

Post-Biblical Jewish Sources in al-Maqrīzī's Historiography—Whence His Knowledge?

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Abstract

In his *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa'l-I'tibār fī Dīkr al-Ḥiṭaṭ wa'l-Āṭār*, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442 CE) includes several chapters that draw on post-Biblical Jewish texts, *inter alia*. The academic literature has very little to say about the presentation that al-Maqrīzī thus creates. To correct this lacuna, this article illuminates al-Maqrīzī's exposure to and use of Rabbinic and Midrashic sources by offering examples of remarks in his writings that appear to have come from such sources—directly, through the mediation of Muslim scholarship, or in an in-between manner. Several conjectures about the origins of his knowledge are offered.

Key words: Midrash, al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, Rabbanites, Karaites, Jews of Egypt

Introduction

The Egyptian historian Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442 CE),¹ devoted several chapters to Jewish history and Judaism in his monumental topographical history of Cairo, *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa'l-I'tibār fī Dīkr al-Ḥiṭaṭ wa'l-Āṭār*, often known as *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*. One of these chapters deals with the Jewish Oral Law and its foundational post-Biblical texts, the Mishnah and the Talmud.² This chapter has received very terse treatment in the academic literature. Those who treat it do so descriptively and without offering insights. Simḥah Pinsker translated some of al-Maqrīzī's remarks on the Mishnah and the Talmud into Hebrew and suggested that al-Maqrīzī based them on a Karaite source.³ Eliyahu Ashtor, summarizing much of al-Maqrīzī's writings on the Jews and Judaism, claimed on the basis of their content that Pinsker was right: al-Maqrīzī had indeed consulted with the Karaites. Yet he does bring two cases of what seems to him possible Midrashic influence.⁴ Daniel Boušek translated most of al-Maqrīzī's writings about Jewish texts into English and

1 On his life and work, see ROSENTHAL 1991, RABBAT 2003, BAUDEN 2010, BAUDEN 2013, BAUDEN 2014.

2 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 950-952.

3 PINSKER 1860: 7-9.

4 ASHTOR 1944, 1: 373-375.

discussed them briefly, noting that al-Maqrīzī's passage about the Mishnah and the Talmud is the longest in medieval Islamic literature that he encountered. He, too, argues that the Karaites were al-Maqrīzī's source of information.⁵ Another scholar who suggests Jewish sources of influence on al-Maqrīzī's descriptions of Jews and Judaism is Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, who, in his critical edition of *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, refers mainly to Biblical verses.⁶

While the above-mentioned scholars pointed Karaite and Biblical influence on al-Maqrīzī's account, al-Maqrīzī's knowledge of the Jewish Oral Law, however, was more extensive than that alleged by scholars. Perusal of al-Maqrīzī's account of Jews and Judaism in *al-Ḥiṭaṭ* demonstrates an aspect of his work that has not been researched to date: his exposure to Rabbinic and Midrashic sources and his intertwining of this material at least nine times in his Jewish history, twice in his description of the Jewish calendar, and twice in his account of the Jewish Oral Law. This article discusses such contents and elements that al-Maqrīzī may have used (sometimes in part), suggests what his sources may have been, and considers what one may learn from this demonstration of knowledge.

(1) Moses' birthday

One of the topics that al-Maqrīzī describes in length is Moses' life. Describing the events of the Exodus, he writes that Moses was born on the seventh of Adar,⁷ a statement that demonstrates familiarity with a Midrashic idea. After all, the date of Moses' birth (and death) is mentioned not in the Bible but in the Talmud⁸ as well as in *Seder 'Ölam Rabbā*,⁹ a second-century CE Jewish chronology ascribed to R. Jose son of Ḥalaftā.¹⁰

(2) Prophecy about Moses' birth

Pharaoh's priests, al-Maqrīzī writes, saw in the stars that the Egyptian king's death would come about at the hands of someone born of the Israelites within a time frame of three years. Therefore, Pharaoh forbade the Israelites to have intercourse during these years. After he saw in the stars that this child had been born, he ordered the males to be massacred.¹¹ The account of having seen this in the stars is absent in the Bible. It is reminiscent of Exodus Rabbah, a work of Aggadic Midrash, redacted around the tenth century CE and apparently compiled by a copyist in the eleventh or twelfth century CE.¹² In Exodus Rabbah 1:18, according to which Pharaoh's sorcerers saw that Israel's savior would be sentenced on account of water, for which reason Pharaoh ordered all male babies

5 BOUŠEK 2012: 286-290.

6 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 922-963.

7 Ibid.: 923.

8 BT, *Megilla* 13b; BT, *Nazir* 14a.

9 *Seder 'Ölam*, 2, ch. 10: 249.

10 See BT, *Niddah* 46b; ROSENTHAL 2007.

11 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 927.

12 See HERR 2007a.

to be thrown into the Nile.¹³ Exodus Rabbah 1:24 clarifies the meaning of “on account of water”: Moses would be sentenced for his conduct in the *mei merībah* incident (where, instead talking to the rock, he struck it. Num. 20:7–13)—information of which the Egyptian sorcerers were oblivious.

(3) Moses' stuttering

After he mentions Moses' death, al-Maqrīzī writes that some Israelites claimed that Moses had been a stutterer (*alṭa'*). Some, al-Maqrīzī continues, traced this disability to a congenital defect; others said that it was the aftermath of an intervention by Pharaoh's wife, who urged him not to kill a child who could distinguish between coals (*jamr*) and dates (*tamr*). When Moses was instructed to eat coals, he placed his hand in his mouth, causing burns that made him stutter.¹⁴ Exod. 4:10 only alludes to the outcome and says nothing about its cause: “And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since you have spoken unto your servant, for I am slow of speech (*keḥad peh*) and slow of tongue (*keḥad lašōn*).”¹⁵ These defects may not necessarily be a stutter, possibly explaining why al-Maqrīzī reports that only some Israelites identified Moses as a stutterer. (Those who failed to make this identification were in all likelihood Karaites, who follow only the literal biblical text).

Al-Maqrīzī's words evoke Exodus Rabbah 1:26, according to which it was Pharaoh's daughter (not his wife) who raised Moses in his palace. As Pharaoh played with him one day, Moses lifted the crown from his head and placed it on his own. This caused the sorcerers to suspect that it was he whom they had seen in their visions as the usurper of Pharaoh's kingdom; hence they proposed that Moses be burned. Jethro, present at the scene, told them that Moses was just a child and therefore lacked judgment. He suggested that a platter with gold and coals be placed before the boy as a test. If Moses extends his hand to the gold, Jethro said, it means that he has the capacity of judgment; in that case, Pharaoh should indeed kill him. If Moses reaches out for the coals, he lacks such a capacity and is not dangerous. Moses reached for the gold but the angel Gabriel intervened and pushed his hand onto the coals. The boy, in pain, placed his hand in his mouth, causing internal burns that turned him into a stutterer. In this account of al-Maqrīzī's, Pharaoh's wife is mentioned instead of Jethro and the sorcerers and Gabriel do not appear at all.

Example no. 2 also appears in the first chapter of Exodus Rabbah, only a few sections after the example cited above. The occurrence of both examples in al-Maqrīzī's remarks suggests that he, or more likely his source, showed much interest in these passages; after all, the elements are not consecutive. Ostensibly this is not the case because al-Maqrīzī's words are almost identical to those of Abū 'Uṭmān 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Kinānī al-Baṣrī (776–

¹³ Cf. BT, *Sanhedrīn* 101b.

¹⁴ al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 935.

¹⁵ Translation taken from *The King James Version of the English Bible*. In certain cases, the translation is slightly modified to reflect (in my opinion) the Hebrew text more accurately.

ca. 868 CE), known as al-Ġāḥiẓ, in *Kitāb al-Bayān wa'l-Tabẓīn*.¹⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, however, adds that there are several opinions about the reason for Moses' stuttering. This raises the possibility of an in-between option: He learned about this Midrashic idea from al-Ġāḥiẓ but approached Rabbanite and Karaite Jews in his milieu in an attempt to obtain more details about it.

(4) "Like an inverted tub"

When the Israelites encamped at Mount Sinai in the third month of the Exodus (i.e., Sīvan), al-Maqrīzī writes, Allāh ordered Moses to have his nation purify and prepare themselves to hear His words. The Israelites purified themselves for three days and on the third day, the sixth of Sīvan, Allāh lifted the mountain (*rafa'a Allāh al-Ṭūr*), basked it in His light, and shadowed His surroundings with clouds. Amid thunder and lightning on the horizon, He issued the Ten Commandments (*ashr al-kalimāt*), which al-Maqrīzī then lists.¹⁷ This account is reminiscent of Exod. 19 in most of its details. The Biblical account of the revelation at Sinai, however, does not state that God lifted the mountain. This information appears only in BT *Šabbat* 88a: "[...] And they stood at the nether part of the mount' [Exod. 19:17]. R. Abdimī b. Ḥammā b. Ḥassā said: "This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain upon them like an inverted tub and told them: 'If you accept the Torah, very well; if not, there shall be your burial.'"

Two Qur'ānic verses report the lifting of the mountain: "We raised over you the Mount" (*wa-rafa'nā fawqakum al-Ṭūr*. Q. 2:93); "And We raised above them the Mount" (*wa-rafa'nā fawquhum al-Ṭūr*. Q. 4:154).¹⁸ Therefore, one may claim that al-Maqrīzī was inspired by these verses. Yet this is not the case. Perusal of al-Maqrīzī's account of Jews and Judaism in *al-Ḥiṭaṭ* reveals that he copied entire paragraphs from Chapter 4 of *Kitāb al-Ta'rīḥ*,¹⁹ a brief chronicle written in Judaeo-Arabic and featuring Rabbinical characters, attributed by some scholars to R. Sa'adya Gaon (882–942 CE).²⁰ This Midrashic content is one of them.²¹

(5) Copies of the Torah

Al-Maqrīzī writes that Moses, before he died, ordered the Israelites to write copies (*nusakh*) of the Torah along with its commentary (*qirā'a*) and to observe both the precepts that they had witnessed from his transmissions and those that they had acquired from him in jurisprudence (*fiqh*).²² Deut. 31:9 reads: "And Moses wrote this Torah and delivered it

16 al-Ġāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa'l-Tabẓīn*, 1: 53.

17 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 933.

18 Translation taken from ARBERRY 1964.

19 I demonstrated this in a recent article (under review).

20 See MALTER 1921: 172-173, 354; MARX 1909: 299-301.

21 *Kitāb al-Ta'rīḥ*, in NEUBAUER (ed.) 1892, 2: 95.

22 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 935.

unto the priests the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel.” According to some Midrashim, e.g., Deuteronomy Rabbah, 9:9, Moses wrote on the last day of his life not one Torah scroll, as stated in Deut. 31:9, but thirteen scrolls—one for each of the twelve tribes and one to be deposited in the ark for consultation in the event that a member of the nation seeks to falsify something.²³ The content of this source is definitely Rabbinic; no Karaite would claim that Moses transmitted *fiqh*, which probably refers to the Talmud. Even this, however, does not suggest that al-Maqrīzī drew his inspiration from a Midrashic source, since here too he copied from *Kitāb al-Taʾrīḥ*, which is, as mentioned, features Rabbinical characters.²⁴

(6) Clouds of glory

The Jews, says al-Maqrīzī, tell that dwelling in booths (as the Torah instructs them to do on the festival of *Sukkot*) reminds them of the shade that Allāh provided their ancestors in the desert by means of “the clouds.”²⁵ This is probably a reference to *ʿamūd he-ʿanan*, the pillar of cloud, also known in the Jewish sources as *ʿananei ha-kabōd*, clouds of glory,²⁶ one of the manifestations of God’s presence.²⁷ BT *Sukkah* 11b reports a disagreement about the meaning of Lev. 23:42: “I made the Children of Israel to dwell in booths.” R. Eliʿezer claims that these booths were *ʿananei ha-kabōd*; R. Aqiba defines them literally as booths.

One may claim that al-Maqrīzī was inspired by these sources or learned about this Midrashic idea from Egyptian Rabbanites, who apparently favored R. Eliʿezer’s opinion. (The text itself does not identify them as Rabbanite but one presumes that they were such because al-Maqrīzī cites a Midrash.) Al-Maqrīzī’s words, however, are almost identical to those of Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī (1272–1332 CE) in *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*,²⁸ who probably based himself on *Mabāhij al-Fikar wa-Manāhij al-ʿIbar* by Muḥammad .b. Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā al-Kutubī, known as al-Waṭwāt (1235–1318 CE).²⁹

(7) Pharaoh’s appearance

In his references to the Israelites in Egypt, al-Maqrīzī describes the Pharaoh of Moses’ time. He cites several opinions about the monarch, each beginning with the expression “and it was told” (*wa-qīla*), without specifying the source. One such source reports that Pharaoh was short and lame and had a long beard, black-blue eyes, a small left eye, and a mole on

23 See further, LAZARUS-YAFEH 1995: 81-88.

24 *Kitāb al-Taʾrīḥ*, in NEUBAUER (ed.) 1892, 2: 96.

25 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 945.

26 E.g., JT, *Yōmā* 2:1 (1:1); BT, *Taʿanīt* 9a; BT, *Yeḇamōt* 72a.

27 E.g., Exod. 13:21-22, 14:19, 33:9-10; Num. 12:5, 14:14, 31:15.

28 al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 1: 195. – On his life and work, see CHAPOUTOT-REMADI 1995.

29 al-Waṭwāt, *Mabāhij al-Fikar*, 1: 217. – On his life and work, see GHERSETTI 2013. See further, BAUDEN 2006: 132-133.

his forehead.³⁰ BT *Mō'ed Qaṭan* 18a also refers to Pharaoh's beard and height, in addition to the size of his genitals. These details are mentioned *en passant* in a discussion about the rules of mourning. They were transmitted by R. Pappa: "The Pharaoh who lived in Moses' lifetime [height] was one cubit (*amah*), his beard [length] was one cubit, and his genital [length] was one cubit and a pinky." As far as I can ascertain, this is the only Jewish source that addresses itself to Pharaoh's physical dimensions. Thus, despite the differences, the origin is Talmudic. Al-Maqrīzī or his source added more details about Pharaoh's looks, perhaps to add spice and interest to the story. It is noteworthy that physical descriptions of Pharaoh appear in earlier Islamic sources,³¹ Thus, it is not necessarily the case that al-Maqrīzī's source in this instance was Jewish.

(8) Elijah as Phinehas

When he discusses Ilyās, the Qur'ānic name of Elijah,³² al-Maqrīzī identifies this figure as Phinehas son of El'azar.³³ The Biblical account places Elijah and Phinehas in eras far apart. Such an identification, however, exists in post-Talmudic Midrashic texts such as *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* (henceforth: *PRE*), an eighth-century CE pseudepigraphic collection ascribed to R. Eli'ezer son of Hyrcanus (late first century–early second century CE).³⁴ *PRE* 46, for example, states in R. Eli'ezer's name that Phinehas is Elijah. In *Midraš Aggadah*, a Midrashic compilation on the Pentateuch edited in the twelfth/thirteenth-century CE,³⁵ it is stated at Num. 25 that Reish Laqīsh subscribes to this identification.³⁶

(9) Phinehas' miracles

After identifying Phinehas as Elijah, al-Maqrīzī writes that some Israelites fornicated with Amorite (instead of Midianite) and Moabite women; thus they invoked the wrath of Allāh, who brought upon them a plague (*wabā'*) that killed 24,000 until Phinehas charged into a tent where a man and a woman (Zimri son of Salū' and Cozbi daughter of Šūr—see Num. 25:14), whom he does not mention by name) were fornicating, and impaled both of them with his spear. Exiting the tent, he hoisted them (on his spear) and showed them to the congregation.³⁷ This description seems like a variation of a fragment of a passage in BT *Sanhedrīn* 82b that describes six miracles wrought for Phinehas when he killed Zimri and Cozbi. The fourth and fifth of these miracles, as described by R. Yōḥanan, were that "[Zimri and Cozbi] did not slip off the spear and an angel came and lifted up the lintel."

30 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 926.

31 E.g., Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal*, 1:322.

32 WENSINCK & VAJDA 1971.

33 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 936.

34 See HERR 2007c.

35 See ID. 2007b: 188.

36 BUBER (ed.) 1894, 2: 148 (Num. 25).

37 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 936.

Some of the miracles performed for Phinehas when he killed Zimri and Cozbi also appear in earlier Islamic sources,³⁸ thus again raising the possibility that al-Maqrīzī's source was not Jewish.

(10) Covenant of peace

After Phinehas killed the fornicating man and woman, al-Maqrīzī writes, Allāh promised him in the Torah “eternal peace” (*dawām al-salāma*).³⁹ This is a paraphrase of Num. 25:12: “And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Phinehas son of El‘azar son of Aaron the priest deflected my wrath from the Children of Israel in his zeal for my sake among them, and I did not consume the Children of Israel in my jealousy. Therefore I say, Behold, I give him my covenant of peace” (*laken ’emor hinenī noten lō ’et berūtī šalōm*. Num. 25:10–12). Al-Maqrīzī adds that some Jews interpreted this verse as instructing that Phinehas would not die and that he lived until the time of Jehoshaphat.⁴⁰ According to the Biblical account, Phinehas did not live until the time of Elijah. The story speaks of Ahab, king of Israel and the contemporary of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (see e.g., I Kgs. 22:2). Furthermore, the Biblical account states not that Elijah died but that he ascended to heaven in a whirlwind (II Kgs. 2:1–11). The idea of Elijah's eternal life appears in second version of *Aḥōt de-Rabbi Nathan*, 38 (*šenayim ’amdū*), a post-Talmudic commentary on, and an elaboration of, the Mishnaic tractate *Aḥōt*, attributed to Rabbi Nathan (late second-century CE), the redaction of which is assumed to have taken place in the Geonic period (late sixth–eleventh century CE):⁴¹ “Elijah will live and exist until the Messiah comes.”⁴²

(11) Ma‘āseh Ḥanūkkah

Describing the festival of Hanukkah, al-Maqrīzī writes that it is celebrated due to the overthrow of a tyrant who had taken over the Temple, killed those who were there, and demanded the *ius primae noctis* privilege. The sons of priests attacked the monarch and the youngest of them killed him. They searched for oil for the Temple but found only a small quantity, and declared the anniversary of those days a festival that they called Hanukkah.⁴³

Hanukkah is not mentioned in the Bible; Rabbanites are important sources of information about it because Karaites do not recognize it. The *ius primae noctis* motif appears in several sources. JT *Ketubōt* 5b (1:5) states that the Greeks “decreed that the governor [shall] first have intercourse [with women who marry].” In BT *Šabbat* 23a, R. Joshua says that women are obliged to light a Hanukkah candle—an unusual demand because normally women are exempt from time-bounded obligations—because they also

38 E.g., Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal*, 1: 322.

39 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 936.

40 Ibid.: 936-937.

41 See KISTER, M. 2007.

42 SCHECHTER (ed.) 1887: 52 (on 38:26).

43 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, 4/2: 946.

participated in the miracle: The Greeks ruled that every virgin bride must have intercourse with the ruler first and the miracle of Hanukkah, he adds, was brought about by a woman. This is probably a reference to the story of Mattathias' daughter.

One would assume that al-Maqrīzī was inspired by Midrash *Ma'aseh Hanūkkah*, which reports that Mattathias' daughter, Hanna, tore her clothing on her wedding day in front of the guests. When her brothers spoke of wishing to kill her for this reason, she asked them why they should be angered by what she had done even as she was about to be given to the Greek governor. You should learn from Simon and Levi, she then told them; they were only two and yet successfully overcame the people of Nablus, whereas you are more than 200. Her brothers learned indeed: They escorted her to the governor, who thought they had come to surrender her to him, and when they entered his house they killed him in their zealotry.⁴⁴ Yet al-Maqrīzī's words, as in Example no. 6, are taken from al-Nuwayrī, who relied on al-Waṭwāt.⁴⁵

(12) The Mishnah—written by divine command at Sinai

In the chapter that deals with the Jewish Oral Law, al-Maqrīzī begins by saying that Allāh gave the Torah to Moses and included in it “the commandments of the Mosaic faith” (*sharā'i' al-milla al-Musawīyya*). In the Torah, al-Maqrīzī continues, Moses instructs any future ruler of the Israelites to write a book that will lay down the laws of the Halakhah (*aḥkām al-sharī'a*) in a way that would allow him to study and then implement them. This book, al-Maqrīzī writes, is called Mishnah (*mishnā*) in Hebrew, a term denoting the extraction of the laws from the divine text (*istikhrāj al-aḥkām min al-naṣṣ al-ilāhī*). Moses wrote the Mishnah—a commentary (*tafsīr*) on the contents of the Torah from the divine word—in his own hand.⁴⁶

The allegation that Moses wrote the Mishnah evokes the beginning of a dictum by Joshua b. Levi in JT, *Pe'ah* 13a (2:4): “Scripture, Mishnah, Talmud and Aggadah, even anything that a longstanding student will teach in the presence of his mentor, were already told to Moses at Sinai.” Another possible source of inspiration for al-Maqrīzī in this context is BT, *Berakhōt* 5a (especially given the proximity of the terms Torah and Mishnah in this source as in that previously mentioned), which states that Scripture, Mishnah, the Prophets, the Hagiographa, and the Talmud were given to Moses in Sinai. (Al-Maqrīzī makes such a claim only in regard to the Mishnah and not in reference to the Talmud.)

(13) Yōḥanan b. Zakkai—the “smallest” of Hillel's disciples

In his account of the Jewish Oral Law, al-Maqrīzī writes about Shammai (50 BCE–30 CE) and Hillel (late first century BCE–early first century CE). After noting their contribution to the Mishnah, he notes: “Hillel had eighty students, of whom the smallest (*aṣgharuhum*)

44 EISENSTEIN (ed.) 1915: 190.

45 al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 1: 197; al-Waṭwāt, *Mabāhij al-Fikar*, 1: 218

46 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Hītat*, 4/2: 950.

was Yōḥanan b. Zakkai.”⁴⁷ This is based on the end of a statement in BT, *Sukkah* 28a: “Hillel the Elder had eighty disciples, thirty of whom were worthy of having the Divine Spirit rest upon them, as [it did upon] Moses our Teacher, thirty of whom were worthy of having the sun stand still for them [as it did for] Joshua b. Nun, [and the other] twenty were ordinary. The greatest of them was Jonathan b. Uzziel, the smallest of them (*qaṭan she-be-kūllan*) was R. Yōḥanan b. Zakkai.”

Conclusion

Many Midrashic contents and elements entered Islamic sources through the mediation of Jewish converts and of Muslim authorities who had learned them from Jews. Midrashic material has been used in Islamic literature from early times for different purposes: Qur’ān interpretation,⁴⁸ folklore,⁴⁹ and polemics, sometimes to allege that Jewish sources are fabricated⁵⁰ and in other cases to argue that they foreshadow the advent of Muhammad.⁵¹ Al-Maqrīzī’s case is different. He uses Midrashic ideas to describe episodes in the Jewish historical narrative. This aspect of his historiography squares with the Rabbanite, not the Karaite, treatment of the Jewish sources. This study of al-Maqrīzī’s writings on Jews and Judaism demonstrates that he was familiar with ideas from post-Biblical Jewish compendia such as the Talmud (both BT and JT), *Exodus Rabbah*, *PRE*, *Abōt de-Rabbi Nathan*, and *Kitāb al-Ta’rīḥ* (and possibly *Seder ‘Ōlam Rabbā* and *Midraš Aggadah*). In the case of *Kitāb al-Ta’rīḥ*, he simply copied the contents *en passant*.

One may speculate that al-Maqrīzī was familiar with, and made use of, additional Jewish materials that had been absorbed into, and/or rewritten in, early Islamic literature, as in Examples 3, 6, and 11 (and, theoretically, in Examples 9 and 7). This, however, is highly improbable in some cases for several reasons. First, in two instances he clearly copied them from *Kitāb al-Ta’rīḥ*, and in one instance he may have used a late Midrashic source (*Midraš Aggadah*); thus, the likelihood of contents from this source having been absorbed into the Islamic literature is lower. Second, most of the materials relate to two Biblical figures: Moses and Phinehas. Al-Maqrīzī speaks of Moses when he discusses Dumuwa synagogue and of Phinehas when discusses Jawjar synagogue. The description of the synagogues is very short compared with that of these personalities, whose stories al-Maqrīzī tells as part of these synagogues’ history and whom al-Maqrīzī discusses at length for an unknown reason. It is very likely that he absorbed information on synagogues and

47 Ibid., 4/2: 951.

48 See MAZUZ 2016b.

49 See KISTER 1972, MAZUZ 2013.

50 See MAZUZ 2017, MAZUZ 2016a: 121-124.

51 See MAZUZ 2016c.

their history from Jewish informants.⁵² Only one of the examples in this article relating to Moses' life was taken from an earlier Muslim sage (Example 3), suggesting that here his sources should be sought outside Islamic literature. If so, al-Maqrīzī was an eclectic who conflated information that he absorbed and compiled from varied sources, Jewish and non-Jewish. In addition, previous studies show that al-Maqrīzī used additional Jewish sources without citing them by name.⁵³

Al-Maqrīzī's knowledge implies one or several of the following possibilities as to its origin: (1) He had some access to Midrashic sources because someone had either told him about them or translated them for him orally—giving him information more characteristic of Rabbinic Jews than of Karaites. The possibility that he learned about this material from Karaites does exist, since some Rabbinic excerpts were found in medieval Karaite literature. Yet, judging by the contents of the excerpts that were found so far, and on their small extent in the medieval Karaite literature,⁵⁴ the chances for that are not high. Future research and findings may change the picture. (2) These sources may have been translated into Arabic and/or Judaeo-Arabic in his milieu and, perhaps, in or before his lifetime. The translations may have strayed somewhat from their origin, possibly explaining the minor differences between his version and the Midrashic ones. If so, who translated them and when? How widely were they disseminated? These questions remain unanswered. (3) Al-Maqrīzī was able to read the Hebrew language or the Hebrew alphabet, at least to some extent. As mentioned above, he copied extensive parts of *Kitāb al-Ta'rīḥ* into his account. Possibilities 1 and 3 are proved.

In addition to the many insights that may be gained by studying the Midrashic elements in al-Maqrīzī's writings, this line of inquiry may be instructive of his Jewish milieu and the prevalent teachings of the Rabbinic Jews of Egypt in his day and possibly before it. This study is another piece in the puzzle relating to our knowledge of the familiarity of Rabbinic Jews in Egypt with Midrashic works. The discovery of many fragments of Halakhic and Aggadic Midrashim in the Cairo Genizah may suggest that these accounts were familiar to Egyptian Jews.⁵⁵ Recently, I published an article on the use of Midrashic sources for polemical purposes by Sa'īd b. Ḥasan al-Iskandarī, a thirteenth-century CE Alexandrian Jew who converted to Islam.⁵⁶ Further research would enhance our knowledge of familiarity with Midrashic contents among the Jews of Egypt in the Late Middle Ages and possibly even earlier.

52 Several Jewish authors who preceded and lived after al-Maqrīzī—Benjamin of Tudela (1130–1173 CE), R. Joseph b. Abba Mari b. Kaspi (1279–1340 CE) and Joseph b. Isaac Sambari (1640–1703 CE)—confirm the connection between Moses and the Dumuwa synagogue. Sambari, however, associates Elijah with the al-Šāmiyyīn synagogue. See Ibn Kaspi, *Mašref la-Kesef*, 156–157; Ibn Kaspi, *Ṭirat Kasef*, 139; Sambari, *Sefer Dibrei Yosef*, 154, 158. See further, MAZUZ [2018b].

53 See ASHTOR 1944, 1: 372; WASSERSTROM 1999: 169; FRENKEL 2012: 329–330.

54 See TIROSH-BECKER 2011, 83–107.

55 See, e.g., KUTSCHER 1968: 103–116, KAHANA 1992, KAHANA 2002, MAZUZ [2018a].

56 MAZUZ 2016c. – On Sa'īd b. Ḥasan see further, MAZUZ 2015.

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