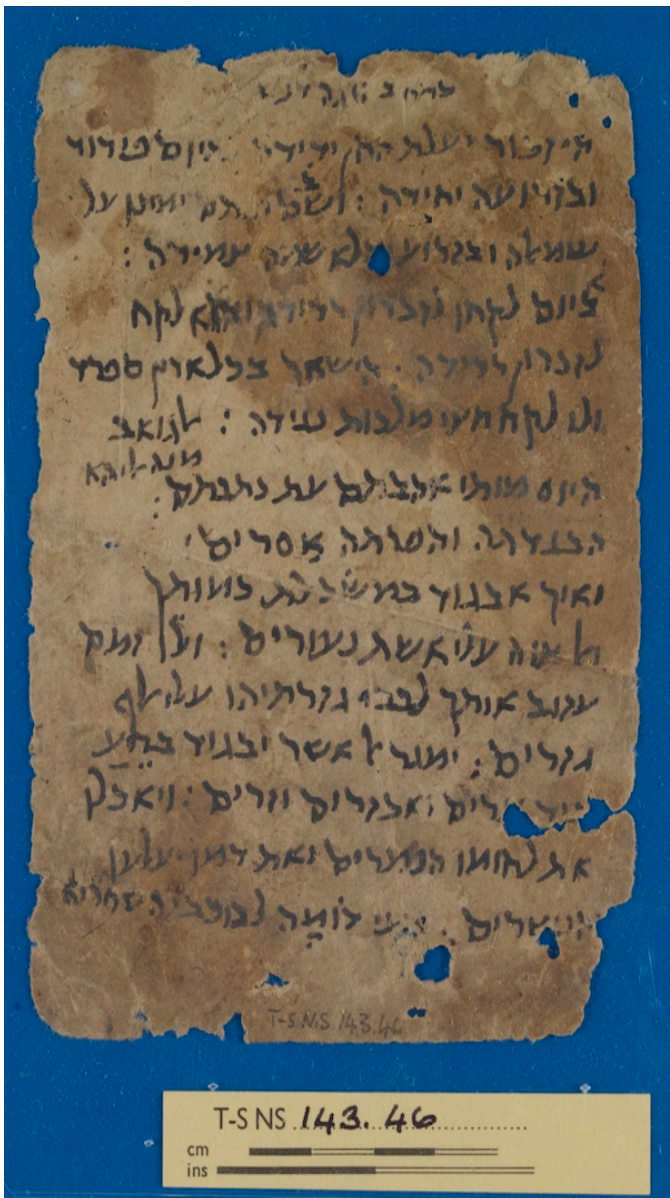Fragment of the Month: October 2019

A hitherto unknown poem by Shelomoh ibn Gabirol: T-S NS 143.46*

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**The famous poem of Mr & Mrs Dunash, T-S NS 143.46 (recto)**

The document before us, TS NS 143.46, should not be headline news at this point because it famously includes the poem attributed to Dunaš b. Labraṭ's wife. Its study began in 1944 when Allony published, from a photo, a fragment of the famous poem that he originally attributed to Ben Labraṭ.[1] Later our fragment was discovered and Fleischer showed us the identity of the author and even the reply addressed to her by her husband.[2] The discovery is unprecedented even today because previously we were only aware of two short Arabic verses by Qasmūna bint Ismāʕīl recorded in an Islamic anthology and, now, we had the first samples of Hebrew verses written by a Jewish poetess of the 10th century. Perhaps the importance of the discovery was responsible for assigning the other side of this fragment to oblivion.

TS NS 143.46 includes four poems, two on each side. Recto includes two liturgical poems, *gĕʔulot*, attributed to Šĕlomoh *ha-qaṭan* (ibn Gabirol) and both are signed with the acrostic šlmh. Verso includes two secular poems, the first is attributed to Dunaš b. Labraṭ's wife and the second one to him. The last one seems to be incomplete and therefore this side must be the verso, the continuation lost in another folio. Three of these four poems were unknown; however, as had been said, the two secular poems have drawn widespread academic attention. Both poems have been well-studied. The two poems use the metre *wāfir* with all its *ḥašw* (stuffing

feet) modified by ʕaṣb (remove the vowel beneath the fifth consonant: מַפָאעַלָתֶן → מַפָאעְלָתֶן equals מַפָאעִילֶן) which is actually very common in both Hebrew and Arabic poetry, resulting in מַפָאעִילֶן מַפָאעִילֶן פָּעוּלֶן מַפָאעִילֶן מַפָאעִילֶן פָּעוּלֶן in all the verses.[3] Furthermore, Lady Ben Labraṭ used the rhythm taṣrīʕ (i.e. ʕarūḍ and ḍarb share rhyme and feet in both hemistichs at the beginning of the composition) in the first two verses. She also used at the beginning of her poem the modification known as naqṣ (remove the seventh quiescent consonant and remove the vowel beneath the fifth consonant: מַפָאעַלָתֶן → מַפָאעְלָתֶ equals מַפָאעִיל) in the first foot of the first hemistich, being scanned this way:

בְּיוֹם פֵּירוּד וּבִזְרוֹעָהּ יְחִידָהּ	הֲיִזְכּוֹר יַעֲלַת הַחֵן יְדִידָהּ
מַפָאעִילֶן מַפָאעִילֶן פָּעוּלֶן	מַפָאעִיל מַפָאעִילֶן פָּעוּלֶן
בְּיֹסְפֵּירֵד וּבִזְרוֹעָהּ יְחִידָהּ	הֲיִזְכּרֵ עֲלַתְהַאחֵן יְדִידָהּ

Her husband answered her using the same meter, according to the technique known as muʕāraḍa but ending in -im; he also seems to use the rhythm taṣrīʕ from the fifth verse.
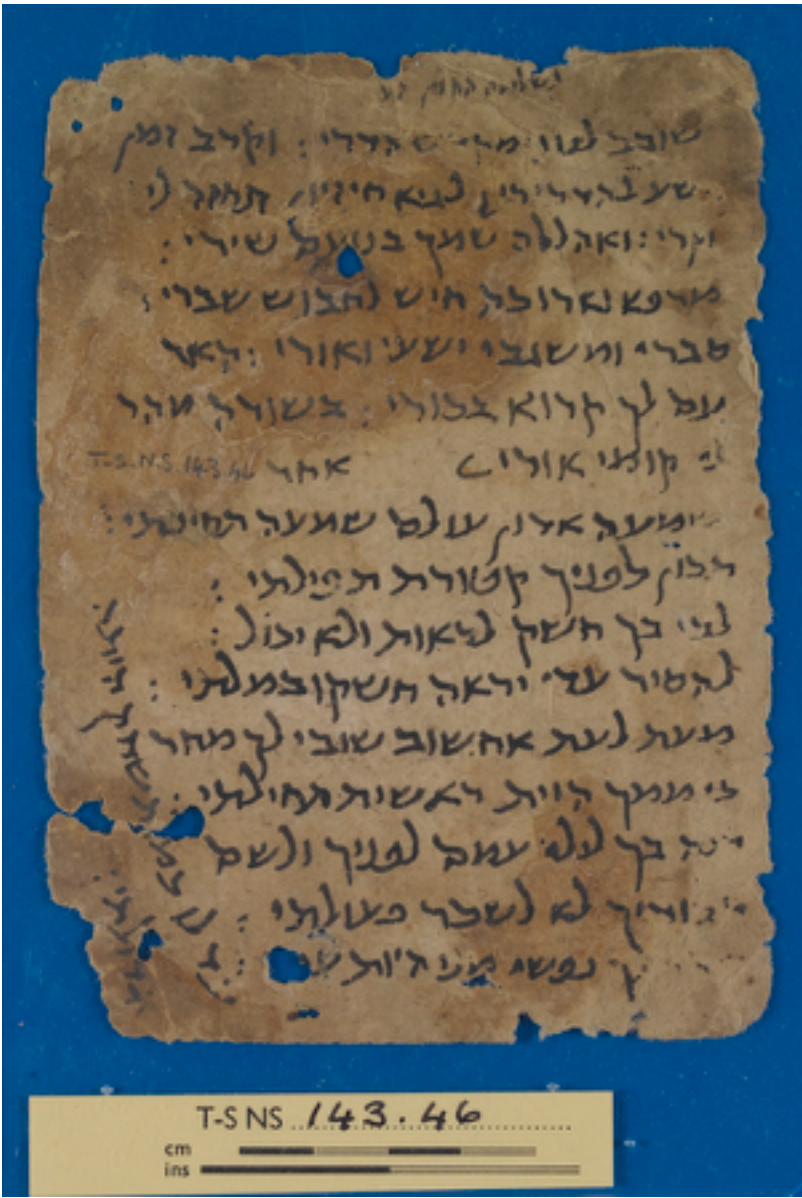
The previously unknown poem by Ibn Gabriol, T-S NS 143.46 (verso)

The other side of the fragment includes two gĕʔulot. The second composition is well-known: שְׁמָעָה אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם, and it has been included in every edition and anthology of religious poetry by Ibn Gabriol.[4] The former, to my surprise, has never been included anywhere or edited previously. The truth is that this composition shows the very characteristics of this poet: signing the acrostic šlmh, creating neologisms (such the infinitive הַדְרִיר), using rhetorical figures (for

instance the partial *muğānasa* in שְׁבְרִי and סִבְרִי) or syntactic alterations due to the metrics (for example, insert the verb inside the construct state chain such as in לְגֵיא חֶזְיוֹן תַּחֲזִיר יְקָרִי instead of the expected תַּחֲזִיר לְגֵיא חֶזְיוֹן יְקָרִי).

We have other readings from two of the four poems included in this fragment. These other versions confirm for us that the transmission of the texts found in TS NS 143.46 was not as good as we might expect. Clearly, the scribe has either relied on his memory thinking he was a good rhapsodist (*rāwy*), copied carelessly, or perhaps he held an already corrupt text. He realises himself that he is wrong when copying verses 2 and 3 from the poem by Ben Labraṭ's wife. In any case, the other extant copies, in manuscripts and in critical editions, highlight the need for amendments which in this case can be solved thanks to metrics. The hitherto unknown poem is as follows:

1. לשלמה הקטן זֹל
2. שובב לנביא מקדש הררי : וקרב זמן
3. [י]שע אל הדרירי c לגיא חיזיון תחזר לי
4. יקרי : ואהללה שמך בנועם שירי :
5. מרפא וארוכה חיש לחבוש שברי :
6. סברי ומשגבי ישעי ואורי : האר
7. עם לך קרוא בכורי : בשורה מהר
8. לי קומי אורי c

Proposed reading of the poem

וּקְרַב זְמָן יֵשַׁע אֱלֵי הַדְרִירִי   **שׁוֹבֵב** לְנָבִיא מִקְדָּשׁ הֲרָרִי

אֲהַלְלָה שִׁמְךָ בְּנֹעַם שִׁירִי   **לְגֵיא** חֶזְיוֹן תַּחֲזִיר יְקָרִי

סִבְרִי וּמִשְׂגַּבִּי שְׁעִי וָאוֹרִי   **מַרְפֵּא** אֲרֻכָה חֹשׁ לְחַבֵּשׁ שִׁבְרִי

מַהֵר בְּשׂוֹרָה לִי וְקוּמִי אוֹרִי   **הָאֵר** פְּנֵי עַם לְךָ קְרָא בְּכוֹרִי

Translation

Bring back the prophet of the Sanctuary on my Mountain

and bring the redemption time to release me

Return to the valley of the vision of my Glory

I will praise your name with the prettiness of my song

Health, heal quickly to bind up my wound

my fortress, my stronghold, look with favour and shine

Look upon your people, cry out: 'my firstborn

bear me soon the good news and arise, shine"

Metrical analysis

Meter *sarīʕ* (*ha-maher*): מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן מַפְעֻולֻן.

Mašṭūr (split) verse with *ḍarb* modified with *kašf* (remove the last consonant of *watid mafrūq*: מַפְעֻולֻן) → מַפְעֻולָא equals מַפְעֻולָאתֶ); its '*arūḍ* is identical. This type of *ḍarb* accepts the modification known as *kabn* (remove the second consonant of the feet when it has no vowel: מַפְעֻולֻן → מַעֻולֻן equals פַעֻולֻן) and so it is shown as *ʕarūḍ* in the verses 1, 2 and 4. The rhyme is -rí with *ridf* (a lengthening letter before the consonant setting the rhyme).

Modifications in the stuffing feet:

kabn: remove the second consonant of the feet when it has no vowel (מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן → מֶתַפְעִלֻן equals מַפַעְלֻן)

ṭayy: remove the fourth consonant of the feet when it has no vowel (מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן → מֶסְתַעִלֻן equals מֶפְתַעִלֻן).

Scansion and proposed transcription[5]

וקרב זמן [י]שע אל הדרירי	שובב לנביא מקדש הררי
וּקְרַב זְמָן יֵשַׁע אֱלֵי הַדְרִירִי	שׁוֹבֵב לְנָבִיא מִקְדָש הֲרָרִי
מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן מַפְעֻולֻן	מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן פַעֻולֻן
וּקְרַבזְמָן יֵאשַׁעאֱלֵי הַדְדִירִי	שׁוֹבֵבְלְנָא בִימִקְקְדָשׁ הֲרָרִי

Šubiblăná bimiqqădáš hărári   uqrabzămán yašaʕʔălí hadrirí

Notes: מִקְדָש according to Exodus 15:17. הֲרָרִי Jeremiah 17:3. אֱלֵי for metrical necessity. הַדְּירִי neologism derived from דְּרוֹר Ezequiel 46:17.

ואהללה שמך בנועם שירי	לגיא חיזיון תחזר לי יקרי
אֲהַלְלָה שְׁמְךָ בְּנֹעַם שִׁירִי	לְגֵיא חֶזְיוֹן תַּחֲזִיר יְקָרִי
מַפַעְלֻן מֶפְתַעִלֻן מַפְעֻולֻן	מַפַעְלֻן מֶפְתַעִלֻן פַעֻולֻן
אֲהַאלְלָה שְׁמְךָאבָנֹוּ עַמשִׁירִי	לְגֵייְחֶז יֻותַּחֲזִר יְקַארִי

Lagiyăḥáz yuntăḥăzír yăqári   ʔăhálălá šimḵabănú ʕamširí

Notes: תַּחֲזִיר for metrical necessity. I omit לי for metrical and syntactic necessity and because יְקָרִי is dependent on לְגֵיא חֶזְיוֹן. אֲהַלְלָה according to Psalm 69:31.

סברי ומשגבי ישעי ואורי	מרפא וארוכה חיש לחבוש שברי
סִבְרִי וּמִשְׂגַּבִּי שְׁעִי וְאֻורִי	מַרְפֵּא אֲרֻכָה חִיש לְחַבֵּש שִׁבְרִי
מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן מַפְעֻולֻן	מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן מֶסְתַפְעִלֻן מִפְעֻולֻן
סִבְרִיוּמֵשׂ גַּבְבִּישְׁעִי וְאֻורִי	מַרְפֵאאֲרֻך כָּהְחִשׁלְחַב בֵּשְׁשִׁבְרִי

Marpiʔărúk kaḥišlăḥáb biššíbri   sibriumíš gabbišĭ̃ʕí waʔurí

Notes: אֲרֻכָה for metrical necessity. לְחַבֵּש for metrical necessity. שְׁעִי according to Genesis 4:5. וְאֻורִי for metrical necessity and parallelism with the following verse; surely, the scribe copies ומשגבי ישעי according to 2Samuel 22:3 and Psalm 18:3.

הָאֵר עִם לְךָ קְרוֹא בְּכוֹרִי   בשורה מהר לי קומי אורי

הָאֵר פְּנֵי עִם לְךָ קְרָא בְּכוֹרִי   מַהֵר בְּשׂוֹרָה לִי וְקוּמִי אוּרִי

מֶסְתַפְעֲלֶן מֶסְתַפְעֲלֶן פַּעֲולֶן   מֶסְתַפְעֲלֶן מֶסְתַפְעֲלֶן מַפְעוּלֶן

הָאאֶרְפְּנֵי עַמלָךְהִקְרָא בְּכוֹרִי   מַאהֶרְבְּשׂוֹ רָהלִיוַקֻו מִיאָורִי

Haʔirpăní ʕamlaḵqără băḵúri   mahirbăšú raliwăqú miʔurí

Notes: פְּנֵי for metrical and semantic necessity, according to Psalm 119:135 among others. קְרָא for metrical necessity. מַהֵר בְּשׂוֹרָה for metrical necessity. וְקוּמִי for metrical necessity but maybe this last hemistich lacks meter in order to introduce the biblical passage קומי אורי (Isaiah 60:1) as reflected in the fragment.

Footnotes

[1] See Nehemya Allony, 'Four Poems', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Jul., 1944), pp. 79-80. In fact it was the text found in Mosseri VIII.202.2 that joins together with Mosseri IV 387.2.

[2] Ezra Fleischer, 'ʕal Dunaš ben Labraṭ wě-išto u-bno', *Meḥqare Yěrušalayim bě-sifrut ʕiḇrit* 5 (1984), pp. 189-202.

[3] For the original prosodic model used between the tenth and twelfth centuries by Andalusi Hebrew poets see José Martínez Delgado, *Un manual judeo-árabe de métrica hebrea andalusí (Kitāb ʿarūḍ al-šiʿr al-ʿibrī) de la Genizah de El Cairo*, Córdoba 2017.

[4] Dov Jarden, *The liturgical Poetry of Rabbi Salomon ibn Gabirol*, Jerusalem 1972, p. 465.

[5] For this transcription see José Martínez Delgado, "On the phonology of Hebrew in Alandalus as reflected by the adaptation of Arabic grammar and poetry", in Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala and Wilfred G. E. Watson (eds.), *Archaism and Innovation in the Semitic Languages, Selected Papers*, Córdoba 2013, pp. 73-86.

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