

Pe'amim

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162

The Middle Ages:
Liturgy and Commentary

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**Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish
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In This Issue

“Yitbarach” poems are literary units beginning with the formula “blessed be the name of the holy one, blessed be he” and enlist praises of the divine related to the following midrashic or homiletic text. A study of those units – many of them reconstructed for the first time from Genizah fragments – points at stylistic and thematic affinities to various liturgical texts. It seems that these literary units moved between interchanging contexts from synagogue performances to literary formation processes of late midrashic compositions. The literary and performative processes presented in the article imply key developments in rabbinic literature in the East in the transition from Late Antiquity to the Medieval period, culminating in the rise of the author’s status as reflected in Geonic Monographs.

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Two of the most important sources regarding early Jewish liturgy are the Prayer Book of Saadia Gaon and the Prayer Book of Solomon ben Nathan. In this article, we consider the text of the Grace after Meals based upon the full array of extant textual witnesses of the two aforementioned prayer books. The article offers a reconstruction of the original text of the Grace after Meals according to each of the two prayer

books, and considers and explicate the salient differences between the two texts.

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The article discusses biographical details about Maimonides as mentioned in the Qur'an commentary of Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (1256-1344), a hitherto unknown source for Maimonides' life. The article focuses on the representation of Maimonides by Abū Ḥayyān in the context of details mentioned about Maimonides by other medieval Muslim authors.

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This article presents several short linguistic observations regarding the original text of the *Guide of the Perplexed*. Some of the remarks propose a different understanding of the text, or a different reading of the text. Other cases call attention to Maimonides' personal style (for instance, the extensive use of demonstrative pronouns), the influence of the Spanish dialect, or the concrete use of the definitive article. Many remarks deal with Middle Arabic (Judaeo-Arabic) features, including pseudo-corrections. Prof. (Emeritus) Joshua Blau passed away during the production of this issue. Prof. Blau taught at the Department for Arabic Language and Literature, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

He was the third President of the Academy of the Hebrew Language and an Israel Prize Laureate (1985).

Yefet ben Eli is famous for his efforts to analyze the psychological motives of biblical characters. This article examines the manner in which Yefet analyzed David's behavior and psychological frame of mind during the last days of his reign: his relationship with his sons, his position on the issue of the succession of the throne, and his relationship with Joab. Yefet's insights are compared to those of Jewish and Christian commentators, and modern scholarship.

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Three different descriptions of the Holy Land were written by Jews during the 1210s, by Samuel b. Samson, Menaḥem of Hebron, and Yehuda al-Ḥarīzī. All three distinguished between Jewish communities along the coast which were under Crusader control, and communities in the hinterland which were under Ayyubid rule. The first two ignored the coastal communities, since they did not consider them a reliable source for the transmission of the holy tradition of the Land of Israel, whereas al-Ḥarīzī was highly critical of the community in Acre due to its leaders' attitude towards Maimonides's legacy.

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Garcia de Orta (1501-1568) was a Jewish physician who lived in Portugal as a 'New Christian'. In 1534 he fled to Goa in India, where he lived, still concealing his Jewish ancestry. In 1563 he published in Goa a book on the simples and drugs of India. The article examines whether the book contains any allusions to Orta's Jewish background.

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