

Article

On Speaking at the Right Time, Acting Humbly, and Eating in Moderation: Practical Philosophy in Translation Within Distant Jewish Communities

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Abstract

In an Eastern Jewish community in 1467, there appeared a book in Judeo-Arabic entitled *Kitāb mahāsin al-ādāb* [The Book of Excellent Conduct]. In its introduction, the author states that he is translating an earlier Hebrew work on ethics called *Sefer musar* [Book on Ethics]. That Hebrew work, broadly known as *Mishle ha-‘arav* [The Sayings of the Arabs], is in turn a thirteenth-century Provençal translation of a still-earlier Arabic work. This article takes three chapters of the Judeo-Arabic version as a vantage point for a comparative cultural analysis: chapter 9 on speaking at the right time, chapter 10 on acting humbly, and chapter 28 on eating in moderation. As medieval translation often involved a process of adaptation and re-creation, I will (1) explore the translation strategies the author employed to transform a Jewish Hebrew *musar* work into a Jewish Judeo-Arabic *adab* work in terms of genre, form, and content, and (2) examine how the ethical values discussed in the three chapters were adapted for the new linguistic audience. The results will shed light on the understanding of how distant Jewish communities interpreted seemingly similar texts in different ways.

Keywords: musar literature; adab literature; Judeo-Arabic; Hebrew; Jewish cultural translation

1. Introduction

When Samuel ibn Tibbon, son of Judah ibn Tibbon, the great translator of Arabic and Judeo-Arabic works into Hebrew in twelfth-century Provence, set out to translate Moses Maimonides’ *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn* [The Guide for the Perplexed] into Hebrew, he unexpectedly sparked a methodological debate on the role of the translator and the faithfulness of a translation. His father Judah had by then translated many works in a variety of genres, such as Bahya ibn Paquda’s *Kitāb al-hidāya ilā farā’id al-qulūb* as *Sefer ḥovot ha-levavot* [Book on the Duties of the Heart], Solomon ibn Gabirol’s *Kitāb iṣlāḥ al-akhlāq* into *Sefer tikkun middot ha-nefesh* [Book on the Improvement of the Moral Qualities], and Sa’adia Ga’on’s *Kitāb al-amānāt wa-l-‘itiqādāt* as *Sefer ha-emunot ve-ha-de’ot* [Book of Beliefs and Opinions], to mention only three philosophical works. Judah ibn Tibbon translated using a “word-for-word” approach, one that is somehow valid when translating two languages as close as Arabic or Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew. Reading this so-called Tibbonide Hebrew would not have felt as comfortable as reading a Hebrew that sought to imitate the classical language as closely as possible, but it was undoubtedly efficient and did not impede the reading or even the admiration of such works, considering the vast number of copies that were made of these Tibbonide translations.¹



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However, not everyone was satisfied with this method of translating Arabic works into Hebrew. As happens today, medieval translators contacted the authors of the works they were translating if this was feasible. At least that is what a letter written in September 1199 seems to indicate. This letter is Maimonides' response to a query about difficult passages in his *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn* posed by the work's Provençal translator, Samuel ibn Tibbon. For a Jewish, Arabic-speaking authority living in Fuṣṭāṭ like Maimonides, who had no problem reading the Arabic originals, literal translations were not appropriate and could potentially corrupt the meaning. He thus seemed to believe that Samuel's misunderstandings had arisen from the latter's intention to translate his work literally. He then instructs Samuel to proceed as follows: "The translator should first try to grasp the sense of the subject thoroughly, and then state the theme with perfect clearness in the other language. This, however, cannot be done without changing the order of words, putting many words for one word, or vice versa, so that the subject be perfectly intelligible in the language into which he translates" (Yellin and Abrahams 1903, p. 201). These "sense-for-sense" translations required a vast linguistic knowledge of both languages and a precise dominion over the subject matter. Therefore, it took some time; indeed, Samuel would not finish his Hebrew version, *Moreh nebukhim*, until 1204.²

This correspondence between author and translator sheds light on the practice of translation itself: authors worry about their words being understood exactly as they meant them, while translators want to create an efficient cultural product that is at the same time valued, desired, and to the taste of the new audience. Although it differs from the way translation is practiced today, medieval translations of works of practical philosophy were a matter of re-creation. Thus, translators felt that they could alter the content and the form of the work they were translating if this was required, as it often was. Additions, deletions, changes of order, changes of form, and even lengthy explanations are all found in works that are presumably direct translations of earlier works.³

One prime example that allows further examination of the nature of the translator's role in this sense is the work at the core of this article. In 1467, according to the colophon of the only surviving manuscript, a Judeo-Arabic work on *musar* topics appeared in an Eastern Jewish community.⁴ The author, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan, of whom further information is lacking, says in the introduction that his book is the result of the translation of a Hebrew work that he has read, *Sefer musar* [Book on Ethics], the translation of which he gives the new title of *Kitāb mahāsin al-ādāb* [The Book of Excellent Conduct].⁵ Through a close reading of the prologue and a comparative exploration of the changes that occurred in genre, form, and content in the Judeo-Arabic version, this article aims to bring to scholarly attention the academic possibilities of the genre, in order to better understand the specificities of the intellectual environment of which the author was a product and in which he acted as a cultural agent. The comparison calls for an examination of how the genre was understood by both authors/translators, which is usually sketched out in the prologue to their works. In addition, changes occur in the literary forms used to convey their ethical messages, while moral concepts undergo adaptation as they pass from one language to another. The article intends to elucidate issues of genre translation and cultural identity through a work that exemplifies the phenomenon of intrareligious cultural translation within distant Jewish communities across the Mediterranean.⁶

2. The Genre in Translation: From Hebrew Musar to Judeo-Arabic Adab

Thirteenth-century Provence became a hotspot of intellectual encounter and production for the Jewish world. Many of the Andalusí Jews that had settled there in the preceding century contributed to the cultural life of the new area thanks to their extensive activity in the field of translation.⁷ The abundance of such translations and the versatility

that the Hebrew language acquired through them encouraged local authors to write their own original works in Hebrew. This is the case of the work *Mishle ha-'arav* [The Sayings of the Arabs], probably written in Provence at the beginning of the thirteenth century by an author known as Isaac ha-Qaṭan.⁸ It is an excellent example of the medieval Jewish genre of *musar*: a compilation of epigrams, short tales, clusters of Biblical quotations, and didactic poems offering advice on moral conduct and the proper way to behave in fifty thematic chapters, while at the same time amusing the audience with a variety of literary forms. This understanding of the genre of *musar* as used in medieval Sepharad has been compared to the highly admired *adab* concept of the Arabic tradition, whose goal was to provide general culture and social, political, and moral advice through entertaining literary works, thus constituting an interesting contact zone of languages, genres, and traditions.⁹

Unfortunately, medieval wisdom texts in Hebrew such as *Mishle ha-'arav* have received very little scholarly attention, and have remained in the margins of the canon. This neglect may have a twofold explanation. First, the genre of wisdom, practical philosophy, ethics, or didacticism has been treated as a minor genre of philosophical thinking. While it does not engage with the bigger philosophical questions that other medieval philosophical treatises address, such as the harmonization of rational thought and theological truth, it does strive to popularize philosophy for the common people, with clear-cut pieces of advice on how to behave in every daily-life situation. In this sense, it is a genre trapped between the religious and the secular spheres and between the oral and written cultures, which may make its analysis somewhat more challenging than other philosophical works.

The second reason is that wisdom works have in many cases been overshadowed by other more canonical works by the same authors. These authors, who took pains to address different audiences with different kinds of works, found themselves writing deep philosophical works for more learned audiences and wisdom treatises for the less educated. For instance, the likewise thirteenth-century Provençal author Jedaiah ha-Penini, whose *musar* work *Sefer ha-pardes* [The Book of the Orchard] was until very recently considered to be only marginal to the canon,¹⁰ unlike other works of his such as *Ohev nashim* [The Lover of Women] or the philosophical *Behinat 'olam* [The Examination of the World], which had been given the attention they deserved.

The Hebrew work *Mishle ha-'arav* and its later Judeo-Arabic version *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-ādāb* are in fact examples of universal wisdom literature. The existence of both versions gives us the possibility of undertaking a comparative approach, enhanced by the fact that it constitutes a perfect translation cycle: from Arabic in al-Andalus, to Hebrew in Provence, and back to (Judeo-)Arabic in the East. Although the uniqueness of this case should not be overlooked, it is fair to surmise that between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, a movement of translating wisdom works from Hebrew and Arabic into Judeo-Arabic seems to have been underway in north Africa and the Islamic East.¹¹ The esteem awarded to previous Hebrew works from the Sephardic world and the need to have them rendered into Arabic for Jewish communities who no longer understood Hebrew justified such translation efforts.¹²

The author of *Mishle ha-'arav* claims that when he was young he read Arabic books and that one of these caught his attention for the moral topics it treated.¹³ In a Provençal context where conflict between the prestige of the Arabic tradition and allegiance to the Hebrew language was rife, Isaac ha-Qaṭan wanted to prove that the ethical content of the Arabic work already existed in the Bible, and so he used the *topos* that all of that knowledge had been taken from the ancient Hebrews (Rothschild 1989, p. 289; Brann 1991, p. 38; Alfonso 2008, p. 49). To do so, he decided to translate the work into Hebrew and add Biblical quotations which, in his view, present similar topics and are blatant proof of this cultural theft. Furthermore, he turns the prose ethical lessons into short poems as was customary

in these kinds of works (Pagis 1976, pp. 211–12).¹⁴ In a completely different context, albeit also Jewish, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan immersed himself in the work's prologue, not translating the prologue of the Hebrew version verbatim, but creating a new introduction that reflects the conventions of the genre, place, and time in which he was writing.

The Judeo-Arabic prologue opens with a characteristic Islamic formula in praise of God: “In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful and on whom we rely” (בסם אללה אלרחמן אלרחים ובה נסתעין). The *basmalah*, used occasionally in works written in Judeo-Arabic, is followed by a mention of the divine attributes (mercy, beauty, glory, majesty) that are proof of the supreme power of God.¹⁵ In what follows, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan explains and justifies the genesis of the work. In an interesting reversal of the narrative of the Hebrew version, he relates that he used to read Hebrew books and that one among them caught his attention: “I have read some Hebrew books, I have analyzed their content with goodwill, and I have found among them a book that revives the hearts. [...] It contains fifty chapters, and its title is *sefer musar* in Hebrew”¹⁶ (פאני קראת פי בעין כתב) / אלעבראניה / וחצרת פי מעאניהא בחסן ניה, / פוגדת פיהא כתאב יחיי אלקלוב ואלאלבאב, / [...] והו יחוי כמסין באב, / (ואסמה ספר מוסר באלעבראניה).

The Judeo-Arabic author says that he is translating a work titled *Sefer musar* in Hebrew. However, of the ten surviving manuscripts that contain a complete or fragmentary copy of the Hebrew version, only five contain a title for the work, and this is *Mishle ha-'arav*. This discrepancy may provide an insight into Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan's understanding of the genre, but there is also a possibility that the work was indeed known in academic circles as *Sefer musar* for the *musar* topics it contained.¹⁷ What seems certain, however, is that the author of *Mishle ha-'arav* wanted to pay homage to the highly esteemed Arabic wisdom tradition and place himself and his work into that same tradition, hence the reference to Arabs in the title. However, to justify his own translation from Arabic into Hebrew, he accused the Arabs of appropriating the biblical knowledge of the Jewish people. Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan, writing a couple of centuries later and in a completely Arabized Jewish community, may have decided to drop the idea of what he saw as an unnecessary homage to the Arabic tradition and concentrate instead on the *musar* genre itself, as the title *Sefer musar* would suggest, linking it to what he saw as a Jewish parallel of *adab*.¹⁸

Since he liked the book very much and understood its usefulness, he decided to translate it into Arabic: “I bethought myself to *explain* the content of its chapters in Arabic words; [...] I *explained* the content of the fifty chapters in fifty *qaṣīdas* [...] and titled it *the excellent conduct*” (פכטר לי אן אשרח מעאני אבואבהא בלפין ערבי, [...] פשרחתו מעאני אלכמסין באב פי כמסין קצידה) [...] וסמיתה מחאסן אללאדאב. This quote gives us helpful information regarding the process of translation. Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan proposed to “explain,” not “translate,” the chapters of the Hebrew work into Arabic, using the verb *sharaha*, which inevitably relates to the concept of *sharh*. This concept has a semantic connotation of “explanation” and “clarification” that is usually found in Arabic commentaries on non-Quranic works. For the Judeo-Arabic tradition initiated in tenth-century Baghdad, *sharh* as a genre involved recasting the Hebrew into Arabic/Judeo-Arabic translations of Jewish religious books. Therefore, the use of the term by the author may suggest his intentions both to situate his ethical and wisdom compilation within this tradition of translating religious books from Hebrew to Arabic/Judeo-Arabic and, at the same time, to justify the mere act of translation as an act of explanation and adaptation (rather than a literal word-for-word rendering), which is what the term *sharh* means in origin and what he accomplished in his work.¹⁹

In addition, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan says that he is rendering the work *Sefer musar*, which corresponds to *Mishle ha-'arav*, highlighting the connection between a work that proudly claimed its origins in the Arabic *adab* tradition and his understanding of its content and character as Jewish *musar*. The title *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-ādāb* shows the term *adab*, in

this case in the plural, as semantically equivalent to the term *musar*, which according to the author appears in the title of the Hebrew work he is translating. Interestingly, readers or listeners of this Judeo-Arabic work would know that it was a translation from Hebrew into Arabic, although they might not necessarily be aware of the fact that the Hebrew work on which the Judeo-Arabic translation is based was in turn a translation of one or more Arabic works. How *Mishle ha- 'arav* arrived in this Eastern Jewish community or how the author got hold of the Hebrew text is still unclear to me. However, the existence of written testimonies in Sephardic, Italian, and Ashkenazic Hebrew scripts spanning from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries attests to the work's popularity across time and place, mainly in Europe, with nothing being known about its travels to northern Africa and the Islamic East.

3. The Form in Translation: From Hebrew Mix to Judeo-Arabic *Qaṣīda*

From a formal perspective, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan refers to each of the fifty chapters as *qaṣīda* [ode, pl. *qaṣā'id*]. The term *qaṣīda* denotes a poem of pre-Islamic origin that was still used in the classical period of Arabic literature. Structurally, it is a monorhyme poem of variable length which uses the same meter throughout. In terms of content, the classical *qaṣīda* is usually divided into three parts: the *nasīb*, which has a landscape or love motif; the *raḥīl*, or description of a journey, which functions as a transition to the third and most important part; and the *qaṣīd*, or real intention of the poem, be it praise, excuse, boasting, petition, eulogy, satire, or moral teaching.²⁰

A striking difference between the classical *qaṣīda* and any of the chapters of *Kitāb maḥāsin al-ādāb* is that the latter does not follow any meter, and each chapter has a different rhyme that does not correspond to the rhyme of the title of the chapter itself. These deviations would have resonated badly against the strict norms of Arabic poetry composition. However, recent scholarship has proven that the classical *qaṣīda* underwent a process of adaptation to new social, political, and cultural contexts, being manipulated according to the needs of individual authors (Gruendler 2000, p. 227), and that post-classical poets did not always adhere to the strict norms of the form (Krenkow and Lecomte 1997, p. 714). Accordingly, when Arabized Jews in al-Andalus followed Arabic literary models, they adapted the *qaṣīda* not only because of the new urban and cosmopolitan environment in which they lived, in contrast to the earlier foreign desert setting, but because they felt no connection to the Arabian motifs and therefore refashioned the traditional themes of the *qaṣīda* through the adaptation of biblical characters, conflicts, and episodes (Goldstein 2004, pp. xviii–xxxviii). A reshaping of the traditional form of the *qaṣīda* is also documented in fifteenth-century Iberia among Jewish authors writing in Hebrew, who often prided themselves on challenging two of the main rules of classical *qaṣīda*: the repetition of rhyme words with the same meaning, and the introduction of prose sections to accompany the verses. This transformation in the *qaṣīda* form may be related to the fact that for these Jewish poets living in a Romance environment, the traditional form felt shapeless or alien to their taste and so they modified it accordingly (Scheindlin 1996, p. 131).

Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan also divides each *qaṣīda* into three parts, but these hold no resemblance to the classical partitioning. The first is the title of the chapter, which functions as an introduction to the topic and corresponds to an index of fifty titles placed directly after the prologue. In fact, this index itself functions as a short wisdom compilation of fifty moral epigrams, once again proving how the same work may address two different audiences at the same time; those wanting quick, concise advice could resort to the index, while those wanting a lengthier explanation could turn to the chapters themselves, using the index as a tool to navigate the book. The second part of each *qaṣīda* presents the content, which proposes a development of ideas related to the topic described in the title. The

last part consists of a final statement of three or four verses in which the author praises himself and his work, and puts forward a request to God, usually a personal plea for the forgiveness of sins. Although it is difficult to determine why the author of *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-ādāb* understood the form of the *qaṣīda* in such a way, the transformations that the *qaṣīda* underwent in different contexts and for different purposes speak for the malleability of the form.

In any case, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan deviated greatly from the form of the chapters that he would have encountered in the work *Sefer musar/Mishle ha-'arav*. As was common in thirteenth-century *musar* works from Iberia and Provence that followed the Arabic model of *adab*, not only in terms of content, but also in its combination of forms, *Mishle ha-'arav* had the double goal of transmitting moral lessons while entertaining the audience. One mechanism for holding the audience's attention is the continual shifting of literary forms. While in each chapter of the Hebrew version, called *sha'ar* [chapter, pl. *she'arim*], we find a combination of plain-prose and rhymed-prose stories, ethical epigrams, moral poems that sum up the preceding prose content, and clusters of biblical quotations to prove the Jewishness of the subject under discussion, the Judeo-Arabic version does not make use of any of these. Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan strived to present such inherited material afresh, balancing tradition with present-day needs. As far as the formal disposition of the subject matter was concerned, he understood that for an ethical work like this to be effective in conveying moral lessons, the form of the *qaṣīda*, which was probably more appreciated and familiar to his Arabized audience than the mix of literary forms of the earlier Provençal Hebrew work, would yield better results.²¹

4. The Content in Translation: On Speaking at the Right Time, Acting Humbly, and Eating in Moderation

Each *sha'ar* of *Mishle ha-'arav* and each *qaṣīda* of *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-ādāb* are monographically devoted to either a virtue that is encouraged (moderation, prudence, wisdom, obedience, friendship, forgiveness, patience, generosity, hospitality, gratefulness, counsel, good family relationships, humility, keeping secrets, the repentance of sins) or a vice that is condemned (vanity, envy, wealth, pride, foolishness, sarcasm, wrath, excessive eating and drinking, enmity, bad proclivities, avarice, tediousness, hypocrisy, the abuse of hospitality). I have taken three chapters of the Judeo-Arabic work as the vantage point for a comparative thematic analysis.²²

The title of chapter 9 in the Hebrew version reads: “Do not speak when it is not the right time: keep silent and be mute; step away and distance yourself from the false tongue” (אל תדבר בלא עתו ושתק ורחק, והבדל מלזות שפה והפרש), while the same chapter in the Judeo-Arabic says: “Do not speak when it is not the right time to do so, lest what you say turn into stuttering” (פי אן לא יתכלם אלאנסאן פי גיר וקת אלכלאם, ללא יבדל תלגלג קולה באלכלאם). Chapter 10 of the Hebrew version reads: “Do not wear but garments of humility and act with modesty; accept the impious man: he will be ashamed and humbled for his sin” (אל תלבש כי אם בגדי), while the Judeo-Arabic introduces the theme as: “Do wear modesty and piety as clothing, lest your foolishness lead you toward hardships and misfortunes” (פי אן לא ילבס אלאנסאן גיר אלתואצע ואלתקא, ללא יאול בה גהלה אלי אלמתאעב ואלשקא). Lastly, chapter 28 of the Hebrew version reads: “Do not desire to eat a lot with greed; do not be of those who glut themselves on meat or guzzle wine” (אל תתאנה הרבות אכל ברע עין, אל תהי בזוללי), while the Judeo-Arabic is: “Do not be a glutton, greedy, or obsessed over food and drinking wine, lest you be considered one of those dedicated to these matters” (פי אן לא ישרה אלאנסאן ויתשהא ויגרבך פי אלמאאכל ושרב אלכמור, ללא יעד מן אלמנהמכין פי הדה אלאמור).²³

Unsurprisingly, from a thematic perspective, the moral teaching of both versions, is practically the same. Chapter 9 advocates the virtue of speaking at the right time, not rush-

ing to speak without thinking first, and avoiding verbal provocations; chapter 10 insists on the virtue of modesty and humility, as these two qualities usually bring tranquility and peace of mind to one's life; and chapter 28 advises against eating too much and advocates the controlling of one's gluttony. The similarities in the advice given confirm that the topics are indeed universal, and the genre is thus able to be translated across linguistic, chronological, and geographic boundaries. Since both audiences are Jewish, it is therefore natural that moral lessons addressed to the same religious group would not need to undergo any process of cultural translation.²⁴

In spite of this, there seems to be a slight contrast in the way each version exemplifies the dangers and consequences of drinking wine in chapter 28. In *Mishle ha-'arav*, after a few prose fragments and poems on eating and drinking wine in moderation, the author includes an interesting literary piece, a complex tale about a king who gathers together a group of sages to instruct his children about the best virtues and worst vices. Each sage presents one vice as being the most destructive for a human being (murder, illicit sexual relationships, theft, false oath, idol worship). When the king realizes that the oldest of the sages has not spoken, he urges him to share his view on the vices already described. The old sage claims that there is one transgression that causes all the others mentioned by the previous sages, and this is drinking wine without moderation. He then relates another tale in which three men, who have been drinking and run out of wine, go to the house of a female Jewish wine seller in the middle of the night. After taking the wine out of the seller's hands, they kill her and kidnap her daughter, who they then rape. The following morning, when the effect of drunkenness has passed, they realize what they have done and, fearing the girl's accusation, kill her as well and flee in the direction of Rome. The story ends with the king who had gathered the sages together telling his children to extract the lesson of the tale. Isaac ha-Qaṭan, the author/translator of the Hebrew work, does not feel the need to explain or even summarize the moral. It is up to the reader or listener to understand the multiple layers hidden in the story: the religious adherence of each of the characters and the implications this has for the plot (only the female wine seller is identified as Jewish; in fact, it is the only instance in the entire book in which a character is identified as such); the consequences inherent in the immoral conduct of the three drunken men and in the mere act of selling wine on the part of the Jewish woman; and, above all, the lesson that the excessive drinking of wine is the cause of a plethora of transgressions.²⁵

When confronted with this chapter, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan did not include the tale in his Judeo-Arabic version, which is much shorter than its Hebrew counterpart. It might be the case that the constrictions of the chosen literary form, the *qaṣīda*, which requires verses of similar length and with the same rhyme scheme, made it difficult for him to include the narration of such a complex tale effectively. What he does, however, is to bring to the forefront authoritative examples of three biblical characters whose excessive drinking leads to their shame. Following the mechanism of ranking these transgressions in the Hebrew chapter, the Judeo-Arabic author presents the deeds of the three characters in order, from the most to the least severe. The first mentioned is Lot, a reference to whom also appears at the end of the Hebrew chapter, as Genesis 19: 31–36 relates that his two daughters attempted to get him drunk and have sexual intercourse with him in order to get pregnant and preserve their lineage. After Lot, although chronologically earlier, Noah is criticized based on Genesis 9: 20–23, which tells that after the flood Noah planted a vineyard. One day, he becomes drunk with the wine and lies naked in his tent. His son Ham sees him like this and tells his brothers Shem and Japhet, who rush to cover their father. Lastly, there is the story of Samson. Judges 16: 17 tells that Samson reveals to Delilah that if his hair is cut, he will lose all of his strength and power. Although there is no explicit mention of wine-drinking in the episode, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan seems to believe that

such a confession was due to drunkenness rather than to Delilah's persistence, hence the inclusion of the example.²⁶

5. Conclusions

The preceding sections have analyzed three pivotal components—genre, form, and content—of the phenomenon exemplified by the translation of the Hebrew work *Mishle ha-ʿarav* into the Judeo-Arabic work *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-ādāb*. Taking into account the conceptual reframing of these three elements for a new audience, one might ask if this phenomenon could be considered one of intrareligious cultural translation within distant Jewish communities.

Cultural translation demands the incorporation of cultural awareness into its methodology. The medieval concept of translation, which involved an enormous amount of adaptation and interpretation, differs from the modern approach, which values faithfulness to the original. Maimonides' instructions on how to translate his *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīm* are proof of this. To begin with, the reformulation of the concept of *musar* as understood in Provence into the concept of *adab* as understood in an Eastern community is quite telling. As has already been proven, medieval Jewish authors were aware of and played with the ambiguity of the term *musar* as referring to both a deeply theoretical philosophical work and a more popular treatise on practical philosophy and good behavior.²⁷ This second view explains why, on encountering *Sefer musar*, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan understood it as a work of *adab*, and gave his translation a title containing that term: *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-ādāb*. By the time this Judeo-Arabic work was produced, *adab* literature had a long history within the Arabic literary tradition. Many of the classical *adab* works, such as those by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, Al-Jāhiz, Ibn Qutaybah, al-Hamadānī's and al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt*, or those of Andalusī authors like Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi and Ibn Ḥazm, consisted of compilations of knowledge in different fields and in different literary forms: poetry, plain prose, rhymed prose, and wise sayings. It was this combination of literary forms that was followed by Jewish authors writing/translating in Hebrew in thirteenth-century Iberia and Provence. In the second half of the fifteenth century in the East, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan would in effect culturally translate both the genre and the form, making it more palatable to Arabic-speaking Jewish audiences.

Structurally speaking, Joseph bar Japhet ha-Ḥazan would adapt the multiform, hybrid nature of the chapters of the Hebrew version and turn them into a modified late-medieval form of the classical *qasīda*; while conceptually the Hebrew *musar* book *Mishle ha-ʿarav* became the Judeo-Arabic *adab* work *Kitāb maḥāsīn al-ādāb*. Both the literary form and the conceptual framework were indeed shaped by the author's interventions in order to produce, in the form of a translation, a final cultural product that was more familiar to its target audience.²⁸ In doing so, the translator was acting as a mediator between two distinct cultural identities (Polliack 1998, p. 21), in accordance with his own literary tastes and those of his audience, refashioning the literary norms of the original genre so as to transform it into something new (Polliack 1998, p. 18).

Thematically, however, it is not surprising that there are few variations in the topics dealt with in the three chapters selected. Wisdom topics are in fact considered universal, for they can be applied to every human being regardless of socio-economic status, religious affiliation, and cultural tradition. Apart from the author's decisions not to include a complex tale about a female Jewish wine seller, and to emphasize the bad deeds of Lot, Noah, and Samson after drinking wine, the advice given on the topics of speaking at the right time, acting humbly, and eating and drinking wine in moderation is very similar. The subject matter, being universal and considered as such by intellectuals in different periods

and places, does not in fact reveal significant changes that might indicate its belonging to one tradition or another.

Thus, the transformation of *Mishle ha- 'arav* into *Kitāb mahāsīn al-ādāb* serves as an example of intrareligious cultural translation (of language, form, and genre), from a thirteenth-century Hebraized Romance-speaking Provençal Jewish community to a fifteenth-century Arabized Arabic-speaking Eastern Jewish audience.

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Appendix A. Judeo-Arabic Edition and English Translation

In the edition of the Judeo-Arabic text that follows, the spelling of the manuscript has been respected. However, in a few instances where the meaning is unclear or potentially erroneous, an alternative reading is provided in a footnote, while the original reading is maintained in the text itself.

Additionally, diacritical marks on Hebrew letters that correspond to specific Arabic phonemes have been retained as they appear in the manuscript: ʾ (ع), ẓ (ض), ẓ (ظ), ẓ (غ), ẓ (ح), ẓ (س). Although the scribe tried to be consistent, these diacritical marks do not always appear, and the edition reflects only the instances where they are present. For other Arabic phonemes that require diacritical marks to differentiate between two realizations, no indication is provided in the text, and so they are not included in the edition.

Furthermore, when the *shadda* is indicated in the text, it has been preserved in the edition. The text also offers partial vocalization in some instances, although vocalization has been omitted from this edition.

Regarding the English translation, the footnotes contain contextual, linguistic, and biographical information to facilitate the reader's comprehension and to clarify the editorial decisions made.

**אלקצידה אל-ט: פי אן לא יתכלם אלאנסאן פי גיר וקת אלכלאם, ללא יבדל תלגלג קולה
באלכלאם.**

אחפץ כלאמך לוקתה ואחרס לאנסאן מן אלזלל כחפץ בובו עינך ואחדר מנו לא תנצאב
פפי לסאנך חיאתך ופיה מותך ואפתי פאחדר תי לא תעתר בו יקנצך שבה עקאב
כס פי סכותך ראחה ופי כלאמך מן זלל, פאחפץ לסאנך ללא תכיב מע מן כאב
מא רית כיף כל עאקל יסכת ועלמה קד צהר ומן יטול כלאמה יגן או ינצאב?
מא ראיתו עמרי אחלא מן אלסכות מע אלחיא ולא ראיתו אשקא מן תאריך אלדאב
אדא סכתו וקיל לך "קול שי" פקולך ילתקט ואן קלת שי וקיל לך "אסכת" פקולך כאב
פכל מן יתחדת פי גיר וקתה ינפקש וקד יעד בגאהל ידולב אלדולאב
יא רב, אחרס לסאני ושפתיי מן אלזלל ואנא בבאבך ואקף ונעם הדא אלבאב!
הא קד סכתו אלאהי עלמך מחיט במא חוי קלבי ואנת רגאיי ואנא מן אלכטאב
פארחמני ואמחא דנובי בחסן גודך ואלכרם ולא יכן לי אלאהי פי מלתאך חגאב

אלקצידה אל-י: פי אן לא ילבס אלאנסאן גיר אלתואצע ואלתקה²⁹, ללא יאול בה גהלה אלי אלמתאעב ואלשקא.

אלבס לבאס אלתואצע יתלגנך³⁰ באלתקא ואלזום מכאפת רבך תשפא מן אלאמראן אדא קרנת אלמכאפה מע אלתואצע תרתקי איצא ויעלו וקארך ותבלג אלאגראן אסלך טריק אלצהא ווארכב גואד אלמערפה ואטען עדוך באלתואצע ולא תכן תגתאן³¹ ואעלם באן אלעאקל מן כאן פי וצט³² אלהרג דאים יסכן גיצה³³ אדא טפח או פאן אסמע וסר אדאנך ואיש טקת צדך סאעדה, שרה אליך יתנאקן ותוצי אללהאן ואנת תאמן שרה ותסתקיל עדאותה ויכתבוך מתואצע ובאלכרם תעתאן דוי אלתואצע פראחי קד אטמאנו מן אלדאד ואהל אלקחה פארקהם באלצר ואלאעראן תרי איש יפיד אלתואצע וענדי שיטאן קוי, גמיע מא אבני ואעמר יכון לוי נקאן פאסטעין ברבי ואסכן בואדי רחממה פהו יבדל סואדי ויקלבה בביאן מסכין אנא מן כופי ועטם דנבי וכתרתה לאכני ראגי פצלו אשפא בלא חמאן

אלקצידה אל-כח: פי אן לא ישרה אלאנסאן ויתשהא וינרבך פי אלמאאכל ושרב אלכמור, ללא יעד מן אלמנהמכין פי הדא אלאמור.

לקמתך כלהא חתי תתבת חיאותך פי אלורא לא תאכל אלכבו וקצדך אנך סמין תכון מא רית כיף אלעאקל יאכל קליל ליריתוי וכיף אכל אלגאהל יאכל בגיר סכון? אצל אלמאאכב שרהנא והו סבב אמראצנא פכיף תריבך רוחך פי אלשרב אי מגנון קום אנתבה ואסתיקן אלי אלפעאל אלצאלחה לא תנתבה ללדה תביע גיר בדון ואן גא אליך שי תאכל כלה בהינה ינצרף פאן אנגבת פצלה וחדך תציר מגבון וימכן אן תתקיא אדא אכלת בלא קדר או אן יציבך היצה או דאי או טאעון מא אלראי אןך תאכל בגיר שהוה תנקהר פכל קליל ואסתעמל עלי אלטעאם סכון ואיך אן תתסלט שהוהך תקהר ותנגבן פאקנע במא תתכפא ומד לנפסך צון ואהתם פי אמר אללה ואפרח בלדה עבאדה ואסלך טריקה בצחה ומערפה ורכון תמרח ותשכר ותכלץ מן אלמתאעב ואלחסר ואן טלבת אלחכמה לא עאש מאל קארון ואן אסתצאפך³⁴ צאחב קדס סמאטה ואלטבק פכל בעקל והינה פערצך אנת תצון מא אחסן כלאם אלעאקל איש קאל תכלם באלאדב לאגל הדא אלגאהל איש קאל צאר מלעון פאנת אחפץ נפסך פי אכלך ושרבך אי שרה לא ילסע אלפקר שאנך ותצטבח מחזון מא רית לוט ונח קבלה ושמשון בעדהם כיף גאבו פי אלשרב חתי גרת אמור ופון? יא רבנא, אגעלני בקלב צאחי מקתנע ונשותי מן דאתי בסרך אלמכנון יא רב אסקי עבידך בכאס גודך ואלכרם תי אצחבה בסר אלנשוה סאעי ואנת מעון

Qasida 9. Do not speak when it is not the right time to do so, lest what you say turn into stuttering.

Keep your words for the right moment, guard your tongue from mistakes as you guard the pupil of your eye, be cautious with it, and you will not be trapped;

Be calm, since in your tongue lie both your life and your death; and be cautious, so you do not become tongue-tied and fall prey to its punishment;

Bear in mind that in your silence lies tranquility and in your speech lies error; therefore, guard your tongue against those who have already fallen;

Have you not noticed how every wise person remains silent and thus shows wisdom, while the one who keeps talking loses control and is disgraced?

I have never seen anything sweeter than silence with modesty, or anyone more miserable than he who abandons good manners;³⁵

If you are silent and are told "say something," your words will be received; but if you speak and are told "be quiet," your words have indeed fallen from grace;

For whoever speaks when he should not, is bound to break himself and is considered a fool that uses tricks.

Oh Lord, protect my tongue and my lips from errors: I stand at Your door, what a magnificent door it is!

I have indeed kept silent, my God, while I am used to talking; Your wisdom surrounds all that my heart contains and You are my only hope;

Have mercy on me, cleanse my sins by Your kindness and generosity, and let there be, oh God, no veil in front of me when I come to meet You.

Qasida 10. Do wear modesty and piety as clothing, lest your foolishness lead you toward hardships and misfortunes.

Clothe yourself in the garment of modesty, and it will crown you with piety; hold fast to the fear of God, for it is a remedy for all ailments;

If you combine the fear of God with modesty, you will rise, your dignity will be exalted, and you will reach your goals;

Take the path of righteousness, ride the horse of knowledge, confront your enemies with modesty, and do not give in to anger;

Know that the wise man, even when beset by hardship, always calms his wrath, no matter how great it may be;³⁶

Listen and sharpen your hearing; help those who hurt you; their hatred towards you will diminish, and you will find satisfaction;

You will be safe from their wickedness; their enmity will be nullified; they will approach you humbly, and you will be rewarded generously;

The humble are joyful [because] they have been freed from harm; as for the mean-spirited, distance yourself from them because of their wickedness and reputation.

You see the good that humility brings, but a strong devil is by my side: everything I build and create is destroyed;

Therefore, I rely on my Lord and dwell in the valley of His mercy, for He will turn and change my blackness into whiteness;

Woe is me for my fear and for the gravity and frequency of my sin! Yet I hope to be healed from any bitterness through His favor.

Qasida 28. Do not be a glutton, greedy, or obsessed over food and drinking wine, lest you be considered one of those dedicated to these matters.

Eat your portion to preserve your life, and do not eat bread in excess, for the result will be to make you fat;

Have you not seen how the wise man is satisfied with little while the fool eats without moderation?

The origin of misfortunes and the cause of illnesses is our gluttony: how does your spirit not distrust drinking, oh arrogant one?

Rise, pay attention, and awaken to good deeds, and do not give heed to pleasures that offer nothing but obesity;

If something is brought to you to eat, renounce it with ease; for if you agree to it, you will only make yourself foolish;

You may have to vomit if you have eaten without consideration, or you may suffer from weakness, discomfort, or even disease;

Do not eat without appetite or be subjugated by it: eat little and serve yourself in moderation;

Do not let that craving dominate and daze you; be content with what is enough, and thus you will protect yourself;

Attend to God's command, rejoice in the pleasure of worshiping Him, and follow His path with rightness, wisdom, and trust;

You will be glad and give thanks for being free from hardships and toil, and if you seek wisdom, may the wealth of Qarun vanish!³⁷

If a friend welcomes you as a guest, honor his food and his plate by eating with awareness and calmness, and thus you will preserve your reputation;

How good are the words of the wise man who speaks with good manners!³⁸ In contrast to this, whatever the fool says becomes cursed;

Therefore, protect yourself from eating and drinking with gluttony, and thus poverty will not harm your dignity, nor will it sadden you;

Do you not know about Lot and Noah before him,³⁹ or Samson after them,⁴⁰ and how they took pleasure in drinking until disaster struck?⁴¹

Oh Lord, grant me a serene and contented heart and let my euphoria arise from within me through Your hidden favor;⁴²

Oh Lord, give Your little servant to drink from the cup of Your kindness and generosity, and grant him the favor of Your euphoria to which he is crawling: You are his assistance!

Notes

- ¹ On Tibbonide Hebrew, see [Maman \(2013\)](#).
- ² For an introduction to the scholarly output of the Ibn Tibbon family in Provence, see [Robinson \(2005\)](#). For a fascinating monographic study on Judah ibn Tibbon's ethical will to his son Samuel, and the implications of the translator's instructions to his son regarding the analysis of translation methods and the role of the translator, see [Pearce \(2017\)](#).
- ³ On the process of medieval translation as interpretation, see [Halkin and Sáenz-Badillos \(2007, p. 95\)](#).
- ⁴ Broadly speaking, Judeo-Arabic is the Middle Arabic spoken and written by Jews in Arabic-speaking lands beginning in the Middle Ages. While Judeo-Arabic is not a linguistically uniform phenomenon ([Khan 2017, p. 24](#)), the written realization of this form of Arabic appears in Hebrew script, with a considerable component of Hebrew and Aramaic words. The bibliography on the Judeo-Arabic language and culture is vast, but for general studies on the language, see [Blau \(1981, 2006\)](#), [Halkin \(2007\)](#), [Khan \(2017\)](#), and [Stillman \(2005, 2010\)](#), to cite just a few.
- ⁵ For a preliminary approach to this work, see [Torollo \(2015\)](#). I am now working on a critical edition and a translation of this text, which is preserved in Ms Huntington 488, folios 84a–160b, at the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford. The single copy seems to be an autograph, written in Oriental Hebrew script and dated 1467. Although the colophon does not give any information regarding the place of production, we can with certainty place the manuscript in Aleppo around 1671–1680, years in which Robert Huntington (1637–1701), chaplain to the Levant Company of English merchants in the city, gathered there a collection of around 200 Hebrew manuscripts. Some of the manuscripts were donated to the library between 1678–1683, while others (Ms Huntington 488 included) were purchased in 1693. On the Huntington collection, see [Richler \(2014, p. 97\)](#).
- ⁶ The Mediterranean, that is to say, the regions that enclose the sea, is here considered as an analytical framework; even though there are notable differences in terms of political entities, religious adherences, and linguistic developments, lines of continuity can still be observed. For instance, practical philosophy or wisdom literature is a demonstrable cultural product marked by a continuity and connectivity in the Mediterranean region across political, religious, and linguistic divides. Indeed, the idea of the Mediterranean as a Jewish scholarly unit deserving attention has gained adepts and resulted in publications in recent decades. To cite just a few examples: [Goitein \(1967–1993\)](#); [Stroumsa \(2009\)](#); [Conklin Akbari and Mallette \(2013\)](#); [Hathaway and Kim \(2014\)](#); [Langermann and Morrison \(2016\)](#); [Decter \(2018\)](#); and [Bird and George-Tvrtković \(2025\)](#).
- ⁷ On translation in the twelfth century, see [D'Alverny \(1982\)](#); on Jewish translation and translators, see [Rothschild \(1989\)](#), and [Halkin and Sáenz-Badillos \(2007\)](#).
- ⁸ For a monograph on this Hebrew work, with an introductory study, a critical edition of the Hebrew testimonies, and a translation into Spanish, see [Torollo \(2021a\)](#). For a discussion on the likely authorship of the work, see pp. 6–8.
- ⁹ A reflection on the nature and qualities of genres such as *adab* and *musar* goes beyond the scope of this article. The conceptual reframing of *adab* into *musar* has been described as “the reconfiguration of a non-Jewish ideal into a Jewish context” ([Koch 2020, p. 14](#)). A recent study highlights the internal heterogeneity of *adab* as a concept that bridges issues of literary form, disposition, and function ([El Shakry 2024](#)). This heterogeneity, and the idea that the concept “marries ethical edification and spiritual comportment with the social habitus of cultural practices” ([El Shakry 2024, p. 114](#)), may have suggested to both medieval authors and contemporary scholars that Arabic *adab* and Jewish *musar* were two different linguistic realizations of the same literary idea. Interestingly, each author understands *adab* as a flexible concept, since “the act of defining *adab* is itself a crucial facet of the self-reflective work of the *adib*. *Adab* is thus at its core an evolving social praxis whose communities continually shape and redefine its terms” ([El Shakry 2024, p. 115](#)). For conceptual parallels between these two terms, with textual examples, see [Klar \(1954, pp. 351–54\)](#); [Ratzaby \(1960–1961, pp. 119–22\)](#); [Septimus \(1983, p. 25\)](#); [Tanenbaum \(2003, pp. 304–5, 317\)](#); [Koch \(2015, pp. 25–29\)](#); [Torollo \(2021b, pp. 43–45\)](#); and [Gorgoni \(2023, p. 145\)](#).
- ¹⁰ For a monograph on this Hebrew work, with an introductory study, a critical edition of the Hebrew testimonies, and a translation into English, see [Torollo \(2022\)](#).
- ¹¹ I am in the process of publishing a book chapter on two Judeo-Arabic *musar* works from the seventeenth century preserved in a Bodleian Library manuscript. The first is an anthology of fables attributed to Luqmān, while the second is a compilation of wisdom epigrams presented as Arabic sayings. The chapter, tentatively titled “A person without *adab* is like a body without a soul: *Fables of Luqmān* and *Sayings of the Arabs* as Judeo-Arabic *Musar*” will appear in a book edited by Patrick B. Koch and Ilaria

- Briata, *Model[s] of Musar: From Ancient to Contemporary Discourse*, within the framework of the research project “Jewish Moralistic Writings of the Early Modern Period” at the University of Hamburg. Furthermore, this book chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on the relationship between Arabic *adab* and Jewish *musar*.
- 12 In fact, there seems to be a parallel phenomenon of translating works of wisdom content, courtesy and etiquette, or practical philosophy into Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish in the early-modern and modern eras, as attested by Tohar (2023, p. 117) and Šmid (2025). For a bibliography of secondary literature dealing with Arabic and Judeo-Arabic translations of Jewish literature, see Singerman (2002).
- 13 The introduction to the work, in which the author explains the genesis of his literary creation, can be found in Torollo (2021a, pp. 159–63) (Spanish translation) and pp. 577–80 (Hebrew edition).
- 14 On the conventions of the Hebrew *musar* genre as a whole and the need to pay attention to the particularities of each work, see Pagis (1978). For an analysis of the authors’ prologues to medieval Hebrew narratives in rhymed prose aimed at revealing the conventions of the genre, see Refael-Vivante (2007).
- 15 The *basmalah*, an Islamic formula said or written at the beginning of the performance of any act of relevance, was sometimes also employed by Jews and Christians in their Arabic writings. On the introductory formulae in a corpus of 935 letters in Arabic, written by Jews to Jews and preserved in the Cairo Genizah, and on the different realizations of the *basmalah* as used by them, see Almladh (2010).
- 16 The term *ma’ānī* (sing. *ma’ānā*), here understood as “content,” can also mean “meaning, reason, topic, idea, basic image, or raw matter.” On the variety of connotations of the term *ma’ānā* (content) and its role in the medieval Arabic system of literary creation in tandem with *lafẓ* (form), see Sadan (2002, pp. 135–38).
- 17 The earliest quotations from *Mishle ha-‘arav* in another work appear in the writings of the thirteenth-century Provençal scholar Menahem ha-Me’iri. In his commentary on the biblical book of Proverbs, he cites a diverse range of *musar* works, introducing these citations with the formula *amru ḥakhame ha-musar* (the sages of *musar* said). Ha-Me’iri does not identify his sources; in some instances, he quotes *Ben ha-melekh we-ha-nazir* [The Prince and the Hermit], in others *Mivhar ha-peninim* [The Choice of Pearls], and in still others *Mishle ha-‘arav*. For citations from *Mishle ha-‘arav*, see Ha-Me’iri (1969, pp. 106, 114, 134, 169, 180, 185, 208, 221, 291).
- 18 On *musar* as a loan translation of *adab*, see note 9.
- 19 Further proving the practice of medieval translation as adaptation, Polliack, in her study on Judeo-Arabic literary genres in the Cairo Genizah, claims that “[I]n almost every genre or class of texts identified in the Genizah corpus it is possible to distinguish a three-layered division between a new Judaeo-Arabic composition (less accurately termed ‘original’), an adapted composition and a translated one, whether from Hebrew or Aramaic into Judaeo-Arabic or from Arabic into Judaeo-Arabic; the medieval boundaries between original, translation and adaptation being far more flexible than their modern parallels” (Polliack 1998, p. 18). In this respect, Todorov and Berrong (1976) notably argue in their foundational discussion of genre theory that “a new genre is always the transformation of one or several old genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination” (p. 161).
- 20 The bibliography on the literary form of the *qaṣīda* is vast. For a basic introduction on its emergence and structure in Arabic, see Krenkow and Lecomte (1997).
- 21 It is therefore telling that he says in the introduction that “I bethought myself to explain the content of its chapters in Arabic words” (פכטר לי אן אשרח מעאני אבואבהא בלפין ערבי). If we bring to the interpretation of this statement the author’s likely awareness of the linguistic concepts of *ma’ānā* (content) and *lafẓ* (form), then we might understand *bi-lafẓ ‘arabi* (בלפין ערבי) as both “in Arabic words” in the sense of language and “in Arabic form” in the sense of a typical literary Arabic form (a *qaṣīda*).
- 22 Appendix A at the end of this article offers a Judeo-Arabic edition with English translation of these three chapters. For the same three chapters of the Hebrew work *Mishle ha-‘arav*, see a Hebrew edition in Torollo (2021a, pp. 538–41, 489–94), and a Spanish translation in Torollo (2021a, pp. 209–13, 268–75).
- 23 The titles of the chapters of the Hebrew work are usually negative imperatives on the topic under discussion, formed by אל(al) followed by the second person imperfect tense of the verb. However, in the Judeo-Arabic version, the titles are usually put in the jussive form, used in Arabic for negative commands, as in אלאנסאן [...] פי אן לא (fī an lā ... al-insān), “that a man not ...”
- 24 Cultural translation is the practice of translation that considers the cultural specificities of the target audience of the translation in order to make the changes needed to increase the familiarity, the acceptance, and thus the effectiveness of the conveyed message. For a few studies that explore instances and methods of medieval cultural translation, see Girón-Negrón (2005); Wacks (2007, pp. 86–128); Sadan (2008); and Torollo (2020).
- 25 A Hebrew edition, English translation, and an analysis of this episode from chapter 28 of *Mishle ha-‘arav* through the lens of cultural translation can be found in Torollo (2020).
- 26 Samson was in fact a Nazirite, having taken the vows described in Numbers 6:1–21 and dedicating himself to God. Numbers 6:3–4 prohibits a Nazirite from drinking wine or any other strong liquor, hence the inaccuracy of the Judeo-Arabic author in attributing Samson’s fall to the breaking of this vow.
- 27 On the idea of *musar* as a Jewish calque of the Arabic concept of *adab*, see note 9.

- 28 Or as Todorov and Berrong (1976) put it, genres “function as ‘horizons of expectation’ for readers, and as ‘models of writing’ for authors” (p. 163), and both aspects are at play in shaping the tastes of both authors and their audiences.
- 29 אלתקא
- 30 יתגדל
- 31 תגתאט
- 32 גיטה
- 33 וסח
- 34 אסתצאפך
- 35 The term used by the author is al-ādāb.
- 36 Literally “whether it overflows or spills over.”
- 37 Qarun is the Arabic name for Korah, who is portrayed as a man of great wealth, but who perished because of his greed. His story is told in Qur’ān 28: 76–83.
- 38 The term used by the author is *adab*.
- 39 Genesis 9: 20–23 relates that after the flood Noah worked the land and planted a vineyard. He then became drunk with wine and lay naked in his tent. His son Ham saw him in this state and told his brothers Shem and Japhet, who rushed to cover their father. As for Lot, Genesis 19: 31–36 tells us that his two daughters made him drunk in order to have sex with him and get pregnant to preserve their lineage.
- 40 In Judges 16: 17, Samson tells Delilah that if his hair is cut, he will lose all his strength and power. The author seems to believe that such a confession was due to drunkenness rather than to Delilah’s persistence, hence the inclusion of this example.
- 41 Literally, “until different sorts of situations unfolded.”
- 42 In this verse and the following, the author plays on the double meaning of *nashwa*, referring both to euphoria arising from alcohol intoxication and to euphoria as intense happiness.

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