Aspects of the Oral Heritage of the Neo-Aramaic-Speaking Jewish Community of Zakho

by

Oz Aloni

Fitzwilliam College

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Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
University of Cambridge
This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

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It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Degree Committee.
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Abstract

This thesis examines three genres of the oral heritage of the Neo-Aramaic-speaking Jewish community of Zakho, Kurdistan: the proverb, the enriched biblical narrative, and the folktale. During the past three decades, there has been a renewed interest in research on Neo-Aramaic, and a substantial growth of research in the field has been seen. However, the contemporary study of Neo-Aramaic has been focused almost exclusively on linguistic description and analysis. Content-based aspects of the study of the language and its cultures have received very little attention. This thesis is a first step towards filling this gap.

The introduction to the thesis provides background information about the Jewish community of Zakho and about the Neo-Aramaic subgroup to which the Jewish Zakho dialect belongs, North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA). It then gives a brief review of relevant aspects of the study of folklore, before providing a description of the database of audio recordings upon which this thesis is based.

The first chapter presents several approaches to the study of the proverb (paremiology). It is argued that an important component for the understanding and analysis of proverbs, one that is often overlooked, is the context of each proverb.

The second chapter analyses an example of the genre of enriched biblical narrative through the lens of a concept taken from the field of thematology: the motifeme – a small meaning-bearing contextual-structural unit of the narrative. It demonstrates the non-linear historical development of the sequence of motifemes in the narrative analysed here, a feature which is particularly typical of Jewish narratives.

The folktale is a genre central to the formation and maintenance of the Jewish Zakho communal identity, and the third chapter contains a detailed analysis of one particular folktale. The folktale chosen for analysis in this chapter features a cross-culturally uncommon motif: the motif of magical gender transformation.

The NENA materials contained in this thesis are transcribed and translated into English. They are drawn from a database of recordings of members of the Zakho community living now mainly in Jerusalem, and were collected in the course of fieldwork undertaken by the author.
Introduction

This thesis 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 thesis 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. Following this, there is a brief discussion of the study of folklore, and then a description of the audio-recorded database upon which this thesis is based. The Introduction ends with an outline of the structure of the thesis, after an explanation of the system of transcription and translation of the NENA texts used here.

1. The Jewish community of Zakho

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 mahallat huzaye, ‘the neighbourhood of the Jews’, is an island in the centre of the River Khabur which flows through the town.

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

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1 For more about the history and culture of the Jews of Zakho and Kurdistan, see Gavish (2004; 2010); Ben-Yaacob (1981); Brauer (1947; 1993); Zaken (2007); Aloni (2014a).
2 For the geography of Zakho, see Gavish (2004: 21-26); Gavish (2010: 13-14).
familial affairs. Some of these letters contain requests for help from neighbouring communities after disasters: 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 Petahyah of Regensburg in the 12th century and Yehudah Al-Ḥarizi in the 13th century⁴ – however Jewish travellers first arrived in Zakho only in the 19th century.⁵ 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.⁶ 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’ woman; contrary to Benjamin’s advice, the rabbi released her from the bonds of her marriage.⁸

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 told in II Kings 17:6: ‘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.’⁹ ‘Habor’ is generally thought to be Zakho’s River Khabur.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ Nachmanides identifies the Sambation as the River Gozan (in his commentary on Deuteronomy 32:26). In many old and modern documents, the Jews of Kurdistan call themselves ha-’ovdim ba-ʾerets ’aššur ‘those who are lost in the land of Assyria’, an expression taken from Isaiah’s prophecy of redemption (27:13): ‘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

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⁶ Fischel (1939: 124).
⁷ A married woman whose husband is missing but is still considered married according to Jewish law, and is thus unable to remarry.
⁸ Benjamin (1859: 24).
⁹ JPS (1999), English translation.
¹⁰ A tributary of the Tigris. A separate river which bear the same name is a tributary of the Euphrates.
of Assyria, and they that were dispersed in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship
the Lord in the holy mountain, in Jerusalem."^{12}

In the middle of the 19th century, Zakho became the prime spiritual centre for
the Jews of Kurdistan,^{13} and many sources refer to it as yerušalayim de-kurdistan ‘the
Jerusalem of Kurdistan’, since it became a centre of training for ḥaxamím ‘rabbis’,
moḥalím ‘circumcisers’, and šoḥaṭím ‘(kosher) slaughterers’.

The rabbis of Zakho were considered an important authority throughout the
entire region. Its Great Synagogue could hold up to three thousand people. Another
synagogue, which also contained a bèt midrāš ‘study hall’ and a hêder ‘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:^{14}

אשֶׁר יִדְעֶה לְשׁוֹאֵלָה עַל דָּרוֹחֲוָי יְמָה וּלְשֵׁמֶר מְזוֹאְתָה פָּתָה כְּמִרְזָא מֵצָא חֵיָם וּפַסָּק
רָצַו מַה שְׁתֵּי קדֶשְׁיָיו לְצִירֵדָו לְפִיקָם שְׁנֵי אָראֵבָם לְמֶלֶם עִלָּיְו בֵּינֵיהֶם.

‘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,^{15} year 5568 of the creation [=the year
1798 CE], year 4 of the kingship of ‘Ali, here BGYRH [?]’

The Jews of Kurdistan immigrated to Israel in their entirety during the first
half of the 20th century,^{16} in two waves.

The first wave, during the 1920s and 1930s, occurred 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 Kurdistan; and the
decrease in their economic status.^{17} Migration during this period was made at the
initiative of individual immigrants. The immigrants arrived in small groups of families
and individuals, sometimes youths without their parents, usually in caravans through

12 JPS (1917), English translation, with some modification.
15 Proverbs 8:34-35. JPS (1917), English translation, with some modification.
16 There is evidence for the immigration of Jews to the Land of Israel even before this. Mann (1931-
1935: vol. 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
17 See Zaken (2007).
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 in Jerusalem from Islamic countries. 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’. One year later, the ‘Law for the Supervision and Administration of the Property of Jews who have Forfeited Iraqi Nationality’ was passed, under which all Jewish properties were confiscated and they were all expelled. Within two years almost all of the Jews of Iraq, among them almost all of the Jews of Iraqi Kurdistan, immigrated to Israel. Most of these immigrants, who were referred to by the immigrants of the first wave as ha-ʿolim ha-ḥadašim ‘the newcomers’, remained for some time in the maʿabarot ‘absorption camps’, then were settled in the Katamonim neighbourhood in Jerusalem and in Maʿoz Tsion outside Jerusalem. The new reality brought about an unprecedented intergenerational gap between parents and children within the community. 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 had many advantages, but was guided by a policy of ‘melting pot’ with one of its goals being the blurring of communal identities of immigrants.

20 Tsimhoni (1989).
22 For the changes in the social structure of the community, see Gavish (2004: 300-319); Gavish (2010: 316-336). 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 that this is the result of the lesser assimilation of the ‘old’ immigrants into the Israeli society.
The historical social and geographic conditions of the Jews of Kurdistan influenced the character and development of their NENA literature. 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 unpene

trated by foreign cultures or armies up until the 20th century, enabled the Jewish communities of the region to preserve very old traditions. The social structure, as well as the material culture, which very much resembled those known to us from the 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.

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, were only committed to writing by ḫaḵamim of the community in 20th-century Israel at the request of scholars. On the other hand, the Midrashim for the three portions of the Pentateuch, Va-Yehi Be-Ṣalaḥ, and Yitro, also published by Sabar, were committed to writing nearer to the time of their creation, and they can be 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 which has been preserved in manuscripts, which is literature of a religious character, and literature which is preserved only orally to this day.

2. North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic

The Aramaic language is – or more accurately, the Aramaic languages are – one of the longest continuously spoken and documented living languages, and one of the oldest languages spoken today. The oldest Aramaic documents still extant date back to the 9th century BCE. Aramaic, initially the language of the Aramaean tribes in

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23 On the literature of the Jews of Kurdistan, see Sabar (1982a); Sabar (1982c); Aloni (2014a: 21-84).
24 See footnote 5 in Chapter 2.
25 See Chapter 2.
28 The main contender for the title of the oldest living language is Coptic, a descendant of Ancient Egyptian.
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 – is due to the relative simplicity of the Aramaic writing system, compared to the Akkadian one.29 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,30 belong to this period of the language’s history: Imperial Aramaic.

The spreading 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 uniform language. The division between Eastern and Western Aramaic dialects became the most substantial one. But change processes did not remain consistent within the boundaries of each geographic region: independent dialects spoken by different ethnic and religious groups which 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.31 Neo-Aramaic is divided into four groups of dialects: North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA),32 the group which includes all of the dialects of the Jews of Kurdistan; Western Neo-Aramaic,33 spoken by Christians and Muslims in the villages Ma'lula Bakh'a and Jubb'adin in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains north of Damascus; Ṭuroyo and Mlhašo,34 two closely related Aramaic languages, each of which has several dialects and which are spoken by Christians in the region of Țor 'Abdin, in Mardin Province in south-east

29 The Akkadian cuneiform included thousands of signs, and many years of training were required to master it.
30 Biblical Aramaic is the language of most of the Book of Daniel, a large part of the Book of Ezra, one verse in Jeremiah (10:11), and two words in Genesis (37:47).
31 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). About the gap in documentation between late antiquity to the early modern period, and the earliest documented sentence in Neo-Aramaic (16th century), see Hopkins (2000).
32 According to Khan (2011: 708), this term was coined by Robert Hoberman (1988; 1989).
33 For grammar and texts, see Arnold (1989-1991).
34 For grammar and texts, see Jastrow (1992).
Turkey; and Neo-Mandaic, spoken by Mandaeans in the city of Ahwaz (in southwest Iran) and its surroundings.

NENA, spoken by Jews and Assyrian 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. 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 prior to their immigration to Israel, about thirty people. 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 most decisive ones in determining dialect cleavage. Instead, the most fundamental subgrouping within the NENA dialects is based on religious affiliation: the Jewish dialects differ from the neighbouring Christian dialects. 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 Urmī, Sanandaj, and Sulemaniyya.

Furthermore, the Jewish dialects of settlements remote from each other present familial resemblance. The dialect cleavage between Jewish and

35 For grammar and texts, see Häberl (2009); for studies of Neo-Mandaic lexicon, see Mutzafi (2014).
37 Mutzafi (2002a).
39 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.
Christian NENA would seem to have been brought about by different histories of internal migration between the two religious communities.\textsuperscript{40}

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 \textit{lišana deni} (‘our language’) subgroup. This includes the dialects of Zakho,\textsuperscript{41} Amadiya,\textsuperscript{42} Dohok, Barashe, Betnure,\textsuperscript{43} Shukho, ‘Arodan,\textsuperscript{44} ʿAtrush, Kara, and Nerwa, on the Iraqi side of the border; and two dialects – Challa\textsuperscript{45} and Gzira\textsuperscript{46} – on the Turkish side of the border.\textsuperscript{47}

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.\textsuperscript{48} This subgroup includes the dialects of Salamas,\textsuperscript{49} Urmi,\textsuperscript{50} Saqqaz,\textsuperscript{51} Sanandaj,\textsuperscript{52} and Kerend\textsuperscript{53} in Iranian Kurdistan; and the dialects of Sulemaniyya,\textsuperscript{54} Rustaqa,\textsuperscript{55} Koy Sanjaq,\textsuperscript{56} Ruwanduz, and Arbil\textsuperscript{57} in Iraqi Kurdistan.

3. The third subgroup consists of the dialects of Barzan.\textsuperscript{58}

Scholars believe that at the present state of research a drawing of a thorough and accurate dialectological map of NENA would be premature.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{40} Khan (2007a: 6).
\textsuperscript{41} See Cohen (2012).
\textsuperscript{42} See Greenblatt (2010).
\textsuperscript{43} See Mutzafi (2008a).
\textsuperscript{44} See Mutzafi (2002a). This is the name of the village used by its Jewish inhabitants; its non-Jewish inhabitants call it ‘Araḏin.
\textsuperscript{45} See Fassberg (2010).
\textsuperscript{46} See Nakano (1970; 1973).
\textsuperscript{47} Khan (2007a); Mutzafi (2008a); Fassberg (2010).
\textsuperscript{48} Mutzafi (2008b).
\textsuperscript{49} See Duval (1883); Gottheil (1893).
\textsuperscript{50} See Khan (2008a).
\textsuperscript{51} See Israeli (1997; 2003; 2014).
\textsuperscript{52} See Khan (2009).
\textsuperscript{53} See Hopkins (2002).
\textsuperscript{54} See Khan (2004).
\textsuperscript{55} See Khan (2002).
\textsuperscript{56} See Mutzafi (2004a).
\textsuperscript{57} See Khan (1999).
\textsuperscript{58} See Mutzafi (2002b; 2004b).
\textsuperscript{59} Mutzafi (2008b: 409-410).
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 – the 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 in them. 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 are not in classical literary Aramaic. Thus we must 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.\(^{60}\)

During 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:\(^{61}\) NENA dialects present ergativity.\(^{62}\) Ergativity is defined as a grammatical system which exhibits identical syntactic or morphological treatment of the sentence subject in sentences employing an intransitive verb to that of the sentence object in sentences employing a transitive verb – a treatment which is distinct from the treatment 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 gradual tendency of 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.

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\(^{60}\) Khan (2007a: 2, 11).

\(^{61}\) Khan (2007b); Doron & Khan (2010); Doron & Khan (2012); Khan (2017); Coghill (2016).

\(^{62}\) As do Ṭuroyo and Mlaḥso.
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. 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.

2. Language contact: 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.

3. Change processes in the Semitic family: NENA attracts the attention of Semiticists 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. Research can follow both processes that are a full manifestation of phenomena which had already appeared embryonically in the ancient languages (e.g. the phonemisation of the two sets of allophones of the bgdkpt consonants), and also processes whose complete life cycle occurred within the boundaries of Neo-Aramaic. Processes of the latter type are especially surprising, since they sometimes repeat similar processes that occurred in the ancient languages, without apparent causal connexion: what might be called the recycling of linguistic phenomena (e.g. the unification of the phonemes /x/ and /g/, newly formed by the split of bgdkpt, with the phonemes /h/ and ‘/ respectively, similar to the merger which took place in ancient North-Western Semitic languages). 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. 69

3. 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 any other form
of verbal or literary expression? That is, is there anything that justifies treating items
of folklore as belonging to an independent category, eligible to have its own research
methodologies? The answer to that question, according to the article ‘Folklore as a
special form of creation’ by Jakobson and Bogatyrev 70 – 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
term the ‘preventive censure of the community’. 71 ‘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.’ 72 Society is the preserving medium
of the folkloric work of art, and the survival of a given work is depended upon
transmitting it further: ‘in folklore only those forms are retained which hold a
functional value for the given community’. 73

69 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.
Likewise, it is possible to explain the (rare) divergence in several cases between the Tiberian
vocalisation and the consonantal text.
70 Jakobson & Bogatyrev (1980 [1929]).
72 Jakobson & Bogatyrev (1980 [1929]: 4-5).
According to Jakobson and Bogatyrev the relation 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 the relation 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*.74

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’.75 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!76

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’,

75 Jakobson & Bogatyrev (1980 [1929]: 6).
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’.\textsuperscript{77} 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.\textsuperscript{78}

The close association between the inception of the theoretical framework 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 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.

3.2. The inherent injustice of analysis

An analysis of a verbal item of folklore, or of any other item of folklore, is almost always an 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 in which many of the factors involved are normally disregarded and discarded in documentation and analysis. An actual performance is specially crafted by the performer (and by the environment – the reactions of audience, for instance), consciously and unconsciously, to match particular aspects of the situation: the event, the day, the place, and so on. An 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

\textsuperscript{77} Jakobson & Bogatyrev (1980 [1929]: 13-14).

\textsuperscript{78} 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); Aloni (2014b: 339).
analysis. 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 of the folklore of various cultures during the 19th and early 20th centuries may thus be explained as an assertion of and a reinforced self-recognition of the progress of modern society. Folklore was showcased as signifying precisely what modern society is not.

4. The database of Jewish NENA recordings

All of the NENA material contained in this thesis is drawn from a database of audio recordings of native speakers of Jewish NENA, members of the Zakho community, now living mainly in Jerusalem. I have collected the recordings over the past eight years by means of fieldwork, with the project commencing in April 2010. Thirty-three speakers 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 folktale, moralistic stories, fairy tales, jokes, proverbs and parables, food recipes, personal memoirs, poetry, mnemohistory, and conversations of various types.

79 This inherent injustice bring 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 an incident, many of the variables of a complex realistic occurrence, in order to be able to make effective generalisations; see Cover (1993).
81 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.
82 Thirteen women, twenty men.
It was Professor 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.83

5. Note on transcriptions and translations in this thesis

The transcription system used throughout this thesis for the NENA texts is the one used by Professor Geoffrey Khan in his NENA grammars. In addition to the standard Semitic consonant and vowel signs, intonation signs are employed: a superscript vertical line (a') indicates an intonation unit boundary; a grave accent (à) indicates the main nuclear stress in an intonation unit; and acute accents (á) indicate non-nuclear word stresses in an intonation unit. Words or phrases in Modern Hebrew are written between superscript capital H letters (H…H).84

English translations are as literal as possible; tenses are kept as in the NENA text, at the expense of standard English style.85 An example of a particularly difficult word to translate is the word hə̀nna. The literal meaning of hə̀nna 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 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. hə̀nna is translated as italicised ‘this’ throughout the English translations.

6. Thesis outline

The three chapters of this thesis explore three genres86 of the rich oral heritage of the Jews of Zakho: proverbs, enriched biblical narratives, and folktales. The three genres picked for this thesis, or rather the analysed unit of each of these genres, progress so

83 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.’
84 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.
85 For a study of Jewish Zakho NENA narrative syntax, see Cohen (2012: 237-357).
86 For the centrality of genre as a category in the study of folklore, see Ben-Amos (1969); Ben-Amos (1976a); Ben-Amos (1976b); Seitel (1999).
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 whole folktale.

The first chapter deals with an important member of the family of gnomic genres: the proverb. The chapter provides a contextualisation in 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 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 of analysis of such narratives: the concept of the transposed motifeme. In order to achieve an understanding of this term, the chapter gives a 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.

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 gender transformation. The chapter contextualises this motif in the scholarship of folk-literature, and proposes a reading of the folktale.

At the end of the thesis are some concluding remarks.
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 that 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,¹ which ‘native as well as foreign speakers ... need to know ... in order to communicate effectively in that language’.² 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 (Section 1), and will then discuss some paremiological issues exemplified by Zakho proverbs (Sections 2-13). The remainder of the chapter consists of proverbs collected in my own fieldwork (Sections 14-15).

1. Paremiography: Published collections of Zakho proverbs

Four collections of Jewish Zakho NENA proverbs have been published so far: Bar-Adon (1930), Rivlin (1945; 1946), Segal (1955), and Sabar (1978). Together they comprise approximately 400 proverbs.³

Each of these collections utilises a different lexicographical system. Bar-Adon published, in the early days of Jewish Neo-Aramaic scholarship, a short collection of seven proverbs, which he had heard from Hakham Baruch.⁴ Bar-Adon quotes the Neo-Aramaic proverb in vocalised Hebrew script, gives its literal⁵ translation into Hebrew,

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¹ Permiakov (1985).
³ A few proverbs occur in more than one collection.
⁴ Bar-Adon (1930: 12).
⁵ On the difficulties that the term ‘literal meaning’ entails, see Searle (1979).
and adds a comment about its ‘intention’, sometimes including some linguistic remarks. For example:

1. šuləd ’osili xurasi, ləbbi k-čahe g-nexi ’izasi
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.⁶

Rivlin lists the 108⁷ proverbs of his collection in alphabetical order. They are transcribed in vocalised Hebrew script. For each proverb, a literal⁸ translation into Hebrew is given, after which he gives a short explanation of the meaning or intention of the proverb. For example:

32. ’an peši tre, peši ṭlaha.
(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.⁹

In some instances, when a proverb alludes to a narrative that is necessary to understand it, Rivlin adds the narrative as well.¹⁰ For example:

95. xa ’ena ʾal solqa u-xa ’ena ʾal kotqlka.
(One eye towards the beet and one eye towards the dumpling.)
A tale: They served a man with some beet, which was very good and sweet, and also with a meat dumpling. He did not know which he should

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⁶ Bar-Adon (1930: 12). His footnotes have been omitted. The Neo-Aramaic in the examples cited in this section are transcribed according to the transcription system used throughout this thesis, which involves some modification of the forms given by the original authors. The translation from Hebrew is mine.
⁷ 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.
⁸ See footnote 5 above.
⁹ Rivlin (1945: 213).
¹⁰ On proverbs that represent or summarise narratives, see Section 8 below.
choose. As a result, other people ate them both, and he remained with neither.\footnote{Rivlin (1945: 213)}

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,\footnote{This is an allusion to Isaiah 27:13. (My footnote.)} and also to observe the spirit of the environment in which they live, their manner, and their wisdom and morals.\footnote{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 literally 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. $\text{súse gə-mnále u-sarîtlâna-ši g-márəm} \text{ ʔaqle}$
   \begin{itemize}
   \item \text{(sarîtlâna Syr[iac] rarely for ֵם, Payne Smith, Thesaurus, s.v.; -animation, Kurdish; aqle, perhaps from argle, Syr[iac] ֵם, rather than from Syr[iac] ֵם ‘twist’)}
   \end{itemize}
   ‘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, and the frog put out his foot too.’ Maclean, however, explains the proverb: If one man gets a present everyone else expects one too.)\footnote{Segal (1955: 254).}
Segal’s principal informants in compiling the collection were Ḥakham Mordekhai ‘Alwani and Ḥakham Ḥabib ‘Alwani, my grandfather. It seems that one of Segal’s goal was to contextualise the proverbs collected by him 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, and one proverb which is partially in Turkish. According to Sabar, in addition to multiple loanwords from old layers of Hebrew, Kurdish, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish, a salient feature of the 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 notes that the reasons for not 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 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-duk yakura*. ‘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.).

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15 Segal (1955: 253).
16 Sabar (1978: 221), no. 16.
19 Sabar (1978: 218). In my opinion, the foreign language may also serve as a marker of proverbiality by increasing its out-of-contextness. On out-of-contextness as an important feature of proverbs, see the discussion in Section 3 and Section 10.1 below.
Sabar also give an index of ‘subjects’,\textsuperscript{21} for example, the proverb given above appears under ‘Honor and Shame’\textsuperscript{22}.

2. 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 its content, 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 in it, 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, including the biblical Book of Proverbs.

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 incapsulating ‘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 will result 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 will result 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

\textsuperscript{21} Sabar (1978: 232).
\textsuperscript{22} Sabar (1978: 232).
anthropologist Malinowski: ‘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.

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 has been done by broadening the scope of what would be considered a proverb, and the latter two by giving the context in which the proverb was recorded.

3. Defining proverbs

Despite their very wide distribution in all registers of language, and the ease with which we intuitively recognise proverbs when encountering them, it is not at all trivial to define what one is. In fact, some paremiologists 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.

The author, Archer Taylor, ‘remarked that in a way his whole book constituted a definition of the proverb’.

Another influential scholar, Bartlett Jere Whiting, writes:

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25 See Section 13 below.
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.\textsuperscript{28}

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:\textsuperscript{29}

Proverbs ... may be provisionally defined as short, traditional, ‘out-of-context’, statements used to further some social end.\textsuperscript{30}

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 ‘traditional’? 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.\textsuperscript{31}

In the spirit of the programmatic article by Jakobson and Bogatyrev,\textsuperscript{32} Hasan-Rokem introduces into the discussion the element of collective experience. The proverb is a

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{28} Whiting (1952: 331), quoted in Dundes (1981: 44).
\bibitem{29} See Section 9 below.
\bibitem{30} Seitel (1969: 145).
\bibitem{31} Hasan-Rokem (1982a: 11).
\bibitem{32} Jakobson & Bogatyrev (1980 [1929]), referred to in Section 3 of the Introduction to this thesis.
\end{thebibliography}
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’.33

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.

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.’34 Thus he offers the following definition, which involves the linguistic concepts of topic and comment:35

\[ T \]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.36

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 puts it, ‘Dundes’ topic/comment

33 See Section 5 below. ‘Competence’ here is as used by Chomsky; Hasan-Rokem (1982a: 11) refers to Chomsky (1965: 4).
34 Dundes (1981: 45).
35 These are particularly associated with the functional sentence perspective of the Prague School.
36 Dundes (1981: 60).
analysis is likewise applicable to any number of ordinary, “made-up” utterances.\textsuperscript{37} The only thing that differentiates ‘ordinary utterances’ from proverbs under this definition is the concept of traditionality.\textsuperscript{38} We shall return to Dundes’s approach in Section 7 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 sentences drawn from long experience’.\textsuperscript{39} And Lord John Russell defined the proverb as ‘one man’s wit and all man’s wisdom’.\textsuperscript{40} 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’.\textsuperscript{41}

4. Image, message, formula, and proverb synonymity

The Finish folklorist and paremiologist Matti Kuusi distinguishes between three components of the proverb: the proverb’s image, its message, and its formula.\textsuperscript{42} 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 from the proverb’s image or message. This can be better understood with an example:

\[ be-kålo \ s'åš-lu, \| \ be-xåtna \ lå \ r'åš-lu. \]

‘[In] the house of the bride they are [already] rejoicing, [but in] the house of the bridegroom they have not [yet] felt [anything].’\textsuperscript{43}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Arora (1994: 10).
  \item For a discussion of the concept of traditionality, see Section 10, features 10.2 and 10.3, below.
  \item Quoted by Dundes (1981: 61).
  \item Taylor (1981: 3).
  \item Taylor (1981: 3-4).
  \item Kuusi (1966); Dundes (1981: 46-47).
  \item Proverb no. 6 in the present collection. The proverbs are given in Sections 14 and 15. The proverbs in Section 14 are given morpheme-by-morpheme glosses, and a context situation is provided for each.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
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.44 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:

\[
dàrmán šəzāne ʾiz,\| dàrmán šrē lēs.\| \\
‘There is a cure for the mad, [but] there is no cure for the crazed.’45
\]

\[
yóma gnèlè,\| qáza u-bála lâ-gnèlu.\| \\
‘The day ended, [but its] troubles did not end.’46
\]

The division between the three components of the proverb has relevance to a phenomenon that may be termed ‘proverb synonymity’. Synonymity between proverbs may occur in either the images or the messages of the proverbs. Image synonymity is similitude of the images expressed in the proverbs, whereas message synonymity occurs when different proverbs with dissimilar images convey a similar message and are used to further a similar end. Take, for example:

\[
šàqfa\| la mšāpya ʾal šàqfa,\| lá-k-táfqa ṣbba.\| \\
‘[If] a piece did not resemble a[nother] piece, it would not have met it.’47
\]

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:

\[
čūčōksa kšōlla zarzūra u-trōhun fayyāre. \\
‘A bird was the surety of a starling and both of them can fly.’48
\]

The message is also the same in:

\[\]
sawóna qròšle, | sotónta hnèlela.
‘The old man pinched [and] the old woman enjoyed it.’

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. ‘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’.

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

6. Internal structure

Looked at in terms of their internal linguistic features, Jewish Zakho proverbs appear in various forms. They may 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

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49 Proverb no. 58 in the present collection.
50 On folkloristic structure, see Section 7 below.
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.\footnote{On the perceptibility of proverbiality, see Section 10 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’ (Section 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 a number of 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. There are also a couple of semantic features: parallelism, and particular semantic fields. And there are several 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.\footnote{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.)}

\begin{quote}
\textit{hākan sotěni hawéwala} ḫškása,\textsuperscript{1} b-ṣarxáxwala māmo.\textsuperscript{1}
\end{quote}

‘If our grandmother had had testicles, we would have called her uncle.’\footnote{Proverb no. 12 in the present collection.}
Some conditional proverbs do not make the conditional marker hakan ‘if’ explicit.

\[\text{šāqfa} \text{ la mšāpya } \text{žl šāqfa, \ lâ-k-tâfqa ŋbbâ.}\]

‘[If] a piece did not resemble a[nother] piece, it would not have met it.’\(^54\)

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

6.2. Single clause with initial noun

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

\[\text{dûnye qṣâya-la.}\]

‘The world is [only] a preparation. [Therefore everything should be taken easily].’\(^56\)

\[\text{əĚla dîda g-mzabnâte go-řâba šuqâne.}\]

‘She sells her yarn in many markets.’\(^57\)

\[\text{ərxe ərxad ɬilaha-lu.}\]

‘Guests are guests of God.’\(^58\)


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\(^54\) Proverb no. 72 in the present collection.

\(^55\) 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.

\(^56\) Proverb no. 78 in the present collection. Several speakers offered the interpretation: ‘The world should be managed [smoothly].’

\(^57\) Proverb no. 98 in the present collection.

\(^58\) SA:5.
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.

ʾíza də̀d lébox nagzə̀ta nšuqła.¹
‘A hand that you cannot bite, [you should] kiss.’⁵⁹

kúd k-込め ṭāba k-éxel čuča.¹
‘He who knows much eats little.’⁶⁰

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.

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 tanéṣa xe nāṣa.¹
‘[Like] fire under a clay pot, a word under a person.’⁶¹

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¹ Proverb no. 2 in the present collection.
² Proverb no. 18 in the present collection.
³ Proverb no. 55 in the present collection.
tórə g-nàpɛl, sakíne g-zàhfi. The ox falls down, [and] the knives become abundant.\textsuperscript{62}

dərmáⁿ šɔzáne ñis, dərmáⁿ šrí’e lès. There is a cure for the mad, [but] there is no cure for the crazed.\textsuperscript{63}

xá bábaⁱ ɡa-mdábr ɔsrà yalúnke, ɔsrà yalúnke la-ga-mdábrí xá bába. One father [can] support ten children, [but] ten children cannot support one father.\textsuperscript{64}

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

be-kálo sès-lu, be-xánə lá rès-lu. [In] the house of the bride they are [already] rejoicing, [but in] the house of the bridegroom they have not [yet] felt [anything].\textsuperscript{65}

lá ’áw jàjik, lá ’áw zàhhar. ‘Not [of] that jajik [herbal cheese], [and] not [of] that poison.’\textsuperscript{66}


6.5. Parallelism

Some proverbs have an overt parallelism in semantics between two parts of the proverb.

\textsuperscript{62} Proverb no. 15 in the present collection.
\textsuperscript{63} Proverb no. 10 in the present collection.
\textsuperscript{64} Proverb no. 39 in the present collection.
\textsuperscript{65} Proverb no. 6 in the present collection.
\textsuperscript{66} Proverb no. 44 in the present collection.
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.’

One father can support ten children, [but] ten children cannot support one father.

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.


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.

(a) Marriage:

\[palgàd bàrtîl, \ hònna-le.\]

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


67 Proverb no. 3 in the present collection.
68 Proverb no. 39 in the present collection.
69 Proverb no. 67 in the present collection.

(b) Family:

\[ bráni u-bóê-bráni u-ê\acute{\i}ni \overset{\smile}{\grave{\i}}\text{lli}. \]

‘[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.’\(^{70}\)

\[ kúd gáwər y\text{̀}m\text{̀}m\text{̀}n, l b-\overline{s}{\acute{\alpha}\acute{r}}\acute{\alpha}xle bábo, l kúd gáwər s\text{ò}t\text{̀}n, l b-am\acute{r}áxle mà\text{̀}m. \]

‘Whoever marries our mother, we shall call him father. Whoever marries our grandmother, we shall call him uncle.’\(^{71}\)

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


(c) Men and women:

\[ dí\text{̀}w\text{̀}n b\text{̀}x\text{̀}t\text{̀}s\text{̀}a, l b\acute{s}\acute{s} bass\text{̀}m\acute{a}\text{-}\acute{l}e l m\text{̀}n-dí\wedge\text{̀}m\text{̀}n g\acute{u}\text{̀}r. \]

‘Sitting with women is better than sitting with men.’\(^{72}\)

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


\(^{70}\) Proverb no. 7 in the present collection.

\(^{71}\) Proverb no. 23 in the present collection. Sabar (2002a: 210) notes that màmò 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.

\(^{72}\) Proverb no. 83 in the present collection.
(d) Animals: donkeys, dogs, fish, foxes, mice, chickens, roosters, crabs, lions, sheep, snakes, bulls, cows, calves, livestock in general, birds, horses, camels, ravens, doves, cats, ants, lice:

\[\text{ʾə́zza mgurwānta} k-\text{sātya mən-rēş ʾənə.}\]

‘The grimy goat drinks from the fountain-head.’\(^{73}\)

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


(e) Kitchen and cooking:

\[\text{qóqa g-êmer} xés\i dē\i hwa-l\i, \text{ʾotrāna [var: káfkir] g-êmer} \text{ʾaṭta mpóqli mònnox.}\]

‘The clay pot says, “My bottom is made of gold”; the ladle says, “I just came out of there.”’\(^{74}\)

\[\text{qóza dōd hawēbā rāba kabanīyat, k-őzya yán maliùxta yán pàxta.}\]

‘A [pot of] cooked food that many cooks are involved in making turns out either [too] salty or [too] bland.’\(^{75}\)

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

(f) Vulgarity: genitalia, excrement, urine, flatulence, prostitution, promiscuity:

\[
\text{partə́na mə̀rre,| la-k-́en ma b-ózən bəd-ó miráta dīdi,| xmára mə̀rre| ba-́ána lá g-mə́hkən.}
\]

‘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.”’

Vulgarity serves to increase the out-of-contextness of the proverb, its ‘improper’ images being sharply contrasted with the casual stream of discourse.

Vulgarity image proverbs in the present collection: 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.


(g) Death and the dead:

\[
mísa də́hun qam-qorile, ʾdal gan-́èzen| ʾdal gə̣hə́nəm,| lè-waju.
\]

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

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: 19, 25, 50, 51, 60, 125, 158, 183.


6.7. Rhyme

Some proverbs rhyme.

\[\text{———} \]

76 Proverb no. 66 in the present collection.
77 See also Section 10.1 below.
78 Proverb no. 51 in the present collection.
šúl ʼozûle xurâsi, l k-čáhe lábbi u-g-néxi ʾizasi. l
‘Work done [for me] by my friends, my heart gets tired and my hands rest.’79

gwârâ ʼstârâ. l
‘Marriage is a shelter.’80

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.


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.

dré-la máya bōd-tré ʾsaqyâsâ. l
‘She poured water in both troughs.’81

maríra xtâyâ, l xôlya ʾelâyâ. l
‘Bitter below, sweet above.’82

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.

79 Proverb no. 71 in the present collection. Cf. BA:1.
80 Proverb no. 8 in the present collection.
81 Proverb no. 81 in the present collection.
82 Proverb no. 82 in the present collection.

6.9. Alliteration

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

\[\text{bróni u-bór-bróni u-té\text{'}ni ʾálli}.\]  
‘[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.’\(^{83}\)

\[\text{kúri u-kur\text{\’}sti, u-té\text{'}ni ʾálli}.\]  
‘[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.’\(^{84}\)

\[\text{xmártə mpáqlula xalawəsə.}\]  
‘The she-ass found relatives [lit. uncles].’\(^{85}\)

\[\text{lá ʾáw jājik, lá ʾáw żāḥhər}.\]  
‘Not [of] that jājik [herbal cheese], [and] not [of] that poison.’\(^{86}\)


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\(^{83}\) Proverb no. 7 in the present collection.

\(^{84}\) Proverb no. 7 var. in the present collection.

\(^{85}\) Proverb no. 28 in the present collection.

\(^{86}\) Proverb no. 44 in the present collection.
6.10. None of the features listed above

Some proverbs do not contain any of the aforementioned features.

\[
\begin{align*}
xá dôle q-qêżâ, & \text{ 'The beard of one is on fire, the other says: “Let me roast my partridge over it.”'}^\text{87} \\
xá lébe l-xâ, & \text{ ‘One cannot overcome [even] one, [but] yet he says come unto me in pairs.’}^\text{88} \\
dámmod żômša g-nápqa, & \text{ ‘When the sun comes out [= appears], the cloud goes to her, it also wants to warm up.’}^\text{89}
\end{align*}
\]


7. Folkloristic structure

In his article ‘On the structure of the proverb’,\textsuperscript{90} Alan Dundes offers a different approach towards the analysis of proverb structure to the one taken in the previous

\textsuperscript{87} Proverb no. 24 in the present collection.
\textsuperscript{88} Proverb no. 38 in the present collection.
\textsuperscript{89} Proverb no. 154 in the present collection.
\textsuperscript{90} Dundes (1981).
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.91

Dundes also detaches his analysis from the question of function:92 ‘The critical question is thus not what a proverb does, but what a proverb is.’93

As quoted above,94 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’.95 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’96 – that is, a proverb consisting of more than one descriptive element – is like father, like son. A Zakho example would be:

\[
lá ʾaw jājik, | lá ʾaw žāḥhar, |
\]

‘Not [of] that jājik [herbal cheese], [and] not [of] that poison.’97

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:

91 Dundes (1981: 46).
92 This contrasts with the approach of Seitel, for example; see Section 9 below.
93 Dundes (1981: 45).
94 See Section 3 above.
95 Dundes (1981: 60).
96 Dundes (1981: 60).
97 Proverb no. 44 in the present collection.
bába g-yáwəl ta-yalònke| kútru k-fârḥi,| yálonke g-yáwi ta-babòhun| kútru g-bàξi,|
‘[When] a father gives to [=provides for] his children, both [sides] are happy, [when] children give to their father, both [sides] cry.’98

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.99 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.100

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:

\[
dərmán ʃəzāne ʾiz,| dərmán ʃrˈe ləs,| \\
\text{‘There is a cure for the mad, [but] there is no cure for the crazed.’}^{101} \\
\text{(cure for the mad ≠ cure for the crazed, there is a ≠ there is no)}
\]

\[
mād jomá‘-lu b-əd kočəksa,| zάllu b-əd ʾɔtrənə. \\
\text{‘What they have saved with a spoon, they wasted with a ladle.’}^{102} \\
\text{(saved ≠ wasted, spoon ≠ ladle)}
\]

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:

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98 Proverb no. 80 in the present collection.
100 Dundes (1981: 59).
101 Proverb no. 10 in the present collection.
102 Proverb no. 48 in the present collection.
lá èwa\| u-lá sə̀xwa,\| ‘Not [in] cloud and not [in] fine weather.’\(^{103}\)
(not = not, cloud ≠ fine weather)

sawóna qrə̀s-le,\| sotə̀nta hnə-le-la,\|
‘The old man pinched [and] the old woman enjoyed it.’\(^{104}\)
(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:

qə̀m-le čə̀ka,\| bə̀sm-la dùka,\|
‘Čeka got up, [and] the place become [more] pleasant.’\(^{105}\)

ʾóz hawə̀sa,\| mándi b-ṃə̀ya,\|
‘Do an act of kindness, [and] throw [it] in the water.’\(^{106}\)

For Dundes, ‘all proverbs are potentially propositions which compare and/or contrast’\(^{107}\). 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.\(^{108}\) 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:

\(^{103}\) Proverb no. 45 in the present collection.
\(^{104}\) Proverb no. 58 in the present collection.
\(^{105}\) Proverb no. 59 in the present collection.
\(^{106}\) Proverb no. 74 in the present collection.
\(^{107}\) Dundes (1981: 54).
šūla| ʾàrya-le,| g-náḥki ʾàlle,| k-páyeš ruviš,|
‘Work is a lion. Only touch it [and] it becomes a fox.’
(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. 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, 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.

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

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109 Proverb no. 73 in the present collection.
110 A book dedicated to this topic is Hasan-Rokem (1982a).
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. 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. 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.

\[xmára k-ťe 'áxel ná'na'?\]

‘Does a donkey know to eat spearmint?’

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

\[\footnote{Seitel (1969).}\]
\[\footnote{Proverb no. 41 in the present collection.}\]
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,114 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:

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?115

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114 The Ibo people of Eastern Nigeria.
In Seitel’s view, the answer to this question is to be found in these ‘external’ categories of function.

10. 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’, 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 by formulated. According to her, the important question is not what a proverb is, but rather what makes listeners 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? 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 argues, ‘the success of a proverb performance as such must depend ultimately 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 will refer 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.’

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’

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116 Arora (1994).
117 Arora (1994: 4). In the words of Seitel (1969: 144): ‘How does one recognize that which he is going to study?’
119 Arora (1994: 8).
in ‘They say,’ who direct. The *proverb user* is but the instrument through which the proverb speaks to the audience.\textsuperscript{120}

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.\textsuperscript{121} These features, therefore, play a crucial role in the process of the acceptance or rejection of new proverbs in a particular community.\textsuperscript{122}

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.\textsuperscript{123} 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 only be observed by a listener or researcher when proverbs occur within the framework of natural discourse.\textsuperscript{124}

10.2. Traditionality

For a researcher, the traditionality of a proverb is in many cases a verifiable attribute.\textsuperscript{125} 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.

\textsuperscript{120} Arewa and Dundes (1964: 70), adapted by Arora (1994: 5). Arora’s adaptations are in italics.
\textsuperscript{121} Arora (1994: 13-23).
\textsuperscript{122} 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.
\textsuperscript{123} See, for instance, Seitel’s definition quoted in Section 3 above.
\textsuperscript{124} Hence the importance of providing context situations in a proverb collection; see Section 13 below.
\textsuperscript{125} Arora (1994: 7).
This, however, cannot be applied to languages for which written sources are lacking. Neo-Aramaic, in this respect, is 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.\(^\text{126}\) Furthermore, many Neo-Aramaic proverbs may have parallel proverbs attested in historical documents of other languages of the area (Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, or Arabic).

### 10.3. Currency

Taylor defined the proverb as ‘a saying current among the folk’.\(^\text{127}\) 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.\(^\text{128}\)

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 the knowledge, judgement, and familiarity with the lexicon of proverbs of modern speakers 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”’.\(^\text{129}\)

### 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

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\(^\text{126}\) For an example of a Jewish Zakho proverb with a Talmudic parallel, see proverb no. 64 in the present collection.

\(^\text{127}\) Taylor (1985: 3).

\(^\text{128}\) 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.’

\(^\text{129}\) Arora (1994: 8).
common for simple sentences to be repeated in any conversation. Arora claims, however, that ‘more complex utterances are not as a rule repeated word for word on other occasions’.  

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’, and ‘[intimate] to those who do not know it that it is a proverb’. 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’.

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’. 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’. 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.

10.7. Paradox and irony

Proverbs may use features such as paradox or irony, or ‘sharp contrasts and surprising comparisons’. These semantic features ‘add to the impression of an utterance as a

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130 Arora (1994: 8).
133 Arora (1994: 10). See Section 6 above for examples of these sorts of features.
136 See Section 13 below.
polished artefact, rather than a casual statement’. In doing so, ‘they contribute to the “made-up/non-made-up” contrast’.

10.8. Lexical markers

The use of archaic lexical items both ‘mark an utterance as non-conversational’ and ‘provide added evidence to the listener that what he is hearing is an “old” saying’. Along the same lines, Sabar 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.’

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 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’.

139 Arora (1994: 12).
140 Arora (1994: 12).
141 Sabar (1978: 218, and footnote 18). Sabar gives the following example (SA:150): zālle xóla bāsor dōla. ‘The rope has followed the drum (or the bucket).’ Sabar explains that the original meaning of the archaic word dōla, ‘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.
11. Deictic and anaphoric usage

A distinction may be made between deictic and anaphoric usages of the proverb. 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.

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 the one between behavioural and narrative usages. Deictic and anaphoric usages can each be found in both behavioural and narrative contexts.

12. 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.\(^\text{144}\) 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 Sections 6 and 10 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 will be termed the proverb-reality cycle:

(a) a general, recurring situation in reality, or a general truth learned from experience (i.e. a ‘type\(^\text{145}\) of reality, in terms of linguistic theory)

\[\downarrow\]

(b) the formulation of a proverb, by way of abstraction, generalisation

(the \textit{poiesis} of the proverb, its creative processing)

\[\downarrow\]

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

\(^{144}\) See also Section 10.7 above.

\(^{145}\) As opposed to a ‘token’. The relation in the pair type/token in this context is similar to the one in the Saussurean pair \textit{langue/parole}. 

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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 in different stages will produce 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:

   \[ \text{pára } xwàra | ta } yóma } kòma. \]
   ‘A white coin for a black day.’\(^{146}\)

   \[ \text{palgód } qahbúsa | mán } nəxpúsa. \]
   ‘Half of the lewdness is caused by shyness.’\(^{147}\)

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:

   \[ \text{ʾaqúbra } lá } g-yáʾel } go-nùqba, | g-máyʾel } kanúšta } ʾəmm-e. \]
   ‘A mouse cannot enter the hole, [but yet it tries to] take a broom in with it.’\(^{148}\)

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:

   \[ \text{kúd } g-šbe } sàker, | lá-g-manélu } kašye. \]
   ‘Whoever wants to get drunk does not count the cups.’\(^{149}\)
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.

One 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. Context situations

In the present collection of proverbs, a context situation is provided for each proverb in Section 14, 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.\(^\text{150}\)

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.\(^\text{151}\)

\(^{150}\) Hasan-Rokem (1982a: 16): ‘The different performances reveal the denotative and connotative variation of a proverb, in the same way a word’s different performances reveal the semantic variation of a word.’

\(^{151}\) 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.
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 which appears in all four previously published collections (with slight variations):\textsuperscript{152}

\begin{center}
\textit{déna l-gūre, τālga l-tūre.}
\end{center}

‘Debt on men, snow on mountains.’\textsuperscript{153}

Each collection gives a different explanation of the message of this proverb, and has a different understanding of the correlations between the metaphor constituents and what they are to represent. Bar-Adon explains: ‘A man must not despair due to the load of his debt, like the eternal snow which the mountains carry patientely.’\textsuperscript{154} 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.’\textsuperscript{155} 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.’\textsuperscript{156} 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!’\textsuperscript{157} That is, the naturalness of mountains carrying a heavy load of snow is correlated with the supposed naturalness of men to have debts.

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.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{152} BA:7, R:86, SE:125, SA:38.
\textsuperscript{153} Sabar’s (1978: 223) translation has been provided here. Interestingly, the first half of the proverb appears in the Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 3b: יונאי לﬀƿרריי.
\textsuperscript{154} Bar-Adon (1930: 13), (my translation).
\textsuperscript{155} Rivlin (1946: 212), (my translation).
\textsuperscript{156} Segal (1955: 268).
\textsuperscript{157} Sabar (1978: 223).
\textsuperscript{158} 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 between a proverb and 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
14. 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,\(^{159}\) translated,\(^{160}\) and given a context situation.\(^{161}\)

1. ʿázza mgurwánta\(^1\) k-šátya mən-rēš ʾěna.\(^1\)
   goat,F grimy,F IND-drink.IPVF from-head.GEN fountain/spring.F
   The grimy goat drinks from the fountain-head.

   Vars.: ʿázza mgurwánta\(^1\) g-éza ʾel réš ʾěna.\(^1\) ‘The grimy goat goes to the fountain-head.’ ʿázza mgurwánta\(^1\) k-šátya mən-rēš xawòra.\(^1\) ‘The grimy goat drinks from the river’s head.’

   yaʾel dmáxla kālānī jmédla mən-qārsa\(^1\)
   mondēlī ʿālla laḥēfa márra-li ʿo-laḥēfa
   dād-mānī-le dād-mānī-le?! la-g-bānne!\(^1\)
   lá-g-ban mkāsyan ʾōbbe! mārri-laḥ ĥawā
   pāxe-paqōz, \(\)ʿázza mgurwánta\(^1\) g-éza
   šátya mən-rēš ʾěna.\(^1\)

   Yael spent the night with us, she was very cold [lit. she froze of cold], I covered her with a blanket [lit. I threw on her a blanket], she said to me, ‘This blanket, of whom is it?! I do not want it! I do not want to cover [myself] with it!’ I told her, ‘Very well! A grimy goat goes [and] drinks from the fountain-head.’

2. ʾīza d-ad léb\(^162\) ox nāgz-ṭ-ta\(^1\)
   hand,F of-GEN unable-2M.SG bite.IPVF-3M.SG-ACC.3F.SG
   nšūq-la.\(^1\)
   kiss.IMP.2SG-ACC.3F.SG

   A hand that you cannot bite, [you should] kiss.

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\(^{159}\) 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, IPVF imperfective, JUS jussive, M masculine, NEG negator, PAST past tense, PFV perfective, PFV_PTCP perfective participle, PL plural, POSS possessive, REL relative, SG singular, VERB_N verbal noun, 1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person.

\(^{160}\) See note about translation in Section 5 of the Introduction.

\(^{161}\) See Section 13 above.

\(^{162}\) A construction from older Aramaic la ʾit b- ‘there is not in-’. 
Var.: ’îz lébox nayzâta\| nšùqla.\| ‘Hand you cannot bite, kiss.’

Cf. SE:72.

The connexion between kissing and biting as opposite expressions of love and hate can be found in Midrash Rabbah Genesis 78:9, in an interpretation to Genesis 33:4, with regard to Jacob and Esau.

xa-báxta ’úzla gazînta ’el-’izâmsa\| u-môkhéla ma-’úzla u-mto’álla b-rêša,\| u-môrra g-šbawa nasyâwa ʾə̀mmma,\| môrra lá-g-maxarwânne bës ʾaxôni,\| ’îz lébox nayzâta\| nšùqla.\| u-môkhéli ʾə̀mmma hâš.\| A [certain] woman complained [lit. made a complaint] about her sister-in-law, and told [her] what she has done and what trouble she caused her [lit. played with her head]. And she said she had wanted to quarrel with her, [but] she said [to herself] ‘I should not destroy the house of my brother, a hand which you cannot bite, kiss it. And I spoke with her well [=nicely].’

3. xáṣa g-əmra:\|
sister IND-say.IPV.3F.SG

ʾaxôn-i,\| xuzí xazy-án-nox wázir dûnye,\| brother-POSS.1SG I_wish see.IPV-1F.SG-ACC.2M.SG wazir.M.GEN world.F

ʾaxôna g-əmêr:\|
xàs-i,\| brother IND-say.IPV.3M.SG sister-POSS.1SG

xuzí xaz-ôn-nax xəddám-təd bəxt-i,\| I_wish see.IPV-1M.SG-ACC.2F.SG servant_maid-GEN wife-POSS.1SG

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.: xáṣa g-əmra:\| ʾaxôni, xuzí xazyánnox wazîra,\| / wázir màsâ,\| / ḥâkóm dûnye,\| / ḥâkómat qâsra,\| / ḥâkôma go qâsra,\| … ’axôna g-əmêr:\| xási,\| xuzí xazÖnnax gawësa qam bèsi.\| ‘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.”’
I love my eldest [lit. firstborn] brother very much, throughout the years [lit. all of the years] whatever he asks me I give him, also money when he needed. My own dear soul [lit. sweet spirit/soul] was for him. When he married I did for him and for his wife whatever they wanted, and he always used to ask me to help his wife with the housework because she cannot do [this] work by herself. After a few years I understood what 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. ʼaqūbra lá g-yáʾel go-nùqba, sáng- 3M.SG mouse.M  Neg IND enter IPFV 3M.SG hole.M

3M.SG g-máyʾal kanúšta 3mm-e.3M.SG broom.F with GEN 3M.SG

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

Var.: ‘aqūbra lebè yāʾel go-nùqba … ‘A mouse cannot enter the hole …’

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

My mother-in-law invited us for Pesach. I told my friend she should come with us, I felt sorry for her [lit. my heart started for her] [since] she does not have anyone [= any 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. ʿol reš yatûme g-lépi garà’e.]
   on head.M.Gen orphan.M IND-learn.IPFIv.3PL barber.M.PL
   On the head of the orphan do the barbers learn.

Var.: ʿol reš yatûma g-lépi ʿizzle grâ’a. ‘On the head of the orphan they learn to cut
hair over it.’

dammad-škâlli lépan mbâšlan, g-
ombâšlânwa matfuniyye163 u-
examûṣta,164 u-kûlla qazâne k-saqlânwala
ta-jirâne déní dad-faqîre weâlû! u-ʾészwalu
xa-kâflâtad yatûne.1 xmási mûrra, ʿọto-
hila dûnyc, ʿol reš yatûma g-lépi grâ’a.1
bâle-áhat ʿúslax mûšwa-šîk.1

When I started learning to cook, I used
to cook matfuniyye163 and xamuṣta,164
and I used to take the whole pot to our
neighbours who were poor and had
many children [lit. a 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 also did
a mitzvah [= a good deed].’

6. be-kâlo ʾlá rʾšš-lû.1165
   house.gen-bride shake.Pfvi-3pl
   house.gen-bridgroom neg feel.Pfvi-3pl
   [In] the house of the bride they are [already] rejoicing, [but in] the house of
the bridgroom they have not [yet] felt165 [anything].

jíran déní séla mûrra ta-yámmi sâtûna,1
mbârêxli, g-šbi mšâdri gorî háwe
1ʾkonsul2 go-ʾamêrika.1 yómmi mboqûra,1
mání mûrræ-lax‘î mûrra, ʿú-xa bâle k-
îan ʿúkun ʾkonsul2 hîle sawôna, u-lês
čú-xa muṣ-gorî.1 yómmi štôqla.1 xarâe
mûrra ta-bâbi, be-kâlo ʾšš-lû, be-xûna
lá rʾšš-lû.1 básar kmá sabása, jíran mûrra
la-mšodórru gorî, mšodórru gër nása.1

Our neighbour came [and] said to my
mother, ‘Sâtuna, 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 bridgroom they have not [yet]
felt [anything].’ After a few weeks, the

163 A tomato soup with meat dumplings.
164 A sour soup with meat dumplings.
165 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 rʾš is ‘to feel’. This is
possibly due to the influence of the Modern Hebrew cognate rgš.
neighbour said, ‘They did not send my husband, they sent another person.’


son-POSS.1SG and- son-GEN-son-POSS.1SG and- load.M-POSS.1SG on-1SG

[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-kurásti, ṭe’ni ẓallí. / rəš-xəsí. ‘[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 dánye húla l-reší.*

The entire world is on my head. My son and the son of my son – and my load is on me.

*u-ṭe’ni ẓallí.*

*šul-’éza kúlle-ile ẓallí,* hám ṭəxwási u-

hám yalúnke dídi b-dáse páshi ṭəmmi.

*kúri u-kurásti,* ṭe’ni ẓallí. *gülli mgombálli go-šuła.*

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* stàra.*

marriage [= marry.INF] cover.INF

Marriage is a shelter.

Var.: *gwàra* stàra-le.* ‘Marriage is a shelter.’

Cf. R:81, a synonym.

*dáde hár g-əmráwa ṭaléni,* bráti bnása

lázəm gòri, *gwàra* stàra-le.*

Dade always used to tell us: ‘My daughter, girls should get married, marriage is a shelter.’
9. **dolamanl** – **brīxa** | **hāwe** | **šlo-lox**
   rich.M | blessed.M.SG | be.IPV.3M.SG | on-2M.SG
   
   **fāqqir** – **m-ēka** | **wéle-lox**
   poor.M.SG | from-where | be.IPV.3M.SG-DAT.3M.SG
   
   [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.: ‘āšir – **brīxa** hāwe ʾšlo-lox, | ʾāni – **mēka** wéle-lox. | ‘Rich – may it be blessed for you, poor – where did you get it from?’ **fāqqir** mēka-lōx, | dolamanl brīxa ʾšlo-lox. | ‘Poor – where is it from? Rich – blessed upon you.’


   Šilo wore a new suit and went to synagogue. Everyone asked him: ‘This suit where is it from?’ He became angry and said: ‘I bought it where Nahum the rich had bought his suit.’ That is, poor – where did you get it from, rich – [may it be] a blessing [lit. blessed] for you.’

10. **dārmān** | **šozáne** ʾiz | **dārmān** | **šrē** | lēs
   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.

   ʾe-bāxta léwa nāša, | čū-xa lēbe ʾawez
   ʾemmā, | šozānta-la, | qōmla ʾizāmsa
   mārā, | léwa šozānta, | xūzi l-šizānuša,
   dārmān šozáne ʾiz, | dārmān šrē lēs.

   That woman is not human, no one can get along [lit. do] with her, she is crazy. Her sister-in-law said [lit. rose and said], ‘She is not mad, I wish she were mad [lit. may it be on madness]. There is a cure for the mad, but not for the crazed.’

11. **dün̄e** | **lā-k-pēšā** | ta | čū-xa.
   world.F | NEG-IND-remain.IPV.3F.SG | for | no_one
   The world will remain for no one.

   Var.: dün̄e lā-pēšā ta-čū-xa. | ‘The world will remain for no one.’
múrdax bør-yóna ṣúle ṭàba bód-xáye
díde,| zünne u-mzobbóne besawása,| bnéle
go-yeruṣaláyim ṭàba,| u-palgód ḳviším| go-yeruṣaláyim ṣáwa bnéle,| u-čála gáfle
nàxle.| kúllu náše bhôtlu,| xá mórrre ta-
daw-xèt,| dùnye| lá-k-péša ta čù-xa.| ʾafólù ta-móše rabénu.| Murdakh the son of Yona did a lot in his life. He bought and sold houses, he built a lot in Jerusalem, and half of the roads in Jerusalem it was he who built, and he passed away [lit. rested] suddenly. All the people were shocked, one said to the other, ‘The world does not remain to anyone’, not even to Moses our Rabbi.

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

12. hákan soté-ni hawé-wa-la ʾoškása,| if grandmother-poss.1pl be.impf-past-dat.3f.sg testicle.f.pl
   b-šarx-áx-wa-la mámo.| FUT-call.impfv-1pl-past-acc.3f.sg uncle.m

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

涞毫克yí mórre,| hákan ṣózáníwa ʾóto,|
kazbóñwa ṭàba.| báxte qam-jobàle,|
šmélan| šmélan,| hákan sóti hawéwala ʾoškása,| b-šarxáxwala mámo.| My uncle said: If I had done such and such [lit. like that], I would have profited a lot. His wife answered him: So we heard, so we heard, if my grandmother had had testicles, we would have called her uncle.

13. hákan u- bálkíd háwwel-bálá.| If and- maybe trouble.f
Maybes cause only trouble.

wan-mfakóre hákan ṣózáníwa ʾóto,| bálkíd ḥóš-tov hóya,| u-hákan ṣóto,| bálkíd …| I was thinking if I had done so [lit. like this], maybe it would have been better, and if [I had done] so [lit. like this], maybe … My mother said: ‘If and maybe [cause only] trouble, you should not think if so and if so.’
yómmi mórra| hákan u-bálkíd háwwel-
bálá.| lá-lazam xášwat hákan ṣóto| u-
hákan ṣóto.|
14. huzáya g-nápq mën màhkame, | jewel.M IND-exit.IPFV.3M.SG from court.F
‘aqóle k-ése b-rêš-e. | mind/intelligence.M-poss.3M.SG IND-come.IPFV.3M.SG in-head.M-poss.3M.SG

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

I went to look for a job [in order] to support myself. I came, they asked me a few questions. From Satan [=Satan made it so that], my mouth closed, I did not know what to say. I went out and thought about what I should have answered. Ah! The Jew goes out of the courthouse [and] his mind comes [back] to his head.

15. tóra g-nápəl, | ox.M IND-fall.IPFV.3M.SG
sakîne g-zâḥf-i. | knife.PL IND-proliferate.IPFV-3PL
The ox falls down, [and] the knives become abundant.

Var.: tóra mpâlle, | sakîne zhâflu. | ‘The ox fell, knives became abundant.’

mpâlle ganáwa go-bes-sâleḥ ‘ağa, | a thief entered [lit. fell into] the house of Saleh Aga, he ‘cleaned out’ his house. Now, 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, the knives increase.
qam-sarqâle, | ‘atta, | the ox falls, the knives become abundant.
naše, | g-šbbi pâre dâd-doyânîlle. | ℒ-
woûtule mohlîta, | ‘âya-la, | tóra g-nâpəl,
sakîne g-zâḥfi.

16. yómâ gnê-le, | qáza u-bâla lâ- gnê-lu. | day.M set.PFV-3M.SG trouble and trouble NEG set.PFV-3PL
The day ended, [but its] troubles did not end.

Var.: yómâ g-gâne, | qáza u-bâla lá g-gâne. | ‘The day ends, [but its] troubles do not end.’

Cf. SA:146.
Today I have heard how many ailments came upon Naḥum the lame, the day ended [lit. set], [but] the troubles did not end [lit. set].

Samra said to her husband: Let's leave Zakho, [and] go to Dohok, maybe God will broaden our hands [= will make us prosper], I know that also in Dohok the community 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.

The daughter of ʾIyo is beautiful and noble, whoever came to ask for her hand, she did not want [him]. Her mind was not cut on anyone [=She was not satisfied with anyone]. She did not get married. She remained in the house of her father; whoever knows much eats little.

The shopkeeper of that shop passed away [lit. rested]. His children sold the shop and travelled away from here. No
one remembers nor mentions that poor soul. Ah! Whoever goes [= dies], goes at his own 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  zá-l-é
whoever.GEN  NEG  walk/go.PFV-3M.SG  on  hand.F-POSS.3M.SG

lá-  k-i’é  b-  qáðor  ‘áql-e.
NEG-  IND-know.IPFV.3M.SG  in-  honour.M  leg-POSS.3M.SG

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

Vars.: kúd g-él  ‘ol  ‘ísáše,  k-i’é  b-qáðor  ‘aqláše.
‘He who walks on his hands, knows how important his legs are.’

Cf. SE:18.

farrán déni wéale  ‘ayán,  ́ táhá  ́ šabásá
qam-šé-áxlá  mábóse  l-bésa,  ́ ráhá
m’ol’állan,  ́ dammad-zállan  básař  táhá
šabásá  kəx-farrán,  ́ ý̂mmi  mórřa-le,  ́
‘bařix  ha-šım’  trásłox,  ́ u-áttá  lá  g-
əm’ázbax,  ́ u-k-i’áx  qádrox,  ́ ́áwa
mjoyôble, lúd  lá  zállé  ‘ol-‘ízé  lá-k-i’é  b-
qáðor  ‘áqlé.

Our baker was sick. For three Shabbats [or: weeks] we prepared [lit. whitewash/plastered\textsuperscript{166}] the Shabbat food\textsuperscript{167} at home, it was a nuisance [lit. we were very pestered]. When we went after three weeks to the baker, my mother told him, ‘Thank God you became healthy, and now we shall not suffer, and we [now] know your worth [lit. honour].’ He replied, ‘Whoever [never] walked on his hands, does not know the honour [= importance] of his legs.’

\textsuperscript{166} Whitewash or plaster was presumably used to insulate the pot in order to keep it hot.

\textsuperscript{167} 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. whoever.GEN IND-want.IPFV.3M.SG be_drunk.IPFV
   lā-g-manē-lu kašye.\|  
   NEG-IND-count.IPFV-ACC.3PL cup.PL

   Whoever wants to get drunk does not count the cups.

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

   g-šōn rába lépen táror tiyāra, | màrrī ta-
yômni, | hákan k-tarónna tiyára ḍamm-
maʿálom dīdī saʿā-u-pålge, | lázom
yawōnne xamū rupīyye, | hákan k-
tarónna palgōd-saʿā, | lázom yawōnne
ʿarbi rupīyye. | bōs-tov tālī kūd-yom lépen
palgōd-saʿā, | bâle, | rába pārē lázem
dāf⁻wān, | yômni mōrra-li, | brōnī, | kūd g-
šōbe sāker, | lā-g-manēlu kašye.\|

   I would very much like to learn to fly aeroplanes. If I fly the aeroplane with my teacher [for] one and a half hour[s], I must pay [lit. give] him fifty rupees. If I fly it [for] half an hour, I must pay [lit. give] him forty rupees. It is better for me to learn each day [for] half an hour, but I must pay a lot of money. My mother said to me, ‘My son, whoever wishes to get drunk does not count the cups.’

22. xamāra g-yasr-i-le kəz-xmāra,\|  
   donkey.M IND-tie.IPFV-3PL-ACC.3M.SG chez-
donkey.M
   g-lāept mōnn-e.\|  
   IND-learn.IPFV.3M.SG from-3M.SG

   [When] you [lit. they] tie a donkey near [another] donkey, it learns from it.

   Vars.: xamāra g-yasrīle kəz-xmāra, | g-lāept mōnne fuʿāle.\| ‘[When] you [lit. they] tie a donkey near [another] donkey, it learns its ill deeds.’ xamāra g-yasrīle kəz-xmāra, | ga-mʿarāt.\| ‘[When] you [lit. they] tie a donkey near [another] donkey, it farts.’ xamāra g-yasrīle kəz-xmāra, | g-lāept mʿārat muvwāse.\| ‘[When] you [lit. they] tie a donkey near [another] donkey, it learns to fart like him.’


   ʿanān ̄tre yalōnke, | man-ȳm īlu māgzas,\|  
   g-ōzi rába ̄pəʾllös. | ʿaw-zōra molōple

   These two children, since the day they are together, they make many mischievous actions. The little one
taught the big [=older] one naughtiness. They jump here and break [things] there [lit. here]. And they took our soul out [= gave us a hard time]. [If] you tie a donkey near [another] donkey, it learns from it.

23. **kúd** marry.ipfv.3m.sg **yèmm-an,** mother-poss.1pl

**b-šarx-áx-le** fut-call/scream.ipfv.1pl-acc.3m.sg **bàbo,** dad

**kúd** marry.ipfv.3m.sg **sòt-an,** grandmother-poss.1pl

**b-amr-áx-le** fut-call/say.ipfv.1pl-acc.3m.sg **màmo,** uncle

Whoever marries our mother, we shall call him father. Whoever marries our grandmother, we shall call him uncle.¹⁶⁸

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

**d’árrí** al-šúla básor tlahá yárxé dàd-wéwali gò-amèrika. màrrulí, qam-maxalpí ìmenahétì déni ëaw-bàţ. màrrí, kúllu xà-ìlu. kúd gáwór yèmmàn, b-šarxáxle bàbo.

I returned to work after spending three months in America [lit. three months that I have 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.’

**sélelan** hàzzan xàsa ta-knàšta, léwe màn-molláta dènì, bàle-rába hàš hile. fráhlan u-mórràn xà ta-daw-xtàt, šud-lá-hawe men-molláta dènì, kúd gáwór sòtan, b-amráxle màmo.

A new hazzan came [lit. came for us] to the synagogue, he is not from our people [= Kurdistani 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,

¹⁶⁸ Sabar (2002a: 210) on màmo: ‘used by young people addressing a paternal uncle or any old person’.
whoever marries our grandmother, we shall call uncle.’

24. xá dón-e q-qèza,1 ṣaw-xét g-èmer
one beard.f-poss.3m.sg IND-burn.ipfv.3f.sg DEM.M.sg-other IND-say.ipfv.3m.sg
hál-li qaqwán-i mţaw-ôn-na,1
give.imp-dat.1sg partridge-poss.1sg roast.ipfv-1m.sg-acc.3f.sg

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

Var.: xá g-báxe dón-e ila bá-qqázà,1 xóre g-èmer hál-li čígari maʿalqùnna.1 ‘One is crying his beard is on fire, his friend says, “Let me light my cigarette [with it].”’

Cf. SA:20, a variant; and also proverb no. 25 below.

wan-gúltà mgumbáltà go-šùlì,1 látri
wáʿada xékan rēši,1 mərjáne k-xázya
hàli,1 g-šmràli,1 kappårx,1 dré ṣenáx ṣəl-bràttì hûl ṣəl-ḥámmmàm u-daʿràn,1
mòrrìlà mòrjáne,1 qōštìd ṣaw dón-e qèza,1 ṣaw-xét g-emərrè hál-li qaqwáni
mţawònna,1

I am completely immersed and troubled [lit. mixed up and shaped into a ball] in my work. I have no time to scratch my head. Mərjane sees my situation, she tells me: ‘[I am] your expiation,169 watch [lit. put your eye on] my daughter 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.’

169 An address expressing affection.
25. xá wél-e qam-šnàqa,\l

   báxt-e g-ṣmra,\l
   wife-POSS.3.M.SG IND-say.IPFV.3.FG

   hál-li pàrè,\l

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

Var.: xá wélù bɔ-šnàqa dìde,\l báxt g-ṣmra,\l hálí pàrè ta-ḥàmmam.\l ‘One is about to be hanged [lit. they are hanging him], his wife says, “Give me money for the bathhouse.”’

Cf. proverb no. 24 above.

yǒmmi g-ṣba šé’a mabóse tré daqíqe
qábɔl šàbsa,\l séla brát jìrâne tñòbla
mònna,\l maxwéli máto g-əmgámbeɬi
kùtèle.\l yǒmmi mòrra,\l ḥàtta?! sá’ət
xnàqɔt gɔsɔkɔ,\l xá wéle qam-šnàqa,\l
báxt g-ṣmra,\l hálí pàrè,\l ḥùn ḥɔl-\l
hàmmam.\l

My mother wants [ = is just about] to prepare [lit. whitewash/plaster\l] the Shabbat food, two minutes before Shabbat [starts], the daughter of the neighbours came and asked her, ‘Show me how you cook the meat dumplings.’

My mother said, ‘Now?! 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 dɔqn-e k-tá’ən,\l

   ḥa’w-xét k-čàhe.\l
   DEM.M.SG-other IND-become_weary.IPFV.3.M.SG

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

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170 The reference is to the miqve, the 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.

171 See footnotes 166-167 above.
Var.: xá dáqne k-ṭaʾānna [ACC.3F], ḏaw-xét k-čāhe mənna.1 ‘One carries his own beard, [but] the other gets tired of it.’

Cf. proverb no. 180 below.

məryam, g-məʾina yalûnke dîda râbêt râba, g-ọza mât k-tâlbi, zâʾo g-amrâla, qây k-čâhyat ōto râba? yalûnke dîdax rûwwe-lu, kûd-xa šud-āwəz ta-bēse.1 mjoyšbla məryam, hâwwa kâssi wêlax! ʾáhat mà-wajax? xá dāqne k-ṭaʾān, ḏaw-xét k-čāhe.1 Məryam helps her children a great deal. She does whatever they ask for. Zaʾo tells her: ‘Why do you tire yourself that way so much? Each one should make for his [own] home [= each child should take care of himself].’ Məryam answered her: ‘All right, my dear one you are, what’s it to you [lit. you what is your concern]? One carries his own beard, [but] the other becomes tired.’

27. xábra ḏad-g-nápəq man-tré səppâsa,1 spoken_word.M REL-IND-go_out.IPVF.3M.SG from-two lip.F.PL
   g-závor-ra küll-a màsə,1 IND-turn.IPVF.3M.SG-ACC.3F.SG all-3F.SG village.F Whatever goes out of the lips will circle the whole village.

Vars.: ... g-závor go-kúlla màsə.1 ‘... in the whole village.’ ... g-závor go-kúlla maswâsa.1 ‘... in all of the villages.’ ... g-závorru [ACC.3PL] kúlla maswâsa.1 ‘... circle all of the villages.’

Cf. R:97, SA:141.

bássə bax-dárwəš mərraš,1 g-šən ʾamránnax xa-məndi, bâlə-xábra xe-pelâvax,1 mərrila, xzə səp̈pəsî ūlu ǧlîqe, k-ʃən xábra ḏad-g-nápəq man-tré səppâsa,1 g-závor go-kúlla màsə.1 Basso the daughter of Darwəsh told me: ‘I want to tell you something, but a word under your slipper.’172 I told her: ‘See, my lips are closed, I know that a word that goes out of the two lips circles in the entire village.’

172 See proverb no. 195 below.
28. **xmárta** mpóq-lu-la **xalawása.**

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

This boy learned [= went to school] with me, he was such a poor soul, they used to hit him and laugh at him. One day he became angry, braced himself [lit. rose on himself], hit one child, he killed him with slaps [= hit him hard]. Everyone was frightened [or: astonished], they said, ‘He became courageous [lit. he grabbed courage], because his grandfather came. The she-donkey found uncles.’

29. **xmára** dād kūš-li **mān-e,**

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

Var.: **xmára** dād kūšli mānna, šud šetan ráku šŏl-e. ‘A donkey that I have [already] dismounted from, the devil should ride it!’

I saw the daughter of Ḥakham Ḥoshrq, go-šuqa. I mórri-la xazálk f-řat mání k-pálex mën-géba go-faršiyye? mérра-li xmára dād-kūšli mānne, šud-šetan ráku šŏl-e, lā k-żan u-lā-waji.

30. **kūd-** ḧet-le **ḥonna,** k-ṣāwe’ zŏbb-e.

Whoever has henna, dyes his penis [as well].

Vars.: ... zŏbbe šōk k-ṣawlé. ‘... dyes also his penis.' ... šud šawē’le zŏbbe. ‘... may he dye his penis!'
Ya’aqub bought for himself [such] an overcoat, may its father’s house be destroyed, how beautiful [it is]! Afterwards he saw in that [same] shop a nice shirt for his dog, [which] resembles that overcoat. It was very expensive. He bought it for his dog. [It is] obvious, whoever has henna, dyes his penis [as well].

31. ksēsa g-ṃqōqya, kír dikāla g-nāpol. The hen cackles, [and] the penis of the rooster falls [off].

hābo mōrra g-ōba msáfra ta-ḵulle ʾēzā. Habo said she wants to travel [away] for the entire festival [of Passover]. Her husband said, ‘I am also eager [to go].’ My mother laughed and said, ‘The hen cackles, [and] the penis of the rooster falls [off]. How will you travel during the festival of Passover? Where will you spend [lit. make, i.e. perform] Passover?!’

32. kālba g-hāwe kučška. A dog sires puppies.

sēle-lān xa-jīran rāʾ, šarakā u-mṣa’rāna, bāb-ḥāq qādarci-le. A bad neighbour came to [live next to] us, a screamer and a foul-mouth, and likes-his-own-voice. We started to ask people about him, who is he, where did he come from. They told us, ‘This is the son of Ya’aqov Qadarći.’ 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 'ol jiràn-e,
whoever.Gen rely.IPFV.3M.SG on neighbour-poss.3M.SG

páyeš là 'asáya.
remain.IPFV.3M.SG NEG dinner.F

He who relies on his neighbour, remains without dinner.

Var.: kúd tákel 'ol xuràse, b-dámex là 'asáya. ‘He who relies on his friends, will sleep without dinner.’

yómmi hár g-amráli. lazém-yá’at ta-gyánax. là táklät 'ol-čú-xa. kúd tákel 'ol jiràne, páyeš là 'asáya.

My mother always tells me: You should know how to get along [lit. know for yourself]. Do not count on anyone. Whoever relies on his neighbour, stays without dinner.

34. xóla qté'-le, šíwe mborbôz-lu.
rope.M cut.IPFV.3M.SG wood.M.PL scatter.PFV-3PL

The rope broke, [and] the sticks scattered.

Cf. SA:144.

zólli 'ol-marimôe174 kër-xuràsti. bába u-yómma náxlu bxà yárxa tâfîlan
xàye.175 bxèla u-mzozrâqla, màrra xóla qté'le, šíwe mborbôzlu. 'átta 'axawási b-ázi kúd-xa 'ol-šîle u-kúd-xa b-ùrxe,
külleni mbàrbôzax. bès bâbi u-yómmi xrrûle.1

I went to pay my condolences [lit. to the marimôe174] to [lit. at] my friend. Her father and her mother passed away [lit. rested] within one month, may they ask for life for us.175 She cried and trembled. She said, ‘The rope snapped, the wood has scattered. Now my siblings will go each one to his work, each one in his way, all of us will scatter. The house of my father and mother has been destroyed.’

174 The Jewish mourning period of seven days, the shiva.
175 An expression said after mentioning the deceased.
I long for those days [lit. I wish/would that for those days], when my father and my mother were alive, and each Shabbat, and each festival, we all used to come to their home [lit. chez them]. And on weekdays [lit. in the middle of the week], whoever went to the market, or to do some task of his, would come to the house of my father, [and so] we used to always see one another. Since the day they passed away [lit. rested], may they ask life for you, each one is busy with his own things, the rope snapped and the wood has scattered.

35. kséša \( \text{dād gə-mrāmda} \),
   hen.F REL IND-spread_dirt_by_digging.IPV.3F.SG
   b-rēš \( \text{gỳn-a gə-mrāmda} \),
in-head self-POSS.3F.SG IND-spread_dirt_by_digging.IPV.3F.SG

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

That bimbo, all day long she speaks of people. This one is like that, and this one did such and such. Now nobody can stand her [lit. everybody is not able to see her]. A chicken that spreads dirt, does so upon her own head.

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177 An expression said after mentioning the deceased.
178 Apparently from the Arabic root \( rml \) ‘to sprinkle with sand’ (definition from Wehr & Cowan 1976: 360).
Whoever is not engaged with the chaos of this world, is of no worth.

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

Ḥakham Zekharya was talkative and very joyful, anything would light him up like fire, and always he used to say, ‘Whoever’s head is not [immersed] in tremors and quarrels, may he go to [fall into] a steep slope, and I like people whose head is [immersed] in tremors and quarrels.’

Var.: xolá kud ʿáwaz tərnini, lázəm [var: ʿána] rəqs-ən. I am not obliged to dance for anyone who makes [=sings] tərnini. ¹⁷⁹

‘Is it so that [for] anyone who tells/tells me tərnini, I will dance?!”

Cf. proverb no. 137 below.

My friend tells me every day, ‘Let’s go to [visit] this [person], she invited us, let’s go to [visit] that [person], she invited us.’ I told her, ‘Is it so that when] anyone says tərnini, I should dance? Is it so that [when] anyone invites me, I should go?’

There is also an additional context situation at proverb no. 104 below.

38. xá léb-e l-xå,  g-émer  tré tré sá-loxun ḏl-li.  
one unable-3M.SG on-one IND-say.IPfv.3M.SG two two come.IMP-2PL on-1SG  
One cannot overcome [even] one, [but] yet he says come unto me in pairs.

Cf. R:47, SE:7, proverbs nos. 4 above and 140 below, which are synonyms.

xazále brat-xáhám šalóm k-palxáwa  
kaz-xa-məšpáha dolamán,  kúd-yom mán  
bónoke húl lèle k-palxáwa,  bás yóm  
xušéba lá-k-palxáwa,  xà yóma,  mórra  
ta-yémma,  jíran dód-ma’alómítí g-ōba  
pálxan kásla b-yóm xušéba,  má g-ūmrat  
Himá? yémma mjóy’blá: bráti, xá lèbe  
l-xá,  g-émer tré sá-loxun ḏl-li,  wat-  
gráfta mèn-šúla dídax kæx-axalómítax,  g-  
ōbat pálxat xa-xèt dúka?!

Khazale the daughter of Ḥakham Shalom used to work for [lit. at] a [certain] rich family. She would work every day from morning until evening. Only on Sunday[s] did she not work. One day, she said to her mother, ‘The neighbour of my boss wants me to work for [lit. at] her on Sunday[s]. What do you say, mother?’ Her mother answered: ‘My daughter, one is not able to overcome one [lit. one cannot on one], he says come to [fight] me in pairs [lit. two two come on me], you are wrenched from your work at your boss’[s], [and] you want to work [at] another place?!’

39. xá bába gæ-mdábår  ḏsrâ yalúnke,  
one father IND-sustain.IPfv.3M.SG ten child.PL  
ḥsrâ yalúnke lá gæ-mdábri xá bába,  
ten child.PL NEG IND-sustain/support.IPfv.3PL one father  
One father can support ten children, [but] ten children cannot support one father.

Cf. R:53, SE:17, proverb no. 80 below.

ḥamínko ɪle be-hål,  lés xá yawólle xa-  
kočkła maràqa,  ḏya-ila, xá bába gæ-  
mdábér ḏsrâ yalúnke, ḏsrâ yalúnke là-  
gæ-mdábri xa-bába.

Ḥaminko is in bad shape [= ill]. There is no one to give him [even] one spoon of soup, that is it [= that is what is referred to by], one father [can] support ten children, ten children cannot [lit. do not] support one father.
40. kúd go-mtá’el b-əd-ʾoxre, | whoever.GEN IND-play.IPVF.3M.SG in-GEN- faeces.PL
ríx ʾoxre k-ése mànne. | smell.M.GEN faeces.PL IND-come.IPVF.3M.SG from-3M.SG

Whoever plays with faeces, smells like faeces.

Var.: kúd go-mtá’el b-əd-ʾoxre, k-ése môn-ʾizase. | ‘Whoever plays with faeces, the smell of faeces comes from his hands’.

Cf. SE:47.

xáham-náḥum hár g-êmer, | ʾénox ʾəl-gyānōxī | hākan-xzêlox xurâsa ganâwe | Ḥakham Naḥum always says, ‘Be
gugālāne | sǒxtāne, | mánnox-šik b-āse ríx | careful [lit. (keep) your eye on
ganawīsa u-dügłe. | kúd go-mtá’el b-əd-ʾoxre, | ríx ʾoxre k-ése mànne. | yourself]! If you find [lit. saw] friends
díu | ʾaxar m-ə́la | Ḥever plays with faeces,
whoever. | ʾaxar ma-škâla | the smell of theft and lies
kámúśta, | yəmmi šme-le u-mōrra | will come. Whoever plays with faeces,
ma-škâla, | lába mōla, | the smell of faeces comes from him.’
washōtā, | laz-əm-hōya b-əš |

41. xmára k-ə́e ʾáxel ná-na’? | donkey.M IND-know.IPVF.3M.SG eat.IPVF.3M.SG spearmint.F

Does a donkey know to eat spearmint?

mbošōllī xà xamūṣta,180 xáru bés | I cooked such a xamūṣta180 soup, may
bābə181 kma-bāsəmta wéala, | the house of its father be destroyed,181
sela | how good it was! Ḥabuba my
habitāba jīran didi, | qam-ṭam-āla u-škāla neighbour came, tasted it and started to
ma-ṭbāla, | lēba mōla, | turn it, ‘There is no salt in it, it
laṣ-əm-hōya b-əš | xamūṣta, | should be more sour.’ My mother heard
xamūṣta, | yəmmi šme-le u-mōrra | and said: ‘[I am] your expiation183
kappārāx Ḥabūba, | ʾyōfī-d182 xamūṣta | Ḥabuba, my daughter cooked a
brāti mbošōlla, | xmrā k-ə́e ʾáxel | wonderful xamūṣta. Does a donkey
ná-na’?! | frəʾhli ṭaba. | know [how] to eat spearmint?!’ I was

180 A sour soup with meat dumplings.
181 Expression of appreciation.
182 The Hebrew noun yofi here takes the NENA genitive marker -d.
183 An address expressing affection.
Take you daughter-in-law from the dunghill, [but] the place of your [own] daughter [you should] select it well.

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,'¹⁸⁴ I do not know what her family is like [lit. how the house of her father is],¹⁸⁵ 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.’

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

¹⁸⁴ For details about the process leading to a Zakho Jewish wedding, see Aloni (2014a: 85-101).
¹⁸⁵ The extended family household in Zakho, be- ‘house of’, and the changes it has undergone in Israel are discussed in Aloni (2014a: 85-88).
Cf. Arama (1573: 88b): ‘Do not be sweet lest they shall swallow you’ (my translation). See also additional references in Zlotnik Avida (1938: 53-54).

My son, see what Maimonides wrote, one should always go in the middle [path]. Do not be too sweet, so that they will not suck you, do not be bitter so that they will not spit you [out], do not be dry so that they will not break you, do not be soft so that they will not crush you.

44. lá ʾáw jājik, lá ʾáw šāḥhar,
NEG DEM.M jajik.M NEG DEM.M poison.M
Not [of] that jajik, and not [of] that poison.

Var.: lá ʾáw jājik bəd ḏ-ʾáw šāḥhar. ‘Not [of] that jajik with that poison.’

Cf. Midrash Tanḥuma, Parashat Balak 6: ‘They say to the wasp: not of your honey and not of your sting’ (my translation). This is used as a proverb in Modern Hebrew as well.

My friend gave me a large and beautiful carpet, but how dirty it was! My soul went out [=I had a hard time] until I cleaned it. One week I worked on [lit. in] it. Ah! Not [of] that jajik, nor [of] that poison.

45. lá ʾéwa u-lá sèxwa,
NEG cloud.M and-NEG fine_weather.M

My friend had a fight with her husband and went back to live with her parents for some time. When

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187 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)’.
46.  lēs ṣenn-i\ u- lēs ṣenn-i.\ there is not from-1SG and- there is not from-1SG

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

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

bax-māmo sóto d karmēla\ qāgemāwa kūd
yōm,\ bāzōl mbōnoke,\ k-kansāwa kūlla
maḥāle,\ u-g-zamāwā,\ lēs mōnni\ u-lēs
mōnī,\ u-xā-dōra qam-baqrānna\ qāy g-
zāmrat ‘e-zamūrtā,\ u-mōrra-li\ ma-lēwa
‘ōto?\ t‘ēli t‘ēli bāš-tov mān-gyāni lā
xzēli.188 mōrrī-la bax-māmo\ yōmmi ‘ōla
hōkkōsa,\ dammad-‘ilāha xłōle dūnye,\ mōrre ta-xa mal’āx,\ ‘ō képa hāwe bd-
izōx,\ u-kūd k-xąsat dād-‘aqūlle lā qatě’
‘el-gyāne,\ mx̣le ‘o-képa ‘el-rēše.\ ‘aw-
māl’āx\ hūl ‘odyo hīle ḫmīla\ u-képa go-
ize.\1

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

188 See proverb no. 106 below.
47. *la k-xárya* ta la *'àxla.*

NEG IND-defecate.IP.FV.3F.SG for NEG eat.IP.FV.3F.SG

She does not defecate so that she should not eat.

Var.: *la *'áxla ta la xárya.* ‘She does not eat so that she should not defecate.’

'ō-nàša' xa-qúrus189 la-g-yáwol ta-čù-xa.1

čènnika-le.1 lá-k-xáre tá lá *'àxèl.* mûx

yèmme-ile1 g-naštáwa qâlma,1 u-golda-

dida gà-mzabñàwale.190 u-bàbe,1 šásat

*árbi hóya *'èlle,1 lá g-yawùlla ta-čù-xa.191

That person does not give [even] one *qurus*189 to anyone. He is a miser. He
does not shit so that he would not eat. He is like his mother, she would skin a
louse and sell its skin.190 And his
father, [when] he has a forty [degree]
fever, he would give it to no one.191

48. *mâd jomó'-lu b-əd kočèksa,1 zál-le b-əd *'øtrâna.1

what-REL collect.PFV-3PL in-GEN spoon.F go.PFV-3SG in-GEN ladle.M

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

Cf. SA:137.

xa-nàša *'úsle gazèda *'él-bàxte.1 g-émer k-
pálxèn rápa1 g-șmjám'en dinar ta-dînar1
g-yáwol ta-báxti má'as kud-yàrxa.1 básor

xà yóma1 g-șmra látù páre,1 láltà bêd-má

msòqa.1 mâd g-șmjám'en bêd-kočèksa,1 g-
él bêd-øtrâna.1

One man complained [lit. made a
complaint] about his wife. He says ‘I
work a lot, I gather one dinar to the
other [lit. dinar to dinar], I give my
wife an allowance each month [or: the
salary of each month]. After [only] one
day she says 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.’

dámmad wëali zùrta,1 láswà máya go-
yerušàlayim.1 g-daryàxwa sàtle,1 ta-kùd
čèpèksèd mâtra k-košàwa go-dáy sàtle.1

máya wëalu rába gòran.1 xà-yoma sële

When I was young [lit. small], there
was no water in Jerusalem. We used to
put a bucket [out], so that every drop
of rain goes down into that bucket.
Water was very expensive/valuable.

189 Sabar (2002a: 283): ‘small Turkish coin’. The reference here is probably to the *grush*, an old Israeli
coin.
190 See proverb no. 102 below.
191 See proverb no. 91 below.
One day my brother came, he kicked [lit. gave a kick to] the bucket, all of the water spilled. My mother said, ‘What we gathered with a spoon, went [away] with a ladle.’

49. man núra dōhun| lá g-šàxn-ax,| from fire.M GEN.3PL NEG IND-become_warm.IPFV-1PL

man tônna dōhun g-àmy-ax.| from smoke.M GEN.3PL IND-become_blind.IPFV-1PL

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


My friend told me, ‘I will come with my children, they will play with your son, and we will bake káde192 for the festival.’ She and her large family came [lit. she came, she and her large family], they did not play at all [lit. it is forbidden if they played], but they did scream, cry, and fight one with the other. They soiled the entire courtyard [= entrance room]. I told her, ‘My friend, we did not warm from your fire, [but] we did become blind from your smoke.’

50. mis raḥa xepi-le| go-mʿarat.| dead.M.SG.GEN much wash.IPFV.PL-ACC.3M.SG IND-fart.IPFV.3M.SG

A corpse that you wash too much will break wind.

Vars.: misa dɔd [REL] raḥa xepile go-mʿarat.| ‘A corpse that you wash too much will break wind.’ misa dɔd [REL] xepile raḥa go-mʿarat.| ‘A corpse that you wash too much will break wind.’

bron-xalto-ʾąster, lóple najarùsa. mûrre, yômni, g-lépen najarùsa, b-ozûnna

The son of Aunt Esther studied carpentry. He said, ‘My mother, I am studying carpentry, I will make for you

51. (‘ání) mísá dóhun qam-qorí-le,
they dead.M.SG GEN.3PL PAST-bury.3PL-ACC.3M.SG

xazáne sqálta.| míséle šíwe’ u-škólle
They do not care whether he goes
táwez xazáne.| bále-xolá qam-xalósła,| xá
[they do not care whether] he go
yómá g-émer| tó dárga léwe ḩāš,| mànxarpọ́nne,| xá yómá g-émer| ʿaqlás
[lit. one] day he says, ‘This door
xazáne hílu ẖlim,| mnxarpọ́nne.| kúd yóm
is not good, I shall replace it’, another
mbo’bósle ʿe xásáne.| yámmé pqéla,| màrra-le bróni,| mís ṛáḥa xepíle go-
[lit. one] day he says, ‘The legs of the
márart. k-mále mbábašọ́tta ʿe xazáne.| márart. closet are crooked, I shall replace
ka xepíle go.

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

Var.: mísá dóhun k-xepíle,| ʿál gan-ʾèzen| ʿál gḥannám.| ‘They have washed their dead,
they do not care whether] he goes to heaven or hell.’

xazále zóllá l-ṣūqá,| zúnná ṛáḥa xódřa,| wažik díde u-bróne
Khazale went to the market, she
mûrdax,| mšódórre žāgīl díde u-bróne
bought a lot of vegetables. Murdakh
šāle,| m̱aʿínīla. sélu drélú kúllú sállat
sent his worker and his son Saleḥ to
qam-dárgot bēsá u-zōllu.| sélá xazále,| help her. They came [and] put all of
žéna xšqúl,| xżélá kūlla xódra híla
the baskets near the door of the house
mburbázta go-ḥōš,| qaṭwásà go-mtáli l-
and went [away]. Khazale came, her
tám. mórra ʿsh! | ‘ání ʿuzlu šúlu,| mísá
eyes became dark [i.e. she was
dóhun qam-xèpile,| ʿál gan-ʾèzen| ʿál
dead [person] that is washed [too]
gḥannám lè-waju.| much, farts. Enough messing with [lit.
dóhun qam-xèpile,| ʿál gan-ʾèzen| ʿál gḥannám lè-waju.| lit. poking] this closet.’

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

mísá dóhun k-xèpile,| ʿál gan-ʾèzen| ʿál gḥannám.| ‘They have washed their dead,
they do not care whether] he goes to heaven or hell.’
52. mbáqor kúll-a dûnye| ʾóz ʿaqól-ox tône.| ask.IMP.2SG all-3F.SG world.F do.IMP.2SG mind/intellect-POSS.2M.SG alone
Ask all of the world [ = everyone], [but] act only according to your own opinion.

Var.: mbáqor kúll-a dûnye| ʾóz b-xábrox tône.| ‘Ask all of the world [ = everyone], [but] act only according to your own word.’

mtoxmánni rába mà-ʾozán,| yómmi I though hard [lit. much] [about] what
màrra-li, bràti, mbáqor kúll-a dûnye| ʾóz I should do, my mother told me, ‘My
ʿaqólax tône.| daughter, ask the entire world, do

53. müx yatúma | ʾót-le zōba.| like orphan.M (REL) there-is-DAT.3M.SG penis.M
Like an orphan who has a penis.
Or: He has a penis like an orphan.

Var.: müx yatúma máre zōba.| ‘Like an orphan, owner of a penis.’

ʾámtni zûnna qundáre xâse,| sêla kaxlêni,| My aunt bought new shoes, she came to us [ = to our house], she shook
to us [ = to our house], she shook
š’âšla gyàna ta-maxuyâlu talêni,| yómmi herself [ = behaved flauntingly] in
môrra g-maxuyâlan qundáre dida,| müx
yatúma ʾótle zōba.| order to show them to us, my mother

My aunt bought new shoes, she came
to us [ = to our house], she shook
herself [ = behaved flauntingly] in
order to show them to us, my mother
said, ‘She shows us her shoes, like an
orphan that has a penis.’

=g’ela bêt-trambel dida mûx yatúma máre
zōba.| She was proud of her car like an
orphan that has a penis.

54. nahagóna | zâl-le ʾél-mâlxa.| large_calf/young_person.M go.PFV-3M.SG to-salt.M
The calf went to [bring] salt.

damm-xóni márre ta-yómmi dâd-
xzéelele šûla u-p-šâkol pâlx tê šabása When my brother told my mother that
he had found himself a job and that he
would begin to work in two weeks, my
mother said, ‘All right!’\[193\] The largish
calf went for the salt. We shall see

\[193\] Said dismissively.

82
xèt, yómmi mòrra' häwwal nahagóna zólle 'əl-məlxə. xázayax 'ila[ha]-'ayən.

with the help of God [lit. may God help].'

séle xor 'axóni mboqorre 'ėka-le 'axóni.
yómmi mòrra' nahagóna zólle 'əl-məlxə.
gxəkle.

My brother's friend came and asked where my brother was. My mother said, 'The largish calf went for the salt.' He laughed.

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

55. nūra xe qòqa, tanésa xe nāša.
fire.F under clay_pot.M word.F under person.M
[Like] fire under a clay pot, a word under a person.

The daughter of 'Aqo fell into the mouth of people [=people started gossiping about her]. The entire neighbourhood spoke about her. They burnt her with their words. This [one] said she went with that [person] and this [one] says she slept with that [person]. And she, poor thing, she was a good woman, the speech [=gossiping] of people made her black in the eyes of everyone. Fire under the clay pot [is like] word[s] under a person.

56. nunisə mən réš-a k-xàrw-a.
fish.F from head-POSS.3F.SG IND-become_spoil.IPFV-3F.SG
A fish [starts to] rot from its head.

Cf. BA:4, SA:100.

čuğa lá-zonat go-dé dokkána. məre-
dokkána duglána u-ganàwa-le. yalúnke
dide u-žagile dide kūllu muxwàse, láplu

Never buy in that shop. The owner of the shop is a liar and a thief. His children and his workers are all like him, they learned from him. This is how it is, the fish spoils from its head.
mànne. ̀ọ̀ọ-ila, ̀unisìa ̀màn-reśa ̀xàrwà.

57. sì ̀xmàr-i, ̀ilàha ̀∑mm-ox.
go.IMP.2M.SG donkey-POSS.1SG God with-2M.SG
hàkan màr-i hàwe ̀∑mm-i.1
if master-POSS.1SG be.IPV.3M.SG with-1SG
̀ilàha p-àwe ̀∑mmi.1
God FUT-be.IPV.3M.SG with-1SG

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

̀bòno ̀màssèlé xa-̀zágil ta-̀fàrna dìde.1
hèdì-hèdì ‘ò-̀zágil ‘úzìle kùlìe mjìndì.1
bòno wòlle go-̀że kùlìa fàrna.1 bàsàr
kma-wà-da,1 bòno xàlé fàrna là-k-
kàzba,1 bàxte màrrà-le,1 bòno màrrox go-
lòbbox xàrxàsì ̀ʃrèlì,1 ̀ʃùlì b-àwôzle ́ò
žàgil,1 sì ̀xmàrì ̀ilàha ̀∑mmox.1 bàlè-̀léwà
̀ọ̀ọ,1 hàkan màrì hàwe ̀∑mmi,1 ̀ilàha p-
àwe ̀∑mmi,1 hàkan hàwot go-̀fàrna,1
bàràxà b-nàpla go-̀fàrna,1
Bòno brought a worker to his bakery. Gradually this worker did everything [in the bakery]. Bòno gave the entire bakery into his hand [=gave the supervision over to him]. After some time, Bòno saw that the bakery did not produce profit, his wife told him, ‘Bòno you said in your heart [=to yourself] ‘I have untied my sash, this worker will do my work. Go, my donkey, God be with you, but it is not so, if my master is with me, God will [also] be with me. If you were at the bakery, a blessing will fall into the bakery [=it will be prosperous].’

58. sawóna qròs-le,1 sòtìnta hnè-le-la.1
old_man pinch.PFV-3M.SG old_woman have_pleasure.PFV-3M.SG-DAT.3F.SG
The old man pinched [and] the old woman enjoyed it.

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

̀yàmmed bàdré sèla,1 xzèla nèhra ìwìqa
u-bèsa mjùrìbìla,1 sèla bàdré màrrà-la,1
sèle ̀sàleh,1 mòrrre-li sa-mpòq xàpìća go-
Badre’s mother came, she saw [that] the laundry [was] left [unattended] and the house was a mess [lit. unorganised, cumbersome]. Badre came and said, ‘Saleğ came, he said to
shemša b-áx šemel-hāwa, 194 xaráe
mášiḥax xorī. ʾáp-ana šuqli néhri u-
zāllī. yāmma márra hāwwa brátī, 1
sawóna qr̲šle, 1 sotáhta hnhel-la. 1

me, “Come out to the sun [for] a little
[while], we shall go for 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. qóm-le čúka, 1 bsám-la dūka. 1
get_up.PFV-3M.SG Čuka.M become_pleasant.PFV-3S.SG place.F
Čuka got up, [and] the place became [more] pleasant.

Var.: qómle čúka, 1 ráxla dūka. 1 ‘Čuka got up, [and] the place became more spacious.’

Cf. SA:41. 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.

er came to visit my sister and to
complain [lit. make complaint] about
my mother-in-law. Her neighbour was
there [lit. at her]. I could not speak
about my mother-in-law. When her
friend went [away], I said to 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-mayʾol-šn-ne
past-bring_in.IPFV-1M.SG-ACC.3M.SG qam-
mōsa, 1
in_front_of death.M

ta yāʾel qam šāsa, 1
for enter.IPFV.3M.SG in_front_of fever.F

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

sélá bax-náhum u-márra ta-yəmmi, 1 xzē
wan-bə-myāsā, 1 lébi ʾón xudáni bē-

The wife of Nahum came and said to
my mother, ‘See, I am dying [= having
a very hard time], I cannot take [lit.

194 Apparently from Arabic nšm al-hawa ‘breath air’.
yelünke didi, lág-mádwan ˈón šuí bési. | mörri ta-náhum, ˈīz xa-báxta maˈináli xá-ga b-šabsá bād-šúla yaqùra, | bād-néhra u-spánja, | b-yawáxła tre-ṭlāha líre. | lá ˈbèle. | yómmi štòqla. | zállu tré yomása, | yómmi xzélá náhum, | môrra-le, | náhum, | šmò la-šamˈzt xrist. | 195 xzélí báxtox, | raḥóð-raḥa ˈayyàne-la. | lóbbá pásše xa-mɔsta, | lázm saqlétən xa-xoddámta maˈinála kuď-yom. | hákan lá ˈila-là-wəz197... | náhum pásše xà-lappa. | 198 mörri ta-yómmi, | šahhɔtɔx bassɔnta! | qam-mayˈlátət qam-mosá, | ta-yàšl̬ qam-sása. | náhum zółle l-bése, | mórre ta-báxtə, | maˈləš, | śqúllə ˈe-jiran, | šud-maˈinálaʃ xá-ga b-šabsa. | make] care of my children, I do not have enough time to do my housework, I said to Naḥum, there is a woman that would help me once a week with the 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, ‘Naḥum, hear [=listen], [may] you not hear [anything] bad.195 I saw your wife, she is very-very ill. Her heart turned into a [single] hair [her heart shrunk because of the hard work, she became sick], you must take [=hire] for her a housemaid that will help her every day. If not, God forbid [lit. may God not do (that)] ...’ Naḥum turned into a [small] lump [=became scared].198 I 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.’

195 See proverb no. 129 below.
196 See proverb no. 136 below.
197 Contraction of | xuláha lá ˈawəz.
198 See proverb no. 135 below.
61. **qóqa** g-ēmer\(^{1}\) xés-i dēhwā-la,\(^{1}\)
clay_pot.M IND-say.IPVF.3M.SG under-1SG gold.M-COP.3F.SG

\(\text{'strána} [\text{var.: káfkir}] \text{g-ēmer}^{1} \quad \text{'ätta mpóq-li} \quad \text{mónn-ox}^{1}\)
ladle.M [\text{var.: large_spoon}] IND-say.IPVF.3M.SG now go_out.PPFV-3M.SG from-2M.SG

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

Cf. R:103.

brat-sóm\(\text{z}\)sar mposón\(\text{n}\)na gyá\(\text{n}\)a,\(^{1}\) kma-ḥāš
wé\(\text{w}\)ala \(\text{'}\)mm\(\text{d}\)d-x\(\text{d}\)ám\(\text{t}\)a.\(^{1}\) x\(\text{d}\)d\(\text{á}\)m\(\text{t}\)a g-
x\(\text{s}\)k\(\text{l}\)la u-m\(\text{m}\)r\(\text{a}\),\(^{1}\) x\(\text{u}\)xí p\(\text{c}\)\(\text{g}\)d mad-
m\(\text{h}\)k\(\text{l}\)a\(\text{x}\) wé\(\text{w}\)ala,\(^{1}\) \(\text{'}\)ätta mpóqli mónnax.\(^{1}\)

The daughter of the real estate agent praised herself, how kind [lit. good] she was to [lit. with] her housemaid. The housemaid laughed and said, ‘I wish [even] a half of what she said were true [lit. has been], I just came out of you.’

ḥ\(\text{b}\)ú\(\text{b}\)ú \(\text{'}\)ús\(\text{l}\)a gazó\(\text{nt}\)a \(\text{'}\)l-xmá\(\text{s}\)a,\(^{1}\)
damm\(\text{d}\)d-wáx m\(\text{h}\)k\(\text{\o\text{y}}\)e\(^{1}\) s\(\text{\e\text{l}}\)a xmá\(\text{s}\)a u-
šk\(\text{k}\)l\(\text{l}\)la m\(\text{p}\)\(\text{a\text{\'}}\)\(\text{o\text{\'}}\)\(\text{n}\)e gy\(\text{\a\text{n}}\)a.\(^{1}\) l\(\text{\e\text{s}}\) go-kú\(\text{l}\)l\(\text{\a\text{\'}}\)a má\(\text{s}\)a
xm\(\text{\a\text{s}}\)a m\(\text{u}\)x\(\text{\w\text{a\text{s}}\text{i}}\).\(^{1}\) k\(\text{m}\)á g-\(\text{\e\text{\m}}\)zæzæ\(\text{\a\text{\'}}\)\(\text{\a\text{\n}}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\)
n\(\text{\a\text{l}}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\).\(^{1}\) Ḥ\(\text{b}\)ú\(\text{b}\)ú \(\text{l}x\(\text{\e\text{s}}\)\(\text{\a\text{l}}\).\(^{1}\) \(\text{'}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\) k-f\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\) \(\text{'}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\)
dé\(\text{\h\text{\w\text{a}}}\) \(\text{'}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\) x\(\text{\e\text{s}\text{\a\text{\a}}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\)\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\)

Ḥabuba complained [lit. made a complaint] about her mother-in-law. While we were speaking, her mother-in-law came and started praising herself. ‘There is not a mother-in-law like myself in the entire village. How much I respect/pamper my daughter-in-law.’ Ḥabuba whispered, ‘I know which gold there is under you.’

62. **qóqa** d\(\text{d}\)d k-tord-le kabaniy\(\text{e}\),\(^{1}\)
clay_pot.M REL IND-break.IPVF.3F.SG-ACC.3M.SG cook.F

l\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\)- \(\text{k-\text{\e\text{\s}}}\) \(\text{h\text{\d}}\)s m\(\text{\o\text{n}}\)n-e.\(^{1}\)
NEG- IND-come.IPVF.3M.SG sound.M from-3M.SG

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

Vars.: … č\(\text{\u\text{\u}}}\)h\(\text{s} \(\text{l}a\-k-\text{\e\text{\s}}}\) m\(\text{\o\text{n}}\)n.\(^{1}\)‘… no sound comes from it.’/ … č\(\text{\e\text{\p}}\)\(\text{\p\text{\p}}}\) l\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\)-k-\(\text{\a\text{\a}}\) m\(\text{\o\text{n}}\)n.\(^{1}\)‘… two drops [of sound] do not come from it.’

I travelled and arrived to the place I had wanted, I looked for a place to park [lit. make-stand] my car, I did not find [lit. see] one, after me came a policeman with his car, he parked it where [lit. in a place of] it is forbidden, I said to myself, this policeman does whatever he wants, a clay pot that the cook breaks, does not make a sound [lit. no sound comes from it]. No one tells him [or: can tell him] [= the policeman] anything.

63. k-xáre má-d g-ße,\| IND-defecate.IPFV.3M.SG what-REL IND-want.IPFV.3M.SG

g-ße wiša,\| g-ssé miyána.\| IND-want.IPFV.3M.SG dry.M IND-want.IPFV.3M.SG liquid.M

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

Vars.: hákan g-ssé k-xáre wiša,\| hákan g-ssé k-xáre miyána.\| ‘If he wants he defecates dry, if he wants he defecates liquid.’ ... rakíxa.\| ‘... soft.’

’o-náša lébox mhémenat ’šlé ’šl čúuled.\| mád g-ssé g-émor.\| hákan g-ssé
k-xáre wiša\| hákan g-ssé k-xáre miyána.\| This person, you cannot believe him about anything [lit. you cannot believe on him on anything]. He says whatever he wishes. If he wished he’d defecate dry [faeces], if he wished he’d defecate liquid [faeces].

64. qózra død hawé-b-a rába kabaniyat,\| cooked_food.F REL be.IPFV.3M.SG-in-3F.SG many cook.F.PL

k-ásya yán maluxta\| yán pàxta.\| IND-come.IPFV.3F.SG or salty.F.SG or bland.F.SG

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 BT\textsuperscript{199} ‘Eruvin 3a: ‘A pot of partners is not hot nor cold.’\textsuperscript{200}

ta-tef\'öllin dâd-brôni\'l kûd xâ môrre-li ma-
\'on.\’ xa-môrre \'ot\'o\l x-a-môrre \'ot\'o.\’ mûrri-
lü\l gâzra dâd-râba kabanâyat g-
æmbašîla,\’ g-dârî ‘îsu gàwa,\’ u-g-baxšîla,\’
g-nápqa yân pâxta yân malûxta.\’ šûqu-
lan,\’ malûşaxle brôni teföllin mâtod g-
\'ëbe.\’

For the bar mitzvah celebration [lit. tefillin] of my son, each one advised [lit. said] me what to do. One said [you should do] so and the other [lit. one] said [you should do] so. I told them, ‘A food that many cooks have cooked, put their hand in, and 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.’

\textsuperscript{65} pâra xwârâ\l ta yôma kôma.\’
coin.m white.m for day.m black.m
A white coin for a black day.

Cf. BA:2, SA:102.

\'axóni g-ëmer ta-brâtë,\’ hfôzlu pâre\l ta-
hâwélax xa-pâra xwârâ\l ta-yôma kôma.\’

My brother [always] tells his daughter, ‘Save the money so that you will have one white coin for a black day.’

\textsuperscript{66} partā'na mûr-re,\l lá-k'i'en ma b-ôzûn
flea.m say.pfv-3m.sg NEG-ind-know.1m.sg what fut-do.ipfv.1m.sg

bôd-ô mirâta dîdi,\l
in.gen-this.m unclaimed_inheritance of-1sg

xmárá mûr-re\l ba\textsuperscript{201}-yâna lá g-màh-ûn.\l
donkey.m say.pfv-3m.sg then\textsuperscript{201} neg ind-speak.ipfv-1m.sg

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.’

\textsuperscript{199} BT = Babylonian Talmud, Vilna edition.
\textsuperscript{200} I thank my grandfather Ḥakham Ḥabib ‘Alwan for this reference.
\textsuperscript{201} Sabar (2002a: 103): ‘proclitic particle to indicate mild puzzlement, wonder, complaint’.
Expression of appreciation.

Var.: partōna mòrre, | miráta dìdi xólle lèbbi, | … ‘The flea said: The good-for-nothing of mine ate my heart [= is causing me distress], …’

Cf. SA:103.

šáleḥ bor-móro mórre ta'-axóne bùxra, | Šaleḥ the son of Maro 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.’

67. palg-òd bàrṭil, | ḡonna-le, | half-gen bride-price.m henna.f-cop.3m.sg

One half of the bride-price is henna.

xurásti qam-'azmálan 'áxlax zālaṭa. | My friend invited us to eat a salad. She said to us, ‘I have made such a salad [lit. one salad], may the house of its father be destroyed,²⁰² that salad.’ We came, we ate, the entire salad was [made of] lettuce, I told her, ‘My friend, you have made a salad all of which is leaves of lettuce, one half of the bride price is henna.’

68. palg-òd qahbūsa | món naxpūsa. | half-gen prostitution/adultery.f from shyness/modesty.f

Half of the lewdness is caused by shyness.

‘áziz bor-jítan déni nàhum, | yāla ‘Aziz the son of our neighbour Nahum is an only child, a good and shy child. The children of the neighbourhood learned to ask him for things, do that

yōkkàna-le, | yāla ḫāš u-naxòpa-le. | yalúnkəd ḥāra láplu tālbi mónne șo'āle, |
thing, give me that thing. ‘Aziz is [too] shy to say, ‘No, I do not have [it], I cannot do [it].’ His father Naḥum is very worried [lit. afraid] about him. He told him: ‘My son, pay attention, one half of lewdness is caused by shyness, learn to say no!’

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

Var.: šqālla mēn šārmā šēpla ‘ol pāsā. ‘She took from her anus [and] smeared on her face.’

See the context situation for proverb no. 111 below.

Because the ewe, tail fat always covers her buttocks, and the goat, her tail is thin and curls upwards, [so] when the ewe jumps, her tail goes up and her buttocks are visible [lit. they see her buttocks]. One day the ewe leaped over a brook, her tail fat went up. The goat stood and said, ‘Huh! The buttocks of the ewe are exposed!’ The camel does not see its [own] hump.203

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203 See proverb no. 93 below.
71. šúl ʿozí-le xurás-i,\(^1\)
work.M.GEN do/make.ipfv.pl.-acc.3m.sg friend.pl.-poss.1sg
k-čáhe lóbb-i u-g-néxi ʿizas-i,\(^1\)
ind-get_tired.ipfv.3m.sg heart-poss.1sg and- ind-rest.ipfv.3pl hand.f.pl.-poss.1sg

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

Var.: šúl ʿozíle xurási,\(^1\) k-čáhe lóbbi u-lá-g-néxi ʿizasi. 'Work done [for me] by my friends, my heart gets tired and my hands do not rest.'

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

kálśi séla maʾináli bed-šúl pòša.\(^1\) kúd
daqíqa qam-baqrálí máto ʿózan ʿó-mandi
u-ʿó-mandi.\(^1\) kílle wáda ʿéni wéla básra.\(^1\)
ʾamránna má ʿósa.\(^1\) báš čéli,\(^1\) mórrí ta-
gyáni,\(^1\) šúl ʿozíle xurási,\(^1\) k-čáhe lóbbi u-g-
néxi ʿizasi.\(^1\)

My daughter-in-law came to help me with [lit. in] the [house]work of Passover. Every minute she asked me how to do [lit. should I do] this thing and this thing. The entire time my eye was after her [ = I watched over her]. [In order to] tell her what to do. I became more tired [than I would have otherwise]. I said to myself, work done [for me] by my friends, my heart gets tired and my hands rest.

72. šágfa\(^1\) la mšápya ʿɬ šágfa,\(^1\)
piece.f neg resemble.ipfv.3f.sg to piece.f
lá- k-táfqan\(^1\)
neg- ind-meet/stumble_upon.ipfv.3f.sg in-3f.sg

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

Vars.: wášla\(^1\) la mšápya ʿɬ wášla,\(^1\) lá-g-ʿálqa ʿbba,\(^1\) '[If] a piece would not resemble a piece, it would not stick to it.' wášla\(^1\) la mšápya ʿɬ wášla,\(^1\) lá-g-ʿálqa ʿɬ wášla,\(^1\) '[If] a piece would not resemble a piece, it would not stick to a piece.'

Cf. R:72, SA:139.

ḥayíka bár-čúna rába čennikā-le,\(^1\) kíllu
k-ı̂.\(^1\) u-báxtə mbúrxə šómmed xaláqa\(^1\)
Hayika the son of Čuna is very stingy, everyone knows. And his wife, blessed be the name of the Creator, also she is
ṣá-aya čonníke muxwáse, šágfa lá mšápya ṣ'el šágfa, lá-k-táfqa bad-šágfa. stingy like him. [If] a piece would not resemble another piece, it wouldn't meet that piece.

73. šúla, ṣ'árya-le, g-náhki ṣ'ólle, work.M lion.M-COP.3M.SG IND-touch.IPFV.3PL on-3M.SG

k-páyeš ruvika, IND-become.IPFV.3M.SG fox.M

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

Var.: šúla mux-ṣ'árya-le, ‘Work is like a lion …’

y'slli l-bésa réši mborbèzle u-әéni I entered home, my head became scattered [= I became weary and confused] and my eyes were darkened. xšklu. mórry yômni, ṣ'üši ṣúla, lá-k-i'an má 'on u-má lá ṣ'ozan, ṣ'éka I said, ‘My mother, I have much 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.’

šáklan. bráti, šúla ṣ'árya-le, mánde ṣ'ázax ṣ'ólle páyëš ruvika.

74. ʿóz hawûsa, mándi b- ạmaya, do.IMP.SG favour.F throw.IMP.3M.SG in-water.PL

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

Var.: ʿóz hawûsa, màrpe b-ạmaya, ‘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 Ecclesiastes 11:1: ‘Send your bread upon the water, for after many days you shall find it.’

màn-dámmød wéåli zürtà yômmi qam- Since I was little, my mother taught me to do people favour[s], and not to ask for anything [in return]. She malpáli ʿón hawûsa ʿemmød-nâšé u-lá always told me, do a favour, throw [it] into the water.

ṭálan ču-mędzi, hár g-mmrâli ʿóz hawûsa, mánde b-ạmaya,
75. dmóx kpíña, qú swí’a.1
  sleep.IMP.2SG hungry.M.SG rise.IMP.SG satiated.M.SG
  Sleep hungry [and] rise full.

Var.: dmóx kpíña, qú šamína.1 ‘Sleep hungry [and] rise fat.’

ḥābūba mòrra-li:1 ḏrāti,1 kúllu wéalu faqir
  go-záxí,1 bxá kóza qúṭma,1 g-marwéwalu
  yalúnke,2204 lámux-‘àxxa.1 l’swa
  lelawása,1 lág-damxánwa mòn-kòpna.1
  yómmi g-emráwa-li,1 dmóx kpónta,1 qú
  swè’ta.1 ŏto g-zaqlàwali ta-dàmxan.1
  Ḥabuba said to me: ‘My daughter, everyone was poor in Zakho, with one
  pile of ashes they would raise the children,2204 not like here. There were
  nights, I did not sleep out of hunger. My mother told me, 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.3F.SG IND-be_abundant/overflow/heal.ipfv.3F.SG
  Where it flows, it heals.

Var.: dúkəd g-jàrya1 k-pàsxa.1 ‘Where it flows, it opens up.’

ḥāle u-‘ázis hay-xamṣí-šenné hilu-gwire.1
ḥáram hákàn šmé’lan xa-čéppén
mònnòhun.1 ḥále xa-bàxta-hila,1 bé’ta
bála pòmma,2205 u-‘ázis-šik,1 léwe
maḥkyànà.1 ėś şdsa,1 yom-xušeBA
mbònoki,1 šmé’lan čríqéne mòn-bésòhun.1
nṣélù xa násúsà,1 lá mhmínìnan ʾanya-
  náše k-ṭi nási u-sárxî ḏò.1 ḥále bxéla u-
  qtálla gyàna.1 yómmi mòrra,1 lá y-élan čú-
  mandi ʾal-danya-náše.1 šáhude mòrrè,1
  ūna r-ăšši xésa talátta-la.2206 ūna wealu-
  Hale and ‘Aziz have been married for
  fifty years. We have never heard [lit. it
  is forbidden if we heard] [even] a
  [single] sound [lit. a two-drops] from
  them. Hale is such a woman, an egg
  without a mouth,2205 and also Ḫaziz is
  not talkative. This week, on Sunday
  morning, we heard shrieks from their
  house. They had such a fight, we could
  not believe that these people know
  how to fight and scream like that. Ḫale
  cried and killed herself [= was in great
  sorrow and distress]. My mother said,
  ‘We did not know anything about
  those people.’ Shawude said, ‘I felt that
  it is wet under her.’2206 Her eyes were

2204 See proverb no. 114 below.
2205 See proverb no. 100 below.
2206 See proverb no. 110 below.
Several speakers offered the interpretation: 'A community settlement in the north of Israel, founded in 1944 by immigrants from Kurdistan.

The son of my uncle bought a house in Eyn Ha-Mekek. My brother said, 'Well, I also would go to Eyn Ha-Mekek!', my mother said, 'All right my son, go! The rope went after the bucket.'

I was angry with my husband, I went to the house of my father, I cried and said to my mother, 'Why did you let my father marry me to my cousin? He is many years older than I am [lit. he exceeds me many years], and his mind is not like my mind. He is a good man, but I did not marry him out of love.' My mother said, 'My daughter, do not be angry, he is a good man, and he is our relative [lit. he is people of ourselves]. The world is about

Cf. SE:79, SA:150. See also Midrash Tanhumah, Parashat Miqets 10.


See also Midrash Tanhumah, Parashat Va-Yigash 5; Yalqu Shim’oni, Parashat Va-Yigash 150.

A community settlement in the north of Israel, founded in 1944 by immigrants from Kurdistan.

Several speakers offered the interpretation: ‘The world should be managed [smoothly].’
See also the context situation for proverb no. 82 below.

79. **bés ʾilāha ʾəmīra.**

The house of God is built.

80. **bāba g-yāwol ta-yalònke| kútru k-fārḥi,|**

[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.

Hamínko cried and said: ‘I do not want anyone to give me money, [when] a father gives to his children, both [sides] are happy, [when] children give to their father, both [sides] cry. May no one cry.’
81. dré-la máya b-ḥd- tré šaqyása.
put.PVF-3F.SG water.PL in-GEN- two water_trough.F.PL
She poured water in both troughs.

My mother told me, ‘My daughter, hold much the honour of [= give much respect to] Dina, our neighbour, the mother of Ephraim, and the honour of Khatun, the mother of ‘Aziz. God will help, one of their children will be your luck [= you will marry]. You should pour water in both troughs.’

82. mərīra xtāya, xšlya ʿəlāya.
bitter.M lower.M sweet.M high.M
Bitter below, sweet above.

I went to visit Ḥabuba. I knew that she was very ill. She is dying [lit. carrying]. When I entered, she became very happy. She told me, ‘My daughter, may God make it shine/bright upon you, like you have brightened my day upon me.’ I said in my heart, ‘That is it, bitter below, sweet above. Her situation is bitter and she is [= appears] sweet. The world is all about managing it.’

83. dîwan baxtāsa, bôš bassîma-le
divan212.M.GEN woman.PL more pleasant.M-COP.3M.SG

Sitting with women is better than sitting with men.

Cf. SE:109, an antonym.

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211 See proverb no. 78 above.
212 Or: drawing room, council, assembly.
Whenever Ġarib ʿOĉe came to us, he would not enter to my father [=my father’s room] to sit with the Ḥakhamim, he used to come in the veranda, sit with the women, laugh and say, ‘A divan of women is more pleasant than a divan of men. And you should know, [that] when women speak men [should] remain silent.213 I will remain silent and laugh my head off [lit. faint from laughter].’

If those who regret ate faeces, there would be no faeces left in the world.

I regretted very much over the foolish deeds that I had done, and the deeds that I had not done. I sat and brooded. My mother told me: ‘My daughter, if those who regret ate shit, there would not remain any shit in the world.’

The brother of Ḥabuba looked for a good girl [lit. ‘kosher’ girl, i.e. of good family, qualities and reputation] to marry and build his house [with]. He travelled to Mosul, he travel to Baghdad, no girl caught his attention [lit. fell in his heart]. He returned to

213 See proverb no. 86 below.
Zakho, on the way he saw a fine girl, shining like the moonlight [lit. like the sun of the moon]. He started speaking with her, it turned out that she was [lit. she went out] a relative of his [lit. his people], and she also grew up in his neighbourhood. Ḥabuba said: ‘My brother, you searched far away, [but] found near. May God make [light] shine upon you.’

See the context situation for proverb no. 83 above.

Whoever does not take [a wife] from his own ethnic group, goes [=dies] in his sickness.

Cf. SE:24.

The son of my uncle married one of the people of here [=Ashkenazim], she took his soul out of him [=she gave him a hard time]. They fight about everything. His mother told him, ‘My son, whoever does not take [a wife] from his own ethnic group, God forbid [lit. may God not make it], goes [=dies] in his sickness.’

214 Contraction of | ʾiláha lá ʾawz.
88. kūd ʾéra ʾpî̂ma, | ʾáxxa k-ṭâres. |
all.REL penis.M crooked/twisted.M here IND-heal.IPFV.3M.SG
Every crooked penis finds its cure here.

Var.: … ‘áxxa k-páyeš râst. ‘ … becomes straight here.’

bēs ʾxāḥam wēale qam-ʾṣūqa, | kūd g-
ed-zālwa ʾṣl-ṣūqa, | bād-ʾúrxe g-yaʾšlwa bēs
be-xâḥam, | brâte mūrre, | lā ʾdōqētun ʾəlli, |
 kūd ʾéra ʾpî̂ma, | ʾáxxa k-ṭâres. | ʾānâ ʾçêli
mân-dânya ʾlīqe u-ḍît ṭād-k-ësî ʾāxxa, |
kûlle yôma xā g-yaʾšî | xā g-nâpəq, | bâsar
tma-šînne | fḥâmla ʾêma bēsa ṣâr wîlé, |
mûx bēs ʾavrahām ʾavînî wêwale, | psûxa
ʾṣl-ʾarba ʾalâle, | xā g-yaʾšî bə-ḥxâya, |
dammwd-g-nâpəq | pâse hîla mpurâqta, |
xâḥam u-ḥxâte k-šamʾîwa kūd-xa, | g-
maʾînîwa kūd-xa, | u-kūd yʾölle l-tâm |
mp̄qle mabsît. | mərâde ḥṣîle. |
The house of the Ḥakham was near the market. Whoever went to the market
would, on his way, enter the house of the Ḥakham [lit. the house of the
household/family of the Ḥakham]. His
[= the Ḥakham’s] daughter said, ‘Do
not hold [this] against me [lit. on me],
every crooked penis finds its cure here.
I am tired [lit. became tired] of these
lowly people [lit. caught and
dissolute]215 who come here. All day
long one enters [and] one goes out.’
After several years, she understood
what a good house it was, it was like
the house of Abraham Our Father,
open to its four sides. One would enter
crying, when he would go out his face
[was] smoothed, the Ḥakham and his
wife used to listen to anyone, used to
help anyone, and whoever entered
there went out satisfied. His wishes
fulfilled.

89. hawîsa lâ- ʾoz-ət ʾůmmd- ḥuzáya. |
favour.F NEG do.IPFV-2M.SG with- jew.M.SG
Do not do a favour for a Jew.

Cf. proverb no. 74 above.

xzēlî xa-šūla ḫâs ta-bər-xâltî, | mŏrri-le sî | I found a good job for my cousin, I told
škôl | hâm p-kâzbat pâre ḫâs, | ham-
mtâhnat, | ṛāba nāše g-əbîwa pałxîwa go-

215 A collocation. The first word of the pair may also mean ‘accidentally conceived’.
dé duksa. bør-xälti zõlle, škálle šûla,
pláxle xá šábsa u-mørre ṭó léwe tâli,
sahrâne 216-la bâle léwa tâli. qómlle u-
qam-šawâqla ṭ-e-duksa, gan-ézen wêla
tâle! xûlî ta-gyâni, hawûsa lá-ozot
ʾammid-huzâya.

work in this place.’ My cousin went,
started working [lit. started the job],
worked one week and said: ‘This is not
for me, it is a sehâne 216 [ = pleasant as
a spring celebration], 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 láxmox reš-mâya, throw.imp.sg bread.m-poss.2.sg on-water.pl
   bálkid xa-nûnîsa b-doqâ-le, 217
   maybe one-fish.f fut-catch.ipfv.3.sg-acc.3.sg

Throw your bread over the water, maybe a fish will catch it.

Cf. SE:54, SA:37, proverb no. 74 above. See Ecclesiastes 11:1: ‘Send your bread
upon the water, for after many days you shall find it.’

dammd-fêli šûla, tlûbli mân-ʾastâzi
maʾâtāni. mørre-li. mándi láxmox reš-
mâya, bálkid xa-nûnîsa b-doqâle. mándi
mŝádor ksâwe ta-râba dukâne.

When I was looking for a job, I asked
my teacher to help me. He told me:
‘Throw your bread to [lit. on] the
water, maybe a fish will grab it. Send
letters to many places.’

91. šásat ṭárbi hóya ṭâl-le, fever.f.gen forty be.ipfv.3.sg on-3.sg
   lá g-yawâl-la ta-čê-xa.
   neg ind-give.ipfv.3.sg-3.sg 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.

216 A spring celebration. See footnote 54 in chapter 3.
217 I thank Yona Sabar for this proverb.
92. hám zyâra| hám tajjâra.| also visit.F also trade.F A visit, as well as a trading opportunity.

yómmi mòrra| b-án mașihâna bâso,| My mother said, ‘I shall go visit Bâso, she is ill, when I return from her, I will go [lit. enter] to Ḥakham Naḥum’s house, and take from him the meat grinder, on my way I will buy two [or] three things from the market, isn’t it [a] good [plan]?’ ‘Of course, mother, well done [lit. may your health/vigour be well/pleasant], both a visit and a trading opportunity’.

93. gúmla lâ- k-xáze ujóksa did-e.| camel.M NEG- IND-see.IPV.3M.SG hump.F of-3M.SG The camel does not see its [own] hump.

See the context situation for proverb no. 70 above.

94. ʾiz-ox mpâl-la go- tér ʾilâha. Your hand fell into the sufficient [=abundance] of God.

Cf. proverb no. 112 below.

ʼáziz mûrreli kmâ g-əbêla moșpâha dêni.| ʼAziz told me how much he loves our family. He told Yo’el the husband of Farûh, the son-in-law of Ḥakham Ḥâbib and Satuna, ‘You do not know what luck you have that you married the daughter of Ḥakham Ḥâbib, your hand fell into the abundance of God.’

95. rozâna rozâna,| ʾiz-i péša dərmâna.| Earthquake.F earthquake.F hand.F-POSS.1SG become.IPV.3F.SG cure.M Earthquake earthquake! My hand shall be the cure!

Said by women after an earthquake, while putting their hands on the ground.
Our neighbour, for some time, does not work, he does not have a job. He does not have even one quruş to support himself. I told him, clean the courtyard, clean the stairs [=staircase] take [=earn] two [or] three quruş, sustain your 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.’

Compare Sabar (1974: 330), nursery rhyme no. 3: 

’sámrə márrə tə-ʃirə nida, šqol brat-xası 
ta-ʃrɔnx, sqštə u-ḥəš-ila, mɔrre-la, 
mad-šəmərat bəx-ʃəstəzı, šəhat mʃəsə, 
šəxnən b-loʃa.’

Samra said to her neighbour, ‘Take the daughter of my sister for your son [=marry them], she is beautiful and good.’ He said to her, ‘Whatever you say, wife of my teacher. You will cut out, and we shall wear.’
98. ʿázla dúd-a g-mzabná-le go- ʾráḥa šuqā-ne.।


She sells her yarn in many markets.

My sister said that she would come [and] help me, and to you she also said that she would come [and] help you, and she said that she would go to my mother [and] cook for 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. bē’ta nápla mān šārm-a,। lā-k-tōra.।


[If] an egg falls from her buttocks it does not break.

This woman is [of one] span’s stature,। [If] an egg falls from her buttocks, it does not break. But her belly knows a lot for herself [= she is very cunning, her appearance is misleading].

100. bē’ta bāla pəmm-a.।

egg.f without mouth.m

An egg without a mouth.

Cf. SA:31.

See the context situations for proverb no. 76 above and proverb no. 112 below.

101. gūr-rax gūr-rax barrākyās-ax ʾeq-lu.।


You got married, you got married, your rugs have torn [because of the many suitors that stepped on it].

Avro Bōṭṭi wanted to sell his house.

Many people came and went, and did not buy the house. He said to himself,
márre ta-gyáne, | ’o-mà-pašla?| qásted xazàle pàšla, | sélù ṛàba ṭalábáye tàla’ sélù u-zállu u-lá-qam-gorìla. | yómma mòn-qàhrìta mòrrà, | gùrrax gùrrax barakyásax ċòqlu. | ‘What’s happened [lit. what did that become]? It is like the story of Khazale [lit. it has become Khazale’s story], many suitors came for her, they came and went and did not marry her. Her mother out of her sorrow said, “You got married, you got married, your rugs tore.”’

102. g-náṣṭi qàlma | u- gólìda dìd-a gə-mzabnì-le. | IND-skin.ipfv.3pl louse.f and- skin.m of-3f.sg IND-sell.ipfv.3pl-acc.3m.sg They skin a louse and sell its skin.

Var.: g-náṣṭi bàqqà, g-əmzábi gólìda dìda. ‘They skin a frog, [and] sell its skin.’

See the context situation for proverb no. 47 above.

103. g-Jáyer mòn šürs-e. | IND-urinate.ipfv.3m.sg from navel.f-poss.3m.sg He urinates through his navel [unlike all others].

Var.: mòn šürse g-Jáyer. ‘Through his navel he urinates.’

Cf. proverb no. 46 above.

’o-náša ṛàba gè’ya-le, | k-xàšu gyáne ràba, | k-xàšu lés mònne, léwe múx kùllu. | g-Jáyer mòn šürse.

This person is very haughty, he thinks highly of himself [lit. he thinks himself (too) much, i.e. he is full of himself], he thinks there is no one like him [lit. there is not of him], he is not like everyone. He urinates from his navel.

104. dré-le párra b-rêš-e | put.ipfv-3m.sg feather.m in-head.m-poss.3m.sg

u- ’éra go- šërma. | and- penis.m in- anus.m

He put a feather on his head and a penis in his anus.

220 See proverb no. 46 above.
mo‘ónni ḥáẓqal bəd-šabāqād bēse.₁ sēle ʿaxône,₁ ḥáẓqal g-emôrre;₁ xzt ʿēma šūla sqâla ʿázle ʿō;₁ ʿana-rohâyî mpâqâla mən-čəhwâ,₁ g-xâkli u-môrrî,₁ ḥâwa,₁ drî párra b-rêšî.₁

bâdre môrra-li,₁ Šmô,₁ lâ-šam‘at xriówa,²²¹ qam-ʿazmûli mâhkyaŋ go-ðiwân gûre,₁ muṟâdı hšôllu,₁ ʿē dôra qamēsa ʿzâmul bâxta mâhkyaŋ ʿommâd-ruwâne.₁

msofrîrî l.“tel-ʿavîv” mtêlî,₁ qam-matwîli go-qurnîsâd sôdde₁ küllu gurâne məh kêlu xâ-basër daw-xêt,₁ hîl mtêle dôrî yôma gnêle₁ nâše kûllu mborbêzlu₁ dômî bôzle.₁ mûrrî-la xurâsti,₁ yômmi mûrra-li mên-sûna₁ dôq qâdrax bəd-ʿızâx₁ u-lôp ta-gyânax₁ xolâ kûd ʿamôr tûrnîni₁ lâzûm râqzat,²²² xzé ma-sêla b-rêšax,₁ drêlu pára b-rêšax₁ u-ʿéra go-šîrmâx.₁

I helped Ḥazqal with painting his house. His brother came, Ḥazqal told him: ‘See what a good [lit. beautiful, i.e. of good quality] job he made [lit. this (person) made].’ I, my spirit went out [of me] [because] of exertion, I laughed and said, ‘Right, put a feather on my head.’

Badre told me, ‘Listen, may you not hear evil,²²¹ they invited me to speak in a divan [= assembly] of men, my wishes came true, this is the first time that they invite a woman to speak with the magnates. I travelled to Tel-Aviv, I arrived, they sat me in the corner of the stage, all of the men spoke one after the other, until my turn arrived, the day ended, all of the people scattered, my blood spilled [=I was shamed, humiliated].’ I told her, ‘My friend, my mother told me a long time ago, grab your honour with your hand [= have dignity], and learn for yourself [= learn a lesson], must you dance for whoever says tûrnîni?!²²² See what has happened to you [lit. see what came unto your head], they put a feather on your head and a penis in your anus.’

105. hâmmam g-ma‘lôq-le b-əd ʿurṭyâs-e.₁

bath.M IND-set_fire.PFV.3M.SG-ACC.3M.SG in-GEN fart.F.PL-POSS.3M.SG

He heated the bath [water] with his farts.

Cf. R:70, SA:58.

²²¹ See proverb no. 129 below.
²²² See proverb no. 37 above.
In our neighbourhood, there was one old woman, poor soul she did not have what to eat. People use to take pity on her, they used to give her crumbs. Once, Nassimo came, he saw that poor soul, [and] he said, ‘Now right away I will speak with the people of the government [= authorities] and they will help her.’ After two [or] three weeks, no one [lit. they did not] heard anything from him, my mother said, ‘That person did not do anything, he set fire to the bath with flatulence. The wife of Mašliḥ said so.’

Cf. SE:80.

See the context situation for proverb no. 46 above.

Var.: xāre qāme1 xāre bāsr1 lá g-mfāreq1 ‘[Whether] you defecate in front of him [or] behind him, he does not distinguish.’

‘o-nāša be-ʿāšel hīle1 lá g-dāʾel mád g-ʿōzi tāle1 xāre qāme1 xāre bāsr1 ...

That person is ill-mannered. He is not able [or: does not want] to see what [people] do for him. You defecate in front of him, you defecate behind him ...

223 See proverb no. 117 below.
108. kúd šabò'ta | xá šanè'ta.  
all.REL finger.F one craft/skill.F  
Each finger, a skill.

‘e-bàxta, | rába šáter-ila, | xa-‘éšet ḥàyil.  
kúd šabò'ta | xá šanè’ta-la. | xuzí ‘axòni  
mgábe ta-gyáne xá muxwása.  
That woman, she is very skillful/clever/strong, a woman of valour. Each finger, a skill. I wish, my brother would choose for himself one like her.

109. xa g-èmer | xa go-mtárj̈om.  
one IND-say.IPFV.3M.SG one IND-translate.IPFV.3M.SG  
One is talking, the other is translating.

‘anya-yalùnke, | kùllu sélù ‘ólli, | mád g- 
ôn | go-m’ámri ‘ólli. | xá g-èmer | xá go- 
mtárj̈om. | ‘iláha nátçrru. | ráwe | u-parqíli.  
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 talàtta.  
under-3M.SG wet.F  
Under him it is wet.

See the context situation for proverb no. 76 above.

111. lá go-mfárqa | ʾéra mon gizàra.  
NEG IND-distiguish.IPFV.3F.SG penis.M from carrot.M  
She cannot distinguish between a penis and a carrot.

brat-‘avro | xà behéma-la. | lá k-l’a čù-
mòndi, | lá go-mfárqa módi mon-mòndi,  
ʾéra mon gizàra, | bāle-y’èla ta-gyána.  
pósła qira, | ṭélà bød-monàšše, | la-
xòpla, | šqólła mon-šórma, | drèla l-
pása, 224 | u-qam-jaabràle gàrrre ʾìmma.  
The daughter of ʾAvro, 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 Mônašše, with no shame [lit. she was not shy], she took from her buttocks

224 See proverb no. 69 above.
[and] put on her face, and she forced him to marry her.

112. \( mpə́l-la \) go- kás yə́mm-a. \\
\( \text{fall.PFV-3F.SG in- belly.F.GEN mother-POSS.3F.SG} \) \\
She fell into her mother’s belly.

Cf. proverb no. 94 above.

\( šánne \) brat-ʾiyə́ kmà hāš wèla' čəppén lə́k-ése mə́nna,\| xa-bə́ tə bə́la pə́mma.\|^{225}
\( ʾilə́ha \) mroḥə́mlə ʾə́lla,\| mə́sdə́rre-la xa- bə́r-hə́lə́l u-qam-gawə́rra.\| yə́mme u-bə́be hā́m gə́bə́lə ḥə́bə́d ṭə́fə́  u-gə́-mə́azyə́lə,\|
\( mpə́l-la \) go-kás yə́mma.\| mbúrxə xələ́qa.\|
Šanne the daughter of ʾIyo, how good she was! A drop does not come from her [ = she is quiet, does not complain], an egg without a mouth.\|^{225}
God had mercy on her, [and] sent her one good boy [lit. a son of ‘kosher’] and he married her. His mother and father also like her very much [lit. much of much], and they pamper her, she fell into her mother’s belly. Blessed is the Creator!

113. \( mxə́-la \) pə́hna ʾə́l-la. \\
\( \text{strike.PFV-3F.SG kick.M on-3F.SG} \) \\
She struck a kick over her.

\( šə́mə́rə́el u-šə́yon jirə́nə́ wə́lə́u, \) lə́plu mə́zə́gə́z,\| zə́lə́l l-ə́skə́r mə́zə́gə́z,\| kū́d mə́ndə́ g-oə́zə́wə mə́zə́gə́z,\| wə́lə́u mə́xə́-jə́mə́ke,\| zə́lə́l l-”uνιvə́rsiτə” mə́zə́gə́z,\|
bə́lə-šə́mə́rə́el wə́wə́lə́ bə́sə́ mare-kə́pə,\| u- bə́sə́ ʾə́qə́l,\| lə́ple lə́ple,\| mxə́le pə́hə́nə ʾə́l- šə́yon| pə́sə́lə hə́kə́m,| šə́yə́n-heš hū́lə bə́- lyə́pə.\|
Šam’el and Šiyon were neighbours, they went to school [lit. studied] together, went to the army together, they used to do everything together. They were like twins. They went to university together, but Šamu’el was more master-of-shoulder [= diligent and successful], and brighter. He studied [and] studied, he struck a kick over Šiyon, he became a doctor. Šiyon is still studying.

\(^{225}\) See proverb no. 100 above.
114. b-xá kóza qūṭma,\textsuperscript{r} g-marwé-wa-lu yalûnke.\textsuperscript{r}
With one pile of ash they used to raise children.

See the context situation for proverb no. 75 above.

115. lá k-káweš mən-šāpya.\textsuperscript{r}
NEG IND-go_down.IPFV.3M.SG from-strainer.M
He does not go down through the strainer.

\textsuperscript{r}I cannot stand [lit. see] this person, how hard [lit. viscous; = stubborn, solemn] he is! Whatever I ask him, he would not do [it], whatever I do [lit. I do (and) I do not do], he does not fulfil my wishes, he is stubborn [lit. viscous], he does not go down through the strainer.

116. qómád šīṭa\textsuperscript{r} u- kása k-ˈi.a.\textsuperscript{r}
stature.M.GEN span\textsuperscript{r} and-belly.F IND-know.IPFV.3F.SG
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. m̀r-wa-la \textsuperscript{r} bax- mašlîah.\textsuperscript{r}
say.PFV-PAST-3F.SG wife.GEN- Mašlîah
Said the wife of Mašlîah.

\textsuperscript{r}When the Kurds [= Jews of Kurdistan] of Zakho came to Israel, there was not [any] work [= jobs] in Jerusalem, they were very poor. On Sunday[s] they used to travel to the villages and work in the fields. Each one used to take with him bread and some condiment to eat [lit. revive]. One day, one man brought only bread. He did not have anything at home. They started eating,

\textsuperscript{r}That is, the distance measurement based on the distance between the thumb and the small finger of the human hand.
mándi ʾal-bése, škállu ʾaxlí, bax-mašlíḥ g-ʾmrále bás láxma ʾstlox?! ḥmól-lá-ʾaxlot ʾattá p-šadrānnox, xárpa pexwārin. ḥmólle lá-xólle zawāʾta dide. ḥmólle u-ḥmólle, yóma gnēle. xurāse mārrule, yóma gnēle, sá xalsāxle šúla. mārrelu, bāle bāx mašlíḥ mārrali mšadrāli pexwārin. mən-dáw yóma g-ʾmrí mɵrwala bax-mašlíḥ.

See also the context situation for proverb no. 105 above.

118. ʾén-a sé-la qam-gyän-a. eyε.F.POSS.3F.SG come.PFV-3F.SG in_front_of-self.POSS.3F.SG

Her [own] eye came unto her. My friend said she would come to me and help me a little. She came [and] pilled two watermelons, how much her eye came to her! [= she was so proud of it!]

xurāsti mórra b-ásya kósli u-maʾināli xárpa. séla mqolápla tré zabāše, kmá ʾénə sεla qam-gyana.

119. naxr-a naxr bəndāqa, səppás-a səppás warāqa, nose.M.POSS.3F.SG nose.GEN hazelnut.F lip.PL.POSS.3F.SG lip.PL.GEN paper.F

mbúrxα šxmwɔd xalàqa. blessed.M.SG name.GEN Creator

Her nose is like a hazelnut, her lips are [thi]n as paper, blessed be the name of the Creator!

Var.: ... pásə páš waràqa, ... ‘... her face is [smooth] as paper ...’


sélu ʾtalabāye ta-brát ʾaxɔnī u-zmɔrru-la naxrə naxr bəndāqa, səppása səppás They came to ask for the hand of [lit. they came for the ‘asking’] my niece and they sang to her, ‘Her nose is like
warâqa,1 mbûrxa šómmød xalâqa,1 u-
kûlleni mtohanèlan.1

120. rózza  k-tà’en màya.1
rice.M IND-carry.IPFV.3M.SG water.PL
Rice [can] take up water.

‘erân tlóbîle mûnni má’hkiyan ‘šómmød
tolmîda dië liâna dëni.1 mûrri ta-tolmîda
‘àse,1 má’hkiyax liâna dëni,1 mûrre g-śûn
‘àsûn bûle mësen ‘šûmni trë xuràsî
ma’âlëš?i mûrri,1 ‘àse go-ëni,1 tláha ‘árxe
u-xá ‘ărxa xà-ila,1 rözzi k- tà’en màya.1

Eran asked me to speak with his
student [some] lišàna denî. I told the
student to come, we shall speak
[some] lišàna denî, he said, ‘I want to
come but I want to bring with me two
[of] my friends, OK?’ I said, ‘They
should come upon my eyes [ = by all
means], three guests and one guest are
the same, my rice [can] take up water.’

Cf. Sabar (2002a: 222), under ma’ne.

‘zómlu xà zamàrtə1 u-zmûra rába rába1
u-lá fhômîlan çù-mëndî,1 mûrri ta-xa-
báxta dôd-wëala tûta qàmi,1 qam-
mapqâla mûn-mâne ‘e-zamàrtà.1 kma-g-
zâmra u-kma-g-ôya,1 çú-xa lá gô-
mtàhne.1

They invited one singer, and she sang
more and more, and we didn’t
understand anything. I told a woman
who was sitting next to me, she took it
out of meaning, this singer. How much
she sings, and how much she whines,
no one enjoys [it].

122. qam-mapqâ-la mûn- naxîr-i,1
PAST-take_out.IPFV.3F.SG-ACC.3F.SG from-
nostril.M-ACC.1SG
She took it out of my nose.

xuràsî mûrra b-āsya šaqlàli bôd-trambèl
dûda,1 la- tán go-dé šûmša,1 hûmmîlî hûmûlîlî,1
sêla u-mûrrali háwal-b-áx zónax xa-

My friend said she would come and
take me in her car, so I should not
walk in that sun. I waited [and]
waited, she came and told me, ‘First
we shall go buy something for me, and afterwards we shall go to your task.' She delayed me, and this favour of hers, she took it out of my nose.

I was at home, I started eating and my sister came [and] hurried me, she took the food out of my nose.

I was angry with my friend, she made me very angry, afterwards she came to speak with me, I did not forgive her, [whatever] she did [or] did not do, I did not speak to her.

My sister asked me to go with her to the market. I did not want to. [Whatever] she did [or] did not do, I did not go with her.

She made her [own] belly hurt.

I asked Basso to buy some tomatoes for me when she is in the market. But I have not seen a single tomato [lit. it is forbidden 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 már’a u- mòsa. |
May pain and death forget you.

‘wi-nšéli zonánna{x tarpe-səlqe. 227
lōbbax la-paʃs,| našélax már’a u-mòsa,| bráti zūnna-li. |
‘Oh I forgot to buy you [some] chards.227 ‘Your heart should not stay [ = do not worry], may pain and death forget you, my daughter bought [some for] me.’

126. ’amóma u- yóm-e kòma. |
scarecrow228.M and- day.M-POSS.3M.SG black
A scarecrow228 and his day is black.

’o qaʃaba mərute raʃ-ile. la-g-mahke,
kake xriče pəmme štima, ’amoma u-yome koma.| This butcher, his face is bad. He does not speak, his teeth are gnashed, his mouth is sealed, a scarecrow228 and his day is black.

127. barhát-œd núra fər-ru mən- štima, 228 šeñ-e. | eʃ-əl,| spark.PL-GEN fire.M fly.PFV-3PL from-
eye.PL-POSS.3M.SG Sparks of fire flew from his eyes.


See the context situation for proverb no. 132 below.

128. gárm-ox lə mayqəɾ-œt-tu. |
bone.PL-POSS.2M.SG NEG make_heavy.IPFV-2M.SG-ACC.3PL
Do not make your bones heavy.

Var.: gárm-e yaqûre.| bone.PL-POSS.3M.SG heavy.PL
His bones are heavy.

Cf. Sabar (2002a: 124), under garma; proverb no. 124 above.

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227 An important ingredient of the soup known as xamusta; see footnotes 78 and 79 in Chapter 2.

228 The translation of ’amoma is according to Khan (2008b: 1215).
šáá ti mšaq‘āna,1 gárme kma-yaqüre,1
hay-tré šabása peláe-didi hîlu kósle,1 xà
bázàrá lázóm čâyök ʿëbbu,1 káse g-
mamrè2la229 u-lá qam-ʾawòzlù,1

See the context situations for proverbs no. 60 and no. 104 above.

129. šmó‘ | la- šamʾót xriwa.| hear.IMP.2M.SG NEG- hear.IP.FV.2M.SG bad.M
Listen, [may] you not hear [any] evil.

130. k-taqál-la | gyân-e.| IND-weigh.IP.FV.3M.SG-ACC.3F.SG self.F-POSS.3M.SG
He weighs himself.

Basso said, ‘I shall go visit my mother-in-law, I’ll take her soup, this morning I saw her walking healthy and well – I know that she is healthy and well, but every several weeks she does not come to us, she weighs herself, [in order to] see whether her daughters-in-law visit her or not. Today is my turn to go visit her, I shall make her head grow [= make her feel important; flatter her].

Var.: ʿiba térr gyânà.| ‘She is sufficient for herself.’


yalúnkät xâsi mjohádlu xá mad-daw-xét.| The children of my sister quarrelled one with the other. One struck words
xá mxéla xábre bad-d-ay-xét.| séla

229 See proverb no. 124 above.
yəmmu,1 u-márra ta-d-ay-zûrtâ,1 qató
qâlax,1 mórri ta-xâši,1 ʾâhat lè-wâjâx,1
ʾay-râbsa k-iʾa tîr gyâna,1 lè[w]a xa-
mâškin,1 ʾiba kúd ʾlâha xawsâša
mayʾilâlu go-jèba.1

in the other [= they argued; insulted one another]. Their mother came and told the little one, ‘Cut your voice [= be silent]! I told my sister, ‘You should not care, the eldest can get along [lit. knows sufficiently for herself], she is not poor [= helpless], she can put [lit. insert] all her three sisters into her pocket [= she is strong enough to manage them].’

132. dîn-i g-ēl m- rēš-i.1
religion/judgement230 M-POSS.1SG IND-go.IPFV.3M.SG from-POSS.3G.SG
I lose my senses. [lit. My religion/judgement goes away from my head.]

This man gets angry quickly. [How] poor is his wife! She came from the market, she had not put down her baskets yet, he started yelling at her, sparks of fire flew from his eyes,231 she tells him, ‘But what did I 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. gnē-li u- lá rʾāš-li.1
be_suddenly_happy/lucky.PFV-1SG and
NEG feel.PFV-1SG
I was so lucky [but] I didn’t realise it.

Can be used either ironically or not.

kâlṣi škîlā pâlxâ,1 nahagōna zîlî ʾol-
mâlx,232 mûrra,1 yalônke masyâlû kôsli
ʾozān-bû xudânî.1 gnēli u-là rʾāšli.1 ʾâna
My daughter-in-law started working, the calf went to [bring] salt.232 She said she would bring the children to [stay with] me, [so that] I [could] take care of them. I was so happy I did not

230 The word dîn is borrowed into NENA from both Hebrew, where it means ‘Jewish law, judgement’, and from Arabic, where it means ‘religion’. See Sabar (2002a: 141).
231 See proverb no. 127 above.
232 See proverb no. 54 above.
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!


hár-dammad g-mašiħónna sótî g-
mbârxâli, | bróni dalâla u-‘azîza dûkox lá
már’a. | Always when I visit my grandmother she used to bless me: ‘My dear and darling son, may your place not hurt [= may you will not experience pain].’

135. pâš-le xà-lappa. | become.PFV-3M.SG one- small_lump.M
He became [as small as] a lump [= he became frightened].


See the context situation for proverb no. 60 above.

136. lább-a pâš-le xa-mâsta. | heart.M-POSS.3F.SG become.PFV-3M.SG 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. Appendix: Additional proverbs, with no glossing or context situation

137. ‘é tɔrnîni233-la, | tɔrnâna | wêla pâšta, | ‘This is tɔrnîni, tɔrnâna is still left.’
‘é tɔrnîni-la, | tɔrnâna | heš b-âşya, | ‘This is tɔrnîni, tɔrnâna will come.’
‘é tɔrnîni-la, | tɔrnâna | wêla bāsra, | ‘This is tɔrnîni, tɔrnâna is behind it.’
Troubles come in bundles. Cf. SA:13 (a synonym), proverb no. 37 above.

138. kûd-xa gâraš núra xe/qam-qóqa dide. | ‘Everyone pulls the fire [towards] under/in front of his one clay pot.’

233 See footnote 179 above.
139. *xātra bōd kālba,* lēba znāya.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. *quí-m-rēši,* lá marçōnnox.1 ‘Get off me so that I will not crush you.’

Cf. SA:108, proverbs no. 4 and no. 38 above (synonyms).

141. *rásqet kālbe ḍāl šezaṇe.*1 ‘The livelihood of dogs is upon [=provided by] the mad.’

Dishonest or cunning people (or underdogs) achieve their needs from the naïve. Cf. SE:120.

142. *réša dōd là-маäre,* lá-yaṣrōtte.1 ‘A head that does not hurt, do not tie it.’

Var.: réš [GEN] la-g-маäre’, lá yaṣrōtte.1 ‘A head that does not hurt, do not tie it.’ Cf. SE:14.

143. *rūṭi u-ṣuqa.*1 ‘The fox … and the market …’

Said in order to emphasise the lack of connection between two things.

144. *ríx poṣyaṣa k-ése māḥkōye dīde.*1 ‘The smell of farts comes from what he says.’

145. *tūrran ʾō jalida,* ta-ṣātayax ʾān māya.1 ‘We broke this ice in order to drink this water.’

Said when a great effort is done to achieve something. Var.: … māya qarīr.1 ‘… cold water.’

146. ‘āqel léwe bōd-rūwwa u-zōra.234 ‘Intelligence is not in big and small [=not dependent on size or age].’

147. *ʾīyo ʾle bāqāya,* u-kōz-lōbbe|xōre wēna.1 ‘Iyo is preparing, and in his heart [=he thinks that] I am his friend [=cooperating].’

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234 I thank Ahuva Baruch for this proverb.
148. pəšli pire, | ūmrī pēva. | ‘I became an old woman, my life is from now on.’
   Cf. Genesis 18:12: "... הָנְדֶעַ יֵרֲחָא יִתְלְובֶה הַתְּיֵה יִלִהַ נְדֶע..." ‘... Now that I am withered, am I to have enjoyment ...’

149. yōmmi dúqla ṭarši, | heš-lá mṭèle. | ‘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. kpìna | k-ékɔl țina. | ‘The hungry eat [even] mud.’
   Anyone who is hungry would eat anything. Cf. the Book of Proverbs 27:7.

151. návyan kálsa u-xmása, | ẓá’lu ‘éra u-ţěskâsa. | ‘Between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law [= amidst their arguments and struggles], the penis and testicles got lost.’
   Cf. R:55 (synonymous in meaning but with a different image).

152. xáyi ta-gyànti! | jůlle dād-kús-d-yom ẓéllì, | ẓádo bòš k-ţakî-li. | ‘My life is for me!’
   I wear clothes of every day [= normal clothes] [lit. clothes of every day are on me], today they suit me better.’
   Expression of good mood, satisfaction.

153. qóqad ‘arása g-rásəx’ qóqad ‘izamyása là g-rásəx. | ‘The clay pot of the rival wives 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. dāmməd šōmša g-nàpqa | ‘éwa g-él kɔsła | ‘áp-awa g-ɔbe šàxən. | ‘When the sun comes out [= appears], the cloud goes to her, it also wants to warm up.’
   Var.: dāmməd ‘éwa k-xàže šōmša mpɔqla | ‘éwa g-él k-ɔsła | ‘áp-awa g-ɔbe šàxən. | ‘When the cloud sees that the sun came out [= appeared], the cloud goes to her, it also wants to warm up.’

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235 I thank Ahuva Baruch for this proverb.
236 Contraction of k-ţakî ‘əlì.
237 Expression of love, but usually addressed to or about another person, predominantly to children: xáyi tàlo! / ‘ál! ‘My life is for you! / for him!’
238 In polygamy.
155. *xréle go zàya.* ‘He defecated in the issue.’
He spoiled the business.

156. ‘*īza la g-ṃáya ʾal šorma.* ‘Her hand does not reach her buttocks.’
She is a miser. Also a curse: may she not be able to serve herself.

157. ‘*ʾāl xa čángga ṭáya, k-tépa.* ‘She [can] float on a handful of water.’
She knows how to get along.

158. ‘*ʾo mísa la k-ṭawéle ʾé ṣázàya.* ‘This dead is not worth this
mournings/lamentation.’
Said about an exaggerated response to something. Or saying that something is
unworthy.

159. *hiye hiye labaniye.* ‘This and this [are both] yogurt.’ (Ar.)
It’s all the same, it’s nothing new.

160. *zaharóke dʾórra lá-gwàra.* ‘Zaharoke returned without getting married.’
Said when someone returns without achieving what he or she had intended.

161. *zóʾəd zamàre.* ‘A pair of singers.’
Said, often dismissively, about inseparable friends or about two people who
collaborate in something.

162. *hále hále kúd-xa ʾal mahàlle.* ‘His situation his situation,
everyone [goes] to his
neighbourhood.’
At the end of the day everyone should mind their own business.

163. *là třsli - dròzli, lā náxli - nùxli.* ‘I did not heal, I cracked; I did not rest, I
barked [= howled].’
Life is hard.

164. *kúlla dúnye šud-péša ʾèra, lā ʾálqa ʾəbbi.* ‘May the entire world be a penis [but]
do not stumble upon / touch me.’
Vars.: … *la náḥqa ʾəlli.* ‘… do no touch me.’ … *la qàrwà ʾəlli.* ‘… do not come close
to me.’ Cf. proverb no. 29 which has a similar message.

165. *xmáre g-əl b-ʾūrxa.* ‘His donkey is walking on the road.’
Things are going well for him.

166. *ma-dóqnox bód máyád dò’e qam-maxurótta?*[^239] ‘What, did you dye your beard white with a yougurt drink?!’
   Said to an older man who says something unwise.

   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.

   Used of someone speaking angrily.

   Past promises are irrelevant. If one promises something, one should deliver now.

170. *kúd lá šxúnne bād-šámšēd bānokē.*[^170] *la-g-šáxēn bād-šámšēd ḍasārtā.*[^241] ‘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. *šalâqtwed bê’e.*[^171] ‘[She who] boils the eggs.’
   Said of someone who knows how to get along in life. Also: a fomenter of quarrels.

   Said as an apology when interrupting someone’s speech.

173. *g-yā’la gō-ʾēnī.*[^173] ‘She goes into my eye.’
   She argues with me, contradicts what I say.

174. *ʾēna qāṭ’a qam-gyāna.*[^174] ‘Her eye cuts in front of her.’
   She thinks highly of herself; makes a big deal out of the respect she thinks is due to her.

[^239]: I thank Ahuva Baruch for this proverb.
[^240]: I thank Naftali Mizrahi for this proverb.
[^241]: I thank Mordechai Yona for this proverb.
175. ʾáxal réše páyōš mònne. ‘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. pósra b-axlåle, gárme mṭašyålu. ‘She would eat the meat [and] hide the bones.’
She won’t reveal my dirty laundry.

177. fágir zûlle l-tôksa, u-zângin ‘riqålé l-bòdra. ‘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. man-jamå‘al là-g-ʾeqa dûksa. ‘From [= because of] the congregation, space
does not become narrow’.
Var.: man-naše … ‘From [= because of] people …’ They feel the space is sufficient
because they love each other. Cf. BT Sanhedrin 7a: ‘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’ (my translation).

179. cúxxa látile kafîl u-damàn. ‘No one has a guarantor and protection-tax/bail.’
Everyone is mortal. Cf. proverb no. 11 above.

180. kárti u-tè‘nîl wêlu š-xâši, u-xóri k-čâhe ṣḥbu. ‘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. dágən quáša qam-ʾozåle kanâšTa. ‘She made the beard of the priest a broom.’
She used something in a disrespectful way. Var.: … ʾozåle sponjadôr. ‘… she made
it a rag.’ Similar message to that of proverb no. 182 below.

182. mxêlu tambûr b-ʾér bàbu. ‘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. Similar message to that of proverb no. 181 above.

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242 I thank Ḥabuba Messusani for this proverb.
243 I thank Boʿaz Sando for this proverb.
244 I thank Naftali Mizraḥi for this proverb.
245 I thank Naftali Mizraḥi for this proverb.
246 I thank Naftali Mizraḥi for this proverb.
183. \( ymút \ al-dík \ u-\textit{éno} \ 'ala-naxàla. \) ‘The rooster dies and [= but] his eye is on the waste [or: bran].’ (Ar.)

Desires never die. Cf. Aramaic version in SE:33, and also proverb no. 191 below.

184. ‘\( áw \ d-\textit{câyak réšé go-tanůra} \ q-	extit{qâyaz bad-nůra}. \)’[247] ‘He who sticks his head into the oven gets burnt by the fire.’ Synonymous message to that of proverb no. 40 above.

185. \( g-	extit{yá\textprime{}}l go-xa-u-xét}. \) ‘He enters one into the other.’

He is starting to get angry.

186. ‘\( ìlá\textprime{ha} šqilále mànne. \)’ ‘God has taken it from him.’

He lost his senses. He became angry.

187. \( m-o-qóma ta-\textit{aqlûsa}. \) ‘From stature to wit.’

May you lose some of your stature and gain it in intelligence. Cf. proverb no. 116 above.

188. \( kúd \ šqâlle \ ‘aqôllax’ là mtáhne \ ‘sûbe. \) ‘Whoever took your wits, may he not enjoy it!’

Cf. SA:9.

189. \( kúd \ g-máxe šûd-màmre, kúd \ g-	extit{máxèl} šûd-	extit{màswe}. \) ‘He who hits should hurt, he who feeds should satiate.’

Cf. SE:11.

190. \( kúsîs \ ‘áló\textprime{lo} \ drèlé b-	extit{érš jàllo}. \) ‘He put the hat of ‘Alo on the head of Jallo.’

He confused two matters.

191. \( ká\textprime{sà kónta k-só\textprime{a}}, \ ‘	extit{éna} kónta là k-só\textprime{a}. \)’[248] ‘A hungry belly [can be] satiated, a hungry eye [can]not [be] satiated.’

Cf. proverb no. 183 above.

192. ‘\( á\textprime{za} qål’á qala\textquoteleft{as}’ párya ká\textprime{sà bëb kulàsa}. \) ‘[May] she go away [to hell, and may] her belly burst and overflow together with her kidney.’

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[247] Sabar (2002a: 131), under \( ē-y-k. \)

[248] Sabar (2002a: 188), under \( kpîna. \)
A curse.

193. šám’ā ʾár’a, lá-ʾamrāla. ‘[May] the earth hear [it, and] not tell it to her.’
   Said about a deceased person, when mentioning a negative fact about them.

194. ʿšba gyāna. ‘[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 pelāvax. ‘A word under your slippers.’
   Keep a secret. See the context situation at proverb no. 27 above.

196. pámmi twíra qàme. ‘My mouth is broken in front of Him.’
   Said to God, when saying something which may be construed as resentful towards

197. ʿamórka ʿamôrra| zamórka zamôrra. ‘May the sayer say it, may the singer sing
   it.’
   Let people say whatever they want.
Chapter 2: Enriched biblical narratives

1. The enriched biblical narrative

The topic of this chapter is a central genre in the oral culture\(^1\) of the Jews of Zakho, and indeed of all Kurdistan: the enriched biblical narrative (EBN). The EBN is the retelling and re-composition of biblical narratives, usually ones 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 even, smooth, story that does not reveal its tapistered nature. The fact that it has drawn in 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 the understanding and analysis of them.

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 2012.\(^2\) The complete narrative, with a translation, is presented in Section 7.

2. Related genres\(^3\)

The EBN shares some 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), may therefore be regarded as meta-generic characteristics in the culture of

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\(^1\) About this term see Ong (1982).
\(^2\) I have published another EBN told by Samra Zaqen, the story of Joseph and his brothers, elsewhere; see Aloni (2014a: 26-60). For another NENA text recorded from Samra, where she talks about her arrival to 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).
the Jews of Kurdistan (that is, characteristics which encompass several genres). The genres which are related to the EBN may be divided into two categories:

1. Synchronously related genres: The living genres native to the culture of the Jews of Kurdistan. These are epic songs (traditionally referred to as tafsir or qəsta); 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 piyyut (liturgical poetry).

2. Diachronically related genres: The 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 the 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 the classical Midrash: ancient literary and exegetical genres were kept alive in the Jewish communities of Kurdistan well into modern times.

2.1. The 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

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

5 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: 183-184; 1959: 106-108). 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’.
The songs are usually rhymed and have a clear strophic structure, and each of the songs was performed with a unique melody. Like with the EBN, as we will see below, motifemes 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’. Another term used interchangeably with this is *qasta*, meaning ‘story’. Sabar described the *tafsirim* as ‘the foremost literary product of the Ḩaxamim of Kurdistan’. Rivlin collected many of the epic songs and published them with an elaborate introduction. Na‘īm 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 Yitzhak. Na‘īm 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 Ḩakham 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); Yosef and Binyamin, performed by Eliyahu Gabbay, Naḥum ‘Adiqa, and Salem Gabbay in the Zakho dialect, recorded by Avigdor Herzog (class mark Y 03627); the story of Yosef 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).

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7 See Gerson-Kiwi (1971).
8 Wehr & Cowan (1976: 713).
12 Shalom (1986).
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. These translations were handed down orally, and only committed to writing at the request of scholars in the 20th century. The term often used by the Jews of Kurdistan to describe these translations is šarḥ or šarʿ, from Arabic, meaning ‘expounding’, ‘explanation’, or ‘elucidation’.

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’. 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.’ It is precisely in these instances that the translations show a family resemblance to the EBN.

2.1.3. NENA Midrashim

The 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 Shmuʿel Barazani. They contain homilies and lessons on three portions of the Torah: Wa-Yehi, Be-Šalah, and Yitro. They were written with the intention of being delivered publicly, and therefore have a capturing, dramatic, character.

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 either be original work of the Ḥakhamim of Kurdistan,

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13 With the exception of the Book of Psalms.
14 There are recordings of oral performances in the National Sound Archive of the National Library of Israel, for example ʿAlwan (1974), which consists of the Book of Ruth performed by Ḥabib ʿAlwan, recorded by Jacqueline Alon (class mark Y 01790).
19 Sabar (1982a: 60).
or else classical Aggadic material that did not survive elsewhere. In both cases – the reworking of older material and the incorporation of original material – are a feature which unites the Midrashim with the EBN.

The NENA Midrashim were published by Sabar.\textsuperscript{21}

2.1.4. Expositions of the haftarot and of 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);\textsuperscript{22} the eight days of Passover (Isaiah 10:32-12:6); the second day of Shavuot (Habakkuk 2:20-3:19);\textsuperscript{23} and the Ninth of Ab (Jeremiah 8:13-9:23). They follow the Hebrew text more closely than the NENA Midrashim, but do contain Aggadic material aimed at interpreting the verses. Similarly to the NENA Midrashim they are preserved in manuscripts in the Nerwa and ‘Amidya 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.\textsuperscript{24}

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 classical Aramaic Targum of the Song of Songs, itself an allegorical interpretation of the Hebrew text.\textsuperscript{25} The exposition of the Book of Ruth is preserved in several manuscripts.\textsuperscript{26} The exposition of Lamentations is preserved in manuscripts in the dialects of Nerwa and ‘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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Sabar (1976; 1985).
\item \textsuperscript{22} Published in Sabar (1982b). A recording of the Book of Jonah performed in the dialect of ‘Amidya by Rahamim Hodeda, recorded by Jacqueline Alon, is kept in the National Sound Archive of the National Library of Israel (class mark Y 02718).
\item \textsuperscript{23} Published in Sabar (1966: 381-390).
\item \textsuperscript{24} Sabar (1982a: 61).
\item \textsuperscript{25} See Sabar (1991).
\item \textsuperscript{26} 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 the dialect of Urmi was published by Ben-Rahamim (2006: 192-215). It contains elaborate Midrashic narrative expansions.
\end{itemize}
Esther is preserved in a single manuscript.²⁷ 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 piyyut

Jewish NENA piyyutim (liturgical poems) in various dialects, which are recorded in manuscripts, have been published by Sabar.²⁸ Most of these piyyutim are translations, sometimes very free translations, of earlier Hebrew piyyutim, but several of them are original works.²⁹ A number of the piyyutim recount biblical narratives,³⁰ which they elaborate in a manner similar to that of the epic songs (see Section 2.1.1. above). These piyyutim were sung in synagogues during certain Jewish festivals.

2.2. The diachronically related genres

2.2.1. Targum³¹

The tradition of Targum, Jewish translations of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic, dates back to the pre-rabbinic period. It seems that the many extant Targumim are related

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²⁷ 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.

²⁸ Sabar (2009).

²⁹ One of these original works is ‘The binding of Isaac’, from a manuscript by Ḥakham Yishay in the Urmī dialect, which was sung on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, published in Sabar (2009: 60-79). Sabar (2009: 60, footnote 149) writes about this piyyut: ‘It seems that the Neo-Aramaic version is not a direct translation of a Hebrew piyyut, 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 piyyutim about the passing away of Moses, which were sung on Simḥat Torah after reading the me’ona Torah portion (Deuteronomy 33:27-29): the first without dialect specification, in Sabar (2009: 299-302); the second in the dialect of Saqqaz, in Sabar (2009: 302-306); the third from a manuscript by Ḥakham Sason, son of Rabbi Babba Barazani of Arbil, in the dialect of Arbil, in Sabar (2009: 306-309); and the fourth, taken from Ben-Rahamim (2006: 216-221), from a manuscript by Shim’om Ben-Michael in the dialect of Naghada, republished in Sabar (2009: 309-312).

³⁰ In one case, qaṣṣat ḥanāna ‘The story of Hannah’, the piyyut is based on a Midrashic narrative. Sabar (2009: 425-443) 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.

³¹ For a comprehensive overview of this topic, see Kasher (2000).
to the ancient liturgical practice of public translation of the Torah, whose aim was to make scripture accessible to members of the community who 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*.\(^{32}\) 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.’\(^{33}\) 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.’\(^{34}\)

The extant Targumim (Targum Onkelos, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Targum Neofiti, the Genizah Targum, the Fragments Targum, and the Tosefta Targum for the Pentateuch; Targum Jonathan Ben ‘Uzzi’el, and the Tosefta Targum for the Prophets; the Targumim for 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 šmō’yn ya kulloxfun mḥubbe didi, de nīšītn kulla ‘azīze didi*\(^{35}\) ‘Oh hear all of you my loved ones, oh listen all my dear ones’. 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 for the Prophets.\(^{36}\) It is a Targum especially rich in Aggadic additions incorporated into the text. One half of the material of the Tosefta Targum

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32 Elbogen (1972 [1913]: 140-141).
33 BT (= Babylonian Talmud, Vilna edition) Brakhot 8a, based on the Soncino English translation.
34 BT Qiddushin 49a; Tosefta Megillah 3:41.
35 Rivlin (1959: 228); see also the comments of Sabar (1982a: 63). Kasher (2000: 73) describes the Hebrew formula ‘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.
is for chapters that are, or were, used as haftarot. Thus it also has stylistic ties to the NENA expositions of the haftarot.\textsuperscript{37}

2.2.2. Midrash

Midrashic discourse is a central component of rabbinic literature. Its hermeneutic techniques and style is an important foundation of, and can be found in, all of the works of that 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 of elaborative hermeneutics of the Midrash, which is so central to the 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.\textsuperscript{38} 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 they are 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)\textsuperscript{39} as well as several modern works (e.g. Toqpo Šel Yosef\textsuperscript{40} and some of the stories in ‘Ose Fele,\textsuperscript{41} both by Rabbi Yosef Shabbetai Farḥi). These 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

\textsuperscript{37} See Section 2.1.4 above.

\textsuperscript{38} In the Talmud, one of the ways this is achieved is by linguistic separation: the biblical text will be in Hebrew and the Midrashic interpretation will often be in Aramaic.

\textsuperscript{39} Dan (1986).

\textsuperscript{40} Farḥi (1867). On Farḥi, his books, and his influence, see Yassif (1982).

\textsuperscript{41} Farḥi (1864-1870). On the uncertainty regarding the year of publication, see Yassif (1982: 48, footnote 7).
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.42

2.3. The Christian durekṭa

Another related Neo-Aramaic genre that should be mentioned in this context is the Christian durekṭa.43 This is a genre of rhymed and metred poetry on religious themes, sung in public gatherings. The genre has its root in the Classical Syrian genre of memra. Many durekyata 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’.44 This bridging function is also shared by Jewish tafsirim (epic songs),45 and indeed the tafsirim and the durekyata have additional characteristics in common: the tafsirim and the durekyata both contain religious themes and narratives, but are both performed publicly in non-liturgical circumstances;46 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 narrating its narrative;47 neither is anonymous,48 as the names of their authors are recorded.49 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 brothers50 with those in the durekyata51 about the same biblical narrative – would certainly prove fruitful.

43 Mengozzi (2012).
44 Mengozzi (2012: 335).
45 See Section 2.1.1 above.
47 Mengozzi (2012: 335).
48 This is not always the case for Jewish epic songs. Rivlin (1959) give traditions about the names of the authors only for some of the songs.
49 Mengozzi (2012: 337).
50 Aloni (2014a: 26-60; 2014b).
51 See, for example, Mengozzi (1999: 477-478, 482 number 16); Rodrigues Pereira (1989-1990).
3. 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, which is key to the analysis of Jewish folk-literature.

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 text\textsuperscript{52} that may recur in other texts, is central to, some say distinctive of,\textsuperscript{53} the study of folklore. The standard reference work most closely associated with the concept of motif in folklore is the Thompson motif index.\textsuperscript{54} 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’.\textsuperscript{55} However, over the years, many theoretical critiques have been made of both the motif index and the concept of the motif itself.\textsuperscript{56}

One such critique is found in Alan Dundes’s article ‘From etic to emic units in the structural study of folktales’.\textsuperscript{57} 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 (or that of the Aarne-Thompson tale type index),\textsuperscript{58} noting that these indexes are ‘useful … [as] bibliographical aids or as means of symbol shorthand’;\textsuperscript{59} 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.

\textsuperscript{52} 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.

\textsuperscript{53} Ben-Amos (1980: 17).

\textsuperscript{54} Thompson (1955-1958).

\textsuperscript{55} Dorson (1972: 6), quoted in Ben-Amos (1980: 17).

\textsuperscript{56} 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).

\textsuperscript{57} Dundes (1962).

\textsuperscript{58} Aarne and Thompson (1961); Uther (2004).

\textsuperscript{59} Dundes (1962: 96).
To explain his argument Dundes uses a pair of concepts coined by the American linguist and anthropologist Kenneth Pike: etic and emic. 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.

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 structural, emic, unit to serve as the fundamental point of reference for folklore studies. As a possibility, he quotes what he describes as ‘one of the most revolutionary and important contributions to folklore theory in decades’; Vladimir Propp’s definition of the function, the structural unit proposed by him in his famous work...
about Russian fairy tales, *Morphology of the Folktale*, where he states that ‘an action cannot be defined apart from its place in the process of narration’.

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 and Weisstein. The basis for the thematological study of Jewish literature, together with a new methodology, was proposed by Elstein and Lipsker. Its central accomplishment is the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Story*, which presents entries on Jewish ‘themes’. 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. Some of the concepts were introduced specifically for 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 wide geographical and cultural spaces. For example, we find about forty distinct written versions of the famous story of Honi the Circle Maker who prayed for rain, and these...

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63 Propp (1958). In this work (which first appeared in Russian in 1928), Propp analyses a corpus of 115 Russian folktales. He defines thirty-one 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 thirty-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), 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’ (2005: 167).

64 Propp (1958: 19), quoted in Dundes (1962: 100). Interestingly, this is also an innovative fundamental principle in the Schenkerian approach to the analysis of tonal music, developed by Heinrich Schenker during the first quarter of the 20th century — see Schenker (1977); Salzer (1962).

65 Trousson (1965); Weisstein (1988). In the context of Jewish culture, see also the numerous studies of Christoph Daxelmüller referred to in Elstein, Lipsker & Kushelevsky (2004: 20-21).


67 See Section 3.2.1 below.

68 On the problem of terminology, see Elstein & Lipsker (2004: 34).

69 The most famous of which is in the Mishna, tractate Ta’anit 3:8.
are almost evenly distributed over a period of thirteen centuries.\textsuperscript{70} 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 Section 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.\textsuperscript{71}

3.2.1. 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. A single story may exhibit several dozens of versions, each of which differ from the rest, but all nevertheless tell the same recognisable story. Each individual version of 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 the 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 which describes the elements of which that layer is composed.

\textsuperscript{70} See Tohar (2013).

\textsuperscript{71} Based on Elstein, Lipsker & Kushelevsky (2004: 9-21) and Elstein & Lipsker (2004).
1. The level of material (Stoff) – the concept of motif: The motif\textsuperscript{72} 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 for hermeneutic deciphering.

2. The level of function – the concept of motifeme: The motifeme\textsuperscript{73} 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 as 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 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

\textsuperscript{72} See also Section 3.1 above.

\textsuperscript{73} The term was coined by Pike (1954: 75). Elstein & Lipsker (2004: 38) and Elstein, Lipsker & Kushelevsky (2004: 11) erroneously ascribe its coining to Dundes (1962).
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. The substructure is thus a mediatory stage between the constant and the telos.

74 The examples given for that by Elstein & Lipsker (2004: 46-47) are the implicit norms of the courtly love of the Middle Ages as the platform of the medieval romance, and the Heavenly City as portrayed in the writings of the 18th century.
4. 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 or 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 its striking tendency to tell and retell narratives, and to leave traces, 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 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 intraculturally 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, in motifeme 5.9, the motifeme 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, in motifeme 5.10, the motifeme of splitting one’s opponent into two without him realising this is taken from the Assyrian folk-epic ‘Qatine’.

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 motifemes 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 motifeme 5.5, where the motifeme of speaking to the crowd at a funeral is transposed from Boaz’s wife’s funeral into 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 motifeme 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’.

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 motifeme 5.13, where Jonathan’s recommendation of David as the one to play music to 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 motifeme 5.8.

Two previously independent motifemes may be unified into one. An example of this is seen in motifeme 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 motifeme 5.4, what takes place in the biblical narrative at the city’s gate instead takes
place in Samra’s story at the synagogue; and in motifeme 5.8, the biblical location of the Elah valley is now Jerusalem. Similarly, when it comes to motifeme 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 under the same category, is what the scholar James Kugel termed ‘narrative expansion’.75 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 to be a whole episode, which in and of itself contains several subordinate motifemes. An example is motifeme 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 xamuṣta soup and giving some to her poor neighbours.76

5. Motifemes in Samra’s story

In what follows nineteen of the motifemes contained in Samra’s story are listed. Each subsection begins with a description of the motifeme77 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 were rich.

(19) ḫaširim ṭelú, ṭasade, ṭaswe-lu... ḳ𝕏TX...‘They were rich, they had a field, they had ... wheat, they had ...’

Naomi was a charitable woman, she took care of her needy neighbours, giving them some of the produce that God had given her. For example, whenever she cooked xamuṣta78 soup, she made sure her needy neighbours had some too.

75 Kugel (1994: 3-5, 276). Kugel, however, defines the narrative expansion as an exegetical device which is ‘based on something that is in the [original] text’ (original emphasis).
76 For further discussion of types of motifeme transposition, see Section 6 below.
77 Some of the subsections deal with groups of interconnected motifemes, rather than a single one.
78 A sour soup made with meat-filled dumplings. See following footnote.
“My neighbours do not have [any]?! It’s a sin!” She used to put some cracked wheat, used to put some … whatever she had [lit. has], a zucchini, “Here,” [she says to the neighbour,] “make [=cook] [with] these some dumplings for your children, don’t leave your home empty [of food].”

Her husband, Elimelech, was 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).

In the Bible, the reason that is given for Naomi and Elimelech and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion leaving the Judaean city of Bethlehem and moving 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). There is no direct

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79 kutèle ‘meat-filled dumplings’ are a very popular dish in Jewish-Kurdish cuisine, particularly in a sour green vegetable soup called xamuṣta; see Shilo (1986: 80-81, 139, 142-143). The kutèle will appear again in the narrative: when they return to Bethlehem, Naomi sends Ruth to glean ears of corn. Naomi says she would make dumplings with whatever Ruth brings: (49) u-ʾōz šbbōlim básru, | mése, | deqānnu garsānu g-osānu, | b-āzax kutèle b-ālax. | ‘Make ears of corn 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.’

80 All translations of biblical verses into English in this chapter are based on JPS (1917) and JPS (1999), with some modifications.
indication of their wealth in the biblical text, nor for Naomi carrying out charitable actions.

Many rabbinic sources describe Elimelech’s family as members of the aristocracy.81 The Targum Ruth translates the phrase אפרתים מבית יהודה in 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.82

One source of Naomi’s description as a good, charitable woman is Midrash Ruth Rabbah 2:5.83 “And the name of his wife Naomi” since her deeds were worthy (naʿīm) and pleasant (naʿīmīm).84

A source for Elimelech’s stinginess as the reason of leaving Bethlehem is Midrash Ruth Zuta 1.85 “Thus he said: Tomorrow the poor gather and I cannot reside among them.”86 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.’87

The Jewish ‘Amidya NENA translation for Ruth 1:1 adds ‘rich man’.88 The ‘Ephrathites’ in Ruth 1:2 mentioned above are translated as ‘great’ or ‘heroes’.89 A recorded performance by Ḥakham Ḫabib ‘Alwan of the Jewish Zakho NENA translation of Ruth translates ‘Ephrathites’ as maʿaqule ‘noblemen, aristocrats’.90 The Jewish Urmi NENA translation for the same verse states that they became ‘high officials’ in Moab, similar to Targum Ruth.91

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81 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 Ṣimʿoni Ruth 598.
83 Lerner edition.
84 My translation.
85 Buber edition (1925: 40).
86 My translation. Another source which gives the same reason is Yalqut Ṣimʿoni Ruth 598.
87 Midrash Ruth Zuta 2, Buber edition (1925: 40). This Aggadah appears also in Yalqut Ṣimʿoni Ruth 599, and in Rabbi Tobiah Ben Eliezer, Midrash Leqaḥ Tov on Ruth 1:2, Bamberger edition (1887: 9).
88 Sabar (2006: 59). Sabar states that this may be taken from Rashi’s commentary on verse 1.
89 Sabar (2006: 59, footnote 3).
5.2. Ruth and Orṭa are the daughters of Meʾohav: (40)

Elimelech marries his two sons to Ruth and Orṭa (in the Bible, Orpah), the daughters of Meʾohav (in the Bible, Moab):

(40)  maʾoháv ši ṭle trè bnásaː rùt, u-ʾòrṭa, qam-ṭalólu ta-kútru bnóne dide.

‘Meʾohav 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 the classical rabbinic literature there is a well-established, old, exegetical tradition that Ruth was the daughter, or the granddaughter, of Eglon king of Moab, who was himself, according to that tradition, the grandson of Balak king of Moab.92 A later source, Midrash Ruth Rabbah 2:9,93 states that Orpah is a daughter of Eglon as well, and therefore a sister of Ruth.

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, like she had left them.

(48)  psáخلا dárgọt bet-lehém tūla. […] ṣīṭla sūṭṭa u-garūṣa u-… múx qamàe béṣa wēla mālya ṣawāe.

‘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.’94

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

92 BT Horayot 10b; BT Nazir 23b; BT Sotah 47a; BT Sanhedrin 105b. See Levine (1973: 48, footnote 6).
93 Lerner edition.
94 These specific grinding implements are taken from the realia in Kurdistan.
Bethlehem, ‘I went out full, and the Lord has brought me back home empty’. Midrash Ruth Rabbah on verse 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 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.’

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 in 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-ér rá sé l-béśa,* l *máḥá[r]’ bónne m-bónoke sálōxun ʾal-knāšta,* masyálax naʾōmi,* u-ʿánā-šik p-áwən go-knāšta,* u-knāšta mlṣa jamāʾa,* b-ózaxni ṣpšăr.īn

‘He tells her, “Go home, tomorrow morning come to the synagogue, Naomi bring you, and I will also be in the synagogue, and the synagogue is full of people, we shall make a compromise.”’

On the following day, Boaz brings his eighty-nine-year-old elder brother to the synagogue, and asks him to perform the yibbum and to take Ruth as wife. The brother replies:

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95 Midrash Ruth Rabbah 3 (Lerner edition); my translation. Original Hebrew: "[הראופרה יאהה תנע_sampling] מאיור. [וז] איהם מתנשׁיא אוס ונניופס? לאבריום הייחות מח المسلمين בני יוחנן ירו לולא, והמשי היא תחכום, מעשי היא תמהות, לאבריום חי פמע, אדומתי מבט האבלי אשתו, מעשי מתו יעודיה מח ממצאים [שלו], והמשי היא תחכום התמהות."
“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, wear it. [...] Go wed [lit. bless] her.”

The congregation agrees. On the following day, Boaz and Ruth get married in the synagogue by performing the ceremony of the seven blessings.

In the Bible, this scene is recounted in Ruth 4:1-12. It does not take place in the synagogue, but rather at the gate of the city. Ruth and Naomi are not mentioned as being present. The legal procedure described in the biblical text is ge'ula, the re-appropriation of agricultural land by a kinsman, and not yibbum, levirate marriage, as it is in Samra’s narrative. One component which became associated with yibbum (or more accurately with the renouncement of the yibbum obligation), namely the ḥalitsa – taking off the shoe of one party and giving it to the other party – does appear in the biblical text, and through this there is an association with yibbum. In both texts, the refusal of the closer 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 that he will be obliged 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 verse 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’. Several sources within the classical rabbinic literature

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96 Handing over one’s shoe is associated with levirate marriage. In Deuteronomy 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 ḥalitsa (‘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.”’ (Deuteronomy 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.

97 See Levine (1973: 98). Targum Ruth translates Ruth 3:11 similarly. The Sanhedrin was the supreme rabbinical court.
identify the closer redeemer as a paternal uncle of Boaz, and a brother of Elimelech. However, one source maintains that the go’el, whose name is Tob, is indeed Boaz’s elder brother. Boaz is said to have been eighty years old at the time of the marriage, thus an elder brother aged eighty-nine is plausible.

Both the recorded performance by Ḥakham Ḥabib ʿAlwan for the Jewish Zakho NENA translation of Ruth and the Jewish ‘Amidya NENA translation for Ruth 4:1 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’. The ‘Amidya translation renders it as darga d-sanhedrin ‘the gate of the Sanhedrin’.

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) ʾilá[ha] sàhz u-nàše sàhzí! kúlló márru ʾibasèder.111 ʾilá[ha] hùlle| smàxla,| máni sèlè-la?| k-ʾìtn máńi?|
“God shall [bear] witness and people shall [bear] witness!”
Everyone said, “OK”. God gave, she became pregnant, 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 Yishay, and Yishay was the father of David.
Only one source in the classical rabbinic literature mentions Boaz’s death immediately after his marriage to Ruth, Midrash Ruth Zuta: 106 ‘They said, in the same night that he came unto her he died.’ 107 The motifeme appears in two later rabbinic sources: Yalqut Šimʿoni and Midrash Leqaḥ Tov. 109 The latter contains a description of the actions which Ruth takes to prevent suspicion with regard to her fidelity:

When Boaz came to Ruth, in 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]. 110

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 the funeral of Boaz, found in Samra’s story, may have originated from the Midrashic description of the funeral of 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. 111

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

106 On the problem of dating Ruth Zuta, see Shoshani (2008). Midrash Ruth Zuta was first published by Buber in 1894.
107 Midrash Ruth Zuta on Ruth 4:13, Buber edition (1925: 49); my translation.
108 Yalqut Šimʿoni Ruth 608.
109 Rabbi Tobiah Ben Eliezer, Midrash Leqaḥ Tov on Ruth 4:17, Bamberger edition (1887: 44). Midrash Leqaḥ Tov is a Midrashic collection for the Pentateuch and the Megillot composed by Rabbi Tobiah Ben Eliezer during the 11th century in Macedonia. It contains both ancient sources and original material by the author.
positioned and integrated into 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 for Ruth 4:14 associates the night of Boaz and Ruth’s marriage with the death of Boaz’s previous wife: qam do lele matla bax-bo’az u-mosele ’aya, man-ilaha ‘On that night the wife of Boaz died and he brought this one [i.e. he took Ruth], [it was] from God.’ This association between the two events may have opened the door for the transposition of the motifeme of the funeral as an interaction with the public.

5.6. Elishay suspects his wife: (85)-(89)

Elishay (in the Bible, Yishay), 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 she is pregnant with David.

(85) kròbwale| man-dè báxta| dammad-wéla smáxta bod-dávid ha-mèlex. |

[...] (86) qam-karòdwa| xá yařxa zólla be-bàba. |

‘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) sèl| g-smrà-le| qam-kardòtti| u-hònna| u-’ána báxta smòxta.| g-ér là| là! |
léwat smòxta!|

‘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 has not been touched by other men.

(88) robbonó šel-’olàm| sáhəz ’ólla ’e-báxta,| bání-básar lèwa nhòqta,| yála didox híle. |

“Master of the Universe, bear witness to this woman, she has not been touched by humans, it is your child.”

112 Sabar (2006: 76); my translation.
God is angry with Elishay for casting doubts upon the morality of his righteous wife and his paternity of the child.

(89) ṭəḇbônó šēl-ōlām, l kášle ṣōlle, l g-er-yála dīdōx hîle, l mà g-əmrə̀tta?!
bàxta, l ṭənəkîyâ, l u-ṣādîkâ, l mà nî b-nâhâq ṣîlā?!
‘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 the classical rabbinic literature, the prominent trend is to portray Yishay as a person of impeccable behaviour and moral stature. He is mentioned as one of four people who never sinned.\(^{113}\) 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: Yalqut Ha-Makhir. 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 Yalqut Ha-Makhir on Psalms 118,\(^ {114}\) we read the following story:

Yishay was the head of the Sanhedrin\(^ {115}\) ... 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 to that slave,

\(^{113}\) BT Shabbat 65b; Targum Ruth 4:22 (=Levine 1973: 41); Rabbi Menahem Ben Rabbi Shlomo, Midrash Sekhel Tov on Exodus 6:20, Buber edition (1901: vol. II, 35).


\(^{115}\) The supreme rabbinical court.
David turned out more red than his brothers ... after nine months, her sons wanted to kill her and her son David since they saw he was red. Yishay told them, ‘Let him be and he will be enslaved to us and a shepherd.’ This was concealed for twenty-eight years, until God said to Samuel, ‘Go, I will send you to the house of Yishay the Bethlehemite.’

Yalqut Ha-Makhiri remained in manuscript 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 Shlomo 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. However, the story does appear, in a different formulation, in another work from the same period and region, Torat Ha-Mminha, by the 14th-century Spanish Rabbi Ya’aqov Ben Hanan’el Sikili (or, of Sicily), which remained in manuscript until 1991. The story is then mentioned in several later sources, each giving a different formulation as well as different reasoning for Yishay’s actions, and citing different biblical verses as support. It appears in Keli Yaqar, a commentary on the books of the prophets, by Rabbi Shemuel Ben Abraham Laniado (16th-17th century, Aleppo). Rabbi Menahem Azariah da Fano (1548-1620, Mantova, Italy) gives a long version of the story, considerably different from the Yalqut Ha-Makhiri version and containing

116 Rabbi Makhir Ben Abba Mari, Buber edition (1899: vol. II, 214); my translation. Original Hebrew: סלינו ברי אורא יאורא במשטרא דה ראני דוד דה שונים היה ראני דודسكن דה השיגה דה, דער ישאר להמדירד, אל היהوزי הנבניא באוכָגייס המקום, היה לי סכ الكبير וספרון ומשטפת נכות, אליהם ב שינע היה לה שמחה תאות ותאות, לי אלא, כל תפניע הלילה מא יתנוכס ואיל בוטות, הנבניא ליליש הלא שמעים, קלח תאות הלילה מא יתנוכס ואיל בוטות, עם העם которого שליך,ISION שילש איל בוטות, ואיל קלא בתי ושתים מאfen אניפא, לי أساس מอาศא נכת נכת, כל תפניע הלילה


118 Homily number 23.

119 Sikili (1991), homily no. 23. This is referred to by Azulay (1957: 72).

120 Laniado (1992: 416), on 1 Samuel 16:11. This is referred to by Ginzberg (1909-1938: vol. VI, 246, note 11).
Kabbalistic interpretation, in his *Ma’amār Ḥiqqur Ha-Din* (printed in 1597). 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 and a released slave. Rabbi Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulay (the Ḥida, 1724-1806) has the story in his *Sefer Midbar Qedemot* and in several other places in his writings. Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna (known as the Vilna Gaon, 1720-1797) gives a commentary on Rabbi Yosef Caro’s *Yore De‘a* 157:24, where he simply adds the comment *ke’uvda deyišay* ‘as the deed of Yishay’ to a decree of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (the Rema) dealing with a disguised wife.

Shinan notes that the Yalqut Ha-Makhiri passage is but one case of a series of women in King David’s ancestry who disguised themselves in an intimate situation: Leah and Jacob (Genesis 29), Tamar and Judah (Genesis 38), Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 3), and the daughter of Lot (Genesis 19). Shinan also claims that although the purposes of this tradition are not entirely clear, it must have a connection to Psalm 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; 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 with whom Joseph had fallen 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, to find 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, *moxšamiya*.

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121 Part 3, Chapter 10. *Ma’amār Ḥiqqur Ha-Din* was printed as part of Fano’s *Sefer ‘Asara Ma’amarot*; Fano (1649: 60a). Referred to by Azulay (1957: 72).

122 A child born from forbidden relations between a married woman and a man who is not her husband.

123 Responsum 68 in Part A of *Sefer Mutsal 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).

124 Azulay (1957: 72); for the various other places the story appears in Azulay’s writings, see footnote 5 there. Azulay’s version of the story is referred to by Ginzberg (1909-1938: vol. VI, 246, note 11).

125 Referred to by Ginzberg (1909-1938: vol. VI, 246, note 11).

126 Shinan (1996).


129 About the patrilocal pattern of marriage in the Jewish communities of Kurdistan see Aloni (2014a: 85-101); also Feitelson (1959: 207); Starr Sered (1992: 13).

130 See Sabar (2002a: 201) on *x-š-m*: ‘(Kurdish)/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 Samuel the Prophet 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) ʾaw-xâṭ| stún nûra lá ʾaxỳâle.| (110) šmûʾāl hannavi,| mûrrele ṭôbbônó šel-ʿolâm| dâmmâd ḥmôlla,| šaxîna b-rêše,| ʾôhâ-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) ʾətlóx xá brôna xâṭ?|
  ‘Do you have another son?’

Elishay says that he has one more son, who is seven years old.

(111) wêle go-ḥisâdê| ʾâm mâd ʾârba,|
  ‘He is in the field with the sheep.’

Samuel tells him to fetch that son. He comes from the field wearing a dašdâša ‘ankle-length robe’ and a white hat.

(113) ʿér ḥmôl ʾāxxa,| monâxle bâd-ṭôbbônó šel-ʿolâm| šaxîná ḥmôlla.|
  ‘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].’

Samuel the Prophet anoints David as king of Israel, using oil from the Temple.

The anointment of King David by Samuel is told in 1 Samuel 16. There God tells Samuel to anoint the son that He will point out (16:3), Yishay brings forth his sons in order (16:7-10), and Samuel asks whether there are more sons and then instructs Yishay 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\textsuperscript{131} to the late Midrashim.

The motifs of the pillar of fire and Shekhinah are well-known from other places in Jewish literature, but both are absent from all the sources recounting David’s anointment. The biblical text states that ‘the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward’ (16:13), immediately after the anointment, but not before.\textsuperscript{132}

David’s age at the time of his anointment is not mentioned in the Bible. He is said to be twenty-eight in Seder ‘Olam Rabbah,\textsuperscript{133} an early rabbinic work from the Tannaitic period, as well as in Yalqut Ha-Makhiri by Rabbi Makhir Ben Abba Mari\textsuperscript{134} and in Torat Ha-Mminха by Rabbi Yaakov Ben Ḥanan’el Sikill.\textsuperscript{135}

5.8. *Guri Kunzari*: (128)-(131), (179)-(181)

King Saul had *Guri Kunzari,\textsuperscript{136}* 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.

\begin{verbatim}
(128) m̲á̱d ʔi̱z, yal̲ín̲k̲ad yera̱šal̲ày̲im, s̲rá̱x̲le ʔr̲á̱mkol̲l̲ ʔ̅̄a̱s̲e, ḥ̅̄ako̱me g̲̅̄o̱be qat̲̄š̲ê̱le g̲ó̱t̲̄i̱s̲a̱. g̲emer-ʔ̅̄aw̲d la̱w̲á̱šla ʔ̅̄e̱ b̲á̱d̲la ʔ̅̄e̱ be qat̲̄š̲ê̱le.

‘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.’
\end{verbatim}

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.

\textsuperscript{131} E.g. Sifre Devarim 17; Midrash Tannaim for Deuteronomy 1:17. For a list of further references, see Gizberg (1909-1939: vol. VI, 247-249, notes 13-23).
\textsuperscript{132} Midrash Tannaim for Deuteronomy 1:17 does state that David used to prophesy, while still a young child, that he would destroy the cities of the Philistines, kill Goliath, and build the Temple.
\textsuperscript{133} Seder ‘Olam Rabbah, Ratner edition (1897: 57), Chapter 13. Ratner notes that although the printed version is ‘twenty-nine’, the correct version according to manuscripts is ‘twenty-eight’.
\textsuperscript{134} See Section 5.6 above.
\textsuperscript{135} See Section 5.6 above.
\textsuperscript{136} 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).
When King Saul sees that, 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 dašdaša ‘ankle-length robe’.

His reason for doing so is that he had noticed that Saul had gotten angry, and he did not want to draw his animosity.

The basis for this motifeme is to be found in 1 Samuel 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.’

This motifeme appears in several rabbinic sources. 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...”

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137 Interestingly, the Hebrew word ‘øyen ‘hostile’ in 1 Samuel 18:9 is derived from the same root as ‘øyin ‘eye’. The JPS 1917 translation for the verse is ‘And Saul eyed David from that day and forward’.

138 One more exchange of clothes by David which occurs in the biblical narrative is in 1 Samuel 18:4: ‘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.’ The robe in this verse may be the source for the dašdaša ‘ankle-length robe’.

139 BT Yevamot 76b; Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 26:9; Midrash Tanhuma Emor, 4; Midrash Shemuel 21, Buber edition (1925: 64). Subsequent references to this tradition include: Midrash Aggadah on Leviticus 21:15, Buber edition (1894: 53-54); Rashi on 1 Samuel 17:38; Abravanel on 1 Samuel 17:55.
these; for I have not tried them’.\textsuperscript{140} In some of these sources, the miraculous fit on David of clothing belonging to Saul, who was previously described as being ‘from his shoulders and upward … higher than any of the people’,\textsuperscript{141} is presented as a sign of David’s future kingship:\textsuperscript{142} for example, ‘even if a person is short, once he is appointed king he becomes tall’\textsuperscript{143} and ‘that is proof that David, may peace be upon him, was worthy for kingship’.\textsuperscript{144} Nonetheless, in none of the sources is the suit presented as a test object as it is 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,\textsuperscript{145} but there is no mention of a miraculous change in size in the song.

5.9. The seven stones: (147)-(150), (162)-(164)

On his way to the battlefield, David collects seven stones to use with his bardaqaniyye ‘slingshot’. As he picks up the stones, he proclaims:

\begin{align*}
(148) \ & \ bəzəxǔt \ ʾavrahām,^1 \ [bəzəxǔt] \ yîtshāk,^1 \ [bəzəxǔt] \ yaʾaqōv^1 \\
& \ “\text{For the merit of Abraham, [For the merit of] Isaac, [For the merit of] Jacob}”
\end{align*}

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:

\begin{align*}
(162) \ & \ yā \ ʾilāhi,^1 \ bəzəxǔt \ kūd \ xā \ u-xà,^1 \ šóʾa \ nāse,^1 \\
& \ “\text{O my God, for the merit of each and every one [of those] seven [sic] men}”
\end{align*}

He then puts his hand in his pocket and discovers that the seven stones he had collected have become one stone.

The biblical source of this motifeme is 1 Samuel 17:40:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{140} 1 Samuel 17:39.
\item \textsuperscript{141} 1 Samuel 9:2.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Cf. motif H36.2 ‘Garment fits only true king’ in Thompson (1955-1958).
\item \textsuperscript{143} Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 26:9; my translation.
\item \textsuperscript{144} Midrash Aggadah on Leviticus 21:15, Buber edition (1894: 54); my translation.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Rivlin (1930: 114); Rivlin (1959: 241).
\end{itemize}
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 Shemuel:

‘And he took his staff in his hand, and chose for himself five smooth stones out of the brook’, one for the name [=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!’

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 the classical rabbinic literature, for example in BT Ḥullin 91b:

It is written: ‘And he took of the stones of the place’ (Genesis 28:11); but it is also written: ‘And he took the stone’ (Genesis 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.”

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146 Midrash Shemuel 21, Buber edition (1925: 64); my translation. Original Hebrew: ירקת פקלה ידנו וורה להmlx ודליב וולקמ חקיו״ וול ומחה השיקולחם ינבא נמלהachi דחא ומשל לששודקה שורבオー, דחא ומשל לשןרהא תשלשו תשלשל תובא סלועה רמא SNMP הלאה ינפא אוה לאוג סדה יلعערפהל וונממ (אמר) [חקיו] והלא לפל חקיה וקד, של לזרע פועט..."

147 Also in: Midrash Genesis Rabbah 68; Midrash Tanhuma VaYetse 1; Midrash Yelammdennu Genesis 128; Midrash Tehillim 91:6; Rabbi Tobias Ben Eliezer, Midrash Leqaḥ Tov on Genesis 28:11, Buber edition (1880 :140-141); Midrash Genesis Rabbati 28:11; Rabbi Menahem Ben Rabbi Shlomo, Midrash Sekhel Tov on Genesis 30:13, Buber edition (1900: vol. I, 140-142); Yalqut Shim’oni VaYetse 118.

The application of the motifeme of the merger of the stones to the stones of David appears in the Zohar in several places,¹⁴⁹ for example: ‘They were made one, all of the five.’¹⁵⁰

In the epic songs published by Rivlin, the motifeme of the merger of the stones appears only in the epic song by Ḥakham Eliyahu Avraham Dahoki Mizraḥi of Dohok.¹⁵¹

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) \textit{mxí darbàdox} \textit{[= dárba dìdox]},

“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) \textit{mxí dárba dìdox} \textit{xázax mà šákal-hûle}.

“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 and lands him safely. When David returned to the battlefield, Goliath is surprised that he is still alive.

(156) \textit{g-er-má-wät şàx?! má?} \textit{g-er wên-șàx} \textit{̄h̄amdu-l-lâ.⁴¹ bēs ḫ̲̲́ĺ̲̲̲[h]a] ḥ̲̲̀m̲̲̀̀ra}.

‘He [= Goliath] says, “What, you’re alive?! What?” He [= David] says, “I’m alive, thank God. The house of God is built [= everything is well].”’

Now it is David’s turn. First he proclaims:

(162) \textit{yā ʾilāḥi,} \textit{bəzxút kûd xá u-xà,} \textit{šōʾa nāse},

“O my God, for the merit of each and every [of those] seven men”

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¹⁴⁹ Zohar vol. III, 272a; Tiquney Zohar 62a; Zohar Ḥadash 66b.
¹⁵⁰ Zohar vol. III, 272a; my translation.
¹⁵¹ Rivlin (1959: 246).
Then, using his *bardaqanîyye* ‘slingshot’, he shoots the single stone into Goliath’s forehead.

(164) ʾúzla ḡər-ḡər-ḡər-ḡər qam-ʿozâle trê qât’e.

‘It made ḡər-ḡər-ḡər-ḡər [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) šʾəšle gyâne| xá qâtʾə mpâlle mònne|`

‘He wiggled himself, one piece fell off him.’

The battle between David and Goliath is described in 1 Samuel 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.\(^{152}\)

However, such a motifeme 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 *Zmîrta D’Qaṭîne* by the 20th-century poet William Daniel, and published in three volumes containing some 6000 verses.\(^{153}\) One version of the folk-traditions of this epic, known to the Jews of Zakho and told in prose, is attested in Shilo (2014: 148-165). In one episode in Shilo’s version, Qaṭine fights against the hero of Armenia. In this episode, like in the one recounting the battle of David and Goliath in Samra’s story, the motifs of both taking turns and of cutting the opponent into two without him realising are present. When Qaṭine’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 Qaṭine. Qaṭine 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 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.\(^{154}\)

\(^{152}\) Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 21:2; Midrash Shemuel 21, Buber edition (1925: 65).

\(^{153}\) See Warda and Odisho (2000); Donabed (2007); Lamassu (2014).

\(^{154}\) Rivlin (1959: 245-247); Rivlin (1930: 116).
5.11. Goliath’s sword and ʾEliya Ḥəṭṭè 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 ʾEliya Ḥəṭṭè (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.

David hesitates, but eventually agrees. As a result, God becomes angry with David:

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.

David appoints ʾEliya Ḥəṭṭè the head of his army.

David appoints ʾEliya Ḥəṭṭè the head of his army.

David cutting off the head of Goliath is recounted in 1 Samuel 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 verse 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 ‘Eliya Ḥṭtè regarding an Israelite woman alludes to the story of David and Bathsheba, told in 2 Samuel 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.’ 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 of it 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.’ The two earliest sources in which our Aggadah explicitly appears are Rabbi Shemuel Ben Abraham Laniado’s Keli Yaqaṭ157 and Rabbi Moshe Alsheikh’s Mar’ot Ha-Tzov’ot,158 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-ʾOhel,159 an alphabetical collection of homilies and Aggadot by Rabbi Avraham Ben Yehudah Leb of Przemysl; Pney Yehoshua160 a Talmudic commentary by Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk; and Ḥomat Ḥanakh,161 a biblical commentary by Rabbi Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulay. Lewin, who lists the two early sources by Laniado and Alsheikh and the later source by Avraham Ben Yehudah Leb of Przemysl (as well as additional sources which state that Bathsheba was indeed predestined for David, but do not relate specifically our Aggadah) in his ṢEẓr Ha-Geʾonim,162 writes in the

155 BT Sanhedrin 107a.
156 Kirchhiem (1874: 10); commentary on 1 Chronicles 2:17. This source is quoted by Lewin (1940: 189).
157 First printed in Venice in 1603; Laniado (1603: 293a), commentary on 2 Samuel 11:3.
158 First printed between 1603 and 1607; Alsheikh (1603-1607: 45a), commentary on 2 Samuel 12:1.
159 Rabbi Avraham Ben Yehudah Leb of Przemysl (1691: 15a).
160 Falk (1739), commentary on BT Qidushin 76b.
161 Azulay (1803: 20b), commentary on Psalms 38:19.
162 Lewin (1940: 189-190).
introduction to the volume that these relatively late sources do not seem to be the original source of this Aggadah.\footnote{Lewin (1940: viii).}

Our Aggadah does appear in the epic songs by Ḥakham Eliyahu Avraham Dahoki Mizraḥi of Dohok,\footnote{Rivlin (1930: 116-117); Rivlin (1959: 248).} by Rabbi Ḥayyim Shalom son of Rabbi Avraham son of Rabbi Ovadya of Nerwa and ʿAmidya,\footnote{Rivlin (1959: 253).} and by Ḥakham Yishay of Urmia,\footnote{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 found\footnote{By Lewin, see footnotes 156 and 162 above (my footnote).} in the writings of the Geonim.\footnote{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.

\footnote{(183) pōšle ṭaβa [ḥolē.]} (184) dúqle ṭeše, ṭaḥqa mən-ʿerṣaʾēl, mārʾa, lā-g-ḥāṭal!

‘He became very sick. A pain, may it be far from Israel, caught his head, it does not stop!’

The Bible links Saul’s ‘evil spirit from God’ and David’s success several times. Saul’s condition is never described as an illness, let alone as 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.\textsuperscript{169}

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:

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.\textsuperscript{170}

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.\textsuperscript{171}

One more time is again immediately after another victory of David 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.\textsuperscript{172}

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:

\textsuperscript{169} 1 Samuel 16:13-14.
\textsuperscript{170} 1 Samuel 16:16.
\textsuperscript{171} 1 Samuel 18:9-11. See 5.14 below as well.
\textsuperscript{172} 1 Samuel 19:8-9.
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.\(^\text{173}\)

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 commentary on the same verse in the 19th century. Similarly, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (the Natziv) writes in his commentary on Leviticus 2:2 about ‘an illness of black humour which had come upon Saul’.\(^\text{174}\) 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 towards David: (185)-(190)

David and Jonathan, Saul’s son and heir to the throne, are very good friends.

\[(185) \text{xà rohâya-lu\'} \text{ xà našâma-lu\'} \text{xà-"gil\'}-ilu\'.\]

‘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,\(^\text{175}\) all the sheep gather around him, bow their heads, and listen.

\(^{173}\) Abravanel’s commentary to 1 Samuel 16:14; my translation. Original Hebrew: אַחֲרֵי מָשָׁתָה מִנְנֵי רוֹחֵן..."

\(^{174}\) My translation.

\(^{175}\) A musical instrument. See footnote 246 below, and also footnote 71 in chapter 3.
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.

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.  

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.

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.

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

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176 1 Samuel 18:1-3.
177 1 Samuel 19:1.
178 1 Samuel 20:41-42.
Israel, and I shall be second to you; and even my father Saul knows this is so.\textsuperscript{179}

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.’\textsuperscript{180} David’s playing is thus not presented as a result of Jonathan’s friendship.

The motifeme of Jonathan’s friendship subsumes, in Samra’s story, two other motifemes: 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),\textsuperscript{181} 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].’\textsuperscript{182} Furthermore, the focus in these sources seems to be David’s ability to provide for each of his sheep in accordance with its needs:

\ldots 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.\textsuperscript{183}

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 for

\textsuperscript{179} 1 Samuel 23:16-17.

\textsuperscript{180} 1 Samuel 16:23.


\textsuperscript{182} Midrash Exodus Rabbah 2:2 (Vilna edition); my translation.

\textsuperscript{183} Midrash Exodus Rabbah 2:2 (Vilna edition); my translation. Original Hebrew: ויהי אם רדפו בשמי תפארת, והו ימי נבטי היי ומקרא הנכון ומקרא הנקין ידנ ישים שליש תשתך אחר כו מקרא הנקין ומי יש שמש המשיח ישהל ישהל, אמר חכמים ממי נבטי היי ומקרא הנכון ידנ ישים שליש תשתך אחר כו מקרא הנקין ידנ ישים שליש תשתך אחר כו Macro publishing, ה"ד ממאיר עלת הביא לרדת עמק טמר.
their leadership skills by God, based on their performance as shepherds. God’s response to David’s action is to correlate the ability to shepherd sheep with the ability to care for people – a tradition that is told also about 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:


‘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 motifeme 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) qāy, ṭēṣōx k-ṭārəs ʾaz-qāy q-qâṭlîtte?

‘Why? Your head heals [when he plays for you] so why do you kill him?’

King Saul replies:

(193) p-qâṭlînne.

‘I shall kill him.’

Two episodes are found in the Bible where King Saul attempts to smite David with his spear, one in 1 Samuel 18:10-11 and the second in 19:9-10. A miraculous salvation 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 not being hit is in the commentary of Rabbi Levi Ben Gershon (the Ralbag, Gersonides) on 1 Samuel 19:10, where he states that David’s being able to evade the strike is 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) [...] palqót dawólna p-póya tále,| u-brátí| mixal| tále |matañà.|f|
“[…] half of the wealth [or: kingdom] will be his, and my daughter Michal – a gift for him.”

This motifeme originates from 1 Samuel 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 Esther 5:3:184 “What troubles you, Queen Esther?” the king asked her. “And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be granted you.”

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,185 that while being pursued by King Saul, David and his men stayed in a cave in the desert of En-Gedi.186 The episode with Abigail, in chapter 25, is said to take place in the area of Maʿom and Carmel, two biblical Israelite settlements located in Judaea 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 Judaean desert, 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.

184 As well as Esther 5:6 and Esther 7:2.
185 See the following subsection.
186 1 Samuel 24:1-2.
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[wɔ̀]nne čù-məndi. fèrat y'àtwat ha-̀qasqad ší la-g-ya[wɔ̀]nne. “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 kɔsyása qàmxɔ, mən-ṭahúnət qàmxɔ. xamší bakkûkè, əmmə bakkûkè ᵃlšəmɔ̃t mən-ṭah-³ əmmət dìdì. [...] (212) sàun la-̀ərba, əmmə réše ərba mèsun, USAGE ta-²ôr-əsh-əšan. “Fifty bags of flour, from the flour-mill. Fifty bottles, a hundred bottles of oil from my mill[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 had given David’s men all of that, he dies.

(218) ôha mòtle, pqèle l-ðûke, mòtle l-ðûke! “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 propose giving him all of her property if he marries her. David agrees and marries her.

This episode is told in 1 Samuel 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, and Gila, after whom Gilo was said to be named by her rich father. The

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187 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.
modern-day neighbourhood of Gilo in Jerusalem is located near the Palestinian town of Beit Jala, thought to be the site of the biblical Gilo,\(^{188}\) which appears later in the biblical narrative: it is the home of Ahitophel the Gilonite,\(^{189}\) David’s counsellor and the grandfather of Bathsheba.\(^{190}\) I have not found any previous source presenting any association between Abigail and Gilo, nor any which states that Abigail was rich in her own right.

As explained in motifeme 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.\(^{191}\) In Samra’s story, the episode takes place just before Rosh Hashana, at the beginning of autumn. This originates from BT Rosh HaShana 18a, where Rav Nahman ascribes to Rabba Bar Abbuha the opinion that the ten days of Nabal’s sickness\(^{192}\) were the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.\(^{193}\) 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 Samuel 25:8.

In the Bible, it is David who ‘sent and spoke concerning Abigail, to take her to him to wife’,\(^{194}\) whereas in Samra’s story the initiative comes from her. This is possibly due to the interpretation of 1 Samuel 25:31 by 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.\(^{195}\) Samra’s version is also reflective of the independence and assertiveness of the Jewish women of Kurdistan in matters pertaining to marriage.\(^{196}\) Abigail’s independence and assertiveness are also stressed in Samra’s

\(^{188}\) Though a more probable identification is Hirbet Jala in the Hebron area; see Luncz’s comment in Schwarz (1900: 126).

\(^{189}\) 2 Samuel 15:12.

\(^{190}\) 2 Samuel 11:3; 2 Samuel 23:34. Cf. 1 Chronicles 3:5.

\(^{191}\) On shearing as a familial feast in the Bible, see Haran (1972).

\(^{192}\) 1 Samuel 25:38.

\(^{193}\) See also Yalqut Šimʿoni Samuel 134; Rashi on 1 Samuel 25:38.

\(^{194}\) 1 Samuel 25:39.

\(^{195}\) BT Bava Qamma 92b; BT Megilla 14b; JT Sanhedrin 2:3; and many other subsequent commentators.

\(^{196}\) 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
story when she issues a written document permitting David’s soldiers to take abundant goods from 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) ksûle ṭâle, ʾána lâ q-qatlônnox, ṛḥâḥt ʿábût qatlîtî ʾána lá-g qaṭlônnox, ṛḥâḥt ḫmeléx ʾyṣrâʾèl-ʾwát.

‘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 Samuel 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 Samuel 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 cruse of water. In both cases, the objects taken are used as proof of David’s good intentions and reverence towards 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,197 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 Samuel 24, or the two objects in the episode in 1 Samuel 26, align better with a general tendency of folktales to use typological numbers.198 I have not found any source referring to King Saul’s apple.


197 Rivlin (1959: 257).

198 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.
5.19. King Saul and Raḥela the fortune-teller: (235)-(242)

King Saul goes to Raḥela the fortune-teller.

(236) báxta pasxáwa bad-fàla, k-i‘áwa má-iz go-hřolām[l] má lès.

‘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 month 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, Samuel the Prophet appears. He says:

(241) šà’ul, tlá[ha] yóme ʾstlox pìše, ʾáḥot u-kǔd tlá[ha] bnóne dúdox ʾásət qtála.

‘Saul, you have three days [lit. three days you have remained], you and your three sons will be killed [lit. come to killing].’

King Saul gets sick, and Raḥela takes care of him for three days.

(242) ʾúslale h[r]marākin[l] šòrḥa máyət ksése, qam-maxlāle, qam-maštyālē, ʾúslale ʾúslale.

‘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 Samuel 28, although her name is not specified in the biblical text. Yalqut Šim‘oni gives the name Zephaniah, and states that she was the mother of Abner. Raḥela’s reluctance to tell fortunes is rooted in verses 3 and 9 of 1 Samuel 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?’

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199 For a literary analysis of the biblical narrative, see Simon (1992).
200 Yalqut Šim‘oni Samuel 140. Another source claims that she was the wife of Zephaniah: Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer 32, Higger edition (1944-1948).
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. The fortune-teller’s compassionate care towards Saul after he receives the tragic message is recounted in the Bible in verses 21-25. However Samra tells of thick rice soup and chicken soup – known folk remedies – as Rahela’s offerings, in lieu of the biblical fatted calf and unleavened bread.

6. 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. 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 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 together with a new causal nexus (e.g. motifeme 5.12);
- unification: combining previously separate motifemes into one unified motifeme (e.g. motifeme 5.18);
- reorganisation of narrative time: the relocation of a motifeme in the narrative time sequence (e.g. motifeme 5.5);

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201 1 Samuel 28:19.

202 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).
• 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. motifeme 5.16; the use of a ‘loudspeaker’ in motifeme 5.8).

7. The NENA text and its translation

The text was recorded at the home of Samra Zaen on 19 April 2012. Present at the recording session were Samra Zaen (SZ), Batia Aloni (BA), and myself (OA). The recording ID is SZ120419T1 9:30-37:29.

BA: k-taxrát mórrax b-sapràttan e…

BA: Do you remember you said you will tell us eh …

SZ: hè hè, | $\text{h}^2\text{sappúr}^\text{HL}$ dōd hánna | $\text{g-}^\text{əbətun}…$

SZ: Yes yes, do you want [to hear] the story of this …

BA: mād g-əbət.

BA: Whatever you want.

SZ: ...dād naʾōmi?!

SZ: ... of Naomi?

BA: naʾōmi u-rút. | $\text{h}^2\text{aval}^\text{HL}$ mād g-əbat māhke, | $\text{hakan-g-}^\text{Əbat} \text{gər-məndi} \text{gər-məndi}.$


SZ: | $\text{H}^\text{lō-xašūv}$ | >āτta wâʾdu-hile, | sēle $\text{H}^\text{zmn}.$

SZ: Never mind, now it is its [= this story’s] time. The time has arrived.

BA: $\text{H}^\text{naxôn}.$

BA: Right.

SZ: sēle $\text{H}^\text{zmn}.$

SZ: Time has arrived.

BA: sēle wâʾdu, | $\text{H}^\text{naxôn}.$

BA: Their time has arrived, correct.

SZ: ...hē, g-emörwa - ʾilāha nātā | $\text{H}^\text{mənxle} \text{axɔñi} \text{go-gan-}^\text{ İzən}.$

SZ: ... Yes, he used to say – may God sa[ve] ... give rest unto him, my brother, in heaven.

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203 See note on hənna in Section 5 of the Introduction.
204 Samra started the word natərre of the expression ʾilāha natərre ‘may God protect him’, but changed it to the expression ʾilāha manəxle ‘may God grant him rest’.
(11) g-emórwa naʾòmi… | u- e… šámmed
góre hònna wélè| ḫ règā̀|… ḫ elimèlex!
He used to say [= tell] Naomi …
and eh … the name of her husband was this, [wait a] moment …
Elimelech!

(12) BA: 'elimelèx.| BA: Elimelech.
(13) SZ: 'élimelèx.| SZ: Elimelech.
(14) skíné-welu go-bet-lèhem.| ṭ swa-lu
xbáyit gadòl, | parnasà tôvá,|
They lived in Bethlehem. They had
a large house, good livelihood,
(15) háya-lahem sådè| ve-ḥòtta…| they had a field, and wheat …
(16) BA: wélèu ḫ asirım.| BA: They were rich.
(17) SZ: máşıkax ḫ owrié ṭ hídi?| là k-
ţan,| SZ: Shall we speak Hebrew or
Kurdish [= Neo-Aramaic]? I don’t know
(18) BA: ḫ kûrdità| BA: Kurdish [= Neo-Aramaic]!
(19) SZ: ṭ a, | ṭ swá-lu, | ḫ asirım ḫ wélèu,|
ş swá-lu | ḫ sadè,| ṭ swá-lu… xetè, |
ş swá-lu… |
(20) BA: zangin wélèu| ṭ bara.| BA: They were very rich.
(21) SZ: hè.| SZ: Yes.
(22) ḫ az̀-ṭ āya ṭ swá-la trè bnóne.| ḫ az̀-
ṭ āya ḫ isá, | ṭ axí tôvá ḫ wélà.| ḫ isá | ḫ im-
lèlv patùah.| g-šba yàwa.| 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) ṭ ròtā-la.| ṭ ána mbásłan xamuṣta,| ḫ xèxením ḥ didì làttu?! ṭ [w]ôn-ile!
It’s Friday. ‘Shall I cook xamustā, [while] my neighbours do not have
[any]?! It’s a sin!’
(24) g-daryāwa xápça göṛsa, | g-daryāwa
xápça… | màd-ótla, | xà qár’a, | hà| She used to put some cracked
wheat, used to put some …
whatever she had [lit. has], a
zucchini, ‘Here,’ [she says to the
neighbour,] ‘make [= cook] [with]
these some dumplings for your

205 A sour soup made with meat-filled dumplings. See footnotes 78 and 79 earlier in this chapter.
206 See previous footnote.
On Sabbath, as well, people. She wants to eat and to feed away [lit. divide, distribute] to and she gives. She also used to give Naomi, she does all. She used to grind wheat, she had a stone mortar. She used to grind [lit. knock] by herself. She had a wooden mallet. She used to mill wheat. She had a wooden mallet. She used to mill semolina. She would mill groats. She would mill semolina. All of the grinding [implements] of wheat. She had a wooden mallet. She had a stone mortar. She used to grind [lit. knock] by herself. She had a wooden mallet. She used to mill wheat. She had a wooden mallet. She used to mill semolina. She would mill groats. She would mill semolina. She used to do all of the things.

To this [woman] she takes some crushed wheat, ‘Make [= cook] mabose [with] these for your children. Don’t leave your stove empty.’ She [that woman] used to do [so = cook the crushed wheat].

He [Naomi’s husband Elimelech] sometimes used to 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.

‘Look now, don’t get angry, God gives to them, [He] gives to me, I shall give to someone else! I have, [therefore] I should give! [It’s the] benevolence of God! [i.e. it is not ours]’ He did not accept that. He would get angry with her.

All of the grinding [implements] of wheat. She had a wooden mallet. She had a stone mortar. She used to grind [lit. knock] by herself. She had a wooden mallet. She used to mill wheat. She had a wooden mallet. She used to mill semolina. She used to do all of the things.

Naomi, she does all of the things, and she gives. She also used to give away [lit. divide, distribute] to people. She wants to eat and to feed [as well].

207 Sabar (2002a: 210) on mabose: ‘(< n-ʔ-ʔ) ... Sabbath-food cooked overnight’. Sabar (2002a: 110) on b-y-t: ‘n-ʔ-ʔ ... to spend the night ... to cook overnight ... to keep overnight’.

177
In the Bible:

In the Bible: Moab.

In the Bible: Orpah.

BA: A worthy woman [lit. daughter of kosher].

SZ: Yes.

So that's what's happened [lit. so this (F.SG.) 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.'

‘Look now, your property will increase! It will not lessen! God who gave, gave to me [in order that] I shall give to others [lit. my other = other than me] also.’ He didn't accept.

He took her. He took her to ...

Meo ... the city of Me’ohav.

Where was the city of Me’ohav?

He took her. He took her to the city of Me’ohav.

Where was the city of Me’ohav?

BA: In [the country of] the Muslims,

He took her. Me’ohav, do you know who he is? Do you know who he is, where he is from? His source, do you know where his source is from? ...

OA: No,

BA: No,

SZ: ... Me’ohav? ... So eh ... he says, ‘I’ll take you to the city of Me’ohav, I have [means], I can afford it.’ Me’ohav also has two daughters, Ruth and Orta. He asked for them [= for their hand] for both his sons.

In the Bible: Moab.

In the Bible: Orph.
(41) qam-nabûlla, žälla ʾēmmel, ʾúsle

[47] qam-goril kuṭru bnàsa
dîde, râḥqa m-bát[et] ʾsrâʾél ʾâwwa mṭle, gôra.

He took her [=Naomi], she went with him, they made a wedding, they married both of his daughters. [May it be] far from the houses of Israel, 210 he died, her husband.

(42) BA: ʾelimèlex, l

(43) SZ: hê, ʾelimèlex mṭle. žälla xa-štā go-pâlga, l

BA: Elimelech.

(44) ʾaz e, žälla xápca xöt go-pâlga, l-kuṭru bnûne-ši mṭlu, l mànî pîšen? l

tlá[ha] baxtása, l

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-ōmra brâtî, lâ-g-sámxan másyan bnûne magurarănx, l sàun gôrun l

mèsun yalûnke, l ʾâna zällu xlöšlu, l

ʾânya-te wêlu, l

She [=Naomi] says, ‘My daughter, I will not become pregnant [and] bear [lit. bring] sons that will marry you. Go 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) rût g-ōmra, mèsat mèsan, pêšat pêsan, l ḫayûm šâllî ʾal-ḫayûm šâllâx. l


ʾâna b-ʾâxlan, l ḫ[ah]at . . . g-ōmra ḫbosèder. l


(47) ʾòrta g-ʾōmrâ-laš sé l-be-bâbax, žälla, l

žälla ʾberras [or: b-ʾurxa]. rût sēla ʾēmma, l

Orṭa, she tells her, ‘Go [back] to your father’s house’. She went [away, may a] blessing [be with

210 An expression said when mentioning a bad event.
211 See Ruth 1:16-18.
(48) sēla, sēla, psāxla dārgat bet-leḥem tūla, "yēš lā' xātte u-stīla e... xātte lāt-la, 'stīla sēta' u-garūsta u-... mūx qamāt bēsa wēla mālya rāwāh.

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-ōmra brātī, sē, bō'az g-māpāq xātte, sē, u-ōz šēbbōlim bāsru, mēse, deqānnu garsānnu g-ōzānnu, b-ōzax kūtele b-āxlacl b-ōzax qāmx b-āxlacl b-ōzax gōrsa b-āxlacl k-ī'ax ʿōzax.

She says ‘My daughter, go, Boaz brings out [= harvests?] wheat, go, and make ears of corn behind them [= the harvesters, i.e. glean], bring [here what you have gleaned], I will crack [lit. knock (in a mortar)] them, grind them, 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) zōlla, xā yōma trē tīḥa, zōlla bāsru, sēle, bō'az, xā yōma qam-xaxēlā mārre-le wāy! ḫēzē bāxta ḫyafā māto k-šāqa...?

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]?’

(51) māndu-la, mčančelum [or: mčamčumun] tāla, ḫēn-ḏavār.

[He said to his harvesters:] ‘Throw to her [some extra ears], tear [some ears] for her [or: pretend you don’t see for her sake].’ [There’s]

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212 From Hebrew šēbbōlīm ‘ears of corn’. (Borrowed before the contact with Modern Hebrew.)

213 Two separate stages of the grinding process.

214 The Jewish law of lēqet (Leviticus 19:9, 23:22) states that harvesters must not collect the ears of corn that fall to the ground during the process of harvesting. They should leave them for the poor to glean.

215 See Ruth 2:16.

216 From ʾ-m-ʾ-ʾm ‘have bleary eyes’ (Sabar 2002a: 132), in order not to embarrass her. This would parallel the biblical ‘... and you shall not put her to shame’ (Ruth 2:15).
That is, he is obliged to fulfil a levirate marriage) with you. See Section 5.4 and footnote 218 on him.’ She says to her, ‘Good, come, bathe, and wash your clothes [or: wipe yourself (maybe with perfume, etc.)], go sleep near his feet.’

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”.’

The story was like that [=she told him the whole matter], her [=Naomi’s] son died and ..., that [=the story] is true, his father and his father are brothers [=Boaz’s father and Elimelech’s father are brothers].

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.

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217 From Hebrew šißbòlet ‘ear of corn’. (Borrowed before the contact with Modern Hebrew.)

218 That is, he is obliged to fulfil a yibbum (levirate marriage) with you. See Section 5.4 and footnote 96 earlier in this chapter.
The following day they went to the synagogue, they went to the synagogue, he brought his brother, he has a brother older than him, eighty-nine years old. He says, ‘My brother, she falls on you,’ this woman.

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.

Take her [= Ruth] for you, may she be blessed upon you [= be blessed together, mazal tov!]. Here is my shoe, wear it.

BA: Yes …

SZ: Go wed [lit. bless] her.'

The congregation all agreed. … He says, ‘Tomorrow, prepare … tomorrow prepare yourself [= get ready], wear [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!’

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219 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 footnote 44 in chapter 3.

220 That is, you are obliged to perform a levirate marriage (or a halitsa). See footnote 218 above.

221 See Ruth 4:7-8.

222 The Modern Hebrew root skm is used here with NENA morphology.

223 The Modern Hebrew root kwn is used here with NENA morphology. The equivalent NENA root is hgr.

224 A ceremony marking the qiddusin, the second and final stage of a Jewish wedding, in which seven benedictions are said.
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, 63)

The following day they came [and] did [= performed the ceremony of the] seven blessings, he married her. May His name be praised! He [= God] is true [= lit. truth], [and] His Torah is true [= lit. truth].

The following day, they say, he died, Boaz died!

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].

People came and gathered, the entire world [= many people, the entire community] gathered, for the funeral.

She [= Naomi] stood up and cried out, ‘[In the name of the] Master of the Universe, see, all of you, testify, yesterday he made the wedding’, this woman225 is her daughter-in-law, this woman [= Ruth], she

225 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 for Targumim liturgical use is switches from second to third person in order to avoid giving offence to the audience.

[Naomi] blessed her to him [= married her off to Boaz], last night he indeed slept with [lit. at] her. If she got pregnant, a son or a daughter, they are of Boaz.

BA: "naxôn."[H]

BA: Correct.


SZ: ‘God shall [bear] witness and people shall [bear] witness!’ Everyone said, ‘OK’. God gave, she became pregnant, who came to her [= who was the child]? Do you know who?

BA: là?:[i]

SZ: Her son, who [is he], what is his name? The son of Ruthie?

BA: la-k-iyan.[i]

SZ: Elishay![i]

BA: I don’t know.

BA: 'ā! 'elišây.[i]

SZ: Ah! Elishay!

BA: No.

SZ: 'elišây!... hwéle-la 'elišây,| 'elíšây,[226] naʾómi qam-ṭaʾanâle,| qam- 'ozábe-xudâni,| 'elíšây,| 'ilá[ha] hùlle-le| šoʾá bnône,| u-xá brâta.| rùt,| "sáfta" díde hîla.| rùt héš wêla pòšta,|

SZ: She gave birth to Elishay [lit. Elishay was born to her]! She gave birth to Elishay [lit. Elishay was born to her],[226] Naomi reared him, she took care of him. Elishay, God gave him seven sons, and one daughter. Ruth was his grandmother. Ruth was still alive,

BA: Yes,

BA: hè,[i]

SZ: So eh, one day, this, Elishay, he got angry with this woman [i.e. his wife], while she was pregnant with King David. He came last, the seventh child.

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[226] See footnote 219 above.
(86) ʿāz e...1 qam-karʾdwala1 xá yaʾrxa zālla be-bāba1 sēla1 g-ʾmrā-le1 qam-kardōtti1 u-hōnna1 u-ʾāna bāxta smāxta1 g-ʾér lā lā! lēwat smāxta!  
So eh, he chased her out, for one month she went to her father’s house. 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!’

(87) BA: lēwe mònni,1  
BA: ‘It is not from me’,

(88) SZ: lēwe mónnit1 g-ʾerra1 g-ʾmrā-le,1 rabbonō šel-ʾolām1 sāhōz ʿólla ῖe-bāxta,227 bāni-bāsār lēwa nhōqta,1 yālá dīdox hīle,1 smāxta zōlla.227  
SZ: ‘It is not from me!’ She says, she tells him, ‘Master of the Universe, bear witness to this woman, she has not been touched by humans, it is your child. She went pregnant [= she was pregnant when she left].’

(89) ʿtōv1! lá-wele ʿtō-kāx merūṣē,1 rabbonō šel-ʾolām,1 kʾśle228 ʾšlle1 g-er-yāla dīdox hīle,1 mà g-ʾmrōtta?!1 bāxta,1 ʿnakiyā,1 u-ʾṣadikā,1 màni b-nāḥaq ʿzálla?!  
Good! He [=Elishay] was not so satisfied. 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?!’

(90) g-ʾemer ta-šamūʾel ha-nnāvi,1 g-ʾemer sī mbārax xá yāla dōd-ʾelīšāy,1 pāeš ḥakōmad yisraʾēl!  
He says to Samuel the Prophet, ‘Go bless [i.e. anoint] one child of Elishay, so that he shall become the king of Israel!’

(91) zōlle1 dámmad zōlle1 šmūʾel hannāvi šārāf ῖol-kullu bātād yisraʾēl ῖol-dō bēsa u-ʾālōxun!  
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: ʾamēn!  
BA: Amen!

(93) SZ: ʾilā[ha] ya[wa]lox ʿʾšet ḥāyil,1  
SZ: May God give you [=OA] a woman of valour

(94) OA: ʾamēn!  
OA: Amen!

(95) BA: ʾamēn!,  
BA: Amen!

227 See footnote 225 above.
228 The Modern Hebrew root k’/s is used here with NENA morphology.
(96) **SZ:** *u-bánat bésa go-rušaláyim xazyálut*
yalónke didox,

**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, ‘amèn, ‘amèn!,

**BA:** Amen, amen, amen!,

(99) **SZ:** *u-’in-šá‘állla muxwási fárhat*
zábbu

**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, ‘amèn!

**BA:** Amen, amen, amen!

(101) **OA:** ‘amèn ‘amèn!

**OA:** Amen amen!

(102) **SZ:** ‘ána kmá kéfi séél! ‘ilāha k-f’é!

**SZ:** Me, I am so happy [lit. how much my joy came]! God knows!

(103) **BA:** ‘amèn!

**BA:** Amen!

(104) **SZ:** ‘az e,…! *hu*-‘emèt e bá††‘ g-érr
bróni rúwwa dalāla, masētu bróné
rúwwa, šamā‘el hannavi monèxle lā
hmólla stún…†

**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) ‘az-è, g-emórrre léwe ‘ó bróna, – ‘átta!
má‘ g-šbanHYotér maddây††‘ g-
máḥkiyan ḫwārít†† kūlle wā‘ada lišānī
g-éza ḫwārít†† g-shānna ḫwārít†† rāba,†

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:** ḫkèn! naxôn! naxôn††

**BA:** Yes, right, right,

(107) **SZ:** hè,†

**SZ:** Yes.

(108) **BA:** ‘az-lá qam-šaqšille ‘aw-bróna,†

**BA:** So he didn’t take that son,

(109) **SZ:** g-emórrre ḫlò, lò ra‘úy.†† maséle
‘aw-xât g-érr ḫlò,†† maséle ‘aw-xât stún
nūra lá xozýálé.†

**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) šmû‘al hannavi, | márrele râbonô šel-
  olâm | dâmmad hmôlla, | šaxâna b-rêše, | ʾôha-le!
Samuel the Prophet, the Master of
the Universe [had] told him, ‘When
the Shekhinah stood [=dwell]
upon his head, this is he [i.e. that is
the son who will be king].’

(111) g-er-lè ʾôha | g-er-lè ʾôha, | kûd ʾešťá
hmôllu | g-ér | ḫôl[| ḫtlôx xa brôna xât?]
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]
[of it?], they [= the other sons] will
substitute for him [lit. switch him]
and will bring him.’

(112) séle mîd-xa-dašdâša | xa-kusîsa
xwârta b-rêše. | g-emér ʾôha-le | g-ér
ʾôha-lé.
He came with [i.e. wearing] an
ankle-length robe, a white hat on
his head. He [= Samuel the
Prophet] says, ‘This is he?’, he
[Elishay] says, ‘This is he’.

(113) hmôll | g-ér ḥmôl ʾâxxa, | monâxle bâd-
râbbôno šel-olâm | šaxiná hmôlla.
He [David] stood, he [= Samuel the
Prophet] says, ‘Stand here’, he
looked towards the Master of the
Universe, the Shekhinah stood [i.e.
dwelt upon David].

(114) g-er-ʾôha brônox màyle šômme?!
dâwid-hîle | g-er-ʾô p-pâl[y] jaš | h-âdavid
mèlex yəsraʾēl[| ḫô brônox!]
He says, ‘This son of yours, what is
his name?’ ‘It is David.’ He says,
‘This [one] will be David, the king
of Israel! This son of yours!’

(115) hawâle h-môshâḥ | dôd mäséle ḫ-šêmenh
man-bêt m Açdâš, | qam-dahônle u-
qâm. | ʾa[w]zâle | u-ʾâl kâffôd-īzêle u-
lôbbe | u-xâše | u-ʾâqle | u-ʾaqar-ʾaqle,
Here is the ointment that he had
brought, oil from the Temple, 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,

229 Translation of dašdaša according to Sabar (2002a: 145).
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: 'amen.

(118) OA: 'amen.

(119) SZ: qam-, xålaš, pōšle bór... qam-

(120) BA: Oh... Guri Kunz, nice,

(121) Who shall they [=Israel] send [and] who shall they not send? King Saul has, one suit, Ziguri Kunzəri, no one can wear it, it is made only for King David. Only a king, the one who will become king...

(122) BA: What is Kuris Kunzəri?

(123) BA: Guri Kunzəri, nice,

(124) BA: Guri Kunzəri in Kurdish [=Neo-

(125) BA: But does it have a meaning [lit. interpretation]? Meaning, what is Guri Kunzəri, its name?

(126) BA: Guri Kunzəri in [as well].

(127) BA: Amen.

(116) g-ér ʿalohim yismor ʿotxá, dúšət

(128) BA: Amen.

(129) That’s it, he became, the son of ..., he anointed him.

After that, later on ... King Saul called ... eh ... also King Saul, Goliath the Philistine, eh he wants to fight with Israel.

The Hebrew root mšh is used here with NENA morphology.

Clearly, an anachronism.

BA: a gun,
(135) **SZ:** là, | dą̣d-g-mạ̀xēl kēpāl, ḍbba! trāq, ġānna, | lá-k-yan šōmmə mày-le b-kūrdi, e...!

SZ: No, [the thing] that you throw a stone with, *trāq! this*, I don’t know what its name is in Kurdish [ = Neo-Aramaic], uh ...

(136) **BA:** e w! | ḍōto! ġē, |

BA: Uh w! Like that, yes,

(137) **SZ:** lá tfakke, | e... | ḍīhēvel[*] |...

SZ: Not a gun, uh ... a rope ...

(138) **BA:** ḍīhēvel[*] | ḍōto! |

BA: A rope, like that ...

(139) **SZ:** u-ğānna, g-e[wō]z tɔʁạq! ġānna, | šōmmə mày-le?!

SZ: And this, it does *tɔʁạq! this*, what is its name?

(140) **BA:** ḍīhēts va-kēsê[IPA]

BA: An arrow and a bow,

(141) **SZ:** ġē ḍīhēts va-hēts, | hēts va-kēsê.[IPA]

SZ: Yes, an arrow and an arrow, an arrow and a bow.

(142) **BA:** ḍīhēts va-kēsê[IPA] u-ɗb-d[*]kūrdî[IPA] mày-la?!

BA: An arrow and a bow, and in Kurdish [ = Neo-Aramaic] what is it?

(143) **SZ:** ḍà?!

SZ: Eh?

(144) **BA:** b-d[*]kūrdî[IPA]

BA: In Kurdish [ = Neo-Aramaic]?

(145) **SZ:** b-d-kūrdî[*] | šōmmə nṣēlî | g-omrânnax, | šōmmə nṣēlî. | šōm[ma] ‘at[tal]-tâxr[an] b-amrânnax[233]

SZ: In Kurdish [ = Neo-Aramaic]? I forgot its name, I tell you, I forgot its name. I’ll remember its name now and tell you.

(146) **BA:** ḍītōv.[IPA]

BA: Good.

(147) **SZ:** ‘ōha zôlle, | qam-šaqṣâlə | ŝōmmə u-zôlle. zôlle rōś... | ŋrûlē ‘al-ğānna, | šqôlle xa-kēpa,[IPA]

SZ: This one [ = David] went [away], he took it with him and went. He went to [lit. upon] ... he came close to the *this*, he took a stone,

(148)  

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].

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233 Samra will remember the word *bardaqaniye* ‘slingshot’ in (164).

234 Maybe to a river, to collect pebbles, or to the battlefield. See 1 Samuel 17:40.
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].

He put them in his this, I forgot, its name is [very] pleasing [ = beautiful] in Kurdish [ = Neo-Aramaic].

He [ = Goliath] went [and] he says ‘Who [is it that] came to kill me? Where are the pošülkan mošülkat?’ They say… He sees it is a child, standing.

He says ‘Strike your blow,’ he [ = David] says, ‘What I …? You are wearing clothes of Kude Kunzari [ = armour], you are able to strike a blow, I, what do I know [how] to strike. Strike your blow [and] we’ll see what sort [of a blow] it is.’

He struck a this. A half of uh … that place was destroyed. This, mountain.

This one [ = David] flew [away], he [Goliath] made him fly [away], God made him land safely [lit. sat him down], he came [and] stood again in front of him [ = Goliath]. He [ = Goliath] says, ‘What, you’re alive?! What?’ He [ = David] says,
Samra remembers the word she had forgotten, thus the strong intonation. See footnote 233 above.

He [= Goliath] says, ‘Well strike your blow’, he [Goliath] says, ‘Who is this [guy]?’ Uh ... He did like that, he lifted this – there was – his eyes were held [i.e. covered],

‘I’m alive, thank God. The house of God is built [= everything is well].’ He [= Goliath] says, ‘Well strike your blow’, he [Goliath] says, ‘Who is this [guy]?’ Uh ... He did like that, he lifted this – there was – his eyes were held [i.e. covered],

He [= Goliath] says, ‘Well strike your blow’, he [Goliath] says, ‘Who is this [guy]?’ Uh ... He did like that, he lifted this – there was – his eyes were held [i.e. covered],
At this point in the narrative, David is not yet king.

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 [of King Saul], in order that he knows that he had killed him, otherwise ...

He [=David] says, ‘Give me his sword [so that] I shall cut his head and carry 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.’

King 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 ...

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242 Contraction of la-g-yawònne-lox.
243 At this point in the narrative, David is not yet king.
(174) ḥmāle xā-gar-xēta| g-emārre ʾtōv| b-yawónnox xa brát yəsraʾēl, hālīle, sēpa dīde.

(175) qurbāne ʾilaha ʾayy-damma, kʾēšle| ʾel dāwīd, g-er-lebo xāwāt čū brāt yəsraʾēl tāłe| ʾšila brāt, ʾāy d-hīlā ʾba[t]-zzūg̣ ēdox bat-šēvaʾ mon-ʾšamāyim| kṣūta tālox, ʾāya b-yawōta ta-ʾelīyā hāṭtē. lēbo xāwāt čū brāt yəsraʾēl.

(176) BA: ʾnaxōn.

(177) SZ: waḷḷa, ʾāya| šqōle sēpa, qtel, drēle go-čanṭa| zōlle m[o]ṭule qām e... šāʿul ha-mmēlex.


(179) ʾaz-dāmmwād qam-maḷušla ḫalīfa| ʾšīle, šāʿul rāba krōble, dāwīd monāxle bād-ʿēn šāʿul, ʾen-šāʿul ġer-škāl-īlu, ġer-škāl pšēle ḫartsūf| dīde.

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.’

Then God [may I be] His sacrifice, 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. destined] for you from heaven, you will give her to ʾEliya ʾHattē. You cannot give any [other] daughter of Israel.’

BA: Right.

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.

That trouble [i.e. Goliath or the Philistines] went [away and] passed from Israel. God will give good to Israel, there was a celebration, they had killed him, that was it. ʾEliya ʾHattē, he [= David] wants to bring him [or: it is needed to bring him], he will make him his general [lit. minister of the army] now.

So when he dressed him in the suit [lit. dressed the suit on him], Saul became very angry, David looked at the eyes of Saul, the eyes of Saul became different [lit. are of different colour/form], his face became different [lit. is of different colour/form].

244 The Modern Hebrew root k’s is used here with NENA morphology.

245 Sabar (2002a: 89): (Ar[abic]) f. ʾāfe misfortune, mishap; pl. ... ʾāfityātā ...’.
Evidently Samra refers here to a musical instrument. According to Sabar (2002a: 127), a jezuke is a ‘booklet (of religious or magic nature)’. According to another informant, Habuba Messusani, the correct name of the intended musical instrument is szuka. Perhaps it is the plucked string instrument szaz, common in Kurdistan. See also footnote 71 in Chapter 3.
washes her, he puts ... in his hand ... green green [and] fresh fresh grass, [and] feeds her.

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. Each and every one, He knows what is in their hearts [lit. his heart].

Whoever has good[ness] [in his heart], whoever does not have, He knows. He said, why do they say, ‘He is the interpreter of the liver and the kidney’? He knows!

He went [and] played the jezuke for him, his head healed. Every three hours he used to make 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.

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].

An angel took the sword [and] put it above David in the wall.

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247 A loan from (pre-Modern) Hebrew galūy ve-yadīa. The connective vav is omitted to fit the common pattern of hendia dyses in NENA, which does not include ‘and’.

248 See footnote 246 above.
(193) sèle yonatáñ1 g-emárre qày,1 résox k-târêñ1 'az-qáy q-qatîlêtte?i g-émer p-qatîlêne.1

(194) wële mira shîne1 máñi død-qatîlêle gôlyat,1 palgôt dawûta p-póya tâle,1 u-brâtî mixal tâle "matanà.11 'az-ê néq[la] hâm p-pá[y]sè xôtîne1 u-hâm p-pá[y]sè...1 k-sâyên mûnne.1

(195) sâmle mûnne,1 jë wèla.11 hû-sôf šel-şavâr,...11 sèla "malhâmâ,11 'ërâqle bâsre,11 'ërâqle bâsre249 dáwûd ha-mmélex zôlê,1 zôlê l."ma'arât"i1 'elyâhu navî "be-hêfa."1

(196) nobûlêle11 manyâ 'emmâe "baâürîm,"11 'êmme,1 tûle go."ma'arâ,11 mûsêlê gyûne1 mûn-qam-šâ'ul1 g."ârâqla.1

(197) 'ay-rût u-na'ômi mûnîkûlêlî?i xlôšla?i rût [u-Jnà'ômi],1 hê,1 sèlan 'áxxa.1

(198) BA: hê,1 hê,1 hê.1

(199) SZ: 'az-dáwûd ha-mmélex sèlê,1 sèlê,1 "rûs ha-šanâ,11 wële go."ma'arât"i1 'elyâhu navî.1

(200) manyâ 'emmâe "hayâlîm"i 'Ôtele,1 g-ôbê 'áxli1 g-ôbê šâte,1 lêt-le,1 mâñi b-ya[woj]le?i hûkûma lêwa 'êmme,1 hûkûma wëla 'êmmod šà'ul.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 become his son-in-law, and also become ... he hates him.

He hated him, that was that [= all of that happened]. Eventually, war came, he chased after him, he chased after him,249 King David went, he went to the cave of Eliyahu the Prophet in Haifa.

He took with him eight hundred men, he sat in the cave, he hid himself from Saul, he ran away.

The one of Ruth and Naomi I’ve [already] told? It’s finished? Ruth and Naomi, yes. We came here [in the story].

BA: Yes, yes, yes.

So [with regard to] King David, Rosh Hashana came, he was in the cave of Eliyahu the Prophet.

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.

249 See footnote 219 above.
There is one, Elimelech. He was in Haifa, a rich [person] of all of Israel [i.e. very rich, the richest]. Gilo,\(^{250}\) this Gilo, is his. All of Gilo is his.

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.

He sent two soldiers to him he says, ‘Rosh Hashana came, I need sheep, need head-flesh,\(^{251}\) need this and that.’

He says, ‘I will not give him anything.’

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.’

He says, ‘I will not give him anything. You [can] fly [or] sit, even this much I will not give him.’

She says, ‘Well sit at your place.’

She went out after the soldiers, she says, ‘Come’, she says, ‘Go [and] say to him, say to David, that I, –

\(^{250}\) A modern neighbourhood in the south of Jerusalem, near the site of biblical Gilo (Joshua 15:41; 2 Samuel 15:12). See Section 5.17 above.

\(^{251}\) 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.
(209)  וַאֲלֹ-שָׁקְלוּתָןְ xá ṣ̄awárqá, l – să’̄ mín ṣ̄q̄l̄ún  ʼās[ra]l  ṭl̄ṣl̄i  ʼām[ma]l  a xamši kasyáṣa ṛózz̄a, l  m̄ān-ṭaḥ̄ūn̄e d̄īd̄i. l

(210)  m’oʾš̄r̄i. 252 xamši kasyáṣa q̄m̄x̄a, l m̄ān-ṭaḥ̄ūn̄ot q̄m̄x̄a. l xamši bakkūke, 253 ʾomm̄á bakkūke ʾś̄m̄n̄[ha]l  m̄ān-ṭaḥ̄-l. l ʾś̄m̄n̄[ha]d̄īd̄i. l

(211)  h̄ūl̄a, l mâd ʾūṭ̄la, l h̄ūl̄a ṣ̄awárqá l xṭ̄ml̄ 254 ʾūṭ̄la, l să’̄ mín ṣ̄q̄l̄un x̄l̄ūn. l

(212)  s̄ā’̄ mín  ʾl̄-ʾōr̄ba, l ʾomm̄á r̄eš̄e ʾōr̄ba m̄̄s̄̄n̄, l ʿūs̄ul̄e ta-ʾr̄oš̄-ha-š̄n̄a. l[1]

(213)  t̄ɔ̄v, l ʾil̄[ha] máʾm̄ɔr̄ b̄̄s̄ax, 255 gil̄á h̄ūl̄a. l

(214)  s̄ēl̄a d̄-ʿ̄r̄a, w̄ēl̄e t̄ɔ̄k̄ȳa, l ḡora. l

(215)  g-ʾɔmr̄-l̄e, l lā h̄ūl̄x̄ō ʾɔ̄-m̄̄n̄d̄i, l t̄a-d̄aw̄d̄i, l t̄m̄n̄ȳa l ʾɔ̄m̄m̄a[ȳ]a l ʾḥ̄a[ȳ]ȳl̄m̄ l ʾɔ̄ṭ̄l̄e l u-ʾl̄āt̄le m̄āx̄l̄l̄u, l s̄ēl̄e l ʾr̄oš̄-h̄a-š̄n̄d̄l̄ l u-ʾɔ̄z̄a, l ʾɔxn̄ ʾɔx̄l̄x̄l̄ ʾɔw̄a ṭl̄ ʾɔx̄l̄? l!

(216)  g-er-l̄a g-yaw̄w̄n̄ne, l ʾɔ̄ṭ̄l̄i ṭ̄a[h̄ūn̄a l u-ʾɔ̄ṭ̄l̄i k̄ūl̄l̄u-ḡeb. l

(217)  g-ʾɔmr̄á x̄ūd-r̄eš̄ox l ʾɔ̄sq̄ad h̄ūl̄l̄i l u-ʾɔ̄sq̄ad l u-ʾɔ̄sq̄ad l u-ʾɔ̄sq̄ad l u-q̄am-... here, take a piece of paper
[= confirmation] – come take ten, thirty, a hundred um fifty bags of
rice, from my mill.

I’ve authorised [that]. Fifty bags of
flour, from the flour-mill. Fifty
bottles, a hundred bottles of oil
from my mi[l]l oil’.

She gave, whatever she has, she
gave a piece of paper [and] signed
it, ‘Come take [and] eat.

She gave, whatever she has, she
gave a piece of paper [and] signed
it, ‘Come take [and] eat.

She says to him, ‘You did not give
anything, to David. Eight hundred
soldiers he has and he does not
have anything, to feed them, Rosh
Hashana came and the festival, we
shall eat [and] he shall not eat?!’

He says, ‘I shall not give him, I have
a mill and I have everything.’

She says, ‘[By the] life of your head,
I gave this much, and this much,
and this much, and I signed them

Here, take a piece of paper

252 The Modern Hebrew root ʾš̄r̄ is used here with NENA morphology.
253 The Modern Hebrew word baq̄b̄uq̄ is here given a NENA plural form. The corresponding NENA
words are b̄ɔṭ̄l̄e, baq̄b̄aq̄i[ȳ]a[t].
254 The NENA root x̄t̄m ‘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’.
255 A blessing expressing gratitude.
xatmánu\textsuperscript{256} Hxatíma\textsuperscript{257} didox, 1 ut-
mțëlu ʿillé ʿawāē.\textsuperscript{1}

(218) ʿóha mòtè, | pqèʿ le l-dūkè, | mòtè l-
dūkè!\textsuperscript{1}

(219) BA: pqèʿ!\textsuperscript{1}

(220) SZ: pqèʿ! g-ómra pqò\textsuperscript{1} si.\textsuperscript{1}

(221) básər xlōśla mën-HxòvʿáH\textsuperscript{258} dīd
yārxa,\textsuperscript{259} mṣodārra, | g-ómra šrùxule
dāwīd ʿāse ʿāxxa.\textsuperscript{1}

(222) sélé dāwīd tūla ʿomme, | mōrra-le, | g-
emōrra ṭaba, | ṭodā ṭēbba\textsuperscript{1} ťałax, | 
hullāx-lan, | u-ʾēšlan | u-xèllan, | u-
mosēlān u-, | Hkōl-tōv.\textsuperscript{1}

(223) g-ómra mēnex, | xā ḫāl u-qōsta ʾēha-la, | ʾē bāxta\textsuperscript{260} pāšla yabbum,\textsuperscript{261} ʾānā'
kūllu ʿānya ʾarxāsa' u-ʿānya kūllu
kaswānnu b-šōmmox,\textsuperscript{1}

[with] your signature, and the
things have [already] arrived to
him.’

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]!

BA: He exploded!

SZ: He exploded! She says, ‘Explode,
go ahead.’

After she had finished with his
shiva,\textsuperscript{258} month,\textsuperscript{259} she sent [word],
she says, ‘Call David to come [or: he
should come] here.’

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].’

She says, ‘Look, that is the situation
[lit. one situation and story is that],
this woman\textsuperscript{260} became yībbum,\textsuperscript{261}
and all these mills, and all these, I
will write them in your name [i.e. I
will make you the owner],

\textsuperscript{256} See footnote 254 above.

\textsuperscript{257} The Modern Hebrew lexeme hatimà is given NENA phonology here: h > x, penultimate stress.

\textsuperscript{258} The mourning period of seven days.

\textsuperscript{259} The mourning period of a month.

\textsuperscript{260} See footnote 225 above. The switch from first to third person here produces ‘combined speech’; see
Golomb (1968).

\textsuperscript{261} Levirate marriage. See Section 5.4 and footnotes 96 and 218 earlier in this chapter. Unlike Ruth,
Gila did not need a yībbum, and Samra corrects herself in (227) below.
but be fair, take also her\textsuperscript{260} when you become king, take her [and] she will be your wife.’

He says, ‘In my eye [=I agree completely].’ They gave their hands of each other [= they shook hands].

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

‘This wealth, to whom will I give [it]? Gilo\textsuperscript{263} is in your name [=yours], the mills are for you, you are entitled to everything.’

He says, ‘I am also entitled to you.’ He took her hand. Some time has passed [lit. this one went this one brought], he became King David.

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

BA: How [do you mean] she fell yibbum on him, after all [is he] the brother of …

\textsuperscript{262} Borrowed into Hebrew from English ‘fair’.

\textsuperscript{263} The neighbourhood. See footnote 250 above.
202

(234) *ksüle tâle,* ʾána là* g-qatlônnox,* ʾáhaṭ|
*g-ḥat qaṭliṭti*| ʾána là-g qaṭlônnox,* ʾáhaṭ ʾmèlex yəsraʾêl|-wât.|*  
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.’

(235) **SZ:** xarâ de ʾba-sôf| e| šáʾul ha-mmêlex bâsîr ʾlā[ha] yôme,| zîlle kâz e| bâxta,| e ḫor[?] Jîm-la rahêla.|  
SZ: After that in the end, uh, King Saul after three days, went to uh ... a woman, uh, her name is Raḥêla.

(236) g-emôrra psôx tâl| bâxta pasxáwa bêd-(97,840),(966,898)
d-fâl| k-iʾawa máʾiz go| olâm| mà lès.|  
He tells her, ‘Open [my fortune] for me [= tell me my 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-ʾmra-wan...| šáʾul ha-mmêlex| wêl e| ʾôsyâ qâbîl| ʾlā[ha]-yûrx kôsî,| wàn-ymûsâ ʾ-îzê là pasxân ta-ʾû-xxa.| là zêʾla šáʾul ha-mmêlex hûle.|  
She says, ‘I’m ... King Saul came to me three month ago, I swore to him [lit. I am sworn on his hand] that I shall not open [the fortune] for anyone.’ She did not know that it is King Saul.

(238) ʾána là-gnâhqâna ṣel| ṣefer| là-g- pâxan,| čkkan wan-môrta xá xâbra ta-šáʾul ha-mmêlex ḫôl,| lô|  
‘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-ʾér psôx,| là kôfle gyâne| ṣàʾul g- émer ṣàʾul...| e| patrônna,| šoqân paṭërâx šáʾul ha-mmêlex môn,| mom- momaṣâ dîdax.| psôxla,| xzêla,| šamūʾel ha-nnâvi-le.|  
He says, ‘Open’, he did not reveal 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) xzêla dâmmod sêle šamūʾel ha-nnâvi,| k-iʾa,| šáʾul mayôs,| xâlaš,| là- môhkêla,| g-ʾmra,| sa-xzâ,| mà ʾiz gô|  
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) psôxla,| u-xzêle šamūʾel ha-nnâvi.| šamūʾel ha-nnâvi g-ére,| šáʾul,| ʾlā[ha]  
She opened, and he saw Samuel the Prophet. Samuel the Prophet tells him, ‘Saul, you have three days [lit.

\[264\] The Modern Hebrew root *ptr* is used here with NENA morphology.
yóme ḏádx ðiš, | ḏáht u-ùd tlá[ḥa] bnóne didídx ḏásot qṭálā. | zèле.

(242) pólšle ḏholè. | ḏáy báxta, | ḏázlale ḏ’marákinh | šórba máyêt ksêsa, | qam- maxlêle, | qam-mašṭyâle, | dmóxle kásle tlá[ḥa] yóme, | pólšla ḏ’máḥamâ | kúd tláhun... |

(243) xzéle kúd | tláhun yalúnké dîde qțilin. | ḏáwa šín pš’a265 wêle, | dréle sépà dîde, | mândéle gyâné | ḏápawá zôlle. | ḏ’asz-máni pîšân? dávid ha-mmélex pólšle ḏ’mélex yâsrâ’èl.[î]

(244) BA: ṣmḥôm, |

(245) SZ: mád qţólle qţólle, | u-mád ṣómme ysâqlé | ḏ’al-šáltôn, | bárux ha-šêm, | ḡkômle.

three days you have remained], you and your three sons will be killed [lit. come to killing].’ He knew.

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 there [lit. at hers] three days, a war started, all three of them …

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 remain (alive)]? King David became the king of Israel.

BA: mmmm …

SZ: Whatever he killed he killed, whatever [=whoever] was with him ascended to the rule, blessed be the Lord, he reigned.

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265 The Modern Hebrew root pš 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, the motif of gender transformation. The folktale, ‘The King and the Wazir’, was told by Ḥabuba Messusani.

1. 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 folktale stories. This draws on both Jewish and Kurdish folklore: many of its tales bear distinctive Jewish characteristics, while others belong in the general regional repertoire. Telling folktale stories, and listening to them, was a very common and popular shared pastime of the communities of Kurdistan. The very same folktale stories, 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 listening and telling stories. Zakho folktale stories 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. Folktale stories are a social institution that plays a role in the forming and maintaining of the Zakho communal identity. They also take part in intergenerational communication: in a society that experienced a deep intergenerational gap brought about by the sharp transition to modern Israel,1 folktale stories (and other oral genres) are a mode of contact between the generation of the grandparents and their grandchildren.2

1 See Sabar (1975). About the social changes within the community caused by the migration, see Gavish (2010: 316–336).
2 Published Jewish Zakho folktale stories are: Socin (1882: 159–168, 219–223); Polotsky (1967), two episodes from a ‘novel’; Alon and Meehan (1979); Avinery (1978); Avinery (1988: 48–65); Zaken (1997); Shilo (2014), a collection of 14 folktale stories 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 folktale stories in the Jewish NENA dialect of Zakho is yet 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
2. ‘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 gallop, leaving the king alone. The king arrives at a river, and 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, yínmed máya ‘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 realise that he is an important man, seeing his beautiful clothes and horse. He does not remember who he is, as he has lost his memory. The hunters take him to a hospital, where he is taken care of for one year. A professor takes him home to be his servant, and eventually the wazir becomes like a son to him. One day the wazir is riding his horse, the horse again gallops, and the wazir falls from his horse 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 who 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

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Jews of Kurdistan and a well-known storyteller throughout Iraqi Kurdistan, was recorded during 1964 by Professor Yona Sabar for the Hebrew University’s Jewish Language Traditions Project (Mifal Masorot Ha-Llašon, 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.
prince that his wife is not lost, she 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 will keep those children, since the king has other children who he had earlier fathered as a man. The king and the prince both return to their homes.

3. The motif of gender transformation

Many of the motifs 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 dropped his ring in water and then recovered it (K1812.17 ‘Solomon’s power to hold kingdom dependent on ring; drops it in water’); yîmmēd mâyā ‘the mother of the water’ (motif F420 ‘water spirits’); 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.)’). 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’.

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, though it is not restricted to it. Many of its other occurrences in oral folk-literature come from the Middle-East – Egypt, Turkey, the

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3 As classified by Thompson (1955–1958). Motifs 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 section 3.1 in chapter 2.

4 In his index, Noy (Neuman, 1954: 395) refers to Ginzberg (1925: 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 adobe 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).


Jews of Iraqi Kurdistan\textsuperscript{10} and the Jews of Yemen\textsuperscript{11} – although it appears in non–Middle Eastern traditions as well.\textsuperscript{12}

Only one occurrence of motif D10 is to be found in classical Jewish literature. That is in a story of a poor widower whose wife left him a nursing baby. The widower could not afford a wet nurse, and by way of miracle he gained breasts and fed his son himself.\textsuperscript{13}

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 spearing 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’ opinion, and says that women’s enjoyment is ten times greater.

An Indian story from the Mahabharata,\textsuperscript{14} the story of King Bhangaswana,\textsuperscript{15} shares 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 to her children is greater than that of a man. 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 containing 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-

\textsuperscript{10} 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.

\textsuperscript{11} Tale number 1235 at IFA.

\textsuperscript{12} For instance it is found in Benin, China, the French-speaking region of Canada, India, Inuit regions and Ireland. See Thompson (1955–1958, vol. II: 8–9); Thompson and Balys (1958: 97).

\textsuperscript{13} Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 53b. Noy (Neuman, 1954: 281), gives several cases of male embryo transformed into female in the womb.

\textsuperscript{14} Book 13, §12.

\textsuperscript{15} Ganguli (c1900: 35–38).
The latter two correspond to international tale-type ATU 681 ‘relativity of time’ (previously known as tale-type AT 681 ‘king in a bath; years of experience in a moment’). ‘Hasan the King of Egypt’ is reminiscent of an Egyptian oral tale. 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 (Hadith Khurafa). In its most elaborate version, in the book Al-Fākhir by 9th century writer Al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Salama, Khurafa, taken prisoner by three jinns, 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.

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 Pinehas of Zakho, which recounts the story of the two brothers ʿAli and ʿAmar. Sabar 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 ʿAmar and his friend go hunting. They chase after a gazelle for three days, and 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!’. 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

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16 Stories number 191, 545, 412 and 435 in Marzolph, Leeuwen and Wassouf (2004).
20 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).
21 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.
22 Sabar (2002b: 613), suggests that this is Pinehas Čilmèro.
23 Socin (1882).
24 Sabar (2002b).
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 lists ‘bathing in an enchanted pool or stream’ as the first of five means by which a change of sex is effected, 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’, writes that ‘as the motif travelled westward it seems that water became the more usual medium’.

One more element of our story should be commented on: 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 eastern Turkey. 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 he 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’, 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. 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. In our folktale, confusion generated by

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27 The other four are: curse or blessing of a deity; exchanging sex with a Yaksha, ‘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).
28 Penzer (1927: 224).
29 Penzer (1927: 224).
32 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–
the focal point of motif D10 – the notion that breaking genders boundaries is possible, even by magic – permeates through many of the narrative elements. A latent sense of confusion is 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 which could have caused this unwelcome transformation.33

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 no apparent motive nor 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-ozán ʾe-nāqla? … lá-k-iʾān ma-ʾōzan. ‘Oh, what shall I do now? … I do not know what to do.’ His confusion is evident, and is growing: (46) la-k-ʾa ma-ʾōza, ta-máni ʾāza ʾāmra ʾána ḥakōma-wán. ‘She does not know what to do, to whom would she go [and] say ‘I am the king’? To whom

150), 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 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: 164–165): ‘Transsexuality evokes categorical and epistemic crises more than any other form of crossing of gender. … transsexuality, in its visibility, holds in itself the various anxieties evoked by different forms of crossing of gender.’ (my translation).

33 About gender transformation as unexpected and unwelcome, see Brown (1927: 6–9).
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) hàngÓN la-hè la-là, ṣmùiyó ṣì-a, ṣì-ékà wèt? ṣémèr là-k-i’en. ‘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.34 The lack of names, 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 is partaking 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) ʾawaqómênà-yòma, ṣmùiyó wèlè ḥakòma, ṣùtya téra. ‘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.

34 It is interesting to note that the imam plays a role of clarifying and restoring order. The children of the wazir are also given names, Mirza-Mahamad Ahmad and Fatma, but these characters play no role in the story; the knowledge of their names is used as proof of identity. That is, once again, names have a role in restoring order.
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): pášla gòra. | qámla lwišša júlle dìda | mxéla l-úrxa ‘She became a man … She rose [and] wore her clothes and started walking.’ And also: (79) báxtox ḥakòma-la. | ‘Your wife is a king’; (80) k-xáze gòra hìle, | ‘He [= the king] sees it is her [feminine, = the king’s] husband’; (81) g-émer yalúnkè mà? | ‘a[he]t-gòra wòt! māto | yalúnke mesûnnu-làx? | ‘He [= the husband] says [to the king]: “Children of what? You are a man! How will I bring you [feminine] the children?”’. The same grammatical confusion occurs in other places in our folktale as well.35

5. ‘The King and the Wazir’: The text

This folktale,36 ‘The King and the Wazir’, told by Ḥabuba Messusoni, 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.37 Present in the recording session were Ḥabuba Messusani (HM), Batia Aloni (BA), Professor Geoffrey Khan (GK), and myself. The recording ID is HM130107T4 00:04-12:16.

35 This linguistic abnormality appears also in the story of the brothers ‘Ali and ‘Amar; see Socin (1882: 164), line 6; Sabar (2002b: 621, no. 51).
36 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’ assertion (1964: 252): ‘… thus far in the illustrious history of the discipline [= folkloristics], not so much as one genre has been completely defined.’
37 See footnote 2 above.
Contraction of the interjection de.

Idiomatic expression meaning 'I will fulfill your request'.

The Modern Hebrew root dhr is used here with NENA morphology.

Sabar (2002a: 141): 'day-day-day: sounds describing speed of racing animals'.

Note the use of two allomorphic forms of the same verb within one sentence: ʾàl, ʾàẕl.

Idiomatic expression meaning 'he did not know where to go', 'he was utterly perplexed'.
(12) zóllë44 xzéle xá, xawóra, k-tënt má-yle?l
    He went44 [and] saw a river. Do you
    know what is xawóra?

(13) GK: ... he...
    GK: ... Yes ...

(14) HM: xawóra, ḫ-Sahar.Ḥ]
    HM: xawóra, a river.

(15) xzéle-xa xawóra, ṭühwwa.]
    He saw a river, [a] big [one].

(16) qómlé tūle ž45-dáw... tāma.]
    He rose [and] sat down upon that ...
    there.

(17) šláxle ḥášak dīdɔx46 ḫ-N′alâ... ḫ], qundáre
    He took off, excuse my language,46 his
    shoes, [and] put his feet in the water.
    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.

(18) wày g-ëmerl mpollo, áatta lā-k-i′on ḍèka
    ‘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
    had fallen. I shall bring it out.’

(19) mpolqle, yínmed máyà47 sèla, mxéla-
    [When] he went out [of the water],
    the Mother of the Water47 came. She
    struck him with one ... this,48 ṭâšɔmə49
    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.

44 This repetition of a word or phrase is a typical stylistic feature of Jewish Zakho NENA narration. It
usually appears at the beginning of an episode in the narrative.
45 Contraction of raš-.
46 Sabar (2002a: 169) on ḫ-N’sak dɔxɔm: ‘All present/of you excluded (said after saying a dirty word)’.
48 See note on ḫ-N’mn in section 5 of the introduction.
49 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).
(20) k-xáze gyâne, brâta-le! xà sqéltâ! lá-g-hanêlox ʾebbâ.
He sees himself [= his reflection in the river], he is a woman! So
beautiful! You could not enjoy [staring enough] at.

(21) [m]póqle l-wârya, júllet gùre-lu táma.
lùšle júlle dide! tûle l-tâma.\(^50\)
He went out [of the water], men’s
clothes were there. He wore his
clothes. He sat there.

(22) sèlu, ʾánnya dôd g-dôqi hônna
šabâkâvâne g-âbe dôqi g-doqî nunyâsa.\(^1\)
k-xáze ᵃ ḫāhûrâ ᵃ hádxâ sqôltâ, g-šmri
wálla bîr ḥâkôma dêni, hay-tïl[ha]
šônne wélu bâ-zvâra xa-/listsâhûrâ tûle,\(^1\)
xa-sqôltâ, xa-brâta u-lâ! g-râze bôd-čû-xa.\(^1\)
Came, these, who catch this,
fishermen, they want to catch, they
catch fish. They see this so beautiful
girl, they say, ‘Indeed the son of our
king, for three years they have been
searching [lit. turning around] for a
girl for him, a beautiful [girl] [or: a
beauty], a girl, and he is not satisfied
with anyone.’

(23) BA: ‘aqôle la-qtéle ʾèl-čû-xa.\(^1\)
BA: His mind was not cut on anyone
[= He was not satisfied with anyone].

(24) HM: ᵃ ḫâha b-nablâxla ᵃ-ulpët ᵃ ráze-ʾebbâ.\(^1\)
HM: ‘This one [= the girl], we shall
take her [to him], perhaps he would
be satisfied with her.’

(25) qômlu sèlu, sèlu,\(^51\) qam-nablâa qâmâye
kûx-hâkôma, yîmme u-bêbê, qam-… g-šmri,
ʾéha ē[r]… ᵃ ḫâh-rádî-la! go-
⁴kôl ha-ʾolât² lez-moxwâ[sa]\(^52\) bôs-
²sqôltâ-la môn râhêl ᵃ毫米ênu ᵃ ḥôlî.\(^1\)
They rose [and] came, they came,\(^51\)
they took her first to the king,
his mother and father, they say, ‘That
[girl] is something different, in the
entire world there is not [a girl] like
her, she is even more beautiful than
Rachel our Mother’\(^53\).

(26) ᵃ tâv² mêsêlu ᵃ-yeled, ᵃ-šêne… qam-
xazêla, ᵃ-šôlê ᵃ-illa, qam-ʾebêla.\(^1\)
Good. They brought the child [= the
prince]. His eyes … he saw her, he fell
in love with her, he loved [or:
wanted] her.

\(^50\) Verbal forms and pronouns in this sentence are masculine. The woman is still referred to as a man
here.

\(^51\) See footnote 44 above.

\(^52\) ʾ > s due to the following consonant.

\(^53\) Rachel the Matriarch.
They went [and] brought [and] married them [lit. they blessed her to him], and in that year she became pregnant. 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.'

Do you know what is a seheràne?

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 my daughter-in-law gave birth to three boys.’

They went out.

His daughter-in-law, she is also a queen, [she has] a crown on her head.

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54 Sabar (2002a): 237: ‘communal procession and picnic in the country side (during Passover or Succoth Holidays)’.
(40) zêllu,| wêlu, ʾaw-yôma| xêllu,| šêlu,|
kûllu| wêlu ba-rqâza| u-dôla| u-zôrne u|
u-mâd| g-šêbe| b-[w]ázat| farâhe,.

(41) ʾéha sêlā xa-hônna b-rêša,| g-ʾmra wâl|la| b-azâna kêz-govân ʾnâhar.| ʾasôqa dîdi
mpôlwâla tâma.| u-ʾasôqa lá xêzyâli.| qam-ʾozâli| ʾe-yîmmed màya ʾibaḥurâ|t|.

(42) zôlā l-tâma,| zôlā l-tâma|56 ʾëna,| bâz
monôxlâ bêd-mâyâ| ʾëna nzôrra bê[d]-
ʾasôqa,| qam-xazyâla,|.

(43) wây!| g-ʾmra| vâl|a| wêlá ʾasôqa ʾasôqat
ḥakôme-la.| p-kôšana.| Oh! She says, ‘Indeed here is the ring!’
It is the ring of the king. ‘I shall go down [there].’

(44) šlixtâ jûlû dîda,| šlixtâ jûlû dîda,
kûšla,| kûšla,|57 g-šba šâqla ʾtābûʿat,|1
sêla yîmmed màya,| mxêla-la xâ,
rašôma,| pôšla ḥakôma.| pôšla gôra.| She took off her clothes, she took off
her clothes, she went down [into the
water]. She went down [into the
water],57 she wants to take the ring,
the Mother of the Water came, she hit
her with a rašôma,58 she became the
king. She became a man.

(45) wi-mâ-b-ožûn ʾe-nâqla| jûllêd baxtâsa
ʾîsanl| lá-k-iʿân ma-ʾdàzên.|59
‘Oh what shall I do now [lit. this
time]? There are women’s clothes! I
do not know what to do.’

(46) qômla lwišîla jûlû dîda| mxêla l-ʿûrxa b-
[ʔ]ₐqle u-dî u-dî u-dî u-sêl|a.| la-k-iʿa
She rose [and] wore her clothes and
started walking [lit. hit the road by
legs] and onwards she came. She does

55 The zurne, a conical wind instrument with a double reed, similarly to the Western oboe, is played
together with a large double-headed bass drum, the doša, during weddings and other happy occasions.

56 See footnote 44 above.

57 See footnote 44 above.

58 See footnote 49 above.

59 The verbal forms in (45) with which the king refers to himself are masculine.
verb in the feminine form, although the king is referred to using masculine forms. In (46) and (47) he is referred to using feminine forms.

She does not know what to do. She has three sons from him. Good, she arrived, now we shall leave her, we come [lit. came] to the wazir.

The wazir, they came, those [people] that go [and] catch this, birds. Hunters.

BA: Hunters.

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].

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.

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.

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60 Unlike in (45), where the king is referred to using masculine forms, in (46) and (47) he is referred to using feminine forms.
61 The Modern Hebrew root *ps* is used here with NENA morphology.
62 Verb in the feminine form, although "zikarón" is masculine.
63 The Modern Hebrew root *tpl* is used here with NENA morphology. Since the historical emphasis of the consonant *t* is not retained in Modern Hebrew, it is pronounced as *t* by Ḥabuba.
(53) mtopolle\textsuperscript{63} p\=s\=le go... | xastax\=àna\textsuperscript{H3} éze\textsuperscript{H4} xá, xá şàtà. g-mbaqrile m-eka wé\|, g-émer là-k-i\=øn, | èka b-åt? là-k-i\=øn, p\=s\=le l-tàmà.\1

(54) xá, | muwwwàso\textsuperscript{l} profesor\textsuperscript{64} g-émer ysálot\textsuperscript{65} k\=stli b-yà[w\=]nnox | xi\=àlal št\=áya, | št\=li šúla, | ùzli xáp\=ça šúla, | m\=ád g-\=sb\=òt \=òz. | g-émer hàwwa. | là-k-i\=e c\=ù-m\=andi.\1

(55) \=a\=wa q\=ómle xà-yoma, | g-\=ãmrí wèle hàkòma, | š\=tle tèra. | hàkòma dòhun mòtle. | š\=tle tèra g-m\=andèlè.\1

(56) \=ôha rk\=úle mah\=íné d\=i\=de | mah\=íné d\=i\=de dh\=ôrra, | dh\=ôrra, | dh\=ôrra, | ùska mp\=olle\textsuperscript{l} mp\=olle xa-gar-xèt \=al-tàm. | H\=avàl\textsuperscript{H}-mp\=olle, | la-brèléle c\=ù-m\=andi, | t\=xèrre.\1

(57) wày!-g-émer | \=àna wàzir wèli k\=é-le hàkòma? \=èka ż\=ólle? \=àna p\=s\=lì \=kvàr\=l mevug\=àr, | zakèn, | mà-b-am\=rèn? | èka p-\=saql\=àli bàxti? la-k-\=saql\=àli, | \=kvàr\=l la-g-bàlti! | \=àna wòl p\=s\=lí... | la-g-m\=hèm\=ènà | ùbbi\= d\=ûwèn \=àna wàzir!\1

(58) sèlè \=al-bësà, | kàz-bàbè, | kàz-daw-bàbè d-qam-h\=onnòlle, | g-em\=òrrè, | mà q\=ôsta? | g-émer hàl ù-q\=ôsta dàdì hàd\=xà wèlà. | dàdì 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’. ‘Where will you go?’ ‘I don’t know’. He stayed there.

One, like yourself, a professor,\textsuperscript{64} says, ‘Come stay with me, I will give you food [and] drink, I have work [for you], do some work for me, do whatever you like.’ He says, ‘all right’. He does not know anything.

He rose one day, they say there’s a king, who has a bird. Their king died. He has a bird which they throw.

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.

‘Wow!’ he says, ‘I was a wazir! 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 wazir!’

He came home, to his father, to that father of his that did such and such for him,\textsuperscript{67} he says to him, ‘What is the story?’ he says, ‘My story [lit. situation and story] is thus. Of mine

\textsuperscript{64} Directed to Professor Khan.

\textsuperscript{65} Dativus ethicus.

\textsuperscript{66} The Modern Hebrew root dhr is used here with NENA morphology.

\textsuperscript{67} The irregular root h-n-n-l in derived from h\=òmà: see footnote 48 above and section 5 of the introduction. Sabar (2002a: 151): ‘to say this and that; to do this and that, have intercourse …’.
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]."

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.'

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.

He went with him, 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. take] the [=his] salary – she [=the maid] tells him 'Who are you?', he says, 'I am the wazir, this house is mine.'

She says, 'Huh?!' She went [and] said to his wife, she says, 'One madman indeed came, he is saying "I am the wazir, this house is mine."'

She [the wife] says, 'Show him in, show him in [and] I'll see what madman [this is].' She sees him [and] she doesn't know [=recognise] him.

He tells her, 'You are my wife, the name of my son is Mirza-Mahamad, the name of my other son is Ahm, the name of my daughter is Fatma. I,
verb in the feminine form, although ‘mišpāṭ’ is masculine. This may be because NENA šari'ota/šar'ota ‘trial, judgment’ is feminine.

69 See footnote 44 above.

70 Verb in the feminine form, although ‘mišpāṭ’ is masculine. This may be because NENA šari'ota/šar'ota ‘trial, judgment’ is feminine.
Meaning, the king who turned into a woman.

Sabar (2002: 127): ‘booklet (of religious or magic nature)’.

Meaning, the king who turned into a woman.

See footnote 54 above.
The feminine possessive pronoun -a refers to the king.

Feminine verbal form.

This verb, uttered by the king, is in the feminine form.

Feminine pronoun.

All forms in (82) referring to the king are feminine.

He says, ‘Your wife has not disappeared, your wife that 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.’

He tells him, ‘Let’s go.’ He went and led him. He [= the king] sees it is his [= 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 want them!’

She [= the husband] says, ‘Children of what? You are a man! How will I bring you the children?’

She [= the king] says, ‘This is my story [lit. my situation and story is thus]. I, my ring fell, I twisted it [around my finger] like that, it fell into the water, the Mother of the Water came, struck me with a rašoma [and] turned [lit. made] me into a girl. I married you, God gave me three sons from you.’

You made a seherâne, I came, my eye caught a glace of my ring, it is a ring of diamond, of, diamond.

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74 The feminine possessive pronoun -a refers to the king.
75 Feminine verbal form.
76 This verb, uttered by the king, is in the feminine form.
77 Feminine pronoun.
78 All forms in (82) referring to the king are feminine.
79 See footnote 49 above.
80 See footnote 54 above.
(84) kópli g-óban šaqlánnə, séla ʾāy yínmed máyaš mxélali xá rašōma qam-ʾozali xá-gar xót gōra.\[^{81}\]

(85) ʾána ḥakómə-wən, k-xášət ʾaxxa. e-náqla g-óban\[^{82}\] yalúnke dīdi, mád mórrē ʾiman, mórrē táli-ɪlu, hʾə-ʔəlōx hīlu.\[^{81}\]

(86) g-emōrra ḫam\[^{85}\] ʾá[h]at zóllax ḫam\[^{84}\] yalúnke yawə̀nnu-lax? ʾilə[ha]-la qабólla mónnax.\[^{83}\]

(87) sèłe-kəz ʾiman ḫam g-ēmer, ʾá[h]at ʾələx yalúnke, ʾəwəl yalúnke dīde hīlu, ʾənəni yalunkę dīde ʰəli, yalúnke dīdax tələx, sī brənī, ʾləhə-ha[w]e ʾəmmox, sī gər xa-xətə.\[^{83}\]

(88) há ʾəhə wēlə, ʾəwəl zòlə l-bēse, ʾə sèle l-bēse. ʾəzēhu g-ḥəbet xa-xət?\[^{84}\]

(89) BA: kūd ʾsmiʾələ xə[y]e...\[^{84}\]

(90) HM: ...xə[y]e, kud-lə ʾsmiʾələ... g-ḥəbet xa-xət?\[^{84}\]

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\[^{81}\] All forms in (84) referring to the king are feminine.

\[^{82}\] Feminine verbal form.

\[^{83}\] All forms in (86) and (87) referring to the king are feminine.

\[^{84}\] A common ending formula in NENA folktales.

I bent down in order [lit. I want] to take it, that Mother of the Water came, struck me with a rašōma [and] turned [lit. made] me again into a man.\[^{81}\]

I am a king, you see here. Now, I want\[^{82}\] my children, whatever the imam says [lit. said]. He says [lit. said] they are for me or they are for you [= he will decree either].

He tell her [= the king], ‘First [lit. also] you went away, and [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; = this is a violation of the divine justice].’

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.’\[^{83}\]

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]?

BA: [May] whoever has heard it live ...\[^{84}\]

HM: ... live, whoever has not heard it ... [also live].\[^{84}\] Would you like another one?
Concluding remarks

It is my hope that this thesis has shown the potential inherent in the folkloristic and literary study of Jewish NENA material. As stated in the Introduction, this thesis is but a first step. Many genres that are represented in the audio-recorded database but do not appear in this thesis, 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 thesis have dealt with three oral genres, whose analytical units progressed from the smallest to the larger. 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 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 of it 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

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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.
3 See Chapter 3, footnote 2. See also Sabar (2005).
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.⁴

It is my hope that we shall not let the uniquely fascinating and varied Neo-Aramaic material “moulder on our shelves”, and that we shall not treat it merely as raw material, inorganic deposit, for grammatical analysis.

Finally, a word about what I have gained from my fieldwork. I started recording Jewish NENA speakers eight years ago. So far I have recorded thirty-three women and men, spending numerous hours with them in their homes. 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.

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