

Dr. Miriam Goldstein
 “Jews and Arabic,” Smithsonian Associates
 Sourcesheet for Lecture #3

Source 1:

Discussion of Noah’s Ark, from Ya‘qūb al-Qirqisānī’s *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ wa-l-Ḥadā’iq* (*The Book of Gardens and Parks*); RNL Evr.-Arab. I:1366, 1v.

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I will now state how things appear to me, and God knows best. Before I begin the explanation, I will preface with an introduction. Even though most of the elements of this ship pertain to divine capability, many of its elements accord with what is required by natural disposition and technical skill. The proof of this is that if its elements derived solely from divine capability, rather than technical skill and the like, it would not have been necessary in the first place for him to command that it be coated; rather, its wood would have been left exposed, given the existence of divine capability. Also, it would not have been necessary to prepare food for the animals inside because the Creator is capable of sustaining them without food.

It is also possible that besides the windows that had the pieces of glass, there were other windows that allowed the entry of air, in order to fan the animals, and that these windows had external fixtures that prevented the entry of water into them. Another necessary element in the ship was roof gutters, which allowed rainwater to flow outside. Given that torrential rains were going to fall on that huge roof for forty days, it was necessary to have many gutters to allow the water to flow out.

Source 2:

Abu al-Faraj Harun (Jerusalem, 10th c.) on Leviticus 7:28-30. Trans. Miriam Goldstein

This is the third section devoted to the “peace-offering.” The first is in the weekly Torah portion “Vayiqra” and includes a description of the part that is sacrificed on the altar. The second, in this weekly Torah portion, includes a description of the laws that govern consumption of the sacrifice by its owner. And the third includes the description of the priest’s part.

Source 3:

Abu al-Faraj Harun (Jerusalem, 10th c.) on Genesis 11:1

Know that several questions emerge from this story. The first, in which it is said that if God, the exalted, enabled the human intellect to recognize the benefit of self defense against danger through actions resulting in grouping together and avoiding dispersion and distance, how could he bring something like punishment upon these people as a result of their building the city with a high tower so that they could gather within it and avoid the dispersion in the land that would lead to personal injury?

The second question is: through which process did they forget the language that they had known? For if he caused them to lose their knowledge of it, the likelihood of the view supporting intentional intervention by God must be admitted.

The third is: how is it possible that he could cause them to forget all the language that they had learned intuitively, to the extent that one would not understand the other regarding something he had known the day before, and does this not damage their state of rational soundness?

Source 4:

Abu al-Faraj Harun (Jerusalem, 10th c.) on Genesis 2:23-24

This is a statement by Moses, peace be upon him, since at that time, Adam had not acquired the knowledge that the father is a father to his child and the mother a mother to him, and the prevailing custom that the man clings to his mate, which is described in the statement of this speaker.

Source 5:

Abu al-Faraj Harun (Jerusalem, 10th c.) on Genesis 47:7-10

Regarding the phrase “how many are the years of your life,” it is likely that this was preceded by conversation which would be profitless to record for us. Two purposes have been mentioned for recording Pharaoh’s question about Jacob’s age. First, to inform us of his age at the time of his arrival in Egypt, to enable the derivation of other dates of events mentioned earlier. Second, to inform us of the weak and aged state Pharaoh observed, which contrasted to the well-known fact of his valor and great strength with which he fought the angel and subdued him. For this reason, when he saw that his body was weak, Pharaoh estimated that he had reached an age older than that of his forefathers, and asked him how old he was, and he responded.