



## DĀNĪĀL B. MOŠEH QŪMESĪ

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**DĀNĪĀL B. MOŠEH QŪMESĪ**, Persian Jewish scholar and exegete of the Karaite sect, the members of which rejected rabbinical writings later than the Bible itself. The Karaites had many followers among the Jews of Persia. Dānīāl was born in *Dāmḡān* in the district of Qūmes in the second half of the 9th century and left Persia for Jerusalem at an unknown date; he died in Jerusalem in the first half of the 10th century. As a Karaite, Dānīāl was in continual conflict with the rabbinic institutions and authorities in Baghdad, then the major center of Jewish authority and scholarship. He was considered one of the most influential leaders of the *Avelei Ṣion* (Mourners of Zion), whose members lived an ascetic life and continued to mourn the destruction of the Second Temple in 71 c.e. Although Dānīāl was thus an ardent Karaite, he seems to have been an original thinker, even showing dissatisfaction with the theological teachings of ‘Ānān b. David (fl. mid-8th century), regarded as the founder of the sect. According to Ya‘qūb Qerqesānī (Mann, 1935), Dānīāl would accept any conclusion, so long as it was based on “sound reasoning.” Contrary to rabbinic tradition, he exempted males under twenty years old from observing all the biblical ordinances and preached acceptance of the testimony of Muslims in matters connected with the Jewish calendar.

Dānīāl wrote extensively on the exegesis of the Bible, characteristically interpreting biblical passages from a rationalist point of view. For example, he rejected the idea of angels as celestial beings in human form, arguing instead that they were simply natural forces, like fire, water, and the like. His commentaries on the Bible were directed against rabbinic authorities and



designed to promote the cause of Karaism. In his most famous book, *Pitron šeneim-‘āsār*, a commentary on the minor prophets, he strongly criticized the rabbinate for pursuing worldly pleasures, neglecting biblical precepts, and thus causing the degeneration of the Jewish people and the prolongation of the exile. He maintained that after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 b.c.e. the Torah had been handed over to the entire Jewish people, so that each individual might become responsible for his own actions. He also claimed that prayers and worship in synagogues built in foreign lands are heathenism, as they are directed toward timbers and stones that are not sacred. A proclamation that he issued in Jerusalem, calling upon the Jews of the [Diaspora](#) to settle there, is extant in the collection from the Geniza in the possession of the Karaite community in Cairo (Mann, 1935).

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(Amnon Netzer)