

Arabisms in R. Judah Ibn-Tibbon's Original and Translated writings

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The influence of medieval Judeo-Arabic on medieval Hebrew, which created the Arabized Hebrew is well known. In comparison to other periods of Hebrew, research of medieval Arabized Hebrew has been relatively scarce. Nowadays we have only few comprehensive and detailed monographs that focus on it. Among these, we find the most comprehensive description of syntax in the monographs of Goshen-Gottstein (2006) and Rabin (2000). In addition, several lexicographic descriptions can be found in Zarfati (1969) that deals with the mathematical lexicon in medieval translated Hebrew writings, in Melammed's unpublished PhD dissertation on the lexicon in Maimonides' "Commentary of the Mishnah" (1999), and in my PhD dissertation (Avirbach 2015) regarding the nominal lexicon in Ibn-Tibbon's translation of "חובות הלבבות תורת". Several other sporadic papers and chapters that deal with specific characteristics of medieval Arabized Hebrew were also published.

R. Judah Ibn-Tibbon (1120-1190), one of the first systematic translators from Arabic to Hebrew, was greatly influenced by Arabic. This phenomena, which also appears in writings of other authors and translators of his time, was due to two main reasons: By the 12th century Hebrew had not been a living spoken language for almost a thousand years; its expansion was therefore inevitable. Arabic was the ideal source for expanding medieval Hebrew since both Hebrew and Arabic are Semitic languages and both maintain similar characteristics. Secondly, Arabic was the mother tongue of many Jewish authors and translators, and therefore had the utmost influence on them; therefore, mutual lexical, grammatical and syntactical influences were unavoidable.

This paper systematically examines the influence of Arabic on R. Judah Ibn-Tibbon's Hebrew, namely the quality and quantity of arabisms in his writings. Specifically, I compare the quantity of arabisms in original texts and in translated texts. The presence of Arabic influences in translated writings will most likely occur due to the direct influence of the original text, as opposed to the presence of arabisms in original Hebrew writings, which can reflect the presence of Arabic in the mental lexicon and grammar of the author or translator.

This paper is based on five texts: One, Ibn-Tibbon's ethical will for his son, is an original Hebrew text. Two texts comprising Ibn-Tibbon's prefaces to his translations of Bahya's "תורת חובות הלבבות" and of Ibn-Janah's "ספר הרקמה" are original texts which were written probably at the same time Ibn-Tibbon translated the Arabic texts. Two additional texts include the first treatise of "תורת חובות הלבבות" and the second article in Saddia Gaon's "ספר האמונות והדעות", both Hebrew translations of Arabic texts.