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**THE AUTOGRAPH MEMOIRS OF OBADIAH THE
PROSELYTE OF OPPIDO LUCANO**

AND

THE EPISTLE OF BARUKH B. ISAAC OF ALEPPO

TOGETHER WITH AN APPENDIX CONTAINING

THE MUSIC OF OBADIAH THE PROSELYTE

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INTRODUCTION

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF OBADIAH THE PROSELYTE as Revealed by His Literary Remains Discovered in the Cairo Genizah

If the voyager to southern Italy should forsake the usual tourist routes and make his way inland from Naples, he would eventually come to the rugged region known as the Basilicata; and if from the city of Potenza, which lies in its heartland, he should take a certain road to the northeast, through a region dotted with the towers and castles of the Normannic conquerors of the 11th century, he would soon come to the ancient town of Oppido Lucano. There he might discover a narrow street with a sign at its head reading: *Via Giovanni-Abdia il Normanno — Musicista Oppidano del Secolo Undicesimo* (i.e., The Street of Johannes-Obadiah the Norman, Musician of Oppido of the Eleventh Century). A passerby might tell him that the name of the street is relatively recent, and that it was first dedicated at a special ceremony convened to honor this man in April of 1970.

Who was this Giovanni-Abdia of Oppido, who lived over nine hundred years ago in this town? How did it transpire that after a lapse of so many centuries the citizens of this town and scholars from throughout Italy should come together there to pay him homage — and that scholars representing much of the world of learning should again be making their way there for similar purposes in the spring of 2004? And in what ways, finally, does this remarkable figure, whose voice we now hear again after the silence of almost a millennium, stand to contribute to our understanding of the era in which he lived?

To answer these questions, and others that arise inevitably out of them, we must turn back to the year 1901, when a local Jerusalem scholar named S.A. Wertheimer published part of a medieval Hebrew document from the Cairo Genizah containing, *inter alia*, the following words: “This letter was written in his own hand by our mas[ter Barukh] ... son of...[Isaac] that it might be kept by Obadiah the Proselyte (for use) in all communities of Israel to which he might go.” (**Document XVII**). The other side of the manuscript contained Rabbi Barukh’s actual autograph letter of recommendation, but Wertheimer published only its poetic prologue, including mainly a dirge on the suffering of the Jews of Palestine at the hands of a conquering army. Only thirty years later, in 1930, did Prof. Jacob Mann publish the other half of this letter, which had in the meantime made its way to the Bodleian Library. In it one read that this same Obadiah the Proselyte (who bore the letter) “is of a great family and ... his father wa[s] a great [chief]tain. This man,” the letter went on, “is expert in the reading of their (Christian) books. Because of his understanding of what he read in their writings, he returned to the God of Israel with all his heart ... and was converted in a Jewish court of law....”¹ (**Doc. XVI**).

¹ All the fragments of Obadiah’s memoirs and the letter of recommendation from which this and the following citations are derived have been conjointly published by me with text-critical annotations in I. Ben-Ami, S. Morag and N. Stillman (eds.), *Mehqeré ‘edot ugenizah: S. D. Goitein Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 77–107. (entitled “Megillat Obadiah hager”) For the above two citations, cf. *ibid.*,

Another manuscript published by Mann at the same time (Cincinnati, MS Hebrew Union College Genizah fragment 8) contained the final leaf of a prayer-book and a colophon which read: "Obadiah the Normannic proselyte, who entered the covenant of the Lord of Israel in the ... year 1403 of the (era of) Documents (=1102 A.D.)²... has written (this prayer book) with his own hand."³ (**Doc. I**). This brief fragment yielded several valuable pieces of information: Obadiah had lived at the turn of the 11th century, he was the member of a family of Normannic stock, and after his conversion he had become expert in the Hebrew language and Hebrew calligraphy. The colophon itself, as well as the page of the prayer-book, provided examples of Obadiah's own handwriting. Moreover, the Arabic title on the recto of the same manuscript page made it evident that Obadiah had learned that language as well; and this information had to be coupled with the fact that, according to Master Barukh's letter, he was also expert in the reading of Christian literature, the use of the term "Normannic" in the colophon suggesting that the language of that literature was Latin.

These few fragments of Hebrew documents thus described a man of learning of the time of the First Crusade from the West, who in the course of his peregrinations in cities of the Near East had studied the literature and beliefs of the Jews — which he adopted as his own — as well as the Arabic vernacular of the inhabitants of that region. Now as it happens, no other figure of precisely this type is known in the annals of the First Crusade. It was thus clear that the study of this man's writings might yield valuable information on Crusade history, on the Jews of the Middle Ages, on proselytism, and on other subjects of salient interest; thus, ever since those early fragments were found, scholars investigating the Cairo Genizah have been on the lookout for other texts pertaining to him. And not without success. Besides the above-mentioned manuscript fragments, already Jacob Mann in his 1930 essay published several broken pages from a chronicle, or memoirs, written by Obadiah (one leaf of which had been published previously by E. N. Adler in 1919). An additional valuable fragment of the chronicle was discovered in 1953 by Prof. S. D. Goitein; and still another by Prof. A. Scheiber of Budapest in 1954. Further developments in the study of Obadiah now make feasible a closer examination of his fragmentary memoirs and related texts, and their arrangement in approximate chronological order.

¶ *Budapest Fragment, fol. 1*: This fragment ⁴ (**Docs. II and III**), first discovered by Scheiber, is written in Obadiah's own handwriting, and informs us that once, in the town of Oppido, twin sons named Rogerius and Johannes were born to Maria the wife of Dreux. By drawing on a statement in another fragment — the Bodleian letter of Barukh ben Isaac mentioned above — one may infer that this Dreux was a man of noble lineage. Johannes was the younger of the two brothers; Maria had given birth to the first with ease, whereas she bore Johannes with great suffering — a fact which must have been divulged to Johannes quite early in his life. Rogerius learned chivalry as he grew older, while Johannes devoted himself to the pursuit of learning. (A Rogerius of Oppido is

pp. 105, 106. For prior publications of individual fragments of the memoirs by various scholars, cf. the bibliography given by me in the Hebrew annual *Sefunoth* VIII, 1964, p. 102.

² The Hebrew expression meaning "Era of Documents" refers to the Jewish version of what is in other traditions understood as the "Era of Alexander (the Great)" or, more commonly, "the Alexandrine Era." The A.D. equivalent is derived by subtracting 311 or 312 from any given Alexandrine Era date.

³ Golb, "Megillat Obadiah hager," *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁴ Golb, "Megillat Obadiah", pp., 95–96.

indeed mentioned in 12th-century Latin records of that region.⁵) The memoirs state these facts, as it were, in a single breath; and it is left to us to speculate whether the pain of the mother was inflicted in any measure on the spirit of the thoughtful and withdrawn child.

It was while still a youth that Johannes heard of the conversion to Judaism of Andreas the Archbishop of Bari, an event which obviously made a deep impression not only upon Obadiah himself but, as Obadiah writes, upon Church officials of both the Roman and Byzantine rites.⁶

The memoirs at this point go on to mention the cities round about Oppido, giving their ancient Italian colloquial pronunciation in Hebrew transliteration.⁷ We may speculate that on the previous folio of the memoirs, now lost, Obadiah had described events in connection with the arrival of the Normans, and of his family in southern Italy some thirty or forty years before his birth.

Soon after the events concerning Archbishop Andreas, so we read in the text, the youth Johannes had a mystical dream which was brought on by the beginning of his puberty — a disturbance independently documented in the annals of psychiatric investigation.⁸ He envisioned himself serving as priest at the basilica in Oppido; suddenly he “beheld a man standing to his right, opposite the altar, and the man called to him ‘Johannes!’” Here this part of the Budapest fragment of the memoirs breaks off, and we are left to speculate on the continuation of the dream. Evidently the apparition was a saintly or charismatic figure who urged Johannes to perform a religious act, one undoubtedly connected with the youth’s studious and withdrawn nature and with the conversion of Andreas to Judaism, which had taken place several years previously.

⁵ In the 12th-century *Catalogus Baronum Neapolitano*, containing a list of feudal holdings of the Normannic nobles of Apulia, we read s.v. “Balbanum”: “Comes Philippus de Balbano...tenet in Ducatu...feudum X militum et cum augmento obtulit milites XXIV. Isti sunt Barones praedicti Comitiss Philippi de Balbano: Rogerius de Oppido...quod tenet de eo est feudum II militum et cum augmento obtulit milites IV et servientes X...” From this it is clear that Rogerius of Oppido was a baron holding land of Count Philip who assigned to him four guards and ten servants. He appears to have been still living in the fifties of the twelfth century, which is the terminus a quo assigned to the compilation of the *Catalogus Baronum*. Obadiah, however, is the only writer to record that Dreux was the father of Roger — and indeed the only medieval writer ever to have made mention of Dreux, who must equally well, as his first-born son, have had the rank and status of baron.

⁶According to records of the Archbishopric of Bari, Andraeas became archbishop in 1062 and passed away in 1078. Cf. e.g. Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* V, 1724, pp. 152-153. Nothing is said of his activities during the intervening years, and the latter date may in reality be that of his flight from Bari and conversion in Constantinople, as described by Obadiah in his memoirs. According to the latter, Andraeas went on to Egypt, and he was apparently living there during the vizierate of Badr al-Jamali, who only began to exert power in 1073 and continued in his role until his death in 1094.

⁷ These colloquial transliterations — which fortunately include vocalizations — may best be rendered in Latin script as follows: **Roma, Salernus, Potenz, , Pa[t]ragali, Ans, Bari, M[o]ntplus, Genzan, B[a]nz, Agranz, Tulv.** The colloquial spelling for the Bradano River may best be rendered in Latin script as **Bradanu**. There is an additional place name ending in the consonants *-tfrg* which has not until now been identified. For the traditional orthographies of these toponyms, cf. my translation of the Memoirs below, Budapest Fragment fol. 1 verso.

⁸ Cf., e.g., R. Krafft-Ebbing, *Hanbdbhuch*. passim.

But the conversion of Johannes, son of Dreux, occurred only at the beginning of the next century — at least twenty years, that is, after that of Andreas, and long after Johannes's mystical dream. We again have to speculate about the intervening years; only enough is known to make clear that the youth Johannes became a serious student of Christianity and of the scriptures. Evidently this introspective son of noble parents was groomed for the priesthood and in his teens entered a monastery to further his studies.

¶ *Cambridge Fragment A (T-S 8.271), fol. 1 (Docs. IV and V)*: Johannes was approximately thirty years of age when the First Crusade broke over Europe. At this point his memoirs resume again, with the first folio of the fragment found by Professor Goitein at Cambridge.⁹ Obadiah describes the first portents of the Crusade, evidently dwelling on an eclipse which took place in February of 1095 or 1096, for which he quotes in Latin — but using Hebrew characters — the verse from Joel III.4 pertaining to the darkening of the sun and the bloody color of the moon. (References to the same events, but with use of other Biblical verses, may be found in Latin chronicles of that period.¹⁰) There is a reference to Pope Urban II's journey to France in the autumn of 1095, in an almost unseen spot.¹¹ We see Obadiah in his role as chronicler, carefully recording what he considered the special events of his time. On the verso of this fragment, we read that each crusader “put crosses on his garment and on his shoulder” in preparation for the journey to Jerusalem. At this point the restoration of the fragment first made by Goitein may be cited verbatim: Before embarking on their journey, the Frankish crusaders “[said to one ano]ther, ‘Why should we [go to a country far away to fight our ene]mies, while in our own countries [and in our own cities there are] our enemies and those who hate [our religion? Why should we lea]ve them here with our wives?’ [This was the talk in all] the camps of the Franks ...” Johannes here echoes the language used by still other chroniclers, both Jewish and Christian, in describing the beginnings of anti-Jewish sentiment at the time of the Crusade. It is clear that he knew of the persecutions, and possibly was witness to some of them. A few years later, in either August or September of 1102, he converted to Judaism, assuming the name of Obadiah ha-Ger (viz., the Proselyte).

¶ *Letter of Barukh b. Isaac (Bodl. Heb a.3, fol. 1) (Doc. XVI)*: Obadiah-Johannes forsook Europe entirely, and no more than a few years after 1102 must have arrived in Syria. His first main stop there evidently was Aleppo, where Barukh b. Isaac — who gave Obadiah the letter of recommendation mentioned above — officiated as head of the Talmudic academy. I find in this same letter¹² a clear hint which points to the country

⁹ Golb, “Megillat Obadiah”, pp. 96–97.

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Orderic Vital, *Hist. Eccles.*, ed. Le Prevost, iii, 1845, p. 462 *supra*; Balderic of Dol, in *RHC*, Occ. iv, p. 161; Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei*, in *RHC*, Occ., iv, p. 149. On lunar eclipses that occurred in 1095 and 1096, see Th. Von Oppelzer, *Canon der Finsternisse* (Vienna 1887), nos. 3557–3560. One of these eclipses occurred in February 1095 and the other in February 1096, either one of which fits well with the mention by Obadiah of “[...] six” in Doc. IV, line 6, where a month is called for by the context. This I construe as a reference of the *sixth month* - i.e. Adar - of the year according to the Jewish calendar, which in 1095 began on February 9th.

¹² See my edition of the letter, “Megillat Obadiah”, pp. 103–106; and compare the restoration with the photograph including the pertinent line of vowels in the same *Goitein Jubilee Volume*, plate XII-2 at end of volume.

where Obadiah's conversion actually took place.¹³ The hint is contained in the vowels of the line of the text preceding the statement indicating that Obadiah was of a great family (see above, third paragraph)— that is, the statement with which the second and main portion of the letter began. (Mann neglected to publish this lonely line of vowels, which in Hebrew, of course, sit below the consonants, not next to them.) The first legible words of this portion of the letter are “who dwell in his lands (*hashōkhenīm be'aršōtāw*).” The vowels just preceding are a-:i-é/a-ā. In another place in this letter Barukh ben Isaac spells the Hebrew word for scholars *talmidē ḥakhām'* (as an abbreviated form for *talmidē ḥakhāmīm*) — precisely with these vowels. It becomes clear that just such a phrase is called for in the line whose consonants are missing: “*scholars* who dwell in his lands, and they told us ...” The previous word, for which the vowels are *i-e-e*, was palpably *iggeret*, “a letter”: viz. *iggeret mitalmidē ḥakhāmīm hashōkhenīm be'aršōtāw*, “a letter from scholars who dwell in his lands.” Before that are the vowels sitting below words that in context with the following phrase may be restored to *bā le'irēnu 'īm*, “came to our city with”. We thus arrive at the sentence: “He (Obadiah) came to our city with a letter from scholars who dwell in his lands, and they told us (i.e. in the letter) that he is of a great family” etc. The analysis of this line of vowels, in other words, hints at the fact that Obadiah converted in meridional Italy, quite likely in a port city such as Bari or Otranto, and that the present letter of Barukh b. Isaac contains the substance of still another letter written by Apulian Jewish scholars on Obadiah's behalf, in which his ceremony of conversion had been described, as well as important facts pertaining to his background and scholarship. It is the ceremony itself which is described at length in Barukh's letter.¹⁴

¶ *Cambridge Fragment A (T-S 8.271), fol. 2 (Doc. VI)*: One cannot know precisely how long Obadiah stayed in Aleppo during his initial sojourn there. Some years after 1102, however, we find him, in the second portion of the fragment identified by Goitein,¹⁵ on his way toward Baghdad. While on the road, he had at least one harrowing adventure. He writes that he beheld a troop of people fleeing westward, while others pursued them close behind. One assailant approached Obadiah and apparently attempted to strike him. He writes at this point that only much later, by searching carefully in the Hebrew Torah, did he understand the hidden meaning of what had transpired. (This passage and some others, incidentally, show that Obadiah had a certain tendency toward mysticism, as did many Latin chroniclers of those times.) On the following page of this fragment, we learn that Obadiah “left the city of Makisin”, arriving first at al-Rahbah and later at Baghdad. Now the mention of Makisin,¹⁶ following upon the description of troops fleeing westward, is reminiscent of events of 1109 described by the Muslim chronicler Ibn al-Athīr, who has troops of Ghāzi ibn Urtuk fleeing from those of Jāwalī — both enemies of the crusaders.¹⁷ During this flight, we are told, Jāwalī travelled westward in

¹³ The following analysis of the enigmatic line of script may be found in greater detail in my article “Dove avviene la conversione al giudaismo del proselito Obadiah di Oppido?,” in *Antiche Civiltà Lucane*, a cura di Pietro Borraro, Galatina 1975, pp. 217-225. Since the time of that publication — i.e., during the past thirty-five years — I have encountered no other publication that might contain an alternate solution to the challenge posed by this line of Hebrew vowel -signs.

¹⁴ See also my analysis and discussion in “Megillat Obadiah”, pp. 91–93, and the Hebrew text itself, p. 105 in my edition = English translation, Doc. XVI, recto, line 45.

¹⁵ Golb, “Megillat Obadiah”. pp. 97–98.

¹⁶ See the photographic enlargement in *Goitein Festschrift*, plate X-1.

¹⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *Chronicle*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, X (Leiden, 1864), vol. 10, p. 321.

pursuit of Ghāzi, toward al-Rahbah precisely by way of Makisin, where he took Baldwin into custody a second time. The harmony of details is such as to raise the possibility that it was these troops that Obadiah saw on his journey — by which token his arrival in Baghdad would have taken place in 1110 A.D.¹⁸

The aforementioned fragment closes with the statement that Muslims (*gōyyīm*)¹⁹ at Baghdad attempted to slay Obadiah on his arrival there. In those times of turmoil, when every day brought news of crusader successes in the battles raging in Syria and upper Mesopotamia, it is not to be wondered at that the Muslim population of Baghdad would be suspicious of a traveller of strange countenance, whose Arabic, if he had it then at all, must have been heavy with the intonations of Normannic Lombardy.

¶ *Budapest Fragment, fol. 2 (Docs. VIII and IX)*: Once safely in Baghdad, Obadiah was supported by the community. He was given living quarters in the synagogue, and the head of the academy soon invited him to “be with the orphan youths in order to teach him the Torah of Moses and the words of the prophets in the script of the Lord and the language of the Hebrews”. These facts we learn from the second folio of the fragment found by Dr. Scheiber.²⁰ On this same page, recto and verso, Obadiah describes at length the persecutions of the Jews of Baghdad carried out by the Vizier Ibn al-Shujā^c during the reign of al-Muqtadī (1075–1094). In fact we learn important details of this oppression appearing in no other source.²¹

¶ *Cambridge Fragment B (T-S 10K21, fol. 1) (Docs. X and XI)*. In still another fragment reflecting the sojourn in Baghdad — this one published by Dr. Mann in 1930 — Obadiah describes the appearance in parts of Mesopotamia of certain false messiahs, each of whom claimed, during times of great tribulations for the Jews, that he was the true redeemer of the people.²² The events concerning these imposters are described minutely. Here it must be emphasized that there is no “Ibn Duji” in the text of this fragment but rather a “Solomon b. Rūjī”;²³ and according to traces of the letters in lines 15–16 of the verso of this Cambridge fragment, it was Solomon b. Rūjī himself who claimed to be the Messiah, not his son. It is the son Menahem, on the other hand, who is described by Samaw’al al-Maghrabī in his *Ifhām al-yahūd*, in the Cairo 1939 edition of which work may also be found the authentic reading *al-Rūjī* (p. 60 near top). Later on, when Benjamin of Tudela visited the Near East (approximately 1165), he heard a slightly deformed version of the story of these two false Messiahs; the name appears incorrectly

¹⁸ On the relevant crusader battles, cf. e.g. Stevenson, *Crusaders in the East*, passim.

¹⁹ In Jewish texts written in Islamic countries, the term *goyyim* means Muslims rather than Christians, the latter being generally designated as *‘arelim*, lit. “uncircumcised ones”. See further my remarks in “Megillat Obadiah”, p. 84.

²⁰ See my edition of the text, “Megillat Obadiah”, pp. 99–100.

²¹ For other sources describing aspects of this persecution, however, cf. the sources cited by A. Scheiber in his “Fragment from the Chronicle of Obadyah, the Norman Proselyte,” *Acta Orientalia Hungariae* IV (1954), p. 275, notes 20–26.

²² See my edition, “Megillat Obadiah”, pp. 100–101.

²³ See *Goitein Jubilee Volume*, plate X-2. Even this enlargement, however, does not entirely clarify the reading, which I could determine with certainty only by studying the original under ultra-violet light at Cambridge.

in copies of his *Itinerary* as “David al-Roi”.²⁴ The *gimel* of the *nisbeh*, Rūgī (=Rūjī), became an *aleph*, which in Hebrew manuscripts is often differentiated from the *gimel* by one short diagonal stroke.

From all that one may observe of his work, it is clear that Obadiah, who redacted his memoirs only years later, actually sought to be an observer and recorder of events of his day, while at the same time studying, either through oral tradition or Arabic and Hebrew chronicles or both, events which had taken place in previous generations. The larger purpose of his memoirs thus begins to emerge.

¶ *Cambridge Fragment C (T-S Loan 31) (Docs. XII and XIII)*. After a sojourn in Baghdad of several years, Obadiah decided, for reasons we cannot know, to return to Syria. On his way he must have stopped at Raqqah, which is mentioned by its Hebrew name of Kalneh (i.e., Kallinikos) in still another fragment of Obadiah’s memoirs published by Dr. Mann.²⁵ This same fragment contains much other information of value: it is a remnant of Obadiah’s eyewitness account of conditions in Aleppo at the time of the great siege of that city by the forces of Roger of Antioch circa 1118 C.E. If one transposes the side termed the *verso* by Mann to its proper position as the *recto* of the fragment, and then deciphers the several small portions of the text left unedited by him, it emerges that Obadiah returned to Aleppo during the siege, and found the Muslims there in dire straits. He describes the intrigues which took place in the palace after the death of Radwān of Aleppo. Power temporarily passed to the eunuch Lu’lū, who, however, was slain in a conspiracy. The Muslims there sought the aid of Ghāzi ibn Urtuk, while Aleppo groaned under the siege of Roger, and people died in the streets. All this we learn from the keen observations contained in Obadiah’s memoirs. As he informs us, he thereafter returned from Aleppo to Raqqah.

¶ *New York, JTSA Adler, 3098/4208, fol. 7 (Docs. XIV and XV)*. In this fragment Obadiah writes that he travelled on to Damascus, where he was again supported by the community.²⁶ It is evident that Obadiah travelled from Raqqah to Damascus in approximately 1119 A.D.; but to get there he would not have returned to Aleppo and thence gone directly southward, as this road was then the scene of intense combat with crusader forces. It is tempting to think that Obadiah took the desert route to Damascus, which would have brought him to Palmyra (Tadmor).²⁷ The pertinent folio of his memoirs, however, in which the journey from Raqqah would have been described, is unfortunately not extant.

²⁴ It is this incorrect form that Benjamin Disraeli unwittingly adopted for his novel *Wondrous Tales of Alroy* (1839). There is no such name in autograph Hebrew texts or anywhere in the Genizah documents, and it evidently never existed as an authentic Hebrew or Arabic personal name. There is an “Alroy” article in *Encyclopaedia Judaica II* (1971), cols. 750–751, despite the fact that the author (N. Poliak) states there that the name “Alroy” and “Al-ruhiy” are “evidently corruptions of al-Duji”. Poliak’s view goes back to Mann’s reading of the term in the Obadiah fragment under discussion. The appellative “Rujī” refers to the Ruj area, in Syria to the west of Aleppo. (I discuss the messianic pretensions of al-Ruji at length in an as yet unpublished article.)

²⁵ Cf. my edition, “Megiliat Obadiah”, pp. 101–102, and the word *Kalneh* in *Goitein Jubilee Volume*, plate XII-1. This word too is better perceived under ultra-violet light in the original at Cambridge.

²⁶ See my edition of this fragment, “Megillat Obadiah”, pp. 102–103.

²⁷ On the Jews of Palmyra/Tadmor, cf. the mid-12th century account of Benjamin of Tudela, ed. M.N. Adler (London 1907), Hebrew text pp. 31–32; English translation, p. 31.

In 1121, so we learn from the same Adler fragment, Obadiah left Damascus for Banias, in the north of Palestine. Here he engaged in discussion with a vegetarian Qaraite Jew named Solomon, who claimed that it was he who was the Messiah, and who predicted the ingathering of the Jews to Jerusalem — then, of course, already occupied by the Crusaders — “within two and a half months.” Obadiah, who shows by his argument that he was by then well acquainted with Jewish doctrine, was sceptical of the claim of the sectarian. The latter urged him not to go on to Egypt, but to remain in Palestine awaiting the ingathering; with regard to which the proselyte writes in his memoirs: “Then Obadiah said to Solomon, ‘I shall go to Egypt and return with our brethren the Israelites who are in Egypt to Jerusalem,’ “ — at which Solomon fell silent. Does Obadiah intend scorn here, or only humor?

From Banias both Obadiah and Solomon travelled separately to Tyre in the autumn of 1121 — only a few years, that is, before that city fell into the hands of the crusaders. Tyre was surrendered to the Franks in 1124, Banias in 1129, Damascus never — and the route taken by Obadiah suggests that he scrupulously avoided entering Crusader territory in Palestine. It was from Tyre that he evidently went on to Egypt and its chief city of Fustat-Misr, where the portions of his memoirs were found some eight hundred years later buried and scattered amidst thousands of other fragments from the Cairo Genizah.

Thus we have the route of Obadiah: From a port city of Italy to Syria; from Aleppo to Maksin and Rahbah; thence to Baghdad, thereafter back to Aleppo by way of Raqqah, then back to Raqqah and down to Damascus, Banias and Tyre, and finally to the chief metropolis of Egypt, where we may assume he passed away a few decades after his arrival there.

¶ *New York JTSA Adler 4096 b and Cambridge T-S K5, fol. 41*: The memoirs break off with Obadiah’s departure for Egypt; and for many years nothing at all was known of his activities in that country itself. There exists by chance, however, a manuscript page containing a Hebrew poem annotated with Lombardic musical neumes of the twelfth century, which had been a puzzle to scholars ever since its photographic publication in 1921. The prevalent view until some years ago was that the Gregorian melody contained on this page was written by a Jew of Palestine or Syria and showed that the music of the medieval church was modeled upon some Near Eastern, Jewish prototype. However, while studying this fragment in 1964, I recognized (as did A. Scheiber in Budapest virtually at the same time) that it contained the actual handwriting of Obadiah-Johannes; another such fragment was soon thereafter identified by N. Allony at Cambridge.

The manuscripts contain Italian music in the Gregorian style, adapted by Obadiah to Hebrew poetry with which he became familiar during his extensive travels in the Near East early in the twelfth century, and thus reveal yet another facet of the personality of this remarkable man of Crusading times.²⁸ **(Doc. XVIII: The Music of Obadiah).**

²⁸ See my studies, “Obadiah the Proselyte: Scribe of a Unique Hebrew Manuscript with Lombardic Neumes”, *Journal of Religion* XLV (1965): 153–56; “‘Al Obadiah hager wa’abodato hamusikologit”, *Tarbiz* XXXV (1965): 81–83; “The Music of Obadiah the Proselyte and his Conversion,” *Journal of*

Thus may be recounted, however briefly, the saga of Obadiah the Norman Proselyte, reconstructed bit by bit from the tattered and effaced Genizah fragments of his autograph memoirs. Obadiah emerges from his own account — would he have known it? — as a man of vision, who endeavoured, in those tumultuous days of the First Crusade, to bridge the gap between West and East. He was a patient labourer in the chronicler's vineyard, seeking to record events of his time whose significance, so he evidently perceived, might be sensed and acknowledged for centuries to come. He was a man of the spirit who sought, wandering from land to land, the one true God, and who believed he had found him within the religion of Israel; who pondered the spiritual meaning, if one could be found, of the tempestuous age in which he lived; and who cherished the poetry of the Bible and the beauty of the Hebrew script and language. And moreover, he clearly believed in the universal voice of music, which had — so he must have thought — the power to unite men of different creeds and cultures in order to serve a higher purpose. As they did to the people of his own time, so do his remaining words and his music call out to us today. Can we fail to be moved by the notable struggle that was his life?

Jewish Studies XVIII (1967): 1–18. Bibliographic notes relating to other publications on Obadiah's music will be found in the last-mentioned study. The custom of musical adaptation — widespread in Obadiah's time — was known as *contrafactum*.

(Footnote 28, continued) In his article in the Wallenstein *Festschrift* (see above, note 24), A. Scheiber proposed that Obadiah was the illuminator and scribe of MSS Oxford Bodl. Heb. c 13 fol. 20 and Cambridge T-S Box K10, fol. 4 — perhaps the two most beautifully illuminated engagement contracts in the Genizah. While further study of the script is needed, I believe that the identification may well be correct — thus supplying us with information on another aspect of Obadiah's personality and activities.

TRANSLATION

A. THE AUTOGRAPH MEMOIRS¹

I. Cincinnati, MS Hebrew Union College Genizah Collection no. 8 (prayerbook fragment):

Colophon reads:

Obadiah the Norman Proselyte who entered the covenant of the God of Israel in the month of Ellul, year 1413 of the (era of) Documents (=1102 A.D.) which is 4862 of the (era of) Creation — he, Obadiah the Proselyte, has written (this prayer-book) with his own hand.²

II. Budapest: Kaufmann Genizah Collection, MS 134, fol. 1. *Recto*:

1. whose name is Oppido. He took a wife named Maria, and Maria conceived
2. and bore unto Dreux her husband two sons on the same day —
3. the first (born) according to the usual manner of women as to their children, to whom they gave the name
4. Rogerius, that is, Rogier, (As for) the second, his lower [parts] came (out)
5. first, his mother bearing him with great pain; she gave
6. him the name Joha[nnes], that is, Giovan. The youths grew up;
7. Rogerius became a man who sought the sword and warfare, whereas Johannes became
8. a man seeking knowledge and wisdom in books. It happened

¹ Note to readers: ()= explanatory additions; []:=suggested restorations of lacunae.

² Throughout the Memoirs, Obadiah invariably refers to himself in the 3rd person.

9. at that time regarding Archbishop Andraeas the high
10. priest in the city of Bari, that the Lord put the love of
11. the Torah of Moses into his heart. He forsook his land, [his] priesthood [and a]ll
12. his glory and came to the city of Constantinople, (where) he circumcised
13. the flesh of his foreskin. There [pa]ssed over him sufferings and hardships;
14. he arose and fled for his life from before the uncircumcised {*margin*: seeking to
slay him; but the Lord God of Israel saved him from their hands in purity. May
the Lord guard proselytes, blessed be the Lord forever! Many went up after him
and, ob[serving] his deeds,} they did as
15. he had done — they also entered the covenant of the living God. Then went
16. the man to the metropolis of Egypt and dwelled there until the day of his
17. death. The name of the king of Egypt in those days was
18. al-Mustansir, and the name of his vezir was [Badr] al-[Jamali].
19. The re[port] concerning Archbishop Andraeas reached

III. Budapest: Kaufmann Genizah Collection, MS 134, fol. 1, verso:

1. unto the entire land of Lombardy and unto the sages of Greece and
2. the sages of Rome, which is the place of the throne of the kingdom of Edom.
3. The Greek sages and all the sages of Edom were ashamed
4. when they h[ear]d the report about him. Johannes heard of the events concerning
him
5. while he was still a youth in the house of Dreux his father.
6. Now these are the names of the cities which are round about Oppido,
7. the place of birth of Johannes son of Dreux: To the west,
8. the city of Rome, the city of Salerno, the city of Potenza,
9. the town of Pietragalla, and the town of Anzi; to the east,
10. the city of Bari, the city of Montepeloso, the town of Genzano,

11. and the [tow]n of Banzi; to the north, the city of Acerenza,
12. a [riv]er named the Bradano lying between Oppido and Acerenza;
13. to the south, the city of Tolve and the city of
14. [Al]bano, Oppido lying between them. Now in the first
15. year in which Johannes was initially defiled
16. by a nocturnal happening in the house of Dreux his father, in that year
17. [Johannes] had a dream — lo, he was officiating at the main church
18. of Oppido [.] his people, when he looked (up) and beheld a man
19. standing to his right opposite the altar. He [said] to him, “Johannes!”

IV. Cambridge: Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection, MS 8.271, fol. 1, *recto*:

1. [.] awoke]
2. Johannes from his sleep, he was afraid because of the [.] as]
3. he knew that there had increased (?) the number of (?) [.]
4. unto them. In the [.]
5. in that year [. month]
6. six of the y[ear]
7. as is written [.]
8. the Franks, and in the language [of the Edomites: *Sol*]
9. *convertetur in tenebra[s et luna in sanguinem]*
10. *antequam veniat dies Do[mini magnus et]*
11. *terribilis*; and in the language of Israe[l: The sun shall turn to darkness]
12. and the moon [to blood,] befo[re the great and terrible day of the Lord cometh.]
13. In that year se[nt]
14. [the P]ope Apostolicus [.]

V. Cambridge: Taylor-Schechter MS 8.271, fol. 1 verso:

1. [.] as a witness be[fore] your eyes
2. [.] against the Ish]maelites and the Jews
3. [.] the day [.] your God. For
4. [.] to visit
5. [.] the F]ranks. They made
6. [.] the cru]cified one whom they hanged
7. [.] and they put the crosses
8. [each and every one o]n his clothing and on his shoulder.
- 9; [.] to go to Jerusalem.
10. [Then said they one to ano]ther: Why is it that we
11. [are going to fight against] our enemies, when, behold, in our (own) lands
12. [.reside] our enemies and those who hate
13. [.] Why should we lea]ve them with our women
14. [.] This was the talk in all] the camps of the Franks.

VI. Cambridge: Taylor-Schechter MS 8.271, fol. 2 recto:

1. [.]
2. which are not good [.]
3. the man of God [.]
4. reposing on [his] be[dand behold]
5. he was standing upon [his] feet]
6. westward through their count[ry]
7. as the appearance of an emerald. They were fleeing wes[tward]
8. who were coming from the east and pursuing after them; and [.]
9. the last [.]. He turned to Obadiah the Proselyte with tremb[ling]
10. a great [.] upon his head; and Obadiah the [Proselyte] took fear [of him].

11. Obadiah the Proselyte put it in his heart to remember [these things]
12. but he knew not their meaning until [he had studied the words of]
13. Moses the servant of God in the script of the Lord [and the language of the
Hebrews]
14. from the beginning of the Torah until its end. [Then arose and went Obadiah]
15. the Proselyte to the land of Shi[na]r [.]
16. the tribes of the children of Israel [.]
17. [.]
18. [.]
19. [.]

[break]

VII. Cambridge: Taylor-Schechter MS 8.271, fol. 2 verso:

1. [.]
2. [.]
3. [.]
4. [.]
5. [.]
6. [.]
7. [. dr]eams and their interpretations in the prophecy of Moses
8. [.]. Obadiah the Proselyte then went from the city of Maksin
9. [and came unto] Rehoboth which is upon the River Euphrates. Then came
10. [Obadiah the Proselyte] unto the city of Adinah which is Baghdad,
11. [capital of the Ishma]elites. There came upon him tribulations and [.]
12. [.] The gentiles (=Muslims) sought to slay him, but the Lord God
13. [. to] save him. Obadiah the Proselyte came

14. [.] and he stood before the doorway of the sy[nagogue]
15. [.] and the [.] went [.]
16. [.]

VIII. Budapest: Kaufmann Genizah Collection, MS 134, fol. 2 *recto*:

1. the academy. The servant installed Obadiah the Proselyte in the house
2. wherein the Jews would pray, and they brought him provisions.
3. It happened thereafter that Isaac, the head of the academy, directed that
4. Obadiah the Proselyte be with the orphan youths, in order to teach him the Torah
5. of Moses and the words of the prophets in the script
6. of the Lord and the language of the Hebrews. Prior to this,
7. the king of Adinah, whose name was al-Muqtadi, empowered his second-in-command, whose name was
8. Abishuga (=Ibn Shuja), to take discriminatory action against the Hebrews
9. dwelling in the city of Adinah. He sought many times
10. to cause them to perish, but the God of Israel thwarted his intent, this time also
11. hiding them from his wrath. (Abishuga) put gleaming signs upon them,
12. on the head of each and every Jew: one on the head
13. and the other on (the) throat, and about a silver-*mithqal* of lead
14. hanging from the throat of each and every Jew, upon which was inscribed
15. (the word) *Dhimmi* — for the Jews were taxed. He moreover had a girdle placed around the loins of each
16. and every Jew. Abishuga further had placed upon the Jewish women
17. two signs: the shoes belonging to each and every woman had to be
18. one red and the other black, while upon the throat of each and every woman
19. or upon her shoe was placed a small brass bell to make a noise

IX. Budapest: Kaufmann Genizah Collection, MS 134, fol. 2 verso:

1. so that one might clearly distinguish between the women of the Hebrews and the women of the gentiles.
2. He further appointed over the Jews cruel gentile men, while upon
3. the Jewish women he appointed cruel gentile women,
4. to oppress them with every kind of curse, spite, and shame.
5. The gentiles would mock them: the people of the land (=common folk)— both they and their children —
6. would strike the Jews in all the areas of the city of Adinah.
7. [*vacat*] Now this was the law concerning the tax which the officials
8. of the king of Adinah would collect from the Jews each and every year: from every
9. single Jew amongst the wealthy ones and those who had the most power
10. they would take four and a half drachmas; from the
11. middle-class Jews, two and a half drachmas; and from
12. the very poor Jews, one and a half drachmas,. If a
13. Jew died without having paid the tax, then whether there remained much or little
14. of it to pay, the gentiles would not allow that he be buried until
15. they had collected that part of the tax still owed by him. If the deceased person
16. had left nothing, the gentiles would ask the Jews to redeem their deceased
17. out of their money for the amount of tax owed. If they would not,
18. the gentiles would seek to cremate him. In addition,
19. this was the practice of the gentiles residing in Adinah to do [unto]

[break]

X. Cambridge: Taylor-Schechter, MS 10K 21 fol. 1 recto:

1. in the days of the chief named al-Afdal. In those days there arose
2. "children of the violent" amongst the nation of Israel, who lifted up their souls to
establish
3. a vision and stumbled in their words. In the mountains of Assyria, in the land of
Hakkeriya,
4. there arose a certain Jew named Solomon ben Ruji, the name of whose son was
5. Menahem; and with them was a glib man named Ephraim b. R.
6. Azariah the Jerusalemite, known as ben Fadlun. They wrote
7. letters to all the Jews near and far
8. in all the la[nds wh]ich were round about them, so that
9. their renown and the contents of their letters reached a far distance.
10. Unto all [the] places which are upon the face of the earth where
11. the Jews are scatt[er]ed am[ongst a]ll the nations which are
12. beneath all the heavens did their renown reach.
13. All of them said that the time had come when the Lord would gather
14. his nation Israel from all the lands unto Jerusalem
15. the holy city, and that Solomon b. [R]uji was the king
16. Messiah. When all the Jews
17. residing in the various lands heard the words of their letters, they rejoiced
18. greatly. They waited days, month[s and] ye[ars but] did not see
19. anything. Many of the Jews [.....]

XI. Cambridge: Taylor-Schechter, MS 10K 21, fol. 1 verso:

1. many [days] in fasting and prayer and charitable acts, for they were awaiting
2. the Lord's salvation, as He had said through
3. his servants the prophets. When they failed to see anything,
4. their hearts were utterly broken within them, and the Jews became ashamed
5. before all the gentiles. For all the gentiles and the uncircumcised ones heard
6. the rumors which came to the Jews; they would all
7. laugh and mock at the Jews and would say
8. "Behold the Jews want to fly, yet they have no wings with which
9. to fly to their land." They continued goading, calumniating
10. and cursing the Jews, and the gentiles would say that everything
11. which the Jews had was false and vain. In those days,
12. in a town called Ba'aquba, which is a one-day journey
13. from the city of Adinah, there arose amongst the Jews
14. a certain [man] known as bin Shaddad, who was "wise in his own eyes".
15. He lifted up his soul to establish a vision, but stumbled and told lies
16. in abundance. The king of Adinah sent for him, seized him and
17. the Jews who were with him, and put them in his prison.
18. While bin Shaddad and the Jews who were with him were
19. in pr[i]son, ben Shaddad would pray before

[break]

XII. Cambridge: Taylor-Schechter, MS Loan 31, recto:

1. [.]

2. [.....]
3. [.....]
4. [.....]
5. [.....]
6. [.....]
7. [.....] and from there went [Obadiah the Proselyte to the city of]
8. [Al]leppo. In th[ose] days w[ere the Franks near unto]
9. Aleppo. The Ishmaelites were in dire strai[ts; Radwan]
10. the king of Aleppo died, and his son would pa[y homage to Lulu]
11. the eunuch of his father, who exercised the rule [in place of him.]
12. One of the servants of Radwan slew the [eunuch Lulu,]
13. and the city of Aleppo remained without a ki[ng, for the king]
14. was survived by small children who did not have [the power]
15. to withstand the Franks. So the me[n of Aleppo] sent
16. and took a great man from the [To]garmites (=Turks) named Ghazi bin
17. Urtuq to be ruler over them along with the sons of Radwan.
18. For the city of Aleppo had remained in dire straits because of
19. Sir Rogier king of Antokhia (=Antioch) and because of the Togarmites

XIII. Cambridge: Taylor-Schechter, MS Loan 31, verso:

1. [.....]
2. [.....]
3. [.....]
4. [.....]
5. [.....]
6. [.....]
7. [.....] and some of them [.....]

8. [. the Ishm]ae[l]ites, while so[me] of them would [.]
9. [.to] the commands of the king of Aleppo. Jews
10. [in abundance in A]leppo died, while those who remained alive were weak and impoverished.
11. [Upon the] poor was a heavy yoke and great trouble.
12. [They would seek from] the gentiles, the inhabitants of Aleppo, and from their brethren
13. [bread, and would keep g]oing and returning to them. They
14. [also] acted charitably in some small measure with Obadiah the Proselyte,
15. [and O]badiah the Proselyte blessed them. Then Obadiah
16. returned to the city of Kalneh (=Raqq), and dwelled there (some) days.
17. So the Lord raised up a saviour for the inhabitants of Aleppo —
18. Ghazi bin Urtuq of the chiefs of the Togarmites.
19. For it happened when the wickedness of the Franks was great in the sight of the Lord

[break]

**XIV. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, MS Adler 4208=3098,
fol. 7 recto:**

- 1, Moreover, the Hebrews residing in Damascus established for Obadiah
2. the Proselyte a collector for his benefit. This collector would gather in from the Hebrews
3. each week a little bit [.] and all of them
4. [. . . .] as [.] dwelled Obadiah [the Proselyte] in Damascus.

5. [Obadiah] the Proselyte [. . . .] rejoiced in them [and ble]ssed them; they would
6. [show charity.....] toward O[bad]iah the Proselyte each one
7. according to his own generosity. Then Obadiah the Proselyte arose from
Damascus and went
8. to [Dan] (=Banias) which is in the land of Israel. [There came forward] of the
Israelites
9. a few poor [men] who acted hospitably to[ward] Obadiah the Proselyte.
10. [In those da]ys, in the month of Ellul, an (Aaronide) priest of the
11. Israelites, a Karaite named Solomon, came
12. to Dan while journeying. He said to Obadiah the Proselyte and to the Je[ws]
13. who were in Dan that in two and a half more months
14. the Lord would gather in his people Israel from all the lands
15. unto [Jeru]salem the holy city. Obadiah the Proselyte said
16. to Solomon: “W[hence k]now you this thing, my lord?”
17. Solomon then said: “Because I am the man whom the Israelites
18. are seeking.” So Obadiah the Proselyte answered (him), saying, “Behold
19. I have heard that you are from the seed of Aaron the Priest: now today is

XV. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America: MS Adler 4208 = 3098,

fol. 7, verso:

1. nineteen years from the day on which I entered into the covenant of
2. the Lord God of Israel, but I have never heard that the [I]sraelites
3. are seeking [sa]lvation through a p[riest o]r Levite — but rather
4. through Elijah the prophet and the [k]ing Messiah, (who are) from the seed of
5. David king of Israel. Now I pray (that you give) [a sign]
6. to prove your claim.” Then said Solomon [.]
7. “I do not eat bread nor do I drink water.” Then said

8. Obadiah the Proselyte to him, "And so what do you eat and drink?"
9. Solomon then said, "Pomegranates, figs, almond[s],
10. nuts, sycamore-fruit, dates and apples, which [come]
11. from trees and shrubs; and I drink milk." Then
12. Obadiah told him that he was a proselyte, and Solomon, rejoicing in this, said
13. to him, "do not g[o] to Egypt, for two and a half
14. months hence we and all the Israelites of the
15. exile shall be [ga]thered together in Jerusalem!" Then Obadiah
16. the Proselyte said to Solomon, "I shall go to Egypt and shall return
17. with our brethren the children of Israel who are in Egypt to
18. Jerusalem." So Solomon was silent. Then Solomon went to
19. Tyre, and afterward Obadiah the Proselyte went to Tyre, and came

B. THE EPISTLE OF BARUKH b. ISAAC OF ALEPPO

XVI. Oxford: Bodleian Library, MS. heb. 2873, fol. 1 *recto*:

1. In Thy name, O Merciful One!
2. To the daughter of Jeshurun whose mourning has become great, when her ways
were hedged up with thorns of affliction, and the signposts
3. were no more by which she might return to her cities. With fear were her troops
disarrayed, weakened were the hands of those who would repair her fissures.
4. For in toil and sorrow have her years passed by, and her hope has become as an
expiring breath, before the fury of the oppressor. Shortened were
5. her vigorous steps, before the raging fury of the famine cast upon her fertile
places, and no warrior remains

6. within her gates from those who were vigilant at her doorposts. Yea, her grape-clusters have been plucked, and closed are the gateways of her
7. pastures. With lowered voices graze her kids, the sound of her afflictions breaks forth. For indeed, spread out are the troops of
8. death's shadow in disorder. She has staggered in seeking her desires, yea she is driven out and has no share in her besought inheritance.
9. Thus has she become one abhorred by people, and is made a toy of unto the ends of the earth; like an antelope caught in a snare has she fallen into her pits.
10. Bare of buttocks are they, enchained in irons; the boy is given away for a fee, while the girl they exchange for a price.
11. As a drop of the basket, as a vain nothing are they accounted before their captors; trampled as the mire of the streets is her beauteous
12. neck. What shall I liken thee unto, O daughter of the Shulamite? Exists there a vision such as, with shuddering, they behold in you?—
13. that your anguished pain should mount your bed, with unstopped flow of tears from the pupil of your eye. For there is no end to your tremblings; yea, swifter
14. than eagles are the hooves of those who plunder you; as sheep for slaughter have your virgin daughters been thrown upon the rocks.
15. The men of knowledge have become dismayed by your measured portion. How have those who dwell upon (Earth's) navel become defiled and melted up in wrath, being handed over
16. to a foreign nation and made to hear a tongue they once knew not, their houses given over to those who plundered them,
17. so that there is not found amongst them even a frail hut in a cucumber patch, after the sword of the dove, unsheathed, did not
18. [cease] to make their flesh as dung. Her blood is spilled into rivers, her wares into wasteland and sea; and her depths have become

19. as waters of saffron, (as) the Sharon wine in color. They have fled, one from a city
and two from a family, the escaped
20. remnant, (like) a ball (thrown) into a large country, and have been plucked from a
holy place, to trample dust in a foreign land.
21. A haughty arm has struck, it has made haste with brooms of destruction, and has
chased away all who unify the Name
22. from every border of the Holy Land without pitying it, that they might never again
behold its stones. Therefore does she sigh
23. with breaking of loins, for her hurts are incurable, they go not away. Yea, in full
measure crushed, where once 'twas fulsome —
24. changed are her measures, her secrets unswallowed by a reckoning, a (mere)
tomen, (nay) '*ukhlah* (measure) in the line of justice. Yet for
25. the coming time has Zion raised up her hands, for there is a hope for her end, for
though paths are crushed beneath her, she has not forsaken
26. the holy offering of her thoughts, at watches' beginnings, for the bread of toil!
Thus will He give rest to his friend, without
27. contortions of vanity as their exchange, and in a place of joy will tremble the
door of (Zion's) scarlet lips dripping myrrh,
28. surpassing the steadfastness of her plantings at appointed times, more than the
darkening over of mountains, with a hoard of desirable showpieces
29. to know every act, for awesome is He
30. amongst the most sweet, a veritable *homṭon* powder amidst a heap of grain in the
storehouse of her desire, to make smooth her paths before all the children of gold.
The Law
31. will not depart from their seed until the arrival of him (=the Messiah) who
possesses the (true) statutes, who will reveal profundities in pleasant manner.
Then shall there exult

32. the dwellers of the rock, for they will be made to inherit anew instead of their shame; and they shall inherit desolate cities — a splendor will they be!
33. For a declarer anew shall give answer unto the daughter of Jerusalem! In the lifetime of our brethren, our confreres, the people of our redemption,
34. the holy congregations who are judicious in writ and orally expound, and whose great ones
35. do serve (the Lord), studying and teaching and propounding difficulties, drawing logical analogies by the *a fortiori* principle; who inherit two worlds,
36. so that the luminaries radiate upon them in clarifying light; for they are pleased to be brought forward well-armed to do the will of their Creator,
37. and with the merit of their fathers three-fold, so that they praise the three holy ones, eagerly as ministering angels. O you heroic ones,
38. putting to rest the furrowed fields, who forsake the *‘orlah* fruit and the seventh-year produce, who take off from their kneaded dough the priestly loaves,
39. and cause the final gleaners to go (through the fields). Humble ones, but unforced, meeting fowlers in the wild growth: Pure
40. is their teaching, (as pure) as crystal objects, their lips murmur (the words of) the ancient (Torah); they make justice pure, and do not grope (for the wall as blind men).
41. In ornamental gowns may they all be adorned. May the offerings which they bring be pleasant unto their Rock, (as) from days everlasting
42. and months abundant, as Scripture states: “Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old,
43. and as in ancient years!” All places of worship and study unto whom
44. this letter shall reach, may they be granted myriad measures of peace [.]
45. [This man, the bearer of our letter,] c[a]me t[o] ou[r] c[i]t[y] [w]i[th] an e[p]i[stl]e [fr]o[m] s[a]g[e[s]

46. who dwell in his lands. They told us that this man is of a great family, that his father
47. wa[[s] a great [chief]tain, and that this man is expert in the reading of their boo[k]s. Because of his understanding of what he read [in the b]ooks
48. of their error, he [re]turned to the Lord of Israel with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his strength, and became a proselyte in a law-court
49. of Israel. When he came to convert, they informed him that the Israelites were in sorrow, oppressed , despised
50. and scorned; he said to his informants, “Do I not know that the Israelites are despised and scorned?
51. Nevertheless I come only out of love for Israel.” After it was discerned that he came out of love,
52. they informed him of some lenient and some severe commandments, and they informed him of the punishment [for] (infractions of)
53. the commandments. Thus they said to him, “If prior to arriving at this stage you ate of the fat-portion, you did not thereby
54. incur the punishment of extirpation; if you defiled the Sabbath, you did not incur the punishment of stoning. But now that you have come
55. to this stage, if you should eat the fat-portion, you shall incur extirpation; and if you should defile the Sabbath, you shall incur stoning.”
56. Just as they informed him of the punishment for infractions of the commandments, thus also did they inform him of the rewards for carrying out the commandments.
57. Thus did they say to him: “Know that the world to come is reserved only for the righteous, and Israel at this time
58. are unable to obtain either a multiplicity of goodnesses or a multiplicity of punishments.” When [he accepted]

59. all of the conditions, they circumcised him immediately, and when he was healed they ritually bathed him. There were [two]
60. sages there, standing on either side of him, and they also informed him of some [lenient and some]
61. severe commandments. Thus was he made an Israelite for every matter. [And now, O our brethren, blessed]
62. may you be unto Heaven, be careful of the honor of this man, and do not [.
. which is]
63. customary toward him. Take care that you not injure him with words, that he be not injured by words [of for]
64. the Lord has warned against injury and oppression toward him, as our masters taught: “He who wounds the feelings of a proselyte transgresses [three negative injunctions,]
65. and he who oppresses him infringes two. In what way is wounding of the feelings different? This is so because three negative injunctions are written — [A stranger (thou shalt not wrong)”, etc.]
66. (etc., etc.) — Thus rather conclude that both (are forbidden) by three (injunctions). It has been (further) taught: “R. Eliezer the Great [said, ‘In three]
67. Biblical passages has the Lord given warning with respect to (treatment of) proselytes, (etc.)’ ”. Still greater is the injury caused by words than injury of
68. a monetary nature, as R. Yohanan said in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai: “Greater is the injury caused by word[is than injury of a monetary nature,]
69. for of the former Scripture has stated, ‘And thou shalt fear thy Lord’, whereas of the latter Scripture has not stated, ‘And thou shalt fear thy Lor[d].” R. Eliezer further]
70. said, “The former thing concerns his very self, the latter (only) his mo[ney.” R.] Samuel b. {Nahmani} said, “The latter thing can be compensated for,

[71. whereas the former cannot be compensated for.]

XVII. Oxford. Bodleian Library, MS heb. 2873, fol. 1 *verso*:

1. This letter was written in his own hand by our mas[ter Baru]kh, the great and outstanding master,
2. may he be guarded by Heaven, son of [our master Isaa]c r.i.p. Our master Barukh wrote this letter
3. that it might be kept by Obadiah the Proselyte (for use) in all communities of Israel to which
4. he might go.

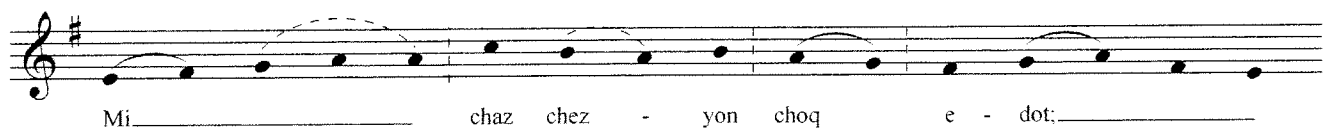
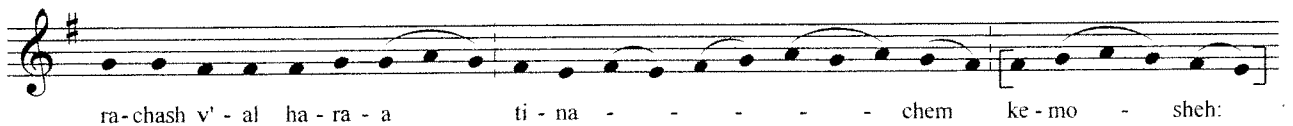
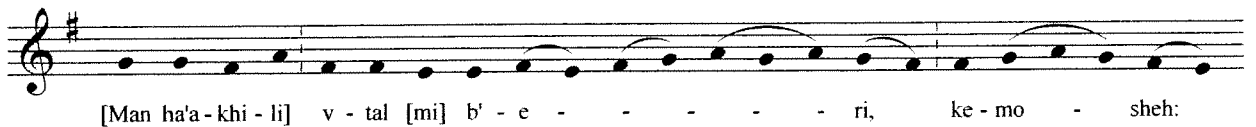
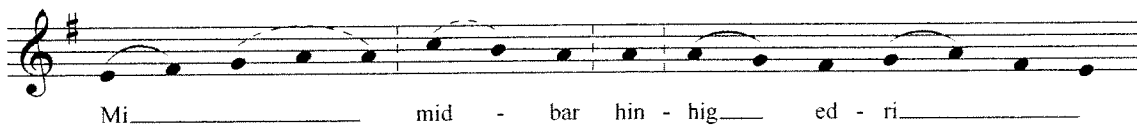
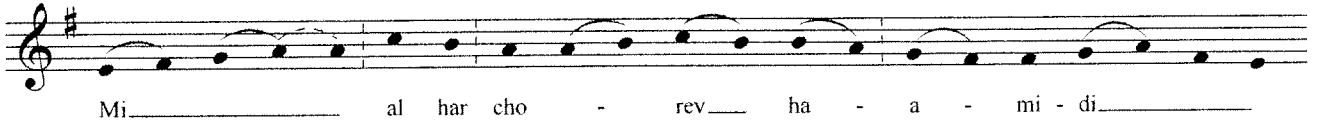
XVIII. The Music of Obadiah (on following pages)

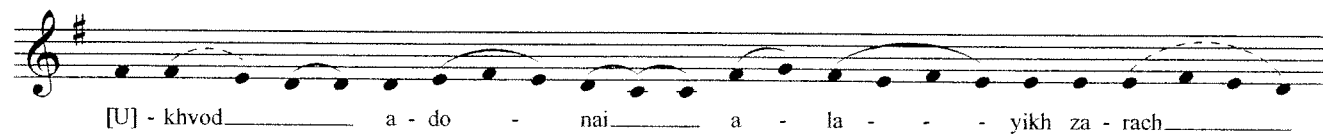
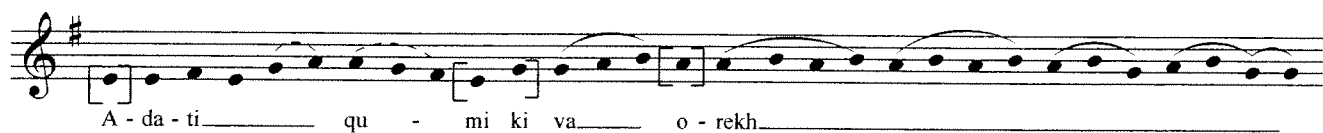
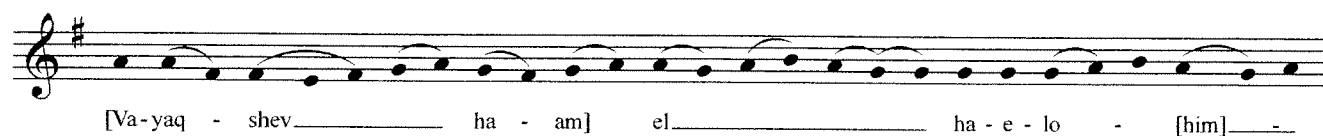
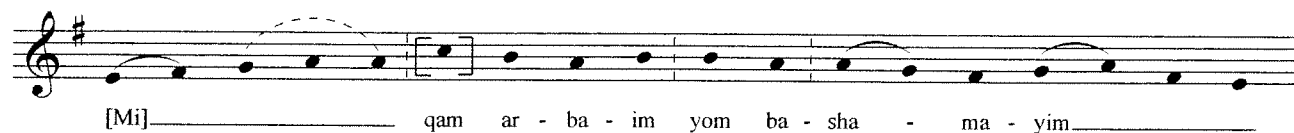
The Songs of Obadiah the Proselyte

As deciphered and transcribed by the late Professor Royal B. MacDonald
With the editorial assistance of Michael Alan Anderson

1. The Praise of Moses

MS JTSA, ENA 4096b
Transposed down a perfect fourth

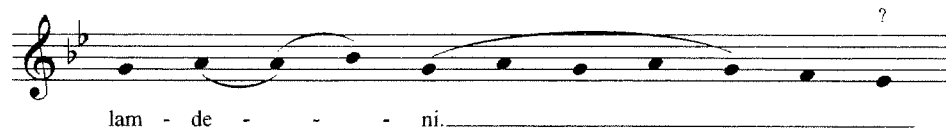
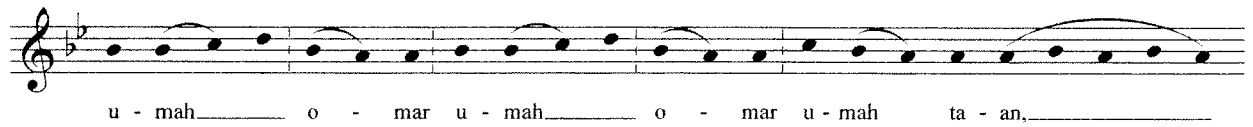




2. Teach, that I might but know

MS T-S Cambridge K5 41 (recto)

Transposed down one whole tone



3. Trust in the Lord

MS T-S Cambridge K5 41 (verso)

Transposed down a perfect fourth

Ba - rukh ha - ge - - - ver a - sher yiv - tach ba - a - do - nay

ve - ha - - - ya a - do - nay miv - ta kho

Be - takh el a - do - - - - - nay be - khol

li - be kha ve - el bi nat kha al ti - sha - - - en.

Be - khol de - ra - khe - - - kha da - - - - e - - - - hu,

ve - hu ye - ya - sher or - - - - kho - te - - - - kha

Ash - rey a - dam ma - - - tza chokh - mah

ve - a - dam ya - fiq te - vu - - - - nah

Hi - ney ash - rey e - nosh yo - khi - che - nu e - lo - - - ah

u - mu - sar sha - day al ti - mas

Translation of the poetic texts

1. The Praise of Moses

[.....]

WHO stood upon Mount Horeb, heard the order “Stand with Me!” — as Moses?

WHO to the desert led my flock, fed them manna, dew from out my well —as Moses?

WHO praised Me with “O merciful and forbearing,” whispered “Thou repentest of the evil” — as Moses?

WHO beheld the sight of statute testimonial, witnessed in full vision, not by parable — as Moses?

WHO is that one who taught and drilled the Torah, merited to come within the cloud — as Moses?

WHO stayed for forty days in heaven, was sustained with neither bread nor water — as Moses?

And the people harked unto the Lord: “My congregation, arise, for thy light hath come, and the Glory of the Lord on thee doth shine!”

As it is said, “Arise, O my light, for thy Light hath come, and the Glory of the Lord on thee doth shine.” (Isaiah 60.1)

2. Teach, that I Might but Know

[.....]

That I might know, that I might know

What to speak within the gates,

What I should say, what I should say, and Thou shouldst answer —

Teach me!

3. Trust in the Lord

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, yea, whose hope is the Lord. (Jerem. 17.7)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own understanding rely not;

In all your ways keep Him in mind, for then will He make straight your path!

(Proverbs 3.5-6)

Happy is he who has found wisdom, he who has begotten understanding. (Prov. 3.13)

Lo, happy is the man whom the Lord reprove — the Almighty’s teaching despise not!

(Job 5.17)

(Translations by N.G.)