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THE ATTITUDES OF KARAITES TOWARDS THE PROPHETHOOD OF JESUS AND MUHAMMAD

Key words: Karaim, Jesus, Muhammad, Old Testament, New Testament, Qur'an, Anan ben David, Isaac of Troki, Avraham Firkovič, Seraya Şapşal.

The reception of the figures of Jesus and Muhammad among adherents of Mosaic Law has consistently been characterized by complexity and ambivalence. Within Samaritanism, which claimed that no prophet could arise subsequent to Moses until the eschatological End of Days, the prophetic claims of both Jesus and Muhammad were typically negated. Among *Beta Israel* (Falasha of Ethiopia), a community historically rooted in a dissenting group of Christian monastic origin who, in the 13th and 14th centuries, advocated a return “to the Bible” among their co-religionists, the prophethood of Muhammad was generally rejected, while that of Jesus was, if not de jure, then de facto acknowledged. Within the milieu of Orthodox Rabbinic Judaism (at least until the appearance of the *Maskilim* in the 19th – 20th century), the name of Jesus was usually followed by the imprecation *yimah shmo* “may his name be cursed”, and that of Muhammad by the epithet *meshuga*, meaning “deranged one” or “crazy one”. Moses Maimonides *HaRambam*, whilst refuting the prophetic status of Jesus and Muhammad, nonetheless recognized a certain positive function for these individuals in the spreading of monotheism among the Gentile nations. A younger contemporary of Maimonides, Rabbi Nethanel al-Fayyumi of Yemen, recognized the role of Jesus and Muhammad as prophets, albeit exclusively to the nations of the world, denying any such significance in relation to the Judaists. As to Karaite attitudes to the matter, while the Karaite separation from Rabbinic Judaism in the 8th and 9th centuries into a distinct and independent “back to the Bible” spiritual movement is by now

fairly well studied, as well as their approach to the Scriptures, the internal Karaite discourse regarding the prophethood or false prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad remains an exceptionally under-researched matter. In my paper, I shall analyse the ambiguity (and not infrequently, directly opposing views) concerning the prophethood or false prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad, spanning from the proto-(or early) Karaites of the 8th century, such as Abu-Isa al-Isfahani, Mishwaya al-Ukbari and Anan ben David, through an important early modern time anti-Christian polemic work *Hizzuq Emunah* by Isaac of Troki (which was translated to major European languages, including Latin), right through to the later Eastern European Karaite intellectuals, such as Avraham Firkovich, Tovi Levi-Babovich and Seraya Shapshal, who called upon their co-religionists to accept the prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad as well as 21st-century Israeli Karaites who, under the influence or even pressure of Israeli mainstream Rabbinic establishment, categorically deny prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad.

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ТРИ ПОГЛЯДИ СУЧАСНОГО ОРТОДОКСАЛЬНОГО ІУДАЇЗМУ НА ХРИСТІАНСТВО

Ключові слова: іудаїзм, християнство, міжрелігійні відносини.

1. Погляд “на”

Підвалини доброзичливого ставлення ортодоксів до християнства було закладено видатним представником т. зв. Modern Orthodoxy рабином та філософом Йосефом Довом Га-леві Соловейчиком зі США, що надрукував есеї “Confrontation” (Tradition, 6:2, pp. 5–9, 1964. Reprinted in: Soloveichik J. A Treasury of Tradition, Hebrew Publishing Co, NY, 1967). У цьому есеї він ретельно розробив керівні принципи, які допускали участь ортодоксального іудаїзму в міжконфесійному діалозі. Його учень, рабин Шломо Ріскін, вирішив, що такий діалог є не тільки можливим, а й потрібним, і протягом багатьох років намагався втілювати мрії свого учителя в життя. У 2008 році він заснував