

The Comparison between Biblical Hebrew and Arabic in Tafsīr al-Alfāz by the Karaite

Abū al-Faraj Hārūn

Nasir Basal

The Karaite Abū al-Faraj Hārūn (Jerusalem, 11th c.) knew the Arabic Language and its grammatical literature very closely. He adapted the classical theory of Arabic grammar, especially from the works of the great Arab grammarian, Ibn al-Sarrāj (Bagdad, 10th c.), in order to describe the grammar and syntax of the Bible. In other words, he wrote a big part of his description of biblical Hebrew grammar (especially its syntax) through an explicit comparison to classical Arabic grammar.

Such was Abū al-Faraj's method, mainly, in his two grammatical compositions, *al-Muštamil* and *al-Kāfī*. In contrast, the grammatical comparisons between biblical Hebrew and Arabic in '*Tafsīr al-Alfāz*' are relatively rare. Most comparisons in his last work are semantic.

These comparisons between Biblical Hebrew and Arabic are sometimes explicit but usually covert. Most entries are renderings through etymological equivalents in Arabic. My purpose in this lecture is to present Abū al-Faraj's method in the glossary '*Tafsīr al-Alfāz*', in which he compares biblical Hebrew to Arabic, to introduce and interpret the compared biblical entries to Arabic in this composition.