IN SEARCH OF SOURCES FOR IBN AL-ṬAYYIB’S THE PARADISE OF CHRISTIANITY: THEODORE BAR KONI’S SCHOLION

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In his Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur, Graf characterizes Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity as “das grösste exegetische Sammelwerk in der christlichen arabischen Literatur.” Despite this assessment, this commentary remains understudied. Among the many areas that remain virtually unexplored is an analysis of the sources on which Ibn al-Ṭayyib based his commentary. The present study aims to show that Theodore Bar Koni’s Scholion was one of the primary sources used by Ibn al-Ṭayyib in the question-and-answer part of his Paradise of Christianity.

IBN AL-ṬAYYIB: LIFE AND ŒUVRE

Ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. 1043), whose full name was Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ṭayyib, was among the most notable Christian intellectuals of Baghdad in the first half of the eleventh century. He worked at the ‘Aḍudiyya Hospital in Baghdad and served as secretary to both Catholicos Yūḥannā b. Nāzūk (r. 1012-1022) and Catholicos Eliya I (r. 1028-1049). He was a student of al-Ḥasan b. Suwār b. al-Khammār (d. after 1017), who himself was a student of Yahyā b. ‘Adī (d. 974). Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s students include ‘Alī b. ‘Isā al-Kaḥḥāl (d. after 1010), Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 1044), and Ibn Buṭlān (d. 1066). He was also a contemporary of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), who was acquainted with his works.

Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s œuvre includes more than forty items, all in Arabic, that span the fields of philosophy, medicine, theology, exegesis, and canon law. In philosophy, he wrote commentaries on the Isagoge of Porphyry, as well as on several works by Aristotle, including the Categories. In medicine, he wrote several treatises in addition to commentaries on Hippocrates and Galen. In canon law, he wrote The Law of Christianity (Fiqh al-naṣrāniyya), which is among the most important Arabic compilations of juridical literature for the Church of the East. He also wrote at least a dozen (short) theological treatises on a variety of topics. In exegesis, Ibn al-Ṭayyib wrote separate commentaries on the Psalms and the Gospels. It should also be noted that he may well have translated the Diatessaron into Arabic. Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s most important exegetical work—and arguably one of his most significant works
in general—is his *Paradise of Christianity* (*Firdaws al-naṣrāniyya*).

*The Paradise of Christianity* is a commentary on the entire Bible in two parts. One part, which is preserved in ms. Vatican Arab. 37, presents a running commentary on most of the Bible. Only the Genesis portion of this part of the commentary on the entire Bible in two parts. One part, which is preserved in ms. Vatican Arab. 36, is a series of questions and answers on the entire Bible.14 This part remains entirely unedited.15 It is the question-and-answer part of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *The Paradise of Christianity*—especially its sources—that is of primary concern in this study.

**IBN AL-ṬAYYIB’S QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: A SAMPLE COMMENTING ON GENESIS**

The entirety of the question-and-answer part of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *The Paradise of Christianity* remains unedited. Thus, before investigating its sources, it is necessary to present an edition of a selection of this text. A section of the commentary dealing with various parts of Genesis, especially the latter chapters, has been chosen as a sample. The edition is based on ms. Vatican Arab. 36, ff. 72r-73r (13th-14th century).16 The edition presents the text in a slightly standardized form: correcting diacritical points; removing *hamza* where it is unexpected; not indicating vowels, *shadda*, and *sukūn*; and introducing paragraph divisions. No attempt has, however, been made to re-write the text in Classical Arabic. Several emendations have been suggested in the edition. These are at times corroborated by an Ethiopic translation of the question-and-answer part of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *The Paradise of Chris-

**TEXT**

والعملة في بيع يوسف شرف اخوته وكيفا يعد الوقت لأهله في وقت البلا فتكون ذلك بالتذبير الالهي. وكيفا يكون علامة المسيح المخلص الذي باعه اليهود للموت وأسلموه للصلب وفي ذلك سر تذبيره في خلاص العالم. واخوة يوسف واليهود ما اعتمدوا الا الشر وفي انتهائهظهر الخير. القمر مثل امه. ولو بقيت لسجدت وناب الاب منابها.

وربكات يعقوب لأولاده تجري مجرى النبوات اما روبل فجعل مفرشه مدناسا بالاضطهاد مع بلها كنته بل اذكره لجهالته. ولم يلمه مما ظهر منه في معنى يوسف اخيه وانه لم بثر مساعده اخوته وشمون ولوي عبرهما للحرب الذي فعلوه مع اهل شيخه بسبب دينا اختهم ويهودا22 اسغ عليه اليرقات والنبوة لأن من نسله بظهر المسيح. وزيولون اجله على ساحل البحر. وفي هذا دلالة على انه ينفع من المتاجر 23 من السفن. ويساخرا جعل له خصيب الأرض التي شانه ان يفحمها وياكل ثمارها. ودا تنبا عليه بالحكم على شعبه بشمتون الجبار. وجاد تنبي عليه بالحرص والحرص، وناشبه بسمن منحنية. وانه بقيم المير للملوك من عمله. ونفتخلي تقدم اعطا ارمه الغلال والرسل والحياة. ويوسف كلله بالذات لما فعل به اخوته. وبنين ابن تنبي عليه بالمشابهة للحيوان في بهيمته وهذا عرض له الاحقاك التي كانت من ابرهيم إلى موسى سبعة وسنوها خمس مائة خمسة
In Search of Sources for Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity

The generations that were from Abraham to Moses are seven, and their years are 545 until the death of Moses. [Gen. 12:4-7] In the seventy-fifth year of Abraham, God prepared him for a divine vision.

[Gen. 30:35]... lacking horns and spotted... [Gen. 30:37-39] It is said that the branch that Jacob was dipping into the water had on it the name of Edom.37 This is impossible because writing had not (yet) appeared, and a document had not (yet) been concluded. (If this was not the case,) why would Laban and Jacob make a daughter-in-law,32 yet he reminded him of his foolishness. He did not curse him for what came about by him in the matter of Joseph his brother and that he did not choose to help his brothers. [Gen. 49:5-7] As for Simeon and Levi, he reproached them for the battle that they made with the people of Shechem on account of Dinah their sister.33 [Gen. 49:8-12] As for Judah, he showered him with blessings and prophecy because from his offspring Christ would appear. [Gen. 49:13] As for Zebulon, he made him settle at the shore of the sea. In this was a demonstration that he would cultivate it and eat its fruits. [Gen. 49:16-18] As for Dan, he prophesied for him the judgment of his people through Samson the giant. [Gen. 49:19] As for Gad, he prophesied for him robbery. [Gen. 49:20] As for Asher, (he prophesied for him) the fat of wheat and that he would establish provisions for kings from his work. [Gen. 49:21] As for Naphtali, his land first gave fruits, emissaries, and a cause.36 [Gen. 49:22-26] As for Joseph, he crowned him with victory for what his brothers did to him. [Gen. 49:27] As for Benjamin, he prophesied a resemblance to animals on account of his brutality, and this happened to him.

The cause of the selling of Joseph (is) the evil of his brothers and so that he could prepare nourishment for his people in the time of distress, for this would come about by the divine economy, and so that it30 would be a sign of Christ the saviour whom the Jews sold for death and handed over for crucifixion. In this is the mystery of his31 economy for the salvation of the world. The brothers of Joseph and the Jews only intended evil. At its conclusion, good appeared. [Gen. 37:9-10] The moon is a symbol of his mother. Had she remained, she would have bowed, but the father was her replacement.


The generations that were from Abraham to Moses are seven, and their years are 545 until the death of Moses. [Gen. 12:4-7] In the seventy-fifth year of Abraham, God prepared him for a divine vision. [Gen. 30:35]... lacking horns and spotted... [Gen. 30:37-39] It is said that the branch that Jacob was dipping into the water had on it the name of Edom.37 This is impossible because writing had not (yet) appeared, and a document had not (yet) been concluded. (If this was not the case,) why would Laban and Jacob make a
covenant at a hill of stones?\textsuperscript{38} [Gen. 32:25-32] The angel who fought Jacob\textsuperscript{39} when he fled from the house of Laban was encouraging him and removing from him fear of Esau, for the difficult struggle (i.e., with the angel) would remove the easy struggle (i.e., with Esau). For, if he could defeat an angel, then how much more suitable would it be for him to defeat a human.\textsuperscript{[Gen. 32:28]} The interpretation of it (i.e., the name of Israel) is ‘seeing God’.

[Gen. 32:32] Because of the pain of his hip from the struggle, the Jews do not eat even now the sciatic nerve, but they remove it.\textsuperscript{[Gen. 31:42]}'The god of his father' by which he swore is God, and it is not as some people say a foreign god.\textsuperscript{[Gen. 25:1-6]} After the death of Sarah, Abraham married Qantura. He bore from her numerous children, and he sent (them)\textsuperscript{40} to the East. [Gen. 31-32] With Jacob's departure from the house of Laban by the command of God, Esau did not attack (him).\textsuperscript{[Gen. 17:24]} Abraham was circumcised when he was ninety-eight years old.

This section in Ibn al-Ṭayyib's \textit{The Paradise of Christianity} contains exegetical material that corresponds to four questions in the \textit{Scholion} of Theodore Bar Koni’s:\textsuperscript{46}

- What is the cause of the selling of Joseph? (ܡܢܐ ܗܝ ܥܠܬܐ ܕܡܙܕܒܢܢܘܬܗ ܕܝܘܣܦ)\textsuperscript{41}
- What is the cause of the blessings of Jacob for his sons? (ܡܢܐ ܗܝ ܥܠܬܐ ܟܬܗܕܒܘܪܐ ܕܝܥܩܘܒ ܕܠܘܬ ܘܗܝܒܢ)\textsuperscript{42}
- How many generations were there from Abraham until Moses and the exodus of the people? How many were their years? (ܒܪܟܡܐ ܗܘܐ ܝܢܫܢ אܝܣܚܩ اوܐܝܫܡܥܝܠ اوܬܥܦܝܘ ܕܥܡܐ ܘܟܡܐ)\textsuperscript{43}
- How old were Isaac and Ishmael?\textsuperscript{44}

How were [the patriarchs]\textsuperscript{45} buried? (ܐܒܪܗܡ ܥܕܡܐ ܠܡܘܫܐ ܘܡܦܩܬܐ ܕܥܡܐ ܘܟܡܐ)

These four questions are subsumed into a single section in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s \textit{The Paradise of Christianity}.\textsuperscript{46} The remainder of this study treats each of these four questions individually.

As will become clear below, some of this exegetical material is also found in Isho’dad of Merv’s running commentary on Genesis,\textsuperscript{47} and less of it is found in the anonymous commentary on Genesis-Exodus 9:32 preserved in ms. (olim) Diyarbakır 22,\textsuperscript{48} which served as one of Isho’dad’s main sources. Though this section in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s \textit{The Paradise of Christianity} at times contains similar exegetical traditions to these two running commentaries, it will be shown that it is based most directly on Theodore Bar Koni’s \textit{Scholion}.

**QUESTION ON THE CAUSE OF THE SELLING OF JOSEPH**

This section in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s \textit{The Paradise of Christianity} begins with the Joseph narrative and more specifically the cause for Joseph’s brothers selling him (Gen. 37:25-28):

والعلة في بيع يوسف شر أخوه

‘The cause of the selling of Joseph (is) the evil of his brothers.’

This is based on the question and first answer given by Bar Koni in his \textit{Scholion}:

‘What is the cause of the selling of Joseph? First, the jealousy and evil of his brothers, as the scripture teaches, “His brothers envied him” (Gen. 28:12).’\textsuperscript{49}
The same cause is found almost verbatim in Isho’dad of Merv’s running commentary:

‘First, the evil and jealousy of his brothers: “his brothers envied him” (Gen. 28:12).’

Ibn al-Ṭayyib compresses the reason given in the two Syriac commentaries, adapting the two words ‘jealousy’ and ‘evil’ in Syriac into a single word ‘evil’ in Arabic. In addition, Ibn al-Ṭayyib does not include the scriptural citation. Removal of a scriptural citation as well as condensing material are recurring tendencies in the authorial process of Ibn al-Ṭayyib.

The second cause that Ibn al-Ṭayyib gives for the selling of Joseph is the following:

‘...and so that he could prepare nourishment for his people in the time of distress.’

This is based on the second reason given by Bar Koni, which is, however, longer:

‘Secondly, so that he could prepare nourishment for their lives and to enliven a salvation for them in the land, as it said, “He sent before them a man” (Ps. 50:17), making the sending of him full of wonder, first as a revelation of the power of the Lord, second (as a revelation of) the purity of Joseph, and third (as a revelation of) the evil of his brothers.’

Isho’dad of Merv attests the same tradition as is found in Bar Koni’s Scholion, but in a shorter form. Likewise, Ibn al-Tayyib provides the same cause as the two Syriac commentaries, but essentially forgoes all of the explanation that follows this cause. It should be noted, however, that Ibn al-Ṭayyib specifically mentions ‘the time of distress’, which is more or less explicitly stated by Bar Koni (i.e., the enslavement in Egypt) but only implied in Isho’dad of Merv’s commentary.
After providing these two causes for the sale of Joseph by his brothers, Ibn al-Ṭayyib proceeds to discuss how God was at work in these events:

فيكون ذلك بالتدبير الإلهي. وكما يكون علامة الصحب الخاضل الذي يأ부 اليهود للموت واسمه للصلب وفي ذلك سر تدبيره لخلاص العالم وأخوة يوسف واليهود ما اعتمدو إلا الشر وفي انتهاءه ظهر الخير.

‘...for this would come about by the divine economy, and so that it would be a sign of Christ the saviour whom the Jews sold for death and handed over for crucifixion. In this is the mystery of his economy for the salvation of the world. The brothers of Joseph and the Jews only intended evil. At its conclusion, good appeared.’

A similar exegetical tradition is found in Bar Koni’s Scholion:

‘These things with Joseph resemble those with our saviour, for in such a way that our saviour would make alive the world through his death, the Jews in their evil crucified him. When the evil of Joseph’s brothers sold him, the selling of him was distributed for a beneficial cause. The Jews, who crucified our Lord, did not confer good on the world, for they completed their desire, and the sons of Jacob (did not confer good) on Joseph, who became king of Egypt. Both of them were inclined toward harm, but God nullified their cunning and turned it to the opposite.’

Almost the same material is again found in Isho’dad of Merv’s running commentary:

All three of the authors develop a similar argument, especially in comparing the ordeal of Joseph at the hands of his brothers with that of Jesus at the hands of the Jews. Nevertheless, it is clear that Ibn al-Ṭayyib is dependent on Bar Koni here, since they both attribute these events explicitly to the divine economy (التدبير = مدبرنوطا). Isho’dad, in contrast, does not mention the divine economy. In addition, once again, Ibn al-Ṭayyib removes details found in Bar Koni, even though he does relay the same general themes.
After this discussion of the causes for selling Joseph, Ibn al-Ṭayyib moves to the meaning of the moon in Joseph’s dream (Gen. 37:9-10):

‘The moon is a symbol of his mother. Had she remained, she would have bowed, but the father was her replacement.’

This is very similar to the explanation given by Bar Koni:

‘Even though his mother had already died, she also bowed to him through the bowing of Jacob, for a man and a woman are one flesh (Gen. 2:24) ...’

All four of these commentaries relay the same explanation that the moon is Joseph’s mother, and that, since she was already dead, she bowed to Joseph through his father, thereby fulfilling Joseph’s dream. The commentary in ms. Diyarbakır 22, followed by Isho’dad, cites Genesis 2:24 to explain how Joseph’s father could take his mother’s place. Bar Koni does not transmit this tradition, and thus it is also not found in Ibn al-Ṭayyib. Bar Koni does, however, cite Gen. 37:9, as does the commentary in ms. Diyarbakır 22 (though not Isho’dad of Merv). Ibn al-Ṭayyib leaves out this scriptural citation from Bar Koni’s Scholion, a practice that was already noted above. In addition, he makes more explicit what is implicit in the Scholion by changing ‘she bowed to him through his father’ to the direct statement that Joseph’s father replaced her. Apart from these minor changes, Ibn al-Ṭayyib is close to an Arabic translation of Bar Koni’s Scholion, even preserving the counterfactual conditional sentence (Syriac ܐܠܘ = Arabic... ܠ ... ܠو).

Even if he shares exegetical traditions with the running commentaries of Isho’dad of Merv and of ms. Diyarbakır 22, Ibn al-Ṭayyib is clearly dependent on Theodore Bar Koni’s Scholion in this question dealing with the Joseph narrative. With this material, Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s authorial process consists of translating the Syriac source into Arabic, often in an abridged form. The abridgement at times involves deleting explanatory material as well as often removing additional scriptural citations. Occasionally, Ibn al-Ṭayyib adds a clarify-
cation to his Syriac source, though this is not as common as his condensing of material.

QUESTION ON JACOB’S BLESSINGS FOR HIS SONS

In his Scholion, Bar Koni proceeds to a new question on ‘What is the cause of the blessings of Jacob for his sons?’ (ما نسب موادث نسب موادث كابوروك), commenting on Genesis 49:1-28. Ibn al-Tayyib also turns to the blessings of Jacob, but he does not mark this transition with a new question. Rather, he simply begins with the following:

‘The blessings of Jacob for his sons are analogous to prophecies.’

Bar Koni also connects Jacob’s blessings to prophecies:

‘What is the cause of the blessings of Jacob for his sons? Even though they bore the form of blessings, actually a hint of prophecy was indicated by them.’

Once again, Ibn al-Tayyib can be seen abridging Bar Koni. Ibn al-Tayyib, following Bar Koni, proceeds to provide a prophetic exegesis for Jacob’s blessings for each of his sons. The exegesis of Ibn al-Tayyib is very close to that of Bar Koni’s Scholion for most of Jacob’s sons, though it departs from it with a couple of them.

Following the biblical text (Gen. 49:3-4), Bar Koni begins with Jacob’s oldest son Reuben:

‘As for Reuben, his first born, because he defiled his bed in lying with Bilhah his handmaid, he reminded him of his transgression. He did not curse him on account of the favour that he showed in the matter of Joseph.’

Ibn al-Tayyib relates the following about Reuben:

‘As for Reuben, he made his bed defiled in lying with Bilhah his daughter-in-law, yet he reminded him of his foolishness. He did not curse him for what came about by him in the matter of Joseph his brother and that he did not choose to help his brothers.’

Ibn al-Tayyib closely follows Bar Koni here. Even the fronting of ‘Reuben’ in the Syriac text is reproduced in Arabic by the ‘ammā ... fa- ... construction. Ibn al-Tayyib, however, adds further explanation for Reuben’s role in the Joseph saga noting that Reuben did not help his brothers. In this, Ibn al-Tayyib departs from his tendency either to reproduce or to abbreviate Bar Koni’s Scholion. Another change between Bar Koni and Ibn al-Tayyib is the description of Bilhah: Bar Koni describes her as ‘his maid-servant’ (دركتها), whereas Ibn al-Tayyib has a word (كنته) that could mean either ‘his sister-in-law’ or ‘his daughter-in-law’. It is difficult to explain why Bilhah’s description as a ‘maidservant’ was changed to ‘daughter-in-law’ or ‘sister-in-law’. This does not follow the Arabic biblical text (Gen. 35:22). The earliest dated Arabic Pentateuch manuscript (ms. Sinai Arabic 2 [939/940]), for instance, has ‘concubine’ here. It is also not found in the running commentary part of Ibn al-Tayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity, where Bilhah is also described as a ‘concubine’ (سرية).
Following the biblical text (Gen. 49:5-7), Bar Koni treats Jacob’s blessing of Simeon and Levi together:

‘As for Simeon and Levi, he reproached them for the slaughter that they made in Shechem on account of Dinah their sister. The prophet Hosea also mentioned it: “The priests joined in the path and killed Shechem” (Hosea 6:9).’

Ibn al-Tayyib provides the following comments on Simeon and Levi:

‘As for Simeon and Levi, he reproached them for the battle that they made with the people of Shechem on account of Dinah their sister.’

Ibn al-Tayyib closely follows Bar Koni’s Scholion here, though he does not include the passage from Hosea, following his tendency to remove additional biblical citations.

Bar Koni provides a Christological interpretation for Jacob’s blessing of Judah (Gen. 49:8-12):

‘As for Judah, he showered him with blessings and also prophecy, as the one from whose generation our Lord Christ would shine forth in flesh.’

The same Christological interpretation is repeated in Ibn al-Tayyib:

‘As for Judah, he showered him with blessings and prophecy because from his offspring Christ would appear.’

Ibn al-Tayyib closely follows Bar Koni’s Scholion here, though he does omit ‘in flesh’.

The first part of Bar Koni’s interpretation of the blessing for Zebulon paraphrases the Peshitta (Gen. 49:13), while the second introduces the interpretation:

‘As for Zebulon, he made him settle at the shore of the sea, as one who would delight in merchandise in the boats.’

Ibn al-Tayyib follows this same structure:

‘As for Zebulon, he made him settle at the shore of the sea. In this was a demonstration that he would benefit from the merchandise in the boats.’

Ibn al-Tayyib closely follows Bar Koni’s Scholion here. Unlike Bar Koni, however, Ibn al-Tayyib makes explicit that the second part is an interpretation of the blessing by adding ‘in this was a demonstration that…’. The translation ‘he would delight in merchandise’ is based on two emendations to Ibn al-Tayyib’s Arabic text: ‘he would avenge himself on’ to ‘he would benefit from’ and ‘that which is last, later, behind’ to ‘merchandise’. Both of these emendations are minor, and both are supported by Bar Koni’s Scholion. It is, however, interesting to note that the Ethiopic translation in ms. EMML 1839 reads:
‘As for Zebulon, he established him and caused him to reside at the shore of the sea. In this, he showed that he would be avenged by those things that were left behind in the boat.’

The Ethiopic translator, then, was translating an Arabic Vorlage similar to that found in ms. Vatican Arab. 36.

Bar Koni provides the following interpretation for Jacob’s blessing of Issachar (Gen. 39:14-15):

‘As for Ishakar, (he prophesied that) in the abundance and tranquility of the land he would cultivate and eat its fruits.’

A similar interpretation is found in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity:

‘As for Ishakar, he made for him abundance of the land such that he would cultivate it and eat its fruits.’

Ibn al-Ṭayyib supplies a verb in the main clause, which is only implied in Bar Koni. In addition, he condenses the two words ‘abundance’ and ‘tranquility’ in Syriac into the single word ‘abundance’ in Arabic.

Bar Koni connects the prophecy of Dan (Gen. 49:16-17) with Samson:

‘As for Dan, (he prophesied) that he would judge his people through Samson the giant.’

Ibn al-Ṭayyib closely follows Bar Koni. There are, however, a couple of differences. He again provides a verb for the main clause, which is only implied in Bar Koni’s Scholion. In addition, Ibn al-Ṭayyib is not able to preserve the play between Dan’s name and the verbal root √dwn ‘to judge’, which is found in the Scholion, the Peshitta, and even the Hebrew text, since this is not the usual meaning of this root in Arabic.

Bar Koni provides two different interpretations for Jacob’s blessing of Gad (Gen. 49:19):

‘As for Gad, (he prophesied) that he would be a robber, or as the Greek says, one who is robbed.’

Ibn al-Ṭayyib, in contrast, provides a single interpretation:

‘As for Gad, he prophesied for him robbery.’

This, then, is another instance in which Ibn al-Ṭayyib condenses the material in Bar Koni’s Scholion. In addition, Ibn al-Ṭayyib again adds the verb ‘he prophesied’, which is only implied in the Syriac.

Bar Koni’s interpretation of Jacob’s blessing of Asher is little more than a rephrasing of the Peshitta text (Gen. 49:20):

‘As for Asher, (he prophesied for him) the fat of food and that he would give provisions to the king from his labour.’

A similar interpretation is found in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity:

‘As for Asher, he established him and caused him to reside at the shore of the sea. In this, he showed that he would be avenged by those things that were left behind in the boat.’

The same connection is found in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity:
‘As for Asher, (he prophesied for him) the fat of wheat and that he would establish provisions for kings from his work.’

In contrast to the case with Dan and Gad, Ibn al-Ṭayyib does not supply a verb in the main clause. Ibn al-Ṭayyib, however, departs from Bar Koni’s Scholion in making both ‘provisions’ and ‘kings’ plural, in contrast to the singulars in the Syriac.

Bar Koni’s interpretation of Jacob’s blessing for Naphtali is more removed from the biblical text (Gen. 49:21) than those previously discussed:

ܐܪܥܗܕܡܢܠܠܬܐܥܡܩܕܡܘܬܬܘܒܠܢܦܬܠܝܠܝܗܒܗܿܘܐܝܟܟܠܠܗ܂ܘܒܗܿܥܿܒܕܐܝܙܓܕܘܬܐ

‘As for Naphtali, he gave him the first fruits from his land, and by this he crowned him as one would serve as an emissary.’74

Ibn al-Ṭayyib does not follow Bar Koni’s Scholion as closely for Naphtali as he does with some of Jacob’s other sons:

والرسلالغلاتارضهاعطاتقدمونفتاليوالحجة

‘As for Naphtali, his land first gave fruits, emissaries, and a cause.’

There are a number of differences here between Ibn al-Ṭayyib and Bar Koni. Though it remains unclear how it exactly happened, the word ‘first’ in ‘first fruits’ (ܡܩܕܡܘܬܐ) in Bar Koni’s text ultimately became an auxiliary verb of ‘to do first’ (تقدم) in Ibn al-Ṭayyib. The genitive relationship between ‘fruits’ and ‘land’ in the Scholion was also removed in Ibn al-Ṭayyib. In its place, ‘his land’ is probably to be understood as the subject of the verbs, though the gender discrepancy is to be noted.75 Ibn al-Ṭayyib does not include the verb ‘he crowned him’ in Bar Koni, but does still preserve the prophecy of Naphtali being a messenger. Ibn al-Ṭayyib, however, adds ‘a cause’ (الحجة) at the end of the list, which could alternatively be understood as ‘pilgrimage’. Without any additional context, this addition is difficult to understand.76 The end result of these changes is that Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s commentary is removed from Bar Koni’s Scholion, even if it is still ultimately based on it.

Bar Koni offers a simple interpretation of Jacob’s lengthy blessing for Joseph (Gen. 49:22-26):

ܒܙܟܘܬܐܠܝܘܣܦܝܗܼܒܘܡܐܡܪ܂ܕܠܘܘܒܢܨܚܢܐܥܠܕܒܒ܂ܒܘܗܿܐܚܩܒܠܨܒܬܗ܂ Buccellati, 2013: 76-77

‘He gave Joseph speech in victory and in glory with which he adorned him against his brothers, the enemies.’77

Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s comments on Joseph are even shorter:

ٍوبيسَفَكَلَّهُ يَفُوزُ لَمَّا فَعَلَ يَهُوَهُ

‘As for Joseph, he crowned him with victory for what his brothers did to him.’

Somewhat surprisingly, the verb ‘to crown’ is found here in Ibn al-Ṭayyib, as opposed to Syriac ‘to give’. This is especially noteworthy since in the previous blessing for Naphtali the Syriac had a verb ‘to crown’ whereas the Arabic did not. Ibn al-Ṭayyib does not include the idea of ‘speech’ (ܡܐܡܪܐ), the meaning of which—it should be noted—is not entirely clear in Bar Koni’s Scholion, and also reduces the two Syriac words ‘in victory’ and ‘in glory’ to a single ‘in glory’ in Arabic. The structure of the final subordinate clause is also entirely different between Bar Koni and Ibn al-Ṭayyib. Thus, as with the previous passage on Naphtali, Ibn al-Ṭayyib does not follow Bar Koni’s Scholion here as closely as he does in the other blessings.

Bar Koni concludes his exegesis of Jacob’s blessings with Benjamin (Gen. 49:27):
As for Benjamin, (he prophesied) that he would be given over to an animal, and that he would resemble it (in) beastliness. This happened through Benjamin.'78

Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s interpretation is slightly more condensed:

′As for Benjamin, he prophesied a resemblance to animals on account of his brutality, and this happened to him.'

As in the case of the blessings for Dan and Gad, Ibn al-Ṭayyib supplies a verb in the main clause, which is only implied in Bar Koni. The syntax and structure of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *The Paradise of Christianity* also departs rather significantly from Bar Koni’s *Scholion* with the transfer of the two Syriac verbs into a series of prepositional phrases.

Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s use of Bar Koni’s *Scholion* varies in this question on Jacob’s blessings for his sons: with some of the blessings, Ibn al-Ṭayyib presents almost an Arabic translation of Bar Koni’s Syriac text, whereas in others he is only loosely based on it. Several of the tendencies seen with the previous question are found again with this question, including the removal of scriptural citations and the inclination to abridge.

Before moving to the next question in Bar Koni, it should be noted that Ibn al-Ṭayyib also comments on the blessings of Jacob in his running commentary.79

While this is not the place to analyze all of the blessings, it is worthwhile to look at a couple of them to compare his method in the running commentary part of *The Paradise of Christianity* with that of the question-and-answer part. Ibn al-Ṭayyib provides the following comments on Jacob’s blessing of Naphtali (Gen. 49:21):

′Naphtali is a quick messenger for his brothers because of the fertility of his land. He has fine expression in his messages, and he comes with good news.'80

Though the ideas are similar to those found in Bar Koni’s *Scholion*, which is quoted above, closer parallels are found in the running commentaries of Diyarbakır 22 and of Isho’dad of Merv. The commentary in ms. Diyarbakır 22 provides the following comments on Gen. 49:21:

′Naphtali, a quick messenger, gives good news to his brothers because of the fertility of his land. Also, Baraq, who was from Naphtali, announced good news to those who were fleeing from the ferocity of Sisera (Jg. 4:6-22).’81

An even closer parallel to the running commentary part of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *The Paradise of Christianity* is found in Isho’dad of Merv’s commentary:

′Naphtali is a quick messenger for his brothers because of the fertility of his land. Also, when Gideon conquered Midian, he sent quick messengers throughout all of Israel (Jg. 7:24), and most of these
In Search of Sources for Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *The Paradise of Christianity*

messengers were from Naphtali. Also, Baraq, who was from Naphtali, announced fine news to those who were fleeing from the ferocity of Sisera (Jg. 4:6-22). The Hebrew: “Naphtali, a gentle stem, who adds beauty through his fruits.” That is, his land is good, and he brings to his people the fine expression of fruits.

The first sentence in Ibn al-Ṭayyib is a word-for-word translation of Isho’dad of Merv’s commentary. Ibn al-Ṭayyib, then, passes over Isho’dad’s comments concerning Gideon and Baraq, both of whom are associated in the biblical text with Naphtali. In his last sentence, Ibn al-Ṭayyib adapts the reading that Isho’dad attributes to the Hebrew, but which is actually from the Septuagint. He does not, however, preserve any indication of the source of this alternative reading. Thus, in this example from his running commentary, Ibn al-Ṭayyib is an Arabic abridgement of the commentary by Isho’dad of Merv, much in the same way that his question-and-answer commentary makes use of Bar Koni’s Scholion.

It should be pointed out that Isho’dad of Merv is not the only source that Ibn al-Ṭayyib employs in his running commentary. Ibn al-Ṭayyib, for instance, provides the following commentary on the blessing of Asher (Gen. 49:20):

“As for Asher, his land is good” (Gen. 49:20). That which Moses said, “He will dip his foot in oil” (Deut. 33:24). It seems that it was the land of Apamea. “He will give nourishment to kings” (Gen. 49:20) with pure oil and wines of exquisite taste, which will be in his inheritance.

Almost the same wording is found in the commentary in ms. Diyarbakır 22:

“Regarding Asher, it says, “He will give nourishment to kings” (Gen. 49:20) with pure oil and wines of exquisite taste, which will be in his land.”

Thus, this is a case in which the running commentary part of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *Paradise of Christianity* is not dependent on Isho’dad of Merv’s commentary, but on Ephrem’s Commentary or possibly the commentary in ms. Diyarbakır 22 (or one like it).

**QUESTION ON BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY**

Following the question on Jacob’s blessings for his sons, Bar Koni turns to a new question in his *Scholion*:

“How many generations were there from Abraham until Moses and the exodus of the people? How many were their years?”

This question is significantly longer than the previous two questions. In Scher’s edition of the Syriac, the question on the cause of the sale of Joseph runs twenty-four lines and the question on the cause of Jacob’s blessings for his sons runs twenty-five lines, whereas this question totals seventy-four lines. Thus, it is three times as long as either of the previous questions! It
begins with Abraham and proceeds to Jacob, then to Joseph, then to the slavery in Egypt, and finally to Moses and his death.

As was the case with the question on Jacob’s blessings, Ibn al-Ṭayyib does not indicate that a new question has begun; rather, he simply turns directly to what will be part of the answer in Bar Koni:

‘The generations that were from Abraham to Moses are seven, and their years are 545 until the death of Moses.’

This corresponds to the first part of Bar Koni’s answer:

‘How many generations were there from Abraham until Moses and the exodus of the people? How many were their years? The generations are seven, and the years are 545 until the passing away of Moses.’

Ibn al-Ṭayyib is clearly based on this sentence from Bar Koni. There are, however, several changes: the Syriac subordinate clause indicating Abraham’s age is changed into a prepositional phrase in Arabic, and the passive verb without an agent in Syriac is changed into God’s direct action in Arabic.

Between these sentences in Bar Koni’s Scholion, there are the following lines of Syriac:

‘In year forty-three of Ninos, king of the Assyrians, Abraham was born, and he lived one hundred and seventy-five years.’

This material is not found in Ibn al-Ṭayyib. In addition, Bar Koni continues for another sixty-six lines of Syriac text in Scher’s edition, and none of this is represented in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity. In this question, then, Ibn al-Ṭayyib adopts a different approach from that which was seen in the previous two questions. Seventy-four lines of Syriac text in Scher’s edition of Bar Koni’s Scholion become no more than thirty words in the Arabic text of Ibn al-Ṭayyib! Thus, a vast majority of the Syriac material in this question is not transmitted into Arabic. This contrasts with the two questions discussed previously, in which Ibn al-Ṭayyib relayed most of the exegetical material in Bar Koni’s Scholion, even if abridging and adapting it.

**QUESTION ON JACOB (AND ABRAHAM)**

Following these few sentences involving the chronology of Abraham, Ibn al-Ṭayyib...
moves to a series of comments primarily about Jacob (esp. Gen. 30-32) but also a couple on Abraham as well. Each of these statements in Ibn al-Ṭayyib derives directly from passages in the following question from Bar Koni’s Scholion:

‘How old were Isaac and Ishmael? How were [the patriarchs] buried?’

This question, which comprises sixty-seven lines of Syriac text in Scher’s edition, discusses various topics, including the age of the patriarchs at their deaths, the story of Jacob and Laban, the meanings and/or etymologies of several words, Abraham’s children after Sarah’s death, the circumcision of Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, and Joseph’s wife Asyat (ܐܣܝܬ). As with the previous question, Ibn al-Ṭayyib does not relay all or even most of the material in the question. Rather, he makes a selection.

This section in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity begins abruptly with the following words:

‘...lacking horns and spotted...’

Without context, the word translated as ‘horns’ could also mean ‘centuries’. In its context within Ibn al-Ṭayyib, the adjective ‘lacking’ (العادمة) would seem to be modifying the immediately preceding ‘divine vision’ (الالھية) from the previous question. This is, in fact, how the Ethiopic translation of Ibn al-Ṭayyib in ms. EMML 1839 understands it:

‘...a divine vision which was lacking centuries. The interpretation of centuries is one hundred years or seventy-two years.’

The Ethiopic translation deletes the word for ‘spotted’ and connects ‘lacking of centuries’ to the textually adjacent ‘divine vision’. In addition, the text adds an exegetical note clarifying the meaning of the Ethiopic word qārn as ‘centuries’, since it does not usually have this meaning. Despite its creativity, the Ethiopic text does not make sense as it stands: what is a vision lacking centuries? A solution to this crux can, however, be found in Bar Koni’s Scholion. Ibn al-Ṭayyib is dependent here on the following passage that discusses the words ‘bald’ (ܡܛܠ܂ܘܐܝܟܢܐ) and ‘spotted’ (ܚܐܒܠܐܐ) in the Peshitta text of Gen. 30:35:

‘...because the “bald ones,” which lack horns, and the spotted ones, which have multiple colors...’

This collocation of ‘without horns and spotted ones’ (ܒܪܐܬܥܦܝܘܘܐܝܟܢܐ) is clearly the source of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s ‘lacking horns and spotted’ (اللقاء القرون البلق). Thus, at some point in the history of one of the texts, some material fell out, resulting in the entirely incomprehensible locution ‘lacking horns and spotted’ that is found in ms. Vatican Arab. 36.

Ibn al-Ṭayyib continues directly with the following remark about the rods that Jacob set up in front of the water troughs of Laban (Gen. 30:37-39):

‘...It is said that the branch that Jacob was dipping into the water had on it the name of Edom. This is impossible because writing had not (yet) appeared, and a document had not (yet) been concluded.’

This is based on Bar Koni’s Scholion:
In Search of Sources for Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *The Paradise of Christianity*

It is said that Jacob carved the name Adonai on those rods that he stuck into the flow of water. This is not, however, true, because the letters of writing had not yet come into existence.98

The same exegetical material is found in Isho’dad of Merv’s running commentary:

Some (say) that on the strips of rods was inscribed the name Adonai. This is not, however, established, since writing had not yet come into existence, but we could say that he was in (a state of) revelation when he read on it the name Adonai.99

Isho’dad is responding here directly to one of his sources, namely the commentary in ms. Diyarbakır 22, which states:

‘It is likely that on the strips on the rods the name Adonai was inscribed’.100

Both Bar Koni and Isho’dad, then, are responding to the tradition preserved in the commentary in ms. Diyarbakır 22. The wording of Ibn al-Ṭayyib makes it clear that he is dependent here on Bar Koni: note, for instance, the beginning ‘it is said’ (قيل).

Interestingly, the Ethiopic translation of the Arabic in ms. EMML 1839 has neither Adonai nor Edom, but Adam:

‘It is said that the branch that Jacob dipped into the water had on it the name of Adam.’

At least two scenarios could explain these data: Adonai in Syriac may have been changed to Adam in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s Urtext, as is attested in the Ethiopic translation, and was only later corrupted to Edom, as is found in ms. Vatican Arab. 36. Or, Adonai could have been corrupted to Edom in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *Paradise of Christianity*, and it was then changed to Adam in the Ethiopic translation, because the Arabic Vorlage did not make sense. It is difficult to adjudicate between these two options, though the latter seems slightly more likely, since it can account for the o-vowel in the second syllable of both Adonai and Edom. Regardless, the change in the Arabic may have been motivated by a loss of understanding of the original Hebrew term Adonai.101

After discussing the fact that writing did not appear on these rods, Ibn al-Ṭayyib states:

‘(If this was not the case,) why would Laban and Jacob make a covenant at a hill of stones?’

The most straightforward translation of this sentence would probably be: ‘Laban and Jacob did not make a covenant at a hill of stones’. This would, however, be strange since the biblical text states that Laban and Jacob did in fact make a covenant at a mountain of stones (Gen. 31:41-52). This crux can be explained by recourse to Bar Koni’s Scholion. Immediately after commenting on the writing of the name Adonai on the reeds, Bar Koni states:
In Search of Sources for Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity

‘If (this was) not (the case), why did Laban and Jacob make a covenant and ratify an agreement on a heap of stones?’

In context, Bar Koni’s argument is as follows: had writing already been invented, Laban and Jacob would not have needed to go through such an elaborate scenario of stacking rocks to ratify an agreement, and therefore it can be deduced that writing had not yet been invented, and therefore the name Adonai could not have been written on the rods. Given the Syriac source, it seems that Arabic لم should not be analyzed as the negation lam, but as li-ma ‘why’, the short form of li-mā. According to this analysis, لم in Ibn al-Ṭayyib is a literal translation of Syriac لمن ‘why’ (this is the interpretation adopted in the edition above). Somewhere between Bar Koni’s Syriac text and Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s Arabic one, the protasis ‘If (this was) not (the case)’ fell out, leaving only the apodosis in Ibn al-Ṭayyib. This accounts for the situation in the earliest layer of the Arabic text. At some point, however, لم could have been reinterpreted as a negation, possibly in an unmarked rhetorical sentence: ‘Laban and Jacob did not make a covenant at a hill of stones’ or better ‘Did Laban and Jacob not make a covenant at a hill of stones?’ This is in fact how the Ethiopic translator understood the Arabic text:

‘As for the angel with whom he (i.e., Jacob) fought when he fled from the house of Laban, (this was) so that he might expel through the harsh and great fear of him (i.e., the angel) that (fear) that is small and meek from Esau.’

Similar exegetical material is found in Isho’dād’s running commentary:

‘The angel fought with him, not in a dream but while he was awake, so that he might expel through the harsh and great fear of him (i.e., the angel) that (fear) that is small and meek from Esau.’

The same general idea is also found in the commentary in ms. Diyarbakır 22, though with significantly different wording:
The angel made him believe that he (i.e., the angel) did not prevail over him (i.e., Jacob) in order to teach him (i.e., Jacob) not to fear Esau.106

Once again, the exegetical content of the four texts is similar: Jacob’s struggle with the angel showed Jacob that he had no reason to fear Esau. The wording of the passages, however, shows that Ibn al-Ṭayyib based his commentary on Bar Koni’s Scholion: both, for instance, begin with a relative clause modifying ‘the angel’. Ibn al-Ṭayyib adds the further clarification that ‘if he could defeat an angel, then how much more suitable would it be for him to defeat a human’. This represents one of the rare instances in the selection treated in this study in which Ibn al-Ṭayyib adds to what is found in Bar Koni.

Immediately following this passage, Ibn al-Ṭayyib has the following statement:

‘The interpretation of it is “seeing God”.’

In Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s text, there is no context within which to understand this statement. Once again, however, an obscure statement in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity becomes clear with recourse to Bar Koni’s Scholion, the very next words of which read:

‘Israel (means) “he saw God”.’107

The name ‘Israel’ (Gen. 32:28), then, seems to have been omitted in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s text, at least as it is witnessed in ms. Vatican Arab. 36. It should be noted that ‘Israel’ is also absent in the Ethiopic translation of Ibn al-Ṭayyib in ms. EMML 1839:

‘The interpretation of his name is “seer of God”.’

The Ethiopic text does, however, include ‘his name’ (ḥ Intellectual), which is not found in the Arabic text, at least as it is preserved in ms. Vatican Arab. 36. Perhaps the Ethiopic text witnesses here to an earlier version of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity, or alternatively the word could have been added by the Ethiopic translator in an attempt to make sense of the obscure Arabic Vorlage.

After commenting on the etymology of the name Israel, Ibn al-Ṭayyib moves to a discussion of Gen. 32:32:

‘Because of the pain of his hip from the struggle, the Jews do not eat even now the sciatic nerve, but they remove it.’

In his Scholion, Bar Koni moves directly to an explanation of the same verse, stating the following:

‘The tendon of the hip is the tendon of the flank, which is near to the thigh, the place of the anus, which Jews do not eat, first because it is a tendon, and second as a remembrance for what happened to the head of their people.’108

Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s comments are not dependent on Bar Koni here. Ibn al-Ṭayyib is also not dependent on the running commentary of Isho’dad of Merv or that in ms. Diyarbakır 22.109 Rather, Bar Koni’s exegesis is a slightly expanded rewriting of the Arabic biblical text. The earliest dated
Arabic Pentateuch manuscript (ms. Sinai Arabic 2 [939/940]), for instance, reads as follows for Gen. 32:32:

فمن أجل ذلك لا يأكلون حي إسرائيل
النساء...

“For this reason, the Israelites do not eat the sciatic nerve...”

Thus, Ibn al-Ṭayyib glosses ‘this’ in the biblical text with ‘the pain of his hip from the struggle’ and changes ‘Israelites’ to ‘Jews’. He then adds ‘until now’ as well as the final clause concerning the removal of the sciatic nerve. Despite these changes, in its structure and even in its wording, Ibn al-Ṭayyib follows the Arabic biblical text.

The fact that Ibn al-Ṭayyib comments on this verse at this particular point in his commentary—between comments on Gen. 32:28 and Gen. 31:42, 53—points, however, to his dependence on Bar Koni’s Scholion.

The next remark in both Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity and Bar Koni’s Scholion deals with the phrases ‘god of my father, the god of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac’ (Gen. 31:42) and ‘fear of his father Isaac’ (Gen. 31:53). On the former, Ibn al-Ṭayyib comments:

حلف الذي أباه واله قال كما ليس الله وليست كما قال قوم الله عرب

“‘The god of his father’ by which he swore is God, and it is not as some people say a foreign god.’

Bar Koni remarks on the latter:

ًا نَأَمَرَهُ الَّذِي تَعَزُّ نَفْسَهُ َلَوْ أَنَّهُ كَانَ مَن يَقْدِرُ

“The fear of his father” by which he swore is not as some people think that, besides the one true God, Isaac worshipped another, but he called that God thusly.”

Similar exegetical material is also found in the running commentary of Isho’dad:

‘The phrase “god of Abraham and fear of Isaac” is a single item that is divided, as is customary of scripture. It is not, as the folly of some would have it, that Isaac worshipped another fear apart from God."

The structure of Ibn al-Ṭayyib is most similar to Bar Koni’s Scholion. Ibn al-Ṭayyib has, however, simplified the material in Bar Koni and removed the reference to Isaac.

Following this discussion of Gen. 31:42 and 53, Bar Koni devotes six lines of Syriac text in Scher’s edition to discussing the meaning of Panuel (Gen. 32:31), the meaning of Mahanaim (Gen. 32:2), the meaning of the word masmā‘ ‘he was lame, blind’ (Gen. 32:31), the meaning of Gen. 31:54, the meaning of Luz (Gen. 28:19), and finally Jacob’s purchasing land in Canaan (Gen. 33:19). He then provides a summary of Genesis 25:1-6:

‘After the death of Sarah, Abraham took the maidservant Qentura. There was born to him from her Zamran, Yaqshan, Madan, Medyan, Ashbaq, and Shwaḥ. Yaqshan begat Shba and Daran. The sons of Daran were Shudim, Laṭšim, and Amim. The sons of Medyan were ‘Epa, Ḥapar, Ḥnok, Abida‘(m), and Elda’a. He sent them to the land of the East.’

In contrast to Bar Koni, Ibn al-Ṭayyib moves directly from the discussion of Gen. 31:42 and 53 to the following comments on Gen. 25:1-6:
After the death of Sarah, Abraham married Qantura. He bore from her numerous children, and he sent (them) to the East.'

Thus, Ibn al-Ṭayyib does not include multiple lines of Syriac in Bar Koni. In addition, he removes all of the genealogical information found in Bar Koni replacing the names with 'numerous children'. This illustrates his tendency to abridge the Syriac material in Bar Koni.

From the discussion of Gen. 25:1-6, Ibn al-Ṭayyib proceeds to comment on Gen. 31-32:

'With Jacob’s departure from the house of Laban by the command of God, Esau did not attack (him).'

This is based on the next sentences in Bar Koni’s Scholion, which are, however, much longer:

'Although the blessed Jacob was commanded by God to go out from the house of Laban (Gen. 31:3), he did not forsake that which is necessary and belongs to human craft, and (thus he went) with presents that he sent to Esau (Gen. 32:13), and he also divided his women and children (Gen. 32:7-8; 33:1). For, the blessed Paul did thusly: although he received a revelation that none of those on the boat would perish, he (still) said, “If these men do not remain on the boat, you will not be able to live” (Acts 27:31).’

Bar Koni is explaining that Jacob gave gifts to Esau and divided his family through his human ingenuity and not because he did not trust in the promise of God. To support this, he cites the story of Paul, who displayed his own ingenuity in telling the soldiers and centurion to stay on the boat lest they die, even though Paul already knew that they would survive thanks to an earlier vision from God. This entire line of argument along with the citation from Acts is not included in Ibn al-Ṭayyib. Rather, Ibn al-Ṭayyib takes his cue from Bar Koni but summarizes in a single sentence in Arabic. In doing this, however, he ignores the problem that Bar Koni is attempting to explain.

Ibn al-Ṭayyib concludes this section by restating Gen. 17:24:

'Abraham was circumcised when he was ninety-eight years old.'

This is based on the very next sentence in Bar Koni:

'Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised.'

Ibn al-Ṭayyib changes the age of Abraham’s circumcision from ninety-eight to ninety-nine. In addition, Ibn al-Ṭayyib rewrites the Syriac by making the verb ‘to be circumcised’ the main verb and changing the statement on his age into a subordinate clause. Following the remark on Gen. 17:24, Bar Koni continues with another ten lines of Syriac. None of this is, however, found in Ibn al-Ṭayyib, which ends with the comment on Gen. 17:24.

This question leaves no doubt that Bar Koni’s Scholion was a principal source for the question-and-answer part of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity. Throughout this question, Ibn al-Ṭayyib
follows exactly the order of presentation in Bar Koni’s Scholion, even including the discussion on Abraham’s children after Sarah (Gen. 25:1-6) and Abraham’s circumcision (Gen. 17:24), which are abrupt departures from the other material on Jacob (Gen. 30-32). In some passages in this question, Ibn al-Ṭayyib is a word-for-word translation of Bar Koni’s Scholion. In others, such as that dealing with Gen. 32:32, he takes his initial cue from Bar Koni, but provides an exegesis that differs from that in the Scholion. This is similar to the questions treated previously. In contrast to the previous questions, however, this question contains several passages that are incomprehensible without Bar Koni’s Scholion. The locution ‘… lacking horns and spotted…’, for instance, is completely unintelligible as it stands in Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s text, at least as it is transmitted in ms. Vatican Arab. 36. This is confirmed by the Ethiopic translation in ms. EMML 1839, which connects these words with the previous question instead of the current question. Or, to take another example, how would a reader of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s Arabic text know that the comment “its interpretation is “seeing God” refers to the name Israel? There is no clue in the text itself. These passages raise a series of questions regarding the function(s) of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity within the Arabic-speaking Christian community: How was this commentary used? Did it presume knowledge of the Syriac exegetical tradition? Or even perhaps access to the original Syriac of Bar Koni’s Scholion? Further research based on a full edition of the Arabic text is needed before such questions can begin to be answered.

CONCLUSION

Already in his Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur, Graf noted that Ibn al-Ṭayyib never names the sources for his Paradise of Christianity: “Im ganzen um-
NOTES

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1 G. Graf, Geschichten der christlichen arabischen Literatur (Studi e testi 118, 133, 146, 147, 172; Vatican, 1944-1952), vol. 2, 162.


3 This was already noted in passing in Roger W. Cowley, Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation. A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 38; Cambridge, 1988), 120 and Aaron Michael Butts, “Embellished with Gold: The Ethiopic Reception of Syriac Biblical Exegesis,” Oriens Christianus. Forthcoming.


5 An interesting memoir recounts the story of Avicenna attempting to acquire books by Ibn al-Tayyib, but Ibn al-Tayyib thwarting the sale because he did not want Avicenna to obtain them (see Dimitri Gutas, Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna’s Philosophical Works [Leiden, 1988], 64-72).


7 His commentary on the Categories is edited with a German translation in C. Ferrari, Die Kategorienkommentar von Abû l-Faraq Ṭabdallâh ibn at-Tayyib. Text und Untersuchungen (Leiden, 2006). The Arabic text is also available in ‘Ali Ḥusayn al-Jābirī et al., al-Šarîḫ al-kabîr li-maqāliṭ Azīstû (Baghdad, 2002).

8 This is edited with a German translation in W. Hoenerbach and O. Spies, Ibn at-Tayyib. Fiqh al-naṣrāniyya (CSCO 161-162, 167-168; Louvain, 1956-57).


12 It is edited with a French translation in J. C. J. Sanders, Commentaire sur la Genèse (CSCO 274-275; Louvain, 1967). An unsystematic comparison of this edition with ms. Vatican Arab. 37 shows that it unfortunately contains numerous misreadings of the Arabic. This can be illustrated by fn. 85 below as well as footnotes 34-41 in Butts, “Embellished with Gold.”


14 Faultless’ characterization of this commentary as “containing the remaining materials” and “the New Testament and all miscellaneous material” (“Ibn al-Ṭayyib,” 681-683) is inaccurate. A more careful description can, however, already be found in Graf, Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur, vol. 1, 163.

15 Thus, contrary to statements found in the secondary literature, not all of the material dealing with Genesis in The Paradise of Christianity has been edited: the running commentary part has been edited by Sanders, but the question-and-answer part that deals with Genesis remains unedited.

16 For this ms., see Ang. Mai, Scriptorium veterum nova collectio, Vol. 4.2 (Rome, 1831), 78; Graf, Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur, vol. 2, 162.

17 An edition of the section of the Ethiopic translation of this commentary that covers the same material as the present study is in progress by the present author.

18 Bar Koni’s Scholion survives in two recensions: the Siirt (edited in A. Scher, Theodorus bar Kōnī. Liber Scholiorum [CSCO 55, 69; Louvain 1910-1912], with a French translation in R. Hespel and R. Draguet[†], Théodore bar Koni. Livre des scolies [recension de Séert] [CSCO 431-432; Louvain, 1981]) and the Urmia (edited with a French translation in R. Hespel, Théodore bar Koni. Livre des scolies [recension d’Urmiah] [CSCO 447-448; Louvain, 1983] [additions only]; the section on the ‘Pauline’ epistles was independently edited with a German translation in L. Brade, Untersuchungen zum Scholienbuch des Theodoros bar Konai [GOF I.8; Wiesbaden, 1975]). There is no difference between the two recensions for the selection treated in this study, and so the study uses the Siirt recension as edited by Scher (Theodorus bar Kōnī) and translated into French by Hespel and Draguet (Théodore bar Koni).

19 Ms. ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ, It should be noted that the Ethiopic translation in ms. EMML 1839 has Ⲣⲟⲩⲧⲣⲟⲩⲩⲩⲩ: ‘economy’ without a pronominal suffix. 20 Ms. ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ, though the order of ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ and ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ could be reversed. The emendation to ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ is corroborated by the Ethiopic translation in ms. EMML 1839, which has ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩⲩⲩ: ‘the end of this’.

21 While the rasm is certain, the dots in the manuscript are not. The reading ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ is ‘his sister-in-law, his daughter-in-law’ is corroborated by the Ethiopic translation in ms. EMML 1839, which has ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ: ‘his bride, daughter-in-law, spouse’. 22 Perhaps read ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ, though note that the East-Syriac form is ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ. 23 Ms. ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ. This emendation is supported by Bar Koni’s Scholion, which has ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ ⲧⲓⲧⲉⲣⲛⲟⲩ: ‘he would delight’ (Scher, Theodorus bar Kōnī, 140.2). The Ethiopic translation in ms. EMML
1839, however, has ḫawa:n: ‘he would be avenged’, and so it was translating an Arabic Vorlage similar to تنتمى, as is found in ms. Vatican Arab. 36. See the discussion below.

20 Ms. ëš, ëš. This emendation is supported by Bar Koni’s Scholion, which has ḫawa:n: ‘merchandise’ (Scher, *Theodorus bar Koni*, 140.3). The Ethiopic translation in ms. EMML 1839, however, has ḫ̄w̄: ‘those things that were left behind’, and so it was translating an Arabic Vorlage similar to تنتمى, as is found in ms. Vatican Arab. 36. See the discussion below.

21 Or, ‘he’.

22 See Gen. 35:22.

23 Possibly emend to ‘Adam’. See below for discussion.


26 Possibly emend to ‘Adam’. See below for discussion.

27 Before this word, ma’tbeh, has been crossed out in the manuscript.


29 Ms. š’k. This may be a case of attraction to the preceding relative pronoun (for attraction in Middle Arabic, see J. Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic* [CSCO 267, 276, 279; Louvain, 1966], §188).

30 This emendation is corroborated by the Ethiopic translation in ms. EMML 1839, which has ḫ̄w̄: ‘by the command of’, with the cognate preposition bā-

31 The ms. reads ‘my’.


33 See Gen. 34.

34 The ms. reads ‘he would avenge himself on’.

35 The ms. reads ‘that which is last, later, behind’.

36 Or, ‘pilgrimage’. See below for discussion.

37 Or, ‘Laban and Jacob did not make a covenant at a hill of stones’; or ‘Did Laban and Jacob not make a covenant at a hill of stones?’ See Gen. 31:41-52. See below for discussion.

38 Or, ‘whom Jacob fought’.

39 Or, ‘he’. See below for discussion.

40 The direct object is added in a marginal note in the ms.


44 Reading a variant in the manuscript tradition, following Hespel and Draguet, *Théodore bar Koni*, 146 n. 9.1.


46 This tendency was noted already in Cowley, *Traditional Interpretation*, 120.


48 This is edited with a French translation in L. Van Rompay, *Le commentaire sur Genèse* (CSCO 483-484; Louvain, 1986).


51 Probably read ṭebēry (sic). It should be noted that this reading is cited without comment in M. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon. A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann’s Lexicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake – Piscataway, 2009), 1490-1491.


54 The ms. reads ‘my’ (τιμίας).

55 The edition reads ḫ̄w̄: (sic). It should be noted that this reading is cited without comment in M. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon. A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann’s Lexicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake – Piscataway, 2009), 1490-1491.
In Search of Sources for Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s The Paradise of Christianity

59 Read אַֽו following Van Rompay.
64 The translation of ‘daughter-in-law’ has been chosen here based on the fact that this is translated by עַוֹ: ‘bride, daughter-in-law, spouse’ in the Ethiopic translation of the question-and-answer part of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *The Paradise of Christianity*, as found in Ms. EMML 1839.
65 Images of this important ms. are available online at <http://www.e-corpus.org/eng/notices/105117-Sinai-Mf-UCL-Arabe-2-Ancien-Testament.html>.
66 Sanders, *Commentaire sur la Genèse*, 97.10 (Arabic), 92 (FT).
67 Scher, *Theodorus bar Kōnī*, 139.18-21 (Syr.); Hespel and Draguet, *Théodore bar Koni*, 144 (FT).
68 Scher, *Theodorus bar Kōnī*, 139.21-140.1 (Syr.); Hespel and Draguet, *Théodore bar Koni*, 144 (FT).
70 Scher, *Theodorus bar Kōnī*, 140.3-5 (Syr.); Hespel and Draguet, *Théodore bar Koni*, 144 (FT).
71 Scher, *Theodorus bar Kōnī*, 140.5-6 (Syr.); Hespel and Draguet, *Théodore bar Koni*, 144 (FT).
72 Scher, *Theodorus bar Kōnī*, 140.6-7 (Syr.); Hespel and Draguet, *Théodore bar Koni*, 145 (FT).
75 This is how the Ethiopic translation in ms. EMML 1839 understood the Arabic: ḫאַלַּלַה ‘produce’ and הָלַה ‘cause’, the latter of which could be translated by Arabic أִلְלָה (as well as the cognate أُلْلَة).
76 It may, however, ultimately be related to the similarity between קַלָּה ‘produce’ and הָלַה ‘cause’, the latter of which could be translated by Arabic أُلْلَة.
79 Sanders, *Commentaire sur la Genèse*, 97.4-101.7 (Arabic), 92-95 (FT).
80 Sanders, *Commentaire sur la Genèse*, 100.1-2 (Arabic), 94 (FT).
82 The edition has כַּלָּה.
83 As Van den Eynde notes (*Išo’dad de Merv*, 237 n. 8), this is not the text of the Hebrew but of the Septuagint: γενήματι ἑντοίχοις ἀναίμων ἐπιδιδοὺς ἐν τῷ γενήματι κάλλος ‘Nephtali, a stem let go, giving beauty by produce’.
85 Sanders reads עַוָּה, but ms. Vatican Arab. 37 has the definite article.
86 Sanders, *Commentaire sur la Genèse*, 100.3-4 (Arabic), 94 (FT).
87 This was already noted by Sanders, *Commentaire sur la Genèse*, 94 n. 7 (FT).
88 R.-M. Tonneau, Sancti Ephraem Syri. In Genesim et in Exodum Commentarii (CSCO 152-153; Louvain, 1955), 116.3-6 (Syr.); E. G.


100 Van Rompay, *Le commentaire sur Genèse-Exode 9,32*, 101.6-7 (Syr.); Van den Eynde, *Išo’dad de Merv*, 208 (FT).

101 Compare the misunderstanding of the tetragrammaton in a Syriac context discussed by Jacob of Edessa in a Scholion to his translation of the *Cathedral Homilies* by Severus of Antioch (M. Brière, *Les Homilieae Cathedrales de Sévère d’Antioche. Traduction syriaque de Jacques d’Édesse. Homélies CX à CXV* [PO 29.1; Paris, 1960], 190-207).


103 Perhaps read 帑돈: ‘stones’.

104 Scher, *Theodorus bar Kōnī*, 144.15-18 (Syr.); Hespel and Draguet, *Théodore bar Koni*, 147 (Syr.).


109 For Išo’dad, see Vosté and Van den Eynde, *Išo’dad de Merv*, 196.2-10 (Syr.); Van den Eynde, *Išo’dad de Merv*, 210 (FT); for ms. Diyarbakır 22, see Van Rompay, *Le commentaire sur Genèse-Exode 9,32*, 104.20-105.2 (Syr.), 133-134 (FT).

110 Read 드립니다 following Scher.

111 Scher, *Theodorus bar Kōnī*, 144.22-145.3 (Syr.); Hespel and Draguet, *Théodore bar Koni*, 147 (FT).


113 The edition has ‘Maran’.


116 This point is made even more explicitly in the running commentary of Išo’dad of Merv (Vosté and Van den Eynde, *Išo’dad de Merv*, 196.10-18 [Syr.]; Van den Eynde, *Išo’dad de Merv*, 210-211 [FT]).


118 It should be noted that this change is not found in the earliest dated ms. of the Arabic Pentateuch, ms. Sinai Arabic 2 (939/940).
It should be pointed out that the use of l- in ‘Abraham was circumcised’ is unusual for Arabic. Given Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s Syriac background, this could well be a replication of the so-called dativus ethicus construction in Syriac (see J. Joosten, “The Function of the So-called Dativus Ethicus in Classical Syriac,” Orientalia 58 [1989] 473-492). Nonetheless, this construction is not found in the Syriac source, and thus it would not be due to translation, but possibly a feature of Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s Arabic idiolect.