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Moreh ha-nevukhim
The First Hebrew Translation of
the *Guide of the Perplexed*

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The Hebrew translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* is the best-documented translation we have from the Jewish Middle Ages. Documents survive relating to the first request made of Samuel Ibn Tibbon to translate it from Arabic into Hebrew in the 1190s. Two letters are extant from a larger correspondence between Ibn Tibbon and Maimonides regarding the proper method of translation and the contradictions in Maimonides' treatment of providence. A first version of the translation was completed in 1204 and a revised version—revised in response to al-Ḥarizi's rival translation—in 1213. The 1213 version circulated with Ibn Tibbon's *Perush ha-millot ha-zarot* along with Ibn Tibbon's marginal annotations and, beginning from the later thirteenth century, commentaries, glosses, and other reference tools.[1]

We have all of this—a substantial amount of data—along with impressive scholarship on the translation itself and its reception. This includes the linguistic studies by Moshe Goshen-Gottstein,[2] Zev Harvey's article

1. See Fraenkel 2007, 53–146, for a full discussion of the evidence.
2. Goshen-Gottstein 2006, which includes also a full bibliography of his articles.

and Carlos Fraenkel's monograph on the marginal notes,[3] the articles by Steven Harvey and Sarah Stroumsa on the letter from Maimonides to Ibn Tibbon on translation,[4] and Yair Shiffman's work comparing Ibn Tibbon's rendering with that of his two rival translators, Judah al-Ḥarizi and Shem Tov Falaquera.[5] And yet, despite the documentary evidence and despite the excellent scholarship on it, we are in many ways only at the beginning of research on Ibn Tibbon's translation and its methods. There is, for instance, still no reliable edition of the Hebrew translation that sorts out and makes sense of the variations in the some 130 manuscripts that survive; this means that any research is by nature provisional.[6] Nor has the translation been explored from literary and cultural perspectives, focusing on the language used, the rules governing language use, and the implication of choosing one term over another.

The goal of this chapter is to take a few steps forward in focusing on the literary and cultural dimensions of Ibn Tibbon's translation of the *Guide*, with emphasis on his use of biblical and rabbinic language in the translation, the possible sources of and influences on his translation, the translation's literalistic and nonliteralistic tendencies, the mechanical process that often applied in his transferring of a word from one linguistic-cultural context to another, and the impact of his translation choice on reception. Following a few remarks about Ibn Tibbon and his life and writings in general, the chapter will explore examples that fit into these categories: the use of biblical language mediated by Saadia Gaon's Tafsīr, that is, his translation of the Bible from Hebrew into Arabic; the original use of biblical language unrelated to Saadia's Tafsīr and often with exegetical significance; the use of rabbinic language and its repercussions; the literalistic and nonliteralistic tendencies of the translation, focusing on technical and nontechnical terms and on the rendering of proper names; and, finally, one of my favorite examples from Ibn Tibbon's later commentary on Qohelet, which shows

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3. W. Z. Harvey 1997a; Fraenkel 2007.

4. S. Harvey 1992a; Stroumsa 1990.

5. See, e.g., Shiffman 1999.

6. For a preliminary effort at a critical edition of the Hebrew translation, see Goshen-Gottstein 1979. For discussion of the surviving manuscripts, see Fraenkel 2007, 228–87; Robinson 2009. It should be noted that an edition of the Hebrew translation would require close comparison with the Judeo-Arabic manuscripts as well; the edition of Munk, and following him those of Joel and Qafih, are based on only a few manuscripts used uncritically and corrected according to classical Arabic.

Ibn Tibbon at work as a translator, giving a clear description of how he translates a term by calque.

One final introductory note: throughout I rely on the earliest dated manuscripts of the Hebrew *Guide*: 1273 and 1283.[7] Both are of Italian provenance and represent, as far as we can tell, a version of the revised translation of 1213.

Samuel Ibn Tibbon:
Translator, Exegete, Philosopher, Maimonidean Enthusiast

Samuel Ibn Tibbon was born around 1165 in Lunel, which was a small but very active rabbinic center in southern France.[8] At the time Lunel was home to the most important yeshivah in the region. Under the direction of Rabbi Meshullam ben Jacob, his sons, and successors, it attracted many of the brightest Jewish students and scholars in Europe. Rabbi Abraham ben David (Rabad) and Rabbi Zerahyah ha-Levi (Razah), for example, both studied in Lunel, where they knew each other and began their famous legal disputations. It was in Lunel, moreover, and in the surrounding regions, that kabbalah emerged, and a Hebrew tradition of philosophy, based on a corpus of texts translated from Arabic and Judeo-Arabic into Hebrew, began to develop, grow, and expand its influence.[9]

Lunel's emergence as the center of Jewish philosophy and translation was due in large measure to Samuel's father, Judah Ibn Tibbon. A refugee from the Almohad persecutions in Islamic Spain, Judah settled in Lunel in the 1150s, where he established himself as a physician, merchant, and, under the patronage of Meshullam and others, translator of Judeo-Arabic works into Hebrew. Over the course of twenty-five years, Judah produced Hebrew translations of several works of grammar, lexicography, philosophy, theology, and apologetics, including Jonah Ibn Janah's *Sefer ha-shorashim* and

7. The manuscript dated 1273 is London, British Library, Add. 14763 (Margoliouth 904; IMHM 4930); that dated 1283, London, British Library, Harley 7586A (Margoliouth 906; IMHM 4876).

8. The following provides a very brief description of Ibn Tibbon's life and writings. For fuller background, see Robinson 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2007/8.

9. For historical, cultural, and literary background, see especially Twersky 1962, 1968; Gordon 1974; Talmage 1975; Saperstein 1980; Septimus 1982; Scholem 1987; Chazan 1989, 2004; Ta-Shma 1992; Freudenthal 1993, 1995; Sendor 1994; Zonta 1996; Schirmann 1997; Halbertal 2000; G. Stern 2009.

Sefer ha-riqmah, Saadia Gaon's *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, Solomon Ibn Gabirol's *Choice of Pearls* and *Improvement of the Moral Qualities*, Bahya Ibn Paquda's *Duties of the Heart*, and Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*. By rendering these works into Hebrew, Judah laid the foundations of a Hebrew philosophical library. He also created a technical scientific terminology that would continue to serve translators and original authors throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern period.[10]

On account of his translation work, Judah Ibn Tibbon earned the title "father of translators." But while in Lunel, he fathered not only a corpus of Hebrew translations but a dynasty of Hebrew translators, which began with his son Samuel, whom he tried to make in his own image, after his likeness. Using local resources, but also bringing in tutors and books from abroad, Judah made every effort to educate his son according to the traditions of Islamic Spain. Samuel was instructed in Hebrew and Aramaic, Bible and Talmud, as well as Arabic, medicine, philosophy, and science. Through a variety of literary exercises described by his father in his famous ethical will—such as copying manuscripts and criticizing poems and epistles—Samuel was also introduced to the poetic and rhetorical traditions of Andalusia. But perhaps the most important aspect of his education was the weekly reading of the Bible together with Saadia Gaon's Arabic translation, in order to sharpen his language skills and improve his translation technique. It seems that Judah's emphasis on translation, more than any of his other efforts, would influence his son and direct his future projects and investigations.[11]

Judah's son Samuel (henceforth referred to simply as Ibn Tibbon) began to work as a translator in his own right only after his father's death. His first project, however, the translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, would be sufficient to provide him with a lifetime of inspiration. The project of translating the *Guide* into Hebrew began in the 1190s and continued, in one way or another, throughout his lifetime.[12] He completed a first edition in 1204, a revised version with glossary (*Perush ha-millot ha-zarot*) in 1213, and seems to have worked on it later as well, adding marginal glosses, additional explications, and study tools, including a short treatise entitled "The Reason for the Table, Showbread, Menorah, and Sweet Savor," which attempted to identify the reason for a commandment that Maimonides

10. For bibliography on Judah Ibn Tibbon, see Robinson 2005.

11. For background on Samuel Ibn Tibbon's education and early training, see especially Judah's "Ethical Will" in Abrahams 1926; relevant sections are discussed in Robinson 2005, 2008.

12. For the development of the translation project, see especially Fraenkel 2007, 53–102.

could not provide.[13] Ibn Tibbon also translated other works by Maimonides, including his commentary on the Mishnah, Avot; the preface to his commentary on the Mishnah, Avot ("Eight Chapters"); the "Letter on Resurrection"; the "Letter to Yemen"; a letter from Maimonides on translation; and possibly the preface to the commentary on the Mishnah, Sanhedrin, Chapter 10 ("Heleq").[14] He also produced the first Hebrew versions of Aristotle and Averroes, translating the *Meteorology* in 1210 and, sometime later, three treatises on conjunction with the active intellect by Averroes and Averroes' son 'Abdallah.[15] Other translations attributed to him, such as that of 'Alī ibn Riḍwān's commentary on Galen's *Ars parva*, are, in my opinion, not his work.[16]

According to a manuscript colophon, the 1204 translation of the *Guide* was completed not in Lunel but in Arles. If this report is to be relied upon, then it would seem to mark the beginning of a period of extended travel in Ibn Tibbon's life. He was in Barcelona and Toledo before 1210, and visited Alexandria twice, returning in 1210 and 1213.[17] It seems that by 1211, moreover, he had already established his primary domicile in Marseille,[18] where he would later teach his most famous pupil, Jacob Anatoli, and where he seems to have died, in 1232.[19] These later years in Ibn Tibbon's life, after 1213 in particular, were devoted more to exegesis and philosophy than to translation: it was then that he produced his two most important original works, his commentary on Ecclesiastes and *Ma'amar yiqqawu ha-mayim*.[20] He also began, and perhaps partially completed, an esoteric explanation of

13. For Ibn Tibbon's glosses on the translation of the *Guide*, see Frankel 2007. For "The Reason for the Table, Showbread, Menorah, and Sweet Savor," see Robinson 2007a, 301–5.

14. On Ibn Tibbon's translations, see Robinson 2005, 2008.

15. The *Meteorology* translation has been edited and translated by Fontaine (Ibn Tibbon 1995); the "Three Treatises" were edited and translated by Hercz (Ibn Tibbon 1869).

16. This is the opinion I arrived at many years ago based on my analysis of the terminology of the translation. For an argument against my opinion and in favor of attributing this work to Ibn Tibbon, see Freudenthal 2016a.

17. See Robinson 2007.

18. For Ibn Tibbon's residence in Marseille, see especially the letter of Asher ben Gershom, written to the sages of France during the Maimonidean controversy of the 1230s; Asher explains there that the greatest of sages would stop at Ibn Tibbon's house in Marseille on their way to the Holy Land, in order to consult his copy of the *Guide*. The reference is presumably to the famous Aliyah of 1211. For the letter, see the edition of Shatzmiller (1997, 79).

19. For his relation to Anatoli, see especially Gordon 1974, and more recently Robinson 2005.

20. For *Ma'amar yiqqawu ha-mayim*, see most recently Kneller-Rowe 2011.

Genesis, entitled *Ner ha-ḥofeś*;[21] and planned, but apparently never began, a commentary on the internal meanings of the book of Proverbs.[22]

These later writings of philosophy and philosophical exegesis were instrumental in spreading the influence of Maimonides in Hebrew and creating the foundation for a Maimonidean tradition. They earned him a special place in the writings of later authors in Provence, Italy, the Byzantine world, and elsewhere, where he is cited as a philosophical-exegetical authority second only to the Master himself. The foundation of everything, however, was the translation of the *Guide*. In fact, one can argue that it was this translation—even more than the Judeo-Arabic original—that created the language of philosophy and philosophical exegesis in Judaism. It is to this—the most important translation in the history of medieval Jewish thought—that we now turn our attention, focusing on literary and cultural elements of Ibn Tibbon's work.

Biblical Language in Ibn Tibbon's Translation and Saadia's Tafsīr

One of the most influential texts in Jewish history is Saadia Gaon's translation of the Torah into Arabic.[23] He translated other books of the Bible as well as part of a larger commentary project.[24] The Tafsīr—as the Torah translation is popularly termed—quickly became the standard rabbinic translation in Islamic lands. It influenced most later biblical translations, not only rabbinic but also Karaite, Samaritan, and even Christian, at least from the thirteenth century forward.[25] It is the translation that the Andalusi Jews grew up with, and its influence can be felt throughout the Spanish tradition, including in the work of Maimonides himself.

Saadia's Tafsīr also had a secondary influence in an indirect way: it served as an Arabic-Hebrew lexicon of sorts for the translators from Arabic into Hebrew in Christian Europe. Evidence of this is found in Judah Ibn Tibbon's ethical will written to his son, in which he exhorts his son Samuel to read the weekly Bible portion with the Arabic translation in order to train himself in translation. Judah says:

21. For references to *Ner ha-ḥofeś* found in Ibn Tibbon's works, and speculation about its fate, see Ravitzky 1977, 16–17.

22. See Ibn Tibbon 2007, par. 625.

23. I work from the Tafsīr published by Derenbourg (Saadia 1893).

24. For Isaiah, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Daniel, and Esther, see Saadia 1993b, 1966, 1972, 1993a, 1994, 2015.

25. See Vollandt 2015; Zewi 2015.

Read every week the Torah section in Arabic. This will improve your Arabic vocabulary and will be of advantage in translating, if you should feel inclined to translate.[26]

There is evidence also from Ibn Tibbon junior, from Samuel Ibn Tibbon, that he heeded his father's advice. He indicates in his *Perush ha-millot ha-zarot* that he had consulted Saadia for the translation of one term: *rasm*. He explains there as follows:

Having explained the meaning of these five words [the five predicables], I will add the explanation of two additional terms, namely, *geder*, "defini-tion," and *ḥoq*, "description". . . . As for the term *ḥoq*, I do not remember having seen this term used in this way by any [previous translator], but I have seen that Rabbenu Saadia translated the biblical term *ḥoq*, as in the phrase *ḥoq u-mishpat*, "a statute and an ordinance" [see, e.g., Exod 15:25], as *rasm*; he similarly translated *ḥuqqay* as *rusūmī* [see, e.g., Ps 50:16]. Because of this, I have translated the Arabic term *rasm* into Hebrew as *ḥoq*.[27]

What happens when we look at the translation itself? We find much more, including dozens of translations in Ibn Tibbon's Arabic-to-Hebrew trans-lation of the *Guide* that correspond with Saadia's Hebrew-to-Arabic transla-tion of the Bible. This includes some of the most distinctive words in the text, such as the translation of *ḥā'ir* and *mutaḥayyir* as *navokh* or *ḥilla* as *taḥbulah*.[28] It also includes some of the more poetic, biblicizing translations found in Ibn Tibbon's text. On the other hand, Ibn Tibbon's mechanical use of Saadia led to some awkward conclusions. I will give one example of a poetic, biblicizing translation and one example showing an awkward result.

Example 1: *Melekhet Maḥshevet*

There are of course many technical terms in the *Guide of the Perplexed*—from science and philosophy, *kalām* and *tafsīr* literature, law and history. Generally, Ibn Tibbon is careful to render them literally, word for word.

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26. See Abrahams 1926, 66 (translation modified).

27. The entry appears in the manuscripts, not in the printed edition of Even-Shemuel. For discussion, see Robinson 2008, 262–63.

28. See, e.g., Exod 14:3, where Saadia translates *nevukhim* as *mutaḥayyirūn*, and Prov 1:5, where Saadia translates *taḥbulot* as *ḥiyyal*.

In one case, however, he uses a biblical locution to render nonliterally the term for "the technical arts." He translates *al-ṣanā'i' al-miḥniyya* as *melekhet maḥshevet*. Here is the text from *Guide* III 2, cited from Pines's translation (417–18) with key words underlined:

> He states that he saw four living creatures and that every living creature among them had four faces, four wings, and two hands. As a whole, the form of each creature was that of a man; as he says: "they had the likeness of a man" [Ezek 1:5]. He also states that their two hands were likewise the hands of a man, it being known that a man's hands are indubitably formed as they are in order to be engaged in the technical arts [Pines translates: "the arts of craftsmanship"; the Arabic is *al-ṣanā'i' al-miḥniyya*; Ibn Tibbon translates: *melekhet maḥshevet*].

In his Hebrew version, Ibn Tibbon translates *al-ṣanā'i' al-miḥniyya* (the technical arts)—what Pines translates as "the arts of craftsmanship"—using the biblical locution *melekhet maḥshevet*, a translation that strikes the reader as a truly elegant, even poetic rendering, perhaps a sign that Ibn Tibbon was no less refined and adept in using classical Hebrew than his poetic rival al-Ḥarizi. The only problem is that this choice was not made by Ibn Tibbon himself; it comes from Saadia's Tafsīr, where Saadia translates *melekhet maḥshevet* at Exodus 35:33 as *ṣanā'i' al-miḥan*. In other words, the correspondence between the two terms was already established by Saadia; Ibn Tibbon is simply following the translation provided by his predecessor. He used Saadia's translation of the Bible as a translation lexicon, an inspiration for his own rendering and a solution to the many difficult and challenging problems he faced.

Example 2: The Uselessness of the Gems in the Breastplate?

While the use of Saadia as an Arabic-to-Hebrew lexicon could lead to some elegant, poetic, biblicizing renderings of Maimonides' *Guide*, such as *melekhet maḥshevet*, the mechanical, uncritical use of Saadia's Tafsīr could result in awkward translations as well. An example is the rendering of gem names in *Guide* III 12. The text of the *Guide*, in Pines's translation (446–47), reads as follows:

> You ought to consider the circumstances in which we are placed with regard to [what is necessary] being found. For the more a thing is neces-

sary for a living being, the more often it may be found and the cheaper
it is. On the other hand, the less necessary it is, the less often it is found
and it is very expensive. Thus, for instance, the necessary for man is
air, water, and food, but air is the most necessary, for nobody can be
without it for a moment without perishing. As for water, one can remain
without it for a day or two. Accordingly air is indubitably easier to find
and cheaper than water. Water is more necessary than food, for certain
people remain, if they drink and do not eat, for four or five days without
food. Accordingly, in every city you find water more frequently and at
a cheaper price than food. Things are similar with regard to foodstuffs;
those that are most necessary are easier to find at a given place and
cheaper than the unnecessary. Regarding musk [*al-musk*; Ibn Tibbon's
Hebrew: *ha-musq*], amber [*al-'anbar*; Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew: *ha-'anbar*],
rubies [*al-yāqūt*; Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew: *ha-odem*], and emeralds [*al-
zumurrud*; Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew: *ha-bareqet*], I do not think that anyone
of sound intellect can believe that man has strong need for them unless it
be for medical treatment; and even in such cases, they and other similar
things can be replaced by numerous herbs and earths.

The Arabic terms for these substances that Maimonides identifies as un-
necessary luxury items and of no real importance are *al-musk*, *al-'anbar*,
al-yāqūt, and *al-zumurrud*. How does Ibn Tibbon translate them? The first
two he simply transcribes: *musk* as *musq* and *'anbar* as *'anbar*. The sec-
ond two are more interesting. Good dutiful son that he was, he knew from
his study of Saadia's Tafsīr that Saadia had used *yāqūt* to translate *odem* at
Exodus 28:17 and 39:10; and *zumurrud* to translate *bareqet* in the same
verses.[29] So what Ibn Tibbon did was simply follow Saadia's rendering and
reverse the process: *yāqūt* in the *Guide* he translated as *odem* and *zumurrud*
as *bareqet*. Simple.

There is only one problem with this translation. What is the biblical
context from which Ibn Tibbon took these terms? It is the description of
the breastplate and ephod at Exodus 28:17 and 39:10. Samuel's mechanical
use of Saadia, in other words, gives a strange flavor to Maimonides' remark.
In the Hebrew translation it is now the gems of the biblical breastplate that
Maimonides has singled out as examples of useless and unnecessary lux-
uries, things with no value for living our lives as humans; at best, he says,
they have medical utility. This may be true, it may not. But it seems that a

29. See Saadia 1893 ad loc.

different example would have been more appropriate and less problematic for Ibn Tibbon's traditional rabbinic reading audience in southern France.

The Original Use of Biblical Language Independent of Saadia's Tafsīr

Ibn Tibbon did not always follow Saadia in his rendering of the *Guide*. Partly this was because Saadia's Tafsīr is not a complete lexicon; there are many Arabic terms in the *Guide* not found in Saadia's translation. Partly this was because Ibn Tibbon had his own ideas about how to translate a term, and in fact there are many translations in the *Guide* that use biblical language in an original way, not mediated through Saadia. My favorite example is the term *mashal metuqqan*, a nonliteral rendering of the Arabic *mathal muḥkam*. Here is the background.

In the preface to the *Guide*, Maimonides describes the biblical *mashal* as follows, cited here according to Pines's translation (11–12) with key terms underlined.

> The Sage has said: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings [*maskiyyot*] of silver" [Prov 25:11]. Hear now an elucidation of the thought that he has set forth. The term *maskiyyot* denotes filigree traceries; I mean to say traceries in which there are apertures with very small eyelets, like the handiwork of silversmiths. They are so called because a glance penetrates through them; for in the Aramaic translation of the Bible the Hebrew term *wa-yashqef*—meaning, he glanced—is translated *wa-istekhe*. The Sage accordingly said that a saying uttered with a view to two meanings is like an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree work having very small holes. Now see how marvelous this dictum describes the well-constructed parable [*al-mathal al-muḥkam*; in Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew: *ha-mashal ha-metuqqan*]. For he says that in a saying that has two meanings, he means an external and an internal one, the external meaning ought to be as beautiful as silver, while its internal meaning ought to be more beautiful than the external one, the former being in comparison to the latter as gold is to silver. Its external meaning also ought to contain in it something that indicates to someone considering it what is to be found in its internal meaning.

The Arabic term used by Maimonides, *muḥkam*, is, among other things, a technical term in Qur'anic exegesis. Obscure or doubtful or ambiguous words or passages are called *mutashābihāt*, while clear, unambiguous terms

or passages are called *muḥkamāt*.[30] This is why Pines translates *muḥkam* in another chapter of the *Guide* (II 30) as "unambiguous."[31] In the preface, however, Pines seems to follow Ibn Tibbon's translation of *mathal muḥkam* as *mashal metuqqan* (well-constructed parable), which, at least for Ibn Tibbon, connects the Arabic not with Qur'an or Qur'anic exegesis but with Qohelet 12:9, where it is said of Qohelet that he *izzen we-ḥiqqer, tiqqen meshalim harbeh*.[32]

This, then, is the biblical background of Ibn Tibbon's nonliteral translation of *mathal muḥkam*, which I believe Pines follows in his translation of the term in the preface to the *Guide*. This translation is, however, more complicated than it may at first seem, for translating *mathal muḥkam* in relation to *tiqqen meshalim harbeh* creates a doubling affect. The many *meshalim metuqqanim* of Solomon—which Ibn Tibbon identifies in Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Qohelet—are defined by Ibn Tibbon in relation to Maimonides' definition of *mashal* in the preface to the *Guide*: they have external meaning, internal meaning, and there is something in the external meaning that points to the internal meaning; in other words, they are allegories that decode themselves. On the other hand, by using the language of Qohelet to translate the *Guide*, Maimonides' original definition of *mashal* is shown to be purely and completely traditional. The Bible, as it were, already describes the *mashal metuqqan* in Qohelet. Maimonides, when read in Hebrew translation, is shown to be continuing the tradition of the Bible and nothing more.

The implication of this example should be clear: Ibn Tibbon uses an original, biblicizing translation of a technical term in the *Guide* that both reads Qohelet into the *Guide* and reads Maimonides' conception of literary artifice into Qohelet. The translation has exegetical repercussions in both directions.

The Use of Rabbinic Language in the Translation

Contrary to the linguistic ideology of al-Ḥarizi, Ibn Tibbon has no problem drawing freely from postbiblical Hebrew and from Aramaic, and he has no reservations about coining new terms and creating new forms.[33] As with his

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30. For background in the Islamic exegetical tradition, see, in general, Kinberg 2001.
31. Pines 355.
32. For Ibn Tibbon's reading of the verse, see Ibn Tibbon 2007, par. 751.
33. For background on linguistic ideology, see Halkin 1963; Septimus 1994.

use of biblical locutions, Ibn Tibbon's use of rabbinic language is sometimes mediated through other sources, mainly his father, Judah. Whether through his father or independent, however, his use of rabbinic language often shows an extraordinary ability to hit upon just the right corresponding terminology. One simple example is *yaḥtalim*, "to have a venereal dream," which Ibn Tibbon translates in *Guide* III 8 with the rabbinic term *ro'eh et ha-qeri*. Another good example is the translation of *ḥijāb* in *Guide* III 9 as *meḥiṣah* and *masakh*, thus connecting the veils that separate man from God with the screens in the tabernacle and synagogue.

Choosing to use rabbinic language, however, is not value free; as with biblical terminology, rabbinic terms carry with them a great deal of baggage. The best example of this, at least my favorite example in all of the translation literature, is the rendering of the Arabic term for "logic," *manṭiq*, as *higgayon*. Here is the background.

Higgayon is, of course—I mean the term itself and related terms— biblical. Joshua 1:8 is one good example: *we-hagita bo yomam wa-laylah*. It is also one of the superscriptions in Psalms, where *higgayon* may mean a musical instrument or tune or something else. In rabbinic literature it takes on other meanings, though in one famous passage no one is sure quite what its sense is. The passage is Eliezer ha-Gadol's deathbed exhortation to his students in Berakhot 28b, which reads as follows:

> When Eliezer became sick, his disciples came to ask about the way of life that will lead to life in the world to come. His response: "Honor your friends, keep your children from *higgayon*, keep them at the feet of sages, and when you pray, know before whom you pray."

All of this is very good advice indeed, except for one problem: What on earth does he mean by *higgayon*? Modern scholars of rabbinic literature have suggested that *higgayon* here, in Berakhot 28b, may refer to rhetoric, and thus Eliezer is expressing a rabbinic suspicion of the contemporary rhetorical schools in Palestine. The Ashkenazi tradition, in contrast, from Rashi forward, reads it another way. Relating the rabbinic *higgayon* in Berakhot 28b to *we-hagita bo yomam wa-laylah* in Joshua, they understood it as referring to the reading of Scripture independent of tradition. What Eliezer was exhorting his students to avoid, in other words, was the independent study of the Bible, for the Bible, they maintained, should always be read through rabbinic tradition; anything else is dangerous.[34] What is most important for

34. See the discussion of this in Talmage 1987.

our purposes is a third reading, which developed in the Islamic world, that associated *higgayon* in Berakhot 28b with "logic," *manṭiq*, and this is the translation Ibn Tibbon used in the *Guide*.

This background gives us a clear genealogy of this translation term. It becomes more complicated when we consider the implications of the translation going forward. If *higgayon* means *manṭiq*, then Eliezer the Great's deathbed exhortation takes on a new meaning entirely: "Honor your friends," he says. "Know before whom you pray" and "Keep your children from studying logic"!

Now we move to Ibn Tibbon and those who followed him. Ibn Tibbon, when translating the *Guide*, was aware of this possible outcome, which he gives some voice to in his apologetic definition of *higgayon* in *Perush ha-millot ha-zarot*. It reads as follows:

> **Higgayon:** Some commentators have explained [the rabbinic phrase] "keep your children from *higgayon*" [Berakhot 28b] as referring to the science called *manṭiq* in Arabic. The Christians call it "dialectic" [referring to the discipline as a whole] with the name of one of its parts. I have followed the commentators [with respect to this terminology] and call [logic] the "art of *higgayon*." But in my view it would have been better had they called [logic] the "art of speech" [*melekhet ha-davar/dibbur/dibber*] following their opinion according to which they define man as "living and speaking." Indeed, in my opinion, [logic] ought to be called the "art of reason" [*melekhet ha-sekhel*].[35]

Though Ibn Tibbon did follow convention and translate *manṭiq* as *higgayon* in the *Guide*, he consistently translates other uses of *nuṭq* with terms relating to *davar*. For example, the definition of human being, *ḥayawān nāṭiq*, is not *ḥay hogeh* for Ibn Tibbon, but *ḥay medabber*. Later figures, however, confronted the problem more directly. For example, Ibn Tibbon's son-in-law Jacob Anatoli, in the preface to his Hebrew translation of Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's "Organon,"* takes the opportunity to defend the study of logic in Judaism against the apparent rabbinic proscription. With a clever close reading of the rabbinic source, he concludes that the emphasis in Rabbi Eliezer's exhortation is "your sons" instead of "logic"; it is only "*your sons*" that should be kept from logic. Adults, in contrast, can—and indeed should—study logic, which will help them access the inner meaning

35. See Ibn Tibbon 1981, 43–44; and the discussion of this passage in Robinson 2008, 263–64.

of Scripture and defend Judaism against Christian polemicists. His defense of logic reads as follows:

> Since I, Jacob, the son of Abba Mari ben Samson ben Anatolio of blessed memory, saw how numerous are the wicked fools who presume against us in an argumentative and dialectic way, I became zealous at them, and there was aroused in me the desire to translate this science [i.e., logic] as far as lay in my power. . . . I was pressed by my brothers and friends, my companions and intimates, the scholarly and educated men of Narbonne and Bèziers, who were eager to approach this subject, and out of affection for them I shall incline my shoulder and assume this added burden. If someone should object that our rabbis prohibited this science, inasmuch as they said: "Keep your sons from logic [*higgayon*]" [Berakhot 28b], our reply is that the person making the objection should listen to his own words. The rabbis said "keep your sons," not "keep yourselves," for this science and the sciences that follow it should be prohibited to the young for two reasons. One is that they exercise a great attraction on man, and should a youth receive his first instruction in them, he would never desire to study the Torah, since the study of the Torah is not speculative like the study of the sciences. The second reason is that if a person's early instruction were not in the Torah, he would for a long time remain without religion and without the true God. . . . A youth must first be instructed in the Torah so that he acquires the correct belief in God and is trained in virtue. . . . Afterwards every philosopher should search and extract the hidden meaning of the words of the Torah. Then he will understand fear of the Lord, and discover knowledge of God.[36]

To sum up this example, the translation choice here, using a rabbinic term to translate a technical-philosophical term in Arabic, had far-reaching implications when read in light of a rabbinic text using the same term. The translation of *manṭiq* as *higgayon* had the result of prohibiting the very subject the translators hoped to make available to the Hebrew-speaking, traditional, Talmud-centered Jews of Christian Europe.

Literalistic and Nonliteralistic Tendencies in the Translation

Samuel Ibn Tibbon—along with his father, Judah Ibn Tibbon, his son Moses Ibn Tibbon, and his son-in-law Jacob Anatoli—is considered a par-

36. See Anatoli 1969, 1–2.

agon of literalistic translation. His translation method is contrasted with Judah al-Ḥarizi's, which is sometimes periphrastic and aims at elegance and readability more than word-for-word fidelity. The way that Maimonides himself contrasts the two existing traditions of translation in his own time sums up the perceived differences well. In his famous letter to Ibn Tibbon on translation, Maimonides encourages Ibn Tibbon to follow the method of Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, who rendered texts into Arabic meaning by meaning, and to avoid the method of Ibn al-Biṭrīq, who translated word for word.[37] Ibn Tibbon generally followed precisely the method excoriated by the Master.

My research on Ibn Tibbon has not led me to change this popular characterization of his translation method. The Hebrew translation, as we have it, does indeed follow the Arabic original more or less word for word. One can put them in columns side by side and follow one after the other with relative ease. Yet still, it is not always hyperliteral, at least not in the way the fourteenth-century translations into Hebrew, for example, were hyperliteral. Ibn Tibbon often uses biblical and rabbinic terms, as we have seen, which lends a classicizing literary quality to the text. And there are many cases in which he translates one Arabic term with two or more in Hebrew, two or more Arabic terms with one in Hebrew, and where he varies his translation choices throughout. Sometimes this variation introduces obscurity into the Hebrew text when there is no obscurity in the Arabic original; at other times it lends color. I will give one example illustrating each: the increasing of obscurity and the adding of color.

Example 1: Introducing Obscurity into an Already-Obscure Text

One of the goals of literalistic translation is to have a consistent one-to-one correspondence between terms in the original text and the target. One can see this in the Karaite translations of the Bible, for instance, which generally mimic the Hebrew in word order and one-to-one correspondence, in contrast to Saadia's translation, which is much freer, frequently changes the order of words, varies word usage, cuts out words, and adds others.[38] Ibn Tibbon's translation, though strongly literalistic, is far from adhering consistently to the ideal of one-to-one correspondence. A few examples can illustrate this tendency: *haśśagah*, a well-known technical term in Hebrew for "grasping intellectually or perceiving intellectually," is used not only for

37. See Maimonides 1988, 2:530–33.
38. For a comparison of Saadia and the Karaites, see Polliack 1997.

the Arabic term for "intellectual grasp," *idrāk,* but also for *laḥaqa*—"to be affected or afflicted by something"; it is used to translate other terms as well. The Hebrew *gemul* is used for *jazā', thawāb,* and *mukāfāh*—three traditional Islamic terms for "otherworldly recompense," but also for *'iwaḍ,* a precise technical term drawn from Islamic *kalām* relating to compensation for unjust suffering, mainly for animals.[39] Translating all of these terms with a single Hebrew term eliminates the nuance found in Arabic. Another good example is *perush,* which translates in the *Guide* at least four different terms: *bayān, sharḥ, tafsīr,* and also *ta'wīl.* For the first three this seems fine, since they are more or less synonyms, but *ta'wīl* is something different entirely. And, in fact, it is because of this ambiguity that the very common Hebrew term *perush* makes it into Ibn Tibbon's *Perush ha-millot ha-zarot* as a "foreign" or "unusual" term meaning "nonliteral, figurative exegesis."[40] There are many other terms that serve double duty throughout the translation.

The best example, however, at least my favorite example, is the notoriously ambiguous term *'inyan,* which translates at least twelve different Arabic words in the *Guide*: *ma'nan, amr, fann, ḥāl, ḥāla, gharaḍ, qiṣṣa, khabr, ḥadīth, bāb, qaḍiyya,* and *taqdīr.* The innocent Hebrew reader, of course, does not know that every *'inyan* in the Hebrew translation may correspond to a different Arabic term in the original. In these cases, Ibn Tibbon would have done well to strive harder to achieve the literalistic ideal.

Example 2: The Problem with Names

An example of nonliteral translation leading to a more elegant, even colorful text in Hebrew is Ibn Tibbon's rendering of names. As anyone who has read an Arabic text knows, Zayd and 'Amr are the standard names used for logical, general, universal examples; and Maimonides, who had read many a text in Arabic, uses precisely these two names throughout the *Guide* when introducing a hypothetical example. When there are more than two names he adds more names to the list. Thus in *Guide* III 18, for example, he has Zayd, 'Amr, Khālid, and Bakr.[41] This is the Arabic tradition, and the Hebrew tradition is very similar. The standard names used for general, hypothetical examples in rabbinic texts are Reuben and Shimon.

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39. For background on compensation (*'iwaḍ*) in Islamic and Jewish *kalām*, see Heemskerk 2000, 157–89; Lasker 2008, 203–16.
40. See Ibn Tibbon 1981, 77.
41. See Pines 475.

Ibn Tibbon, of course, knew both these traditions, which is why he generally substitutes one for the other: he translates Zayd and ʿAmr as Reuben and Shimon, or when there are more than two names, as in *Guide* III 18, as Reuben, Shimon, Levi, and Yehudah.[42] This is what he usually does throughout the translation, but not always. At *Guide* III 13, for example, Ibn Tibbon translates Zayd and ʿAmr not as Reuben and Shimon but as Reuben and Hanokh. Why? Let's look at the text more fully, citing Pines's translation (449–50):

> I shall return to the subject of this chapter, namely, to the discussion of final end. I say then: Aristotle has made it clear that in natural things the agent, the form, and the final end are one and the same thing; I mean to say that they are one and the same thing in species. For, to take an example, the form of Zayd [in Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew: Reuben] is the agent producing the form of the individual ʿAmr [Pines for some reason translates ʿAmr consistently as ʿUmar; in Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew: Hanokh], who is his son; the thing it does is to give to ʿAmr's [again, Pines translates as ʿUmar's; in Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew: Hanokh's] matter a form pertaining to its species, the final end of ʿAmr [Pines: ʿUmar; Ibn Tibbon: Hanokh] consisting in his having a human form.

Why did Ibn Tibbon here change the natural, obvious translation of Zayd and ʿAmr as Reuben and Shimon? Why isn't he consistent throughout his translation of the *Guide*? For some reason it would make no sense to translate ʿAmr as Shimon here. Why? Let us consider the example: Zayd gave form to his son ʿAmr. Shimon is not Reuben's son in the biblical text, Hanokh is, as indicated at Genesis 46:9. Thus we see that even here, in this seemingly simple, insignificant point of translation, Ibn Tibbon translates nonliterally to cohere with the biblical text; he translates in a way that would make sense to the biblical readers for whom he is translating.

As a final note, it is worth adding that Ibn Tibbon was not the only one who struggled with the translation of Zayd and ʿAmr in *Guide* III 13. Al-Ḥarizi translated them as Reuben and Shimon; Salomon Munk and Michael Friedländer simply as Zayd and ʿAmr; Chaim Rabin as John and Jack;

42. There are five examples in part III of the *Guide*: at *Guide* III 17, Zayd and ʿAmr are translated as Reuben and Shimon, and Zayd as Reuben; at *Guide* III 18, Zayd, ʿAmr, Khālid, and Bakr are translated as Reuben, Shimon, Levi, and Yehudah; at *Guide* III 24, Zayd is translated as Reuben; *Guide* III 13 is the only place where Zayd and ʿAmr are translated as Reuben and Hanokh.

Shlomo Pines as Zayd and, for some unknown reason, ʿUmar; Yosef Qafiḥ, like Ibn Tibbon, uses Reuben and Hanokh; while Michael Schwarz, in his new modern Hebrew translation, chose Shimon and Nemuʾel (see 1 Chron 4:24). And lest one think it was only the translators of the *Guide* who struggled obsessively with the translation of names, the four Hebrew translations of al-Fārābī's *Isagoge* also vary when rendering Zayd, ʿAmr, and also Khālid, even in a straightforward, universal, seemingly neutral, philosophical context. The four different translations have Zayd, ʿAmr, and Khalid; Reuben, Shimon, and Levi; Gad, Asher, and Dan; and my favorite: Zavdi, ʿAmri, and Zimri.[43] Even personal names, even names used in the abstract world of logical argument, can pose a challenge to the best of translators.

Translation by Calque

The last example I will discuss is the best description of translation by calque that I have seen in a medieval text. Ibn Tibbon describes how he began with an Arabic technical term, went back to its basic ordinary meaning, found a Hebrew word that corresponds with the ordinary meaning, and then extended its semantic range to include the technical meaning in Arabic. The text is in the preface to Ibn Tibbon's commentary on Qohelet. I will cite it in extenso and then end with a few comments about it.[44]

> Having mentioned the inductive syllogism, I shall explain what I mean
> by "induction," when I use it here and elsewhere. I say: it seems to me
> that the philosophers borrowed the Arabic word, which I replace with
> the Hebrew *ḥippuś*, from the language of the multitude, who use it to
> express a notion that resembles what the philosophers intend when they
> use it. The notion for which the multitude use this word, namely, *istiqrāʾ*,
> is as follows. They say: "I have examined [*istaqraytu*] a certain land,"
> that is, I have traveled through all of it, seeing the character [*ʿinyan*]
> of each of its villages and cities. The philosophers then borrowed [this
> same term] to represent the examination [*ḥaqirah*] of a single universal
> by knowing the intention [*ʿinyan*] of each of its parts and species. They
> called such an action *istiqrāʾ*, derived a verb from it, and constructed

43. The four Hebrew translations of al-Farabi's *Isagoge* are found in the following manuscripts: Munich 307 (IMHM 1657), fols. 117b–23a; Paris 917 (IMHM 30335), 101a–8b; Paris 917 (IMHM 30335), 176a–83b; Paris 898 (IMHM 26854), 1b–10a.

44. Cited from Ibn Tibbon 2007, par. 31. And see the discussion in Robinson 2008, 265–67.

whatever [grammatical forms] they desired. They said: "I have examined all of the particulars that are subsumed under a certain universal," that is, I have used the speculative method to pass through all of them, knowing in this way the intention [*ʿinyan*] of each of them. I did not find a single word in our language closer to this meaning than *ḥippuś*, even though the Arabic word [*istiqrāʾ*], unlike the Hebrew *ḥippuś*, implies not only the examination of a notion but knowledge of the notion examined.

This remarkable text gives us a glimpse into the workshop of a master translator. It is significant for other reasons as well. First of all, it calls to mind al-Fārābī's description of translation at the end of book 2 of his *Book of Letters*, where he explains that one way to translate philosophy into a language that does not have it is to use the ordinary language of that language and then add philosophical meanings.[45] Secondly, this report of Ibn Tibbon helps to establish the precise moment a technical term entered the Hebrew language. While Ibn Tibbon himself had previously used a very awkward locution to translate *istiqrāʾ* in *Guide* III 12—*limnot aḥat aḥat*, "to count one by one"—and while other early translators had used the term *ḥaqirah*, subsequent translators, with few exceptions, accepted and employed this newly formed term to describe the logical process of induction.[46] Most importantly, what this and related passages allow us to see is a very sensitive reader who has command of the different languages and literatures he is working with, yet whose loyalty is always split, constantly in tension, between the competing demands of the Arabic-speaking world that made Maimonides' *Guide* possible and the biblical and rabbinic literatures that hold the key to spreading Maimonides' philosophical-theological-exegetical opus throughout the European Jewish world.

Conclusion

There has been much excellent research done on Ibn Tibbon's *Guide* translation, as there has been on other translations in the Middle Ages. We now know so much about what was translated and when, who the translators were, who their patrons were, and whom they translated for.[47] A solid foundation has been established in the linguistic sphere by Moshe Goshen-

45. See al-Fārābī 1968, 157–61; see also 1981.
46. See Robinson 2008, 265–66n75.
47. See now the table given in Zonta 2011.

Gottstein in his work on Arabized Hebrew and translation Hebrew, and in the philosophical sphere by Zev Harvey, Carlos Fraenkel, and others.[48] As I said at the outset, until there is a reliable edition of the Hebrew translation, with all its variation, any and all research at this point is provisional. What we can do, nevertheless, is map out the categories of research worth investigating in this and other medieval translations. What I have discussed in this chapter are important categories and sources that one ought to keep in mind: the use of biblical and rabbinic language; the way biblical language is mediated through Saadia; the influence of Samuel's father, Judah, and other translators and exegetes; the literalistic tendencies of the translation; the translation of names; and the methods of translation. Saadia's Tafsīr, I think, will be especially fruitful in this respect, for studying Ibn Tibbon as well as the other translations from the period. I suspect that Ibn Janah's Arabic lexicon of the Bible will be equally important in this respect. So, to reiterate what I stated at the outset, despite the excellent research on Ibn Tibbon's translation of the *Guide* and other medieval translations, or perhaps because of it, there is still much work to be done. The present chapter, along with the others in this volume, is yet another step forward in a field that remains very much in its infancy.

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48. See the citations above, nn. 2–4.