



## **Qirqisani, the Karaite, and His Work on Jewish Sects**

W. Bacher

*The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 7, No. 4. (Jul., 1895), pp. 687-710.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-6682%28189507%291%3A7%3A4%3C687%3AQTKAHW%3E2.0.CO%3B2-L>

*The Jewish Quarterly Review* is currently published by University of Pennsylvania Press.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/upenn.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## QIRQUISANI, THE KARAITE, AND HIS WORK ON JEWISH SECTS.

FOUR years after Saadyah had published his fundamental *Book of Beliefs and Doctrines* (933 C.E.), a Karaite savant wrote a work which had a similar tendency, namely, to offer some safe guidance amid the numerous religious opinions which were then put forth, and some justification for the application of speculative reasoning to things religious. The name of this Karaite scholar has long been known, Abû Jûsuf Ja'qûb Al-Qirqisânî; but with regard to his work, we now for the first time receive reliable and precise information. For this we are indebted to the scholar who has already done so much towards elucidating obscure points in the domain of older Jewish literature, viz., Abraham Harkavy, of St. Petersburg. There recently appeared in the eighth volume of the transactions of the Imperial Russian Archæological Society a larger work, in the course of which Harkavy published a part of Qirqisânî's treatise in the Arabic original (pp. 279-319), introduced by an exposition and review in Russian (pp. 247-278) of the contents of this text published for the first time. Although I am only partially able to master this introduction, written, as it is, in Russian, I yet undertake to give wider publicity to Harkavy's work, and to reproduce new and important particulars derived from the text of Qirqisânî itself.

Abû Jûsuf Ja'qûb Al-Qirqisânî—so called after Qirqisân or Qurqusân, the ancient Circestum, Karkemish—wrote the said work, as Harkavy pointed out before, in the year 937. He named it *The Book of Lights and the high beacons*

(Kitâb al-anwâr wal-marâqib).<sup>1</sup> It consists of thirteen parts (מקצלות), the contents of which we become acquainted with through Harkavy's Introduction (p. 249). The first part is the portion edited by Harkavy, and will be further discussed later on. The second part, consisting of twenty-eight chapters, demonstrates the duty of Speculative Enquiry with regard to religious matters, and establishes its conclusive power. The third part, in twenty-five chapters, deals with the various adverse religious sects and their views. In sixty-eight chapters the fourth part contains the fundamental principles, leading to the understanding of particular religious statutes. The following parts treat of the religious institutions or precepts themselves in systematic order:—

5th. Concerning Circumcision and the Sabbath (40 chapters);

6th. The nine other Commandments of the Decalogue (104 chapters);

7th. Concerning the New Moon and the First-fruits (21 chapters);

8th. Concerning the Feast of Weeks (15 chapters);

9th. Concerning the Remaining Festivals (24 chapters);

10th. The Laws of Levitical Uncleanliness in man and beast (66 chapters);

11th. On Forbidden Marriages and the Law of the Levirate (31 chapters);

12th. On Forbidden Meats, Dress, and Seeds, and the fringes (42 chapters);

13th. On the Laws of Inheritance (14 chapters).

The above shows that the last nine parts of Qirqisânî's work, to which the first four are a sort of general introduc-

---

<sup>1</sup> Hadassi mentions a ס' הנצנים of Qirqisânî (*vide* Pinsker, *Lik hadm.* I. 169), but הנצנים is only an erroneous rendering of כתאב אלנאר, as כתאב אלנאר in Arabic means "lights" as well as "flowers." The proper rendering would be ס' האורים, as Levi b. Jepheth names the work (*v.* Pinsker, II. 90, 193). The book was briefly quoted as כתאב אלנאר (without ואלמראקב), *vide* Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek* (1866), p. 114.

tion, form collectively a *Book of Precepts*, and this may probably be the ספר המצות, attributed to our author. The MS., Or. 2526 of the British Museum, contains the twelfth Maqâla (Part) and portions of the fifth and ninth Maqâla of the ספר המצות (*vide* Margoliouth *Descriptive List*, etc., p. 42); Or. 2578 contain portions of the eleventh and twelfth; Or. 2579 portions of the fifth and sixth parts. Or. 2525 of the British Museum contains "an abstract of the ספר מצוות of Abû Jûsuf Jakûb Al-Kirkisânî" (*v. Margoliouth*, p. 42).

According to information received from Professor Büchler, the MS. contains an explanation of the commandments of the Decalogue; and this would, accordingly be the sixth part of the Kitâb âl-Anwâr. Finally, in Margoliouth's *Catalogue*, we find the contents of Or. 2524 thus: "Two fragments of a ספר מצוות, probably by Jakûb al-Kirkisânî, containing refutations of the Christians, Mohammedans, and of several individual writers." The contents contradict the title *Book of Precepts*. As a matter of fact the title ס' המצוות never appears, as I was informed by Professor Büchler (*Vide Revue des Etudes Juives*, XXVI, 311). It contains a number of chapters (באב), marked as those from the seventh to the twenty-third. Also the end of the sixth chapter is preserved. The sixteenth chapter (אלבאב אל"י) finds a place in H. Hirschfeld's *Arabic Chrestomathy* (London, 1892), pp. 116-121; and when Dr. Hirschfeld styles the MS. as the *Sefer Hammizroth of Jaqûb Qirqisânî*, he but follows the designation adopted in the official Catalogue of the British Museum: this was unknown to me at the time I reviewed the said Chrestomathy (*Revue des Etudes Juives*, XXV. 155). M. Hartwig Derenbourg styles the contents of the MS., "Fragments of a כתאב אצול אלדין Karaite en arabe" (*Revue des Etudes Juives*, XXIII. 284), without mentioning Qirqisânî as the author. Now, as we have a means of learning through Harkavy the divisions of Qirqisânî's work, we are in a position to make the statement beyond doubt, that the MS. Or. 2524

of the British Museum contains the greater portion of the third part of the Kitâb al-anwâr (*i.e.*, of the twenty-five chapters of this part, the sixth to the twenty-third). This part is of a polemic nature, and can therefore not properly be styled כְּתָאב אֲצוּל אֲלֵדִין; and yet this description even would be more appropriate for it than that of סֵפֶר הַמִּצְוֹת. Really, if any part of Qirgisânî's work might be called dogmatic (כ' אֲצוּל אֲלֵדִין), it would rather be the second part, or even the fourth, according to the division given above.

In addition to the Kitâb al-anwâr wal-marâqib, the Imperial Library of St. Petersburg possesses also an exegetic work by Qirgisânî, viz., Kitâb ar-riyâd wal-hadâiq" (כְּתָאב אֲלֵרִיָאֵץ וְאֲלֹהֲדֵאִיק), "The Book of Fields and Gardens." It is a commentary upon those portions of the Pentateuch not devoted to the laws, and is consequently supplementary to those portions of the chief work dealing with the laws of the Pentateuch. Harkavy cites (p. 250, note 1) an interesting passage from this work, bearing upon Gen. ix. 27. Qirgisânî there gives an explanation to the words וַיִּשְׁכֶּן בְּאֶחָדֵי שָׁם, which makes them refer to the conversion of the Chazars to Judaism (דֹּלֶךְ רִאֲגַע אֵלֵי אֲלִכְזָר) (אֲלֵדִין תְּהוֹדוּ). The MS., Or. 2492, of the British Museum contains the said portion of this work upon the first two pericopes (*v.* Margoliouth, p. 24; Derenbourg, *Revue des Etudes Juives*, XXIII. 282).

As Harkavy deduces from quotations occurring in the two works which have been preserved, Qirgisânî was also the author of the following works:—Commentaries to Job and Ecclesiastes; a book on the Unity of God (כְּתָאב אֲלֵתְוָחִיד); a work on the translation of the Bible (כְּתָאב פִּי אֲלֵקוּל עַלִּי אֲלֵתְרַגְמָה).

In the introductory part of his chief work, Qirgisânî gives a survey of the Jewish sects as they existed in ancient times, and also in his own times. This knowledge is now made available to all those acquainted with Arabic by the excellent edition of Harkavy. Much of that which

we read here concerning the various sects and their doctrines has long been known; but even these data acquire a new charm, and further corroboration, when read in the context of an original work devoted exclusively to the subject in question, composed by one who spoke from experience, or who was in a position to obtain his materials from ancient documents now lost. Add to this that Qirqisânî, notwithstanding his Karaite proclivities and consequent prejudice against the Rabbis, makes upon us the impression of an objective compiler and chronicler, who devotes to the subjects he represents a lively interest, and conceals nothing which might be of importance. At the end of the first chapter, (which, by the way, serves as an introduction to the entire work,) he makes the assertion that he has drawn his materials, not alone from the works of his predecessors, but also from his personal experience among the learned societies in which he moved, and, in the case of such meetings as he did not attend, from the verbal reports of its proceedings (ממא בעצה מדרן) פי כתב מן הקדם ובעצה ממא גרי פי אלמנאלס אלתי חצרההא פי כתב מן הקדם ובעצה ממא גרי פי אלמנאלס אלתי חצרההא פי כתב מן הקדם ובעצה ממא גרי פי אלמנאלס אלתי חצרההא p. 280, l. 23-25).

It is specially interesting to hear what Qirqisânî has to say regarding the remnants of ancient sects extant in his days. The 'Ananites, says he, are very few, and gradually decreasing. Only about twenty persons are living at Damascus of the adherents of Abû 'Isâ Isfahânî. Of the Judgânites, only few are extant at Isfâhân (317, 4-7). Not one of the adherents of Ismaïl the 'Okbarite remains at the present day (317, 3). On the other hand, some of the followers of Meshuje are to be found in 'Okbara, named after their founder; but among them are no persons of culture or of speculative turn of mind in religious matters (285, 17). The followers of Malik of Ramla are still called Ramlites or Malikites (285, 13); while those of Abû 'Imrân Mûsa Tiflisî are yet to be found in Tiflis, Armenia (285, 11).

More interesting, however, is the picture which Qirqisânî

unfolds of the conditions existing in his time within the folds of the Karaites themselves. In the last chapter he gives so vivid and drastic a picture of the dissensions reigning among them in matters of greater or minor importance, as regards doctrine and practice, that, did we not know the portraiture proceeded from the pen of Qirqisânî, so zealous a Karaite, we might be inclined to put it down as a lampoon directed by some opponent in the ranks of the Rabbins. He takes occasion to point out their doctrinal and ritual differences as he observed them at different places—in Bagdâd (317, 20; 318, 5; 319, 8); Tuster (317, 23, 26; 319, 10); Basra (318, 25, 34; 319, 10); Persia (318, 25); Chorâsân (319, 2); Gebâl (319, 4); and Syria (319, 1); and he closes the long list of examples illustrative of the differences and doubtfulness existing among Karaites with the following words:—"Things are becoming worse day by day" (וּלְאִמֵּר כָּל יוֹם פִּי זֵי־אֲדֹרָה) (319, 24). In another passage (285, 23) he says in this connection:—"You can scarcely meet two Karaites of one and the same mind in all matters: upon one point or another everyone has an opinion different from that of the rest." It is worthy of note to remark the point to which Qirqisânî once takes the opportunity of referring, namely, the want of attention among the Karaites to the Rabbinic literature—he means the Midrash. "Had the Karaites," he says, "obtained an insight into the flaws and discrepancies which disfigure this branch of literature they would have rendered the task of controversy with the Rabbis a much easier one." "It is only of late," he continues, "that some few among them occupy themselves with the study of that literature, and they soon light upon the weaknesses and contradictions referred to" (296, 3-6. In line 3, instead of אֶקְאִילָהּ, read אֶקְאִילָהֶם).

With remarkable candour does Qirqisânî lash the petty and selfish motives which often prompted the Karaite teachers in the expression of their opinions. In the first chapter, Qirqisânî sketches the character of Daniel al-Dâmegânî, also called Daniel al-Qumîsî (אֶלְקוּמִסִּי), as the

latest founder of a sect. He treats of him specially later on, in the eighteenth chapter. On the one hand he praises him as a person than whom no one was more honest and unreserved in the frank avowal of the results of his speculations in religious matters. He reports of him that he was in the habit of furnishing his followers who possessed copies of his works with verbal instructions concerning alterations which they were to mark in them in the event of any change which his opinions had undergone since the time his works first appeared. But, on the other hand, he reproaches Daniel Qûmisî for his unbounded hatred of the 'Ananites. At an earlier period, so Qirqisânî relates, he used to style 'Anan ראש המשכילים; but later on he never spoke of him else than as ראש הכסילים. This, he concludes, is one of the great scourges which is rife among our people, viz., the way they attack and bear hatred against one another. The motive in most instances is jealousy and ambition (ואכזר מא יחמלהם עלי דלך אלחסד) ומלב אלריאסה (280, 21).

In the same introductory chapter,<sup>1</sup> Qirqisânî directs his remarks also against those Karaites, who, like those residing in Tuster (Schuster, the ancient Susa), appear to accept the fundamental principle of Karaism, viz., independent enquiry and research, while in reality they find fault with the rational perception, viz., that of the demonstrative sciences, whether it be in Dialectics or Philosophy.<sup>2</sup> They adopt this course, says Qirqisânî, partly through dulness of the intellect and the difficulty of this sort of speculative enquiry, and partly through their insisting upon the idea that the application of the speculative methods of philosophy to religious matters is fraught with danger to their convictions. Our author cites also the said

---

<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the chapter, and consequently of the entire work, has, unfortunately, not been preserved.

<sup>2</sup> יעיבון עלי מן נטר פי אלמעקול יעני בשי מן אלעלום אלברהאנייה אמא  
(279.15) אלזרליה ואמא אלפלספיה.



Daniel al-Qûmisî as an example of an opponent to rationalism as applied to religion. He decisively combats the idea that reason opposes religious belief, and asks: Are there not many, who are not alone not weakened, but even strengthened in their faith by such knowledge, while many apostatise from their faith and become the worst heretics, who have kept aloof from rationalistic knowledge. Rationalism, says Qirqisânî—and this he wishes to prove in his work—is the foundation upon which every article of faith is based, and from which every knowledge flows (280, 7: אלמעקול אצל יבני עליה כל קול ויסתכרז בה כל על-).

He proceeds from a similar point of view as Saadyah in his chief philosophical work: and it is a particular worth mentioning, that the same verse, Psalm cxix. 18, with which Saadyah begins his introduction, is employed by Qirqisânî at the end of his introductory chapter (280, 30).

A large portion of Qirqisânî's history of the sects is devoted to polemics against the Rabbins. He regards these as a sect of Jews which sprang up at the time of the Second Temple. The real founder, however, of the school of thought introduced by the Rabbis, was no other than King Jeroboam I. He was "the first who brought dissension into the religious camp, and sowed the seeds of rebellion in Israel," "who altered the precepts of religion, and falsified them." We cannot here reproduce (as it would exceed the limits of this article) the reasoning by means of which Qirqisânî brings out this idea of identifying the principles of Rabbinism, as they appeared to a Karaite, with those of the seceding king, who was by no means an idolator (Vide p. 281, 1—282, 5; 286, 1-5). After giving in the second chapter a survey of the sects afterwards to be dealt with in detail (282, 16—285, 25), Qirqisânî devotes two long chapters (3rd, p. 285-297; 4th, 297-303) to the explanation of the points of difference between Rabbinism and the other Jewish sects. In the former chapter, he enumerates over sixty particulars, mostly of Halacha, in which the tradition of the Rabbis deviates from the proper

explanation of Holy Writ, or in which it contradicts itself. At the head of this list, he places the reproach that the Rabbis in their work *Shi'ur Kômâ*, שיעור קומה, represent God as a body (286, 8). A few more of these faults found with the Rabbis are:—that they do not pray the Psalms of David, but prayers composed by themselves, though in beginning their prayers they say, אשר בחר בדוד עבדו, ורצה בשירי קדשו<sup>1</sup>; that the Psalms which they do adopt, they do not rehearse as prayers, but in a sitting posture, as though they were reading (286, 22; 287, 4); that they bow at the end of their prayer, in the manner of the Christians, to the right and to the left, presumably before the two angels appointed for man (287, 7); that in the prayer מכניסי רחמים they turn to the angels to bring their petitions before God's Throne, resting upon the Scriptural words of Koheleth x. 20:—ובעל כנפים יניד דבר, and taking “winged ones” to mean angels, according to Isaiah vi. 2 (287, 10). They further explain that the laws of Cleanliness and Uncleanliness are abrogated during the exile, asserting: מיום שהרב בית המקדש אין טמאה ואין טהרה (289, 5); they omit an undoubted duty on the day of Atonement, viz., the saying of the prayer צלאת המיד<sup>2</sup> in place of the daily morning sacrifice, commencing as they do with the recital of the confession of sin: while, on the other hand, they have made it a duty to repeat at the conclusion of the day an unknown prayer called by them נעילה (294, 10).

In the Fourth Chapter *Qirqisânî* gives us a similar list of Rabbinic teachings and expressions, but these belong

<sup>1</sup> In that part of the Prayer Book שאמר ברוך, which introduces the Psalms of the Morning Service, it is said: ובשירי דוד עבדך נהללך. The Benediction quoted by *Qirqisânî* is one formed after that employed in connection with the Haphtara (אשר בחר בנביאים טובים ורצה ברביהם). It is a question whether such was actually in use at his time.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* the same expression, 294, 21; what is meant is תפלת שחרית. The prayer in the Liturgy of the Day of Atonement called ת' שחרית, is not regarded by Q. as such, inasmuch as it has included in it the Confession of Sin.

to the Agada. In this chapter he also begins with the book *שיעור קומה*; then he adduces expressions from the pseud-epigraphic writings *כתבא ואותיות דר' עקיבא* (=*חכילות*), and from the Talmud. He reproduces in detail the legends of Rabba b. Nachmani (he consistently puts *רבא*) taken from *Baba-Mezia* 86*a*, and of Elieser b. Hyrcanus from *B. M.* 59*b*. He criticises most vehemently the Talmudic account of the origin of the Septuagint (*Megilla* 9*a*), which he places side by side with the Christian account. Lastly, he refers to the extraordinary appreciation by the Rabbis of the translation of the Pentateuch by Onkelos (*אנקלוס דגור*), selecting a few examples of renderings which he considers perfectly absurd, viz., that of Gen. xxviii. 21; xlix. 11; Exod. xii. 48;<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxiii. 18. Qirqisânî does not admit the defence put forth by some Rabbis that such passages of the Agada have to be regarded not as belonging to the general traditions, but as the opinions of individuals, or that they were the expressions of enemies of the Rabbis, which had become incorporated among their own (302, 16).

With apparent delight and avowed tendency does Qirqisânî include within the limits of his picture the well-known differences in matters of ritual, specially between the Palestinian and Babylonian Jews. He adduces this divergence within the folds of Rabbinic Judaism in the matter of religious opinion as a strong argument against the genuineness and truth of Rabbinic tradition, and as a weapon on his side against the reproach, so fondly levelled by the Rabbins at the Karaites, that of want of unanimity and certainty (*vide* 308, 24; 319, 27). According to Qirqisânî, these differences between the Jews of Palestine and Babylon are connected with the ancient feud between the schools of Hillel and Shammai (284, 2), and upon the strength of this assumption he refers, in the list of

---

<sup>1</sup> He quotes (as a translation of *כל ערל לא יאכל בו*) : *כל משעמד לא יאכל מנה*.

the various sects, to the said differences in chronological order in that part (ch. 10), in which we should have expected, according to the introductory survey of the Second Chapter, a mention of the Schools of Hillel and Shammai, concerning whose controversies he also introduces several notices (309, 2-18). He derives his knowledge of these differences between the Palestinian and Babylonian Jews, as he asserts at the end of the chapter dealing with them (311, 15), from the writings of the Rabbis themselves, one of their number having collected them in a separate volume. In the beginning of the Chapter (308, 20) he remarks that these differences amount to about fifty, and enumerates amid polemical expressions, sixteen of them. Of the fifty-five entries of differences found in Joel Müller's treatise,<sup>1</sup> we find quoted by Qirqisânî the following numbers: 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 31, 40, 41, 51. He includes two numbers which are missing in the sources from which Müller drew his materials.<sup>2</sup>

From what has already been stated, it will easily be seen that Qirqisânî studied with industry, for polemical purposes, the Literature of the Rabbis. In addition to the *Mishna* and *Talmud*, and those works of mystic and pseud-epigraphic literature already mentioned, we learn from the text before us of the following works which he cites:—

1. A book, *יראת חטא*, from which he quotes this expression: "You will have no reward for studying and

---

<sup>1</sup> חלוף מנהגים בין בני בבל לבני ארץ ישראל (reprinted from Jhg. VII. and VIII. of *השחר*, Vienna, 1878).

<sup>2</sup> In a Hebrew translation the two numbers would have to run thus:—  
1. (310, 11), אנשי בבל מתירים לשום את הקדרה אל התנור קודם בוא, (310, 5) אין אנשי בבל אינן השבת כדי שתתבשל בשבת ואנשי א"י אוסרים מתירים לקדש את האשה בשנה השביעית ואנשי ארץ ישראל מתירים זה.  
This latter number must undoubtedly be based upon some misunderstanding. In the original there occurred the word בשביעית (= בפריות ש' = בדמי ש'), and Q. thoughtlessly took it to mean בשנה השביעית. Cf. the Commentary למלך משנה on Maimûni's *Mishne Torah*, *Hilch. Ishûth*, V. 3.

searching the Torah, but only for your searching the teachings of the Rabbis" (248, 10: *וקאלוּא פּי יראת חמא ליס*: 248, 10: *לך אנר אן תקרא ותדרס פּי אלתוריה אלא פּי גמאר אלרבאנין*).

The book is evidently the same that, as Azulai (ed. Benjacob, II. 62a) remarks, is referred to by Salomon b. Al-Kabez in his commentary to Ruth i. 21, by the name *מס' יראת חמא*. Harkavy (p. 298, note 10) is, therefore, wrong in saying it is quite unknown. It is an ethical treatise similar to *מס' דרך ארץ*. Two MSS. of the Bodleian (No. 120 and 380, vide *Neubauer's Cat.*, Col. 19 and 83) contain the tractate *יראת חמא*, between the tractates *Aboth* and *Derech Erez*. Qirgisânî's citation is a testimony to its age.

2. *מסכת גיהנם* (298, 16), not identical with the *מסכת גיהנם* (published in Jellinek's *Beth-Hamidrash*, I. 147, 9), for Qirgisânî's quotation is not to be found in the latter.

3. *תשובת אחאב*, probably an Agadic work based upon the Biblical story of King Ahab's repentance (1 Kings xxi. 27-29). Qirgisânî quotes from this and the aforementioned work the Agada occurring in both, according to which God himself, in Isaiah xxii. 12, makes use of weeping and lamentation. This bold Agadic conception which presents God as weeping over the destruction of his sanctuary, is already met with in older Midrashic writings (Vide *Die Agada der Palästinensischen Amoräer*, I. 145; note 4).

4. An Agadic work known as *תלמוד בני רבי* (299, 4: *אגדה להם תערף בתלמוד בני רבי*). He quotes from the same an Agadic passage which, rendered into Hebrew, would probably run thus:—*שלושה דברים למד הקב"ה ממושה • אחד • במעשה העגל כאשר רצה להשמיד בני ישראל כמו שאמר ועתה הניחה לי ויחר אפי בהם ואכלם אמר משה לפניו ושמעו מצרים כי העלית בכחד וגו' אמר לו הקב"ה החייתני בדבריך שנאמר ואולם חי אני • והשני במעשה סיחון כשאמר הקב"ה למשה והתגר בו מלחמה לא ישר הדבר בעיני משה ולא עשה מה שצוהו הקב"ה שנאמר ואשלח מלאכים ממדבר קדמות אל סיחון וגו' ומה שעשה ישר בעיני הקב"ה ואמר לו משה*

מבטל אני את דברי ואקיים את דבריך וזה שאמר אחר זה כי תקרב אל עיר וגו'.

The third point, referred to in the opening words, which God learnt from Moses, is missing.

Qirqisânî adds the remark : "I think that this passage is taken from the Talmud" (ואחסב אן הוא אלהול מן אלהלמוד). Perhaps he was thinking of the passage in Berachoth, 32a, where we may read almost literally part of the first Agada based on Exod. xxxii. 10 and Numb. xiv. 13, 16, and 21. The second Agada, which brings into connection Deut. xx. 10 and Deut. ii. 24 and 26, is to be found in the Midrash Tanchuma in the frame of a similar three-fold Agada.<sup>1</sup> What the "Talmud of the Sons of Rabbi," as the title of an Agadic work, is to signify, is beyond even conjecture.

5. A work of Hâi, Chief of the College, in which he attributes to R. Jizchak Nappacha, the Palestinian Amora, the rules for fixing the Calendar (293, 5). This work of Hâi the elder (Hâi b. David), is known also to later Karaite writers, beginning with Jepheth b. Ali, as Pinsker has shown (*Likkute Kadmonijoth*, II., 94, 148-151). According to Levi b. Jepheth it was a controversial work against the Karaites.

6. Not from personal observation, but from the relations of others, Qirqisânî was acquainted with a translation made by the same Chief of the College, Hâi. It is said of the latter, that he in conjunction with his father (הו ואביו, perhaps הו ואביוה, he and his brother) translated the book of 'Anan from Aramaic into Hebrew מן אלארמאני (אלי אלעבראני). The two translators, as we are further told in this remarkable account, had found nothing in 'Anan for which there was not some support in the teachings of the

<sup>1</sup> *Tanch.* א"ר לוי שלשה דברים עשה משה והסכים הקב"ה : שופטים, fine : על ידו . ואלו הן : ..... ואחת בימי סיחון ועוג א"ל הקב"ה לך הלחם עמו סכור אמת המים שלו ומשה לא עשה כן שנאמר ואשלח מלאכים . א"ל הקב"ה חייך עשית כראוי מסכים אני על ירך לפיכך משה מזהיר על ישראל ואומר להם כי תקרב אל עיר להלחם עליה וקראת אליה לשלום. Conf. *Deuteronomium Rabba*, c. V. fin.

Rabbins, with the exception of one ordinance concerning the firstborn of cattle. Ultimately they even found this point in the ritual of the Paitan Jannai (פי חזאנה ינאי), 284, 17-22.

7. The ritual of Eleasar (אלעזר פי חזאנה), i.e., of Kalir, from which Qirqisânî quotes (300, 1-3) a piece belonging to the Liturgy of the Day of Atonement, and beginning וְהִידּוּ הָרִמָּה אֶשֶׁר לִךְ אֶרֶץ וּדְרִיָּה בְּרֹחַ אֲמֹרָה. This same quotation, probably derived from our author, is to be found several times in *Hadassi* (vide Zunz, *Literaturges. d. Syn. Poesie*, p. 63).

Qirqisânî in one place makes mention by name of a Rabbinic authority (312, 2). I asked—so he relates—Ja'qûb Ibn Ephraim, the Palestinian (אלשאמי): Why do you (Rabbis) attract to yourselves the 'Isavites (the adherents of 'Isa Isfahani) and intermarry with them, seeing that they (as you are well aware) ascribe the prophetic spirit to such individuals as were no prophets, namely, Jesus and Muhammed? His reply was:—Because they do not differ from us in the matter of the Festivals. Harkavy remarks that the person here named, Jacob b. Ephraim, is identical with the man whose Commentary to the T. Sabbath of the Jerusalem Talmud was brought from Palestine to Babylon by Salmon ben Jerucham (Pinsker, II., 14).

The most important authority whom Qirqisânî follows in his account of the sects, is one who, as a philosophical writer, is highly esteemed on the Rabbinic side since Bachja Ibn Pakûda, viz., David Almuqammès (or, as his name was also pronounced Almiqmâs, אלמקמאץ). Concerning this personage, around whom there has gathered some inexplicable mystery, we learn from this work of Qirqisânî the most astounding particulars. In the chapter on Christianity he states that he is indebted for his statements on this subject to the accounts of David b. Merwân Al-Raqqî. He then proceeds: "This person, known by the name of אלמקמאץ, was a philosopher. First he was a Jew, and then he be-

came converted in Nisibis to Christianity, under the lead of a man named Nânâ (=Nonnus, *vide* p. 259, note 3). The latter was much esteemed among Christians, as he was a perfect philosopher and practised medicine. David Almuqammes was for many years his pupil, and thus it was that he learnt the principles of Christianity so thoroughly, and distinguished himself in philosophy. Later on he wrote two books concerning the Christians, in which he attacked them; both works are known. He further translated from among their books and commentaries a Commentary upon Genesis, which he termed *כתאב אלכליקה* (Book of Creation), and also a Commentary upon *Koheleth* (306, 16-23). These data impress one with their own historic truth, and we have no reason to doubt their being facts. Qirqisânî seems to have spent some time in Raqqua, David's native place (V. Munk, *Mélanges de Philosophie*, p. 474), for he receives information from a scholar of this town concerning some particulars in the ritual of Jerusalem (310, 29: *והכי שיד: (מן משאיד אלרקו*). He could thus have gathered from that place authentic details regarding the life of Almuqammes. With reference to this surname, we have the ingenious suggestion of Harkavy, viz., "the leaper, jumper" (cf. Arabic *קמץ*, Aram. *קמצא*, grasshopper, *sauterelle*), this surname having been intended to point to the fact that David changed his religion twice, "jumped" from one to the other, seeing that he was converted to Christianity, and then returned to Judaism. David's Commentary on Genesis, to which reference is made, Harkavy found quoted in a fragment of an anonymous Arabic Commentary on Genesis. It is stated in this fragment (p. 261): "David b. Merwân Al-Raqqî, called Almuqammes, wrote a book in explanation of Genesis, which he translated from the commentaries of the Syrians." The fragment lays stress upon a characteristic of this Commentary on Genesis by David b. Merwân, stating that it is now defective, now unnecessarily prolix.

The work of David b. Merwân, from which Qirqisânî



drew most of the materials for his chapter on Christianity (p. 305-307), he calls in another passage (308-316) כְּתָב אֶלְצִרָהּ, Kitâb-al-Dharâ, Book of Fierce Attack, a characteristic title for a controversial work. He also refers in his accounts of individual sects (304, 9 and 16) to David b. Merwân as his authority, and we may infer that even in those parts in which he does not refer to him specially, he drew from him as his source. The same source supplied in later times (twelfth Century), Jehuda Hadassi with material for Nos. 97 and 98 of his Eshkol Hakkofer on Jewish sects. This account, hitherto regarded as the chief source of information on the subject, can now be controlled and supplemented with the assistance of Qirqisânî.

Qirqisânî sets to work chronologically in his accounts of the Jewish sects, as well in his introductory survey in the second chapter, as in the later chapters devoted to the individual sects. Here follows an enumeration of the various sects in the same order as he mentions them, with details of special interest or such as have been hitherto unknown.<sup>1</sup>

1. The Samaritans, "called by the Jewish people כּוּרִים" (282, 16). It is related of them, that to this very day, they revere the memory of Sanballat the Choromite as one of their princes (285, 21). During their prayers they turn to Shilo (303, 11). They reckon the new moon according to a calendar supposed to have been fixed by Jeroboam (עִיבּוֹר, יִרְבַּעַם, 303, 15). They are divided into two sects, one called כּוּשֵׁן, the other דּוּסְטָאן (Dustân=Dositheos). One of these sects denies the Resurrection. They, having made a few alterations in the text of the Thora, accordingly add in Gen. iv. 8, קוֹם נֹצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה (303, 18-22).

2. The Sadducees ((אֶלְצִדּוּקִיָּה). Zadok, their founder, wrote books against the Rabbanites, without adducing proofs, in behalf of his views which were opposed to those of the Rabbanites (283, 11-13). Boëthus, the other founder,

---

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the Rabbanites, this has appeared in the foregoing remarks.

taught, as the 'Ananites and all other Karaites, that the Feast of Weeks could only be held on a Sunday (283, 15 ; 304, 22). The Sadducees prohibited divorce, as Jesus did later (304, 3 ; 305, 12). They explained (according to the statement of David Almuqammes), the bodily attributes ascribed to God in Holy Writ in their literal signification (304, 9-16).

3. The Magârites (אלמגאריה). They are so called from the fact that their books were found in a cave (מגאר, Hebr. מערה). The "Alexandrine" belongs to them, whose work is known and famous ; it is the best of the "Books of the Cave." Then comes a little work called ספר ידוע, also a beautiful book. The remaining works of the Magârites are mostly devoted to idle, senseless talk (283, 18-20). It is said that some of this sect held laughing as prohibited (304, 14). They explain several passages of Scripture in an improbable, senseless (allegorical) manner (304, 15). They insist upon the bodily attributes referred in Scripture to God being taken to have reference to an Angelic Being, to whom even the creation of the world is ascribed (304, 18-21). On this last point, Qirqisânî remarks, they agree with the view expressed by Benjamin Nehâwendi. By the term "Alexandrine" (אלכסנדריאני) we have to understand Philo, as Harkavy rightly assumes (p. 256, etc.). The title of the work ספר ידוע may be read ס' ידוע or ס' ידוע (p. 257). The phrase "dwellers in caverns" reminds us, says Harkavy, of the Egyptian Therapeutæ. The references to the allegorical explanation of Scripture, and to the angels creating the world (Logos, Demiurgos) agree with the mention of Philo's name in connection with this sect, which, according to Qirqisânî's chronology, sprang up before the rise of Christianity. The existence of an account of Philo and his writings among Jewish circles (which may probably have been drawn from Christian literature, through David Almuqammes) is a highly interesting piece of information in the history of literature, which has become known through Harkavy's edition.

4. Jesus and the Christians. In the chapter on Christianity, Qirqisânî reproduces (as he states in the heading of the chapter) mostly that which he found in the work of David Almuqammes. It is a short sketch containing the chief doctrines, and a few details concerning the history of Christianity, and it also includes a sort of criticism. The religion of the Christians, as at present existing, was introduced and diffused by Paul (פולץ). He ascribed Divinity to Jesus and the prophetic spirit to himself. He denied the necessity for carrying out the commands, and taught that religion consisted in humility (אלתרואצט). All animals may be eaten, "from the fly to the elephant" (305, 14-19). The later Christian philosophers (אלמחורדין מן פלאספיה אלנצארי) assert, that the religious ordinances were given to the Israelites in Divine wrath. The Israelites chose these ordinances for themselves because they resembled those of the Sabians; while those of the Egyptians, to which those of the Sabians were related, were known to them through their stay in Egypt (306, 4-7). The Nicæan Council, at which 318 bishops were assembled, determined upon precepts which occur neither in the Thora, nor the Gospel, nor in the articles of faith of Peter and Paul (פי קאנון פוטרום ופולץ), (306, 29-32).

5. The Qarîtes (אלקריעיה), so called because they only made use of vessels fashioned out of gourds (קרע) (283, 28). They reside near the Nile, twenty parasangs from Fostât. According to one writer, they trace their descent to Jochanan b. Kareach (Jer. xliii. 4),<sup>1</sup> who emigrated to Egypt (283, 30). They are said to celebrate the Sunday in addition to the Sabbath, and this is an evidence of their leaning towards Christianity (308, 11). If David Almuqammes be right, that Christianity is based upon the teachings of the Sadducees and the Qarîtes, then the latter must naturally have existed before Christianity (308, 14-18). The exclusive use by them of vessels made

<sup>1</sup> This is also the view of the Karaite lexicographer David b. Abraham (*vide* Pinsker, I. 166).

of gourds is explained by Qirqisânî (308, 2-10) by the assumption that the Qar'ites, like the Samaritans, avoided as unclean contact with other people, and consequently made use of gourd vessels fashioned by themselves. Qirqisânî found particulars concerning this sect in a book which he calls *חכאיה אלמקאלאת* (308, 14), which, according to Harkavy's ingenious conjecture, is the *Kitâb al maqâlât* (*כתאב אלמקאלאת*) of Abû 'Isâ al-Warrâq, from which also Al-Bêrûnî derived many details regarding the Jews (*Revue des Etudes Juives*, XII. 258).

6. Obadja, known by the name Abû 'Isâ Al Isfahânî. He declared himself a prophet in the days of the Chalif Abdulmelik b. Merwân. As the sign of his mission, his adherents regarded the fact which they alleged of his having been an ignorant tailor, who could neither read nor write, and yet composed books and scrolls without his having received instruction from anybody (284, 5-11 ; 311, 20-23). Relying on Ps. cxix. 164, he prescribed seven prayers daily ; upon the strength of a revelation which he said was vouchsafed him, he prohibited the enjoyment of meat and wine, though having no Biblical evidence for it. He regarded the Rabbins as upon the same footing as the prophets, and insisted that he received a command from God to pray according to the prescription of the Rabbis, the Eighteen Benedictions, and the Shema' (311, 23-27). He recognised the prophetic mission of Jesus and Muhammed, and ordered the Gospel and the Korân to be read (312, 5-7).

7. Abû 'Isâ Judgân. His followers call him the Shepherd (*אלרעאי*), *i.e.*, the "Shepherd of the Nation." He is said to have been a disciple of Abû 'Isâ Obadja (Isfahânî), and he also ascribed the spirit of prophecy to himself. His disciples look upon him as the Messiah (284, 12-14 ; 312, 16), and they await his return (312, 17). The Judganites prohibit meat and wine, and spend much time in praying and fasting. As regards Sabbaths and Festivals, they are but kept as memorials (312, 17-19).

8. 'Anan the Exilarch. Qirgisânî enumerates over thirty lessons and precepts, mostly belonging to the Ritual, as those of 'Anan (312, 23; 313, 30), the first point being an Halacha expressed in Hebrew *אלא בכרתה*,<sup>1</sup> whereby it is permitted to carry on Sabbath articles of light weight. He states as a last point, that 'Anan taught the transmigration of souls (*אלהנאסך*) and is said to have written a work on the subject.<sup>2</sup>

9. Benjamin Al-Nehâwendî. He was well versed in Rabbinic utterances and in the knowledge of Scripture. He is said to have been judge (*דיינא*) for many years (285, 1-3). Qirgisânî attributes to Benjamin the second important founder of Karaism, about a dozen instructions, mostly bearing upon Religious Law (314, 3-24). At the head of these stands his well-known doctrine concerning the Demiurgos, which reminds us of Philo's Logos:—"God created an angel which created the entire universe. It is this angel which gave the prophets their commission, which allowed miracles to be performed, and gave commands and prohibitions."

10. Ismaîl al-'Okbarî (*אלעכבר*). He lived in the days of the Chaliph Almu'tasim billâh (834-842). Most of his utterances border on insanity; nevertheless, he was full of self-admiration, and in his writings disparaged 'Anan (314, 3). When on the point of death, he is said to have bidden his followers place upon his tomb the words:—*רכב קרי* and *כריב* and insisted upon the Bible text being read as it is written. This is, however, contrary to what he himself is said to have asserted on several occasions, viz., that there are passages in Scripture which were originally different from what they appear in our present text: *e.g.* Gen. iv. 8, where the words *נצח השדה* were added; Ex. xx. 18, where, instead of *רואים*, there stood originally *שומעים*;

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps based on Numbers vii. 9, *בכתה יסאו*.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Schreiner, *Der Kalâm in der jûdischen Literatur* (Berlin, 1895), page 66.

in Exod. xvi. 35, where was יֹאכְלִי instead of אֹכְלִי; in Gen. xlvii. 15 there used to be שלושם ושנים instead of שלושם ושלש: this is an error of the sacred text (גלט מן אלכרתאב) (314, 27—315, 7). As regards the first point, Qirqisânî remarks (319, 2) that it was also the custom of some Karaites in Chorâsân to read only according to the Kethib: in the same place (319, 3) he says of other dwellers in Chorâsân, that with regard to the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton they hold that he who does not pronounce it as it is written (יהוה) but as אדני, is guilty of unbelief.

11. Musâ al-Sa'frânî (אלזעפראני), known by the name of Abû 'Imrân al-Tiflîsi. He was a contemporary of Benjamin Nehâwendî and Ismaîl 'Okbarî, and came from Bagdad. His surname he received on account of his having settled in Tiflis, a town of Armenia, where followers of his are yet to be found (283, 8-12). He wrote replies to questions attributed by him to Chiwi (Albalchî) (ולה גואבאת מסאיל) (ינסבדה אלי חיזיה), and also some leaves concerning the permission of enjoying flesh food (315, 21 *sq.*).

12. Malik al-Ramlî lived at Ramla. His followers are still called Ramlites or Malikites (285, 13-14). It is related of him that once during a stay in Jerusalem he swore that upon the altar of this sanctuary the cock was brought as a sacrifice (Cf. Pinsker, II. 84), (315, 23). Neither Malik al-Ramlî nor Abû 'Imrân al-Tiflîsi wrote a work upon the precepts, and they differed only in a few minor points from the general body of Karaites (315, 17-19).

13. Mêshawaih (or Mêshuje, מישויה) al-'Okbarî lived, as the afore-named Ismaîl, in 'Okbara (285, 15).<sup>1</sup> His opinions on Ritual Law savour of ignorance. An 'Okbarite told Qirqisânî that Mêshawaih adopted and spread many of the customs of the Jews living in Gebâl (the Median mountain lands), among whom there exist many unwarranted innovations in the Ritual (316, 1-3). The Qibla

<sup>1</sup> Q. mentions nothing about Mêshawaih having lived in Baalbek, and having, in consequence, borne the name Baalbeki.

(facing at the time of prayer) should according to his opinion, always be to the west, even though in places situated to the west of Palestine, like Egypt and Maghreb, the back instead of the face would thus be turned towards Jerusalem (316, 11, 13).

14. Daniel al-Dâmegânî, known as Al-Qûmisî (אלקומסי), the last one who formulated a special doctrine, wrote a work and found adherents (285, 19, 20).<sup>1</sup> In his view upon angels, he deviates from that held by any of the Israelites (אל ישראל, Rabbanites as well as Karaites). He regards them, namely, not as living, reasoning creatures, entrusted by God with missions as prophets are; but he regards them as bodies, by means of which God produces effects, as fire, clouds, winds, etc. (316, 17-21). He is said to have taught that the obligation to carry out the precepts of religion only begins with the twentieth year of one's life (316, 25). He forbade certain things to be done on Sabbath, as *e.g.*, the washing of the hands with soap (316, 26). He declared as permissible the testimony of Mohammedans with regard to the observance of the New Moon (316, 28).

From the preceding survey we gain an insight into the multitude of Jewish sects, as they presented themselves in a chronologically arranged table to the imagination of Qirqisânî. The perspective from which these sects were viewed is that of a keen Karaite, to whom the large majority of the professors of Judaism appeared but as a sect, which had rebelled against the true principles of the Faith, represented as these were by the Karaites themselves.

In addition to this, small groups which clustered around the peculiar opinions of a certain teacher, are treated as real sects. It is surprising that only a passing reference is made to Chiwi Albalchi, and that he is not spoken of under a special heading. As we learn from Saadyah, he exercised a great influence, and his heretical opinions concerning the Bible had a far different scope from the Bible

---

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* above, p. 692 concerning him.

criticism—if we may use the term—equally remarkable, of Ismaïl al 'Okbarî.

I regard it as superfluous to enter into details as to the value of Qirqisânî's work, made accessible to us by Harkavy, for the purposes of correcting and supplementing the accounts of Jewish sects which we have hitherto possessed, and which, in the main, are drawn from the self-same sources.

One thing is certain, the first part of Qirqisânî's *Book of Lights*<sup>1</sup> will have to be consulted as the most important

<sup>1</sup> Harkavy fixed the text upon the basis of two MSS. which mutually supplemented each other. Yet there are *lacunæ*, as both MSS. had them in the same places. The Arabic text is written in Hebrew characters; the Teshdîd sign is nowhere inserted, which, perhaps, would have done no harm here and there. I have found only unimportant printer's errors and other corrigenda, and I herewith place the list at the disposal of the editor and the readers of the book.

Page 279, line 5, *for* באלאמה *read* באלאמם  
 „ 279, „ 15, „ אלבראניה „ אלבראניה  
 „ 280, „ 29, „ גדה „ גורה?  
 „ 281, „ 8, „ ידה אד „ ידה אד  
 „ 281, „ 19, delete one אהם.  
 „ 282, „ 5, in place of the words supplied by Harkavy in parentheses, קר, supply קר אפלא, or קר אפלים (cf. 301,5).

Page 284, line 10, delete the stop before פאטרה.

„ 284, „ 14, *for* ותלמידה *read* ותלמידה  
 „ 285, „ 15, „ מישויה „ מישויה  
 „ 285, „ 16, „ מע יחכי „ מא יחכי  
 „ 286, „ 16, „ מ „ מן  
 „ 288, „ 22, „ אנת „ אנת  
 „ 289, „ 21, „ גלודה „ גלודה  
 „ 299, „ 30, „ בית אלמקדם „ בית אלמדרסה  
 „ 300, „ 24, after חתי, a verb has been omitted, say, שאהרוא.

Page 301, line 27, *for* שונעה *read* שונעה (= שֹׁנֵעָה, cf. יובלג, p. 287, 19).

„ 302, „ 22, „ ויכאבר „ ויכאבר (cf. p. 311, 17).

„ 315, „ 21, „ גואבה „ גואבאת (Harkavy writes thus in *Studien und Mittheilungen*, V. 147, note 2).

Page 316, line 17, *for* יתבת *read* יתבת

„ 318, „ 36 „ זכר „ זכר (cf. p. 312, 19).

„ 319, „ 29 „ ולך „ ולך



source of information for this chapter of Jewish History, side by side with, or rather in preference to Jehuda Hadassi, Shahrestâni, and Makrisi. M. Harkavy deserves the thanks of all those who are interested in the history of the age of Saadyah, and of Judæo-Arabic literature in particular. May he have the good fortune to bring to light yet many such jewels out of those treasures of the St. Petersburg Library which are committed to his care and scholarship.

W. BACHER.

Budapest, September, 1894.

---