

# Fashioning the “Inner” (*Bāṭin*) in Baḥya ibn Paqūda’s *Duties of the Hearts*\*

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## ■ Abstract

In the seminal work, *Direction to the Duties of the Hearts*, Baḥya ibn Paqūda (flourished 11th century) aimed to reconstruct Jewish existence on the basis of a fundamental distinction between the “duties of the members” and the “duties of the hearts.” Baḥya’s intent was to instigate a transition towards the internalization of Jewish religious life. This paradigm shift was to take place not only by the shaping of an ideational formation and a new set of distinctions that Baḥya aimed at integrating in Jewish life, but also through a reflective consideration of the state of the Jewish tradition, its transmission mechanisms, historical trajectory, and contemporaneous challenges. As I will demonstrate in this article, in order to realize this transformation, Baḥya utilized a distinction that cross-cuts his work: the distinction between *ẓāhir* (“external” or “manifest”) and *bāṭin* (“inner” or “hidden”), that mostly indicates the relation between the manifest sphere of one’s actions and the activity that takes place only in one’s mental space. However, as I argue, this distinction is also applied by Baḥya to the expanse of Jewish “tradition,” pertaining to what was disclosed in it and what was left unimpacted, what was communicated and what was kept unsaid, what was remembered and what was neglected.

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## ■ Keywords

interiority, Baḥya ibn Paqūda, *Duties of the Hearts*, tradition, hermeneutics, *bāṭin*, *zāhir*

## ■ Introduction

In the writing of *Kitāb al-Hidāya ilā Farāʾid al-Qulūb* (Eng.: *The Guide to the Duties of the Hearts*; Heb.: *Ḥovot ha-Levavot*; written circa 1080), the author, Baḥya ibn Paqūda, sought to rearrange Jewish life on the basis of a fundamental distinction between the “duties of the members” (*farāʾid al-jawāriḥ*) and the “duties of the hearts” (*farāʾid al-qulūb*).<sup>1</sup> By using this distinction, Baḥya attempted to bring about a turn that would yield an internalization of Jewish religious life and a shifting of its focus from the religious community to the individual.<sup>2</sup> In this reevaluation of values, the core of religious life moves away from the worship of the divine through actions that are visible to all, i.e., “duties of the members,” and in its place Baḥya puts the “duties of the hearts,” a realm of inner activity that is executed in the confines of one’s mental space and which Baḥya fashions as a site of intimacy between the human and the divine.<sup>3</sup> He sought to bring about this shift not only by shaping an ideational framework and a new set of distinctions—albeit

<sup>1</sup> It is probable that the work’s Hebrew title was coined by its translator, Judah ibn Tibbon. I did not find any sign that Baḥya was the one who gave the Arabic phrase *farāʾid al-qulūb* the Hebrew rendering *hovot ha-levavot*. Moreover, in the surviving fragment of Joseph Kimḥi’s translation of the work, the phrase *farāʾid al-qulūb* is translated as *hovot ha-lev*, and is contrasted with *hovot ha-guf* (in his translation of the “Gate of Repentance,” ch. 9). The fragment, Leipzig Uni. Ms. B.H. doud. 39 (*hovot ha-lev* appears in 3a), was printed in three different editions, with some inaccuracies: in Adolf Jellinek’s introduction to the edition he coproduced with Isaac Benjacob of the *Guide to the Duties of the Hearts* (Leipzig, 1846); in David Sluzki’s edition (Warsaw, 1870); and in Avraham Tsifroni’s edition (Jerusalem, 1928). For the phrase *hovot ha-lev*, see *System der Moral von Bechaji bar Josef, nach der von Jehuda Ibn Tibbon aus dem Arabischen gefertigten Uebersetzung nebst einem kurzen Kommentar hrsg. mit einer Einleitung und Fragmenten der Josef Kimchi’schen* (ed. Adolf Jellinek and Isaac Benjacob; Leipzig, 1846) 24; for the original Arabic of the paragraph, see *Kitāb al-Hidāya ilā Farāʾid al-Qulūb* (ed. Yosef Qāfih; Jerusalem, 1973) 322, henceforth, *al-Hidāya*. In a similar fashion, in his English translation (see n. 12 below), Menahem Mansoor opted to translate *qulūb* (pl.) as “heart” (sing.). For this article, I provide a more literal rendering of the title, which reflects both the Arabic source and choices made by Judah ibn Tibbon in his translation.

<sup>2</sup> This assessment is consensual in the scholarly study of the *Duties of the Hearts* and is expressed even by scholars who sought to trace precedents to the phenomenon already in the Bible or in late antique rabbinic literature. This point is also valid in the work of scholars who argued that the sources of Judaism have mitigated the trends that Baḥya drew from the world of Muslim Sūfism and asceticism; see, e.g., Georges Vajda, *La théologie ascétique de Bahya Ibn Paquda* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1947) 140, 145.

<sup>3</sup> On the possible Arabic source for the distinction between the “duties of the hearts” and the “duties of the members,” see Amos Goldreich, “Possible Arabic Sources for the Distinction between ‘Duties of the Heart’ and ‘Duties of the Limbs,’” *Te’uda* 6 (1988) (= *Studies in Hebrew and Arabic: In Memory of Dov Eron*, ed. Aron Dotan) 179–208 (Hebrew); on the Muʾtazilite background of the concept of *farāʾid*, see Diana Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue: Philosophy and Mysticism in Baḥya b. Paqida’s “Duties of the Heart”* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) 197–98.

ones that are based on currents and trends from Islamic thought—that he aimed to integrate into Jewish life, but also through a reflective consideration of the state of the Jewish tradition, its modes of transmission, its past, and its predicaments in his times.<sup>4</sup> As will be explicated throughout the article, in order to realize the above-mentioned transformation, Bahya utilized one of the fundamental distinctions that run through *Duties of the Hearts*, namely, the distinction between *zāhir* (“external” or “manifest”) and *bāṭin* (“inner” or “hidden”). This distinction is used chiefly in the context of the relation between the manifest sphere of one’s actions and the activity that takes place only in one’s mental space;<sup>5</sup> but, as I argue, Bahya applies it also to the realm of “tradition”—what is disclosed in it and what is undisclosed, what is communicated and what is left untold, what is remembered and what is neglected.<sup>6</sup>

Thus far, scholarship on Bahya’s *Duties of the Hearts* has centered on three focal points (with some studies addressing two or all three of them at once). One focal point involves tracing Bahya’s sources and highlighting the proximity between his work and some elements from the works of earlier Muslim authors;<sup>7</sup> the second deals

<sup>4</sup> On the structure of the Jewish tradition and the issue of Judaism as a “tradition” in the Middle Ages, see Shlomo Pines, *Studies in the History of Jewish Philosophy: The Transmission of Texts and Ideas* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1977) 7, 16; idem, “A Discussion on Science and Belief in the Study of Judaism,” *The University* 11.2–3 (1966) 13–15; and see remarks on Pines’s notion of the Jewish tradition in Giorgio Agamben, “Il teorema di Pines,” in Shlomo Pines, *Le metamorfosi della libertà. Tra Atene e Gerusalemme* (ed. and trans. Angela Guidi; Vicenza: Neri Pozza editore, 2015) 8–9. On the modes of transformation of medieval tradition in an interreligious perspective, see Sarah Stroumsa, “Whirlpool Effects and Religious Studies: A Response to Guy G. Stroumsa,” in *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe: Encounters, Notions, and Comparative Perspectives* (ed. Volkhard Krech and Marion Steinicke; Leiden: Brill, 2012) 159.

<sup>5</sup> On the crucial role of the term *bāṭin* in the construction of the inner life of religion in Bahya, see Sara Sviri, “Jewish-Muslim Mystical Encounters in the Middle Ages with Particular Attention to al-Andalus (Muslim Spain),” prepared for and published as “Mysticism,” in *Jews in the Medieval Islamic World* (ed. Phillip I. Lieberman; vol. 5 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) 891–922; Ehud Krinis, “Stranger in This World: Bahya ibn Paquda and the Turn Inward in Islamic and Judeo-Arabic Asceticism (*zuhd*)” (forthcoming). I am indebted to Ehud Krinis for sharing with me some chapters of his work in progress.

<sup>6</sup> On this issue, see Goldreich, “Possible Arabic Sources,” 181 n. 9.

<sup>7</sup> See, especially, A. S. Yahuda, *Prolegomena zu einer erstmaligen herausgabe des kitāb Al-Hidāja ‘ila farā’id al-qulūb* (Frankfurt am Main: Kauffmann, 1904); idem, “Die Islamischen Quellen des Al-Hidāja,” in *Al-hidāja ilā farā’id al-qulūb des Bachja Ibn Jōsēf ibn Paqūda* (ed. A. S. Yahuda; Leiden: Brill, 1912) 53–113; Ignác Goldziher, “Al-Hidāja ‘ilā Farā’id al-Qulūb des Bachja ibn Jōsēf ibn Paqūda aus Andalusien. Im arabischem Urtext zum ersten Male nach der Oxforder und Pariser Handschrift sowie den Petersburger Fragmenten hrsg. von A. S. Yahuda,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 77 (1913) 529–38; Yiḏḥak Heinemann, *Die Lehre von der Zweckbestimmung des Menschen im griechisch-römischen Altertum und im jüdischen Mittelalter* (Breslau: Marcus, 1926) 37–48; Georges Vajda, “Le dialogue de l’âme et de la raison dans les ‘Devoirs des Cœurs’ de Bahya ibn Paquda,” *REJ* 102 (1937) 93–104; Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*; Ehud Krinis, “Stranger in this World”; Menachem Mansoor, “Arabic Sources on Ibn Pakuda’s ‘Duties of the Heart,’” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 3 (1973) 81–90; Nahem Ilan, “*Al-i’tidāl Al-Sharī’i*: Another Examination of the Perception of Asceticism in *The Duties of the Heart* of Bahya,” *REJ* 164 (2005) 449–61; Seako Yazaki, *Islamic Mysticism and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī: The Role of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 154–59; David Hartwig

with the question of the radicality and the novelty of Bahya's proposed religiosity in relation or comparison to his Jewish sources, as well as with the influence his work exerted on future works written by Jewish authors;<sup>8</sup> and the third addresses primarily the coherency of Bahya's system (or aspects of it), with no reference to intra- and intercultural genealogies.<sup>9</sup> Absent from this scholarly picture is a topic that lies at the center of the present article, namely, the strategy through which Bahya sought to implement his novel approach within the "medium" of the Jewish tradition, and to cast it not only on his present times but also backward as being part and parcel of Judaism's own "inner history."<sup>10</sup>

Baneth, "The Common Teleological Source of Bahya Ibn Paquda and al-Ghazālī," in *Sefer Magnes* (ed. Fritz Baer et al.; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1938) 23–30 (Hebrew); Goldreich, "Possible Arabic Sources"; Binyamin Abrahamov, "The Obligation to Speculate in Bahya's Thought," *Studies in Judeo-Arabic Culture* (ed. Haggai Ben-Shammai et al.; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2014) 71–80 (Hebrew); idem, "The Sources Used by R. Bahya Ibn Paqūda in *Ḥovot ha-levavot*," *Oreshet* 9 (2020) 7–38 (Hebrew); Svirī, "Jewish-Muslim Mystical Encounters"; eadem, "Spiritual Trends in Pre-Kabbalistic Judeo-Spanish Literature: The Cases of Bahya ibn Paqūda and Judah Halevi," *Donaire* 6 (1996) 78–84; Paul Fenton, "Eastern Pietism, or: The Encounter between the Mysteries of Israel and Ismā'īl," in *An Introduction to Kabbalah* (2 vols.; Ra'anana: Open University, 2016) 2:440–45 (Hebrew).

<sup>8</sup> See, especially, Vajda, *La théologie ascétique*; Alexander Altmann, "The Religion of the Thinkers: Free Will and Predestination in Saadia, Bahya, and Maimonides," in *Religion in a Religious Age* (ed. Shlomo Dov Goitein; Cambridge, MA: Association for Jewish Studies, 1974) 25–51; Isaiah Tishby, in collaboration with Joseph Dan, *Hebrew Ethical Literature: Selected Texts with Introductions, Notes and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Newman, 1970) 109–21 (Hebrew); Joseph Dan, *Hebrew Ethical and Homiletical Literature* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1975) esp. 47–62 (Hebrew); Adam Afterman, *Devequt: Mystical Intimacy in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Los Angeles: Cherub, 2011) 62–72 (Hebrew); Hannah Kasher, "A Hypothetical Dialogue between Judah Halevi and Bahyā ibn Paqūda," in *Studies in Arabic and Islamic Culture II* (ed. Binyamin Abrahamov; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2006) 57–86; eadem, "Between Intention and Action in Bahyā ibn Paqūda and Maimonides," in *By the Well: Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Halakhic Thought Presented to Gerald J. Blidstein* (ed. Uri Ehrlich, Howard Kreisel, and Daniel J. Lasker; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2008) 255–67 (Hebrew); Patrick B. Koch, *Human Self-Perfection: A Re-Assessment of Kabbalistic Musar-Literature of Sixteenth-Century Safed* (Los Angeles: Cherub, 2015) 26–29, 54–56, 167–69, 191–93. On the reception of Bahya's work, see Aharon Mirsky, *From Duties of the Heart to Songs of the Heart* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992) (Hebrew); Nahem Ilan, "'Beginning of Wisdom'—The Remnants of a Sufi Composition in Judaeo-Arabic Inspired by 'Duties of the Heart,'" *'Aley 'Asor: Proceedings of the Tenth Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies* (ed. Daniel J. Lasker and Haggai Ben-Shammai; Be'er Sheva: Ben Gurion University, 2008) 21–103 (Hebrew); Israel M. Ta-Shma, "A Summary of *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Hearts* by R. Asher b. R. Shelamya of Lunel," *'Aley Sefer* 10 (1982) 13–24 (= Israel M. Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature* [4 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2004–2010] 4:133–46) (Hebrew).

<sup>9</sup> See, especially, David Kaufmann, *Die Theologie des Bachja ibn Pakuda* (Vienna: Karl Gerold, 1874); Eliezer Schweid, "The Path of Repentance for the Individual Undergoing Purification," *Da'at* 1 (1968) 17–42 (Hebrew); Lenn E. Goodman, "Bahya on the Antinomy of Free Will and Predestination," *JHI* 44 (1983) 115–30; Howard Kreisel, "Asceticism in the Thought of B. Bahya ibn Paquda and Maimonides," *Da'at* 21 (1988) vii–xiii; Ruth Birnbaum, "The Role of Reason in Bahya and Maimonides," *Shofar* 19.2 (2001) 76–86; Joseph Dan, "Spiritual Ascent and Mysticism in the *Guide to the Duties of the Hearts* by Bahya Ibn Paquda," in *History of Jewish Mysticism and Esotericism* (13 vols.; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2008–2020) 4:290–314 (Hebrew).

<sup>10</sup> On the term "medium" in relation to the notion of "tradition," see Anthony Giddens, "Living

As part of his attempt to implement his new religious emphases, Baḥya put much discursive effort into articulating the relation between the “duties of the hearts” and the tradition at the core of which he sought to place them. The essence of Baḥya’s line of argumentation is the claim that apart from a declaration of their centrality, the “duties of the hearts,” which he also calls “inner knowledge” (*‘ilm al-bāṭin*),<sup>11</sup> were neither enumerated nor sufficiently clarified in the canonical sources of Judaism. In the words of Baḥya:

The Scriptures are concise in their explanation of this matter [the inner knowledge]. Only hints and indications are used . . . , for the Scriptures rely on the intelligence of the wise to be inspired to search and inquire about the matter as much as possible, until it is grasped and understood.<sup>12</sup>

This argument of Baḥya, which resurfaces repeatedly from the work’s introduction onward, has been scantily remarked upon in scholarship and has yet to receive any focused discussion.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, sub-arguments expanding on this argument that appear in other sections of the work have thus far not been identified as such, let alone discussed.

I shall begin, therefore, by addressing the question of how to reconcile the medium of tradition—in which, until the writing of the work, Baḥya’s novel religious approach and much of his technical vocabulary had not yet been introduced, or at least had not been crystalized—with the “new” that was introduced in his work not only as an integral part of Jewish religious life but also as a way of rearranging and refashioning this way of life. In the first part of the article, I examine Baḥya’s argument, which provides an answer to the question of how to integrate the doctrine—indeed the very category—of the “duties of the hearts” into a tradition that did not formerly recognize it as a constitutive category. According to Baḥya, the canonical sources did not elaborate on the “duties of the hearts” for several reasons, which I explore below: the first reason concerns the sociology of the knowledge of these duties; the second concerns an epistemological principle that is fundamental to the structure of the “duties of the hearts”; and the third concerns a hermeneutical issue that stems from the very framework of distinctions that Baḥya develops in his book. The need to downplay the discussion of the “duties of the hearts” is the reason, according to Baḥya, that up until his day they did not

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in a Post-Traditional Society,” in *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (ed. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Last; Cambridge: Polity, 1994) 59–109. On the idea of “inner history” that is drawn from the late theory of experience of Edmund Husserl and is brought to bear on the structure of traditions, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (4th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1975) 207–9.

<sup>11</sup> On *‘ilm al-bāṭin*, see n. 39 below.

<sup>12</sup> Baḥya ben Joseph ibn Pakuda, *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart* (trans. Menahem Mansoor; Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004) 137–38 (henceforth, *Duties of the Hearts*; note I use the plural “hearts,” diverging from Mansoor’s published title); *al-Hidāya*, 89–90. All quotes from the *Duties of the Heart* are modified versions of Menahem Mansoor’s translation.

<sup>13</sup> See Goldreich, “Possible Arabic Sources,” 181 n. 10, 183 n. 13.

receive the systematic study they deserve. The writing of his book, he contends, changed this reality. However, the question arises as to whether Baḥya himself does not act improperly in shedding too much light on that which was not meant to be disclosed fully. In the second part of the article, I discuss how Baḥya contends with this problem through a set of arguments that clarify the new balance that he seeks to establish in his book between partial disclosure and partial concealment.

### ■ “Neglected, Not Contained in any Book”: The Status of the “Duties of the Hearts” in the Jewish Tradition

In the introduction to his work, Baḥya writes:

As the religious commandments are divided in two—they have an exterior (*ẓāhir*) part and an interior (*bāṭin*) part—I studied the books of our predecessors who composed many books on the religious commandments after the time of the Talmudic sages, so that I might learn from them the inner knowledge (*‘ilm al-bāṭin*). . . . Having studied these books, I could not find among them even one dealing exclusively with the inner knowledge. When I found that this knowledge, the knowledge of the duties of the heart (*‘ilm farā’id al-qulūb*), was neglected, not contained in any book comprising its origins, forsaken, with none of its chapters collected in one work, I was deeply astonished.<sup>14</sup>

In these words, Baḥya draws a link between the “duties of the hearts” and the “inner” (*bāṭin*), a term of crucial importance in his work—as well as in his Islamic sources—that encompasses hermeneutical, theological, eschatological, and anthropological aspects.<sup>15</sup> It is also notable that in more than one branch of Baḥya’s sources, the *bāṭin* (both “inner” and “hidden”) is considered superior to the *ẓāhir* (the “external” and the “manifest”),<sup>16</sup> a principle that Baḥya not only adopted but indeed was one of the first Jewish (Rabbanite or Karaite) authors to introduce as a fundamental distinction and to articulate in a systematic manner. Moreover, this quote attests that in Baḥya’s view, the “duties of the hearts” are not only a set of duties that demand acknowledgment and execution, they also form an *‘ilm*, that is, they call for study and clarification and also, as Baḥya explicates throughout his work, for certain mental dispositions and a series of exercises in order to be

<sup>14</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 88; *al-Hidāya*, 17–18.

<sup>15</sup> A comprehensive study of the various dimensions of Baḥya’s *bāṭin* discourse is beyond the scope of the present article, due not only to limitations of space but to the more focused research question at hand.

<sup>16</sup> For a brief survey of the contrast between *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* in Muslim sources, beginning from the Qur’ān, see Bernd Radtke, “Bāṭen,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 3:859–61. Due to limitations of space, I will not be able to expand on the connections, or on the differences, between Baḥya’s notion of *bāṭin* and the variety of Muslim sources that circulated in al-Andalus. On *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* in Sūfī and Ismā’īlī literatures, see Ignác Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1920) 200–204, 214–15; Daniel de Smet, “Au-delà de l’apparent. Les notions de *ẓāhir* et *baṭin* dans l’ésotérisme musulman,” *OLP* 25 (1994) 197–220; Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-‘Arabī and the Ismā’īlī Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014) 25–27.

initiated into them.<sup>17</sup> According to Baḥya, until his day, and especially in everything that was written in post-Talmudic times, no systematic or comprehensive study of this *‘ilm* was conducted. Moreover, the science (or wisdom or knowledge) of the “duties of the hearts”—which is the most fundamental aspect of religious life as portrayed by Baḥya, the key to a proper relationship with the divine and the portal to the “world to come”—is “neglected,” with no one attending to it seriously.<sup>18</sup> This issue, continues Baḥya in his rhetorical gesture, is bewildering to the point that:

I said to myself, It may be that this kind of duty is not obligatory upon us, but is commanded rather by way of morality (*adab*), in order to show us the right way and the straight path. Perhaps it is to be considered a supererogatory duty, for whose neglect we are neither questioned nor punished. This may be the reason why the ancients have left it unnoted.<sup>19</sup>

The major concern here is with the status of the activity derived from the “inner knowledge,” and with the question of whether the lack of attention to the “duties of the hearts” signifies its inferior status vis-à-vis the commandments that were subject to enumeration and clarification. In other words, the question raised by Baḥya, in a mode of *circulus in probando*—that is, by presupposing the existence of a distinct realm of the “duties of the hearts”—is whether these duties are superior in terms of religious validity to the rest of the commandments, as he assumes, or inferior to them, as may be assumed by the lack of any systematic treatment of them until his times. The attempt to resolve this question by way of “the reasoned (*ma‘qūl*), the written (*al-maqtūb*) and the transmitted (*al-manqūl*),”<sup>20</sup> that is, by rational argumentation, by the written Torah, and by the oral Torah, led Baḥya to the following conclusion: “I found them to be the basis of all duties. Were they not, all

<sup>17</sup> For a comprehensive study of *‘ilm* in medieval Islam, see Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

<sup>18</sup> Baḥya gathers three items in one category of books that aimed at “instilling the matters of religion in our hearts by way of rational demonstration (*istiḍlāl*) and the refutation of those who disagreed with us.” These are: Sa‘adya’s *Kitāb al-Amānāt wa l-‘itiqādāt* (Book of Beliefs and Opinions); the *Book of Principles of Religion*, which possibly refers to a work by Samuel ben Ḥofni (on this, see Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* [Berlin: Kommissionsverlag des Bibliographischen Bureaus, 1893] §65; idem, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache* [Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1877] 102–3; David Sklare, *Samuel ben Ḥofni Gaon and His Cultural World* [Leiden: Brill, 1996] 27 n. 114; however, see Sarah Stroumsa, “Dawūd ibn Marwān Al-Muqammiṣ and His ‘Ishrūn Maqāla” [PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1983] 27 n. 122 [Hebrew]); and *The Book of al-Muqammiṣ*, which refers to Dawūd ibn Marwān Al-Muqammiṣ (Stroumsa argues that Baḥya refers here specifically to Al-Muqammiṣ’s *‘Ishrūn Maqāla*; and see further on the appellation *Book of al-Muqammiṣ* in Stroumsa, “Dawūd ibn Marwān Al-Muqammiṣ,” 27). It is difficult to understand Baḥya’s logic in listing together these books, and whether he saw them as forming an inner Jewish tradition of some kind. It is also difficult to ascertain if the focus in Baḥya’s words is the polemical aspect of these works: the effort of “instilling of the matters of religion” or the rational mode of inquiry that aims at undisputable proofs.

<sup>19</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 88–89; *al-Hidāya*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 89; *al-Hidāya*, 18.

the duties of the members would be of no avail.”<sup>21</sup> According to Baḥya, therefore, the “duties of the hearts” are not only superior to the “duties of the members” from a religious perspective but also condition the very realization of the “duties of the members,” or at least determine their validity.<sup>22</sup>

However, what is the meaning of the claim that a study of the written and the oral Torah will expose the “duties of the hearts” that were neglected in post-Talmudic Judaism, that is, by the Geonim as well as in Baḥya’s own Andalusī cultural milieu? Here lies the beginning of a discursive strategic move that Baḥya will put to use throughout the book, namely, the retrojection of his religious approach to the canonical sources of (Rabbanite) Judaism in order to instill the “duties of the hearts” as part of the traditional medium. This aspect demands a separate study of hermeneutical aspects in Baḥya’s work, but for our purposes it will suffice to indicate the two dimensions of Baḥya’s argument. Baḥya claims, on the one hand, that a study of the canonical sources will reveal that the “duties of the hearts” already appear in them, but on the other hand, that they appear in such a manner that they can easily be neglected or forgotten and vanish without leaving their proper mark on the Jewish tradition, as indeed occurred, he argues, in his times. According to Baḥya, the reason for this is that the realm of the “duties of the hearts”—and the science involved in their clarification—is not unpacked in the canonical sources but only attested to by way of indicating its existence and the obligation to follow it. Baḥya sets out to prove this point already in his introduction by presenting a set of verses from the Torah, specifically from Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

<sup>21</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 89; *al-Hidāya*, 18–19.

<sup>22</sup> Baḥya articulates the second possibility further on: “when intentions are defective, deeds are not acceptable to God” (*Duties of the Hearts*, 97; *al-Hidāya*, 29–30). In any event, the nature of the relations between the “duties of the hearts” and the “duties of the members” is not stable throughout the book and shows some inner tensions. In some cases Baḥya presents the “duties of the hearts” as a complementary realm of activity to the “duties of the members,” which indicates the degree of congruity between the manifest aspect of one’s actions and the more inner aspects, aiming at an equilibrium between the body and the “heart” (see *Duties of the Hearts*, 98; *al-Hidāya*, 30; cf. *Duties of the Hearts*, 430; *al-Hidāya*, 414). This mode of presentation is not hierarchical, even though Baḥya’s overall approach—that emphasizes the superiority of the inner over the manifest—renders hierarchical the very presentation of the two terms. In other instances, Baḥya presents the “duties of the members” as a necessary inauguration vehicle, a preliminary mode of worship, for it is impossible to worship the divine in a way that does not involve the participation of the members in the earlier stages of one’s spiritual development (see *Duties of the Hearts*, 384; *al-Hidāya*, 363). This has a parallel in Baḥya’s argument that one learns to curb the beastly desires first by following the commandments that are learned from the sources of tradition and only then from the dictation of the mind (see *Duties of the Hearts*, 181; *al-Hidāya*, 135–36). In still other cases, the “duties of the hearts” are introduced as the mental infrastructure that preconditions the execution of the “duties of the members,” without which they may not persist or will be devoid of any religious significance (see *Duties of the Hearts*, 89; *al-Hidāya*, 18–19). This presentation distinguishes in a more hierarchical manner between the “duties of the hearts” and the “duties of the members.” The issue of hierarchy is brought up in several other locations in the work (see most clearly in *Duties of the Hearts*, 91; *al-Hidāya*, 21); and see some more references in Goldreich, “Possible Arabic Sources,” 183 n. 13. However, the reasons given for the superiority of the “duties of the hearts” vary, and the issue calls for further study.



This set of sources grounds the very existence of the “duties of the hearts” in Scripture’s most fundamental layer, though according to Bahya, this layer does not exhaust the biblical references, for the rest of the “books of the prophets” “abound in this.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Bahya argues that the study of Talmudic literature, too, will attest that in the times of the early sages, the “duties of the hearts” were not forgotten and still formed a constituent part of their religiosity, one that left a mark on their way of life as it is recounted in their literature.<sup>24</sup> We can therefore detect a tension between, on the one hand, an element that according to the author is fundamental to Jewish life and that is present in its canonical sources, and, on the other, the fact that its very mode of presentation in these sources enabled the forgetting and marginalization of this element from the core of religious life in the times of Bahya, which he argues had begun already in Geonic times.<sup>25</sup> This tension stems from the fact that while the existence of the “duties of the hearts” was indeed indicated, the details of the duties themselves were not explicated and their consequences were not spelled out in the corpora of traditional literature. The reason—or, as will be clarified below, reasons—for this mixture of presence and absence is not fully disclosed by Bahya in his introduction but unfolds throughout his book. In these recurring discussions, Bahya reiterates the principle that the lack of analysis of the “duties of the hearts” in traditional sources is due not to their inferiority relative to other commandments (namely, the “duties of the members”) but in fact to their lofty status and preeminence.

The first reason for the absence of the necessary elucidation of the “duties of the hearts” is related to an epistemological principle that is integral to Bahya’s work.

<sup>23</sup> See *Duties of the Hearts*, 90; *al-Hidāya*, 19–20. With regard to the phrase “the books of the rest of the prophets,” see also *al-Hidāya*, 253, where the category also consists of biblical wisdom literature.

<sup>24</sup> See *Duties of the Hearts*, 90–91; *al-Hidāya*, 20–21.

<sup>25</sup> Bahya’s attitude toward the stature and tradition of the Geonim of Babylonia has yet to be systematically studied. Bezalel Safran suggests that “Bahya’s attitude to the Geonim is one of unqualified veneration,” and that this attitude is related to an ideology that rejects the mode of life of Jewish courtiers in al-Andalus; see Bezalel Safran, “Bahya ibn Paquda’s Attitude toward the Courtier Class,” in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* (ed. Isadore Twersky; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) 154–196, at 179. However, this position is inconsistent with Bahya’s overall discourse in the *Duties of the Hearts*. Admittedly, Bahya was highly influenced by Sa’adya, and no outright utterances against the tradition of the Geonim can be found in the work (this type of rhetoric is generally atypical of Bahya’s discourse of earlier Jewish sources), but Bahya does marginalize, and sometimes reject, trends that characterize the tradition of the Geonim. In any case, the analysis of Bahya’s approach to the Geonim of Babylonia will require a careful examination of the modes of construction, as well as deconstruction, of the authority of the Geonim in al-Andalus. For a recent methodological discussion on the construction of epistemic authority, see Jan Opsomer and Angela Ulacco, “Epistemic Authority in Textual Traditions: A Model and Some Examples from Ancient Philosophy,” in *Shaping Authority: How Did a Person Become an Authority in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance?* (ed. Shari Boodts, Johan Leemans, and Brigitte Meijns; Turnhout: Brepols, 2016) 21–46, esp. 21–37; and, with some extension, in Saskia Aerts, “Historical Approaches to Epistemic Authority: The Case of Neoplatonism,” *JHI* 80 (2019) 343–63, esp. 344–57.

According to this principle, the very structure of the “duties of the hearts” is such that they require the “calling to attention of the mind” (*tanbīh al-‘aqlī*),<sup>26</sup> that is to say, the comprehension of these duties in an internal process. Therefore, any external transmission fundamentally fails to capture the “duties of the hearts,” and can serve only to urge, by way of intimation, an understanding that can only be reached by the force of one’s own reason.<sup>27</sup> This principle is mentioned in Baḥya’s discussion of the question of whether the “duties of the hearts” are referred to in Scripture—and if so, in what manner—or whether they are too obvious to mention. As part of this discussion, Baḥya considers the example of the duty to “unify” (*tawḥīd*) God.<sup>28</sup> In order to fulfil this obligation, one has to know how to truly unify the divine, and one cannot be satisfied with solely reciting the verse that attests to God’s unity. What else, then, did Scripture provide besides the verse that attests to God’s unity? Alongside this explicit but insufficient verse, the Torah also declared an ethos, which Baḥya calls an “induction” (Ar. root *h.t.t*), that calls for clarifying in a reasoned manner the heart’s duty to unify God.<sup>29</sup> This was done, according to Baḥya, in a verse from Deuteronomy (4:39): “Know therefore this day and keep in your heart that God [alone] is God.” With this example, Baḥya sought to present a general principle: although the “duties of the hearts” were referred to in Scripture, they were not clarified, because their mode of conduct *as* “duties of the hearts” cannot be realized merely by adhering to Scripture. In the words of Baḥya:

The same is true for the rest of the duties of the hearts (*farā’id al-qulūb*). . . . The believer’s faith will not be pure unless he studies and executes them. This is the inner knowledge (*ilm al-bāṭin*), the light of the hearts and souls. This is meant by the friend (*walī*) when he says [Ps. 51: 8]: “Indeed You desire truth about that which is hidden; teach me wisdom about secret things.”<sup>30</sup>

Two points deserve to be emphasized in the general principle that Baḥya formulates. The first is that the “duties of the hearts” are not exhausted by intellection and are not a theoretical field of knowledge. Their realization necessitates an act that follows comprehension, even if this act does not transcend one’s “interiority.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The term *tanbīh* is further discussed around n. 59 below.

<sup>27</sup> This refers not only to the rational demonstration of what is already known from traditional sources, nor to rational speculation per se, but to the achievement of knowledge of religious duties that were not acknowledged as duties in any other way, and to the enhancement of the scope of duties that are learned in other ways. On the duty of rational speculation and of providing rational demonstration to traditional knowledge, see Abrahamov, “The Obligation to Speculate,” 71–80.

<sup>28</sup> To this duty, Baḥya dedicates the entire first “gate” of his work; see Kaufmann, *Die Theologie des Bachja*, 52–71; Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*, 146–52.

<sup>29</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 93; *al-Hidāya*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 93; *al-Hidāya*, 24.

<sup>31</sup> This is the “works of the hearts” (*‘a’ mā’ al-qulūb*), a phrase in use already in the works of Christian authors in late antiquity (Syriac: ܥܡܠܐ ܕܩܘܠܒܐ), that resurfaces in sources of early Islamic asceticism and becomes prominent in the works of al-Muḥāsibī. See Goldreich, “Possible Arabic Sources,” 207–8; Sara Sviri, *Sufis: An Anthology* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2008) 308 n. 34 (Hebrew); Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad: A Study of the Life and Teaching of*

Second, and more importantly for the issue at hand, is Baḥya's claim that the comprehension of the "duties of the hearts" requires an intellectual effort that exceeds passive reception. All that Scripture can offer, therefore, is a hint, an indication.

The second reason Baḥya presents for the absence of the necessary elucidation of the "duties of the hearts" is political in nature, and he addresses it in a discussion on the question of divine retribution. According to Baḥya:

Good deeds are divided into two parts, one hidden and known to God alone, like the duties of the heart, and the other apparent (*ẓāhir*) in the members, not concealed to anyone, which are the commandments, whose performance is apparent in the members. The Creator requites the deeds apparent in the members with a reward apparent in this world; the inner (*bāṭin*), hidden (*khāfī*) deeds He requites with a hidden reward, the reward in the world to come.<sup>32</sup>

Here, Baḥya presents a twofold analogy: on the one hand, between acts done in an unconcealed manner, i.e., "duties of the members," which are rewarded by an unconcealed reward, i.e., a reward given already in this world; and, on the other hand, between the acts done in one's mental space—invisible to any spectator—and a different kind of retribution economy that involves a reward in the world to come, that is, a reward that is non-apparent in this world.<sup>33</sup> The world to come, according to Baḥya, is hidden, in the sense that it is a reward bestowed for acts done in a mental space that is in principle hidden from any other being. As such, a spectator cannot foresee in advance who will be rewarded with it. But the world to come is hidden not only because it is a non-apparent reward for non-apparent acts but also because of its "distance," that is, for being a reward that will be bestowed in a non-immediate future, and thus one that demands patience and endurance. The problem, argues Baḥya, is that such endurance does not characterize the general public (or, in medieval terminology, the multitude; Ar. *jumhūr*), which seeks immediate reward for every action.<sup>34</sup> This was already true in the time of the revelation of the

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*Hārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī A.D. 781–857* (London: Sheldon Press, 1935) 87. On the relation of 'ilm and 'a'mal, see Josef van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Hārīt al-Muḥāsibī. Anhand von Übersetzungen aus seinen Schriften dargestellt und erläutert* (Bonn: Orientalisches Seminar der Universität Bonn, 1961) 36, 80–81.

<sup>32</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 260; *al-Hidāya*, 238.

<sup>33</sup> This interpretation does not exhaust Baḥya's conception of the "world to come" as *bāṭin*. In addition, the world to come is "hidden," in the sense that no knowledge of it is available other than the fact that it is a reward given to the souls only and not to the bodies, and even this is known only by way of intimation in a verse from Zechariah (3:7): "I will permit you to move about among these attendants"—i.e., according to Baḥya, the angels, or *rūḥāniyyāt*). However, because "we cannot conceive of the form of the soul without the body," we are not in a position to know "what reward delights it and what punishment torments it in this state" (*Duties of the Hearts*, 258; *al-Hidāya*, 226; cf. Baḥya's interpretation of the same verse in *Duties of the Hearts*, 188; *al-Hidāya*, 142).

<sup>34</sup> The distinction between the multitudes (*jumhūr*) and an elite of elect few (*khawāṣṣ*) is not exhaustive of Baḥya's work. In addition, Baḥya seems to attempt to create a circle of addressees that is not limited to an elect few but is not regarded as the multitude (see *Duties of the Hearts*, 148; *al-Hidāya*, 93). For this reason, argues Baḥya, he writes the book in Arabic, a prevalent language

Torah, when the people were in a state of “ignorance and little understanding,” in a condition analogous to that of a youth who requires, in order to be motivated, either the promise of “*immediate* pleasures, like wonderful food and drink, clothing and a carriage, and the like,” or the threat of “*immediate* discomforts, like hunger, nakedness, whippings, and the like.”<sup>35</sup> Given this state of affairs, there was no point in conveying to the public the duties whose reward is mostly deferred to the world to come and which are characterized by their transcendence of the immediate. This infantile mental condition necessitated tilting most of the discussion toward commandments that yield a reward in this world and downplaying the discussion of duties rewarded in the world to come.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, according to Baḥya, this state of affairs not only characterizes the nation in a primeval state that has since been overcome, but is continuous, as is reflected in his statement—which does not seem to be limited to his present time—that “the multitude of the nation (*jumhūr al-’amma*) has only the apparent deeds, not the hidden ones,” and therefore “Scripture treats only briefly the matter of reward in the world to come.”<sup>37</sup>

The third reason for the absence of a clarification and discussion of the “duties of the hearts” in the sources that make up the tradition is a more profound one and relates to the very framework of distinctions that is operative in Baḥya’s work, primarily the overarching distinction between the “manifest” (*ẓāhir*) and the “inner” (*bāṭin*) and the predilection for the latter. In Baḥya’s outlook, because the “inner” dimension is superior to the “manifest,” it is unfeasible that the Torah, “*Kitāb Allāh*,” should include only the “manifest.”<sup>38</sup> The Torah must include an “inner” dimension that requires transcending what is clearly manifest in the surface of the text. In other words, Baḥya’s basic *episteme*, which gives precedence to the “inner,” immediately renders problematic any contentment with or adherence

for most of “the people of the generation,” and employs metaphors and similes.

<sup>35</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 259; *al-Hidāya*, 226 (italics added).

<sup>36</sup> See also *Duties of the Hearts*, 281 (“because this matter [the reward and punishment in the world to come] is little explained in our Book and there are but scant traces of it”); *al-Hidāya*, 253. Cf. *Duties of the Hearts*, 196 (inexact trans.); *al-Hidāya*, 153; and especially Baḥya’s claim that only “traces” or “signs” (*āthār*) were given with regard to the world to come. On *āthār*, see also Ignác Goldziher and Tjitze J. De Boer, “Athar,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009) 1:736.

<sup>37</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 260–61; *al-Hidāya*, 228–29.

<sup>38</sup> Baḥya employs the term *Kitāb Allāh* frequently in his work. This phrase is sometimes used to signify the Hebrew Bible by other medieval Rabbanites and Karaite authors writing in Judeo-Arabic. On the term *Kitāb Allāh* in Qur’anic discourses and in other Islamic discourses of the 9th–10th cents., see Khalil Andani, “Revelation in Islam: Qur’anic, Sunni, and Shi’i Ismaili Perspectives” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2019) 110–91. For other cases of the use of this term by Jewish authors in light of Muslim sources and approaches, see Haggai Ben-Shammai, “Return to the Scriptures in Ancient and Medieval Jewish Sectarianism and in Early Islam,” in *Les retours aux écritures. Fondamentalismes présents et passés* (ed. Évelyne Patlagean and Alain Le Boulluec; Louvain: Peeters, 1993) 319–39, esp. 333–36. Possibly, in some cases the employment of *Kitāb Allāh* by both Rabbanite and Karaite authors has a polemical aspect and responds to the accusation of the falsification of the Bible; see Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 70–71.

to the “manifest” or “external” dimension only. Inner knowledge, *‘ilm al-bāṭin*, is therefore also an interpretation of Scripture that exposes within it a realm of religious activity that is not apparent and not sufficiently clear in Scripture’s explicit statements.<sup>39</sup> In this sense, the reward of the world to come is not only a “hidden” (i.e., non-apparent in this world) reward for an act done “inwardly” (i.e., in one’s mental space in a mode invisible to the eyes of a spectator) but is also a reward for an act that is “hidden” (in the sense of being insufficiently spelled out) beneath the surface of Scripture. The existence of the “duties of the hearts” as part of what ought to be inferred from Scripture is hinted at already in the introduction to the work, in Baḥya’s insistence that a systematic interpretation such as his own did not previously exist. Following his claim quoted above that there exist both “inner” and “external” commandments, Baḥya adds:

As the religious commandments are divided in two—they have an exterior (*ẓāhir*) part and an interior (*bāṭin*) part—I studied the books of our predecessors who composed many books on the religious commandments after the time of the Talmudic sages. . . . I found that all their explanations and commentaries fall under one of the three following headings: (1) Interpreting the

<sup>39</sup> Binyamin Abrahamov suggests that there is no esoteric dimension of concealed knowledge in the term *‘ilm al-bāṭin* in Baḥya’s discourse. Instead, he argues that the term signifies only one’s orientation toward the “duties of the hearts”; see Baḥyā Ibn Paqūda, *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart* (Hebrew trans. and notes by Binyamin Abrahamov; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2019) 73 n. 29, henceforth *Duties* (ed. Abrahamov). However, see Goldreich, “Possible Arabic Sources,” 181 nn. 9–10. For further on *‘ilm al-bāṭin* in Baḥya’s work, see Moritz Steinschneider, *Jewish Literature: From the Eighth to the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans & Roberts, 1857) 101; Yahuda, “Die Islamischen Quellen des Al-Hidāja,” 97. On the tension between two senses of *‘ilm al-bāṭin* in Sūfī discourses, and on the similarities and differences between Sūfī and Ismā‘īlī utilization of the term, see Amos Goldreich, “An Unknown Treatise on Suffering by Abū Al-Qāsim Al-Kirmānī,” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 7 (1988) 176 (Hebrew). For more on *‘ilm al-bāṭin* in al-Andalus, see Maribel Fierro, “Bāṭinism in Al-Andalus: Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurtubī (d. 353/964), Author of the ‘Rutbat al-Ḥakīm’ and the ‘Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm (Picatrix),” *Studia Islamica* 84 (1996) 106; Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, 26 n. 79. Nonetheless, it seems that there were cases in which the very distinction between different kinds of *bāṭinism* in al-Andalus was unstable, or even undetermined, and sometimes merged in the figure of a specific thinker or in the circle of disciples of one master; see Manuela Marin, “Abū Saīd Ibn al-Arābī et le développement du soufisme en al-Andalus,” in *Minorités religieuses dans l’Espagne médiévale* (ed. Manuela Marin and Joseph Pérez; special issue; *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 63–64 [1992]) 33–34. On earlier uses of the term, especially in circles of Muslim mystics and ascetics, see the appendix to Bernd Radtke, “Theologien und Mystiker in Ḥurāsān und Transoxanien,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 136 (1986) 551–65, and see some more sources in Goldreich, “An Unknown Treatise,” 176–77 and notes. Interestingly, al-Muḥāsibī, whose possible influence on Baḥya was noted already by Vajda and Yahuda and was discussed more extensively in Goldreich, presents the term *‘ilm al-bāṭin* programmatically in a way incongruent with Baḥya. In his *kitāb al-‘ilm*, al-Muḥāsibī labels three categories of knowledge: *‘ilm al-ẓāhir* (external or manifest knowledge), *‘ilm al-bāṭin* (inner knowledge), and *‘ilm bi-Allāh*; see an Arabic edition of the treatise appended to Leonard Librande, “Islam and Conservation: The Theologian-Ascetic al-Muḥāsibī,” *Arabica* 30 (1983) 125–46, at 141 lines 3–4. However, see traditions al-Muḥāsibī brought in Berenike Metzler, *Den Koran verstehen. Das Kitāb Fahm al-Qur’ān des Ḥārīt b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016) 353.

verses in the book of God and the works of the prophets . . . in one of these two modes: interpreting the words and their meaning . . . [or] interpreting grammatically the phrases, their metaphors, their declensions and conjugations and corrections. . . . (2) Summarizing the principle commandments . . . (3) Instilling the matters of religion in our hearts by way of rational demonstration and refutation of those who disagreed with us.<sup>40</sup>

This paragraph can be approached in two modes, which differ in the degree of disputation they contain. The first way of reading it is as a schematic survey of the extant post-Talmudic literature written in Jewish (Rabbanite) circles, possibly with reference to the prominence of the writings. This type of survey does not necessarily indicate any opposing position vis-à-vis the mentioned literature but can be interpreted as expressing a milder stance that only alludes to an absence: despite everything that the tradition has produced thus far, no book like *The Guide to the Duties of the Hearts* has been written. The second mode perceives in each of the three categories enumerated in the quoted passage a major flaw and a sign of treading on an erroneous religious path. While I cannot elaborate here on the three categories, for present purposes it will suffice to note how the second mode of reading applies to the first category, which addresses the exegetical literature that focuses on lexical or grammatical aspects of Scripture.<sup>41</sup> In light of this second and more critical mode of reading, the exegetical literature since the times of the Geonim was characterized by hypersensitivity to a register that is secondary in its importance, without noticing that the very exegetical act, when carried out in such a way, hides more than it reveals. It may bring some accomplishments in its own limited exegetical field, but it occludes a hermeneutical horizon that is vital to proper religious life, namely, the “inner knowledge.”

<sup>40</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 88; *al-Hidāya*, 17–18.

<sup>41</sup> Bahya gives Sa'adya as a noticeable example of an author of exegetical literature who focused on the interpretation of the “words and their meanings,” i.e., on what Bahya related to as an exegetical trend that does not pay heed to the “inner” dimension of Scripture. Even though this depiction is generally congruent with Sa'adya's mode of interpretation, it does not cover the whole range of the rich and multifarious exegetical approach, which also includes *bāḥin* and *sirr* interpretations in various cases, and especially in his commentary on Proverbs; see Sa'adya Gaon, *Commentary to Proverbs* (ed. and trans. Yosef Qāfiḥ; Jerusalem, 1975) on Prov 5:14–20 (56–57); 7:5–23 (68–72, esp. 72); 11:1 (93); 11:26 (98); 12:9 (100); 12:11 (ibid.); 19:11 (143); 19:13 (144); 20:4 (150); 20:26 (257); 21:14 (163); 22:13 (172); 22:24–25 (175); 24:27 (191); 25:8–10 (197); 28:10 (229); 29:21 (242). Qāfiḥ does not distinguish in his translation between *bāḥin* and *ma'ani* and translates both as “matter” (Heb: *inyan*). See further on *bāḥin* in Sa'adya in Haggai Ben-Shammai, “The Tension between Literal Interpretation and Exegetical Freedom: Comparative Observations on Saadia's Method,” in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 33–50, at 42; idem, “Multiple Meanings of Scriptural Verses in Saadia's Exegetical Theory” (Hebrew), in Haggai Ben-Shammai, *A Leader's Project: Studies in the Philosophical and Exegetical Works of Saadya Gaon* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2015) (Hebrew) 319, 322; idem, “The Rabbinic Literature in Sa'adya's Exegesis: Between Tradition and Innovation,” in idem, *A Leader's Project*, 345–48.

The idea of a layered hermeneutical approach is explicitly articulated in the “Gate of the Obligation of Obedience” in Baḥya’s account of the ten ranks of the “study of the Torah” (*ilm al-kitāb*). This list is multivalent and contains a mixture of a number of different threads, including the relation between the written Torah and the oral Torah and the importance of learning from the reliable Rabbanite tradition.<sup>42</sup> One of the axes of this list that is of special relevance to our present concern is the analysis of the different modes by which the verses gather their meaning. The lowest-rank mode, which Baḥya likens metaphorically to the Qur’ānic image of an “ass carrying books,” is that of reciting the text in a way that does not relate to it any meaning at all.<sup>43</sup> The succeeding ranks include a progression in the degree of acquaintance with the text, beginning with a mastery of its grammatical forms, which is followed by an understanding of its palpable senses, including some degree of comprehension of the metaphorical language employed in it. This art of understanding forms the fifth rank and is termed “the science of the matters of Torah” (*ilm ma’ānī kitāb Allāh*).<sup>44</sup> Only in the ninth rank—the highest rank from the perspective of hermeneutic excellence, which differs from the tenth rank only in the sources on which the exegesis relies—does the exegete reach the level of proper understanding of the “duties of the hearts.” This rank is achieved by those who have “made the effort to study the duties of the hearts and of the members,” including that which distinguishes between these two categories and that which impairs each one of them. The people of this rank are presented also as those who have “comprehended the manifest and inner meanings of the Torah.”<sup>45</sup> Notably, Baḥya draws an analogy here between knowing the “duties of the hearts” and comprehending the inner sense of the Torah. He typifies as “inner” (*bāṭin*) not only those acts done in a person’s interiority, but also the knowledge that exists in a hidden layer from a hermeneutical perspective. This idea is reiterated in the “Gate of Self-Accounting (*muḥāsaba*),” in Baḥya’s presentation of a passage of initiation that one must undergo in the course of one’s studies as a reader of Scripture and as a subject of tradition. Readers of Scripture must not be satisfied with what they gather from the knowledge of the Torah and the books of prophets in the first stages of their learning. Moreover, it is better that readers forget the contents of their former stage of understanding and that, as they develop their intellectual capacity (*‘aql*) and faculty of discernment (*tamyīz*), they address Scripture anew, “as if [they] had never

<sup>42</sup> One can discern here traces of a possible dispute with Karaism; see *Duties* (ed. Abrahamov), 199 n. 29. On Karaite presence in al-Andalus in the 11th cent., see Elinoar Bareket, “Karaite Communities in the Middle East during the Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries,” in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources* (ed. Meira Polliack; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 251; Haggai Ben-Shammai, “Major Trends in Karaite Philosophy and Polemics in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” in *Karaite Judaism* (ed. Polliack), 357; Camilla Adang, “The Karaites as Portrayed in Medieval Islamic Sources,” in *Karaite Judaism* (ed. Polliack), 187–88; Eliyahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1966) 2:139, 141, 144, 163–64, 172 (Hebrew).

<sup>43</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 193; *al-Hidāya*, 148; See, further, *Duties* (ed. Abrahamov), 124 n. 57.

<sup>44</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 193; *al-Hidāya*, 149.

<sup>45</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 194; *al-Hidāya*, 150.

read a letter of it.” Only in this manner, claims Baḥya, may one know the verses according to different modalities, including the distinctions between verses whose sense is clearly established (*muḥkam*) and those that are ambiguous (*mutashābih*); those that can be understood by way of analogy and those that cannot be subject to the use of analogy; and, most important to the issue at hand, those whose sense is manifest (*ẓāhir*) and those that have an inner (*bāṭin*) sense.<sup>46</sup>

We can see, therefore, that the central distinction between the inner (*bāṭin*) and the manifest (*ẓāhir*) utilized by Baḥya throughout his book has a significant hermeneutical dimension in his system. Two factors work in tandem here: (a) the elevation of the “inner” above the “manifest” as a firm position that plays the role of an organizing principle in Baḥya’s discourse; and (b) the presupposition regarding the ultimate value of Scripture. The combination of these two leads Baḥya to argue that Scripture is characterized by having an “inner” dimension and a “manifest” one, and that its “manifest” dimension—i.e., the surface of the text and the plain sense that can be gathered at this level—suffers from the fundamental problem of the “manifest,” namely, its inferiority vis-à-vis the “inner.” The exegete must abide by this hermeneutical principle, avoid being content with understanding only what can be gleaned from the manifest dimension of the book, and seek to achieve the “inner” knowledge that is kept hidden in it.

Various exegetical trends in medieval Judaism up until the time of Baḥya introduced the demand to interpret Scripture in a way that exceeds its plain sense, a need that arose out of various changing reasons related to the exegetes’ guiding principles. This might be done because of overt contradictions between different verses, an incongruity between knowledge that was validated by reason and various explicit statements made in a verse, a mismatch between Scripture and other canonized texts of tradition, and other reasons.<sup>47</sup> Common to all of these is the assumption that an interpretation that exceeds the plain sense is limited to specific locations in Scripture and is not a principle to be applied to the text as a whole. By contrast, the present study of Baḥya’s *Duties of the Hearts* exposes an overarching distinction that grants superiority to the “inner” over the “manifest” and leads to a general hermeneutic position—which is clearly pronounced, if not fully realized,

<sup>46</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 388; *al-Hidāya*, 367–68. On the distinction between *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* in Qur’ānic exegesis, see John Wansbrough, *Qurānic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 149–50. On this distinction in Sa’adya, see Moshe Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon’s Translation of the Torah: Exegesis, Halakha and Polemics* (New York: Feldheim, 1959) 331–32, 335 (Hebrew); Sa’adya Gaon, *Commentary on Genesis* (ed. and trans. Moshe Zucker; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1984) 38–44 and Sa’adya’s exposition of the distinction on 17–18 (Arabic) and 191 (Hebrew trans.). See also Ben-Shammai, “The Rabbinic Literature,” 338–39.

<sup>47</sup> See, for instance, Sa’adya’s presentation of exegetical principles in *Kitāb al-Amānāt wa’l-i’tiqādāt* (ed. and trans. Yosef Qāfiḥ; Jerusalem, 1992) 219–20. Cf. Sa’adya Gaon, *Commentary on Genesis*, 17–18 (Heb. 190–91); Sa’adya’s introduction to Isaiah, printed in Ben-Shammai, “Saadya’s Introduction to Isaiah as an Introduction to the Books of the Prophets,” *Tarbiz* 60.3 (1991), 371–404 (Hebrew); Sa’adya Gaon, *Commentary on Job* (ed. and trans. Yosef Qāfiḥ; Jerusalem, 1973) 20–21.



by Bahya as a commentarial enterprise—according to which the “inner” knowledge of Scripture is to be sought not only in cases of a local exegetical challenge but in principle, i.e., as a general rule that applies to Scripture as a whole.

### ■ The “Duties of the Hearts” between *Zāhir* and *Bāṭin*

Although Bahya does not argue—and in all likelihood did not suppose—that a systematic study of the “duties of the hearts” can completely exhaust the “inner” meaning of Scripture, some of his statements analyzed above clearly indicate that, for him, comprehending the “duties of the hearts” forms at the very least a partial realization of the “inner knowledge.”

But does Bahya himself not act faultily by exposing the “inner” in the very act of writing his book, that is, in making that which is noble (because it is “inner”) become of lesser quality because of its disclosure? Put differently, we may ask whether the “inner knowledge” is not to be kept under at least some sort of concealment. Though Bahya does not raise this question explicitly with regard to his own work or dedicate a specific discussion to it, it is improbable that he was unaware of it, if only because of the centrality of the distinction between the “inner” and the “manifest” to his work, and his strong condemnation, in other respects, of turning the “inner” into “manifest.”<sup>48</sup> There are reasons to assume—even if it cannot be unquestionably determined—that Bahya does acknowledge this problem, or, in a more cautious formulation, that the problem leaves its traces in his discourse even if it is not defined or diagnosed as such. This assumption is strengthened when we identify a line of argumentation that runs through his book and constitutes a kind of resolution of this problem, for the reasons I enumerate below.

The first stage of this argumentative move lies in Bahya’s claim, in the introduction to his work, that the crisis of his times—which had already begun, as he tacitly puts it, in the days of the sages that “followed the people of the Talmud” (*ahl al-Talmud*)—demands a change of attitude from that of the “ancient righteous fathers”—an alternative name, most likely, for the *ahl al-Talmud*—who transmitted the “duties of the hearts” in a “general” manner or through a description of their own annals and modes of conduct.<sup>49</sup> Admittedly, even in previous generations the issue of the “duties of the hearts” was reserved for a select few and did not concern

<sup>48</sup> “Manifesting” the inner perfection is presented as one of the temptations of the instinct (“you should show your deeds, uncover your behavior before the people”) that are to be controlled; see *Duties of the Hearts*, 289; *al-Hidāya*, 262. Bahya considers this mode of manifestation as “pretense” (*riyā’*). On *riyā’*, see Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*, 160–63, 166–67, 170–75.

<sup>49</sup> See *Duties of the Hearts*, 90–91, 97; *al-Hidāya* 21, 28. On the incorporation of biography and hagiography in Arabic literature in medieval al-Andalus, see Manuela Marín, “Biography and Prosopography in Arab-Islamic Medieval Culture: Introductory Remarks,” *Medieval Prosopography* 23 (2002) 1–17; eadem, “Parentesco simbólico y matrimonio entre los ulemas Andaluses,” *Al-Qantara* 16 (1995) 335–56. Bahya assigns a special role to the Mishnaic tractate *Avot* and distinguishes it from the rest of the talmudic corpus. *Avot*, he argues, includes a more detailed account and prefigures the mode by which the “duties of the hearts” are to be addressed. Indeed, in his introduction Bahya uses *Avot* extensively, an issue that warrants further study.

the general public, but Baḥya still opts to describe this as a crisis of the “people of our own times,” who “neglect even the knowledge and practice of the duties of the members, not to mention the duties of the hearts”;<sup>50</sup> or, in another formulation, “our contemporaries overlook them [the duties of the hearts] in both theory and practice.”<sup>51</sup> This dire situation is reflected according to Baḥya in a twofold crisis: a crisis of a communal scope that has to do with the condition of religious life and the worship of the divine; and a crisis of a personal nature, for even if Baḥya were to succeed in comprehending to a certain degree the knowledge of the “duties of the hearts,” the fact that this knowledge is not public and is not disseminated widely enough would lead to an erosion of his knowledge over time and might even lead to its eventual loss. Baḥya’s crisis-narrative enables him to argue that although the category of the “duties of the hearts” (and all knowledge that partakes in it) is not an acknowledged part of the Jewish culture of his times or of the way in which its canonical sources are approached, this does not mean that the category is foreign to Judaism. Instead, the foreignness of the category is a product of an age of negligence and forgetting. Moreover, this narrative allows Baḥya to explain why, despite the fact that no book has been written that posits the “duties of the hearts” at the core of Jewish religious life, such a book is timely and urgent. This argument transforms the absence of the “duties of the hearts” in previous sources from a suspicious sign of the introduction of an external influence that seeks to reshape the tradition in its own image to a sign of the utter necessity to write the book and redeem a dimension of religious life that, according to the author, has been part and parcel of Judaism from its formative stages. Furthermore, and indirectly, the crisis also provides an explanation for Baḥya’s decision to expose the “inner knowledge”—which should in principle be kept hidden, at least to some degree—to the eyes of every future reader.

However, this is not the only argument that can be seen as related to this issue. Another argument results from Baḥya’s framing of the “duties of the members” as limited in number, in contrast with the “duties of the hearts” that are infinitely extended; or, in another formulation that is in one respect more cautious and in another respect more daring, a framing that sees the commandments that are grounded in the dictates of human reason and inferred as part of the “inner knowledge” as “almost innumerable.”<sup>52</sup> Amos Goldreich has indicated that this

<sup>50</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 92; *al-Hidāya*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 96; *al-Hidāya*, 27.

<sup>52</sup> For the first formulation, see *Duties of the Hearts*, 92 (“For the duties of the members are limited in number . . . while the duties of the heart are many and their derivations [fūrū’] innumerable”); *al-Hidāya*, 23. For the second one, see *Duties of the Hearts*, 184; *al-Hidāya*, 137. The second source is indeed more cautious in stating that the “duties” are not infinite but do reach a limit, but it is more daring for the fact that, unlike the first source, it disconnects the commandments dictated by reason that are not referred to in his work from the relation of principle, or root (*aṣl*), to branch, or derivation (*far’*). See discussion on these sources from a different perspective in Goldreich, “Possible Arabic Sources,” 179–80. See also Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*, 16, 188–89.

framing forms part of Baḥya's careful but audacious construction of an architecture of religious life that is structured upon two asymmetrical systems of commandments: one that includes the "duties of the members" that add up to 613 commandments, and the other that is made up of the "duties of the hearts," which are infinitely "branched."<sup>53</sup> From the perspective of our present concern, it is important to note that the infinite number of the "duties of the hearts"—even if all of them are somehow derived from the ten "roots," or "principles" (*uṣūl*), enumerated in the ten "gates" of Baḥya's work—allows one to see the *Guide to the Duties of the Hearts* as an act of only partial disclosure, which still leaves much to be discovered and independently pursued by the perceptive reader. Unlike the tree whose roots are hidden from sight but whose branches are visible, Baḥya's book presents the "direction to the duties of the hearts" as an inverted tree: its roots are exposed but the full gamut of the branches cannot be seen. Baḥya implies this much in his discussion of how the "duties of the hearts" unfold from the principles enumerated in his book and of the divine assistance that is necessary in order to perceive the duties that branch out from these principles. In Baḥya's words:

You must know that all the duties of the hearts . . . are included in these ten roots (*uṣūl*) included in this book, both the positive and the negative ones. . . . Therefore, adhere to them in your heart, and repeat them constantly in your mind, and then their branches (*furū'*) will be made manifest to you, with the help of God as he perceives from your intention your desire [to fulfill them] and your inclination towards them. As it is said by the friend (*walī*) [Ps. 25: 12–14]: "Whoever fears God, he shall be shown what path to choose; his soul shall abide in prosperity, and his seed shall inherit the land. The *secret* (Heb. *sod*) of God is for those who fear Him, to them He makes known His covenant."<sup>54</sup>

The sequence of verses with which Baḥya ends his discussion in this paragraph attests to a process of *future* disclosure of knowledge that is not imparted to every reader simply by the act of reading the book. Moreover, in quoting the three verses, Baḥya ties together the fear of God and the life of the soul devoted to God, treating both elements as a secret that will be revealed by divine assistance to those who adhere to God.<sup>55</sup> It is also possible that Baḥya integrates in this quotation an allusion to the reward of the world to come that awaits those who fear God, expressed in the phrase "his seed shall inherit the land," which is associated with a statement in *m. Sanh.* 10:1: "All of Israel have a share in the world to come, as it is said [Isa. 60:21]: 'And your people, all of them righteous, shall inherit the land for all time.'"<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> See *Duties of the Hearts*, 183.

<sup>54</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 105–6; *al-Hidāya*, 40 (italics added).

<sup>55</sup> On employing the verse Ps 25:14 to indicate esoteric knowledge, see already *Tanḥuma* Lekha para. 19; *ibid.*, *Vayeira* para. 5.

<sup>56</sup> See also Sa'adya's interpretation of Psalms 37:9 ("those who look to God shall inherit the land"): "With regards to the several references in this psalm to the righteous who shall inherit the land, it can be interpreted in several ways . . . meaning the place of recompense (*dār al-thawāb*) for it is

A third argument for regarding the *Duties of the Hearts* as a book that only partly discloses knowledge and thus retains at least some degree of concealment, concludes the third chapter of the “Gate of Self-Accounting.” According to Baḥya, the Torah is not the only text that has both “inner” and “manifest” dimensions. His own book as well—or at least this particular unit in the “Gate of Self-Accounting,” which in any case Baḥya sees as a concise version of the whole book<sup>57</sup>—is written in the same manner and features secrets that are not fully disclosed but are only hinted at in the work:

Therefore you should think of them [the modes of self-accounting] constantly and bring them to mind as long as you live. Do not be content with my concise discourse on them and with my short indications here, for each of these matters is laden with far more interpretations and clarifications than I have mentioned to you. I have only urged them on your attention (*tanbīhā*), and reminded those who are concerned in a few words. . . . May you keep it in mind, guarding it in your memory and turning your thoughts to it frequently, for when you rehearse it thus you will be exposed to all sorts of hidden secrets and spiritual lessons. Do not assume that if you contemplate and study the manifest sense (*ẓāhir*) of the words you know their inner (*bāḥin*) meanings as well. These can be reached only after much thought, constant repetition, and continuous and diligent effort expended over a long period of time.<sup>58</sup>

First, these words further clarify Baḥya’s specific rendering of the term *tanbīh*, the “calling to attention,” which he frequently employs in the book and which is also featured in the subtitle of the work as it appeared in Ms. Paris BN Ms. héb. 756 (*wa-l-tanbīh ‘alī lawāzim al-ḍamā’ir*; “and the calling to attention to the requirements of the interiorities”).<sup>59</sup> Notably, it turns out that the term *tanbīh* signifies, on the one hand, an address and an utterance that involve some disclosure, but, on the other hand, the structure of this address is nothing but an act of intimation, an indication that it is not exhausted by what it discloses and calls for further exploration. Moreover, in this paragraph Baḥya creates a bold doubling of the structure of Scripture. He does indeed expound on biblical verses, and he reveals some of their secrets by shedding light on them from the perspective of the “inner knowledge” or the “duties of the hearts”; yet, by doing so, he does not ultimately dissolve the mystery but only transports it to his own book. Now, it is his book that requires the careful study that befits the study of Scripture; it is his book that is designed to become subject to memorization, a treasure of subtle secrets that will

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called ‘land’ as it is said: ‘enjoy the goodness of God in the land of the living’ (Ps. 27:13).” Sa’adya Gaon, *Commentary on Psalms* (ed. and trans. Yosef Qāfiḥ; Jerusalem, 1966) 114; Cf. Qur’ān 21:105.

<sup>57</sup> See *Duties of the Hearts*, 356; *al-Hidāya*, 333.

<sup>58</sup> *Duties of the Hearts*, 397; *al-Hidāya*, 377.

<sup>59</sup> On *tanbīh*, see *Duties* (ed. Abrahamov), 39 n. 96; Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*, 179–82, 190–92. For a different perspective on the use of the term in Baḥya, see Vajda, *La théologie*, 58. For the originality of the work’s subtitle, see Yahuda, *Prolegomena*, 39; However, see Goldreich, “Possible Arabic Sources,” 194 n. 69.

go unnoticed by inattentive readers and will only be disclosed to those who delve deeply into its inner dimension.

## ■ Conclusion

In this article I have shown how Baḥya sought to integrate the category and the doctrine of the “duties of the hearts” into Jewish discourse as an essential element. For that purpose, I have analyzed how the distinction between *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir* is reflected in Baḥya’s approach to the Jewish tradition whose values he sought to revalue, and I have demonstrated how this distinction also sheds light on Baḥya’s understanding of the book he authored. This investigation exposes a central tension in the work, which is expressed in Baḥya’s attempt to prove, on the one hand, that the “duties of the hearts” are not a new element in the world of Judaism but are instead an essential part of it and, on the other hand, that this element is not plainly visible and is not imparted as part of the “surface” layer of the canonical texts.

My exploration of Baḥya’s book from the perspective of the status of the “duties of the hearts” in the Jewish tradition has revealed, for the first time, that the discussions related to this issue are not exhausted by Baḥya’s programmatic introduction but that they also resurface in various other sections of the work. My analysis of these various discussions has uncovered several reasons that, according to Baḥya, had necessitated the partial concealment of the doctrine of the “duties of the hearts” and the avoidance of any systematic consideration of these duties up until his own resolution to write the book. The first reason is epistemological and concerns Baḥya’s insistence that a proper acquisition of the “duties of the hearts” must involve a process of rational intellection. This kind of understanding may indeed be catalyzed by an explicit biblical utterance, but Scripture can do no more than indicate and prompt this process. The second reason is Baḥya’s overall pessimism regarding the possibility that the general public will be willing to fulfill the “duties of the hearts,” the reward of which is granted only in a distant future and, thus, does nothing to enhance one’s status in the eyes of one’s neighbors. Because no presentation of the “duties of the hearts” will provide a strong enough motivation to entice the multitudes to proper worship of the divine, they are not elaborated upon in the “manifest” dimension of revelation (i.e., the explicit utterances of Scripture), which are intended for the general public. The third reason is more structural and concerns the framework of basic distinctions in Baḥya’s work. Given that the distinction between *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* is one that Baḥya keeps revisiting from various perspectives and, given that, on the basis of this distinction, he shapes the fundamental hierarchical framework that characterizes different dimensions of religious life, the distinction necessarily must also play a role in the structure of revelation—in other words, Scripture itself must include both “inner” and “manifest” dimensions.

Ostensibly, in the very act of writing a systematic work that addresses the principles of the “duties of the hearts,” Baḥya boldly overturns the balance between

the “inner” (meaning, in this case, “concealed”) and the “manifest.” Bahya is not silent on this issue, and in analyzing some of his discussions, I have introduced three modes through which Bahya shapes his dialectical stance between concealment and manifestation with regard to both the act of writing his book and its contents. One mode involves the alarming narrative of the crisis that befell his generation and that left unattended the knowledge of the “duties of the hearts” and the possibility of abiding by them in the worship of the divine. This predicament, Bahya argues, requires him to dedicate a book to the systematic treatment of the “inner knowledge.” The second mode has to do with Bahya’s repeated assertion that the “duties of the hearts” are innumerable and thus that *every* act of disclosure can only be partial, since by definition it does not exhaust the infinite number of the duties. The third mode consists in Bahya’s presentation of his book as an act of only partial disclosure, a disclosure that retreats as an integral part of the way in which it unfolds, thereby enticing the reader to its secrets without fully exposing them. His written work thus displays a variation on the tension between concealment and manifestation that characterizes the earlier biblical Jewish discourses as depicted by Bahya. He does not completely overturn the balance, but only reshapes it by moving its center of gravity to his own work.

The various discussions throughout this article have shown, then, that the distinction between *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir* in Bahya’s work is not limited to the anthropological, ethical, or religious dimensions of the worship of the divine, as it is frequently employed and understood. It also has important bearings on Bahya’s conception of layered knowledge and his notion of tradition. Only by understanding this dimension can we fully assess the nature of the intervention Bahya sought to make in the medium of the Jewish tradition and the way in which he sought to implement his approach as an integral part of Judaism.

Moreover, the analysis of Bahya’s discourse reveals an illuminating chapter that has yet to be told about the rise of *bāṭin* discourse in medieval (Rabbanite and Karaite) Jewish culture between the tenth and twelfth centuries and which therefore calls for a wider investigation. Although the meaning of the contrasting term (*ẓāhir*) was the subject of several studies that dealt with its function in Jewish discourses since its first appearances in the sources available to us, no study has thus far been dedicated to exploring how *bāṭin* functioned in the writings of Jewish authors and specifically not in the writings of authors preceding Maimonides.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> On *ẓāhir* in medieval exegetical literature written in Judeo-Arabic, see Mordechai Z. Cohen, *The Rule of Peshat: Jewish Constructions of the Plain Sense of Scripture and Their Christian and Muslim Contexts, 900–1270* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020) 50–54. On the role of the term in Sa’adya, see Ben-Shammai, “Saadya’s Introduction to Isaiah,” 148–49; idem, “The Tension,” 36–38, 39–42; idem, “Multiple Meanings,” 317–19; idem, “The Rabbinic Literature,” 338–39, 345–58. On *ẓāhir* in Yefet ben ‘Eli see Yefet ben ‘Eli, *Commentary on Hosea* (annotated ed., Hebrew trans. and introduction Meira Polliack and Eliezer Schlossberg; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2009) 19–29; Cohen, *The Rule of Peshat*, 54–57; Ilana Sasson, *The Arabic Translation and Commentary of Yefet ben ‘Eli on the Book of Proverbs* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 55–58. On *ẓāhir* in al-Qirqisānī, see Rina Drory, *The Emergence of Jewish-Arabic Literary*

Any future analysis of *bāṭin* discourse would require not only close attention to the different senses given to the term in different sources but also an assessment of: the centrality of this category in the exegetical, theological, and philosophical trends in the works of other Jewish authors; the contribution of this category to transformations of Jewish religiosity in the Middle Ages; and the different cultural contexts in the Islamic world from which it is possible that *bāṭin* discourse—or better put, discourses—drew.

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*Contacts at the Beginning of the Tenth Century* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1988) 114–16 (Hebrew). On *zāhir* in Maimonides, see Cohen, *The Rule of Peshat*, 245–53; idem, *Opening the Gates of Interpretation: Maimonides' Biblical Hermeneutics in Light of His Geonic-Andalusian Heritage and Muslim Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 87–127, 185–89, 445–54.