The Third Section (al-Qiṣṣa al-thālitha)

Ad 3:6–15

(א 2r–v; ב 3r–5v; ג 1r–3v; ד 1r–v; ה 307–308; יא 1r–v; יב 1r–v)

And now the biblical text of the third section, which concerns the particulars of the affliction that befell the faithful, 1 and the beginning of which says about Haman:

(3:6) Yet it seemed paltry in his eyes to lay his hands on Mordechai alone, for they had informed him of his people; and so he sought to annihilate 2 all the Jews, Mordechai’s people, who were in Ahasuerus’ kingdom.

(3:7) In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, an arrow shaft 3—that is, the lot—was cast 4 in the presence

---

1 Ar. al-muʾminīn, which term is often employed by Saadia as an epithet for the Jews (see Schlossberg, “Islam,” 21, n. 8).
2 “to annihilate”—Ar. an yunfidha (or possibly yunaffadha, or yunfada, on which alternatives see Blau, Dictionary, 706b–707a [albeit citing no examples from Saadia]), on this sense of which see ibid., 707a (citing, inter alia, Saadia’s translation of Lev 26:30; Num 33:52; Deut 7:10; Pss 37:38; 83:11; 106:23, 34).
3 “an arrow shaft”—Ar. sahm, on this sense of which see, inter alios, Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān, 15:201: والسِّمْحَةُ الْقُدُّصَ الَّذِي يَقُرَّعُ بِهِ (“The term sahm also denotes the arrow shaft with which one casts/draws lots”). Whether or not Saadia actually conceived of the pūr as an arrow shaft (see his citation of Ezek 21:26 in the commentary ad loc.), this translation serves the lexically “imitative” purpose of representing the less-common biblical lexeme רוּפּ (probably Old Persian; see Wechsler, “Old Persian,” 185) by the less-common (at least in the context of sortilege)/semantically-narrow Arabic lexeme sahm, just as the following, well-attested biblical lexeme לָרוֹגַּה by which it is defined is translated by the equally ubiquitous, semantically broad genre lexeme (for sortilege) qurʿa.

Saadia’s meticulous attention to the grammatical details of the biblical text—and another “imitative” (hardly slavish) facet of his translation ad loc.—is likewise borne out by his rendering of רוּפּ as sahm without the article, even though the former is defined in following by the explicitly definite form לָרוֹגַּה (as also in Saadia’s rendering: al-qurʿa). This anarthrous rendering by Saadia (contra which see Yefet, Esther, 23*: אֲלָפָרָה וּאֲלָכְפָרָה) may in fact reflect a basic acquaintance (at the least) on his part with the (Neo-)Persian language (from
of Haman from day to day and from month to month, whereupon it fell on the twelfth, which is the month of Adar.

(3:8) Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There are found certain people scattered about and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are divergent from (those of) all the people, and the king’s laws they do not observe, and letting them go on in this (way) does not befit the king."