

THE PALANQUIN
אִפְרִיּוֹן עֲשָׂה לוֹ
Appiryon 'Asa Lo



AUTHORED BY
Ḥakham Solomon Jedidiah ben Aaron
(1650–1740, Troki)

TRANSLATED BY
Esther Mangoubi

VOCALIZED AND ANNOTATED BY
Gabriel Wasserman

THE KARAITE PRESS



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Introductory Notes from The Karaite Press

About the Translator: Esther Mangoubi has been an instructor teaching German and at times French at several Boston area universities. Most of her previous translation projects involved translating works from English into French or German. She has also translated various letters of Solomon Schechter.

About the Vocalizer and Annotator: Dr. Gabriel Wasserman (PhD Yeshiva University, 2016) is a scholar of Jewish texts, with a specialty in *piyyuṭim*, Hebrew liturgical poetry. Wasserman previously served as the translator and annotator of *Royal Attire: On Karaite and Rabbanite Beliefs* (Daly City: The Karaite Press, 2016). In addition to his work with The Karaite Press, Wasserman has translated both Hebrew academic prose and primary sources, as can be seen, for example, in his English translation of the editors' introduction published in Joseph Yahalom and Naoya Katsumata, eds., *Tahkemoni, or The Tales of Heman the Ezrahite, by Judah Alharizi* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2010). His PhD dissertation is on *piyyuṭim* for Ḥanukka in mediaeval European Jewish communities. Wasserman is also the author of a Rabbanite Passover Haggada, *Ashira Va'ashannena Baḥashiqoth* (New York, 2015), which includes both his scholarship and his original poetic compositions.

As always, The Karaite Press is thankful for the work of Tomer Mangoubi, who contributed his insights to this project throughout.

About the Author:¹ Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron has been referred to (at least in one manuscript) as *He-ḥakham Ha-kolel*, a title that generally refers to someone who possesses great knowledge in the fields of liberal arts, humanities, philosophy and or medicine – in addition to knowledge of religious matters.² As this attribution suggests, he was among the most prominent Karaite sages of his time.

Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron was born in 1650 in the city of Paswoł in the Lithuanian district of Panėvežys. In the early 1700s, he and his family moved to the city of Troki, which was subsequently devastated by a plague in 1710. The plague took the lives of Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron's wife and their two sons: Mordecai and Simḥa. A prolific poet, he wrote elegies lamenting the destruction caused by the plague. One such poem, "A'orer Levavi Leqonen" ("I stir up my heart to lament"), commemorates the victims of the plague, and appears in the Vilna edition of the Karaite prayer book.³ This prayer book also contains a song for the Sabbath, written by Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron in memory of his son, Mordecai.⁴ After the plague, Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron moved for a short time to the city of Vilna, where he served as the head of the Beth Din. In 1719, he returned to Troki.

Like his contemporary Ḥakham Mordecai ben Nisan, Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron received significant attention from Christian

1 The Karaite Press extends its gratitude to Dr. Riikka Tuori for providing extensive biographical information, from which we cultivated this section.

2 Riikka Tuori, p. 62, note 111; the cited manuscript is St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy Ms. A065, folio 6a.

3 *Siddur Ha-tefilloth Ke-minhag Ha-qara'im* (Volumes 1–4, Vilna, 1890–1892), vol. 4, pp. 260 f. The prayer book introduces the poem with a rather somber note: "[At one time,] in the lands of Poland and Lithuania, there were more than thirty [Karaite] communities, and their remnants [at the time of printing] are just three, and they are Troki, Łutsk, and Ponevez." See page 260.

4 Volume 4, p. 108.

Hebraists.⁵ *Appiryon 'Asa Lo* itself was written in response to questions posed by Johann Uppendorff, a Swedish professor at the University of Riga. In addition to *Appiryon 'Asa Lo*, Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron wrote at least two other polemical works: one on the relations between Karaites and Rabbanites; and the other, a refutation of Christianity.

It should be noted that Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron wrote two distinct versions of *Appiryon 'Asa Lo*. It appears that the shorter one, upon which this publication is based, was written for a Christian Hebraist audience; while the more extensive one was likely written later and intended for Karaite consumption.

About this Edition: This edition is the only known English-language translation of either version of Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron's *Appiryon 'Asa Lo*.⁶ This work, like Ḥakham Mordecai ben Nisan's *Levush Malkhuth*,⁷ first came to light in academic circles in 1866, when Adolf Neubauer published an unvocalized text of the shorter version, after his examination of previously unpublished Karaite manuscripts in the Russian National Library in Saint

5 The Karaite Press has previously published Ḥakham Mordecai ben Nisan's letter to the King of Sweden discussing the major differences between Karaites and Rabbanites: Mordecai ben Nisan, *Royal Attire: On Karaite and Rabbanite Beliefs*, translated and annotated by Gabriel Wasserman (Daly City, 2016).

6 As indicated in Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron's work, he chose the title *Appiryon 'Asa Lo* because those three words are equivalent in *gematriyya* to *Sefer Minhagé Qara'é* (*The Book of Customs of the Karaites*). The title *Appiryon 'Asa Lo* translates to "[he] made for himself a palanquin." This title serves as an allusion to the name of our author, Shelomo/Solomon, for the words of the title appear in Song of Songs 3:9: *King Solomon made himself a palanquin from the wood of the Lebanon [Forest]*.

7 This work has recently been published under the title *Royal Attire*. See fn. 5, *supra* (Daly City: The Karaite Press).

Petersburg.⁸ In 1956, the nascent Karaite community in Israel published an unvocalized Hebrew version of *Levush Malkhuth* together with the short version of *Appiryon 'Asa Lo*. It appears that the only substantive differences that the Karaite community introduced in *Appiryon 'Asa Lo* are that they consistently changed any references to Rabbanites to say “our brothers the Rabbanites,” and often changed references to “Karaite sages” to say “our sages.”⁹

About the Hebrew Text: This edition of Ḥakham Solomon ben Aaron's *Appiryon 'Asa Lo* is based on Neubauer's 1866 publication. We have normalized the Hebrew spelling to fit the standard in vocalized Hebrew texts. In addition, we have made the following changes from Neubauer's text: (i) addition of paragraph breaks in a number of places, to make the changes in topic easier for the reader to follow; (ii) correction of clear typographical errors; and (iii) in two places, changing a Biblical quotation to fit our text of Scripture. We have included an appendix of these three types of changes for those interested in reviewing them. Finally, the table of contents in ed. Neubauer reverses the order of chapters 23 and 24 from how they appear in the actual text; in our edition, we have changed the table of contents to fit the text.

As with our publication of *Levush Malkhuth/Royal Attire*, the reader should be assured that these adaptations do not impact the substance of *Appiryon 'Asa Lo*. Academics will take comfort in the fact that Neubauer's publication of *Appiryon 'Asa Lo* is

8 Neubauer published this text in his German work, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek: Beiträge und Documente zur Geschichte des Karäerthums und der Karäischen Literatur* (1866) [English: From the Petersburg Library: Contributions and Documents Regarding the History of Karaism and Karaite Literature (1866)].

9 As noted, there also exists a significantly longer version, in two parts, which is found in many manuscripts; in 2000, the Karaite R' Yosef Elgamil published Part I of this longer version, but Part II remains unpublished.

available online at Archive.org.¹⁰ Scholars can compare any variations in this edition from Neubauer's publication. In order to assist this type of comparison, this edition contains bracketed, superscripted page numbers corresponding to the page number in Neubauer's publication, like so: {2} or {ב}.

¹⁰ <https://archive.org/details/ausderpetersbuorneubgoog>.

הקדמה למהדורת תשנ"ו

חברת ההצלחה לבני מקרא שמחה להביא לפני הקהל הרחב, רבנים, וקראים, את הספר הראשון מסדרת הספרים העומדים להדפיסם.

החברה תספק את כלי תשמישי הקדושה כגון: ספרי תפילה, הגדות לפסח, ענין השחיטה, סכיני שחיטה, כלי ברית מילה, ציציות, טליתות וכדומה. כ"כ מוכנה לאפשר לכל אחד מבני העדה לעיין בספרי חכמינו ע"ה הנמצאים בידה ואשר יגיעו לידה.

ברצונינו להסב את תשומת לב הקורא היקר על הסיבה שהניעה אותנו להדפיס את הספר הנ"ל, לא על מנת לפגוע במי שהוא חלילה וחס, אלא כדי לספק חומר נכון מקוצר על ההבדלים הקיימים בין הרבנים והקראים, זה מאחר שפנו אלינו מספר מוסדות בארץ ומחוצה לה ובקשו לדעת את האמת לאמיתו.

אנו נמשיך בדרכינו כדי להוכיח את הצדק בין כל קהל ישראל כי התורה שבידינו היא תורה אחת ויחידה שאינה מוחלפת בשום תורה אחרת, היא תורת משה רבנו עליו השלום ונביאיו הטהורים.

Preface to 1956 Israeli Edition

The Association for the Success of Karaites is happy to present to the general public, Rabbanites, and Karaites, the first book in the series of books that they are planning to print.

The association supplies ritual items, such as prayer books, *haggadoth* for Passover, [books on] the matter of kosher slaughtering, knives for such slaughter, tools for circumcision, *zizioth*, *tallethoth*, and the like. Similarly, it is prepared to allow any member of the community to examine any books of our sages, may they rest in peace, that [the association] currently possesses or might have in the future.

It is our wish to make the dear reader aware of the reason that caused us to print this book: it is not in order to insult anyone, God forbid, but only to supply correct, concise material regarding the differences between Rabbanites and Karaites, for various institutions in Israel and abroad have turned to us, and asked to know the truth [about this matter].

We will continue in our way, to demonstrate the truth among the whole Jewish community, that the Torah in our hands is one, single Torah, which is never exchanged for any other Torah; it is the Torah of Moses our Teacher, may he rest in peace, and of [God's] pure prophets.