It would be difficult to study commentaries on any book of the Bible, but especially those on the Torah, without addressing the paramount question of the commentator's thoughts on its authorship. Studies of the way in which this fundamental issue was viewed by medieval Karaites have focused on the analysis of diverse aspects of the novel and innovative concept of the biblical author-redactor or compiler-editor (al-mudawwin). Apparently, it was introduced by Karaite exeges with a view to explaining both internal textual phenomena and the external historical context of the creation of particular biblical texts, or the Bible as a whole.  

1 Most of the research devoted to this subject has scrutinized the role and distinct functions fulfilled by the mudawwin in medieval Karaite Bible commentaries, but has rarely dealt with the question of his identity.  

2 This is especially so in the case of the Pentateuch, which Scripture itself, not to mention long-standing Jewish tradition, has always associated—at least to a certain extent—with the figure of Moses, this question was either never

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1 Drafts of this chapter were presented at the 40th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies (Washington, 21–23 December 2008) and the 14th Conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies (Tel Aviv, 9–13 August 2009).

2 It was probably Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī who introduced both the term and the concept of al-mudawwin to medieval Karaite exegesis. It was subsequently adopted and used by many Karaite exeges from the Jerusalem school such as its founder, Yūṣuf b. Nūḥ, his student Abū Ḥarūn, Sahl ben Maṣliyah, and Yefet ben 'Eli. On this school or “house of study,” see above p. 3, n. 2.

3 For a discussion in which Moses is identified as the human author of the Pentateuch
discussed at all, or it was assumed that Moses, the traditionally understood author of the Torah, was the person associated with this term.\(^4\)

This chapter, therefore, will investigate the relationship between Moses and the “conglomerate term” mudawwin in light of Yefet’s commentary on the Pentateuch with the aim of reconstructing the exegete’s concept of the process of tadwin and the identity of the mudawwin.\(^5\) In other words, it will address what seem to be simple questions: Who, in Yefet’s opinion, wrote the Torah? Was it Moses or someone else? Was it a one-stage process, an action performed by a single, concrete individual (be it Moses or someone else) within a clearly defined time period, or did it involve more agents who were active during a much longer span of time?\(^6\)

1. Formal Statements

In keeping with Jewish tradition, Medieval Karaite exegetes, just like their Rabbanite counterparts, acknowledged the unparalleled position of Moses as the greatest of all prophets, (Deut 34:10),\(^7\) the only one to

by tradition rather than by Scripture itself, see Sternberg, *Poetics*, pp. 58–83, where the author states: “Tradition thus casts Moses in the role of author or mediator of the Pentateuch. Yet the narrative itself makes no such claim. (…) In short, Moses appears as writing within the plot rather than as the writer within the narrative, still less as self-styled writer” (p. 66). On the Torah leaving “deliberately vague” the question of Moses’ role in the process of writing the Pentateuch, see Polliack, “Conception,” pp. 353–354; idem, “Voice,” pp. 898–899.


\(^5\) See Polliack, “Voice,” p. 896. The Ar. term tadwin denotes the act of writing down, composing, recording, compiling, or committing something to writing. See Blau, *Dictionary*, p. 224a–b. On the Ar. root dawwana, its derivatives and their possible meanings, see below, p. 141, n. 76 and further bibliography there.

\(^6\) The term “writing” here refers to both the mechanical act of writing down or copying something, and the creative act of composing, fashioning, as well as editing the text.

\(^7\) The unique position of Moses among the prophets was emphasized by most medieval Jewish philosophers and exegetes, beginning with Saadia Gaon, who referred to Moses (along with Aaron and Miriam) as “our masters and crowns” (סאראתנו ואמניננו).