

Aspects of the Biblical Material World in Medieval Judeo-Arabic: Flora and Fauna in Abū al-Faraj Hārūn's Glossary *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz al-Ša'ba fī al-Miqra* to Isaiah

Aspectos del mundo material de la Biblia en el judeoárabe medieval: La Flora y la Fauna en el glosario Šarḥ al-'Alfāz al-Ša'ba fī al-Miqra a Isaías de Abū al-Faraġ Hārūn

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Abstract

This article examines how Abū al-Faraj Hārūn identified, translated, and interpreted the ancient biblical terms in the book of Isaiah in Arabic to learn about the material world of the Bible, as it was then perceived in the medieval Arab world and Persia. The article focuses on the topics of flora and fauna, providing a comparative analysis of Abū al-Faraj Hārūn's definitions in the *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz* with the writings of other Karaite scholars from his circle and those of prior, contemporary, or later rabbinic exegetes. The study of these terms in scholars' writings reveals that many of them were not understood in the same way by medieval exegetes; each interpreted the different terms and translated them into Arabic according to their understanding and the accepted interpretation in their times and places. Therefore, it is little wonder that conflicting opinions arose among different biblical commentators in different eras and different regions. Yet, it also occasionally happened that a biblical word was left untouched, without being translated into Arabic.

Resumen

Este artículo examina cómo Abū al-Faraġ Hārūn identificó, tradujo e interpretó en árabe los antiguos términos bíblicos del libro de Isaías para conocer el mundo material de la Biblia, tal como se percibía entonces en el mundo árabe medieval y en Persia. El artículo se centra en los temas de la flora y la fauna, proporcionando un análisis comparativo de las definiciones de Abū al-Faraġ Hārūn en el *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz* con los escritos de otros estudiosos karaítas de su círculo y los de exegetas rabínicos anteriores, contemporáneos o posteriores. El estudio de estos términos en dichos escritos revela que muchos de ellos no fueron entendidos de la misma manera por los exegetas medievales; cada uno interpretó los diferentes términos y los tradujo al árabe de acuerdo con su comprensión y la interpretación aceptada en su tiempo y lugar. Por lo tanto, no es de extrañar que surgieran opiniones contradictorias entre los diferentes comentaristas bíblicos en diferentes épocas y regiones. También ocurrió que una palabra bíblica se dejó como está, sin ser traducida al árabe.

Keywords: Judaeo-Arabic; biblical Hebrew philology; *realia*.

Palabras clave: Judeoárabe; Hebreo Bíblico; *realia*.

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1. Introduction

1.1 *Šarḥ/Tafsīr al-'Alfāz al-Ša'ba fī al-Miqra* (= Explanation of the Difficult Words in the Hebrew Bible)¹ is a bilingual, Hebrew-Arabic glossary of Biblical Hebrew. It is apparently the last book composed by the influential Karaite scholar Abū al-Faraj Hārūn², who lived and was active in Jerusalem in the tenth and eleventh centuries,³ and who wrote on various subjects, including all aspects of Hebrew grammar⁴.

The treatise's existence was first mentioned by A. E. Harkavy⁵, who described it as a work containing explanations of difficult words in the Hebrew Bible but, as noted

1 Henceforth *Šarḥ*, *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz*. The composition's title is not written uniformly in the manuscripts. A. E. Harkavy (1881:158. See note 5 below) mentions it under the name شرح الألفاظ (= explanation of the words). It would seem that he saw a short version of the book's title, perhaps even in Arabic script, but did not mention in which manuscript he saw it. The title appears in different forms in various manuscripts, for example: *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz allatī fīha Šu'uba fī al-Miqra wa-Dīkr 'Istīqāqihā* (= Explanation of the Difficult Words in the Bible and Mention of Their Derivation), *Tafsīr al-'Alfāz al-Ša'ba* (= Explanation of the Difficult Words), *Tafsīr 'Alfāz al-Miqra* (= Explanation of the Words of the Bible), etc. For more on the names of this work and references in the manuscripts, see, for example, Basal, 2018b: 323-324.

2 As the author himself states explicitly at the end of the book, he exceeded the request made by the person who had ordered the book and included also some matters of semantics and grammar which he had not mentioned in previous writings. He did not defer the discussion on these issues to a more appropriate subsequent composition because he feared he would die in the meantime or that other troubles would prevent him from completing the project (Goldstein, 2014: 373: 11-12 and the English translation, *ibid.*: 365).

3 Abū al-Faraj and his writings are discussed in numerous recent studies. For a partial survey, see Basal, 2018b: 321-322, n. 3.

4 He is the author of the following works: *al-Kitāb al-Muštamil 'alā al-'Uṣūl wa-al-Fuṣūl fī al-Luġa al-'Ibrāniyya* (= The Comprehensive Book on the Foundations and Branches of the Hebrew Language), henceforth: *al-Muštamil*, *Muštamil*; *al-Kitāb al-Kāfī fī al-Luġa al-'Ibrāniyya* (= The Sufficient Book on the Hebrew Language), henceforth: *al-Kāfī*, *Kāfī* [on its luxurious scientific edition see Khan *et al.*, 2003; Basal, 2006]; *al-Madḥal 'ilā 'Ilm al-Diqdūq fī Turuq al-Luġa al-'Ibrāniyya* (= Introduction to the Science of Grammar on the Ways of the Hebrew Language); the Masora treatise *Hidāyat al-Qārī* (= Guidance of the Reader); the biblical commentaries *Takwīš* (= "Digest" of Ibn Nūh's commentary on the Pentateuch) and *Šarḥ/Tafsīr al-'Alfāz al-Ša'ba fī al-Miqra* (= Explanation of the Difficult Words in the Bible), which is the subject of the present paper. Previously two other works were also ascribed to Abū al-Faraj: *Muxtaṣar al-Kāfī* (= Abridgment of *al-Kāfī* [= The Sufficient]) and *Kitāb al-'Uqūd fī Taṣārīf al-Luġa al-'Ibrāniyya* (= The Book of the rules on Inflection in the Hebrew Language). However, following Meir Zislin's and Nadia Vidro's research (Vidro, 2011: 7-10, § 2.2), scholarly opinion today tends to hold that the latter works were composed by another Karaite sage, who lived in the second half of the eleventh century and whose identity is unknown. For a recent discussion of these works see, for example, Basal, 2018b: 322, n. 4.

5 Harkavy, 1881: 158. See also Olszowy-Schlanger, 2001: 181.

above, did not provide the manuscript's number. A few years later, Samuel Poznanski⁶ identified British Museum MS BL Or. 2499 (pp. 1-21) as a part of the treatise mentioned by Harkavy, a proposal which G. Margoliouth accepted in his catalogue of Hebrew and Samaritan manuscripts in the British Museum Library⁷. Poznanski repeated this identification in another article in which he published passages from the British Museum manuscript⁸. However, in our opinion, this manuscript text does not belong to *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz* and certainly does not constitute another version of it⁹.

Numerous manuscripts of the work in question have been preserved in various libraries throughout the world. The number of extant copies testifies to its popularity¹⁰. Almost all the manuscripts are written in Judeo-Arabic, in Hebrew script. Three are written in Arabic script¹¹.

1.2 Biblical glossaries and word lists are a genre that existed already before R. Saadia Gaon's (882-942) translation of the Pentateuch. The first modern scholar who mentioned the existence of bilingual Hebrew-Arabic glossaries and word lists in medieval Judeo-Arabic literature was S.D. Goitein¹². Several subsequent articles also discussed this genre, occasionally accompanied by original texts¹³.

Abū al-Faraj composed the glossary *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz al-Ša'ba fī al-Miqra*, at the end of which¹⁴ he explicitly states that he did so at the request of Abū al-Ṭayyib Šmu'el bin Maṣnūr¹⁵, for the latter's two sons. In the treatise, Abū al-Faraj continued in his predecessors' footsteps and compiled a glossary of the entire Hebrew Bible, including the Aramaic parts¹⁶. To the best of our knowledge, *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz* is the only known glossary that encompassed all twenty-four books of the Old Testament¹⁷.

Šarḥ al-'Alfāz follows the order of the books of the Bible. It was composed after Abū al-Faraj had completed his two grammatical treatises, *al-Muštamil* and *al-Kāfī*, since he explicitly notes that in the former he discussed some matters that are mentioned

6 See Poznanski, 1896: 213-214.

7 Margoliouth, 1899, I: 205-206, no. 276; see also Olszowy-Schlanger, 2001: 181.

8 Poznanski, 1908; see also Olszowy-Schlanger, 2001:181.

9 I intend to devote a paper to this manuscript in the near future.

10 Abū al-Faraj's *Kitāb al-Kāfī* enjoyed similar popularity: there are at least sixty extant manuscript copies of it (see Khan *et al.*, 2003, II: 1056-1057).

11 So far three manuscripts containing passages of *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz* in Arabic script have been found, all in the National Library of Russia. The largest consists of eight pages from the end of Jeremiah and the beginning of Ezekiel. I am currently preparing this manuscript for publication.

12 See Goitein, 1962: 56.

13 See, for example, Tobi, 1998; Polliack-Somex, 2000; Eldar, 2001; Blau-Hopkins, 2007; Martínez Delgado, 2007; Martínez Delgado, 2013; Blau-Hopkins, 2017.

14 The ending has been preserved in its entirety in two MSS. Goldstein (2014: 361-374) published it with an English translation and commentary.

15 The identity of Abū al-Ṭayyib is unclear.

16 On this and other features of the glossaries, see, for example, Eldar, 2001: 23-29. This issue will be discussed at length in the Introduction of my book (Basal, 2020: § 2.2.6).

17 This is the work to which Téné (1994) refers.

in the two latter works, and occasionally also states that he added to what was contained in them¹⁸.

The usual structure of the entries in the manuscripts consists of three elements, sometimes in a row and sometimes arranged in a column: (a) the entry itself, usually a single word, but occasionally consisting of two or more words; (b) an Arabic translation; (3) a fragment, of variable length, of a verse in which the word appears. However, in the case of *hapax legomena*, Abū al-Faraj provides only an Arabic translation, adding *min al-mawḏi* (= from the context), *min al-ma'nā* (= from the meaning [in the context]), *min al-qarīna* (= from the context), or *min al-mujāwara* (= from the adjacent [text])¹⁹.

At the end of the book, Abū al-Faraj notes that he discussed two types of words: (a) difficult words in the Bible (*al-'alfāz al-ša'ba fī al-Miqra*); and (b) words which present a certain amount of difficulty (*ma'mā yakūn min al-'alfāz qadr min al-šu'ūba*), “whose meanings are not common in the Bible, and whose intentions are not clear, as they are in clear and common words such as *'eres* (עֶרֶץ) = earth, *šamayim* (שָׁמַיִם) = heaven, and others”²⁰.

In many entries, Abū al-Faraj also added grammatical or exegetical explanations to the Arabic translation. These explanations are sometimes quite long, or even very long, relative to the glossary as a whole²¹.

1.3 The book of Isaiah is filled with numerous words and expressions denoting objects in the material world, including fauna, flora, celestial objects, metals, and other minerals, gemstones, jewelry, ornaments, fabrics, foods, vessels, measures, weights, and more.

These biblical *realia* terms are very ancient, reflecting the material world of the biblical period. Many of them were not understood identically by medieval exegetes; each of them interpreted the various terms and translated them into Arabic according to their understanding and the accepted interpretation in their own times and places. Therefore, it is little wonder that conflicting opinions arose among different biblical commentators in different times and different regions. It also happened that a biblical word was left as it is, without being translated into Arabic.

18 See, for example, Abū al-Faraj's discussion of the preposition “ל” (למקדוק ולמעוה) (Daniel 11:1), National Library of Russia MS NLR Evr.-Arab. I. 1391 (87b: 4-6), where he explicitly states that the discussion in *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz* does not also appear in his *al-Muštamil* and *al-Kāfi*: וקד מצא אלכלאם פי אקסאם אללאם מסתקצי פי כתאבי אלכאפי ואלמשתמל דון מא זכרתה ההנא פי טני פלדלך אורדתה (= The types of the *lamed* [ל] have already been discussed completely in the [or: my] two books *al-Kāfi* and *al-Muštamil*, without what I mentioned here, as far as I know, which is why I wrote it [here]).

19 This will be discussed at length in the Introduction of my book (Basal, 2020: § 2.2.6), accompanied by examples from all parts of *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz*.

20 For the Arabic version, see Goldstein (2014: 373) and for the English translation *ibid.*, 364. A characterization of the words included in the treatise would require a comprehensive study of all the entries. At present the picture is not sufficiently clear; the issue will be treated at length in my book (Basal, 2020: § 3).

21 For example, his grammatical discussion of the form ותרדנה (Jeremiah 9:17) MS L1: 169b:3-170a, or his extended explanation of מִשָּׁעָה (Jeremiah 23:33) MS L1: 182b:1-184b:17.

Abū al-Faraj, too, translated into Arabic and explained material terms in his *šarḥ*, using the Arabic terminology of his times. It is also possible that he relied on relevant contemporary Arabic literature.

An examination of Abū al-Faraj's translations and definitions in the *Šarḥ*, when compared with the writings of other Karaite scholars from his circle as well as contemporary, preceding or subsequent rabbinic exegetes, can teach us about the material world of the Bible, as perceived in the medieval Arab world and Persia.

In sections that follow, I will present the biblical flora and fauna terminology mentioned in the *šarḥ* on Isaiah and Hārūn's translations/explanations, which I will attempt to explain and compare to those of contemporary and previous Karaite and rabbinic commentators. The following are all the relevant terms I found in *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz* on Isaiah, accompanied by brief explanations²².

2. Fauna and flora in *Šarḥ al-'Alfāz* on Isaiah

2.1 Fauna

2.1.1 Birds

1. אֲלֻדִיּוֹת [...] וְנִדְיוֹת הוּ גַמֵּע דְּנִיָּה אֶלְמִדְכוּר פִּי אֶלְאָהֶד וְאֶלְעֶשְׂרִין טָאִיר (Isa. 34:15) – דְּנִיָּה – דְּנִיָּה (Deut. 14:13: וְהַדְּנִיָּה], which is mentioned as one of the twenty-one unclean fowl).

Abū al-Faraj quotes the Hebrew word as is, without any identification, beyond the comment that this bird belongs to a list that consists, so he says, of twenty-one unclean species of fowl²³. However, Jefet, Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 72), and Avishur (2000) *ad loc.*; Ibn Janāḥ translated it in 'Uṣūl as חֲדָאָה (حَدَاة), a large dark-brown bird of prey of the hawk family²⁴.

2. סוּס – סוּסִים (Isa. 38:14) – כְּאַלְסֻנוּיָּהּ (سُونُوِيَّة - *sunūniyya*) = like a swallow, like Jefet and Saadia *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 81), and Alfāsī as well²⁵. Ibn Bal'am *ad loc.* (Goshen-Gottstein, 1992: 172): אֶלְסֻנוּיָּהּ וְהִי אֶלְכִּטָּאף.²⁶

22 For the reader's benefit, I added some distinguishing markers that do not appear in the original Arabic text.

23 A list of unclean birds appears in two places in the Pentateuch: Lev. 11 and Deut. 14. Each list contains twenty names of birds. This is also the number given in the Talmud (Tractate Hullin 63a), but, according to another opinion there, the number of unclean birds is twenty-four. See Dotan – Basal, 2011, II: 621-622, n. 4.

24 See Jefet, Isaiah (II, 21b: 11); Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, 1875: 149:14); see also Damīrī (1887, II: 310-318). Cf. Dotan – Basal, 2011, II: 621-622.

25 See Jefet, Isaiah, II, 61a:11; Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 318: 25-26).

26 Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, 1875: 477:9-11) identified סוּס as الكركي and *Šorašim* (Bacher, 1896-1897: 335): כּוּרְכִיא. This is also Targum Yonatan's translation, like the translation of the word סוּס in the Talmud, Tractate Qiddushin 44a: כִּי כּוּרְכִיא. Avishur (2000: 84) *ad loc.*: כִּטָּאף. See also Dotan – Basal, 2011, I: 413; II: 797-798.

3. עגור (Isa. 38:14) – כרְכִי (كَرْكِي - *karkī*) = cran, like Jefet,²⁷ Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 81), Ibn Bal'am (Goshen-Gottstein, 1992: 172), and Avishur (2000: 84) *ad loc.* Alfāsī²⁸: אַלְבִּירָגּ לֵה אַלְבִּירָגּ (= and אַבּו חוּדִיגּ which is called אַלְבִּירָגּ). Ibn Janāḥ: فَسَّرَ فِيهِ سَنُونِيَّةً وَهِيَ الْخَطَافُ (= It has been translated as سنونوية [= swallow]; it is [what is called] خَطَاف). Ben Mobarak translates likewise²⁹.

4. אַסְמַא טַוּוּר אַמַּא טוּאוּיִס או גִּירָהּא – וְלַעֲטָלְפִים – עֲטָלְףָּ (Isa. 2:20) (= names of birds; peacocks or some other type); that is, טוּאוּיִס (طَوَاوِيْس - *tawāwīs*) = peacocks, is one identification of this animal.

Abū al-Faraj interpreted וְלַעֲטָלְפִים in the same way as Jefet *ad loc.*; the latter left the original Hebrew word in the translation and noted in the commentary on the verse: וְהוּא אִסְמָא טַוּוּר (= It is the name of the peacock)³⁰. Others interpreted the word likewise but used different formulations³¹.

5. לַעֲיִט – עֵיט (Isa. 18:6) – לַגְאָרָה (جَارِح - *jāriḥ*) = to a bird of prey, like Jefet *ad loc.*; Ben Mobarak, Saadia, and Alfāsī translate טַיִר, טַיִר (= bird, birds)³². In neither case is a specific bird species identified, only the general meaning of bird or bird of prey.

2.1.2 Domestic animals

1. עֵיִר – עֵיִרִים (Isa. 30:6) – אַלְגַּחַאשׁ (جَحَاش - *jihāš*) = (young?) donkeys, like Jefet³³, Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 61), Avishur (2000: 74) *ad loc.*, and Alfāsī³⁴. It is not clear whether by this Abū al-Faraj means young, energetic donkeys used as beasts of burden, therefore did not use the Arabic cognate عَيْر (‘*īr*)³⁵, which according to Arabic

27 See Jefet, Isaiah, II, 61a:11, 15.

28 See Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 318:25-26).

29 See Ibn Janāḥ in his *‘Uṣūl* (Neubauer, 1875: 502: 27-28); Ben Mobarak, 2010, II: 20:15; Dotan – Basal, 2011, I: 413; II: 797-798.

30 See Jefet, Isaiah, I, 38a:8; 39b:3-4.

31 Saadia *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 7): וְאֵלְכַפְאִישׁ (= and bats), and the same in Ibn Janāḥ's *‘Uṣūl* (Neubauer, 1875: 556:32) and Ben Mobarak (2010, II: 116:7); a similar identification is found in Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 386: 33 – 387: 35): אִסְמָא טַיִר יְקַאֵל לֵה אַלְכַשְׂאָף וְהוּא טַיִר כְּסִיס יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֵלְלִיל וְלִדְלִךְ אִסְמִי בַּהּ בַּעֲזָא אֵלְכַשְׂאָף (= the name of a bird called [in Arabic] الخَطَافُ [אַלְכַשְׂאָף] אַלְכַשְׂאָף, a despised bird that flies at night, and is therefore called by the name of an idol). Avishur (2000: 47) *ad loc.* translates אַלְכַשְׂאָף. Both forms, כַּשְׂאָף and כַּפְאָשׁ, denote the same bird; the difference between them is probably dialectal.

32 See Jefet (Isaiah, II, 14a:8); Ben Mobarak (2010, II: 52:5): אַלְגַּאָרָה מִן אַלְטַוּוּר (= a bird of prey). This is how Saadia (Derenbourg, 1893: 275) translated וְהָרָעָה (Deut. 14:13). Targum Yonatan *ad loc.*: לעוּפָא (Sperber, 1992, III: 36), that is, a bird in general; Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 38), too, used the words טַיִר, טַיִר (= bird, birds) *ad loc.*, as did Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 389:19) and Avishur (2000: 62) לַעֲיִט (Isa. 18:16) in the case under discussion here and in the reference verse.

33 See Jefet, Isaiah (I, 306a:15). Subsequently (I, 307a:7) Jefet used הַמִּיר (= donkeys).

34 See Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 392:87).

35 Thus, for example, Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, 1875: 521:10): عَيْر وَاَعْيَار, and translation in *Šorašim* (Bacher, 1896-1897: 366): חַמּוּר וְחַמּוּרִים; cf. Ben Mobarak (2010, II: 41:17 – 42:1).

dictionaries means either a domestic or a wild donkey, and is synonymous with *حمار* (*himār*)³⁶.

2. *רָחַל* – *וְכַלְכְּלָהּ* (Isa. 53:7) – and like a ewe).

רָחַל (*raxla* – *رَحْلَة*), ewe, is cognate with Hebrew *רָחַל*, with the sound correspondence Hebrew *ח* (*ḥ*) – Arabic *خ* (*x*). Abū al-Faraj thus makes a covert comparison with Arabic³⁷. Ben Barūn makes the comparison explicit³⁸: *מִן סִכְאֵל* (= similar to *רָחַל* [רָחַל], a female lamb).

Jefet, Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 119), and Avishur (2000: 100) *ad loc.* also translated *רָחַל*, while Ibn Janāḥ writes *رخلات* (= ewes)³⁹.

2.1.3 Wild beasts

1. *אֵיִים* (Isa. 13:22) – *אלגזאיריין* (= the dwellers of the islands, that is, the wild beasts [who dwell] on the islands). Abū al-Faraj interpreted the unusual plural form *אֵיִים* in the same way as Jefet, Alfāsī, and Avishur (2000: 58) *ad loc.* Others understood it differently⁴⁰.

2. *נָחֵשׁ פְּרִיחַ* (Isa. 27:1) – *אלחנש אלמגארץ* (*al-hanaš al-mu'arīḍ*) = the bolt snake, that is, a snake who serves as a bolt or latch, from *מִן הַקֶּצֶה* (= to bolt [...] from one end) (Exod. 36:33). All translators used various forms derived from the Arabic verb *عَرَضَ* = to bolt⁴¹, except Jefet *ad loc.*: *חַנְשׁ פִּשְׁטִּיבָּן* – *hanaš faštubān* = bolt snake⁴².

3. *נָחֵשׁ עֶקְלָחוֹן* (Isa. 27:1) – *אלחנש אלשכס* (*al-hanaš al-šaks/šakis*) = the winding snake. Similarly, Abū al-Faraj translated the word *עֶקְלָחוֹן* (Jud. 5:6) in the reference verse: *שַׁכְּסָת, שַׁכְּסָת, שַׁכְּסָת* (*šaksāt, šakisāt*) = winding. A similar

36 See, for example, Lane, 1863-1893, V: 2208; Dozy, 1881, II: 194.

37 See Basal, 2018a: 232-234, § 3a; cf. Maman, 2004: 314 (no. 675).

38 See Kokovcov, 1916: 91 (Becker, 2005: 156).

39 See Jefet, Isaiah, II, 230b:4; Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, 1875: 675, n. 69).

40 Jefet *ad loc.* translated (Isaiah, I, 144a:3): *וְחַוּשׁ אֶלְגִּזְאִיר* (= beasts of the islands), and explained (*ibid.*: 11-12): *וּפְסָרוּ קוּם וְחַוּשׁ תִּלְתָּאָם מִן אֶלְגִּזְאִיר אֲלִבְעִידָהּ* (= and commentators explained that these are wild animals who gathered from the distant islands). Alfāsī (Skoss, 1936, I: 72:20): *אֶלְחַוּשׁ אֶלְגִּזְרִיָּהּ*, and Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, 1875) as well (607:9). Others understood the form *אֵיִים* in a variety of ways: Targum Yonatan (Sperber, 1992, III: 29): *חַוּלוּן*; Saadia *ad loc.*: *בְּנוֹ אֵיִ* (= jackals), as did Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, 1875: 37: 27-30, the second option). The form *אֵיִים* there is perceived as a plural of *הָאֵיָהּ* (Lev. 11:14), which Ibn Bal'am *ad loc.* (Goshen-Gottstein, 1992) translated *אלטאיר* (= birds, fowl) and noted that it was a plural that was formed irregularly (*עֵלִי גִיר קִיאַס*). For an extensive discussion, see Dotan – Basal, 2011, I: 106; II: 781.

41 See Blau, 2006: 430, s.v. *عرض* III. Saadia *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 53): *אלחיאַת אלמגארצָהּ* (= bolting snakes); Avishur (2000: 70) *ad loc.*: *תַּעֲבֹן מִגִּזְרֵי* (= bolting snake); Alfāsī (Skoss, 1936, I: 273: 116) on the reference verse: *לִיעֲאָרֶץ* (= to bolt, to lock), and on the verse discussed here (*ibid.*, 1945, II: 425: 28-29): *אלחיה אלעריץ* (= the wide snake, namely, leviathan).

42 See Jefet (Isaiah, I, 268a:5); on this, see Blau (2006: 504, s.v. *فشتبان*).

explanation is given only by Avishur (2000: 70) *ad loc.*: הו שבה תעבאן שכס (= it is similar to a winding snake). Others interpreted the term likewise but phrased it differently⁴³.

4. מַפְאֲזִיּוּן [מַפְאֲזִיּוּן] (= מפאזיין מן לַעַם לְצִיִּים יַעֲנִי וְחַשׁ אֶל־מַפְאֲזוֹהָ – Isa. 13:21) – צִיִּים – צִים. *mafāziyyūn*] = of the desert, from לַעַם לְצִיִּים [Psa. 74:14], that is, beasts of the desert). This is the same translation that Abū al-Faraj used for צִיִּים (Isa. 34:14). These translations show that he believed that the word denoted desert-dwelling beasts in general rather than any specific animal, and derived it from צִיָּה, a word that means ‘desert’. It is the same as Jefet and Avishur (2000: 58) *ad loc.*⁴⁴.

5. קפוד (Isa. 14:23) – קנפוד, from גַּם קפוד (Zeph. 2:14). קנפוד (قنفذ - *qunfud*) is the Arabic cognate of קפוד, with the sound shift: Hebrew “d” – Arabic “q”. The meaning is the common one (hedgehog). The Hebrew word is here covertly compared to its Arabic counterpart⁴⁵.

6. קפוד, with a Hebrew-internal shift between “z” and “d”, as Abū al-Faraj explicitly noted in his *al-Kitāb al-Kāfi*⁴⁶: ופיה מא ינוב מנאב דאל נחו אלזאי אלתי פי שמה קננה קפוז לאן משהור אסם הדא אלטאיר בדאל (= it contains [the letter “z”] which replaces the “d”, like the “z” in שְׁמָה קִנְנָה קפוז [Isa. 34:15], because the name of this bird usually appears with “d”, as in קָאֵת וְקפוד [Isa. 34:11], גַּם קפוד [Zeph. 2:14]).

Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 32) and Avishur (2000: 59), too, translated קנפוד *ad loc.*, and Jefet quotes this meaning as a second opinion⁴⁷.

7. תוא – תוא (Isa. 51:20) – כתיתל (*taytal*), from ותאז וְתָמַר (Deut. 14:5). From Abū al-Faraj’s derivation of the meaning of this word from ותאז we learn that he thought that the *hapax legomenon* תוא is equivalent to ותאז, also an *hapax legomenon*, but with the last two letters reversed. According to Goshen-Gottstein (1992: 20), this is a species of animal, the equivalent of זמר or יעל in Arabic.

43 Jefet *ad loc.* (Isaiah, I, 268:6): חנש מעוג, and likewise Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 53): וואלמלתוי מנהא אלמעוג, that is, winding and twisted. Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 425: 28-29): ארחות עקלקלות טרק מעוגה ומתלה נחש עקלתון אלמעוג אלמעוג: ארחות עקלקלות [Jud. 5:6] twisting roads, and similarly נחש עקלתון [Isa. 27:1], which winds and twists). Likewise Ibn Ezra and Kimchi (1993) *ad loc.*

44 See Jefet (Isaiah, I, 143b: 14). Ibn Janāh (Neubauer, 1875: 607: 8-9), too, explains: وربما يريد به الحيوانات التي تأوى الى الصية وهي البياء (= it may be that what is meant by this is the animals which dwell in the צִיָּה, that is, the desert). Saadia, however, identifies the word *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 30) with אלצדא (= owl). Ibn Janāh (Neubauer, 1875: 607: 5-7) quotes Saadia’s explanation, which he introduces with the words فسر فيه (= it has been interpreted as), and *Sorašim* (Bacher, 1896-1897: 428): “It has been translated as a male owl, but this is baseless; it can be any owl”.

45 See Basal, 2018a: 232-234, § 3a; cf. Maman, 2004: 234 (no. 563).

46 See *Kāfi* (Khan *et al.*, 2003, I: 513-514).

47 See Jefet, Isaiah, II, 22a: 7-8. Alfāsī (Skoss, 1936, I: 369: 33-34; 1945, II: 564: 25-26) also distinguishes between קפוד, a bird, and קפוד (hedgehog). Ibn Ezra (1996) *ad loc.*, too, states explicitly that קפוד and קפוד are distinct. Ben Mobarak (2010, II: 262:1) likewise says about קפוד: הו אלפאש: קפוד (= it is the bat).

Jefet, Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 116), Ibn Bal'am, and Avishur (2000: 99), too, translated תִּיתַל *ad loc.*; Alfāsī⁴⁸.

8. מִן מְסַפְדַּד פְּתָנִים (= jackals), from וּבְנֵי אֵי (Isa. 13:22) – וְתַנִּים – תָּן. (Mic. 1:8).

Biblical exegetes interpreted תַּנִּים in a variety of different ways. Abū al-Faraj identified it as בְּנֵי אֵי (بَنَاتُ أَوَى – *banāt 'awā*), in agreement with Jefet *ad loc.*. Ibn Janāḥ mentions this meaning but rejects it, because, as he claims, בְּנֵי אֵי are small animals⁴⁹. Others identified it as a species of snake, etc⁵⁰.

2.1.4 Reptiles

1. מִמּוֹ פֶּתֶן חָרַשׁ (Psa. 58:5) – פֶּתֶן – פֶּתֶן (Isa. 11:8) – מַטְרוֹן (= a kind of snake), from מַטְרוֹן (Mטְרוֹן – *maṭrūn*).

Abū al-Faraj is alone in his translation of פֶּתֶן here as מַטְרוֹן. He uses the same translation for פֶּתֶן in the reference verse, and also for the *hapax* form שְׁפִיפּוֹן (Gen. 49:17). He thus considers פֶּתֶן and שְׁפִיפּוֹן as synonyms.

This definition is identical to Saadia's in the reference verse (Qāfiḥ, 1996: 147), and to his translation of שְׁפִיפּוֹן (Derenbourg, 1893: 78)⁵¹. However, in the verse under discussion here, Saadia translated פֶּתֶן as מִן אֶלְשָׁאֵעַ (= a kind of snake named אֶלְשָׁאֵעַ [=courageous]), as did Jefet *ad loc.*⁵².

2. בְּיַצֵּי צִפְעוֹנֵי (Isa. 59:5) – עֲרִבִיד (= a type of snake), as in צִפְעוֹנֵי (Isa. 11:8) – צִפְעוֹנֵי.

Abū al-Faraj identified the snake צִפְעוֹנֵי as עֲרִבִיד (عَرَبِيد – *'irbīd*)⁵³, like Jefet *ad loc.*, an identification that I did not find elsewhere⁵⁴.

48 See Jefet, Isaiah, II, 218b:8; Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 719:20).

49 See Jefet (Isaiah, I, 144a:4). See also Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, 1870: 765: 1-2): وقد ترجم فيه قوم بنات أوى وهي دويبات. وليس هذا صحيح. On ابن أوى (= jackal, in colloquial Arabic [wāw] ואוי), See extensive discussion in Damīrī, 1887, I: 99: 12-13; Dotan – Basal, 2011, II: 781.

50 Saadia *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 30): אלערבד = a type of snake. Goshen-Gottstein (1992: 83) notes that it is usually taken to denote a צִפְעָה or a species of snake; however, Saadia translated both צִפְעָה (Isa. 14:29) and צִפְעוֹנֵי (Isa. 11:8; 59:5; Prov. 23:32) as אַרְקֶשׁ, אַרְקֶשׁ (= a spotted [snake]); Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II, 523: 42-45) uses a general word for snake, אַפְעִי (أَفْعَى); in Ibn Janāḥ, 'Uṣūl (Neubauer, 1875, s.v. צִפְעָה, 618: 21-23) there is no Arabic translation!

51 See Avishur, 2000: 198; 1989: 143-145; Blau, 2006: 664, s.v. מַטְרוֹן.

52 See Jefet (Isaiah, I, 126b:1); Alfāsī (Skoss, I, p. 581: 30): אלערבד, which is the translation of צִפְעוֹנֵי by Abū al-Faraj below; Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, 1875: 595:3): الحيات الرقش (= spotted snakes). Avishur (2000) *ad loc.* used general word: אֶלְשָׁאֵעַ (= the snake).

53 In classical Arabic 'irbid, 'irbad; the colloquial form is עֲרִבִיד ('irbīd, 'arbīd), see: Ibn Durayd, 1987-1988, II: 117[b]: 28-29.

54 See Jefet, Isaiah, I, 126b:7. Saadia *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 26): אַרְקֶשׁ (= spotted [snake]); Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 523: 44): אֶלְשָׁאֵעַ, that is, a snake in general. As עֲרִבִיד he translated (I, p. 581:30) פֶּתֶן (above); Ibn Janāḥ in 'Uṣūl (Neubauer, 1875 [Rouen]: 618, n. 92): شجاع, which is Saadia's translation of פֶּתֶן (above); Avishur (2000: 57) *ad loc.*: אֶלְשָׁאֵעַ (see פֶּתֶן, above); Ben Mobarak (2010, II: 222: 16-17): אֶלְשָׁאֵעַ (= the snake).

2.1.5 Small creatures

1. וַאֲתַתְּ הַקֶּהָבִים לְמִינֵהוּ כַּקֶּהָבִים – קֶהָב (Isa. 40:22) – כאלגראד (= like locusts), from וַאֲתַתְּ הַקֶּהָבִים לְמִינֵהוּ (Lev. 11:22).

Abū al-Faraj translates גראד (جَرَاد – *jarād*) = locusts, as do Jefet⁵⁵, Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 86), and Avishur (2000: 86) *ad loc.* According to Alfāsī, it is נוע מן אלגראד יקאל (= a kind of locust which [in Arabic] is called גנדב [جُنْدُب – *jundub*])⁵⁶.

2. עֵשׂ (Isa. 50:9) – אלעת (= worms), as in יֹאכְלֵם עֵשׂ (Isa. 51:8).

עֵשׂ (أَلْعَث – *al'utt*) is the Arabic cognate of Hebrew עֵשׂ, with Hebrew “ע” corresponding to Arabic “ل”. According to the classical dictionaries, it is the plural of *'utta* (= moth), and also means ‘decay’. Abū al-Faraj decided to compare the Hebrew word to Arabic עַת (*'utt*) ‘worms’ because it suits the context in the verses in which it appears. The comparison with the Arabic cognate appears explicitly in Ben Barūn’s *muwāzana*⁵⁷.

Jefet⁵⁸ and Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 113) also translated אלעת *ad loc.* Alfāsī thought that the meaning was ‘decay’,⁵⁹ as did Ibn Bal‘am, whose precise opinion is difficult to understand.⁶⁰

3. עֲכָבִישׁ (Isa. 59:5) – ענכבות (= spider), the cognate Arabic word (عَنْكَبُوت – *ankabūt*), with the same conventional meaning.

2.2 Flora

2.2.1 Trees

1. אֶרֶז (Isa. 44:14) – ארז (= cedar), like Hebrew אֶרֶז (Lev. 14:4).

אֶרֶז is an *hapax legomenon*, and its meaning is uncertain⁶¹. Abū al-Faraj identified it according to the context as ‘cedar’ (*'erez* in Hebrew, *'arz* in Arabic), with a Hebrew-internal substitution of “n” for “z” at the end of the word; in his *al-Kitāb al-Kāfī*, he

55 See Jefet, Isaiah, II, 83b:2.

56 See Alfāsī (Skoss, 1936, I: 519: 39-40) and the same in Ibn Janāh’s *ʿUṣūl* (Neubauer, 1875: 210:22).

57 See Ben Barūn (Kokovcov, 1916: 83); cf. Becker (2005: 178): [...] מְגֻאֵס לְלַעֲתָהּ וְהִיא אֶלְטוֹסָהּ וְיִקְאֵל אֶלְאַרְצָהּ [...] (= similar to עֵתָהּ, it is מְגֻאֵס לְלַעֲתָהּ [= mothworm], and some say it is אֶלְאַרְצָהּ [= termite] [...]). In classical Arabic dictionaries the word is usually defined as أَرْضَةُ الخَنْبِ (= termite).

58 See Jefet, Isaiah, II, 204b:9; 212b:9.

59 Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 435:12) on our verse: עַת וְעַפְּן (= decay and mold).

60 Ibn Bal‘am *ad loc.* (Goshen-Gottstein, 1992: 204): הוּא אֶלְעֵת וְאֶלְעֵת תַּעֲפֵן יוֹלְדָה אֶלְדוֹד אֶלְכַאֲרִין פִּי אֶלְאַשִׁיא וְיִסְמֵן אֶלְדוֹדָהּ (= it is עַתָּה; עַתָּה is the decomposition brought about by worms that exist inside of things. The worm is called עַתָּה). See Goshen-Gottstein, 1992: 204.

61 Perhaps it should be identified with the bay tree (*Laurus nobilis*); see *Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, 1950, I: 596-597 (in Hebrew).

explicitly gives this explanation as one opinion⁶²: נטע ארון קיל אן אלנון פיה מקאם זאי לתכון (= ארון ללמאורה [Isa. 44:14], it has been said that the “n” in it is a substitute for “z”, so that it is אָרָן by context). In other words, he views it as parallel to תְּרִזָּה < תְּרִזָּה in the verse under consideration here.

The identification with ארון also appears in Jefet, *ad loc.*: אלארוז. According to Alfāsī, אָרָן is a type of אָרָז⁶³ while others explained it differently⁶⁴.

2. שְׁטָה (Isa. 41:19) – סנט (= acacia), from עֲצֵי שְׁטִים (Exod. 25:10 and elsewhere). סנט (سنت – *sant*, سنط – *sant* [and also أَقَاقِيَا – ‘*aqāqya*]) is the etymological counterpart of Hebrew שְׁטָה (= *Acacia arabica*), a tall tree with a hard trunk and brown bark, which excretes a resin with medicinal properties⁶⁵.

By translating the word as סנט, Abū al-Faraj implicitly compared it to its Arabic counterpart, like Ben Qurayš, who compared the two languages explicitly; Jefet and Saadia *ad loc.*; Alfāsī⁶⁶.

3. תְּדָהָר (Isa. 41:19): אלאבהל. תְּדָהָר (أبْهَل – ‘*abhal*) means ‘cypress’⁶⁷. Abū al-Faraj identified it thus, like Avishur (2000: 87) *ad loc.* and in Isa. 60:13. However, because of the proximity of תְּדָהָר and תְּאֲשֹׁר (the next entry) in the text, the identification of both is not uniform in the various sources⁶⁸.

4. תְּאֲשֹׁר (Isa. 41:19) – וּתְאֲשֹׁר – וּתְאֲשֹׁר (= box tree: *Buxus sempervirens* L.)⁶⁹.

Abū al-Faraj, like Jefet, identifies the word here and in the reference verse with תְּאֲשֹׁר, in contrast to Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 89) and Avishur (2000: 87) *ad loc.* (see previous entry).

5. אָרָזָה (Isa. 44:14) – אָרָזָה במתאבה פִּי אָרָזָה (= cedar, the same as in אָרָזָה < עֵרָה in Zeph. 2:14). In other words, Abū al-Faraj considers תְּרִזָּה and אָרָזָה as two synonyms

62 See Khan *et al.*, 2003, I: 368-369.

63 See Jefet, Isaiah, II, 139b:17; Alfāsī (Skoss, 1936, I: 153:178).

64 Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 98) and Avishur (2000: 91) *ad loc.*, and also Ibn Janāh (Neubauer, 1875 [Rouen], 68, note 45): סנדיאן (= [the genus] oak); Ben Mobarak (2010, I: 142: 11-12), quoting a minority opinion: אלצנובר (= stone pine).

65 For more on סנט, see Löw, 1924-1934, II: 377-391; Meyerhof, 1940, no. 278: 135-136.

66 See Becker (1984: 246-247; 304-305); cf. Jefet, Isaiah (II, 250a:7) and Saadia *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 89); Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 663:15). See also Basal, 2018a: 232-234, § 3a.

67 See, for example, Löw, 1924-1934, I: 83; Blau, 2006: 53, s.v. أَبْهَل.

68 For example, Jefet *ad loc.* translated the three nouns in our verse, בְּרוֹשׁ תְּדָהָר וּתְאֲשֹׁר, with just two nouns: שָׁגַר וְאֲשֹׁר. The difficulty may be resolved if we assume that Jefet considered בְּרוֹשׁ תְּדָהָר and בְּרוֹשׁ תְּדָהָר as synonymous, both meaning שְׁרִיבִין, אַרְמֵינִיָּה (= cypress). Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 89) on תְּדָהָר *ad loc.*: אלסאג (*al-sāj*), which in the Talmud (Rosh Hashana 23a; Bava Batra 80b) appears as שאגא.

69 See Dozy, 1881, I: 787; Löw, 1924-1943, I: 317, 319; Blau, 2006: 348, s.v. شَمَشَل.

for the cedar tree, with “*t*” in תְּרִזָּה replacing “*z*” in אֲרִזָּה, as he explicitly argues in *al-Kitāb al-Kāfi*; likewise Jefet *ad loc.* (as a possibility)⁷⁰ and Alfāsī (as one opinion)⁷¹.

2.2.2 Spice and perfume plants

1. כַּמּוֹן – כַּמּוֹן (Isa. 28:25) – ואלכמון (= cumin), from the context.
 כַּמּוֹן is *Cuminum cyminum*. All other sources also either translate as Arabic كُمُون (*kammūn*) or note that the meaning is well-known.

2. וְהַקְּטָמִת – וְהַקְּטָמִת (Isa. 28:25) – ואלגלבאן, from וְהַקְּטָמִת (Exod. 9:32).
 Abū al-Faraj also translated וְהַקְּטָמִת in the reference verse as גִּלְבָּאן (جُلْبَان – *julubbān*), as well as וְהַקְּטָמִים (Ezek. 4:9), as did Jefet, Saadia, Ibn Bal‘am *ad loc.*; Ibn Janāh⁷².
 גִּלְבָּאן is ‘grass pea’ (*Lathyrus sativus*); according to ‘*Uṣūl*, the people in Iraq call it الجلبان. The word appears in the dictionaries in a variety of pronunciations: *Julabān*, *Julubbān*, *Jullabān*, and in modern Egyptian *gilbān*⁷³.

3. וְסוּף – וְסוּף (Isa. 19:6) – ואלדיס, from בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף (Exod. 2:5).
 וְסוּף is דִּיס (دیس – *dīs*) (*Arundo festucoïdes*) is the name of a plant with black fruit, from which an eye medication and oil are produced. Some have compared it to סמאר (*smār*, *summār*, *sammār*) and אסל (أسل – ‘*asal*)⁷⁴.
 Abū al-Faraj identifies וְסוּף in the verse under discussion here as well as in the reference verse as Arabic דִּיס, like Jefet⁷⁵, Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 39), and Avishur (2000: 63) *ad loc.*; others identify it as papyrus⁷⁶.

4. קִצְצָה (Isa. 28:25) – קזח (= nigella seeds), from the context.
 קִצְצָה is a *dis legomenon* that appears twice in close proximity (Isa. 28:25, 27). Therefore Abū al-Faraj translated it in accordance with the context in which it appears, like Jefet *ad loc.*⁷⁷: קזח (قزحة – *qizha*) in Arabic (with “*z*”), which in modern Palestinian

70 See Jefet, Isaiah, II: 139b:16; 140a:16.

71 See Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 752:30).

72 See Jefet (Isaiah, I: 288b:7); Ratzabi, 1993: 58; Goshen-Gottstein, 1992: 138; Neubauer (1875: 327: 20) and Avishur (2000: 72) *ad loc.*: כרסונה (كرسنة – *kirsinna*) (= vetch).

73 See Meyerhoff, 1940: no. 80, p. ١٢ – 42-43. Dozy (1881, I: 204) read *jilbān*, with “*t*” as the first vowel, and noted that Lane (1863-1893, II: 440) has جُلْبَان.

74 See, for example, Ibn al-Bayṭār (1935, IV: 289). See also Löw (1924-1934, I: 556), Meyerhoff, 1940: no. 90, p. 47 [٩, ١٣].

75 See Jefet, Isaiah, I, 192a:2.

76 Apparently following Targum Yonatan (Sperber, 1992, III: 37): “גומא”; Jefet *ad loc.*, who identified וְסוּף as דִּיס (see above), adds: וברדי (= papyrus), as do Ibn Janāh (Neubauer, 1875, 477:16) and Ben Mobarak (2010, I: 698: 13). According to Sharoni (1999, II: 605), Arabic ديس is the lakeshore bulrush (*Scirpus lacustris*).

77 See Jefet, Isaiah, I, 288b:6.

Arabic⁷⁸ is the name of the spice seed of *Nigella sativa*, a plant of the buttercup family⁷⁹. Saadia *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 58). translated אלקצה (with “ץ”)⁸⁰. a form that seems to constitute a late assimilation to Hebrew (instead of Arabic קוח)⁸¹.

2.2.3 Field and water plants

1. אגמון – אגמון (Isa. 9:13) – וברדי (= and papyrus), like נפוח ואגמון (Job 41:12).

Abū al-Faraj also translates אגמון in the reference verse as ברדי (*Cyperus papyrus*), like Jefet *ad loc.*, who adds that here it symbolizes those in power⁸². Others, too, have the same translation as Abū al-Faraj and Jefet: Ibn Bal‘am (Goshen-Gottstein, 1992: 67) and Avishur (2000: 54) *ad loc.*, Alfāsī, Ibn Janāh as well as Ben Mobarak⁸³.

2. ובקר – ובקר (Isa. 18:5) – וחצרם (חֻצְרִים - *huṣrum*) = and unripe grapes, as accepted by all.

3. וגלגל – וגלגל (Isa. 17:13) – וכאלדוואר (دَوَار - *dawwār*) = like dry plants (that blow in the wind), as in אלהי שיתמו כגלגל (Psa. 83:14).

The literal meaning of *dawwār* is ‘spinning, revolving’. This is the word that Abū al-Faraj uses to translate וגלגל, which in our verse parallels כְּמוֹץ הָרִים. He uses the same word to translate כגלגל in the reference verse, where it parallels לקש, where he also adds that this is a type of plant. From this, the meaning of ‘dry plants blowing in the wind’ evolved; today, the latter is this word’s meaning in Palestinian Arabic, at least in Galilee.

78 See Bargouthi, 2001, III: 61.

79 See Denizeau (1960: 417); see also Lev (2002: 210), who mention other Arabic nouns: חב סודה, חב ברקה, חב סודה, שוניז. According to Löw (1924-1943, III: 122) קצה is similar to cumin, but is black (cf. Ibn Ezra and Kimchi [1993] *ad loc.*).

80 Like Targum Yonatan *ad loc.* (Sperber, 1992, III: 55): קצוח, and in Galilean Aramaic: קיצוחה (Sokolof, 2017: 401a).

81 See Blau (2006: 547, قَصْح), and Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 568: 55-56); Ibn Janāh (Neubauer, 1875: 642: 10-11) and Ibn Bal‘am (Goshen-Gottstein, 1992: 138) who mention another name: שוניז (شونيز - *šūnīz*), a Persian loan-word in Arabic, which means, according to Šita (1992, II: 1771a), a black spice plant and, according to Steingass (1892: 767), means coriander.

82 Jefet (Isaiah, I, 106a: 5-14): ואמא אלברדי רגאלה אלסלסאן [...] ואלברדי (= and אלברדי [...] and as for אלברדי, [this refers to] the men in power). Targum Yonatan *ad loc.* (Sperber, 1992, III: 19): ואטרון (= and a senior official, an officer).

83 See Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 123:28); Ibn Janāh (Neubauer, 1875: 20: 4-6); Ben Mobarak (2010, I: 70: 12-15). The latter two also mention another opinion, that אגמון is Arabic קמקם (*qumqum*), as Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 22), too, translates אגמון in the reference verse. However, Saadia himself translates *ad loc.*: ואלסעפה (= and the [date?] branch), but translates קאגמון (Isa. 58:5) as כאלפאפיר (like papyrus). See the extensive discussion in Dotan –Basal (2011, I: 358; II: 701), and references there.

The word דוּרָא as the translation of גְּלִגְלִי is found only in Avishur (2000: 62) *ad loc.* The meaning of ‘dry plants’ is also quoted by Alfāsī as a second opinion⁸⁴; it would appear that this was also Jefet’s intention *ad loc.*⁸⁵

4. גָּמָא (Isa. 18:2) – ברדי (*bardī* – بَرْدِي) = papyrus, like גְּמָא (Exod. 2:3).

Abū al-Faraj translated the word גָּמָא with ברדי also in the reference verse (Exod. 2:3), as well as אָגְמוֹן (Job 40:26), וְאָגְמוֹן (Isa. 9:13; Job 41:12) and פְּאָגְמוֹן (Isa. 58:5). ברדי is the accepted and obvious identification⁸⁶.

5. תְּבַצְלֵת הַשָּׁרוֹן (Song 2:1) – תְּבַצְלֵת – תְּבַצְלֵת (Isa. 35:1) – כאלנרגסה (= like a daffodil), like תְּבַצְלֵת הַשָּׁרוֹן (Song 2:1).

Abū al-Faraj identified תְּבַצְלֵת as Arabic נַרְجִס (*narjis* – نَرْجِس) also in the reference verse⁸⁷ and derived its meaning from תְּבַצְלֵת in the verse under discussion here, for the word appears only twice in the Bible.

The identification is identical to those made by Jefet, Saadia, and Avishur (2000) *ad loc.*; Alfāsī. נַרְגִס is the accepted and obvious identification⁸⁸.

6. תְּחַת הַנֶּעְצוּצִים אוֹ אֵלֶּיךָ אִמָּא זַעֲרֹר (Isa. 7:19) – הַנֶּעְצוּצִים הַנְּהַלְוִלִים – נְהַלְוִל, נֶעְצוּצִים (Isa. 55:13). (= two types of plants or trees, a hawthorn, or the like), like תְּחַת הַנֶּעְצוּצִים (Isa. 55:13).

The words הַנֶּעְצוּצִים הַנְּהַלְוִלִים are rare, and their meaning is not clear. הַנֶּעְצוּצִים occurs twice in the Bible and הַנְּהַלְוִלִים only once. It is, therefore, no wonder that they were interpreted in different ways⁸⁹. Abū al-Faraj did not know whether they were (small)

84 Alfāsī (Skoss, 1936, I: 325: 93-97): אֶחָדִישׁ אֵיִיבַס (= dry grass), and also Ibn Bal’am *ad loc.* (Goshen-Gottstein, 1992: 97). See also Dotan – Basal, 2011, I: 212 – II: 448-449.

85 Jefet *ad loc.* (Isaiah, I, 182a:5) translated אֶלְבָכַר (= wheels), probably a reference to ‘dry plants that roll like a wheel’. (= wheel), plural, בְּכָר (= בכר, plural, see Blau, 2006: 48. Saadia translated *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 37): כַּאֲלֵגְרַבְאָה (= like the dust from a sieve), see Blau, 2006: 476, s.v. غَزْبَالَة. In glossary A5 (Blau – Hopkins, 2017: 199; 206) the words בְּגִלְגֵל (Psa. 77:19) and פְּגִלְגֵל (Psa. 83:14) are translated respectively בַּאֲלֵפֶלֶךְ, בַּאֲלֵפֶלֶךְ (= in/as the [celestial] sphere). On فَالَك (*falak*) (=wagon wheel) see Blau, 2006: 515.

86 On ברדי, see Dotan – Basal (2011, I: 70, 108, 358 – II: 701-702), where it translates אָגְמוֹן.

87 According to Löw (1924-1934, II: 156), נַרְגִס is *Colchium*.

88 See Jefet (Isaiah, I, 23b:8); Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 72); Avishur, 2000, 79; Alfāsī (Skoss, 1936, I: 515:105), and others, for example Ibn Janāh (Neubauer, 1875: 257:20 – 258:2): نَرْجِس and quotes R. Hisdai and R. Hai Gaon, both of whom translated Hebrew נַרְגִס as רִקִּיס (Filipowski, 1854: 85; Sáenz-Badillos, 1986: 166*). נצה הנותרת: (= a bud that gives [pleasant] smell). Kimchi (1993) *ad loc.* and Ben Danān, 1996: 138 (as a second opinion): רוד.

89 Jefet *ad loc.* (I, 87a:17): אֶלְעוּסָא [...] אֶלְעֵתַר (= wild thyme [...] boxthorn). צַעֲתַר (Ar.: سَعْتَر, *sa'tar* in spoken Arabic, is a well-known spice plant and עוּסָא (= *Lycium*) is a thorny wild plant, see Dotan – Basal, 2011, II: 496, 658. Saadia *ad loc.* (Ratzabi, 1993: 17): אֶלְסֵדֶר (*sidr*) (Christ’s thorn, *Ziziphus spina Christi* L), also called נַבֵּק (*nabaq/nabq*), a tree of the buckthorn family. See Ibn al-Bayṭār, 1935, II: 15:5 – 32:4; cf. Lane, 1863-1893, IV: 1331; Lev, 2002: 261. B) אֶלְיַנְבוֹת (*Anagyris foetida*), a noxious plant (bean trefoil), see Blau, 2006: 679, יַנְיֹוֹת; see also Neubauer, 1875: 412: 25-26. Alfāsī (Skoss, 1945, II: 280:31) on הַנֶּעְצוּצִים (Isa. 55:13): הוּא בְּבַאת יִקְאֵל לֵה אֶלְעַנְצֵל וְהוּא אֶלְבוּרֵק (= this is a plant called [in Arabic] אֶלְעַנְצֵל (*'unṣul*) and is [identical with] אֶלְבוּרֵק [*burq*]). According to Ibn al-Bayṭār (1935, II: 138:4) it is a plant similar to an onion.

Ibn Janāh in his *Uṣūl* (Neubauer, 1875) and Ibn Bal’am *ad loc.* (Goshen-Gottstein, 1992: 56) state that הַנֶּעְצוּצִים in Isa. 55:13 is a tree which in Arabic is called النخض, a cognate of נֶעְצוּצִים; in Arabic dictionaries this word is defined as a thorny plant that grows on the plain, according to some in Hijāz. See, for example, Ibn Sīda, 2000, I: 410; cf. also *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Ibn Manzūr, 1981, VII: 238b: 3-4).

In translating Hebrew שׂוֹרֵק with Arabic سَرِيْق (سَرِيْق), i.e., ‘excellent grapevines’¹⁰³, Abū al-Faraj followed in the footsteps of Jefet¹⁰⁴, Saadia (Ratzabi, 1993: 35), and Avishur (2000: 61) *ad loc.* Ibn Janāḥ in ‘Uṣūl, too, uses the same word, giving a more extensive explanation: اجود الكروم ويقال له السريق ويكون بالشام.¹⁰⁵

3. Summary and conclusions

The book of Isaiah is filled with numerous words and expressions denoting objects in the material world, including flora and fauna, that were discussed in this article. The material terms from *Šarḥ al-’Alfāz* that we analyzed in this study were translated by Abū al-Faraj into Arabic and explained using the Arabic terminology of his time. It is also possible that Abū al-Faraj relied on relevant contemporary Arabic literature.

The presentation and examination of the biblical flora and fauna terminology mentioned in the *Šarḥ al-’Alfāz* and Hārūn’s translations/explanations, when compared with the writings of earlier and contemporary Karaite scholars and rabbinic commentators, teaches us about the material world of the Bible, as it was perceived in the medieval Arab world and Persia.

These biblical *realia* terms are very ancient, reflecting the material world of the biblical period. Many of them were not understood the same way by medieval exegetes; each interpreted the different terms and translated them into Arabic according to their understanding and the accepted interpretation in their own times and places. Therefore, it is little wonder that conflicting opinions arose among different biblical commentators in different times and different regions. Yet, it also happened that a biblical word was left as it is, without being translated into Arabic.

4. Manuscripts

Abū al-Faraj Hārūn’s *Šarḥ al-’Alfāz* on Isaiah,
MS. L1: NLR Evr.-Arab. I. 1346

Jefet ben ‘Alī’s Commentary on Isaiah:
Isaiah1: NLR Ms. Evr. I. 568: 1:1 – 32:17
Isaiah2: NLR Ms. Evr. I. 569: 32:18 – 66:24

103 See Blau, 2006: 294, s.v. سَرِيْق.

104 See Jefet, I, 169b:13.

105 See Ibn Janāḥ (Neubauer, 1875: 751: 21-22) and Ibn Tibbon translation in *Šorašim* (Bacher, 1896-1897: 537): שׂוֹרֵק (= the best kind of grapes, which in Arabic is called سَرِيْق). Ben Mobarak (2010, II: 470: 5-6) translates very similarly in the reference verse and the verse considered here: זרעון אלכרם (= trellised vines), as in Menahem ben Saruq (Filipowski, 1854: 182 – Sáenz-Badillos, 1986: 390*): שׂוֹרֵק כשריג, and Ibn Ezra *ad loc.*

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