellect*, 4, 13.

<sup>235</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (State University of New York Press: 1993), 238.

<sup>236</sup> See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:3-8; and cf. Ibn ‘Aqnīn in the introduction to his commentary to the Song of Songs (Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 6-7, 10-11).

<sup>237</sup> Tanḥum follows Maimonides and the Peripatetic tradition in general in positing the existence of a chain of ten intellects. See his second commentary to Song 8:11, MS Pococke 320, 70b, where he speaks of *al-‘uqūl al-‘ashara*.

<sup>238</sup> For Tanḥum on the Active Intellect, see MS Pococke 320, 54b; and variants in Yehudah Levi Naḥum, *Mi-yetzivot sifrutiyot mi-teman* (Mi‘al ḥasifat ginze teman: 1981), 8. See also below, pp.186-188, p.322, p.325. Cf. also Maimonides’ *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:7. Tanḥum also employs the Avicennan terminology of *wāhib al-ṣuwar* (the Giver of Forms) to refer to the Active Intellect. See MS Pococke 320, 21b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 24. The passage is cited below, p.343-344. For *wāhib al-ṣuwar* as the Active Intellect, see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 79, 124; Jules L. Janssens, “The Notions of *Wāhib al-ṣuwar* (Giver of Forms) and *Wāhib al-‘aql* (Bestower of Intelligence) in Ibn Sīnā,” in *Intellect et Imagination dans la Philosophie Médiévale*, eds. Maria Cândida Pacheco and José F. Meirinhos (Brepols: 2006), vol. 1, 551-562.

own hierarchy of faculties and functions. This hierarchical scheme is attested in the works of al-Fārābī.<sup>239</sup>

### C. *Al-Malakūt*

In the context of the soul's descent into the world of matter, Tanḥum's description of the human soul's origin in the angelic world (*'ālam al-mal'akhim*) is particularly significant. Although his terminology mixes Hebrew and Arabic, it is quite clear that Tanḥum is referring to the cosmic realm known as *al-malakūt*.<sup>240</sup> The term *al-malakūt* appears in the Qur'ān, where it is of uncertain meaning.<sup>241</sup> In an unambiguously cosmological sense, *al-malakūt* appears in two very distinct contexts: The visionary tradition, where it is the name of a particular realm of the celestial world;<sup>242</sup> and the philosophical tradition, where the term may signify either the rank of the Active Intellect (al-Farabi),<sup>243</sup> or the separate intellects that govern the celestial spheres and from which the latter emanate (Ibn Sīnā).<sup>244</sup>

Ibn Sīnā made the additional move of identifying the intellects that govern the spheres with the angels.<sup>245</sup> Al-Ghazālī (d.1111) followed Ibn Sīnā in asserting the angelic nature of *al-malakūt*.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Cf. Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 164-187.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Tanḥum's introduction to *Al-murshid al-kāfī*, where he mentions "the divine providence that reaches [beings existing in *potentia*] via the world of *malakūt* (*al-'ināya al-rabbāniyya al-wāṣila ilayhā bi-wāṣitat 'ālam al-malakūt*)." Shy translates this as *ha-hashgahah ha-'elyonah ha-maggi'ah elav be-emitza 'ut 'olam ha-sekhalim*. (Shy, *Murshid*, 2-3.) Cf. also Abraham Maimonides' interchangeable use of the expressions *al-'ālam al-malakūtī* and *'ālam al-malā'ika* below, p.136, fn.249.

<sup>241</sup> The term is attested in the Qur'ān: 6:75; 7:185; 23:88; 36:83. In some of these verses the context already implies, or at least accommodates, a cosmological interpretation.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. The description of al-Bisṭāmī's heavenly ascent (*mi'rāj*) attributed to Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 248; see also *ibid.* 359, fn.76).

<sup>243</sup> See Al-Fārābī's *The Political Regime: Al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya also known as the treatise on the principles of beings* (Imprimerie Catholique, Beyrouth, 1964), ed. Fauzi M. Najjar, 32 line 12.

<sup>244</sup> Davidson, *On Intellect*, 133.

<sup>245</sup> Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 238; and cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd.: 1958), 34-35.

<sup>246</sup> See Buchman, *Niche of Lights*, 12, lines 1-3; Davidson, *On Intellect*, 133. Al-Ghazālī apparently understood the term to be derived from *malak* (angel) rather than *mulk* (dominion), actually posing an opposition between the heavenly world of *al-malakūt* and the earthly realm of *al-mulk wa-'l-shahāda* "[material] Dominion and [sense] Perception." (Timothy J. Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric*

The identification of the separate intellects with the angels was thereafter adopted by Maimonides.<sup>247</sup> Notably, al-Ghazālī described the intellectual soul as originating in the angelic realm of *al-malakūt*.<sup>248</sup> Al-Ghazālī’s formulation of this matter is strongly echoed in the writings of Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237), who articulates a dualistic anthropology with the human soul emanating from the angelic realm.<sup>249</sup> Indeed, al-Ghazālī’s works are well-attested among the works copied and transmitted by medieval Egyptian Jews from the thirteenth century and thereafter.<sup>250</sup> In identifying *al-malakūt* with the angelic, intellectual realm, Tanḥum was following most closely in the footsteps of al-Ghazālī and Abraham Maimonides.

#### D. Soteriology

Of the fate of the human soul, Tanḥum writes as follows:

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*Psychology and Eschatology of the Ihyā’* (Brill: 2001), 148-149.) For al-Ghazālī’s indebtedness to the Aristotelian tradition, and to Ibn Sīnā in particular (despite his critique of the latter in *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*), see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 130. Davidson’s discussion is based primarily on al-Ghazālī’s *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, which he considers to reflect al-Ghazālī’s cosmology at its most developed stage. For discussions of al-Ghazālī’s dependence and divergence from Avicennan philosophy based upon other sources, see Richard Frank, “Al-Ghazali’s Use of Avicenna’s Philosophy,” in *Revue des études islamiques* 55-57 (1987-1989), 271-285; and Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology* (Oxford University Press: 2009). al-Ghazālī’s relationship with philosophy was deeply fraught with unease, as he recognized its value in all fields – mathematics, logic, physics, metaphysics, and ethics – and yet disagreed with certain conclusions in the field of metaphysics and believed the philosophers as a social group to be fundamentally impious. See in particular *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, “Divisions of the [Philosophical] Sciences” (in *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl li-ḥujjat al-islām abū ḥāmid al-ghazzālī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Karim al-Marraq (Al-mu’assasa al-waṭaniyya li-l-kitāb (al-jazā’ir)/al-dār al-tūnisīyya li-l-nashr: 1984), 49-67; and in Richard J. McCarthy’s English translation, *Al-Ghazali’s Path to Sufism: His Deliverance from Error (al-Munqidh min al-Dalal)* (Fons Vitae: 2000), 31-42).

<sup>247</sup> *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:3-8.

<sup>248</sup> Buchman, *Niche of Lights*, 10 line 18 in Arabic/lines 31-32 in English; Davidson, *On Intellect*, 136-7. For a fuller discussion of the homologous relationship between soul/heart-body and physical world/*al-malakūt* in al-Ghazālī, see Gianotti, *Al-Ghazali’s Unspeakable Doctrine*, 14-15, 148.

<sup>249</sup> See Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 1, 66-70; above p.133, fn.230. Notable also is Abraham Maimonides’ commentary to Genesis 1:26, where he states: “Just as he brought Adam’s physical matter into being from the world of elements that was created before him – as He made clear with the statement *and the Lord God formed the human being from the dust of the earth* (Gen. 2:7) – in like manner He brought his form into being from the supernal world (*al-‘ālam al-malakūtī*). [The] only [difference is] that the world of the elements from which his physical matter was brought into being by the decree and will of his Creator is non-rational inanimate being, whereas the angelic world (*‘ālam al-malā’ika*) from which his form emanated is rational living being.” (Wiesenberg, *Perush Rabbenu Avraham ben Ha-Rambam*, 6-7; translation mine.)

For a discussion of the possible influence of al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* on Maimonides’ *Mishneh torah*, see Steven Harvey, “Alghazali and Maimonides and their Books of Knowledge,” in *Be’erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. Jay M. Harris (Harvard University Press: 2005), 99-117.

<sup>250</sup> Fenton, “Judaean-Arabic Mystical Writings,” 92-93.

It becomes immersed in the physical world, and the filth of sensible things. If it remained in such a state it would perish (*fa-halakat*), after its felicity is extinguished – and that is the *life of the world to come*. But if it seeks out the true sciences, it remembers its place of origin and yearns for it. If it persists in laboring for this [end] by acquiring rational and moral virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-nuṭqiyya wa-'l-khulqiyya*), it is capable of freeing itself from its cage, and it departs from the darkness of the body in the [state of] connection (*īṣāl*) to its point of origin, and it attains eternal life, subsistence (*baqā'*) and felicity (*sa'āda*), the peak of which cannot be grasped, as it is written, *No eye has beheld God save Yours; He acts for one who awaits Him.*<sup>251</sup>

Here Tanḥum follows Maimonides in identifying the only possibility for the attainment of felicity in the hereafter through the development of moral and intellectual virtues,<sup>252</sup> along with the pursuit of philosophical knowledge.<sup>253</sup> The absence of such virtues and knowledge will lead to the soul's perdition.<sup>254</sup> As he states in his *ta'wīl* of 4:11, true union (or “attainment”, *wuṣūl*) is impossible while the soul dwells in the body.<sup>255</sup> This is consistent with Maimonides' position,

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<sup>251</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 131. Although *elohim* may be read as vocative in this verse, I have translated it as the direct object, as this appears to be more consistent with Tanḥum's own reading.

<sup>252</sup> See Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection* (Scholars Press: 1990), 1-5. For moral virtues as a necessary precondition for prophecy (which is the full realization of intellectual perfection), see *Eight Chapters*, Chapter 7 (in Raymond L. Weiss and Charles Butterworth, *Ethical Writings of Maimonides* (Dover: 1975), 82); *Guide* II:32 (Pines, 361).

<sup>253</sup> See also Tanḥum's statement “that [the soul's] purpose is to dwell in this domain – that is, the domain of the [physical] world (*dunyā*) – in order to contemplate something of His handiwork, and to acquire those of the sciences that it may make use of in order to attain its perfection *in actu*...” (Shy, *Perush*, 131) For the Arabic phrase *al-'ulūm al-ḥaqīqiyya* (“the true sciences”) as signifying philosophical sciences, cf. Maimonides' use of *'ulūm ḥaqīqa* to denote knowledge derived from philosophical inquiry (Introduction to the *Guide*; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 6 line 11; Pines, 10, and fn.25). For Tanḥum's positive attitude towards philosophy, see Shy, *AlKulliyat*, 539. Shussman (“Qavvim,” 101) points out that Tanḥum's basis for permitting philosophical inquiry is stated in his commentary to Jonah: Ancient Jewish books containing all branches of learning were lost in exile and studied by the Gentile nations; this knowledge must thus be retrieved by recourse to non-Jewish philosophy (see Shy, *Perush*, 110-111).

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Tanḥum's commentary to Song 1:14, where the soul proclaims that the beloved is the source of knowledge and perfection, by means of which it is saved from destruction (MS Pococke 320, 17b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 19). Cf. Maimonides' *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Repentance, 8:1.

<sup>255</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 136-137. This is in some tension with Zoref's interpretation, for which see Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 57-58 and fn. 31. There, Zoref recognizes that conjunction upon death is lasting according to Tanḥum, while conjunction during one's lifetime is temporary. For the likelihood that Tanḥum believed there to be a more fundamental qualitative difference between conjunction before and after the soul's release from the body, see his description of conjunction upon death, translated above, p.130-131.

and resonates profoundly with the concluding passage of *Guide* III:51, in which the death of the intellectually perfected individual is described in mystical terms.<sup>256</sup>

Considering Tanḥum's Avicennan conception of the soul's origin, it is interesting to note that Tanḥum does not appear to accept Ibn Sīnā's position that all human souls survive death.<sup>257</sup> Indeed, his statement that the soul immersed in the material world "would perish" implies that an ignorant human soul may become so enmeshed with the body that it perishes with the death thereof.<sup>258</sup> Such a position is suggested in oblique terms by Ibn Sīnā, and may represent a compromise with al-Fārābī's soteriology.<sup>259</sup> In a similar fashion, Tanḥum's formulation here appears to represent a synthesis between the positions of Ibn Sīnā and Maimonides (following al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājja), with Tanḥum accepting Ibn Sīnā's account of the soul's origin, but Maimonides' account of its salvation.

#### *E. Tripartite division of the faculties*

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<sup>256</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 627-8. Maimonides' reference to the acquisition of the moral virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-khulqīyya*) and attainment of pure thought before discussing the sublime deaths of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam strongly suggests that this passage sits in the background to Tanḥum's present discussion.

<sup>257</sup> For which, see Jon McGinnis, *Avicenna* (Oxford University Press: 2010), 129, 217-221; Davidson, *On Intellect*, 109-115.

<sup>258</sup> Such a conception is reflected in Abraham Maimonides's commentary to Genesis 1:24, where he writes that the souls of animals are also emanated, but cannot survive the death of the body due to their enmeshment with matter. (See Wiesenberg, *Perush Rabbenu Avraham ben Ha-Rambam*, 2-3; cf. Ibn Sīnā's formulation, in Inati, *Physics and Metaphysics*, 39, 165.) Regarding animals, Tanḥum rejects this position. Interpreting the very same verse as Abraham in his commentary to Qohelet, Tanḥum writes as follows: "... insofar as the soul of a human being (*naḥf al-insān*) is from the supernal world, and its return shall be to its [own] kind and essence (*ilā 'unṣurihā wa-ma 'dinihā*); while the soul of an animal (*naḥf al-ḥayawān*) is from the terrestrial world (*al-'ālam al-arḍī*), and its return when it decomposes shall also be to its [own] essence (*li-ma 'dinihā*). And this is affirmed in the *Creation Narrative* (*ma'aseh be-reshit*). It states concerning animals, *let the earth bring forth living beings* {or possibly, according to this interpretation: *the animal's soul*; Heb. *nefesh ḥayah* – Gen. 1:24}, but concerning the human it states, *let us make a human in our image, after our likeness* (Gen. 1:26). And it states: *The Lord God made the human from the dust of the earth, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life*. (Gen. 2:7)" (MS Pococke 320, 108a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 53.) Tanḥum's interpretation echoes that of the anonymous *Kitāb ma'ānī al-naḥf*; see *Sefer torot ha-nefesh*, trans. Isaac Broydé (Levinsohn-Kilemnik: 1896), 81. Contrast the interpretation in Genesis Rabba 8:1, where an interpretation of Gen. 1:24 is cited in the name of Rabbi Leazar (Eleazar), which understands the verse to refer to the human soul, which will later be blown into Adam's nostrils; see *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary*, eds. J. Theodor and C. Albeck (Wahrman Books: 1965), # 8, vol. 1, 56.

<sup>259</sup> See Davidson, *On Intellect*, 115.

In his allegorical interpretation of Jonah 3:3, Tanḥum identifies the three day walk across Nineveh with the physical loci of each of the human organism's faculties:

The meaning of *a three days' walk across* (Jonah 3:3) is that there are three loci of the principle faculties (*maḥallāt ummahāt al-quwā*) in the body. They are the heart, the brain, and the liver. But the nearest to the soul are the faculties of conceptualization (*quwā al-taṣawwur*) that are in the brain, not to mention cogitation (*al-mufakkira*), for it is [the latter] to which meanings come. Therefore, Jonah's call *in the city* was *the distance of one day's walk*.<sup>260</sup> (Jonah 3:4) Thereafter, the news spread and achieved its goal. And the meaning of the statement *human and beast* (3:7, 8) is "both those of the faculties that are noble like a *human*, and those that are base like a *beast*." Or, if you wish, say: "The cognitive faculty that is characteristic of the *human* (*al-quwwa al-fikriyya al-khāṣṣa bi-'l-adam*), and the similar faculties that are in the *animal*."<sup>261</sup>

Here, Nineveh's span of "a three day walk" is understood as an allusion to the three loci of the body's faculties: The heart, brain, and liver. According to this theory, the organism's animal faculties (*al-quwā al-ḥayawāniyya*) are seated in the heart, and regulate the flow of blood while generating involuntary emotional responses to external stimuli. The vegetative or natural faculties (*al-quwā al-ṭabī'iyya*) are seated in the liver, and from there they govern the various organs via the veins. Among other things, the natural faculties are responsible for reproduction, digestion and nourishment, and excretion. Finally, the mental faculties are located in the brain.<sup>262</sup> Synthesizing Aristotelian and Platonic elements,<sup>263</sup> this scheme was promoted by Galen, and

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<sup>260</sup> Or: Jonah's call was *the distance of one day's walk into the city*. While this alternative division of the verse does not fit the masoretic cantillation, it is a somewhat more comfortable reading of Tanḥum's own citation in this passage, which begins with the term *ba-'ir* (into the city). He does not discuss the division of the verse in his exoteric commentary.

<sup>261</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 135.

<sup>262</sup> See Manfred Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh University Press: 1978), 60-62.

<sup>263</sup> It seems that Galen was the first to identify the Platonic tripartite soul with the Aristotelian division of living beings into vegetable, animal, and human; see Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Brill: 1994), 95 and fn.9. For Plato's threefold division of the human soul, including the localization of its parts, see *Timaeus* 69d-73a. For Aristotle's division of beings in a psychological context, see *De Anima* II:3 (414a-415a). For Galen's reception of

widely accepted with minor variations among medieval physicians and philosophers.<sup>264</sup> Tanḥum interprets Jonah’s journey of a single day’s walk into the city as an indication of the primacy of only one of the three loci, i.e., the brain.

The two faculties mentioned by Tanḥum as being located in the brain are conceptualization (*taṣawwur*) and cogitation (*mufakkira*). *Taṣawwur* is the function by which one conceptualizes the object of knowledge.<sup>265</sup> It is one of the two major enablers of knowledge (*‘ilm*) according to al-Fārābī (the other being *taṣdīq*, assent). The former corresponds with the simple apprehension of a concept, while the latter corresponds with judgment of its truth or falsehood.<sup>266</sup> The scheme of *taṣawwur* followed by *taṣdīq* as the basic process of the acquisition of knowledge was thereafter adopted by Ibn Sīnā, and became standard in Islamic Peripatetic epistemology.<sup>267</sup> This

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elements of Platonic and Aristotelian psychology, see Christopher Gill, *Naturalistic Psychology in Galen and Stoicism* (Oxford University Press: 2010).

<sup>264</sup> For the localized tripartite psychology in the *Theology of Aristotle*, see Adamson, “Aristotelianism and the Soul in the Arabic Plotinus,” 223. For this division of the faculties in Ḥunayn Ibn Iṣḥāq’s Arabic translation of Galen, and as attested more fully in al-Rāzī’s account of Galen’s position, see *Kitāb jālīnūs ilā ghalawqun fī al-ta’ī li-shifā’ al-amrāq: maqālātān*, ed. Muḥammad Salīm Sālim (Al-hay’a al-miṣriyya al-‘amma li-l-kitāb: 1982), 31. According to al-Rāzī (d.c.925), Galen located the mental soul in the brain, the animal soul in the heart and muscles, and the natural or vegetative soul in the liver and non-arterial veins – see *ibid.*, 31 fn. 1. See also Ibn Sīnā’s adoption of this model, in Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna’s Psychology: An English Translation of Kitāb al-Najāt, Book II, Chapter VI, with Historico-Critical Notes and Textual Improvements on the Cairo Edition* (Oxford University Press: 1952), 64-68. For Maimonides’ familiarity with this division, even while promoting an alternative model, see *Eight Chapters*, chap. 1, translated in Weiss and Butterworth, *Ethical Writings*, 61. For Maimonides’ adoption of the tripartite Galenic scheme in the *Guide*, see III.12 (Pines, 447); and cf. I.72 (Pines, 187). For his adoption of this psychology in his medical writings, see *Maimonides: Medical Aphorisms, Treatises 1-5*, ed. and trans. Gerrit Bos (Brigham Young University Press: 2007), vol. 2, 20-21 (6:94); and cf. also *ibid.*, vol. 1 (2004), 40 (3:29), 62 (4:4), 66 (4:26). For a closely related scheme in a thirteenth century Jewish Sufi work, see Paul Fenton, “A Mystical Treatise on Perfection, Providence and Prophecy from the Jewish Sufi Circle,” in *Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity*, ed. Daniel Frank (Leiden, 1995), 310-311.

<sup>265</sup> See Harry A. Wolfson, “The Terms *Taṣawwur* and *Taṣdīq* in Arabic Philosophy and their Greek, Latin, and Hebrew Equivalents,” in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion* (Harvard University Press: 1973), 478-492.

<sup>266</sup> See Wolfson, “The Terms *Taṣawwur* and *Taṣdīq*, 478; Deborah L. Black, “Al-Fārābī,” in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (Routledge: 1996), 183.

<sup>267</sup> Deborah L. Black, “Certitude, justification, and the principles of knowledge in Avicenna’s epistemology,” in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge University Press: 2013), 121.

epistemology is also attested in Tanḥum’s introduction to his commentary to Qohelet.<sup>268</sup> *Taṣawwur* is thus the most preliminary stage in the acquisition of knowledge.

Both the cogitative faculty (*mufakkira*) and conceptualization (*taṣawwur*) feature in Ibn Sīnā’s epistemology (which is formulated differently in different works).<sup>269</sup> The cogitative faculty in medieval Islamic psychology was ultimately derived from Aristotle’s cogitative soul (*dianoētikōn*), and widely incorporated into the psychologies of both Muslim and Jewish thinkers<sup>270</sup> via the works of Galen.<sup>271</sup> Referring to the same cognitive function or internal sense (*tafakkur*),<sup>272</sup> Maimonides followed the Avicennan tradition of using the term to signify both the cogitation, and the rational or discursive imagination (equivalent to the Aristotelian *phantasia logistikē*).<sup>273</sup> Ibn Sīnā describes this as the power of “combination and separation (*tarkīb wa-taḥṣīl*)” – in its narrowly dianoetic sense the object of such combination and separation is ideas, while in conjunction with the imagination the object is images.<sup>274</sup> In its totality, the cognitive function of *fikr/tafakkur/mufakkira* thus represents the ability to employ discursive reason in a productive fashion, drawing on knowledge already acquired. Tanḥum’s rhetorical formulation *a fortiori* – “the faculties of conceptualization (*quwā al-taṣawwur*) that are in the brain, not to

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<sup>268</sup> The passage reads as follows: “We thus state that wisdom is the completion of the human soul through conceptualization of things and assent to practical and theoretical truths to the extent of human ability, and this is the *telos* of the human being and his ultimate felicity (*istikmāl al-naḥs al-insāniyya bi-taṣawwur al-umūr wa-’l-taṣdīq bi-’l-ḥaqā’iq al-’amaliyya wa-’l-naẓariyya ‘alā qadr al-tāqa al-insāniyya wa-hādhā huwa ghāyat al-insān min ḥayth huwa insān wa-huwa nihāyat sa’ādatihi*).” (MS Pococke 320, 72b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24.)

<sup>269</sup> For *mufakkira/fikra* in Ibn Sīnā, see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 95-96. For *taṣawwur* and *taṣdīq*, see McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 29-31, 37, 117.

<sup>270</sup> See Davidson, *On Intellect*, 345 fn.112; Harry A. Wolfson, “The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts,” in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion* (Harvard University Press: 1973), 252-262.

<sup>271</sup> Galen lists the three governing faculties of the soul as imagination (*al-takhayyul*), cogitation (*al-fikr*), and memory (*al-dhikr*). See *Kitāb jālīnūs ilā ghalawqun fī al-ta’ī li-shifā’ al-amrād: maqālatān*, ed. Muḥammad Salīm Sālīm (Al-hay’a al-miṣriyya al-’amma li-l-kitāb: 1982), 33.

<sup>272</sup> Harry Austryn Wolfson, “Maimonides on the Internal Senses,” in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 25:4 (1935), 441-442 and fn.4, 451-452.

<sup>273</sup> Wolfson, “Maimonides on the Internal Senses,” 451-452.

<sup>274</sup> Wolfson, “Maimonides on the Internal Senses,” 452-453.

mention cogitation (*al-mufakkira*)” – thus makes sense in the light of Peripatetic psychology and epistemology.<sup>275</sup>

While Tanḥum’s allegorical interpretation of the expression *human and beast* (Jonah 3:7, 8) as a reference to a person’s human faculties and animal faculties might seem at first glance to be rather dualistic in its anthropology, this is not necessarily so. (In the literal stratum of the narrative the expression refers to the prophetic instruction to both humans and animals to refrain from eating, and to clothe both the humans and animals in sackcloth.) Rather than representing a stark dualism, Tanḥum’s formulation reflects the Platonic-Galenic anthropology described above, that locates the basic mental functions in the physical body.<sup>276</sup>

The functions (*al-af‘āl*) that occur in the body fall into three categories:<sup>277</sup> Rational, animal, and physical, [the latter] being the vegetative [function] (*nuṭqiyya wa-ḥayawāniyya wa-ṭabī‘iyya wa-hiya al-nabātiyya*). The vegetative is endowed with the physical [function]; and the animal with that and the animal [function]; and the human being with those two and the rational [function].

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<sup>275</sup> For a broad study of the internal senses in medieval philosophy in both the Islamic and Christian world, including their origins in the Greek sources, Wolfson, “The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts.” Tanḥum adopted a version of Ibn Sīnā’s five-fold division of the inner senses. For this division, see Jari Kaukua, “Avicenna on the Soul’s Activity in Perception,” in *Active Perception in the History of Philosophy: From Plato to Modern Philosophy*, eds. José Filipe Silva and Mikko Yrjönsuuri (Springer International Publishing: 2014), 101; Wolfson, “The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts,” 95-100. For the five internal senses in Tanḥum, see his commentary to Qohelet 7:19 (MS Pococke 320, 140a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 73-74).

<sup>276</sup> For this scheme in Ibn Sīnā, see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 80; McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 124. See also Shams Inati and Elsayed Omran, “Literature,” in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (Routledge: 1996), 887. Tanḥum’s choice to call the three types “functions (*af‘āl*)” may be informed by Maimonides’ assertion of the fundamental unity of the soul – indeed, he consciously prefers to describe these elements as “functions” rather than “souls”. See the first chapter of his *Eight Chapters* (in Weiss and Butterworth, *Ethical Writings*, 61). There, he accepts al-Fārābī’s five-fold division, for which see al-Fārābī’s *Fuṣūl muntaza‘a* (Selected Aphorisms), translated in Charles E. Butterworth, *Alfarabi: The Political Writings – Selected Aphorisms” and Other Texts* (Cornell University Press: 2001), 14. For the Aristotelian origins of the five functions of the unitary soul, see *De Anima* II:3 (414a-415a).

<sup>277</sup> Lit. “have three principles (*lahā thalātha mabādi*)’.”

However, the welfare and virtue of the human being is due to its rational faculty (*innamā huwa bi-sabab quwwatihi al-nāṭiqa*).<sup>278</sup> (Commentary to Qoh. 7:17)

By referring to the animal faculties in human beings, Tanḥum follows the Aristotelian-Galenic tradition in acknowledging that human beings share organic processes with non-human animals (and by extension, with plants); but humans also possess mental abilities that are unique.<sup>279</sup> Hence, the term *quwā* is particularly apt in this context, as it represents not only functions and capabilities, but also the hints at the quality of the intellect *in potentia*. Tanḥum is thus referring to the faculties that enable the human being to grasp ideas so that they might cognize *in actu*.

#### F. *Perfected intellect governing others*

Tanḥum offers two interpretations for the conclusion of the narrative, in which Jonah is disappointed by the repentance of the people of Nineveh, but rebuked by God for this reaction.<sup>280</sup> The first interpretation maintains the allegorical valence of Nineveh as the body, and explains that the soul who has disciplined its body is disappointed that it is still bound to the body and not entirely free thereof. The soul is rebuked for this, and told that neither divine wisdom (*ḥikmatuhu*) nor justice (*‘adluhu*) permit such a conclusion. Divine wisdom dictates that, since these faculties have become increasingly perfected, they must be sustained. Divine justice dictates that *everything* must receive that which it needs if it is properly prepared to receive it, and there is injustice in withholding that which the physical body needs from it.<sup>281</sup> Here Tanḥum rejects a strong asceticism that aims at the total suppression or obliteration of one’s physical needs. This is in accord with the opinions of both Saadia and Maimonides, for whom Jewish

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<sup>278</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 138a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 72.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Salim, *Kitāb jālīnūs*, 31-34.

<sup>280</sup> See Jonah chapter 4; Shy, *Perush*, 136-137.

<sup>281</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 136-137.

ritual observance was a sufficient form of asceticism that rendered more extreme forms unnecessary or even undesirable.<sup>282</sup>

Tanḥum's second interpretation provides a true climax for the perfection of the individual soul, i.e., the guidance of less perfected souls:

[This passage] may also be interpreted as an allegory for seeking the welfare of the people of *Nineveh (istiṣlāḥ ahl nineveh)*,<sup>283</sup> which are an expression for the rational souls which are immersed in the sensible world (*al-nufūs al-nāṭiqa al-munghamira fī 'ālam al-ḥiss*). That is to say that the soul – once it has attained some conjunction with the intellect (*idhā balaghat min al-ittiṣāl bi-'l-'aql*), while it is [still] associated with matter – cannot attain union with it (*mā yumkinuhā al-wuṣūl ilayhi*). At that time, it is not satisfied solely with its own liberation (*bi-khalāṣihā*), but it becomes like its source by emanating goodness (*fī ifādat al-khayr*) upon the other inhabitants of this dwelling-place – by which I mean the souls that cling to the bonds of the body – and exhorts them with instruction and admonition (*bi-'l-ta'līm wa-'l-wa'd [sic]*).<sup>284</sup> It becomes the cause of their liberation, just as *Jonah (may peace be upon him)* became a cause of the liberation of the people of *Nineveh* after his own liberation.<sup>285</sup>

Although he approves of the message of the second alternative (indeed, he authored it) he explicitly prefers the first, as it better “fits the end of the narrative (*huwa al-muṭābiq li-tatimmat*

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<sup>282</sup> For Saadia's view, see especially *Kitāb al-amānāt wa-'l-i'tiqādāt*, 10:4 – see Samuel Rosenblatt, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (Yale University Press: 1967), 364-367; Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot*, 293-295. For Maimonides' view, see the fourth chapter of *Eight Chapters* (Weiss and Butterworth, *Ethical Writings*, 69-70); *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Character Traits, 3:1; Davidson, *Moses Maimonides*, 431, 540-541. For a stronger reading of Maimonides' asceticism – according to which the true ideal is for individuals to entirely eradicate carnal desires, while the laws of the Torah are a concession to the needs of those who cannot achieve such a degree of moral perfection – see David Shatz, “Maimonides' Moral Theory,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. Kenneth Seeskin (Cambridge University Press: 2005), 180-181, 183.

<sup>283</sup> For the term *istiṣlāḥ*, see above, p.88, fn.33.

<sup>284</sup> For the conflation of *dād* and *zā* in Judeo-Arabic, see Blau, *Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic*, 39.

<sup>285</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 137.

*al-qiṣṣa*).”<sup>286</sup> Although Tanḥum does not explain why this is so, we might offer two possibilities: (a) The first interpretation retains the narrative’s focus on the perfection of the individual soul; and (b) it offers an allegorical valence for God’s rebuke of Jonah. Still, his second interpretation is of particular interest, as it reveals Tanḥum’s Maimonidean conception of prophecy, and indeed all proper instruction.

Tanḥum’s formulation is shaped by its allegorical context: The rational souls are “immersed in the sensible world,” just as Jonah had been immersed in “the sea of hylic matter,”<sup>287</sup> and their liberation (*khalāṣ*) mirrors the birdlike soul’s release from its corporeal cage.<sup>288</sup> But beyond the allegorical elements of the passage lies the conception that an excess of perfection enables the individual to guide others towards perfection. As Maimonides puts it in the (*Guide* II.37):

It is fitting that your attention be aroused to the nature of that which exists in the divine overflow (*al-fayḍ al-ilāhī*) coming toward us, through which we have intellectual cognition and through which there is a difference of rank between our intellects. For sometimes something comes from it to a certain individual, the measure of that something being such that it renders him perfect, but has no other effect. Sometimes, on the other hand, the measure of what comes to the individual overflows from rendering him perfect toward rendering others perfect (*wa-qad yakūnu al-shay’ al-wāṣil ilā al-shakhṣ qadran yafīḍu ‘an takmīlihi li-takmīl ghayrihi*). This is what happens to all things: some of them achieve perfection to an extent that enables them to govern others, while

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<sup>286</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 137. For another example of Tanḥum’s acceptance of the message of a *ta’wīl* despite his insistence that it does not fit the context, see his commentary to Qohelet 5:1 (MS Pococke 320, 130a).

<sup>287</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 133. This terminology may have been informed in turn by the *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* (The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity). Particularly suggestive is the use of this terminology in the context of a traveler in a ship as a figure for the soul in the body. See Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 15. Cf. also Ibn ‘Aqūn’s use of an almost identical formulation in Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 32-33.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. Shy, *Perush*, 130-131. Outside of this allegorical context, Tanḥum employs the more typical terminology of the soul’s release from its corporeal “prison” (*sijn*); see his commentary to Qohelet 8:8 (MS Pococke 320, 148b). For the Platonic background to this figure, cf. *Phaedo* 65d, 82e; Thomas Kjeller Johansen, *Plato’s Natural Philosophy: A study of the Timaeus-Critias* (Cambridge University Press: 2004), 137. For the importance of this dualistic anthropology in late antique Hellenistic Judaism and in Pauline Christianity, see Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (University of California Press: 1993), 31-33.

others achieve perfection only in a measure that allows them to be governed by others, as we have explained (*minhā mā ḥaṣala lahu al-kamāl mā yudabbiru bihi ghayrahu wa-minhā mā lam yaḥṣal lahu min al-kamāl illā qadr yakūnu mudabbaran bi-ghayrihi kamā bayyannā*). [...]

It has already become clear to you that, were it not for this additional perfection, sciences would not be set forth in books and prophets would not call upon the people to obtain knowledge of the truth.<sup>289</sup>

Thus, according to Maimonides, all true guidance of others towards human perfection is the product of an individual's surplus in a particular kind of perfection.<sup>290</sup> True prophetic and philosophical instruction is necessarily the product of such a degree of perfection. Indeed, the pursuit of the welfare of others (including wise instruction and governance) in one's society is framed in medieval sources – Maimonides among them – in terms of *imitatio Dei*.<sup>291</sup> Tanḥum's understanding that the soul that achieves a higher degree of perfection is compelled to guide others towards perfection is thus strikingly attested in Maimonides' thought, which is in turn rooted in contemporaneous Peripatetic traditions.<sup>292</sup>

### Non-Peripatetic Elements in Tanḥum's Commentary to Jonah

#### A. *A parallel between Tanḥum's commentary to Jonah and the Zohar*<sup>293</sup>

Immediately striking is the parallel between the respective interpretations of the Book of Jonah in Tanḥum's commentary and the Zohar to Exodus (*parashat va-yaqhel*, 199a).<sup>294</sup> However, the

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<sup>289</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 373-374, 375; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 264 line 3 – 265 line 8.

<sup>290</sup> Avraham Melamed, "Ha-Rambam 'al ha-ofi ha-medini shel ha-adam – tzerakhim u-meḥuyyabut," in *Tribute to Sara: Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Kabbala presented to Professor Sara O. Heller Wilensky*, eds. Moshe Idel, Devora Dimant, Shalom Rosenberg (The Magnes Press: 1994), 327-328.

<sup>291</sup> Haim (Howard) Kreisel, "Maimonides' Political Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. Kenneth Seeskin (Cambridge University Press: 2005), 195, 208; Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought* (State University of New York Press: 1999), 125-158; Abraham Melamed, *The Philosopher-King in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Political Thought* (State University of New York Press: 2003), 35-40, 48-49; and cf. Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection*, 8.

<sup>292</sup> Kreisel, "Maimonides' Political Philosophy," 197.

<sup>293</sup> I thank Dr Nathan Wolski for his helpful comments concerning these passages in the Zohar.

significance of this parallel is far from clear. The relevant passage from the Zohar reads as follows:

Jonah, descending into the ship, is the human soul descending into this world to enter a human body. Why is she called יונה (*Yonah*), Jonah? Because as soon as she joins the body, she is *yonah*, cheated,<sup>295</sup> in this world, as it is said: ולֹא תונוּ (*ve-lo tonu*), *You shall not cheat, one another* (Leviticus 25:17). Then a person moves through this world like a ship in the great ocean about to break up, as it is said: *The ship threatened to break up* (Jonah 1:4).<sup>296</sup>

There are three possible ways to account for this parallel:

1. Direct dependence. Although elements of the Zoharic corpus began to circulate in Spain very late in Tanḥum's life, and it is highly unlikely that he had come into contact with it, it is possible that he came into contact with some elements of Spanish Kabbalah.<sup>297</sup> It is also not impossible that Tanḥum's interpretations circulated within his own lifetime, perhaps as far away as Christian Spain.

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<sup>294</sup> For passage in the Zohar, see *Sefer ha-zohar*, ed. Reuben Margalioṭ (Mossad Harav Kook: 1964 ), vol. 2 (Exodus), 397. For an English translation of the full Zoharic Jonah narrative, with critical notes, see *The Zohar (Pritzker Edition)*, trans. and commentary by Daniel Matt (Stanford University Press: 2011), vol. 6, 132-134. For an alternative translation of the passage and analysis of the passage, see Aryeh Wineman, *Mystic Tales from the Zohar* (Princeton University Press: 1998), 99-117. For the anomalous quality of this passage in its reading of a complete biblical narrative as a coherent allegory, see Wineman, *Mystic Tales*, 103. See also Henry Malter, "Personifications of Soul and Body: A Study in Judaeo-Arabic Literature," in *Jewish Quarterly Review* (New Series) 2:4 (1912), 464. For introductory studies of the Zohar, see Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford University Press: 2004); Fischel Lachower and Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, trans. David Goldstein, 3 vols. (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization: 1989); Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Schocken Books: 1995), 205-243. For the transmission of mythical tropes (such as the tension between the aforementioned two divine impulses) from rabbinic literature into the kabbalistic tradition and other medieval sources, see Yehuda Liebes, "De Natura Dei," in *ibid.*, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism*, trans. Batya Stein (State University of New York Press: 1993), 1-64.

<sup>295</sup> Wineman translates *yonah* here as "experiences agony and affliction" (Wineman, *Mystic Tales*, 99).

<sup>296</sup> Translation from *The Zohar (Pritzker Edition)*, trans. Daniel Matt (Stanford University Press: 2011), vol. 6, 132-134; Aramaic in *Sefer ha-zohar*, ed. Reuben Margalioṭ (Mossad Harav Kook: 1964 ), vol. 2 (Exodus), 397.

<sup>297</sup> For early evidence of the Zoharic texts and their earliest circulation in the 1280's and 1290's, see Gershom Scholem, "The Earliest Citation from *Midrash ne'elam*," in *Tarbiz* 3:2 (1932), 181-183; Boaz Huss, "The Early Dissemination of "Sefer ha-Zohar"," in *Tarbiz* 70:3-4 (2002), 507-542. In 1305, Isaac of Acre famously traveled to

2. Dependence upon common sources.
3. Finally, it is possible that the author(s) of the Zohar coincidentally hit upon a similar allegorical reading of the Jonah narrative to that of Tanḥum.<sup>298</sup>

Although none of these possibilities can be dismissed with certainty at this point, all but the final option are highly unlikely. I am thus inclined to view the parallel between Tanḥum's *ta'wīl* of the Jonah narrative and the Zohar's interpretation as the product of similar allegorical hermeneutical strategies, applied to a relatively simple narrative. Indeed, striking though the parallel may be, at this point we see no evidence for direct dependence in either direction. The specific allegorical meaning ascribed to the name *yonah* differs: While Tanḥum's draws an etymological link between Jonah's name and the name of the dove, the Zohar derives the name from the verbal root *y-n-h/y* (to oppress, afflict). Furthermore, where Tanḥum's allegory provides an account of the emanation of the human intellectual soul from the realm of the intellects, and communicates a basically Peripatetic soteriology, the Zohar's narrative is one of mythic cosmic judgment, resolving itself with death, and finally culminating in the messianic resurrection of the dead.<sup>299</sup> Indeed, apart from Jonah as the human soul (and by implication the sea as the material world), there is no single figure in the narrative that is interpreted in a common fashion in the two passages.

However, the independence of these sources from one another does not entirely preclude the existence of a common literary background. In the background to both works, we may point to

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Spain in order to locate and examine the Zohar, of which he had heard while still in Acre. He had difficulty locating it, and encountered differing reports concerning its authorship; see Fishbane, *As Light before Dawn*, 34-35, 40-41.

<sup>298</sup> For an overview of contemporary scholarly views concerning the authorship of the Zohar, see Green, *A Guide to the Zohar*, 164-168. For the problems that emerge in connection with the coherence of the Zohar as a book and its textual transmission, see Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism* (The Magnes Press/ Cherub Press: 2013), 224-438.

<sup>299</sup> See Wineman, *Mystic Tales*, 99-102.

*Rasā'il ikhwān al-ṣafā'* (The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity) as providing the metaphorical figure of a traveler in a ship for the soul within the body, and possibly a qur'anic commentary attributed to Ibn al-'Arabī as providing a link between this metaphor and the Jonah narrative.<sup>300</sup> These motifs may also have been transmitted to the Zohar via contemporaneous Hebrew works.<sup>301</sup> In addition, although the passage cited above does not identify Jonah with the dove, the Zohar Ḥadash makes a link between Noah's dove (*yonah*) and the human soul (but makes no link to the Jonah narrative).<sup>302</sup> Although none of these passages map directly onto Tanḥum's commentary to Jonah, the numerous parallels are suggestive of some shared literary background. Just as Tanḥum's depiction of the soul as a dove draws on abundant earlier literary sources that depict the soul as a bird (as we shall see below), it is likely that similar sources sit in the background to the Zoharic passages.<sup>303</sup>

### B. *Sufi and Plotinian Elements*

In the concluding passage of his commentary on Jonah, Tanḥum treats the custom of reciting the book of Jonah in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement.<sup>304</sup> This serves as a point of departure for an excursus on the mystical state of *unio divina*:

At that time, the soul has usually become supple and it is ready to receive insights,<sup>305</sup> and to choose freedom from the darkness of the appetites. For it is to this end – by which I

<sup>300</sup> Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 15. In the qur'anic commentary, Yūnus in the ship is likened to “the heart (*al-qalb*)” in the body. In connection with Tanḥum's commentary, note in particular the suggestive discussion of the “corporeal faculties (*al-quwā al-badaniyya*)” in the passage cited by Zoref.

<sup>301</sup> For Spanish and Provençal Hebrew sources in the background to this passage in the Zohar, see Wineman, *Mystic Tales*, 104. For the similarity between this passage in the Zohar and post-Maimonidean philosophical allegory, see *ibid.*, 105.

<sup>302</sup> See Zohar Ḥadash (ed. Reuben Margalioṭ), 21b. For the relationship of the Zohar Ḥadash to the main body of the Zohar, see Green, *Guide to the Zohar*, 159-161. Cf. also *Ra'ya mehemna* in Zohar, 2:153b; and *Tiqqune zohar* ch. 20. Both of the latter are later strata of the Zohar (see Wineman, *Mystic Tales*, 115 n. 1).

<sup>303</sup> See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (The University of North Carolina Press: 1975), 306-307. For a study of the depiction of the soul as a bird in Jewish (mainly rabbinic) sources, see Victor Aptowitz, “Die Seele als Vogel,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 69 (1925), 150-169. Cf. also *Zohar ḥadash*, 21a (*Midrash ha-ne'elam*); *Tiqqune ha-zohar*, 21, 53a.

<sup>304</sup> See Maimonides' *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, 13:11.

mean for the purpose of guidance towards the benefits of *repentance* and the lesson of the people of Nineveh – that *our Rabbis of blessed memory* established this book as the *haftarah* at this time [i.e., Yom Kippur afternoon]. If that [practice] also connects to this inner interpretation [of the book], then even greater the benefit. *Repentance* is assured and accomplished both inwardly and outwardly (*wa-tammat al-teshuvah zāhiran wa-bāṭinan*) as a result of this interpretation,<sup>306</sup> which accords with that which is appropriate. There necessarily follows from this interpretation an effort to attain human perfection, through which one attains perpetual subsistence and eternal bliss, rapture in the cups of delightful drink, the delight of whose drunkenness never ends, and the intoxication of whose wine never passes. May God, exalted is He, place us – together with everyone who applies himself to [human perfection] – among those who attain it, who scoop up that which overflows from Him, who glory in the delight of its sweetness. As it is said in the statement of [God’s] Intimate One,<sup>307</sup> peace be upon him: *They are satiated by the rich fare of your house, and you give them to drink of the stream of your delights.* (Ps. 36:9)<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Arabic: *ma’ārif*. Shy translates *li-qubūl al-ma’ārif* as *leqabbel et ha-ḥasadim*, apparently understanding the expression *qubūl al-ma’ārif* to mean “to receive the countenance” in the sense of receiving Divine favor. It seems more likely to me that Tanḥum is employing the term in its more widely attested sense as “direct knowledge”. Compare his use of the term in MS Pococke 320, 26a, 53b, 69b, 70a, and many other places. For the concept of *ma’rifa* as experiential knowledge of the Divine in Sufi discourse, see Renard, *Knowledge of God*.

<sup>306</sup> This appears to mean that while the public recitation of the Book of Jonah on Yom Kippur, accompanied by fasting and prayer, helps to accomplish the practical requirements of repentance, Tanḥum’s exposition of the allegorical message of the book leads the reader to inner contemplation and the pursuit of human perfection.

<sup>307</sup> Arabic: *al-walī*, here referring to King David. This is a term of qur’anic origin, widely used both by Sufis and Shiites. According to its Sufi usage, the “saints” (*walī*; plu. *awliyā’*) constitute the higher ranks of the cosmic hierarchy of humans, with only the “pole” or “axis” (*qutb*) ranking above them. In a Shiite context the *awliyā’* are not only the rightful rulers, but the possessors of “knowledge of the hidden” (*‘ilm al-ghayb*); ‘Ali Ibn Abi Ṭalib is considered the *walī Allāh* par excellence (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 199-200; Hermann Landolt, “Walāya,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York, 1987), vol. 15, 316-323). According to the Sufi use of the term, it would thus most likely allude to David’s advanced spiritual state of intimacy with the Divine as reflected in his composition of the Psalms. For the concept of *walāya* in Ibn al-‘Arabi’s thought, see Michael Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī* (The Islamic Texts Society: 1993), 47-59, 103-115. Alternatively, according to its usage in a Shiite context, Tanḥum would be alluding to David’s role as an ideal ruler endowed with prophecy, and as the ancestor of the Messiah.

<sup>308</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 137-139.

Here, the mystical overtones in Tanḥum’s account are immediately striking. Indeed, drunkenness (*sukr*) as an expression of mystical union is a common Sufi motif.<sup>309</sup> It appears that Tanḥum is alluding here to the attainment of full conjunction with the Active Intellect upon death, since he denies the possibility of full *unio mystica* while the soul is embodied in its fleshly abode.<sup>310</sup> This would fit Maimonides’ description of the soul’s intense delight (*ladhdha*) in union with the Active Intellect, once it is freed from the shackles of the body at death.<sup>311</sup> It thus appears that Tanḥum found Sufi terminology to be an appropriate mode of expression to illustrate his basically Peripatetic soteriology.

However, Tanḥum was not wholly consistent in his descriptions of the state of intoxication. In at least one passage in his commentary to the Song of Songs, he offers what appears to be an account of the initially disorienting effects of mystical experiences:

Then comes the intense desire (*al-shawq al-qawī*) that impels denudation (*al-tajarrud*) and the abandonment of physicality and the departure from corporeality, as comes to pass for everyone at first due to a lack of resilience and [due to] weakness. Then comes lightheadedness and unsteadiness, and a loss of self-control and caution, like drunkenness (*sukr*) that comes unexpectedly from strong wine to a person unaccustomed to it. But if

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<sup>309</sup> For intoxication (*sukr*) as a Sufi state (*ḥāl*) and for the striking wine imagery alluding to mystical union employed in the context of Abū Sa‘īd al-Kharrāz’s death, see *Al-Qushayri’s Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risāla al-qushayriyya fī ‘ilm al-taṣawwuf* (Reading, 2007), trans. Alexander D. Knysh, 93-94, 313. For *shurb* (“drinking”), see *ibid.*, 95. See also Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 51, 58-59, 129. For intoxication as a motif in the mystical wine poetry of Tanḥum’s Andalusian contemporary al-Shushtarī (d.1265), see Lourdes María Alvarez, *Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī: Songs of Love and Devotion* (Mawah, N.J., 2009), 35-50; for the celebrated mystical wine ode (*khamriyya*) of the Egyptian Sufi Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d.1235) see Arthur John Arberry, *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ* (E. Walker: 1952), 81-90.

<sup>310</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, 136-137.

<sup>311</sup> *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 627-628; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, 463 line 12). Here, Maimonides cites Canticles 1:2, which speaks of the lover’s kisses as “better than wine.” Perhaps this passage provided the inspiration for Tanḥum’s poetic excursion on the rapture of mystic union.

the organs and the brain get used to it, the drunkenness settles and the person becomes strong enough to bear it and endure it.<sup>312</sup>

In this passage, one hears the voice of an individual who is “accustomed” to such experiences. The passage displays a deep familiarity with Islamic mystical terminology. *Tajarrud* is a term attested in medieval philosophical literature<sup>313</sup> that became widely employed in mystical discourse.<sup>314</sup> The place of “intoxication” was also debated: Is it a preliminary stage on the path to self-realization (as Tanḥum claims here), or is it more advanced?<sup>315</sup> As we can see, Tanḥum used the terminology of *sukr* (intoxication) to describe both the disorienting effects of the loosening of one’s attachment to the physical body, and the transcendent experience of *wuṣūl* (*unio mystica*, possible only after death). That is to say, Tanḥum uses the typically Sufi terminology of intoxication to describe both the most preliminary stage of mystical experience, and the ultimate and most advanced state of divine union.<sup>316</sup>

It should be emphasized, however, that the impact of Sufism upon Tanḥum’s thought runs deeper than his use of distinctive terminology. The presence of Sufi and Illuminationist concepts in Tanḥum’s writings is also evident from other passages that we have seen. For example, Tanḥum states that the catalyst for the soul’s journey back to its source is its acquisition of philosophical

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<sup>312</sup> MS Pococke 320, 52a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 62; published in Naḥum, *Mi-yetsirot sifrutiiyyot*, 3.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts* (Albany, 1992), 170.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Al-Ghazālī’s account of the perfection of the intellect once it “disengages (*tajarrada*) from the coverings of fancy and imagination” (*ghashāwat al-wahm wa-’l-khayāl*), possible to the fullest degree only after death (Buchman, *Niche of Lights*, 9, lines 5-7). For *tajrīd* as the ascetic discipline by means of which the soul may ennoble itself and attain *autognosis*, see also *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On Magic I* (Epistle 52a), trans. and eds. Godefroid de Callataÿ and Bruno Halflants (Oxford, 2011), 96 in English/17 in Arabic.

<sup>315</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 58-59. While such mystics as Bayezid (Abu Yazid) al-Bistami were characterized as “intoxicated”, others such as Junayd (d.910) emphasized sobriety as an advanced stage of spiritual development (Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley, 2007), 4, 17). Hujwiri is reputed to have said: “Intoxication is the playground of children, but sobriety is the death-field of men.” (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 129)

<sup>316</sup> Interestingly, Tanḥum also describes Jonah’s state of willful ignorance and his flight from the path towards human perfection as *sukr* (Shy, *Perush*, 135). The term is thus very versatile in Tanḥum’s usage.

knowledge (*al-‘ulūm al-ḥaqīqiyya*).<sup>317</sup> One may find a precedent for this in Maimonides’ *Mishneh torah*, where the contemplation of nature leads to awe (or “fear”, *yir’ah*) and love (*ahabah*) of God, and a desire to know the Divine.<sup>318</sup> Absent in Maimonides, however, is the concept of the soul’s yearning for its home. Indeed, such a formulation would make little sense to a thinker who locates the origin of the soul in the human body. Tanḥum’s comparison of the soul to a bird is draws on a long literary tradition among Muslim writers, attested in the works of al-Ghazālī, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d.1191), Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d.c.1230), and Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (d.1240). To one degree or another, all of these writers drew upon Ibn Sīnā’s *Risālat al-ṭayr* (Epistle of the Bird), a work with which Tanḥum was directly familiar.<sup>319</sup> The soul’s yearning for its true home in the heavenly realms – a concept reminiscent of Gnostic soteriology – was a motif widely employed by Sufi writers.<sup>320</sup> In addition, the concept of return

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<sup>317</sup> See Shy, *Perush*, 130-131.

<sup>318</sup> *The Book of Knowledge*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:2.

<sup>319</sup> Ali Asani, ““Oh that I could be a bird and fly, I would rush to the Beloved”: Birds in Islamic Mystical Poetry,” in *A Communion of Subjects*, eds. Paul Wandau and Kimberly Patton (Columbia University Press: 2006), 170-175; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 306-307; Carl W. Ernst, “The Symbolism of Birds and Flight in the Writings of Ruzbihan Baqli,” in *Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 2, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford, 1999), 353; Henri Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (Princeton, 1990), trans. Willard R. Trask, 178-183; and Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *The Universal Tree and the Four Birds: Treatise on Unification (al-Ittiḥād al-kawnī)*, trans. with introduction and commentary by Angela Jaffray (Anqa Publishing: 2006). In *Risālat al-ṭayr*, Ibn Sīnā famously depicts the soul as a bird trapped in a snare. See Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 188-189; Peter Heath, “Disorientation and Reorientation in Ibn Sīnā’s *Epistle of the Bird*,” in *Intellectual Studies on Islam* (Salt Lake City, 1990), eds. Mazzaoui and Moreen, 163-183. Al-Ghazālī’s version was published in Arabic along with that of Ibn Sīnā as “*Risālatā al-ṭayr*” (Arabic), in *al-Mashriq* 4 (1901), ed. L. Cheikho, 882-924. An English translation of al-Suhrawardī’s Persian version of the epistle appears in Wheeler M. Thackston, *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* (London, 1982), 21-25.

Tanḥum’s words in the name of an anonymous scholar in MS Pococke 320, 7a, and in his introduction to *Al-murshid al-kāfi* (Shy, *Murshid*, 2-3), are a citation from Ibn Sīnā’s *Risālat al-ṭayr*. For the passage, passage see Heath, “Disorientation and Reorientation,” 67; Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 191-192. For the passage in Arabic, see Mehren, *Traitées Mystiques*, fasc. 2, 47. See also our discussion of Tanḥum’s bird allegory in the introduction to his commentary on Song, discussed at length in the chapter 5 below.

<sup>320</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 188-189. The concept of longing for one’s homeland (*waṭan*) had long been a widely explored theme in medieval Arabic literature (Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* (Leiden, 1992), 25 and fn.46). It took on new significance in Sufi literature, and was employed by the Persian Sufi ‘Abd al-Khaliq al-Ghujdawani and Ibn al-Fariḍ (see Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia, South Carolina, 1998), 234; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 276). This theme is also attested in a formulation very similar to Tanḥum’s in a Jewish Sufi text from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century; see Fenton, “Mystical Treatise on Perfection, Providence and Prophecy,” 305.

to one's heavenly abode of light is attested in the writings of al-Suhrawardī,<sup>321</sup> whose Illuminationist philosophy has been shown to have influenced the Jewish pietists of thirteenth century Egypt.<sup>322</sup> Many of these motifs also feature prominently in the works of the great medieval Iberian Hebrew poets, who inclined primarily towards Neoplatonism, including Ibn Gabirol (d.c.1057), Moses Ibn Ezra (d. after 1138), Abraham Ibn Ezra (d.1164).<sup>323</sup> Ultimately, these writers draw on Plotinian sources, translated and transmitted in Arabic.<sup>324</sup>

## Conclusion

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that Tanḥum quite skillfully evades neat categorization. He certainly draws richly upon the Andalusian school of biblical exegesis, usually focusing on the definition of unusual or ambiguous lexemes, and problems of syntax and morphology. He also exhibits a broad sensitivity to narrative coherence and issues of textual history and transmission. In his *peshat* exegesis, he refers to a formidable range of sources, spanning the gamut of rabbinic and medieval exegetical literature. However, Tanḥum also belonged to the post-Maimonidean school that understood the biblical text to consist of at least

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<sup>321</sup> John Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany, 2001), 48. Al-Suhrawardī also employs the theme of the soul's imprisonment in the body and its yearning to return to the angelic realm (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna – Suhrawardī – Ibn 'Arabi* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 73-4).

<sup>322</sup> Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 206-208; Russ-Fishbane, *Between Politics and Piety*, 135 fn.148. For the presence of Illuminationist literature from this period in the Cairo Geniza, see Paul Fenton, "Judaean-Arabic Mystical Writings," 91. In this context, Tanḥum's description of the "the illumination (*ishrāq*) of the light of the intellect" upon the soul (Shy, *Perush*, 111) is intriguing. Al-Suhrawardī also drew upon al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār* (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 259), further developing the latter's mystical ontology of light, already attested to a degree in the works of Ibn Sīnā. The terminology of illumination had thus become a common feature of Peripatetic, Sufi and Neoplatonizing discourse by the end of the twelfth century.

<sup>323</sup> See Adena Tanenbaum, *The Contemplative Soul: Hebrew Poetry and Philosophical Theory in Medieval Spain* (Leiden, 2002) [in particular 20-21, 101-104]. See also Abraham Ibn Ezra's introduction to his commentary on Qohelet, in which he writes that "just as a traveler who is taken captive desires to return to the land of his birth, to be with his family, the rational spirit (*ha-ruah ha-maskelit*) yearns to dwell [*lehe'ahez*; cf. Genesis 34:10, 47:27] in the higher regions, so that it might ascend to the hosts [*ma'arakhot*; cf. 1 Sam. 17:20, 23:3] of the Living God, which do not dwell in physical houses. For bodies are likened to houses, and their foundation is in dust."

<sup>324</sup> See pp.131-133 and notes above. For Plotinus' discussions of light as analogous to emanation, and for the transmission of those conceptions into Arabic (and ultimately Latin) sources, see David C. Lindberg, "The Genesis of Kepler's Theory of Light: Light Metaphysics from Plotinus to Kepler," in *Osiris* 2 (1986), 9-14.

two strata of meaning: The apparent or literal sense (*ẓāhir*) and the inner or esoteric sense (*bāṭin*). Our author is willing to expose the text's *bāṭin* when faced with a major problem in the *ẓāhir*, and in the case of Jonah that problem constitutes the narrative's very basis.

Like Ibn 'Aqnīn and Abraham He-Ḥasid before him, Tanḥum draws on Sufi discourse in formulating his *ta'wīl*. However, in his adherence to a fundamentally Peripatetic soteriology, Tanḥum also resists definition as a "Jewish Sufi". To paint this portrait in positive terms, we might say that Tanḥum is indeed among the last of the Judeo-Arabic *pashṭanim* of the Spanish tradition and a participant in the Egyptian-Levantine Jewish pietist culture; he is a philologist, a philosopher, and a mystic.

## Chapter 4: Tanḥum's Commentary to Qohelet

Perhaps more than any other, Tanḥum's commentary to Qohelet provides a striking illustration of his breadth as an exegete and a thinker. His understanding of Qohelet as a treatment of the theoretical sciences, with certain passages also alluding to ethics, facilitated his broad exploration of the sciences within the context of his commentary. Tanḥum found opportunities for extensive excurses in his commentary, providing us with significant insights into his intellectual world. In order to situate the commentary within its literary and historical context, I shall present an overview of the reception of Qohelet in Jewish exegesis. I shall then present a general introduction to Tanḥum's commentary, followed by a study of several notable elements within it.

### **Rabbinic reception of Qohelet and the Song of Songs**

Although the rabbis most likely inherited a biblical canon that included Qohelet and the Song of Songs, in the tannaitic period the degree of sanctity attributed to these works remained a matter of debate.<sup>1</sup> The *locus classicus* for this discussion is a particularly dramatic passage in the Mishnah in which a disagreement is related over whether or not scrolls of Qohelet and the Song of Songs render the hands impure.<sup>2</sup> The Mishnah's own understanding of this practice is that sacred texts (*kitbe qodesh*) are considered to render the hands unclean so that they will be treated with a higher degree of respect. As the Mishnah puts it, "their impurity is according to [the

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<sup>1</sup> For the mishnaic dispute discussed below as assuming the canonicity of Qohelet and Song, see Sid Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Archon Books: 1976), 123; Alex P. Jassen, *Scripture and Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Cambridge University Press: 2014), 57-59. Qohelet and Song appear to have been universally included in rabbinic enumerations of the biblical canon; see Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture*, 51-56. Against this view, see Arthur Green, "Shekhinah, The Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs: Reflections on a Kabbalistic Symbol in Its Historical Context," in *AJS Review* 26:1 (2002), 2 and fn. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Mishnah Yadayim 3:5. For Tanḥum's citation of his Mishnah (with a slight variant), see above, p.66.

degree to which] they are cherished (*le-fi ḥibbatan hi tum'atan*).<sup>3</sup> Thus, while the books of Homer do not render the hands impure, properly produced scrolls of scriptural works generally do.<sup>4</sup> Thus, regardless of the historical origins of the practice, the author(s) and tradents of the Mishnah understood the debate to be about the revered status of Qohelet and the Song of Songs.<sup>5</sup> The climax of the debate around the Song of Songs and Qohelet is reached with Rabbi Akiva's response: "God forbid! No person of Israel has ever held the divergent opinion that the Song of Songs does not render the hands impure."<sup>6</sup> For the whole world is not worthy of the day that the

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<sup>3</sup> Mishnah Yadayim 4:6. Cf. Tosefta Yadayim 2:19 (Zuckerman). See also David Stern, "On Canonization in Rabbinic Judaism," in *Homer, the Bible, and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World* (Brill: 2003), 232.

<sup>4</sup> For the identification of Homer in this context in Mishnah Yadayim 4:6, despite corrupt MSS, see Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: 1962), 105-111; Lee Martin McDonald, "Hellenism and the Biblical Canons: Is There a Connection?" in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts (Brill: 2013), 14-15, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Palestinian Talmud, Tractate Sotah 2:4 (18a): "Did they not decree that books render the hands impure due to their sanctity (*mi-pene qedushshatan*)?" Cf. also Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture*, 120-124. This understanding of the Mishnah has been questioned in recent years; see John Barton, "The Canonicity of the Song of Songs," in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs/Perspektiven der Hoheliedauslegung*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn (Walter de Gruyter: 2005), 3-5; Shamma Friedman, "The Holy Scriptures Defile the Hands," in *Minḥah le-Naḥum: Biblical and Other Studies Presented to Nahum M. Sarna in Honour of his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, eds. Marc Brettler and Michael Fishbane (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament/Sheffield Academic Press: 1993), 117-132. Friedman questions the degree to which this explanation is a satisfactory account of the Mishnah's own understanding of the practice, and argues that the origins of the practice are rooted in an archaic fear of imparting holiness to unworthy objects. According to his argument, the Talmud would only later understand the practice to be motivated by the respectful treatment of these objects. Friedman's argument is further developed in Timothy H. Lim, "The Defilement of the Hands as a Principle Determining the Holiness of Scriptures," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 61/2 (2010), 501-515. I am inclined to accept the mishnaic account as an application of the same rationale that the Mishnah ascribes to the uncleanness of human bones ("so that a person will not make the bones of their mother and father into ladles"); cf. Lim, "Defilement of the Hands," 503. I am not claiming that the Mishnah's rationale necessarily reflects the historical origins of this practice, but merely that this is the Mishnah's own understanding of the practice. For the aforementioned critique of the traditional rabbinic understanding of these laws, see Friedman, "The Holy Scriptures Defile the Hands," 118. Barton appears to reject the notion that the impurity of these books is connected to their sacred status at all; he suggests that it may be connected to the absence of the Tetragrammaton from these works. (That the defilement of the hands is connected to the sanctity of the scroll is nowhere denied by Friedman; he merely prefers a ritual-experiential explanation of the Mishnah to the consequentialist interpretation.) I find Barton's critique unsatisfying, as it ignores the *explicit* rationale for these positions provided by the Mishnah (and in a text that so rarely makes its motivations explicit!). Again, whether or not the Mishnah accurately reflects the historical origins of this practice, and whether or not the designation of *kitbe qodesh* maps comfortably onto our notions of canonization, may be debated. However, that the author(s)/tradents of the Mishnah understood the practice to reflect something about the sacred status of the books in question is beyond any doubt (in the humble opinion of this writer).

<sup>6</sup> I.e., It is universally agreed that a properly produced scroll of the Song of Songs renders the hands impure.

Song of Songs was given to Israel. For all of the Writings<sup>7</sup> are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.<sup>8</sup> And if they held divergent opinions, it was only with regard to Qohelet.”<sup>9</sup> The Mishnah concludes with the opinion of Rabbi Akiva’s brother-in-law Rabbi Johanan b. Joshua,<sup>10</sup> who affirms that both Qohelet and the Song of Songs render the hands impure (in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Simeon b. ‘Azzai). Thus, despite recording some discomfort with these texts on the part of early rabbinic figures, the Mishnah ultimately endorsed the full sanctity of both Qohelet and the Song of Songs. This became the authoritative stance in rabbinic tradition.<sup>11</sup>

Diverse interpretations of verses within Qohelet were compiled into midrashic collections, most notably *Midrash Qohelet (Qohelet Rabbah)* and *Qohelet Zuṭa*.<sup>12</sup> The encyclopedic quality of *Qohelet Rabbah* may reflect its intended function as an educational primer, and may have

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<sup>7</sup> The precise valence of the term “writings” (*ketubim*) here is not entirely clear – it could refer narrowly to the Hagiographa, or to the entire of Scripture. See Marc Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity*, trans. Batya Stein (State University of New York Press: 1996), 83.

<sup>8</sup> Jacob Neusner translates: “For all the scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is holiest of all.” (See *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, trans. Jacob Neusner (Yale University Press: 1988), 1127.) Another possibility for translating this passage, picking up on the use of the terminology of *qodesh* and *qodesh qodashim* in the context of Temple architecture, might be: “For all of the Writings are [analogous to] the Temple sanctum (*qodesh*), but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.”

<sup>9</sup> Mishnah Yadayim 3:5.

<sup>10</sup> MS Kaufmann has *shammua* ‘ in place of *yeshua* ‘ (*yehoshua* ‘ in most printed editions).

<sup>11</sup> See Maimonides’ commentary to the Mishnah Yadayim 3:5 cited above, where he determines the *halakhah* according to Simeon b. ‘Azzai (i.e., both Qohelet and Song render the hands impure); *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Other Primary Categories of Impurity, 9:6.

<sup>12</sup> For the redaction and transmission of these works, see Reuven Kiperwasser, *Midrashim on Kohelet: Studies in their Redaction and Formation* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Bar-Ilan University: 2005); Kiperwasser, “Structure and Form in Kohelet Rabbah as Evidence of Its Redaction,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 58/2 (2007), 283-302. For a critical edition of *Qohelet Zuṭa*, see *Midrash zuṭa ‘al shir ha-shirim rut ekha ve-qohelet*, ed. Solomon Buber (H. Itzkowski: 1894), 81-130. *Midrash Qohelet* or *Haggadat Qohelet* has been known as *Qohelet Rabbah* only since the publication of the Venice edition of 1545; see H. L. Strack and G. Stemmerger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Fortress Press: 1992), 345. A number of non-critical editions of *Midrash Qohelet/Qohelet Rabbah* have been published, but only one partial critical edition, for which see Marc Hirshman, *Midrash Qohelet Rabbah Chapter 1-4: Commentary (Ch.1) and Introduction* (PhD dissertation, Jewish theological Seminary: 1983). For an English translation, see *Midrash Rabbah* (Soncino Press: 1939), vol. 8.

inspired medieval exegetes who saw the work as a repository of the sciences.<sup>13</sup> Its interpretations of verses from Qohelet are often informed by the traditional attribution to Solomon.<sup>14</sup>

Targum Qohelet in particular interprets the work as the product of Solomon's reflections later in life, in particular after his legendary deposition by the arch-demon Asmodeus.<sup>15</sup> The king's subsequent wanderings give him the opportunity to contemplate the fleeting nature of worldly power and status.<sup>16</sup> The Targum reflects a strong and unified editorial project. It breaks verses into their component parts and incorporates these fragments in its narrative elaboration, employing both literal translation and creative paraphrase in its composition.<sup>17</sup> Thus, what is sometimes a fairly straightforward translation or paraphrase is framed within a more elaborate narrative setting.<sup>18</sup> The targumist often takes the opportunity to depart from the boundaries of the Hebrew text and emphasize the values of Torah study, repentance, prayer, and charity.<sup>19</sup> These

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<sup>13</sup> For this as a possible function of *Qohelet Rabbah*, see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 317-318.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 18; James T. Robinson, "Ecclesiastes, Book of: III.B. Medieval Judaism: Interpretation," in *The Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (De Gruyter: 2013), vol. 7, 281.

<sup>15</sup> Targum Qohelet 1:12; and cf. bGittin 68a-b. Cf. also the reference to this narrative in the Geniza text following Grünhut (1897), *Midrash shir hashirim*, new edition with commentary and notes by Joseph Chaim Wertheimer (Ktav Yad Vasefer Institute: 1981), 73 and Wertheimer's comments in fn. 44; and the Solomon narrative in Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition; Wahrmann Books: 1967), vol. 2, 86-87. See also Dina Stein, *Textual Mirrors: Reflexivity, Midrash, and the Rabbinic Self* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2012), 45. For the character of Asmodeus, see Tobit 3:8, 17; Idit Pintel-Ginsburg, "Asmodeus," in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions*, eds. Raphael Patai and Haya Bar-Itzhak (Routledge: 2015), vol.1, 51-52; Dan Ben-Amos, "On Demons," in *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought: Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan on his Seventieth Birthday*, eds. Rachel Elior and Peter Schäfer (Mohr Siebeck: 2005), 31, 34.

For discussions of Targum Qohelet in general, see Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: 2010), 327-328; Paul V. M. Flesher and Bruce Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Baylor University Press: 2011), 241-244. Targum Qohelet appears to have been completed by the 7<sup>th</sup> century in Palestine. See Peter S. Knobel, "The Targum of Qohelet," in *The Aramaic Bible: The Targums*, vol. 15, eds. Cathcart, Maher, McNamara (The Liturgical Press: 1991), 9-15. On the linguistic character of Targum Qohelet, see *ibid.*; and Flesher and Chilton, *The Targums*, 233-235.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, "Medieval Judaism: Interpretation," 281.

<sup>17</sup> Knobel, "The Targum of Qohelet," 2.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Flesher and Chilton, *The Targums*, 11

<sup>19</sup> Knobel, "The Targum of Qohelet," 2; Flesher and Chilton, *The Targums*, 241-244.

themes will also be emphasized in the Karaite tradition, discussed below. Throughout the composition, the targumist draws on a rich body of earlier exegetical material.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, interpretations of Qohelet are scattered throughout the talmuds and related literature.<sup>21</sup> A particularly important discussion concerning the self-contradictory quality of Qohelet and its status within the corpus of the Hebrew Bible may be found in the Babylonian Talmud, where the following statement is ascribed to R. Judah b. R. Samuel b. Shelat, in the name of Rab: “The Sages wished to suppress (*lignoz*) the Book of Qohelet, because its words contradict each other. And why did they not suppress it? Because it begins and ends with words of Torah.”<sup>22</sup> The passage goes on to explain the way in which the opening and concluding passages of Qohelet are consistent with pious values, and resolves some blatant contradictions in the text. This is only one of several instances in which post-mishnaic rabbinic sources simultaneously affirm the sanctity of Qohelet and express their discomfort with certain elements of its content.<sup>23</sup> Also notable is a passage in the Babylonian Talmud offers a moralizing anthropological allegoresis of verses from Qohelet:

Rami b. Abba said: What is [the meaning of] that which is written, *a small city etc.*? (Qoh. 9:14) *A small city* – this is the body; *with few people (ibid.)* – these are the organs; *and to it came a great king, and surrounded it (ibid.)* – this is the evil inclination (*yetzer ha-ra'*); *and built mighty siege works against it (ibid.)* – these are iniquities. *Present in the city was a poor wise man (ibid. v. 15)* – this is the good inclination (*yetzer ṭob*); *who saved the city with his wisdom (ibid.)* – this

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<sup>20</sup> See Knobel, “The Targum of Qohelet,” 2; Flesher and Chilton, *The Targums*, 236.

<sup>21</sup> For the reception of Qohelet in rabbinic literature in general, see Marc Hirshman, “Qohelet’s Reception and Interpretation in Early Rabbinic Literature,” in *Studies in Ancient Midrash*, ed. James Kugel (Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies: 2001), 87-99; Ruth N. Sandberg, *Rabbinic Views of Qohelet* (Edwin Mellen Press: 1999).

<sup>22</sup> Shabbat 30b.

<sup>23</sup> Particularly notable is the statement that the sages wished to suppress Qohelet, “for in it they found words tending [or: leading] towards heresy (*debarim maṭṭin le-tzad minut*).” See *Pesikta de Rav Kahana: According to an Oxford Manuscript*, ed. Bernard Mandelbaum (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: 1987), vol. 1, #8 (*Mitzvat ha-’omer*), 135; *Qohelet Rabbah* 1:3. Cf. also see *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, ed. Solomon Schechter (1887), version A, #1, 2.

is repentance and good works; *but nobody remembered that poor man (ibid.)* – for at the time of the [dominance of the] evil inclination, there is nobody there to mention the good inclination.

*Wisdom renders the wise stronger than ten rulers. (ibid., 7:19) Wisdom renders the wise stronger* – this is [a reference to] repentance and good works; *than ten rulers* – two eyes, two ears, two hands, two feet, the penis and the mouth.<sup>24</sup>

Tanḥum saw himself as part of the rabbinic tradition, and he frequently cites the sages, whom he calls *al-awā'il* (lit. “the ancients”).<sup>25</sup> This is no less true of his commentary to Qohelet, in which he repeatedly refers to classical rabbinic literature, both for the sake of linguistic comparison and in order to inform the content of his exegesis.<sup>26</sup> Although he prioritizes linguistic and philological analysis, and reads the work through the prism of contemporaneous philosophical and scientific discourse, the rabbinic tradition sits prominently in the background to Tanḥum’s exegetical project.

### **The medieval Judeo-Arabic tradition**

The evidence for the emergence of the Judeo-Arabic tradition of interpreting Qohelet is fragmentary but suggestive. Perhaps the earliest figure that we can identify with the interpretation of Qohelet within this period is the very same one who may have served as a conduit of late antique philosophical literary conventions from a Syriac Christian context to a

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<sup>24</sup> bNedarim 32b. There is a parallel to this interpretation in Qohelet Rabbah to Qoh. 9:14.

<sup>25</sup> For Tanḥum’s terminology in referring to the rabbis, see above, p.60 and fn.97; below p.393-394 and fn.498.

<sup>26</sup> For the use of rabbinic sources for lexical comparison in Tanḥum’s commentary to Qohelet, see MS Poccocke 320, 87b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 36; MS Poccocke 320, 91b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 39; MS Poccocke 320, 104a/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 50; MS Poccocke 320, 139a/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 73. For Tanḥum’s use of moralizing interpretations from rabbinic sources, see MS Poccocke 320, 131b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 67; MS Poccocke 320, 139b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 73. See also MS Poccocke 320, 146b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 78. See also his interpretation of bQiddushin 71a through Peripatetic soteriology in MS Poccocke 320, 113a/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 56. In looking to rabbinic sources to shed light on otherwise philological and philosophical exegesis, Tanḥum followed in the footsteps of Maimonides. See Edward Breuer, “Maimonides and the Authority of Aggadah,” in *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. Jay M. Harris (Harvard University Press: 2005), 25-45.

Jewish context: Dāwūd Ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ.<sup>27</sup> Although his commentary to Qohelet is no longer extant, James T. Robinson has speculated concerning the likely character of the work based on the Syriac cultural and literary context in which Dāwūd was educated after his conversion to Christianity, and which colored his literary output after his reversion to Judaism.<sup>28</sup> Following in the tradition of the patristic school of Antioch,<sup>29</sup> it is likely that Dāwūd's commentaries would have included systematic introductions, verse-by-verse commentaries, and linguistic, stylistic, and rhetorical discussions pertaining to the text in question. Further, it is most likely that Dāwūd would have adopted a systematic mode of theological argumentation informed by philosophical discourse and *kalām*, as is evident from his extant writings.<sup>30</sup> From the period of Dāwūd's activity onward, such features would become characteristic of much of the Jewish biblical exegesis produced within the Islamic world, including exegesis of Qohelet.<sup>31</sup> Although his role in shaping these norms is impossible to appraise with any certainty, his activity allows us to trace some of the central elements in Judeo-Arabic literary production as far back as the ninth century.

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<sup>27</sup> James T. Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy: The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Salmon ben Yeroham on Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)* (Brill: 2012), 10-11; Sarah Stroumsa, *Dawūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ's Twenty Chapters ('Ishrūn Maqāla)* (Brill: 1989), 34-35; Stroumsa, "Soul-searching at the Dawn of Jewish Philosophy: A Hitherto Lost Fragment of al-Muqammiṣ's *Twenty Chapters*," in *Ginze Qedem* 3 (Ben-Zvi Institute: 2007), 137\*-141\*. For an overview of Dawud al-Muqammiṣ's biography, works, and central aspects of his thought, see Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 15-35. For Dawud as a bridge between Jewish, Christian, and Islamic discourse, see Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish *kalam*," 78; Daniel Frank, "Karaites Commentaries on the Song of Songs from Tenth-Century Jerusalem," in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, eds. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering (Oxford University Press: 2010), 51.

<sup>28</sup> Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 11-12; Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 19-20, 23-26, 29, 32.

<sup>29</sup> For the extended period that Dawud spent in Nisibis, see Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 15-16. For a study of the School of Nisibis, its establishment, history, and place at the intellectual and cultural crossroads of the Hellenistic and Near Eastern worlds, see Adam Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 12; Cf. Stroumsa, *Twenty Chapters*, 19-33. For Dawud's relationship with *kalām*, see Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish *kalam*," 78-79; Ben-Shammai, "Jewish Thought in Iraq," 25.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 19.

## A. *Karaite*

Qohelet occupied a place of considerable importance in the exegetical program of the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century Karaite communities,<sup>32</sup> with least five commentaries being composed on it in the formative period of Karaite exegesis. Of those commentaries, three are extant.<sup>33</sup> Within the Karaite tradition, Qohelet is generally read from an asceticizing viewpoint, as an exhortation to resist the temptation to engage in the study of foreign wisdom, and to aspire to simple piety.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the earliest Karaite commentary to establish apply this approach consistently to Qohelet is that of Salmon b. Yeroḥam (fl.c.930-960).<sup>35</sup> Notably, Salmon maintains that Qohelet is to be interpreted according to its literal sense, rather than as prophetic parables:

The learned ought to know that the meanings of Qohelet, peace be with him, are according to their external sense [*zāhir*] and are not proverbs [*amthāl*]...<sup>36</sup> The reason I begin this way is because I have learned of people who interpreted the book improperly, saying, for example, that with the verse: “The Sun also ariseth, and the Sun goeth down (Qoh 1:5),” he refers to the Kingdom’s appearance and disappearance, as it is said: “Her sun is gone down while it was yet day, she hath been ashamed and confounded” (Jer 15:9). [...] The book as a whole [they

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<sup>32</sup> For an overview of the place of Qohelet in Karaism and its major interpreters, see Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, esp. 10-27. For the popularity of the Five Scrolls among medieval Jews in the Islamic world in general, see Kraemer, *Maimonides*, 57.

<sup>33</sup> Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 10; Robinson, “Medieval Judaism: Interpretation,” 281-282.

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*; Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon’s Commentary*, 20, 71. An exception to this rule is the collection of grammatical glosses composed by Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf Ibn Nūḥ (10<sup>th</sup> century), which is focused entirely on linguistic elements of the text and largely ignores its broader literary sense. For the commentary, see Geoffrey Khan, *The Early Karaite Tradition of Hebrew Grammatical Thought: Including a Critical Edition, Translation and Analysis of the Diqduq of ‘Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf ibn Nūḥ on the Hagiographa* (Brill: 2000), 466-473. For a discussion of this source, see Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 31-33.

<sup>35</sup> See Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*. For summary of the scant biographical data related to this figure, and for the scope of his literary output, see *ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>36</sup> The Arabic *mathal* can signify proverbs or parables; see Robinson’s translation in *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 167 and fn.8. In the present context, the dichotomy that the author proposes between the *zāhir* and the *mathal* suggests that he is using it in the latter sense.

understood] in this same way. The one who first introduced these meanings was Benjamin al-Nahāwandī – may Allah have mercy on him.<sup>37</sup>

In this passage, one may find valuable information concerning the emergence of different interpretive traditions regarding Qohelet among Jewish exegetes. Salmon’s reference to a systematic interpretation of Qohelet by Benjamin b. Moses al-Nahāwandī (9<sup>th</sup> century) – apparently largely allegorical in quality – attests to the diversity of approaches to Qohelet among non-Rabbanite Jews in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> Al-Nahāwandī’s historical allegory is also somewhat reminiscent of rabbinic midrash, highlighting the complex relationship between Karaite and Rabbanite thought in this period.<sup>39</sup>

Salmon’s approach constitutes the first fully developed articulation of what will become a major trend in Karaite exegesis of Qohelet, and a significant undercurrent in the Rabbanite tradition; namely, that the book is understood primarily as an exhortation to proper religious devotion and asceticism (*zuhd*).<sup>40</sup> Another major theme in Salmon’s commentary – echoing earlier Karaite attitudes<sup>41</sup> – is the rejection of “foreign books” and “alien wisdom.”<sup>42</sup> These themes were continued to a large degree in the commentary to Qohelet by Yefet b. Eli.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Translation (accompanied by the Judeo-Arabic original and annotation) from Robinson *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 166-169. For discussion of the passage, see *ibid.*, 12-13, 110.

<sup>38</sup> For al-Nahāwandī, see Fred Astren, *Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding* (University of South Carolina Press: 2004), 88-89, 167-169.

<sup>39</sup> Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 13.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of this theme in Salmon’s commentary, see Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 112-114, 119, 123-124, 127-130.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the passage of Daniel al-Qumisi’s theological work cited in Robinson *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 131-134.

<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of Yefet’s commentary to Qohelet, see Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 22-24. For Yefet in general, see Haggai Ben-Shammai, *The Doctrines of Religious Thought of Abū Yūsuf Ya’qūb al-Qirqisānī and Yefet ben ‘Eli* (PhD dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem: 1977), 2 vols. See also the following recent editions of his commentaries, and their respective introductions: Polliack and Schlossberg, *Yefet ben ‘Eli’s Commentary on Hosea*; Michael Wechsler, *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet ben ‘Eli the Karaite on the Book of Esther* (Brill: 2008); Joseph Alobaidi, *Old Jewish Commentaries on the Song of Songs I: The Commentary of Yefet ben Eli* (Peter Lang: 2010). For a partial edition of Yefet’s commentary to

Overall, we may identify two major themes that recur in Karaite exegesis of Qohelet: Simple piety, and asceticism (*zuhd*). It is particularly notable for our purposes here that a major emphasis of Karaite interpretations of Qohelet is the rejection of foreign wisdom. As we shall see, this latter point differs significantly from the reception and interpretation of the work in the Rabbanite Judeo-Arabic tradition. That having been said, the asceticizing reading of Qohelet would echo throughout its interpretive history, both within the Karaite context and without.

## B. Rabbanite

### *Saadia Gaon*

Although there is no evidence that Saadia composed a commentary to Qohelet, he does interpret significant portions of the text in his work *Kitāb al-amānāt wa-'l-i'tiqādāt* (The Book of Beliefs and Opinions). Some of his interpretations exhibit a moralizing tendency,<sup>44</sup> while others demonstrate his concern to ground his theory of the soul in Scripture.<sup>45</sup> In addition, elements of an asceticizing interpretation of Qohelet, somewhat mirroring Karaite exegesis, may be found in some of his interpretations.<sup>46</sup> However, his asceticizing interpretations tend to be explicitly qualified.<sup>47</sup> A particularly striking example may be found in *Beliefs and Opinions* 10:3, where Saadia presents an extended interpretation of a series of statements in Qohelet. According to Saadia's interpretation, the exclusive pursuit of any single end is destructive. Saadia states that

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Qohelet, see Richard Murray Bland, *The Arabic Commentary of Yefet ben 'Ali on the Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapters 1-6* (unpublished PhD dissertation; The University of California, Berkeley: 1966).

<sup>44</sup> See for example his treatment of Qoh. 12:1-2 – English translation in Samuel Rosenblatt, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (Yale University Press: 1967), 386-387; Arabic original and Hebrew translation in Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibhar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot*, 309-310.

<sup>45</sup> See *Beliefs and Opinions*, 6:2; in Rosenblatt, 239-241; Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 21.

<sup>46</sup> For Saadia's oeuvre as reflecting the conscious adoption of Karaite literary models, even as he polemicized vigorously against Karaite ideology and practice, see Rina Drory, *Model and Contacts: Arabic Literature and its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture* (Brill: 2000), 142-143. For the possibility of Saadia's subsequent influence on Yefet ben Eli's exegesis, see James T. Robinson, *The Arabic Translation of Yefet ben 'Eli the Karaite on the Book of Joshua* (Brill: 2015), 8-9.

<sup>47</sup> See for example Saadia's interpretation of Qohelet 2:22 in 10:4 – see Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 367.

Solomon points to “three classes of objects of mundane<sup>48</sup> ambition (*thalātha abwāb min maḥābb al-dunyā*)”<sup>49</sup> that should not be pursued to the exclusion of all else:

The first of these [strivings that Solomon considers futile] is the exclusive devotion to wisdom to the neglect of all other objects of [human] desire. He says, namely, in reference thereto: *And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly – I perceived that this also was a striving after wind* (Eccles. 1:17). [...]

He next repeats [this observation] with reference to the exclusive cultivation of mirth and gaiety, saying that if a person gave all his attention and devotion to them alone, they, too, would prove a disappointment to him. Thus he says: *I said in my heart: “Come now, I will try thee with mirth, and enjoy pleasure”; and, behold, this also was vanity* (Eccles. 2:1) [...]

After this he makes the same remark for the third time about the upbuilding of the material world and he informs us that the preoccupation therewith, too, is vanity. He does this in his statement: *I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and parks* (Eccles. 2:4) and all the other things that he relates about his doings until the end of the passage in question. The reason he gives as his objection to all this sort of activity is that he has to leave whatever he has achieved to those that will come after him and that, therefore, his labor will have been wasted. Thus he says: *And I hated all my labour wherein I labored under the sun, seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me* (Eccles. 2:18).<sup>50</sup>

Here, Saadia resolves the internal tensions that have perturbed interpreters of Qohelet by declaring that the author was in fact exhorting the reader to attain a balance between the pursuit

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<sup>48</sup> Thus Rosenblatt (*Beliefs and Opinions*, 362). Perhaps a better translation would be “worldly ambitions”.

<sup>49</sup> Saadia’s implication that exclusive devotion to wisdom is a “worldly/mundane ambition” is very peculiar. Cf. Ibn Ghiyath’s explicit dichotomy between the futility and transience of the terrestrial realm, versus the value of that which is above “the rank of the sun (*martabat al-shams*)”, i.e., “the level of wisdom (*darjat al-ḥikma*).” See Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 275.

<sup>50</sup> *Kitāb al-amānāt wa-’l-i’itqādāt* 10:3. Translation from Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 362-363. For Arabic original and Hebrew translation, see Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de’ot*, 291-292. For a discussion of this passage, see Israel Efros, “Saadia’s General Ethical Theory and its relation to Sufism,” in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57 (seventy-fifth anniversary volume, 1967), 167-168.

of wisdom, the pursuit of happiness, and the active cultivation of the world around us. Notwithstanding his moderately asceticizing reading of Qohelet, Saadia noted the plurality of attitudes within the work and resisted the urge to subsume one perspective entirely to the other.<sup>51</sup> This is in contrast with the talmudic passage cited above, according to which the internal tensions in the text are regarded as a fault that could potentially jeopardize the place of Qohelet in the scriptural canon. In the Talmud, the contradictions must be harmonized. For Saadia, Qohelet's contrasting perspectives merely qualify each other, pointing to a life of moderation and balance.

### *Isaac Ibn Ghiyāth*

In contradistinction with Saadia and the Karaite tradition, and emphasizing the divergent readings to which Qohelet lends itself, interpreters from the Rabbanite communities of Islamic Iberia primarily understood Qohelet to affirm the central importance of philosophical investigation.<sup>52</sup> The commentary to Qohelet by Isaac Ibn Ghiyāth of Lucena (d.1089) appears to be the first or only biblical commentary that he authored.<sup>53</sup> It is most likely due to its place as the author's first commentary that the introduction is not limited to a discussion of Qohelet, but also

<sup>51</sup> Indeed, *Beliefs and Opinions* 10:4, which immediately follows his discussion of Qohelet cited above, begins the section that he suggests calling *Kitāb zuhd tāmm* (A Complete Book of Asceticism) – for which, see Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 364; Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibhar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot*, 292. On this section and its name, see p.248 and fn.367 below. Saadia concludes the central discussion of that section, focusing on thirteen competing human impulses, by returning to his earlier reading of Qohelet – see 10:17, in Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 399; Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibhar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot*, 318-319. See also Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 20-21, 71.

<sup>52</sup> Robinson, "Medieval Judaism: Interpretation," 282.

<sup>53</sup> For a broad study of Ibn Ghiyāth, see Sarah Katz, *Rabbi Yitzhaq Ibn Giyat: Monografiyah* (Reuven Mas: 1994). See also George Vajda, "Quelques Observations en Marge du Commentaire d'Isaac Ibn Ghiyāth sur l'Écclésiaste," in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57 (seventy-fifth anniversary volume, 1967), 518-527. The commentary and Arabic translation, accompanied by a Hebrew translation, was published by Yosef Qafih in *Hamesh megillot*, 161-296. For Qafih's mistaken attribution of the commentary to Saadia Gaon, see Shlomo Pines, "Four Extracts from Abu'l-Barakat al-Baghdadi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes," in *Tarbiz* 33:2 (1963), 198, 212-213; Katz, *Rabbi Yitzhaq Ibn Giyat*, 122. Qafih deduced the primacy of this commentary from Ibn Ghiyāth's words in his introduction: "I have therefore placed this noble book first, due to the fine precision of its meanings and the subtlety of its secrets, and its sheer depth (*qaddamtu min dhālik sharḥ hādihī [sic] al-dīwān al-sharīf li-diqqat ma 'ānīhi wa-liṭāfat asrārihi wa-bu'd ghawrihi*)." See Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 164, and fn.34. For a general discussion of Ibn Ghiyāth's commentary to Qohelet, see Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 21-22.

treats the nature of scriptural writing and interpretation as a whole.<sup>54</sup> Like Saadia's commentaries and those of the Jerusalem Karaites, it is accompanied by an Arabic translation of the Hebrew text. In addition to the obvious affinities that Ibn Ghiyāth's commentary shares with the Judeo-Arabic traditions of the East, he was also deeply enmeshed in the intellectual life of his native Iberia.<sup>55</sup>

Ibn Ghiyāth called Qohelet *Kitāb al-zuhd* ("the Book of Asceticism"), echoing the asceticizing interpretations of Qohelet that had been advanced by Karaite exegetes (and Saadia to a degree).<sup>56</sup> However, the specific brand of asceticism that Ibn Ghiyāth favored permitted a degree of worldly attachment, and even demanded involvement in the mundane.<sup>57</sup> In contradistinction to the Karaite approach, Ibn Ghiyāth advocated a scholastic mode of asceticism that was inextricably bound up with the pursuit of knowledge of the sciences and intellectual discipline, through which one might purify the body and mind, and ultimately attain felicity in the hereafter.<sup>58</sup>

The introduction to Ibn Ghiyāth's commentary is notable for a number of reasons, not least of which is that it appears to be the earliest Rabbanite usage of the Alexandrian philosopher's prooemium.<sup>59</sup> In line with his general emphasis on the philosophical wisdom, the exegete begins

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<sup>54</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 161-164.

<sup>55</sup> For Ibn Ghiyāth's place among the Andalusian exegetes, see Katz, *Rabbi Yitzḥaq Ibn Giyat*, 117-124.

<sup>56</sup> Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 21, 26.

<sup>57</sup> Hagit Mittelman (Kiel), "The Conception of Asceticism (*al-Zuhd*) in the Commentary on Ecclesiastes Ascribed to Isaac Ibn Ghiyāth and its Comparison to Islamic Mysticism," in *Da'at* 48 (2002), 58-59 [Hebrew]. See also his commentary on Qohelet 9:9: "He urges the [pursuit] of a livelihood and [worldly] endeavors, and that one should not engage in it too little." (Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 262.)

<sup>58</sup> Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 21-22.

<sup>59</sup> See Sara Klein-Braslavy, "*Without Any Doubt*": *Gersonides on Method and Knowledge* (Brill: 2011), 119-120. For the philosopher's prooemium in the Syriac milieu, see Eva Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface* (Uppsala University: 1988). For the philosopher's prooemium, and its transmission into a medieval Jewish context, see James T. Robinson, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes and the Philosopher's Prooemium," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 3, eds. Isadore Twersky and Jay M. Harris (Harvard University Press: 2000), 83-146; Frank, "Karaite Commentaries," 53. For the systematic introduction more broadly as a feature of Arabic literary culture, and for its adoption and promulgation by Saadia Gaon, see Rina Drory, "Bilingualism and

his introduction in praise of the art of writing.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, he frames all writing as ideally pedagogical, as a way to enable whomever may wish to access knowledge or insights to do so – despite physical isolation or the absence of qualified teachers. This is no less true of Scripture, and applies to Ibn Ghiyāth’s work as an interpreter.<sup>61</sup>

While Tanḥum does not adopt the format of Ibn Ghiyāth’s introduction and commentary, many of the themes that he develops may be found here. In particular, Tanḥum’s discussion of the seven sciences alluded to in Proverbs 9:1 may be inspired by Ibn Ghiyāth’s enumeration of the sciences and their appearance in Qohelet, and the latter’s depiction of the work as a repository of

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Cultural Images: The Hebrew and the Arabic Introductions of Saadia Gaon’s *Sefer Ha-Eguron*,” in *Israel Oriental Studies* (XV), eds. Shlomo Izre’el and Rina Drory (Brill: 1995), 11-23.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn Ghiyāth reframes a common rabbinic historiographical trope in a subtle but profound way. According to dominant account, the Oral Torah – defined in the Talmud as *debarim she-be-’al peh* (“orally transmitted things”) – is not to be studied from a written text, just as the scriptures are not to be studied or publicly recited orally (see Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Gittin 60b). The act of recording the Oral Torah in writing was, in this view, a concession intended to prevent the corruption and eventual disappearance of the Torah. (Cf. Tosefta ‘Eduyot 1:1. Rav Sherira Gaon writes as follows: “When Rabbi [Judah the Prince] saw that that there was such variation in the oral recitations of the rabbis – even though they indicate the same meaning – he was concerned that they were not sufficient and it would be lost. For he saw that minds [lit. “hearts”] were diminishing and the wellspring of wisdom was being sealed and Torah was disappearing. As Rabbi Yoḥannan said in [the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate] ‘Erubin [53a]: “The minds [lit. “hearts”] of the former ones were [as wide] as the entrance of the [Temple] court, of the latter-day ones were [as narrow] as the entrance of the sanctuary.”” [Iggeret Rav Sherira Gaon, ed. Benjamin Menashe Levin (Haifa: 1921), Spanish version, 20-21.]) According to Ibn Ghiyāth’s conception, the written composition and exposition of *debarim she-be-’al peh* is not simply a necessary evil, but a positive response to the failure of oral culture to successfully produce educated societies. (See Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 163.) Books replace the able teachers of former generations, and avoid the pitfalls of oral societies: Forgetting, confusion, or simple inaccessibility. Ibn Ghiyāth’s commentary mirrors this process in his own period: It is thus designed for the student who requires a guide who can make known the inner meanings (*bawāṭin*) with which the book of Qohelet is brimming, but may have no physical access to capable teachers. (See *ibid.*, 164.)

<sup>61</sup> Ibn Ghiyāth writes as follows: “The author begins his composition and commentary and says: Since the object of the composers of tomes and the masters of literary works is to bring near those of their topics which are far, and to ease [the comprehension of] that which is difficult in them, and to settle their contradictions, and to reconcile their incongruities, and to explicate simply their concepts... the most appropriate end to which a writer might aspire, and the most praiseworthy thing upon which an author might rely, is to aim directly at their intended purposes, and to convey them in concise language that clarifies their meanings to their readers, and to reject long-windedness and excessive detail... for then the student (*al-muta’allim*) will become distressed, and one who tries to understand it (*al-muta’fahhim*) will become too baffled to attain that which he desires... (Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 161.) In this context, Ibn Ghiyāth refers to his own pedagogical aspirations, but also to Scripture in general and Qohelet in particular: “And our sacred books, followed this path – those possessing divine inspiration, those which are the speech of God and his intimate prophets, which possess eloquence and conciseness...” (*Ibid.*, 162) If Solomon is characterized as the sage who collected wise pronouncements, drew associations between them, and made them accessible (*ibid.*, 292), then Ibn Ghiyāth is the learned interpreter who can do the same for the student who wishes to enter the study of Qohelet.

philosophical wisdom may have similarly shaped his understanding of the book as a discourse upon the theoretical sciences.<sup>62</sup>

### *Abraham Ibn Ezra*

In his commentary to Qohelet, Ibn Ezra is less prone to extended philosophical and scientific excursions than Ibn Ghiyāth, although the shorter excursus continues to play a role.<sup>63</sup> This is in line with his belief that biblical commentary should not stray too far from its focus on textual problems.<sup>64</sup> However, he does occasionally delve more deeply into specific philosophical issues,<sup>65</sup> and in several passages he draws on contemporary scientific and cosmological discourse.<sup>66</sup>

Ibn Ezra's introduction to his commentary makes it clear that he associates Qohelet with the acquisition of wisdom. The precise nature of this wisdom is unclear in the local context, but can be ascertained from the scope of scientific topics treated in the commentary. Astronomy and physics feature prominently, and Ibn Ezra alludes to several other philosophical sciences.<sup>67</sup> In the introduction, he also emphasizes the soul's longing for its abode in the intellectual realm, a theme upon which Tanḥum will develop in various contexts.<sup>68</sup> Ibn Ezra concludes the

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 8-9. See Ibn Ghiyāth's analysis of the lexeme *qohelet*, discussed below, p.179 fn.122; and his account of the sciences alluded to in Qohelet, discussed below, p.193-194. For a fuller discussion of the classification of the sciences in medieval Arabic and Judeo-Arabic sources, and Tanḥum's place within that tradition, see below, pp.190-230.

<sup>63</sup> For the excursus as a literary unit embedded in exegesis, which may provide necessary background but is fundamentally independent, see Sela, *Ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science*, 288-289, 326.

<sup>64</sup> See his critique of the geonic approach to biblical exegesis in the introduction to his commentary on the Pentateuch; and Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 22, 41.

<sup>65</sup> For example, see his commentary to Qohelet 7:3; and Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 22.

<sup>66</sup> Mariano Gómez Aranda, "Ibn Ezra and Rashbam on Qohelet: Two Perspectives in Contrast," *Hebrew Studies* 46 (2005), 252-254.

<sup>67</sup> Mariano Gómez Aranda, "The Meaning of Qohelet According to Ibn Ezra's Scientific Explanations," in *Aleph* 6 (2006), 339-370.

<sup>68</sup> For this theme in Tanḥum's commentary to Jonah, and its antecedents, see above, p.153-154.

introduction with a declaration that one cannot achieve true fear of God without first attaining wisdom and understanding:

Nothing that a creature (*notzar*) does endures. For all created beings (*ha-nibra'im*) may toil to create something that is an element (*shoresh*), or to destroy it to the point that it is non-existent, but all of their deeds are a figment and an image and an accident (*demut u-temunah u-miqreh*): Separating the conjoined, conjoining the separate, moving that which is at rest, or bringing to rest that which is in motion. Thus, the activity of human beings is nothingness and emptiness, other than fearing God.<sup>69</sup> And a man cannot attain the level of fear [of God] until he ascends the ladder of wisdom, and is built up and well established in understanding.

Thus, according to Ibn Ezra, scientific knowledge is a prerequisite for, and an enabler of, true fear of God. It was Solomon's ultimate goal to instill this fear of God, and towards this end, he conveyed scientific knowledge in Qohelet.<sup>70</sup>

#### *Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī*

Another contribution to the philosophical interpretation of Qohelet was made by Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. after 1164), the author of *Kitāb al-mu'tabar* (The Book of That Which Has Been Derived from Contemplation), and a convert to Islam late in life.<sup>71</sup> Following the precedent of Saadia, Karaite exegetes, and Ibn Ghiyāth, al-Baghdādī's commentary to Qohelet is accompanied by an Arabic translation of the biblical text.<sup>72</sup> In the segments of the commentary published, translated into Hebrew, and studied by Shlomo Pines, al-Baghdādī discusses questions

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<sup>69</sup> Here, Ibn Ezra brings the content of Qoh. 1:2 and 12:8 ("*Futility of futilities!*") into direct conversation with Qoh. 12:13.

<sup>70</sup> Gómez Aranda, "The Meaning of Qohelet," 344.

<sup>71</sup> For Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī in general, see the articles collected in Shlomo Pines, *Studies in Abu'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī: Physics and Metaphysics* (The Magnes Press/ E. J. Brill: 1979); and Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press/ Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme: 1985), 131-140.

<sup>72</sup> See Pines, "Toward the Study of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Commentary on Qohelet," 198; Samuel Poznanski, "Aus Abū-l-Barakāt Hibat-Allah's arabischem Kommentar zu Qohelet," in *Zeitschrift für Hebraeische Bibliographie* XVI (1913), 32-36.

of theodicy, psychology, and the order of the composition of the books of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>73</sup> He also touches upon cosmology, insofar as it is relevant to questions of theodicy and psychology.<sup>74</sup> Based on Pines' selection and study, al-Baghdādī may viewed Qohelet as a kind of compendium on various topics.<sup>75</sup> The question of coherence aside, al-Baghdādī's treatment of Qohelet reflects his integration of a wide array of sources, including philosophical ones.<sup>76</sup>

### *Maimonides*

Maimonides never wrote a commentary on Qohelet, but two elements in his writings help us to gain an insight into his approach to the work: His explicit statements regarding its status, and his scattered comments on verses from Qohelet. In contrast to Ibn Ghiyāth,<sup>77</sup> Maimonides did not believe Qohelet to be the product of prophecy:

Not only words of Torah, but all sacred texts (*kitbe qodesh*) render the hands impure, even the Song of Songs and Qohelet, which are words of wisdom (*dibre hokhmah*).<sup>78</sup>

Here, Maimonides appears to assume a distinction within the biblical canon between prophetic works and those which represent the wisdom and insight of a particular individual. This formulation reflects one way of interpreting the a passage in the Babylonian Talmud and the Tosefta, in which R. Simeon b. Menasya states that “Qohelet does not render the hands impure, for it is from Solomon's [own] wisdom (*me-hokhmato shel shelomoh*).”<sup>79</sup> The anonymous rabbis respond by pointing to 1 Kings 5:12, where it is stated that King Solomon composed three

<sup>73</sup> Pines, “Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Commentary on Qohelet,” 199.

<sup>74</sup> See the text presented, translated into Hebrew, and discussed in Pines, “Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Commentary on Qohelet,” 200-206. Here, al-Baghdādī also discusses questions connected to human intuition.

<sup>75</sup> This may reflect his adoption of rabbinic attitudes. Cf. our discussion of *Qohelet Rabbah* above, p.158-159.

<sup>76</sup> For his use of Euclid, see Pines, “Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Commentary on Qohelet,” 204-206. For an affinity with the Brethren of Purity, see *ibid.*, 210. He also cites and critiques verses from Abū ‘Alī al-Muḥassin Ibn ‘Alī al-Tanūkhī (d. 994), for which see *ibid.*, 207.

<sup>77</sup> See Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 166-167.

<sup>78</sup> See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Other Primary Categories of Impurity, 9:6.

<sup>79</sup> See Tosefta Yadayim 2:14 (ed. Zuckerman); bTalmud Megillah 7a. In the Talmud, the formulation is very slightly different: “... for it is Solomon's wisdom (*mi-pene she-hokhmato shel shelomoh hi*).”

thousand proverbs (*mashal*) and one thousand and five songs, apparently affirming the special status of the canonical works attributed to Solomon.<sup>80</sup> The rabbis' response may be understood either as a rejection of R. Simeon b. Menasya's position concerning the non-prophetic quality of Qohelet,<sup>81</sup> or as a defense of the book's sanctity *despite* its non-prophetic quality. Maimonides clearly understood the passage in the latter sense. Thus, we may conclude that Maimonides understood the dispute to hinge upon whether works of wisdom (*hokhmah*) render the hands impure, given that they are not a product of prophecy.<sup>82</sup>

Maimonides also offers interpretations of individual verses from Qohelet throughout the *Guide*. As is to be expected, these are not systematic in nature, and his approach to the material depends very much on the context in which it is cited.<sup>83</sup> Apart from his use of verses from Qohelet in his lexical discussions,<sup>84</sup> Maimonides interprets verses through the lense of ethics,<sup>85</sup> psychology,<sup>86</sup> and metaphysics.<sup>87</sup> He specifically raises the question of Qohelet's position on the eternity of the world,<sup>88</sup> miracles,<sup>89</sup> and theodicy.<sup>90</sup> In addition, he links Qohelet to his discussions about the

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<sup>80</sup> Tosefta Yadayim 2:14 (ed. Zuckerman); bTalmud Megillah 7a.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. the commentary attributed to Rashi on the Talmud *ad loc.* (s.v. *va-halo kebar ne'emar va-yedabber*), which clearly understands the prophetic quality of the book as the basis of R. Simeon b. Menasya's dispute with the rabbis. In his commentary on the Mishnah, which is printed in many standard editions, Obadiah di Bertinoro (d.c.1516) accepted this interpretation and applied it to the dispute in Mishnah Yadayim 3:5.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Yosef Marciano, "Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim," in *Teshurah le-'Amos: Collected Studies in Biblical Exegesis - Presented to 'Amos Hakham*, eds. Moshe Bar-Asher, Noah Hakham, and Yosef 'Ofer (Tevnot: 2007), 87-90. Compare also Ibn Ezra's statement in the introduction to his commentary on Qohelet: "So the Lord, the God of Israel, aroused the spirit of Solomon His beloved to explain desirable matters, and to demonstrate the straight path." And in the commentary to Qoh. 1:1: "And since Solomon's desire was to compose passages that would be internalized [by the reader or listener], he began with the word *dibre* ("the words of")..." These passages appear to present the work as the product of Solomon's own insight, and shaped by his own rhetorical skill, although Ibn Ezra may have believed the general project of compilation to have been divinely inspired.

<sup>83</sup> One clear example is his interpretation of Qoh. 5:1: In his discussion in *Guide* I.59 (Pines, 143), he uses this verse to highlight the problems inherent in ascribing attributes to God, and to assert the superiority of apophatic theological discourse; in his discussion in III.52 (*ibid.*, 629) the same verse is used to emphasize the ethical virtue of refraining from unnecessary verbosity. Cf. also his citation of Qoh. 5:2 in *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Dispositions, 2:4.

<sup>84</sup> See *Guide* I.4 (Pines, 27); I.14 (*ibid.*, 40); I.40 (*ibid.*, 90); I.65 (*ibid.*, 158).

<sup>85</sup> *Guide* III.52 (Pines, 629).

<sup>86</sup> *Guide* III.22 (Pines, 490), citing bTalmud Nedarim 32b on Qoh. 9:14 and 4:13.

<sup>87</sup> *Guide* II.6 (Pines, 263), citing *Qohelet Rabbah* and *Genesis Rabbah*; III.25 (*ibid.*, 505).

<sup>88</sup> *Guide* II.28 (Pines, 334-336).

<sup>89</sup> *Guide* II.28 (Pines, 336).

limits of knowledge,<sup>91</sup> the proper order of the acquisition of knowledge,<sup>92</sup> and the ideal objects of contemplation.<sup>93</sup> Maimonides also cites numerous verses from Qohelet in the *Mishneh torah*, with his application of some verses based on earlier interpretations.<sup>94</sup> In the *Mishneh torah*, he cites Qohelet both in the context of the theoretical sciences (i.e., physics and metaphysics),<sup>95</sup> and in a moralizing fashion, predominantly in the Laws of Dispositions and the Laws of Repentance.<sup>96</sup>

We may thus point to three elements in Maimonides' discussions of Qohelet that are relevant for our understanding of Tanḥum's exegesis: (1) His identification of Qohelet with wisdom (*hokhmah*) rather than prophecy; (2) interpretations of specific verses from Qohelet in the *Guide* that may have informed Tanḥum's understanding of those verses;<sup>97</sup> (3) the scope of Maimonides' interpretations as yet another basis for Tanḥum's understanding of Qohelet as treating "many principles of theoretical wisdom," as well as elements of ethics.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Guide* III.12 (Pines, 445).

<sup>91</sup> *Guide* I.5 (Pines, 30), I.32 (*ibid.*, 69), I.34 (*ibid.*, 73).

<sup>92</sup> *Guide* I.34 (Pines, 75). For the relevance of Maimonides' discussions of this topic for Tanḥum's classification of the sciences, see below, pp.205-209.

<sup>93</sup> See *Guide* I.39 (Pines, 89), where in the context of a lexical discussion concerning the Hebrew term *leb* (heart) Maimonides interprets Qoh. 10:2 as prescribing intellectual contemplation of "perfect things" (*al-umūr al-kāmila*). For the Arabic, see Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 60, lines 12-13.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. his citation of Qoh. 9:8 in Laws of Repentance 7:2, and cf. bTalmud, Tractate Shabbat 153a; Tractate Semahot 2:1; Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, version B, # 29, 62; *Qohelet Rabbah* 9:8. See also his citation of Qoh. 10:3 in Laws of Dispositions 5:8, may reflect Ibn Ezra's interpretation of the verse. For the possibility but lack of certainty regarding Maimonides' awareness of Ibn Ezra, see Isadore (Yitzḥaq) Twersky, "Did R. Abraham Ibn Ezra Influence Maimonides?" in *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra: Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth-Century Jewish Polymath*, eds. Isadore Twersky and Jay M. Harris (Harvard University Press: 1993), 21-48 [Hebrew section].

<sup>95</sup> See Laws of the Foundations of the Torah 2:5, in which he cites Qoh. 5:7 to illustrate the hierarchy of separate intellects; and *ibid.* 4:9, where he cites Qoh. 12:7 to illustrate the composite quality of the human body, as opposed to the intellect.

<sup>96</sup> See Laws of Dispositions 2:4, 2:5, 3:1 (in an anti-asceticizing vein), 5:8; Laws of Repentance 2:1, 3:2, 5:4, 7:2, 7:7, 9:1. See also Laws of Torah Study 3:12, 7:13.

<sup>97</sup> For example, note Maimonides' impact on Tanḥum's commentary to Qoh 3:15, discussed below, pp.251-253.

<sup>98</sup> For this understanding, see below p.180, p.431.

Beyond his interpretations of specific verses in Qohelet, Maimonides' philosophical esotericism would shape subsequent Jewish exegesis of Qohelet, both in the Islamic world and in the growing communities of Western Christendom.

### **Post-Maimonidean exegesis of Qohelet in Western Christendom prior to Tanḥum**

#### *Samuel Ibn Tibbon*

The commentary on Qohelet by Samuel Ibn Tibbon (c. 1165-1232) is particularly notable within the post-Maimonidean tradition in Western Christendom.<sup>99</sup> Ibn Tibbon, who translated the *Guide of the Perplexed* into Hebrew and corresponded with Maimonides, self-consciously and explicitly modeled his exegesis on Maimonidean hermeneutics.<sup>100</sup> He expressed his disappointment in earlier exegetes whose works do not reflect Maimonides' methodology, and consciously pushes against the asceticizing reading of Qohelet that characterized much of interpretive tradition that preceded him (represented in particular by Ibn Ghiyāth).<sup>101</sup> Whereas Ibn Ghiyāth reframes the asceticizing interpretation of Qohelet in scholastic terms, Ibn Tibbon now fully embraces a philosophical reading of the work.<sup>102</sup> In his view, Qohelet is fundamentally intended as an argument for belief in the immortality of the soul.<sup>103</sup> However, along the way, the

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<sup>99</sup> For a translation and study of his commentary to Qohelet, see Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*. For a critical edition of the Hebrew text, see James T. Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (PhD dissertation, Harvard University: 2002). (My references are to the published study and translation.)

<sup>100</sup> Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*.

<sup>101</sup> For Ibn Tibbon's fraught relationship with the Andalusian *peshat* tradition, and his critique of Ibn Ghiyāth's approach to Qohelet, see Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 34-35, 68-73. For his critique of Ibn Ezra's astrological interpretation of verses from Qohelet, see *ibid.*, 73-75.

<sup>102</sup> Note that both Ibn Tibbon and Tanḥum refer to the Ibn Ghiyāth's title for Qohelet, *Kitāb al-zuhd*. (See Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 70-73; below, p.185.) Whereas the former critiques and rejects this association, Tanḥum merely explains in what sense this title reflects the contents of Qohelet. Tanḥum's treatment is hardly polemical, and it is thus difficult to believe that he was aware of Ibn Tibbon's critique.

<sup>103</sup> Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 35-36.

author finds opportunity to explore other themes, such as the limitations of human knowledge, theodicy, ethics, and the dangers of philosophy for the unprepared.<sup>104</sup>

Although Tanḥum does not seem to have been familiar with Ibn Tibbon's commentary on Qohelet, there are a number of significant parallels between the two works. In both commentaries, the introduction is partly modeled on the rabbinic *petiḥta*.<sup>105</sup> Both authors are concerned with the coherence and progression of the Solomonic corpus. Where Ibn Tibbon understands each of the three Solomonic works as a treatment of a specific philosophical theme,<sup>106</sup> Tanḥum argues that they follow the proper order of the philosophical sciences.<sup>107</sup> Both exegetes adopted the Maimonidean-Aristotelian ethical doctrine of the golden mean.<sup>108</sup> However, while Ibn Tibbon reads his ethics both out of Maimonides and directly out of Aristotelian sources, Tanḥum's approach is much more deeply shaped by Ibn Sīnā.<sup>109</sup> Beyond their general dependence upon Maimonides, which is even more pronounced in Ibn Tibbon than in Tanḥum, these two exegetes exhibit contrasting tendencies. Ibn Tibbon distances himself from pre-Maimonidean exegetes, and reflects the post-Averroesian return to Aristotle's works,<sup>110</sup> while

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<sup>104</sup> Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 36-40.

<sup>105</sup> See Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 29-30; and below, p.192. This feature is most likely inspired in both works by Ibn Ezra, for which see p. 192 below. Note that all three exegetes select their remote verse from Proverbs.

<sup>106</sup> For the Song of Songs as a poetic and allegorical account of conjunction with the Active Intellect, Qohelet as a discussion of the immortality of the soul, and Proverbs as a discourse on form and matter, and for Ibn Tibbon's general discussion of the proper order of the Solomonic corpus, see Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 199-207.

<sup>107</sup> See below, pp.182-184.

<sup>108</sup> Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 40-41.

<sup>109</sup> See Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 40-41; and below, 230-250.

<sup>110</sup> For Ibn Tibbon's familiarity with and dependence on Ibn Rushd, see Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 6, 9, 44, 51-52, 76, 78, 92-108. For the primacy of Aristotle in Ibn Rushd's thought, see Richard C. Taylor, "Averroes: religious dialectic and Aristotelian philosophical thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge University Press: 2005), particularly 189-196; Craig Martin, *Subverting Aristotle: Religion, History, and Philosophy in Early Modern Science* (Johns Hopkins University Press: 2014), 13.

Tanḥum expresses and exhibits deep affinities with the Andalusian *peshat* tradition, and aligns himself more closely with Ibn Sīna in philosophical matters.<sup>111</sup>

### *Isaac Ibn Laṭīf*

Isaac Ibn Laṭīf (d. late thirteenth century) occupies a peculiar place in the history of Jewish thought. His synthesis of Neoplatonic philosophy and Spanish Kabbalah often led later Jewish writers to relate to him as an outsider, whether they belonged to the former or latter school of thought.<sup>112</sup> In some ways, Ibn Laṭīf appears to be consciously resisting the post-Averroesian return to a purer Aristotelianism.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, Sara O. Heller Wilensky identified Ibn Laṭīf as a pioneer of the anti-Aristotelian trend that would reach its apogee in the works of Ḥasdai Crescas (d. 1410/1411).<sup>114</sup>

In addition to his major work *Sha‘ar ha-shamayim* (The Gate of Heaven), Ibn Laṭīf penned a commentary to Qohelet.<sup>115</sup> In the introduction to his commentary, he states that the work contains references to physics, metaphysics, ethics, and political science, all based upon sound logical reasoning.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, he employs distinctly dualistic terminology, referring to the

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<sup>111</sup> For Tanḥum’s relationship with the Andalusian *peshat* tradition, see chapter 2 above, particularly p.43-44. For his dependence on Ibn Sīnā, see above, p.133, p.153 fn.319; and below, pp.324-342, p.347-348 and fn.306.

<sup>112</sup> See Sara O. Heller Wilensky, “Isaac Ibn Laṭīf – Philosopher or Kabbalist?” in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Harvard University Press: 1967), 185-223; Sara O. Heller Wilensky, “The “First Created Being” in Early Kabbalah: Philosophical and Isma‘ilian Sources,” in *Binah: Jewish Intellectual History in the Middle Ages* 3, ed. Joseph Dan (Praeger: 1994), 65-77 [BOTH WHOLE]. For Ibn Laṭīf’s general identification with the Jewish Neoplatonists, and with Ibn Gabirol in particular, see Wilensky, “Isaac Ibn Laṭīf – Philosopher or Kabbalist?” 200-210. For his relationship with Spanish Kabbalah, see *ibid.*, 210-221.

<sup>113</sup> For his Platonic sympathies, despite knowing Plato only indirectly, and his criticism of the tendency to accept Aristotle’s views as authoritative, see Wilensky, “Isaac Ibn Laṭīf – Philosopher or Kabbalist?” 188-195.

<sup>114</sup> Wilensky, “Isaac Ibn Laṭīf – Philosopher or Kabbalist?” 192. However, it should be noted that Ibn Laṭīf did often align himself with al-Fārābī. See *ibid.*, 195-200. For the anti-Aristotelian trend and Ḥasdai Crescas, see James T. Robinson, “Hasdai Crescas and anti-Aristotelianism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, eds. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge University Press: 2003), 391-413.

<sup>115</sup> Published as *Perush megillat qohelet* (Constantinople: ca. 1585). For a partial list of Ibn Laṭīf’s works, see Wilensky, “Isaac Ibn Laṭīf – Philosopher or Kabbalist?” 186 and fn. 11.

<sup>116</sup> Ibn Laṭīf states that the work contains elements of “the natural sciences and some metaphysics (*ha-ḥokhmot ha-tib‘iyyot u-miqtzat ha-elohiyyot*), based upon demonstrative analogy (*benuyim ‘al yesod ha-heqqeshim ha-moftiyyim*), weighed upon the scales of the science of logic (*ha-shequlim be-mozne ḥokhmot ha-higgayon*),

inner and outer meaning of the text.<sup>117</sup> Ibn Laṭīf prefaces his commentary with twelve principles that he believes to encapsulate the central messages of Qohelet.<sup>118</sup> For our purposes, it is perhaps most interesting to note that not only does he find broad references to the philosophical sciences in Qohelet, but continues to echo the asceticizing tradition in quite prominently (presumably following Ibn Ghiyāth).<sup>119</sup> Interestingly, Ibn Laṭīf expresses satisfaction that earlier exegetes have provided an exhaustive treatment of the linguistic aspects of the text.<sup>120</sup> In this sense, he accepts the authority of the *peshat* tradition without engaging directly in their project, preferring to focus more squarely on the philosophical aspects of the work.

### Overarching Themes in Tanḥum’s Commentary to Qohelet

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accompanied and contained by the principles of the Torah and faith. [...] Further, included in it are matters that provide instruction concerning the rectification of human dispositions (*‘inyanim morim ‘al tiqqune ha-middot ha-enoshiyyot*), and the arrangement of the association of some people with others (*ve-‘al sidre hanhagat bene adam qetzatam ‘im qetzatam*)...”

<sup>117</sup> He states that he tasted but “a miniscule amount [...] of the brief outer meanings of his words (*gotzer hitzzone debarav*), let alone their inner meanings (*kol she-ken penimiyyotehen*).” In *Sha ‘ar ha-shamayim*, Ibn Laṭīf mentions four modes of interpretation: Lexical analysis (*diqduq ha-millot*), *peshat* (explained by Wilensky as “aggadic” for reasons unstated), allegorical (*mashal*), and *derash* (glossed by Wilensky as “mystical”). See Wilensky, “Isaac Ibn Laṭīf – Philosopher or Kabbalist?” 219. For *diqduq ha-millot*, cf. p.295 and fn.75 below. Although Wilensky draws a connection between these modes of exegesis and the famous fourfold method, it is not clear to me that the parallel is a strong one. On the fourfold method, see Frank Talmage, “Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism,” in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green (Crossroad: 1989), 313-355; Moshe Idel, “PaRDeS: Some Reflections on Kabbalistic Hermeneutics,” in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, eds. John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (State University of New York Press: 1995), 245-264.

<sup>118</sup> The twelve principles are: (1) The existence of God; (2) creation ex nihilo; (3) the fundamental goodness of the creation; (4) that a grasp of true existence is beyond human comprehension; (5) that everything composed of four elements passes (including the animal soul – which is how he reconciles contradictory statements in Qohelet); (6) that most of what befalls humans is the fruit of our own doing; (7) that providence pertains to each person “according to his level”; (8) that the *teloi* of human beings are wisdom, fear of God, and observance of the commandments; (9) the limitations of human knowledge of God and the angelic realm; (10) that the soul attains perfection through study, good works, training, and worship (*ha-limmud ve-ha-ma ‘asim ve-ha-hakhanot ve-ha-‘abodot*), but cannot attain further perfection after separation from the body; (11) subsistence of the intellectual soul (*ha-nefesh ha-hakhamah*) after death; and (12) reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked.

<sup>119</sup> In his elaboration of his fifth principle in the introduction, Ibn Laṭīf states that “this sage began to express disdain and derision for the matters of this world, meaning the world of generation and corruption (*hithil zeh he-hakham legannot u-lebazzot ‘inyene zeh ha-‘olam rotzeh lomar ‘inyene ‘olam ha-havayah ve-ha-hefsed*).” He goes on to advocate devotion to the acquisition of wisdom and performance of good works.

<sup>120</sup> See his introduction, immediately before beginning the commentary proper, where he states that he will “now begin to explain the details derived from these general [principles] in a commentary upon each and every verse, without devoting attention to lexical analysis and [etymological] roots (*mi-beli she-asim leb le-diqduq ha-millot u-le-shorsham*), for greater experts have already preceded me concerning them (*she-kebar qademuni bahem beqi ‘im mimmenni*).”

Like Ibn Ghiyāth and Ibn Ezra, and echoing a tendency in Maimonides, Tanḥum interprets Qohelet primarily through a philosophical prism.<sup>121</sup> He understands the participle *qohelet* to refer to the collection and synthesis of the philosophical sciences, translating it as “gatherer/synthesizer of the sciences” (*jāmi‘ al-ḥikam*) and stating that it is equivalent to the Greek term “philosopher” (*faylasūf*).<sup>122</sup> The inclusion of the the philosophical sciences in

<sup>121</sup> Indeed, the major commentaries on Qohelet that Tanḥum consulted while composing his own were those of Ibn Ghiyāth and Ibn Ezra. See Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 8; Simon Eppenstein, *Aus dem Kohelet Kommentar des Tanḥum Jeruschalmi (Cap.I-VI): Mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen* (Julius Benzian: 1888), 6-8. For a full edition of Tanḥum’s commentary to Qohelet, with an introductory study and Hebrew translation, see Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*.

<sup>122</sup> My translation of *ḥikam* is based on Tanḥum’s use of the term in referring to the philosophical sciences (for which see below, p.196), and his explicit identification of the term with the Greek loanword *faylasūf*. It seems to me that this is primary sense of the term in Tanḥum’s usage in Qohelet. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “The meaning and concept of philosophy in Islam,” in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (Routledge:1996), 21. Cf. also Ibn Sīnā’s division of philosophy into *ḥikma naẓariyya* and *ḥikma ‘amaliyya* subdivide into two sets of three ‘*ulūm*, see “Al-risāla al-khāmisa: fi aqsām al-‘ulūm al-‘aqliyya,” in *Tis‘ rasā’il*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Dār al-‘arab li-l-bustānī: 1328 AH), 105. For the use of this term to refer to philosophy in Ibn Sīnā, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna’s Philosophical Works*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Brill: 2014), 74 fn. 16, 75 fn. 18, 118, 264 fn. 29. For other uses of the term, see Dimitri Gutas, “Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 101:1 (1981), 49-86. Cf. also Moses Qimḥi’s use of the term *ḥokhmah/ḥokhmot*, discussed below, p.194.

Tanḥum’s interpretation of the lexeme *qohelet* reflects a range of sources. Ibn Ezra (commentary to Qoh. 1:1) states that Solomon “was called thus because of the wisdom that was gathered within him (‘*al leshon ha-ḥokhmah she-niqhalah bo*.” This interpretation seems to be based upon Rashi, who states that Solomon is called *qohelet* “because he gathered much wisdom (‘*al shem she-qihel ḥokhmot harbeh*.” For Ibn Ezra’s relationship with Rashi, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 232-233; Aharon Mondschein, ““Only One in a Thousand of his Comments may be Called *Peshat*”: Toward Ibn Ezra’s View of Rashi’s Commentary to the Torah,” in *Studies in Bible and Exegesis*, vol. 5 (Bar-Ilan University Press: 2000), 221-248. In his introduction, Ibn Ghiyāth says that Solomon is called *qohelet* because he gathered that which was scattered (Qafīḥ, *Hamesh megillot*, 165-166), and mentions that the feminine participle of “gathering” (*al-ijmā‘*) is employed in order to allude to wisdom and philosophy (*al-ḥikma wa’l-falsafa*; *ibid.*, 167).

It seems to me that Tanḥum’s use of the terminology of *j-m-‘* thus appears to reflect Ibn Ezra’s interpretation (apparently informed by Rashi), borrowing the terminology of Ibn Ghiyāth, and following the latter in his explicit identification of the name with philosophy.

These interpretations exist in some tension with midrashic tradition. *Qohelet Rabbah* 1:1 suggests that these teachings were presented at the *haqhel* gathering (for which, see Deuteronomy 31:10-13; the rabbinic term for the gathering is derived from the imperative in v.12), based in part on comparison with the language of 1 Kings 8:1 (cf. also v.2); this is referred to by Rashi (on Qoh. 1:1).

Tanḥum’s understanding of the term *faylasūf* may be contrasted with that of Nathan b. Jehiel’s *Arukh*, which suggests that it means “astronomer/astrologer” (*ḥozeh ba-kokhavim*; lit. star-gazer); see Kohut, *Arukh*, vol. 6, 355. See however the Tosafot to bShabbat 116a, where the author-editor states that “our master {presumably R. Isaac of Dampierre - RD} heard [...] that in Greek the term *pilosofos* means ‘lover of wisdom’ (*dod ha-ḥokhmah*.” Rashi’s interpretations *ad loc.* (i.e., that the term refers to a *min*/heretic, presumably a Christian) and in his commentary to bAbodah Zarah 54b (i.e., “sages of the nations”) appear to be based on local context in the talmudic passages.

Qohelet is thus intimated in its very name.<sup>123</sup> Like Ibn Ezra, the elements of theoretical philosophy that he identifies in Qohelet are viewed as a precursor to true fear of God; like Ibn Ghiyāth, he sees *zuhd* as a necessary stage on this path. In these ways, Tanḥum once again aligns himself primarily with the Iberian exegetical tradition.<sup>124</sup>

However, Tanḥum's understanding of the Qohelet's place within the Solomonic corpus differs considerably from that of his predecessors. According to Tanḥum, the three Solomonic works represent a tripartite program of cultivation that is intended to guide the individual towards knowledge of the Divine and eternal felicity. Concerning the relationship between Proverbs and Qohelet, and their place in the ethical and intellectual cultivation of the individual, Tanḥum writes as follows:

In accordance with this, in *Proverbs* Solomon placed practical – that is, ethical (*al-khuqliyya*) – wisdom, and the refinement of the soul, and imparting to it praiseworthy characteristics and correct manners, and well-guided dispositions, and following the paths of temperance, at the beginning.

Then, in this *book* [i.e., Qohelet], he explained many principles of theoretical wisdom. Then, at the end of the book, he reviewed matters of abstinence (*al-zuhd*), and that of it which is incumbent upon a perfect person, by informing him of the lot from which there is no escape for anybody – that being death. Then he concluded the whole [work] with the fear of God, as if to say that the purpose of all the aforementioned ethics and wisdom is the fear of God. Therefore did he

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<sup>123</sup> For Tanḥum's further association of the collection and synthesis of wisdom with a traditional Solomonic appellation – Agur (cf. Prov. 30:1) – see below, Appendix B, p.431.

<sup>124</sup> Another notable heir of the Iberian tradition, and perhaps a younger contemporary of Tanḥum, is Jacob Algiani (fl. late 13<sup>th</sup>-early 14<sup>th</sup> century in Spain or Provence), who composed a *peshat*-oriented commentary to Qohelet. He adopts a philological-literary methodology, and ultimately a Saadian perspective on Qohelet, colored by Maimonidean-Aristotelian ethics: It encourages adherence to the middle-path, moderation between extremes (of pleasure, asceticism, devotion to the acquisition of wisdom, etc.). See Marc Hirshman, "Peshat and Derash Side-by-Side: A Newly Discovered Manuscript of "Midrash Qohelet" and of R. Jacob Algiani's Commentary on Qohelet," in *Tarbiz* 67:3 (1998), 397-406.

say, *The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Fear God and observe his commandments, for this is the whole of mankind.* (Qoh. 12:13) That is, “the purpose of everything that you hear or understand of the various [kinds of] wisdom is the fear of God and obedience of his commandments, for this is the purpose of the human species and the major part of its felicity.” That is [the meaning] of the statement, *for this is the whole of mankind.* Therefore, the prophet rebuked one who lays claim to wisdom but is empty of knowledge and fear of God, and he said, *See, they reject the word of the Lord, so their wisdom amounts to nothing.* (Jer. 8:9)

Therefore, he started by announcing that the matters of this corporeal world collectively – property, furnishings, wealth, enjoyment, appetites, power, and attaining [one] – are objectives that have no inherent value<sup>125</sup> to them. Rather, the entirety of that which is in the world of generation and corruption is ephemeral, transient, insubstantial like dust, for the entirety [of it] is mere fluctuation. Thus does he say, *Futility of futilities*<sup>126</sup> *said etc.* That is, “Everything that I shall profess to have strived for, attained, been granted that which I have hoped for, and of which I have come to the far limit – I find that none of it has a purpose, nor does it last, but it is insubstantial [and] transient. All of it is in flux (*muḥāl*),<sup>127</sup> with no true [existence].”<sup>128</sup>

Tanḥum’s understanding of the coherent quality of the Solomonic corpus is most clearly expressed in his commentary to Qohelet 12:9:

<sup>125</sup> Lit. “intended purpose (*ghāya maqṣūda*)”.

<sup>126</sup> I have not attempted to translate the verse in strict accordance with the medieval Arabic translators, as Tanḥum leaves some ambiguity in his own reading of the verse, clearly drawing on two divergent traditions: In the previous sentence, he declares the sublunar world and its pleasures to be “insubstantial like dust (*ma ‘dūm ka ‘l-habā’*)”, drawing on a Judeo-Arabic tradition of rendering Hebrew *hebel* (pausal *habel*) as “dust (*habā’*)”, both in Qoh. 1:1 and elsewhere. For Salmon b. Yeroḥam’s use of this terminology in his translation of Qoh. 1:1, see Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 184. For a review of this tradition in translation, see *ibid.*, fn.35. In his commentary to Qoh. 1:2, Tanḥum offers no full and literal translation of the verse, but he does hint at Ibn Ghiyāth’s translation – *mustaḥīl nihāyat al-istiḥāla* – by referring to Solomon’s assertion in the verse that everything is in flux (*muḥāl*). For Ibn Ghiyāth’s translation, see Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 172. See also his commentary to 1:2, in *ibid.*, 173.

<sup>127</sup> For this as an allusion to Ibn Ghiyāth’s translation of Qoh. 1:2, see previous note.

<sup>128</sup> MS Pocke 320, 75a-75b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 26.

Now concerning these three books, they contain three types of subject matter. The first is *Proverbs*, which encourages instruction in good dispositions, and virtuous and balanced conduct in each and every disposition,<sup>129</sup> and provokes the love wisdom and an effortful inclination towards it, to the exclusion of all else. [It encourages one] to distance [oneself] from gluttony and the love of carnal pleasure and animalistic appetites, and from being misled by the deceptions of matter. [...]

The second is *Qohelet*, which delves into the natural sciences their subjects (*al-‘ulūm al-ṭabī‘iyya wa-mabāḥithihā*), and the pursuit of the secrets of beings and their purposes (*wa-ṭalab asrār al-kā’ināt wa-ghāyātihā*)... So that a person may understand the secrets of the beginnings and ends, and the causes and effects, and similar things. Then, it informs one of one’s own inescapable lot, so that one may turn away (*li-yazhada*) from this transient world and pine for the other [world], in which there is subsistence and everlasting existence, as has been explained.

The third is *The Song of Songs*, in which he described the true destination and the ultimate purpose (*al-wuṣūl al-ḥaqīqī wa-’l-ghāya al-quṣwā*), and that union with the intellect (*al-ittiḥād bi-’l-‘aql*) which the soul attains, and the its illumination by means of [the intellect’s] dazzling glow, and the immersion in His love (exalted is He) which follows from this.<sup>130</sup>

Against rabbinic tradition, Tanḥum thus proposes the following order within the Solomonic corpus: Proverbs, Qohelet, and the Song of Songs.<sup>131</sup> According to Tanḥum, the traditional

<sup>129</sup> The Arabic *wa-’l-sayr fī al-sīra al-fādila al-mutawassiṭa min kull khulq wa-khulq* strongly evokes the Peripatetic ethical ideal of the Golden Mean, discussed below, pp.230-250.

<sup>130</sup> MS Pococke 320, 189b-190a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 110-111.

<sup>131</sup> For the post-talmudic rabbinic understanding that Solomon composed Song in his youth, Proverbs in his middle years, and Qohelet in old age, see Revuven Kiperwasser, “Ecclesiastes, Book of: III.A. Rabbinic Judaism: Interpretation,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (De Gruyter: 2013), vol. 7, 279. In the prologue to *Song Rabbah (Midrash Hazita)*, three opinions are cited: According to a tradition attributed to Ḥiyya Rabbah, Solomon first composed Proverbs, then Song, and finally Qohelet; according to another tradition attributed to the same figure, he composed all three simultaneously; and according to an opinion attributed to Rabbi Jonathan and based on the phases of a person’s life (as noted above), he composed Song, Proverbs, and finally Qohelet. A final opinion, attributed to Rabbi Yannai the father-in-law of Rabbi Ammi, says that it is universally accepted that Qohelet was written last. Indeed, with the exception of the position that they were composed simultaneously (apparently meaning at the same stage of King Solomon’s life), these various opinions place Qohelet at the end of

canonical order may be justified by the desire to separate Lamentations from the Song of Songs.<sup>132</sup> He identifies Proverbs with ethics, Qohelet with the theoretical sciences in general and physics in particular, and the Song of Songs with the theme of conjunction with erotic love for the Divine and conjunction with the Active Intellect. Interestingly, this division corresponds closely with Origen's classification of the Solomonic corpus into moral (Proverbs), natural (Qohelet), and enoptic or inspective philosophy (Song of Songs).<sup>133</sup> This striking parallel is all

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the corpus. However, the three works are routinely referred to in the order of Proverbs, Qohelet, and Song: See the concluding phrase of 1:6, 1:7, 1:8, and 1:9 (and contrast this with the order in 1:5). The traditional order of the Solomonic corpus in masoretic codices is Proverbs, Song, Qohelet—a problem with which Tanḥum dealt in the introduction to his commentary to Song: “Thus, he states here that this *book* is an epitome of his other works, and the quintessence of his total wisdom, and the purpose of all the wisdom that he advanced. And this indicates that his compilation of wisdom in this *book* was at the end of his life. And I shall explain to you at the end of *Qohelet* why he placed it before Qohelet in Scripture, when it is fitting that it should be after it.” (MS Evr. Arab. I 4249 [reel F 58035 in the Hebrew University microfilm collection]; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 6.)

Samuel Ibn Tibbon allowed for variant opinions concerning the order of the composition of Proverbs and Qohelet, but insisted that Song was the final installment in the trilogy (see Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 199-207).

Yefet b. Eli also discusses the Solomonic corpus in this order, although if there is any suggestion that there is a progression in status, sophistication, or sanctity as one makes one's way through the works, it is never stated explicitly. See his commentary to Qohelet, 1:1, in which he describes the “religious science” taught by Solomon: “*Proverbs* deals with the deduction of the *Lord's Commandments* (*tafrī' mitzfoṭ* [sic] *ywy*), encouraging people to perform them, avoiding transgression, and mentioning [or: recalling] God's treatment of the righteous and the wicked, guidance of the people to that which is advantageous and benefits them in this realm and the afterlife, and various points of personal refinement (*wa-ḏurūb min al-ādāb*). *Qohelet* is concerned with encouraging people to abstain (*fī tazhīd al-nās*) from excess in accumulating riches and in preoccupation with eating and drinking. It also finds fault with one who becomes completely ascetic (*wa-dhamma ayḏan li-man yazhudu bi-'l-kulliyya*), refusing to enjoy the delights that God, may he be exalted, created for the benefit of human beings. It also encourages people to obey [God], and to show [other] human beings guidance in the physical realm (*fī dār al-dunyā*). It also mentions the day of death and warns against the use of foreign books (*bi-kutub al-barrānī*). This book [i.e., *The Song of Songs*] concerns the nation of Israel, its repentance and intense longing for the appointed times.” (Translated with reference to Joseph Alobaidi's English translation, for which see Alobaidi, *The Commentary of Yefet ben Eli*, 147-148; for Arabic, see *ibid.*, 25-26.) For Karaite opposition to the study of foreign books (*kutub barrānī*), see Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, in particular 131-134; Ben-Shammai, “Jewish Thought in Iraq,” 28-29.

<sup>132</sup> See his commentary to Qoh. 12:9, cited below, in Appendix C, p.435, fn.5. In this context, Tanḥum also cites Ibn Sīnā's view that metaphysics (“that which is after physics [*mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a*]”) should properly be called “that which precedes physics (*mā qabl al-ṭabī'a*)”, demonstrating that the lofty may also be said to precede the base (causally in the case of metaphysics). However, Tanḥum's own emphasis on the curricular progression of the Solomonic corpus renders this explanation unsatisfying, and he thus concludes his discussion of this point with the local argument from canonical context. For a fuller elaboration of Tanḥum's reliance on Ibn Sīnā in this context, see below, *ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> See Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 9. For a translation of the passage in Origen see, *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation, No. 26 – Origen: The Song of Songs Commentary and Homilies*, trans. R. P. Lawson (Newman Press: 1956), 39-41. See also J. N. B. Carleton Paget, “Christian Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Alexandrian Tradition,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament* ed. Magne

the more peculiar considering its absence from other extant Jewish exegesis. One cannot discount the possibility that Tanḥum may have had some exposure to Christian exegesis, whether via written sources or orally.

Tanḥum's emphasis that Solomon "concluded the whole [work] with the fear of God, as if to say that the purpose of all the aforementioned ethics and wisdom is the fear of God," highlights the textual frame of Qohelet (primarily Qoh. 12:13); reflects the explicit link that Ibn Ezra draws between philosophical wisdom and the fear of God; and echoes Maimonides' discussion of the contemplation of nature and the cosmos as a means of cultivating the fear and love of God, which Tanḥum may easily link to Qohelet once he has identified the work as a repository of theoretical philosophy.<sup>134</sup> In addition, he identifies *zuhd* as a central theme in Qohelet: It provides a meditation upon death, in order "that one may turn away (*li-yazhada*) from this transient world." Although he implies that the theme of *zuhd* is primarily the concern of the concluding passages of the work, in actual fact he finds a number of opportunities to elaborate upon this subject throughout his commentary.<sup>135</sup> In one passage, Tanḥum refers explicitly to the general association of Qohelet with *zuhd*:

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Sæbø, vol. 1, part 1 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 1996), 528; Karlfried Froehlich, "Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament in the High Middle Ages," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 2000), vol. 1, part 2, 530; Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (1981), 57-59. For an edition of the extant Greek fragments of Origen's commentary to Song, see *Commentario al Cantico dei Cantici*, ed. Maria Antonietta Barbàra (Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna: 2005).

<sup>134</sup> See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:1-2. Indeed, it is in the context of his commentary to Qohelet that he mentions his work *Kitāb al-fikr fī al-makhlūqāt wa- 'tibār ḥikmat al-ṣāni ' fī al-mawjūdāt* (The Book of Reflection upon the Created Beings and Contemplation of the Wisdom of the Artisan in Existent Beings). For this work and its background, see above, pp.31-34.

<sup>135</sup> In addition to the passages cited here, see MS Poccocke 320, 95b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 130; MS Poccocke 320, 123a/Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 62. For a passage in which Tanḥum polemicizes against extreme asceticism, see MS Poccocke 320, 138a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 72. In that passage, Tanḥum echoes Maimonides' critique of extreme asceticism, for which see the fourth chapter of *Eight Chapters*, in Weiss and Butterworth, *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, 69-70; *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Character Traits, 3:1.

*A season to give birth and a season to die.* (Qoh. 3:2) The beginning and end of a human.<sup>136</sup> First he exhorts one not to prolong one’s expectations and forget death, and be fooled by one’s health and fortune, and disregard the matter of one’s afterlife. Rather, just as he attained through the decomposition of others, it shall soon be reversed and he too shall decompose and something else will come into being. So if he does not establish a [mode of] existence for his soul through which it might endure after its departure [from the body] (*fa-matā lam yaj‘al li-nafsihi wujūd tathbutu bihi ba’d al-mufāraqa*), it will result in total annihilation and everlasting death. Therefore, this book is called “The Book of Asceticism” (*kitāb al-zuhd*). And in similar vein, [Solomon] also concluded the book with a discussion of the fate from which there is no escape for the entire species, and a discussion of the particular stages of the demise of a human being.<sup>137</sup>

Here, Tanḥum refers explicitly to Ibn Ghiyāth’s title for Qohelet, and proposes a broader identification of Qohelet with the theme of *zuhd*; however, there is also a clearly Peripatetic philosophical program that informs Tanḥum’s formulation: The soul will cease to exist “if he does not establish a [mode of] existence [...] through which it might endure after its departure [from the body]...” That mode of existence – the actualization of the human intellect – is attained through a program of philosophical training and cultivation, as we shall see below. Tanḥum thus follows Ibn Ghiyāth in emphasizing the value of scholastic asceticism (as opposed to the Karaite model of simple piety). Despite occasional treatments of the theme of *zuhd*, Tanḥum generally maintains his exegetical focus on the philosophical sciences, also allowing ethical discourse into the discussion when it is closely motivated by the text.<sup>138</sup>

It is important to note that Tanḥum’s philosophical exegesis of Qohelet is generally not allegorical. Rather, Qohelet is a summary account of a range of basic topics in philosophy, which

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Ibn Ezra’s commentary *ad loc.*

<sup>137</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 97a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 44. Tanḥum’s reference to the description of the demise of a human being is to Qoh. 12:1-7.

<sup>138</sup> See discussion below, in this chapter.

also locates major elements of the philosophical curriculum within the overall program of individual perfection. However, unlike Salmon b. Yeroḥam , Tanḥum never explicitly rejects the possibility of allegoresis in Qohelet. For example, in his commentary to Qohelet 4:12, he writes as follows:

R. Joseph Ibn ‘Aqnīn interpreted (*ta’awwala*) [the verse] *Two are better than one* (Qoh. 4:9) as referring to the human soul, by which I mean the potential capability<sup>139</sup> to attain the intellectual form. And this is not useful alone, or beneficial on its own. As it is said, *A soul*<sup>140</sup> *without knowledge is surely no good.* (Prov. 19:2) But if it reaches the next level, that being the material intellect (*al-naḥs al-hayūlānī*) by means of which one apprehends the principles of things (*mabādi’ al-umūr*) and by means of which one may come to know some truths (*ba’d al-ḥaqā’iq*). For the former stage is that of the organ of sight (*ālat al-baṣar*), whereas the second is that of the visual pneuma (*al-rūḥ al-bāṣir*),<sup>141</sup> and welfare pertaining to [the soul’s] governance [of the body] and the body is accomplished by means of both (*wa-takmulu bi-’l-ithnayn al-maṣāliḥ al-tadbīriyya wa-’l-jismāniyya*). If one attains the third level, which is the illumination of the Active Intellect upon both of them – which is called the acquired intellect (*al-’aql al-mustafād*) – then [true] benefit is accomplished... Its rank is then that of emitted light (*al-nūr al-khārij*), by which I mean the brightness of the sun with which the seeing spirit conjoins (*ittaṣala*), and which brings forth that which was *in potentia* into actuality.[...]

Now this allegorical interpretation (*hādihā al-ta’wīl*) is fine, and agrees with the content insofar as it is absolutely true in and of itself, but it is severed from [its context] among the verses, alien and

<sup>139</sup> Arabic: *quwwat al-isti’dād*. Lit. “the faculty/potential of readiness/susceptibility.”

<sup>140</sup> The biblical *nefesh* has a wide semantic range, and may refer to a person (or any living being – cf. Gen. 1:20-21, 24; Lev. 4:2, 5:17, 5:21). In its biblical usage, it does not refer narrowly to the soul as understood in the Greco-Arabic tradition. However, this is the sense in which Tanḥum and Ibn ‘Aqnīn read the term in this verse. For a study of the term in its biblical context, see Daniel Lys, *Néphesh. Histoire de l’âme dans la révélation d’Israël au sein des religions proche-orientales* (Presses Universitaires de France: 1959); and cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 659-661.

<sup>141</sup> For the Galenic background to this theory of optics, see Olivier Darrigol, *A History of Optics: From Greek Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press: 2012), 8. For a summary of Ibn Sīnā’s optical theory, including his critique of the Stoic and Galenic theory of an extramitted visual pneuma, and his proposal of an alternative model, see McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 102-110.

detached. For the context of the verses points to a connected sense, as you see, and [that sense speaks of] moral matters (*umūr khulqiyya*). It does not jump suddenly from them to matters pertaining to the intellect (*umūr ‘aqliyya*) without any transition (*bi-ghayr tadrīj*), and then abandon them unfinished and return to the previous topic.<sup>142</sup>

Ibn ‘Aqnīn reads the verses from Qohelet through the prism of Peripatetic psychology, according to which the human intellect goes through several stages of development, moving successively from potential to actual intellection. Peripatetic thinkers mapped out the stages of human intellection, from one’s birth with the basic potential to think, through one’s acquisition of a basic repertoire of thoughts, one’s actual engagement in thought, and finally to the most advanced stage, called the acquired intellect (*al-‘aql al-mustafād*).<sup>143</sup> There was no uniform account of this process, and each thinker would frame it in a way that fit their particular understanding of the human intellect and its relationship to the Active Intellect.<sup>144</sup> Al-Fārābī posited three such stages, culminating in the acquired intellect, although for him this apparently does not refer to the direct acquisition of thoughts from the Active Intellect (as it does for Ibn Sīnā).<sup>145</sup> Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s scheme appears to reflect a hybrid formulation, although the terminology is somewhat confusing, with the material intellect (*al-‘aql al-hayūlānī*) apparently standing in place of the intellect *in habitu* (*al-‘aql bi-’l-malaka*; a term never used by al-Fārābī, who prefers

<sup>142</sup> MS Pococke 320, 113a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 56.

<sup>143</sup> Tanḥum seems to interpret Song 3:11 through such a scheme: “Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon, wearing the crown that his mother gave him on his wedding day, on his day of his heart’s rejoicing. (Song 3:11) The soul’s encounter with the intellect (*ijtimā’ al-naḥs bi-’l-‘aql*), and [the soul’s] crowning with [the intellect] (*wa-tatawwujhā bihī*) by means of essential apprehension. And his heart’s rejoicing [refers to] the delight and pleasure that comes from that encounter (*al-ladhdha wa-’l-masarra al-hāšila min dhālik al-ijtimā’*). This is the meaning of the statement of the ancients, may their memory be a blessing (*al-awā’il z[ikhronam] li[-berakhah]*): *The righteous sit, their crowns upon their heads, delighting in the radiance of the Divine Presence.* (Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 17a)” (MS Pococke 320, 43b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 51.) While Maimonides connected the talmudic passage to the afterlife (rejecting an eschatological reading; see *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Repentance, 8:2), Tanḥum reads it in connection with the acquired intellect.

<sup>144</sup> Davidson, *On Intellect*, 12.

<sup>145</sup> See Davidson, *On Intellect*, 49-50, 85.

“actual [passive] intellect”).<sup>146</sup> In any case, the identification of three stages of intellection is necessitated by the verses: *Two are better than one* (Qoh. 4:9); *a threefold cord is not readily broken* (Qoh. 4:12). This simplified scheme thus moves from intellection *in potentia* to intellection *in actu*, in this case understood to mean the possession of a basic repertoire of thoughts and occasional active engagement in thought, and finally comes to its fullest expression in the attainment of the acquired intellect.<sup>147</sup> The popular comparison between intellection and sight, with the Active Intellect standing in place of the sun, is closest to the formulation in al-Fārābī’s *Al-siyāsa al-madaniyya* (The Political Regime).<sup>148</sup>

Tanḥum appears entirely comfortable with the content of Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s interpretation and with the possibility of applying *ta’wīl* to the book of Qohelet; indeed, it is only for these reasons that he cites the interpretation at all. He explicitly rejects it only because he is not convinced that it offers a satisfying account of these verses as they appear in context.<sup>149</sup> Once again, we may see

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<sup>146</sup> This account of the material intellect could be informed by the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De Intellectu*, or alternatively colored by Ibn Rushd – check Davidson, *On Intellect*, 23, 254, 258-314. For al-Fārābī’s terminology, see *ibid.*, 49.

<sup>147</sup> For this scheme as reflected in Maimonides, who states that the soul that survives death is not the same soul that is born with the body, see *Guide* I.70 (Pines, 173-174).

<sup>148</sup> See Najjar, *Al-Farabi’s The Political Regime*, 35-36. It is possible that the origin of this passage’s representation of the material intellect in place of the intellect *in habitu* lies in al-Fārābī’s statement that, once it has attained some intimacy with the Active Intellect, the human intellect “becomes divine after having been material (*wa-yaṣṭru ilāhiyyan ba’d an kāna hayūlāniyyan*).” (*Ibid.*, 36, line 4.) Cf. also Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 200-203. For a discussion of these passages, see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 50-51. Compare also the account contained in the Arabic Plotinian source ascribed to *al-shaykh al-yūnānī*, in Rosenthal, “Al-Ṣayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source,” in *Orientalia* 21 (1952), 480-481. Another of the Arabic Plotinus texts, *Risāla fī al-‘ilm al-ilāhī*, also compares the human soul’s relationship to Intellect to the air that is filled by the radiance of the sun – see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 42. Ultimately, the analogy has its roots in Themistius’ association of Plato’s comparison of the “cause of science and truth” to the sun (*Republic* 6.508) with the Active Intellect – for which see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 14. Cf. also Aristotle’s distinction between the material intellect and another intellect, which brings things about in the same way that light does, in *De Anima* 430a 14-17. See also the similar analogy in the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Intellectu*, discussed in Davidson, *On Intellect*, 23; and Ibn Rushd’s use of this imagery, discussed in *ibid.*, 323.

<sup>149</sup> Indeed, it may be that Tanḥum initially regarded this as a convincing *ta’wīl* of the passage. He alludes it in his commentary to Song, where he writes as follows: “For the position of the intellect vis-à-vis the soul is [comparable to] the position of the sun’s light vis-à-vis the eye. As long as the eye is not comingled with sunlight, one sees only *in potentia*; but when the light of the sun shines upon it, it becomes seeing *in actu*. Similarly, the relationship of the intellect to the soul’s [intellectual] apprehension [may be either] *in potentia* or *in actu*. That this matter will be explained in [the commentary to] *Qohelet* more simply than in the present account.” (MS Pococke 320, 8b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 8.) Given that his inclusion of this interpretation was

how deeply Tanḥum understands the allegorical valence of Scripture to be bound up in its literal sense as determined by context, and accessed through linguistic and philological processes. In addition, we see that for Tanḥum, the allegorical valence itself must maintain its coherence – and the fragmentation that results from Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s reading is further evidence of its lack of viability in the present context.

A further example of Tanḥum’s acceptance of allegoresis as a legitimate mode of exegesis for Qohelet may be found in his discussions of Qohelet 9:14-15. The verses read as follows:

*There was a small city, with few people in it; and to it came a great king, and surrounded it, and built mighty siege works against it. Present in the city was a poor wise man who saved the city with his wisdom, but nobody remembered that poor man.*

Due to this passage’s importance in rabbinic interpretation, and its frequent citation in medieval Jewish literature, Tanḥum had opportunity to discuss this passage in other contexts, such as his commentary to Jonah, and his commentary to the Song of Songs.<sup>150</sup> However, when he interprets the verses in their place in Qohelet, he declines to elaborate further, stating that he explained them at length in his (no longer extant) commentary to Job.<sup>151</sup> Thus, we are disappointingly lacking Tanḥum’s full treatment of this passage. However, there is every indication that he followed rabbinic precedent in understanding the verses as an anthropological allegory, possibly going even further in elaborating upon its psychological allusions.<sup>152</sup> In addition, the association

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decided well in advance, it may be that it was only upon later reflection (or perhaps in the process of composing the commentary to Qohelet) that he began to regard it as less compelling based on context.

<sup>150</sup> For the interpretation of this passage in the Babylonian Talmud, see above, p.160-161. For this passage in Tanḥum’s commentary to Jonah, see Shy, *Perush*, 134-135; see also his second commentary to Song 3:4, MS Pococke 320, 39b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 46.

<sup>151</sup> MS Pococke 320, 161a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 89. These passages are discussed in Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 17.

<sup>152</sup> He offers a similar interpretation of the verse, *Wisdom renders the wise stronger than ten rulers that a city might contain* (Qoh. 7:19), identifying the ten rulers as the five external and five internal senses. See MS Pococke 320, 140a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 73-74; and discussion in *ibid.*, 18. In his

that Tanḥum draws between Qohelet 9:14-15 and the Book of Job clearly reflects Maimonides' discussion of the ethical perfection but intellectual deficiency of Job in *Guide* III.22.<sup>153</sup>

In sum it might be said that, by adopting a philosophical understanding of the content of Qohelet, Tanḥum fits quite comfortably into the Andalusian tradition. Like Ibn Ghiyāth, he reads Qohelet as promoting a mode of moderate scholastic asceticism (*zuhd*). Like Ibn Ezra, he emphasizes the centrality of the fear of God as an outcome of the study of Qohelet. However, in his understanding of the tripartite Solomonic corpus as reflecting the ideal philosophical curriculum, and in his identification of Qohelet with the theoretical sciences, Tanḥum stands alone among Jewish exegetes. His broadly philosophical understanding of Qohelet enabled him to explore a range of topics in his commentary, providing us with a clearer picture of his own rich and eclectic worldview.

### **The introduction: Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's classification of the philosophical sciences**

The classification of the sciences became a popular theme in medieval Islamicate philosophical literature.<sup>154</sup> With roots in the Aristotelian scholarship of late antiquity, these classifications were originally intended as a division of the Aristotelian corpus into its distinct fields of study.<sup>155</sup>

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commentary to Jonah, he follows rabbinic precedent in identifying the king of the parable as the evil inclination (*yetzer ha-ra'*). In this context, he also identifies the city of Nineveh as a figure for the loci of the tripartite human soul – see above, pp/138-143. A fuller interpretation is hinted at in his commentary to Song 3:4 (MS Pococke 320, 39b, Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 46), where he identifies the city guards with the corporeal desires that prevent the body from perishing. These examples, combined with the connection that he draws with Qoh. 9:14-15 and his expressed intention to explicate those verses in great deal, would seem to hint at a more developed allegory of the human organism as a *polis*. For the presence of this kind of psychological-political-cosmological homology in Tanḥum's commentaries, see below, pp.372-296.

<sup>153</sup> See Pines, *Guide*, 487-490. For Maimonides on Job in general, see Robert Eisen, *The Book of Job in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford University Press: 2004), 43-77.

<sup>154</sup> See Wofhart Heinrichs, "The Classification of the Sciences and the Consolidation of Philology in Classical Islam," in *Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East*, eds. Jan Willem Drijvers and Alasdair A. MacDonald (Brill: 1995), 119-139.

<sup>155</sup> See Gutas, *Avicenna*, 149; Dimitri Gutas, "Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle's Philosophy: Between Alexandria and Baḡdād," in *Der Islam* 60 (1983), 231-267.

Classifications of the sciences would ultimately serve as models for curricula of study,<sup>156</sup> and as a means by which an author could express broad philosophical (and in particular epistemological) commitments.<sup>157</sup> Already in al-Fārābī's works, we may observe a more theoretical application of this genre, reflecting the conception that there exists a hierarchy of the sciences based on the nobility of the object of study, the quality of the science's proofs, and the magnitude of its benefits.<sup>158</sup> However, the sciences are discussed in his *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm* (Enumeration of the Sciences) in more or less the order that they are best acquired, thus still reflecting the additional function of this genre as an idealized curriculum.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, a number of medieval philosophers either prescribe curricula that roughly follow their classifications,<sup>160</sup> or relate that their own philosophical education mirrored such a hierarchy of the sciences.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Miquel Forcada, "Ibn Bājja and the Classification of the Sciences in al-Andalus," in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 16 (2006), 287, 291; Gutas, *Avicenna*, 149-154, 363-364. Of course, philosophical programs of study were often ignored. For the marginality of the philosophical sciences in the educational culture of Mamluk Egypt, see Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton University Press: 1992), 13.

<sup>157</sup> Gutas, *Avicenna*, 149; Osman Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam* (Islamic Texts Society: 1998), 43, 46.

<sup>158</sup> Bakar, *Classification*, 46-47. Indeed, the hierarchical underpinnings of the work are reflected in some MS traditions in its opening lines, which state that the work is "on the ranks of the sciences (*fī marātib al-'ulūm*).” See *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm li-l-fārābī*, ed. Osman Amine (Dār al-fikr al-'arabī: 1949), 43 and fn.3. Of course, this statement reflects the understanding of later readers and copyists alone.

<sup>159</sup> Bakar, *Classification*, 62. This applies to his enumeration of what he understands to be the philosophical sciences in Amine, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm* (*Ibid.*). However, al-Fārābī leaves both jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and systematic theology (*kalām*) to the end of his work. The explanation for this appears to be that both *fiqh* and *kalām* are derivative, based on the true knowledge of the lawgiver (*wāḍī' al-nawāmis* or *wāḍī' al-sharī'a*) and founder of the religion (*wāḍī' al-milla*; note that in the *Book of Religion*, al-Fārābī states that *sharī'a* and *milla* are synonymous). While al-Fārābī leaves these derivative arts to the end of his account, Maimonides structures his parable in *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 618-620) according to epistemological hierarchy alone.

<sup>160</sup> Al-Kindī (d.866) insisted that the study of mathematics must come before the study of any other science; see Charles Butterworth, "Al-Kindi and the Beginnings of Islamic Political Philosophy," in *Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Muhsin S. Mahdi*, ed. Charles Butterworth (Harvard University Press: 1992), 16-19. In some medieval schemes, mathematical disciplines that had some practical application were classified as practical geometry or as physics, while pure arithmetic was considered to provide preparatory training for the theoretical disciplines; see Elspeth Whitney, "Paradise Restored: The Mechanical Arts from Antiquity through the Thirteenth Century," in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 80, part 1 (The American Philosophical Society: 1990), 131; and cf. this distinction in al-Fārābī, in Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Barnes and Noble Books: 1992), 61. See also Abū Sahl al-Masīhī's (fl. late 10<sup>th</sup>–early 11<sup>th</sup> cent.) prescription of his classification as a sound philosophical curriculum, in Gutas, *Avicenna*, 170-172. Also notable is Maimonides' position on the proper order of acquiring the philosophical sciences as discussed in the *Guide*, for which see below, pp.204-207.

<sup>161</sup> See, for example, Ibn Sīnā's autobiographical account of his education, in William E. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn Sina* (State University of New York Press: 1974), 18-35 (Arabic text with facing English translation); and in English

We are fortunate to have Tanḥum's full classification of the philosophical sciences, which constitutes a significant portion of the introduction to his commentary to Qohelet. His major purpose in presenting this classification seems to be to locate the contents of Qohelet within the tripartite structure of Solomon's works as he understands it. If Qohelet is concerned with physics, or more broadly with the theoretical sciences, why should such a theme be treated at all in the Hebrew Bible? What is Solomon's purpose in imparting such knowledge to his readers? How does the work fit within a broader curriculum of ethical, intellectual, and spiritual cultivation? With these questions sitting in the background, Tanḥum's classification provides an account of the content and progression of the philosophical sciences.

### *Tanḥum's Classification of the Sciences*

Tanḥum begins his introduction with an interpretation of a remote biblical verse that he interprets as an allusion to the philosophical sciences. His interpretation of the verse serves as a prelude to his fuller classification of the sciences, and reflects the rabbinic literary form of the *petiḥta* (proem).<sup>162</sup> In this case, it is likely that Tanḥum's use of this rhetorical device was inspired by Ibn Ezra, who begins his own introduction to Qohelet with an interpretation of Proverbs 15:24. Tanḥum's introduction begins as follows:

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translation with textual-critical notes in Gutas, *Avicenna*, 23-28; and Ibn Bājjā's account of his own philosophical training cited in Josef Puig Montada, "Philosophy in Andalusia: Ibn Bājjā and Ibn Ṭufayl," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge University Press: 2005), 157; and Maimonides' account of his addressee's training in the Epistle Dedicatory to the *Guide* (Pines, 3). All of these accounts have a degree of prescriptive import.

<sup>162</sup> The *petiḥta* classically opens with an interpretation of a remote verse, the interpretation of which leads one back to the verse being expounded. For the *petiḥta* in general, see Joseph Heinemann, "The Petihtot in Aggadic Midrashim, their origin and function," in *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (1965), 43-47. For the *petiḥta* in tannaitic literature, see Joseph Heinemann, "Tannaitic Proems and Their Formal Characteristics," in *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol.3, part 3 (1969), 121-134. For a study of the *petiḥta* in the Babylonian Talmud, see Eliezer Segal, "The Petiḥta in Babylonia," in *Tarbiz* 54:1 (1984-1985) 177-204. For another example of a medieval adaption of the *petiḥta* in a commentary to Qohelet, also taking a verse from Proverbs as its point of departure, see Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 29-30, 150ff.

Since an introduction to this book is necessary, we say: We have already stated, concerning the verse *Wisdom has built her house, has hewn her seven pillars* (Prov. 9:1), that by this it refers to the enumeration of the philosophical sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-ḥikmiyya*), though there are many branches and numerous disciplines altogether through which a human being’s wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) is perfected – so that *seven* may simply indicate plurality according to the idiom of the Hebrew language, [whose speakers] indicate plurality with the number seven. But if *seven* is a precise enumeration, it refers to (1) practical wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-‘amaliyya*); (2) propaedeutic wisdom (*wa-’l-ḥikma al-riyāḍiyya*), which is of four categories; (3) physical science (*al-‘ilm al-ṭabī‘ī*); (4) divine science (*wa-’l-‘ilm al-ilāhī*), which is the ultimate goal (*al-ghāya al-quṣwā*) of them all. These thus come to [a total of] seven.<sup>163</sup>

One element in the background to Tanḥum’s interpretation of Proverbs 9:1 in this context is Ibn Ghiyāth’s discussion of the philosophical sciences in the introduction to his commentary to Qohelet. Ibn Ghiyāth broadly divides the sciences into three categories: The revealed sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-tanzīliyya*), the geometric and mathematical sciences (*al-handasiyya* [*wa-’l-riyāḍiyya*]), and the philosophical sciences (*al-falsafīyya*).<sup>164</sup> He then lists seven sciences that he maintains are alluded to (but not expounded upon in detail) in Qohelet:

1. Arithmetic (*‘ilm al-a‘dād wa-’l-ta‘arīf*);
2. Astronomy (*‘ilm al-hay’a wa-ma‘rifat al-ḥaraka al-falakiyya wa-quṭb al-kawākib wa-taqābulihā...*);
3. Physics (*‘ilm al-ṭabī‘a*);
4. Music (*‘ilm al-mūsīqā*);
5. Medicine (*al-‘ilm al-ṭibbī*);

<sup>163</sup> MS Poccocke 72b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24.

<sup>164</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 164.

6. Logic (*'ilm al-mantiq*) and the linguistic arts, including grammar, poetry, and rhetoric;
7. Divine knowledge (*al-'ilm bi-'llāh*).<sup>165</sup>

Ibn Ghiyāth provides a citation from Qohelet that alludes to each of these sciences, with the exception of medicine, of which music constitutes a part, since it is “medicine for the soul (*al-ṭibb al-naḥsānī*).”<sup>166</sup> Beyond these seven sciences, Ibn Ghiyāth lists twelve other “temporal and religious benefits (*manāfi' dunyā'iyya wa-dīniyya*)” that are treated in Qohelet, some civic (such as obedience of the king) and others intellectual (such as the exhortation to acquire wisdom and avoid folly).<sup>167</sup>

The closest antecedent for Tanḥum's identification of Proverbs 9:1 with the philosophical sciences appears to be Moses Qimḥi's commentary *ad loc.*,<sup>168</sup> where the seven pillars are identified with seven sciences (*ḥokhmot*):<sup>169</sup>

...*has hewn* (*ḥatzebah*) *her* [seven] pillars is an expression [figuratively] borrowed from stonemasons (*ḥotzebe eben*). The sense refers to shaping pillars<sup>170</sup> by means of hewing (*ba-ḥatzibah*) and other kinds of construction.<sup>171</sup>

One may interpret that it says *wisdoms* (*ḥokhmot*)<sup>172</sup> in order to inform [the reader] that wisdom (*ḥokhmah*) built her house from seven sciences (*ḥokhmot*), and this is the sense of *has hewn her*

<sup>165</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 168.

<sup>166</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 168.

<sup>167</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 169-170.

<sup>168</sup> For the misattribution of Qimḥi's commentary to Abraham Ibn Ezra in rabbinic Bibles, and the discovery of this error by Jacob Reifmann, see *A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs Attributed to Abraham Ibn Ezra*, ed. Samuel Rolles Driver (The Clarendon Press: 1880), v-vi.

<sup>169</sup> Considering the medieval Arabic convention to refer to the sciences as *ḥikam* – adopted by Tanḥum, and reflected in the title of the work ascribed to al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* – this interpretation of the Hebrew *ḥokhmot* is quite understandable. See above, p.179 and fn.122.

<sup>170</sup> Hebrew: *hashva'at ha-'ammudim*. My translation takes *hashva'ah* in its rabbinic sense; see Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Judaica Press: 1989), 1532 (entry for שויה, שוי). Cf. the Arabic root *s-w-y*, and use of the root *sh-w-y* in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, in Talmud bShabbat 140b.

<sup>171</sup> The syntax of the passage in the Hebrew is somewhat unclear.

*seven pillars*, they being the pillars of the house. And this refers back to the statement *Wisdom has built her house*, “house” being feminine.<sup>173</sup>

Or *her seven pillars* [refers to] the pillars of wisdom, they being the seven sciences upon which the house of wisdom is established.<sup>174</sup>

And there are those who interpret these seven sciences in different ways, and everyone chooses for themselves. May the truth show its path.<sup>175</sup>

As we shall see in detail below, Tanḥum’s reception of Qimḥi’s interpretation is informed by Peripatetic enumerations of the sciences such as those in Ibn Sīnā’s *Kitāb al-shifā’* (The Book of Healing)<sup>176</sup> and *Risāla fī aqsām al-‘ulūm al-‘aqliyya* (Epistle on the Parts of the Intellectual Sciences),<sup>177</sup> al-Ghazālī’s *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* (The Aims of the Philosophers),<sup>178</sup> and *Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq* (Treatise on the Art of Logic; henceforth, *Treatise on Logic*) attributed to

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<sup>172</sup> The Hebrew *hokhmot* in the verse is in the plural.

<sup>173</sup> That is to say that the feminine pronominal suffix (literally, “her pillars”) refers to the noun “house” (*bayit*), which is usually masculine. Here, however, the noun is feminine.

<sup>174</sup> That is to say, the referent of “her pillars” is *hokhmah*, a regular feminine noun. Although *hokhmot* is plural, Qimḥi (Prov. 9:1, s.v. *hokhmot banetah betah*) compares this formulation with Genesis 49:22, where a feminine plural is treated as a feminine singular.

<sup>175</sup> Hebrew: *ve-ha-emet yoreh darko*. This expression appears to be a Hebrew calque of the Arabic *wa-‘l-ḥaqq yuwarri* [or: *yūrī*] *ṭarīqahu*. The expression is used in a similar sense to *allāhu a‘lam*, i.e., to indicate that determining the true opinion or interpretation is beyond the abilities of the writer. For the use and transmission of this expression, see Shy, “Ha-signon ha-ishshi,” 568-569. For the root *w-r-y* (“show”) in Judeo-Arabic, and for the interchangeability of its II and IV forms, see Blau, *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, 759.

Although Qimḥi’s reading of the sevenfold division of wisdom appears to be deliberately vague, on the basis of earlier Aristotelian classifications of the sciences, and his acceptance of Ibn Ezra’s (disproven) authorship, Wolfson has suggested that the seven sciences to which the commentary alludes are: A. (1) Logic; B. The theoretical sciences: (2) Theology (including psychology, i.e., metaphysics as a whole), (3) arithmetic, (4) geometry, (5) astronomy, (6) music, (7) physics. See Harry Austryn Wolfson, “The Classification of Sciences in Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy,” in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, eds. Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams (Harvard University Press: 1973), 507-509.

<sup>176</sup> For Arabic text, see *Al-shifā’*, ed. Ibrahim Madkour (Nashr wizārat al-ma‘ārif al-‘umūmiyya: 1952), vol. 1, 12-16. For a comparison of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī’s classification of the sciences in his *Kitāb al-mu‘tabar* with that of Ibn Sīnā in the *Shifā’*, see Shlomo Pines, “Studies in Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī’s Poetics and Metaphysics,” in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines – Volume I: Studies in Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī – Physics and Metaphysics* (The Magnes Press/Brill: 1979), [138-136] 275-277.

<sup>177</sup> For Arabic text, see “Al-risāla al-khāmisa: fī aqsām al-‘ulūm al-‘aqliyya,” in *Tis ‘rasā’il*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Dār al-‘Arab li-l-bustānī: 1328 AH), 104-118.

<sup>178</sup> For Arabic text, see *Muqaddimat tahāfut al-falāsifa al-musammāh maqāṣid al-falāsifa li-l-imām al-ghazālī*, ed. Sulayman Dunya (Dār al-ma‘ārif bi-‘l-miṣr: 1961).

Maimonides.<sup>179</sup> Here, Tanḥum treats practical philosophy as a whole, while distinguishing between the different parts of theoretical wisdom, in order to arrive at a total of seven branches of wisdom. Interestingly, he is not entirely satisfied by this interpretation of Proverbs 9:1, apparently preferring to understand “seven” as an idiomatic approximation of the manifold branches of philosophical wisdom.<sup>180</sup>

We can thus identify three elements in the background to Tanḥum’s interpretation of Proverbs 9:1 at the outset of his commentary to Qohelet: (a) Ibn Ghiyāth’s discussion of seven sciences alluded to in Qohelet in the introduction to his commentary; (b) Moses Qimḥi’s commentary to Proverbs 9:1, in which he specifies that the verse refers to seven sciences; (c) the various classifications of the philosophical sciences (discussed in detail below) that provide Tanḥum with a neater sevenfold taxonomy of the sciences.

Tanḥum now offers a preamble to his full enumeration, first dividing philosophical wisdom (*ḥikma*) into two broad categories: Practical wisdom (*ḥikma ‘amaliyya*) and theoretical wisdom (*ḥikma nazariyya*).<sup>181</sup> This distinction has its roots in the works of Aristotle,<sup>182</sup> and is widely

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<sup>179</sup> See Israel Efros’ critical edition, with partial Arabic text, English translation, and three Hebrew translations: Efros, *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic (Maḳāla fī-ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq)* (American Academy for Jewish Research: 1938). A complete edition of the Arabic (in Arabic script) was published in Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq.*” Subsequently, Efros published a study of the MSS, accompanied by a complete and improved critical edition (in Hebrew script) – see Israel Efros (ed.), “Maimonides’ Arabic Treatise on Logic: Introduction,” in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 34 (1966), 155-160; and “Maḳāla fī ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq,” in *ibid.* (Hebrew section), 82-2. For the work’s disputed attribution, see below, p.199-200, and fn.190.

<sup>180</sup> Compare with Saadia’s commentary and translation *ad loc.* in Qafiḥ, *Mishle*, 80, variant 1. According to this variant, *ḥatzevah ‘ammudeha shiv‘ah* is rendered into Arabic as *wa-naḥatat ‘amudahā kathīran*. The commentary (*ibid.*, 80-84) is polemical in character, and asserts that whereas the groups judged by Saadia to be heterodox have not based their positions on extensive foundations, rabbinic Jews have done so. Thus, *kathīran* more closely reflects the commentary, while *sab‘atan* reflects the verse more closely. Aware of this, Qafiḥ preferred the latter version (see *ibid.*, 80, note 8). Gersonides would later adopt this interpretation (see his commentary *ad loc.*).

<sup>181</sup> MS Pockocke 320, 72a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24.

<sup>182</sup> For the Aristotelian origins of this distinction, see see Wolfson, “The Classification of Sciences in Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy,” 493, 495; Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* VI:1.

attested in the Islamic philosophical tradition.<sup>183</sup> Tanḥum’s precise formulation of the general division of the sciences strongly echoes that of al-Ghazālī in the *Maqāṣid*.<sup>184</sup>

Tanḥum takes this definition a step further by making explicit how each of these two categories is expressed in the life of the individual who pursues knowledge of it. Practical philosophy is that of which “we first require knowledge of it, and then the purpose (*ghāya*) of knowing it is action (*al-‘amal*) according to that which we have learned of it, and to establish it in our souls. For knowing it is insufficient for attaining felicity if it is not accompanied by action in accordance with [that] knowledge.”<sup>185</sup> This stands in contrast with theoretical wisdom, after which “nothing is needed other than investigation and contemplation (*baḥth wa-naẓar*).”<sup>186</sup> This characterization of the respective goals of practical and theoretical philosophy strongly echoes Ibn Sīnā’s account in the *Shifā’*:

The goal (*al-ghāya*) of theoretical philosophy is the perfection of the soul so that it may achieve knowledge alone (*takmīl al-nafs bi-an ta‘lama faqat*), while the goal of practical philosophy is

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<sup>183</sup> For al-Kindī’s adoption of this distinction, see *Rasā’il al-kindī al-falsafiyya*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Hādī Abū Rīda (Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabi: 1950-1953), vol. 2, 8. al-Fārābī employed this distinction in his works – see, for example, “Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, Part III: The Philosophy of Aristotle,” in *Alfarabi: Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. Muhsin Mahdi (Cornell University Press: 2001), 73. For the adoption of this distinction by the Brethren of Purity (using the terminology of *ṣanā’i’ ‘amaliyya* versus *ṣanā’i’ ‘ilmiyya*), see Wolfson, “The Classification of Sciences in Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy,” 495; for its adoption by Miskawayh, see Dimitri Gutas, “Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle’s Philosophy: Between Alexandria and Baḡdād,” in *Der Islam* 60 (1983), 232-233. Ibn Sīnā explained the distinction between the respective purposes of these two broad categories of the sciences: “The object of theoretical [wisdom] is truth (*al-ḥaqq*); the goal of practical [wisdom] is the good (*al-khayr*).” For Arabic, see “Aqsām,” 105. For a very similar formulation in his *Shifā’*, see Madkour, *Shifā’*, vol. 1, 14, lines 17-18. For this distinction in al-Ghazālī’s *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, see Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 134; Treiger, “Al-Ghazālī’s Classifications of the Sciences,” 4. The distinction was also employed by al-Ghazālī in his less Peripatetically oriented *Mizān al-‘amal* and *Al-risāla al-laduniyya*. See Bakar, *Classification*, 203-204. See also the *Treatise on Logic*, for which see Maimonides’ *Treatise on Logic (Maḳāla fi-ṣinā’at al-mantīk): The Original Arabic and Three Hebrew Translations*, ed. Israel Efron (American Academy for Jewish Research: 1938), 62 (English).

<sup>184</sup> MS Pococke 320, 73a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24: “Each of these two [modes of] wisdom may be divided into three parts (*wa-kull wāḥid min al-ḥikmatayn yanqasimu ilā thalātha aqsām*).” Compare with al-Ghazālī’s statement in the *Maqāṣid*: “Each of the two [kinds of] sciences is divided into three parts (*wa-kull wāḥid min al-‘ilmayn yanqasimu ilā thalātha aqsām*)” (Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 134). On Tanḥum’s preference for the term *ḥikma* over *‘ilm* and *falsafa*, see below p.211.

<sup>185</sup> MS Pococke 320, 72b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24.

<sup>186</sup> MS Pococke 320, 73a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24.

the perfection of the soul not only so that it may achieve knowledge, but also so that it may know what should be done with it [i.e., that knowledge] and put it into action. The goal of theoretical [philosophy] is the profession of an opinion (*i'tiqād ra'y*), not in deed; while the goal of practical [philosophy] is knowledge of the opinion (*ma'rifat ra'y*) in deed. Theoretical [philosophy comes] first (*fa-l-naẓariyya ūlā*), as it is related to opinion.<sup>187</sup>

The resemblance is clear: According to both authors, the goal (*ghāya*) of theoretical philosophy consists of intellectual apprehension alone; practical philosophy requires an additional element in order to attain the full realization of its purpose, namely, action. However, Tanḥum reverses the hierarchy implied by Ibn Sīnā. Whereas Ibn Sīnā states that theoretical philosophy precedes the practical, Tanḥum takes precisely the opposite view: “Thus is the former called practical wisdom, and it must necessarily come first (*wa-yajibū taqḍīmuhā ḍarūratan*); while the latter is called theoretical wisdom, for nothing further is needed than the pursuit of speculation (*baḥṭh al-naẓar*).”<sup>188</sup> Ibn Sīnā understands the necessity to bring the practical sciences to their full realization in action to be an indication that they represent a more advanced stage of philosophical training than the theoretical sciences. However, Tanḥum makes no judgment on this basis – he merely notes their “purpose” and scope in order to explain why they are called “practical” and “theoretical”. The basis for his insistence that the practical sciences should precede the theoretical seems to lie in the curricular aspect of his classification, based on the Maimonidean understanding that the development of ethical virtues must precede the acquisition of intellectual virtues (as discussed below).

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<sup>187</sup> Madkour, *Shifā'*, vol. 1, 12.

<sup>188</sup> MS Pococke 320, 72b-73a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24.

Following the brief interpretation of Prov. 9:1 with which he begins his introduction to Qohelet, Tanḥum offers his full classification of the philosophical sciences, which may be summarized as follows:

[A] Practical Wisdom:

- (1) Individual governance (*tadbīr shakhṣī wa-ḥikma shakhṣiyya*).
- (2) Household governance (*al-siyāsa al-manziliyya*).
- (3) Political wisdom (*ḥikma madaniyya*).

[B] Theoretical wisdom:

- (1) Propaedeutic science (*al-‘ilm al-riyāḍī*), consisting of four parts: (a) Arithmetic; (b) geometry (*al-handasa*); (c) music; and (d) astronomy (*al-hay’a*).
- (2) Physics (*al-‘ilm al-ṭabī‘ī*)
- (3) Divine science (*al-‘ilm al-ilāhī*).<sup>189</sup>

*Tanḥum’s classification in comparison with earlier classifications: Basic content*

The most obvious place to begin the search for the background to Tanḥum’s classification is in the works of Maimonides. One factor that might complicate such an effort is that Maimonides’ authorship of the *Treatise on Logic* has been called into question.<sup>190</sup> Whatever the case may be,

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<sup>189</sup> See MS Pococke 320, 73a-74a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24-25. Metaphysics is described but not named in his full enumeration, it is named *al-‘ilm al-ilāhī* in his interpretation of Prov. 9:1, for which see above, p.193.

<sup>190</sup> Maimonides’ authorship of this work was questioned by Herbert Davidson; see “The Authenticity of Works Attributed to Maimonides,” in *Me’ah she’arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, eds. E. Fleischer *et al.* (The Magnes Press: 2001), 118-125; Davidson, *Moses Maimonides*, 313-322. Cf. also Charles H. Manekin, “Logic in Medieval Jewish Culture,” in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, ed. Gad Freudenthal (Cambridge University Press: 2011), 116-117. For critiques of Davidson’s position, see Joel Kraemer, “Is There a Text in This Class?” in *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism* 8 (2008) 268-272, and in particular 273-275 n. 62-63; Ahmad Hasnawi, “Réflexions sur la terminologie logique de Maïmonide et son contexte Fârâbîen: Le *Guide des perplexes* et le *Traité de logique*,” in *Maïmonide, philosophe et savant*, eds. Tony

it seems that by Tanḥum's period of activity the *Treatise* was widely attributed to Maimonides.<sup>191</sup> The fourteenth chapter of the *Treatise* presents a succinct classification of the sciences. In that chapter, the philosophical sciences are presented as follows:

[A] Theoretical philosophy, which may be further divided into three parts:

(1) Mathematics (*al-ta'ālīm*), also called propaedeutic science (*al-'ulūm al-riyādiyya*).

(2) Physics (*al-'ilm al-ṭabī'ī*).

(3) The divine science (*al-'ilm al-ilāhī*; also called *mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a*, “metaphysics”), which consists of two distinct parts: (a) The “study of every being which is not matter nor a force in matter, that is to say, of whatever pertains to God, may His name be exalted, and also, according to the opinion of the philosophers, to angels; for they deny that angels are corporeal, and they call them transcendent intelligences, i.e., separated from matter”; and (b) the study of “the remote causes of the subject matter of the other sciences, and is called both divine science and metaphysics.”

[B] Political (i.e., practical) science, which is subdivided into four parts:

(1) Ethics, called “the human individual's governance of himself (*tadbīr al-shakḥ min al-nās nafsahu*).”

(2) Governance of the household (*tadbīr al-manzil*).

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Lévy and Roshdi Rashed (Peeters: 2004), 39-78. Additional considerations in favor of Maimonides' authorship of the treatise have been offered by a number of scholars; see Steven Harvey, “Maimonides and the Art of Writing Introductions,” in *Maimonidean Studies*, ed. Arthur Hyman (Yeshiva University Press: 2008), vol. 5, 86-88; Mordechai Z. Cohen, *Three Approaches to Biblical Metaphor*, 101 fn. 12; Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton University Press: 2009), 127-128. Cf. also the parallels noted by Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic*, 63 fn. 43.

<sup>191</sup> The work was widely, if not universally, ascribed to Maimonides since the mid-thirteenth century at the latest. The first of its Hebrew translators, Moses b. Samuel Ibn Tibbon, made this identification in 1254; see Mauro Zonta, “Medieval Hebrew Translations of Philosophical and Scientific Texts: A Chronological Table,” in *Science in Medieval Jewish Culture*, ed. Gad Freudenthal (Cambridge University Press: 2011), 31.

(3) Governance of the city (*tadbīr al-madīna*).

(4) Governance of the great nation or the nations (*tadbīr al-umma al-kabīra aw al-umam*).<sup>192</sup>

In this division, the author echoes al-Fārābī's *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm* (Enumeration of the Sciences), particularly in the progression from the theoretical to the political science (i.e., the practical sciences).<sup>193</sup> In some ways, the *Treatise*'s divisions is closer to Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī:<sup>194</sup> All of these authors propose the same division of the theoretical sciences. Furthermore, the *Treatise*, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Ghazālī all describe mathematics as consisting of the classic *quadrivium* of (a) arithmetic, (b) geometry, (c) astronomy, and (d) music.<sup>195</sup> Thus, the basic content of the philosophical sciences remains basically common to these authors, although the order varies.<sup>196</sup>

The one point of disagreement between Tanḥum and the *Treatise on Logic* in terms of the basic division of the philosophical sciences appears in the practical sciences. This disagreement was temporarily suppressed when Tanḥum collapsed practical philosophy into a single category in his interpretation of Proverbs 9:1, but becomes clear from his full enumeration: He divides practical

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<sup>192</sup> English in Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic*, 62-64. Arabic in Efros, "Maqāla," 87-90; and Türker, "Al-maqāla fī ṣinā'at al-manṭiq," 108-110.

<sup>193</sup> For the *Treatise*'s reliance on al-Fārābī, see Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic*, 19.

<sup>194</sup> For the *Treatise*'s sources in general, see Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic*, 19-32.

<sup>195</sup> For the origin of this division of mathematics with Boethius in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> cent., and its transmission into the medieval Latin West, see Hardy Grant, "Mathematics and the Liberal Arts," in *The College Mathematics Journal* 30:2 (1999), 102-104; Hardy Grant, "Mathematics and the Liberal Arts II," in *The College Mathematics Journal* 30:3 (1999), 197-203. For its transmission into the Arabic philosophical tradition, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 363. Contrast with al-Fārābī, who divided the mathematical sciences (*'ilm al-ta'ālīm*) into seven parts: Arithmetic, geometry, optics, astronomy, music, weights, tool-making. Arabic text in Amine, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, 75-90; see also Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, 61; Bakar, *Classification*, 137-138.

<sup>196</sup> A notable absence from Tanḥum's treatment of the theoretical wisdom is logic. By omitting logic from his enumeration of the sciences, Tanḥum follows the precedent set by Maimonides in his *Treatise on Logic*. Maimonides offers an explicit rationale for his omission: Logic is not a science per se, but rather a set of universal rules that govern all human discourse, across linguistic boundaries. See Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic*, 63 (in English section); Efros, "Maqāla," 87; Joel Kraemer, "Maimonides on the Philosophic Sciences," 82-83. In adopting this formulation, Maimonides was dependent on al-Fārābī. For al-Fārābī's view, see Muhsin Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundations of Islamic Political Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press: 2001), 72. For Maimonides' terminology in the *Guide* and his *Treatise on the Art of Logic* as profoundly informed by that of al-Fārābī, see Cohen *Three Approaches*, 98-118, esp. 103.

philosophy into three rather than four parts, making no distinction between “governance of the *polis*” and “governance of the great nation or nations” (as the *Treatise on Logic* does). While this may seem strange considering Tanḥum’s explicit deference to Maimonides’ authority in philosophical matters,<sup>197</sup> it is notable that in this case it is Maimonides’ enumeration that is atypical of the genre.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, both Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī explicitly state that each of the two types of philosophical sciences may be divided into three parts,<sup>199</sup> an assertion echoed by Tanḥum. He thus demonstrates his direct dependence upon non-Jewish philosophical sources, unmediated by Maimonides. Indeed, the content of his classification (excluding its order) most closely follows Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī, who propose a simple tripartite division of the practical sciences: Ethics, domestic governance, and governance of the *polis*.

#### *The order of the sciences*

As we have seen, Tanḥum treats practical philosophy *before* theoretical philosophy. This is in contradistinction with Ibn Sīnā’s Arabic classifications, the *Treatise on Logic*, and al-Fārābī’s classification, in which practical philosophy *follows* theoretical philosophy. Ibn Sīnā in particular states explicitly that theoretical philosophy (*al-falsafa al-naẓariyya*) must come before practical philosophy (*al-falsafa al-‘amaliyya*), “because it pertains to opinion [only].”<sup>200</sup> Indeed, the ascending enumeration in Ibn Sīnā’s classifications quite clearly reflects a hierarchical

<sup>197</sup> For which, see Shy, *AlKulliyat*, 537-8.

<sup>198</sup> Lawrence V. Berman, “A Reexamination of Maimonides’ “Statement on Political Science,”” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89:1 (1969), 108-109.

<sup>199</sup> Ibn Sīnā writes as follows: “Theoretical wisdom consists of three parts (*aqsām al-ḥikma al-naẓariyya thalātha*)” (“Aqsām,” 105); “the practical sciences are three [in number] (*wa-kānat al-‘ulūm al-‘amaliyya thalātha*)” (*ibid.*, 107).

Ibn Sīnā proposes the following tripartite division in his *Shifā’* and *Aqsām*, and this enumeration is adopted by al-Ghazālī in his *Maqāṣid* (following Ibn Sīnā’s *Dāneshnāme-ye ‘Alā’ī*): [A] Theoretical philosophy: 1. Physics (*al-‘ilm al-ṭabī‘ī*); 2. Mathematics (*al-‘ilm al-riyāḍī*); 3. Metaphysics (*al-‘ilm al-ilāhī*). [B] Practical philosophy: 1. Political science (*‘ilm al-siyāsa*); 2. Household governance (*tadbīr al-manzil*); 3. Ethics (lit. “the science of dispositions”; *‘ilm al-akhlāq*).

<sup>200</sup> Madkour, *Shifā’*, vol. 1, 12.

conception of the sciences,<sup>201</sup> also echoing an implied hierarchy in a number of al-Fārābī's works.<sup>202</sup> In fact, the debate around the proper discipline with which to commence one's philosophical study was one with its roots in the ancient Neoplatonic schools.<sup>203</sup>

In the second chapter of his introduction to *al-Shifā'*, Ibn Sīnā first divides the sciences into those that deal with subjects that are not the product of human volition or action (*laysa wujūduhā bi-ikhtiyārīnā wa-fi'linā*), and those that deal with subjects that are a product of human volition and action. Knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of the subjects of the former category is called “theoretical philosophy (*falsafa nazariyya*),” while knowledge of the latter category is called “practical philosophy (*falsafa 'amaliyya*)”. It is notable that Ibn Sīnā places theoretical philosophy before practical philosophy in both the *Shifā'* and the *Aqsām*. This hierarchy is reflected in al-Ghazālī's most Peripatetic account of the sciences,<sup>204</sup> contained in his *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* (Intentions of the Philosophers).<sup>205</sup> In his enumeration of the philosophical sciences in the *Maqāṣid*, al-Ghazālī

<sup>201</sup> In his *Aqsām* (“Aqsām,” 105) Ibn Sīnā begins his enumeration with the lowest science (*al-'ilm al-asfal*) – physics; moves to the middle science (*al-'ilm al-awsat*) – mathematics; and concludes with the highest science (*al-'ilm al-a'lā*) – metaphysics. Cf. his enumeration of the theoretical sciences from lowest to highest in his *Dāneshnāme-ye 'Alā'i*, translated in Farhang Zabeh, *Avicenna's Treatise on Logic: Part One of Danesh-name Alai (A Concise Philosophical Encyclopaedia) and Autobiography* (Martinus Nijhoff: 1971), 13.

<sup>202</sup> Note the ascending order of the sciences in *Ihsā' al-'ulūm* (see ed. Amine).

<sup>203</sup> Angela Jaffray, *At the Threshold of Philosophy: A Study of Al-Fārābī's Introductory Works on Philosophy* (PhD dissertation, Harvard: 2000), 38-40.

<sup>204</sup> al-Ghazālī presents his readers with “no fewer than seven different classifications in his authenticated works” – see Alexander Treiger, “Al-Ghazālī's Classifications of the Sciences and Descriptions of the Highest Theoretical Science,” in *Dîvân* 2011/1, 2. al-Ghazālī demonstrates that he is particularly conscious of the dependence of classification upon the context and intent of the composition when he states that the “sciences of the philosophers, with reference to the aim we have in mind, include six divisions...” Translation Richard J. McCarthy's, in *Al-Ghazali's Path to Sufism: His Deliverance from Error (al-Munqidh min al-Dalal)* (Fons Vitae: 2000), 31. Emphasis mine. Here al-Ghazālī divides the sciences into six parts, albeit with some differences from his other divisions: Mathematics (*riyādiyya*), logic (*manṭiqiyya*), physics (*ṭabī'iyya*), metaphysics (*ilāhiyya*), politics (*siyāsiyya*), and ethics (*khuluqiyya*). His division here lends itself to the discussion which follows, in which he distinguishes between the useful and potentially harmful elements of each science, and the extent to which each is compatible with his understanding of Islamic belief.

<sup>205</sup> This work is a summary of Peripatetic philosophical material, apparently dating from al-Ghazālī's period of devotion to the study of philosophy, prior to his critique thereof in the *Tahāfut*; see Walbridge, *Wisdom of the Mystic East*, 55. In the *Maqāṣid*, al-Ghazālī enumerates the sciences in the following order:

[A] Practical sciences:

(1) The science of governing the community (*al-'ilm bi-tadbīr al-mushāraka allatī li-l-insān ma'a al-nās kāffatan*; i.e., politics);

most closely follows Ibn Sīnā's Persian work *Dāneshnāme-ye 'Alā'ī* (Book of Knowledge for 'Alā' al-Dawla).<sup>206</sup>

An interesting precedent for the order of Tanḥum's classification may be found not in earlier enumerations of the sciences, but in Maimonides' *Guide*. In several passages in the *Guide*, Maimonides either describes or prescribes the proper order in which the philosophical sciences are to be acquired.<sup>207</sup> Two passages are of particular importance in this regard, and as we shall argue below, it is likely that they informed Tanḥum's classification of the sciences. The first of these passages is in *Guide* I.34, in which Maimonides presents five causes due to which the study of metaphysics is prevented or delayed. The third of these causes is "the length of the preliminaries (*tūl al-tawḥī'āt*)."<sup>208</sup> In the course of his discussion of this category, Maimonides writes as follows:

[...] [I]t is certainly necessary for whomever wishes to achieve human perfection to train himself at first in the art of logic, then in the mathematical sciences according to the proper order, then in the natural sciences, and after that in the divine science.<sup>209</sup>

Within the theoretical sciences, then, Maimonides prescribes a clear progression from logic (which may be a tool [*āla*] or a science) to mathematics, to physics, and finally to

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- (2) Governance of the household (*'ilm tadbīr al-manzil*);
  - (3) Ethics (lit. "the science of dispositions"; *'ilm al-akhlāq*).
- [B] Theoretical sciences:
- (1) Metaphysics (*[al-'ilm] al-ilāhī* or *al-falsafa al-ūlā*);
  - (2) Mathematics (*al-riyāḍī*, or *al-ta'līmī*);
  - (3) Physics (*al-'ilm al-ṭabī'ī*).

(See Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 135-136; Treiger, "Al-Ghazālī's Classifications of the Sciences," 4.) Al-Ghazālī thus places the theoretical sciences after the practical. However, in this work he presents the sciences in *descending* order, from highest to lowest – as indicated by his description of physics as "the lesser science" (*al-'ilm al-adnā*).

<sup>206</sup> Treiger, "Al-Ghazālī's Classifications of the Sciences," 3-4.

<sup>207</sup> See his introductory epistle to the *Guide* (Pines, *Guide*, 3); and the introduction to the *Guide*, where he states that the "divine science" should only be studied after physics (*ibid.*, 9).

<sup>208</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 73; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 49 line 20.

<sup>209</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 75.

metaphysics.<sup>210</sup> In his discussion of the fourth cause, he makes another statement that has a direct bearing on our subject:

The fourth cause is to be found in the natural aptitudes. For it has been explained, or rather demonstrated, that the moral virtues are a preparation for the rational virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-khulqiyya hiya tawḥī'āt li-l-faḍā'il al-nuṭqiyya*), it being impossible to achieve true, rational acts – I mean perfect rationality – unless it be by a man thoroughly trained with respect to his morals and endowed with the qualities of tranquility and quiet. [...] It is accordingly indubitable that preparatory moral training (*al-tawḥī'āt al-khulqiyya*) should be carried out before beginning with this science [i.e., metaphysics], so that a man should be in a state of extreme uprightness and perfection...<sup>211</sup>

We may thus observe that for Maimonides, training in ethics must precede training in the theoretical sciences (in particular metaphysics), as one's training in the latter presumably corresponds at least for the most part with the effort to acquire intellectual virtues. From the discussion in *Guide* I.34, we learn that Maimonides' ideal curriculum would begin with ethical training, and progress to logic, mathematics, physics, and finally conclude with the study of metaphysics.

Such a progression also underlies an important passage in *Guide* III.51. Maimonides explains that the subject of this chapter is “the worship as practiced by one who has apprehended the true realities peculiar only to Him after he has obtained an apprehension of what He is; and it also guides him toward achieving this worship, which is the end of man, and it makes known to him how providence watches over him in this habitation until he is brought over to the *bundle of*

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<sup>210</sup> Cf. Maimonides' introduction to the *Guide* (Pines, 9), and I.34 (*ibid.*, 73).

<sup>211</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 76-77.

life.”<sup>212</sup> Apparently in order to explain the ranks attained by human beings on their path to this end, Maimonides now presents the parable of the city and the king’s palace:

I shall begin the discourse in this chapter with a parable that I shall compose for you. I say then. The ruler is in his palace, and all his subjects are partly within the city and

(1) partly outside the city.

(2) Of those who are within the city, some have turned their backs upon the ruler’s habitation, their faces being turned the other way.

(3) Others seek to reach the ruler’s habitation, turn toward it, and desire to enter it and to stand before him, but up to now they have not yet seen the wall of the habitation.

(4) Some of those who seek to reach it have come up to the habitation and walk about it searching for its gate.

(5) Some of them have entered the gate and walk about in the antechambers.

(6) Some of them have entered the inner court of the habitation and have come to be with the king, in one and the same place with him, namely, in the ruler’s habitation. But their having come to the inner part of the habitation does not mean that they see the ruler or speak to him. For after their coming into the inner part of the habitation it is indispensable that they should make another effort;

(7) then they will be in the presence of the ruler, see him from afar or nearby, or hear the ruler’s speech or speak to him.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 618.

<sup>213</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 618. The visual layout and numbering of the ranks is mine. In my numbering of the ranks, I follow Steven Harvey, “Maimonides in the Sultan’s Palace,” in *Perspectives on Maimonides*, ed. Joel Kraemer (Oxford/Littman: 1991), 63; and David R. Blumenthal, *Philosophic Mysticism: Studies in Rational Religion* (Bar-Ilan University Press: 2006), 98-99; and *not* Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (Yale University Press: 1980), 500. The latter appears to consider those “outside the city” as not truly belonging to these ranks at all. For a division of the ranks that is similar to that of Harvey and Blumenthal, see Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection*, 20. However, Kellner adds an eighth stage: The prophecy of

Explaining the parable after presenting it, Maimonides clarifies that these represent ranks or stages in the attainment of human perfection, culminating in an encounter with “the ruler”. In the course of this explanation, Maimonides writes as follows:

Know, my son, that as long as you are engaged in studying the mathematical sciences and the art of logic (*al-‘ulūm al-riyādiyya wa-ṣinā‘at al-mantiq*), you are one of those who walk around the house searching for its gate. [...] If [...] you have understood the natural things (*al-umūr al-ṭabī‘iyya*), you have entered the habitation and are walking in the antechambers. If, however, you have achieved perfection in the natural things and have understood divine science (*al-ilāhiyyāt*), you have entered into the ruler’s place *into the inner court* and are with him in one habitation. This is the rank of the men of science; they, however, are of different grades of perfection.<sup>214</sup>

That is to say that logic<sup>215</sup> and mathematics serve as an initial stage in one’s philosophical training, after which one may progress to physics and metaphysics. These levels correspond with the ranks in the parable numbered (4), (5), and (6) above. Another element in this passage that may have informed the order of Tanḥum’s classification is Maimonides’ account of the third rank, as numbered above. Those who seek the palace but have never seen it are identified by Maimonides’ with “the multitude of the adherents of the Law, I refer to *the ignoramuses who*

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Moses. I have not included this in my discussion of the parable for two reasons: Moses is only discussed later in the *Guide* III.51, at some removal from the parable and its explanation; and the chapter has a decidedly practical orientation (*ibid.*, 13) – but the reader cannot hope to reach the level of the prophecy of Moses (see Maimonides’ seventh principle of faith in his introduction to the tenth chapter of Mishnah Tractate Sanhedrin, known as *Pereq Heleq*).

<sup>214</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 618; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā‘irīn*, 455 line 28 – 456 line 5.

<sup>215</sup> By omitting logic from his enumeration of the sciences, Tanḥum follows the precedent set by Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, and the *Treatise on Logic*. The *Treatise on Logic* offers an explicit rationale for the omission: Logic is not a science per se, but rather a “tool” (*āla*) governs all the sciences; see Efros, *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic*, 63; Joel Kraemer, “Maimonides on the Philosophic Sciences in his Treatise on the Art of Logic,” in *Perspectives on Maimonides*, ed. Joel Kraemer (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization: 1991), 82-83. In adopting this formulation, the *Treatise* sides with the al-Fārābī’s formulation, and against that of Ibn Bājjā. For al-Fārābī’s view, see Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundations of Islamic Political Philosophy*, 72. For Ibn Bājjā’s view of logic as both an instrument (*āla*) of reason and as a science, see Forcada, “Ibn Bājjā and the Classification of the Sciences in al-Andalus,” 300. Of course, the omission of logic from one’s enumeration of the sciences does not imply that it was not an important part of the curriculum.

observe the commandments.”<sup>216</sup> There is a strong case to be made that this rank corresponds with ethical training, which constitutes a central aspect of the role of the commandments in the life of the individual (in addition to the inculcation of correct doctrines).<sup>217</sup> Proscriptions teach one a mild mode of asceticism, subduing the passions and helping one to free oneself from vices<sup>218</sup> and from attachment to the physical world,<sup>219</sup> while certain other *mitzvot* are intended to cultivate constant meditation upon Torah and correct doctrines.<sup>220</sup> That this conception of the *mitzvot* was adopted by Tanḥum is evident from his introduction to the *Murshid*. In fact, Tanḥum appears to identify the study of religious praxis with the practical sciences as a whole.<sup>221</sup> Thus, in this

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<sup>216</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 619.

<sup>217</sup> See *Guide* III.27 (Pines, 511); and in particular *Guide* III.54 (Pines, 635), where Maimonides explicitly states that most of the commandments serve as moral training. See also Howard Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought: Studies in Ethics, Law, and the Human Ideal* (State University of New York Press: 1999), 160. Cf. Ibn Sīnā's similar approach to the role of religious observance in ethical cultivation, in Gutas, *Avicenna*, 290. In *Guide* III.35, Maimonides divides the commandments into fourteen categories, in each case identifying the sections in the *Mishneh torah* that deal with the laws of that particular category: (1) Laws that communicate or affirm true doctrines, such as divine incorporeality and unity; (2) laws that negate idolatrous beliefs and practices, - this being the negative corollary of the previous category; (3) laws that improve one's moral qualities; (4) laws that prescribe charitable gifts - “[f]or one who is rich today will be poor tomorrow, or his descendants will be poor; whereas one who is poor today will be rich tomorrow, or his son will be rich”; (5) laws that prevent wrongdoing and aggression; (6) laws concerning punishment for transgressions, which provide deterrence against wrongdoing; (7) laws that dictate or constrain one's ownership of property, participation in trade, and entry into contracts - “[f]or these property associations are necessary for people in every city, and it is indispensable that rules of justice should be given with a view to these transactions and that these transactions be regulated in a useful manner”; (8) laws concerning days on which work is forbidden (Sabbaths and festivals), serving either to teach a correct doctrine, or to facilitate bodily rest, or both; (9) laws concerning worship (prayer, *Shema*, etc.), inculcating correct theology (to a degree) and love of God; (10) laws concerned with the sacrificial cult of the Sanctuary and Temple, and the details of how and by whom its service is to be conducted; (11) laws concerned with the sacrifices themselves, the logic of which is bound up in Israelite cultural history [for which see III.32] (12) laws concerning purity, creating an atmosphere of veneration around the Sanctuary; (13) laws concerning food taboos, the purpose being to cultivate a mild asceticism; (14) laws concerning sexual taboos (linking *kil'e ha-behemah* and circumcision to this, it becomes clear that this is also about cultivating a mild asceticism). (Pines, 535-538)

<sup>218</sup> *Eight Chapters*, in Weiss and Butterworth, *Ethical Writings*, 72.

<sup>219</sup> *Guide*, III:51 (Pines, 622).

<sup>220</sup> In his introduction to the *Mishneh torah*, Maimonides states that the commandments contained in the *Book of Love* are those “in which we are commanded, in order to love the Omnipresent and remember Him always, such as the recitation of the *Shema* and prayer and *tefillin* and benedictions.” In *Guide* III:51 (Pines, 622) the *Shema* and prayer are tools by means of which the first stages of contemplative consciousness are developed.

<sup>221</sup> In the introduction to the *Murshid*, Tanḥum writes that study of the Oral Law is necessary in order to know “how to perform the *commandments* (*kayfiyyat 'amal al-mitzvot*)”, and it thereby “helps one attain human perfections - both spiritual and physical - refines the soul's dispositions, establishes the proper order of social relations, sets political associations aright...” It must therefore precede the study of other sciences. (Shy, *Murshid*, 2-5.) Tanḥum continues, stating that such study “leads to intellectual felicity, and bestows eternal life, bringing about everlasting delights.” (*Ibid.*) However, it is hard to believe that Tanḥum, who elsewhere insists on the necessity of philosophical

passage from the *Guide* we can observe the following progression in the spiritual cultivation of the individual (omitting the study of jurisprudence):<sup>222</sup> Observance of the commandments; training in logic and mathematics; study of physics; and finally the study of metaphysics.

The order of the sciences as reflected in *Guide* I.34 and III.51 also more closely fits a Maimonidean understanding of the content of the most esoteric sciences according to rabbinic tradition: The Work of the Creation (*ma'aseh bereshit*) and the Work of the Chariot (*ma'aseh merkabah*).<sup>223</sup> Maimonides famously identified these disciplines with physics and metaphysics respectively.<sup>224</sup> That ethical cultivation and the study of mathematics would function as

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training in attaining true felicity, is at this point still talking about the study of practical *halakhah* (or even *fiqh*) in its narrow sense. Rather, it seems that such training *enables* one's further training in philosophical sciences (some of which actually do fall into the realm of Torah study according to Maimonides – cf. *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Foundations of the Torah, 2:11-12, 4:10-13; Laws of Torah Study, 1:12). Tanḥum's articulation of this understanding in the *Murshid* strongly reflects a Maimonidean conception of the practical aspect of the Torah as political philosophy (in its broader Alfarabian sense, including all of the “practical sciences” – for which, see al-Fārābī's treatment of political science in his *Enumeration of the Sciences*, translated in Butterworth, *Political Writings*, 76-80). For the broadly Maimonidean background to this conception, see Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought*.

<sup>222</sup> According to al-Fārābī, the discipline of *fiqh* is an art (*ṣinā'a* – see Amine, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, 107; translation in Butterworth, *Political Writings*, 80). He understands it to be an imitation of somebody else's philosophical insight, or a formal method of deduction based on the law produced through that insight. This is not to say that al-Fārābī's understanding of jurisprudence is purely mechanistic. Indeed, the jurist must have a comprehensive knowledge of the law, combined with an understanding of human society and its customs, and the original languages of the legal sources. (See Butterworth, *Political Writings*, 99-101.) Indeed, the *originator* of the law (“the lawgiver”; *wāḍī' al-nawāmis* or *wāḍī' al-sharī'a*) is a truly wise figure. (See Muhsin Mahdi, *Alfarabi: Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* (Cornell University Press: 2001), 47 section 58.) It is true knowledge – or even prophecy – that *produces* the law, and indeed enables the foundation of the *polis*. (See Muhsin Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundations of Islamic Political Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press: 2001), 131-139.) But deriving legal conclusions on the basis of that original law remains a formalistic art. This definition of *fiqh* informs Maimonides' own definition of the term *talmud* in the *Mishneh torah* in its narrower sense, excluding its other parts, namely the esoteric sciences of “the orchard (*pardes*)” (i.e., physics and metaphysics). See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Study of Torah, 1:12; and cf. Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 4:13. See also Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (Yale University Press: 1980), 500.

<sup>223</sup> See Mishnah, Tractate Ḥagigah, 2:1; Tosefta Ḥagigah 2:1-7 (ed. Zuckerman); Palestinian Talmud, Ḥagigah 2:1 (77a-77d); Babylonian Talmud, Ḥagigah 11b-16a. See also David J. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (American Oriental Society: 1980); Michael D. Swartz, “The Jewish Visionary Tradition in Rabbinic Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, eds. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge University Press: 200), 198-221. See also Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton University Press: 2009).

<sup>224</sup> See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:11-12, 4:10-13; Maimonides' commentary to Mishnah Ḥagigah 2:1; Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (Yale University Press: 1980); Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 167; Menachem Kellner, *Science in the Bet Midrash: Studies in Maimonides* (Academic Studies Press: 2009), 219-224.

preparatory training for the study of physics and metaphysics makes a great deal of sense when one takes the Maimonidean conception of *ma'aseh bereshit* and *ma'aseh merkabah* into account.

We have thus seen that both the *Guide* and the *Treatise on Logic* place mathematics before physics and metaphysics within the theoretical sciences, against Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī.<sup>225</sup> In so doing, they follow an alternative model within the philosophical tradition: That of al-Fārābī,<sup>226</sup> the Brethren of Purity,<sup>227</sup> and others.<sup>228</sup> By including mathematics as the first of the philosophical sciences, Tanḥum thus aligns himself with the latter tradition. Both in this, and in placing ethical cultivation before theoretical investigation, Tanḥum echoes Maimonides' conception of the ideal philosophical curriculum as expressed in the *Guide*.

#### *Creative eclecticism in Tanḥum's classification*

As we have seen, there is suggestive evidence for Tanḥum's reliance on the classifications of al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sīnā, the *Treatise on Logic*, and the *Guide of the Perplexed*. His eclecticism emerges still more clearly from a close comparison between his terminology and that of his predecessors.

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<sup>225</sup> In this, they followed in al-Kindī's footsteps. For a description of al-Kindī's approach, see George N. Atiyeh, *Al-Kindi: The Philosopher of the Arabs* (Islamic Research Institute, Rawalpindi: 1966), 39-40. For the mind's gradual ascent from contemplation of bodies to the disembodied and the divine (implicitly via those things that *may* be abstracted from matter, i.e., mathematics), see Abū Rīda, *Rasā'il al-kindī*, vol. 2, 10-12.

<sup>226</sup> See Amine, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, 43; Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, 60-63; Ian Richard Netton, *Al-Fārābī and his School* (Routledge: 1992), 39.

<sup>227</sup> For "propaedeutic" quality of mathematics, and its place at the beginning of the philosophical sciences according to the Brethren, see Wolfson, "The Classification of Sciences in Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy," 495-496; see also Godefroid De Callataÿ, "The Classification of Knowledge in the *Rasā'il*," in *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and their Rasā'il: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press: 2008), ed. Nader El-Bizri, 67-68; Wolfson, "The Classification of Sciences in Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy," 495. For the Arabic text of this classification, see *Rasā'il ikhwān al-ṣafā'* (Dār bayrūt li-l-ṭibā'a wa-'l-nashr: 1957) vol. 1, 267-275.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī's (10<sup>th</sup> century) *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*, where he suggests (in the name of a sage *blwtys*, possibly Plotinus) that mathematical studies are appropriate for young men because it prepares them for more serious philosophical study by accustoming them to abstract thought. See Franz Rosenthal, "Plotinus in Islam: The Power of Anonymity," in *Atti del Convegno internazionale sul tema: Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente* (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, anno 371, Quaderno 198: 1974), 439.

In dividing philosophical wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) into two branches, Tanḥum terms the resulting categories of sciences as *ḥikma ‘amaliyya* and *ḥikma nazariyya*.<sup>229</sup> This terminology is not used by Ibn Sīnā in the *Shifā’*, or in the *Treatise on Logic*;<sup>230</sup> it does, however, echo Ibn Sīnā’s *Aqsām*,<sup>231</sup> and to a lesser extent al-Ghazālī’s *Maqāṣid*.<sup>232</sup> It is likely that his use of this terminology is motivated by his exegetical project: Proverbs 9:1 mentions *ḥokhmot*, Solomon is the archetypal *ḥakham*, and *ḥokhmah* and the *ḥakham* are discussed frequently in Qohelet.<sup>233</sup> Thus, Tanḥum’s preference to employ the Arabic term *ḥikma* to denote philosophy as a whole, cognate with the Hebrew *ḥokhmah*, likely reflects his exegetical concerns (including his effort to bring Jewish and Greco-Arabic traditions into closer alignment). This does not preclude the possibility of his dependence on Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī – on the contrary, it explains *why* Tanḥum would prefer the formulations of the *Aqsām* and the *Maqāṣid* over their alternatives.

Also in the context of dividing the sciences into their practical and theoretical branches, Tanḥum states as follows:

Concerning theoretical wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-nazariyya*), its purpose is knowledge (*‘ilm*) and the acquisition of correct views and accurate convictions. If the soul conceives the true nature of existent beings so that the forms of the true existents may become impressed upon it, [the soul]

<sup>229</sup> MS Pococke 320, 72b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24.

<sup>230</sup> In the *Shifā’*, Ibn Sīnā divides *ma‘rifat al-umūr* into *al-falsafa al-nazariyya* and *al-falsafa al-‘amaliyya* (Madkour, *Shifā’*, vol. 1, 12, lines 5-7). The *Treatise on Logic* exhibits an awareness of several different sets of terminology (its very context is a discussion of terminology), but fundamentally divides *al-falsafa* into *al-falsafa al-‘amaliyya* and *al-falsafa al-‘ilmiyya* – see Efros, “Maqāla,” ٥٧, lines 5-9; Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq*,” 108]. Cf. also al-Kindī, who divides *al-falsafa* into *‘ilm* and *‘amal*, further qualified (or glossed?) as *nazariyya* and *‘amaliyya* – see Abū Rīda, *Rasā‘il al-kindī*, vol. 2, 8).

<sup>231</sup> There, *ḥikma nazariyya* and *ḥikma ‘amaliyya* subdivide into two sets of three *‘ulūm* (“*Aqsām*,” 105).

<sup>232</sup> There, al-Ghazālī divides *al-‘ilm al-ḥikmī* into an *‘ilm ‘amalī* and an *‘ilm nazarī* (Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 134)

<sup>233</sup> For the biblical narrative of Solomon’s prayer for understanding, and his acquisition of a “wise heart (*leb ḥakham*)”, see 1 Kings 3:9-12, and v.12 in particular. For the figure of Solomon as the possessor and teacher of esoteric wisdom in the works of Maimonides, see Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 163-194.

itself becomes real (*wa-in tataṣawwaru al-nafs bi-ḥaqq'iq al-mawjūdāt kay tartasima fīhā ṣuwar al-ḥaqq'iq fa-taṣīru ḥaqq bi-dhātihā*).<sup>234</sup>

Here, there is a striking parallel between Tanḥum's statement that one must impress the "true nature of existent beings" into the soul and al-Ghazālī's assertion in the *Maqāṣid* that the purpose of the study of theoretical science is "so that the configuration of the entirety of existence according to its hierarchy may arise in our souls, just as the beheld form arises in a mirror (*li-taḥṣulu fī nufūsinā hay'at al-wujūd kullihī 'alā tartībihī kamā taḥṣulu al-ṣūra al-mar'iyya fī al-mir'āh*)."<sup>235</sup> Despite their similarity, there is a major difference between these formulations: While al-Ghazālī describes the reflection of all existence in the soul like a objects in a mirror, Tanḥum emphasizes the actualization of the human intellect – a distinctly Peripatetic concern.<sup>236</sup>

In framing the terminology of the practical sciences, Tanḥum's formulation echoes Ibn Sīnā and the *Treatise on Logic*: "They are called [both] governance and administration."<sup>237</sup> After listing each practical science, Tanḥum discusses its utility (*fā'ida*):

(1) The first of [the three parts] is individual governance. Its utility (*wa-fā'idatuhā*) lies in the study of virtues and the way in which they might be acquired, and the manner of the treatment of ills and deficiencies, from one upon whose soul these things have been impressed. [This is] so

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<sup>234</sup> MS Pococke 320, 72b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24.

<sup>235</sup> Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 134. Here, al-Ghazālī is obviously echoing Ibn Sīnā: "Wisdom is a contemplative art from which a person gains the attainment of the entirety of that which exists in his soul, and those actions that it one is obliged to acquire in order to ennoble and perfect the soul..." ("Aqsām," 104.) Tanḥum's formulation is slightly closer to al-Ghazālī's, not least in its mention of "forms" (*ṣuwar*) being impressed upon the soul, and in its *explicit* application to the theoretical sciences (which remains merely strongly implicit in the *Aqsām*). See also Treiger, "Al-Ghazālī's Classifications of the Sciences," 4.

<sup>236</sup> See above p.121, p.143, and p.187-188; and below, p.227, p.413, p.432, and p.442. For background to al-Ghazālī's formulation, compare Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*, in Shams C. Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism: Remarks and Admonitions: Part Four* (Kegan Paul International: 1996), 87-88.

<sup>237</sup> Arabic: *wa-tusammā tadābīr wa-tusammā siyāsāt*. Concerning political science, Ibn Sīnā writes: "It is known as governance of the city and called the science of administration (*wa-yu'rafu bi-tadbīr al-madīna wa-tusammā 'ilm al-siyāsa*)." (Madkour, *Shifā'*, vol. 1, 14, line 12.) The author of the *Treatise on Logic* writes: "Any [mode of] governance by means of which a person governs another [person] is called 'administration' (*wa-kull tadbīr yudabbiru bihi al-insān ghayrahu yusammūnahu siyāsa*)." Türker, "Al-maqāla fī ṣinā'at al-mantiq," 109; Efros, "Maqāla," ۲, line 27. Like the *Treatise on Logic*, Tanḥum applies this statement to all of the practical sciences. However, his specific formulation seems to mirror that of the *Shifā'*.

that the soul might become chastened through the attainment and acquisition of virtues, and through the abandonment of vices and caution of them. So that the soul might be cleansed and purged and purified.

(2) The second is household administration (*al-siyāsa al-manziliyya*). Its utility lies in knowing the quality of associations and partnerships that are desirable between the members of the household and the relatives and the family and the attendants, so that their welfare might be furthered between them, and their association and interaction with each other might be improved.

(3) The third part is political wisdom. Its utility lies in knowing the quality of partnerships that occur between individual people so that an association might occur between them, so that they may seek their corporeal welfare and material necessities: Food, shelter, clothing and other such things that are all artificial (*ṣinā'īyya*). Thus their lasting individual existence is brought about to the greatest extent possible, and the continuation of their species as the union necessitates, if they act in accordance with that which will bring them eternal existence (*al-baqā' al-abadī*) and everlasting subsistence (*al-thabāt al-sarmadī*). Prophetic governance (*al-tadbīr al-nabawī*) falls into this category, and it is a part of it in [one] sense and distinct from in [another] sense, just as we alluded to above on a similar [topic] concerning the hierarchy of beings and the categories of their ranks at the beginning of *Proverbs*.<sup>238</sup>

Tanḥum's repeated use of the term *fā'ida* echoes that of al-Ghazālī in his *Maqāṣid*: Describing practical philosophy, he states that “its utility (*wa-fā'idatuhā*)” lies in determining the actions that will result in the welfare of human beings in this world and the hereafter.<sup>239</sup> However, rather than discussing the utility of the practical sciences as a whole, Tanḥum discusses the distinct utility of each individual practical science (as is emphasized by his repetition of the phrase *wa-fā'idatuhā*).

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<sup>238</sup> MS Poccoke 320, 73a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24.

<sup>239</sup> Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 134.

Tanḥum’s account of the content of each science is highly eclectic in its terminology. In his description of ethics, he relies chiefly on the *Treatise on Logic*,<sup>240</sup> though certain elements appear to be appropriated from the *Shifā’*.<sup>241</sup> His account of governance of the household is similarly eclectic,<sup>242</sup> as is his description of political science.<sup>243</sup> His statement that political science aims to bring about “lasting individual existence,” “the continuation of their species as the union [of body and soul] necessitates,” “eternal existence (*al-baqā’ al-abadī*) and everlasting subsistence (*al-thabāt al-sarmadī*),” echoes a concern expressed in many of the classifications: The role of

<sup>240</sup> Note Tanḥum’s emphasis on the acquisition of virtues and the removal of vice: Ethics is “the study of virtues and the way in which they might be acquired, and the manner in which ills might be treated and eliminated, from one upon whose soul these things have been impressed. [This is] so that the soul might become chastened through the attainment and acquisition of virtues, and through the abandonment of vices and caution of them. So that the soul might be cleansed and purged and purified (*ta’līm al-faḍā’il wa-kayfiyyat iqtinā’ihā wa-ṣūrat mu’ālaḥat al-shurūr wa-izālatihā mi-man irtasamat fī nafsihi li-tazkū al-nafs bi-iktisāb al-faḍā’il wa- iqtinā’ihā wa-’l-iqlā’ ‘an al-radhā’il wa-’l-ḥidhr minhā li-tuṭahhara al-nafs wa-tunaqqā wa-tuṣaffā*).” This theme is most prominent in the *Treatise on Logic*, in which we read that ethics is a person’s acquisition of “virtuous dispositions, and the elimination of vices, if they have formed (*an yukassibahā al-akhlāq al-fāḍila wa-yuzīlu ‘anhā al-akhlāq al-radhīla in kānat ḥaṣalat*).” See Arabic in Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-manṭiq*,” 109; and in Efros, “Maqāla,” 2, lines 17-18. The author goes on to define virtues and vices, including the definition of good and evil actions (*khayrāt* and *shurūr* respectively) that result from such dispositions.

<sup>241</sup> Tanḥum’s emphasis on the chastisement and purification of the soul is foreshadowed by Ibn Sīnā’s comment that ethics is concerned with the individual’s “purity of soul (*fī zakā’ nafsihi*)” – see Madkour, *Shifā’*, vol. 1, 14, line 14.

<sup>242</sup> Tanḥum calls home governance *al-siyāsa al-manziliyya*, in contradistinction with the classifications discussed here, which all use the terminology of *tadbīr al-manzil*. However, the term does echo the terminology of the *Treatise on Logic* in the passage immediately preceding the enumeration, where the author states that “any [mode of] governance (*tadbīr*) by means of which one governs others is called “administration” (*siyāsa*).” (See Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-manṭiq*,” 109; and in Efros, “Maqāla,” 2, line 27. ). Similarly, its purpose is “that their welfare might be furthered between them, and their association and interaction with each other might be improved (*li-tantazīma bihi al-maṣlaḥa baynahum wa-yuḥsana ta’āwunuhum wa-’ishratuhum ba’ḍihim ba’ḍ*),” echoing the phraseology of the *Treatise*, which states that this science investigates “how they may cooperate together [...] so as to bring about the best possible improvement of their condition (*kayf yu’āwinu ba’ḍuhum ba’ḍan [...] ḥattā yantazīma ṣalāḥ ḥālihim ḥasab al-maqdira*).” See Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-manṭiq*,” 109; and in Efros, “Maqāla,” 2, line 1; English with changes from Efros, *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic*, 64).

However, Tanḥum’s reference to “the quality of association and partnership that are desirable between the members of the household and the relatives and the family and the attendants, so that their welfare might be furthered between them, and so that their cooperation and association might mutually benefit them (*kayfiyyat al-mu’āshara wa-’l-mushāraka allatī yanbaghī an takūna bayn ahl al-manzil wa-’l-aqārib wa-’l-ahl wa-’l-atbā’*)” most closely reflects the formulation of Ibn Sīnā’s *Aqsām* (*kayfa yanbaghī an yakūna tadbīr al-manzil al-mushtarik baynahu wa-bayn zawjihi wa-waladihi wa-mamlūkihi*...). Cf. also Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 135.

<sup>243</sup> His account of political science bears little resemblance to Ibn Sīnā’s formulations - see Madkour, *Shifā’*, vol. 1, 14, lines 11-12; “*Aqsām*,” 107-108. There is, however, some correspondence with al-Ghazālī’s *Maqāṣid* (Dunya, 135). Here, al-Ghazālī describes political sciences as “knowledge of the governance of a human’s partnership with humans as a whole (*al-’ilm bi-tadbīr al-mushāraka allatī li-l-insān ma’a al-nās kāffatan*).” Compare Tanḥum’s account of politics as “knowing the quality of partnership that occur between individual people so that an association might occur between them (*an ya’lama kayfiyyat al-mushāraka allatī taqa’u bayn ashkhāṣ al-nās li-yaḥṣala baynahum ta’āwun min ba’ḍihim ba’ḍ*).” Cf. also the formulation of the *Treatise on Logic* on household governance, cited in note above.

wise government is to guide its subjects towards physical, ethical, and intellectual perfection.<sup>244</sup> This conception is emphasized by Maimonides in particular in the *Guide*.<sup>245</sup> Tanḥum’s discussion of the ambiguous place of prophetic governance (*al-tadbīr al-nabawī*) in relation to political wisdom echoes both Ibn Sīnā’s *Aqsām* and the *Treatise on Logic* – the former placing the study of prophecy within political science,<sup>246</sup> and the latter stating that “divine commandments (*al-awāmir al-ilāhiyya*)” have replaced the science of political governance, and thus positing a dichotomy between the two.<sup>247</sup> Maimonides’ articulation of the ways in which divinely inspired legislation overlaps and diverges from modes of governance produced by the human imagination may have led Tanḥum to emphasize the position of prophetic governance as both overlapping with and transcending political science.<sup>248</sup> In these matters, Tanḥum’s echoes earlier discussions, but his specific formulation appears to be original.

Tanḥum’s full account of the contents of the theoretical sciences is as follows:

Now concerning theoretical wisdom, it also consists of three parts:

(1) There is one part that is attached to matter (*al-mawādd*) and only exists [in conjunction] with it. However, the mind can abstract its concepts from their matter and conceive of them as mental concepts (*lākin yumkin al-dhihn an yujarrida ma‘ānīhā ‘an mawāddihā wa-yataṣawwarahā ma‘ānī dhihniyya*), even though it [also] conceives of their matter. For the mind can receive [those concepts], and wisdom<sup>249</sup> with them. [This branch] is called propaedeutic science (*al-‘ilm*

<sup>244</sup> See “Aqsām,” 107; Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 135. The *Treatise on Logic* contains one of the more expansive discussions of this theme: “Governance of the city is a science providing those that possess it with knowledge of true felicity (*al-sa‘āda al-ḥaqīqiyya*), providing them with the way to obtain it, and a knowledge of true misery, showing them the way to avoid it, instilling in their dispositions [the ability] to abandon supposed happiness [...], and it explains to them what supposed misery is...” (Alternative translation in Efras, *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic*, 64; Arabic in Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq*,” 109; and in Efras, “Maqāla,” ۸۷.)

<sup>245</sup> III.27 (Pines, 510-511).

<sup>246</sup> See “Aqsām,” 108.

<sup>247</sup> See Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq*,” 110; and in Efras, “Maqāla,” ۸۷.

<sup>248</sup> See *Guide*, II.40 (Pines, 383-384).

<sup>249</sup> Arabic: *al-ḥikam*. Or: philosophical knowledge.

*al-riyādī*), and it consists of four parts: (a) Arithmetic; (b) geometry (*al-handasa*); (c) music; and (d) astronomy (*al-hay'a*), by which I mean the science of the celestial spheres and their measurements and rotations, and the shape of their movements (*hay'at ḥarakātihā*) and their respective distances, and things of this manner.

(2) The second part is also attached to matter (*ta'alluquhu aydan bi-'l-mawādd*), but it cannot be denuded from its material [substances], nor can the mind conceive of it in the absence of them; such as motion and rest, place and time, admixture and transformation, and similar such [things] concerning other attributes that inhere in bodies; such as lightness and weight, coarseness and smoothness, sweetness and bitterness, and such things. It is called physics (*al-'ilm al-ṭabī'ī*), and it has fundamental principles (*uṣūl*), namely the four elements; and branches, namely the various things that come into being<sup>250</sup> [from combinations of the elements]. [The latter consist of] three genera (*ajnās*): Mineral, vegetable, and animal. Human beings are treated by [this science], for they are included in animality in one sense, and excluded in another sense.

(3) The third part of theoretical wisdom is absolutely free of matter, denuded of corporeality, and it is attended by no composition (*tarkīb*) in any sense whatsoever, neither outside the mind nor within it. It consists of knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of the angels and souls and spiritual beings, which are called separate intellects and forms denuded of matter by the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā*), and knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of their ranks, and their causes and effects (*wa-'l-'ilal minhā wa-'l-ma'lūlāt wa-'l-asbāb wa-'l-musabbabāt*),<sup>251</sup> and knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of God's providence, and his creation of the existent beings by means of those ranks<sup>252</sup> according to their hierarchy, and knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of the souls of the celestial spheres and the pure spirits.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Arabic: *Mutakawwināt*. This term (in its other forms *kā'ināt* or *mukawwanāt*) evokes the conception of the sublunar realm as “the world of generation and corruption (*al-kawn wa-'l-fasād*).”

<sup>251</sup> I did not provide a different translation here for the pairs *'ilal/ma'lūlāt* and *asbāb/musabbabāt*. For the relationship between these terms, see below, p.222, fn.276.

<sup>252</sup> I.e., by means of emanation through the intellects.

<sup>253</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 73a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24-25.

Within the theoretical sciences, Tanḥum distinguishes between knowledge of things that only exist in an embodied state, but which may be known in the mind in a manner abstracted from their corporeality; knowledge that must remain associated with matter even in the mind; and knowledge of things truly abstract. The distinction itself is widely attested in Islamicate philosophical literature.<sup>254</sup> In the *Treatise on Logic*, the author describes mathematics as the study of “material things not as they are but as abstracted from, though always existing in, matter.”<sup>255</sup> Tanḥum echoes this formulation when he states that mathematics “is attached to matter and only exists [in conjunction] with it. However, the mind can abstract its concepts from their matter and conceive of them as mental concepts, even though one conceives of their matter.”<sup>256</sup> In a subtle departure from the formulation of the *Treatise on Logic*, Tanḥum states that the object of the science is “attached” (*ta‘allaqa*) to matter – a term not used in this context by the *Treatise on Logic*,<sup>257</sup> but used by Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī.<sup>258</sup> In addition, his reference to

<sup>254</sup> Cf. al-Kindī, in Abū Rīda, *Rasā‘il al-kindī*, vol. 2, 8-10; Ibn Sīnā in Madkour, *Shifā’*, vol. 1, 12-13; “Aqsām,” 105-106; Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 136. These distinctions are implicit in the *Treatise on Logic*, insofar as the author states that the objects of mathematical study may be abstracted from matter, physics investigates bodies and that which pertains to them, and metaphysics investigates the incorporeal – see Efros, *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic*, 63 (Arabic in Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq*,” 108-109; and in Efros, “Maqāla,” ٢٧٧).

<sup>255</sup> Arabic: *fa-lā yanẓuru* [following Efros’ emendation (“Maqāla,” ٢٧٧)]; the MSS read *tanzuru* [fī al-aṣām ‘alā mā hiya ‘alayhi bal yanẓuru fī ma‘ānī mujarrada ‘an mawāddihā wa-in kānat tilka al-ma‘ānī lā yūjadu illā fī mawādd. English translation in Efros, *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic*, 63; Arabic in Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq*,” 108; and in Efros, “Maqāla,” ٢٧٧).

<sup>256</sup> Arabic: *yata‘allaqu bi-‘l-mawādd wa-lā yūjadu illā fihā lākin yumkinu al-dhihn an yujarrida ma‘ānihā ‘an mawāddihā wa-yataṣawwarahā ma‘ānī dhihniyya wa-law lam tataṣawwara mawādduhā.*

<sup>257</sup> It should be noted that the *Treatise* does use this term when describing metaphysics as “discussing anything “pertaining to the deity (*al-kalām fīmā yata‘allaqu bi-‘l-ilāhi*).” See Efros, “Maqāla,” ٢, line 2; Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-manṭiq*,” 108. Still, the phraseology that the science itself “pertains” to a particular object is not used in the *Treatise* – rather, it uses the verb *nazara* (considers), following al-Fārābī’s formulation (cf. Amine, *Iḥṣā’ al-‘ulūm*, 91).

<sup>258</sup> In the *Shifā’*, Ibn Sīnā uses this terminology to describe that to which the practical sciences “pertain” (*tata‘allaqu, ta‘alluq*) – see Madkour, *Shifā’*, vol. 1, 14, lines 11, 13, 14. In the “Aqsām” (105-106) Ibn Sīnā writes as follows: “Indeed, these parts of [theoretical wisdom] are divided thus because the definitions and existence of the matters that they investigate may be attached to corporeal matter and motion (*ḥudūduhā wa-wujūduhā muta‘alliqāt bi-‘l-mādda al-jismāniyya wa-‘l-ḥaraka*), [...] and the existence of [other] matters may be attached to corporeal matter and motion, while their definitions are not attached to them (*wujūduhā muta‘alliq bi-‘l-mādda wa-‘l-ḥaraka wa-ḥudūduhā ghayr muta‘alliqā bihimā*).” For a parallel passage with slightly different terminology, see Madkour, *Shifā’*, vol. 1, 13. Al-Ghazālī employs the same terminology of *ta‘alluq* (as a verbal noun and participle) – see Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 136. Contrast al-Kindī’s description of separation and attachment to matter, for which he uses the terminology of *mufāraqa* and *ittiṣāl* respectively – see Abū Rīda, *Rasā‘il al-Kindī*, 8-10.

“the mind” (*al-dhihn*) as the subject of the act of abstraction may point to direct familiarity with al-Fārābī.<sup>259</sup>

The statement that knowledge of physics necessarily remains associated with bodies and matter even while conceived of in the mind reflects discussions in both Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī.<sup>260</sup> Knowledge of the states and accidents of bodies is mentioned in all of the classifications, and as we have come to expect, Tanḥum’s account seems eclectic (although it is notable for its brevity).<sup>261</sup> Particularly notable is Tanḥum’s division of physics into roots and branches (*uṣūl* and *furū‘* respectively). According to Tanḥum, the roots are the four elements, while the branches are the various things that come into being (*sā’ir al-mutakawwināt*) from them. The distinction between roots and branches in physics was made by Ibn Sīnā,<sup>262</sup> who also lists the four elements as one of eight “roots” of physics.<sup>263</sup> However, where Tanḥum identifies the “various creatures” with the branches, Ibn Sīnā identifies them with the roots of physics – although both explicitly divide them in this context into mineral, vegetable, animal.<sup>264</sup> In straightforwardly enumerating the three kingdoms, Tanḥum’s formulation is closest to the

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<sup>259</sup> Al-Fārābī states that theoretical mathematics is concerned with numbers in an “absolute [sense], insofar as they are abstracted from their bodies in the mind (‘*alā annahā mujarrada fī al-dhihn ‘an al-ajsām*’)...” (Amine, *Iḥṣā’ al-‘ulūm*, 75.) In al-Fārābī, the mind is the locus of abstraction; in Tanḥum, it is the agent. Whether this is meaningless, or whether it points to a difference in the valence of the term *dhihn*, or whether there is a substantial difference in epistemology is not clear to me, and is beyond the scope of our present discussion.

<sup>260</sup> Madkour, *Shifā’*, vol. 1, 12-13; Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 136-137.

<sup>261</sup> Note however the succinctness of the *Treatise on Logic* (Efros, 63).

<sup>262</sup> “Aqsām,” 108. Al-Ghazālī in the *Maqāṣid* does not make clear distinction between roots and branches, but he does list branches, in the substance of which he follows Ibn Sīnā (Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 139). He makes a clearer distinction between roots and branches in mathematics (see *ibid.*).

<sup>263</sup> “Aqsām,” 109.

<sup>264</sup> See “Aqsām,” 109-110, where Ibn Sīnā states that the fifth part (identified as a “root”) investigates “the state of those things that come into being” (*ḥāl al-kā’ināt*; cf. Tanḥum’s *mutakawwināt*), further subdivided into mineral, vegetable, and animal. The fifth root investigates *ḥāl al-kā’ināt* in the context of minerals, the sixth in the context of vegetables, the seventh in the context of animals.

*Treatise on Logic*.<sup>265</sup> However, he once again echoes Ibn Sīnā when he adds that humans are also studied in physics, since they are animals in a sense, and are not in a sense.<sup>266</sup>

Although Tanḥum adopts the Avicennan distinction between roots and branches within physics, the sense in which he employs this distinction differs considerably. Ibn Sīnā designated virtually everything identified by Tanḥum as falling within the study of physics as “roots” – including the four elements, their combination, motion, and the study of the three kingdoms of generated beings (i.e., minerals, plants, and animals). These are thus the *fundamental divisions* of physics as a theoretical science. For him, the branches were *practical disciplines* derived from these theoretical principles, including medicine, astrology, dream interpretation, the production of talismans, and alchemy.<sup>267</sup> These are nowhere mentioned by Tanḥum. Rather, for Tanḥum, the “roots” signify the elements, while the “branches” signify the beings whose bodies are composed

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<sup>265</sup> See Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic*, 63.

<sup>266</sup> “Aqsām,” 110. Here, Ibn Sīnā states that the eighth root of physics investigates “knowledge of the soul (*maʿrifat al-nafs*)”, determining its nature and comparing its faculties with those of animals. See also “Aqsām,” 108; and the passage from *Kitāb al-ḥudūd* (The Book of Definitions) discussed in Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy*, 56. The notion that human beings are animals, but rendered distinct by virtue of their rational capacity, is formulated by Aristotle in *De Anima* 415a, where he states that some animals have reason and thought (*logismon kai dianoian*); and in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b-1098a, where he states that the human being’s task in life, as distinct from other animals, lies in the use of one’s rational faculty (*leipetai dē praktikē tis tou logon echontos*). These formulations are closely echoed by al-Fārābī – see Mahdi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, 122. Following this line of reasoning, “rational animal (*ḥayawān nāṭiq*)” became a classic definition of human beings in medieval Arabic thought. Cf. Paul E. Walker, *Early philosophical Shiism: Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge University Press: 1993), 117. Al-Sijistānī’s definition of most humans as “rational mortal living-being (*ḥayy nāṭiq mayyit*)” – as opposed to the prophets, who transcend this level to the “sacred soul” and become “inspired rational inspired living-being (*ḥayy nāṭiq muʿayyad*; for which see *ibid.*)” – makes for an interesting comparison to Saadia’s use of the formulation *umm kull ḥayy nāṭiq māʿit* (the mother of all rational mortal life) to translate the Hebrew *em kol ḥay* in his *Tafsīr*. For this formulation in Saadia, see Derenbourg, *Oeuvres Complètes de R. Saadia ben Iosef*, 98. Saadia’s formulation is virtually identical with that of the Brethren of Purity, who define humans as “living, rational, and mortal (*ḥayy nāṭiq mayyit*).” (English translation from *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On Logic: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of EPISTLES 10-14*, ed. and trans. Carmela Baffioni [Oxford University Press/Institute of Ismaili Studies: 2010], 65 [English section]; Arabic in *ibid.*, 5 [Arabic section].) For humans as *ḥayawān nāṭiq* in al-Fārābī, see Najjar, *Al-Farabi's The Political Regime*, 31, line 9; 32, line 9.

<sup>267</sup> “Aqsām,” 110-111. Cf. Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 139.

of those elements.<sup>268</sup> Tanḥum's account of physics is once again informed by many, straightforwardly dependent on none.<sup>269</sup>

The content of metaphysics in the Greco-Arabic tradition was not clear-cut. Tanḥum's treatment of metaphysics reflects the reception of two traditions that are traditionally in some tension with each other. The first is the primarily Aristotelian tradition, represented by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, and adopted in the *Treatise on Logic*.<sup>270</sup> According to this tradition, metaphysics is the most universal of the sciences, investigating the principles that govern the other sciences, as well as the principles of existence itself (i.e., ontology). Insofar as God is the remote cause of all being, theology also falls within this category.<sup>271</sup> Representatives of the alternative tradition include al-Kindī and the Brethren of Purity. These thinkers focus their accounts of metaphysics more squarely on the traditional realms of the Islamic sciences, bringing them into closer alignment with theology and psychology.<sup>272</sup>

Tanḥum's account of the scope of metaphysics most closely echoes the more Neoplatonizing-Islamicizing tradition, but in his actual formulation he draws most extensively on the Peripatetic

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<sup>268</sup> In his second commentary to Song 3:7, Tanḥum mentions the study of the elements as a subdivision of physics, referring in the process to the elements as roots: "the science of the roots, which is the elements ('ilm al-uṣūl alladhī huwa [sic] al-ustuqsāt)." See MS Pococke 320, 41a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 48. Compare Ibn Sīnā's formulation in Inati, *Physics and Metaphysics*, 89, paragraph 22; Arabic in *Al-ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt li-abī 'alī bin sīnā*, ed. Sulayman Dunya (Dār al-ma'ārif: 1992), part 2, 322.

His terminology for the elements also differs from that of Ibn Sīnā: Tanḥum uses the Arabic *ustuqsāt* (Greek *stoicheioi*) in place of Ibn Sīnā's *anāṣir*. For the use of *ustuqsāt* to signify the four elements in his classification of the sciences, see al-Fārābī, in Amine, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, 96-97; Najjar, *Al-Farabi's The Political Regime*, 31 (line 10), 38 (lines 2, 4, 5, 6), and throughout; Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 136, line 9; and see Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Philosophical Lexicon*, vol. 1, 8. However, in his *Kitāb al-ḥurūf*, al-Fārābī uses the term *'unṣur/'anāṣir* in addition – see *ibid.*, 305. The terminology of *ustuqsāt* is also used by Maimonides in the *Guide*. See *Guide*, I.72 (Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 127, line 16; 128, lines, 2, 15, 22, 24, 30; 129 line 1, and so on).

<sup>269</sup> Also notable is Tanḥum's silence with regard to the oft-repeated distinction between those sciences whose object is produced by human will or choice, versus those sciences that investigate that which is not the product of human will or choice. For this distinction in al-Fārābī, see Amine, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, 91 (in the context of physics); Ibn Sīnā, Madkour, *Shifā'*, vol. 1, 12, lines 4-5 (in the context of theoretical sciences); Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic*, 63 (in the context of physics).

<sup>270</sup> For Ibn Sīnā's understanding of metaphysics and his relation to al-Fārābī on this point, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 270-288.

<sup>271</sup> Gutas, *Avicenna*, 285-6.

<sup>272</sup> Gutas, *Avicenna*, 275-282.

sources. Echoed in Tanḥum’s description are readily identifiable elements from the *Treatise on Logic* and even the Brethren of Purity.<sup>273</sup> However, it seems that the most central source for his formulation is Ibn Sīnā’s *Aqsām*. The first two aspects of this science – knowledge of the angels and souls and spiritual beings on the one hand, and knowledge of their ranks on the other – correspond with Ibn Sīnā’s fourth fundamental category of metaphysics:<sup>274</sup> Speculation concerning the existence and endurance of spiritual substances (identified as different kinds of angels), demonstrations concerning their multiplicity and ranks, and their governance of the world of generation and corruption.<sup>275</sup> Also possibly associated with this category in Ibn Sīnā is the next aspect of Tanḥum’s account, the “causes and effects” of these angels (*wa-’l-’ilal minhā*

<sup>273</sup> Tanḥum states that the subject matter of metaphysics is “absolutely free of matter, stripped of corporeality (*’ariya ‘an al-mawādd bi-’l-’iṭlāq mujarrad ‘an al-jismāniyya*).” The *Treatise on Logic* initially defines metaphysics as “the study of every being which is neither a body nor a force in a body (*laysa bi-jism wa-lā quwwa fī jism*).” (Correcting Efros’ translation in *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic*, 63. See Arabic in Efros, “Maqāla,” 2, lines 1-2; Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-manṭiq*,” 108. Cf. also Moses Ibn Tibbon’s translation in Efros, *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic*, 80, lines 10-11; and the formulation upon which this is based in al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā’ al-’ulūm* (ed Amine), 99 [*yafḥaṣu fīhi ‘an al-mawjūdāt allatī laysat bi-aqsām wa-lā fī aqsām*].) For Tanḥum’s specific formulation *’ariya ‘an al-mawādd*, cf. al-Ghazālī’s statement that mathematics is “devoid of matter (*barī’ ‘an al-mādda*)” (Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 136, 137), and al-Fārābī’s statement that the First Existence is “free of all matter (*khilw min kull mādda*)” (English translation and Arabic text in Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 58-59, line 2 in Arabic). Tanḥum also mentions metaphysics’ preoccupation with “the angels and souls and spiritual beings, which are called ‘separate intellects’ and ‘forms denuded of matter’ by the philosophers (*al-malā’ika wa-’l-anfus wa-’l-rūḥāniyyīn wa-tusammā ‘inda al-ḥukamā’ ‘uqūl muḥāraqa wa-ṣuwar mujarrada ‘an al-mawādd*).” Cf. the *Treatise*’s statement that metaphysics includes the study of “angels as well, according to [the philosophers’] opinion – for they do not believe the angels to be bodies, rather calling them ‘separate intellects’, by which they mean that they are separate from matter (*li-annahum lā ya’taqidūna al-malā’ika aqsām bal yusammūnahā al-’uqūl al-muḥāraqa yurīdūna bi-dhālik annahā muḥāraqa li-mawādd*).” (See Arabic in Efros, “Maqāla,” 2, lines 3-5; Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-manṭiq*,” 108; and cf. Efros’ translation in *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic*, 63. Cf. also *Maimonides’ Guide*, I.49 [Pines, 108].)

Like Ibn Sīnā (“*Aqsām*,” 112-114), the Brethren of Purity divide metaphysics into five parts (cf. al-Fārābī’s division into three; Amine, *Iḥṣā’ al-’ulūm*, 99-100). They describe the second and third of the five parts of metaphysics as (2) the science of spiritual beings (*’ilm al-rūḥāniyyāt*), which are simple intellectual substance (*al-jawāhir al-basīṭa al-’aqliyya*), and identified as the angels, and are called forms free of matter (*ṣuwar mujarrada min al-hayūlā*); and (c) science of psychic beings (*’ilm al-naḥsiyyāt*), which are the souls that occupy both celestial and earthly bodies. (*Rasā’il*, 274.) In particular, Tanḥum’s references to souls and spiritual beings (*al-anfus wa-’l-rūḥāniyyīn*), and his additional definition of the angels as “forms denuded of matter (*ṣuwar mujarrada ‘an al-mawādd*)” echoes the Brethren (*rūḥāniyyāt, naḥsiyyāt, ṣuwar mujarrada min al-hayūlā*). See, however, *Kuzari* II:4; and Elliot R. Wolfson, “Merkavah Traditions in Philosophical Garb: Judah Halevi Reconsidered,” in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 57 (1990-1991), 188-192. It is difficult to determine if Tanḥum was reliant on one or both of these sources, or some related material.

<sup>274</sup> However, see fn. 273 above for the impact of the *Treatise on Logic* and the *Brethren of Purity* on this passage.

<sup>275</sup> “*Aqsām*,” 113.

*wa-’l-ma’lūlāt wa-’l-asbāb wa-’l-musabbabāt*).<sup>276</sup> The fifth part of Ibn Sīnā’s metaphysics treats the subservience of heavenly and earthly corporeal substance to spiritual substances, and demonstrates the existence of a chain of connection (*irtibāf*) existing between terrestrial beings and heavenly beings, with the entirety of existence ultimately connecting back to God.<sup>277</sup> This category appears to correspond with Tanḥum’s account of “knowledge (*ma’rifā*) of God’s providence, and his creation of the existent beings by means of those ranks according to their hierarchy,” although we also hear an echo of al-Fārābī’s *Iḥṣā’ al-’ulūm*.<sup>278</sup> Finally, Tanḥum’s description of knowledge of “the souls of the celestial spheres and the pure spirits” is reminiscent of the Brethren of Purity’s account of the third category of metaphysics, psychology.<sup>279</sup> Although Ibn Sīnā’s second fundamental division (*aṣl*) of metaphysics is entirely absent, and his first is at best alluded to in passing,<sup>280</sup> it still seems that his account in the *Aqsām*, along with the *Treatise on Logic*, played a central role in Tanḥum’s formulation of metaphysics. (Ibn Sīnā’s third fundamental category of metaphysics will be discussed below.) But once again, a close comparison brings Tanḥum’s integration of a wide range of sources into fuller focus.

<sup>276</sup> One might hear an echo of Ibn Sīnā’s “cause and effect (*al-’illa wal-ma’lūl*)”, mentioned among other things in his first root category of metaphysics (“Aqsām,” 112). The pairs *’ilal/ma’lūlāt* and *asbāb/musabbabāt* are both used to refer to causes and effects respectively. For these terms as being basically synonymous, and Ibn Rushd’s explicit statement to this effect, see *Le Guide des Égarés*, ed. and trans. Solomon Munk (A. Franck: 1856-1866), vol. 1, 313 and fn.1. Both *’illa* and *sabab* are used by al-Fārābī to refer to the four causes of Aristotelian physics – see Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī’s Lexicon*, vol. 1, 171-172, 284-287; vol. 2, 560. For the possibility that *sabab* and *’illa* have distinct meanings in Maimonides’ *Guide*, see Abraham Nuriel, “On the Usage of the Terms *Sabab* and *’illa* in the Guide of the Perplexed,” in *Tarbiz* 56:4 (1987), 515-525. It is also possible that Tanḥum wished to employ the full range of terminology for rhetorical effect, in the process echoing Ibn Sīnā on the one hand, and the *Treatise* and al-Ghazālī on the other hand. For *al-’illa wa-’l-ma’lūl* in Ibn Sīnā, see “Aqsām,” 112; for *sabab al-wujūd kullihī* and *sabab wa-musabbab* in al-Ghazālī, see 140; for *al-asbāb al-ba’ida jiddan* in the *Treatise*, see Efros, “Maqāla,” 2, line 6; Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-mantiq*,” 108.

<sup>277</sup> “Aqsām,” 113-114.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. his statement that “one then comes to know how beings were created from him [’*anhu*; versio, fn. 14: through him *bihi*], how they acquire existence from him (*kayfa istafādat ’anhu al-wujūd*). Then [metaphysics] investigates the ranks of beings, and how those ranks came about, and how each thing came to occupy its rank.” (Amine, *Iḥṣā’ al-’ulūm*, 100-101.)

<sup>279</sup> “The science of psychic beings (*’ilm al-naḥṣāniyyāt*), which are the souls that occupy both celestial and earthly bodies.” (*Rasā’il ikhwān al-ṣafā’*, vol. 1, 274.)

<sup>280</sup> For these, see “Aqsām,” 112.

## *The Rank of Sanctity*

After presenting his initial account of the scope and content of metaphysics, Tanḥum continues as follows:

Then one proceeds from knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of this to the rank of sanctity (*martabat al-quddūsiyya*), pure and exalted above any image, bare of any likeness, pure from any compound. Simplicity beyond which there is no simplicity, absolute perfection, and true beauty. There is no relation between Him and the rest of His creations, and His existence is unlike their existence, and His true essence is unlike their true essence. He does not share existence with them other than by homonymy (*siwā bi-ishtirāk al-ism*).

It is knowledge of Divinity (*ma'rifat al-rubūbiyya*), by which I mean knowledge of God to the extent possible, according to the capacity of human beings, and knowledge of the attributes by which He is described, and the sense in which they point to Him (*wa-hay'at dalālatihā 'alayhi*)<sup>281</sup> with reference to the creation of existent beings and the origination of created beings out of His everlasting and eternal will and volition (*'an mashī'atihi wa-irādātihi al-abadiyya wa-'l-azaliyya*).<sup>282</sup>

However, in reality He has no essential attribute (*ṣifa dhātiyya*), nor does any essential mode of being (*hay'a nafsāniyya*) apply to Him. He has no “self” (*nafs*) to which accidents of the self (*a'rāḍ nafsāniyya*) might occur. He is the maker (*fā'il*) of the totality of existent beings,<sup>283</sup> He is

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<sup>281</sup> So MS Lon. Bl. Or. 5063 (National Library of Israel, reel F 6466; Margoliouth cat. #207). In MS Pococke 320 the reading is *'alā*, which is the *lectio difficilior* but makes little syntactic sense (see Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 25 and fn. 10).

<sup>282</sup> Here, Tanḥum appears to be alluding to his belief in the eternity of the cosmos. For divergent perspectives concerning Maimonides' position on the topic of the eternity of the cosmos versus creation *ex nihilo*, see Abraham Nuriel, “The Question of a Primordial or Created World in the Philosophy of Maimonides,” in *Tarbiz* 33 (1964), 372-387; Israel Ravitzky, “The Question of a Created or Primordial World in the Philosophy of Maimonides,” in *Tarbiz* 35 (1966), 333-348; Herbert Davidson, “Maimonides' Secret Position on Creation,” in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Harvard University Press: 1979), 16-40; Kenneth Seeskin, *Maimonides on the Origin of the World* (Cambridge University Press: 2005); Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 71-86.

<sup>283</sup> The sense here is that God is active (*fā'il*) while the rest of existence is passive (*maf'ūl*) in relation to Him.

the cause of their existence, and His constant sustenance of them (*wa-imdāduhu lahā bi-'l-baqā'*) is the cause of their continuation and subsistence.

This part is the most exalted of [all] the ranks of wisdom, and the most sublime and noble. It is the goal of the various sciences and [branches of] knowledge (*sā'ir al-ḥikam wa-'l-ma'ārif*), and the *telos* (*nihāya*) of every science, and the aim of every virtue.<sup>284</sup>

Although Tanḥum describes *martabat al-quddūsiyya* as a distinct “rank”, its content seems to indicate that it is in fact a subcategory of metaphysics. Tanḥum’s identification of the chief foci of this discipline as the meaning of divine attributes, the sense in which they point to God, and the manner in which all other being originates from God, is entirely consistent with other writers’ accounts of metaphysics – most notably al-Fārābī,<sup>285</sup> Ibn Sīnā,<sup>286</sup> al-Ghazālī.<sup>287</sup> Indeed, perhaps the closest parallel to Tanḥum’s description of this discipline is the third fundamental division of metaphysics in Ibn Sīnā’s *Aqsām*, which shares an overwhelming focus on divine attributes, but also emphasizes a more apophatic approach.<sup>288</sup> In addition, Tanḥum’s reference to *ma'rifat al-*

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<sup>284</sup> MS Pococke 320, 73b-74a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 25.

<sup>285</sup> See Amine, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, 100-101.

<sup>286</sup> “Aqsām,” 112-113.

<sup>287</sup> See Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 140.

<sup>288</sup> Ibn Sīnā’s third fundamental division of metaphysics is as follows: “It is speculation concerning the demonstration of [the existence of] the First Reality, His unity, the indication of His separateness and divinity, the impossibility of any being’s partnership with Him in the rank of His existence (*ithbāt al-ḥaqq al-awwal wa-tawḥīdihi wa-'l-dalāla 'alā tafarrudihi wa-rubūbiyyatihi wa-'mtinā' mushāraḥat mawjūd lahu fī martabat wujūdihi*), that He alone exists necessarily by His [very] essence, and anything that exists apart from Him requires His existence. It then considers His attributes, the quality of His attributes [*kayfa takūnu ṣifātuhi* – lit. how his attributes are], what is understood {Arabic: *al-mawḥūm* – for *wahm* as the estimative faculty in Ibn Sīnā’s epistemology, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 344; Davidson, *On Intellect*, 89} by the expression of each attribute – although the expressions that are used concerning His attributes (such as the One, Existing, Prior, Knowing, All-Capable) all indicate some other matter, it being inconceivable that there are many notions in the One in whom there is no multiplicity in any sense, each [notion] distinct from the other. And how these attributes must be understood becomes known, so that there need not be any differentiation or multiplicity in His essence, and [so that] His true, essential Oneness may not be maligned.” (See “Aqsām,” 112-113.)

*rubūbiyya* echoes al-Ghazālī’s definition of metaphysics as *‘ilm al-rubūbiyya* in the *Maqāṣid*,<sup>289</sup> and Ibn Sīnā’s formulation in the aforementioned third fundamental division of metaphysics.<sup>290</sup>

Another dimension of this discipline is illuminated by Tanḥum’s suggestion that this mode of knowledge “may be acquired from the Prophetic Books in the form of narratives, and in the manner of exhortation (*‘alā ṭarīq al-akhbār wa-‘alā sabīl al-tanbīh*).” The role of narrative in this process is likely an allusion to the symbolic representation of philosophical truths in prophetic discourse.<sup>291</sup> Tanḥum’s reference to exhortation (*tanbīh*) seems to be inspired by Maimonides’ *Guide*, and perhaps also by Ibn Rushd. A most striking formulation may be found in Ibn Rushd’s *Kitāb al-kashf ‘an manāhij al-adilla fī ‘aqā’id al-milla* (Exposition of Methods of Demonstrations Concerning Religious Doctrines):

Yet the Qur’ān in its entirety is but a call to theoretical investigation (*du‘ā’ ilā al-naẓar wa-’l-’tibār*) and consideration and an admonition to resort to these theoretical methods (*wa-tanbīh ‘alā ṭuruq al-naẓar*).<sup>292</sup>

Once again mirroring Ibn Rushd in connection with the religious obligation to contemplate the divine wisdom in nature via philosophical speculation, Maimonides states that a divinely inspired Law

takes pains to inculcate correct opinions with regard to God, may He be exalted in the first place, and with regard to the angels, and [...] desires to make man wise, to give him understanding, and to awaken his attention, so that he should know the whole of that which exists in its true form

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<sup>289</sup> Dunya, *Maqāṣid*, 140.

<sup>290</sup> “Aqsām,” 113; see fn. 288 above.

<sup>291</sup> Compare Salmon b. Yeroḥam’s use of the term *akhbār* in Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 150. For scriptural narratives as possessing an esoteric stratum of philosophical meaning in Tanḥum, see above, pp.62-74. For the short anecdote (*khābar*) as a genre in Arabic literature, see Peter Heath, “Allegory in Islamic literatures,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, eds. Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck (Cambridge University Press: 2010), 85.

<sup>292</sup> Translation from *Faith and Reason in Islam: Averroes’ Exposition of Religious Arguments*, trans. Ibrahim Y. Najjar (Oneworld Publications: 2001), 32; Arabic in *Manāhij al-adilla fī ‘aqā’id al-milla*, ed. Maḥmud Qasim (The Anglo-Egyptian Library: 1964), 149.

(*wa-tarūmu taḥkīm al-insān wa-tafhīmahu wa-tanbīhahu ḥattā ya'lama al-wujūd kullahu 'alā šūratihī al-ḥaqq*)...<sup>293</sup>

It seems that the *tanbīh* alluded to by Ibn Rushd is a general exhortation to contemplation (parallel to *du'ā'*), while the *tanbīh* alluded to by Maimonides is actually a rhetorical presentation of metaphysical truths. Tanḥum appears to adopt the Maimonidean model here, according to which the divine law guides individuals not only towards bodily welfare, but intellectual perfection as well.<sup>294</sup>

In light of the above, it seems that *martabat al-quddūsiyya* is indeed to be regarded as a part of metaphysics, and that knowledge of the meanings of God's attributes and the modes in which divine providence operates may be obtained from the systematic study of metaphysics, as well as from a close reading of Scripture. The theoretical sciences would thus be divided into knowledge abstracted from bodies (mathematics); the study of bodies and their motion and accidents (physics); study of beings that are *not* bodies (metaphysics I); theology (metaphysics II).

#### *Human Perfection and Imago Dei*

Following the passage on *martabat al-quddūsiyya*, Tanḥum elaborates on the significance of the attainment of such insight:

On account of this intellectual apprehension through which human beings are ennobled above other species of animals, it is said of them, *Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness* (Gen. 1:26); and it is stated, *In the image of God He created him.* (*Ibid.*, v.27) [This is not] due to their physical form, which is their shape and configuration (*shakl wa-takhīṭ*). It is said of them, *You have made him little less than the angels, and adorned him with glory and majesty; You have made him master over Your handiwork, laying the world at his feet.* (Ps. 8:6-7) [This is

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<sup>293</sup> *Guide* II.40; Pines, 384; Munk, *Dalālat al-hā'irīn*, 271, lines 27-28.

<sup>294</sup> *Guide* III.27 (Pines, 510-511).

attained] through the intellectual apprehension of their<sup>295</sup> true nature, through cognitive mastery of their utilization in all of their purposes and benefits.

One who has attained the completion of his soul and its refinement through these disciplines<sup>296</sup> – both the practical and epistemic (*al-‘amaliyya minhā wa-‘l-‘ilmiyya*)<sup>297</sup> – his soul shall be cleansed and purified through acquiring virtuous dispositions and upright traits. Then [his soul] shall become ennobled through true and perfect opinions. For he has already obtained the two kinds of wisdom, and through this he seeks refuge in the attainment of this final part, which is their *telos* and highest rank (*ghāyatuhā wa-sharafuhā*).

One who has achieved and accomplished this has attained true felicity, and eternal life, and the intellectual *telos*. He abides eternally (*wa-baqiya al-baqā’ al-sarmadī*), immersed in the seas of being (*mustaghrāq fī biḥār al-wujūd*), delighting in union with the Originator of all Being<sup>298</sup> (*mutaladhdhidh bi-waṣl mūjid kull mawjūd*), sublime is His name and exalted His renown.

[...]

There is no doubt that wisdom is that which endows a person with an intellectual soul (*naḥs ‘aqliyya*), for it transforms the aptitude which [that person] has *in potentia* into actuality, so that it becomes an intellect *in actu*. Then one may become acquainted with the true nature of things, and one’s soul may become purified, and it may acquire good dispositions (*malakāt al-khayr*) through the practical wisdom by which it is shaped, and attain true opinions and intellectually [sound and] satisfying doctrines through the theoretical wisdom that it gains.

This is the ultimate perfection and felicity of the human being (*wa-hādhā huwa ghāyat kamāl al-insān wa-sa‘ādatuhu*), through which a person attains eternal life, and ascends to the ranks of the

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<sup>295</sup> Although the referent of the feminine suffix *-hā* is ambiguous, the simplest reading is that it refers to the sciences discussed above.

<sup>296</sup> Lit. “parts.”

<sup>297</sup> Here, Tanḥum is alluding to the practical and theoretical sciences. See his first brief account of the seven sciences, above; and cf. the usage in the *Treatise on Logic* where philosophy is divided into *al-falsafa al-‘amaliyya* and *al-falsafa al-‘ilmiyya* – see Efros, “Maqāla,” ٥٧, lines 5-9; Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-mantiq*,” 108].

<sup>298</sup> Or: Every being.

angels who are near [to God], and draws near to knowledge of God (*ma'rifat allāh*) to the extent that this is possible. Then fear of Him becomes true, non-imaginary; and worship of Him [becomes] purely intellectual, non-corporeal.<sup>299</sup>

Tanḥum's understanding of the broadly cultivated, intellectually perfected and spiritually realized human being as the fullest expression of *imago dei* – and indeed as being the truest *human* – is distinctly Maimonidean. For Maimonides, the individual's attainment of intellectual perfection represents the highest realization of human nature, and the full expression of *imago dei*.<sup>300</sup> This conception of *imago dei* as expressive of some property of the human intellect has its background in several streams of thought that merged in Maimonides' own exegetical project.<sup>301</sup> First, and most obviously, there is the biblical account of the human being as an image of the Divine,<sup>302</sup> and its reception in rabbinic thought – often in explicitly imagistic terms.<sup>303</sup> Then there is the Platonic conception of the human soul as sharing a kinship (*sungeneia*) with the gods, a notion that was enthusiastically embraced by the Stoics.<sup>304</sup> A similar understanding is articulated in rabbinic literature,<sup>305</sup> and brought into full and explicit conversation with the biblical narrative by medieval exegetes such as Abraham Ibn Ezra (d.c.1164), who asserted that human beings

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<sup>299</sup> MS Pockocke 320, 74a-75a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 25-26.

<sup>300</sup> *Guide*, I:1 (Pines, 21-23). On intellectual perfection as the *telos* of human existence, see *Guide*, III:27 (Pines, 511), and *Guide* III.54 (*ibid.*, 635). Maimonides' conception of human perfection has been the subject of much scholarly discussion. For an overview of the major approaches, see Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection*, 1-11. See also Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought*.

<sup>301</sup> For important recent studies of Maimonides as a biblical exegete, see Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as a Biblical Interpreter*; Cohen, *Three Approaches*; *ibid.*, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*.

<sup>302</sup> For which, see Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1-2, 9:6. For imagistic understandings of these passages, see Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge University Press: 2009), 69-70. See also Esther J. Hamori, "When Gods Were Men": *The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature* (De Gruyter: 2008).

<sup>303</sup> For a comprehensive study of the concept in classical rabbinic Judaism, see Yair Lorberbaum, *In God's Image: Myth, Theology, and Law in Classical Judaism* (Cambridge University Press: 2015). For a distinctly imagistic understanding of *imago dei* in rabbinic thought see Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, version B, # 30, 66.

<sup>304</sup> See John R. Lenz, "Deification of the Philosopher in Classical Greece," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press/Associated University Presses: 2007), eds. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, 59; Guy G. Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity* (The University of Chicago Press: 2009), 12.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot, 10a.

may only be considered to be “in the Divine Image” insofar as “the supernal soul of the human being (*nishmat ha-adam ha-‘elyonah*)” shares something of the divine nature.<sup>306</sup> Like Ibn Ezra, Maimonides adopts a non-imagistic interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27. However, he formulated his understanding in distinctly Aristotelian terms: Since the human intellect is an entelechy of the organism, rather than an emanated entity, the divine image and likeness (*tzelem* and *demut*) consist of the human ability to attain true intellectual insight.<sup>307</sup> Thus, according to Maimonides, one attains the fullest expression of *imago dei* upon achieving intellectual perfection. Tanḥum’s statement that this notion refers to “intellectual apprehension through which human beings are ennobled above other species of animals,” as opposed to the human “form and configuration (*shakl wa-takḥīṭ*),” is directly based on *Guide* I:1.<sup>308</sup>

#### *Concluding remark*

In sum, we have seen that Tanḥum’s classification of the philosophical sciences presents a coherent curriculum of philosophical training, beginning with ethical training and ending with the mastery of the theoretical sciences, the highest of which is metaphysics. Indeed, the

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<sup>306</sup> Namely, immortality and incorporeality; see Ibn Ezra’s commentary to Genesis 1:26. Contrast this with those Jewish exegetes who saw the fullest expression of *imago dei* in *imitatio dei* – namely, in the ability of human beings to live in a mode that mirrors that of the Divine. For example, see Saadia’s *Tafsīr* to Gen. 1:26: “Let us make a human being in our image [and] in our likeness [insofar as that human is] appointed as an overlord (*musallaṭan*)...” (In *Oeuvres Complètes de R. Saadia ben Iosef al-Fayyūmī*, ed. J. Derenbourg (E. Leroux: 1893), vol. 1, 6. Cf. also the Qur’ān’s account of the creation of Adam as the appointment of a ruler representative of God (*khalīfa*; in *Sūrat al-baqara* [2], 30). Maimonides makes a sharp distinction between the concepts of *imago dei* and *imitatio dei*; for which, see my article “*Imago* and *imitatio*: Perfection of the individual and society in Maimonides’ theory of religious law,” in *Law, Religion and Love: A Collection of Essays in Search of Ecumenical Justice*, eds. Paul Babie and Vanja-Ivan Savić (forthcoming).

<sup>307</sup> *Guide* I.1 (Pines, 21-23).

<sup>308</sup> “*Image* [*selem*] and *likeness* [*demuth*]. People have thought that in the Hebrew language *image* denotes the shape and configuration of a thing (*shakl al-shay’ wa-takḥīṭi*). This supposition has led them to the pure doctrine of the corporeality of God, on account of His saying: *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*. (Gen. 1:26) [...] The term *image* [...] is applied to the natural form, I mean to the notion in virtue of which a thing is constituted as a substance and becomes what it is (*al-ma’ nā alladhī bihi tajawhara al-shay’ wa-ṣāra mā huwa*). It is the true reality of the thing in so far as the latter is that particular being. In man that notion is that from which human apprehension (*al-idrāk al-insānī*) derives. It is on account of this intellectual apprehension (*hādḥā al-idrāk al-‘aqlī*) that it is said of man: *In the image of God created He him*. (*Ibid.* 1:27)” ( *Guide* I.1 (Pines, 21-22; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, 14.) See also Abraham Maimonides’ formulation in his commentary to Gen. 1:26, in Wiesenberg, *Perush Rabbenu Avraham ben Ha-Rambam*, 5.

philosophical curriculum is oriented as a whole towards the loftiest ideal of human perfection according to the Maimonidean view: The full realization of *imago dei*. Although his overall approach might be said to be fundamentally Maimonidean, Tanḥum does not appear to be significantly dependant on any single previous classification. Rather, his classification reflects a familiarity with several different enumerations, reformulated into his own coherent account of the philosophical sciences, their content, and purpose.

### Reading Ethics in Qohelet

Although Tanḥum understood Proverbs to be the central Solomonic exposition of ethics, he also identified significant elements of ethical discourse within Qohelet. In the absence of his commentary to Proverbs, his interpretations of such passages provide us with valuable insights into his approach to ethics. In his commentary to Jonah, Tanḥum stated that the acquisition of moral virtues is a necessary element in the soul's perfection and ultimately its salvation.<sup>309</sup> In his classification of the sciences, he wrote that ethics purifies the soul through "the study of virtues and the way in which they might be acquired," and subsequently attempting to acquire those virtues and purge oneself of vices.<sup>310</sup> However, we have yet to see *how* one acquires moral virtue – indeed, we have yet to see *what* Tanḥum conceives it to be.

After stating that Qohelet 4:5-6 refers to the slothful, lazy fool, Tanḥum writes as follows:

...*And I have seen a futility under the sun.* (Qoh. 4:7) Its *taqdīr*<sup>311</sup> based on its context is *And I have seen another futility belonging to another foolish person.* That is, there is another fool (*jāhil ākhir*) who is the opposite of the one mentioned previously, and this one is on the opposite extreme of the aforementioned one insofar as he is alone, without a wife, or child, or companion,

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<sup>309</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 131; passage translated above, p.130.

<sup>310</sup> See Tanḥum's account of ethics in his classification of the sciences, MS Pococke 320, 73a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24; cited above.

<sup>311</sup> For Tanḥum's use of this exegetical term, and its Islamic and Judeo-Arabic background, see above, pp.49-51.

or next of kin, or heir. However, his wealth is great, and he has extensive acquisitions. Despite this, he remains terribly distressed, extremely covetous, and greatly pained and burning [with desire] to increase his wealth, due to the greatness of his greed. But he will not allow himself to procure anything from his wealth, or to consume anything of it, and he does not take pleasure [in it]. This, then, is the extreme end of blame and greed, just as the first one is at the other extreme of debasement and insensitivity through pleasure and laziness. The former considers (or is deluded) that this is decency and piety; just as the second imagines this to be (or is deluded that it is) advancement, valiance, and proper management. But in reality, both of them are on two extremes of the vices (*fa-inna al-ithnayn fī ṭarafay al-radhā'il*), although the first is healthier than the second, and more receptive to treatment in the return to moderation (*wa-aqrab li-qubūl al-'ilāj fī al-rujū' ilā al-i'tidāl*). The preferable, recommended [form of] moderation is the intermediate position between these two dispositions (*wa-'l-i'tidāl al-mukhtār*<sup>312</sup> *al-mandūb ilayhi huwa al-tawassuṭ bayn hādhayn al-khulqayn*) – neither an excess of greed and blame and miserliness, nor an excess of laziness and debasement and abandoning oneself to languor. For both extremes are a vice.<sup>313</sup>

Following Ibn Ezra *ad loc.*, Tanḥum understands this verse to oppose two different modes of folly: One pertaining to the pleasure-seeking sloth, and other to hard-driven and ambitious hoarder.<sup>314</sup> According to Tanḥum's understanding, these two vices stand at opposite ends of a spectrum, in the middle of which lies virtue, i.e., moderation (*i'tidāl*). Although these opposing tendencies both constitute vices, Tanḥum acknowledges that one of these ends of the spectrum is

<sup>312</sup> Following MS London (Margoliouth 207; reel no. F 6466 in the National Library of Israel), which reads אלמכתאר (*al-mukhtār*); against MS Poccocke 320, which reads אלמתאכר (*al-muta'akhkhir*). For this reading, see Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 55, and fn. 3.

<sup>313</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 111a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 55.

<sup>314</sup> Ibn Ezra qualifies the fool of Qoh. 4:5 as belonging to the class of "slothful fools (*kesilim 'atzelim*).” (See his commentary *ad loc.*) In his commentary to 4:7, he writes: “I returned from observing the matters of this fool, and saw another fool [who was] the opposite of the first.” He goes on to explain this this fool constantly toils to acquire further riches, despite already having attained considerable wealth, and is never satisfied. For the hedonistic disposition of the first “fool”, who is apparently dominated by the appetitive or vegetative soul, cf. Ibn Ezra's commentary to Qoh. 7:3.

more easily guided towards the mean than the other, viz. the ambitious hoarder.<sup>315</sup> (The basis for Tanḥum's preference of one vice over the other will be discussed below.)

Based on this passage, it may be said that Tanḥum broadly accepts Maimonides' account of ethics. Although both Bahya Ibn Paquda and Judah Ha-Levi advocated moderation (*i'tidāl*),<sup>316</sup> it was Maimonides who most clearly (and influentially) articulated a theory of ethics based on the Aristotelian conception of the Golden Mean.<sup>317</sup> For example, in the *Mishneh torah*, Maimonides writes as follows:

Each and every human being has many dispositions, each one different and completely distant from the other. There may be a wrathful person, constantly angry; and [another] person who is placid, and never becomes angry at all – or if he does, he only becomes a little angry over the course of many years. Or there may be a person who is exceedingly haughty, and another who is exceedingly lowly in spirit; one who is gluttonous and whose desire to pursue his appetites is never satiated, and one of very pure heart who does not even desire the minimal things that the body requires... [...] In this manner are all dispositions...

[...]

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<sup>315</sup> Contrast this with Ibn Ghiyāth's statement that the mode of folly introduced in Qoh. 4:7 is the most severe (*aṣ'ab*). See Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 213.

<sup>316</sup> For Bahya's attitude, see Naḥem Ilan, "Al-I'tidāl al-Sharīf: Another Examination of the Perception of Asceticism in *The Duties of the Heart* of Bahya," in *Revue des études juives* 164 (2005), 449-461; Howard Kreisel, "Asceticism in the Thought of R. Bahya Ibn Paquda and Maimonides," in *Da'at* 21 (1988), 5-22. For his use of the term *i'tidāl* in the context of prescribing a qualified asceticism, see *ibid.*, 10. For Ha-Levi's conception of moderation, and his use of the term *i'tidāl*, see Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's Kuzari* (State University of New York Press: 2000), 46. For the likelihood of Tanḥum's integration of at least one aspect of Ha-Levi's discussion into his ethical-psychological theory, cf. the passage cited and discussed by Lobel (*ibid.*) and Tanḥum's reference to the rational soul growing "strong and wiser than those faculties, and govern[ing] them adequately, so that each one gets that which it deserves and needs (for that is what they were created for) in the appropriate quantity and at the necessary time." (MS Poccocke 320, 131a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 67.)

<sup>317</sup> For Maimonides' ethics in general, see Herbert A. Davidson, "The Middle Way in Maimonides' Ethics," in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 54 (1987) 31-72; Raymond L. Weiss, *Maimonides' Ethics: The Encounter of Philosophic and Religious Morality* (The University of Chicago Press: 1991). Maimonides' ethical thought was anchored in turn in the Greco-Arabic philosophical tradition. For the transmission of classical Greek sources into Arabic, and their integration and adaption into Islamic ethical thought alongside the teachings of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, see Bazat-Tahera Qutbuddin, "Healing the Soul: Perspectives of Medieval Muslim Writers," in *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 2:2 (1995), 62-87.

The two opposite extremes of any disposition are not good path, and one should not follow them or habituate oneself to them. If one finds one's nature tending towards one [extreme], or prone to one [extreme], or [if one] has become habituated to one [extreme] and behaves according to it, one should bring oneself back to the ideal and travel the path of the good – that is, the upright path.

The upright path is the median attribute within each and every disposition that a person has, that being the disposition that is of equal distance from the two extremes, closer neither to one nor to the other...<sup>318</sup>

According to Maimonides, if one's character tends towards one extreme – that is to say, a vice – one must habituate oneself to the opposite mode of behavior in order to bring one's dispositions to the mean. Although the practice of excess in a corrective context may be necessary, Maimonides makes it clear that the ultimate purpose of such training is to return to the mean disposition, balanced between the two extremes.

The anthropological underpinnings of Tanhum's ethical theory are perhaps most clearly reflected in his commentary to Qohelet 7:3, in which he writes as follows:

*Better is anger than revelry... (Qoh. 7:3)*

It has already been noted that in *Solomon's* discourse – according to the apparent sense of its formulations – there is much contradiction. But there is no contradiction in the meanings [of these formulations] if you contemplate them. And we have already explained some of them above. And his statement here is one such contradiction: *Better is anger than revelry (Qoh. 7:3)*; then he states, *For anger resides in the breast of fools (ibid., 7:9)*. He [also] states, *For in much wisdom is much anger (ibid., 1:18)*; and its opposite is *and remove anger from your heart (ibid., 11:10)*.

And its explanation and purpose have been offered above, and its secret has been unveiled. And

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<sup>318</sup> *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Character Traits, 1:1-4.

he states, *it is good that one should eat and drink* (*ibid.*, 5:17); and its contrary, *it is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting* (*ibid.*, 7:2). [...] And one who contemplates them can find many such examples. [...]

There is no doubt that the human soul may be divided into three parts, by which I mean that three functions arise from it (*a'nī anna yaşduru 'anhā thalātha af'āl*), each agent of [these functions] being called a soul (*yusammā kull fā'il minhā nafs*). They are the physical, the animal, and the rational [soul] (*wa-hiya al-ṭabī'iyya wa-'l-ḥayawāniyya wa-'l-nuṭqiyya*).

When the physical [soul] triumphs and dominates [the other facets of the soul], the appetites grow strong, and the love of pleasure waxes mighty. Therefore, anyone who pursues the goals of this soul will not attain wisdom.

When the animal [soul] triumphs and dominates, the flames of anger are awakened, and vengeance, and the quest for rulership, and authority, and honor, and the love of wealth, and similar such examples of imaginary self-aggrandizement. This extinguishes the light of wisdom, and taints the luster of the rational soul.

When the rational [soul] grows strong and wiser than those faculties, and governs them adequately (*wa-dabbarat|hā al-tadbīr al-wājib*), so that each one gets that which it deserves and needs (for that is what they were created for) in the appropriate quantity and at the necessary time (as shall be elucidated in the commentary on *Alas for you, O land whose king is immature*<sup>319</sup> etc. [Qoh. 10:16] and *Happy are you, O land whose king is free* [Qoh. 10:17]) – then the lights of the rational soul grow strong, its wisdom gleams, it connects to its source, and acquires [knowledge of] the true nature of things from it, and it unites with its absolute perfection and its perpetual felicity, without hindrance or prevention from those rivals that were appointed to serve it by benefitting the body, not to hinder it from its very essence.

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<sup>319</sup> For this interpretation, see Tanḥum's commentary *ad loc.*, in Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 98; and Hebrew translation in *ibid.*, 183.

So [the rational soul] seeks help from each one of [these parts of the soul] in breaking its fellow, and occupies itself only with its own perfection. For laughter, amusement, and merrymaking follow the quest for pleasure; while anger, pride, and the quest for rulership and power destroy laughter and play. A leisurely life in pursuit of pleasures, and play, and pleasure [sic],<sup>320</sup> and laughter, necessarily produces a paucity in the soul's ambition; while rulership, anger, and the quest for honor and authority necessarily bring about the soul's haughtiness and a rise in ambition – and this is more noble without doubt, and certainly closer to the path of wisdom. [Thus] he stated, *Better is anger than revelry*. (Qoh. 7:3)

But concerning a person who allows the wrathful soul to govern the rational [soul], so that it becomes overwhelming and overpowering, and a person becomes habituated to this, and he establishes an angry disposition, and he destroys his ethical [virtues] and knowledge (*wa-yutlifu khulqiyyātahu wa-ma 'arīfahu*) – as it says in *Proverbs*, *Do not associate with an angry person etc. Lest you learn his ways, and find yourself ensnared* (Proverbs 22:24-25) – [in such a case,] the intellectual forms are unable to become manifest in their [proper] time. As the ancients<sup>321</sup> (*may their memory be a blessing*) said, *One who becomes angry – if he is a sage, his wisdom departs from him; and if he is a prophet, his prophecy departs from him.*<sup>322</sup> And they inferred this from *Elisha* (*may peace be upon him*) and *Jacob our ancestor* (*may peace be upon him*), who lacked [the ability to attain] revelation when wrathful or angry (*alladhī 'adimū al-wahy 'inda al-ghayd* [sic] *wa-'l-ḥaraj*). And *Elisha* had to stimulate gaiety and eliminate that symptom. Thus he said, *Now then, get me a musician, etc.* (2 Kings 3:15) As for *Jacob*, revelation returned to him when he received the news concerning *Joseph*, as the verse states, *and the spirit of Jacob their father was revived*. (Gen. 45:27) The targumist explained, *and the spirit of prophecy rested upon*

<sup>320</sup> Arabic: *wa-ṭibat al-'aysh li-talab al-ladhkhāt wa-la 'b wa-'l-ladhha...*

<sup>321</sup> Arabic: *al-awā'il*. For Tanḥum's use of this term to refer to the rabbis, see above, p.60, p.161; and below, p.393-394, and notes.

<sup>322</sup> See Baylonian Talmud, Pesahim 66b.

*Jacob their father.*<sup>323</sup> Therefore, his statement that *Better is anger than revelry* (Qoh. 7:3) is not [to be understood] in an absolute sense, but rather it is in relation to *revelry*, which derives from frivolity, folly, and ignorance, as he states, *Of revelry I said: "It is ignorant!"*<sup>324</sup> (Qoh. 2:2) Therefore do you see that the only people who laugh, jest, and play around excessively are youngsters or juveniles, with weak intellects, over whom passion (*al-shahwa*) rules most strongly.<sup>325</sup> But the elderly and the mature, whose flame of passion has been extinguished, and whose excitable humors have subsided, tend for the most part towards precise observance of etiquette, haughtiness, demanding respect (*ḍabṭ al-nāmūs wa-kibr al-naḥs wa-ṭalab al-ḥurma*); and [they tend towards] gravity by showing a stern face, and eschewing play, laughter, and frivolity. Therefore [does he say], *for though the face may be stern, the heart is glad.* (Qoh. 7:3) That is to say, "The consequence of sternness of the face, when it comes from cogitation and reflection and the pursuit of virtue, is gaiety and joy (*baṣṭa wa-farah*)."

Therefore, despite being blameworthy and an unfitting disposition in reality, *anger* is more inclined towards the correct course than *revelry*, which is thought to be praiseworthy although it is in reality one of the greatest deficiencies and vices.<sup>326</sup>

In his critique of anger in this passage, Tanḥum is clearly influenced by Maimonides.<sup>327</sup> In this case, Tanḥum is also almost certainly dependent on Abraham Maimonides' *Kitāb kifāyat al-*

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Targum Onqelos *ad loc.* Tanḥum's citation differs from the standard editions of the Targum insofar as it reads "the spirit of prophecy (*ruaḥ nebu'ah*)" in place of "the holy spirit (*ruaḥ qudsha*)."

<sup>324</sup> Understanding the lexeme *meholal* as explained by Tanḥum in his commentary *ad loc.*, where he translates *meholal* as *jāhil* (MS Poccocke 320, 85b; Zoref *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 34).

<sup>325</sup> For the association of the vegetative faculty with desire (*shahwa*), cf. Text E in Franz Rosenthal, "Aš-Šhayḥ al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source (Continued)," in *Orientalia* 22 (1953), 378-381.

<sup>326</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 130b-132a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 66-68. Cf. Tanḥum's commentary to Qohelet 1:17-18 (MS Poccocke 320, 84a-85a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 33-34), where he notes the prevalence of contradictions in Qohelet, citing the talmudic statement: "Is it not enough that your words contradict those of your father, that they must also contradict one another?" (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 30a) Here he also divides the contradictions in this book into linguistic ambiguities and ambiguities pertaining to the meaning (which require particularization or specification, *tafṣīl*), the latter fitting our case more closely.

<sup>327</sup> *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Character Traits, 2:3. Note in particular Maimonides' citation of the Babylonian Talmud, Pesahim 66b. For a discussion of anger in Maimonides' thought, see Tamar M. Rudavsky, *Maimonides* (Wiley-

‘*ābidīn*.<sup>328</sup> However, despite the singular condemnation of anger that one encounters in his sources, Tanḥum still concludes that the animalistic disposition is preferable to the vegetative, as it is more easily guided towards the mean.<sup>329</sup>

In proposing a psychological solution to the tension between contradictory verses – in this case the preference of anger over revelry in Qohelet 7:3 and the condemnation of anger in Qohelet 11:10 – Tanḥum follows the precedent set by Ibn Ezra. While earlier exegetes had proposed a wide range of solutions to this problem, from expanding the semantic range of the Hebrew root *k-‘-s* to providing specific context for the verse,<sup>330</sup> Ibn Ezra grounded his resolution of the tension between conflicting verses in the Solomonic corpus in his tripartite Platonic-Galenic psychology. Ibn Ezra prefaces his treatment of the verse with a short excursus on the soul and its vegetative, animal, and rational faculties. He then presents the problem of contradictions, noting extent to which it disturbed the rabbis, and stating that some have even gone so far as to propose

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Blackwell: 2010), 168-170; Joshua Parens, *Maimonides and Spinoza: Their Conflicting Views of Human Nature* (The University of Chicago Press: 2012), 35, 37-38.

<sup>328</sup> See Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 2, 52-53. Note the citation of Gen. 45:27 with the Targum, and the citation of 2 Kings 3:15.

<sup>329</sup> Cf. *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Character Traits, 1:1-2.

<sup>330</sup> For the former solution, see Yefet b. Eli’s statement that *ka‘as* denotes both the Arabic *ghamm* (sorrow, distress) and *ghayḍ* [i.e., *ghayẓ*] (anger), the former being praiseworthy and the latter not. See Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 11 and fn.10. This solution is echoed in Tanḥum’s commentary, where he states that *ka‘as* is a homonym (*ism mushtarik*), referring to anger (*ghayḍ*; i.e., *ghayẓ*), suffering (*alam*), and misery (*tanakkud*; with variant *ta‘ab* [weariness, toil]). See MS Pococke 320, 84b-85a, Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 34; and cf. the meanings of the term offered by Ibn Janāḥ in Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 328. Ibn Ghiyāth defines *ka‘as* as “sorrow, despair, and weariness (*al-ḍajar wa-‘l-qanaṭ wa-‘l-baram*).” Against the background of this definition, Ibn Ghiyāth offers two closely related contextualizing interpretations for the verse, the first extolling suffering (*ālām*) in the lower world (*al-dunyā*) over rejoicing, and the second prescribing sorrow (*ḍajar*) and despair (*qanaṭ*) concerning it. For rabbinic background to the ideal of suffering in this world as potentially purifying and transformative, see Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma‘el*, Tractate Ba-ḥodesh X, 344-348. After offering his own interpretation, Ibn Ghiyāth provides three more contextualizing possibilities: A classical rabbinic one ascribed to “the aggadists (*ahl al-haggadah*)”, who applied the verse to King David’s parenting of Absalom (cf. *Qohelet Rabbah* 7:3); another interpretation attributed to “some [or: one] of the elders (*ba‘ḍ al-shuyūkh*)”, stating that anger towards the wicked is more in the latter’s interest that forbearance; and finally, an interpretation that the anger of the wise (*ghaḍab al-ḥakīm*) is better than the laughter of the ignorant (*ḍaḥk al-jāhil*). (See Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 237.) Salmon b. Yeroḥam offers a similar contextualizing solution: Anger *at* fools is better than rejoicing *with* them, and has a more salubrious effect on the righteous person’s heart. (See Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 404-405.) The Talmud contextualizes this statement from God’s perspective: God’s anger at the righteous in this world is better than His mocking laughter at the wicked in the world to come. (See bTalmud, Shabbat 30b).

multiple authorship of Qohelet.<sup>331</sup> In contrast, accepting the traditional Solomonic attribution of the work, Ibn Ezra proposes a psychological solution.<sup>332</sup> A person who is dominated by their vegetative faculty (*nefesh*) – engendering the desire for carnal pleasures and consumption – must arouse the animal faculty (*ruah*) to subdue it. This is the basis of verses extolling anger, such as Qohelet 7:3. One who achieves this enables one’s rational soul (*neshamah*) to attain a limited degree of philosophical insight, but still cannot master more advanced material.<sup>333</sup> The next stage involves the rational soul’s direct subjugation of the animal faculty, by occupying itself with wisdom.<sup>334</sup> In his Hebrew terminology for the tripartite psychology, Ibn Ezra explicitly follows Saadia.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> This is quite distinct from the positions of Yefet b. Eli and Samuel b. Meir (Rashbam), who distinguished between the authorship of the body of Qohelet and its framing verses. See Rashbam’s commentary to Qoh. 1:2, where he states that “Qohelet did not author these two verses, [...] but rather the one who arranged the discourses as they are (*oto she-sidder ha-debarim kemot she-hen*).” He returns to this theme in his commentary to Qoh. 12:8, stating that from that point until the end of the book is the addition of “those who arranged it (*otan asher sidderuhu*).” For Yefet’s attribution of these verses to “the redactor (*al-mudawwin*)”, see Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 11 and fn. 5 and 6. As noted by Zoref (*ibid.*), neither of these exegetes proposes true multiple authorship. In contrast, the view raised and rejected by Ibn Ezra is precisely that: “he stated that [Qohelet’s] disciples composed the book, each according to his own reasoning (*ve-amar ki talmidav hibberu ha-sefer ve-khol ehad amar ke-fi mahashabto*).” (Commentary to Qoh. 7:3.) He rejects this position based on the consistent use of the first person. Ibn Ezra’s account of those who subscribe to multiple authorship of Qohelet is repeated by Tanḥum in *Al-kulliyāt* – see *ibid.*, 12 and fn. 3.

<sup>332</sup> For Saadia as Ibn Ezra’s predecessor in formulating such a solution to the problem of obvious contradictions in Qohelet, see above, p.166-167. Tanḥum adopts a general approach very similar to that of Saadia and Ibn Ezra: If Qohelet 1:1-11 is a general meditation on the cyclical quality of natural processes, and the subsequent portions of the work represent specific perspectives, then the perspectives described concerning human dispositions are intentionally contradictory so that they might qualify and moderate one another. Tanḥum writes as follows: “Know that from the beginning of the *book* until here [i.e., Qoh. 1:11], *Solomon* spoke in an inclusive and general manner concerning the elements and causes and beings as a whole. From here he begins to specify and explain matters that occur to the mind and arise in people’s suppositions and thoughts. This is why he began at [this point] in the same way that he began the opening of the *book*, and said *I am Qohelet, I was king* (1:12).” (MS Pococke 320, 81b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 31.) For the masoretic section (*parashah*) that concludes with Qoh. 1:11 as the Solomon’s introduction, cf. Samuel Ibn Tibbon’s commentary (Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon’s Commentary*, 35, 179-180).

<sup>333</sup> Ibn Ezra (*ad loc.*) states that the *neshamah* or rational soul then attains some knowledge of “the sciences of the bodies (*hokhmot ha-geviyyot*).” While the *ruah* rules, the *neshamah* “is unable to know higher sciences, due to the strength of the *ruah* which seeks authority and begets anger (*lo tukhal lada’at ha-hokhmot ha-elyonot ba’abur koah ha-ruah ha-mebaqqeshet serarah ve-hi molidah ha-ka’as*).”

<sup>334</sup> “After the *neshamah* overcomes the *nefesh* with the *ruah*’s assistance, the *neshamah* must occupy itself with wisdom, so that [wisdom] might help it defeat the *ruah*.”

<sup>335</sup> After presenting the Hebrew terminology and explaining its relationship to the tripartite soul, Ibn Ezra states that “thus too did our master Saadia Gaon, may his memory be a blessing, divide them.” (See his commentary *ad loc.*) Indeed, Saadia explains the Hebrew terms *nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah* in precisely this fashion when presenting his

Tanḥum's reliance on Ibn Ezra in this context could not be clearer. Like Ibn Ezra, Tanḥum resolves overt contradictions in Qohelet by resorting to his tripartite psychology; and like Ibn Ezra, the content of Qohelet 7:3 informs Tanḥum's preference of the "animal" traits over the "vegetative". That is to say that, although such a disposition remains a vice, it is better than its opposite vice in relative terms.<sup>336</sup>

However, Tanḥum departs from Ibn Ezra in one significant way: He entirely disregards the progressive quality of Ibn Ezra's account. That is to say that the rational soul does not *first* engage the animal soul in order to defeat the vegetative soul, and *then* subdue the animal soul in partnership with wisdom; rather, it employs the two lower faculties to mutually moderate one another, apparently simultaneously. In framing the matter in this way, Tanḥum remains much closer to their mutual source for this method: Ibn Sīnā's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*.<sup>337</sup> In that work, after offering the narrator advice on the negative traits of his three companions (representing the imagination, the animal faculty, and the vegetative faculty),<sup>338</sup> the sage Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān advises him as follows:

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theory of the tripartite soul – see Qafilī, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot*, 201; Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 243-244. See also Y. Tzvi Langermann, "Some Astrological Themes in the Thought of Abraham ibn Ezra," in *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra: Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth-Century Jewish Polymath*, eds. Isadore Twersky and Jay M. Harris (Harvard University Press: 1993), 54-55.

<sup>336</sup> Ibn Ezra states that "when the *nefesh* grows strong, the *neshamah* grows weak and is unable to resist it... Therefore, one who occupies oneself with eating and drinking will never grow wise."

<sup>337</sup> For Tanḥum's familiarity with that work, see above, p.334. For Ibn Ezra's Hebrew version of Ibn Sīnā's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, see *Ḥay ben Meqitz*, ed. Yisrael Levin (The Katz Research Institute for Hebrew Literature, Tel Aviv University: 1983). See also Aaron Hughes, "The Three Worlds of Ibn Ezra's *Ḥay ben Meqitz*," in *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 11:1 (2002), 1-24. See also Steven Harvey, "Avicenna's Influence on Jewish Thought: Some Reflections," in *Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann (Brepols: 2009), 330-331.

<sup>338</sup> Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton University Press: 1960), 140. Cf. Ibn Sīnā's discussion of the relationship between the rational, vegetative, and animal souls in an ethical context, cited in Gutas, *Avicenna*, 290. For this as Ibn Ezra's interpretation of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, cf. his terminology in *Ḥay ben Meqitz* (ed. Levin, 55 and notes), and compare his commentary to Qoh. 7:3; and see Hughes, "The Three Worlds," 8 (where he employs the Platonic terminology; note the Galenic identification of the parts of the Platonic soul with the Aristotelian categories of the vegetable, animal, and rational, discussed above, p.139-140).

As for stratagems and effectual means to which thou canst have recourse in respect to these companions, there is one that consists in subduing the slack and gluttonous companion by the help of the one who is violent and malicious, and in forcing the former to retreat. Conversely, another way will be gradually to moderate the passion of the intolerable angry one by the seduction of the gentle and caressing companion, until he is completely satisfied.<sup>339</sup>

Tanḥum's formulation reflects Ibn Sīnā's account more closely than does Ibn Ezra, both in his account of the simultaneous and mutual opposition of the vegetative and animal faculties as a means for moderating these impulses, and in certain elements of his Arabic terminology.<sup>340</sup>

In the background to both Tanḥum and Ibn Ezra is another source, namely Saadia Gaon. Saadia shared the tripartite psychology that forms such a central part of Ibn Ezra's and Tanḥum's respective interpretations of Qohelet 7:3, and Ibn Ezra (*ad loc.*) refers explicitly to Saadia in this context.<sup>341</sup> It is Saadia who first understood the contradictions in Qohelet (at least in the context of psychological dispositions) to balance one another out, helping the individual to attain an

<sup>339</sup> Translation from Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 139-140; for Arabic, see Mehren, *Traités Mystiques*, fasc. 1, 5-6. In this passage, Ibn Sīnā strikingly echoes Plato's motif of the soul as a chariot-rider driving two horses of differing temperaments in *Phaedrus* 253d-256e. However, in the Platonic account, one horse is black, misshapen, ill-tempered, and unresponsive; whereas the other is white, virtuous, and obedient. In Ibn Sīnā's account, both opposing elements are essentially negative, but may be managed to one's advantage if properly manipulated. On the fragmented and unsystematic transmission of Platonic sources in Arabic, see Franz Rosenthal, "On the Knowledge of Plato's Philosophy in the Islamic World," in *Islamic Culture* 14 (1940), 387-422; Paul E. Walker, "Platonisms in Islamic Philosophy," in *Studia Islamica* 79 (1994), 5-25; Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Plato arabico-latinus: Philosophy – Wisdom Literature – Occult Sciences," in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, eds. Stephen Gersh and Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen (Walter de Gruyter: 2002), 31-65.

<sup>340</sup> For parallels in terminology, compare Tanḥum's statement that the rational soul "seeks help from each one of [these parts of the soul] in breaking its fellow (*tasta 'in 'alā kasr kull wāḥida minhunna bi-rafiqatihā*)" with Ibn Sīnā's *fa-taksiruhu kasran*, understood by Corbin to denote routing ("forcing the former to retreat"). Compare also Tanḥum's reference to the triumph (*zuhūr*) of one faculty over the other with Ḥayy Ibn Yaqqān's instruction to the narrator to "overcome them (*istazhar 'alayhim*)". See Mehren, *Traités Mystiques*, fasc. 1, 5-6. In his commentary to Qoh. 7:3, Ibn Ezra uses the Hebrew roots *g-b-r* (wax mighty, overcome) and *n-tz-h* (in form II [*pi'el*]; be victorious, defeat). In *Ḥay ben Meqītz*, he uses the root *k-n-* (subdue): "Subdue the foolish one with the desirous one, and the desirous one with the fool (*hakhna ' ha-shoteh me-hem ba-mit 'avveh ve-ha-mit 'avveh ba-shoteh*)." (Levin, *Ḥay ben Meqītz*, 55.) Both Ibn Sīnā and Tanḥum emphasize *i'tidāl*: Tanḥum states that "the point is that you should travel [the path] of moderation and temperance in all matters (*al-qaṣd an tasluka fī jamī' umūrika 'alā al-tawassuṭ wa-'l-i'tidāl*)" (MS Pococke 320, 139b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 73); compare Ibn Sīnā in Mehren, *Traités Mystiques*, fasc. 1, 5.

<sup>341</sup> For Saadia's discussion of the tripartite soul, see Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibhar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot*, 201; Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 243-244. Cf. also Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibhar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot*, 290; Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 360.

equilibrium between competing impulses. By emphasizing the attainment of a balance between competing impulses, Tanḥum echoes Saadia’s conception of psychological balance as an ethical ideal.<sup>342</sup> Apart from the three “mundane ambitions” that he associated with Qohelet, Saadia articulates a highly developed ethical theory, according to which the various impulses that a human being experiences must simultaneously be affirmed and constrained.<sup>343</sup> He identifies thirteen “principle desires (*‘uyūn al-maḥābb*)” that each occupy their place in the life of a human being, but are destructive when one becomes dominant. According to Saadia, these desires must be taken together (*jumi‘at*) and balanced against each other in order to attain “total correctness (*al-ṣawāb al-maḥḍ*).”<sup>344</sup> The proper proportion of each category (*fann*) is dictated by both wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) and revealed law (*al-sharī‘a*).<sup>345</sup> Saadia’s more basic “three classes of objects of mundane ambition” – which he associates with Qohelet, as discussed above<sup>346</sup> – also appear to

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<sup>342</sup> For Saadia’s approach to ethics, including this conception, see Efros, “Saadia’s General Ethical Theory,” particularly 167-168; Menachem Kellner, “The Place of Ethics in Medieval Jewish Philosophy – the Case of Saadia Gaon,” in *Shofar* 9:1 (1990), 32-47; Eliezer Goldman, “The Ethical Theory of R. Sa’adiah Gaon,” in *Daat* 2-3 (1978-1979), 7-28.

<sup>343</sup> Now just as the material objects do not consist of just one of the four elements [of which they are said to be composed], and the body of the trees cannot exist with only one of the parts mentioned by us, and man cannot live if he has bone or flesh alone – in fact, even the heavens are not illuminated by just one star – so, too, man’s conduct in the course of his lifetime cannot logically be based on just a single trait (*bi-khulq wāḥida*). But just as in each instance the final product is the result of a combination of ingredients in larger or smaller proportions, so too, is man’s behavior the resultant of a combination of his likes and dislikes in varying proportions. (English from Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 358; Arabic original and Hebrew translation in Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de‘ot*, 288.)

<sup>344</sup> See Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de‘ot*, 319; compare English translation in Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 399. Interestingly, Saadia describes an imbalance in such impulses in Hebrew terms borrowed from Qoh. 1:15 (*a twisted thing, wanting*; Heb. *me‘uvvat ve-ḥesron*). This interpretation is not reflected in Tanḥum’s commentary *ad loc*.

<sup>345</sup> See Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de‘ot*, 319; Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 399. We may hear an echo of Saadia’s conception also in Tanḥum’s conception of “philosophical moderation (*al-tawassuṭ al-ḥikmī*)”: “*Be not excessively righteous, and act not the wise man to excess...* (Qoh. 7:16) When these two faculties [the vegetative and the animal faculties] become influential according to their nature, and they achieve their goals according to their animal nature, the human being perishes through the extinction of the light of the intellect, and the extinction of the torch of the soul – this being expansive darkness. But when one travels the path according to wise moderation (*al-tarīq ‘alā al-tawassuṭ al-ḥikmī*), providing these two faculties with that which they deserve, through which they are created to endure – that is wisdom and proper conduct.” (MS Pockocke 320, 138b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 72.)

<sup>346</sup> For which, see above, p.165-166.

be anchored in his tripartite division of the soul.<sup>347</sup> In any case, his formulation foreshadows that of Tanḥum. Indeed, although Saadia's account of ethics is complicated by a degree of contradiction (or at the very least eclecticism), his conception of the balanced human life most closely echoes Peripatetic sources.<sup>348</sup>

Another source that shares close parallels with Tanḥum's discussion of the intellectual soul's guidance of the animal and vegetative souls is *Kitāb ma'ānī al-nafs* (Book of Concepts of the Soul).<sup>349</sup> Tanḥum and *Ma'ānī al-nafs* share an emanationist theory of the soul's origin, as well as their tripartite psychology.<sup>350</sup> According to the ethical theory of *Ma'ānī al-nafs*, the intellectual soul must train the animal and vegetative souls in order to render them virtuous, guiding them towards the mean.<sup>351</sup> Indeed, the author states that when such virtue of the souls (or faculties) is attained, the lower faculties reflect the nature of the intellectual soul and they all become luminous.<sup>352</sup> This bears some resemblance to Tanḥum's formulation, when he states that "when

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<sup>347</sup> See Efros, "Saadia's General Ethical Theory," 167-168.

<sup>348</sup> For a comparison and contrast between Saadia's approach to ethics and that of Aristotle (and the Stoics, Mu'tazilites, and others), see Efros, "Saadia's General Ethical Theory," 169-172; Goldman, "The Ethical Theory of R. Sa'adiah Gaon," 22-28.

<sup>349</sup> For alternative translations of the title, see Isaac Husik, *A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy* (Dover Publications: 2002), 106. For the Arabic original, see *Kitāb ma'ānī al-nafs (Buch vom Wesen der Seele)*, ed. Ignác Goldziher (Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse: 1907). For a Hebrew translation, see Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*. For an discussion of the work, its misattribution to Bahya Ibn Paquda, and its general contents, see Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 106-113. For the likelihood of a late (or mid-) eleventh to early twelfth century dating of the work, see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 25.

<sup>350</sup> For the emanationist psychology in *Ma'ānī al-nafs*, see Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 108. For the author's tripartite psychology, see Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 2, 7, 25-26, 28-29, and throughout; Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 111-12.

<sup>351</sup> For the virtues and vices of the two lower souls, and the attainment of virtue as contingent on their obedience to the rational soul, see Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 7, 25-26, 79-81; see Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 111-112.

<sup>352</sup> According to *Ma'ānī al-nafs*, through the process of successive emanation, the soul accretes layers of veils that dim its original light – see Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 70-75; Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 110-111.

the rational [soul] grows strong and wiser than those faculties, and governs them adequately, [...] the lights of the rational soul grow strong, its wisdom gleams...”<sup>353</sup>

The similarity between Tanḥum’s treatment and that of *Ma’ānī al-nafs* is striking, but once again, it should also not obscure the differences between them. For the author of *Ma’ānī al-nafs*, each faculty of the soul has its virtuous mean, towards which it should be guided by the intellectual soul.<sup>354</sup> In positing the essential goodness of each of the soul’s faculties, *Ma’ānī al-nafs* follows most closely in the footsteps of Saadia.<sup>355</sup> In contrast, Tanḥum views the animal and vegetative elements of the soul as fundamentally destructive – indeed, they constitute two opposing extremes or vices. The mean towards which Tanḥum strives is between these two impulses, so that they might constrain each other. But when they are in equilibrium, *they* do not become luminous or virtuous – the *intellectual soul* becomes luminous, and the individual as a whole is said to be virtuous. Still, *Ma’ānī al-nafs* provides an important precedent for the explicit synthesis of an Aristotelian ethics of the mean with the Platonic-Galenic tripartite psychology. It seems that Saadia’s model of the intellect (*‘aql*) moderating the impulses of the human organism (nature, *ṭabī‘a*) provides a precedent for both *Ma’ānī al-nafs* and Tanḥum, for whom the rational soul (*nafs nāṭiqā*) is the governing agent in attaining balance between competing human impulses.<sup>356</sup>

At this point, we might say that Tanḥum’s ethical theory reflects an Aristotelian-Maimonidean conception of the Golden Mean, and that he frames that theory in terms of the Platonic-Galenic psychology that he shared with so many medieval thinkers. However, this view of Tanḥum’s

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<sup>353</sup> Cf. also Saadia’s comparison of the faculties of the soul to the stars in the night sky. Tanḥum’s description of the rational soul as it “governs [the animal and vegetative faculties] adequately (*wa-dabbarathā al-tadbīr al-wājib*)” also reflects contemporaneous philosophical terminology, insofar as the Peripatetics define ethics as “governance of the self” (*tadbīr al-nafs, tadbīr al-shakḥ nafṣahu*). See above, p.200; p.241 and fn. 343.

<sup>354</sup> Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 111-112.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. Efros, “Saadia’s General Ethical Theory,” 167.

<sup>356</sup> Efros, “Saadia’s General Ethical Theory,” 169-172; Goldman, “The Ethical Theory of R. Sa’adiah Gaon,” 10-12.

understanding of the process of ethical cultivation is somewhat complicated by the following passage:

*To the man who pleases Him, He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy (ḥokhmah ve-da'at ve-simḥah)... (Qoh. 2:26)*

That is, the perfect human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) whose way is pleasing to God is the one to whom He provides a soul that is not occupied with any corporeal matters, and does not demand enjoyment, and is only occupied with wisdom and knowledge (*bi-'l-ḥikam wa-'l-ma'ārif*), and [such a person] is happy with what sustenance he gets, whether it be much or little. That is, he has attained contentment, satisfaction, and joy with his lot in this physical existence. As they (*may their memory be a blessing*) said, *Who is rich? One who is happy with his lot (ha-sameaḥ be-ḥelqo)*. (Mishnah, Tractate Abot 4:1) And the scholars (*al-ḥukamā*) say: “The definition of wealth is contentment (*ḥadd al-ghanā' al-qanā'a*).” Therefore, concerning this he stated, *and knowledge and joy (ve-da'at ve-simḥah)*. (Qoh. 2:26) Similarly did he say, *I praised joy* (Qoh. 8:15), meaning “contentment” (*al-qanā'a*).”

Thus, the meaning of the entire passage, is that the sage (*al-ḥakīm*) has definitively attained the ultimate purpose (*al-ghāya al-akhīra*), it being wisdom, knowledge, perfection, and joy and contentment in this (*wa-'l-surūr bi-dhālik wa-'l-qanā'a*), as discussed above. And the opposite extreme concerning deficiency and vice is greed, gluttony, miserliness, and hoarding. [...] And one who possesses such vices is called a *sinner (ḥoṭe)*.<sup>357</sup> And each of these extremes necessarily has a mean, and the mean state between these two [extremes] is that concerning which he said, *There is nothing good for a man but to eat and drink* (Qoh. 2:24), as explained above.<sup>358</sup>

Therefore, the human being may fit into one of three ranks. As for the perfect (*al-kāmil*), being the highest rank, [such a person] has turned away (*zahada*) from all pleasures, and only seeks that

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<sup>357</sup> See the remainder of Qoh. 2:26, which opposes *the man who pleases Him* with the *sinner (ḥoṭe)*.

<sup>358</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 94a-94b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 42.

which is necessary – he does not need to obtain wealth or hoard it. As for the traveler on the middle path (*sālik al-ṭarīq al-wasṭī*), sharing the lot of those who live in the world – he makes acquisitions permissibly and spends what he acquires permissibly, and exchanges it for those good ends, just activities, and pleasure that he desires. As the Law says: *You may spend the money on anything you desire etc.* (Deut. 14:26). [He spends it] on that which it commands of righteousness and gifts and *charity* and such things. [Finally, there is] the base, greedy, miserly, blameworthy, gluttonous [person], whose soul will not allow him to consume any of his wealth, saving it for others instead due to his meanness and greed. Now the second [individual] is indubitably more virtuous than this one, although in truth superiority belongs to the first one.<sup>359</sup>

Here, Tanḥum posits the existence of three ranks of human beings. At the apex of human ethical development is the whole or perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*),<sup>360</sup> who turns away (*zahada*) from the pleasures of the world. Then there is “the traveler on the middle path (*sālik al-ṭarīq al-wasṭī*)”, who pursues profit, but is careful to only attain good and permissible ends with that profit. Tanḥum’s formulation here is reminiscent of the Aristotelian ideal of moderation, although he states that one who permits oneself unnecessary but permitted pleasures is actually inferior to the ascetic. Finally, there is the sinner, greedily acquiring wealth only in order to hoard it. According to Tanḥum, the middle path is better than that of gluttony or hoarding, but the true ideal remains a moderate asceticism, indicated by his account of “turning away” from worldly pleasures. This asceticism is an expression of contentment (*qanā‘a*), and following Ibn Janāḥ, Tanḥum associates this term and concept with the Hebrew *simḥah* (joy) mentioned in the verse.<sup>361</sup> Indeed, Tanḥum was not the first to draw a link between contentment and asceticism:

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<sup>359</sup> MS Pocke 320, 95a-95b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 43.

<sup>360</sup> For a discussion of Tanḥum’s use of this expression, see below, pp.278-280.

<sup>361</sup> See Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 731. Here, he applies this meaning of the term specifically to Qoh. 8:15. Tanḥum’s reliance on Ibn Janāḥ is further supported by a minor error that he makes in citing the verse, substituting the form *ve-shabbeaḥ* from Qoh. 4:2 for the form *ve-shibbaḥti* in Qoh. 8:15.

Abraham Maimonides stated that “contentedness is the source and root of abstinence (*wa-l-qanā‘a hiya mabda’ al-zuhd wa-aṣluhu*).”<sup>362</sup> Further emphasizing this association, and reflecting his profound synthesis of contemporary Islamic discourse and Jewish learning, Tanḥum cites both the Mishnah (Abot 4:1), which employs the cognate term *sameaḥ* in praise of contentment, and a maxim of the scholars (*al-ḥukamā’*) equating *qanā‘a* with true wealth. Although Tanḥum’s source remains unidentified, similar sayings extolling contentment were not uncommon, and the theme receives prominent treatment in Sufi literature.<sup>363</sup> In the above passage, Tanḥum thus affirms the superiority of a mild asceticism over indulging one’s desires, even when such activities generate positive results.

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<sup>362</sup> Arabic in Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 2, 216, line 16. English with changes from *ibid.*, 217. For this reason, Abraham’s chapter on *zuhd* directly follows the chapter on *qanā‘a*. Contrast this with al-Qushayri, who treats the *maqām* of *zuhd* before that of *qanā‘a*, and who insists that *maqāmāt* must follow the correct order – see translation in English translation in *Al-Qushayri’s Epistle on Sufism: Al-Risala al-qushayriyya fi ‘ilm al-tasawwuf*, trans. Alexander Knysh (Garnet Publishing: 2007), 77. However, some sayings in the section on *zuhd* imply that the situation might be more complex, for example: “Abu Sulayman al-Darani said: “Wool is a mark of renunciation. Therefore, one must never wear a woollen garment that costs three *dirhams*, if one’s heart is longing for five *dirhams*.”” (Translation from Knysh, *Al-Qushayri’s Epistle*, 135.) The implication here is that external *zuhd* should not precede the attainment of inner renunciation, as the former is ideally merely an expression of the latter.

<sup>363</sup> Zoref notes the very similar saying, “the best wealth is contentment (*khayr al-ghinā al-qanā‘a*),” suggesting that Tanḥum’s version may even have its origins in a scribal error *khayr* > *ḥadd* (in Arabic script sans diacritics). (Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 130, fn. 1.) While this is possible, it seems to me more likely that this is simply a closely cognate saying. In his chapter on *qanā‘a*, Abraham Maimonides wrote as follows: “Contentedness is, then, obligatory for every person of sense, because it is the true wealth (*li-annahā al-ghanā’ al-ḥaqīqī*).” (See Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 2, 216, line 15; English from *ibid.*, 217. For the chapter on *qanā‘a* in general, see *ibid.*, 214-225.) For the same concept of contentment (*qanā‘a*) as the truest form of wealth, see Thomas Herzog “Social milieus and worldviews in Mamluk *adab*-encyclopedias: The example of poverty and wealth,” in *History and Society during the Mamluk Period (1250-1517): Studies of the Annemarie Schimmel Research College I*, ed. Stephan Conermann (Bonn University Press: 2014), 78-79. Cf. also the section of al-Qushayri’s epistle on the topic of contentment (*qanā‘a*), which contains several similar pronouncements that equate true wealth with contentment – see English translation in Knysh, *Al-Qushayri’s Epistle*, 175-178. Cf. al-Qāḍī Quḍā‘ī’s (d.1062) statement in the name of ‘Ali Ibn Abi Ṭalib that “There is no treasure richer than contentedness (*wa-lā kanz aghnā min al-qanā‘a*)” (text and translation in al-Qāḍī al-Quḍā‘ī, *A Treasury of Virtues: Sayings, Sermons and Teachings of ‘Ali with the One Hundred Proverbs attributed to al-Jāḥiẓ*, ed. and trans. Tahera Qutbuddin [New York University Press: 2013], 38-39, 1.303); and the Persian poet Sa’di Shirazi’s statement in his *Būstān* that “Contentment makes a man rich” (translated in *The Būstān by Shaikh Muṣliḥu-d-Dīn Sa’di Shirāzī*, trans. Henry Wilberforce Clarke [Darf Publishers Limited: 1985], 284).

A similar tension between advocacy of moderation in one's dispositions and a more asceticizing tendency has been noted in Maimonides' works.<sup>364</sup> It has been suggested that the asceticizing elements in Maimonides' writing are addressed to the elite, while the masses will be best served by a program of moderation.<sup>365</sup> Another way of resolving this tension may be that the golden mean pertains to ethics in its teleological sense, while the ethically and intellectually perfected individual will only provide the body with its basic needs. That is to say that the individual who is in the preliminary stages of ethical cultivation should aim for the mean disposition, while the outcome in an individual who has truly internalized such character traits will be a mild asceticism. (These solutions are not mutually exclusive – indeed, the elite are expected to have undergone rigorous moral and intellectual cultivation.) The latter formulation seems to resonate most strongly with Tanḥum's scheme, insofar as he advocates “philosophical moderation (*al-tawwasuṭ al-ḥikmī*)” in negotiating the tension between one's competing impulses, but understands the whole, maximally virtuous human being to be one who has transcended the desire for unnecessary pleasures.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> For a discussion of this tension in Maimonides, see Kreisel, “Asceticism”; Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought*, 175-182. This tension is reflected even in the continuation of the passage cited here: “One who is particularly careful in this matter and distances himself from the mean disposition in one direction is called “pious” (*ḥasid*). How so? One who distances himself from arrogance to the opposite extreme, so that he is very lowly in spirit, is called “pious”, and this is the attribute of “piety” (*ḥasidut*). If one moves only to the mean, becoming [moderately] humble, he is called “wise” (*ḥakham*), and this is the attribute of “wisdom” (*ḥokhmah*). And this is true of all of the other dispositions. The pious ones of old (*ḥasidim ha-rishonim*) would guide their dispositions towards the extremes – they would guide one disposition towards one extreme and another towards the other extreme. But this is more than the law requires of us.<sup>364</sup> We are commanded to follow the middle ways (*ba-derakhim ha-ellu ha-benonim*), these being the good and upright ways, as it is said, *and walk in His ways*. (Deut. 28:9)”

<sup>365</sup> Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought*, 178-182. For a different approach to this inconsistency in Maimonides' works, focusing more on the motivation for ascetic practices than the audience for whom his writing is intended, see Twersky, *Introduction to Maimonides' Code*, 459-468. Finally, a diachronic solution has been suggested, for which see Davidson, “The Middle Way in Maimonides' Ethics,” 61-62. However, as Davidson himself points out, the tension is already apparent within the *Mishneh torah* itself (*ibid.*, 61). And although it is less apparent in *Eight Chapters*, it is much more so when one turns one's attention to the body of Maimonides' commentary on Mishnah Abot that *Eight Chapters* introduces, particularly in the cases of meekness and anger (see *ibid.*, 37-38). It thus appears that the diachronic solution is not very satisfying, even as presented by its major advocate.

<sup>366</sup> To some degree, this may be true of all ethical dispositions: According to Maimonides, virtues in and of themselves are characteristics of the soul, of which actions are the most accessible expression. Davidson, “The Middle Way in Maimonides' Ethics,” 31. The individual must also inculcate dispositions through repetition. See

By adopting an ascetic ideal, Tanḥum was also drawing on a much richer tradition of *zuhd* in Jewish thought. Saadia treats the topic of *zuhd* at length in *Beliefs and Opinions*, entitling the section *Kitāb zuhd tāmm* (Book of Complete Asceticism),<sup>367</sup> and ultimately advocating a mild asceticism, without distancing oneself from society and its institutions.<sup>368</sup> Baḥya Ibn Paquda also advocated certain modes of *zuhd*, devoting the entire penultimate chapter of his *Kitāb ilā farā'id al-qulūb* (Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart) to the topic.<sup>369</sup> Preoccupation with *zuhd* continued in the post-Maimonidean Egyptian context, with Abraham Maimonides devoting a chapter to it in his *Kitāb kifāyat al-'ābidīn*.<sup>370</sup> In addition, Tanḥum's own cultural milieu was one in which some degree of asceticism had become widely practiced among Jews in Egypt and the Levant.<sup>371</sup> Regular fasting and self-affliction, night vigils and retreats became commonplace among individuals of pious temperament or those who sought social status.<sup>372</sup> Thus, Tanḥum's adoption of a positive stance towards asceticism both echoes earlier Judeo-Arabic sources, and is in harmony with his own cultural milieu.

We might summarize Tanḥum's position as follows. Tanḥum associates contentment (*qanā'a*, *simḥah*) with a mildly ascetic lifestyle. One who has achieved equanimity does not neglect one's physical needs, nor does such a person strive to own or consume more than is necessary in order to live a basically healthy and dignified life. That is to say that contentment expresses itself in a

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*ibid.*, 31, 33-34; and *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Character Traits, 1:7. In Tanḥum's case, my argument is that moderate *zuhd* is primarily conceived of as an expression of a highly virtuous soul. However, in other contexts, Tanḥum will actually suggest that *zuhd* should be part of the spiritual regimen early on the path. See below, p.346, p.351.

<sup>367</sup> My translation of the title reflects Qafih's understanding, as reflected in his translation *Sefer ha-perishut ha-shelemah*, understanding *tāmm* to refer to *zuhd* (which is clear due to the feminine gender of the Hebrew *perishut* – see Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot*, 292). Rosenblatt (*Beliefs and Opinions*, 364) renders the title, “a complete book of asceticism.”

<sup>368</sup> For Saadia's full treatment of the topic, see English in Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 364-401; Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de'ot*, 292-320.

<sup>369</sup> Kreisel, “Asceticism”; Ilan, “*Al-I'tidāl al-Sharī'ī*: Another Examination”. For an English translation of the chapter, see Mansoor, *Duties of the Heart*, 402-425.

<sup>370</sup> See Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 2, 224-307.

<sup>371</sup> Fenton, *Treatise of the Pool*, 12-18.

<sup>372</sup> See Russ-Fishbane, *Between Politics and Piety*, 105-106; Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 102-108.

mildly ascetic disposition. Thus, when Tanḥum sets up his three-tiered typology of attitudes towards the acquisition of wealth in his commentary to Qohelet 2:26, asceticism emerges as the preferred option. However, he also fully subscribes to the notion of the “middle path” or golden mean in the context of moral dispositions. That is to say that one must attain a balance between opposing impulses, e.g., the impulse towards slothfulness at one end of the spectrum and hard-driven ambition at the other. Indeed, this is the primary means that Tanḥum offers for attaining equanimity and contentment, viz. cultivating a balance between one’s opposing dispositions.<sup>373</sup>

Tanḥum may be grouped together with Ibn Ezra and the author of *Ma‘ānī al-naḥs* as a thinker whose ethics are based on a synthesis of Saadia,<sup>374</sup> Ibn Sīnā’s works (most notably *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*),<sup>375</sup> and a generally Neoplatonizing account of the descent of the human soul.<sup>376</sup> However, following in the wake of Maimonides, Tanḥum places a greater emphasis on the Aristotelian conception of the Golden Mean. In addition, he distinguishes himself from these thinkers in his close adherence to Ibn Sīnā’s prescription of ongoing mutual opposition between

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<sup>373</sup> Compare with Tanḥum’s commentary to Qoh. 7:15: “The statement *sometimes a righteous person* (Qoh. 7:15) and *sometimes is a wicked person* (*ibid.*) implies that this is not the most common occurrence. However, such a thing may occur from time to time. [...] And the meaning of *perishes through his righteousness* (*ibid.*) is that it is the cause of his perishing, such as if he constantly fasts, or prevents himself from sleeping, or intensifies his struggle (*al-mujāhada*) to the point that it necessarily brings about moral illness, or madness and delusion and similar things. And the meaning of *endures in his wickedness* (*ibid.*) is that one might behave exceedingly greedily, and eat and drink and pursue pleasure to excess, but no pain or illness or inflamed indigestion or harmful occurrence follows, despite the fact that it is well known that excessive eating and pleasure necessarily leads to such things. Therefore, he commanded [the reader] and stated that both extremes are bad and harmful, although it happens (*ittafaqa*) that some people remain safe from the harm [of such habits]. So do not be misled by this, but make sure to follow the middle path, which is the path of wisdom (*bal usluk anta ṭarīq al-waṣṭ allatī hiya ṭarīq al-ḥikma*).” (MS Pococke 320, 137b-138a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 72.) In the continuation of this long treatment of ethics, he states that “the point is that you should travel [the path] of moderation and temperance in all matters (*al-qaṣd an tasluka fī jamī‘ umūrika ‘alā al-tawassuṭ wa-’l-i’tidāl*), in one’s deeds and opinions and doctrines and dispositions – for this is integrity (*al-‘adāla*).” (MS Pococke 320, 139b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 73.) Cf. also Ibn ‘Aqṣīn’s commentary to the Song of Songs, in Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 138-139.

<sup>374</sup> For the familiarity of the author of *Ma‘ānī al-naḥs* with Saadia’s commentary to *Sefer yetzirah*, see Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 9-11, 14, 18.

<sup>375</sup> For the familiarity of *Ma‘ānī al-naḥs* with Ibn Sīnā, see Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 5, 29; Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 107-108.

<sup>376</sup> For this motif in *Ma‘ānī al-naḥs*, see Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 110-111, 113.

the animal and the vegetative faculties as a means towards attaining equanimity, as formulated in *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*.

### **Between the Peripatetics and the *mutakallimūn*: Tanḥum’s theory of time**

The fundamental nature of time has been debated since antiquity. Both Plato and Aristotle formulated conflicting accounts of the fundamental nature of time, and they did so against the background of the debates of the Presocratics.<sup>377</sup> While Plato defined time as “a moving likeness of eternity,”<sup>378</sup> Aristotle preferred to regard it as a measure or number of motion.<sup>379</sup> Indeed, according to the Aristotelian position, the present moment (*to nun*) is merely the boundary between past and future time.<sup>380</sup> These positions were transmitted and developed in the medieval Islamic world, and both Aristotelian and Platonizing accounts may be found among Islamicate philosophers.<sup>381</sup> In contrast, many *mutakallimūn* adopted an atomistic account of time that bore a striking resemblance to certain Indian conceptions.<sup>382</sup> Adopting the Aristotelian view,

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<sup>377</sup> For Presocratic discussions about the nature of time, see Kathleen Freeman, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Companion to Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (The Alden Press: 1946), 131, 147, 253. For Pythagoras’ conception of the relationship between time and motion, see *ibid.*, 253; C. J. de Vogel, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism: An Interpretation of Neglected Evidence on the Philosopher Pythagoras* (Van Gorcum: 1966), 193. For two alternative translations of Aristotle’s account (in Fragment #201) of the Pythagorean myth of the origin and nature of time, breath, and the void, see Daniel W. Graham, “Philolaus,” in *A History of Pythagoreanism*, ed. Carl A. Huffman (Cambridge University Press: 2014), 56; *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton University Press: 1984), vol. 2, 2443.

<sup>378</sup> *Timaeus* 37c-d.

<sup>379</sup> *Physics* 4.11.219b; 4.12.221b.

<sup>380</sup> *Physics* 4.11.218b-220a.

<sup>381</sup> See L. E. Goodman, “Time in Islam,” in *Religion and Time*, eds. Anindita Niyogi Balslev and J. N. Mohanty (Brill: 1993), 138-162; Tamar M. Rudavsky, *Time Matters: Time, Creation, and Cosmology in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (State University of New York Press: 2000).

<sup>382</sup> For the difference between medieval Islamic atomism and ancient Greek atomism, and for the affinity between the former and Indian conceptions, see Shlomo Pines, “The Middle Ages. Introduction to Mediaeval Science,” in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, vol. 2, (Magnes Press: 1986), 355. For an alternative argument, which identifies the emergence of an atomistic theory of time with Diodorus Cronus, its adoption by Epicurus, and the possibility of its revival in Islamic thought by Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d.c. 841) based ultimately on Greek sources, see Richard Sorabji, “Atoms and Time Atoms,” in *Infinity and Continuity in Ancient and Medieval Thought*, ed. Norman Kretzmann (Cornell University Press: 1982), 37-86. For two *mutakallimūn* who adopted alternative positions on the nature of time – Mu‘ammar and al-Nazzam (9<sup>th</sup> century) – see Goodman, “Time in Islam,” 142-147. For the *kalām* in general, including its historical background and aspects of its atomism, see Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Harvard University Press: 1976).

Maimonides offered a withering critique of those *mutakallimūn* who believed time to be composed of a series of discreet and indivisible instants.<sup>383</sup>

Considering his general positions on physics and the sciences, and his psychology and soteriology, one might reasonably expect that Tanḥum would adopt a Peripatetic position on the nature of time, or at the very least echo Maimonides' skepticism. However, this does not appear to be the case:

*What is occurring occurred long since, and what is to occur occurred long since; and God seeks the pursued (ve-ha-elohim yebaqqesh et nirdaf). (Qoh. 3:15)*

It has already been mentioned that the ancients<sup>384</sup> (*may their memory be a blessing*) use the term *kebar* in the sense of “already” (*qad*), and this also appears to be the case from its context<sup>385</sup> here, since he is saying, “That which was already, it certainly is; and that which will be, its existence in nature already was in the past. This is because the divine will determines the regularity of existence and the succession of one [thing] after another.” The meaning of this is that cyclical motion that is constant, is continuous without disruption or end. And each and every part that the celestial sphere traverses now appears to be brand new – though thousands of such [revolutions] have already come before it. So too the part which comes after it, one by one so that the part that was in the East moves to the West, and the one that was in the West moves to the East.<sup>386</sup> And

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<sup>383</sup> See Guide I.73 (Pines, 196-198); Rudavsky, *Time Matters*, 35-38, 72-77, 82-83. For Maimonides' implicit agreement with the Aristotelian view of time as a measure or number of motion, see *Guide* I.52 (Pines, 117); for his open advocacy of this position, see introductory proposition #15 to book II, (Pines, 237). However, Maimonides did acknowledge that the nature of time was one of the more difficult philosophical questions – see his statement in the course of his critique of time atomism: “And this is only appropriate with regard to them {i.e., it is only appropriate that the *mutakallimūn* should have no understanding of the true nature of time - RD}; for seeing that the cleverest philosophers were confused by the question of time and that some of them did not understand its notion – so that Galen could say that it is a divine thing, the true reality of which cannot be perceived – this applies all the more to those who pay no attention to the nature of any thing.” (*Guide* I.73; Pines, 196-197.) For a broad account of Maimonides' account and critique of the *kalām*, see Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalam*, 43-57.

<sup>384</sup> Arabic: *al-awā'il*. For this term as a reference to the rabbis, see above, p.60, p.161; below, p.393-394, and notes.

<sup>385</sup> Arabic: *min ma'nāhā*. For *ma'nā* as “context”, see above, p.46 and p.51, fn.53.

<sup>386</sup> “East” and “West” here are the Arabic *mashriq* and *maghrib* – the place of the Sun's rising and setting, respectively.

this is constant, without disruption or break or end. And from each and every part there arise phenomena (*āthār*) in the universe<sup>387</sup> – heat and cold, or wetness, or dryness, or some mineral will come into being, or some plant will be generated, or some animal will propagate itself (by which I mean their species).

When the configuration that was thus at the time of their generation changes to a different configuration – different to it in its arrangement of stars and axis and nearness and distance and elevation and lowness and so on – that which has been generated shall also decay (*fa-yafsudu ayḍan dhālika al-mutakawwin*), during that arrangement that has determined [this], through the nature of that which is in the lower<sup>388</sup> world. [...]

And whenever these revolutions revolve around these points and those opposite them, such phenomena (*āthār*) as these are brought into being in the world. And constant motion and time proceed from them, composed of instants (*murakkab min al-ānāt*) – and that is the present time, between the past and the future. It does not appear to the senses due to its fineness, and cannot be divided. And by means of the succession of these instants and their connection to one another, time becomes contiguous,<sup>389</sup> and natural cosmic actions<sup>390</sup> become constant (*ittaṣala al-zamān wa-’stamarrat al-af’āl al-wujūdiyya al-ṭabī’iyya*), which can only be conceived of in time. And concerning this he said, *and God seeks the pursued*. (Qoh. 3:15)<sup>391</sup>

Tanḥum’s interpretation of Qohelet 3:15 is partly based on Maimonides’ treatment of the verse in *Guide* II.28. After establishing that verses from Qohelet argue for the eternity of the universe *a parte post* and its fundamental stability, he interprets the Qohelet 3:15 as meaning that God “desires that that which exists should continue and that its various parts should be consecutive to

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<sup>387</sup> The Arabic *wujūd* here signifies that which exists.

<sup>388</sup> I.e., sublunar.

<sup>389</sup> Literally: time connects [together].

<sup>390</sup> Literally: natural actions pertaining to existence [i.e., the world]. Here, *ṭabī’iyya* presumably refers to the sublunar world.

<sup>391</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 104a-b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 50.

one another (*yaqūlu innahu yurīdu ta‘ālā istimrār al-wujūd wa-tatābu‘ ba‘ḍahu li-ba‘ḍin*).<sup>392</sup> Closely echoing Maimonides’ formulation, Tanḥum states that *God seeks the pursued* means that “the divine will determines the regularity of existence and the succession of one [thing] after another (*iṭṭirād al-wujūd wa-tatābu‘ahu li-ba‘ḍihi ba‘ḍin*).” Tanḥum thus follows Maimonides in his description of general cosmic regularity, although his introduction of celestial motion and its relation to time is colored by Ibn Ezra’s commentary *ad loc*. Ibn Ezra states that the pronoun *hu* – reflected in the English translation by the verb *is* – refers to the present, as opposed to what occurred in the past and what is to occur in the future. Ibn Ezra understands the “pursued” (*nirdaf*) to refer to the present moment in time, and he states that the verse refers to the divine will for time to remain continuous.<sup>393</sup> He then moves on to the topic of celestial motion, which has its own midpoint or *nirdaf*, the center of the terrestrial sphere.<sup>394</sup> Implicit in Ibn Ezra’s commentary is that there exists some relationship (beyond mere homology) between time and cosmic motion, and that this scientific concept is alluded to in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>395</sup> Tanḥum’s reference to the easterly and westerly motion of the celestial spheres is based on Ibn Ezra,<sup>396</sup> although it also echoes passages in Maimonides.<sup>397</sup> Picking up on Ibn Ezra’s implication, Tanḥum explicitly posits a causal link between motion and time (“constant motion and time

<sup>392</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 336; Munk, *Dalālat al-hā‘irīn*, 235, lines 4-5.

<sup>393</sup> For an English translation of this passage in Ibn Ezra and a discussion of its contents, see Mariano Gómez Aranda, “The Meaning of Qohelet According to Ibn Ezra’s Scientific Explanations,” in *Aleph* 6 (2006), 351-352. Here, the sentence *ve-ha-‘inyan she-ha-elohim biqqesh me-ha-zeman she-yihyeh nirdaf* is translated: “The meaning of the verse is that God wanted time to be continuous.” (*Ibid.*, 351.) For discussions of this passage, see also Shlomo Sela, *Astrology and Biblical Exegesis in Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Thought/ Aṣṭrologiyah u-farshanut ha-miqra ba-haguto shel avraham ibn ‘ezra* (Bar-Ilan University Press: 1999), 215-16, 228.

<sup>394</sup> Gómez Aranda, “The Meaning of Qohelet,” 351.

<sup>395</sup> Gómez Aranda, “The Meaning of Qohelet,” 351-352.

<sup>396</sup> Ibn Ezra (*ad loc*.) writes that “the part that was in the East returns to the West, and vice versa (*ve-yashub ha-ḥeleq she-hayah ba-mizraḥ ba-ma‘arab ve-hefekh*)...” Cf. Ptolemy’s *Almagest* 1:2, (H26-27; English translation in *Ptolemy’s Almagest*, trans. G. J. Toomer [Duckworth: 1984], 45-46). For the translation of Ptolemy’s *Almagest* into Arabic, see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ‘Abbāsīd Society (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries)* (Routledge: 1998), 30, 114, 182-184.

<sup>397</sup> See *Guide* I.72, where Maimonides mentions the easterly and westerly motions of different celestial spheres (Pines, 184-185; Munk, *Dalālat al-hā‘irīn*, 127).

proceed from” the celestial revolutions). He also takes the opportunity to explore two scientific subjects in greater detail: The link between celestial motion and the cycles of generation and corruption in nature;<sup>398</sup> and the fundamental nature of time. Tanḥum’s account of the effect of celestial motion upon terrestrial phenomena echoes Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblios*, and ultimately reflects an Aristotelian understanding of the relationship between the heavenly spheres and the sublunar realm.<sup>399</sup> But it is Tanḥum’s final point – the nature of time – that is the focus of the present discussion.

In apparent disagreement with Ibn Ezra and explicit contrast with Maimonides, Tanḥum’s conception of time in this passage appears to be distinctly atomistic.<sup>400</sup> That this is Tanḥum’s intended meaning is supported by his formulation that the present instant “does not appear to the senses due to its fineness, and cannot be divided (*lā yaẓharu li-l-ḥiss li-diqqatihi wa-lā yanqasimu*).” There is a degree of ambiguity here, insofar as these may be separate statements describing distinct qualities of the present moment: It is imperceptible; and it is indivisible, as it is no duration at all, but rather a point between past and present.<sup>401</sup> However, a simpler reading is that its fineness is the cause of both the present moment’s imperceptibility and its indivisibility. Indeed, this reading is reinforced by Tanḥum’s subsequent description of “the succession of

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<sup>398</sup> The conception the derivation cyclical generation and corruption in celestial motion is ultimately of Aristotelian derivation; see *On Generation and Corruption* 2:10-11. For the contrast between perfect celestial motion and the generation and corruption of beings in the sublunary realm, see Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 1:3 (270a).

<sup>399</sup> Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblios*, 1:2. For the translation of the *Tetrabiblios* into Arabic, and for its central place in Arabic astrological writing, see Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 109. Cf. also *Guide* I.72 (Pines, 184-186).

<sup>400</sup> Ibn Ezra *ad loc.* writes that time is unitary, “although {reading *ve-im* as a calque of the Arabic *wa-in* – RD} it may be divided into past and future time, and that which separates them (*ve-im yithalleq li-zeman ‘abar ve-‘atid ve-ha-mabdil benehem*).” His insistence on the unity of time, and his account of the present as “that which separates” the past from the future, point towards a Peripatetic conception of time, as shall be discussed below. For Maimonides rejection of the atomistic theory of time held by the *mutakallimūn*, see above, p.250-251. Cf. also Zoref’s discussion of Tanḥum’s commentary to Qoh. 1:10 (discussed below), in Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 19.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. al-Fārābī’s formulation in *Sharḥ al-fārābī li-kitāb arisṭūṭālīs fī al-‘ibāra*, eds. W. Kutsch and S. Marrow (Al-maṭba‘a al-kāthūlīkiyya: 1960), 40; translated in Abed, *Aristotelian Logic and the Arabic Language*, 128.

these instants and their connection to one another (*tatabbu' hādhihi al-ānāt wa-'ttiṣāluhā li-ba 'dihā ba 'dīn*)” – implying the reality of these instants and their constant flow.

Another relevant passage may be found in Tanḥum’s commentary to Qohelet 1:10. Here, he states that Solomon’s use of both singular and plural terminology to describe time actually reflects different aspects of its nature:

*Here is something of which one might say, “Look, it is new.” It has been so for eternities that was before us (kebar hayah le-‘olamim asher hayah mi-lefanenu). (Qoh. 1:10)*

[...]

The meaning of *eternities* is periods and durations (*mudad wa-azmina*). And like this is *Rock of Eternities* (*tzur ‘olamim*; Isa. 26:4), that is, “Creator of durations and epochs” (*khāliq al-azmina wa-'l-duhūr*).<sup>402</sup> And by his statement [*that was*], he means *that were*, for *eternally* (*le-‘olamim*) is a plural form. But he said *that was* because time is continuous through the continuity of the motion from which it proceeds; and also because time is composed of instants, and an instant – which is the true element of time – is indivisible (*wa-ayḍan inna al-zamān murakkab min ānāt wa-'l-ān alladhī huwa ḥaqīqat aṣl al-zamān ghayr munqasim*).<sup>403</sup>

The textual problem to which Tanḥum is responding here, and which I have tried to reflect in my awkward translation of the biblical verses, is the author’s apparent use of a singular verb (*hayah*; “was”) with a plural noun as its subject (*‘olamim*; hyperliterally, “eternities”). Following both Ibn Ezra and Ibn Ghiyāth, he takes the plural form of *‘olamim* to refer to durations of time.<sup>404</sup> Ibn Ghiyāth raises the question of the subject of the singular verb *hayah*, offering two possible

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<sup>402</sup> Cf. Salmon b. Yeroḥam and David b. Abraham al-Fasi, who render *olam[im]* as *dahr/duhūr*; in Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 212-213 and fn.128; and Ibn Janāh, who states that “by *‘olam*, one alludes to an ancient period, an age ago, distant (*mudda qadīma min al-dahr ba 'īda*)...”

<sup>403</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 80b-81a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 31.

<sup>404</sup> In his commentary *ad loc.*, Ibn Ezra interprets *‘olamim* as *zemannim* (times), cognate with Tanḥum’s Arabic *azmina*. In his translation, Ibn Ghiyāth uses the plural form *azmān* (Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 180).

solutions: That it refers to the Hebrew *kebar*; or that it refers to the plural *'olamim*, and the author was not particular in his use of number, a well attested phenomenon in biblical Hebrew.<sup>405</sup>

Basing himself upon Ibn Ghiyāth's second suggestion, Tanḥum chooses to exploit the verses apparent use of the singular verb *hayah* for the plural subject *'olamim*, setting up a tension between the unitary and multiple quality of time. Time is one because it is composed of a contiguous flow of instants, the connection between which which gives it its sense of coherence and continuity; it is many due to the multiplicity of its basic element (Arabic: *aṣl*, lit. "root/foundation"),<sup>406</sup> the indivisible instant. Here, the flow of discrete instants justifies the author's use of the plural form *le-'olamim*, while the interconnection of these instants justifies his use of the singular *hayah*. To the best of my knowledge, Tanḥum's exploitation of this tension in the verse is entirely original.

Few, if any, thinkers outside of the *kalām* tradition in the Islamic world held an atomistic view of time. Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d.923/932) identified time as one of the five eternal substances (*jawhar*, plu. *jawāhir*), and made a distinction between absolute time and relative time.<sup>407</sup> Although he was an atomist in his theory of matter, he exhibits no such tendencies in his theory of time.<sup>408</sup> Following al-Fārābī,<sup>409</sup> Ibn Sīnā held an Aristotelian view of time, regarding it as a measure of

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<sup>405</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 182. The tension may also be resolved by viewing the singular noun *dabar* as the subject of both uses of *hayah* in the verse.

<sup>406</sup> For Tanḥum's use of the term *aṣl* to refer to the four elements, see above, p.216, p.219-220 and fn. 268.

<sup>407</sup> Joel Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and his Circle* (Brill: 1986), 167; Shlomo Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, trans. Michael Schwarz (The Magnes Press: 1997), 60-62; Goodman, "Time in Islam," 151-154. For the relationship between al-Rāzī's theory of time to that of Galen, see Peter Adamson, "Galen and al-Rāzī on Time," in *Medieval Arabic Thought: Essays in Honour of Fritz Zimmermann*, eds. Rotraud Hansberger, M. Afifi al-Akiti, and Charles Burnett (The Warburg Institute: 2012), 1-14. For al-Rāzī in general, see Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, 41-107; Sara Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rāwandī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, and Their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Brill: 1999), particularly pp.87-120.

<sup>408</sup> See Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, 48-50, 57-62.

<sup>409</sup> For whose view, see Abed, *Aristotelian Logic and the Arabic Language*, 128.

motion,<sup>410</sup> and defining the instant (*ān*) as the boundary between the past and the present.<sup>411</sup> The Brethren of Purity offer several views on the nature of time, but nowhere do they articulate an atomistic position.<sup>412</sup> Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (10<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>413</sup> and al-Ghazālī take a basically Aristotelian view of time,<sup>414</sup> while Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī reframes the Aristotelian position, bringing it into closer alignment with the Neoplatonists.<sup>415</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d.1210) vacillated somewhat, but leaned towards a Platonic account of time,<sup>416</sup> while Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī took a basically Aristotelian stance regarding the nature of time.<sup>417</sup> In none of

<sup>410</sup> For Ibn Sīnā’s discussion of time in the *Shifā’*, see *Avicenna: The Physics of the Healing, Books I & II*, trans. Jon McGinnis (Brigham Young University Press: 2009), 219-247. Here, Ibn Sīnā offers an expansion of the Aristotelian definition of time: “So it remains that [time] is a magnitude of an unfixed position (*miqdār hay’a ghayr qārra*) – namely, motion (*al-ḥaraka*) from place to place or from one position to another between which there is some distance through which the positional motion circulates. This is what we call *time* (*al-zamān*).” Translation and Arabic text in *ibid.*, 231. For his allusions to atomistic conceptions, see McGinnis, *The Physics of the Healing, Books I & II*, 219, 229 and fn. 1.

<sup>411</sup> See Goodman, “Time in Islam,” 154-155. For Ibn Sīnā’s understanding of the instant as the boundary between past and future, existing only insofar as it is perceived, see McGinnis, *The Physics of the Healing, Books I & II*, 237. For time as infinitely divisible, see *ibid.*, 239.

<sup>412</sup> In Epistle 15, chapter 13, they cite three definitions of time, according to which it would have no absolute existence: (a) the opinion of the common people (*jumhūr al-nās*), that it is the passing of the various periods of time – years, months, days, hours; (b) the opinion that it is “the number of the sphere’s movements (*‘adad ḥarakāt al-falak*)”; and (c) the opinion that it is “a period measured by the movements of the sphere (*mudda ta’udduhā ḥarakāt al-falak*).” See text and translation in *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On the Natural Sciences: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of EPISTLES 15-21*, ed. and trans. Carmela Baffioni (Oxford University Press/Institute of Ismaili Studies: 2013), 123 (English), 43 (Arabic). Positions (b) and (c) are Aristotelian and Neoplatonic, respectively (cf. Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, 59), while (a) echoes Abū Bakr al-Rāzī’s exhortation to seek knowledge of such basic aspects of being from common experience as described by the layperson (see *ibid.*, 63). The Brethren of Purity further assert that according to these definitions, time would have no true existence, the present being merely the boundary between past and future – see Baffioni, *On the Natural Sciences*, 123-124 (English), 43-44 (Arabic). However, the Brethren note that from another point of view, time has actual existence if we define it as the totality of the twenty-four hour day, insofar as it is always all hours of the day in some part of the world. Therefore, the twenty-four hour day always exists as a whole. In addition, the form of time may arise in the human soul if one contemplates its passage and cycles (*ibid.*, 124-125 [English], 44-45 [Arabic]). See also *Risālat jāmi‘at al-jāmi‘a li-ikhwān al-ṣafā’ wa-khillān al-wafā’*, ed. ‘Arif Tamir (Dār al-nashr li-l-jāmi‘iyyīn: 1959), 65; Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 63-64.

<sup>413</sup> For this view and a discussion of it, see Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*, 166-171.

<sup>414</sup> See Goodman, “Time in Islam,” 158-161.

<sup>415</sup> Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. after 1164) critiqued Aristotle’s understanding of time as a measure of motion, himself preferring to call it a “measure of existence (*miqdār al-wujūd*).” His formulation echoes the conception of the Neoplatonic philosopher Damascius (6<sup>th</sup> cent.). See *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines – Volume I: Studies in Abu’l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī – Physics and Metaphysics* (The Magnes Press/Brill: 1979), 336-337. See also Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, 94-95, fn. 139.

<sup>416</sup> Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, 95.

<sup>417</sup> See his statement that “time is the magnitude of motion when the magnitude of its earlier and later are brought together in the mind (*al-zamān huwa miqdār al-ḥaraka idhā jumi‘a fī al-‘aql miqdār muqaddamihā wa-muta’akhhirihā*).” See text and translation in *Suhrawardī: The Philosophy of Illumination*, eds. and trans. John

the aforementioned thinkers do we find an atomistic conception of time. A possible exception to this rule within the Judeo-Arabic tradition is Saadia Gaon, who makes a rather elusive statement, apparently affirming the existence of the present (*al-muqīm*) as the smallest unit of time (*ān*), rather than seeing it as the boundary between the past and the future.<sup>418</sup> Although Qafih understood this remark in atomistic terms, it is not entirely clear to me that this was Saadia's intended meaning.<sup>419</sup>

To the best of my knowledge, the only Islamicate thinker within the philosophical tradition who formulated a view of the instant that may prefigure that of Tanḥum is al-Kindī. Although al-Kindī's understanding of time is generally Aristotelian – as he defines it as the measure of motion, while describing the present as the meeting point between the past and the future<sup>420</sup> – there are two passages that may shed some light on Tanḥum's formulation. In the first of these passages, from his *Kitāb fī al-falsafa al-ūlā* (On First Philosophy),<sup>421</sup> al-Kindī explains how things “become many”: “Time becomes many through its ending-points, which are the instants of time that delineate its ending-points, just as punctuation delineates the ending-points of a written text (*al-zamān yatakaththaru bi-nihāyātihi allatī hiya ānāt al-zamān al-ḥādḍa li-nihāyātihi ka-ḥadd al-‘alāma li-nihāyāt al-khaṭṭi*).”<sup>422</sup> Although it seems from this passage that

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Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Brigham Young University Press: 1999), 119, lines 20-21 in English, lines 14-15 in Arabic.

<sup>418</sup> Saadia states that time may be divided into past, present, and future, and that “the present is smaller than any other unit of time (*al-muqīm huwa aqall min kull ān*).” See Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de‘ot*, 38. For an English translation of this passage, see Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 44. For a discussion of this passage and the argument in it, see Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalam*, 418-419. For the term *muqīm*, see Blau, *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, 576-577. For the impact of *kalām* on Saadia's thought, see Stroumsa, “Saadya and Jewish *kalam*.”

<sup>419</sup> Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de‘ot*, 38 fn. 47. For a discussion of this passage, see Rudavsky, *Time Matters*, 7-80.

<sup>420</sup> For both of these assertions, see al-Kindī's treatment of time in his *Risāla fī al-jawāhir al-khamsa* (Epistle on the Five Essences), in Abū Rīda, *Rasā'il al-kindī al-falsafīyya*, vol. 2, 32-34. See also the entries under *zamān* in Jirar Jihami, *Mawsū'at muṣṭalahāt al-kindī wa-'l-fārābī* (Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn), part I (al-Kindī), 83-84.

<sup>421</sup> For an edition of the text, see Abū Rīda, *Rasā'il al-kindī*, vol. 1, 97-162. For a discussion of the text, see Peter Adamson, *Al-Kindī (Great Medieval Thinkers)* (Oxford University Press: 2006), 9, 22-25.

<sup>422</sup> Abū Rīda, *Rasā'il al-kindī*, vol. 1, 157.

al-Kindī did not believe the instant to possess actual existence, his language is somewhat suggestive of Tanḥum’s later formulation: Time *multiplies* or *becomes many* insofar as it may be divided into instants (*ānāt*).

In his *Risāla fī al-jawāhir al-khamsa* (Epistle on the Five Essences), al-Kindī states one cannot grasp the quiddity of time through its definition as a measure of motion; rather, knowledge of the quiddity of time lies in knowing that “the instant connects the time that has past with that which is approaching, although the instant that is located between them has no permanence, for it elapses before we discern it (*inna al-ān yaṣīlu al-zamān alladhī maḍā wa-’lladhī huwa mustaqbal wa-lākin al-ān al-mawjūd baynahumā lā baqā’ lahu li-annahū yanqaḍī qabl tafkīrinā fīhi*).”<sup>423</sup> Note that in his account, the instant (*al-ān*) is imperceptible due to its lack of permanence or stasis (*baqā’*), rather than due to the fact that it possesses no reality or is merely a boundary. Al-Kindī then adds that “this instant is not time, but when it is considered by the intellect from instant to instant, we establish that in that which lies between them, there exists time (*fa-hādhā al-ān laysa zamānan wa-lākin idhā i’tubira fī al-’aql min ān ilā ān fa-innanā naḍī’u anna fīmā baynahumā yūjadu zamān*).”<sup>424</sup> He concludes the passage by stating that “this is the definition of time in virtue of which it is called continuous, being: The perceived instant that [connects or] continues between that of [time] which has passed, and that which is approaching (*al-ān al-mutawahham alladhī [yaṣīlu aw] yuwāṣīlu mā bayn al-māḍī minhu wa-bayn al-mustaqbal*).”<sup>425</sup> There is thus a real ambiguity in this passage. On the one hand, certain elements of al-Kindī’s theory of time appear to be typically Peripatetic; however, from dimensionless instant to dimensionless instant there is time. Furthermore, as we have seen, time may be said to be many by virtue of the instants that punctuate it. The precise nature of time

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<sup>423</sup> *Rasā’il al-kindī*, vol. 2, 34.

<sup>424</sup> For the possible meaning of this passage, see Abū Rīda’s comment in *Rasā’il al-kindī*, vol. 2, 34 fn. 8.

<sup>425</sup> *Rasā’il al-kindī*, vol. 2, 34; and cf. Ibn Sīnā in McGinnis, *The Physics of the Healing, Books I & II*, 236.

according to al-Kindī remains somewhat elusive, but he certainly emphasizes both its continuity and its multiplicity; and, while stopping short of atomism, he appears to emphasize time’s reality (at least in the final passage cited). There are thus a number of elements in Tanḥum’s discussion that are foreshadowed by al-Kindī.

Despite his nonstandard position on the nature of time, Tanḥum’s terminology clearly reflects his study of Peripatetic sources. His account of the connectedness (*ittiṣāl*) of time echoes Peripatetic discussions on the nature of time,<sup>426</sup> as does his use of the term *ān* to describe the instant (as opposed to *waqt* or *zaman*).<sup>427</sup> Although he rejects this position, Ibn Sīnā does in fact use precisely the terminology the terminology of the instant (*ān*) that is either divisible or indivisible (*munqasim/ ghayr munqasim*).<sup>428</sup> This terminology is closely reflected in Maimonides’ critique of the theory, who describes is as proposing the multiplicity of time.<sup>429</sup> The very close resonance between Tanḥum’s formulation and those of Ibn Sīnā and Maimonides raises the odd possibility that he is familiar with the atomistic theory of time primarily as it is discussed in the Peripatetic critiques – and adopted it nonetheless.<sup>430</sup> Indeed, by affirming both the continuity of time and the

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<sup>426</sup> For example, see Ibn Sīnā’s discussion of the continuity (*ittiṣāl*) of time in McGinnis, *The Physics of the Healing, Books I & II*, 237; and Maimonides’ account of the non-atomistic position as positing the continuity (*muttaṣilan*) of time, in Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, 136 line 18. The language echoes the discussion in Aristotle’s *Physics* 4.11.

<sup>427</sup> For this term as characteristic of the Peripatetic philosophers, see Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, 31 and fn. 67. Cf. also Ibn Sīnā’s account of the *ān* in McGinnis, *The Physics of the Healing, Books I & II*, 220 and fn. 3; *ibid.*, 236, 237-247. However, Ibn Sīnā does employ the term *waqt/awqāt* in his account of the opinion of those who believe “that time is a collection of moments (*majmū’ awqāt*),” a position that he rejects – see McGinnis, *The Physics of the Healing, Books I & II*, 219. Similarly, Maimonides uses the plural *azmina* in his account of the theory – see Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, 136, line 12.

<sup>428</sup> “...if [time] is indivisible, it is what they call the *present instant* and not a a time (*wa-in kāna ghayr munqasim kāna al-amr alladhī yusammūnahu ānan wa-laysa bi-zamān*).” McGinnis, *The Physics of the Healing, Books I & II*, 220.

<sup>429</sup> The third premise of the *mutakallimūn* that is critiqued by Maimonides is “their saying that time is composed of instants, by which they mean that there are many units of time that, because of the shortness of their duration, are not divisible (*qawluhum inna al-zamān mu’allaḥ min ānāt ya’nūn annahā azmina kathīra lā taqbalu al-qisma li-qaṣr muddatihā*).” *Guide* I.73 (Pines, 196; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, 136, lines 12-13).

<sup>430</sup> In his commentary to Qoh. 1:10, Tanḥum’s reference to *azmina* echoes Maimonides’ terminology in *Guide* I.73 (see previous note); in the same passage, his statement that “time is composed of instants, and an instant – which is the true element of time – is indivisible (*al-zamān murakkab min ānāt wa-’l-ān alladhī huwa ḥaqīqat aṣl al-zamān ghayr munqasim*)” echoes Ibn Sīnā’s account of atomism.

reality of the present instant, Tanḥum affirms two aspects of our experience of time that most philosophical sources understood to be mutually exclusive.

In conclusion, Tanḥum's account of the nature of time appears to be rather eclectic: Time proceeds (*ṣādir*) from the motion of celestial bodies (and is not merely a measure of their motion), possessing reality outside of the mind; it is composed of an interconnected flow of instants (*ānāt*); it also enables us to conceive of events, "which can only be conceived of in time." Three elements of Tanḥum's theory of time may be identified in al-Kindī: Time becomes many due to the plurality of instants (*ānāt*); it is continuous due to the interconnection of those instants; and the instant is imperceptible, not necessarily because it has no true existence, but because it passes too quickly. In a Judeo-Arabic context, there is a possible precedent for such a conception in Saadia. Although Tanḥum's position is non-Peripatetic, his terminology remains largely within that school, reflecting his general dependence upon Peripatetic sources in his philosophy and science. It thus would seem that Tanḥum consciously chose to adopt an atomistic view of time, for reasons that he did not make explicit, and in direct opposition to the prevailing views among Islamicate philosophers.

#### **"A Word Fitly Spoken": Tanḥum on Qohelet 9:7-10**

*Go, eat your bread in gladness, and drink your wine in joy; for your action has been approved by God. Let your clothes always be white, and your head lack no ointment. Experience life with a woman you love all the days of your vanity that are granted to you under the Sun – all the days of your vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in your toil that you toil under the Sun. Whatever it is in your power to do, do with all your might; for there is no action, nor thought, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in Sheol, where you are going. (Qoh. 9:7-10)*

The four verses cited above are rich in interpretive possibilities, and Tanḥum's treatment of them integrates a number of distinct threads in the history of their reception. In his commentary on this passage, he presents two interpretations, both of which he insists are conveyed by the text: One addressed to the more sophisticated and advanced reader, who understands the allegorical valence of the verses when read in isolation from their context; the other addressed to the more simple reader, who will understand the verses in context as further developing Qohelet's critique of hedonism.<sup>431</sup> In each case, Tanḥum sees the four verses as constituting a coherent literary unit. Although it is a long passage, it is worth citing it in full in order to note its structure and breadth. After citing it full, we shall identify a number of Tanḥum's sources, and note the ways in which he reframes them.

[Tanḥum's preamble to his commentary on Qohelet 9:7-10]

These four verses possess a single, connected sense. However, in them *Solomon* followed a very unusual philosophical method (*salaka fihā shelomoh maslak hikmī gharīb jiddan*), including within them two senses, differing [and] contradictory in one aspect, connected and in accord in another aspect, to the point that no change of language or emendation of expression is necessary (*bi-ḥaythu lā yaḥtāju li-taghyīr lafẓ wa-lā taqdīr 'ibāra*).

[A. First sense]

That is, when their meanings are separated and not connected to that which preceded them, they refer to perfections (*kamālāt*), and lead one to truths (*ḥaqā'iq*). That is – he finished [speaking of] that which he wished to elucidate concerning the dissimilarity of things from their true nature according to what appears to people at first glance (*ikhtilāf al-umūr 'an ḥaqā'iqihā 'alā mā yazharu li-l-nās bi-awwal wahlatin*), and mentioned the characteristics of people in their various dispositions and the distance between their respective knowledge (*sifāt al-nās fī ikhtilāf*

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<sup>431</sup> See Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 13.

*akhlāqihim wa-tabā‘ud ma‘ārifihim*), finishing with his statement that one cannot hope for a higher state after death. Rather, one who occupied oneself throughout one’s life with the delights of the body, and who was infatuated with love of them, dies in a state of deficiency, and righteousness cannot be hoped for afterwards. For hope only remains as long as a person is alive in the world (*al-dunyā*)...

Following this, he states: “Since this is the case, it behooves you, O intelligent one (*yā ayyuhā al-‘āqil*), to occupy yourself throughout your life only with that which pleases God, and with what draws you near to knowledge of Him (*ma‘rifatihi*). Then, once you have persevered in this and become certain of its attainment, it then behooves you to take pleasure and rejoice, and that your soul should be soothed with what comes to you of the greatest delight, which is compared to the delight of wine-induced intoxication, and with that epistemic nourishment and intellectual consumption that [the soul] attains, through which it attains subsistence and everlastingness (*al-baqā’ wa-‘l-dawām*).” Concerning this, he says *Go, eat your bread in gladness, etc.*

Then, he commanded persistence in righteousness in one’s actions, excellence in one’s dispositions, and purifying one’s conduct, so that one’s intellectual illumination and purity of psychic apprehension may endure (*li-tadūmu lahu al-ishrāqāt al-‘aqliyya wa-‘l-ṣafā’ li-l-idrākāt al-naṣṣāniyya*). Thus he says, *Let your clothes always be white, and your head lack no ointment*, as we laid out its explanation in the first part of the book, when we treated the subject of *ta’wīl*.

Then he said: “When you have walked this path, and you have internalized these praiseworthy dispositions, and you have acquired praiseworthy characteristics, do not say that life will come to your soul after its separation from matter (i.e., after death). Rather, in the very state of connection<sup>432</sup> (*bal wa-ḥāl al-iqtirān*) you will see that life, and know it, and taste its delight (*tarā tilka al-ḥayāt wa-ta‘lamuhā wa-tadhūqu ladhdhatahā*) – while [the soul] exists with matter in this terrestrial world, concerning which the statement has already been made above that it is

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<sup>432</sup> I.e., between the body and soul.

*Vanity of vanities.* Then, concerning this, he said *Experience life with a woman you love all the days of your vanity.*

Then he said: “The purpose of your existence and the completion of your life and your toil in this corporeal world is that you should attain this perfection and that this felicity be granted [to you]. That is [the meaning of] the statement, *for that is your portion in life, and in your toil that you toil under the Sun.*

Then he further emphasized and pushed the point concerning obeying [God], and he said: “Since you already know that the purpose is noble, and the goal is exalted and of mighty degree, but it is fleeting and cannot be rectified [after the opportunity passes], it is fitting that you struggle to the utmost degree and move to your ultimate ability towards the attainment of this end, and the arrival at this most mighty felicity, as long as you are able to do so, and [as long as] you have the possibility to arrive at it. Although you disparaged it and occupied yourself with other things to the point that death approached and you were [still] [157b/171] in your imperfect state, and you had rendered yourself deficient, for in the grave there is no growth, nor acquisition, nor thought, nor deliberation, nor any rectification of that righteousness in actions which has passed [one by].” That is [the meaning of] the statement, *Whatever it is in your power to do, do with all your might; for there is no action, nor thought, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in Sheol, where you are going.*

By *Sheol*, he means the grave,<sup>433</sup> as in *for I shall go to Sheol mourning for my son.* (Gen. 37:35) There are cases in which *Sheol* refers to punishment, extinction, non-being, and destruction (*al-‘uqūba wa-’l-‘inqiṭā‘ wa-’l-‘adam wa-’l-tilāf*), as in *Let the wicked descend<sup>434</sup> to Sheol* (Ps. 9:18); *Sheol, and a barren womb* (Prov. 30:16). The depths of the earth are thus named, as in *They went*

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<sup>433</sup> See Ibn Ezra’s commentary to Qoh. 9:10, and his discussion of this term in his commentary to Genesis 37:35. Cf. also the Targum to our verse, where *bi-she’ol* is rendered *be-bet qeburta*. Although Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 695) cites *she’ol* as a secondary usage of the root *sh-’l*, he does not gloss this term as *qabr/qeber*. Following Ibn Ezra, Qimḥi does supply this meaning in his lexicon – see *Sefer ha-shorashim le-rabbi david ben yosef qimḥi ha-sefaraddi/Rabbi Davidis Kimchi Radicum liber sive Hebraeum bibliorum lexicon*, eds. Johann Heinrich Biesenthal and Fürchtegott Lebrecht (Impensis G. Bethge: 1847), 363.

<sup>434</sup> Hebrew: *yerdu*. The Hebrew of the original verse reads *yashubu* (“let [the wicked] return”).

*down alive to Sheol, with all that belonged to them.* (Num. 16:33) From this, [the term is] applied to the grave.

He then considered his manner – *action* (*ma‘aseh*), which refers to righteous deeds and excellence in one’s disposition – before *thought* (*heshbon*), which is cogitation (*fikr*). For cogitation is accompanied by theoretical wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-nazariyya*), and action (*al-‘amal*) is accompanied by practical wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-‘amaliyya*) – by which I mean ethical [wisdom] (*al-khulqiyya*) – which is an introduction to [theoretical wisdom], as we explained at the beginning of this *book*.

Then, after cogitation comes *knowledge* (*da‘at*), which is intellection, comprehension, and the investigation of true existences (*al-ta‘aqqul wa-’l-tafahhum wa-’l-baḥth ‘an al-ḥaqā’iq*).

Then, afterwards, [he considered] the attainment of the perfect wisdom [that emerges] from the totality of that which precedes it (*ḥuṣūl al-ḥikma al-kāmila min majmū‘ hādhihi al-mutaqaddima*).

So these meanings were ordered thus in these four verses, a connected meaning according to the perfections which characterize the perfect human (*al-kamālāt al-muqṣūda bi-’l-insān al-kāmil*).<sup>435</sup>

[B. Second sense]

As for the other sense that may be understood from [these verses], it is [apparent] when they are connected with the previous verses, the meaning not ending before [our verses], and they are a conclusion to that meaning. That is as is it says before [these verses]: *And men’s hearts are full of evil, and there is madness in their heart while they live.* (Ecc. 9:3)

Owing to all this, they say: “None have any hope, nor felicity, nor delight, other than the living (*laysa rajā’ wa-sa‘āda wa-ladhdha siwā li-l-aḥyā’*). As for the dead, after they die nothing

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<sup>435</sup> Lit. “the perfections that one has in mind with respect to the perfect human.” Cf. Blau, *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, 548.

further may be hoped for them – neither happiness nor misery – and neither [158a/172] love nor hatred, nor perception, nor profit that may be attained in any sense remains for them.

One of the things that they say is that God provides one whom He favors with what he will eat and drink in this world, and He affords [this individual] other delightful things, just as *Job* thought at first, as we explained in the *Book of Job* that fortune, and children, and sustenance, and wealth, and prosperity, and delight, and honor are repayment for his righteousness. When one is lacking it is thought that one lacks uprightness, as we explained some of his statements. So here they say, *Go, eat your bread in gladness, and drink your wine in joy; for your action has been approved by God.* That is, had He not been pleased with you, He would not have provided you with these benefits – so delight in them and luxuriate, for this is your purpose, and your felicity. Luxuriate in beautiful clothing, and glory in it – *Let your clothes always be white*; and pamper yourself, take comfort, and delight in anointing yourself [with oil] and living in ease – *and your head lack no ointment* (according to the sense of *and [let him] dip his foot in oil* [Deut. 33:24], owing to the abundance of bounty and luxury).

Thus did *Job* say concerning what seemed to him concerning comfort and luxury: *When my feet were bathed in cream (hemah) – meaning hem'ah<sup>436</sup> – and rocks poured out streams of oil for me* (Job 29:6), as we explained in its place.

He then followed these delights – food, drink, clothing, anointment, comfort – with the delight of the sense of touch, and said *Experience life with a woman you love all the days of your vanity*, by which he means “the days of one’s youth”, as we explained above. ... *that are granted (asher natan) to you under the Sun* – by which he means *are granted (asher nittan)*,<sup>437</sup> as in *and [upon whose head] has been placed (nittan) a royal diadem.* (Esther 6:8) Meaning, “Rejoice with your wife, whom God has provided you, and luxuriate in what He has given you, for this is the purpose

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<sup>436</sup> That is to say that, although there would typically be a consonantal *alef* in this word, in the cited verse from *Job* it is assimilated and not pronounced.

<sup>437</sup> The verse has the active *qal* form; Tanhum here suggests that it is to be interpreted as if it is passive.

of your profit – and He spurs you on in life, and if not, you are comparable to the dead for he can achieve nothing of this.”

Then he repeated this assurance concerning their belief and imaginings (*fī i'tiqādihim wa-khayālātihim*), upon which they base their opinions: “Whenever you are able to attain luxury and delight, seize the opportunity, for there is nothing to hope for nor fear after death.” Meaning that they do not picture the concept of a final reward or punishment, so they spur themselves on and strive to attain corporeal delights, for they do not pay attention to anything else, nor do they grasp anything other than this.

Concerning this he says that, of all their erroneous statements and their untrustworthy beliefs, the [most] deluded is that they say to themselves *Whatever it is in your power to do, do with all your might*, by which they mean: “Whatever delight, luxury, and comfort you can attain – seize it!” ... *for there is no action, nor knowledge [sic], etc. in Sheol*. That is, “you will not find any of this in the afterlife or the grave.”

This is utmost wisdom – that he could utter a single statement, corresponding with a single form, alluding to two contradictory meanings with a single formulation and composition, without superfluity or deficiency, one of these meanings being connected to groups of people according to their imaginations, and the other being true in and of itself (*ḥaqq fī dhātihi*), being his [i.e., Solomon’s] opinion and belief that he intended to elucidate. Of such things is it said: *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*<sup>438</sup> (Prov. 25:11)

### *Ibn Ghiyāth*

In his commentary, Ibn Ghiyāth states that “the Sage” (*al-ḥakīm*; i.e., Solomon) composed these verses as an “explanation of general statements that include this realm and the realm to which one is taken (*hādhi [sic] al-dār wa-'l-dār al-muntaqal ilayhā*). Concerning that which is specific

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<sup>438</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 156a-158b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 86-87.

to this realm, there are three aspects: The contemplation of righteousness in one's actions (*salāḥ al-a'māl*) and increasing [those actions], and of the nutrition through which bodies are sustained, and reproduction through which replacement [of the individuals of the species] is enabled."<sup>439</sup> While Ibn Ghiyāth's understanding of the statement concerning eating, drinking, and human partnership and reproduction is anchored in a fairly straightforward reading of the text, he follows classical rabbinic sources in linking Qohelet 9:8 with repentance and positive actions.<sup>440</sup> He goes on to further analyze the verse, emphasizing that consideration of the afterlife and ethical uprightness are necessary in order to justify the enjoyment of the physical world, and presenting three interpretations of v. 9: That it encourages reproduction, as mentioned above; that it offers a rationale for pursuing a livelihood; and that it encourages peaceful companionship with all the benefits that follow from it.<sup>441</sup>

Ibn Ghiyāth's discussion of Qohelet 9:10 is quite closely echoed in Tanḥum's commentary. In Tanḥum's paraphrase of the verse's sense as addressed to the elite, he writes that "since you already know that the purpose is noble, and the goal is exalted and of mighty degree, but it is fleeting (*wa-huwa ma'a dhālik fā'it*) and cannot be rectified [after the opportunity passes], it is fitting that you struggle to the utmost degree (*an tajhada ghāyat al-jahd*) and move to your ultimate ability towards the attainment of this end, and the arrival at this most mighty felicity, as long as you are able to do so, and [as long as] you have the possibility to arrive at it (*tālamā anta qādir 'alā dhālik wa-laka muknat al-wuṣūl ilayhi*)." This mirrors elements of Ibn Giyath's commentary, in which he ascribes to Solomon the statement that "as long as you can do it and you have the capacity and ability (*wa-bika al-maqdira wa-'l-mukna*) to acquire virtues and study

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<sup>439</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 262.

<sup>440</sup> Tractate Shabbat 153a; Tractate Semahot 2:1; Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, version B, # 29, 62; *Qohelet Rabbah* 9:8.

<sup>441</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 262.

the sciences in this realm, strive and struggle (*jidda wa-’jtahid*) to do it before it passes (*qabl al-fawt*), and to this the scholars (*al-afādīl*) alluded [when they said], *Act while you still find [the opportunity], and it is available to you, and it is still in your possession* (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 151b).<sup>442</sup> The cluster of common terminology in this passage – *fawt/fā’it*, *jahd/ijtihād*, and *mukna* – points to Tanḥum’s direct dependence on this passage in Ibn Ghiyāth, although he reformulates the statement to mirror the structure of Qohelet 9:10 more closely.<sup>443</sup>

We can thus identify the following elements in Ibn Ghiyāth’s commentary on these verses that informed Tanḥum’s interpretation: (a) He reads them in isolation from their broader context, as an earnest instruction to pursue the actions described therein; (b) following classical rabbinic interpretations, he identifies Qohelet 9:8 with good works;<sup>444</sup> (c) he reads 9:10 as encouragement to seize the opportunity to acquire moral virtues and knowledge of the philosophical sciences before death, explaining the Hebrew *ḥeshbon* as “the science of arithmetic, geometry, philosophy, and the other branches of the sciences (*’ilm al-ḥisāb wa-’l-handasa wa-’l-falsafa wa-sā’ir funūn al-’ulūm*)”;<sup>445</sup> and (d) his terminology in his commentary to 9:10 seems to have directly informed Tanḥum’s formulation.

<sup>442</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 262-264. The force of the Talmudic maxim cited by Ibn Ghiyāth appears to be that one should perform good acts while one has the opportunity or the resources to do so (cf. Rashi’s commentary *ad loc.*). The citation in Qafih’s edition reads *and it is still in your possession* (*ve-’odo be-yadakh*); standard editions of the Babylonian Talmud read *and you are still in possession of yourself* (*ve-’odakh be-yadakh*), i.e., before death. The latter version seems more appropriate within the context of Ibn Ghiyāth’s commentary, and indeed it is cited according to the standard version in Qafih’s Hebrew translation. The formulation itself is somewhat obscure and exists in multiple variants, including *ve-’odan* (MS Vatican, Bibliotheca Apostolica, Ebr. 108), and *ve-’adayin* (MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. 95).

<sup>443</sup> Tanḥum’s statement that “it is fitting that you struggle to the utmost degree and move to your ultimate ability towards the attainment of this end, and the arrival at this most mighty felicity, as long as you are able to do so, and [as long as] you have the possibility to arrive at it” corresponds most clearly with the first half of v. 10, while “for in the grave there is no growth, nor acquisition, nor thought, nor deliberation, nor any rectification of that righteousness in actions which has passed [one by]” corresponds to the second half of v. 10. Cf. also Maimonides’ use of this verse in *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Repentance, 9:1.

<sup>444</sup> In this case, Maimonides’ citation of the rabbinic interpretation of the verse may also have informed Tanḥum’s account; see *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Repentance, 7:2; see also his citation of Qoh. 9:7 in a moralizing fashion in *ibid.* 7:7.

<sup>445</sup> Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 264.

### *Ibn Ezra*

A major source in the background to Tanḥum's second interpretation of these verses, addressed to those who are not attuned to their allegorical valence, is Ibn Ezra's commentary. In his discussion of Qohelet 9:7, he determines that the verse articulates the "wickedness" and "madness" (*ra' , holelot*) in the hearts of human beings, mentioned in 9:3. That is to say, the verse is continuous with that which precedes it, and expresses the vain and transgressive thoughts of ignorant human beings, who rush to enjoy the pleasures of the physical world before death renders such enjoyment impossible. His reading of these verses as continuous with the preceding passage becomes yet clearer in his commentary to 9:8-9, where he cites and rejects the opinion that this cluster of verses gives qualified permission to enjoy the physical world. In response to this position, Ibn Ezra states "that the verses that are above and below are connected, being the thoughts<sup>446</sup> of human beings (*she-ha-pesuqim she-yesh le-ma'lah u-le-maṭṭah hem debeqim ve-hu dibbur leb bene ha-adam*)," and goes on to point out that the pleasures enumerated in these verses are entirely corporeal. Finally, he determines that verse 9:10 continues the inner thoughts of human beings.<sup>447</sup>

Ibn Ezra's commentary thus provides the following elements, appropriated by Tanḥum in his own interpretation of the verses: He asserts (a) that verses 9:7-10 constitute a coherent passage; (b) that this passage continues the vain thoughts of human beings alluded to in the verses above (particularly 9:3); and (c) that the pleasures referred to are purely carnal. Although Ibn Ezra's interpretation of the verses is in direct tension with Ibn Ghiyāth's reading, Tanḥum's

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<sup>446</sup> Lit. "speech of the heart."

<sup>447</sup> "Do all pleasurable things that you have the opportunity to do – for there is no accounting for [one's] action, or thought, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol." (Ibn Ezra, *ad loc.*) For Ibn Ezra's identification of problematic verses in Qohelet as the articulation of wicked or foolish opinions, rather than positions advocated by Solomon, see Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 12.

hermeneutical dualism enables him to conceive of a way to incorporate both possibilities. Indeed, by citing Proverbs 25:11 – *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver* – Tanḥum evokes the *locus classicus* for Maimonidean biblical esotericism.<sup>448</sup>

### *Targum Qohelet*

Despite their striking disagreement over whether Qohelet 9:7-10 is to be read as a statement of the foolish, or whether it is to be read as Solomon’s earnest advice to the reader, Ibn Ghiyāth and Ibn Ezra are in agreement that “eating” and “drinking” refers to the physical consumption of food and beverage. Tanḥum’s allegorical interpretation of these elements might thus strike us as somewhat surprising. Apart from the fact that a consistently allegorizing reading of the verses is more in harmony with Tanḥum’s hermeneutical dualism, one possible source for Tanḥum’s allegorical interpretation of these activities may be identified in the Targum to Qohelet 9:7, which reads as follows: “Solomon said through a prophetic spirit from before the Lord: In the future, the Master of the World will say to each and every righteous person (*‘atid mare ‘alma lememar le-khol tzaddiqa ve-tzaddiqa be-anpe nafsheh*), ‘Go and taste (*izel te‘om*)<sup>449</sup> your bread with joy, which has been given to you in return for your good bread that you gave to the poor and emaciated who was hungry. And drink with a glad heart the wine that has been kept in store for you in the Garden of Eden,<sup>450</sup> in return for your wine that you mixed for the poor and emaciated who was thirsty. For the Lord has already approved your performance of righteous acts.” According to the Targum, then, the eating and drinking described in our verse refers to the

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<sup>448</sup> For which, see above, p.64-65.

<sup>449</sup> The Jewish Palestinian Aramaic *t-‘-m* may actually carry a slightly broader valence, also meaning “eat”; see Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 228. I have translated it according to its more standard meaning in JPA, which corresponds both with its Hebrew cognate and the Arabic verb *dhāqa* employed by Tanḥum in this passage.

<sup>450</sup> The Targum to Qohelet 9:7, as published by Qafih, reads *be-ginneta de-‘eden* in Aramaic (*Hamesh megillot*, 261); other versions read *be-gan ‘eden* in Hebrew (see *Mikra’ot Gedolot ‘Haketer*, ed. Menachem Cohen (Bar-Ilan University Press: 2012), 188-190). The Rabbinic Bible (*Miqra’ot Gedolot*, Venice: 1525) agrees with the latter version. There is no difference in meaning between these readings.

consumption of one's just reward in Eden. Although the Targum lends itself to an eschatological reading, particularly in the deferral of the events described therein to a future date ('*atid* [...] *lememar*), it may also be read as an allusion to the bliss of the afterlife. In the *Murshid*, Tanḥum identifies the Garden of Eden with the subsistence of the intellectual souls of perfected human beings after death.<sup>451</sup> It is thus likely that Tanḥum would have interpreted the Targum's reference to the Garden of Eden soteriologically rather than eschatologically.

### *Sufi Elements*

Finally, elements of Sufi discourse may be identified in Tanḥum's allegorical reading of these verses. The most striking of those are (a) his assertion that one will "taste" (*tadhūqu*) the pleasures of the afterlife while still embodied; and (b) his reference to the perfected individual as "the perfect human" (*al-insān al-kāmil*).

The conception of *dhawq* as direct experience of the Divine is attested in classical Sufi sources, including al-Qushayri's *Risāla* (where it is treated alongside *shurb*, "drinking").<sup>452</sup> Interestingly, Tanḥum does not make a link between *dhawq* and the eating described in Qohelet 9:7; rather, the association is made with *experiencing* – or more literally, *seeing* – life with a woman that one loves, mentioned in Qohelet 9:9. This is reflected in Tanḥum's use of the verb *r-'y* in his creative paraphrase of the verse: "you will see that life, and know it, and taste its delight (*tarā tilka al-ḥayāt wa-ta'lamuhā wa-tadhūqu ladhdhatahā*)." Although he does not state it explicitly, the beloved woman appears to represent the body or the material world, a point which Tanḥum

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<sup>451</sup> Shy, *Murshid*, 408-411. Here (*ibid.*, 411) Tanḥum refers to Maimonides' discussion of the afterlife in the Laws of Repentance in the *Mishneh torah*, stating that the topic is treated at length there. Although this is true of certain elements common to Tanḥum's discussion of the topic and that of Maimonides – such as the incommunicability of the pleasure of the afterlife, and the citation of Isaiah 64:3 in this context (8:7) – it is worth noting that the latter never mentions Eden by name. Rather, his discussion is focused on defining and discussing that which is called "the world to come" (*ha-'olam ha-ba*; see 8:1 and 8:8 in particular).

<sup>452</sup> Knysh, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle*, 95; Arabic in *Al-risāla al-qushayriyya fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Abū Sahl Najāh 'Iwad Ṣiyam (Al-muqaṭṭam li-l-nashr wa-'l-tawzī': 2009), 132-133.

clarifies by emphasizing its connection with the concluding phrase of the verse, *all the days of your vanity*. Both in his identification of the beloved woman with matter and his use of the verb *tarā* to refer to perception of the intellectual realm, Tanḥum's interpretation appears to be informed by Maimonides' discussions in the *Guide*.<sup>453</sup>

It is thus clear that *dhawq* in this context refers to the direct perception of something of the afterlife before one's actual death. In believing that some measure of the experience of the afterlife is attainable within one's lifetime, Tanḥum's position is in tension with Maimonides' account in the *Mishneh torah*, a passage with which Tanḥum was clearly familiar.<sup>454</sup> But interestingly, he closely echoes Abraham Maimonides, who also employed the terminology of *dhawq* in the context of asserting that one may have some limited experience of the afterlife while still alive.<sup>455</sup> Indeed, this attitude appears to have been characteristic of the Egyptian Jewish pietists.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> Maimonides associates the allegorical figure of a woman with matter as opposed to form. See his introduction to the *Guide*, in Pines, 13-14; *Guide* I.6 (Pines, 31); *Guide* I.17 (Pines, 43); and *Guide* III.8 (Pines, 431); Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 149-150; Tova Rosen, *Unveiling Eve: Interpreting Gender in Medieval Hebrew Literature* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2003), 80-81. For the impact of this association on Tanḥum, see Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 18. Cf. also Tanḥum's commentary to Qoh. 7:26, in MS Pococke 320, 142b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 75; and Tanḥum's interpretation of Qoh. 7:28, in which he appears to offer both literal and allegorizing interpretations of the sexes – see MS Pococke 320, 143b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 76. For this motif in another Maimonidean exegete of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Samuel Ibn Tibbon, see Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary*, 135.

For the verb *ra'ah* as an expression of intellectual apprehension, see *Guide* I.4 (Pines, 27-28).

<sup>454</sup> See the Laws of Repentance 8:6-7, where he writes that the experience of the afterlife (*'olam ha-ba*, lit. "The World to Come") is utterly unattainable and inconceivable while embodied. For Tanḥum's reference to this chapter in the Laws of Repentance, see Shy, *Murshid*, 410-11.

<sup>455</sup> On the topic of the afterlife (*al-ākhirah*, *gan 'eden*), Abraham Maimonides refers to "one who has tasted something of it or has inhaled its fragrance in (this) nether abode (*man dhāqa shay'an minhu aw ishtamma rā 'ihatahu fī dār al-dunyā*).” (Text and translation in Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 2, 274-275; alternative translation and discussion in Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 217.)

For a discussion of this passage and Abraham Maimonides' attitude towards the possibility of foretasting the afterlife against its admittedly complex Maimonidean background, see Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 212-218. Apart from adopting distinctly Sufi terminology, this attitude echoes the Sufi expression "die before you die (*mūtū qabla an tamūtū*)," for which see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 70, 135.

<sup>456</sup> Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 212-218.

The present example is not Tanḥum's only reference to *dhawq* in the context of some kind of direct experience. As the following two citations demonstrate, Tanḥum utilized this terminology in multiple ways:

*Your ointments [are more fragrant] than any spice.* (Song 4:10) “The fragrance of your perfume is more delightful and delicious than any fragrance.” Meaning, “They have become for you directly experienced [and] essential delights (*ladhdhāt dhawqiyya dhātiyya*),<sup>457</sup> with aromatic [and] redolent fragrances wafting from them, through which you have formed a partnership with the supernal existing beings.” And from these apprehensions flows a speech more delightful and sweeter and more pleasant than any delight or sweetness...<sup>458</sup>

*I ate my honeycomb along with my honey.* (Song 5:1) [...] As for [the Hebrew term] *ya'ri*, it is honeycomb, as we have said – as in *in the honeycomb* (*be-ya'rat ha-debash*; 1 Sam. 14:27). And it is potently sweet, extremely delightful, since it is natural, as we have said.<sup>459</sup> Thus, when he mentioned this arrival and union (*hādhā al-wuṣūl wa-'l-ittiḥād*), and described delights such as these, he said: “I wish all the friends such as this, and all those that seek perfection that they may become intoxicated with this intoxication, and that they may taste this fare (*wa-yadhūqū min hādhā al-ṭa'ām*) and know its delight.” *Eat, friends! Drink and become drunk, loved ones!* (*ibid.*)<sup>460</sup>

Much like his use of the motif of intoxication, Tanḥum employs the terminology of *dhawq* differently depending on the local context.<sup>461</sup> In the former citation, *dhawq* is apparently

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<sup>457</sup> Cf. the usage in an Egyptian Jewish pietist text, published in Fenton, “Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments,” 63, line 8; translated in *ibid.*, 68.

<sup>458</sup> Second commentary to Song 4:10 – see MS Pococke 320, 47a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 56. I marked the end of Tanḥum's allegorical paraphrase of the verse before the final sentence, as I believe that the latter introduces the following verse: *Sweetness drops from your lips, O bride, honey and milk are under your tongue...* (Song 4:11)

<sup>459</sup> See MS Pococke 320, 49b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 59.

<sup>460</sup> Second commentary to Song 5:1 – see MS Pococke 320, 50a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 59-60.

<sup>461</sup> For Tanḥum's flexible use of the term *sukr*, see above, p.151-152.

associated with delight in direct perception of “supernal existing beings (*al-mawjūdāt al-‘ulwiyya*),” presumably those classes of beings that are not embodied. There also appears to be an association between *dhawq* and prophetic discourse: “you have formed a partnership with the supernal existing beings, and from these apprehensions flows a speech more delightful and sweeter and more pleasant than any delight or sweetness.” In the latter citation, based both on Tanḥum’s references to *wuṣūl* and *ittiḥād* and the continuation of the passage, it appears to be associated with the soul’s final conjunction with the Active Intellect upon the death of the body.<sup>462</sup> It thus appears that Tanḥum applies the term *dhawq* broadly to denote powerful experience, informed by the content of the verses that he is interpreting. As we have seen, this includes *dhawq* as (a) a foretaste of the afterlife, (b) as the direct perception of intellectual truths, and (c) as the indescribable pleasure of union with the intellectual realm upon the death of the body.<sup>463</sup> That Tanḥum employs this terminology in the context of direct experience is suggestive of exposure to Sufi teachings, at the very least indirectly or via informants.<sup>464</sup> Tanḥum was not

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<sup>462</sup> For *wuṣūl* and *ittiḥād* as referring to lasting conjunction after death, see above p.144, p.152; and below, p.353-354, p.359.

<sup>463</sup> See Maimonides’ description of rapturous death – “death by a kiss (*mitah bi-neshiqah*)” – in *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 627-628). See also Michael Fishbane, *The Kiss of God: Spiritual and Mystical Death in Judaism* (University of Washington Press: 1994), 24-26, 28-30, 39.

<sup>464</sup> Particularly considering his comparison of this experience with intoxication (*nashwa, sukr*). Although al-Qushayri’s passage dedicated to sobriety and intoxication (*al-ṣaḥw wa-‘l-sukr*) precedes the passage on *dhawq*, these concepts are deeply enmeshed with each other. Al-Qushayri identifies three stages: tasting (*dhawq*), drinking (*shurb*), and quenching (*rayy*). Those who attain *dhawq* behave as if they are drunk; those who attain *shurb* become drunk; those who attain *rayy* are sober. (See Knysh, *Al-Qushayri’s Epistle*, 95; ‘Iwaḍ Ṣiyam, *Al-risāla al-qushayriyya*, 132.) Here, drunkenness is a median stage on the way to a sobriety that is beyond the mundane consciousness. The relationship between intoxication and sobriety was debated in classical Sufi sources – see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 58-59. See also above, p.152 and fn. 315. Although he does not follow this scheme, and indeed it is not clear if he was aware of al-Qushayri’s treatment, Tanḥum’s repeated juxtaposition of *dhawq* with his (more common) theme of intoxication is suggestive of some awareness of Sufi discourse. Cf. Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 81-83. For Jewish familiarity with al-Qushayri’s epistle, which is attested in both Hebrew and Arabic script among the Geniza documents, see Fenton, “Judaeo-Arabic Mystical Writings,” 92.

alone among Jewish writers to adopt this terminology<sup>465</sup> – indeed, Abraham Maimonides preceded him in describing the foretaste of the afterlife in precisely these terms.<sup>466</sup>

Given Tanḥum’s frequent reliance on Ibn Sīnā, a comparison with the latter’s usage of this terminology may be enlightening. In his later works, Ibn Sīnā employed the term *dhawq* and associated it with delight (*ladhdha*), just as Tanḥum does.<sup>467</sup> Whether or not Ibn Sīnā’s use of the term *dhawq* corresponds precisely with his conception of intuition (*ḥads*), as has been argued by Gutas,<sup>468</sup> it does appear to be associated with prophecy and direct perception of metaphysical truths and causes.<sup>469</sup> As we have observed, Tanḥum’s second commentary to Song 4:10 appears to reflect an association between *dhawq* and prophecy. However, Tanḥum’s usage is considerably broader than that of Ibn Sīnā. I would argue that his account of *dhawq* in his commentary to Qohelet 9:9 is more closely associated with the experience of disembodiment, described here as a foretaste of the afterlife. This is consistent with his description of the intoxicating experience of “denudation” (*tajarrud*) in his commentary to the Song of Songs.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> See also Judah Ha-Levi’s well-known use of the terminology of *dhawq* to articulate a dichotomy between intellectual knowledge and direct perception of the Divine in his *Kuzari*, for a discussion of which see Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 89-102.

<sup>466</sup> Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 217.

<sup>467</sup> For this association in Ibn Sīnā, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 75 fn. 18, 200. On this point, Tanḥum also echoes Maimonides. For the association of intellectual apprehension with delight (*ladhdha*) in Maimonides, see Kreisel, *Maimonides’ Political Thought*, 112, 133.

<sup>468</sup> For the argument that *dhawq* corresponds with *ḥads*, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 199-200, 344-345. For a critique of this position, see Michael E. Marmura’s review article of Gutas’ book, “Plotting the Course of Avicenna’s Thought,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111:2 (1991), 337, 340-342. Here, Marmura suggests that *dhawq* may refer to the subjective quality or experience of direct perception (*ma’rifā*). For *ḥads* in general, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 179-201. A succinct account of *ḥads* in this context is given in Ibn Sīnā’s *Al-ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt* (Remarks and Admonitions): “As for intuition (*al-ḥads*), it presents the middle term in the mind at once, either after search and desire without movement or without desire and movement. Its intermediate, or what is of the same order, is also represented with it.” (Translation from Inati, *Physics and Metaphysics*, 103; Arabic in Dunya, *Al-ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt*, part 2, 393-394.)

<sup>469</sup> See Gutas, *Avicenna*, 372-373; Marmura, “Plotting the Course,” 341.

<sup>470</sup> For which see above, p.151-152.

The term *dhawq* is also discussed repeatedly by al-Ghazālī throughout his works.<sup>471</sup> In his *Ihyā' ulūm al-dīn* (Revival of the Religious Sciences), al-Ghazālī states that *dhawq* is the perfection of knowledge, and that the knowledge that was once possessed in an “outer” manner becomes “internal”.<sup>472</sup> The pleasure of the deepening knowledge of the Divine is impossible to communicate to one who has not experienced it.<sup>473</sup> It appears that some elements of al-Ghazālī’s discourse on the topic of *dhawq* made a significant impact on Tanḥum, although it is not obvious from a comparison of their use of the specific term. There is a significant parallel between Tanḥum and al-Ghazālī insofar as they posit a relationship between the intuitive sense for poetry and the aptitude for prophecy.<sup>474</sup> In his *Mishkāt al-anwār*, al-Ghazālī draws an analogy between the intuitive “taste in poetry (*dhawq al-shi'r*)” that may be observed in some individuals, differing greatly in degree and quality from others who lack such a sense. This sense may only be developed in those who possess at least “the root of this taste (*aṣl al-dhawq*)”; one who lacks it altogether cannot attain it through reason or intellection.<sup>475</sup> Al-Ghazālī states that the matter is similar with respect to those who possess “the specific prophetic taste (*al-dhawq al-khāṣṣ al-nabawī*)”.<sup>476</sup> In his commentary to Qohelet 7:11, Tanḥum draws the very same parallel between the poetic and prophetic aptitudes, going even further to argue that the very etymology of prophecy and poetry in both Hebrew and Arabic reflects their common intuitive properties.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought* (Routledge: 2012), 48-63.

<sup>472</sup> Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 49-50.

<sup>473</sup> Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge*, 49-55.

<sup>474</sup> Judah Ha-Levi’s *Kuzari* expresses a similar perspective in his *Kuzari*, but without drawing an explicit link to prophecy. For the relationship between al-Ghazālī and Ha-Levi on this point, see Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 175-176.

<sup>475</sup> English translation and Arabic text in Buchman, *Niche of Lights*, 37-38.

<sup>476</sup> English translation and Arabic text in Buchman, *Niche of Lights*, 38.

<sup>477</sup> After observing that trades and practical sciences are more easily acquired by some people than others, Tanḥum states that the matter is similar in the case of the poetic arts (*al-ṣanā'i' al-shi'riyya*), where “you see one who is capable [and] predisposed to it (*mu'ahhal musta'idd lahu*), speaking in [poetic forms] without exertion, and composing whatever he desires how he wishes, in the quickest time without affectation – without knowledge or linguistics or grammar or prosody, and without awareness of poetic phrasing and the various meters. And [one sees] another, who has no propensity (*isti'dād*), who is consistent in this, knows the [relevant] sciences, and understands

However, where al-Ghazālī employs the terminology of *dhawq* in this context, Tanḥum prefers the terminology of *isti'dād* (propensity, readiness, aptitude).<sup>478</sup> While there is little indication of direct dependence in this case, the similarity between these two accounts is striking indeed. In addition, the opposition that Tanḥum sets up between natural aptitude (*isti'dād*) on the one hand, and cogitation or reflection (*fīkr, tarrawī*) on the other hand, is strongly reminiscent of Ibn Sīnā's distinction between intuition (*ḥads*) and discursive thinking (*fīkr*).<sup>479</sup>

Tanḥum's reference to the concept of *al-insān al-kāmil* appears to point to his familiarity – quite possibly indirectly – with the teachings of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (d.1240). Similar concepts and formulations may be found in earlier works, but it was Ibn al-'Arabī who first employed this terminology in a technical sense in his introduction to *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.<sup>480</sup> However, Tanḥum's

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the secrets, and knows figurative expressions, and can decipher allusions. In addition, [this person] has studied the linguistics, grammar, books on prosody, and is astute in extracting the subtle meanings and explaining hidden secrets – and despite this, he cannot compose a single rhythmically balanced verse. And if he forces it, wearies himself excessively for a long period, and exerts [his] mind, he will still not produce anything of the likes of the one who is predisposed to it in his constitution. For this reason, poets are known in Hebrew as *prophets (nebi'im)*, as was explained in *Chronicles*, in its statement *who prophesied (ha-nibba) in thanksgiving and praise*. (Cf. 1 Chron. 25:3) So too was it explained that [the expression] *a band of prophets (lahaqat nebi'im; 1 Sam. 19:20)* refers to a group of poets reciting poetic declarations of glorification and praise. Similarly, in the language of the Arabs “poetry” (*al-shi'r*) is from the sense of “perception” [or: “insight”; *al-shu'ūr*], which is one of the faculties of the human soul that apprehends unseen things all at once, without cogitation or reflection (*wa-huwa quwwa min quwā al-nafs al-insāniyya tudriku umūr ghaybiyya duf'atan min ghayr fīkr wa-lā tarawwī*)...” (MS Pococke 320, 134b-135a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 69-70.) Maimonides appears to associate perception or insight (*shu'ūr*) with the Avicennan faculty of intuition (*ḥads*) – see *Guide* 2:38 (Pines, 376-377 [where “divination” = *shu'ūr*]; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 266, lines 6-25).

<sup>478</sup> For variable degrees of prophetic *isti'dād* in an Egyptian pietist text from the same period, apparently associated with Abraham he-Ḥasid, see Fenton, “Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments,” 58. For a later example (from a closely related milieu) of *isti'dād* as a central element of attaining the highest degree of spiritual realization in Obadiah Maimonides' *Al-maqāla al-ḥawḍiyya*, see Fenton, *Treatise of the Pool*, 116 (“spiritual receptivity” – see intext of terms in *ibid.*, 131); 27b in Arabic. This concluding passage becomes still more pertinent when we view it in the context of the post-Maimonidean pietistic milieu, which emphasized the renewal of prophecy. For this concern among the pietists, see Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 187-218. For a discussion of al-Ghazālī's account of the human *isti'dād* for knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of God, see Renard, *Knowledge of God*, 48. It seems that Maimonides used this term to refer to the material intellect. See *Guide*, I.70 (Pines, 174 [“preparedness”]; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 119, line 28).

<sup>479</sup> For this distinction, see the translation from the *Ishārāt* in Gutas, *Avicenna*, 186-188.

<sup>480</sup> See Masataka Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabī's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought* (Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa: 1987), 49. For this concept in general, its background, and its formulation by Ibn al-'Arabī and later development by 'Abd al-Karīm Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jili (mid-14<sup>th</sup>-early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries), see Reynold A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge University Press: 1921), 77-142.

use does not reflect the theosophic conception expressed by Ibn al-‘Arabī, for whom it represents the individual human being’s embodiment of the full range of divine modes of being.<sup>481</sup>

Against this possibility, it might be argued that Tanḥum employs this formulation in a nontechnical sense, echoing Peripatetic sources such as Maimonides, e.g., in *Guide* III.54.<sup>482</sup> Indeed, the medieval philosophical focus on human perfection (*al-kamāl al-insānī*) leads almost inevitably to such formulations, and appears to have informed Ibn al-‘Arabī’s own terminology.<sup>483</sup> However, Tanḥum’s repeated use of this expression,<sup>484</sup> combined with the Sufi orientation of so many Jews in his historical and cultural milieu, as well as the influence of Ibn al-‘Arabī on Egyptian Sufism of this period,<sup>485</sup> render it highly unlikely that he would have been unaware of the associations that his readers would make with this terminology.

In contrast with Ibn al-‘Arabī’s original usage, Tanḥum’s use of the term emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the ethical development and intellectual insight of the perfected human

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<sup>481</sup> According to his usage, the expression *al-insān al-kāmil* may be applied both to the cosmic *anthropos* (also called “the great human”, *al-insān al-kabīr*), and to individual human beings who come to embody and positively synthesize the range of divine essences as represented by the most comprehensive name of the Divine, *Allāh*. See Takeshita, *Ibn ‘Arabī’s Theory of the Perfect Man*; William C. Chittick, *The Sufī Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (State University of New York Press: 1989), 27-30. See the translations in Caner K. Dagli, *Ibn al-‘Arabī: The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam)* (Great Books of the Islamic World/Kazi Publications: 2004), 5-6; and Ralph Austin, *Ibn al-‘Arabī: Bezels of Wisdom* (Paulist Press: 1980), 51. See also Ronald L. Nettler, *Sufī Metaphysics and Qur’ānic Prophets: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Thought and Method in the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (The Islamic Texts Society: 2003), 20-24.

<sup>482</sup> Pines, 634-638.

<sup>483</sup> For the background to the terminology of human perfection in philosophical sources and its adoption into the discourse of the Egyptian Jewish pietists, see Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 189-201. For the impact of philosophical discourse on Ibn al-‘Arabī in general, see Franz Rosenthal, “Ibn ‘Arabī between ‘Philosophy’ and ‘Mysticism’”: “Sūfism and Philosophy are neighbours and visit each other” *fa-inna at-ṭaṣawwuf wa-t-tafalsuf yatajāwarāni wa-yatazāwarāni*,” in *Oriens* 31 (1988), 1-35. For the background to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s conception of *al-insān al-kāmil* in philosophical discourse, see Frank Griffel, “Muslim philosophers’ rationalist explanation of Muḥammad’s prophecy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Cambridge University Press: 2010), 178.

<sup>484</sup> See his commentary to Qoh. 2:26, translated above, p.244.

<sup>485</sup> For the arrival in Egypt of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s disciples in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, see Hofer, *Sufism, State, and Society*, 12. For the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* in Cairo, Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī (d.1298), as a student of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s disciple Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d.1274), see *ibid.*, 75.

being, rather than comprehensive embodiment of divine attributes or names.<sup>486</sup> In this sense, Tanḥum remains more firmly within the Peripatetic tradition. His adoption of Sufi technical language in this case is of interest for two primary reasons: (a) it shows some (possibly indirect) awareness of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s thought on the part of a Jewish thinker, where generally speaking it has been shown that Ibn al-‘Arabī made little or no impact on Jewish writers in this period;<sup>487</sup> (b) it marks a peculiar turn in intellectual history, with the Peripatetic reframing of a Sufi concept, that was in turn a theosophic reformulation of Peripatetic discourse on human perfection. This terminology enabled Tanḥum to express the ultimate goal of the Peripatetic program of philosophical cultivation with a clarity and crispness that might have otherwise eluded him.

In reading the cultivation of the “perfect human being” in these four verses, Tanḥum echoes his curricular program as set out in the introduction to his commentary. However, instead of focusing on the classification of the philosophical sciences themselves, he traces the moral and intellectual development of the individual: One must first acquire moral virtues, then develop the cogitative faculty, then apprehend concepts intellectually via demonstration, and finally synthesize one’s moral and intellectual training into “perfect wisdom [that emerges] from the totality of that which precedes it (*ḥuṣūl al-ḥikma al-kāmila min majmū‘ hādhihi al-mutaqaddima*).” Tanḥum’s account of a higher degree of insight emerging from the synthesis of all branches of philosophical learning recalls his explanation of Solomon’s appellation *qohelet*, which he understands to be roughly equivalent to the Greek term *fyilasūf*, and to mean “synthesizer of the sciences (*jāmi‘ al-ḥikam*).”<sup>488</sup> That is to say, Solomon is called Qohelet because he acquired and synthesized the various branches of the practical and intellectual

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<sup>486</sup> For Tanḥum’s use of the terminology of *al-insān al-kāmil* referring to the fully ethically balanced and intellectually realized individual, compare his commentary to Qoh. 2:26 (above, p.244) with the present passage.

<sup>487</sup> See Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 189 and fn. 10; Fenton, “Judaeo-Arabic Mystical Writings,” 91-92; but cf. *ibid.*, 92 fn. 17, 97.

<sup>488</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 74b; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 25-26. See above, p.179.

sciences. Here, the acquisition of these dispositions, abilities, and disciplines renders the individual a “perfect human being” – one whose wisdom has become whole through systematic cultivation. In Tanḥum’s use of the terminology of *al-insān al-kāmil* to communicate this philosophical ideal, we see a tendency in his writing to integrate and synthesize Peripatetic and Sufi discourse – a tendency that is most pronounced in his commentary to the Song of Songs.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 80.

## Chapter 5: Tanḥum's Commentary to the Song of Songs

As was discussed at length in the second chapter, Tanḥum understood Scripture to contain an esoteric stratum of meaning, with which he was willing to engage when faced with a serious problem in the literal sense of the text. In only two cases did Tanḥum appear to believe that an *entire biblical book* required allegorical treatment: The Book of Jonah, and the Song of Songs. While Tanḥum's allegorical treatment of Jonah is relatively brief,<sup>1</sup> his commentary on the Song of Songs covers over sixty-five folio pages in MS Pococke 320. Although his chief aim is ostensibly to demonstrate that what appears to be a text describing erotic, earthly love is in fact an allegory, the commentary to the Song of Songs affords Tanḥum a rich opportunity to frame the central tenets of his psychology and soteriology, among other themes, in most compelling experiential and even erotic terms. This commentary has the potential to provide us with profound insights into Tanḥum's intellectual world, and to contribute to the emerging picture of the cultural life of thirteenth century Egyptian and Levantine Jewry.

### Reception of the Song of Songs

#### *Rabbinic Background to Interpretation of the Song of Songs*

Midrashic interpretations of the Song of Songs are present throughout rabbinic literature. The best known midrashic collections that are structured specifically as commentaries to the Song of Songs are *Midrash shir ha-shirim* (also known as *Shir ha-shirim rabbah* and *Midrash/Aggadat ḥazita*)<sup>2</sup> and *Midrash zuṭa*.<sup>3</sup> In addition, two midrashic texts from the Cairo Genizah have been

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<sup>1</sup> Shy, *Perush*, 129-139; 180b-185a in the MS.

<sup>2</sup> For these works, their historical background, and editions (including partial critical editions), see Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 315-316. The *editiones principes* were Constantinople (1514, reprinted 1520) and Pesaro (1519), though the relationship between these editions is debated. For these editions, and their relationship to the MSS, see Michel G. Distefano, *Inner-Midrashic Introductions and their Influence on Introductions to Medieval Rabbinic Bible Commentaries* (Walter de Gruyter: 2009), 56-57. The two critical editions

published.<sup>4</sup> According to the most widespread scholarly understanding, the Song of Songs was generally understood by the rabbis as an allegory for Israel's sacred history and its relationship with God.<sup>5</sup> (This exegetical tendency will henceforth be referred to as "historical-allegorical".) Some scholars have emphasized a possible polemical context for this interpretation, as a rejection of Christian modes of spiritualizing allegoresis, or of Christian identifications of the female protagonist of the Song of Songs as a representation of the Church.<sup>6</sup>

However, a number of studies have rendered a monolithic understanding of rabbinic exegesis of the Song of Songs untenable. Saul Lieberman and Gershom Scholem argued that alongside the historical-allegorical approach, the Song of Songs was interpreted in an esoteric sense that

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that were mentioned in Strack and G. Stemberger (*Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 316) as currently being in preparation have been abandoned; see Distefano, *Inner-Midrashic Introductions*, 56, fn. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Published by Solomon Buber in *Midrasch suta: Hagadische Abhandlungen über Schir ha-Schirim, Ruth, Echah und Koheleth, nebst Jalkut zum Buche Echah* (H. Itzkowski: 1894), 3-41; also published as *Agadath Shir Hashirim*, ed. Solomon Schechter, in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 6:4 (1894), 648-655. For a discussion of these sources and published editions, see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 319-320. For these as editions of the same text, see Ephraim E. Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretation of the Sages and the Expositions of Origen on Canticles, and the Jewish Christian Disputation," in *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971), 254. (For the Hebrew version of the aforementioned article, see Ephraim E. Urbach, "Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and the Exposition of Origen on Canticles, and the Jewish Christian Disputation," in *Tarbiz* 30 (1960), 148-170.)

<sup>4</sup> See *Midrash Shir Hashirim: Printed from a Geniza Manuscript*, ed. Eliezer Halevi Grünhut (Jerusalem: 1897); second edition with additional introduction, notes and indices by Joseph Chaim Wertheimer (Ktav Yad Vasefer Institute: 1971). See also the Genizah fragment published in Jacob Mann, "Some Midrashic Geniza Fragments," in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 14 (1939), 333-337. On these editions, see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 347-348.

<sup>5</sup> Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretation of the Sages," 254-256; Yair Zakovitch, *The Song of Songs: Introduction and Commentary (Mikra Leyisra'el Series*, eds. Moshe Greenberg and Shmuel Ahituv [Am Oved Publishers: 1992]), 34-36; Sara Japhet, "The human body and its beauty in mediaeval *peshat* exegesis of the Song of Songs," in *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'ān, presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*, eds. Meir M. Bar-Asher, Simon Hopkins, Sarah Stroumsa and Bruno Chiesa (The Ben-Zvi Institute: 2007), 133-134; Sara Japhet, "The Pendulum of Exegetical Methodology: From *Peshat* to *Derash* and Back," in *Midrash Unbound*, eds. Michael Fishbane and Joanna Weinberg (The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization: 2013), 253 – 257. Cf. also Michael Fishbane, *The Kiss of God: Spiritual and Mystical Death in Judaism* (University of Washington Press: 1994), 15. Fishbane's characterization of the rabbinic historical allegory as representing "the covenantal love between God and Israel" allows for a richer reading of erotic elements in rabbinic theology and historiography, rather than merely seeing this exegetical strategy as a means to suppress all eroticism.

<sup>6</sup> Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretation of the Sages"; Zakovitch, *Song of Songs*, 37; R. Kimelman, "Rabbi Yoḥanan and Origen on the Song of Songs," in *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980) 567-595; and cf. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius*, 83-84.

constituted the basis for the *Shi'ur qomah* (Dimensions of [the Divine] Body) tradition.<sup>7</sup> According to Scholem and Lieberman, *Shi'ur qomah* reflects late antique Jewish sources known to rabbinic circles before the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>8</sup> Pointing to Origen's account of the Song of Songs as a work whose study was restricted to adult Jews, they emphasized the importance of the description of the lovers' bodies in Song 5:10-16 as forming the basis for the contemplation of the *corpus dei* and its dimensions. Indeed, those verses appear in the *Shi'ur qomah* traditions at a climactic moment in the description of the Divine.<sup>9</sup>

Daniel Boyarin suggested new ways of understanding rabbinic hermeneutics, in particular regarding rabbinic understandings of the Song of Songs. According to his view, the rabbis viewed the Song of Songs not as a "lock to which the key has been lost,"<sup>10</sup> but rather as a key to the understanding of Scripture.<sup>11</sup> That is to say, the Song of Songs is not a problematic text that requires external knowledge in order to render it properly intelligible, but rather a text that illuminates otherwise inaccessible meanings of the Torah (i.e., the Pentateuch).<sup>12</sup> Boyarin's reading reframes rabbinic hermeneutics as a whole, in particular as represented in the *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el*, and locates rabbinic treatments of the Song of Songs within this new

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<sup>7</sup> Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and the Talmudic Tradition*, 38-40; Lieberman, *Mishnat shir ha-shirim*, in *ibid.* (Appendix D), 123. For the *Shi'ur qomah* texts in general, see Martin Samuel Cohn, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions* (J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]: 1985); Scholem, *Major Trends*, 63-67; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 36-42; Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (Schocken Books: 1991), 15-55; Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, trans. Allan Arkush, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (The Jewish Publication Society/Princeton University Press: 1987), 20-24. For critiques of Scholem and alternative views, see Schäfer, *Origins*, 306-315.

<sup>8</sup> Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 40-41. For the late antique provenance of *Shi'ur qomah*, see Schäfer, *Origins*, 311-315. For the likelihood of a Babylonian provenance for the texts, see *ibid.*, 307.

<sup>9</sup> For examples, see Cohn, *Shi'ur Qomah*, 46-50 (*Siddur rabbah*); 72-73 (*Merkabah rabbah*); 97 (*Sefer razi'el*); and cf. Schäfer, *Origins*, 308-309.

<sup>10</sup> Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 26; translation from Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Indiana University Press: 1990), 105.

<sup>11</sup> See Daniel Boyarin, "Two Introductions to the Midrash on the Song of Songs," in *Tarbiz* 56 (1987), 479-500; Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 105-116.

<sup>12</sup> Boyarin, "Two Introductions," 479; Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 107-108.

scheme.<sup>13</sup> He explicitly rejected Lieberman's interpretation of Rabbi Akiva's homily based on Song 5:9-6:3 in the *Mekhilta* as the basis of the *Shi'ur qomah* traditions,<sup>14</sup> along with the other key elements of Lieberman's argument.<sup>15</sup> However, Boyarin does not negate the possibility that the Song of Songs occupied an important place in late antique Jewish esotericism, nor does he seem particularly interested in this question.<sup>16</sup>

Despite his rejection of some of its central claims, Boyarin acknowledges that the essay in which Lieberman presented his theory is "brimming with novellae."<sup>17</sup> In particular, he accepts Lieberman's understanding of Origen's account of Jewish attitudes towards the Song of Songs, namely, that there were Jews in late antiquity who interpreted the work esoterically.<sup>18</sup> This understanding of Origen has, however, been challenged by Martin Samuel Cohn,<sup>19</sup> Philip S. Alexander<sup>20</sup> and Peter Schäfer.<sup>21</sup> The latter in particular states that there is nothing in Origen's account that indicates that the Song of Songs was interpreted in an esoteric manner. Rather, the historical-allegorical interpretation muted the book's overt eroticism, which was itself ample enough reason to refrain from teaching the book to the less learned student.<sup>22</sup> Schäfer's skepticism is welcome, and much of his critique of Scholem is cogent and penetrating. However,

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<sup>13</sup> However, even within the *Mekhilta* itself there are many examples that sit in clear tension with Boyarin's theory. For example, see the interpretation of Song 1:8 ascribed to R. Yoḥannan b. Zakkai, in which the latter interprets the verse historically/prophetically in light of his encounter with a poor Jewish (*'ibrit*) girl, picking food out of the dung of an Arabian horseman's horse (in Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el*, Tractate Ba-ḥodesh I, 290-291). This example stands out in particular due to R. Yoḥannan b. Zakkai's statement that until he saw this girl he did not understand the verse. Thus, the *Mekhilta* both provides historical-allegorical readings of Song, and depicts R. Yoḥannan b. Zakkai applying external data in decoding a verse from Song as some kind of allegory.

<sup>14</sup> Boyarin, "Two Introductions," 497; Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el*, Tractate Shirata III, 185-186.

<sup>15</sup> Boyarin, "Two Introductions," 492-500.

<sup>16</sup> Boyarin, "Two Introductions," 492, and fn. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Boyarin, "Two Introductions," 492.

<sup>18</sup> However, he questions whether there is any evidence for such a reading in classical rabbinic sources; see Boyarin, "Two Introductions," 492 fn. 30, 499-500.

<sup>19</sup> Cohn, *Shi'ur Qomah*, 20 and fn. 77.

<sup>20</sup> Philip S. Alexander, *The Targum of Canticles*, The Aramaic Bible, Volume 17A, (The Liturgical Press: 1987) 36-37.

<sup>21</sup> Schäfer, *Origins*, 310-311.

<sup>22</sup> Schäfer, *Origins*, 311; and cf. Halperin, *Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, 53, fn. 132.

on this point Scholem's and Lieberman's reading of Origen appears more convincing. The other passages mentioned by Origen – Genesis 1, Ezekiel 1, and the concluding chapters of Ezekiel – were certainly associated with esoteric disciplines.<sup>23</sup> Schäfer notes this, and suggests that there need not be a single reason for the Jewish practice described by Origen.<sup>24</sup> While this is possible in theory, the *absence* of other sexually explicit or morally problematic passages from Origen's list,<sup>25</sup> and his implication that the reservation of the study of the Song of Songs for the most advanced students is indicative of its high status,<sup>26</sup> are highly suggestive that he understood Song to be part of an esoteric tradition.

Schäfer's critique of Scholem's and Lieberman's position regarding the emergence of *Shi'ur qomah* from the exegesis of the Song of Songs is also significant. While it is true that Schäfer's own explanation – that the *Shi'ur qomah* tradition developed independently and that passages from the Song of Songs were woven into the accounts<sup>27</sup> – is convincingly argued, the stark distinction between exegesis and “proof text[s]” that he proposes is simplistic.<sup>28</sup> The very fact that the authors and redactors of the *Shi'ur qomah* texts placed the highly stylized descriptions of the beloved's body from Song 5:11-16 at the center of their account of the Divine upon his throne is proof enough that they associated the text with some kind of theophany.<sup>29</sup>

No clear scholarly consensus has emerged concerning the relationship between *Shi'ur qomah* and an esoteric tradition of interpreting the Song of Songs. It should be emphasized that, despite Schäfer's and Boyarin's critiques, the view expressed by Scholem and Lieberman concerning the

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. A. S. Halkin, “Ibn ‘Aknin's commentary on the Song of Songs,” in *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: 1950), 400.

<sup>24</sup> Schäfer, *Origins*, 311.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Mishnah Megillah 4:10, and the related *barayta* in the Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 25a-b.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Barton, “Canonicity of the Song of Songs,” 2.

<sup>27</sup> Schäfer, *Origins*, 308-309. Cf. Cohn, *Shi'ur Qomah*, 20, fn. 77.

<sup>28</sup> Schäfer, *Origins*, 309.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Japhet, “The human body,” 134 fn.5.

link between Rabbi Akiva's homily and *Shi'ur qomah* has been accepted by a number of scholars.<sup>30</sup> More importantly, whatever the historical relationship between *Shi'ur qomah* and the interpretation of verses from the Song of Songs might be, the very fact of their association in these texts is enough to suggest a connection between the Song of Songs and theophany or contemplation to later readers of this literature.

Also notable is Lieberman's reference to the association of the secrets of the Chariot (*ḥadre ha-merkabah*) with Song 1:4: *The king brought me to his chambers*.<sup>31</sup> On the same verse, Song of Songs Rabbah presents the narrative of the "four [who] entered the orchard" (*arba'ah nikhnesu la-pardes*), which contains numerous literary allusions to the Song of Songs, both in its form in Song of Songs Rabbah, and its parallels in the Tosefta and the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds.<sup>32</sup>

Although it has been our aim here to emphasize the diversity within rabbinic interpretation of the Song of Songs, it is certainly the case that there are many passages within rabbinic literature – perhaps the majority of cases – that treat the work in a straightforwardly historical-allegorical manner.<sup>33</sup> Mention should also be made of the Targum to the Song of Songs, which represents a

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<sup>30</sup> For example, see Joseph Dan, "Mysticism in Jewish History, Religion, and Literature," in *ibid.*, *Jewish Mysticism (volume III: The Modern Period)*, (Jason Aaronson: 1999), 50; and Zakovitch, *Song of Songs*, 36, 89. Cf. however, Fishbane, *Kiss of God*, 62-63; Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius*, 85-89, 147 nn. 8-9; Daniel Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation in Medieval Germany: A Study of the Sod ha-Egoz Texts* (Mohr Siebeck: 1997), 60-62.

<sup>31</sup> See Song Rabbah, 1:4; Lieberman, *Mishnat shir ha-shirim*, 122; Halperin, *Merkabah*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Tosefta Ḥagigah 2:3-4 (Zuckerman); Palestinian Talmud, Ḥagigah 2:1; Babylonian Talmud, Ḥagigah 14b; Song Rabbah, 1:4. See Shalom Rosenberg, "Philosophical Hermeneutics on the Song of Songs, Introductory Remarks," in *Tarbiz* 59 (1990), 134; Fishbane, *Kiss of God*, 35. Note in particular that the only use of the term *pardes* in the Hebrew occurs in Song 4:13; the repeated use in the rabbinic narrative of the unusual verb *hetzitz* (cf. Song 2:9); and the passage's culmination in Rabbi Akiva's safe emergence from the Orchard, which is associated in the narrative with Song 1:4. Note that in the Babylonian Talmud, the association of Rabbi Akiva's emergence from the Orchard with Song 1:4 is deferred until Ḥagigah 15b; this is not evidence of the verse's original absence, but rather of the fragmentation of the narrative for exegetical purposes, and subsequent filling in of the full narrative on 14b.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius*, 85. Boyarin points to Lieberman's observation that the *tanna'im* in the Mekhilta are consistent in their association of Song with a particular event in the biblical narrative of Israel's redemption (Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 114). Of course, such an observation does not require that those figures

fully developed historical-allegorical reading of the work.<sup>34</sup> The Targum draws heavily on earlier midrashic material, but is overwhelmingly unified in style, method, and outlook. This in itself appears to suggest its unified authorship.<sup>35</sup> Philip Alexander locates its origin in seventh-eighth century Palestine.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, there are a very small number of rabbinic sources that reflect a more literal understanding of the Song of Songs.<sup>37</sup> Notable examples of such a reading include a statement in the Tosefta ascribed to Rabbi Akiva that suggests that the Song of Songs may have been popularly treated as a love song and sung in taverns;<sup>38</sup> a statement in an amoraic midrash that derives wedding etiquette from the Song of Songs;<sup>39</sup> and a liturgical text that celebrates the

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accurately represent historical personae; it merely demonstrates that the tradents and redactors of the material attributed consistent approaches to those figures. It is important to emphasize that for our purposes it is immaterial whether the authors and tradents of the *Mekhilta de-rabbi yishma'el* viewed Song as a “dark” text in need of illumination, or as an “illuminating” text (according to Boyarin’s understanding of the *meshal*’s use in tannaitic literature), however fascinating such a question may be. The mere fact of Song’s *association* with the major events of Israel’s *Heilsgeschichte* is sufficient to explain the dominance of historical allegoresis in medieval Rabbanite exegesis, particularly given the adoption of Hellenistic conceptions of allegory by Jewish exegetes in the centuries after the Islamic conquests.

<sup>34</sup> For which, see Alexander, *The Targum of Canticles*; Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited/ Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 2010), 323-327; Fleisher and Chilton, *The Targums*, 240-241.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander, *Targum of Canticles*, 55.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander, *Targum of Canticles*, 55-60. See also Zakovitch, *Song of Songs*, 35-36. It could be argued that a discussion of the Targum properly belongs to the medieval period, since its authorship appears to postdate the Islamic conquest of Palestine. However, I have grouped it together with late antique rabbinic literature due to two considerations: (a) The fact that it is most closely aligned with the late antique traditions of exegetical translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic for synagogal recitation and study; (b) the absence of any obvious Greco-Arabic influence; and (c) the fact that it was viewed as a classical rabbinic source by medieval Rabbanite exegetes. Cf. Daniel Frank, “Karaites Commentaries on the Song of Songs from Tenth-Century Jerusalem,” in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, eds. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, Joseph W. Goering (Oxford University Press: 2010), 51, 52; Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 146-147.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Japhet, “The Pendulum of Exegetical Methodology,” 253 and fn.17.

<sup>38</sup> See Tosefta Sanhedrin 12:10. Of course, the literal reading alluded to here cannot be called “rabbinic” insofar as the rabbinic text itself rejects it. However, it might more safely be described as a late antique Jewish tradition, familiar to rabbinic sources. The ascription to Rabbi Akiva is significant when juxtaposed with his statement in Mishnah Yadayim 3:5. It is possible that the Tosefta here identifies Rabbi Akiva as the most appropriate representative of the sanctity of Song, and by extension, as the most fitting opponent of any literal reading or improper use thereof.

<sup>39</sup> *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, 1:1 (ed. Bernard Mandelbaum [The Jewish Theological Society of America: 1987], vol. 1, 1): “Rabbi Hanina said: The Torah teaches you proper etiquette, namely that the groom should not enter the *huppah* until the bride permits him. *Let my beloved come to his garden* [or: *canopy*; see following interpretation in *Pesiqta*] (Song 4:16); and only afterwards, *I came into my garden* (*Ibid.* 5:1).” The verses are adjacent.

consummation of marriage in language borrowed from the Song of Songs, and which is of uncertain provenance.<sup>40</sup>

In sum, it may be said that diverse interpretive traditions concerning the Song of Songs existed among Jewish scholarly circles of late antiquity, including rabbinic circles. Furthermore, multiple trends can be seen even within a single redacted text. Aside from being read as an allegory for the sacred history of Israel, the Song of Songs may have provided a hermeneutical “key” to understanding the Torah, and it appears to have been associated with the great theophanies of rabbinic historiography, and the mysteries of the Chariot (*merkavah*). These interpretive inclinations remained available to medieval exegetes to recover and reframe.

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<sup>40</sup> See Ta-Shma, *Ha-tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 181-187; Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation*, 64-66; and in particular R. Langer, “The Birkat Betulim: A study of the Jewish Celebration of Bridal Virginity,” in *Proceedings of the American Association for Jewish Research* 61 (1995), 53-94. The benediction is known as *birkat betulim*, *asher tzag* and other names. It is not mentioned explicitly in the Babylonian or Palestinian Talmudim, but is widely known and referred to by the geonic period and thereafter. Ta-Shma suggests that the prayer may have been known to the Palestinian Talmud as the benediction for betrothal effected by sexual intercourse (Ta-Shma, *Ha-tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 183, n.6; for the practice of betrothal by intercourse, see Mishnah Qiddushin 1:1). The text reads as follows:

Blessed are You, Lord, King of the World, who planted a nut (cf. Song 6:11) in the Garden of Eden, a lily of the valleys (*ibid.* 2:1). Lest a stranger come to dominate the sealed spring (*ibid.* 4:12), the loving doe (Prov. 5:19) keeps it pure, and does not violate the ordinance. Blessed are You, who chooses the offspring of Abraham.

(Based on the version appearing in *Halakhot gedolot*, ed. Esriel Hildesheimer [Meqitze nirdamim: 1971], vol. 2, 226.)

On the sexual symbolism of the walnut (as often understood) of Song 6:11, see Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation*; Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition; The Magnes Press/Cherub Press: 2013), 162 and fn. 72. In addition to three clear allusions to Song, we should note the sexual resonance of Prov. 5:19, against the background of its interpretation in the Babylonian Talmud, ‘Erubin 54b. There, the Torah (in place of the biblical figure of Wisdom) is likened to a “loving doe” due to the latter’s “narrow womb” – which makes her lover experience her as if she were perpetually virginal. So too is the Torah to be experienced, as perpetually new. Taken with the rabbinic interpretive background in mind, the application of this verse to a woman’s protection of her virginity is quite astonishing in its suggestiveness. The benediction fell out of use gradually due to Maimonides’ opposition to its recital. (Ta-Shma, *Ha-tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 181-187; for the full responsum, see *R. Moses b. Maimon: Responsa*, ed. Jehoshua Blau [Mekize Nirdamim: 1960], vol. 2, responsum #207, 363-366.) See Ta-Shma for a discussion of the reasons behind Maimonides’ opposition to the practice – i.e., that the ceremony originally entailed the viewing of the blood-stained sheet or garment after the consummation of the marriage and was thus improper (Ta-Shma, *Ha-tefillah ha-ashkenazit ha-qedumah*, 185). The viewing of the sheet is not mentioned explicitly by Maimonides; rather, he declares the blessing to be in vain, and criticizes the gathering that he refers to as *qiddush ha-betulim* as improper. See *ibid.*, 181; Blau, *Responsa*, #207, 366.) Additional reasons for Maimonides’ objection to the blessing might be his generally negative attitude towards sex and touch, and the blessing’s application of verses from Song in an unambiguously sexual context. For Maimonides’ attitudes towards sex and touch, see *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Character Traits, 5:4; and *Guide* II.36 (Pines, 371), II.40 (Pines, 384), III.49 (Pines, 608).

## Medieval Judeo-Arabic Interpretation: Karaite

From their earliest period of activity, the Song of Songs attracted the attention of Karaite exegetes, with Benjamin al-Nahawandi composing a commentary on the work in the ninth century.<sup>41</sup> The tenth century saw the production of several commentaries, including those of David b. Abraham al-Fāsī, Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf Ibn Nūḥ, Salmon b. Yeroḥam, and Yefet b. Eli. While al-Fāsī’s commentary is not extant,<sup>42</sup> and Ibn Nuḥ’s is narrowly linguistic in focus,<sup>43</sup> those of Salmon and Yefet are not only extant, but exhibit a high degree of overlap in their attitude towards the Song of Songs.<sup>44</sup> Part of Salmon’s exegetical project consisted of collecting interpretive traditions that had become current among the Jerusalem Karaites.<sup>45</sup>

Salmon and Yefet interpret the Song of Songs both in a historical-allegorical and an actualizing sense. That is to say that passages in the Song of Songs are read both as an allegorical account of the sacred history of Israel, and in the light of contemporary events, which are seen as the fulfillment of prophecies.<sup>46</sup> In contrast with the general trend in Rabbanite exegesis of the Song of Songs, Salmon and Yefet appear to grant primacy to the actualizing element of their

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<sup>41</sup> Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 146. For Karaite exegesis of Song in general, see *ibid.*, 145-164; Frank, “Karaite Commentaries.” For medieval Jewish exegesis of Song in general, see Barry Dov Walfish, “An Annotated Bibliography of Medieval Jewish Commentaries on the Song of Songs,” in *The Bible in Light of its Interpreters: Sarah Kamin Memorial Volume*, ed. Sara Japhet (The Magnes Press: 1994), 518-579; Siegmund Salfeld, *Das Hohelied bei jüdischen Erklärern des Mittelalters* (Verlag Julius Benzian: 1879).

<sup>42</sup> See Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 146 fn. 9. For the passage that informed Frank’s conclusion that al-Fasi did indeed compose such a commentary, see Skoss, *The Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary of the Bible Known as Kitāb Jāmi‘ al-Alfāz (Agrōn) of David ben Abraham al-Fāsī*, vol. 1, 158, lines 67-68.

<sup>43</sup> For an edition, see Khan, *The Early Karaite Tradition of Hebrew Grammatical Thought*, 456-465.

<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of their commentaries in general, see Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 146-164. Salmon’s commentary (composed in 956 CE) was thought to be lost until its relatively recent rediscovery; see *ibid.*, 148. For an edition of Yefet’s commentary see *Old Jewish Commentaries on the Song of Songs I: The Commentary of Yefet ben Eli*, ed. and trans. Joseph Alobaidi (Peter Lang: 2010). See also Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 7-17.

<sup>45</sup> Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 148.

<sup>46</sup> Salmon identifies three basic elements in Song: (a) An entreaty to God to explicate the Torah; (b) an expression of remorse for sins and grief for punishment; and (c) longing for the advent of the Messiah. See Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 151-152; and cf. Yefet’s similar approach in *ibid.*, 155.

interpretation.<sup>47</sup> In addition, and bound up with these aspects of the commentaries, there is a distinctly polemical current (typically anti-Rabbanite) within these commentaries.<sup>48</sup>

Most notably – and in direct contrast with Salmon’s attitude towards Qohelet – both Salmon and Yefet vigorously and self-consciously insist on an allegorical reading of the Song of Songs. Both writers employ distinctly dualistic terminology (*zāhir* versus *bāḥin/ta’wīl*) in framing their exegesis,<sup>49</sup> and insist that the Song of Songs is intended purely as an allegory.<sup>50</sup> However, both of their Arabic translations of the Song of Songs are strikingly literal, as is typical of Karaite biblical translations in general.<sup>51</sup>

### Medieval Judeo-Arabic Interpretation: Rabbanite

A historical-allegorical understanding of the Song of Songs was promoted by Saadia Gaon (d.942).<sup>52</sup> This is clear from an extant treatise on the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15:1-18), in which Saadia states that the Song of Songs is concerned with Israel’s “past, present, and future (*al-māḍī wa-’l-muqīm wa-’l-āī*”).<sup>53</sup> He appears to have written a complete commentary on the Song of Songs, but the text that has been preserved and ascribed to him is either misattributed or heavily reworked.<sup>54</sup> The commentary attributed to Saadia appears to date from the late tenth or early

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<sup>47</sup> Frank, “Karaite Commentaries on the Song of Songs,” 56.

<sup>48</sup> See Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 156, 161-164; Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Cornell University Press: 2008), 112-115.

<sup>49</sup> For Salmon’s *zāhir/bāḥin* dichotomy, and his definition of Song as “purely esoteric (*al-bāḥin al-mahḍ*)”, see Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 150. For Yefet’s distinction between the text’s *zāhir* and its more indeterminate *ta’wīl*, see *ibid.*, 157. For the latter passage in Arabic, see Alobaidi, *Commentary of Yefet ben Eli*, 49; for Alobaidi’s (problematic and inelegant) translation, see *ibid.*, 184-185.

<sup>50</sup> For Salmon’s attitude, see Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 150, 152; for Yefet, see *ibid.*, 155.

<sup>51</sup> Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 152-153, 158; Polliack, *The Karaite Tradition of Arabic Bible Translation*.

<sup>52</sup> See Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, 321-323; Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 498-499. Note that Saadia does not cite Song even once in *Beliefs and Opinions* – see the index of scriptural citations in Qafih, *Sefer ha-nibḥar ba-emunot u-ba-de’ot*, 350-351; and in Rosenblatt, *Beliefs and Opinions*, 491.

<sup>53</sup> Haggai Ben-Shammai “New Findings in a Forgotten Manuscript: Samuel b. Hofni’s Commentary on *Ha’azinu* and Saadya’s ‘Commentary on the Ten Songs’,” in *Qiryat Sefer* 61 (1986-7), 323. For the full passage dealing with Song, with a Hebrew translation, see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 33-39.

<sup>54</sup> See Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, 321-323. For a discussion of the extant commentary, see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 17-20; Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 9-11; for the text see *ibid.*, 17-129.

eleventh century, and is of undetermined geographical origin.<sup>55</sup> That commentary suggests a historical-allegorical reading of the Song of Songs, culminating in the messianic era – although, in contrast with Karaite exegetes, the redemption and its accompanying tribulations take a decidedly secondary place in relation to the narrative of Israel’s past glory.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the commentary suggests that the Song of Songs be read as a basically chronological account of Israel’s salvation history.<sup>57</sup>

Echoing the multiplicity of earlier rabbinic exegesis, interpretation of the Song of Songs in the Maghrib remained diverse. Alongside the common historical-allegorical tendency,<sup>58</sup> there is indirect evidence of the persistence of literal interpretations in the Maghrib.<sup>59</sup> In addition to Ibn Ezra’s critical reference to astronomical and psychological interpretations of the Song of Songs,<sup>60</sup> Ibn Ḥazm (d.1064) provides indirect evidence for the interpretation of the Song of

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Daniel Frank (“Karaite Commentaries on the Song of Songs,” 52) states that it is a later reworking, while Philip S. Alexander (*The Targum of Canticles*, 45) asserts that it is misattributed, and is of early authorship, possibly dating to the tenth century. For the theory that it is a later reworking of Saadia’s commentary, see Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, 321-322; Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 10.

<sup>55</sup> For Judah Ratzhabi’s theory that it is of Babylonian origin, and Qafih’s opinion that it is a Yemeni reworking of an authentic Saadian commentary, see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 17-18. For Qafih’s own formulation position, see Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 10.

<sup>56</sup> See in particular Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 26.

<sup>57</sup> Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 26; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 19.

<sup>58</sup> See Zoref’s discussion of a medieval commentary on Song, apparently by a Maghribi exegete, in *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 20-24; note also Judah Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s disappointment at only finding historical-allegorical commentaries despite his ongoing search for alternatives, for which see Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 498-499.

<sup>59</sup> Joseph b. Judah Ibn ‘Aqnīn relates an anecdote that a prominent Jewish physician, Abū al-Ḥasan Meir Ibn Kamniel of Seville, related to him that another Jewish physician had explained Song to the Almoravid ruler ‘Alī Ibn Yūsuf Ibn Tashfīn, “according to its literal sense as a love poem (*‘alā zāhir lafẓihi min al-ghazal*).” Ibn ‘Aqnīn relates that the incensed Ibn Kamniel persuaded the king of the falsity of this approach by appealing to Solomon’s wisdom and saintliness, and emphasizing the lofty allegorical sense of the book. See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 490-491; Halkin, “Ibn ‘Aknin’s commentary on the Song of Songs,” 391-392. Note also the account of the early Spanish Kabbalist Ezra b. Solomon (d. mid-13<sup>th</sup> century) who wrote in his commentary that those who understand Song literally have “felled many victims (*rabbim ḥalalim hippilah*)” – see *ibid.*, 392 and fn. 20. For a general discussion of Ezra’s b. Solomon’s commentary, which is perhaps the earliest kabbalistic commentary on Song, see Elliot R. Wolfson, “Asceticism and Eroticism in Medieval Jewish Philosophical and Mystical Exegesis of the Song of Songs,” in *With Reverence for the Word*, eds. McAuliffe, Walfish, and Goering (Oxford University Press: 2010), 96-97.

<sup>60</sup> See below, p.295-296. For the sense in which I am using the term “psychological”, see below, p.296, fn. 80.

Songs as an alchemical text.<sup>61</sup> The Hebrew poets of *al-Andalus* drew extensively on the Song of Songs – in both a religious and secular context.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, it is notable that the use of Song appears entirely natural and unselfconscious in its various settings. Solomon Ibn Gabirol (11<sup>th</sup> century) drew on the Song of Songs to describe return of the soul to God, and the loving relationship between both the individual and community and the Divine.<sup>63</sup> Judah Ha-Levi also employed the language of Song 7:1 to describe the return of the soul to its Maker, identifying the soul with the biblical Shulamite.<sup>64</sup> This depiction has a direct parallel in *Kitāb ma‘ānī al-naḥs*.<sup>65</sup> There, the author offers a neoplatonizing interpretation of Song 7:1, relating it to the return of the soul to its Lord after its sojourn in the material world.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, *Ma‘ānī al-naḥs* consistently exhibits a distinctly psychological reading of verses from the Song of Songs.<sup>67</sup> The diverse recontextualization of verses from this work in medieval Iberian Hebrew poetry demonstrates the wide range of interpretive possibilities that such writers perceived in the text.

Although he wrote no commentary, Baḥya Ibn Paquda interprets isolated verses from the Song of Songs as alluding to the state of the individual lover of God in his work *Kitāb al-hidāya ilā*

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<sup>61</sup> He writes that “I have seen one of [the Jews] who is of the opinion that that it [contains] allusions to alchemy (*al-kīmiyā*), but this is yet another clever delusion.” (See Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-ḥiṣāl fī al-mīlāl wa-’l-ahawā’ wa-’l-niḥāl*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Dār al-kutub al-’ilmiyya: 1996), vol. 1, 233; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 24-25.) For Jewish awareness of and involvement in alchemy in the medieval Islamic world, see Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Sourcebook* (Princeton University Press: 1994), 95-151.

<sup>62</sup> Adena Tanenbaum, *The Contemplative Soul: Hebrew Poetry and Philosophical Theory in Medieval Spain* (Brill: 2002), 102-104; Wolfson, “Asceticism and Eroticism,” 95. Cf. also, for example, the striking imagery drawn from Song in Moses Ibn Ezra’s poem reproduced and translated into English in Raymond Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life* (Oxford University Press: 1986), 96-97, briefly discussed in *ibid.*, 100. And compare the similar use of motifs and language from Song by Ibn Gabirol, in *ibid.*, 110-111, briefly discussed in *ibid.*, 112.

<sup>63</sup> Tanenbaum, *Contemplative Soul*, 103; Jochanan Wijnhoven, “The Mysticism of Solomon Ibn Gabirol,” in *The Journal of Religion* 45:2 (1965), 146.

<sup>64</sup> See Bernard (Dov) Septimus, “On the Use of Talmudic Literature in Spanish Hebrew Poetry,” in *Tarbiz* 53:4 (1984), 612. Cf. also Tanenbaum, *Contemplative Soul*, 189.

<sup>65</sup> For which, see above, p.242 fn. 349.

<sup>66</sup> See Goldziher, *Ma‘ānī al-naḥs*, 31; Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 40; Rosenberg, “Philosophical Hermeneutics,” 137. Compare this formulation with Tanḥum’s commentaries to Song 7:1 in 29b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 33; 60b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 72.

<sup>67</sup> See for example Goldziher, *Ma‘ānī al-naḥs*, 28, 29; Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 35, 38. See also Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 25.

*farā'id al-qulūb*.<sup>68</sup> He interprets Song 8:6 and 1:13 as an allusion to the individual's constant remembrance of the Divine, shifting the focus of rabbinic interpretations from the hypostatized Israel (*keneset yisra'el*) to the individual.<sup>69</sup> In another case, he understands Song 3:1 – *upon my bed at night I sought the one whom my soul loves* – to refer to constant meditation upon God by night.<sup>70</sup> By consistently employing verses from the Song of Songs in such a fashion, Baḥya implies that the work is concerned with the individual's love of God, although this is nowhere stated explicitly.<sup>71</sup>

### *Ibn Ezra*

Although Abraham Ibn Ezra was usually preoccupied with explaining the *nimshal* (that to which the allegory points) in biblical formulations that he understood to be figurative, in the case of the Song of Songs he made a very sharp distinction between the literal sense and the allegorical sense, focusing on one and then the other.<sup>72</sup> In this he followed the precedent set by Rashi, both in his attention to the linguistic elements of the text according to its literal meaning, and in interpreting the Song of Songs in midrashic fashion as a historical allegory.<sup>73</sup> (In this sense, Tanḥum's own commentary most likely reflects the indirect influence of Rashi, albeit remotely.)

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<sup>68</sup> Wolfson, "Asceticism and Eroticism," 93; Fenton, "Mystical Commentary," 21.

<sup>69</sup> Mansoor, *Duties of the Heart*, 111, 429, 439. Compare Baḥya's interpretation of Song 1:13 (*ibid.*, 429) with its source in the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 88b. In the latter, the speaker is *keneset yisra'el*; in Baḥya the speaker is the soul who has attained love of and reliance upon God.

<sup>70</sup> See Mansoor, *Duties of the Heart*, 439. Cf. Maimonides' prescription of meditation upon the Divine while lying in bed, in *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 623).

<sup>71</sup> Fenton, *Perush miṣti*, 540.

<sup>72</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 263. For a general discussion of Ibn Ezra's commentary to Song, see Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 206-208.

<sup>73</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 264; Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 206. It seems that Rashi's commentary contained the only sustained treatment of the literal sense of the text known to Ibn Ezra; see Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 206, fn. 77. For Rashi and exegesis of Song in Western Christendom, see below, pp.305-308.

Two commentaries on the Song of Songs by Ibn Ezra are extant: One that he completed in France in 1156, and an earlier recension that dates to the author's arrival in Rome around 1140.<sup>74</sup> Both versions exhibit a tripartite structure: First the commentator treats difficult lexemes and grammatical problems (*perush ha-millot*);<sup>75</sup> then he interprets the text according to its literal meaning (or as he frames it, the *mashal* or parable); finally, he explores its allegorical sense as a figure for the relationship between *keneset yisra'el* and God (the *nimshal*).<sup>76</sup> Although he adopted the historical-allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs, Ibn Ezra's commentary also attests to the existence of alternative traditions by explicitly rejecting them:

The people of critical investigation (*anshe ha-meḥqar*) have attempted to explain this book according to cosmological doctrines and the conjunction of the supernal soul with the body (*hiṭḥabberut ha-neshamah ha-'elyonah 'im ha-guf*), which is of the lowest rank. Others have interpreted it in connection with astronomy (*ha-matkonet*). May the wind take them all, for they are vanity.<sup>77</sup> The truth is nothing other than that which the ancient sages have transmitted...<sup>78</sup>

By rejecting the alternative readings, Ibn Ezra informs us that such interpretations did indeed circulate, apparently among philosophically inclined Jews in *al-Andalus*.<sup>79</sup> Ibn Ezra mentions

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<sup>74</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 47.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Arabic: *sharḥ/tafsīr al-alfāz*. For *perush ha-millot* in Ibn Ezra, see Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 222. For *sharḥ/tafsīr al-alfāz* in Judeo-Arabic exegesis, see Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, "The Explanation of Difficult Words by Abū al-Faraj Hārūn ibn al-Faraj," in *Exegesis and Grammar in Medieval Karaite Texts*, ed. Geoffrey Khan (Oxford University Press: 2001), 180-181 (for Karaite context); Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 478 and fn. 55, 484 (for Rabbanite context). See also Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 241-245. For *millot* as *alfāz* in Ibn Ezra, see *ibid.*, 257. Cf. also Tanḥum's use of this formulation (*sharḥ alfāz hādhihi al-qīṣṣa*) in Shy, *Perush*, 113.

<sup>76</sup> For Ibn Ezra's general theory of the *mashal*, with reference to his commentary on Song, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 33-97.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Isaiah 57:13.

<sup>78</sup> Second commentary to Song, 1:1.

<sup>79</sup> Wolfson, "Asceticism and Eroticism," 93-94. Cf. Ibn Ezra's commentary to Qohelet 7:3, where he refers to philosophers as *ḥakhme ha-re'ayot* ("scholars who employ demonstration" or "scholars of demonstrations"); and the introduction to his commentary to the Torah, where he refers to *anshe shiqqul ha-da'at* ("the people of intellectual deliberation"). Cf. also Saadia Gaon's Arabic formulation, describing philosophically inclined Jews as *muntahilī al-naẓar wa-'l-baḥṭh*, and al-Qirqisānī's description of *muntahilī al-naẓar min al-rabbāniyyūn* [sic] (Sklare, *Samuel b. Hofni*, 106 and fn.24).

two distinct traditions: One that understands the Song of Songs in a psychological (and perhaps cosmological) sense,<sup>80</sup> highly reminiscent of Plotinian sources;<sup>81</sup> and one that understands it as referring to *matkonet* (apparently astronomy).<sup>82</sup>

Despite Ibn Ezra's explicit rejection of non-historical allegoresis, it seems that his attitude towards the valence of the Song of Songs is not as clear-cut as it might appear at first sight: Shalom Rosenberg has pointed out that verses from the Song of Songs are used freely in Ibn Ezra's *Hay ben Meqitz*, a reworking of Ibn Sīnā's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, to describe the individual's yearning for the Divine and pursuit of knowledge.<sup>83</sup> Introducing the narrative, Ibn Ezra writes in the voice of the narrator:<sup>84</sup>

I abandoned by home, my birthplace and my nation,

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<sup>80</sup> By "psychological", I mean that this mode of interpretation is concerned with the text as it applies to the human soul (Greek *psychē*). It is possible that Ibn Ezra is referring to *Kitāb ma'ānī al-naḥs*, which is preoccupied with the emanation of the rational soul, its relationship with the body, and its ultimate return to the intellectual realm, and which does indeed interpret verses from Song in such a vein (see above, p.293). For the relationship of "the supernal soul of the human being (*nishmat ha-adam ha-'elyonah*)" to the body as analogous to the relationship of God to the world (the body being likened to a microcosm), see Ibn Ezra's interpretation of Genesis 1:26. For a cosmological interpretation of Ibn Ezra's conception of *ha-neshamah ha-'elyonah*, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "God, the Demiurge and the Intellect: On the Usage of the Word *Kol* in Abraham Ibn Ezra," in *Revue des Études Juives* 149 (1990), 82-83.

<sup>81</sup> For the relationship between body and soul as a central theme in Plotinus' psychology, and for the transmission of these discussions into the Arabic summaries of his works (where they are reframed in more Aristotelian terms), see Adamson, "Aristotelianism and the Soul in the Arabic Plotinus," 213-227.

<sup>82</sup> In general, the Hebrew term refers to a configuration or structure. For similar uses of this terminology in an astronomical context, see Ibn Ezra's description of the structure of the heavens (*matkonet melekhet ha-shamayim*) in his commentary to Qohelet 1:3; his use of the term *matkonet* in an astrological sense in Qohelet 3:1; the unfortunate configuration (*matkonah qashah*) of the sun and moon in his commentary to Job 2:14; and his entirely unambiguous use of the term *matkonet* to describe the configuration of the stars in his commentary to Ps. 19:2. Ibn Ezra does employ the term in other contexts. For a linguistic context, see his commentary to Gen. 1:1, his "long commentary" to Ex. 18:10, and his commentaries to Micah 1:15, Ps. 115:16, and Esther 1:10; for an anthropological/physiological context, see Gen. 3:6, the parallel in his alternative commentary (*shittah aheret*) to Gen. 2:17, and his commentaries to Qoh. 12:5 and Daniel 2:2. For a peculiar example in which he uses this term to describe the homologous relationship between his anthropology and his theory of language, see his "long commentary" to Ex. 19:20; and for the use of the expression in the context of an anthropological-cosmological homology, see his commentary to Dan. 10:21. Cf. also his use in *Sefer ha-me'orot*, cited in Langermann, "Astrological Themes," 56. I would tentatively suggest that in his commentary to Qoh. 1:1 his unqualified use may be a calque for the Arabic [*ilm*] *al-hay'a*, which commonly refers to astronomy. See also Uriel Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadia Gaon to Abraham Ibn Ezra* (State University of New York Press: 1991), 226; Tanenbaum, *Contemplative Soul*, 153 fn.19.

<sup>83</sup> Rosenberg, "Philosophical Hermeneutics," 136-137.

<sup>84</sup> These sources are cited and discussed in Rosenberg, "Philosophical Hermeneutics," 136-137.

for my mother's sons rebuked me, (Song 1:6)

they appointed me a guard without a vineyard.<sup>85</sup> (*Ibid.*)

Introducing the character of Ḥay b. Meqitz, Ibn Ezra writes that

His eyes were the eyes of doves, (cf. Song 4:1)

his brow as a sliver of pomegranate, (cf. *ibid.* 4:3)

his posture was not bent, nor his strength spent,

his eye was undimmed, his freshness intact, (Deut. 34:7)

his ointments were as sweet as the fragrance of spikenard, (cf. Song 1:3, 1:12)

his mouth is delicious, he is entirely desirable.<sup>86</sup> (*Ibid.*, 5:16)

In his account of the soul's desire to follow Ḥay, Ibn Ezra writes as follows:

Draw me after you, let us run. (Song 1:4)

I shall exult in you and be glad. (Cf. *ibid.*, 1:4)

In your kisses I rejoice and am happy,

from the fragrant wine (*ibid.*, 8:2) and sweet nectar.<sup>87</sup> (cf. *ibid.*)

Ibn Ezra's choice of biblical citations is carefully chosen. For example, by having Ḥay describe himself in language borrowed from Proverbs, Ibn Ezra associates him with wisdom and knowledge.<sup>88</sup> Thus, the centrality of citations from the Song of Songs in describing the origins of the narrator (i.e., the soul), the characteristics of Ḥay, and the soul's yearning to follow Ḥay, implies that Ibn Ezra's attitude towards the book's possible valences may be more complex than

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<sup>85</sup> Levin, *Ḥay ben Meqitz*, 49, lines 4-5.

<sup>86</sup> Levin, *Ḥay ben Meqitz*, 50, lines 9-12.

<sup>87</sup> Levin, *Ḥay ben Meqitz*, 57, lines 57-58.

<sup>88</sup> See Levin, *Ḥay ben Meqitz*, 51-52; cf. Rosenberg, "Philosophical Hermeneutics," 137.

it seems at first glance. This possibility becomes all the more likely when we take into account his use of verses from the Song of Songs in a psychological vein in his religious poetry.<sup>89</sup> Despite his criticism of philosophical exegesis of the Song of Songs, he at the very least *applies* these verses in a psychological and soteriological context.<sup>90</sup>

### *Moses Maimonides*

Maimonides was perhaps the most central figure in establishing an individualistic and philosophical interpretation of the Song of Songs as a major trend among Jewish exegetes.<sup>91</sup> Although he never authored a commentary, Maimonides made explicit statements concerning the allegorical valence of the work:

What is the proper manner of love (*ahabah*)? One should love God with a great, expansive, mighty love, to the point that one's soul is bound up in God's love, and one is constantly infatuated by it,<sup>92</sup> like those who are sick with love, whose mind is never free from the love of that woman by whom he is constantly grieved, whether he is arising in the morning, going to sleep at night, or eating and drinking. Even greater than this should be the love for God in the heart of His lovers, and they are constantly troubled by it, as we have been commanded: [*You shall love the Lord your God*] with all of your heart and with all of your soul. (Deuteronomy 6:5) This is [the meaning of] that which Solomon said: *For I am sick with love.* (Song 2:5) The whole of the Song of Songs is an allegory for this concept.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Tanenbaum, *Contemplative Soul*, 130.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Wofson, "Asceticism and Eroticism," 93-94.

<sup>91</sup> See Marciano, "Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim."

<sup>92</sup> Hebrew: *ve-nimtzah shogeh bah tamid*. Cf. Prov. 5:19: *be infatuated with her love always (be-ahabatah tishgeh tamid)*. Cf. also Jonathan Dauber, *Knowledge of God and the Development of Early Kabbalah* (Brill: 2012), 202.

<sup>93</sup> *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Repentance, 10:3.

Maimonides thus states in no uncertain terms that the Song of Songs is an allegory for human love of the Divine.<sup>94</sup> As we have seen above, Maimonides links the love of God is directly to intellectual contemplation through the acquisition of philosophical knowledge; indeed, he states that one's love of God is proportionate to such knowledge.<sup>95</sup> Thus, although Maimonides ranks the Song of Songs together with Qohelet as a work of wisdom (*hokhmah*) rather than prophecy (*nebu'ah*), there is no denying the profound importance of its theme.<sup>96</sup> Maimonides returns to the theme of love for God in the concluding chapters of the *Guide*.<sup>97</sup> In *Guide* III.51, he writes as follows:

*Because he hath set his passionate love upon Me (ki bi hashaq), therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known My Name. (Ps. 91:14)* We have already explained in preceding chapters that the meaning of *knowledge of the Name* is: apprehension of Him. It is as if [the psalm] said that this individual is protected because he hath known Me and then passionately loved Me (*'arafanī wa-'ashiqanī ba'd dhālik*). You know the difference between the terms *one who loves (oheb)* and *one who loves passionately (hosheq)*; an excess of love (*maḥabba*), so that no thought remains that is directed toward a thing other than the Beloved, is passionate love (*'ishq*).<sup>98</sup>

Maimonides' use of the terminology of *'ishq* to describe a powerful longing for the Divine follows closely in the Avicennan tradition (noting that Ibn Sīnā himself consciously employed Sufi motifs). Indeed, it is most likely that Ibn Sīnā is the source for Maimonides' terminology in

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Marciano, "Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim," 95-104.

<sup>95</sup> See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Repentance, 10:6; and Dauber, *Knowledge of God*, 202. Cf. also Don Seeman, "Reasons for the Commandments as Contemplative Practice in Maimonides," in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 103:3 (2013), 300-305.

<sup>96</sup> See Marciano, "Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim," 87-90.

<sup>97</sup> However, he employed verses from Song freely in the *Guide* based on the context of his discussion: For example, as an individualistic allegory, a national-historical allegory, or even as eschatological prophecies. See Marciano, "Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim," 92- 95.

<sup>98</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 267; Munk, , *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 462. I have altered Pines' formatting and orthography slightly for the sake of consistency.

this passage.<sup>99</sup> Most notably, these themes are treated in *Al-risāla fī al-‘ishq* (The Epistle on Love) and the concluding sections of *Al-ishārāt wa-’l-tanbīhāt* (Remarks and Exhortations), in which the author employs Sufi language in the service of his essentially Peripatetic project.<sup>100</sup> Maimonides draws a final link between passionate love of Divine and the Song of Songs in his description of the rapturous death of the perfected human:

... when a perfect man is stricken with years (*idhā ta‘ana al-kāmil fī al-sinn*) and approaches death, this apprehension increases very powerfully, joy over this apprehension and a great love for the object of apprehension become stronger, until the soul is separated from the body at that moment in this state of pleasure. Because of this the *Sages* have indicated with reference to the deaths of *Moses, Aaron, and Miriam* that *the three of them died by a kiss*. They said that the dictum [of Scripture], *And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab by the mouth of the Lord*, (Deut. 34:5) indicates that he died by a kiss.<sup>101</sup> Similarly it is said of Aaron: *By the mouth of the Lord, and died there*. (Num. 33:38) And they said of *Miriam* in the same way: *She also died by a kiss*. But with regard to her it is not said *by the mouth of the Lord*; because she was a woman, the use of the figurative expression was not suitable with regard to her. Their purpose was to indicate that the three of them died in the pleasure of this apprehension (*fī ḥāl ladhdat dhālik al-idrāk*) due to the intensity of passionate love (*al-‘ishq*). In this dictum the *Sages, may their memory be blessed*, followed the generally accepted poetical way of

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<sup>99</sup> Steven Harvey, “The Meaning of Terms Designating Love in Judaeo-Arabic Thought and Some Remarks on the Judaeo-Arabic Interpretation of Maimonides,” in *Judaeo-Arabic Studies: Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies*, ed. Norman Golb (Harwood Academic Publishers: 1997), 184-185.

<sup>100</sup> For a study of Ibn Sīnā’s *Risāla fī al-‘ishq*, including the author’s integration of elements of Sufi discourse, see Etin Anwar, “Ibn Sīnā’s Philosophical Theology of Love: A Study of the *Risālah fī al-‘Ishq*,” in *Islamic Studies* 42:2 (2003), 331-345. For his relationship with the Aristotelian tradition, see Gutas, *Avicenna*. On his engagement with Sufi discourse in *Al-ishārāt wa-’l-tanbīhāt*, see Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism*. See also Parviz Morewedge, “The Logic of Emanationism and Šūfism in the Philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Part I,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91: 4 (1971), 467-476; Parviz Morewedge, “The Logic of Emanationism and Šūfism in the Philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Part II,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 92: 1 (1972), 1-18.

<sup>101</sup> Pines (628, fn. 47) refers the reader to the Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra, 17a. Indeed, there one may find these figures who “died by a kiss”. However, it seems that Song Rabbah 1:2 was Maimonides’ source, as it links the same discourse with Song 1:2, just as Maimonides does in the continuation of the passage.

expression that calls the apprehension that is achieved in a state of intense and passionate love for Him (*'inda shiddat 'ishqihi*), may He be exalted, *a kiss*, in accordance with its dictum: *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, and so on.*<sup>102</sup> (Song 1:2)

In this passage, which profoundly informed post-Maimonidean philosophical exegesis of the Song of Songs, the death of the perfected human being becomes the ultimate manifestation of the passionate love of God.<sup>103</sup> The rabbinic treatment of “death by a kiss” resonates felicitously with Song 1:2, and indeed Song of Songs Rabbah makes the connection between this concept and the biblical verse.<sup>104</sup> The major shift in Maimonides’ treatment is from the rabbinic emphasis on the righteous figures of Israel’s past to the attainment of intellectual conjunction that should be the aim of the ethically and intellectually cultivated individual.<sup>105</sup> Also significant is the absence of an esoteric element to Maimonides’ understanding of the Song of Songs. Maimonides did not believe that the allegorical valence of the Song of Songs should be kept from the masses. On the contrary, his free and open declaration in the *Mishneh torah* that the Song of Songs is an individualistic psychological-soteriological allegory creates the impression that he was far more comfortable with minimally learned Jews associating the text with intense desire for some kind of union with the Divine than he was with the literal valence of the text.

Maimonides’ general attitude to the Song of Songs was surely an important factor informing Tanḥum’s decision to interpret the work in an individualistic, psychological vein. In addition, we may point to examples in which Tanḥum exhibits direct reliance upon Maimonides.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Pines, 627-628; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 462-463.

<sup>103</sup> For the centrality of this passage, see Marciano, “Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim,” 107 and fn. 61.

<sup>104</sup> Fishbane, *Kiss of God*, 18. Cf. also Maimonides’ use of Song 5:2 to describe the state of the highly perfected prophet, who maintains a state of intellectual contemplation of the Divine even while engaged in worldly activities, in *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 623).

<sup>105</sup> Fishbane, *Kiss of God*, 24-26.

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, Tanḥum’s definition of *'ishq*, which amounts to a reformulation of Maimonides treatment in *Guide* III.51. The passage is cited below, p.324 fn. 209. By noting parallels in a philosophical, psychological, and

*Joseph b. Judah Ibn ‘Aqnīn*

Despite the diversity of Jewish interpretation of the Song of Songs, the earliest known medieval exegete to enshrine an alternative interpretation to historical allegoresis in a systematic commentary was Joseph b. Judah Ibn ‘Aqnīn (d.c.1220).<sup>107</sup> In the introduction to his work, he justifies this reading at length. Drawing an analogy between the Song of Songs and *Kalīla wa-dimna*, Ibn ‘Aqnīn posits that the work’s vivid and sensual imagery will draw the hearts of the simple to read and contemplate it. As they become more closely acquainted with it and attain deeper levels of insight, the work will lead them to contemplate the more profound matters that sit at the heart of the work.<sup>108</sup> Following the precedent set by Ibn Ezra, Ibn ‘Aqnīn divides his commentary into three parts: One treating the linguistic stratum of the text, one the classical rabbinic allegorical reading, and finally one presenting his own philosophical reading of the text. He thereby demonstrates (in addition to his explicit statements to this effect) that his innovative approach does not signal a rejection of the national-historical sense of the text.<sup>109</sup>

Despite his affirmation of the historical-allegorical tradition, Ibn ‘Aqnīn remained self-conscious of his departure from the established tradition of historical allegoresis. His discomfort with his own place at the beginning of this tradition is evident from the following passage, as is his dissatisfaction with the established exegetical norms:

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soteriological context, we allow ourselves to perceive a much broader Maimonidean impact on Tanḥum than was acknowledged by Zoref (*Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 58-60).

<sup>107</sup> For a general treatment of the work, see A. S. Halkin, “Ibn ‘Aknin’s commentary on the Song of Songs,” in *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: 1950), 389-424. For an edition of the Arabic with a Hebrew translation, see Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*. See also Wolfson, “Asceticism and Eroticism,” 94; Fenton, “Mystical Commentary,” 23-24; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 54-58.

<sup>108</sup> See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 4-5; Cohen, “The Best of Poetry,” 19.

<sup>109</sup> See Halkin, “Ibn ‘Aknin’s commentary on the Song of Songs,” 407-408.

I<sup>110</sup> have seen the commentaries of those who preceded me [in interpreting] this book. Among them is the commentary of the teacher, master, and greatest representative of this approach, the great *Gaon*, R. Saadia (*may his memory be a blessing*), by whose light we are illuminated and whose method we follow. I found that he (may God be pleased with him) interpreted the book's terminology and meanings in accordance with linguistic principles, and discussed its inner meaning based on the statements of *our rabbis* (*may their memory be a blessing*). I also heard that R. Abraham Ibn Ezra (*may his soul rest in Eden*) explained the book according to three strata of meaning (*'alā thalātha wujūh*), but I had not seen it. I had a powerful desire to consult it, so I acquired it from Spain, from *students* in Cordoba. I read it (*wa-waqafnā 'alayhā*), and it is as the Arabs say in their parables: "To hear the practitioner/ is better than seeing him." And it is as the poet said: "We saw you and you did not astound us/ we tested you but we were not pleased with the report." I saw other commentaries, such as that of Rabbi Shemaryah<sup>111</sup> (*may his soul rest in Eden*) and others, and none of them satisfied me...<sup>112</sup>

It must be emphasized that although he was aware of Maimonides and appears to have known him personally in Fez,<sup>113</sup> Ibn 'Aqnīn's interpretation does not seem to be dependent on Maimonides' treatment of the work.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, in a certain sense, Ibn 'Aqnīn's interpretation is at odds with that of Maimonides: Ibn 'Aqnīn does not understand the Song of Songs as Maimonides puts it, as an allegory for the soul's intense love of God; rather, he understands it as a dialogue between the rational soul and the Active Intellect. That is to say that (a) the Song of

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<sup>110</sup> Throughout, Ibn 'Aqnīn employs the first person plural. Since this reads uncomfortably in English, I have followed Halkin's practice in his Hebrew translation in rendering such plural forms into the singular. The only exception is the ambiguous phrase "by whose light we are illuminated and whose method we follow," where Ibn 'Aqnīn may be referring to the Jewish scholarly community in general.

<sup>111</sup> Possibly Shemaryah b. Elḥanan of Fuṣṭāṭ (late 10<sup>th</sup>-early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries), for whom see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (Yale University Press: 1998), 128; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 24, 40. For the text of the the remaining fragment of his commentary on Song, see *ibid.*, 40.

<sup>112</sup> Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 498.

<sup>113</sup> Halkin, "Ibn 'Aknin's commentary on the Song of Songs," 405.

<sup>114</sup> Halkin, "Ibn 'Aknin's commentary on the Song of Songs," 399-401; Rosenberg, "Philosophical Hermeneutics," 135.

Songs not only expresses the desire of the individual for the Beloved, but also the Active Intellect's guidance of that substance which bears an affinity with it towards itself; and (b) the soul's desire is not for God – whose emanation of sublunar forms and governance of the world takes place via the Active Intellect – but for the Active Intellect.

As Joseph Marciano has observed, the emphasis in this reading is much more directly on soteriology, whereas in Maimonides' account salvation (or felicity, *sa'āda*) follows as a result of intense desire (*'ishq*) for God. According to Maimonides, desire for God is the true focus of the Song of Songs; receiving an intellectual emanation from the Active intellect is a consequence of that desire.<sup>115</sup> In shifting the object of human desire from God to the Active Intellect, Ibn 'Aqnīn's commentary prefigures certain trends in post-Maimonidean exegesis of the Song of Songs, as attested in the interpretations of Joseph Ibn Kaspi (d.1340), Moses Ibn Tibbon (fl. thirteenth century), and Levi b. Gershom (Gersonides; d.1344).<sup>116</sup>

### *The Egyptian Pietistic Context*

At roughly the same time as Ibn 'Aqnīn was active in the Maghrib, the Egyptian Jewish pietist Abraham he-Ḥasid appears to have written a commentary on the Song of Songs.<sup>117</sup> In a highly original move, the author interprets the bride (*kallah*) or female companion (*ra'yah*) as figures for unveiling (*mukāshafa*) and conjunction (*ittiṣāl*), while the seeker of unveiling and

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<sup>115</sup> Marciano, "Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim," 106.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Marciano, "Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim," 106-108; Wolfson, "Asceticism and Eroticism," 94-95. For a synoptic edition, German translation, and study of Moses Ibn Tibbon's commentary to Song, see Otfried Fraisse, *Moses Ibn Tibbons Kommentar zum Hohelied und sein poetologisch-philosophisches Programm: Synoptische Edition, Übersetzung und Analyse* (Walter de Gruyter: 2004). For a discussion of Ibn Kaspi's brief introductory comments to Song, see Arthur M. Lesley, "Proverbs, Figures, and Riddles," in *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, History*, ed. Michael Fishbane, 208; *Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides): Commentary on Song of Songs*, trans. Menachem Kellner (Yale University Press: 1998), xvi-xvii. For the Hebrew of Gersonides' commentary, see *Commentary on Song of Songs by Rabbi Levi ben Gershom*, ed. Menachem Kellner (Bar-Ilan University Press: 2003).

<sup>117</sup> For the published fragments of Abraham he-Ḥasid's commentary to Song, see Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments," 50-56; Fenton, "Mystical Commentary," 43-53; Fenton, "Perush misti," 580-583.

conjunction is the male lover (*dod*).<sup>118</sup> He seems to have viewed the Song of Songs as something akin to a spiritual manual detailing the path to union with the Beloved,<sup>119</sup> and employs typically Sufi formulations, such as “traveling the Lord’s path” (*al-sulūk fī derekh hashem*; equivalent to the Arabic expression *al-sulūk fī tarīq allāh*),<sup>120</sup> the recollection (*dhikr*) of God’s names, unveiling (*mukāshafa*), and of course love (*maḥabba*, *‘ishq*) of God.<sup>121</sup> The fragments of this commentary exhibit virtually no concern with literal or historical-allegorical exegesis. It is significant that in this commentary the eroticism of the Song of Songs is not so much “translated” in to unproblematically religious language, but shifted into the realm of direct perception of the Divine and the quest for such experience.<sup>122</sup>

### **Exoteric and Esoteric Interpretation of the Song of Songs among Jews in Western Christendom**

As noted above, Tanḥum lived in a diverse Jewish community that included immigrants from Western Christendom.<sup>123</sup> In addition, he appears to have been aware of the community of Jewish scholars who lived in Acre – who were largely of Western European origin.<sup>124</sup> Although Tanḥum aligns himself with the Judeo-Arabic (and particularly Andalusian) exegetical tradition, a brief

<sup>118</sup> Fenton, “Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments,” 51 (2a line 15-2b line 1); translated in *ibid.*, 55; cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 28-29.

<sup>119</sup> Fenton, “Mystical Commentary,” 29-30.

<sup>120</sup> For the expression *al-sulūk fī tarīq allāh*, cf. the title of al-Qushayri’s epistle *Tartīb al-sulūk fī tarīq allāh*. For this is as the full title of the work as attested in MSS, see Fritz Meier, “Quṣayrī’s *Tartīb al-sulūk*,” in *Oriens* 16 (1963), 5; see also Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* [Edinburgh University Press: 2007], 86, 119). For the theme of the path in Sufi discourse in general, see Schimmel, “Mystical Dimensions,” 98ff.

<sup>121</sup> All of these expressions may be found in the short fragment published in Fenton, “Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments,” 50-52; and translated in *ibid.*, 52-56.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Wolfson, “Asceticism and Eroticism,” 92-93. Cf. Isaac Ibn Sahula’s (13<sup>th</sup> century) suggestion that merely listening to the recitation Song can effect some kind of conjunction or elevation of the soul (Wolfson, “Asceticism and Eroticism,” 97).

<sup>123</sup> See above, p.12-13.

<sup>124</sup> As is implied by his son Joseph’s testimony (Mann, *Texts and Studies*, vol.1, 437-8). For the increasingly Franco-German character of the community of scholars in Acre, and for the high esteem in which they were held among local and neighboring Jewish communities, see Sylvia Schein, “Between East and West: The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and Its Jewish Communities as a Communication Center (1099-1291),” in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora: The Pre-Modern World*, ed. Sophia Menache (Brill: 1996), 158, 164-165.

treatment of the ways in which the Song of Songs was approached in the Jewish traditions of Western Christendom is not out of place. Several notable trends in the interpretation of the Song of Songs emerged in medieval Western Christendom: (1) Developments on the midrashic-allegorical trend; (2) a literalist trend; (3) an esoteric trend in the Franco-German tradition; and (4) trends within the nascent schools of Spanish Kabbalah.

Rashi sought both to introduce a new degree of coherence to the historical-allegorical mode of exegesis, and to bring it into closer alignment with the literal sense and narrative progression of the text. As such, his commentary to the Song of Songs pioneered the self-conscious engagement with the literal stratum of meaning in the work.<sup>125</sup> As has been noted, the attention that Rashi devoted to the literal sense appears to have served as a model for Ibn Ezra.<sup>126</sup> In addition, out of Rashi's school emerged a newly energized Franco-German *peshat* tradition of biblical interpretation, represented in particular by his grandson Samuel b. Meir (Rashbam).<sup>127</sup> Samuel also produced a commentary to the Song of Songs, which distinguished clearly between the literal and historical-allegorical modes of interpretation.<sup>128</sup> Although Samuel was dependent on Rashi and shared his primary sources, he also demonstrated a broader awareness of the rhetorical and literary aspects of the literal stratum of meaning.<sup>129</sup> From the early thirteenth century, a cluster of *peshat*-oriented commentaries begin to be produced in Western Christendom. Several

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<sup>125</sup> See Ivan G. Marcus, "The Song of Songs in German Hasidism and the School of Rashi: A Preliminary Comparison," in *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume*, ed. Barry Walfish (Haifa University Press/University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press: 1992), vol. 1, 182-184. For Rashi's engagement with the literal sense of the text, see Sara Japhet, "Rashi's Commentary on the Song of Songs: The Revolution of the Peshat and its Aftermath," in *Mein Haus wird ein Bethaus für alle Völker genannt werden (Jes 56,7): Judentum seit der Zeit des Zweiten Tempels in Geschichte, Literatur und Kult – Festschrift für Thomas Willi zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Julia Männchen and Torsten Reiprich (Neukirchener Verlag: 2007), 199-219. See also Japhet, "The Pendulum of Exegetical Methodology," 258-259; Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 205-206.

<sup>126</sup> Japhet, "Rashi's Commentary on the Song of Songs," 202; Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 206 and fn. 77.

<sup>127</sup> See Japhet, "Rashi's Commentary on the Song of Songs," 207-210. For the Northern French school of *peshat* in general, see Grossman, "The School of Literal Jewish Exegesis in Northern France." For

<sup>128</sup> For a critical edition and study of this commentary, see Sara Japhet, *The Commentary of Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam) on the Song of Songs* (World Union of Jewish Studies: 2008).

<sup>129</sup> Japhet, "The Pendulum of Exegetical Methodology," 259-262.

of these effectively ignore the allegorical stratum of meaning, while at least one rejects it even in principle.<sup>130</sup>

Finally, esoteric interpretations of the Song of Songs circulated in Western Christendom. Within the Franco-German tradition, we note in particular the *Sod ha-egoz* texts, which take the nut imagery of Song 6:11 to refer to the *merkabah*.<sup>131</sup> These texts are closely related to the *hekhhalot* tradition, and exist in multiple versions or recensions.<sup>132</sup> These texts were produced and transmitted in an Ashkenazic rabbinic culture that possessed a highly developed esoteric tradition, of which little has reached us in the form of complete works.<sup>133</sup> *Hekhalot* texts also informed another German Pietist commentary on the Song of Songs, attributed to Eleazar of Worms, which integrated both historical-allegorical and individualistic esoteric elements into its treatment of the work.<sup>134</sup> Among Iberian theosophical kabbalists, the Song of Songs was interpreted as a depiction of the rupture and reunion of divine potencies represented by the ten *sefirot*. That is to say that the drama of the lovers in the narrative takes place *within* the Godhead.<sup>135</sup> However, both the philosophical tradition of interpretation and the historical-

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<sup>130</sup> Japhet, "Rashi's Commentary on the Song of Songs," 211-215; Japhet, "The Pendulum of Exegetical Methodology," 262-263; Sara Japhet, "Perush anonimi le-shir ha-shirim bi-khetab yad prag (ḥumash iger): mabo u-mahadurah biqqortit," in *To Settle the Plain Meaning of the Verse: Studies in Biblical Exegesis*, eds. Sara Japhet and Eran Viezel (The Bialik Institute/The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: 2011), 206-247.

<sup>131</sup> See Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation*.

<sup>132</sup> On the various recensions and their relationships to one another, see Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation*, 13-39.

<sup>133</sup> On the emergence, transmission, and documentation of esoteric teachings among the German Pietists (*ḥaside ashkenaz*), see Daniel Abrams, "The Literary Emergence of Esotericism in German Pietism," in *Shofar* 12:2 (1994), 67-85; Joseph Dan, *Torat ha-sod shel ḥasidut ashkenaz* (The Bialik Institute: 1968). On esotericism among the tosafists, see Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Peering Through the Lattices: Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period* (Wayne State University Press: 2000). For the transmission of *Shi'ur qomah* and *hekhhalot* texts in Italy and France in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Joseph Dan, *Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of Jewish History* (New York University Press: 1987), 83.

<sup>134</sup> Marcus, "Song of Songs in German Ḥasidism," 184-186. For Song 6:11 and the *sod ha-egoz* texts in Eleazar's works, including the commentary to Song ascribed to him, see Abrams, *Sexual Symbolism and Merkavah Speculation*, 29-36.

<sup>135</sup> Rosenberg, "Philosophical Hermeneutics," 134; Wolfson, "Asceticism and Eroticism," 96-107; Green, "Shekhinah, The Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs," 16-17.

allegorical mode made their mark on the emerging kabbalistic exegesis of the Song of Songs: The former predominantly in the context of ecstatic Kabbalah (in the school of Abraham Abulafia), and the latter in the discourse of exile/alienation and redemption/union that is now located within the Godhead as understood in theosophical Kabbalah.<sup>136</sup>

Although it is unlikely that Tanḥum was directly aware of these traditions, it is significant that Jewish immigrants from Western Christendom to Egypt and the Levant would have shared several fundamental assumptions regarding the interpretation of the Song of Songs: The authority of the midrashic tradition; the contested possibility of a literalist interpretation; and the association of the Song of Songs with some kind of esoteric teaching.<sup>137</sup> In addition, it is possible that the French Jews of Egypt and the Levant would have been more inclined towards an esoteric reading of the Song of Songs due to their pietistic tendencies.<sup>138</sup> Without suppressing the diversity of either the Franco-German or the Judeo-Arabic interpretive traditions, and without projecting the situation in Acre onto Egypt, it may be noted that 13<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian Jewry would largely have recognized a similar range of interpretive possibilities for the Song of Songs.

### Overview of the medieval situation

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<sup>136</sup> For the impact of philosophical exegesis on the kabbalistic exegesis of Song, see Wolfson, "Asceticism and Eroticism." For the particular appropriation of individualistic, philosophical exegesis of Song on the ecstatic (Abulafian) school of Kabbalah, and the role of the esoteric traditions of the German Pietists (*haside ashkenaz*) in this synthesis, see *ibid.*, 95-96. For the reframing of the themes of exile and redemption within the theosophic prism of the Zohar, see *ibid.*, 99, 102.

<sup>137</sup> Indeed, diverse esoteric and mystical traditions came into contact with one another within the scholarly community of Acre: Ecstatic and theosophical Kabbalah, Ashkenazic Pietism, and Sufi-inflected post-Maimonidean Pietism. See Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn*, 23-32.

<sup>138</sup> On French Jewish immigration to the Levant as a pietistic phenomenon, see Ephraim Kanarfogel, "The 'Aliyah of Three Hundred Rabbis' in 1211: Tosafist Attitudes toward Settling in the Land of Israel," in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 76:3 (1986). For the link between pietism and esotericism in the Franco-German tradition in general, and the greater role that pietism and esotericism played in the Northern French context than previously thought, see Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*. For a comparative study of the pietist movements of Germany and Egypt, see Paul Fenton, "Two Pietist Schools: The Hasidey Ashkenaz and the Jewish Sufis in Egypt," in *Da'at* 45 (2000), 5-23.

Jewish exegesis of the Song of Songs has been diverse for as long as one can trace its history. The emergence of new modes of exegesis in the medieval period did not erase this diversity, but rather enabled new interpretive strategies that never ceased to draw on the richness of the earlier sources at their disposal. By the mid-thirteenth century, we can identify the following significant trends in Jewish exegesis of the Song of Songs:

1. Historical allegoresis, represented by the Targum to the Song of Songs, and a dominant trend within classical rabbinic literature. This approach views the Song of Songs as an allegorical representation of the central events in Israel's *Heilsgeschichte*. It was adopted and refined by Saadia, Rashi, Samuel b. Meir, and Ibn Ezra, among others.
2. Actualizing allegoresis, which is combined with historical-allegorical interpretation in extant Karaite commentaries. This approach interprets elements of the text as an allegory for current events, often with polemical overtones. This approach is reflected in the commentaries of Yefet b. Eli and Salmon b. Yeroḥam.
3. Interpretation of the Song of Songs as an allegory for the soul's intense love of God or the Active Intellect, referred to by Rosenberg as "individualistic" or "philosophical" allegory. This emerges from sparsely documented Spanish traditions, and is represented in the works of Judah b. Joseph Ibn 'Aqnīn and Moses Maimonides. Maimonides' adoption of this interpretation of the Song of Songs did much to popularize it in the post-Maimonidean period, both in Western Christendom and in the Islamic world. Within this trend, there is a tendency to interpret verses from the Song of Songs in a psychological vein.
4. A Sufi reading of the Song of Songs, represented in the commentary associated with Abraham He-Ḥasid. Here, the male lover is identified as the wayfarer on the

mystical path, seeking the female companion, who represents unveiling (*mukāshafa*) and conjunction (*ittiṣāl*).

5. A literalist trend, most strikingly represented in the small number of purely literal commentaries originating in Northern France and Spain, but at least partly enabled by the linguistic analysis integrated by Rashi and his grandson Samuel b. Meir (Rashbam) into their otherwise allegorizing commentaries.

6. An esoteric trend in the Franco-German context, deeply shaped by the *hekhlot* tradition and associating part or all of the Song of Songs with contemplation of the Chariot (*merkabah*).

7. Within the emerging Spanish theosophic kabbalistic tradition, the Song of Songs was understood as an allegory for the dynamic interactions between the *sefirot*. However, the older discourse of exile and redemption was incorporated into this mode of exegesis, just as philosophical/Maimonidean elements informed interpretation of Song in the Abulafian ecstatic tradition.

### **Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi on the Song of Songs: Substance, structure, and scope**

There has been some confusion around the identification of Tanḥum's commentary to the Song of Songs, compounded by the fact that he effectively wrote two distinct commentaries to the work.<sup>139</sup> Recently, two editions have become available that clarify our picture of the commentary: The first is included in Arye Zoref's PhD dissertation, accompanied by a Hebrew

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<sup>139</sup> The fragments of Tanḥum's commentary published by Qafiḥ (in *Ḥamesh megillot*), and Yehudah Levi Naḥum (with a Hebrew translation by Qafiḥ, in Naḥum, *Mi-yetzirot sifrutiiyyot*) were not identified, and both Fenton and Langermann were apparently misled by the double format of the commentary, not locating the appropriate passages of MS Pococke 320 to compare with the published fragments. See Yitzhak Tzvi Langermann, "Saving the Soul by Knowing the Soul: A Medieval Yemeni Interpretation of Song of Songs," in *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 12:2 (2003), 150 fn.6; and Fenton, "Mystical Commentary," 25 fn.13. Whereas Langermann denies the attribution to Tanḥum altogether, Fenton makes the identification, but mistakes one of Tanḥum's commentaries for the work of another author, who "seems also to have been influenced by him." (*Ibid.*)

translation;<sup>140</sup> and the second is Joseph Alobaidi's published edition, accompanied by an English translation.<sup>141</sup> Both are based primarily on the most complete manuscript, MS Pococke 320, which lacks only the opening passage of Tanḥum's introduction.<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, Alobaidi's edition is based only on one manuscript (and inexplicably lacks the opening passage of that manuscript), contains no critical apparatus, and is riddled with errors of transcription. In addition, the English translation is often highly problematic. For these reasons, the present study will refer only to the most complete manuscript (MS Pococke 320) and Zoref's edition. When relevant, I will refer to the translations of Zoref and Alobaidi.

Following the example of Rabbi Akiva in the Mishnah, Tanḥum understood the Song of Songs to be the most hallowed of the Hagiographa. In the introduction to his commentary to the Song of Songs, after discussing the scope of the Solomonic corpus, he writes as follows:

Thus, [Solomon] states here that this *book* [i.e., the Song of Songs] is an epitome of his other works (*khulāṣat sā'ir muṣannaḫātīhi*), and the quintessence of his total wisdom (*wa-zubdat jamī' ḥikmatīhi*), and the purpose of all the wisdom<sup>143</sup> in which he had advanced (*wa-'l-ghāya min jamī' mā taqaddama bihi min al-ḥikam*).<sup>144</sup> This indicates that his compilation of wisdom in this *book* was at the end of his life. [...]

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<sup>140</sup> Arye Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles: Studies in its Tendencies and its Jewish, Sufi-Islamic and Christian Sources, with a Critical Edition* (PhD dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: 2012), 2 vols.

<sup>141</sup> Joseph Alobaidi, *Old Jewish Commentaries on the Song of Songs II: The Two Commentaries of Tanḥum Yerushalmi – Text and Translation* (Peter Lang: 2014).

<sup>142</sup> For a description of the five MSS used by Zoref, including MS Pococke 320, see Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 1-4.

<sup>143</sup> Or: sciences. See note directly below.

<sup>144</sup> The Arabic *ḥikam* (wisdom) is in the plural form, and here most likely refers to the philosophical sciences. See discussion above, p.179 and fn.122.

The loftiness of this *book*, and its elevated rank in lofty meanings, and its exalted station, have already become well-known among the religious community (*al-milla*). They know that it is the furthest limit of his wisdom, and the [ultimate] destination (*wa-maḥall al-wuṣūl*)...<sup>145</sup>

Two elements of this passage are particularly illuminating in light of our discussions of Tanḥum's thought up until this point. The first is that the Song of Songs is described as an epitome (*khulāṣa*) of Solomon's works, as "the quintessence of his total wisdom (*wa-zubdat jamī' ḥikmatihī*)," and as the *telos* of the totality of wisdom and science that Solomon has attained. This formulation points quite clearly towards Tanḥum's statement that the loftiest degree of human insight emerges from "the totality of that which precedes it (*majmū' hādhihi al-mutaqaddima*),"<sup>146</sup> i.e., from the acquisition, synthesis, and contemplation of the philosophical sciences as a whole.<sup>147</sup> Here, we learn that the Song of Songs is actually an expression of such a mode of knowledge. Secondly, Tanḥum states that "the loftiness of this *book*... [has] already become well-known among the religious community." Although this may simply be a reference to the philosophical sense associated with the book by earlier writers such as Ibn 'Aqṇīn, Maimonides, and possibly Abraham he-Ḥasid, it may also allude to his awareness of the more widespread association of the Song of Songs with some esoteric sense – perhaps on the part of the pietistically oriented communities of Egypt and the Levant, and perhaps even among Western European arrivals in that region.

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<sup>145</sup> For this passage, see MS Evr. Arab. I 4249 in the National Library of Russia at St Petersburg (reel F 58035 in the Hebrew University microfilm collection); Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 6. The Arabic conclusion of the passage cited here simultaneously evokes the final station on a journey – *maḥall* signifying a place, and *wuṣūl* "arrival"; and union with the divine Beloved – *maḥall* being etymologically connected with *ḥulūl*/dwelling, and *wuṣūl* being understood in its technical sense as union of some kind with the Divine (or for Tanḥum, union with the Active Intellect). For this sense of *wuṣūl* in Tanḥum, see Shy, *Perush*, 137.

<sup>146</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 157b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 173.

<sup>147</sup> See above, p.265, p.280.

In terms of its precise allegorical valence, Tanḥum leaves room for ambiguity. He notes that according to all opinions, the male beloved (*al-maḥbūb*) is the Divine (*al-ḥaqq* – the Real/True).<sup>148</sup> Regarding the identity of the female beloved (*al-maḥbūba*), Tanḥum mentions that she is held by some to (a) represent wisdom (*al-ḥikma/al-ḥokmah*),<sup>149</sup> and by others to (b) represent the personified Community of Israel (*keneset yisra'el*). He then adds that the book may be interpreted as (c) an account of “the wise rational soul’s desire to reach the place of intellectual exaltedness, which is [the soul’s] place of origination, and her first world, and her fundamental elemental substance.”<sup>150</sup> It is significant that Tanḥum does not clearly identify the male beloved here as God per se, as he may be leaving room for understanding that figure as a representation of the Active Intellect (following Ibn ‘Aqnīn).<sup>151</sup>

Tanḥum’s suggestion that the female beloved might be identified with wisdom is intriguing, as it does not appear to be attested among medieval interpretations of the Song of Songs.<sup>152</sup> After mentioning it in passing in the introduction, we hear nothing more of this hermeneutical possibility. Although Tanḥum appears to ascribe this approach to others – “there are those who say (*fa-thamma man qāla*) that it alludes to wisdom”<sup>153</sup> – the possibility remains that the suggestion is his own.

Tanḥum states that once the allegorical valence has been revealed in a general sense, it is easily applied to individual verses and passages:

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<sup>148</sup> This passage is preserved in MS Evr. Arab. I 4249.

<sup>149</sup> Like most Judeo-Arabic authors, Tanḥum often employs code-switching, particularly when a term carries a particular technical valence in Hebrew or Aramaic. In many cases, he employs the Arabic definite article with a Hebrew term – e.g., *al-galut*, *‘ālam al-mal’akhim*. Here, it is unclear to me whether he is code-switching or using the Arabic term, as the *tā marbūṭa* is generally not indicated in the MSS.

<sup>150</sup> MS Pococke 320, 8a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 8.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 58-59.

<sup>152</sup> However, it does foreshadow certain modern critical interpretations of Song as part of the Wisdom corpus. See Katharine J. Dell, “Does the Song of Songs have any connections to wisdom?” in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs/Perspektiven der Hoheliedauslegung*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn (Walter de Gruyter: 2005), 8-26.

<sup>153</sup> MS Pococke 320, 7a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 7.

Now we have already provided guidance concerning the [book's] meanings in a general sense, and we have revealed its purpose as a whole, as a summation without detailed explication – although its detailed explication is very easy after this general account (*tafṣīluhu qarīb jiddan ba‘d hādhā al-ijmāl*).<sup>154</sup>

However, Tanḥum makes a conscious decision *not* to adopt one possible stance towards the text, namely, to refrain from ascribing significance to specific elements of the narrative. Indeed, he explicitly rejects such an approach, while acknowledging the limitations of his own effort:

The common practice of the commentators is that in such matters they explicate a word from the verse and skip the remainder or a verse, and then explain another at length based on what seems to fit the discourse. But I have arranged all of the verses according to meanings, and all expressions in close alignment so that the entirety may be arranged according to the aforementioned meaning. And let it not be said that any statement or any verse has no meaning<sup>155</sup> – for [if that were the case] they would not have been mentioned. Or [let it not be] said that this explanation is incorrect, and this is not the intended [meaning]. Therefore, let not one who studies it scold me if he sees that in some places there is laxity or imprecision concerning whether a term indicates the masculine or feminine gender in its literal sense, whereas we have interpreted it as feminine, or vice versa, or something similar. For we attempted to the best of our ability to arrange the meanings harmoniously,<sup>156</sup> and not a thing has been left out that fits the meaning, nor has anything unnecessary been added. *The Merciful One desires one's heart*.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> MS Pococke 320, 10b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 11.

<sup>155</sup> Lit.: that this statement or this verse has no meaning...

<sup>156</sup> Cf. the translation in Alobaidi, *The Two Commentaries*, 191.

<sup>157</sup> MS Pococke 320, 34a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 39. The concluding Aramaic expression “the Merciful One desires one's heart (*rahmana libba ba'e*)” is of Talmudic origin – see Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, 106b (which in the Vilna edition and most MSS reads *ha-qadosh barukh hu* [the Holy One, blessed is He] in place of *rahmana*). The precise formulation used by Tanḥum is attested in Ibn Ezra in something approaching the same sense (see his long commentary to Ex. 31:18, and commentary to Qoh. 5:1). Perhaps the best English rendition of the dictum as Tanḥum employs it is, “It is the thought that counts.”

In this passage, Tanḥum insists upon the significance of each and every verse, and pushes against the position that not every element of the Song's narrative carries an allegorical valence – the latter being a perfectly convincing understanding of Maimonides' approach to the work.<sup>158</sup>

Tanḥum's commentary to the Song of Songs is unique insofar as it reveals itself as a work in progress.<sup>159</sup> At first, he adopts a tripartite structure for the commentary, not dissimilar from those of Ibn Ezra and Ibn Aqnin. However, while Ibn Ezra and Ibn 'Aqnīn offer three successive interpretations for each verse, Tanḥum begins by offering his lexical interpretation of each verse, and only offers his psychological and historical allegoresis at the end of each masoretic *parashah* (paragraph).<sup>160</sup> He maintains this structure for a single *parashah* (Song 1:1-4). In the second *parashah*, he begins to blur the distinction between the strata of meaning – for example, by delving straight into a philosophical-allegorical discussion of Song 1:6, after some linguistic comments, although that verse does not mark the end of a *parashah*.<sup>161</sup> However, he retains the *parashah* as a meaningful unit of exegesis beyond that point. Indeed, his initial commentary to Song 1:15-2:7, which constitutes an entire masoretic *parashah*, takes the unit as a whole from the outset, rather than going through the process of offering a lexical treatment of each verse and only then his two allegorical discussions.<sup>162</sup> From that point onwards, Tanḥum begins to ignore the *parashiyyot* as meaningful units, and from Song 2:8 he focuses instead on presenting his

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<sup>158</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 187-188; Marciano, "Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim," 105. This position was adopted explicitly by Joseph Ibn Kaspi (d.c.1340), who authored an extremely brief commentary in the form of an introduction, for discussion of which, see Kellner, *Commentary on Song of Songs*, xvi-xvii; Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, 214-215; Arthur M. Lesley, "Proverbs, Figures, and Riddles: The *Dialogues of Love* as a Hebrew Humanist Composition," in *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, History*, ed. Michael Fishbane (State University of New York Press: 1993), 208. Cf. Ibn 'Aqnīn's approach, discussed in Halkin, "Ibn 'Aknin's Commentary on the Song of Songs," 412.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 3-4.

<sup>160</sup> These are the blocks of text in masoretic MSS and scrolls that are distinguished by an open or closed gap in the text (*petuḥah*, *setumah*). For a discussion of this feature of the Tiberian masoretic tradition, see Khan, *Short Introduction*, 3, 35-36, 40-41.

<sup>161</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 13a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 14.

<sup>162</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 18a-22a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 20-26.

historical allegoresis verse by verse. At this point, Tanḥum seems to have resolved to compose two independent commentaries. Thus, when he resumes his second commentary, he begins from Song 2:8.<sup>163</sup> Tanḥum's shift in organizational principle sheds light on the peculiar challenges that this biblical book posed for an exegete who was committed to maintaining the coherence of the work (and his own commentary) while offering multiple interpretive possibilities.

Like Ibn 'Aqnīn, Tanḥum feels bound to acknowledge and give some priority to the historical-allegorical interpretation. But in the final instance, also like Ibn 'Aqnīn, Tanḥum's heart is elsewhere.<sup>164</sup> This is implied by his tendency to allow his philosophical program to color his historical-allegorical interpretations.<sup>165</sup> But his preference for psychological allegoresis is most strikingly expressed in the remarks preceding his interpretation of the final verses in his first (historical-allegorical) commentary to the Song of Songs:

I shall therefore turn to the final completion of this discourse,<sup>166</sup> and then I shall return to the other true, noble, lofty sense, the purpose [of the book], and I shall complete [the commentary]

<sup>163</sup> See Alobaidi, *The Two Commentaries*, ix-x.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 4.

<sup>165</sup> A characteristic example may be found in his first commentary to Song 4:13, he writes as follows: "*Your limbs are an orchard of pomegranates. The divine sciences and prophetic secrets (al-'ulūm al-ilāhiyya wa-'l-asrār al-nabawiyya). With luscious fruits. The other branches of the sciences, knowledge, and wisdom (sā'ir anwā' al-'ulūm wa'l-ma'ārif wa-'l-ḥikam).*" (MS Pococke 320, 26a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 29.) This is even more pronounced in many cases, such as his commentary to Song 8:1: "*Would that you were like a brother to me. If only you were always with me, your providence would never depart from me. Reared on my mother's breast. And my insights were conjoined to knowledge of you (idrākātī mutṭaṣila bi-ma'rifatika). I would find you in the open, and kiss you. Your emanation (fayḍuka) would reach me perpetually.*" (MS Pococke 320, 31b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 36.) The language that Tanḥum employs here is one of intellectual conjunction through mental apprehension, typical of individual psychology. That he intends this to be part of his historical-allegorical treatment is clear from context, and from the continuation of the verse: "*They would not despise me. I would not be troubled by those of other nations (sā'ir al-umam) who would rebuke me or consider me to have some deficiency, as has become habitual during the time of separation and distance from your side...*" (*ibid.*) It is thus clear that the Tanḥum's speaker is the hypostatized Israel (*keneset yisrael*). Cf. also his conclusion to the historical-allegorical commentary abounds in experiential and psychological terminology, and soteriological motifs, in MS Pococke 320, 35a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 40. A similar tendency to allow psychological discourse to color the historical-allegorical stratum of the commentary may be found in Ibn 'Aqnīn's commentary; see Halkin, "Ibn 'Aknin's Commentary on the Song of Songs," 408-409.

<sup>166</sup> I.e., his historical-allegorical reading of Song. Tanḥum is clearly not referring to a specific verse, as this passage is located in between his first treatment of 8:12 and 8:13, with the final two verses remaining to be interpreted.

from the place that we interrupted it. For I wanted to complete this explanation in proper order, with a coherent theme (*muttaṣil al-ma'nā*), and [only] then to return to that one and complete it just as we began it, without interruption or departure...<sup>167</sup>

It thus seems that after experimenting with two alternatives,<sup>168</sup> Tanḥum hit upon the formula that he was to follow for the remainder of his commentary: A complete historical allegoresis, followed by a more extensive but freer philological and psychological commentary (described in glowing terms as “the other true, noble, lofty sense, the purpose [of the book]”). This allowed him to treat each aspect of the book as a whole with minimal fragmentation and interruption.

Tanḥum's decision to defer the philological discussion and place most of it in the psychologizing stratum of his commentary is understandable if we consider the significance of the experiential and erotic language that he identifies in the text of the Song of Songs. Early in his commentary, Tanḥum blurs the boundaries between experiential philosophical discourse and his lexical treatment of the text. For example, in his (clearly delineated) lexical treatment of Song 1:4, we find the following Arabic paraphrasis, followed by commentary:

*Your name is flowing oil.* (Song 1:3) [...] The meaning is: “When your name is mentioned, pure and fragrant breezes waft, as if aromatic oil was flowing and gushing.” One who possesses such attributes deserves to be loved (*fa-ḥaqqā li-man hādhihi ṣifātuhu an yuḥabba*), and conjunction with him (*al-ittiṣāl bihi*) should be desired.<sup>169</sup>

The theological and soteriological implications of desiring conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with a beloved possessing desirable or beautiful attributes (*ṣifāt*) are immediately striking to a reader attuned to such discourse. Another example is the following:

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<sup>167</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 34b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 40.

<sup>168</sup> I.e., verse-by-verse philological analysis followed by historical and psychological-soteriological interpretation at the end of each *parashah*, and one *parashah* which he attempted to merely treat as a unit.

<sup>169</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 11a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 12.

*The king brought me to his chambers.* (Song 1:4) [The form is in] the past-tense, but the meaning is future-tense... And the meaning is: “O Sublime King! Draw me after you, and bring me into your palaces and your private quarters (*ijdhibnī khalfaka wa-adkhilnī quṣūraka wa-khudūraka*), so that I might attain union with you (*li-attaḥida bika*), and be happy and rejoice and delight in nearness to you (*wa-asurru wa-afraḥu wa-altadhdhu bi-qurbika*).<sup>170</sup>

In these passages, one hears clear echoes of Peripatetic and Sufi experiential terminology. The extent to which Tanḥum has in mind the technical sense of the term *jadhb* is difficult to determine due to its close affinity with the language of the verse is used.<sup>171</sup> However, the philosophical – and specifically soteriological – valences of union (*ittiḥād*) and delight (*ladhdha*) in nearness (*qurb*) to the Sublime King are hard to ignore.<sup>172</sup>

In the aforementioned cases the mystical and soteriological references remain only implicit. However, this is not always the case. In Tanḥum’s philological treatment of Song 1:3, he writes as follows:

His reference to *maidens* (*‘alamot*) is according to the poetic method (*‘alā al-ṭarīqa al-shi’riyya*), for love and mutual affection (*al-‘ishq wa-’l-taḥābub*)<sup>173</sup> take place between males and females – girls (*al-ṣabāyā*) in particular. Most commonly, men love women. But in this case, due to [the beloved’s] great beauty and exceeding perfection, the girls sink in his love, knowing nothing thereafter of the conditions of the world (*aḥwāl al-dunyā*). So too is the soul – with which the discourse is concerned, and to which the pronouns refer – included among the women and

<sup>170</sup> MS Pocke 320, 11b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 12.

<sup>171</sup> This terminology is used by Ibn ‘Aqnīn – see Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 32. Yefet b. Eli translates the term *moshkheni* in Song 1:4 as *ijdhibnī*; the Arabic *j-dh-b* is also one equivalent for the Hebrew root *m-sh-k* (which is actually cognate with the Arabic root *m-s-k*) provided by Ibn Janāḥ – see *Uṣūl*, 395. For the Sufi resonance of this term, see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 105; John Renard, *Historical Dictionary of Sufism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Rowman & Littlefield: 2016), 213.

<sup>172</sup> For *ladhdha* as characteristic of intellectual apprehension in Ibn Sīnā, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 75 fn. 18, 150-151 fn. 13, 200. For this theme in Maimonides, see Kreisel, *Maimonides’ Political Thought*, 112, 133. Compare the terminology of *qurb* in Moses Maimonides and Abraham Maimonides, see below, p.353 fn. 327.

<sup>173</sup> Considering the confusion between verbs in the V and VIII forms in Judeo-Arabic, a better translation might be “courtship” (*taḥabbub* > *taḥābub*). (See Blau, *Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic*, 78.)

maidens, in the feminine gender.<sup>174</sup> And this is one of the concealed matters, the hidden secrets. And the term *maidens* (*'alamot*) is also employed<sup>175</sup> in the sense of *and it remained concealed* (*ve-ne'lam*) *from him* (Lev. 5:2, 3, 4), *and it is concealed* (*ve-ne'elmah*) *from all living beings* (Job 28:21). This is why he said *maidens* (*'alamot*) rather than *girls* (*ne'arot*) or something similar in meaning.<sup>176</sup>

In this passage, Tanḥum's philological treatment of the text leads him directly into a discussion of the verse's allegorical (psychological-soteriological) valence. Here, the narrator's choice of young women as a subject affords Tanḥum the opportunity for a more extended discussion of the verse; this leads him to the question of why the author would choose this specific term to describe the young women. Tanḥum sees significance in the equivocality of meaning (*ishtirāk*) in the Hebrew root *'l-m*,<sup>177</sup> suggesting the presence of an esoteric meaning.<sup>178</sup> He thus follows Ibn 'Aqnīn in identifying the maidens of the verse with the rational soul.<sup>179</sup>

Although the Song of Songs does not possess the same degree of narrative coherence as the Book of Jonah, we may still identify central figures in the Tanḥum's allegorical treatments of the book. As he mentions in his introduction, both the male beloved and King Solomon generally

<sup>174</sup> Tanḥum's point here seems to be that in relation to God, the soul is regarded as feminine. Cf. above, p.272-273.

<sup>175</sup> Lit.: "In the term *maidens* there is equivocality [insofar as it shares] the sense (*fīhi ishtirāk li-ma'nā*)..." This articulation of the breadth of the term's lexical valence is informed by Maimonides' terminology as employed in his introduction to the *Guide* (Pines, 5; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 2, line 7), and throughout the work. For the basis of Maimonides' terminology in al-Fārābī's logic, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 100-103.

<sup>176</sup> MS Pococke 320, 11a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 12.

<sup>177</sup> The semantic breadth of the root *'l-m* actually reflects the assimilation of the phonemes [γ] and [ʕ] (equivalent to the Arabic *ghayn* and *'ayn* respectively) into the Hebrew letter *'ayin*. Thus, the Hebrew term *'elem* (young man; the masculine of *'almah*, employed in our verse) is etymologically related to the Arabic *ghulām*.

<sup>178</sup> In this case, the esoteric meaning is that there is an esoteric meaning (*sirr*). Compare Goldziher, *Ma'ānī al-naḥs*, 29; Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 38. The author of *Ma'ānī al-naḥs* prefigures Tanḥum on two points: He identifies the maidens as a reference to rational souls (as does Ibn 'Aqnīn – see note below); and he appears to register an association with the "hidden", possibly inspired by the indistinguishable Hebrew root later identified as significant by Tanḥum. The author's interpretation may also be colored by the Arabic root *'l-m*, as he states that "the souls who know hidden things love their hidden Creator (*al-nufūs al-'arīfa bi-'l-khafāya tuḥibbu bāri'ahā al-khafī*)," and goes on to emphasize that the subject of the verse is not to be taken literally, but rather that it refers to "the passion of the souls that know their Creator (*'ishq al-nufūs al-'arīfa bi-bāri'ihā*)" (*ibid.*). The emphasis on both hiddenness and direct knowledge (*ma'rifa*) implies a particularly broad and creative interpretation of the lexeme *'alamot*.

<sup>179</sup> See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 32-33. Cf. the similar interpretation in Goldziher, *Ma'ānī al-naḥs*, 29; Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 38.

represent God.<sup>180</sup> In the historical-allegorical stratum, the Daughters of Jerusalem are Israel as individuals, while the mother – also called “Jerusalem” – is “the collective of Israel” (the Judeo-Arabic *jam ‘iyyat yisra’el* apparently being a calque for the Hebrew *keneset yisra’el*).<sup>181</sup> Thus, the latter is also identical with the female narrator.<sup>182</sup> The guardians that beat the female narrator in Song 3:3 and 5:7 are interpreted in the historical-allegorical stratum as “the enemies, adversaries, and kingdoms into whose hands we have fallen,”<sup>183</sup> i.e., foreign enemies. In contrast, the foxes of Song 2:15 represent the internal enemies – “*the wicked of Israel (rish’e yisra’el)*.”<sup>184</sup> The brothers of Song 8:8-9 represent the angels, whom Israel resembles (or whose place she occupies in the hierarchy of terrestrial beings), and who guide and protect her.<sup>185</sup> However, Tanḥum’s use of these figures in the historical-allegorical stratum of the commentary is not entirely consistent.<sup>186</sup>

In the psychological-soteriological stratum, the female beloved represents the intellectual soul, as do the Song’s accounts of beauty, whiteness, or radiance:

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<sup>180</sup> MS Evr. Arab. I 4249; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 6.

<sup>181</sup> MS Pococke 320, 24a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 27. Cf. Tanḥum’s formulation, apparently glossing *keneset yisra’el* with *jamā’atuhum*, in MS Pococke 320, 7b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 7.

<sup>182</sup> MS Pococke 320, 7b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 7.

<sup>183</sup> MS Pococke 320, 27a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 30.

<sup>184</sup> MS Pococke 320, 23b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 26.

<sup>185</sup> First commentary to Song 8:8-9: “*We have a little sister.* (Song 8:8) The angels say: We have a sister who resembles us in the terrestrial world, and she is the religious community of *Israel (wa-hiya millat yisra’el)*... *And she has no breasts.* (*Ibid.*) That is, their perfection falls short of that which is required of them. *What shall we do for our sister when she is spoken of?* (*Ibid.*) What will the state of [divine] providence over her be when she will be summoned to trial and requital? *If she be a wall, we will build upon it a silver battlement.* (*Ibid.*, 8:9) We shall guide her and instruct her and emanate some of the intellectual apprehension and pure worship that which will cleanse her [of her] filth, remove her debasement, and whiten her like silver...” (MS Pococke 320, 33a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 38.)

<sup>186</sup> For example, note his comment in his historical-allegorical commentary to Song 3:10 that he identifies the Daughters of Jerusalem as “the collective of Israel (*jam ‘iyyat yisra’el*).” See MS Pococke 320, 24b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 28. Tanḥum’s historical-allegorical commentary to Song 8:2 (“I would lead you, I would bring you to my mother’s house, she {following Ibn Ezra’s commentary *ad loc.*} would instruct me”) also exhibits an indeterminacy regarding the relationship of the speaker to her mother. See MS Pococke 320, 31b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 36.

The soul, in its essential beauty, is likened to whiteness and purity, while the corporeal faculties among which [the soul] resides and which it governs [are likened] to blackness and darkness and coarseness and opaqueness. And [Solomon] calls the governing and comprehending faculties (*al-quwā al-mudabbira al-mudrika*) – meaning cogitation, imagination, and memory (*al-fikr wa-'l-khayāl wa-'l-dhikr*), and that which pertains<sup>187</sup> to them – *the Daughters of Jerusalem*. (Song 1:5, 2:7, 3:5, 5:8, 5:16, 8:4) For they are near to simplicity.<sup>188</sup> This applies in particular to [the faculty] cogitation, for it is the loftiest and most subtle of the corporeal faculties. This is why human beings were endowed with it, to the exclusion of other animals.<sup>189</sup>

In above passage, we learn also that the Daughters of Jerusalem are to be identified with the mental faculties of cogitation, imagination, and memory (*fikr, khayāl, dhikr*).<sup>190</sup> The foxes of 2:15 represent the lesser mental faculties associated with the imagination (*khayāl, wahm*).<sup>191</sup> There is of course some tension here concerning the place of the imagination, possibly reflecting its problematic status in Maimonidean psychology and prophetology.<sup>192</sup> The “mother’s sons” of Song 1:6 are identified with the corporeal faculties (*al-quwā al-badaniyya*),<sup>193</sup> as are the guardians of Song 3:3 and 5:7.<sup>194</sup> As in the historical-allegorical commentary, the voice of the

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<sup>187</sup> Arabic: *yatba 'uhum*. The term may mean “follows”, “accompanies”, or “attaches”, among other potentially relevant valences.

<sup>188</sup> That is to say, they are mid-way between the composite nature of matter and the simplicity of intellect.

<sup>189</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 13a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 14. Cf. also MS Poccocke 320, 52b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 62.

<sup>190</sup> For the Galenic provenance of this conception, see above, p.139-140, and fn.263.

<sup>191</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 38a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 43-44. Cf. Ibn 'Aqnīn's identification of the foxes with the animal and vegetative faculties (Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 104-105). Although the term *wahm* is used by Ibn Sīnā and others to refer to the estimative faculty, it appears that Tanḥum is using it in its more common sense to denote the imaginary or delusional. For the former usage, see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 28, 89. However, even according to this usage, the estimative faculty is closely aligned with the imagination – see *ibid.*, 113, fn. 154. Indeed, in *Al-qānūn fī al-ṭibb* (The Canon of Medicine), Ibn Sīnā conflates the estimative and imaginative faculties – see Wolfson, “The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts,” 280. In the same passage, Tanḥum also cites a midrashic interpretation that identifies the foxes as inexperienced scholars who assume communal authority for which they are unprepared. The interpretation is attested in Maimonides' *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Torah Study, 5:4.

<sup>192</sup> Davidson, *On Intellect*, 203-206; Stern, *Matter and Form*, 122-125, 179-180.

<sup>193</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 13a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 14.

<sup>194</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 39b, 52b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 45, 62. In the former passage, Tanḥum identifies the guardians with the foxes of Song 2:15. This is either an inconsistency, or his

brothers in Song 8:8 is implicitly identified with the separate intellects, which Tanḥum identifies with the angels. However, here the sister represents the human intellectual soul rather than the community of Israel.<sup>195</sup> Overall, the psychological elements with which Tanḥum identifies the book's characters in his psychological interpretation echo Ibn 'Aqnīn's commentary.<sup>196</sup>

It is important to note the ambiguity in Tanḥum's commentary concerning the identity of the male beloved. He asserts that "everybody is in agreement that the [male] beloved alluded in this book is the Real, exalted is He (*al-ḥaqq ta 'ālā*);"<sup>197</sup> but he does in fact imply elsewhere that the object of desire may be the Active Intellect:

*My beloved is mine, and I am his, who shepherds among the lilies. (Song 2:16) Once [the soul] has seized those foxes,<sup>198</sup> and taken hold of the aforementioned faculties through exercises, struggle, scientific investigation, enduring reflection, and preoccupation with the attainment of true insights (*bi-'l-riyāḍa wa-'l-mujāhada wa-'l-naẓar*<sup>199</sup> *al-'ilmī wa-thabāt al-fikr wa-ishṭighālihi bi-taḥṣīl al-ḥaqā'iq*) – then she attains union with the intellect that is the Beloved, and she becomes His, and He becomes hers, and at that time there is no separation between them.<sup>200</sup>*

Tanḥum's statement in this passage that the soul now "attains union with the intellect that is the Beloved (*fa-ittahadat bi-'l-'aql alladhī huwa al-maḥbūb*)" leaves little doubt that he has the Active Intellect in mind.<sup>201</sup> It appears that Tanḥum left some room for movement in establishing the allegorical valence of each figure. Indeed, he could once again find a respectable precedent

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use of "corporeal faculties" encompasses the more basic mental faculties. Cf. Tanḥum's treatment of mental faculties in his allegorical commentary to Jonah, in Shy, *Perush*, 135.

<sup>195</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 68b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 81.

<sup>196</sup> See Halkin, "Ibn 'Aknin's Commentary on the Song of Songs," 409-411.

<sup>197</sup> MS Evr. Arab. I 4249 (reel F 58035 in the Hebrew University microfilm collection); Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 6.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Tanḥum's commentary to Song 2:15 in MS Poccocke 320, 38a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 43-44.

<sup>199</sup> In the MS *wa-'l-naḍar*. For the conflation of *dād* and *zā* in Judeo-Arabic, see Blau, *Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic*, 39.

<sup>200</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 38b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 44.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 58-59.

for the representation of distinct concepts with a single signifier in Maimonides' *Guide*: In *Guide* I.23, Maimonides states that the Hebrew term *elohim* may refer to God, angels (of which the Active Intellect is one), or human rulers.<sup>202</sup> In maintaining such an ambiguity, Tanḥum's allegoresis approaches both Ibn 'Aqnīn's psychological interpretation of the Song of Songs, and the Western Maimonidean tradition.<sup>203</sup> Those exegetes consistently identified the male beloved with the Active Intellect.<sup>204</sup>

Despite the disjointed and fragmented quality of the Song of Songs, Tanḥum did identify an overall progression through three stages of encounter with the Divine, marked by the thrice-repeated verse: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by gazelles or hinds of the field: Do not wake or rouse love until it please!* (Song 2:7, 3:5, 8:4).<sup>205</sup> In the psychological stratum of the commentary, these verses each mark the end of a spiritual station (*maqām*).<sup>206</sup> He also saw a progression from *'al hare bater* ("over hills of separation";<sup>207</sup> Song 2:17) to *'al hare besamim* ("on hills of spices"; Song 8:14). Whereas the former denotes distance from the Divine in both the historical-allegorical and psychological strata of the commentary, the latter represents a renewed intimacy between the lovers. In the historical-allegorical context, this refers to the

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<sup>202</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 23.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 58-59.

<sup>204</sup> Marciano, "Ha-rambam u-farshanut shir ha-shirim," 106-108.

<sup>205</sup> The three verses are not truly identical. In Song 8:4 there are two differences: The phrase *by gazelles or hinds of the field* is omitted; and the negation after the adjuration is *mah* rather than *im*. Cf. Ibn Kaspi's later adoption of a very similar scheme – for which see Halkin, "Ibn 'Aknin's Commentary on the Song of Songs," 411-412. For more on these verses, and Tanḥum's interpretation of them, see below, pp.342-355.

<sup>206</sup> MS Pococke 320, 41b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 48.

<sup>207</sup> The Hebrew *bater* (the nonpausal form would be *beter*) is of uncertain meaning. In his first commentary to Song 2:17, Tanḥum translates the phrase into Arabic as "hills of separation and division" (*jibāl al-inqitā' wa-'l-firqa*) – see MS Pococke 320, 24a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 27. In explaining the verse thus, he follows Ibn Ezra's commentary *ad loc*. This interpretation is echoed in Tanḥum's second commentary to the verse, MS Pococke 320, 72a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 85. Cf. also his commentary to: "However, this is a rank pertaining to knowledge (*martaba 'ilmiyya*), and it does not last as a perpetual conjunction (*ittiṣāl*), but exists only at certain times. For this occurs during the preliminary stages, as we have said. Therefore, he considered this rank and this conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) to be intermittent – *on hills of separation* (*'al hare bater*; Song 2:17), from *and he dissected them* (*va-yebatter otam*; Gen. 15:10)." [MS Pococke 320, 38b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 44; in his interpretation of Gen. 15:10, Tanḥum follows Ibn Ezra *ad loc*.

return to Jerusalem and the restoration of full divine providence to the community of Israel; in the psychologizing stratum, the ultimate level of intimacy is lasting conjunction between the soul and the Beloved.<sup>208</sup> Finally, in his psychologizing stratum, Tanḥum understands Song 8:8-14 as a discourse on the topic of love (*maḥabba*) and passion (*'ishq*), including also an overview of the soul's progression.<sup>209</sup>

### Tanḥum's Allegory of the Dove

Inspired by the repeated motif of the dove in the Song of Songs,<sup>210</sup> and by the popular Islamicate literary motif of the soul as a bird,<sup>211</sup> Tanḥum prefaced his commentary with an allegorical narrative depicting the human soul as a dove.<sup>212</sup> He foreshadows the allegory by describing the experience of the soul returning to the point of its origin in vivid sensory terms:

This *book* describes how the intellect constantly advances and moves [the soul], rank by rank, it drawing nearer and approaching [the intellect] bit by bit. When it smells the scents of her world from [the intellect], and it perceives its homeland from which it has grown foreign, and it tastes but a little of its fruits, and it delights in the breeze of its light and radiance, and it grows luminous in its shimmering light and its many rays, and it savors the beauty of its views

<sup>208</sup> For the historical-allegorical commentary, see MS Pococke 320, 35a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 40. For the psychologizing stratum, see MS Pococke 320, 71b-72a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 85.

<sup>209</sup> MS Pococke 320 68b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 81. Tanḥum's discussion of *maḥabba* and *'ishq* is dependent on *Guide* III.51, where Maimonides states: "You know the difference between the terms *one who loves* [*oheb*] and *one who loves passionately* [*ḥosheq*]; an excess of love [*ifrāt al-maḥabba*], so that no thought remains that is directed toward a thing other than the Beloved, is passionate love [*'ishq*]." (Pines, *Guide*, 267; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 462.) In his second commentary to Song 8:8, Tanḥum writes: "He then mentioned love and the passion (*al-maḥabba wa-'l-'ishq*) that the soul finally reaches. And he mentioned the extent of that love, and its extreme pleasure. And he mentioned the attributes of lovers and the quality of the rank of love (*martabat al-maḥabba*), and the rank of passion (*martabat al-'ishq*), which is an excess of love (*ifrāt al-maḥabba*), and immersion in it to the point that one notices nothing other than the beloved, and perceives none other than he." (MS Pococke 320 68b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 81.)

<sup>210</sup> See Song 2:14, 5:2, 6:9.

<sup>211</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 306-308; Asani, "Birds in Islamic Mystical Poetry." For depictions of the soul as a bird in Jewish sources, see Malter, "Personifications of Soul and Body," 475-478; Aptowitz, "Die Seele als Vogel."

<sup>212</sup> For a general discussion of Tanḥum's allegory, see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 103-105

and its vistas, it remembers who it once was, but had forgotten. And it despises that to which it had become accustomed.

So does it live after death, and return [to its homeland] after passing away. It can see clearly, and it is illuminated, and its covering is removed, and it glows and shines.<sup>213</sup>

Several elements that allude to the bird allegory may be identified in the above passage. The soul's longing for its homeland (*waṭan*), its perception of familiar vistas, and its recollection of its true identity all anticipate the allegorical narrative of the soul as a dove, a figure which is nonetheless never explicitly mentioned in this passage. Also notable is Tanḥum's mention of "the intellect" that guides the soul towards itself. This appears to be a reference to the Active Intellect.<sup>214</sup> In describing the soul's "tasting" of the fruits of its homeland, Tanḥum introduces the terminology of *dhawq*. Indeed, in light of our above discussion of his use of the term in reference to one's experience of some aspect of the afterlife while still embodied, and close parallels that his descriptions share with Abraham Maimonides,<sup>215</sup> we might be able to further contextualize and clarify his use of such imagery in the present passage: After experiencing some faint sense of the intellectual realm from which it comes – described as smelling its scent, catching a glimpse, "tast[ing] but a little of its fruits (*wa-dhāqat min ba'd thimārihi*)", and so on – the soul is *reminded* of its true nature. These images evoke the bird analogy as presented in Tanḥum's commentary to Jonah, and echo elements of Ibn Sīnā's *Risālat al-ṭayr*.<sup>216</sup> According to Tanḥum, these experiences awaken the soul to its origins in the intellectual realm, and alert it

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<sup>213</sup> MS Pococke 320, 8b-9a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 8-9.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Shy, *Perush*, 133, and see above, p.121, p.134-135.

<sup>215</sup> See above, p.273 and fn. 455.

<sup>216</sup> For example, the consumption of fruits is common to both narratives. After escaping their captivity and coming to the pinnacle of the seventh mountain, described in the lush terms of an idyll, the birds "ate of its fruits and drank from its rivers and tarried there until we had cast off weariness." (Translation from Heath, "Disorientation and Reorientation," 166, paragraph 17; Arabic in Mehren *Traités Mystiques*, fasc. 2, 46.) For an alternative translation of the passage, see Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, 190. However, in our passage in Tanḥum, the tasting and smelling arouses the soul to seek its homeland, rather than being a quite advanced stage of the journey to the King, as in *Risālat al-ṭayr*.

to its final destination in that realm.<sup>217</sup> This is in direct contrast with Ibn Sīnā’s narrative in *Risālat al-ṭayr*, in which a flock of freed birds are required to remind the narrator of his true identity.<sup>218</sup> In Tanḥum’s account, the soul’s ultimate return is explicitly identified as taking place after death: “So does it live after death, and return [to its homeland] after passing away (*fa-‘āshat ba’d al-mawt wa-tarāja ‘at ba’d al-fawt*).”

After this short preamble, Tanḥum presents his extended allegory of the dove. I cite it here in full:

At this moment it knew that it is like a dove between a peacock above her – she forgets him, but he perceives her – and a crow below her.<sup>219</sup> She gazed at [the crow], and he enticed her. She became intimate with him, and loved him. [The period] her companionship with him grew long, and she comingled with him, her feathers acquiring blackness from his attributes (*wa-khālaṭat/lu fa-’ktasaba rīshuhā iswidād min ṣifātihā*), and acquiring his stupor. She served him with all of her [might], taking pleasure and delighting in him. [All the while] he ate in the dirt and occupied himself with illusory matters.

She had been stripped of the beauty of her attire, and her finery, and her garments (*wa-hiya qad ‘ariyat min ḥusn al-kiswa wa-’l-ḥilya wa-’l-thiyāb*). As a result of the depth of her absorption with him, she did not behave with proper respect towards herself, let alone did she look above

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<sup>217</sup> Compare his commentary to Jonah, in Shy, *Perush*, 131. Translated above, p.126-127, p.130.

<sup>218</sup> See Heath, “Disorientation and Reorientation,” 165, paragraph 12.

<sup>219</sup> For the 15<sup>th</sup> century Yemenite exegete Zekharyah ha-Rofe’s appropriation of this motif, see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 31, 153-154. While Fenton states that Zekharyah is directly dependent on Tanḥum (Fenton, *Perush miṣti*, 542 fn.12), Langermann is less committal and suggests the possibility of a common source (Yitzhak Tzvi Langermann, “Saving the Soul by Knowing the Soul,” 157-158). As pointed out by Zoref, Langermann’s observation that Tanḥum shows no interest in the theme of autognosis, a subject that occupies an important place in the thought of Zekharyah, is unfounded. In addition, Zekharyah exhibits dependence on Tanḥum in other cases. See Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 153-154. Although he does not state it explicitly, it seems that Zoref inclines towards Fenton’s position, as do I (despite the fact that Fenton presents no argument and does not mention the present example). For the circulation of Tanḥum’s commentaries in the Yemen in the medieval and early modern periods, see Yitzhak Tzvi Langermann, *Yemenite Midrash: Philosophical Commentaries on the Torah* (AltaMira Press: 1996), 73-74, 238-239, 326 n.44.

herself (*faḍlan ‘an an tanḍuru [sic]<sup>220</sup> min fawqihā*). Then, one day, she turned her attention to herself, and saw a glimmering adornment and elegant finery around her neck. She looked at her necklace, and found it strange. She said that this wondrous trace (*athar*) is unlike the traces (*āthār*) of this repugnant fellow. This disgusting, black, torpid drinking companion, the companion and drinking partner of whom is compelled by this strangeness to investigate and reflect upon the cause of this adornment (*al-baḥṭh wa-’l-tafakkur ‘an sabab dhālik al-taṭwīs*), and the beauty of this brightness and this luster. She looked, and due to the peacock’s sheen and beauty that shone upon her, she knew that her perfection and beauty must have come from him, and that he was the cause of her wings and life. [She knew that] through conjoining with him, her happiness would increase.

She became infatuated with his beauty, and inclined towards his service, and she clung to his plume. His companionship was pleasant for her, and his friendship was enjoyable.

She despised the friendship of the crow, and regretted having been his companion. She came to know what she had lost by being his friend, and his defects and faults were revealed to her. His cunning and deception became gradually more obvious to her. Gradually, she cut [her ties to] him. And whenever she became a degree removed from his friendship, she approached the peacock by a degree. The nearer she became to the peacock, and the further she became from the crow, she continued to progress in her friendship [with the peacock], and she continued to be drawn after him, and to be absorbed in loving him, and she strove to acquire his attributes and become like him (*wa-tudāwimu al-injidhāb khalfahu wa-tastaghriqu fī maḥabbatihi wa-taḥriṣu ‘alā al-ittiṣāf bi-ṣifātihi wa-’l-tashabbuh bihi*).

All the while, she was in a state of ever-increasing desire, to the point that she achieved a firm reunion with him, and a favorable encounter (*ijtimā‘ akīd wa-’ttiṣāl mufīd*). She confirmed [his true nature] and knew him, and remembered that which she had forgotten. She knew that he is her

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<sup>220</sup> For the conflation of *ḍād* and *zā* in Judeo-Arabic, see Blau, *Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic*, 39.

father, and that her wellspring is from him, and that he is the root from which she has been cut off, and her source from which she has been severed.

She became certain that the cause of the discontinuance (*inqiṭā'*) of [the peacock's] aid to her, and [the reason that] it appeared as if he was shunning her, was that she had exchanged him for the crow, and made him the object of her service, and had been pleased to eat of the dirt from which [the crow had derived] his nourishment.

Thus did she grow further from the crow, and cut off [all] memory of him. When she abandoned him entirely, when she became certain of his deceit towards her and came to know that he had been an enemy in the form of a friend, harm in the guise of benefit, a delegate of evil in the form of a sincere counselor... she turned to true counsel, and lasting, enduring benefit, whose goodness is guaranteed, who fulfills his promise now and in the future. So she became absorbed in his love, and her desire to cling to him grew greater, as did her distress and pain at his separation [from her], and [whenever she] was occupied with anything other than him – even for the most fleeting moment.

This desire led her to the fountain of life, and to pure light, and to attain delight, and lasting happiness, and the illumination with which there is no darkness, and the presence after which there is no absence.

Therefore, the soul is compared to a dove in this book, and with the eyes of doves:

*Your eyes are doves* (Song 1:15); *like doves by watercourses* (5:12); *O my dove, in the cranny of the rocks* (2:14); *my dove, my perfect one* (5:2) – according to the specific interpretations that will be offered in their respective places.<sup>221</sup>

In this passage, Tanḥum draws richly on the medieval Islamic tradition of bird allegories, and on the Avicennan allegorical tradition in particular.<sup>222</sup> This genre was also adopted by Shihāb al-Dīn

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<sup>221</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 9a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 9-10.

al-Suhrawardī, becoming a part of the Illuminationist tradition, as well as by Sufi authors.<sup>223</sup> Insofar as Tanḥum’s allegory represents a fairly straightforward symbolic depiction of his philosophical psychology and soteriology, his approach to such allegory may be said to follow closely in the Avicennan tradition. That is to say that like Ibn Sīnā, Tanḥum employs allegory as a way of communicating philosophical insights in an accessible manner, rather than as a way of conveying truths that are incommunicable via systematic demonstration or discourse.<sup>224</sup> The passage echoes elements of Ibn Sīnā’s *Risālat al-ṭayr* in particular, a work that Tanḥum cites verbatim in opening section of the introduction to his commentary on the Song of Songs.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> For allegory in a Sufi and philosophical context in the Islamic world, see Heath, “Allegory in Islamic literatures,” 86-97. For a broad study of Avicennan allegory, see Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy*. Zoref suggests that the narrative reflects an unknown Islamic source – see Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 103. I consider the existence of such a source highly unlikely, predominantly due to (a) the lack of any direct or indirect evidence for such a claim; (b) Tanḥum’s terminological and conceptual consistency, suggesting his own authorship; and (c) his tendency elsewhere to draw on well-known literary models in order to promote his own distinctive philosophical program (see in particular his classification of the philosophical sciences, discussed above, pp.190-230).

<sup>223</sup> See John Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardī and the Heritage of the Greeks* (State University of New York Press: 2000), 103-112; Heath, “Allegory in Islamic literatures,” 91-92. Two schools of thought regarding al-Suhrawardī’s allegories developed, one promoted by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Maḥmūd Shahrazūrī (d. after 1288), and one by Sa’d Ibn Maṣṣūr Ibn Kammūna (d.1284). The former emphasized the anti-Peripatetic elements in al-Suhrawardī’s thought, while elaborating on its symbolic aspect. The latter reads al-Suhrawardī more firmly within the Avicennan tradition, interpreting his allegories in a straightforwardly philosophical mode. See Hossein Ziai, “The Illuminationist tradition,” in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (Routledge: 1996), 473-492. In any case, there is some sense in which al-Suhrawardī believed his own allegories to communicate some profound philosophical truth more effectively than those of Ibn Sīnā; see Wheeler M. Thackston, *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* (The Octagon Press: 1982), 4-5. For the difficulty faced by Ibn Kammūna in “decoding” some of the more mythical or fantastic elements of al-Suhrawardī’s allegories, see Ziai, “The Illuminationist tradition,” 491-492. For an English translation of the treatises, see Thackston, *Mystical and Visionary Treatises*.

For an edition of al-Ghāzālī’s *Risālat al-ṭayr*, which differs substantially in structure, style, and content from that of its Avicennan namesake, see *Majmū‘at rasā’il al-imām al-ghāzālī* (Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya: 1988), vol. 4, 48-53. Al-Ghāzālī’s epistle was also published along with that of Ibn Sīnā in Cheikho, “Risālatā al-ṭayr.” See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (State University of New York Press: 1987), 99-100. For Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī’s highly esoteric bird allegory, see Jaffray, *The Universal Tree and the Four Birds*. The best known example of bird allegory in the Persian Sufi tradition is ‘Aṭṭār’s *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, of which there are several translations in English, including the recent *The Speech of the Birds: Manṭiq ‘ṭ-Tair*, trans. Peter Avery (Islamic Texts Society: 1998). See also Asani, “Birds in Islamic Mystical Poetry,” 172-174. For bird imagery in the Persian poetic tradition more generally, see Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (The University of North Carolina Press: 1992), 177-190.

<sup>224</sup> For this approach to allegory, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 337-343; Walbridge, *Leaven of the Ancients*, 111-112.

<sup>225</sup> MS Pockocke 320, 7a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 6. See below for an English translation – Appendix C, p.436-437. Already in the preamble, Tanḥum echoes *Risālat al-ṭayr*: “It remembers who it once was, but had forgotten. And it despises that to which it had become accustomed

Gutas has argued in connection with Avicennan allegory (and in some contradistinction with Avicennan/Sufi-inspired Suhrawardian allegory) that one can decode the narratives quite clearly into their philosophical components or denotata.<sup>226</sup> Indeed, Tanḥum virtually invites us to do so by presenting a semi-allegorical preamble to the bird narrative. When we pay close attention to the language of Tanḥum’s allegory, we may note his use both of philosophical terminology and figurative terminology that he decodes for the reader elsewhere. The dove – representing the human rational soul, as Tanḥum states repeatedly<sup>227</sup> – associates with the crow, acquiring the latter’s attributes (*wa-khālaṭat|hu fa-’ktasaba rīshuhā iswidād min ṣifātihā*). The black, crude and gluttonous crow represents the corporeal faculties.<sup>228</sup> The peacock’s gleam (*ishrāq*), of which the dove’s adornment’s sheen is a trace (*athar*), alerts her to the peacock’s role as the cause (*sabab*) of her perfection (*kamāluhā*), and recalls the role of the Active Intellect as the cause of the human intellect.<sup>229</sup> The etymological connection between the ornament (*taṭwīs*) and the peacock (*tāwūs*) further highlights this causal relationship. The repeated references to conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the peacock clearly recall the psychological and soteriological sense of the term, and the vocabulary of desire and eros (*injidhāb*, *maḥabba*, *shawq*) carries strong

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(*tadhakkarat mā kānat nasiyat|hu wa-karihat mā alifāt|hu*.” (MS Pococke 320, 8b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 9.) Compare Ibn Sīnā: “And they made me remember what I had been made to forget, and made loathsome that to which I had grown accustomed (*wa-dhakkaratnī mā kuntu unsiyatuhu wa-naghghaṣat ‘alā mā aliftuhu*.” (Translation from Heath, “Disorientation and Reorientation,” 165, paragraph 12; Arabic in Mehren, *Traitées Mystiques*, fasc. 2, 44.)

<sup>226</sup> Gutas, *Avicenna*, 337-346; cf. Heath, “Disorientation and Reorientation.”

<sup>227</sup> For example, see the comments in his commentary to Jonah, translated above, p.126-127.

<sup>228</sup> See MS Pococke 320, 13a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 14; translated above, p.321. Cf. also Tanḥum’s commentary to Jonah, in Shy, *Perush*, 136-137.

<sup>229</sup> For the Active Intellect as the cause of the actualized human intellect according to al-Fārābī and Ibn Rushd, and of human thought according to Ibn Sīnā, see in general Davidson, *On Intellect*, and in particular 29-30. For Ibn Sīnā’s views in particular, see *ibid.*, 74-126. For the human soul’s retention of the luminosity of the intellectual realms, even as that gleam is masked through the successive stages of emanation, see *Kitāb ma’ānī al-naḥs* – in Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 70-75; discussion in Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 110-111. Cf. also Tanḥum’s reference to “the angel entrusted with the guidance of the rational soul (*al-malak al-mutawallī hidāyat al-naḥs al-nāṭiqa*)” (Shy, *Perush*, 133), which appears to be a reference to the Active Intellect (see above, p.134).

associations from the philosophical and Sufi traditions.<sup>230</sup> While she is infatuated with the crow, the dove does not “look above herself (*tanḍuru* [sic] *min fawqihā*)”, an apparent reference to speculation (*naẓar*) concerning that which is noble and pure, e.g., the celestial world or metaphysics.<sup>231</sup> Even the dove’s gradual motion away from the crow recalls Tanḥum’s advice not to ignore the needs of the corporeal faculties, but to merely provide for their needs and ensure that the rational soul guides them rather than the reverse.<sup>232</sup>

The philosophical valence of the dove’s loss of her beautiful finery as a result of her association with the crow, and of the mysterious ornament that alerts her to her affinity with the peacock, is somewhat harder to determine. The loss of metaphorical finery as a result of human carnality recalls older mythological motifs, such as Adam and Eve’s loss of their glorious robes of light upon sinning – a narrative transmitted in the Syriac tradition.<sup>233</sup> Although there is a suggestive parallel to this motif in Genesis Rabbah, where Adam and Eve are given robes of light rather

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<sup>230</sup> For *injidhāb/jadhāb/jadhba*, see above, p.318 and fn. 171. For al-Qushayri’s treatment of *maḥabba*, see Knysh, *Al-Qushayri’s Epistle*, 325-335; for his treatment of *shawq*, see *ibid.*, 335-339. For Judeo-Arabic terminology of love, and its relation to different modes of Islamic discourse, see Harvey, “Meaning of Terms Designating Love.”

<sup>231</sup> Cf. MS Poccocke 320, 14a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 15. Here, Tanḥum states that Song 1:8 exhorts the soul to contemplate lofty things, beginning with the heavenly spheres and progressing beyond them to things without any bodily form. This passage describes a progression from the contemplation of the sublunar material world (mainly the impression of higher modes of existence upon it) to the contemplation of ever loftier subject matter. Alternatively, this could be an allusion to Ibn Sīnā’s account of the attainment of the acquired intellect, and hence the direct emanation of intelligible forms into the mind, versus conceptualization of impressions retained by the imagination. Ibn Sīnā states that “the former is looking above, and this [latter case] is looking below (*fa-’l-awwal naẓar ilā fawq wa-hādhā naẓar ilā asfal*).” (See Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna’s De Anima (Arabic Text): Being the Psychological Part of Kitāb al-Shifā’* [Oxford University Press: 1959], 248.)

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Tanḥum’s account of the soul’s adjuration of the corporeal faculties to permit temporary conjunction with the Active Intellect for as long as possible, despite its knowledge that she must continue to provide for them until the natural death of the body. (MS Poccocke 320, 21b; *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 24; translated below, p.343.) Cf. also Tanḥum’s allegorical commentary to Jonah in Shy, *Perush*, 136-137. Along similar lines, in his commentary on Qohelet 7:18: “He stated: *For one who fears God will do one’s duty by both (yetze et kullam)*. (Qoh. 7:18) As the Ancients (*al-awā’il*) say, *he fulfilled his duty (yatza yede ḥobato)*. Meaning that God created these creatures for some purpose and necessary benefits, [...] so the virtuous individual follows the divine will, and does not abandon any of [God’s] creations to the point that they are willfully destroyed or squandered, since it is incumbent upon [a person] to obey His ordinances and to accept his commandments. But one who has done such a thing has deviated from the obligation that God has enjoined him to fulfil.” (MS Poccocke 320, 139a; Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 73.)

<sup>233</sup> See Sebastian Brock, “Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30:2 (1979), 221-223.

than hide following their sin, the narrative of the *loss* of the radiant garment upon sinning would not be echoed in Jewish sources until its emergence in the Zohar.<sup>234</sup> Sebastian Brock has drawn a link between this motif and Ishtar’s loss of her divine robe during her descent into the underworld.<sup>235</sup> This motif is further echoed in Islamic sources,<sup>236</sup> and may also be reflected in the account of the luminous soul’s progressive dimming as it descends through successive realms in *Kitāb ma‘ānī al-nafs*.<sup>237</sup> Tanḥum’s account in this context is highly reminiscent of these sources, recalling the fall of the initially perfect human being into carnality and corruption.

I would suggest that the dove’s ornament represents one of two alternatives: The impression of higher worlds upon the substance of the soul; or the attainment of virtue.<sup>238</sup> In the first case, the allegory would once again echo the account in *Ma‘ānī al-nafs*, where the soul retains an impression of the realms that it traverses in the course of its emanation.<sup>239</sup> However, this does not sit well in the narrative, where the loss of finery and the retention of the ornament appear as two distinct motifs. I am thus inclined towards the second possibility. The viability of this reading is

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<sup>234</sup> For the version of Genesis 3:21 ascribed to Rabbi Meir’s personal scroll, which substituted *garments of light* (*kotnot or*) for *garments of skin* (*kotnot ‘or*), see Genesis Rabbah 20:12. For the passage in the Zohar, see Zohar 229b (translation in Matt, *Zohar*, vol. 1, 230). Where the earlier rabbinic source merely suggests an alternative reading – albeit one with mythical resonance – the Zohar harmonizes both versions into a coherent narrative of sinning and fall. Whereas before sinning, Adam and Eve were clothed in robes of light, after eating of the forbidden fruit their garments are of skin. (The Zohar here also integrates an interpretation from the Babylonian Talmud, *Soṭah* 14a, where *garments of skin* is interpreted to mean “something from which the skin derives benefit [*dabar she-ha-‘or neheneh mimmennu*].”) For the afterlife of this motif in the kabbalistic teachings of Isaac Luria (16<sup>th</sup> century), see Shaul Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbalah* (Indiana University Press: 2008), 50-51.

<sup>235</sup> Brock, “Jewish Traditions,” 222. For the possibility of the Ishtar narrative as a motif echoed in later Jewish and Gnostic traditions, see Edwin M. Yamauchi, “The Descent of Ishtar, the Fall of Sophia, and the Jewish Roots of Gnosticism,” in *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978), 143-175.

<sup>236</sup> For Ibn Kathīr’s opinion that Adam and Eve were clothed in light in the Garden of Eden, see Brannon Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (The University of Chicago Press: 2006), 57, 178 n.33. Cf. the account of the soul’s concealed luminosity in the Brethren of Purity, discussed in Tanenbaum, *Contemplative Soul*, 142.

<sup>237</sup> See chapters 16-17, in Goldziher, *Ma‘ānī al-nafs*, 53-60; Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 70-78; Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 110-111. Cf. also the verses of the final *maqāma* of Judah al-Ḥarīzī’s *Taḥkemoni* (eds. Yahalom and Katsumata, 559-560), in which the author describes the death of the body as removal of a garment, the donning of finery, and the return to a radiant state of freedom.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. the account in *Ma‘ānī al-nafs*, in Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 70-75; discussed in Husik, *History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, 110-111.

<sup>239</sup> See Goldziher, *Ma‘ānī al-nafs*, 57-60; Broydé, *Torot ha-nefesh*, 75-78.

increased by the occurrence of a similar motif in medieval Iberian Hebrew poetry, which Adena Tanenbaum has convincingly identified as a figure representing ethical virtue.<sup>240</sup> This observation carries further weight in our case, when we consider Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s interpretation of the jewelry of Song 1:10 as the attainment of intellectual and ethical virtue (*husn al-‘ilm wa-’l-‘amal*).<sup>241</sup>

We have already seen that the tastes, scents, and vistas perceived by the dove are best identified as the direct but limited experience of the intellectual realm itself that may be attained by the philosophical and spiritual adept.<sup>242</sup> Finally, enduring union, and the attainment of “lasting happiness, and the illumination with which there is no darkness, and the presence after which there is no absence,” represents the liberation of the soul from the body upon death.<sup>243</sup>

Like Ibn Sīnā’s *Risālat al-ṭayr*, Tanḥum’s allegory is concerned with the tension between the intellectual and carnal aspects of the human being, and depicts the soul’s transcendence of carnality and its release from the bonds of the flesh.<sup>244</sup> In Ibn Sīnā’s allegory, the narrator forgets his true nature while trapped in a snare, and is reminded of his former state only when he sees other birds who had freed themselves and were about to take flight;<sup>245</sup> similarly, in Tanḥum’s allegory the dove forgets her origins and must be reminded of her true nature in order to set off on her journey towards the peacock. As in Tanḥum’s preamble to the allegory, in *Risālat al-ṭayr* the figure of lush vistas and delightful scents and fragrances features prominently.<sup>246</sup> However, Tanḥum’s allegory differs from that of Ibn Sīnā in important ways. While in *Risālat al-ṭayr* the beautiful vistas function as a distraction for the soul on its journey to the king, for Tanḥum they

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<sup>240</sup> Tanenbaum, *Contemplative Soul*, 132-145.

<sup>241</sup> Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 54-55; discussed in Tanenbaum, *Contemplative Soul*, 138.

<sup>242</sup> See above, pp.272-276, p.325.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. the passage from Tanḥum’s commentary to Jonh, translated above, p.150, and subsequent discussion.

<sup>244</sup> Corbin, *The Visionary Recital*, 187-188.

<sup>245</sup> Corbin, *The Visionary Recital*, 188.

<sup>246</sup> See Corbin, *The Visionary Recital*, 190.

remind the soul of its origins and grant it some taste of its homeland; where the narrator in *Risālat al-ṭayr* is trapped, the Tanḥum's dove is seduced; where an external catalyst is required to remind the narrator in *Risālat al-ṭayr* (a flock of free birds) of his true nature, the dove in Tanḥum's allegory attains this knowledge through contemplation of herself (or more specifically, an ornament upon herself).<sup>247</sup> In short, Tanḥum appropriates several elements from Ibn Sīnā's allegory, but reframes them in order to fit his own psychological and soteriological program.

Tanḥum's description of the crow closely echoes Ibn Sīnā's account of the narrator's slothful companion in *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, and points towards his reliance on the latter.<sup>248</sup> Concerning this figure, the sage Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān states that "nothing can fill his belly but the earth; nothing satisfies his appetite but sand (*lā yamla 'u baṭnahu illā al-turāb wa-lā yasuddu gharathahu illā al-raghām*)."<sup>249</sup> Similarly, Tanḥum's crow "ate in the dirt and occupied himself with illusory matters (*ya 'kulu fī turāb wa-yashtaghīlu bi-ashghāl tuḥākī al-sarāb*)."<sup>250</sup> More tellingly, the crow also *eats* dirt: The dove "had been pleased to eat of the dirt from which [the crow had derived] his nourishment (*raḍiyat bi-'l-ighṭidhā' ma 'ahu min al-turāb alladhī kāna minhu ghidhā'uhu*)."<sup>250</sup> However, the basic tension in Tanḥum's allegory is not between the different faculties of the soul, as it is in *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* (and several related passages in Tanḥum).<sup>250</sup> Rather, in his bird allegory, Tanḥum alludes primarily to the more basic tension between the corporeal and rational elements of the human soul, and more broadly, to the place of the human soul within his

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<sup>247</sup> Although Tanḥum's bird allegory frames the matter in this way, there are passages in which he articulates a more straightforward account of autognosis. See his commentary to Song 1:8 (in MS Pococke 320, 14a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 15), and his second commentary to Song 6:12 (in MS Pococke 320, 59b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 71). See discussion in Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 153.

<sup>248</sup> However, contrast Tanḥum's negative portrayal of the crow with Ibn al-'Arabī's depiction of Universal Body as a crow in his own bird allegory, entitled *Risālat al-ittiḥād al-kawnī* (Epistle on Unification). In the latter, the crow articulates Ibn al-'Arabī's defense of the corporeal as an aspect and disclosing agent of the Divine. For a translation of the passage, see Jaffray, *The Universal Tree and the Four Birds*, 47-49; for the Arabic, see *ibid.*, 18-19 (Arabic side).

<sup>249</sup> Translation with changes from Corbin, *The Visionary Recital*, 139; Mehren, *Traité Mystiques*, fasc. 1, 5.

<sup>250</sup> See above, pp.230-232, p.239-240, p.249-250.

emanationist cosmology – a message more closely aligned with Ibn Sīnā’s *Risālat al-ṭayr*. According to Tanḥum, the human soul is like a barrier or isthmus (*barzakh*) set between two seas – between the sublunar, material world and the intellectual realm.<sup>251</sup> The emanated human intellect is now embodied, and it may either become further enmeshed in matter – which will lead to its ultimate perdition with the death of the body – or it may assert its independence and properly govern the other faculties, enabling it to attain various levels of conjunction with the Active Intellect, and ultimately to attain union with the latter when the body perishes.<sup>252</sup> Indeed, this may explain Tanḥum’s account of the dove’s *seduction* rather than entrapment – emphasizing the volitional aspect in one’s engagement with the material versus the intellectual.<sup>253</sup>

Certain features of Tanḥum’s bird allegory are harder to explain, most notably the apparent echoes in this narrative of non-Arabic literary motifs. The crow appears as a representation of the material world, or of desire for the material world, in Rumi’s *Mathnāwī*.<sup>254</sup> While the hoopoe (*hudhud*) classically stands in the role of the spiritual guide in the Islamic poetic and mystical tradition,<sup>255</sup> the peacock is a considerably more complicated figure to unpack. The peacock is regarded as a solar symbol in ancient Indian and Egyptian sources, and its presence in many depictions in both of those contexts in association with the source or tree of life implies its

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<sup>251</sup> See MS Pococke 320, 59b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 71.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. above, p.143-144, p.151-152; and below, p.353-354, p.359.

<sup>253</sup> For the normative and ethical dimensions of the soul’s descent into the body, see Tanenbaum, *Contemplative Soul*, 132-145.

<sup>254</sup> See the passage translated in A. J. Arberry, *More Tales from the Masnavi* (George Allen and Unwin: 1963), 102.

<sup>255</sup> For the hoopoe as the intermediary between Sulaymān and the land of Sabā’ in the Qur’ān, see Sūrat al-Naml (27) vv. 20ff. The most famous example of the hoopoe as a spiritual guide and bringer of *ma’rifa* may be found in Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*; see Asani, “Birds in Islamic Mystical Poetry,” 174. For the hoopoe as the bringer of good tidings, see Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, 75; for the hoopoe as the guide to the Beloved, see *ibid.*, 179, 184, 189. For the hoopoe as a figure for the faculty of inspiration (*ilhām*) in the allegories of al-Suhrawardī, see Thackston, *Mystical and Visionary Treatises*, 102-103, n. n and w.

association with immortality.<sup>256</sup> One occasionally encounters the peacock in the role of a soul-bird in Persian literature.<sup>257</sup> Particularly notable is al-Suhrawardī's depiction of the human soul as a peacock imprisoned by the king in a coarse and dark leather case. Al-Suhrawardī employs Ibn Sīnā's motif of the bird forgetting its true nature, and one of the catalysts for the peacock's yearning for its forgotten homeland are the sweet fragrances of the garden and the songs of its fellow peacocks.<sup>258</sup> The association of the peacock with luminosity may also echo Persian sources.<sup>259</sup> Most peculiar in its similarity is the Yezidi figure of the Peacock Angel (*malak t̄awūs*), who represents the Divine as it interacts with the world.<sup>260</sup> Although the Yezidi formulation ascribes to this figure the greatest centrality, the peacock as some kind of angelic, divine, or demonic figure is widely attested in those traditions that draw on Old Iranian and Mesopotamian culture.<sup>261</sup> Whether and how Tanḥum became aware of such traditions is a difficult puzzle to solve. Assuming that his knowledge of Persian was extremely limited or non-existent, there is a possibility that he was aware of translations or accounts in Arabic. Alternatively, it is possible that he encountered such traditions orally, particularly among Sufis.<sup>262</sup> Finally, there is the possibility that Tanḥum's depiction of the Active Intellect as a

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<sup>256</sup> See Garnik Asatrian and Victoria Arakelova, "Malak-Tāwūs: The Peacock Angel of the Yezidis," in *Iran and the Caucasus* 7:1-2 (2003), 24.

<sup>257</sup> See Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, 183-184.

<sup>258</sup> Thackston, *Mystical and Visionary Treatises*, 83-85.

<sup>259</sup> In his *Iskandarnāma*, Niẓāmī (d.1209) compares the peacock to the sun; see Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, 396, n. 36.

<sup>260</sup> See Asatrian and Arakelova, "Malak-Tāwūs." For the Yezidis in general, their origins and history, see P. G. Kreyenbroek, "Yazīdī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 11, ed. P. J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Brill: 2002), 313-316; Philip G. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances, and Textual Tradition* (The Edwin Mellen Press: 1995); Garnik Asatrian and Victoria Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel: The Yezidis and their Spirit World* (Acumen Publishing: 2014).

<sup>261</sup> Asatrian and Arakelova, "Malak-Tāwūs," 22-33, 35-36.

<sup>262</sup> For the likelihood that Tanḥum was familiar with Sufi oral traditions, see below, p.350-351.

peacock was primarily motivated by that bird's association with beauty, and that the close parallel between certain Persian sources and Tanḥum's allegory is coincidental.<sup>263</sup>

The one distinctly Maimonidean element of Tanḥum's allegory is his description of the dove's adoption of the peacock's attributes (*ṣifāt*) and her imitation (*tashabbuh*) of him. The concept of the philosophical life as a means of *imitatio dei* (*tashabbuh bi-'llāh/ bi-'l-bāri'*) is well attested in Islamic philosophical sources.<sup>264</sup> In a Jewish context, the notion of imitating or likening oneself (*tashabbuh*) to the divine attributes as depicted in Scripture takes on particular significance in the works of Maimonides. In his *Sefer ha-mitzvot* (Book of Commandments), he defines the eighth positive commandment as “that which we were commanded, concerning assimilation [or likening ourselves] to him according to our ability (*alladhī umirnā bi-'l-tashabbuh bihi bi-ḥasab ṭāqatinā*).”<sup>265</sup> Maimonides grounds this commandment in Deuteronomy 28:9 (as well as a similar formulation from Exodus 11:22): *And walk in his ways*.<sup>266</sup> In the *Mishneh torah*, Maimonides interprets the same verse/commandment as a call to ethical cultivation, and goes on to write as follows:

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<sup>263</sup> For the peacock's association with beauty, especially that of the beloved, see Schimmel, *Two Colored Brocade*, 184, and 396 n. 36. This may sit in the background to Suhrawardī's use of the image of the peacock encased in coarse leather; see p. 336 above.

<sup>264</sup> See Lawrence V. Berman, “The Political Interpretation of the Maxim: The Purpose of Philosophy is the Imitation of God,” in *Studia Islamica* 15 (1961), 53-61; Wilensky, “Isaac Ibn Latīf – Philosopher or Kabbalist?” 190-191. For this concept in al-Fārābī, see *Alfārābīs philosophische Abhandlungen*, ed. F. Dieterici (Leiden: 1890), 53, line 15. For the concept in the Brethren of Purity, see William C. Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy: The Quest for Self-Knowledge in the Teachings of Afdal al-Dīn Kāshānī* (Oxford University Press: 2001), 72-74. Note in particular the association of *tashabbuh* with the internalization of ethical virtues in the Brethren of Purity, in *ibid.*, 73.

<sup>265</sup> *Sefer ha-mitzvot le-rabbenu mosheh ben maymon*, ed. Joseph Qafīḥ (Mossad Harav Kook: 1971), 62.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Maimonides' enumeration of the commandments in his introduction to the *Mishneh torah*, positive commandment #8. Maimonides' interpretation of this verse appears to be based on a passage in *Tanna de-be eliyahu*: “... and walk in His ways (Deut. 28:9) – in the ways of Heaven [i.e., in the ways of God]. Just as [it is in] the ways of Heaven [to be] compassionate and merciful to the wicked and receive them through repentance, so shall you be merciful to one another.” See *Seder eliyahu rabbah ve-seder eliyahu zuṭa ha-muba'im be-shem tanna de-be eliyahu*, ed. Meir Ish-Shalom (Vienna: 1902), 135.

And so did they learn concerning the explanation of this commandment:<sup>267</sup> “Just as He is called Gracious, you be gracious; just as He is called Compassionate, you be compassionate; just as He is called Holy, you be holy.”<sup>268</sup> And in this fashion did the prophets apply the various epithets to God: Slow to Anger, Abundant in Kindness, Righteous and Upright, Perfect, Mighty and Strong, and so on – in order to instruct [us] that these are good and upright ways and that one must conduct oneself in them, and imitate (*u-lehiddamot*) these [paths] to the greatest of one’s ability.<sup>269</sup>

Reformulating classical rabbinic sources, Maimonides describes ethical cultivation in terms of *imitatio dei*, employing cognate terminology in Hebrew and Arabic.<sup>270</sup> According to Maimonides, the purpose of biblical accounts of divine attributes is not to *describe God* – a project that Maimonides utterly rejects<sup>271</sup> – but to inform human behavior.<sup>272</sup> Maimonides thus views such accounts in consequentialist terms: They lead human beings to cultivate positive dispositions and to live in moderation. The biblical accounts of divine modes of behavior thus carry normative value for Maimonides, expressed in the ethical cultivation of the individual.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> I.e., the commandment mentioned in the previous clause (*halakhah*).

<sup>268</sup> See fn. 270 below for the rabbinic sources of this formulation.

<sup>269</sup> *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Dispositions, 1:6.

<sup>270</sup> In *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma‘el*, Tractate *Shirta* (3), the following interpretation of the unusual Hebrew lexeme *ve-anvehu* in Ex. 15:2 is ascribed to Abba Shaul: “Become alike unto Him {*na demeh lo*; variants include *edmeh/eddameh lo*, and *hiddameh lo* – RD}. Just as He is gracious, you be gracious; just as He is compassionate, you be compassionate.” For text and translation, see Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Tractate Shirata III, 185, lines 43-44, and variants; cf. parallel in Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 133b, where the standard (Vilna) text reads *heve domeh lo* (“be like him”). Based on Maimonides’ use of the reflexive *u-lehiddamot*, I suspect that his version of this interpretation read *hiddameh* – forming a felicitous parallel to the reflexive *tashabbuh* in Arabic. Although the rabbinic sources evoke Genesis 1:26-27 in their use of the root *d-m-h*, Maimonides draws a sharp distinction between *imago dei* (which he identifies with the capacity for intellectual apprehension in *Guide* I.1) and *imitatio dei* (which he frames as a commandment based on Deut. 28:9, as discussed above). In the *Mekhilta* and the Talmud, the subtle implication is that *imitatio dei* enables the full realization of *imago dei*. This approach would be picked up and developed in later sources, perhaps most strikingly by the kabbalist Moses Cordovero (d.1570). For his concept that the cultivation of divine modes of behavior and dispositions constitutes the fullest realization of *imago dei*, see Tomer Deborah, ed. Nisan Vaksman (Shoshanim: 1960), 3.

<sup>271</sup> For example, see *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 1:5-12; *Guide* I.54-60 (Pines, 123-143).

<sup>272</sup> As well as to negate incorrect theological views. See *Guide* I.47 (Pines, 104-106).

<sup>273</sup> See *Guide* I.54 (Pines, 123-128).

A second, related context in which Maimonides develops his conception of *imitatio dei* is in his discussions of wise governance. In *Guide* III:54, he rejects the position that divine providence does not extend to the sublunar world, before writing as follows:

Rather is it as has been made clear to us by the Master of those who know:<sup>274</sup> *That the earth is the Lord's.* (Ex. 9:29) He means to say that His providence also extends over the earth in the way that corresponds to what the latter is, just as His providence extends over the heavens in the way that corresponds to what they are. This is what he says: *That I am the Lord who exercise long-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth.* (Jer. 9:23) Then he completes the notion by saying: *For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.* (*ibid.*) He means that it is My purpose that there should come from you *loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment in the earth* in the way that we have explained with regard to the *thirteen attributes*:<sup>275</sup> namely, that the purpose should be assimilation to them (*al-tashabbuh bi-hā*) and that this should be our way of life. Thus the end that he sets forth in this *verse* may be stated as follows: It is clear that the perfection of man that may truly be gloried in is the one acquired by him who has achieved, in a measure corresponding to his capacity, apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, and who knows His providence extending over His creatures as manifested in the act of bringing them into being and in their governance as it is (*fī t̄jādihā wa-tadbīrihā kayfa huwa*). The way of life of such an individual, after he has achieved this apprehension, will always have in view *loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment*, through assimilation to His actions (*tashabbuhan bi-af'ālihi*), may He be exalted, just as we have explained several times in this Treatise.<sup>276</sup>

This passage provides a bridge between the ethical and political aspects of *imitatio dei*. Twice in this passage, Maimonides mentions “assimilation” (*tashabbuh*) to the divine attributes. In this

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<sup>274</sup> Arabic: *sayyid al-‘ālimīn*; i.e., Moses. Cf. *Guide* I.54 (Pines, 123)

<sup>275</sup> This is the traditional rabbinic name for the divine epithets listed in Exodus 34:6-7. On them, see *Guide* I.54 (Pines, 124-128).

<sup>276</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 637. Arabic in Munk, *Dalālat al-hā'irīn*, 470 line 24 – 471 line 7.

passage, there is a distinctly political element: The Arabic term *tadbīr*, used in this passage, has unmistakable political implications.<sup>277</sup> In its post-theoretical stage, human political activity in these modes mirrors – and is an extension of – the deity’s governance of the world.<sup>278</sup>

In the Maimonidean view, there are thus two categories of *tashabbuh*: One that precedes theoretical study, and one that emerges as the result of the entire project of ethical and intellectual cultivation. Against the background of Maimonides’ discussion, we may now see how closely Tanḥum’s description to the dove’s imitation (*tashabbuh*) of the peacock recalls the Maimonidean conception of *imitatio dei* as an ideal of ethical development, and as an outcome of moral and intellectual cultivation of the self.

Our final point of reflection regarding Tanḥum’s bird allegory focuses on his basic choice of allegory in the Avicennan mode as a suitable means by which to convey philosophical insights. As is so often the case, it is helpful to view Tanḥum against the background of Maimonides. Maimonides applied his hermeneutical dualism quite narrowly, in order to interpret passages that he identifies as prophetic parables.<sup>279</sup> Following al-Fārābī’s account of religion,<sup>280</sup> Maimonides

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<sup>277</sup> Cf. The discussions of “governance of the city (*tadbīr al-madīna*), and governance of the great nation or the nations (*tadbīr al-umma al-kabīra aw al-umam*). English in Israel Efros (ed. and trans.) in *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic (Maqāla fī-ṣinā’at al-manṭiḳ)*: *The Original Arabic and Three Hebrew Translations* (American Academy for Jewish Research: 1938), 62-64. Arabic in Efros, “Maqāla,” 82; and Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-manṭiḳ*,” 109.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. Haim (Howard) Kreisel, “Maimonides’ Political Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. Kenneth Seeskin (Cambridge University Press: 2005), 195, 208; Kreisel, *Maimonides’ Political Thought* (State University of New York Press: 1999), 125-158; Abraham Melamed, *The Philosopher-King in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Political Thought* (State University of New York Press: 2003), 35-40, 48-49; and cf. Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection*, 8. For the homology between the human organism and the cosmos, and for the human mind occupying the role of the deity in this scheme, see *Guide* I.72 (Pines, 184, 190-191).

<sup>279</sup> See above, p.64-65, p.78, p.124-125.

<sup>280</sup> See *Alfarabi: The Political Writings (“Selected Aphorisms” and Other Texts)*, trans. Charles Butterworth (Cornell University Press: 2001), 94-97, sections 2-5, particularly section 4. In *The Opinions of the Virtuous City*, al-Fārābī discusses the place of religion in the virtuous city as follows: “The philosophers (*ḥukamā’*) in the city are those who know these things {including physics, metaphysics, cosmology, prophetology, the qualities of the virtuous city which facilitates the attainment of intellectual and spiritual felicity, and the wicked city that renders felicity impossible - RD} through strict demonstration and their own insight; those who are close to the philosophers know them as they really are through the insight of the philosophers, following them, assenting to their views and trusting them. But others know them through symbols which reproduce them by imitation, because neither nature nor habit has provided their minds with the gift to understand them as they are. Both are kinds of knowledge

understood such passages as symbolic representations of philosophical truths.<sup>281</sup> In discussing matters that have been regarded as the esoteric sciences in rabbinic tradition, which he identified with the philosophical sciences,<sup>282</sup> Maimonides must find a way to communicate esoterically.<sup>283</sup> That is to say that he must find a way to disclose the truth to the most insightful and devoted reader, while concealing it from those readers who are unprepared for the truth. In such cases, subtle ambiguities and contradictions alert the reader to the true message being communicated.<sup>284</sup> In contrast with Maimonides, we may recall Tanḥum's account of the "very unusual philosophical method (*maslak hikmī gharīb jiddan*)" that Solomon adopted in composing the verses of Qohelet 9:7-10.<sup>285</sup> This is the method of philosophical multivocality, the ability to construct a discourse with distinct strata of meaning that might be read in different ways by readers of varying sophistication. In support of this point, Tanḥum cites Proverbs 25:11 – a verse that Maimonides connects to his dualistic understanding of prophetic symbolism.<sup>286</sup> However, where Maimonides limited the concept of multivalent or symbolic speech to prophetic parables, Tanḥum applies it more broadly. According to Tanḥum, Solomon himself employs multivalent speech in his wise discourse, tailoring one stratum of meaning to the more sophisticated reader and another to the simpleton or novice.<sup>287</sup> It seems to me that Tanḥum's choice of a bird allegory to introduce his commentary on the Song of Songs is no mere coincidence. For Tanḥum, allegory in the Avicennan mode was the preferred method of conveying philosophical insights to a broad

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(*ma'rifatān*), but the knowledge of the philosophers is undoubtedly more excellent. [...] But what is best known often varies among nations, either most of it or part of it. Hence these things are expressed for each nation in symbols other than those used for another nation. Therefore it is possible that excellent nations and excellent cities exist whose religions differ, although they all have as their goal one and the same felicity." (Text and translation in Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 278-281.)

<sup>281</sup> Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 134.

<sup>282</sup> See above, p.209-210.

<sup>283</sup> Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 8-9.

<sup>284</sup> See Maimonides' introduction to the *Guide* (Pines, 18, 20).

<sup>285</sup> See above, p.262.

<sup>286</sup> See his introduction to the *Guide* (Pines, 11-12)

<sup>287</sup> See above, p.267.

readership, particularly those of psychological or soteriological import. Maimonides found a precedent for his esoteric method in the Book of Job;<sup>288</sup> Tanḥum followed his understanding of the figure of Solomon in his preference for allegory. This choice was enabled by Tanḥum's profound engagement with the Avicennan tradition.

### The three spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) of the soul

The final verse that Tanḥum interprets before switching formats to two consecutive commentaries is Song 2:7. This is the first of the three adjurations of the Daughters of Jerusalem (Song 2:7, 3:5, 8:4) that Tanḥum regards as significant,<sup>289</sup> and it affords him an opportunity to present his overall division of the Song of Songs, reflecting as it does the tripartite structure of the soul's path back towards the Divine.<sup>290</sup> He writes as follows:

... love until it desires. (Song 2:7)

The meaning of this is that, since she described the intensification of [her] desire and the greatness of [her] love (*shiddat al-shawq wa-'aẓīm al-maḥabba*) and immersion in this delight

<sup>288</sup> *Guide* III.23 (Pines, 495).

<sup>289</sup> For the rabbinic understanding of these verses as constitutive of three distinct oaths, see the Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 111a. A fourth verse with a very similar formulation appears in Song 5:8. However, due to the significant difference in the second half of the verse, and in keeping with the rabbinic understanding of these verses as a tripartite adjuration, Tanḥum leaves it out of the scheme. (Cf. Ibn 'Aqñin cites a version from Song Rabbah to Song 2:7, referring to four oaths; Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 78-81.) Tanḥum also ascribes meaning to the repetition of the verse in the historical stratum of his commentary to Qoh. 8:4: "It is after the fashion of a commandment (*al-waṣīyya*) that – while they are in exile and under the authority of another – they will not need to resort to motions or actions before the time is right, lest they bring harm or destruction upon themselves through that which they thought would bring welfare and relief. For when the Divine Will manifests and the time comes, and the period [of exile] ends, they will require no movement of their own, nor to manage [things] strategically... This verse is repeated three times in this *book* for the sake of emphasis, and also parallel to the three *exiles* which befell Israel: *The exile of Egypt, the exile of Babylon*, and this general and extended *exile* – may God show us its termination soon." (MS Pococke 320, 32a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 36-37.) Cf. also his first commentary to Qoh. 3:4-5: "Since this is how things are, do not make any movement before its [proper] time..." (MS Pococke 320, 24a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 27.) This interpretation of the verse appears to be based on the same passage in the Babylonian Talmud (Ketubot 111a), where these three adjurations are interpreted as requiring that Israel (a) does not ascend *en masse* to the Land of Israel, and (b) does not rebel against the nations among whom they live; and that (c) those nations do not oppress Israel excessively (*yoter mi-day*).

<sup>290</sup> There is a suggestive parallel in a fragment of the commentary connected to Abraham he-Ḥasid's circle, which associates the attainment of the station (*maqām*) of conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the female speaker's adjuration of the Daughters of Jerusalem in Song 5:8. Fenton, "Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments," 50; translated in *ibid.*, 53.

that has no comparison or analogue to which it can be likened, and she mentioned the union and attachment to the Beloved (*al-ittiḥād wa-'l-talāzum bi-'l-maḥbūb*), to the point that she withdrew from material governance, it is as if she feared that the bodily faculties will naturally draw her along and restore her to their governance – which was the fundamental intention (*aṣl al-gharaḍ*) of the union – and they will deprive her of this delight, and bring her out of the intoxication (*al-nashwa*) that comes [to her] *in actu*. She therefore adjured each class of these faculties by that perfection with which she was endowed by the Giver of Forms so that they may give her respite, and not arouse her from her drunkenness (*wa-lā yunabbihūhā min sakratihā*), and not cut her off from her delight until the Divine Intention may bring it to pass (*ilā an ya'tī al-gharaḍ al-ilāhī bi-dhālik*). For her return to them is necessary, until the period that has been determined for the conjunction [between the body and soul] has come to an end completely naturally according to the mixture [of the humors], which determined that [she should] receive such faculties and such a form.

Such being the case, do not hasten my departure from my Beloved's presence, since this encounter has finally occurred (*alladhī qad ḥaṣala lī hādhā al-ijtimā'*). For until now, I did not have absolute faith that when I sought Him out I would find Him – so let me have my fill of Him, and do not deprive me of Him.

This, then, is the first of the soul's stations, and it is the first encounter (*fa-hādhā awwal maqām min maqāmāt al-naḥs wa-huwa awwal al-ijtimā'*). Concerning [this station] it is said, *May the Lord bless you and keep you.* (Num. 6:24) For the soul is still weak, and has not yet attained a firm and well-established disposition through which it might endure and not exit his presence again. So it requires protection (*ḥifẓ*) from God, and providential care (*wa-shumūl 'ināya*) that will protect it from the cunning and attraction of these faculties.

The second is a higher rank (*wa'-l-thāniya martaba a 'lā*),<sup>291</sup> in which it attains a divine light (*ḍiyā' rabbānī*) which confirms for her that which she had doubted in the beginning and safeguards her from the obstacles of those who would send her back by occupying her with delusions and imaginary things. It thus attains a greater steadiness and persistence than [in] the previous rank (*fa-yahşulu lahā al-istiqrār wa-'l-thabāt akthar min al-martaba al-mutaqaddima*). This is [the meaning of] the statement, *May the Lord cause His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.* (Num. 6:25)

After this is the rank of true certainty, and guaranteed security from destruction, and true union – after with there is no separation (*wa-ba'dahā martabat al-ḥaqīqa al-yaqīniyya wa-'l-salāma al-maḍmūna min kull 'aṭab wa-'l-ittiḥād al-ḥaqīqī alladhī lā iftirāq ba'dahā*). About this, Scripture states, *May the Lord favor you and grant you peace.*<sup>292</sup> (Num. 6:26)

Tanḥum first identifies the verse as an account of the soul's<sup>293</sup> adjuration of the bodily faculties by the form bestowed upon it by the Giver of Forms (*wāhib al-ṣuwar*), which typically refers to the Active Intellect in Avicennan terminology.<sup>294</sup> In identifying the Daughters of Jerusalem here with the bodily faculties, Tanḥum follows the precedent set by Ibn 'Aqnīn in his commentary to

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Zoref's translation (*Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 178) of this phrase into Hebrew as “a higher rank (*madregah gebahah yoter*)”, vocalizing the consonants מלפא as *a 'lā*. According to Zoref's reading, the noun (*martaba*) does not match the adjective in gender. (An alternative reading might be *martabat i 'lā* – “a rank of exaltation”.) However, that this is Tanḥum's intention appears most likely, based on the use of the same phrase in an expanded formulation in MS Pococke 320, 41a/Zoref, *ibid.*, vol. 2, 48: The soul “apprehends [each science] and progresses by means of it towards knowledge of the most lofty and simple and noble rank (*ilā ma 'rifat martaba a 'lā wa-absaṭ wa-ashraf*)...” Cf. Blau, *Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic*, 111, 307-308.

<sup>292</sup> MS Pococke 320, 21b-22a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 24.

<sup>293</sup> Contrast Ibn 'Aqnīn's identification of the speaker of this verse as the Active Intellect (Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 80-81).

<sup>294</sup> For *wāhib al-ṣuwar* as the Active Intellect, see Davidson, *On Intellect*, 79, 124; Jules L. Janssens, “The Notions of *Wāhib al-ṣuwar* (Giver of Forms) and *Wāhib al-'aql* (Bestower of Intelligence) in Ibn Sīnā,” in *Intellect et Imagination dans la Philosophie Médiévale*, eds. Maria Cândida Pacheco and José F. Meirinhos (Brepols: 2006), vol. 1, 551-562. For what appears to be a looser use of the term to refer to God in Judah Ha-Levi's *Kuzari* (4:25), see Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 176. In fact, there seems to be a precedent in Ibn Sīnā for applying this terminology to intellects other than the Active Intellect (although the latter produces the forms apparent in the sublunar realm) – see the metaphysics of the *Shifā'* 9:5, in *Avicenna: The Metaphysics of the Healing*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Brigham Young University Press: 2005), 335, paragraphs 3-4.

the same verse.<sup>295</sup> The three stations (*maqāmāt*) of the soul on its path towards union with the Beloved correspond with the three verses of the Priestly Blessing of Numbers 6:24-26. Tanḥum sets out the following scheme: The first station is characterized by a fervent prayer for safekeeping from the interference of the corporeal faculties, adjuring them to remain at bay for long enough to facilitate some encounter with the Beloved; the second entails the gracious bestowal of a divine illumination upon the intellect, presumably corresponding with the attainment of the acquired intellect (*al-‘aql al-mustafād*);<sup>296</sup> and the final stage is enduring union (*ittiḥād*) with the Beloved, presumably with the death of the body.<sup>297</sup> Of particular importance in clarifying this final point is Tanḥum’s statement that “her return to them is necessary, until the period that has been determined for the conjunction [between the body and soul] has come to an end completely naturally.” This makes it clear that the encounter with the Beloved is necessarily temporary while embodied; in contrast, lasting union only occurs with death. Once again, Tanḥum’s account bears the closest resemblance to Ibn Sīnā, who emphasizes the perfect and lasting conjunction of the soul with the Active Intellect upon death.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Tanḥum’s explicit identification (in MS Pockocke 320, 13a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 14) of the Daughters of Jerusalem with the “governing and comprehending faculties (*al-quwā al-mudabbira al-mudrika*)” – namely “cogitation, imagination, and memory (*al-fīkr wa-‘l-khayāl wa-‘l-dhīkr*)” – makes one suspect that by “corporeal faculties” he is referring to mental faculties, apart from the intellect itself. Indeed, Ibn Sīnā treats the rational faculty as distinct from all other faculties insofar as it does not acquire knowledge through a physical organ, and does not reside in the body. See Rahman, *Avicenna’s Psychology*, 50-54. See also Ibn Sīnā’s usage cited in Davidson, *On Intellect*, 104. For even the cogitative faculty as corporeal, and localized in the physical organ of the brain, see Davidson, *ibid.*, 98. Indeed, the five internal senses are to some degree localized – which is to say that they are embodied. (See Davidson, *ibid.*, 89.) It thus seems to me that Tanḥum is referring here to all mental faculties other than the intellect. The difference in emphasis – in one case identifying the Daughters of Jerusalem as being closer to the simplicity of the intellect, and in the other identifying them as a potential barrier to conjunction with the Beloved – may be a product of context. However, it is also quite possible that Tanḥum’s use here is broader, and that he includes the functions associated with the animal and vegetative souls. These are both possible readings of Ibn ‘Aqūn, who in this context identifies the Daughters of Jerusalem as “the faculties that serve the rational [soul] (*al-quwā al-khādima li-l-nāṭiqa*),” and emphasizes that all functions related to the soul (*al-quwā al-naṣiyya*) are located in the body. See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 80-81.

<sup>296</sup> For which, see above, p.186-187.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. above, p.144, p.152, p.275, p.335; and below, p.354.

<sup>298</sup> “When it is freed from the body and the body’s accidents, it can to conjoin with the Active Intellect in perfect conjunction. There, it finds intellectual beauty, and everlasting pleasure (*wa-‘l-ladhdha al-sarmadiyya*)...” Arabic in

Tanḥum’s interpretation pays close attention to the progression of the Priestly Blessing, and to the successive shifts in its language: “May the Lord bless you and *safeguard* you. May the Lord *cause His face to shine upon you*, and may He be gracious to you. May the Lord favor you, and grant you *peace*.” The final stage in Tanḥum’s scheme takes the Hebrew lexeme *shalom*, and links it to the Arabic *salāma* (security) – signaling the end of the path, and the ultimate attainment of the goal, i.e., subsistence of the human intellect in conjunction with, or within, the Active Intellect, with no threat of disruption.<sup>299</sup> The motion from safeguarding, through illumination, and finally to peace, is picked up by Tanḥum and read through the prism of his program of philosophical and spiritual cultivation. In reading the verses in this manner, Tanḥum also reframes a daily liturgical practice in compelling soteriological terms.<sup>300</sup>

Tanḥum now offers another framing of the threefold path, now in terms of spiritual journeying (*safar*):

Therefore, the scholars who are acquainted with these stations and know their ranks and purposes say (*wa-li-dhālik qālat al-fuḍalā’ al-muṭṭali’īn ‘alā hādhihi al-maḡāmāt al-‘ārifīn bi-marātibihā wa-ghāyatihā*): The journey (*al-safar*) may be divided into three parts – a journey to God (*safar ilā allāh*), which is asceticism and exercises and struggles (*wa-huwa al-zuhd wa-’l-riyāḍāt wa-’l-mujāhadāt*); a journey with God (*wa-safar ma’a allāh*), which is worship and fasting and constant seeking of God (*wa-huwa al-’ibāda wa-’l-ṣiyām wa-ṭalab allāh ‘alā al-dawām*); and a journey

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Rahman, *De Anima*, 248; cf. the partial English translation in Davidson, *On Intellect*, 110; and see discussion in *ibid.*, 109-110.

<sup>299</sup> For the likelihood of Tanḥum’s belief in the loss of individual selfhood upon death, see below, p.354.

<sup>300</sup> For Maimonides’ prescription of the daily recitation of the Priestly Blessing by members of the Aaronid priesthood (*kohanim*), see *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, 14:1. Cf. also *Siddur R. Saadja Gaon*, eds. I. Davidson, S. Assaf, and B. I. Joel (Mekize Nirdamim/Reuben Mass: 2000), 39; and Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta’anit 26b. Contemporary Jewish liturgical practice is diverse on this point. Even in those communities in which the *kohanim* do not bless the congregation daily, the prayer leader recites the Priestly Blessing in the repetition of Eighteen Benedictions (cf. Davidson *et al.*, *Siddur R. Saadja*, 42; *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, 15:10; Saadia and Maimonides assume that the Priestly Blessing is recited by the *kohanim* daily, and address a case in which none are available to recite it, but this is also the practice of communities in which the *kohanim* do not publicly recite the blessing daily).

within God (*wa-safar fī allāh*), which is the attainment and immersion in love of Him in pure knowledge (*wa-huwa al-wuṣūl wa-'l-istighrāq fī maḥabbatihi bi-maḥd al-'irfān*). No trace (*athar*) of any other beings (*sā'ir al-mawjūdāt*) remains in the soul, only of Him (praised is He), to the point that [the soul] disregards its own essence, and is not aware of its own existence, as a result of the sheer strength of its preoccupation with His love. This is true peace (*al-shalom al-ḥaqīqī*), which neither changes nor fades. *And may He grant you peace.* (Num. 6:26) Similarly, he stated concerning the final rank and the last of the stations (*nihāyat al-marātib wa-ākhir al-maqāmāt*): *Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace.* (Song 8:10)<sup>301</sup>

In the passage cited above, Tanḥum finds yet another expression of the soul's threefold path back to the Divine. A saying of certain scholars (*al-fuḍalā'*) who are familiar with the soul's stations (*maqāmāt*) posits the existence of three types of journey: The journey to God, the journey with God, and the journey in God. These three modes of journey correspond with “asceticism and exercises and struggles,” “worship and fasting and constant seeking of God,” and “the attainment and immersion in his love in pure knowledge” respectively. Tanḥum's adoption of the terminology of *maqāmāt* (stations) is significant. The *maqāmāt* of the spiritual seeker were treated extensively by al-Qushayri, who asserted that unlike other kinds of spiritual states, the *maqām* is attained through the efforts of the individual.<sup>302</sup> In his famous epistle on Sufism, al-Qushayrī presented an extensive list of these stations.<sup>303</sup> However, it seems likely that Tanḥum encountered this terminology primarily via its transmission in Ibn Sīnā's *Al-ishārāt wa-'l-tanbīhāt*, where the latter discusses “the stations of the knowers (*maqāmāt al-'ārifīn*).”<sup>304</sup> Ibn Sīnā begins this section by stating that “the knowers have stations and ranks by which they are distinguished while still alive in the temporal realm (*inna li-l-'ārifīn maqāmāt wa-darajāt*

<sup>301</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 22a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 24-25.

<sup>302</sup> Knysh, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle*, 77-78; Arabic in *Al-risāla al-qushayriyya*, 66-67.

<sup>303</sup> Knysh, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle*, 111-339.

<sup>304</sup> For an English translation of this lecture (*namaṭ*), see Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism*, 81-91.

*yukhaṣṣūna bihā wa-hum fī ḥayātihim al-dunyā*).<sup>305</sup> Without creating a clear scheme of *maqāmāt*, Ibn Sīnā presents a broad treatment of the progression of the “knower” (*‘arīf*), often expressed in vivid experiential and figurative terminology. It is considerably easier to explain Tanḥum’s free adoption of this terminology in an epistemological and soteriological context from Ibn Sīnā than an original Sufī context, particularly considering his familiarity with the *Ishārāt*.<sup>306</sup> In addition, that same section in the *Ishārāt* treats a number of themes that appear in our passage in Tanḥum’s commentary, including stations (*maqāmāt*), asceticism (*zuhd*), exercise (*riyāḍa*), direct knowledge (*‘irfān*), [intellectual] worship (*‘ibāda*), and arrival or union (*wuṣūl*).<sup>307</sup> Tanḥum does not exhibit clear or direct dependence on the text of this chapter on any single point, and the scheme that he presents differs significantly from Ibn Sīnā’s treatment, at least in form; however, it is certainly worth noting that we have in this section of the *Ishārāt* a cluster of themes and terminology that sit in the background to our passage.

However, Tanḥum’s familiarity with Sufī discourse does not appear to be entirely indirect in this passage. It is helpful to distinguish between the basic scheme of three modes of “journeying” (*saḥar*), and Tanḥum’s explanation for each stage. We begin with the basic division. Arye Zoref has identified literary sources and parallels for this tripartite maxim, which seems to have its origins in a statement in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Kitāb al-isfār ‘an natā’ij al-asfār* (The Book of Unveiling Concerning the Effects of Journeys).<sup>308</sup> In that work, Ibn al-‘Arabī writes as follows:

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<sup>305</sup> See Arabic in *Al-ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt li-abī ‘alī bin sīnā*, ed. Sulayman Dunya (Dār al-ma‘ārif: 1958), part 4, 789; compare English translation in Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism*, 81.

<sup>306</sup> For Tanḥum’s explicit discussion (in *Al-kulliyāt*) of Ibn Sīnā’s *Shifā’*, *Najāt*, *Ishārāt wa-tanbīhāt*, and *‘Uyūn al-ḥikma*, and the relationship of these works to one another, see Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 23.

<sup>307</sup> For an English translation of this section, see Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism*, 81-91; for Arabic, see Dunya, *Al-ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt*, part 4, 789-852. For the *‘ibāda* of the *‘arīf* as an intellectual exercise, see Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism*, 82, 85. For *wuṣūl*, see Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism*, 88 (chapter 17); Dunya, *Al-ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt*, part 4, 835. For the other terms, see throughout the section.

<sup>308</sup> See Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 84-89.

There are three kinds of voyage (*fa-inna al-asfār thalātha*) – not four. The Real – may He be magnified and glorified – has affirmed them. They are: the voyage *from* Him, the voyage *to* Him and the voyage *in* Him (*safar min ‘indihi wa-safar ilayhi wa-safar fīhi*).<sup>309</sup>

Although discussions of spiritual travel were well attested before Ibn al-‘Arabī penned these words, we have here a clear precedent for a tripartite typology of the journey (*al-safar*).<sup>310</sup> However, there are significant differences between the accounts. First of all, journeying *from* God is nowhere attested in Tanḥum.<sup>311</sup> Furthermore, Ibn al-‘Arabī identifies several further subdivisions within each mode of journeying, providing a detailed account of the causes and motivations behind the spiritual evolution/devolution of individual human beings.<sup>312</sup> Indeed, we might say that, while Ibn al-‘Arabī presents a typology of *travelers*, Tanḥum provides an account of the successive *stages* of the spiritual path of the adept.

As Zoref notes, the closest parallel to Tanḥum’s formulation is actually attested in the work of a writer who was active after Tanḥum’s death: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292-1350). In his work *Madārij al-sālikīn* (The Paths of the Travelers), a commentary on ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī’s *Manāzil al-sā’irīn* (The Stations of the Wayfarers), al-Jawziyya writes as follows:

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<sup>309</sup> For this translation and the Arabic text, see *The Secrets of Voyaging: Kitāb al-Isfār ‘an natā’ij al-asfār*, ed. and trans. Angela Jaffray (Anqa Publishing: 2015), 40. This most recent edition of the Arabic text is partly based on Denis Gril’s critical text (*Les Dévoilement des effets du voyage* [Éditions de l’Éclat: 1994], accompanied by a French translation), with additional manuscripts taken into account – indeed, a different MS forms the base of Jaffray’s edition. The text is also cited with Hebrew translation in Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 87-88.

<sup>310</sup> See in particular al-Qushayri’s statement that “travel (*safar*) can be divided into two parts: travel with your body, which implies moving from one place to another; travel with your heart, which implies rising from one attribute to another. One sees many who travel with their bodies, while those who travel with their hearts are few.” (Translation from Knysh, *Al-Qushayri’s Epistle*, 297.) For the motif of *safar* in general in Sufi discourse, prior and subsequent to Tanḥum, see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 84-91.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 87-88.

<sup>312</sup> See Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 88.

One who possesses the station of verification should know the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*),<sup>313</sup> and distinguish between it and falsehood, and grasp the Truth and eliminate falsehood. This is one rank (*martaba*). Then it becomes clear to him that this is not [attained] by means of him[self], but by means of God alone. At that point, he is freed from his might and power, and knows that this is by means of the Truth. Then he becomes proficient in that station (*dhālik al-maqām*), and it becomes firmly established in his heart. Then his verification becomes by means of God, and within God. In the first [station], the object of his quest is purified of all else, and denuded of that which is other than itself. In the second, his relationship with that which is other than himself is purified, that which is other than He being Him, Praised is He. And in the third, his witnessing and inadequacy are denuded,<sup>314</sup> so that they occur within the object of his quest. The first, then, is journeying to God; the second is journeying by means of God; the third is journeying within God (*fa- 'l-awwal safar ilā allāh wa- 'l-thānī safar bi- 'llāh wa- 'l-thālith safar fī allāh*).<sup>315</sup>

Here, the parallel to Tanḥum is indeed much closer. Rather than a typology of travelers, this passage sets up a progression in knowledge of God. The language itself is much closer to that of Tanḥum, and a link is drawn between journeying (*safar*) and stations (*maqāmāt*). However, as noted, the source itself is later. There are two possible explanations for this parallel: (a) As Zoref suggests, Tanḥum and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya may be dependent on a common source;<sup>316</sup> or (b) the parallel may reflect the oral transmission of a maxim (possibly based ultimately upon Ibn al-‘Arabī), which continued to be refined throughout its transmission. This latter possibility

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<sup>313</sup> The term *al-ḥaqq* may refer both to truth (a sense that is implied by its opposition to falsehood in this passage), and to God (a sense that is implied by its context in a discussion of the attainment of knowledge of God, *ma‘rifā*). Indeed, by employing this term in his discussion of verification (*taḥqīq*), the attainment of firmly grounded knowledge of God, al-Jawziyya appears to be playing deliberately on the ambiguity in Arabic.

<sup>314</sup> Apparently of the individual’s ego. That is to say, they become independent of the individual’s self, occurring within God.

<sup>315</sup> See Arabic text in *Madārij al-sālikīn bayn manāzil “iyyāka na‘budu wa-iyyāka nasta‘īn”* (Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya: 1988), vol. 3, 407. The Arabic is also cited and translated into Hebrew in Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 88-89.

<sup>316</sup> Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 88, fn. 2. Cf. also *ibid.*, 92

provides an explanation for how a later writer would so closely mirror Tanḥum's formulation in the absence of a common written source (and presumably without any awareness of Tanḥum).

Tanḥum's explanation for each mode of journeying is particularly informative, shedding light on his particular synthesis of Peripatetic and Sufi discourse, and demonstrating the range of intellectual possibilities available to a Jewish writer in his cultural and historical context. The first stage entails asceticism, exercises, and struggle (*zuhd*, *riyāḏāt*, *mujāhadāt*). Although these terms are well attested in Islamic sources,<sup>317</sup> they had also long been adopted in Judeo-Arabic discourse.<sup>318</sup> It is particularly interesting that Tanḥum situates *zuhd* at the beginning of this path, as we have already seen that the figure of the *zāhid* is identified as the ideal, fully perfected individual, who is no longer a slave to the base impulses after having attained contentment (*qanā'a*).<sup>319</sup> It is quite possible that Tanḥum identified two distinct aspects in *zuhd* – first as a regimen of personal training and cultivation, and finally as an expression of one's freedom from carnal desires.<sup>320</sup>

In his inclusion of worship (*al-'ibāda*) in the second stage of his three modes of journeying, Tanḥum once again echoes Maimonides, and reflects his own contemporary cultural and historical milieu. It seems that Tanḥum is referring here to Maimonides' ideal of intellectual

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<sup>317</sup> For example, for al-Qushayrī on *zuhd*, see above, p.246 fn. 362. For al-Qushayrī's chapter on *mujāhada*, see Knysh, *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle*, 118-122. For al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb riyāḏat al-naḥs* (Disciplining the Soul), see *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul/ Kitāb Riyāḏat al-naḥs, & on Breaking The Two Desires/ Kitāb Kasr al-shahwatayn: Books XXII and XXIII of The Revival of the Religious Sciences/ Iḥyā 'ulūm al-dīn*, trans. T. J. Winter (Islamic Texts Society: 1995). For the centrality of *riyāḏa* in attaining the health and virtue of the soul in medieval Islamic thought, see Qutbuddin, "Healing the Soul," 70, 78, 80.

<sup>318</sup> For *zuhd* in Judeo-Arabic literature, see above, p.248. For *riyāḏa*, cf. Maimonides' use of the related form *irtiyād* in describing the rigorous practice of intellectual contemplation in *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 623; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 459, line 5); see also Stern, *Matter and Form*, 310. For Abraham Maimonides' chapter on *mujāhada*, see Rosenblatt, *High Ways*, vol. 2, 306-327. Cf. also Tanḥum's reference to *zuhd* and *riyāḏa* in his allegorical commentary to Jonah, in Shy, *Perush*, 135; English translation in Appendix A below, p.417.

<sup>319</sup> See above, pp.244-246 and notes.

<sup>320</sup> Such a distinction would reflect the Maimonidean understanding of virtuous behavior as a mode of training, and also as an expression of virtues already attained (at a more advanced stage). Cf. Davidson, "The Middle Way in Maimonides' Ethics," 31, 33-34. For similarly flexible use of terminology elsewhere, cf. Tanḥum's description of various stages of spiritual development as intoxication (*sukr*; see above, p.151-152).

contemplation, which the latter identifies with the rabbinic concept of “service in the heart (*‘abodah she-ba-leb*)”.<sup>321</sup> Mere use of the expression *‘ibāda* would not be enough to establish this association, but here the likelihood is further increased when we consider that Tanḥum implicitly aligns the second mode of journeying with the second of his *maqāmāt*, discussed above: The attainment of divine illumination (*ḍiyā’ rabbānī*), and mental stability and persistence (*istiqrār, thabāt*). Indeed, Tanḥum invites his readers to interpret the Sufi dictum in light of his preceding discussion when he once again cites Numbers 6:26, and returns to the theme of “the final rank and the last of the stations (*nihāyat al-marātib wa-ākhir al-maqāmāt*).” It thus seems that the worship (*‘ibāda*) that Tanḥum has in mind is mental contemplation of some description. This interpretation is further reinforced by the close parallel between Tanḥum’s terminology elsewhere and Maimonides’ discussion of intellectual worship (*al-‘ibāda al-‘aqliyya*) in *Guide* III.51.<sup>322</sup> There, Maimonides identifies this mode of worship with the talmudic “worship in the heart (*‘abodah she-ba-leb*),”<sup>323</sup> and describes it as “total devotion to Him (*al-inqītā’ ilayhi*).”<sup>324</sup> Maimonides does indeed insist that constant meditation upon one’s passion for the Divine is the ideal towards which one should strive.<sup>325</sup> In several passages, Tanḥum closely echoes this discussion in the *Guide*, employing the term *‘ibāda* to indicate intellectual insight, or otherwise intimating that his use of the term reflects that of

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<sup>321</sup> *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 621); Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, 457, line 6.

<sup>322</sup> For intellectual worship (*al-‘ibāda al-‘aqliyya*) in *Guide* III.51, see Pines, 623; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, 459 lines 1-2.

<sup>323</sup> For this expression in its original rabbinic context, see Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 2a; cf. Deut. 11:13. In the Talmud, the expression “service in the heart” describes prayer, not intellectual contemplation. Maimonides cites the dictum in its original talmudic sense in the *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, 1:1.

<sup>324</sup> See *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 621; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, 457, line 13); and David R. Blumenthal, “Philosophic Mysticism: The Ultimate Goal of Medieval Judaism,” in *Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects in Judaeo-Arabic Culture* (Brill: 2006), eds. Benjamin Hary and Haggai Ben-Shammai, 7, 10. For a discussion of these passages, see David R. Blumenthal, “Maimonides’ Philosophic Mysticism,” in *Da‘at* 64-66 (2009), xii-xvii. Maimonides identifies prayer and the recitation of the *Shema* as ideal opportunities for such contemplative practice, among other possibilities (Pines, *Guide*, 622). For supererogatory devotion in the Egyptian pietist context, see Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 102-126.

<sup>325</sup> *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 623-624).

Maimonides.<sup>326</sup> Why exactly Tanḥum distinguishes between renunciation (*zuhd*) on the one hand, and fasting (*ṣiyām*) on the other, is not entirely clear. However, Abraham Mamonides' commentary to Exodus 24:11 may shed some light on the matter. Here, fasting accompanies intellectual illumination and exclusive intellectual meditation upon the Divine – and indeed, Abraham's formulation echoes the very same passage in *Guide* III.51.<sup>327</sup> This fasting is thus not part of one's initial regimen of ethical cultivation, aimed at subduing the vegetative soul; rather, its purpose is to further disconnect from the corporeal faculties and render the mind more supple and receptive.<sup>328</sup>

The final mode of journeying for Tanḥum – journeying *within* God – is explained as “union and immersion in love of Him, in pure knowledge (*wa-huwa al-wuṣūl wa-'l-istighrāq fī maḥabbatihi bi-maḥḍ al-'irfān*),” in which “no trace (*athar*) of any other beings (*sā'ir al-mawjūdāt*) remains in the soul, only of Him (praised is He), to the point that [the soul] disregards its own essence, and is not aware of its own existence, as a result of the sheer strength of its preoccupation with His love.” Here, two elements of the description may help us to ascertain Tanḥum's intended

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<sup>326</sup> See Tanḥum's historical-allegorical commentary on Song 1:4, where he describes the priests and Levites as “exclusively devoted to worship of [God] (*al-munqaṭi 'in li-'ibādatihi*).” (MS Pococke 12b, Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 13-14.) This formulation reflects the language of *Guide* III.51 very closely. Compare also his discussion of divine providence (*'ināya*) emanating from the Temple and its leadership in his commentary (see below, pp.385-390, p.395-396), and note the profound link between these themes in *Guide* III.51. See also his historical-allegorical commentary to Song 8:9, where the intellectual insights conveyed to Israel by the angels/intellects are described as intellectual apprehension (*idrāk 'aqlī*) and pure worship (*al-'ibāda al-khāliṣa*). (MS Pococke 320, 33a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 38.) The discussion of contemplative intellectual '*ibāda* in *Guide* III.51 provides the key to all of these passages in Tanḥum.

<sup>327</sup> Abraham Maimonides explains the perception of the Divine described in this verse as the product of a regimen of self-isolation (*khalwa*), during which they were “exclusively devoted to Him (*munqaṭi 'in lahu*)” to the point that they attained their respective levels of perfection, nearness (*qurb*), and worship (*'ibāda*) – here certainly referring to intellectual contemplation. See Wiesenberg, *Perush Rabbenu Avraham ben Ha-Rambam*, 379; the passage is cited in English translation in Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 121. For intellectual worship (*al-'ibāda al-'aqliyya*) as nearness to God (*al-qurb min allāh*) in *Guide* III.51, see Pines, 623; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 459 lines 1-2. For the theme of human perfection, see throughout the chapter.

<sup>328</sup> Cf. Tanḥum's discussion in his commentary to Jonah, cited and discussed above, p.90; and Maimonides' statement in *Guide* III.51 that “in the measure which the faculties of the body are weakened and the fire of the desires is quenched, the intellect is strengthened, its lights achieve a wider extension, its apprehension is purified, and it rejoices in what it apprehends.” (Pines, *Guide*, 627.)

meaning: His use of the term *wuṣūl*, and his description of the loss of individual consciousness in the state of union. In the terminology ascribed to Sufis by Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī, *wuṣūl* (lit. arrival, attainment, conjunction) appears to refer to union of some kind with the Divine.<sup>329</sup> In the context of our passage in Tanḥum’s commentary, the use of this term is particularly felicitous: It is indeed the ultimate waystation (*maqām*), the culmination of the journey (*safar*), represented by the attainment of peace in Song 8:10.<sup>330</sup> Tanḥum’s usage here echoes that of Abraham Maimonides, in whose extant writings *wuṣūl* is often employed along with the terminology of spiritual traveling, and associated with the attainment of prophetic insight.<sup>331</sup> Elsewhere, Tanḥum quite clearly declares the impossibility of such enduring attainment before the death of the body.<sup>332</sup> Based on his actual description of this “immersion” upon death, it seems likely that Tanḥum believed in the loss of individual consciousness upon death ( “it disregards its own essence, and is not aware of its own existence”).<sup>333</sup> If this reading is correct, Tanḥum’s conception of the human intellect’s survival of death is typically Peripatetic.<sup>334</sup>

In sum, Tanḥum’s initial scheme of three *maqāmāt* reflects the progression of his program of intellectual cultivation through philosophical training and contemplative praxis, culminating in the subsistence of the mind within the Active Intellect upon the death of the body. In bringing this scheme into dialogue with a Sufi typology of spiritual journeying, Tanḥum enriches his

<sup>329</sup> Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 24-25.

<sup>330</sup> See his commentary to this verse in MS Pococke 320, 70a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 82-83. Here, Tanḥum offers a brief summary of the individual’s moral and intellectual cultivation, concluding that “this is the purpose of every felicity (*ghāyat kull sa’āda*), and the end of every virtue (*wa-nihāyat kull faḍīla*), and the attainment of total security (*wa-’l-wuṣūl ilā maḥq al-salāma*).”

<sup>331</sup> Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*, 191-193, 201, 226.

<sup>332</sup> In his commentary to Jonah, Tanḥum states that “the soul – once it has attained some conjunction with the intellect (*idhā balaghat min al-ittiṣāl bi-’l-’aql*), while it is [still] associated with matter – cannot attain union with it (*mā yumkinuhā al-wuṣūl ilayhi*).” (Shy, *Perush*, 137.)

<sup>333</sup> Compare his descriptions of immersion or drowning (*istighrāq*) in the intellectual realm or in love of the Belover, most notably in MS Pococke 320, 19a, 50b, 56a, 65b, 67a, 68b, 71b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 21, 60, 66, 78, 79, 81, 85.

<sup>334</sup> For this as Maimonides’ position, following Ibn Bājja, see *Guide* I.74 (Pines, 221); Pines, *Guide*, ciii-civ; Davidson, *On Intellect*, 203; Stroumsa, *Maimonides*, 162, 181. This is also presented as the philosopher’s teaching in Judah Ha-Levi’s *Kuzari* 1:1.

account, and finds a compelling way to communicate the progressive quality of his program, and its culmination in *wuṣūl* (arrival, attainment, union). The passage reflects Tanḥum's wide range of sources: We hear echoes of Ibn Sīnā, Maimonides, Sufi sources (possibly oral), and sources from within Egyptian pietist circles. Just as importantly, we see that, despite his insistence on employing his terminology in flexible ways, Tanḥum is broadly consistent in his worldview. His soteriology remains well within the bounds of Peripatetic thought, he exhibits an overwhelmingly Avicennan orientation, and he finds an effective and compelling language to communicate his ideas in Sufi discourse.

### **Between *pashaṭ*, *derash*, and *ta'wīl* in Tanḥum's commentary**

As has been noted, Tanḥum's commentary to Song 2:7 is the final passage in which he provides linguistic, historical-allegorical, and psychological exegesis in a unified format, organized both according to verse (for linguistic analysis) and masoretic divisions (for the two allegorical commentaries). From Song 2:8, Tanḥum simply provides the reader with two separate verse-by-verse commentaries for the remainder of the work. In order to better establish the quality of the two commentaries, I shall explore two examples, identifying Tanḥum's sources in each stratum of the commentary, and noting salient features of both the historical-allegorical and psychologizing components.

#### *Example I*

*For now the winter has passed, the rain is over and gone.* (Song 2:11)

In his first commentary to Song 2:11, Tanḥum provides a very succinct treatment:

*For now the winter has passed...*<sup>335</sup> (Song 2:11)

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<sup>335</sup> There is no commentary on the remainder of the verse, and it is not cited here in the MSS.

The straits and the time of cold, suffering, and humiliation have passed and come to an end. *For the term of her service is over* (Isa. 40:2), her allotted time has been completed.<sup>336</sup>

This treatment is more striking for what it lacks than what it contains: There is no linguistic analysis, no use of scriptural citations to illustrate Hebrew usage, and no identifiable philosophical content. In fact, Tanḥum's sensitivity to the verse's contextual and linguistic sense (*peshat*), even when engaging in allegoresis, may have contributed to his *restraint* in providing further historical-allegorical details. Unlike some earlier commentators, Tanḥum does not even identify specific exiles or chapters in Israel's history that might be connected to this verse.<sup>337</sup>

Tanḥum is content to declare that, just as rain and cold passes and gives way to spring, Israel's humiliation will yield to redemption. He further illustrates this point by offering a citation from Isaiah 40:2, which makes a similar point, but outside of an allegorical context. This verse would be familiar to Tanḥum's intended readers, as it is the second verse of the first *haftarah* (prophetic lection) of the Sabbaths of consolation, following the fast of the ninth of the month of Ab.<sup>338</sup> To the best of my knowledge, Tanḥum is the only exegete to cite this verse. There are thus two elements that stand out in this passage: Tanḥum's restraint in historical allegoresis; and his illustration of the same theme in a familiar prophetic verse that is not marked or identified as allegorical.

In his second commentary to Song 2:11, although his discussion remains brief, Tanḥum provides a considerably richer treatment:

*For now the winter (ha-setav) has passed... (Song 2:11)*

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<sup>336</sup> MS Pococke 320, 23a-b;; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 26.

<sup>337</sup> Ibn 'Aqnīn first associates the verse with times of oppression (*waqt al-shi'bud*) in general, but then offers more elaborate interpretations based on rabbinic sources; see Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 90-91. Ibn Ezra generally offers little detail for this verse, other than apparently identifying the rainy season with the end of the Egyptian enslavement according to Abraham's calculation (*qetz abraham*), concerning which see his commentary to Ex. 12:40.

<sup>338</sup> See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, 13:19.

[A] [The term *setav* means] “winter” (*al-shitā*). The Targum of *summer and winter* (*qayitz va-ḥoref*; cf. Gen. 8:22) is *qayṭa ve-sitva*.<sup>339</sup>

...*the rain is over and gone* (*ḥalaf halakh lo*). (Song 2:11)

[B] [The Hebrew *ḥalaf halakh lo* means] “passed and departed” (*jāza wa-maḍā*), as in *They pass* (*ḥalfu*) *like reed-boats*. (Job 9:26) It also has the sense of “cessation” (*al-qat*), as in *As for idols, they shall completely vanish* (*kalil yaḥalof*). (Isa. 2:18) And from [the same term] were the people of generation and corruption named *the passing ones* (*bene ḥalof*; Prov. 31:8), meaning “broken up, disintegrated” (*munqaṭi ṭn mutahallilīn*).

[C] The meaning is that the impediments and obstructions and barriers have vanished (*al-mawāni* ‘*wa-’l-qawāṭi*’ *wa-’l-ḥujub qad* ‘*adimat*), and there remains nothing preventing your union (*wa-mā baqiya laka māni* ‘*min al-ittihād bī*) with me if you work towards its fulfilment.<sup>340</sup>

In contrast with Tanḥum’s first commentary to the verse, here he provides a good deal of lexical analysis, building upon the work of earlier exegetes. In [A], Tanḥum provides an analysis of the term *setav* (winter), first translating it with the cognate Arabic *shitā*. In this, he follows in the footsteps of earlier translators.<sup>341</sup> In noting that the Aramaic equivalent of *ḥoref* is *sitva* (clearly cognate with the Hebrew *setav*),<sup>342</sup> Tanḥum echoes the earlier commentaries of Ibn ‘Aqnīn and Ibn Ezra (and indirectly, Rashi).<sup>343</sup> This reading appears to be informed by the Targum *ad loc*.<sup>344</sup>

Unlike his predecessors, who simply glossed the Hebrew *setav* with its close Aramaic cognate

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<sup>339</sup> See Targum Onqelos *ad loc*.

<sup>340</sup> MS Pococke 320, 36a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 41-42.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. Yefet b. Eli, in Alobaidi, *Commentary of Yefet ben Eli*, 6, 52; and the translation and commentary ascribed to Saadia in Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 52-53. Cf. also Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s explanation of *setav* as “the rainy season (*zaman al-mashtā*)” (in Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 90).

<sup>342</sup> Indeed, Brown, Driver, and Briggs (*Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 711 [#5638]) identify it as an Aramaic loanword.

<sup>343</sup> Rashi writes: “*winter* (*setav*) – winter (*ḥoref*). Aramaic [lit. “Targum”] – *sitva*.” (See his commentary *ad loc*.) Ibn Ezra closely echoes Rashi in the extremely terse glosses to this term in both of his commentaries to Song *ad loc*. Finally, Ibn ‘Aqnīn strings these elements together into a basic but complete sentence: “The Aramaic [lit. “Targum”] of *winter* is *sitva* (*targum ḥoref sitva*).”

<sup>344</sup> The Targum to our verse begins: “For behold, the time of oppression that is similar to winter (*de-dame le-sitva*) has ended...”

*sitva*, Tanḥum provides a concrete example from Targum Onqelos to Genesis 8:22. Tanḥum prefers concrete examples to generalities, demonstrating both his conscientiousness as a scholar and his skill as a pedagogue.

Tanḥum now [B] offers an analysis of the lexeme *ḥalaf*, which he translates into Arabic as “passed and departed (*jāza wa-maḍā*).” This echoes both Ibn Janāḥ’s explanation of the root as denoting “passing and going and travel (*jawāz wa-dhahāb wa-masīr*),”<sup>345</sup> and earlier Arabic translations of the verse.<sup>346</sup> He thereby ignores Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s translation of *ḥalaf* as “stride” (*khaṭara*), although he does choose to cite the same verse as Ibn ‘Aqnīn in support of his reading, viz. Job 9:26. Tanḥum’s subsequent explanation of the root as implying “cessation” (*qaṭ’*) is drawn from Ibn Janāḥ, who links this sense of the term to both of the verses that Tanḥum cites in support of such reading.<sup>347</sup> In his reading of Proverbs 31:8, Tanḥum frames his reading of *the passing ones* (*bene ḥalof*) in philosophical terms, emphasizing those individuals as “the people of generation and corruption (*ahl al-kawn wa-’l-fasād*),” an allusion to the physical process of the composition of sublunar beings from the elements and their subsequent decomposition.<sup>348</sup> This understanding of Proverbs 31:8 is informed both by Ibn Janāḥ and Ibn Ezra, although neither of those exegetes employ philosophical terms in their reading of the verse.<sup>349</sup> In short, Tanḥum’s lexical treatment is broadly based upon the works of earlier exegetes, yet it looks beyond them to

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<sup>345</sup> *Uṣūl*, 229.

<sup>346</sup> Both Yefet b. Eli and Pseudo-Saadia render *‘abar* and *ḥalaf* as *jāza* and *maḍā* respectively. See Alobaidi, *Commentary of Yefet ben Eli*, 6, 52; Qafiḥ, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 51-53. Although Tanḥum employs both terms, he applies them to v.11b.

<sup>347</sup> He translates *kalil yaḥalof* in Isa. 2:18 as *jamī’an yuqṭa’ūna*, and without introducing a new sense he translates *bene ḥalof* in Prov. 31:8 as *dhawī al-halāk* (*Uṣūl*, 229).

<sup>348</sup> For the adoption of this terminology from Aristotle’s *De Generatione et Corruptione* and its adoption into Arabic philosophical discourse, see Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī’s Philosophical Lexicon*, vol. 1, 421-423. For the Brethren of Purity’s epistle on generation and corruption, see Baffioni, *On the Natural Sciences*, 171-184 (original in Arabic section, 155-183).

<sup>349</sup> For Ibn Janāḥ, see note 347 above; for Ibn Ezra, see his commentary to Prov. 31:8, where he glosses the expression *bene ḥalof* as “mortals (*bene temutah*)”, an explanation apparently based on Ibn Janāḥ. For three alternative explanations for this expression, see Saadia’s commentary to the verse, in Qafiḥ, *Mishle*, 267-268. On the identification of Saadia’s commentary to Proverbs, see Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, 320; Qafiḥ, *Mishle*, 3.

new sources that could further illuminate the text, even employing philosophical terminology to shed light on the use of a lexeme in Proverbs.

In [C], Tanḥum introduces philosophical concerns more explicitly, as he shifts into an allegorical mode of interpretation. According to this interpretation, winter and the rainy season represent the barriers that prevent union with the Beloved. Those barriers – presumably the body and its faculties, as interpreted by Ibn ‘Aqnīn and described by Tanḥum elsewhere<sup>350</sup> – have now ceased to interfere with intellection, providing an opportunity for the soul to work towards union (*ittiḥād*) with the Divine. It is significant that Tanḥum does not depict immediate union, focusing rather on the effort in earnest to attain it at some future point. This points rather strongly to his consistent use of the term *ittiḥād* (along with *wuṣūl*) to describe enduring conjunction with the Active Intellect upon the death of the body (as shall be discussed below), echoing Maimonides’ use of this term in *Guide* III.51.<sup>351</sup> Admittedly, this is not at all explicit. However, Tanḥum’s choice to emphasize that such union does not take place immediately, and his choice to use the terminology of *ittiḥād* in contrast with Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s use of *ittiṣāl* (conjunction), are both suggestive.<sup>352</sup> Tanḥum thus differs from Ibn ‘Aqnīn in two respects: (a) In substance, in his reluctance to read this verse as a direct reference to union upon death – preferring instead to read it as an invitation to “work towards” a deferred union; and (b) in his preference to describe that deferred union as *ittiḥād* rather than *ittiṣāl*.

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<sup>350</sup> See the third stratum of Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s commentary, where he describes the soul’s humiliation while imprisoned in the body (*al-jasad*), until such a time that it may escape the body and its organs (*al-ālāt*). See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 90-92. MS Pococke 320, 14a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 15. Cf. Maimonides’ discussion of psychological/epistemological veils in *Eight Chapters* (chapter 7), translated in Weiss and Butterworth, *Ethical Writings*, 80-83. Cf. also al-Ghazālī’s discussion of the many types of “veils” that prevent humans from perceiving the Divine, in Buchman, *Niche of Lights*, 44-53. Here, not only are the corporeal and lower mental faculties described as veils, but even the true intellectual apprehensions of the philosophers prevent them from grasping a higher truth. See Frank Griffel, “Al-Ghazālī’s Cosmology in the Veil Section of his *Mishkāt al-Anwār*,” in *Avicenna and his Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann (Brepols: 2009), 27-49.

<sup>351</sup> Kreisel, *Maimonides’ Political Thought*, 139, 144-146.

<sup>352</sup> For Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s use of *ittiṣāl* in his commentary to this verse, see Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 90-92.

Also tempting, but similarly elusive, is the possibility that in his allusion to the corporeal faculties, Tanḥum is playing on the medieval sense of the Hebrew lexeme *geshem*. Although it refers to rain in biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, in medieval Hebrew its valence was expanded under the influence of the Arabic term *jism* (body).<sup>353</sup> It is also interesting to note that Tanḥum's phraseology (*wa-mā baqiya laka māni'*) in this passage somewhat echoes that of Yefet b. Eli, who offers the following allegorical paraphrase of the verse: "You have no impediment that would prevent you (*laysa laki māni' yamna'uki*) – so arise and come!"<sup>354</sup>

In summary, we note that Tanḥum includes no linguistic analysis in his first commentary to Song 2:11, and provides a very bare and schematic historical-allegorical reading of the verse. One notable feature of his first commentary is the example that he provides for the verse's theme (as he identifies it), drawn from a biblical passage that would be familiar from its liturgical use. In contrast, Tanḥum's second commentary to Song 2:11 contains a significant amount of lexical analysis, clearly draws on a rich array of earlier exegetical material, and adds significantly to the earlier material by providing concrete examples and using philosophical terminology to illuminate the lexical discussion. He then provides a psychological allegoresis of the verse, that demonstrates his consistent use of soteriological terminology, in this case apparently employing the term *ittiḥād* to refer to the soul's enduring union with the Active Intellect upon death.

### *Example II*

*Behold Solomon's bedstead, sixty warriors encircling it, of the warriors of Israel.* (Song 3:7)

Our second example is less typical, insofar as there is no lexical or syntactic problem that Tanḥum feels a need to address in the verse. Rather, the problem that sits at the center of his

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<sup>353</sup> The same might be true for Ibn 'Aqñīn (however, note his repeated use of the term *jasad*). See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 90-92. In our passage, Tanḥum uses neither term.

<sup>354</sup> See Alobaidi, *Commentary of Yefet ben Eli*, 52.

treatment is one of symbolism: What does the figure of Solomon represent? What is meant by his *bedstead*? And what is the significance of the *sixty warriors* that stand about it, guarding it?

In his first commentary, Tanḥum writes as follows:

*Behold Solomon's bedstead, sixty warriors encircling it, of the warriors of Israel.* (Song 3:7)

This religious community (*al-milla*) that is the throne<sup>355</sup> of perfection, among whom<sup>356</sup> the *Divine Presence* resides, and upon whom the divine light dwells (*allatī sakanat fīhi al-shekhinah wa-ḥalla 'alayhā al-nūr al-ilāhī*), numbers *sixty ten-thousands* (*shishshim ribbo*),<sup>357</sup> by which I mean *six hundred thousand men*.<sup>358</sup> (Num. 11:21) These are the *sixty warriors encircling it*.<sup>359</sup>

Although brief, this passage contains much that is notable. Tanḥum implies here (as he will state explicitly elsewhere) that Solomon represents perfection in this verse, the Arabic *kamāl* being equivalent to the Hebrew root *sh-l-m*.<sup>360</sup> He thus reframes the rabbinic statement that the verse

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<sup>355</sup> Tanḥum uses the Arabic *sarīr* to render the Hebrew *miṭṭah* (bed, couch; lit. “place of reclining” – see Brown, Drivers, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 641-642 [#4296]). There is certainly a degree of semantic overlap between these terms, although *sarīr* can also refer to a throne, a use of the term that was common (cf. Ibn al-Jawzi's [d.1201] discussion of the semantic valence of 'arsh versus other terms for and parts of royal thrones, such as *sarīr*, in *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār aṣ-Ṣifāt*, ed. and trans. Merlin Swartz [Brill: 2002], 262). It seems to me from context that Tanḥum is able to translate *miṭṭah* as *sarīr* in the first place due to the terms' overlapping valence as a bed – indeed, the following verse (Song 3:8) will emphasize that the warriors guard Solomon as he sleeps – but that his elaboration of the motif in his commentary plays more on the Arabic term's sense as a throne. For the translation of *miṭṭah* as *sarīr* in this verse, cf. Yefet b. Eli's translation in Alobaidi, *Commentary of Yefet ben Eli*, 9, 68; and the Arabic translation attributed to Saadia in Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 69.

<sup>356</sup> Alternatively: upon which. For this ambiguity in the passage, see the discussion below.

<sup>357</sup> This is a classical rabbinic formulation of the number of Israelites exiting Egypt. See Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el*, Tractate Shirata IX, 213; *ibid.*, Tractate Va-yassa' II, 231; *ibid.*, Tractate Amalek III, 279.

<sup>358</sup> Translated according to Saadia's *Tafsīr* (Derenbourg, *Oeuvres Complètes de R. Saadia*, vol. 1, 209), in which he simply understands the unusual Hebrew term *ragli* according to its Arabic valence, rendering it *rijāl*. Ibn Janāḥ glosses the Hebrew *ragli* with the Arabic *rājil*, i.e., those walking (*Uṣūl*, 664). See also Targum Onqelos, which translates *gabra rigla'a* (footmen?) – cf. Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 516; and David Qimḥi, in *Sefer ha-shorashim le-rabbi david ben yosef qimḥi ha-sefaraddi*, ed. J. H. R. Biesenthal and F. Lebrecht (Berlin: 1847), 343.

<sup>359</sup> MS Poccoke 320, 24b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 27.

<sup>360</sup> In one case, Tanḥum identifies Solomon with the perfected soul, insofar as the latter shares qualities and is derived from the “Perfect Beloved”: “Therefore, by means of the name *Solomon*, he composed a parable for the [masculine] Perfect Beloved; then he employed it [to refer to the feminine] beloved, who becomes perfected through its relation to Him, and becomes related to the city *Shalem* and its wise, perfect King, and to that which it attains of perfection with respect to its Beloved and Passionately Desired One (*maḥūbihā wa-ma'shūqihā*), who called her *my dove, my perfect one* (Song 5:2; 6:9)...” (MS Poccoke 320, 60b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's*

refers to “the King to whom peace belongs (*la-melekh she-ha-shalom shello*),”<sup>361</sup> retaining the association with the root *sh-l-m*, but imbuing it with philosophical significance. Tanḥum’s reference to the *sixty warriors* as the *six hundred thousand* – or as the rabbinic sources put it, the *sixty ten-thousand* – Israelite males of military age echoes both Ibn ‘Aqnīn and Ibn Ezra,<sup>362</sup> and is based upon classical rabbinic sources.<sup>363</sup> However, Tanḥum parts from his predecessors in important ways. Ibn Ezra interprets the *bedstead* as either the Temple (as implied in his first commentary *ad loc.*) or as the Land of Israel (second commentary *ad loc.*), and Ibn ‘Aqnīn interprets it as the Sanctuary, around which the six-hundred thousand adult male Israelites were camped.<sup>364</sup> In the background to both Ibn Ezra and Ibn ‘Aqnīn is the Targum *ad loc.*, which identifies the *bedstead* with Solomon’s Temple.<sup>365</sup> In contrast, Tanḥum identifies this figure with the religious community (*al-milla*), echoing the Maimonidean preoccupation with the Israelites as a *milla* established by the Patriarchs and provided with the truest revelation by Moses.<sup>366</sup> Indeed, more than the earlier interpreters, Tanḥum removes the focus from the spatial

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*Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 72.) Elsewhere, he writes: “It has already been [stated] that the name *Solomon* is derived from the meaning, “perfection” (*al-kamāl*). And the ancients (*al-awā’il*), may their memory be a blessing, said: *Every “Solomon” mentioned in the Song of Songs is holy* (Babylonian Talmud, Shebu’ot 35b).” (MS Pococke 320, 70b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 83.)

<sup>361</sup> See Song Rabbah to Song 1:2, 3:7, and 3:11; Babylonian Talmud, Shebu’ot 35b; and many parallels.

<sup>362</sup> Tanḥum’s succinct phrasing seems to echo Ibn Ezra’s direct statement that the *sixty warriors* “are the sixty ten-thousand who entered the land,” as formulated in his first commentary to Song, *ad loc.* (Cf. also Rashi *ad loc.*) On the other hand, compare his description of Israel – “among whom the *Shekhinah* resides, and upon whom the divine light dwells (*allatī sakanat fīhi* [sic] *al-shekhinah wa-ḥalla ‘alayhā al-nūr al-ilāhī*)” – to that of Ibn ‘Aqnīn, who states that the *bedstead* is to be identified as the Sanctuary (*al-mishkan*), and more specifically “to the dwelling of the *Shekhinah* in it (*li-ḥulūl al-shekhinah fīhi*).” (See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 148.) He also mentions the “enumeration” (*‘adad*) of the Israelites, and several elements that will be echoed in Tanḥum’s esoteric stratum of the commentary, discussed below.

<sup>363</sup> The clearest rabbinic sources for such an interpretation of Song 3:7 are Numbers Rabbah (Naso # 11) and *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma’el*, Tractate Piṣḥa, XIV, 75 (ed. Lauterbach). Cf. also Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma’el*, Tractate Shirata IX, 213.

<sup>364</sup> Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 148-149. Compare the commentary attributed to Saadia, in Qafīḥ, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 70.

<sup>365</sup> The Targum *ad loc.* also integrates the interpretation of the sixty warriors as a reference to the sixty letters of the Priestly Blessing.

<sup>366</sup> “For the end of their efforts during their life was to bring into being a religious community (*milla*) that would know and worship God.” (*Guide* III.51 [Pines, 624].) Cf. also Stroumsa, *Maimonides in his World*, 113-114; Kellner, *Science in the Bet Midrash*, 269.

element of land or the concrete figure of the Sanctuary or Temple, instead identifying the *bedstead* with the religious community as constituted by the Torah and governed by prophecy.<sup>367</sup>

Notwithstanding Tanḥum's deemphasis of the more explicitly spacial interpretations of the verse's *bedstead* or "throne", the prominent place accorded to the Temple and Sanctuary in earlier sources seems to motivate Tanḥum's reference to the Divine Presence (*shekhinah*) that dwells among the Israelites. This raises the question of what precisely Tanḥum means when he refers to the *shekhinah*. Maimonides interprets the application of the Hebrew verb *sh-k-n* to the Divine as referring to "the permanence of His Indwelling (*dawām sakīnatihi*) – I mean His created light (*nūruhu al-makhlūq*) – in a place (*fī mawḍi'*), or the permanence of providence (*dawām 'ināyatihi*) with regard to a certain matter."<sup>368</sup> Maimonides offered two distinct understandings of the term *shekhinah*: As a distinct created hypostasis that he calls "the created light (*al-nūr al-makhlūq*)",<sup>369</sup> and as a figurative description of divine providence via the Active Intellect.<sup>370</sup> A survey of Tanḥum's use of the term shows that he uses it primarily in its first sense.<sup>371</sup> In some cases, Tanḥum strongly echoes classical rabbinic sources in describing the

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<sup>367</sup> However, compare Song Rabbah *ad loc.* (and the parallel in Numbers Rabbah, Naso, # 11), which glosses *miṭṭato* ("his bedstead") with *maṭṭotav shebaṭav* ("his standards, his tribes") – i.e., identifying the bedstead with the tribes themselves. This may imply Tanḥum's direct reliance on the midrashic sources for his understanding here.

<sup>368</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 55; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 37, lines 15-16.

<sup>369</sup> For this concept, see *Guide* I.5 (Pines, 31), I.10 (*ibid.*, 37), I.19 (*ibid.*, 46), I.25 (*ibid.*, 55), I.27 (*ibid.*, 57), I.28 (*ibid.*, 60), I.64 (*ibid.*, 156), I.67 (second method) (*ibid.*, 229); and cf. 1.18 (*ibid.*, 44-45), and I.21 (*ibid.*, 48). For a discussion of the concept in Maimonides, and its background in Saadia Gaon and other sources, see Esti Eisenmann, "The Term 'Created Light' in Maimonides' Philosophy," in *Daat* 55 (2004-2005), 41-57. Cf. Abraham Maimonides' reference to "the indwelling of His light and Divine Presence and providence in the Temple (*ḥulūl nūrihi wa-sakīnatihi wa-'ināyatihi fī al-miqdash*)," in his commentary to Genesis 1:26 (Wiesenberg, *Perush Rabbenu Avraham ben Ha-Rambam*, 9; see also Wiesenberg's comment in *ibid.*, 8, fn. 60; and Abraham's commentary to Ex. 16:7, in *ibid.* 280-281).

<sup>370</sup> See *Guide* I.25 (Pines, 55).

<sup>371</sup> In this vein, Tanḥum writes as follows: "In the course of the narrative, the construction of the *Temple* and the dwelling of the light of the *Divine Presence* in it (*wa-ḥulūl nūr al-shekhinah fīhi*), and [God's] providence for them on account of this, were described allegorically. This is [the meaning of] His statement, *I clothed you with embroidered garments, and gave you sandals of dolphin leather to wear, and wound fine linen about your head, and dressed you in silks. I decked you out in finery [and put bracelets on your arms and a chain around your neck].* (Ezek. 16:10-11) *You adorned yourself with gold and silver, and your apparel was of fine linen, silk, and embroidery.* (*Ibid.* v.13)" (MS Pococke 320, 8a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 8.) "While the king was at his dining hall etc. (Song 1:12) *Israel* only has felicity in the presence of God's light

transportation of this entity through the desert, and its arrival at its final destination in Jerusalem.<sup>372</sup>

In the context of his first commentary to Song 3:7, the sense in which Tanḥum uses *shekhinah* is difficult to determine. This lack of clarity is to some degree the product of a syntactic ambiguity, owing to Tanḥum's use of the feminine form *allatī*, closely followed by the masculine *fīhi*.<sup>373</sup> If we read this usage of the masculine pronominal suffix of *fīhi* as anomalous, and assume that it refers back to the feminine *milla* – which is the most obvious referent of the feminine suffix of *allatī*, and thus renders the sentence more coherent – then the feminine suffix of *'alayhā* would most likely refer to the *milla*. In this case, *shekhinah* and “the divine light” could be read as synonymous. Alternatively, the referent of *fīhi* could be the masculine *sarīr*, in which case we could also read the referent of *'alayhā* as the most proximate feminine noun *shekhinah*. This would result in a three-tiered figure: The throne or bed is the *milla*, upon/in which the *shekhinah* dwells, and upon the *shekhinah* rests the divine light.<sup>374</sup> Although the imprecise use of the feminine *allatī* is attested in medieval Judeo-Arabic,<sup>375</sup> the syntactic disruption that such a

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among them (*bi-ḥudūr nūr allāh baynahum*), and the *Divine Presence* is present with them (*wa-'l-shekhinah ḥāḍira 'indahum*).” (MS Pococke 320, 18a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 20.)

“... since it described that they only have felicity in the presence of the *Divine Presence* among them (*bi-ḥudūr al-shekhinah baynahum*), and [in] residing in the exalted land that God bestowed them...” (MS Pococke 320, 22a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 25.)

<sup>372</sup>“When they went out into the wilderness the Shekhinah was with them, as it is said: “And the Lord went before them by day” (Ex. 13:21) until they brought Him with them to His holy Temple.” (Text and translation in Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma 'el*, Tractate Shirata III, 186.) Cf. Tanḥum's first commentary to Song 4:6: “Until the day grows breezy, and the shadows flee... (Song 4:6) It means: “The Sanctuary will remain among you, transported from place to place, until noon – until the breeze of the second half [of the day] blows. Then the *Divine Presence* will be transported to the Temple built on Mount Moriah.” (MS Pococke 320, 25b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 29.) Cf. also Maimonides' *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Temple, 6:16.

<sup>373</sup> Zoref entirely circumvents this problem, since the Hebrew *ummah* (as he translates *milla*) and *miṭṭah* (*sarīr*) are feminine; see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 182.

<sup>374</sup> Cf. the (admittedly somewhat ambiguous) translation in Alobaidi, *The Two Commentaries*, 149.

<sup>375</sup> See Blau, *Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic*, 237. For the opposite phenomenon, in which *alladhī* is frequently used without regard of gender or number, see *ibid.*, 235.

reading would cause, particularly considering the simple conjunctive *wā* in *wa-ḥalla*<sup>376</sup> and ease of reading *milla* as the referent of *‘alayhā*, lead me to lean towards the first possibility – i.e., that *all* the suffixes in the relative clause refer to the noun *milla*. The locative sense of the preposition *fī*, along with the subsequent mention of “the divine light (*al-nūr al-ilāhī*)” that “dwells (*ḥalla*)” upon them, leads me to suspect that in this passage Tanḥum does not associate the Divine Presence with the Active Intellect or its providence (*‘ināya*), but rather with “the created light (*al-nūr al-makhlūq*)” that fills the Holy of Holies. Admittedly, however, this reading is uncertain.

In his second commentary to the verse, Tanḥum provides a far more extensive interpretation:

*Behold Solomon’s bedstead, sixty warriors encircling it, of the warriors of Israel. (Song 3:7)*

[A] Every *Solomon* mentioned in this book is a consistent allegory (*mathal muṭṭarid*) for the figurative meaning (*mumaththal*) of the whole book. It refers to absolute perfection (*al-kamāl al-muṭlaq*), of which every perfection existent or alluded to is an emanation. And the throne (*sarīr*) to which [the verse] alludes is the soul, which is a throne for the intellect, and is that upon which it rides (*wa-markūb lahu*).

[B] [Solomon] states that the foundations of the sciences and apprehensions that – once the soul has attained them and become accustomed to them and placed them roundabout her – free her from all harm and from any physical thing that should be feared are sixty [in number]. He named them *warriors* because every science necessarily brings about strength and subsistence for the soul, insofar as it apprehends it and progresses by means of it towards knowledge (*ma’rifa*) of the most lofty and simple and noble rank, which [the verse] has called, *palace* (Song 3:9). Similarly, he stated in another *verse*, *There are sixty queens and eighty concubines etc.* (Song 6:8) The

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<sup>376</sup> Had it been Tanḥum’s intention to differentiate “the divine light” from the *shekhinah*, we might expect to see some syntactic indication, such as a change of word order (e.g., *wa-‘alayhā ḥalla*).

enumeration of these sixty is by way of intuition (*'alā sabīl al-ḥads*) – there is no demonstration [to prove such an enumeration].

[C] However, we know intuitively (*bi-'l-ḥads*) that these are the parts of the fundamental sciences. For example, the science of ethics and governance (*'ilm al-akhlāq wa-'l-siyāsa*) contains four parts: Individual, household, and city-state governance (*al-siyāsa al-shakḥīyya wa-'l-manziliyya wa-'l-madaniyya*); and governance of the religious community (*tadbīr al-milla*), by which I mean prophetic governance (*siyāsat al-nubuwwa*). The mathematical sciences are four [in number], each part further dividing into parts. Physics too may be divided into parts, including the science of the roots, which are the elements. Then admixture, motion, time, place, matter, form, meteorology,<sup>377</sup> minerals, plants, animals, the human being, and similar such subdivisions. Metaphysics too [may be further subdivided]. And this [enumeration] is entirely intuitive (*'alā ṭarīq al-ḥads*). Included [among these sciences] are the religious sciences (*al-'ulūm al-shar'īyya*) and that which attends them, that being what becomes apparent from the scriptural expression (*al-laḥẓ al-naṣṣī*), as is compatible with its context (*al-makān*).<sup>378</sup>

[D] However, the true intent of [the number] *sixty* is a hidden matter; there is no indication by means of which we establish its purpose with certitude. There are those who say that it refers to the faculties that abide in the human body and remain in the service of the soul, as [the latter's] representatives in governing the body so that [the soul] might remain free of direct contact with the body. For something that is not a body cannot come into direct contact with a body in a tactile sense, and there is no essential conjunction (*ittiṣāl dhātī*) between them.

[E] The *sages* (*al-ḥakhamim*) have stated in a homiletical fashion (*'alā ḥukm al-derash*) that it is an allusion to the *Priestly Blessing*, for its three verses contain sixty letters. We have already stated that these three verses allude to the ranks of the soul and its stations (*li-marātib al-naḥs wa-*

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<sup>377</sup> Arabic: *Al-āthār al-'ulwiyya*. See Ilai Alon, *Al-Farabi's Lexicon*, vol. 1, 3.

<sup>378</sup> Or: with the place. Cf. Al-Farabi's opinion that the jurist must have a comprehensive knowledge of the law, combined with an understanding of human society and its customs, and the original languages of the legal sources. See Butterworth, *Political Writings*, 99-101.

*maqāmātihā*) in accordance with the beginning, middle, and end.<sup>379</sup> Thus are the stations and conjunctions (*tilka al-maqāmāt wa-'l-ittiṣālāt*) categorized in this *book*, as we have explained. At the end of each station (*maqām*) it states, *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by gazelles or hinds of the field: Do not wake or rouse etc.*<sup>380</sup> (Song 2:7, 3:5, 8:4)

In [A], Tanḥum once again affirms the traditional rabbinic identification of Solomon with “the King to whom peace belongs” – i.e., God – in distinctly philosophical terms.<sup>381</sup> Underlying this interpretation is the medieval valence of the Hebrew term *sh-l-m* as perfection, equivalent to the Arabic *k-m-l* both in its sense of wholeness and perfection. Tanḥum follows Ibn ‘Aqnīn in identifying the *bedstead* as the soul, upon which the intellect – presumably the Active Intellect – is seated.<sup>382</sup> However, Tanḥum’s statement that the soul is that upon which the intellect rides (*markūb lahu*) is quite unique. First, it is helpful to note that Tanḥum’s language appears to be inspired by Song 3:10 (*his chariot [he made] crimson*).<sup>383</sup> There is another passage in Tanḥum’s commentary that may shed light on this image. In his second commentary to Song 7:6,<sup>384</sup> Tanḥum identifies four elements of the human soul, explicitly equating them with the four faces of the heavenly creatures in Ezekiel’s vision (cf. Ezek. 1:10). This echoes Maimonides’

<sup>379</sup> I.e., of the soul’s journey towards perfection and conjunction with the Divine.

<sup>380</sup> MS Poccocke 320, 41a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 47-48.

<sup>381</sup> This statement is connected to the present verse in Song Rabbah to 3:7.

<sup>382</sup> See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 148-151, 152-153. I would suggest that Halkin’s translation mistakes the participle *al-nāṭiqa* in 38a lines 8-9 (*ibid.*, 148-150) for the subject, when it is either a direct object or modifies an indirect object. According to the first of these options, we might translate: “here, by means of *his bedstead*, he spoke of the rational soul, the locus of [God’s] light, (*fa-ḥakā hunā bi-miṭṭato al-nāṭiqa maḥall nūrihi*).” According to the second possibility, we would translate: “here, by means of his rational *bedstead*, he spoke of the locus of [God’s] light.” (Ibn ‘Aqnīn consistently refers to the rational soul simply as *al-nāṭiqa*.) According to either reading, the rational soul is the locus of God’s light, represented in the verse by the figure of Solomon’s bedstead. Apart from rendering the word-order awkward, Halkin’s reading results in a non-agreement between the subject (*al-nāṭiqa*; Halkin: *ha-sikhlit*) and the verb (*ḥakā*; Halkin: *mesapperet*). In addition, my reading fits well with Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s subsequent emphasis of the rational soul as the “place of the light of the Active Intellect (*maḥall nūr al-‘aql al-fa‘āl*).” (See *ibid.*, 152; 38b, line 19).

<sup>383</sup> See MS Poccocke 320, 43a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 51. Here, the adornment of the carriage in crimson represents the soul that has become immersed in love, and is prepared for the encounter with the Beloved. Cf. Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s commentary *ad loc.*, where he identifies the crimson-draped chariot with blood, which is the “chariot” (*markab*) of the soul; see Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 162-163.

<sup>384</sup> See the passage translated below, p.388.

discussion of the verb *r-k-b* in *Guide* I.70. In that chapter, he explains the divine appellation *Rider of Araboth* (*rokheb ba-‘arabot*; Deut. 33:26) as denoting God’s rotation of the outermost celestial sphere, thereby setting the heavens and all of their parts into motion.<sup>385</sup> Here, Maimonides states that the description of the “*throne of glory* [...] borne by *four animals* (*kisse ha-kabod ḥamalat|hu arba‘ ḥayyot*)” points to many “intimations” (*tanbīhāt*) – one of which Tanḥum appears to decode in his treatment of human psychology in the context of his interpretation of the Work of the Chariot (*ma‘aseh merkabah*). If I am correct in this interpretation, Tanḥum’s description of the soul as that upon which the intellect rides may be a reference to his understanding of the four-part human organism as the Chariot (*merkabah*), guided towards its perfection by the Active Intellect.<sup>386</sup>

Tanḥum now [B] offers an interpretation of the number sixty, which he understands to represent the sciences that the soul must acquire, and which subsequently protect it from harm. They are called *warriors* due to the strengthening effect they have on the soul, enabling the latter to attain true knowledge and attain the rank of *palace* (*appiryon*).<sup>387</sup> However, the enumeration is either an intuitive estimation or a typological representation, also alluded to in Song 6:8.<sup>388</sup> Tanḥum

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<sup>385</sup> Pines, *Guide*, 171-175. For the background of the expression *rokheb ba-‘arabot* as an appellation for Baal, the Rider of the Heavens/Clouds?, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford University Press: 2003), 85-86.

<sup>386</sup> Cf. the statement ascribed to Resh Laqish in Genesis Rabbah that the patriarchs were themselves the Chariot (*merkabah*), in Theodor and Albeck, *Bereshit Rabba*, # 47 (vol. 1, 475), # 69 (vol. 2, 793), # 82 (vol. 2, 983). See also our discussion below, p.391-392.

<sup>387</sup> The lexeme *appiryon*, a *hapax legomenon* occurring in Song 3:9, appears to be a non-Semitic loanword. For possible Sanskrit and Greek etymologies, see Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 68. For Ibn Gabirol’s location of the *appiryon* of the divine Glory (*kabod*) within the intellectual realm, see Tanenbaum, *Contemplative Soul*, 63. Tanḥum translates the term as *hawdaj* (litter, sedan), echoes Ibn Ezra in explicitly stating that it is a *hapax*, and offers several possible Hebrew etymologies. (See MS Poccoke 320, 42b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 50; cf. the explicit and implied etymologies of Ibn ‘Aqnīn, in Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 156-159.) For *appiryon* as *hawdaj*, cf. Yefet b. Eli’s translation in Alobaidi, *Commentary of Yefet ben Eli*, 9, 70; and the translation accompanying the commentary attributed to Saadia, in Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 69; and the commentary itself in *ibid.*, 70.

<sup>388</sup> Tanḥum does not expand upon this theme in his commentary to 6:8, but he adds that the *sixty queens* may also represent sixty forces (*sittīn quwā*) in the governance of the world, that have eighty subdivisions (represented by the

here refers to his interpretation of the *palace* of Song 3:9, in which he states that this figure represents the final perfection of a human being, and the ultimate realization of *imago dei*.<sup>389</sup>

Tanḥum thus once again alludes to his ideal of the attainment of human perfection through comprehensive philosophical cultivation.<sup>390</sup> This interpretation of the number sixty in this manner appears to be unattested in earlier commentaries.<sup>391</sup>

Tanḥum now offers [C] an account of the sciences alluded to in the verse.<sup>392</sup> He enumerates them as follows:

1. Ethics and governance (*'ilm al-akhlāq wa-'l-siyāsa*): (a) Individual, (b) household, and (c) city-state governance; and (d) governance (*tadbīr*) of the religious community (*tadbīr al-milla*), by which I mean prophetic government (*siyāsat al-nubuwwa*).
2. Mathematics: Four, each part further dividing into parts.
3. Physics: The science of elements, admixture, motion, time, place, matter, form, meteorology, minerals, plants, animals, the human being, and similar such subdivisions.
4. Metaphysics, which may be further subdivided.
5. The religious sciences (*al-'ulūm al-shar'iyya*) and that which follows them, apparently scriptural exegesis.

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*eighty concubines*), and innumerable further subdivisions (*and countless maidens*). See MS Pococke 320, 57a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 67-68.

<sup>389</sup> MS Pococke 320, 41a, 43b; Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 48, 51.

<sup>390</sup> See the discussion of Tanḥum's classification of the sciences, above, pp.190-230.

<sup>391</sup> In addition to association with the 600 000 adult male Israelites in the desert that is advanced by both Ibn Ezra and Ibn 'Aqnīn and reflected in Tanḥum's first interpretation of the verse, Ibn 'Aqnīn discusses (a) the human being's faculties that serve the soul, which number approximately sixty; and (b) the mathematical symbolism of the number sixty. (Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 148-151.)

<sup>392</sup> Note that this enumeration was presumably written before the full classification of the sciences in the introduction to his commentary on Qohelet. For Tanḥum's authorship of his commentaries following the traditional order of the masoretic codices, see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 8-14.

In this enumeration of the sciences, Tanḥum divides the practical sciences into four parts rather than three. In so doing, he more closely follows the *Treatise on Logic*.<sup>393</sup> However, while the fourth part of the practical sciences according to the latter is “governance of the great nation or the nations (*tadbīr al-umma al-kabīra aw al-umam*),”<sup>394</sup> in Tanḥum’s account it is “prophetic rulership (*siyāsāt al-nubuwwa*).” In identifying prophetic rulership as a distinct category, Tanḥum echoes the distinction maintained in both the *Treatise* and the *Guide* between human *nomoi* and the governance of revealed law.<sup>395</sup> Absent from his enumeration here is the distinction between practical and theoretical sciences.<sup>396</sup> Also new is the category of religious sciences, which is absent from more peripatetically inclined enumerations.<sup>397</sup> The discrepancies between his two enumerations quite clearly arise from his local exegetical concerns. In the introduction to Qohelet, his primary aims are to demonstrate that the structure and progression of the Solomonic corpus mirror the philosophical sciences, and to provide his reader with a model philosophical curriculum; in his second commentary to Song 3:7, he seeks to illustrate the sheer profusion and diversity of the sciences that must be acquired in order to attain and maintain intellectual perfection. Each account has its symmetry: In the introduction to Qohelet, the three parts of the practical sciences mirror the three parts of the theoretical sciences; in his commentary to the Song of Songs, the four parts of the ethical and political science mirror the four parts of the mathematical sciences.

Tanḥum now [D] declares that the true meaning of the enumeration of *sixty warriors* remains a mystery, and that others have proposed alternative interpretations along the lines that are relevant

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<sup>393</sup> See above, pp.200-202.

<sup>394</sup> English in Efros, *Maimonides’ Treatise on Logic*, 62-64. Arabic in Efros, “Maqāla,” 88-92; and Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā’at al-manṭiq*,” 108-110.

<sup>395</sup> For this theme, see *Guide* III.27 (Pines, 510-5112).

<sup>396</sup> For this distinction in his commentary to Qohelet, see above, p.196-197.

<sup>397</sup> See above, pp.190-230. For this category in al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ ulūm al-dīn*, see Bakar, *Classification*, 205-206.

to his psychologizing commentary. The first alternative that Tanḥum discusses identifies the *sixty warriors* with “the faculties that abide in the human body and remain in the service of the soul,” governing the body on the soul’s behalf. These faculties mediate between the governing soul and the governed body, since “something that is not a body cannot come into direct contact with a body in a tactile sense, and there is no essential conjunction (*ittiṣāl dhātī*) between them.”<sup>398</sup> This interpretation is provided by Ibn ‘Aqnīn, who offers a full enumeration of sixty faculties.<sup>399</sup> However, Ibn ‘Aqnīn does not raise the problem of mediation between the immaterial soul and the body, a theme that is treated in the Arabic Plotinus texts.<sup>400</sup>

In [E], Tanḥum offers a final possibility for the interpretation of the figure of the *sixty warriors*: A classical rabbinic interpretation that draws a connection between our verse and the sixty letters of the Priestly Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26).<sup>401</sup> The interpretation is cited by Ibn ‘Aqnīn, but not explicitly identified as rabbinic<sup>402</sup> – demonstrating Tanḥum’s direct familiarity with the classical sources. He goes on to allude to his own interpretation of the Priestly Blessing, which integrates elements of Peripatetic soteriology and Sufi terminology. Tanḥum’s interpretation of the Priestly Blessing will be discussed at length in the following section of the present chapter. In the context of Tanḥum’s commentary to Song 3:7, suffice it to say that Tanḥum sees an allusion in the Priestly Blessing to each major stage of an individual’s spiritual development, and he understands that scheme to be reflected in the very structure of the Song of Songs. Although he neither explicitly affirms nor rejects the rabbinic identification of Song 3:7 with the Priestly Blessing, it is likely that he saw it as significant in the most literal sense of the term: It signifies

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<sup>398</sup> Cf. Adamson, “Aristotelianism and the Soul in the Arabic Plotinus,” 214.

<sup>399</sup> See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 150-153.

<sup>400</sup> See Adamson, “Aristotelianism and the Soul in the Arabic Plotinus,” 213-227. For the rational or divine soul governing the body via the animal soul in the *Theology of Aristotle*, see *ibid.*, 221.

<sup>401</sup> See Song Rabbah to Song 3:7.

<sup>402</sup> See Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 148-149. This also true of the commentary to Song attributed to Saadia; see Qafih, *Hamesh megillot*, 70.

some association between the figures of the Song of Songs and the Priestly Blessing. Indeed, as we have seen, Tanḥum saw a direct parallel between the clear tripartite structure of the Priestly Blessing, and the progression of the Song of Songs according to the three major stages of intellectual and spiritual attainment.

In conclusion, Tanḥum's interpretations of these two verses illustrate his different modes of exegesis within this work. We note the more extensive quality of his second commentary, its inclusion of linguistic discussions, and his tendency to provide more detailed discussions in the context of his psychologizing exegesis. This, combined with the explicit statements noted in our introduction to his commentary,<sup>403</sup> serves to emphasize the primacy of this mode of interpretation for Tanḥum. This is not to deny the richness of his first commentary: As we have seen, his historical-allegorical exegesis is often grounded in earlier sources, reframes those sources in original ways, and is sometimes informed by philosophical concerns. But there is no doubt that Tanḥum's abilities as a philologist and a thinker are more fully expressed in his second, psychologizing commentary.

### ***"A king, captive in the pools": Tanḥum on the Sanctuary***

#### *Background: Macrocosm and Microcosm, Polis and Tabernacle*

The notion that there exists a basic homology between the cosmos and the human being has its roots in antiquity. It is reflected in the works of Plato, and appears to have its origins among the pre-Socratics.<sup>404</sup> In the Hellenistic period, the concept of the human being as microcosm, and its

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<sup>403</sup> See above, p.316-317.

<sup>404</sup> For a broad history of the concept, see George Perrigo Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms in the History of Philosophy* (Columbia University Press: 1922). For Plato's conception of the world as a whole and coherent individual being, see *Timaeus* 30b-34b; for the human head being modeled on the world, see *ibid.*, 44d-45b; cf. also 90c-d. For Democritus of Abdera's statement that "Man is a universe in little (*Microcosm*)," see Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A complete translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (The Alden Press, Oxford: 1948), 99; see also Karsten Friis Johansen, *A History of*

corollary of the universe as *anthropos* writ large, attained wide acceptance: It is attested in the works of Philo of Alexandria,<sup>405</sup> Neoplatonic, Stoic, and Christian sources.<sup>406</sup> The concept of a cosmic-anthropological homology was further transmitted and developed in the medieval period, and formulations of it may be found in a broad range of medieval Islamic sources, including al-Fārābī, the Brethren of Purity, Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī, and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, among others.<sup>407</sup> Such a concept is also attested in classical rabbinic sources,<sup>408</sup> and picked up by medieval Jewish thinkers such as Yefet b. Eli, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Judah Ha-Levi, Joseph Ibn Ṣaddiq, and Maimonides.<sup>409</sup>

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*Ancient Philosophy: From the Beginnings to Augustine*, trans. Henrik Rosenmeier (Routledge: 1998), 74. For its development and transmission in Stoic sources, see Francis E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York University Press: 1967), 186.

<sup>405</sup> See David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Brill: 1986), 465-466.

<sup>406</sup> See Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms*, 1-36.

<sup>407</sup> Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms*, 37-52. For al-Fārābī on the homologous structure of the organism, the cosmos, and the *polis*, see fn. 411 below. For the Brethren of Purity on the cosmos as a “macroanthropos”, see Baffioni, *On the Natural Sciences*, 135-137 (English)/ 68-73 (Arabic), 305-307 (English), 392-395 (Arabic); Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 66-74; Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, 181. For al-Sijistānī on this theme, see Paul E. Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge University Press: 1993), 107-113. For Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī’s articulation of this concept in his allegories, see Thackston, *Mystical and Visionary Treatises*, 66-67, 73, 103. For the ascription of the concept that human beings are a microcosm to Hermes in the early Arabic *Al-siyāsa al-‘ammīyya*, see Kevin van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford University Press: 2009), 198.

<sup>408</sup> Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, version A, # 31, 90-92; *Aggadot ‘olam qatan*, in Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* (Wahrmann Books: 1967), vol. 5, 57-59. See Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: The World and Wisdom of the Rabbis of the Talmud* (Harvard University Press: 1975), 233. Cf. also Genesis Rabbah 1:26 (ed. Theodor and Albeck, vol. 1, 58-59).

<sup>409</sup> See Malter, “Personifications of Soul and Body,” 453-454. For Yefet b. Eli’s statement that the human being is a small world (*al-‘ālam al-ṣaghīr*), see Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms*, 39. For the concept of the human being as a microcosm in the thought of Ibn Gabirol, see Jacques Schlanger, *La Philosophie de Salomon Ibn Gabirol: Étude d’un néoplatonisme* (Brill: 1968), 313-316. For the theme in Judah Ha-Levi, see *Kuzari* 4:25, where he refers to the “greater and smaller world, by which I mean the human being (*al-‘ālam al-akbar wa-’l-aṣghar a’nī al-insān*),” in Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-’l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 176; and cf. Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Song of the Distant Dove: Judah Halevi’s Pilgrimage* (Oxford University Press: 2008), 75. For Joseph Ibn Ṣaddiq, see Jacob Haberman, *The Microcosm of Joseph Ibn Ṣaddiq* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: 2003). For this concept in Maimonides, see *Guide* I.72 (Pines, 184-194, esp. 190). See also Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms*, 43-45. In addition to the aforementioned sources, note the centrality of this theme in Shabbetai Donnolo’s (10<sup>th</sup> century, Southern Italy) commentary to *Sefer yetzirah*, for which see Andrew Sharf, *The Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo* (Aris & Phillips: 1976), 6-7, 51, 52-72, 73, 91-93. This motif is also employed by Baḥya Ibn Paquda – see Mansoor, *Duties of the Heart*, 160-161; Lobel, *Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*, 129. See also the elaborate treatment of this topic in the work of the Yemeni author Nathanael Ibn al-Fayyūmī (fl. 12<sup>th</sup> century), *Bustān al-‘uqūl*. For this passage, see *The Bustan al-Ukul by Nathanael Ibn al-Fayyumi* (Columbia University Press: 1908), ed. and trans. David Levine, English section 12-39, Judeo-Arabic section 8-23.

A third tier in this cosmological scheme is sometimes occupied by the *polis*. Once again, the motif has its origins in antiquity, and is reflected in Plato's *Republic*.<sup>410</sup> Al-Fārābī echoes the *Republic* when he states that the virtuous city-state is to be understood as an organism insofar as its parts interact in a fashion analogous both to the cosmos and a human being.<sup>411</sup> The proper structure and function of the polis is to be inferred from a profound contemplation of both the macrocosm and the microcosm, observing the interrelation between their parts in order to ensure harmonious functioning.<sup>412</sup>

A distinct motif in rabbinic thought is that of the Sanctuary or Temple as a model of the cosmos or the heavens.<sup>413</sup> Indeed, this understanding appears to be rooted in antiquity, and is attested in diverse historical and cultural contexts.<sup>414</sup> The notion of the Sanctuary or Solomon's Temple<sup>415</sup> as a model of the human organism is perhaps a logical extension of such thinking, particularly

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<sup>410</sup> For this as a theme in Plato's *Republic*, see G. R. F. Ferrari, *City and Soul in Plato's Republic* (University of Chicago Press: 2005).

<sup>411</sup> For structural parallel between the *polis* and the cosmos in al-Farabi, see Berman, "The Purpose of Philosophy." For the *polis* as analogous to a human being in its structure and function, see *Fuṣūl muntaza'a* (Selected Aphorisms), translated in Butterworth, *The Political Writings*, 23 (section 25). For the concept of the organism as a quasi-political hierarchy in which various faculties and organs rule others, see al-Fārābī's *Mabādi' ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, Chapters 10-11 (in Richard Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādi' ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* (Clarendon Press: 1985), 164-187). For the relationship between al-Fārābī's political philosophy and Plato's *Republic*, see Muhsin S. Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy* (The University of Chicago Press: 2001), 83, 101-102, 192-193.

<sup>412</sup> For an English translation of the relevant passage in *Kitāb al-milla* (Book of Religion), see English translation see Charles E. Butterworth (trans.), "Alfarabi, *The Book of Religion*," in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), eds. Joshua Parens and Joseph C. Macfarland (Cornell University Press: 2011), 31-35. It is also possible that this concept underlies al-Fārābī's statement that the "first ruler (*al-ra'īs al-awwal*)" – i.e., the lawgiver (*wāḍī' al-nawāmis* or *wāḍī' al-sharī'a*) referred to in other works – has attained perfection in all of the sciences. For this conception in al-Fārābī, see Butterworth, "Alfarabi, *The Political Regime*," 42 (paragraph 79). For the exclusive use of the term *wāḍī' al-sharī'a* in the *Book of Religion*, see Charles E. Butterworth (ed. and trans.), *Alfarabi: The Political Writings ("Selected Aphorisms" and Other Texts)* (Cornell University Press: 2001), 96 fn.9.

<sup>413</sup> Mandelbaum, *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, vol. 1, 8; Song of Songs Rabbah to Song 3:11. Cf. Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 7:7, cited and discussed in Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," in *The Journal of Religion* 64:3 (1984), 284-285.

<sup>414</sup> For a summary and qualified affirmation of William Foxwell Albright's argument concerning the cosmological significance of the Solomonic Temple in the biblical accounts, see Levenson, "Temple and World," 285-286. Cf. also Gary A. Anderson, "To See Where God Dwells: The Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition," in *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2008), 13-45.

<sup>415</sup> Although Tanḥum's discussions appear to refer both to the Sanctuary and the Temple, for the sake of convenience I shall refer consistently to the Sanctuary.

given the attestation of a microcosmic anthropology in rabbinic sources. Indeed, such a conception is strongly implied in one recension of *Midrash tanhuma*.<sup>416</sup>

Given the long history and wide diffusion of such analogical discourse, it is not surprising that thinkers within the medieval rabbinic tradition should pick up on this scheme, and continue to develop their own models of such a three-tiered cosmic homology.<sup>417</sup> Indeed, this is precisely what we find in Saadia Gaon's commentary to *Sefer Yetzirah*:

As for his statement, *and from all three has He built His abode (me'ono)*, it refers to the *Sanctuary (mishkan)*,<sup>418</sup> as it states, *O Lord, I love Your abode and home (me'on betekha) and the dwelling-place (meqom mishkan) of Your glory.* (Ps. 26:8)<sup>419</sup> For the ceiling of the *Sanctuary* is similar to the sky, having shades of blue in its weave; and the *hooks* (which are like golden studs) in the middle, which resemble the stars in the sky, as they said, *And the hooks in the loops appear like the stars in the firmament.*<sup>420</sup> And the foundations of the *Sanctuary* – called *adanim* – resemble the foundations of the earth, i.e., the mountains and their hills,<sup>421</sup> as it states, *Upon what are her pillars (adaneha) pressed* etc. (Job 38:6) And there is space between them, and the light of the Divine Presence (*ha-shekhinah*) dwells therein, as we hold as an article of faith (*na'taqidu*)

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<sup>416</sup> “It is written: *The Lord founded the earth by wisdom* etc. (Prov. 3:19) And it says: *I filled him with the spirit of God, with wisdom.* (Ex. 31:) It teaches you that the *Sanctuary* is equivalent to the entire world, and to the formation of the human being, who is a microcosm (*'olam qatan*).” (*Midrash Tanhuma* [Vilna: 1831], *Pequdei* 3.) This edition is ultimately based on one of two recensions, which formed the basis for the *editio princeps* (Constantinople: 1520/22). However, the passage does not appear in S. Buber's edition (*Midrasch Tanhuma*, Vilna: 1885). The latter most likely reflects a European recension of the text. For editions and studies, dating and origins of the text, the complex relationship between its recensions, and the difficulties involved in recovering or reconstructing an *Urtext* of the *Tanhuma*, see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 302-306. For E. E. Urbach's argument that this passage preserves an ancient source that is reflected in scattered talmudic references, see Urbach, *Sages*, 245-248. Apart from fundamental methodological problems in Urbach's discussion, note the *Tanhuma*'s integration of the stammaitic gloss to R. Hanina's comment in bNiddah 16b, viz. that God does not determine if the embryo will develop into a righteous or wicked person, but leaves that in the hands of the individual human being. This passage in the *Tanhuma* is thus very clearly dependent on the passage in bNiddah.

<sup>417</sup> Compare the Brethren of Purity, who view the Ka'ba as a model of the earth, and the circumambulations about it as an enactment of celestial motion – in Baffioni, *On the Natural Sciences*, 154-156 (English)/ 116-118 (Arabic), 295-296 (English)/ 376-377 (Arabic).

<sup>418</sup> In his Arabic translation of the Hebrew passage in SY, Saadia renders *me'ono* (His abode) as *qudsahu* (His sanctuary).

<sup>419</sup> I.e., the verse from Psalms equates the terms “abode” (*ma'on*) and “sanctuary” (*mishkan*).

<sup>420</sup> Cf. the formulations in Mandelbaum, *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, vol. 1, 8; Song Rabbah 3:11.

<sup>421</sup> Thus Qafih translates the Arabic, which literally reads “their pegs” (*awtāduhā*).

that He, exalted and almighty, is present in all things and occupies all things. And these are the parallels by which one may compare the great world (that is the world),<sup>422</sup> and the middle world (that is, the *Sanctuary*),<sup>423</sup> and the small world (that is, the human being).<sup>424</sup> As we say, “The luminaries in the world, and the eyes of a person, and the lamps of the candelabrum in the *Sanctuary*.”<sup>425</sup> And we say: *The firmament (al-raqia’)* divides the two waters in the world;<sup>426</sup> and the screen (*wa’-l-parokhet*) divides the between the select (*al-khaṣṣ*) and the common (*wa’-l-‘āmm*) in the *Sanctuary*, and the barrier called *diaphragma* divides between the nourishing apparatus (*ālat al-ghidhā’*) and the vital apparatus (*wa-ālat al-naḥs*) in a person. And you may find a complete account of the eighteen pairs by means of which these three may be compared in the explanation of *the construction of the Sanctuary (sharḥ ma’aseh ha-mishkan)*. And this is why it states, *and from all three has He built His abode.*<sup>427</sup>

Here we find a clear statement of the existence of a homology between a great (*kabīr*), small (*ṣaghīr*), and medial (*awsaṭ*) cosmos. It is quite evident that Saadia is reliant on midrashic sources for the first two sets of parallels.<sup>428</sup> Also notable is Saadia’s reference to “the explanation of the construction of the *Sanctuary (sharḥ ma’aseh ha-mishkan)*”. It is not entirely clear from

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<sup>422</sup> Arabic: *al-‘ālam al-kabīr wa-hiya al-dunyā.*

<sup>423</sup> Arabic: *wa’-l-‘ālam al-awsaṭ wa-huwa al-mishkan.*

<sup>424</sup> Arabic: *wa’-l-‘ālam al-ṣaghīr wa-huwa al-insān.*

<sup>425</sup> Arabic: *Kamā naqūl inna al-nayyirayn fī al-dunyā wa’-l-‘aynayn fī al-insān wa-suruḥ al-manāra fī al-mishkan.*

The precise relationship between this statement and that which follows is not clear to me. On the one hand, like that which follows, it is a comparison between a particular element of the three tiers of the homologous *kosmoi*. On the other hand, unlike that which follows, this appears to be framed as a known statement: “As we say (*kamā naqūlu*)...” Perhaps the opening statement is a known saying, while that which follows is Saadia’s own expansion upon the topic.

<sup>426</sup> See Gen. 1:6-7.

<sup>427</sup> Qafih, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 103. For a discussion of this passage, see Maurizio Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah: Interpretive Projections of the Sanctuary and Ritual* (Cherub Press: 2007), 161-162.

<sup>428</sup> Mandelbaum, *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, vol. 1, 8.

this context whether Saadia is referring to a work of his own,<sup>429</sup> or to an earlier work of another author.<sup>430</sup>

Saadia's discussion in his commentary to *Sefer yetzirah* inspired two quite divergent treatments among later medieval Jewish thinkers. Abraham Ibn Ezra developed upon the tripartite model, refining and elaborating upon it in the process; while Judah Ha-Levi focused on the analogical relationship between the human organism and the Sanctuary.<sup>431</sup>

In his "short commentary" to Exodus 25:7, Abraham Ibn Ezra writes as follows:

Know that the Gaon explained *shesh* as one of the varieties of linen in Egypt, and it is very fine. And he explained [this] very well, and the witness is *And he dressed him in clothes of fine linen (bigde shesh; Gen. 41:42)*.

He also said that there are three worlds: This world is the great one (*zeh ha-'olam hu ha-gadol*), and the Sanctuary is the median one (*ve-ha-mishkan ha-emtza 'i*), and the human is the small one (*ve-ha-adam ha-qatan*). The world has the sky, the Sanctuary has drapes (*yeri 'ot*) – as it is said, *spreading the heavens like a tent drape (ka-yeri 'ah; Ps. 104:2)* – and the human being has a head. And [so too] the firmament, the curtain, and the barrier between the apparatus of the soul (*nefesh*) and that of consumption.

Also [like this is] light in the world, the light of the Divine Presence (*shekhinah*), and the light of the soul (*nefesh*). Also [like this is] the earth, [the element of] earth in the human being, and the pillars of the Sanctuary. And in the world are angels, and in the Sanctuary cherubs, and in the human being thoughts.<sup>432</sup> And plants, and the showbread, and consumption in humans. And

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<sup>429</sup> For which possibility, see Malter, *Saadia Gaon*, 186. Despite his paraphrase of Saadia, followed by Mottolese (*Analogy in Midrash*, 161), Saadia does not use any first person possessive form – leaving the authorship of the *sharḥ* ambiguous.

<sup>430</sup> Cf. Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash*, 161-162.

<sup>431</sup> Cf. Langermann, "Astrological Themes," 34.

<sup>432</sup> Ibn Ezra locates the the origin of the human rational soul in the spiritual or intellectual realm, also associated with the Universal Soul. See Wolfson, "God, the Demiurge and the Intellect," 82-83. See also his statement to this

luminaries, lamps, and eyes. And birds in the world, and in the sacrificial ceremony, and the wings of the lungs in humans. And livestock and animals in the world, and the sacrifice of livestock, and hands and feet in humans. And in the world are joys and sorrows, and in the Sanctuary musical instruments and slaughter and burning, and in the human being liver and spleen. And in the world are humans, and in the Sanctuary the high priest, and in the human being the heart. And in the world is the work of the heavens (*melekhet shamayim*), and in the Sanctuary the Ark and Tablets, and in the human being wisdom. Also in the world are winds,<sup>433</sup> and in the Sanctuary hangings and cords and pegs, and in the human being the various faculties (*mine ha-koah*). And in the world there is the narrative of the Sabbath day, (Gen. 2:1-4) and in the Sanctuary the dedication of the altar,<sup>434</sup> (Ex. 25-40) and in the human being circumcision.<sup>435</sup>

Although Ibn Ezra's account is self-consciously informed by that of Saadia, it differs on a number of points. Whereas Saadia offers five sets of parallels, Ibn Ezra offers fourteen. Where some of the parallels are clearly derived from Saadia's discussion, a number of them are highly original. Particularly notable is his equation between the cherubs and the intellect, which has a strong parallel in the introduction to his commentary to the Pentateuch, suggesting that it is his original formulation.<sup>436</sup> His order also differs from that of Saadia, and is somewhat less stylistically fragmented. It is also notable that this particular formulation is unique in Ibn Ezra's writings, although it does resonate strongly with his general inclination to point to homologous structures. Elsewhere, Ibn Ezra presents quite a different three-tiered cosmology. Both in his

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effect in *Sefer ha-mibharim*, cited in Langermann, "Astrological Themes," 52. This concept is echoed in the introduction to his commentary to the Pentateuch, in his critique of radical allegoresis (the third method), where he states that "the angel between a person and his God is his intellect (*ve-ha-mal'akh beyn adam u-beyn elohav hu sikhlo*)."

<sup>433</sup> Or: cardinal directions; or: spirits. Heb. *ruhot*.

<sup>434</sup> On the striking similarity between the language of the dedication of the Sanctuary and the Creation narrative, see Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Origins of Biblical Israel* (Schocken: 1986), 213.

<sup>435</sup> For a discussion of this passage, see Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash*, 162. Cf. also Ibn Ezra's "long commentary" to Exodus 26:6.

<sup>436</sup> *Ve-ha-mal'akh beyn adam le-elohav hu sikhlo*.

commentary to the Torah and in *Hay ben Meqitz*, he refers to an upper (*'elyon*), middle (*emtza 'i*), and lower (*shafel*) world – corresponding with the intellectual realm, the celestial realm, and the sublunar world respectively.<sup>437</sup> Not only is the human being a microcosm, but language is structured as an analogue to the human being.<sup>438</sup>

In the *Kuzari*, Judah Ha-Levi picked up on the analogy between the human organism and the Sanctuary, and richly developed upon it.<sup>439</sup> He understood the Divine presence in the Holy of Holies to mirror the human being's rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭīqa*), while the proper arrangement of its parts and distribution of its faculties raises the physical body above the animal class and makes it a fitting abode for “the intellectual sovereign (*al-malik al-'aqlī*)”.<sup>440</sup> The relationship between the Divine presence and the sacrificial service mirrors that between the intellectual soul and the body: Just as the Divine hosts the sacrificial procedures and meals, but is detached from those processes and independent of them, the quasi-angelic rational soul is far-removed from the physical processes of the body. And just as the proper functioning of the sacrificial cult renders the cultic center receptive to the Divine presence, the properly nourished and healthily functioning physical organism becomes receptive to the emanated human intellect.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> See Hughes, “The Three Worlds.”

<sup>438</sup> For the human being as a microcosm, see Ibn Ezra's alternative commentary (*shiṭṭah aḥeret*) to Gen. 1:26, and his commentaries to Zach. 12:1, Prov. 3:18, Dan. 10:21. For the anthropological-linguistic analogy, see his “long commentary” to Ex. 19:20.

<sup>439</sup> See Malter, “Personifications of Soul and Body,” 479. For the entire relevant passage in Arabic, see in Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 59-63; English translations are from Hirschfeld, *Kitab al-Khazari*, 101-106. The Arabic called the Divine presence *al-amr al-ilāhī* (Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 59), translated by Hirschfeld (*Kitab al-Khazari*, 102) as “the Divine Influence”. See also Howard Kreisel, “Reasons for the Commandments,” in *Maimonidean Studies*, vol. 5, ed. Arthur Hyman (Yeshiva University Press: 2008), 173.

<sup>440</sup> Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 59; cf. Hirschfeld, *Kitab al-Khazari*, 102.

<sup>441</sup> Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 59-60; Hirschfeld, *Kitab al-Khazari*, 102-103. Ha-Levi's concept of the human soul here is that it is “a substance separate [from matter] approaching that of the angels (*jawhar muḥāraq yuqāribu jawhar al-malā'ika*).” (Compare Hirschfeld's translation, *ibid.*, 103.)

According to Ha-Levi, the fat and vapor of sacrifices reflect the role of the blood in the body, which carries small fatty globules to which heat clings (the heat being represented by the smoke of the incense and oil). The altar of burnt offerings bears the visible fires, while the golden altar bears a more sublime and invisible fire.<sup>442</sup> The candlestick bears “the light of wisdom and inspiration (*nūr al-ḥikma wa-’l-ilhām*)”, apparently like brain, in which the faculties of the mind are located.<sup>443</sup> These symbolic organs must be “fed” by the abundance of material goods represented by the table. The entire system stood in the service of the Holy Ark and the Cherubim, which represent the heart and lungs above it.<sup>444</sup> Similarly, the Levites represent the faculties, which enable the functioning of the inner and outer senses via the organs in which they are located.<sup>445</sup>

Ha-Levi’s *ḥibr/ḥabr* stops short of offering a more detailed account – indeed, he even states that the matter might not be precisely as he says.<sup>446</sup> But this is not before he has presented a powerful case for the sacrificial service and its cultic space as a complex representation of the human organism and the relationship between the intellect and the physical body to which it must become enjoined.

### *Tanḥum on the Sanctuary: Part I*

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<sup>442</sup> Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-’l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 61; Hirschfeld, *Kitab al-Khazari*, 104. Cf. also the description of the flame of the altar of burnt offerings in the Babylonian Talmud, Yoma, 21b.

<sup>443</sup> Once again, Ha-Levi does not make this explicit. For his treatment of the brain as the locus (*maḥāll*) of the internal and external senses (*al-ḥawāss al-zāhira wa-’l-bāḥina*), but functioning with the support of the heart (*bi-ta’yīd al-qalb*), see Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-’l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 63; Hirschfeld, *Kitab al-Khazari*, 104. Here he also makes explicit that the heart is ranked above the brain in terms of its governance of these functions.

<sup>444</sup> Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-’l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 62; Hirschfeld, *Kitab al-Khazari*, 104.

<sup>445</sup> Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-’l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 62; Hirschfeld, *Kitab al-Khazari*, 104-105.

<sup>446</sup> Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-’l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 63; Hirschfeld, *Kitab al-Khazari*, 106.

Apparently taking his inspiration primarily from ha-Levi,<sup>447</sup> Tanḥum presents the following interpretation of the Sanctuary and its parts in his first commentary to Song 4:1:

*Ah, you are beautiful, my companion! You are beautiful! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil.* (Song 4:1)

*Behind your veil.* The message (*al-khiṭāb*) reaches them from within the *partition* (*al-parokhet*), which is a veil (*hijāb*) that separates between *the Sanctum* (*ha-qodesh*) and *the Holy of Holies* (*qodesh ha-qodashim*).

And similar to this is the diaphragm (*hijāb al-qalb*) that separates [the heart] from the liver and the intestines. And the *cover* (*wa-'l-kapporet*) is the veil that encloses the heart itself, the heart corresponds with the *ark* (*al-aron*), and the lungs hover over it with their wings outside the veil: *Shielding the cover with their wings.* (Ex. 25:20, 37:9)

*The showbread*<sup>448</sup> is permanently upon the liver, for the nourishment of all of the organs is from [the liver].

The brain and senses and faculties of perception are the *candelabrum* (*al-menorah*): *Its lamps shall illuminate before it.* (Cf. Ex. 25:37) For there are seven apertures in the front [of the human head]: Two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth.<sup>449</sup>

*The altar of the burnt offering* is the stomach.

*The incense altar* is cogitation (*al-fikr*), upon which is placed neither a *strange fire*,<sup>450</sup> nor a *burnt offering for your spirit* (cf. Ezek. 20:32),<sup>451</sup> nor a physical [meal] *offering* (*minḥah jismāniyya*)

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<sup>447</sup> Cf. Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 182, fn. 26. Contrary to Zoref, I do not see any *direct* correspondence between Ibn Ezra's "short commentary" to Exodus 25:7 and Tanḥum's first commentary to Song 4:1. Rather, they are both dependent (Tanḥum minimally so) on Saadia's commentary to *Sefer yetzirah*, discussed in detail below.

<sup>448</sup> For which, see Exodus 35:13, 39:36.

<sup>449</sup> Corresponding with the seven lamps of the candelabrum.

like *the altar of the burnt offering*. It is not occupied with anything perceived by the senses, composite, or compounded<sup>452</sup> – *and you shall pour no libation upon it* (Ex. 30:9) – save *incense*, a subtle *sweet smell* that rises from subtle, finely fragrant matter.

The *breastplate* is the imaginative faculty (*wa- 'l-ḥoshen al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*); the *ephod* is the common sense (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarik*).<sup>453</sup> They are inlaid with *lapis lazuli* (*abne shoham*; Ex. 25:7, 28:9) – purity, cleanliness, and translucence; and *ornamental*<sup>454</sup> *stones* (*abne millu'im*; Ex. 25:7) – for the perception of the rank of intellectual perfection, free of compositeness.

And the soul is the *high priest*, *speaking by means of the holy spirit* (*medabber be-ruaḥ ha-qodesh*), using the *Urim and Thummim*. (Cf. Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21)

The remaining faculties are the rest of the *priests* and *Levites*, and the remaining organs are the rest of *Israel*.

And when *the priest atones for himself*, he then *atones for his household*, who are the rest of the *priests*. (Cf. Lev. 16:6, 11, 17, 24) Subsequently, *atonement* reaches the rest of *Israel*.

Just as *Israel* is [comprised of] *priests*, *Levites*, and *Israelites*, the faculties [of human beings] are spiritual, animal, and natural<sup>455</sup> (*al-quwā nafṣāniyya wa-ḥayawāniyya wa-ṭabi'iyya*).

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<sup>450</sup> Cf. Ex. 30:9; Lev. 10:1; Num. 3:4, 26:61.

<sup>451</sup> Judeo-Arabic: *wa-lā 'olah 'al ruḥakhem*. In context it is clear that Tanḥum is using *'olah* in a nominal sense, referring to the sacrifices. However, in Ezekiel 20:32 the participle is used in its non-sacrificial sense, rendering the sense “that which occurs to you”. (Cf. the Targum, Rashi, and Qimḥi *ad loc.*) It is not clear to me whether Tanḥum read the original verse that way, or is simply borrowing its phraseology for a new context.

<sup>452</sup> Arabic: *wa-lā yushghalu bi-amr maḥsūs murakkab mumtazij*. While conceptualization (*taṣawwur*) is responsible for the initial abstraction of concepts from objects of sense perception, cogitation (*fikr/tafakkur/mufakkira*) represents the ability to employ discursive reason in a productive fashion, drawing on knowledge already acquired. See discussion above, pp.140-142.

<sup>453</sup> For *al-ḥiss al-mushtarik* as the faculty by means of which the mind receives sensible forms, Kaukua, “Avicenna on the Soul’s Activity in Perception,” 101.

<sup>454</sup> I have based this translation of the Hebrew *abne millu'im* on Ibn Janaḥ’s interpretation, that the term here refers to “stringing [or: arranging] and threading (*al-naẓm wa- 'l-silk* ).” (Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 376.)

<sup>455</sup> I.e., vegetative.

Similarly, the *basin* for pouring water to wash the hands and feet, and the *sacrifices* in the morning and evening *always*, and of course the *additional* [offerings], [meal] *offerings*, and *votive and freewill offerings* throughout the day. For that is similar to the sequence of meals for most of the [human] species, for the most part.

And from what we have discussed, one may deduce what has not been discussed, and the entire matter will be revealed.<sup>456</sup>

Simultaneously echoing ha-Levi and modifying his formulation, Tanḥum states that the altar of burnt offerings is the stomach, while the golden altar represents the mental faculty of cogitation (*fikr*). Furthermore, the body of the candelabrum is the brain and the faculties seated in it – sensory and mental – while the seven lamps upon its branches represent the seven orifices of the human head. In these cases, Tanḥum appears to be picking up on the implications of ha-Levi’s somewhat abstruse account and elaborating upon it. However, in the case of the candelabrum, the closest parallel to Tanḥum’s formulation may be found in the anonymous *Peraqim ba-hatzlahah* (Chapters on Felicity), a medieval Judeo-Arabic work of uncertain authorship that was ascribed to Maimonides, but is more likely of post-Maimonidean Levantine or Egyptian provenance, as it exhibits the typical Peripatetic-Sufi eclecticism that characterizes so much of the literary production of this milieu.<sup>457</sup> In this work, the author identifies the menorah as “the

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<sup>456</sup> MS Pococke 320, 25a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 28.

<sup>457</sup> For the spurious attribution of this work to Maimonides, see the introductions of D. H. Baneth and H. S. Davidowitz to their critical edition, *Peraqim ba-hatzlahah* (Mekize Nirdamim: 1939); Davidson, *Moses Maimonides*, 309; Itzhak Shailat, *Letters and Essays of Moses Maimonides* (Shailat Publishing – Ma’aleh Adumim: 5755 AM), vol. 2, Appendix B, 696-697. Naphtali Wieder suggested that Abraham Maimonides may have been the author. Fenton rejected this possibility, preferring to attribute it to his son Obadiah – see Fenton, *Treatise of the Pool*, 43-46. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh offered her critique of Fenton’s identification in her review of the latter’s aforementioned book, “Maqor ḥadash le-toldot ha-tzufiyut ha-yehudit,” in *Tarbiz* 52:4 (1983), 665. For a bibliography MSS, editions, translations, commentaries, and studies of *Peraqim ba-hatzlahah*, see Israel Jacob Dienstag, “Peraqim ba-hatzlahah ha-meyuḥasim la-rambam: bibliografyah shel hotza’ot, tirgumim, u-meḥqarim,” in *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, 16 (1986), 51-56. It is worth noting that all of the theories raised concerning the authorship of this work locate it in the post-Maimonidean *Mashriq*; cf. Wieder’s comments cited in *ibid.*, 53, #29.

five senses, the sun and moon, the rational and imaginative [faculties] (*khamisa ḥawāss wa-’l-shams wa-’l-qamar al-nāṭīqa wa-’l-mutakhayyila*).<sup>458</sup> Although the text is somewhat difficult here, it seems that “the rational and imaginative” glosses the previous two term – “sun and moon”.<sup>459</sup> Thus, the seven branches of the candelabrum represent the five senses plus two mental faculties. This closely parallels Tanḥum’s identification of the candelabrum’s trunk as the brain with its senses and cognitive faculties, and the seven branches with the head’s orifices.

In other cases, the correspondence is clearer. According to both ha-Levi and Tanḥum, the showbread represents the nutriment that nourish the body;<sup>460</sup> Tanḥum takes this further by identifying the table as the liver. The identification of the Holy Ark and the Cherubim with the heart and lungs respectively is common to both authors, although Tanḥum follows Saadia in identifying the partition (*parokhet*) with the diaphragm,<sup>461</sup> and expands upon the theme by identifying the cover (*kapporet*) over the ark with the heart’s encasement. Tanḥum also follows ha-Levi in identifying the Levites as the physical faculties.

Finally, we note that Tanḥum differs from Ha-Levi’s identification of the *shekhinah* (Divine Presence) with the rational soul. In Tanḥum, the Divine Presence is not explicitly identified in this context.<sup>462</sup> In contradistinction with ha-Levi, Tanḥum identifies the *high priest* as the rational soul. Although there is no orthographic distinction between the Arabic *mudabbir* and the Hebrew *medabber*, the phrase *speaking by means of the holy spirit* (*medabber be-ruaḥ ha-qodesh*) is in

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<sup>458</sup> *Peraqim ba-hatzlahaḥ ha-meyuḥasim la-rambam zal*, ed. H. S. Davidowitz (Mekize nirdamim: 1939), 3. For the work’s misattribution to Maimonides, see Baneth’s and Davidowitz’s introductions to the edition.

<sup>459</sup> See Davidowitz, *Peraqim ba-hatzlahaḥ*, 3, fn.9. Cf. the formulation in *ibid.*, 5, lines 14-17. The author also offers another possibility: That the solid gold candelabrum represents the pure rational soul (*ibid.*, lines 10-14).

<sup>460</sup> Cf. Ibn Ezra’s identification of the showbread with “consumption” (*ma’akhal*).

<sup>461</sup> See Yosef Qafih, *Sefer yetzirah (kitāb al-mabādi’)*: ‘im perush ha-ga’on rabbenu sa’adyah b”r yosef fayyūmī zatza”l – maqor ve-tirgum (Ha-va’ad le-hotza’at sifre rasa”g/ Qeren yehudah leyb epshteyn ye-ishto ḥanah ‘a”y ha-aqademyah ha-ameriqanit le-madda’e ha-yahadut: 1972), 103.

<sup>462</sup> Cf., however, our discussion of the *shekhinah* in Tanḥum, above, pp.363-365.

fact a citation from the Babylonian Talmud (Yoma 73b).<sup>463</sup> In writing of the high priest's communication through the holy spirit (*ruah ha-qodesh*), Tanḥum is likely alluding to the Active Intellect.<sup>464</sup> Just as the rational soul governs the vegetative and animal faculties, the priests govern the lower strata of Israelite society. Indeed, Tanḥum appears to be picking up on a theme that was already alluded to by Ha-Levi, namely, that the Sanctuary or Temple is in fact an representation of the *polis* as a whole: Just as the human body is intricately constructed in order to render it receptive to the intellect, so “is the living, godly people arranged (*wa-ha-ka-dhā intaḏamat al-milla al-ḥayya al-ilāhiyya*).”<sup>465</sup> Thus, in addition to viewing the Sanctuary as a depiction of the human organism, both Tanḥum and Ha-Levi hint at the philosophical motif of the *polis* as a mesocosm mirroring the individual human organism.

### *Tanḥum on the Sanctuary: Part II*

We have seen the close resemblance between Tanḥum's account of the Sanctuary as a representation of the human organism and that of Ha-Levi. In his second commentary to Song 7:6, Tanḥum offers a more elaborate account of his cosmology and psychology, concluding with another discussion of the symbolism of the Temple and Sanctuary.

*A king, captive in the pools (asur ba-reḥaṭim).* (Song 7:6)

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<sup>463</sup> Cf. Zoref (*Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 183), who reads the lexeme in Arabic, translating it into Hebrew as *manḥig*. Alobaidi reads the phrase correctly in this case (*The Two Commentaries*, 154).

<sup>464</sup> Cf. Tanḥum's discussion of “the Intellect's governance of created beings,” for which see below, p.389. For the identification of *rūḥ al-quds* (cognate with the Hebrew *ruah ha-qodesh*) with the Active Intellect, compare Ibn Sina's usage, discussed in Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā): With a Translation of the Book of the Prophet Muḥammad's Ascent to Heaven* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 1992), 181-182; and cf. Alfarabi's identification of the Active Intellect with the “Holy Spirit” or “Spirit of Holiness” (*rūḥ al-quds*), in Richard Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 52-53 (line 11 in Arabic).

<sup>465</sup> Baneth, *Kitāb al-radd wa-'l-dalīl (al-kitāb al-khazarī)*, 61; Hirschfeld, *Kitāb al-Khazarī*, 104.

“Pools” (*aḥwāḍ*), like *In the pools (ba-reḥaṭim)*,<sup>466</sup> *the water receptacles*.<sup>467</sup> (Gen. 30:38) [...] He likened long hair and tresses to pools, in their length, and their thickness, and their many strands. It states that the aforementioned king is a captive (*asīr*) of those pools,<sup>468</sup> that is, enthralled (*mutayyam*)<sup>469</sup> by them. [Solomon] thereby refers to himself, [stating] that he is a captive of her love, and enthralled by her beautiful attributes.

Its allegorical sense (*wa-ta'wīluhu*) is that the pools are where water is gathered, and gushes from the spring (*wa-yafīḍu min al-yanbū'*). It is the soul that the stream<sup>470</sup> of the Immaterial reaches.<sup>471</sup>

In it, various waterways are gathered. It then distributes [the water] and gives those beings that

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<sup>466</sup> Although the Leningrad Codex has *roḥaṭim* with a *ḥaṭaf qametz* in Gen. 30:38, the form is technically identical – the *ḥaṭaf qametz* merely indicates that the *sheva* is to be pronounced, and it is colored by the *qametz* under the *he*.

<sup>467</sup> This verse treated immediately preceding Song 7:6 by Ibn Janāḥ, and the phrase *ba-reḥaṭim* is glossed as *fī l aḥwāḍ* (Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 668-669).

<sup>468</sup> Cf. Ibn Janāḥ: “The king who passionately loves you is captive to the love of those water-spouts, that is, those locks (*inna al-malik al-‘āshiq laki asīr ḥubb hādhihi al-marāzīb ay hādhihi al-dhawā’ib*).” (Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 669.)

<sup>469</sup> The Arabic *mutayyam* carries the literal sense of enslavement, while figuratively implying infatuation.

<sup>470</sup> Although I have generally translated *faḥḍ* as “emanation”, here I have tried to reflect Tanḥum’s use of water imagery to describe this cosmological and psychological process.

<sup>471</sup> Arabic: *wa-’l-naḥs fa-ḥiya alladhī yaṣīlu ilayhā faḥḍ al-mufāraq*. Obviously vocalizing the final word of this sentence *al-mafāriq*, Alobaidi translates: “It is to her that the water comes from different corners.” In a footnote, he offers a more literal (if somewhat incoherent) alternative according to his reading: “It is towards her that the فيض flood/emanation comes from all the bifurcations/parts المغارق.” (See Alobaidi, *The Two Commentaries*, 280 and fn. 37.) Alobaidi’s interpretation also appears to be colored by the continuation of the passage. The major syntactic problem with Alobaidi’s rendition is his generous expansion of the genitive construction. In terms of its content, it is also rather unclear what this might mean. In contrast with Alobaidi, Zoref translates this sentence as follows: “For to [the soul] does the emanation reach from the separate [intellects] (*she-ken eleha maggi’ah ha-shefa’ min [ha-sekhalim] ha-nibdalim*).” (Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 239.) Zoref still breaks up the *iḍāfa* construction (by adding a definite article to the *mudāf* and the prepositional *min*), but he retains its sense largely intact. Fundamentally, I agree with Zoref’s understanding of the expression. Indeed, this is not the only place that Tanḥum employs *al-mufāraq* in the singular masculine form in this sense: An example may be found in his commentary to Song 1:7, where Tanḥum mentions “the manner in which matter receives the influence [or: impression] of the Immaterial (*kayfiyyat qubūl al-mawādd ta’thīr al-mufāraq*).” (See MS Pococke 320, 13b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 15.) However, this does not remove all ambiguity in our passage. There remains the question of whether Tanḥum is referring more narrowly to the Active Intellect (as seems likely in his commentary to Song 1:7), or to the intellectual realm more broadly. An example of the latter usage may be found in Tanḥum’s commentary to Song 1:8, where he writes: “Firstly, you should investigate the attributes of the celestial spheres... for that it is easier for you [i.e., the soul] than apprehending the activity of that which is immaterial (*li-anna hādihā ahwan ‘alayki min idrāk fi’l al-mufāraq*), for the celestial spheres are bodies...” (MS Pococke 320, 14a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 15.) Here, it appears that Tanḥum is referring to anything that is not a body, e.g., God, the emanated intellects, and the human intellectual soul. Zoref’s Hebrew translation disambiguates this aspect of our passage by referring to the intellects in the plural form (reflecting the common Arabic terminology, *al-’uqūl al-mufāraqa* [*’an al-ajsām/al-mawādd*]). Although there is contextual support for such a reading, I prefer to retain the indeterminacy of the original in my translation.

are below it to drink, just as sheep drink from water in pools that has come to them from springs or flowing wells, whether through natural streams, or through irrigation and excavation.

The Intellect is the king who rules the entirety, [and] provides for every creature the perfection that befits it (*al-mu'ī li-kull mawjūd kamālahu al-lā'iq bihi*).<sup>472</sup> And he states that this king is a captive of the love of these pools, responsible for bringing water to them from the original spring, and the source of the primordial river that issues forth from *Eden* (*wa-mabda' al-nahr* [or: *al-nahar*] *al-awwal al-khārij min 'eden*). Then he divides it and splits it among the creations, and waters all of the orchards, and the various trees that are in the gardens – which are an expression denoting the entire world, while the trees are the creations.

However, the components of the tributaries of this river may be divided in the first place into four parts, as the verse states: *and it becomes four branches*. (Gen. 2:10) Of these four, two have no motion (*intiḡāl*), but their governance is comprehensive – from the all-encompassing [sphere] to that which is encompassed (*min al-ḡāwī li-l-muḡtawā*). Concerning it, he said: *It encircles the whole land of Havilah, where the gold is* (*ibid.* 2:11), and *the onyx and the bdellium* (cf. *ibid.* 2:12) and similar such minerals.

The second *encircles the whole land of Cush* (*ibid.* 2:13), [which is] a place of wondrous vegetation and herbage, and mighty trees. But it is gloomy and dense, though it is more noble than the former. That is why it is described as *the land of Cush* (*ibid.*).

As for the third, from this part on one gets motion, transposition, and apprehension (*ḡaraka nuḡla wa-idrāk*). Concerning it, it is said [that] *it is the one that flows east of Ashur* (Gen. 2:14). And this also alludes to the sense<sup>473</sup> of sight and contemplation (*al-lamḡ wa-'l-nazar*), from *I behold it* (*ashurennu*), *but not soon* (Num. 24:17).<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> It is not clear to me whether Tanḡum is referring here to the Active Intellect or God; both readings appear to be possible.

<sup>473</sup> Lit. “And in it there is equivocality [insofar as it shares] the sense of sight (*wa-fīhi ishtirāk li-ma'nā al-lamḡ*)...”

<sup>474</sup> The MSS omit the word *qarob* (soon).

As for the fourth, it is not possessed of place, nor does it pertain to a direction, nor is it characterized by movement. Rather, it persistently increases, without disruption or end: *And the fourth river is Perath.* (Gen. 2:14) This is an allusion to the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nātiqa*) that exists in the human species.

Then this soul itself divides in the same manner into four faculties, in accordance with the human body: The ox-like faculty for the accumulation and love of wealth is like the mineral faculty; the eagle-like faculty for the appetites and the love of them is like vegetative [faculty]; the lion-like faculty for striving and anger and authority is like the animal [faculty]; and the spiritual soul which is particular to human beings, by which I mean the intellect (*wa- 'l-nafs al-nafsāniyya al-khaṣīṣa bi- 'l-insān a 'nī al- 'aql*).

Thus did the prophet describe in [his account of] the *chariot* (*al-merkabah*): *A lion's face, an ox's face, an eagle's face, and a human face.* (Cf. Ezek. 1:10)<sup>475</sup> Many allusions concerning these hidden matters have been treated in *The Book of Job* and the beginning of *Proverbs*.<sup>476</sup> And we stated there that these are all prolegomena to *The Song of Songs*.

It is thus established that the king is eternally captive to the governance of [his] subjects, and [to] the division of these parts that reach the pools in the necessary directions, according to the divine will – *and God seeks the pursued* (Qoh. 3:15), as will be explained in *Qohelet*.<sup>477</sup>

Similarly, *Moses our master* is the king of Israel – *He became a king in Jeshurun* (Deut. 33:5) – and he was captive to governing of *Israel*, conveying everything to those who deserved it, and [governing them] during their sojourns and waystations. Indeed, the flags were arranged

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<sup>475</sup> The biblical verse reads: *Each of them had a human face; each of the four had a lion's on the right; each of the four had an ox's face on the left; and each of the four had an eagle's face.*

<sup>476</sup> Neither of these commentaries have been identified among the MSS.

<sup>477</sup> Zoref (*Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 240, fn.89) notes that Tanḥum's commentary to Qohelet 3:15 focuses on his account of the nature of time, and suggests that this does not fit his account of his commentary here. However, I would suggest that Tanḥum is referring to the passage in his commentary to that verse in which he states that from celestial motion “there arise phenomena (*āthār*) in the universe – heat and cold, or wetness, or dryness, or some mineral will come into being, or some plant will be generated, or some animal will propagate itself (by which I mean their species).” (This passage cited above, p.252.)

according to the governance of this divine emanation. [There were] four *flags*, and on *Reuben's flag* a human likeness searching for mandrakes<sup>478</sup> was depicted, on *Judah's flag* the likeness of a lion, on *Joseph's flag* the likeness of an ox – a firstborn ox (Deut. 33:17), *Joseph collected produce like the sands of the sea* (Gen. 41:49), *Joseph gathered in all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan* (Gen. 47:14). And on *Dan's flag* the likeness of a snake and an eagle. And you know that he *gathers all of the encampments* (Num. 10:25), for the appetites and gluttony are the most common causes of various illnesses and diseases and bodily and spiritual death. It is thus established that [Moses'] governance of the community is precisely the Intellect's governance of the created beings (*fa-ṣaḥḥa anna tadbīrahu al-milla huwa tadbīr al-'aql li-l-mawjūdāt bi-'aynihi*).

Therefore was the construction of the *Sanctuary* commanded according to the pattern of the macrocosm<sup>479</sup> and its configuration (*'alā nuskhat al-'ālam al-akbar wa-hay'atihi*). That is the very pattern of the microcosm (*al-'ālam al-aṣḡhar*) and its configuration, and its various organs and their uses – that being the human being. Thus the *Sanctuary* becomes a mesocosm (*'ālam mutawassiṭ*), between the greater and the smaller [worlds]. And similarly did the ancients say (*qālat al-awā'il*) that the *Sanctuary is a middle world* (*al-mishkan 'olam benoni*).<sup>480</sup> Thus *Joseph's search and inquiry began with the oldest and concluded with the youngest*,<sup>481</sup> (Gen. 44:12) [in a fashion] comparable to his Originator, sublime and mighty is He, to the extent of human ability.

Similarly did *Moses (peace upon him)* assimilate himself and strive to imitate the Divine Command to the extent possible (*wa-ka-dhālik tamaththala mosheh 'a[lav] ha-[shalom] wa-*

<sup>478</sup> Cf. Gen. 30:14. For *duda'im* as mandrakes, see Ibn Ezra's commentary *ad loc.*

<sup>479</sup> Alobaidi (*The Two Commentaries*, 79) mistakenly transcribed *ākhir* instead of *akbar*, and his English translation reflects his error (see *ibid.*, 283).

<sup>480</sup> Alobaidi (*The Two Commentaries*, 283) bizarrely renders this phrase as “the Temple is *eternity between us*” (italics his), misreading *benoni* as *benenu* and ignoring its context by providing the biblical rather than the rabbinic valence of the term *'olam*.

<sup>481</sup> Hebrew: *ba-gadol heḥel u-ba-qaton killah*. Lit. began with the large and concluded with the small.

*'amila 'alā al-tashshabuh bi-amr allāh ta '[ālā] ḥasab al-maqdira), becoming similar to the point of bringing a world into existence, establishing it, and governing it (ḥattā shābaha ḥattā fī ijād 'ālam wa-iqāmatihī wa-tadbīrihi).<sup>482</sup>*

Based on the interpretation of the term *reḥaṭim* as a body of water,<sup>483</sup> Tanḥum draws an analogy between the poetic description of the beloved's locks as pools of water and the emanation of all existence from the Divine. The depiction of cosmic emanation as a waterflow is well attested in medieval sources in the Neoplatonic tradition, and is thereafter adopted in Peripatetic sources.<sup>484</sup> God is “captive” to the creation – indeed, infatuated – insofar as He continues to guide and sustain all being. This interpretation of the verse leads into an excursus on the philosophical-allegorical sense of the Eden narrative of Genesis and Ezekiel's vision of the Chariot, culminating in a declaration concerning the parallel structures of the macrocosm (i.e., the universe), microcosm (the human being), and mesocosm (the Sanctuary). Before explicitly introducing Eden into the discussion, Tanḥum states that the garden represents the entire world (*jumlat al-'ālam*), while the trees represent the created beings in that world (*al-mawjūdāt*). The four rivers of Eden represent the four classes of beings identified according to the Aristotelian scheme.<sup>485</sup> This interpretation differs both from Ibn Gabirol, who associated the four rivers with

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<sup>482</sup>MS Pococke 320, 62b-64a; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 74-76.

<sup>483</sup>This understanding is attested in Ibn Janāḥ, who glosses the term both as *marāzīb* (water spouts), and *aḥwād* (pools, basins; see Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 668-669). Cf. also the translation attributed to Saadia Gaon, in Qafīḥ, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 111; and Ibn Ezra's second interpretation of Song 7:6 (where he seems to assume Ibn Janāḥ's interpretation).

<sup>484</sup>For the depiction of the process of emanation as the flow of water from a spring in Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*, and the close affinities between such formulations and those of the Brethren of Purity, see *The Crown of Kingship ("Keter Malkhuth") of Solomon Ibn Gabirol*, ed. Israel Levin (University of Tel-Aviv Press: 2005), 46-47. For the adoption and discussion of this motif by Maimonides, see *Guide*, II.12 (Pines, 279-280).

<sup>485</sup>For Aristotle's application of this division to living beings (i.e., excluding minerals), and adding a category of rational beings, see *De Anima* 2:3 (414a-415a). A classification of composite beings closely derived from Aristotle is articulated explicitly and succinctly by al-Fārābī, who states that “bodies are of five genera: Celestial body, rational animal, irrational animal, plant, and mineral body...” (Najjar, *Al-Fārābī's The Political Regime*, 31, lines 9-11.) Removing the irrelevant celestial body, Tanḥum is thus left with four genera of composite sublunar beings. This division is adopted by Maimonides, who identifies four forces (*quwā*) that proceed from the Active Intellect,

the four elements,<sup>486</sup> and from Abraham Maimonides, who interpreted them in light of the geographical theory of four continents.<sup>487</sup> Mirroring the division of sublunar beings into these four classes, the human soul divides into four faculties that correspond with the four faced angelic *ḥayyot* of Ezekiel’s vision of the chariot (*merkabah*): The ox-like faculty corresponds with the mineral; the eagle-like faculty corresponds with the vegetative; the lion-like faculty corresponds with the animal; and the intellectual soul is peculiar to humans.<sup>488</sup> The tripartite division of the soul that we saw in Qohelet now shifts, and the “faculty for the accumulation and love of wealth” – previously conflated with ambition and the desire for power, and identified with the animalistic soul<sup>489</sup> – is identified as representative of the mineral kingdom in the human organism. Despite this minor reformulation, in substance Tanḥum still most closely follows the Galenic scheme.<sup>490</sup> By drawing a link between the four rivers of Genesis and the four faces of Ezekiel’s *ḥayyot*, Tanḥum emphasizes the profound link between cosmology and psychology – or more precisely, between the Work of the Creation (*ma‘aseh bereshit*) and the Work of the Chariot (*ma‘aseh merkabah*), which Maimonides identified with physics and metaphysics

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bringing forth (a) the mixture of elements that produces minerals, (b) vegetative souls, (c) animal souls, and (d) the rational faculty. (*Guide* I.72; Pines, 187.)

<sup>486</sup> See Levin, *Crown of Kingship*, 261, line 96. See also Samuel Ibn Tibbon’s adoption of the same interpretation, in Robinson, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon’s Commentary*, 342.

<sup>487</sup> Wiesenberg, *Perush Rabbenu Avraham ben Ha-Rambam*, 34-37. For the origin of this theory in the writings of Crates of Mallus, see Daniela Dueck, *Geography in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press: 2012), 77-78.

<sup>488</sup> For Joseph Ibn Ṣaddiq’s observation of the presence of mineral, vegetative, and animal aspects in both the microcosm and the human organism in the context of his microcosmic anthropology, see Haberman, *The Microcosm*, 75. For Galen as the first identifiable writer to draw a parallel between the Platonic tripartite soul and the Aristotelian classification of general, see Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, 95 and fn.9.

<sup>489</sup> See passages translated above, p.231, p.234.

<sup>490</sup> For further divisions while fundamentally maintaining the tripartite model, cf. Ibn Sīnā’s account in his *Qanūn*, in which he locates the mental faculties in the brain; he divides the natural or vegetative faculties into two categories, locating one in the liver and one in the testicles; and he locates the animal faculties in the heart – see *Al-qanūn fī al-ṭibb: ta’līf al-shaykh al-ra’īs abū ‘alī al-ḥusayn bin ‘alī bin sīnā*, ed. Idwār al-Qashsh (Mu’assasat ‘izz al-dīn li-l-ṭibā‘a wa-’l-nashr: 1987), vol. 1, 91.

respectively.<sup>491</sup> Indeed, such a link is already strongly implied in the opening chapters of the *Guide*.<sup>492</sup>

The profound homology that Tanḥum sees between the cosmic order and the human organism constitutes the link between his discussion of an emanationist cosmology in the context of exegesis and his general statement on the tripartite homology between the cosmos, Sanctuary, and human being. It is interesting to note, however, that Tanḥum's first inclination is to liken the tribal and political arrangement of the Israelites under Moses' leadership to the cosmic hierarchy, more closely resembling al-Fārābī's account of the *polis* as the middle tier of the cosmic hierarchy.<sup>493</sup> Indeed, he emphasizes the cosmological-political homology when he states that Moses' "governance of the community is precisely the Intellect's governance of the created beings (*fa-ṣaḥḥa anna tadbīrahu al-milla huwa tadbīr al-'aql li-l-mawjūdāt bi-'aynihi*)." He also finds support for the application of this scheme in a political context in the representation of the various figures on the tribal standards. This motif occurs in a very similar formulation in Tobias b. Eliezer's midrashic collection (fl. eleventh-twelfth century), *Leqaḥ ṭob* (Good Teaching; cf. Prov. 4:2), but they may be reliant on common sources.<sup>494</sup> However, Tanḥum appears to blur the boundary between a symbolic reading of the tribal standards on the one hand, and a more

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<sup>491</sup> See *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:11-12, 4:10-13; Maimonides' commentary to Mishnah Ḥagigah 2:1; Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides*; Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 167; Menachem Kellner, *Science in the Bet Midrash*, 219-224.

<sup>492</sup> See *Guide* I.1 (Pines, 21-23), and *Guide* I.2 (Pines, 23-26). Here Maimonides identifies psychological, epistemological, and soteriological concerns in the opening Genesis narratives. See also Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 53. In general, see Sara Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides' Interpretation of the Story of Creation* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition; Reuben Mass: 1987); Sara Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides' Interpretation of the Adam Stories in Genesis: A Study in Maimonides' Anthropology* (Reuben Mass: 1986).

<sup>493</sup> Cf. the commentary on Song 4:1 attributed to Saadia, where the arrangement of the twelve tribes in the Israelite camp in the desert is said to be modeled on the zodiac, and the four sections on the four elements (Qafih, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 78-79). This interpretation leads into a discussion of the human being as a microcosm (*ibid.*, 79).

<sup>494</sup> See *Leqaḥ ṭob*, ed. Buber, 83a. Note that the human figure in Tanḥum's version represents Reuben searching for mandrakes, while in *Leqaḥ ṭob* the human figure actually represents a mandrake. For this work and the debate around its author's origins and place of residence, see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 356-357.

thoroughgoing allegoresis of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers on the other.<sup>495</sup> As he states in this passage, even Joseph’s search for the planted goblet in his brothers’ sacks symbolically represents the emanative process that culminates in the existence of the human being and the religious community of the Israelites. Tanḥum’s reading of the Joseph narrative seems to be original, and to some degree parallels the post-Maimonidean philosophical allegoresis that became popular in Western Christendom.<sup>496</sup>

Tanḥum’s direct source for his statement that the Sanctuary is a “middle world” is not clear. His treatment does not clearly exhibit direct dependence either upon Saadia or Ibn Ezra, though this possibility can certainly not be precluded.<sup>497</sup> More importantly, Tanḥum’s use of the expression “the Ancients have said” (*qālat al-awā’il*) implies a rabbinic source, as he consistently uses that

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<sup>495</sup> Contrast Abraham Maimonides’ commentary on Gen. 44:12, where there is no hint at a cosmological reading. On the contrary, Abraham attributes purely human (and deceptive) motivations to Joseph: He wanted to follow the most standard procedure for such a search so that his brothers would not suspect him of having engineered the situation. (See Wiesenberg, *Perush Rabbenu Avraham ben Ha-Rambam*, 172-173.) This interpretation appears to be based on Samuel b. Ḥofni Gaon’s interpretation of the same passage, for which see *The Biblical Commentary of Rav Samuel Ben Hofni Gaon according to Geniza Manuscripts*, ed. and trans. into Hebrew by Aaron Greenbaum (Mossad Harav Kook: 1978), 220-221.

<sup>496</sup> Ibn ‘Aqnīn’s commentary to Song also exhibits a somewhat broader allegorizing tendency than one might expect, particularly given his lack of familiarity with Maimonidean philosophical allegoresis of prophetic *amthāl*. For his explicit defense of allegorical exegesis against Maimonides’ critique of such methods in the *Mishneh Torah*, in Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 142-147. For the observation that Ibn ‘Aqnīn appears to be unfamiliar with Maimonides’ own application of similar hermeneutics in the *Guide*, see Halkin, “Ibn ‘Aknin’s commentary on the Song of Songs,” 399-400. Ibn ‘Aqnīn interprets the entire narrative of Jacob’s encounter with the divine being in Genesis 32:25-33 as a philosophical allegory (see Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 132-143). Although he affirms its literal truth, he goes so far as to interpret the statement that the Israelites do not consume of the sciatic nerve “to this day” (Gen. 32:33) as a figure for luminosity of the afterlife (Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 138-139). For his citation in this context of the rabbinic maxim that “a verse does not depart from the realm of its *peshat*,” see Halkin, *Inkishāf al-asrār*, 142-143. For this maxim, see Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 63a; Yebamot 11b, 24a. For the original valence of the expression, and its reception by medieval exegetes, see Cohen, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation*, xvii, 348-381, 495-499. For philosophical allegoresis among Jewish exegetes in Western Christendom in the post-Maimonidean period, see Frank Talmage, “Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism,” in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green (Crossroad: 1989), 313-355; Isaak Heinemann, “Scientific Allegorization during the Jewish Middle Ages,” trans. Elizabeth Petuchowski, in *Studies in Jewish Thought: An Anthology of German Jewish Scholarship*, ed. Alfred Jospe (Wayne State University Press: 1981), 260-261.

<sup>497</sup> His use of the relative forms *akbar* and *aṣghar* (against Saadia’s *kabīr* and *ṣaghīr*), and the form V participle *mutawassīṭ* (against Saadia’s *awsaṭ*) is notable, but does not prove that he did not simply slightly reformulate Saadia’s position.

term to refer to the rabbinic sages.<sup>498</sup> This possibility is further strengthened by his use of the Hebrew locution *'olam benoni* – a departure from both Saadia's Arabic terminology and Ibn Ezra's Hebrew formulation (*ve-ha-mishkan ha-emtza 'i*). However, no rabbinic source that I can find uses the expression *'olam benoni*, or explicitly asserts the existence of a tripartite cosmology. This leads us to the possibility that Tanḥum may have been dependent on a rabbinic or midrashic source that is no longer extant.<sup>499</sup>

Tanḥum's concluding statement, that Moses strove to imitate the Divine in producing and governing a world, directly builds upon the notion of the Sanctuary as a mesocosm. However, this formulation goes a step further in speaking of the construction of the Sanctuary in cosmogonic terms: "...to the point of bringing a world into existence, establishing it, and governing it (*ḥattā shābaha ḥattā fī 'ijād 'ālam wa-iqāmatihi wa-tadbīrihi*)." This recalls a classical rabbinic understanding of the establishment of the Sanctuary in the desert as the completion or fullest enactment of the Creation. Thus, in the *Pesiqta de-rab kahana* we find the

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<sup>498</sup> See Wechsler, *Strangers*, 55, 89. For this usage in his commentary to Song, see MS Poccocke 320, 16a-b/ Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 18; MS Poccocke 320, 34b/Zoref, *ibid.*, 39; MS Poccocke 320, 35a/Zoref, *ibid.*, 40; MS Poccocke 320, 36b/Zoref, *ibid.*, 42; MS Poccocke 320, 43b/Zoref, *ibid.*, 51; MS Poccocke 320, 46b/Zoref, *ibid.*, 55; MS Poccocke 320, 51b/Zoref, *ibid.*, 61; MS Poccocke 320, 61b/Zoref, *ibid.*, 73 (using the plural form *awwalīm*); MS Poccocke 320, 70b/Zoref, *ibid.*, 83. For this usage in his commentary to the Twelve Minor Prophets, see Shy, *Perush*, 21, 27, 39, 59, 79, 95, 99, 127, 145, 151, 243, 259, 299, 327. Tanḥum also occasionally uses the term *al-hakham[im]* to refer to the rabbis (see for example *ibid.*, 249, 273).

<sup>499</sup> Cf. Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash*, 161-162. Tanḥum presents the strongest evidence for the existence of a (possibly pseudo-) midrashic text that depicts the Tabernacle as a mesocosm. Note also the parallels in *Bereshit rabbati* and *Midrash tadshe*, for which see Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash*, 147-150. For a discussion of these works and their relationship to Moses ha-Darshan (11<sup>th</sup> century), see *ibid.* See also Urbach, *Sages*, 362. It is not clear to me that the redactor/author of *Genesis rabbati* did not take his inspiration from Saadia. In that work, we find the following passage (ed. Albeck, p.32): "When the Holy One, blessed is He, said to Moses, "Make a sanctuary for me!" [Moses] said: "How shall I know how to make it?" The Holy One, blessed is He, said: "Do not worry – just as I created the world, and your body, so shall you create the sanctuary." And whence [do we know] that it is thus? In the Sanctuary you find that there were planks fixed in the sockets, in the body the ribs are fixed in the vertebrae, and in the world the mountains are fixed in the foundations of the earth. In the Sanctuary the planks were covered with gold, in the body the ribs are covered with flesh and tendons are drawn tight and hold a person upright, and in the world trees and herbs are drawn tight. In the Sanctuary curtains covered its height and its two sides, in the body skin covers one's organs and ribs on both sides, and in the world the sky covers the earth on both sides [i.e., all around]. In the Sanctuary, the screen (*parokhet*) divides between the sanctum and the Holy of Holies, in the body the diaphragm (*zar'efet ha-guf*) divides between the heart and the belly, and in the world is the firmament, separating between the upper and lower waters..." On this passage, see Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash*, 143-144.

following interpretation of Numbers 7:1, attributed to R. Joshua b. Levi, who transmits it in the name of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai: “*It came to pass, on the day that Moses finished setting up the Sanctuary. It does not say setting up a sanctuary (lehaqim mishkan), but setting up the Sanctuary (lehaqim et ha-mishkan).*”<sup>500</sup> What was set up with it? The world was set up with it. For until the Sanctuary was set up, the world remained unsteady. When the Sanctuary was set up, the world became stable.”<sup>501</sup> Although the emphasis here is on the completion or reinforcement of the cosmos, there is a more straightforwardly cosmogonic implication here, which is indeed further emphasized in a parallel passage in Numbers Rabbah.<sup>502</sup> Indeed, in the passage preceding this one in the *Pesiqta de-rab kahana*, we encounter the notion of the Sanctuary as a model of the heavens.<sup>503</sup>

A more substantial innovation in Tanḥum’s account of Moses’ enactment of Creation is his emphasis on the political aspect of the Sanctuary. As we have seen above, this was already implied in Judah Ha-Levi’s *Kuzari*, and subtly reflected in Tanḥum’s first commentary to Song 4:1.<sup>504</sup> However, in the present passage, Tanḥum grants this theme new prominence. By employing the political terminology of *tadbīr*, Tanḥum underscores his earlier comment that Moses’ “governance of the community is precisely the Intellect’s governance of the created beings (*tadbīrahu al-milla huwa tadbīr al-‘aql li-l-mawjūdāt bi-‘aynihi*.)” Here we encounter a most striking support for Lawrence V. Berman’s understanding of *imitatio dei* (*al-tashabbuh bi-‘llāh/bi-‘l-bāri*) in al-Fārābī and Maimonides, emphasizing the creation and governance of the

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<sup>500</sup> The interpretation is based on the presence of the marker of the definite direct object (*et*), which is read here as a *ribbuy* (addition), here implying the presence of another direct object. For the well-known rabbinic dispute over whether or not this particle is to be considered midrashically meaningful, see the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 51a; Genesis Rabbah 1:14 (ed. Theodor and Albeck, vol. 1, 12); Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Heavenly Torah: As Refracted through the Generations*, ed. and trans. Gordon Tucker and Leonard Levin (Continuum: 2008), 49, 245.

<sup>501</sup> Mandelbaum, *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, vol. 1, 9.

<sup>502</sup> Numbers Rabbah, Naso, 12:11.

<sup>503</sup> Mandelbaum, *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, vol. 1, 8.

<sup>504</sup> See above, pp.381-383, 385.

perfect state as a cosmos in miniature as the goal of post-philosophical political activity.<sup>505</sup> Tanḥum actually brings together two distinct strands of thought in this passage: One which views the Sanctuary as a model of cosmos; and one which frames the foundation of the virtuous *polis* in similar terms. When we read Tanḥum's two discussions of the significance of the Sanctuary together, it becomes clear that this is not the product of confusion on Tanḥum's part, but reflects his synthesis of the various rabbinic, philosophical, and Judeo-Arabic sources into a coherent account. According to this account, Moses brings the Sanctuary into being, and the latter is in fact the heart of the Israelite *polis*.<sup>506</sup> It is from the Sanctuary that the divinely inspired priests govern the entire religious community. Indeed, in the structure and service of the Sanctuary, one may perceive the wisdom of both the organism and the cosmos.

### Concluding Remarks

For Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi, the Song of Songs presents both challenges and opportunities. The challenge of interpreting a fragmented text with little narrative coherence presents an opportunity to experiment with different formats for the commentary, and ultimately settle on a freer style that can contain both philological and philosophical discourse. The challenge of interpreting an overtly erotic text presents an opportunity to employ erotic language in the realm of collective and individual spiritual experience. The challenge of narrative fragmentation invites Tanḥum to explicitly discuss questions of structure and progression.

In the Song of Songs, Tanḥum finds the fullest expression of the human encounter with the Divine. After ethical cultivation, training in the theoretical sciences, and contemplation of the

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<sup>505</sup> Berman, "The Purpose of Philosophy," 58.

<sup>506</sup> Compare Maimonides' account in *Guide* III.51 (Pines, 624): "For in those four, I mean the *Patriarchs* and *Moses our Master*, union with God (*al-ittiḥād bi-llāh*) – I mean apprehension of Him and love of Him – became manifest, as the texts testify. [...] For the end of their efforts during their life was to bring into being a religious community (*ijād milla*) that would know and worship God." (Pines, *Guide*, 624; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, 459.)

cosmos, the individual is impelled on his or her journey back to the intellectual realm by a passionate and all-consuming desire. The awakening begins early, but the destination is clear: It is the loss of individual selfhood upon the death of the body, in a state of pure intellection. While tracing the journey, Tanḥum finds opportunities to explore issues of political, psychological, and cosmological import. Indeed, he ultimately sees these topics as deeply unified.

Although Tanḥum's psychology, program of philosophical self-cultivation, and soteriology fit comfortably into the Peripatetic tradition, he found Sufism to offer the richest and most resonant language to describe such concepts. Not only did he pick up on elements of Sufi terminology as they were transmitted in the Avicennan tradition, both directly and indirectly (e.g., via Maimonides), but he appears to have had some direct recourse either to written or oral Sufi sources. This is particularly striking in the case of his tripartite division of the Song of Songs to mirror the journey to God, the journey with God, and the journey within God. That having been said, Tanḥum remains deeply grounded in the Maimonidean and Avicennan intellectual traditions, and freely draws upon the Judeo-Arabic cultural milieu of *al-Andalus*.

## Concluding Remarks

The present study represents a step towards a fuller appreciation of Tanḥum b. Joseph Ha-Yerushalmi as an exegete and a thinker, emerging from over a century of scholarship on his oeuvre, and devoting particular attention to his philosophical commentaries. In the pages that follow, I shall summarize some of the more central observations that have emerged from the study.

### Tanḥum's Exegetical Project

Shy's suggestion that Tanḥum self-consciously modeled his literary project on that of Maimonides is well founded. Maimonides insisted that it is incumbent upon every Jew to study Scripture, followed by rabbinic law. To this end, he authored a legal code of unprecedented comprehensiveness and accessibility. He also provided significant tools for the philosophical interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, and produced a comprehensive and accessible legal code to facilitate more widespread and broader study of the Oral Law. Tanḥum in turn produced extensive biblical commentaries, culling and reframing material from earlier commentaries, incorporating linguistic and grammatical material that had previously been omitted from commentaries, and frequently providing fresh analysis when he felt that it was required. On occasion he applied philosophical tools to his *peshat* exegesis. He also produced philosophical commentaries on several books of the Hebrew Bible. Extant examples include his philosophical exegesis of Qohelet, and his allegorical commentaries on the Book of Jonah and the Song of Songs. Non-extant examples include his commentaries to Proverbs, and at least to some extent to Job. In presenting philosophical exegesis of such works, Tanḥum explicitly understood himself to be following in the path of Maimonides. In this way, just as post-Maimonidean exegetes such as Samuel Ibn Tibbon, David Qimḥi, Joseph Ibn Kaspi, Gersonides and others would develop

philosophical hermeneutics in the Jewish communities of Western Christendom, Tanḥum continued the Maimonidean exegetical project in the Islamic East. In addition, in place of Nathan b. Jehiel of Rome's *'Arukh*, Tanḥum provided a new and far more accessible reference tool for the study of Maimonides' *Mishneh torah* and the Mishnah, applying the linguistic advances of the Andalusian *peshat* school to the study of rabbinic texts.

In general, Tanḥum systematically and self-consciously applied a philological method in lexical analysis, that involved (a) identifying the original sense of a given term, (b) its common usage, and (c) its application within a specific literary context. His theory of the redactional history of the Minor Prophets was in large measure a response to the lack of a clear chronological order among those works, and the apparently fragmentary nature of some of those works. In the case of Jonah, this theory actually allowed Tanḥum to skirt the problem of the prophet's behavior by asserting that in the absence of the complete narrative, one cannot fully comprehend the actions of the protagonist. In these cases and others, Tanḥum reveals himself as a highly systematic exegete, with cogent and fully-formed conceptions of philological methodology and textual history.

### **The Theoretical Underpinnings of Tanḥum's *ta'wīl***

Tanḥum's methodology in allegorical exegesis (*ta'wīl*) is also based upon a coherent conception of the meaning of the biblical text, and how its strata of meaning may be accessed. Tanḥum's theory of *ta'wīl* may be summarized as follows:

(a) There is an underlying prophetic intention or purpose (*aṣl al-gharaḍ*), consistent with philosophical truths, that should only be revealed to those who are worthy.

(b) The esoteric meaning is encoded within an accessible narrative that benefits the masses. The latter is the *zāhir* or *pashaṭ* (which are not strictly synonymous, but usually correspond with one another). This is the facet of the text that a reader first encounters, and Tanḥum calls this the “initial intention” (*al-qaṣd al-awwal*, and slight variants). The unenlightened do not progress beyond this stratum of meaning.

(c) After understanding the “initial intention” through systematic philological analysis, one may begin to access the underlying purpose of the text by paying close attention to the derivation of terms, literary devices such as metaphor and homonymity, and the general trajectory of the narrative and its central figures. *Ta’wīl* is therefore the process of recovering the underlying purpose of the text, encoded in the literal stratum of meaning (*zāhir*).

In his *ta’wīl*, Tanḥum employs two sets of Arabic hermeneutical terminology interchangeably: The terminology of *majāz/isti’āra* (nonliteral language, metaphor) favored by the Andalusian *pashaṭ* exegetes; and the language of *asmā’ mushtarika/ishtirāk al-ism* (equivocality or homonymy) that was popularized among Jewish exegetes by Maimonides, and drawn from the Aristotelian-Alfarabian tradition. These are basically tools for lexical analysis, drawn from the fields of linguistics, literary criticism, and logic, and applied in a biblical context in order to determine (or make a case for) the semantic range of a given term or expression. However, Tanḥum would apply these methods in allegoresis, as the broader semantic associations of any given biblical term constitute an *ishāra* (allusion, indication) that points the reader towards the inner, philosophical stratum of the text’s meaning. For Tanḥum, philology in the *pashaṭ* tradition is the point of access to the “initial” meaning of the text, not to be rejected when moving to the philosophical sense, but informing and enabling one’s access to the latter.

## Tanḥum's Peripateticism

In his philosophical commentaries, Tanḥum articulates a richly philosophical worldview. Although Tanḥum was clearly aware of the great Iberian Jewish Neoplatonists, his cosmology remained fundamentally Peripatetic. Ten intelligences emanate from God, the lowest of which is the Active Intellect. The latter governs the sublunar realm, characterized as “the world of generation and corruption”. In his psychology, Tanḥum subscribes to the widely accepted Galenic version of the tripartite soul, which is itself a synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian elements. In his emanationist theory of the soul's origin, he closely echoes Ibn Sīnā, and indeed parts ways with Maimonides. In adopting this position, he picks up on Plotinian elements in the Islamic philosophical tradition. However, Tanḥum's soteriology remains broadly Peripatetic insofar as it emphasizes the acquisition of moral and intellectual virtues as a precondition for the soul's survival of the death of the body. In strongly implying that the soul loses its individual identity after death, Tanḥum follows in the footsteps of Ibn Bājjā and Maimonides, and echoes certain passages in Ibn Sīnā.

In his ethical discourse, Tanḥum once again demonstrates his intellectual eclecticism. By emphasizing the antagonistic relationship between the animal and vegetative faculties, and harnessing the tension between them in order to attain a degree of moral equilibrium, Tanḥum follows directly in the footsteps of Ibn Sīnā, as the latter formulates his position in *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*. To be sure, Tanḥum was also aware of Abraham Ibn Ezra's reformulation of Ibn Sīnā's view, and *Kitāb ma'ānī al-nafs* also furnishes some striking parallels to Tanḥum's ethical theory. However, in his precise formulation, Tanḥum remains closest to Ibn Sīnā, in this case preferring the latter's original account to its Jewish reformulations. Also evident in Tanḥum's advocacy of

the method of philosophical equilibrium (*al-tawassuṭ al-ḥikmī*) is the profound impact of Maimonides' formulations of Aristotle's doctrine of the Golden Mean.

Finally, Tanḥum's adoption of the Avicennan mode of philosophical allegory is nothing short of unique. To the best of this writer's knowledge, Tanḥum's is the only known original philosophical bird allegory in the Judeo-Arabic tradition. To be sure, he draws richly on his Arabic sources, most notably Ibn Sīnā. However, he fashions the narrative into a succinct representation of the soul's origin, its process of philosophical cultivation, and its ultimate liberation in passionate conjunction with its source. The narrative serves a definite pedagogical program, and reveals Tanḥum's conscious engagement with Islamic-Arabic literary traditions. The latter aspect of Tanḥum's activity is also illustrated in his inclusion of an original classification of the philosophical sciences in the introduction to his commentary on Qohelet, based on a selection of earlier Peripatetically inclined classifications.

In sum, although Tanḥum is an eclectic thinker, it may be said that his philosophical worldview rests upon twin pillars, one Muslim and one Jewish: Ibn Sīnā and Maimonides. He engaged broadly in the intellectual currents of his time, but the central elements in his thought are most profoundly shaped by the Islamic Peripatetic tradition.

### **Sufi sources**

Like many of his contemporary Egyptian and Levantine coreligionists, Tanḥum incorporated elements of Sufī discourse into his works. In the main, his Sufi terminology appears to be (at least indirectly) derived from those writers who synthesized Sufi and Peripatetic discourse in their works: On the Peripatetic side, Ibn Sīnā and Maimonides (who was dependent in this context on Ibn Sīnā); and on the Sufi side, al-Ghazālī.

However, Tanḥum also appears to have had some direct exposure to Sufi sources, most strikingly within the school of Ibn al-‘Arabī. The two clearest cases of this are his repeated use of the terminology of “the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*)”, and his discussion of the three modes of spiritual journeying (*safar*). In the former case, Tanḥum employs Ibn al-‘Arabī’s terminology to the individual who has attained moral and intellectual virtues, and contemplates the totality of existence in order to grasp something of the wisdom of its Creator. By applying the Sufi terminology in such a manner, Tanḥum effectively reverses Ibn al-‘Arabī’s appropriation of philosophical terminology in a theosophical context. In neither of these two cases can one point to clear dependence on a literary source, and it is possible that Tanḥum was exposed to these concepts by oral informants. In these cases, we encounter a rare example of a Jewish writer who engaged to some extent with the Akbarian stream of Sufi thought.

### **Jewish Intellectual Eclecticism in the Post-Maimonidean Islamic World**

In the works of Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi, we see a powerful illustration of the intellectual eclecticism that characterized Jewish thought in the post-Maimonidean period in Islamic lands. In the Yemen, members of the dominant movement of philosophical Judaism interpreted Maimonides largely through the prism of Ismaili thought; in Egypt and the Levant, a combination of Sufi and Avicennan elements informed Jewish reception of “The Great Eagle”. In this sense, Tanḥum fits comfortably into his historical milieu.

However, to leave our interpretation of Tanḥum at that would be to obscure that which is most original about him. Tanḥum synthesized a considerable breadth of Judeo-Arabic linguistic and exegetical material in his commentaries, adopted and cultivated Arabic literary models, and engaged profoundly with the Islamicate Peripatetic tradition. In the final instance, it is the profound connection that Tanḥum perceived between philology and philosophy that unifies his

literary project, and sets him apart from other medieval Judeo-Arabic exegetes. In insisting that *peshat*, accessed through rigorous and broadly informed textual analysis, is the gateway to the philosophical bedrock of Scripture, Tanḥum reveals himself not merely as a synthesizer of earlier material, but as a true philosopher of Scripture.

## Appendix A: Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary to the Book of Jonah:

### Introduction and Esoteric Commentary<sup>1</sup>

[Introduction:]<sup>2</sup>

*The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai as follows.* (Jonah 1:1) Minds have become exceedingly perplexed in ascertaining the true meanings of this narrative, not least concerning the statement, *And Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from before the Lord.* (*Ibid.*, 1:3) Similarly, [they have been perplexed by the statement that] *from before the Lord he was fleeing.* (*Ibid.*, 1:10) For it is highly problematic that a prophet who has attained a true understanding of the rank of His existence – exalted is He – and His knowledge's encompassment of all things, and His transcendence of time and place and such things belonging to the conditions of bodies, should flee His presence, exalted is He, from place to place, or that he should refuse to accept [God's] command, exalted is He, and to carry out His mission, and such things.<sup>3</sup>

This perplexity is not removed by that which is stated concerning this narrative in the manner of [rabbinic] *expositions (al-derashot)* or other metaphorical or allegorical methods (*turuq al-taḥmīl wa-'l-ta'wīl*).<sup>4</sup> Although these may persuade some people, the effect of this persuasion does not endure when the matter is truly investigated, unless one interprets the narrative in its entirety as one of the prophetic parables, composed in order that one may understand its inner meaning

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<sup>1</sup> Tanḥum's commentary to Jonah is published in Shy, *Perush*, 108-139.

<sup>2</sup> The introductory passage appears in Shy, *Perush*, 108-113.

<sup>3</sup> These problems were most notably raised by Yefet b. Eli, Saadia Gaon, and Abraham Ibn Ezra. Although his formulation of the problem most closely echoes Ibn Ezra, Tanḥum is evidently not satisfied by any of the earlier solutions to the problem. See discussion above, pp.81-85.

<sup>4</sup> For Tanḥum's attitude towards rabbinic exegesis, see above, pp.60-62. For his hermeneutical dualism, according to which the text possesses an outer, literal stratum of meaning (*ẓāhir*) and an inner stratum (*bāṭin/ta'wīl*) which is accessed through allegorical modes of interpretation (*ta'wīl*), see above, pp.62-75.

(*bāṭinahū*) alone, in which case it is not a fundamentally factual narrative (*qiṣṣa wujūdiyya aṣliyya*). But this is not acceptable to us, for if we permit it in the case of this narrative, it would become acceptable in other like passages among the narratives of the prophets and their states.<sup>5</sup> This would destroy the foundations of religion (*al-sharī'a*), and that which guards its fundamental belief (*i'tiqādahū*).<sup>6</sup>

Now, we shall not entirely refrain from the [allegorical] interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the narrative in this discourse, but rather it is our opinion that we must affirm the truth of that which is believed concerning it and those like it, aside from the [allegorical] interpretation (*ta'wīl*), and only after that may it be interpreted according to that which accords with its true meanings (*yata'awwalu 'alā mā yunāsib min al-ma'ānī al-ḥaqīqiyya*), after the manner of allusion and exhortation and traditional transmission (*'alā ṭarīq al-ishāra wa-'l-tanbīh wa-'l-isnād*), without believing that this alone is the initial purpose (*al-qaṣd al-awwal*).<sup>7</sup>

However, establishing the true meaning of this narrative is much more difficult than others, for there pertains to it another cause [of difficulty] in addition to the cause that is common to all prophecies, that is the obscurity of their methods in describing their situations (*fī waṣf maqāmātihim*), and their reliance upon the familiarity of the people of their time with this [this method] and the principles underlying the quality of prophecy (*kayfiyyat al-nubuwwa*) and the quality of those situations (*wa-kayfiyyat tilka al-maqāmāt*),<sup>8</sup> so that at that time there was no

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<sup>5</sup> Arabic: *qiṣṣa al-anbiyā' wa-aḥwālihim*. Cf. Shy's translation of *wa-aḥwālihim* as *ve-hitnabbe'utam* ("and their prophesying"; *Perush*, 108).

<sup>6</sup> For such discomfort with radical allegoresis that denies the literal truth of the narrative, cf. the third exegetical method discussed by Ibn Ezra in the introduction to his commentary to the Torah.

<sup>7</sup> For this expression, see our discussion above, p.63-64.

<sup>8</sup> From context, it appears that Tanḥum is employing the term *maqām* in a nontechnical (i.e., non-Sufi and non-philosophical) sense. In adopting this understanding, I follow Shy, *Perush*, 108.

need for explanation or information.<sup>9</sup> This second cause that is additional to the obscurity [of their methods], as we explained, is that we cannot find anything in the whole of this *book* by means of which we might be guided to the intended purpose in reporting this entire narrative. The proof of this – in addition to that which we stated concerning *The Book of Obadiah* – is that it is unlikely that a great prophet would only receive a revelation concerning only one matter in his [entire] life. Indeed, the biblical text<sup>10</sup> explicitly states that Jonah, may peace be upon him, had a *book* that included many prophecies and narratives. This is known from the statement in *The Book of Kings* that he prophesied to Jeroboam b. Joash *the king of Israel*, and that is the statement therein, *according to the word of the Lord that He spoke through His servant Jonah b. Amittai the prophet of Gat Ha-Hefer*.<sup>11</sup> (2 Kings 14:25)

There is no doubt that this narrative is from that [work] in its entirety, and that this is what remains extant of it, the rest having been lost with the rest of what we lost of the [sciences of] felicity (*al-sa'ādāt*), and wisdom (*wa-'l-ḥikam*),<sup>12</sup> and the secrets of the *Torah* (*wa-asrār al-torah*) and the secrets of the prophecies, and all the sciences (*al-'ulūm*) with which the sages and scholars of our religious community (*ḥukamā' millatina wa-'ulamā'ihim*) occupied themselves. They were lost to us in the *exile* (*al-galut*), forgotten and transmitted to others of other religious

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<sup>9</sup> That is to say that all of the prophetic literature assumes a degree of familiarity with prophetic methods, which assume knowledge of the events referred to in the course of the discourses.

<sup>10</sup> Arabic: *al-naṣṣ*. This may narrowly mean “verse” or more broadly “text”. Neither translates elegantly into English in the present context, but the meaning of the Arabic is clear.

<sup>11</sup> This identification is made in *Pirqa de-rabbi eli' ezer*, and subsequently by both Yefet b. Eli and Abraham Ibn Ezra in their commentaries to Jonah. See Yefet's commentary to Jonah 1:1 in Andruss, *The Judaeo-Arabic Commentary*, 31-32; and the opening passage of Ibn Ezra's commentary to Jonah 1:1. For more on these sources and the extent to which Tanḥum builds upon this observation, see above, p.85-86.

<sup>12</sup> The Arabic is plural. The term *ḥikma/ḥikam* is employed by Tanḥum in his commentary to Qohelet as a synonym for *'ilm/'ulūm* (science/sciences), although here both are employed separately. This may be more stylistic than substantial, however.

communities, so that we must seek [those sciences] in their books.<sup>13</sup> However, an ignorant person of our [religious community] considers them to belong to them [i.e. the foreigners], not us, as we explained in the introduction to the first part of this book (*al-juz' al-awwal min hādhā al-kitāb*).<sup>14</sup>

Now, those books which are mentioned in the biblical text (*al-naṣṣ*) and are no longer extant prove the existence of others that are not mentioned. Among those [that are mentioned] are also *The Book of the Upright*, and *the book of the Words of Nathan the Prophet*<sup>15</sup> and *Gad the Seer*, and *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and the Kings of Judah*.<sup>16</sup> And similarly, the prophecies of *Ahijah the Shilonite*, and *the Vision of Jedo the Seer*, as are mentioned<sup>17</sup> in *Chronicles*,<sup>18</sup> and others of which nothing remains in the *exile*, as is explained in each place that they are mentioned.<sup>19</sup>

For this reason too are the *Twelve* [Minor Prophets] arranged in this *book* after *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel*, irrespective of chronological order, which is maintained in the major *books* (*fī al-sefarim al-kibār*) such as *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah*. For the periods of Hosea, Joel, Amos, and others as well was during the lifetime of Isaiah, predating Jeremiah. Similarly, Jonah (*peace upon him*) predates Isaiah, as is made clear by the verse that we mentioned in *The Book of Kings*. Since only fragments<sup>20</sup> of the discourses of these [prophets] were found, they were collected in a single *book*, although their periods vary. Chronological order was followed in the cases of some of

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<sup>13</sup> For the notion that sciences were known to the ancient Israelites that were subsequently forgotten as a result of exile, a conception common to Ibn Ezra and Judah Ha-Levi, see Sela, *Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science*, 309-310.

<sup>14</sup> I.e. *Al-kulliyāt*. See above, p.28.

<sup>15</sup> See 2 Chr. 9:29.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. 1 Kings 15:23; 22:39; 22:46; 2 Kings 14:28; 20:20.

<sup>17</sup> Lit. "as he mentioned," where the subject is ambiguous.

<sup>18</sup> See 2 Chr. 9:29.

<sup>19</sup> For a list of these non-extant extra-biblical works mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, and a brief discussion, see Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture*, 17-19.

<sup>20</sup> Arabic: *qalīl*. Literally, "a little".

them due only to their relationship to one another.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, I say that it is not unlikely that if we were to find the continuation of this narrative matters might become clear to us that would remove the difficulties and would render our explication and elucidation superfluous.

Know that it is not possible to substantiate this for everybody,<sup>22</sup> so do not demand this of me, other than an allusion which will scarcely suffice those who are worthy of it.

I shall therefore consider the aforementioned two causes [of difficulty in understanding this text], and I shall return to the principles that I have set out concerning the unveiling of the purposes of prophecies and the methods of prophetic proclamations in the first part of this book, which is called *Al-kulliyāt*.<sup>23</sup> I hope that by means of this all doubt shall leave you through the attainment of certainty with God's help, exalted is He.

The scholars and commentators (may God be pleased with them) are in accordance – and it is very obvious when one considers it – that God's intention, exalted is He, in this narrative is to rebuke Israel for their failure to accept the guidance towards the good<sup>24</sup> which was brought to them by the prophets from Him, exalted is He, and their lack of vigilance in repentance when they heard the exhortations and warning of punishment. But the nations – who do not have a connection between themselves and God (exalted is He) like [Israel's] connection [to God] – are better than them in this respect, insofar as when they are exhorted and scolded for the slightest thing, it leaves its mark upon them immediately and they turn away<sup>25</sup> from disobedience, so the result is positive, and their punishment is removed. But as for Israel, this has no salutary effect

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<sup>21</sup> For Tanḥum's understanding of the redactional history of the Minor Prophets, see discussion above, pp.86-88.

<sup>22</sup> Tanḥum seems to be referring to the esoteric sense of the Book of Jonah. An alternative reading might identify the redactional theory as the subject of this statement (i.e. that it can or should be demonstratively proven only to certain individuals). However, based on the continuation of the passage, and the fact that Tanḥum has already argued openly and persuasively for his redactional theory, I consider the latter possibility unlikely.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of *Al-kulliyāt*, see above, pp.27-30.

<sup>24</sup> Arabic: *al-istiṣlāḥ*. This is to say that the prophets prescribed *istiṣlāḥ*. For this term, see above, p.88 fn. 33.

<sup>25</sup> Lit. "return."

on them, though it may be repeated frequently. This is the explanation of the narrative as a whole according to its literal sense (*'alā al-wajh al-zāhir*), and it is in truth the initial intention (*wa-huwa al-maqṣūd awwalan bi-'l-ḥaqīqa*).<sup>26</sup>

As for that which it contains in addition to this, regarding its allegorical interpretation (*al-ta'wīl*) according to the method of allusion and exhortation (*'alā tarīq al-ishāra wa-'l-tanbīh*) which benefits humans and demands constant recollection and intellectual contemplation, it concerns the state of the human soul as it dwells in the sensible world (*ḥāl al-naḥs al-insāniyya fī ḥulūlihā fī 'ālam al-ḥiss*), and the illumination of the intellect's light upon it (*wa-ishrāq nūr al-'aql 'alayhā*), and its attainment of perpetual felicity (*wa-ḥuṣūl sa'ādatihā al-dā'ima*) through receiving it,<sup>27</sup> and its wretchedness in the absence of this. There is therefore, if you reflect upon it, a powerful analogy to the general and particular aspects of the state [of the soul] (*li-kullīyyāt ḥālihā wa-juzwiyyātihā* [sic]<sup>28</sup>) in this narrative.

After presenting this introduction, I see fit to present a linguistic treatment of this narrative and the meanings of its verses,<sup>29</sup> for this is the primary purpose (*al-gharad al-awwal*) of this book.<sup>30</sup> Then I shall follow this with the exposition of its meanings according to the aforementioned [method of allegorical] interpretation *with the help of the Almighty...*

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<sup>26</sup> For Tanḥum's use of the term *al-qasḍ al-awwal* and its cognates, see discussion above, p.63-64.

<sup>27</sup> I.e., the illumination or light. The Arabic employs the partative *min*; thus, more literally, "though receiving [something] of it."

<sup>28</sup> I.e., *juz'īyyātihā*. See Blau, *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, 88.

<sup>29</sup> Arabic: *arā an ākhudha fī sharḥ alfāz hādhihi al-qīṣṣa wa-ma'ānī nuṣūṣihā*. I have translated this sentence in light of the technical sense of *sharḥ alfāz* as a lexically (and more broadly, linguistically focused) commentary, for which see above, p.295 and fn. 75.

<sup>30</sup> For the literal sense of Scripture as *al-qasḍ al-awwal/al-maqṣūd awwalan/al-gharad al-awwal*, and for a discussion of these expressions, see above, p.63-64.

[After completing the explication of the Book of Jonah according to its exoteric sense, Tanḥum continues:]<sup>31</sup>

Now that we have completed the explanation of the expressions whose exposition we considered necessary within this book, we shall follow it with that [allegorical] interpretation (*ta'wīl*) that may accord with them in addition to the literal meaning (*al-zāhir*), according to the method of the recent [scholars] (*al-muta'akhhirīn*) who hold such views,<sup>32</sup> and we shall relate something of that which is in this book relating to the state of the soul (*ḥāl al-nafs*), as we said above.

We state that it is due to this that he is named Jonah.<sup>33</sup> For, as you will know from our explanation of the *Song of Songs*, this is a name that is applied metaphorically to the human soul.<sup>34</sup> This is due to the qualities that inhere in the dove,<sup>35</sup> that correspond with [the soul's] condition. They include delicacy, the beauty of its appearance, its watchfulness, its integrity, which are not found in any other bird. Likewise – if it is raised in a [particular] place and becomes accustomed to it, and then it is sent away from there to some faraway place – it is in [the dove's] nature to remember [its place of origin], and to return to it to the best of its capability. [This is true to the extent] that even if one clips its wings or imprisons it in a cage, and it remains there for a long time, as soon as it finds a means of deliverance from its imprisonment and its wings heal, it will not remain thus without moving towards its homeland. It rises, ascending, until it can see [its homeland], and thither it returns.

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<sup>31</sup> The esoteric commentary appears in Shy, *Perush*, 129-139.

<sup>32</sup> The reference appears to be to Maimonides, who advocated the allegorical interpretation of passages that he identified as prophetic parables. For a comparison between Maimonides' method and that of Tanḥum, see above, pp.63-75.

<sup>33</sup> Hebrew: *yonah*.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Tanḥum's commentary to Canticles 2:14, in MS Pococke 320, 37b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 43. See in particular MS Pococke 320, 9a-b; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 9-10, translated and discussed in detail above, pp.326-342.

<sup>35</sup> The Hebrew term for the dove (*yonah*) is identical with the name of the prophet.

This is the state of the soul. It emanates from His light, exalted is He, from the intellectual world, then it dwells in the body in order to govern it. It becomes immersed in the physical world, and the filth of sensible things. If it remained in such a state it would perish, after its felicity is extinguished – and that is the *life of the world to come*. But if it seeks out the true sciences, it remembers its place of origin and yearns for it. And if it persists in laboring for this [end] by acquiring rational and moral virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-nuṭqiyya wal-khulqiyya*),<sup>36</sup> it is capable of freeing itself from its cage, and it departs from the darkness of the body towards connection (*īṣāl*) with its point of origin, and it attains eternal life, subsistence (*baqā'*) and felicity (*sa'āda*), the peak of which cannot be grasped, as it is written, *No eye has beheld God save Yours; He acts for one who awaits Him*.<sup>37</sup> (Isaiah 64:3) For this reason the *sages, peace be upon them*, have named it *dove (yonah)* in the verse, *My dove in the clefts of the rock*, (Cant. 2:14) [and] *my dove, my perfect one (ibid. 5:2; 6:9)*, and others, as we shall explain in its [proper] place when we get to it, *with the help of Shaddai*.

Likewise regarding [Jonah's] descent<sup>38</sup> from *Amittai*: [The soul] is from the light of the intellectual world, whose existence is of abiding certainty through the existence of the First Reality, blessed and exalted is He.<sup>39</sup> That is to say that His existence, exalted is He, is true existence in its essence, by which I mean that His necessity is part of His essence. Everything other than Him is deficient in essence, since its existence emanates from His existence, exalted is

<sup>36</sup> For Tanḥum's program of philosophical self-cultivation and its soteriological significance, see above, pp.190-230.

<sup>37</sup> Although *elohim* may be read as vocative in this verse, I have translated it as the direct object, as this appears to be more consistent with Tanḥum's own reading.

<sup>38</sup> Lit. "Likewise, the *nisba* to Amittai..."

<sup>39</sup> Arabic: *fa-innahā min nūr al-'ālam al-'aqlī al-ladhī wujūduhu ta'ālā* {lit. whose existence, exalted is it (!)} *thābit al-tahaqquq bi-wujūd al-ḥaqq al-awwal tabāraka wa-ta'ālā*. If the referent of the pronominal suffix of *wujūduhu* is taken to be God – which is strongly implied by the expression *ta'ālā* – this seems to imply a distinction between God and "the First Reality" (*al-ḥaqq al-awwal*), the latter which undoubtedly refers to God. The only resolution seems to be that the referent is "the intellectual world" (*al-'ālam al-'aqlī*), and the expression *ta'ālā* is used due to the divine or angelic nature of that realm, or that it is a scribal error born of habit. I have thus omitted the expression *ta'ālā* from my translation.

He. So nothing possesses true existence other than He, and He is real in essence. This is the meaning of His statement: *And the Lord God is true, He is the living God and eternal king.* (Jer. 10:10) The first existence that emanates from His existence is the world of *angels* (*‘ālam al-mal’akhim*)<sup>40</sup> – I mean the world of forms denuded of matter<sup>41</sup> – and from them emanates the existence of the souls that govern bodies. Their existence – I mean the existence of the intellects – is of greater reality than the existence of the souls, since [the intellects] are the medium between [the souls] and [God], exalted is He. So this ascription [i.e., the son of Amittai] corresponds with this meaning, as you see.

As for the *ta’wīl* of the revelation (*al-wahy*) from Him (exalted is He) [to Jonah], it is an allusion (*ishāra*) to the appearance of the emanation (*al-fayḍ*) that is necessary in order to bring [the soul] into existence.<sup>42</sup>

Here one should consider that [Jonah’s] mission was for the welfare of *Nineveh*’s governance. This name contains an etymological derivation from *naveh*, which is “dwelling-place (*al-maskan*)”. That is to say that [the soul’s] purpose is to dwell in this domain – that is, the domain of the [physical] world (*dār al-dunyā*), in order to contemplate something of His handiwork (*li-ta’tabir mā fīhā min ṣan’ihī ta’ālā*), and to acquire those of the sciences that it may make use of in order to attain its perfection *in actu*.

This is the reason for its distance from His presence, to the extent that the veiling [that results from embodiment in] matter necessitates it. This is the movement *to flee to Tarshish from before*

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<sup>40</sup> This is an allusion to the intellectual realm known as *‘ālam al-malakūt*, for which see above, p.135-146.

<sup>41</sup> For the angels as “forms separated from matter,” see above, pp.134-136, p.221 and fn. 273.

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of Tanḥum’s emanationist theory of the soul’s origin, see above, pp.130-133.

*the Lord*, i.e. immersion in the sea that is called *Tarshish*,<sup>43</sup> being the physical world and the crude, dark sea of hyllic matter (*‘ālam al-ṭabī‘a wa-baḥr al-hayūlā al-kathīf al-muzlim*),<sup>44</sup> which is considered [to have] in its dark recesses a clarity similar to the color blue, as we explained concerning the naming of the sea *Tarshish* due to its blueness.<sup>45</sup>

One should also consider that [the verse] states, *from before the Lord (mi-lifne ywy)* and not *from [the Lord’s] countenance (mi-pene)*, like *Where can I flee from Your countenance?* (Ps. 139:7), [and] *Moses fled from his countenance* (Ex. 4:3). But this is far removed from the Sacred Sovereign (*al-ḥaḍra al-quḍsiyya*), the Necessary Occurrence (*ḍarūrī al-wuqū‘*).

One should also consider that the *flight* is associated with the preparation of the *ship*, which is the body in which [the soul] dwells so that it might improve it, and be improved by means of it.<sup>46</sup> [The body] is similar to a ship: For just as a ship is constructed from parts, each of which has a benefit that can only be fully realized through it [i.e. that specific part], but those benefits are fully realized through guiding agents<sup>47</sup> who use those tools for that to which they are suited, so too is the body composed of organs shaped for functions that are necessary for its sustenance and the soul’s continuing connection to it, and it has faculties operating in those organs that help to fully realize the welfare of the soul and the body together.

Also, just as the ship has a rope that one has no choice but to hold if one wishes to set off on a journey into the sea, and if one maneuvers skillfully (*in aḥsana tadbīrahu*) the passenger is delivered and arrives safely at his desired destination without suffering wreckage, so too does the

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<sup>43</sup> In the MS: *tarshishah*, with the directive *he*. This may be a scribal error or a deliberate choice based on the form in Jonah 1:3.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the description of the immersion of human souls in “the sea of matter, which is called in their language *hayūlā*,” in *Mozne ha-‘iyyunim*, a thirteenth century Hebrew translation of an earlier Muslim treatise, cited in Langermann, “Astrological Themes,” 72-73.

<sup>45</sup> See Tanḥum’s exoteric commentary to Jonah 1:3 (Shy, *Perush*, 113) and our discussion, above, p.91, p.95-96.

<sup>46</sup> For antecedents and parallels to the figure of the ship as the human body, see above, pp.147-149.

<sup>47</sup> Arabic: *bi-mudabbirīn*, from *tadbīr* (governance, rule, management, direction).

soul have no choice but to perfect itself in association with the body, its faculties and their governance and use insofar as they will perfect it [i.e. the soul]. If it takes control of them and is able to govern them justly as wisdom necessitates, it is saved from the sea of hylic matter and its darkness, and it arrives at the world of light and perpetual felicity. But if it maneuvers badly and one sinks in corporeal appetites, it is ruined and suffers the misfortune that comes with no repair for its fracture, and after which there is no rectification for its shattering. Thus, according to this [allegorical] interpretation (*'alā hādhā al-ta'wīl*), the *ship* is a symbol (*mithāl*) for the body carrying the soul and the faculties.

Since the soul alone possesses intellect and [the capacity for] governance, ruin or liberation is on account of it and as a result of it. And when it is engulfed in the intoxication of the physical [body and world] (*sukr al-ṭabī'a*), those who are governed by it having control over it, its state deteriorates and the causes of destruction are stirred up, and the waves of that terrible sea crash against the ship, as it states, *And the Lord cast a mighty wind into the sea, and there was a great tempest in the sea.* (Jonah 1:4) This is due to differences in opinion, and error in thinking, leading to ruin and shattering. *And it was considered as if the ship would break apart.*<sup>48</sup> (*Ibid.*)

None of the faculties is able to escape at all, nor does it know its true path, since this is not part of its function. Rather, each one fulfils only the function with which its Creator entrusted it, as is the inclination of the ship's crew – each one turning to the one that he serves [i.e. his god]. And this is useless for [their] liberation. This is [the meaning of] the statement: *The sailors were afraid, and they cried out, each to his own god.* (*Ibid.*, 1:5)

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<sup>48</sup> For this understanding of the verse, see Tanḥum's exoteric commentary to the verse, translated and discussed above, p.97, pp.100-102.

As a result of the great confusion in their state they are unable to carry the tools in order to fulfil their functions – so they cast them [overboard]: *And they cast [their] belongings in the ship into the sea in order to lighten the load. (Ibid.)*

The true cause (*al-sabab al-aṣlī*) [of their waywardness] is hidden from them; that is, the deep sleep that has come upon *Jonah in the ship's hold*. This is [the meaning of] the statement: *Jonah had descended into the ship's hold, lay down, and fell asleep. (Ibid.)* This despite the fact that the leader entrusted with his instruction (*al-muwakkal bi-tanbīhihi*),<sup>49</sup> meaning *the captain (rab ha-ḥobel* cf. *ibid.*, 1:6) – and he is the angel responsible for the guidance of the rational soul and its perfection (*wa-huwa al-malak al-mutawallī hidāyat al-naḥs al-nāṭiqa wa-takmīlahu*)<sup>50</sup> – constantly calls out to him spurs him on to arouse himself to fulfil the function that is particular to him with regard to the service<sup>51</sup> of his Lord (*min 'ibādat rabbihi*). This is [the meaning of] the statement: *Wherefore dost thou slumber? Arise and call to thy God!*" (*Ibid.*, 1:6) Since [Jonah] did not fulfil his duty, searching instead for a cause for punishment for the ship and its crew, it came about on account of him alone.

*And the lot fell upon Jonah (ibid., 1:7)*, and he acknowledged this to them, since the soul is obliged with the governance and neglectful in its duty, so due to it is the decree of ruin for all [of the faculties and the body] by accident, and [the soul] in essence. That is [the meaning of] the statement: *for on my account has this great tempest come upon you. (Ibid., 1:12.)*

As for the analogy of the statement *I am a Hebrew ('ibri anokhi; Jonah 1:9)* according to this [allegorical] interpretation (*li-hādhā al-ta'wīl*), there are multiple meanings. One of them is its

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<sup>49</sup> Here the referent of the pronominal suffix in the Arabic *tanbīhihi* is conveniently ambiguous: The captain is responsible for overseeing and advising the crew, and also attempts to arouse Jonah from his sleep.

<sup>50</sup> For this figure as representing the Active Intellect, see above, p.134-135.

<sup>51</sup> Or: worship.

etymological derivation (*ishtiqaquhu*) from *traveling the paths of the seas* (‘*ober orhot yammim*; Ps. 8:9) – meaning a traveler (‘*ābir sabīl*), not one of the inhabitants who dwell in this realm, but one necessarily moving away from it (*lā min al-sākinīn al-qāṭinīn fī hādhā al-dār bal muntaqil ‘anhā darūratan*). Another is that it is derived from *across the river* (*me-‘eber ha-nahar*),<sup>52</sup> meaning from another side and an area other than this one. This is because the soul emanates from the world of the intellect, as [explained] above (*wa-hādhā li-anna al-naḥs fā’ida kamā taqaddama min ‘ālam al-‘aql*), and is foreign and distant in the world of sense-objects.<sup>53</sup> Another is according to its literal sense (‘*alā zāhirihi*) as a title of kinship (*nisba*) to the school (*madhhab*) of *Abram the Hebrew* (*abram ha-‘ibri*; cf. Gen. 14:13), that being the school of monotheism (*madhhab al-tawḥīd*).<sup>54</sup> The meaning is that the root of the human soul is in the world of simplicity and true unity (‘*ālam al-basāṭa wa-’l-tawaḥḥud al-ḥaqīqī*).

The meaning of *the sea and the dry land* (Jonah 1:9) according to this [allegorical] interpretation is “the lower world and the supernal world” (*al-‘ālam al-sufī wa-’l-‘ālam al-‘alawī*). For just as the sensory world is likened to the *sea*, the world in which one who is delivered from this *sea* arrives is likened to *dry land*. But the soul – despite the knowledge imparted to it through the aforementioned exhortation, and due to the strength of the *slumber* – chooses immersion in that sea and succumbs to ruin within it, and prefers to weary itself minimally in the virtuous practice of abstinence and discipline (*al-zuhd wa-’l-riyāda*) and the betterment of one’s dispositions, and

<sup>52</sup> See Josh. 24:3, 15; 2 Sam. 10:16; 1 Chron. 19:16. For the use of this expression to shed light on the expression *abram ha-‘ibri* in Gen. 14:13, see the interpretation of “the rabbis” (*rabbanin*) in Genesis Rabbah *ad loc.* (*parashah* 41 [42], eds. Theodor and Albeck, 414). This interpretation is adopted by Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 500), Rashi (commentary to Gen. 14:13), and cf. Ibn Ezra’s commentary to Ex. 1:16. Cf. also Joshua 24:3. An explicit connection between these verses is made by Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 500).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Genesis Rabbah, *parashah* 41 (42) (eds. Theodor and Albeck, 414): “Rabbi Judah said: The whole world was on one side (*me-‘eber ehad*), and [Abram] was on the other side.”

<sup>54</sup> See Ibn Ezra’s commentary to Ex. 1:16, where he explains Abraham’s appellation *ha-‘ibri* as reflecting his origins over the river (*me-‘eber ha-nahar*; cf. previous note), and adds that the Israelites are known as Hebrews (‘*ibrim*) due their faith (*ve-‘al emunato yiqqare ‘ibri*), that faith being peculiar to the descendants of Eber. Cf. Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 500), who notes descent from Eber as a possible reason for Abraham being called ‘*ibri*.

the acquisition of the true sciences. This is due to its ignorance of the happiness (*al-na'īm*) that will come to it, which bears no resemblance to its present enjoyment of sleep and intoxication.

That is [the meaning] of the statement: *Pick me up and cast me into the sea.* (*Ibid.*, 1:12)

When this is done to it, its misfortune increases and the creatures of that terrible sea swallow it up. That is [the meaning of] the statement: *The Lord provided a giant fish etc.* (2:1) At that point, it would be doomed to ruin, and destruction would be inevitable, were it not for that wondrous tendency and extraordinary fineness – that is, turning oneself towards His door, exalted is He, and awakening from the sleep of ignorance, humbling oneself before Him in seeking deliverance. This is [the meaning of] the statement: *Jonah prayed to the Lord his God<sup>55</sup> from the belly of the fish.* (*Ibid.*, 2:2)

When it attains sincere repentance (*al-tawba al-khāliṣa*) and is properly inclined, it receives the noble emanation (*al-fayḍ al-karīm*) that assists the soul in governance [of the body and faculties], and its state improves, as does the state of those governed by it.<sup>56</sup> They submit and acknowledge [the soul's] rulership, and are bound by its command, and turn away from their wickedness and their injustice, and unite in their purpose – that purpose being one, and being [the soul's] purpose.<sup>57</sup> That is [the meaning of] the statement: *The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and great and small alike put on sackcloth.* (*Ibid.*, 3:5)

This took place when [Jonah] brought them the divine command (*al-amr al-ilāhī*), which cannot be resisted, [and] through which the animal to which it is fed becomes intoxicated, so that one may lead it to one's destination, by which I mean the soul's conjunction with its intellectual

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<sup>55</sup> The MS reads *elohim* (God) in place of *elohav* (his God).

<sup>56</sup> I.e., the body and its faculties.

<sup>57</sup> The Arabic *wa-huwa maqṣaduhā* is ambiguous, as the feminine pronominal suffix may refer either to the soul or to the faculties. Although either interpretation would make sense, the former is less redundant and therefore reads better in context. Compare Shy's Hebrew translation (*Perush*, 134): *ve-hi maṭṭaratah*.

point of origin (*īṣāl al-naḥs bi-'l-mabda' al-'aqlī*), and its reception of emanation from it (*wa-qubūl al-fayḍ minhu*), although it is still associated with the body.<sup>58</sup> That is [the meaning of] the statement: *The Lord commanded the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon dry land.* (*Ibid.*, 2:11)

At that time, [Jonah] returns to the governance of the people of *Nineveh*, as is proper, and they submit to receive from him, and their king is humbled at his command – and he is *the evil inclination* (*yetzer ha-ra'*), as the *sages* also exemplified this matter in *Qohelet* on the verse *There was a small town with few men in it, and to it came a great king* (Qoh. 9:14), as we shall explain in its place with God's help.<sup>59</sup>

The meaning of *an enormously large city* (*'ir gedolah l-elohim*; Jonah 3:3) according to this [allegorical] interpretation is that it must necessarily be led to knowledge of Him (*innahā ḍarūriyya muwaṣṣala ilā ma'rifatihī*).<sup>60</sup>

The meaning of *a three days' walk across* (Jonah 3:3) is that there are three loci of the principle faculties (*maḥallāt ummahāt al-quwā*) in the body. They are the heart, the brain, and the liver. But the nearest to the soul are the faculties of conceptualization (*quwā al-taṣawwur*) that are in the brain, not to mention cogitation (*al-mufakkira*), for it is [the latter] to which meanings come. Therefore, Jonah's call *in the city* was *the distance of one day's walk*.<sup>61</sup> (Jonah 3:4)

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<sup>58</sup> That is to say that the divine command weakens the animal soul, and rendering it more docile for the intellectual soul to govern, and attain a measure of conjunction with the Active Intellect, even while embodied.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 32b. For Tanḥum's interpretation of this passage and his sources, see Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 14-17.

<sup>60</sup> This interpretation plays on the literal sense of *l-elohim* as "to God". In its literal narrative context, Tanḥum understands to the expression to refer to the size and political influence of the city, as he writes in his exoteric commentary: "A mighty and great city (*madīna 'aẓīma wa-kabīra*), being the base of the king of Assyria (*wa-hiya qā'idat malik ashūr*)." (Shy, *Perush*, 121.) The Arabic *muwaṣṣala* also hints at aforementioned conjunction (*īṣāl*) with the intellectual realm (called in its fullest sense *wuṣūl*; see above, p.137, p.144, p.152, p.353-354.).

<sup>61</sup> Or: Jonah's call was *the distance of one day's walk into the city*. While this alternative division of the verse does not fit the masoretic cantillation, it is a somewhat more comfortable reading of Tanḥum's own citation in this passage, which begins with the term *ba-'ir* (into the city). Rather than breaking up the verse, this maintains its unity. Tanḥum does not discuss the division of the verse in his exoteric commentary.

Thereafter, the news spread and achieved its goal. The meaning of the statement *human and beast* (3:7, 8) is “both those of the faculties that are noble like a *human*, and those that are base like a *beast*.” [Alternatively,] if you wish, say: “The cognitive faculty that is characteristic of the *human* (*al-quwwa al-fikriyya al-khāṣṣa bi-’l-adam*), and the similar faculties that are in the *animal*.”<sup>62</sup>

The statement [that] “*forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown*” may be interpreted (*wa-yata’awwalu*) with respect to a very peculiar sense, that being that the purpose of the body is the perfection of the soul, as [discussed] above, and the age at which the attainment of this perfection becomes possible is one’s fortieth year, much as the ancient ones (*al-awā’il*) of *blessed memory* stated: *At the age of forty did Abraham come to know his Creator*.<sup>63</sup> Meaning that if this body is far from perfection and keeps one from true conjunction (*al-ittiṣāl al-ḥaḳīqī*), one must break it and weaken it by renouncing it (*itlāfuhu wa-ifsāduhu bi-’l-takhallī ‘anhu*). This is what appears to the soul at first, before speculative demonstration concerning this [matter]. But when one engages in speculative demonstration through the light of the intellect, it is revealed to [the soul] (*ūḥā ilayhā*) that this is not the case.

Therefore, because [the destruction] was not brought about, but rather they repented, their state became orderly, and their continued existence was ensured, it pained *Jonah* according to his present view. For he thought that they are the cause of his ruin, and he will only be liberated after a mighty struggle – so he yearned to be free of them. But God, exalted is he, informed him that neither his wisdom nor his justice require such a thing: Wisdom, since perfection constantly

<sup>62</sup> For a discussion of Tanḥum’s allegorical commentary to Jonah 3:4-7, see above, pp.138-143.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Maimonides’ *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Idolatry and the Practices of the Gentiles, 1:2: “... and at the age of forty, did Abraham come to know his Creator.” Cf. Genesis Rabba, Noah, *parashah* 30: “At the age of forty-eight did Abraham come to know his Creator.” (In *Bereshit Rabba*, eds. Theodore and Albeck, vol. 1, 274, line 2.) Cf. also *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21 (*’aseret ha-dibberot* #1), where the ages given are three years, forty eight years, and fifty years. Cf. also bTalmud Nedarim, 32a: “At the age of three did Abraham come to know his Creator.”

increases with respect to that to which it adheres; and justice, since it requires providing anything that is prepared [to receive something] with that which it deserves. So as long as this body is prepared to receive life and governance from the soul, neither is it proper to rob it of its right, nor to submit to that which is not necessary for it. Rather, justice is [served] when both are afforded their rightful lot, until the period of preparedness that God wills is complete.<sup>64</sup>

The parable of the *gourd* is presented in accordance with what we explained above, concerning the meaning of the statement, “*You cared about the plant etc. (Jonah 3:10) And should I not care about Nineveh etc. (Ibid. 3:11)*”<sup>65</sup>

[This passage] may also be interpreted as an allegory for seeking the welfare of the people of *Nineveh*, which are an expression for the rational souls which are immersed in the sensible world (*al-nufūs al-nāṭiqā al-munghamira fī ‘ālam al-ḥiss*). That is to say that the soul – once it has attained some conjunction with the intellect (*idhā balaghat min al-ittiṣāl bi-’l-‘aql*), while it is [still] associated with matter – cannot attain union with it (*mā yumkinuhā al-wuṣūl ilayhi*). At that time, it is not satisfied solely with its own liberation (*bi-khalāṣihā*), but it becomes like its source by emanating goodness (*fī ifādat al-khayr*) upon the other inhabitants of this dwelling-place – by which I mean the souls that cling to the bonds of the body – and exhorts them with instruction and admonition. It becomes the cause of their liberation, just as *Jonah (may peace be upon him)* became a cause of the liberation of the people of *Nineveh* after his own liberation. This too is a beautiful interpretation, but the most fitting interpretation for the end of the narrative is the one that we mentioned first.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> For this passage as reflecting Tanḥum’s moderate asceticism, see above, p.143-144.

<sup>65</sup> See the discussion of Tanḥum *peshat* commentary to Jonah 3:10-11 above, pp.107-112.

<sup>66</sup> For these two interpretations – namely, that the fully realized intellectual either guides others towards perfection, or the proper governance of the corporeal faculties – see above, pp.143-146.

Now we have already treated this book at great length, and departed from our usual method concerning other [books]. But this has been our intention, considering that which is in this [allegorical] interpretation of the benefit that comes from a person's arousal of their soul, and their contemplation of their point of origin and the place to which they return. This is particularly so when the narrative is expounded during its recitation aloud at the end of the *fast* of *Yom Kippur* day,<sup>67</sup> when one's gross matter has passed away and one's corporeal faculties have been weakened, and the matter that results in the purification of the inner faculties (*al-quwā al-bāṭina*) has become supple, and souls have become attentive to some of that which is required of them through the *prayers* and the *confessions* that come in addition to contemplation of one's sins, remorse for them, and seeking forgiveness.

At that time, the soul has usually become supple and it is ready to receive insights, and to choose freedom from the darkness of the appetites. For it is to this end – by which I mean for the purpose of guidance towards the benefits of *repentance* and the lesson of the people of Nineveh – that *our Rabbis of blessed memory* established this book as the *haftarah* at this time [i.e. *Yom Kippur* afternoon].<sup>68</sup> And if that [practice] also connects to this inner interpretation [of the book], then even greater the benefit. *Repentance* is assured and accomplished both inwardly and outwardly (*wa-tammāt al-teshuvah ṣāhiran wa-bāṭinan*) as a result of this interpretation, which accords with that which is appropriate. There necessarily follows from this interpretation an effort to attain human perfection, through which one attains perpetual subsistence and eternal bliss, rapture in the cups of delightful drink, the delight of whose drunkenness never ends, and the intoxication of whose wine never passes. May God, exalted is He, place us – together with

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<sup>67</sup> Hebrew: *yom tzom kippurim*.

<sup>68</sup> For the public recitation of the Book of Jonah on *Yom Kippur*, see Maimonides, *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, 13:11.

everyone who applies himself to [human perfection] – among those who attain it, who scoop up that which overflows from Him, who glory in the delight of its sweetness. As it is said in the statement of [God's] Intimate One (*al-walī*),<sup>69</sup> peace upon him: *They are satiated by the rich fare of your house, and you give them to drink of the stream of your delights.*<sup>70</sup> (Ps. 36:9)

*The Book of Jonah* is complete, with the help of God Most Faithful, blessed is His name and exalted His renown.

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<sup>69</sup> For the significance of this term, see above, p.150 fn. 307.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Maimonides' interpretation of the following verse of the psalm (Ps. 36:10; *For with You is the source of life, in your light do we see light*), which he associates with an emanationist cosmology, in *Guide* II.12 (Pines, 280).

## Appendix B: Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Introduction to His Commentary on

### Qohelet<sup>1</sup>

*In the name of the Lord, God of the World.*<sup>2</sup>(Gen. 21:33)

[1:1] *The words of Qohelet, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*

Since an introduction to this book is necessary, we say: We have already stated, concerning the verse *Wisdom has built her house, has hewn her seven pillars* (Prov. 9:1), that by this it refers to the enumeration of the philosophical sciences (*al-'ulūm al-ḥikmiyya*),<sup>3</sup> though there are many branches and numerous disciplines altogether through which a human being's wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) is perfected – so that *seven* may simply indicate plurality according to the idiom of the Hebrew language, [whose speakers] indicate plurality with the number seven. But if *seven* is a precise enumeration, it refers to (1) practical wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-'amaliyya*); (2) propaedeutic wisdom (*wa-'l-ḥikma al-riyāḍiyya*), which is of four categories; (3) physical science (*al-'ilm al-*

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<sup>1</sup> The present translation is based primarily on MS Pococke 320, 72b-75b; transcribed in Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 24-26.

<sup>2</sup> Here Tanḥum follows Maimonides' usage of this verse, echoing the Islamic *basmla* (pace Qafih, for whose discussion see *Moreh ha-nebukhim* [Mossad Harav Kook: 1977], 3 fn. 4). Qafih notes that in employing this formulation, Maimonides expresses his identification with Abraham, the messenger of monotheism in an idolatrous world. For Maimonides' usage and interpretation of this verse, see Pines, *Guide*, 3 and fn.1 (introductory epistle), 282 and n.4 (II.13), 516 (III.29); and cf. *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Idolatry and Gentile Norms, 1:3. Saul Lieberman noted that Maimonides prefaces all of his works with this formulation (see *Hilkhoth Ha-Yerushalmi (The Laws of the Palestinian Talmud) of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon*, ed. Saul Lieberman [The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: 1995], 5, fn. 7). Of course, the fact that Maimonides' usage of Gen. 21:33 echoes the *basmla* does not in the least negate Qafih's insightful observation concerning the significance of this usage. At the risk of over-reading, Tanḥum's adoption of this formulation may indicate his self-perception as a follower of Maimonides, or even as an enabler of the full realization of the latter's religious and philosophical project. For this aspect of Tanḥum's activity, see above, p.25-26.

<sup>3</sup> For *ḥikma* as philosophy in this context, see above, p.179 fn. 122. I have generally preferred to translate the singular form as "wisdom", preserving the association with the Hebrew *ḥokhmah*. However, where Tanḥum employs the plural form and thereby more clearly alludes to the philosophical sciences treated in his classification, I have rendered the term "sciences". In general, I have indicated the original form underlying my translation.

*ṭabīʿī*); (4) divine science (*wa-ʿl-ʿilm al-ilāhī*), which is the ultimate goal (*al-ghāya al-quṣwā*) of them all. These thus come to [a total of] seven.<sup>4</sup>

We shall state here that wisdom is the perfection (*istikmāl*) of the human soul through conceiving objects (*taṣawwur al-umūr*) and confirming (*wa-ʿl-taṣdīq*)<sup>5</sup> practical and theoretical truths according to one's human capacity. This is the *telos* of a human being (*ghāyat al-insān*) insofar as one is a human being, and it is [the human being's] ultimate felicity (*nihāyat sa'ādātihi*).

Wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) may be classified initially into two parts: Practical (*'amaliyya*) and theoretical (*naẓariyya*).<sup>6</sup>

As far as practical wisdom is concerned, we first require knowledge of it, and then the purpose of knowing it is practical application (*al-'amal*) according to that which we have learned of it, and establishing it in our souls. For knowing it is insufficient for the attainment of felicity, unless one follows it up with action (*'amal*) in accordance with the knowledge (*al-'ilm*).

Concerning theoretical wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-naẓariyya*), its purpose is knowledge (*'ilm*) and the acquisition of correct views and accurate convictions. If the soul conceives the true nature of existent beings so that the forms of the true existents may become impressed upon it, [the soul] itself becomes real. There is no action that must follow this. Rather, it is abstract: Knowledge and conceptualization (*bal mujarrad 'ilm wa-taṣawwur*).

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<sup>4</sup> For the background to this interpretation of Prov. 9:1 in the light of medieval classifications of the sciences, see above, pp.194-196.

<sup>5</sup> For the epistemological terms *taṣawwur* and *taṣdīq*, see discussion above, pp.140-142.

<sup>6</sup> For the division of philosophy into the practical and theoretical sciences, see above, pp.196-198. With this distinction, Tanḥum begins his classification of the philosophical sciences. For the genre, and a detailed study of Tanḥum's classification against the background of his antecedents, see above, pp.190-230.

Thus is the former called practical wisdom, and it must necessarily come first; while the latter is called theoretical wisdom, for nothing further is needed than the pursuit of speculation (*baḥth al-nazar*).

Each of these two [modes of] wisdom (*al-ḥikmatayn*) may be divided into three parts.

[The Three Parts of Practical Wisdom]

The parts of practical [philosophy] are three, and they are called [both] governance (*tadābīr*) and administration (*siyāsāt*).

(1) The first of [the three parts] is individual governance. Its utility (*wa-fā'idatuhā*) lies in the study of virtues and the way in which they might be acquired, and the manner of the treatment of ills and deficiencies, from one upon whose soul these things have been impressed. [This is] so that the soul might become chastened through the attainment and acquisition of virtues, and through the abandonment of vices and caution of them. So that the soul might be cleansed and purged and purified.

(2) The second is household administration (*al-siyāsa al-manziliyya*). Its utility lies in knowing the quality of associations and partnerships that are desirable between the members of the household and the relatives and the family and the attendants, so that their welfare might be furthered between them, and their association and interaction with each other might be improved.

(3) The third part is political wisdom (*ḥikma madaniyya*). Its utility lies in knowing the quality of partnerships that occur between individual people so that an association might occur between them, so that they may seek their corporeal welfare and material necessities: Food, shelter, clothing and other such things that are all artificial (*ṣinā'iyya*). Thus their lasting individual existence is brought about to the greatest extent possible, and the continuation of their species as

the union necessitates, if they act in accordance with that which will bring them eternal existence and everlasting subsistence.<sup>7</sup> Prophetic governance (*al-tadbīr al-nabawī*) falls into this category, and it is a part of it in [one] sense and distinct from in in [another] sense, just as we alluded to above on a similar [topic] concerning the hierarchy of beings and the categories of their ranks at the beginning of *Proverbs*.

#### [The Three Parts of Theoretical Wisdom]

Now concerning theoretical wisdom, it also consists of three parts:

(1) There is one part that is attached to matter (*yata'allāqu bi-'l-mawādd*) and only exists [in conjunction] with it. However, the mind can abstract its concepts from their matter and conceive of them as mental concepts (*lākin yumkin al-dhihn an yujarrida ma'ānīhā 'an mawāddihā wa-yataṣawwarahā ma'ānī dhihniyya*), even though it [also] conceives of their matter. For the mind can receive [those concepts], and wisdom<sup>8</sup> with them. [This branch] is called propaedeutic science (*al-'ilm al-riyādī*), and it consists of four parts: (a) Arithmetic; (b) geometry (*al-handasa*); (c) music; and (d) astronomy (*al-hay'a*), by which I mean the science of the celestial spheres and their measurements and rotations, and the shape of their movements (*hay'at ḥarakātihā*) and their respective distances, and things of this manner.

(2) The second part is also attached to matter (*ta'alluquhu ayḍan bi-'l-mawādd*), but it cannot be denuded from its material [substances], nor can the mind conceive of it in the absence of them; such as motion and rest, place and time, admixture and transformation, and similar such [things] concerning other attributes that inhere in bodies; such as lightness and weight, coarseness and smoothness, sweetness and bitterness, and such things. It is called physics (*al-'ilm al-ṭabī'ī*), and

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<sup>7</sup> For the concern of political science with the welfare of the body and soul see above, p.214-215. For this dual concern as a litmus test of divinely inspired legislation according to Maimonides, see *Guide* III.27 (Pines, 510-511).

<sup>8</sup> Arabic: *al-ḥikam* (plu.). Or: scientific knowledge.

it has fundamental principles (*uṣūl*), namely the four elements; and branches, namely the various things that come into being<sup>9</sup> [from combinations of the elements]. [The latter consist of] three genera (*ajnās*): Mineral, vegetable, and animal. Human beings are treated by [this science], for they are included in animality in one sense, and excluded in another sense.

(3) The third part of theoretical wisdom is absolutely free of matter, denuded of corporeality, and it is attended by no composition in any sense whatsoever (*‘ariya ‘an al-mawādd bi-’l-iṭlāq mujarrad ‘an al-jismāniyya wa-lā tarkīb yalḥaquhā bi-wajh min al-wujūh*), neither outside the mind nor within it. It consists of knowledge of the angels (*ma‘rifat al-malā’ika*) and souls and spiritual beings, which are called separate intellects and forms denuded of matter by the philosophers (*al-ḥukamā*), and knowledge of their ranks (*wa-ma‘rifat marātibihā*), and their causes and effects (*wa-’l-‘ilal minhā wa-’l-ma‘lūlāt wa-’l-asbāb wa-’l-musabbabāt*),<sup>10</sup> and knowledge of God’s providence (*wa-ma‘rifat ‘ināyat allāh*), and His creation of the existent beings by means of those ranks<sup>11</sup> according to their hierarchy, and knowledge of the souls of the celestial spheres and the pure spirits (*wa-ma‘rifat al-nufūs al-falakiyya wa-’l-arwāḥ al-zakiyya*).

Then one proceeds from knowledge of this (*ma‘rifat dhālik*) to the rank of sanctity (*martabat al-quddūsiyya*), pure and exalted above any image, bare of any likeness, pure from any compound. Simplicity beyond which there is no simplicity, absolute perfection, and true beauty. There is no relation between Him and the rest of His creations, and His existence is unlike their existence, and His true essence is unlike their true essence. He does not share existence with them other than by homonymy (*siwā bi-ishtirāk al-ism*).

<sup>9</sup> Arabic: *Mutakawwināt*. This term (in its other forms *kā’ināt* or *mukawwanāt*) evokes the conception of the sublunar realm as “the world of generation and corruption (*al-kawn wa-’l-fasād*).”

<sup>10</sup> I did not provide a different translation here for the pairs *‘ilal/ma‘lūlāt* and *asbāb/musabbabāt*. For the relationship between these two pairs of terms, see above, p.222 fn. 276.

<sup>11</sup> I.e. by means of emanation through the intellects.

It is knowledge of Divinity (*ma'rifat al-rubūbiyya*), by which I mean knowledge of God to the extent possible, according to the capacity of human beings, and knowledge of the attributes by which He is described, and the sense in which they point to Him<sup>12</sup> with reference to the creation of existent beings and the origination of created beings out of His everlasting and eternal will and volition (*'an mashi'atihi wa-irādātihi al-abadiyya wa-'l-azaliyya*).<sup>13</sup>

However, in reality He has no essential attribute (*ṣifa dhātiyya*), nor does any essential mode of being (*hay'a nafsāniyya*) apply to Him. He has no “self” (*nafs*) to which accidents of the self (*a'rāḍ nafsāniyya*) might occur. He is the maker (*fā'il*) of the totality of existent beings,<sup>14</sup> He is the cause of their existence, and His constant sustenance of them (*wa-imdāduhu lahā bi-'l-baqā'*) is the cause of their continuation and subsistence.

This part is the most exalted of [all] the ranks of wisdom, and the most sublime and noble. It is the goal of the various sciences and [branches of] knowledge (*sā'ir al-ḥikam wa-'l-ma'ārif*), and the *telos* (*nihāya*) of every science, and the aim of every virtue.

[This mode of wisdom] may be acquired from the Prophetic Books in the form of narratives, and in the manner of exhortation (*'alā ṭarīq al-akhbār wa-'alā sabīl al-tanbīh*). And human beings were created with the inclination towards this in their mind, and [the inclination towards]

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<sup>12</sup> Arabic: *wa-hay'at dalālatihā 'alayhi*. So MS Lon. Bl. Or. 5063 (National Library of Israel, reel F 6466; Margoliouth cat. #207). In MS Pococke 320 the reading is *'alā* in place of *'alayhi*, which is the *lectio difficilior* but makes little syntactic sense (see Zoref, *Tanchum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 25 and fn. 10).

<sup>13</sup> Here, Tanḥum appears to be alluding to his belief in the eternity of the cosmos. For divergent perspectives concerning Maimonides' position on the topic of the eternity of the cosmos versus creation *ex nihilo*, see Abraham Nuriel, “The Question of a Primordial or Created World in the Philosophy of Maimonides,” in *Tarbiz* 33 (1964), 372-387; Israel Ravitzky, “The Question of a Created or Primordial World in the Philosophy of Maimonides,” in *Tarbiz* 35 (1966), 333-348; Herbert Davidson, “Maimonides' Secret Position on Creation”; Kenneth Seeskin, *Maimonides on the Origin of the World* (Cambridge University Press: 2005); Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides as Biblical Interpreter*, 71-86.

<sup>14</sup> The sense here is that God is active (*fā'il*) while the rest of existence is passive (*maf'ūl*) in relation to Him.

investigation of His true nature – insofar as He imbued them with the intellectual form – with certain proofs and demonstrations.

On account of this intellectual apprehension through which human beings are ennobled above other species of animals, it is said of them, *Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness* (Gen. 1:26); and it is stated, *In the image of God He created him.* (*Ibid.*, v.27) [This is] not due to their physical form, which is their shape and configuration.<sup>15</sup> It is said of them, *You have made him little less than the angels, and adorned him with glory and majesty; You have made him master over Your handiwork, laying the world at his feet.* (Ps. 8:6-7) [This is attained] through the intellectual apprehension of their<sup>16</sup> true nature, through cognitive mastery of their utilization in all of their purposes and benefits. One who has attained the completion of his soul and its refinement through these disciplines<sup>17</sup> – both the practical and epistemic (*al-‘amaliyya minhā wa-’l-‘ilmiyya*)<sup>18</sup> – his soul shall be cleansed and purified through acquiring virtuous dispositions and upright traits. Then [his soul] shall become ennobled through true and perfect opinions. For he has already obtained the two kinds of wisdom, and through this he seeks refuge in the attainment of this final part, which is their *telos* and highest rank (*ghāyatuhā wa-sharafuhā*).

One who has achieved and accomplished this has attained true felicity, and eternal life, and the intellectual *telos*. [Such a person] abides eternally (*wa-baqiya al-baqā’ al-sarmadī*), immersed in the seas of being (*mustaghrāq fī bihār al-wujūd*), delighting in union with the Originator of all

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<sup>15</sup> Arabic: *lā min ajl al-ṣūra al-jismāniyya allatī hiya al-shakl wa-’l-takḥīf*. This definition of what *imago dei* does not mean is based on Maimonides’ formulation in *Guide* I.1. See above, p.229 fn. 308.

<sup>16</sup> Although the referent of the feminine suffix *-hā* is ambiguous, the simplest reading (also in light of the continuation of the passage) is that it refers to the sciences discussed above.

<sup>17</sup> Lit. “parts.”

<sup>18</sup> Here, Tanḥum is alluding to the practical and theoretical sciences. See his first brief account of the seven sciences, above; and cf. the usage in the *Treatise on Logic* where philosophy is divided into *al-falsafa al-‘amaliyya* and *al-falsafa al-‘ilmiyya* – see Efros, “Maqāla,” ٥٧, lines 5-9; Türker, “*Al-maqāla fī ṣinā‘at al-mantiq*,” 108.

Existence<sup>19</sup> (*mutaladhdhidh bi-waṣl mūjid kull mawjūd*),<sup>20</sup> sublime is His name and exalted His renown.

When *Solomon* (*may peace be upon him*) collected these parts of practical and theoretical wisdom, he was called *qohelet*. This means “gatherer<sup>21</sup> of the sciences” (*jāmi‘ al-ḥikam*) from [the same root as] *Gather the people* (Deut. 31:12).<sup>22</sup> He was also called *agur*,<sup>23</sup> meaning the same thing, from *it gathers in (agrah) its food at the harvest*. (Prov. 6:8) This is an active participle (*ṣifa fā‘ila*) rather than a passive one (*ṣifa maf‘ūla*), in the same form as *because the king’s mission was urgent (naḥutz; 1 Sam 21:9)* meaning *pressing (loḥetz)*.<sup>24</sup> Participles like it include *extending [its limbs] or contracting (sarua‘ ve-qalut; Lev. 22:23)* was *shrewd (hayah ‘arum; Gen. 3:1)* *speckled and spotty (naqod ve-ṭalu; Gen. 30:32, 33)*. Also like it is *my arrow wound is painful, though I am free from transgression (anush ḥitztzi beli pasha‘; Job 34:6)* That is, “painful, hurting” (*mu’lim mu’dhī*). And like this is *agonizing pain (ke’eb anush; cf. Isaiah 17:11)*, and also *your injury is agonizing (anush le-shibrekh; Jer. 30:12)*, as we explained in *Proverbs*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Or: every existent being.

<sup>20</sup> For *ladhdha* as a characteristic of intellectual apprehension, see above, p.151, p.276.

<sup>21</sup> Or: synthesizer.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of Tanḥum’s interpretation of the lexeme *qohelet*, see above, p.179-180 and fn.122.

<sup>23</sup> For Agur the son of Jakeh, see Prov. 30:1. For the traditional rabbinic identification of this figure with Solomon, and the interpretation of this name as an indication of the “collection” of Torah, see *Qohelet Rabbah* 1:1; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:1; *Midrash Tanḥuma*, ed. Buber, Va-era #2. Cf. Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, version A, # 39, 119. This interpretation is cited by Rashi on Qoh. 1:1, and in a more elaborate formulation by his grandson, R. Samuel b. Meir (Rashbam) *ad loc.*

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ibn Janāḥ’s discussion of the sense of this verbal root in connection with 1 Sam. 21:9: “In my opinion, it is not improbable that the *nūn* is in place of a *lām*, as if its root were *laḥutz* [a typically passive form] in the sense of *loḥetz* [an active participle], meaning ‘pressing and urgent’ (*dāghīṭan ḥāfīzan*).” (Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 426.)

<sup>25</sup> Tanḥum’s analysis of the form *anush* in Job 34:6 and Jer. 30:12, and the examples that he cites from Gen. 3:1, Gen. 30:32/33, Lev. 22:23, are all drawn from Ibn Janāḥ’s entry for the root ‘-n-sh, in Neubauer, *Uṣūl*, 60.

Based on this sense the Greeks coined the term “philosopher”, meaning “gatherer of wisdom” (*jāmi‘ al-ḥikma*) in Greek.<sup>26</sup> By entitling this book *The words of Qohelet* – that is, “a discourse of the gatherer of the sciences” (*maqāla li-jāmi‘ al-ḥikam*) – the collections of his wisdom and their principles are mentioned in it.

There is no doubt that wisdom (*al-ḥikma*) is that which endows a person with an intellectual soul (*nafs ‘aqliyya*), for it transforms the aptitude which [that person] has *in potentia* into actuality, so that it becomes an intellect *in actu*.<sup>27</sup> Then one may become acquainted with the true nature of things, and one’s soul may become purified, and it may acquire good dispositions (*malakāt al-khayr*) through the practical wisdom by which it is shaped, and attain true opinions and intellectually [sound and] satisfying doctrines through the theoretical wisdom that it gains.

This is the ultimate perfection and felicity of the human being (*wa-hādhā huwa ghāyat kamāl al-insān wa-sa‘ādātuḥu*), through which a person attains eternal life, and ascends to the ranks of the angels who are near [to God],<sup>28</sup> and draws near to knowledge of God (*ma‘rifat allāh*) to the extent that this is possible. Then fear of Him becomes true, non-imaginary; and worship of Him [becomes] purely intellectual, non-corporeal.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For this understanding of the term *faylasūf*, see above, 179-180 and fn. 122. In describing Solomon as the gatherer or synthesizer of the philosophical sciences, Tanḥum alludes to his ideal of the human being who, after acquiring a training in the practical sciences (particularly ethics) and theoretical sciences, contemplates the totality of her or his knowledge of the cosmos. From the totality emerges a higher degree of insight, possibly associated with prophecy. See above, p.265, p.280. For the background to Tanḥum’s ideal of *i‘tibār* (contemplation), see above, pp.31-34.

<sup>27</sup> For the stages of intellection according to the medieval Arabic Peripatetics, see above, p.187-188.

<sup>28</sup> Here, Tanḥum asserts that by actualizing one’s intellect, one achieves some affinity with the angels. For Maimonides’ implication that the acquired intellect is that which survives death, in his statement that the soul that survives death is not the same as that which is born with the body, see *Guide* I.70 (Pines, 173-174). According to Tanḥum’s philosophical sources, the separate intellects (*al-‘uqūl al-mufāraqa*) are identified as angels. For this understanding, see above, pp.134-136, 221 fn. 273.

<sup>29</sup> For Ibn Ezra’s view that fear of God is the intended outcome of the scientific discourse in Qohelet, see above, p.170-171. Compare also Qoh. 12:13, cited in the continuation of this passage. For fear (and love) of God as the outcome of the contemplation of nature (including the study of physics and metaphysics), Maimonides’ *Mishneh torah*, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 2:1-2. For intellectual worship (*al-‘ibāda al-‘aqliyya*), see Maimonides, *Guide* III.51, see Pines, 623; Munk, *Dalālat al-ḥā‘irīn*, 459 lines 1-2. In that chapter, Maimonides identifies intellectual contemplation with the talmudic concept of “*worship in the heart* (‘*abodah she-ba-leb*)” (for

In accordance with this, in *Proverbs* Solomon placed practical – that is, ethical (*al-khuqliyya*) – wisdom, and the refinement of the soul, and imparting to it praiseworthy characteristics and correct manners, and well-guided dispositions, and following the paths of temperance, at the beginning.<sup>30</sup>

Then, in this *book* [i.e., *Qohelet*], he explained many principles of theoretical wisdom. Then, at the end of the book, he reviewed matters of abstinence (*al-zuhd*), and that of it which is incumbent upon a perfect person, by informing him of the lot from which there is no escape for anybody – that being death. Then he concluded the whole [work] with the fear of God, as if to say that the purpose of all the aforementioned ethics and wisdom is the fear of God. Therefore did he say, *The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Fear God and observe his commandments, for this is the whole of mankind.* (Qoh. 12:13) That is, “the purpose of everything that you hear or understand of the various [kinds of] wisdom is the fear of God and obedience of his commandments, for this is the purpose of the human species and the major part of its felicity.” That is [the meaning] of the statement, *for this is the whole of mankind.* Therefore, the prophet rebuked one who lays claim to wisdom but is empty of knowledge and fear of God, and he said, *See, they reject the word of the Lord, so their wisdom amounts to nothing.* (Jer. 8:9)

Therefore, he started by announcing that the matters of this corporeal world collectively – property, furnishings, wealth, enjoyment, appetites, power, and attaining [one] – are objectives

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which, see Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 2a; and cf. Deut. 11:13). In the Talmud, the expression “service in the heart” describes prayer, not intellectual contemplation. Maimonides cites the dictum in its original talmudic sense in the *Mishneh torah*, Laws of Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, 1:1.

<sup>30</sup> For Tanḥum’s understanding of the Solomonic corpus of *Proverbs*, *Qohelet*, and *Song* as reflecting a philosophical curriculum, divided into ethics, physics (or the theoretical sciences more broadly), and metaphysics (or rapturous post-metaphysical contemplation) respectively, see above, pp.182-184. However, the boundaries between the subject matter of these books are fluid in Tanḥum’s view. For example, see his discussions of ethics in *Qohelet*, discussed above, pp.230-250.

that have no inherent value<sup>31</sup> to them. Rather, the entirety of that which is in the world of generation and corruption is ephemeral, transient, insubstantial like dust, for the entirety [of it] is mere fluctuation. Thus does he say, *Futility of futilities*<sup>32</sup> said etc. That is, “Everything that I shall profess to have strived for, attained, been granted that which I have hoped for, and of which I have come to the far limit – I find that none of it has a purpose, nor does it last, but it is insubstantial [and] transient. All of it is in flux (*muḥāl*),<sup>33</sup> possessing no reality.”

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<sup>31</sup> Lit. “intended purpose (*ghāya maqṣūda*)”.

<sup>32</sup> I have not attempted to translate the verse in strict accordance with the medieval Arabic translators, as Tanḥum leaves some ambiguity in his own reading of the verse, clearly drawing on two divergent traditions: In the previous sentence, he declares the sublunar world and its pleasures to be “insubstantial like dust (*ma’dūm ka’l-habā*)”, drawing on a Judeo-Arabic tradition of rendering Hebrew *hebel* (pausal *habel*) as “dust (*habā*)”, both in Qoh. 1:1 and elsewhere. For Salmon b. Yeroḥam’s use of this terminology in his translation of Qoh. 1:1, see Robinson, *Asceticism, Eschatology, Opposition to Philosophy*, 184. For a review of this tradition in translation, see *ibid.*, fn.35. In his commentary to Qoh. 1:2, Tanḥum offers no full and literal translation of the verse, but he does hint at Ibn Ghiyāth’s translation –*mustahīl nihāyat al-istiḥāla* – by referring to Solomon’s assertion in the verse that everything is in flux (*muḥāl*). For Ibn Ghiyāth’s translation, see Qafiḥ, *Ḥamesh megillot*, 172. See also his commentary to 1:2, in *ibid.*, 173.

<sup>33</sup> For this as an allusion to Ibn Ghiyāth’s translation of Qoh. 1:2, see previous note.

## Appendix C: Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Introduction to His Commentary to the Song of Songs<sup>1</sup>

...*Qohelet*. And the verse states, *He composed three thousand proverbs*. (1 Kings 5:12) And it states [that] *his songs numbered one thousand and five*. (*Ibid.*) Thus, he states here that this *book* is an epitome of his other works (*khulāṣat sālir muṣannaḥātīhi*), and the quintessence of his total wisdom (*wa-zubdat jamī' ḥikmatīhi*), and the purpose of all the sciences that came before it (*wa-'l-ghāya min jamī' mā taqaddama bihi min al-ḥikam*).<sup>2</sup> This indicates that his compilation of wisdom in this *book* was at the end of his life. And I shall explain to you at the end of *Qohelet* why<sup>3</sup> he placed it before Qohelet in Scripture,<sup>4</sup> when it is fitting that it should be after it.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The beginning of Tanḥum's introduction to his commentary, insofar as it is extant, is based exclusively on MS Evr. Arab. I 4249 in the National Library of Russia at St Petersburg (reel F 58035 in the Hebrew University microfilm collection). The remainder is based primarily on MS Pococke 320, and is transcribed in its entirety in Zoref, *Tanḥum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 2, 6-11.

<sup>2</sup> The Arabic *ḥikam* (wisdom) is in the plural form, and most probably refers to the philosophical sciences. See discussion above, p.179 and fn.122.

<sup>3</sup> Reading מל as *li-ma* (= *li-mā*).

<sup>4</sup> Arabic: *fī al-kitāba*. In Judeo-Arabic, this term often indicates the written form (*ketib*) of Scripture, as distinct from the reading tradition (*qeri*) – see Blau, *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*, 588. In the present context, it appears to refer to the standard written form of Scripture according to its traditional canonical order. Cf. the use of this form to describe the proper order of biblical passages in the *tefillin* in a query addressed to Maimonides, in Blau, *Responsa*, responsum #139, 267. For Song as preceding Qohelet in the normative rabbinic canonical order, see Maimonides' *Mishneh torah*, *Laws of Tefillin*, *Mezuzot*, and *Torah Scrolls*, 7:15; for the order in the Spanish and Oriental MS tradition (which differs slightly), see Wechsler, *Strangers*, 11-14.

<sup>5</sup> In his commentary to Qoh. 12:9, Tanḥum states that “it would be proper to place [the Song of Songs] after *Qohelet*, just as the scholars (*al-ḥukamā'*) do. They place the divine science (*al-'ilm al-ilāhī*) after physics (*al-'ilm al-ṭabī'ī*) in accord with the curriculum [*al-ta'līm*; lit. instruction, education], calling it metaphysics (*mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a*) in this respect. In truth, they call it “that which precedes physics” (*mā qabl al-ṭabī'a*) due to its nobility and the fact that it precedes nature. Similarly was [the Song of Songs] placed before *Qohelet*. [This was] also so that one would not pass directly from it to the *Book of Lamentations* (*sefer ha-qinot*), whose sense is contrary [to that of Song]. But the transition from Qohelet – on abstinence, one's ultimate fate, and death [...] – to *Lamentations* is appropriate.” (MS Pococke 320, 191a; Zoref, *Tanḥum Yerushalmi's Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 111-112.) The view that metaphysics should properly be called *mā qabl al-ṭabī'a* is that of Ibn Sīnā: “As for the name of this science, it is [metaphysics], “that which is after nature (*mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a*).” [...] The meaning of “[that which is] after nature” [involves] posteriority relative to us. For, when we first observe existence and get to know its states, we observe this natural existence. As for that which this science, if considered in itself, deserves to be named, [this] is to speak of it as the science of what is “prior to nature (*mā qabl al-ṭabī'a*),” because the matters investigated in this science are, in [terms of] essence and generality, prior to nature.” (For this translation and the Arabic original,

The loftiness of this *book*, and its elevated rank in lofty meanings, and its exalted station, have already become well-known among the religious community (*al-milla*). They know that it is the furthest limit of his wisdom, and the [ultimate] destination (*wa-maḥall al-wuṣūl*),<sup>6</sup> and the arrangement of its ranks and his various stations (*wa-ikhtilāf maqāmātihi*) are according to their beginnings and ends.<sup>7</sup> However, the interpretations of it vary, and the explanations differ <according> to the respective perfection of the of interpreter, <concerning the connection> of its particular meanings to distinct allusions and diverse meanings, despite being in agreement concerning the fundamental [meaning of the text] (*ma‘a al-ittifāq fī al-aṣl*).

[The allegorical valence of the male beloved:]

For everybody is in agreement that the [male] beloved alluded in this book is the Real, exalted is He, and any majesty in it<sup>8</sup> is derived from His majesty, and any beauty or loveliness – however great – is from<sup>9</sup> that which is acquired of His venerable attributes, as one scholar (*ba‘d al-fuḍalā’*) said when he was asked to say something of His attributes and perfection. He answered, saying, “He is the King who, whenever you call beauty unmixed with ugliness to mind, or if you call perfection untarnished by deficiency to mind, you have attained a complete picture of him.”<sup>10</sup>

Every perfection is in reality his, and every defect – even be it metaphorical – must be entirely denied him. His beauty has a face, his generosity a hand. One who serves him gains the utmost

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see Marmura, *Metaphysics of the Healing*, 16-17.) While Tanḥum’s use of the term *ta‘līm* evokes educational practice, Ibn Sīnā’s discussion focuses more fundamentally on the movement from knowledge of the material and particular to knowledge of the abstract and general.

<sup>6</sup> The Arabic simultaneously evokes the final station on a journey – *maḥall* signifying a place, and *wuṣūl* “arrival”; and union with the divine beloved – *maḥall* being connected with *ḥulūl*/dwelling, and *wuṣūl* being understood in its technical sense as mystical union. For this sense of *wuṣūl* in Tanḥum, see above, p.137, p.144, p.152, p.353-354. For the association of Song with *wuṣūl* in his commentary to Qohelet, see above, p.182.

<sup>7</sup> Arabic: *al-mabādī wa-’l-nihāyāt*. These terms also imply fundamental principles and *teloi* respectively.

<sup>8</sup> I.e., any majesty described in the book. Zoref understands the pronominal suffix to refer to the human being; see Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi’s Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 155.

<sup>9</sup> Until here is based exclusively on the St Petersburg MS. From here forward is based primarily on MS Pococke 320.

<sup>10</sup> Due to this citation’s original allegorical context (for which, see the subsequent note), I have not capitalized the pronouns.

felicity (*al-sa'āda al-quṣwā*); one who forsakes him forfeits the hereafter and the [temporal] world (*al-ākhirā wa-'l-dunyā*).”<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the human soul's ultimate felicity, and its perfection and its life, is to come to know His splendor, and to delight in witnessing Him according to one's rank. However, concerning the highest of the ranks of supernal existent beings – the celestial spheres and the stars, not to mention the angels – their ultimate felicity and the *telos* of their delight and the eternity of their subsistence lies in that which they grasp of His sublimity, and in that which they behold of His dominion, each rank according to that which comes to them according to the grasp of His sublimity that its faculties can bear, and that which comes to them through its utmost exertion. And all of them declare their worship and praise and exultation, and their tremendous desire, saying *Blessed is the glory of the Lord, in His place*. (Ez. 3:12)

[The allegorical valence of the female beloved: A. Wisdom]

Concerning the [female] beloved to which [the book] refers, speaking of her in figurative language,<sup>12</sup> there are those who say that it alludes to wisdom,<sup>13</sup> as he said in *Proverbs, A loving doe, a graceful mountain goat. Let her breasts satisfy you at all times*. (Prov. 5:19) He said in her

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<sup>11</sup> This is a citation from the concluding passage of *Risālat al-ṭayr* by Ibn Sina. I have translated it in consultation with Peter Heath's English translation in, "Disorientation and Reorientation in Ibn Sina's *Epistle of the Bird*," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam*, eds. Mazzaoui and Moreen, 167, paragraph 24; cf. also Henri Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton University Press: 1988), 191-192; Arabic in Mehren, *Traité Mystiques*, fasc. 2, 47.

<sup>12</sup> Arabic: *al-mukhāṭib bi-lisān ḥālihā*. For the expression *lisān al-ḥāl* in Tanḥum and his predecessors, see Shy, "Ha-signon ha-ishshi," 565-567; Shy, "Perusho shel tanḥum ha-yerushalmi la-miqra be-hashva'ah le-millono le-mishneh torah," 537-539; Solomon Munk, *Commentaire de R. Tan'houm de Jérusalem, sur le livre de 'Habakkouk, publié pour la première fois, en arabe, sur un manuscrit unique de la bibliothèque Bodléienne, et accompagné d'une traduction et de notes (Extrait du t. XII de la Traduction de la Bible de M. Cahen)* (Paris: 1845), 94; Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 159, fn. 8. Cf. Zoref's translation *u-medabberim be-lashon piyyuṭit bi-shemah* (Zoref, *Tanchum Ha-Yerushalmi's Commentary on Canticles*, vol. 1, 156.)

<sup>13</sup> To the best of my awareness, there are no extant commentaries that reflect such an interpretation. This reading, according to which Song depicts the love between God and hypostatized wisdom, is somewhat reminiscent of kabbalistic interpretations that understand Song to reflect the interaction of the *sefirot*, the ten hypostatized divine modes of being or attributes. For this understanding, see Rosenberg, "Philosophical Hermeneutics," 134. For wisdom in general in the Hebrew Bible, including its personification, see Roland E. Murphy, "Hebrew Wisdom," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101:1 (1981), 21-34.

name, *Mine are counsel and resourcefulness; I am understanding; courage is mine. Through me kings reign, and rulers decree just laws. Through me princes rule, great men and all the righteous judges. Those who love me I love, and those who seek me will find me.* (Prov. 8:14-17) *I endow those who love me with substance; I will fill their treasuries.* (Ibid. v.21) He said, *The Lord created me at the beginning of His course, as the first of His works of old. In the distant past I was fashioned, at the beginning, [at the origin of earth.]* (Ibid. vv.22-23) and, *There was still no deep when I was brought forth, [no springs rich in water].* (Ibid. v.24) *I was there when He set the heavens into place; when He fixed the horizon upon the deep.* (Ibid. v.27) Then, He said in her name, *I was there with Him as a confidant, a source of delight every day, rejoicing before Him at all times.* (Ibid. v.30) [The matter is] as we explained some of the meanings of these verses in their respective places.

#### [B. The Collective of Israel]

There are those who say that it refers to the Community of Israel (*keneset yisra'el*) – that is, the whole of them. They interpret it as referring to [the Israelites'] presence in Egypt in a most confined condition, and tremendous disgrace. But when the Real, exalted is He, perceived the strength of their desire for Him, and their search for Him, and their wish to reach Him, He took them and restored them to a place of nearness to Him. He brought them near to His sublime flank, and caused them to stand at Mount Sinai, and gave them to drink the wine of His love, and delighted them with the fare of his Law, and announced His commandments to them through His Book. He guided them through the wilderness under the shelter of the Cloud, as He said, *Who is she that comes up from the desert like columns of smoke, in clouds of myrrh and frankincense, of all the powders of the merchant?* (Song 3:6) This is the meaning of His statement, exalted is He, *Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness [with its seraph serpents and scorpions, a*



...and I entered into a covenant with you... (*Ibid.*) at the gathering at Mount Sinai. And he took a record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. (Ex. 24:7) ...Thus you became Mine (Ezek. 16:8) through their statement, “We will do and obey.” (Ex. 24:7)

Then He described their nourishment, the delicacies, their silken attire, the comfort, the acquisition of [their] country, and the delivery of its bounty to them. He said, *Your food was choice flour, honey, and oil. You grew more and more beautiful, and became fit for royalty.* (Ezek. 16:13) At that time your name became great, and your dominion was prolonged, and your decrees were fulfilled: *Your beauty won you fame among the nations...* (*Ibid.* v.14)

In the course of the narrative, the construction of the *Temple* and the dwelling of the light of the *Divine Presence* in it, and [God’s] providence for them on account of this, were described allegorically. This is [the meaning of] His statement, *I clothed you with embroidered garments, and gave you sandals of dolphin leather to wear, and wound fine linen about your head, and dressed you in silks. I decked you out in finery [and put bracelets on your arms and a chain around your neck].* (*Ibid.* v.10-11) *You adorned yourself with gold and silver, and your apparel was of fine linen, silk, and embroidery.* (*Ibid.* v.13) These are the materials from which the Tabernacle was constructed. He enumerated fifteen different kinds of voluntary gifts to the Tabernacle.<sup>16</sup> They are *gold, and silver, and bronze; blue and purple* (Ex. 25:3-4), and the others mentioned there until *lapis lazuli and gemstones.* (*Ibid.* v.7) Similar is the enumeration through which he showed them favor through Ezekiel, who enumerated them in a similar fashion. But here they are enumerated allegorically, ascribing a figurative sense to the expressions, and [they are employed using] desirable rhetoric after the manner of poetic discourse. For [poetry] is the

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<sup>16</sup> The reference here is to the fifteen materials to be donated to the Tabernacle, mentioned in Ex. 25:3-7.

most pleasant of rhetorical methods, and that towards which the soul is most inclined, and the most desirable to the heart.

[C. The condition of the human soul]

Others have interpreted this book concerning the wise rational soul's desire to reach the place of intellectual exaltedness, which is [the soul's] place of origination, and her first world, and her fundamental elemental substance.

[They interpreted the book] as a communication of her spiritual state, that the blackness and grossness that are appear from her are not essential to her, and do not belong to her intrinsic attributes. Indeed, they are accidental traits and material states that [the soul] acquired through [her] proximity to the bodily faculties, and through being bound by their governance throughout the period of [her] connection [to the body], so that the body may continue to exist as long as is possible, according to that which Divine Wisdom and Supernal Will require.

As for [the soul's] essence, it is the utmost beauty and purity. *I am black, but beautiful, [O daughters of Jerusalem – like the tents of Kedar, like the pavilions of Solomon]. Do not stare at me because I am swarthy, because the sun has gazed upon me. My mother's sons quarreled with me, they made me guard the vineyards; my own vineyard I did not guard.* (Song 1:5-6) Her desires are tremendous, and many are her sighs over being separated from the [Divine] flank, and her pains are great.

Now the intellect – which is her place of origination, and her source, and which emanates its lights upon her – when it apprehends that she is sincere in her plea, reveals itself to her in dazzling brightness, and overwhelming light, and radiant illumination, according to her ability to

bear it at the beginning; then, perfection and [intellectual] apprehension and brightness grow as a result of [the Intellect], bit by bit, towards the *telos*.

For one who remains in a dark place is unable to gaze at a light that shines forth suddenly. Rather, one must become progress gradually until one's eyesight becomes strong enough through the light and brightness which is added to it and merged with it.

For the position of the intellect vis-à-vis the soul is [comparable to] the position of the sun's light vis-à-vis the eye. As long as the eye is not comingled with sunlight, one sees only *in potentia*; but when the light of the sun shines upon it, it becomes seeing *in actu*. Similarly, the relationship of the intellect to the soul's [intellectual] apprehension [may be either] *in potentia* or *in actu*. That this matter will be explained in [the commentary to] *Qohelet* more simply than in the present account.

This *book* describes how the intellect constantly advances and moves [the soul], rank by rank, it drawing nearer and approaching [the intellect] bit by bit. When it smells the scents of its world from [the intellect], and it perceives its homeland from which it has grown foreign, and it tastes but a little of its fruits, and it delights in the breeze of its light and radiance, and it grows luminous in its shimmering light and its many rays, and it savors the beauty of its views and its vistas, it remembers who it once was, but had forgotten. And it despises that to which it had become accustomed. So does it live after death, and return [to its homeland] after passing away. It can see clearly, and it is illuminated, and its covering is removed, and it glows and shines.<sup>17</sup>

[Tanḥum's allegory of the dove:<sup>18</sup>]

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<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of this passage, see above, pp.324-326.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion of Tanḥum's bird allegory, its philosophical valence, and its literary background, particularly in the works of Ibn Sīnā, see above, pp.326-342.

At this moment it knew that it is like a dove between a peacock above her – she forgets him, but he perceives her – and a crow below her. She gazed at [the crow], and he enticed her. She became intimate with him, and loved him. [The period] her companionship with him grew long, and she comingled with him, her feathers acquiring blackness from his attributes (*wa-khālaṭat/hu fa-’ktasaba rīshuhā iswidād min ṣifātihā*), and acquiring his stupor. She served him with all of her [might], taking pleasure and delighting in him. [All the while] he ate in the dirt and occupied himself with illusory matters.

She had been stripped of the beauty of her attire, and her finery, and her garments (*wa-hiya qad ‘ariyat min ḥusn al-kiswa wa-’l-ḥilya wa-’l-thiyāb*). As a result of the depth of her absorption with him, she did not behave with proper respect towards herself, let alone did she look above herself. Then, one day, she turned her attention to herself, and saw a glimmering adornment and elegant finery around her neck. She looked at her necklace, and found it strange. She said that this wondrous trace (*athar*) is unlike the traces (*āthār*) of this repugnant fellow. This disgusting, black, torpid drinking companion, the companion and drinking partner of whom is compelled by this strangeness to investigate and reflect upon the cause of this adornment (*al-baḥth wa-’l-tafakkur ‘an sabab dhālik al-taṭwīs*), and the beauty of this brightness and this luster. She looked... and due to the peacock’s sheen and beauty that shone upon her, she knew that her perfection and beauty must have come from him, and that he was the cause of her wings and life. [She knew that] through conjoining with him, her happiness would increase.

She became infatuated with his beauty, and inclined towards his service, and she clung to his plume. His companionship was pleasant for her, and his friendship was enjoyable.

She despised the friendship of the crow, and regretted having been his companion. She came to know what she had lost by being his friend, and his defects and faults were revealed to her. His

cunning and deception became gradually more obvious to her. Gradually, she cut [her ties to] him. And whenever she became a degree removed from his friendship, she approached the peacock by a degree. The nearer she became to the peacock, and the further she became from the crow, she continued to progress in her friendship [with the peacock], and she continued to be drawn after him, and to be absorbed in loving him, and she strove to acquire his attributes and become like him (*wa-tudāwimu al-injidhāb khalfahu wa-tastaghriqu fī maḥabbatihi wa-taḥriṣu ‘alā al-ittiṣāf bi-ṣifātihi wa-’l-tashabbuh bihi*).

All the while, she was in a state of ever-increasing desire, to the point that she achieved a firm reunion with him, and a favorable encounter (*ijtimā’ akīd wa-’ttiṣāl muftīd*). She confirmed [his true nature] and knew him, and remembered that which she had forgotten. She knew that he is her father, and that her wellspring is from him, and that he is the root from which she has been cut off, and her source from which she has been severed.

She became certain that the cause of the discontinuance of [the peacock’s] aid to her, and [the reason that] it appeared as if he was shunning her, was that she had exchanged him for the crow, and made him the object of her service, and had been pleased to eat of the dirt from which [the crow had derived] his nourishment.

Thus did she grow further from the crow, and cut off [all] memory of him. When she abandoned him entirely, when she became certain of his deceit towards her and came to know that he had been an enemy in the form of a friend, harm in the guise of benefit, a delegate of evil in the form of a sincere counselor... she turned to true counsel, and lasting, enduring benefit, whose goodness is guaranteed, who fulfills his promise now and in the future. So she became absorbed in his love, and her desire to cling to him grew greater, as did her distress and pain at his

separation [from her], and [whenever she] was occupied with anything other than him – even for the most fleeting moment.

This desire led her to the fountain of life, and to pure light, and to attain delight, and lasting happiness, and the illumination with which there is no darkness, and the presence after which there is no absence.

Therefore, the soul is compared to a dove in this book, and with the eyes of doves:

*Your eyes are doves* (Song 1:15); *like doves by watercourses* (5:12); *O my dove, in the cranny of the rocks* (2:14); *my dove, my perfect one* (5:2) – according to the specific interpretations that will be offered in their respective places.

Solomon was constantly shifting towards this purpose, and [returning] to these themes with diverse expressions, charming descriptions, figurative designations, and meanings layered, pleasant, and agreeable – each according to its purpose.

Sometimes he articulates the soul’s condition in figurative terms and her desire (*yatakallamu bilisān ḥāl al-naḥs wa-tashawwuqihā*),<sup>19</sup> and sometimes [he speaks] of the intellect and its praiseworthy and noble attributes. He explains the differences between the ranks of spiritual union (*wuṣūl*), and the causes that prevent [union] or sever it, in a rhetorical, desirable, and arousing style. Of that to which one is accustomed and habituated in the sensible world are poetic attributes, and rhetorical, desirable, arousing, positive metaphors; or depraved, distancing, far-fetched, despicable ones – each one according to its purpose.

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<sup>19</sup> For the expression *lisān al-ḥāl*, see above, p.437 fn. 12. Tanḥum’s subsequent emphasis of the “rhetorical, desirable, [and] arousing style (*kalām khiṭābī mushawwiq muraghghib*)” of Solomon’s discourse increases the likelihood that he is employing the formulation in its technical sense, indicating figurative expression.

If no parable or exemplary prolegomena are presented, and the [topic] is not communicated in a familiar, commonly known, generally accepted manner – not in an unfamiliar manner – its true meaning will not be understood, nor its quality grasped [in the mind], nor will its existence become apparent. For this is like one who learns that which is through that which is not, or the known through the unknown, or the hidden by that which is yet more hidden and more difficult to grasp. This is not the way of the wise.

Indeed, due to the difficulty of these matters and their obscurity and remoteness from the minds of the masses, and their variance from that to which they have become accustomed – for all corporeal habituations are at variance with these spiritual matters – therefore you see that the masses always reject these meanings, and consider their way to be inferior, and consider anyone who is at all preoccupied with them to be crazy and dull-minded, to the point that you can see what they said about the prophet, “*What did that madman come to you for?*” (2 Kings 9:11)

He said to them, “*You know the man and his ranting!*” (*Ibid.*)

Now as for these intellectual concepts (*hādhihi al-ma‘ānī al-aqliyya*), they are particularly intended the perfect, for only souls pure of torpor that have escaped their habituations can understand their meanings and know the extent of their excellence. Therefore have they been compelled to make comparisons, and conceal [these concepts] in riddles and hints (*aḍṭarrahum al-amr ilā al-tamthīl wa-’l-ikhfā’ bi-’l-alghāz wa-’l-rumūz*). In order to elucidate them, they employed allusions, similes, comparison, and metaphor (*wa-’sta‘malū fī tabyīnihā al-ishārāt wa-’l-tashbīhāt wa-’l-tamthīl wa-’l-isti‘āra*).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Here, Tanḥum emphasizes that, just as the biblical authors encoded certain concepts in their works, there is a method by which those concepts may be deciphered. Note that this interpretation is not affected by the identity of the subject of the verb *ista‘malū*, which is ambiguous. If the subjects are the prophetic authors, the statement refers to the tools encoded in the text, that alert the reader to the intended meaning; if the subjects are the readers, it refers to the methods of which they were aware when interpreting prophetic texts.

Now, we have already provided guidance concerning the [book's] meanings in a general sense, and we have revealed its purpose as a whole, as a summation without detailed explication – although its detailed explication is very easy after this general account. Thus, it remains our duty to explain the difficult expressions (*sharḥ al-alfāz al-mushkila*)<sup>21</sup> from an etymological perspective and [in the light of] linguistic form, for this was the initial intention in composing this book (*awwal al-qaṣd min waḍ' hādhā al-kitāb*).<sup>22</sup> [In addition,] one cannot avoid a discourse upon these two interpretations according to that which befits the [book's] purpose, lest the discourse be deficient.

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<sup>21</sup> For the *sharḥ al-alfāz* as an exegetical genre, see above, p.295 fn. 5. For Tanḥum's allusion to this terminology in his commentary to Jonah, see the passage translated above in Appendix A, p.410.

<sup>22</sup> For Tanḥum's conception of *al-qaṣd al-awwal*, see above, p.63-64. For the specific implications of his statement here, see above, p.65-66, p.70-71.

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