

Studies in Semitic Vocalisation and Reading Traditions

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Aaron D. Hornkohl and Geoffrey Khan (eds.), *Studies in Semitic Vocalisation and Reading Traditions*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0207>

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Semitic Languages and Cultures 3.

ISSN (print): 2632-6906

ISSN (digital): 2632-6914

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-78374-935-5

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-78374-936-2

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-78374-937-9

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0207

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MARGINALIA TO THE QILLIRIAN RHYME SYSTEM

*Michael Rand**

1.0. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In his path-breaking article ‘*Ha-Shiṭot ha-rashiyot shel he-ḥaruz ha-ivri min ha-piyyuṭ ‘ad yamenu*’, Benjamin Harshav established the two chief rhyme-norms that are in use in classical *piyyuṭ*.¹ As is well known, the first of these is the norm that demands identity of sound from the consonant before the last vowel in the poetic line onwards. The second, which is termed ‘Qillirian’ in honour

* The present article is my own translation, with occasional additions, of Rand (2007), to which I have added an Appendix. The first note in the original article reads: “I would like herewith to express my gratitude to my teacher, Prof. Raymond Scheindlin, the Director of the Shalom Spiegel Institute for Research in Medieval Hebrew Poetry. The Institute’s financial assistance has made possible my participation in the Conference in honour of Zulay, the fruits of which are now presented to the reader.” Professor Scheindlin is now retired from his position at the Jewish Theological Seminary, as well as from that of Director of the Shalom Spiegel Institute. My gratitude and personal attachment to him have greatly waxed with the years.

¹ Harshav (1971). His findings have been published in English in Harshav (1972). See also Harshav (2008).

of the great poet who invented and introduced it into Hebrew *piyyut*, is the discontinuous rhyme norm, which demands the participation of two root consonants in the *rhymeme* (i.e., the formally defined sound unit whose repetition at the ends of the poetic lines constitutes the presence of rhyme) in addition to identity of sound from the consonant preceding the last vowel onwards.

These two norms (along with any conceivable rhyme norm in general) are rooted in the concrete language material of which the poet avails himself in the composition of his *piyyut*. In other words, the poet orders the words in the poetic lines in a certain way in order to create the required acoustic impression in the ears of the audience of his listeners. This impression is created by means of the presence of sound parallelism in the expected places in the poetic lines, and if the audience is familiar with the rhyme system being employed in the poem that is being recited, this parallelism is anticipated and perceived as an integral part of the poetics of the poem.

From the philological perspective, it is accepted that the linguistic material simultaneously consists of several layers—the phonetic, the phonological, the morphological, etc. Not all rhyme norms are equal in their relation to these layers. In the case under discussion at present, the norm of the consonant preceding the last vowel operates on the phonetic layer, since the parallelism that it entails is purely that of sounds. On the other hand, the Qillirian norm activates both the phonetic as well as the morphological layers, since the demand for the participation of two root consonants in the *rhymeme* is predicated on the existence of a

root, which is a morphological unit. This important distinction notwithstanding, the common denominator of both norms is the equivalence of actual linguistic entities—phonetic or morphological. *Ab initio*, the notion of equivalence is concrete. However, as the consciousness of the rhyme norm spreads in the poetic culture, the notion of equivalence may be altered—it may be gradually liberated from the concreteness of the sounds on the basis of which it first came into being and become abstracted, i.e., formalised, to a certain degree. In other words, both the poet as well as the audience are prepared to process as equivalents linguistic (phonetic) units that are not in fact equivalent, but are nevertheless placed within the poetic line at points that are known to be points of equivalence.

2.0. RHYME AND PHILOLOGY

By itself, the fact that the notion of equivalence may become increasingly abstracted has no bearing on our understanding of *piyyut* as a literary phenomenon. One may simply characterise it as belonging to the category of poetic license, and content oneself with listing poetic equivalents as an aid to the editing of *piyyuṭim*. For example, we find the following string of rhymes in the Qillirian *seḏer ʿolam* קנני ראשית דרכו for Shavuot: / לְאָהָד / יְהָד / אָהָד / אָהָד / וַיַּחַת / אָהָד / אָהָד / אָהָד / אָהָד (Ins. 246–54).² From here, we may conclude that the sounds /t/ and /d/ are treated as being equivalent, if only in a small number of instances, for the purposes of the rhyme norm employed by Qillir. This is not surprising from the phonetic point of view, since *tav* is a voiceless dental

² Elizur (2000, 108–9).

plosive and *dalet* a voiced dental plosive, so that the degree of phonetic similarity is sufficiently great as to render possible the use of these two sounds as equivalents for the purpose of rhyme.³

On the one hand, this example is clear-cut, since there is no doubt that despite the equivalence between *tav* and *dalet* within the abstract rhyme norm, the two sounds involved were kept distinct on the concrete phonological level of the linguistic material on which Qillir drew in composing his *piyyuṭim*. On the other hand, in creating sound-equivalents at the ends of poetic lines (which are loci that are relatively protected from spelling errors and scribal corrections, since every locus constitutes a link in the rhyme-chain, whose integrity guarantees the stability of every one of its links), the rhyme norm serves as an important philological tool, which enables researchers to uncover changes in pronunciation in the poet's time and place. In such cases, however, great caution must be exercised, and it is incumbent upon the researcher to prove that a certain sound equivalence that seems to bear witness to a phonetic phenomenon is indeed a concrete one, rooted in the linguistic material itself rather than merely in

³ We ought also to take into consideration the possibility of word-final voicing neutralisation, so that the case above would not be a matter of a high degree of similarity, but perhaps rather one of phonetic identity. However, the fact that the distinction between the letters *dalet* and *tav* in word-final position is stable throughout the history of Hebrew writing (as opposed to the distinction between *mem* and *nun* in Rabbinic Hebrew, for example) seems to militate against the possibility of speaking of actual, complete neutralisation.

the function served by it within the formal rhyme norm, as in the example of *tav* and *dalet* above.

An instructive example in this connection may be found in the case of rhymes in which a syllable-opening *ʾalef* immediately follows an open syllable with a *shewa*, as in ק-אוד. We occasionally find in Qillirian *piyyut* that such an *ʾalef* is elided, along with the *shewa* that precedes it—i.e., ק-אוד becomes מוד** (a double asterisk represents a hypothetical form). Thus for example in the following examples: מלך) עֲרֵבוֹת / ... / מִתְחַבְּאוֹת / שְׁלֵהָבוֹת / וְלֵהָבוֹת (לְמֶלֶךְ, lns. 52–54);⁴ אֲאָבִיד בְּיוֹם מִבְּדָן / לְמֶלֶךְ / בְּגִבּוֹלוֹ / דָּמִי לוֹ (בְּמִשְׁפַּט, lns. 58–62);⁵ שִׁינִן / שְׁנָאֵן / קְדוֹשׁ הוֹפִיעַ (לְשׁוֹן, lns. 33–34).⁶ In these examples, in fact, the *ʾalef* is elided before both a vocal and a silent *shewa*. Here, moreover, as opposed to the case of *tav* and *dalet* that I cited above, it appears that we are faced not merely with poetic license, but with an actual phonetic phenomenon that may be traced throughout the development of Hebrew, from Biblical Hebrew to the language-form represented by Qillir. In the Bible, we already find a number of cases of the elision of *ʾalef* when following *shewa*—e.g., תּוֹמִים (Gen. 25.24; = תְּאוֹמִים), שְׂרִית (2 Chron. 12.39; = שְׂאֵרִית), מִאֲתָיִם (= מִאֲתָיִם**), etc.⁷ This phenomenon is known also in the Dead Sea Scrolls: שְׂרִית (= מִאֲוֹדָה), מוֹדָה (= מִאֲוֹדָה).

⁴ Goldschmidt (1970, 85). The *piyyut* has now been published in a critical edition; see Elizur and Rand (2014, 249–50).

⁵ Goldschmidt (2002, קנח).

⁶ Elizur (2000, 92).

⁷ See Bergstrasser (1986, I:§15e) and Blau (2010, 88, §3.3.4.2.4).

(שארית), רויה (= ראויה).⁸ And in manuscripts of Rabbinic Hebrew we find: כילו (= כאלו), תילים (= תהלים), כיב (= כאב), etc.⁹

From this string of examples, it is clear that the phenomenon as it is found in Qillir's poetry is the result of a historical phonetic development, and that there is consequently no reason to see it as stemming merely from rhyme pressure and, therefore, as a purely formal phenomenon. It is possible to highlight the phonetic status of the phenomenon under discussion as it is found in the Qillirian corpus by comparing it to an apparently similar phenomenon in the *piyyuṭim* of Pinḥas ha-Kohen, who postdates Qillir.¹⁰ In a new edition of his *piyyuṭim* Shulamit Elizur points out the rhyme שופֶּר / מַעֲפֶּר / יוֹשֶׁפֶּר / הַמְּפֹאֶר (*piyyuṭ* קי, lns. 1–4).¹¹ In this case, a root consonant ^ʾ*alef* is elided between two full vowels—i.e., מַפּוֹאֶר becomes מַפֶּר** as it were, apparently for purposes of rhyme. On the one hand, in light of the examples that I have cited above from the Qillirian corpus and the dialects of Hebrew that preceded his, it appears that the roots of the phenomenon that is attested in the poetry of Pinḥas—i.e., the elision of ^ʾ*alef*—are indeed phonetic. On the other hand, I have not found any support from the history of Hebrew for the phenomenon in the

⁸ See Kutscher (1974, 498–500); Qimron (1986, 25).

⁹ See Sokoloff (1969, 34).

¹⁰ Elizur (2004, 9) fixes his time “after the middle of the eighth century.”

¹¹ Elizur (2004, 652). The anonymous reader of my article has suggested that “one might imagine that the text ought to be emended, and that perhaps הַמְּפֹאֶר, i.e., a *Hofʿal*, should be read.” If we accept this emendation, the example before us belongs to the group of examples discussed in the previous paragraph.

form in which it is attested there.¹² It is therefore reasonable to conclude that in the present case we see in Pinḥas an emancipation from the concrete realm of phonetics and entry into the formal realm of poetics.

This impression is strengthened by an additional example cited by Elizur: תנא / המוצנא / מא (poem 23, lns. 28–30).¹³ She notes that, for purposes of rhyme, there are two pairs here, the element תנא being shared by both of them: תנא / מא and תנא / המוצנא. In the first pair the *ʾalef* is reckoned as an actual consonant, the rhyme being תנא-. In the second pair, however, the *ʾalef* is elided, as the rhyme is תנ-. It is entirely clear that from a phonetic point of view a bivalent consonant, which simultaneously exists and does not exist, is an impossibility. Therefore, the conclusion presents itself that we are not here dealing with the glottal stop /ʔ/ as it remains or is elided in various linguistic con-

¹² Cf., however יפי התור (= יפי התאר; 11QPs^a, col. 28, ln. 9), which appears to be relevant to the case under investigation here (see Qimron 2018, 322–24, §E 2.1.3). It is attested also in the Ben Sira Scroll from Masada: תור לבנו (= תואר לבנו; col. 6, ln. 2), תור שמים (= תואר שמים; col. 6, ln. 12). Blau (2010, 88, §3.3.4.2.4) suggests that the elision of *ʾalef* between two full vowels stands behind the Biblical Hebrew form נמץאים (1 Sam. 13.15 *et passim*), as opposed to the expected נמץאים: “It seems that in vulgar speech נמץאים, through the analogy to verbs III-y, became **nimšim*. The hypercorrect effort to use more ‘refined’ forms led, by analogy to חטאים and to נמץאים. Thus *ḥotim* : *ḥotəʾim* = *nimšim* : *x*, where the hypercorrect *x* is נמץאים.”

¹³ Elizur (2004, 353–54).

texts, but rather with a rhyme-unit that may or may not be reckoned, in accordance with the needs of the formal rhyming system. At the same time, it is nevertheless important to underscore the fact that Pinḥas' treatment of the 'alef is rooted in phonetic developments.

3.0. THE RHYMING OF /A/ AND /E/ IN QILLIRIAN *PIYYUṬ*

In the Qillirian *qedushta* for Shemini Ašeret לֹלֹל לֹלֹל there appears to be attested a rare and unusual phenomenon. In a number of instances in this composition, it seems that the vowels /a/ (*pataḥ*, *qameṣ*) and /e/ (*segol*, *šere*) are paired in the same rhymeme, which is contrary to expectation in the case of a vowel system of the Palestinian/Sephardi type, in which the distinction between these two vowel qualities is maintained. The examples are indeed few, but the phenomenon nevertheless appears to be real: נִפְּרֶת / מִפְּרֶפֶת / נִצְהֶרֶת / נִצְהֶרֶת (lns. 9–12); בֵּת / שְׁנִשְׂאֵבֶת / שׁוֹאֵבֶת (lns. 112–15); in *piyyuṭ* 4, whose lines mostly rhyme in -צָר or -צֶר, the following rhyme-words are found: עוֹצֵר (ln. 63), הַנִּצֵּר (ln. 66), הַיּוֹצֵר (ln. 73), קֹצֵר (ln. 76).¹⁴ Aside from these examples, I am aware of three more cases of rhyming of this type in the Qillirian corpus. In the *qerova* for 14 benedictions זְכוֹר אֵיכָה for the Ninth of Av we find the following: רָחֵם / לְוָחֵם / זֶהֱם / פָּחֵם (lns. 36–39).¹⁵ In three places, it might be possible to disagree with the vocalisation given in Goldschmidt's

¹⁴ Rand (2008, 38–66).

¹⁵ Goldschmidt (2002, קנ).

edition—perhaps one ought to vocalise יָחַם, רָחַם,¹⁶ נִוְהֵם—but I see no way of casting doubt on the vocalisation of the last word, לָחַם, which is based on the language of Scripture in Lam. 5.6. Here are two examples from another source, the *shiv'ata* צפֿע איבי זורו for Shabbat Zakhor: שָׁכַר / נָעֵבֶר / לָסֵבֶר / זָכַר (Ins. 7–10); שְׁמָעָה / הִרְשָׁעָה / שְׁמוּעָה / לְרוּעָה / (Ins. 67–70).¹⁷ We are, therefore, in possession of additional examples from the Qillirian corpus of the rhyming of /a/ and /e/.

Another example of such rhyming is cited by Elizur from the *piyyuṭim* of Pinḥas: לִזְבֵּן / יִיבֵן / הַמְלִיבֵן / לָבֵן (*piyyuṭ* קלו, lines 61–64).¹⁸ Elizur (2004, 175 n. 69).expresses doubt in this case, indicating that “it is possible that here R. Pinḥas has divided the strophe into two rhyme pairs sharing a similar rhyme.” It seems, however, that it, too, is to be reckoned. Up to this point, I have attempted to demonstrate that even in cases of rhyme based on the formal poetic system, rather than phonetics, it is nevertheless possible to discover the influence of the phonetic level in the background, constituting the basis of the formal system. In the cases under discussion here, on the other hand, it is very difficult to discover the phonetic background of this odd alternation. As

¹⁶ The line that ends with this word has not been properly interpreted by Goldschmidt. The phrase מעשרי בששי יחם refers to Israel, who set aside a tithe of their flocks (i.e., the fruits of their ייחום ‘heat, oestrus’) in the sixth month, which is Elul (see Mishna, *Rosh ha-Shana* 1.1). I would like to thank the anonymous reader of the original Hebrew paper for having pointed out the proper interpretation.

¹⁷ Elizur (1991, 62–67).

¹⁸ Elizur (2004, 747).

is well known, in the Genizah fragments alternations between *segol* and *šere* as well as between *pataḥ* and *qameš* are found in abundance.¹⁹ But as far as I am aware, there is no evidence of alternation between these two pairs.

Perhaps it is possible to seek the background to this phenomenon in the phonetics of the Tiberian vocalisation system. In it, we do in fact encounter an alternation between *pataḥ* and *šere*, which may be defined in terms of morphology. In the suffixed verbal forms of the *pi'el* stem, as well as in the suffixed, prefixed and imperative forms of the *hitpa'el* there are many instances attested in which the final syllable bears *pataḥ* rather than *šere*—e.g., גָּדַל alternating with גִּדֵּל, מָלַט with מִלֵּט, וַיִּתְחַזֵּק with וַיִּתְחַזֶּק, etc.²⁰ It is important to stress that in these cases the vocalic alternation is located in the ultima of the forms under consideration—i.e., in the syllable that functions as the locus of rhyme within the poetic line. In this context, it is instructive to compare the vocalisations offered by two different editors in a place of potential /a/ ~ /e/ rhyme. In his edition of the Qillirian *shiv'ata* ובני ציון אהם for Shabbat ha-Hodesh Spiegel vocalises וְלִשְׁעָבֵר / לְגִבֵּר / וְלִעֲבֹר / (Ins. 11–14), thereby apparently acknowledging the existence of the alternation in the Qillirian rhyme system.²¹ Elizur, on the other hand, who doubts the existence of this alternation in the Qillirian corpus, vocalises in her edition / לְגִבֵּר / וְלִעֲבֹר /

¹⁹ See Yeivin (1991, 160). The origin of these alternations is the Palestinian pronunciation of Hebrew.

²⁰ See Bergstrasser (1986, II:§§17d, 18e).

²¹ Spiegel (1939, רעח–רעט).

וּלְשַׁעֲבֵר / יִתְגַּבֵּר (Ins. 17–20).²² Examining the two first rhyme words (without taking into account the fourth, with regard to whose reading the editors differ), we must admit, on the one hand, that in Biblical Hebrew there is no *pi'el* infinitive of the form *לְקַטֵּל***, a fact that seems to vindicate Spiegel's vocalisation. On the other hand, it is perhaps possible to claim that Qillir changed the quality of the expected vowel on the basis of an analogy to the forms of the prefixed verb and the imperative in the *hitpa'el*, thereby justifying Elizur's approach. In the final analysis, however, both Spiegel's and Elizur's vocalisations take into account the possibility of the alternation /a/ ~ /e/, the difference being that, while in Spiegel's version the alternation is realised on the phonetic level—i.e., the vowels /a/ and /e/ participate in the rhymeme and are heard by the ear—in Elizur's it is incorporated into the morphological level—i.e., she assumes the possibility of the existence of an infinitival form *לְקַטֵּל*** instead of the expected *לְקַטֵּל*. Thus also in the vocalisation given by Goldschmidt in the Qillirian *qina* הִטָּה אֱלֹהֵי אֲזִנָּךְ / עָתָק / לְשַׁתָּק (Ins. 3–4).²³

The alternation attested in Biblical Hebrew obviously occurs only in certain verbal forms, and this morphological specificity prevents us from pointing to the Biblical Hebrew phenomenon in order to explain those other occurrences of the

²² Elizur (1991, 111).

²³ Goldschmidt (2002, פא). It is also possible to imagine a *hif'il* form *לְשַׁתָּק*, with elision of the *he*, but such a vocalisation would not obviate the problem, since if we accept it, we must explain the appearance of a stem-vowel /a/ in place of the /i/ expected in a *hif'il* infinitive.

/a/ ~ /e/ alternation in the Qillirian rhyme system that are not based on such verbal forms. Nevertheless, if we accept that the alternation does exist in Qillir's *piyyuṭim*, it is perhaps possible to see in the Biblical Hebrew phenomenon at least a part of the phonetic background of the phenomenon that is attested in the formal Qillirian rhyme system. In other words, the instance that I have cited above makes it plausible that Qillir was indeed aware of the possibility of an /a/ ~ /e/ alternation within his rhyme system, if only on rare occasions, and if only under specific morphological conditions. From such a locus, in which the alternation is, so to speak, legitimate from the point of view of the morphophonology of Biblical Hebrew according to the Tiberian tradition, it spread to other points within the rhyme system, which are found outside of the original morphological context.

In the final analysis, whether or not the specific considerations offered above provide a full explanation for the alternation /a/ ~ /e/ within the Qillirian rhyme system is not so important. The methodological point made here is more significant: when setting about to explain an unusual phenomenon in the rhyme system, we must attempt to seek its roots in the phonetics and morphophonology of the speech form (or forms) of which the poet makes use in composing his poetry.

APPENDIX—THE RHYMING OF /A/ AND /E/ IN HEBREW MAQĀMAS IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY EGYPT

The rhyming of /a/ and /e/ in Hebrew is also encountered in an entirely different linguistic and cultural context. In the course of editing a number of Hebrew *maqāmas* in the style of the *Taḥkemoni* of Yehuda al-Ḥarizi that were probably composed thirteenth-century Egypt,²⁴ I have encountered the following cases:

- (1) לְכֵן הַבֵּית הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי בֹנֶה / יְסֻדוֹתָיו תְּלוּיִים עַל קו הָאֲמוּנָה (Introduction, ln. 4)

‘As for this edifice that I am building (cf. 1 Kgs 6.12), / its foundations are suspended from (i.e., built upon) a true outline’.²⁵

- (2) הִבֵּט אֶל מֵת תוֹד הָאֲרוֹן / עַל אֶרֶץ וּבִיד כָּל נִמְצָא // עֵת נִקְבֵּר [ו] לְתוֹפֶת
יִצָּא יְחִיָּה יִשְׁבּוֹר אֲרוֹן יִצָּא / יֵלֵךְ (*maqāma* 7, lns. 30–31)

‘Behold a corpse in a coffin, / found upon the ground and in everyone’s hands. // When it is buried and goes down to

²⁴ I intend to publish a critical edition of the *maqāmas* in the near future. In the meantime, the most up-to-date information may be obtained in Schirmann (1965, 408–13). The narrator of the *maqāmas* is Etan ha-ʿEzrahi, and the hero is Ḥovav ha-Midyani. For the latter’s name, see Rand (2018, 45 n. 7). For the *Taḥkemoni* see al-Ḥarizi (2010).

²⁵ The text is published in Davidson (1928, 224).

hellfire, / it rises to life—breaks the coffin's bonds and comes forth'.²⁶

- (3) וַיַּעַן עוֹד בְּחֹזֶק לֹא יָחַת / וַיִּדְבֵּר בְּאוֹת הַחַת (*maqāma* 10, ln. 2)

‘And he furthermore replied with unflagging strength / and composed in the letter *het*’.²⁷

In all of these cases, an /a/-vowel (always *qameṣ*) rhymes with an /e/-vowel (*ṣere* or *segol*). Alongside them we probably ought to consider the following case, encountered in a homonym poem (*ṣimmud*):

- (4) מִי יִתְּנָה חֶלְקִי יְדִידִי יִתְּנֵנִי / מְכַל וְאַעְזֹזב לְזִמְנָה הֶבְלִי // לוֹ יִדְרְשָׁה רוּחִי
לְקַחְתָּהּ יִאֲמָרָה / לְבִי הֲלוֹא הוּא הַיְדִיד הֵב לוֹ
(*maqāma* 8, lns. 49–50)

‘Would that my friend gave my due portion / of all [his love] and abandon Time and its vanities. // Were he to seek to take my spirit, my heart’s / response would be “He’s the friend, yield to him”’.²⁸

²⁶ In this riddle-epigram the ‘corpse in a coffin’ is apparently the seed in its husk, which may be held in the hand or sown in the ground. When it is ‘buried’, i.e., sown, the seed bursts out of the husk and comes alive as a plant. The text is found in ms. Oxford, Bodleian Heb. d. 64 fol. 78 (cat. 2822/19). The hollow letter indicates a doubtful reading in the manuscript.

²⁷ The text is found in ms. St Petersburg, Russian National Library, Fir-kovitch IIA 87.1 fol. 9.

²⁸ The text is found in ms. Oxford, Bodleian Heb. d. 63 fol. 77 (cat. 2826/38).

Here, the fact that the terminal elements הַבָּלוֹ ‘its vanities’ and הָב לוֹ ‘yield to him’ are supposed to be homonymic implies that *segol* and *pataḥ* are being treated as equivalents.

The cases of /a/ and /e/ rhyming under examination here occur in a composition by an author whose native language we can safely assume to have been Arabic. With this background in mind, we ought to examine a related phenomenon, encountered in bilingual Hebrew-Arabic poetry: the treatment of Hebrew /a/ and /e/ vowels together as being the equivalents of Arabic etymological *ā*. Garbell has collected numerous examples from Spanish Hebrew poets.²⁹ For the present purposes, it is sufficient to illustrate this point from the trilingual, Hebrew-Arabic-Aramaic poem דְּבַר אֵל יֵאֱמָן by al-Ḥarizi, found in *maqāma* 20 of the *Taḥkemoni*.³⁰ The poem is written in tristichs, the first stich of every line being in Hebrew, the second in Arabic and the third in Aramaic. In every line, the Hebrew and Arabic stichs rhyme with one another, whereas the Aramaic stich bears a rhyme that embraces the whole poem. The following Hebrew-Arabic pairs are relevant to our purpose:

(5) דְּבַר אֵל יֵאֱמָן / וְטֹאעָאֵת אֶלְרַחֲמָאן (ln. 31)

²⁹ See Garbell (1954–1956, 1:686) for /a/, and (ibid., 1:688) for /e/.

³⁰ Al-Ḥarizi (2010, 294–95). Al-Ḥarizi was born in Spain in 1165 and died in Aleppo in 1225. Approximately the last ten years of his life were spent on a journey through the Islamic East that began in Egypt. See Rand (2018, 4–5).

‘God’s word is sure / as is obedience to the Merciful’.³¹

- (6) שְׁמוֹ לְעֵד נִעְלָה / הוּא אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים (ln. 33)

‘His name is exalted forever, / He is the sublime Lord’.

- (7) בְּתֵבֵל שָׁם מְשָׁטָר / חוּי כָּל אֱלֹהִים (ln. 37)

‘He imposes his rule on the world, / which takes in all its quarters’.

- (8) וְיִשְׁעִי יִגְלָה / פִּיעֲלִי מִדְּלוּלָה (ln. 42)

‘And my Salvation becomes manifest / and He raises the lowly’.

More examples could be cited from this source, but these suffice to establish the point. In these cases, we may say that, for purposes of rhyme, the opposition between Hebrew /a/ and /e/ is neutralised in the Arabic phoneme /ā/.

It would appear that both sets of cases are best explained in terms of the vocalic shift known in the Arabic grammatical tradition as *ʿimāla*, the fronting and raising of /ā/ (as well /a/).³² In the case of the bilingual rhymes, this could simply mean that as a result of *ʿimāla* Arabic /ā/ had become the closest possible rhyme-equivalent to a Hebrew /e/-type vowel.³³ Furthermore,

³¹ Ed. Yahalom-Katsumata unnecessarily (or perhaps mistakenly) vocalises יִאֲמֵן. Also, for purposes of illustration I have employed the *plene* spelling אֱלֹהִים instead of the defective spelling אֱלֹהִים found there.

³² See Levin (2013, II:311–15).

³³ The use of Arabic /ā/ as an equivalent for /a/ and /e/ in the bilingual rhymes finds an analogue in Karaite Bible manuscripts written in Arabic characters. In these, *ʿalif* represents long *qameṣ*, *pataḥ*, and *segol*,

the /a/ ~ /e/ rhymes in the Hebrew *maqāma* would seem to indicate that the process of *ʿimāla* had come to affect the /a/ vowel in the Hebrew pronunciation of Arabic-speaking Jews, with the result that /a/ and /e/ became sufficiently close to serve as equivalents for purposes of rhyme. The rarity of the phenomenon is presumably to be explained by the fact that Hebrew poets and authors of rhymed prose tended to maintain the historical distinction between /a/ (*pataḥ*, *qameṣ*) and /e/ (*segol*, *ṣere*), with the result that the shift in vowel quality is masked. In fact, the *maqāmas* in which the rhyming of /a/ and /e/ is encountered employ a decidedly lower register than those of al-Ḥarizi. In plain words, they are more ‘folksy’. It is, therefore, not surprising that in them the ‘Hebrew *ʿimāla*’ that I am positing occasionally breaks through.

4.0. REFERENCES

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whereas *ṣere* may be represented by *ʿalif* or *yā*. The variable representation of *ṣere* is interpreted by Khan (1987, 30) as follows: “Whereas... *ʿalif* is sometimes used for *ṣere*, *yā*’ is never used for *segol*. This suggests that a qualitative coalescence of the two vowels had not taken place in the pronunciation of the scribes. The use of *ʿalif* to represent the two *e* vowels was facilitated by the fact that the Arabic *ʿalif mumāla* could be realised with two degrees of *ʿimāla*, viz. *ʿimāla mutawassīṭa* (*ε* = *segol*) or *ʿimāla šadīda* (*e* = *ṣere*).”

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