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AN ANALYSIS OF SAADIA GAON'S BAKASHOT  
IN LIGHT OF HIS PHILOSOPHY

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of Requirements for Ordination

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## CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	iii
Chapter I: Saadia Gaon: His Life and Times	1
Chapter II: Saadia's Philosophy	21
Chapter III: An Overview of Saadia's Siddur	30
Chapter IV: Translation and Analysis of Saadia's Bakashot	40
Notes	77
Bibliography	85

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## Chapter 1

## SAADIA GAON: HIS LIFE AND TIMES

In his own works...there stands revealed a tumultuous personality with giant mental powers, that broke through new paths of thought and learning, an exquisite personality that was sensitive to beauty of language and nobility of diction, a prophetic figure, zealous for righteousness and grappling with the eternal problems of the human spirit and, withal, an essentially earthly character, bold, aggressive and hard-hitting in the many battles he fought in defense of his ideas and in protection of his personal honor against foul attack.<sup>1</sup>

With these words Abraham Neuman sought to capture the essence of Saadia Gaon, for unlike other historical figures, unlike other philosophers, Saadia has left us a vast storehouse of literature which invites us to know him with a rather personal understanding of just who he was and what he stood for. As Abraham Neuman and many others did honor to Saadia by accepting this invitation, so too will we, in this chapter, attempt to come to take the measure of this uniquely colorful man.

The study of Saadia's life was revolutionized by the discovery of the Cairo Genizah. With the help of this new-found information, Henry Malter wrote his monumental biography of Saadia<sup>2</sup> which sought for the first time to provide a narrative and descriptive look at the Gaon's life. Unfortunately, due to discoveries that were made after Malter's book had already gone to press, "an important part of the narrative portion... was rendered obsolete through the discovery of a tattered, mutilated Genizah fragment."<sup>3</sup> This Genizah fragment, discov-

ered by Jacob Mann, shed new light on the actual date of Saadia's birth. Until this find, the date of Saadia's birth was believed to be 892. In fact, in accordance with this belief the millenium of his birth was celebrated in 1892--as it turns out, ten years too late--because as the Genizah fragment has brought to light, Saadia was actually born in 882. The fragment is actually part of a list of Saadia's works, compiled by his sons, She'erit and Dosa, eleven years after their father's death. We may glean from this fragment that Saadia was born somewhere between the 27th of June and the 5th of July and that he probably died on May 18, 942 at approximately 2 o'clock in the morning.<sup>4</sup>

As to the place of Saadia's birth, it has been established by Friedlander and others that he lived first at Fayyum (the Pithom of the Bible) where he was probably born. Thus, he is known as Saadia al-Fayyum, or in Hebrew, Saadia ha-Pithom.

In regard to his parentage, we know only that his father's name was Joseph;<sup>5</sup> in Mohammedan sources it is Jacob. It is difficult to gain an accurate account of Saadia's family background since he entered into so many controversies throughout his life, thus leaving himself open to mud-slinging, the principal issue of which was his yihus. For example, Friedlander writes:

One of his Karaite opponents asserted that Saadiah came from a family of Proselytes. Saadiah protested against this assertion, and stated that he was a descendant of Shelah, son of Judah and that Rabbi Chaninah b. Dosa was one of his descendants, and in

fact, he gained nothing by his own defense, but such controversy seems to have formed part of the tactics of the literary warfare of the times.<sup>6</sup>

For convenience, we may, in accordance with the outline Henry Malter has suggested,<sup>7</sup> divide Saadia's life into three parts, the first of which is this, the Egyptian period. Of the three periods of his life, this is the one about which we have the least information. We do know that Saadia received his education in Egypt and that he began his literary activity there as well.<sup>8</sup> Malter felt that this was the logical outcome of the fact that the study of Talmud and of Geonic literature had been in full swing among Egyptian Jews at an early period. In fact, he goes so far as to say that the Jews of Egypt were familiar with the literature of the two academies in Babylonia (which were the main seats of Jewish culture at that time). In Malter's own words, "Indeed, there was hardly any other country except Palestine that was in such frequent communication with Babylonia in the period under consideration."<sup>9</sup> In contrast to Malter, Neuman claims that Palestine had greater influence on Saadia, pointing to Egypt's proximity to Palestine and the "consequent greater facility in travel and communication between the two countries."<sup>10</sup> In any event, it seems safe to assume that the education Saadia received in Egypt was of a high level embracing the vastness of Jewish scholarship which was taking place both in Babylonia and in Palestine.

As little as we know about this so-called Egyptian period, we know even less about how and why it came to a close.

That is to say, determining when and why Saadia left Egypt remains a matter of conjecture. Once again, the information that we do have is based on Genizah fragments. These fragments are parts of two letters written by Saadia somewhere in Babylonia during the winter of 922.<sup>11</sup> These letters provide the following information. First, Saadia alludes to the fact that it had been six and a half years since he had seen his wife and children or his pupils. Second, we may infer from this letter that Saadia was not in Palestine for the entire six and a half years. Therefore, we may deduce that Saadia left Egypt in the year 915, that during his years in Egypt he had married and had begun a family, and that he was to some extent recognized as a scholar and teacher in Egypt.<sup>12</sup>

Based on still another fragment, Malter attempts to answer the question of why Saadia left Egypt at all. While others have suggested that Saadia left Egypt as a result of his quest for knowledge which he might have thought could only be satisfied in Babylonia and Palestine, or perhaps as a result of a piety which drove him to settle in Palestine, Malter suggests still another reason for his departure. Malter holds that Saadia did not leave Egypt voluntarily, but rather that he was either banished or felt himself to be in such danger in Egypt that he felt compelled to leave. Malter points to the fact that it was during his Egyptian period that Saadia wrote his book in response to Anan, the founder of Karaism. Malter explains that this book had "made him the most hated and most feared champion of Rabbinism against

Karaism."<sup>13</sup>

It is very possible that a combination of these reasons led Saadia to leave both his homeland and his family and to make a new life for himself somewhere else. Happily, it seems that Saadia was reunited with his family probably in Babylonia only a short time after the above-mentioned letters were written.<sup>14</sup>

The summer of the year 921 marks the beginning of what Malter sees as the second stage of Saadia's life, namely his famous controversy with the Palestinian scholar Ben Meir concerning who should control the Jewish calendar, Babylonia or Palestine. Before entering into an examination of the details of this debate, let us attempt at least to come to an understanding of the issues and concerns which confronted tenth century Judaism.

The major questions facing Jews at this time all had to do with who had control, who was really in authority. On the one hand, there were the Karaites who denied the authority of the Oral Law; on the other hand were the Rabbanites who saw the Oral Law as the logical extension of the written Torah. On the one hand, there was the Exilarch, "governor of Jewish Babylonia, appointed by the ruler of Persia and vested with full authority over his Jewish subjects."<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, there was the Gaon, who was the head of the academy, spiritual leader and halachic judge. Theirs was "a struggle between the secular and religious forces for leadership."<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, there was the Holy Land, Palestine. Once



the home of the Temple, Palestine had suffered a tremendous lapse during the Byzantine persecutions. On the other hand, there was Babylonia which, in response to Palestine's supposed demise, "tried to sever themselves from the authority of Palestine,"<sup>17</sup> and thus take advantage of the fact that they, unlike their brethren in Palestine, were well-established and...in better political and economic circumstances."<sup>18</sup> As Neuman writes:

The heads of the Babylonian schools were convinced--and they succeeded in making this conviction general--that they alone possessed the tradition of the talmudic teachers in unbroken continuity. Palestine, it was claimed, [had] suffered so greatly that its chain of tradition was irreparably broken.<sup>19</sup>

The calendar question, then, to return to the problem at hand, was a symptom of a greater issue, namely, who would determine the cycle of Jewish time, Babylonia or Palestine?

In order to come to an understanding of the severity of this issue, we must take into account the importance of uniform Jewish practice, especially in regard to the time set aside for the observance of the holidays. Jewish life was (and still is) based on the flow of the Jewish year. The party which determines the calendar essentially determines Jewish life. Calendar regulation is symbolic of far greater power and influence.

Hillel II is credited with publishing the rules of calendation in the middle of the fourth century. "...it seems that it was not automatically followed without official announcement by the Palestinian authorities."<sup>20</sup> In fact:

As late as 835, a Babylonian Exilarch expressly

states in a letter that in the interest of the unity of Israel, he, the Geonim, the scholars and the public at large follow the calendar announcement of the Palestinian scholars. About the same time, it seems, the Babylonian schools sent a group of scholars to Palestine to study and discuss the problem of determining the calendar and probably soon afterwards, they emancipated themselves from the ancient custom of relying on Palestine for the announcement of the dates of the holidays.<sup>21</sup>

It was not until Ben Meir headed the Palestinian academy at the beginning of the tenth century that there was once again a struggle for power between Babylonia and Palestine regarding the regulation of the calendar. Ben Meir sought to restore the old influence of the Palestinian academy, "Since the Sanhedrin of Palestine dominated Jewish life by the fixation of the calendar, Ben Meir wanted to restore the old prerogative of the Palestinian academy to regulate the Jewish calendar."<sup>22</sup> Ben Meir's timing was perfect. The Babylonian academies were on the decline at that time. In fact, Sura was on the brink of closing its doors. Pumbedita was experiencing severe problems because of the struggle alluded to before, i.e., a vying for power between the scholars and the Exilarch. In light of all this, Ben Meir thought the time was ripe to win back power for Palestine.

It was the summer of 921. Each year at the time of Hoshana Rabba, a pilgrimage was made to Mt. Olivet. It was at this solemn convocation in the year 921 that Ben Meir had his son proclaim publicly that, in effect, the struggle between Palestine and Babylonia had begun.<sup>23</sup>

The essence of Ben Meir's proclamation was that starting that fall (921), the months of Marheshvan and Kislev



would have only 29 days, in contrast to the Babylonian calculation which proclaimed them to be full 30-day months.<sup>24</sup>

Neuman provides a more detailed explanation of why Ben Meir sought to diminish these months by a day:

Ben Meir announced a three-year calendar which was at variance with the calculation of the Babylonian authorities. He took this position on the ground that the Babylonian scholars erred in their calculation by failing to take into account a differential of 35 seconds and most important of all, that the sole authority to declare the new moon and to fix the calendar was rested in the spiritual leadership of the land of Israel.<sup>25</sup>

Neuman seems to be hitting at the heart of the problem, namely that the details of why and how Ben Meir sought to adjust the calendar are secondary to the fact that he simply wanted to wrest power from Babylonia, and thus had to find an important issue about which he could differ with Babylonia, an issue about which he would be able to incite the people. The calendar question was just such an issue. As Solomon Zeitlin expressed it, it was not just a question of calendar but rather a question of "leadership by Palestine, the land of Israel, with its great tradition, of the Diaspora, Babylonia, the present center of Jewish culture."<sup>26</sup>

Ben Meir understood that he would need both political and financial support for his position. He, therefore, traveled to Baghdad and obtained the support of one of the more influential bankers at the Court of the Caliph, Aaron ben Amram. "Through the latter's influence, he succeeded in getting a favorable decree."<sup>27</sup> However, alliances were made on the opposing side as well. A truce was established between

the Exilarch and scholars in Babylonia so that they would be better prepared to fight Ben Meir's attempt at re-establishing Palestine as the center of Judaism.<sup>28</sup>

In very practical terms, the calendar controversy boiled down to this: Were the Jewish people to begin celebrating Pesach in the spring of 922 on Sunday or Tuesday?<sup>29</sup> Was Rosh Hashanah to begin on Tuesday or Thursday?<sup>30</sup> Finkelstein informs us of the following:

A Christian Syrian chronicler of the eleventh century recorded that in 921 the Western (Palestinian) Jews started their New Year on Tuesday, those of the East, (Babylonians) on Thursday.<sup>31</sup>

Apparently, this split lasted for approximately a year.<sup>32</sup> Days which were considered to be holy and solemn by one faction were mere working days to another. Consequently, Israel was in a state of severe disunity, a situation which Israel could hardly afford. The problem was how to put a stop to it:

No one in official position in Babylonia was a match for Ben Meir of noble lineage, redoubtable in fighting skill, possessed of ancient Palestinian traditions and determined to restore the Holy City as the spiritual capital of Judaism. There was only one man that could meet the challenge of the hour and he was Saadia of Fayyoun of the land of Egypt.<sup>33</sup>

At the time of this controversy Saadia was a wandering scholar. He was in Syria without official position or responsibility. His reputation of being a fine scholar and teacher had already spread to the point where his word carried considerable weight.<sup>34</sup> When Ben Meir's intent was made known to him, Saadia wrote letters to the Palestinian trying to dissuade him from his quest. His letters were to no

avail.<sup>35</sup> Saadia, however, "was convinced that supreme religious authority belonged to the academies in Babylon; that the very fate of Judaism was linked with their traditions and leadership, and that Ben Meir's grandiose challenge had to be resisted as a threat to the unity of Israel."<sup>36</sup> (Zeitlin goes so far as to claim that Saadia had as his motive the elevation of the Babylonian academy over the Palestinian academy.)<sup>37</sup>

Despite the fact that the spokesmen for each side in this controversy were renowned and respected scholars, the debate was not above the use of mud-slinging. Saadia referred to Ben Meir as "the accursed one," while Ben Meir tried to discredit Saadia by circulating rumors to the effect that Saadia's father was in the service of the Mohammedans and had defiled himself by eating abominations. Moreover, Ben Meir accused Saadia of causing a schism in Israel, comparing Saadia to the first biblical schismatic, Jereboam.<sup>38</sup>

Genizah fragments shed a certain amount of light on the proceedings of the controversy but they do not provide much information about just how Saadia combated Ben Meir's arguments.<sup>39</sup> We do know from a quotation of the eleventh century Spanish scholar, Isaac ben Baruch, that Saadia countered with the charge that the Jewish calendar of Babylonia came from Moses along with the Torah.<sup>40</sup>

Ultimately, as we might have anticipated, the Babylonian authorities under the leadership of Saadia won the battle over who would control the calendar. Zeitlin, however, has pointed

out that in order to foster his arguments, Saadia distorted certain talmudic passages in his favor. Zeitlin sees it as particularly deplorable that Saadia distorted the Talmud since in so doing he "gave the Karaites a weapon to attack both him and the Rabbinites and also the excuse to attack the rabbis, saying that they had distorted Jewish tradition."<sup>41</sup> Zeitlin hastens to add:

In his fight for the independence of Babylonia from the hegemony of the few Jews in Palestine and for the establishment of the Jewish calendar on a scientific basis, he was quite right, and Jewish history for the last one thousand years has vindicated him.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, Zeitlin reminds us that Saadia's calendar is still in use today, indicating that Saadia was right in his fight against Ben Meir, even though his arguments were faulty.

In any event, finally, after two years of bitter fighting, unity was restored in Israel, and Babylonia prevailed over Palestine. We may end our discussion of this controversy with the words of Friedlander who wrote:

If there are some who would exclaim khaval! in reference to the lost polemical writings of Saadia and his opponents, we do not join in this lamentation. The few fragments of this class of literature that have been unearthed are not such as create an appetite for more of them, and we should rather be inclined to exclaim "May they rest, where they are, in peace!"<sup>43</sup>

It was as a direct result of Saadia's victory over Ben Meir that he was thrust into what Malter sees as the third and final stage of his life, Saadia's rise to the Gaonate. It is to this period that we now turn.

Malter points out that despite the key role Saadia played in the calendar controversy, he remained in the background of Jewish activities for the six years following the end of the debate. That is to say, we know very little about Saadia's activities between the years 922-928: "The only trace of his existence during that period is a passage from one of his works, quoted by a later author, Abraham b. Hiyya, in which Saadia refers to the year 926 as the time of his writing."<sup>44</sup> Malter suggests that we may assume that Saadia lived largely in seclusion during this time, studying and writing.<sup>45</sup> It was at the end of this six-year period that the Exilarch, David b. Zakkai rewarded Saadia for his vital role in winning the calendar controversy, by making him the Gaon of Sura. In so doing, Saadia became the first foreigner to hold this highest post.<sup>46</sup>

It would be naive to think that this move on David b. Zakkai's part was motivated solely by a sense of gratitude. According to Solomon Zeitlin, Ben Zakkai hoped that by making him Gaon, Saadia would help him in his conflict with Kohen-Zadek who wanted to close Sura and have only one academy with him as leader. Ben Zakkai perceived this as a personal threat to his own authority.<sup>47</sup> To understand the dynamics at play here more fully, let us examine for a moment the nature of the academies and, more to the point, the character of the Gaonate.

History in the century before the first geonic records is unclear but by the year 750 we have a better sense of the



scholarly activity that was taking place; in fact, the middle of the eighth century is the first time that a Gaon is more than a name to us. This was the Gaon, Yehudai of Pumbedita, author of the first code produced by the Babylonian schools. The following generations only answered questions from Babylonia and other countries. It was during this time that Amram's siddur was written as a responsum in answer to a request made by Spanish communities.<sup>48</sup>

At first Sura enjoyed special privileges over Pumbedita but by 842 Pumbeditan authorities were issuing responsa, and by 890 it was writing responsa from Pumbedita and available funds were equally allotted between the two academies. By 890 Pumbedita was transferred to Baghdad, the capital of the Caliphate. This move gave Pumbedita new life, while Sura was almost closed down altogether. Thought was given to appointing a member of the Pumbedita school as titular Gaon of Sura to at least keep the institution alive. The man designated to take on this position, an uncle of the later Gaon Sherira, died before the plan could be put into effect. This was taken as a sign that the idea of having a titular Gaon for Sura was a mistake. The matter was reconsidered and the search began for someone who would assume the Gaonate of Sura and bring this institution back to life.<sup>49</sup>

Rivalry was a way of life in the academies. To begin with, there was rivalry between Gaon and Exilarch. In addition, there was competition within the academies themselves as the Gaonate became more powerful and as many more people

sought to ascend to it. This competition, however, remained inbred as most of the Geonim of both academies belonged to the same few prominent families who, predictably, opposed the election of an outsider.<sup>50</sup> So, though the geonic period lasted for five centuries, only one foreigner ever became Gaon. That foreigner was Saadia.<sup>51</sup>

In his search for the proper Gaon of Sura, the Exilarch, David b. Zakkai, first approached one of the scholars of Sura, Nissi al-Naharwani who is said to have declined the position on the grounds that he did not feel himself to be up to such a difficult task.<sup>52</sup> Respecting al-Naharwani's preference, the Exilarch proceeded to ask him to help him choose between two other scholars, Tsemah ben Shahin and Saadia.<sup>53</sup> While al-Naharwani greatly respected Saadia's ability, he "strongly urged the Exilarch against appointing him Gaon of Sura." He warned that Saadia's uncompromising integrity and strong sense of self-confidence were bound, sooner or later, to bring him into collision with David ben Zakkai who was himself a commanding personality.<sup>54</sup> But David ben Zakkai disregarded this advice and elevated Saadia to the position of Gaon of Sura:

His elevation was a personal triumph over an oligarchical tradition. It was the fruit of repeated victories that he had scored in the defense of rabbinic tradition vs. the Karaites and even more so, of his victorious vindication of Babylonian Judaism vs. the claims of Palestine leadership.<sup>55</sup>

Saadia's appointment may have come as a shock even to him, for, in one of the two letters he wrote to Egypt announcing his election, he applies the verse: "And Hezekiah rejoiced

and all the people, for the thing was done suddenly."<sup>56</sup>

As it turns out, David ben Zakkai made a good choice in terms of the future of Sura. Saadia Gaon did in fact resurrect the institution. However, al-Naharwani had been correct. It was not long before the Exilarch and Saadia locked horns. In 930, the harmony which the two leaders had enjoyed at first came to an abrupt end.<sup>57</sup>

On the face of it, the dispute was legal. David ben Zakkai had determined, with the endorsement of Saadia, that in certain civil matters the written approval of two Geonim were required in order for a decision to be considered official. In approximately the year 930 the Exilarch had to decide on the distribution of an inheritance of about 70,000 gold pieces of which the Exilarch was to receive ten percent. Saadia was not in total agreement with the way in which David ben Zakkai wished to handle the proceedings and so he deferred to an older colleague, Rab Kohen-Tsadek, saying that in this case, one signature should be sufficient. When repeatedly asked to explain his refusal to sign, Saadia finally gave in and explained his objections. Naturally, the Exilarch became incensed over this and pressured Saadia all the more to sign the document. Despite the urgings of David ben Zakkai's son, Saadia refused to yield. The Exilarch's son became so angry that he threatened the Gaon with physical force at which time Saadia's supporters "unceremoniously" threw him out of the house.<sup>58</sup> As a direct result of this situation, the Exilarch excommunicated Saadia and appointed



Joseph ben Jacob ibn Satia, a descendant of Geonim to take Saadia's place.<sup>59</sup> In response to this great insult, Saadia excommunicated the Exilarch and appointed David ben Zakkai's brother Hasan, called Josiah in Hebrew, as "counter-Exilarch."<sup>60</sup> Saadia responded by publishing an interesting document called "the Open Book" (Sefer Ha-Galui) which has unfortunately been lost except for a few fragments which have been recovered in recent years.<sup>61</sup> This book did deal with other subjects besides the unfairness of the Exilarch's behavior, but apparently the tone of the book was very sharp,<sup>62</sup> so much so that Kalaf ben Sarjado (who represented a third power which had developed in Baghdad, i.e., he was a court barker),<sup>63</sup> felt it incumbent upon himself to provide a rejoinder to the ex-Gaon's book. D.S. Margoliouth said of this rejoinder, "in virulence and obscenity [it] exceeds anything of the sort I have ever seen."<sup>64</sup> Once again, the facts of the controversy are largely buried in obscurity, due to the fragmentary form of the documents pertaining to it.

The argument between Saadia and David ben Zakkai escalated to such a point that Babylonian Jewry was split between two rivals, Geonim and Exilarchs, both claiming to be rightful incumbents. Eventually, however, Saadia's strongest supporters lost their influence; "Hasan, the counter-Exilarch, was banished to a remote province and Saadia had to retire, and even go into hiding for some time."<sup>65</sup> Apparently, Saadia left for Baghdad where he spent his time in seclusion writing.

On the face of it, it was a strange turn of events which

ended Saadia's excommunication. It seems that in a particular legal case, each litigant was allowed to select his own judges. One litigant selected the Exilarch, the other selected Saadia. The Exilarch, however, had declared that anyone who recognized Saadia would be excommunicated. "Accordingly, he had the recalcitrant person apprehended by his guards and badly manhandled."<sup>66</sup> It was at this point that "a group of notables"<sup>67</sup> went to Bishr ben Aaron, the banker and father-in-law of Kalaf ben Sarjado (the author of that scathing anti-Saadia polemic) and asked him to intervene and bring an end to this terrible schism for which his son-in-law was in some part responsible. In response to their pleas, Bishr

invited to his house the leaders of Jewry, summoned the Exilarch and told him plainly that the people were tired of the protracted struggle and that he had to make peace with Saadia or else!<sup>68</sup>

As a result of this unusual encounter, peace was finally restored between David ben Zakkai and Saadia, Saadia was reinstated as Gaon and Joseph ben Jacob (whom the Exilarch had made Gaon in Saadia's place) retained his income and was designated as Saadia's successor.<sup>69</sup>

Solomon Zeitlin comments on the outcome of the quarrel by saying:

Saadia did not succeed entirely in destroying the Exilarchate but did succeed in diminishing the power of the Exilarch. Now the Gaon, the religious leader, gained more influence and power over the Jewish people.<sup>70</sup>

Before closing a discussion of the Saadia-David ben Zakkai controversy, we must take into account Ellis Rivkin's learned analysis of the situation. Rivkin states that the

controversy must be seen "as part of the larger problem of the conflicted character of tenth century events,"<sup>71</sup> the most crucial of which was the disintegration of the Abbassid Caliphate. This disintegration brought about the appearance of independent, autonomous centers in Egypt, North Africa, Spain and Italy and, more to the point, the diminution of available resources. Accordingly, a struggle for survival between Sura and Pumbedita, between the Gaonate and the Exilarchate, became inevitable. When seen in this light, the Saadia-David ben Zakkai controversy may be viewed as but one symptom of a difficult period of decline. Rivkin writes:

The Great Controversy was indeed a great controversy, but only partially because of the antagonists. It was the culmination of a series of struggles to offset the consequences of disintegration. It was the most violent because the outcome could no longer be compromise, but consolidation and annihilation. The proof is not in anything that was said but in the outcome: the collapse of renowned Sura, the impotence of the Exilarch and the desperate condition of Pumbedita.<sup>72</sup>

Saadia remained Gaon of Sura for five more years after his reinstatement. Unfortunately, this was not a long enough time to re-establish Sura as a vibrant academy. Moreover, Saadia's successor was unsuccessful in his attempt to perpetuate what Saadia had begun. "The gates of the Sura Academy were closed for half a century, not to be reopened until the end of the tenth century."<sup>73</sup> It was Saadia's second son, Dosa (1013-1017), who took over after Sura's reopening.

We know very little about Saadia's activity after he returned to the Gaonate. We know of only one circumstance. It seems that David ben Zakkai died shortly after the recon-

ciliation was realized and that his son and successor (the one who had threatened Saadia with bodily harm if he did not sign the document dealing with the inheritance) also died approximately seven months after his father, leaving behind one son, twelve years old. Apparently, Saadia took it upon himself to educate this child and to take care of him in every way.<sup>74</sup> Saadia, himself, died shortly thereafter.

Solomon Zeitlin commented on Saadia's life experiences thusly:

Saadia Gaon in his strife against the Karaites, Ben Meir and the Exilarch had one aim: to unite the Jews under religious leadership. He strongly held that the Jews were a people only through the Torah and hence the leadership should be vested in a man who had the authority to interpret the Torah.<sup>75</sup>

To a certain extent, Zeitlin's view of Saadia has a bearing on the thrust of this paper. The question we seek to answer is: was Saadia, whose agile mind was able to comprehend all aspects of learning, both religious and secular, seeking throughout his life to bring everything under the umbrella of religiosity? If this is true, then how can we explain why Saadia wrote a book of philosophy? Moreover, how can we explain his ability to, on the one hand, maintain a philosophic view of God, while on the other, write a prayer-book, obviously based on a Jewish view of God? Regardless of the answers to these questions, the fact remains that the vastness of Saadia's writing reflected the work of a brilliant thinker whose breadth of learning seemed limitless. In the words of Henry Malter:

Saadia is the first Jewish scholar whose universal

mind embraced all the branches of Jewish learning known in his time. He acquired a mastery in each department, threw into the shade the efforts of all his predecessors and contemporaries, and that won for him the honorable title accorded to him by an admirer, "the chief spokesman on all matters of learning..."76



*My heart grieved...as I saw in our time many of those who adhere to their faith entertaining impure beliefs and unclear ideas... I felt to help them was my duty and guiding them a moral obligation upon me.<sup>1</sup>*

—Saadia Gaon  
Introduction to Emunot V'Dayot

## Chapter II

### SAADIA'S PHILOSOPHY

While there is evidence of Saadia's philosophy in almost all of his vast works,<sup>2</sup> his philosophical magnum opus, Emunot V'Dayot<sup>3</sup> is the work which will concern us in this chapter.

Since our ultimate goal is to come to an understanding of how Saadia, author of Emunot V'Dayot, can be reconciled with Saadia, the author of his Siddur, we will confine ourselves to a discussion of those issues in his philosophy which have a direct bearing on his liturgy.

Saadia begins his philosophical treatise with the following prayer:

Blessed be God, the God of Israel, Who is alone deserving of being regarded as the Evident Truth, Who verifies with certainty unto rational beings the existence of their souls, by means of which they assess accurately what they perceive with their senses and apprehend correctly the objects of their knowledge. Uncertainties are thereby removed from them and doubts disappear, so that demonstrations become lucid for them and proofs become clear. May He be lauded, then, above the highest commendation and praise.<sup>4</sup>

With this prayer the tone for the whole work is set: for in this statement Saadia is doing far more than merely thank-

ing God. He is equating God with "the Evident Truth," suggesting perhaps that in examining the workings of the intellect, one uncovers two entities. The first of these is God who stands at both the beginning and end of intellectual pursuit. He stands at the end because, as Truth, He is the goal of our thinking and exploring. He is at the beginning because it is God who allows us to know and appreciate the functioning of the soul, i.e., its power to assimilate and verify information gathered by our senses. The soul, therefore, is the second entity uncovered in the process of examining the workings of the intellect. Based on this prayer alone, it seems we have legitimate reason to disagree with the following statement made by Israel Efros:

He [Saadia] did not accept the idea maintained by his Arabic contemporary, Alfarabi, that there is a spherical spirit called the Active Intellect, who moves our sense-experience to conceptual knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

It may be true that Saadia did not consider the Active Intellect to be "a spherical spirit," but the above statement by Saadia seems to suggest that he equated what became known as the Active Intellect with God. It is my contention that the heart of Saadia's system is to be found in this opening prayer. I hope to show the viability of this contention in the following pages.

As we have already seen, Saadia writes in a direct manner, presenting his essential views almost immediately from the outset. As Altman observed, Saadia writes in "a matter-of-fact style, lucid and precise, sometimes of an abrupt brevity..."<sup>6</sup> While still within the confines of the intro-

duction, Saadia states that there are three bases of truth. They are: (1) knowledge gained by direct observation; (2) the intuition of the intellect; and (3) knowledge inferred by logical necessity.<sup>7</sup> Saadia hastens to add that "the community of monotheists"<sup>8</sup> correctly considers tradition to be a fourth basis for truth. Heschel explains the validity of considering tradition a source of truth by saying that, "...the public transmission, on consensus omnium, serves as satisfactory evidence for the authenticity of Jewish tradition."<sup>9</sup> That is to say, the authenticity of tradition is founded on the belief that knowledge gained by direct observation is a basis for truth. After all, the original people who began a tradition were eyewitnesses, and Saadia asserts it is safe to assume that people would only perpetuate belief in a true occurrence. A whole people could not be fooled.

For Saadia, the Torah is rational and can accordingly stand up to the criteria for truth which he set up. In fact, Saadia felt that the Torah could have been attained by intellect alone, i.e., without revelation.<sup>10</sup> The question then arises, why is revelation necessary at all? What is the nature of faith?

Saadia sees revelation as necessary since the process of acquiring knowledge is a long and arduous one, for which some people do not have the time or inclination. Revelation, therefore, allows us to see a glimpse of the end of our intellectual journey towards the truth. In other words, the truth obtained through reason or through revelation is the



same, i.e., it is God. Faith then, as seen by Saadia, may be summarized as confidence in the fact that the revelation transmitted to us through tradition is, in fact, a glimpse of the truth. Accordingly, we may concur with those who have stated that, for Saadia, there is no conflict between faith and reason, for Saadia does not see faith as belief in God, but rather as confidence in the validity of human reason. This confidence, too, comes from God, since by Saadia's own admission, it is He who "verifies with certainty unto rational beings the existence of their souls, by means of which they assess accurately what they perceive with their senses and apprehend correctly the objects of their knowledge." What, then, is the role of the soul in Saadia's system?

For Descartes the basis of truth and knowledge was cog-nito, ergo sum, I think, therefore, I am. For Saadia, the essence of intellectual endeavor, the one truth which is inevitably the basis for all others, is the existence of the soul and, therefore, the existence of God. We might accordingly state Saadia's creed as follows: I think, therefore, God is. If we can picture Saadia sitting in an armchair in an unlit room without any other stimulation, the one thing of which he would be aware would be the existence of his soul. Even though we cannot see our souls, we are forced to admit that they are part of us.<sup>11</sup> Based on the knowledge that our souls do exist, "the reliability of perception and knowledge is verified, errors...removed, doubts disappear, proofs and demonstration become clear and distinct."<sup>12</sup> Saadia spells

out the role of the soul quite explicitly:

It is the soul that provides the various sense organs with their sense faculties. How, then, can it be asserted that it is they that give to it its essence? Whoever makes such an assertion perverts all judgment and distorts the truth.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, Saadia stresses that the soul carries out its many activities in conjunction with the body.<sup>14</sup> When united with the body, the soul becomes endowed with the following three faculties: (1) the power of reasoning; (2) the power of appetition; and (3) the power of anger.<sup>15</sup> The soul, therefore, in Saadia's system is the essence of the human being. He writes, "...even though man's body is of small dimension, his soul is more extensive than heaven and earth because his knowledge embraces all that they contain."<sup>16</sup>

The soul, then, is a divine gift, leading us towards the divine, for without it the acquisition of the truth is impossible. In Heschel's words:

Truth is as valuable as life; it is something to be loved. There is an intricate connection of the problem of truth with the problem of God. His existence is as evident as the value of truth. He is truth.<sup>17</sup>

With this we turn to an exploration of Saadia's concept of God.

Saadia begins his discussion of God in the second treatise by explaining that, while the sciences start out with concrete data, they strive for the abstract. That is to say, the more advanced the knowledge, the more subtle it is. He writes:

Every station reached...in [the] advance of knowl-

edge consists of necessity of ideas more abstract and subtle than the proceeding, the last constituting the most abstract and subtle of all.<sup>18</sup>

Although this statement is seemingly unrelated to a discussion of God, with this preface, Saadia is setting us up for such a discourse. After all, the suggestion here is that although we may not be able to say very much about God with any assurance, this is in reality testimony to the fact that our knowledge of Him is very advanced.

In fact, Saadia goes on to say, and this is critical to his God concept, there is only one thing which we can say of God and that is that He is the creator of the world.<sup>19</sup> Saadia writes in regard to this that he aimed "to prove that the extreme abstractness of the idea of the Creator was its true character and that, when we have found by means of our reason that it is the subtlest of all things knowable, we have discovered its real nature."<sup>20</sup> The significance of Saadia's introduction to this treatise now becomes clear, namely, that although the only thing we can say of God is that He is the Creator, this does not mean that we do not know Him. In fact, our knowing that God is creator gives us more information than one might at first think. For example, Saadia writes, "God has no attributes. All attributes are implied in His being a Creator."<sup>21</sup> Saadia reiterates this sentiment in Treatise V when he writes:

It is to be borne in mind, of course, that when the attribute of mercy is mentioned in connection with the Creator, exalted and magnified be He, it must necessarily be thought of as reverting to His creations, since it cannot possibly apply or

appertain to Him inasmuch as He is free from all effect...It is...merely one of the predicates of God's activity.<sup>22</sup>

How, then, can we summarize Saadia's concept of God? We can say that, for Saadia, God is Creator: He is the source of knowledge. He is the goal of intellectual endeavor because He is truth and that, accordingly, one approaches God through the pursuit of truth, i.e., by activating one's intellect.

Heschel writes:

...Saadia emphasizes, Scripture calls righteous those who possess the right method and patience in the search for truth, and wicked those who lack these virtues.<sup>23</sup>

Efros concurs with Heschel's summary and states that, in Saadia's view, impatience and haste cause error in thought, so much so that Saadia calls a wrong inference khayt (sin).<sup>24</sup> Relationship to God, then, shocking as it may seem, is solely intellectual for Saadia.<sup>25</sup>

Herein lies the problem. How could a man who felt as Saadia did about God, who felt as he did about the intellect, have written a prayerbook? Did Saadia dance at two weddings, meaning that, when he was a philosopher, he espoused philosophy, but when he prayed, he prayed as a Jew, leaving behind his philosophical view of God? These are the questions which motivated this paper. Before looking specifically at his prayerbook, let us examine Saadia's approach to prayer as expressed in Emunot V'Dayot.

Saadia attempts to look at prayer in a rational way, i.e., by stating that it is logical to pray:

...logic demands that whoever does something good

be compensated either by means of a favor shown to him if he is in need of it, or by means of thanks, if he does not require any reward...It was ...necessary for Him to command His creatures to serve Him and thank Him for having created them.<sup>26</sup>

Later on in the work, Saadia describes a "renegade" as one who abandons faith in God or who participates in prayer "although in his heart of hearts there is no firm conviction or certainty. Such a one is really mendacious and deceitful in his utterances as well as in his professed belief."<sup>27</sup> On the surface of it, there is seemingly no conflict between his philosophical views and the concept of prayer. All he has said thus far is that it is logical to pray, as it is logical to express thanks to one who has done a favor, and that prayer is only proper when it is consistent with an inner conviction, i.e., a belief in God. However, on careful consideration, we realize that Saadia is here making logical inferences from an illogical premise, for did he not say that God is truth, that one approaches God through the intellect? How can such a God respond to prayer? How can such a God take cognizance of the human condition, for such a God is cognizance.

Moreover, in 2:10 Saadia explicitly states:

Were we, in our effort to give an account of God, to make use only of expressions that are literally true, it would be necessary for us to desist from speaking of Him as one that hears and sees and pities and wills to the point where there would be nothing left for us to affirm except the fact of His existence.<sup>28</sup>

This, of course, is in keeping with the heart of Saadia's system, namely with his belief that God possesses no attributes. In light of this, the crucial question to be asked is, if the



only thing we can really say about God is that He exists, how then do we pray to Him? If He cannot hear or see, why speak to Him? If He cannot pity or will, why make requests of Him?

Furthermore, in chapter 6 of the second treatise Saadia writes:

It is out of the question, however, that the Creator of all things should entertain a desire for aught that He has created or be in fear of it.<sup>29</sup>

What else is prayer but descriptive praise or an invitation for communication rendered in the hopes of some kind of response? Yet throughout Emunot V'Dayot, Saadia paints a portrait of an unresponsive, indescribable God. What then is Saadia's Siddur all about? Does it stand independent of his philosophy or is it somehow an extension of his philosophy? If the latter is the case, it will be interesting to see what kind of language Saadia employs in his prayerbook to describe an indescribable God, to petition a God who cannot hear or respond. We turn now to an examination of Saadia's Siddur to determine whether it reflects in any way Saadia's conception of God as presented in Emunot V'Dayot.

## Chapter III

## AN OVERVIEW OF SAADIA'S SIDDUR

Concerning Saadia's Siddur, Alexander Altmann writes:

Another important production was his Siddur, the first Jewish Prayerbook of which we know. Here too Saadya's purpose is in the main educational and pedagogical. He recognizes the need of supplying the communities with a textbook of prayer instead of the mere halachic rules of prayer with which his predecessors in the field of Jewish liturgy, R. Natronai and R. Amram Gaon, were chiefly concerned.<sup>1</sup>

The question then arises, was Saadia's Siddur "the first Jewish Prayerbook of which we know"? If it was not the first in terms of the date it was written, is it then the first in some other way, e.g., in importance, or in its unique approach? Again, there is some controversy surrounding this question.

For example, Elbogen too considered Saadia's Siddur to be the first, also discounting the works of both Natronai and Amram as mere elaborations of the rules about prayer. Elbogen hastens to add, "Not that Saadia was indifferent to the bearing of Halakah; he was no reformer, the sayings of the Talmud were considered obligatory by him. His approach was that of the theologian."<sup>2</sup> Elbogen goes on to say that Saadia wrote his Siddur for the average man, as a manual, not as a work of scholarly discussions.<sup>3</sup> It is the validity of this contention that we will test in this and the following chapter.

Louis Ginzberg is in agreement with both Altmann and Elbogen. He considers Saadia's Siddur to be the oldest prayerbook available to us despite the fact that Rav Amram

had composed his order of prayer twenty years before Saadia's birth. He essentially disregards Rav Amram's Siddur based on the fact that it is virtually impossible to recognize what was original to Amram.<sup>4</sup>

While admitting that Saadia probably was strongly influenced by Amram, Malter feels that overall, in comparison to Saadia's Siddur, Amram's prayerbook sinks into oblivion. He writes, "Saadia may therefore, properly be designated as the first scientific author in the field of liturgy."<sup>5</sup> Malter goes on to qualify this by saying that, despite this, Amram's work had a far greater impact on the development of Jewish liturgy throughout the Middle Ages than did the ritual composed by Saadia.<sup>6</sup>

Louis Finkelstein differentiates between the two prayerbooks as follows:

Saadia's Siddur, in contrast to Amram's is a work of quite different caliber and shows the pronounced individuality of the author. He does not merely codify the current customs, but uses his judgments in selecting the prayers, declares what is proper and valid, and criticizes and omits what he considers wrong.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to all of the abovementioned scholars, Lawrence Hoffman stands alone in considering Rav Amram's Siddur to be superior to that of Rav Saadia Gaon's. Hoffman feels that, in trying to impose logical categories on the order of prayers, Saadia lost something of the flow of the service. For example, due to the imposition of artificial categories, the Torah reading, which falls into no specific category, is left to the end; Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are set apart



from one another; congregational prayer separated from individual prayer.<sup>8</sup>

To summarize then, while Rav Amram's Siddur clearly preceeded Saadia's prayerbook, there is some scholarly discussion about which of these prayerbooks is more important. One thing is clear, Saadia's goal in writing his prayerbook differed greatly from Amram's. He sought to provide more than a halachic framework for understanding Jewish prayer. Saadia himself tells us he felt bound to write prayers in the period of Galut in which he lived because of what he perceived as the three-fold sin of negligence, addition and omission. Furthermore, he saw it as his obligation to make up for the obvious lack of knowledge and understanding among the masses.<sup>9</sup>

The details of the writing of the Siddur are shrouded in darkness. Again, scholars differ greatly in their attempts to piece together its origins. Louis Finkelstein believed the Siddur was composed in Babylonia.<sup>10</sup> Louis Ginzberg thought it had been written in Baghdad, "the most important Jewish community at the time."<sup>11</sup> Elbogen writes:

At what time and in what environment the Siddur was written is not known. He probably composed it in the years of his stay in the Near East before he had been appointed Gaon, i.e., before 928.<sup>12</sup>

In Lawrence Hoffman's words, "The history of Saadiah's prayerbook is almost as bizarre as its author's life is colorful."<sup>13</sup> He goes on to tell us that only one relatively complete text of the Siddur is extant. Apparently, this text was donated to the Bodleian library where it remained unrecognized until 1851. In the year Moritz Steinschneider

discovered its contents. However, the first significant monograph did not appear until 1904:

Its author, Jonah Bondi, hoped to publish the prayerbook, but died before he could do so. The three scholars who eventually did edit the volume saw their effort delayed by almost a quarter of a century due to the political barriers of World War Two and the premature deaths of would-be collaborators. So Saadiah's work was not actually printed until 1941--and even then significant parts were missing. The main corpus has been supplemented by later genizah discoveries, though we still lack sections, including part of the introduction.<sup>14</sup>

In any event, let us turn to an analysis of what we do know about Saadia's Siddur. While the text of the prayers is naturally written in Hebrew, the "intermediary remarks"<sup>15</sup> are in Arabic. In fact, Saadia used well-known Moslem cultic terminology (e.g., "Imam" for the reader, "Kibla" to refer to the direction in which his prayer was to be spoken<sup>16</sup>). As far as his poetic style is concerned, Saadia seems to pride himself on obscurity. Malter attributes this to an imitation of a style prevalent at that time among Arabs and Jews, i.e., "the more uncommon and obscure, the more remarkable the performance."<sup>17</sup>

Finkelstein concurs by saying:

In the spirit of the period Saadia excelled in the artificial technique which was then considered the essential of poetic compositions. Rare expressions and difficult word formations abound here as in the polemical treatises in verse form. They often make it hard to understand the meaning...<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to note that Saadia's Siddur is the first rabbinic writing to have a preface.<sup>19</sup> In fact, while Saadia called his Siddur "The Collection of Prayers and Hymns," his preface was entitled "Obligation of Prayers" and

was mentioned as a separate work in book lists and enumerated among his polemical writings by his sons.<sup>20</sup> It is in the introduction that Saadia points out the significance and necessity of prayer, its basis in reason (seikhel) and in the Bible (katuv) and the development of the prayers throughout the generations (mekubal).<sup>21</sup>

It is important for us to note that in the introduction Saadia describes God in "a purely philosophic manner...showing the necessity of our belief in Him and our obedience to His laws."<sup>22</sup> Here we have the first evidence of an overlap between Saadia's philosophical bent and his liturgical endeavors.

For most scholars, however, Saadia's prayerbook is seen as separate and distinct from his philosophy. With the possible exception of his introduction, evidence of his philosophy throughout the prayerbook has gone largely unacknowledged. The fact remains that Saadia's Siddur includes some significant changes in the liturgy which may be better understood if examined in light of his philosophy. Analysis of all of these changes is beyond the scope of this paper. We will confine our analysis in the next chapter to Saadia's petitionary prayers. However, before turning to that discussion, let us at least take stock of the kinds of changes Saadia made throughout his prayerbook.

In his book, The Canonization of the Synagogue Service, Lawrence Hoffman gives us the most comprehensive picture of the make-up of Saadia's Siddur. Hoffman enumerates several

guiding principles which represent Saadia's concerns and which may help us to come to a sense of what Saadia hoped to achieve in his prayerbook. The first guiding principle which Hoffman offers is Saadia's overriding concern, as expressed in the introduction to his prayerbook, with "the correction of a ubiquitous state of liturgical sloppiness."<sup>23</sup> Hoffman goes on to say:

In contrast to the many improprieties and seeming neglect which he saw as marking the actual worship of his time, Saadiah postulated an original and, therefore, pure liturgical corpus of prayers pre-dating the Roman destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.). Saadiah would restore Jewish worship to this pristine state.<sup>24</sup>

Hoffman then lists three distinct criteria first unearthed by Heinemann; Saadia depended on them in determining whether to include a prayer or not. In fact, a careful analysis of the Siddur shows that Saadia would not include any prayer which (1) modified the formal structure of the blessing (i.e., its opening with reference to God and His kingdom and its ending with the name of God); or (2) changed the intent of the prayer; or (3) which was not mentioned in the Talmud.<sup>25</sup> Hoffman tells us that the third criterion cited above "fits well with Saadiah's anti-Karaite bias, which marked his career. And the first two harmonize with the image of Saadiah, the rationalist, the philosopher, the grammarian. These are the two keys to Saadiah."<sup>26</sup>

In light of these criteria, let us now examine some of Saadia's liturgical changes. In keeping with criterion #2, Saadia was opposed to the inclusion of or chadash in the



yotzer. The yotzer, a prayer about creation, and more specifically about light (as it symbolizes creation) does not speak of messianic hope. Or chadash, on the other hand, shares the yotzer's light imagery, but uses it as a symbol for the future light which the coming of the Messiah will bring. Accordingly, to include or chadash in the yotzer is to confuse the original intent of the yotzer. Therefore, according to Saadia it should not be done. Hoffman adds:

The case of or chadash is only the most famous of many cases where this exceptional gaon strikes out against "irrational" practice, and this factor, his championing of liturgical "rationality" will prove to be more important than his battle with Karaism.<sup>27</sup>

Actually, Saadia's anti-Karaite stand is quite obvious throughout his prayerbook. He seems to go to great extremes to avoid grounding his blessings in rabbinic adage; he searches, sometimes ignoring obvious rabbinic precedent, for a biblical basis.<sup>28</sup> In this way, Saadia is showing that rabbinic thought is in accordance with Torah law. In so doing, he is fighting the Karaites on their own ground.

Another observation which we must note is that often Saadia changes the tenses of some of the verbs, seeming almost obsessed with grammatical structures.<sup>29</sup> Hoffman sees this too as a manifestation of Saadia's desire to remain consistent with biblical expression. In regard to the choice of a particular nominal form in birkat shalom, Hoffman writes:

Saadiah, the grammarian [based] his grammatical preference on biblical usage...Again we see Saadiah at his best. As a grammarian who based his preferences on biblical example, he was without peer among the geonim.<sup>30</sup>



Another example of a stand taken in defiance of Karaite sentiment and belief is Saadia's position on the issue of whether a layperson may recite the birkat hakohanim in light of the fact that the Torah specifies that it is to be pronounced by the priests. The Babylonians extended the prerogative of saying this prayer to all prayer leaders, while the Palestinians omitted it in the absence of priests. Hoffman feels, and his case is convincing, that Saadia sided with the Babylonians on this issue, not because he had a propensity for agreeing with them (Hoffman shows throughout his book that, in fact, Saadia did not seem bound by any geographic loyalty, feeling free to adopt elements of both traditions), but because he wished to demarcate his own position, in contradistinction from the Karaites. Since the differentiation between Priest, Levite, and Israelite was important to the Karaites (they sought to have their synagogue resemble the Temple as much as possible), Saadia took just the opposite stand. Saadia was here trying "to refute the liturgical claims of the Karaites."<sup>31</sup> Hoffman summarizes as follows:

We have seen Saadiah reacting strongly in two directions. The first is his antipathy to his life long foe, the Karaites, who were just beginning their age of glory in Palestine. The second was a rather general observation that Saadiah scrutinized language and logical structure very closely, preferring linguistic phraseology found in the Bible.<sup>32</sup>

It seems that Hoffman is right in this assertion, but there seems as well to be a third direction in which Saadia reacts strongly, and that is Saadia's compulsion for consistency, i.e., consistency between his prayerbook and his philosophy.

Hoffman himself touches on this but does not seem to give it the full significance it deserves. Let us now look at Hoffman's one discussion of the influence of Saadia's philosophy on his liturgy.

Apparently, there was great geonic debate as to just what was to be included in the Friday evening service. Specifically, the discussion centered around the admission or exclusion of three particular prayers, all dealing with the concern for the protection of the dead. The three prayers are vehu' rachum, veshameru and shomer 'amo yisra'el. Both Amram and Saadia excluded vehu' rachum and shomer 'amo yisra'el. But Saadia differs from all other authorities by including veshameru and yir'u 'eineinu in the Friday night liturgy. Hoffman goes on to explain this unusual preference by referring to Emunot V'Dayot 3:7, the section in which Saadia discusses the eternality of the biblical commandments. What is Saadia's proof-text? None other than Exodus 31:6, veshameru which ends with the words, ledorotam berit 'olam, "throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant."<sup>33</sup> Just how long do these laws remain operative? Until the resurrection which explains the inclusion of yir'u 'eineinu which is merely a reminder that there is reward for those who keep God's law. Accordingly, the inclusion of these prayers is in keeping with Saadia's philosophy.

In light of this, it seems appropriate to add yet another dimension to Hoffman's understanding of Saadia's Siddur. Yes, Saadia sought throughout his prayerbook to refute the Karaites,

and yes he paid special attention to logic and grammar, but he also sought to provide consistency between his prayerbook and his philosophy. Hoffman himself wrote:

So Saadiah was not writing for the average man, no matter what he may have contended to the contrary. He was writing for the intellectual, the philosopher, the logician, the man who wanted to know that his traditional worship fulfilled all the criteria demanded by an age of system and order.<sup>34</sup>

As we have stated above, an analysis of all of Saadia's liturgy in this light is beyond the scope of this paper. We will confine ourselves to an examination of the petitionary prayers, or bakashot, which Saadia wrote and included in his prayerbook. It is to this task that we now turn.

## Chapter IV

## TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS OF SAADIA'S BAKASHOT

Concerning the degree to which there is evidence of Saadia's philosophy in his prayerbook, Louis Finkelstein wrote:

...Rab Saadia was at once a mighty thinker and one of the foremost poets of the Jewish tradition. In most...prayers, he simply follows the traditional modes of the synagogue. Except for certain nuances of style, his diction and his thought are indistinguishable from those of many of his predecessors. Integrated personality that he was, he could, when he entered the house of worship immerse himself completely in the ancient rabbinic world. He expressed himself in terms reflecting accurately his own vision, but which were nevertheless similar to those of more ancient scholars who had no access to western philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Finkelstein's message is subtle but crucial for us in our examination of the bakashot. He is saying that one aspect of Saadia's genius was his ability to write prayers that functioned on two levels. The surface, more apparent level consisting of language and rhythm, allow the prayers to appear at first glance as if they are in keeping with the traditional mode, while the deeper layer reflects "accurately his own vision" that is Saadia's own philosophical perspective which is often out of step with the traditional view. Our work then is cut out for us. We must determine if Finkelstein is correct, if in fact, Saadia's bakashot convey two distinct messages and if so, we must decide if this is integration or if Saadia remains a philosopher in Jew's clothing. Our task laid out before us, we must proceed with the first logical step in our examination, i.e., an English rendering of

of Saadia's two petitionary prayers known as Bakashot.

Saadia wrote:

Since I realized few people understood what they were praying and I was afraid that he who recites such a petition instead of coming nearer his master, would become alienated from Him through his non-sensical words, I composed such a petition in two recensions which emphasizes praise and exaltation of God as well as submission on the part of the human being, confession of...<sup>2</sup> request of Israel's consolation and salvation.

The first bakashah, Saadia tells us in his dinay tefillah, was composed for shabbatot and hagim, "v'yomai simchah" and for happy occasions. Specifically, Saadia tells us, this bakashah was to be added if one who had already said the tefillah came to synagogue and found the congregation reciting it. He writes, "and if the person decides to pray with them it is necessary for him to add this bakashah."

#### HaBakashah HaRishonah

You alone are God, singularly exalted above all, exalted beyond all blessings, beyond all praises, greater than all exaltation, without limit, without end, without attribute. There is none who can compare to You in any way, there is none equal to You in any likeness. There is none like You among the existing things, besides You there is no God. Your being is of old, and there is none second to You. You are eternal and there is none else. The eternal God is a dwelling-place and there is no stranger with You. You are the living God and Your days are unlimited. You are the mesheh hahmah, and You have not taken counsel with any sage who might instruct



You. And from Your mouth flow knowledge and understanding and no teacher teaches You. Riches and glory come from You but You do not take them for a gift. You rule over all, You did not receive Your kingdom from another. In Your hands are strength and power and You do not possess them in small quantity, because Your power and Your pride do not become weaker, and Your wisdom and Your understanding cannot be added to or diminished, and Your kingdom does not change because it is an eternal kingdom, and Your strength and Your honor do not change for eternity and Your years do not end, because You are the God of eternity. You are the advisor and who can contradict? In the stretching forth of Your hand, who can call it back? If You silence a people who will make them noisy? If You hide Your face, who will see You? Surely whomever You bless is blessed. Your word stands forever as does Your lovingkindness. From generation to generation Your faith abides. O God who is hidden from the eyes of all living creatures, who is exalted and wondrous beyond the vision of all creation, the exalted dwelling place and the heavens and the heights of the heavens cannot sustain You, the one who dwells on the precipices of the earth and even this cannot encompass You, who makes the clouds His chariots. Where is Your resting place? Everything comes from You and everything is Yours, all being is Your witness. In their hearts, all who make requests of You, understand You and in their thoughts You and Your teaching are found and then You are close to them in the depths of their spirits because our

souls belong to You and it is incumbent upon us to be faithful witnesses and our bodies respond within us with a testimony of truth. They teach us that we are the clay and that You are our fashioner, and that You are the creator and that all of us are the work of Your hands. Because of all of this we thank You, Lord our God, God of our ancestors. You are our God and we are Your servants and before You we bow and prostrate ourselves and pray and implore and give praise to Your great name and exalt You in Your praises, and request from You our lives and our daily bread and knowledge in our hearts and healing in our flesh and forgiveness for our sins and redemption of our souls from all trouble, because we know that You are omnipotent and no plan is withheld from You. You made the heavens and the heights of the heavens and all their host. You spread them out like a curtain and like a tent-cloth You split them, and like a tent You spread them out. Your right hand stretches them out over the void, and their foundations tremble, and they would be astounded at Your rebuke, and like smoke they will vanish in the end, and they are enrolled like the book of heaven and all their hosts will fall down as the leaf from a fig tree. You live and continue forever and ever, unto eternity.

You are the Lord, God, the giver of the sun which gives light to day, moon and stars to light the night, the one who proclaims that the sun will shine by day, but not by night, and only the stars are tucked away by day. The maker of Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades and the chambers of the earth.

The one who brings forth the Zodiac in their season, and comforts Arcturus concerning his sons and all of them standing still at the light of your arrows as they went at the shining of Your glittering spear and from fear of You they were darkened and crushed and they withdrew their brilliance. But You live and continue forever and ever, unto eternity.

You are the Lord, God who spreads out the earth upon the water, fastener of the earth's foundations, the one who determines the earth's measurements, who stretches the line upon it, the one who hangs the earth over nothingness. Who prepared the mountains in His strength and hills you overpower with might. You establish the depths and waddies and in sending forth Your word upon the earth it runs swiftly, and when You look at the earth it trembles, and when You touch the mountains they smoke and they will be molten like wax and distilled like water poured down from a steep place. You live and continue forever and ever, unto eternity.

You are the Lord, God, who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes the mountains spring with grass, who waters the hills from His upper chambers, who plants trees in the earth and all kinds of fruit, who makes grass and herbs spring forth for the service of humankind, bread from the earth to give seed to the sower and bread to the one who eats and if You blow on them they dry up, the whirlwind takes them away as stubble. From the fear of You Lebanon was ashamed and withered, Bashan and Carmel stripped bare. But You live and continue forever and

ever, unto eternity.

You are the Lord, God, the creator of all living souls, the earth and all that it contains, the seas and all that is in them, all creeping things. There is no limit to the number of living things small and large. You are the one who knows all the birds of the air if it is the wing of a stork or pinion, and by Your wisdom the hawk soars and by Your word the eagle mounts up. All the beasts of the forest are yours, the cattle of a thousand hills, cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kind. These all look to You and You give them their food in due season. Give to them and they eat it up, open Your hand and they are filled with good things. Turn away Your face from them and they are astounded, take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. But You live and continue forever and ever, unto eternity.

You are the Lord, God, who fashioned man from the dust of the earth. With skin and flesh You have clothed him and with bones and arteries You have knit him together. You grant him life and steadfast love and Your good spirit You have given to instruct him. You search out his path and are acquainted with all his ways and You tell him the laws of Your will and teach him to do good and to walk the straight path in Your eyes all the days of his life in the land until the day of his visitation. You overpower him forever and he is gone. You change his countenance and send him away. All flesh may perish together and man return to dust, but You

live and continue forever and ever, unto eternity.

You are the Lord, God, and You give life to all because with You is the source of life, the God who rules by His might forever, in every place Your eyes run to and fro, a man cannot hide himself in secret places, because You see him. Man cannot go from Your spirit and cannot flee from before You, a king who loves justice, the one who establishes equity in whom there is no imperfection, who shows no partiality and does not take a bribe. As You have thought so it was, as You have advised so it will stand. Your voice divides the flames of fire and Your wind divided the mountains and broke the rocks, and Your word does not return empty until it does that which You desire, and it will be successful in that which You sent it to do. The one who searches the hearts and tries the reins, searching all the depths of the belly, You uncover deep things out of darkness and bring to light the shadow of death, You make day pass and bring on the night, You bring summer and winter, changing seasons and times, making one generation pass and bringing another, You remove kings and establish kings. You humble the haughty and elevate the lowly. You end life and revive the dead, You make rich and poor, You raise up the poor from the dust and lift up the beggar from the dunghill. You satiate the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, raise those who are bowed down, lift up the fallen and give freedom to the captives, open the eyes of the blind, make the dumb sing and fill those who are empty. You visit the barren and open the



womb, You are the one who causes one to bear after holding back and who causes healing after smiting, binding up after breaking. You are close to those who are broken and save those who have a contrite spirit. You love the humble and hate the lofty. You bring near those who are far away and receive those who return. You forgive iniquity and pardon sins and pass over transgression. Master of lovingkindness for those who are good and for those who are evil, slow to anger for the righteous. To those who are guilty You do good and answer in all times of sorrow those who descend into the sea in ships, those who wander in a desert waste to be bound in affliction and iron, those who lay down on a sick bed, those who go with strength before the pursuer, before the ferocious beast when it was silent in the midst of upheaval, to strangers and to the inhabitants of a land that is not theirs, to the inhabitants of the land when a sword is raised against them, to the vinegrower and the husbandmen when dew and rain are held back, to the hart when he pants on the water brooks and to the wild goats of the rock when they bow themselves and bring forth their young, to the raven when his young cry to God. You hear the cry of all at one time and like a blink of the eye You save everyone because You are a gracious God, compassionate and slow to anger, showing lovingkindness and repenting of evil.

And the host of heavens praise You. Seraphim stand above You and before You, You make the wind Your messengers, You make the flaming fire Your ministers, You make them

appear like torches. The beasts run and return as the appearance of a flash of lightning and they go and they say to You, 'Here we are' and everyone glorifies Your holy name and gives praises before the throne of Your glory. For fear of You other gods cower and from Your truth Ophanim tremble and from the voice of Your word they loosen their wings and they exalt Your holiness, the God whose glory fills the whole earth. They give blessing to You, the blessed God whose glory is from His place. They do not know You in a place or in a camp because a cloud and a mist surround you, and a storm is in Your way and fire flashing forth as the appearance of amber is before You and there is brightness like the fire flashing forth from Your hand. Majesty and glory and shining from His brightness before You. You made dark, thick clouds of the skies Your secret place, pride and power are Your garment and the likeness of all high and lofty ones are seen by You in Your ridings because all high and lofty ones are made low under You. Before You, who is strong? Who can stand before You? Who is stubborn before You and yet remains whole? Because You are the master of power who does not allow the warrior to glory in his power. Moreover, You are the master of wisdom, the wise man does not glory in his wisdom. You are the master of riches, the rich man does not glory in his riches, for they will soon wither like the grass and fade like the green herb. Like a garment they will become old and like a shadow You will pass over them and they will pass away because the wise one is the one who knows You, who does not

glory in his own actions because they are done in Your name, because in You are they justified and all the seed of Israel shouts praise saying 'In God we glory every day and Your name we thank forever!'

You are the Lord, God who chose Abram and brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees and made his name Abraham and established Your covenant with Isaac and promised him on Mt. Moriah and established a witness in Isaac and gave the Torah to Israel. The great miracles which we saw with our own eyes, the signs and the wonders, the strong hand, and the outstretched arm, nothing like them having been created in heaven or on the earth, the testimony, the Torah and the Mishnah, and the writings and the commentaries. Restorer of souls, the happy of heart, those of great stature, those who enlighten the eyes, if a person will do these things, he will find life through them. From heaven You made our fathers hear Your voice and on earth You made them see Your great fire, and You have beaten down their foes from before them and You did not withhold manna from their mouths and You put Your dwelling-place among them. To them You are called 'The Lord of hosts, God of Israel who sits among the cherubim.' All that You do, You do so that they will keep Your statutes and so that they may guard Your Torah and Your laws. Accordingly, You are tremendously great because there is none like You and there is no god to match You according to all which we have heard with our ears. In keeping with this we say, Blessed are You and blessed is Your honored name forever.

Blessed are You, God of Gods. Blessed are You, master of masters.

Blessed are You who are the first. Blessed are You who are the last and the end of all.

Blessed are You who does wonders that are innumerable, who does miracles without number.

Blessed are You, who never tires, is never weary. Blessed are You who never slumbers and never sleeps.

Blessed are You who can tell the end from the beginning. Blessed are You who knows from the beginning what will not be done.

Blessed are You who provides a good reward to those who fear Him. Blessed are You whose power and anger are directed against those who forsake Him.

Blessed are You the foundation of all the ends of the earth and of the distant seas. Blessed are You who does not disgrace those who wait for Him forever.

Blessed are You in the heavens above and blessed are You on the earth below.

Blessed are You in the day because You illumine us and blessed are You at night as You keep darkness from us.

Blessed are You on Your throne of glory and blessed are You in the small places of heaven.

Blessed are You in Your Temple and blessed are You in all the ends of the earth.

Blessed are You by the exalted angels and blessed are You in the congregation of the holy.

Blessed are You by the children of Israel and blessed are You by all the nations.

Blessed are You in this generation and blessed are You in the coming generations.

Blessed are You in the days of our exile, and blessed are You in the days of our ingathering.

Blessed are You in this world and blessed are You in the world to come.

Blessed are You in all the blessings which we say and blessed are You in all the blessings that will be said in the future.

Praise and blessing are due You. It is wonderful to sing and good to give thanks and if we consent all the days of our lives and shake the sleep from our eyes, and we stand like cedars and empty a pit of all the water that is in the seas to bless You with the words of every mouth and to praise You with the singing of every tongue and to thank You with the beating of every heart, to praise You with the muttering of every lip and more than the number of dust particles in the world and the sand of the sea and the stars of the expanse and more than the years and the days and the weeks and the seconds and beyond the number of all sprouts and all bushes and every seed and more than the measure of the steps of every foot and all the souls of every living spirit. We can only accomplish a fraction of the grandness of the praises due You. In truth, who can tell of the power of God who makes His praises to be heard and You hear from heaven and



save and will regarding us, because You are a God who hears prayer.

May it be Your will, Lord, our God that You will forgive us for all of our sins and forgive us for our transgressions and pardon us for our infirmities because great is Your lovingkindness, because our backslidings are many. We have sinned and transgressed and done evil, we have rebelled and have turned from Your commandments and Your good statutes. Please, for Your sake, receive and will our return, cleanse us of our sins, and purify us from our transgressions and we will be among those whose sins are no longer remembered.

May it be Your will Lord, our God that You deal with us according to Your measure of mercy all the days of our lives and direct the work of our hands and heal our wounds and save us from the hand of our enemies. Do not hear the complaints and cries in our houses, there will be no devastation or destruction within our borders for we will be ones who will desire You and fear Your name because we study Your Torah and You make us wise with good sense before You and we will be one in our hearts in our fear of Your name in order to make us wise in all the ways in which we walk and in all the ways that we turn. Gather us to You and You bring us out from peace to peace and we find rest in the way of life which is before You.

May it be Your will Lord, our God that You will see the affliction of Your people, Israel and their dispersion in all lands and the destruction of Jerusalem which is desolate

and Your sanctuary which was spoiled and forsaken as a desert. Be zealous for Your holy name which is profaned among the nations. Gather the remnant of Your flock from all the places where they are found and return Israel to their dwelling. The ultimate dominion will come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem shall stand and shout with power and the majesty of Israel's God will come for all the nations are gathered to Him to call on the name of the Lord with one accord because to You we look and wait for Your salvation and we hope for Your great mercy and Your lovingkindness to rest on the multitude of Your people. Do not turn us from our hopefulness and please do not disappoint us, our king. Do not cause us to be embarrassed because of our reasonings. Show us, O Lord, Your lovingkindness and give us Your salvation and establish Your promise with us. Fill us with Your comfort. Save Your people and bless your inheritance, be their shepherd and lift them up forever. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

The second bakashah, Saadia tells us, was written for fast days. Saadia put such stress on this bakashah that he added an Arabic translation. Most of this bakashah with some additions, forms a large part of the Penitential Prayers for the Eve of Rosh Hashanah and is referred to in medieval literature as the "Viddui (Confession) of R. Saadia." Here is the second bakashah in its entirety:

HaBakashah HaShniyah

An alternative version made up of necessary words and grievances of the heart and the oppressions of man. Here is the text:

Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise for today I know and I have considered in my heart that You Lord are one and there is none other in Your kingdom or in Your dominion. There is no other who can do Your works or who has Your power and everything else was created out of nothing. How could anyone or anything be compared to You when You have fashioned everything, or be weighed in the scales against You when You have created everything. Accordingly, the heart must believe and the spirit know that You are one, unique in all Your names and exalted in all Your ways and wondrous in all Your works, invisible to the eyes of all living creatures for the eye does not see You.

Truly You are our God, You are from eternity and You gave life to the world and it is You who sustains it and You will continue to exist after it perishes and passes away for Your years will not end.

Surely, Lord our God You formed all creations. You called to them and they stood as one. You have the ability to make them end or to make them pass away for in Your hand are strength and power to renew them or to make them return to their beginnings.

Truly, Lord our God, You created this world to be a passing world that in it people should examine the statutes and

ordinances which You commanded them, and the paths of life and of good and of death and of bad which You have placed before them. But the world to come is an abiding world in which is given a bountiful reward for all Your lovingkindness and in it You take vengeance against those who betrayed you.

True it is Lord, our God that You have chosen the remaining seed from all the peoples which are on the face of the earth and You made for us from the old days great wonders which we saw with our own eyes, signs and miracles and the strong hand and the outstretched arm which are unique in all the earth and in all the nations.

Truly, Lord our God, You turned us in the time that we were angry with You and in exile and You did not allow us to die.

True it is Lord, our God that You are our savior and deliverer, the one who returned to our dwelling, the builder of the Temple, who does good for us and has made our numbers greater than our ancestors'. When You speak Your mouth and Your hands are full.

Because of these things we thank You Lord, our God and for Your great force and for Your wonders, Your frightening acts, and Your wondrous actions which do not sustain the heavens, the earth, or man. No living thing is able to turn or to examine their smallness, not one man. Who is it who can tell of Your greatness and who makes Your praises heard? It is You who are exalted as the head above all, above and beyond all blessings and praises.

I have remembered but part of Your ways and I have been overwhelmed. I am more humble in my own eyes, for what is man that he should stand before You? His origin is dust. While he lives, his home is dust. At his death he returns to dust. In what then should he take pride? How can he be bold?

Even in health he is weak, how much the more so in sickness when sorrow and groaning break him.

Even with knowledge he does not understand his own body, he does not understand his own depths or his lying down or his getting up, or his hunger or his satisfaction, or his sickness or his death. He cannot apprehend what the day will bring or what will be tomorrow. Therefore his heart is filled with fear and anxiety.

And even if he has riches, behold he is poor, even destitute, naked he came forth from his mother's womb and naked he will return to go as he came. He cannot bear anything, he who is not uplifted in his toil and that he cannot take it with him and if he is happy because his wealth is great and because his hand has gotten much, the rich man lies down but he is not gathered, he opens his eyes and he is not.

And if in the days of his life and his years behold You have made his life as a handbreath and his age as nothing before You and his years as a passing shadow. He comes forth like a flower and is cut down, he flees like a shadow and yet does not continue. Surely every man walks in vanity. Surely they are disquieted in vain receiving shame and he is ashamed and humiliated of his own counsel. He makes one



lodge and makes one lie down and raises hopes until the day of His visitation. In that day His beauty is consumed like a moth. In that day His thoughts perish. Only do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God and He will maintain him in His toil.

What is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You visit him. Is not Your mercy great, his reward from the beginning, his thoughts standing before You. You have made him little lower than the angels and have crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet.

I also am Your servant, child of Your truth, dust and ashes exalted and raised up, poor, distressed and deceitful, a man of medium wealth.

I know Lord that You are righteous to me and You favor me and although my heart is not made straight You reward me well because Your mercy is great, grand as the grandness of the heavens on the earth and Your lovingkindness and Your truth which is lifted up to the clouds.

I know Lord that I was not and You made me, You formed me and You directed me. You have granted me life and lovingkindness and Your visitations preserve my spirit. You have taught me wisdom and understanding and from the strength of Your power You strengthen me and from the wealth and honor which are before You, You have ruled me, and from heights to heights, You exalt me, as if from day to day You make me

whole, that You bring me to this point. You have made me arrive at this end and my soul knows very well that Your lovingkindness for me is great and You have saved my soul from the depths of Sheol. The foreigner and the oppressor find me and You save me. Insolent ones have risen up against me and You redeem me from their hand. You redeem me many times over and I arrive at the gates of death and I live. What can I answer You for all your bounty to me? If I utter praise like the waters of the sea and if I broaden my mouth with a song like the expanse of eternity, during my watch I will stand like the cedars of Lebanon and I will stand on the stronghold of Tabor and Hermon and I will spread my hands like the wings of eagles, and I will lift my eyes continually like the stars of the heaven. And I will lift up my voice like a ram panting on the springs of water, and I will bow down on my knees and I will wander all my years, all the days which you have given me, Lord, I will not attain even a thousandth of the plentiful bounty and the lovingkindness and the mercy which You did for me in the past even until today.

But not according to Your bounty have I answered You but rather according to the verse: Is this how you repay the Lord for I have forgotten all Your lovingkindness, and I have ignored all of Your goodness, and I have turned away from Your statutes, and I have done evil in Your eyes, and vanities of the world have consumed me, and I am confused and have gone crazy, and I have preferred evil to good, and error to truth, impurity to purity, abomination to merit, I have exchanged an

eternal world for a passing world, from day to day I arise early and sin, until my sins overwhelm me. They outnumber the hairs on my head, they are greater than the strides of my feet, they are stronger than the words of my mouth, I have sunk into the depths and there is no place to stand, I came into the depths and the flood swept me away.

Not You, O Lord, have I injured, but myself and not You have I made angry, but myself. For if man sins, how can that affect You? And if he iniquities are great, harm You? But alas for the men who have sinned against You, and alas for their souls, for they have brought evil on themselves.

My God, I am embarrassed and also ashamed to lift up my face to You. Like a despicable vessel, so I am degraded in the eyes of my soul. Like a man who is thrown into a ditch and even his clothes abhor him. It is as if I was shaped in iniquity from the beginning and accordingly my face is covered with embarrassment.

When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me, for how am I able to stand before You in light of my sins, how can my heart endure or my hands be strong? You have called me to Your ordinances, but I have turned to evil. Like a driven leaf have I considered myself and to dry stubble do I liken myself. As a pregnant woman who is near to giving birth, is in pain and cries out in her pangs, so too have I been in Your sight, because of Your indignation and Your wrath which I have deserved because of the greatness of my sins, but the heavens and the earth cannot sustain Your wrath,

all the more so am I unable to do so.

And as a result of my calling upon Your name, and remembering Your lovingkindness, and preparing before them my sins and my transgressions, my heart melted and my flesh is prickly and my bones tremble and my bowls churn and my hands lack strength and my steps totter, my head is bowed and my tears pour forth, my palate is dry and all my members are like a shadow. I am bowed down at the hearing of it. I was astounded at seeing it, for You are the great king and this is my portion and this is the work of my hands.

And now, Lord my God, after my return I am comforted, and after it is made known to me I smack my thigh, because of this I will lift up my flesh in my teeth and my soul I will place in my hands, for how can I approach You Lord and how can I be subjugated to You, exalted God, and how can I atone given the multitude of my sins which pass and vanish like the waters which are split on the ground and cannot be gathered up again.

If repentance and thanks would appease you, Behold I repent and confess as I say before You: I have sinned before You, Lord, I have transgressed, and done perversely, I have rebelled and turned from Your commandments and ordinances, I have perverted what is right but it did not profit me.

And if a broken spirit You will grant atonement, here is my broken heart, crushed my spirit by reason of my troubles and weariness which surround me in my sin, until there is nothing healthy in my flesh. What else is there in me to

chastise? In one second You could lift up Your hand against me and I would be no more. Or if You remain silent to me I would be like those who go down into the pit.

And if in my crying and my moaning You forgive me, behold the secret places of my soul will weep for the multitude of my sins, and in the innermost depths of my spirit my soul will moan for the multitude of my transgressions. And if there is strength within me, then surely my eye will pour forth and not cease until all of my tears are gone.

And if by prayer and by supplication You will forgive, behold I pray: As the eyes of the servant are lifted up to his master, so my eyes are lifted up to You. Were I able to stand up, then I would stand before You all the days of my life. You, Lord, know the body that You have prepared, that it is weak and its thoughts boorish like the ferment in the dough, because it is evil.

And so O Lord, our God, if I have sinned and transgressed, do according to Your wisdom and forgive, because You are perfect in knowledge and I have repaid evil for good while You have given me good and not evil, for he who gives more than his fellow is righteous and all the more so the creator.

And if I have sinned much, You who are the master of lovingkindness will increase Your forgiveness and will subdue Your anger because His justice is greater than the great mountains, deeper than the great abyss, covering the heavens with his glory, his praises filling the earth.

Lord, I heard of Your fame and I know that from but one



of these attributes You will forgive when they sin against You but not when they sin against all of them. Forgive, please, my transgressions and my sins and the sins of Your people Israel and their transgressions, and cleanse me from my sins and my transgressions and purify me. Do not take revenge on me as You have said, I am merciful says the Lord and I will not keep my anger forever. Do not be very angry with me, and do not remember my sin forever, as You have said, For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be wroth, because great are the days of my life which are consumed in grieving. Concerning them I say: "So am I to possess months of vanity." And many nights during which I will labor, during which I will sigh, and I will converse with them in their watches on my bed and say to them: "And wearisome nights are appointed to me" and much of my sleep is absorbed in groans and I cry out to them: "Because all our days are passed way in wrath" and how many are the remaining days of my life that I may know them and be exalted, or my end and the measure of my days that I may prolong my life, for I am a stranger with You and a resident alien before You like all my first fathers. And tomorrow You will call and I will answer You. You will send Your word until it runs swiftly. What is of value in my blood, Lord, if You kill me? And what's the benefit if You make me go down to Sheol in my sins, and what is the value of Your dealing with me according to my way? Not in this manner would You be praised, and not like this would Your name and Your praises be to the ends of the earth. But the thing for

which You are praised is for dealing with Your servant mercifully. As You have said: "For the sake of My name I will forego My wrath and for My praise will I refrain from you, and I will not cut you off." And also the quality which gives You glory is Your pardoning and Your forgiveness and the passing over of transgression, as You have said: "The wisdom of man is to be long-suffering, and his glory is to forego sin." All the more so is this true of the eternal God.

Please, Lord, the great God, powerful and wonderful who keeps the covenant and lovingkindness, do not let the pain which has befallen Your servant from the day of my coming on the earth, seem a small thing to You. Behold my suffering, but not my sin, regard my distress, but not my stiffneckedness, look at my sorrows, but not at my betrayal. Accept my troubles as a ransom for my sins, my affliction for my guilt, and the shame of my soul for the transgression of my soul. Make my sins pass from before Your eyes and remember them no longer.

Preserve me from wickedness, purify me from craziness, turn me from my uncleanness, and I will be near to You, accept me and declare me innocent, for You are a God of forgiveness, favor and mercy. Let me know Your ways, O God, teach me Your paths, direct me in Your truth, and guide me in the straight path, and unite my heart to fear Your name. Turn my heart to Your forgiveness and to Your testimonies, for You call "Peace, peace" first to him that is afar, and then to him that is near. Comfort me, O Lord, for all the troubles which have

flowed over my head in the days which have passed, with Your goodness, Your salvation, Your favor, Your will, and the light of Your countenance. For I thirst for Your mercies as a parched land thirsts for water. Allow me to hear of happiness and joy, make my crushed bones happy, and let me lie down in confidence, my sleep free from fear and evil, and guard me and help me, and in the shadow of Your wings hide me, and I will not fear evil because You are with me.

You know, O Lord, that I cannot save myself without You, but You have created and You can forgive. Cause my eyes to be enlightened in Your Torah, grant me Your wisdom, teach me of the knowledge and understanding which You give from Your mouth, provide me with my allotted bread, in quiet and not in wandering, that which is permitted and not forbidden in security and not in fear. Do not make me depend on people because all flesh is like grass, and all His lovingkindness is like the blossom of the field. I trust You, Lord. I will not be embarrassed I have trusted in You. You have saved me from my enemies, and defended me from those who rise up against me. Do not deliver me to my enemies that they should say, we have swallowed him up. Turn their reproach upon their own head, and return my soul from their destruction. You save the poor from those stronger than they, and the poor and the needy from those that steal from them.

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed, save me and I shall be saved. Bind my breech and the stroke of my wound and cover me with Your great peace, and make it possible to

keep Your commandments and to maintain Your ordinances, to study and to teach, to keep and to do. Place me among those of the world to come, among those who go early and late to the houses of assembly and to the houses of study, those whose power is in You, who have in their hearts Your paths. From men which are Your hand, from men of the world whose portion is in this life, You have filled their bellies with Your hidden treasure. And I will be among the people who put their trust in the shadow of Your wings, and they will be satisfied with the fatness of Your house and rivers of pleasure will You make them drink. That I may be worthy of the great goodness which You have stored away for those who fear You, which You have wrought for those who trust in You. For with You is the source of life, in Your light do we see light. And the one who asks, if he asks You a little You will answer him more than he even asked. Because Your servant according to his strength and the shortness of his hand will he ask. And You according to Your strength and according to the length of Your hand bestows benefits on us, the God of our salvation.

May it be Your will O Lord, our God, that this era may mark the final end of the captivity of Your people Israel, the completion of our exile and mourning, the end of our affliction and suffering. The period of bondage has been long, the yoke of dominion has been heavy. Every day we become weaker, with the increase of days, our numbers decrease, with the passage of years, we also pass. We have no guide or anyone to take us by the hand, even as You warned us, "There

is none to guide her among all the sons whom she has brought forth, neither is there any that takes her by the hand of all the sons that she has brought up." There is none to commiserate with us or to console us, as You said, For who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem? Who will bemoan You? Or who will turn aside to ask about Your welfare? And who can stand in the breach or build a fence for us? There are no prophets, or anyone who knows how long. There is none who calls on Your name in truth, that stirs up himself to take hold of You, for we all have wandered like sheep, we have turned each to his own way, each one after his gain and each one after the stubbornness of his own heart. The sins of our ancestors were not enough, we add more sins to theirs. We have not been improved by the chastisements which have come to us, nor through all the warnings with which we have been warned. You, O Lord, planned to purify us of our dross and to remove our tin and to cleanse our impurity from us. Therefore, You sent us into exile, and dispersed us among the nations. We have sunk into the roaring waters of the empires. As silver is poured out into a fiery crucible, so we have been poured out. We have been driven like chaff off the mountains and our sins have carried us away like the wind. But it is not because of the shortness of Your hand, O Lord, that You refrained from helping us, or because of the deafness of Your ear that You have refrained from hearing our prayer. But our sins have separated us from Your salvation. You are just in all that has come to us, for You have dealt



truly, but we have done wickedly.

And now, O Lord, our God, the redeemer of Israel and His holy one, will You be angry with us forever? Will You maintain Your anger for all generations? Far be it from You. You will not cast off forever, and withhold Your favor. Your lovingkindness is not gone forever, nor Your mercies ceased. They are renewed every morning, recurring at all times, and in every moment. Because of Your name, give us a sign of favor, for that is the hope of all. Do not forget the covenant of our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, O Lord, for the sake of Your Torah and its students, who have become few and bowed down, concerning which You assured us that it will not be forgotten from our seed, and that Your words, which You have placed in their mouths will not depart, for the sake of Your people and Your heritage, who have remained a few out of many, like a beacon on the top of a mountain, and like a sign on a hill, and for the sake of Jerusalem, Your holy city, whose grandeur is gone from her, and our holy and beautiful Temple which is burned with fire, while all our pleasant things have become waste. And see, we have been utterly abandoned. Behold, the time is fitting for You to save and for Your mercies and lovingkindness to be known. For we have no deeds, and the pious ones have disappeared from the earth. Let your compassions speedily come to meet us, and Your lovingkindness come to us, and let Your mercies subdue Your anger and may Your great goodness remove Your indignation from Your people Israel and Your inheritance. Help us, O God

of our salvation, and gather us and save us from the nations that we may give thanks to Your holy name and praise your praise.

Turn again, Lord, our captivity, and comfort us in our wrongdoing. Satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness and we will sing and be happy all our days. Make us glad according to the days of our affliction and the years when we saw evil. Send a redeemer that he may redeem us and raise us up in happiness to our land and may the light of Your Shechinah be among us, and the vision of Your prophets near to us and by Your words may our dead come alive and awakened are those who dwell in the dust. And eternal happiness will be ours as it is said: "And the ransomed of the Lord will return and come to Zion with songs and eternal joy upon their heads. They will attain joy and happiness and sorrow and sighing will flee away." As it is also said: "The mountains will depart and the hills will be removed but Your lovingkindness will not depart from You and the covenant of my peace will not be removed, so says the Lord who has mercy on You." As it is also said: "At that time I will bring you that is at the time that I gather you together, for I will give you a name to be praised by all the people of the earth, when I return you from your captivity before your eyes, says the Lord." And more than these are the acts of consolation to those remaining and say: "In those days at that time, says the Lord, the sin of Israel will be sought after and there will be none, and the transgression of Judah and it will not

be found because I will forgive those whom I preserve." And saying: "And a man will not teach his neighbor, or a man his brother saying, Know the Lord, because everyone will know Me from the smallest to the biggest, says the Lord, because I will forgive their transgressions and their sins will I no longer remember." So have you said and so have you done, so will You continue to do. And accordingly thousands are with You. Remember me, O Lord, with the favor which You have for Your people, visit me with Your salvation, that I may see the goodness of Your           to be joyful in the joy of Your nations, that I may glory with Your inheritance. For You hear prayer and hear cries. There is none like You. And we do not know what do do, our eyes are upon You. Not because of our righteousness do we ask for Your favor but because Your mercy is great. O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, hearken and do, do not delay for Your own sake, O my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.

#### Analysis and Conclusion

A careful examination of Saadia's bakashot sheds great light on his philosophy. In fact, studying his bakashot clarifies a basic problem Saadia faced in postulating the view of God which is described in Emunot V'Dayot. Let us for a moment review what we have already said regarding Saadia's view of God as set forth in his philosophical work.

In Chapter II we summarized Saadia's God concept by saying that in his view:

1. God is creator.

2. God is the source of knowledge, the goal of intellectual pursuit, i.e., God is truth.

The problem that arises from such a view is that a God who is creator has a different relationship with, demands different things, of humankind than does a God who is purely intellectual. A God who has created the world is an involved God, a God who listens and responds to prayer, a God who demands adherence to an ethical way of life. In contrast, a God who is purely intellectual can only be approached through the intellect, i.e., through the pursuit of truth. Such a God cannot hear or respond or intervene in human affairs. Such a God is an idea, making no demands on humankind except that they should activate their intellects.

It was important for Saadia to establish that God created the world out of nothingness for this is the basis of the traditional Jewish concept of God. Saadia, first and foremost was a Jew. Moreover, it was important for Saadia to see God as creator because this ultimately basis of his argument for resurrection, "the most glorious of promises made to the children of Israel by the Creator."<sup>3</sup> Saadia writes:

It is, therefore, quite clear that whoever admits that the Creator produced everything that exists out of nothing and supported His prophets with marvelous miracles cannot reject the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead or adhere to arguments from nature (to the contrary).<sup>4</sup>

We can see that Saadia's entire world view was inextricably linked with his belief in creatio ex nihilo, i.e., with his belief that God created the world out of nothingness.

On the other hand, it was important for Saadia to establish that God is truth. Living in a world which placed great value on logic and philosophy, it was important to those who were committed to Judaism's perpetuation to show that its basis was in reason. He writes:

...to corroborate revelation by means of reason and thus to refute unbelievers is not only commendable but actually mandatory.<sup>5</sup>

The question then becomes, how could Saadia reconcile these two conflicting views of God? We see such an attempt at reconciliation in the words of his bakashot. The opening section of the first bakashah is in essence a description of God, the idea. In outline form, it might look like this:

1. God is unique.
2. God is above human praise, words are inadequate.
3. God has no attributes.
4. God is eternal.
5. God is the mesheh hahmah, continuous source of wisdom, the Active Intellect.
6. God is omnipotent.
7. Once again, God is eternal.

Contrast this to the description of God found in the section which refers to God as:

The one who searches the hearts and tries the reins, searching all the depths of the belly...You make rich and poor, You raise up the poor from the dust and lift up the beggar from the dunghill. You satiate the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked...etc.

Clearly, the God of these verses is very much involved in the daily activities and concerns of His people; a God who is re-



sponsive to their needs, a God very much different from the description given in the beginning of the bakashah. Let us reserve judgment, however, until we have examined the bakashah in its entirety.

In the next section which begins, "You are the master of power...Moreover You are the master of wisdom...You are the master of riches...", Saadia seems to be setting up a system of Platonic ideals. That is to say, God is the ideal; we are but a mere shadow of His greatness in terms of our power, our wisdom, our riches, etc. This section, then, is philosophically sound.

The next section is a list of blessings which shed little if any light on our discussion. This section concludes, however, with a statement which is again problematic if we were to view it from a purely philosophical point of view. The final sentence states: "for You are a God who hears prayer." Once again, Saadia has reverted back to describing God the creator, as God the idea fades into the background.

The second bakashah opens, as did the first, with a purely philosophical description of God. In fact, regarding the opening section of this bakashah, Louis Finkelstein wrote:

Here we have the confession of philosophical faith in the transcendent God, whose infinite being defies finite comprehension.<sup>6</sup>

It is within the first few pages of this bakashan that Saadia makes the following statement which seems to be indicative of his attitude. He writes:

Truly, Lord our God, You created this world to be

a passing world that in it people should examine the statutes and ordinances which You commanded them.

Despite any inconsistency which we might find in Saadia's philosophy and then by extension in his liturgy, it remains clear that Saadia is not an advocate of blind faith. God's commandments are not only to be done, but to be examined. Here, Saadia has accomplished a synthesis of the religious and the philosophical.

Once again, we see in this bakashah a depiction of human smallness in contrast to God's vastness:

What is man that he should stand before You? His origin is dust...even in health he is weak...even with knowledge he does not understand...even if he has riches, behold he is poor...

Repeatedly we read of our inability to properly thank God:

Who is it who can tell of Your greatness and who makes Your praises heard? It is You who are exalted as the head above all, above and beyond all blessings and praises.

In the next section of the second bakashah, Saadia once again alludes to a God who is all of an unaffected by the human condition:

For if man sins, how can that affect You? And if his iniquities are great how can they harm You? But alas for the men who have sinned against You, alas for their souls, for they have brought evil upon themselves.

It is the next section, however, which seems to clearly embody Saadia's ambivalence about the true nature of God. He writes:

If repentance and thanks would appease You, here is

my repentance...if a broken spirit You will forgive, here is my broken heart...if by prayer and supplication You could be appeased, here is my prayer...

Saadia is a Jew and despite the aloofness which a philosophical view of God entails, he is determined to continue acting in accordance with the belief that God is responsive and, therefore, forgiving, loving and concerned. Just as David Hume, the philosopher, believed that there was no such thing as cause and effect, yet found it impossible to live his life any other way but in accordance with this belief, so too Saadia apparently found it impossible to ignore his people's confidence in the immanence of God. Finkelstein writes:

...Rab Saadia deliberately chose this prayer and its companion work to express...the philosophical insights which he felt had to be shared by every Jew so that he might understand his faith. In this very effort, Rab Saadia expresses one of the basic principles of his thought. For Rab Saadia Gaon these two perceptions of God -- His immanence and His transcendence -- are not inconsistent or contradictory or even supplementary. They are facets of unity. He can pray to God better, and with the greater intimacy and love, because he looks upon Him as the Infinite, beyond the possibility of description of man.<sup>7</sup>

Whether Finkelstein is right in assuming that Saadia did not see his philosophical and traditional views of God as inconsistent, we cannot say. We must, however, take note of the fact that any inconsistency we might perceive is not unique to Saadia's liturgy, it is a tension which is present as well within his philosophy. As it turns out, the bakashot bring this tension to light because in them we see Saadia's two views of God side by side, making the differences that

much more pronounced.

It is now time to return to the questions which we have posed throughout this paper. We have been concerned with the question of how a philosopher, who spoke of an indescribable, unresponsive God, could write a prayerbook. The answer is that although Saadia took the necessary philosophical steps to prove that God is the creator of the world, this notion has spiritual and religious ramifications which are left unsung in Emunot V'Dayot but which are fully expressed in his bakashot. By postulating that God is the creator of the world, Saadia not only maintained harmony with the beliefs of Kalam, but was able to confirm the Jewish belief in a personal, caring God. The problem is that Saadia held two views of God which are in opposition to one another, for in addition to being the creator of the world, Saadia saw God as truth. Saadia, apparently, fought very hard to achieve a synthesis between the creator God and the God who is truth. His bakashot contain two strands of thought which never gel, but only co-exist. There is no melding of the two images of God. The attempt at synthesis is embodied in the fact that Saadia had the courage to place these two images side by side; that he allowed his prayers to reflect this tension between the philosophical and traditional views of God. Yet, we must not lose sight of the fact that this man was such a genius that even those sections of the bakashot which reflect a purely philosophical view of God are comprised of pesukim, i.e., verses from Scripture. In other words, Saadia was

using words of Torah to make philosophic proclamations. Herein may lie the true synthesis.

So it turns out that Finkelstein was right. Saadia's bakashot convey two distinct messages, i.e., the dual image of God which was developed in Emunot V'Dayot. Was Saadia merely a philosopher in Jew's clothing? The answer must be that he was a Jew and a philosopher who strove to achieve a synthesis between his two worlds so that he and his faith might survive.



## NOTES

Chapter I

1. Abraham A. Neuman, "Saadia and His Relation to Palestine," Saadia Studies. Abraham A. Neuman and Solomon Zeitlin, eds. (Philadelphia: The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1943), p. 112.
2. Henry Malter, Saadia Gaon: His Life and Works (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1921).
3. Neuman, "Saadia and His Relation to Palestine," p. 110.
4. Malter, Saadia Gaon, p. 421.
5. M. Friedlander, "Life and Works of Saadia," Jewish Quarterly Review, Vol. 5 (January, 1883): 180.
6. Ibid.
7. Malter, Saadia Gaon, p. 39.
8. Louis Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1944), p. 58.
9. Malter, Saadia Gaon, p. 42
10. Neuman, "Saadia and His Relation to Palestine," p. 118.
11. Malter, Saadia Gaon, p. 55.
12. Ibid., p. 56.
13. Ibid., p. 58.
14. Ibid., p. 63.
15. Ibid., p. 94.
16. Solomon Zeitlin, "Saadia and Religious Leadership," Saadia Studies, p. 366.
17. Ibid., p. 380.
18. Ibid.
19. Neuman, "Saadia and His Relation to Palestine," p. 120.
20. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 60.
21. Ibid.

22. Zeitlin, "Saadia and Religious Leadership," Saadia Studies, p. 385.
23. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 63.
24. Ibid., p. 62.
25. Neuman, "Saadia and His Relation to Palestine," Saadia Studies, p. 125.
26. Zeitlin, "Saadia and Religious Leadership," Saadia Studies, p. 389.
27. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 61.
28. Zeitlin, p. 388.
29. Neuman, p. 126.
30. Zeitlin, p. 368.
31. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 62.
32. Neuman, p. 126.
33. Ibid., p. 127.
34. Neuman, p. 127.
35. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 62.
36. Neuman, p. 131.
37. Zeitlin, p. 396.
38. Ibid., p. 369.
39. Apparently Saadia recorded the details of the controversy in his "Book of Festivals," but, unfortunately, only fragments of it are extant.
40. Zeitlin, pp. 390-391.
41. Ibid., p. 394.
42. Ibid., p. 392.
43. Friedlander, "Life and Works of Saadia," p. 196.
44. Malter, Saadia Gaon, p. 89.
45. Ibid., p. 90.
46. Zeitlin, p. 396.

47. Ibid.
48. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 55.
49. Ibid., p. 56.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., p. 67.
53. Ibid.
54. Robert Gordis, "Saadia in Light of Today," Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 178.
55. Neuman, p. 111.
56. II Chronicles 29:36; Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 68.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., p. 70.
59. Ibid., p. 68.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., p. 74.
62. Ibid., p. 75.
63. Ibid., p. 71.
64. Ibid., p. 75.
65. Ibid., p. 76.
66. Ibid., p. 77.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Zeitlin, p. 397.
71. Ellis Rivkin, "The Saadiyah-David ben Zakkai Controversy: A Structural Analysis," Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman. Meir ben Horin, Bernard D. Weirby and Solomon Zeitlin, eds. (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 403.

72. Ibid., p. 422.
73. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 79.
74. Ibid.
75. Zeitlin, p. 397.
76. Malter, Saadia Gaon, p. 51.

## Chapter II

1. Saadia Gaon, The Book of Beliefs and Opinions. Samuel Rosenblatt, trans. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 7.
2. Malter lists the fields of knowledge covered in Saadia's writings as follows:
  - A. Hebrew philology (comprising grammar, lexicography and exegesis);
  - B. Liturgy (including poetics in general);
  - C. Halakhah in its manifold ramifications (covering the various branches of Jewish religious and civil law);
  - D. Calendar and chronology (largely polemical);
  - E. Philosophy (especially the philosophy of religion and embracing the author's systems of ethics and psychology);
  - F. Polemics against the Karaites and other opponents of traditional Judaism of diversified content and written at various periods of the author's life).
3. Emunot V'Dayot was written in Baghdad in the year 933. Scholars are in agreement about the fact that the work seems to have been begun as a series of independent treatises, only later to be combined into one volume. Interestingly enough, the Arabic original of Saadia's work was not published until 1880 by S. Landauer (Leyden), based on a Bodleian manuscript with variants from the Leningrad Library. The Hebrew translation, made in 1186 by Juda Ibn Tibbon, was originally printed in Constantinople in 1562. See Rosenblatt's introduction to his English translation of Emunot V'Dayot.
4. Saadia, Book of Beliefs, p. 3.
5. Harry A. Wolfson, "The Jewish Kalam," Jewish Quarterly Review Anniversary Volume, p. 550.
6. Alexander Altman, ed. Three Jewish Philosophers (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 15.

7. Saadia Gaon, Book of Beliefs, p. 16.
8. Ibid.
9. Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy," Jewish Quarterly Review, No. 2-3, Vol. 33 (1942-43): 312.
10. Norman Lamm, "Faith and Doubt," Tradition, Vol. 9 (Sp/Sm '67), p. 23.
11. Saadia's argument for the existence of the soul is as follows: "By the knowledge derived from logical necessity...is meant conclusions, which, unless they are accepted by the individual as true, would compel his denial of the validity of his rational intuitions or the perception of his senses. Since, however, he cannot very well negate either of these two, he must regard the said inference as being correct. This, we are forced to affirm, although we have never seen it, that we possess a soul. We must also agree that every soul is endowed with reason in order not to deny the latter's manifest activity." Saadia, Book of Beliefs, p. 16.
12. Heschel, "The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy," p. 272.
13. Saadia, Book of Beliefs, p. 243.
14. Ibid., p. 247.
15. Ibid., p. 243.
16. Ibid., p. 183.
17. Heschel, p. 289.
18. Saadia, Book of Beliefs, p. 87.
19. Saadia's arguments for the existence of the world can be found on pp. 41-44 of Rosenblatt's translation of the Book of Beliefs and Opinions.
20. Saadia, Book of Beliefs, p. 91.
21. Ibid., p. 100.
22. Ibid., p. 228.
23. Heschel, p. 297.
24. Israel Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," Jewish Quarterly Review, No. 2-3, Vol. 33 (1942-43): 155.



25. It seems, however, that he did his best to couch this in language that would not make these ideas readily available to the average reader. Incidentally, this kind of double message was not alien to Saadia. For example, he commonly prepared a double translation of most biblical books; one for scholars, called sharh, one for the general public, called tafsir. In addition, in Treaties 8:3, Saadia, in explaining the obscurity of the angels's message in the Daniel story, writes:

Thereupon the angel of his own accord, before giving him the explicit answer, prefaced his remarks to him by mentioning the reason on account of which he had veiled this answer in obscure terms. He told him, namely, that he had thus obscured it only in order that the common people and the ignorant might not understand and be worried. For the desires and apprehensions of these individuals do not correspond to those entertained by the wise; that is, the reward of the world to come and life eternal. They desire, rather, the possessions of this world and its glory that can be acquired immediately. The wise, however, will understand the answer, as he said: Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white and refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and one of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand. (Dan. 12:9,10)

There is definitely a sense in Saadia's writings of "them" (meaning those who had activated their intellects) and "us" (meaning those who have not).

26. Saadia, Book of Beliefs, p. 139.  
 27. Ibid., p. 219.  
 28. Ibid., p. 118.  
 29. Ibid., p. 123.

### Chapter III

1. Alexander Altman, ed. Three Jewish Philosophers. (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 18.
2. Ismar Elbogen, "Saadia's Siddur," Saadia Anniversary Volume (New York: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1943), p. 249.
3. Ibid., p. 250.

4. Louis Ginzberg, "Saadia's Siddur," Saadia Studies. Abraham A. Neuman and Solomon Zeitlin, eds. (Philadelphia: The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1943), p. 328.
5. Malter, Saadia Gaon, p. 151.
6. Ibid., p. 147.
7. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 91.
8. Lawrence A. Hoffman, The Canonization of the Synagogue Service (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 165.
9. Elbogen, "Saadia's Siddur," Saadia Anniversary Volume, p. 251.
10. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 92.
11. Ginzberg, "Saadia's Siddur," Saadia Studies, p. 317.
12. Elbogen, "Saadia's Siddur," Saadia Anniversary Volume, p. 252.
13. Hoffman, Canonization, p. 11.
14. Ibid.
15. Elbogen, "Saadia's Siddur," Saadia Anniversary Volume, p. 250.
16. Ibid.
17. Malter, Saadia Gaon, p. 217.
18. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 92.
19. Ginzberg, "Saadia's Siddur," Saadia Studies, p. 327.
20. Finkelstein, Rab Saadia Gaon, p. 91.
21. Malter, Saadia Gaon, p. 148.
22. Ibid., p. 164.
23. Hoffman, Canonization, p. 11.
24. Ibid., p. 28.
25. Ibid., p. 11.
26. Ibid., p. 165.

27. Ibid., p. 30.
28. For example, he establishes the order of the Tefillah not based on Megillah 17b as one might think, but rather on a selection of biblical verses. Hoffman, p. 166.
29. Ibid., p. 49.
30. Ibid., p. 53.
31. Ibid., p. 55.
32. Ibid., p. 54.
33. Ibid., p. 79.
34. Ibid., p. 165.

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