Preface to 1956 Israeli Edition

The Association for the Success of Karaites is happy to present to the general public, Rabbanites, and Karaites, the first book in the series of books that they are planning to print.

The association supplies ritual items, such as prayer books, haggadoth for Passover, [books on] the matter of kosher slaughtering, knives for such slaughter, tools for circumcision, ẓiẓioth, ṭallethoth, and the like. Similarly, it is prepared to allow any member of the community to examine any books of our sages, may they rest in peace, that [the association] currently possesses or might have in the future.

It is our wish to make the dear reader aware of the reason that caused us to print this book: it is not in order to insult anyone, God forbid, but only to supply correct, concise material regarding the differences between Rabbanites and Karaites, for various institutions in Israel and abroad have turned to us, and asked to know the truth [about this matter].

We will continue in our way, to demonstrate the truth among the whole Jewish community, that the Torah in our hands is one, single Torah, which is never exchanged for any other Torah; it is the Torah of Moses our Teacher, may he rest in peace, and of [God’s] pure prophets.

Appiryon ‘Asa Lo

A Palanquin He Made for Himself,

King Solomon, from the council of the Lord, that shall stand[[1]](#footnote-1)

He made its pillars of choice silver of the tongue of the righteous,[[2]](#footnote-2) informing the cause of the division between the Karaites and the Rabbanites; its top is of gold,[[3]](#footnote-3) in that it explains that the foundation of the legal code [dath][[4]](#footnote-4) of Karaism stands on three pillars: the seven types of analogy [heqqesh]; transmission that is passed down smoothly; and the commandments, which are positive and negative; its seat is purple,[[5]](#footnote-5) in laying out the rules and customs in order, according to the order of the years of a person’s life, from birth until death, and the rules dependent on season, following the order of the year; its inside is inlaid with love from the daughters of Jerusalem,[[6]](#footnote-6) to attract the heart of people who study this brief work, because of its great shortness and its [convenient] arrangement.

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Author’s note

Author’s note regarding those that enter the orchard of the Torah to explain [its] words in accordance with the plain meaning of the text, sometimes using the aid of tradition that has been passed down, and of commonsense understanding. Why should one err, using a [Rabbanite] tradition that is triumphalist and foreign [to the Biblical text]? To this end, [the author] is beginning with an introduction, speaking the words of this poem: {3}

Be diligent, O my heart, at the doors of understanding,

And behave in accordance with God’s Law, in faith,

So that you not err in interpreting its words,

When you face its path, whose fence [of restrictions] is appropriate.

To find favor and good understanding in the eyes of

The eternal Lord, and the people of faith,

You have, indeed, the foundation of Scripture as a peg

In the hand of a reliable person – not Talmud or Mishna.

Alongside it, perform analogy and parallels,

And give a portion to seven, yea, to eight.

Gather many reliable proofs,

And respond to those [Rabbanites], who are triumphalist over delightful [Torah].

And if you are good at bearing your eye with understanding,

Then in it will you find explanation and understanding,

And you will not subtract, nor add, to

The Scriptures, such that they will be faithful.

And if you find that the restrictions of the sages

Are well set, drawn from understanding –

Know that they established them not from their own heart,

But they have a source point in the Law.

They investigated them with their beautiful understanding, and found

In the Torah [and] in the Prophets, a mother of wisdom;

Their words are refined like silver,

And do not contradict [Scripture’s] faithful testimony.

They are established in the Text, like goads,

To restore the Law’s crown, as in olden times,

To guard it from the changes of people who modify,

So that it will be perfect, and not changed.

Therefore, they are called by the name “Karaites,”

For Scripture is a possession in their hand.

{4} Foreword

Then Solomon said: God said to announce to mankind His might and the glory of His reign (Psalms 145:12). [I have undertaken this work] because Lord Johann Puffendorf[[7]](#footnote-7) – who is known for his great scholarship, and is head of the King of Sweden’s institution of study in Riga (may [the king’s] glory be exalted and his kingdom uplifted) – has entreated me in his writings and letters to inform him about the reasons for the division of the House of Israel into two, Karaites and Rabbanites, and also to explain to him the fundamentals of the legal code of Karaism, upon which its foundations are fastened. For he said that the Rabbanites are known in all places, to the far ends of the land and the sea, whereas the Karaites are mentioned, only by name, in the books of scholars, such as the books of Buxtorf[[8]](#footnote-8) and other translators of holy books; and this matter [of the split between Rabbanites and Karaites] is not really known among [these scholars], for when they copied matters of the transmission [of Jewish religion] from the Rabbanites, they found that the Rabbanites attributed us [Karaites] and this division to an incident that happened during the time of Antigonus of Sokho and his two students, who are Zadok and Boethus – and this is a lie, as will be explained below, for it is religious hatred that brought them to link us with the Sadducees, and in this they are confused,[[9]](#footnote-9) and cannot even begin[[10]](#footnote-10) to recount the chronology of the world and to understand the years of each generation.

[Firstly,] Maimonides and the author of Sefer Ha-­yuḥasin[[11]](#footnote-11) wrote that Joshua ben Peraḥya lived at the time of R. Yehuda ben Ṭabbai, but the Ra’avad[[12]](#footnote-12) and Ibn Yaḥya, the author of Shalsheleth Ha-­qabbala,[[13]](#footnote-13) wrote that ben Ṭabbai came before ben Peraḥya. The same [confusion] exists [regarding] the Hasmonaean monarchy and dominion, [for] according to Abravanel,[[14]](#footnote-14) the time of their reign was 142 years, but according to the opinion of others, and [according to] Seder ‘Olam,[[15]](#footnote-15) it was 104 years. And now, whether it is from their lack of knowledge or whether it is from their hatred, any intelligent person will understand that they have moved the time of the separation of the Karaites to Antigonus’s time; and even that time they did not know exactly, for the author of the book Ẓemaḥ David[[16]](#footnote-16) wrote that the time of Zadok and Boethus is unknown to them. And there is no one among the Rabbanites who admits the truth, except for the sage R. Judah Ha-­levi in his book Kuzari,[[17]](#footnote-17) part 3. And necessity made him reveal the truth, for he was speaking with the king, and had no opportunity to change or to switch things.

In order that the truth may be revealed, as the sun comes out in its splendor,[[18]](#footnote-18) I have used my inkstand for this matter[[19]](#footnote-19) in order to sort out and clarify the matter of this division, {5} with the help of the books of our predecessors. I called this small work Appiryon ‘Asa Lo (“A Palanquin He Made for Himself”), for these three words are equal in gemaṭriyya to Sefer Minhagé Qara’é (The Book of Customs of the Karaites);[[20]](#footnote-20) and furthermore, my name is signed in the letters of the word ‘asa (made).[[21]](#footnote-21) And I will begin the matter:

At the divisions of Reuben   
there were great searchings of heart (Judges 5:16).[[22]](#footnote-22)

It can be found in the book ‘Asara Ma’amaroth (Ten Utterances), by the comprehensive scholar R. Caleb ben Elijah Afendopolo, of the Karaite sages in great Constantinople, and in the books of R. Yefeth ben Ẓa‘ir, and the other earlier and later sages of the Karaites:

The time of the separation of the Karaites and the Rabbanites was during the time of the Second Temple when the Hasmoneans, that is the High Priest Mattathias and his sons, became mighty, and killed Philippus, the captain of the guard of Antiochus, the King of Greece.

(This is a quote from the above-­mentioned sage in the above-­mentioned book). And I, in accordance with the request of the above-­mentioned gentleman [Johann Uppendorff], have applied myself [to know] the number of years, and found that the beginning of the building of the Second Temple was in the first year of the reign of Cyrus, that is the year 3394 since the creation of the world; and the Temple was not built, because Cyrus was killed; and King Ahasuerus of Esther reigned for 14 years, and died; afterwards was Esther’s son, King Darius, who is Artaxerxes, who decreed the building of the Temple in the first year of his reign, and the Temple was completed in the eighth year of his reign, and he reigned 32 years; and Alexander the Macedonian killed him, and the Greek rule began, and continued until the year 212 after the building of the Temple. Then the Hasmonaeans gained power, and revolted against Antiochus, the king of Greece, and killed Philippus, who was his governor over Jerusalem. The kingdom of the Hasmoneans stood and prospered for 103 years, until the time of King Herod, which was in the year 3725 of the creation. So, in the year 212 after the building of the Temple, Mattathias, also known as Hasmonaeus, reigned, and died during that year. After him, his eldest son Judah, called Maccabaeus, reigned six years, and died; and Jonathan, his brother, reigned seven years, and died; and Simeon, his brother, reigned eight years and died. Afterwards, John son of Simeon son of Mattathias, whose Greek name was Hyrcanus I, reigned, as both king and high priest. However, for the sake of brevity, I will not go into detail about what happened between him and the Pharisees[[23]](#footnote-23) because of a man who created quarrel and wickedness. This man is Eliezer, who intimated that [John Hyrcanus’s] high priesthood was flawed; and the sages were killed, because they did not silence this Eleazar.[[24]](#footnote-24) And this Hyrcanus reigned over Israel for thirty-one years, and then died. His youngest son, King Yannai, who is called Alexander, reigned [after him] – for [Hyrcanus] had three sons: the first was Aristobulus; the second, Antigonus; and the third, Alexander. He consulted God about who would reign after him, and the answer came: “Alexander will reign after you.” [Alexander] was vile in his eyes; [so,] before his death, [he made] his son Aristobulus king, and he made his brother Antigonus the commander of the army over God’s people, and he put Yannai in chains. But Aristobulus’s rule did not last long, only one year, for he died, together {6} with his brother Antigonus; and their brother Yannai reigned, in accordance with God’s word; he, too, was both king and high priest. During the festival of Sukkoth, while he was offering burnt-­offerings on the altar, one of the students was insolent and pelted the king on his forehead with a piece of fruit. Also at this time, they intimated that his priesthood was flawed, because his mother, the wife of his father Simeon,[[25]](#footnote-25) had been a captive on Mount Moda‘ith, and because of that he was unfit for the priesthood, because of suspicion [that his lineage was not fit for the priesthood].[[26]](#footnote-26) The king became furious, and he sent his battalions, and they killed 65,000 of the Pharisees;[[27]](#footnote-27) in the end, he annihilated eight hundred great sages, who were [trying to] hide in Beth Shemesh. Out of all the sages who taught the Torah, only Simeon ben Shaṭaḥ, who was the brother of the king’s wife, and his colleague Yehuda ben Ṭabbai, both students of Nittai the Arbelite, survived through the time when Queen Alexandra, wife of King Yannai, whose name is also Alexander, allowed them to return. It is this Simeon ben Shaṭaḥ who fabricated the Oral Law, who became head of the Rabbanites. Yehuda ben Tabbai, who followed Moses’s Law with an exegesis that accords with the plain meaning of the Bible, became the head of the Karaites. Now, if one calculates the years of the Hasmonaean Kings from the year 212 of the building of the Second Temple, as mentioned above, until the death of Yannai the Younger, who is Alexander ben Hyrcanus, one will find eighty-­one years. From this follows that the time of the separation of the Karaites from the Rabbanites was in year eighty-­one of the Hasmonaean reign, that is, year 293 from the building of the Second Temple, which is year 3704 from the creation of the world, and 124 years before the destruction of the Temple.[[28]](#footnote-28) But the dispute of Zadok and Boethus with their teacher Antigonus happened 254 years before the time of the separation of the Karaites and Rabbanites. This being the case, the lip of truth shall be established forever, but I shall silence the lying tongue of the Rabbanites.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Chapter 1

Regarding[[30]](#footnote-30) the Foundations upon which the House of Israel Stands

The pillars on which the Jewish faith rests are threefold: Scripture (kathuv); Analogy (heqqesh);[[31]](#footnote-31) and the Burden of the Inheritance (Sevel Ha-­yerusha), which is the transmission that has been passed down. The explanation of these is:

Scripture includes positive and negative commandments, for example: he that is born in thy house must needs be circumcised (Genesis 17:13), and bid them that they make them fringes (Numbers 15:38); and, [as examples of negative commandments,] ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations (Exodus 35:3),[[32]](#footnote-32) thou shalt not eat any abominable thing (Deuteronomy 14:3); and so forth, and all the commandments included in Moses’s Torah; the Karaite sages did not enumerate them with a definite number, giving as proof the words of King David, may he rest in peace: [I have seen an end to every purpose;] but Thy commandment is exceeding broad (Psalms 119:96). But the Rabbanites counted 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments, for a total of 613.

Analogy: Certain commandments are observed by our people through Analogy, and they are derived from the authority of Scripture, as, for example: Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together (Deuteronomy 22:10), for from the word “plowing” an analogy and similarity is established to all kinds of work, and from the words with an ox and a donkey to any two species, that is, a pure species with an impure species, or a strong one with a weak one.

The Burden of the {7} Inheritance is the customs that we have followed from the time of our holy fathers, for example, on which body part and in which way to perform circumcision, and how much to cut the foreskin, or in what place and in which way to perform kosher slaughtering [sheḥiṭa] – for Scripture does not give an clear explanation for any of this. From the Burden of the Inheritance we know that slaughtering is done on the throat of the animal, and we also know about porging meat and removing the veins. The same is true for the matter of marriage, and for [certain] customs regarding prayer, and for the matter of sanctifying the months.[[33]](#footnote-33) All these and similar [laws] are not explicitly explained in the Torah, but we know them from the transmission that is passed down from father to son, from teacher to student.

The Rabbanites call their tradition transmission, and say that it is an explanation of the Written Law. However, the Karaite sages do not agree, because there are things in their tradition that contradict the written Torah. According to the opinion of the Karaites, any transmission that has support in Scripture, and does not contradict the Torah, is true, and we accept it upon us. It is for this reason that the division between [the Karaites and the Rabbanites] occurred, as will be explained.

Chapter 2

Regarding the Commandment of Circumcision

This is the first commandment for any male in Israel, for it is performed on males on the eighth day after birth. From the words and the uncircumcised male (Genesis 17:14), written in Parashath Lekh Lekha,[[34]](#footnote-34) we know the place of circumcision; [whereas] the way to perform it, and how to cut the foreskin and with what kind of tool – we know [these] from the Burden of the Inheritance from generation to generation.[[35]](#footnote-35) The circumciser must believe in Moses’s Torah, and know the commandment’s [underlying] secret and purpose. [However,] according to the Karaite sages, if it should happen that a gentile has performed a proper circumcision, it is not necessary to perform a second circumcision. The Rabbanites, by contrast, say that one needs to draw blood; but this would be called a wound, not a circumcision!

In this commandment, there is [also another] difference of opinion between the Karaites and the Rabbanites, for the Rabbanites say that there need to be both mila [removal of the foreskin] and peri‘a [peeling back of the tissue connecting the foreskin to the glans, to expose the circumcised glans]. They cite as proof what God, blessed be He, said to Joshua: and go back, circumcise the children of Israel the second time[[36]](#footnote-36) (Joshua 5:2). But the Karaites say that the word a second time [shenith] is linked to earlier in the sentence, to the word go back; just as in [the verse] and for the second side of the tabernacle (Exodus 36:25), where the word second is not linked to tabernacle, but to side.[[37]](#footnote-37) The meaning is that [Joshua] should go back from his earlier intention, for he had agreed at first for the Israelites who were born in the Wilderness to be uncircumcised, and now he needed to circumcise them. Therefore [God] said go back [ . . . ] a second time from their first intention. [Alternatively,] it seems to me to explain the word a second time, along with go back, as meaning that Joshua was commanded two things in these words: the first was to make tools for circumcision, to be prepared for him and for [the generations] coming after him; the second was to circumcise with his own hands and not through someone else’s hands. On account of these two actions, it says: a second time.[[38]](#footnote-38)

[In any case,] all the Karaite sages taught that only mila without peri‘a is necessary, for [peri‘a] is an addition to the words of the Torah. It is the duty of every male in Israel {8} to be circumcised, for the Torah warns that one who neglects this commandment will have his soul cut off from eternal life, as it is said: that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant [Genesis 17:14]. However, if the child is weak on the eighth day, then one waits and does not circumcise for a few days, in order not to cause a death, because of what is said [regarding the commandments]: which if a man do, he shall live by them [Leviticus 18:5]; and when he recovers, then they must circumcise him. This commandment is a general principle for all the commandments of the Torah, which derive from it.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Chapter 3

Regarding the Sabbath

The foundation of this commandment stems from the time of the creation, but the instruction to observe it comes from Moses our Teacher, at the giving of the Torah. This day has two names, shabbath and shabbathon. Our sages explained that the name shabbath is used for the seventh day itself, but shabbathon is used for the part that is added from the secular to the holy on the eve of the seventh day [Friday] and at the end of the Sabbath.[[40]](#footnote-40) The meaning of “resting” [shevitha] is cessation from and letting go of labor. Now the Karaite sages forbade every single kind of labor in existence, except for the service of God, and carrying food inside the house when it is needed for people’s sustenance, and all other necessary tasks, such as making the bed and putting on clothes. Whoever performs tasks, except for these kinds, is called a Sabbath-­desecrator, and his punishment during the time of the Monarchy was stoning and also kareth,[[41]](#footnote-41) and during the time of the Exile it is the same as the punishment of anyone who breaks any other prohibition. The sages of the Rabbanites, however, counted the kinds of work, and fixed the number of basic kinds of work at thirty-­nine “major categories of work,” as they are known in the books of the [Rabbanite] sages.

The early Karaite sages forbade the lighting of a candle on Friday that would still be burning on the Sabbath. But the later sages permit it, because it is natural work, with only one [human] touch, and it is a great need for people’s lives in eating and in all other movements, as long as it is lit before the Sabbath.[[42]](#footnote-42) And it is already forbidden to extinguish it, because extinguishing on the Sabbath is work.

All kinds of work that are not necessary, whether performed by oneself or by a delegate, are forbidden. And it is forbidden for a Jew to profit from what a gentile does on the Sabbath, unless it happened without [the Jew’s] knowledge; and all the more so [it is forbidden for the gentile] to perform labor for the Jew. In general, it is a duty for every Jew to rest on this day and to cease from all work, he and his male and female servants and his animals, as it is written: that thy man-­servant and maid-­servant may rest as well as thou (Deuteronomy 5:14). [The fact that] the Sabbath is called “holy” refers to separation, meaning that it should be distinguished and separated from the rest of the days of the week in every way. [The fact that the Torah] refers to “blessing” [on the Sabbath] refers to Torah study.[[43]](#footnote-43) There is no other activity or business that one may do on the Sabbath, only mental activity in Torah study. It is forbidden to pick fruit on the Sabbath, or to tear off weeds or prepare food, as it is said: And it shall come to pass on the sixth day that they shall prepare (Exodus 16:5). And it is forbidden to fast on the Sabbath, as it is said: and call the Sabbath a delight (Isaiah 58:13), except for Yom Kippur, for fasting on it is an obligation. It is also forbidden to have intercourse with a woman, {9} as it is said: Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8); and as it is said: and [He] hallowed it (Genesis 2:3). The Rabbanites are of the opposite opinion; for, on the contrary, they require marital relations [on the Sabbath], as they say: “The time [for marital relations] for students of the sages is once a week, on Friday night.”[[44]](#footnote-44) It is a criminal sin that they require. Walking outside of an area [teḥum] and carrying from one domain [reshuth] to another are forbidden, as it is said: abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day (Exodus 16:29). According to the opinion of our sages, in his place [Heb. taḥtav, literally “beneath himself”] indicates the domain, [out of which one may not carry items,] and out of his place indicates the area, [out of which one may not walk]. And the size of the area is up to 2000 cubits, as was in Jerusalem. And from the Burden of the Inheritance, [we know that] it is forbidden to cross a river, either by bridge or by boat, because the river and the dry land are two boundaries. It is permitted to do work on Shabbat in the case of mortal danger, for example to fight an enemy, to save someone from burning or from drowning in a river, or to prepare medication for a sick person, as it is said: he shall live by them (Leviticus 18:5).

Chapter 4

Regarding the Sanctification of the Month

You should know that knowledge about the sanctification of the month is a fundamental principle for the Jewish community, because the appointed times and the holy days depend on knowing the time of the New Moon, and from it follows the calculation of the years, the months, and the days. Now in this matter, there is no explicit commandment and no proclaimed instruction [in Scripture]; it is only through a hint that we find that sacrifices and burnt offerings were offered on the day of the New Moon, as it is said: And in your new moons ye shall present a burnt-­offering unto the Lord [ . . . . ] (Numbers 28:11). And in some places in the Torah and in the Prophets, it mentions [the New Moon] in proximity to the sanctified days, because of the sacrifice;[[45]](#footnote-45) and it informs us of the appointed times according to their date in the month. From the Burden of the Inheritance, we know that during the time of the Monarchy and the time of the Prophets and the High Court, the month was sanctified based on sighting [the moon], and the years were fixed in the Holy Land according to the aviv.[[46]](#footnote-46) However, when it became clear that the people of Israel were going to be far from their country, the Men of the Great Assembly, who had come up from Babylonia [to build the Second Temple], fixed a nineteen-­year cycle of the calendar, which is generally called “the golden number,”[[47]](#footnote-47) twelve regular years and seven leap years, based on the experience that this calculation evens out with the finding of the aviv in the Land of Israel.[[48]](#footnote-48) Now the Karaite sages, even during the time of the Exile, do not rely solely on the fixed settings, but rather try to get sightings of the moon at the time when it is new; when it is seen, they sanctify the month and fix the days. If there is any obstacle [to sighting the moon, such as] clouds in the sky, or rainy weather developments in the air, then [the Karaites] are aided by the true calculation [of the new moon] in the manner of the astronomers, in accordance with the regular, true movement of the sun and the moon; for in the absence of clear knowledge, they follow an approximation – not like the Rabbanites, who do not concern themselves at all with sighting [the moon], but base their entire position on the average calculation, the equal calculation,[[49]](#footnote-49) not on the true calculation as known in the scientists’ books. Moreover, they also err, and cause the people to err, with laws of postponement, which they have fabricated:[[50]](#footnote-50) that Passover may not [begin] on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday;[[51]](#footnote-51) and Rosh Ha-­shana may not [fall] on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday; {10} and ‘Aẓereth [i.e., Shavu‘oth] cannot fall on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Saturday; and other matters that their sages have explained, to lead the people to err, which is a great rebellion, [for it is] adding and taking away from the words of the Torah. The Karaites have already showed the error of the Rabbanites regarding this in certain times and places, when the old moon was seen in the morning, and [the Rabbanites nonetheless] sanctified the month [in the evening],[[52]](#footnote-52) and when the new moon was seen [in the evening], yet [the Rabbanites] did not sanctify the new month. This can be found in the books of the Karaites.

The Karaites set the days and the months in the following manner: they arrive at a calculation of the angular separation[[53]](#footnote-53) [between the sun and the moon], in accordance with astronomy, according to each place and region;[[54]](#footnote-54) and in accordance with that calculation, they establish the days of the months – whether the months will be full or lacking, for the ones that are full have thirty days, and the ones that are lacking have twenty-­nine days. Even so, they also use help from sightings, for they count twenty-­nine days from the evening of the sighting, and if the [next New] Moon is seen on the eve of the thirtieth day, then they sanctify the coming month, and [know that] the preceding month has been lacking; but if the moon is not seen on the eve of the thirtieth day, then they sanctify the thirty-­first day as the coming month, and [know that] the preceding month has been full. On the eve of the thirty-­first day, whether or not the moon was has been sighted, they sanctify the thirty-­first day, because it was transmitted from our forefathers, generation after generation, that there is no month with fewer than twenty-­nine days, and no month with more than thirty. In a leap year, they always intercalate the month of Adar.[[55]](#footnote-55) And if there is doubt in the month of Tishri or in the month of Nisan, which have the festivals in them, then they sanctify two days, because of the doubt.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Chapter 5

Regarding the Festival of Unleavened Bread (*Ḥag Ha-­maẓẓoth*)

This holiday is one of the three festivals when the adult Israelite men used to go up to Jerusalem, as it is said: Three times in a year shall all thy males appear (Deuteronomy 16:16). This holiday is in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. It starts on the fifteenth day of Nisan. During the time of the Monarchy, they used to offer the pesaḥ sacrifice from the flock, and they would sanctify a holy convocation for seven days, and destroy their leavened matter [ḥameẓ], and eat unleavened bread [maẓẓoth]. Now, in the time of the Exile, the sacrifices are no more, and only the holy convocation, the destroying of leaven, and the eating of unleavened bread remains for us, as it is written: And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt; and thou shalt observe and do these statutes (Deuteronomy 16:12).[[57]](#footnote-57)

The meaning of ḥameẓ is the fermentation (se’or) that is produced in a natural way, whether intentionally or accidentally, from five species of grain, which are: wheat, barley, shifon, shibboleth shu‘al, and kussemeth,[[58]](#footnote-58) and according to the opinion of a few sages also millet.[[59]](#footnote-59) These six species leaven, but other species, such as rice and all kinds of legumes, such as legumes,[[60]](#footnote-60) peas, fava beans, lentils, and the like, are permitted for consumption on Passover, for they do not leaven; even if they are wettened with water, they [simply] spoil, [but do not leaven.] The commandment [of destroying ḥameẓ] is carried out with great safeguarding, so that there will not be ḥameẓ. But other fermented things, such as vegetables, milk, fruit juice, and honey, are permitted on Passover.[[61]](#footnote-61)

The sanctity of the first and seventh day is the same as that of the Sabbath, except for the preparation of food, as it is said: save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you (Exodus 12:16). In this, there is a difference between us and the Rabbanites, for {11} they permit slaughtering animals on the festival, for the ultimate goal [of this activity] is to eat them; whereas the Karaite sages, on the other hand, derived from the word akh (“save”), which indicates a limitation, that [the permission to do labor on the festival] is limited to labors in [direct] preparation of food; they permit only the kind of labor that is followed [immediately] by eating, such as cooking and baking of items that have been [otherwise] prepared on the previous day. During the five days that are called “weekdays of the festival” [ḥol ha-­mo‘ed], there is no cessation of work; but nonetheless, the sages made a fence, anyway, that no heavy work should be done on these days, out of respect for the festival. The customs of the divine service for those days, i.e., prayer, are known from the prayer book of the Karaites.

Chapter 6

Regarding the Counting of Fifty Days from the Day following the Sabbath that Falls in the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread

The discussion of this count comes up in the Torah in Parashath Emor, after the discussion of the Festival of Unleavened Bread; the reason for this is that in the Land of Israel, the barley harvest is always reached during the days of Passover. During the time of the Temple, the Israelites used to offer a sheaf [‘omer], to wave it as a wave-­offering before God, and to thank the Rock of Israel, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever (Psalms 136:1). And from the day of the waving of the sheaf, they would count fifty days until the first crops of the wheat harvest, which is the time of the festival of Shavu‘oth. All Jews unanimously acknowledge that the beginning of this count is during the days of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, but there is a difference of opinion among them concerning this matter, for the Karaite sages say that the day of waving [the sheaf] and the [first day of] the count are always on the day following the Sabbath that falls during the seven days of Passover, according to the plain meaning of the text.[[62]](#footnote-62) If it happens that the first day of Passover is a Sabbath, then the counting begins on the day following the first day,[[63]](#footnote-63) which is the Sunday of Passover; [they cite] evidence from what is said in Scripture: on the morrow after the sabbath (Leviticus 23:11,15), with the definite article, which in accordance with its grammatical meaning, cannot be understood as one of the days of the week, but only as the actual Sabbath, which is the Sabbath of Creation [shabbath bereshith],[[64]](#footnote-64) according to the count of the days of the creation. On the other hand, the Rabbanites interpret [the phrase] as meaning “the day following the holiday,” and understand [the word shabbath] as referring to the first day of Passover, always, [even in a year when this falls on a different day of the week.] Therefore, they always count from the day following the first festival day, and consequently the Shavu‘oth of the Rabbanites falls out on any day of the week, not on a given day as in the opinion of the Karaite sages, [for whom] the Festival of Shavu‘oth is always on the Sunday, the morrow of the seventh Sabbath. The Karaite sages have arguments [as strong] as lions confirming this point. During the time of the sage R. ‘Anan, of the Karaite sages, who was a descendant of the royal family of King Jehoiachin,[[65]](#footnote-65) in the year 4400 from the creation of the world,[[66]](#footnote-66) there was a great war between the Karaites and the Rabbanites concerning this difference of opinion, and the above-­mentioned sage bared his soul unto death[[67]](#footnote-67) by the hands of the Rabbanites. May his death be his atonement.[[68]](#footnote-68)

{12} The custom among the Rabbanites is to count at the time of the evening prayer, in accordance with the beginning of the days of creation;[[69]](#footnote-69) but the Karaites count after the morning prayer, [citing] as evidence the waving of the sheaf, which was in the morning, after the daily burnt offering. And now that we are outside of the Holy Land, we do not have the offering of the sheaf, but only the counting of the days. The wording of the counting can be found in the first part of the prayer book.

Chapter 7

Regarding the Festival of Shavu‘oth

This is the second of the three pilgrimage festivals when the adult Israelite men were required to appear before God every year in the holy place. It is also called the Day of the Firstfruits [yom ha-­bikkurim], when they would offer a new grain-­offering, because the wheat harvest was reached close to this day, as the matter of the firstfruits is explained in Parashath Emor.[[70]](#footnote-70) This day is established as a holiday in memory of two things, according to the opinion of the Karaite sages. The first is in memory of the conquest of the [Holy] Land from the seven nations, and the eating of its produce; this is the meaning of [the word] shavu‘oth [literally “weeks”], as in [the verse]: that keepeth for us the appointed weeks of the harvest [Jeremiah 5:24]. The second is in memory of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, for most people say that it took place on this day.[[71]](#footnote-71) These two ideas are related, and one cannot exist without the other, as the sages say: “When there is no flour, there is no Torah.”[[72]](#footnote-72) The first is the wholeness of the body, which is food; and the second is the wholeness of the soul, which is Torah. [This holiday is not established] on a fixed day of the month, for knowing its [date] depends on the counting of the days. According to the practice of the Karaites, this festival always occurs on the day following the Sabbath.

Chapter 8

Regarding the Fasts

In the books of the Prophets, we find four months in which fasts are established, as explained in the prophecy of Zechariah, chapter 8, verse 19. He does not explain on which day of the month [they are observed], or for what reason; but by way of the tradition, we know, generation after generation, that these fasts are because of the tragedies and disasters that befell the People of Israel in those months, which are Tammuz, Av, Tishri, and Ṭeveth, on specific days of [these months], as is written at the end of the book of Kings and at the end of the book of Jeremiah: on the tenth of Ṭeveth, Jerusalem was captured, and the siege by Nebuchadnezzar began; and on the ninth of Tammuz the [wall of the] city was breached, and on the seventh and the tenth of Av, Nebuzaradan and his men burned the Temple and all the houses of Jerusalem. And on the twenty-­fourth of the month of Tishri, all the Israelites fasted, as is written in the book of Nehemiah [9:1]. Now, there is a division of opinion between us and the Rabbanites, for the Rabbanites do not mourn at all for the destruction of the First Temple, giving as a reason that consolation for the destruction of the First Temple already came to Israel during the time of the Second Temple. Thus, they fast during the above-­mentioned months for the destruction of the Second Temple in the month of Av, and for the breaking of the [Two] Tablets [by Moses] in the month of Tammuz. But our Karaite sages say in response to them {13} that the consolation [resulting] from the building of the Second Temple was not complete; if, indeed, the Rabbanite opinion [were correct], then according to the prophet Zechariah’s prophecy and promise, the fast days would have turned into joy and gladness, and cheerful seasons (Zechariah 8:19) – but this was not [how] these days were observed during the Second Temple period; on the contrary, we find that they fasted even during the Second Temple period, on the twenty-­fourth of the month of Tishri. Moreover, it was during the Second Temple period that the priests inquired about the fasts, as is written in the prophecy of Zechariah, chapter 7, verse 3.[[73]](#footnote-73) The custom of these fasts is to fast from evening to evening, to be in mourning, and not to taste anything in one’s mouth. In the evening, at the conclusion of the fast, we pray with penitential prayers [seliḥoth] and supplications [taḥanunim]; these prayers can be found in the [Karaite] prayer book.

From the ninth of Tammuz to the tenth of Av, we practice great mourning, and on every one of the Sabbaths [in this period], we gather in the afternoon in the synagogue and read the Lamentations of Jeremiah,[[74]](#footnote-74) along with the prophets’ admonishments to the Israelites.[[75]](#footnote-75) And the cantor [ḥazzan] explains the lamentations to the common people in their [native] language. We do not make any festive celebrations until the tenth of Av; [only] then do we accept consolation, taking evidence from what is written in Ezekiel, chapter 40.[[76]](#footnote-76)

Chapter 9

Regarding Yom Teru‘a

In Parashath Emor comes the commandment for this day to be a solemn rest [shabbathon], a memorial [ . . . ], a holy convocation [miqra qodesh] (Leviticus 23:24), on the first of the seventh month. Since [the Torah refers to this day] as shabbathon and miqra qodesh, the meaning is that it is a holiday, which is fitting to sanctify by ceasing work, as on the other holidays. Now, from the plain, apparent meaning of the text, the reason for this holiday is not known. However, we know from the tradition handed down from generation to generation, called the Burden of the Inheritance, and from a precise exegesis of the expression zikhron teru‘a,[[77]](#footnote-77) that this is the time of the beginning of the days of repentance and the awakening to it; this is the meaning of zikhron teru‘a – to remind us to take repentance to heart, which is the meaning of teru‘a, as in: let us shout for joy [nari‘a][[78]](#footnote-78) to the Rock of our salvation [Psalms 95:1]. The foundation on which this holiday is based is the binding of Isaac; and therefore the custom, preserved since early days, is that on these ten days from Yom Teru‘a to Yom Kippur, we get up at midnight for supplications [taḥanunim], confessions [vidduyim], penitential prayers [seliḥoth], petitions [baqqashoth], and the reading of the passage And Moses besought (Exodus 32:11), which can be found in the second part of the prayer book. During the time of the Temple, the Sabbatical Year [shemiṭṭoth] and the Jubilees [yovelim] used to start during this month, and they would blow shofaroth [animal horns] to proclaim freedom and to return all things to their owners.

Chapter 10

Regarding the Matter and Practice of Yom Kippur, and the Ceremony During It

Concerning this day, we find that there was the ceremony of the High Priest; that is, the High Priest used to enter in front of the ark into the qodesh[[79]](#footnote-79) once a year, to make atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel (Leviticus 16:17), as the matter is known and explained in Parashath Aḥaré Moth.

In Parashath Emor there are two admonitions concerning this day: the first is the affliction of the soul, which means fasting, {14} and the second is the cessation of work; and [the day] is called “an appointed time” and “a holy convocation.” Now given that during the Exile, the sacrificial service has ceased to exist, and we do not have an anointed priest from the seed of Aaron, nevertheless, because Scripture says a statute for ever (Leviticus 23:31) in reference to this matter, we are required to observe and to follow the customs of this appointed time: afflicting our souls, which is fasting; and, instead of the sacrifice, to stand from evening to evening in prayer and supplications; and to cease all work. And this day, which falls on the tenth day of the seventh month, is more honored than the Sabbath, for during it there is no bodily activity, only activity of the mind in prayer and supplications, as mentioned above. And everyone who is able is required to fast, except for minors and those suffering from dangerous illnesses, who are exempt from the commandments.

Chapter 11

Regarding the Festival of Sukkoth, which is on the Fifteenth Day of the Seventh Month

This holiday, the last of the three pilgrimage festivals, is in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt, when the Israelites sat in booths [sukkoth], after having left Egypt, and [God] gave them shelter[[80]](#footnote-80) through [His miraculous] clouds in the Wilderness. [The festival] alludes to God’s influence,[[81]](#footnote-81) blessed be He, over the people of Israel and therefore is seven days long, like Passover. We know from tradition that this festival was kept far from the Festival of Unleavened Bread, in order to make the commandment dear [to us]. It is the custom for all Jews to build booths from the wood of goodly trees, and to decorate the booth with fruit from trees, and willow branches, as best they can, and to live in it as a house during the seven days, in order to remember God’s deeds, which were tremendous, which He did for our ancestors. The sanctification of the first day and the cessation of work during this appointed time is the same as on Passover and the other holidays. And the day of Shemini ‘Aẓereth, which is on the twenty-­second day of this month, is a holiday in its own right, not included in the days of Sukkoth; rather, it is the completion of the appointed times and the sacred occasions. And it is when we complete the [reading of] the Torah, according to the institution of the Good Figs, who came up from Babylon [to the Land of Israel, at the time of the building of the Second Temple].[[82]](#footnote-82) This holiday is called Shemini ‘Aẓereth [that is, “the eighth day, the time of being restrained inside”], because [the people] would remain restrained [ne‘eẓarim] inside the Temple [rather than going home], to offer burnt offerings, and to give thanks to God for all the acts of mercy [that He had given them, in allowing them to] get through all the holy days in a state of health and safety; and they rejoiced in completing [all the holidays].

Chapter 12

Regarding the Custom to Begin the Torah on the First Sabbath after the Holiday of Shemini ‘Aẓereth

We begin the Torah, that is, Parashath Bereshith, with declarations of happiness from verses that are appropriate for the situation, and with a beautiful tune, following a custom that goes back to the institutions of Ezra the Priest, namely the establishment of the [division of] the Torah into parashiyyoth [weekly portions]. For when Ezra the Priest saw that the Israelites would be in a long exile, and the Torah would be forgotten among them, he consulted with his party, the Men of the Great Assembly, and divided the whole Torah into parashiyyoth, according to the number of Sabbaths in a year, so that the reading of the whole Torah could be completed in a full year. They also established hafṭaroth, that is, texts from the [books of the] Prophets with similar subjects to those of the parashiyyoth. And since some of the parashiyyoth deal with matters of the holidays, they also established to read parashiyyoth on the holidays, as is specified in [the books of] liturgical customs. Since there is not an equal number of Sabbaths {15} in every year, they established that in a non-­leap year, we combine a few parashiyyoth that are similar in subject matter, such as Vayyaqhel with Pequdé, Tazria‘ with Meẓora‘, and others, so that the completion of the Torah and the parashiyyoth will be at the right time. Similarly, in a leap year we follow the established order, and read one parasha over the course of two Sabbaths, so that there will be enough parashiyyoth for the whole year. For in a simple year, the number of Sabbaths is smaller than that of parashiyyoth; and in a leap year there are more Sabbaths than parashiyyoth; therefore, we follow this practice.

The Rabbanites have the custom to observe the days of Ḥanukka, [starting] on the twenty-­fifth of Kislev. However, the Karaites do not accept this custom, because the story of this event is not in Scripture, and [the holiday] is not accepted and established by all Israel, unlike Purim, which all Israel ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail (Esther 9:27).

Chapter 13

Regarding the Customs of the Month of Ṭeveth

In this month, on the tenth [day], it is customary to fast in memory of the siege that the Baylonian king laid on Jerusalem, as explained above in the eighth chapter. From the institution of the early ones [i.e., earlier Jewish sages] it is customary to mourn also [in the remainder of] this month, from the fast day until the New Moon of Shevaṭ; and on every Monday and Thursday, we get up before dawn to say the prayers of the Days of Mercy, with supplications [teḥinnoth] and penitential prayers [seliḥoth], and the reading of the passage And Moses besought (Exodus 32:11), according to the custom.

Chapter 14

Regarding the Customs for the Month of Adar

In this month, great rescue came to Israel in the kingdom of Babylonia on the fourteenth and fifteenth day of the month, and for this reason, Mordecai and Esther established it to be among the people’s customs that they make [these days] days of feasting and joy, and to praise the King of Heaven for the miracles and wonders that He did greatly for his people. Now, in these days we read the Book of Esther in the synagogue after the prayers; and [moreover,] in order to increase joy, we begin reading this book on the evening after the Sabbath that precedes the actual [days of] Purim; [thus,] we read the book three times.[[83]](#footnote-83) Also, during the prayers of these two days, [we read] Psalms suitable to the subject of the enemies’ humiliation and God’s mercy to the poor and indigent who cry out [to Him], blessed be He. We also sing appropriate verses and satirical [i.e., lighthearted] compositions, in the middle of the reading of the Book [of Esther], such as the verse Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the mighty, from the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:11), and others; and beautiful psalms [are sung] in the synagogue. In people’s homes, too, they eat a delicious meal and sing many praises and songs. There is no cessation of work; only happiness, joy and glory, and the sending of portions to one another.

Chapter 15

Regarding the Customs of Divine Service

A positive commandment from the Torah is the service of the Creator, blessed be He, as it is written: And ye shall serve the Lord your God (Exodus 23:25), and similarly, Thou shalt fear the Lord {16} thy God; Him shalt thou serve (Deuteronomy 10:20). During the time of our glorious Temple, this service was done by offering sacrifices on the altar; during the time of the Exile, prayer takes the place of sacrifice. The proof is that King Solomon, may he rest in peace, said, in the Book of [I] Kings, chapter 8, verse 48: and pray unto Thee toward their land;[[84]](#footnote-84) and similarly in Hosea, chapter 14, verse 3: so will we render for bullocks the offering of our lips.

Now the service comes in two forms, obligatory service and voluntary service. The obligatory service is twice a day, in the evening and in the morning, as is evident from the daily burnt offering, which was brought twice a day; this is the custom on weekdays, but on Sabbaths and festivals, there are additional [musaf] prayers. Voluntary service depends on the devotion of each individual person, whenever they are [experiencing] clinging to God, blessed be He.

The forms of these prayers can be found in the prayer books. In general, the obligatory prayer, according to the opinion of the Karaite sages, needs to include seven conditions, which are: praise [shevaḥim], thanks [hoda’a], confession [viddui], petition [baqqasha], supplication [teḥina], crying out [ẓe‘aqa], calling out [qeri’a]. It does not matter whether [the prayer] is formulated in a long manner, or a short one, as long as it includes these conditions and the principles of the religion [dath]. The cantor [ḥazzan], whom everyone calls the “emissary of the community” [sheliaḥ ẓibbur], takes the place of the priest, who [would serve] at the time of the Temple; he needs to have a pleasant and acceptable voice, and to be trained and knowledgeable about the matters of the prayers, so that he can understand what he is saying, and not sin through his tongue, and thus bring sin upon the congregation – for the merit of the whole congregation depends on him. He also needs to truly have an exemplary and intelligent understanding of the faith, and not merely what is usual.[[85]](#footnote-85) He should do his work with complete devotion, and not pray like the simple people, whose prayer is like the chirping of birds. There are other forms of service, which are like branches of this service; for example: blessings made upon items from which we derive enjoyment [birkhoth ha-­nehenin], and blessings on food before and after [the meal]. In general, for anything that people receive from the Creator’s providence, blessed be He, whether it be bad or good, they must bless His Name; as King David, may he rest in peace, said: I found trouble and sorrow, but I called upon the name of the Lord (Psalms 116:3–4); I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord (Psalms 116:13). Some say that for every commandment, when one performs and does it, one must give blessing to the Giver of the Torah, for Good and upright is the Lord; therefore doth He instruct sinners in the way (Psalms 25:8).

Chapter 16

Regarding the Principles of Faith according to the Opinion of the Karaite Sages

There are ten principles of faith of the Hebrew religion:

The first principle is to believe in the existence of God, blessed be He, that He is One and there is no oneness like His in all supernal beings, and certainly in the lower beings, as it is written: Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one (Deuteronomy 6:4).

The second principle is that He is not a body, nor any power of a body, and nothing that can happen to a body can happen to Him, as it is written: Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves – for ye saw no manner of form (Deuteronomy 4:15); and it is said: ye heard the voice of words, but ye saw no form; only a voice (Deuteronomy 4:12). And it is said: To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal? saith the Holy One (Isaiah 40:25).

The third principle is that He alone created the world out of nothingness into being, and He guides it {17} in His kindness. He is the first and He is the last, as it is written: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth [Genesis 1:1]; and it is written in Isaiah [45:12]: I, even I, have made the earth, and created man upon it [ . . . . ]

The fourth principle is that it is fitting to pray to Him alone and serve Him alone, as it is written: Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; Him shalt thou serve (Deuteronomy 10:20). It is not fitting to pray to any created being: not to an angel, nor to a heavenly sphere,[[86]](#footnote-86) nor to holy people on earth – as do the Rabbanites and other sects, who need intermediaries to God. They forget what is said: The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth [Psalms 145:18]; and: Who will rise up for me against the evil-­doers? [ . . . ] Unless the LORD had been my help [ . . . . ] (Psalms 94:16–17); and: [It is God] that looketh down low upon heaven and upon the earth (Psalms 113:6).

The fifth principle is to believe in the words of the righteous prophets, may they rest in peace, as it is written: if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord do make Myself known unto him in a vision [ . . . ] (Numbers 12:6); and: I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put My words in his mouth [ . . . ] (Deuteronomy 18:18); and: believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper (II Chronicles 20:20).

The sixth principle is that the prophecy of Moses our Teacher is true, and that he is the father and head of all the prophets, as it is written: My servant Moses is not so; he is trusted in all My house. With him do I speak mouth to mouth [ . . . . ] (Numbers 12:7–8).

The seventh principle is that the Torah of Moses our Teacher, may he rest in peace, is true and in effect forever; it will not be changed, as it is said: And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 4:44); and: Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it (Deuteronomy 4:2); and: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left (Deuteronomy 5:28); and: Remember ye the law of Moses [ . . . . ] (Malachi 3:22). This principle includes the requirement for the believer to know the Holy Language [Hebrew], with its features, in order to be able to reconcile the descriptions of the Creator, blessed be He, that are threefold in the Torah: existential, causal, and otherwise; likewise, [to reconcile] the physical attributes ascribed to the Creator, such as descent, ascent, speech, walking, sleeping, waking up, hiding, sight, distance, nearness, and physical limbs – so that one will understand how to respond to a heretic, [and explain] that the Creator, blessed be He, is lacking all these [physical attributes]; [the Torah seems to describe God as having all these attributes] only because the Torah is formulated in the way people speak, so that those who hear may understand; for that reason, human attributes are used [to describe the Creator], for it is the power of speech that makes humanity unique and special among creatures.

The eighth principle is to believe that God, blessed be He, knows people’s thoughts, and all their deeds, and that He pays back the good with good, and punishes the evil, as it is said: Great in counsel, and mighty in work; whose eyes are open [upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings] (Jeremiah 32:19); and: With the merciful Thou dost show Thyself merciful, with the upright man Thou dost show Thyself upright; With the pure Thou dost show Thyself pure; and with the crooked Thou dost show Thyself subtle (Psalms 18:26–27).

The ninth principle is to believe in the coming of the King Messiah, [who will] be a devoted shepherd for Jacob, [God’s] people, and Israel, the tribe of [God’s] inheritance, as it is said in the prophecy of Jeremiah the Prophet, may he rest in peace, in chapter 23, and also in chapters 33–34. And moreover, it is about [the King Messiah]: And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), for he will be from the seed of King David, may he rest in peace. And it is said: And a redeemer will come to Zion (Isaiah 59:20). And he will bring the nation of Israel out of the Exile, and he will wage God’s wars, and he will lead the nation according to the Torah of Moses, without {18} taking anything away from it. There are many promises in the words[[87]](#footnote-87) of the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah and the deliverance of Israel from this Exile, such as in the prophecy of Jeremiah at the end of chapter 46. And whoever investigates the rest will find them, each in their place [in Scripture].[[88]](#footnote-88)

The tenth principle is to believe in the resurrection of the dead, which will occur at the time when God, blessed be He, wants, as it is written: Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall arise [ . . . ] (Isaiah 26:19); And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake (Daniel 12:2); and it is said: Behold, I will open your graves [ . . . ] And I will put My spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land; and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken, and performed it, saith the Lord (Ezekiel 37:12–14). Even though contradictory statements to this principle are made in the Holy Scriptures, such as If a man die, may he live again? [ . . . ] (Job 14:14); As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, [so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more] [Job 7:9]; For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again [ . . . ] (II Samuel 14:14) – [nonetheless,] every believer is required to know the explanation to these statements, which is not as it appears from their plain meaning; for they are said according to the ways of nature, for it is the normal course of events that what has been separated will not be gathered again by itself, and what has been destroyed will not be rebuilt, and a thing will not act by itself if it has no miraculous help and preparation from the true Actor, the prime mover, who is the Creator, blessed be He and blessed be His Name from now to all eternity. There is a way to believe this principle through rational explanation, for if God was powerful[[89]](#footnote-89) enough to create the created beings out of nothing at the beginning of creation, then how much more so is God able[[90]](#footnote-90) to bring the soul back to the place where the spirit has gone.[[91]](#footnote-91)

Concerning the resurrection of the dead, the Karaite sages made precise investigation, and put in great efforts to align their rational considerations with the statements of the Torah and the prophecies, so that both lights together may illuminate – the light of the Torah and the light of reason. They saw that there are four kinds of levels of people in terms of attainment of perfection of the mind and perfection of the soul: [1] the righteous person who is also wise, [2] the righteous person who is a fool, [3] the evil person who is wise, and [4] the evil person who is a fool. Now, for the first and the last level there is no need for resurrection. The person on the first level is already perfect,[[92]](#footnote-92) for this person has already attained the highest degree of perfection that human nature can achieve, like the level of Moses our Teacher, may he rest in peace, and Enoch, and the other holy people. The person on the last level has such shortcomings that they have nothing left that requires resurrection, that is, no wisdom and no good deeds; therefore they will go to eternal destruction. But these levels are in the minority; only one out of a thousand people [is on the highest or lowest level]. Most people are on the two middle levels, that is to say, people with good deeds, who did not attain wisdom, are the majority; and the second level, those who are learned in wisdom and do not put in the effort to do good deeds, are the minority. These two levels will come back to life in the resurrection of the dead. Evidence for this is in the words of prophecy, as it is said: And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake [ . . . ] (Daniel 12:2); it does not say that all of those that sleep, or a few of those that sleep, but rather that most of those that sleep [in the dust shall awake]; {19} this alludes to the two middle levels; [as the verse continues:] some to everlasting life – these are the people with good deeds, who did not attain the level of learning [wisdom]; and some to reproaches [ . . . ] – these are the ones learned in wisdom, who did not put in the effort to acquire good deeds.

And the theory of transmigration of the soul, to which the Platonists and most sages of Kabbalah subscribe, has been categorically rejected by the Karaite sages, with both hands, and with arguments as formidable as lions. The sage R. Isaac Abravanel, one of the Spanish Rabbanite sages, also agrees with this [rejection] in his book Ma‘ayané Ha-­yeshu‘a.[[93]](#footnote-93)

Chapter 17

Regarding the Commandment of *Ẓiẓith* (Fringes) and the Conditions of Dressing

At the end of Parashath Shelaḥ Lekha it is written: bid them that they make them throughout their generations fringes [ẓiẓith] in the corners of their garments [Numbers 15:38]. Our sages interpreted the word ẓiẓith as [being associated with] the concept of seeing and looking, as [we find a related word in a verse,] he peereth [meẓiẓ] through the lattice [Song of Songs 2:9]. The meaning [of the verse on ẓiẓith] is to make a sign on one’s garment, so that when one sees it, one will remember the commandments of God, and not sin in one’s business dealings or other activities. This was the custom during the time of the Monarchy, in the Holy Land; but today, when we are dispersed to all corners of the exile, the sages have established a fence, so that this commandment not fall into complete disuse, that we should wear a four-­cornered garment or ṭalleth, with ẓiẓith, during the times of prayer, and when fulfilling a commandment, such as circumcision. From tradition, we know that this commandment is for men, and not for women;[[94]](#footnote-94) and that this commandment is to be fulfilled during the day, and not at night.[[95]](#footnote-95) Therefore, we are not accustomed to wear ẓiẓith during the evening prayer. The ẓiẓiyyoth[[96]](#footnote-96) are seven in number,[[97]](#footnote-97) to symbolize the seven days of creation. Six of them are white, corresponding to the weekdays; and one is blue, the color of the firmament, corresponding to the Sabbath. There is a hint to this in [the verse]: Let thy garments be always white [Ecclesiastes 9:8]. The Rabbanites have a different number, following what Simeon ben Shaṭaḥ fabricated; and do they not use a strand of blue – but our sages do not agree with them.

The Rabbanites also have another custom: during prayer, they place on their heads a knot with four passages [from the Torah]; and they also tie signs onto their arms, [basing themselves] on what is written in the Torah: And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes (Deuteronomy 6:8). They say that the Oral Law has taught them this way, but the Karaite sages reject these understandings, and explain the matter mentioned [in the verse] as proverbial and metaphorical; they said that the words bind them for a sign upon your hand refer to the Ten Commandments, and the ten fingers of the human hand, for one must diligently and persistently remember these matters constantly, as if they were bound to one’s hands. The same is true of the frontlets, which are a reference to the whole Torah, which should always be in one’s heart, as if it were placed between one’s eyes. These two statements, as well as a third – And thou shalt write them upon the door-­posts of thy house (Deuteronomy 6:9) – are all meant as a metaphor for the diligence and persistence [that one must have] in [remembering and observing the Torah], just as King Solomon, may he rest in peace, said: Write them upon the tablet of thy heart (Proverbs 3:3), [and] bind them about thy neck (Proverbs 6:21). This means {20} that the Torah should always be on a person’s mind, in all one’s activities and movements, as it is said: In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths (Proverbs 3:6).

I have decided to include in this chapter the prohibition to wear sha‘aṭnez, meaning a garment that is made of two species, that is, wool and linen together (Deuteronomy 22:11). For this reason, we may not sew woolen garments with linen threads, and we may not weave the two species together, and we may not fold the two species into one garment, [all in accordance with the prohibition that] is written in Parashath Ki Theẓé. It is also forbidden for a man to wear women’s clothing, and for a woman to put on men’s gear, in order not to engage in bad, lecherous activity. It is also forbidden to round off the side-­growth of the head, and to shave the side-­growth of the beard, in the way that the nations do. But it is permitted to trim the hair on the head and the corners of the beard with scissors around the side, or with a razor, as long as they are not damaged; for this is acceptable, and this is the custom, so that the person’s hair will not become too heavy and massive. [Any] custom of dressing is acceptable, in accordance with the custom of each place and region, as long as it not be made of sha‘aṭnez. Moreover, because of the aspect of our being in Exile, it is not fitting to wear bright-­colored clothes; rather, they should be close to the color black, as is the custom of the Mourners of Zion and Jerusalem,[[98]](#footnote-98) may it be rebuilt and established speedily in our days.

Chapter 18

Regarding Matters of Impurity and Purity

Since God, blessed be He, chose the people of Israel, the nation that is close to Him, He gave them laws and fences, to behave in holiness and keep away from impurity, because the Divine Presence [shekhina] travels among them, as it is said [regarding the time of] the Giving of the Torah: Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy unto Me;[[99]](#footnote-99) and similarly: For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp (Deuteronomy 23:15) and, in Parashath Aḥaré Moth: Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things [ . . . . ] (Leviticus 18:24). Now there are different kinds of impurity. The impurity of a person can come from the inside or from the outside. The impurity from the inside comes from [the person] themselves, such as a zav [one who has had a genital secretion], or a leper [suffering from the mysterious ẓara‘ath affliction], or the impurity of a seminal emission, for a man [who has experienced the emission] or a woman [into whose body the semen has entered]. The impurity of ẓara‘ath lasts seven days. The impurity of the zav is [such that] from the time that the discharge ceases, the must person count seven clean days, and then be pure in the evening [following the seventh day]; and [the zav] must also wash his clothes. The impurity of a seminal emission lasts only one day. A person who touches someone impure needs to wash their clothes, and has an impurity that lasts for only one day.

A female has another kind of impurity from herself, namely menstrual impurity [nidda]. In this matter there is a difference of opinion between us and the Rabbanites. For the Rabbanites count seven clean days for the menstruant from the time when the blood stops flowing; but the Karaite sages explain [the matter] as it is written in the Torah, requiring [her] to be in menstrual impurity for seven days from the moment when she sees the first blood. Even if she sees blood during all seven days, there is no concern, for this follows the way of nature; but if, after she becomes pure [at the end of] the seventh day, she sees blood on the eighth day, then she is called a zava, and she must disregard days [from the count toward purity] as long as she sees blood, and [only] when [the blood flow] ends, she must count seven clean days, and she will be clean in the evening [at the end of the seventh clean day]. On the other hand, if she does not see any blood throughout {21} the eighth day, but she sees on the ninth day or later, then she must treat herself as a menstruant. In this requirement, too, the Rabbanites changed Torah’s words, for they do not observe the impurity of a menstruant as required by the laws of the Torah, but rather according to their own wishes they made laws only to separate the woman from her husband during the time of her menstruation – but apart from this, the [Rabbanite] women use the house as if they were pure, and also eat at the same table [as pure people], which is the opposite of the divine intention. According to the opinion of the Karaite sages, the woman must be careful about impurity, in the best way; that is, she should not touch anything pure, neither implements nor the bed, but she should have her own implements for eating and drinking, and for all other uses, during the time of her menstrual impurity. If she touches a pure object, it contracts impurity, and then it is necessary to purify the defiled item in accordance with the nature of its material, as will be explained later. A woman after childbirth follows the same rules as a menstruant, for forty days for a male [child], and for twice as many, that is eighty days, for a female [child].

Outside impurity [includes] the impurity from a corpse, which contaminates a person impure for seven days, whether by touching or by being in the same tent, as it is written in Parashath Ḥuqqath Ha-­tora: When a man dieth in a tent [ . . . . ] (Numbers 19:14). Also, someone who touches any of the above-­mentioned impure persons – such as a menstruant, a woman after childbirth, a zav, or a zava – or their bedding, needs to wash their clothes, and will be impure for a day. If a person dies suddenly in a house, and the owner of the house does not notice it in time to remove the movable objects so that they not become impure, then one must purify the objects that have become contaminated, in accordance with their kind, whether they are of metal, plant material or inanimate[[100]](#footnote-100) material, as it is written in the Torah: every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make to go through the fire (Numbers 31:23), and anything that can abide the water, make to go through water, and they will be pure. The time when the article becomes pure is sunset in the evening. There is no other way that [these objects] can become pure. This is the case for objects that are moveable, which can be brought from place to place. On the other hand, if the objects are not movable, such as a house and its fixed parts, and parts attached with nails so that they do not fall, and also jugs[[101]](#footnote-101) and ditches that are dug in the ground, such that they are not movable, then they do not contract impurity; even if the above-­mentioned incident [death of a person] occurs, they do not become impure. The same is true for orchards, plants, unpicked fruit that is still on the tree, and water that flows in the river or is in springs or pits. In general, anything that cannot be detached from its place does not become impure, for it is said: it must be put in water (Leviticus 11:32).[[102]](#footnote-102)

If any vermin or carcass of a contaminating animal, as explained in Parashath Shemini [Leviticus 11:29 ff.], falls on objects that can contract impurity, such as foods; drinks; anything called an implement, whether of wood or of hide; clothes; blankets; or anything that people use – then, we, the Karaites, treat them as impure, and take great care. On the other hand, the Rabbanites are very lenient in these matters: if impure vermin falls into food or a beverage, <they estimate if there are fifty-­nine kosher parts, and the sixtieth part impure, and [if so], they permit that food or beverage>;[[103]](#footnote-103) they say in their Oral Torah that the impurity is nullified in sixty parts. {22} <According to this, if 59 young goats and one little pig are cooked in one pot, everything is kosher.>[[104]](#footnote-104) This is a great rebellion against the Torah. Dry grains do not contract impurity from a person dying in the tent; but if they are ground up, or roasted over fire, or soaked in water, then they become impure. For according to the opinion of our sages, five things render items susceptible to contract impurity, for which the acronym is MMṬMʔ – water [mayim], salt [melaḥ], grinding [ṭeḥina], knife [ma’akheleth], esh [fire]; they themselves also bring about impurity,[[105]](#footnote-105) for slaughtered and salted items also contract impurity. Some of them can never leave [their impurity] for a state of purity, but others can, as has been explained above.

Chapter 19

Regarding *Sheḥiṭa* (Kosher Slaughter)

The foundation for this matter comes from the time of Noah the Righteous, may he rest in peace, as it is said: Only flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat (Genesis 9:4). This means not to cut a limb from an animal that is still alive, as they used to do at that time, which was [an act of] great cruelty and also a coarse way of eating, to the extent that Noah, his sons, and the generations coming after them were adjured to keep away from it; [this was the situation] until the time of Moses our Teacher, may he rest in peace, through whom there came a second commandment, as it is written in Parashath Re’é: then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the Lord hath given thee, as I have commanded thee (Deuteronomy 12:21). If we examine the issue by means of logical Analogy [heqqesh], [we see that] it was forbidden to Noah to eat animals that were still alive, and from Moses our Teacher, may he rest in peace, we were adjured not to eat animals that died by themselves or animals that died without slaughter, as is written in Parashath Aharé Moth: And every soul that eateth that which dieth of itself, or that which is torn of beasts (Leviticus 17:15), and also in Parashath Re’é: Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself [ . . . . ] (Deuteronomy 14:21) – then the consequence is that animals must be eaten in a way different from these two, which is slaughter [sheḥiṭa] at the throat, as known to the people of Israel from the transmission that has been passed down from generation to generation. In any event, there is evidence from the Torah in a hint, when it says: he shall pour out the blood thereof, in Parashath Aharé Moth (Leviticus 17:13), for it is possible to drain the blood from the whole body only by cutting the four main blood vessels in the animal’s throat, which are the sources of the blood in the whole body.

Now sheḥiṭa, as practiced among the Jewish people, has two reasons: the first is to drain most of the blood from the body of the animals; the second is to act compassionately with the animals, to take their life in the lightest way, mercifully – not as they used to do in Noah’s time, to cut a limb from the living animal and have the animal suffer for several days, and not as the gentiles do it now, by hitting with a draw-­knife and a hammer, they strike down with hatchet and hammers,[[106]](#footnote-106) and stab with knives. This [kind of slaughtering] is included in the definition of ṭerefa [“torn flesh”, which is forbidden]. Now, according to a ruling of the early sages, slaughtering according to the [proper Jewish] practice needs {23} to be carried out by a seemly person;[[107]](#footnote-107) [this is derived by] Analogy from the priests, who would do the slaughtering during the time of the Monarchy. The person also must be a believer, a person of good deeds and learned in God’s Torah, so as not to be on the same level as the animal; as King David, may he rest in peace, said: Man that is in honour understandeth not; he is like the beasts that perish [cf. Psalms 49:13, ibid. verse 19]. For it is not right for someone to cause the death of something on their own level; for humanity was given dominion and rule over the animals because of the great level of the [human’s] intelligent soul, as it is said: Yet Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels [ . . . . ] Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands [ . . . . ] (Psalms 8:6–7). The slaughtering needs to be performed with an iron knife that is designated for the purpose, with all its conditions, that is, the knife must be sharp and honed, and with no nick, and the other conditions. [And the slaughtering] must be performed in a forward-­and-­backward motion, in the lightest way, so that the animal will not suffer. The slaughtering needs to be carried out with dexterity. Moreover, it is necessary to investigate and to estimate that nothing happens during the slaughtering that will render it unfit. There are ten such [disqualifying conditions]:[[108]](#footnote-108) “leaving over” [hash’ara]; “waiting” [shehiyya]; “digging” [ḥalada]; “uprooting” [‘iqqur]; “pushing” [derasa]; “slaughtering at the bone” [hagrama]; “lifting up” [hagbaha]; “pulling down” [hashpala]; “beheading” [hattaza]; and “cutting off” [hafsaqa].[[109]](#footnote-109) Their explanation can be found in Sefer Ha-­miẓvoth,[[110]](#footnote-110) and in the books about slaughtering [written] by our sages.

It is forbidden to slaughter a parent and child on the same day, and this applies also to a pregnant animal. As it is written: ye shall not kill it and its young both in one day (Leviticus 22:28); and it is written: If a bird’s nest chance to be before thee in the way [ . . . thou shalt not take the dam with the young] (Deuteronomy 22:6). It is forbidden to slaughter a mammal, or any animal of the permitted species, if it is sick, whether it is from a natural disease or from having been hit or from any other mishap, such as broken [in its limb], or torn by a predator, as it is said: Every moving thing that liveth shall be for food for you (Genesis 9:3), and: These are the living things which ye may eat (Leviticus 11:2); for the word “living” sometimes refers to health, as in: for they are lively, in Parashath Shemoth (Exodus 1:19).[[111]](#footnote-111) According to the opinion of the Karaite sages, animals need to be checked before one slaughters them – to investigate their eating and drinking [habits], as well as the rest of their movements – so that the slaughtering will not be in vain, for naught, and the life of the animal be lost needlessly; for all the signs that render an animal permissible for consumption according to the laws of the Torah can be recognized while the animal is still alive, as will be explained in the following chapter. On the other hand, the Rabbanites are wrong in this matter, for only after the act of slaughter do they check if the animal is fit for consumption – and thus, most of the time, their slaughter ends up being in vain.[[112]](#footnote-112) It is also forbidden to slaughter an animal that [the Torah] rules to be sent away alive,[[113]](#footnote-113) or to be stoned,[[114]](#footnote-114) or burned,[[115]](#footnote-115) or put to death in any other way.[[116]](#footnote-116) [It is also forbidden to slaughter] an animal that is the result of crossbreeding.[[117]](#footnote-117) It is also forbidden for a Jew to castrate animals, as it is said: [That which hath its stones bruised, or crushed, or torn, or cut, ye shall not offer unto the Lord;] neither shall ye do thus in your land like so (Leviticus 22:24). But if a gentile castrates [animals] without our permission, it is permitted for us to derive benefit from them. If the slaughter is performed without observing the above-­mentioned conditions, then the slaughtered animal is called a carcass [nevela], and is not fit for consumption. Since the Rabbanites have a different way of slaughtering from ours, we do not allow [the consumption of] their slaughter, as all explained in the books of our sages, may they rest in peace. It was instituted by our sages to bless God at the time of the slaughter, for His permission to take an animal’s life for the needs of humans.[[118]](#footnote-118)

{24} Chapter 20

Regarding Food, Drink and the Ways of Conduct regarding Them

This is the book of human development:[[119]](#footnote-119) it is necessary[[120]](#footnote-120) that people’s food should be of types that are similar to their nature. There are five [such types]: plants, and four types of animals, namely: domestic mammals, wild mammals, birds and fish. The divine wisdom makes a specific fence, that there must be criteria among these species [to determine] which [ones] are fit for human consumption, according to their [human] nature, to replenish that which is excreted [from the chemicals that compose humans], and which are hard and not suitable [for human food]. Therefore, [divine wisdom] put clear signs in the Torah. For mammals, whether domestic or wild, there are two signs: chewing the cud and split hooves. For birds, it gives no signs about their nature, but it excludes [specific] forbidden or impure ones by name, in the Torah, in Parashath Shemini and Parashath Re’é; the remaining [birds] are pure, permitted for human consumption. Fish have two signs, namely fins and scales.

[This is] the way of rendering these species fit for human consumption. The domestic mammals – which are of three species, namely cattle, sheep, and goats – [are rendered fit] by means of slaughter and pouring out their blood onto the ground. Wild mammals and birds, too, [are rendered fit] by slaughter, and by covering their blood with dirt. Fish [are rendered fit] by being collected, that is, hunted [i.e., fished] from the water. After the slaughter is appropriately performed, according to the conditions stated in chapter 19 [of this work], there is also a further practice, [in order to avoid] the prohibition to eat blood, namely, porging the meat, that is, removing the arteries and veins from all parts of the slaughtered carcass, and washing the flesh three times in water, and salting it a bit with medium-­[grade] salt, that is, not too coarse and not too fine, so that the blood that remained from the porging will be drawn out. Afterwards, it is appropriate to boil the meat in water, so that the foam and filth will be removed.

There are still other conditions for turning the carcass into food. The forbidden fats [ḥalavim] – which are of five kinds, namely, the fat that covers the innards, the fat that is on the innards, the fat that is on the kidneys, the kidneys themselves, and the lobe above the liver; [plus,] in sheep, [a sixth fat, namely] the tail fat – are forbidden to eat, because they were brought on the altar as a fire-­offering, a sweet savor. And the sciatic nerve [gid ha-­nashé] and the other forbidden parts that are known from the Burden of the Inheritance to be porged from the meat are forbidden, and must be removed from the flesh of the carcass. From the statement Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother’s milk (Exodus 23:19), it is forbidden to eat meat with butter and milk. According to the opinion of our sages, [this prohibition applies only to] the meat [of species that that have] milk, such as the three species of domestic mammals, and the meat of wild mammals; but not the meat of birds or fish, for they do not have milk. But the Rabbanites, following the ruling of their sages, add further, prohibiting bird-­meat with butter or milk; and they are very careful in observing this, so that no meat utensils get mixed up with dairy utensils; for they have utensils for meat alone, and for dairy alone; they use special dishes for each one. They are careful about this as if it were a matter of impurity and purity. This is an addition to what is written in the Torah; whereas regarding [actual] impurity and purity, they are lenient, as we have explained above.

For the preparation of fish, there is no other condition or fence, only that they cannot be dead in the water, nor beaten [to death] after being collected [i.e., fished], but rather they must die a natural death [as a result of] being removed from the water. Also, one must {25} be careful after their death that they not touch or be mixed with unclean species of fish. Anything that issues from a clean animal is permissible for consumption, such as eggs and milk; and also honey, for it is not susceptible to contracting impurity, as one can demonstrate from Scripture. Anything that issues from an unclean [animal] is forbidden. If an impure thing, such as the meat from a carcass or a torn animal, or unclean vermin, touches or falls by chance into one of these [pure] foods or drinks, or if [the pure foods or drinks] have been prepared in contaminated or impure vessels, then they become forever impure, and cannot be rendered pure.

Chapter 21

Regarding Conjugal Union, and Taking a Wife

It is the custom in the Karaite community for the betrothal[[121]](#footnote-121) to be performed by emissaries – the man who is betrothing sends an emissary to represent him; and, from the young woman’s side, her father or one of her relatives [serves as the emissary]. They make a binding agreement about known conditions, to which the two sides agree. The betrothal is performed through three acts; these [acts] are: [payment of] the bridal price [mohar], [signing of a] written document [kethav], and [giving of] consent [raẓon].[[122]](#footnote-122) If all three acts are performed, then the agreement is binding; but if any one of them is missing, the agreement is invalid. The value of the bridal price is in accordance with the custom of each place, for it is not specified in the Torah. On the other hand, the Rabbanites have a fixed rate for the bridal price, from the rulings of their sages. The emissaries and witnesses write and sign the conditions of betrothal, [to which the parties] have agreed, and this is called “the conditions of betrothal” [tena’é ha-­’erusin]. From this time on, the man is called the groom [ḥathan], and the betrothed woman, the bride [kalla].

The custom for the wedding [is as follows]: the groom makes a [festive] meal, and goes to his father-­in-­law’s house with his friends, who are called “groomsmen” [shushbinin], and with his whole party; they accompany him with songs and hymns, and musical instruments, and they carry his portions in front of him. When they arrive, the cantor or the most noble person covers the head of the bride with a nice cloth, with verses appropriate for the occasion,[[123]](#footnote-123) such as Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants [ . . . ] And let the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us, from Psalms 90 [verses 16–17]; afterwards, they say A Song of Ascents, [Psalms] 126. They dress the bride in a garment that the groom has vowed to her, which is called “the bridal-­price of virginity” [mohar ha-­bethulim]. Afterwards, [the people all] feast and make their hearts merry, and the friends of the groom, that is, the groomsmen, rejoice with merry heart, and dance with the bridesmaids until the afternoon. The groom and the bride, each one in their own house, prepare themselves for the oath affirming the contract. [The guests] accompany the groom with beautiful songs, and they gather at the house of the [father]-­in-­law to make the bridal canopy. The elders and the dignitaries sit and write in the written document [sheṭar kethubba] the fact of the marriage and the dowry that the bride is bringing in from her father’s house to her husband’s. And they sign on the later bridal price [mohar ha-­me’uḥar], which is what the husband obligates himself to [give] to his wife, so that she can provide for herself during the days of her widowhood, God forbid, or if she gets divorced; [this is] so that he will not take the agreement and the contract lightly and annul it. At least ten elders sign on all this; [this is derived] by Analogy from the story of Boaz and Ruth.[[124]](#footnote-124) Afterwards, they have the groom and the bride stand in front of the elders, under a cover made from a ṭalleth, and the cantor performs the [ceremony of the] bridal canopy, by saying the Seven Blessings, which are presented in the {26} second volume of the prayer book, and with Biblical verses that are appropriate for the situation. Then [the guests all] eat their evening meal, and make their hearts merry, until the end of the wedding, in accordance with the couple’s [financial] means. The Sabbath closest to the conclusion of this business is called the Matrimonial Sabbath [shabbath ḥathanim]; its customs can be found in the prayer book mentioned above.

The rules of a lawsuit concerning virginity:[[125]](#footnote-125) According to the opinion of our sages, [such a lawsuit] must be on the morning after the [ceremony of the] bridal canopy, and its laws can be found in Sefer Ha-­miẓvoth by Rabbenu Aaron bar Elijah, or in the book Addereth.[[126]](#footnote-126) Moreover, according to the Torah’s law, a husband must suspect his wife of infidelity[[127]](#footnote-127) if he sees telltale signs of adultery in her. During the time of the Monarchy, they used to examine [the suspected wife] through [the ordeal of] the water of the unfaithful woman [mé soṭa], [which would be conducted] by a priest; but during the time of the Exile, if [the husband] sees a sign of this transgression, he must not approach his wife [sexually] until she is tried by law, with evidence and testimony; but a single witness is acceptable for such testimony, and even a woman’s testimony is acceptable. The signs that are indicative of the deed [of adultery], and the laws regarding them, can be found in the above-­mentioned books. If the woman is found guilty, then she must be divorced, because of the unseemly thing,[[128]](#footnote-128) and she forfeits her kethubba and her later bridal price. This law applies also to a woman who is found not to be a virgin [on her wedding night]. The sentence for adultery during the time of the Monarchy was death, as written in Parashath Qedoshim [Leviticus 20:10]; and during the time of the Exile, [the sentence is] lashes and other punishments, as court estimates [to be appropriate], through penitential suffering and afflictions.[[129]](#footnote-129) The remaining laws pertaining to this matter are clearly explained in the Torah.

Chapter 22

Regarding Forbidden Sexual Relationships (*‘Arayoth*)

Every Jew is severely warned not to marry nor have sexual relations with the persons included in the eleven verses that appear in Parashath Aḥaré Moth, [starting with] chapter 18, verse 7, for at the end of the passage it is written: even the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people [Leviticus 18:29]. Due to the depth [and difficulty] of the matter, there is a disagreement among the Jewish sages, the Karaites and Rabbanites. Moreover, there is disagreement even within the Karaite sages; for the earlier ones, who were called the merakkevim,[[130]](#footnote-130) prohibited many persons who are not included in the above-­mentioned [Biblical] passage, who cannot be derived through Analogy; rather, [these sages] derived Analogy upon Analogy – and the later sages did not agree to this. [The opinion of the merakkevim survived] until the sage R. Joseph the Seer and his student R. Yeshu‘a came, and argued with the merakkevim, and brought out the law in its true meaning. In accordance with what they carefully derived, with their intellectual honesty, from the above-­mentioned verses, they established that there are six ways to learn about forbidden and permitted sexual relationships, according to the opinion of the above-­mentioned R. Yeshu‘a:

1) A man is forbidden to six kinds of nuclear relatives [she’erim], namely his father, mother, brother, sister, son, and daughter. The prohibition on the female relatives [is that he must not have relations] with them, such as the mother, sister, and daughter; but [the prohibition] on the male relatives applies to their wives, namely the father’s wife, brother’s wife, and son’s wife, for they are in [conjugal] clinging to the nuclear relatives.

2) A man is forbidden to [further] relatives,[[131]](#footnote-131) namely his father’s brother and sister, his mother’s brother and sister, his brother’s son {27} and daughter, his sister’s son and daughter, his son’s son and daughter, and his daughter’s son and daughter. This prohibition is derived from the verse: [Thou shalt not uncover] the nakedness of thy father’s sister [ . . . . ] [Leviticus 18:12]. [The prohibition] on the females [is that he must not have relations] with them; and the prohibition on the males applies to their wives.

3) There is a prohibition on a man [against having relations] with two people who are relatives of each other, but not related to him, as it is written: Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter [Leviticus 18:17]. Accordingly, a man is prohibited [to have relations with] a woman and her father, a woman and her mother, a woman and her brother, a woman and her sister, a woman and her son, a woman and her daughter. The prohibition on the females [is that he must not have relations] with them; and [the prohibition] on the males applies to their wives.

4) There is a prohibition on a man [against having relations] with a person and their relatives by one step of removal, as it is written: Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter; thou shalt not take her son’s daughter, or her daughter’s daughter, to uncover her nakedness: they are near kinswomen; it is lewdness [Leviticus 18:17]. Based on this statement, a man is prohibited [to have relations with] a woman and her daughter’s daughter, a woman and her sister’s daughter, a woman and her son’s son, a woman and her father’s father, a woman and her mother’s mother, a woman and her brother’s daughter. The [prohibition on such] relatives, on the females, [is that he must not have relations] with them; and [the prohibition] on the males applies to their wives.

5) There is a prohibition on two relatives [against having relations] with two relatives, as it is written: The nakedness of thy father’s wife’s daughter [ . . . . ] [Leviticus 18:11] – for the man and his son are two relatives, and the woman and her daughter are two relatives. By Analogy from this, two brothers are forbidden to marry two sisters, and two brothers are forbidden to marry a woman and her daughter. In general, any two relatives are forbidden to any two-­relatives, whether they are parent and child, or siblings.

6) There is a prohibition on two nuclear relatives [to have relations with] a person and their relative by one step of removal, as it is written: Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father’s brother [Leviticus 18:14]. And this is an act of mighty exegesis,[[132]](#footnote-132) which the above-­mentioned R. Yeshu‘a derived mightily: for here [in this verse], the word “relative” [she’er] is not mentioned, as it is in the preceding verses; [so,] from that fact, we see that the father’s “brother” is not actually the father’s relative, but [the father]’s stepbrother, that is, the son of the man’s paternal grandfather’s wife from another man. Now, the man and his grandfather are a person and a relative by one step of removal, and the grandfather’s wife and her son are two [nuclear] relatives. And because the grandfather has married the mother of the father’s stepbrother, therefore, it is not acceptable for the man, who is the grandson, to marry his step-­uncle – and since both of them are males, the prohibition applies to the step-­uncle’s wife. This rule applies to [pairs of relative that are related through] ancestry and descent, but not [to pairs related] through sibling relations, as is all very well explained in the book Addereth, which is [also] called Sefer Ha-­miẓvoth, as the reader will find.

And if it happens accidentally, that is, that people who are forbidden in [any of] the above ways get married and have sexual relations, then, when the matter becomes known to the court, they must separate the couple without a writ of divorce [geṭ], for the marriage is not valid with a forbidden partner, and the marriage is considered as if it did not happen.

{28} Chapter 23

Regarding Inheritance and Its Distribution

Inheritance was customary before the giving of the Torah, for it is a social arrangement and custom, as we find regarding Abraham our Father, may he rest in peace: But unto the sons of the concubines, that Abraham had, [Abraham gave gifts] (Genesis 25:6); lo, one born in my house is to be mine heir (Genesis 15:3). Therefore, the Torah did not leave this matter unexplained, [as we see] from its note on the matter of Zelophehad’s daughters, in Parashath Pinhas, [Numbers] chapter 27, [verses 6–11]. In general, it explains that the children inherit the land-­inheritance and other [things] left over from their parents, and the males always come before the females. In the absence of nuclear relatives, the more distant relatives in the clan inherit, in the following manner: if a man dies has no son, then his son’s son will receive the inheritance. If he has no grandson, then his father or mother will inherit, if they are still alive. If he has no [living] father or mother, then his brothers or sisters inherit. If he has no brothers or sisters, then his grandparents will inherit, that is, his father’s father and mother, or his mother’s father and mother, if they are alive. If he has none of these, then the brothers of his father or mother, or their sisters, inherit. A man is obligated to arrange [the] inheritance [of his estate] in this way; and if he is unable, then he must appoint executors for his estate, or, if he dies without a will, then the court[[133]](#footnote-133) must appoint executors to distribute the inheritance according to the above-­mentioned way, that is, the sons inherit the estate, and strive to marry off the daughters. The firstborn son receives a double portion of his father’s property; the meaning of “a double portion” is twice as much value as any other one son. Thus, [for example,] if there are three sons, one of whom is the firstborn, then they must divide the estate into four portions, and the firstborn will take a double portion; and always, [however many sons there are,] they add one more portion, which goes to the birthright of the firstborn.

Moreover, regarding a man’s inheritance of his wife’s estate – according to the opinion of our sages, the man does not inherit from his wife; rather, her sons stand in her place [to receive her inheritance], and, in the absence of sons, the relatives that are close to her from her clan. But according to the opinion of the Rabbanites, it is the opposite: the husband inherits from his wife. They do not have any support from the Torah; but rather, they cite an argument from the words in Parashath Pinḥas, [Numbers] chapter 27, [verse 11:] and he shall possess it, [which they read as: and he shall possess her.] This is a result of their folly in grammatical matters, for that verse does not even mention a woman; rather, it says he shall possess it, with the pronoun othah in the feminine form referring to the inheritance [naḥala], a [grammatically] feminine noun.[[134]](#footnote-134) [Moreover, according to the Karaite sages,] when a woman’s husband dies, she does not inherit all his estate, but may only claim her kethubba and her later bridal price from his property.

The firstborn for the inheritance is the firstborn of the father,[[135]](#footnote-135) not the firstborn of the mother,[[136]](#footnote-136) because that one is not clearly known.[[137]](#footnote-137) And if the preceding [birth] was a stillbirth or a daughter, it does not take away [the first son]’s birthright. The reason for [the birthright of the firstborn is that he is] the son who helps his father before all other sons, and therefore receives a double portion.

Chapter 24

Regarding Mourning and the Laws of Burying the Dead

The commandment to bury the dead is known from common sense; it is called “kindness and truth”, as Jacob said: and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt (Genesis 47:29). The way of practicing this commandment, [as known] from the Burden of the Inheritance, is to wash the dead person, to close his orifices, to close his mouth and his eyes, to dress him {29} in a white shroud, befitting his dignity, and to bury him in a wooden coffin. We dig sufficiently deep in the ground such that the smell of his flesh will not come out. During the whole time that the dead person lies in the house, [the people] recite dirges, and comfort the mourners, and eulogies are delivered, if the departed person is dignified enough [to deserve them], with words expounding [on the Torah], and with stories of his dignity, regarding his good deeds or his wisdom and ancestry. Afterwards, they carry him with poles on their shoulders,[[138]](#footnote-138) and the whole community together recites the Acknowledgment of the Judgment [ẓidduq ha-­din],[[139]](#footnote-139) with Biblical verses appropriate for the occasion, as presented at the end of the second volume of the prayer book. After the burial, the family members and other relatives sit on the ground for seven days, and observe mourning for thirty days. In honor of parents, the children[[140]](#footnote-140) observe mourning for close to a year; and similarly, a husband for his wife, and a wife for her husband, observe mourning for a year. During the seven days of mourning, each one of the members of the community is obligated to visit the mourners, and to comfort them with food and a cup of consolation in [that] order, each one. The practice of mourning is to refrain from all kinds of pleasures and indulgences, and to stay away from things causing happiness. In general, the bereaved change their clothes, their way of speaking, and all their activities, in the way of mourners, as explained in detail in the book Addereth, [derived] by Analogy from the prophecy of Ezekiel.[[141]](#footnote-141) In any event, the law of the Torah is that one does not need to mourn too much, as it is written: Ye are the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead (Deuteronomy 14:1). For this [excessive mourning by self-­laceration] was the custom of the idol worshippers; [and we are obligated to be different from them,] as it is said: for all the men that followed the Baal of Peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from the midst of thee (Deuteronomy 4:3). And we were promised in the words [of the next verse]: But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day (Deuteronomy 4:4).[[142]](#footnote-142)

1. A pun on two verses: King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood (me-­‘aẓé) of Lebanon (Song of Songs 3:9); and But the counsel (va-­‘aẓath) of the Lord, that shall stand (Proverbs 19:21). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A conflation of two verses: He made the pillars thereof of silver (Song of Songs 3:10), about Solomon’s palanquin; and The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver (Proverbs 10:20). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Continuation of Song of Songs 3:10, about Solomon’s palanquin: the top thereof of gold. Our author uses the word zahav (Z-­H-­B), “gold,” as an acronym: Z represents the numeral seven; H stands for “tradition,” ha‘taqa; B stands for smoothly, beḥalaq. The text indicates these letters with special symbols over them. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. We have translated the word dath as “legal code.” The Hebrew word dath (derived from the Persian word dāta) is often translated as “religion,” but refers more specifically to the legal and ceremonial aspects of a religion. In that regard, we have translated it as religion elsewhere, where context seems to dictate that understanding. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Again from Song of Songs 3:10, about Solomon’s palanquin: the seat thereof of purple. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The conclusion of Song of Songs 3:10: the inside thereof being inlaid with love, from the daughters of Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This is the version of the name that appears in ed. Neubauer. However, MS Frankfurt Hebr. Oct. 271 reads “Uppendorff,” and indeed, this seems to be the correct reading; if we accept this reading, the addressee is Johann Uppendorff (1645–1698) of the University of Riga. See Daniel Lasker, “The Karaite Reception of David Gans’ Work” Judaica Bohemiae 51,1 (2016), p. 153, note 17; Riikka Tuori, Karaite zĕmīrōt in Poland-­Lithuania: A study of paraliturgical Karaite Hebrew poems from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (PhD Dissertation, University of Helsinki, 2013), p. 80, note 213. Tuori notes that somewhere along the transmission of the text of The Palanquin, “[a]pparently the German Baron Samuel Puffendorf (1632–1694) has been confused with the Swedish Uppendorff.” [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629), Professor of Hebrew at Basel, and author of many works on Hebrew and Judaism. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Literally “confused in the land,” using the words of Exodus 14:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Literally “are unable to open the door,” using the words of Genesis 19:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Book of Genealogy, by Abraham Zacuto (1452 – c. 1515). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Abraham ibn Da’ud (1110–1180), author of Sefer Ha-­qabbala, available in English translation by Gerson Cohen: The Book of Tradition, Jewish Publication Society, 1967, reprinted 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The Chain of Tradition, by Gedalya ibn Yaḥya (c. 1515 – c. 1587). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. R’ Isaac Abravanel, a Spanish Rabbanite. See p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The Order of All Time, an ancient rabbinic chronographic work, attributed to the second-­century sage R. Yosé ben Ḥalafta, available in English translation by Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology, Jason Aronson, 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. David’s Sprout, by David Gans (1541–1613). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The Book of the Khazar, by Judah Ha-­levi (c. 1079 – 1141), available in English translation by Hartwig Hirschfeld, Book of Kuzari, 1905, revised 1930, reprinted 1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. That is, clearly; using the language of Judges 5:31. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Hebrew eth qasti nathatti ba-­‘inyan, a very clever re-­write of Genesis, 9:13, eth qashti nathatti be-­‘anan (I have put my rainbow in the cloud). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Actually, Appiryon ‘Asa Lo = 758, and Sefer Minhagé Qara’é = 759, but it is customary not to be concerned with a difference of one when calculating gemaṭriyya. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. It is unclear exactly what the author means. In the longer version of the work, as found, e.g., in manuscript New York JTS Mic. 3325, he writes that his name is signed in the word ‘asa, whose three letters expand into an acrostic of ‘asa ha-­melekh shelomo, “King Solomon made” (with the order of the words switched). The phrase, and the title of the book, are taken from Song of Songs 3:9: King Solomon made himself a palanquin from the wood of the Lebanon [Forest]. Our author’s name was Solomon, though he was not a king, so using this verse as the title of the book alludes to his name. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Because of the word “divisions,” our author uses this verse to introduce his discussion of the divisions of the Jewish people. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The text in ed. Neubauer has the odd spelling porshim, rather than the usual perushim; one might read this as “separatists” or “schismatics,” but it is clear that our author understands the Pharisees as the main group of Jewish sages, the ancestors of both Karaites and Rabbanites, so the spelling is probably a quirk. Both our author and his contemporary, Ḥakham Mordecai ben Nisan, the author of Royal Attire, assert that the Pharisees were the precursors to both the Karaites and the Rabbanites. See Royal Attire, pp. 27–29. In the Middle Ages, Rabbanite sages, such as R. Abraham ibn Ezra and Maimonides, referred to Karaites as Sadducees, a group that opposed the Pharisees during the time of the Second Temple. See Abraham ibn Ezra’s comment on Leviticus 23:40, and Maimonides, Mishné Tora, Laws of Slavery 6:6. Neither Royal Attire nor this short version of Appiryon ‘Asa Lo accepts the view that the Karaites are related to the Sadducees. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Thus in ed. Neubauer: First time Eliezer, second time Eleazar. In Josippon, ed. David Flusser (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1978, chapter 30, pp. 19 ff.), the name is Eleazar throughout; Flusser does not indicate any manuscripts that have the variant “Eliezer”, but these similar names are often interchanged in Hebrew texts. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. This must mean either “his father John” or “his grandfather Simeon.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The suspicion is that his mother had either been raped by a non-­Jew, or committed fornication with one, while in her captivity. If such an act produced John Hyrcanus, he would not be a priest, because priesthood is transmitted from father to son. Moreover, a woman who has been involved in sexual impropriety is forbidden to marry a priest (see Leviticus 21:7); according to rabbinic halakha, any descendant of a priest and such a woman is not a priest (Babylonian Talmud Qiddushin 77a); thus, even if John Hyrcanus was not descended from this act of fornication, but from a union between his mother and his father after the fornication, rabbinic halakha would not consider him a priest. On this point, many of the Karaite sages agree with the rabbinic halakha. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Here, the form used for Pharisees in ed. Neubauer is even more unexpected: meforashim. This literally means “people set apart” or “people designated;” our author may understand “Pharisees” as meaning “separatists, ascetics.” [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. If we assume 68 CE as the year of the destruction of the Temple (as assumed in most traditional Jewish chronology), then this would come out to 57 BCE, whereas our author’s date for Antigonus would come out to 187 BCE. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. This sentence uses the language of Psalms 12:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. In the Hebrew, the chapter headings begin variously with the particle be-, or the word be‘inyan or odoth. All of these mean “regarding, concerning, on the matter of.” For the sake of consistency, we have rendered them all into English as “regarding.” [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Because the term “Analogy” translates the Hebrew heqqesh, a technical term indicating one of the three foundations of the faith, we capitalize the word from here on, just as we capitalize the words “Scripture” and “Burden of the Inheritance.” [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The mediaeval Karaite understanding of this verse is ye shall cause no fire to burn; but, as we shall see in chapter 3, our author does not understand Scripture to forbid leaving flames lit, but only actual kindling of flames on the Sabbath. Therefore, we have kept the JPS translation of this verse, as is our usual practice regarding Biblical verses. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. That is, how to determine what day is the first of the month. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Our author often cites Biblical passages by parasha, that is, the Torah-­portion in which the passage occurs, according to the traditional Jewish cycle of reading the Torah over the course of a year. See below, chapter 12. In all such cases, we have added chapter and verse numbers, so a reader unfamiliar with the parasha divisions will have no trouble finding the precise citations. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. In our punctuation of this sentence, we have split these various aspects into two categories: the place of circumcision on the body, which is derived from the word male in Scripture; and the other aspects, which are known only from the Burden of Inheritance. This resolves the apparent contradiction in this sentence, for our author begins by saying that we know these from Scripture, but concludes by saying that we know them all from the Burden of Inheritance. It is also possible not to split the aspects into two categories, and to read the author as meaning that all this is commanded by Scripture, even though it is not stated explicitly, and we need the Burden of Inheritance to tell us what Scripture means. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The JPS translation reads: and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. However, our author makes a point of the meaning of the word shuv as “go back” (rather than “again”), so we have translated the verse accordingly. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The order of words in Hebrew in the Exodus verse, uleẓela‘ ha-­mishkan ha-­shenith, would read in English as: “and for the side of the tabernacle, the second one.” Thus, the word “second” is closest to “tabernacle;” but nonetheless, the verse is clearly not describing a second tabernacle, but a second side, so the word “second” must refer to the word “side” earlier in the verse, not to the adjacent word “tabernacle.” In Joshua, too, the word “second” is closer to the word “circumcise,” but our author argues that it refers to a word earlier in the sentence, “go back.” [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. It is unclear exactly how the author reads the verse to refer to these two principles, but presumably he reads a second time to mean “a second rule, in addition to the first one.” [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. This sentence seems to refer not to circumcision, but to the principle that preserving life takes precedence over all other commandments. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. That is, one must stop working for a bit of time already before the onset of the shabbath proper, and not start working again until a bit of time after the conclusion of the shabbath proper; this extra time is called shabbathon. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Kareth refers to the Biblical penalty of being ‘cut off’ from the People of Israel (Genesis 17:14 et passim). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. The words “with only one [human] touch” suggest that our author permits kindling of fire before the Sabbath because human involvement in the fire ceases after the initial “touch.” [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Presumably the words “holy” and “blessing” refer to Genesis 3:3: And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; and to Exodus 20:11: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Babylonian Talmud, Kethubboth 62b. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The author’s words “because of the sacrifice” seems to refer to the fact that the New Moon, just like the festivals, has a special musaf sacrifice. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. The aviv is the spring barley that ripens in the Land of Israel. Because the Torah calls Nisan (which is the month of Passover) “the month of the aviv” (Deuteronomy 16:1), the calendar must not be allowed to drift to such an extent that Nisan falls before the ripening of the aviv. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The golden number generally refers to a year’s placement within the nineteen-­year cycle, and usually does not refer to the entire cycle itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Seven years in the cycle are intercalated, that is, have an extra month. It is not clear whether our author uses the term “evens out” to convey that in any given year Nisan will not come before the appearance of the aviv, or whether over nineteen years this intercalated calendar evens out with a calendar based on physical observation. Here we note that the Karaite Ḥakhamim Judah Hadassi (Constantinople, twelfth century) and Israel Ha-­ma‘aravi (Egypt, 1313) reported that the Karaites of their day who lived close to the Land of Israel would investigate the state of aviv and set their calendars accordingly. See Royal Attire, pp. 167–168, n. vi. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. “The average calculation” and “the equal calculation” are synonymous, for using the average position of the moon means assuming that the length of every lunar month is equal. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The Rabbanites have rules to postpone the celebration of the New Moon by a day if it the calculated date will cause certain holidays to fall on certain days of the week. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. The days of the week here are all indicated by acronyms. The first acronym is BaD”U, that is, Passover may not begin on Monday (the second day of the week, beth), Wednesday (the fourth day of the week, daleth), or Friday (the sixth day of the week, vav). Our author alludes ironically to this acronym when he uses the word “fabricated,” badu, earlier in the sentence, which is also an allusion to I Kings 12:33: And [Jeroboam] went up unto the altar which he had made in Beth-­el on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised [bada] of his own heart. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Sanctifying the month in the evening would mean sanctifying it before it is visible at all, because the new moon is not visible until at least twelve hours after the old moon has disappeared. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Hebrew qesheth ha-­re’iyya (cf. Maimonides, Mishné Tora, Laws of Establishing the New Month, chapter 17). Ed. Neubauer prints qeẓath ha-­re’iyya, “a bit of calculation,” which makes no sense in this context, so we propose this emendation, which yields perfect sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Indeed, the majority historical Karaite view is that the local moon is the moon that determines the start of months. See Royal Attire, pp. 161–164, n. iii. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. That is, a leap year must have thirteen months, and the extra month is always a second Adar, never a second Nisan, a second Iyyar, or any other month. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. That is, apparently, they treat both day thirty and day thirty-one as the New Moon, and, consequently, if the doubt is not resolved, both day forty-four and day forty-five as the first day of Passover, etc.; and, similarly, for the holidays in Tishri. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. In the Biblical context, this verse is about Shavu‘oth; however, our author is using it here in the context of Passover and the Festival of Maẓẓoth. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. This list of five grains that can become ḥameẓ is identical to the list in Mishna, Pesaḥim 2:5. The first two names (ḥiṭṭim, which is wheat, and se‘orim, which is barley) are clear, but the identification of the remaining three is controversial. Zohar Amar has written an entire book on the subject (from a Rabbanite-­Talmudic, but scientific, point of view): Five Types of Grain: Historical, Halachic, and Conceptual Aspects (Hebrew), Mechon Har Bracha, 2011. Because our author mentions the same rare, uncertain names of grains as the Mishna does, it is clear that his list derives, whether directly or indirectly, from the Mishna. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. See Ḥ’ Elijah Bašyachi, Addereth Eliyyahu, ‘Inyan Ḥag Hamaẓẓoth, Chapter 5, folio 39c. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. The first instance of “legumes” translates the Hebrew qiṭniyyoth, and the second translates Hebrew zer‘onim. The two Hebrew words are usually synonymous, though the author seems to have understood zer‘onim as a subset of qiṭniyyoth. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. In the Middle Ages, there was an intra-­Karaite debate regarding the definition of ḥameẓ. Some Karaites held, as does our author, that in the context of the Festival of Maẓẓoth, the only forbidden ḥameẓ is that produced from these specific grains; this is also the Rabbanite view. Other Karaites held that ḥameẓ refers to fermented products in general, even from non-­grain sources. See Ḥ’ Elijah Bašyachi, Addereth Eliyyahu, ibid., folio 39d, who cites this opinion, but strongly opposes it. The practice of the Karaite Jewish community in Egypt in modern times was to refrain from consuming all fermented products. See Mourad El-­Kodsi, The Karaite Jews of Egypt: 1882–1986 (Lyons, N.Y.: Wilprint, Inc., 1987), p. 146, note 6, and 148, note 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. There is a syntactical ambiguity in the author’s words here, in the phrase “the day following the Sabbath that falls during the seven days of Passover” – what falls during the days of Passover: the Sabbath, or the day following the Sabbath? This ambiguity results in a practical difference only if the first day of the Festival of Maẓẓoth is a Sunday, in which case that Sunday falls during the seven days of Maẓẓoth, but the Sabbath that precedes it does not. If the relevant Sabbath must be during the week of Maẓẓoth, then in such a year, the sheaf-­waving, and the beginning of the count, would not be until the next week, the Sunday following the Passover holiday. However, if only the Sunday need be during the days of Maẓẓoth, then the sheaf-­waving, and the beginning of the count, would be on the first day of the holiday. The standard Karaite approach is that the Sunday must fall out during the festival (see Addereth Eliyyahu, ‘Inyan Ḥag Ha-shavu‘oth, Chapter 6, folio 42d, who discusses this at length). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Literally “the day after the holiday” (yom ṭov), for the first day of Passover, unlike the next five days, has the status of yom ṭov, a holiday when work is prohibited. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. The term shabbath bereshith, “the Sabbath of Creation,” is used in post-­Biblical Hebrew writing to mean specifically the day “Saturday;” it refers to the fact that the Sabbath is introduced at the end of the account of creation, in Genesis 2:1–3, and is used to distinguish Saturday from other meanings of the word shabbath, such as the Sabbatical year (Leviticus 25:2 et passim), and, according to the Rabbanite interpretation, the first day of Passover (see the next sentence in Appiryon). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Jehoiachin was one of the last descendants of King David to reign in Jerusalem. He was followed only by his brother Zedekiah, whose children were all killed, so Jehoiachin’s descendants are the heirs to the Davidic throne. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Corresponding to 640 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Using the language of Isaiah 53:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. That is, may whatever sins he may have committed in his lifetime be atoned by his tragic death. Note that the claim that the Rabbanites killed ‘Anan is almost certainly not historically correct, but it was not entirely invented by the author of Appiryon. Rather, it seems to be an expansion of what is found in the works of earlier authors, who suggested that the Rabbanites sought to kill ‘Anan but without success. See Jacob al-­Qirqisānī, The First Section of the Book of Lights and Watchtowers, chapter 8, translated by Bruno Chiesa and Wilfrid Lockwood, in Ya‘qūb Alqirqisānī on Jewish Sects and Christianity (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984), p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. In Genesis 1, the account of creation, each days is described as there was evening and then there was morning, and this is how dates on the Jewish calendar work, for both Karaites and Rabbanites. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. That is, the offering of the two loaves of bread from the new wheat-­crop, called “bread of the first-­fruits” (leḥem ha-bikkurim) in Leviticus 23:20. This is completely different from the firstfruit ritual described in Deuteronomy 26, to which Scripture never assigns an explicit date. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Scripture never gives an explicit date for the Revelation at Sinai, but it states that the people arrived at the Wilderness of Sinai in the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt (Exodus 19:1), i.e., the month of Sivan, in which Shavu‘oth always falls. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. This is a quote from the Rabbanite text Pirqé Avoth (included in the Mishna) 3:20. The quote continues: “And when there is no Torah, there is no flour.” [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. God’s response, through Zechariah, in 7:4 ff., does not directly answer the question of whether or not the fasts still apply in the Second Temple period; in 8:19, he says that these fasts will become joy and gladness, and cheerful seasons, but it is not clear whether he is talking about the present or about some unspecified period in the future. Our author clearly understands Zechariah as referring to the future. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. That is, the Book of Lamentations, Ekha. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. That is, various passages from prophetic books, which rebuke the people. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. This seems to mean that Ezekiel 40 is read liturgically on this day; this chapter of Ezekiel promises the building of a future Temple, so this is “evidence” that is used for consolation. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. This expression, “commemoration of a teru‘a” or “commemorative teru‘a,” is a subject of dispute between Karaites and Rabbanites. Most Karaite interpreters understand the word teru‘a as meaning “shouting,” whereas Rabbanite tradition understands it as meaning “blowing the shofar (animal horn).” The 1917 JPS translation of Scripture, in accordance with the Rabbanite tradition, renders the expression as: a memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns. At least one Karaite sage, Ḥ’ Daniel al-­Qūmisī, advocated blowing the shofar on Yom Teru‘a as a means of promoting repentance, though it is unclear whether he believed that this was required by Leviticus 23:24, or merely advisable to stir people to repent. See Royal Attire, p. 185, n. xxvii. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. A verb from the same root as the noun teru‘a. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. The Holy of Holies, the holiest place in the Temple. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Hebrew sikkekham, a verb from the same root as the noun sukka. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. The Hebrew word for “influence,” hashpa‘a, comes from a root meaning “outpouring;” the author seems to be alluding to the outpouring of blessing that God gave the Israelites in the Wilderness, both physically through protection and spiritually through the influence of the Torah. He may also be alluding to the outpouring of blessing that God gives every year in the harvest, which is celebrated on Sukkoth. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. The expression ‘the Good Figs’ is a reference to the vision in Jeremiah 24, where God shows the prophet two baskets of figs (verse 1); One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first-­ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs [ . . . ] (verse 2). God explains to Jeremiah the significance of this vision: Like these good figs, so will I regard the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans, for good. And I will set Mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land [ . . . ] (verses 5–6); whereas the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad; surely thus saith the LORD: So will I make Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem (verse 8). The identification of this group of righteous exiles with Karaites or proto-­Karaites is made by the eleventh-­century Karaite author Elijah ben Abraham, in his work The Split of the Karaites and Rabbanites [Hilluq Ha-­qara’im Ve-­ha-­rabbanim], printed in Pinsker, Liqquṭé Qadmoniyyoth, volume 2, p. 101. See Fred Astren, “Karaite Historiography and Historical Consciousness,” in Meira Polliack, ed., Karaite Judaism: History and Literature (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Once on the Saturday night before Purim, once on the first day of Purim, and once on the second day of Purim. Indeed, the traditional Karaite view is that two days of Purim are to be celebrated by all Jews, regardless of whether one lives in a walled or an unwalled city. See James Walker, editor and translator, Esther Explained: Megillat Esther with Commentary by Hakham Ya’aqov ben Re’uven, Daly City: The Karaite Press, 2016, comment to Esther 9:26. Rabbanite halakha requires the reading of the Book of Esther only on one of the two days; Jews in cities that were walled in antiquity read it on the fourteenth of Adar, while Jews in cities that were unwalled (or not yet in existence) in antiquity read it on the fifteenth of Adar. See Shulḥan ‘Arukh volume Oraḥ Ḥayyim §688 (and at paragraph 4, where it states the Jews in a city that whose walled status in antiquity is uncertain must read on both days). Nonetheless, even according to Rabbanite halakha, both of the two days are considered Purim everywhere in the world, and are celebrated as joyous days (Shulḥan ‘Arukh volume Oraḥ Ḥayyim §696:3, and R. Moses Isserles’s gloss on §695:3). There were also Rabbanite communities that had the custom of reading the Book of Esther on the two Saturday nights preceding Purim, although this is not required by Rabbanite halakha. See Tractate Sofrim, 14:15–16 (ed. Michael Higger, New York, 1937, pp. 269 f.). This is quite similar to the Karaite practice of reading it on the Saturday night immediately before Purim. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. The context is: If they sin against Thee [ . . . ] and Thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive unto the land of the enemy; [ . . . ] yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, [ . . . ] and pray unto Thee toward their land [ . . . ] then hear Thou their prayer and their supplication [ . . . . ] (I Kings 8:46–49). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. “What is usual” – Hebrew mequbbal, i.e., “accepted” (for people in the general populace). Alternatively, the word might mean “what is received,” that is, understandings of the religion that have been received in teachings from previous generations; if so, the author would be saying that a cantor must not rely on this, but give independent thought to the matters of the religion. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Hebrew galgal, corresponding to the Latin sphaera; according to late antique and medieval astronomical understanding, these are enormous clear spherical containers, which cause the motion of the planets and other celestial bodies. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. “In the words” – ed. Neubauer reads “according to the words” (ke-­divré), and we have followed this in our Hebrew text; but it is likely to be a typographical or scribal error for “in the words” (be-­divré). [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Literally, “every man with his own standard, according to the ensigns,” using the language of Numbers 2:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Literally, “the Lord’s hand is not too short,” using the language of Isaiah 59:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Literally, “is the Lord’s right hand lifted high,” using the language of Psalms 118:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Using the language of Ezekiel 1:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Hebrew syntax somewhat difficult, literally: “The first one, and its perfection.” This reading, ha-­rishona ushlemuthah, is probably a typographical error for ha-­rishona lishlemuthah; but we have kept the text as in ed. Neubauer. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Wellsprings of Rescue, a commentary on the Book of Daniel. The reference in Neubauer reads either “side 2” or “72”; but something seems to be missing, for “side 2” would need a reference also to folio number, and “72” cannot refer to a chapter, for there are not 72 chapters in the book; it could refer to a folio number, but we would need to know the specific edition in order for this number to be meaningful. In any event, the reference is evidently to Wellspring 6, Palm 5, commenting on the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s experience living among the wild animals in Daniel 4:21–25; Abravanel there rejects the idea that humans can be reincarnated into animals. However, in Abravanel’s commentary on Deuteronomy 25:5–10, he enthusiastically advocates the idea that humans are reincarnated into other humans. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Many early Karaite sages, held that women were indeed obligated to wear ẓiẓiyyoth. This was the position of Ḥakham Ya‘aqov Qirqisani (tenth century), Ḥakham Levi ben Yefeth (eleventh century), and Ḥakham Judah Hadassi (twelfth century). In contrast, both Ḥakham Aaron ben Elijah (fourteenth century) and Ḥakham Elijah Bašyachi (late fifteenth century) write that the commandment is limited to men. See Royal Attire, pp. 187–189, n. xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Ḥakham Judah Hadassi (twelfth century) writes that fringes should be worn both day and night. See Eshkol Ha-­kofer, alphabet #241, letter gimmel (ed. Eupatoria 1836, folio 92 column b). In contrast, Ḥakham Elijah Bašyachi (fifteenth century) writes that one is only obligated to wear ẓiẓiyyoth during the day. See Addereth Eliyahu, ‘Inyan Tefila, Ch. 7 (ed. Eupatoria 1835, folio 60 column b). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Plural of ẓiẓith. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. That is, seven strands in the fringe on each of the four corners of the garment. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. A Karaite group from the ninth to eleventh centuries, who emphasized mourning for Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Our author appears to have merged two verses: Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy (Leviticus 20:7), and And ye shall be holy unto Me (ibid., verse 26). When our author says “at the Giving of the Torah,” he is presumably referring to a verse such as Exodus 19:10: Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-­day and to-­morrow. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Hebrew domem, literally “silent, dumb.” This word is often used in medieval and modern Hebrew to refer to inanimate substances such as rocks; however, here it might mean specifically items that will not react to fire by burning or shriveling up. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. The author is evidently referring to some type of jug that is welded into the ground; it is unclear exactly what this is. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. The argument is apparently that because anything immovable cannot be “put in water,” therefore it does not contract impurity. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Neubauer indicates these words in brackets; presumably, as in the next bracketed clause, they appeared in his manuscript in the margin. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Neubauer writes that these words appear in his manuscript in the margin, to replace the following words, which are found in the inside of the text: “They pour out sixty portions, and permit the rest.” [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. It is unclear how these items bring about impurity, beyond the fact that they render food susceptible to contracting impurity from contaminating causes. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Using the language of Psalms 74:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. The word used here is ish, which can mean either “man” or “person” in general. It is not clear what the author’s position is regarding female slaughterers. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. The list of conditions is preceded in ed. Neubauer by the word el, “to;” this word makes no sense in context, and is probably an error, but we have nonetheless included it in our Hebrew text. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. These conditions are highly technical, and an explanation of them goes beyond the scope of this work. For more information, see Shemuel Hakohen, Ritual Slaughter: A Modern Guide to Karaite Jewish Practice, translated by Isaac Sardar Ha-­levy (Daly City: Karaite Jews of America, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. There are various books of this title; it is unclear which one our author means. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. The verse is saying that the Hebrew women, when giving birth, are different from Egyptian women, for they are lively. Obviously, the Egyptian women are not dead; so the “life” of the Hebrew women must refer to health. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. For it turns out, retroactively, that the animal was not healthy, and thus they are unable to eat the meat. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Such as the leper’s bird, in Leviticus 14:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Such as the ox that gores, in Exodus 21:28 (which specifically states: its flesh shall not be eaten). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. This may refer to an animal that was in a city that is declared under the ban (ḥerem), such as Jericho at the time of Joshua; the Israelites burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein (Joshua 6:24). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Such as an animal that is in a city that has been led astray to idolatry (‘ir niddaḥath); the Torah commands: Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword (Deuteronomy 13:16). [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. For Scripture forbids crossbreeding animals (Leviticus 19:19). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. The modern Karaite blessing is thus: “Blessed are you Y·H·W·H our God, eternal king, who has sanctified us through His commandments, and permitted us to slaughter a pure domestic mammal,” or “a pure bird,” or “a pure wild mammal.” See Ritual Slaughter, p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Using the language of Genesis 5:1. JPS translates: This is the book of the generations of Adam; but here, the author is using it to mean: “In this chapter, I will discuss what is necessary for humans to consume, in order to live.” [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Literally “it requires;” this is probably just an impersonal construction, meaning “it is necessary;” but it is faintly possible that the author means that the verse Genesis 5:1 somehow requires people’s food to be similar to their nature. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Betrothal (erusin) in Jewish law is not equivalent to “engagement” in contemporary English, but is a binding legal status, a kind of incomplete marriage. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. The earlier Karaite halakhic work Addereth Eliyyahu, by R’ Elijah ben Moses Bašyachi, also requires consent; though it refers to consent with the word bi’a (Addereth Eliyyahu, Seder Nashim, chapter 1, folio 90a). This use of the word bi’a, literally “coming,” is in contrast to rabbinic use of the word to mean sexual intercourse (e.g. Mishna Qiddushin 1:1.) [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. It seems that these verses are sung by the cantor, not embroidered on the cloth. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Cf. Ruth 4:2: And he took ten men of the elders of the city [ . . . . ] [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. See Deuteronomy 22:13 ff.: If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, and lay wanton charges against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say: ‘I took this woman, and when I came nigh to her, I found not in her the tokens of virginity’ [ . . . . ] [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. The Book of Commandments of R’ Aaron ben Elijah is formally titled (and better known in Karaite circles as) Gan ‘Eden. The second work referenced in this sentence is Addereth Eliyyahu, by R’ Elijah Bašyachi. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. “Suspect his wife of infidelity” – literally, “be jealous of his wife,” using the language of Numbers 5:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Using the language of Deuteronomy 24:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. That is, the court rules that the guilty parties must engage in religious penances to atone for their act. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. This epithet is from the verb le-­harkiv, “to graft” (here used in the pi‘el conjugation, le-­rakkev). Under the system of the merakkavim, a husband and wife were deemed as one person or one flesh, based on the verse: Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24). As an example, the wife’s sister is considered to be the husband’s own sister and all the sister’s relatives are considered to be relatives of the husband’s own sister. Thus, if one pictures a family tree, it is like grafting the groom’s and bride’s family trees together at a single point: the bride and groom who are now one person. Cf. Ḥakham Ṭoviyya Babovich, Rosh Pinna (English edition forthcoming from the Karaite Jews of America), paragraphs 2.18 and 3.42. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. The same word is used as above, she’erim, but here it clearly does not refer to nuclear relatives, but to more distant relatives. It is possible that the text is corrupt, and should actually say: “relatives of she’erim” or “she’erim of she’erim.” [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. “Mighty exegesis” – Hebrew hagbara, literally “making mighty”. This is a term in Karaite exegesis that refers to items that may not be proven unequivocally. In such instances, the early Karaite sages (including R. Yeshu‘a) “strengthen” (or “accept”) the interpretation that has the most evidence (or least doubt), even though the interpretation cannot be derived with certainty. For this linguistic usage, compare Addereth Eliyyahu, ‘Inyan Sheḥiṭa, chapter 5, folio 62d, where higbir be-­da‘to, “he had it mighty in his mind,” means “he believed that this was most likely.” [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Hebrew ha-­din, apparently short for beth ha-­din. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Ḥakham Benjamin al-­Nahāwandī also was of the opinion that a man inherits from his wife. See The Remnant and the Relic: From the Books of Commandments of the Early Karaites (Daly City: The Karaite Press, 2017), p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Hebrew bekhor on, using the language of Deuteronomy 21:17 (the passage dealing with inheritance) and Genesis 49:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Hebrew bekhor reḥem, using the language of Exodus 13:2 et passim. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. It is not clear what our author means by “because that one is not clearly known.” [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. That is, the coffin is held up by poles, which the people bear on their shoulders. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Verses accepting that God’s decision to take the person’s life has been just. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Or “sons;” it is unclear if the author means to include daughters or not, since we see that he makes gender distinctions regarding various other commandments. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. In Ezekiel 24:15–18, God commands the prophet not to observe mourning practices for his dead wife. There are several things that he is told to do or not do; from this, we can derive that other mourners are supposed to do exactly the opposite. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. The author concludes the book with an optimistic Biblical verse, offering blessing to his readers; this is a common way for Jewish books to end. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)