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**AR-RUS IN MEDIEVAL JUDAEO-ARABIC
BIBLICAL COMMENTARY?
(A TRIBUTE TO ABRAHAM
ELIYAHU HARKAVY)¹**

The publication of this short note in the 17th volume of the *Khazar Almanac*, devoted also to Vladimir Petrukhin's jubilee, is a great honor for me. The present study is an homage to V. Petrukhin's role in the renewal of Judaic studies in Post-Soviet Russia and especially in the field of the research of early medieval sources for East-European history written in Hebrew and other Jewish languages. Another kind of homage is my reference to Abraham Eliyahu Harkavy who was the first researcher and publisher of the earliest evidences on the history of East-European peoples (especially the Khazars and the Rus') written in Judaeo-Arabic [*Harkavy, 1877; 1880; 1897; Гаркави, 1882*]².

In the following paper I'm going to present a version of the text of one of the earliest Judaeo-Arabic accounts concerning some East-European and Eurasian steppe peoples, which is preserved in Biblical commentaries

¹ I am grateful to Dr. Timofey Guimon (Institute of the World History of Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow) and Dr. Dan Shapira (University of Ramat-Gan, Israel) for their help and commentaries in time of my work with English text of this paper. I am solely responsible for the conclusions made further.

² There are some other important studies in this field (especially [*Polak, 1951; Ankori, 1957, p. 64–79; Поляк, 2001, с. 86*]) but they all are based only Harkavy's publications and not on independent manuscript evidences.

written by Yefet ben Eli, a 10th century Jerusalemite Jewish Karaite author. The fragments of this text – a part of the commentary on the book of Ezekiel (Ez. 38:1–6 and 39:1) – were cited by Harkavy in his two short works, one in Russian [*Гаркави, 1882, с. 239–241*] and one in Hebrew [*Harkavy, 1880, p. 1–2*]. Harkavy cited a manuscript of Yefet's commentary on Ezekiel, which evidently originated from the collections of Abraham Firkovitch. Such kind of identification of the manuscript seems to be undoubted, because according to Harkavy, he discovered this evidence between the manuscripts of Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg³ [*Harkavy, 1880, p. 1–2*]. Unfortunately, the manuscript of Yefet's commentary used by Harkavy for his work can hardly be identified because in the 1870s and 1880s the manuscripts of Firkovitch collections did not have any shelfmarks. However, now we can identify some of the manuscripts of the Firkovitch 2nd collection, containing Yefet's commentary on Ezek. 38. Harkavy was acquainted with one of them. We can only speculate which one of those manuscripts served as basis for two his above-mentioned publications.

Little is known about Yefet ben Eli himself. Due to his full Arabic name and especially *nisbah* (Abu-l-Hasan al-Lavi al-Basri) we know that he originated from Lower Mesopotamia and belonged to a Levitical family. He lived for the most part of his life in Jerusalem, where he (while belonging to a Karaite group called “Aveley Tsiyyon” or the “Mourners of Zion”) wrote his commentary to the Bible. Dates of his birth and death are unknown. His commentary on the Book of Daniel, which is considered to be his last work, contains the dates of Byzantium's conquest of Antioch, Tarsus and Ayn Zarba (i.e. the years 962, 965 and 969) [*Margoliuoth, 1889, p. VI*]. In the same work, the author states that 2300 years have passed since the Exodus (988 CE), and that the Muslim religion has been existing for 400 years in his days [*Margoliuoth, 1889, p. 137, 152*]. The 400th year of Hijra was the year 1010 CE. So, as the latest work of ben Eli dates to the period between the end of the 980s and the beginning of the 1010s, his commentary on the Book of Ezekiel was probably finished by the end of the 980s. An additional argument in favor of an earlier date for the commentary on Ezekiel (Ezek. 47:22–23) is provided by a passage on Khazars, which are mentioned as a group converted into the Jewish religion: “*al-Khazar al-ladhina dakhalu fi-d-din fi waqt al-galut*” [see: *Рашковский, 2014, esp. p. 260–263*].

³ Today it is the National Library of Russia.

As for the manuscripts used as the basis for this work, I should, first, mention a complete version of Yefet's commentary copied in 1686–1688 in a brilliant eastern semi-cursive script by a karaitic scribe Daniel ben Moshe ha-Melammed ben Josiah Fayruz from Cairo. Now this manuscript is kept in the Institute of the Oriental Manuscripts⁴ of the Russian Academy of Sciences. That is one of the volumes of ben Eli's commentaries, preserved in the collection of Fayruz family [*Gintsburg*, 2003, p. 87]⁵. The shelfmark of the manuscript in I. Guintsburg catalogue is B 135.

Another manuscript used for this publication belongs to the 2nd Collection of Abraham Firkovitch. Its shelfmark in the Manuscript department of the National Library of Russia is Evr-Arab I 3464. The manuscript is not dated. It is written on the oriental paper with no watermarks. The fragment with the commentary of on Ezek. 38:1–6 is on folios 1b–4a. It starts with the title *"In the name of the Lord God of Israel, may his name be blessed – the 3d part (אלתאלתאלו) of the commentary on the book of Ezekiel"*. The title is written in square letters. Another manuscript containing the text in question is Evr.-Arab. I 3909. This manuscript is also not dated and written on paper in oriental semi-cursive script without watermarks. The commentary on verses 1–6 of the book of Ezekiel appear in this manuscript on folio 108.

Finally, at least a part of Yefet's commentary on Ezekiel 38:1–6 (the verses 5–6) is preserved in Evr-Arab I 177 (fol. 181–182 and 190). According to its colophon (on fol. 226a) the manuscript was finished in 1335⁶. There are also some other manuscripts that I used while working on this paper. Those manuscripts will be named separately.

⁴ In 1818–1930 – the Asiatic Museum of Russian Academy of Sciences, than later in 1934–1956 – the Institute of Oriental Studies; than in 1956–2007 Leningrad (and since 1991 – Saint Petersburg) Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of Soviet (and since 1991 – again Russian) Academy of Sciences, and now since 2007 – Institute of the Oriental Manuscripts.

⁵ Later, in 19th century this collection arrived Crimea, where in 1916 it has become the part of the "Karaitic people's library" (*Karay bitikligi*) in Eupatoria. Afterwards, in 1931 this collection was sent to the Institute of the Oriental Studies in Leningrad (today it is the Institute of the Oriental manuscripts of the Russian academy of Sciences in St.-Petersburg). See more about this manuscript in [*Старкова*, 1965]. K. B. Starkova was eager to publish this work already in 1960s. [*Старкова*, 1965, с. 205]. For the additional information on this manuscript, see a printed catalogue by Jonah Gintsburg [*Gintsburg*, 2003, p. 87].

⁶ To be precise the final day of the work of a scribe named Shmuel ben Yosef was the 29th of Tammuz coinciding with the Islamic month Dhu'l-Qa'dah of 735.

In his commentary on Ezek. 38:1–6, Yefet identifies some Biblical nations and realities with peoples of his time. For example, Meshech, mentioned in Ezek. 38:2 is called Khorasan – the region of Eastern Iran and Iranian speaking lands in Central Asia. The word as-Şaqaliba or the Slavs is used in this context in order to identify the Biblical land of Tubal which in the original meaning of the book of Ezikiel existed (as well as Meshech) in the 1st part and the middle of the 1st millennium BCE in Eastern Anatolia [Yamauchi, 1976, p. 243–245].

In fact, there are many problems with the translation and the identification of the word *roš* (ראש) which literary means “head” and in conjunction with the word *nasi* (נשיא), meaning “prince”, clearly should be translated as “the chief prince”. Most of the modern translations understand this clause in the above-mentioned way, but a misunderstanding of ראש as a term for a title of a ruler or a name of the nation is also well known. For the first time it occurs in the Septuagint where the Hebrew expression נשיא ראש is translated as ἄρχοντα Ἰώζ.

In both his publications [Harkavy, 1880, p. 2; Гаркави, 1882, с. 139–140] Harkavy indicates that before the discovery of Yefet’s evidence on Rus’ this interpretation of Ezek. 38:2 was known only from the quotation in “Sefer ha-Osher” or the “Book of Reaches”, written by a 11th–12th century Constantinople Karaite Jacob ben Reuven. Harkavy demonstrates that the printed text of this book⁷, created as an epitome of earlier Jewish Karaite Hebrew and Judaeo-Arabic commentaries, contains the censored version of Jacob ben Reuven’s commentary to Ezek. 38:2. The word “רוסיים” or the Ruses is changed for the “goyyim” (גויים), meaning simply Non-Jews in the printed edition [Jacob ben Reuben, 1836, fol. 10a]. The whole pericope as Harkavy cites in the Hebrew version of his publication looks as follows:

נשיא ראש⁸. מע’ נשיא לרוסיים שמם בלשון הקדש ראש. משך כורוסניים ותובל היא שקלביניא.
[Harkavy, 1880, p. 2]⁹

⁷ Appeared in Gözlev (Eupatoria) in Crimea in 1836.

⁸ Here and afterwards, the text in bold letters contains the original Biblical text and Hebrew words in the main Judaeo-Arabic text.

⁹ Mss. C11. fol. 120a of the Institute of Oriental manuscripts of Russian Academy of Sciences.

The prince (of) Roš. Meaning the prince of Ruses, whose name is Roš in the Holy Tongue. Meshekh are the Khorasanians. Tubal is Sclavinia.

We can only speculate how deep could be Jacob ben Reuven's real acquaintance with the peoples Eastern Europe and Central Asia mentioned in his adaptation of Yefet's commentary to Ezek. 38:2. Was he really influenced by a tradition of understanding of the text in Septuagint, while living in the cultural Greek-speaking milieu? As for me, I only can say that I doubt if the Hebrew title *Nasi* (leader, chieftain, or prince) can be understood here as an equivalent of the Old Russian and Old Church Slavonic word *Kniaz'*. As for the people of Rus' themselves, he could have been acquainted with them very well because of the regular commercial and diplomatic contacts between Rus' and Byzantium in the time of his life.

It seems to be evident that Jacob ben Reuven's interpretation of the verse (Ezek. 38:2) is not original in any case and follows the one of Yefet ben Eli in all its important details. The only substantial difference is a change of Arabic term *Ṣaqaliba* to the Greek word *Sclavinia*. The last form of the word clearly indicates that Jacob ben Reuven really knew the Greek ethnic term indicating the Slavic speaking peoples.

Another difficulty is the lack of manuscript evidence on the Rus' in two of three available for me manuscripts of Yefet's commentary on the Book of Ezekiel. In those manuscripts the translation of Hebrew word *Roš* in this context is really attested as *ar-Rum* that can be understood as an indication of Rome or Byzantium. The mixture between *ar-Rus* (אלרוס) and *ar-Rum* (אלרום) can easily be explained as a result of misspell between the Hebrew letters "samekh" and "mem sofit". The reading **ar-Rum** instead of **ar-Rus** occurs in the manuscripts **B 135** (fol. 292a) and **Evr.-Arab. I 3464** (fol. 1b, 2a) and only in the manuscript **Evr.-Arab. I 3909** (fol. 180a) there is a clear and evident reading **ar-Rus**. However, even here the letter "samekh" in words *ar-Rus* and *Khorasan* looks the same as "mem sofit" in the word *Adam* one line above¹⁰.

A Middle Eastern Karaite (or Rabbanite) Jew of the 2nd part of the 10th century could refer to the Byzantian Empire as "enemy of Israel" in the context of its "Reconquista" in Levant under Nikephoros Phokas (963–969), John Tzimiskes (969–976) and Basil II (976–1025), and persecutions and forced conversions under Romanos I Lekapenos (919–944). However,

¹⁰The original digitalized manuscriptis are available with the help of Israel National Library manuscript database: <https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/en/ManuScript/> (12.04.2020). The number manuscript Evr.-Arab. I 3909 microfilm in Israel National Library catalogue is F 57630.

the identification of Hebrew *Roš* in the original text of Yefet's commentary with the Byzantians and not the Rus' seems doubtful. There are four important reasons for this. Firstly, the reading "ar-Rus" instead of *ar-Rum* makes possible the wordplay between the Hebrew word *Roš* and Judeo-Arabic *ar-Rus*. Secondly, there is a clear evidence of Jacob ben Reuven that Constantinople Karaites translated and understood the ethnic term *ar-Rus* of Yefet's commentary to Ezek. 38:2 as the name of Rus' after only a hundred years since this work was finished. Thirdly, MS. Evr-Arab I 3909 confirms the reading *ar-Rus*. Finally, the appearance of the form *ar-Rum* in the later manuscript tradition also could be a result of the usage of this ethnic term in relation to Rum, now designating the Ottoman Empire or its metropolitan province – Rumelia. Thus, it could be a rationalistic reconstruction of the text by later medieval scribes. Moreover, as I have stated before, at least one of the manuscripts (B 135) containing the form *ar-Rum* instead of *ar-Rus* originated from Ottoman Egypt.

There are two more ethnic and toponymical terms of East-European and Central Asian origin mentioned in Yefet's commentary on Ezek. 38:1–6. The first is Bab al-Abwab or Derbend – the port on the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea. Yefet was well acquainted with that place and mentioned it at least two times in his commentaries on Jeremiah 50:25 and Daniel 11:40–44 [*Margoliouth, 1889, p. 133; Рашковскуй, 2016, с. 68–69*].

The second one is at-Turk identified with Togarma of Ezek. 38:6. This word served to Muslim historians and geographers of the time as an indication of nomadic and semi-nomadic Turkic speaking population living to the north from the Islamic countries. The identification of the northern barbarians with the descendants of Togarma in Jewish, Christian and Muslim tradition is based on the evidence of this single verse of the book of Ezekiel. The author of the Book of Josippon, an elder contemporary of Yefet ben Eli, attests it in the first chapter of his work. There exists one more evidence of Yefet's commentary on Ezekiel with a mention of the "land of Turks" (בלאד אלתרך) in a commentary to Ezek. 27:14 (Evr-Arab. I 177. fol. 190b)¹¹.

Hereinafter I give the text of Yefet's commentary on Ezek. 38:1–6, based on the Ms. Evr-Arab I 3464 with the variants from the Mss. Evr-Arab I 3909, Evr-Arab I 177 of Russian National Library, and B 135 of the Institute of the Oriental Manuscripts with an English translation.

¹¹ In the MS. B 135 (fol. 204a) there is a form בלד אלתרך.

בשם יוי אלוהי ישראל יתש¹²
 אלגזו אתאלת מן תפסיר ספר יחזקאל
 ויהי דבר יהוה אלי לאמר.
 וכאן כטאב אללה אליי קולא. **בן אדם שים**
פניך אל גוג ארץ המגוג נשיא ראש משך
ותובל והנבא עליו. יא אבן אדם אגעל
 קצדך אלי **גוג**¹³ ארץ **אלמגוג** שריף אלו¹⁴ וכראסאן¹⁵
 ואלצקאלבה ותנבא עליה. דכר **גוג** אלדיהו
 אכר עדו לישראל אד הו קץ **מלחמה** ובעדה
 יתוטא אלעאלם למסיחה ולעבידה¹⁶ והם אלדין¹⁷
יגיבון בקאיא ישראל מן ענד¹⁸ **נהרי כוש בצבים**
ובפרדים ובכרכרות והם איצא יאתון בגואהר
 נפיסה אלתי יזיין בה אלקדס וכל דלך דכרה
 קבל בני אלקדס תם קאל בעדה **בעשרים וחמש**
 \fol.2a\
שנה לגלותינו. אעלם אן גוג הוא אסם אלמלך ומגוג
 הו אסם אלקביל כקו **גמר ומגוג ומדי ויון ותובל**¹⁹
 ודכר מעה תלת קבאיל גיר קבילה אעני **מגוג**
 והואלי אתלתה **הם ראש משך ותובל**²⁰ וישבה
 אן אלו²¹ אסמהם באלאבראני **ראש** ויקרב
 אנהם מן **בני יפת** איצא וכדלך **תובל מבני יפת**.
 ואמא **משך** פהם אתנין. אלואהד מן **בני שם**

¹² The title of the third part of the commentary (in square script) exists only in the Mss Evr-Arab I 3464. The Hebrew text of the book of Ezekiel in MS Evr-Arab I 3464 is also in the square script.

¹³ The original text contains here the Hebrew form גוג instead of Judaeo-Arabic יאגוג (or יاجوخ in Arabic).

¹⁴ Both manuscripts (B 135 and Evr-Arab. I 3464) have here and downwards "ar-Rum" (אלרום) instead of ar-Rus. The orthography here can be compared to the word "Khorasan" (כרסאן) which is written next to it. The correct form ar-Rus exist only in the Ms. Evr.-Arab I 3909. For the details see note #10.

¹⁵ In Evr-Arab I 3464 וכראסאן is written on the margins of the page (fol. 1b). The first "alef" is above the rest of the word between "samekh" and "resh".

¹⁶ The text here is given according to Mss. B 135. Evr-Arab I 3464 has another form of plural (עבאדה) here.

¹⁷ Mss B 135 has אלדי

¹⁸ The word in Mss (Evr-Arab I 3464) is written above the line.

¹⁹ In Mss B 135 the last two words are omitted.

²⁰ In B 135 al this clause is shortened: **ראש משך ותובל**

²¹ This is the reading in Mss B 135 and Evr.-Arab I 3464. The correct form אלו²¹ is kept in Ms. Evr-Arab. I 3909.

כקו וגתר ומשך ואלתאני מן בני יפת כקו ומשך
ותירס והדה אלמדכור הוא איצא מן בני יפת
מתל אכותה. פערף אנה יגמע קבילה מע
תלת²² קבאיל מן בני עמה גיר מא ינחשר מנהא
אליהא מן סאיר אלאמם לכן האולי אלמדכורין
הם אלגבורים²³ ומעולה עליהם. ואמרת
כה אמר אדני יהוה הנני אליך גוג נשיא
/fol. 2b/

ראש משך ותירס: וקל כדי קאל אלרב
אלאלאה הא אנא עליך יא גוג שריף ראש משך
ותובל: מעני קו הנני אליך יריד בה באלנקמה
מתל קו פי פרעוה והר שעיר וגירהם.
ושבבתיך ונתתי החיים בלחייך והוצאתי
אותך את כל חילך סוסים ופרשים לבשי
מכלול כולם קהל רב צנה ומגן תפשי חרבות
כולם. וארדדך ואגעל אלמהאר²⁴ פי לחייך
ואכרגך מע כל גישך כילא ופרסאנא לבאס
אקביא כלהם גוקא כבירא אצחאב אלתרס
ואלדרקא צאבטי אלסיף כלהם: קאל פי קו
ושובבתיך אנה קצד בה אלי אלבקאיא אלת²⁵
אנפלחת מן מן עסכר מלך הצפון אלת קיל פיהא
ועלה באשו ותעל צחנחו פהם אלדי יתור גוג
/л3a/

אלי אלמגי וקיל אנה מן לפט אלעתו ומענאה הו
אנה יפרד באפראד רדיה עליה פהי אלת²⁶ תעתיה
ותהלכה כמא סנשרה דלך פי אלפצל אלדי בעדה
וקו ונתתי חיים בלחייך הו קול לפרעה ונתתי מתב²⁷
חיים בלחייך לכנה גדב פרעה מן קצבה אלמלך
אלי טרף עמלה והדא יגדבה מין אקצא באב
אלאבואב אלי הדה אלבלד. ודכר עסכרה פמנה
אלרגאלה כקו ואת כל חילך ומנהם רכאב אלכיל
כקו סוסים ופרשים תם דכר לבאסהם בקו לבשי
מכלול תם דכר אלאת חרבהם פקאל צנה ומגן

²² Mss. B 135 – ג.

²³ Mss. B 135 – אלגבארה.

²⁴ Mss. B 135 – אלמהאד.

²⁵ Mss B 135 has אלדי here.

²⁶ Mss B 135 has אלדי here.

²⁷ The word is written on the margins by another hand.

תפשי חרבות כלם. פּרש כּוּש ופּוּט
 אתם כלם מגן וכּוּבַע: פּאַרס ואלחבש
 ותפת מעהם כלהם אצחאב אלדרקה ואלכודה:
 ערף אנה יגי פרס והו מן אלשרק ואנמא כּוּש
 /π3b/

ופּוּט פּאַן אצללהם מן אלגרב לאנהם מן בּני חם והם
 באלקרב מן עמל מצר כמא דכרהם פי פצל מצרים
 כּוּש ופּוּט וּלוד וכל הערב וכּוּש²⁸ וישבה אנהם
 גומע²⁹ מלך הצפון מן מלך מצר פי וקת רגועה אלי
 אלשאם והו אלדי קיל פיה ומשל במכמני הזהב
 ובכל המודות מצרים ולובים וכּוּשִׁים במצעדיו
 פערף אן כּוּשִׁים ולובים יגין מעה כּוּשִׁים וכּוּשִׁים
 ולובים במצעדיו פאלדי יבקא ינצאפו אלי גוג
 ויגון מעה וערף אנהם איצא אצחאב אלדרק
 ולבאס אלכודה גמר וכל אגפיה בית
 תוגרמה ירכתי צפון את כל אגפיו עמים
 רבים אתך: גמר וכל אפואגהא דאכל אלדרך
 צדור אלשמאל וכל אפוגהא שׁעוב
 כתירה מעך: אעלם אן גמר הו מן
 /4a/

בני יפת וכדלך תוגרמה לאנה אדכל כּוּש ופּוּט
 פי אלוסט מן חית אנהם גבארה מתל אלעסאכר
 אלתי תקדם דכרהא פדלך דכרהם תם

In the name of the Lord God of Israel, may his name be blessed – the beginning of the 3d part of the commentary on the book of Ezekiel. *And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying*³⁰:

*And there was a speech from God to me telling*³¹: *Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him. Oh, Son of man incite your intention on Gog of*

²⁸ This is the reading of the last word in Mss. Evr-Arab I 3464 and B 135. The correct reading כּוּב exist in Mss. Evr-Arab. I 3909.

²⁹ Ms. B 135 – אגתמע.

³⁰ I cite the English translation of Masoretic text according to the version of JPS Tanakh, except some place where its translation of some words is not correct.

³¹ He and downwards I give the English translation of Yefet's translation of Biblical verses into Judaeo-Arabic with an underscore.

the Land of Magog the ruler of ar-Rum³², Khorasan, and as-Şagaliba and prophesy against him. Gog, which is the worst enemy of Israel is mentioned because it is the *end of the war* (Dan 9:26) and afterwards the world will be prepared for His Messiah and his servants. Those are the rest of Israel or the ones who are coming *from the rivers of Kush* (Zeph. 3:10) *in litters, (and) upon mules, and upon dromedaries³³* (Is. 66:20) and they will come with the precious jewels that will be used to decorate Jerusalem and all that is mentioned before the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Afterwards it is written: “*in the five and twentieth year of our captivity*” (Ezek. 40:1). Be aware that Gog is the name of the King and Magog is a Name of a tribe like it is written: “*Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal³⁴*” (Gen. 10:2). With him three nations are mentioned³⁵. And none of them is called Magog³⁶. Those three are Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. And it’s possible that ar-Rum³⁷ are called Rosh in Hebrew. Possibly they are also the descendants of Japheth as well as Tubal. But as for Meshech, there are two of them. The one is the descendant of Shem as it is said: *Geter and Meshech* (1 Chr. 1:17) and the second is a descendant of Japheth as it is said: “*Meshech and Tiras*” (Gen. 10:2). This above mentioned is also a descendant of Japheth like the others. And you should know that a tribe will gather together with tree other tribes (descending) from his cousins, but the rest of the peoples are not added to them because those nations mentioned above are mighty and the hope is on them. *And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. And say thus says the God the Lord: Oh, Gog the ruler of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal I am against you.* The meaning of the words “*Behold, I am against thee*” is a revenge as in the words (addressed to) the Pharaoh and the Mountain of Seir³⁸ and others. *And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed*

³² The manuscripts Evr-Arab I 3464 and B 135 have here the word ar-Rum (Rome or Byzantium) instead of “ar-Rus” (the Rus’) as a result of misspell between the letters “mem sofit” and samekh”. The adequate reading “ar-Rus”(ארֶרֻס) exists only in the Mss. Evr-Arab 3909, fol. 108a.

³³ The text in Is. 66:20 contains the word “qirqaroth”. The word “dromedaries” for its translation is more correct translation than the “swift beasts” of JPS Tanakh.

³⁴ Javan and Tubal are omitted in Mss B 135

³⁵ In Ezek. 38:2

³⁶ This phrase is omitted in Mss B 135.

³⁷ Both manuscripts (Evr-Arab I 3464 and B 135) have ar-Rum instead of ar-Rus here. The correct reading “ar-Rus” exists in the Mss. Evr-Arab I 3909.

³⁸ A euphemism for Edom – an eternal enemy of biblical Israel. The words “Edom” and “Seir” were often used as an indication of the Christendom in medieval Jewish texts.

with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. I shall throw you back and put a stick³⁹ into your jawbone and I shall take you out with all your army: horses and cavaliers all clothed in better protecting (armors). They all have their shields, and leather shields and holding swords. The words «*And I will turn thee back* refer to those that shall escape from the army or the King of the North (Dan. 11:7–15, 40), as it is said: “*his foulness may come up, and his ill savour may come up*”» (Joel 2:20), which is going to revenge Gog for his coming. It is said that those are the words of pride and their meaning is that he is going to be divided in parts and will be recalcitrant and will be destroyed, as we will explain further. The expression «*and put hooks into thy jaws*» is addressed to the Pharaoh: “*but I will put hooks in thy jaws*”» (Ezek. 29:4). That’s why the Pharaoh is expelled from his royal residence to the extremity of his dominions and this expulsion comes from Bab al-Abwab⁴⁰ to this City⁴¹. The mention of his army and its men is like the saying: “and all thine army” (Ezek. 38:4). And their clothing is mentioned in the saying “*all sorts of armour*”. The meanings of their weaponry are mentioned: “*with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords*”. *Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet. Al-Fars, al-Habash and T-f-t⁴² with them are the owners of shield and helmet.* You should know, that the coming of Persia is from the east and as for Ethiopia and Libya their roots are from the West, because they are the descendants of Ham. They are close to the regions of Egypt, as it written: “*Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia’ and all the mingled people, and Chub⁴³*” (Ezek. 30:5) and it is possible that it is a gathering together of the kings of North and the King of Egypt in time of his coming back to Syria. It is the one predicted in the words: *But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps* (Dan. 11:43). You should know that the *Ethiopians and the Libyans* would come with him as it is said: *Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps* (Dan. 11:43). But some of them will leave and join to Gog and will come with him. And

³⁹ Arabic مِهَارٌ – a stick, used for driving a Bactrian camel.

⁴⁰ That’s an Arabic name of Derbend, a sea-port and an important fortress on the Caspian sea.

⁴¹ Meaning, perhaps Jerusalem, where the commentator himself used to live.

⁴² Unidentified place. Possibly this ethno-geographic term can be identified with Tibet. I am grateful to Dr. Dan Shapira for this identification.

⁴³ Because of misspell the text of two Mss. (Evr.-Arab I 3464 fol. and B 135 fol. 293) contains here a not correct reading: Cush. The correct variant Chub is preserved in the Mss. Evr.-Arab I 3909.

you should also know that they are the owners of shield and clothed in helmets. *Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. Gomer with all his troops with Turks with all their troops and many nations with you.* You should know that Gomer is one of the sons of Japheth as well as Togarmah that's why he made Kush and Put enter whence they are heroes like the hosts mentioned before and that's why their mention is over.

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Abbreviation

Ezek.	The book of Ezekiel
Dan.	The book of Daniel
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
Zeph.	The book of Zephaniah
Is.	The Book of Isaiah

Б. Е. Рашковский

ар-Рус в средневековом иудео-арабском комментарии к Библии? (Памяти А. Я. Гаркави)

Со времен А. Я. Гаркави [*Гаркави, 1882; Harkavy, 1878–80*] в историографии известен фрагмент комментария Йефета бен Эли – караимского экзегета второй половины X в. к 38 главе книги пророка Иезекииля, содержащий упоминаниями о Руси, Хорасане и Славянах. С двумя последними отождествляются, соответственно, библейские Мешех и Тубал. Арабским *ар-Рус* при этом переводится еврейское выражение «наси рош», в данном контексте означающее «главный князь» или «верховный правитель». Это упоминание принимается за первое свидетельство средневековой еврейской библейской экзегезы о Руси.

В статье приводится полная публикация всего комментария Йефета бен Эли на первые шесть стихов 38 главы книги Иезекииля, содержащие упоминания о странах и народах Восточной Европы и Центральной Азии: Хорасане, руси, славянах, Баб ал-Абвабе и тюрках.

К л ю ч е в ы е с л о в а : Йефет бен Эли, книга пророка Иезекииля, Русь, славяне, Мешех, Тубал, комментарий.