

Title: Karaite treatises on Hebrew verbal conjugations: a genre and its function

Nadia Vidro

The Karaite school of Hebrew grammar originated in the 9th century Iraq and Iran, reached the peak of its development in the 11th century Jerusalem, and was supplanted by the teachings of Rabbanite grammarians in the 12th century Byzantium. To this day a number of Karaite grammars have been edited, leading to the elucidation of grammatical concepts and approaches to the Hebrew language and the biblical text characteristic of Karaite grammarians. On this basis it is now possible to contextualise individual grammars and identify genres within the body of Karaite grammatical writings.

A noticeable group of Karaite texts, from all layers of this grammatical tradition, deals with Hebrew verbal morphology, with a strong focus on verbal conjugations. These works, some in Judaeo-Arabic, others in Hebrew, share underlying grammatical concepts and modes of presentation, and are clearly in conversation with one another. They differ significantly from classical Rabbanite works on the subject both in their grammatical theory and in their thematic focus and scope.

The present paper looks at Karaite treatises on Hebrew verbal conjugations as a separate genre in the Karaite grammar writing. It identifies the genre's salient features, and attempts to establish a functional context of works on verbal conjugations, considering that Rabbanite and Arabic books on Hebrew verbs written before the 12th–13th centuries take a different, lexicographical approach to this material.