

## *Meshal Qadmonim*

A Newly Discovered Ashkenazic Binding  
Fragment of an Unknown *Maqama* from the  
Cathedral Library of Freising, Germany

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The Hebrew parchment fragment presented here comes from an unknown and seemingly lost poetic composition.<sup>1</sup> It shares characteristics with several other works from the Middle Ages, without being identical to any of them. The fragment, which had been used as a binding wrapper, was uncovered more than a decade ago. But not until 2009, during the initial stages of my search for previously unknown Hebrew binding and manuscript fragments in German archives and libraries, was it rediscovered and further analyzed.<sup>2</sup>

One of the aims of the “Genizat Germania” project is to reconstruct the medieval bookshelf of Ashkenaz from the late Middle Ages. Since its beginning in 2007, this project has identified a great deal of statistically relevant material. Hundreds of new and unexplored Hebrew parchment fragments have come to light and been catalogued. Most of the newfound fragments contain well-known texts and compositions. The majority of parchment fragments that were reused as binding material were taken from complete manuscripts, such as *Maḥzorim* (prayer books for the High Holy Days and special *Shabbatot*), Bible codices, Talmudic literature, and halakhic compendia. A very small number of the fragments discovered thus far come from unknown or lesser known books or codices, namely biblical commentaries or works dealing with specific halakhic matters. Very few include otherwise unknown aggadic or poetic material, like the piece presented here.

This fragment was uncovered in the Cathedral Library of Freising (*Dombibliothek*), the diocesan library of the archbishopric of Munich. When the

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<sup>1</sup> I thank my colleagues and research assistants who helped me to check all known texts and editions in my effort to see whether the fragmentary text published here is extant in any other source. I am especially grateful to Dr. Martin Walko (Freising) for telling me about this manuscript and Reimund Leicht for his many useful comments.

<sup>2</sup> For a prospectus on this project, see A. Lehnardt, ed., “*Genizat Germania*”: *Hebrew and Aramaic Binding Fragments in Context* (“European Genizah”: Texts and Studies 1; Leiden: Brill, 2010).

book was restored, its original book cover was removed and replaced with a new cardboard cover. At that time, the parchment binding was detached and kept separately, in a collection of smaller manuscript fragments. It was stored with a brief, hand-written note: “Eine in spätem Hebräisch abgefaßte, wertlose Hirtengeschichte ...” (A worthless shepherd’s tale, composed in late Hebrew ...).

During my visit to the Cathedral Library it became clear that the book that originally hosted the fragment was from a two-volume work on church history by Adolphus Brachelius, *Historiarum nostri temporis, edition secunda: in duas partes divisa. Priore emendatior, et continuata in annum 1652, diversis variorum principum, et virorum illustrium figures exornata*, which was printed in Cologne in 1652 by Ioannes Antonius Kinckius.<sup>3</sup> These books have their roots in Cologne, having been written by a Catholic historian and printed by a well-known printer who were both active there. On the front page of the copy in the Freising library, a handwritten note indicates that the book belonged to the “Collegii Soctis Jesu Monac. 1657” (the library of the Society of Jesus, Munich). On the outer margin of the fragment, an earlier signature, “VII.d.13,” appears. On the fragment itself a shortened form of the book’s title was jotted along the bottom margin, below the space between the columns of text. An additional note bearing the shortened form of the book’s title was glued to the parchment, upside down in relation to the Hebrew text.

Since no restoration protocol has been transmitted, it is difficult to trace the origin of the cover binding. Considering that the books were printed in 1652 and were in the Jesus Society library collection by 1657, the timeframe between the binding process and the acquisition of the book is rather tight. It seems, therefore, that the volume was wrapped in the Hebrew parchment soon after its printing, either in Cologne or shortly after in Munich.

The manuscript fragment measures 25 × 20 cm. Each column of the bifolio has 30 lines of text. The width of each column is 14.5 × 10 cm. The letters vary in width and breadth, but most measure 1 × 0.5 cm, with initial letters measuring 2 × 2 cm. Three lines of smaller letters were written by the same hand above recto column b. The text in this fragment is written in an Ashkenazi semi-cursive script, which can be dated to the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> During the process of recycling, the ruling on the parchment was erased and only thirty-two tiny pierced holes are visible at the margins of the leaf. In the absence of the ruling, we lack an important indicator for locating the origin

<sup>3</sup> On this printer, see C. Reske, *Die Buchdrucker im 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2007), 475.

<sup>4</sup> Since no authoritative handbook on Ashkenazic script yet exists, I rely here on A. Yardeni, *The Book of the Hebrew Script: History, Paleography, Script Styles, Calligraphy and Design* (London: British Library, 2002), 235–37.

of the manuscript. In any event, the scribe did not adhere closely to the margins. He seldom used line fillers or custodians for the first word written in the subsequent line. The left-hand edges of columns do not form a straight line, a feature that signals the date of this manuscript, since “until the 14th century the ruled line was treated with absolute respect in Ashkenaz.”<sup>5</sup> Other details also demonstrate that this manuscript was written not with the same care as greater codices, such as Bible or Talmudic manuscripts. Some strange orthographical mistakes are found here,<sup>6</sup> although such occurrences are not atypical for Ashkenazi copyists. Thus, the text of the manuscript must have been the product of repeated copying, though perhaps not very often. Since no glosses are added, it can be assumed that it was not compared or corrected with the help of other copies of the same text.

The rather thin parchment is in relatively good condition. Residue of glue and blots of black ink as well as the faded state of the original ink render parts of the text difficult to transcribe. In some lines, only a few words can be deciphered. Even a close examination of the original precludes further reading of some of the faded, erased, or obliterated letters. As a result, one third of the manuscript fragment cannot be read.

## Composition and Content

The text of the fragment is written in two columns, a style that is characteristic for Ashkenazic manuscripts, especially for halakhic codices, poetry, and commentaries. Since the original text must have been longer, the order for reading these columns is a matter of conjecture. According to the legible parts of the fragment, the columns would be read in the following order: recto column b, verso column a, verso column b, recto column a. Following this order, the text can be divided into three sections:

<i>Section</i>	<i>Folio</i>	<i>Content</i>
1	recto b, lines 1–3	A narrative introduction about a certain Menahem.
2	recto b, lines 4–25	A rhymed fable about wolves collecting tithes (“taxes”).
	verso a, lines 5–30	A rhymed fable about a certain shepherd, ‘Et raṣon, who protects his flock.

<sup>5</sup> C. Sirat, *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*, ed. and trans. N. de Lange (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 131.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the spelling on folio recto b, line 12: ונקיט instead of נקור. On the orthography of “Aṭbash,” see below.

Section	Folio	Content
	verso b, lines 1–4	Continuation of the shepherd's fable; concludes with "Seliq."
3	verso b, lines 5–30	Opens with the introductory formula: <i>mashal haya mi-qadmonim</i> . Describes someone who secretly raises birds.
	recto a, lines 1–16	A cat (named Shunra), mice, and broken vessels.
	recto b, lines 17–30	A son of a locust (Bar Qamša) comes to her house. Continuation, where Shunra explains why she was running after a mouse and why she broke the vessels.

Due to the preserved text the structure of the narrative is as follows: recto b, lines 1–3, is a kind of narrative introduction attributed to a certain Menaḥem, who comes to a town. The shift to the following texts is not entirely clear. It seems that the following text on recto b, line 4, up to verso b, line 4, is a continuous text about a certain *‘Et raṣon*. The end of this section is marked by the word *seliq*, "end." The coherence of this part is attested also by the detailed description of the flock with bells and pomegranates (recto b, line 22, and verso a, lines 24–25). The other part of the fragment, beginning with verso b, line 5, preserves a fable which is introduced as "*mashal mi-qadmonim*" about a certain Bar Qamša. The end of this part is missing.

According to this order the plot of the first fable is that a certain king gave the order that "wolves" should collect taxes. However, in the region of the Qenizim, who dwell in Prizim, this did not happen. Something prevented it in Qiryat Ba'al, but also in other places they could not raise taxes. This was accomplished only later by the thieves – with disastrous effects for the flocks. Only the flock of *‘Et raṣon* was spared from the tax collectors, and this shepherd earmarked the flock with bells and pomegranates so that they would not get mixed with the flock of his neighbor. *‘Et raṣon* seems to have been able to protect his flock, but this arouses his neighbors envy (verso a, lines 7ff), and they concoct a plan to lay a snare. The following dialogue of this part of the story is not entirely clear, and also the end remains difficult to reconstruct. In the end, though, the bells and pomegranates seem to have been taken from the flock (verso a, line 24–25), and the flock seems to have given not only taxes but a much higher price.

The plot of the second fable is different: a famine broke out and a certain Ba'al ben Ḥanan moved into the house of Bar Qamša in order to survive. The miser Bar Qamša realizes that something of his supplies is missing and he therefore decides to bring in a cat. Bar Qamša loves this cat much, so that

the cat is even allowed to sit at his table. When there were no more mice in the house, the cat starts to lay hand on Bar Qamša's cultivated birds. But instead of suspecting his cat, Bar Qamša suspects his son. The son, however, gets angry and defends himself, saying that the cat has eaten the birds and that he has even broken the vessels. When Bar Qamša confronts the cat, he replies that he carried out his duty and saw Balaq ben Šippor ("son of a bird") among Bar Qamša's birds consuming his supplies (recto a, line 26). For that reason he was convinced that the birds were mice (recto a, line 27). The vessels were broken when the son tried to strike him with a rod. The reaction of Bar Qamša is not transmitted in the fragmentary text.

### Comparable Texts

The contents and the *dramatis personae* in the two main parts of our *meshalim* are well-known from similar collections. From antiquity, Aesop's Fables present analogous narratives about cats and mice, as well as wolves and sheep.<sup>7</sup> Some details in the *meshalim* here echo fables in the Talmud and in *Mishle Shu'alim* by Berekhya ha-Naqdan.<sup>8</sup> But in comparison with our fragment, these earlier compositions differ significantly with regard to biblical style, phrasing, and their moral doctrine. Although the author of our fragment indeed seems to have been inspired by those earlier collections, he went further by using rhyme prose and different moral lessons and subtexts.

Our author was deeply influenced by biblical phraseology and grammar. Some of the lines in this fragment are comprised of biblical quotations which are seldom abridged or rephrased. The knowledge of grammar needed for this literary technique must have been remarkable, and this capacity immediately brings to mind the Sephardic school of poetry in twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Remarkably our author appears not to have used these stylistic and formal devices to convey hidden meanings through the described actions and dialogues. Obviously, he was composing these fables with no interest in the *remez*, the symbolic or allegorical meaning of the quoted verses. Such mystical meanings play a certain role in Sefardic *maqama* compositions. In our fragment hidden meanings like these, however, remain obscure, and no explicit reference to kabbalistic works can be identified.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. R. Nickel, *Äsop, Fabeln: Griechisch-Deutsch* (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 2005), 84–85 (cat and mice), 153–55 (wolves and sheep), 164–65 (mice and cats).

<sup>8</sup> Cf., e.g., the fable about the cat, the bird, the fox, and the hare in M. Hadas, *Fables of a Jewish Aesop: Translated from the Fox Fables of Berechiah ha-Nakdan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 204–5. For fables in the Talmud, see bSanhedrin 38b; bSukkah 28a; bBava Batra 134a.

At first sight, as noted above, this newly discovered text is reminiscent of the famous collection of fables by Berekhya ha-Naqdan, from the second half of the twelfth century.<sup>9</sup> Some of the animals mentioned in this text, for instance, also appear in his *meshalim*. Even the phrase “*meshal qadmonim*” appears in verso column b, line 5, thereby presenting the intention of this anonymous author: to create a work that illustrates a moral lesson with symbolic characters. However, the rhyme, style, and contents of the fragment share little with that collection that nevertheless may have served as a model for this work of rhymed prose, as it did for many others.<sup>10</sup>

Our fragment may be compared with additional works and poetic features from the Sephardic tradition. When examined against another great medieval compendium of *meshalim*, the famous *Meshal ha-Qadmoni* by Isaac ibn Sahula (13th century, Spain), this fragment shares only a few words and an approach to citing biblical phrases in common with it.<sup>11</sup> This way of composing a text from a *florilegium* of biblical quotations is typical of Sephardic *meshalim*. Some of the strophes in our fragment therefore reflect the *maqamot* of the poet-narrator, traveler, and translator, Yehuda ben Salomo Alharizi, a native of Toledo who died in Aleppo, Syria, in 1225.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. M. Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher* (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag des Bibliographischen Bureaus, 1893; repr. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1956), 958–62. For an edition of the text, see A. M. Haberman, *Mishle shu'olim le-Rabbi Berekhya ha-Naqdan* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1946); for a commentary on the Hebrew text, see H. Schwarzbaum, *The Mishle Shu'olim (Fox Fables) of Rabbi Berekhiah ha-Nakdan* (Kiron: Institute for Jewish and Arab Folklore Research, 1979). On the Yiddish version, see J. Schumacher, *Sefer Mišle Šu'olim (Buch der Fuchsfabeln) von Jakob Koppelmann: In Originalschrift und Transkription* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 2006). For a discussion of the possible historical background of Berakhya, his life, and his other works, see N. Golb, *The Jews in Medieval Normandy: A Social and Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); G. Bos and J. Zwink, eds., *Berakhya Ben Natronai ha-Nakdan, Sefer Ko'ah ha-Avanim (On the Virtue of Stones): Hebrew Text and English Translation: With a Lexicological Analysis of the Romance Terminology and Source Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1–5.

<sup>10</sup> On fables in medieval Jewish literature, cf. E. Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktales: History, Genre, Meaning* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 191–209, 261–62; and J. Dan, *The Hebrew Story in the Middle Ages* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 282.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the literary background of this work, cf. Isaac Ibn Sahula, *Meshal Haqadmoni: Fables from the Distant Past: A Parallel Hebrew-English Text*, ed. R. Loewe, vols. 1–2 (Portland: Littman Library, 2004), 1:xvi–xxiv.

<sup>12</sup> For some of Alharizi's *maqama* with fable-like contents, see S. I. Kaempf, *Nichtandalusische Poesie andalusischer Dichter aus dem elften, zwölften und dreizehnten Jahrhundert: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Poesie des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Prague: Carl Bellmann, 1858). And see also J. Alharizi, *The Book of Tahkemoni: Jewish Tales from Medieval Spain*, trans. D. S. Segal (Portland: Littman Library, 2001); J. Alharizi, *Tahkemoni or the Tales of Heman the Ezrahite*, ed. with introduction, commentary, and indices by J. Yahalom and N. Katsumata (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 2010). On his life, see also J. Blau, P. Fenton, and J. Yahalom, eds., *Kitāb al-Durar: A Book of Praise of God and the Israelite Community by Judah Alharizi* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 2009), 9\*–41\*.

When comparing the Freising fragment with Alḥarizi's compositions, in particular with his *Sefer Taḥkemoni*, it immediately becomes clear that the conventions of the Arabic *maqama* (in Hebrew: *maḥberet*) were not followed strictly. Even if in some details the fragment resembles the plots of his compositions, the thematic and moral outlook is very different.<sup>13</sup> In my reading, none of Alḥarizi's *maqamot* match the style, rhyme, or contents of the newly discovered fragment.<sup>14</sup>

Another famous Sephardic writer and apt candidate for comparison with the verses in our fragment is *Sefer Sha'ashuim*, composed by Joseph ben Me'ir ibn Zabara (born ca. 1140).<sup>15</sup> But his compositions do not include poems with similar in content and meaning. The remaining Sephardic author who composed similar rhyming prose was Todros Ha-Levi ibn Abulafia (1170–1244). None of the texts in his *Sefer Gan ha-Meshalim ve-ha-Ḥiddot* – a vast corpus of poems and rhyme prose which includes *maqamot* from other Sefardic poets as well – correspond to the one studied here.<sup>16</sup> Although select verses in Abulafia's collection resemble our text, no pair of strophes is identical.

The most remarkable comparative for our text is found in a manuscript from the famous Guensburg collection in Moscow. In 1983 Zvi Malachi has published a number of *meshalim* from this Ashkenazic manuscript in semi-cursive script from the fifteenth century. It includes five similar rhymed animal fables, none of them, however, being identical with our text.<sup>17</sup> The composer of these rhymed *meshalim* was Avraham ben Ya'aqov from Regensburg, whose name is mentioned in acrostic in several strophes. In one *meshal* Avraham even reports that he had been arrested in Regensburg due to a blood libel. This event is well-attested by other documents, and it took place in 1476 and drew a long-lasting arrest of fourteen Jews from Re-

<sup>13</sup> For a summary of some of the typical topics in Al-Harizi, cf. J. P. Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 157–58.

<sup>14</sup> On the role of the rhyme in Alḥarizi, see D. Pagis, *Change and Tradition on the Secular Poetry: Spain and Italy* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Keter, 1976), 199–215.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. I. Davidson, *Sepher Shaashuim: A Book of Medieval Lore by Joseph ben Meir ibn Zabara* [Hebrew] (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1914).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Todros ha-Levi ibn Abulafia, *Sefer Gan ha-Meshalim we-ha-ḥiddot*, ed. A. M. Gaster (London: Goldstone, 1926); Todros ha-Levi ibn Abulafia, *Gan ha-Meshalim we-ha-ḥiddot*, ed. D. Jellin, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Defus ha-Sefer, 1932–1936). These editions can be accessed and compared online.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Z. Malachi, *Mishle Ḥayyot meḥurazim le-Avraham bar Ya'aqov mi-Regensburg*, in Malachi, *Pleasant Words: Chapters from the History of Hebrew Literature* (Jerusalem: Haberman Institute, 1983), 208–34. I am grateful to Reimund Leicht who has compared the manuscript of this composition with the fragment from Freising with the help of a microfilm at the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in Givat Ram, Jerusalem (F27951).

gensburg.<sup>18</sup> In those days the Jews of Regensburg earned their income by money lending and trading. High taxes were put on them and they were always in dangerous and threatened situation, a situation that seems to reflect in the Freising fragment too. Regarding to style and language these late Ashkenazic fables are the closest comparable texts to the Freising fragment.<sup>19</sup>

### The Presumed Author of the Fragment

Who could have written the fables preserved in the Freising fragment? Its form and the style of its rhyme prose point to the Spanish school of poetry, perhaps in the second half of the thirteenth century. Perhaps the names mentioned in the text could contribute toward identifying the author. The first name mentioned might be a certain Menaḥem, on folio recto b, line 1, since there we read *הייתי אני מנחם*. Is the author of the *mashal* speaking here in the first person, or is this an allusion to an invented persona, someone who gives comfort, or perhaps a messianic figure – such as the famous Menaḥem mentioned in the Talmud Yerushalmi, *Massekhet Berakhot* 2.4/10ff (5a)?<sup>20</sup> Or might this simply refer to biblical phrases like Lamentations 1:9 and 1:17, expressing the anonymous author's desire to console the fears of his people? Since the lines that precede this stanza are not entirely legible and this passage is written in a smaller font than the rest of the text, it may be a later addition. At present, this three-line passage seems to serve as a kind of narrative introduction to the whole text. Perhaps this is the conclusion of a prolegomenon that started on the prior leaf, now lost. If a name is being mentioned here, referring to an author Menaḥem, his identity remains unclear.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, names appear to play an important role throughout this text. The other intriguing name mentioned in the fragment is *'Et raṣon*, a

<sup>18</sup> Cf. M. Stern, "Der Regensburger Judenprozess 1476–1480," *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 18 (1927): 363–86; see also P. Herde, "Regensburg," in *Germania Judaica*, vol. 3.2: 1350–1519, *Ortschaftartikel Mährisch-Budwitz – Zwolle*, ed. A. Maimon, M. Breuer, Y. Guggenheim (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 1199–200.

<sup>19</sup> Avraham uses the same introductory formula and the same technique of rhyme like, for example, the expression *וישא משלר ויאמר* found in the fragment on recto a, lines 1, 7, and 16.

<sup>20</sup> On this famous text, see M. Himmelfarb, "The Mother of the Messiah in the Talmud Yerushalmi and Sefer Zerubbabel," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Greco-Roman Culture III*, ed. P. Schäfer (TSAJ 93; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 370.

<sup>21</sup> Menaḥem ben Aaron ben Zerah from Navarre, the author of the *Zedah la-Derekh*, might come to mind. He witnessed both the slaughter of his family and the expulsion of Jews from France. In 1385 he died in Toledo, one of the main Jewish centers in Spain at that time. Several poems are transmitted in his name, but none with similar contents. Cf. L. Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie* (Berlin: J. Kauffmann, 1865), 506.



personal name seemingly derived from a phrase in Psalm 69:14 that speaks of “a favorable moment” for God. Since no person with this name is known from other sources, this unusual phrase-name leaves many questions open. Does it refer in this context to a concept of twenty-eight qualities of time – fourteen positive and fourteen malevolent – listed in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8? Does the name refer to the time of judgment: in later traditions the term hints at the time for *Minḥab* prayers on Shabbat afternoon, the time of strict judgment? According to a famous aggadah, Moses died at that very time on a Shabbat (cf. b*Sota* 13b). The lame individual named ‘*Et raṣon*’ (cf. recto b, line 17), therefore, might bear the features of a Messianic figure as well.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, biblical names, including Beli‘al (Deut 13:14) and Raḥel, appear in the manuscript with small abbreviation marks over each letter, which seem to refer to their symbolic meanings. The reference to “Baal-Ḥanan son of Akhbor,” known from Genesis 36:38, is – due to the dearth of readable text – also quite puzzling. The name is most probably a fable name and does not refer to any symbolic interpretation, for example the seven kings in Genesis 36:31–42, a well-known kabbalistic tradition. The author might just have read “ben Akhbar,” son of a mouse, instead of “Akhbor” in the masoretic text of the Bible. Like the name Balaq ben Ṣippor, “son of a bird” (recto a, line 25) he introduces another name of an animal.

Other biblical names, like Kenezites and Perizzites (recto b, line 7), and Kiryat Ba‘al, (recto b, line 8), are written without additional markings, although the place name Gaza (verso a, line 8) does have them. Thus their plain meaning seems to be intended, and they were not introduced as a cipher for certain names of people or places during the author’s lifetime. The term *shunra* (sometimes vocalized *shunnara*), designating a cat (verso b, line 22ff), exists in the Talmud, but without further symbolic significance.<sup>23</sup> From poetic contexts the name *shunnara* is well-known from the famous *Ḥad Gadya* hymn in the Haggadah for Passover. Time of creation and the author of this famous song are unknown. But it seems very likely that this Aramaic song was composed under the influence of contemporary German folksongs somewhere in Ashkenaz during the sixteenth century. This probably hints at the background of the fragments author as well.

Cats and birds like those mentioned in the fragment commonly appear in other fables and *meshalim*. In our fragment though, they do not seem to

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ps 69:14 and see b*Berakhot* 8a. If the name ‘*Et raṣon*’ can be derived from Ps 69:14, it is furthermore interesting to note that in Ps 69:21 the speaker laments that his prayer has not found *menahamim*, comforters – probably here we find an explanation for the correct understanding of the Menahem, mentioned at recto b, line 1–3.

<sup>23</sup> On “shun(a)ra,” cf. M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmudim Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London: Judaica, 1903), 1537 s.v.; see also b*Berakhot* 56a and b*Sanhedrin* 105a.

serve as symbols.<sup>24</sup> The personal name (Bar) Qamša, however, which is well-known from Midrash and Talmud, seems to carry a deeper symbolic meaning. In rabbinic tradition, we learn of a worthless servant who is confused by his master's instructions and offers an invitation to Bar Qamša instead of Qamša, his master's friend.<sup>25</sup> According to this narrative, the Temple was destroyed as a consequence of a dispute that resulted from this misunderstanding. In our poem fragment, the names Qamša and Bar Qamša are probably introduced with their Aramaic meanings "locust" (Qamša) and "son of a locust" (Bar Qamša), thereby also carrying the meaning miser or screw.<sup>26</sup> Just as locusts are miserly and possess destructive potential that can cause starvation and famine, the author of the *maqama* associates these same motives with the famous Bar Qamša story, another type of "locusts" or misers who brought famine and destruction to the land.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly these lines might refer to the consolation mentioned at the beginning of the fragment (fol. recto b, line 1). Since the name Menaḥem (ben 'Ami'el) in Aggadah is connected with theological speculations over the destruction of the Temple, this section of the *mashal* might refer to a rabbinical explanation for the *ḥurban*, so closely connected with the tragic misunderstanding by that servant.

The rabbinic sources quoted in the fragment are drawn from Mishnah *Avot* 2:7 (recto a, line 17) and Bavli *Sukka* 26a (recto a, line 17). No kabbalistic texts are cited explicitly, and the hermeneutical methods and concepts fit rabbinical standards. For example, in verso a, line 4, a word from the quoted verse is introduced with a reference to "Aṭbash," a method for rearranging the order of letters, words, and sentences as a means for reaching a hidden stratum of the text, in this case, its numerical value. But this cannot be estimated as an indicator to the kabbalistic interpretation and a mystical intention of the text.

The most remarkable feature on the level of this assumed pre-kabbalistic rabbinical interpretation is the *mashal*, about Qamša, Bar Qamša, and the cat that shatters vessels while hunting mice (recto a, lines 10–30). Despite the tendency to interpret this as an allusion to the famous Lurianic myth of the breaking of the vessels (*shvirat ha-kelim*), the *mashal* in no way refers to a *tiqqun* or any other indication of Luria's explanations for evil.<sup>28</sup> The destruction of the vessels by the cat might simply refer to devastation like the one of Jerusalem.

<sup>24</sup> In case one can ascribe the text to an Ashkenazi writer, it might be thinkable that the author had a word-play with the German expression for son, "Sohn," in mind. In that case, *Shun-ra* might designate the cat as a bad son, a "Sun ra," "einen schlechten Sohn."

<sup>25</sup> Cf. bGittin 56a; *Lamentations Rabbah* 4:3.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1386.

<sup>27</sup> For this interpretation, see, e.g., J. Rubinstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 148.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. on this, e.g., G. Necker, *Einführung in die lurianische Kabbala* (Frankfurt am Main: Weltreligionen, 2008).

Whatever the plot of the second fable might have been, the narrative clearly directs the reader to a situation of depression and persecution of a Jewish community. Obviously the little sheep are symbols for persecuted Jews (probably also “the speckled and spotted goat” mentioned in recto b, line 10). The image of the *‘Et raṣon* on the other side makes the reader think of a wise rabbi or community leader or even a local bishop or so. This consoler of the community seems to be the hero of our fable. And it is he who stresses the moral of the last story: that one should not fight against a smaller evil with a greater out of miserliness.

## Conclusion

Due to the difficulty in understanding the unique message of this text fragment, I am first and foremost presenting its transcription along with a provisional, unrhymed translation. The moral message of the *mesbalim*, introduced in part by wisdom teachings from the Sayings of the Fathers and the Talmud, seems to be best understood on the background of the situation of Ashkenazic Jewish communities at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Yet the quantity of illegible material precludes a definitive judgment. Nevertheless, the text can be confirmed as a *maqama* composition, almost certainly written after the great epoch of Spanish Jewry, perhaps by a learned Ashkenazic imitator of Isaac ibn Shahula, the author of *mesbal qadmonim* from the second half of the thirteenth century.

Since the Freising manuscript fragment comes from a small codex, likely written in Ashkenaz (or Northern Italy) in the second half of the fifteenth century, it might have been composed by an Ashkenazi Jew, possibly by Rabbi Avraham ben Ya‘aqov from Regensburg himself, or by another similar well-educated and learned Jew from his surroundings. He wanted to include his message into the learned rhyme prose of his famous Spanish ancestors. They had suffered like the Jews of his time, and therefore he wanted to enclose his message in the rhymed poetry of their time. In this regard, the book binding fragment from Freising is not only a significant witness for the late medieval reception of *maqama* literature in Ashkenaz, it also attests that the form of composition can remind its readers to famous forerunners who suffered from similar persecutions.

Since my search for binding fragments in German archives and libraries is an ongoing project, it can be hoped that additional pages of this work or similar compositions will come to light. Some of the supposedly worthless parchment fragments that were recycled as book cover wrappers are obviously more precious than were previously expected.

## Text

## Critical Symbols

- ? Doubtful or not readable letter  
 <> Lacuna, addition or correction  
 [ ] Addition from biblical quotation

## Recto b

- 1 הרבים ההם. הייתי אני מנחם. בעיר אחת. בפחד וב???  
 2 ראיתי בעיר ריב וחמס. וחסד מרעהו למס. אין עושה טוב. ???  
 3 ואוהבי שוחד. ויד ה' היית' עלי. וידבר השם אלי  
 4 ויהי בימים הרבים. בעת היו הזאבים. מעיר לעיר ר???  
 5 קֶרֶת וכל פלך. במצות המלך. לגבות המעשר. וכל ???  
 6 נמצא אתו גדרות. צאן ועשתרות. ולא הרימו מנו מעשר ???  
 7 הקניזים. היושבים בפרזים. סביבות הערים בכפר הע???  
 8 שועל. והיו תוצאותיו אל קרית בעל. וכל החצרים אשר סביב???  
 9 לא היו מעשרים. אך סוררים. וחברי גנבים. ובכל עת בא???  
 10 שוללים ובוזזים. טלו' ונקוט בעזים. וכל שה חוס בכשבים ???  
 11 הצאן והטובים. בין שמאל בי"ן ימי"ן זאב יטרף. אכלתו ???  
 12 טורף. יוסף מהר לשלול שלל. כאשר יבער הגלל. וישלח ???  
 13 החלב אשר על הקרב. וככה יאכלו אותו. מדי חדש ב<חדשו>  
 14 שבת בשבתו. יבא כל בשר. <> וישב הצאן ולא נותר. ???  
 15 הכרים. כי נאספו כל העדרים. עדר עדר לברו. זאב י???  
 16 צדן. והניח רק עדר איש אחד. אשר כל ימיו ביחד. מ???  
 17 ולכן עת רצון. נקרא בשמו. כי בתומו. היה הולך נכה ???  
 18 ויתן לו מעשר. מכל ויעזב את מקנהו. גלמוד ושכן ???  
 19 בלתי אם כלב. שמח וטוב לב. הניח אצלו. אכן היה לו. א???  
 20 פן יתערבו יחד. עדרי חביריו. בצאנו. ובפתע בלא איבה  
 21 פגוש דוב שכול יקראנו. וכי אי לרשע אוי לשכנו. פן מ???  
 22 להם יאונה. ויעש להם פעמוני ורמוני. זה"ב תכלת וארג<מן>.  
 23 לאות ולסימן. בצוארי הכבשים. למען יראוהו הזאב<ים>.  
 24 בעת שגובים. מנת המלך והמסים. ולכן יביאו לו ש???  
 25 והלך ומנדו. את הכל נתן בידו. ולכן בבא זאב יטרף ???

## Verso a

- 1 ?[י] בקר. בין טוב לרע. מעדר עת רצון הופרע.  
 2 ???לבו. ותמיד בבא. בנימין עם חרף. נפשו ל??? אֶתֹ  
 3 ??? בעי? כבקרת רועה עדרו. ויאכלו גם אכול. בכל מכל ?  
 4 [הכפ]ריים שואגים לטרף. בקיץ ובחורף. א"ט ב"ש ג"ר זאב עם  
 5 [עור]ס <ע>ל עצמם יבש. היה מספר מפקד הצאן. מלבד  
 6 ?? <ע>ת רצו<ן>. לא שלח ידו. ויוותר הוא לברו. מעדרו בלי לקחת.  
 7 ???ה אחת. ויקנאו בו האחרים. מבני התושבים הגרים.

- 8 ??? <הישובים בחצרים. עד עז"ה. עליהם הפחד. וימתיקו סוד  
 9 ??? ורו?? אחד. הבה נתחכמה לו. פן ירבה והיינו א???  
 10 ??? עלינו מתגאה. וילכו ויבאו אצל הרועה. יאמרו איכה  
 11 ??? תי פה. את הבקר את הצאן. הן מהנה עת רצון.  
 12 ??? ושיו ואין עמו כי אם כלב. ואיך תרעה בה?? והלא  
 13 ??? הל?? חסד לא בצדקתך וביושר. וענית ואמרת  
 14 ??? ה?? עדי נתן לך. ויען הרועה ויאמר הן ??? ל'פות  
 15 ??? אם ונטל בני מעים. שור עם שה חיים. בבקר יאכל  
 16 [לערב] יחלק שלל. לעורב החלב אשר הכבד. ויאמר[ו]  
 17 ??? עשה זאת איפא והנצל אם כנים דברך מ??נו  
 18 ??? עמך ונבקשנו. למה ??? אֲתָנוּ והיה הטוב ההוא  
 19 ??? ה' עמנו. והיטבנו לך כמני כיס אחד יהי לכולנו  
 20 [ודעת] נפשך ינעם. וזאת הפעם. אל תייגע שמה. את כל  
 21 [כי מע]ט המה. אך נשלחה אנשים לפנינו. ויחפרו לנו. את  
 22 [הארץ]. ורשם עליה הפודין ברוב כח ותחפש. ול"ו ככנו נפש.  
 23 ???נו הם. וקצת אנשים מהם. עזבו אחרי הצאן.  
 24 ??? עת רצון. את כל הסמנים. ויתנו את הפעמוני'  
 25 [בתוך הרימונ]ים. וילכו ויטמינו. כאשר יכלו עוד הצפינו. ואת  
 26 ??? פר?? מהם הטובים. ורח"ל היתה יפת תואר. המיתו  
 27 ??? ער. וידברו אל יוצאי שער. עירם לאמר ראו הנה  
 28 ??? בליעל. ויטוש על והעזים כשבים. שמו להם  
 29 ??? הצאן והבקר. וכל הנמצא ידוקר. לפי חרב. את  
 30 ??? וידבר ככה אמר למען יבעירו. חמת עת רצון

## Verso b

- 1 כן כ?? ???? ???? שם. אם יפתוך חטאים. להנה??  
 2 ??? ???? ???? ???? מ?? הנחלים. שנשיכתו <נשי> <שועל> ???  
 3 <עקי> צָתוּ עקיצת עקרב. בשמרם עקב רב. כ?? ????  
 4 ??? לך והארכתי ימים: ליק.  
 5 אמת משל היה מקדמונים. לפני כמשנים. איש עי?? עשה??  
 6 כאשר עדיין נמצא עוד עשרים וחמישה. ל העשיר??  
 7 הממלאים. עוצמותיהם גם כנפש ל?? ל??  
 8 ה?? היה עיניו ש?? כמהו. ומצ?? בדעת של חו?? ל?? ב??  
 9 מ?? מרוב צחת עיין ולכ[ל] רוחו ל?כלכל כלכל. כל דבר האוכל. עיני??  
 10 ל??ני. עלינו ב"י קמצ"ו. זה ש?? שהי?? ל?י וכן יחיד אומ??  
 11 מ?? ת?ן היה אוהב צ?? ???? ושע' ל?? ???? ועל כן שמו ???  
 12 [כ] ׀ הוא היה מגדל עופות בסתר ו?? ???? מכל אשר י[ ] ׀  
 13 בע>ת< ההיא היה רעב. בכל ערי המלכות. ויוועצו העם ללכת ר??  
 14 ל?? אוכל לנפש לשבור. גם בעל חנון בן עכבר. עזב את הד??  
 15 ל?? לשבור בר.  
 16 וישמחו על העצה. ויבא אל ביתו בר קמצא. א?? ????  
 17 זרעו וכל מאן דיכפיין ויתי לאכול. ויהי היום יצא יצא כמנהגו ???

- 18 א לראות ולה? ??? והנה אינינו ??? כתמול שלשו <ם> ???  
 19 ראשו וישם. ויאמר אכן אין חתולים עמדי מטה ?? והן ונשתה ???  
 20 ונאכל ??? ויבו בעיניו וימל<א חימה. וישלח שליחים לה??  
 21 וויחם. ??? אליו אחי? ??? הרע בו שלחת. לה??  
 22 ה??הו ישמח על הקמ>ה? אותו ??? ויקראו את שמו שונר <א> ???  
 23 ביה בר קמצא מאד ובכל עת אשר ישב לסעוד היה הח[ת]ת??  
 24 לל? בצ? ??? וינא בעל כנפים בשונרא כמכ? ???  
 25 בא?? וכאשר לא מצא עכברים לקח אחד מהצ??  
 26 ושוב מצפור ??? ופּוּר. ו??ל? היה עושה בזאב??  
 27 ??? השה והדבר הזה קשה ?? הכית ??? הלך ובא ???  
 28 ב והלש? בשונר <א> להשליך ??? עם ??? לא ???  
 29 ה??ל פּוּר ומ?ש? ??? בשערותיו ??  
 30 יים כמוך ??? <א> יככה אוכל וראיתי באבדן מולדתי וי??  
 31 חיה אשר בשמחה ??? גם החתול מקדם ???

## Recto a

- 1 ??? ו?? ו?? וול < > וישא משלו < > ???  
 2 דור עיקש ופתלתל פ?? ???  
 3 אל חתול. < > נים תלחוך אחרי??  
 4 ??? וול בעל הבית קרא לאמ' אנא שא נא אל עבדיך ??  
 5 ??? עַל בנך יחידך. ואל תתן דודיך כי מגיד עליו ריע'ו מ>ה <ח  
 6 ה?? מלבושך הוא מטנף. וללבי הוא זעם ואנף. ועלי הדבר לי ???  
 7 קשה. אכה אשאל איש כי יאהב בנו. ויורד רירו על זה. <וישא> משלו  
 8 תשכיל <לבק>ש לו אשה יפה. איכה יקנה המעכוערת [!]  
 9 אב נושך נא ריר על פה. עם כן האהבה עוורת.  
 10 ויחר אף הבן מאד. וייחל עוד. שבעת ימים ויבא בפנים נזעמים.  
 11 אצל אביו ויאמר. מה לך לשמר. אשר העכבר הגדול גולה בורה יֵהדול.  
 12 וחס הוא על הקטנה. עם כן משמרתך במפקד עז על הגנה.  
 13 ומלקטו מעוגת בשערים. ראה כי אחר עכברים קפץ ודלג חתולך.  
 14 ושבר את כיליך. וגם הוא אוכל סליך. וכאשר תמצא חסרון דבר.  
 15 הוא אומר זה עשה עכבר. כן הכלי דחף ברגלו. ואומר העכבר עושה  
 16 לו < > וישא משלו ויאמר  
 17 מרבה שפחה מרבה זמה. פרצה קראה גנב זונה.  
 18 מקדם לו משל נראה. מפקיד הלב על הגנה.  
 19 כשמוע בר קמצא את הדבר. וראה והנה הכלי נשבר. ויתאנו איתעבר.  
 20 ואל עברו שונרא. זעק וקרא. בזעם ועברה. ויאמר מה זאת עשית.  
 21 כי מששתה את כל כילי. והטוב שבהם אלי שברת. ויען החתול מה  
 22 אמרתי אם אתה לו שמעני. בי אדוני. ידבר נא עבדך דבר. רצתי  
 23 אחר העכבר. הוא המשביר בר. ויאכל מעבור. וארוץ אתריו וא'  
 24 ואעבור. לא שיניתי מן הסדר. ואבא גם אל החדר. כן אדוני קמצא.  
 25 לצוד צידי ואמצא. את בלק בן ציפור. שמה יושב ויצפור. והנה  
 26 שם קנגו ציפורים. אשר ממונך מפקרים. ואוכל מכל בעבור. כי

- 27 <ה>ייתי סבור. ???ם עכברים. ועל לב רע ש<י>ר בשירים. והתחילו אומרי.  
 28 הם זרע אשת משה. ופה?רם עלי קשה. אכן כמנהג. הייתי  
 29 ואהרגום כשה. ויבא בנך גם הוא. וירום את ידו במטהו  
 30 את כפי ולשכלי. ולכן שכר את הכלי. וכשמוע בר קמצא כל

*Translation*

*Recto b*

- 1 those many. I, the one who consoles, was in a certain town. In  
 fear [...].  
 2 I saw in town violence and strife. To he who is afflicted pity  
 should be shown from his friend.<sup>29</sup> No one did anything good.  
 3 But friends of thieves.<sup>30</sup> And the hand of the Lord came upon  
 me.<sup>31</sup> And the Lord spoke to me.  
 4 **And** a long time after,<sup>32</sup> at that time, the wolves were {going}. From  
 town to town [... to every]  
 5 city and every district. Following a precept of the king. Collecting the  
 tithe.<sup>33</sup> And the whole [flock]  
 6 was in the sheepfolds. The flock with lambs. And they never set aside  
 the tithe [...]  
 7 the Kenezites.<sup>34</sup> Who settled among the Perizzites.<sup>35</sup> Around the  
 cities,<sup>36</sup> in a village [of the ...]  
 8 fox. And they lead to Kiryat Ba'al.<sup>37</sup> And all the courts in the vicinity  
 [of these towns].<sup>38</sup>  
 9 They did not tithe. But they were rebellious.<sup>39</sup> And cronies of thieves.<sup>40</sup>  
 And all the time [...].  
 10 They rob and plunder. {Every} speckled and spotted goat.<sup>41</sup> And every  
 dark sheep [...],<sup>42</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Job 6:14.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Isa 1:23.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ezek 27:1.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Exod 2:23. This opening formula is based on biblical phraseology.

<sup>33</sup> Referring to taxes.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Gen 15:19 and 36:11.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Gen 15:20.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Josh 19:8.

<sup>37</sup> See Josh 15:60: Kiriyat Ba'al is Kiryat Ye'arim.

<sup>38</sup> Josh 19:8.

<sup>39</sup> Ps 68:7.

<sup>40</sup> Isa 1:23.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Gen 30:32. Note the spelling error: ונקוט instead of נקוד.

<sup>42</sup> See Gen 30:32 where this phrase comes first, then the phrase quoted in the fragment just before.

- 11 the flock and the fine ones. On the left, on the right, a ravenous wolf.<sup>43</sup>  
For his food [...]
- 12 he has torn.<sup>44</sup> And continues to plunder the spoil. As one burns dung.<sup>45</sup>  
And he sent [...]
- 13 the fat that is on the entrails.<sup>46</sup> And this is how they should eat it.<sup>47</sup>  
Each and every New Moon,
- 14 Sabbath after Sabbath. All flesh shall come.<sup>48</sup> < > Now the flock was  
gathered and no one remained. [...]
- 15 {from} the best lambs.<sup>49</sup> And all the flocks were rounded up.<sup>50</sup> Flock  
by flock, each on its own. A wolf [...]
- 16 hunted them. And he spared the flock of only one man. Who was all  
his days together. [...]
- 17 Thus, *'Et raşon*.<sup>51</sup> Called by his name. Because of his innocence. He  
has a lame walk [...].
- 18 And he gave him a tithe. And he left all his livestock alone.<sup>52</sup> Lonesome  
live [...],
- 19 unless a dog. Happy and light-hearted. He stayed with him. Indeed he  
belonged to him. [...]
- 20 Lest they become mixed. With the droves of others. With the flock of  
his own.<sup>53</sup> And suddenly, without enmity<sup>54</sup> [...]
- 21 Better to meet a bereaved bear.<sup>55</sup> Woe to the wicked and woe to his  
neighbor,<sup>56</sup> lest [...]
- 22 harm befall them. And he made a bell and a pomegranate for them.  
Gold, blue and purp<le>.<sup>57</sup>
- 23 as a sign and a symbol. Around the necks of the sheep. So the  
wol<ves> would notice them.
- 24 At the moment when they take. The portion of the king and the taxes.  
And therefore they brought to him [...]

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Gen 49:27.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Gen 37:32.

<sup>45</sup> 1 Kgs 14:10.

<sup>46</sup> Lev 4:8.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Exod 12:11.

<sup>48</sup> Isa 66:23.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Deut 32:14.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Gen 29:7.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Ps 69:14. On the name "Time of Acceptance" (or the like), see the introduction.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Exod 9:22.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Tanhuma (ed. Buber) on Exod 15:22: "Just as a shepherd looks out for his sheep during the day because of the heat and during the night because of the wolves, so the Holy One looks out for Israel."

<sup>54</sup> Num 35:22.

<sup>55</sup> Prov 17:12.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. bSukkah 56b.

<sup>57</sup> Exod 28:15.



25 And he went and converted it. And delivered everything into his hands.<sup>58</sup> And therefore, when the ravenous wolf comes [...]

*Verso a*

- 1 [... to be concer]ned. Whether good or bad.<sup>59</sup> From the flock, ‘*Et raşon* became separated.
- 2 [...]. And always with his arrival. Benjamin, a people despised.<sup>60</sup> His life [...] with him
- 3 [...]. As a shepherd seeks out his flock.<sup>61</sup> And has also consumed the food.<sup>62</sup> With all and from all<sup>63</sup> [...]
- 4 [The young l]ions roar for prey. Throughout the summer and the winter.<sup>64</sup> *Aṭbash*<sup>65</sup>: the wolf with two hundred and three<sup>66</sup> {lambs}<sup>67</sup> with the skin o<n> their bones being withered.<sup>68</sup> The number of sheep was recorded. With the exception of
- 6 <‘*E>t raş<o>n*. He did not lay a hand {on him},<sup>69</sup> He alone was left.<sup>70</sup> Without taking anything from his flock.
- 7 [... one]. And others were wrought up against him.<sup>71</sup> From among the resident aliens.<sup>72</sup>
- 8 [...]<who / that> dwelt in courts.<sup>73</sup> As far as Gaza.<sup>74</sup> They were afraid. And they consulted secretly.
- 9 [...]. Let us deal shrewdly with him.<sup>75</sup> Lest he increase<sup>76</sup> and we were / are [...]
- 10 [...] about us he was exalted. And they went out to the shepherd. They asked: How

<sup>58</sup> Cf. 2 Chr 36:17.

<sup>59</sup> Lev 27:33.

<sup>60</sup> Judg 5:18.

<sup>61</sup> Ezek 34:12.

<sup>62</sup> Gen 31:14.

<sup>63</sup> A formulation also found in *Birkat ha-mazon*.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Zech 14:8.

<sup>65</sup> The word is written with abbreviation markers between each pair of letters to signal a non-literal meaning. In addition, it is spelled here with *ṭeṭ* rather than *tav*, perhaps due to a scribal error.

<sup>66</sup> The Hebrew word *gar* appears with an abbreviation marker. This indicates that its numerical value is intended, not the literal meaning, “dwell.”

<sup>67</sup> Isa 11:6.

<sup>68</sup> Lam 4:8.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Exod 22:10.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Gen 44:20.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Gen 37:11.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Lev 25:45.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Deut 2:23.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Gen 10:19.

<sup>75</sup> Exod 1:10.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Exod 1:10.

- 11 [...] here. The cattle and the herd. Yes, replied ‘*Et raṣon*.  
 12 [...] and no one was with him except a dog.<sup>77</sup> And how will you shepherd [ ] and not  
 13 [...] grace, nor because of your virtue and your righteousness.<sup>78</sup> And answer and recite<sup>79</sup>  
 14 [...] has given you. And the shepherd answered and said: Yes [...]  
 15 [...] and took his inwards. Ox and sheep would dwell together. In the morning he eats  
 16 [and in the evening] he divides the spoil. To be mixed with the fat that is on the liver.<sup>80</sup> And they said [...]  
 17 [...] do this then,<sup>81</sup> and he excused himself: If your words are honest<sup>82</sup> [...]  
 18 [...] with thee we may seek.<sup>83</sup> Why [...] with us and it becomes good that  
 19 [...] the Lord with us. We shall do unto us the same unto thee,<sup>84</sup> as we shall have a common purse.<sup>85</sup>  
 20 [For wisdom] will enter your mind.<sup>86</sup> And this one at last. Do not trouble all the men there, since  
 21 they [are so few].<sup>87</sup> But let us send men ahead. To reconnoiter the  
 22 [land].<sup>88</sup> And he recorded the redeemed, with great effort looking for [them].<sup>89</sup> And thirty-six gave their lives.  
 23 [...]. And some of the people from among them. Left the sheep behind.  
 24 [...] ‘*Et raṣon*. All the signs. And they attached the bells  
 25 [between the pomegranate]s.<sup>90</sup> And they went and hid.<sup>91</sup> But when they could not hide him no longer.<sup>92</sup> And the [...]  
 26 [...] from the good ones. And Raḥel was beautiful in form.<sup>93</sup> Put (him) to death  
 27 [...]. And they talked / spoke to those leaving the gates. Of their town, while they were saying: Watch out, here

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. Num 26:65.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Deut 9:6.

<sup>79</sup> Deut 26:5.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Lev 3:4.

<sup>81</sup> Prov 6:3.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. for this formulation *Sefer Takbkemoni*, gate 11.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Song 6:1.

<sup>84</sup> Num 10:33.

<sup>85</sup> Prov 1:14

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Prov 2:10.

<sup>87</sup> Josh 7:3.

<sup>88</sup> Deut 1:22.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Job 30:18.

<sup>90</sup> Exod 39:25.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. 2 Kgs 7:8.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Exod 2:3.

<sup>93</sup> Gen 29:17.

- 28 [...] Belial!<sup>94</sup> And he came down on the goats [and] sheep. He put them  
 29 [...] the sheep and the cattle. And they that remain shall be pierced through.<sup>95</sup> By the sword.<sup>96</sup>  
 30 [...] and he said so, while speaking: To make him glow. The ardor of *'Et raṣon*.

*Verso b*

- 1 So [...]. If sinners entice you.<sup>97</sup> Here [...]  
 2 [...] the streams. For its bite is the <bi>te of a <fox>,  
 3 and its sting is the sting of a scorpion.<sup>98</sup> The reward for obeying them is great. [...]<sup>99</sup>  
 4 [...] and I will grant you long life.<sup>100</sup> Conclusion. (*Seliq*)  
 5 **Truth** {is in this} fable from the distant past. Before me, like those old in years. A man [...] made [...]  
 6 when there still are another twenty-five. [...] for the rich [...]  
 7 that fill. Their bones, in life also [...]  
 8 [...] his eyes were [...] like his. [...] in the opinion of [...] in [...]  
 9 [...] from so many dry eyes, in ea[ch] direction to provide for them. Everything has been eaten. [...]  
 10 [...]. We are holding a handful. [...] and the individual says [...]  
 11 [...] he loved [...] and therefore his name is [...]  
 12 [...] he raised a bird secretly [...] from everything [...]  
 13 At this t[im]e, there was a famine. In every town of the kingdom. And the people took counsel to go [...]  
 14 to [...] to buy the food necessary for life. Also Ba'al-Ḥanan son of Akhbor.<sup>101</sup> Left the (place) [...]  
 15 [...] to procure grain rations.<sup>102</sup>  
 16 And they rejoiced over the council. Then Bar Qamṣa came to his house. [...]  
 17 his offspring, and to whoever is hungry, he will give something to eat. And when days passed as they used to [...]  
 18 [...] to see and to go [...] and here, he was absent [...] as in the pa<st> [...]

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Deut 13:14.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Isa 13:15.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Gen 34:26 et cetera.

<sup>97</sup> Prov 1:10.

<sup>98</sup> mAvot 2:15.

<sup>99</sup> Ps 19:12.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. 1 Kgs 3:14.

<sup>101</sup> Gen 36:38–39.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Gen 42:3.

- 19 on his head and he placed {it} upon his head. And he said: Indeed, there  
 are no cats with me. [...] and let us drink  
 20 and let us eat [...] But he be[came] angry.<sup>103</sup> And he was filled with  
 rage.<sup>104</sup> And he sent emissaries to [...]  
 21 [...]. [...] to him, his brothers [...] you have sent out the bad within it.  
 [...]  
 22 [...] and he was happy about his existence [...]. And they called his  
 name Shunr[a] (cat) [...]  
 23 [...] [and] Bar Qamša [liked her] very much. And every time he sat  
 down to eat, the cat was {with him} [...].  
 24 [...] and a bird touched Shunra [...]  
 25 [...] and when the (cat) did not find any mice, he took one of the  
 b[irds ...]  
 26 [...] a bird [...]. And [...] did so with the wol[ves ...]  
 27 [...] the sheep, and the matter was difficult [...] went and came [...]  
 28 [...] and he sent [out] for Shunra, to cast out [...]  
 29 [...] by its hair [...]  
 30 [...] And how can I bear to see the destruction of my homeland.<sup>105</sup>  
 31 [...] and in his joy [...] also the cat from before [...]

*Recto a*

- 1 [...] < > And he took up his parable < >.  
 2 [...] it is a perverse and crooked generation<sup>106</sup>  
 3 [...] to a cat [ ] to lick off [ ]  
 4 [...] And the landlord said: I urge you,<sup>107</sup> forgive your servants [...]  
 5 [...] your only son.<sup>108</sup> And don't give your love, for he has told the  
 Master of the Universe (*ribbono shel 'olam*) his wish (?)  
 6 [...] He has soiled your garment. And against my heart he has raged  
 with anger. And unto me the word [...]  
 7 [...] How can I ask a man if he loves his son? And let spit run down on  
 it.<sup>109</sup> <And he took up> his parable:  
 8 Understand: <See>k a beautiful woman! How can you acquire an  
 ugly one?  
 9 A father stung with spit on his mouth. Given that love is blind.

<sup>103</sup> Esth 3:6.

<sup>104</sup> Esth 3:5.

<sup>105</sup> Esth 8:6.

<sup>106</sup> Deut 32:5.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Gen 50:17.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Gen 22:2.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. 1 Sam 21:14.

- 10 **And the son** became very angry. And he waited further. Another seven days.<sup>110</sup> And he came with a glowering face.<sup>111</sup>
- 11 To his father he said. What do you have to keep? Concerning the big captive mouse, who flees and gets away.
- 12 And he took pity on the small one. With the son of your guard, he arranged a force for her protection.
- 13 And gathered from the barley cake. Look, he leapt after the mice, and your cat jumped.
- 14 And he broke your vessels. And he also ate your portion. And when he found something missing.
- 15 He says: This was done by the mouse. Likewise, the vessel was knocked down by his foot: He says: The mouse did (it)
- 16 to him / if (?) < > And he took up his parable, saying:
- 17 More maidservants, more lewdness.<sup>112</sup> The breach invites the thief.<sup>113</sup>
- 18 We are bringing a nice parable (*mashal*) before him. The heart may prepare its defense.
- 19 When Bar Qamša heard about the matter. And saw, behold, the broken vessel. He quarreled with him, and his anger grew.
- 20 And to his servant Shunra. He shouted and screamed. With anger and wrath. And he cried: What have you done?
- 21 Because you touched all my vessels. And even the most precious to me you have broken. But the cat answered: What
- 22 can I say, if you do not listen to me? Please, my Lord. Let your servant appeal to (my Lord)!<sup>114</sup> I was running
- 23 after the mouse. He wanted to get into the grain rations.<sup>115</sup> And he ate from the produce.<sup>116</sup> That is why I ran after her.
- 24 And transgressed. I have not changed the order. And I will also come to the room. Son of my Lord Qamša.
- 25 To hunt for prey, and I will find. Balak, this son of a bird.<sup>117</sup> There he sits and flies away.<sup>118</sup> Behold,

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Gen 8:12.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Prov 25:23.

<sup>112</sup> mAvot 2:7: "He used to say: More flesh, more worms; more treasures, more care; more maidservants, more lewdness; more male servants, more theft; more women, more witchcraft."

<sup>113</sup> bSukkah 26a.

<sup>114</sup> Gen 44:18.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Gen 42:3.

<sup>116</sup> Josh 5:11.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Num 22:2.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Judg 7:3.

- 26 prepare (yourselves), birds!<sup>119</sup> Who take apart your means. Eat it all.  
Because
- 27 < I > was sure. [...] (they are) mice. And about a bad heart {we} hear /  
s<in>g in songs. And they began to say:
- 28 They are offspring of the wife of Moses. And [...] hard for me (?).  
Right, according to custom. I was
- 29 and I will kill them like sheep. And your son is also coming. And he  
raised his hand with his rod,<sup>120</sup>
- 30 my hand and for my reason. And that is why he broke the vessel. And  
when Bar Qamša heard all this [...]

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. Ezek 31:6.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Num 20:11.

כתב הקטן הייתי אצל לטמס' בנצח אהרן 1923  
 רומני בענין רבן זמאס' זמסר לופקת אלס' ופין טילר סיב  
 וייבב ל'מדר' וידה ה'ג' על' וידב' הקטן יול'

**פירוש**  
 כלים הרבים כעת היו החזקים ויער לעיר ו  
 בית כל פלך כמיונה הולך ל' בזה האמנו וכל  
 כלינו יום גדרות יקון ועשתהחתי לא היונו וועג מעטיו  
 הקדשים היושבים בערדים ההיכות הערים בכפר הם  
 ערדי' היו ומיעוהחד יול קרית כפול וכל ותימרים וישר פניו  
 לק היו ומעשרין יקון כוררים וחברי גבית וככל עג כיון  
 סוללים וכודגס' עלו וגזעו בעדים' וכל טהה הם בכשכז  
 והליון הדעותים' כין ערדי' יד ויאך זמס' יטרד' חלטה  
 עורף' יוסף וחר לשלל טולל' כיושר וכפר הגלל וישלח ו  
 החב יושר על הקרב וכמה יזכו וזוהי מדי הרט כ  
 שבת כמכותנו יבין כל בשר' יועב היצון וזין עותד  
 הכמים' כי יוסכנו כל העררע' ערר ערר כרדי' זמב' י  
 יקון והנה רך ערר ליעז יהוד' רושר כל יואן כוחר' י  
 וכן עת יקון קריו כטאון' כי כטאון' היה הולך נכח  
 ויקון לו ויעקר' וכל ויעזב ית וקנהר' גומוד ושכח  
 כולו יקם כלב' טוח ועוב לב' הכח וימיו יזכן היה ל' ח  
 קן יעשרט יחד' עררי הכירין' ביעקן וכפתש ביו' ר  
 עגוש רוב שכח יקרמוני וכי יודי' ורשע וי'ל'טכסן' קן  
 אדם יחטה' ויעש' והב' פעמות ורמוע' זהב' תלמל וזרז  
 ידות ולסיון' ביעוררי' הככסלם' ויען' ירוחהו הדגס'  
 כעת טובים' מנת הולך המזכים' ולו יכרו או כרס'  
 והך ווערו' יוד' הכו טען כידו' זלפן בבין זמב' יטרד'

Figure 1. Recto b, Ashkenazic Binding Fragment of an Unknown Maqama. Reproduced by courtesy of Diözesanbibliothek des Erzbistums München und Freising.

בקר בין טוב ארע ופקר עת ריגון הוסר  
והו ומויב בבא כעמס עם חרו ופיו לידי  
על כן ת וועה ערבו ויחל גם זוכא רל וטל  
ויס יח יגם ארע בקיין וכוונו יט בשע זעס עם  
ים ע עמס ורעו היה זכער ופקר היסין ואלד  
ב רר לטו שלחזיו דיונה הוי אכרו נעדרה בולקחו  
ה לט ויקעו בו האררים זכבס הוי טנים הרבים  
ישס ס כה יסיע ער עסר אלהם הפקד זוי ויהי סר  
רו יהר הכר עתה ל קויעכ וזויט  
עוה ולט ויכר יחל הרעה ויחיה איה  
ל ית הפקד יסיה וקויעכ ער ריגון  
וס ין עונו כעס עב ייק תועה פירעט  
הל גל או בוס הרך כיוני ויעה איה  
ה גר קויעכ עס הויעה ויחיה הויט  
אכ וטל ככ ויעס שור עמס חס ככר יסיה  
יה של לערהא הויט ער על הרר יסיה  
נה עשה זאה ייעה וקעל יס טעס דכרן וטעני  
ה ויך ועקעו איה עי כמ ויהי הטיב הבה  
ה יוט והיעבג לך כוונ סס איה ויחל  
נקע יעם וזיה העס או תיעו עוה יחל  
ט ייה אך נטחה ינשים אפעט ויהפדו לטיות  
ור סם עלה הקורן נרצ כס וקעס או ככר עט  
ע ית ווקעט אנשים יוהם עזכו אחרו היסין  
ע ר דיוקן ית ל הפועים ויטו ית הפועים  
ים יחכו ויעוטי כאטי ולו ער היקען וידר  
ע יח ויהי הט כים דחל הוה ית גריר הויה  
ע ידכו הו ייעו שע יעסס איה ויחיה הטי  
כיל ויעס על העדים הנשכים שוה אכר  
ה ין ובקר וס הנעוץ ויקר אפ חב ית  
כ כס איה ווען בעיו חוועט חוק

Figure 2. Verso a, Ashkenazic Binding Fragment of an Unknown Maqama. Reproduced by courtesy of Diözesanbibliothek des Erzbistums München und Freising.



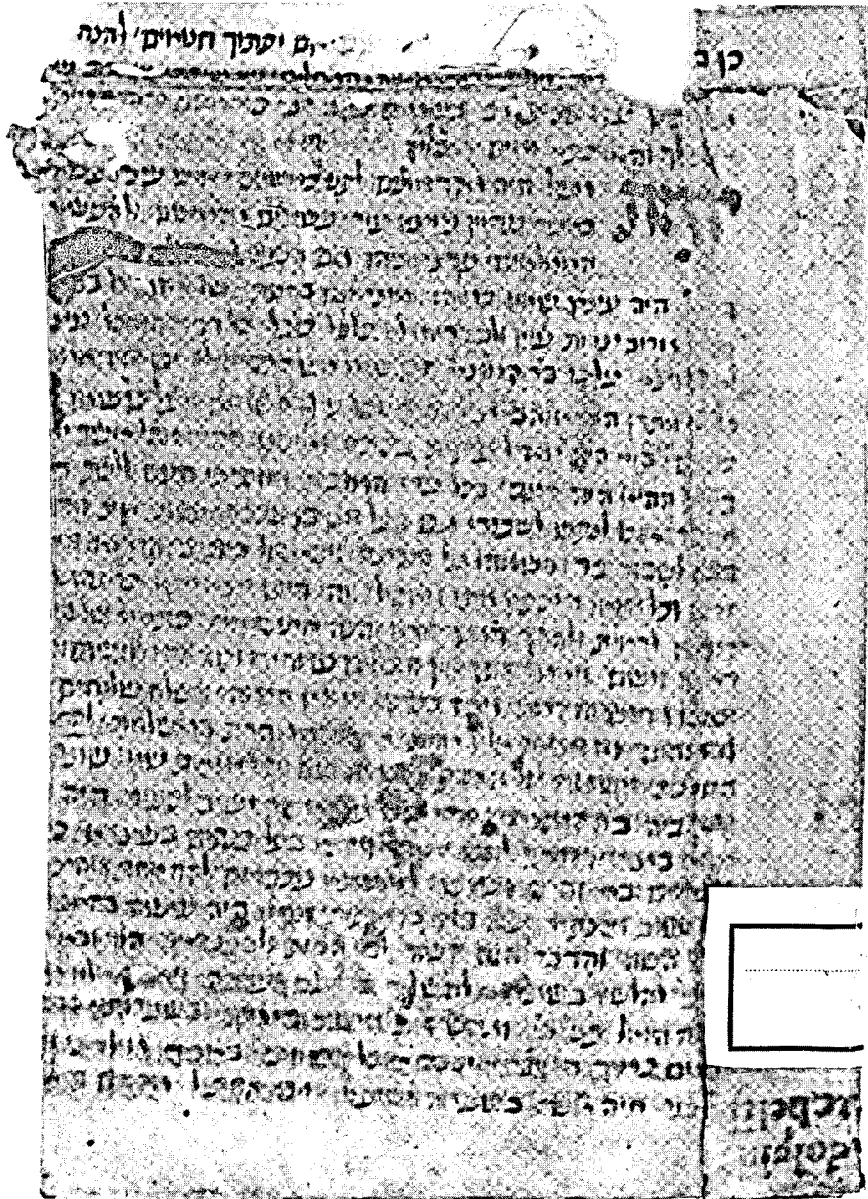


Figure 3. Verso b, Ashkenazic Binding Fragment of an Unknown *Maqama*. Reproduced by courtesy of Diözesanbibliothek des Erzbistums München und Freising.



Figure 4. Recto a, Ashkenazic Binding Fragment of an Unknown Maqama. Reproduced by courtesy of Diözesanbibliothek des Erzbistums München und Freising.