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Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen on Fāṭimid Victory: A Hebrew Ode to al-Mustans̄ir Billāh and Badr al-Jamālī Reconsidered

JOHANNES DEN HEIJER and JOACHIM YESHAYA

ABSTRACT *This article presents a vocalised edition (on the basis of MS T.-S. Misc. 36.174, Cambridge University Library) and a revised translation of a Hebrew ode written on the occasion of the Fāṭimid victory over the invading Saljūq army in Cairo in 469/1077. Elaborating on earlier research on the Cairo Genizah treasures starting with Julius H. Greenstone's 1906 paper, the article first of all aims to present whatever historical data can be obtained about the poet, Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen, and about the time period and the circumstances in which he must have written his poem, which is addressed to the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mustans̄ir Billāh and his vizier Badr al-Jamālī. Other major objectives of the article are the identification of other historical persons and events alluded to in the praise poem, a literary analysis of the ode within the conceptual framework of "martial poetry", and an examination of its laudatory or propagandistic aspects.*

Keywords: Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen; Hebrew and Jewish Studies; Literature – verse; al-Mustans̄ir Billāh, Fāṭimid caliph; Badr al-Jamālī, vizier of Egypt; Saljūqs, Turkish dynasty – military history; Fāṭimid caliphate – military history; Hebrew literature – odes; MSS Cambridge, University Library, T.-S. Misc. 36.174

1. General introduction

The poem under discussion in this article¹ was published, translated and commented upon more than a century ago by Julius H. Greenstone.² He based his edition,

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¹ Joachim Yeshaya prepared the vocalised version (section 6) and the revised translation of the poem (section 7), and wrote draft versions of sections 1 (except the last paragraphs), 3, 4 and the first part of section 5. Johannes den Heijer drafted the latter part of section 1, section 2 and the remaining part of section 5. We have edited and reworked the entire article together and are deeply grateful to our colleague Marina Rustow (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD) for her further editing, corrections and stimulating suggestions and remarks. We would also like to thank Yechiel Kara (Jerusalem, Academy of the Hebrew Language) for his help with the vocalisation, and the Syndics of Cambridge University Library, particularly Ruth Long (Cambridge University Library) and Ben Outhwaite (head of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at Cambridge University Library) for sending us a digital scan of the manuscript T.-S. Misc. 36.174 and for granting permission to publish it in this article (see Plates 1 and 2 below). Finally, we are indebted to several colleagues present at the 20th Colloquium on the History of Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras (CHESFAME), held in Ghent, 11–13 May, 2011, whose highly inspiring feedback, given during the discussions and afterwards, will be referred to in various footnotes below.

which is still by and large reliable, on a manuscript (T.-S. Misc. 36.174) preserved in Cambridge University Library, in the miscellaneous boxes of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection's Old Series. Greenstone did not provide vocalisation marks, and his translation needs certain amendments to allow for a twenty-first century update of the historical and literary interpretation of the poem, after a century of research on the Cairo Genizah treasures. As an annex to this paper, we shall therefore present a vocalised version of the poem as well as a fresh, revised translation, to which we shall refer and from which we shall quote throughout our discussion and analysis.

This laudatory poem has been studied not so much by scholars of medieval Hebrew poetry for any particular literary or prosodic quality it might have, but rather by historians for its obvious historical value, as it was written on the occasion of the Fāṭimid victory over the invading Saljūq army, headed by Aṭsiz b. Uwaq (d. 471/1079), in Cairo in 469/1077. According to the poem, this army consisted not only of Turks or Turcomans (in Hebrew: *tōgarmīm*, on the basis of the biblical name of a tribe that lived to the north of Israel, see Genesis 10:3; Ezekiel 27:14; 38:6; the modern Hebrew word for Turkey is also *tōgarmā*) but also of Armenians, Arabs and Germans. Few Hebrew poems have come down to us that refer to general historical events going beyond matters specifically related to the history of the Jewish community. One rare other reference to the invasion of the Saljūqs (again called *tōgarmīm*) in the latter part of the fifth/eleventh century may be found in a Hebrew poem by the Egyptian Jewish poet 'Eli ha-Ḥaver ben 'Amram (fl. eleventh century) published by Tova Beeri.³

The colophon at the end (lines 147–50) of our lengthy panegyric, written in the poet's own hand, contains both the name of the poet (Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen, referring to his priestly descent) and its date of composition (corresponding to 23 January 1077):

147. The second day [= Monday], with four (days) remaining in the month of Shevat, and in years,
148. The year 4837 from the Creation, and from the Destruction (of the Second Temple) 1009.
149. Solomon, he is ha-Kohen (the priest), the son of Joseph, and descendant of *Geonim*.
150. And if you would count, count 149. It is more precious than pearls.

Elaborating on earlier research, to which we shall return shortly, we shall try, first of all, to present whatever historical data can be obtained about the poet, Solomon ben

² Julius H. Greenstone, "The Turkoman Defeat at Cairo. By Solomon ben Joseph Ha-Kohen: Edited with Introduction and Notes", *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 22 (1906): 144–75. For a palaeographic analysis and reproductions of the manuscript, see pp. 144–7. While we tend to consider the manuscript to be an autograph – in response to a question raised by Michael Brett during the discussion at the 20th CHESFAME – we refrain here from discussing the fact that Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen wrote his Hebrew poem on a reused Arabic document (folded twice to yield four separate writing spaces on each side), as can be seen in the photograph (see Plate 2 below). For this aspect of the poem, and indeed for this fascinating phenomenon of interconfessional relations in Fāṭimid Cairo in general, we refer to current research carried out by Marina Rustow, whose project is to result in two forthcoming monographs.

³ Tova Beeri, "'Eli ha-Ḥaver ben 'Amram: Hebrew Poet in Eleventh-Century Egypt" [in Hebrew], *Sefunot* 8 (2003): 279–345 (see pp. 307–9, poem no. 8).

Joseph ha-Kohen (fl. eleventh century), and about the time period and the circumstances in which he must have written his praise poem. Careful analysis of the database of the Institute for the Study of Poetry and Piyyut, established by the late Professor Ezra Fleischer in Jerusalem, shows that no other poems can be ascribed to this person.⁴ Nevertheless, the name Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen occasionally appears in other Genizah documents, mostly of a legal nature. In the same year (1077) in which he composed his panegyric, he was apparently also appointed presiding judge (*Av Bet-Din*) of the High Court of the Jerusalem *yeshiva* in Fuṣṭāṭ, an office he would hold until at least 1098. In this capacity, Solomon's signature can be found in various Genizah fragments, among which is David ben Daniel's marriage contract with Nāshiya, daughter of the influential Karaite *kātib* Moses ben Aaron ha-Kohen (fl. eleventh century), drawn up in 1082 in Fuṣṭāṭ.⁵

Some of the foremost Genizah specialists have pointed to the particular historical relevance of this poem.⁶ As early as 1906, Samuel Poznanski devoted most of his review of Greenstone's article to the family ties of Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen (II), a grandson of the Palestinian *gaon* of 1025 bearing the same name (I), and a son of Joseph ha-Kohen ben Solomon, who in 1051 lost a long and bitter struggle over the headship of the Palestinian Academy to Daniel b. 'Azarya, who had come to Egypt from Iraq.⁷

Around 1920, Jacob Mann criticised Greenstone for not having correctly identified all the eulogised persons in the poem. Besides the caliph al-Mustanṣir (r. 427–487/1036–1094) (who is mentioned by name in line 6), Mann not only identified his commander-in-chief, the notorious Armenian vizier Badr al-Jamālī

⁴ The database of the Institute for the Study of Poetry and Piyyut (*Mifal le-Hecker ha-Shira ve-ha-Piyyut*), established by the late Professor Ezra Fleischer in Jerusalem, houses the following data for poets with the name Solomon ben Joseph:

- A penitential poem (*seliḥa*) beginning with the words אלוהים הדובר נכונים "God who tells true things", ascribed to a poet named Solomon ben Joseph ha-Haver and copied in two manuscripts: Philadelphia, Dropsie College, 288; Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter Collection, NS.127/53; - Another partial *seliḥa* ascribed to Solomon ben Joseph ha-Haver can be found in manuscript NS.231/37 in the Taylor-Schechter Collection; - A *tokheḥa* (liturgical poem of rebuke) or *baqqasha* (liturgical poem of petition to God for the forgiveness of sins), in which the names Solomon ben Joseph Temani (the Yemenite) and Isaac ben Yefet Temani (the Yemenite) are mentioned, and copied in manuscript: London, British Library, BM.5557.W/1; - A *piyyut* or liturgical poem for the New Year (in Hebrew and Arabic), beginning with the words: שמעו שמוע "Listen to the sound of the *shofar*", ascribed to Solomon ben Joseph Shabbazi and copied in manuscript BM.5557.Y/1 (London, British Library); - In manuscript L.OR.10578.H/35 (Gaster Collection, British Library, London) are mentioned: Solomon ben Joseph and Solomon Kohen ben Joseph ha-Talmid ben Judah Fāsī; - A *piyyut* beginning with the words: אביעה מקרה קראני ברביעי "I express an event which happened to me on the fourth (day)", ascribed to Solomon ben Joseph and published by Abraham David in "Persecutions of the Jews of France" [in Hebrew], *Tarbiš* 46 (1977): 251–7. None of these poets, however, can be identified with Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen, the author of the Hebrew ode to al-Mustanṣir Billāh and Badr al-Jamālī. We are grateful to Dr Sara Cohen of the Institute for the Study of Poetry and Piyyut for her tremendous helpfulness.

⁵ See Shlomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, volumes I–VI (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–1993), II: 512 (n. 11), for other dated documents written at Solomon ben Joseph's court.

⁶ See the bibliographies edited by Shaul Shaked, *A Tentative Bibliography of Geniza Documents* (Paris: Mouton & Co, 1964), p. 159 (no. 174); Stefan Reif, Paul Fenton, and Rebecca W. Jefferson, *Published Material from the Cambridge Genizah Collections: A Bibliography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 222; Rebecca W. Jefferson and Erica C.D. Hunter, *Published Material from the Cambridge Genizah Collections: A Bibliography 1980–1997* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 183.

⁷ Samuel Poznanski, "Zu dem Berichte über die Niederlage der Turkomanen bei Kairo", *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 22 (1906): 247–8.

(d. 487/1094) (line 11), but also contended that lines 20–21 contain an allusion to two prominent members of Fustāṭ’s Jewish community, the brothers Judah and Mevorakh b. Sa’adya (fl. eleventh century), both of whom were also court-physicians.⁸

Some of Mann’s other identifications were later criticised by Shlomo Dov Goitein, whose *Mediterranean Society* contains occasional references to Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen, as does Mark Cohen’s 1980 book, entitled *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt*.⁹ These scholars, however, maintained the identification of the two brothers, Judah and Mevorakh, to which we shall return shortly.

Both Moshe Gil and Yehoshua Frenkel have dealt with the period of Saljūq invasions in Palestine in some of their publications. Their observations, once again, are made from a historical perspective, and primarily concern details of chronology.¹⁰ More recent socio-historical studies based on Genizah documents by Miriam Frenkel (2006) and Marina Rustow (2008) have offered new perspectives on medieval Jewish leadership and on the complex relations between the Rabbanite and Karaite-Jewish communities of Fāṭimid Egypt. Rustow’s study also devotes some lines to the period of the Saljūq invasions, and to the family ties and legal documents signed by our poet Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen.¹¹

In summary, as mentioned earlier, scholars have mostly considered the historical relevance of this poem, rather than its poetical particularities, apart from Greenstone and, more recently, Joseph Yahalom. Admittedly, it is still from a historical angle that Yahalom focuses particularly on the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem, and in the process, he also comes up with a fresh interpretation of the lines in which Mann had identified the two brothers mentioned above.¹² In our discussion on these important matters of decoding the poem (see below, 2.3), we shall include Yahalom’s view on this issue. At this point, however, we should like to refer to his remarks from the perspective of literary analysis. In this regard, Yahalom has made an important contribution by comparing the poem with two war poems composed by the Andalusian-Jewish warrior-poet Samuel ha-Nagid (d. 1056), a vizier and army commander in Zīrid Granada. Yahalom correctly notes that the enigmatic

⁸ Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs: A Contribution to their Political and Communal History*, volumes I–II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920–1922; reprint: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969–1970), I: 187; 207–8.

⁹ Shlomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 407 (n. 45); II: 351; 512 (n. 11); 604 (n. 26); Mark R. Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt: The Origins of the Office of Head of the Jews, ca. 1065–1126* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 61, 64, 109, 165, 171.

¹⁰ See Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 410–11; *idem*, “The Scroll of Eyyatar as a Source for the History of the Struggles of the Yeshiva in Jerusalem during the Second Half of the Eleventh Century: A New Reading of the Scroll” [in Hebrew], in *Jerusalem in the Middle Ages: Selected Papers*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1979), 39–106 (see particularly p. 43); Yehoshua Frenkel, “The Saljūqs in Palestine (1071–1098)” [in Hebrew], *Cathedra* 21 (1981/2): 49–72 (see particularly pp. 57–9).

¹¹ See Miriam Frenkel, “The Compassionate and the Benevolent” *The Leading Elite in the Jewish Community of Alexandria in the Middle Ages* [in Hebrew], (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2006); Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); for Rustow’s references to MS T-S Misc. 36.174, see p. 329, n. 16; p. 334, n. 30; p. 377.

¹² See Joseph Yahalom, “The Temple and the City in Hebrew Liturgical Poetry” [in Hebrew], in *The History of Jerusalem*, ed. Joshua Prawer (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1987), pp. 215–35; *idem*, “The Temple and the City in Liturgical Hebrew Poetry”, in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period 638–1099*, ed. Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1996), pp. 270–94, esp. pp. 285–94.

number 149 (not noted by Greenstone) mentioned in the colophon by Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen at the end of his poem (exactly 149 lines long) was not only the number of Psalms according to the contemporary enumeration (since the first two Psalms were reckoned as one), but also the number of lines in Samuel ha-Nagid's war poems entitled *Shira* (Song) and *Tehilla* (Praise).¹³ Stimulated by these observations, we shall take Yahalom's approach one step further, and try to emphasise some more structural and thematic aspects, which Solomon ben Joseph's poem seems to share with other so-called "martial poems", i.e., a genre of poems that describe actual military activity (and a sub-genre of the category of "war poems", which do not always deal with military pursuits). The main components of a typical martial poem may be detailed as follows:¹⁴

1. an introduction containing (a) benediction of God (and occasionally, as in this poem, other laudatory passages dedicated to earthly persons involved in the war) and (b) a description of the context and causes of the conflict (which sometimes includes a description of the enemy, of weaponry, and of the rival armies and their advance);
2. the "martial nucleus" of the poem (preparations for and description of the battle itself; divine intervention; description of the defeated army);
3. a conclusion, containing (a) blessing of God; (b) praise of the poem or self-praise of the poet; (c) a statement on the diffusion of the poem (+ its good news); (d) varia.

Thus, one main aspect of this article will be an attempt to elaborate this literary approach of Solomon's poem and analyse it within this conceptual framework of martial poetry. But there is another aspect of its composition that calls for more attention than it has received so far. This is its status as a eulogy, or an expression of praise – that is, the specifics of its political message in the shape of a panegyric.

To be sure, this remark is not meant to deny that, starting with Greenstone, all the authors we have just mentioned have paid due attention to its laudatory dimension, but in doing so, they still concentrated primarily on its historical implications and particularly on the identification of persons alluded to. The reason we are compelled further to scrutinise the poem from the point of view of its function as a poem of praise, or indeed of propaganda, is that most comments on this matter given thus far have been quite subordinate to the identification issues. Even the most elaborate account of this aspect, which includes references to comparable discourse in Muslim as well as in Coptic Arabic historiography, is given in a footnote that mainly aims at supplying bibliographical references.¹⁵ We should like to take those references precisely as an encouragement for further investigation, which, however, we can carry out only to a limited extent within the framework of this article.

¹³ Dov Yarden, *Divan Shmuel Hanagid: Ben Tehillim* [in Hebrew], (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College Press, 1966), pp. 4–14 (poem no. 2); pp. 16–26 (poem no. 4). The poem entitled *Tehilla* (Praise) was translated by Peter Cole in his *Selected Poems of Shmuel HaNagid* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 39–47 (notes pp. 180–186).

¹⁴ See David Segal, "Observations about Three War Poems of Shmuel Ha-Nagid: A Study in Internal Poetic Cohesion", *AJS Review* 4 (1979): 165–203; cf. Angel Sáenz-Badillos and Judith Targarona, "Jewish Tradition in Arabic Form in the War Poetry of Shemuel Ha-Nagid", in *From Iberia to Diaspora: Studies in Sephardic History and Culture*, ed. Yedida K. Stillman and Norman A. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 264–81; Arie Schippers, "Arabic Tradition and Hebrew Innovation: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry", PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1988, pp. 257–89; published as: *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 217–43.

¹⁵ Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government*, p. 61, n. 45.

Hence, besides further discussing the allusions to historical persons and events, and the literary analysis of the poem as an expression of “martial” poetry, we shall focus on selected phrases and expressions in those parts of the poem that we consider singularly relevant for its laudatory or propagandistic aspects.

2. The introductory section of the poem: some problems of identification and interpretation

2.1. *The imam-caliph al-Mustanşir Billāh*

Now, with this triple approach in mind, let us analyse Solomon ben Joseph’s poem, which indeed begins with the praise of God in the first four lines:

1. The LORD judges nations; the LORD, for all times;
2. He is the Protector of widows, and He is the Father of orphans.
3. Have you seen the marvels of God, who has created and perfected?
4. He also saved for the house of ‘Alī, the perfect oases of Qēdār—

In line 4, we can see the first of a number of remarkable features of Solomon’s praise for the Fāṭimid victory over the Saljūq army headed by Aṭsiz. This first feature is the mere fact that the poet, a Jew and not a Muslim, to be sure, proves to be perfectly aware of the specifically Ismā‘īlī, or at least Shī‘ite, character of the Fāṭimid caliphate of al-Mustanşir Billāh: he praises God for having saved the Fāṭimid capital¹⁶ (line 4) as well as the caliph himself (as we shall see below, line 5) for the house of ‘Alī. This is by no means a trivial observation when we compare this with other texts. Whereas such emphasis on the caliph’s ‘Alid lineage is abundant, as may be expected, in contemporary propaganda hailing from official Fāṭimid circles, i.e. from the monumental inscriptions and from the official letters (*siḡillāt*) of al-Mustanşir to his followers in Yemen,¹⁷ it is also conserved in later, post-Fāṭimid historical writing, such as the well-known histories by Ibn Muyassar (d. 677/1278), al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), and so on. But things are quite different when we compare our Hebrew poem with other non-Muslim, i.e., Christian, discourse of the same period. Such discourse is extant in a number of passages of the contribution of Mawhūb b. Manşūr b. Mufarrij (d. 1100) to the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, the official history of the Coptic Church.¹⁸ Mawhūb’s text, which consists of the biographies

¹⁶ We owe the identification of Qēdār as referring to Cairo, in medieval Jewish (Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic) texts, to Yehoshua Frenkel, who brought this point to our attention in the discussion of our paper at the 20th CHESFAME.

¹⁷ Michael Brett, “Badr al-Ġamālī and the Fatimid Renaissance”, in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Era IV*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Jo Van Steenbergen [Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, CXL] (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), pp. 61–78, esp. 69–71.

¹⁸ All references to the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* in this article are given according to the unpublished manuscript Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate Hist. 12, which contains the third volume of the primitive redaction of the text. See Johannes den Heijer, “L’*Histoire des Patriarches d’Alexandrie*: recension primitive et Vulgate”, *Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte* 27 (1985): 1–29; *idem*, *Mawhūb Ibn Manşūr Ibn Mufarrij et la rédaction du texte arabe de l’Histoire des Patriarches d’Alexandrie* [Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, LIII: Subsidia, LXXXI] (Lovanii, 1989), pp. 14–80. In the present study, the Cairo manuscript in question will be referred to as MS C. For the reader’s convenience, references to the folios of this MS will be followed by those to the edition of the better-known but secondary “Vulgate” version, which appears in *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, known as the History of*

of the two Coptic Orthodox patriarchs of the author's lifetime, contains numerous reports and notes on all kinds of events and circumstances related to Fāṭimid rule and particularly to the caliphate of al-Mustanṣir Billāh, but all of this without a single reference or even allusion to the Fāṭimids' Shī'ite doctrine.¹⁹ While the Jewish poet and the Christian chronicler are using two very different modes of written expression, they can nevertheless be considered to occupy similar positions with regard to the Fāṭimid authorities, as both are prominent members of their respective *dhimmī* communities. Therefore, this striking difference in outlook definitely deserves our attention.²⁰

After these four lines of invocation, with its almost immediate link to the Fāṭimid imamate, Solomon moves on to a considerably longer section (lines 5–33), in which he praises some of the earthly persons involved in the war, and first of all:

5. The great king who tells secrets,
6. Al-Mustanṣir Billāh, Ma'add who is the father of Tamīm
7. May he live forever in abundance of good, and may he be established eternally,
8. The priest, son of priests, the pure, the perfect

The expression in line 5 *higgīd ta' alūmīm*, "who tells secrets", obviously refers to the esoteric knowledge that, according to Shī'ite doctrine, the imams possess and transmit to the initiated. This feature, once again, is well-known from a variety of Muslim sources, whether written by Ismā'īlīs themselves or about them by others,²¹ but in Coptic historiography of the period it is totally lacking.

(footnote continued)

the Holy Church, by Sawirus Ibn al-Muḳaffa', Bishop of al-Aṣmūnīn, ed., trans. and annotated by Aziz S. Atiya, Yassa al-Masīh, and Oswald H.E. KHS-Burmester [Publications de la Société d'Archéologie Copte. Textes et Documents, III] Volume II, part II-part III (Le Caire: Société d'Archéologie Copte, 1948–1959). The titles of the two relevant parts of this edition will be abbreviated here as *HPC* II ii and II iii, respectively.

¹⁹ The same holds true for Mikhā'īl, bishop of Tinnīs, whose biographies included in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* cover the earlier parts of Fāṭimid rule in Egypt (edited in *HPC* II ii). Only a later continuator of this historiographical tradition, who wrote shortly after the collapse of the Fāṭimid caliphate, displays in his introduction a certain awareness of the doctrinal difference between the abolished house of imam-caliphs and the newly established Ayyūbid dynasty: *HPC* III ii, pp. 59–61, transl. pp. 99–102. (This passage does not exist in the abovementioned Cairo MS, cf. den Heijer, *Mawhūb Ibn Manṣūr Ibn Mufarrig*, p. 77.)

²⁰ Arnold Franklin's book, *This Noble House: Jewish Descendants of King David in the Medieval Islamic East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), explores the profound concern with genealogy and lineage that developed among Jews in Muslim lands during the Middle Ages. Franklin also draws the comparison with 'Alid genealogy, and suggests that Jews were perfectly aware of the Muslim claims and issued their own, similar genealogical claims. See also Franklin's article "Cultivating Roots: The Promotion of Exilarchal Ties to David in the Middle Ages", *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 29/1 (2005): 91–110.

²¹ Cf. for example, Heinz Halm, *Die Kalifen von Kairo: Die Fatimiden in Ägypten 973–1074* (München: Beck, 2003), p. 253; Farhad Daftari, *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* [Ismaili Heritage Series, XII], (London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005), pp. 209–10; Arzina Lalani, *Degrees of Excellence: A Fatimid Treatise on Leadership in Islam. A new Arabic edition and English translation of Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysabūrī's Kitāb iḥbāt al-imāma* [Ismaili Texts and Translation Series, VIII], (London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010). In her introduction, Lalani adequately sums up al-Naysabūrī's views on the imam as follows (p. 10): "It is the imam who preserves the religious law and its esoteric truths, the revealed law (*shar'ā*) and its inner dimension (*haqīqa*). For this reason the evolution of religious cycles depends on him and it remains his prerogative

In line 6, in the caliph's name, the elements Ma'add and Abū Tamīm are well-attested in all relevant sources, including the *History of the Patriarchs*, albeit in one passage only.²²

Describing the caliph and imam as a *kōhēn*, "priest", as Solomon does in line 8 may very well be taken as corresponding to the Arabic *imām*, which obviously stands for a different concept from "priest", but this need not disturb us if we accept the idea that what we are witnessing here is a fascinating process of adaptation of an Islamic concept to a Jewish cultural frame of reference.

This seems all the more likely since the poet goes on, in the same line, to call al-Mustanşir Billāh *ben kohanīm* "son of priests". This expression clearly refers to the imam's ancestors, i.e. to the unbroken chain of successors of 'Alī (d. 661) and Fāṭima (d. 632). In Fāṭimid formulary of this period, this element occurs repeatedly, as in the following inscription on one of the city gates of Fāṭimid Cairo, Bāb al-Naşr:²³

There is no god but God alone, he has no associate, Muḥammad is the Prophet of God, 'Alī is the Companion of God, blessings of God on both of them and on the imams of their offspring (*min dhurriyatihimā*), all of them.

Furthermore, the use of the adjectives *tāhōr*, pl. *tehōrīm* "pure" and possibly also *shalēm*, pl. *shetēmīm* "perfect, faithful" could be taken to freely echo the formula appearing in the same inscription and in many other texts of the period:

(...) our Master and our Lord, Ma'add Abū Tamīm, the imam al-Mustanşir Billāh, Commander of the Faithful, [may] the blessings of God [be] on him and on his ancestors, the pure (*al-ṭāhirīn*) imams, and on his noble descendants.²⁴

The reference to the imam-caliph's offspring that concludes this formula, may well have informed the poet when he composed his line 9:

9. And also his sons, who yearn for the priesthood, the sons of nations

(footnote continued)

to interpret them and act upon the prophet's religious law; the imam alone is able to make changes or replacements. It is, therefore, only through the imam that one attains the inner truth of religious law, its esoteric interpretation and its meaning."

²² In the preface to his contribution to the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* (MS C, 1r-3r/HPC II ii, pp. 159-61), Mawhūb uses this relatively complete form of the caliph's name as a means of dating his work; see den Heijer, *Mawhūb Ibn Manşūr Ibn Mufarrig*, pp. 83-4.

²³ For a more systematic presentation of the inscriptions of the period in question, written on the Cairo city walls, and for references to publications and earlier studies, see Johannes den Heijer, "Le vizir fatimide Badr al-Ġamālī (466/1074-487/1094) et la nouvelle muraille du Caire: quelques remarques préliminaires", in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Era V*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Kristof D'hulster [Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta CLXIX] (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), pp. 91-107.

²⁴ For further examples of this formulation, see the petitions published by Samuel M. Stern, "Three Petitions of the Fatimid Period", *Oriens* 15 (1962): 172-209 and Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Legal and Administrative Documents in the Cambridge Genizah Collections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 302-409; *idem*, "The Historical Development of the Structure of Medieval Arabic Petitions", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 53 (1990): 8-30. The "noble descendants" clause was only for caliphs who had already had children; before then it was "expected descendants".

In brief, our poet, Solomon, mostly stresses al-Mustanṣir's authority in terms partly reminiscent of Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī formulary, and partly deriving from either his own literary genius or his expertise in Jewish religious writings. But the main point here is that the authority he glorifies in the imam and caliph is of an exclusively religious nature. The reference to hereditary priesthood in particular must have worked well for a Jewish audience, but at the same time it also strongly refers to the imamate, that lineage of legitimate rulers of the Muslim community, according to Shī'ite doctrine, who are endowed with occult knowledge – a detail that has not escaped the attention of our Jewish poet. These lines of the poem, on the other hand, do not contain any allusions to the caliph's worldly power beyond the eloquent but rather general formula appearing in line 7.

2.2 The military vizier, Badr al-Jamālī

After eulogising the caliph and his offspring, Solomon continues by praising the victorious army and then singles out its commander:

10. And also his servants, who love to fight at (the risk of) their lives,
11. And at their head, the commander of the armies – may He who dwells in the heavens keep him alive

As mentioned in the introduction, Jacob Mann was the first scholar to identify this commander-in-chief as the notorious Armenian vizier and military dictator, Badr al-Jamālī. Even in later sources, he is often simply referred to as the *amīr al-juyūsh*, the “commander of the armies”, the military commander *par excellence*, and the need to explicitly mention his name is rarely felt. This suffices to corroborate Mann's identification of the vizier in Solomon's seemingly rather indirect reference to him. It may be noted, once again, that Mawhūb b. Maṣṣūr b. Mufarrij, in his equally contemporary narrative account, also systematically uses the title *amīr al-juyūsh* in his numerous passages featuring Badr al-Jamālī.²⁵

The vizier owes this remarkable notoriety to his achievement of seizing control of the Fāṭimid Empire and effectively ruling it from 467/1074 to 487/1094. It was he who brought about a radical and lasting change in Fāṭimid political structures, to the effect that henceforth and throughout the second Fāṭimid century, military viziers would hold the real power, while the imam-caliphs were most of the time reduced to representative symbols of religious authority and its legitimisation. Whereas Gaston Wiet had already dubbed him “l'une des personnalités les plus marquantes de toute l'Égypte musulmane”, Heinz Halm, more recently, went as far as considering Badr al-Jamālī as the first sultan of Egypt in a typological sense.²⁶ Among Badr's numerous innovations, one may cite his new city walls of Cairo with its famous gates, which still stand today, and his policy of introducing

²⁵ For example: MS C, ff. 51r–52v/*HPC* III iii, pp. 204–206; MS C, ff. 57v–59v/*HPC* III iii, pp. 210–12; MS C, ff. 69r–72r/*HPC* III iii, pp. 220–3. In one case in this text, the vizier's name appears in a slightly more elaborate form; see below, section 2.2.

²⁶ Heinz Halm, “Badr al-Ġamālī: Wesir oder Militärdiktator?”, in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Era V*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Kristof D'hulster [Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta CLXIX] (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), pp. 121–7.

a hereditary vizierate, to the effect that one can speak, with Yaacov Lev, of a “Jamali House of military Viziers”.²⁷

What lifted Badr al-Jamālī to these towering heights was the political, economic and humanitarian crisis of the preceding period, known as *al-shidda al-‘uẓmā* or “the Great Crisis”, which he was able to subdue with an iron-fist policy. In this period, the population of Egypt was hit by pestilence, famine and inflation, trade was down because of the overall lack of security on the roads, and violent conflicts broke out between the various ethnic factions of the Fāṭimid army. War raged particularly between the African slave soldiers supported by the caliph’s mother, herself originally an African concubine, and the Turkish regiments, at that time commanded by the Taghlibī Arab *amīr* Nāṣir al-Dawla b. Ḥamdān (d. 465/1073). This scion of the once powerful Ḥamdānid dynasty of Aleppo and Mosul had the overt ambition, in connivance with the Saljūq rulers of Baghdad, of overthrowing the Ismā‘īlī dynasty and restoring ‘Abbāsīd sovereignty in Egypt and its Fāṭimid dependencies. Accordingly, in Alexandria and the Delta, he had the invocation of al-Mustanṣir in the Friday prayers replaced by that of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Qā’im (r. 422–467/1031–1075). Although Nāṣir al-Dawla’s scheme eventually came to naught because he was assassinated by some of his own Turkish allies, the weakened Fāṭimid state still faced utter collapse due to the internal chaos in Egypt. As a last resort, al-Mustanṣir called Badr al-Jamālī from Syria to restore order with his Armenian militia. Badr accepted the caliph’s plea but on his own terms, which entailed a significant raising of the profile of his rank of vizier: within a short time, he came to hold supreme authority over the military, the judiciary and the Ismā‘īlī propaganda (*da‘wa*) apparatus.²⁸ When Badr al-Jamālī, three years after assuming full power in Egypt, successfully defeated the new ‘Abbāsīd attack against the Fāṭimid Empire that is the topic of our poem, he was essentially facing the same adversary as had seriously threatened Ismā‘īlī rule during the “Great Crisis” earlier on, even if this time around, Nāṣir al-Dawla was dead and the new attack was carried out by the Saljūq army headed by Aṭsiz. It was most of all to mark this victory that the famous commemorative mosque of the *amīr al-juyūsh* was erected on the al-Muqaṭṭam²⁹ mountain overlooking Cairo, a building that is still widely known as the *Mashhad al-ḥuyūshī*.³⁰ This, to be sure, was also the victory that is the subject of Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen’s poem.

Due to a calculated combination of ruthless military oppression, efficient use of propaganda and methods of winning the hearts and minds of his subjects, his

²⁷ Yaacov Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt* [Arab History and Civilization, Studies and Texts] (Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 46–54.

²⁸ On the “Great Crisis” and Badr’s takeover with its long term implications, see, e.g., Leila S. Al-Imad, *The Fatimid Vizierate, 969–1172* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1990), pp. 96–109; Lev, *State and Society*, 46–7, 137; Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid, *Al-Dawla al-fāṭimiyya fi Miṣr, tafsīr gadīd* [second edition], (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya al-Lubnāniyya, 2000), pp. 146–7, 150; Paul E. Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 56–64; Halm, *Die Kalifen von Kairo*, 400–20; Brett, “Badr al-Gamālī and the Fatimid Renaissance”, 61–78, den Heijer, “Le vizir fatimide”, 91–3, 98–100.

²⁹ Note that the Arabic root *qtm* (“to cut off”) used in the name *al-Muqaṭṭam* can also be detected in the use of the Hebrew numeral 149) מנף) in line 150 in the poem, which may point to an additional, hidden meaning of “destruction”.

³⁰ Max Van Berchem, “Une mosquée du temps des Fatimites au Caire”, in *Mémoires présentées à l’Institut égyptien* 2 (1889): 605–19, pl. I–IV; Caroline Williams, “The Cult of Alid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo. Part I: The Mosque of al-Aqmar”, *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 37–52.

regime succeeded in coping with pro-ʿAbbāsid sentiments among the Sunnī population and at the same time actively managed the affairs of the Jewish and Christian communities.³¹ According to Mark Cohen, Badr al-Jamālī's centralising policies might even have been responsible for the institution of one single communal leader, the *ra'īs al-Yahūd*, for the Rabbanites, Karaites and Samaritans.³² If this suggestion, which was admittedly put forward with considerable hesitation, were to be substantiated with further evidence, it would combine eloquently with the much better documented evidence of Badr al-Jamālī's direct involvement in the affairs of the various Christian denominations. One interesting example of this is found in Mawhūb b. Maṣṣūr b. Mufarrij's contribution to the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, in which the *amīr al-juyūsh* is reported to have ordered the redistribution of certain churches in Cairo among the Armenian, Syrian and Coptic Christian communities.³³ Another aspect of the vizier's interference is his reported personal insistence on relocating the residence of the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria to the Cairo region, a move that in retrospect turned out to be a turning point in the history of the Coptic Church.³⁴

Returning to the poem and particularly to Jacob Mann's identification of Badr al-Jamālī as the "commander of the armies" mentioned in line 11, suffice it to recall that 60 years later, in 1980, Mark Cohen commented upon Badr al-Jamālī's victory against the Saljūqs and stated: "Upon his triumphal return to Cairo, the victor was greeted by various expressions of joy and gratitude, including the accolades of a Jewish judge in Fuṣṭāṭ." With this statement, Cohen implicitly confirmed Mann's identification of the "commander of the armies" as Badr al-Jamālī.³⁵ Later in his monograph, Cohen refers to this poem, writing:

By 1077, Solomon was already in Cairo-Fuṣṭāṭ, where in that year he penned the poem for which he is famous, celebrating the rout of the Saljūq invasion force and praising the caliph, his viceroy Badr al-Jamālī, and apparently also the brothers Judah and Mevorakh b. Sa'adya.³⁶

From our side, the only detail we should like to add to the identification of the "commander of the armies" as Badr al-Jamālī is that Solomon uses the Hebrew expression

³¹ The remarkable story of Badr al-Jamālī's "Fatimid reconquest" followed by his *Realpolitik* vis-à-vis the Sunnī population and the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, has been told and analysed many times over, from a variety of viewpoints. For the most recent studies, see the works by Brett, Lev and Halm and den Heijer cited above, as well as Johannes den Heijer, "Religion, Ethnicity and Gender under Fatimid Rule: Three Recent Publications and their Wider Research Context", *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 65/1–2 (2008): 38–72, esp. cols 45–7, with further references.

³² Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government*, 50–78. Cf. Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community*, 104–7; 339–40.

³³ Johannes den Heijer, "Considérations sur les communautés chrétiennes en Égypte fatimide: l'État et l'Église sous le vizirat de Badr al-Jamālī (1074–1094)", in *L'Égypte fatimide, son art et son histoire: Actes du colloque organisé à Paris les 28, 29 et 30 mai 1998*, ed. Marianne Barrucand (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999), pp. 569–78, esp. 574.

³⁴ This, at least, is what has been argued in Johannes den Heijer, "Le patriarcat copte d'Alexandrie à l'époque fatimide", in *Alexandrie Médiévale* 2, ed. Christian Décobert [Études Alexandrines, VIII] (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2002), pp. 83–97, esp. 86–7.

³⁵ Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government*, 64. In footnote 45 (p. 61), he had already qualified the poem as "contemporary Jewish laudes" to Badr al-Jamālī.

³⁶ Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government*, 109. The qualification of Solomon as "famous" is perhaps something of an overstatement here. For the question of the "two brothers", see the next section (2.3).

qeṣīm ṣeva'ōt, which Greenstone had translated as “captain of hosts”. This literal translation certainly has its merits, but our translation “commander of the armies” makes it all the more explicit that we are dealing here with a skilful literary rendering of the Arabic *amīr al-juyūsh*. On the one hand, the Hebrew expression efficiently translates the Arabic, but on the other, it may also be taken, as may the language of the whole poem, to reflect a scriptural connotation that seems befitting to the overall specifically Jewish religious atmosphere that the poet seeks to evoke for his readership or audience.

But the most significant point we would like to make here is the way in which Solomon’s poem illustrates the tremendous rise in the profile of Badr’s vizierate: in contrast to the emphasis on purely religious authority that the poet ascribes to the imam-caliph, al-Mustanṣir Billāh, he most elaborately expresses Badr al-Jamālī’s authority in terms of military clout and geopolitical preponderance. As we have seen, in line 11, after Badr al-Jamālī’s usual military title, Solomon adds the formula, “may He who dwells in heaven keep him alive”. Subsequently, in three relative clauses, Solomon eulogises Badr, the military vizier, as nothing less than the most powerful man on earth:

12. Who is chief over all chiefs, of all peoples and of all nations,
13. Whose light is like that of the sun, who is not ashamed like those who feel shame,
14. Whose sword is polished against all enemies and all adversaries.

Despite the indisputable originality of Solomon’s imagery and style, these lines are nevertheless quite reminiscent of certain expressions in the Arabic texts of the inscriptions or the *ṣijillāt* and may very well have been inspired by their general tendencies. In those texts, we encounter such formulae, concerning the vizier Badr: “And may [God] bless the Commander of the Faithful with the length of his life; may [God] prolong his power and exalt his word!”³⁷ Moreover, one of al-Mustanṣir’s letters to Sulayhid Yemen refers to the sword (which, incidentally, also appears in one of Badr’s titles, *sayf al-islām*, “Sword of Islam”) and the sun, two elements that we find in Solomon’s poem:

(...) Drawing the sword of state from its sheath (...) the Commander of the Faithful, whose hand was outstretched to God in prayer and supplication to preserve his life for the sake of his state (...). Know, in fact, that through his [Badr’s] services, God has caused the sun of the Fāṭimid state (...) to rise to the zenith in the heaven of power (...) ³⁸

But irrespective of these intertextual aspects, the historical implications of such hyperbolic language are tremendous in themselves. In calling the vizier “chief over all chiefs, of all peoples and of all nations (...)”, the poet diplomatically but

³⁷ This formula occurs in several of the inscriptions mentioned in den Heijer, “Le vizir fatimide”, 93–4, and in the forthcoming monograph by Johannes den Heijer entitled *Chants de triomphe de l’Empire fatimide: Étude sur les inscriptions monumentales du vizir Badr al-Ġamālī (1074–1094) en Égypte, en Syrie et en Palestine*. As Michael Brett points out, it is also used as “formulaic phrase employed with reference to Badr al-Jamālī in the letters of al-Mustanṣir to the Yemen (...)”, see Brett, “Badr al-Ġamālī and the Fatimid Renaissance”, 69. We owe our translation of this and the following formulae to Brett’s article.

³⁸ Brett, “Badr al-Ġamālī and the Fatimid Renaissance”, 70.

nevertheless quite clearly presents him as surpassing the caliph when it comes to political significance and magnificence.

In the lines that follow, the poet sings the praise of the Fāṭimid victory over the Saljūq and ʿAbbāsīd enemy, and once again, this victory is presented not only as God-given but also attributed in no uncertain terms to Badr:

15. God appointed him to destroy them, and he did indeed destroy them and devastated
16. Their palaces and their citadels, which they built on heights,
17. And he also cut off their heads, a righteous judgment against the guilty!

2.3 Jewish dignitaries?

The scholars mentioned in the introduction have argued that the poet, after singing the praise of Badr al-Jamālī, subsequently turns to Badr's entourage, and particularly to what may have been one of his (Jewish) advisers, giving him the honorific title "the glorious old man". In order to further assess this identification, let us take a fresh look at the passage in question.

18. May our God strengthen him, may He reinforce him forever!
19. And his servitors and all his servants, whose odour is fragrant,
20. And at their head, the glorious old man, distinguished in honours,
21. The faithful friend, like twin brothers;

Within the general outline of the poem's composition, it would seem that with the personal pronoun "him", *hū*, in line 18, Solomon continues to refer to Badr al-Jamālī, the "commander of the armies". Jacob Mann, in his interpretation of lines 20 and 21 as praising the two brothers and court-physicians, Judah and Mevorakh b. Sa'adya, identified the *zeqan ha-hōd*, "glorious old man", as Judah and *ha-'ahūv ha-ne'eman*, "the faithful friend", as Mevorakh. Mann even suggested that the poem itself might well be dedicated to these two dignitaries, since Solomon composed it in Hebrew and so must have intended to address it to Jews who could appreciate it in that language.³⁹

For Mark Cohen, Mann's interpretation was no longer a hypothesis but simply a fact as far as the first of the two brothers, Judah b. Sa'adya the physician, is concerned. According to Cohen, this physician "had poems composed in his honor", and the evidence adduced in a footnote includes the present poem as well as four other poems or poetic fragments.⁴⁰ Whether the other four poems are correctly described as written in honour of Judah b. Sa'adya is a question that is beyond the scope of the present study. If this proves to be the case, Cohen's statement about Judah b. Sa'adya can obviously be considered correct in general. For the poem under consideration here, however, this view seems questionable, especially in light of the fact that Joseph Yahalom has offered an entirely different identification of the *zeqan ha-hōd*, "glorious old man" (which he incidentally prefers to translate as "Glorious Elder"): according to Yahalom, this expression would refer to

³⁹ Mann, *The Jews in Egypt*, I: 208.

⁴⁰ Cohen, *Self-Government*, 165 and n. 21.

another court physician by the name of Abraham ha-Kohen ben Isaac ibn Furāt (fl. eleventh century).⁴¹

Without meaning to dismiss either of these identifications, and considering that the title *zeqan ha-hōd* or *hōd ha-zeqēnīm* may have been applied to other Jewish dignitaries of the period, we are nevertheless compelled to face one vexing problem, which lies in the expression “like twin brothers”. Particularly if we are to subscribe to Yahalom’s interpretation of the “Glorious Elder” as a reference to the court physician Abraham ha-Kohen ben Isaac ibn Furāt, i.e. to one Jewish dignitary only, the expression “the faithful friend” would certainly make sense, but the words “like twin brothers” would then be much more difficult to account for. In order to address this problem, let us point out, in the first place, that the various suggestions for the identification of the “glorious old man” as an adviser to the vizier and possibly a Jewish one – whether Judah b. Sa’adya or Abraham ha-Kohen ben Isaac ibn Furāt – are based on the assumption that *hū*, “him”, in line 18 does indeed refer to Badr, an assumption that seems in itself quite fair and legitimate. However, this is by no means the only possible way of reading the passage in question and it can in fact be challenged by one main structural objection. This is the fact that it presupposes that the first part of the laudatory poem is a perfectly neat, orderly and logical composition with regard to the hierarchy of the addressees: from God himself (lines 1–3), via the “House of ‘Alī” (line 4), down to the imam-caliph (lines 5–8) and his offspring (line 9) to the military vizier (lines 10–18), and subsequently to the latter’s assistants and servants (line 19), and most particularly to his main advisers (lines 20–21). Given the specific background of the poet, it would make perfect sense to presume that, amongst those main advisers, a Jewish dignitary would be the object of particular praise here, if we are to understand the sequence this way.

The likelihood of such an orderly and hierarchical structure, however, cannot be taken for granted. Since the whole passage starting with line 10, which introduces the “servants” of the caliph and then the commander of these “servants”, is directly linked to the caliph and his offspring, it also seems possible to discern a different, somewhat more obscure but far from incoherent structure in this part of the poem, and to read the passage starting in line 19 (“And his servitors and all his servants ...”) as one that brings us back to the same level as that of line 10, in other words, to the “servants” of the caliph.

An even more compelling issue is that after switching to “servants”, in lines 10 and 19, both passages, in their respective following lines, 11 and 20, continue with exactly the same opening word, *u-ve-rōshām* “and at their head”. To the contemporary reader or listener, this technique of repetition may very well have had the effect of evoking, in line 20 just as much as in line 11, the awe-inspiring authority of the all-powerful and victorious military vizier, Badr al-Jamālī.

At any rate, as stated before, the matter remains unsettled and we may actually have to opt for a solution that is quite similar to Greenstone’s initial interpretation. Possibly, the poem was not meant to be entirely systematic here, and with the suffixed personal pronoun *hū*, “him”, in line 18, Solomon may have intended to bring us back, somewhat abruptly, to the caliph, al-Mustanşir. And if we are to

⁴¹ Abraham ha-Kohen ben Isaac ibn Furāt was granted the Hebrew honorific title “Glory of the Elders” (*hōd ha-zeqēnīm*) by the *gaon* Daniel b. ‘Azarya; see Yahalom, “The Temple and the City in Liturgical Hebrew Poetry”, 289; Mann, *The Jews in Egypt*, I: 86; and Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt*, 171.

read these lines this way, the “glorious old man” who is at the “head” of “his servitors and all his servants” would turn out to be, once again, the military commander and vizier, Badr (even though the term is sometimes reserved for Jewish dignitaries as pointed out above).

If, then, the “glorious old man” is indeed taken to represent Badr, the “twin brothers” must be the caliph and the vizier, placed at the same level in a way that is quite compatible with the distribution of religious and military authorities between the two, as highlighted above. Allusions to this *de facto* equality, here expressed in the metaphor “like twin brothers”,⁴² and indeed Badr al-Jamālī’s preponderance over the caliph, are attested in other textual evidence as well. In the abovementioned monumental inscriptions, the term *fatā*, “servant”, which would seemingly suggest the vizier’s subordination to the caliph, is followed by an impressive series of titles and honorific formulae that clearly surmount those given to the caliph.⁴³

Whatever the right interpretation may be, it seems reasonably obvious that in the rest of this section, which extends until line 33, the poet extols the virtues of Badr al-Jamālī, the vizier, rather than of al-Mustanṣir, the imam-caliph, and he does so by simply repeating his earlier statements in different words.

3. Allusions to the circumstances of the war

The long section of lines 34–109 informs the reader about the circumstances and causes of the war, with a description of the enemy and their weaponry (lines 40–50): “who were a strange and cruel people, girded with embroidered garments, armed and officered – chiefs among the Emim ‘aggressors’ – and capped with helmets, black and red, with bow and spear and quivers full of arrows [...]”. Further scrutiny would be needed to point to parallels with other kinds of texts, but a few remarks can be made here. First of all, of the Saljūq commander, whom we know was Aṭsiz b. Uwaq, our poet says:

53. But when he (their chief) consulted the fortune-tellers, the diviners mocked him.
54. And they broke camp, and placed (men) in ambush,
55. And they were afraid, and also told their servants, “Let us depart from the boundary”!

In this last line, the poet hints at a certain reluctance to invade Egypt on the part of some of Aṭsiz’s advisors, and this episode is attested in al-Maqrīzī’s account of the failed invasion, from which the most relevant sentences run as follows:

⁴² In the discussion at the 20th CHESFAME, Lutz Richter-Bernburg (Tübingen), added the valuable observation that the metaphor of twin brothers is very prominent in Ismāʿīlī cosmology, and referred us to the introduction by Henry Corbin to Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Ḥikmatayn* (Teheran/Paris: Institut Franco-Iranien–Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1953).

⁴³ Gaston Wiet, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum. Première partie: Égypte. Tome deuxième: Égypte* [Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, LII] (Le Caire: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1930), p. 151; Irene A. Bierman, *Writing Signs: the Fatimid public text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 105; den Heijer, “Le vizir fatimide”, 98–100. Cf. also Brett’s observation that many of al-Mustanṣir’s letters (*siḡillāt*) to the Sulayhids in Yemen instruct the Ismāʿīlīs in Yemen “to mention his name with that of the Imam in the Friday prayer”, see Brett, “Badr al-Ġamālī and the Fatimid Renaissance”, 69.

Atsiz proceeded to the extremities of Egypt in Jumādā I, and Ibn Yaldakūsh advised him not to concern himself with Cairo but [only] to take possession of the Rīf. (...) Then Atsiz gathered his companions and consulted them. They differed in opinion about the matter, and one of them said: “Return, because you have stepped on the land of Egypt, but you have only 5,000 [troops], whereas the people [i.e. the enemy] are numerous, and the consequences of the affairs are unknown”.⁴⁴

Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction, both Moshe Gil and Yehoshua Frenkel have dealt with the period of Saljūq invasions of Palestine, but they have given a different interpretation of lines 61–2 of our poem, dealing with the Turcoman conquest of Jerusalem. These lines, which are open to a number of interpretations, read:

61. He also remembered what they had done to the people of Jerusalem,
62. That they had besieged them two years, twice.

Gil took this to mean “for four years” and argued that Jerusalem fell to the Saljūqs only in the summer of 1073 (contrary to the date usually offered in research, 1071). Frenkel, on the other hand, understood the text to mean “twice within two years” and claimed that there were two Saljūq conquests of Jerusalem, in 1071 and 1073.⁴⁵

Still in the same section, much emphasis is given to the cruelties committed by the Saljūqs during the conquest of Jerusalem (e.g. lines 74–80):

74. And they stand on the roads scheming to act like Cain,
75. And cut off the ears, and also amputate the nose,
76. And they steal the garments, leaving them standing naked,
77. And also roar like lions, and growl like young lions,
78. They do not resemble men, but they are like beasts,
79. And (like) prostitutes and adulterers, and inflame themselves with males,
80. They are bad and sinful, and spiteful like the Sodomites.

This passage also exemplifies the poet’s use (typical of Jewish poets) of biblical allusions and motifs from Arabic war poetry, such as likening the soldiers to lions.⁴⁶

4. The “martial nucleus” of the poem

After a description of the enemy’s advance, we turn to the “martial nucleus” of the poem in lines 110–139. This section contains all the thematic elements described

⁴⁴ For the account of the Saljūq campaign, see al-Maqrīzī, *Ittī‘āz al-Ḥunafā’ bi-akhbār al-a’imma al-fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafā’*, ed. Jamāl al-Shayyāl and Muḥammad Aḥmad, volumes I–III (Cairo, 1971–1976), III: 317–9. The passage quoted is edited on p. 317.

⁴⁵ See Gil, *A History of Palestine*, 410–411; *idem*, “The Scroll of Evyatar”, 43; Frenkel, “Saljūqs in Palestine”, 57–9. Cf. Greenstone, “The Turkoman Defeat at Cairo”, 150–1, who also assumed that the poem hinted at two Saljūq attacks on Jerusalem, in 1070/1 and 1076/7.

⁴⁶ This comparison may be related to similar imagery in *Faḍā’il al-Turk* treatises, as suggested by Yehoshua Frenkel (Jerusalem) in the CHESFAME discussion.

above, but Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen particularly stresses the divine intervention leading to the defeat of the enemy (lines 123–6):

123. God commanded that the enemies should be like the deaf and the dumb,
124. And he did not favour them, and He did not save them – the worshippers at high places,
125. And before He paid heed to their supplication, they were slain and dead,
126. And their heads were cut off, and their souls fled away.

The description of the defeated enemy that follows (lines 136–9) again contains typical Arabic motifs, such as the wild animals about to devour the corpses of the enemy:

136. And their corpses were cast to the wild beasts and animals,
137. And the remainder of their bodies, for maggots and worms,
138. And the rest they gathered up in large heaps of bones,
139. For summer and winter, for autumn and spring.

5. Conclusions

The poem ends with the customary praise of God (lines 140–6) and the colophon (lines 147–50) discussed before. To conclude this study, we should reiterate and elaborate the various issues of assessment and interpretation of the poem.

From the literary point of view, we must address the matter of its evaluation in comparison to the Andalusian poetic tradition and within the context of Hebrew literary activity in the Muslim East. Unlike the quantitative metre used by Andalusian-Jewish poets, Solomon ben Joseph employs a primitive metre with a fixed number of 12 syllables per line, somewhat comparable to the Arabic *hazaj* (Heb. *marnīn*) metre in the East. The poem features a simple but systematic rhyme ending in the Hebrew plural *-īm*, contains many new word forms and conjugations of verbs, and frequently uses conjunctions at the beginning of lines. The poet included his name in the colophon of the poem, but not in an alphabetical acrostic. Both Greenstone and Yahalom seem to agree that Solomon's poem cannot compare with that of Andalusian poets such as Samuel ha-Nagid, since, in the words of Yahalom, it is "weighed down by unstylised details of history in a manner that ill befits literary composition. But this is, perhaps, precisely the reason that historians will find the poem of such great interest."⁴⁷

Thus, to sum up this literary aspect of our presentation, one of the chief peculiarities of the poem is that it is one of the few Hebrew war poems reflecting actual military activity and that it shares many structural and thematic parallels with other poems belonging to this genre.

The other formal aspect we have tried to highlight is that of the poem's status as a eulogy, praising the caliph al-Mustaṣfir Billāh, and even more the military vizier, the *amīr al-juyūsh*, Badr al-Jamālī. In this respect, Mark Cohen has another interesting hypothesis. About the poet, the judge Solomon ha-Kohen, who at some point before 1077 must have migrated from Palestine to Egypt, Cohen says: "Perhaps,

⁴⁷ Yahalom, "The Temple and the City", 290–1.

like so many other Palestinians, he too fled to Egypt in the face of the Saljūqs in 1071, a fact that would make his triumphant poem of 1077 all the more poignant.⁴⁸ To us, the idea that Solomon would have sought refuge in Egypt as early as 1071 seems somewhat unlikely, given the complete lack of security in Egypt at that time, in the middle of the “Great Crisis” and the Sunnī uprising and civil war: prospects in Egypt were certainly not very attractive at that time and, moreover, traveling was notoriously dangerous. But perhaps Solomon moved to Egypt in or shortly after 1074, when Badr al-Jamālī had put an end to the civil war and restored the Fāṭimid order.

This question of dating, however, is only a detail. For the rest, we can totally agree with Cohen that Solomon, as a recent immigrant to Cairo and coming from Jerusalem, clearly intended to express his allegiance, and the allegiance of his Jewish community for that matter, not only to the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī caliphate in which he had found a safe haven from the Saljūqs who had driven him from his home, but most particularly in the *amīr al-juyūsh*, or in his terms, *qeshm ševaʾ ōt*, Badr al-Jamālī, who had made this all possible. In this respect, it might be significant that Solomon composed the poem the very year he was appointed judge in Fustāt,⁴⁹ an appointment that he most probably also owed to Badr.

While this overall trend in the poem is clear, we must still ask ourselves some final questions about its *Sitz im Leben* and purpose, and most of all about the fact that it was written in Hebrew and preserved in only one witness, a single Genizah document. In such circumstances, one cannot *a priori* rule out the possibility that the author wrote it simply for his own use, without the intention of making it public in any particular manner. Although there is no specific evidence against such a scenario, we nevertheless do not consider it to be very likely, given Solomon ha-Kohen’s social status and connections. We would rather be inclined to believe that he wrote the poem to be read and, most of all, to be heard.⁵⁰ This, however, entails the further question of who his audience may have been.

The most obvious answer to this question is, of course, that this audience was the Jewish community of Fustāt. Another possibility, however, is that he intended to reach out to Jewish communities elsewhere in the Fāṭimid Empire.⁵¹ One complicating factor is that one cannot easily assess the extent to which all the members of such communities at that time were comfortable with literary Hebrew, beyond texts belonging to the strictly religious domain. Although the poem contains numerous references to such texts, the extensive use of Judeo-Arabic in this period and environment seriously raises the question of whether it would have had the

⁴⁸ Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government*, 109.

⁴⁹ In reminding us of this remarkable issue of chronology, Marina Rustow has suggested that Solomon might even have written his poem as a way of emphasising his ties to the regime against the nascent authority of the *raʾīs al-yahūd* (personal communication to the authors).

⁵⁰ As circumstantial evidence, we should like to point to Marina Rustow’s important remark (personal communication to the authors) that many of the reused decree fragments in the Genizah were intended as private copies of texts, which were nevertheless meant to be read aloud or used in the public, liturgical and sermonic setting of the synagogue. Further scrutiny of the *mise-en-page* and *mise-en-texte* might point to a similar function of the present poem.

⁵¹ During the discussion following the presentation of our paper at CHESFAME 2011, Miriam Frenkel (Jerusalem) confirmed our impression that the poem is likely to have been addressed to the Fāṭimid Jewish communities at large, with the propagandistic aim of accepting Ismāʿīlī rule as preordained by a divine cosmological plan, a theme that should be further investigated in comparable Jewish literature of the period.

desired impact on its audience without some sort of Arabic translation or commentary.⁵²

And if we allow ourselves to speculate this far, and accept the possibility that such an Arabic version of the poem may once have existed, a further step in the hypothesis would be the suggestion that Solomon ha-Kohen composed this poem not only for his own Jewish community, but ultimately, for the vizier Badr al-Jamālī himself, and that he might even have had the opportunity to recite it before the vizier at his palace, and perhaps in that of the imam-caliph as well, in the way of court poets. In support of this idea, it is interesting that another Genizah document contains a letter by someone who may well have been our poet's great-grandfather, Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen, part of which is a request for a decree of investiture from al-Ẓāhir (r. 411–427/1021–1036), expressed in a Hebrew style that may be taken as intended to approximate to Arabic rhymed prose (*saḡ*). In this document, one would be justified in seeing a precedent for a formal Hebrew composition that was meant to be translated into a formal Arabic register for presentation at the palace.⁵³

From a methodological point of view, in the absence of hard evidence, we must insist on the necessity of exploring all possible options while remaining aware of the risks involved in speculation. The fact of the matter is that we are reduced to such speculation because we lack information about the precise details of Solomon's purpose and intentions with regard to his poem. And even though in other aspects too, our commentary may have resulted in more questions than answers, we hope that our analysis has nevertheless shed some new light on the poem.

Our characterisation of the poem as belonging to “martial poetry” represents a new approach to its literary status and can be taken as a point of departure for further enquiry. As for its status as a eulogy, we have demonstrated how it can be

⁵² In the same discussion, Niall Christie (Vancouver) suggested that Solomon, whose first spoken language was obviously Arabic, might even have drafted his poem in that language. This seems far from unlikely, since echoes can be detected of Arabic martial poems such as Abū Tammām's famous ode on the caliph al-Mu'taṣim's victory at Amorium. See Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām (Cairo, 1951–1957), 3 volumes, I: 45–79, and a poem by the Andalusian al-Liṣṣ in praise of 'Abd al-Mu'min on the Rock of Gibraltar (in Ibn Sa'īd, *El Libro de las Banderas de los Campeones*, ed. and Spanish trans. Emilio García Gómez [Madrid, 1942], p. 19; trans. Arthur J. Arberry, *An Anthology of Moorish Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 19; and [a much better trans.]: “The Lamp of the Almohads”, in Michael Brett, *Ibn Khaldun and the Medieval Maghrib* (London: Ashgate, 1999), Vol. VI:13. We owe these observations to Matthew Gordon (Miami) and Michael Brett (London, with the references). That at least some cultivated Egyptian Jews in the Fāṭimid period were familiar with Classical Arabic poetry in general was corroborated, also at the 20th CHESFAME in Ghent, by Miriam Frenkel (Jerusalem) in her paper, “Objects as Text: A Critical Reading in Fatimid Material Culture”, based on a close reading of a Genizah document that lists a number of objects in an inventory, including a codex containing Arabic poetry. On the other hand, Adel Sidarus (Lisbon/Evora) reminded us of a parallel with a Hebrew poem by Abraham ibn Ezra, see Michel Garel, “Guerre des échecs, échec à la guerre: de la ruse d'Ibn Ammār à la muse d'Ibn Ezra”, in J. P. Monferrer Sala and S. Torallas Tovar, eds., *Cultures in Contact. Transfer of Knowledge in the Mediterranean Context. Selected Papers*, Córdoba 2013, pp. 141–50, and of some Qur'anic reminiscences that deserve further scrutiny.

⁵³ The document in question is T-S 24.43, published by Shlomo D. Goitein, “New Sources on the Palestinian Gaonate”, in *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Saul Lieberman and Arthur Hyman (Jerusalem and New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1974), 3 volumes, I: 503–37. Cf. Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community*, 91–3, 171–2. Once again, we owe this important corroboration of our interpretation, as well as the references, to Marina Rustow.

compared with other types of sources that also contain elements of praise or propaganda. In varying degrees, this applies to monumental epigraphy or the documents emanating from the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī bureaucracy itself, i.e., from the chancellery (*dīwān al-inshāʿ*) or from the mission (*daʿwa*) department, to Arabic chronicles and other historiography conserved and transmitted by much later authors such as Ibn Muyassar and al-Maqrīzī, or, again, to the contemporary witness of the Coptic biographer of patriarchs, Mawhūb b. Maṣṣūr b. Mufarrij.

Seen in this light, Solomon's poem on al-Mustanṣir and most of all on Badr al-Jamālī is truly amazing, if only for its very existence. After all, there are not many rulers in the medieval Middle East for whom declarations of praise were written or transmitted by Shīʿite Ismāʿīlīs, and by Sunnīs, as well as by at least one influential Coptic notable and by a prominent member of the Jewish community.

In brief, we hope to have demonstrated, by adding our comments to those of our predecessors, that this poem by Solomon ha-Kohen, while admittedly not meeting the literary standards of similar Hebrew or Arabic poetry, is nevertheless of a cultural relevance that far exceeds the dimension of its intriguing references to historical personalities and events. Seen in this light, Solomon's poem certainly has a rightful place among what Gaston Wiet has called the "chants de triomphe" on the Fāṭimid victory of Badr al-Jamālī, first over the Sunnī rebels led by Nāṣir al-Dawla b. Ḥamdān and then over Aṭsiz and his Saljūq invaders.⁵⁴

6. The poem

יי זדין עמים / יי לארץ זמים
 הוא דין אלמנות / והוא אבי התומים
 הראית נפלאות אל / אשר עשה וגם התמים
 וגם הציל לבית עלי / נאות קדר התמים
 המלך הגדול אשר / הגיד תעלומים
 אלמסתצר באללה / מעד הו אבא תמים
 זחי לעד ברוב הטוב / וגם יהיה לקיומים
 הפהן בן פהנים / הטהורים השלימים
 וגם בניו הקמיהים / לכהונה בני אומים
 וגם עבדיו האוהבים / בנפשותם לחומים
 ובראשם קצין צבאות / זחיהו דר מעונים
 אשר הוא ראש לכל ראשים / בכל גוים וכל אמים
 אשר אורו כאור שמש / לא יבוש בנכלמים
 אשר חרבו מרוסה על / כל אויבים וכל קמים
 לתכליתם זמנו אל / וגם פלם וגם השמים
 לטירותם וארמנותם / אשר בנום עלי רמים
 וגם חתך ראשיהם / דין צדק באשמים
 ישגבהו אלהינו / ואזילהו לעולמים
 ושמשינו וכל עבדיו / אשר ריחם מבושמים
 ובראשם זקן ההוד / ונהקבוד בסיומים
 האהוב הנאמן / כמו אחים מותאמים
 ישמרהו צורינו / לעזרהו בכל פנים

⁵⁴ Wiet's expression is borrowed in the title of Johannes den Heijer, *Chants de triomphe de l'Empire fatimide. Étude sur les inscriptions monumentales du vizir Badr al-Gamālī (1074-1094) en Égypte, en Syrie et en Palestine* (forthcoming).

- יַעֲרֹב לְךָ שָׁרִינוּ / סָגוּל עִם רֹאשׁ לְכָל עַמִּים
 קָחָה מִנְחָה וּמִנוּחָה / רוֹב בְּרָכוֹת וְרוֹב שְׁלוֹמִים
 25 וְתֵן קִידָה מִזִּידָה / בְּרוֹב חֵידָה וְהַגְיוֹנִים
 לְאֵל עֶזְרָה וְגַם נֶצֶר / וְהַכְחִיד צָר וְגַם הַהֲמִים
 וְגַם הַיִּשְׁיֵשׁ בְּנֵי אֵל חַי / הַיִּשְׁרִים הַתְּמִימִים
 אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ רוֹב צְדָקוֹת / וּמִתְעַנִּים וְגַם צָמִים
 וְשׂוֹאֲלִים כָּל שְׁבוּעִים / וְגַם לִילוֹת וְגַם יָמִים
 30 לְאֵל הַחַי וְהַשְׁדִּי / הַצּוֹר פָּעֵלוּ תַמִּים
 וְהַעֲתִירָם לְהַסְתִּירָם / וְגַם עָנַם מִמְרוֹמִים
 בְּלֹא מִנְחָה וְלֹא קָרְבָן / וְלֹא קִטְרֶת וְלֹא סָמִים
 וְלֹא נְבוּאָה וְלֹא אוֹרִים / וְלֹא תוֹמִים וְלֹא חֲלוּמִים
 וְגַם הַצִּיב לְמַכְמוֹרֶת / וְגַם הֵימִיט לְפַעֲמִים
 35 וְגַם פִּתְּהָ לְלֵב אוֹיֵב / לְהַקְרִיבוֹ אֶל תַּחֲוִמִּים
 וַיַּעֲבְרוּ הַנְּהָרוֹת / וְגַם דָּרְכוּ הָאֲגָמִים
 וַיִּהְיוּ כְּאוֹזִיבִים / כְּנוֹטָרִים וְנוֹקְמִים
 וַיִּכְנְסוּ בְּמוֹ שַׁפְרִיר / בְּזֶזּוֹ וְגַם שְׁפוֹךְ דָּמִים
 וְגַם גָּלוּ הָעֲרִיּוֹת / וְגַם פָּתְחוּ הָאֲסָמִים
 40 וְהֵם עִם זֶר מִתְאַכֶּזֶר / וְגַם נֶאֱזָר בְּנִרְקָמִים
 מְחוּמָּשִׁים מְשׁוֹלְשִׁים / וְגַם רֹאשִׁים לְאֲמִים
 וְגַם לוֹבָשִׁים קוֹבְעוֹת / כֶּם שְׁחוּרִים וְאֲדוּמִים
 וְגַם קִשְׁת וְגַם כִּידוֹן / בְּנוֹת אֲשֶׁפָה בְּפִנְיָמִים
 וַיַּצְעֲקוּ כְּמוֹ פִילִים / וַיִּנְהֲמוּ כְּהֵמוֹת יָמִים
 45 לְהַרְעִידֵם לְהַפְחִידֵם / אֲשֶׁר לְמוֹלֵם מִתְקוּמָמִים
 וַיִּתְּגוֹדְדוּ כְּגִלִּי זֵם / לְשׁוֹב אַחֲזֹר מַעֲרִימִים
 וְלִלְשׁוֹנָם מְלַעֲגִים / בְּמוֹ מַרְמָה מִתְרַמִּים
 מַעֲרֹבְבִים אֲרַמְנִיִּים / וְעַרְבֵיאִים וְאֲדוּמִים
 וַיּוֹנוּם וְאֲשַׁכְּנִזִּים / וְרִיפְתִּים וְתוֹגֶרֶם
 50 וְגַם רָעִים וְחֹטְאִים / כְּשׂוֹטִים לֹא כְּחֲלוּמִים
 וַיִּשְׁאוּ הָעָרִים / וְגַם הָיוּ לְשׁוּמִימִים
 וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ בְּלִבּוֹתָם / וְגַם לְנַחֹל כְּמִדּוּמִים
 וְנִמְלֵךְ הוּא בְּמִנְחָשִׁים / זֶהְתְּלוּ בּוֹ הַקּוֹסְמִים
 וּמִחְנוֹתָם מְסִיעִים / וּלְמַאֲרֵב הֵם שָׁמִים
 55 וְהֵם פּוֹחֲדִים וְגַם אוֹמְרִים / לְעִבְדֵיהֶם נִתְּחָמִים
 וְנִכְשְׁלוּ וְנִחְשְׁלוּ / וַעֲיִגְיָהֶם נַעֲצָמִים
 וְנִלְכְּדוּ בְּשַׁחֲיוֹת / בְּנֵי זִמּוֹת וְגַם זָמִים
 וְזָכַר אֵל עֲוֹנוֹתָם / וְחֹטְאוֹתָם הַחֲתוּמִים
 וְרַעוּתָם אֵלֵי כָל אִישׁ / וְצוֹרְרִים כָּל הַזְּקוּמִים
 60 וְהַפִּילָם וְהַשְׁפִּילָם / וְדִיכְדָךְ כֶּם דּוּמִימִים
 וְגַם זָכַר עֲשׂוֹתָם עִם / אֲנָשֵׁי הַירוּשָׁלַיִם
 אֲשֶׁר הִצְרוּ לָהֶם / שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים שְׁנֵי פַעַמִּים
 וְגַם שָׁרְפוּ הַגְּדִישִׁים / וְהַחְרִיבוּ הַמְּקוּמִים
 וַיִּקְצְצוּ הָעֲצִים / וַיִּרְמְסוּ הַכְּרָמִים
 65 וַיִּסּוּבְּבוּ אֶת הָעִיר / עַל הַהָרִים הַרְמִים
 וְהַחְרִיבוּ הַקְּבָרִים / וְהַשְׁלִיכוּ הָעֲצָמִים
 וְגַם בָּנוּ אֲרַמּוֹנִים / לְחִסּוֹת בָּהֶם מִחֲמִים
 וְהַצִּיבוּ מִזְבֵּחַ / הָרוֹג עָלָיו הַזְּעוּמִים
 וְהָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׁים / רוֹכְבִים עָלֵי הַחוּמִים
 70 צוֹעֲקִים אֶל אֵל אֱלִים / לְשֹׁכֵךְ רוֹב הַחֲמִים
 עוֹמְדִים כָּל הַלִּילָה / לְהִנְסֶה לַתְּנוּמִים

- וְהָאוֹיְבִים מִחֲרִיבִים / וּמַעֲרִיבִים וּמִשְׁכִּימִים
וַיִּרְעוּ הָאֲרָצוֹת / וַיִּחְשְׁפוּ הָאֲדָמִים
וְהֵם עֹמְדִים עַל דְּרָכִים / עֲשׂוֹת פֶּקֶן זִמְמִים
וְחֹתְכִים הָאֲזֻנִּים / וְגַם הָאֶף מְשִׁלִּימִים 75
וַיִּשְׁלְלוּ הַמִּלְבוּשִׁים / לְהִצִּיגֵם עִירֻמִּים
וְגַם יִשְׁאֲגוּ פְּאֲרֵיֹת / וְכִכְפִּירִים נִהְמִים
וְלֹא יִדְמוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם / וּלְחִיּוֹת הֵם דּוֹמִים
וְגַם זִנּוֹת וְגַם זֹנִים / וּבִזְכָּרִים נִחְמִים
וְגַם רָעִים וְחֹטְאִים / וּמִכְעִיסִים פְּסֻדוֹמִים 80
וַיְרוֹשְׁשׁוּ בְּנֵי טוֹבִים / וַהֲרַעִיבוּ לְמוֹנְעִמִים
וַיִּצְאוּ כָּל בְּנֵי הָעִיר / וּבִשְׂדֵה הֵם הוֹמִים
וְגַם עוֹטִים עַל שָׁפֶם / מִכְּאֵב דּוֹמִימִים
וְלֹא רִיחָמוּ אֲלֻמְנוֹת / וְלֹא חָסוּ עַל תּוֹמִים 85
וְיָמָּה נַעֲשׂוּ וְאֵן יִחָסוּ / וְחֹטְאוֹתֵם נִרְשָׁמִים
וְשִׁרְיָהֶם הֵם הִתְעוּם / וְרֹאשֵׁיהֶם הִתְכַּמִּים
סוֹרְרִים הֵם וְגִבִּים / וְלִהְרַע מְחוֹכְמִים
וְתַעֲלוּלִים בָּם מוֹשְׁלִים / לְהִנְהִיגֵם לְבִלּוֹמִים
וְקִינָא אֶל לְמַקְדָּשׁ אֵל / וַיִּזְרַם נִזְרָמִים
עַל רוּעַ מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם / גְּלוּיּוֹת גַּם נַעֲלָמִים 90
וַיִּשְׁנוּ דְּתוֹת אֵל / וַיִּשְׁנוּ הַכֶּתֶּמִּים
וּמִרְצָחִים וּמִרְכִּילִים / וּמַגִּיעִים דָּם בְּדָמִים
וְחֹטְאִים הַחֲדָשִׁים / נִתּוֹסְפוּ עַל קְדוּמִים
בְּאֵר שַׁחַת לְהוֹרִידֵם / בְּתוֹךְ עוֹמְקֵי הַתְּהוֹמִים
זֶאֱבָדָם יִמְחָה זָכָרָם / וְלֹא יֵרָאוּ בְּנֵעִימִים 95
תִּהְיֶה עֲלֵיהֶם יוֹקֶדֶת / עִם גִּחְלֵי הֶרְתֵּמִים
עוֹנֹתָם אִם נִסְפָּר / תִּהְיֶה בּוֹשָׁה וְכִלְמִים
מִחֲמַסָּם כַּעַס אֵל / וְגַם שְׁלַח לְנִקְמָם
וּבֹא יִחְרִיב עוֹלָמוֹ / בְּרוֹב הָאֶף וּבִזְעָמִים
וְגַם מִנֵּעַ הַרְבִּיבִים / וְגַם טָלִים וּגְשָׁמִים 100
וְגַם חֲרָבוֹ הַעֲזִינּוֹת / וְלֹא רוּו הַתִּלְמִים
וְגַם הָיוּ פְּסֻדוֹמִים / וְלַעֲמֹדָה הֵם נִדְמִים
אֲזִי הַגִּבִּיר לְאוֹיֵב / לְהַכְחִידֵם בְּחֻרְמִים
וְאֲשׁוּרִים וּצְפוֹנִים / הוֹבִילֵם עַל הָלוֹמִים
וּבֹא הִצַּר עָלֵי מִבְּצָר / בְּקוֹל הַמוֹלָה וּבִרְעָמִים 105
בְּרוֹב מַחֲלוֹת וּבִדְגָלִים / כְּמוֹ קֶרֶן הָרָאִימִים
וְנִכְנַס צָר אֵלֵי אוֹצָר / וְגַם פֶּתַח לְסִתּוֹמִים
וְהִלֵּךְ צָר לְדַמְשֶׁק / בְּמִזֵּל טוֹב וּבִרְנָנִים
לְכֻדָּה גַּם יֵשֵׁב בָּהּ / כְּמוֹת מֵאֲתִים זִמִּים
וְדָמוּ מִלוֹךְ לְמוֹ פֶּסְטָאט / וַעֲיִנֵּיהֶם נִשְׁתֵּמִים 110
וּבֹא וְרָץ אֵל עִיר הַמְּלוּכָה / הַסְּכוּכָה בְּעִנְנִים
הַיְדוּעָה כְּמוֹ קֶאֱהֶרָה / לְכָל גּוֹיִים וְכָל אַמִּים
וַיֵּץ מִחֲנָה לְעִזּוּרִים / וּבָם הָרָאֵשׁ לְמַחְכִּימִים
וְצָג דְּגָלִים כְּעַמּוּדִים / מִבְּנֵי כּוֹשׁ בְּנֵי חָמִים
וּבֹא הָאִישׁ בְּרוֹב חִימוֹת / רוֹב אֵימוֹת וְהָאִימִים 115
וְעַרְבִיאִים וְהַגְּרִיאִים / מִשְׁמָאִילִים וּמִזִּמְנִים
וּבֹא אוֹיֵב בְּרוֹב גָּאוֹן / לְבָלוּעַ בְּעֶצְמִים
צוּר הַפִּיר עֲצַת גּוֹיִם / הִנֵּיא מִחֻשְׁבוֹת עַמִּים
וְהַמִּזֵּל אֲזִי שָׁפֵל / בְּנוֹת עֵישׁ וְגַם כִּימִים

- 120 וּנְצָחוּם עֲדַת עָלִי / עֲזָרִי נִין זְמַנִּים
וְעָקְוּ בְנֵי אֲבֹתָם / וְיִשְׁ[מַעַל הַרְחוּמִים
לְמִכָּה מְלָכִים גְּדוֹלִים / וְיִהְיוּ מְלָכִים עֲצוּמִים
וְצֹנָה אֵל הָיוּ אוֹיְבִים / כְּמוֹ חֲרָשִׁים וְכֹאֲלֵמִים
וְלֹא רָצָם וְלֹא חָלְצָם / בְּנֵי כְמוֹת וְגַם בְּמִים
125 וְעַד שָׁעָה בְּפִגְעָה / הָיוּ חֲלָלִים גַּם [רַד] וּמִים
וְנִגְזְרוּ רֹאשֵׁיהֶם / וְגַם עָפוּ הַנְּשָׁמִים
וּמִי הִנֵּה וּמִי יִהְיֶה / יִנָּאִים זֹאת הַנְּאוּמִים
וּבְזָזוּם וּשְׁלָלוּם / וַיִּירָשׁוּם בְּכִרְסוּמִים בְּכִרְסוּמִים
וְגַם כֹּאֵו הָרָאשִׁים / בְּדוֹדָאִים עַל שְׂכָמִים
130 פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ מִצְאוֹי הַחֵן / וְעוֹז מֶלֶךְ בְּנִיתוֹנִים
וְגַם צֹנָה לְשִׁיבּוֹרֶם / וְקִיצוּצָם בְּקִרְדוּמִים
וּשְׁלָחָם לְמִדְיָנוֹת / לְרִפְאָ לֵב הַעֲגוּמִים
אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לְשִׁכּוֹרִים / וְרוּחוֹתָם נִפְעָמִים
יֵשׁ מֵהֶם עַל תּוֹכָנָם / וַיֵּשׁ מֵהֶם נִפְצָמִים
135 וְפֹם מִמֶּלֶךְ רַבְרָבִנִּים / הִנֵּה לְאַבְנֵי דוּמִים
וְנִבְלָתָם מוֹשְׁלָתָ / לְחִיּוֹת וְלִבְהֵמִים
וְהַנְּשָׂאָר בְּגִוּיוֹתָם / לְתוֹלְעוֹת וְגַם רִמִּים
וְגַם יִתְרָם הַצְּבִירוֹם / חֲמָרִים חֲמָרִים עֲצָמִים
לְקִיץ וְלַחֲוֹרָף / וְלִסְתָּוִיִּים וְלַחֲמִים
140 וְזֶה מַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּנְסָה / הַמְּכַסֶּה בְּרֹב רַחֲמִים
עָשׂוּ צְדָקוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת / וּבִקְשׁוּ אֵל בְּרָנִים
אֶבֶן מֵאֶסוּ הַבּוֹנִים / הִוְתָּה לְרֹאשׁ הַפְּנִים
בּוֹא זְבוֹא בְּרִנָּה / כִּי נִרְצוּ מֵאֲלֵמִים אֲלֵמִים
תִּזְכּוּ לְבָנִין בֵּית / וּדְבִירִים וְאוֹלָמִים
145 גַּם הַטָּף וְהַנְּשִׁים / וְהַבְּנוֹת וְהַבְּנִים
כִּי יֵשׁ דְּבַר יִי / וְכָל מַעֲשָׂיו בְּאֵמוּנִים
יוֹם שְׁנֵי אַרְבַּע נִשְׁאָרוּ / לְחֹדֶשׁ שָׁכַט וּבִשְׁנֵים
שְׁנֵי תִתְּלוּ לְצִירָה / וְלַחֲוֹרָבִן מִשְׁטִימִים
שְׁלָמָה הוּא הַכֹּהֵן / בֶּן הַדּוֹסָף נִין גְּאוּנִים
150 וְאִם תִּמְנָה מִנָּה קִטְמ / זְקָרָה הִיא מִפְּנִינִים

7. Translation

- The LORD judges nations; the LORD, for all times;
He is the Protector of widows, and He is the Father of orphans.
Have you seen the marvels of God, who has created and perfected?
He also saved for the house of ‘Alī, the perfect oases of Qēdār –
- 5 The great king who tells secrets,
Al-Mustanṣir Billāh, Ma‘add, who is the father of Tamīm,
May he live forever in abundance of good, may he be established eternally,
The priest, son of priests, the pure, the perfect –
And also his sons, who yearn for the priesthood, the sons of nations –
- 10 And also his servants, who love to fight at [the risk of] their lives,
And at their head, the commander of the armies – may He who dwells in heaven
keep him alive –
Who is chief over all chiefs, of all peoples and of all nations,

- Whose light is like that of the sun, who is not ashamed like those who feel shame,
 Whose sword is polished against all enemies and all adversaries;
 15 God appointed him to destroy them, and he did indeed destroy them and devastated
 Their palaces and their citadels, which they built on heights,
 And he also cut off their heads, a righteous judgment against the guilty!
 May our God strengthen him, may He reinforce him forever!
 And his servitors and all his servants, whose odour is fragrant,
 20 And at their head, the glorious old man, distinguished in honours,
 The faithful friend, like twin brothers;
 May our Rock protect him, help him at every turn!
 May it please you, our master, beloved of the people, head of all nations,
 Accept tribute and repose, many blessings and plenty of greetings.
 25 And give thanks from your soul, with much thought and devotion,
 To God who helped and protected, who destroyed the enemy and also threw
 [them] into panic,
 Who made rejoice the sons of the living God, the righteous, the perfect ones,
 Who did much charity, and afflicted themselves and also fasted,
 And prayed for weeks, both day and night,
 30 To the living God, the Almighty, the Rock, whose deeds are perfect.
 And He granted their prayers for protection, and answered them from the heavens,
 [Although they came] without offering, without sacrifice, without incense,
 without perfumes,
 Without prophecy, without Urim, without Thummim, without dreams,
 And He ensnared [the enemy] and occasionally overthrew them,
 35 And He also enticed the enemy to bring them near to the boundary.
 And they crossed the rivers, and marched through the reed pools,
 And they were like enemies, like those who bear a grudge and are revengeful,
 And they entered Fustât, plundered and also shed blood,
 And they ransacked the cities and discovered the store-houses;
 40 They were a strange and cruel people, girded with embroidered garments,
 Armed and officered – chiefs among the Emim “agressors” –
 And capped with helmets, black and red,
 With bow and spear and quivers full of arrows;
 And they trumpet like elephants, and roar as the roaring ocean,
 45 To terrify, to frighten those who rise up against them,
 Press forward like the waves of the sea, they cunningly devise their retreat,
 And they stammer with their tongues, and try to deceive with craftiness;
 They are mingled of Armenians, Arabs, and Christians [lit. “Edomites”
 Byzantines?],
 Greeks and Germans [lit. “Ashkenazim”], Paphlogonians [Berbers?] and
 Turks;
 50 And they are wicked men and sinners, madmen, not sane,
 And they ruined the cities, which were made desolate
 And they rejoiced in their hearts, imagining that they would inherit.
 But when [their chief] consulted the fortune-tellers, the diviners mocked him.
 And they broke camp, and placed [men] in ambush,

- 55 And they were afraid, and also told their servants, "Let us depart from the boundary"!
 And they stumbled and straggled, and their eyes were shut,
 And they were caught in the traps – the sons of adultery.
 And God remembered their iniquities and their sins that are sealed,
 And their evil deeds against all men, how they oppressed all creatures.
- 60 And He overthrew them and humiliated them and crushed those among them that did not flee.
 He also remembered what they had done to the people of Jerusalem,
 That they had besieged them two years, twice,
 And burned the heaped corn and destroyed the places,
 And cut down the trees and trampled upon the vineyards,
- 65 And surrounded the city upon the high mountains,
 And despoiled the graves and threw out the bones,
 And also built palaces, to seek refuge from the heat,
 And erected an altar to slay upon it the abominations;
 And the men and the women ride upon the walls,
- 70 Crying unto the God of gods, to calm the great anger,
 Standing the whole night, banishing sleep,
 While the enemies destroy, evening and morning,
 And they break down the earth, and lay bare the ground,
 And they stand on the roads scheming to act like Cain,
- 75 And cut off the ears, and also amputate the nose,
 And they steal the garments, leaving them standing naked,
 And also roar like lions, and growl like young lions,
 They do not resemble men, but they are like beasts,
 And also [like] prostitutes and adulterers, and inflame themselves with males,
- 80 They are bad and sinful, and spiteful like the Sodomites.
 And they impoverished the sons of good [families], and starved the delicately bred.
 And all the inhabitants of the city went out and moaned in the field,
 And also covered their upper lips, wailing due to their pain,
 But they had no mercy on widows, and did not spare orphans.
- 85 What should they do, where should they seek refuge, since their sins are recorded?
 Their princes led them astray, their chiefs, the wise ones;
 They are rogues and thieves, they are clever at doing wrong;
 Boys rule over them, leading them by putting a curb on them.
 But God was zealous on behalf of His sanctuary, and scattered them sweeping them away.
- 90 Because of their evil deeds, the revealed and also the hidden:
 They changed the laws of God, they repeated sins,
 They are murderers and slanderers, cause blood[shed] to follow upon blood[shed],
 And new sins were added to earlier ones,
 To lower them to the pit of destruction, into depths of the deep;
- 95 He will destroy them, He will blot out their memory, and they shall not see pleasant things,
 A burning shall be upon them, as well as hot coals of broom-wood:
 Should we [attempt to] count their sins, it would be a shame and a disgrace.

- Because of their violence, God was vexed and also sent vengeance,
 And He came, destroyed His world, with much anger and fury,
 100 And He also withheld the showers, also dew and rain,
 The springs were dried up and the furrows were not watered.
 They were like Sodomites, they resembled [the people of] Gomorrah.
 Then He strengthened the enemy, [in order] to destroy them [later] with utter
 destruction.
 And the Assyrians and the Northerners, He led them for the purpose of striking
 them.
- 105 And the enemy came to the fortress, with a noise of roaring and of thunder,
 With much dancing and with banners, like the horns of the wild oxen.
 And the enemy entered the treasury, and also opened the hidden places
 And the enemy went to Damascus, with a lucky star and with songs,
 And they captured it and dwelt therein, for about two hundred days.
- 110 And they imagined reigning in Fustāt, but their eyes were blinded.
 And they came in haste to the royal city, which is protected by clouds,
 And which is known as Cairo, to all peoples and all nations.
 And there came forth the camp of the saved ones, and among them was the
 chief of the wise,
 And they placed flags like columns, for the sons of Kush, the sons of Ham.
- 115 And the chief came with great anger and with great terror,
 And Arabians and Hagarites, to the left and to the right.
 And the enemy came with much arrogance, to swallow up the nations.
 But the Rock brought to naught the advice of nations, He made of no effect the
 devices of peoples.
 And then their star declined, the daughters of Ursa Major and Pleiades,
- 120 And the troops of 'Alī conquered them – the saved, the descendants of
 Zamzummim;
 The sons of the revered Abraham and Ishmael cried
 To Him who strikes down great kings and slays mighty kings.
 And God commanded that the enemies should be like the deaf and the dumb,
 And he did not favour them, and He did not save them – the worshippers at
 high places,
- 125 And before He paid heed to their supplication, they were slain and dead,
 And their heads were cut off, and their souls fled away.
 He who was and He who will be [God] said these words.
 And they robbed them and spoiled them, and dispossessed them by cutting
 them off.
 And their chiefs came, with baskets upon their shoulders,
- 130 Seeking the accustomed favour of the king, and a happy fate by their
 submission,
 But he commanded to crush them and to cut them up with axes,
 And he sent them to the provinces to heal the sorrowful hearts
 [Of those] who were like drunken men, whose spirits were agitated,
 Some of them remained sound, others were wounded.
- 135 And the mouth that boasted of great things became like a speechless stone.
 And their corpses were cast to the wild beasts and animals,
 And the remainder of their bodies, for maggots and worms,
 And the rest they gathered up in large heaps of bones,

For summer and winter, for autumn and spring.

140 And this was done by Him who tests man [God], who protects in His great compassion.

Perform works of righteousness and thanksgiving and seek God with joy.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

He shall come back with songs of joy, for the binders of the sheaves were favoured.

You will merit the building of the Temple, its sanctuaries and halls,

145 Also the children and the women, the daughters and the sons,

For the word of God is upright, and all His works are faithful.

The second day [= Monday], with four (days) remaining in the month of Shevat, and in years,

The year 4837 from the Creation, from the Destruction (of the Temple) 1009.

Solomon, ha-Kohen (the priest), the son of Joseph, descendant of *Geonim*.

150 And if you would count, count 149. It is more precious than pearls.

8. Plate Section

Plate 1: MS T.-S. Misc. 36.174-F preserved in the Cambridge University Library.

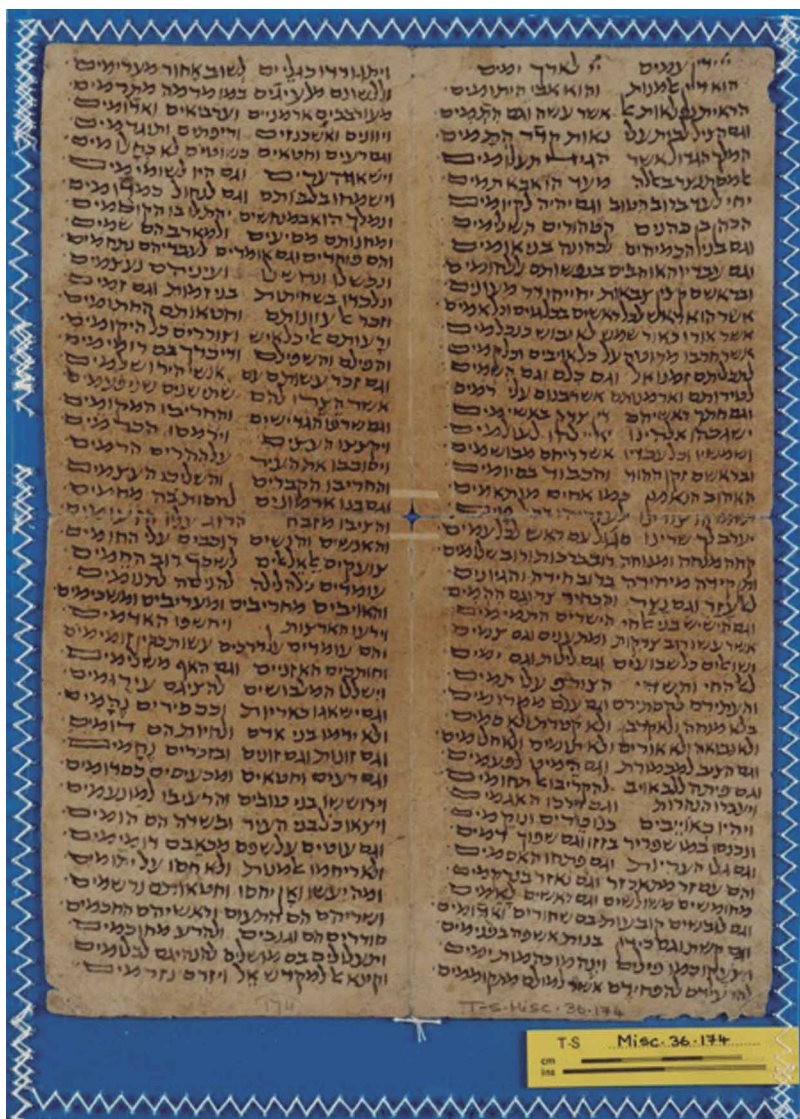


Plate 2: MS T.-S. Misc. 36.174-B preserved in the Cambridge University Library.

