Competing Tropes of Eleventh-Century Andalusi Jewish Culture*

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Judaism and the Jews, whose very names are determined by ties of memory to a particular place (Judea), embraced the concept of diaspora out of political, religious, and historical necessity. Following the exile of Judean elites to Babylonia in 587 BCE, the idea of diaspora became enmeshed in a complex bundle of remembered and imagined experiences such as destruction and dispossession along with decidedly ahistorical aspirations such as redemption and return.[1] Diaspora thus became a critical feature of the dialectic of Jewish history in that it described the current state of the Jews' dispersion and sense of rupture with a past "pristine age" yet reinforced their expectation and hope that it was destined to come to an end with the "ingathering of the exiles." Jews of very different literary, intellectual, and spiritual orientations treated Exile/Diaspora as the central trope of Jewish experience.

How was this trope handled in Andalusi-Jewish culture?[2] Here, I am concerned

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* This essay is a revised version of a talk presented at the University of California (Berkeley), the University of Washington (Seattle), King's College (London), Yale University, and Cornell University.

1 "Scattering," "dispersal" [Ezekiel 36:19: "I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries"], and recuperation [Ezekiel 36:24: "I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you back to your own land"] are already inscribed as tropes in the biblical literature of the first exile after 587 BCE.

2 Thanks to her singular contributions to the field Tova Rosen has made it possible for other scholars to incorporate new literary critical and theoretical perspectives in the study of medieval Hebrew literature. On the broader transcultural significance of diaspora, see Elazar Barkan and Marie-Denise Shelton (eds.), *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas*, Stanford 1998, p. 5. In my forthcoming monograph (*Andalusi Moorings*), Andalusi Jewish representations of home, home away from home, homelessness, homesickness, and homecoming are examined alongside Andalusi Muslim constructions of al-Andalus as a place of exceptional merit and the site of communal loss and longing. Both are set against Christian Spanish constructions of the Jews' and the Muslims' place in Iberia. A preliminary study of the latter is Ross Brann, "The Moors?" *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009), pp. 307-318. For a study of the specifically Jewish issues in the modern period see Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination*, Berkeley 2000; and on al-Andalus, Esperanza Alfonso, "The Uses of Exile in Poetic Discourse: Some Examples from Medieval Hebrew Literature," Ross Brann and Adam Sutcliffe (eds.), *Renewing the Past, Reconfiguring Jewish*

with a discrete manifestation of the conflicts that were a source of creative tension in Andalusi Jewish culture and that defined this Jewish sub-culture in a Muslim polity. I am referring to the *territorial dimension* of the Jews' complex loyalties and competing cultural orientations. To put it simply: how did the Andalusi Jews' discourse regarding their connection to what they called Sefarad exist in creative textual rivalry with their expressions of pious devotion to the Land of Israel, a place most of them never saw except through the parallax imaginative lens of their sacred texts and the performance of their liturgical rituals? How does the geographical-literary imagination inflect these competing tropes in Andalusi-Jewish culture, mediating the relation of exile to space?[3]

Previous scholarship regarding the Andalusi Jewish geographical-cultural orientation offers three paradigmatic approaches to the question. Speaking as a nineteenth-century German-Jewish intellectual possessed by a deep attachment to his own country, its language and culture, Heinrich Graetz defined the Jews' ties to medieval Iberia this way:

> The Jewish inhabitants of this happy peninsula [Iberia] contributed by their hearty interest to the greatness of the country, which they loved as only a fatherland can be loved.[4]

Gerson D. Cohen underscored the Jews' attachment to al-Andalus/Sefarad with greater nuance but no less boldly than Graetz. In his provocative reading of Abraham ibn Daud's twelfth-century *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, Cohen observes that the Andalusi Jewish elite "tried to live as though Andalus could become a second Palestine or its surrogate, and Granada and Seville latter-day Jerusalems."[5] At the same time Cohen notes "the constant and passionate prayer for a return to the Holy Land that is echoed incessantly in the poetry of Andalus." According to Cohen the two themes expressed in Andalusi Hebrew poetry (attachment to life in Sefarad/longing for Palestine) and the cultural approaches informing

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Culture: From al-Andalus to the Enlightenment, Philadelphia 2003, pp. 31-49, and Israel Levin, *Tannim we-khinnor: ḫurban galut, naqam u-g'ulah ba-shirah ha-civrit ha-le'umit* [Jackals and Harp: Destruction, Exile, Revenge and Redemption in National Hebrew Poetry], Tel Aviv 1998, pp. 96-108, 174-183, 275-299.

3 Amy K. Kaminsky, *After Exile: Writing the Latin American Diaspora*, Minneapolis 1999, p. xvi.

4 Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 3, Philadelphia 1956 [1894], p. 41.

5 *The Book of Tradition: Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, Gerson D. Cohen (ed. and trans.), Philadelphia 1967, p. 287. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Exile and Expulsion in Jewish History," Benjamin R. Gampel (ed.), *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1391-1648*, New York 1997, pp. 3-22, expresses this opposition in Jewish history in general by the terms "exile" and "domicile." On Halevi and geographical-cultural reorientation, see Ross Brann, "Judah Halevi," M. R. Menocal, R. P. Scheindlin, and M. Sells (eds.), *The Literature of al-Andalus*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 271-276.

them "were by no means mutually exclusive. The traditional messianic dream was a religious dogma that would be effected by God in His good time. In the meanwhile, a surrogate program could be translated into reality in Andalus as it had been in previous centuries in Babylonia."

Accordingly, Samuel the Nagid and Moses ibn Ezra are said to represent the authoritative voices of a definitive tilt towards al-Andalus among eleventh- and twelfth-century Hebrew poets – the former because he was so involved in the Andalusi political and cultural scene, the latter because he pined nostalgically for his former home and its Arabic-speaking cultural orbit while exiled in Christian Iberia. By contrast, in Cohen's interpretive scheme, Judah Halevi's eventual turn (in text and deed) toward a stricter Jewish piety in the twelfth century signifies the most prominent challenge to the "Andalusi orientation" of his predecessors or to others' attempts to live with the tension of two competing points of geographical reference in Iberian Jewish culture. To Halevi, any balance at all implicitly seemed to favor Sefarad and "all its prosperity" over Jerusalem and "the dust of its ruined shrine." Indeed, other scholars such as Nehemiah Allony and Ezra Fleischer following the approach established by Yitzhak Baer have touted the voice of tradition and piety as the sole authentic expression of the Jewish ethos.

Does Andalusi Hebrew poetry before Halevi really delineate so deep and unambiguous an attachment to Sefarad as Graetz imagined or as Cohen asserted in a more tempered manner? Did the Andalusi Jewish literary intellectuals' affection for Sefarad coexist or compete with their pious longing for their people's restoration to the Land of Israel? Was Halevi, the self-styled "prisoner of love" and "prisoner of desire," really the first Hebrew poet to verbalize geographical desire for the East, or can the reader discover earlier topical prefigurations of Halevi's twelfth-century literary reorientation? Finally, was there room within the Andalusi Jewish cultural matrix for yet a fourth approach that appeared to favor neither Sefarad nor Jerusalem nor the artful and edgy balancing of the two?

Let us briefly reconsider the tenth-century poet Dūnash ben Labrāṭ and a prominent motif in "*We-omer al tishan.*"[6] Shulamit Elizur's recent Genizah discovery (textual corrections and eleven additional lines) now identifies the lyric as a *qaṣīda* in honor of Ḥasdai ibn Shaprūṭ of which the "wine song" is but the lyrical introduction.[7]

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6 Hayyim Schirmann, *Hebrew Poetry in Spain and Provence* [in Hebrew], vol. 1, Jerusalem 1959, pp. 34-35. Translated by Raymond P. Scheindlin, *Wine, Women and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life*, Philadelphia 1986, pp. 41-42.

7 Nevertheless it also appears to have existed or been transmitted as an independent lyric. See

This is not the place to reconsider the lyric and I have no intention of rehearsing literary discussions of what was previously known of this poem. Rather, I draw our attention back to the text because I believe there is an obscured source of historical tension embedded in the lyrical introduction that has yet to be unpacked. The poem opens with a voice issuing a conventional Arabic-style invitation to a wine soirée set in a lush, alluring Andalusi garden:

> There came a voice: "Awake!"
> Drink wine at morning's break.
> 'Mid rose and camphor make
> A feast of all your hours…

A second voice, explicitly identified with the poet's persona, appears in the last quarter of the poem's introduction to deliver a stern rebuke to his would-be drinking companion:

> I chided him: "Be Still!
> How can you drink your fill
> When lost is Zion hill…

What is the ideological contest hidden in the poem to which I referred? Dūnash ben Labrāṭ was an arrival from the Muslim East and the circle around Saadia Gaon. He would certainly have understood that the Andalusi social and cultural moment described in the poem's extended introduction – wine and song – might appear to compromise the rabbanite position in its struggle against Karaite Judaism. By the middle of the tenth century, exactly when Dūnash was drawn to Umayyad al-Andalus as a maturing center of Jewish culture and society, Karaite intellectuals in the East were vigorously challenging their community's diaspora to come settle in Jerusalem. Wherever we turn in Karaite literature we encounter historical reports, homilies, ritual prescriptions, and scriptural interpretations reinforcing emphatically the singular significance of *earthly* Jerusalem as the very center of Jewish life as well as the focus of spiritual devotion. By contrast, rabbanite Jews could be said to channel their geographical desire, deferring and projecting restoration to the Land of Israel into the apocalyptic future.[8] Three

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Shulamit Elizur, "Ḥiddushim beḥeqer ha-shirah we-ha-piyyuṭ," David Rosenthal (ed.), *The Cairo Geniza Collection in Geneva: Catalogue and Studies* [in Hebrew], Jerusalem 2010, pp. 200-207.

8 Dūnash in fact reiterates the classical biblical and later rabbinic hope-appeal for God to intervene on behalf of Jerusalem and catholic Israel. See *Dūnash ben Labrāṭ: Poems*, Nehemiah Allony (ed.), Jerusalem 1947, p. 60, ll. 4-6:

> Build the City of our joy,

major Karaite biblical exegetes in fact took up residence in Jerusalem during the tenth century: Yefet b. Alī from Basra, David b. Abraham of Fez, and Salman b. Yeruḥim whose place of origin is uncertain. In his Arabic commentary on Psalm 69 Salman ben Yeruḥim surveys the activist Karaite enterprise:

> People appeared from the east and the west who intensified their devotion and the study and knowledge [of the Law]. They made it their intention to settle in Jerusalem. So they have abandoned their possessions and their homes and renounced worldly pleasures. They are now residing in the Holy City and await the arrival of the Remnant…They are the Shoshanim.[9]

Salman further reads Psalm 137 (v. 4: "How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?") as a biblical proof-text forbidding the composition and performance of sacred Hebrew songs on "alien soil," that is, outside the Land of Israel.[10] Levi b. Yefet (Yefet b. Alī's son) positions two Psalms (Ar. *mazāmir al-quds*) pertaining to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (Psalm 74: "Why have you rejected us forever O God!" and Psalm 79: "O God, the nations have invaded Your inheritance") at the very beginning of the recitation of Psalms in the synagogue service. Such texts received a double reading, as historical references to ancient Israel and as prophetic allusions to the Jews' socio-religious situation in the tenth century. Furthermore, their prominent liturgical placement is a sign of the urgency and imminence of Israel's redemption in the Karaite religious imagination and of the Karaite belief in the obligation to overturn exile and diaspora through human agency.

To further underscore the intra-Jewish cultural sensitivity apparent in Dūnash's poem it is worth citing a few passages from "The Epistle to the Diaspora," a pointed and passionate appeal for Karaite settlement in Jerusalem attributed to Daniel al-Qūmisī, the leading Karaite intellectual and founder of the important Karaite community and center in the Holy City at the turn of the tenth century:

Madmannah and Sansannah [of the far end of Judea]
And the stone the builders rejected
turn into the chief [Temple] cornerstone.
May the Lord's ransomed return
And reach Zion in glee.

See also ibid., p. 57, ll. 6-8; p. 58, ll. 3-4, 7.

9 Haggai Ben-Shammai, "The Karaites," J. Prawer and H. Ben-Shammai (eds.), *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Islamic Period (638-1099)*, Jerusalem and New York 1996, p. 201.

10 Uriel Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadia Gaon to Abraham ibn Ezra*, From Hebrew: Lenn J. Schramm, Albany, NY 1991, pp. 64-65.

> Know that the scoundrels who are among Israel say one to another, "It is not our duty to go to Jerusalem until He shall gather us together, just as it was He who cast us abroad." These are the words of those who would draw the wrath of the Lord and who are bereft of sense.
>
> Therefore it is incumbent upon you who fear the Lord to come to Jerusalem and to dwell in it, in order to hold vigils before the Lord until the day when Jerusalem shall be restored, as it is written: And do not give him rest (Isa. 62:7).[11]

The text's most biting summons makes reference to the performance of *Christian* and *Muslim* pilgrimage to Jerusalem, indicating that the question of geographical desire was a point of sensitivity not only in an internecine Jewish contest:

> Do not nations other than Israel come from the four corners of the earth to Jerusalem every month and every year in the awe of God? What, then, is the matter with you, our brethren in Israel, that you are not doing even as much as is the custom of the Gentiles in coming to Jerusalem and praying there…

Apart from the Epistle's rhetorical power and ideological program, there is much to indicate that Jerusalem became the renewed focus of piety within each of the three monotheistic religious communities during the later part of the ninth and into the tenth century. A monk named Bernard, a Christian pilgrim in Jerusalem around 870 who left a narrative of his itinerary,[12] attests to Charlemagne's interest and stake in Jerusalem. That two Egyptian governors (Isā b. Muḥammad al-Nusharī, d. 909, and Muḥammad b. Tughj, founder of Ikhshidids, d. 964) were buried in Jerusalem suggests that revived religious interest in Jerusalem among Muslims was also stirring during the tenth century.[13] The Andalusi Ibn Abd Rabbih (d. 940) already devotes a chapter of *Al-Iqd al-farīd* to the theme.[14] Writing about his native Jerusalem

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11 Jacob Mann, "A Tract by an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 12 (1922), pp. 257-298; cited excerpts translated by Leon Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology: Excerpts from the Early Literature*, New Haven and London 1952, pp. 34-39.

12 F.E. Peters, *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times*, Princeton 1985, pp. 220-224.

13 Joseph Yahalom (in "The Temple and the City in Liturgical Hebrew Poetry," Prawer and Ben-Shammai [eds.], note 9 above) cites S. D. Goitein, "al-Ḳuds" *Encyclopedia of Islam* [2nd ed.], vol. 5, Leiden 1980, p. 327. On the status of Jerusalem during this period see Emmanuel Sivan, "Le caractere sacré de Jérusalem dans l'Islam aux 12-13th sicles," *Studia Islamica* 27 (1967), pp. 149-182.

14 *Ibn Abd Rabbih: Al-Iqd al-farīd*, M. Muḥammad Qumayha (ed.), Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut 1983, vol. 7, pp. 29-93.

around 985, al-Muqaddasī observes: "Her streets are never empty of strangers." At the same time he notes with some annoyance that "everywhere the Christians and Jews have the upper hand."[15] Finally, the genesis of full-fledged treatises on *faḍā'il al-quds/faḍā'il bayt al-maqdis/faḍā'il bayt al-muqaddas* ("the [religious] merits of Jerusalem") dates to al-Wāsiṭī no later than 1019-1020.[16]

To return to the Jews: in addition to encouraging pilgrimage and advocating collective re-settlement in Jerusalem, the "Mourners of Zion" and Karaites in general were known for their ascetic regimen and liturgical predisposition to lamentation as a fundamental register of Hebrew prayer.[17] In the aforementioned epistle attributed to Daniel al-Qūmisī we find a powerful critique of those Jews who are too busy, distracted and preoccupied with material considerations to return to God's presence in the Land:

> Now you, our brethren in Israel, do not act this way. Hearken to the Lord, arise and come to Jerusalem, so that we may return to the Lord. Or, if you will not come because you are running about in tumult and haste after your merchandise, then send at least five men from each city in the Dispersion...

The voice of conventional piety we hear in Dūnash ben Labrāṭ's lyrical introduction thus seems keenly attuned to four principal Karaite concerns articulated by al-Qūmisī and espoused by the "Mourners of Zion." They are (1) a sense of urgency regarding the Jews' temporal predicament, (2) a tendency toward expressions of sorrow and ascetic practice, (3) a heightened awareness of the Jewish religious investment in Palestine, and (4) an acute sensitivity to the Jews' social-psychological predicament regarding the political irrelevance of their stake in Palestine.

Did these issues leave any further trace in Andalusi Jewish culture?[18] Ḥasdai

15 Peters, note 12 above, p. 235.

16 *Abū Bakr Muḥammad (b. Aḥmad al-Wāsiṭī): Faḍā'il al-bayt al-muqaddas,* Isaac Hasson (ed.), Jerusalem 1979. See Emmanuel Sivan, "The Beginnings of the *Faḍā'il al-Quds* Literature," *Israel Oriental Studies* 1 (1971), p. 263, and Isaac Hasson, "Muslim Literature in Praise of Jerusalem: Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis," *Jerusalem Cathedra* 1 (1981), pp. 168-184.

17 S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Genizah*, vol. 5, Berkeley 1988, p. 362.

18 Rina Drory, *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture*, Leiden 2000, pp. 147-157, delineates "three major Karaite contributions to tenth-century Jewish culture." They are (1) introduction of an option for a change in Jewish literature (Arabic models), (2) introduction of writing as an official mode of text production (institutionalized writing of literary works), and (3) preparation of language–setting for the new writing models (division of function between Hebrew and Arabic).

ibn Shaprūṭ's tenth-century letter to the Jewish king of the Khazars identifies its author as "belonging to the exiled Jews of Jerusalem in Sefarad." The earliest textual evidence for this appropriation-interpretation of the verse from the biblical prophet Ovadiah (v.20) is the Targum Jonathan's (4th-5th century in the form that has come down to us) gloss on biblical Sefarad as 'Espamya' ("And the exile of Jerusalem that is in Sefarad" – and the exile of Jerusalem that is in Spain). Subsequently, the tradition appears in the late Geonic historiographical source *Seder colam zuṭa'* ["Vespasianus came in and destroyed the Temple and exiled Israel and many families from the house of David and Judah to Espamya which is Sefarad"[19]] and in *Midrash eser galuyot*. The latter's dating is uncertain but R. Ṣemaḥ Gaon, the head of the Palestinian academy for thirty-one years, cites it in the ninth century.[20]

Ibn Shaprūṭ's letter to the Khazar king represents the earliest extant text of *Andalusi* provenance to associate the Jews of al-Andalus with the exiles from Jerusalem. The eleventh-century biblical exegete and Hebrew grammarian from Toledo, Judah ibn Bilcam, already seems to sense the constructedness of the tradition. In his commentary on Ovadiah he observes: "The opinion that Sefarad is al-Andalus has spread among our people; its name in olden days was Espamya." In due course and notwithstanding Ibn Bilcam's uncertainty about the tradition's origin or reliability, the identification became a touchstone for the Jews of Iberia. Jonah ibn Janāḥ, Moses ibn Ezra', Abraham ibn Daud, and David Qimḥi, among others, cited the tradition because it gave prophetic corroboration to their claims regarding the Andalusis' noble lineage, possession of authoritative Hebrew learning, and preeminence in Hebrew aesthetic production.

In the mid-tenth century, then, three social-religious and political issues appear to converge around a contest over territorial orientation: Andalusi elites were beginning to assert themselves as occupying a position of privilege in the diaspora; the compass of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish devotion was increasingly pointed toward Jerusalem; and Jerusalem-centered Karaite Jews were embroiled in a contest with rabbanites for advantage in claiming the authoritative voice to define Judaism. I thus believe the aforementioned topos served the purpose of establishing the identity of the Jews of al-Andalus as *suspended*, so to speak, between Sefarad and Jerusalem.[21]

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19 Adolf Neubauer (ed.), *Seder ha-ḳakhamim we-qorot ha-yamim*: *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes*, vol. 1, Oxford 1888, p. 71.

20 Cited in *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, note 5 above, p. 251.

21 Ḥasdai ibn Sharpūṭ's letter to the Khazar king offers an idealized picture of the richness of al-Andalus in general and the security of Jewish life there in particular ("*anu peliṭat yisra'el cavdei adoni ha-melekh*

The Karaite agenda and activist approach to the Holy Land was infectious and challenging and it certainly played a significant role in a fundamental shift in rabbanite thinking about history, dispersion, exile, and redemption. S. D. Goitein notes: "Between the death of Saadia Gaon in Baghdad in 942 and that of…Judah Halevi shortly after his arrival in Palestine in 1141, a considerable change seems to have occurred in the rabbanite-Jewish attitude toward messianism. The matter assumed an aura of urgency, as if redemption were around the corner, as if one had to do something to hasten its realization."[22] Andalusi Jewish fascination with reports from Khazaria, Ḥasdai ibn Shaprūṭ's aforementioned Hebrew correspondence with Joseph,[23] the king of that realm, and evidence of covert and overt messianic speculation among Andalusi Jews all attest to a certain *de-spritualization* in Andalusi Jewish culture of the classical rabbinic attitudes toward home, homelessness, homesickness, and homecoming. In Gerson Cohen's words, "at no time in the history of the Jews after the second century was there such a concentration of messianic speculation and of vigorous reaffirmation of the messianic hope as there was in Andalus in the 11th and 12th centuries."[24]

The ideological shift is clearly inscribed in Andalusi Hebrew verse, especially insofar as poetry in general and *piyyuṭ* in particular served as important literary vehicles for inner Jewish resistance to the memory and condition of displacement, dispersion, and powerlessness. Ever since the age of the classical Palestinian *piyyuṭ*, poems were composed on the theme of catholic Israel's redemption from exile and recited as the final element of the *yoṣer* poetic cycle. During the Andalusi period, these poetic embellishments to the liturgy on the theme of communal redemption evolved into an independent strophic genre (*ge'ullah*) embraced by

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sheruyim be-shalwah be-ereṣ megurenu" ["we dwell peacefully in the land of our sojourn"], Pavel K. Kokovtzov, *Evrejsko-Xazarskaja Perepiska v X vieke*, Leningrad 1932, p. 10; translated in Franz Kobler (ed.), *Letters of Jews through the Ages,* vol. 1, New York 1978, pp. 98. By contrast, catholic Israel ("*kenesset yisra'el*") is portrayed as subjugated in the panegyric Ibn Shaprūṭ commissioned from Menaḥem ben Sarauq ("*Afudat nezer le-sheveṭ moshlim*" in Schirmann, note 6 above, vol. 1, pp. 6-8), one of two poems accompanying the epistle. See Esperanza Alfonso, "Constructions of Exile in Medieval Hebrew Literature: Between Text and Context" [in Hebrew], *Mikan* 1 (2000), pp. 85-96.

22 Goitein, note 17 above, vol. 5, p. 391. Goitein (vol. 5, p. 365) also observes that "the Karaite emphasis on the study of the Bible and Hebrew, their belief in the power of independent reasoning, and their call to live in the Holy Land, or at least to visit there, and lead an austere life, all invited examination and at least partial emulation."

23 Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, Ithaca and London 1982, pp. 75-95; D. M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, New York 1967, pp. 125-170.

24 *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, note 5 above, p. 288.

many Andalusi Hebrew poets.[25] Yet not every Andalusi *ge'ullah* adheres to an urgent and imminent agenda of eschatological homecoming. On the contrary, lyrics such as "*Esbelah nedudi agilah ve-galuti*," [I bear up with my wandering/ I rejoice in my exile] by Isaac ibn Ghiyāth,[26] the eleventh-century rabbinic authority from Lucena, suggest a counter-approach that reaffirms the traditional rabbinic posture of waiting with hope.[27]

Aside from their role in the literary historical development of *ge'ullot*, Andalusi poets devoted lyrics of a personal and social nature to *imaginative* journeys to Palestine, compensation, as it were, for their exilic/diasporic existence. Two generations after Dūnash, Samuel the Nagid produced several poems in which the poet's religious devotion for Zion appears to figure prominently. In this context it is instructive to recall that the Nagid supposedly championed rabbanite resistance to Karaite activity in eleventh-century Iberia. So too, his ambition to be a dominant voice in Jewish affairs beyond the borders of al-Andalus apparently led him to cultivate and maintain close ties with Jewish elites in Palestine. Although the Nagid does not seem to have composed *piyyuṭim per se*, three of his Hebrew 'war' poems (Ar. *al-ḥamāsa*) are introduced by elegies for Zion or odes to the city. "*Be-libbi ḥom le-mifqad ha-necurim,*" written in 1047 on the occasion of Granada's defeat of the combined forces of Seville and Malaga, begins with a first-person seventeen-line lament. It serves as an introduction to a long poetic description of the battle (ll. 18-58) before the poem concludes (ll. 59-64) with a praise-dedication to God. In the introductory lament over life in exile we find a passage whose final lines appear to be an exercise or variation on the theme and rhetorical pattern established by Dūnash.[28]

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25 Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems on God, Israel and the Soul*, Philadelphia 1991, p. 36; Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, From German: Raymond P. Scheindlin, Philadelphia and New York 1993, p. 169.

26 *Rabbi Isaac ibn Ghiyyat: Poems* [in Hebrew], Yonah David (ed.), Jerusalem 1987, pp. 182-183. The poem's intertextual dynamics involving Lamentations, 2nd Isaiah, and the Song of Songs are especially rich.

27 Compare this approach with Joseph ibn Abitur's elegy (Schirmann, note 6 above, vol.1, pp. 64-65) for the suffering of the Jews of Palestine during the Bedouin raids of 1024, in which the poet speaks of Palestine as "their Homeland, *the place of their desire*." The term "meḥoz ḥefṣah" reappears in Abraham ibn Ezra's elegy for the communities of Iberia and North Africa at the outset of the Almohad period, "Ahah yarad cal sefarad," in *Abraham ibn Ezra Reader* [in Hebrew], Israel Levin (ed.), New York and Tel Aviv 1985, p. 102, l. 37, where its usage is ambiguous. See Ross Brann, "Constructions of Exile in Hispano-Hebrew and Hispano-Arabic Elegies" [in Hebrew], Reuven Tsur and Tova Rosen (eds.), *Israel Levin Jubilee Volume: Studies in Hebrew Literature 1*, Tel Aviv 1994, pp. 53-54.

28 *Semu'el Ha-Nagid: Poemas I*, Angel Saenz-Badillos and Judit Targarona Borras (eds.), Cordoba 1988, pp. 106-110.

Seething on account of his and his people's condition, "[d]welling outside Zion, impure as a corpse," the poet wonders about and imagines restoration to the place and to the station of his Levite tribe as singers in the Jerusalem Temple service:

Will melodious song ever ring from my mouth or from my son's
on the Levites' Temple platform?

Will I ever see the children of the Living God
whisked to Zion like clouds and doves?

By the life of my living Redeemer! Until
my dying day I hope for the ingathering of the dispersed!

I do not claim: "I am mighty and majestic,
I belong among kings and eminent folk."

Neither do my urges tempt me to claim:
"You are a god, honored above men,

For what might you gain when Israel is redeemed?
What more could you attain when the dispersed are gathered in?"

Standing in the Sacred Precincts is best for my soul,
finer than ruling over everyone.

Quaffing rich drink on impure soil
is like swilling dregs to me!

The poet proceeds to imagine participating in the Temple cult, only to be roused from the fantasy (awakening from a vision serves as a conventional transition formula in Arabic and Hebrew verse). Instead of serving in the Temple in Jerusalem, the poet's persona awakens to realize he is commissioned to compose Hebrew verse in praise of God as battle awaits him at Ronda. Samuel's rhetorical gifts, sensibility as a Hebrew poet, and position of privilege in Granada provide him with a fundamentally different approach to the question of Psalm 137 and its Karaite interpretation.[29] So too the poetics of the qaṣīda form signify a symbolic

29 See also the Nagid's "Levavi be-qirbi ḫam" (note 28 above, pp. 41-44), whose fifteen-line introduction is a lament over Zion's ruin, preceding the transition (ll. 15-16) to the poetic description of Granada's battle against rebel forces (ll. 16-37); and the *tehillah* "*Haeeṣor naḥalei einai we-anuḥah*" (pp. 136-141, ll. 1-7).

transaction: composition of Arabic-style Hebrew poetry replaces Temple service. The poet thus overcomes geographical and religious desire through the act of literary representation.

The reader encounters a textual journey of another sort, and with it an overlooked fourth position to the question of geographical orientation within the Andalusi Jewish cultural matrix, in the eleventh century poet-philosopher Solomon ibn Gabirol. One of his characteristically enigmatic poems is "*Mah lakh yeḥidah teshevi*" ["What's troubling you my soul, silent as a captured king?"], a fifty-verse lyric that, as in so many of Ibn Gabirol's poems, blurs conventional generic and thematic lines between Andalusi Hebrew occasional-social and devotional poetry. For our purposes this poem is interesting because it appears to relate the poet's contemplating a journey and quest, albeit with Gabirolian misdirection. The Arabic superscription is more specific, yet only adds to the mystery: *wa-qāla ḥina khurūjihi min al-andalus*: "verse he recited upon his departure from al-Andalus."[30]

The poem consists of four or five thematic units whose divisions are skillfully marked by changes in tone and address as well as sharp mood swings adroitly represented by transitional techniques. The lyric's pattern of metaphorical movements (mournful paralysis, motionless devotion, aimless futility, tentative journey, and the dynamic motion of swift flight; note the parallels with epithets for God, *yoshevi* [l. 6, "from His throne" in Cole's translation but more literally "the Enthroned"] and *rokhevi* [l. 38, "who rides the sky," i.e. "the celestial Charioteer"]) is especially noteworthy. It may be outlined as follows:

1. counsel to the poet's soul
   - (a) ll. 1-4 poet's soul is deeply aggrieved and silent
   - (b) ll. 5-10 soul advised to renounce the World and await God
   - (c) ll. 11-13 the World is denounced
2. solution for the soul and its specific problem
   - (a) ll. 14-16 soul urged to return to God and express itself
   - (b) ll. 17-21 the soul's troubles with society
3. a second solution for the soul
   - ll. 22-30 poet exhorts soul to leave al-Andalus for the East
4. ll. 31-38 more counsel to the poet's aggrieved soul
5. ll. 39-43 poet curses land of his foes

Coda: ll. 44-50 complaint with ascetic elements (in colloquial Andalusi Arabic)

30 *Solomon ibn Gabirol: Secular Poems* [in Hebrew], H. Brody and J. Schirmann (eds.), Jerusalem 1974, pp. 12-13. The translation (with exceptions noted) is from *Selected Poems of Solomon ibn Gabirol,* Peter Cole (trans.), Princeton 2001, pp. 85-87.

In this lyric the poet turns to his irate soul (frequently gendered in the Hebrew by use of the epithet *yeḥidah*, "my only one") with questions, prodding, and counsel. Central to Neoplatonic thought is the notion that the soul, detached from its sublime source to which it will eventually return, wallows in the misery of corporeal existence. A thematic staple of Andalusi liturgical poetry thus involves admonishing the soul to abandon its worldly attachments.[31] In "*Mah lakh yeḥidah*" the soul has become so accustomed to its isolation, so inured in its desolation, as to have severed its conjunction with God.[32] This condition also interferes with the soul's (and thus the poet's) capacity to express itself in songs of praise to God: the Neoplatonic poet's version of writer's block is captured beautifully in the image of a wounded (song-) bird and through the rhetorical tropes *muqābala* [parallelism] and *muṭābaqa* [antitheton] of line 2 (*kanfei renanim ta'sefi/u-khnaf yegonim tisḫavi*").

What's troubling you, my soul,
    silent as a captured king---
that you've drawn in the wings of your hymns
    and drag them around in your suffering?
How long will your heart be in mourning?
    When will your weeping give way?…
Be still my soul, before the Lord---
    be still but don't despair. [ll. 1-3; 5]

31 Scheindlin, note 25 above, pp. 42-43. See, for example, Adena Tanenbaum, *The Contemplative Soul: Hebrew Poetry and Philosophical Theory in Medieval Spain*, Leiden 2002, pp. 84-105, which studies Ibn Gabirol's strophic *piyyuṭ* to the soul "Shabbeḥi nafshi le-ṣureikh," *Solomon ibn Gabirol: Liturgical Poems* [in Hebrew], Dov Yarden (ed.), vol. 2, Jerusalem 1971-73, pp. 537-538.

32 Abstinence and seclusion, expressions of the Arabic topos *dhamm al-dunyā*, are also paired motifs in Ibn Gabirol's *zuhdiyya* "Mah tifḥadi nafshi" (Brody and Schirmann [eds.], note 30 above, p. 128; trans. Cole, note 30 above, p.105). This lyric is nearly a miniature study exercise for the first three thematic units of our poem:

> Why are you troubled and frightened, my soul?
> Be still and dwell where you are.
> Since the world to you is small as a hand,
> you won't, my storm, get far.
>
> Better than pitching from court to court
> is sitting before the throne of your Lord;
> if you distance yourself from others you'll flourish
> and surely see your reward.
>
> If your desire is like a fortified city,
> a siege will bring it down in time:
> You have no portion here in this world---
> so wake for the world to come.

Hold on until he gazes
down from his throne in heaven;
Close your doors behind you and hide
until your anger has faded.
Whether you thirst or go hungry
hardly merits attention:
The rewards to come will be greater---
you'll count them all soon as a blessing.
Distance yourself from the world's concern,
don't waste away in its prison…[ll. 6-10]

Return, my soul, return to the Lord,
restore your heart to its place:
Pour out your tears like water,
before him plead your cause---[ll. 14-15]

Ibn Gabirol's irascible persona, speaking here as a sage counselor to his soul, urges the soul to turn its silence [(l. 1) "*Mah lakh yeḥidah teshevi/dumam ke-melekh ba-shevi*"] into stillness [(l.5) "*Dommi yeḥidati le-el/dommi we-al teaṣevi*"] and to wait for God. Indeed, the poet's persona seems assured in the advice it offers; it seems to promise that such a seemingly passive course will actually restore a reciprocal relationship between God and soul (l. 6). This mutuality is captured in the neatly wrought semantic balance if not symmetry of *imdi we-ṣappi ad asher/yashqif we-yere' yoshevi* ("Hold on until he gazes down from his throne in heaven.") The text invites the reader to reflect on the final passage of this first section with the poem's opening passage in mind: the denunciation of the world in line 11 ("*Mah lakh adamah vogedah?*") echoes the rhetorical formula of the first line. However, the resemblance between the passages is more apparent than real because all of the verbs and many of the nouns in the first two passages (*teshevi, imdi, dumam, ba-shevi, davaqt be-yagon, qever, yoshevi, hinnazeri,* etc.) applied to the soul and God involve images of immobility. By contrast, the motion of the final passage of the first part of the poem, that is, the motion of the material world, has the qualities of aimlessness, circularity, and duplicity (*tithallekhi u-tesovavi; titni/tiqḥi, titnaddevi*). The opposing images set up the motion of the soul toward God in the poem's second part ("*Shuvi yeḥidati le-el*," l. 14), the phrasing of which is perfectly parallel to the earlier instructions given the soul in line 5 ("*dommi yeḥidati le-el*").

In the poem's key passage (end of second and the third unit), the intellectually exacting, socially alienated poet and his anguished soul seek understanding, appreciation, and recognition elsewhere. The soul's hoped-for release upward

("from the dungeon where you brood," l. 16) harkens back to the image of it trapped in the grave of its own making (l. 4).

perhaps he'll see to release you
    from the dungeon where you brood
with boors you've come to abhor,
    who can't understand what you've written,
or determine what's worth preserving
    and what would be better erased---
who can't hear what you're saying,
    or know if it's true or mistaken.
Rejoice in the day you leave them
    and offer your thanks on an altar.
Others elsewhere will know
    the worth of the person you are. (ll. 16-21)

Repeated references to the poet's embittered soul, its revulsion for the confines and corruption of earthly existence, and its disgust for the taint of ignorance from having to live in society among boors remind us that the poem only seems to belong with other familiar lyrical complaints. I have in mind Gabirolian lyrics such as "*Niḥar be-qor'i geroni*" on the poet leaving Saragossa and "*Neshamah me-asher tit'aw geduah*" by Samuel the Nagid on the poet leaving Cordoba,[33] or nearly any poem from the cycle of lyrical complaints Moses ibn Ezra' composed in the Christian kingdoms of the north during his forty-year exile from Muslim Granada. As in the Arabic, these decidedly social and personal lyrics typically employ passages of *fakhr* (boast) in counterpoint to the poet's expressions of social and intellectual alienation (*taẓallum*). The boast thus redeems the poet symbolically from life among intellectual inferiors and from social rejection and isolation.

It should be noted that the Nagid's aforementioned poem "*Neshamah me-asher tit'aw geduah*" also begins with mention of the soul, abstractly, in the third person and in opposition to the body (ll. 1-4). However, in line five, the Nagid's poem moves briskly into a conventional lyrical complaint about leaving Cordoba and escaping the misunderstanding of his friends (ll. 5-9). The poet's journey (ll. 10-19) is then outlined in self-aggrandizing terms, followed by a panegyric (ll. 20-24). By contrast, Ibn Gabirol's ("*Mah lakh yeḥidah*") fusion of genres, themes, and voices involves deceptive reversals, internal contradictions, and ambiguities, as we shall presently see.

Rise, my troubled soul,

33 Schirmann, note 6 above, vol. 1, pp. 207-210; vol. 1, pp. 83-84.

rise up and take yourself there,
rise up and live where people
will hold you in proper regard.
Leave your father and mother,
and save your love for the Lord.
Rise up and race in pursuit of that place,
be swift as an eagle or deer. (ll. 22-25)

Although "that place" to which the poet's soul is bidden to swiftly flee is not yet identified, the injunction that it must depart immediately is decisive and the ensuing anticipated leave-taking absolute. The verbs *qumi, qumi, hityaṣevi* (l. 22) suggest the poet's stance is rebellious and defiant: he exhorts his soul to gather itself and rise up against the social and spiritual constraints imposed upon it. The inner turmoil suppressed to this point in the poem is now released in the form of externalized action that will, like the patriarch Abram of the biblical allusion (l. 24), replace meaningless social attachments with pious devotion to God.

The next segment finally specifies the journey's itinerary but not without ambiguous turns of its own.

When trouble and anguish confront you,
don't let panic consume you.
Whether you'll need to take on
mountain, gorge or wave,
put Andalusia behind you,
and do it without delay---
until you've set foot near the Nile,
the Euphrates or the Beautiful Land (of Israel),
where you'll walk in the power of pride,
be lifted and held in awe. (ll. 26-30)

The soul is counseled to abandon al-Andalus for Egypt, Iraq, and the Land of Israel. In the East it will surely find the esteem it could not enjoy in al-Andalus. But this itinerary and its rationale raise more questions for the reader. Is the journey the poem contemplates an actual journey or an imagined and symbolic trek? Do the earlier references to captivity and the abundance of biblical allusions suggest a possible communal rather than individual-minded reading? And how are we to reconcile the personal, social-psychological motive for the journey's undertaking with its high-minded spiritual purpose? Certainly the detail is so concrete as to suggest that the journey is real and not imagined (hills, valleys,

seas, foreign lands). To put these questions another way: Are we to think of the soul's projected departure from al-Andalus for the East as akin to the Nagid's fantasy of Temple service, as more in the mold of Judah Halevi's lyrics anticipating and subsequently inscribing poetically the physical and spiritual route of his pilgrimage to Palestine, or rather as a singularly Gabirolian journey?

Once the poet exhorts his soul to exclusive love of God (l. 24, "*ṣureikh levado ehevi*"), it follows that the soul must seek love of the divine to the end of the earth. Indeed, the proposed flight to the East is redefined in line 25 to swift pursuit of God ("*qumi we-ruṣi aḥaraw*"). Yet in the next passage the poet must again urge on his soul that remains reluctant to let go of its accustomed place in al-Andalus. The reader should note the shift from the concrete sense of "*beit megureikh*" ("household," in line 32) to the metaphorical sense of "*ger*" ("stranger," in line 35). The motif of the soul's wandering upon the earth retroactively affirms the metaphorical nature of the proposed journey from al-Andalus to the East. Indeed we are reminded in line 34 ("*ki ṣel eloah baadeikh/im telehki o' teshevi*") that God is accessible anywhere and everywhere:

Why, my troubled soul,
    why languish there in your longing?
Is it leaving your people or household
    that holds you back in your grief?
Keep them in mind as you go
    And your sorrow will find relief,
For the Lord's shadow is with you,
    whether you leave or stay---
And I'll be considered a stranger,
    until my bones are worn away.

Remember the fathers in exile,
    keep them always in mind:
Abram and tent-dwelling Jacob,
    and Moses who fled in haste:
each in distance took refuge
    in the Lord who rides the sky. (ll. 31-38)

Much could be said about the conclusion of the poem (ll. 39-50).[34] Indeed, much

34 The reader will note dramatic changes in the poem's final two passages: (1) the poet initially ceases speaking to his soul and turns instead to "the land of my enemies" before again pressing his soul to depart ("My heart's desire is distant; how far will you manage to go---"). This abrupt change

more could be said about the whole poem, especially its abovementioned pattern of metaphorical movements (mournful paralysis, motionless devotion, aimless futility, tentative journey, and the dynamic motion of swift flight; compare, as noted above, the reciprocal epithets for God at the beginning and toward the end of the poem, *yoshevi*, l. 6, with *rokhevi*, l. 34). We could also speak about its sharp mood swings adroitly represented by transitional techniques.[35] But what is the significance of the unpredictable Gabirolian poetic twist and linguistic switch from Hebrew to Andalusi Arabic in line 44b of the poem's coda? The anaphoric sequence ("*lahfa cala*"; Cole: "I sigh for…" or "Woe for…") clearly sounds an impassioned cry that builds in intensity across lines 44b-48. Uttered with the immediacy of the colloquial language, the wail sharpens the lyrical complaint launched in line 39. Misunderstood, alone, rejected, frustrated, longing to depart, his poetry driven by acrimony, the figure of the poet appears to displace his soul as the subject. The poet laments that he is left to his own devices and he nearly succumbs to the prospect of remaining in place. Was the devotional journey for the soul (plotted in the body of the poem) somehow premature? On the contrary, the poet's desperate plight and longing *identifies him* with the *out of place* position of the soul in the corporeal world. All that is left is pious resignation: "*allah yaclam madhabī*" (Cole: "God knows where I'm going!" or "Only God knows my way!") [l. 50].

For our purposes suffice it to say that the ambiguity of motive and destination in Ibn Gabirol implies that the soul's proposed flight in the poem, however concretely rendered, is a spiritual quest.[36] The poet's problems with yet attachment to society

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in the speaker's stance and the addressee as well as in the text's subject and tone is reinforced and amplified by (2) a unique linguistic turn mid-verse from Hebrew to Andalusi Arabic (l. 44b), deftly preserving both the meter and rhyme. The text's shift to colloquial language superficially resembles a *muwashshaḥ*'s *kharja*. However, "*Mah lakh yeḥida*" is not a strophic lyric but a polythematic mono-rhyming poem in quantitative meter.

35 The text's relationship to the Arabic genre *zuhdiyya*, to *Rasā'il ikhwān al-ṣafā'*, and to Neoplatonic thought in general are also especially prominent. On Neoplatonic thought and Ibn Gabirol, see Lenn E. Goodman, *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, Albany, NY 1992, and Yehudah Leibes, "The Book of Creation in R. Shelomoh Ibn Gabirol and a Commentary on His Poem 'I Love You'" [in Hebrew], *Proceedings of the Second International Congress on the History of Jewish Mysticism* (1987), pp. 73-123. On Ibn Gabirol and *zuhdiyya*, see Raymond. P. Scheindlin, "Ibn Gabirol's Religious Poetry and Arabic *Zuhd* Poetry," *Edebiyat* NS 4 (1993), pp. 229-242. Scholarly opinion is divided on the precise dating of the *Rasā'il ikhwān al-ṣafā'* but the encyclopedia arrived in al-Andalus in the early eleventh century. On the *Epistles of the Pure Brethren* and Ibn Gabirol, see Jacques Schlanger, *La philosophie de Salomon ibn Gabirol: étude d'un néoplatonisme*, Leiden 1968, pp. 94-97, and Israel Levin, *Mystical Trends in the Poetry of Ibn Gabirol* [in Hebrew], Lod 1986, pp. 137-167.

36 The ambiguity is also captured in line 48 of the Arabic coda: "lahfa cala saqac l-ladhī/qad ḍāqa fihi maṭlabi." Following Yarden's note, Peter Cole (note 30 above, p. 87) translated the line "sigh for this world and its smallness / which can't contain my longing." Schirmann, however understood *saqac* in the sense of "home" or "land." Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manzur, *Lisān al-carab*, vol.

are symbolic of the soul's imprisonment in the corporeal realm – the myth-metaphor of the soul's *exile* in the material world and its longing to return and be gathered back to its Sublime Source. The text reminds us repeatedly (ll. 24, 34, 38) of the soul's need to replace community and its collective aspirations with communion with God and to exchange the soul's social isolation and its temporary attachment to material existence for intimacy and oneness with God.

When he is not speaking as a liturgical poet on behalf of the community, Ibn Gabirol tends to strip territory of religious significance. He has no use at all for al-Andalus and no particular or urgent need for the Land of Israel. Ibn Gabirol does not even seek what would now be called a diasporic intellectual community; rather, the poet's impulse to de-territorialize is matched by his sense of fulfillment as a solitary religious intellectual.[37] Ibn Gabirol's suppression of geographical desire, whether for al-Andalus or Palestine, to which other Andalusi Hebrew poets gave voice (and to which Ibn Gabirol himself gave voice as a liturgical poet),[38] and Samuel the Nagid's displacement of it through imaginative representation, reinforce our sense of the flexibility and untidy complexity of these competing

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4, Cairo 1984-86, pp. 2040-2044, identifies one of the term's meanings as well as its dialectical variant *ṣaqac* as "home"/"land"/"dwelling." It appears that Schirmann's understanding is correct and the line should read: "sigh in a land that can't contain my longing." In a personal communication with Peter Cole he tells me he would amend his translation accordingly.

37 In the meditative work *Tadbīr al-mutawaḥḥid* Ibn Bājja, like Ibn Gabirol, is principally concerned with the individual's intellectual contact with the Divine. So too, the protagonist of Abraham ibn Ezra's *Ḥay ben Meqiṣ* (text in Levin, note 27 above, p. 121), an adaptation of Ibn Sīnā's philosophical allegory, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, narrates a vertical journey that begins on the same note as Ibn Gabirol's:

> I have abandoned my house
> Walked away from my possessions.
> I left my home
> My birthplace, my people.
> The sons of my mother put me in charge
> But they did not let me attend to my vineyard.
> I arose to travel
> In search of tranquility.
> My spirit called out for relaxation
> My soul demanded peace
> I was in need of seclusion.

38 For example, the poet laments Israel's exile and pleads for or projects its eventual redemption-restoration in a poetic introduction to the second benediction of the daily prayer: note 31 above, vol. 2, pp. 337-338; see also the poet's admonition ("Nafshi dei mah tifali,"), vol. 1, p. 289, and counsel to the soul, vol. 2, pp. 333-334.

tropes (Sefarad/Israel) and the varieties of their inflection in eleventh- and twelfth-century Andalusi Jewish culture.[39]

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39 It also reminds us that several Andalusi Hebrew poets (Isaac ibn Khalfun, Judah Halevi, Isaac ibn Ezra, Judah al-Harizi) actually left al-Andalus for the Muslim East.