



Cantor-Rabbis in Italy, Franco-Germany and England

GENERAL BACKGROUND

JEWISH SETTLEMENTS in Italy appeared as early as the Roman pagan era (2nd c. BC to AD 313). When Christianity became the *religio licita* of the Roman Empire the legal status of the Jews changed. They were not allowed to serve in the army, nor were they permitted to hold positions of honour in the civil service. Laws were passed forbidding the building of new synagogues or the repair of old ones. With the fall of the western Roman Empire in 476 and the troubles that followed, Jews emigrated to the relatively stable south of Italy, ruled by the Roman emperors in Byzantium. Although the Byzantine emperors Justinian and Heraclius enacted legislation designed to limit the practice of Judaism, the status of the Jews changed for the better in the ninth century under a more tolerant government. Now settled in the coastal cities Taranto, Trani, Oria, Venosa and Bari, Jewish merchants were active in the flourishing maritime trade with Greece, northern Africa and the eastern Mediterranean.

An insight into Jewish life in Byzantine Italy is provided by the family chronicle of Ahima'as ben Paltiel (b. 1017). Written in rhymed prose, the Ahima'as Scroll (*Megillat 'Ahima'as*) recounts the achievements of the author's ancestors from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, beginning with Amittai (c.800) of Oria, in Apulia. According to the family legend, Amittai's family was brought to southern Italy by Titus after the fall of Jerusalem. Ahima'as boasts that his forebears were 'diviners of mysteries' and 'makers of verse' and describes Amittai as 'a poet and scholar'. The Italians were linked to the Franco-Germans by the Kalonymides of Lucca, Moses, Kalonymus and Mešullam (10th–11th c.) who moved to Mainz in the tenth century.

Jewish settlements in Germany date from the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who in 321 and 331 issued decrees affecting the Jews of Cologne. In the ninth century, under Carolingian rule, Jews are listed among the merchants near the Imperial Court at Aachen. By the end of the eleventh

century Jewish settlements were situated throughout the valleys leading to the North Sea, and on the Danube. Jews were often invited by government authorities to improve the commercial life of the region. The Bishop of Speyer in 1084 offered such inducements as protection against 'the insolence of the populace' and the privilege of owning land. Settling in cities like Speyer, Regensburg, Cologne, Worms and Mainz, Jews would voluntarily segregate themselves in neighbourhoods in which they built the synagogue and established a cemetery.

When the Kalonymide family moved to Mainz in the tenth century, the city gained pre-eminence in Jewish scholarship. Mešullam, son of Moses b. Kalonymus, was the leading European rabbinic authority in his day and was consulted by Jewish communities in distant parts of Europe and North Africa. Several of his responsa (answers to enquiries on matters of Jewish law) were found in the Cairo Geniza. Moses and his son Mešullam were early contributors to what was to become the Franco-German (Aškenaz) prayer-book, and their hymns occupy a prominent place in the ritual. Adding to the lustre of Mainz was the eminent cantor-rabbi Simeon b. Isaac b. Abun (c.950) and Rabbenu Geršom b. Judah (950–1028), master of the academy at Mainz, which in his day became a magnet for Jewish students throughout Europe.¹ The Italian–Franco-German connection was transplanted in England by Jacob of Orleans and Yom Tov b. Isaac of Joigny, students of the French master Rabbenu Jacob Tam.

Although there is reason to suppose that Jews came to England with the Norman conquest in 1066, it is not until the mid-twelfth century that we hear of established Jewish communities in London, Lincoln, Winchester, York, Oxford, Bristol, Gloucester and Norwich. Under the rule of Henry I (1100–35) Jews were tolerated and, presumably, were granted a charter of liberties. With the death of Henry, Jews in Norwich (in 1144) and in Gloucester (in 1168) were charged with murdering Christians in order to obtain blood for the Passover. More such accusations followed in 1181, 1183 and 1192.

During the reign of Henry II, prosperous Jewish financiers like Aaron of Lincoln (c.1125–86) became an asset to the Crown. The benefit to the state from taxes raised from Jews almost equalled the amount gained from the general population. The accession to the throne of Richard I, 'Cœur de Lion', in 1189, brought a change for the worse in the lives of England's Jews. The religious excitement of the Crusades, in which Richard was a leading figure, led to outrages against Jewish settlements in Stamford and Norwich among others. When a mob threatened to massacre the York congregation in March 1190 the Jews, led by R. Yom Tov b. Isaac of Joigny, chose voluntary death rather than baptism.

The reign of Henry III initiated new restrictions against the Jews. By order of the Council of Oxford (in 1222), the ruling of the Fourth Lateran Council

¹ See Blumenkranz, 'Germany', pp. 163–4.

(1215) requiring Jews to wear a distinctive badge was enforced. Blood libel accusations continued, among which was the case of young St Hugh of Lincoln, said to have been murdered in 1255 for ritual purposes. Eighteen Jews were executed for this alleged offence. Heavy taxes impoverished Jews, rendering them of little value to the state. In light of this development, Edward I issued an edict on July 1290 which called for the expulsion of the Jews from England.

Jewish learning flourished in twelfth-century England. Two students of the French scholar R. Jacob Tam, R. Jacob of Orleans and R. Yom Tov b. Isaac of Joigny, settled in England and established academies of learning in York, though each met a martyr's death during the anti-Jewish riots brought on by Crusader zeal. Abraham Ibn Ezra visited London in 1158 and was warmly received. In the four weeks in June and July that he spent there, he completed his philosophical-ethical treatise, *Yesod Mora*.¹ The work was commissioned by his English patron, Joseph b. Jacob of Maudeville.

The Role of the Italian Synagogue Poet

Unlike the Hispanic courtier-poet beholden to his patron, Italian hymnists served the congregation in much the same way as their classical and late eastern predecessors. Between accounts of Aḥima'as's illustrious kindred, Amittai and his son, Šefatyah, there are amusing anecdotes about congregational life in ninth-century Apulia. Amittai's colleague Silano of Venosa, a gifted synagogue poet in his own right, is portrayed as a prankster with the presence of mind to bring comic relief during a crisis in the congregation.

It happened that a visiting dignitary from Ereš Yisra'el came to Venosa and was to preach at the Sabbath service. When word of his visit spread, men and women from the nearby villages came to Venosa and, for reasons unknown, began brawling in the streets. Seeing that the Sabbath was approaching and the tension had not subsided, Silano, who had access to a copy of the visitor's sermon, made some changes in the text without the author's knowledge. The Scripture reading for the Sabbath dealt among other things with the wife who has gone astray (Num. 5: 12 ff.), and presumably the preacher related the reading to the rabbinic commentary in *Num. Rabbah* 12. 16: "And they came, both men and women" [Exod. 35: 22]: they came on top of one another, men and women together in a promiscuous throng.' The preacher, caught up in the enthusiasm of his message, found himself reading Silano's emendation:

When men came in wagons,
The women emerged from their houses of ill repute
And beat upon them with pitchforks.

This sudden shift from a biblical setting to recent contemporary events elicited a roar of laughter from both Silano and his congregation and helped defuse a tense situation. The preacher, however, was not amused, and upon his return to Ereš Yisra'el he reported the incident to his superiors. As a result Silano was scorned for many years by the Holy Land elders, who relented at last in response to the intercession of Aḥima'as (the grandfather of the author of the famous *Megillah*). Several *seliḥot* by Silano, one of the earliest synagogue poets in Europe, have been preserved and are included in the Franco-German liturgy.²

Silano had access to the Sabbath sermon to be given by a visiting dignitary because it is likely that he was a synagogue employee. It is presumed that Silano's colleagues, Zevadiah, Šefatiah and his son Amittai, and David b. Huna, were also cantor-poets in the eastern tradition. In this role they were required to compose the expected embellishments of the obligatory prayers and, when the occasion required, to improvise. The Aḥima'as Scroll relates one such incident, when Amittai, son of Šefatiah, was urged to extemporize an elegy on the death of a wayfarer at the Oria inn. The poet, who also served as a judge in the region's religious court, had left the city to tend to his vineyard when he was summoned by the elders of Oria to eulogize the deceased. Without much time to prepare, Amittai hastened back to the city to pay homage to the dead man. He began his elegy with a simile between the plight of a wayfarer in a strange city and the agony of Israel exiled to a foreign land.³

Alas, O wayfarer, alas, O exile;
Those not familiar with you will be unruly;
Whoever knows you and has had dealings with you will lament and
bewail [your fate].

Among the mourners stood 'Moses the schoolteacher', a detractor of Amittai, who began to parody the elegy with a play on words:

Whoever knows you and has had dealings with you
Suffers from your judgments.

The reference to some of the harsh rulings of Amittai, the judge, was not lost upon the assembly, who undoubtedly relished the parody. The role of the cantor-poet as judge in a rabbinic court is continued in tenth-century Rhineland Jewry led by rabbis Simeon b. Isaac and Geršom b. Judah of Mainz.

² *Megillat 'Aḥima'as*, pp. 18–19; Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 14.

³ Amittai, *Širey*, p. 119; Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 18.

The Role of the Franco-German and English Synagogue Poets

Unlike the courtier-poets of Andalusia and the cantor-poets in Italy, the Franco-German rabbi-poets were the recognized religious authorities in their communities. Simeon b. Isaac, the earliest Rhine Valley poet born in Germany, was known by the title 'Our rabbi Simeon' (*Rabbana' Šim'on*). In this role he addressed a wide range of concerns to the Jewish public. In a revealing *gerovah* for Pentecost, *Šekhen ra'akha*, Simeon cautions his prospering congregation against greed and materialism:⁴

[Man] fashioned from clay how does he profit?
He lusts with a passion for what is not his!
The rich have possessions that are not theirs [to keep];
A purchase that is not yours, why make it?
Would that he were wise and understanding in knowledge and
reason,
He would rejoice and take courage from his lot in life.

The prominence of R. Simeon b. Isaac as spiritual leader of the Mainz community is attested by the earliest chronicle (*Memorbuch*) from this region. In one entry he is cited as 'our master, Rabbi Simeon the Great'. From the entry we learn that R. Simeon successfully intervened with state authorities for the purpose of easing anti-Jewish decrees. His efforts, together with the intercession of Pope John XVIII through his legate the Bishop of Piperno, helped put an end to the persecutions of Jews and led to their return, in 1013, to Mainz, where they were protected in their persons and property by the state.⁵ In his role as communal leader, R. Simeon was alert to any variants in Jewish religious practice that could lead to the kind of schism produced by the arguments of Karaites against their Rabbanite opponents in eastern Europe. In his *selihah*, *'Elohim, gamu 'alay zedim*, he denounces in harsh tones a group of dissenters—possibly Karaites or their sympathizers—within the Jewish community:⁶

Lord, wicked men have risen against us
Whose righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth;
Traitors, they profane the covenant of the fathers;
They anger us with their arrogance and scorn;
Haughty is their speech; their faces bold;
Their words are boastful; they slander and insult . . .
They intend to profane the holy Sabbath;

⁴ Habermann, *Piyyutey Rabbi Šim'on*, pp. 102–3. ⁵ Blumenkranz, 'Germany', p. 174.
⁶ Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, pp. 252 ff.; Habermann, *Piyyutey Rabbi Šim'on*, p. 162.

Their meeting place, a den of robbers;
They disobey the Torah, forsake their duty.

The rabbi-poet Geršom b. Judah (960–c.1028) of Mainz, known as Rabbenu Geršom, the 'Light of the Exile'—a title applied to him by R. Solomon b. Isaac (RaŠI)—was a younger contemporary of R. Simeon b. Isaac. Rabbenu Geršom became the most influential teacher at the academy of Mainz, attracting students like R. Isaac b. Judah and R. Isaac b. Eliezer Ha-Levi. The latter were to become the mentors of RaŠI, the leading commentator on the Bible and the Babylonian Talmud and the author of several liturgical hymns. Although best known for the enactments (*taqqanot*) ascribed to him as appellate judge, and for his commentary on the Talmud, R. Geršom also wrote for the synagogue service.

Joseph b. Samuel Ṭov Elem (Bonfils) was a contemporary of R. Simeon and Rabbenu Geršom. Born in Provence, Ṭov Elem lived in Narbonne, Limoges and Anjou. A respected rabbinic authority whose opinions were cited by RaŠI and the Tosafists (authors of additional comments on the Talmud), he is the author of hymns in classical and late eastern genres. The other Franco-German cantor-poets and their students who settled in England also functioned as rabbinic authorities and communal leaders in addition to their duties as cantor-poets.⁷

THE PRINCIPAL ITALIAN POETS

Amittai

Amittai b. Šefatiah, the most prolific of the Apulians, is the author of a *gedušta'*, several *yošerot*, including the innovative *'Asihah be-divrey nifle'otekha*, *selihot*, *zemiroth* and epithalamia. Some fifty of his hymns have been preserved in Mediterranean and Franco-German congregations. In addition to his standard liturgical work, Amittai experimented with a mock-serious dialogue in his *Wikuah ha-gefen we-ha-'ešim*. The poem, included in the synagogue ritual, features two protagonists, the vine and the tree. Both debate their relative merits in alternating strophes with closing scriptural verse:⁸

[THE VINE:]
My wine brings joy to men, a libation mixed with fire,
Giving breath to the weary wayfarer, moving the whispering lips;
See it strengthening the weak; Solomon made note of it:
'Give strong drink to one who is perishing and wine to those in
bitter distress.' [Prov. 31: 6]

⁷ Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 121–238.

⁸ Ibn Nagrela, *Ben Tehillim*, p. 318, No. 207.

[THE TREE:]

That which you highly praise gives licence to the dejected,
Leads good men to shameless acts; it makes the virtuous
quarrelsome,
Like Scorpio stinging the Pleiades; on the likes of it the parable
speaks:
'Wine is a mocker; strong drink a brawler.' [Prov. 20: 1]

Amittai's use of rabbinic sources is limited. The following, from his *zemer* (song), *Ševah rum šofer*, is an exception.⁹

Were all the moisture-laden heavens made of parchment
Written upon repeatedly, they would not suffice to encompass
The praises of the One who adorns the heavens and makes the eve
and morn.

Were all the earth's spaces waters, even pits and clefts,
And though o'erladen with ink, they could not write
The praises [etc.]

Completing the conceit, the poet asserts that if all men were scribes and all the trees were pens, they would not be equal to the task of praising the One, etc. The source of the metaphor is a statement by Raba b. Meḥasia (in *bŠab* 111a): 'If all the seas were ink, reeds pens, the heavens parchment, and all men writers, they could not suffice to write down the intricacies of government.' The conceit also appears in the *Nišmat kol hay*, a prayer from the period of the anonymous poets, and in the writings of the late eastern poet Sa'adyah Ga'on, the Hispanics Menaḥem Ibn Saruq and Moses Ibn Ezra, and Franco-Germans Simeon b. Isaac and Meir b. Isaac.¹⁰

Amittai's moving refrain-hymn (*pizmon*), *'Ezkerah 'elohim we-'ehemayah*, gained wide popularity and was included in Italian and Franco-German liturgies. Chanted during the afternoon service on the Day of Atonement, its eloquence combines yearnings for Israel's national restoration with full confidence in God:¹¹

When I remember, O Lord, I am filled with longing;
Every city built on its own site I see,
While the city of God is consigned to the realm of the dead;
Yet, withal, we are dedicated to God, our eyes are lifted up . . .

In addition to the ninth-century Apulians, Italian poets included Solomon Ha-Bavli of Rome (mid-10th c.); the Kalonymides of Lucca, Moses, Kalonymus, and Mešullam (10th–11th c.); Elia b. Šemayah of Bari (11th c.); members of

Rome's Anaw family, Yeḥiel b. Abraham (d. before 1070); Yerahmiel b. Solomon (12th c.); Zedekiah b. Benjamin and Yeḥiel b. Yekutiel (13th c.); thirteenth-century poets from Trani (in Apulia), Isaiah b. Mali and Isaiah b. Elijah; members of the deRossi family (*Ha-'Adummim*) in Rome, Solomon b. Moses (d. after 1284) and his son Emanuel; and Moses b. Isaac da Rieti (b. 1398), who composed decasyllabic Hebrew poetry in syllabic metre.¹²

Solomon Ha-Bavli

The mid-tenth-century poet Solomon Ha-Bavli, probably of Rome, heralds a neo-classical revival in synagogue hymnography. The term *bavli*, from the biblical 'Bavel', was commonly used by rabbinic sources (and in the New Testament) as a reference to Rome, and it is likely that Solomon lived there. Apart from the Qilliric two-root-consonant rhyme, and sporadic neologisms, allusions and Aramaisms, Ha-Bavli's rhetorics are not unlike those of the Apulians. Below is his argument with God in the *seliḥah*, *'Eyn ke-middat basar middotekha*.¹³

Since Your character is unlike that of mortal man,
Where is Your zeal and your eternal counsel?
The daughter [Israel] whom You chose for Your gracious home,
Lords have ruled her and she cannot join You.

In the penitential, *'Elleh be-šališemo*, based on Ps. 20: 8 ('Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord'), Ha-Bavli deals with the vexing problem of how to justify the subservient existence of Jews exiled to Christian and Muslim lands. Was not Israel God's favoured daughter? Why is she powerless while the rejected sons, Ishmael and Esau (Muslims and Christians) lead vast armies that rule the known world? Ha-Bavli insists that Israel's trust in God is a power greater than the military force of her enemies:¹⁴

These trust their commanders; others, in their cavalry;
Our faith is in Your Name and power to intervene;
Dweller in the heights, bring near our redemption!

These trust their legions; others take pride in their skills;
Our faith increases in the One mighty to save;
He aids the weak over the strong!

Ha-Bavli, the author of an *'avodah*, *'Adderet tilbošet*, and of several *yošerot* and *seliḥot*, gained wide acceptance in the Mediterranean world and his works

⁹ Ibn Nagrela, *Ben Tebillim*, p. 118.

¹⁰ Habermann, *Tyyunim*, p. 55.

¹¹ *Maḥazor Le-Yamim*, ii. 663–4.

¹² For a more complete list of Hebrew poets in Italy, see Schirmann, *Mivḥar Ha-Širah*, pp. 9–24.

¹³ Fleischer, *Piyyutey . . . Ha-Bavli*, p. 271.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 320–1.

were included in the Italian, Franco-German and Balkan prayer-books. His neo-classical leanings inspired several imitators, and his *yošer*, 'Or yeša' *me'uššarim*, was a model for Italians and Franco-Germans like Mešullam b. Kalonymus and Simeon b. Isaac and the Byzantine poet Benjamin b. Samuel.¹⁵

Elia b. Šemayah

Solomon Ha-Bavli's influence is evident in the hymnography of Elia b. Šemayah of Bari (in Apulia), the author of some thirty-eight penitential hymns. Bari in the eleventh century was a thriving seaport city from which Christian pilgrims in 1064–5 began their journey in record numbers to the Holy Land. The story of the four rabbis from Bari (recorded in Ibn Daud's *Sefer Ha-Qabbalah*, pp. 43–9, 63–7) who, after being taken prisoner at sea in 972, were redeemed by Jewish communities in Alexandria, Tunisia, Kairouan and Cordoba, suggests that Apulia was a flourishing seat of Jewish learning. This view was supported by the statement of Rabbenu Tam (12th c.): 'From Bari goes forth the Torah and the word of God from Otranto.'

Bar Šemayah's hymns are in some respects more imitative of Qillir than are Ha-Bavli's. Note the dense alliterative chain in his *seliḥah*, recited during the Ten Days of Repentance. Following is the opening strophe:¹⁶

*Iwṛwītikha, qiwṛwītikha me-'ereš merḥaqqim;
Be-qirbi šihartikha, qera 'tikha mi-ma'amaqqim . . .
Deraštikha biqqaštikha ba-reḥovot u-va-šewaqqim . . .*

You are my desire and my hope in distant lands;
With all my being I wait for You; I call You from the depths . . .
I seek You and ask for You on the streets and highways.

Images from pastoral life, drawn largely from biblical sources, figure prominently in the rhetoric of the Bari poet. In Bar Šemayah's *seliḥah*, *Ta'innu ke-šo'n 'ovedot*, Israel, the lamb, is left unguarded by her shepherds and is set upon by the wild boar (*ḥazir ya'ar*), a metaphor for Christians:¹⁷

We have wandered to the ends of the earth like sheep forsaken;
We prowl the streets, mountains and valleys;
Since shepherds have failed to defend us,
The wild boar boisterously sealed our fate.

Like Ha-Bavli, Bar Šemayah addresses the problem of Jewish weakness and subservience to Christian power. Seeking an answer to Israel's loss of

¹⁵ Fleischer, *Piyyuṭey . . . Ha-Bavli*, pp. 7–8, 378–9.

¹⁶ Elia b. Šemayah, *Piyyuṭey*, p. 36.

¹⁷ Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyuṭ*, ii. 23.

sovereignty and subsequent exile, he blames her leaders ('shepherds have failed to defend us').

The Kalonymides

In addition to Apulia and Rome, the city of Lucca in Lombardy was a centre of Jewish learning and liturgic creativity in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The earliest hymnist in this region, Moses ben Kalonymous (9th c.) is the author of 'Eymat nor'otekha, a *gerovah* chanted in the Franco-German ritual on the last day of Passover. Built on earlier classical models, the hymn exudes a determined confidence, seen in the poet's account of Pharaoh's fall and his suggestion that Israel's current enemy will meet a similar fate. Following is the *qiqlar* section of the hymn:¹⁸

What good will sin do to the sinner?
Can the might of the arrogant prevail?
Will He not repay each one for his deeds?
Can mere flesh rebel
Against the Maker of all by His word?

The second member of the illustrious Kalonymide family, Kalonymous b. Moses, known as Kalonymous the Elder, lived in the mid-tenth century. Although he is cited by his contemporary, Rabbenu Geršom b. Judah of Mainz, as a 'great scholar and a composer of hymns for all the festivals', only some fourteen of his *rahiṭim* for the Day of Atonement have been preserved in the Franco-German ritual and in prayer-books from Prague and Salonica. All of his *rahiṭim*, based on the verse from Jer. 10: 7, 'Who would not fear You, O King of the nations?', are in the form of a litany with consistent rhyming couplets. In the familiar *rahiṭ* pattern, each hymn is introduced by the above verse; the couplets are preceded by one of the units in the verse and that unit becomes the prime focus of the poem. Following is a portion of his *rahiṭ*, *Ha-goyim 'efes wa-tohu*, in which he draws a contrast between Israel and the nations:¹⁹

The nations are accounted before You as nothing and emptiness;
Your true and tried [Israel] are apart, not counted among them . . .
The nations consider holy the child born from lechery;
Your exalted [Israel] abhor the passion of the lewd woman.

The second couplet is an anti-Christian polemic based on a legend traceable to the pagan Celsus that Mary had been divorced by her husband, who suspected her of adultery, and that Jesus was born as a result of her affair with a Roman soldier (see Origen, *Contra Celsum*, i. 28, 32). The poet is equally blunt in a following couplet:

¹⁸ *Mahazor Le-Regalim*, p. 521.

¹⁹ *Mahazor Le-Tamim*, ii. 186–7.

The nations deify a corrupt symbolic image;
Your people give testimony to Your sovereignty, O God of gods.

The 'symbolic image' is presumably a reference to the crucifix. The characterization of Jesus as 'corrupt' can be traced to Rabbi Abbahu (c.300) of Caesarea, who is reported to have said (in *jTa'an* 2. 1): 'If a man says to you, I am god, he lies; [if he says], I am the son of man, he shall regret it; [if he says], I shall rise to heaven, he says it, but he shall not fulfil it.' Kalonymous b. Moses' *rahit* on the 'nations' was generally omitted by editors of the prayer-book for fear of offending the Christian ruling power.

The son of Kalonymous the Elder, Mešullam (10th–11th c.), was probably born in Lucca, later moved to Rome and died in Mainz. He is the author of two 'avodot in classical style, 'Ammiš koah and 'Asoheah nifle'otekha. Both are preserved in the Franco-German prayer-book.²⁰ As emissary of the congregation he reveals his inner fears in the eloquent *rešut*, in rhyming quatrains, 'Eymekha nasa'ti ħin be-'orkhi, for the morning service of the Day of Atonement. As in his 'avodot, there are hardly any allusions to rabbinic sources; the clarity and directness of the hymn is its most appealing quality. Below is the opening strophe:²¹

I prepare my prayer burdened by the fear of You;
Your people have sent me; I bend my knee;
You took me from the womb; You light up my darkness;
Teach me clear speech, lead me in Your truth.

Another hymnist from the Kalonymide family was Šabbetai b. Moses, who held the title *ro'š qallah*, a high-ranking office in the academy at Rome. Presumably he was the father of R. Kalonymous b. Šabbetai 'iš romi ('of Rome'), cited as a rabbinic authority by the Franco-Germans and highly esteemed by RaŠI.²²

Rome's Anaw Family

Another of Italy's prominent families were the Anaws (or Anaus). Known in Italian as the Piatelli or delli Mansi, they could trace their descent to the nobles of Jerusalem brought to Rome by Titus. Nathan b. Yeħiel (born c.1037) was the author of the lexicographical study *Sefer Ha-'Arukh*, and his son, the synagogue poet Yeħiel b. Abraham (d. before 1070), wrote some twenty-three hymns, including a *qerovah* for the Fast of Esther, *yošerot* for Passover and Pentecost, and *seliħot* and *qinot*. For reasons unknown, most of his works have survived in manuscript form only, and a few have been preserved in Italian prayer-books. Of particular interest is his penitential on the

²⁰ *Mahazor Le-Yamim*, ii. 435 ff., 447 ff.

²¹ Ibid. 112.

²² See Zimmels, 'Scholars and Scholarship', p. 182.

eclipse of the sun, 'Attah galita sodekha. The poet does not elaborate on the eclipse as an uncommon occurrence in the natural order; he is more concerned with describing the reaction of Rome's Christian population to the startling event. The poet's phenomenological approach to a rare natural event is unprecedented in Jewish hymnography.

The hymn opens with an affirmation that God controls the lights in the heavens and that Jews should not fear an eclipse of the sun. Moreover, the poet warns his congregation not to follow the idolatrous practices of the Christians who, in dread of changes in the natural order, turn to their statues of Jesus and Mary for help:²³

Abhor the idols of the gentiles; do not envy them;
Reject the habits of the nations; be joined in the fear of Me . . .
Madmen and fools day and night act as if smitten
And terrorized when the sun and moon change;
Fear and tremble and be in awe of My Name
And do not dread the signs of the skies . . .
Your words have helped him who stumbles to remember the
covenant;
Would that he put his faith in You and be blessed hereafter
Rather than hope in a man like him, splayed,
A statue he carved from the forest wood.

The 'man like him, splayed' is a reference to Jesus on the cross. In a revealing strophe the poet notes the panic of the frightened Christians seeking divine aid in the wake of the eclipse. He describes a religious procession in the streets of Rome in which statues, presumably of Jesus and Mary, were borne on the shoulders of the devout:

The idolaters kneel and bow down even as they stumble;
Destroy the platforms of the idols and bring dread to their palaces;
They have gathered to place the statue on their shoulders;
They carry it, since it cannot walk.

Other hymnists in the Anaw family of Rome included Benjamin b. Abraham, the physician (13th c.), and his son Zedekiah (d. after 1280), also a physician, and their contemporaries Abraham b. Joab, Moses b. Abraham and Yeħiel b. Yequiel who wrote in Spanish quantitative metres. Following is Zedekiah b. Benjamin's entreaty (*teħinnah*) titled 'On the time of troubles'. In it he prays for God's help from the accusations of the Franciscan monks:²⁴

They mock me; with contempt they remove
My mantle of many colours that I wore.

²³ Schirmann, *Le-Toledot Ha-Širah*, ii. 39–43.

²⁴ Schirmann, *Mivħar Ha-Širah*, p. 100.

They are like worshippers of idols, these priests of paganism;
 They act abominably, making false charges with lying deceit;
 Like the contentious priest [Hos. 4: 4] they demand tithes and gifts;
 They exalt themselves over me and devise strategies against me.

The phrase 'they remove / My mantle of many colours [Gen. 37: 3] that I wore' charges that the Franciscans are now claiming to be the 'true Israel' (*verus Israel*).

Anan b. Marino

From Siponto, another Jewish centre of learning in the tenth and eleventh centuries, came the synagogue poet Anan b. Marino, from whom only one hymn for the close of the Sabbath has been preserved. Many of Siponto's scholars were students of Ha'yyay Ga'on at the Pumpeditha academy in Babylon. Anan's *piyyut* is in the form of a personal appeal to Elijah, urging him to hasten the redemption of Israel. According to rabbinic tradition, Elijah was expected to announce the coming of the Messiah at the close of the Sabbath, but not on the eve of the Sabbath or festival, so as not to disturb Jewish families in their preparations for the holy days (*bPes* 13a and *b'Eruv* 43b). The hymn opens with a rhyming quatrain followed by strophes of tercets. The last two cola of the quatrain are repeated after each strophe:²⁵

O prophet Elijah, how long will you tarry?
 The eyes of the dear lad [Israel] hang upon you and await your coming . . .
 There is a time to be silent and a time to speak; how long will you hold your tongue . . .
 Be brave, prepare and arm yourself, go to the son of Jesse.
 Tell him that the flogged can only whisper their complaints to God;
 Perhaps he will hasten his advent and save me from my seducers . . .
 The wise and their followers who are privy to hidden truth
 Know this from tradition:
 The end will not come by the word of man!

The 'hidden truth' is that the Messiah will come only at the urging of Elijah the Prophet.

Yerahmiel b. Solomon and Yehiel b. Yekutiel

The visit of Abraham Ibn Ezra to Italy from 1140 to 1147 or 1148 was instructive for the cantor-poets in the region, who now dispensed with the Qilliric rhyme of two root-consonants and favoured the prosody of two metrically

²⁵ Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 24–6.

balanced hemistichs after Hispanic models. Early in the twelfth century, Yerahmiel b. Solomon was the first Italian hymnist to compose in quantitative metre. In the following century the practice became commonplace, and skilled poets like Yehiel b. Yekutiel (d. c.1280), a member of Italy's venerable Anaw family, succeeded in arranging an ethical treatise of 175 cola in a consistent *ha-merubbeh* metre: –v/– –v/– –v. The treatise, *Ma'alot Ha-Middot*, is modelled after an earlier work by Ha'yyay Ga'on titled *Musar Haskel*, and is similar in theme to the *Qa'arat Kesef* of the thirteenth-century Provençal poet Yehosef Ha-'Ezovi. Yekutiel's opus was probably chanted in the synagogue during the month of 'Elul and the Ten Days of Repentance. It is written in the first person singular, with the author confessing his frailties and lamenting his fate. His diatribe against the vagaries of personified Time is reminiscent of similar conceits in Judeo-Arabic poetry. Armed with his trust in God and relying on 'wisdom' and 'reason', he can overcome Time's treachery and help himself and others:²⁶

Behold a man buffeted by Time, filled with anguish, overcome with
 shame and scorn . . .
 Men who saw me were amazed and stupefied . . .
 They counselled courage [saying]: . . .
 Although Time has deceived you like a cheat,
 Let your wisdom's spear strike it down . . .
 Array your reason to stand against it
 And take refuge under cover of the Dweller on High . . .
 I now resolve to follow in the way of the wise and learned;
 I shall instruct myself first . . . then teach the many others.

Following his resolve, the poet harks back to an earlier time and regrets his failure as a father to his children. This personal tragedy is his reason for writing this poetic treatise, which, he hopes, will provide ethical guidance and instruction to parents:

My sons are gone, no more;
 They are strangers to me; they denounce me!
 They have left me and I am alone . . .
 They refused my counsel and went their way . . .
 I mourned for them . . . and was ashamed . . .
 Reasonable thoughts then turned me around;
 They said, 'Have mercy on the foolish;
 Remove the stumbling-block before them.'
 This is the reason for this treatise in which I gathered
 Sayings true and honest from Scripture and the sages . . .
 To teach children respect and guard them from Time's sorrow.

²⁶ Ibid. 33–9.

Moses b. Isaac da Rieti

Born in 1398 in Rieti, R. Moses lived for a time in Rome, where he was the local rabbi and served as private physician to Pope Pius II. He died in Rome after 1460. His *Miqdaš me'at* (Little Sanctuary) composed when he was 24, is a syllabic-metre Hebrew adaptation in *terza rima* of Dante's *Divina Commedia*. Whether Moses da Rieti was the first Jewish hymnist in Italy to employ syllabic metre is questionable in light of the discovery of syllabic-metre Hebrew poetry in the Cairo Geniza. Da Rieti's *Miqdaš me'at* was to influence the Corfiote poet Moses Ha-Kohen, author of a *terza rima* hymn on the festival of Purim. Selected cantos from *Miqdaš me'at* were chanted in the Italian synagogue service. Following is a selection from Part II, Canto I:²⁷

The holy chamber [*heykhal qodeš*] was located in the middle,
The heads of the creatures and the concealed light
Adorned its walls, extending to the edges.

I saw it (the light) curling in the heights;
There was no limit to the troops verging towards it,
Ascending and descending the ladder's steps . . .

Then I beheld the image of the chamber
And its court inhabited by a growing throng;
Master and student sat at their places.

They discoursed on the Torah armed with talmudic
Weapons in their hands, nor were they without
The legends [*'aggadah*] that gladden the heart.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN ITALY

Rhyme and Metre

The rhyme of the Apulians was a modified Qilliric pattern with the rhymeme in the final syllable only. Terminal rhyme, replacing Qillir's two-root-letter rhyme, was already in vogue during the late classical era. One of its practitioners in the latter period was Phinehas Ha-Kohen, who probably found it too difficult to emulate Qillir's demanding practice. Solomon Ha-Bavli reintroduced the 'pure' two-root-letter Qilliric rhyme, and apparently influenced Elia b. Šema'yah to follow his example. Later Italian poets discontinued this practice.

The early Italian hymns featured a word metre in which each colon comprised a fixed number of units. This practice, which Ha-Bavli continued, was

²⁷ Schirmann, *Mivhar Ha-Širah*, pp. 195–7.

a change from earlier eastern prosody of stress metre, wherein each colon presented an equal number of heavily stressed units. The latter included semantically significant words and excluded conjunctions, pronouns and adverbs joined by hyphens. In the Italian 'pure' stress all words were counted, regardless of their significance.²⁸

The Italians also experimented with variations in syllabic metre. Following is an example of this by an anonymous Italian hymnist lamenting the anti-Jewish decrees of the Byzantine emperor Basileus (867–86). The hymn, in rhyming couplets, comprises lines of eight syllables:²⁹

'Anas 'oti melekh 'edom
Bi-šma' yisra'el paš li dom . . .

Kenesiyot nataš raša'
Lo' hitpallel ba-hem noša'.

Edom's king has violated me
After my 'Hear O Israel' he struck me dumb . . .

The wicked man destroyed the synagogues;
None survives to pray in them.

Another sample of syllabic metre from Apulia is seen in a *zemer*, *Hiddaleh dallat 'ummi*, by Amittai b. Šefatyah, preserved in the Cairo Geniza. It, too, is constructed in rhyming couplets and eight-syllable metre.³⁰ The syllabic metre of the Apulians anticipated the later Hispanic metrics. However, it is unlikely that there was a direct influence, given that the Spaniards, unlike the Italians, made a distinction between the *šewa' mobile* and the *hataf*, with the latter serving as a short syllable and the other morphemes as long syllables. These distinctions were based on models from long and short syllables in Arabic poetry, even as the several metric configurations utilized by Ibn Nagrela and his contemporaries were based on the work of al-Khalil Ibn Aḥmad who codified the rules of Arabic poetry. However, the discovery in the Cairo Geniza of poetry in syllabic metre composed in ninth-century Italy necessitates a revision of earlier opinions that this practice was first introduced in Hebrew poetry by the fifteenth-century Italian hymnist Moses da Rieti.³¹

The language of the Apulians is based primarily on Scripture and is relatively free of neologisms and allusions. Occasionally, Amittai would refer to rabbinic sources. Ha-Bavli, too, modelled his hymns mostly on biblical sources, which he complemented periodically with Aramaic usages. His neologisms and allusions to rabbinic sources are evident, but are not pervasive.

²⁸ Fleischer, *Piyyutey . . . Ha-Bavli*, pp. 71–94.

²⁹ *Megillat 'Ahima'as*, p. 106; Fleischer, 'Hebrew Liturgical Poetry', p. 419.

³⁰ Amittai, *Širey*, p. 129.

³¹ Pagis, *Hidduš U-Masoret*, pp. 294–9; Fleischer, 'Hebrew Liturgical Poetry', p. 420.

THE PRINCIPAL ITALIAN GENRES

‘Avodah

One of the earliest Italian *‘avodot* is *‘Adderet tilbošet*, by Solomon Ha-Bavli. Characteristic of Ha-Bavli’s neo-classicism, his *‘avodah* is devoid of rhyme and its strophes are defined by the letters of the alphabet. In this practice he follows the model of Yose b. Yose’s *‘avodot*, *‘Azkir gevurot ‘eloha*, and *‘Attah konanta ‘olam be-rov hesed*. Like Yose’s hymns in this genre, Ha-Bavli’s divide the work into two parts, beginning with a narrative introduction relating Israel’s sacred history until the time of Moses and Aaron and closing with an account of the Aaronic High Priest serving in the Temple on the Day of Atonement.³² Later treatments of the *‘avodah* by Mešullam b. Kalonymus include *‘Amiš koah* and *‘Asoheah nifle’otekha*, both preserved in the Franco-German prayer-book. The former is, like Yose’s and Ha-Bavli’s, without rhyme, and the strophes are delineated by the letters of the alphabet. Mešullam’s *‘Asoheah nifle’otekha* is built in rhyming quatrains which define the strophes. His model for this practice may have been the classical poet Eleazar Qillir, who composed *‘avodot* in rhyme. Mešullam also divides his *‘avodot* in the style of his predecessors.³³

Qedušta’

As far as is known, only one *qedušta’* from the early Italian period has been preserved. Amittai b. Šefatiah’s epithalamium *qedušta’*, *‘Attah hu’ we-lo’ yittammu šenotekha*, is constructed in the classical manner, albeit with some minor variations. Instead of the standard set of quatrains in the *mešullaš* section, Amittai chooses tercets. He dispenses with the *qiqlar* and strays from tradition by signing his name after the alphabetic acrostic in the *rabiš*, *‘Amittai haqazq’*. He also deviates from the classical form of the genre by signing his name in three places (in the *mešullaš*, the *rabiš*, and in poem No. 5). His citations from Scripture are not related to the weekly lesson because the hymn has a specific purpose (celebrating a wedding) that is unrelated to the Sabbath Torah reading.³⁴

Yošer

The early Italian hymnists were less inclined to follow classical models in their *yošer* than in their *qedušta’* compositions. Part of the reason is that, unlike the *qedušta’*, the several components of the *yošer* had not been standardized in

³² Fleischer, *Piyyutey . . . Ha-Bavli*, pp. 38–43.

³³ *Mahazor Le-Yamim*, ii. 435 ff., 447 ff.

³⁴ Amittai, *Širey*, pp. 9–31.

Amittai’s time. It is also likely that the Italians, like some *ge’onim* in Iraq, were reluctant to add embellishments to the traditional benedictions of the *šema’*. The Italian hymnists who chose to compose *yošerot* had several options given the available variations in this genre.

Contrary to the choices of the Hispanics, who preferred the lyrical sections in the *yošer*, such as the *me’orah* (‘Praised are You, Lord, creator of lights’), the *‘ahavah* (‘Praised are You, Lord, who loves His people Israel’), and the *mi kamokha* (‘Who is like You, Lord?’), the Italian hymnists favoured the longer *guf ha-yošer* and *zulat* because they allowed greater opportunities for impressing the congregations who employed them. The *guf ha-yošer*, *zulat* and *‘ofan* are the only three components in the early Apulian *yošer* complex. The *‘ofan* (based on Isa. 6: 3 and Ezek. 3: 12) presumably appealed to the Italians because it afforded an opportunity to speculate on the divine ‘chariot throne’.

The customary construction of the *guf ha-yošer*, beginning with Qillir, was in sets of three tercets interrupted by a choral response ending with the unit *qadoš*. The *yošer* for Šabbat Hatanim by Zevadiah, *‘Afa’er šem melekh be-mošav maqhalotaw*, follows this earlier model. Amittai, in his *guf ha-yošer* for the Sabbath, *‘Asiḥah be-divrey nifle’otekha*, deviates from this pattern by adding a *qadoš* refrain after each strophe. Presumably, his purpose in this effort was to allow for wider congregational participation in the synagogue service. Unlike the late eastern synagogues, the Apulians did not make use of a professional choir and were content to allow only the precentor to chant the prayers. In lieu of a choir, the Italians enlisted the aid of the congregation by adding response refrains to the standard poetic embellishments of the benedictions of the *šema’* and *‘amidah*. Following is a sample from the five-strophe *‘ofan*, *‘Er’ellim u-mal’akkim*, by Amittai with a internal, rondeau-type refrain chanted by the congregation at the end of each strophe.³⁵

Angels and messengers
Sanctify and bless
The King of kings.

They prepare and make ready
Their wings, a shelter;
Each day they enthrone
The King of kings.

The extraordinary efforts of the Apulians to involve the congregation in hymnic responses is seen in two *zemarim* (songs) by Amittai preserved in the Cairo Geniza. The non-Hebrew refrains repeated by the congregation in the *zemarim* are *Diqla diqla laḥ* and *Hiddaleh let dallah*. It is likely that the

³⁵ David, *Širey Zevadiah*, pp. 53–60; Amittai, *Širey*, pp. 25–31, 106; Fleischer, *Ha-Yošerot*, pp. 643–4.

language of the refrains is a contemporary Apulian vernacular with which the congregation was thoroughly familiar.³⁶

Solomon Ha-Bavli has left us three *yošerot*. His *'Omeš dar hažaḳim*, for the Sabbath, is built in a manner similar to the style of Amittai's *'Asihah be-divrey nifle'otekha*, with choral refrains attached to each strophe. In his *'El nissa'*, Ha-Bavli changes course and adds a mere two *qadoš* couplet refrains to the twenty-four-strophe hymn. There is a terse quality to this hymn, built in sets of cola comprising only two units. Ha-Bavli's third hymn in this genre is the magisterial *'Or yeša' me'uššarim*, for Passover. This much-imitated poem is built in rhyming quatrains, with closing scriptural verses spanning the complete book of Canticles. The influence of Qillir is much in evidence. Like his mentor, Ha-Bavli adds a transitional set of strophes, the *silluq*, which connects the *guf ha-yošer* to the *'ofan*. He also revives the Qilliric practice of the two root-consonant rhyme. However, unlike Qillir (and Amittai) the independent-minded Ha-Bavli builds his *'Or yeša'* in quatrains (not tercets) and omits the *qadoš* refrains. Presumably the choral component in this hymn was in the congregation responding with the scriptural citation from Canticles at the end of each strophe.³⁷

'Ofan

Echoes from Jewish mysticism are heard in Amittai's *'Attah 'elohey ha-ruhot* and David b. Huna's *'ofan* for Passover, *Gan na'ul 'ussefu 'er'ellim*. Decoding the latter hymn requires a knowledge of the *heykhalot* literature to which the poet's congregation was undoubtedly privy. In the eight-strophe hymn in quatrains, God is Israel's sought-after beloved. The poet's language and imagery are drawn largely from Canticles:³⁸

The *'er'ellim* [angels] were assembled in the sealed garden;
There they play with Your shoots [Cant. 4: 12],
Nard and crocus spread out in the valleys;
Garden springs pulsating in their flow.

Awaken, north wind, blow upon my garden;
I entered the bower and drank my wine;
My sleep flows on and my God protects me;
I have put away my flute, the voice of my song . . .

He who lives in the heights, His speech is most sweet;
Where has He gone; I seek after Him in the streets;
He has come down to raise me from the depths;
I will praise Him in the thunderous choir.

³⁶ Amittai, *Širey*, pp. 128–9; Fleischer, 'Hebrew Liturgical Poetry', p. 424.

³⁷ Fleischer, *Piyyutey . . . Ha-Bavli*, pp. 191–223.

³⁸ Schirrmann, *Mivhar Ha-Sirah*, pp. 17–18; Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 19–20.

Zulat

Innovations in other components of the *yošer* are credited to Amittai in his five surviving *zulatot*. In eastern congregations the theme of the *zulat* centred on the weekly reading from the Prophets. Amittai appears to be unaware of this practice, or he is unwilling to follow it. The themes of his *zulatot* are diverse. One of the more colourful in this genre is his *'Az bi-hyot kallah*, for Šabbat Ḥatanim, when the bridegroom is called to the reading of the Torah. The epithalamium-style *zulat* is cast in the form of a dialogue and celebrates God's deliverance of the maiden Israel held captive by Putiel, Egypt's guardian angel. Based mostly on Ezek. 16, the hymn opens with God sending His messenger Moses to Putiel seeking the release of Israel, who has now come of age to be betrothed. When, after a heated exchange with Moses, the angel refuses, God intervenes, punishing Egypt and rescuing Israel, whom He takes for His bride:³⁹

When the bride dwelt in the strange land
And matured, reaching the age of nubility,
He appointed an agent to set her free,
Since her girlhood days were over.
The messenger came to speak to Egypt's angel:
'Make not light of this matter!
Her bridegroom made you guardian to give her the best;
How can you permit yourself to enslave her, embitter her life?'

Putiel replied, 'Deceiving her now
Will only spoil her; you cannot help her;
Go your way and leave her be;
Delude her not, let her go back to work.'

THE PRINCIPAL FRANCO-GERMAN POETS

Simeon b. Isaac

The first hymnist known to have been born in Germany was Simeon b. Isaac of Mainz, author of *yošerot*, *qerovot* and *selihot*. Like Solomon Ha-Bavli and the classical poets, he favoured a carefully crafted word metre and at times loaded his hymns with neologisms, ellipses and allusions in Qilliric fashion. Like his predecessors, he embellished his hymns with anadiplosis—word repetition linking two strophes—and on occasion, as in his *selihah*, *'Ewili ha-mat'eh margiz*,⁴⁰ he employed internal rhyme. He is eclectic in his rhyming

³⁹ Amittai, *Širey*, p. 86

⁴⁰ Habermann, *Piyyutey Rabbi Šim'on*, p. 148.

tastes: his *selihah*, 'Akh bekha 'el,⁴¹ is in a modified free verse similar to pre-classical hymnody.

R. Simeon's *qedušta'ot* generally follow classical patterns, with occasional additions of *rešuyyot* and scriptural verses. The verses are set at the beginning, middle or end of his hymns. In the *gufha-yoser*, *silluq*, 'ofan, *zulat* and *ge'ullah* of his 'Ahuvekha 'ahevukha, for Passover, he skilfully embeds into his strophes whole chapters from Canticles. This practice he probably learned from Solomon Ha-Bavli's *yoser*, 'Or yeša' me'uššarim. The latter hymn was the likely model for R. Simeon's *yoser*. The Rhineland poet often expands on the verse with comments from rabbinic literature, as in the following from the *silluq*.⁴²

'Your two breasts' [Cant. 4: 5]
Are adorned with royalty and priesthood.

The referent is *Cant. Rabbah* 4: 5, ' "Your two breasts": these are Moses (royalty) and Aaron (priesthood).' A revealing aspect of the Rhineland poet is given in his *rešut*, 'Atiti le-ḥannenkha, to a *qerovah* for the New Year. Here the rabbi-poet confesses the fear that he may be unworthy to lead his congregation in prayer:⁴³

I come beseeching with a heart torn and agitated;
I seek Your mercy like a beggar at the door;
Take pity on us; judge us not harshly
Lord, open my lips . . .

Although Carolingian Jewish merchants generally prospered, restrictive decrees against them were not uncommon. They were accused of collusion with Muslims in the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem by the Caliph al-Ḥākim, and of co-operating with Judaizing movements within the Church. In 1012 Emperor Henry II expelled the Jews from Mainz, which ultimately led to anti-Jewish excesses and forced baptisms. It is likely that Simeon's *yoser*, 'El 'el ḥay 'arannen, was written against this background:⁴⁴

Exile overcomes me, poverty and emptiness,
When I see baseness exalted among men;
Oppressed by lying enemies seeking to excise Your name from
my lips;
They forbid me entrance to Your mansion.
Do not keep silent!

The 'mansion' is a reference to the reward of the faithful in the world to come. The refrain 'Do not keep silent' was repeated by the congregation after

⁴¹ Habermann, *Piyyutey Rabbi Šim'on*, p. 158.

⁴² Ibid. 27–33.

⁴³ Ibid. 107.

⁴⁴ Blumenkranz, 'Germany', pp. 172–4; Habermann, *Piyyutey Rabbi Šim'on*, pp. 14, 40–1.

each strophe. It is likely that the later choral responses in the Franco-German synagogue were based on Simeon b. Isaac's model. Combined with this lament is the hope for national restoration in his *yoser*, *Melekh 'amon ma'amorkha*, for the New Year:⁴⁵

May the *šofar* in France and Spain proclaim the holy time
When the Eternal will renew the scattered in all directions,
And they will bow down to the Lord at the holy mountain [Zion].

On happier occasions the poet participated in his congregation's wedding celebrations. He is probably the first of the central European hymnists to compose epithalamia in the form of *rešuyyot* (permissions) preceding the marriage ceremony. His serious tone in this genre is in contrast to the Hispanic epithalamia, with their broad references to Canticles and the joys of love. Simeon focuses instead on God's mighty act as matchmaker, in his *Me-rešut šokhen 'ad*.⁴⁶

He prepares for each man a suitable mate according to his merit . . .
It was as difficult to mate them as was dividing the sea for Israel.

The latter is based on *Lev. Rabbah* 8. 1.

Rabbenu Geršom b. Judah

A younger contemporary of Simeon b. Isaac, Rabbenu Geršom was personally affected by the anti-Jewish agitation in 1012, when his son was forcibly converted to Christianity and died shortly thereafter. Echoes of this tragedy are heard in his *selihah*, 'Attah mi-qedem 'eloheynu, for Ḥanukkah:⁴⁷

In his folly, the Greek and his evil minions
Sought to make Your people forget Your sweet Name;
He planned to banish the children at play [Israel];
He fell and was crushed and died afflicted with illness . . .

He is more direct in his reference to contemporary events in the hymn, 'Eleykha nigra'.⁴⁸

They have decreed that we no longer call upon the Lord's name,
Our redeemer, called the God of hosts;
My Beloved, all radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten
thousands;
[They would have us] despise His word and expunge Him.

⁴⁵ Fleischer, *Širat Ha-Qodeš*, p. 458; Habermann, *Piyyutey Rabbi Šim'on*, pp. 47–9.

⁴⁶ Habermann, *Piyyutey Rabbi Šim'on*, p. 184.

⁴⁷ Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 181–2.

⁴⁸ Habermann, *Sefer*, p. 16.

R. Geršom seeks solace in memories of the Jerusalem Temple; and in a moving elegy, *'Avadnu me-'eres ʔovah*, he mourns its destruction and the loss of the national home, even as he takes comfort in the Torah and its study:⁴⁹

The holy city and its precincts are a prey and reproach;
All its precious wares are sunk and sequestered,
And only this Torah has remained.

R. Geršom was also the author of some ten *seliḥot*, all patterned after earlier classical and eastern models.⁵⁰

Joseph ʔov Elem

Joseph b. Samuel ʔov Elem (Bonfils) was a contemporary of Simeon b. Isaac and Rabbenu Geršom. Born in Provence, ʔov Elem lived in Narbonne, Limoges and Anjou. A respected rabbinic authority whose opinions were cited by RašI and the Tosafists, he is the author of hymns in classical and late eastern genres. Of special interest is his first-time use of the pseudo-*muwashshah* for the French synagogue. Presumably, he was influenced by the Hispanics in this rhyming practice, since there is no evidence that it was employed by the early Italians. This rhyming pattern was later to be used by Meir b. Isaac of Worms who also experimented with quantitative metres. Following is part of ʔov Elem's *seliḥah* for the Fast of Gedaliah, *'Ayahed ʔuri*. The hymn's opening verse, 'Hear O Israel' (Deut. 6: 4), is repeated in a refrain:⁵¹

The entangled thorns [i.e. the nations] who worship the idol [lit.
Molokh]
May their mouths be stopped and they be cast like refuse in the
streets;
He is glorified among His holy ones who circle [the heavens];
See, a king will reign in righteousness.

ʔov Elem revived the long-neglected practice of composing *ma'arivim*, the six-strophe festival evening hymn, mentioned above. There is no evidence that the early hymnists in Italy wrote *ma'arivim*: it is presumed that precursors there were discouraged from this practice by a laity eager to join their families for the festive evening meal. ʔov Elem also experimented with the newer constructions of the *guf ha-yoşer*, pioneered by Amittai and Solomon Ha-Bavli. Instead of the traditional set of three tercet strophes followed by a tercet refrain ending with the word *qadoş*, the French poet and his colleagues enlarged both strophes and refrains in ratios of seven to four or five to two. In ʔov Elem's *guf ha-yoşer*, *'Arannen ḥasdekha la-boqer*, for the second Sabbath

⁴⁹ Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 181.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 180.

⁵¹ *Seder Ha-Seliḥot . . . Liṭa'*, pp. 162–3.

after Passover, the ratio of strophes to refrains is seven to four. In the hymn the poet deftly combines the themes of both holy days and closes with a celebration of married life and Sabbath rest:⁵²

With His hands He made him [Adam] that he may prosper,
Gave him dominion over all in east and west;
He said, 'Man cannot be at peace alone!
From his rib He removed a fruitful vine . . .
A day of rest He gave to the scattered folk [Israel] . . .
The Lord is robed and girded with strength

Menaḥem b. Makhir

A nephew of Rabbenu Geršom, R. Menaḥem b. Makhir of Regensburg, rabbinic authority and hymnist, witnessed the anti-Jewish excesses on the eve of the First Crusade in 1096 and the years following, and composed an elegy, *'Evel 'a'orer*, lamenting the havoc wrought among Rhineland Jewry. The elegy is both a supplication for divine aid and a historical record, complete with dates of the tragic events. The literary figures in the hymn are taken largely from Lamentations and adapted for contemporary use. The elegy is built in rhymed couplets with repeated alternating refrains modelled after classical forms:⁵³

They humiliated my saints, profaned my sanctuary, degraded my
holy places, alas!
In the year 4856 [1096], the eleventh year of the cycle 256, woe is
me! . . .
The worshippers of Molokh waged war against God's forces and
ruled the region, alas!
The unruly and unkempt [tyrannized] the pure Torah, woe is
me! . . .
Clothed in vengeance, arise, stand and resist;
In the heights above, devise judgment for the fallen,
And restore the *šekhinah* to its place.

The term 'worshippers of Molokh' is a commonplace reference to Christians by Franco-German and Byzantine hymnists.⁵⁴

In contrast to the sombre tone and angry lament in his elegy, R. Menaḥem celebrates, in his *baqqaşah*, *Mah 'ahavti me'on beytekha*, the festive water-drawing ceremony in the Jerusalem Temple on the first day of Tabernacles. The hymn was part of the Franco-German ritual, where it was chanted on

⁵² Bcr, *Seder*, p. 729.

⁵³ Habermann, *Sefer*, p. 63.

⁵⁴ Zunz, *Die synagogale Poesie*, p. 467.

that feast-day. The hymns' superscription in the 1331 Nuremberg Prayer-Book reads, 'A "Flute" [*halil*] for the Water-Drawing Celebration.' Its theme is based on rabbinic accounts (in *mSukk* 5, 1–2) of the celebration in Temple times, enhanced by an orchestra of flutes. The *baqqašah* is built in six strophes of rhyming sestets with the name of the poet in the acrostic. The following is the second strophe:⁵⁵

Flute-playing [was offered] at the water-drawing, a precious
practice from earliest times,
On five days or six during the feast celebrated by the purchased
congregation [Israel];
At the conclusion of the first festival day they descended to the
constructed court of women,
Where they made a great enactment as decreed by custom;
The city rejoiced and was pleased as a peaceful river stretched wide;
Upon [the city] ascended the families, the tribes of God.

The hymn closes with a plea to renew the days of old, when pilgrims travelled thrice-yearly to Jerusalem and appeared before the Lord. Like Ṭov Elem, Menahem b. Makhir experimented with pseudo-*muwashshah* rhyming schemes, and his '*ofan*, *Mal'akhey ševa'ot be-elšon*, is constructed in quatrains with internal rhyme and a scriptural verse serving as the closing 'belt'.⁵⁶

Meir b. Isaac

The innovative R. Meir b. Isaac, *šeliḥ šibbur* (precentor) of Worms, was a contemporary of Menahem b. Makhir. R. Meir died in 1096, shortly before the Crusader action against Rhineland Jews, in which his wife and his son, Isaac, were murdered. He wrote *gerovot*, *šiv'atot* (for Šabbat Zakhor and Šabbat Parah), *ma'arivim* and *seliḥot* in both Hebrew and Aramaic. To the *ma'arivim* he added a seventh strophe called *bikur* or *tosefet*.⁵⁷ R. Meir was the first central European poet to compose in Judeo-Arabic quantitative metre. He is best remembered for his '*agedot* (Binding of Isaac (Gen. 22) hymns), which he pioneered in European synagogue hymnography, and his poems in Aramaic, like the '*Aqdamut millin*, for the first day of Pentecost. His '*agedah* hymns struck a chord in the hearts of European Jews during the fearful days of 1096 and thereafter. Isaac's resolve to be sacrificed on Mount Moriah was seen a victory for the Jewish faithful who died sanctifying God's name during the Crusader outrages in the Rhineland. Following is the closing strophe of R. Meir's '*agedah*, '*El har ha-mor giv'at horayah*, for the Day of Atonement in which God assures Abraham of His promise:⁵⁸

I swear by My might,
That by this, your deed
I will hear the cry of your sons in pain . . .

'*Aqdamut millin*, initially written to introduce the Aramaic translation of the Torah lesson, continued to be chanted in Franco-German synagogues long after the practice of translating into Aramaic was discontinued. Its fifty-two couplets in monorhyme constitute a complete alphabetic acrostic, the author's name and a closing prayer, 'May he [the author] persevere in the Torah and in good deeds, amen; be strong and of good courage.'

Ephraim b. Isaac

The respected halakhic authority and hymnist of exceptional talent, Ephraim b. Isaac of Regensburg, lived through the anti-Jewish decrees of 1137 and the atrocities of the Second Crusade in 1146–7. He studied in France under Rabbenu Jacob Tam and before settling in Regensburg—where he served on its appellate court (*beyt din*)—he lived in Speyer and Worms. Author of some thirty-two liturgical hymns, including *yošerot* and *seliḥot*, R. Ephraim is predominantly sombre in his themes and reflects the anger, fears and hopes of his congregation. In a moving *yošer* for the Sabbath of Passover, '*Eloha bekha 'ehaveq*, R. Ephraim trumpets Israel's resolve to remain faithful to its God, despite the attempts by Christians at conversion.⁵⁹

He bows to one hung on a rack,
And counsels me to deny You,
And bend the knee to a block of wood;

I will not run to feed after him;
I know that he and his will be put to shame;
Harm awaits him who stands surety [for a stranger]!

'Hung on a rack' and a 'block of wood' are references to Jesus on the cross. The last line is based on Prov. 11: 15 and is interpreted by the poet as a warning against trusting 'strange' gods. In a revealing line from his '*ahavah* for Pentecost, '*Otekhā kol ha-yom qiwwinu*, he struggles to remain hopeful of Israel's ultimate redemption.⁶⁰

I am compelled to be exchanged [for another];
Moreover, forlorn is my trust
In the End of Days [redemption];
How long O Lord?

⁵⁵ Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyuṭ*, ii. 182–4.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 466.

⁵⁶ Fleischer, *Širat Ha-Qodeš*, p. 438.

⁵⁸ *Mahazor Le-Yamim*, ii. 558–9.

⁵⁹ Habermann, 'Piyyuṭey R. Ephraim . . . mi-Regensburg', p. 130.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 137.

Despite his doubts, in his *selihah*, 'Elohim 'adonay heyli, he affirms the conventional theodicy by blaming himself for his fate.⁶¹

My affliction is in proportion to my sins;
Sackcloth and ashes are my blanket,
Therefore I am deeply moved.

R. Ephraim's mastery of the poetic craft is seen in his ten hymns composed in quantitative metre, after the manner of the Hispanics. In his *baqqašah*, 'Ašer 'eyn lo temurah,⁶² he experiments with an uncommon metre, – –v/ – –v/– –v/– –v, a variation of the familiar *ba-'arokh*: – –v/– –v/– –v/– –v/– –v (both are to be read from right to left). In this usage R. Ephraim may have been influenced by Samuel Ibn Nagrela, who employs a similar metre in his liturgical hymn 'Ašer natah šehaqim.⁶³ True to Hispanic practice, R. Ephraim's *baqqašah* is constructed in two metrically identical halves, after the *qašādah* model. His example in composing hymns with quantitative metrics was followed by his contemporaries R. Barukh b. Samuel of Mainz and R. Jacob b. Meir Tam.

R. Ephraim's treatment of the *zulat* varies from eastern models in its change of focus. Like other hymns in this genre for the Sabbath by Rhineland poets, R. Ephraim's deals with Israel's travail in exile. Following is the refrain in his *zulat*, 'Eli, 'eli lammah, for the fifth Sabbath after Passover.⁶⁴

My God, my God
Why are my sighs hidden from You?
Behold, I am a dove afflicted.

The influence of Golden Age Hispanic poets is clearly evident in the poetry of R. Ephraim. Following the model of the Regensburg hymnist Solomon Ibn Gabirol, he plays on words—here 'length' (*le-'orekh*) and 'your light' (*le-'orekh*)—to recontextualize verses from Scripture for emphasis. Following is an example from his *zulat*, 'Elohim lo' 'eda' zulatekha.⁶⁵

How long will I be oppressed?
They have put stumbling-blocks in my path
The nations who walk its length [*le-'orekh*].

The last line is from Isa. 60: 3, 'Nations shall come to your light' (*le-'orekh*). Likewise in the *zulat*, 'Eli, 'eli lammah, he prays:

Cast away the exile that it may not be found;
Bring light to the eyes of the formidable [Israel],
For they are overcast [*ki 'afilot hemmah*].

⁶¹ Habermann, 'Piyutey R. Ephraim . . . mi-Regensburg', p. 147.

⁶³ Ibn Nagrela, *Ben Tebillim*, p. 322.

⁶⁴ Habermann, 'Piyutey R. Ephraim . . . mi-Regensburg', p. 135.

⁶² Ibid. 159.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 132.

The latter is based on Exod. 9: 32, 'But the wheat and the emmer were not hurt [from the hail], for they ripen late [*ki 'afilot hemmah*].'

Ephraim b. Jacob

Born in 1133, Ephraim b. Jacob of Bonn, eminent halakhist and author of *novellae* on the Talmud, kept a record in his *Memorbuch* of the atrocities committed during the Second Crusade in 1147. He is the author of some thirty Hebrew and Aramaic synagogue hymns in several genres. In addition to his moving 'agedah, 'Et 'avotay 'ani mazkir, he wrote an 'ahavah, 'Ayum-mati 'ahavtikh, in the form of a dialogue in alternating strophes between God and Israel.⁶⁶

[GOD:]

My beloved, My mercies have contained My anger, now reversed;
The time to be gracious to you has come;
Why do you say, 'My hope is lost!?' . . .
If I forget you I forsake My right arm;
Is God's hand unable to save the dearest?
Is He not permitted to treat the son of the loved one [Jacob] as
the first born? [cf. Deut. 21: 16]

[ISRAEL:]

My fair Beloved, I know that You can gladden me;
In my hand is the marriage document [*ketubah*],
A reliable witness of the purchase inscribed,
But my hopes continue to be frustrated;
Every day I am always in distress;
I have been killed for Your sake, slaughtered and made desolate,
But my love is as strong as death.

The form of the hymn is styled after the dialogue 'ahavah, *Segullati melukhab 'azartikh*, attributed to Mešullam b. Moše (11th c.) of the Kalonymides. The dialogue as rhetorical device, observed earlier in the work of Amittai, was often employed by the Franco-Germans.

In the 'ofan to his *yošer*, 'El 'ehad yahid, R. Ephraim of Bonn permits himself to speculate on the divine chariot throne. This is in line with the practice of the Franco-German rabbi-poets, who were less reticent in this respect than their classical and late eastern predecessors. In the 'ofan, R. Ephraim paraphrases the legend of the angel Sandalfon, who approaches the chariot throne bearing a crown from the collective prayers of Israel. He elicits a promise from the crown that it will ascend and rest upon God's head.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Habermann, 'Piyutey R. Ephraim . . . mi-Bonn', pp. 234–6.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 241–2.

Sandalfon consults with Wisdom on fashioning knots for the crown,
 Exacting a promise that it will ascend on the head of the Fearful and Awesome;
 Fair is the crown made from the prayers of the pure,
 Carried from the womb, praising the Lord, a people yet unborn.
 [Ps. 102: 19]

The poet's source is a rabbinic comment (in *bHag* 14b) on Ezek. 1: 15, "Now as I beheld the living creatures [*ḥayyot*], I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures," [it means] a certain angel who stands on the earth and his head reaches unto the living creatures . . . his name is Sandalfon . . . he stands behind the chariot [throne] and weaves crowns for his Maker. But is it so? Is it not written [in Ezek. 3: 12]: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place"? accordingly, no one knows His place! He [Sandalfon] pronounces the (Divine) Name over the crown, and it goes and rests on His head.'

Barukh b. Samuel

The mid-twelfth-century cantor-rabbi Barukh b. Samuel of Mainz is the author of hymns in the *yošer* series, *zemiroṭ*, *rešuyyot* and *seliḥot*. A prominent halakhist and author of responsa in Jewish law, R. Barukh studied under R. Ephraim b. Isaac of Regensburg and served as circuit judge (*dayyan*) for Mainz and surrounding villages. Many of his hymns reflect the hardships of Rhineland Jewry during his lifetime. With the certainty that God is faithful, R. Barukh reminded the Lord of His obligation to His son Israel, in the *zulat*, 'Aḥarey nimkar':⁶⁸

Is it not the duty of a father to redeem his son;
 Why have You forgotten him? Should You not take him back?
 Yours is the obligation to redeem him again;
 You are bound to protect him and put him on his feet.

Elaborating on the personalized rhetoric, in a *seliḥah* for the Day of Atonement, 'Ani hu' *ba-šo'el*, the poet lectures the Father and urges Him to admit that His son is in need:

Redeem Your captive son and bless his substance;
 When will You acknowledge him and say, 'I know, my son, I know;
 I have seen you suffer, destroyed by pain;
 I have heard your plaint, I will redeem and rescue.'⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Habermann, 'Piyyuṭey R. Barukh', p. 83.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 132.

Combining complaint with polemic in his *seliḥah*, *Beynot 'arayot*, R. Barukh presses God for an answer to his insistent question:

How long will they boast before me,
 Saying, 'This dead man [Jesus] is Your son!'⁷⁰

There is a hint of provocation in the poet's tone. His question ('How long will they boast') is a rhetorical charge: 'How can You tolerate this perverse claim that the crucified Jesus is Your son?'

R. Barukh is also the author of an eloquent meditation, ostensibly for his personal use. Modelling his style on the meditations of Sa'adyah Ga'on, the Mainz poet celebrates the virtues of personified Wisdom. The hymn, *Be-roš 'ilan mešoreret*, in the form of a metrically balanced *qaṣīdah*, is based on sources in rabbinic literature (*bBB* 26b–27a). In 1894 it was published as an appendix to the Babylonian Talmud.⁷¹

'On the treetop I sing, I am Wisdom of good fortune.'
 Beneath lie the shepherds on a floor of pearl and onyx . . .
 Within its [Wisdom's] shade live many with honour and beauty . . .
 'Accept me O Lord like an [altar] offering, like a caring gift . . .
 I, blessed Wisdom, sing perched on the treetop.'

FRANCO-GERMAN LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Rabbinic Usage

The language of R. Meir b. Isaac and his contemporaries was derived mostly from Scripture and a sizeable amount of rabbinic usages in Hebrew and Aramaic. For example, in his 'ofan, *Mal'akhey ševa'ot*, the term *bi-sqirah* is taken from the rabbinic account (in *bRH* 18a) of the New Year when all creatures pass before God, who views them with 'a simple glance' (*bi-sqirah 'aḥat*).

Rhyme

In addition to the standard eastern rhyming patterns, the pseudo-*muwashshah*, pioneered in France by Joseph Ṭov Elem, gained popularity in Rhine valley synagogues. Following is the last strophe in the 'ofan for the intermediate Sabbath of Tabernacles, *Mal'akhey ševa'ot*, by Meir b. Isaac.⁷²

'Al kes 'orah / watiq yošev be-tif'arah
 Le-'olamo mabbit bi-sqirah / mi kamoni yiqra'
 'Al ḥayyot ha-qodeš mitga'eh
 'Al ha-merkavah hadur we-na'eh.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 147.

⁷¹ Ibid. 156–7.

⁷² *Maḥazor Le-Sukkot*, pp. 261–2.

Upon a throne of light / the Lord sits in glory;
 He looks down upon his world with a glance; 'Who is My equal?'
 He proclaims;
 He is exalted above the holy creatures
 Surrounding the chariot [throne] magnificent and sublime.

Metre

Meir b. Isaac was the first central European poet to experiment with quantitative metre in the Hispanic style. His *seliḥah*, *Tefillah tiqqah*, for the New Year evening service is built in rhymed hemistichs and its metre is a variation of the Judeo-Arabic *ha-marnin*, --/--v (*pe'ulim*, *nif'al*). This was to be his only halting attempt at quantitative metrics.⁷³ Other efforts at composing in the new metrics by R. Ephraim of Regensburg and Rabbenu Jacob b. Meir Tam (c.1100–71) were likewise unimpressive. When Abraham Ibn Ezra arrived in France in 1147 he came to know and admire Rabbenu Tam, a prominent rabbinic scholar and master of the academy at Champagne. The letters the two men exchanged reveal Ibn Ezra's disdainful reaction to Rabbenu Tam's attempt at metric poetry in Hispanic fashion:

Who let the Frenchman into poesy's mansion?
 [Who permitted] the stranger to trample upon the holy place?
 Were Jacob's verses as sweet as manna,
 I am the sun, and I grow hot and they melt. [Exod. 16: 21]⁷⁴

Ibn Ezra's countryman Judah Al-Ḥarizi (12th c.) is even less charitable in his assessment of Franco-German hymnography, in his *Tahkemoni* (No. 18, p. 190):

I have seen learned men among the French. They shine as the stars in heaven. Their hearts are as wide in wisdom as the broad sea. They leave nothing unstudied. However, I have paid attention to the poetry they write, and what I heard is not authentic [*lo' ken yedabberu*]; their themes are base, not worth the listening; their hymns are stiff as iron and loaded with sins like the scapegoat [Lev. 16: 8]. Their rhymes are full of errors. Seeking to innovate in poesy, their work is incomprehensible without a commentary. Some of them do write commentaries on their verse and these too require commentaries. Suffice it to say that their poems are strange and their metrics fragmented.

By the élite Hispanic standards of Ibn Ezra and Al-Ḥarizi, the Franco-Germans were as fault-ridden in the poetic art as was Eleazar Qillir, their model and mentor. In his response to Ibn Ezra's strictures, Rabbenu Tam admits as much. The allusion to Exod. 16: 21 was not lost on Rabbenu Tam, the younger man, who graciously conceded that he had met his master:

⁷³ *Seder Ha-Seliḥot . . . Polin*, pp. 115–19.

⁷⁴ Dinur, *Yisra'el Ba-Golah*, II. iii. 83.

I am a servant employed by Abraham [Ibn Ezra];
 I bend the knee and bow before him!

Impressed by this allusion to Gen. 23: 17–18, but not to be outdone, Ibn Ezra replied with mock reproach:

Is it proper for the gallant shepherd of God's flock
 To abase himself in writing before one despised?
 Heaven forbid that the Lord's angel
 Should bend the knee and bow before a vagrant.⁷⁵

Polemics

A distinctive feature in the language of the Franco-Germans consists of the neologisms designating the ruling Christian power. Simeon b. Isaac and Ṭov Elem refer to them as 'oppressors' (*'oyen*); Simeon, Ṭov Elem and RaṢI call them 'liars' (*ṭofeley šeqer*); and R. Geršom labels them 'the wicked' (*beney 'awlah*). Ṭov Elem charges that they are idol-worshippers (*kore'ey le-molekh*) and his countryman Reuben b. Isaac (c.1300) states they they serve foolishness (*'ovedey hevel*). No less sanguine are the characterizations of the founder of Christianity. Judah b. Kalonymous of Mainz (c. 1200) calls him 'a detestable offspring' (*nešer nig'al*) and his contemporary, David b. Mešullam of Speyer, refers to him as the 'child born in the heat of fornication' (*yilḥum ha-zimmah*). The crucifix is labelled by Judah b. Kalonymous as 'the hanging corpse' (*peger taluy*) while to Ṭov Elem and R. Geršom it is seen as 'the contemptible image' (*'ešev nivzeh*).⁷⁶

Undoubtedly, these visceral epithets reflect the agonies endured by Rhineland Jewry during the First and Second Crusades. They may also reflect a response to a Christian practice that Jews found particularly offensive. Adding insult to injury, Christian monks often forced Franco-German Jews in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to hear missionizing sermons. Barukh b. Samuel in his *seliḥah*, 'Eleykha 'adonay nafši 'essa', hints at this practice.⁷⁷

The children are ensnared by baptismal waters,
 While the mother is sent to a burning place;
 Without protection, her lips whisper; she pricks up her ears to the
 scandalous tone.

The mother who was not 'ensnared' was consigned to the stake ('burning place') while her children continued to be exposed to the preaching of the monks hoping to convert them with 'baptismal waters'. A similar complaint is heard by the poet Zedekiah delli Mansi of Rome (Zedekiah b. Benjamin the

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Zunz, *Die synagogale Poesie*, pp. 461, 467–8.

⁷⁷ Habermann, 'Piyuṭey R. Barukh', p. 101; Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, pp. 21–3.

Physician) (d. after 1280), who in a pseudo-*muwashshah* *tehinnaḥ* laments the missionizing efforts of the Franciscan order:⁷⁸

All manner of heretics appeared; ravaging foxes;
Barefoot, girded with sackcloth, they made claims;
With their staves they pushed their sweets upon the congregation;
They jeered at me; they build roads [for my ruin]. [Job 30: 12]

The widespread missionizing efforts of the thirteenth-century monks are also seen in the hymn *Ya'ir levavi* by the Provençal poet Isaac of Mont Ventoux (*Ha-Seniri*). He protests against their proselytizing practices, which appear ludicrous to him:

He places his faith and hope in a statue;
From wood that will not rot, he makes an image;
That which he cut from the forest,
He proclaims, 'God is your name!'⁷⁹

The degree of success achieved by the monks' campaign among the Jews in central Europe has not as yet been determined.⁸⁰ It is known, however, that European Christians became converts to Judaism during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They included R. Abraham the Proselyte (mentioned in *Tosafot* on *bQid* 71a); the poet R. Yehosifyah the Proselyte; and R. Ovadiah the Proselyte of Normandy, author of the 'Scroll of Ovadiah' (*Megillat 'Ovadiah*).

In the year 1264 a young convert to Judaism named Abraham, from Augsburg, was emboldened to enter a disputation with the monks in a nearby city. In the course of the heated debate, young Abraham took a crucifix from the monks and broke it in half. This led to a mob attack upon the Jewish community, following which Abraham was brought back to Augsburg in chains and was subsequently burned at the stake. In observance of his martyrdom, a *selihah*, *Mah rav tuvekha*, was composed by R. Mordecai b. Hillel, author of the 'Mordecai Commentary' on the Talmud, and another, *'Akhhalunu hamamunu*, by R. Moses b. Jacob. In the latter work the poet pays tribute to the young martyr:

'Who created courageous souls?
It is God who does no wrong.'
This is what the humble Abraham said to them . . .
Impetuous, he would have none of their soothing words,
And he said, 'I will not join you like the rabble;
I am inscribed in the Books and Records,
And I see the lights of Israel aglow.'⁸¹

Philosophical Themes

Unlike the late eastern and Hispanic poets, central Europeans were not inclined to inject contemporary philosophy and science into their hymnography. While Sa'adyah Ga'on and Ibn Gabirol and their contemporaries could learn much from Arabic culture, which was at its summit during their lifetimes, there was little in central European civilization in the High Middle Ages that interested Franco-German Jews. Some few attempts to embrace religious philosophy and mysticism are preserved in hymns on God's unity (*širey ha-yihud*) and hymns on God's glory (*širey ha-kavod*). These emerge in the thirteenth century from the circle of German pietists (*hasidey 'aškenaz*). Following is part of an anonymous central European *šir ha-yihud*, reminiscent of the meditations on religious philosophy by Sa'adyah Ga'on, who appears to be its primary source:⁸²

You confuse the wise . . . Your might weakens the bravest
heart . . .
Their thoughts are not Yours . . . our Lord is exalted beyond
limit;
Hidden beyond hiding, borne aloft beyond bearing, concealed
utterly . . .
Quality and quantity do not pertain to Him; nothing is His
equal . . .

In stressing God's transcendence, the Franco-German poet invokes some of the ten categories ('quality . . . quantity') in the writings of Aristotle, which were probably available to him through the writings of Sa'adyah Ga'on. Speculations in mysticism centred around the figures of R. Judah the Ḥasid of Worms (d. 1217), whose writings are preserved in the 'Book of the Devout' (*Sefer ḥasidim*), and his disciple, R. Eleazar b. Judah, of Worms, author of the halakhic code, the *Rogeah*, and of kabbalistic tracts. It is likely that the hymn 'Anna', *be-khoah*, ascribed to the second-century rabbi Neḥunyah b. Ha-Qanah, originated in the circle of mystics identified with the Ḥasidim in medieval Germany (*hasidey 'aškenaz*). The seven-cola unrhymed hymn is in a six-unit word metre. Its initial letters make up the forty-two-letter Name of God. Below are the opening cola:⁸³

[O Lord,] we ask that with the might of Your powerful right hand,
You set free the captive;
O awesome God, accept the prayers of Your people, lift us up,
make us pure.

⁷⁸ Schirrmann, *Mivḥar Ha-Širah*, pp. 100–2.

⁷⁹ Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 129.

⁸⁰ Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, pp. 159–81.

⁸¹ Habermann, *Sefer*, p. 189.

⁸² Sa'adyah Ga'on, *Siddur*, pp. 47–58; Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 204–5.

⁸³ Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, pp. 94–5; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 82–3.

Folk Legends

Cantor-rabbis in central Europe would often insert folk stories into the synagogue liturgy. Being themselves the rabbinic authorities in the region they had no hesitation about this practice, unlike their classical and late eastern predecessors, whom the rabbis chided for adding legends and mysteries to the standard liturgy. Among the popular folk legends in the Franco-German ritual is the story of Judith, recited during Hanukkah. The earliest treatment of this story in the ritual is by the eleventh-century Joseph b. Solomon of Carcassonne, in Provence. Cited as an authority by RaŠI (in his commentary on Ezek. 21: 18), R. Joseph is the author of the *yošer* 'Odekha ki 'anafta,⁸⁴ for the first Sabbath of Hanukkah.

The hymn begins with praise of God, who took revenge against Antiochus after he issued decrees against the Jews. Among the tyrant's rulings was the obligation of Jewish brides to spend their wedding night with the provincial governor. The hymn continues with an account of the nuptials of Mattathias' daughter and her bold plan in rallying her brothers, under the leadership of Judah the Maccabee, to resist the harsh decree. Following is R. Joseph's dramatic description of the daughter's action on her wedding night:

As they gathered by the canopy to drink and rejoice,
The bride appeared without any clothes;
She poured a cup for the assembled revellers
Who hid their faces, now protected from gazing;
Fierce was the brother's anger against her:
'The noble guests are here invited to celebrate,
How could you stand before them like a naked whore!
The fair lady gave them answer:
'How dare you lecture me with your hypocrisy?
When you allow the unclean Gentile to have his pleasure with my
body!'

This bold action causes her brothers to muster forces and launch a rebellion against the ruling power. When word of this reaches Holofernes (commander of the enemy armies), he gathers his forces and lays siege to the city of Jerusalem. The hymn concludes with an account of Judith's courage in slaying Holofernes and liberating her people. In this *yošer*, R. Joseph combined three originally independent legends preserved in the book of Judith in the Apocrypha and in three rabbinic sources, the *Megillat Ta'anit* (ch. 6), the *Ma'aseh Yehudit* (otherwise known as *Hibbur Yafeh Me-Ha-Yešu'ah*), and *Midraš Le-Hanukkah*.⁸⁵

In order to understand the hymnist's method of combining the legends it

is first necessary to separate them. Originally the tale of Judith and Holofernes in the Apocrypha was independent of the other two. The story grew in stages until it reached the form in R. Joseph's *yošer*. In the earliest rabbinic stage the Judith legend retained most of the personal and place-names of the account in the Apocrypha. In the second stage of the legend there is no mention of place-names and only four characters from the Apocrypha are referred to by name. However, the identities of the four have been altered: Holofernes is 'King of Greece', instead of commander of Nebuchadnezzar's armies, as in the earlier account, and Judith is not 'the daughter of Be'eri', as in the first-stage account, nor is she 'the daughter of Merari', as in the Apocrypha. Only Uzziah ben Micah and Carmi are remembered as 'officers in the Israelite army', whereas in the Apocrypha they are the town magistrates and their names are given as Uzziah ben Micah of the tribe of Simeon and Carmi ben Malkiel. Moreover, the setting of the story is Jerusalem and not Bethulia, as in the earlier account, and the struggle is now between the Jews and the Greeks (not the Babylonians) during the Maccabean period.

There are two tracks in the third stage of the Judith legend. In the first, as exemplified in the *Ma'aseh Yehudit*, the names of the characters have been completely forgotten. There is no mention of Holofernes, or of Greeks, or even of Judith. We learn only that 'the king of the Gentiles came to Jerusalem with forty thousand soldiers, and the Israelites were discomfited before them', and that a 'young woman of the daughters of the prophets . . . took her life in her hands' and saved her people by cutting off the king's head, after getting him drunk. This helped to rally the warriors of Israel and defeat their enemy.

In the second track of this third stage, the Judith legend is firmly connected with the Maccabean uprising and with the evil decrees of 'the king of the Greeks'. One such decree ordered that whoever took a wife was to bring her first to the provincial governor so that he might have intercourse with her before she could return to her husband. This decree and the legend surrounding it is first mentioned in *Megillat Ta'anit* (ch. 6). In this account, the daughter of Mattathias (son of Yoḥanan, the High Priest), on the eve of her marriage, is saved from being disgraced by the provincial governor through the courageous efforts of Mattathias and his sons, who prevail over the Greeks.

This legend in *Megillat Ta'anit* is embellished in the later *midrašim*. There the daughter of the High Priest, now named Hannah, appears naked at her wedding feast. When her brothers are outraged by her behaviour, she taunts them for their hypocrisy, and for their passive compliance with a ruler's decree that allows the provincial governor to take sexual liberties with Jewish brides. Thoroughly shamed, the brothers resolve to resist their oppressors and rally to do battle against the enemy. Subsequently, the story—with some variations—of the High Priest's daughter and the resistance of her brothers is

⁸⁴ Ber, *Seder*, pp. 629–33.

⁸⁵ 'Ošar *Midrašim*, i. 204–9.

connected with the Maccabean rebellion against Antiochus IV, Epiphanes. Still later, these two are combined with the Judith legend when, in retaliation against the Maccabean resistance, a siege is laid to the city of Jerusalem by Holofernes, acting, presumably, on the orders of Antiochus. The merging of all three stories is not achieved in the extant *midrašim*, but in the *yošer* 'Odekha ki 'anafta by R. Joseph b. Solomon, cited above.

Characteristically, the French hymnist, like Qillir in the classical period, chose to enlarge upon the legends from rabbinic sources for the edification and entertainment of his congregation. This three-stage development of the Judith legend is supported by a *yošer*, 'Odekha ki 'anitani, and a *zulat*, 'Eyn moš'i'a we-go'el, by R. Menaḥem b. Makhir of Regensburg⁸⁶ and a *seliḥah*, Mi kamokha 'addir, by the Cretan physician and poet Malkiel b. Meir Aškenazi (13th–14th c.).⁸⁷ In his *yošer*, R. Menaḥem tells of the decrees issued by the Greek authorities, including the privileges of provincial governors with Jewish brides, and continues with the story of the wedding night of Hannah, the sister of Judah, and the subsequent rebellion of Judah and his followers. In R. Menaḥem's more subdued treatment of Hannah's behaviour before her wedding-night guests, the bride, daughter of the High Priest, is concerned that she will be condemned by law to burning (Lev. 21: 9) if she is violated by a Gentile:

The bride, her hair dishevelled, entered the assembly;
In lieu of wine, she poured a cup of tears for the evil to come;
Her coloured coat she tore to shreds;
Her brother Judah spoke, 'Hannah, why do you cry?
And why despair like a drunkard and complain?'
She replied, 'My lord, I am by nature not depressed!
But if the villian violates me on my wedding night,
I will have profaned my father and be condemned to burning!'

Notably missing in the *yošer* is the Judith legend. However, in his *zulat* R. Menaḥem relates the story of Judith and her heroic act in slaying the commander of the Greek armies, although he does not mention the *ius primae noctis* issued by the authorities, or the story of the daughter of the High Priest and the provincial governor, and the resistance of Judah and his followers. Of equal significance in the *zulat* is the reference to Judith as 'the daughter of Merari', which is similar to the pedigree of Judith given in the Apocrypha and in the earliest midrashic version. This would suggest that at the time of R. Menaḥem these several legends were not as yet combined, although the story of Judith was already connected with the observance of Ḥanukkah.

The *seliḥah* of Malkiel b. Meir is the latest treatment of the Judith legend. As in the *yošer* of R. Joseph b. Solomon, the Judith story is merged with that

of Judah and his sister and their resistance to the government decree affecting Jewish brides. It is also connected with the story of the Maccabean uprising against Antiochus. However, Judith is not mentioned by name, but only as 'the honourable Judaeen lady' (*ha-yehudit ha-kevudah*). Her name has been forgotten!⁸⁸

Reflecting the lighter side of Franco-German Jewry is the ballad-like *havdalah*, 'Is ḥasid hayah, by the thirteenth-century Franco-German R. Jesse b. Mordecai. The hymn is based on the folk legend concerning Elijah the prophet, expected to come at the close of the Sabbath to announce the arrival of the Messiah. In this account, the prophet sells himself as a slave in order to help a poor man in distress:⁸⁹

There lived a saintly man without food or provisions,
Unemployed and confined to his home for lack of clothes;
Surrounded by five children and a worthy wife
Who said, 'No longer can you sit idle;
Are we not without food to eat, naked and destitute;
You have acquired Torah learning by your efforts, but what shall
we eat?
Give a care, beloved, and go to market,
The gracious and merciful One on high will, perhaps, have
compassion on us . . .'
'You have given wise counsel, but I cannot agree
To be embarrassed and venture out without a stitch of clothes . . .'
She hastened to borrow from neighbours clothes suitable for wear;
Now dressed, he put his trust in a loving God
While his children prayed, 'Let him not return a poor man,
disgraced!'
He walked in the market with his hopes high, and Elijah appeared
to greet him;
He who would announce the redemption assured him, 'Today you
will be rich;
Command me, by your honour, I am now your slave;
Announce it: Here is an uncommon slave to be bought . . .'
When a merchant happily made the purchase for 800,000 gold
coins,
He asked [Elijah], 'What are your skills, do you know the building
trade?
On the day that you complete the work on my mansions and
palaces, I will set you free.'

⁸⁶ Ber, *Seder*, pp. 636–44.

⁸⁷ Weinberger, *Širat Yisra'el*, pp. 65–9.

⁸⁸ Weinberger, 'A Note on . . . Judith', pp. 44–8.

⁸⁹ Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 206–7.

Needless to say, Elijah was able to finish his labours and regain his freedom. Undoubtedly, the story of the enslaved prophet struck a chord among Rhineland's Jews, who were as yet not freed from the burdens of exile.

Despite the hardships, there were times of rejoicing called for by the religious calendar. On Purim, Franco-German Jews celebrated the fall of Haman and the triumph of Mordecai with liturgical hymns, like the *ma'ariv* in the form of a parody by the thirteenth-century R. Menaḥem b. Jacob. The poem begins with a play on the words from Exod. 12: 42: '[That was for the Lord] a night of vigil' (*leyl šimmurim*), which the poet converts to 'a night of drunkards' (*leyl šikkorim*). (The practice of imbibing intoxicants in celebrating Purim is supported by the rabbinic injunction (in *bMeg* 7b), 'It is the duty of a man to mellow himself [with wine] on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai."') Continuing, the poet pursues his theme in a mock-serious tone:

For the Purim (feast) prepare ducks and chickens . . .
Cursed be the man who eats lentils
On the nights of Purim . . .
Cursed be the man who eats ground peas—
It is so decreed by the king and the governor and all the heads;
Every Israelite family shall rise up in arms against him,
And expel him from the holy congregation!⁹⁰

The phrase 'cursed be the man' is a parody of the 'cursed be Haman . . . blessed be Mordecai' from rabbinic literature, also preserved in the pre-classical Purim hymn *Šošanat ya'aqov*.⁹¹

Another festive *ma'ariv* for the Purim evening service was composed by R. Eliezer Dayyan of Amberg, in Bavaria. Presumably, the hymn was a Purim gift sent to his father. R. Eliezer also begins with the parody 'a night of vigil . . . a night of drunkards' (*leyl šimmurim . . . leyl šikkorim*), and pursues a mock-serious tone similar to that of R. Menaḥem b. Jacob. R. Eliezer's hymn elaborates on the merits of Purim rejoicing and is constructed in rhyming tercets with a repeated refrain of the opening parody, *Leyl šikkorim*:

A night of drunkards: no water is permitted in the home
As on the days of the solstice and equinox [when water was
believed to be poisoned] . . .⁹²
A night of drunkards: let us toast together many cups
And eat sponge cake instead of *ḥarosef* [the Passover mixture
symbolic of the mortar used to fashion bricks in Egypt] . . .
A night of drunkards: rejoice with your wife often,
Evening, morning and noon.

⁹⁰ *Mahazor Witry*, pp. 583–4.

⁹¹ *Ber, Seder*, p. 448.

⁹² Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, p. 257.

The humorous folk character of this hymn is seen in its use of the vernacular, such as *leqikhlikh* (l. 34) for sponge cake, and in its play on words, as in the following:

Coins [*sela'im*] protect the rabbits;
Give them to the poor and destitute
On the day of Purim rejoicing . . .

The word play is based on Ps. 104: 18, 'The rocks [*sela'im*] are a refuge for the rabbits', and is here used to urge disbursements to the needy in line with the instructions in Esther 9: 22. Here is another example of word-play humour from the hymn:

Take a jar of Haman [*šinšenet ha-man*] in your hands
And fill it with wine from your jugs
On the day of Purim rejoicing.

This must have elicited a laugh from the congregation, familiar with the verse in Exod. 16: 33, 'And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar [*šinšenet*] and put an omer of manna [*man*] in it."⁹³

THE PRINCIPAL FRANCO-GERMAN GENRES

Qeđušta' 'Eloheykhem

Although the Franco-Germans did not make significant changes in the *qedušta'*, they favoured an addition to the genre which began with the unit '*eloheykhem*'. The poem, comprising six or seven cola in monorhyme, was inserted in the *qeduššah* of the Sabbath and festival Additional Prayer (*musaf*). The hymn was chanted between the fourth verse, 'I am the Lord your God' ('*ani 'adonay 'eloheykhem*'), and the fifth verse, 'The Lord shall reign throughout all generations.'⁹⁴ Several '*eloheykhem*' poems were composed by Franco-Germans, including Judah b. Samuel the Ḥasid (c.1150–1217); Eliezer b. Judah of Worms (1165–1230) and Barukh b. Samuel of Mainz (1150–1221). Following is an '*eloheykhem*' hymn in the Franco-German ritual for the Sabbath of the Intermediate Days of Tabernacles. The acrostic yields the name Yehudah (the Ḥasid?).⁹⁵

Your God:
May He return to Jerusalem, His tabernacle and dwelling;
May He build His temple and the chamber where He will rest;

⁹³ Habermann, *Iyyunim*, pp. 304–6.

⁹⁴ It is possible, but unlikely, that the Italian poet Zevadiah pioneered this genre in his '*Eloheykhen zeruyaw ye'esof*'. The reason for doubt is that the acrostic in the hymn is not clear. See David, *Širey Zevadiah*, p. 48.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*; *Mahazor Le-Sukkot*, p. 286.

May He cause to dwell therein the glory of His presence
 [šekhinato];
 May He in His wrath tread upon the enemy as in a wine press;
 May He erect a pavilion to shade the guardians of His tabernacle;
 May He who establishes His vault upon the earth
 Rule over all the lands from His heights in the heavens.

Yošer

The Franco-German *guf ha-yošer* generally followed earlier Italian forms. Like Amittai, who in his *'Asiḥab be-divrey nifle'otekha* added a *qadoš* refrain after each strophe, Franco-German poets departed from eastern models and varied the ratio of strophes to refrains. In Ephraim of Regensburg's *yošer*, *'Ašer be-ma'amarot 'immes gevurot*,⁹⁶ his ratio of strophes to refrains is four to two.

Departing from the eastern practice in which the theme of the *guf ha-yošer* expanded upon the Sabbath Torah reading, the central Europeans varied the focus of this hymn. Their treatment of the *guf ha-yošer* for the festivals stressed the laws and traditions of the occasion, whereas for the Sabbath the theme of the *guf ha-yošer* centred on creation of the world in six days and celebration of the day of rest.

'Ofan

The Franco-German speculation in the *'ofan* on the nature of creation (*ma'aseh bere'šit*) and on God's chariot throne (*ma'aseh merkavah*) differed from eastern and Spanish practices. While the latter were constrained in their esoteric utterances in the *'ofan* by fear of rabbinic authorities, who forbade these efforts, the Franco-Germans had no such qualms, since the hymnographers were the rabbis in the region. Already Amittai in his *'ofan*, *'Attah 'elohey ha-ruḥot*, anticipates the new freedom in mystical speculation:⁹⁷

You are the Lord of the souls;
 You know the innermost feelings;
 You reveal man's thoughts;
 You are praised by holy songs.
 Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.

Metatron, prince of the inner chamber,
 Teaches the Torah to the young;
 Seized from among the earthlings,
 He changed into flame and clouds.

⁹⁶ Habermann, 'Piyyuṭey R. Ephraim . . . mi-Regensburg', p. 184.

⁹⁷ Amittai, *Širey*, p. 97.

According to the legend (in *BAZ* 3b), Metatron, originally the man Enoch taken up to God (Gen. 5: 24), was employed in the heavens as instructor to the young. In this *'ofan*, Amittai shows familiarity with several angelic figures, like Temalyon, the guide (l. 11), Yafi'el, the prince of darkness (l. 16), Zahariy'el, prince of the constellations (l. 26) and Qippod, prince of Gehenna (l. 27).

Rhine valley poets expanded on Amittai's treatment of the *'ofan*. Simeon b. Isaac in his *Ševivey šalhavot* speculates on the esoteric name of God, 'Adiriron', and Meir b. Isaac closes his *'ofan*, *Mal'akhey seva'ot* with a reference to the divine chariot throne.⁹⁸ Along with a thematic freedom, the central Europeans allowed themselves latitude in structuring the *'ofan*. In addition to the standard rhyming-quatrains model, they also favoured tercets with internal rhyme and variable refrains, and pseudo-*muwashshahāt* forms in the Hispanic fashion.

'Ahavah

The Franco-German *ahavah* is distinctive for its dialogue form. In *Segullati melukhah 'azartikh*, attributed to Mešullam b. Moses, God (*dodi*, the beloved) and Israel (*segullati*, the treasure) exchange, in alternating strophes, words of endearment:⁹⁹

[GOD:]
 My treasure . . .
 From the furnace I have saved you, and lead you to follow Me;
 Eternally I have loved you, My treasure.

[ISRAEL:]
 My beloved
 Your name gives strength to my sons, Your remembrance illumines
 my face;
 Fervently I pray You to bring relief from my enemies . . .
 To You I lift mine eyes, my beloved.

Zulat

Following Italian models, the *zulatot* of the Franco-Germans departed from eastern practices, where the *zulat* was a thematic expansion of the reading from the Prophets for Sabbaths and festivals. Instead, the theme of the central European *zulat* varied. The festival *zulat* focused on themes related to the holy day, whereas the *zulat* for the Sabbath dealt in most instances with

⁹⁸ Habermann, *Piyyuṭey Rabbi Šim'on*, p. 59, l. 20. Adiriron is a name under which God appears in the *beykhalot* books read by R. Simeon's colleagues, the Ḥasidim, in medieval Germany. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 114, and *Mahazor Le-Sukkot*, pp. 261–2, l. 17.

⁹⁹ Fleischer, *Širat Ha-Qodeš*, p. 459.

contemporary events. Following is a portion of Simeon b. Isaac's *zulat*, 'El 'el *ḥay 'arannen*, with its sharp staccato call for retribution on Israel's enemies:¹⁰⁰

Look upon me, labouring in agony;
I am like dill beaten out with a stick;
Remove the whip from me;
Be not silent.

A similar tone pervades Ephraim of Regensburg's *zulat*, 'Eli, 'eli *lammah*, for the fifth Sabbath after Passover:¹⁰¹

My God, my God
Why are my sighs hidden from You?
Behold, I am a dove afflicted.

'El 'Adon and Ševah

The Franco-Germans introduced into the *yošer* cycle two additions to the Sabbath morning hymn preceding the first benediction before the *šema*, 'El 'adon 'al kol ha-ma'asim. Titled 'El 'adon and Ševah, the additions were inserted before the first and last strophes of the 'El 'adon benediction respectively. Following is part of a *ševah* by the Franco-German poet Mordecai for a Sabbath on which a circumcision is performed. The hymn is built in tercets with refrains ending with the word *qadoš*, thereby rhyming with the last unit of 'El 'adon 'al kol ha-ma'asim:¹⁰²

Praises are lavished upon Him
By the hosts on high exalting,
And His people covenant with Him
With the blood of circumcision and the holy flesh . . .

The blood and flesh of the infant
Atones like an altar offering;
O Holy One, command and forgive
The guardians of the sacred sanctuary.

Rešut

Learning from the Hispanics, the Franco-Germans composed 'permission requests' (*rešuyyot*) before the Sabbath and festival morning prayer, *Nišmat kol ḥay*. The *rešut* by Menaḥem b. Makhir of Regensburg, *Nišmat melummedey morašah*, for Simḥat Torah,¹⁰³ is probably the first of its kind by a central

European hymnist. R. Menaḥem constructs the hymn in rhyming tercets introduced by the word *nišmat*, in a manner similar to the *rešuyyot* of Joseph Ibn Abitur, Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Judah Ha-Levi. Below is the first strophe:

[In] the soul of the Torah scholars, men who are free ['Avot 6. 2],
You have planted the hope of eternal life and rest;
The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

Franco-Germans were fond of composing *rešuyyot* for the evening service *barekhu*. This practice followed the model of the Hispanics, although the latter wrote *rešuyyot* for the morning *barekhu* only. The Franco-German *rešut* was, in most instances, a pseudo-*muwashshah* with the 'belt' colon usually rhyming with the unit *barekhu*, as in the following by Solomon b. Eliezer:¹⁰⁴

Sing to the Lord
Young and old;
In God's assemblies
Bless [*barekhu*].

'Permission' hymns were also composed in Aramaic. The use of Aramaic in the synagogue liturgy appears in pre-classical eastern congregations where selections from the Scripture reading were translated into the more familiar language of the Talmud. The practice was continued in the early Italian synagogue by competent scholars who would introduce their translations with an Aramaic permission (*rešut*) in which they summarized the scriptural reading. In the Italian ritual these permissions are known as *alfabeytin* or *fabeytin*, since they featured an alphabetic acrostic. Franco-German poets were attracted to the Aramaic permission, and in the mid-eleventh century began writing in this genre. The best-known is the monorhyme hymn, 'Aqdamut millin, by Meir b. Isaac, chanted before the reading of the Torah on the first day of Pentecost.¹⁰⁵

The popular *rešut* was also involved in the liturgical celebration of weddings. On the Sabbath following the nuptials, the bridegroom was escorted to the synagogue by his groomsmen (*šošvinin*). During the morning service, he would be called to read a Torah lesson appropriate for the occasion, such as the account of Isaac's betrothal to Rebekah in Gen. 24: 1 ff. The invitation to the bridegroom to begin his Scripture reading was preceded by an elaborate introduction with extravagant mock-heroic conceits, composed mostly in monorhyme. The invitation to chant the Torah lesson was framed in the form of a *rešut*, a permission request addressed first to God, then to the Torah, the sages in the congregation and the laity.

The themes of the permission request usually focused on the sanctity of

¹⁰⁰ Habermann, *Piyyutey Rabbi Šim'on*, pp. 14, 40-1.

¹⁰¹ Habermann, 'Piyyutey R. Ephraim . . . mi-Regensburg', p. 135.

¹⁰² Fleischer, *Širat Ha-Qodeš*, pp. 460-1.

¹⁰³ *Mahazor Le-Sukkot*, pp. 331-2.

¹⁰⁴ *Mahazor Witry*, p. 566.

¹⁰⁵ *Mahazor . . . Ha-Šavu'ot*, pp. 56-61.

family life and the joys of marriage, and sought the blessings of the deity upon the young couple. Later embellishments of this *rešut* were in the form of dedications to the groomsmen and to the parents of bride and groom. Following is a portion of Simeon b. Isaac's *Me-rešut šokhen 'ad we-qadoš*, one of the earliest permission requests by a Rhineland poet. In the last section R. Simeon appeals to the congregation:

With the permission of the holy remnant gathered here,
 Replete with merit like a pomegranate, trustworthy in their
 dealings . . .
 Accustomed to show love for the bridegroom on his wedding
 day . . .
 With their permission, rise up Mr . . . the bridegroom from among
 the people uncounted [Num. 23: 10],
 And stand by me on the wooden platform as decreed by custom;
 Let your groomsmen accompany you with song and refrain;
 Open your lips to recite the proper blessing of praise before and
 after [the Torah reading],
 And read the select portion from the true testimony [the Torah] . . .
 And let the people respond with, 'Amen', after you, for great is the
 reward of the covenant [observed].¹⁰⁶

R. Simeon's *rešuyyot* for these occasions gained wide popularity. Following his model, poets like Meir b. Isaac began to compose *rešuyyot* for other festive events. R. Meir's hymns in this genre were directed to the honorees invited to complete the Torah reading on Simḥat Torah, and those asked to begin the reading anew with the book of Genesis. The latter were designated the 'bridegroom of the Torah' (*ḥatan torah*) and the 'bridegroom of Genesis' (*ḥatan bere'šit*), respectively. In the *rešut*, the honorees were treated to a poetic celebration of the merits of the Torah and their own special gifts. Some of the *rešuyyot* for Simḥat Torah were divided into the four thematic units of the *rešut* for the bridegroom; others, like *Maqdim we-ro'š la-gore'im*, by Meir b. Isaac, focused on the special character of the *ḥatan bere'šit*.¹⁰⁷

My heart overflows, giving direction to my eyes,
 Beholding the beacon bright illuminating like a lantern;
 He grows stronger on his watch like a steady pillar in place;
 Standing firm, providing a true foundation stone . . .
 Arise and stand Mr . . . bridegroom of Genesis.

Although this *rešut* is now a part of the Franco-German ritual, it is likely that R. Meir had in mind a particular notable when composing his hymn. The

¹⁰⁶ Habermann, *Piyyuṭey Rabbi Šim'on*, p. 187.

¹⁰⁷ *Mahazor Le-Sukkot*, pp. 451–60.

ḥatan bere'šit, like the *ḥatan torah*, was a distinguished community leader. In the rabbinic period they honoured 'the greatest of them all' (*bMeg* 32a) by reading the conclusion of the Torah. In later practice, the congregation's rabbi was the *ḥatan torah*, while its presiding officer was designated *ḥatan bere'šit*.

Nišmat

'Illu Finu

Another Franco-German embellishment of the *Nišmat kol ḥay* was a hymn inserted before the phrase, 'Were our mouths filled with song' (*'Illu finu male' širah*). One of the first central Europeans to compose in this genre was a twelfth-century French convert to Judaism, Yehosifyah the Proselyte. His hymn, 'Were a song as wide as the sea, it would not suffice for the eternal living [God]' (*We-'illu širah ka-yam, 'eyn day ḥay we-qayyam*), was included in the Franco-German ritual.¹⁰⁸

Ha-Melekh

A new genre introduced by thirteenth-century Franco-Germans was a work beginning with 'The King' (*ha-melekh*). The hymn was injected into the *Nišmat kol ḥay*, between the verses 'The King is enthroned high and exalted' (*ha-melekh ha-yošev 'al kisse' ram we-nisa'*) and 'Abiding forever, exalted and holy is His name' (*šokhen 'ad marom we-qadoš šemo*). The *ha-melekh* hymns were generally constructed in the form of a pseudo-*muwashshah*, with each strophe beginning with *ha-melekh* and ending with *šemo*. Following are strophes from this genre by the Franco-German poet Solomon:¹⁰⁹

The King, a freewill song
 Is hymned to Him in every region:
 Extol Him who rides the clouds;
 The Lord is His name . . .

The King, His hand extended high
 When garbed with might on vengeance's day;
 The God is a warrior;
 The Lord is His name.

'El Ha-Hoda'ot

Another central European innovation was titled 'God of Thanksgiving' (*'el ha-hoda'ot*). It was placed before the last blessing in the 'introductory hymns

¹⁰⁸ Fleischer, *Širat Ha-Qodeš*, p. 461.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

and psalms' (*pesukey de-zimra*'). Appropriately, the *'el ha-hoda'ot* was chanted before the verse 'God of thanksgiving, Lord of wonders who takes delight in songs and psalms, O God and King, the life of the universe' (*'El ha-hoda'ot, 'adon ha-nifla'ot, ha-boher be-širey zimrah, melekh 'el hay ha-'olamim*). The hymn opens with the word *'El* and is constructed either in the form of a Spanish-style pseudo-*muwashshah* or with a constant refrain in the early Italian mode. Below is a sample of the genre in the latter form, by a thirteenth-century poet named Eliezer:¹¹⁰

God of thanksgiving
From the four corners,
Evening and morn,
King and God, the life of the universe.

Lord from above,
Revered in praises
Above all exalted,
King and God, the life of the universe.

Ma'ariv

The *ma'ariv* (evening) hymn not often found in eastern liturgies and neglected by Hispanics and early Italians was popular with the Franco-Germans. The Frenchman Joseph Ṭov Elem was the first European to compose in this genre. The tendency to lengthen the evening service with embellishments was frowned upon in many Mediterranean congregations, both so as not to encroach upon dinner time and from fear of attack while returning home late at night. This fear was probably no longer warranted in France under the early Capets in the eleventh century, when there were no special decrees affecting Jews.¹¹¹

The Franco-German *ma'arivim* generally followed classical models, which divided the hymn into six units of generally equal length, save for the longer third. The genre was often adorned with opening and closing scriptural verses in the classical manner. Only one rhyming quatrain was allocated to each of the units, whereas the third was allowed refrains and responses. Occasionally the *ma'ariv* was built in tercets with a pseudo-*muwashshah* rhyme pattern. The third unit concluded with a quatrain similar to the others and led the hymn into the evening service verse, 'Who is like You O Lord among the mighty?' (*mi kamokha ba-'elim 'adonay?*). The theme of the *ma'ariv* units focused on the meaning of the festival, with the expanded third devoted to the particular laws and traditions of the day. Following is the opening of Ṭov Elem's *ma'ariv* for Tabernacles, *'Atanneh šidqot 'el*.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Fleischer, *Širat Ha-Qodeš*, p. 463.

¹¹¹ Schwarzfuchs, 'France', p. 153.

¹¹² *Mahazor Le-Sukkot*, pp. 48–51.

I will proclaim God's love to my people,
In this sanctuary I will voice my song;
I will celebrate His might and will not be silent;
At night His melody is with me.

Beginning in the eleventh century, Rhine valley poets like Meir b. Isaac would add a seventh unit, known as *bikkur* (early, i.e. evening, service) or *tosefet* (addition). This unit, considerably larger than the preceding ones and varied in form, led into the closing benediction after the *šema*, 'Blessed are You, O Lord, who spreads the tabernacle of peace over us' (*ha-pores sukkat šalom 'aleynu*). Although the addition of the seventh unit disrupted the symmetry of the *ma'ariv*, it was considered necessary to close the hymn with a flourish of prominent proportions rather than with a mere quatrain.

Magen 'Avot

Franco-German poets endowed the Sabbath evening service with an embellishment of the *magen 'avot bi-dvaro* (God's word has ever been our fathers' shield), a liturgical synopsis of the seven benedictions of the evening *'amidah*. This synopsis probably originated in the rabbinic period, where it is indirectly referred to in *bŠab* 24b.¹¹³ The synopsis was also included in the Babylonian synagogue ritual, as may be seen in the Amram Ga'on prayer-book.¹¹⁴ The Franco-German *magen 'avot* addition generally opened with a short paraphrase of Scripture, followed by a tercet designed to rhyme with the third line of the synopsis hymn, 'The holy God like whom there is none' (*ha-'el ha-qadoš še-'eyn kamohu*). Below is part of a *magen 'avot* addition for Sabbath Šuvah by an anonymous Franco-German poet:¹¹⁵

Would that the sinner would fear my words, confess and forsake
[his sins],
And be reconciled to the Lord and obtain His mercy;
Return O Israel to the Lord our God for He will abundantly
pardon;
He instructs the wayward. Who can teach like Him?
Turn from evil and do good; His strength is power's paragon;
To sweet song He raises high His hand;
'Our father's shield God's word has ever been;
He revives the dead by His word;
The holy God like whom there is none.'

¹¹³ See RaŠI's comment in *bŠab* 24b on 'The Reader who descends before the desk'.

¹¹⁴ *Seder Rav 'Amram Ga'on*, p. 64.

¹¹⁵ Fleischer, *Širat Ha-Qodeš*, p. 467.

Seliḥah

The central European *seliḥot* are distinctive in their reflection of contemporary Jewish disabilities resulting from government decrees and unruly mobs. The early Italian and Franco-German *seliḥot* are noted for their restrained quatrains, unembellished by closing scriptural verses. This was in marked contrast to the late eastern and Hispanic treatment of the genre. With the visit to the region of Abraham Ibn Ezra in the twelfth century, changes occurred in the local hymnography. One result was that the Franco-German *seliḥah* was endowed with enhancements, including quantitative metre. The following groupings of *seliḥot*, *ḥata'nu*, *'aqedah* and *gezerot*, were named after their main theme and structural style.

Ḥata'nu

The later central European *seliḥot* favoured strophic forms, whether in couplets (*ṣeniyyah*), tercets (*ṣeliṣit*) or quatrains (*ṣalmonit*, complete). These were often preceded by verses from Scripture repeated as refrains, or by the litany 'We have sinned O our Rock; forgive us, our Maker'. Hymns with the latter refrain were identified by the term *ḥata'nu* (we have sinned). The *ḥata'nu*, originating in the classical period, was used in Rhineland synagogues as a confessional. It was built in strophes connected by anadiplosis and interrupted by the litany 'We have sinned'. A memorable sample is R. Geršom b. Judah's *Gadol 'awoni we-la-ḥato' hosafiti*.¹¹⁶

My sin is great; I add to my transgressions;
My guilt increases; my evil multiplies;
Great are my failings; I should be flogged;
I deserve to be exiled; I have forgotten my homeland.

'Aqedah

A prominent place in the Franco-German ritual is reserved for the *'aqedah*, a *seliḥah* on the Binding of Isaac (Gen. 22). The *'aqedah* makes its debut in Europe in the work of the eleventh-century poet Meir b. Isaac. The Binding of Isaac theme was rarely treated in separate hymns in the classical and late eastern post-classical periods, and hardly at all by the Hispanics. However, given the experience of the central Europeans during the anti-Jewish decrees of 1096, 1146–7 and 1197 and the martyrdom of Rhine valley congregations, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, in response to God's command, had a familiar resonance.

This familiarity was enhanced by a rabbinic reading (in *Midraš Ha-Gadol* on Gen. 22: 19) of the *'aqedah* in Gen. 22, suggesting that the reason Isaac is

¹¹⁶ *Maḥazor Le-Yamim*, ii. 566.

not mentioned accompanying his father from Mount Moriah is that, 'although Isaac did not die, Scripture regards him *as though* he had died and his ashes lay piled on the altar. That is why it is written [in Gen. 22: 19], "So Abraham [alone] returned to his young men." 'Elaborating on the rabbinic comment, R. Ephraim b. Jacob of Bonn (born in 1133 and witness to the havoc in the ensuing years) wrote the following in his *'aqedah*, 'Et 'avotay 'ani mazkir'.¹¹⁷

He [Abraham] hastened to pin him [Isaac] with his knees;
He made strong his two arms;
With a steady hand he slaughtered him as required;
A complete sacrifice prepared.

When a reviving dew fell upon him and he lived,
He seized him to slaughter him again;
Bear witness, Scripture; it is truth confirmed:
And the Lord called Abraham, even a second time from heaven.
[Gen. 22: 15]¹¹⁸

Gezerot

A distinctive type of Franco-German *seliḥah* came to be called *gezerot* (decrees), in which the martyrdom of Rhineland Jewry by decree during the Crusades was memorialized, often by eyewitness accounts. The *gezerot* differed from other *seliḥot* in their account of atrocities committed against Jews, in a named locality. Following is an example by R. Joel b. Isaac Ha-Levi of Bonn lamenting the suffering of the Cologne congregation during the decrees of 1147. The hymn *Yivkeyun mar mal'akhey šalom*, comprising thirty-three versets in monorhyme with closing couplet, was chanted in Franco-German congregations during the Ninth of 'Av and is included in the region's *Seder Ha-Qinot*.¹¹⁹

Alas, fallen into the hands of strangers; the hand of the Lord
struck
The King's treasure [Israel], the gentle and fair
Daughter of Cologne; my head is in pain, I have seen a horrible
thing:
They sought to baptize them in the accursed putrid waters,
Urged them to worship the dead, a strange god;
They threatened death to the disobedient [lit. those who cursed
the 'strange god'], but Jacob chose the Lord!

¹¹⁷ Habermann, 'Piyuṭey R. Ephraim . . . mi-Bonn', pp. 264–6.

¹¹⁸ Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, pp. 148–9. ¹¹⁹ *Seder Ha-Qinot*, pp. 160–3.

Petiḥah

The *petiḥah* (introduction), thematically related to the *seliḥah*, was chanted before the first recitation of God's Thirteen Attributes (Exod. 34: 6–7) during the vigil nights of 'Elul and the Days of Awe. Characteristically, the *petiḥah* closed with the verse 'For we rely upon Your exceeding mercy' (*ki 'al raḥamekha ha-rabbim 'anu betuḥim*) or a paraphrase thereof. The closing focused on God's mercy and led into the introductory formula to the Thirteen Attributes, 'The Lord, the Lord is a merciful and gracious God.' Two *petiḥot* by RaŠI, [*'Adonay*] *'elohey ha-ševa'ot* and *'Az ṭerem nimteḥu*, are included in Franco-German *seliḥot* collections.¹²⁰

Qinah

The Franco-German elegies (*qinot*) are divided thematically into two sets: general laments voiced on ordained fast-days like the Ninth of 'Av, and threnodies in observance of particular tragedies that befell Rhineland Jewry. Distinctive in their elegies is a fondness for the writings of Judah Ha-Levi on the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. His zionides, particularly *Šeyyon ha-lo' tiš'ali li-šlom 'asirayikh*, with its elegantly balanced hemistichs, were widely imitated, although the Franco-Germans appeared to be unable to duplicate Ha-Levi's elaborate metrical pattern: – / –v– / –v– / –v– // – / –v– / –v– / –v– –. The most notable of the imitation zionides were composed by R. Meir b. Barukh of Rothenburg (c.1215–93) and his contemporary Eleazar b. Moses Ha-Daršan of Wuerzburg.¹²¹ Elegies lamenting specific decrees in Crusader days were written by Kalonymous b. Judah of Mainz (11th c.), who wept over the catastrophe that befell the congregations in Speyer, Worms and Mainz; Ephraim of Bonn (d. after 1196), on the fate of Blois Jewry; Menahem b. Jacob of Worms (d. 1203), on the martyrs of Boppard; Barukh b. Samuel of Mainz (12th c.), regretting the losses in Speyer, Boppard and Blois; and Yeḥiel b. Jacob, on the destruction of the Lauda and Bischofsheim congregations in 1235, among others.¹²²

Some of the personalized elegies are impressive in their uncommon insights into the horrible events in twelfth-century Rhineland. Among these is Barukh b. Samuel's *Beynot 'arayot*, lamenting the death of a young man named Isaac, in Würzburg, who chose martyrdom to baptism:

The Binding of Isaac was clear to see,
In the streets and byways to all revealed;
One of the Israelites leapt forth
And sanctified Your name willingly . . .

¹²⁰ *Seder Ha-Seliḥot . . . Liṭa'*, pp. 65, 139. ¹²¹ *Seder Ha-Qinot*, pp. 124–6, 128–30, 135–7.

¹²² Habermann, *Sefer*, pp. v–vii; idem, 'Piyyuṭey R. Barukh', pp. 96–9, 133–40.

A charming youth, adored by all;
Alas, he was tortured on a crushing rack.¹²³

Eleazar b. Judah of Worms (d. between 1223 and 1232) was moved to write a tribute to his wife, who was murdered, together with his two daughters, in 1197, by two brigands who broke into his home on the twenty-second day of Kislew. Although R. Eleazar is controlled in his elegy, written in the form of a commentary on Prov. 31: 10, his sense of personal loss comes through.¹²⁴

'A capable wife who can find' like my worthy spouse, the matron
Dolša? . . .
'The heart of her husband trusts in her,' she fed and clothed him
with dignity . . .
'She is like the ships of the merchant' providing for her mate that
he may study Torah . . .
'She girds herself with strength' . . . cooks her meals and sets her
table for all . . .
'She opens her mouth with wisdom' and knows the permitted and
forbidden . . .
'She rejoices in obeying her husband' and never causes him
distress;
'Give her a share in the fruit of her hands' in the Garden of Eden.

Birkat Ha-Mazon

In honour of the seven feast-days (*šiv'at yemey ha-mišteḥ*) following a wedding, poetic embellishments of the grace after meals (*birkat ha-mazon*) were customary. In this the Franco-Germans revived a practice that had been neglected since the period of the classical poets. Seeing that their epithalamia were well received, the hymnists began to adorn the grace at the feast of circumcision. Enhancing the grace after the Sabbath and festival meals followed, and some of the leading poets in the region made their contributions, including Simeon b. Isaac, Ephraim b. Isaac of Regensburg and Barukh b. Samuel of Mainz.

ENGLAND'S PRINCIPAL POETS**Caedmon?**

The earliest liturgical poetry in England was composed by Caedmon, who, according to the Venerable Bede, lived in the seventh century and composed

¹²³ Ibid. 147.

¹²⁴ Id., *Toledot Ha-Piyyuṭ*, ii. 197–200.

poetic paraphrases of the biblical books Genesis, Exodus and Daniel.¹²⁵ A. Mirsky has suggested that Caedmon may have been Jewish.¹²⁶ Presumably, these biblical paraphrases served a liturgical purpose similar to the *gerovot* of Yannai and Qillir in the synagogue and the *kontakia* of Romanus the Melode in the Byzantine church. In paraphrasing the Scripture reading, Caedmon often embellished the text with non-biblical conceits, in much the same way as did Yannai and Qillir, who were able to draw inspiration from rabbinic sources. It is likely that Caedmon's embellishments likewise derived from extra-biblical sources, whether early Christian or rabbinic. Following is Caedmon's embellishment on Gen. 2: 21: 'So the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh':

And he [Adam] knew no pain
His gift came without hurt.¹²⁷

How did Caedmon know that this procedure was accomplished without suffering? Possibly he had access to the rabbinic source in *Pirqey de R. Eliezer*, No. 12, 'The Holy One blessed be He had compassion upon the first man [Adam] and in order that he should not feel any pain, He cast upon him the sleep of deep slumber.' Presumably, Caedmon was also familiar with the work of the Church Father Tertullian (c.155–c.222), who discussed Adam's 'sleep' in his *De Anima*, 43.

Noteworthy is Caedmon's paraphrase of Gen. 7: 16: 'And those that entered [the ark] male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in.' He elaborates:¹²⁸

The Guardian of the kingdom of heaven
Shut after him, *with His own hand* [italics mine],
The opening to the sea vessel.

The figure of God closing the ark in this way is mentioned in *Pirqey de R. Eliezer*, No. 23, 'When all creatures had entered [the ark], the Holy One, blessed be He, closed and sealed with His hand the gate of the ark.' A similar expression is found in *The Book of Adam and Eve*, ed. Malan, III. ix.¹²⁹

Caedmon's embellishment on the drunkenness of Noah and his being uncovered in his tent (Gen. 9: 20 ff.) is instructive:¹³⁰

First came Ham,
And as the son of Noah
Arrived where his father lay

In distress, he did not extend
The honour due to the man who gave him birth;
Even his nakedness he did not conceal from onlookers,
But he laughed lustily
And told his brothers how
The master is sprawled out in his house.

The rabbinic source for this legend is *Pirqey de R. Eliezer*, No. 23: 'Ham entered and saw his [Noah's] nakedness. He did not take to heart the duty of honouring [one's father]. But he told his two brothers in the market, making sport of the father.' Here, too, a similar account is preserved in the *Book of Adam and Eve*, ed. Malan, III. xiii. Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (bk. i, ch. 6) also refers to the behaviour of Ham '(Noah) . . . being drunk, he fell asleep, and lay naked in an unseemly manner. When the youngest son saw this, he came laughing, and showed him to his brethren . . . And when Noah was made sensible of what had been done, he prayed for prosperity for his other sons; but for Ham . . .'

Was Caedmon Jewish, as Mirsky suggests? His name is derived from the Hebrew *qadmon* (ancient); he embellishes Scripture for liturgical use after the fashion of Yannai and Qillir; and he may have been familiar with rabbinic sources. Yet he had access to non-rabbinic texts which may have served him, and it is likely that he was familiar with Romanus' Scripture adorning *kontakia* for the Byzantine Church. Caedmon's religious identity remains open to speculation.

Yom Ṭov b. Isaac

The earliest hymns for the synagogue by a Hebrew poet in England were the penitentials and elegies—some in Aramaic—composed by Yom-Ṭov b. Isaac of Joigny, who settled in York around 1180. His metric *selihah Yom, yom yidrošun lakh* is built in strophes and refrains after late eastern models. The hymn was included in the Franco-German ritual for the Day of Atonement evening service. In the following sample the poet pleads for divine aid.¹³¹

Reject the tale-bearer [Satan];
Annul his recorded charges . . .
Silence the prosecutor
And receive the intercessor instead;
See our disgrace,
Consider it instead of our sin.

An elegy on the martyrs of York, where R. Yom-Ṭov and his congregation perished in 1190, was composed by R. Joseph of Chartres, who lived in

¹²⁵ Bede, *A History of the English Church and People* (Harmondsworth, 1964), pp. 245–8.

¹²⁶ Mirsky, 'Midrašot'.

¹²⁷ Cf. B. J. Timmer, *The Later Genesis*, edited from MS Junius 11 (Oxford, 1948), ll. 179–80.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, ll. 1363–4.

¹²⁹ See *Pirqey de R. Eliezer*, pp. 87 n. 4, 166 n. 6.

¹³⁰ Timmer, *The Later Genesis*, ll. 1576–84.

¹³¹ *Mahazor Le-Yamim*, ii. 28–9.

England. In a revealing couplet, he blames Richard I for the anti-Jewish violence that began with the Third Crusade, led by the English king, in company with the German emperor, Friedrich I, and Philippe II of France, and invokes dire punishment upon the ruler and his subjects:¹³²

My anger is directed towards you, king of the isles,
Under your wings is found the blood of the innocent;
May God punish the Kitium [English] herd;
May their lot in life be like the corpses of my people;
Let there be no dew or rain on the island land;
From the day your king was crowned [in 1189], woe has come to
your land . . .

Meir of Norwich

The most versatile rabbi-poet in England was R. Meir b. Elijah of Norwich. Born in France, where he studied under the Tosafists, R. Samson b. Abraham of Sens and R. Solomon b. Judah of Dreux, R. Meir settled in England and was among the Jews banished in 1290 by Edward I. The poet lamented the expulsion in his *havdalah*, 'Oyevi bi-m'eyrah tiqqov, bearing the superscription, 'A *me'orah* for the severity of the exile and the killings in the prison and the loss of property.' Following is an excerpt from the hymn in which Israel is referred to in the singular:¹³³

They scattered him in all directions;
He sought [in vain] the vision, hidden;
Yes, the visionaries sealed it from light . . .
The wicked men encompassed him, menacingly seeking to devour
him;
They imprisoned him and he looked for light in the evening.

The superscription designating the hymn as a *me'orah* is misleading and was probably added by a later editor. 'Oyevi bi-m'eyrah is connected to R. Meir's *Me'onah 'eloha samayim*, to be chanted at the close of the Sabbath, as indicated in its refrain, 'Mighty are You and luminous who separated the darkness from the light.' This refrain is based on the *havdalah* service benediction, 'Praised are You . . . who divides light from darkness.' The connection between *Me'onah 'eloha*, and 'Oyevi bi-m'eyrah is confirmed by the acrostic which begins in the first hymn with 'Meir Be-Rabbi' and concludes in the second with 'Eliyahu Hāzaq'. R. Meir, like most of the early Italians and Franco-Germans, did not compose *me'orot* as separate liturgical units.¹³⁴

Like many central European poets, R. Meir constructed his *mi kamokha* hymn with a Hispanic-style cosmic preface. In his epic 216-cola *Mi kamokha, mitnasse' ba-marom 'al keruvo*, for Passover, he expatiates on the creation of the world, the story of the Patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt and the dividing of the sea. The hymn closes with 'Who is like You, O Lord, majestic among the gods? And they sang . . . this song on that day.' R. Meir varies from the typical Hispanic rhyming quatrains in this genre by constructing the opening four strophes in tercets, with rhyming couplets and closing scriptural verse. The remaining strophes are in quatrains of rhyming tercets and closing verse. All verses are in monorhyme ending with *hu'*. The acrostic, one of the lengthiest in Hebrew hymnography, yields 'Meir, the alphabet, I, Meir son of Elijah from the municipality of Norwich which is in the island country called England; I will strive in the Torah of my Maker and in the fear of Him, amen, amen selah.' Unlike the general practice of the Hispanics, the eclectic R. Meir resorts to an extensive use of rabbinic allusions. Following are some examples:¹³⁵

Before the foundations were laid,
Before the cold from the scattering wind,
Seven creations He made;
He is the One who formed all things. [ll. 9–10]

The 'seven creations' are cited in *bPes* 54a: 'Seven things were created before the world was created, and these are they: The Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of Glory, the Temple and the name of the Messiah.'

He caused the earth to put forth vegetation *a fortiori*
[*be-qal wa-homer*]
And trees by their own shape [*le-šivyonam*] were
created;
The awe-inspiring luminaries He made;
The great and the small are there. [ll. 19–20]

This strophe can be understood only with reference to rabbinic sources. In the first line the poet alludes to the comment in *bHul* 60a:

For when the Holy One, blessed be He, enjoined 'after its kind' [Gen. 1: 11] upon the trees, the plants applied unto themselves an *a fortiori* argument, saying: If the Holy One, blessed be He, desired a motley growth, why did He enjoin, 'after its kind' upon the trees? Moreover, if upon trees, which by nature do not grow up in a motley growth, the Holy One, blessed be He, enjoined 'after its kind', how much more so does it apply to us! Immediately each plant came forth after its kind.

¹³² Habermann, *Toledot Ha-Piyyut*, ii. 244–5.

¹³³ Habermann, *Piyyutim We-Sirim*, pp. 13–16.

¹³⁴ Fleischer, *Ha-Yoserot*, p. 673.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 575–91; Habermann, *Piyyutim . . . Rabbi Meir*, pp. 17–31.

In the second line, R. Meir refers to the statement in *bHul* 60a:

All the animals of the creation were created in their full-grown stature, with their consent, and according to the shape of their own choice, for it is written [in Gen. 2: 1]: 'And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their host'; read not 'their host' [*seva'am*] but 'their shape' [*siyyonam*].

R. Meir's *tokheḥab* (self-rebuke), *Miqreh beru'im we-sodam*, was probably intended as a private meditation for the ill and infirm. Unlike the central European poets, whose liturgical writings focused on the corporate needs of the congregation and generally disregarded personal concerns, R. Meir's 'admonition', written in the first person singular—probably to his son—is distinctive in the manner in which it individualizes man's concern with death and the grave.¹³⁶

When his time comes [to die],
He cannot escape . . .
The Angel [of Death] stands before him,
His drawn sword, in his hand . . .
The body descends into the grave;
He is buried in the sand;
Alas, after he is covered,
There is no rest for him . . .
He is sent to be punished there;
A lash for each sin . . .
Be fearful of these;
Tremble and sin not;
My son, shun transgression;
Justice, justice pursue . . .
Keep the word of my Rock and Redeemer
Who supports me in my lot . . .

'He is sent to be punished there' is a reference to the legend of 'Judgment and Punishment in the Grave' (*din we-hibbut ha-qever*) from the writings of the Babylonian *ge'onim*. The legend was later incorporated into the liturgical writings for the Byzantine synagogue.¹³⁷ Like some of the central Europeans, R. Meir tried his hand at composing *qasīdab*-type hymns in metrically balanced hemistichs. In some sixteen of these, which he dedicated to a friend, R. Meir displays his virtuosity. The hymns, divided into sets of four, are built in quatrains with rhyming morphemes in both the opening and closing of the colon. The author's name 'Meir' is given in the acrostic of each set.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Fleischer, *Śirat Ha-Qodeš*, p. 470; Habermann, *Piyyuṭim . . . Rabbi Meir*, pp. 5–8.

¹³⁷ Weinberger, *Seder Ha-Seliḥot . . . Ha-Romaniotim*, pp. 20–2.

¹³⁸ Habermann, *Piyyuṭim . . . Rabbi Meir*, pp. 32–9.

Jewish Hymnography



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