

RABBI TANHUM BEN JOSEPH HA-YERUSHALMI, *Al-murshid al-kafi* (The Sufficient Guide)

In Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew, manuscript on paper

Egypt or Yemen, late 13th-early 14th century

i + 100 + *i* folios on paper, modern paper pastedowns and flyleaves, modern pagination in pencil in Arabic numerals in or near upper-outer corners, incomplete (possible original collation: [Part I:] [i-ix lacking] x¹⁰ [1 through 3 lacking] xi-xii¹⁰ xiii¹⁰ [10 lacking] [xiv-xv lacking] xvi¹⁰ xvii¹⁰ [2 through 10 lacking] [xviii lacking] xix¹⁰ [1, 2, 9, 10 lacking] [xx-xxi lacking] xxii¹⁰ [10 lacking] xxiii⁸ [3 through 8 lacking] xxiv¹⁰ [1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10 lacking] xxv¹⁰ [1 and 10 lacking] [xxvi lacking]; [Part II:] [i-vi lacking] vii¹⁰ [1 through 9 lacking] [viii-ix lacking] x¹⁰ [1 through 6, 8 through 10 lacking] [xi-xxi lacking]; [Part III:] [i-xi lacking] xii¹⁰ [1-2, 9-10 lacking] [xiii-xviii lacking] xix¹⁰ [1 through 7, 10 lacking] xx¹⁰ [1 through 9 lacking] xxi¹⁰ [9-10 lacking] [xxii-xxiii lacking] xxiv¹⁰ [2 through 10 lacking]), first page of each quire signed in pen near gutter at head in Hebrew characters (sometimes damaged or obscured; see pp. 15, 35, 55, 73, 93, 107, 125, 199), midpoints of quires generally dotted in one or more of the outer corners of the middle opening, horizontal catchwords at the end of each quire (sometimes damaged or obscured; see pp. 14, 34, 54, 92, 158, 182), ruled in blind with a mastara (ruling board) (justification approximately 140 x 90 mm.), single-column text written in elegant Eastern square (headings and lemmata) and semi-cursive (text body) scripts in black ink in 18 lines, justification of lines via dilation or contraction of final letters and slanted inscription of final words, corrections in hand of primary scribe, tapering text on pp. 7, 65, 87, diagrams on pp. 39, 123, scattered staining and dampstaining, gutters periodically strengthened, worming throughout often affecting text, more intense on pp. 1-2, 69-72, 95-98, 131-134, 141-142, 173-174, 181-187, 195-198, sometimes taped, at other times not, water(?) damage to text on pp. 56-57, 73, 103, 107-109, 125, 158, 175, 178-180. Modern red library buckram, very slightly scuffed, paper ticket with title affixed to spine at head, Sassoon shelf mark (1048) numbered in gilt at base of spine. Dimensions approximately 196 x 134 mm.

Building on the legal code of Maimonides, the *Al-murshid al-kafi* constitutes an important source for the study of "the history of Hebrew linguistic scholarship in the Middle Ages in general, and of Hebrew lexicography in particular" (Shy, 2005). Our manuscript's origins lie in the geographical and temporal vicinity of the work's author. Of the ten copies, all incomplete, of the updated version of *Al-murshid al-kafi* that are known to have survived, the present manuscript (together with TM 1374, on this site, once part of the same manuscript) is the only one held privately, and it serves as a valuable witness to the work's textual tradition. It was once in the collection of David Solomon Sassoon.

PROVENANCE

1. While no colophon has been preserved, it is possible to approximately localize and date this manuscript on paleographical grounds to Egypt (or perhaps nearby Yemen) of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.
2. The manuscript was recorded by David Solomon Sassoon (1880-1942), one of the most prominent private collectors of Hebraica and Judaica of all time, on January 3, 1929, as a gift presented to him by "my beloved friend Elhanan ha-Kohen Adler, may God keep

and sustain him, who had bought it from David Fränkel of Vienna." The reference is to Elkan Nathan Adler (1861-1946), another major bibliophile, who inscribed a note to Sassoon in Hebrew that accompanies the manuscript: "With God's help, a gift sent to the wise David, from his admiring friend, the humble Elhanan ha-Kohen Adler." It thereafter entered Sassoon's London library under the shelf mark 1048.

TEXT

pp. 1-200, [portions of Rabbi Tanhum ben Joseph ha-Yerushalmi's *Al-murshid al-kafi*], incipit, "ṭuruqāt mabniyya li-l-ḥirās[a]... masīḥ aw bi-ghay[r] tamalīḥ wa-kull."

Rabbi Moses Maimonides (also known as Rambam; 1138-1204) began compiling a Jewish legal code in about 1170. The work set out to assemble all the halakhic material scattered throughout the Mishnah, Tosefta, *midrashim*, and Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds into fourteen synthetic books, which were then subdivided into eighty-three treatises comprising a total of one thousand chapters. Rambam titled his project *Mishneh torah* (lit., Repetition of the Torah), "because a person will first read the Written Torah [Hebrew Bible] and later read this, and in that way he will know the entire Oral Torah without having to consult any other book in between."

Unlike Maimonides' other works, which were written in Judeo-Arabic, the *Mishneh torah* was composed in Mishnaic Hebrew. Its prestige derives not only from the authority of its compiler but from its comprehensiveness and its masterful, intuitive organization. Following its initial publication c. 1180, the *Mishneh torah* would go on to exert enormous influence on Jewish thought and practice, especially after Rabbis Jacob ben Asher (c. 1270-1340) and Joseph Caro (1488-1575) elected to use it as one of the foundations upon which they built their own vastly important halakhic codes, the *Arba'ah turim* and *Shulhan arukh*, respectively.

Rabbi Tanhum ben Joseph ha-Yerushalmi, a close adherent of Maimonides' teachings who passed away in Fustat (Old Cairo) in 1291, is best known on account of his rationally inclined Judeo-Arabic commentaries on the books of the Hebrew Bible, as well as the present lexicographical work. *Al-murshid al-kafi* (The Sufficient Guide) is so named, according to the introduction, because "it is sufficient vis-à-vis that which was intentionally included herein, and it is a guide for that which was accidentally elided." The book was composed in lucid, exacting Judeo-Arabic for the benefit of those students of Rambam's *Mishneh torah* whose Mishnaic Hebrew was not fluent enough to easily understand his words or those of Rabbi Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome's Talmudic-midrashic dictionary, *Sefer he-arukh*. (Copies of the latter work were also apparently hard to come by in Rabbi Tanhum's environs and could be difficult to navigate.)

Al-murshid al-kafi demonstrates its author's wide-ranging knowledge of fields as diverse as musicology, astronomy, physics, optics, architecture, engineering, agriculture, botany, and zoology, as well as his deep familiarity with comparative Semitic philology and grammar. Its utility as a Mishnaic Hebrew dictionary and reference tool for understanding the *Mishneh torah* earned *Al-murshid al-kafi* great popularity among the Arabic-speaking communities of the Middle East, especially of Yemen, and it was copied, reworked, and epitomized in about 140 manuscripts and fragments that have come down to us (Tobi, 1991). As Hadassa Shy has argued (2005), toward the end of his life, Rabbi Tanhum himself prepared an updated version of

the book, including corrections, expansions, and reformulations of the original, that has also survived, albeit in far fewer exemplars.

Our manuscript comprises portions of an early copy of the updated version of *Al-murshid al-kafi* that, like the author's autograph in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, was originally divided into three parts: Part I covering the letters *alef* through *yod*, Part II the letters *kaf* through *ayin*, and Part III the letters *pe* through *tav*. The manuscript as it stands today contains fragments from all three parts of the original, from the middle of the lemma *b-r-g-n* through the beginning of the root *t-p-l*, including the entirety of the section on the letter *gimel* (pp. 8-65). Other letters preserved here in part include *bet* (pp. 1-7), *dalet* (pp. 66-72), *heb* (pp. 73-87), *vav* (pp. 88-94), *het* (pp. 95-132), *tet* (pp. 133-156), *mem* (pp. 157-158), *nun* (pp. 159-160), *kof* (pp. 161-172), *shin* (pp. 173-198), and *tav* (pp. 199-200). (The full manuscript likely originally contained about 1,400 pages.)

Due to its "highly faithful" readings, this manuscript was used by Hadassa Shy for her 2005 critical edition of the updated version of *Al-murshid al-kafi* in those places where the aforementioned autograph (and two other manuscripts) were either laconic or difficult to decipher. (Previous partial editions of the original version had appeared in 1903 and 1961.) Remarkably, another portion of this very same manuscript, comprising four nearly complete consecutive quires from Part II of the book (covering entries from the letters *samekh* and *ayin*), was purchased by David Solomon Sassoon on December 1, 1913, a bit over fifteen years prior to Adler's gift of the present portion, and it subsequently became MS Sassoon 410 (see now TM 1374).

LITERATURE

Bacher, Wilhelm, ed. *Aus dem Wörterbuche Tanchum Jeruschalmi's*, Strasbourg, 1903.

Blau, Joshua, ed. *Ha-sifrut ha-aravit ha-yebudit—perakim nivbarim*, pp. 249-261, Jerusalem, 1980.

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Sassoon, David Solomon. *Obel Dawid: Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the Sassoon Library, London*, vol. 2, p. 1038 (no. 1048), Oxford and London, 1932.

Shy, Hadassa. "Al-murshid al-kafi le-r. tanhum ha-yerushalmi (mavo va-arakhim le-dugmah me-ot tav)," *Lesbonenu* 33:2-3 (January-April 1969), pp. 196-207; 33:4 (July 1969), pp. 280-296.

Shy, Hadassa, ed. and trans. *Al-murshid al-kafi [ha-madrikh ha-maspik]: millono shel tanhum ha-yerushalmi le-mishneh torah la-rambam*, esp. p. xxxi, Jerusalem, 2005.

Tanhum ben Joseph ha-Yerushalmi. *Sefer al-murshid al-kafi [ha-madrikh ha-maspik]*, ed. and trans. by Baruch Toledano, vol. 1, Tel Aviv, 1961.

Tobi, Yosef. "Tirgumim u-millonim araviyyim le-'mishneh torah' la-rambam," *Sefunot* 5 (20) (1991), pp. 203-222, at pp. 205-207.

Toledano, Baruch. "Rabbi tanhum ha-yerushalmi," *Sinai* 42:1-6 (Tishrei-Adar 1957-1958), pp. 339-355, at pp. 348-355.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Our MS (digitized black-and-white microfilm available within the building of the National Library of Israel only)

https://www.nli.org.il/he/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001348030205171/NLI

TM 1431