Philo's Odyssey into the Medieval Jewish World: Neglected Evidence from Arab Christian Literature

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In his magisterial work *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (1993), David Runia addresses the thorny question of Philo's influence on medieval Jewish thought. Though this question has been of interest for over a century, the results of research conducted in this area are, according to Runia, "scattered and confused."[1] Runia briefly surveys the scholarship on the subject as far back as the late nineteenth century. He argues that in order to validate the claim that Philo was known to Jews (and Muslims) in the medieval period, it would be necessary to show that these groups had access to his thought.

Runia then lists two theories addressing this issue, neither of which is conclusive due to lack of evidence (or sheer improbability). The first theory suggests that Philo became known to medieval Jews via a Syriac or an Arabic translation.[2] The problem with this theory, according to Runia, is that there is no evidence that a translation into either Syriac or Arabic ever existed.[3] The second "more radical"[4] claim suggests that Philo became known in the medieval period through a cache of ancient writings, believed to have been written by the Essenes and discovered ca. 790 in a cave near Jericho.[5] Runia doubts that this theory is tenable because the discovered writings are reported

1. David Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 15. See also, David Winston, "Philo's *Nachleben* in Judaism," *Studia Philonica Annual* 6 (1994): 103–10, esp. 106–8. In this article, Winston supplements Runia's work with additional considerations. Those which pertain to our question will be treated in detail in our review below.

2. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 15.

3. Ibid., 15–16, 28.

4. Ibid., 16.

5. This discovery is reported in *Letter 47* of the East-Syriac catholicos-patriarch Timothy I (r. 780–823); see Oscar Braun, "Ein Brief des Katholikos Timotheos I. über biblische Studien des 9. Jahrhunderts," *Oriens Christianus* 1 (1901): 299–313, here 304–09; cf. Vittorio Berti, *Vita e studi di Timoteo I (†823), patriarca cristiano di Baghdad: Ricerche sull'Epistolario e sulle fonti contigue* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 2009), 297–305.

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to have been in Hebrew, and there is no evidence that Philo's works—all written in Greek—had ever been translated into Hebrew in ancient times.

However inconclusive the results, Runia points out that this avenue of research is, by no means, exhausted:

> Moreover further investigation of Syriac and Arabic literature may yield interesting results (the latter falls, of course, outside the Christian tradition but may well be dependent on it).[6]

The modest aim of the present article is to show one such intriguing result—concrete evidence of a series of short Philonic passages (all of them from the *De vita contemplativa*) in an Arabic translation—as well as to point out that, contrary to Runia's suggestion, Arabic literature does not necessarily fall "outside the Christian tradition." In fact, it is precisely the intersection of Arabic literature and the Christian tradition—i.e. the vast and still insufficiently explored Christian literature in Arabic—that seems to be a promising avenue for the transmission of Philo's works and Philonic ideas to medieval Jews. Arab Christianity (and Middle Eastern Christianity more generally) is, therefore, a crucial "bridge community" connecting antiquity with medieval Islamic and Jewish thought.[7] Exploring Christian literature in Arabic is thus extremely worthwhile and, we believe, holds the promise of solving long-standing mysteries of intellectual history.

This article includes three parts. In order to find out how exactly an Arab Christian translation of Philonic passages would be significant, in the first part of the article we shall examine the earlier scholarship in more detail. We shall begin by surveying the scholarship prior to Runia, in order to get a better grasp of the issue and its implications, following which, we shall examine scholarship subsequent to Runia, to determine the current state of the question. In the second part of the article, we shall present the evidence for sections of Philo's *De vita contemplativa* in a (Christian) Arabic translation and provide an annotated English translation of these sections. We shall also discuss some additional references to Philo in Christian works written in Arabic. In the third part, we shall offer some tentative observations on how this new evidence might shed light on the question of medieval Jews' famil-

6. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 343. Winston follows Runia's conclusions in "Philo's *Nachleben* in Judaism," 106.

7. It is no accident that the vast majority of medieval translations of philosophical and scientific works from Greek into Arabic were produced by Middle-Eastern Christians. On these translations see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries)* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); for the Christian context see Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 106–28.

iarity with Philo. Finally, we will present an edition of the Arabic Philonic translation, in comparison to the Greek original.

1. Knowledge of Philo among Medieval Jews: The State of the Question

Working in the late nineteenth century, the great Russian Jewish scholar Abraham Harkavy (1835–1919) was the first to publish a section of the famous Karaite[8] Jewish author Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī's Arabic treatise *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-marāqib* (*Book of Lights and Watchtowers*), written in 927 CE.[9] In the section published by Harkavy, Qirqisānī gives a history of several Jewish sects. Among the first, he treats the Rabbinites, the Samaritans, the Sadducees, and a group he calls Magharians (*al-maghāriyya*), or "people of the cave," called so, according to Qirqisānī, because their writings were found in a cave (*maghār*). One of the Magharians, al-Iskandarānī ("The Alexandrian") is the author of one (and possibly two) important works. Qirqisānī writes:

> His book is famous and well-known (*mashhūr maʿrūf*), and it is the most exalted of the books of the Magharians, and after it [in importance] there is a small booklet[10] entitled *Sēfer Yāḏûaʿ*, and this is also a fine book.[11]

To Qirqisānī's work, Harkavy added a commentary of his own in which he identified the Magharians with the Essenes, particularly with the "Egyptian branch" of the Essenes that Philo called "Therapeutae." He also tentatively identified "the Alexandrian" with Philo himself. Harkavy believed that there is a connection between Philo's theory of the Logos and the Magharian view, also reported by Qirqisānī (on the authority of the ninth-century Jewish au-

8. On every aspect of Karaite history and belief see now Barry Dov Walfish and Mikhail Kizilov, *Bibliographia Karaitica: An Annotated Bibliography of Karaites and Karaism* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011). Many of the studies discussed below are listed in §5.1.3 ("The Magharians and the Medieval Discovery of Scrolls"), 51–52.

9. A.Ya. Garkavi [Harkavy], "Izvestiya karaima Abu-Yusufa Yakuba al-Kirkisani ob evreyskikh sektakh," *Zapiski vostochnago otdeleniya Imperatorskago russkago arkheologicheskago obshchestva* 8 (1894): 247–321; English trans. (without the Arabic text): Albert Harkavy, "Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī on the Jewish Sects," in *Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī on Jewish Sects and Christianity: A Translation of Kitāb al-Anwār, Book I, with Two Introductory Essays*, ed. Bruno Chiesa and Wilfrid Lockwood (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), 49–90.

10. It is unclear from Qirqisānī's text whether this second book was also authored by al-Iskandarānī.

11. Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-Anwār wal-marāqib: Code of Karaite Law*, vol. 1, ed. Leon Nemoy (New York: The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1939), Book I, §2.8, 12. Nemoy himself expressed reservations about Harkavy's interpretation of the passage and his identification of "the Alexandrian" with Philo—see Leon Nemoy, "al-Qirqisānī's Account of the Jewish Sects and Christianity," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 8 (1930): 317–97, here 327, note 24.

thor Dāwūd al-Muqammis),[12] that the world was created by an angel rather than by God Himself and that all the biblical anthropomorphic descriptions of God refer in reality to this angelic demiurge.[13]

More evidence of Philo's presence in the medieval Jewish world has been discovered in the Cairo Genizah. Built in Fustāt (old Cairo) in the ninth century, the Ibn ʿEzrā synagogue housed a depository of Jewish texts and documents, known as the Genizah. The Taylor-Schechter Collection, housed at the Cambridge University Library, is the largest collection of documents originating from the Genizah. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in a series of articles, Hartwig Hirschfeld began publishing fragments from the Judeo-Arabic portion of the Genizah. One of these fragments cites a work entitled *Prolegomena of the Alexandrian* (*Muqaddimāt al-Iskandarānī*). In a study published in 1904, Hirschfeld identified "the Alexandrian" as Philo. The citation deals with the question of why God revealed the ten commandments—and the Torah in general—in the desert rather than in a city. It appears to originate from (a condensed version of) Philo's *De Decalogo*, where this question is indeed discussed.[14] According to Hirschfeld, this is the only known instance of a Philonic treatise (albeit, in a condensed form) introduced in Judeo-Arabic literature. Nonetheless, Hirschfeld does not claim that, apart from this one instance, Philo was entirely unknown to medieval Jews. Hirschfeld writes:

> The very fact of [Philo's] name being mentioned is interesting from various points of view, and shows that the Egyptian Jews under Moslem rule not only endeavoured to enrich their own literature by original works, but also to render older works accessible to the reading public.[15]

A possible reference to Philo is found in yet another Genizah fragment, which Hirschfeld identified as a polemical treatise against the Karaites, *Kitāb al-Tamyīz*, written by Qirqisānī's contemporary, the great tenth-century Rabbinite scholar Saʿadia Gaon. Here, Saʿadia quotes a passage from a work he attributes to a certain Judah of Alexandria. Hirschfeld thinks Saʿadia's "Judah of Alexandria" is Philo.[16] The passage in question deals with a succession of

12. On al-Muqammis see Sarah Stroumsa, *Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ's* Twenty Chapters [ʿIshrūn Maqāla] (Leiden: Brill, 1989); Bruno Chiesa, "Dāwūd al-Muqammis e la sua opera," *Henoch* 18 (1996): 121–55. Here and below, in transliterations from Arabic, Syriac, and Hebrew, some diacritics are omitted for technical reasons.

13. Harkavy, "Izvestiya," 255–8, 276; English trans. Harkavy, "Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī," 57–60, 78.

14. Hartwig Hirschfeld, "The Arabic Portion of the Cairo Genizah at Cambridge (Seventh Article)," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 17.1 (1904): 65–68, here 65–66.

15. Ibid., 65.

16. Hartwig Hirschfeld, "The Arabic Portion of the Cairo Genizah at Cambridge (Third Article): Saadyah Fragments," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 16.1 (1903): 98–112, here 99; cf.

pentecostal feasts of First Fruits. Though it is not found in Philo's extant works, it bears some resemblance to Philo's description of the calendar of the Therapeutae and, as some scholars were to point out later, even more so to the calendar of Qumran.[17]

Samuel Poznański's 1905 article "Philon dans l'ancienne littérature judéo-arabe,"[18] surveys a number of doctrinal parallels between Philo and several ninth and tenth-century Jewish authors, in an attempt to show that these authors knew and used Philo's works. He begins with ninth-century Karaite author Benjamin al-Nahāwandī, whose doctrine of a pre-existent, angelic demiurge resembles and, according to Poznański, is influenced by Philo's Logos. Arguing against Harkavy's identification of the Magharians with the Essenes/Therapeutae, Poznański suggests a later date for the Magharians: "c'est plutôt encore au VII^{e} ou au VIII^{e} siècle, époque où les sectes poussaient comme des champignons et avaient pour la plupart une existence éphémère, qu'il convient de placer les al-Maghâriya."[19] Poznański affirms, however, that with the discovery of a fragment of the *Prolegomena of the Alexandrian*, there is sufficient evidence to identify "the Alexandrian" with Philo. He also points out that, according to the fifteenth-century Karaite author Samuel al-Maghribī, Qirqisānī, in his *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-marāqib*, enumerates "ten useful principles" which go back to "the Alexandrian" (i.e. Philo). Poznański also proposes that the Genizah fragment discovered by Hirschfeld originates from the sixth part of Qirqisānī's book.[20] He further argues that Philo's thought could have reached Judeo-Arabic authors via a Syriac Christian translation, and that al-Muqammis (who is known to have studied with a Christian theologian named "Nānā," and translated two Christian works from Syriac into Arabic) could have been Qirqisānī's source. Nonetheless, Poznański acknowledges the limits of this hypothesis, as it lacks concrete evidence needed for verification: "Espérons donc que de nouvelles découvertes éclaireront d'une lumière plus vive cette question si attachante."[21]

In his article "Inquiry into the Sources of Karaite Halakah" (1912–13), Bernard Revel argues that Philo's influence on Karaite thought is not limited to the writings of Qirqisānī. Revel provides twenty-two examples of Karaite legal interpretations that deviate from the Rabbinite tradition and correspond to interpretations given by Philo. Revel's aim is to show that "in

the Judeo-Arabic text, 103.

17. See e.g. Joseph M. Baumgarten, "4Q Halakah^{a} 5, the Law of Hadash, and the Pentecostad Calendar," in his *Studies in Qumran Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 131–42, esp. 134–38.

18. Samuel Poznański, "Philon dans l'ancienne littérature judéo-arabe," *Revue des Études Juives* 50 (1905): 10–31.

19. Ibid., 22.

20. Ibid., 26.

21. Ibid., 30.

most of Philo's deviations from [Rabbinic] Tradition the Karaites hold the same view," and this, he writes, "points to some kind of dependence of the latter on Philo, or to common descent from a particular tradition."[22] Revel maintains that Karaite dependence on Philo is the likelier of the two possibilities, and following Harkavy, points to Qirqisānī's veiled reference to Philo as "the Alexandrian" to buttress his position.

Since the 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in caves at Qumran, several scholars attempted to identify Qirqisānī's Magharians ("people of the cave") with the Qumran sect, assumed to be the Essenes. In his article "Who Were the Magārīya?" published in 1960, Norman Golb challenges this view.[23] Golb points out that there are several variant spellings of the name "Maghāriyya" extant in medieval literature (e.g., in the Muslim authors al-Bīrūnī and al-Shahrastānī), and only one of them—the one chosen by Qirqisānī—has anything to do with caves. If we assume that Qirqisānī chose a wrong spelling, his explanation of the name of the sect would certainly be wrong and thus there would be no reason to identify the Magharians (however spelled) with the Qumran sect. Furthermore, as Golb writes, "even if we do accept the spelling of the name and the explanation offered by Qirqisānī, the fact remains that there is nothing unique about the story of the discovery of Hebrew manuscripts in a cave. There were at least five similar traditions extant in medieval times."[24] Thus even if Qirqisānī was correct in choosing the right spelling and the designation "people of the cave," this would not provide sufficient reason to identify the Magharians with the Qumran sect.

Furthermore, the association of the Magharians with Philo[25]—assuming Qirqisānī's "Alexandrian" is indeed Philo—does not help prove that the Magharians are to be identified with Qumran: "the fact that Philo knew about the Palestinian Essenes [assumed to be identical with the Qumran sect] does not at all imply that those Essenes knew about Philo, and that they had copies of his (Greek!) writings."[26] Golb concedes that "it is possible that the

22. Bernard Revel, "Inquiry into the Sources of Karaite Halakah," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, new series 3.3 (1913): 337–96, here 394; based on the author's PhD dissertation, *The Karaite Halakah and Its Relation to Sadducean, Samaritan and Philonian Halakah*, Part I (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1913), 86.

23. Norman Golb, "Who Were the Magārīya?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80.4 (1960): 347–59; see 347, note 1 for a list of studies representing the view challenged by Golb. Golb also refutes a second theory according to which the Magharians were not an *ancient* sect whose writings *were found* in a cave, but a *medieval* sect that *found* these ancient writings.

24. Ibid., 350.

25. Here, Golb is particularly concerned with challenging the supposition of Paul Kahle's article "The Age of the Scrolls," *Vetus Testamentum* 1 (1951): 38–48, where Kahle writes, "We know that in two of his books Philo gives an enthusiastic description of the Essenes. It is only natural therefore that a library of the Essenes should have contained copies of his books" (45).

26. Golb, "Who Were the Magārīya?" 352. Indeed, when Philo describes the Essenes, he

Egyptian Therapeutae possessed Philonic treatises"; however, he continues, "these 'lovers of the contemplative life' were not by any means the same sect as the Essenes [again assumed to be identical with the Qumran sect], nor would the medieval heresiographers [such as al-Muqammis and Qirqisānī] have been likely to make the inference that they were the same—if, to be sure, they even knew of them."[27] Thus, Golb maintains that although it is possible that the Therapeutae knew of Philo, this sect cannot be identified with the Essenes or with Qumran. Moreover, Qumran literature mentions neither Philo nor an "Alexandrian," and it does not reflect Philo's doctrine or system of philosophical exegesis.

Golb then presents his own view on the matter. He acknowledges that Philo was known to figures like Sa'adia and Qirqisānī: "indeed, it is evident that some Philonic ideas were known in the tenth century and that they were in at least a few cases correctly ascribed to Philo."[28] Golb further asserts that in using the epithet "Alexandrian" Qirqisānī was indeed referring to Philo. Although, according to Golb, both Qirqisānī and his source, al-Muqammis, *believed* that Philo belonged to the Magharian sect, in reality, this could not have been the case. Philo's theory of the Logos cannot account for the Magharian "angelic demiurge" (unless one were to severely distort Philo's position), and thus Philo cannot be the source for this key Magharian doctrine. Moreover, unlike the Magharians, who accepted the literal interpretation of Scripture but ascribed biblical anthropomorphic descriptions of God to the "angelic demiurge," Philo interprets these passages allegorically and ascribes them to God. Though there are occasional points of similarity between the positions of Philo and the Magharians (such as the idea that at the beginning of creation all things were made to be in their most perfect and complete state), the Magharians radicalize these ideas far beyond the scope of Philo's conclusions.

So if, based on doctrinal and hermeneutical incompatibilities, Golb concludes that Philo could not have belonged to the Magharian sect, how does he explain why al-Muqammis and Qirqisānī believed this to have been the case? In order to find out, we must look to Golb's final remarks. Here, Golb examines the title of the second Magharian treatise mentioned by Qirqisānī:

locates the sect in Palestine and Syria, in cities in Judea, many villages, and large "communes" of great populations. See *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 75, 91; *Hypothetica* 11.1, 11.3, 11.14.

27. Golb, "Who Were the Magārīya?" 352. In a later footnote (357, note 62) Golb flatly denies any relation whatsoever between the Therapeutae and the Essenes.

28. Ibid., 355. Golb acknowledges Philo's influence, but only to a certain extent. For instance, in referring to Revel's article mentioned above, Golb asserts that Revel "goes too far … in inferring that the works of Philo were read in the middle ages especially by Qaraitic codifiers who thereupon assimilated Philonian legal views into their own halakhic systems" (355, note 45).

> The Magārīyan *Sēfer yādō'a* (this vocalization seems preferable to *Sēfer yaddū'a* which can only mean "The Book of a man named Yaddū'a" or *Sēfer yādū'a*, which must mean a nonsensical "known book") is a book of "knowing," that is, of *gnosis*; with such a book-title in antiquity we may compare the Qumrān *Sēfer he-hāgō*, or the Valentinian *Pistis Sophia.*[29]

Following this, Golb's theory on the identity of the Magharians fully emerges. According to Golb, the Magharians were a Gnostic sect of Judaism flourishing in Egypt during the first few hundred years of the common era. That this sect had access to Philo's works explains the occasional similarity in their positions. The role of the demiurge, or the archons, which was pivotal in Gnostic doctrine, was construed by medieval writers as referring to an angel that created the world, a view which was also held by certain medieval sects. Golb contends that the writings of the Magharians reached the Jewish and Islamic heresiographers (possibly in a Syriac translation) who, unfamiliar with the Gnostics, interpreted these writings using terms and concepts available to them at the time.

In the same year that Golb published his article, Philo scholar Harry A. Wolfson published a study entitled "The Pre-Existent Angel of the Magharians and al-Nahāwandī." In this study, Wolfson examines the belief, common to both the Magharians and al-Nahāwandī, that it was a pre-existent created angelic demiurge who created the world.[30] Wolfson compares the descriptions of the Magharian and al-Nahāwandī's doctrines given by Qirqisānī and the twelfth-century Muslim doxographer Shahrastānī.[31] He assumes that both Qirqisānī and Shahrastānī derive their positions from the same source, al-Muqammis, and that in his writings, al-Muqammis described two

29. Ibid., 357. See also Harry A. Wolfson, "The Pre-Existent Angel of the Magharians and al-Nahāwandī," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 51.2 (1960): 89–106, here 89. Wolfson suggests an emendation so that the translation would read, "His book is commonly known by the title of *Ma'rūf*," and takes the *Sēfer Yāḏûa'* to be a Hebrew abridgement of the larger Arabic work. The reason for this suggestion is that *Ma'rūf* and *Yāḏûa'* both mean "known" in Arabic and Hebrew respectively. Like Golb, Wolfson connects the title of the book with Gnosis.

30. Wolfson, "The Pre-Existent Angel"; see esp. 99 for Wolfson's "brief history" of the Magharians. For a detailed analysis of the doctrine of angelic mediation in Judaism, see Jarl Fossum, "Gen. 1:26 and 2:7 in Judaism, Samaritanism, and Gnosticism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 16.2 (1985): 202–39. In this article, Fossum traces the development of the notion that an angel assisted God in the creation of the world in Greek, Rabbinic, Samaritan, and Gnostic sources. For a discussion of Gen. 1:26 in Philo and Christian heresies, see also David T. Runia, "'Where, Tell Me, Is the Jew…?': Basil, Philo, and Isidore of Pelusium," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 172–89, reprinted in his *Philo and the Church Fathers: A Collection of Papers* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 126–43.

31. For an interesting analysis of Shahrastānī's account of the Magharians (and particularly of Shahrastānī's intentions in presenting the Magharians the way he does), see Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Šahrastānī on the Magāriyya," *Israel Oriental Studies* 17 (1998): 127–54.

different sects: the early Jewish sect and the later Christian sect that grew from it. Wolfson notes that al-Muqammis converted for a time to Christianity (and subsequently reverted back to Judaism). It was during the period that al-Muqammis was a Christian that he learned of these sects from the Christian theologian Nānā. Wolfson examines the origin of the doctrine of an angelic demiurge, countering the position of Harkavy and Poznański that it derives from Philo's Logos.[32] Wolfson's own position is that the Magharian and al-Nahāwandī's doctrine of an angelic demiurge is Gnostic (here Wolfson's position converges with Golb's). Furthermore, Wolfson points out that ancient sources do not refer to Philo as "the Alexandrian" or even as "Philo the Alexandrian" and there is thus no sufficient reason to identify Qirqisānī's "Alexandrian" with Philo.[33]

In his study on the Magharians published in 1987,[34] Jarl Fossum presents the four passages in the medieval authors al-Bīrūnī, Shahrastānī, Qirqisānī, and (the twelfth-century Byzantine Karaite author) Judah Hadassi describing the Magharians. After comparing the accounts and noting their differences, Fossum concludes: "It is clear … that the different reports on the Magharians come from several sources."[35] Fossum identifies two of these sources: the famous ninth-century Muslim heresiographer Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq, who is the source for al-Bīrūnī, and al-Muqammis, who is the source for Qirqisānī, Hadassi, and Shahrastānī. He asserts however that these authors must have drawn, additionally, on other, unidentifiable, sources for information concerning the Magharians.[36] Fossum attributes the variant spellings of

32. Because, according to Wolfson, the angel doctrine is a feature of the pre-Christian Jewish sect, it predates Philo and thus he cannot be its source. Moreover, the doctrine of the pre-existent angel is incompatible with Philo's Logos, insofar as Philo's Logos is never identified with God, nor does it stand in for God when described anthropomorphically.

33. For further discussion of Philo as "the Alexandrian," see David Runia, "Philonic Nomenclature," *Studia Philonica Annual* 6 (1994): 1–27, reprinted in his *Philo and the Church Fathers*, 25–53, here 47–48 of the reprint. Runia states that though the biographical accounts (Josephus, Eusebius, Jerome, Pseudo-Sophronius, Photius, and the *Souda*) provide details of Philo's geographical location, this epithet was not used until modernity. Runia notes the following exceptions: "The Alexandrian" was used in an Armenian translation of Eusebius' *Chronicle* and by George Syncellus (who likely derived the title from the *Chronicle*). Runia lists two other references which could be significant, namely: Philo's anonymous Armenian translator connects Philo to the Alexandrian synagogue of Acts 6:9; the East-Syriac author Barhaḏbšabbā 'Arbāyā (ca. 600) designates Philo as head of the Alexandrian school.

34. Jarl E. Fossum, "The Magharians: A Pre-Christian Jewish Sect and Its Significance for the Study of Gnosticism and Christianity," *Henoch* 9 (1987): 303–44.

35. Ibid., 311.

36. Though he does not seem to mention the Magharians, the Arabic-writing Coptic Christian theologian Severus ibn al-Muqaffa' (ca. 905–987), bishop of al-Ashmūnayn, discusses the related views of Benjamin al-Nahāwandī. See Wasserstrom, "Šahrastānī on the Magāriyya," 144; Sidney H. Griffith, "The *Kitāb Misbāh al-'aql* of Severus Ibn al-Muqaffa': A Profile of the

the terms "Magharian" to copyists' errors, claiming (correctly) that all four authors refer to the same sect whose name means "people of the cave."[37] According to Fossum, with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, evidence of ancient ascetic Jewish sects actually *living* in caves has come to light, and he therefore suggests that "Qirqisānī … misinterpreted the name *Maġārīya* as hinting at the fact that the books of the sect were found in a cave, while the name actually designated the sectaries as 'Cave-Dwellers'."[38] In virtue of their cave-dwelling, asceticism, and calendrical peculiarities (mentioned particularly by al-Bīrūnī), the Magharians closely resemble the Qumran sect and must have been their contemporaries. Shahrastānī's statement that the Magharians lived four centuries before the fourth-century Christian heretic Arius further strengthens this dating.

Fossum rejects the view that the (supposed) recovery of Magharian (and Philonic) writings in a cave near Jericho ca. 790 CE[39] refers to Qumran Cave I.[40] Given that the Romans finished destroying the buildings at Qumran shortly before 70 CE, Fossum thinks it unlikely that there was sufficient time for Philo's writings to make it into Cave I. Fossum proposes, however, that the Essenes continued to exist well after 70 CE and that a later Essene group might have had Philo in their possession. The texts discovered ca. 790 probably belonged to this later group, who may have hidden them in a cave near Jericho while undertaking a pilgrimage to Qumran, the home of their forefathers. Fossum submits that the medieval recovery of these texts likely influenced, half a century later, al-Nahāwandī's teaching about the creator angel and that it is very tempting to identify these texts with those mentioned by Qirqisānī—including the book of "the Alexandrian" (i.e., presumably Philo).[41]

Christian Creed in Arabic in Tenth-Century Egypt," *Medieval Encounters* 2 (1996): 15–42; reprinted in his *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic: Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (Ashgate: Variorum, 2002), Essay VIII, here 27–28.

37. Ibid., 312. Fossum thus rejects Golb's view that *maghāriyya* is possibly not the correct reading of the term.

38. Ibid., 317.

39. See note 5 above. It is important to stress that Timothy's letter—our source for the discovery of ca. 790 CE—speaks only of a discovery of biblical and apocryphal books. That Magharian (or Philonic) material could have been discovered there as well is an (unconfirmed) scholarly construct.

40. Ibid., 319. Unlike other caves at Qumran, Cave I displays evidence that texts had been removed from it prior to the discovery in 1947.

41. Ibid., 319–21. Against Wolfson, Fossum asserts that there are multiple similarities between Philo's Logos and the creator angel, and that the doctrine of the creator angel is not simply a medieval misinterpretation of a different doctrine.

To conclude our review, we shall now examine the contributions of Bruno Chiesa and Y. Tzvi Langermann, whose work has been published subsequent to Runia's book. In a pathbreaking article published in 1996, Chiesa adduced further evidence in support of the theory that Saʿadia, Qirqisānī, and al-Muqammis knew of Philo.[42] As mentioned above, al-Muqammis had a Christian teacher called Nānā, who, Chiesa argues, is the ninth-century miaphysite Christian theologian Nonnus of Nisibis (d. after 861)[43]—bilingual in Syriac and Arabic, and possibly (though Chiesa does not explicitly raise this possibility) trilingual in Syriac, Arabic, and Armenian.[44] Since al-Muqammis studied with "Nānā" (Nonnus) for many years, and Nonnus is known to have spent much of his life in Armenia, it is likely that al-Muqammis studied with him during his stay there. If that is the case, then, according to Chiesa, al-Muqammis could have had access to the Philonic corpus in its Armenian translation.[45] It is then through al-Muqammis that Qirqisānī came to know of Philo.

In order to justify his claim that Qirqisānī was familiar with Philo, Chiesa goes on to discuss the Genizah fragment of the *Prolegomena of the Alexandrian* (*Muqaddimāt al-Iskandarānī*), discovered by Hirschfeld. Following Golb, Chiesa identifies this fragment as originating from Book VI, chapter 1 of Qirqisānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-marāqib* (missing in Nemoy's edition of Qirqisānī's work due to a lacuna in the manuscripts on which that edition is based).[46] Using additional manuscript sources from the second Firkovich collection (unavailable to Nemoy), Chiesa is able to partially reconstruct the remainder of chapter 1 as well as chapter 2 (also missing from Nemoy's edition). As a result, he is able to present a clear picture of the full content of the *Prolegomena of the Alexandrian*, which turns out to be—as Chiesa convincingly shows—a digest of Philo's two treatises, *De decalogo* and *De*

42. Bruno Chiesa, "Dāwūd al-Muqammis e la sua opera," *Henoch* 18 (1996): 121–55.

43. This identification was first proposed by Georges Vajda, "La finalité de la création de l'homme selon un théologien juif du IX^{e} siècle," *Oriens* 15 (1962): 61–85, here 61, note 1.

44. Herman G.B. Teule, art. "Nonnus of Nisibis," in: David Thomas and Barbara Roggema (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 1 (600–900) (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 743–5; Michael P. Penn, art. "Nonos of Nisibis," in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, ed. Sebastian P. Brock et al. (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2011), 313. On Nonnus' connections to Armenia see Robert Thomson, "Literary Interactions between Syriac and Armenian," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 10 (2010): 3–19, here 9b–10a; Edward G. Mathews, Jr., "Syriac into Armenian: The Translations and Their Translators," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 10 (2010): 20–44, here 25b–26a.

45. Chiesa, "Dāwūd al-Muqammis," 132. It is important to keep in mind that approximately one quarter of the Philonic corpus is transmitted to us only in the Armenian translation of the original Greek. It is also significant that, as Chiesa points out, it is precisely the Armenian tradition that commonly refers to Philo as "the Alexandrian" (see note 33 above).

46. Ibid., 132; cf. Golb, "Who Were the Magārīya?" 355.

specialibus legibus.[47] Thanks to Chiesa's analysis, the question of the identity of the "Alexandrian" is therefore settled: as Harkavy had suggested back in 1894, Qirqisānī's "Alexandrian" is indeed Philo! It is unfortunate, however, that Chiesa refrained from publishing the reconstructed text of these two chapters from Qirqisānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār*, leaving it "ad altra occasione."[48]

In "On the Beginnings of Hebrew Scientific Literature and on Studying History through 'Maqbiloṯ' (Parallels)," Y. Tzvi Langermann discusses early (ca. eighth and ninth centuries CE) Jewish scientific literature in Hebrew. The enigmatic cosmological work *Sēfer Yesîrāh* (*Book of Formation*) is one of the four key texts in Langermann's paper relative to which he criticizes Yehuda Liebes' historiographical method, which is based on textual parallels.[49] Liebes finds similarities between the *Sēfer Yesîrāh* and the Philonic corpus and takes these parallels to indicate that the *Sēfer Yesîrāh* was composed contemporaneously with Philo. Langermann takes Liebes to task for neglecting to specify the criteria used in selecting parallels and for his failure to employ "historical thinking." One crucial question that Liebes does not consider is whether Philo was available to Jewish authors in the eighth and ninth centuries—in Langermann's view, a much likelier date for the *Sēfer Yesîrāh*'s composition.[50] Langermann suggests that the evidence pointing to Philo's accessibility in medieval Judaism is compelling. Referring to Chiesa's study discussed above, Langermann writes: "if Chiesa is correct, the question is no longer whether Philo's writings were known in the early Islamic period, but how much of the Philonic corpus was available and through which channels of transmission."[51] To this, Langermann adds an observation of his own:

47. Chiesa, "Dāwūd al-Muqammis," 132–37.

48. Ibid., 132.

49. Y. Tzvi Langermann, "On the Beginnings of Hebrew Scientific Literature and on Studying History through 'Maqbiloṯ' (Parallells)," *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science & Judaism* 2 (2002): 169–89, esp. 177–89. For an overview of scholarship on the *Sēfer Yesîrāh* and another critical review of Liebes' treatment, see Elliot Wolfson, "Text, Context and Pretext: Review Essay of Yehuda Liebes's *Ars Poetica in Sefer Yetsira*," *Studia Philonica Annual* 16 (2004): 218–28. Langermann and Wolfson are both reviewing Yehuda Liebes' monograph *Tōraṯ ha-Yesîrāh shel Sēfer Yesîrāh* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2000).

50. Cf. Wolfson, "Text, Context, and Pretext," 226–27, who argues that "the choice of a ninth century Islamic environment [as the likely milieu for the emergence of the *Sēfer Yesîrāh*] is eminently sensible on textual and sociological grounds," and that this era of "Gnostic encyclopedism" was a period of collaboration between Jewish and Islamic "occultists," while the fact that the *Sēfer Yesîrāh* relies on and alludes to a variety of ancient sources sufficiently accounts for Liebes' "parallels."

51. Langermann, "On the Beginnings," 182.

> I may add another tidbit, perhaps of interest though not nearly as significant as Chiesa's study. Some Arabic gnomologies cite a saying in the name of "Fīlūn." The gnomon, in which "Fīlūn" says that he did not seek to have children out of his love for children, does not seem to be of much help; and the alleged author may be Philo of Larissa, or Philo the Megarian, not Philo Judaeus.[52]

Langermann situates the question of Philo's influence in medieval Judaism within a broader context: that of the survival of Hellenistic Judaism. Langermann's position is that forms of Hellenistic Judaism had survived into the medieval period. He argues elsewhere[53] that one particular view of creation attacked by Sa'adia is a position attributed to the Jews in the fourth century CE by Calcidius and that this is additional evidence of the survival of some aspects of Hellenistic Judaism into the medieval period. If indeed Philo's thought was available to Jews in the Middle Ages, this would, according to Langermann, raise serious objections as to the validity of Liebes' theory concerning the early dating of the *Sēfer Yesîrāh*.

To conclude: as our review has made clear, there is clear evidence of Philonic echoes in medieval Jewish literature.[54] Determining the conduits which carried Philo's thought from antiquity to medieval Jewish authors has, however, proved to be a difficult task, inextricably bound to the question of the identity of the Magharians and "the Alexandrian," to whom they are linked. This question, in turn, implicates a web of subsidiary considerations, which are often difficult to untangle. Although certain aspects of Philo's thought (such as the Logos) resemble, or seem to resemble, the Magharian "angelic demiurge," the connection between the two seems rather remote (here we endorse Golb's argument), and it is more likely that Philo and the Magharians (whoever they were) represent distant branches of the manifold Jewish tradition of speculation over angelic and other forms of mediation than that Philo influenced the Magharians in any direct way. Even if we accept Fossum's position that the Magharians were a real Second Temple Jewish sect (which seems likely), that their, or their successors', books were indeed discovered in a cave in the Middle Ages (which is possible), and that these books influenced the medieval Karaites (which is possible, too), the theory that *Philo* was transmitted by this means remains tenuous at best.

52. Ibid., 182 ("Megarian" is, of course, not to be confused with "Magharian"). The reference is to Ibn Hindū's (d. 1019) *al-Kalim al-rūḥāniyya*, in: Sahbān Khalīfāt, *Ibn Hindū, sīratuhu, ārā'uhu l-falsafiyya, mu'allafātuhu*, Part 1 (Amman: al-Jāmi'a al-Urdunniyya, 1995), 380–480, here 439–40.

53. Y. Tzvi Langermann, "Sa'adya and the Sciences," in his *The Jews and the Sciences in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1999), Essay II, 1–21, here 9–11.

54. For additional examples, see Elliot Wolfson's "Traces of Philonic Doctrine in Medieval Jewish Mysticism: A Preliminary Note," *Studia Philonica Annual* 8 (1996): 99–106, esp. 100–03.

Fortunately, owing to Chiesa's research, we now have a plausible alternative to the "cave theory" of transmission of Philo. According to this alternative view—which allows us to "loosen" the likely spurious connection between Philo and the Magharians—Qirqisānī knew of Philo through al-Muqammis, who in turn had access, probably via Nonnus of Nisibis, to the Armenian translation of Philo's works. However, as long as Chiesa's reconstruction of the two crucial chapters from Qirqisānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-marāqib* remains unpublished, important questions persist unanswered. For example, we are still unsure why Qirqisānī associated Philo with the Magharians. (Is it perhaps Qirqisānī's mistaken inference from his source, al-Muqammis?) It is also crucial to see whether Qirqisānī's quotations of the *Prolegomena of the Alexandrian* (=a digest of Philo's *De decalogo* and *De specialibus legibus*) show any signs of having been translated or adapted from the Armenian version of these treatises. If this is the case, could we perhaps propose that it was Nonnus himself who prepared an Arabic version of the *Prolegomena of the Alexandrian* (translated/adapted from Armenian), and that he did so at al-Muqammis' request?[55]

We hope that answers to all these questions are forthcoming, and that the edition of Qirqisānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār*, Book VI, chapters 1–2 promised by Bruno Chiesa is forthcoming as well. In the meanwhile, we suggest to take a step back and consider the Middle Eastern Christian tradition more generally, as an important "bridge community" connecting the thought of antiquity with that of the Jews (and Muslims) in the medieval period. We shall do so by examining the hitherto neglected evidence for Arab Christian transmission of Philonic thought. We will then come back to the principal question at hand and will offer some observations on how the Arab Christian evidence here presented might shed light on medieval Jews' familiarity with Philo.

2. Philo in Arab Christian Literature

There is as yet no study of Philo in Arab Christian literature. Georg Graf's *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*—the magisterial five-volume analytical catalogue of Arab Christian literature, written in the 1940s—does not mention any Christian translations of Philo into Arabic.[56] To the best of

55. The possibility that al-Muqammis himself knew Armenian seems remote to us, but nevertheless also needs to be considered.

56. Philo is mentioned only twice in Graf. The first reference (Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 5 vols. (Città del Vaticano, 1944–53), vol. 1, 266, note 1) is spurious, for it is based on a questionable reading of the Arabic translation (from Coptic) of Severus of Nastarawah's *Homily on the Life of St. Mark*; cf. J.-J.-L. Bargès, *Homélie sur St Marc, apôtre et évangéliste par Anba Sévère, évêque de Nestéraweh* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1877), 170–73; Arabic section, 39. The second reference (Graf, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 486) is a pseudo-Philonic citation in a collection of Pagan philosophers' testimonies to the Trinity, incorporated in the eleventh-century Nestorian encyclopedia *Kitāb al-Majdal*. See discussion below.

our knowledge, scholarly literature subsequent to Graf is, likewise, completely silent on Arab Christian translations of Philo.

However, at least one such translation exists. While working on the complete Arabic translation of the Dionysian corpus (the version prepared by Ibn Sahqūq in Damascus in 1009),[57] Alexander Treiger was fortunate to discover a number of Philonic passages—all of them from the *De vita contemplativa*—preserved in an "appendix" to the Arabic Dionysius.[58] This appendix includes three texts, all of which are culled from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*: Polycrates of Ephesus' *Episle to Victor* (*CPG* 1338; Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, III 31), Clement of Alexandria's *Can a Rich Man Be Saved* (*CPG* 1379; Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, III 23),[59] and the Philonic passages under discussion (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, II 17). Two short but intriguing notes (on which more below) follow the three texts.

It is virtually certain that this Arabic appendix has the same origin as the Arabic Dionysius: namely, that it was translated from Greek into Arabic by Ibn Sahqūq in Damascus in 1009, as part of the Dionysian corpus. In fact, there are multiple Greek manuscripts of the Dionysian corpus (with John of Scythopolis' scholia) which contain this appendix. The Greek manuscript from which Ibn Sahqūq was working obviously belonged to this type; and hence, for the sake of completeness, after translating the Dionysian corpus into Arabic, Ibn Sahqūq translated the appendix as well.

The best study of this appendix—in the original Greek and in the ninth-century Latin translation by Anastasius Bibliothecarius—is by the Hungarian scholar Réka Forrai.[60] Forrai indicates that she has not been able to find any Greek manuscripts of the Dionysian corpus that contain the appendix but do *not* include John of Scythopolis' scholia. This suggests that the appendix

57. On this translation see Alexander Treiger, "New Evidence on the Arabic Versions of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*," *Le Muséon* 118 (2005): 219–40; Alexander Treiger, "The Arabic Version of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *Mystical Theology*, Chapter 1," *Le Muséon* 120 (2007): 365–93; Cécile Bonmariage and Sébastien Moureau, "*Corpus Dionysiacum Arabicum*: Étude, édition critique et traduction des *Noms Divins* IV, §1–9," *Le Muséon* 124 (2011): 181–227 and 419–59.

58. At the end of MS Sinai ar. 268. Presumably, MS Sinai ar. 314 originally also included this appendix, but unfortunately the concluding section of this manuscript is lost.

59. These Arabic fragments of Polycrates of Ephesus and Clement of Alexandria are, likewise, not mentioned in Graf.

60. Réka Forrai, "The Notes of Anastasius on Eriugena's Translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 18 (2008): 74–100, here 91–100; cf. Forrai's PhD dissertation, *The Interpreter of the Popes: The Translation Project of Anastasius Bibliothecarius* (Central European University, Budapest, 2008): http://www.etd.ceu.hu/2008/forrair.pdf, 137–47. See also *Clement of Alexandria, Quis Dives Salvetur*, ed. P. Mordaunt Barnard [Texts and Studies: Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature, vol. V.2] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), xxiii–xxv.

may be part of the scholia.[61] Moreover, she makes the point that two of the three texts cited in the appendix are also mentioned in the scholia: Philo's *De vita contemplativa* is mentioned in John of Scythopolis' scholion on Dionysius' *Epistle 1*;[62] Clement of Alexandria's *Can a Rich Man Be Saved*, is referenced in a scholion on *Epistle 10*;[63] Polycrates' letter is not mentioned in John of Scythopolis' scholia, but is relevant to Dionysius' *Epistle 10*, insofar as it mentions the death of St. John the Theologian, who is the addressee of this epistle.[64] Finally, the concluding note of the appendix has parallels to John of Scythopolis' famous *Prologue* to the scholia.[65] In view of all this, Forrai suggests that this appendix was added "to the Greek text at a very early stage, probably even by John of Scythopolis himself."[66] We concur with this important conclusion.[67]

Thus what we have in MS Sinai ar. 268 is a Christian Arabic translation of John of Scythopolis' still unpublished appendix, which includes fragments of Polycrates of Ephesus, Clement of Alexandria, and Philo—all culled from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*; it also includes two notes—apparently by John of Scythopolis himself—dealing, respectively, with the background of Philo's Therapeutae (what kind of Jews—or Christians—they were) and with various church authorities' references to Dionysius. What follows is an annotated English translation (from Arabic) of the last section of the appendix that includes the Philonic passages and the two notes. As we shall see, Ibn Sahqūq's version is, unfortunately, rather crude and severely distorts the sense of the original (he would not have passed a Greek exam in Dalhousie's Classics

61. Forrai, "Notes of Anastasius," 99. Unfortunately, the latest edition of John of Scythopolis' scholia on Dionysius' *Divine Names—Ioannis Scythopolitani Prologus et Scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae Librum De Divinis Nominibus cum additamentis interpretum aliorum* (Corpus Dionysiacum IV/1), ed. Beate Regina Suchla (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2011)—does not seem to mention the appendix.

62. Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 263.

63. Ibid., 250.

64. Forrai, "Notes of Anastasius," 91–93.

65. Ibid., 98–99.

66. Ibid., 100.

67. This conclusion is further strengthened by the fact—also duly noted by Forrai—that both John of Scythopolis and the appendix derive their knowledge of Philo's *De vita contemplativa* exclusively from Eusebius. In his scholion on Dionysius' *Epistle 1*, already mentioned above, John of Scythopolis mentions that Philo discusses the "Therapeutae" at the *end* of the *De vita contemplativa*. Yet, it is only *in Eusebius' quotations* from Philo that this discussion occurs at the end; hence, the conclusion seems unavoidable that John of Scythopolis did not know Philo's treatise directly, but relied exclusively on Eusebius; it would therefore stand to reason that it was John of Scythopolis too who appended those same Philonic quotations from Eusebius at the end of his scholia. See Forrai, "Notes of Anastasius," 92; cf. Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis*, 58 and 250.

department!); moreover, it does not always make good sense in Arabic and is therefore extremely difficult to translate into English. An attempt has been made to make it as intelligible as possible, while remaining faithful to Ibn Sahqūq's Arabic (even as it frequently fails to accurately reflect the Greek); significant discrepancies between the Arabic and the underlying Greek and other peculiarities of the Arabic translation are indicated in footnotes.

By Philo (Fīlūs), on the believers among the Christian faithful from the people of circumcision who were in Egypt, and also on the monks, from the treatise he wrote on the visible and observable world and on supplication [due] therein.[68]

The emergence and coming-to-be of the universe is multidirectional, for it is necessary for it to partake of the perfect good. In Greece, upon all those who are summoned (?), and in the vicinity of the borders of the barbarians, and especially around Alexandria, among these excellent [men] there were those who would bring cure in every direction, just as they were healers[69] in their own town, living in their own abode, homeland, and country and preserving those who [dwelled] in the vicinity of the lake known as Mary [i.e., lake Mareotis]—namely those who are weaker and so would find an opportunity in the [good] preservation of the air and its healthy composition.

By [Philo], from the [same] treatise.

In every private [space] there is a certain pure[70] dwelling, called "source of purity"[71] and "monastery"[72] in which solitaries [engage] in mysteries of the pure world. The necessities of the body, all of them, cannot be separated (?) from one another, even if they are indispensable for others. But in those [men], in virtue of their knowledge of the laws and of the wondrous sayings of the prophets, praises [of the divine] grow and are perfected, in piety and purity.

By [Philo], from the [same] treatise.

The duration of stay does not extend until evening, because for all of them (?)[73] this becomes training (?)[74] and governance, I mean, for those who philosophize in their own town out of love for wisdom and so employ symbols and indications which they think are translation[s] of the concealed nature. In virtue of pure thought and careful consideration, these [symbols]—[transmitted] from ancient men who were not the leaders of [any one] sect among these[75]—become clear to masters of consideration. They have left behind the youths [whose] vision is drawn together, namely those people of syllogism who used the first symbols and imitated the state of the previous sect.

68. A mistranslation of Περὶ βίου θεωρητικοῦ ἢ ἱκετῶν.

69. *āsiyan* ~ Gr. θεραπευτῶν.

70. This is the translator's usual way of rendering ἱερός or σεμνός, both meaning "sacred."

71. *ma'din al-tuhr* ~ Gr. σεμνεῖον.

72. *dayr* ~ Gr. μοναστήριον.

73. The text is partially effaced, and the reading is conjectural.

74. It is very difficult to make sense of this word. Possibly, the translator simply transliterated the Greek term ἄσκησις, which then became corrupted by subsequent copyists.

75. The sense is not clear, and the translation bears very little connection to the underlying Greek.

By [Philo], from the [same] treatise.
So much so that they do not only contemplate this but also produce songs of praise and hymns to God in complete and perfect metres and melodies [based] on exceedingly pure numbers, so that they necessarily rejoice.

By [Philo], from the [same] treatise.
[Certain] people have well-founded self-control, and so they proceed toward it with [their] soul for the sake of other causes, having made the virtues to be their food or drink. There is no one among them who does not come forth before the setting of the sun and is not revealed as being worthy of the light that delivers the body from darkness by necessity. For this reason, day and night is a short day for them, and ... (?)[76] it happens that it is only after three days that they remember food, because their love for wisdom gives them knowledge that keeps their mind away from food. In virtue of this [knowledge], they become firm. They are people who rejoice in this manner and get their nourishment from wisdom. They are nourished by temperance, self-sufficiency, and renunciation of the body, for [wisdom] has given them teachings that keep them satisfied for a long period of time. Even after six days they barely taste food, though they do eat of necessity.

By [Philo], from the [same] treatise.
Here there are [also] curing women, aged virgins who have remained[77] in purity, but not because of necessity—as is the case of the [female] sacristans among the Pagans. They preserve their souls, especially in virtue of knowledge that they have voluntarily acquired in [their] struggle and love for wisdom. They are concerned with [their] livelihood and hasten toward it, being cognizant of the passions surrounding the body. Yet at the same time they are ready to face death, for the likeness of a soul loving and adoring God has already been born within them.

By [Philo], from the [same] treatise.
As far as indications of the pure books are concerned, these [too] become clear to them and do not escape their understanding. [This happens] through intellectual symbols, for every [religious] legislation is likely to become the source of life for these men. The body has certain definite, visible ranks, while the soul [exists] in virtue of the utterances set forth and produced for it by the hidden, invisible intellect, differently and separately. [The soul's] characteristic feature is to contemplate, as one observes [an image] in the mirror. Its appellations possess wondrous matters in the noetic [realm], which get revealed to the extent of its contemplation.

Eusebius the all-loving[78] has mentioned [all] this. Philo is saying these things regarding the impure Jews, but some say, regarding the Nazarene Jews, while others [say] he [is speaking] about those from the people of circumcision who believe in Christ, yet formally keep the Law of Moses, while still others [claim he is speaking] about the perfect Christians, who belong to the group living a life of monastic seclusion and are publicly known as the "healers" [i.e., Therapeutae]. It is not only Eusebius the all-loving and Philo the Jew, but also the blessed Dionysius, the judge,[79] the disciple of the apostle

76. One word is unclear.

77. The word is partially effaced, and the reading is conjectural.

78. Here and below, a mistranslation of Eusebius' sobriquet ὁ Παμφίλου ("the [disciple and friend] of Pamphilus").

79. Here and below, "judge" (*qāḍī*) translates "Areopagite."

> Paul and the bishop of Athens, who in his treatise on the universal ecclesiastical hierarchy [speaks about] the monk[s] donning the monastic habit and calls [them] curer[s] and healer[s] [i.e., Therapeutae].[80]
>
> The evangelist Luke mentions this blessed Dionysius, the judge, in the Acts of the Apostles, i.e., in the "Praxeis,"[81] as also Dionysius the bishop of Corinth, an ancient and blessed man of many fruits,[82] says in his epistle to the community of the Athenians,[83] and Eusebius the all-loving does in his *Ecclesiastical Narration and History*.[84]

Other than Ibn Sahqūq's translation, there are some additional references to Philo in Arab Christian literature. In the first place, we should mention two Christian historians—Agapius of Manbij (tenth century) and Bar Hebraeus (thirteenth century)—who in their works written in Arabic mention Philo. Agapius' report (largely based on Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, II 18) is as follows:

> In the first year of [Gaius Caligula's] reign [i.e., 38 CE], Flaccus, king of Egypt, made an expedition and subjugated [the Jews] for seven years, filling their sanctuaries with statues and offerings to idols. They, in turn, sent ambassadors to Gaius to inform him of this. One of them was the Hebrew philosopher Philo, the author of many treatises about the calamities that befell the Jews in his time. He ridiculed king Gaius, blaming him for his ignorance and for the fact that he had made himself out to be a god. He praised [true] worshippers found in Egypt.[85] He wrote a commentary on the first book of the Torah and mentioned that when [Noah][86] woke up he had been covered. He wrote five treatises on the legal regulations, five on the Exodus of the Sons of Israel, and four on the matters mentioned in the Law [of Moses]. His treatises were read in the assemblies of the Romans during the reign of [Claudius].[87] The [Romans] praised them highly and deposited them in the imperial libraries in Rome.[88]

80. Dionysius the Areopagite, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, ch. VI.1.3, 532D–533A.

81. The Greek name of the Book of Acts, often used in Arabic as well. The reference is to Acts 17:34.

82. The translator mistranslated the personal name Polycarp as an epithet ("of many fruits") applied to the previously mentioned Dionysius of Corinth.

83. In the original Greek, this is possibly a reference to Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians* (*CPG* 1040); Polycarp's *Epistle to the Athenians* is unknown. This Polycarp may be the intended addressee of Dionysius the Areopagite's *Epistle 7*. Interestingly, Migne's edition and some Greek manuscripts of the scholia on the Dionysian corpus include this clause on Dionysius of Corinth and Polycarp as part of John of Scythopolis' prologue—see Suchla, *Ioannis Scythopolitani Prologus et Scholia*, 103 (apparatus); Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis*, 145–46, note 6.

84. A case of hendiadys: two synonymous words used to translate the Greek ἱστορία.

85. An apparent reference to the Therapeutae.

86. The text is corrupt here. The reference is to Philo's *De sobrietate*.

87. The text is corrupt here. The only plausible reading is "Claudius," as in the parallel passage in Eusebius.

88. *Agapius Episcopus Mabbugensis, Historia Universalis* (CSCO ser. III, t. 5), ed. Louis Cheikho (Beirut: E typographeo catholico, 1912), 245–46; *Kitāb al-ʿunvān, Histoire universelle, écrite par Agapius (Mahboub) de Menbidj*, Seconde partie (I), Patrologia Orientalis 7.4, ed. and trans. Alexandre Vasiliev (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1911) [26–7]/482–83.

Agapius' report is cited verbatim by another Christian historian, al-Makīn ibn al-ʿAmīd (thirteenth century); however, in his account, Philo's name got corrupted and reads as "Nikon" or "Niphon."[89] It is evident that unlike Agapius, al-Makīn no longer knew who Philo was.

Bar Hebraeus' report of the same incident is much shorter. It mentions Philo (alongside Josephus) as a "wise ambassador" sent to the emperor Gaius, but does not mention any of Philo's books.

> Gaius Caesar reigned four years. In the first year of his reign he appointed Herod Agrippa as a governor over the Jews for the period of seven years. In that same year, Pontius Pilate killed himself. Flaccus was sent as a judge to Jerusalem. He filled the Jewish sanctuaries with statues, and so they sent two wise ambassadors—the Hebrews Philo and Josephus—to the emperor, because they were deeply concerned[90] about the official's actions.[91]

As far as citations from Philo go, the most important place to look is Arab Christian florilegia.[92] One example will suffice here. The eleventh-century Arab Christian theologian (and prolific translator of Patristic literature from Greek into Arabic) ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Fadl from Antioch translated into Arabic Pseudo-Maximus the Confessor's florilegium *Loci Communes*.[93] This

89. MS Paris, BNF ar. 294, fol. 182r-v; MS Vat. ar. 168, fol. 134r. This part of al-Makīn's chronicle is still unedited.

90. For this difficult word (Ar. *yataḍawwarūna*) see R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879–1901), vol. 2, col. 1525; Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1881), vol. 2, 15a.

91. Bar Hebraeus, *Tārīkh mukhtasar al-duwal*, ed. Antūn Sālihānī (Beirut: al-Matbaʿa al-kāthūlīkiyya, 1890), 114–15. For the parallel text in Bar Hebraeus' *Chronography*, written in Syriac, see *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. Paul Bedjan (Paris, 1890), 48; *The Chronography of Abû'l Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician, Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus*, 2 vols., trans. E.W. Budge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), vol. 1, 49.

92. Arabic translations of Greek Patristic works that *cite* Philo would be another obvious place to consider. However, it does not seem that any of these works (conveniently listed in Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 348–56; reprinted with corrections in David T. Runia, "References to Philo from Josephus up to 1000 AD," *Studia Philonica Annual* 6 [1994]: 111–21) were translated into Arabic. However, here further research is needed.

93. On ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Fadl's translations, see Hans Daiber, "Graeco-Arabica Christiana: The Christian Scholar ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Fadl (11th c. A.D.) as Transmitter of Greek Works," in *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, ed. David C. Reisman and Felicitas Opwis (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 3–9. On his still unpublished Arabic translation of the *Loci Communes*, entitled *Book of the Garden* (*Kitāb al-Rawda*), see Alexander Treiger, "ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Fadl," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 3, ed. David Thomas and Alex Mallett (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 89–113, esp. 100–03; Michel van Esbroeck, "Les sentences morales des philosophes grecs dans les traditions orientales," in *L'Eredità classica nelle lingue orientali*, ed. M. Pavan and U. Cozzoli (Firenze, 1986), 11–23. For the Greek original of the *Loci Communes* see Sibylle Ihm, *Ps.-Maximus Confessor, Erste kritische Edition des sacro-profanen Florilegiums* Loci communes (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2001).

florilegium belongs to the genre of the so-called "sacro-profane" florilegia, in that each chapter cites first the sacred authorities (the Holy Scripture and the Church Fathers) and then sayings of, or attributed to, ancient Greek authors, including Thales, Pythagoras, Solon, Euripides, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, Demosthenes, Diogenes, Epicurus, Menander, and many others. There, we find some twenty-odd quotations from Philo's works—all of them duly translated into Arabic by 'Abdallāh ibn al-Fadl.[94] For instance, in the Arabic version of Chapter 17 ("On Education") we read:

> Philo said: It is unavoidable that an inexperienced horse rider should fall down over cliffs and precipices, just as when he is endowed with experience he is saved from these matters.
>
> He said also: It is difficult to be educated in great [things] before small [things].[95]

The first maxim is taken from the *Legum allegoriarum* (I 73), where it appears in the context of Philo's discussion of the fourth river flowing out of Eden, Euphrates (Gen. 2:14), symbolically understood as the fourth (in Philo's arrangement) cardinal virtue: justice. The second maxim is adapted from Philo's *De vita Mosis* (I 62), where Philo explains why it was necessary for Moses to train himself first in herding sheep for his father-in-law as a preparation to becoming a perfect king.

In addition to these authentic quotations, some "pseudo-Philonic" citations appear in the so-called "Pagan Testimonia" collections, where mostly spurious quotations from Pagan authors (Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Hermes Trismegistus, and others) are adduced in support of the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Here are two typical examples.

> Philo said: You can see those people exaggerating or limiting the number of virtues and ranks; as for me, I say that the one, great, and exalted God is three[fold].[96]
>
> Philo said: The Son of God shall come, having become incarnate and made Himself similar to the mortals of the earth.[97]

94. See chapters 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 17, 18, 21, 26, 27, 32, 39, 40, 41, 45, 60, 62, 66, 68, and 70 of the Arabic translation. Interestingly, Philo is grouped together with the Church Fathers, rather than the Pagan Greek authors.

95. MS Vat. ar. 111, fol. 117v; cf. Ihm, *Ps.-Maximus Confessor*, 403.

96. Cited in the eleventh-century Nestorian encyclopedia *Kitāb al-Majdal*, *bāb* 2, *fasl* 3 (MS Paris BNF ar. 190, fol. 68v; Graf, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 468 refers to the parallel manuscript Vat. ar. 108, fols 53r–54r).

97. Cited in 'Abdallāh ibn al-Fadl's *Book of Benefit*, chapter 33 (MS Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 541, fol. 41v) and in Gerasimos' *An Exhaustive Compilation on the Healing Doctrine* (MS Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale 548, fol. 128v).

It is unfortunate that this interesting genre of Arab Christian literature has not yet been studied (though there are some studies of similar collections in Greek and Syriac), and so it is impossible at present to know the provenance of these "pseudo-Philonic" quotations.[98]

3. Conclusion

This article surveys, for the first time, the available evidence for translations of and references to Philo in Arab Christian literature. We have been able to demonstate that an actual Philonic text—the *De vita contemplativa*—exists in Arabic, albeit in a fragmentary form (derived from Eusebius via John of Scythopolis). In addition, Philonic quotations, both authentic and spurious, appear quite frequently in Arab Christian florilegia (such as ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Fadl's translation of the Greek "sacro-profane" florilegium *Loci communes*) and in Arab Christian collections of "Pagan Testimonia." Thus, contrary to Runia's assertion, there is evidence of Arabic transmission of Philonic material, and moreover, this transmission does not fall "outside the Christian tradition" (a statement which implicitly denies the very existence of Arab Christians) but to the contrary is part and parcel of the heritage of arabophone Christianity of the Middle East.

We do not wish to claim, of course, that the Arab Christian translation of Philo's *De vita contemplativa*—or the other references from Arab Christian literature presented here—have anything directly to do with al-Muqammis, Qirqisānī, or the Magharians; they are all chronologically *later* than al-Muqammi and Qirqisānī, and so could not have influenced these thinkers. Nor can we, at present, be sure that the Arabic translation of the *De vita contemplativa* was accessible to medieval Jews (or Muslims) subsequent to its production. Though the Arabic Dionysius—with its Philonic appendix—was used by a variety of Arabic-writing *Christian* theologians, particularly in Egypt (e.g., the thirteenth-century Copto-Arabic authors al-Muʾtaman ibn al-ʿAssāl and Ibn Kātib Qaysar), we have, so far, no direct evidence of *Jews* (or Muslims) reading this text. Nevertheless, as recently pointed out by Krisztina Szilágyi, there is a considerable amount of Arab Christian material in the Cairo Genizah.[99] This a clear sign that arabophone Jews were reading Arab Christian works, and it is certainly possible that (some) Jewish authors might have had access to the present text as well.

98. For an overview, see Graf, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 483–86. On related Syriac material see Sebastian Brock, "A Syriac Collection of Prophecies of the Pagan Philosophers," in his *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Ashgate: Variorum, 1992), Essay VII.

99. Krisztina Szilágyi, "Christian Books in Jewish Libraries: Fragments of Christian Arabic Writings from the Cairo Genizah," *Ginzei Qedem* 2 (2006): 107*–162*.

What we do wish to argue is that the partial Arabic translation of the *De vita contemplativa* presented here has something important to teach us about the avenues of access to Philonic thought available to medieval Jews (or Muslims) in the Middle East. As in Late Antiquity, so also in the early Islamic period, it was the Christians who were the custodians of Philo's legacy—and, no less importantly, of the vast body of Patristic thought directly or indirectly informed by Philo. After the Islamic conquest of the Middle East in the seventh century, it is, consequently, the Middle Eastern Christian communities who were in the best position to provide access to this Philonic legacy. Philo's millennium-long odyssey into the medieval Jewish world would have, therefore, to have passed through them. Thus we wish to submit that whatever access to Philonic thought medieval Jews (and Muslims) in the Middle East might have had they had it *in virtue of contacts with Christians or through reading Christian books*.

This is true also for al-Muqammis (and, indirectly, Qirqisānī): if we are to follow Bruno Chiesa, al-Muqammis had access to Philonic thought in virtue of contacts with Christians in Armenia, most likely through the auspices of his teacher, the Middle Eastern Christian theologian Nonnus of Nisibis, possibly trilingual in Syriac, Arabic, and Armenian. As argued above, it is probably Nonnus himself who, presumably at al-Muqammis' request, compiled the so-called *Prolegomena of the Alexandrian*—an Arabic digest of the Armenian[100] translation of Philo's *De decalogo* and *De specialibus legibus*, later embedded in Book VI of Qirqisānī's *Kitāb al-Anwār wa-l-marāqib*. *Even if* the "cave theory" were correct and medieval Jews did indeed get access to Philo from a cache of ancient writings discovered in a cave, this in itself would not be sufficient to explain the impact of Philonic thought upon them. This, for the simple reason that Philo's writings so discovered would have been written in Greek, and the Arabic-speaking Jews of the Middle East would have had to resort to the services of a Christian colleague to have them translated into Arabic, and indeed to have their significance explained in the first place.[101]

100. This seems likely but, as mentioned above, still needs to be confirmed by scholars competent in Armenian.

101. The situation would have been different in the case of the Greek-speaking Jews of Byzantium, but we have no evidence that they took interest in Philo. Thus for example the Judeo-Greek documents from the Cairo Genizah published by Nicholas de Lange make no reference to Philo—see Nicholas de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996). Nor is it likely that a Greek-speaking *Jewish* merchant from Byzantium would have been up for the task of translating from Greek into Arabic Philonic texts supposedly discovered in a cave. This would have required a professional translator of Greek theological literature, and in the Middle East Christians held a near-monopoly in this art. (The only significant case of a non-Christian translator from Greek into Arabic known to us is the ninth-century author Thābit ibn Qurra, a "Sabian," or Pagan, from Harrān.)

Seen from this angle, it becomes evident that *contacts* between Middle Eastern Jews and Middle Eastern Christians (as well as between Muslims and Christians) in the early Islamic period hold the key to many unresolved puzzles of intellectual history, and a sustained study of these contacts is an important desideratum. Sarah Stroumsa and Gregor Schwarb have recently surveyed some of the historical evidence for these contacts and highlighted their significance for the development of Jewish as well as Christian theology in Islamic lands.[102]

The second lesson that this Arab Christian Philonic translation can teach us is that in evaluating the impact of Middle Eastern Christianity on medieval Judaism (or Islam), one should pay close attention not only to Syriac sources but to Arab Christian literature as well. Much like Syriac-speaking Christians, Arabic-speaking Christians (often bilingual, trilingual, or even multilingual—with access to sources in Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Georgian, and Greek) are an important "bridge community" that connected the worlds of Late Antiquity and early Islam.[103] Any research into possible influences of antique and late antique sources on medieval Jewish or Islamic thought should therefore *begin* with a careful survey of what is available in Christian Arabic. Still insufficiently explored and for the most part (an estimated 90%!) still unpublished, Christian literature in Arabic holds the promise of solving long-standing mysteries of intellectual history. This is particularly true of the virtually unstudied Arab Christian translations of many hundreds of Greek Patristic works: by the Cappadocian Fathers, Evagrius, John Chrysostom, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and many, many others. These translations were produced in such important translation centres as the monastery of Mār Sābā in Palestine (in the eighth-tenth centuries) and the city and region of Antioch during the period of Byzantine reconquest of northern Syria (969–1084).[104] Once this vast body of material is carefully

102. Sarah Stroumsa, "The Impact of Syriac Tradition on Early Judaeo-Arabic Bible Exegesis," *ARAM* 3 (1991): 83–96; Gregor Schwarb, "Die Rezeption Maimonides' in der christlich-arabischen Literatur," *Judaica* 63 (2007): 1–45 (with copious references); an English version of this study is to be published in *Proceedings of the 12th Conference of the Society of Judaeo-Arabic Studies*, ed. Yosef Tobi (Haifa, forthcoming). See also Szilágyi, "Christian Books in Jewish Libraries"; Simone Rosenkranz, *Die jüdisch-christliche Auseinandersetzung unter islamischer Herrschaft, 7.–10. Jahrhundert* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004).

103. Of course, some Jews, and possibly some Muslims, were also bilingual in Syriac and Arabic (or trilingual in Syriac, Arabic, and Persian). Al-Muqammis, for instance, knew Syriac well enough to translate Syriac biblical commentaries into Arabic. Some ninth and tenth-century Muslim historians and heresiographers (e.g., Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq) might have also been competent in Syriac—though this question has not yet been studied.

104. To be sure, there do exist studies on some specific translations (by Samir Khalil Samir, Jacques Grand'Henry, and Paul Géhin, among others) as well as on manuscripts that contain them (studies by Joseph-Marie Sauget, Paul Géhin, and André Binggeli are particularly important). At

investigated and assessed, there is a real chance of discovering additional references to—and perhaps even translations of—Philo unknown today.

the same time, there is, as yet, no sustained *historical* research of these translations and most of them remain unpublished; for a catalogue of these translations see Graf, *Geschichte*, vol. 1; and Joseph Nasrallah, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du V^e au XX^e siècle*, vol. III/1 (Louvain: Peeters and Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1983), 196–220, 273–310, 387–91. Alexander Treiger is currently preparing a preliminary study of these translations, to be published in the proceedings of the conference "Monks, Merchants and Artists in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Relations of Byzantium to the Arab Near East (9th to 15th c.)," Mainz, October 16–19, 2012 (ed. Johannes Pahlitzsch and Vasiliki Tsamakda). For one of the key translators of Greek Patristic works into Arabic, 'Abdallāh ibn al-Fadl, see note 93 above.

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