REPORT

Report of the 9th Medieval Hebrew Poetry Colloquium (MHPC)

KU Leuven, Belgium, 15-17 July 2019

Organized by Dr. Joachim Yeshaya (KU Leuven) and Prof. Elisabeth Hollender (Goethe University Frankfurt) with the Support of the European Association for Jewish Studies (EAJS) Conference Grant Programme in European Jewish Studies

1) The original 'event rationale'

Hebrew poetry was a primary feature of medieval Jewish life and society ever since liturgical poetry or *piyyut*, used in the synagogue to embellish the prayer ritual, emerged in late antiquity and secular poetry appeared in Spain more than one thousand years ago. Among the leading centers of medieval Hebrew poetry were Palestine in the Byzantine and early Islamic period and Babylonia in the ninth and tenth centuries, but none was as prestigious as Andalusia from the end of the tenth to the middle of the twelfth century. Afterwards, poetry continued to be composed throughout the Islamic world and Christian Europe, including Eastern Europe where even during the early modern period the oeuvre of local Jewish poets connects to older, medieval traditions.

Since the days of Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), the study of Hebrew poetry has become an integral part of Jewish studies in Europe. The Medieval Hebrew Poetry Colloquium (MHPC) was initiated at the start of the 21st century by European scholars feeling the need to meet on a regular basis in order to uphold this European tradition of scholarship in the field of medieval Hebrew poetry. Indeed, the geographical distance between researchers living in different European countries and outside Europe makes the MHPC an essential catalyst for the development of this field.

The first meeting organized in 2000 in Oxford as the 3rd EAJS Summer Colloquium filled a gap in the academic market and opened many doors for early career scholars who were and still are easily absorbed within the MHPC network. As Wout van Bekkum wrote in his report on the first MHPC (https://www.eurojewishstudies.org/colloquia/medieval-hebrew-poetry-in-its-religious-and-secular-context-3rd-eajs-summer-colloquium-yarnton-manor-24th-to-27th-july-2000/), "The contributions of these and other doctoral researchers to the interdisciplinary dimensions of the field in an open atmosphere of questioning and observing were a particular stimulant to the participants of a meeting which was a great success and has led to request for further similar colloquia in the future." This appeal has led to the tradition of MHPC's organised under the auspices of the EAJS, which by now counts eight earlier meetings: Oxford 2000, Granada 2002, Aix-en-Provence 2004, Boston (Real Colegio Complutense) 2006, Groningen 2008, Bochum 2011, Paris 2014, and Helsinki 2016.

The main goal of the ninth MHPC, scheduled in Leuven, Belgium, from July 15-17, 2019, is, as during earlier meetings, to serve as a platform where established and early career scholars from various European countries and from outside Europe dealing with medieval Hebrew poetry can present work in progress and recently completed projects to an audience of peers.

This setting leaves ample room for discussion and academic exchange, which at the minimum results in the development of ideas by being exposed to ideas, but frequently also culminates in concrete proposals for cooperation.

At this point, it is difficult to anticipate all topics, but previous MHPC calls for papers have acted as barometers of changing opinions and novel trends in the research field, both in the kinds of questions asked as well as in the methods and sources employed. Among the expected sessions of the ninth MHPC, which is again bound to define the state of the art in this field, there is a workshop on digital humanities and medieval Hebrew poetry and a debate session considering the different types of interaction between the poets and their respective worlds.

2) Reflection on whether and how the goals of the event have been achieved

The ninth MHPC has indeed led to a better integration of early career scholars in the community and strengthened already existing networks especially for European scholars, who otherwise, unlike for example their Israeli colleagues, do not have the chance to meet on a regular basis. MHPC participants more generally, regardless of whether they came from different European countries, Israel, the United States or even the Far East, acquired knowledge of and insight into the state of the art of this field, e.g. recent developments in the field of digital humanities that can be applied to the research of medieval Hebrew poetry (see further below).

Besides six sessions, the program also boasted a digital humanities workshop and a roundtable considering the different types of interaction between the poets and their respective worlds, during which the up to then completely secret edited volume *The Poet and the World: Festschrift for Wout van Bekkum on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday* (https://www.degruyter.com/view/product/503295?rskey=0Bl7gj) was successfully presented (see picture below and note that during this roundtable a few local professors and PhD candidates from KU Leuven were also present). There was ample room for discussion and networking during complimentary coffee breaks, lunches and also a reception as a conclusion of the first day. All of these breaks, except for the visit to the Great Beguinage, took place at the historic Irish College, a Franciscan College established in Leuven more than 400 years ago.

3) A detailed overview of all sections and papers that comprise the event, including a reflection on the discussions, questions and answers that followed the presentations. Please do include names and affiliations of contributors.

After words of welcome by the organizer Dr. Joachim Yeshaya (KU Leuven), by the vice dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at KU Leuven, Prof. Pierre Van Hecke, and by the co-organizer and president of the EAJS, Prof. Elisabeth Hollender (Goethe University Frankfurt), the event started with a round table on "The Paytan and his World."

Round table: The Paytan and his World (Chair: Elisabeth Hollender)

This roundtable discussed the relation between the liturgical poet, his audience, and the world that they lived in. The participants were interested, among other things, in matters of personality, professionality, and popularity of *paytanim* and their respective oeuvres, irrespective of locality and period. Is it possible to detect shared features of *paytanim* that made them and their oeuvre successful? This round table was intended as a brain-storming session in which both discussants and audience brought forward ideas and abstractions from the specific *paytanim* that they study. The discussants (Wout van Bekkum [University of Groningen],

Michael Swartz [Ohio State University], Tova Beeri [Tel-Aviv University], Riikka Tuori [University of Helsinki] and Elisabeth Hollender [Goethe University Frankfurt]) each presented a 5-7 minutes statement, the following discussion was open to the audience as well.

Wout van Bekkum brought up the topic of the modern literary judgment of liturgical poets who, thanks to the survival of important manuscript collections (such as the Cairo Genizah), are part of an essentially continuous literary history. Discussing the selection criteria of the *paytanim* included in the 1971 *Encyclopedia Judaica* entry on Piyyut by Ezra Fleischer, in the *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry* published throughout the 1920s and 30s by Israel Davidson and in *Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie* (Berlin 1865) by Leopold Zunz, Van Bekkum dealt with matters of periodization, poetic form, aesthetic value, taste and distaste, popularity and insertion in the synagogue ritual. Indications of an early hierarchy of *paytanim* can already be found in medieval times, e.g. in Saadya Gaon's *Egron*. Using the example of the paytan Yannai, Van Bekkum stressed the modern dislike for the elaborate language of *piyyut*, which has been studied e.g. by Yahalom, Zvi Novick, Lieber and recently also by Münz-Manor & Arentzen in an article entitled "Soundscapes of Salvation", *Studies in Late Antiquity* 3.1 (2019): 36-55.

Michael Swartz gave an overview of different aspects related to the topic of the round table, including a) the material context of *piyyut*; b) stylistic matters; c) the linguistic environment; and d) the poets' place in society. He particularly focused on the existence of liturgical professionals in Late Antique Judaism, which include—in the absence of the Temple priests—*paytanim*, cantors, orators, magicians and diviners. Using the corpus of Aramaic funeral poems published in Joseph Yahalom and Michael Sokoloff's *Shirat Bene Maʿaraḇa* as an example, Swartz emphasized that composing poetry on the occasion of a death and in mourning rituals involves many considerations and engages various social and political components.

Tova Beeri compared the poetic output of 3 *paytanim* from the 10th-11th c., Joseph al-Baradani, David ha-Nasi and Eli He-Haver ben Amram, with 2 questions in mind: a) what motivated them in writing *piyyutim*? b) How were their *piyyutim* received by the audience? Joseph al-Baradani was a professional cantor in Baghdad; his poems ended up in the Cairo Genizah probably thanks to his son, who also was a cantor. Al-Baradani had a political motivation and poetry was a means to show off his knowledge and help him along the path towards leadership. His *piyyutim* in various genres were very popular and were also performed, possibly with the help of a choir. He was called the Great Cantor by Rav Hai Gaon. David ha-Nasi, a scion of the house of the Babylonian Exilarchs, held no office himself and was critical of Jewish leadership. He wrote only in the penitential genre and his compositions reveal a pious and pietist, possibly even Sufi inclination two centuries before Abraham Maimonides established his pietist circle in Egypt. Despite the fact that his penitential poems were not included in the prayer ritual, David ha-Nasi was highly appreciated by colleague poets such as Ibn Abitur and his poems were transmitted in many manuscripts. Eli He-Haver was head of the Yerushalmi congregation in Egypt; he was also a *dayyan* and his legal activities are evident from a wide variety of Genizah documents. This political figure wrote *piyyutim* in various genres and also secular poems incl. panegyrics, but it seems that he was no professional poet and that his poems, transmitted in manuscripts in his own handwriting, were less popular that that of Joseph al-Baradani and David ha-Nasi.

Riikka Tuori discussed the lengthy history and geographical diversity (from medieval Egypt and Byzantium to early modern Lithuania) of Karaite poetry, which has often been deemed a "pale imitation" of the Rabbinic masterworks. Tuori demonstrated the significance of the so-called minor authors included in the fourth volume of the Karaite prayer book, which she studied in her Ph.D. dissertation *Karaite Zĕmīrōt in Poland-Lithuania: A Study of*

Paraliturgical Karaite Hebrew Poems from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Helsinki: Unigrafia, 2013). As a case study, she focused on the Lithuanian Karaite Zeraḥ ben Nathan (ca. 1578–1657/8), known for his correspondence dealing with scientific questions with the Rabbanite scholar and polymath, Joseph Solomon Delmedigo of Candia (1591–1655). Yet, he was also an autodidact poet whose oeuvre of about 30 surviving poems in print and manuscripts included both liturgical poems and various types of paraliturgical hymns for weddings and festivals.

Elisabeth Hollender summed up questions related to the quality and quantity of poetic oeuvres and their transmission in manuscript collections and/or prayer rites. She stressed that also mediocre poems written by so-called "lesser" (local) poets, who were known only in the communities where they were active and whose *piyyutim* were never transmitted beyond the region in which they (or their relatives) lived, are worthwhile for study purposes and enable us to ask questions about the intellectual horizon of poets belonging to peripheral communities. Hollender argued how the transmission of *piyyuṭim* written by "lesser" poets had more to do with the poet (his status and his personal relationships) than with the (quality of) the *piyyutim*. In sum, she claimed that important information can be gathered from piyyutim, independent of their poetic quality. After these initial statements, the volume *The Poet and the World: Festschrift for Wout van Bekkum on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, was presented to Wout van Bekkum.

The round table triggered a lively discussion during which the following topics were raised:

- The aesthetics of "functionality" vs. the concept of literary quality; the *paytanim* had a dual loyalty versus a) the earlier poetic tradition; b) their own community.
- The importance of literary fashion in bringing about change, e.g. in the introduction of rhyme patterns or the adoption of certain melodies known in the surrounding cultures.
- The importance of quantity in the Digital Humanities; in order to study patterns, it is necessary to gather the biggest amount of poems possible; yet it is problematic to define authors as minor poets based solely on the quantity of his known *piyyutim*, since this number may not reflect their original oeuvre; in other words, the availability of texts in manuscript collections such as the Cairo Genizah or the Firkovich materials is crucial.
- The difference between beautiful and non-beautiful texts: who decides about epigonism and what makes a good poem good and a bad poem bad? What about the judgement of medieval literary critics such as Moses Ibn Ezra?
- The neo-*paytanic* movement in the State of Israel: which *piyyutim* still represent a living tradition and which ones are excluded from recitation at music festivals and the like? This popularity is related to identity politics and the revival of Mizrachi Jewish culture.

Session 1: The Paytan, Piyyut and Midrash (Chair: Wout van Bekkum)

Joseph Yahalom (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and Naoya Katsumata (Kyoto University), *Ibn Abitur between Fusṭāṭ and Córdoba: Two Jewish Cultural Centers at the Turn of the Eleventh Century*

This presentation discussed the question of the place of Ibn Abitur's literary works between the two Jewish centers. One the one hand, he received his basic training at the academy of Moses ben Hanoch in Spain. On the other hand, he spent most of his years in Egypt. It is difficult to know exactly what he composed in Cordoba when he was still young and what he composed

after that in Fustat, where he settled for more than 40 years. In their analysis of the actual biography of Ibn Abitur, Yahalom and Katsumata paid particular attention to matters of chronology and geography with the aim of evaluating the way in which his life and his geographical setting between West and East is reflected in his oeuvre and assessing the considerable impact of Ibn Abitur's oeuvre on contemporary writers, above all Isaac Ibn Mar Saul of Lucena, but also later 11th c. poets such as Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Isaac Ibn Ghiyyat. One of the main arguments of Yahalom and Katsumata's paper was in postulating Ibn Abitur's relative precedence in time, especially as compared to his contemporary, Isaac Ibn Mar Saul. The discussion following this joint paper focused on matters of transmission (were there autograph manuscripts and did Ibn Abitur write drafts of poems?) and poetic themes (can the frequent references to angels be linked to magical literature); furthermore, the participants expressed their eagerness towards seeing the critical edition of Ibn Abitur's poetic oeuvre which the co-presenters are preparing.

Laura Lieber (Duke University), *The Drama is in the Details: Yannai's Poetic Reimagining of Biblical Ritual*

Lieber examined how the Yom Kippur *qerova* by the liturgical poet Yannai (ca. 6th c. CE, Galilee) offers insights into the performance and experience of Jewish liturgy in Late Antiquity, and how the deployment of sensory details in such a work intersects with the spatiality and materiality of prayer. The analysis gave an overview of the composition as a single whole which was performed in the context of the Yom Kippur morning service, itself a moment of religious drama. Comparison with the early Avodah piyyutim served to highlight distinctive elements of this composition. In her analysis, Lieber paid careful attention to elements of physicality (the fasting at Yom Kippur), spatial perception, sensory deployment, and participatory dynamics between the performer and the congregation. In her paper and also in the discussion afterwards, Lieber clarified the holistic approach she propagates, for example in taking into account also the larger performative context of Christian hymnology as well as recent trends in the study of visual culture and new archeological finds.

Elisabetta Abate (University of Göttingen), *Searching for Poetic Passages in Tannaitic Literature*

Abate offered a thematic and literary analysis of Mishnah Sotah 8:1, a section of a tannaitic midrash on Deut 20:2-9 (containing laws about preparing the army for war). Characterizing the text as a poetic composition, Abate dwelled on features such as imagery and lexis, structure and rhythm, alliteration and assonance, and the dovetailing of content and form. The discussion focused on matters of intertextuality (other battlefield scenes or representations of the soundscape of battles), the relation between midrash and piyyut (taking into account Aaron Mirsky's work), and the difference between prose texts with a poetic function (employing Roman Jakobson's terminology) and proper poetic texts embedded in Rabbinic literature.

Session 2: Hebrew Poetry and Rhymed Prose between East and West (Chair: Ayelet Oettinger)

Michael Rand (Cambridge University), *The Arabic Table of Contents of the Taḥkemoni of Judah al-Ḥarizi and the Maqamas of Etan ha-Ezraḥi*

In this paper, related to his recently published book on *The Evolution of al-Ḥarizi's* Taḥkemoni (Leiden: Brill, 2018), Rand dealt with the Arabic table of contents that is prefaced to the second recension of al-Ḥarizi's *Taḥkemoni*, stressing the innovation that it represents with regard to the development of the structure of the Classical (i.e., Ḥaririan) *maqama*. This table of contents was examined within the context of al-Ḥarizi's literary activity as well as that of Spanish and Eastern Hebrew *adab* literature in general. In addition, Rand discussed a fragment of the table of contents that has been preserved in the hitherto unpublished *maqama*s of Etan ha-Ezrahi (Egypt, 13th c. [?]) as an indicator of the adoption of al-Ḥarizi's innovation into the developing Hebrew *maqama* tradition. The discussion focused on matters related to Rand's examination of the textual evidence and raised the question whether the addition of a table of contents is only necessary for non-canonical books.

Adena Tanenbaum (Ohio State University), *Contrafaction as Counter-Writing: Zechariah Aldāhirī's Jawāb Poems*

This paper is part of a larger work by in progress by Tanenbaum investigating the imitation, appropriation, and transformation of earlier poems in Aldāhirī's *jawābāt*. Zechariah Aldāhirī (16th c.) was a robust practitioner of the mimetic technique known in Yemenite Hebrew poetry as *jawāb* (response). Like the classical Arabic *muʿārada*, this technique involved the deliberate matching of a new poem's formal features to those of an existing model. Most of Aldāhirī's contrafactions are to poems by the Andalusians and Judah Alharizi, but he also reworked pieces by Immanuel of Rome and the 13th-century Adani poet Abraham ben Halfon. His penchant for exemplars from the Andalusian corpus suggests that these texts had achieved a sort of canonic status for him, and thus the enterprise had an exegetical dimension to it. Bearing in mind that both the stand-alone *jawāb* and the more invasive *ziyāda* (amplification) are intertextual, and that their meaning is in part dependent upon their models, Tanenbaum analyzed Aldāhirī's implicit responses to the poems he emulated, modified, appropriated, or effectively rewrote. She also examined his very few explicit statements on these processes, which are found in his rhymed prose narrative, *Sefer hamusar*. The discussion focused on the equivalent Hebrew terms for *jawāb* (*shir meshiv*), *muʿārada* (*mangid shiratam*?), and *ziyāda* (*tosefet*).

Session 3: Medieval Jewish Poets and their Cultural Legacy (Chair: Joachim Yeshaya)

Masha Itzhaki (INALCO Paris), *Judah ha-Levi and Contemporary Poetry*

Quite a number of contemporary literary studies analyze the intertextual relationships between Biblical myths and figures and Israeli poetry, nevertheless almost no attention has been given to those existing with medieval Hebrew poetry and poets. In this presentation Itzhaki examined the intertextual uses of Judah ha-Levi, the historical figure and his poetry, in contemporary Hebrew poetry. This paper focused on 3 case studies: a) The concept of the "Jewish journey" in Amichai's *Open, Closed, Open* (1998); b) "Zion" (ציון הלא תשאלי) as intertext to the political sarcasm in Nathan Zach's poems; c) East and West in Ronny Someck's poem "Rihal Madrid" (ריה"ל מדריד). In the discussion other poems were taken into account, including Ronny Someck's "Striptease of the Rose" and a poem by Shva Salhoov taken from her 2012 book תורת החיתוכים and based on ציון הלא תשאלי.

Dudu Rotman (Achva Academic College) and Uriah Kfir (Ben-Gurion University), *Baʿal ha-ʾazharot: S. Y. Agnon Revisits Solomon Ibn Gabirol*

S. Y. Agnon's story *Ha-siman* (1944; 1962) is probably the author's most explicit literary reaction to the Holocaust and the 1943 destruction of Buczacz Jewry in Agnon's hometown in Galicia. Strangely enough, the story also weaves in and out of the tradition of *Piyyut*, by centering on Solomon Ibn Gabirol, and in particular his *Azharot* for the Shavuʿot festival. The climax of the story is when Ibn Gabirol, who had been dead for almost a millennium, reveals himself to the protagonist (who is modeled after Agnon's own character) as the latter is reciting Ibn Gabirol's liturgy. This presentation was based on Rotman and Kfir's joint work on a larger project which focuses on the great Hebrew poets of the Andalusian Golden Age, not simply as authors of poetry in their own right, but primarily as the subjects of literary works by others (poems, short stories, novels, folk traditions, plays, popular songs and even comics) in a continuous tradition which extends from the Middle Ages to our times. By presenting several literary references to Ibn Gabirol (e.g. by Maimonides and his exegetes, folk stories, etc.), Rotman and Kfir argued that Agnon's Ibn Gabirol is a link in a chain of a rich tradition which typically sees him as *Baʿal ha-ʾazharot* (author of the Azharot). This tradition can also shed new light on the story's finale (which gave the story its name, *Ha-siman*, "The Sign"), which narrates the (ill-fated) attempt of the resurrected Ibn Gabirol to create a literary monument for the liquidated community of Buczacz.

Sarah Pearce (New York University), *In the Taifas of Monsey and Great Neck: Samuel ibn Naghrīla's Poetry in Hasidic Literature in the United States*

This paper looked at two receptions of the poetry of Samuel ibn Naghrīla in ultra-Orthodox communities in the United States. One is the presentation of Ibn Naghrīla as an influence on Judah ibn Tibbon in the bilingual Hebrew-English introduction to an edition by Pinhas Korah of Ibn Tibbon's ethical will designed for an ultra-Orthodox readership. The other is a graphic novel (comic book) that presents the biography of Ibn Naghrīla and portrays him and his poetry in as de-Arabized a context as possible. By studying the quotations from Ibn Naghrīla's *diwān* in this two works, Pearce demonstrated the ways in which the poet is transformed from a Sephardi literary and cultural model into an Ashkenazi one that better serves the interests of a very particular community of readers. The discussion centered around matters of graphics, editorial agenda, Jewish nationalism and language choice (New York English). One of the participants noted that this graphic novel was also translated into (bad) Hebrew.

Session 4: Research of Medieval Hebrew Poetry—Past and Future (Chair: Naoya Katsumata)

Jonathan Vardi (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), *The Generations of the Hebrew Poets in Muslim Spain According to Moses Ibn Ezra: Re-examination*

Moses Ibn Ezra's book of poetics, *Kitāb al-Mukhāḍara wal-Mudhakara* includes a detailed narrative describing the history of the Hebrew-Andalusi poetic school. It contains a rather peculiar comparison between the generations of Hebrew poets and the periods of Arabic poetry. What do the first Hebrew poets in Spain, Menaḥem b. Saruq and Dunash b. Labrat have in common with the pre-Islamic poets, or Samuel ha-Nagid with the *Mukhaḍramūn* (contemporaries of the Prophet)? Was Ibn Ezra so charmed by historical typologies or so determined to present the Hebrew poetry as a perfect parallel of the Arabic one, that he forced this foreign periodization on the work of his fellows? A close reading of Ibn Ezra's words by Vardi demonstrated that this comparison actually reveals his profound comprehension of the Hebrew literature of his time, and offers a new way to analyze diachronically the development of the Hebrew-Andalusi poetics. Vardi's paper triggered lively discussion concerning the tricky term *Mukhaḍramūn* and its accepted usage in Arabic literary criticism as referring to

transitional periods of literature, but even more so concerning the differences between the poetic styles of Samuel ha-Nagid (lyrical style: frequent usage of simile rather than metaphors) and Moses Ibn Ezra (badi' "novel" style; all-encompassing and sophisticated use of metaphors).

Peter Sh. Lehnardt (Ben-Gurion University), *Heinrich Brody for the 21st Century: Romantic, Idealistic and Contextual Literary Criticism*

Hayim (Heinrich) Brody (1868, Ungvár—1942, Jerusalem), was undoubtedly one of the founders of the academic research of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry, even if he was most of the time a practicing Rabbi, participated in fundamental research projects such as the *Hebräische Bibliographie* and the edition series of *Meqitse Nirdamim*, until he was in 1930 appointed head of the Schocken Institute for Hebrew Poetry, first in Berlin and then in Jerusalem. In his paper, Lehnardt offered some criteria of a reevaluation of Brody's methodological development from a romanticist subjective approach (known for its German translations of Hebrew poems), through idealistic "objectivization" to a contextual literary criticism (leading to Hebrew editions with complete commentaries in Hebrew, and ultimately, to the "Jerusalem school" of writing editions with commentaries in Hebrew.) In the discussion, Lehnardt stressed the versatility and didactic qualities of Brody, who dealt with various periods of poetic creativity.

Session 5: War and Love in Spanish-Hebrew Poetry (Chair: Aurora Salvatierra)

Barbara Gryczan (University of Warsaw), *The "Neo-Solomonic" Dream of Samuel ha-Nagid, as Presented in Some of his War Poems*

According to Gryczan, Shmuel ha-Nagid was the first to fully embrace and comprehensively develop the idea of reviving the biblical Hebrew language through literature. He was also the only poet to compose Hebrew war poems which he submerged deeply in the conceptual as well as the historic reality of the Bible. Ha-Nagid envisioned a strong, self-aware, and influential Jewish society that created its own chronicle worthy to be a continuation of the biblical one. Through his writing the Hebrew language was no longer to be perceived as used solely for sacral proposes but was to become the living language of contemporary Jewish history once again. Moreover, ha-Nagid's ambition was to serve not only as a faithful recorder of happenings but also as their main protagonist, much like King David or Solomon, exercising a legitimate influence on the events of his time. Aspiring to be the leader of the renewed Jewish society modelled after the biblical Kingdom was quite audacious an endeavour, and so was even the idea of commenting on the current events in the biblical manner. In her presentation, Gryczan discussed poems in which ha-Nagid strives to legitimise his role, using every chance to create either a direct or allusive connection between himself and selected biblical luminaries, between his words and the words of the Bible. The discussion focused on whether the Hebrew language was really alive as a spoken language in medieval Spain (e.g. Ha-Nagid's son Joseph being proficient in Hebrew already at a young age) and in which kinds of situations Hebrew might actually have been used in the Middle Ages (e.g. meetings of Jews from different countries; Hebrew as a sort of *lingua franca*?) Also the question of the linguistic divide between Judeo-Arabic (used for everyday communication and writing) and Hebrew (used in poetry) was raised.

Arie Schippers (University of Amsterdam), *Jewish, Muslim and Christian Love in Strophic Poetry from Muslim Spain*

The *muwashshaḥ* (girdle poem), which originally is a specific form of Arabo-Andalusian strophic poetry, is different from the official Arabic ode called *qaṣīda*, which is not subdivided in strophes, and has only one rhyme in the whole poem. The *muwashshaḥ* has been imitated by the Spanish Jewish poets in Hebrew, and is usually called *shir ezor* (girdle poem). In his paper, Schippers analyzed a selection of Hebrew girdle poems by Moses Ibn Ezra (1055–1138) and compared them to Arabic counterparts written by Abd al-Sahl al-Isra'ili, a Jewish convert to Islam. Giving an overview of the linguistic features (especially the frequent use of the imperative form) and the clusters of (love) themes and motifs in these poems, Schippers kept in mind the Arabic literary context in which Ibn Ezra's poems were composed and paid extra attention to the Classical or Colloquial Arabic and Romance texts included within the *kharja*s (the exit lines of these strophic poems).

Workshop: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Digital Humanities*— (*But Were Afraid to Ask) (Chair: Ophir Münz-Manor; Open University of Israel)

Exploring the prospects of digital approaches to textual scholarship as well as their challenges and shortcomings, Münz-Manor discussed a few manifesto's by Franco Moretti (Stanford Literary Lab; the concept of "distant reading") and Jill Lepore (the rise and fall of the fact in humanities and society at large). The problem of the growing gap between non-computational colleagues and digital humanists (some of whom have lost contact with the texts themselves) was also raised, and Münz-Manor (together with his colleague Itay Marienberg-Milikowsky) proposed a fusion of close reading of the texts themselves as well as distant reading and a quantitative approach in other to find patterns in order to remedy this; he also referred to his forthcoming article on "analogue poetry in a digital world."

Münz-Manor explored several tools and websites that are available for the academic end-user and that require no technical knowledge or abilities in order to digitally process and analyze (poetic) texts:

Palladio - Visualize complex historical data with ease*
https://hdlab.stanford.edu/palladio/

Palladio's tutorials: https://hdlab.stanford.edu/palladio/help/

Catma - For undogmatic Textual Markup and Analysis https://catma.de

Catma's manuals / tutorials: https://catma.de/documentation/

Voyant - See through your text* https://voyant-tools.org

Voyant Help: https://voyant-tools.org/docs/#!/guide/about

Avi Shmidman's digital Piyyut edition website: http://www.qerovot18.com

Session 6: Hebrew Rhymed Prose outside al-Andalus (Chair: Adena Tanenbaum)

Aurora Salvatierra (University of Granada), *Diḵre ha-ʾala ve-ha-nidduy (Words of Curse and Excommunication) by Judah Ibn Shabbetai: Cursing in Rhymed Prose*

Salvatierra examined Judah ibn Shabbetai (ca. 1168–ca. 1225)'s *Diḇre ha-ʾala ve-ha-nidduy* (*Words of Curse and Excommunication*), a *maqāma*-style work aimed at publicly discrediting five prominent members of the Jewish community of Zaragoza. This work forms an interesting example of how this Jewish poet from Christian Spain constructed his adversaries and projected his ideas about evil onto them. After the evil that characterizes them is described, the enemies are condemned with cursing images and formulas with a high degree of verbal violence. According to Salvatierra, the meaning and function of this type of discourse, which is known from contemporary legal and religious documents, is transferred to a literary framework that is traditionally associated with *belles-lettres*: rhymed prose and poetry. The transposition of the curses to this textual space may have been a recourse that made it possible to fictionalize certain people and situate them in a narrative context where they could be condemned using performative language. This would legitimize a discourse difficult to accept in another genre because of its aggressiveness and the profile of its targets, all members of the power structure. Questions for Salvatierra included the possibility that this work was a parody and that it shared certain features with his more well-known work *Minḥat Yehuda śoneʾ ha-nashim*, and also the issue of the relationship to magical curses and oaths was raised during the discussion.

Dana Fishkin (Touro College), *Sin and Gender in the Works of Immanuel of Rome*

This paper focused on the sin of adultery in both the literary and exegetical works of Immanuel Ha-Romi. On his tour of Hell, in *Mahberet Ha-Tophet V'Ha-Eden*, Immanuel encounters a group of female adulteresses who rejected eternal life in favor of eternal punishment. He also sees an adulterer enduring punishment for his sin, but Immanuel's unique description of the sin of adultery does not focus on the act itself, but rather the social and moral ramifications of the adulterous union. The adulterer is punished because his illegitimate and uneducated child caused civic disorder in the community. This same view is expanded and developed in Immanuel's commentary on the Judah and Tamar story in Genesis, where the prohibition of prostitution linked to adultery is cast as a blight on social morality. Advocating an interdisciplinary approach, Fishkin argued that Immanuel's acute focus on gender, sexual morality and their role in the social order, apparent in both his literary tale and biblical commentary, reflects the Christian communal values of social order and morality emphasized by Italian communes in their state-building campaigns in the 13th-14th c. The discussion focused particularly on the question whether Immanuel in other *maqama*s upheld a more forgiving attitude towards the sin of adultery, and whether due to its philosophical approach the *Mahberet Ha-Tophet V'Ha-Eden* can be deemed an exception for that matter.

Revital Refael-Vivante (Bar-Ilan University) and Shmuel Refael-Vivante (Bar-Ilan University), *"Maase Zofar"* מעשה צופר *(Salonica, ~1600): A Study of An Enigmatic Hebrew Story*

Maasé Zofar is a short novella written in Hebrew, published in Salonica around the year 1600 by the Bat Sheva Brothers publishing house. A partial hand-written version of this work is also extant in the British library, and is apparently an Italian manuscript from the 17th century. The main character in this work is Zofar, and the story depicts his escapades as his struggles to support his family cause him to resort to a host of tricks, deceptions and even unusual cruelty. He achieves his objectives in all sorts of curious ways, and he always makes sure to pray to God to be by his side and help him succeed. This story, which the presenters have recently published (and translated into Spanish) with the University of Granada Press, was in earlier scholarly research unwarrantedly attributed to Shem Tov Ardutiel de Carrion, but according to Refael-Vivante an earlier version of this non-rhymed story existed in Spain and some of its

motifs (e.g. the donkey that produces silver coins) found its way to several folk tales in Spain, Portugal, the Americas and elsewhere. The Hebrew adaptation of the story was probably written about 100 years after the exile from Spain in Salonica, but it remains a mystery why Hebrew and not Judeo-Spanish was chosen. One of the questions raised during the discussion was whether the name Zofar was also in the original Spanish story (apparently not), and if not, who chose this particular name, the author of the work or rather the publisher?

4) A summary highlighting the most significant and productive threads in papers and discussions, with a reflection on the tasks ahead.

Since previous MHPC's have acted as barometers of changing opinions and novel trends in the research field, both in the kinds of questions asked as well as in the methods and sources employed, Joachim Yeshaya (KU Leuven) attempted to summarize the gist of this edition at the end of the 9th MHPC. First and for all, the topics raised during the opening roundtable and also in the Festschrift (see above) served as a *leitmotif* and were touched upon in several contributions during this colloquium.

Furthermore, it became apparent that Spain is back in full swing. 13 years ago, the late Angel Sáenz-Badillos noted and regretted the near absence of papers dealing with Spanish-Hebrew poetry during the 2006 Boston meeting; in Leuven the Spanish center made a glorious return; is this move from periphery towards center part of a wider research trend or a mere coincidence? Hebrew rhymed prose is clearly and increasingly so part of the interest of the participants; in fact, almost 1/3 of the sessions of the Leuven meeting was devoted to rhymed prose; this should not necessarily be reflected in the name of the MHPC, but it is striking nevertheless. The Piyyut section was—despite a promising opening on the first day—slightly smaller than usual; the relationship between the Paytan and his World but also that of Piyyut and Midrash seem to be fruitful avenues for further research.

As to methodology—the Digital Humanities are a blossoming research field and the MHPC network is fortunate enough to have a few colleagues in Hebrew poetry who can be guiding lights in this field, including Ophir Münz-Manor (Open University of Israel) and Avi Shmidman (Bar-Ilan University). At the end of his workshop, Ophir Münz-Manor volunteered to be a contact person for any questions concerning DH or computational literary studies. As to the kinds of questions asked—the reception history of Hebrew poets as cultural heroes in (modern) Jewish culture seems to have become a hot topic: Ophir Münz-Manor contributed a study of the *nachleben* of Elʿazar berabbi Qillir to the Festschrift and during this meeting there was a complete session devoted to the topic of medieval Jewish poets and their cultural legacy.

5) A statement about planned outcomes (projects, future workshops, collaborations) and outputs (publications)

During the summary session, the participants of the MHPC welcomed the idea of holding a Tenth MHPC meeting already in July 2020 in Madrid, in order not to conflict with the dates of the 2021 World Congress of Jewish Studies and the 2022 EAJS Conference. One of the organizers will be Sarah Pearce (New York University), who suggested New York University's new campus in Madrid as a possible site for the next MHPC. Even more attention will be paid towards attracting young scholars (hopefully with the help of travel money) and towards having various formats during the MHPC, including roundtables, workshops, textual study sessions and so on.

Since the main goal of the event is to present work in progress to an audience of peers, no joint publication is anticipated. However, papers presented during the ninth MHPC will serve as a basis for individual publications by participants. The edited volume *The Poet and the World: Festschrift for Wout van Bekkum on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, which was presented during the opening round table (see above), is the result of cooperation between members of the MHPC network.

6) The actual final programme of the event

Monday, July 15th, 2019

10:00-10:30: Welcome to the 9th MHPC by Joachim Yeshaya, Pierre Van Hecke (vice dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at KU Leuven) and Elisabeth Hollender (EAJS president)

10:30-12:00: **Round table: The Paytan and his World (Chair: Elisabeth Hollender)**

Tova Beeri, Wout van Bekkum, Elisabeth Hollender, Michael Swartz, Riikka Tuori

13:30-15:30: **Session 1: The Paytan, Piyyut and Midrash (Chair: Wout van Bekkum)**

Joseph Yahalom and Naoya Katsumata, *Ibn Abitur between Fusṭāṭ and Córdoba: Two Jewish Cultural Centers at the Turn of the Eleventh Century*

Laura Lieber, *The Drama is in the Details: Yannai's Poetic Reimagining of Biblical Ritual*

Elisabetta Abate, *Searching for Poetic Passages in Tannaitic Literature*

16:00-17:30: **Session 2: Hebrew Poetry and Rhymed Prose between East and West (Chair: Ayelet Oettinger)**

Michael Rand, *The Arabic Table of Contents of the Taḥkemoni of Judah al-Ḥarizi and the Maqamas of Etan ha-Ezraḥi*

Adena Tanenbaum, *Contrafaction as Counter-Writing: Zechariah Aldāhirī's Jawāb Poems*

Tuesday, July 16th, 2019

9:00-11:00: **Session 3: Medieval Jewish Poets and their Cultural Legacy (Chair: Joachim Yeshaya)**

Masha Itzhaki, *Judah ha-Levi and Contemporary Poetry*

Dudu Rotman and Uriah Kfir, *Baʿal ha-ʾazharot: S. Y. Agnon Revisits Solomon Ibn Gabirol*

Sarah Pearce, *In the Taifas of Monsey and Great Neck: Samuel ibn Naghrīla's Poetry in Hasidic Literature in the United States*

11:30-13:00: **Session 4: Research of Medieval Hebrew Poetry—Past and Future (Chair: Naoya Katsumata)**

Jonathan Vardi, *The Generations of the Hebrew Poets in Muslim Spain According to Moses Ibn Ezra: Re-examination*

Peter Sh. Lehnardt, *Heinrich Brody for the 21st Century: Romantic, Idealistic and Contextual Literary Criticism*

16:00-18:00: **Session 5: War, Love and Education in Spanish-Hebrew Poetry (Chair: Aurora Salvatierra)**

Barbara Gryczan, *The "Neo-Solomonic" Dream of Samuel ha-Nagid, as Presented in Some of his War Poems*

Arie Schippers, *Jewish, Muslim and Christian Love in Strophic Poetry from Muslim Spain*

Wednesday, July 17th, 2019

9:00-10:30: **Workshop: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Digital Humanities*— (*But Were Afraid to Ask) (Chair: Ophir Münz-Manor)**

11:00-13:00: **Session 6: Hebrew Rhymed Prose outside al-Andalus (Chair: Adena Tanenbaum)**

Aurora Salvatierra, *Diḇre ha-ʾala ve-ha-nidduy (Words of Curse and Excommunication) by Judah Ibn Shabbetai: Cursing in Rhymed Prose*

Dana Fishkin, *Sin and Gender in the Works of Immanuel of Rome*

Revital Refael-Vivante and Shmuel Refael-Vivante, *"Maase Zofar"* מעשה צופר *(Salonica, ~1600): A Study of An Enigmatic Hebrew Story*

14:30-15:30: Summary of the 9th MHPC by Joachim Yeshaya + where does the Medieval Hebrew Poetry Colloquium go?