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The Neo-Aramaic Oral Heritage of the Jews of Zakho

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THE NEO-ARAMAIC
ORAL HERITAGE OF
THE JEWS OF ZAKHO

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Oz Aloni





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INTRODUCTION

This book deals with three genres of the oral heritage of the Neo-Aramaic-speaking Jewish community of Zakho, Kurdistan. During the past three decades, there has been a renewed interest in research on Neo-Aramaic, and a substantial increase has been seen in the amount of research. However, the contemporary study of North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) has focused almost exclusively on aspects of the language, such as phonology, morphology, sentence-level syntax, lexicography, dialectology, diachronic development, and language contact. Content-based aspects of the study of the language and its cultures, such as folkloristic analysis, narrative structure, discourse structure, and phraseology, have been almost completely neglected. This book is but a first step in an attempt to fill this gap in NENA scholarship.

This Introduction begins by providing some background on the Jewish community of Zakho, before looking at the language spoken in that community, NENA, and previous research on it. There follows a brief discussion of the study of folklore, and then a description of the audio-recorded database upon which this book is based. The Introduction ends with an outline of the structure of the book, after an explanation of the system of transcription and translation of the NENA texts used here.

1.0. The Jewish Community of Zakho¹

The town of Zakho is located in the northern tip of Iraqi Kurdistan, approximately ten kilometres south of the Turkish border and thirty kilometres east of the Syrian border. It is surrounded by high mountains. All roads leading to Zakho, including the main road from Mosul, go through rough mountain passes. The oldest part of Zakho, which includes *maḥallat huzaye* ‘the neighbourhood of the Jews’ is an island in the centre of the River Khabur, which flows through the town (for the geography of Zakho, see Gavish 2004, 21–26; 2010, 13–14).

It appears that the Jewish community of Zakho is old, though there are few documents which provide historical information about it. The oldest historical sources which attest the presence of Jews in Zakho are letters, the earliest of which date to the 18th century. These often contain Halakhic questions about various topics directed to rabbis of other cities (*responsa*): marital contracts, legal disputes, and familial affairs (Ben-Yaacob 1981, 58–62; Gavish 2004, 27–30; 2010, 15). Some of these letters contain requests for help from neighbouring communities after disasters, e.g., the famine of 1880 and the wave of persecutions of 1892.

Jewish travellers arrived in Kurdistan as early as medieval times—Benjamin of Tudela and Petaḥyah of Regensburg in the 12th century and Yehudah Al-Ḥarizi in the 13th century (Brauer

¹ For more about the history and culture of the Jews of Zakho and Kurdistan, see Brauer (1947; 1993); Ben-Yaacob (1981); Gavish (2004; 2010); Zaken (2007); Aloni (2014a).

1947, 17–20; 1993, 38–40). However, Jewish travellers first arrived in Zakho only in the 19th century (Ben-Yaacob 1981, 58–62). The first Jewish traveller to mention Zakho is Rabbi David D’Beth Hillel, who visited the town in 1827 and found approximately six hundred Jewish families living there. He describes the old synagogue and some Jewish customs unique to the community of Zakho, which he finds similar to customs described in ancient history books (Fischel 1939, 124). Based on that similarity, he concludes that the Jews of Zakho are descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Israël Joseph Benjamin (‘Benjamin the Second’) arrived in Zakho in 1848 and found two hundred Jewish families there. He recounts that the chief rabbi of the town, Rabbi Eliyahu, asked for his advice in the matter of an *‘aguna* woman²; contrary to Benjamin’s advice, the rabbi released her from the bonds of her marriage (Benjamin 1859, 24).

According to the mnemohistory of the Jews of Kurdistan, they are descendants of the ten Israelite tribes exiled by Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria, as recounted in the Hebrew Bible: “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria. He deported the Israelites to Assyria and settled them in Halah, at the [River] Habor, at the River Gozan, and in the towns of Media” (2 Kgs 17.6; NJPS [1999] English translation).³ ‘Habor’ is

² A married woman whose husband is missing but is still considered married according to Jewish law, and is thus unable to remarry.

³ For a comprehensive study of the history of quests to locate the Ten Tribes, see Ben-Dor Benite (2009). For an analysis of the role of the Ten Tribes in Jewish folk-narratives recorded at the Israel Folktale Archives Named in Honor of Dov Noy (IFA), University of Haifa, see Stein (2015).

generally thought to be Zakho's River Khabur.⁴ According to Ben-Yaacob, it is possible that the Sambation (sometimes spelled Sabation), mentioned in the rabbinic literature as the frontier of the realm of the ten tribes, may be the Great Zab, another river of Kurdistan (Ben-Yaacob 1981, 12).⁵ Nachmanides identifies the Sambation as the River Gozan (in his commentary on Deut. 32.26). In many old and modern documents, the Jews of Kurdistan call themselves *ha-'ovdim bə-'ereṣ 'aššur* 'those who are lost in the land of Assyria', an expression taken from Isaiah's prophecy of redemption "And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great horn shall be sounded; and they shall come that were lost in the land of Assyria, and they that were dispersed in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship the Lord in the holy mountain, in Jerusalem" (Isa. 27.13; JPS [1917] English translation, with some modification).

In the middle of the 19th century, Zakho became the chief spiritual centre for the Jews of Kurdistan (Gavish 2004, 50–56; 2010, 44–50), and many sources refer to it as *yerušalayim de-kurdistan* 'the Jerusalem of Kurdistan', since it became a centre of training for *ḥaxamim* 'rabbis', *mohalim* 'circumcisers', and *šoḥaṭim* '(kosher) slaughterers'.

The rabbis of Zakho were considered an important authority throughout the entire region. Its Great Synagogue could hold

⁴ A tributary of the Tigris. A separate river which bears the same name is a tributary of the Euphrates.

⁵ About the Sambation in Jewish literature see Werses (1986) and Stein Kokin (2013).

up to three thousand people. Another synagogue, which also contained a *bet midraš* ‘study hall’ and a *heder* ‘children’s school’, could hold up to one thousand people. The historian Walter Fischel, who visited Kurdistan twice during the 1930s, copied a Hebrew inscription from a wall of the Great Synagogue (Fischel 1939, 124; see also Ben-Yaacob 1981, 61; Gavish 2004, 161; 2010, 162).

אשרי אדם שומע לי לשקוד על דלתותי יום יום לשמור מזווחות פתחי כי מוצאי מצא חיים ויפק רצון מה'. שנת ה'ת'ק'נ"ח ליצירה לפ"ק שנת ארבע למלכות עלי כאן בג יר"ה.

Happy is the man that hearkens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors, for he who finds me finds life, and obtains favour of the Lord,⁶ year 5568 of the creation [= the year 1798 CE], year 4 of the kingship of ‘Ali Khan Bag YRH [= may his glory be exalted].

The Jews of Kurdistan immigrated to Israel in their entirety in two waves during the first half of the 20th century.⁷

Those in the first wave, during the 1920s and 1930s, immigrated mainly for religious reasons: coming to the Holy Land. Some social and political factors were also involved: World War I and its severe consequences; the British mandate over Iraq and Palestine; the deterioration in personal security of the Jews of

⁶ Prov. 8.34–35 (JPS 1917), English translation, with some modification.

⁷ There is evidence for the immigration of Jews to pre-state Israel even before this. Mann (1931–1935, I:488) has found a letter sent from the village of Sundur to Jerusalem in the early 18th century, which shows that individuals, at least, had immigrated by then (see Hopkins 1993, 51; Gavish 2004, 147; 2010, 150–51).

Kurdistan; and the decline in their economic status (see Zaken 2007). Migration during this period was undertaken on the initiative of individual immigrants. The immigrants arrived as small groups of families and individuals, sometimes youths without their parents, usually in caravans through Lebanon, and in many cases without the required migration certificates from the Iraqi authorities. They settled mainly in Jerusalem, in the ‘Kurdish’ neighbourhood. Their community was the first community of Jewish immigrants from Islamic countries in Jerusalem. In fact, it would be more precise to speak of several communities, since in general each group of immigrants from a particular town or village in Kurdistan established an independent community in Jerusalem, with its own synagogue and communal institutions. These communities occasionally sent emissaries to their home towns in Kurdistan with the aim of recruiting funds and more newcomers.

The second wave of migration commenced in March 1950, two years after the establishment of the State of Israel. The Iraqi government, as part of its efforts to deal with increasing internal instability, passed a law entitled ‘Supplement to Ordinance Cancelling Iraqi Nationality’, which stipulated that “the Council of Ministers may cancel the Iraqi nationality of the Iraqi Jew who willingly desires to leave Iraq” (Law No. 1 of 1950, *Official Gazette of Iraq*, 9 March 1950; see <http://www.justiceforjews.com/iraq.html>). One year later, the ‘Law for the Supervision and Administration of the Property of Jews who have Forfeited Iraqi Nationality’ was passed (Law No. 5 of 1951, *Official Gazette of Iraq*, 10 March 1951; see <http://www.justiceforjews.com/iraq.html>),

under which all Jewish properties were confiscated and they were all expelled (Tsimhoni 1989). Within two years almost all of the Jews of Iraq, including almost all of the Jews of Iraqi Kurdistan, had immigrated to Israel (Gavish 2004, 300; 2010, 316–317). Most of these immigrants, who were referred to by the immigrants of the first wave as *ha-olim ha-ḥadašim* ‘the newcomers’, remained for some time in the *ma‘abarot* ‘absorption camps’, then were settled in the Katamonim neighbourhood in Jerusalem and in Ma‘oz Tsion outside Jerusalem. The new reality brought about an unprecedented intergenerational gap between parents and children within the community.⁸ Unlike the immigrants of the first wave, the ‘new’ immigrants were able to take advantage of the young state’s modern education system, which naturally afforded them many advantages, but which was also guided by a ‘melting pot’ policy, one of the goals of which was the blurring of immigrants’ communal identities.

The historical social and geographic conditions of the Jews of Kurdistan influenced the character and development of their NENA literature (see Sabar 1982a; 1982c; Aloni 2014a, 21–84). The isolation of each of the Jewish communities in Kurdistan, spread across the many towns and villages of this rugged mountainous land, which remained largely unpenetrated by foreign

⁸ For the changes in the social structure of the community, see Gavish (2004, 300–19; 2010, 316–36). The internal division of the community into ‘new’ and ‘old’ immigrants has an interesting linguistic consequence: Sabar (1975) describes the NENA of the ‘old’ immigrants as surprisingly conservative and as less influenced by Modern Hebrew in its lexicon, phonology, and syntax. Sabar explains this as a result of the less extensive assimilation of the ‘old’ immigrants into Israeli society.

cultures or armies up until the 20th century, enabled the Jewish communities of the region to preserve very old traditions (see ch. 2, fn. 6). The social structure, as well as the material culture, which very much resembled those known to us from classical rabbinic literature, contributed to this preservation as well. Ancient literary and exegetical genres, such as Aggadic Midrashim and epic songs about biblical themes, which embellish the original narrative with Aggadic traditions, continued to be created and performed in the Jewish communities of Kurdistan in modern times (see ch. 2).

A simple division of the literary heritage of the Jews of Kurdistan into oral and written literature will not prove accurate, since most of this literature, including some of what now forms its written portion, has been passed down orally and bears distinctive features of oral transmission. Thus, for instance, the Jewish NENA Bible translations published by Sabar (1983; 1988; 1990; 1993; 1995a; 2006; 2014), were committed to writing by *ḥaxamim* of the community only in 20th-century Israel at the request of scholars. On the other hand, the Midrashim for the three portions of the Pentateuch, *Va-Yeḥi*, *Be-Šalah*, and *Yitro*, also published by Sabar (1985; see also 2009), were committed to writing nearer to the time of their creation, being found in manuscripts from the 17th century; but they are also based upon traditions which were transmitted orally. Nonetheless, it will prove useful to distinguish between literature that has been preserved in manuscripts, which is literature of a religious character, and literature that is preserved only orally to this day.

2.0. North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA)

The Aramaic language is—or more accurately, the Aramaic languages are—one of the longest-lived, continuously spoken and documented living language groups, and one of the oldest languages spoken today.⁹ The oldest Aramaic documents still extant date back to the 9th century BCE. Aramaic, initially the language of the Aramaean tribes in modern-day Syria, gained historical prominence after it was adopted as the administrative language of the Neo-Assyrian empire, together with the Assyrians' own language—Akkadian—in the 8th century BCE. It retained this status in subsequent empires, the Neo-Babylonian and the Persian Achaemenid empires. It seems that this unlikely historical occurrence—the adoption of a local language as the administrative language of what was the largest and strongest empire at the time—was due to the relative simplicity of the Aramaic writing system, compared to the Akkadian one.¹⁰ Aramaic became the *lingua franca* of the ancient Near East. Most of the Aramaic texts in the Hebrew Bible, written in what is usually called Biblical Aramaic,¹¹ belong to this period of the language's history: Imperial Aramaic.

⁹ The leading contender for the title of the oldest living language is Coptic, a descendant of Ancient Egyptian.

¹⁰ Akkadian cuneiform included thousands of signs, and many years of training were required to master it.

¹¹ Biblical Aramaic is the language of most of the book of Daniel, a large part of Ezra, one verse in Jeremiah (10.11), and two words in Genesis (37.47).

The diffusion of Aramaic across a very large territory, from Egypt in the west to India in the east, brought about dialectal diversification and fragmentation of the previously more uniform language. The division between Eastern and Western Aramaic dialects became the most decisive one. But processes of change were not consistent within the boundaries of each geographic region: independent dialects spoken by different ethnic and religious groups that lived in the same geographic regions came into being. The results of these dialectal diversification processes, which began in the 3rd century BCE, are reflected in the present-day Neo-Aramaic dialectological map.

The term 'Neo-Aramaic' covers all of the Aramaic dialects spoken today. The earliest written attestation of these dialects is five hundred years old.¹² Neo-Aramaic is divided into four groups of dialects: North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA),¹³ the group which includes all of the dialects of the Jews of Kurdistan; Western Neo-Aramaic,¹⁴ spoken by Christians and Muslims in the vil-

¹² There is evidence for the existence of Neo-Aramaic dialects long before that. For example, an Arabic list of medicines dated to the beginning of the 11th century specifies the names of these medicines in other languages, and one of them very much resembles NENA (see Khan 2007a, 11). On the gap in documentation between late antiquity and the early modern period, and on the earliest documented sentence in Neo-Aramaic (16th century), see Hopkins (2000).

¹³ According to Khan (2011, 708), this term was coined by Robert Hoberman (1988; 1989).

¹⁴ For grammar and texts, see Arnold (1989–1991).

lages Maṣlula Bakhṣa and Jubbṣadin in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains north of Damascus; Ṭuroyo and Mlaḥso,¹⁵ two closely related Aramaic languages, each of which has several dialects and which are spoken by Christians in the region of Ṭur ṣAbdin, in the Mardin Province of south-east Turkey; and Neo-Mandaic,¹⁶ spoken by Mandaeans in the city of Ahwaz (in south-west Iran) and its environs.

NENA, spoken by Jews and Christians, originally in the wide area east of the River Tigris in Kurdistan, presents an exceptionally high degree of linguistic diversity. Scholars identify some 150 separate NENA dialects (Khan 2011, 709). Almost every village or small rural settlement in the vast mountainous tracts of Kurdistan had its own distinct dialect. Thus, for instance, the Jewish dialect of Aradhin was spoken by only four families, about thirty people, prior to their immigration to Israel (Mutzafi 2002a). The differences between several of the dialects are so significant that no mutual intelligibility is possible. The mountainous topography of Kurdistan, the scarcity of paved roads, and the sporadic character of human settlement in the region have all contributed to the emergence of this exceptional linguistic diversity.

As would be expected, geographical obstacles, such as the Tigris and the Great Zab rivers, are indeed important linguistic boundaries on the dialect map. Surprisingly, however, these geographical factors are not the only factors in determining dialect

¹⁵ For grammar and texts, see Jastrow (1992).

¹⁶ For grammar and texts, see Häberl (2009); for studies of Neo-Mandaic lexicon, see Mutzafi (2014).

cleavage. One of the most fundamental subgroupings within the NENA dialects is based on religious affiliation: the Jewish dialects differ from the neighbouring Christian dialects (Khan 2011, 709; 2007a, 6).¹⁷ It was often the case that in a single town or village, the two communities, Jewish and Christian, spoke NENA dialects that were mutually unintelligible; this is the case, for example, in the towns of Urmi, Sanandaj, and Sulemaniyya.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Jewish dialects of settlements remote from each other present familial resemblance. The dialect cleavage between Jewish and Christian NENA would seem to have been brought about by different histories of internal migration between the two religious communities (Khan 2007a, 6).

¹⁷ The differences are particularly great east of the Great Zab river, i.e., in the Trans-Zab dialects.

¹⁸ For comparisons between Jewish and Christian dialects, see Khan (2008b, 16), who discusses Jewish Amediya, Betanure, and Nerwa, in contrast with Christian Barwar; and also Mutzafi (2008a, 10), who contrasts Jewish Betanure with Christian Bishmiyaye. The differences between the Jewish and the Christian dialects of Zakho were not as extreme, though clearly there were two separate dialects (see Sabar 2002a, 4). For grammatical descriptions of the Christian dialect of Zakho, see Hoberman (1993); Mole (2002). For texts in the Christian dialects of Zakho and Dihok (Dohok), see Sabar (1995b). According to Mole (2002, iv–v, ix), the Chaldean community of Zakho was, up to the 1960s, relatively small. Immigration from surrounding villages, which were destroyed by the Iraqi government in 1976–1977, as well as a second wave of displacement in the late 1980s, led to the growth of that community, and brought about a diversification in the Neo-Aramaic dialects spoken by Christians in Zakho. The Christian dialect of Zakho is, therefore, not a homogenous dialect, and findings or data of different researchers (e.g., Hoberman and Mole) may consequently diverge.

The many Jewish NENA dialects can be divided into subgroups. The primary division is into three subgroups.

1. The first subgroup of Jewish NENA dialects is the *lišana deni* ‘our language’ subgroup. This includes the dialects of Zakho (Cohen 2012), Amadiya (Greenblatt 2010), Dohok, Barashe, Betanure (Mutzafi 2008a), Shukho, ‘Aṛodan (Mutzafi 2002a),¹⁹ ʾAtrush, Kara, and Nerwa, on the Iraqi side of the border; and two dialects—Challa (Fassberg 2010) and Gzira (Nakano 1970; 1973)—on the Turkish side of the border (Khan 2007a; Mutzafi 2008a; Fassberg 2010).
2. The second subgroup is spoken in the east of the NENA region, across the Great Zab, and is called the Trans-Zab subgroup by Mutzafi (2008b). This subgroup includes the dialects of Salamas (Duval 1883; Gottheil 1893), Urmi (Khan 2008a), Saqqəz (Israeli 1997; 2003; 2014), Sanandaj (Khan 2009), and Kerend (Hopkins 2002) in Iranian Kurdistan; and the dialects of Sulemaniyya and Ḥalabja (Khan 2004), Rustaqa (Khan 2002), Koy Sanjaq (Mutzafi 2004a), Ruwanduz, and Arbil (Khan 1999) in Iraqi Kurdistan.
3. The third subgroup consists of the dialects of Barzan (Mutzafi 2002b; 2004b).

Scholars believe that at the present state of research the drawing of a thorough and accurate dialectological map of NENA would be premature (Mutzafi 2008b, 409–10).

¹⁹ This is the name of the village used by its Jewish inhabitants; its non-Jewish inhabitants call it ʾAraḏin.

The term ‘Neo-Aramaic’ brings to mind the idea of consecutive historical stages, with the Neo-Aramaic languages following historically on from previous Aramaic languages. However, this is not necessarily the case. It needs to be emphasised that all NENA dialects—indeed, all Neo-Aramaic dialects—have considerable historical depth, and that they are not direct descendants of any of the literary Eastern Aramaic dialects—Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, Syriac, and Mandaic—recorded in writing. The Neo-Aramaic dialects descend from ancient dialects that were spoken concurrently with the literary dialects, with only the latter being richly documented, thanks to the mostly religious corpora written therein. One of the indications of the ancient roots of Neo-Aramaic is the presence of Akkadian loanwords—predominantly names of agricultural tools and activities—which are found in Neo-Aramaic, but not in classical literary Aramaic. We must thus infer that the modern dialects are not identical with the classical dialects: the influences that they absorbed from Akkadian at the time when it was still spoken were distinct (Khan 2007a, 2, 11).

Over the past three decades there has been substantial growth in the linguistic scholarship of Neo-Aramaic. Many books and research papers have been published, among them dictionaries, grammatical descriptions, comparative studies, and theoretical investigations. Linguists have found a variety of important phenomena in Neo-Aramaic. Here four of these will be mentioned:

1. Partial ergativity (Khan 2007b; 2017; Doron and Khan 2010; 2012; Coghill 2016; Noorlander 2021). NENA

dialects exhibit ergativity.²⁰ Ergativity is defined as a grammatical system which exhibits syntactic or morphological treatment of the sentence subject in sentences employing an intransitive verb identical to that of the sentence object in sentences employing a transitive verb—treatment which is distinct from that of the subject of the transitive verb. Various subgroups of NENA dialects show different degrees of ergativity, but none of them is fully ergative: ergativity is restricted to defined areas of the verbal system (e.g., it is found in past tense only, or only with verbs of a certain lexical aspect). Comparing the distribution of ergativity in NENA subgroups reveals a tendency to gradual grammatical change: the transition to a nominative-accusative system (a system which distinguishes the treatment of subjects and objects regardless of the transitivity or intransitivity of the verb), which is more common cross-linguistically. Neo-Aramaic is the only Semitic language that presents ergativity, and the influence of Kurdish, an ergative language, has surely contributed to the introduction of ergativity into NENA. However, this is not a simple case of areal influence, since the seeds of ergativity are to be found already in ancient forms of Aramaic (Khan 2007a: 14). It appears that this feature of the language, which existed in an undeveloped form, became fully manifested in the ‘sympathetic’ environment of the Kurdish language.

²⁰ As do Țuroyo and Mlaḥso.

2. Language contact (Kapeliuk 2011). Until the emigration of its minorities, Kurdistan was a unique laboratory for research into the horizontal, contemporaneous, relations between languages. In a single geographic region, simultaneously and for extended periods of history, many dialects of languages that are members of separate families were spoken: Aramaic (North-Western Semitic), Kurdish (Indo-Iranian), Turkish and Azeri (South-Western Turkic), and Arabic (Central Semitic). The investigation of the mutual influences between these languages is a fertile ground for interesting conclusions (Khan 2005; 2007a, 15; Haig and Khan 2018).

3. Processes of change in the Semitic family. NENA attracts the attention of Semitists for what it may tell us about ancient Semitic languages. The study of NENA within the framework of historical Semitic linguistics enables a deeper and fuller understanding of long-term processes of change in the Semitic languages. It also helps in producing a fuller picture of the linguistic situation of the Semitic languages in antiquity (Khan 2005). Research can trace processes involving the full manifestation of phenomena which had already appeared embryonically in the ancient languages (e.g., the phonemicisation of the two sets of allophones of the *bgdkpt* consonants; Khan 2005, 84–87), as well as processes whose complete life cycles have occurred within the chronological boundaries of Neo-Aramaic. Processes of the latter type are especially surprising, since they sometimes repeat similar processes that occurred in the

ancient languages, with no apparent causal connection: what might be called the recycling of linguistic phenomena (e.g., the unification of the phonemes /x/ and /ǧ/, newly formed by the split of *bgdkpt*, with the phonemes /ħ/ and /ʕ/, respectively, similar to the merger which took place in ancient North-Western Semitic languages; Khan 2005, 87–93). This brings to mind concealed linguistic DNA, hereditarily passing from one temporally distant language to another within the same family.

4. Historical dialectology. The dialectological picture that NENA presents has challenged the picture of linguistic reality painted by linguists of previous generations: a picture of monolithic languages, devoid of significant dialectological diversity, with clear and defined boundaries. The overwhelming dialectological diversity within NENA has led scholars to speculate that the dialect picture in antiquity may have been equally diverse. This assumption aids in the understanding of many details in classical texts.²¹

²¹ For instance, it is possible to explain differences between the three main reading traditions of Biblical Hebrew—the Tiberian, Palestinian, and Babylonian traditions—as reflecting dialect differences. It is possible to explain the (rare) divergence in several cases between the Tiberian vocalisation and the consonantal text in similar fashion.

3.0. The Study of Folklore

An important part of the present study centres around folkloric texts. This section, then, offers a brief discussion of the preliminaries of the discipline of folkloristics.

3.1. Jakobson and Bogatyrev's 'Folklore as a Special Form of Creation'

Given that this study analyses verbally performed items of folklore, a question arises: is there anything that marks off folk-texts and distinguishes them from other forms of verbal or literary expression? That is, is there anything that justifies treating items of folklore as belonging to an independent category, deserving of its own research methodologies? The answer to that question, according to the article 'Folklore as a Special Form of Creation' by Roman Jakobson and Petr Bogatyrev (1980 [1929])—regarded by many as the founding manifesto of modern folkloristics—is, of course, yes. Folklore is indeed a special, unique, form of human creativity, and it cannot be categorised as any other form of artistic creativity. Its nature is particularly dissimilar from written literature, since in folkloristic creativity an inherent component is what Jakobson and Bogatyrev (1980 [1929], 7) term the "preventive censure of the community." "An item of folklore per se begins its existence only after it has been adopted by a given community, and only in those of its aspects which the community has accepted" (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980 [1929], 4–5). Society is the preserving medium of the folkloric work of art, and the survival of a given work depends on its further transmission: "in folklore only those forms are retained which hold a functional

value for the given community” (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980 [1929], 6).

According to Jakobson and Bogatyrev the relationship between a potential item of folklore, one which exists as knowledge common to many members of a community, and any actual, concrete, individual performance, is parallel to that between the two Saussurean concepts of *langue* and *parole*:

In folklore the relationship between the work of art on the one hand, and its objectivization—i.e., the so-called variants of this work as performed by different individuals—on the other, is completely analogous to the relationship between *langue* and *parole*. Like *langue*, the folkloric work is extra-personal and leads only a potential existence; it is only a complex of particular norms and impulses, a canvas of actual tradition, to which the performers impart life through the embellishments of their individual creativity, just as the producers of *parole* do with respect to *langue*. (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980 [1929], 9)

The difference between oral and written literature is particularly salient when comparing the potential survival and longevity of the two: as opposed to folklore, a written literary work “retains its potential existence” (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980 [1929], 6). It can be revived and become influential once again after long periods, even centuries, of complete disregard and neglect by society. Its survival, or at least its potential survival, is not dependent upon intergenerational transmission or acceptance.

In the field of folklore the possibility of reactivating poetic facts is significantly smaller. If the bearers of a given poetic tradition should die out, this tradition can no longer be resuscitated, while in literature phenomena which are a

hundred or even several hundred years old may revive and become productive once again! (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980 [1929], 7)

Despite the methodological separation between oral and written literature which the authors draw, an interesting form of relation between the two is possible, a reciprocal relation between folklore and written literature—the ‘recycling’ of folklore. Despite their categorical differentiation, their separate functions in culture, and their different paths of development, artistic literary works and folkloristic works may influence one another and may constitute the raw material of one another. The authors address this type of relation in discussing Pushkin’s poem ‘The Hussar’, commenting that it is “a characteristic example of the way in which art forms change their functions in passing from folklore to literature and, vice versa, from literature to folklore” (Jakobson and Bogatyrev (1980 [1929]: 13–14). Pushkin based his poem on a popular folktale, but reworked it into a highly sophisticated and ironic poem, whose folksiness serves as an artistic device. The poem later reverted back to the realm of folklore, becoming part of a popular piece of Russian folk theatre.²²

The close association between the inception of the theoretical framework of folkloristics and that of linguistics is notable throughout the article, both of whose authors are indeed famous for their contributions to linguistics: using key concepts of theoretical linguistics, the authors claim that the adaptation of an

²² For a similar case of the relationship between NENA oral and written literature, the book *Toqpo šel Yosef* (Farḥi 1867) and the story of Joseph and his brothers, see Aloni (2014a, 27–30; 2014b, 339).

item of folklore by a society, and subsequent changes that the item of folklore undergoes, are parallel to processes of grammaticalisation and other innovative transformations in language. An incidental variation of a linguistic generalised principle—a lapsus or an element of personal style—cannot be considered a part of a language’s grammar, unless it is gradually accepted into the general system. A *parole* incident, a personal performance, will remain defined as such unless it is integrated into the *langue*. This can happen only if the coincidental change matches the internal rules of development of the language.²³

3.2. The Inherent Injustice of Analysis

Analysis of a verbal item of folklore, or of any item of folklore, almost always consists of analysis of a recorded, transcribed, written, concrete performance of that item, a performance that is but one of many possible performances of it. Analysis detaches the item of folklore from its broader original context. Any particular performance of an item of folklore emerges organically from the context in which it is performed—complex contexts many of whose constituent factors are normally disregarded and discarded in documentation and analysis. An actual performance is

²³ Naturally, almost a century after its publication, Jakobson and Bogatyrev’s article has been followed by numerous important discussions and theoretical formulations regarding folkloristics and its object of study, which are beyond the scope of the present book. See, for instance, Finnegan (1977); Ben-Amos (1982); Bendix (1997); Shuman and Hasan-Rokem (2012); Honko (2013); Noyes (2016).

specially crafted by the performer (and by the environment—audience reactions, for instance), consciously and unconsciously, to match particular aspects of the situation: the event, the day, the place, and so on. A given analysis must disregard a substantial portion of these aspects of the particular situation. It is this necessary disregarding, partially intentional and partially arising from ignorance, that creates an injustice towards the item of folklore being analysed, the inherent injustice in any analysis.²⁴ It is brought about by the distinction between a concrete performance of an item of folklore and its abstract, potential, ‘dematerialised’, existence, common to many members of the community—a distinction which is so fundamental to the study of folklore.

3.3. The Study of Folklore as the Rejection of Folklore

Ironically, the inception of the study of folklore is linked to the rejection of folklore itself. The rise of folkloristics as a discipline occurred simultaneously with, and was driven by, the major forces and processes of change of Western modernity. One component of the cultural changes brought about by modernity was a rejection of the ‘traditional’. Folklore, tagged as traditional, was rejected as being a feature of non-progressive cultures and societies, the opposite of how modern society perceived itself. The flourishing in Europe of the documentation, collection, and study

²⁴ This inherent injustice brings to mind the inherent injustice of the law pointed out by scholars of jurisprudence: the law must always ignore many of the relevant details of a given incident, many of the variables of a complex realistic occurrence, in order to be able to make effective generalisations (see Cover 1993).

of the folklore of various cultures during the 19th and early 20th centuries may thus be explained as an assertion, and a reinforced self-recognition, of the progress of modern society. Folklore was showcased as signifying precisely what modern society is not (Bendix and Hasan-Rokem 2012, 2; see also Bauman and Briggs 2003).

4.0. The Database of Jewish NENA Recordings

All of the NENA material contained in this book is drawn from a database of audio recordings of native speakers of Jewish NENA, members of the Zakho community, now living mainly in Jerusalem.²⁵ I have collected the recordings over the past eleven years by means of fieldwork, with the project commencing in April 2010. Thirty-three speakers²⁶ have been recorded for the database, which now comprises approximately 150 hours of audio recordings. Various spoken genres are represented in the database: enriched biblical stories, epic songs, different types of folktales, moralistic stories, fairy tales, jokes, proverbs and parables, food recipes, personal memoirs, poetry, mnemohistory, and conversations of various types.

²⁵ Twenty of the recorded speakers were born in Zakho; nine were born in Jerusalem into Zakho families; and four were born in Barashe, Challa, Kara, and Sandu, respectively.

²⁶ Thirteen women, twenty men.

It was Prof. Geoffrey Khan who first encouraged me to start recording speakers for this project in 2010, stressing the importance of the documentation and study of the NENA dialects.²⁷

On a personal note, the contribution of the thirty-three women and men whom I have recorded, and in whose homes I have spent numerous hours—their contribution to my study, to my knowledge, and indeed to my life, has been invaluable. When I started my fieldwork, I set out to find informants, but what I have found was wonderful people.

5.0. Note on Transcriptions and Translations

The transcription system used throughout this book for the NENA texts is the one used by Prof. Geoffrey Khan in his NENA grammars (see, for instance, Khan 1999; 2004; 2008a; 2009). In addition to the standard Semitic consonant and vowel signs, intonation signs are employed: a superscript vertical line (a^l) indicates an intonation unit boundary; a grave accent (\grave{a}) indicates the main nuclear stress in an intonation unit; and acute accents (\acute{a}) indicate non-nuclear word stresses in an intonation unit. Usually, vowels in stressed syllables are long and vowels in unstressed syllables are short; long vowels in unstressed syllables are marked with a macron (\bar{a}) and short vowels in stressed syllables are

²⁷ See Khan (2007a, 1): “The description of these dialects is of immense importance for Semitic philology. The dialects exhibit linguistic developments that are not only interesting in their own right but also present illuminating parallels to developments in earlier Semitic.”

marked with a breve (ă).²⁸ Hyphens are used in the following cases: between the *g~k*,²⁹ *b~p*,³⁰ and *qam-* prefixes and their *qatəl* verb base; before cliticised copulas *-ile~le* *-ila~la* *-ilu~lu*; after the cliticised prepositions *l-*, *b-*, *bəd-*, *ta-*, etc.; after the conjunction *u-* ‘and’; after the cliticised relative particle *dəd-*; before or after other cliticised elements: *be-* ‘household of’, *la-* ‘no, not’ *-šī* ‘also’, etc. Words or phrases in Modern Hebrew are written between superscript capital *H* letters (*^H...^H*).³¹

Morpheme-by-morpheme glossed NENA texts are provided in ch. 1, §14.0, and ch. 3, §4.0.

English translations are as literal as possible; tenses are kept as in the NENA text, at the expense of standard English style.³² An example of a particularly difficult word to translate is the word *hənnā*. The literal meaning of *hənnā* is ‘this’ or ‘this thing’. Pragmatically it has several functions: a substitute for a word that the speaker is unable to remember (sometimes the speaker will add the forgotten word immediately thereafter); an

²⁸ This is also true for vowels whom the speaker chose to pronounce particularly long or short in their connected speech for various reasons (i.e., non-phonemically).

²⁹ Also with a prosthetic vowel: *gə-*.

³⁰ The hyphen is kept when the verbal prefixes *g~k-* and *b~p-* are assimilated to the subsequent consonant, e.g., *q-qābəl*, *p-pāyāš*.

³¹ In some cases it is difficult to decide whether a phrase is a loan from Modern Hebrew or whether it is a loan from an older layer made prior to immigration to Israel.

³² For a study of Jewish Zakho NENA narrative syntax, see Cohen (2012, 237–357).

anaphoric pronoun referring back to an object or a concept mentioned earlier; an abbreviation replacing an idea that all participants know it refers to; and as a euphemistic substitute for words that the speaker wishes to avoid saying. The word *hanna* is translated as italicised ‘*this*’ throughout the English translations.

6.0. Outline of the Book

The three chapters of this book explore three genres³³ of the rich oral heritage of the Jews of Zakho: proverbs, enriched biblical narratives, and folktales. The three genres chosen for this book, or rather the analysed units of each of these genres, progress so to speak from the smallest unit, that of the proverb, to the larger unit of the motifeme, and then to the largest unit of a complete folktale.³⁴

The first chapter deals with an important member of the family of gnomic genres: the proverb. The chapter provides contextualisation within the framework of paremiology, the study of proverbs. It suggests that what is lacking in the existing documentation and analysis of Jewish NENA proverbs (and indeed, in those of other languages as well) is a key factor in the understanding of the phenomenon of the proverb: the performative

³³ For the centrality of genre as a category in the study of folklore, see Ben-Amos (1969; 1976a; 1976b); Seitel (1999).

³⁴ Indeed, these three units are of different analytical statuses: the proverb and the folktale are both genres recognised by the community of speakers as such (i.e., emic genres; see the discussion in ch. 2, §3.1), whereas the unit of the motifeme is an analytical unit derived from a theoretical methodology (about the unit of the motifeme see ch. 2, §§3.2.2, 4.0).

context. The chapter presents a new collection of Jewish Zakho NENA proverbs.

The topic of the second chapter is the genre of enriched biblical narratives. The chapter proposes a tool for analysis of such narratives: the concept of the transposed motifeme. In order to achieve an understanding of this term, the chapter gives background for the concepts of motif and motifeme in the study of folklore. It describes the methodological approach in which the concept of motifeme is used: thematology. The chapter examines one example of an enriched biblical narrative, the narrative of Ruth and Naomi and King David as told by Samra Zaqen, and demonstrates an analysis of it using the concept of the transposed motifeme.³⁵

At the centre of the third chapter is a folktale, ‘The King and the Wazir’ as told by Ḥabuba Messusani. This folktale is a rather unusual one, since it is built around a relatively uncommon motif in folk-literature, the motif of magical gender transformation. The chapter contextualises this motif in the scholarship of folk-literature, and proposes a reading of the folktale.³⁶

The book ends with some Closing Remarks.

³⁵ The recording of the narrative recounted by Samra Zaken is available for listening at <https://nena.ames.cam.ac.uk/dialects/78/>.

³⁶ The recording of the folktale told by Ḥabuba Messusani is available for listening at <https://nena.ames.cam.ac.uk/dialects/78/>.

CHAPTER 1: PROVERBS

The so-called gnomic genres of oral culture are a group of genres which share the common feature of brevity. Proverbs, proverbial phrases, idioms, riddles, jokes, aphorisms, Wellerisms, and slogans are several important members of the group. The study of this group of oral genres is situated on the border between several disciplines: folkloristics, linguistics, anthropology, and literary theory. It seems that the gnomic genres are important not only to the cultural competence of a member of a community, but also to the linguistic competence of a speaker of a language: the Russian scholar Grigorii L'vovich Permiakov concluded as the result of an experiment that there is a “paremiological minimum” of 300 gnomic texts (Permiakov 1985), which “native as well as foreign speakers [...] need to know [...] in order to communicate effectively in that language” (Mieder 1997, 405). This chapter is dedicated to a prominent member of the group of gnomic genres: the proverb.

The study of proverbs and proverbial phrases can generally be divided into two realms: paremiography, which is the collection, compilation, and lexicography of proverbs; and paremiology, which is the theoretical study of proverbs and proverb usage. This chapter will begin with an overview of the existing paremiographical collections of Jewish Zakho NENA proverbs (§1.0), and will then discuss some paremiological issues exemplified by Zakho proverbs (§§2.0–13.0). The remainder of the chapter consists of proverbs collected in my own fieldwork (§§14.0–15.0).

1.0. Paremiography: Published Collections of Zakho Proverbs

Four collections of Jewish Zakho NENA proverbs have been published so far: Pesah̄ Bar-Adon (1930), Yosef Yoʻel Rivlin (1945; 1946), Judah Benzion Segal (1955), and Yona Sabar (1978). Together they comprise approximately 400 proverbs.¹

Each of these collections utilises a different lexicographical system. In the early days of Jewish Neo-Aramaic scholarship, Bar-Adon (1930, 12) published, a short collection of seven proverbs, which he had heard from Ḥakham Baruch. Bar-Adon quotes the Neo-Aramaic proverb in vocalised Hebrew script, gives its literal² translation in Hebrew, and adds a comment about its “intention,” sometimes including linguistic remarks. For example:

1. *šuləd ʻozili xurasi, ləbbi k-čahe g-nexi ʻizasi*

‘[In Hebrew:] A work done for me by my friends, my heart gets tired [but] my hands rest.’

The intention: When one’s work is done by others, one cannot be sure whether the workers are doing the work decently, and so one’s heart is not at ease, as opposed to one’s hands, which are at rest. Or: The heart gets tired when work is performed by friends and the heart itself does nothing. (Bar-Adon 1930, 12)³

¹ A few proverbs occur in more than one collection.

² On the difficulties that the term ‘literal meaning’ entails, see Searle (1979).

³ His footnotes have been omitted. The Neo-Aramaic in the examples cited in this section is transcribed according to the transcription system used throughout this book, which involves some modification of the

Rivlin lists the 108⁴ proverbs of his collection in alphabetical order. They are transcribed in vocalised Hebrew script. For each proverb, there is a literal⁵ Hebrew translation, after which he gives a short explanation of the meaning or intention of the proverb. For example:

32. *ʿan peši tre, peši t̄laha*

(If today there are two, tomorrow there will be three.)

Meaning if a man and a woman marry, children will follow; or if two people join together loyally, their partnership will grow and more people will join. (Rivlin 1945, 213)

In some instances, when a proverb alludes to a narrative that is necessary to understand it, Rivlin adds the narrative as well.⁶ For example:

95. *xa ʿena ʾəl səlqa u-xa ʿena ʾəl kotalka.*

(One eye towards the beet and one eye towards the dumpling.)

A tale: They served a man some beet, which was very good and sweet, and also a meat dumpling. He did not know which he should choose. As a result, other people ate them both, and he was left with neither. (Rivlin 1945, 213)⁷

forms given by the original authors. The translation from Hebrew is mine.

⁴ Rivlin (1945, 207) states that this is “a selection from one thousand proverbs in the language of Targum [= NENA]” which are in use by the Jews of Kurdistan.

⁵ See fn. 2 above.

⁶ On proverbs that represent or summarise narratives, see §8.0 below.

⁷ This is reminiscent of Buridan’s ass.

Rivlin acknowledged the value of his collection of proverbs for linguistic research. At the time of its publication, there was hardly any published material in the Jewish Zakho dialect, or in any other Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialect. However, he proclaimed that his motivation in publishing these proverbs was to

open a window which will allow us to observe the spirit of this Jewish tribe, which is almost lost in the land of Assyria,⁸ and also to observe the spirit of the environment in which they live, their manner, and their wisdom and morals. (Rivlin 1945, 208; my translation)

Segal divides the 143 proverbs in his collection into thirty-three semantic categories, such as ambition, authority, boasting, and boldness. The proverbs are given in a detailed phonetic transcription (which does not correspond to the modern standard for transcribing Neo-Aramaic). Each proverb is translated literally⁹ into English. Linguistic comments, mainly etymological, are given for each proverb, and reference is also made to other paremiographical collections. For many of the proverbs, a concise remark about meaning is given. For example:

[Category:] Ambition

1. *súse gə-mná'le u-sariṭlána-ši g-márəm 'áqle*

(*sariṭlána* Syr[iac] rarely for ܪܘܫܐ, Payne Smith, Thesaurus, s.v.; *ši*, Kurd[ish]; *aqle*, perhaps from *argle*, Syr[iac] ܪܘܫܐ, rather than from Syr[iac] ܪܘܫܐ 'twist'.

'The horse is being shod, and the crab also lifts its foot.'
(Rivlin, No. 84: 'The water-reptile(?) lifts its foot, and says, Shoe me.' Maclean No. 58: 'They came to shoe the mule,

⁸ This is an allusion to Isa. 27.13 (my footnote).

⁹ See fn. 2 above.

and the frog put out his foot too.’ Maclean, however, explains the proverb: If one man gets a present everyone else expects one too.). (Segal 1955, 254)

Segal’s principal informants in compiling the collection were Ḥakham Mordekhai ‘Alwani and Ḥakham Ḥabib ‘Alwani (Segal 1955, 253).¹⁰ It seems that one of Segal’s goals was to contextualise the proverbs that he collected with other collections of Aramaic, Kurdish, and Middle Eastern proverbs, and point out linguistic issues that emerge from these proverbs.

The aim of Sabar’s collection is not only to document NENA proverbs, but to document all proverbs that were used by the Jewish community of Zakho, regardless of the language in which they were framed. Two-thirds of his 153 proverbs are indeed in Zakho’s Jewish NENA. However, the criterion for this collection is not language-based, but community-based, and it documents the lexicon of proverbs shared by the community. Sabar lists proverbs in the three languages commonly spoken by the members of the Jewish community of Zakho—NENA, Kurdish, and Arabic—as well as giving one proverb in the Christian NENA dialect of Zakho (Sabar 1978, 221, no. 16), and one proverb which is partially in Turkish (Sabar 1978, 226, no. 81). According to Sabar, in addition to multiple loanwords from old layers of Hebrew, Kurdish, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish, a salient feature of Jewish Neo-Aramaic speech is its colouring “with numerous proverbs in the languages of their neighbouring ethnic groups,” which the Jews “naturally incorporated into Neo-Aramaic speech” (Sabar 1978, 215). Sabar notes that the reasons for not

¹⁰ Ḥakham Ḥabib ‘Alwani was the author’s grandfather.

translating “foreign” proverbs into NENA may have been in order to enhance the authenticity of folk-narratives of the foreign milieu, or to preserve the proverb’s specific “literary form, such as rhyme, play on words, rhythm, metre, and other prosodic features, which would be lost in translation” (Sabar 1978, 218).¹¹

Sabar gives the transcribed proverb, its translation into English, a reference to other paremiographical collections, including the Zakho collections discussed above, and an explanation of the meaning of the proverb or any linguistic issues that emerge from it. For example:

77. *kepa l-duke yaqura*. ‘A stone is heavy in its (original) place.’ A person is respected only as long as he is in his own community, Cf. Segal, 34; Maclean (1895), 122; Socin (1882), p. 119, r (vars.); Tikriti, 783; Yahuda, Y. B., 643 (vars.). (Sabar 1978, 226)

Sabar (1978, 232) also gives an index of ‘subjects’; for example, the proverb given above appears under ‘Honor and Shame’ (Sabar 1978, 232).

2.0. A Misleading Conception

It is common to see proverbs as traditional sayings expressing a general truth, tokens of folk-wisdom formulated and polished into pithy, gnomic sentences. The most important and meaningful constituent of a proverb, according to this common view, is

¹¹ In my opinion, the use of a foreign language may also serve as a marker of proverbiality by increasing out-of-contextness. On out-of-contextness as an important feature of proverbs, see this chapter’s discussions in §§3.0 and 10.1 below.

its content, which is identical with its wise or moralistic message. A more literary-oriented approach might also be interested in the literary mechanisms (figurative language, prosody, intertextuality, etc.) that the proverb utilises in order to effectively convey its message. But even then, the assumption is that the important part of the proverb is the meaning contained therein, its semantics. This conception is very much based on the classical idea of the proverb as a moralistic-didactic literary product. It is strengthened by the way proverbs are collected, presented, and traditionally studied in classical and other ancient proverb anthologies.

This conception of the proverb is a misleading one in so far as it concerns the linguistic and folkloristic documentation, study, and analysis of proverbs. It may result in neglecting three central elements of the phenomenon of the proverb. Firstly, an extensive set of proverbs and proverbial phrases—those which do not match the view of the proverb as encapsulating ‘traditional wisdom’ or having moralistic or didactic value—is left out, despite being a part of the oral culture of a community. This may be termed the *lexicographical gap*, since it is a shortcoming in the completeness of the paremiographical collection. Secondly, the functional and pragmatic value of proverbs is ignored. The social-behavioural and linguistic circumstances in which a certain proverb may or may not be used and the ends that the utterance of a proverb aims to achieve either in the social sphere or in the discourse are key elements of proverb competence. Ignoring them results in what may be termed the *pragmatic gap*. And thirdly, the fact that the meaning of a proverb is not determined solely by its

internal constituents, but to a very large extent by its discursive environment—that is, the fact that a proverb’s meaning is context-dependent—is often forgotten. This results in a *semantic gap*, since the portion of the meaning of a proverb which lies outside the boundaries of its sentence is missed.

The importance of context parameters for the study of folklore performance in general has long been recognised. It was expressed succinctly by the functionalist anthropologist Malinowski (1926, 24, quoted in Bascom 1954, 335): “The text, of course, is extremely important, but without the context it remains lifeless.” Equally relevant are the words of the folklorist Alan Dundes:

Functional data must, therefore, be recorded when the item is collected. An item once removed from its social context and published in this way deprives the scientific folklorist of an opportunity to understand why the particular item was used in the particular situation to meet a particular need. (Dundes 1965, 279, in his introduction to a reprint of Bascom 1954)

In the collection of proverbs contained in this chapter, an attempt has been made to overcome these three gaps—the lexicographical, the pragmatic, and the semantic: the first gap, by broadening the scope of what would be considered a proverb, and the latter two by giving context situations for each proverb.¹²

3.0. Defining Proverbs

Despite their very wide distribution in all registers of language, and the ease with which we intuitively recognise proverbs when

¹² See §13.0 below.

encountering them, it is not at all trivial to define what one is. In fact, some paremiologists have believed that it is impossible to do so. Perhaps the most influential book in modern paremiology begins with the following statement:

The definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking. An incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not. Hence no definition will enable us to identify positively a sentence as proverbial. (Taylor 1985, originally published in 1962, quoted in Dundes 1981, 44)

The author, Archer Taylor, “remarked that in a way his whole book constituted a definition of the proverb” (Dundes 1981, 44).

Another influential scholar, Bartlett Jere Whiting, writes:

To offer a brief yet workable definition of a proverb, especially with the proverbial phrase included, is well nigh impossible. Happily no definition is really necessary, since all of us know what a proverb is. (Whiting 1952, 331, quoted in Dundes 1981, 44)

Despite these sceptical remarks concerning the possibility and (lack of) necessity of such a definition, many scholars have offered their views on this question, either in works dedicated wholly to the theoretical quest for a definition, or as tentative theoretical premises in works dealing with other paremiological issues. In what follows, three of these definitions are given, and attention is drawn to certain aspects of these definitions.

A short definition is given by Peter Seitel, in an article which will be further discussed below (see §9.0 below):

Proverbs [...] may be provisionally defined as short, traditional, ‘out-of-context’, statements used to further some social end. (Seitel 1969, 145)

This definition raises a few questions. What is the nature and degree of the ‘out-of-contextness’ of proverbs? How do they relate then to the discursive, linguistic, social, or behavioural contexts in which they occur? What is the meaning of “traditional” in that respect, and why should proverbs be regarded as such? How does the utterance of a proverb “further some social end,” and what type of ends does it further?

Galit Hasan-Rokem defines proverbs as a genre of folk-literature, among the genres that have been termed gnomic or minor:

The most common of these genres is the proverb, which may be defined as a genre of folk literature which presents a specifically structured poetical summary referring to collective experience. The proverb is used in recurring situations by the members of an ethnic group to interpret a behavioural or interactional situation, usually one which is a source of conflict or scepticism. (Hasan-Rokem 1982a, 11)

In the spirit of the aforementioned (see above, Introduction, §3.0) programmatic article by Jakobson and Bogatyrev (1980 [1929]), Hasan-Rokem introduces into the discussion the element of collective experience. The proverb is a mediator between communal experience and communal poetics, and the private, personal usage of it within personal experience. Hasan-Rokem points out several features that underlie the phenomenon of the proverb. Firstly, by referring a situation to the community’s

values and transferring it to a conceptual level, the proverb restores equilibrium to the situation. Secondly, a proverb, once used, creates a collocation, a link, between the situation at hand and a chain of past situations that the same proverb may apply to. Hasan-Rokem terms this “the paradigmatic aspect of proverb usage” (‘paradigmatic’ here in the Saussurean sense of the term). When proverbs are used within a narrative, it is this usage that creates intertextuality, a relationship with other narratives and situations in which the same proverb may appear. And thirdly, the ability of the individual to properly use a proverb in acceptable, “correct,” contexts is “the syntagmatic aspect” (again in the Saussurean sense). Hasan-Rokem terms this ability “proverb competence.”¹³

These two definitions by Seitel and Hasan-Rokem emphasise the function of proverbs. They attach more importance for the understanding of what a proverb is to its relationship with its context (social, behavioural, discursive, and narrative contexts) than to the qualities of the particular sentence or phrase which happens to be that proverb. They maintain that what determines whether we deem an utterance a proverb or not are chiefly parameters *external* to that utterance.¹⁴

¹³ See §5.0 below. ‘Competence’ here is as used by Chomsky; Hasan-Rokem (1982a, 11) refers to Chomsky (1965, 4).

¹⁴ This is not to say that Hasan-Rokem or Seitel dismiss or ignore the *internal* parameters of the structure of the proverb. Hasan-Rokem speaks of three levels of the proverb: the use, the function, and the structure (see in particular Hasan-Rokem 1982a, 18–53; see also Hasan-Rokem 1993, where both the context and poetics of the proverbs are analysed). For Seitel’s (1969) argument, the concept of metaphor, which pertains

Alan Dundes, on the other hand, offers a different view. His approach to the question of what a proverb is relies on observing its internal structure. “The critical question is thus not what a proverb does, but what a proverb is” (Dundes 1981, 45). Thus he offers the following definition, which involves the linguistic concepts of topic and comment:¹⁵

[T]he proverb appears to be a traditional propositional statement consisting of at least one descriptive element, a descriptive element consisting of a topic and a comment. (Dundes 1981, 60)

The attempt to define the proverb intrinsically, avoiding dependence on external factors, is appealing. Dundes’s definition, however, has a point of weakness: it may be applicable to many utterances, even those which are clearly not proverbs. It does not indicate what is not a proverb. As Arora (1994, 10) puts it, “Dundes’ topic/comment analysis is likewise applicable to any number of ordinary, ‘made-up’ utterances.” The only thing that differentiates ‘ordinary utterances’ from proverbs under this definition is the concept of traditionality.¹⁶ We shall return to Dundes’s approach in §7.0 below.

To conclude this section on definitions, here are two final short, informal definitions, which may be regarded as proverbs in their own right. Cervantes stated that proverbs are “short sen-

to *internal* structure, is crucial. On internal and external parameters see §5.0 below.

¹⁵ These are particularly associated with the functional sentence perspective of the Prague School.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the concept of traditionality, see below, §10.0, specifically the features discussed in §§10.2–3.

tences drawn from long experience” (quoted by Dundes 1981, 61). And Lord John Russell defined the proverb as “one man’s wit and all man’s wisdom” (Taylor 1981, 3). Taylor, using an altered formulation of this definition as the title for an article, states that this definition underwent a process of proverbial change, and is now remembered as giving prominence to wisdom rather than wit: “the wisdom of many and the wit of one” (Taylor (1981, 3–4).

4.0. Image, Message, Formula, and Proverb

Synonymy

The Finnish folklorist and paremiologist Matti Kuusi, distinguishes between three components of the proverb: the proverb’s image, its message, and its formula (Kuusi 1966; Dundes 1981, 46–47). The proverb’s image is its semantic content considered independently from its pragmatic function as a proverb. The proverb’s message is usually not expressed explicitly in its semantic content, and is related to its pragmatic function. The proverb’s formula is its syntactic or logical structure.

Some formulas recur in the proverbial lexicon independently of the proverb’s image or message. This can be better understood with an example:

be-kálo šʾàšlu,¹ be-xátna lá rʾàšlu.¹

‘[In] the house of the bride they are [already] rejoicing, [but in] the house of the bridegroom they have not [yet] felt [anything].’ (proverb no. (6) in the present collection¹⁷)

This proverb’s image is related to a wedding: one family is already celebrating their daughter’s engagement while the other family has not even heard about it.¹⁸ The message of the proverb, made explicit, is ‘one party is ahead of the other in a shared venture; one of the parties may even not express agreement to the initiative’. The formula of this proverb, two independent clauses of which the second is negative, recurs in other proverbs:

dərmán šəzáne ʾiz,¹ dərmán šríʿe lès.¹

‘There is a cure for the mad, [but] there is no cure for the crazed.’ (proverb no. (10) in the present collection)

yóma gnèle,¹ qáza u-bála là-gnelu.¹

‘The day ended, [but its] troubles did not end.’ (proverb no. (16) in the present collection)

The division between the three components of the proverb has relevance to a phenomenon that may be termed ‘proverb synonymy’. Synonymy between proverbs may occur in either the images or the messages of the proverbs. Image synonymy is similitude of the images expressed in the proverbs, whereas message synonymy occurs when different proverbs with dissimilar images

¹⁷ The proverbs are given in §§14.0–15.0. The proverbs in §14.0 are given morpheme-by-morpheme glosses, and a context situation is provided for each.

¹⁸ On the procedure for betrothals and weddings in the Jewish community of Zakho, see Aloni (2014a, 88–101).

convey a similar message and are used to further a similar end. Take, for example:

*šàqfa' la mšápya 'əl šàqfa,' lá-k-tafqa 'əbba.'*¹

‘[If] a piece did not resemble a[nother] piece, it would not have met it.’ (proverb no. (72) in the present collection)

The message of this proverb is that ‘the two parties are together, or are collaborating on some ill endeavour, only because there is something similar in their characters, or because of the implicit agreement of the less guilty party’. It is synonymous with the message of the following proverb, though their images are very different:

čūčáksa kfálla zarzúra u-tróhun fayyàre

‘A bird was the surety of a starling and both of them can fly.’ (proverb no. (72) in Rivlin 1946, 211; my translation)

The message is also the same in:

*sawóna qrəšle,' sotánta hnèle-la.'*¹

‘The old man pinched [and] the old woman enjoyed it.’ (proverb no. (58) in the present collection)

Since synonymous proverbs are usually synonymous only in one of the three components, they always present a degree of contrast. The choice between different synonymous proverbs, in the same situation, may emphasise different aspects of that situation, and by that offer different interpretations of the same situation.

5.0. ‘External’ and ‘Internal’ Grammar and Structure

When considering the grammar and structure of proverbs and proverb usage, the discussion may be divided into two interrelated aspects: the ‘external’ and the ‘internal’. Given that the term ‘grammar’ refers to a set of implicit rules which govern the correct use of a linguistic item, and that the term ‘structure’ refers to the manifestation of these rules in any particular occurrence as well as to the relationships between the various constituents of that structure, ‘external’ refers here to the relationship of a proverb with its surrounding linguistic environment (its co-text) and with its non-linguistic circumstances (its context); ‘internal’ refers to the structure, content, and grammatical phenomena within the sentence(s) or phrase(s) that constitutes the proverb itself. The ‘structure’ here includes linguistic-grammatical and poetic features (such as syntactic structure, selection of lexical items, prosody, etc.), as well as internal ‘folkloristic structure’ (on folkloristic structure, see §7.0 below).

The following five sections consider several approaches to both the internal and the external analysis of the grammar and structure of proverbs.

6.0. Internal Structure

Looked at in terms of their internal linguistic features, Jewish Zakho proverbs appear in various forms. They consist of a variety of syntactic structures: they may be comprised of one sentence or more, or they may not be a complete sentence at all; they may

employ various types of subordinate clauses. They may use special, poetic, or rare lexical items, or may use everyday or even vulgar language. They may utilise various topoi and images from various semantic fields. They may or may not be in metre, may rhyme or not, may use alliteration or other types of sound play, or may use puns. It would seem that there are no particular grammatical or poetic constraints on, or prerequisites for, a sentence or a phrase in order that it should be a proverb. To put it differently, there are no absolute grammatical or linguistic parameters according to which the interpretation of an utterance in natural speech as a proverb by the listeners is predictable (on the perceptibility of proverbiality, see §10.0 below).

However, it does seem that many Zakho proverbs do have one or more of a small set of characteristic grammatical features that may increase the likelihood of an utterance being perceived as a proverb. Some of these features, though particularly common in proverbs, do not entail proverbial interpretation; they are common also in non-proverbial language. On the other hand, one of the features—the feature of ‘two independent juxtaposed clauses’ (§6.4)—does entail, or at least radically increase the likelihood of, proverbial interpretation. Examples of proverbs with each of these features are quite common among the proverbs in the published collections, as well as in those of the present collection.

The features which suggest a possible interpretation as a proverb may be grouped under three categories. There are four syntactic features: conditional sentences, single clauses with an initial noun, an initial noun or pronominal head with a relative

clause, or two independent juxtaposed clauses; two semantic features: parallelism and particular semantic fields; and three prosodic features: rhyme, metre, and alliteration.

In what follows, each feature is demonstrated through several examples. In addition, those proverbs in the present collection as well as in previously published collections which possess the relevant feature are listed. Following sections exemplifying each feature, some examples of proverbs which do not possess any of these features are given.

6.1. Conditional Sentences

Some proverbs have the structure of a conditional sentence.¹⁹

hákan soténi hawéwala ʾəškàsa,¹ b-šarxáwala màmo.¹

‘If our grandmother had had testicles, we would have called her uncle.’ (proverb no. (12) in the present collection)

Some conditional proverbs do not make the conditional marker *hakan* ‘if’ explicit.

šàqfa¹ la mšápya ʾəl šàqfa,¹ lá-k-tafqa ʾəbba.¹

‘[If] a piece did not resemble a[nother] piece, it would not have met it.’ (proverb no. (72) in the present collection)

Conditional proverbs in the present collection: nos (12), (72), (84), (91).

¹⁹ Hasan-Roken (1982b, 285) makes the following claim: “all proverbs have a common deep structure, which may be perceived and described as the logical structure of a conditional proposition. This assumption is based on the fact that all proverbs are universal generalisations, and never represent only a single instance” (my translation).

Conditional proverbs in the previously published collections:²⁰ R:18, R:19, R:20, R:28, R:31, R:33, R:34, R:35, R:36, R:38, R:96; SE:21, SE:28, SE:36, SE:38, SE:89, SE:94, SE:95, SE:115, SE:142; SA:2.

6.2. Single Clause with Initial Noun

In many cases the initial noun in a proverb is extraposed and thus topicalised.

dúnye qzàya-la'

'The world is [only] a preparation. [Therefore everything should be taken easily].'²¹ (proverb no. (78) in the present collection)

*'ázla dída g-mzabnále go-ráḅa šuqàne.'*¹

'She sells her yarn in many markets.' (proverb no. (98) in the present collection)

'arxe 'arxad 'ilaha-lu

'Guests are guests of God.' (SA:5)

Initial noun proverbs in the present collection: nos (11), (17), (28), (32), (35), (42), (54), (56), (67), (68), (70), (73), (78), (79), (83), (88), (89), (93), (98), (105), (124), (127), (139), (141), (142), (144), (146), (157), (166), (172), (178), (181), (190).

²⁰ Throughout this chapter, in referring to individual proverbs from the previously published collections the following abbreviations are used: BA=Bar-Adon (1930); R=Rivlin (1945; 1946); SE=Segal (1955); SA=Sabar (1978). The number following the colon represents the number of the proverb in the respective collection.

²¹ Several speakers offered the interpretation: 'The world should be managed [smoothly].'

Initial noun proverbs in the previously published collections: BA:1; R:75, R:76, R:77, R:87, R:89, R:105, R:108; SE:8, SE:10, SE:34, SE:39, SE40, SE:42, SE:43, SE:44, SE:49, SE:51, SE:52, SE:53, SE:55, SE:57, SE:60, SE:62, SE:68, SE:74, SE:75, SE:77, SE:90, SE:91, SE:92, SE:98, SE:101, SE:102, SE:103, SE:104, SE:107, SE:109, SE:112, SE:113, SE:117, SE:119, SE:120, SE:132, SE:135, SE:139, SE:143; SA:2, SA:17, SA:22, SA:27, SA:37, SA:41, SA:43, SA:44, SA:45, SA:58, SA:63, SA:69, SA:77, SA:100, SA:107, SA:116–124, SA:131, SA:142.

6.3. Initial Noun or Pronominal Head with Relative Clause

Some proverbs consist of an initial noun or pronominal head, followed by a relative clause.

*ʿīza dād lébox nagzàtta nšùqla.*¹

‘A hand that you cannot bite, [you should] kiss.’ (proverb no. (2) in the present collection)

*kúd k-îe řàḅa¹ k-éxal čùča.*¹

‘He who knows much eats little.’ (proverb no. (18) in the present collection)

Relative clause proverbs in the present collection: nos (2), (18), (19), (20), (21), (22), (23), (27), (29), (30), (33), (35), (36), (37), (40), (48), (50), (62), (64), (71), (76), (87), (142), (170), (184), (188), (189).

Relative clause proverbs in the previously published collections: BA:1; R:1, R:2, R:4, R:5, R:6, R:7, R:8, R:9, R:10, R:11, R:12, R:13, R:21, R:24, R:37, R:62, R:73, R:98, R:104; SE:9, SE:11, SE:12, SE:14, SE:23, SE:24, SE:32, SE:47, SE:63, SE:65,

SE:72, SE:76, SE:82, SE:86, SE:108, SE:110, SE:124, SE:127, SE:133, SE:136, SE:138; SA:6, SA:7, SA:8, SA:9, SA:10, SA:88, SA:89, SA:91, SA:136, SA:141.

6.4. Two Independent Juxtaposed Clauses

In some cases, a proverb is comprised of two (or more) syntactically independent juxtaposed clauses, with no conjunction or anaphoric pronoun in the latter.

núra xe qòqa,¹ tanésa xe nàša.¹

‘[Like] fire under a clay pot, a word under a person.’ (proverb no. (55) in the present collection)

tóra g-nàpel,¹ sakíne g-zàhfi.¹

‘The ox falls down, [and] the knives become abundant.’ (proverb no. (15) in the present collection)

dərmán šəzáne ʔiz,¹ dərmán šrí'e lès.¹

‘There is a cure for the mad, [but] there is no cure for the crazed.’ (proverb no. (10) in the present collection)

*xá bàba¹ gə-mdábər ʔəsrà yalúnke,¹ ʔəsrà yalúnke la-gə-mdábri
xá bàba.¹*

‘One father [can] support ten children, [but] ten children cannot support one father.’ (proverb no. (39) in the present collection)

Many of these proverbs are also rhymed, or contain alliteration.

be-kálo šʔəšlu,¹ be-xátna lá rʔəšlu.¹

‘[In] the house of the bride they are [already] rejoicing, [but in] the house of the bridegroom they have not [yet] felt [anything].’ (proverb no. (6) in the present collection)

lá ʔáw jàjik,¹ lá ʔáw žàhhar.¹

‘Not [of] that jajik [=herbal cheese], [and] not [of] that poison.’ (proverb no. (44) in the present collection)

Juxtaposed clause proverbs in the present collection: nos (3), (6), (9), (10), (15), (16), (31), (34), (39), (43), (44), (49), (52), (55), (58), (59), (61), (66), (69), (74), (75), (80), (82), (85), (92), (96), (97), (109), (148), (153), (176), (189), (191).

Juxtaposed clause proverbs in the previously published collections: R:1; SE:41, SE:65, SE:73, SE:93, SE:141; SA:4, SA:10, SA:13, SA:18, SA:20, SA:21, SA:23, SA:28, SA:38, SA:42, SA:46, SA:48, SA:50, SA:68, SA:96, SA:137, SA:138, SA:144, SA:147.

6.5. Parallelism

Some proverbs exhibit overt semantic parallelism between two parts of the proverb.

xása g-əmra:¹ ʾaxòni,¹ xuzí xazyánnox wázir dùnye,¹ ʾaxóna g-èmer:¹ xàsi,¹ xuzí xazánnax xəddámtəd bəxti.¹

‘The sister says: ‘My brother, I wish I would see you [= that you would be] the wazir of the [entire] world.’ The brother says: ‘My sister, I wish I would see you [= that you would be] the servant-maid of my wife.’ (proverb no. (3) in the present collection)

xá bàba¹ gə-mdábər ʾəsrà yalúnke,¹ ʾəsrà yalúnke la-gə-mdábri xá bàba.¹

‘One father can support ten children, [but] ten children cannot support one father.’ (proverb no. (39) in the present collection)

Parallelism in proverbs in the present collection: nos (3), (6), (9), (10), (39), (42), (43), (44), (45), (48), (49), (55), (58), (61), (65),

(75), (80), (82), (85), (86), (96), (97), (109), (153), (163), (168), (176), (177), (189), (191).

Parallelism in proverbs in the previously published collections: BA:1, BA:2, BA:7; R:1, R:2, R:5, R:11, R:14, R:16, R:17, R:25, R:26, R:34, R:38, R:50, R:52, R:69, R:78, R:92, R:107; SE:11, SE:15, SE:17, SE:25, SE:26, SE:29, SE:37, SE:44, SE:46, SE:48, SE:50, SE:52, SE:56, SE:65, SE:70, SE:103, SE:104, SE:105, SE:111, SE:116, SE:122, SE:123, SE:125, SE:128, SE:131; SA:10, SA:13, SA:16, SA:21, SA:23, SA:38, SA:42, SA:147.

6.6. Semantic Field of the Proverb's Image

There are several particularly common semantic fields from which proverbs' images are drawn. It should be emphasised that the semantic field of the proverb's image does not determine other aspects of that proverb, that is, its message formula or its function.

6.6.1. Marriage

*palgəd ɓárɕil, ʰə̀nna-le.*¹

‘One half of the bride-price is henna.’ (proverb no. (67) in the present collection)

Marriage image proverbs in the present collection: nos (6), (8), (23), (25), (42), (67), (87), (101), (117), (151), (153), (160), (169).

Marriage image proverbs in the previously published collections: R:8, R:16, R:20, R:34, R:63, R:65, R:76, R:77, R:81, R:101, R:106; SE:27, SE:107, SE:108, SE:110, SE:111, SE:112, SE:113, SE:114, SE:131.

6.6.2. Family

*bróni u-bər-bróni u-té'ni 'əlli.*¹

‘[Behold, here are] my son and my son’s son, [but yet] my load is upon me.’ Or: ‘My son and my son’s son and my load are upon me.’ (proverb no. (7) in the present collection)

*kúd gáwər yəmman,¹ b-šarxáxle bābo.¹ kúd gáwər sòtan,¹
b-amráxle màmo.¹*

‘Whoever marries our mother, we shall call him father. Whoever marries our grandmother, we shall call him uncle.’²² (proverb no. (23) in the present collection)

Family image proverbs in the present collection: nos (3), (6), (7), (12), (23), (39), (42), (80), (112), (114), (117), (151), (153).

Family image proverbs in the previously published collections: R:10, R:21, R:32, R:36, R:53, R:101; SE:16, SE:17, SE:30, SE:31, SE:81, SE:113, SE:114, SE:121; SA:8, SA:82, SA:87, SA:88, SA:90, SA:105.

6.6.3. Men and Women

díwan baxtása,¹ báš bassìma-le¹ mən-díwan gùre.¹

‘Sitting with women is better than sitting with men.’ (proverb no. (83) in the present collection)

Men and women image proverbs in the present collection: nos (12), (25), (58), (83), (86), (117), (151).

²² Sabar (2002a, 210) notes that *màmo* is “used by young people addressing a paternal uncle or any old person.” Each of the two sentences of this proverb can be used separately.

Men and women image proverbs in the previously published collections: BA:7; R:8, R:41, R:64, R:68, R:78; SE:10, SE:52, SE:53, SE:57, SE:106, SE:109, SE:110, SE:123.

6.6.4. Animals

Figures include donkeys, dogs, fish, foxes, mice, chickens, roosters, partridges, goats, crabs, lions, sheep, snakes, bulls, cows, calves, livestock in general, birds, horses, camels, ravens, doves, cats, ants, fleas, lice.

’ázza mgurwànta¹ k-šátya mən-réš ’èna.¹

‘The grimy goat drinks from the fountain-head.’ (proverb no. (1) in the present collection)

Animal image proverbs in the present collection: nos (1), (4), (7), (15), (22), (24), (28), (29), (31), (32), (35), (41), (54), (56), (57), (66), (70), (73), (90), (93), (102), (139), (141), (143), (165), (183).

Animal image proverbs in the previously published collections: BA:4, BA:6; R:3, R:6, R:16, R:17, R:27, R:44, R:49, R:50, R:55, R:66, R:72, R:73, R:74, R:75, R:82, R:84, R:84, R:87, R:93, R:99, R:107, R:108; SE:1, SE:2, SE:3, SE:4, SE:6, SE:8, SE:22, SE:33, SE:40, SE:47, SE:48, SE:59, SE:60, SE:67, SE:68, SE:70, SE:71, SE:99, SE:101, SE:117, SE:120, SE:122, SE:130, SE:131, SE:138, SE:142; SA:21, SA:48, SA:52, SA:55, SA:68, SA:69, SA:70, SA:71, SA:72, SA:73, SA:75, SA:80, SA:84, SA:96, SA:99, SA:100, SA:103, SA:109.

6.6.5. Kitchen and Cooking

qóqa g-èmer¹ xési dèhwa-la,¹ ʿatrána [var: káfkir] g-èmer¹ ʿatta mpáqli mánnox.¹

‘The clay pot says, “My bottom is made of gold”; the ladle says, “I just came out of there.”’ (proverb no. (61) in the present collection)

qázra dād hawéba rába kabaníyat,¹ k-ásya yán malùxta¹ yán pàxta.¹

‘A [pot of] cooked food that many cooks are involved in making turns out either [too] salty or [too] bland.’ (proverb no. (64) in the present collection)

Kitchen cooking and food image proverbs in the present collection: nos (24), (41), (44), (48), (55), (61), (62), (64), (75), (120), (115), (138), (149), (150), (159), (171), (172), (175), (176), (189), (191).

Kitchen cooking and food image proverbs in the previously published collections: BA:4; R:103, R:104; SE:71, SE:75, SE:129, SE:135; SA:67, SA:137.

6.6.6. Vulgarity

Figures include genitalia, excrement, urine, flatulence, prostitution, promiscuity.

partáʿna m̀arre,¹ la-k-iʿen ma b-ózæn bəd-ó miráta d̀idi,¹ xmára m̀arre¹ ba-ʿána lá g-màhkən.¹

‘The flea said: “I do not know what to do about that good-for-nothing of mine [= my penis]”, the donkey said: “I, then, shall not speak.”’ (proverb no. (66) in the present collection)

Vulgarity serves to increase the out-of-contextness of the proverb, its ‘improper’ images being sharply contrasted with the casual stream of discourse (see also §10.1 below).

Vulgarity image proverbs in the present collection: nos (12), (22), (30), (31), (40), (47), (50), (53), (58), (63), (66), (68), (69), (70), (84), (88), (96), (99), (103), (104), (105), (107), (111), (144), (151), (155), (156), (164), (182).

Vulgarity image proverbs in the previously published collections: R:50, R:62, R:70, R:80, R:94, R:102; SE:35, SE:38, SE:47, SE:58, SE:59, SE:67, SE:68, SE:100, SE:122, SE:123; SA:15, SA:24, SA:25, SA:48, SA:58, SA:74, SA:126, SA:129.

6.6.7. Death and the Dead

mísa dóhun qam-qorile, ’ál gan-’èzen’ ’ál gəhənàm, lè-waju.’

‘They have buried their dead, they do not care whether he goes to heaven or hell.’ (proverb no. (51) in the present collection)

This does not include proverbs whose message refers to death or to the deceased but whose image does not, such as (in the present collection) proverbs nos (11), (193), and (194).

Death and the dead image proverbs in the present collection: nos (19), (25), (50), (51), (60), (125), (158), (183).

Death and the dead image proverbs in the previously published collections: BA:5; R:35, R:60, R:65, R:106, R:107; SE:5, SE:20, SE:21, SE:28, SE:30, SE:33, SE:58, SE:70, SE:82, SE:131; SA:8, SA:28, SA:44, SA:72, SA:73, SA:115.

6.7. Rhyme

Some proverbs rhyme.

šúl ʾozíle xuràsi,¹ k-čáhe lóbbi u-g-néxi ʾizasi.¹

‘Work done [for me] by my friends, my heart gets tired and my hands rest.’ (proverb no. (71) in the present collection.

Cf. BA:1)

gwàra¹ stàra.¹

‘Marriage is a shelter.’ (proverb no. (8) in the present collection)

Rhymed proverbs in the present collection: nos (6), (8), (9), (27), (29), (42), (45), (49), (52), (59), (60), (65), (68), (71), (75), (76), (77), (80), (82), (86), (87), (92), (95), (106), (108), (119), (126), (150), (151), (152), (159), (162), (176), (184), (190), (192), (193), (197).

Rhymed proverbs in the previously published collections: BA:1, BA:2, BA:3, BA:7; R:7, R:9, R:19, R:20, R:21, R:22, R:23, R:24, R:25, R:26, R:28, R:29, R:31, R:33, R:37, R:38, R:45, R:46, R:48, R:59, R:68, R:69, R:71, R:78, R:86, R:90, R:91, R:95, R:97; SE:22, SE:24, SE:47, SE:79, SE:81, SE:85, SE:88, SE:91, SE:103, SE:104, SE:108, SE:111, SE:118, SE:122, SE:123, SE:125, SE:129, SE:130, SE:132; SA:4, SA:6, SA:8, SA:16, SA:17, SA:20, SA:21, SA:23, SA:32, SA:37, SA:38, SA:68, SA:79, SA:81, SA:87, SA:92, SA:95, SA:102, SA:103, SA:105, SA:112, SA:116–124, SA:127, SA:129, SA:141, SA:150.

6.8. Metre

Some proverbs present an equal number of stresses in the two parts of the proverb, similar to the metre of biblical poetry.

*dréla m̄áya bəd-tré šaqyàsa.*¹

‘She poured water in both troughs.’ (proverb no. (81) in the present collection)

*maríra xtàya,¹ xályà ’alàya.*¹

‘Bitter below, sweet above.’ (proverb no. (82) in the present collection)

Proverbs in metre in the present collection: nos (4), (6), (8), (13), (14), (15), (21), (29), (33), (34), (42), (44), (45), (52), (53), (55), (58), (59), (60), (65), (68), (71), (74), (75), (77), (81), (82), (85), (92), (96), (97), (101), (108), (109), (116), (119), (123), (139), (140), (143), (145), (147), (148), (150), (159), (168), (175), (177), (193), (197).

Proverbs in metre in the previously published collections:
 R:3, R:12, R:14, R:15, R:22, R:25, R:28, R:37, R:55, R:57, R:58,
 R:69, R:73, R:78, R:85, R:86, R:91, R:92, R:98, R:99, R:100;
 SE:11, SE:15, SE:16, SE:18, SE:19, SE:23, SE:25, SE:26, SE:29,
 SE:37, SE:41, SE:42, SE:46, SE:47, SE:48, SE:49, SE:50, SE:56,
 SE:59, SE:61, SE:79, SE:91, SE:105, SE:111, SE:122, SE:123,
 SE:125, SE:131, SE:132, SE:141; SA:4, SA:9, SA:17, SA:18, SA:21,
 SA:23, SA:28, SA:37, SA:46, SA:49, SA:53, SA:68, SA:79, SA:92,
 SA:102, SA:108, SA:112, SA:150.

6.9. Alliteration

Alliteration or other forms of sound play are common in proverbs.

*bróni u-bár-bróni u-té'ni 'àlli.*¹

‘[Behold, here are] my son and my son’s son, [but yet] my load is upon me.’ Or: ‘My son and my son’s son and my load are upon me.’ (proverb no. (7) in the present collection)

*kúri u-kuràsti, u-té'ni 'àlli.*¹

‘[Behold, here are] my young goat, and my young she-goat, [but yet] my load is upon me.’ Or: ‘My young goat and my young she-goat and my load are upon me.’ (proverb no. (7) var. in the present collection)

*xmárta mpáqlula xalawàsa.*¹

‘The she-ass found relatives [lit. uncles].’ (proverb no. (28) in the present collection)

*lá 'áw jàjik, lá 'áw žàhhar.*¹

‘Not [of] that jajik [=herbal cheese], [and] not [of] that poison.’ (proverb no. (44) in the present collection)

Proverbs with alliteration in the present collection: nos (2), (6), (7), (13), (28), (29), (44), (46), (47), (59), (60), (65), (72), (81), (82), (85), (92), (95), (96), (100), (101), (107), (108), (116), (119), (123), (126), (128), (133), (137), (140), (148), (150), (159), (161), (162), (163), (168), (184), (189), (191), (192), (193), (195), (197).

Proverbs with alliteration in the previously published collections: BA:7; R:7, R:10, R:12, R:14, R:18, R:19, R:46, R:57, R:63, R:79, R:83, R:87, R:92, R:99; SE:11, SE:29, SE:37, SE:40, SE:48, SE:49, SE:50, SE:52, SE:60, SE:80, SE:115, SE:116, SE:118,

SE:128, SE:131; SA:7, SA:10, SA:13 (quoted as ‘variant’), SA:14, SA:17, SA:23, SA:30, SA:31, SA:40, SA:42, SA:49, SA:50, SA:53, SA:57, SA:102, SA:103, SA:113, SA:139.

6.10. None of the Features Listed Above

Some proverbs contain none of the aforementioned features.

xá lébe l-xà,¹ g-émer tré tré sáloxun ’àlli.¹

‘One cannot overcome [even] one, [but] yet he says come unto me in pairs.’ (proverb no. (38) in the present collection)

dámmed šámša g-nàpqa¹ ’éwa g-él kàsla¹ ’áp-awa g-ábe šàxən.¹

‘When the sun comes out [= appears], the cloud goes to her, it also wants to warm up.’ (proverb no. (154) in the present collection)

Proverbs with none of the above features in the present collection: nos (26), (38), (94), (110), (113), (118), (121), (122), (129), (130), (131), (132), (134), (135), (154), (167), (173), (174), (179), (180), (185), (186), (187), (196).

Proverbs with none of the above features in previously published collections: R:39, R:40, R:42, R:43, R:47, R:51, R:54, R:56, R:61, R:67, R:88; SE:7, SE:45, SE:54, SE:64, SE:66, SE:69, SE:78, SE:83, SE:84, SE:87, SE:96, SE:97, SE:126, SE:134, SE:137, SE:140; SA:47, SA:56, SA:83, SA:85, SA:86, SA:106, SA:130, SA:133.

7.0. Folkloristic Structure

In his article ‘On the Structure of the Proverb’, Alan Dundes (1981) offers an approach towards the analysis of proverb structure different from the one taken in the previous section. Dundes

still focuses on the internal structure of the proverb, but not on its linguistic structure. Rather than taking into account the proverb's grammatical elements, Dundes considers what he terms its 'folkloristic structure':

To the extent that proverbs are composed of words, there would have to be linguistic structure involved. The question is rather whether there are underlying patterns of 'folkloristic structure' as opposed to 'linguistic structure' which may be isolated. (Dundes 1981, 46)

Dundes also detaches his analysis from the question of function:²³ "The critical question is thus not what a proverb does, but what a proverb is" (Dundes 1981, 45).²⁴

As quoted above (§3.0), Dundes defines the proverb as "a traditional propositional statement consisting of at least one descriptive element, a descriptive element consisting of a topic and a comment" (Dundes 1981, 60). The terms 'subject' and 'predicate' are deliberately avoided here, since these syntactic elements do not always coincide with the topic-comment pair.

In the tradition of structuralism, a central concept in Dundes's analysis is contrast or opposition. When a proverb is comprised of more than one "descriptive element," the relation between these elements may be either oppositional or non-oppositional. An example given by Dundes for a non-oppositional "multi-descriptive element proverb" (Dundes 1981, 60)—that is,

²³ And, indeed, a given proverb from its context. See §13.0 below.

²⁴ This contrasts with the approach of Seitel, for example. See §9.0 below.

a proverb consisting of more than one descriptive element—is *like father, like son*. A Zakho example would be:

*lá 'áw jàjik, ' lá 'áw žàḥḥar.*¹

‘Not [of] that jajik [=herbal cheese], [and] not [of] that poison.’ (proverb no. (44) in the present collection)

Dundes’s example for an oppositional multi-descriptive element proverb is *Man works from sun to sun but woman’s work is never done*, where there are oppositions of man versus woman, and finite work versus infinite work. A corresponding Zakho example would be:

*bába g-yáwəl ta-yalònke' kútru k-fàrḥi, ' yálonke g-yáwi ta-babòhun' kútru g-bàxi,*¹

‘[When] a father gives to [=provides for] his children, both [sides] are happy, [when] children give to their father, both [sides] cry.’ (proverb no. (80) in the present collection)

This distinction between oppositional and non-oppositional constitutes the primary division in Dundes’s typology of multi-descriptive element proverbs. The oppositional or non-oppositional relation between the descriptive elements in a proverb is generated by different proportions of “identificational-contrastive” features (Dundes 1981, 52).²⁵ Some proverbs involve primarily contrastive features and are therefore clearly oppositional, while others involve identificational features and are non-oppositional. But many proverbs combine both identificational and contrastive features. Thus, the axis of oppositional-non-oppositional must be seen as a continuum (Dundes 1981, 59).

²⁵ The term is taken from linguist Kenneth Pike.

Proverbs achieve varying degrees of contrast or similarity by employing different combinations of contrast between their structural constituents. The strongest contrast is produced when both pairs of topics and the comments of the two descriptive elements are in opposition: *Last hired, first fired* (last ≠ first, hired ≠ fired). Similar examples exist in Zakho:

dərmán šəzáne ʔiz, 1 dərmán šrí'e lès. 1

'There is a cure for the mad, [but] there is no cure for the crazed.' (proverb no. (10) in the present collection)

(cure for the mad ≠ cure for the crazed, there is a ≠ there is no)

mád mjómá'lu bəd kočəksa, 1 zállu bəd ʔatràna. 1

'What they have saved with a spoon, they wasted with a ladle.' (proverb no. (48) in the present collection)

(saved ≠ wasted, spoon ≠ ladle)

A lesser contrast exists when only one pair of these components is in opposition: *Easy come, easy go* (easy = easy, come ≠ go). Zakho examples of this lesser degree of contrast include:

lá èwa 1 u-lá səxwa, 1

'Not [in] cloud and not [in] fine weather.' (proverb no. (45) in the present collection)

(not = not, cloud ≠ fine weather)

sawóna qrəšle, 1 sotánta hnèle-la, 1

'The old man pinched [and] the old woman enjoyed it.' (proverb no. (58) in the present collection)

(old man ≠ old woman, to pinch parallels to enjoy)

Non-opposition will be produced when none of the components are in contrast: *Many men, many minds*. Zakho examples:

qámle čùka,¹ bsámle dùka.¹

‘Čuka got up, [and] the place become [more] pleasant.’
(proverb no. (59) in the present collection)

’óz hawùsa,¹ mándi b-ṛàya.¹

‘Do an act of kindness, [and] throw [it] in the water.’ (proverb no. (74) in the present collection)

For Dundes (1981, 54), “all proverbs are potentially propositions which compare and/or contrast.” A high level of contrast or contradiction between the elements of the proverb is analogous, suggests Dundes, to the concept of complementary distribution in linguistic theory. For example, consider *When the cat’s away, the mice will play* (Dundes 1981, 55). From the three sets of contrasting composites in this proverb—cat ≠ mice, one ≠ many, absence ≠ presence—there appears an image of two mutually exclusive situations: the presence of the cat versus the presence of the mice. These two situations can be said to be in complementary distribution, since when one is the case the other cannot be. Once again, an analogous example can be found in Zakho proverbs:

šùla¹ ’àrya-le,¹ g-náhki ’àlle,¹ k-páyəš ruvika,¹

‘Work is a lion. Only touch it [and] it becomes a fox.’ (proverb no. (73) in the present collection)

(untouched [not commenced] work ≠ touched [commenced] work, lion ≠ fox)

The two situations—where one has not started work and it is as intimidating as a lion, and where one has started work and consequently it has shrunk to being a fox—are mutually exclusive, and may be described as being in complementary distribution.

On the basis of these principles Dundes offers several types of underlying ‘folkloristic structure’ of proverbs. These types, in addition to giving insights concerning the theory of the phenomenon of the proverb, may be used as a tool for the classification and lexicography of proverbs.

8.0. Proverbs in Behavioural or Interactional Contexts vs Proverbs in Narratives

A distinction should be made between proverbs used in social interaction and proverbs used within a narrative. Those two categories, however, overlap to a degree. Firstly, narratives in themselves can perform, and usually do perform, a function in social interaction. And secondly, the account of proverb used in social interaction—the context situations provided in the present proverb collection, for example—is always in the form of a narrative: the actual social happening has been narrativised.

Scholars have studied the use of proverbs within narratives, particularly folk-narratives,²⁶ as a special case of proverb usage, with its own unique additional characteristics:

The use of a proverb within a folk narrative, stresses the paradigmatic, cultural aspect of the proverb. The proverb within the narrative creates an effect of intertextuality, a relationship between several texts. (Hasan-Rokem 1982a, 11)²⁷

A special class of proverb consists of those proverbs which allude to particular narratives, usually narratives which are well-known

²⁶ A book dedicated to this topic is Hasan-Rokem (1982a).

²⁷ Hasan-Rokem refers here to Morawski (1970) and Abrahams and Babcock (1977).

to members of the community. A proverb of this type immediately brings to mind the associated narrative, and thus telling it in its entirety becomes unnecessary. The frequent use of a proverb of this kind separately from its narrative grants it a degree of independence, and it is possible that a member of the community could learn the correct usage, message, and social function of such a proverb without becoming aware of its narrative, although, naturally, knowing the narrative is a condition for a fuller understanding of it.

Several such narrative-dependent proverbs are recorded in the present collection: nos (70), (101), and (117). There are also examples in the previously published collections: R:3, R:4, R:5, R:6, R:9, R:10, R:20, R:37, R:41, R:43, R:59, R:82, R:85, R:95; SE:65; SA:12, SA:30.

9.0. Seitel's Social Use of a Metaphor

A model of analysing the elements of a proverb's utterance in relation to its extra-linguistic context was suggested by Peter Seitel (1969). Seitel divides each performance of a proverb into three components:

1. the 'social context': the various elements that constitute the relation between the speaker and the hearer of a proverb, the circumstantial relation between the addressee of the proverb and its addresser;
2. the 'imaginary situation': the constituents of the image expressed in the proverb itself and the nature of the relations between them;

3. the ‘social situation’: the situation in social interaction that the proverb is applied to, the social end that the proverb is intended to further.

This can be exemplified using the following Zakho proverb.

xmára k-î'e ʾáxəl nàʿnaʿ?!'

‘Does a donkey know to eat spearmint?!’ (proverb no. (41) in the present collection)

This proverb was said by a grandmother to her grandson when the latter refused to eat a certain dish she had prepared for him. According to Seitel’s terminology, the social context would be the familial relation between a grandmother and a grandson, with all that it entails (age, gender, traditional roles, generational gap, etc.); the imaginary situation would be the image expressed in the proverb itself, that is to say the donkey, the spearmint, and the relation between them, perhaps ‘inability to eat’, ‘lack of appreciation’, or ‘ignorance of the quality of’; and the social situation to which the proverb is applied is the refusal of the grandson to eat the dish due to, in the grandmother’s view, ignorance towards its quality or mere stubbornness. It is clear, and this is one of the central qualities of the phenomenon of the proverb, that there is an analogical relationship between the imaginary situation of the proverb and the social situation.

Another important part of Seitel’s model is the concept of correlation. In our example, the grandson fills two roles: he takes part in both the social context—being a child, male, grandson, of a certain age, and so on—and also in the social situation—being

the one that refuses stubbornly and ignorantly to eat. The mapping of one type of relation onto the other by means of applying a proverb is termed by Seitel 'correlation'.

Seitel proposes a simple and useful way of classifying types of correlation. A proverbial correlation may be either in the first, second, or third person, singular or plural. In our example, the correlation is that of second person singular. Had the grandmother directed the proverb to two of her grandchildren, the correlation would have been second person plural. Had the grandmother uttered the proverb while speaking to her daughter, the mother of the grandson, about the grandson's refusal, the correlation would have been third person singular.

As Seitel shows, the very same proverb may have different, and sometimes reversed, meanings when used in different correlations. Seitel states that, in the community whose proverbs are the subject of his study,²⁸ proverbs belonging to the type involving animals, when correlated with human beings in a first-person correlation, are always intended to justify one's own actions, whereas the same type of proverb, and indeed the same proverbs themselves, when in a second-person correlation, are intended as a negative appraisal of the addressee's actions. There seems to be a rule operating here, which can only be discovered by documenting and analysing the features of the context and the situation. It is a demonstration of the importance of the documentation of these features for the study of the phenomenon of the proverb in any given language community.

Seitel's approach is directed at answering a critical question:

²⁸ The Ibo people of Eastern Nigeria.

Given that a person has memorized a certain number of proverb texts, by application of what set of rules does he speak them in a culturally appropriate manner and by what criteria does he judge the correctness of another's usage? (Seitel 1969, 144)

In Seitel's view, the answer to this question is to be found in these 'external' categories of function.

10.0. Arora's 'Perception of Proverbiality'

Unlike other scholars who have attempted to define the genre of proverbs, Shirley Arora, in her article 'The Perception of Proverbiality' (Arora 1994), does not try to find intrinsic features of the proverb by studying a particular corpus of actual proverbs, on the basis of which a definition may be formulated. In her view, the important question is not what a proverb is, but rather what leads listeners to identify a proverb when they encounter one. Arora distinguishes between two separate questions. The first question is, how does the researcher identify a proverb? That is, how does the researcher determine the category of their object of investigation, in which some phrases are included and some are not (Arora 1994, 4)?²⁹ The second, more fundamental, question is, how does a speaker of a particular language, within a particular oral culture, identify a proverb? How does the *speaker* assign the label 'proverb' correctly? From a descriptive point of view, this is a central question; as Arora (1994, 6) argues, "the success of a proverb performance as such must depend ultimately

²⁹ In the words of Seitel (1969, 144): "How does one recognize that which he is going to study?"

on the listener's ability to perceive that he or she is being addressed in traditional, i.e., proverbial, terms."

By applying the label 'proverb' to an utterance, the listener refers its content not to the authorship of the immediate speaker, but to the authority of communal tradition. This dissociation of the proverb from the individual speaker is an important factor in the performance of a proverb, and is one of the sources of its effectiveness in fulfilling its social function.

What is significant, and essential to the success of any proverb performance, is evidence that the utterance in question was 'not made up' by the speaker; that it belongs to the category of 'they say,' not 'I say.' (Arora 1994, 8)

The *listener* knows that the proverb used by the *speaker* was not made up by *that* person. It is a proverb from the cultural past whose voice speaks truth in traditional terms. It is the 'One,' the 'Elders,' or the 'They' in 'They say,' who direct. The proverb user is but the instrument through which the proverb speaks to the audience. (Arewa and Dundes 1964, 70, adapted by Arora 1994, 5, with Arora's adaptations in italics)

Thus the question of how a listener knows that a particular phrase is intended as a proverb arises. How does he or she know that it is expected of him or her to refer the saying to communal authorship?

Arora's claim is that a number of features increase the probability of a phrase being perceived as a proverb. Some of these features are independent of the 'genuineness' of the proverb: an 'artificial' newly composed proverb, in which these features are deliberately incorporated, may well be perceived as a genuine 'traditional' one; this is indeed shown to be the case by the results of an experiment reported in the article (Arora 1994, 13–23). These

features, therefore, play a crucial role in the process of the acceptance or rejection of new proverbs in a particular community.³⁰

Each of the nine features that Arora suggests increase the chance of a listener interpreting an utterance as a proverb are now discussed in turn.

10.1. Out-of-contextness

The out-of-context nature of proverbs, when used in a natural conversational context, is a feature noted by many paremiologists.³¹ Here it is argued that the ‘abruption’ of the natural, well-contextualised, flow of conversation, is one of the markers that allow the listener to identify a proverb. This trait, naturally, can be observed by a listener or researcher only when proverbs occur within the framework of natural discourse.³²

10.2. Traditionality

For a researcher, the traditionality of a proverb is in many cases a verifiable attribute (Arora 1994, 7). A proverb that is claimed to be ‘traditional’ by a community of speakers may be found either in historical documents of previous periods of the language or in more recent scholarly paremiographical collections.

³⁰ Arora, whose study is based on the identification of proverbs in Spanish by members of Spanish-speaking communities in Los Angeles, acknowledges that these features and the ranking of their relative prominence may differ in different languages.

³¹ See, for instance, Seitel’s definition quoted in §3.0 above.

³² Hence the importance of providing context situations in a proverb collection; see §13.0 below.

This, however, cannot be applied to languages for which written sources are lacking. Neo-Aramaic, in this respect, presents in a challenging situation: there is relatively little historical documentation of Neo-Aramaic and its various dialects. However, other forms of older Aramaic are abundantly documented. A comparison between the corpus of Neo-Aramaic proverbs and the corpus of Talmudic Aramaic proverbs, for instance, may prove fruitful.³³ Furthermore, many Neo-Aramaic proverbs may have parallel proverbs attested in historical documents of other languages of the area (Hebrew, Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, or Arabic).

10.3. Currency

Taylor (1985, 3) defined the proverb as “a saying current among the folk.” There is no doubt that general acceptance is an important, perhaps crucial, feature of a proverb. But what is the criterion for considering a proverb to be current? What is the ‘critical mass’ of currency? It seems that there is no clear answer for this.³⁴

Determining the currency of a proverb becomes more problematic when investigating a language such as Jewish Neo-Aramaic, with a limited number of native speakers. If one wishes to capture the ‘traditional’ situation, one must assume that modern

³³ For examples of Jewish Zakho proverbs with Talmudic or Midrashic parallels, see proverbs nos (15), (39), (44), (52), (64), (77), (178) in the present collection.

³⁴ Arora (1994, 7): “but no one has suggested a means of identifying the point at which sufficient ‘currency’ has been attained to mark the magical transformation from non-proverb to proverb.”

speakers' knowledge, judgement, and familiarity with the lexicon of proverbs represent those of the community of earlier period. However, this problem is solved if the subject of study is defined as the language as it is spoken today by its present community of speakers, and the oral culture of that community.

It should be borne in mind that *actual* traditionality and currency have little or no significance for the speaker and listener in a proverb performance situation. The speakers usually do not possess any factual knowledge about these variables. As Arora puts it, "from the ethnic point of view, age and currency are largely assumptions based on the attribution of these characteristics to the abstract category of 'proverbs'" (Arora 1994, 8).

10.4. Repetition

The fact that a particular phrase is repeated on more than one occasion by speakers is an indication that it is a proverb. It is not a sufficient one though, since it is also common for simple sentences to be repeated in conversation. Arora claims, however, that "more complex utterances are not as a rule repeated word for word on other occasions" (Arora 1994, 8).

10.5. Grammatical and Syntactic Features

Proverbs are likely to have some grammatical or syntactical features which both make the proverb "easier to remember and transmit" (Silverman-Weinreich 1981, 71, quoted in Arora 1994, 9–10), and "[intimate] to those who do not know it that it is a proverb" (Silverman-Weinreich 1981, 71, quoted in Arora 1994, 9–10). These features, however, are not in themselves sufficient

for a definition of the genre, since they “would appear equally applicable to non-traditional, conversational utterances” (Arora 1994, 10; see §6.0 above for examples of this type of features).

10.6. Metaphor

When browsing through an existing collection of proverbs, labelled as such, we automatically interpret the proverbs’ images as meant metaphorically: the label ‘proverb’ entails metaphorical interpretation.

In reality, however, the process is the opposite: the out-of-contextness of a statement “labels it as a metaphor, to be understood figuratively, and leads in turn to its identification as a proverb” (Arora 1994, 11). The metaphorical interpretation, triggered by the utterance’s out-of-contextness, entails the labelling as ‘proverb’. The metaphorical quality of a proverb is determined by its context. It “becomes metaphorical only within its context” (Arora 1994, 11). As a result, paremiographical collections which document only the proverbs, and isolate them from their original discursive context, lack something fundamental to the phenomenon of the proverb and its study (see §13 below).

10.7. Paradox and Irony

Proverbs may use features such as paradox or irony, or “sharp contrasts and surprising comparisons” (Arora 1994, 11, referring to the ideas of Silverman-Weinreich 1981, 77). These semantic features “add to the impression of an utterance as a polished ar-

tefact, rather than a casual statement” (Arora 1994, 12).³⁵ In doing so, “they contribute to the ‘made-up/non-made-up’ contrast” (Arora 1994, 12).

10.8. Lexical Markers

The use of archaic lexical items both “mark[s] an utterance as non-conversational” and “provide[s] added evidence to the listener that what he is hearing is an ‘old’ saying” (Arora 1994, 12). Along the same lines, Sabar (1978, 218 and fn. 18) claims that “proverbs may indicate various dialects or older strata and include archaic forms or words, some of them unknown or obsolete outside of the proverb. [...] As any folk literature, proverbs, too, may preserve archaic words and forms.”³⁶

10.9. Prosodic Markers

The use of certain prosodic (or as Arora terms them, phonic) markers can signal to a listener that an utterance is a proverb. For example, if an utterance involves rhyme, metre, or alliteration, it is more likely to be treated as a proverb.

The existence or absence of metric substructure in a message is the quality first recognized in any communicative

³⁵ For a discussion from another angle of the proverb being ‘a polished artefact’, see §12.0 below.

³⁶ Sabar gives the following example (SA:150): *zálle xóla básər dòla*.¹ ‘The rope has followed the drum (or the bucket).’ Sabar explains that the original meaning of the archaic word *dòla* ‘bucket’ was lost in Neo-Aramaic, and so the word is interpreted as its homonym, ‘drum’; hence the different explanations of the proverb. See proverb no. (77) in the present collection.

event and hence serves as the primary and most inclusive attribute for the categorization of oral tradition.... The presence of such markers indicates ‘a deliberate deviation from everyday speech’. (Ben-Amos 1976a, 228–29, quoted in Arora 1994, 13)

11.0. Deictic and Anaphoric Usage

A distinction may be made between the deictic and anaphoric usages of proverbs. Proverbs may be used deictically—that is, they may refer to persons, events, situations, or objects that are extra-linguistic, but still have relevance to the speaking event. Proverbs may also be used in reference to persons, events, situations, facts, and so on that were previously mentioned in the discourse—that is, anaphorically.

The anaphoric usage of proverbs is most evident when proverbs are employed in narrative, where it is clear that they refer to an intra-discursive element. The distinction between deictic and anaphoric proverb usage is not identical to that between behavioural and narrative usages. Deictic and anaphoric usages can each be found in both behavioural and narrative contexts.

12.0. The Creative Process and the Proverb-reality Cycle

In order to recognise a proverb as such, the addressee ought to identify in it a degree of creative reworking. The addressee must sense the trace of a creative process (see also §10.7 above). The creative formulation is what makes encountering an utterance of

a proverb enjoyable, and appreciated as meaningful, and is ultimately responsible for the proverb's acceptance. The trace of creative work can take various forms: interesting prosody, rhyme, or metre, a surprising metaphor, or humour. Each of the features discussed in §§6.1–10 and 10.1–9 above may serve as a trace of creative processing, detectable by the listeners.

The various kinds of creative formulation are the result of the focusing of the creative effort on different stages of what is here termed the proverb-reality cycle:

(a) a general, recurring situation in reality, or a general truth learned from experience (i.e., a 'type'³⁷ of reality, in terms of linguistic theory)



(b) the formulation of a proverb, by way of abstraction, generalisation (the *poiesis* of the proverb, its creative processing)



(c) the application of an existing proverb to a particular situation in reality (a 'token' of reality); the instantiation of the proverb

The creative effort may be concentrated in varying proportions in the three stages of this cycle, as well as in the transitional stages leading from one to the other. Focusing the creative effort

³⁷ As opposed to a 'token'. The relation in the pair type/token in this context is similar to the one in the Saussurean pair *langue/parole*.

in different stages produces different types of proverb. For example, consider the following two types of proverb.

1. Proverbs which are formulations of general truths with unique wording and rhyme, metre, or alliteration. These proverbs tend to be spoken when the situation depicted in them actually occurs, that is to say, they tend not to be used metaphorically. Examples would be:

pára xwàra¹ ta yóma kòma.¹

‘A white coin for a black day.’ (proverb no. (65) in the present collection; also BA:2, SA:102)

This proverb may be said, for instance, when a small amount of money is saved, or when coins change hands.

palgád qahbùsa¹ mán nàxpùsa.¹

‘Half of the lewdness is caused by shyness.’ (proverb no. (68) in the present collection)

This proverb may be said, for instance, when a shameful incident happens to someone who is considered too modest or self-righteous.

2. Proverbs which do not express in their image a general truth or a general statement. These are spoken in situations which are completely different from what is expressed in their image, and often in a very surprising way. An example would be:

’aqúbra lá g-yá’al go-nùqba,¹ g-máy’al kanúšta ’àmme.¹

‘A mouse cannot enter the hole, [but yet it tries to] take a broom in with it.’ (proverb no. (4) in the present collection)

This proverb is used to describe a person who commits himself or herself to a task beyond his or her powers, or to refer to a situation in which the resources are not sufficient to achieve a goal.

Another example would be:

kúd g-ábe sàker,¹ lá-g-manelu kašîye.¹

‘Whoever wants to get drunk does not count the cups.’

(proverb no. (21) in the present collection)

This proverb is used when someone tries to save expenses after having already decided they want to achieve something, or to express the view that one should commit oneself wholeheartedly to what one is doing.

In a proverb of type (1), the focus of creativity would be in stage (b), the proverb’s poetic formulation, and in the transitional stage leading to it, the identification of the recurring situation in reality. In a proverb of type (2), the focus of creativity would be stage (c), the application of the proverb in a surprising manner, in a situation which is seemingly unrelated to the proverb’s image.

Even a trace of the focus of creativity in the proverb is sufficient to enable the proverb’s acceptability, and its preservation in shared cultural memory.

13.0. Context Situations

In the present collection of proverbs, a context situation is provided for each proverb in §14.0, giving a situation in which a speaker may use the proverb naturally. There are two main reasons for providing these context situations.

1. The context situation is an example of the correct use of the proverb. It provides the information about proverb competence involved in the usage of that particular proverb—for instance, the correlations between the constituents of the proverbs and reality, the out-of-contextness of the proverb, and so on.³⁸

2. A context situation is the most effective and accurate way of recording the message of the proverb. For many of the proverbs, the message—a principal part of the proverb's meaning—cannot be inferred from the proverb's image. It may be argued that the most important part of the meaning of the proverb lies outside of it.³⁹

An example of the importance of context statements for the second reason, that they give an effective means for recording the message of the proverb, can be demonstrated with a proverb

³⁸ Hasan-Rokem (1982a, 16): "The different performances reveal the denotative and connotative variation of a proverb, in the same way as different performances reveal the semantic variation of a word."

³⁹ In discussing the understanding of proverbs, Hasan-Rokem (1982a, 15) notes that "in and of itself, the proverb is an inadequate source." The corpus of Aramaic proverbs recorded in the Talmud serves as an illustration of this. In many cases, the meaning of these proverbs is unclear, as is evident from opposing interpretations made by commentators. The reason is not necessarily that obscure words are used in the proverb. Rather, it is precisely because the meaning of the proverb lies primarily in its message, and in its social usage, both of which can be understood only if context is provided. When context is not recorded, the fragile meaning of the proverb is easily forgotten.

which appears in all four previously published collections (with slight variations):

déna l-gùre,¹ tálga l-ùre.¹

‘Debt on men, snow on mountains.’⁴⁰

Each collection gives a different explanation of the message of this proverb, and has a different understanding of the correlations between the metaphor’s constituents and what they represent. Bar-Adon explains: “A man must not despair due to the load of his debt, like the eternal snow which the mountains carry patiently” (Bar-Adon 1930, 13; my translation). That is, the ability of mountains to steadily resist the weight of snow is correlated to men’s perseverance. Rivlin explains: “Meaning, people will not give back what you lend them” (Rivlin 1946, 212; my translation). That is, the disposition of snow to melt is correlated with people’s tendency not to pay back. Alternatively, snow as a common reality is correlated with people’s indifference towards their debts. Segal explains: “Do not be afraid to incur debts; they will disappear like the winter snows” (Segal 1955, 268). That is, the snow’s disposition to melt is correlated with a debt’s tendency to eventually be settled. Finally, Sabar explains: “Just as it is natural for the lofty mountains to have snow on top, so it is for men to have debts. Don’t be ashamed to borrow money!” (Sabar 1978, 223). That is, the naturalness of mountains carrying a heavy load of snow is correlated with the supposed naturalness of men to have debts.

⁴⁰ Sabar’s (1978, 223) translation has been provided here. Interestingly, the second half (in SE:125: the first half) of the proverb appears in the Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 3b: תלגא לטורי.

In addition to offering different understandings of the message of this proverb and the function of the metaphor, the cited collections do not help us to establish the rules for the correct usage of this proverb, that is to say, in which social and discursive circumstances it may or may not be spoken.⁴¹

⁴¹ A further example of the importance of context in proverb usage is seen in Dundes (1981, 51), where he comments on Sokolov's (1950, 285) statement that what distinguishes a proverb from a riddle in the case of a particular Russian sentence that can be used as both is intonation:

Sokolov is incorrect, however, when he contends it is only by means of a single change of intonation that a proverb is transformed into a riddle. It is obviously not intonation per se which is the critical causal factor. Instead, it is the context in which the text is cited. [...] The context or rhetorical intention of the speaker determines the intonation pattern and the genre distinction.

14.0. The Proverbs

The proverbs and proverbial phrases in this collection were collected from various informants. All context situations, unless otherwise stated, are recorded from Batia Aloni. Each proverb is glossed,⁴² translated,⁴³ and given a context situation.⁴⁴

- (1) *ʾǝzza mǝgurwànta¹ k-šátya mǝn-réš ʾèna.¹*
 goat.F grimy.F IND-drink.IPFV.F from-head.GEN fountain/spring.F
 ‘The grimy goat drinks from the fountain-head.’

Vars.: *ʾǝzza mǝgurwànta¹ g-éza ʾəl réš ʾèna.¹*

‘The grimy goat goes to the fountain-head.’

ʾǝzza mǝgurwànta¹ k-šátya mǝn-réš xawòra.¹

‘The grimy goat drinks from the river’s head.’

yáʿel dmáxla kǝslèni¹ jmádla mǝn- qàrsa¹ mǝndéli ʾǝlla laḥèfa¹ mǝrra-li ʾo-laḥèfa dǝd-máni-le dǝd-màni-le?!¹ la-g-bànnè!¹ lá-g-ban mkásyan ʾǝbbe!¹ mǝrri-la¹ háwa páxe-paqǝž,¹ ʾǝzza Yael spent the night with us, she was very cold [lit. she froze of cold], I covered her with a blanket [lit. I threw a blanket on her], she said to me, “This blanket—whose is it, whose is it?! I do not want it! I do not want to cover [myself] with it!” I told her, “Very well,

⁴² The Leipzig Glossing Rules (<https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php>) are used here. Abbreviations used are: ACC accusative, COP copula, DAT dative, DEM demonstrative, F feminine, FUT future, GEN genitive, IMP imperative, IND indicative, INF infinitive, IPFV imperfective, JUS jussive, M masculine, NEG negator, PAST past tense, PFV perfective, PFV_PTCP perfective participle, PL plural, POSS possessive, REL relative, S singular, VERB_N verbal noun, 1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person.

⁴³ See note about translation in §5.0 of the Introduction.

⁴⁴ See §13.0 above.

mḡurwànta¹ g-éza šátya mən-réš [you] fastidious half-wit [lit. bland-clean]!
ʿèna.¹ goes [and] drinks from the fountain-head.”

- (2) *ʿíza d-əd léb⁴⁵-ox nagz-ət-ta¹ nšùq-la.¹*
 hand.F of-GEN unable-2MS bite.IPFV-3MS-ACC.3FS kiss.IMP.2S-ACC.3FS
 ‘A hand that you cannot bite, [you should] kiss.’

Var.: *ʿíz lébox nagzàtta¹ nšùqla.¹*

‘Hand you cannot bite, kiss.’ Cf. SE:72.

The connection between kissing and biting as opposite expressions of love and hate can be found in an interpretation of Gen. 33.4 in Midrash Genesis Rabbah 78.9 with regard to Jacob and Esau.

xa-báxta ʿúzla gazánta ʿel- A [certain] woman complained
ʿízàmsa¹ u-məḥkéla ma-ʿúzla u- [lit. made a complaint] about
 her sister-in-law, and told
mtóʿšlla b-rèša.¹ u-márra g-ábawa [her] what she had done and
 what trouble she caused her
 [lit. and played with her head].
našyáwa ʿəmma,¹ márra lá- And she said she had wanted to
 quarrel with her, [but] she said
g-maxərwánne bés ʿaxòni,¹ ʿíz [to herself] “I should not de-
 stroy my brother’s house, a
lébox nagzàtta¹ nšùqla.¹ u- hand which you cannot bite,
 kiss it. And I spoke with her
 well [=nicely].”
məḥkéli ʿəmma bəš.¹

- (3) *xása g-əmra.¹ ʿaxòn-i,¹ xuzí xazy-án-nox*
 sister IND-say.IPFV.3FS brother-POSS.1S I_wish see.IPVF-1FS-ACC.2MS
wázir dùnye,¹ ʿaxóna g-èmer:¹ xàs-i,¹ xuzí
 wazir.M.GEN world.F brother IND-say.IPFV.3MS sister-POSS.1S I_wish
xaz-án-nax xəddámt-əd bəxt-i.¹
 see.IPFV-1MS-ACC.2FS servant_maid-GEN wife-POSS.1S

⁴⁵ A construction from older Aramaic *la ʿit b-* ‘there is not in-’.

“The sister says: “My brother, I wish I would see you [= that you would be] the wazir of the [entire] world.” The brother says: “My sister, I wish I would see you [= that you would be] the servant-maid of my wife.””

Vars.: *xása g-əmra:*¹ *ʾaxòni, xuzí xazyánnox wazíra,*¹ / *wázir màsa,*¹ / *ħakóm dùnye,*¹ / *ħakómæt qàšra,*¹ / *ħakóma go qàšra,*¹...*ʾaxóna g-èmer:*¹ *xàsi,*¹ *xuzí xazánnax gawésa qam bèsi.*¹

“The sister says: “My brother, I wish I would see you a wazir, / a wazir of a town, / the king of the world, / a king of a castle, / a king in a castle,...” The brother says: “My sister, I wish I would see you a beggar in front of my house.””

ʾana-rába g-əbáanne ʾaxóni I love my eldest [lit. firstborn]
*bùxra,*¹ *kúllu šənnə mād* brother very much, throughout
*g-ṭalábwa mánni g-yawànwale,*¹ the years [lit. all of the years]
*u-hám pàre dämməd g-lazəmwa.*¹ whatever he asks me I give
roháyí ʾay-xlísa ṭále wéla. him, also money when he
damməd-gúrre ʾúzli ṭále u-ta- needed. My own dear soul [lit.
*báxte mād g-əbéwa,*¹ *u-hár* sweet spirit/soul] was for him.
g-ṭalábwa mánni maʾinánna When he married I did for him
báxte bəd-šúl bèsa¹ čükun-léba and for his wife whatever they
mnóšəd gyána ʾóza šùla.¹ básər wanted, and he always used to
kmá šənnə¹ fhəmlí mad-náše ask me to help his wife with the
*g-əmri,*¹ *xása g-əmra¹ ʾàxoni,*¹ housework because she cannot
*xuzí xazyánnox wázir dùnye,*¹ do [this] work by herself. After
*ʾaxóna g-èmer:*¹ *xàsi,*¹ *xuzí* a few years I understood what
xazánnax xədámətəd bəxti.¹ people say: The sister says ‘My
 brother, I wish I would see you
 [= you would be] the wazir of
 the [entire] world. The brother
 says: “My sister, I wish I would
 see you [= you would be] the
 servant-maid of my wife.”

- (4) 'aqúbra lá g-yá'el go-nùqba,¹ g-máy'el
 mouse.M NEG IND-enter.IPFV.3MS in-hole.M IND-insert.IPFV.3MS

kanúšta 'àmm-e.¹

broom.F with-GEN.3MS

'A mouse does not [=cannot] enter the hole, [but yet it tries to] take a broom in with it.'

Var.: 'aqúbra lébe yá'el go-nùqba...

'A mouse cannot enter the hole...'

Cf. proverbs nos (38) and (140) below, which are synonyms.

xmàsi,¹ qam-azmálan ta-pàšha,¹ My mother-in-law invited us
'ána mǎrri ta-xuràsti¹ 'ásya she should come with us, I felt
'ammèni,¹ lǎbbi pǎšle 'ábba látla sorry for her [lit. my heart
čù-xa,¹ góri pqè'le,¹ mǎrre-li,¹ started for her] [since] she
'aqùbra,¹ lébe yá'el go-núqba,¹ does not have anyone [=any
g-máy'el kanúšta 'ámme.¹ relatives]. My husband was not
 pleased [lit. exploded] [about
 this], he told me, a mouse,
 [even when] it cannot enter
 the hole, takes a broom with it.

- (5) 'al réš yatùme¹ g-lépi garà'e.¹

on head.M.GEN orphan.M IND-learn.IPFV.3PL barber.MPL

'On the head of the orphan do the barbers learn.'

Var.: 'al réš yatùma¹ g-lépi 'álle grà'a.¹

'On the head of the orphan they learn to cut hair over it.'

damməd-škállli lépan mbàšlan,¹ When I started learning to
g-ambašlánwa matfunìyye¹⁴⁶ u- cook, I used to cook *matfu-*
xamùšta,¹⁴⁷ u-kúlla qazáne *niyye⁴⁶* and *xamùšta,⁴⁷* and I
 used to take the whole pot to
k-šaqlánwala ta-jiráne déni dəd- our neighbours who were poor
 and had many children [lit. a

⁴⁶ A tomato soup with meat dumplings.

⁴⁷ A sour soup with meat dumplings.

*faqíre weálu¹ u-’áswalu xa-
kaflátəd yalünke.¹ xmási mər̄ra,¹
’óto-hila dūnye,¹ ’əl rēš yatūma¹
g-lépi grà’a.¹ bāle-’áhat ’úzłax
màšwa-šik.¹* large family/household of children]. My mother-in-law said, “This is how the world is, on the head of the orphan they learn to cut hair, but you have also done a mitzvah [= a good deed].”

- (6) *be-kálo š’əš-lu,¹ be-xátna lá r’əš-lu.¹⁴⁸*
house.GEN-bride shake.PFV-3PL house.GEN-bridegroom NEG feel.PFV-3PL
‘[In] the house of the bride they are [already] rejoicing, [but in] the house of the bridegroom they have not [yet] felt⁴⁸ [anything].’

*jíran déni séla mār̄ra ta-yámmi
sətūna,¹ mbàrəxli,¹ g-’əbi mšádri
góri háwe ^Hkónsul^H go-’amèrika.¹
yámmi mboqəra,¹ máni mər̄re-
lax?¹ mər̄ra,¹ čú-xa bāle k-ì’an¹
čúkun ^Hkónsul^H híle sawòna,¹ u-
lés čú-xa mux-gòri.¹ yámmi
štəqla.¹ xaráe mār̄ra ta-bàbi,¹ be-
kálo š’əšlu,¹ be-xátna lá r’əšlu.¹
básər kmá sabàsa,¹ jíran mār̄ra
la-mšodər̄ru gòri,¹ mšodər̄ru gèr
náša.¹* Our neighbour came [and] said to my mother, “Sətuna, bless me, they want to send my husband to be a consul in America.” My mother asked, “Who told you?” She said, “No one, but I know because the consul is an old man, and there is no one [suitable] like my husband.” My mother remained silent. Afterwards she said to my father, “[In] the house of the bride they are [already] rejoicing, [but in] the house of the bridegroom they have not [yet] felt [anything].” After a few weeks, the neighbour said, “They did not send my husband, they sent another person.”

⁴⁸ According to Sabar (2002a, 286), the meaning of this verb is ‘to notice, wake up (as a result of noise, etc.)’. For NENA speakers in Israel, though, the fundamental meaning of *r’š* is ‘to feel’. This is possibly due to the influence of the Modern Hebrew cognate *rgš*.

- (7) *brón-i u-bār-brón-i u-té'n-i ʔəll-i.*¹
 son-POSS.1S and-son-GEN-son-POSS.1S and-load.M-POSS.1S on-1S
 ‘[Behold, here are] my son and my son’s son, [but yet] my load is upon me.’
 Or: ‘My son and my son’s son and my load are upon me.’
 Vars.: *kúri u-kuràsti,*¹ *u-té'ni ʔəlli.*¹ / *rəš-χàsi.*¹
 ‘[Behold, here are] my young goat, and my young she-goat, [but yet] my load is upon me / on my back.’
 Or: ‘My young goat and my young she-goat and my load are upon me / on my back.’

Cf. proverb no. (180) below.

- kúlla dúnye híla l-rèši.*¹ *bróni u-bār-bróni u-té'ni ʔəlli.*¹ ‘The entire world is on my head. My son and the son of my son—and my load is on me.’
- šul-ʔéza kúlle-ile ʔəlli,*¹ *hám ʔaxwási u-hám yalúnke dídi b-áse pášhi ʔəmmi.*¹ *kúri u-kuràsti,*¹ *u-té'ni ʔəlli.*¹ *gúlli mgombálli go-šúla.*¹ ‘The work of the holiday [= Passover] is on me. My siblings as well as my children will come to spend Passover with me. My young goat, and my young she-goat, [but yet] my load is upon me. I am completely immersed in work [lit. I am mixed and shaped into balls in work].’

- (8) *gwàra*¹ *stàra.*¹
 marriage [= marry.INF] cover.INF
 ‘Marriage is a shelter.’
 Var.: *gwàra*¹ *stàra-le.*¹
 ‘Marriage is a shelter.’

Cf. R:81, a synonym.

- dáde hār g-amráwa ʔaléni,*¹ *bráti bnása lázəm gòri,*¹ *gwàra*¹ *stàra-le.*¹ Dade always used to tell us: “My daughter, girls should get married, marriage is a shelter.”

- (9) *doḷāmand¹— brīxa háwe ʾəl-lox,¹ fàqqir¹—*
 rich.M blessed.MS be.IPFV.3MS on-2MS poor.MS
m-éka wéle-lox.¹
 from-where be.PFV.3MS-DAT.2MS

‘[To the] rich [they say] may it be a blessing [lit. blessed] for you, [to the] poor [they say] where did you get it from [lit. from where is it to you]?’

Vars.: ‘*āšir¹—brīxa háwe ʾəllox,¹ ʿāni¹—méka wéle-lox.¹*

‘Rich—may it be blessed for you, poor—where did you get it from?’

fàqqir¹ mèka-lox,¹ doḷāmand¹ brīxa ʾəllox.¹

‘Poor—where is it from? Rich—blessed upon you.’

Cf. R:94, SE:98, SE:99, SE:100.

šālo lúšle bádle xásta u-zálle l- Šəlo wore a new suit and went
knəšta.¹ kúllu qam-baqrīle ʾe- to synagogue. Everyone asked
bádle mèka-ila?¹ krəble u-mərre from?’ He became angry and
qam-zonánna dúksət náḥum said: ‘I bought it where Naḥum
zangín zúnne bádle dide.¹ ʾāya- the rich had bought his suit.’
ila,¹ ʿāni¹ mèka-lox,¹ ʿāšir¹ brīxa That is, poor—where did you
ʾəllox.¹ get it from, rich—[may it be] a
blessing [lit. blessed] for you.’

- (10) *dərmán šəzáne ʾiz,¹ dərmán šríʿe lès.¹*
 cure.M.GEN mad.PL there_is cure.M.GEN crazed.PL there_is_not

‘There is a cure for the mad, [but] there is no cure for the crazed.’

ʿe-báxta léwa nàša,¹ čú-xa lébe That woman is not human, no
 ʿáwəz ʾəmma,¹ šəzànta-la,¹ qəmla one can get along [lit. do] with
 ʾizámsa mər̄ra,¹ léwa šəzànta,¹ her, she is crazy. Her sister-in-
 xúzi l-šizànùsa,¹ dərmán šəzáne law said [lit. rose and said],
 ʾiz,¹ dərmán šr̄ʿe lès.¹ ‘She is not mad, I wish she were
 mad [lit. may it be on mad-
 ness]. There is a cure for the
 mad, but not for the crazed.’

(11) *dùnye¹ lá-k-peša ta čù-xa.¹*

world.F NEG-IND-remain.IPFV.3FS for no_one

‘The world will remain for no one.’

Var.: *dúnye la-péša ta-čù-xa.¹*

‘The world will remain for no one.’

Cf. SA:45.

múrdax bər-yóna ʾízle řàḅa bəd- Murdakh the son of Yona did a
xáye díde,¹ zúnne u-mzobbóne be- lot in his life. He bought and
sawàsa,¹ bnéle go-yerušaláyim sold houses, he built a lot in Je-
řàḅa,¹ u-palgód ^Hkvišim^H go- in Jerusalem it was he who
yerušaláyim ʾàwa bnéle,¹ u-ála built, and he passed away [lit.
gáfle nàxle.¹ kúllu náše bhàtlu,¹ xá rested] suddenly. All the peo-
márre ta-daw-xèt,¹ dùnye¹ lá- ple were shocked, one said to
k-peša ta čù-xa.¹ ʾafállu ta-móše the other, “The world does not
rabènu.¹ remain to anyone”, not even to
 Moses our Master.

(12) *hákan soté-ni hawé-wa-la ʾəškàsa,¹*

if grandmother-POSS.1PL be.IPFV-PAST-DAT.3FS testicle.FPL

b-šarx-áx-wa-la màmo.¹⁴⁹

FUT-call.IPFV-1PL-PAST-ACC.3FS uncle.M

⁴⁹ Sabar (2002a, 210) on *màmo*: “used by young people addressing a paternal uncle or any old person.”

‘If our grandmother had had testicles, we would have called her uncle.’⁴⁹

ʾamóyi m̀arre,¹ hákan ʾozánwa My uncle said: “If I had done
 ʾòto,¹ kazbánwa r̀àba.¹ báxte qam- such and such [lit. like that], I
 jobàle,¹ šmèʾlan¹ šmèʾlan,¹ hákan would have profited a lot.” His
 sóti hawéwala ʾəškàsa,¹ heard, so we heard, if my
 b-šarxáxwala màmo.¹ grandmother had had testicles,
 we would have called her un-
 cle.”

(13) hákan u-bàlkid¹ ḥawwəl-bàla.¹

if and-maybe trouble.F

‘Maybes cause only trouble.’

wan-mfakóre hákan ʾozánwa I was thinking if I had done so
 ʾòto,¹ bálkid b̀áš-ṭov hòya,¹ u- [lit. like this], maybe it would
 hákan ʾòto,¹ bálkid...¹ yámmi done] so [lit. like this],
 m̀arra¹ hákan u-bàlkid¹ ḥáwwel- maybe... My mother said: “If
 bàla.¹ lá-lazəm xášwat hákan and maybe [cause only] trou-
 ʾòto¹ u-hákan ʾòto.¹ ble, you should not think if so
 and if so.”

(14) huzáya g-nápəq mən m̀əhkame,¹

jew.M IND-exit.IPFV.3MS from court.F

ʾaqále k-ése b-rèš-e.¹

mind/intelligence.M-POSS.3MS IND-come.IPFV.3MS in-head.M-POSS.3MS

‘[Only when] the Jew comes out of the court, does he gain back his wit.’

zálili táʾyan šúla ta-ʿəšan.¹ sèli,¹ I went to look for a job [in order]
 qam-baqr̀li kma-šoʾále.¹ mən- they support myself. I came,
 šètan¹ pám̄mi gl̀əqle¹ lá yʾéli ma- they asked me a few questions.
 ʾàmran.¹ mpáqli u-mtoxmán̄ni From Satan [= Satan made it
 má-lazəm mjobánwa.¹ ʾəh!¹ so that], my mouth closed, I
 huzáya g-nápəq mən-m̀əhkame,¹ did not know what to say. I
 ʾaqalle k-ése b-rèše.¹ went out and thought about
 Ah! The Jew goes out of the what I should have answered.
 courthouse [and] his mind comes [back] to his head.

(15) *tóra g-nàpel,*¹ *sakíne g-zàhf-i.*¹

ox.M IND-fall.IPFV.3MS knife.PL IND-proliferate.IPFV-3PL

‘The ox falls down, [and] the knives become abundant.’

Var.: *tóra mpàlle,*¹ *sakíne zhàflu.*¹

‘The ox fell, knives became abundant.’

See: נפל תורא חדר לסכינא ‘The ox fell—sharpen the knife’ (BT⁵⁰ Shabbat 32a)⁵¹

*mpàlle ganáwa go-bes-sáleh ʾàga,*¹ A thief entered [lit. fell into]
*bése qam-saràqle.*¹ ʾàtta,¹ *xá básər* the house of Saleḥ Aḡa, he
*xá k-ési nàše,*¹ *g-àbbi páre dād-* ‘cleaned out’ his house. Now,
*doyənnule.*¹ *la-wállule mohlàta.*¹ one by one people come, they
 want the money they had lent
 him. They did not allow him a
 respite. That’s it, the ox falls,
*ʾàya-la,*¹ *tóra g-nàpel,*¹ *sakíne*
*g-zàhfi.*¹ the knives increase.

(16) *yóma gnè-le,*¹ *qáza u-bála là-gne-lu.*¹

day.m set.PFV-3MS trouble and-trouble NEG-set.PFV-3PL

‘The day ended, [but its] troubles did not end.’

Var.: *yóma g-gàne,*¹ *qáza u-bála là g-gàne.*¹

‘The day ends, [but its] troubles do not end.’

Cf. SA:147. See also Sabar (2002a, 123), under *g-n-y*.

ʾádyo šméʿli kma-dardubáľá sélu Today I have heard how many
 ailments came upon Naḥum
*ʾəl-náḥum ʾarja,*¹ *yóma g-gàne,*¹ the lame, the day ended [lit.
 set], [but] the troubles did not
*qáza u-bála lá g-gàne.*¹ end [lit. set].

(17) *képa ʾəl-dúk-e* *yaqùra.*¹

stone.M on-place-POSS.3MS heavy.M

⁵⁰ BT = Babylonian Talmud, Vilna edition.

⁵¹ I thank Prof. Yoel Elitzur for this reference.

‘A stone is heavy [when it is] in its place.’

Cf. SE:34, SA:77.

sámra márra ta-gòra,¹ sa-šoqáxla Samra said to her husband:
zàxo,¹ ’áx ’al-dòhok’ bálkid ’iláha Let’s leave Zakho, [and] go to
’izéni marùxla,¹ k-’an hám go- Dohok, maybe God will
dòhok’ jamá’a b-dóqi qàdrox.¹ broaden our hands [= will
màrra-la¹ ’ána lá g-šoqánna make us prosper], I know that
zàxo,¹ lá g-šóqan jamá’a dīdi,¹ also in Dohok the community
képa ’al-dúke yaqūra.¹ will respect you [lit. hold your
 honour]. He told her: I do not
 leave Zakho, I do not leave my
 community, a stone in its place
 is heavy.

(18) *kúd k-’e rāḅa¹ k-éxal čūča.¹*

whoever.GEN IND-know.IPFV.3MS much IND-eat.IPFV little

‘He who knows much eats little.’

brat-’iyo,¹ sqálta u-ma’aqùl íla,¹ The daughter of ’Iyo is beauti-
kúd séle talàbla,¹ lá ’bèla.¹ ’aqálla ful and noble, whoever came to
là qté’le ’al-čū-xa.¹ là gúrra,¹ ask for her hand, she did not
pášla go-bés be-bāba,¹ kúd k-’e want [him]. Her mind was not
rāḅa¹ k-éxal čūča.¹ cut on anyone [= She was not
 satisfied with anyone]. She did
 not get married. She remained
 in the house of her father; who-
 ever knows much eats little.

(19) *kúd g-él,¹ mən kīs gyàn-e g-él.¹*

whoever.GEN IND-go.IPFV.3MS from pocket.M REFL-3MS IND-go.IPFV.3MS

‘He who passes away, it is from his own pocket that he loses.’

mzabnána dād-dé dakkána The shopkeeper of that shop
nàxle.¹ yalúnke díde qam-zabnīla passed away [lit. rested]. His
dakkána¹ u-msofárru mən- children sold the shop and
màxxa.¹ čū-xa lá k-taxárre u-lá travelled away from here. No
g-matxárre ’o-pappùka.¹ ’àh!¹ kúd one remembers nor mentions
g-él,¹ mən-kīs gyàne g-él.¹ that poor soul. Ah! Whoever
mğabíne ’àlle.¹ čū-xa mən-gébe lá goes [= dies], goes at his own
xsàrrre,¹ ’áwwa xsàrrre.¹ expense [lit. from his own
 pocket]. What a pity! [lit.
 pity/deprivation on him!] No
 one apart from him lost [or:
 lacked] anything, [it is only]
 he [who] lost [or: lacked].

(20) *kúd lá zól-le 'əl 'iz-e'*

whoever.GEN NEG walk/go.PFV-3MS on hand.F-POSS.3MS

lá-k-i'e lá 'àql-e.'

NEG-IND-know.IPFV.3MS in-honour.M leg-POSS.3MS

'He who never walked on his hands does not understand how important his legs are.'

Vars.: *kúd g-él 'əl 'izàse, k-i'e b-qádər 'àqlàse.'*

'He who walks on his hands, knows how important his legs are.'

kúd g-él 'əl 'ize, k-i'e b-qádər 'àqlàse.'

'He who walks on his hands, knows how important his legs are.'

Cf. SE:18.

farrán déni wéale 'ayàn, 'tłahá Our baker was sick. For three
šabása qam-še'áxla mabóse Shabbats [or: weeks] we pre-
l-bèsa, 'rāba m'ol'əllan.' pared [lit. whitewash/plas-
damməd-zəllan básər 'tłahá tered⁵²] the Shabbat food⁵³ at
šabása kəz-farràn, 'yómmi home, it was a nuisance [lit. we
mərra-le, 'Hbarúx ha-šém^H were very pestered]. When we
trəšlox, 'u-áttá lá g-əm'əzəbax, 'suffer, and now we shall not
u-k-i'áx qàdrox. 'áwa mjoyə̀ble, 'your worth [lit. honour].' He
kúd lá zálle 'əl-'ize' lá-k-i'e replied, 'Whoever [never]
b-qádər 'àqle.' walked on his hands, does not know the honour [= im-
 portance] of his legs.'

⁵² Whitewash or plaster was presumably used to insulate the pot in order to keep it hot.

⁵³ Jewish law forbids cooking on the Sabbath. The food for the Sabbath is cooked on Friday and left hot, using insulation or a small source of heat, for twenty-four hours.

- (21) *kúd g-šbe sàker,*¹
 whoever.GEN IND-want.IPVF.3MS be_drunk.IPVF
*lá-g-mane-lu kašīye.*¹
 NEG-IND-count.IPVF-ACC.3PL cup.PL

‘Whoever wants to get drunk does not count the cups.’

Cf. SE:9, SE:11, which are synonyms.

*g-šbān řāba lépen řárān řiyāra,*¹ I would very much like to learn
*mārri ta-yàmmi,*¹ *hākan* to fly aeroplanes. If I fly the
k-řarānna řiyāra ’ammed- [for] one and a half hour[s], I
*ma’ālām dídi sa’ā-u-pálge,*¹ *lázam* must pay [lit. give] him fifty
*yawānne xamsī rupíyye.*¹ *hākan* rupees. If I fly it [for] half an
*k-řarānna palgəd-sa’ā,*¹ *lázam* forty rupees. It is better for me
*yawānne ’arbī rupíyye.*¹ *bāš-řov* to learn each day [for] half an
*řāli kúd-yom lépen palgəd-sa’ā,*¹ hour, but I must pay a lot of
*bāle,*¹ *řāba páre lázem dāřān,*¹ money. My mother said to me,
*yāmmi mārri-li,*¹ *brōni,*¹ *kúd g-šbe* “My son, whoever wishes to get
*sàker,*¹ *lá-g-manelu kašīye.*¹ drunk does not count the
 cups.”

- (22) *xmāra g-yasr-í-le kəz-xmāra,*¹ *g-láep*
 donkey.M IND-tie.IPVF-3PL-ACC.3MS *chez-donkey.M IND-learn.IPVF.3MS*
*mānn-e.*¹
 from-3MS

‘[When] you [lit. they] tie a donkey near a[nother] donkey,
 it learns from it.’

Vars.: *xmāra g-yasrīle kəz-xmāra,*¹ *g-láep mōnne fu’āle.*¹

‘[When] you [lit. they] tie a donkey near a[nother] don-
 key, it learns its ill deeds.’

*xmāra g-yasrīle kəz-xmāra,*¹ *gə-m’ārət.*¹

‘[When] you [lit. they] tie a donkey near a[nother] donkey, it farts.’

xmára g-yasrîle kəz-xmàra,¹ g-láep m‘árət muxwàse.¹

‘[When] you [lit. they] tie a donkey near a[nother] donkey, it learns to fart like him.’

Cf. R:99, SA:68, SA:99.

ʼaná tré yalònke,¹ mən-yóm ìlu These two children, since the
màǵgaz,¹ g-ózi rába pə‘állòs.¹ ʼaw- day they are together, they
zóra moláple ʼaw-rúwwa ʼáwəz actions. The little one taught the
hublòtìyye.¹ g-nádi ʼàxxa¹ u-g-tóri big [= older] one naughtiness.
ʼàxxa.¹ qam-mapqíla rohàyan.¹ They jump here and break
xmára g-yasrîle kəz-xmàra,¹ [things] there [lit. here]. And
g-láep mənne.¹ they took our soul out [= gave
 us a hard time]. [If] you tie a
 donkey near [another] donkey,
 it learns from it.

(23) *kúd gáwər yàmm-an,¹*
 whoever.GEN marry.IPFV.3MS mother-POSS.1PL

b-šarx-áx-le bəbo.¹ kúd gáwər
 FUT-call/scream.IPFV-1PL-ACC.3MS dad whoever.GEN marry.IPFV.3MS
sòt-an,¹ b-amr-áx-le màmo.¹⁵⁴
 grandmother-POSS.1PL FUT-call/say.IPFV-1PL-ACC.3MS uncle

‘Whoever marries our mother, we shall call him father.
 Whoever marries our grandmother, we shall call him un-
 cle.’⁵⁴

Cf. SE:115. Note that each of the two sentences of this proverb can also be used separately.

dʼárrí ʼəl-šúla básər tlahá yárxe I returned to work after spend-
dəd-wéwali go-ʼamèrika. ing three months in America
 [lit. three months that I have

⁵⁴ See fn. 49 above.

*màrruli,*¹ *gam-maxəlpīle* been in America]. They told me [that] they replaced our good manager. I said: ‘They are all the same [lit. one]. Whoever marries our mother we shall call father.’
^H*menahél^H déni* ^ʾ*aw-ḃàš.*¹ *mərrī,*¹
*kúllu xà-ilu.*¹ *kúd gáwər*
*yəmman,*¹ *b-ṣarxáxle bəbo.*¹

*sələlan ḥázzan xása ta-knəšta,*¹ A new hazzan came [lit. came for us] to the synagogue, he is not from our people [= Kurdistanian Jews], but he is very good. We were happy and we said one to the other, ‘[It is good even if] he should not be from our people, whoever marries our grandmother, we shall call uncle.’
*léwe mən-məlláta dəni,*¹ *bāle-ṛāḃa*
*ḃàš ḥīle.*¹ *frəḥlan u-mərran xá ta-*
*daw-xət,*¹ *šud-lá-hawe men-*
*məlláta dəni,*¹ *kúd gáwər sòtan,*¹
*b-amráxle mamo.*¹

(24) *xá dáqñ-e* *q-qəza,*¹ ^ʾ*aw-xét* *g-əmer*¹
 one beard.F-POSS.3MS IND-burn.IPFV.3FS DEM.MS-other IND-say.IPFV.3MS

hál-li *qaqwán-i* *mṭaw-ən-na.*¹
 give.IMP-DAT.1S partridge-POSS.1S roast.IPFV-1MS-ACC.3FS

‘The beard of one is on fire, the other says: “Let me roast my partridge [over it].”’

Var.: *xá g-báxe dáqñe ila bə-qyàza,*¹ *xóre g-émer hálli čígari ma‘əlqəñna.*¹

‘One is crying his beard is on fire, his friend says, “Let me light my cigarette [with it].”’

Cf. SA:20, a variant; proverb no. (25) below, a synonym.

*wan-gúlta mgumbálta go-šùli.*¹ I am completely immersed and
*láltli wá'ada xékan rèši.*¹ *mərjáne* troubled [lit. mixed up and
*k-xázya həli,*¹ *g-əmra- ,*¹ I have no time to scratch my
*kappàrax,*¹ *dré 'enáx 'əl-bràti'* *híl* head. Mərjane sees my situa-
*'án 'əl-ḥámmam u-da'ràn.*¹ tion, she tells me: “[I am] your
*mórrila mərjáne,*¹ *qáštəd 'áw* expiation,⁵⁵ watch [lit. put
*dáqne qèza,*¹ *'aw-xét g-emərre'* your eye on] my daughter
*hálli qaqwáni mṭawənná.*¹ while [lit. until] I go to the
 bath and return.” I told her:
 “Mərjane, [this is] the story of
 that one who [when] his beard
 is on fire, the other tells him,
 give me my partridge [and] I
 shall roast it.”

(25) *xá wél-e* *qam-šnáqa,*¹

one COP-3MS [= be.PFV.3MS] in_front_of-hanging.VERB_N [= hang.INF]

báxt-e *g-əmra,*¹ *hál-li*
 wife-POSS.3MS IND-say.IPFV.3FS give.IMP-DAT.1S

*pàre,*¹ *'án* *'əl-ḥámmam.*¹
 money [= coin.MPL] go.IPFV.1S to-bath.M

‘One is about to be hanged, his wife says, “Give me money, I shall go to the bathhouse.”’⁵⁶

Var.: *xá wélu bə-šnáqa dīde,*¹ *báxte g-əmra,*¹ *hálli páre ta-ḥámmam.*¹

‘One is about to be hanged [lit. they are hanging him], his wife says, “Give me money for the bathhouse.”’

⁵⁵ A form of address expressing affection.

⁵⁶ The reference is to the *miqve* ‘ritual bath’, where the wife bathes after her menstrual period in preparation for marital relations. The woman in the proverb does not understand the severity of the situation of her husband, and intends to prepare herself for him.

Cf. proverb no. (24) above.

yámmi g-ába šé'a mabóse tré My mother wants [=is just
daqíqe qábəl šàbsa,¹ séla brát wash/plaster⁵⁸] the Shabbat
jiráne t̄lábla mənna,¹ maxwéli food, two minutes before Shab-
máto g-əmgámbeli⁵⁷ kutèle.¹ bat [starts], the daughter of the
yámmi mənra,¹ 'àtta?!¹ sá'ət neighbours came and asked
xnáqət gasàksa?¹ xá wéle qam- her, "Show me how you shape
šnàqa,¹ báxte g-əmra,¹ háli pàre,¹ into balls⁵⁷ the meat dump-
'án 'əl-ḥàmmam.¹ At the time [of] the choking
 [=slaughtering?] of the
 [goat's] kid? One is about to be
 hanged, his wife says, give me
 money, [so that] I shall go to
 the bathhouse."

(26) *xá dəqən-e k-ṭá'ən,¹ 'aw-xét*

one BEARD.F-POSS.3MS IND-carry.IPFV.3MS DEM.MS-other

k-čàhe.¹

IND-become_wearry.IPFV.3MS

'One carries his own beard, [but] the other gets tired.'

Var.: *xá dəqne k-ṭa'ənnā* [ACC.3F],¹ *'aw-xét k-čàhe mənna.¹*

'One carries his own beard, [but] the other gets tired of it.'

Cf. proverb no. (180) below.

⁵⁷ See Sabar (2002a, 122), under *g-m-b-l*.

⁵⁸ See fns 52–53 above.

*məryam,*¹ *g-má'ina yalúnke dída* Məryam helps her children a
*řàbət řàba.*¹ *g-óza mád k-tàlbi.*¹ they ask for. Za'o tells her:
*zá'o g-əmràla,*¹ *qáy k-čáhyat 'óto* 'Why do you tire yourself that
*řàba?' yalúnke dídax rùwwe-lu,*¹ make for his [own] home
*kúd-xa šud-'áwəz ta-bèse.*¹ [=each child should take care
of himself]. Məryam answered
*mjoyəbla məryam,*¹ *háwwa kàssi* her: 'All right, my dear one you
*wélax!*¹ *'áhat mà-wajax?*¹ *xá* are, what's it to you [lit. you
*dəqne k-tá'an,*¹ *'aw-xét k-čàhe.*¹ carries his own beard, [but] the
other becomes tired.'

(27) *xábra* *dəd-g-nápəq* *mən-tré səppàsa,*¹
spoken_word.M REL-IND-go_out.IPFV.3MS from-two lip.FPL

g-závər-ra *kúll-a mäsə.*¹
IND-turn.IPFV.3MS-ACC.3FS all-3FS village.F

'Whatever goes out of the lips will circle the whole village.'

Vars.: ...*g-závər go-kúlla mäsə.*¹

'...in the whole village.'

...*g-závər go-kúllu maswàsə.*¹

'...in all of the villages.'

...*g-závərru* [ACC.3PL] *kúllu maswàsə.*¹

'...circle all of the villages.'

Cf. R:97, SA:141.

*básso bax-dárwəš m̀rrali,*¹ Basso the daughter of Darwəsh
*g-ában ʾamránnax xa-m̀ndi,*¹ told me: “I want to tell you
*bālě-xábra xe-pelàvax.*¹⁵⁹ something, but a word under
*m̀rrila,*¹ *xzé səppási flu gliqe,*¹ your slipper.”⁵⁹ I told her: “See,
k-lʾan xábra d̀d-g-nápaq m̀n-tré my lips are closed, I know that
*səppàsa,*¹ *g-závər go-kúlla m̀sa.*¹ a word that goes out of the two
 lips circles in the entire vil-
 lage.”

(28) *xmárta mpáq-lu-la xalawàsa.*¹

donkey.F GO_OUT.PFV-3PL-DAT.3FS uncle.PL

‘[Suddenly] the she-ass found relatives [lit. uncles].’

*ʾó yála láple ʾəmmi,*¹ *xà m̀skin* This boy learned [=went to
*wéle,*¹ *kúllu g-maxéwale u-* school] with me, he was such a
*gaxkíwa ʾəlle,*¹ *xa-yóme jg̀rrre,*¹ poor soul, they used to hit him
 and laugh at him. One day he
*qámle ʾəl-gyàne,*¹ *mxéle xa-yàla,*¹ became angry, braced himself
 [lit. rose on himself], hit one
*qam-qaṭəlle b̀d-šarqìʿe.*¹ *kúllu* [lit. hit him hard]. Everyone
 was frightened [or: aston-
*bhətlu,*¹ *m̀rru,*¹ *dúqle jur-ùta,*¹ ished], they said, “He became
 courageous [lit. he grabbed
*čúčkün sawóye sèle.*¹ *xmárta* courage], because his grandfa-
 ther came. The she-donkey
*mpáqləla xalawàsa.*¹ found uncles.”

(29) *xmára d̀d kúš-li m̀nn-e,*¹ *šəṭaṇ šud ráku*

donkey.M REL descend.PFV-1S from-3MS Satan let ride.IPFV.3MS

*ʾəll-e.*¹

on-3MS

‘A donkey from which I have [already] dismounted, let
 [even] the devil ride it.’

Var.: *xmára d̀d kúšli m̀nne,*¹ *šud šəṭaṇ ráku ʾəlle.*¹

‘A donkey from which I have [already] dismounted, the
 devil should ride it!’

⁵⁹ See proverb no. (195) below.

Cf. proverb no. (164) below, which is a synonym.

*xzéli brat-xáham ʾəṣṣhaq go-šùqa.*¹ I saw the daughter of Ḥakham
mǝrri-la xazále k-ʔat máni ʾəṣṣhaq in the market. I told her:
k-pálex mǝn-gébox go- works instead of you [= who
farmašiyye? mǝrra-li xmára dǝd- has the job you used to have]
*kúšli mǝnne,*¹ *šud-šəṭaṇ ráku ʾálle,* in the pharmacy? She told me:
*lá k-ìʾanʾ u-là-waji.*¹ “A donkey from which I have
 dismantled, let the devil ride
 it, I do not know and I do not
 care.”

- (30) *kúd-ʾət-le* *ḥənnna,*¹ *k-šáweʾ* *zəbb-e.*¹
 all.REL-there_is-DAT.3MS henna.F IND-dye.IPFV.3MS penis.M-POSS.3MS
 ‘Whoever has henna, dyes his penis [as well].’

Vars.: ...*zəbbe šák k-šawéʾle.*¹

‘...dyes also his penis.’

...*šud šawéʾle zəbbe.*¹ ‘...may he dye his penis!’

yaʿaqúbe zúnne ta-gyáne xà Yaʿaqube bought himself
*pǎltoʾ xáru bés bába*⁶⁰ *má sqǎlta.*¹ [such] an overcoat, may its fa-
 ther’s house be destroyed,⁶⁰
xaràeʾ xzéle go-dáy dakkànaʾ how beautiful [it is]! After-
*šúdra sqǎlta ta-kalǎbsa,*¹ wards he saw in that [same]
*g-əmsápya ʾəl-day-pǎlto.*¹ *wéala* shop a nice shirt for a she-dog,
 [which] resembles that over-
*rǎba gəran.*¹ *qam-zawənnna ta-* coat. It was very expensive. He
*kalǎbsa díde.*¹ *maʿalùm,*¹ *kúd ʾətle* bought it for his dog. [It is] ob-
 vious, whoever has henna, dyes
*ḥənnna,*¹ *k-šáweʾ zəbbe.*¹ his penis [as well].

- (31) *ksésa gə-mqòqya,*¹ *kír* *dikála g-nàpəl.*¹
 hen.F IND-cackle.IPFV.3FS penis.GEN rooster IND-fall.IPFV
 ‘The hen cackles, [and] the penis of the rooster falls [off].’

⁶⁰ An expression of appreciation.

ḥábo márra g-ába msáfra ta-külle Ḥabo said she wants to travel
ʔèza.¹ góra m̀̀rre¹ ʔáp-ana wen- [away] for the entire festival
mnèkar.¹ yámmi g-xákla u- [of Passover]. Her husband
m̀̀rra,¹ ksésa gə-mqòqya,¹ kír said, “I am also eager [to go].”
dikála g-nâpəl.¹ m̀̀áto msafrétun My mother laughed and said,
bəd-ʔez-zyàra?¹ ʔéka b-ozétun “The hen cackles, [and] the
pəšḥa?!¹ penis of the rooster falls [off].
 How will you travel during the
 festival of Passover? Where
 will you spend [lit. make, i.e.,
 celebrate] Passover?!”

(32) *kálba g-háwe* *kučəḏka.¹*

dog.M IND-give_birth.IPFV.3MS puppy.M

‘A dog sires puppies.’

sèle-lan xa-jíran rà¹,¹ šaráxa u- One bad neighbour came to
mšaʔràna,¹ u-ʔášəq ḥəsse,¹ škállan [live next to] us, a screamer
mbáqrax náše ʔəlle,¹ m̀̀ni-le¹ and a foul-mouth, and likes-
méka sèle.¹ márru-lan ʔó bər- his-own-voice. We started to
yáʔqov qadərči-le.¹ mbúrxa ask people about him, who is
šəmməd xalàqa,¹ ʔáy raʔúsa u- he, where did he come from.
ʔáw šráxa u-ʔáw ḥás ta-kùtru.¹ They told us, “This is the son of
kálba g-háwe kučəḏka.¹ Yaʔaqov Qadarči.” Blessed be
 the name of the Creator! The
 [same] wickedness and the
 [same] screaming and the
 [same loud] voice to the both
 of them. A dog sires a puppy.

(33) *kúd* *tákel* *ʔəl jiràn-e,*

whoever.GEN rely.IPFV.3MS on neighbour-POSS.3MS

páyəš *là ʔašáya.¹*

remain.IPFV.3MS NEG dinner.F

‘He who relies on his neighbour, remains without dinner.’

Var.: *kúd tákel ʔəl xuràse,¹ b-dámex lá ʔašàya.¹*

‘He who relies on his friends, will sleep without dinner.’

yámmi hàr g-əmráli.¹ lazəm-yáʔat My mother always tells me:
ta-gyàanax.¹ lá táklat ʔəl-čù-xa.¹ “You should know how to get
 along [lit. know for yourself].

kúd tákel ʔal jiràne,¹ páyǎš là Do not count on anyone. Who-
 ever relies on his neighbour,
 ‘ašáya.¹ stays without dinner.”

(34) *xóla qtèʔ-le,¹ šíwe mborbàz-lu.¹*
 rope.M cut.PFV-3MS wood.MPL scatter.PFV-3PL

‘The rope broke, [and] the sticks scattered.’

Cf. SA:144.

zálli ʔal-marimóe⁶¹ kǎz-xuràsti.¹ I went to pay my condolences
 [lit. to the *marimoe*⁶¹] to [lit. at]
bába u-yámma náxlu bxà yárxa¹ my friend. Her father and her
 mother passed away [lit.
ṭalḫílan xàye.⁶² bxéla u-mzo- rested] within one month—
rzàqla,¹ mǎrra xóla qtèʔle,¹ šíwe may they ask for life for us.⁶²
 She cried and trembled. She
mborbàzlu.¹ ʔátta ʔaxawási b-ázi said, “The rope snapped, the
 wood has scattered. Now my
kúd-xa ʔal-šùle¹ u-kúd-xa siblings will go each one to his
 work, each one in his way, all
b-ʔúrxe,¹ kúlleni mbàrbəzax.¹ bés of us will scatter. The house of
 my father and mother has been
bábi u-yámmi xrùle.¹ destroyed.”

⁶¹ The Jewish mourning period of seven days, the *shivʿa*.

⁶² An expression said after mentioning the deceased.

*xuzt*⁶³ ʔal-dán yomàsa,¹ damməd- I long for those days [lit. I
*bābi u-yóm̄mi wéalu šàx,*¹ *u-kúd* wish/would that for those
*šābsa,*¹ *u-kúd ʔèza,*¹ *kúlleni* days],⁶³ when my father and
 my mother were alive, and
*k-asyáxwa kàslu.*¹ *kúlleni wéalan* each Shabbat, and each festi-
 val, we all used to come to their
*màzğaz.*¹ *u-go-palgəd šābsa kud-* home [lit. *chez* them]. And on
 weekdays [lit. in the middle of
*g-ezálwa l-šùqa,*¹ *yán ʔal-xa-* the week], whoever went to the
 market, or to do some task of
*xəlmáta dide,*¹ *k-eséwa be-bābi,*¹ his, would come to the house of
 my father, [and so] we used to
*hár k-xazyáxwa xa-ʔaw-xèt.*¹ always see one another. Since
 the day they passed away [lit.
*mən-yóm nàxlu,*¹ *ṭalbīloxun* rested]—may they ask life for
 you⁶⁴—each one is busy with
*xàye.*⁶⁴ *kúd xá hile-žgila bəd-* his own things, the rope
 snapped and the wood has scat-
*šoʔále dide,*¹ *xóla qtèʔle*¹ *u-šíwe* tered.
*mborbəzlu.*¹

(35) *ksésa dəd gə-mràm̄da,*¹

b-réš gyàn-a

hen.F REL IND-spread_dirt_by_digging.IPFV.3FS⁶⁵ in-head self-POSS.3FS

*gə-mrám̄da.*¹

IND-spread_dirt_by_digging.IPFV.3FS

‘A hen that spreads dirt, does so upon her own head.’

ʔə çàhla,¹ *kúlle yóma g-máh̄kya* That bimbo, all day long she
 speaks of people. This one is
 ʔal-nàše.¹ ʔó ʔóto-ile u-ʔé ʔúzla like that, and this one did such
 and such. Now nobody can
*hádxa u-hàdxa.*¹ ʔátta kúllu lébu stand her [lit. everybody is not
 able to see her]. A chicken that
*daʔlila.*¹ *ksés gə-mràm̄da,*¹ *b-réš* spreads dirt, does so upon her
 own head.
*gyàna gə-mrám̄da.*¹

⁶³ See Sabar (2002a, 193), under כוויי.

⁶⁴ An expression said after mentioning the deceased.

⁶⁵ Apparently from the Arabic root *rml* ‘to sprinkle with sand’ (definition from Wehr and Cowan 1976, 360).

- (36) *kúd réš-e léwe go qarqəşyàsa,*¹
 whoever.GEN head.M-POSS.3MS COP.NEG.3MS in tremor/quarrel.MPL
*ʔál kəndàla.*¹
 go.IPFV(.JUS.)3MS steep_slope.M
 ‘Whoever is not engaged with the chaos of this world, is of
 no worth.’

Said by Ḥakham Zekharya, a well-known figure in the Zakhō community in Jerusalem.

xáḥam zəxáya wéale maḥkyána Ḥakham Zekharya was talka-
*u-ràba kèfči,*¹ *kúd-məndi* tive and very joyful, anything
*g-maʿaləqwale mux-nùra,*¹ *u-hár* would light him up like fire,
*g-emərwa,*¹ *kúd réše léwe go-* and he always used to say,
*qarqəşyàsa,*¹ *ʔál kəndàla.*¹ *u-ʔána* “Whoever’s head is not [im-
g-əben náše dəd-réşu hîle go- mersed] in tremors and quar-
*qarqəşyàsa.*¹ rels, may he go to [= fall into]
 a steep slope, and I like people
 whose head is [immersed] in
 tremors and quarrels.”

- (37) *xolá kud ʔəwəz tərniṇi,*¹⁶⁶ *lázəm [var: ʔána]*
 is_it_so all.REL do.IPFV.3MS tərniṇi must/need [I]
*ràqz-ən.*¹
 dance.IPFV-1MS
 ‘I am not obliged to dance for anyone who makes [= sings]
*tərniṇi.*⁶⁶
 Var.: *xolá kud ʔámər/ʔámərri tərniṇi,*¹ *ʔána b-ràqzən.*¹
 ‘Is it so that [for] anyone who tells/tells me *tərniṇi*, I will
 dance?!’

Cf. proverb no. (137) below.

⁶⁶ Sabar (2002a, 313) on *tərnàna tərniṇi*: “sound imitations of dance.”

*xurásti kúd-yoma g-əmrà-li sa-
 ʔáx kəz-dé qam-ʿazməlan¹ sa-ʔáx
 kəz-dayá qam-ʿazmalan. márrī-la
 xolá kud-ʔámer tərniṇi,¹ lázəṃ
 rəqzan.¹ xolá kud-ʿazəmli lázəṃ
 ʔən.¹* My friend tells me every day,
 “Let’s go to [visit] this [per-
 son], she invited us, let’s go to
 [visit] that [person], she in-
 vited us.” I told her, “Is it so
 that [when] anyone says
tərniṇi, I should dance? Is it so
 that [when] any-one invites
 me, I should go?”

See proverb no. (104) below for an additional relevant context .

(38) *xá ləb-e l-xà,¹ g-émer tré tré sá-loxun*
 one unable-3MS on-one IND-say.IPFV.3MS two two come.IMP-2PL
ʔəll-i.¹
 on-1s

‘One cannot overcome [even] one, [but] yet he says come unto me in pairs.’

Cf. the synonymous R:47, SE:7, proverb no. (4) above and no. (140) below.

*xazále brat-xáḥam šàlom¹ Khazale the daughter of
 k-palxáwa kəz-xa-məšpáḥa Ḥakham Shalom used to work
 dolamàn,¹ kúd-yom mán bənoke for [lit. at] a [certain] rich fam-
 híl lèle k-palxáwa.¹ bás yóm ily. She would work every day
 xušəba¹ lá-k-palxawa.¹ xà yóma,¹ Only on Sunday[s] did she not
 márra ta-yəmma,¹ jìran dəd- work. One day, she said to her
 maʿaləmti¹ g-əba pálxan kəsla mother, “The neighbour of my
 b-yóm xušəba,¹ má g-əmrət you say, mother?” Her mother
^{H>}ima^{H>}?¹ yəmma mjoyəbla:¹ bràti,¹ answered: ‘My daughter, one is
 xá ləbe l-xà,¹ g-émer tré tré not able to overcome one [lit.
 sáloxun ʔəlli,¹ wat-qrəfta mən- one cannot on one], he says
 šúla dítax kəz-maʿaləmtax, come to [fight] me in pairs [lit.
 g-əbat pálxat xa-xət dúka?! to work [at] another place?!’*

- (39) *xá bàba¹ gə-mdábər* *ʔəsrà yalúnke,¹ ʔəsrà yalúnke*
 one father IND-sustain.IPFV.3MS ten child.PL ten child.PL
la-gə-mdábri *xá bàba.¹*
 NEG-IND-sustain/support.IPFV.3PL one father
 ‘One father can support ten children, [but] ten children cannot support one father.’

Cf. R:53 (where Rivlin gives a similar proverb in Arabic), SE:17, proverb no. (80) below. See רחמי דאבא אבני רחמי דבני אבני דהוו ליה (BT Sota 49a); ‘The love of the father is for the sons, the love of the sons is for the sons they have’ (BT Sota 49a); אב א' מפרנס עשרה בניו באהבה (BT Sota 49a); ‘One father provides with love and willingly for ten sons but ten sons do not provide with love and willingly for their one father’ (Horowitz 1649, 64a); אב אחד יכול לפרנס עשרה בנים ועשרה בנים אינם יכולים לפרנס אב אחד (BT Sota 49a); ‘One father can provide for ten sons but ten sons cannot provide for one father’ (Shapiro 1911, 20).

hamínko íle be-ḥàl,¹ lés xá Haminko is in bad shape
 [= ill]. There is no one to give
yawálle xa-kočáksa maràqa,¹ him [even] one spoon of soup,
 that is it [= that is what is referred to by], one father [can]
ʔàya-íla,¹ xá bàba¹ gə-mdabér support ten children, ten children
ʔəsrà yalúnke,¹ ʔəsrà yalúnke la- children cannot [lit. do not] support
gə-mdábri xa-bàba.¹ one father.

- (40) *kúd* *gə-mtá‘el* *b-əd-ʔəxre,¹ ríx*
 whoever.GEN IND-play.IPFV.3MS in-GEN-faeces.PL smell.M.GEN
ʔəxre *k-ése* *mànne.¹*
 faeces.PL IND-come.IPFV.3MS from-3MS
 ‘Whoever plays with faeces, smells like faeces.’

Var.: *kúd gə-mtá‘el bəd-ʔəxre,¹ k-ése mən-ʔizase.¹*

‘Whoever plays with faeces, the smell of faeces comes from his hands’.

Cf. SE:47.

xaham-náhum hár g-èmer,¹ ’énox Ḥakham Naḥum always says,
’al-gyànox!¹ hākan-xzélox xurása “Be careful [lit. (keep) your eye
on yourself]! If you find [lit.
ganàwe¹ duglàne¹ šəxtàne,¹ saw] friends [who are] thieves,
mánnox-šik b-ése ríx ganawúsa liars, dirty, also from you the
smell of theft and lies will
u-dùgle.¹ kúd gə-mtá’el bəd- come. Whoever plays with fae-
’əxre,¹ ríx ’əxre k-ése mənne.¹ ces, the smell of faeces comes
from him.”

(41) *xmára k-’e* *’áxəl* *nà’na’?!¹*

donkey.M IND-know.IPFV.3MS eat.IPFV.3MS spearmint.F

‘Does a donkey know to eat spearmint?!’

mbošəlli xà xaḡúšta,¹⁶⁷ xáru bés I cooked such a *xaḡúšta⁶⁷* soup,
bàbe¹⁶⁸ kma-bassəmta wéala.¹ may the house of its father be
destroyed,⁶⁸ how good it was!
séla ḡabúba jíran dídí,¹ qam- Ḥabuba my neighbour came,
taḡ’ála u-škálla ma’ibàla,¹ léba tasted it, and started to scorn it,
‘There is no salt in it, it should
məlxá,¹ lazəm-hóya bəš be more sour.’ My mother
heard and said: ‘[I am] your ex-
xaḡúšta.¹ yəmmi šme’la u-mərra piation⁷⁰ Ḥabuba, my daughter
kappàrax ḡabúba,¹ H.yófi^H-d⁶⁹ cooked a wonderful *xaḡúšta*.
Does a donkey know [how] to
xaḡúšta bráti mbošəlla,¹ xmára eat spearmint?!’ I was very
k-’e ’áxəl nə’na’?! frəḡli rəba.¹ happy.

(42) *káls-ox* *mən-súlta* *məsi-la,¹*

daughter_in_law-POSS.2MS from-dunghill.F bring.IMP.2MS-ACC.3FS

⁶⁷ A sour soup with meat dumplings.

⁶⁸ An expression of appreciation.

⁶⁹ The Hebrew noun *yofi* here takes the NENA genitive marker *-d*.

⁷⁰ A form of address expressing affection.

dúk-əd bràt-ox¹ mbàni-la.¹

place.F-GEN daughter-POSS.2MS select.IMP-ACC.3FS

‘Take you daughter-in-law from the dunghill, [but] the place of your [own] daughter [you should] select it well.’

mámo múrḏax márre ta-bàbi,¹

bróni mpállle basər-brát ḥayṯka

garà²a,¹ g-ḏben ʔán ṯalabáye

dīda,¹⁷¹ lá-k-iʔen mǎṯo-hīle bés-

be-bàba,¹⁷² ʔéma nǎše-lu.¹ bābi

mjoyible¹ kálsox mən-súlta mès-

la,¹ dúkəd bràtox¹ mbàni-la.¹

márre ta-bàbi,¹ xàbrox hīle

ʔastázi.¹

Uncle Murdakh said to my father: “My son fell after the daughter of Ḥayika the barber [= he likes her], I would like to go to negotiate the marriage,⁷¹ I do not know what her family is like [lit. how the house of her father is],⁷² what [kind of] people they are.” My father answered him: “Take your daughter-in-law from the dunghill, the place of your daughter select it well.” He said to my father: “That is true [lit. (this) is your word], my teacher.”

(43) *lá háw-ət dùša¹ [var.: xəlyá¹] lá meṣi-lox,¹*

NEG be.IPFV-2MS honey.M [var.: sweet.M] NEG suck.IPFV.3PL-ACC.3MS

lá háw-ət dùša¹ mǎrira lá reqi-lox.¹

NEG be.IPFV-2MS honey.M bitter.M NEG spit.IPFV.3PL-ACC.3MS

lá háw-ət wiša¹ lá tori-lox.¹

NEG be.IPFV-2MS dry.M NEG break.IPFV.3PL-ACC.3MS

lá háw-ət rakixa¹ lá marči-lox.¹

NEG be.IPFV-2MS soft.M NEG crush.3PL-ACC.3MS

‘Do not be [too] sweet, so that they will not suck you.

Do not be [too] bitter, so that they will not spit you [out].

⁷¹ For details about the process leading to a Zakho Jewish wedding, see Aloni (2014a, 85–101).

⁷² The extended family household in Zakho, *be-* ‘house of’, and the changes it has undergone in Israel are discussed in Aloni (2014a, 85–88).

Do not be [too] dry, so that they will not break you.

Do not be [too] soft, so that they will not crush you.'

Cf.: פן יבלעוך אל תהי מתוק פן יבלעוך 'Do not be sweet lest they swallow you' (Arama 1573, 88b; my translation). See also additional references in Zlotnik Avida (1938, 53–54).

*bròni' xzí ma-ksúle rambàm,*¹ My son, see what Maimonides
*lazəm-hár 'ázət go-pàlga,*¹ *lá* wrote, one should always go in
the middle [path]. Do not be
*hávət rāḇa xəlyā' lá meṣeïlox,*¹ *lá* too sweet, so that they do not
suck you, do not be bitter so
*hávət mārira' lá reqïlox.*¹ *lá* that they do not spit you [out],
do not be dry so that they do
*hávət wiša' lá torïlox.*¹ *lá hávət* do not break you, do not be soft so
*rakixa' lá marčïlox.*¹ that they do not crush you.

(44) *lá 'áv jàjik,*¹ *lá 'áv žàḥḥar.*¹

NEG DEM.M *jajik*.M NEG DEM.M *poison*.M

'Not [of] that *jajik*,⁷³ [and] not [of] that poison.'

Var.: *lá 'áv jàjik' bəd d-'áv žàḥḥar.*¹

'Not [of] that *jajik* with that poison.'

Cf. אומרים לה לצרעה לא מדובשך ולא מעוקצך 'They say to the wasp: not of your honey and not of your sting' (Midrash Tanḥuma, Parashat Balak 6); משל אמרי ליה לצרעה לא מן דובשך ולא מן עוקצך 'A proverb: they say to the wasp: not of your honey and not of your sting' (Midrash Tanḥuma Buber edition, Parashat Balak 9; my translation). This is used as a proverb in Modern Hebrew as well.

⁷³ A dish made of yogurt or cream cheese with *parpaxine* 'purslane'. Sa-bar (2002a, 126): "soft herbal cheese." See Shilo (1986, 49).

xurásti wállali maḥfúra rúwwa My friend gave me a large and
u-sqùla.¹ bale-kmá šaxtána beautiful carpet, but how dirty
wewàle,¹ roḥáyí mpáqla híl qam- it was! My soul went out [=I
qalwànnè.¹ xá šábsa pláxli ḥ̀bbe.¹ had a hard time] until I
ḥ̀h! lá ḥ̀áw jàjik,¹ lá ḥ̀áw žàḥḥar.¹ cleaned it. One week I worked
jajik, nor [of] that poison. on [lit. in] it. Ah! Not [of] that

(45) *lá ḥ̀ewa¹ u-lá sàxwa.¹*

NEG cloud.M and-NEG fine_weather.M

‘Not [in] cloud and not [in] fine weather.’

xurásti muxšámla⁷⁴ mən-gòra.¹ My friend had a fight with her
damməd-mšoləḥlu,¹ básər kma- husband and went back to live
yomása,¹ qam-baqrále gòra,¹ with her parents for some
ḥ̀iman g-šbet ḥ̀áx be-bàbi.¹ mārre time.⁷⁴ When they reconciled
xá-yoma la-ḥ̀ewa u-la sàxwa.¹ [with each other], after several
fhámla lá-g-be ḥ̀à¹ u-štəqla.¹ days, she asked her husband,
 “When would you like us to go
 to the house of my father?” He
 said, “On a day [when there is]
 no cloud [and] no fine
 weather.” She understood that
 he does not want to go and was
 silent.

(46) *lés mənn-ì¹ u-lés mənn-ì.¹*

there_is_not from-1s and-there_is_not from-1s

‘There is no one like me, there is no one like me.’

Cf. R:91, proverb no. (103) below.

bax-mámo sótəd karmèla¹ Bakh-Mamo [=Uncle’s Wife]
q-qemáwa kùd yóm,¹ bázəl the grandmother of Carmela,
mbənoke,¹ k-kanšáwa kùlla used to get up every day at
maḥále,¹ u-g-zamràwa,¹ lés dawn, she would sweep the en-
mənnì¹ u-lés mənnì.¹ u-xá-ḍora tire neighbourhood, and sing,
qam-baqrànnà¹ qáy g-zámrat ḥ̀e- “There is no one like me, and
 there is no one like me.” And
 one time I asked her, “Why do
 you sing this song?” and she

⁷⁴ Sabar (2002a, 201) on *x-š-m*: “to feel alienated (daughter-in-law who after a quarrel goes back to live temporarily with her parents).”

zəmərta,¹ u-mərra-li¹ ma-léwa said to me, “What, is it not so?
ʔəto?¹ ʔʻéli ʔʻəli¹ bəš-ʔov mən-gyáni I searched [and] searched,
lá xzəli.¹⁷⁵ mārri-la bax-màmo¹ [and] did not find [anyone]
yəmmi ʔəta həkkòsa,¹ damməd- better than myself.”⁷⁵ I told
ʔiláha xláqle dūnye,¹ mārre ta-xa her, “Bakh-Mamo, my mother
malʻax,¹ ʔó képa háwe bəd-ʔizòx,¹ has a story, when God created
u-kúd k-xázət dəd-ʻaqólle lá qáte¹ the world, He said to one angel,
ʔəl-gyàne,¹ mxíle ʔo-képa ʔəl-rəše.¹ ‘Let this stone be in your hand,
ʔaw-màlʻax¹ híl ʔədyo híle ʔmíla¹ and whoever you see that is not
u-képa go-ʔize.¹ satisfied with himself [lit. that
his mind is not cut upon him-
self] strike his head with this
stone [lit. hit this stone on his
head].’ This angel until today
waits [or: stands] and the stone
[is] in his hand.”

See an additional context situation at proverb no. (103) below.

(47) *la k-xárya ta la ʔàxla.¹*

NEG IND-DEFECATE.IPFV.3FS for NEG eat.IPFV.3FS

‘She does not defecate so that she should not eat.’

Var.: *la ʔáxla ta la xàrya.¹*

‘She does not eat so that she should not defecate.’

ʔo-nàša¹ xa-qúrus⁷⁶ la-g-yáwəl ta That person does not give
čù-xa.¹ čənnika-le.¹ lá-k-xare tá lá [even] one *qurus⁷⁶* to anyone.
ʔàxəl.¹ míx yəmmə-ile¹ g-naštáwa He is a miser. He does not shit
qàlma,¹ u-gəlda-dída gə- so that he would not eat. He is
mzabnàwale.¹⁷⁷ u-bàbe,¹ šásət like his mother, she would skin
ʔərbi hóya ʔəlle,¹ lá g-yawólle ta a louse and sell its skin.⁷⁷ And
čù-xa.¹⁷⁸ his father, [when] he has a
forty [degree] fever, he would
give it to no one.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See proverb no. (106) below.

⁷⁶ Sabar (2002a, 283): “small Turkish coin.” The reference here is probably to the *grush*, an old Israeli coin.

⁷⁷ See proverb no. (102) below.

⁷⁸ See proverb no. (91) below.

(48) *mád mjomá[‘]lu b-əd kočəksa,¹ zəl-le b-əd*

what-REL collect.PFV-3PL in-GEN spoon.F go.PFV-3S in-GEN

ətràna.¹

ladle.M

‘What they have saved with a spoon, they wasted with a ladle.’

Cf. SA:137.

xa-náša ʔúzle gazáda ʔəl-bàxte.¹ One man complained [lit. made a complaint] about his
g-émer k-pálcən rə̀ba¹ wife. He says “I work a lot, I
g-əmjám[‘]ən dínar ta-dínar¹ gather one dinar to the other
g-yáwən ta-báxti má[‘]aš kud-¹ [lit. dinar to dinar], I give my
yàrxá.¹ básər xà yóma¹ g-əmra¹ wife an allowance each month
låtla páre,¹ låtla bəd-má msòqa.¹ [or: the salary of each month].
mád g-əmjám[‘]ən bəd-kočəksa,¹ After [only] one day she says
g-él bəd-ətràna.¹ she does not have money, she
 does not have with what to
 shop in the market. What I
 gather with a spoon, goes with
 a ladle.’

dámməd wéali zùrta,¹ láswa When I was young [lit. small],
məya go-yerusàlayim.¹ there was no water in Jerusa-
g-daryáxwa šàtle,¹ ta-kúd lem. We used to put a bucket
čəppáksəd mátra k-košáwa go- rain goes down into that
dáy šàtle.¹ məya wéalu rə̀ba bucket. Water was very expen-
gəran.¹ xá-yoma séle ʔaxòni¹ sive/valuable. One day my
mxéle páhna ʔəl-šàtle¹ kúllu məya brother came, he kicked [lit.
bəzlu.¹ yəmmi mərra,¹ mád gave a kick to] the bucket, all
mjomá[‘]lan bəd-kočəksa,¹ zəllu of the water spilled. My
bəd-ətràna.¹ mother said, ‘What we gath-
 ered with a spoon, went
 [away] with a ladle.’

(49) *mən núra dòhun¹ lá g-šàxn-ax,¹*

from fire.M GEN.3PL NEG IND-become_warm.IPFV-1PL

mən tónna dōhun¹ g-‘āmy-ax.¹

from smoke.M GEN.3PL IND-become_blind.IPFV-1PL

‘Their fire does not warm us, but their smoke blinds us.’

xurāsti mərri-li,¹ b-āsyan My friend told me, “I will come
‘əmməd-yalónke dīdi,¹ ‘āni mtá‘li with my children, they will
‘əmməd-brónax,¹ u-‘áxnax bake *kade*⁷⁹ for the festival.”
b-yápyax káde⁷⁹ ta-‘èza.¹ séla She and her large family came
 [lit. she came, she and her
‘áya u-kəfləta,¹ hāram hakan- large family], they did not play
mtə‘əllu,¹ bāle šrəxlu¹ bxəlu¹ u- at all [lit. it is forbidden if they
 played], but they did scream,
nšəlu xá ‘əmməd-daw-xət.¹ külle cry, and fight one with the
 other. They soiled the entire
hóš qam-šaxtenīle.¹ mərri-la courtyard [= entrance room]. I
xurāsti,¹ mən-núra dóxun lā- told her, “My friend, we did not
šxənnan,¹ mən-tónna dóxun warm from your fire, [but] we
 did become blind from your
‘mèlan.¹ smoke.”

(50) *mís rāḅa xepī-le¹ gə-m‘ārət.¹*

dead.MS.GEN much wash.IPFV.PL-ACC.3MS IND-fart.IPFV.3MS

‘A corpse that you wash too much will break wind.’

Vars.: *mísa dād [REL] rāḅa xèpile¹ gə-m‘ārət.¹*

‘A corpse that you wash too much will break wind.’

mísa dād [REL] xèpile rāḅa¹ gə-m‘ārət.¹

‘A corpse that you wash too much will break wind.’

⁷⁹ Sabar (2002a, 180) on *kada*: “baked turnover stuffed with cheese.” It is the customary dish for the festival of Shavuot. See Shilo (1986, 162).

*bron-xalto-àster,*¹ *láp̄le najarùsa.*¹ The son of Aunt Esther studied
*màrre,*¹ *yàmmi,*¹ *g-lépen najarùsa,*¹ carpentry. He said, 'My
*b-ozánnax xazáne sqàlta.*¹ pentry, I will make for you a
*masséle šìwe'*¹ *u-škàlle 'áwez* beautiful closet.' But has he in-
*xazàne.*¹ *bāle-xolá qam-xalàšla,*¹ deed finished it? One day he
*xá yóma g-èmer'*¹ *'ó dár̄ga léwe* shall replace it', another [lit.
*ḃàš,*¹ *mخالپәнنه,*¹ *xá yóma* one] day he says, 'The legs of
*g-èmer'*¹ *'aqlás xazáne hílu p̄lime,*¹ the closet are crooked, I shall
*mخالپәнну.*¹ *kúd yóm mbo'ḃášle* replace them.' Each day he
*'é xazàne.*¹ *yómme p̄qè'la.*¹ *már̄ra-* messed with [lit. poked] that
*le bròni,*¹ *mís řáḃa xep̄ile'*¹ *g-* closet. His mother exploded
*m'ār̄at.*¹ *k-mále mba'ḃašátta 'é* [= was exhausted and impa-
*xazàne.*¹ [too] much, farts. Enough
messing with [lit. poking] this
closet.'

(51) (*'áni*) *mísa dóhun qam-qorì-le,* ^{'ál}

they dead.MS GEN.3PL PAST-bury.3PL-ACC.3MS go.IPFV.3MS

gan-èzen' ^{'ál} *gəhənnəm.*¹ (*lè-waj-u*).¹

Garden[-of]-Eden go.IPFV.3MS hell

NEG-concern-POSS.3PL

'They have buried their dead, they do not care whether he goes to heaven or hell.'

Var.: *mísa dóhun k-xèpile,*¹ ^{'ál} *gan-èzen'* ^{'ál} *gəhənnəm.*¹

'They have washed their dead, [they do not care whether] he goes to heaven or hell.'

*xazále zólla l-šūqa,*¹ *zúnna řáḃa* Khazale went to the market,
*xəḃḃra.*¹ *mùrdax,*¹ *mšodárre žágil* she bought a lot of vegetables.
*díde u-bróne šàleḃ,*¹ *ma'inila.*¹ Murdakh sent his worker and
sélu drélu kúllu sállat qam-dárgat his son Saleḃ to help her. They
*bəsa'*¹ *u-zəllu.*¹ *séla xazàle,*¹ *'éna* came [and] put all of the bas-
and went [away]. Khazale
came, her eyes became dark

*xsàqlu,*¹ *xzéla kùlla xáḏra hīla* [i.e., she was unpleasantly surprised by the sight], she saw
*mburbázta go-ḥòš,*¹ *qaṭwása gə-* that all of the vegetables were
*mtá'li l-tàm.*¹ *márra 'əh!*¹ *'áni* scattered in the courtyard,
 where cats play [lit. cats play
*'ùzlu šúlu,*¹ *mísa dóhun qam-* there]. She said, 'Ah! They did
 their work, they have washed
*xèpile,*¹ *'ál gan-ʿèzen*¹ *'ál* their dead [person], [if] he
 goes to heaven or to hell—they
*gəhənnám lè-waju.*¹ do not care.'

- (52) *mbáqər kúll-a dùnye*¹ *'óz* 'aqól-ox *təne.*¹
 ask.IMP.2S all-3FS world.F do.IMP.2S mind/intellect-POSS.2MS alone
 'Ask all of the world [= everyone], [but] act only according
 to your own opinion.'

Var.: *mbáqər kúlla dùnye*¹ *'óz b-xábrox təne.*¹

'Ask all of the world [= everyone], [but] act only accord-
 ing to your own word.'

Cf. שיתן מליכין יהון לך ומליכות נפשך לא תשבוך 'You should have sixty
 advisors, but do not forsake the advice of yourself' (Ben Sira
 1544, 15b).⁸⁰

*mtoxmánni řáḅa mà-'ozán,*¹ I though hard [lit. much]
 [about] what I should do, my
*yámmi mərəra-li,*¹ *bràti,*¹ *mbáqər* mother told me, 'My daughter,
 ask the entire world, do [what]
*kúlla dùnye*¹ *'óz 'aqállax təne.*¹ your mind [says] alone.'

- (53) *múx yatúma 'ət-le* *zəbba.*¹
 like orphan.M (REL) there_is-DAT.3MS penis.M

'Like an orphan who has a penis.'

Or: 'He has a penis like an orphan.'

Var.: *múx yatúma máre zəbba.*¹

'Like an orphan, owner of a penis.'

⁸⁰ Referred to by Weissberg (1900, 61).

ʿámti zúnna qundáre xàse,¹ séla My aunt bought new shoes, she
 kəslèni,¹ šʷášla gyána ta-max- came to us [=to our house],
 she shook herself [=behaved
 uyálu ʧalèni,¹ yámmi mǎrra flauntingly] in order to show
 g-maxuyálan qundáre dída,¹ múx them to us, my mother said,
 “She shows us her shoes, like
 yatúma ʷt̪le zə̀bba.¹ an orphan that has a penis.”

gʷela bəd-ʧrambel dída mox She was proud of her car like
 yatúma máre zə̀bba.¹ an orphan that has a penis.

(54) nahagóna zəl-le ʷəl-mə̀lxa.¹

large_calf/young_person.M go.PFV-3MS to-salt.M

‘The calf went to [bring] salt.’

damməd-ʷaxóni mǎrra ta-yámmi When my brother told my
 dəd-xzélele šúla u-p-šákəl pālax mother that he had found him-
 tré šabása xèt,¹ yámmi mǎrra¹ self a job and that he would
 hǎwwa! nahagóna zǎlle ʷəl- begin to work in two weeks,
 mǎlxa. xázyax ʷila[ha]-ʷáyən.¹ my mother said, “All right!⁸¹
 The largish calf went for the
 of God [lit. may God help].”

séle xór ʷaxóni mboqǎrre ʷéka-le My brother’s friend came and
 ʷaxóni.¹ yámmi mǎrra¹ nahagóna asked where my brother was.
 zǎlle ʷəl-mə̀lxa. gxə̀kle.¹ My mother said, “The largish
 calf went for the salt.” He
 laughed.

See the additional context situation at proverb no. (133) below.

(55) níra xe qòqqa,¹ tanésa xe nǎša.¹

fire.F under clay_pot.M word.F under person.M

‘[Like] fire under a clay pot, a word under a person.’

brat-áqo mpǎlla go-pǎmmed The daughter of ‘Aqo fell into
 nǎše.¹ kúlla maḥále mǎḥkéla the mouth of people [=people
 ʷèlla.¹ qam-šaʷwə̀ʧfla bəd-xábre started gossiping about her].
 The entire neighbourhood

⁸¹ Said dismissively.

*dòhun.*¹ 'ó *márre zállá* 'amməd- spoke about her. They burnt
*dòha,*¹ *u-*'ó *márre dmáxla* 'amməd [one] said she went with that
*dawàha.*¹ *u-*'áya *pappùke,*¹ *báxta* [person] and this [one] says
*ḃaš wéla,*¹ *maḥkóyəd náše qam-* she slept with that [person].
makámlla b-'en-kùllu. *núra xe* And she, poor thing, she was a
*qòqa,*¹ *tanésa xe nàša.*¹ good woman, the speech
[=gossiping] of people made
her black in the eyes of every-
one. Fire under the clay pot [is
like] word[s] under a person.

(56) *nunisa*¹ *mən réš-a* *k-xàrw-a.*¹

fish.F from head-POSS.3FS IND-become_spoil.IPFV-3FS

'A fish [starts to] rot from its head.'

Cf. BA:4, SA:100.

*čúga lá-zonat go-dé dakkàna.*¹ Never buy in that shop. The
märe-dakkána duglána u- owner of the shop is a liar and
*ganàwa-le.*¹ *yalúnke dide*¹ *u-* a thief. His children and his
*žagile dide*¹ *kúllu muxwàse,*¹ *lólpu* workers are all like him, they
learned from him. This is how
*mənne.*¹ 'òto-ila,¹ *nunisa*¹ *mən-* it is, the fish spoils from its
*réša k-xàrwa.*¹ head.

(57) *sí xmàr-i*¹ 'iláha 'amm-ox.¹ *hákan mār-i*

go.IMP.2MS donkey-POSS.1S God with-2MS if master-POSS.1S

*háwe 'amm-i,*¹ 'iláha *p-áwe 'ámmi.*¹

be.IPFV.3MS with-1S God FUT-be.IPFV.3MS with-1S

'Go, my donkey, may God be with you. If my master is with
me, God will [also] be with me.'

bəno məsséle xa-žágil ta-fərna Bəno brought a worker to his
*dide.*¹ *hedi-hèdi*¹ 'o-žágil 'úze did everything [in the bakery].
*külle mändi.*¹ *bəno wälle go-ʔize* Bəno gave the entire bakery
*kùlla fərna.*¹ *básər kma-wà'da,*¹ into his hand [=gave the su-
pervision over to him]. After
*bəno xzéle fərna là-k-kazba,*¹ some time, Bəno saw that the
*báxte mər-ra-le,*¹ *bəno mərrox go-* bakery did not produce profit,
his wife told him, "Bəno you

lábbox xarxáši šřèli,¹ šúli said in your heart [= to yourself] 'I have untied my sash,
b-awázle 'ó žàğil,¹ sí xməri¹ 'iláha this worker will do my work.
'əmmox.¹ bāle-léwa 'òto,¹ hákan Go, my donkey, God be with
məri háwe 'əmmi,¹ 'ilaha p-áwe you', but it is not so, if my master
'əmmi.¹ hákan háwət go-fəřna,¹ is with me, God will [also]
bařáxa b-nápla go-fəřna.¹ be with me. If you were at the
 the bakery, a blessing will fall into
 the bakery [= it will be prosperous]."

(58) *sawóna qrəş-le,¹ sotánta hnè-le-la.¹*

old_man pinch.PFV-3MS old_woman cause_pleasure.PFV-3MS-DAT.3FS

'The old man pinched [and] the old woman enjoyed it.'

Cf. R:72, SE:56, SA:139.

yəmməd bádre sèla,¹ xzéla néhra Badre's mother came, she saw
šwíqa u-bèsa mǝřbəla.¹ séla [that] the laundry [was] left
bádre mərra-la,¹ séle sàleḥ,¹ [unattended] and the house
mərrə-li sa-mpóq xápča go- was a mess [lit. unorganised,
šəmša¹ b-áx šəmel-həwa,¹⁸² xaráe cumbrous]. Badre came and
másiḥax xòri.¹ 'áp-ana šúqli néhri said, "Saleḥ came, he said to
u-zəlli.¹ yəmma mərra həwwa me, 'Come out to the sun [for]
bráti,¹ sawóna qrəşle,¹ sotánta a little [while], we shall go for
hnèle-la.¹ a walk. After that we shall visit
 my friend.' So I left my laundry
 and went." Her mother said,
 "Very well, my daughter, the
 old man pinched [and] the old
 woman enjoyed [it]."

(59) *qám-le čùka,¹ bsám-la dùka.¹*

get_up.PFV-3MS Čuka.M become_pleasant.PFV-3FS place.F

'Čuka got up, [and] the place became [more] pleasant.'

Var.: *qámle čùka,¹ rúxla dùka.¹*

'Čuka got up, [and] the place became more spacious.'

⁸² Apparently from Arabic *nšəm al-hawa* 'breath air'.

A small change that makes a difference for the better. Čuka was the *shamash* (custodian) of one of the synagogues of the Jewish-Kurdish community in Jerusalem.

Cf. SA:41.

séli mášihan xàsi' u-ʔózan I came to visit my sister and to
gazánta ʔəl-xmàsi.' jíran dída' complain [lit. make complaint]
wéwala kàsla,' láswa-bi about my mother-in-law. Her
maḥkýánwa ʔəl-xmàsi.' dámməd neighbour was there [lit. at
zálła xurásta mārri ta-xàsi' ʔàh!' her]. I could not speak about
qámle čùka,' bsámlla dùka.' ʔátta my mother-in-law. When her
ʔibi maḥkýán u-ʔamránax má- friend went [away], I said to
ʔiz ʔəl-ləbbi.' my sister, 'Ah! Čuka got up,
 [and] the place became more
 pleasant. Now I can speak and
 tell you what is in my heart.'

(60) *qam-mayʔəl-ən-ne qam-mòsa,' ta yáʔel*

PAST-bring_in-1MS-ACC.3MS in_front_of-death.M for enter.IPFV.3MS

qam šàsa.'

in_front_of fever.F

'I brought him to death so that he will [agree to] enter the fever.'

séla bax-náḥum u-mərri ta- The wife of Naḥum came and
yàmmi,' xzè' wan-bə-myàsa,' lébi said to my mother, "See, I am
ʔón xudáni bət-yalúnke dīdi,' lá- dying [=having a very hard
g-madwan ʔón šúl bəsi.' mārri ta- time], I cannot take [lit. make]
nàḥum,' ʔiz xa-báxta maʔináli xá- care of my children, I do not
ga b-šabsá bəd-šúla yaqúra,' bəd- have enough time to do my
néhra u-spəñja,' b-yawáxla tre- housework, I said to Naḥum,
tláha lire.' lá ʔbèle.' yámmi there is a woman that would
štəqla.' zálle tré yomàsa,' yámmi help me once a week with the
xzéla nàḥum,' mərri-le,' nàḥum,' hard [lit. heavy] work, with
 laundry, and with washing the
 floor, we shall give [=pay] her
 two [or] three lire. He did not
 agree [lit. want]." My mother
 remained silent. Two days
 passed [lit. went], my mother
 saw Naḥum, she told him,

šmò¹ la-šam'át xriwa.¹⁸³ xzéli "Naḥum, hear [=listen],
 bāxtox,¹ raḅād-ṛaḅa 'ayyàne-la.¹ [may] you not hear [anything]
 lābba pāšle xa-màsta,¹⁸⁴ lāzəm bad.⁸³ I saw your wife, she is
 šaqléten xa-xáddamta ma'inála into a [single] hair⁸⁴ [=her
 kùd-yom.¹ hákan là¹ 'ila- heart shrank because of the
 là-wəz...¹⁸⁵ náḥum pāšle xà- hard work, she became sick],
 lappa.¹⁸⁶ mārri ta-yəmmi,¹ you must take [=hire] for her
 šaḥḥátax bassəmta!¹ qam- a housemaid that will help her
 may'alátte qam-mòsa,¹ ta-yá'əl every day. If not, God forbid
 qam-šasa.¹ náḥum zólle l-bèse,¹ [lit. may God not do (that)]..."
 mārre ta-bāxte,¹ ma'lèš,¹ šqúlla 'e- Naḥum turned into a [small]
 jìran,¹ šud-ma'inálox xá-ga lump [=became scared].⁸⁶ I
 b-šābsa.¹ told my mother, "[May] your
 health/vigour be well/pleasant
 [=well done, bravo]! You
 have brought him into death so
 that he will enter the fever."
 Naḥum went home, he said to
 his wife, "All right, take
 [=hire] this neighbour, may
 she help you once a week."

(61) qóqa g-èmer¹ xés-i dèhwa-la,¹ 'ətrána

clay_pot.M IND-say.IPFV.3MS under-1s gold.M-COP.3FS ladle.M

[var.: káfkir] g-èmer¹ 'àtta mpáq-li mánn-ox.¹

[var.: large_spoon] IND-say.IPFV.3MS now go_out.PFV-3MS from-2MS

"The clay pot says, "My bottom is made of gold"; the ladle says, "I just came out of there.""

Cf. R:103.

⁸³ See proverb no. (129) below.

⁸⁴ See proverb no. (136) below.

⁸⁵ Contraction of 'iláha lá 'àwəz.

⁸⁶ See proverb no. (135) below.

*brat-šámšar mpošónna gyàna,*¹ The daughter of the real estate
kma-báš wéwala ʾammed- agent praised herself, how kind
 [lit. good] she was to [lit. with]
*xədámta.*¹ *xədámta g-xákla u-* her housemaid. The housemaid
 m̀arra,¹ *xuzí palgád mad-* laughed and said, “I wish
 [even] a half of what she said
*məhkélaḡ wèwala,*¹ *ʾatta mpáqli* were true [lit. has been], I just
 m̀nnax.¹ came out of you.”

*ḡabúba ʾúzla gazańta ʾal-xmása,*¹ ḡabuba complained [lit. made
 a complaint] about her
*damməd-wáx maḡkòye*¹ *séla* mother-in-law. While we were
 speaking, her mother-in-law
*xmása u-škálla mpašóne gyàna.*¹ came and started praising her-
 self. “There is not a mother-in-
lés go-kúlla mása xmása law like myself in the entire
 village. How much I respect/
*muxwàsi.*¹ *kmá g-amʿazézanna* pamper my daughter-in-law.”
*kàlsi.*¹ *ḡabúba lxəšla,*¹ *ʾána k-ʾan* ḡabuba whispered, “I know
*ʾéma déhwa ʾís xəsax.*¹ which gold there is under you.”

(62) *qóqa dəd k-torá-le kabanìye,*¹

clay_pot.M REL IND-break.IPFV.3FS-ACC.3MS cook.F

*lá-k-ese ḡàs m̀nn-e.*¹

NEG-IND-come.IPFV.3MS sound.M from-3MS

‘A clay pot that is broken by the cook does not make a sound.’

Vars.: ...čü-ḡas lá-k-ese m̀nne.¹

‘...no sound comes from it.’

...čəppèn la-k-ése m̀nne.¹

‘...two drops [of sound] do not come from it.’

Cf. R:104, SE:121.

msofárrri u-mṭéli ʔal-dúksəd I travelled and arrived to the
g-ebànwá,¹ ṭʔéli dúksa ta- place I had wanted, I looked
maḥmelánne ṭrambél dīdi,¹ la- stand] my car, I did not find
xzèli,¹ básri séle pólis ʔammed- [lit. see] one, after me came a
ṭrambél dīde,¹ qam-maḥmálle policeman with his car, he
dúkəd ^Amamnù^{CA} hīla,¹ mǎrri ta- parked it where [lit. in a place
gyàni, ʔó pólis g-áwəz mád g-əbe,¹ of] it is forbidden, I said to my-
qóqa dəd-k-torále kabanīye,¹ lá- self, this policeman does what-
k-ese ḥàs mənne.¹ čúxcxa lá ever he wants, a clay pot that
g-əmǎrre xa-məndi.¹ the cook breaks, does not make
a sound [lit. no sound comes
from it]. No one tells him [or:
can tell him] [=the police-
man] anything.

(63) *k-xáre má-d g-əbe,¹ g-əbe*

IND-defecate.IPFV.3MS what-REL IND-want.IPFV.3MS IND-want.IPFV.3MS

wiša,¹ g-əbe miyàna.¹

dry.M IND-want.IPFV.3MS liquid.M

‘He defecates whatever he wants, [if] he wants dry [it is dry], [if] he wants liquid [it is liquid].’

Vars.: *hákan g-əbe k-xáre wiša,¹ hákan g-əbe k-xáre miyàna.¹*

‘If he wants he defecates dry, if he wants he defecates liquid.’...*rakìxa.¹* ‘...soft.’

ʔo-náša lébox mhémenət ʔille ʔəl This person, you cannot be-
čú məndi.¹ mád g-əbe g-əmər.¹ lieve him about anything [lit.
hákan g-əbe k-xáre wiša¹ hákan you cannot believe on him on
g-əbe k-xáre miyàna.¹ anything]. He says whatever
he wishes. If he wished he’d
defecate dry [faeces], if he
wished he’d defecate liquid
[faeces].

(64) *qázra dəd hawé-b-a rába kabanīyat,¹*

cooked_food.F REL be.IPFV.3MS-in-3FS many cook.FPL

k-ásya yán malùxta¹ yán pàxta.¹

IND-come.IPFV.3FS or salty.FS or bland.FS

‘A [pot of] cooked food that many cooks are involved in making turns out either [too] salty or [too] bland.’

Cf. SE:135. Also compare: קדרא דבי שותפי לא חמימא ולא קרירא ‘A pot of partners is neither hot nor cold’ (BT ‘Eruvin 3a).⁸⁷

ta-tefállin dād-bròni¹ kúd xá For the *bar mitzvah* celebration
márre-li ma-’òñ.¹ xa-márre ’òto¹ [lit. *tefillin*] of my son, each
xa-márre ’òto.¹ m̀rri-lu¹ q̀zra one advised [lit. said] me what
dād-ráḅa kabanìyat g-əmbašlila,¹ [you should do] so and the other [lit. one] said
g-dári ’ízu g̀awa,¹ u-g-baxšila,¹ [you should do] so. I told them,
g-nápqa yán p̀axta yán malùxta.¹ “A food that many cooks have
š̀qu-lan,¹ malušáxle bróni cooked, put their hand in, and
tefállin m̀atod g-əbe.¹ stirred, turns out either bland
 or [too] salty. Leave us, we
 shall wear [= put on] my son’s
tefillin [= celebrate my son’s
bar mitzvah] however he
 wishes.”

(65) *pára xwàra¹ ta yóma kòma.¹*

coin.M white.M for day.M black.M

‘A white coin for a black day.’

Cf. BA:2, SA:102.

’axóni g-émer ta-bràte,¹ ḥfázlu My brother [always] tells his
p̀are¹ ta-hawélax xa-pára xwàra¹ daughter, “Save the money so
ta-yóma kòma.¹ that you will have one white
 coin for a black day.”

(66) *partə’na m̀r-re,¹ lá-k-i’en ma b-ózan*

flea.M say.PFV-3MS NEG-IND-know.1MS what FUT-do.IPFV.1MS

bəḍ-ó miráta d̀idi,¹ xmára m̀r-re¹

in.GEN-this.M unclaimed_inheritance of-1s donkey.M say.PFV-3MS

⁸⁷ I thank my grandfather Ḥakham Ḥabib ‘Alwan for this reference.

*ba⁸⁸-’ána lá g-màhk-ən.*¹

then⁸⁸-I NEG IND-speak.IPFV-1MS

‘The flea said: “I do not know what to do with that good-for-nothing of mine [=my penis],” the donkey said: “I, then, shall not speak.’

Var.: *partə’na mərre,¹ miráta dídi xálle lèbbi,¹...*

‘The flea said: “The good-for-nothing of mine ate my heart [= is causing me distress],...”’

Cf. SA:103.

<p><i>şaleḥ bər-máro mərre ta-’axóne</i> <i>bùxra,¹ àh!¹ ’józli mən-màdrase!¹</i> <i>lázəm řába lèpən,¹ látli wá’da</i> <i>xápča mtà’lən.¹ ’axóne dəd-</i> <i>g-láyəp páyəš ḥàkim¹ mərre¹ ba⁸⁸-</i> <i>’ána má b-ámrən,¹ látli wá’da</i> <i>xékən rèši.¹ ’àya-ila¹ partə’na</i> <i>mərre,¹ lá-k-i’ən ma b-ózən bəd-ó</i> <i>miráta dídi,¹ xmára mərre¹ ba⁸⁸-</i> <i>’ána lá g-màhkən.¹</i></p>	<p>Şaleḥ the son of Məro said to his eldest brother: “Ah! I am tired of school! I must study a lot, I don’t have time to play a little.” His brother, who is studying to become a doctor, said: “Well, what will I say? I do not have time to scratch my head.” That is it: The flea said, “I do not know what to do with that good-for-nothing of mine,” the donkey said, “I, then, shall not speak.”</p>
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(67) *palg-əd bārtil,¹ ḥənnale.¹*

half-GEN bride_price.M henna.F-COP.3MS

‘One half of the bride-price is henna.’

⁸⁸ Sabar (2002a, 103): “proclitic particle to indicate mild puzzlement, wonder, complain.”

xuràsti qam-‘azmálan ’áxlax My friend invited us to eat a
zàlata.¹ mórra talèni,¹ ’úzli xà made such a salad [lit. one
zàlata,¹ xàru bèš bàba ’e-zàlata¹. salad], may the house of its fa-
sèlan,¹ xèllan,¹ kúlla zàlata wéala entire salad was [made of] let-
xàssa,¹ mórriila xuràsti,¹ ’úzlxax tuce, I told her, “My friend,
zàlata kúlla tãrpəd xàssa,¹ palgíd you have made a salad all of
ḅãrtiḷ,¹ ḅènnale.¹ which is leaves of lettuce, one
 half of the bride price is
 henna.”

(68) *palg-ád qahḅusa¹ mən naxpùsa.¹*

half-GEN prostitution/adultery.F from shyness/modesty.F

‘Half of the lewdness is caused by shyness.’

‘áziz bær-jíran déni nàḅum,¹ yála ‘Aziz the son of our neighbour
yakkàna-le,¹ yála ḅáš u-naxòpa- Naḅum is an only child, a good
le.¹ yalúnkəd ḅára lãplu tálbi and shy child. The children of
 the neighbourhood learned to
mánne šo’ále,¹ ’óz ’ò-məndi¹ hálli ask him for things, do that
 thing, give me that thing. ‘Aziz
’ò-məndi.¹ ‘áziz g-náxəp ’ámər is [too] shy to say, “No, I do
 not have [it], I cannot do [it].”
là,¹ làtli,¹ lébi ’òzən.¹ bábe His father Naḅum is very wor-
 ried [lit. afraid] about him. He
nàḅum¹ g-záde ’álle řàḅa.¹ mārre-
le bròni,¹ drí bàlox,¹ palgád told him: “My son, pay atten-
 tion, one half of lewdness is
qahḅusa¹ mən naxpùsa.¹ lóp mār
là?¹ caused by shyness, learn to say
 no!”

(69) *šqál-la mən šərm-a¹ [var.: šərma¹] dré-la ’əl*

take.PFV-3FS from anus.F-POSS.3FS [var.: anus.F] put.PFV-3FS on

pàs-a.¹ [var.: pàsa.¹]

face-POSS.3F.SG [var.: face.F]

‘She took from her anus [and] put on her face.’

Var.: *šqállla mən šərma¹ šəpla ’əl pàsa.¹*

⁸⁹ An expression of appreciation.

‘She took from her anus [and] smeared on her face.’

See the context situation for proverb no. (111) below.

(70) *šárm-əd* *’iwánta glè-la.*¹

anus/buttocks.F-GEN ewe.F be_exposed.PFV-3FS

‘The ewe’s buttocks are exposed.’

mad-híla *’iwánta* *’álsa dída hār* Because the ewe, tail fat al-
g-əmkásya *šərma*¹ *u-’ózza* ways covers her buttocks, and
dumáka *dída* *daqíqa-le* *u-* the goat, her tail is thin and
g-əmgámbel *l-’èl,*¹ *damməd-* curls upwards, [so] when the
’iwánta *g-nádyá* *dumáka* *dída* ewe jumps, her tail goes up and
*g-yàsəq*¹ *u-k-xazíla* *šərma.*¹ *xá-* her buttocks are visible [lit.
yoma *’iwánta* *ndéla* *’əl-jǎlal,*¹ they see her buttocks]. One
’álsa *dída* *rùmla.*¹ *’ózza* *hmállá* *u-* day the ewe leaped over a
*màrra,*¹ *’è!*¹ *šárməd* *’iwánta* *glèla!*¹ brook, her tail fat went up. The
gúmla *lá-k-xaze* *’ujjáksa* *dìde.*¹⁹⁰ goat stood and said, ‘Huh! The
buttocks of the ewe are ex-
posed!’ The camel does not see
its [own] hump.⁹⁰

(71) *šúl* *’ozí-le* *xuràs-i,*¹

work.M.GEN do/make.IPFV.PL-ACC.3MS friend.PL-POSS.1S

k-čáhe *lábbi-i* *u-g-néxi* *’izas-i.*¹

IND-get_tired.IPFV.3MS heart-POSS.1S and-IND-rest.IPFV.3PL hand.FPL-POSS.1S

‘Work done [for me] by my friends, my heart gets tired and
my hands rest.’

Var.: *šúl* *’ozíle* *xuràsi,*¹ *k-čáhe* *lábbi* *u-là-g-nexi* *’izasi.*

‘Work done [for me] by my friends, my heart gets tired and
my hands do not rest.’

Cf. BA:1, SE:85, SA:127.

⁹⁰ See proverb no. (93) below.

*kálsi séla maʿináli bed-šúl pəšə.*¹ My daughter-in-law came to help me with [lit. in] the *kúd daqíqa qam-baqráli məto* [house]work of Passover. Every minute she asked me *ʾózan ʾó-məndi u-ʾò-məndi.*¹ *kúlle* how to do [lit. should I do] this thing and this thing. The entire *wáʿda ʾéni wéla bàsra.*¹ *ʾamránna* time my eye was after her [= I watched over her]. [In order *má ʾòza.*¹ *bəš čhéli.*¹ *márrri ta-* to] tell her what to do. I became more tired [than I would *gyàni,*¹ *šúl ʾozúle xuràsi,*¹ *k-čáhe* have otherwise]. I said to myself, work done [for me] by my friends, my heart gets tired and *lábbi u-g-néxi ʾizasi.*¹ my hands rest.

(72) *šàqfa¹ la mšápya ʾəl šàqfa,¹*

piece.F NEG resemble.IPFV.3FS to piece.F

lá-k-tafqa ʾəbb-a.¹

NEG-IND-meet/stumble_upon.IPFV.3FS in-3FS

‘[If] a piece did not resemble a[nother] piece, it would not have met it.’

Vars.: *wəšla¹ la mšápya ʾəl wəšla,¹ lá-g-ʿalqa ʾəbba.¹*

‘[If] a piece would not resemble a piece, it would not stick to it.’

wəšla¹ la mšápya ʾəl wəšla,¹ lá-g-ʿalqa ʾəl wəšla.¹

‘[If] a piece would not resemble a piece, it would not stick to a piece.’

Cf. R:72, SA:139.

hayíka bər-čúna rába čənnika-le,¹ Hayika the son of Čuna is very *kúllu k-ì.¹ u-báxte¹ mbúrxa* stingy, everyone knows. And *šəmməd xaláqa¹ ʾáp-aya čənníke* his wife—blessed be the name of the Creator—also she is *muxwàse.¹ šàqfa¹ lá mšápya ʾəl* stingy like him. [If] a piece did *šàqfa,¹ lá-k-tafqa bəd-šàqfa.¹* not resemble a[nother] piece, it wouldn’t meet [that] piece.

- (73) *šùla*¹ *ʔàrya-le*¹ *g-náhki* *ʔàlle*¹ *k-páyəš*
 work.M lion.M-COP.3MS IND-touch.IPFV.3PL on-3MS IND-become.IPFV.3MS
*ruvika*¹
 fox.M

‘Work is a lion. Only touch it [and] it becomes a fox.’

Var.: *šùla*¹ *mux*-*ʔàrya-le*¹...

‘Work is like a lion...’

*yʔàlli l-bèsa*¹ *réši mborbàzle*¹ *u-ʔéni* I entered home, my head be-
*xšàklu*¹ *mórri yàmmi*¹ *ʔtli rāba* came scattered [=I became
*šùla*¹ *lá-k-iʔan má ʔòn*¹ *u-má lá* weary and confused] and my
*ʔòzan*¹ *ʔéka šàkkan*¹ *bràti*¹ *šùla* eyes were darkened. I said,
*ʔàrya-le*¹ *mánde ʔízax ʔàlle*¹ *páyəš* “My mother, I have much
*ruvika*¹ work, I do not know what I
 should do and what I should
 not do, where I should start
 from.” “My daughter, work is a
 lion, throw your hand at it
 [= commence performing it],
 it becomes a fox.”

- (74) *ʔóz* *hawùsa*¹ *mánda* *b-ṁàya*¹

do.IMP.2S favour.F throw.IMP.2MS in-water.PL

‘Do an act of kindness, [and] throw [it] in the water.’

Var.: *ʔóz hawùsa*¹ *màrpe b-ṁàya*¹

‘Do an act of kindness, [and] let [it] go in the water.’

Cf. SE:54, SA:37, proverbs nos (89) and (90) below. Also compare: ‘Send your bread upon the water, for after many days you shall find it’ (Qoh. 11.1).⁹¹

⁹¹ About the Jewish tale-ocototype associated with this verse, see Noy (1971).

mən-dámməd wéali zúrta¹ yámmi Since I was little, my mother
qam-malpáli ’ón hawúsa taught me to do people fa-
’amməd-nàše¹ u-lá tálban çù- vour[s], and not to ask for any-
məndi.¹ hár g-əmràli¹ ’óʒ hawúsa,¹ thing [in return]. She always
mánde b-ṁàya.¹ told me, do a favour, throw [it]
 into the water.

- (75) *dmóx kpìna, qú swì’a.¹*
 sleep.IMP.2s hungry.MS rise.IMP.2s satiated.MS

‘Sleep hungry [and] rise full.’

Var.: *dmóx kpìna, qú šamìna.¹*

‘Sleep hungry [and] rise fat.’

ḥabúba mərra-li.¹ bràti,¹ kúllu Ḥabuba said to me: “My
wéalu faqìr go-záxo,¹ bxá daughter, everyone was poor
kóza qùṁma,¹ g-marwéwalu in Zakho, with one pile of ashes
yalünke,⁹² lá mux-’àxxa.¹ ’áswa they would raise the children,⁹²
lelawàsa,¹ lá-g-damxanwa mən- not like here. There were
kàpna.¹ yámmi g-emràwa-li,¹ nights, I did not sleep out of
dmóx kpànta,¹ qú swè’ta.¹ ’óto hunger. My mother told me,
g-zağlāwali¹ ta-dāmxa.¹ sleep hungry, rise satiated.
 This is how she would tempt
 me to sleep.”

- (76) *dúkəd g-jàrya¹ k-pàrya.¹*
 place.GEN IND-flow.IPFV.3FS IND-be_abundant/overflow/heal.IPFV.3FS

‘Where it flows, it heals.’

Var.: *dúkəd g-jàrya¹ k-pàsxa.¹*

‘Where it flows, it opens up.’

ḥále u-’áziz hay-xamšt-šanne Ḥale and ‘Aziz have been mar-
hilu-gwìre.¹ ḥáram hákan šmé’lan ried for fifty years. We have
 never heard [lit. it is forbidden

⁹² See proverb no. (114) below.

xa-čappén mǎnnòhun.¹ ḥále xa- if we heard] [even] a [single]
bàxta-hila,¹ bé'ta bála pàmma,⁹³ sound [lit. a two-drops] from
u-‘áziz-šik,¹ léwe maḥkyàna.¹ ’è them. Ḥale is such a woman,
šábsa,¹ yom-xušéba mbànoke,¹ an egg without a mouth,⁹³ and
šmé’lan čriqéne mǎn-besòhun.¹ also ‘Aziz is not talkative. This
ṇsélu xà ṇašúsa,¹ lá mhimánnan week, on Sunday morning, we
’anya-náše k-í’i ṇáši u-šárxi ’òto.¹ heard shrieks from their house.
ḥále bxéla u-qtálla gyàna.¹ yámmi They had such a fight, we
màrra,¹ lá y’élan čú-mǎndi ’al- could not believe that these
danya-náše.¹ šáḥude mǎrre,¹ ’ána people know how to fight and
r’óšli xésa talàtta-la.⁹⁴ ’éna scream like that. Ḥale cried
wealu-šəṛṛ.¹ ’iláha-d-’úzle ’e- and killed herself [= was in
pəřšánta psəxla,¹ dúkəd g-jàrya¹ great sorrow and distress]. My
k-pàrya.¹ mother said, “We did not know
anything about those people.”
Shahude said, “I felt that it is
wet under her.⁹⁴ Her eyes were
malicious. [Good that] God
made [lit. God that made] this
abscess open up, where it
flows, it heals.”

(77) *zál-le xòla¹ básər dòla.¹*

go.PFV-3MS rope.M after/behind drum/bucket.M

‘The rope followed the bucket [or: drum⁹⁵].’

Cf. SE:79, SA:150. See also: הלך החבל אחר הדלי ‘The rope followed the bucket’ (Midrash Tanḥuma, Parashat Miqets 10).⁹⁶

⁹³ See proverb no. (100) below.

⁹⁴ See proverb no. (110) below.

⁹⁵ See Sabar (1978, 231).

⁹⁶ See also Midrash Tanḥuma, Parashet Va-Yyigash 5; Yalquṭ Šim‘oni, Parashat Va-Yyigash 150.

bər-amóyi zúnne bésa go^{Hc}en- The son of my uncle bought a
ha‘emèq.^{H197} ʾaxóni m̀̀rre,¹ ba- house in Eyn Ha-Emek.⁹⁷ My
 ʾáp-ana b-án ʾəl^{Hc}en-ha‘emèq!^{H1} brother said, “Well, I also
 yámmi m̀̀rra,¹ háwwa br̀̀ni,¹ sì!¹ would go to Eyn Ha-Emek!”
 zálle x̀̀la¹ básər d̀̀la.¹ My mother said, “All right, my
 son, go! The rope went after
 the bucket.”

(78) *dúnye qzàya-la.¹*

world.F prepare.VERB_N-COP.3FS

‘The world is [only] a preparation. [Therefore everything should be taken easily].’⁹⁸

Cf. SA:43, SA:44, SA:45.

*kr̀̀bli mən-g̀̀ri,¹ zálle be-b̀̀bi,¹ I was angry with my husband,
 bxéli u-m̀̀rri ta-ỳ̀mmi,¹ qáy I went to the house of my father,
 šúqlax b̀̀bi magúrri ta-b̀̀r- I cried and said to my
 ʾamòyi?¹ g-mázəd ʾ̀̀lli r̀̀ba mother, ‘Why did you let my
 š̀̀nne,¹ u-‘aq̀̀lle lé[w]e mux- father marry me to my cousin?
 ‘aq̀̀lli.¹ náša b̀̀š-ile,¹ b̀̀le ʾána He is many years older than I
 lá-qam-goranne mən-m̀̀h̀̀bbe.¹ am [lit. he exceeds me many
 ỳ̀mmi m̀̀rra,¹ br̀̀ti,¹ là-karbát,¹ years], and his mind is not like
 náša b̀̀š-ile,¹ ma‘š̀̀lax b̀̀š,¹ u- my mind. He is a good man,
 naš-gyána d̀̀ni híle.¹ dúnye but I did not marry him out of
 qzàya-la.¹ ʾátta b-asélax love.’ My mother said, ‘My
 yalünke,¹ u-mkəfat ʾ̀̀bbu,¹ ʾiláha daughter, do not be angry, he
 b-dáre ʾahava-šalóm benòxun.¹ is a good man, and he is our
 relative [lit. he is people of
 ourselves]. The world is about
 managing it. Soon you will
 have children [lit. now children
 will come to you], and
 you will be happy with them,
 God will give [lit. put] love
 [and] peace between you
 [both].’*

See also the context situation for proverb no. (82) below.

⁹⁷ A community settlement in the north of Israel, founded in 1944 by immigrants from Kurdistan.

⁹⁸ Several speakers offered the interpretation: ‘The world should be managed [smoothly].’

- (79) *bés* *ʔiláha ʔəmìra.*¹
 house.M.GEN God be_built.PFV_PTCP.M
 ‘The house of God is built.’

See ch. 2, §7.0, no. (156).

*mərri ta-šàmra,*¹ *bǎne u-bomaxét* I said to Samra, “Tomorrow
*p-káwəš tàlga.*¹ *čúxa lá-g-napəq* and the following day it will
 snow [lit. snow will descend].
*mən-bèse.*¹ *ʔatta g-én ʔəl-šùqa,* No one will go out of his house.
 I am going now to the market;
*g-šbat zonánnax xa-məndi?*¹ would you like me to buy you
 anything?” She said to me, “I
*mərri-li,*¹ *lá bràti,*¹ *ʔtli mád* have what I need, I have food,
*g-làzman,*¹ *ʔtli ʔixàla,*¹ *bés ʔiláha* the house of God is built, and
 be blessed by God [= may God
*ʔmìra,*¹ *u-mburáxtət ʔiláha hòyat.*¹ bless you].”

- (80) *bába g-yáwəl* *ta-yalònke*¹ *kútru k-fàrḥ-i,*¹
 father IND-give.IPFV.3MS to-child.PL both IND-rejoice.IPFV-3PL
yálonke g-yáwi *ta-bab-ðhun*¹ *kútru g-bàxi.*¹
 child.PL IND-give.IPFV.3PL to-father-POSS.3PL both IND-cry.IPFV.3PL
 ‘[When] a father gives to [= provides for] his children, both
 [sides] are happy, [when] children give to their father,
 both [sides] cry.’

Cf. proverb no. (39) above.

*ḥamínko bxéle u-mərre,*¹ *lá-g-ben* Ḥaminko cried and said: “I do
*čú-xa yawálli pàre,*¹ *bába g-yáwəl* not want anyone to give me
 money, [when] a father gives
*ta-yalònke*¹ *kútru k-fàrḥ-i,*¹ to his children, both [sides] are
 happy, [when] children give to
*yálonke g-yáwi ta-babðhun*¹ *kútru* their father, both [sides] cry.
*g-bàxi.*¹ *šud-čù-xa la-báxe.*¹ May no one cry.”

- (81) *dré-la* *máya b-əd-tré* *šaqyàsa.*¹
 put.PFV-3FS water.PL in-GEN-TWO water_trough.FPL
 ‘She poured water in both troughs.’

Cf. proverb no. (98) below, a synonym.

yámmi márra-li bràti¹ dóq rába My mother told me, “My
qádār dína jíran dèni¹ yámməd daughter, hold much the hon-
ʿefràyim¹ u-qádār xátun yámməd our of [= give much respect to]
ʿáziz.¹ ʿilá[h]a ʿáyən xá mən- Dina, our neighbour, the
yalúnke dóhun páyāš mázzal mother of Ephraim, and the
dìdax.¹ lázəm-dáryat məya bəd- honour of Khatun, the mother
tré šaqyāsa.¹ of ʿAziz. God will help, one of
 their children will be your luck
 [= you will marry]. You should
 pour water in both troughs.”

(82) *məřıra xtàya,¹ xályā ʿəlàya.¹*

bitter.M lower.M sweet.M high.M

‘Bitter below, sweet above.’

zállì mašihánna ḥabùba.¹ yʿéli I went to visit Ḥabuba. I knew
řáḅa ʿayàne-la. hīla mṭaʿðne.¹ that she was very ill. She is dy-
dámməd yʿállì, kéfa séle u-frəhla ing [lit. carrying]. When I en-
řáḅa.¹ mərra-li¹ bràti¹ ʿiláha tered, she became very happy.
mabhárta ʿəllàx,¹ mətəd She told me, “My daughter,
mabhárrax ʿállì yòmi.¹ məřri go- may God make it shine/bright
ləbbi,¹ ʿàya-la,¹ məřıra xtàya,¹ upon you, like you have bright-
xályā ʿəlàya.¹ ḥála məřıra-le¹ u- ened my day upon me.” I said
ʿàya xliša-la.¹ dúnye qzàya-la.¹⁹⁹ in my heart, “That is it, bitter
 below, sweet above. Her situa-
 tion is bitter and she is [= ap-
 pears] sweet. The world is all
 about managing it.”⁹⁹

(83) *díwan baxtāsa,¹ bəš bassíma-le¹*

divan¹⁰⁰.M.GEN woman.PL more pleasant.M-COP.3MS

mən-díwan gùre.¹

from-divan¹⁰⁰.M.GEN man.PL

‘Sitting with women is better than sitting with men.’

Cf. SE:109, an antonym.

⁹⁹ See proverb no. (78) above.

¹⁰⁰ Or: drawing room, council, assembly.

damməd-gárib 'óče *k-eséwa* Whenever Ġarib 'Oče came to
*kəslèni,*¹ *lá-g-ya'əlwə* *kəs-bábi* us, he would not enter to my
 father [=my father's room] to
yátu 'əmməd-xaḥamìne,¹ *k-eséwa* sit with the Ḥakhamim, he
 used to come in the veranda,
*go-barbàanke,*¹ *g-yatúwa* 'əmməd- sit with the women, laugh and
 say, "A *divan* of women is more
*baxtása,*¹ *g-gaxəkwə* *u-g-əmər,*¹ pleasant than a *divan* of men.
 And you should know, [that]
*díwan baxtása,*¹ *bəš bassíma-le'* And you should know, [that]
mən-díwan *güre.*¹ *u-lázəm* when women speak men
 [should] remain silent.¹⁰¹ I will
*ya'ətun,*¹ *damməd-baxtása* [should] remain silent and laugh my
 remain silent and laugh my
g-màḥki' *güre* *k-šàtqi.*¹⁰¹ 'ána head off [lit. faint from laugh-
 ter]."
p-šàtqən' *u-g-šanéwa* *mən-gəxka.'*¹

- (84) *hákan g-nàpel,*¹ 'axl-í-wa 'əxre,¹
 if one_who_regrets.PL eat.IPFV-3PL-PAST faeces.PL
lá-g-peš-i-wa 'əxre *go-dùnye.'*¹
 NEG-IND-remain.IPFV-3PL-PAST faeces.PL in-world.F

'If those who regret ate faeces, there would be no faeces left in the world.'

ndámli *řába* 'əl-pə'ullós *dəd-* I regretted very much over the
 foolish deeds that I had done,
 'úzli,¹ *u-l-^Hma'asím^H* *dəd-là* 'úzli,¹ and the deeds that I had not
 done. I sat and brooded. My
túli *u-šfənni.*¹ *yəmmi* *mərra-li,*¹ done. I sat and brooded. My
 mother told me: "My daughter,
bràti' *hákan* *nadáme* 'axlíwa mother told me: "My daughter,
 if those who regret ate shit,
 'əxre,¹ *lá-g-pešíwa* 'əxre *go-* there would not remain any
 shit in the world."
*dùnye.'*¹

- (85) *řé-li* *raḥùqa,*¹ *xzé-li* *qaríwa.'*¹
 search.PFV-1S far.M find/see.PFV-1S close.M

'I searched far away [but] I found close by.'

¹⁰¹ See proverb no. (86) below.

ʾaxón ḥabùba¹ ʿʔéle xa-brát ḥalál The brother of Ḥabuba looked
 ta-g-áwər u-báne bèse,¹ msófərre kosher, i.e., of good family,
 l-mòṣol¹ msófərre l-bàgdad,¹ čü marry and build his house
 bráta lá-mpəlla go-ləbbe.¹ dʾərre [with]. He travelled to Mosul,
 l-zàxo,¹ go-ʾürxa¹ xzéle xa-bráta he travelled to Baghdad, no girl
 spàhin¹ mùx šəmšəd sèhra caught his attention [lit. fell in
 g-màbhəra.¹ škálle máhke his heart]. He returned to
 ʾəmma,¹ mpəqla náša dide¹ u-hám Zakho, on the way he saw a
 rwéla go-mahàle dide.¹ ḥabúba fine girl, shining like the moon-
 màrra,¹ ʾaxòni,¹ ʿʔélox rahùqa¹ light [lit. like the sun of the
 xzélox qarìwa.¹ ʾilàha mabhərra moon]. He started speaking
 ʾəllox.¹ with her, it turned out that she
 was [lit. she went out] a rela-
 tive of his [lit. his people], and
 she also grew up in his neigh-
 bourhood. Ḥabuba said: “My
 brother, you searched far
 away, [but] found near. May
 God make [light] shine upon
 you.”

(86) *damm-əd-baxtása g-màhk-i,¹ guráne k-šàtq-i.¹*

time-GEN-woman.PL IND-speak.IPFV-3PL man.PL IND-be_silent.IPFV-3PL

‘When women speak, men are silent.’

See the context situation for proverb no. (83) above.

(87) *kúd lá k-šáqəl mən-məllət-e,¹*

whoever.GEN NEG IND-take.IPFV.3MS from-ethnic_group.F-POSS.3MS

g-él b-əllət-e.¹

IND-go.IPFV.3MS in-illness.F-POSS.3MS

‘Whoever does not take [a wife] from his own ethnic group,
 goes [= dies] in his sickness.’

Cf. SE:24.

bər-ʔamóyi gúrre xá mən-náš The son of my uncle married
ʔáxxa,¹ roháye qam-mapqàla.¹ [=Ashkenazim], she took his
ʔal-kúd mándi g-ṇàši.¹ yámme him a hard time]. They fight
màrra-le,¹ bròni,¹ kúd lá k-šáqal about everything. His mother
mən-mállàte,¹ ʔila-lá-wəz g-él¹⁰² told him, “My son, whoever
b-ʕállàte.¹ does not take [a wife] from his
 own ethnic group, God forbid
 [lit. may God not make it],
 goes [=dies] in his sickness.”

(88) *kúd ʔéra p̄lima,¹ ʔáxxa k-tàres.¹*

all.REL penis.M crooked/twisted.M here IND-heal.IPFV.3MS

‘Every crooked penis finds its cure here.’

Var.: ...ʔáxxa k-páyəš ràst.

‘...becomes straight here.’

bés xáḥam wéale qam-šūqa.¹ kùd The house of the Ḥakham was
g-ezálwa ʔal-šūqa,¹ bəd-ʔúrxe near the market. Whoever
g-yaʔlwa bás be-xàḥam.¹ bráte went to the market would, on
 his way, enter the house of the
màrra,¹ lá doqétun ʔəlli,¹ kúd ʔéra Ḥakham [lit. the house of the
 household/family of the
p̄lima,¹ ʔáxxa k-tàres.¹ ʔána çhèli Ḥakham]. His [=the
 Ḥakham’s] daughter said, “Do
mən-dánya ʔíqe u-flíte dəd-k-ési not hold [this] against me [lit.
 on me], every crooked penis
ʔáxxa.¹ külle yòma xá g-yàʔal¹ xá finds its cure here. I am tired
g-nàpəq.¹ básər kma-šənne¹ [lit. became tired] of these
 lowly people [lit. caught and
fhámle ʔéma bésa bəš wéle,¹ mùx dissolute]¹⁰³ who come here.
bès ʔavrahám ʔavīnu wéwale,¹ All day long one enters [and]
 one goes out.” After several
psíxa ʔal-ʔarbá ʔalàle.¹ xá g-yáʔal years, she understood what a
 good house it was, it was like
bə-bxàya,¹ damməd-g-nàpəq¹ the house of Abraham Our Fa-
 ther, open to its four sides. One

¹⁰² Contraction of ʔiláha lá ʔàwəz.

¹⁰³ A collocation. The first word of the pair may also mean ‘accidentally conceived’.

*páse hīla mpuršàqta,*¹ *xáḥam u-* would enter crying, when he
*báxte k-šam'íwa kùd-xa,*¹ smoothed, the Ḥakham and his
*g-ma'iniwa kùd-xa,*¹ *u-kúd y'alle* wife used to listen to anyone,
*l-tàm' mpáqla mabsùt.*¹ *məṛáde* used to help anyone, and who-
*ḥšile.*¹ ever entered there went out
satisfied. His wishes fulfilled.

- (89) *hawúsa là-'oz-ət* *'əmməd-huzáya.*¹
favour.F NEG-do.IPFV-2MS with-jew.MS
‘Do not do a favour for a Jew.’

Cf. proverb no. (74) above.

*xzéli xa-šúla ḥáš ta-bər-xàlti,*¹ I found a good job for my
márrī-le si' škòl' hám p-kázbət cousin, I told him, “Go, start
*páre ḥáš,*¹ *ham-mtáhnət.*¹ *rába* [working there], you will earn
náše g-əbíwa palxíwa go-dé good money, and enjoy it as
*dùksa.*¹ *bər-xàlti zəlle,*¹ *škálle* well. Many people would have
*šúla,*¹ *pláxle xá šàbsa' u-mərre'*¹ *'ó* liked to work in this place.” My
*léwe ṭàli,*¹ *səhràne*¹⁰⁴ *-la' bále léwa* cousin went, started working
*ṭàli.*¹ *qámle u-qam-šawáqla 'e-* [lit. started the job], worked
*dùksa,*¹ *gan-‘ézen wéla ṭàle!*¹ *xšúli* one week and said: “This is not
*ta-gyàni,*¹ *hawúsa là-'ozət* for me, it is a *sehrane*¹⁰⁴
*'əmməd-huzáya.*¹ [= pleasant as a spring celebra-
tion], but it is not for me.” He
left [lit. he rose and left] that
place. It was the Garden of
Eden [=exceptionally good]
for him! I thought to myself,
“Do not do a favour for a Jew.”

- (90) *mándi lāxm-ox reš-ṁàya,*¹ *báلكid xa-nunísa*
throw.IMP.2MS bread.M-POSS.2MS on-water.PL maybe one-fish.F
*b-doqà-le.*¹⁰⁵
FUT-catch.IPFV.3FS-ACC.3MS

¹⁰⁴ A spring celebration. See ch. 3, fn. 39.

¹⁰⁵ I thank Prof. Yona Sabar for this proverb.

‘Throw your bread over the water, maybe a fish will catch it.’¹⁰⁶

Cf. SE:54, SA:37, proverb no. (74) above. See ‘Send your bread upon the water, for after many days you shall find it’ (Qoh. 11.1).

damməd-ṭʿéli šùla,¹ ṭlóbli mən- When I was looking for a job, I
ʿəstázi maʿənni.¹ mərəre-li:¹ mándi asked my teacher to help me.
laxmox reš-ṣàya,¹ bálkid xa- He told me: “Throw your bread
nunísa b-doqàle.¹ mšádər ksáwe to [lit. on] the water, maybe a
ta-ráḃa dukàne.¹ fish will grab it. Send letters to
many places.”

(91) *šásət ʿərbi hóya ʿəl-le,¹ lá g-yawál-la*
fever.F.GEN forty be.IPFV.3FS on-3MS NEG IND-give.IPFV.3MS-3FS

ta-čù-xa.¹

to-any-one

‘[Even if] he had fever of forty [degrees], he would give it to no one.’

See the context situation for proverb no. (47) above.

(92) *hám zyàra¹ hám təjjàra.¹*

also visit.F also trade.F

‘A visit, as well as a trading opportunity.’

yəmmi mərri¹ b-án mašihánna My mother said, “I shall go
bässso,¹ hila-ʿayyàne,¹ damməd- visit Bässso, she is ill, when I re-
dáʿran mənna,¹ b-yáʿlan be- turn from her, I will go [lit. enter]
xáḃam nàḃum¹ u-p-šáqlan mánne to Ḥakham Naḃum’s
house, and take from him the
ṭahún pəsra,¹ go-ʿúrxi zónan tré meat grinder, on my way I will
buy two [or] three things from
ṭlahá ʿawáye mən-šùqa,¹ ḃàš-ila?¹ the market, isn’t it [a] good
[plan]?” “Of course, mother,
maʿálum yəmmi,¹ šahátax well done [lit. may your

¹⁰⁶ See above, fn. 91.

*bassəma*¹ *hám zyàra*¹ *hám* health/vigour be well/pleasant], both a visit and a trading opportunity.”
*təjjàra*¹

(93) *gúmla lá-k-xaze* ‘*ujjəksa dīd-e*.’¹

camel.M NEG-IND-see.IPFV.3MS hump.F of-3MS

‘The camel does not see its [own] hump.’

See the context situation for proverb no. (70) above.

(94) *ʔíz-ox mpál-la go-tér ʔilàha*.

hand.F-POSS.2MS fall.PFV-3FS into-sufficient God

‘Your hand fell into the sufficient [= abundance] of God.’

Cf. proverb no. (112) below.

‘*áziz mārreli kmá g-əbéla* ‘Aziz told me how much he loves our family. He told Yoʔel the husband of Faruḥ, the son-in-law of Ḥakham Ḥabib and Sətuna, “You do not know what luck you have that you married the daughter of Ḥakham Ḥabib, your hand fell into the abundance of God.”’
*məšpáha dèni*¹ *mārre ta-yóʔel*
*gor-fàruḥ*¹ *xətən xaḥam-ḥábib u-*
*šətùna*¹ *lá-k-iʔət ʔéma* ^H*mazzál*^H
ʔítlox dəd-gúrrox brat-xáḥam
*ḥábib*¹ *ʔízoḥ mpálla go-tér ʔilàha*¹

(95) *rozána rozàna*¹ *ʔíz-i pəša*

earthquake.F earthquake.F hand.F-POSS.1S become.IPFV.3FS

*dərmàna*¹

cure.M

‘Earthquake earthquake! My hand shall be the cure!’

Said by women after an earthquake, while putting their hands on the ground.

(96) *ʔixál-e pàrta*¹ ‘*urtyás-e prəzla*.’¹

food.M-POSS.3MS bran/sawdust.F fart.F.PL-POSS.3MS iron.M

‘His food [is of] sawdust [but] his farts [are of] iron.’

Var.: ...‘*urʔise pòlaz*.’¹

‘...his fart [is of] steel.’

*jìran déni,¹ kmá wà'da,¹ lá- Our neighbour, for some time,
k-palex,¹ látle šùla.¹ látle xá has not been working, he does
qúrus¹⁰⁷ má'eš gyàne.¹ mārri-le not have a job. He does not
mqálu hòš,¹ mqálu jaradòkat,¹ have even one *qurus*¹⁰⁷ to sup-
šqól tré tláha qrùše,¹ mdábār port himself. I told him, clean
hàlox.¹ mjoyible,¹ 'ána lá-gon 'o- the courtyard, clean the stairs
šùla,¹ lá-gə-mqalwən básər nàše.¹ [= staircase] take [= earn] two
xási mārri-li šùqle,¹ 'ó 'ixále [or] three *qurus*, sustain your
pārta-le,¹ 'úrṭise prəzla.¹ situation [= earn a living, take
care of yourself]. He answered:
"I do not do these things, I do
not clean after people." My sister
told me: "Leave him, his
food is sawdust [but] his farts
are iron."*

- (97) 'áhat mḥāšəl,¹ 'áxnən b-lòš-ax.¹
you.MS cut_out.IMP.2S we FUT-wear.IPFV-1PL
'You shall cut it [and] we shall wear it.'

Compare Sabar (1974, 330), nursery rhyme no. 3:

xumyānox mḥāšəl u'āhət lōš [...]

'May your father-in-law cut out (garments) for you to wear.'

In that case, however, the expression is used not as a proverb but rather literally.

*sámra mārri ta-jíran dída, šqól Samra said to her neighbour,
brat-xási ta-brònox,¹ sqǎlta u- "Take the daughter of my sister
ḥāš-ila.¹ mārre-la,¹ mad-'ámrat for your son [= marry them],
she is beautiful and good." He
bax-'əstàzi,¹ 'áhat mḥāšəl,¹ said to her, "Whatever you say,
wife of my teacher. You will
'áxnən b-lòšax.¹ cut out, and we shall wear."*

- (98) 'əzla díd-a g-mzabná-le go-ráḥa šuqà-ne.¹
yarn.M GEN-3FS IND-sell.IPFV.3FS-ACC.3MS in-many market.M-PL

¹⁰⁷ Sabar (2002a, 283): "small Turkish coin." The reference here is probably to the *grush*, an old Israeli coin.

‘She sells her yarn in many markets.’

Cf. proverb no. (81) above, a synonym.

*xási mǎrra b-ásya maʿinàli,¹ u- My sister said that she would
tǎlax-šik mǎrra b-ásya come [and] help me, and to
maʿinàlax,¹ u-mǎrra b-áza kəz- you she also said that she
yámmi mbašlǎla,¹ ʿána k-ʿan lá- would come [and] help you,
g-oza mándi mən-màndi,¹ bále and she said that she would go
ʿázla dída g-mzabnále go-řáḅa to my mother [and] cook for
šūqàne.¹ her, I know that she does not
do a thing from a thing [= she
won’t do anything], yet she
sells her yarn in many markets.*

(99) *béʿta nápla mən šǝrm-a,¹ lá-k-tora.¹*

egg.F fall.IPFV.3FS from buttocks.F-POSS.3FS NEG-IND-break.IPFV.3FS

‘[If] an egg falls from her buttocks it does not break.’

*ʿé báxta qóməd šita-la,¹⁰⁸ béʿta This woman is [of one] span’s
nápla mən šǝrma,¹ lá-k-tora.¹ stature,¹⁰⁸ [If] an egg falls from
bǎle-kása k-ʿa řáḅa ta-gyána.¹ her buttocks, it does not break.
But her belly knows a lot for
herself [= she is very cunning,
her appearance is misleading].*

(100) *béʿta bála pəmma.¹*

egg.F without mouth.M

‘An egg without a mouth.’

Cf. SA:31.

See the context situations for proverbs nos (76) above and

(112) below.

(101) *gúr-rax gúr-rax barrəkyás-ax*

get_married.PFV-3FS get_married.PFV-3FS *kilim_rug.PL-POSS.3FS*

čəq-lu.¹

tear.PFV-3PL

¹⁰⁸ See proverb no. (116) below.

‘You got married, you got married, your rugs have torn [because of the many suitors that stepped on them].’

ʾávro báṭṭi g-əbéwa mزابنوا ʾAvro Bəṭṭi wanted to sell his
 bèse.¹ řába náše sélu u-zəllu,¹ u- house. Many people came and
 bèsa¹ lá zùnnu.¹ mərre ta-gyàne,¹ house. He said to himself,
 ʾə-mà-pəšla?¹ qásted xazàle “What’s happened [lit. what
 pəšla,¹ sélu řába řalabáye řàla¹ did that become]? It is like the
 sélu u-zəllu u-là-qam-gorila.¹ story of Khazale [lit. it has be-
 yámma mən-qahríta mərri,¹ come Khazale’s story], many
 gúrrax gúrrax barakyásax suitors came for her, they came
 čəqlu.¹ and went and did not marry
 her. Her mother out of her sor-
 row said, ‘You got married,
 you got married, your rugs
 tore.’”

(102) g-náštī qàlma¹ u-gálda díd-a gə-mzabni-le.¹

IND-skin.IPFV.3PL louse.F and-skin.M of-3FS IND-sell.IPFV.3PL-ACC.3MS

‘They skin a louse and sell its skin.’

Var.: g-náštī bàqqa,¹ g-əmzábni gálda dida.¹

‘They skin a frog, [and] sell its skin.’

See the context situation for proverb no. (47) above.

(103) g-jáyēr mən šürs-e.¹

IND-urinate.IPFV.3MS from navel.F-POSS.3MS

‘He urinates through his navel [unlike all others].’

Var.: mən šürse g-jáyēr.¹

‘Through his navel he urinates.’

Cf. proverb no. (46) above.

ʿo-náša rāḅa gèʿya-le,¹ k-xášu This person is very haughty, he
 gyáne rāḅa,¹ k-xášu lés thinks highly of himself [lit. he
 mənne,¹⁰⁹ léwe múx kùllu.¹ thinks himself (too) much, i.e.
 g-jáyēr mən šūrse.¹ he is full of himself], he thinks
 there is no one like him [lit.
 there is not of him],¹⁰⁹ he is not
 like everyone. He urinates
 from his navel.

(104) dré-le párra b-rèš-e¹ u-ʿéra go-šərma.¹

put.PFV-3MS feather.M in-head.M-POSS.3MS and-penis.M in-anus.M

‘He put a feather on his head and a penis in his anus.’

moʿanni házqəl bəd-šabágəd I helped Ḥazqəl with painting
 bèse.¹ séle ʿaxòne,¹ házqəl his house. His brother came,
 Ḥazqəl told him: “See what a
 g-emərre:¹ xzī ʿéma šúla sqíla good [lit. beautiful, i.e., of
 good quality] job he made [lit.
 ʿúzle ʾò.¹ ʿana-roḥáyi mpáqla this (person) made].” I, my
 spirit went out [of me] [be-
 cause] of exertion, I laughed
 and said, “Right, put a feather
 on my head.”

bádre mərri-li,¹ šmò,¹ lá-šamʿat Badre told me, ‘Listen, may
 xriwa,¹¹⁰ qam-ʿazmīli máḥkyan you not hear evil,¹¹⁰ they in-
 vited me to speak in a divan
 go-díwan gùre,¹ muṛáḍi ḥšəllu,¹ ʿé [= assembly] of men, my
 wishes came true, this is the
 dóra qamésa ʿzámli báxta first time that they invite a
 woman to speak with the mag-
 nates. I travelled to Tel-Aviv, I
 máḥkya ʿamməd-ruwàne.¹ arrived, they sat me in the cor-
 ner of the stage, all of the men
 msófərri L^Htel-ʿaviv^H mṭèli,¹ spoke one after the other, until
 qam-matwīli go-qurnísəd sədde¹ my turn arrived, the day
 kùllu guráne məḥkélu xá-basər ended, all of the people scat-
 tered, my blood spilled [=I
 daw-xèt,¹ hīl mṭéle dōri¹ yóma was shamed, humiliated].’ I
 gnèle¹ náše kùllu mborbəzlu¹ told her, ‘My friend, my
 mother told me a long time
 dámmi bəzle.¹ mərri-la xuràsti,¹ ago, grab your honour with

¹⁰⁹ See proverb no. (46) above.

¹¹⁰ See proverb no. (129) below.

yámmi mǎrra-li mǎn-zùna¹ dóq your hand [= have dignity],
qádrax bǎd-ʔizàx¹ u-lóp ta- and learn for yourself [= know
gǎnax¹ xolá kúd ʔamǎr tǎrnìni¹ how to take care of yourself,
lázǎm ràqzat,¹¹¹ xzé ma-séla protect your interests], must
b-rèšax,¹ drélu pára b-rèšax¹ u- you dance for whoever says
ʔéra go-šǎrmax.¹ *tǎrnìni?!¹¹¹* See what has hap-
 pened to you [lit. see what
 came unto your head], they
 put a feather on your head and
 a penis in your anus.’

(105) *hámam g-ma¹lǎq-le* *b-ǎd ʔurtyàs-e.¹*

bath.M IND-set_fire.IPFV.3MS-ACC.3MS in-GEN fart.F.PL-POSS.3MS

‘He heated the bath [water] with his farts.’

Cf. R:70, SA:58.

go-mahále dèni,¹ ʔáswa xa- In our neighbourhood, there
soṭǎnta,¹ pappúke láswa-la má was one old woman, poor soul,
ʔaxlǎwa.¹ náše g-raḥmíwa ʔǎlla,¹ she did not have what to eat.
g-yawíwala pǎrtòxe.¹ xǎ-dora,¹ People use to take pity on her,
séle nǎssimo,¹ xzéle ʔe-pappúke,¹ they used to give her crumbs.
mǎrre,¹ ʔátta há¹ ʔahà máḥken Once, Næssimo came, he saw
ʔámmǎd naš-máḥkame u- that poor soul, [and] he said,
ma¹ʔiníla.¹ baser-tré tǎláha šabása,¹ “Now right away I will speak
lá šmé¹lu mǎnne čù-mǎndi,¹ with the people of the govern-
yámmi mǎrra,¹ ʔo-náša la-úzle ment [= authorities] and they
čù-mǎndi,¹ hámam g-ma¹lǎqle will help her.” After two [or]
b-ʔurtyàse.¹ mǎrwala bax- three weeks, no one heard [lit.
mašlíah.¹¹² they did not hear] anything
 from him, my mother said,
 “That person did not do any-
 thing, he set fire to the bath
 with flatulence. The wife of
 Mašliaḥ said so.”¹¹²

¹¹¹ See proverb no. (37) above.

¹¹² See proverb no. (117) below.

- (106) *tʻé-li tʻè-li,¹ bāš-tov mən gyáni lá xzè-li.¹*
 search.PFV-1S search.PFV-1S more-good from self-1S NEG see.PFV-1S
 ‘I searched [and] searched [but] did not find [anyone] better than myself.’

Cf. SE:80.

See the context situation for proverb no. (46) above.

- (107) *xáre qàm-e¹ xáre bàsr-e¹ xà*
 defecate.IPFV.3S/PL in_front-3MS defecate.IPFV.3S/PL behind-3MS one
íla.¹
 COP.3FS

‘[Whether] you defecate in front of him [or] behind him, it is one [= it is the same for him].’

Var.: *xáre qàme¹ xáre bàsre¹ lá g-mfàreq.¹*

‘[Whether] you defecate in front of him [or] behind him, he does not distinguish.’

ʔo-náša be-ʿàšel híle.¹ lá-g-daʔal That person is ill-mannered.
mád g-ózi tàle.¹ xáre qàme¹ xáre He is not able [or: does not
bàsre!¹ want] to see what [people] do
 for him. You defecate in front
 of him, you defecate behind
 him...

- (108) *kúd šabòʔta¹ xá šanèʔta.¹*
 all.REL finger.F one craft/skill.F
 ‘Each finger, a skill.’

ʔe-bàxta,¹ rāba šàter-íla,¹ xa-ʿéšet That woman, she is very skil-
hàyil.¹ kúd šabòʔta¹ xá šanèʔta- ful/clever/strong, a woman of
la.¹ xuzí ʔaxòni¹ mgábe ta-gyáne valour. Each finger, a skill. I
 wish, my brother would
xá muxwàsa.¹ choose for himself one like her.

- (109) *xa g-èmer¹ xa gə-mtàrjəm.¹*
 one IND-say.IPFV.3MS one IND-translate.IPFV.3MS

‘One is talking, the other is translating.’

ʔanya-yalùnke,¹ kùllu sélu ʔálli,¹ mád g-òñ¹ gə-mʔámri ʔəlli.¹ xá g-èmer¹ xá gə-mtàrjəm.¹ ʔiláha nàtərru.¹ ràwe¹ u-parqili.¹ These children, they all came upon me. Whatever I do, they boss me around. One says [and] the other [lit. one] translates. May God guard them. May they grow and let me be.

(110) *xés-e talətta.¹*

under-3MS wet.F

‘Under him it is wet.’

See the context situation for proverb no. (76) above.

(111) *lá gə-mfárqa ʔéra mən gizàra.¹*

NEG IND-distiguish.IPFV.3FS penis.M from carrot.M

‘She cannot distinguish between a penis and a carrot.’

brat-ʔavro¹ xà behéma-la,¹ lá k-îʔa çù-məndi,¹ lá gə-mfárqa mádi mən-məndi,¹ ʔéra mən gizàra,¹ bále-yʔèla ta-gyána.¹ pášla qira,¹ tpeła bəd-mənəšše,¹ la-nxəpla,¹ šqəlla mən-šəрма,¹ dréla l-pàsa,¹¹³ u-qam-jabrále gúrre ʔəmma.¹ The daughter of ʔAvro, she is so stupid/vulgar [lit. one beast she is], she does not know anything, she cannot tell one thing apart from the other, a penis from a carrot, but she knew for herself [=she knew how to manage well]. She made herself [as sticky] as tar, she glued [herself] to Mənašše, with no shame [lit. she was not shy], she took from her buttocks [and] put on her face,¹¹³ and she forced him to marry her.

(112) *mpál-la go-kás yəmm-a.¹*

fall.PFV-3FS in-belly.F.GEN mother-POSS.3FS

‘She fell into her mother’s belly.’

Cf. proverb no. (94) above.

¹¹³ See proverb no. (69) above.

šánne brat-ʔiyo¹ kmà báš wèla¹ Šanne the daughter of ʔIyo,
 čəppén la-k-ése mənna,¹ xa-béʔta does not come from her [= she
 bála pəmma.¹¹⁴ ʔiláha mrohámle is quiet, does not complain],
 ʔəlla,¹ mšodárre-la xa-bər-ħalàl¹ an egg without a mouth.¹¹⁴
 u-qam-gawərra.¹ yómme u-bábe God had mercy on her, [and]
 hám g-əbála řəbəd řába¹ u-gə sent her one good boy [lit. a
 mʔazəzila,¹ mpəlla go-kás son of kosher] and he married
 yəmma.¹ mbúrxa xalàqa.¹ her. His mother and father also
 like her very very much [lit.
 much of much], and they pam-
 per her, she fell into her
 mother's belly. Blessed is the
 Creator!

(113) mxá-la pəhna ʔəl-la.¹

strike.PFV-3FS kick.M on-3FS

‘She struck a kick over her.’

šamúʔel u-šiyon jirəne wéalu,¹ Šamuʔel and Šiyon were neigh-
 ləplu mázğaz,¹ zəllu l-ʔaskar bours, they went to school [lit.
 mázğaz,¹ kúd mándi g-ozíwa studied] together, went to the
 məzğaz.¹ wéalu mux-jəməke.¹ army together, they used to do
 zəllu l-^Hunivérsita^H məğzaz,¹ everything together. They
 bəle-šamúʔel wéwale bəš mare- were like twins. They went to
 kápa,¹ u-bəš ʔaqel.¹ ləple ləple,¹ university together, but
 mxéle pəhna ʔəl-šiyon¹ pəšle Šamuʔel was more master-of-
 ħàkim.¹ šiyon-heš híle bə-lyàpa.¹ shoulder [= diligent and suc-
 cessful], and brighter. He stud-
 ied [and] studied, he struck a
 kick over Šiyon, he became a
 doctor. Šiyon is still studying.

(114) b-xá kóza qùtṭna,¹ g-marwé-wa-lu yalúnke.¹

in-one pile.M ash.M IND-raise.IPFV.3PL-PAST-ACC.3PL child.PL

‘With one pile of ash they used to raise children.’

See the context situation for proverb no. (75) above.

(115) lá k-káweš mən-šəpya.¹

NEG IND-go_down.IPFV.3MS from-strainer.M

¹¹⁴ See proverb no. (100) above.

‘He does not go down through the strainer.’

’o-náša lébi da’lànne,¹ kma- I cannot stand [lit. see] this
 ‘aqùša-le!¹ mád g-tálban mènne,¹ = stubborn, solemn] he is!
 lá g-ewəz, g-ón là-g-on,¹ lá Whatever I ask him, he would
 g-maḥşállu muṛàdi,¹ ‘aqùša-le,¹ lá not do [it], whatever I do [lit.
 k-káweš mən-şàpya.¹ I do (and) I do not do], he does
 not fulfil my wishes, he is stub-
 born [lit. viscous], he does not
 go down through the strainer.

(116) qóməd şìta¹ u-kása k-ì’a.¹

stature.M.GEN span¹¹⁵.M and-belly.F IND-know.IPFV.3S

‘He is as tall as a span but [lit. and] his belly knows [= he is cunning].’

See the context situation for proverb no. (99) above.

(117) mār-wa-la bax-maşliah.¹

say.PFV-PAST-3FS wife.GEN-Maşliah

‘Said the wife of Maşliah.’

dámməd kurdináye dəd-záxo When the Kurds [= Jews of
 sélu l-əsrə’əl,¹ láswa šúla go- Kurdistan] of Zakho came to
 ruşalàyim,¹ wé[w]alu rāba Israel, there was not [any]
 faqíre.¹ b-yom-xuşéba gə- work [=jobs] in Jerusalem,
 msafríwa ’əl-maswása u- they were very poor. On Sun-
 g-palxíwa go-daštása.¹ kúd-xa day[s] they used to travel to
 k-şaqəlwa ’ámme lāxma¹ u- the villages and work in the
 xápča pexwárin ta-’âyəš.¹ xà- fields. Each one used to take
 yoma¹ xa-náša mäséle bás¹ with him bread and some con-
 lāxma.¹ láswale čú-məndi ’əl- diment to eat [lit. live (on)].
 bèse.¹ škállu ’àxli,¹ bax-maşliah One day, one man brought
 only bread. He did not have
 anything at home. They
 started eating, the wife of
 Maşliah told him, “Do you

¹¹⁵ That is, the distance measurement based on the distance between the thumb and the small finger of the human hand.

g-əmrále bás ləxma ʔətlox?! have only bread?! Wait don't
ħmól lá-ʔaxlət ʔátta eat, I will send you right away
 [lit. now] some condiment.”
p-šadrənnox, ʔápxa pəxwərin. He waited and waited, the day
ħmále lá-xəlle zawáʔta dide. ended. His friends told him,
ħmále u-ħmále, yóma gnèle. “The day ended, come, let’s
 finish work.” He told them,
xuráse mərrule, yóma gnèle, sá “But the wife of Maşliah said
xalşəxle şúla. mərrəlu, bále bəx she would send me [some]
 Maşliah [on], they say, “Said the wife
márrali mšadráli of Maşliah.”
pəxwərin. mən-dáw yóma
g-əmri mərwala bəx-maşliah.

See also the context situation for proverb no. (105) above.

(118) ʔén-a sé-la qam-gyàn-a.¹

eye.F-POSS.3FS come.PFV-3FS in_front_of-self-POSS.3FS

‘Her [own] eye came unto her.’

xurásti mərra b-álya kásli u- My friend said she would come
maʔinàli ʔápxa. séla mqoləpla to me and help me a little. She
tré zabàše, kmá ʔéna séla qam- came [and] piled two water-
gyàna. melons, how much her eye
 came to her! [= she was so
 proud of it!]

(119) *naxír-a naxír bəndəqa, səppás-a səppás*

nose.M-POSS.3FS nose.GEN hazelnut.F lip.PL-POSS.3FS lip.PL.GEN

*warəqa, mbúrxə šəmməd xaləqa.*¹

paper.F blessed.MS name.GEN Creator

‘Her nose is like a hazelnut, her lips are [thin] as paper,
 blessed be the name of the Creator!’

Var.: ...*pása pás warəqa*,¹...

‘...her face is [smooth] as paper...’

Cf. Sabar (1974, 332), nursery rhyme no. 15, ‘Rhymes of praise for baby girls’.

sélu ṭalabáye ta-brát ʾaxòni¹ u- They came to ask for the hand
zmèrru-la¹ naxíra naxír of [lit. they came for the ‘ask-
bəndàqa,¹ səppása səppás ing’ of] my niece and they
waràqa,¹ mbúrxá šámməd sang to her, “Her nose is like
xalàqa.¹ u-kúlleni mtohnèlan.¹ a hazelnut, her lips are [thin]
as paper, blessed be the name
of the Creator!” And all of us
were happy.

(120) *rəzza k-ṭáʾən m̀àya.¹*

rice.M IND-carry.IPFV.3MS water.PL

‘Rice [can] take up water.’

‘erán ṭlábbe m̀anni máhkiyan Eran asked me to speak with
his student [some] *lišana deni*.
ʾámməd təlmíḍa díde lišána I told the student to come, we
dèni.¹ m̀arri ta-təlmíḍa ʾàse,¹ shall speak [some] *lišana deni*,
he said, “I want to come but I
máhkiyax lišana dèni,¹ m̀arre want to bring with me two [of]
g-əbən ʾásən bále mésen ʾámmi my friends, okay?” I said,
“they should come upon my
tré xuràsi¹ ma‘alèš?¹ m̀arri,¹ ʾáse eyes [= by all means], three
guests and one guest are the
go-ʾèni,¹ ṭláha ʾárxe u-xá‘ ʾárxa same, my rice [can] take up
xà-ila,¹ rəzzi k-ṭáʾən m̀àya.¹ water.”

(121) *qam-mapqá-la mən-mà‘ne.¹*

PASR-take_out.3FS-ACC.3FS from-meaning.F

‘She took it out of meaning [= she exaggerated, she over-
did it].’

Cf. Sabar (2002a, 222), under *ma‘ne*.

‘zámli xá zamàrta¹ u-zmára r̀àba They invited one singer, and
she sang more and more, and
r̀àba¹ u-lá fhámlan çù-məndi.¹ we didn’t understand any-
thing. I told a woman who was
m̀arri ta-xa-báxta dəd-wéala túta sitting next to me, “she took it
out of meaning, this singer.
qàmi,¹ qam-mapqála mən-má‘ne How much she sings, and how
much she whines,” no one en-
ʾe-zamàrta.¹ joys [it].

(122) *qam-mapqá-la mən-naxîr-i.*¹

PAST-take_out.3FS-ACC.3FS from-nose.M-POSS.1s

‘She took it out of my nose.’

xurásti márra b-álya šaqláli bəð- My friend said she would come
trambél dída,¹ la-ʔán go-dé and take me in her car, so I
šəməša,¹ hməlli hməlli,¹ séla u- should not walk in that sun. I
márrali háwal b-áx zónax xa- waited [and] waited, she came
móndi tði¹ u-xárae b-áx ʔl- and told me, “First we shall go
xəlmáta dídax,¹ qam-maʔətəláli¹ buy something for me, and af-
u-é maʔarúf dída qam-mapqála afterwards we shall go to your
mən-naxîri.¹ task.” She delayed me, and this
 favour of hers, she took it out
 of my nose.

wéali l-bəsa,¹ škáli ʔáxlan u-séla I was at home, I started eating
xási qam-lazləzàli,¹ qam- and my sister came [and] hur-
mapqále ʔixála mən-naxîri.¹ ried me, she took the food out
 of my nose.

(123) *ʔúz-la là-ʔuz-la.*¹

do.PFV-3FS NEG-do.PFV-3FS

‘[Whatever] she did [or] did not do.’

krábli mən-xurásti,¹ qam- I was angry with my friend,
majgərráli řəba,¹ xaráe séla she made me very angry, after-
máhkya ʔəmmi,¹ là-qam- wards she came to speak with
samhanna,¹ ʔúzla là-ʔuzla,¹ là- me, I did not forgive her,
məhkeli ʔəmma.¹ [whatever] she did [or] did
 not do, I did not speak to her.

xási tlabla ʔán ʔəmma ʔəl-šūqa,¹ My sister asked me to go with
là-g-banwa,¹ ʔúzla lá-ʔuzla là zəlli her to the market. I did not
ʔəmma.¹ want to. [Whatever] she did
 [or] did not do, I did not go
 with her.

(124) *kás-a qam-mamərʔà-la.*¹

belly.F-POSS.3FS PAST-cause_pain.3FS-ACC.3FS

‘She made her [own] belly hurt.’

Cf. proverb no. (128) below.

<i>ṭlábli mən-báссо zonáli xapča-</i>	I asked Basso to buy some to-
<i>ḅaṇḍóra damməd-hóya go-šùqa,¹</i>	matoes for me when she is in
<i>ḅarám-hakan xzéli xà-ḅaṇḍora,¹</i>	the market. But I have not seen
<i>kása gə-mamər'ála,¹ lébi ṭálban</i>	a single tomato [lit. it is forbid-
<i>mánna cù-məndi.¹</i>	den if I saw one tomato]! She
	made her [own] belly hurt [to
	avoid the task], I cannot ask
	her for anything.

See also the context situation for proverb no. (128) below.

(125) *našé-lax mār'a u-mòsa.¹*

forget.IPFV-ACC.2FS pain.M and-death.M

'May pain and death forget you.'

<i>'wi-nšéli zonánnax tarpe-</i>	'Oh I forgot to buy you [some]
<i>sàlqe.¹¹⁶ 'labbax la-pàeš,¹</i>	chards. ¹¹⁶ 'Your heart should
<i>našélax mār'a u-mòsa,¹ bráti</i>	not stay [= do not worry], may
<i>zùнна-li.¹</i>	pain and death forget you, my
	daughter bought [some for]
	me.'

(126) *'amóma u-yóm-e kòma.¹*

scarecrow¹¹⁷.M and-day.M-POSS.3MS black

'A scarecrow¹¹⁷ and his day is black.'

<i>'o qašaba mərute ra'ile. la-</i>	This butcher, his face is bad.
<i>g-maḥke, kake xriče pəmmə</i>	He does not speak, his teeth
<i>štima, 'amoma u-yome koma.¹</i>	are gnashed, his mouth is
	sealed, a scarecrow ¹¹⁷ and his
	day is black.

(127) *baḅbát-əd núra fār-ru mən-'én-e.¹*

spark.PL-GEN fire.M fly.PFV-3PL from-eye.PL-POSS.3MS

'Sparks of fire flew from his eyes.'

Cf. Sabar (2002a, 114), under *birbāte*.

¹¹⁶ An important ingredient of the soup known as *xamušta*; see ch. 2, fns 36–37.

¹¹⁷ The translation of *'amoma* is according to Khan (2008b, 1215).

See the context situation for proverb no. (132) below.

- (128) *gárm-ox là mayqər-ət-tu.*¹
 bone.PL-POSS.2MS NEG make_heavy.IPFV-2MS-ACC.3PL
 ‘Do not make your bones heavy.’

Var.: *gárm-e yaqùre.*¹
 bone.PL-POSS.3MS heavy.PL
 ‘His bones are heavy.’

Cf. Sabar (2002a, 124), under *garma*; proverb no. (124) above.

*šábtí mšaqa‘ána,*¹ *gárme kma-* Shabti the cobbler, his bones
*yaqùre,*¹ *hay-tré šabása peláve-* are so heavy, it’s three weeks
 [that] my shoes are with him,
*didi hílu kàsle,*¹ *xà bəzmára* he has to knock in them [only]
 the one nail, he made his belly
*lázəm čáyək ʾəbbu,*¹ *káse* ache¹¹⁸ and he did not fix [lit.
*g-mamrè‘la*¹¹⁸ *u-lá qam-* do/make] them.
*ʾawə̀zlu.*¹

- (129) *šmóʾ la-šamʾət xriwa.*¹
 hear.IMP.2S NEG-hear.IPFV.2MS bad.m
 ‘Listen, [may] you not hear [any] evil.’

See the context situations for proverbs no. (60) and no. (104) above.

- (130) *k-taqál-la gyàn-e.*¹
 IND-weigh.IPFV.3MS-ACC.3FS self.F-POSS.3MS
 ‘He weighs himself.’

*báссо mərra,*¹ *b-án mašihanna* Basso said, “I shall go visit my
*xmási,*¹ *b-nablánna xápča* mother-in-law, I’ll take her
 some soup, this morning I saw
*šòrḫa,*¹—*bánoke qam-xazyánna* her walking healthy and
 well—I know that she is
*b-izála sax-salim,*¹—*k-ʾan sax-* healthy and well, but every

¹¹⁸ See proverb no. (124) above.

*salim h̄ila,*¹ *b̄ále kúd-kma šabása* several weeks she does not
*l̄a-k-asya k̄asléni,*¹ *k-taqlàla* [in order to] see whether her
*gyána,*¹ *xázya kalása maṣih̄ila* daughters-in-law visit her or
*yan-l̄a,*¹ *ʔádyo t̄ori-le b-an* not. Today is my turn to go
*maṣəh̄anna,*¹ *r̄éša marw̄anne.*¹ visit her, I shall make her head
grow [=make her feel im-
portant; flatter her].”

(131) *k-ʔa* *tér* *gyàn-a.*¹

IND-know.IPFV.3FS sufficient_for self.F-POSS.3FS

‘She knows sufficiently for herself.’

Var.: *ʔba tér gyána.*¹

‘She is sufficient for herself.’

Cf. Sabar (2002a, 308), under *tér*.

yalúnkət xási mjoh̄ádlu xá m̄ad- The children of my sister quar-
*daw-x̄ət.*¹ *xá mx̄éla x̄ábre b̄ad-d-* relled one with the other. One
*ay-x̄ət.*¹ *séla ȳammu,*¹ *u-m̄orra ta-* struck words in the other
*d-ay-z̄urta,*¹ *q̄t̄oʔ q̄àlax.*¹ *m̄arri ta-* [=they argued; insulted one
another]. Their mother came
*x̄àsi,*¹ *ʔáhat l̄è-wajax,*¹ *ʔay-r̄ábsa* and told the little one, “Cut
your voice [=be silent]!” I
*k-ʔa tér gyána,*¹ *l̄è[w]a xa-* told my sister, “You should not
care, the eldest can get along
*m̄áskin,*¹ *ʔba kúd t̄láha xasw̄ása* [lit. knows sufficiently for her-
self], she is not poor [=help-
less], she can put [lit. insert]
*mayʔilálu go-j̄èba.*¹ all her three sisters into her
pocket [=she is strong enough
to manage them].”

(132) *d̄in-i* *g-él* *m-r̄ěš-i.*¹

religion/judgement¹¹⁹.M-POSS.1S IND-go.IPFV.3MS from-head.M-POSS.1S

‘I lose my senses. [lit. my religion/judgement goes away
from my head.]’

¹¹⁹ The word *d̄in* is borrowed into NENA from both Hebrew, where it means ‘Jewish law, judgement’, and from Arabic, where it means ‘religion’. See Sabar (2002a: 141).

ʔo-náša hàyya g-jágər.¹ pappúke This man gets angry quickly.
 bàxte,¹ sela m-šuqa, heš-lá [How] poor is his wife! She
 mutíla sálle dída,¹ škálle šárax came from the market, she had
 ʔəlla,¹ barbátəd núra fərru mən- not put down her baskets yet,
 ʔəna,¹²⁰ g-emrá-le hawa-mà he started yelling at her, sparks
 ʔúzli,¹ mårre k-ʔat dammət- of fire flew from his eyes,¹²⁰
 k-ésən ʔəl-bésa u-la-k-xazənnax,¹ she tells him, “But what did I
 dñni g-él mən-rəši.¹ do?!” He says, “You know
 [that] when I come home and
 do not see you my judgement
 goes away from my head [= I
 lose my senses].”

- (133) *gné-li* *u-lá rʔəš-li.*¹
 be_suddenly_happy/lucky.PFV-1S and-NEG feel.PFV-1S
 ‘I was so lucky [but] I didn’t realise it.’

Can be used either ironically or not.

kálsi škálla pàlxa,¹ nahagóna My daughter-in-law started
 zálle ʔəl-məlxá,¹²¹ mərra,¹ working, the calf went to
 yalónke masyálu kásli ʔozán-bu [bring] salt.¹²¹ She said she
 xudáni.¹ gnéli u-là rʔəšli.¹ ʔána la- would bring the children to
 k-šayəhli rəši xekánne,¹ ʔátta [stay with] me, [so that] I
 lázəm ʔón xudáni bəd-yalónke [could] take care of them. I
 zòre.¹ ʔáya u-yəmma-šik gnèlu.¹ was so happy I did not feel it.
 Me, I do not have free time to
 scratch my head, now I have to
 take care of little children. She
 and her mother also are happy!

- (134) *dúk-sox lá mårʔa.*¹
 place.F-POSS.2MS NEG hurt.IPFV.3FS
 ‘[May] your place not hurt.’

hár-damməd g-mašihónna sóti Always when I visit my grand-
 g-mbarxàli,¹ bróni dalála u- mother she used to bless me:
 ʔazíza dúkox là mårʔa.¹ “My dear and darling son, may
 your place not hurt [= may
 you will not experience pain].”

¹²⁰ See proverb no. (127) above.

¹²¹ See proverb no. (54) above.

(135) *páš-le* *xà-lappa.*¹

become.PFV-3MS one-small_lump.M

‘He became [as small as] a lump [= he became frightened].’

Cf. Sabar (2002a, 207), under *lappa*. See the context situation for proverb no. (60) above.

(136) *lább-a* *páš-le* *xa-màsta.*¹

heart.M-POSS.3FS become.PFV-3MS one-hair.F

‘Her heart became [like] a hair [that is, her heart ‘shrank’ because of fear, sorrow, hard work, or illness].’

See the context situation for proverb no. (60) above.

15.0. Appendix: Additional Proverbs (with No Glossing or Context Situation)

(137) *’é tər̀ǹni¹²²-la,*¹ *ternàna¹ wéla pàšta.*¹

‘This is *tər̀ǹni*,¹²² *ternàna* is still left.’

*’é tər̀ǹni-la,*¹ *ternàna¹ heš b-àsyā.*¹

‘This is *tər̀ǹni*, *ternàna* will come.’

*’é tər̀ǹni-la,*¹ *ternàna¹ wela bàsra.*¹

‘This is *tər̀ǹni*, *ternàna* is behind it.’

Troubles come in bundles. Cf. SA:13 (a synonym), proverb no. (37) above.

(138) *kúd-xa gárəš núra xe/qam-qóqa dide.*¹

‘Everyone pulls the fire [towards] under/in front of his one clay pot.’

¹²² See fn. 66 above.

Var.: *kúd kabaniye gáraša...*

‘Each cook pulls...’ Cf. SA:85.

(139) *xáṭra bəd kàlba,¹ léba znàya.¹*

‘[The stroke of a] rod in a dog, there is no prostitution
[= shame] in it.’

Hitting a dog is permissible. Also used metaphorically: insulting a bad person is allowed (he who acts like a dog will be treated like a dog). Cf. SA:114.

(140) *qú-m-rèši,¹ lá marčə̀nnox.¹*

‘Get off me so that I will not crush you.’

Cf. SA:108; proverbs no. (4) and no. (38) above (synonyms).

(141) *rásqet kálbe ʾəl šə̀zàne.¹*

‘The livelihood of dogs is upon [= provided by] the mad.’

Dishonest or cunning people (or underdogs) achieve their needs at the expense of the naïve. Cf. SE:120.

(142) *réša dəd la-mǎre,¹ lá yasrətte.¹*

‘A head that does not hurt, do not tie it.’

Var.: *réš [GEN] la-g-mǎre,¹ lá yasrətte.¹*

‘A head that does not hurt, do not tie it.’ Cf. SE:14.

(143) *rùvi¹ u-šùqa.¹*

‘The fox...and the market...’

Said in order to emphasise the lack of connection between two things.

(144) *ríx pəšyàsa k-ése mən maḥkóye díde.¹*

‘The smell of farts comes from what he says.’

(145) *túrran ʾó jalída,¹ ta-šátyax ʾán mə̀ya.¹*

‘We broke this ice in order to drink this water.’

Said when a great effort is done to achieve something.

Var.: ...*máya qaràra*.¹

‘...cold water.’

(146) ‘*áqel léwe bəd-rúwwa u-zòra*.¹²³

‘Intelligence is not in big and small [= not dependent on size or age].’

(147) ‘*íyo íle bə-qzàya, u-kəz-ləbbe¹ xòre wéna*.¹

‘Iyo is preparing, and in his heart [= he thinks that] I am his friend [= cooperating].’

(148) *pášli pìre, úmri pèna*.¹²⁴

‘I became an old woman, my life is from now on.’

Cf. [...] עֲדָנָה לִי עֵתָהּ הִיא בְּלִתִּי אֶחָרִי [...] ‘[...] Now that I am withered, am I to have enjoyment [...]’ (Gen. 18.12)

(149) *yámmi dúqla təršī, heš-lá mṭèle*.¹

‘My mother prepared pickles, it[s time] has not yet arrived [= it is not ready yet].’

Said when someone is delaying a favour which has been asked.

(150) *kpìna¹ k-éxəl tìna*.¹

‘The hungry eat [even] mud.’

Anyone who is hungry would eat anything. Cf. the Prov. 27.7.

(151) *návyan kálsa u-xmàsa, zà’lu ’éra u-’əškàsa*.¹

‘Between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law [= amidst their arguments and struggles], the penis and testicles got lost.’

¹²³ I thank Ahuva Baruch for this proverb.

¹²⁴ I thank Ahuva Baruch for this proverb.

Cf. R:55 (a synonymous proverb).

- (152) *xáyi ta-gyàni!*¹ *júlle dād-kúd-yom* 'àlli,¹ 'ádyo bàš k-šakli-li.¹²⁵
 'My life is for me!¹²⁶ I wear clothes of every day [= normal clothes] [lit. clothes of every day are on me], today they suit me better.'

An expression of good mood, satisfaction.

- (153) *qóqəd 'arása g-řàsəx!* *qóqəd 'izamyása là g-řàsəx.*¹
 'The clay pot of the rival wives¹²⁷ boils, the clay pot of the sisters-in-law does not boil.'

Rival wives, living in the same home, must find a way to get along (in the proverb they cook together), sisters-in-law do not get along and they do not have to collaborate.

- (154) *dámməd šámša g-nàpqa!* 'éwa g-él kàsla!¹ 'áp-awa g-ábe šàxən.¹

'When the sun comes out [= appears], the cloud goes to her, it also wants to warm up.'

Var.: *dámməd 'éwa k-xáze šámša mpəqla!* 'éwa g-él k-əsla!¹ 'áp-awa g-ábe šàxən.¹

'When the cloud sees that the sun came out [= appeared], the cloud goes to her, it also wants to warm up.'

- (155) *xréle go zàya.*¹

'He defecated in the issue.'

¹²⁵ Contraction of *k-šakli* 'àli.

¹²⁶ An expression of love, but usually addressed to or about another person, predominantly to children: *xáyi řàlox!* / *řàle!* 'My life is for you! / for him!'

¹²⁷ In polygamy.

He spoiled the business.

(156) *ʔíza la g-ṁátɣa ʔəl ṣ̌ərma.*¹

‘Her hand does not reach her buttocks.’

She is a miser. Also a curse: may she not be able to serve herself.

(157) *ʔəl xa čáŋga ṁáɣa, k-ṭèpa.*

‘She [can] float on a handful of water.’

She knows how to get along.

(158) *ʔo m̀isa¹ la k-ṭawéle ʔé ‘azàya.*¹

‘This dead is not worth this mourning/lamentation.’

Said about an exaggerated response to something. Or saying that something is unworthy.

(159) *h̀ìye h̀ìye labaǹìye.*¹

‘This and this [are both] yogurt.’ (Ar.)

It’s all the same, it’s nothing new.

(160) *zaharóke d’áṛra la-gwàra.*¹

‘Zaharoke returned without getting married.’

Said when someone returns without achieving what he or she had intended.

(161) *zóʔəd zamàre.*¹

‘A pair of singers.’

Said, often dismissively, about inseparable friends or about two people who collaborate in something.

(162) *h̀ále h̀ále kúd-xa ʔəl maḥ̀alle.*¹

‘His situation his situation, everyone [goes] to his neighbourhood.’

At the end of the day everyone should mind their own business.

(163) *lâ trásli¹, dràzli¹, lâ nâxli¹, nùxli¹*

‘I did not heal, I cracked; I did not rest, I barked
[= howled].’

Life is hard.

(164) *kúlla dúnye šud-péša ’èra¹, lá ‘álqa ’əbbi¹*

‘May the entire world be a penis [but] do not stumble upon
/ touch me.’

Vars.: ...*la náḥqa ’əlli¹*

‘...do no touch me.’

...*la qàrwa ’əlli¹*

‘...do not come close to me.’

Cf. proverb no. (29) above which has a synonymous message.

(165) *xmáre g-él b-’ùrxa¹*

‘His donkey is walking on the road.’

Things are going well for him.

(166) *ma-dáqnox bád máyəd dò’e qam-maxurátta?¹²⁸*

‘What, did you dye your beard white with a yogurt drink?!’

Said to an older man who says something unwise.

(167) *’elíko b-xà nása¹*

‘Eliko with one ear.’

Used to describe someone or something with some defect, lacking something, incompetent. Or said about a task which was performed only partially. Cf. R:64.

(168) *xá xábra nùra¹, xá xábra bàrud¹*

‘One word [of] fire, one word [of] gunpowder.’

¹²⁸ I thank Ahuva Baruch for this proverb.

Used of someone speaking angrily.

(169) *mánda dád-lá-’áse ’amməd-kàlo,¹ lá-kese bàsra.¹²⁹*

‘What does not come with the bride, shall not come after her.’

Past promises are irrelevant. If one promises something, one should deliver now.

(170) *kúd lá šxǎnne bəd-šǎmšəd bənoke.¹ la-g-šáxǎn bəd-šǎmšəd
‘ašǎrta.¹³⁰*

‘He who did not warm up in the morning’s sun, will not warm up in the evening’s sun.’

Something done too late is useless. Cf. R:11, SE:124 (explained with various messages).

(171) *šaláqtəd bè’¹e.*

‘[She who] boils the eggs.’

Said of someone who knows how to get along in life. Also: a fomenter of quarrels.

(172) *xábrox qté’li bəd-šàkar.¹*

‘I cut your word[s] with sugar.’

Said as an apology when interrupting someone’s speech.

(173) *g-yá’la go-’èni.¹*

‘She goes into my eye.’

She argues with me, contradicts what I say.

(174) *’éna qát’a qam-gyàna.¹*

‘Her eye cuts in front of her.’

¹²⁹ I thank Naftali Mizrahi for this proverb.

¹³⁰ I thank Mordechai Yona for this proverb.

She thinks highly of herself; makes a big deal out of the respect she thinks is due to her.

(175) *ʾáxəl réše páyǝš mǝnne.*¹

‘May it eat his head, and [still] stay from him.’

May the object that he did not agree to give me harm him and exist after him.

(176) *pásra b-axlǝle,¹ gárme mǝšašyǝlu.*¹³¹

‘She would eat the meat [and] hide the bones.’

She won’t reveal my dirty laundry.

(177) *fáqir zǝlle l-tǝksa,¹ u-zǝngin ʾriqǝle l-bǝdra.*¹³²

‘The poor went to his belt [= euphemism for intercourse?] and the rich ran to the threshing floor.’

The only pastime of the poor is sexual intercourse (?). Cf. proverb no. (9) above.

(178) *mǝn-jamǝʿa¹ lǝ-g-ʾeqa dúksa.*¹³³

‘From [= because of] the congregation, space does not become narrow’.

Var.: *mǝn-naše...*

‘From [= because of] people...’

They feel the space is sufficient because they love each other. Cf. כי רחימתין הוה עזיזא אפותיא דספסירא שכיבן השתא דלא עזיזא רחימתין פוריא
 לן ‘When our love was strong, we could lay on the blade of a sword, now our love is not strong, a bed sixty ells wide is not enough for us’ (BT Sanhedrin 7a; my translation).

¹³¹ I thank Ḥabuba Messusani for this proverb.

¹³² I thank Bo‘az Sando for this proverb.

¹³³ I thank Naftali Mizraḥi for this proverb.

(179) *cúxxa látle kafíl u-damàn.*¹³⁴

‘No one has a guarantor and protection-tax/bail.’

Everyone is mortal. Cf. proverb no. (11) above.

(180) *kárti u-ṭè’ni¹ wélu š-xàši,¹ u-xóri k-čáhe ’ábbu.*¹³⁵

‘My load and my burden are on my back, and [= but] my friend is getting tired because of [lit. in] them.’

Cf. proverbs no. (7) and no. (26) above.

(181) *dáqən qáša qam-’ozále kanàšta.¹*

‘She made the beard of the priest a broom.’

She used something in a disrespectful way.

Var.: ...’ozále sponjədòr.¹

‘...she made it a rag.’

Synonymous message to that of proverb no. (182) below.

(182) *mxélu tambúr b-’ér bàbu.¹*

‘They struck the drum with the penis of their father.’

Said when someone is showing disrespect while thinking they are, or trying to be, respectful. Synonymous message to that of proverb no. (181) above.

(183) *ymút al-dik¹ u-’éno ’ala-naxàla.¹*

‘The rooster dies and [= but] his eye is on the waste [or: bran].’ (Ar.)

Desires never die. Cf. Aramaic version in SE:33; proverb no. (191) below, a synonym.

¹³⁴ I thank Naftali Mizrahi for this proverb.

¹³⁵ I thank Naftali Mizrahi for this proverb.

(184) *ʾáw d-čáyak réše go-tanùra¹ q-qáyəz bəd-nùra.*¹³⁶

‘He who sticks his head into the oven gets burnt by the fire.’

Synonymous message to that of proverb no. (40) above.

(185) *g-yáʾəl go-xa-u-xət.*¹

‘He enters one into the other.’

He is starting to get angry.

(186) *ʾiláha šqilále mənne.*¹

‘God has taken it from him.’

He lost his senses. He became angry.

(187) *mən-qóma ta-ʿaqlùsa.*¹

‘From stature to wit.’

May you lose some of your stature and gain it in intelligence. Cf. proverb no. (116) above.

(188) *kúd šqálle ʿaqəllax¹ là mtáhne ʾəbbe.*¹

‘Whoever took your wits, may he not enjoy it!’

Cf. SA:9.

(189) *kúd g-máxe šud-màmre,¹ kúd g-máxəl šud-màswe.*¹

‘He who hits should hurt, he who feeds should satiate.’

Cf. SE:11.

(190) *kusís ʿàlo¹ dréle b-érš jàllo.*¹

‘He put the hat of ‘Alo on the head of Jallo.’

He confused two matters.

¹³⁶ Sabar (2002a, 131), under č-y-k.

(191) *kása kpán̄ta k-sò'a, 'éna kpán̄ta là k-só'a.*¹³⁷

‘A hungry belly [can be] satiated, a hungry eye [can]not [be] satiated.’

Cf. the synonymous proverb no. (183) above.

(192) *'áza qál'a qala'isa' párya kása béb kulisa.*¹

‘[May] she go away [to hell, and may] her belly burst and overflow together with her kidney.’

A curse.

(193) *šám'a 'ár'a, lá 'amràla.*¹

‘[May] the earth hear [it, and] not tell it to her.’

Said about a deceased person, when mentioning a negative fact about them.

(194) *'šba gyàna.*¹

‘[May] she love herself.’

Said about a deceased person, after saying that she had loved the speaker, or that the speaker had loved her, in order that the deceased person shall not cause the speaker to join her.

(195) *xábra xé pelàvax.*¹

‘A word under your slippers.’

Keep a secret. See the context situation at proverb no. (27) above.

(196) *pám̄mi twíra qàm̄e.*

‘My mouth is broken in front of Him.’

Said to God, when saying something which may be construed as resentful towards Him. Cf. Jer. 12.1.

¹³⁷ Sabar (2002a, 188), under *kp̄ina*.

(197) *ʾamórka ʾamàrraʾ zamórka zamàrra.*¹

‘May the sayer say it, may the singer sing it.’

Let people say whatever they want.

CHAPTER 2: ENRICHED BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

1.0. The Enriched Biblical Narrative

The topic of this chapter is a central genre in the oral culture¹ of the Jews of Zakho, and indeed of all Kurdistan: the enriched biblical narrative (EBN). The EBN is the retelling and re-composition of a biblical story, usually one of heroic or epic nature. The core, skeletal, biblical narrative is enriched with numerous additions which are woven into it in an organic manner, producing an smooth, even story that does not reveal its composite nature. The fact that it draws on elements from various sources which often originated in different historical periods and in different cultural realms is not evident to the listener, nor is its history of change and growth.

The chapter will consider the EBN through the prism of a concept taken from the study of thematology, the *motifeme*, and it will propose a new concept, the *transposed motifeme*. The chapter claims that the transposed motifeme is a phenomenon central to the EBN and its related genres, and that it is important for their understanding and analysis.

An example of an EBN will be discussed and analysed in this chapter. It consists of two related, and consecutive, stories: the story of Ruth and Naomi and the story of king David. It was told by Samra Zaqen, and recorded in her home on 19 April

¹ On this term see Ong (1982).

2012.² The complete narrative, with a translation, is presented in §7.0.

2.0. Related Genres³

The EBN shares certain characteristics with other prevalent genres of the oral as well as the written culture of the Jews of Kurdistan. These characteristics, predominantly the mechanism of transposed motifemes and the mediatory function (both discussed below),⁴ may therefore be regarded as meta-generic characteristics in the culture of the Jews of Kurdistan (that is, characteristics which encompass several genres).⁵ The genres which are related to the EBN may be divided into two categories:

1. Synchronically related genres: the living genres native to the culture of the Jews of Kurdistan. These are epic songs (traditionally referred to as *tafsir* or *qəšta*); oral translations of the Hebrew Bible; older NENA translations of the Hebrew Bible; NENA Midrashim; expositions of the *haftarot* and of the Megillot; and Jewish NENA *piyyuṭ* (liturgical poetry).

² I have published another EBN told by Samra Zaqen, the story of Joseph and his brothers, elsewhere; see Aloni (2014a, 26–60). For another recording of a NENA text recounted by Samra, where she talks about her arrival in Israel in 1951 and her first encounter with Modern Hebrew, see Aloni (2015).

³ For a comprehensive overview of the literature of the Jews of Kurdistan, see Sabar (1982a; 1982c, xxxii–xxxvi).

⁴ In §§4.0 and 2.2.1, respectively.

⁵ For discussions of the centrality of genre as a category in the study of folklore, see Ben-Amos (1969; 1976b); Seitel (1999).

2. Diachronically related genres: genres belonging to earlier layers of Jewish culture to which the origins of the EBN phenomenon may be traced. These genres are the *Targum* in various configurations; the *Midrash* in various configurations; *piyyut*; and post-antiquity Rewritten Bible texts.

The geographical isolation of the Jewish communities of Kurdistan—as well as the social structure and their material culture, which greatly resembled those known to us from the rabbinic period—enabled the Jewish communities of Kurdistan to preserve ancient literary traditions and practices, and thus the deep connection between the literary genres of the Jews of Kurdistan and the world of classical Midrash: ancient literary and exegetical genres were kept alive in the Jewish communities of Kurdistan well into modern times.⁶

⁶ Rivlin (1942, 183) commented: “It is indeed possible that Midrashim otherwise lost, were preserved in the Aggadah of the Jews of Kurdistan” (my translation). For examples of that type, see Rivlin (1942, 183–84; 1959, 106–8). Gerson-Kiwi (1971, 59) similarly stated that “Kurdistan is known as a territory... where... archaic languages and... archaic singing and playing have survived the vicissitudes of history.... Here we seem to have some samples of a living antiquity, doubly interesting in that it is to a considerable extent connected with Jewish history of the biblical period.” According to Brauer (1947, 12), translated as Brauer (1993, 27), “one gains the impression that a great many ancient (Talmudic) Jewish usages and beliefs, both religious and secular, have been preserved and kept alive among the Jews of Kurdistan.”

2.1. Synchronically Related Genres

2.1.1. Epic Songs

Epic songs recount biblical or Midrashic narratives, rich in heroic and dramatic elements. These songs were a popular pastime in Kurdistan, and also served as an educational medium for those members of the community who did not have access to the written sources (Sabar 1982a, 63). The songs are usually rhymed and have a clear strophic structure, and each of the songs was performed with a unique melody (Gerson-Kiwi 1971). Similar to the case of the EBN, as we will see below, motifs added to the skeletal narrative of an epic poem are woven into it in an organic manner.

A term commonly used for these epic songs is *tafsir* (pl. *tafsirim*). The word is borrowed from Arabic, where it means “elucidation, interpretation,” or “commentary on the Qur’an” (Wehr and Cowan 1976, 713). Another term used interchangeably with this is *qaṣṭa*, meaning “story” (Sabar 2002a, 282). Sabar described the *tafsirim* as “the foremost literary product of the *ḥaxamim* of Kurdistan” (Sabar 1982c, xxxvi).

Rivlin collected many of the epic songs and published them with an elaborate introduction (Rivlin 1959). Na‘im Shalom, a *hazzan* ‘cantor’ at Ša‘arey Tora, a synagogue of the Jewish community of Zakho in Jerusalem, has recorded and published his performance of two of these epic songs: the story of Joseph and his brothers and the story of the binding of Isaac (Shalom 1986).

Na'im Shalom's renditions differ in many details from the equivalent songs in Rivlin's book, though they follow the same structure.

Other recordings of NENA epic songs are kept in the National Sound Archive in the National Library of Israel, notably: David and Goliath, performed by Ḥakham Ḥabib 'Alwan in the Zakho dialect, recorded by Johanna Spector (class mark Y 00039); David and Goliath, performed by Eliyahu Gabbay, Naḥum 'Adiqa, and Salem Gabbay in the Zakho dialect, recorded by Avigdor Herzog (class mark Y 03627); Joseph and Benjamin, performed by Eliyahu Gabbay, Naḥum 'Adiqa, and Salem Gabbay in the Zakho dialect, recorded by Avigdor Herzog (class mark Y 03627); the story of Joseph performed by Neḥemya Ḥoča in the Zakho dialect, recorded by Edith Gerson-Kiwi (class mark CD 04871 F424-425 item 5351-5366); David and Goliath, performed by Raḥamim Ḥodeda in the dialect of 'Amidya, recorded by Jacqueline Alon (class mark Y 02719); and the binding of Isaac performed by David Salman in the dialect of Ḥalabja, recorded by the performer (class mark Y 04514).

2.1.2. Translations of the Hebrew Bible

The Jews of Kurdistan kept a living tradition of translations into their NENA dialects of the entire Hebrew Bible.⁷ These translations were handed down orally,⁸ and committed to writing at the

⁷ With the exception of the book of Psalms.

⁸ There are recordings of oral performances in the National Sound Archive of the National Library of Israel, for example 'Alwan (1974),

request of scholars only in the 20th century.⁹ The term often used by the Jews of Kurdistan to describe these translations is *šarḥ* or *šarʿ*, from Arabic, meaning “expounding, explanation, elucidation” (Wehr and Cowan 1976, 463).

These translations of the Hebrew Bible are often very literal—“the general tendency is to translate the biblical formulation word by word as much as possible, and therefore the result is a frozen and unnatural language” (Sabar 1983, 27, quoted in Avinery 1984, 138; my translation). However, they were “often based on the traditional commentaries, such as Rashi and the classical Aramaic Targum... [and] in certain cases... a more homiletic translation or allegorical translation was preferred” (Sabar 1982c, xxxv). It is precisely in these instances that the translations show a family resemblance to the EBN.

2.1.3. NENA Midrashim

NENA Midrashim were preserved in manuscripts originating from the 17th century, copied in Nerwa and ʿAmidya. It seems that these NENA Midrashim, in their edited form, were the product of the school of Ḥakham Shemuʿel Barazani (Sabar 1982a, 60). They contain homilies and lessons on three portions of the

which consists of the book of Ruth performed by Ḥakham Ḥabib ʿAlwan, recorded by Jacqueline Alon (class mark Y 01790).

⁹ See Rivlin (1959, 68–69). Multiple volumes of these translations were published by Sabar (1983; 1988; 1990; 1993; 1995a; 2006; 2014). A translation of the book of Ruth, as read by Zeʿev (Gurgo) Ariel, was published by Goldenberg and Zaken (1990).

Torah: *Wayḥi*, *Bešallah*, and *Yitro*. They were written with the intention of being delivered publicly, and therefore have a captivating, dramatic character (Sabar 1982a, 60).

A large percentage of the Aggadic material in these Midrashim can be traced back to older, classical Midrashim, but has been reworked and given new, elaborate formulation. In many instances, however, the Aggadic material cannot be traced back to earlier sources and it must be regarded as either original work of the Ḥakhamim of Kurdistan or classical Aggadic material that did not survive elsewhere. Whatever the case may be, the reworking of older material and the incorporation of original material are features that unite the Midrashim with the EBN.

The NENA Midrashim were published by Sabar (1976; 1985).

2.1.4. Expositions of the *Haftarot* and the Megillot

The NENA expositions of the *haftarot* (portions taken from the books of the biblical prophets, read in synagogue after the reading of the Torah) are of *haftarot* for special occasions: the afternoon of Yom Kippur (the book of Jonah; Sabar 1982b);¹⁰ the eight days of Passover (Isa. 10.32–12.6); the second day of Shavuot (Hab. 2.20–3.19; Sabar 1966, 381–90); and the Ninth of Ab (Jer.

¹⁰ A recording of the book of Jonah performed in the dialect of ‘Amidya by Raḥamim Ḥodeda, recorded by Jacqueline Alon, is kept in the National Sound Archive of the National Library of Israel (class mark Y 02718).

8.13–9.23).¹¹ They follow the Hebrew text more closely than do the NENA Midrashim, but also contain Aggadic material aimed at interpreting the verses. Similarly to the NENA Midrashim, they are preserved in manuscripts in the Nerwa and ʿAmidyā dialects, except for the *haftarah* for the Ninth of Ab, which is preserved in the Zakho dialect and is still used liturgically today by the Jewish community of Zakho in Israel (Sabar 1982a, 61).

The expositions of the Megillot (the Five Scrolls) are similar in character to those of the *haftarot*, although they tend to follow the Hebrew text even more closely. One exception is the exposition of the Song of Songs, which is a translation of the book's classical Aramaic *Targum*, itself an allegorical interpretation of the Hebrew text (Sabar 1991). The exposition of the book of Ruth is preserved in several manuscripts.¹² The exposition of Lamentations is preserved in manuscripts in the dialects of Nerwa and

¹¹ National Library of Israel, Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts no. F74965 copied by Rabbi Shemu'el Baruch from the author, his father, Rabbi Yosef Binyamin; Michael Krupp Manuscript Collection Ms. 2915 written by Ḥakham Ḥabib ʿAlwan; the National Library of Israel Ms. Heb. 1007 copied by Mordechai Naḥum Zakhariko; Ms. Heb. 494 written by Darwish Ben Shim'on Shanbiko; Ms. Heb. 695 written by Shabbetai Ben Ya'aqov. Several recorded performances are kept in the National Sound Archive of the National Library of Israel (class marks Y 00028(8-13), Y 00504(02), Y 00504, YC 02657, CD 05033, CD 05037).

¹² National Library of Israel, Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts nos F26847, F26945, F44919, F73987, Ms.Heb.1012 = 28, Ms.Heb.7806 = 28, and MSS-D2233. An exposition of the book of Ruth from a privately owned manuscript by Shim'on Ben-Michael written in

‘Amidya, but is known to the Jews of Zakho in Israel and is recited orally on the Ninth of Ab. No exposition of Ecclesiastes survives, and it is unclear whether it was ever translated into NENA. The exposition of the book of Esther is preserved in a single manuscript.¹³ Two recordings of the book of Esther, both in the dialect of ‘Amidya, are kept in the National Sound Archive of the National Library of Israel: one is performed by Repha’el ’Eliyahu, and recorded by Nurit Ben-Zvi (class mark Y 05750); the other is performed by Raḥamim Ḥodeda, and recorded by Jacqueline Alon (class marks Y 02717, Y 02718).

2.1.5. NENA *Piyyuṭ*

Jewish NENA *piyyuṭim* (liturgical poems) in various dialects, which are recorded in manuscripts, have been published by Sabar (2009). Most of these *piyyuṭim* are translations, sometimes very free translations, of earlier Hebrew *piyyuṭim*, but several of them are original works.¹⁴ A number of the *piyyuṭim* recount biblical

the dialect of Urmi was published by Ben-Rahamim (2006, 192–215). It contains elaborate Midrashic narrative expansions.

¹³ National Library of Israel, Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts no. F44919, pp. 70a–104a. This is a Neo-Aramaic translation of the older Aramaic Targum Sheni of the book of Esther. Sabar (1982a, 61) states that exposition of the book of Esther is preserved only orally.

¹⁴ One of these original works is ‘The Binding of Isaac’, from a manuscript by Ḥakham Yishay in the Urmi dialect, which was sung on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, published in Sabar (2009, 60–79). Sabar (2009, 60, fn. 149) writes about this *piyyuṭ*:

narratives,¹⁵ which they elaborate in a manner similar to that of the epic songs (see §2.1.1. above). These *piyyuṭim* were sung in synagogues during certain Jewish festivals.

2.2. Diachronically Related Genres

2.2.1. Targum¹⁶

The tradition of Targum, Jewish translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic, dates back to the pre-rabbinic period. It seems that the many extant Targumim are related to the ancient liturgical practice of public translation of the Torah, whose aim was to make scripture accessible to members of the community who

It seems that the Neo-Aramaic version is not a direct translation of a Hebrew *piyyuṭ*, but is rather drawn, with considerable elaboration and dramatisation and with a variety of additions taken from the local linguistic reality... from the rabbinic Midrashim about the binding [of Isaac].

There are also four *piyyuṭim* about the passing away of Moses, which were sung on Simḥat Torah after reading the *me'ona* Torah portion (Deut. 33.27–29): the first without dialect specification, in Sabar (2009, 299–302); the second in the dialect of Saqqəz, in Sabar (2009, 302–6); the third from a manuscript by Ḥakham Sason, son of Rabbi Babba Barazani of Arbil, in the dialect of Arbil, in Sabar (2009, 306–9); and the fourth, taken from Ben-Rahamim (2006, 216–21), from a manuscript by Shim'on Ben-Michael in the dialect of Naghada, republished in Sabar (2009, 309–12).

¹⁵ In one case, *qəṣṭtət ḥanna* 'The story of Hannah', the *piyyuṭ* is based on a Midrashic narrative. Sabar (2009, 425–43) gives two versions: one in the dialect of Zakho and one in the dialect of Dohok, from a manuscript by Ḥakham Eliyahu Avraham Yitzḥaq Dahoki.

¹⁶ For a comprehensive overview of this topic, see Kasher (2000).

were not able to understand the Hebrew. In antiquity, this simultaneous translation was done extemporaneously (or memorised in advance) during the public reading of the Torah by a designated person, the *meturgeman* (Elbogen 1972 [1913], 140–41). Later in the history of *Halakha*, the study of *Targum* side by side with the study of the Hebrew text of the Torah became an obligation, rooted in a Talmudic decree: “Rav Huna son of Judah said in the name of Rabbi Ammi: ‘A man should always complete his portions [of Torah] together with the congregation [reading] twice [the Hebrew] scripture and once [the] Targum” (BT Brakhot 8a; translation based on the Soncino English edition). According to the rabbis, translating the Hebrew Bible properly is a delicate task with sharp borders on both ends of the literal-paraphrase axis: “Rabbi Yehudah said: ‘one who translates a verse literally, he is a liar; one who adds, he is a blasphemer and a libeller” (BT Qiddushin 49a; Tosefta Megillah 3.41).

The extant Targumim (Targum Onkelos, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Targum Neofiti, the Genizah Targum, the Fragments Targum, and the Tosefta Targum of the Pentateuch; Targum Jonathan Ben ‘Uzzi’el, and the Tosefta Targum of the Prophets; the Targumim of the Writings) vary in the degree of literalness and the amount of Aggadic material they incorporate into the text.

The Targum tradition is relevant to the EBN genre in two of its aspects. Firstly, in its mediatory function. It serves as a bridge between the biblical text and the people. This is a very important function in a community where many members could not understand the Hebrew in which the Bible is written. The EBN fills this mediatory function, and declares it in formulas such

as *de šmo'un ya kulloxun mħubbe didi, de mšitun kullu 'azize didi* 'Oh hear all of you my loved ones, oh listen all my dear ones' (Rivlin 1959, 228).¹⁷ Secondly, the Targum weaves Aggadic material into the text in a manner that produces a smooth, unified text. It does not indicate when it departs from a literal translation and incorporates Aggadic additions, and this is very similar to the EBN.

An example of a classical Targum which is particularly close to the EBN style is the Tosefta Targum of the Prophets.¹⁸ It is a Targum especially rich in Aggadic additions incorporated into the text. One half of the material of the Tosefta Targum is for chapters that are, or were, used as *haftarot*. Thus it also has stylistic ties to the NENA expositions of the *haftarot*.¹⁹

2.2.2. Midrash

Midrashic discourse is a central component of rabbinic literature. Its hermeneutical techniques and style are an important foundation of, and can be found in, all of the works of the relevant literature: both those which are classified as Midrash (e.g., Midrash Rabbah for various books of the Hebrew Bible), and those which are not classified as such (e.g., the two Talmudim). The technique

¹⁷ See also the comments of Sabar (1982a, 63). Kasher (2000, 73) describes the Hebrew formula עמי בני ישראל 'my people sons of Israel' used to address the audience, which appears dozens of times in the classical Aramaic *Targumim* for the Torah. Kasher lists this formula as one of the proofs that the *Targumim* were performatively used in the liturgy.

¹⁸ See edition with commentary in Kasher (1996).

¹⁹ See §2.1.4 above.

of elaborative hermeneutics of Midrash, which is so central to Jewish culture, is the direct ancestor of the EBN.

Nonetheless, one point of dissimilarity between the two must be noted: the Midrashic text, in most cases, quotes the original biblical text dealt with within the Midrashic discourse. By doing that it poses a differentiation between the written text, and the oral Aggadic material. Thus an inherent classification system exists within the Midrashic text itself.²⁰ The EBN, as we shall see, does not do that. In fact, one of the core features of the genre is the unity of the narrative: the teller and the audience are not necessarily aware, nor are they expected to be aware, of the various ingredients—many of them dating back to entirely different periods and cultural realms—that make up the unified EBN text.

2.2.3. Post-antiquity Rewritten Bible Texts

The term ‘Rewritten Bible’ usually refers to a genre prevalent in Second Temple literature, particularly in the Qumran literature. Here it is intended to describe several medieval works (e.g., *Sefer ha-Yašar*; Dan 1986) as well as several modern works (e.g., *Toqpo šel Yosef* and some of the stories in ‘*Ose Fele*, both by Rabbi Yosef Shabbetai Farḥi²¹ [1867 and 1864–1870,²² respectively]). These

²⁰ In the Talmud, one of the ways this is achieved is by linguistic differentiation: the biblical text is in Hebrew and the Midrashic interpretation is often in Aramaic.

²¹ On Farḥi, his books, and his influence, see Yassif (1982).

²² On the uncertainty regarding the year of publication, see Yassif (1982, 48, fn. 7).

works are similar in their programme to their better-known Second Temple namesake: they rewrite narratives taken from the Hebrew Bible while adding Aggadic material into the stream of narration. What is common to Rewritten Bible texts and the EBN is that both produce a continuous narrative whose added themes become integral parts of the whole and are not marked as being added material.

Not only is there this theoretical overlap between Rewritten Bible texts and the EBN, one of these works, *Toqpo šel Yosef*, published in 1867 in Livorno, surprisingly shares much of its Aggadic material with a Zakho EBN, the story of Joseph and his brothers (Aloni 2014a, 27–30; 2014b, 339).

2.3. The Christian *Durekṭa*

Another related Neo-Aramaic genre that should be mentioned in this context is the Christian *durekṭa* (Mengozzi 2012). This is a genre of rhymed and metred poetry on religious themes sung at public gatherings. The genre has its roots in the Classical Syriac genre of *memra*. Many *durekyāta* are based on biblical narratives with added material.

Comparing the Jewish Targum and the Christian *durekṭa*, Mengozzi writes that both are “presented as bridge-genres from written to oral tradition” (Mengozzi 2012, 335). This bridging function is also shared by Jewish *tafsirim* ‘epic songs’ (see §2.1.1 above), and indeed the *tafsirim* and the *durekyāta* have additional characteristics in common: the *tafsirim* and the *durekyāta* both contain religious themes and narratives, but are both performed publicly in non-liturgical circumstances (Mengozzi 2012, 338–

39); they both contain within their verses expressions directed to attract the audience's attention and meta-poetic statements about the act of performing the song and recounting its narrative (Mengozzi 2012, 335); neither is anonymous,²³ as the names of their authors are recorded (Mengozzi 2012, 337). In addition, some *tafsirim* and *durekyata* are based on the same biblical narratives, and in these cases some of the themes of the additional material are shared. A comparative study of the themes in these cases—for example, comparing those of the Jewish *tafsir* of Joseph and his brothers (Aloni 2014a, 26–60; 2014b) with those in the *durekyata* (see, for example, Mengozzi 1999, 477–78, 482 no. 16; Rodrigues Pereira 1989–1990) about the same biblical narrative—would certainly prove fruitful.

3.0. Thematology

Following a discussion of the motif in the analysis of folklore, this section considers the most important concepts of thematology, the methodological approach which will be used in the analysis of the EBN below. The following section then proposes a new concept, the transposed motifeme.

²³ This is not always the case for Jewish epic songs. Rivlin (1959) gives traditions about the names of the authors for only some of the songs.

3.1. The Motif as a Fundamental Concept in Folkloristics

The concept of motif, which is defined as a small meaning-bearing element of a text²⁴ that may recur in other texts, is central to, some say distinctive of (Ben-Amos 1980, 17), the study of folklore. The standard reference work most closely associated with the concept of motif in folklore is the Thompson motif index (Thompson 1955–1958). It offers a systematic classification of motifs—recurring elements—in folk-literature. The ability to use this index has been described as “a skill which is indispensable to the folklorist, and the defining trait that separates him from all other student of culture” (Dorson 1972, 6, quoted in Ben-Amos 1980, 17). However, over the years, many theoretical critiques have been made of both the motif index and the concept of the motif itself.²⁵

One such critique is found in Alan Dundes’s (1962) article ‘From Etic to Emic Units in the Structural Study of Folktales’. Dundes criticises the choice of the motif as a basic unit in the study of folklore. While not denying the value of the motif index

²⁴ In the context of this chapter, a small meaning-bearing element of a narrative. But the concept of motif is relevant to other art forms as well: music, dance, visual art, textile, and more.

²⁵ For a thorough overview, see Ben-Amos (1980). See also Ben-Amos (1995, 71): “as much as motif-analysis has become the hallmark of folklore research in the first half of the twentieth century, it has failed to yield substantive interpretive insights into the nature of oral literature and the dynamics of tradition.” Although Thompson’s motif index is the most well-known, it is not the only one—for a list of motif indexes, see Uther (1996). For an annotated bibliography, see Azzolina (1987).

(or that of the Aarne-Thompson tale type index [Aarne and Thompson 1961; Uther 2004]), noting that these indexes are “useful... [as] bibliographical aids or as means of symbol shorthand” (Dundes 1962, 96), he deems that the motif unit is inadequate. The root of Dundes’s criticism is that the motif is, according to him, not a structural unit.

To explain his argument Dundes uses a pair of concepts coined by the American linguist and anthropologist Kenneth Pike (1967): *etic* and *emic* (see ch. 1, §7.0, fn. 25 above). Pike’s binary distinction—which originates from the modes of thought of theoretical linguistics and is etymologically derived from the suffixes of the terms ‘phonetic’ and ‘phonemic’—refers to two approaches to the analytical study of any cultural item: language, narrative, literary works, items of art, or folklore. ‘*Etic*’ denotes a systematic approach where the concepts and analytical units are external to the object of study and to its cultural context, and do not account for the internal functional relations between the elements of that object. *Etic* units are objective, predetermined, and measurable independent of the particular context. ‘*Emic*’, on the other hand, denotes an approach whose concepts and units are conceived with attention to the internal function and reciprocal relations between the elements of the object. It emphasises the structure that these elements constitute, as well as the cultural context of the object at hand. One may add that such an approach takes into

consideration two contexts, the internal one which is formed between the constituents of the cultural item, and the external one which exists between that item and its culture.²⁶

According to Dundes, the motif (as well as the tale type)—at least in the way it is used in folklore studies—is an etic unit, in that it pays no attention to the function of the motif in the context in which it appears. Dundes stresses the need for a new *emic* structural unit to serve as the fundamental point of reference for folklore studies. As a possibility, he (Dundes 1962, 100) quotes what he describes as “one of the most revolutionary and important contributions to folklore theory in decades”: Vladimir Propp’s (1962, 100) definition of the function, the structural unit proposed by him in his famous work about Russian fairy tales, *Morphology of the Folktale*,²⁷ where he states that “an action cannot be defined apart from its place in the process of narration” (Propp 1958, 19, quoted in Dundes 1962, 100).

²⁶ Another example for the various possible contexts is the acceptance of the item in its culture as an item—i.e., as a ‘type’—as well as the relation item-audience in a particular performance—i.e., as a ‘token’.

²⁷ In this work (which first appeared in Russian in 1928), Propp analyses a corpus of 115 Russian folktales. He defines 31 plot events, which he terms ‘functions’, which may appear in each of the folktales. The functions are generalised and formulated in a reductive manner. In the actual texts, they may take up various different surface realisations. What is striking is that, though any given folktale may have any number of Propp’s functions, their order of appearance is fixed and invariable. Propp also defines seven types of characters which undergo the 31-one functions. Thus, the product of Propp’s work, which is considered one of the first demonstrations of a structuralist approach towards texts, is a grammar of Russian folktales. For more detail, see Toolan (2005, 167),

The methodological approach known as thematology is an attempt to create tools which overcome these shortcomings of the concept of the motif.

3.2. Thematology: The Concepts

Thematology is a branch of the study of literature whose foundations were laid by scholars such as Trousson (1965) and Weisstein (1988).²⁸ The basis for the thematological study of Jewish literature, together with a new methodology, was proposed by Elstein and Lipsker (2004). Its central accomplishment is the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Story*, which presents entries on Jewish ‘themes’ (see §3.2.1 below).

At the core of the thematological study of Jewish narratives stands a system of concepts developed by Elstein and Lipsker. These concepts differ from the parallel concepts used in general thematology and the study of folklore, and aim to meet the requirements that the special characteristics of Jewish literature pose.²⁹ Some of the concepts were introduced specifically for the thematology of Jewish narratives to accommodate their unique features—in particular, the tendency of Jewish narratives to be told and retold in numerous versions over long periods of time and

where he writes that “reactions to the *Morphology [of the Folktale]* provide striking parallels to some of the critical reception given to transformational-generative grammar in the 1960s.”

²⁸ In the context of Jewish culture, see also the numerous studies of Christoph Daxelmüller referred to in Elstein, Lipsker, and Kushelevsky (2004, 20–21).

²⁹ On the problem of terminology, see Elstein and Lipsker (2004, 34).

wide geographical and cultural spaces, and to leave written documentation of many of these versions over these vast time and space scopes. For example, we find about forty distinct written versions of the famous story of Ḥoni the Circle Maker who prayed for rain,³⁰ and these are almost evenly distributed over a period of thirteen centuries (Tohar 2013). These different versions, though showing immense variation, all tell the same story: they are constructed on the same structural skeleton, the same chain of motifemes (the same ‘constant’, see §3.2.2 below). To describe this phenomenon of a series of varied versions of the same narrative, which unfolds over a long period of time and wide geographical areas, the term ‘homogenous series’ was coined. In what follows, a description of the fundamental concepts of the methodology of thematology of Jewish narratives is given (based on Elstein, Lipsker, and Kushelevsky 2004, 9–21 and Elstein and Lipsker 2004).

3.2.1. The Homogenous Series

As mentioned, a striking feature of the literature of the Jews, which sets it apart from other literatures, is the tendency of Jewish narratives, often first found in the Hebrew Bible or in other classical Jewish sources, to be told and retold over and over again in varying versions, many of which have come down to us in written form. A single story may exhibit several dozens of versions, each of which differs from the rest, but all nevertheless telling the same recognisable story. Each individual version of

³⁰ The most famous of which is in the Mishna, tractate Ta‘anit 3.8.

the series may originate from anywhere across a vast geographical and cultural space—from anywhere inhabited by Jews. It may be told in any of the Jewish languages and come from any period of Jewish history.

In the thematological methodology, it is the series itself—rather than any single version of the story—that becomes the object of investigation. Trends in the development of the series as a whole are discovered, and its trajectory may be contextualised in extra-textual observations. The homogenous series, also sometimes simply referred to as a ‘theme’, is the central object of study in the methodology proposed by Elstein and Lipsker. It is different from what is in many instances the object of other thematological studies, the heterogeneous series, where texts are grouped and studied together based on a looser resemblance, for instance, the use of the same set of motifs.

3.2.2. Levels of Text

In the methodology proposed by Elstein and Lipsker, six levels of text are analysed. The levels are hierarchical: each level contains the previous. In addition, each level is paired with a corresponding concept that describes the elements of which that layer is composed.

1. The level of material (*Stoff*)—the concept of motif: the motif (see §3.1 above) is a small unit of narrative syntax. It belongs to the level of the textual material. A motif may be a narrative element, such as a ring, a wedding, rain, or a dance. The motif, when treated as an independent unit, is an abstraction detached from context, and is not sufficient

for the study of its original literary environment. In reality, motifs always appear within given textual contexts, and therefore they perform a function, or participate in performing a function, of narrative syntax. Only when it is looked upon as an organic part of its original context can a motif lend itself to hermeneutic deciphering.

2. The level of function—the concept of motifeme: the motifeme³¹ is the smallest functional unit of a narrative. As opposed to the motif, which is accounted for outside of the texts it originated from, the motifeme cannot be considered an abstraction detached from its place in the narrative—it is always a part of that context. Its functional value is manifested in that it is the binding principle of motifs. The motifeme is the element that forms meaningful connections between individual, abstract, meaningless motifs and anchors them in a meaningful narrative sequence. Therefore, it is the prime unit of the narrative. It constitutes the link between the units of the material and their role in the text and gives meaning to both—to the motifs and to the textual sequence. It is the central building block in thematological methodology, and is what replaces the motif (which was given this fundamental role in some other schools of folkloristics and literary study) as the smallest meaningful—that is, meaning-carrying—unit of the text. In a narrative sequence, the motifeme may be either an

³¹ The term was coined by Pike (1954, 75). Elstein and Lipsker (2004, 38) and Elstein, Lipsker, and Kushelevsky (2004, 11) erroneously ascribe its coining to Dundes (1962).

element of the storyline or an element of poetic function (introduction, epilogue, scenery, description of the non-storyline elements, and so on).

3. The level of structure—the concept of constant: the constant is the chain of motifemes which recur in all versions of a particular narrative. It is formed by the homogenous series, and is what is common to all of its incarnations. Different versions may give more or less emphasis to particular motifemes of the constant. The variation in emphasis given to each motifeme in a particular token of the constant enables the researcher to infer conclusions about the telos (see below). The variety in the ways in which a constant materialises in different versions of a narrative raises the question of the borders of the homogenous series: a version which omits one or two of the motifemes will normally be considered a member of the series, but what about more remote versions on the spectrum of change? Here, the judgement of the researcher plays a role.

4. The level of ideas—the concept of telos: the telos represents the quality related to ideals and values of the homogenous series as a whole, as well as of each individual instantiation of it. Each change from one version to another in the chain of versions, each particular emphasis or unique expression of a motifeme in a version, may be linked to a value or ideal prevalent in the intellectual and social atmosphere in which that version was created. The concept of telos links literary development and literary entities to

social, non-literary, realities. Thus the analysis of a complete homogenous series can point to long-term trends of change in the extra-literary reality of the community to which that series belongs.

5. The two mediatory levels: in addition to these four main levels of the text, there are two mediatory levels, which Elstein and Lipsker call 'teleological mediators'. These are the 'configuration', which mediates between the motif and the motifeme, and the 'substructure', which meditates between the constant and the telos.

a. The configuration: a configuration is a set of motifs that show a tendency to appear together in the same alignment. Examples of this from familiar tales would be a dragon which guards gold or a wolf which is in a forest. As such, the configuration is still detached from the textual connectivity which would give it meaning, and still does not lend itself to hermeneutic deciphering. It is a mediatory stage which organises the motifs before the motifeme grants them their narrative meaning.

b. The substructure: the substructure is similar to the telos, in that it is an extra-literary reality which gives form to the literary object. The substructure is, however, not a formal, well-structured, system of ideas, beliefs, or moral values which are consciously retained by a society, but rather an unconscious, implicit, state of mind which is prevalent in society at the period when a story version originates.³² The

³² The examples of substructure given by Elstein and Lipsker (2004, 46–47) are the implicit norms of the courtly love of the Middle Ages as the

substructure is thus a mediatory stage between the constant and the telos.

4.0. Transposed Motifemes

As we have seen, Elstein and Lipsker propose a methodology which has a fixed sequence of motifemes, the constant, at its centre. It emphasises the structural similarity between the many versions of each narrative, seen collectively as a set—the homogenous series. This methodological approach relies on a shared structural thread of motifemes, on the homogeneity of the series: its principal object of study is not the narrative itself nor an individual version of it, but rather the homogenous series as a whole, the development of the narrative over time. This approach is particularly fruitful when applied to Jewish literature and folk-literature due to their striking tendency to tell and retell narratives, and to leave traces, i.e., written attestations, of many of the retold versions over very long periods.

What I would like to suggest here is an approach that considers the matter through an equally important feature of Jewish literary folk-traditions, and indeed Jewish literature as a whole, a feature which is very much present in the oral heritage of the Jews of Kurdistan. This is a feature that represents the opposite impulse from the retention of the same motifemic structure that produces the homogeneity of the homogenous series. It is the tendency to mix into a story narrative elements taken from various historical periods and cultural realms in a way which bypasses

platform of the medieval romance and the Heavenly City as portrayed in the writings of the 18th century.

the chronological development of the series. A reiteration of a narrative may unexpectedly contain a motifeme 'foreign' to the constant of the series, or more accurately what has been the constant up to this point. In many cases, this newly planted motifeme is taken from another, entirely different, and sometimes traceable, narrative. It is, so to speak, transposed from its 'original' locus and incorporated into a new one by the teller or the community that creates the narrative. I call this phenomenon the 'transposed motifeme'.

4.1. Manners of Transposition

What is interesting in tracing the origin of transposed motifemes is that there seem to be few constraints on what these origins may be: motifemes may be borrowed intra-culturally from narratives originating in the same culture, but of completely different genres, periods, and content, or they may also be borrowed extra-culturally. What is offered here is an analysis that follows the life of the motifeme: its migration from one series to the other and the changes it undergoes.

There are several ways in which a motifeme may be transposed. Here these will be exemplified using the motifemes which will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

A motifeme may be taken from an entirely different narrative or non-narrative text. This other text may be a Jewish one—for example, the motifeme in §5.9, that of the merging of the stones, is taken from a non-narrative portion of a Jewish text, the *Zohar*, which may itself have derived the idea from the appearance of a motifeme of merging stones in relation to the stones of

Jacob, attested in many places in classical rabbinic literature. Alternatively, the originating text might be one of another culture—for example, the motifeme §5.10, that of splitting one's opponent into two without him realising this, is taken from the Assyrian folk-epic, *Qaṭīne*.

A motifeme can also be taken from the very same narrative, but transposed into a new location in it. This may be a result of a structural change, or a result of mere stylistic choice of the storyteller. Examples of this can be seen with the motifemes in §§5.17 and 5.18, where in the biblical narrative the episode of Saul and David in the cave appears before the episode of Abigail, whereas in Samra's story the order is reversed. Another example is the motifeme §5.5, where speaking to the crowd at a funeral is transposed from Boaz's wife's funeral to Boaz's own funeral.

A special case of transposition within a narrative is a motifeme which retains its previous location in the narrative sequence, but where the causality structure is altered: the causality nexuses linking the motifeme to previous or subsequent events (motifemes) in the narrative are different from those in earlier versions of the narrative. This is a very subtle transposition. An example of this can be seen in the motifeme in §5.12, where king Saul's illness is explained as resulting from his anger and his realisation that David will become king instead of him. In the biblical text, Saul is not said to have an illness, and the explanation given for his behaviour is "an evil spirit from God" (1 Sam. 16.14).

Naturally, when motifemes are transposed from different sources and fused together in the new narrative, new causality

structures appear. An example of this can be seen in the motifeme in §5.13, where Jonathan's recommendation of David as the one to play music for his father king Saul is explained as resulting from Jonathan having seen David playing for the sheep and his compassionate care of them.

A motifeme may be split, and told in portions in non-sequential parts of the narration, as occurs with that in §5.8.

Two previously independent motifemes may be unified into one. An example of this is seen in the motifeme in §5.18, where two separate episodes of the biblical narrative, the episode of the cave and the episode in Saul's camp, are united into one in Samra's story.

The location of a motifeme, or its historical context, may be altered. In the motifeme in §5.4, what takes place in the biblical narrative at the city gate instead takes place in Samra's story at the synagogue; and in the motifeme in §5.8, the biblical location of the Elah Valley is now Jerusalem. Similarly, when it comes to the motifeme in §5.17, in the Bible the episode takes place in biblical Ma'on and Carmel, and in Samra's story it takes place near the modern city of Haifa. The modern neighbourhood of Gilo in Jerusalem is also mentioned.

Another type of manipulation of the motifemic structure, which is not a transposition in the strict sense but nonetheless may be considered in the same category, is what the scholar James Kugel termed "narrative expansion" (Kugel 1994, 3–5,

276).³³ This is the elaboration of a previously existing motifeme in the narrative sequence. This elaboration can be so expansive that, in the new narrative, what was previously one short motifeme has grown into a whole episode, which in and of itself contains several subordinate motifemes. An example is the motifeme in §5.1, where Naomi's righteousness—in itself a motifeme transposed into the narrative from classical rabbinic literature—is described at length, and includes her cooking the Jewish-Kurdish *xamuṣṭa* soup and giving some to her poor neighbours.³⁴

5.0. Motifemes in Samra's Story

In what follows 19 of the motifemes contained in Samra's story are listed. Each subsection begins with a description of the motifeme³⁵ as told in Samra's story, and continues with a discussion of the sources of the motifeme. The intention is to demonstrate the varied histories and transposition processes of the motifemes.

5.1. Naomi and Elimelech's Wealth, the Charity of Naomi (14)–(35)

Naomi and Elimelech are rich.

³³ Kugel (1994, 4), however, defines the narrative expansion as an exegetical device which is “based on something that *is* in the [original] text” (original emphasis).

³⁴ For further discussion of types of motifeme transposition, see §6.0 below.

³⁵ Some of the subsections deal with groups of interconnected motifemes, rather than a single one.

- (19) ^H‘aširîm^H wélu,¹ ’əswá-lu ^Hsadè,^{H1} ’əswá-lu... xàtte,¹ ’əswá-lu...¹
 ‘They were rich, they had a field, they had... wheat, they had...’

Naomi is a charitable woman, taking care of her needy neighbours and giving them some of the produce that God has given her. For example, whenever she cooks *xamušta*³⁶ soup, she makes sure her needy neighbours have some, too.

- (23) ^Hšəxením^H dídi látlu?!¹ ‘a[w]òn-ile!¹ (24) *g-daryáwa xápča*
gərsa,¹ g-daryáwa xápča...¹ mād-’ətla,¹ xà qár’a,¹ hà^{’1} ’úzlu,¹
kutèle ta-yalúnke dīdax,¹ lá šoqátte bésax spīqa.¹
 “‘My neighbours do not have [any]?! It’s a sin!’” She would put some cracked wheat, would put some... whatever she had [lit. has], a zucchini, “Here,” [she says to the neighbour,] “make [= cook] [with] these some dumplings³⁷ for your children, don’t leave your home empty [of food].”

³⁶ A sour soup made with meat-filled dumplings. See following footnote.

³⁷ The dish *kutèle* ‘meat-filled dumplings’ is very popular in Jewish-Kurdish cuisine, particularly in a sour green vegetable soup called *xamušta*; see Shilo (1986, 80–81, 139, 142–43). The *kutèle* will appear again in the narrative: when they return to Bethlehem, Naomi sends Ruth to glean ears of grain. Naomi says she would make dumplings with whatever Ruth brings: (49) *u-’óz šəbbólim bāsrū,¹ mēse,¹ deqānnu garsānnu g-ozānnu,¹ b-’ózax kùtele¹ b-’āxlax.¹* ‘Make ears of grain behind them [=the harvesters, i.e., glean], bring [here what you have gleaned], I will crack [lit. knock (in a mortar)], grind them, prepare them, we shall make dumplings, we shall eat.’

Her husband, Elimelech, is angry with her for giving away their property. In order to prevent her from giving away any more he decides to move to the city of Me'ohav (in the Bible, Moab).

(33) *kràble mánna,¹ g-érra là g-šoqánnax go-bet-lèhem.¹ g-yáwat ràba...¹ kúlla dawálti b-yà[wa]tta.¹ (34) wàlox¹ g-zèda dwáltox!¹ là-g-naqsa!¹ 'állà d-húlle húlle tàli¹ yáwan ta-gèri ší!¹ là-q-qabəlwa.¹ (35) qam-nabəlla¹ qam-nabálla l...bázər mə'ohàv,¹*

'He got angry with her, he tells her, "I will not let you stay [lit. leave you] in Bethlehem. You give a lot... you will give [away] all of my property." "Look now, your property will increase! It will not lessen! God, who gave, gave to me [in order that] I should give to others [lit. my other = other than me] also." He didn't accept. He took her. He took her to... the city of Me'ohav.'

In the Bible, the reason that Naomi and Elimelech and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion leave the Judahite city of Bethlehem and move to Moab is famine: "And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the field of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons" (Ruth 1.1).³⁸ There is no direct indication of their wealth in the biblical text, nor for Naomi carrying out charitable actions.

³⁸ All translations of biblical verses into English in this chapter are based on JPS (1917) and JPS (1999), with some modifications.

Many rabbinic sources describe Elimelech's family as members of the aristocracy.³⁹ Targum Ruth translates the phrase אפרתים מבית לחם (Ruth 1.2), otherwise rendered 'Ephrathites of Bethlehem', as 'leaders of Bethlehem', and mentions that Elimelech's family became 'royal adjutants' upon arriving in Moab (Levine 1973, 46–47).

One source of Naomi's description as a good, charitable woman is Midrash Ruth Rabbah 2.5 (Lerner edition): "And the name of his wife Naomi' since her deeds were worthy (*na'im*) and pleasant (*na'imim*)." (my translation)

A source for Elimelech's stinginess as the reason of leaving Bethlehem is Midrash Ruth Zuta 1 (Buber edition 1925, 40): "Thus he said: 'Tomorrow the poor gather and I cannot reside among them'" (my translation; see also Yalqut Šim'oni Ruth 598). The following passage of the same Midrash states, however, that stinginess was common to all the members of the family: "Why did scripture mention his wife and his sons? Since they held each other back, out of miserliness that they all had. When the husband wants [to give charity] the wife does not want, or the wife wants but the sons do not want" (Midrash Ruth Zuta 2, Buber edition 1925, 40).⁴⁰

³⁹ BT Bava Batra 91a; Midrash Tanḥuma Shemini 9; Midrash Tanḥuma BeHar 3; Seder 'Olam Rabbah 12, Ratner edition (1897, 53–54); Midrash Ruth Rabbah 1.9; 2.5; Yalqut Šim'oni Ruth 598.

⁴⁰ This Aggadah appears also in Yalqut Šim'oni Ruth 599, and in Rabbi Tobiah Ben Eli'ezer, Midrash Leqaḥ Ṭov on Ruth 1.2, Bamberger edition (1887, 9).

The Jewish ‘Amidya NENA translation of Ruth 1.1 adds ‘rich man’ (Sabar 2006, 59).⁴¹ The ‘Ephrathites’ in Ruth 1.2 mentioned above are translated as ‘great’ or ‘heroes’ (Sabar 2006, 59, fn. 3). A recorded performance by Ḥakham Ḥabib ‘Alwan of the Jewish Zakho NENA translation of Ruth translates ‘Ephrathites’ as *ma‘aqule* ‘noblemen, aristocrats’ (‘Alwan 1974). The Jewish Urmi NENA translation of the same verse states that they became ‘high officials’ in Moab, similar to Targum Ruth (Sabar 2006, 59, fn. 6).

5.2. Ruth and Orṭa are the Daughters of Me’ohav (40)

Elimelech marries his two sons to Ruth and Orṭa (in the Bible, Orpah), the daughters of Me’ohav (in the Bible, Moab):

(40) *mə’oháv ší ’átle trè bnàsa:¹ rùt,¹ u-’òrṭa.¹ qam-ṭaláblu ta-kútru
bnóne dide.¹*

‘Me’ohav also has two daughters, Ruth and Orṭa. He [= Elimelech] asked for them [= for their hand] for both his sons.’

The book of Ruth does not mention any family relationship between Ruth and Orpah and the king of Moab. Nor does it indicate they are sisters. From the biblical text, it seems that Elimelech and Naomi’s two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, were married only after the death of Elimelech (Ruth 1.3–4).

In classical rabbinic literature there is an old, well-established exegetical tradition that Ruth was the daughter, or the

⁴¹ Sabar states that this may be taken from Rashi’s commentary on v. 1.

granddaughter, of Eglon king of Moab, who was himself, according to the same tradition, the grandson of Balak king of Moab (BT Horayot 10b; BT Nazir 23b; BT Sotah 47a; BT Sanhedrin 105b; see Levine 1973, 48, fn. 6). A later source, Midrash Ruth Rabbah 2.9 (Lerner edition), states that Orpah is a daughter of Eglon as well, and therefore Ruth's sister.

5.3. Naomi's House Remains as She Left It (48)

When Naomi returns with Ruth to her house in Bethlehem, all of her wheat-grinding implements are still there, just as she left them.

(48) *psáxla dárġat bet-lehèm' tùla.' ...'ávla sàtta' u-garùsta' u...'*
*múx qamàe' bésa wéla màlya 'awáe.'*⁴²

'She opened the door of [her house in] Bethlehem, she sat [down].... She has a stone mortar and a hand mill and... like [it was] before, her house was full of things.'⁴²

This motifeme does not appear in previous sources. Both the Bible and the classical rabbinic literature describe Naomi's return to Bethlehem in a way that may be interpreted as quite the opposite: in Ruth 1.21, Naomi says to the people of Bethlehem, "I went out full, and the Lord has brought me back home empty." Midrash Ruth Rabbah on v. 19 gives the following speech said by the people of Bethlehem:

Is it she, whose deeds were good and worthy? Once she wore her colourful and woollen clothes and now she is

⁴² These specific grinding implements reflect the realia in Kurdistan.

wearing rags, once her face was red from eating and drinking and now her face is green from hunger, once she went by sedan chair and now she is walking barefoot.⁴³

The association of Ruth and Naomi's return with grinding implements may be explained by the end of Ruth 1.22, "they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest," and by the fact that the entire narrative from that point onwards is set within the period of harvest.

5.4. At the Synagogue (56)–(62)

After Ruth, heeding the advice of Naomi, spends the night at the foot of Boaz's bed, she asks him to marry her in levirate marriage (*yibbum*), since Boaz's father and Elimelech's father were brothers. Boaz tells Ruth to come with Naomi to the synagogue on the following day, where they will resolve the matter.

(56) *g-érra sé l-bèsa,¹ ^Hmaḥá[r]^H bónne m-bánoke sáloxun ʿəl-knàšta,¹ masyálox naʿòmi,¹ u-ʿána-šik p-áwən go-kništa,¹ u-kništa mliša jamàʿa,¹ b-ózáxni ^Hpšarà.^{H1}*

‘He tells her, “Go home, tomorrow morning come to the synagogue, Naomi will bring you, and I will also be in the synagogue, and the synagogue is full of people, we shall make a compromise.”’

⁴³ Midrash Ruth Rabbah 3 (Lerner edition); my translation. Original Hebrew: ותאמרנה הזאת נעמי] אמרו, [זו] היא שהיו מעשיה נאים ונעימים? לשעבר היתה מתכסה בבגדי צבעונין ומילתין שלה, ועכשיו היא מתכס' בסמרטוטין, לשעבר היו פניה אדומות מכח האכילה והשתיה, ועכשיו פניה ירוקות מכח רעבון. לשעבר היתה מהלכת באסקפסטיות [שלה], ועכשיו היא מתהלכת יחפה.

On the following day, Boaz brings his 89-year-old elder brother to the synagogue, and asks him to perform the *yibbum* and to take Ruth as wife. The brother replies:

(58) ʾāxonī¹ telta-ʾsār yalúnke ʾətlī,¹ u-ʾána^H māvugár^H lébi mǎhkən,¹
lébi ʾəmməd-bàxti mǎhkən,¹ (59) šqúlla ʾəlox¹ hóya bráxta
ʾəllōx,¹ wéla^H nàʿal^H dídi lúšla,¹ ... (61) si-mbàrəx-la.¹

“My brother, I have thirteen children, and I am old, I cannot speak, I cannot [even] speak with my wife. Take her [= Ruth] for you, may she be blessed upon you. Here is my shoe,⁴⁴ wear it. ...Go wed [lit. bless] her.”

The congregation agrees. On the following day, Boaz and Ruth are married in the synagogue by performing the ceremony of the seven blessings.

In the Bible, the *yibbum* scene is recounted in Ruth 4.1–12. It does not take place in the synagogue, but rather at the city gate. Ruth and Naomi are not mentioned as being present. The

⁴⁴ Handing over one’s shoe is associated with levirate marriage. In Deut. 25.5–10, it is stated that if a man does not wish to perform levirate marriage with his brother’s widow, the ceremony of *ḥališa* ‘loosening of the shoe’ must be performed: “Then shall his brother’s wife go up to him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face; and she shall answer and say: ‘So shall it be done unto the man that does not build up his brother’s house.’” (Deut. 25.9). In Ruth 4.7–8, it is stated: “Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning exchanging, to confirm all things: a man drew off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour; and this was the attestation in Israel. So the near kinsman said unto Boaz: ‘Acquire for yourself,’ and he drew off his shoe.” See also BT Gittin 34b–37b.

legal procedure described in the biblical text is defined (in vv. 4 and 7) as *ge'ula*, the re-appropriation of agricultural land by a kinsman, and not *yibbum*, levirate marriage, as it is in Samra's narrative. Indeed, the *ge'ula* procedure as described in Ruth is not identical to the one formulated in Lev. 25.25–34, since the latter describes only re-appropriation of property and does not mention marriage. The inclusion of marriage to Ruth in the legal procedure creates a strong association with the *yibbum* procedure. In addition, one procedural component taken from *yibbum* (or, more accurately, from the renouncement of the *yibbum* obligation), namely *ḥaliṣa*—taking off the shoe of one party and giving it to the other party—does appear in the biblical text. In both the biblical and Samra's texts, the refusal of the more closely related *go'el*, or redeemer, is explained by his reluctance to marry an additional wife, Ruth, though in the biblical narrative, he initially agrees to acquire the land and withdraws his agreement only when he hears of his obligation to marry Ruth as well. The Bible does not reveal the familial relation between Boaz and the closer *go'el*, nor does it give any other identifying details, such as his name, age, or the number of his children. Boaz's taking Ruth as a wife is discussed in Ruth 4.13, but there is no mention of a ceremony of the seven blessings.

When it comes to the locale, Targum Ruth 4.1 translates the 'gate' as 'the gate of the court of the Sanhedrin' (see Levine 1973, 98).⁴⁵ Several classical rabbinic literary sources identify the closer redeemer as one of Boaz's paternal uncles and as a brother

⁴⁵ Targum Ruth translates Ruth 3.11 similarly. The Sanhedrin was the supreme rabbinical court.

of Elimelech (e.g., BT Bava Batra 91a; Midrash Tanḥuma BeHar 3). However, one source maintains that the *go'el*, whose name is Tob, is indeed Boaz's elder brother (Midrash Ruth Rabbah 6.6 Lerner edition).⁴⁶ Boaz is said to have been 80 years old at the time of the marriage (Midrash Ruth Rabbah 6.4 Lerner edition; Yalqut Šim'oni Ruth 606), thus an elder brother aged 89 is plausible.

Both the recorded performance by Ḥakham Ḥabib 'Alwan for the Jewish Zakho NENA translation of Ruth ('Alwan 1974) and the Jewish 'Amidya NENA translation of Ruth 4.1 (Sabar 2006, 74) name the *go'el* as Tob, but do not provide details about his age, family relationship, or number of children. The recorded performance renders the 'gate' of Ruth 4.1 as *bes din* 'court of law' ('Alwan 1974). The 'Amidya translation renders it as *darga d-sanhedrin* 'the gate of the Sanhedrin' (Sabar 2006, 74).

5.5. Boaz's Death and Elishay's Birth (64)–(83)

Boaz dies the day after marrying Ruth. Many people come to the funeral and Naomi, being a resourceful woman, publicly declares that the marriage took place, that Ruth spent one night with Boaz, and that if Ruth is pregnant, the child is Boaz's:

(77) ʔilá[ha] sàhəz u-náše sàhzi!' kúlló márru ^Hbəsèder.^H ʔilá[ha] hùlle' smàxla,^l máni sèle-la?' k-ʔitun máni?'

“God shall [bear] witness and people shall [bear] witness!”

Everyone said, “Okay”. God gave, she became pregnant,

⁴⁶ According to this and other sources, the name of the closer redeemer was Tob; this is derived from an interpretation of Ruth 3.13.

who came to her [=who was the child]? Do you know who?’

Ruth gives birth to Elishay.

The biblical text does not say how long Boaz lived after marrying Ruth. The name of their child was Obed, who was the father of Jesse (Hebrew *Yishay*), and Jesse was the father of David (Ruth 4.17–22).

Only one source in classical rabbinic literature mentions Boaz’s death immediately after his marriage to Ruth, Midrash Ruth Zuta.⁴⁷ “They said, in the same night that he came unto her he died” (Midrash Ruth Zuta on Ruth 4.13, Buber edition 1925, 49; my translation). The motifeme appears in two later rabbinic sources: Yalqut Šim‘oni (Ruth 608) and Midrash Leqaḥ Ṭov (Rabbi Tobiah Ben Eli‘ezer, Midrash Leqaḥ Ṭov on Ruth 4.17, Bamberger edition 1887, 44).⁴⁸ The latter contains a description of the actions which Ruth takes to prevent suspicion with regard to her fidelity:

When Boaz came to Ruth, on that same night he died. And Ruth held him upon her belly the entire night so that they should not say that she was disloyal to him with another man. And when all came in the morning, they found him dead on her belly and therefore they named him [=the child] after Naomi [since she adopted him]. (Rabbi Tobiah

⁴⁷ On the problem of dating Ruth Zuta, see Shoshani (2008). Midrash Ruth Zuta was first published by Buber in 1894.

⁴⁸ Midrash Leqaḥ Ṭov is a Midrashic collection for the Pentateuch and the Megillot composed by Rabbi Tobiah Ben Eli‘ezer in Macedonia during the 11th century. It contains both material derived from ancient sources and original material by the author.

Ben Eli'ezer, *Midrash Leqah Tov on Ruth 4.17*, Bamberger edition 1887, 44; my translation)⁴⁹

While the strategy to prevent suspicion described in this source is not the same as the one in Samra's story, Naomi plays a role in both.

The motifeme of speaking to the crowd gathered for Boaz's funeral found in Samra's story may have originated from the Mid-rashic description of the funeral for Boaz's wife:

And some say that the wife of Boaz died on that day, and [the people of] all of the towns congregated in order to pay an act of kindness [= participate in the funeral]. Ruth entered with Naomi, and it came to pass that she [= Boaz's wife] was taken out and she [= Ruth] entered [at the same time]. And all the city was astir concerning them. (*Midrash Ruth Rabbah 3.5–6* Lerner edition; my translation)⁵⁰

In both texts, the gathering of a congregation for a funeral is exploited to serve as an event of interaction with the public. However, the two similar motifemes are positioned and integrated at two different points of the narrative sequence; this is an example of the transposition of a motifeme from one point to another within the same narrative.

The Jewish 'Amidya NENA translation of Ruth 4.14 associates the night of Boaz and Ruth's marriage with the death of

⁴⁹ Original Hebrew: ד"א ילד בן לנעמי ולא לבועז מלמד כשבא בעז אל רות באותו הלילה מת ותפשתו רות על בטנה כל הלילה שלא יאמרו זנתה תחתיו מאיש אחר וכשבאו הכל בבוקר מצאוהו מת על בטנה ולפיכך קראוהו על שם נעמי.

⁵⁰ Original Hebrew: ויש אומרים, אשתו של בועז מתה באותו היום, ונתכנסו כל העיירות לגמילות חסד, ועד כל עמה בגמילות חסד, נכנסה רות עם נעמי, והיתה זו יוצאה וזו נכנסת, ותהום כל העיר עליהן.

Boaz's previous wife: *qam do lele mətla bax-bo'az u-mosele 'aya, mən-ʔilaha* 'On that night the wife of Boaz died and he brought this one [i.e., he took Ruth], [it was] from God' (Sabar 2006, 76; my translation). This association between the two events may have opened the door for the transposition of the motifeme of the funeral for purposes of providing an opportunity for interaction with the public.

5.6. Elishay Suspects His Wife of Unfaithfulness (85)–(89)

Elishay (in the Bible, Jesse), the father of David, is angry with his wife. He chases her out of the house. She stays at her father's house for one month while pregnant with David.

(85) *krəbwale' mən-dè báxta' damməd-wéla smáxta bəd-dávid hamèlex.'* ... (86) *qam-karədwala' xá yařxa zəlla be-bàba.'*¹

'He got angry with this woman [i.e., his wife], while she was pregnant with king David.... He chased her out, for one month she went to her father's house.'

When she returns, Elishay does not believe that the child is his.

(86) *səla' g-əmrà-le' qam-kardətti' u-hənnə' u-ʔána báxta sməxta.'*
g-ér là' là! léwat sməxta!'

'She came, she says to him, "You chased me out, and this and I am a pregnant woman." He says, "No, no! You are not pregnant!"'

The wife calls God as a witness that she had not been touched by other men.

(88) *rābbonó šel-‘olām¹ sáhəz ʾəlla ʾe-bàxta,¹ bāni básar ləwa nḥáqta,¹ yála dīdox híle.¹*

“Master of the Universe, bear witness to this woman, she has not been touched by humans, it is your child.”

God is angry with Elishay for casting doubts upon the morality of his righteous wife and his paternity of the child.

(89) *rābbonó šel-‘olām,¹ k‘ásle ʾəlle.¹ g-er-yála dīdox híle,¹ má g-əmrətta?!¹ bāxta,¹ ^Hnakiyà,¹ u-šadikà,^H mǎni b-náḥəq ʾəlla?!¹*

“The Master of the Universe got angry with him. He says, “It is your child, what are you saying to her?! [She is a] clean, and righteous, woman, who would touch her?!”

This motifeme has no trace in the biblical text. In classical rabbinic literature, the prominent trend is to portray Jesse as a person of impeccable behaviour and moral stature. He is mentioned as one of four people who never sinned (BT Shabbat 65b; Targum Ruth 4.22 [= Levine 1973, 41]; Rabbi Menaḥem Ben Rabbi Shelomo, Midrash Sekhel Ṭov on Exod. 6.20, Buber edition 1901, II:35). It is hard to see how this view is compatible with the motifeme in Samra’s story.

There is, however, a source in which this motifeme does appear. Curiously, it is a work that did not have as wide a distribution in the Jewish world as other late Midrashic works: *Yalquṭ ha-Makhiri*. This is a compilation of earlier Midrashic material that was composed by Rabbi Makhir Ben Abba Mari, apparently in 14th-century Spain or Provence. In *Yalquṭ ha-Makhiri* on Ps. 118, we read the following story:

Jesse was the head of the Sanhedrin⁵¹... He had sixty grown sons, and he became celibate with his wife for three years. After three years, he had a beautiful female slave and he desired her. He told her, "My daughter, prepare yourself tonight in order to come to me in exchange for a release document." The slave went and said to her mistress, "Save yourself and myself and the soul of my master from hell." She said to her, "What is the reason for that?" She told her everything. She said to her, "My daughter, what can I do? For he has not touched me for three years now." She said to her, "I will give you some advice, go prepare yourself and so will I, and this evening when he says 'shut the door' you shall enter and I shall go out." And thus she did. In the evening, the slave stood and extinguished the candle, she came to shut the door, her mistress entered and she went out. She spent the entire night with him and was impregnated with David. And out of his love for that slave, David turned out redder than his brothers... after nine months, her sons wanted to kill her and her son David, since they saw he was red. Jesse told them, "Let him be and he will be enslaved to us and a shepherd." This was concealed for 28 years, until God said to Samuel, "Go, I will send you to the house of Jesse the Bethlehemite." (Rabbi Makhir Ben Abba Mari, Buber edition 1899, II:214)⁵²

⁵¹ The supreme rabbinical court.

⁵² Original Hebrew: פליגי בה תרי אמוראי במערבא, חד אמר דוד בן אהובה היה, וחד אמר דוד בן שנוואה היה, כיצד ישי ראש לסנהדרין היה, ולא היה יוצא ונכנס אלא באוכלוסא בס' רבוא, והיו לו ס' בנים גדולים ופירש מאשתו ג' שנים, לאחר ג' שנים היתה לו שפחה נאה ונתאווה לה. א"ל בתי תקני עצמך הלילה כדי שתכנסי אלי בגט שחרור, הלכה השפחה ואמרה לגברתה הצילי עצמך ונפשי ואדוני מגיהנם, א"ל מה טעם, שחה לה את הכל, א"ל בתי מה אעשה שהיום ג' שנים לא נגע בי, א"ל אתן לך עצה, לכי תקיני עצמך ואף אני כך, ולערב כשיאמר סגרי הדלת תכנסי את ואצא אני, וכך עשתה. לערב

Yalqut ha-Makhiri remained in manuscript form until it was published in six volumes by five scholars over four decades, starting in 1893. The volume that contains this passage was published by Shelomo Buber in 1899. Rabbi Makhir lists his source for each of the passages of his book, but the source given for this particular passage is simply “a Midrash.” It is not to be found in any earlier extant rabbinic work.⁵³ However, the story does appear, in a different formulation, in another work from the same period and region, *Torat ha-Mminḥa*, by the 14th-century Spanish Rabbi Ya‘aqov Ben Ḥanan’el Sikili (or, of Sicily), which remained in manuscript form until 1991 (Sikili 1991, homily no. 23; referred to by Azulay 1957, 72). The story is then mentioned in several later sources, each giving a different formulation as well as different reasoning for Jesse’s actions, and citing different biblical verses as support. It appears in *Keli Yaqar* (Laniado 1992, 416, on 1 Sam. 16.11),⁵⁴ a commentary on the books of the prophets,

עמדה השפחה וכבת את הנר, באת לסגור את הדלת נכנסה גברתה ויצאה היא, עשתה עמו כל הלילה נתעברה מדוד, ומתוך אהבתו על אותה שפחה, יצא דוד אדום מבין אחיו, מכאן אמרו חכמים צריך אדם לקשט עצמו ולעמוד כנגד אשתו בשעה שהיא עולה מבית הטבילה לט’ חדשים בקשו בניה להרגה ואת בנה דוד, כיון שראו שהוא אדום, אמר להם ישי הניחו לו ויהיה לנו משועבד ורועה צאן, והיה הדבר טמון עד כ"ח שנה, כיון שא"ל הקב"ה לשמואל לך אשלחך אל בית ישי הלחמי... On the tension between David and his siblings in the Bible and in classical rabbinic literature, see Grossman (1995).

⁵³ Though, as Ginzberg (1909–1938, VI:247, fn. 13) states, BT Pesahim 119a gives a dialogue between David, Jesse, David’s brothers, and Samuel, composed of the verses of Ps. 118.21–28. Three of these verses appear in the dialogue between David’s mother and brothers in the passage in *Yalqut Ha-Makhiri*.

⁵⁴ This is referred to by Ginzberg (1909–1938, VI:246, fn. 11).

by Rabbi Shemu'el Ben Avraham Laniado (16th–17th century, Aleppo). Rabbi Menaḥem Azariah da Fano (1548–1620, Mantova, Italy) gives a long version of the story, considerably different from the *Yalqut ha-Makhiri* version and containing Kabbalistic interpretation, in his *Ma'amar Ḥiqqur ha-Din* (printed in 1597).⁵⁵ This passage by Fano is quoted in a responsum (printed in 1723) by Rabbi Ya'aqov Alfandari (17th century), which deals with a Halakhic question concerning the possibility of marriage between someone who may perhaps be a *mamzer*⁵⁶ and a released slave.⁵⁷ Rabbi Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulay (the Ḥida, 1724–1806) has the story in his *Sefer Midbar Qedemot* (Azulay 1957, 72) and in several other places in his writings.⁵⁸ Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna (known as the Vilna Gaon, 1720–1797) gives a commentary on Rabbi Yosef Caro's *Yore De'a* 157:24 (Ginzberg 1909–1938, VI:246, fn. 11), where he simply adds the comment *ke-uvda de-yiṣay* 'as the deed of Yishay' to a decree of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (the Rema) dealing with a disguised wife.

⁵⁵ Part 3, ch. 10. *Ma'amar Ḥiqqur ha-Ddin* was printed as part of Fano's *Sefer 'Asara Ma'amarot* (Fano 1649, 60a), referred to by Azulay (1957, 72).

⁵⁶ A child born from forbidden relations between a married woman and a man who is not her husband.

⁵⁷ Responsum 68 in Part A of *Sefer Muṣal me-'Eš*, a collection of Alfandari's writings that survived a fire; see Alfandari (1998, 95). This responsum was referred to by Azulay (1957, 72).

⁵⁸ For the various other places the story appears in Azulay's writings, see fn. 5 there. Azulay's version of the story is referred to by Ginzberg (1909–1938, VI:246, fn. 11).

Shinan (1996) notes that the *Yalqut ha-Makhiri* passage deals with but one case of a series of women in king David's ancestry who disguised themselves in an intimate situation: Leah and Jacob (Gen. 29), Tamar and Judah (Gen. 38), Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 3), and the daughters of Lot (Gen. 19). Shinan (1996) also claims that although the purposes of this tradition are not entirely clear, it must have a connection to Ps. 51. 7: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Curiously, a similar story is told by Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (book 12, ch. 4.6; referred to by Ginzberg 1909–1938, VI:246, fn. 11); in this case the story is about Joseph the son of Tobias who had a son, Hyrcanus, with his niece, who had been disguised by her father as an actress and with whom Joseph fell in love.

The fact that Elishay's wife stays at her father's house for a month in Samra's story represents the realia of marital life in Kurdistan. It was common for a woman, who would be living with her husband's extended family,⁵⁹ to take shelter at her parents' house for a period of time after a quarrel with her husband or her mother-in-law—there is a verb to describe this, *moxšəmla*.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ On the patrilocal pattern of marriage in the Jewish communities of Kurdistan, see Aloni (2014a, 85–101); also Feitelson (1959, 207); Starr Sered (1992, 13).

⁶⁰ See Sabar (2002a, 201) on *x-š-m*: "(K[urdish]/P[ersian]) to feel alienated (daughter-in-law who after a quarrel goes back to live temporarily with her parents)."

5.7. David's Anointment (90)–(119)

God sends the prophet Samuel to anoint a son of Elishay as king. Elishay has six sons, and he presents them to Samuel by age. God had told Samuel to anoint the son that had a pillar of fire, the *Shekhinah* 'divine presence', upon his head. But Samuel does not see the pillar of fire upon any of the sons' heads.

(109) *māséle 'aw-xət' stún núra lá xəzyàle.*¹ (110) *šmú'əl hannavi,¹
márrele rəbbonó šel-'olàm' dámməd ḥmálla,¹ šaxína b-rəše,¹
'òha-le!*

'He brought the other one, he didn't see the pillar of fire. Samuel the prophet, the Master of the Universe [had] told him, "When the Shekhinah stood [= dwells] upon his head, this is he.'"

Samuel asks Elishay:

(111) *'ətlóx xá bròna xát?*¹

'Do you have another son?'

Elishay says that he has one more son, who is seven years old.

(111) *wéle go-^Hsadè^H 'əmməd 'ərbə,*¹

'He is in the field with the sheep.'

Samuel tells him to fetch that son. He comes from the field wearing a *dəšdàša* 'ankle-length robe' and a white hat.

(113) *g-ér ḥmól 'àxxa,¹ monáxle bəd-rəbbóno šel-'olàm' šaxiná
ḥmàlla.¹*

'He [= Samuel the prophet] says, "Stand here," he looked towards the Master of the Universe, the *Shekhinah* stood [i.e., dwelt upon the head of that son, David].'

The prophet Samuel anoints David as king of Israel, using oil from the Temple.

The anointment of king David by Samuel is told in 1 Sam. 16. There God tells Samuel to anoint the son that he points out (16.3), Jesse brings forth his sons in order (16.7–10), and Samuel asks whether there are more sons and then instructs Jesse to fetch David from the field where he was tending the sheep (16.11).

The anointment is referred to, or retold, in numerous rabbinic sources, ranging from early Tannaitic works (e.g., *Sifre Devarim* 17; *Midrash Tannaim on Deut. 1.17*) to the late *Midrashim*.⁶¹

The motifs of the pillar of fire and *Shekhinah* are well-known from other places in Jewish literature, but both are absent from all sources that recount David's anointment. The biblical text states that "the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16.13), immediately after the anointment, but not before.⁶²

David's age at the time of his anointment is not mentioned in the Bible. He is said to be 28 in *Seder 'Olam Rabbah* (Ratner edition 1897, 57, ch. 13),⁶³ an early rabbinic work from the Tannaitic period, as well as in *Yalqut ha-Makhiri* (see §5.6 above) and in *Torat ha-Minḥa* (see §5.6 above).

⁶¹ For a list of further references, see Ginzberg (1909–1939, VI:247–49, fns 13–23).

⁶² *Midrash Tannaim on Deut. 1.17* does, however, state that David prophesied as a young child that he would destroy the cities of the Philistines, kill Goliath, and build the Temple.

⁶³ Ratner notes that although the printed version is '29', the correct version according to manuscripts is '28'.

5.8. *Guri Kunzəri* (128)–(131), (179)–(181)

King Saul had *Guri Kunzəri*,⁶⁴ a suit of armour. Only the one chosen to be king, David, would be able to wear it. The suit is described as an object able to test the capability to fight Goliath.

(128) *mád* ʔiz,¹ *yalúnkəd yerušalâyim*,¹ *šrâxle* ^H*rámkol*^H ʔâse,¹ *hakóme*
g-êbe qatêlle gòlias.¹ *g-emer-ʔáwd lawášla ʔè bádla*¹ ʔibe *qatêlle*.¹
 ‘All of [lit. whatever there is] the children [i.e., boys] of
 Jerusalem, a loudspeaker called out that they should come,
 [since] the king wished to kill Goliath. He says, whoever
 wears this outfit, he is able to kill him.’

But it does not fit anyone. Only one boy has not tried the suit on, a seven-year-old boy who was left in the fields. King Saul orders him to be fetched.

(131) *qam-malušîla* ʔêlle,¹ *bâr šoʔá šênne*,¹ *yîštabbáh* *šemò*¹ *rwéle qam-*
*małêla!*¹
 ‘They dressed him with it [lit. it on him], [only] seven years
 old [i.e., therefore small], may His name be praised, he
 [= David] grew and filled it!’

When king Saul sees this, he is angry, since he feels that this boy, David, will become king instead of him. Later in the story, David refuses to wear the suit of armour, and insists on wearing his own *dašdâša* ‘ankle-length robe’.

⁶⁴ From Kurdish *zirih* ‘coat of mail’ and *kum* ‘helmet’; see Sabar (2002a, 161), where he also refers to occurrences of the word in Rivlin (1959, 233, 241).

(180) *gələlələlə léwa báš t̀ali! lášši qəzla! ʰlò lò lò! ʰl makušənna
m̀nni! ʹána bəd-dəšdəša dīdi b-azəna!*

‘Gələlələlə it [= the suit] is not good for me! My body has been burnt. No no no! I’ll take it off me, I shall go in my ankle-length robe!’

His reason for doing so is that he noticed Saul’s anger, and he does not want to draw his animosity.

(181) *g-émer ʹéne lá-hoya ʹəlli,*¹

‘He says [= his reasoning was], “His [= Saul’s] eye should not be upon me.”’⁶⁵

The basis for this motifeme is to be found in 1 Sam. 17.38–39, immediately after king Saul agrees to send David to fight Goliath:

And Saul clad David with his apparel, and he put a helmet of brass upon his head, and he clad him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his apparel, and he essayed to go[, but could not]; for he had not tried it. And David said unto Saul: “I cannot go with these; for I have not tried them.” And David put them off him.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Interestingly, the Hebrew word ‘oyen ‘hostile’ in 1 Sam. 18.9 is derived from the same root as ‘ayin ‘eye’. The (1917) JPS translation for the verse is “And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.”

⁶⁶ One more exchange of clothes by David which occurs in the biblical narrative is in: “And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his apparel, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle” (1 Sam. 18.4). The robe in this verse may be the source for the *dašdəša* ‘ankle-length robe’.

This motif appears in several rabbinic sources (BT Yevamot 76b; Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 26.9; Midrash Tanḥuma Emor, 4; Midrash Shemu'el 21, Buber edition 1925, 64).⁶⁷ In all these sources, the suit which Saul gives to David miraculously fits his size, Saul's dissatisfaction is visible, and David refuses to wear the suit for the battle, saying "I cannot go with these; for I have not tried them" (1 Sam. 17.39). In some of these sources, the miraculous fitting on David of clothing that belongs to Saul, who was previously described as being "from his shoulders and upward... taller than any of the people" (1 Sam. 9.2), is presented as a sign of David's future kingship:⁶⁸ for example, "even if a person is short, once he is appointed king he becomes tall" (Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 26.9; my translation) and "that is proof that David, may peace be upon him, was worthy for kingship" (Midrash Aggadah on Lev. 21.15, Buber edition 1894, 54; my translation). Nonetheless, in none of the sources is the suit presented as a test object, as in Samra's formulation.

Saul giving his coat of mail, helmet, and sword to David is mentioned in the epic song by Ḥakham Eliyahu Avraham Dahoki Mizraḥi of Dohok published by Rivlin (Rivlin 1930, 114; 1959, 241), but there is no mention of a miraculous change in size in the song.

⁶⁷ Subsequent references to this tradition include: Midrash Aggadah on Lev. 21.15, Buber edition 1894, 53–54); Rashi on 1 Sam. 17.38; Abrahanel on 1 Sam. 17.55.

⁶⁸ Cf. motif H36.2 "Garment fits only true king" in Thompson (1955–1958).

5.9. The Seven Stones (147)–(150), (162)–(164)

On his way to the battlefield, David collects seven stones to use with his *bardaqaṇiyye* ‘slingshot’. As he picks up the stones, he proclaims:

(148) *bəzxút ʿavrahàm, ʿ [bəzxút] yitshàk, ʿ [bəzxút] yaʿaqòv*¹

“For the merit of Abraham, [For the merit of] Isaac, [For the merit of] Jacob”

He continues in this manner to name five patriarchal figures. He puts the stones in his pocket. Before using these stones in battle, David again says:

(162) *yá ʿilàhi, ʿ bəzxút kúd xá u-xà, ʿ šóʿa nàse, ʿ*

“O my God, for the merit of each and every one [of those] seven [*sic*] men”...

He then puts his hand in his pocket and discovers that the seven stones he collected have become one stone.

The biblical source of this motifeme is 1 Sam. 17.40:

And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in the shepherd’s bag which he had, even in his scrip; and his sling was in his hand; and he drew near to the Philistine.

The following extract appears in Midrash Shemuʿel:⁶⁹

“And he took his staff in his hand, and chose for himself five smooth stones out of the brook,” one for the name

⁶⁹ Original Hebrew: ויקח מקלו בידו ויבחר לו חמשה חלוקי אבנים מן הנחל, אחד לשמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, ואחד לשמו של אהרן, ושלוש לשלשת אבות העולם, אמר אהרן לא אני הוא גואל הדם עלי להיפרע ממנו, (א"ל) [אמר] הקב"ה והלא לפני חירף וגידף, עלי להפרע ממנו...

[=sake] of the Holy One blessed be He, and one for the name [=sake] of Aaron, and three for the three patriarchs. Said Aaron, “Is it not me who is the blood-avenger? I must take vengeance on him [=Goliath]!” Said the Holy One blessed be He, “But it is before me that he had taunted and cursed! I must take vengeance on him!” (Midrash Shemu’el 21, Buber edition 1925, 64; my translation)

Here, there is no mention of the separate stones becoming one. The merging of the stones is reminiscent, though, of a famous Aggadah about the stones collected by Jacob, which appears in various formulations in several places in classical rabbinic literature, for example:

It is written: “And he took of the stones of the place” (Gen. 28.11); but it is also written: “And he took the stone” (Gen. 28.18)! Said Rabbi Yitzḥak: “That teaches us that all of these stones gathered to one place, while each one of them says, ‘Upon me shall this righteous man rest his head,’” a Tanna taught: “They were all merged into one.” (BT Ḥullin 91b, my translation)⁷⁰

The application of the motif of the merger of the stones to the stones of David appears in the Zohar in several places (Zohar III:272a; Tiquney Zohar 62a; Zohar Ḥadash 66b), for example:

⁷⁰ Original Hebrew: כתיב ויקח מאבני המקום, וכתיב ויקח את האבן! אמר רבי יצחק: מלמד שנתקבצו כל אותן אבנים למקום אחד, וכל אחת ואחת אומרת עלי יניח צדיק זה ראשו; תנא: וכולן נבלעו באחד. Also in: Midrash Genesis Rabbah 68; Midrash Tanḥuma VaYeṣe 1; Midrash Yelammednu Genesis 128; Midrash Tehillim 91.6; Rabbi Tobiah Ben Eli’ezer, Midrash Leqaḥ Ṭov on Gen. 28.11, Buber edition (1880, 140–41); Midrash Genesis Rabbati 28.11; Rabbi Menahem Ben Rabbi Shelomo, Midrash Sekhel Ṭov on Gen. 30.13, Buber edition (1900, I:140–42); Yalqut Ṣim’oni VaYeṣe 118.

“They were made one, all of the five” (Zohar III:272a; my translation).

In the epic songs published by Rivlin (1959, 246), the motif of the merger of the stones appears only in the epic song by Ḥakham Eliyahu Avraham Dahoki Mizraḥi of Dohok.

5.10. The Battle against Goliath (151)–(166)

David goes to fight Goliath. Goliath is surprised to see a child standing in front of him, and disparages him. In the battle, blows will be struck in turn. Goliath says:

(152) *mxí darbàdox* [= *dárba dīdox*],¹

“Strike your blow.”

David replies that Goliath should strike first, since he is the one wearing armour and since David does not know how to strike.

(152) *mxí dárba dīdox¹ xázax mà šákəl-híle.*¹

“Strike your blow [and] we’ll see what sort [of a blow] it is.”

Goliath strikes his blow and destroys half a mountain. He causes David to go flying. God saves David, cushioning his landing. When David returns to the battlefield, Goliath is surprised that he is still alive.

(156) *g-er-má-wət šàx?! má?¹ g-er wən-šàx¹ Aḥamdu-l-là.^{A1} bés
ʔilá[ha] ʔmìra.¹⁷¹*

⁷¹ See above, ch. 1, §14.0, proverb no. (79).

‘He [= Goliath] says, “What, you’re alive?! What?” He [= David] says, “I’m alive, thank God. The house of God is built⁷¹ [= everything is well].”’

Now it is David’s turn. First he proclaims:

(162) *yá ’ilàhi,¹ bəzxút kúd xá u-xà,¹ šó’a nàse,¹*

“‘O my God, for the merit of each and every [of those] seven men”’

Then, using his *bardaqaniyye* ‘slingshot’, he shoots the single stone into Goliath’s forehead.

(164) *’úzla gər-gər-gər-gər-gər qam-’ozále trè qát’e.*

‘It made gər-gər-gər-gər-gər [and] it made him two pieces [i.e., sliced him].’

Goliath, not being aware that he has been split in two, asks contemptuously ‘Is this your blow?’, to which David replies by asking Goliath to wiggle a bit.

(166) *š’ášle gyàne¹ xá qát’ə mpálle mənne¹*

‘He wiggled himself, one piece fell off him.’

The battle between David and Goliath is described in 1 Sam. 17.41–50. Taking turns in striking is not mentioned there, or anywhere in classical rabbinic literature. The sources do not mention Goliath having a chance to strike—indeed, some of the sources state that upon seeing David, Goliath was rooted to the ground, unable to move (Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 21.2; Midrash Shemu’el 21, Buber edition 1925, 65.

However, such a motif of taking turns in battle appears in the well-known folk-epic ‘Qaṭine’. This folk-epic describes the adventures of the Assyrian national hero, Qaṭine. The various

folk-traditions comprising this tale were shaped into the national Assyrian epic song *Zmīrta D'Qāṭīne* by the 20th-century poet William Daniel, and published it in three volumes containing some 6000 verses (see Warda and Odisho 2000; Donabed 2007; Lamassu 2014). One version of the folk-traditions of this epic, known to the Jews of Zakho and told in prose, is attested in Shilo (2014, 148–65). In one episode in Shilo's version, Qaṭīne fights against the hero of Armenia. In this episode, like in that recounting the battle of David and Goliath in Samra's story, the motifs of taking turns and cutting the opponent into two without him realising are both present. When Qaṭīne's turn to strike comes, he cuts the hero of Armenia, head to toe, with his recently sharpened dagger. The hero is not aware that he has been cut and laughs at Qaṭīne. Qaṭīne asks him to dance a little before he strikes his third blow. When the hero does, he falls into two pieces.

Taking turns and cutting one's adversary into two also appear in the episode of the David and Goliath battle in the epic song recorded by Rivlin from Ḥakham Eliyahu Avraham Dahoki Mizraḥi of Dohok (Rivlin 1930, 116; 1959, 245–47).

5.11. Goliath's Sword and 'Eliya Ḥəttè and His Condition (167)–(178)

King Saul has ordered that Goliath's head must be cut off and placed before him, so that he knows that Goliath has indeed been killed; no sword but Goliath's own can cut off his head. David asks 'Eliya Ḥəttè (in the Bible, Uriah the Hittite), the bearer of Goliath's armour, to give him Goliath's sword, so that he can cut off Goliath's head and carry it to king Saul.

(172) *g-er-lá-g-yanne-lox* [= *la-g-yawənnə-lox*]¹ ʾótli šàrt ʾámmox¹
hákan yawátti xà-brat-yəsraʾèl,¹ *b-yawənnə-lox*.¹

‘He says, “I will not give it to you. I have a condition for [lit. with] you: if you give me a daughter of Israel [i.e., a girl of Israel to marry], I will give it to you.”’

David hesitates, but eventually agrees. As a result, God becomes angry with David:

(175) *g-er-lébox yáwət çù brát yəsraʾél tàle*¹ ʾálla brát,¹ ʾáy d-híla
^H*ba[t]-zzúg^H dídox bat-šéva^c mən-^Hšamáyim^H ksúta tàlox*,¹ ʾàya
b-yawáttá ta-ʾeliyá ḥəttè.¹

‘He says, “You cannot give any daughter of Israel to him but the daughter, the one that is your spouse, Bathsheba, [which is] written [i.e., destined] for you from heaven, you will give **her** to ʾEliya Ḥəttè.”’

David cuts off Goliath’s head, and takes it and places it in front of king Saul. The Israelites are freed from Goliath and the Philistines.

(178) *zəlla*,¹ ʾúrra,¹ ^H*ra^{ch}-ʾáfe*, *mən-yəsraʾèl*,¹ ʾilá[ha] *b-yá[wə]*¹ ^H*tòv^H*
ta-ʾəsraʾèl,¹ *pášla šahyàna*,¹

‘That trouble went [away and] passed from Israel. God will give good to Israel, there was a celebration.’

David appoints ʾEliya Ḥəttè the head of his army.

David’s decapitation of Goliath is recounted in 1 Sam. 17.51:

And David ran, and stood over the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him,

and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw that their mighty man was dead, they fled.

In v. 54, it is told that David brought Goliath's head to Jerusalem: "And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent." The condition imposed by ʿEliya Ḥəttè regarding an Israelite woman alludes to the story of David and Bathsheba, told in 2 Sam. 11.

The idea that Bathsheba was David's destined wife appears in the Talmud: "Bathsheba the daughter of Eliam was destined for David from the six days of creation, but she came to him with pain" (BT Sanhedrin 107a). However, the Aggadah that identifies Uriah the Hittite as Goliath's armour-bearer, that says he is given an Israelite woman by David, and that indicates that God punishes David by making this woman David's destined wife Bathsheba, is quoted only by later sources. The earliest attestation thereto is an allusion in a commentary on Chronicles ascribed to a disciple of Saadia Gaon (10th century CE): "And the one who says that Uriah the Hittite was the military servant of Goliath, is wrong" (Kirchhiem 1874, 10; commentary on 1 Chron. 2.17; quoted by Lewin 1940, 189). The two earliest sources in which our Aggadah explicitly appears are Rabbi Shemuʿel Ben Avraham Laniado's *Keli Yaqar* (Laniado 1603, 293a, commentary on 2 Sam. 11.3) and Rabbi Moshe Alsheikh's *Marʿot Ha-Tzovʿot* (Alsheikh 1603–1607, 45a, commentary on 2 Sam. 12.1), which cites it as being from "a Midrash of our rabbis which became known though I have not seen it written [= a copy of it]." Though there is insufficient information to determine the exact years that Rabbi Laniado spent in the city of Safed, it is possible that the two rabbis lived there concurrently, during the latter half of the

16th century CE; it is certainly the case that their two books were printed in the same year and by the same publisher in Venice. Subsequent sources are *Petaḥ Ha-'Ohel*, an alphabetical collection of homilies and Aggadot by Rabbi Avraham Ben Yehudah Leb of Przemysl (1691, 15a); *Pney Yehoshua'*, a Talmudic commentary by Rabbi Ya'akov Yehoshua' Falk (Falk 1739, commentary on BT Qiddushin 76b); and *Ḥomat 'Anakh*, a biblical commentary by Rabbi Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulay (Azulay 1803, 20b, commentary on Ps. 38.19). Lewin, who lists the two early sources by Laniado and Alsheikh and the later source by Leb (as well as additional sources which state that Bathsheba was indeed predestined for David, but do not relate specifically our Aggadah) in his *'Otzr Ha-Ge'onim* (Lewin 1940, 189–90), writes in the introduction to the volume that these relatively late sources do not seem to be the original source of this Aggadah (Lewin 1940, viii).

Our Aggadah does appear in the epic songs by Ḥakham Eliyahu Avraham Dahoki Mizraḥi of Dohok (Rivlin 1930, 116–17; 1959, 248), by Rabbi Ḥayyim Shalom son of Rabbi Avraham son of Rabbi 'Ovadya of Nerwa and 'Amidya (Rivlin 1959, 253), and by Ḥakham Yishay of Urmia (Rivlin 1959, 299), all recorded by Rivlin. In the first song, David asks for Goliath's sword, in the second he asks for a key for Goliath's armour which was hidden in Goliath's beard, and in the third he asks Uriah to open the armour around Goliath's neck. In Samra's version both the sword and the key are mentioned. Rivlin writes about this Aggadah:

As for the use of Aggadah by the authors of the [epic] songs, we should keep in mind that the Jews of Kurdistan also had a tradition and Aggadah, which may originate in lost Midrashim. We should not assume that all Aggadot in

these songs originate with the author. Such is the case with the Aggadah about Uriah the Hittite and Bathsheba in these songs, which is not to be found in the Midrashim, but a source for it was found⁷² in the writings of the Geonim. (Rivlin 1959, 104; my translation)

5.12. Saul's Illness (183)–(184)

Realising that David will take his place as king, king Saul becomes angry and ill.

(183) *pášle rāba ḥolē.^{h1}* (184) *dúqle rēše,¹ ráḥqa mən-ʿasraʿəl,¹*
màrʿa,¹ là-g-ḃaṭəl!¹

‘He became very sick. A pain, may it be far from Israel, caught his head, it does not stop!’

The Bible several times links Saul’s “evil spirit from God” and David’s success. Saul’s condition is never described as an illness, let alone a headache. The first mention of the evil spirit occurs immediately after David’s anointment by Samuel, as a consequence of it:

Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. Now the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrified him. (1 Sam. 16.13–14)

It is the remedy to this evil spirit, the music of the harp, that brings David into the house of Saul for the first time:

⁷² The source, the aforementioned commentary on Chronicles, was located by Lewin (Lewin 1940, 189; my footnote).

Let our lord command your servants, that are before you, to seek out a man who is a skilful player on the harp; and it shall be, when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, that he shall play with his hand, and you will be well. (1 Sam. 16.16)

The second mention is after the battle against Goliath, when Saul witnesses the public support for David resulting from the battle:

And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. And it came to pass on the next day, that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the house; and David played with his hand, as he did day by day; and Saul had his spear in his hand, and Saul threw the spear, thinking to pin David to the wall. But David eluded him twice. (1 Sam. 18.9–11; see §5.14 below as well)

One more time is again immediately after another of David's victories over the Philistines:

And there was war again; and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled before him. And an evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand; and David was playing with his hand. (1 Sam. 19.8–9)

It appears that the first time Saul's condition was 'diagnosed' as an illness is quite late. Rabbi Yitzhak Abravanel writes in the 15th century:

After the spirit of the Lord departed from him, he did not remain as the rest of men, but rather apprehensions and bad thoughts surrounded him, and his mind was always occupied with his punishment and with how the Lord had rent the kingdom of Israel from him, and how his good spirit departed from him, and due to that his blood burnt

and the illness of melancholia developed in him, which is developed in men due to the burning of the blood and the burnt red humour, and the physicians have already written that this illness causes the loss of imagination and the faculty of judgement. (Abravanel's commentary to 1 Sam. 16.14; my translation)⁷³

This notion that Saul has some kind of mental disorder recurs only very rarely in the history of traditional Jewish biblical exegesis. The passage by Abravanel is cited by Rabbi Meir Leibush Ben Yehiel Michel Wisser (the Malbim) in his 19th-century commentary on the same verse. Similarly, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (the Natziv) writes in his commentary on Lev. 2.2 about “an illness of black humour which had come upon Saul” (my translation). Despite the few occurrences of this idea in traditional exegesis, reading a mental disorder into the character of Saul has become very common among modern readers of the text, in both academic and popular culture. However, I have not found any previous source that identifies the illness of king Saul as a ‘headache’.

5.13. Jonathan's Friendship with David (185)–(190)

David and Jonathan, Saul's son and heir to the throne, are very good friends.

(185) *xà roháya-lu' xà našáma-lu' xà-^Hgil^H-ilu.'*

⁷³ Original Hebrew: ...אחרי שסרה ממנו רוח השם הנזכר לא נשאר כיתר האנשים, אבל סבבוהו בלהות ומחשבות רעות, והיה תמיד דמיונו מתעסק בענשו ואיך קרע השם את מלכות ישראל מעליו ואיך רוחו הטוב סר מעליו, ומתוך זה נשרף דמו ונתהוה בו חולי המילאנ”קולייא המתהוה באדם משריפת הדם והאדומה השרופה, וכבר כתבו הרופאים שבחולי הזה יפסד הדמיון והכח המחשב...

‘They are one spirit, they are one soul, they are the same age.’

Jonathan goes to visit David in the field. He sees that when David plays his *jezuke*,⁷⁴ all the sheep gather around him, bow their heads, and listen.

(185) *k-xáze damməd-g-máxe jezùke, kùlle ʿérba k-èsē, k-ḥàməl.*¹

‘He sees that when he plays his *jezuke* all the sheep come, stand.’

Jonathan finds another good quality in David: he treats with compassion the ewes that have given birth. He pets them, washes them, and feeds them with fresh green grass.

(186) *dàre... go-ʿize... gəlla yarùqa yarùqa, raʿiza raʿiza g-maxəlla.*¹

‘He puts... in his hand... green green [and] fresh fresh grass, [and] feeds her.’

It is Jonathan’s friendship with David, and his seeing David playing music for the sheep, that causes him to recommend David’s playing to his father Saul, as a cure for his headache.

In the biblical text, David and Jonathan’s friendship appears in various places, for example:

The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.... Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. (1 Sam. 18.1–3)

⁷⁴ A musical instrument. See fn. 131, below, and also ch. 3, fn. 56.

And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should slay David; but Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David. (1 Sam. 19.1)

David arose out of a place toward the South, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times; and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David: Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying: The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my seed and your seed, for ever. (1 Sam. 20.41–42)

And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him: Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you; and you will be king over Israel, and I shall be second to you; and even my father Saul knows this is so. (1 Sam. 23.16–17)

However, the biblical narrative talks about David playing music for Saul before it mentions David and Jonathan meeting: “David took the harp, and played with his hand; so Saul found relief, and it was well with him, and the evil spirit departed from him” (1 Sam. 16.23). David's playing is thus not presented as a result of Jonathan's friendship.

The motif of Jonathan's friendship subsumes, in Samra's story, two additional motifs: David playing music for the sheep and David feeding the ewes. Both are given as reasons for Jonathan's acknowledgement of David's worth.

A Midrashic tradition about taking care of sheep by giving them soft grass appears in three places in classical rabbinic literature: Midrash Tehillim 78 (edited prior to the 8th century CE in

the Land of Israel); Midrash Exodus Rabbah 2.2 (probably edited in the 10th century CE; Shinan 1984); and Yalqut Šim‘oni Psalms 823 (edited in the 12th or 13th century CE). In these sources, unlike in Samra’s story, David gives the soft grass to the newborn lambs, not to their mothers: “[David] would bring out the small ones to graze first so that they should graze on the soft [grass]” (Midrash Exodus Rabbah 2.2 Vilna edition; my translation). Furthermore, the focus in these sources seems to be David’s ability to provide for each of his sheep in accordance with its needs:

...and then he would bring out the old [sheep] so that they would graze on the medium grass, and after that he would bring out the youths so that they would graze on the hard grass. The Holy One blessed be He said, whoever knows how to shepherd each sheep according to its strength should come and shepherd my people. (Midrash Exodus Rabbah 2.2 Vilna edition; my translation)⁷⁵

This contrasts with Samra’s story, where the focus is David’s compassion towards the newborn lambs and their mothers.

In these sources, the fact that David takes care of the sheep is not said to be witnessed by Jonathan, nor is it connected to David’s appointment as a musician for king Saul. Rather, it forms part of a tradition of stories about leaders being tested by God for their leadership skills, based on their performance as shepherds. God’s response to David’s action is to correlate the ability

⁷⁵ Original Hebrew: ויקחהו ממכלאות צאן, מהו ממכלאות צאן כמו ויכלא הגשם, היה מונע הגדולים מפני הקטנים והיה מוציא הקטנים לרעות כדי שירעו עשב הרך ואחר כך מוציא הזקנים כדי שירעו עשב הבינונית, ואח"כ מוציא הבחורים שיהיו אוכלין עשב הקשה, אמר הקב"ה מי שהוא יודע לרעות הצאן איש לפי כחו יבא וירעה בעמי, הה"ד מאחר עלות הביאו לרעות ביעקב עמו.

to shepherd sheep with the ability to care for people—a tradition that is also recounted in connection to other leaders, such as Moses. Samra indicates that David’s behaviour is the reason for Jonathan’s esteem towards him, although she does follow this with an element of the divine thereafter:

(187) *ʔt̄le* ^H*l̄év* *ṭòv*^H *u-[q]urbáne* *ʔilá[ha]* *k-iʔè.*¹ ^H*galuy-yadùà*^{dh}-*ile,*¹
k-l̄eʔ *hàdxa-le,*¹ *k-l̄e* *go-lábbəd* *náše* *mà-ʔis.*¹

‘He has a good heart and God [may I be] His sacrifice knows. It is well known [to Him] [lit. revealed (and) known], He knows it is so, He knows what [there] is inside the heart[s] of people.’

I have not found any attestation of the motif of David playing for the sheep in earlier sources.

5.14. King Saul’s Sword and the Angel (191)–(193)

After a few days of David playing to king Saul in order to relieve his pain, Saul attacks David with his sword. An angel diverts the sword and causes it to hit the wall above David. Jonathan says:

(193) *qày,*¹ *rěšox* *k-tàrəṣʔ*¹ *ʔaz-qáy* *q-qatl̄àtte?*¹

“‘Why? Your head heals [when he plays for you] so why do you kill him?’”

King Saul replies:

(193) *p-qatl̄ànne.*¹

“‘I shall kill him.’”

Two episodes are found in the Bible where king Saul attempts to smite David with his spear, 1 Sam. 18.10–11 and 19.9–10. Miraculous deliverance by an angel is not described there,

nor anywhere else in the exegetical tradition. The only reference that I have found to there being something miraculous about David's evasion of the attack is in the commentary by Rabbi Levi Ben Gershon (the Ralbag, Gersonides) on 1 Sam. 19.10, where he states that David's being able to evade the strike was a miracle, since his attention was focused on playing properly at the same time.

5.15. King Saul's Promise (194)

King Saul makes a promise that whoever kills Goliath will receive half of the kingdom and marry his daughter Michal.

(194) ...*palgôt dawálta p-póya tãle,¹ u-bràti¹ mìxal¹ tãle ^Hmatanà.^{H1}*

“...half of the wealth [or: kingdom] will be his, and my daughter Michal—a gift for him.”

This motif originates from 1 Sam. 17.25: “And it shall be, that the man who kills him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.”

The promise to give half of the kingdom echoes Est. 5.3: “‘What troubles you, Queen Esther?’ the king asked her. ‘And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be granted you’” (see also Est. 5.6; 7.2).

5.16. The Cave of Elijah the Prophet (195)–(200)

David escapes from king Saul and hides in the Cave of Elijah the Prophet in Haifa. He has with him eight hundred men.

The Cave of Elijah the Prophet is a well-known pilgrimage site, located on Mount Carmel in the city of Haifa. The Bible

states, one chapter before the episode with Abigail (see the following subsection) that while being pursued by king Saul, David and his men stayed in a cave in the desert of En-Gedi (1 Sam. 24.1–2). The episode with Abigail, in ch. 25, is said to take place in the area of Ma'on and Carmel, two biblical Israelite settlements located in Judah to the south of Hebron. The association of the cave of David and his men with the Cave of Elijah the Prophet on Mount Carmel in Haifa in Samra's story is due to the coincidentally identical names of the biblical settlement and the mountain. In the biblical narrative, the En-Gedi cave is not a part of the Abigail episode, and it is in the desert of Judah, not in the region of Hebron. The cave is incorporated into Samra's story because it appears immediately before the Abigail episode in the biblical text.

5.17. Gila of Haifa (201)–(231)

The festival of Rosh Hashana is approaching, and David needs sustenance for his men. A very rich man, Elimelech, lives in Haifa; he owns flour-mills. His wife, Gila, is also very rich, and she owns the neighbourhood of Gilo (in Jerusalem), which her father had named after her. David sends two soldiers to ask for sustenance for Rosh Hashana, but Elimelech refuses. He replies to Gila's protests:

(206) *lá g-ya[wà]nne čù-māndi.¹ fèrat¹ yàtwat¹ ha-ʿàsqað šī la-g-ya[wá]nne.¹*

“I will not give him anything. You [can] fly [or] sit, even this much I will not give him.”

Gila goes after the soldiers and gives them a written document permitting them to take anything they might need.

(210) *xamší kəsyása qàmxa,*¹ *mən-ṭahúnət qàmxa.*¹ *xamší bakbúke,*¹
ʾəmmá bakbúke ^{Hšəmən^H} *mən-ṭáh-*¹ ^{Hšəmən^H} *dídi.*¹... (212)
*sáʿun lə-ʾərba,*¹ *ʾəmmá réše ʾərba mèsun,*¹ *ʾúzule ta-^Hróš-ha-*
šanà.^{H1}

“Fifty bags of flour, from the flour-mill. Fifty bottles, a hundred bottles of oil from my mi[ll], oil.... Come to the sheep, bring one hundred heads of sheep, prepare them [lit. it] for Rosh Hashana.”

When Gila tells her husband she has given David’s men all of that, he dies.

(218) *ʾóha mət̄le,*¹ *pqèʿle l-dúke,*¹ *mət̄le l-dúke!*¹

“This one [=the husband] died, he exploded [i.e., died from anger] on the spot [lit. his place], he died on the spot [lit. his place]!”

After the mourning period for her husband, Gila invites David to visit. He thanks her for the food she sent, and she proposes giving him all of her property if he marries her. David agrees and marries her.

This episode is told in 1 Sam. 25.2–43. However, Samra’s version differs from that one on several points.

The names of the couple in the Bible are Nabal and Abigail. Samra uses Elimelech, the same as the name of the husband of

Naomi at the beginning of Samra's narrative,⁷⁶ and Gila, after whom Gilo was said to be named by her rich father. The modern-day neighbourhood of Gilo in Jerusalem is located near the Palestinian town of Beit Jala, thought to be the site of biblical Gilo,⁷⁷ which appears later in the biblical narrative: it is the home of Ahitophel the Gilonite (2 Sam. 15.12), David's counsellor and the grandfather of Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11.3; 23.34; cf. 1 Chron. 3.5). I have found no previous source presenting an association between Abigail and Gilo, nor any which states that Abigail was rich in her own right.

As explained with regard to the motifeme in §5.16 above, in Samra's story Gila and Elimelech's home is located in the modern city of Haifa because the biblical settlement of Carmel shares its name with Mount Carmel near Haifa.

In the Bible, Nabal is said to be a wealthy owner of herds of sheep and goats. In Samra's narrative, he is the owner of flour-mills. This is perhaps taken from the realia of Kurdistan, where millers were among the wealthy property owners.

The Bible indicates that this episode took place when Nabal was shearing his sheep. Although shearing, as a family celebration, did not have a fixed time, it most commonly occurs during the spring.⁷⁸ In Samra's story, the episode takes place just before

⁷⁶ A point of similarity between the two characters called Elimelech is that they do not allow their wives to use their wealth to provide goods to those in need.

⁷⁷ Though a more probable identification is *Ḥirbet Jala* in the Hebron area; see Luncz's comment in Schwarz (1900, 126).

⁷⁸ On shearing as a familial feast in the Bible, see Haran (1972).

Rosh Hashana, at the beginning of autumn. This originates from BT Rosh HaShana 18a, where Rav Naḥman ascribes to Rabba Bar Abbuha the opinion that the ten days of Nabal's sickness (1 Sam. 25.38) were the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur (see also Yalquṭ Šim'oni Samuel 134; Rashi on 1 Sam. 25.38). The notion that David needed sustenance for his men for the feast of the eve of Rosh Hashana comes from Rashi's commentary on 1 Sam. 25.8.

In the Bible, it is David who “sent and spoke concerning Abigail, to take her to him to wife” (1 Sam. 25.39), whereas in Samra's story the initiative comes from her. This is possibly due to the interpretation of 1 Sam. 25.31 by the rabbis—after convincing David not to punish Nabal, and referring to his future as king of Israel, Abigail says to David, “then remember your handmaid.” The rabbis understood this as a hint for David to marry her after the death of Nabal (BT Bava Qamma 92b; BT Megilla 14b; JT Sanhedrin 2.3;⁷⁹ and many other subsequent commentators). Samra's version is also reflective of the independence and assertiveness of the Jewish women of Kurdistan in matters pertaining to marriage.⁸⁰ Abigail's independence and assertiveness are also stressed in Samra's story when she issues a written document permitting David's soldiers to take abundant goods from

⁷⁹ JT = Jerusalem Talmud, Vilna edition.

⁸⁰ See Sabar (1982c, xv): “Kurdish women in general enjoy more freedom and a wider participation in public life than do Arab, Persian, and Turkish women. They are also freer in their behavior towards males and rarely wear the veil.” On the life of Jewish women in Kurdistan, see Brauer (1947, 147–57; 1993, 175–89).

her and her husband's property, and by emphasising that she was wealthy in her own right and not only due to her husband.

5.18. David Finds King Saul Asleep (233)–(234)

David finds king Saul asleep. He cuts a piece of his coat, takes a bite of his apple, and drinks from his water, but he does not hurt him.

(234) *ksúle tãle, 'ána lâ q-qaṭlànnox, 'àhæt g-ábæt qaṭlètti 'ána lá-g qaṭlànnox, 'áhæt ^Hmélex yəsra'èl^H-wát.*¹

'He wrote to him, "I shall not kill you, you want to kill me, I shall not kill you, you are the king of Israel."

This draws from two separate biblical episodes. The first is in 1 Sam. 24, where, when Saul enters the caves in which David and his men are hiding, David cuts off a corner of Saul's cloak without him noticing. The second is in 1 Sam. 26, in which David and Abishai enter the camp of king Saul while the king and his men are asleep. David does not hurt the king, but rather takes his spear and flask of water. In both cases, the objects taken are used as proof of David's good intentions and reverence for the king of Israel. It is probably this similarity between the two episodes that led to their unification in Samra's story.

The unification of the two biblical episodes also appears in the epic song published by Rivin (1959, 257), where it says that David "ate a little from his plate, drank some water from his jar, cut [a piece] off from Saul's coat."

It seems that the three objects that are taken in Samra's story and in the epic song, instead of the one object in the episode in 1 Sam. 24, or the two objects in the episode in 1 Sam. 26, align

better with a general tendency of folktales to use typological numbers.⁸¹ I have found no source referring to king Saul's apple.

5.19. King Saul and Raḥela the Fortune-teller (235)– (242)

King Saul goes to Raḥela the fortune-teller.

(236) *báxta pasxáwa bəd-fàla, ¹ *k-i'áwa má-ʔiz go-^{Hc}olám^{Hl} má lès. ¹**

'A woman that used to open in fortunes [i.e., she was a fortune-teller], she knew what there is in the world [and] what there is not.'

He asks her to tell his fortune. She refuses, because she swore to king Saul three months ago that she would not tell anyone's fortune. Saul does not reveal himself, but promises her that he will ensure that the king exempts her from her oath. In the process of telling Saul's fortune, the prophet Samuel appears. He says:

(241) *šà'ul, ¹ *ṭlá[ha] yóme ʔtlox piše, ¹ *ʔàhət u-kúd ṭlá[ha] bnóne dídox ʔásət qtàla. ¹***

"Saul, you have three days [lit. three days you have remained], you and your three sons will be killed [lit. come to killing]."

⁸¹ That is, numbers that bear special symbolic meaning for a particular culture and tend to recur in many of its texts and art forms. For example, Law no. 14, "the law of three and the law of repetition," in Olrik's influential "Epic laws of folk narrative" (Olrik 1965 [1908]) describes the many repetitions of the number three in European folktales (Olrik's study was of folktales of European origin). In the Hebrew Bible, the numbers seven, ten, twelve, and forty often recur.

King Saul gets sick, and Raḥela takes care of him for three days.

(242) ʿúzlale ^Hmaràkim^{H1} šòrḫa' máyət ksèsa,¹ qam-maxlále,¹ qam-maštyàle,¹

‘She made for him soups, thick [rice] soup, chicken soup [lit. chicken water], she fed him, she gave him to drink.’

The story of the diviner of Endor is told in 1 Sam. 28,⁸² although her name is not specified in the biblical text. Yalquṭ Šim‘oni gives the name Zephaniah, and states that she was the mother of Abner (Yalquṭ Šim‘oni Samuel 140).⁸³ Raḥela’s reluctance to tell fortunes is rooted in vv. 3 and 9 of 1 Sam. 28:

And Saul had put away those that divined by a ghost or a familiar spirit out of the land.... And the woman said unto him: “Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those that divine by a ghost or a familiar spirit out of the land; So why are you laying a trap for me, to get me killed?”

The period of three months is not mentioned in the biblical text, nor is her oath not to tell fortunes. In the tragic message given to king Saul by Samuel, Samra’s narrative specifies three days, a further period of three, where the biblical text gives only one day (1 Sam. 28.19). The fortune-teller’s compassionate care towards Saul after he receives the tragic message is recounted in the Bible in vv. 21–25. However, Samra tells of thick rice soup and chicken soup—known folk remedies—as Raḥela’s offerings, in lieu of the biblical fatted calf and unleavened bread.

⁸² For a literary analysis of the biblical narrative, see Simon (1992).

⁸³ Another source claims that she was the wife of Zephaniah: Pirqey De-Rabbi Eli‘ezer 32, Higger edition (1944–1948).

6.0. Conclusion

We have seen that various motifemes in Samra's story draw from different historical layers of Jewish literature, as well as from other traditions. The way in which the motifemes are amalgamated into a new cohesive narrative 'bypasses' the consecutive historical development of the homogenous series of Elstein and Lipsker's thematology of Jewish narratives, since motifemes are drawn from sources of various periods, and various cultural spaces, regardless of their historical consecutiveness.⁸⁴ This process in fact disrupts the homogeneity of the homogenous series. It is this non-linear borrowing of motifemes that I refer to as motifeme transposition.

It should be noted again that in addition to straightforward transposition of motifemes from one source to another there are several other mechanisms of motifeme manipulation:

- altered causality: keeping the motifeme structure of previous versions of the narrative, but tying them

⁸⁴ This criticism of Elstein and Lipsker's notion of the historical development of the homogenous series resembles Moshe Idel's criticism of Gershom Scholem's historical picture, expressed, for instance, in Scholem (1941). Idel (1990, xxiii) states: "Thus I am hesitant to conceive the history of Kabbalah as it appears in the written documents as a 'progressive' evolution alone. It seems that alongside this category we shall better be aware of the possibility that later strata of Kabbalistic literature may contain also older elements or structures, not so visible in the earlier bodies of literature. In other words, I allow a greater role to the subterranean transmission than Scholem and his followers did." See also Idel (1988, 20–22).

together with a new causal nexus (e.g., the motifeme in §5.12);

- unification: combining previously separate motifemes into one unified motifeme (e.g., the motifeme in §5.18);
- reorganisation of narrative time: the relocation of a motifeme in the narrative time sequence (e.g., the case of the motifeme in §5.5);
- subsuming: one motifeme subsumes under it several other motifemes in a hierarchical structure (e.g., the motifemes in §5.13);
- temporal transposition: the re-setting of a motifeme in a new historical period, or milder forms of anachronism (e.g., the motifeme in §5.16; the use of a 'loudspeaker' in the motifeme in §5.8).

7.0. The NENA Text and Its Translation

The text was recorded at the home of Samra Zaqen on 19 April 2012. Present at the recording session were Samra Zaqen (SZ),

Batia Aloni (BA), and myself (OA). The recording ID is SZ120419T1 9:30–37:29.⁸⁵

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| (1) | BA: <i>k-taxrát márrax b-sapràttan e...</i> ¹ | BA: Do you remember you said you will tell us eh... |
| (2) | SZ: <i>hè hé,¹ ^Hsəppùr^{H1} dəd hánna⁸⁶ g-əbètun...</i> ¹ | SZ: Yes yes, do you want [to hear] the story of <i>this</i> ... ⁸⁶ |
| (3) | BA: <i>mád g-əbàt.</i> ¹ | BA: Whatever you want. |
| (4) | SZ: <i>...dəd na^còmi?</i> ¹ | SZ: ...of Naomi? |
| (5) | BA: <i>na^cómi u-rùt.¹ ^Hava^H mád g-əbat màhke.¹ hakan-g-əbat gèr-məndi¹ gèr-məndi.</i> ¹ | BA: Naomi and Ruth. But tell [us] whatever you want. If you want [= prefer] something else [then tell] something else. |
| (6) | SZ: <i>^Hlò-xašív^{H1} ʔátta wà^cdu-hile.¹ séle ^Hzmàn.^{H1}</i> | SZ: Never mind, now it is its [= this story's] time. The time has arrived. |
| (7) | BA: <i>^Hnaxòn.^{H1}</i> | BA: Right. |
| (8) | SZ: <i>séle ^Hzmàn.^{H1}</i> | SZ: Time has arrived. |
| (9) | BA: <i>séle wà^cdu,¹ ^Hnaxòn.^{H1}</i> | BA: Their time has arrived, correct. |
| (10) | SZ: <i>...hé, g-emárwa—ʔiláha nàtə¹⁸⁷...manə̀xle¹ ʔaxòni¹ go-gan-èzen.¹</i> | SZ: ... Yes, he used to say— may God sa[ve] ⁸⁷ ... give rest unto him, my brother, in heaven. |

⁸⁵ The recording is available for listening on the North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic Database Project site at <https://nena.ames.cam.ac.uk/dialects/78/>.

⁸⁶ See note on *hèнна* in Introduction, §5.0.

⁸⁷ Samra started the word *natərre* of the expression *ʔiláha natərre* ‘may God protect him’, but changed it to the expression *ʔiláha manə̀xle* ‘may God grant him rest’.

- (11) *g-emárwa na‘òmi...¹ u- e...*
šámméd góre hànna wéle¹
^Hrèga^{CH}... ‘elimèlex!¹ He used to say [= tell] Na-
omi... and eh... the name of
her husband was *this*, [wait a
moment... Elimelech!
- (12) BA: ‘elimelèx.¹ BA: Elimelech.
- (13) SZ: ‘elimelèx.¹ SZ: Elimelech.
- (14) *skíne-welu go-bet-lèhem.¹ ‘áswa-*
lu^Hbáyit gadòl,¹ parnasà tóvā,¹ They lived in Bethlehem. They
had a large house, good liveli-
hood,
- (15) *háya-lahem sàde¹ ve-ḥàtta...^{H1}* they had a field, and wheat...
- (16) BA: *wéalu^Haširìm.^{H1}* BA: They were rich.
- (17) SZ: *máḥkax^Həvrìt¹ ‘ó^H kùrdi?¹*
là k-í’an,¹ SZ: Shall we speak Hebrew or
Kurdish [= Neo-Aramaic]? I
don’t know
- (18) BA: *^Hkùrdit!^{H1}* BA: Kurdish [= Neo-Aramaic]!
- (19) SZ: *‘ə,¹ ‘əswá-lu,¹ ^Haširìm^H wélu,¹*
‘əswá-lu^Hsadè,^{H1} ‘əswá-lu... SZ: OK, they had, they were
rich, they had a field, they
had... wheat, they had...
xàtte,¹ ‘əswá-lu...¹
- (20) BA: *zangìn wéalu¹ rāḇa.¹* BA: They were very rich.
- (21) SZ: *hè.¹* SZ: Yes.
- (22) *^Həz^H-‘əya ‘áswa-la trè bnóne.¹*
^Həz^H-‘əya ^Hišā,¹ ‘áxi¹ tōvā^H
wéla.¹ ^Hišā¹ ‘im-lèv¹ patìah.^{H1}
g-ába yàwa.¹ So she had two sons. So she
was a very good [lit. the best]
woman. A woman with an
open heart. She wants to give.

- (23) ʿəròta-la.¹ ʿána mbášlan
xamùšta,¹⁸⁸ Hšəxením^H dídi
làtlu?! ʿa[w]òn-ile!¹ It's Friday. "Shall I cook *xamùšta*,⁸⁸ [while] my neighbours do not have [any]?! It's a sin!"
- (24) g-daryáwa xápča gərsa,¹
g-daryáwa xápča...¹ màd-ʿátla,¹
xà qárʿa,¹ hà¹ ʿúzlu,¹ kutéle⁸⁹ ta-
yalúnke dídax,¹ lá šoqátte bésax
spìqa.¹ She would put some cracked wheat, would put some... whatever she had [lit. has], a zucchini, "Here," [she says to the neighbour,] "make [= cook] [with] these some dumplings⁸⁹ for your children, don't leave your home empty [of food]."
- (25) ta-dè¹ b-nàbla¹ xápča sayìhe,¹
ʿúzlu mabòse⁹⁰ ta-yalúnke
dídax.¹ la-šoqátte qanúnax
spìqa.¹ g-ozàwa.¹ To this [woman] she takes some crushed wheat, "Make [= cook] *mabose*⁹⁰ [with] these for your children. Don't leave your stove empty." She [that woman] would do [so = cook the crushed wheat].
- (26) ʿàwa¹ Hləfʿamim^H k-esèwa¹
k-xazèwa,¹ H³o^H-wéla nabòle,¹
H³o^H-wéla b-isàya,¹ méka kàsyat?¹
k-karəbwa¹ rəba.¹ He [Naomi's husband Elimelech] would sometimes come [and] see her, either while she was taking [produce to her neighbours] or while she was coming [back], "Where are you coming from?" He would get very angry.
- (27) wàlox,¹ là-karbət,¹ ʿàlla g-yáwəl
tàlu¹ yáwəl tàli,¹ yáwan ta-xa- "Look now, don't get angry, God gives to them, [He] gives to me, I shall give to someone

⁸⁸ A sour soup made with meat-filled dumplings. See fns 36 and 37 earlier in this chapter.

⁸⁹ See previous footnote.

⁹⁰ Sabar (2002a, 210) on *mabose*: "(< ת-י-ב)... Sabbath-food cooked overnight." Sabar (2002a: 110) on *b-y-t*: "ת-י-ב... to spend the night... to cook overnight... to keep overnight."

- xət.*¹ *ʔətli,*¹ *g-ábe yàwan!*¹ *xer-*
*ʔalla!*¹ *là qabálwa.*¹ *k-karəbwa*
*mónna.*¹ else! I have, [therefore] I
should give! [It's the] benevo-
lence of God! [i.e., it is not
ours]" He did not accept that.
He would get angry with her.
- (28) *kúllu gorgiát hət*¹ [= *grásət*
xət[te] ?]. *ʔəswá-la dānga.*¹
*ʔəswá-la sətta.*¹ *g-deqáwa*
*mnòša.*¹ All of the grinding [imple-
ments] of wheat. She had a
wooden mallet. She had a
stone mortar. She would grind
[lit. knock] by herself.
- (29) *g-deqáwa xətte,*¹ *ʔəswá-la*
*garəsta.*¹ *g-garsáwa gərsa,*¹
*garsáwa kəškəri.*¹ *kùlle geb-*
*g-ozáwa.*¹ She would grind wheat, she
had [manual] millstones. She
would mill groats. She would
mill semolina. She would do
all of the things.
- (30) *naʕəmi,*¹ *kùllu geb-gozáwa,*¹ *u-*
*g-yawàwa.*¹ [*gə-m*] *palʔàwa ta-*
*náše ší.*¹ *g-əba ʔəxla u-màxla.*¹ Naomi, she does all of the
things, and she gives. She
would also give away [lit. di-
vide, distribute] to people. She
wants to eat and to feed [as
well].
- (31) BA: *brát həlál.*¹ BA: A worthy woman [lit.
daughter of kosher].
- (32) SZ: *hè.*¹ SZ: Yes.
- (33) ^{H2} *áz^H ʔəha wéla.*¹ *krəble mónna,*¹
g-érra là g-šoqánnax go-bet-
*ləhem.*¹ *g-yáwat rəba...*¹ *kúlla*
*dawólti b-yà[wa]tta.*¹ So that's what's happened [lit.
so this (FS) was]. He got angry
with her, he tells her, "I will
not let you stay [lit. leave you]
in Bethlehem. You give a lot...
you will give [away] all of my
property."
- (34) *wàlox*¹ *g-zèda dwóltox!*¹ *là-*
*g-náqsa!*¹ *ʔállā d-húlle húlle tətli*¹
*yáwan ta-gèri ší!*¹ *là-q-qabəlwa.*¹ "Look now, your property will
increase! It will not lessen!
God who gave, gave to me [in
order that] I shall give to oth-
ers [lit. my other = other than
me] also." He didn't accept.

- (35) *qam-nabàlla¹ qam-nabàlla l-...¹* He took her. He took her to...
mə'ò...¹ bážər mə'ohàv,¹ 'èka Meo... the city of Me'ohav.⁹¹
wéla¹ bážər mə'ohàv?¹ Where was the city of
 Me'ohav?
- (36) BA: *go-məšəlmàne,¹* BA: In [the country of] the
 Muslims,
- (37) SZ: *qam-nabàlla.¹ mə'oháv* He took her. Me'ohav, do you
k-ì'ə̀tule maní-le? k-ə̀tule máni- know who he is? Do you know
le¹ mekàle?¹ ^Hmakór^H dide,¹ who he is, where he is from?
k-ə̀tule ^Hmákor^H dide His source, do you know
mekàle?...¹ where his source is from?...
- (38) OA: ^Hlò,^H OA: No,
- (39) BA: ^Hlò,^H BA: No,
- (40) SZ: *... mə'ohav?... 'ə̀z e...¹* SZ: ... Me'ohav?... So eh... he
g-émer nablónnax bážər says, "I'll take you to the city
mə'ohàv,¹ 'ána 'ə̀tli, g-bàre of Me'ohav, I have [means], I
mónni.¹ mə'oháv ší 'ə̀tle trè can afford it." Me'ohav also
bnàsa:¹ rùt,¹ u-ə̀rta.¹ qam-ṭalə̀blu has two daughters, Ruth and
ta-kútru bnóne dide.¹ Orṭa.⁹² He asked for them
 [= for their hand] for both his
 sons.
- (41) *qam-nabàlla,¹ zə̀lla 'ə̀mme,¹ 'úzlu* He took her [= Naomi], she
^Hḥatonà^H qam-gorìlu kútru went with him, they made a
bnása dide.¹ rə̀ḥqa m-bát[ət] wedding, they married both of
'əsra'èl¹ 'áwwa mət̄le,¹ gòra.¹ his daughters. [May it be] far
 from the houses of Israel,⁹³ he
 died, her husband.
- (42) BA: 'elimèlex,¹ BA: Elimelech.

⁹¹ In the Bible: Moab.

⁹² In the Bible: Orpah.

⁹³ An expression said when mentioning a bad event.

- (43) SZ: *hè,¹ ʿelimélex mätle.¹ zóllo
xa-šáta go-pàlga,¹* SZ: Yes, Elimelech died. One year had passed [lit. one year went in the middle (i.e., in the midst of the story)],
- (44) *ʿáz e,¹ zóllo xápča xát go-pàlga,¹
u-kútru bnòne-ši mótlu,¹ mání
píšen?¹ t̄l̄á[ha] baxtása.¹* So eh, some more time passed [lit. some more went in the middle], and both sons also died, who remained [alive]? The three women.
- (45) *g-ámra bràti,¹ lá-g-samxan
másyān bnóne magurànnax,¹
sàʿun¹ gòrun¹ mésun yalünke,¹
ʿána zèllu xləšlu,¹ ʿanya-tre
wélu.¹* She [=Naomi] says, “My daughter, I will not become pregnant [and] bear [lit. bring] sons that will marry you. Go [PL] get married [and] have [lit. bring] children, I, they’ve gone, they’re finished [= for my part, I will not bear any more children], there were [only] these two [lit. these two were].”
- (46) *rùt¹ g-àmra,¹ mèsat¹ mèsan,¹ pèšat
pèšan,¹ ^Hḥayím šəllí¹ ʿal-ḥayím
šəllàx.¹ ʿaní lò ʿaʿazón ʿotáx¹ bə-
šúm ʾəfen!¹ ḥayím šəllí v-
šəllàx¹—ʿəḥàd!^{H1} ʿá[h]at mèsat¹
ʿána mèsan,¹ ʿá[h]at ʿàxlat¹ ʿána
b-àxlan,¹ ʿá[h]at...¹ g-ámra
^{H1}bəsèder.^{H194}* Ruth says, “[If] you die, I die, [if] you live, I live [lit. you remain, I remain], my life is on [= for] your life. I will not leave you under any circumstances! My life and yours—are one. [If] you die, I die, [if] you eat, I eat, [if] you...” She [=Naomi] says, “Fine.”⁹⁴
- (47) *ʾòrta g-əmra-lá¹ sé l-be-bàbax.¹
zəlla,¹ zóllo ^Hberaxā^H [or:
b-ʾürxa].¹ rúit séla ʾəmma.¹* Orta, she tells her, “Go [back] to your father’s house.” She went [away, may a] blessing [be with her] [or: she went her way]. Ruth came with her [= with Naomi].

⁹⁴ See Ruth 1.16–18.

- (48) *sèla,¹ sèla,¹ psáxla dárġat bet-
leħèm¹ tùla.¹ ^Hyéš lá^H xàtte¹ u-
’ávla e... xàtte lát-la,¹ ’ávla sàtta¹
u-garùsta¹ u-...¹ múx qamàe¹
bésa wéla màlyá ’awáe.¹* She came, she came, she opened the door of [her house in] Bethlehem, she sat [down]. She has wheat and she has eh... wheat she doesn't have, she has a stone mortar and a hand mill and... like [it was] before, her house was full of things.
- (49) *g-ámra bràti,¹ sè,¹ bò‘az¹ g-mápəq
xàtte,¹ sè,¹ u-’óz šəbbólím⁹⁵
bàsru,¹ mèse,¹ deqànnu
garsànnu⁹⁶ g-ozànnu,¹ b-ózáx
kùtele¹ b-àxlax.¹ b-ózáx qámxa
b-àxlax,¹ b-ózáx gársa b-àxlax!¹
k-ì‘ax ’ózáx.¹* She says “My daughter, go, Boaz brings out [= harvests?] wheat, go, and make ears of grain⁹⁵ behind them [= the harvesters, i.e., glean],⁹⁷ bring [here what you have gleaned], I will crack [lit. knock (in a mortar)] them, grind them,⁹⁶ prepare them, we shall make dumplings, we shall eat. We shall make flour [and] eat. We shall make groats [and] eat! We know [how] to make [them].”
- (50) *zəlla,¹ xà yóma¹ trè¹ ṭḷàha,¹ zəlla
bàsru,¹ sèle,¹ bò‘az,¹ xá yóma
qam-xazèla¹ márre-le wày!¹ ^Héze^H
báxta ^Hyafà^H màto k-šáqla...?’¹* She [= Ruth] went, one day, two, three, she went behind them [= the harvesters]. He came, Boaz saw her one day, he said to himself [or: to his harvester], “Way! What a beautiful woman, how [is it possible that] she takes... [= collects ears]?”

⁹⁵ From Hebrew *šibbōlīm* ‘ears of grain’ (borrowed before contact with Modern Hebrew).

⁹⁶ Two separate stages of the grinding process.

⁹⁷ The Jewish law of *lèqet* (Lev. 19.9; 23.22) states that harvesters must not collect the ears of grain that fall to the ground during the process of harvesting. They should leave them for the poor to glean.

- (51) *māndu-la*,¹ *mčančəlun*⁹⁸ [or: *mčāmčumun*⁹⁹] *tála*.¹ ^{H>}*èn-đavár*.¹ ^{H>}*im*^H-*sèla*¹ ^{H>}*é-baxta*^{H>}*yafà*^{H>} *u*-¹ *mà'qul*¹ ^{H>}*óza šabbòlət*,¹⁰⁰ *hàllu-la*.¹
- [He said to his harvesters:] “Throw to her [some extra ears], tear [some ears]⁹⁸ for her [or: pretend you don’t see for her sake⁹⁹]. [There’s] no harm [lit. thing] [in that]. If [such] a beautiful and noble woman came to glean [lit. make ear¹⁰⁰], give [or: let] her.”
- (52) *zälla mārra ta-xmàsa*¹ *g-ámra k-ì'at*¹ *mārre bó'az hádxə, qam-baqránnu mǎni-le*¹ *márri bò'az hùle*.¹
- She went and told her mother-in-law, she says, “You know, Boaz said so-and-so. I asked them who he is, they said, ‘It is Boaz.’”
- (53) *g-ámra à'awa...*¹ *mpállax yabúm*¹⁰¹ ^{H>}*əlle*.¹ *g-əmrà-la*¹ *tòv*,¹ *sè*,¹ *xòp*,¹ *u-msè*¹ [or: *u-mšè*],¹ *sé dmòx*¹ *qam-à'qle*.¹
- She [= Naomi] says, “He... you fell *yibbum*¹⁰¹ on him.” She says to her, “Good, come, bathe, and wash your clothes [or: dab yourself (maybe with perfume, etc.)], go sleep near his feet.”
- (54) *zälla dmáxla qam-à'qle*,¹ *sèle*¹ *qam-xazéla štəhta qam...*^{H>}*mìta*^{H>} *díde*.¹
- She went [and] slept near his feet, he came [and] saw her lying down near... his bed.

⁹⁸ See Ruth 2.16.

⁹⁹ From *č-m-č-m* ‘have bleary eyes’ (Sabar 2002a, 132), to avoid embarrassing her. This would parallel the biblical “...and you shall not put her to shame” (Ruth 2.15).

¹⁰⁰ From Hebrew *šibbòlet* ‘ear of grain’ (borrowed before contact with Modern Hebrew).

¹⁰¹ That is, he is obliged to fulfil *yibbum* (levirate marriage) with you. See §5.4 and fn. 44 earlier in this chapter.

- (55) *g-er-qày¹ bràti,¹ ^Hlâma,^H g-àmra,¹ xmasî màrra,¹ g-náplan ²àllox,¹ hàdxá wéla hækòsa¹ mótle bròna u-...,¹ ^Hze naxon,^H bábe u-bábe ²axwàsa-lu.¹* He says, “Why, my daughter, why?” She says, “I fall on you [yibbum].” The story was like that [= she told him the whole matter], her [= Naomi’s] son died and..., that [= the story] is true, his [= Boaz’s] father and his [= Elimelech’s] father are brothers.
- (56) *g-érra sé l-bèsa,¹ ^Hmaḥá[r]^H bónne m-bánoke sáloxun ²l-knàšta,¹ masyálox na²òmi,¹ u-²ána-šik p-áwən go-knàšta,¹ u-knàšta mīlsa jamà‘a,¹ b-ózáxni ^Hpšarà.¹ psèder.^H* He tells her, “Go home, tomorrow morning come to the synagogue, Naomi will bring you, and I will also be in the synagogue, and the synagogue is full of people, we shall make a compromise.” Fine.
- (57) *^Hle-məḥrət^H zállu l-knàšta,¹ zállu l-knàšta,¹¹⁰² m-əséle ²axòne,¹ ²átle ²axóna báš rúwwa mənne,¹ bər-ṭṭáne u-²áç²a šənnne-le.¹ g-ə¹márre ²axòni,¹ g-nápla ²àllox,¹ ²è báxta.¹¹⁰³* The following day they went to the synagogue, they went to the synagogue,¹⁰² he brought his brother, he has a brother older than he, 89 years old. He says, “My brother, she falls on you,¹⁰³ this woman.
- (58) *hàdaxa-la ḥál u-qášta.¹ g-ér ²àxonì¹ telta-²sár yalúnke ²àtli,¹ u-²ána ^Hməvugár^H lébi mähkən,¹ lébi ²əmməd-bàxti máhkən,¹* This [lit. thus] is the situation and the story.” He [= the brother] says, “My brother, I have thirteen children, and I am old, I cannot speak, I cannot [even] speak with my wife.

¹⁰² This repetition of a word or phrase with this intonation is a typical stylistic feature of Jewish Zakho NENA narration. It usually appears at the beginning of an episode in the narrative. See also ch. 3, fn. 29.

¹⁰³ That is, you are obliged to perform levirate marriage (or *ḥališa*). See fn. 101 above.

- (59) *šqúlla t̄àlox¹ hóya bráxta ʾə̀llox,¹* Take her [= Ruth] for you,
wéla^H nà^cal^H dídi lúšla,¹¹⁰⁴ may she be blessed upon you
 [= be blessed together, *mazal tov!*]. Here is my shoe, wear it.
- (60) BA: *hè...¹* BA: Yes...
- (61) SZ: *si-mbàrəx-la.¹* SZ: Go wed [lit. bless] her.”
- (62) *jamá^ca kúllu məskùmlu¹⁰⁵ ...¹ g-ér* The congregation all agreed....
^Hmaḥàr¹ taxíni...^{H1} bəne¹ He says, “Tomorrow, pre-
máxən¹⁰⁶ gyàna^x,¹ ləš,¹ u-ʾána prepare... tomorrow prepare
b-ləšən¹ b-áx ʾəl-knəšta,¹ b-ozáx yourself [= get ready], wear
^Hšéva^c braxòt!^{H1107} [wedding garments] and I will
 wear [wedding garments], we
 shall go to the synagogue,
 [and] we shall do [= perform
 the ceremony of the] seven
 blessings!”¹⁰⁷
- (63) *^{H1}le-maḥrát^H sélu ʾúzlú ^Hšéva^c* The following day they came
braxòt,^{H1} qam-gawərra.¹ [and] did [= performed the
^H[yi]štabáḥ šəmò!^{H1} ʾáwwa ceremony of the] seven bless-
ʾəmmè¹ ^Htóra šeló ʾəmmè^t.^{H1} ings, he married her. May His
 name be praised! He [= God]
 is true [= lit. truth], [and] His
 Torah is true [= lit. truth].
- (64) *^{H1}le-moḥorát ʾomrím ba-bóker hu-* The following day, they say,
mèt.¹ bó^caz mèt!^{H1} he died, Boaz died!
- (65) BA: *e bə^caz?¹ ʾāa...¹* BA: Boaz? Oh...!
- (66) OA: *^Hkèn?!^{H1}* OA: Really [lit. yes]?!

¹⁰⁴ See Ruth 4.7–8.

¹⁰⁵ The Modern Hebrew root *skm* is used here with NENA morphology.

¹⁰⁶ The Modern Hebrew root *kwn* is used here with NENA morphology. The equivalent NENA root is *ḥzr*.

¹⁰⁷ A ceremony marking the *qiddušin*, the second and final stage of a Jewish wedding, in which seven benedictions are said.

- (67) SZ: ^Hbó'az mèt!,¹ láyla 'exàd
nəš'ár 'ità.^H SZ: Boaz died! He stayed with
her [only] one night.
- (68) BA: wī!...¹ BA: Wī!
- (69) OA: ^Há kèn?!¹ zé ló yadàti.^H OA: Really [lit. yes]?! I didn't
know that.
- (70) BA: pappùke!...¹ BA: Poor man!...
- (71) SZ: ^Hbó'az mèt...^H SZ: Boaz died...
- (72) zálle xábra 'əllù¹ bó'az mət̄le,¹
bó'az mət̄le,¹ xmàsa¹ šàt̄ər-ila.¹ The word went to them
[= they were informed, they
learned the news that] Boaz
died, Boaz died. Her
[= Ruth's] mother-in-law is [a]
resourceful [woman].
- (73) sélu jmá'lu nàše¹ kúlla 'àlam
jmá'la ^Hla-ləvayà.^H People came and gathered, the
entire world [= many people,
the entire community] gath-
ered, for the funeral.
- (74) ḥmàlla u-šrə̀xla,¹ g-əmrá rəbbóno She [= Naomi] stood up and
cried out, “[In the name of
šəl-'olàm,¹ xzàwun,¹ kúllloxon
sahzètun,¹ támmal 'úzle
^Hḥatùna,^H see, all of you, testify, yester-
day he made the wedding,”
- (75) 'é bāxta¹⁰⁸ kàlsa ḥíla,¹ 'é bāxta this woman¹⁰⁸ is her daughter-
in-law, this woman [= Ruth],
qam-barxála 'əlle,¹ lál-xəl wəl- she [= Naomi] blessed her to
him [= married her off to

¹⁰⁸ Samra switches here to third person. Switching from first to third person within direct speech is a common feature of Samra's narration, especially in instances where the narrator does not wish to take upon herself an utterance which is perceived as negative. In relation to that, see Kasher (2000, 74, feature B) where one of the features he mentions as indicative of Targum liturgical use is switches from second to third person in order to avoid giving offence to the audience.

- dmáxle kàsla,*¹ *ʔakán smáxla* ^{H,ðH} Boaz], last night he indeed
bróna ^{H,ðH} *bráta dād-bòʕaz-ilu.*¹ slept with [lit. at] her. If she
got pregnant, a son or a
daughter, they are of Boaz.
- (76) BA: ^H*naxòñ.*^{H1} BA: Correct.
- (77) SZ: *ʔilá[ha] sàhəz u-náše sàhzi!*¹ SZ: “God shall [bear] witness
kúllò mórru ^H*bəsèder.*^{H1} *ʔilá[ha]* and people shall [bear] wit-
*hülle*¹ *sməxla,*¹ *máni sèle-la?*¹ ness!” Everyone said, “Okay.”
*k-ʔitun máni?*¹ God gave, she became preg-
nant, who came to her [= who
was the child]? Do you know
who?
- (78) BA: *làʔ.*¹ BA: No.
- (79) SZ: *bróna mání,*¹ *má-yle šèmmə?*¹ SZ: Her son, who [is he], what
*bər-rùti?*¹ is his name? The son of
Ruthie?
- (80) BA: *là-k-iyán.*¹ BA: I don’t know.
- (81) SZ: *ʔelišây!*¹ SZ: Elishay!
- (82) BA: *ʔà!*¹ *ʔelišây.*¹ BA: Ah! Elishay!
- (83) SZ: *hwéle-la ʔelišây!...¹ hwéle-la* SZ: She gave birth to Elishay
*ʔelišây,*¹⁰⁹ *naʕómi qam-ʔaʕanàle,*¹ [lit. Elishay was born to her]!
*qam-ʕozábe-xudàni,*¹ *ʔelišây,*¹ She gave birth to Elishay [lit.
*ʔilá[ha] hülle-le¹ šoʕá bnòne,*¹ *u-* Elishay was born to her],¹⁰⁹
*xá bràta.*¹ *rùt,*¹ ^H*sáfta*^H *dide híla.*¹ Naomi reared him, she took
care of him. Elishay, God gave
*rùt¹ héš wéla pəšta,*¹ him seven sons, and one
daughter. Ruth was his grand-
mother. Ruth was still alive,
- (84) BA: *hè,*¹ BA: Yes,
- (85) SZ: *ʔəz e,¹ xà yóma,¹ hənna,¹* SZ: So eh, one day, *this,*
ʔelišây,¹ krəbwale¹ mən-dè báxta¹ Elishay, he got angry with this
*damməd-wéla smáxta bəd-dávid*¹ woman [i.e., his wife], while
she was pregnant with king

¹⁰⁹ See fn. 102 above.

- ha-mèlex.*¹ ^H*aḥaròn^H sé[le]*¹ David. He came last, the seventh child.
^H*yéled ševi^ḥ*¹
- (86) ^ʾ*áz e...¹ qam-karədwala¹ xá* So eh, he chased her out, for
^y*arxa zəlla be-bāba.¹ səla¹* one month she went to her father's house. She came, she
^g*əmrà-le¹ qam-kardətti¹ u-hənnà¹* says to him, "You chased me
^u*-ʾána bāxta sməxta.¹ g-ér là¹ là¹* out, and *this* and I am a pregnant woman."
^l*əwat sməxta!¹* He says, "No no! You are not pregnant!"
- (87) BA: *léwe mənni,¹* BA: "It is not from me,"
- (88) SZ: *lèwe mənni!¹ g-èrra,¹ g-əmrà-* SZ: "It is not from me!" She
<sup>le,¹ rəbbonó šel-ʿolām¹ sáhəz ʾəlla says, she tells him, "Master of the Universe, bear witness to
<sup>ʾe-bəxta,¹¹⁰ báni bāsār lèwa this woman,¹¹⁰ she has not
<sup>nḥáqta,¹ yála dīdox híle.¹ sməxta been touched by humans, it is
<sup>zəlla.¹¹⁰ your child. She¹¹⁰ went pregnant [=she was pregnant
when she left]."</sup></sup></sup></sup>
- (89) ^H*tòn^H!¹ lá-wele^H kol-káx* Good! He [=Elishay] was not
<sup>meruṣè,^H rəbbonó šel-ʿolām,¹ so satisfied. The Master of the
<sup>kʿásle¹¹¹ ʾəlle.¹ g-er-yála dīdox Universe got angry with him.
<sup>híle,¹ má g-əmrətta?!¹ bəxta,¹ He says, "It is your child, what
^H*nakiyà,¹ u-ṣadikà,^H mənì* are you saying to her?! [She is
<sup>b-náḥəq ʾəlla?!¹ a] clean, and righteous,
woman, who would touch
her?!"</sup></sup></sup></sup>
- (90) *g-émer ta-šamúʿel ha-nnàvi,¹* He says to Samuel the prophet,
<sup>g-émer sí mbárəx xá yála dəd- "Go bless [i.e., anoint] one
<sup>ʾelīšāy,¹ páeš ḥakóməd yisraʿèl!¹ child of Elishay, so that he
shall become the king of Israel."</sup></sup>

¹¹⁰ See fn. 108 above.

¹¹¹ The Modern Hebrew root *kʿs* is used here with NENA morphology.

- (91) *zàlle' dâmmâd zàlle' šmû'el*
hannâvi šârâf 'al-kúllu bātâd
yisra'él 'al-dó bésa u-'allòxun!
 He went, when he went, Samuel the prophet, may [his blessing] shine on [or: may he watch over] all the houses of Israel [and] on this house and on you!
- (92) BA: 'amèn!
 BA: Amen!
- (93) SZ: 'ilá[ha] ya[wá]lox ^H'éšet
hâyil,^H
 SZ: May God give you [= OA] a woman of valour
- (94) OA: 'amèn!
 OA: Amen!
- (95) BA: 'amèn!',
 BA: Amen!,
- (96) SZ: u-bânât bésa go-rušaláyim
xazyálu yalónke dîdox,¹
 SZ: and build a house in Jerusalem, may she [= BA] see your children,
- (97) OA: 'amèn 'amèn 'amèn!
 OA: Amen amen amen!
- (98) BA: 'amèn,¹ 'amèn, 'amèn!',
 BA: Amen, amen, amen!,
- (99) SZ: u-'in-šá'-'alla muxwâsi
fârhat 'ábbu
 SZ: and God willing you [= BA] will be happy with them like myself [i.e., like I am happy with my own grandchildren]
- (100) BA: 'amèn, 'amèn,¹ 'amèn!
 BA: Amen, amen, amen!
- (101) OA: 'amèn¹ 'amèn!
 OA: Amen amen!
- (102) SZ: 'ána kmâ kéfi séle!¹ 'ilâha
k-î'e!¹
 SZ: Me, I am so happy [lit. how much my joy came]! God knows!
- (103) BA: 'amèn!
 BA: Amen!
- (104) SZ: 'âz e,...¹ ^Hha-'emèt¹ e' bâ^H
g-érre bròni' rùwwa' dalâla,¹
mâselu bróne rùwwa,¹ šamû'el
hannâvi monàxle' là hmâlla stún...¹
 SZ: So uh,... The truth, uh, he [= Samuel the prophet] came, he [Elishay] says to him, "My son, the eldest, [my] dear one," they brought his eldest son, Samuel the prophet looked, the pillar [of

- fire] did not stand... [= was not upon the eldest son]
- (105) *ʿaz-è,¹ g-emárre léwe ʾó bròna,¹—
ʾátta¹ mà¹ g-əban¹ ^Hyotér
maddây^H g-máḥkiyan ^Hcəvrít^H
kúille wá‘ada lišáni g-éza
^Hcəvrít,^H g-əbánna ^Hcəvrít^H rəba,¹* So, he says, “It is not this son”—now, what, I like to speak Hebrew too much, I speak Hebrew, all the time my tongue goes [to] Hebrew, I love Hebrew very much,
- (106) BA: *^Hkèn¹ naxòn¹ naxòn^H* BA: Yes, right, right,
- (107) SZ: *hè,¹* SZ: Yes.
- (108) BA: *ʾaz-lá qam-šaqaʿille ʾaw-bròna,¹* BA: So he didn’t take that son,
- (109) SZ: *g-emárre ^Hlò,¹ lò raʾúy.^H
māséle ʾaw-xát g-ér ^Hlò,^H māséle
ʾaw-xát¹ stún núra lá xəzyàle.¹* SZ: He says to him, “No, [he is] not worthy.” He brought the second one, he says “No,” he brought the other one, he didn’t see the pillar of fire.
- (110) *šmúʾal hannavi,¹ mārrele rəbbonó
šel-‘olàm¹ dāmməd ḥmálla,¹
šəxína b-rəše,¹ ʾəha-le!¹* Samuel the prophet, the Master of the Universe [had] told him, “When the Shekhinah stood [= dwells] upon his head, this is he [i.e., that is the son who will be king].”
- (111) *g-er-lè¹¹² ʾóha¹ g-er-lè¹¹² ʾóha,¹
kùd ʾəštá ḥməllu¹ g-ér ^Hlò!^H
ʾətlóx xá bròna xát?¹ g-ér ʾətli
xa-bróna xát¹ ^Hcəvál^H bār šoʾà
šánne-le.¹ wéle go-^Hsadè^H
ʾəmməd ʾəba,¹ g-erre mà-g-ot...,
ʾáni mxalpì-le¹ mesèle.¹* He [= Samuel the prophet] says, “It’s not him,” he says, “It’s not him,” all of the six stood [in front of him], he says, “No!” “Do you have another son?” He says, “I have one more son, but he is [only] seven years old. He is in the field with the sheep.” He says, “What are you doing... [= why are you making an issue out of it?], they [= the other sons] will substitute for him [lit. switch him] [and] will bring him.”

¹¹² Contraction of *lèwe*.

- (112) *séle mād-xa-dəšdāša*¹¹³ *xa-*
*kusísa xwārta b-rəšē.*¹ *g-emér*
ʔəha-le' g-ér ʔəha-le.' He came with [i.e., wearing]
 an ankle-length robe,¹¹³ a
 white hat on his head. He
 [= Samuel the prophet] says,
 “This is he?” he [Elishay] says,
 “This is he.”
- (113) *ḥmàlle' g-ér ḥmól ʔəxxa,*¹
monáxle bəd-rəbbóno šel-^colàm'
šaxiná ḥmàlla.' He [David] stood, he [= Sam-
 uel the prophet] says, “Stand
 here,” he looked towards the
 Master of the Universe, the
 Shekhinah stood [i.e., dwelt
 upon David].
- (114) *g-er-ʔəha brònox' mÀYle šámme?'*
dàwid-hile' g-er-ʔó p-pà[y]əš'
^Hdàvid mèlex yəsra'èl!^H ʔə
brònox!' He says, “This son of yours,
 what is his name?” “It is Da-
 vid.” He says, “This [one] will
 be David, the king of Israel!
 This son of yours!”
- (115) *hawéle ^Hməšḥà^H dád maséle*
^Hšémen^H mən-bét məqdàš, qam-
dahànle' u-qàm-¹ ʔa[wə]zle' u-ʔál'
káffəd-ʔize' u-ləbbe' u-ḫəṣe' u-
ʔəqle' u-ʔəqər-ʔəqle, Here is the ointment that he
 had brought, oil from the Tem-
 ple, he anointed him, and
 made [i.e., applied it] towards
 [lit. the side of] his palms and
 his heart and his back and his
 legs and his feet,
- (116) *g-ér ^Həlohím yišmòr ʔotxá,^H*
dúksət ʔəzət,¹ háwət ^Hbarì.^H kúille
yalúnkət yəsra'èl.' he says, “May God protect you,
 [every] place that you go, may
 you be healthy.” [And] all the
 children of Israel [as well].
- (117) BA: *ʔamen.*¹ BA: Amen.
- (118) OA: *ʔamen.*¹ OA: Amen.
- (119) SZ: *qam-, xəlaš,¹ pəšle bór...'*
*qam-mašəḥle.*¹¹⁴ That's it, he became, the son
 of..., he anointed him.

¹¹³ Translation of *dəšdāša* according to Sabar (2002a, 145).

¹¹⁴ The Hebrew root *mšḥ* is used here with NENA morphology.

- (120) *básær ʔòto,¹ xaràye,...¹ Hšáʔul ha-mmèlex^H šrǎxle...¹ e...¹ Hgám-ken^H šáʔul ha-mmèlex¹ séle*
gólyas paləštàya,¹ ə g-əbe nàše
ʔammed-yəsraʔəl.¹ After that, later on... king Saul called... eh... also king Saul, Goliath the Philistine, eh he wants to fight with Israel.
- (121) *máni mšàdri¹ máni là-mšadri?¹*
šáʔul ha-mèlex ʔàtle,¹ xá^H Hhalifà^H
zigúri kunzəri,¹¹¹⁵ čùxxa lèbe¹
lawəšla,¹ Hrák^H ta-dávid ha-mèlex hila-ʔùzta.¹ bás mèlex,¹
ʔaw-dəd-páyəš mèlex...¹ Whom shall they [= Israel] send [and] whom shall they not send? King Saul has, one suit, *Ziguri Kunzəri*,¹¹¹⁵ no one can wear it, it is made only for king David. Only a king, the one who will become king...
- (122) BA: *máyla kúri kunzəri?¹* BA: What is *Kuri Kunzəri*?
- (123) SZ: *gúri kunzəri-le šəmma.¹* SZ: Its name is *Guri Kunzəri*.
- (124) BA: *ʔá gúri kunzəri,¹ H¹yàfe^H,¹* BA: Oh *Guri Kunzəri*, nice,
- (125) SZ: *gúri kunzəri bəd-kürdi,¹ bəd-hənnə¹ lá-kyan bəd.^Hcəvrít^H mÀY-le,¹* SZ: *Guri Kunzəri* in Kurdish [= Neo-Aramaic], in *this* I don't know, in Hebrew, what it is.
- (126) BA: *H²áva^H ʔótla^H Hperùš^H?¹*
yáʔane mÀY-la gúri kunzəri,¹
šəmma?¹ BA: But does it have a meaning [lit. interpretation]? Meaning, what is *Guri Kunzəri*, its name?
- (127) SZ: *é šəmma,¹ Hhalifá^H*
dəd^Hmèlex^H hila,¹ kúlla ʔámməd
Hbarzalim^H u-ʔámməd é¹ šanéʔta SZ: Uh, its name, it is the suit of the king, all of it with irons [i.e., made out of pieces of iron], and with uh, it is made by craftsmanship, not just a simple thing. It's valuable [lit.

¹¹¹⁵ Sabar (2002a, 161): “ziri(-kunuziri) coat of mail (=H[ebrew] תרמא B[ible] T[ranslations]), armour.” In Rivlin (1959, 233, 241): “ziri ukum ziri.” Sabar (2002a, 161) explains: “kum = helmet, K[urkish].”

- ʔùzta¹ lá^Hstâm.^H ʔàtlā...¹ ʔtla
 H^cèrex!^H čúxxa lèbe lawášla.¹
- (128) mád ʔiz,¹ yalúnkəd yerušalàyim,¹ All of [lit. whatever there is]
 šrǎxle^Hrámkol^H ʔàse,¹ ḥakóma the children [i.e., boys] of Je-
 g-ábe qaṭəlle gólías.¹ g-emer-ʔáwd called out that they should
 lawášla ʔè bádlá¹ ʔibe qaṭəlle.¹ come, [since] the king wished
 to kill Goliath. He says, who-
 ever wears this outfit, he is
 able to kill him.
- (129) ...là...¹ xá d-làwəšla¹ xá rəbsa-la ... not... whoever [lit. one
 ʔále¹ xá zúrta-la ʔále,¹ lá g-ʔóra [too] large, for one it's
 qáme u-xà...¹ small, it doesn't fit him [lit. it
 doesn't enter in front of him],
 and one...
- (130) g-ámri ʔíz xà pīša,¹ bār šoʔà They say, there's one [boy]
 šānne-le¹ wéle gó^Hsadè,^H ʔàw- left, he is seven years old, he is
 gora-le pīša!¹ qu-sáʔun mèsu-le.¹ in the field, only this man is
 left [i.e., only he did not try
 the suit yet]! "Go fetch him."
- (131) qam-malušla ʔəlle,¹ bār šoʔá They dressed him with it [lit.
 šānne,¹ yištabbáh šemò¹ rwéle it on him], [only] seven years
 qam-ṣaḷəla!¹ old [i.e., therefore small], may
 His name be praised, he
 [= David] grew and filled it!
- (132) šáʔul ha-mélex krəbble,¹ g-er-ʔò...¹ King Saul got angry, he says
 p-páyəš šwini,¹ p-šaqaḷla...¹ [to himself] "This one... will
 be instead of me, he will take
 it... [i.e., the kingship]"
- (133) H^tòv,^H g-ábe ʔázat qatłátte gólíyas "Good, you need to go and kill
 palištàya,¹ g-émer H^tòv,¹ ʔéyn Goliath the Philistine," he
 beʔayà.^H lùšle¹ dəsdaša díde,¹ [= David] says, "Very well, no
 H^kóna^H díde b-rəše,¹ kaṭiya díde,¹ problem." He wore his ankle-
 length robe, his hat is on his
 head, his keffiyeh, and he has,

¹¹⁶ Clearly, an anachronism.

- u-[ʔə]tle,¹ ʔátle hənna,¹ ʔáy-dəd* he has *this*, that [thing] which
e...¹ uh...
- (134) BA: *tfàkke,¹* BA: a gun,
- (135) SZ: *là,¹ dəd-g-màxe¹ kèpa¹ ʔàbba¹* SZ: No, [the thing] that you
tràq,¹ hənna,¹ lá-k-yan šámme throw a stone with, *traq!* *this*, I
máy-le b-kürdi,¹ e...¹ don't know what its name is in
Kurdish [= Neo-Aramaic],
uh...
- (136) BA: *e wi!¹ ʔòto¹ hè,¹* BA: Uh *wi!* Like that, yes,
- (137) SZ: *lá tfàkke,¹ e...¹ Hhèvel^H...¹* SZ: Not a gun, uh... a rope...
- (138) BA: *Hhèvel^H ʔòto¹* BA: A rope, like that...
- (139) SZ: *u-hənna,¹ g-e[wá]z tsràq!¹* SZ: And *this*, it does *tsraq!* *this*,
hənna,¹ šámme mày-le?¹ what is its name?
- (140) BA: *Hhèts va-kèšet^H* BA: An arrow and a bow,
- (141) SZ: *hé^Hhèts va-ḥèts,¹ hèts va-* SZ: Yes, an arrow and an ar-
kèšet.^H row, an arrow and a bow.
- (142) BA: *Hhèts va-kèšet.^H u-bəd-* BA: An arrow and a bow, and
Hkúrdit^H mày-la?¹ in Kurdish [= Neo-Aramaic]
what is it?
- (143) SZ: *ʔà?¹* SZ: Eh?
- (144) BA: *bəd-^Hkúrdit?^H* BA: In Kurdish [= Neo-Ara-
maic]?
- (145) SZ: *bəd-kürdi?¹ šámme nšèli¹* SZ: In Kurdish [= Neo-Ara-
g-amrànnax,¹ šámme nšèli.¹ maic]? I forgot its name, I tell
šám[ma] ʔát[ta]-táxr[an] you, I forgot its name. I'll re-
b-amrànnax.¹¹¹⁷ member its name now and tell
you.¹¹⁷
- (146) BA: *Htòn.^H* BA: Good.

¹¹⁷ Samra will remember the word *bardaqaṇiye* 'slingshot' in (164).

- (147) SZ: *ʾóha zàlle, ʾ qam-šaqállla*
ʾámme u-zàlle. zólle rásš-... ʾ qrúle
ʾal-hànnna,¹¹¹⁸ šqállle xa-kèpa, ʾ
 SZ: This one [= David] went [away], he took it with him and went. He went to [lit. upon]... he came close to the *this*,¹¹¹⁸ he took a stone,
- (148) *g-ér* [declaiming:] *bəzxútʾ ʾav-rahàm, ʾ šqállle xa-kèpa xət g-érʾ*
bəzxút yaʿaqòv, ʾ bəzxút ʾav-rahàm, ʾ yitšàk, ʾ yaʿaqòvʾ hay-ṭlâha. ʾ
 he says, “For the merit of Abraham,” he took another stone, he says, “For the merit of Jacob, for the merit of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.” Here this is three [of them].
- (149) *sqállle tré kèpe-xətʾ g-ár bəzxútʾ*
mòšeʾ ve-haròn. ʾ kúd xámša
dréle go-jèbe, ʾ zàlle. ʾ
 He took two more stones, he says, “For the merit of Moses and Aaron.” The five of them he put in his pocket, [and] he went [away].
- (150) *qam-darélu go-hànnna dide, ʾ*
nəšèliʾ šamma bassìma-le bəd-kùrdi.¹¹¹⁹
 He put them in his *this*, I forgot, its name is [very] pleasing [= beautiful] in Kurdish [= Neo-Aramaic].¹¹¹⁹
- (151) *zólle g-èmerʾ màni séleʾ qatèlliʾ*
kèlu, ʾ pošùlkanʾ mošùlkat?¹¹²⁰
g-èmrì... ʾ k-xàzeʾ xa-yàla-le, ʾ
ḥmìla,¹¹²¹
 He [= Goliath] went [and] he says “Who [is it that] came to kill me? Where are the *pošùlkan mošùlkat?*”¹¹²⁰ They say... He sees it is a child, standing.¹¹²¹
- (152) *g-ér mxí darbàdox [= dárba*
dìdox],¹¹²² g-ér ʾàna máʾ?... ʾ
 He says “Strike your blow,”¹¹²² he [= David] says, “What I...? You are wearing clothes of

¹¹¹⁸ Maybe to a river, to collect pebbles, or to the battlefield. See 1 Sam. 17.40.

¹¹¹⁹ See fn. 117 above.

¹¹²⁰ Unclear. Perhaps Goliath is mocking Hebrew names?

¹¹²¹ See 1 Sam. 17.42.

¹¹²² David and Goliath take turns in striking. See §5.10 above.

- ʾàhət¹ lwìša¹ jùllət kúde kunzəri,¹ Kude Kunzəri [= armour], you
 ʾíbox máxət dârbe,¹ ʾána mà- are able to strike a blow, I,
 k-iʾən máxən.¹ mxí dárba didox¹ what do I know [how] to
 xázax mà šókəl-hile.¹ strike. Strike your blow [and]
 we'll see what sort [of a blow]
 it is."
- (153) mxéle xá hánna,¹ xà^ʾ palgèd,¹ He struck a *this*. A half of uh...
 e...¹ ʾáy dùka,¹ xrùla.¹ hánna,¹ that place was destroyed. *This*,
 Hhàr.^H mountain.
- (154) BA: hè,¹ BA: Yes,
- (155) SZ: külle^H hàr^H kúšle,¹ bəd-dé SZ: The entire mountain went
 bəd-hánna dide.¹ down, with that with his *this*.
- (156) ʾó fârre,¹ qam-mafârre,¹ ʾilá[ha] This one [= David] flew
 qam-matùle,¹ séle hmólle xá-ga [away], he [Goliath] made
 xát barqùle.¹ g-er-má-wət šàx?! him fly [away], God made him
 má?¹ g-er wən-šàx¹ Ahamdu-l- land safely [lit. sat him down],
 là.^{A1} bés ʾilá[ha] ʾmìra.¹¹²³ he came [and] stood again in
 front of him [= Goliath]. He
 [= Goliath] says, "What,
 you're alive?! What?" He
 [= David] says, "I'm alive,
 thank God. The house of God
 is built¹²³ [= everything is
 well]."
- (157) g-er-de mxí dârbox,¹ g-ér ʾo- He [= Goliath] says, "Well
 màni-le?¹ eh.¹ hàdxa ʾúzle,¹ strike your blow," he [Goliath]
 moròmle hánna ʾásw[a]¹ ʾíne says, "Who is this [guy]?"
 [= ʾene ?] dwìqe wélu,¹ Uh... He did like that, he lifted
this—there was—his eyes were
 held [i.e., covered],
- (158) BA: he, BA: Yes,

¹²³ See ch. 1, §14.0, proverb no. (79).

- (159) SZ: *bád-e...¹ ^Hbarzèl.¹ kóva^c*
barzèl.^{H1} gúri kunzóri ^Hbarzèl^{H1}
híla,¹ kùlla.¹ SZ: ... in uh... iron. Iron helmet. The *Guri Kunzəri* is [made of] iron, all of it.
- (160) BA: *he he,* BA: Yes yes,
- (161) SZ: *kúlle ^Hkòva^c barzél.^{H1} u-...¹*
hàнна ^Hbarzél.^{H1} morámle hádxa
ʔene,¹ gōbʔene gléle,¹ g-ér mxí
dárba dídox,¹ SZ: All of it is an iron hat. And... iron *this*. He lifted his eyes like that, his forehead was uncovered, he says, “Strike your blow,”
- (162) *g-ér yá ʔiláhi,¹ bəzxút kúd xá u-*
xà,¹ šóʔa nàse,¹ ʔide [or: dé¹²⁴]
m[ən]dèle go-jébe,¹ šoʔà¹ hánna
šqəlle,¹ xàʔ pášlu!¹ pášlu xà képa.¹ he says, “O my God, for the merit of each and every one [of those] seven men,” he put [lit. threw] his hand in his pocket, he had taken seven *this*, they became one! They [all] became one stone.
- (163) BA: *əmhəm,¹* BA: Hmmm,
- (164) SZ: *qam-daréle go-barda-*
qaniye.¹²⁵ qam-daréle go-barda-
qaniye dide¹²⁶ ʔúzle tràq!!¹ ʔírra
go-gobʔene¹ ʔúzla gər-gər-gər-gər-
gər qam-ʔozále trè qəʔe. SZ: He put it in [his] sling-shot.¹²⁵ He put it in his sling-shot.¹²⁶ He made *traq!!* It penetrated his [= Goliath’s] forehead, it made *gər-gər-gər-gər-gər-gər* [and] it made him two pieces [i.e., sliced him].
- (165) BA: *^Hyòfi,¹ yòfi!^{H1}* BA: Nice, nice!
- (166) SZ: *qam-ʔozále trè qəʔə.¹ ʔoà!¹*
g-emərre,¹ ʔəha-le dárba dídox,¹ It [= the stone] made him two pieces. *Oa!* He [= Goliath] says [dismissively], “Is this your blow?” He says, “Well,

¹²⁴ Interjection expressing encouragement.

¹²⁵ Samra remembers the word she had forgotten, thus the strong intonation. See fn. 117 above.

¹²⁶ See fn. 102 above.

- g-er-dé šʷùšla gyánox.*¹ *šʷššle*
*gyàne*¹ *xá qátʔə mpólle mənne.*¹
He wiggled himself a little.” He wiggled himself, one piece fell off him.
- (167) *Hʷával mǎ^{Hl} wéle míra ta-dàw,*¹
*tà...*¹ *ta-šáʷul ha-mèlex,*¹ *lázəm*
*réše qatéʷle matúle qàme,*¹ *dəd-*
*yáʷe qam-qatəlle,*¹ *lǎxwa...*¹
But what [more], he had told to that, to... to king Saul, he needs to cut his [= Goliath’s] head and put it in front of him [= king Saul], in order that he knows that he had killed him, otherwise...
- (168) BA: *hè,*¹
BA: Yes,
- (169) SZ: *lǎ-g-bar[e],*¹ *lát-le*^{Hl} *brerǎ.*^{Hl}
*ʷalla g-erre,*¹ *mǎni-le*¹ *Hʷahraʷt^H*
*dideʷ?*¹ *ʷeliyá həttè.*¹ *ʷelyá həttà.*¹
SZ: It [i.e., this action] cannot be, he does not have a choice. So he tells him... Who is his [= Goliath’s] responsible person [i.e., his armour-bearer]? ʷEliya Həttè. ʷEliya Həttà.
- (170) BA: *hè,*¹
BA: Yes,
- (171) SZ: *ʷawa*¹ *g-emǎrre hǎllile*¹ *qzila,*¹
*hǎllile sépa dide,*¹ *čù-sepa lébe*
*qatéʷle réš*¹ *d-gólyas palaštàya,*¹
*láh[aw]e sépa dide.*¹
SZ: He tells him, “Give me the key, give me his sword,” no sword can cut the head of Goliath the Philistine, if it is not his [own] sword.
- (172) *g-er-hǎllile sépa dide,*¹ *qatʷənne*
*réše*¹ *nablənne.*¹ *g-er-lá-g-yanne-*
*lox*¹²⁷¹ *ʷətli šǎrt*¹ *ʷəmmox*¹ *hákan*
*yawǎtti xà-brat-yasraʷəl,*¹
*b-yawənnelox.*¹
He [= David] says, “Give me his sword [so that] I shall cut his head off and bring it [to king Saul].” He says, “I will not give it to you. I have a condition for [lit. with] you: if you give me a daughter of Israel [i.e., a girl of Israel to marry], I will give it to you.”

¹²⁷ Contraction of *la-g-yawənnelox*.

- (173) *hmálle dáwəd ha-mmèlex, mato*
b-yawónne brát yəsraʔəl?¹ u-là
g-bárya šík¹ g-əbe-réše nabólle
ta...¹ King¹²⁸ David waited [and
 thought], “How will I give him
 a daughter of Israel?” and it is
 also not possible [not to take
 the head], he must carry his
 head to...
- (174) *hmálle xá-gar xèta¹ g-emárre*
ᵀtòvᵀ¹ b-yawónnox xa brát
yəsraʔəl,¹ hàllile,¹ sèpa díde.¹ He waited [and thought] once
 again, he tells him, “Very well,
 I will give you a daughter of
 Israel, give it to me, his
 sword.”
- (175) *qurbáne ʔílaha ʔày-damma,¹*
kʕsle¹²⁹ ʔəl dàwid,¹ g-er-lébox
yáwət çù brát yəsraʔél tèle¹ ʔállla
brát,¹ ʔáy d-híla ᵀba[t]-zzúgᵀ
dídox bat-šévaᶜ mən-ᵀšamáyimᵀ
ksúta tãlox,¹ ʔàya b-yawótta ta-
ʔeliyá hättè.¹ lébox yáwət¹ çù brát
yəsraʔél.¹ Then God [may I be] His sacri-
 fice, got angry with David, He
 says, “You cannot give any
 daughter of Israel to him but
 the daughter, the one that is
 your spouse, Bathsheba,
 [which is] written [i.e., des-
 tined] for you from heaven,
 you will give **her** to ʔEliya
 Ḥättè. You cannot give any
 [other] daughter of Israel.”
- (176) BA: *ᵀnaxòn.ᵀ* BA: Right.
- (177) SZ: *wallà,¹ ʔàya...¹ šqállle sèpa,¹*
qtèʔle,¹ dréle go-çãnta¹ zálle
m[o]túle qám e...¹ šáʔul ha-
mmèlex.¹ *Wallah*, that [happened]... He
 took the sword, he cut, he put
 it in a bag, he went and laid
 [lit. sat] it in front of uh...
 king Saul.
- (178) *zàlla,¹ ʔùrra,¹ Hra^{CH}ʔáfè,¹³⁰ mən-*
yəsraʔél,¹ ʔílá[ha] b-yá[wə]l That trouble [i.e., Goliath or
 the Philistines] went [away

¹²⁸ At this point in the narrative, David is not yet king (though he is already anointed).

¹²⁹ The Modern Hebrew root *kʕs* is used here with NENA morphology.

¹³⁰ Sabar (2002a, 89): “(Ar[abic]) f. ʔáfè misfortune, mishap; pl. ʔáfityāta.”

- ^Htòv^H ta-ʾəsraʾél,¹ pǎšla šahyàna,¹ and] passed from Israel. God
qam-qatlìle xǎlaš,¹ ʾeliyá hətte st¹ will give good to Israel, there
g-šbe mesèle,¹ b-awǎzle ^Hšár was a celebration, they had
šavá^H dìde ʾe-náqla.¹ killed him, that was it. ʾEliya
Ḥəttè, he [= David] wants to
bring him [or: it is necessary
to bring him], he will make
him his general [lit. minister
of the army] now.
- (179) ʾaz-dámməd qam-malùšla So when he dressed him in the
suit [lit. dressed the suit on
^Hhalífa^H ʾalle,¹ šáʾul rába kràble,¹ him], Saul became very angry,
David looked at the eyes of
dáwid monáxle bəd-ʾén šàʾul,¹ David, the eyes of Saul became
ʾen-šàʾul¹ gèr-šəkəl-ilu,¹ gèr-šəkəl different [lit. are of different
colour/form], his face became
pǎšle¹ ^Hpartsúf^H dìde.¹ different [lit. is of different
colour/form].
- (180) gəlǎlǎlǎ léwa bǎš tǎli!¹ lášši Gəlǎlǎlǎ it [= the suit] is not
qǎzla!¹ ^Hlò lò lò!^H makušǎnna good for me! My body has
burnt. No no no! I'll take it off
mǎnni¹ ʾána bəd-dǎšdǎša dídi me, I shall go in my ankle-
length robe! They took it off
b-azèna!¹ qam-makušìla mǎnne.¹ him.
- (181) g-émer ʾéne lá-hoya ʾəlli,¹ pǎšla,¹ He says [= his reasoning was],
pǎšla tère!¹ “His [= Saul’s] eye should not
be upon me [i.e., I do not want
him to become hostile to me].”
It [= the suit] became, it be-
came his size!
- (182) BA: hè¹ ^Hbètaḥ,^H BA: Yes, sure,
- (183) SZ: ʾèh,¹ zǎlle u-sèle,¹ ʾaz-šàʾul,¹ SZ: Uh, he went and came
pǎšle¹ ^Hholè,^H qḥàrre,¹ g-əmer-ʾó [back, from the battle against
Goliath], so Saul, became sick,
he became angry, he says,
p-pá[y]ǎš šwìni.¹ pǎšle ràba “This one [= David] will be
[king] instead of me.” He be-
came very sick.
^Hholé.^H

- (184) *dúqle rēše,¹ ráhqa mən-ʿəsraʿəl¹,
màrʿa,¹ là-g-ḡaṭəl¹* A pain, may it be far from Is-
rael, caught his head, it does
not stop!
- (185) *yonàtan bróne,¹ rābəd rába¹
^Hháver^H dəd-dāwid-hile.¹ xà
roháya-lu¹ xà nāšama-lu¹ xà-
^Hgil^H-ilu,¹ g-él kášle go-^Hsadē^H u-
kēse,¹ u-k...¹ k-xáze damməd-
g-máxe jezúke,¹³¹ kúllē ʿérba
k-ēse,¹ k-ḡaməl.¹ k-épi rēšu,¹
k-šàm^{ʿi} jezúke díde.¹* His son Jonathan, he's very
much a friend of David. They
are one spirit, they are one
soul, they are the same age, he
[= Jonathan] goes to him
[= David] to the field, and
he... he sees that when he
plays his *jezuke*¹³¹ all the sheep
come, stand. They bow their
heads, they hear [= listen to]
his *jezuke*.
- (186) *u-ʿátle xa-mánda xét ši-^Htòv^H
dáwid ha-mmèlex,¹ kud-g-másya
yàla,¹ bròna,¹ bràta,¹ ʿéma
ʿiwánta g-hawèla,¹ g-él k-šaqàlla¹
u-g-mašmàšla¹ k-xayàpla,¹
dàre...¹ go-ʿize...¹ gèlla¹ yarùqa¹
yarùqa,¹ raʿiza¹ raʿiza¹
g-maxàlla.¹ u-[g-]māštela mǎya.¹* And he has another thing that
is good, king David: whoever
brings a child [= gives birth],
a boy, a girl, whichever ewe
gives birth, he goes [and]
takes her, and pets her, he
washes her, he puts... in his
hand... green green [and]
fresh fresh grass, [and] feeds
her.
- (187) *ʿátle ^Hlév tòn^H u-[q]urbáne
ʿilá[ha] k-íʿè.¹ ^Hgaluy-yadùa^{cH}-
ile,¹³² k-íʿe¹ hàdxa-le,¹ k-íʿe go-* He has a good heart and God
[may I be] His sacrifice knows.
It is well known [to Him] [lit.
revealed (and) known],¹³² He

¹³¹ Evidently Samra refers here to a musical instrument. According to Sabar (2002a, 127), a *jəzunkə/čəzuke* is a “booklet (of religious or magic nature).” According to another informant, Ḥabuba Messusani, the correct name of the intended musical instrument is *suzuka*. Perhaps it is the plucked string instrument *saz*, common in Kurdistan. See also ch. 3, fn. 56.

¹³² A loan from (pre-Modern) Hebrew *galuy ve-yadua*^c. The connective *vav* is omitted to fit the common asyndetic hendiadys pattern in NENA.

- lábbəd náše mà-ʾis.*¹ *kúd-xa u-xá*
*k-íʿe má-ʾiz go-ləbbe.*¹ knows it is so, He knows what [there] is inside the heart[s] of people. Each and every one, He knows what is in their hearts [lit. his heart].
- (188) *ʾáud ʾátle tòn,*¹ *ʾáud látle k-ìʿe.*¹ Whoever has good[ness] [in his heart], whoever does not have, He knows. He said, why
márre, qàʾy¹ g-ámri^H paršán^H
*kóda u-kùlisa-le,*¹ *k-ìʿe!*¹ do they say, “He is the interpreter of the liver and the kidney”? He [= God] knows!
- (189) *ʾáz è,*¹ *g-emárre bàbi b-án*
*mesánnox,*¹ *ʾátli xà¹ dāwid e...*¹ So uh, he [= Jonathan] says,
*g-máxe b-jezük¹³³ ta-ʾárba,*¹ *šud-*
*ʾáse.*¹ “My father, I’ll go bring you, I have one, David uh... he plays the *jezuke*¹³³ for the sheep.”
“Let him come.”
- (190) *zəlle mxélele b-jezúke¹ réše*
*trəšle.*¹ *kud-dāmməd¹ tlá[ha]*
*sàʿe,*¹ *g-ewázle maxéle jezúke¹*
*ʾáwa g-nà[y]əx.*¹ *trəšle rəše,*¹
dāmməd g-èzel¹ ʾáwa réše
*g-màreʾ.*¹ He went [and] played the *jezuke* for him, his head healed. Every three hours he used to do for him, to play the *jezuke* for him, he [= Saul] would rest. His head healed, whenever he [= David] goes away, his [Saul’s] head hurts.
- (191) *xá yòma,*¹ *trè,*¹ *ʾàrba,*¹ *xá yòma¹*
*g-šaqaðlle sépa díde,*¹ *g-ábe*
*maxèle ʾəlle,*¹ *qaṭəlle,*¹ *qaṭəlle*
[or: *p-qaṭəlle,*¹ *p-qaṭəlle*] *dáwəd.*¹ One day, two, four, one day he takes his sword, he wants to strike him with it, in order to kill him, to kill David [or: he will kill him, he will kill David].
- (192) *malàx qam-šaqaðlle sèpa,*¹ *qam-*
*daréle mən-ʾél dáwəd go-gùda.*¹ An angel took the sword [and] put it above David in the wall.

¹³³ See fn. 131 above.

- (193) *sèle yonatan¹ g-emárre qây,¹
réšox k-tàrəš¹ ʿaz-qáy q-qaṭlätte?¹
g-émer p-qaṭlənne.¹* Jonathan came, he tells him,
“Why? Your head heals [when
he plays for you] so why do
you kill him?” He says, “I shall
kill him.”
- (194) *wéle mîra šîne¹ máni dād-qaṭálle
gòlyat,¹ palgát dawálta p-póya
ṭàle,¹ u-bràti¹ mìxal¹ ṭále^Hmat-
anà.^{H1} ʿaz-ʿé náq[la] hám
p-pá[γ]əš xətne¹ u-hám
p-pá[γ]əš...¹ k-sáyən mənne.¹* He had said also, “Whoever
kills Goliath, half of the wealth
[or: kingdom] will be his, and
my daughter Michal—a gift for
him.” So now, he will also be-
come his son-in-law, and also
become... he hates him.
- (195) *sámle mənne,¹ ʿè wéla.¹ ^Hbə-sóf
šel-davàr,...^{H1} séla^Hmalḥamà,^{H1}
ʿarəqle bàsre,¹ ʿarəqle bàsre¹³⁴
dáwəd ha-mmélex zàlle,¹ zálle l-
^Hmaʿarát^{H1} ʿelyáhu naví^Hbe-
hèfa.^{H1}* He hated him, that was that
[= all of that happened]. Even-
tually, war came, he chased af-
ter him, he chased after him,¹³⁴
king David went, he went to
the cave of Eliyahu the
prophet in Haifa.
- (196) *nobàllele¹ tmanyá ʿəmmáe
^Hbaḥurim,^{H1} ʿəmmme,¹ túle go-
^Hmaʿarà,^{H1} mṭošéle gyàne¹ mən-
qam-šàʿul¹ g-ʿarəqla.¹* He took with him eight hun-
dred men, he sat in the cave,
he hid himself from Saul, he
ran away.
- (197) *ʿay-rút u-naʿómi moḥkyàli?¹
xləšla?¹ rút [u-]naʿómi,¹ hè.¹
sélan ʿàxxa.¹* The one of Ruth and Naomi
I’ve [already] told? It’s fin-
ished? Ruth and Naomi, yes.
We came here [in the story].
- (198) BA: *hè,¹ hè,¹ hè.¹* BA: Yes, yes, yes.

¹³⁴ See fn. 102 above.

- (199) SZ: ^ʔaz-dáwəd ha-mmélex sèle,¹ So [with regard to] king David, Rosh Hashana came, he was in the cave of Eliyahu the prophet.
 sèle,¹ ^Hróš ha-šanà,^{H1} wéle go-
^Hma‘arát^H ^ʔelyáhu navì.¹
- (200) tmanyá ^ʔammáe ^Hḥayalím^H ^ʔàtle,¹ He has eight hundred soldiers, they need to eat, they need to drink, he does not have [anything to give them]. Who will give him? [= no one will give him] The government [or: reign] is not with him, the government [or: reign] is with Saul.
 g-ábe ^ʔàxli¹ g-ábe šàte,¹ làt-le.¹
 màni b-ya[wá]le?¹ ḥukúma lèwa
^ʔamme,¹ ḥukúma wéla ^ʔamməd
 šà^ʔul.¹
- (201) ^ʔisen¹ xà^ʔ,¹ ^ʔelimèlex.¹ wéle go- There is one, Elimelech. He was in Haifa, a rich [person] of all of Israel [i.e., very rich, the richest]. Gilo,¹³⁵ this Gilo, is his. All of Gilo is his.
 ḥəfa,¹ ^Hc ašr^{H1} dəd-kúlla,¹ kúlla
 yəsra^ʔèl-ile.¹ ^Hgiló^{H135} ^ʔe ^Hgilò,^{H1}
 dide-ila. kúlla ^Hgiló^H dide-ila.¹
- (202) ^ʔàtle,¹ bāxta,¹ ^ʔāya¹ bāba ^Hc ašr^H- He has, a wife, she, her father is rich. Gilo is hers, she was named after it Gila [lit. her name was put Gila; or: he put her name Gila], all of Gilo belongs to her [lit. is written in her name]. And her husband is rich, he has... a mill and he has a mill [Ar.], and he has flour.
 ile,¹ ^Hgiló^H dida-ila,¹ šamma-ile
 dorya dide gila,¹ ^Hgiló^H kúlla
 wéla ksúta bəd-šamma.¹ u-góra
^Hc ašr^H-ile,¹ ^ʔàtle...¹ ^ʔərxe¹ u-^ʔàtle
 taḥùne¹ u-^ʔàtle qàmxa.¹
- (203) mšodárre tré ^Hḥayyalím^H kàsle¹ He sent two soldiers to him he says, “Rosh Hashana came, I need sheep, need head-flesh,¹³⁶ need this and that.”
 g-émer séla ^Hroš-ha-šanà^{H1} g-əbéli
^ʔərba,¹ g-ábe¹ pəsər-rəša¹³⁶ g-ábe
^ʔó-məndi ^ʔò-məndi.¹

¹³⁵ A modern neighbourhood in the south of Jerusalem, near the site of biblical Gilo (Josh. 15.41; 2 Sam. 15.12). See §5.17 above.

¹³⁶ It is a custom to eat the flesh of the head of an animal or a fish in the festive meal of Rosh Hashana eve.

- (204) *g-ər-lá g-ya[wá]nne čù-məndi.*¹ He says, “I will not give him anything.”
- (205) *g-ərrále gila,¹ mə̀to lá*
g-yawáxle?!¹ tmanyá-ə́máe
^Hhayyalím^H ə̀tle¹ tíwa go-
^Hma‘arà^H bála ʔixàla,¹ štàya,¹
ə̀rba,¹ qàmxa,¹ rəzza,¹ šàkar.¹ Gila tells him, “How will you not give to him?! He has eight hundred soldiers sitting [= staying] in a cave with him, without food, drink, sheep, flour, rice, sugar.”
- (206) *g-émer lá g-ya[wə]nne čù-*
məndi.¹ fərat¹ yàtwat¹ ha-ə̀sqad
ší la-g-ya[wá]nne.¹ He says, “I will not give him anything. You [can] fly [or] sit, even this much I will not give him.”
- (207) *g-əmrá de-tú ʔəl-dùkox.* She says, “Well sit at your place.”
- (208) *[m]páqla básər^Hhayyalím,^H*
g-əmrá^Hbò‘u,^H g-əmrá sá‘un
màrule¹ márun ta-dàwid,¹
ə̀na,¹— She went out after the soldiers, she says, “Come,” she says, “Go [and] say to him, say to David, that I—
- (209) *wəl-šqúllloxun xá waràqa,¹—*
sá‘un šqòlun¹ ʔəs[ra]¹ !ləši¹
ə̀m[ma] a xamší kəsyása rəzza,¹
mən-ṭahúne dīdi.¹ here, take a piece of paper [= confirmation]—come take ten, thirty, a hundred um fifty bags of rice, from my mill.
- (210) *m’ošəri.¹³⁷ xamší kəsyása*
qàmxa,¹ mən-ṭahúnət qàmxa.¹
xamší bakbúke,¹³⁸ ə́mmá
bakbúke^Hšəmən^H mən-táh-¹
^Hšəmən^H dídi.¹ I’ve authorised [that]. Fifty bags of flour, from the flour-mill. Fifty bottles, a hundred bottles of oil from my mi[ll], oil.”

¹³⁷ The Modern Hebrew root ʔšr is used here with NENA morphology.

¹³⁸ The Modern Hebrew word *baqbùq* is here given a NENA plural form. The corresponding NENA words are *bə̀tle*, *baqbaqiyat*.

- (211) *hùlla,¹ màd 'ótla,¹ húlla waràqa¹* She gave, whatever she has,
xtəm̄la¹³⁹ 'ólla,¹ sá'un šqólun she gave a piece of paper
xòlun.¹ [and] signed it, “Come take
 [and] eat.
- (212) *sá'un lə-ʾərba,¹ 'əmmá réše 'ərba* Come to the sheep, bring one
mèsun,¹ 'úzule ta-^Hroš-ha-šanà.^{H1} hundred heads of sheep, pre-
 pare them [lit. it] for Rosh
 Hashana.”
- (213) *tòv,¹ 'ilá[ha] má'mər bèsax,¹⁴⁰* Good. May God build your
gilá hùlla.¹ house,¹⁴⁰ Gila gave.
- (214) *séla d'əra, wéle tək̄yā,¹ gòra.¹* She came [and] returned, he
 was reclined [and relaxed],
 her husband.
- (215) *g-əmrà-le,¹ là húllox čù-məndi,¹* She says to him, “You did not
ta-dàwid.¹ tmanyà¹ 'əmmàya¹ give anything, to David. Eight
^Hhayyilim^H 'ótle¹ u-látle maxəllu,¹ hundred soldiers he has and he
séle ^Hroš-ha-šanà^H u-ʾəza,¹ does not have [anything] to
'əxnan 'əxlax¹ 'áwa là 'əxəl?!¹ feed them, Rosh Hashana came
 [and] he shall not eat?!”
- (216) *g-er-lá g-yawənnə,¹ 'ótli təhùna¹* He says, “I shall not give him,
u-ʾótli kùllu-geb.¹ I have a mill and I have every-
 thing.”
- (217) *g-əmrá xud-rəšox¹ 'əsqađ hùlli¹* She says, “[By the] life of your
u-ʾəsqađ¹ u-ʾəsqađ¹ u-ʾəsqađ¹ u- head, I gave this much, and
 this much, and this much, and

¹³⁹ The NENA root *x̄tm* ‘to seal, to end, to obscure, to overfill or to be overfull’ (Sabar 2002a, 202) is used here with the meaning of its Hebrew cognate, ‘to sign’.

¹⁴⁰ A blessing expressing gratitude.

- qam-xatmánnu*¹⁴¹ *Hxatíma*^{H142}
*dídox,*¹ *u-mṭelu* ṽ*lle* ṽ*awáe.*¹ I signed them [with] your signature, and the things have [already] arrived to him.”
- (218) ṽ*oha* *màtle,*¹ *pqè*¹ *le l-dúke,*¹ *màtle*
*l-dúke!*¹ This one [= the husband] died, he exploded [i.e., died from anger] on the spot [lit. his place], he died on the spot [lit. his place]!
- (219) BA: *pqè*¹ *le!*¹ BA: He exploded!
- (220) SZ: *pqè*¹ *le!*¹ *g-ámra* *pqò*¹ *sì.*¹ SZ: He exploded! She says, “Explode, go ahead.”
- (221) *básər* *xlášla* *mən*-^{Hšəv} *á*^{H143} *díde*
*yárxə,*¹⁴⁴ *mšodərra,*¹ *g-ámra*
*šruxule*¹ *dàwid*¹ ṽ*ase* ṽ*əxcə.*¹ After she had finished with his *shiv*^ə,¹⁴³ month,¹⁴⁴ she sent [word], she says, “Call David to come [or: he should come] here.”
- (222) *séle* *dàwid*¹ *túla* ṽ*əmmə,*¹ *mərra-*
*le,*¹ *g-emárra* *ṛába,*¹ *Htodá* *rəbbá*^H
*ṭəlx,*¹ *hulləx-lan,*¹ *u-əšlan*¹ *u-*
*xəllan,*¹ *u-mosəlan* *u-*,¹ *Hkol-tòv*^{H.}¹ David came, she sat with him, she told him, he tells her, “Many thanks to you, you gave us, and we ate [lit. ate dinner], and we ate, and we brought and, all the good [of the earth, i.e., an abundance of high-quality foods].”

¹⁴¹ See fn. 139 above.

¹⁴² The Modern Hebrew lexeme *ḥatimà* is given NENA phonology here: *ḥ* > *x*, penultimate stress.

¹⁴³ The mourning period of seven days.

¹⁴⁴ The mourning period of a month.

- (223) *g-ámra mènex,¹ xá hál u-qásta*
ʔèha-la,¹ ʔé báxta¹⁴⁵ pásšla
yàbbum,¹⁴⁶ ʔàna¹ kúllu ʔánya
ʔarxása¹ u-ʔánya kùllu kaswánnu
b-šəmmox,¹ She says, “Look, that is the situation [lit. one situation and story is that], this woman¹⁴⁵ became *yibbum*,¹⁴⁶ and all these mills, and all these, I will write them in your name [i.e., I will make you the owner],
- (224) *Hʔavâl,^H hwí^{Hfèr},^{H1147} ʔàp-aya*
nábəlla¹⁴⁵ dámməd péšət
Hmèlex,^{H1} šqùlla¹ péša bəxtox.¹ but be fair, take also her¹⁴⁵ when you become king, take her [and] she will be your wife.”
- (225) *g-ér go-ʔèni.¹ hùlle ʔízu d-xa-u-*
xət.¹ He says, “In my eye [= I agree completely].” They gave their hands of each other [= they shook hands].
- (226) BA: *máto mpálla yábbum ʔəlle,¹*
xolá ʔaxón...¹ BA: How [do you mean] she fell *yibbum* on him, after all [is he] the brother of...
- (227) SZ: *là yábbum!¹ g-əmrále pásšla*
ʔarməlsa,¹ SZ: Not *yibbum*! She tells him she became a widow,
- (228) BA: *ʔà¹ ʔarməlsa,¹* BA: Oh, a widow,
- (229) SZ: *u-^Htseʔirà^H-la,¹ u-ʔətla mál,¹*
u-ʔətla...¹ SZ: And she is young, and she has property [or: wealth], and she has...
- (230) *ʔó mál ta-máni b-yawànnə?¹*
Hgilo^{H1148} b-šəmmòx,¹ ʔarxawása “This wealth, to whom will I give [it]? Gilo¹⁴⁸ is in your name [= yours], the mills are

¹⁴⁵ See fn. 108 above. The switch from first to third person here produces ‘combined speech’; see Golomb (1968).

¹⁴⁶ Levirate marriage. See §5.4 and fns 44 and 101 earlier in this chapter. Unlike Ruth, Gila did not need *yibbum*, and Samra corrects herself in (227) below.

¹⁴⁷ Borrowed into Hebrew from English ‘fair’.

¹⁴⁸ The neighbourhood. See fn. 135 above.

- tàlox*,¹ *ʿá[ha]t* ^H*magía*^{CH} *tálox* for you, you are entitled to
^H*ha-kòl*.^H everything.”
- (231) *g-ér* ^H*magi*^{CH} *ʿá*^H *ʿà[ha]t* *ší* *táli*.¹ He says, “I am also entitled to
šqállle *ʿiza*.¹ *zálle* *ʿàya mséla* *ʿàya*¹ you.” He took her hand. Some
pášle dáwid ha-mmélex.¹ time has passed [lit. this one
went this one brought], he be-
came king David.
- (232) BA: ^H*yòf*^H! BA: Great!
- (233) SZ: *zàlle*...¹ *šáʿul* *ʿéle* *ʿàlle*¹ *qam-* SZ: He went... Saul searched
xazèle,¹ *ʿàwa*,¹ *xzéle šáʿul* for him. [It was] he [= David]
dmìxa,¹ *qtéʿle* *ʿásqad m-ʿabáyye* [who] found him, he found
dìde,¹ *šqállle xá laqqá m-xabúša* him asleep, he cut this much
*dìde*¹ *štéle mʿaya* *dìde*¹ *là nhóqle* of his cloak, he took a bite of
ʿàlle.¹ [but] he did not touch him.
- (234) *ksúle* *tàle*,¹ *ʿána* *là*¹ *q-qaṭlànnox*,¹ He wrote to him, “I shall not
*ʿàhət*¹ *g-əbət* *qaṭlatti*¹ *ʿána* *lá* *g-* kill you, you want to kill me, I
qaṭlànnox,¹ *ʿàhət* ^H*mélex* shall not kill you, you are the
yəsraʿèl^H-*wət*.¹ king of Israel.”
- (235) SZ: *xaráe* ^H*ba-səf*^H *e*¹ *šáʿul* *ha-* SZ: After that in the end, uh,
mmélex básər *tlà[ha]* *yóme*,¹ king Saul after three days,
zálle kəz e...¹ *bəxta*,¹ *e* went to uh... a woman, uh,
^H*kor*[ʿ]*ím-la*^H *raḥèla*.¹ her name is Raḥela.
- (236) *g-emərra psóx* *tàli*¹ *báxta* He tells her, “Open [my for-
pasxáwa bəd-fála,¹ *k-iʿáwa má-* tune] for me [= tell me my
ʿiz go-^H*olàm*^H *má* *lès*.¹ fortune],” a woman that used
to open fortunes [i.e., she was
a fortune-teller], she knew
what there is in the world
[and] what there is not.
- (237) *g-əmra-wan*...¹ *šáʿul* *ha-mmélex*¹ She says, “I’m... king Saul
wéle *ʿàsya* *qábəl*¹ *tlá[ha]-yárxe* came to me three months ago,
I swore to him [lit. I am sworn

- kàšli,*¹ *wan-yəmísa ž-ʔíze là*
*pasxán ta-čù-xxa.*¹ *là zéʔla šáʔul*
*ha-mmèlex híle.*¹ on his hand] that I shall not
open [the fortune] for any-
one.” She did not know that it
is king Saul.
- (238) *ʔána lá g-naḥqàna ʔal-^Hséfer^H la-*
*g-pàsxan,*¹ *čákkən wan-márta xá*
*xábra ta-šáʔul ha-mmèlex ^Hlò,*¹
lò!^H “I shall not touch the book
[and] not open, because I have
said [lit. I am said] [this] one
thing [or: word] to king Saul,
no—no!”
- (239) *g-ér psòx,*¹ *là kšáfle gyàne¹*
^H*ával^H g-émer ʔàna... e¹*
*paṭṛənnax,*¹⁴⁹ *šóqən paṭèrrax*
*šáʔul ha-mmélex mán,*¹ *mən-*
*momàsa dífax.*¹ *psàxla,*¹ *xzèla,*¹
šamúʔel ha-nnàvi-le. He says, “Open,” he did not re-
veal himself, but, he says, “I
will... exempt you, I will see
that king Saul exempts you
from your oath.” She opened,
she saw, it is Samuel the
prophet.
- (240) *xzèla dámməd séle šamúʔel ha-*
*nnàvi,*¹ *k-ìʔa,*¹ *šáʔul mayàs,*¹
*ḫàlaṣ.*¹ *là-məḥkela,*¹ *g-əṃra,*¹ *sa-*
*xzì.*¹ *má ʔíz gó...¹* She saw when Samuel the
prophet came, she knows, Saul
shall die, that’s it. She did not
speak, she says, “Come see,
what there is in the...”
- (241) *psàxla,*¹ *u-xzèle šamúʔel ha-*
*nnàvi.*¹ *šamúʔel ha-nnàvi g-ére,*¹
*šàʔul,*¹ *ṭlá[ha] yóme ʔətlax piše,*¹
ʔəḥət u-kúd ṭlá[ha] bnóne dídox
*ʔəsət qṭàla.*¹ *zèʔle.*¹ She opened, and he saw Sam-
uel the prophet. Samuel the
prophet tells him, “Saul, you
have three days [lit. three days
you have remained], you and
your three sons will be killed
[lit. come to killing].” He
knew.
- (242) *pəšle ^Hholè.^H ʔày baxta,*¹ *ʔúzlale*
^H*maràkim^H šəṛḇa¹ máyət ksèsa,*¹
*qam-maxlále,*¹ *qam-maštyàle,*¹ He became sick. That woman,
she made for him soups, thick
[rice] soup, chicken soup [lit.
chicken water], she fed him,
she gave him to drink, he slept

¹⁴⁹ The Modern Hebrew root *pṭr* is used here with NENA morphology.

- dmáxle kásla t̄láh[ha] yòme,¹*
pášla^H mə̀lhamà^H kúd t̄láhun...¹
 there [lit. at hers] three days,
 a war started, all three of
 them...
- (243) *xzéle kúd¹ t̄láhun yalúnke díde*
qt̄ilin.¹ ʾáwa š̄in p̄š^ca¹⁵⁰ wèle,¹
dréle sépa díde,¹ mändéle gyàne¹
ʾápawa zə̀lle.¹ ʾaz-máni p̄šən?¹
dáwid ha-mmélex p̄šle^H mélex
yəsraʾèl.^H
 He saw all his three children
 getting killed. He [himself]
 also was wounded, he put his
 sword, he threw himself, he
 also went [away, i.e., died]. So
 who became [king] [or: who
 remained (alive)]? King David
 became the king of Israel.
- (244) BA: *ʾəmhəm,¹*
 BA: mmmm...
- (245) SZ: *mád qt̄əlle qt̄əlle,¹ u-mád*
ʾámme ysə̀qle¹ ʾəl-^Hšə̀ltòn,¹ bárux
ha-šəm,^H h̄kə̀mle.
 SZ: Whatever he killed he
 killed, whatever [= whoever]
 was with him ascended to the
 rule, blessed be the Lord, he
 reigned.

¹⁵⁰ The Modern Hebrew root *pš^c* is used here with NENA morphology.

CHAPTER 3: A FOLKTALE

At the centre of this chapter is a folktale told in the Jewish Zakho NENA dialect. This is a rather unusual folktale, since it is built around a relatively uncommon motif in folk-literature, that of magical gender transformation. The folktale, ‘The King and the Wazir’, was told by Ḥabuba Messusani.

1.0. The Folktales of the Jews of Zakho

An essential part of the rich oral heritage of the Jewish community of Zakho is the large and complex corpus of folktales. This draws on both Jewish and Kurdish folklore: many of the tales bear distinctive Jewish characteristics, while others belong to the general regional repertoire. Recounting folktales, and listening to them, was a very common and popular shared pastime of the communities of Kurdistan. The very same folktales, in different versions, with additions, omissions or creative embellishments—all depending on the taste (and talent) of the tellers and their audience—could be told throughout Kurdistan, and in all of its different languages and dialects. The practice of storytelling continued in the Jewish-Kurdish communities in Israel: the senior members of the Zakho community in Jerusalem tell of the regular gatherings in a *diwan*, a drawing room of a home of one of the elders of the community, for the purpose of telling and listening to stories. Zakho folktales vary in length from relatively short ones, like the one presented here, to very long ones capable of filling several long consecutive winter evenings—oral novels, one may call them. Folktales are a social institution that plays a role

in the forming and maintaining of Zakho communal identity. They also perform a function in intergenerational communication: in a society that experienced a deep intergenerational gap brought about by the sharp transition to modern Israel (see Sabar 1975),¹ folktales (and other oral genres) are a mode of contact between the generation of the grandparents and their grandchildren.²

2.0. ‘The King and the Wazir’: Synopsis

A king and his wazir go out to explore their town, wearing ordinary clothes. After crossing a bridge, the wazir’s horse breaks into a gallop, leaving the king alone. The king arrives at a river, and

¹ About the social changes within the community caused by the migration, see Gavish (2010, 316–36).

² For published Jewish Zakho folktales see: Socin (1882, 159–68, 219–23); Polotsky (1967), two episodes from a ‘novel’; Alon and Meehan (1979); Avinery (1978; 1988, 48–65); Zaken (1997); Shilo (2014), a collection of 14 folktales written originally in NENA (not transcribed from a recording), which I edited; Aloni (2014a, 65–79). An important collection of oral literature of the Jews of Kurdistan, though only in English, is Sabar (1982). The most important collection of folktales in the Jewish NENA dialect of Zakho remains unpublished. It is a corpus of 33 stories recorded from Mamo (‘uncle’) Yona Gabbay Zaqen, father of the teller of our present folktale, Ḥabuba Messusani. Mamo Yona (Zakho 1867–Jerusalem 1970), an exceptional bearer and performer of the rich tradition of the Jews of Kurdistan and a well-known storyteller throughout Iraqi Kurdistan, was recorded during 1964 by Prof. Yona Sabar for the Hebrew University’s Jewish Language Traditions Project (*Mifal Masorot ha-Lašon*; see Fellman 1978). Only a small portion of this material has been published, in Sabar (2005): Mamo Yona’s own life story, narrated by him.

he sits down in order to eat and rest. He plays with his ring, and it falls into the water. The king dives into the water in order to recover his ring, and when he gets out, *yímméd m̄áya* 'the mother of the water' (a water spirit) hits him on the head, and he is transformed into a woman. As he sees his reflection in the water, he realises that he is now a very beautiful woman. Some fishermen who pass by take the beautiful woman, with the intention of marrying her to the son of their own king. The king and queen are astounded by the woman's beauty, and their son the prince falls in love with her. The woman and the prince get married and have three children. To celebrate the third birth, the king throws a *seherane* 'an outdoor celebration' for all his people. The woman goes to the riverside in order to look again for her lost ring (the king's ring). She sees the ring in the water, and gets into the river to take it. The mother of the water comes again, hits her on the head, and the woman becomes a man once more, the king. He does not know what to do next.

In the meantime, the wazir, who had fallen from his horse, is found by some hunters, who, seeing his beautiful clothes and horse, realise that he is an important man. He does not remember who he is, as he has lost his memory. The hunters take him to a hospital, where he is given care for one year. A professor takes him home to be his servant, and eventually the wazir becomes like a son to him. One day while the wazir is riding his horse, the horse again gallops, and the wazir falls off at the same place where he had fallen before. He regains his memory. The wazir and his adoptive father go to the wazir's home, but his wife does

not recognise him. She suggests that they should go to the imam, and he will decide whether the wazir is her husband or not.

The king also comes back to his home. His wife does not believe that he is her husband, so he also waits for the imam to come on Friday. The imam, who turns out to be Bahlul, the king's brother, decrees that the king is the king and that the wazir is the wazir, and he sends them back to their homes.

The prince, who had been married to the woman whom the king became, searches for his wife everywhere. Eventually he arrives in the town of the king and the wazir. He goes to the imam and tells him about his lost wife. The imam tells the prince that his wife is not lost, but is a king. The king demands that the prince give him the children that he bore as a woman, and tells the whole story of his transformation. The imam decrees that the prince should keep those children, since the king has other children whom he had earlier fathered as a man. The king and the prince both return to their homes.

3.0. The Motif of Gender Transformation

Many of the motifs³ that appear in our story are known from other literary and folk traditions. To list but a few: the king and his wazir go out wearing ordinary clothes (motif K1812.17 'king in disguise to spy out his kingdom'); the king drops his ring in water and then recovers it (K1812.17 'Solomon's power to hold

³ As classified by Thompson (1955–1958). Motif numbers and titles discussed here are taken from Thompson's classification. For the concept of motif in folklore, and critiques thereof, see Dundes (1962); Ben-Amos (1980); Ben-Amos (1995). See also ch. 2, §3.1.

kingdom dependent on ring; drops it in water’); *yúmmed máya* ‘the mother of the water’ (motif F420 ‘water spirits’);⁴ the king looks at his reflection in the water after having been transformed and sees an extraordinarily beautiful woman (motif T11.5.1 ‘falling in love with one’s own reflection in water. (Narcissus.)’).⁵ But the most surprising motif in our folktale, and one which plays a fundamental role in its structure, is certainly motif D10 ‘transformation to person of different sex’.⁶

Motif D10 is relatively uncommon in literary and folk traditions cross-culturally. In both written and oral literature, it is predominantly found in narratives from the Indian cultural space,⁷ though it is not restricted to it. Some of its other occurrences in oral folk-literature come from the Middle-East–Egypt (El-Shamy 1980, 33–38), Turkey (Walker and Uysal 1992, 241–

⁴ In his index, Noy (Neuman 1954, 395) refers to Ginzberg (1909–1938, V:87, 204), who lists several occurrences of water spirits in Jewish literature. Ginzberg mentions the belief, also found in Greek literature, that “water is the abode of demons.”

⁵ See also motif J1791.6.1.

⁶ Similar relevant motifs are: D10.2 ‘change of sex after crossing water’; D12 ‘transformation: man to woman’; D695 ‘man transformed to woman has children’; T578 ‘pregnant man’.

⁷ For a thorough overview of the sources, see Brown (1927); Penzer (1927).

43), the Jews of Iraqi Kurdistan,⁸ and the Jews of Yemen⁹—although it appears in non-Middle Eastern traditions as well.¹⁰

Only one occurrence of motif D10 is to be found in classical Jewish literature. It is found in a story about a poor widower whose wife left him a nursing baby. The widower could not afford a wet nurse, and by way of miracle gained breasts and fed his son himself (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 53b).¹¹

Perhaps the most well-known occurrence of D10 in Western culture is the Greek myth of Tiresias, the blind prophet who, as a punishment from Hera for hurting a pair of copulating snakes, spends seven years as a woman and gives birth to children. After encountering another pair of copulating snakes and sparing them, he is released from his punishment. Having the experience of being both a man and a woman, Tiresias is asked to judge in an argument between Zeus and his wife Hera: who has more pleasure in sexual relations, men or women? Tiresias agrees with Zeus, and says that women's enjoyment is ten times greater.

An Indian story from the Mahabharata, the story of King Bhangaswana (Ganguli ca. 1900, 35–38, book 13, §12), shares

⁸ In addition to our folktale, tales number 3932, 13471, and 16376 at the Israel Folktale Archives Named in Honor of Dov Noy (IFA), University of Haifa.

⁹ Tale number 1235 at IFA.

¹⁰ For instance, it is found in Benin, China, the French-speaking region of Canada, Inuit regions, and Ireland. See Thompson (1955–1958, II:8–9); Thompson and Balys (1958, 97).

¹¹ Noy (Neuman 1954, 281) gives several cases of male embryos transformed into females in the womb.

many plot elements with our folktale. King Bhangaswana is punished by Indra for not including him in a sacrificial ceremony. He is transformed into a woman while bathing in a lake. Bhangaswana had one hundred sons as a man and one hundred sons as a woman. They all slew one another in a battle incited by Indra. When Indra pardons Bhangaswana, now living as an ascetic woman, he asks which of the children should be resurrected. Bhangaswana replies that those he had as a woman should be resurrected, since the affection of a woman for her children is greater than that of a man for his. Highly pleased by the woman's truthfulness, Indra resurrects all two hundred children. He then gives Bhangaswana the choice of being a man or a woman, but Bhangaswana chooses to remain a woman, since the pleasure a woman finds in sexual relations is greater than that of a man.

The many print and manuscript versions of the *Arabian Nights* include four stories which contain the motif of a change of gender: 'The Enchanted Spring', 'Hasan the King of Egypt', 'Warlock and the Young Cook of Baghdad', and 'Shahab al-Din' (stories number 191, 545, 412, and 435 in Marzolph, Leeuwen and Wassouf 2004). The latter two correspond to international tale-type ATU 681 'relativity of time' (Uther 2004, I:373; Marzolph, Leeuwen, and Wassouf 2004, 797), previously known as tale-type AT 681 'king in a bath; years of experience in a moment' (Aarne and Thompson 1961, 238). 'Hasan the King of Egypt' is reminiscent of an Egyptian oral tale (El-Shamy 1980, 33–38). In 'Warlock and the Young Cook of Baghdad' a transformed vizier gets married and gives birth to seven children; the transformed vizier

of ‘Hasan the King of Egypt’ gives birth to only a single child. In all four stories the change of sex is by means of dipping in water.

The oldest of the Middle-Eastern manifestation of the motif is the one of the tale of Khurafa (*Ḥadith Khurafa*).¹² In its most elaborate version, in the book *Al-Fākhir* by 9th-century writer Al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Salama, Khurafa, taken prisoner by three *jinn*s, hears the following story told by a man: the man was transformed into a woman after being trapped in a particular well; he then got married and gave birth to two children; after some time he went back to the same well, was transformed back into a man, got married again and had two more children.¹³

The final story that will be mentioned here is possibly the earliest recorded folktale of the Jews of Zakho. It also includes the transformation of men into women in proximity to water—in this case, the transformation of two men. This is a Jewish Zakho NENA text recorded by Socin as early as 1870 from Pineḥas of Zakho,¹⁴ which recounts the story of the two brothers ‘Ali and ‘Amar (Socin 1882). Sabar (2002b) has published an updated version of this story, written in language as if it were told in the 1950s, together with a commentary on the linguistic differences between the two versions. In this story, the son of ‘Amar and his friend go hunting. They chase after a gazelle for three days, and

¹² See Drory (1994), where she claims that *Ḥadith Khurafa* was one of the earliest “attempts to legitimize fiction in classical Arabic literature”. See also Marzolph, Leeuwen, and Wassouf (2004, 616).

¹³ This story is classified by El-Shamy (2004, 378, as tale-type 705B “I have begotten children from my loins, and from my womb!”: Khurâfah’s experience,” where he lists more of its occurrences.

¹⁴ Sabar (2002b, 613), suggests that this is Pineḥas Čilmèro.

on the third day they reach a river. The gazelle leaps over it and says to them, “Stop following me. God will, if you are men, you will become women; if you are women, you will become men!” (Sabar 2002b, 625). They marry men and live as women for seven years. One of them gives birth to a triplet of boys, and the other to a triplet of girls. One day they dress as men, take their horses, and ride to find the gazelle. Again they chase after her for three days, and then reach a river. The Gazelle leaps again and says the same words, and the two are transformed back into men and return to their homes.

Almost all of the stories mentioned here present a curious coupling: the proximity of motif D10 to water. Indeed, in his article about the motif in Indian literature, Brown (1927, 4) lists “bathing in an enchanted pool or stream” as the first of five means by which a change of sex is effected,¹⁵ and Penzer, after providing an overview of cases of sex transformation “by a magic pill, seal or plant, or merely by mutual agreement with a superhuman being” (Penzer 1927, 224), writes that “as the *motif* travelled westward it seems that water became the more usual medium” (Penzer 1927, 224).

One more element of our story deserves comment: the name of the imam, Bahlul. The character of Bahlul, or Behlül Dane—the clever brother, or son, of caliph Harun Al-Rashid—is well-known from many folktales, especially those originating in

¹⁵ The other four are curse or blessing of a deity; exchanging sex with a Yakṣa, “a creature that is unique in possessing the power to make this remarkable exchange”; by magic; by the power of righteousness or in consequence of wickedness. See Brown (1927, 4–5).

eastern Turkey (Walker and Uysal 1966, 296). A whole sub-genre of folktales features him. In all of them he seems at first like a simpleton, or pretends to be one, but eventually proves his mental and moral superiority over everyone, including the caliph. One of the many Behlül Dane stories is particularly relevant to our folktale. In the story ‘Behlül Dane Teaches God’s Time versus Human Time’ (told by Hacı Mehmet Sivri in 1974; see Walker and Uysal 1992, 241–43), the caliph Harun Reşit is sceptical when he hears Behlül Dane saying, “I have a God whose one hour is equivalent to a thousand of our hours.” When entering the bathroom with a kettle of water, Harun Reşit has a vision in which he lives as a woman for years, gets married, and has children. He then wakes up to discover himself still in his bathroom.

4.0. *Baxtox hakoma-la* ‘your wife is a king’:

Gender Boundaries and Perplexity

Many scholars have commented on the cultural and social unrest and anxiety that undermining gender boundaries may create.¹⁶ In

¹⁶ For example, “Cross-dressing is about gender confusion.” About this sentence, taken from Marjorie Garber’s book *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1992, 390), Tova Rosen (2003, 149–50), writes: “If clothing is a language, then cross-dressing poses a gender riddle. Clothes are intended both to cover and to reveal; they hide the body’s sexual signs and, at the same time, signify the binarism of the sexes. The concealed anatomical differences are replaced by a culturally determined gendered symbolism of clothing. Thus, in texts, as well as in life, clothing functions as a code for sexual (and other) differences. Moreover, the language of clothing does not only encode ‘masculinity’ or ‘femininity’, but rather points to the very constructedness of gender

our folktale, confusion generated by the focal point of motif D10—the notion that breaking genders boundaries is possible, even by magic—permeates many of the narrative elements. There is a latent sense of confusion everywhere: in the plot and the reasoning of its events, in the words and the actions of the characters, in the narration, even in the language of the folktale. From the very first event in the storyline, obscurity is present. The wazir's horse breaks into a gallop for no apparent reason. He then falls from it, loses his memory, and spends several years under another identity. The king is transformed into a woman by a water spirit, gets married, and has children. He has not done anything to enrage the water spirit to merit this unwelcome transformation.¹⁷

What is the reason for or purpose of these ordeals? Do they come as a punishment, or in order to teach some lesson? In many of the other stories built around these motifs, some rationale for the tormenting adventures undergone by the characters is given: they are either punished by enraged gods or spirits, or taught a lesson after showing disbelief. Not in our folktale. The king and the wazir's long and harsh ordeals come and then go away with

categories. Cross-dressing, on the other hand, manifests the discontinuity between the sexual body and the cultural gender and, thus, offers a challenge to easy notions of binarism.“ Also, Meiri (2011, 164–65): “Transsexuality evokes categorical and epistemic crises more than any other form of crossing of gender.... [T]ranssexuality, in its visibility, holds in itself the various anxieties evoked by different forms of crossing of gender” (my translation).

¹⁷ On gender transformation as unexpected and unwelcome, see Brown (1927, 6–9).

no apparent motive or benefit of a lesson learned. Even when their period of transformation is done and they regain their original identity, there are hardships involved—the disbelief of the wives, the king torn away from the children he gave birth to as a woman, the prince losing his beloved wife—and no greater power, position, wealth or wisdom—no compensation—is gained. This is a Kafkaesque folktale, almost as Kafkaesque as Kafka's own *Metamorphosis*, where the suffering of the protagonists is left unexplained and unresolved.

The words of the king after being transformed back into a man in his second encounter with the mother of the water, where we would expect him to rejoice at having recovered his identity, are

(45) *wi-má-b-ozən ʾə-nàqla?ʾ... lá-k-iʾən ma-ʾòzən.*¹

‘Oh, what shall I do now?... I do not know what to do.’

His confusion is evident, and is growing:

(46) *la-k-iʾa ma-ʾòza,¹ ta-máni ʾáza ʾámra ʾána ḥakòma-wan.¹ ta-máni ʾámra ʾána bax-ḥakòma-wan.¹*

‘She does not know what to do, to whom would she go [and] say “I am the king”? To whom would she say “I am the wife of the king”?’

This reaction of the king, his manhood restored, seems even more helpless than his reaction to his first transformation, where he simply wore his original man's clothing and was taken away by the fishermen.

The peak of confusion and loss of identity in the story is found in the secondary character, the wazir. When he is found by

the hunters after he has fallen from his horse, the following short dialogue takes place:

(51) *là-g-maḥke,¹ la-hè la-lá,¹ g-əmriḥe m̀ani-wət?¹ g-émer là-k-i`en,
wéle p̀ṣi`a.¹ m-èka wét? g-émer là-k-i`en.¹*

‘He does not speak, not “yes” [and] not “no,” they say to him “who are you?” He says, “I don’t know,” he is wounded. “Where are you from?” He says, “I don’t know.”’

The wazir’s words are at variance with his appearance, a tension between his external identity markers and his own lack of identity: he is recognised by the hunters as being an important person by his clothing and horse, but the external aspects of his identity do not help him when he loses his sense of self.

The atmosphere of confusion is not created by the events of the storyline alone; stylistic features of the narrative contribute to it as well. For instance, the characters are nameless. Only one character, who appears towards the end of the story, has a name: the imam Bahlul. It is interesting to note that the named imam Bahlul plays a role of clarifying the events and restoring order. Indeed, also the children of the wazir, who play no role in the story as characters, are given names: Mirza-Maḥamad, Aḥmad, and Fatma. Their only function is to be named. The knowledge of their names is used as proof of identity. That is, once again, names and naming take part in restoring order. The lack of names of characters, which is a well-known characteristic of fairy-tales in itself, contributes to the confusion of the listener due to the identity transformations in our folktale. Furthermore, the confusion is aggravated. Our folktale contains three kings (the main character; the father of the prince; and the prince, who is also

referred to as king), three queens (the wife of the main character; the mother of the prince; and the woman who used to be king, who is referred to as queen after marrying the prince), and three women (the main character; the wazir's wife; the main character's wife). These sets of characters are referred to as 'the king', 'the queen', and 'the woman' respectively, without specification.

It seems that even the teller of the story herself partakes in the general bafflement. The following episode occurs just before the wazir goes out for the ride which will bring about the regaining of his memory:

(55) 'áwa¹ qámle xà-yoma,¹ g-ámri wéle ḥakòma,¹ 'átle țera.¹
ḥakóma dóhun màtle.¹ 'átle țera g-mandèle.¹

'He rose one day, they say there's a king, who has a bird.
Their king died. He has a bird which they throw.'

This episode, which seems incoherent and has no clear ties to preceding or subsequent events, is located at a crucial point of the storyline, just before all the entanglements of the story begin to be resolved.

Gender transformation spreads confusion and chaos even in the grammatical structure of the language of the folktale: at the points of transformation, as well as when the king later recounts his experiences, the use of referential elements with specified gender—pronouns and conjugations—becomes unclear. Grammatical elements of the 'wrong' gender are used both before

and after a transformation takes place. For example, in (44)–(46):¹⁸

(44) *pāš-la* *gòra*.¹...
 become.PFV-3FS man.M
 ‘She became a man...’

(46) *qám-la* *lwiš-í-la* *júlle* *dìd-a*¹...
 rise.PFV-3FS dress.PFV-ACC.3PL-3FS clothes.PL GEN-3FS
 ‘She rose [and] wore her clothes...’

(46) ...*mxé-la* *l-úrxa*
 hit.PFV-3FS on-way.F
 ‘...and started walking.’

And also, (79)–(81):

(79) *báxt-ox* *hakòma-la*.¹...
 wife.F-POSS.2MS king.M-COP.3FS
 ‘Your wife is a king’;

(80) *k-xáze* *gòr-a* *híle*,¹...
 ind-see.IPFV.3M.SG husabnd.M-POSS.3FS COP.3MS
 ‘He [= the king] sees it is her [= the king’s] husband’;

(81) *g-émer* *yalúnkəd* *mà?*¹ *’a[he]t-gòra wát!*¹
 ind-say.IPFV.3MS children-GEN what you.MS-man.M COP.2MS
 ‘He [= the husband] says [to the king]: “Children of what? You are a man!”’

(81) *màto*¹ *yalúnke* *mes-ən-nu-lax?*¹
 how children bring.IPFV-1MS-ACC.3PL-DAT.2FS
 “How will I bring you [feminine] the children?”

¹⁸ For the purpose of clarifying the grammatical gender discrepancies, the following examples are glossed. For explanation of the abbreviations used see ch. 1, fn. 42.

The same grammatical confusion occurs in other places in our folktale as well.¹⁹

5.0. ‘The King and the Wazir’: The Text

This folktale,²⁰ ‘The King and the Wazir’, told by Ḥabuba Messusani, was recorded on 7 January 2013 at Ḥabuba’s home in Jerusalem’s Katamonim neighbourhood, where many of the Jewish immigrants from Kurdistan settled when arriving in 1951. Ḥabuba was born in Zakho in 1936 and came to Jerusalem in 1951. As mentioned, she is the daughter of the famous storyteller Mamo Yona Gabbay.²¹ Present in the recording session were Ḥabuba Messusani (HM), Batia Aloni (BA), Prof. Geoffrey Khan (GK), and myself. The recording ID is HM130107T4 00:04–12:16.²²

¹⁹ This linguistic abnormality appears also in the story of the brothers ‘Ali and ‘Amar; see Socin (1882, 164, ln. 6; Sabar 2002b, 621, no. 51).

²⁰ This folktale clearly belongs to the genre of fairy-tale (*Märchen*). It presents the genre’s distinctive characteristics: unknown time and place of happening, nameless protagonists, archetypical characters, miraculous incidents, and supernatural beings. That being said, keep in mind Dundes’s assertion (1964, 252): “...thus far in the illustrious history of the discipline [= folkloristics], not so much as one genre has been completely defined.”

²¹ See fn. 2 above.

²² The recording is available for listening on the North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic Database Project site at <https://nena.ames.cam.ac.uk/dialects/78/>.

- (1) HM: ^Hhayá mélex^H xá ḥakòma¹ HM: There was a king, a king,
u-wazíra.¹ and a wazir.
- (2) ḥakóma g-émer ta-wazíra dide,¹ The king says to his wazir, “Let
d²³-áx xàzax¹ má hìle¹ ^Hmaṣàv^H us see what is the situation of
bážer dèni.¹ our town.
- (3) b-lóšax júlle dád ^Hragìl,^H hàdxax,¹ We shall wear these ordinary
júlləd dârwiše,¹ b-áx zàvrax.¹ clothes [lit. clothes of regular],
like that, beggars’ clothes, we
shall go [and] wander around.”
- (4) g-émer[r]e go-ḡèni.¹²⁴ He says to him, “upon my
eyes.”²⁴
- (5) g-émer náblax xa-ğolàma He says, “Shall we take a serv-
ḡámma,¹ g-émer là.¹ ant with us?” he says, “No.”
- (6) ṭón xápča ḡawàye,¹ ḡixàla,¹ u-drí Carry some things, food, and
go-kásta dídox,¹ put [them] in your bag,
- (7) ḡá[hə]t go-mahíne dídox, ḡàna you on [lit. in] your horse, I on
go-mahíne dídí¹ kútran b-áx. [lit. in] my horse. Both of us
will go.
- (8) [m]páqlu básər gəššra,¹ They went out, [and right] af-
ter the bridge,
- (9) mahíne dəd wàzir¹ dhèrra.¹²⁵ ḡí u- the wazir’s horse broke into
dī²⁶ u-ḡrəqla u-ḡrəqla u-ḡrəqla u- gallop. I and dī²⁶ she ran and
ḡrəqla u-qam-nablále ḡemma,¹ hìl¹ ran and ran and ran and took
ḡúrət.^{Hḡ}eze^H xamšá ^Hkelométer^H until a distance [lit. way] of
qam-mamp[ə]lále.¹ some five kilometres [where]
she dropped him.

²³ Contraction of the interjection *de*.

²⁴ Idiomatic expression meaning ‘I will fulfill your request’.

²⁵ The Modern Hebrew root *dhr* is used here with NENA morphology.

²⁶ Sabar (2002a, 141): “*day-day-day*: sounds describing speed of racing animals.”

- (10) *pášle hákoma*^{H1} *levàd,*^{H1} *lá-k-i'è*
*ʿéka ʿàl,*¹ *ʿéka lá ʿàzəl.*¹²⁷ The king was left [lit. became] alone, he does not know where he should go, where he should not go.²⁸
- (11) *zàlle.*¹ He started walking [lit. he went].
- (12) *zàlle*²⁹ *xzéle xá,*¹ *xawòra.*¹ He went²⁹ [and] saw a river.
*xawóra k-ʿat mà-yle?*¹ Do you know what is *xawóra*?
- (13) GK: ... *he...* GK: ... Yes...
- (14) HM: *xawòra,*¹ *Hnàhar.*^{H1} HM: *xawóra*, a river.
- (15) *xzéle-xa xawòra,*¹ *rùwwa.*¹ He saw a river, [a] big [one].
- (16) *qámle túle ž*³⁰ *dáw...* *tàma.*¹ He rose [and] sat down upon that... there.
- (17) *šlaxle hášak dídox*³¹ *Hnaʿalà...*^{H1} He took off, excuse my language,³¹ his shoes..., [and] put
*qundáre dide,*¹ *dréle ʿáqle go-*
*ṁàya,*¹ *mopáqle xápča ʿixála*
*xàlle,*¹ *mopáqle józi díde ʿúzlele*
*xa-qàhwa,*¹ *mtóʿálle bádʿ ʿasáqsa*
*dide hàdxa.*¹ *ʿasáqsa díde mpélla*
*go-ṁàya.*¹ He took out some food [and] ate, took out his coffee kettle [and] made himself a coffee, he played with his ring, like that. His ring fell into the water.

²⁷ Note the use of two allomorphic forms of the same verb within one sentence: *ʿàl,* *ʿàzəl.*

²⁸ Idiomatic expression meaning ‘he did not know where to go, he was utterly perplexed’.

²⁹ This repetition of a word or phrase with this intonation is a typical stylistic feature of Jewish Zakho NENA narration. It usually appears at the beginning of an episode in the narrative. See also ch. 2, fn. 102.

³⁰ Contraction of *rəš-*.

³¹ Sabar (2002a, 169) on *hàšak dōxun*: “All present/of you excluded (said after saying a dirty word).”

- (18) *wày g-émer¹ mpàlla¹ 'átta lá-
k-i'ə̀n 'éka má b-òzen,¹ d-lá
'asə̀qsa.¹ qə̀mle,¹ šlǎxle júlle dide¹
u-g-émer b-àn,¹ kóšə̀n go-màya,¹
zé'li 'éka mpàlla.¹ mapqə̀nna.¹* “Oh!” he says, “It fell, now I do not know where, what I shall do, without a ring.” He rose, took off his clothes, and he says, “I shall go, go down into the water, [since] I know where it fell. I shall bring it out.”
- (19) *mpáqle, yímməd mə́ya³² sèla.¹
mxéla-['ə̀l]le xá... hə̀nna¹³³
rašóma³⁴ go-rèše,¹ qam-'ozále xà
^Hbaḥorà,^H lá g-hanélox 'ə̀bba
men[xət].¹ hə̀kòma pásle
^Hbaḥurà.^H* [When] he went out [of the water], the Mother of the Water³² came. She struck him with one... *this*,³³ *rašòma*³⁴ upon his head. She turned him into such a girl, you could not stare enough at [lit. you would not enjoy (i.e., be satisfied) to stare at her]. The king became a young woman.
- (20) *k-xáze gyàne,¹ bràta-le!¹ xà
sqéлта! lá g-hanèlox 'ə̀bba.¹* He sees himself [= his reflection in the river], he is a woman! So beautiful! You could not enjoy [staring enough] at.
- (21) *[m]páqle l-wàrya,¹ júllet gùre-lu
táma. lúšle júlle dide¹ túle
l-tàma.¹³⁵* He went out [of the water], men's clothes were there. He wore his clothes. He sat there.³⁵
- (22) *sèlu,¹ 'ányá¹ dód g-dóqi hə̀nna¹
šabakvànè¹ g-ə̀be dóqi g-doqí* Came, these, who catch *this*, fishermen, they want to catch, they catch fish. They see this

³² Sabar (2002a, 177): “a female ghost that dwells in the river.”

³³ See note on *hə̀nna* in §5.0 of the Introduction.

³⁴ Sabar (2002a, 292): “vertical hand used as cursing sign; a blow with open hand on top of the head (to indicate disdain, disapproval...).” Also appears in Rivlin (1959, 226, 240).

³⁵ Verbal forms and pronouns in this sentence are masculine. The woman is still referred to as a man here.

- nunyàsa.¹ k-xáze 'é^Hbaḥurá^H
 hádxá sqə̀lta,¹ g-ámri wálla bár
 ḥakóma dèni,¹ hay-ṭláh[ha] šə̀nne
 wélu bə-zvára xa-^Hbaḥurá^H ṭàle,¹
 xa-sqə̀lta,¹ xa-bràta u-là¹ g-ráze
 bəd-čù-xa.¹
- (23) BA: 'aqə̀le la-qté'le 'əl-čù-xa.¹
- (24) HM: 'éha b-nabláxla^H ulày^H
 raze-'əbba.¹
- (25) qámli sèlu,¹ sèlu,¹³⁶ qam-nablíla
 qámáye kəz-ḥakóma, yímme u-
 bəbe,¹ qam... g-əmri,¹ 'éha
 g[e[r]... 'é gèr-məndi-la¹ go-^Hkól
 ha-'olám^H lez-moxwà[sa]¹ bəs³⁷-
 sqə̀lta-la mən ráḥel 'əmmènu
 'afə̀llu.¹
- (26) ^Htòv.^H mäsélu^H yèled,^H 'éne...¹
 qam-xazèla,¹ 'šə̀qle 'əlla,¹ qam-
 'ebèla.¹
- (27) zə̀llu mäsélu qam-barxíla 'əlle,¹
 u-'áy šàta,¹ smə̀xla.¹ [h]wélela
 xa-bróna.¹ šátəd...¹ pə̀šla,¹ básier
- so beautiful girl, they say, “Indeed the son of our king, for three years they have been seeking [lit. turning around] for a girl for him, a beautiful [girl] [or: a beauty], a girl, and he is not satisfied with anyone.”
- BA: His mind was not cut on anyone [= He was not satisfied with anyone].
- HM: “This one [= the girl], we shall take her [to him], perhaps he would be satisfied with her.”
- They rose [and] came, they came,³⁶ they took her first to the king, his mother and father, they... say, “That [girl is something] different... she is something different, in the entire world there is not [a girl] like her, she is even more beautiful than Rachel our Mother.”³⁸
- Good. They brought the child [= the prince]. His eyes... he saw her, he fell in love with her, he loved [or: wanted] her.
- They went [and] brought [and] married them [lit. they blessed her to him], and in that year she became pregnant.

³⁶ See fn. 29 above.

³⁷ The shift š > s is due to the following consonant.

³⁸ Rachel the Matriarch.

- tré šǎnne,¹ smǎxla, hwélela xa-bróna xǎt.¹ báser tré tǎá[ha] šǎnne¹ smǎxla hwélela xa-bróna xǎt hay-tǎáha.¹*
- (28) *qámli^H anšey^H-bàžer,¹ ʾo ħakóma mǎrre,¹ g-émer b-ózen¹ seheràne.¹³⁹ k-ʾǎt má-yla seheràne?¹*
- (29) GK: *mm*
- (30) HM: *mà-yla?¹*
- (31) GK: *^Hmesibà.^H*
- (32) BA: *^Hnaxon.^H*
- (33) HM: *seheráne nǎpǧax ʾǎl-e...¹*
- (34) BA: *^Hmesibà.^H*
- (35) GK: *^Hpiknik.^H*
- (36) HM: *...^Hpǎknǎk.^H*
- (37) *[m]pǎqlu b-seheràne,¹ u-b-nablánna báxti u-yalúnke dǎdi, kúlle ʾixǎla¹ ʾána b-yáwǎn ta-nás¹ bàžer,¹ bàlas.¹ ʾáse ʾǎl-xǎšbòni,¹*
- She gave birth to a son [lit. a son was born to her]. A year... she stayed [= she did not become pregnant for one year, and then] after two years she became pregnant [again] and gave birth to another son. After two [or] three years she became pregnant [again and] gave birth to another son, that's three.
- They rose, the people of the city, the king said, he says, "I shall do a *seheràne*."³⁹ Do you know what is a *seheràne*?
- GK: Mm.
- HM: What is it?
- GK: A party.
- BA: Right.
- HM: *Seheràne*, we go out to the...
- BA: A party.
- GK: A picnic.
- HM: ...picnic.
- They went out for the *seheràne*, "and I shall take my wife and my children, I will give all of the food to the people of the city, for free. They should come at my expense, because

³⁹ Sabar (2002a), 237: "communal procession and picnic in the country side (during Passover or Succoth Holidays)."

- čukun-kálsi [h]wélela hay-
t[à][ha] bnóne.¹ my daughter-in-law gave birth
to three boys.”
- (38) [m]pàqlu.¹ They went out.
- (39) kàlse-ši,¹ ^Hmalkà^H-la,¹ ...wéle
^Hkéter^H b-rèša.¹ His daughter-in-law, she is also
a queen,... [she has] a crown
on her head.
- (40) zàllu,¹ wélu, ^ʿaw-yòma¹ xèllu,¹
štèlu,¹ kùllu¹ welu bə-rqàza¹ u-
dòla¹ u-zərne⁴⁰ u¹ u-mád¹ g-əbe¹
b-^ʿ[w]ázat¹ farəhe.¹ They went, they were, on that
day they ate, they drank, eve-
ryone was dancing, and *ḏola*
and *zurne*,⁴⁰ and whatever is
necessary for a celebration [lit.
whatever is needed in making
celebrations].
- (41) ^ʿéha séla xa-hánna b-rèša,¹
g-ámra wàlla¹ b-azána kəz-gəván
^Hnàhar.^H ^ʿasəqsa dídi mpəlwala
tàma.¹ u-^ʿasəqsa lá xəzyàli.¹
qam-^ʿozáli ^ʿe-yəmməd məya
^Hbaḥurà^H.¹ That one [= the woman], some
this came into her head, she
says [to herself], “Indeed, I
shall go to the riverside. My
ring fell there. And I did not
find [lit. see] the ring. That
Mother of the Water made
[= turned] me into a girl.”
- (42) zólla l-tàma,¹ zólla l-táma⁴¹ ^ʿèna,¹
báz monáxla bəd-məya¹ ^ʿéna
nzərta bə[d]-^ʿasəqsa.¹ qam-xa-
zyàla.¹ She went there, she went
there,⁴¹ her eye, she only
looked at the water, her eye
caught a glance of her ring.
She saw it.
- (43) wáy! g-əmra¹ wálla wéla ^ʿasəqsa
^ʿasəqsət ḥakòme-la.¹ p-košàna.¹ Oh! She says, “Indeed here is
the ring!” It is the ring of the
king. “I shall go down [there].”

⁴⁰ The *zurne*, a conical wind instrument with a double reed (similar to the Western oboe), is played together with a large double-headed bass drum, the *ḏola*, during weddings and other happy occasions.

⁴¹ See fn. 29 above.

- (44) *šlixíla júlle dída, šlixíla júlle*
dída,¹ kùšla.¹ kùšla,¹⁴² g-šba šáqla
^Htabà^cat,^H séla yímméd mə̀ya,¹
mxéla-la xá¹ rašòma,¹⁴³ pə̀šla
ħakòma.¹ pə̀šla gòra.¹ She took off her clothes, she took off her clothes, she went down [into the water]. She went down [into the water],⁴² she wants to take the ring, the Mother of the Water came, she hit her with a *rašòma*⁴³ she became the king. She became a man.
- (45) *wi-má b-ozán ʔə-nàqla?¹ júlləd*
baxtàsa ʔsən!¹ lá-k-iʔən ma-
ʔòzən.¹⁴⁴ “Oh what shall I do now [lit. this time]? There are women’s clothes! I do not know what to do.”⁴⁴
- (46) *qám̄la lwišíla júlle dída¹ mxéla*
l-ʔúrx̄a b-[ʔ]àql̄e u-dí u-dí u-dí u-
dí u-sèla.¹ la-k-íʔa ma-ʔòza,¹ ta-
máni ʔáza ʔámra ʔána ħakòma-
wán.¹ ta-máni ʔámra ʔána bax-
ħakòma-wán.¹ She rose [and] wore her clothes and started walking [lit. hit the road by legs] and onwards she came. She does not know what to do, to whom would she go [and] say “I am the king”? To whom would she say “I am the wife of the king”?
- (47) *lá-k-iʔa mà-[ʔ]oza,¹ ʔtla t̄lá[ħa]*
bnóne mənne.¹⁴⁵ ^Htóv^H m̄t̄ela,¹
^Haxšáv^H ʔáya b-šoqàna,¹ sélan
kəz-wàzir.¹ She does not know what to do. She has three sons from him.⁴⁵ Good, she arrived, now we shall leave her, we come [lit. came] to the wazir.
- (48) *wázir sèlu, ʔànya¹ d̄əd¹ g-èzi,¹*
g-dóq̄i¹ hənna¹ t̄ere.¹ nəš̄are.¹ The wazir, they came, those [people] that go [and] catch *this*, birds. Hunters.

⁴² See fn. 29 above.

⁴³ See fn. 34 above.

⁴⁴ The verbal forms with which the king refers to himself in (45) are masculine.

⁴⁵ Unlike in (45), where the king is referred to using masculine forms, in (46)–(47) he is referred to using feminine forms.

- (49) BA: *nəčāre.*¹ BA: Hunters.
- (50) HM: *g-él g-mènxi,¹ ʾò¹ xá nàša,¹ mux-ḥakòma-le wázir,¹ xá-kma júlle sqile-ʾalle,¹ ʾe mahíne, wele-mpíla l-tàm.¹* HM: He walks, they look. [They see] this, one man, he is like [= he looks like] a king, the wazir, some beautiful clothes he has, and a horse [lit. that horse], he [the wazir] had fallen there [lit. he is fallen there].
- (51) *là-g-maḥke,¹ la-hè la-lá,¹ g-əmríle m̀ani-wət?¹ g-émer là-k-iʾen, wéle pšì^{ʿa}.¹⁴⁶ m-èka wét?¹ g-émer là-k-iʾen.¹ ^Hzikarón^H díde zàlla.¹⁴⁷ la-k-táxer čù-məndi.* He does not speak, not “yes” [and] not “no,” they say to him, “who are you?” He says, “I don’t know,” he is wounded. “Where are you from?” He says, “I don’t know.” His memory was gone [lit. went]. He does not remember anything.
- (52) *qám̄lu qam-nablíle,¹ qam-daréle gó,¹ ʾe h̀anna,¹ gó xastaxàna,¹ márru ta-dáw...¹ e dóktor g-émer ʾòh!¹ ʾó xá nàša rúwwa-le,¹ qam-xazáxle wele-mpíla mən-mahíne,¹ msàdərre,¹ mtàpəl⁴⁸ ʾəbbe.¹* They rose and took him, they put him in a, *this*, in a hospital, they said to that... eh doctor, he [= one of the hunters] says, “Oh! This is a great [= important] man, we saw him [he had] fallen down from a horse, fix him, treat him.”
- (53) *mtop̀alle⁶³ pás̄le gó...¹ xastaxàna¹ ^Héze^H xá, xá šàta.¹ g-mbaqríle m-èka wét,¹ g-émer là-k-iʾən,¹* He treated him... he stayed in the hospital for about one year. They ask him “where are you from?” He says “I don’t know.”

⁴⁶ The Modern Hebrew root *pš*^ʿ is used here with NENA morphology.

⁴⁷ Verb in the feminine form, although ^Hzikarón^H is masculine. See fn. 55 below.

⁴⁸ The Modern Hebrew root *tpl* is used here with NENA morphology. Since the historical emphatic quality of the consonant *ṭ* is not retained in Modern Hebrew, it is pronounced as *t* by Ḥabuba.

- ʿéka b-ât?¹ là-k-iʿən,¹ pášle
l-tàma.¹ “Where will you go?” “I don’t know.” He stayed there.
- (54) xà,¹ muxwàsox¹ profèsor⁴⁹
g-émer ysálox⁵⁰ kàslì¹
b-yà[wə]nnox¹ ʿixàla¹ štàya,¹ ʿátli
šùla,¹ ʿúzli xápča šùla,¹ mád
g-ábət ʿòz.¹ g-émer hàwwa.¹ lá-
k-iʿe çù-məndi.¹ One, like yourself, a profes-
sor,⁴⁹ says, “Come stay with
me, I will give you food [and]
drink, I have work [for you],
do some work for me, do what-
ever you like.” He says, “all
right.” He does not know any-
thing.
- (55) ʿáwa¹ qámle xà-yoma,¹ g-ámri
wéle ʰakòma,¹ ʿótle t̀era.¹
ʰakóma dóhun mətle.¹ ʿótle t̀era
g-mandèle.¹ He rose one day, they say
there’s a king, who has a bird.
Their king died. He has a bird
which they throw.
- (56) ʿóha rkúle mahíne dide,¹ mahíne
díde dhàrra,¹ dhàrra,¹ dhàrra,¹⁵¹
ʿóka mpàlle¹ mpàlle xa-gar-xét
ʿəl-tàm.¹ ^{H)}aval^H-mpàlle,¹ la-
brélele çù-məndi,¹ txàrrre.¹ He [the wazir] rode his horse,
his horse galloped, galloped,
galloped. Where he had fallen,
he fell there again. But [when]
he fell, nothing happened to
him, he remembered.
- (57) wáy! g-émer¹ ʿána wàzir wéli¹ ké-
le ʰakòma? ʿéka zəlle? ʿána pášli
^Hkvàr¹ mevugàr,¹ zakèn,^H mà-
b-amrən?¹ ʿéka p-šaqláli bəxti?
la-k-šaqlàli,¹ ^Hkvár^H la-g-bàli!¹
ʿána wál pəšli...¹ la-g-mhéməna
ʿəbbi¹ díwən ʿána wàzir!¹ “Wow!” he says, “I was a wa-
zir! Where is the king? Where
has he gone? I became already
old, what will I say? Would
[lit. where would] my wife
take me [back]? She wouldn’t
take me [back], she doesn’t
love [or: want] me anymore.
Indeed I became... She won’t
believe me that I am the wa-
zir!”

⁴⁹ Directed to Prof. Khan.

⁵⁰ *Dativus ethicus*.

⁵¹ The Modern Hebrew root *dhr* is used here with NENA morphology.

- (58) *séle* ʾal-bèsa,¹ *kəz-bàbe*,¹ *kəz-daw-
bàbe d-qam-hənnàlle*,¹⁵²
g-emərre,¹ *mà qəšta?*¹ *g-émer həl*¹
u-qəšta dídi hədxa wəla.¹ *dídi u-
dəd-ħakōma*.¹ *ħakōma zólle b-xá*
ʾəl,¹ *lá-k-iʿen ʾéka zəlle*,¹ *u-ʾána*
zólle b-xà-ʾal.¹
- He came home, to his father,
to that father of his that did
such and such for him,⁵² he
says to him, “What is the
story?” he says, “My story [lit.
situation and story] is thus. Of
mine and of the king. The king
went to one side, I do not
know where he went, and I
went to another [lit. one] side
[= we separated].”
- (59) *g-émer de-quí sà bròni*,¹
k-taxrétén ʾəka-wət,¹ *go-d-éma*
*bàžer?*¹ *g-émer hə*.¹ *k-taxrátte*
šəmməd bəsox,¹ *k-iʾətte?*¹ *g-émer*
hə.¹ *qu-d-àx*¹ *b-ásən ʾəmmox*.¹
- He [the father] says, “So go
ahead [lit. rise come] my son,
do you remember where you
were?” He says, “Yes.” “Do you
remember the name of your
home, do you know it?” He
says “Yes.” “So let’s go [lit. rise
that we shall go], I’ll come
with you.”
- (60) *šqálle ʾáwa u-báxte, làtle*
yalúnke,¹ ʾó *pəšle mux-bròne*.¹ *se-
d-àx b-ásən ʾəmmox*,¹ *zálle*
ʾəmmə.¹
- He took his wife [lit. he took
himself and his wife], he
doesn’t have children, he [the
wazir] was [lit. became] like a
son to him [lit. his son]. “Let’s
go [lit. go that we shall go], I’ll
come with you.” He went with
him.
- (61) *zólle ʾəmmə*,¹⁵³ *mtoqtáqlu*
[b-]dàrga,¹ *[m]páqla xa-
xəddàmta*,¹—*ʾátte pàre*,¹ *wəzír*
- He went with him,⁵³ they
knocked on the door, a maid
opened—he has money, he is a
wazir, he receives [lit. take] a
salary, his wife receives [lit.

⁵² The irregular root *hnl*, with gemination of the second root letter, is derived from *hənnā*; see fn. 33 above and §5.0 of the Introduction. Sabar (2002a, 151): “to say this and that; to do this and that, have inter-course....”

⁵³ See fn. 29 above.

- híle,¹ k-šáqəl m̀à‘aš,¹ b́axte* take] the [= his] salary—she
k-šáqla m̀à‘aš,¹—g-əmrále m̀ani- [= the maid] tells him “Who
wət ʔàhət?¹ g-émer ʔána wàzir are you?” he says, “I am the
wə́n,¹ ʔó bésa d̀idi-le.¹ wazir, this house is mine.”
- (62) *g-ámra wày!¹ źalla m̀arra ta-* She says, ‘Huh?!’ She went
b́axte g-əmra-xa-šəzàna wəl-sèle, [and] said to his wife, she says,
g-émer¹ ʔána wàzir wə́n,¹ ʔó bésa “A madman indeed came, he is
d̀idi-le.¹ saying ‘I am the wazir, this
house is mine.”
- (63) *g-ámra m̀àʔurre,¹ máʔurre xázyan* She [the wife] says, “Show him
ʔèma šəzàna.¹ k-xazyá-le la- in, show him in [and] I’ll see
g-yaʔàle.¹ ʔèma šəzàna. I’ll see what madman [this is].” She
sees him [and] she doesn’t
know [= recognise] him.
- (64) *g-emárra ʔáhat b̀axti wát,¹* He tells her, “You are my wife,
š́mmed bróni, mirza-mah̀amad- the name of my son is Mirza-
íle,¹ š́mmed bróni xèt,¹ ʔàhmad- Mah̀amad, the name of my
íle,¹ š́mmed bràti¹ f̀atma-le.¹ other son is Aḥmad, the name
of my daughter is Fatma. I, this
is my story [lit. my situation
and story is thus].”
ʔàna¹ h̀àl¹ u-qásta d̀idi hádxa-la.¹
- (65) *g-ámrale h̀mòl,¹ tú tamà,¹ xà* She tells him, “Wait, sit over
ʔála.¹ nablánnox kəz-ʔimam.¹ there, aside. I’ll take you to the
h̀akan-ʔimam m̀arre d̀ə[d]¹ imam. If the imam says that
^Hbeʔemét^H ʔá[hə]t gòri wét,¹ góri, you are my husband, [you are
láʔ làʔ l̀əwət góri.¹ my] husband, [if] not, [then]
not, you are not my husband.”
- (66) *g-emárra ^Hbəssèder.^H* He tells her, “Okay.”
- (67) *h̀ákoma š́ine t̀réle t̀réle ʔáw* The king also, he rode and
h̀akòma,¹ séle ʔəp-awa.¹ séle, rode that king. He also came.
séle⁵⁴ m̀télé ʔəl bésa.¹ séle g-pásxa He came, he came⁵⁴ he arrived
home. He came, the maid
opened the door, he says, “I

⁵⁴ See fn. 29 above.

- dárga xəddàmta,¹ g-émer 'ána* am the king, I... that is my
ḥakóma wə̀n.¹ 'ána... 'áya bə̀xti- wife."
la.¹
- (68) *'álla g-əmrá, lə̀wan 'ána bə̀xtox,¹* On the contrary she replies [lit.
'áhət wət-piša gèr šəkál,¹ lá-welox says], "I am not your wife, you
hàdxa!¹ 'átta-wal pášlox gèr changed [lit. you became a dif-
hə̀nna!¹ 'ána là g-əmhémənan ferent shape], you were not
'əbbox.¹ g-émerra^Htòv.^{H1} like that! Now you indeed be-
 came [of] different *this!* I do
 not believe you." He tells her,
 "Okay."
- (69) *'áp-awa zólle qam-matùle, 'éka* He also went, [someone] sat
wə̀zir,¹ qam-matwíle xə̀zre.¹ him down where the wazir
 [was], they sat him down next
 to him.
- (70) *yóm 'əròta,¹ yóm 'əròta-g-əmri* "Friday, [on] Friday our imam
b-əse 'ímam dèni.¹ 'ímam déni will come. Our imam he will
'áwa b-qàte'.¹ k-ì'e.¹ 'ótle decree. He knows. He has [the
^Hnevu'ə.^H k-xáza 'ákan d-íle^Hbe- gift of] prophecy. He sees
'emè^H ḥakóma.¹ whether he is really the king."
- (71) *wállə k-èse,¹ 'ímam dóhun yóm* Indeed, their imam comes [on]
'ərròta,¹ k-xáze bə̀hlul-íle,¹ 'axón Friday, he [= the king] sees it
ḥakóm,¹ k-xə̀ze 'əwa-le.¹ is Bahlul, the king's brother.
 He [= the king] sees it is him.
- (72) *g-əmríle wállə k-ì'ət,¹ 'é hə̀nna¹* They tell him, "Indeed, you
dèni,...¹ ^Hmišpát^H déni qam- know, our *this...* our case [lit.
mesáxla⁵⁵ kə̀slox.¹ ^Hkt^H là-mşax.¹ trial] we brought to you. Be-
'òha,¹ ḥakòma-le,¹ 'ó wə̀zir-íle.¹ cause we are not able [to de-
 cide whether] that [man] is
 the king [and] this [is the] wa-

⁵⁵ Verb in the feminine form, although ^H*mišpát^H* is masculine. This may be because NENA *šari'əta/šər'əta* 'trial, judgment' is feminine. See fn. 47 above.

- ʾàhət¹ mār, ¹ psóx jəzúka⁵⁶
 b-qúr^can dīdox¹ kan-díle wàzir¹
 kan-díle ḥakòma.¹ zir. You, say [= tell us the answer], open a booklet⁵⁶ in your Quran, whether he is the wazir [and] whether he is the king.”
- (73) g-émer ʾó wázir-ile u-ʾó ḥakòma-
 le,¹ d'órun l-bés gyanòxun.¹ He says, “That is the wazir and that is the king, go back to your homes.”
- (74) qam-nabálle ʾáwa l-bèse¹ u-ʾáwa
 l-bèse.¹ He led them, him to his home and him to his home [= he led each one of them to his home].
- (75) ʾó bār ḥakòma,¹ dád wéla bàxte,¹
 kúlla ʾáy seheràne¹ pǎšla ʾázaya
 ʾèlle.¹ g-ṭáʾe báxte zàlla,¹ u-zà¹la¹
 u-zà¹la¹ u-...,¹ la šúqle xá dùksa,¹
 híl ʾamèrika zǎlle!¹ That son of the king, that she⁵⁷ was his wife, that entire se-heràne⁵⁸ turned into mourning upon him. He is looking for his wife [but] she is gone, and she has disappeared and disappeared and..., He did not leave [out even] one place, he went all the way to America!
- (76) čú dúkka lá šúqle híle bə-ṭáya
 ʾàlla.¹ čú-xxa lá k-ṭe¹ lé⁵⁹ xázya
 bàxta.¹ He did not leave [out even] one place, he is searching for her. No one knows, [no one] had seen a woman.
- (77) xzélú xá góra ḥakòma¹ zǎlle.¹
 mṭèle l-d-áy bázher.¹ mṭéle l-d-áy
 bázher,¹ ʾéka b-àl?¹ zǎlle ʾál
 hànna,¹ kəz-ʾimam,¹ kəz-jèma^c.¹ They had seen a man, a king. He [already] went [away]. He [= the husband] arrived in that city, where should he go? He went to *this*, to the imam, to the mosque.

⁵⁶ Sabar (2002a, 127): “booklet (of religious or magic nature).” See also ch. 2, fn. 131.

⁵⁷ Meaning, the king who turned into a woman.

⁵⁸ See fn. 39 above.

⁵⁹ Contraction of *léwe*.

- (78) *g-emárre bròni¹ mà¹ ^Hbakašá^H
dìdox híla?¹ g-émer hâl¹ u-qàsta¹
dìdi¹ hàdxa wéla.¹ qam-xazéla xá
^Hbahurá^H rás,¹ bastád ^Hnàhar,^H
qam-meséla tàli¹ u-qam-gorà¹nna¹
u-[ʔə]tlí tlá[ha] bnóne mènna,¹
u-zà¹la báxti!¹* He tells him, “My son, what is your request?” He says, “This is my story [lit. my situation and story was thus]. They [= the fishermen] saw a girl on the river bank, they brought her to me, and I married her, and I have three sons from her, and my wife has disappeared!”
- (79) *g-émer là zá¹la báxtox,¹ báxtox
hâl¹ u-qásta hàdxa-la,¹ báxtox
hakòma-la.¹ ʔátta mnablónnox
kàsle,¹ u-, ʔàwa¹ b-qaté¹la šar¹áta
dìdox.¹* He says, “Your wife has not disappeared, your wife this is her story [lit. the situation and story is thus], your wife is a king, now I shall take you to him, and, he will decree [lit. cut] your judgement.”
- (80) *g-émərre d-àx.¹ zólle qam-
nabállle.¹ k-xáze gòra⁶⁰ híle,¹ ʔáwa
k-îe, wéle báxta gòra⁶⁰ híle.¹
g-əmrále⁶¹ kèlu yalúnke dídi?¹
g-əbànnu!⁶²* He tells him, “Let’s go.” He went and led him. He [= the king] sees it is her [= the king’s] husband. He [= the king] knows, he was a woman, this is [= was] her husband. She [= the king] tells him, “Where are my children? I want⁶² them!”
- (81) *g-émer yalúnkəd mà?¹ ʔa[he]t-
gòra wát!¹ màto¹ yalúnke
mesónnu-làx?⁶³* He [= the husband] says, “Children of what? You are a man! How will I bring you⁶³ the children?”
- (82) *g-ámra hâl¹ u-qásta dídi hàdxa-
la.¹ ʔána¹ mpàlla¹ ʔasəqsa¹ dìdi,¹* She [= the king] says, “This is my story [lit. my situation and story is thus]. I, my ring fell, I

⁶⁰ The feminine possessive pronoun -a refers to the king.

⁶¹ Feminine verbal form.

⁶² This verb, uttered by the king, is in the feminine form.

⁶³ Feminine pronoun.

- hádxa qam-mazvəràнна¹ mpóla* twisted it [around my finger]
go-màya,¹ séla yímmèd màya¹ like that, it fell into the water,
mxéllali xá rašòma¹ qam-^ozali the Mother of the Water came,
^H*bahùra^H.¹ qam-gorànnox,¹ ^oiláha* struck me with a *rašòma*⁶⁵
wállèli¹ tlà[ha] bnóne mánnox.¹⁶⁴ [and] turned [lit. made] me
 into a girl. I married you, God
 gave me three sons from you.⁶⁴
- (83) *úzlox seheràne,¹ sèli,¹ ^oéni* You made a *seheràne*,⁶⁶ I came,
nžárra-[^e]l ^oasáqsa dīdi,¹ ^oasáqsa my eye caught a glance of my
dəd-^Hyahalòm^H hīla,¹ dád,¹ ring, it is a ring of diamond, of
jawàhar.¹ diamond.
- (84) *kápli g-šban šaqlàнна,¹ séla ^oáy* I bent down in order [lit. I
yímmèd màya¹ mxéllali xá want] to take it, that Mother of
rašòma¹ qam-^ozali xá-gar xót the Water came, struck me
gòra.¹⁶⁷ with a *rašòma* [and] turned
 [lit. made] me again into a
 man.⁶⁷
- (85) *ána ħakòma-wən,¹ k-xázət* I am a king, you see here.
^o*àxxa.¹ ^e-náqla g-éban⁶⁸ yalúnke* Now, I want⁶⁸ my children,
dīdi,¹ mád mórre ^oiman,¹ mórre whatever the imam says [lit.
táli-ilu,¹ ^Ho^H-tálox hīlu.¹ said]. He says [lit. said] they
 are for me or they are for you
 [= he will decree either].”
- (86) *g-emárra ^Hgam^H-^oà[h]at zóllax¹* He tells her [= the king], “First
^H*gam^H-yalúnke yawànnu-lax?¹* [lit. also] you went away, and
^o*ilà[ha]-la qabálla mánnox.¹* [now you want that] I will give
 you the children as well?! God
 will not permit this! [lit. God
 will not accept it from you;

⁶⁴ All forms in (82) referring to the king are feminine.

⁶⁵ See fn. 34 above.

⁶⁶ See fn. 39 above.

⁶⁷ All forms in (84) referring to the king are feminine.

⁶⁸ Feminine verbal form.

- (87) *sèle-kəz ʿimam¹ ʿimam g-èmer,¹*
ʾá[h]at ʾótłax yalúnke,¹ ʾàwa¹—
yalúnke dide hílu.¹ ʾàni¹ yálunke
díde țàle,¹ yalúnke díđax țàlax,¹
sí bròni,¹ ʾílaha-ha[w]e ʾəmmox,¹
sí gór xa-xèta.¹⁶⁹ He came to the imam, the imam says, “You [= the king] [already] have children, he [= the prince]—those are his children. They, his children are for him [= should stay with him], your children are for you. Go my son, may God be with you, go and marry another.”⁶⁹
- (88) *há ʾèha wéla,¹ ʾáwa zólle l-bèse,¹*
ʾó séle l-bèse.¹ ^Hzéhú^H g-ábet xa-
xèt?¹ Here, this is it, he went to his home, [and the other] one went to his home. That’s it, would you like another one [= story]?
- (89) BA: *kúd šmiʾále xà[y]e...¹* BA: [May] whoever has heard it live...
- (90) HM: *...xà[y]e,¹ kud-là*
šmiʾále...¹⁷⁰ g-ábet xa-xèt?¹ HM: ...live, whoever has not heard it... [also live].⁷⁰ Would you like another one?

⁶⁹ All forms in (86)–(87) referring to the king are feminine.

⁷⁰ A common ending formula in NENA folktales.

CLOSING REMARKS

It is my hope that this book has shown the potential inherent in the folkloristic and literary study of Jewish NENA material. As stated in the Introduction, this book is but a first step. Many genres that are represented in the audio-recorded database but do not appear in this book, as well as many additional examples of genres that are represented here, await subsequent studies. Furthermore, content-based approaches to the study of previously published NENA material will surely prove fruitful.

The three chapters of this book have dealt with three oral genres, whose analytical units progressed from smallest to largest. The first chapter dealt with proverbs, the second with the motifs of an enriched biblical narrative, and the third with a folktale. Each of the themes of these three chapters deserves future attention. The first chapter dealt with only one member of the family of gnomic genres, the proverb. Other members that are represented in the recorded database were not included: jokes, riddles, aphorisms, anecdotes, idiomatic expressions,¹ and more. The second chapter contains an analysis of only a single example of the several enriched biblical narratives recorded in the audio database. These, as well as related published texts, in

¹ Though idioms and idiomatic expressions are usually not considered a genre of folklore, but rather a linguistic category, they also belong in the gnomic category.

particular the Jewish NENA Midrashim,² await a study uncovering their sources and their ties to previous and contemporary works and traditions. The folktale featured in the third chapter is, as mentioned, one of the shortest of the many folktales recorded in the database. Additionally, the most important collection, both folkloristically and linguistically, of Jewish NENA folktales—the Mamo Yona stories³—remains unpublished and unstudied.

The abundance of Neo-Aramaic material presented by recent scholarship and the relative neglect of content-oriented study focused thereupon bring to mind the words of the anthropologist Alfred I. Hallowell, which though directed to anthropologists are relevant also to us:

So far as the anthropologists are concerned, I believe it is fair to say that while it has been customary over a long period to collect a representative sample of the oral narratives of the people they happen to be studying, it is an open secret that, once recorded, very little subsequent use may be made of such material. Indeed, these archival collections, once published, often moulder on our shelves waiting for the professional folklorist, or someone else, to make use of them in a dim and uncertain future....

This marginal position which oral narratives have occupied in anthropological studies is not due to the inherent nature of the material but to a failure to exploit fully the potentialities of such data. (Hallowell 1947, 544–45, quoted by folklorist William Bascom 1954, 333)

² Sabar (1985).

³ See ch. 3, fn. 2. See also Sabar (2005).

It is my hope that we shall not let the uniquely fascinating and varied Neo-Aramaic material “moulder on our shelves,” nor that we treat it merely as raw material, inorganic deposit, for grammatical analysis.

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The Neo-Aramaic Oral Heritage of the Jews of Zakho

Oz Aloni

In 1951, the secluded Neo-Aramaic-speaking Jewish community of Zakho migrated collectively to Israel. It carried with it its unique language, culture and customs, many of which bore resemblance to those found in classical rabbinic literature. Like others in Kurdistan, for example, the Jews of Zakho retained a vibrant tradition of creating and performing songs based on embellishing biblical stories with Aggadic traditions.

Despite the recent growth of scholarly interest into Neo-Aramaic communities, however, studies have to this point almost exclusively focused on the linguistic analysis of their critically endangered dialects and little attention has been paid to the sociological, historical and literary analysis of the cultural output of the diverse and isolated Neo-Aramaic communities of Kurdistan. In this innovative book, Oz Aloni seeks to redress this balance.

Aloni focuses on three genres of the Zakho community's oral heritage: the proverb, the rewritten biblical narrative and the folktale. Each chapter draws on the author's own fieldwork among members of the Zakho community now living in Jerusalem. He examines the proverb in its performative context, the rewritten biblical narrative of Ruth, Naomi and King David, and a folktale with the unusual theme of magical gender transformation. Insightfully breaking down these examples with analysis drawn from a variety of conceptual fields, Aloni succeeds in his mission to put the speakers of the language and their culture on equal footing with their speech.

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