Hebrew Bible Quotations in Arabic Transcription in Safavid Iran of the 11th/17th Century: Sayyed Aḥmad ʿAlavī’s Persian Refutations of Christianity

Dennis Halft OP
Research Unit Intellectual History of the Islamicate World, Freie Universität Berlin
dennis.halft@dominikaner.de

Abstract
In Muslim polemical writings on the Bible written in Arabic, scriptural quotations frequently appear in Arabic transcription of the original Hebrew. This phenomenon also occurs in the Persian refutations of Christianity by the 11th/17th-century Shīʿī scholar Sayyed Aḥmad ʿAlavī. The adduced biblical materials, however, vary significantly depending on the particular manuscript or recension. Nevertheless, they reflect the common repertoire of scriptural verses invoked by Muslim authors. In contrast to Henry Corbin, who argued on the basis of the Hebrew versestranscribedinArabiccharactersthatʿAlavīwasaHebraistanddirectlyacquaintedwiththeJewishScriptures, it is suggested here that the Shiʿī scholar relied instead on lists of biblical “testimonies” to Muhammad. Although ʿAlavī’s literary sources are as yet unknown due to a lack of research, there is evidence from the manuscripts dating from ʿAlavī’s lifetime that he copied the transcribed Bible quotations from earlier Muslim writings.

Keywords
Arabic transcription of Hebrew, Biblical testimonies to the Prophet Muḥammad, Henry Corbin, Muslim Bible reception, Muslim polemics against Judaism and Christianity, Safavid Iran, Sayyed Aḥmad ʿAlavī, Shiʿī refutations of Christianity

I
Despite the allegations in the Qurʾān that Jews and Christians have tampered with their divine scriptures, Muslim writers frequently draw on the Bible to prove the veracity of the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad.1 The scriptural

1) This article is based on a paper presented at the International Research Workshop “The Bible in Arabic among Jews, Christians and Muslims,” Tel Aviv University, 22–24 May 2012. Thanks to a research grant from the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft I was able to access various sources during a stay in Iran in 2011. I should like to take the opportunity to thank Mohammad Ebrahim
material was transmitted in collections of biblical “testimonies” included in intermediary sources, among the earliest known ones being the K. al-dīn wa-l-dawla by the Nestorian convert to Islam ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. 251/865) and, in particular, Abū Muhammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutayba’s (d. 276/889) Alām al-nubuwwa. Both writings give evidence of the general tendency in Muslim polemical literature to reproduce biblical verses and traditional arguments against Judaism and Christianity over centuries. This apparently also applies to scriptural quotations in Syriac, Greek and especially Hebrew that were transcribed in Arabic characters. Although portions of the Bible were available in Arabic translation since the late 8th or early 9th century CE, Muslim writers drew on biblical verses in the languages used by Jews and Christians, probably with the purpose of authenticating the claim of Muḥammad’s prophethood and, in the case of Shi‘ī authors, the advent of the imāms. Although this phenomenon has attracted scholarly attention since the late 19th century CE, the research on the sources used by Muslim authors still remains a desideratum in the field of Islamic studies.

Alizadeh, Ahmad Nabavi and Sadegh Sajjadi for making some of the manuscripts consulted for this study available to me and to Camilla Adang and Sabine Schmidtke for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article.

For an introduction to Muslim polemics and further references, see Adang, Muslim Writers (with a survey of verses from the Hebrew Bible invoked by Muslim authors, pp. 264–266); Lazarus-Yafeh, Intertwined Worlds; Nickel, Narratives of Tampering.


Interestingly, it was obviously more important to argue on the meaning of the adduced verse than to reproduce the original script. An early exception seems to be al-Maqālist (d. after 355/966) who alongside the Arabic transcription also gives the biblical verses in Hebrew characters, cf. his K. al-bad’, vol. 5, pp. 32–34 (translation), pp. 29–32 (Arabic numbers, text).
II

In early modern Safavid Iran, biblical passages in an Arabic transcription of the original Hebrew also appear in the Persian refutations of Christianity entitled *Lavāme’-e rabbānī* dar radd-e shohba-ye nasrānī (1031/1621) and *Meṣqal-e șafā’* dar tajleya va tasfeya-ye Āyena-ye ḥaqq-nomā (1032/1622), composed by the well-known Shi‘i scholar Sayyed Ahmad ‘Alavi (d. between 1054/1644 and 1060/1650). The large number of sources, namely about a dozen manuscripts of the former tract and twice as many of the latter, provides evidence for the relatively wide diffusion of ‘Alavi’s polemical writings. An examination of the transmitted manuscripts shows that the adduced Hebrew biblical material is subject to considerable variations, depending on the manuscript or recension concerned. This development can already be attested to in the manuscripts dating from the author’s lifetime.

The earliest known manuscript of *Lavāme’-e rabbānī*, MS Cambridge, University Dd.6.83 dated in the colophon to 5 Sha‘bān 1031/15 June 1622, quotes only Genesis 17:20 in an Arabic transcription of the Hebrew. Other verses of the Pentateuch are rendered in Arabic translation. The only known manuscript of *Meṣqal-e șafā’* bearing ‘Alavi’s personal signature can be found in MS Rome, Biblioteca vaticana Borg. pers. 5. The date of composition is given in the colophon as 1032/1622. In this manuscript, Deuteronomy

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7) Currently the most comprehensive, though still incomplete, reference work listing numerous copies of ‘Alavi’s polemical writings is Derāyatī, *Fehrestvāra*, vol. 8, p. 1106, vol. 9, p. 692. Although both tracts are available in print (cf. Aḥmad ‘Alavi, “Lavāme’-e rabbānī,” ed. Sa‘īd; idem, *Meṣqal-e șafā’,* ed. Nājī Eṣfahānī), a critical edition based on a comprehensive discussion of the transmitted manuscripts and recensions is still lacking. For an analysis of selected manuscripts of *Lavāme’-e rabbānī* and their textual variations, see my “Schiiṭische Polemik.” Regarding the primary sources of *Meṣqal-e șafā’,* I propose to discuss its manuscripts and recensions in my Ph.D. dissertation which is currently in preparation.

8) MS Cambridge, University Dd.6.83, fol. 14b:10–15a:1. For a description of this copy, see my “Schiiṭische Polemik,” p. 314f.

9) Interestingly, the Arabic translation of Deut. 33:2a has interpolated the word al-nūr and translates “the light” as coming from Mount Sinai instead of God himself. This variant apparently avoids an anthropomorphism and is already to be found in 4th/10th-century Shi‘I writings such as Ibn Bābawayh, *K. al-tawḥīd*, p. 427f.; idem, *ʿUyūn*, vol. 1, p. 165. In MS Cambridge, University Dd.6.83, fol. 13a:8–10, the verse runs as follows:

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\text{ notions} \text{ سأَهِرُتُمُرُبُّ} \text{ سأَهِرُتُمُرُبُّ} \]

10) MS Rome, Biblioteca vaticana Borg. pers. 5, fol. 174b:7. For ‘Alavi’s signature at the end of a personal note, see fol. 173b:2– of the manuscript. His hand can be established by comparison with other writings which have preserved glosses in the author’s hand including his signature. Cf. E’tesāmī, *Fehrest*, vol. 5, pp. 450f., 520 (with a facsimile of *Kuḥl al-absār*, MS Tehran, Majles 1944, fol. 1b); Monzavi and Daneshpazhūh, *Fehrest*, vol. 1, pp. 189–191; Ahmad ‘Alavi, *Laṭā’ef-e ghaybīyya*,
33:2a appears in addition to Genesis 17:20, both transcribed in Arabic characters.\footnote{In other manuscripts of \textit{Meṣqal-e ṣafā} which date from some years later in Shāh Ṣafī’s (r. 1039/1629–1052/1642) era but still in ’Alavī’s lifetime, Hebrew verses now appear in different transcription systems alongside word for word translations from Hebrew into Persian. In MS Mashhad, Āstān-e Qods 256 and MS Tehran, Dāneshgāh 3531 F (‘aksi) which both contain glosses in ’Alavī’s hand and are dedicated in the prologue to Shāh Ṣafī,\footnote{MS Mashhad, Āstān-e Qods 256, fols 76b:6–7, 79a:3–7, 79b:3–12; MS Tehran, Dāneshgāh 3531 F (‘aksi), fols 73a:5, 75a:11–75b:3, 75b:10–76a:6.} Deuteronomy 33:2a and Genesis 17:20 are quoted in two different transcriptions.\footnote{MS Tehran, Majles 715, fol. 3a:10. For a description of this copy, see Eʿteṣāmī, \textit{Fehrest}, vol. 1, p. 58, no. 194, vol. 2, p. 453f., no. 715. A microfilm is available in the Ketābkhāna-ye Markazi-ye Dāneshgāh, Tehran, cf. Dāneshpazhūh, \textit{Fehrest-e mikrāfīlmhā}, vol. 3, p. 84, no. 4654.} Moreover, Deuteronomy 33:2b appears in a fully transcribed Hebrew quotation, whereas Deuteronomy 18:15 and Zechariah 9:9 appear only as word for word translations from Hebrew into Persian.\footnote{In the appendix, I shall present the transcribed Hebrew verses with their respective Persian translations. \textit{pp.} 84, 86 (introduction). The two latter references give facsimiles of \textit{Laṭāʾef-eghaybī}, MS Tehran, Dāneshgāh 74, fols 17b, 151a. For a description of MS Rome, Biblioteca vaticana Borg. pers. 5, see Rossi, \textit{Elenco}, p. 163.} The fact that Deuteronomy 33:2a appears in addition to Genesis 17:20, both transcribed in Arabic characters,\footnote{MS Rome, Biblioteca vaticana Borg. pers. 5, fols 81a:10–11, 82b:2–4. Isolated Hebrew terms which occasionally appear in the manuscripts of \textit{Meṣqal-e ṣafā} are not considered in this article.} in other manuscripts of \textit{Meṣqal-e ṣafā} which date from some years later in Shāh Ṣafī’s (r. 1039/1629–1052/1642) era but still in ’Alavī’s lifetime, Hebrew verses now appear in different transcription systems alongside word for word translations from Hebrew into Persian. In MS Mashhad, Āstān-e Qods 256 and MS Tehran, Dāneshgāh 3531 F (‘aksi) which both contain glosses in ’Alavī’s hand and are dedicated in the prologue to Shāh Ṣafī,\footnote{MS Mashhad, Āstān-e Qods 256, fols 76b:6–7, 79a:3–7, 79b:3–12; MS Tehran, Dāneshgāh 3531 F (‘aksi), fols 73a:5, 75a:11–75b:3, 75b:10–76a:6.} Deuteronomy 33:2a and Genesis 17:20 are quoted in two different transcriptions.\footnote{MS Tehran, Majles 715, fol. 3a:10. For a description of this copy, see Eʿteṣāmī, \textit{Fehrest}, vol. 1, p. 58, no. 194, vol. 2, p. 453f., no. 715. A microfilm is available in the Ketābkhāna-ye Markazi-ye Dāneshgāh, Tehran, cf. Dāneshpazhūh, \textit{Fehrest-e mikrāfīlmhā}, vol. 3, p. 84, no. 4654.} Moreover, Deuteronomy 33:2b appears in a fully transcribed Hebrew quotation, whereas Deuteronomy 18:15 and Zechariah 9:9 appear only as word for word translations from Hebrew into Persian.\footnote{In the appendix, I shall present the transcribed Hebrew verses with their respective Persian
18:15 appears twice in different translations suggests a later insertion in the text on the basis of different sources.\textsuperscript{17} Besides Zechariah 9:9, Habakkuk 3:3 and Isaiah 9:2 are also adduced here in word for word translations from Hebrew into Persian.\textsuperscript{18}

In contrast to all previously mentioned manuscripts, MS Tehran, Majles 715 reflects a particular Jewish flavour which suggests the influence of a Jewish informant. This is shown by the fact that the portions of the Jewish cycle of Torah reading are indicated before the citation of Genesis 17:20 and Deuteronomy 18:13 and 15, namely the Parashot Lekh-Lekha, respectively, Shoftim.\textsuperscript{19} A Hebrew quotation from the Jewish Midrash, given under reference to “the leading exegetes of the Jews”, is also adduced in Arabic transcription. In favour of the Muslim argument on Deuteronomy 34:10, it allegedly gives evidence for the advent of a prophet “among others than the Children of Israel”, namely Muhammad, who is said to be a descendant of Ishmael.\textsuperscript{20}

In sum, the sources of ʿAlavī’s refutations suggest a development towards the insertion of more differentiated and extensive Hebrew biblical quotations transcribed in Arabic characters and word for word translations into Persian in later manuscripts. This development probably began shortly after ʿAlavī’s original composition and continued until his death in the mid-11th/17th century. Still, the adduced scriptural verses including additions and revisions are far from being original but are rather standard for Muslim polemical writings on the Bible.

III

Although in the current state of research we do not at present know ʿAlavī’s sources, there is no evidence that he was a Hebraist with a direct knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. Nevertheless, it has been argued by previous scholarship since the 1970s that the adduced Hebrew verses transcribed in Arabic characters were indications for ʿAlavī’s acquaintance with Hebrew. The prominent French philosopher and orientalist Henry Corbin (1903–1978), for instance, was among the first Western scholars who turned their attention to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., fols 78b:6–11, 79b:9–13.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., fols 80a:2–8, 80a:14–80b:11, 81a:4–9.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., fols 76b:11, 78a:13. Cf. the appendix, nos 2 and 3.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., fol. 79b:4–8. For the Midrash quote, see the appendix, no. 5.
\end{itemize}
ʿAlavī's theological and philosophical thinking. Based on his research on the above-mentioned MS Tehran, Majles 715, Corbin came to the conclusion:


Following Corbin, later scholars similarly claimed that the biblical verses in Arabic transcription of the Hebrew text allegedly give evidence for ʿAlavī's erudition and his direct access to the Hebrew Bible, possibly with the aid of a Jew or a Jewish convert to Islam. Thus the French scholar Francis Richard stated on the basis of an undated manuscript of Meṣqal-e ṣafā, MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Suppl. persan 12:

Sayyid Ahmad ʿAlavī (...) semble s’être fait aider par quelqu’un connaissant l’hébreu, peut être un Juif converti, de manière à utiliser des arguments tirés du texte hébreu du Deutéronome lui-même. (...) On sait en effet que Sayyid Ahmad avait tiré certains de ses arguments décisifs contre la vérité de la doctrine chrétienne de la Torah elle-même.

Such conclusions, however, which are still echoed today, seem to be questionable in the light of the transmitted sources. Corbin’s first argument that ʿAlavī had a perfect knowledge of Hebrew is challenged by the fact that no

22) Corbin apparently mixed up the shelf marks in his various contributions. Instead of MS Tehran, Majles 715 (see his En Islam iranien, vol. 4, p. 27, n. 27) he numbered the copy elsewhere “725” or “726”, cf. Corbin, “Annuaire 1976–1977,” p. 171; idem, “Theologoumena,” p. 233, n. 28. It is beyond doubt, however, that Corbin was referring to MS Tehran, Majles 715.
24) This manuscript gives Deut. 33:2a and Gen. 17:20 in a single Arabic transcription of Hebrew, cf. MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Suppl. persan 12, fols 190b:3, 192a:3–4. For a description of this copy, see Blochet, Catalogue, vol. 1, p. 33 f., no. 52 (the indicated shelf mark “Supplément 11” at the very end needs to be corrected to “Supplément 12”).
26) Flannery, “The Persian Mission,” p. 104, n. 360; Harrow, “Notes on Catholic-Shīʿī Relations,” p. 109, n. 31, p. 120. It remains unclear to me on which sources Harrow’s assumptions are based.
word for word translation into Persian is to be found in the earliest dated manuscripts, namely MS Cambridge, University Dd.6.83 and MS Rome, Biblioteca vaticana Borg. pers. 5. Moreover, it is striking that several inaccuracies appear in the transcribed quotations of Hebrew verses such as Genesis 17:20 which is commonly interpreted in Shi‘i writings as predicting the mission of the twelve imāms. In all the early manuscripts of both Lāvāme‘e’e rabbānī and Meṣqal-e ṣafā’ single Hebrew terms are regularly omitted (nesī‘ün, yolid, untatiṿ).27 An accurate quotation of the verse is only to be found in the first of two transcription variants preserved in MS Tehran, Majles 715 on which Corbin exclusively based his conclusions.28 This suggests that ‘Alavī was not acquainted with Hebrew but copied the verse in a defective Arabic transcription from an earlier source. Later, Genesis 17:20 was apparently rectified in part as transmitted in MS Tehran, Majles 715. Interestingly, a full quotation of the same verse but in a different transcription also appears in a recension of al-Kashkūl (1002/1593), composed by ‘Alavī’s teacher Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḫusayn al-‘Āmilī (d. 1030/1621).29 This transcription variant of Genesis 17:20 with its characteristic ممکن ممکن, followed by a translation into Persian, comes fairly close to the one already included in Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Nu’mānī’s (d. about 360/971) K. al-Ghayba.30 The manuscripts of ‘Alavī’s polemics, however, obviously rely on a transcription tradition which is different from the one found in al-Kashkūl.

Corbin’s second argument, that the biblical material incorporated in ‘Alavī’s refutations is based on the Hebrew Bible itself, also appears unlikely. Since the Shi‘i scholar reproduces common scriptural verses and traditional arguments as they appear in various earlier Muslim writings, there was no need to consult the Jewish Scriptures directly. The argumentation concerning Deuteronomy 33:2, for instance, as given in all the above-mentioned manuscripts of ‘Alavī’s refutations, recalls well-known literary topoi which already appear in Ibn Qutayba’s list of biblical “testimonies” in his 3rd/9th-century tract A’lām al-nubuwwa. ‘Alavī apparently relied on an intermediary source which likewise refers to “the land of Abraham” (zamīn-e Khalīl) where Mount Seir is said to have been located. In addition, the same connection between the village of

27) MS Cambridge, University Dd.6.83, fol. 15a:1; MS Mashhad, Āstān-e Qods 256, fol. 78a:1 and 3; MS Rome, Biblioteca vaticana Borg. pers. 5, fol. 82b:4; MS Tehran, Dāneshgāh 3531 F (‘aksi), fol. 74a:10 and 12. Cf. also MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Suppl. persan 12, fol. 192a:4.
28) MS Tehran, Majles 715, fol. 76b:2–14.
29) For Gen. 17:20 transcribed in Arabic characters, see Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḫusayn al-‘Āmilī, al-Kashkūl, vol. 2, p. 61 (I thank Simon W. Fuchs for making the edition of Muhammad Ṣadīq Naṣīrī available to me); Bosworth, Bahā’ al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, p. 52.
Nazareth (Nāṣira) and the Arabic name for Christians (al-Naṣārā) is established, as Ibn Qutayba had already done.\(^{31}\) That the Shi‘ī scholar relied on earlier literary sources is also suggested by an Arabic quotation which apparently draws on Genesis 21:13–14, given under reference to the Qur‘ān commentator Ismā‘īl b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suddī (d. 127/745).\(^{32}\) This quotation which is commonly attributed to al-Suddī also appears in later 11th/17th-century Shi‘ī works, namely Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan Ḥurr al-ʿĀmili’s (d. 1104/1693) al-Jawāhir al-saniyya fi l-ḥadīth al-qudsiyya and Muhammad Bāqir b. Muhammad Taqī Majlisī’s (d. about 1110/1699) Biḥār al-anwār. Both authors refer to ʿAlī b. Mūsā b. Ṭawūs (d. 664/1266) al-Ṭarāʾifīmaʿrifatmadhāhibal-ṭawāʾif as their source.\(^{33}\) Thus it is reasonable that ʿAlavī likewise quoted al-Suddī through an intermediary source which still needs to be identified.

Corbin’s third argument that the adduced variants of an Arabic transcription of Hebrew verses as found in several manuscripts of ʿAlavī’s Mesqal-e ṣafā’ argue for the author’s direct acquaintance with the Jewish Scriptures, is not justified either. On the contrary, since it seems unlikely to assume that there were Pentateuch manuscripts in 11th/17th-century Isfahan with such variant Hebrew texts, the variations of the Arabic transcription rather indicate that different Muslim sources were used by ʿAlavī. Although the phonetic transcription of Hebrew in Arabic characters in Muslim polemical literature is in need of further study, there are indications in the manuscripts of the Shi‘ī scholar’s writings which suggest that the transcriptions were, at least in part, originally devised by Muslims.\(^{34}\) Considering the different transcription variants in the

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[31] Cf. MS Cambridge, University Dd.6.83, fol. 13a:10–13b:9; MS Mashhad, Āstān-e Qods 256, fol. 77a:10–77b:6; MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Suppl. persan 12, fol. 19a:7–19b:6; MS Rome, Biblioteca vaticana Borg. pers. 5, fol. 82a:1–9; MS Tehran, Dāneshgāh 353a F (‘aksī); fols 73b:8–74a:3; MS Tehran, Majles 715, fol. 76a:11–76b:6, and Schmidtke, “The Muslim Reception,” p. 254, no. 3. For an English translation of the corresponding passage as quoted in Ibn al-Jawzī’s Wafāʾ, see Adang, Muslim Writers, p. 268.

[32] Although the author frequently draws on biblical materials in his Tafsīr, I was unable to identify this quotation according to al-Suddī, Tafsīr al-Suddī l-kabīr. The passage which is transmitted in the all above-mentioned manuscripts of Mesqal-e ṣafā’ runs, according to MS Tehran, Majles 715, fol. 77b:8–12, as follows:

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\text{لمَ كَرَهَتْ سَارَةِ مَكَانُ هَاجَر اٰوُحِي اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ اٰلِ اٰ بِرِهِمْ خَلِيلِهِ الْسُّلَمُ، قَالَ: اٰطْلُقَ بَسْحُعَالِ وَ اٰمَهُ حَتَى تَنْزِلَ بِنَتِيِّ النَّبِيِّ، يَعْنِي مَكَهْ، فَلَنَّا نَشَرَ دُرِيْتَهَا وَ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا بَيْتاً عَظِيمًا، وَ جَعَلَ مِنْ ذَريَّهَا اٰثْنَيْ عَشَرَ عَظِيمًا.}
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[34] Plosive pe is rendered by bā‘: ʿاَطْلُقَ بَسْحُعَالِ.—Deut. 34:10, MS Tehran, Majles 715, fol. 79a:14.
sources, it seems that ‘Alavī was not sufficiently acquainted with the Hebrew language and Scriptures to decide on the quality of the respective transcription, but rather copied them side by side into his refutation. Such a procedure can already be observed in Muhammad b. ‘Ali b. Shahhrashūb’s (d. 588/1192) Manāqib ʿAl Abī Tālib in which Genesis 17:20 is also adduced in two different transcriptions. The author identifies Faḍl b. Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī’s (d. 548/1153) Iʿlām al-warā bi-aʿlām al-hudā as his source for the first variant and Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAyyāsh al-Jawhari’s (d. 401/1011) Muqtaḍab al-athar fī l-naṣṣ ‘alā l-aʿīmmat al-ithnay ʿashar for the second transcription. The latter also served as a source for ‘Ali b. Yūnus Bayāḍī (d. 877/1472–1473) who includes the transcribed Hebrew text of Genesis 17:20 in his al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm ilā mustaḥqiql-taqdīm. A transcription of the verse is also included in al-Majlisī’s late 11th/17th-century Biḥār al-anwār who identifies Ibn Shahhrashūb’s Manāqib as his source.

In view of the fact that earlier transcription variants of Hebrew biblical verses reappear in Shiʿī writings in Safavid Iran, it is reasonable to assume that this also applies to the verses included in the manuscripts of ‘Alavī’s polemics. Interestingly, in the same period in the Ottoman Empire, biblical verses in an Arabic transcription of Hebrew also emerged in Ottoman Turkish refutations of Judaism which possibly drew on earlier Arabic sources.

39 On Keşfūʾl-esrāʾ fī islāmīl-Yehūd veʾl-aḥbār (1016/1607) by the Jewish convert to Islam Yūsuf.
Hebrew verses transcribed in Arabic characters is neither confined to Muslim writings in Arabic nor to anti-Jewish tracts but appears in Ottoman Turkish as well as Persian polemics against Judaism and Christianity from the early 11th/17th century onwards.

IV

In conclusion, there is no evidence from the manuscripts of Lavāmeʿ-e rabbānī and Mešqal-e şafā’ that ‘Alavī was acquainted with Hebrew, nor that he had any direct knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. Although the manuscripts which date from ‘Alavī’s lifetime reflect a significant increase in Hebrew scriptural quotations transcribed in Arabic, they still belong to the traditional corpus of verses that are commonly invoked by Muslim writers. Despite the possible involvement of a Jewish informant, it seems reasonable to assume that ‘Alavī relied on earlier lists of biblical “testimonies” to Muḥammad included in intermediary sources which provided the Hebrew material in Arabic transcription. Even though ‘Alavī’s sources remain as yet unknown due to a lack of research, the assumptions made by Corbin and other scholars do not seem to be justified. In view of the arguments proposed in this article and our knowledge about the transmission of biblical materials in Muslim writings, ‘Alavī’s refutations of Christianity cannot be considered as proof of a Hebraist’s hand.

Ibn AbīʿAbdal-Dayyān (Yūsuf İbn EbiʿAbdüʾd-Deyyān), for instance, see Schmidtke and Adang, “Aḥmad b. Muṣṭafā Ṭaşkubrizāde,” p. 84. For the Hebrew passages included in his refutation, see Pfeiffer, “Confessional Polarization,” pp. 44–46, 49 f.
Appendix

The biblical passages according to the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible and in the Arabic transcription and the word for word translation into Persian as found in MS Tehran, Majles 715:

1. Deuteronomy 33:2

Interestingly, the writer comments on a small orthographical variation between Pentateuch manuscripts which he claims to know. After translating the Hebrew רִעְשִׂמ (meaning 'from') into Persian ریعٰشٰم, he remarks that “in some copies of the Torah [the first letter] mīm [= Hebrew mem] is marked with the vowel kasra [= Hebrew chireq] and, after that, [the letter] sīn [= Hebrew sin] is without diacritical point and vowelless [=ריִעֵשִׂמ]. Even so, the meaning [of ] is ‘from’. The writer apparently expects a dagesh forte and a short vowel in the initial letter of רִעְשִׂמ after the assimilation of the final consonant of רִעְשִׂמ with the following. Such a familiarity with Hebrew grammar rather suggests the source of a Jewish informant.

41) The Arabic transcription of מברבך is split into the parts وؤؤوت and مري.
2. Genesis 17:20

وفيما بعد عادوا دوما، ويشمل شعبيتها حقاً بريدخ، وهم يتعرضون

وإيضاً يتعرضون دوماً للذنوب، وهم يتعرضون.

3. Deuteronomy 18:13 and 15

ثم نصيحة للعدوى الالهية (…) بناء مفهوم مفهوم كل تطبيق للعدوى الالهية. 

هذا في دفع شوفظح (…) باب النص: تأمل بيته عين الدوائيات اللوقية نابياً بسترنخا متاحاً

كامون يافق لها الدوائيات اللوقية إيلابو تشغشاغ.

ترجمه: شوفظح، جمع شوفظح، عين بين بركان صاحب حكم، تأمل بيته في صف

بلى تمام، بيته باش، عين مع مع، الدوائيات عين بركار، اللوقية عين خداوند، نابياً عين

نبي مرسل، متبرختا خوبيشا تو اين دو اسراب، مبستارا بردان تو، كامون عين

مانند من كه موسى يعيشبر و او العزم، ياقب اين يعيشبر ب خواهد انگيزاند، لخاز براي

تو، الدوائيات بركار، اللوقية خداوند تو إيلابو بكفته او، تشغشاغ بسندون. (…)
The Arabic transcription of مَبِير is split into the parts مَيِّمِر and مَعِير.

A translation of [82] אָּדוּנָּא as it appears in the quotation is lacking here.

Sifre Devarim, paragraph 357, 10. I owe this reference to Camilla Adang.
6. Habakkuk 3:3

The translation of the puzzling term הָלֶס as “always” (hamīsha) is already to be found in the early Jewish tradition, cf. Snaith, “Selah,” p. 55.

7. Zechariah 9:9

The corresponding transcription of the term יִנָע in Arabic characters is lacking here.
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