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Published in:
Journal of Jewish Studies

DOI:
[10.18647/3328/JJS-2017](https://doi.org/10.18647/3328/JJS-2017)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2017

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Bekkum, W., & Katsumata, N. (2017). Between Convention and Innovation: A Study of Thematic and Literary Features of Three Sedarim for Wayyosha of the tenth and eleventh centuries . *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 68(2), 324-345. <https://doi.org/10.18647/3328/JJS-2017>

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Between convention and innovation: a study of thematic and literary features of three Sedarim for Wayyosha of the tenth and eleventh centuries

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ABSTRACT This article is based on the edition and study of three lengthy compositions for the Seventh Day of Passover (Wayyosha – Exod. 14:30). These compositions are outstanding in length and show parallel characteristics in structure and content. Recent publications of these three Sedarim offer introductions to structural characteristics and describe ways of inserting all the opening words from Canticles, Exodus 15 and Judges 5. Now that we have these poems at our disposal, we address questions about the place and time of their emergence and use. We analyse these compositions within one context, and discover interesting fusions of motifs and themes, which are at times taken from rabbinic sources or otherwise invented by the composers themselves. Three text samples from the same two stanzas demonstrate the various levels of connection. We believe that local or regional custom was involved in writing this poetry within a restricted period of time.

THIS STUDY is based on three publications of Sedarim for Wayyosha (Exod. 14:30).¹ All three compositions are lengthy and exhibit a number of parallel characteristics, in both structure and content. The earlier two of these three Sedarim offer introductions to their structural characteristics and insert all the opening words from Canticles, Exodus 15 and Judges 5.

1. W. van Bekkum, 'Shir Ha-Shirim, a Medieval Hebrew Poem for the Seventh Day of Passover', *Dutch Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures* 1 (1995), pp. 21–84; idem, 'Additions to Seder Shir Ha-Shirim, a Medieval Hebrew Poem for the Seventh Day of Passover', *Dutch Studies in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures* 4 (1999), pp. 87–94; W. van Bekkum and N. Katsumata, 'Divine Love and the Salvation of Israel: A New Composition for the Seventh Day of Passover', *Ginzei Qedem, Genizah Research Annual* 10 (2014), pp. 45*–97*; J. Yahalom and N. Katsumata (eds), *Yotserot for Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Festivals – Indices* (vol. 2 of *The Yotserot of R. Samuel the Third, A Leading Figure in Jerusalem of the 10th Century* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2014), pp. 849–92.

Moreover, each composition refers to a number of scriptural verses in which songs of the Bible are represented. This article will focus on matters of content as well as on literary features, by which we hope to demonstrate that the three compositions are interrelated for the sake of Yom Wayyosha, the Seventh Day of Passover that commemorates the divine salvation of the people of Israel from the hands of the Egyptians. Jewish liturgy and Hebrew hymnography preserve an older tradition of poems intended for Passover. Early paytanim like Joseph birabbi Nissan versified the subject of Wayyosha in different contexts that are not connected with Canticles at all; the Song at the Sea (Exod. 14:30–15:18) self-evidently stands at the centre of the hymnist's handling of this festive day.² The verses of Exodus 15 are usually conceived as an ideal paradigm for the past repression and subsequent redemption of Israel, a paradigm that retains significance and relevance for the generations to come. Therefore the Seventh Day of Passover is marked by the reading of this scriptural text.

At a certain moment in the late antique history of Hebrew liturgical poetry a tendency arose to pay specific attention to Wayyosha motifs and themes in relation to Canticles. For instance, the sixth-century Byzantine-Jewish composer (*paytan*) Yannai composed both a *shiv'ata* and a *qedushta* based on Canticles.³ From then on one will usually find an intrinsic connection between the themes of Wayyosha and the intentions of Canticles: the salvation of Israel is a token of God's love and affection which time and again has been stressed in liturgical poetry and exegetical prose. This interconnection has also been well established within the lengthy structures of the three compositions under discussion, and it is clearly expressed in the literary devices and the matters of content vis-à-vis the numerous liturgical and poetic texts on the subject of Passover and all that is attached to it.⁴

Now that we have at least three of these poems at our disposal, new questions can be asked about the place and time of their emergence. The

2. M. Zulay, *Eretz Israel and Its Poetry, Studies in Piyyutim from the Cairo Genizah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), pp. 182–6; E. HaCohen, 'Joseph birabbi Nissan from Sheweh Qiryatayyim, This is Neweh, an Ancient Hebrew Hymnist from the Bashan', *Al Atar* 4–5 (1999), pp. 229–39.

3. Z.M. Rabinovitz (ed.), *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai According to the Triennial Cycle of the Pentateuch and the Holidays* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1987), pp. 265–89; L. Lieber, *A Vocabulary of Desire: The Song of Songs in the Early Synagogue* (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2014), pp. 195–263.

4. See our article in J. Yeshaya and E. Hollender (eds), *Exegesis and Poetry in Medieval Karaite and Rabbanite Texts* (Karaite Texts and Studies 9; Études sur le Judaïsme Medieval 68; Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2016), pp. 17–39.

composers of the first two Sedarim are unknown, although the manuscripts offer some vague references to their composers, in one case possibly bearing the name Yehudah, and in the other case possibly bearing the name 'Eli.⁵ Since we know nothing more than these names, both compositions can be considered anonymous, unlike the third Seder, whose composer is Samuel the Third, a prominent figure in Jewish history from the late tenth to the early eleventh century. We possess many biographical details about Samuel the Third, both as a leader of Palestinian Jewry and as a literary figure. As to the question of chronology or an attempt to fix the moment of the emergence of these three texts in Jewish liturgy, no conclusive answer can be given, not even when we take into account that we are quite certain about the lifetime of Samuel the Third. However, this study adopts a chronological order of Sedarim for Wayyosha based on palaeographical arguments related to the reconstruction of what is called *Mahzor Eretz Yisra'el*. Recent research has established that one fragment from Seder 1 appears in this *Mahzor*, which can be approximately dated to the ninth and early tenth centuries.⁶ On this basis one can assume that Seder 1 is definitely earlier than Seder 3 because of our certainty regarding Samuel's lifetime. In lines 571–99 of his Seder he inserts an acrostic name: שמואל הרביעי בחבורה בהושענא – 'Samuel the Fourth in the Academy, son of Hoshā'na'. This insertion clearly alludes to an early stage of his life around the year 1001, since he signed a document dating from 10 November 1004 as השלישי בחבורה בירבי – 'Samuel the Third in the Academy Birabbi'. Samuel's promotion up the ranks of the Geonic Academy had taken place before 1004.⁷ With regard to Seder 2, some scholarly discussion has originated from the assumption that this Seder was composed by a later copyist and poet by the name of 'Eli ben Yehezkel (eleventh century).⁸ This would imply that Seder 2 was composed after that of Samuel the Third, but this seems unlikely to us. Given the considerable number of direct parallels between Seder 2 and Seder 1 there is much reason

5. Van Bekkum, 'Shir Ha-Shirim', p. 32; Van Bekkum and Katsumata, 'Divine Love', pp. 50*–51*, esp. note 13.

6. J. Yahalom and E. Engel, *Mahzor Eretz Israel, A Geniza Codex* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987); see M. Rand, 'Was Mahzor Eretz Israel – A Geniza Codex Indeed Used in Eretz Israel? New Fragments of the Codex and their Contribution to an Understanding of the Nature of its Liturgical Rite', *Tarbiz* 82:4 (2014), pp. 529–47, esp. pp. 536–7.

7. Yahalom and Katsumata, *The Yotserot of R. Samuel the Third*, vol. 1, pp. 18, 22.

8. The opinion of Ezra Fleischer, based on oral information supplied by Dr Sarah Cohen, The Ezra Fleischer Institute for the Research of Hebrew Poetry in the Genizah.

to suppose that the two anonymous Sedarim are closer to each other than Samuel's Seder is to both of them. Therefore our numbering of Sedarim is probably the best option for this study.

What could explain the wish of a number of paytanim within this relatively short period of time (tenth and eleventh centuries) to devote so many lines to the liturgical themes of the Seventh Day of Passover (the story of Israel's salvation at the Sea of Reeds) that show Israel's gratitude to God, who crushed the Egyptian enemy, by whom all enemies of Israel are represented? These themes include the divine love as portrayed in Canticles, the victorious Song of Deborah, and scriptural references to singing and chanting. Why did they discuss all these great motifs in one large framework of 40 stanzas that are similar or even identical to one another? Hebrew hymnography does not contain similar groups of compositions for one specific day in the liturgical calendar. Even *Sidrei 'Avodah*, the lengthy poems for Yom Kippur, were composed by individual paytanim over a very long period of time, each of them in his own generation, although they all adhere to the conventions of this particular genre. A comparison with *Sidrei 'Avodah* can help us understand aspects of (fixed) patterns, as well as the consistency of the genre throughout the centuries.⁹ The phenomenon of thematic elaboration in combination with a rather well-defined and delineated structural framework is widely known in Jewish hymnology. From the medieval manuscripts we learn that such poetic works may stand in a long historical tradition and bear the title *Seder* or *Sidra*. The definition of a *Seder* or *Sidra* pertains to the sequence of subject matter or to a sequence of what could also be seen as independent hymns, which appear in a lengthy series of poetic verse.¹⁰ Like the compositions for Wayyosha, the *'Avodot* are commonly defined as *Sedarim*, in accordance with Geonic sources that mention the recitation of the *Seder 'Avodah* on Yom Kippur.¹¹ Indeed, Sedarim for Yom Kippur are an independent genre, but our question is whether we should treat the Sedarim for Wayyosha in a

9. M.D. Swartz and J. Yahalom, *Avodah, An Anthology of Ancient Poetry for Yom Kippur* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), pp. 15–39; N. Katsumata, *Seder Avodah for the Day of Atonement by Shelomoh Suleiman Al-Sinjari* (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 24; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 1–5: most exceptionally, this paytan, alongside the earliest composer Yose ben Yose (fourth century), wrote more than one *Seder 'Avodah*!

10. E. Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in the Middle Ages* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1975; reprint Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2007), p. 180.

11. A. Mirsky, *Yosse ben Yosse, Poems* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1977), p. 27.

diachronic manner or whether we can arrange them synchronically within certain limits of time and place.

Additionally, the fact that Wayyosha compositions are brought into one context, together with the book of Canticles, has led to interesting fusions of motifs and themes, which are at times taken from rabbinic sources or otherwise invented by the paytanim themselves. The overall dominance of the sequence of words taken from Canticles at the beginning of each quatrain throughout the entire composition establishes an atmosphere in which singing songs and praising God play the major role. This is clearly enforced by the insertion at the beginning of each third line within the quatrains of scriptural verses referring to famous songs in the Hebrew Bible, such as Num. 21:17 ('Then Israel sang this song'), Ps. 30:1 ('A psalm and song at the dedication of the house of David'), Ps. 98:1 ('A psalm, sing to the Lord a new song'), and 2 Chron. 20:21 ('And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers to the Lord, who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and who should say, Give thanks to the Lord; for His steadfast love endures forever'). Rabbinic sources have fixed the number of famous scriptural songs at ten (as in the *Mekhilta*⁹ and in the *Targum*), to which both the anonymous composer of Seder 1 and Samuel the Third adhered. The insertion of references to all verses of Canticles and each word from the ten scriptural verses can explain, to a large extent, why these Sedarim became so lengthy. For this reason, a fixed stanzaic pattern had been developed, consisting of three quatrains and one triplet, which could be multiplied until all references were used. A simple calculation informs us that it would have been sufficient for each composition to consist of 39 stanzas – that is, 585 lines – for the total of 117 verses from each chapter in the book of Canticles. Nevertheless, each Seder is composed of the round number of 40 stanzas, including 600 lines! Indeed, the last stanza in each of the three Sedarim contains distinctive opening words and deals with a unique theme of astrological purport connected to Judg. 5:20 ('They fought from heaven, the stars in their forces fought against Sisera'). After discussing each Seder's overall stylistic features, we will turn to each one's specific closure in detail.

For the sake of comparing and contrasting each Seder for Wayyosha, we have selected the same two stanzas from all three compositions, the lines 181–210, by which we would like to demonstrate the various levels of connection between the opening words of Canticles (line 1 in each strophe), the

references to the scriptural verses pertaining to the subject of singing (line 3 in each strophe), and the transitions to the scriptural closing verses (line 4 in each strophe). One of the main issues that concerns us is the allusions within each stanza to line 15 (the general theme of salvation of Israel from Egypt by the hand of God) and to line 30 (Deborah's song). The ensuing paragraphs will discuss literary and stylistic aspects of each poetic text, about which we can already make preliminary generalizations: Seder 1 displays a more conventional and even classical-piyyutic impression; Seder 2 tends to employ liturgical and prayer-like components; and Samuel the Third in Seder 3 uses a more personal and post-classical language and style.

In the text from Seder 1 (see pages 7–8 below) a number of linguistic and stylistic features are notable, for instance the use of a nominal form like חמד and a verbal form like נמתי as in the line *מְשַׁכְנִי לְהַר הַחֵמֶד נִמְתִּי בְּסִבְרָה* (l. 16: 'Draw me near to the mountain of pleasance – Sinai – I spoke explicitly'), and the sequence of synonyms: *אֵל תִּרְאוּנִי צְנוּמָה שְׂדוּפָה שְׁבוּרָה* (l. 24: 'Do not gaze upon me, [because I am] withered, blasted, broken'). The following quotation exemplifies the grammar of piyyutic Hebrew (l. 37): *וּבְנֵי בִילְגָשׁ יִקְוּמוּ וְהַצֵּר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל* ('and the sons of the concubine – the Ishmaelites – will rise, and Israel will be sorely distressed'). The latter example is partly taken from Judges 10:9, where the verbal form *וְהַצֵּר* is in the past tense according to Biblical Hebrew grammar. However, in this line the paytan uses this same form in the future tense analogous to the verbal form *יִקְוּמוּ*. Piyyutic style is also effected by alliterative wordplay, as in l. 463: *מַעֲמִים מְקוֹבְצֶת נִקְבְּצֶת בְּנִי*: *קוֹל מוֹנְעָמִים* ('those who use a sweet voice [for prayer] will be gathered and collected from the nations').¹²

Our two-stanza example elaborates the well-known and widespread tradition of the Four Kingdoms, as it originates in the Book of Daniel. The first stanza opens by explicitly mentioning the Four Kingdoms, with details given in the following lines and strophes: Sinear, Media, Greece, and a fourth unnamed kingdom (probably Edom, Rome or Ishmael). Also, l. 115 explicitly mentions 'the Four Kingdoms' against whom God will fight by drawing his bow towards them: *אַרְבַּע מַלְכוּתוֹת לְמוֹלָם קָשְׁתִּי אָעִיר*.

12. Van Bekkum, 'Shir Ha-Shirim', pp. 35–6, 50.

Seder 1: *Seder Wwayyosha* לעושה דיניי אשורר שיר השירים

XIII

Four kingdoms *have found me* <Cant. 3:3>, they are cheering in order to subdue me,

By the hand of Sinear [Babel] I was severely weakened and made ill,
For yourselves [Israel] <Deut. 31:19>; the [enemies] who dwell in My house
loudly raise their voice:

The snorting of the horses is heard from Dan, at the sound of the neighing <Jer. 8:16>

185 My seat [Temple] was *almost* <Cant. 3:4> pressed aside by the spread of shadows [exile],

Media and Greece cried out to me, my ears are tingling,
When they extinguished my children <Deut. 31:19> by depressing decrees:
In the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps <Ps. 88:7>

[God who said:] *I charge you* <Cant. 3:5>, He warned me, therefore I did not
rebel against powerful [kingdoms],

190 The fourth [kingdom] weakened my strength, and pressed me into abuse,
[but Israel] will chant *the song* <Deut. 31:19> on the day of delivery and
salvation:

On that day shall there be upon the bells <Zech. 14:20>

The bells will be holy to the one who rings the cymbals [the Levite],
Thus we will sing like [we did] on the shores:

195 *The depths have covered them, they sank into the bottom* <Exod. 15:5>

מצאוני | ארבע מלכויות לרופסי צוהלות
בנד שינערי נחלשתי בכמה עזילות
לכם | גרי ביתי בקול צלולות
'מדן נשמע נחרת סוסיו מקול מצהלות' <יר' ח, טז>

185 כמעט | דוחף בסאי בנטיות ציללות
הזעיקתני מדיי וננן ואזני ניצללות
את | ולדיי ככיבו בגזירות ניצללות
'בבור תחתיות במחשכים במצולות' <תה' פח, ז>

190 השבעתי | זיהרני ולא מרדתי באצילות
חילי התישה רביעית והדיקתני בניצולות
| טופפה ליום רוח והצללות השירה
'ביום ההוא יקה על מצילות' <זכ' יד, כ>

מצילות | יקה קודש למנעניע בצללות
כן נשיר כמו על צילות
'תהומות וכוסיומו קרדו במצולות' <שמ' טו, ה> 195

XIV

Who <Cant. 3:6> would not fear you, O king, who hears everything,
 Making noise and straightening out heaven and earth,
This [Israel] <Deut. 31:19> praised Your mighty deeds when [You] proclaimed
 the beautiful [Torah]:
Then You did speak in vision <Ps. 89:20>

- 200 *Behold* <Cant. 3:7>, [Moses] has put [the Torah] in the mouth of the knowledge-
 able sages,
 He persisted forty [days] without water and food,
And he taught <Deut. 31:19> the utterances and words [of the Torah]; the sons
 [Israel] will listen:
The days are at hand, and the word of every vision <Ez. 12:23>

- The Assyrian enemy [wants] to starve *all of them* <Cant. 3:8> in wrath,
 205 The One who is near to those who call upon him, repelled anger and
 enragement,
 He announced to the myriads <Deut. 31:19> a message of rejoice:
Therefore shall the Master, the Lord of hosts, send among His fat ones leanness <Is.
 10:17>

- [God] has sent leanness to those who challenge them in a scant measure;
 Their descendants recounted the righteous acts towards the inhabitants
 [enemies]:
 210 *The inhabitants of the villages ceased* <Judg. 5:7>

מי | לא ייראך מלך כל יאזון
 מרעיש רום ותחת כפלים ניפזון
 הזאת | ניצחה גבורותיך מליצה בהאזון
 'אז דברת בחזון' <תה' פט, כ>

200 הנה | סמה כפי חכמי רימזון
 עמד ארבעים בלי מים ומזון
 ולמדה | פצח וקינציה בנים לאזון
 'קרבנו הימים ודבר כל חזון' <יח' יב, כג>

205 כולם | צר אשורי בעברה להרזון
 קרוב לקוראיו דחה אף ורגזון
 את | ריבבותם בישר בשורת עלזון
 'לכן ישלח האדון יי צבאות במשמניו רזון' <יש' י, טז>

רזון | שלח במתגרימו באיפת רזון
 תולדותם תנו צדקות פירזון
 'תדלו פרוזון' <שופ' ה, ז> 210

Throughout Seder 1 the poet succeeds in joining together several traditional typologies of Israel's adversaries (using appellations for Pharaoh, Egypt, Edom and Amalek) in conjunction with bequests of revenge and defeat, as in l. 127: שְׂרֵי דוּמָה ('the princes of Dumah' – that is, Edom), l. 204: צֶרַח אֲשׁוּרֵי ('the Assyrian enemy'), l. 316: לָהֶלֶחַם בְּכַנְעָנִים ('to fight against the Canaanites'), l. 358: מַלְכוּת גְּבִירָה ('the kingdom's mistress' – that is, Babylon), l. 526: שְׁמֵאלוֹ בְּיַחַדָּהּ לְשִׁישָׁךְ ('God's left hand crushed Sheshakh' – that is, Babylon).¹³

In stanza XIII the poetic words in l. 181, לְרוּפְסֵי צוּהָלוֹת, allude to the four royal powers rejoicing in the feebleness of Israel. This situation is the exact antithesis of the scene at the time of salvation from the Egyptians: Moses, Miriam and the people of Israel chanted a triumphal song to celebrate the defeat and annihilation of the arch-enemy, Egypt. This seems to contradict the words of Prov. 24:17–18, that one should not rejoice when the enemy falls, and one's heart should not be glad when he stumbles. The discussion of rejoicing at the downfall of the enemies or the wicked finds its source in *bMeg.* 10b, where it is said that the ministering angels wanted to recite a song of praise when the Egyptians were drowning in the Red Sea. However, God exclaimed: 'My handiwork is drowning in the sea, and you recite a song of praise?' This divine exclamation is seen as proof that God did not rejoice at the downfall of Egypt. Therefore the question arises as to how the defeat of the Egyptian adversary can be praised in song by the people of Israel. The behaviour of the four kingdoms may have been justified by the paytan in this specific line in a מִידָּה כְּנִגְדַּ מִידָּה manner: just as Israel cheered the loss of Egypt, the nations are in their turn permitted to be joyful about the loss of Israel. The joy of the enemies is emphasized by the raising of voices and the loudness of those who consider Israel to be the outsider (Job 19:15: גָּרִי בֵּיתִי – לִזְרוֹת תַּחֲשַׁבְנִי) as mentioned in ll. 183–4. The people of Israel remain in exile and have no kingdom (l. 185), whereas the Medes and the Greeks join in ear-splitting shouts and screams (l. 186). When alluding to the fourth kingdom as an oppressor and abuser, the paytan deliberately returns to the future song of Israel, thereby stressing hope and expectation of redemption (ll. 191–3). This stanza concludes with the explicit parallel between past and future: 'Thus we will sing like we did on the shores.'

13. Ibid., pp. 38, 39, 41, 45, 52; *ibid.*, 'Additions to Seder Shir Ha-Shirim', p. 90.

After stanza XIII elaborates the motif of the four kingdoms, stanza XIV starts with the reference to God as the king and creator of heaven and earth whose ultimate intention is to reveal the Torah to Moses and the people of Israel, in agreement with the well-known saying in *Genesis Rabba* 1:4: אָמַר ר' בַּנַּיָּהוּ בְּנֵיהָ עוֹלָם וּמְלוּאָה לֹא נִבְרָא אֱלָא בְּזִכּוֹת תּוֹרָה ('R. Bannayah said: the world and its entirety were created only for the sake of Torah'). The third strophe of this stanza (ll. 204–5) returns to the mentioning of a classical enemy, Assyria, that is described in Is. 10:5–6 as 'the rod of My anger' (שֶׁבֶט אַפִּי) and 'the people of My wrath' (עַם עִבְרָתִי). In the context of the Bible these phrases refer to God's anger and wrath. The paytan of Seder 1 consciously employs both expressions for an occasional typology of an aggressive enemy whose anger is pushed aside by God. Thereupon good tidings are announced to the multitudes of Israel. The last strophe of stanza XIV is a good example of the structural rigidity of the composition caused by anadiplosis (רִיזוּן), the rhyme scheme זון- and the closing verse from Judg. 5:7. This scriptural verse is enigmatic in both its content and meaning, but the composer has chosen not to go into its intricacies.

Seder 2 (see pages 11–12 below) offers an instructive example of the tension that exists between the poetic portions and the scriptural insertions or additions. The straightforward and occasionally simple language is best demonstrated at the beginning of each stanza throughout the composition. The anonymous composer gives the impression that he did not put full artistic effort into the versification of the scriptural motifs or intentions connected to the implications of the Exodus portion and the Book of Canticles. Thus we find many examples of simple extensions to the scriptural openings: in l. 16 with reference to Cant. 1:4: מְשִׁבִּינִי אַחֲרֶיךָ לְבֵית הַבְּחִירָה ('Draw me after you to the house of choice'); in l. 31 with reference to Cant. 1:7: הַגִּידָה לִּי תוֹחֶלֶת בְּנֵן אֶרְיָאֵל ('Tell me about the expectation to build Ariel'); in l. 91 with reference to Cant. 2:2: כְּשׁוֹשְׁנָה בֵּין הַחוֹחִים תִּמְתִּי ('Like the lily among thorns, my perfect one is planted'); and in l. 331 with reference to Cant. 5:7: פִּתַּחְתִּי תְהִלָּה לְאֵל חַי וְקַיָּים ('I began to praise the living and existing God').¹⁴

14. Van Bakkum and Katsumata, 'Divine Love', pp. 59*, 60*, 64*, 80*.

Seder 2: *Seder Wwayyosha* הגיוניי אצפצף בנועם

XIII

The four heads of the leopard *found me* <Cant. 3:3>, they beseech to catch me,
In ten exiles my perfect one [Israel] is panic-stricken,
And the great [God], awesome in His doing, *shall say: where are their gods?*
<Deut. 32:37>:

You are holy, You are enthroned upon the praises <Ps. 22:4>

- 185 The Rock *almost* <Cant. 3:4> pressed them into the depths of water,
He preserved them for a day of darkness and gloom,
The fat of their sacrifices <Deut. 32:38> they assembled and collected forcefully:
In the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps <Ps. 88:7>

I charge you <Cant. 3:5>, O fine ones [Israel], not to speed up the era of
redemption,

- 190 I will gladden their lives for a day of delivery and salvation,
See now <Deut. 32:39>, O pure ones, and show understanding for the God of
actions:

For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed <I Sam. 2:3>

He knows how to act and does great things,
The perfect ones praised Him with lutes and cymbals:

- 195 *The depths have covered them, they sank into the bottom* <Exod. 15:5>

מצאוני | ארבעת ראשי נמר ללכדי שואלות
בעשר גליות תמתי בקהלות
ואמר אי אלהימו | גדול נורא עלילות
'קדוש יושב תהלות' <תה' כב, ד>

- 185 כמעט | דחפם צור למי מצולות
הצפינם ליום חשך ואפילות
אשר חלב זבחימו | ויעדוהו לקטוהו תחת האילות
'בבור תחתיות במחשכים במצולות' <תה' פח, ז>

- 190 השבעתי אתכם | זבים לבל תעוררו קץ הנאולות
חייכם אשמח ליום רנוח והצללות
ראו | טהורים וקבינו אל פעולות
'כי אל דעות יי' ולא נתכנו עלילות' <שמ"א ב, ג>

- עלילות | יודע עושה גדלות
כלולים שורוהו בנבלים ובצלצלות
'תהומות יכסימו ירדו במצולות' <שמ"ט, ה> 195

XIV

*Who is this coming up <Cant. 3:6> to bless the Rock of Israel?
Who pleasantly sings songs of praise and glory,
For <Deut. 32:40> the Saviour and Redeemer will gather her outcasts:
And He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel <Is. 11:12>*

- 200 *Behold his couch is <Cant. 3:7> leaning upon the will of God,
Supported by the sixty letters, noted by the mouth of God [Priestly Blessing],
When <Deut. 32:41> He will show His wonders and hurry the Redeemer
from Zion:
The Lord of hosts is His name, the Holy One of Israel <Is. 47:4>*

- All <Cant. 3:8> will cheer to exalt and to praise
The Holy, enthroned upon the praises of Israel.
205 I will make my arrows drunk with blood <Deut. 32:42> of the prominent men in
Edom and Ishmael:
And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel <Ez. 25:14>*

Israel is safeguarded in the shade of the One who is higher than any other
god;

[This is what] I have told in a song to the Shepherd of Israel:

- 210 *The inhabitants of the villages ceased, in Israel <Judg. 5:7>*

מי זאת עולה | לברך לצור ישראל
מנעמת שיר ושבח והלל
כי | נדוניה נקבץ מושיע וגואל
'אסף נדחי ישראל' 'יש' יא, יב <

200 חנה מטתו | סמוכה ברצון אל
עזורה בששים אותיות ה'שומים מפי אל
אם | פלאותיו נראה ונחיש מציון גואל
'יר' צבאות שמו קדוש ישראל' 'יש' מז, ד <

205 כולם | צוחלים לדומם ולהלל
קדוש יושב תהלות ישראל
אשכיר חצי מדם | רמי קומת אדום ושמעאל
'ונתתי את נקמתי באדום ביד עמי ישראל' 'יח' כה, יד <

210 ישראל | שמורים בצל רם על כל אל
תניתי בשיר לרועה ישראל
'חדלו פרזון בישראל' 'שופ' ה, ז <

The last instance also shows that in some cases the poetic verses resemble liturgical phrases: *מְרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ שְׁמוֹ אֶזְכִּירָה* (l. 17: 'The high and holy One, I will recount His name'), *לְבָרֶךְ לְצִוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל* (l. 196: 'To bless the Rock of Israel') and *תְּכַוִּינַן וְתַחַדֵּשׁ אֶרְמוֹנַי* (l. 211: 'To establish and renew My palaces'). Additionally, one major theme informs the entire work, namely the overall emphasis on singing and praising in honour of God: *יִשְׂרָאֵל מְהֵרָה בְּשִׁיר וְשִׁבַּח* (l. 43: 'O Israel, speed up in song, and laud, and praise'), *יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּרְכוּ מוֹשִׁיעַ וְגוֹאֵל שִׁיר יְדִידִים* (l. 58: 'O Israel, bless the Deliverer and Redeemer'), *יְפַצִּיחוּהָ בְּשִׁבַּח וְשִׁיר* (l. 73: 'The beloved ones will utter a song in praise and chant'), *מִנְעִימֵי שִׁירָה וְשׁוֹפְכֵי תַּחֲנוּנִים* (l. 77: 'Those who sweetly sing and pray in supplication') and *ה' שִׁבְחוּ אֶתְנָה בְּקֶרֶב הַמּוֹנִי* (l. 148: 'I will express God's praise among my multitudes').¹⁵

In stanza XIII the reference to the four heads of the leopard echoes the concept of the four kingdoms explicitly mentioned in Seder 1. The composer does not specify the Midrashic connection between the leopard and the rule of the Greeks. The misery of Israel is further accentuated by the ten exiles, a common topic in rabbinic literature generally specified as the exiles of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Vespasianus and Hadrian. Israel's despair is described as so severe that God will force them to turn to no other deity but Himself (ll. 183–4). The second strophe alludes to the day of judgement in strong terms regarding darkness and doom; even the sacrifices are not considered to have been brought with the right intentions. Although this negativity dominates the history of Israel, God's actions and ultimate plan to bring redemption are entirely in His power and His own decision, as has been proven in the past: Israel may now be 'in the deeps' of exile, but then the Egyptians were the ones who were sent to the depths. Stanza XIV stresses the hope of Israel to be reassembled (l. 198) and to see God's wonders with regard to the reinstallation of the priests (l. 201) and vengeance upon Israel's enemies (ll. 206–7).

A final remark on Seder 2: in the third line of each quatrain the composer cites the opening words of a lengthy scriptural verse – as we can see in the two stanzas above – taken from Deut. 32:1–42; this is distinct from the other two Sedarim where the Ten Songs of Scripture are cited word by word.¹⁶

15. Ibid., pp. 59*, 71*, 72*; 60*–63*, 67*.

16. Van Bekkum and Katsumata, 'Divine Love', p. 50*.

Seder 3: *Seder Wayyosha* שיר השירים אסלסל בפפח רנני

XIII

Those who surround me *found me* <Cant. 3:3> and ruled me,
When those who guard vain idols stand together, they want to destroy [Israel],
Then <Num. 21:17> I screamed because of these guardians united in each
generation:

For, lo, the kings were assembled <Ps. 48:5>

- 185 I *scarcely* <Cant. 3:4> escaped from the path upon which they were marching,
I avoided from passing it by but they were trapped,
The holy nation *sings* <Num. 21:17> and chants, when the enemies have
disappeared:

For, lo, your enemies, O Lord, for, lo, your enemies shall perish <Ps. 92:10>

- I *charge you* <Cant. 3:5>, O ones who heed [my Torah], not to be rebellious,
190 Wait for the end of days, and do not fear,
Israel <Num. 21:17>, you, O pure of heart, worship your King:
Sing to the Lord, O His pious ones, and give thanks <Ps. 30:5>

Give thanks, O beloved ones, sing and give praise,
Like the day upon which your oppressors drowned and perished:

- 195 *The depths have covered them, they sank* <Exod. 15:5>

מַצְאוֹנִי | אוֹפִי אֲשֶׁר בִּי רָדוּ
בוֹעֲרִים הַשּׁוֹמְרִים הַבְּלִי שְׁנֵא כְעֲמָדוּ
אֲז | גַּעֲיִתִי מִשּׁוֹמְרֵי כָל דּוֹר כְּנֶאֱנָדוּ
'כִּי הִנֵּה הַמַּלְכִּים נוֹעְדוּ' <תה' מה, ה>

185 כְּמַעַט | דִּילְגָתִי עַל דְּרָכָם אֲשֶׁר צֻעְדוּ
הַפְּרַעְתִּיו מִלְּעֲבוֹר בּוֹ וְהֵם נִלְכְּדוּ
לְשִׁיר | וַיִּזְמַר עִם קְדוֹשׁ צִירִים כְּנִקְחָדוּ
'כִּי הִנֵּה אוֹיְבֵיךָ יָי כִּי הִנֵּה אוֹיְבֵיךָ יֵאָבְדוּ' <תה' צב, י>

190 הַשְּׁבַעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם | וְהִירִי פֶן תִּמְרָדוּ
חֲבוּ לִקְץ הַיָּמִין וְאַל תִּחַרְדוּ
יִשְׂרָאֵל | טָהוֹרֵי לֵב לְמַלְכְּכֶם עֲבָדוּ
'זָמְרוּ לִי חֲסִידֵיךָ וְהוֹדוּ' <תה' ל, ה>

195 הוֹדוּ | וְדִידִים וְשִׁירוֹ וְסִלְדוּ
כִּיּוֹם טָבְעוּ מַעֲנִיְכֶם וְאָבְדוּ
'תְּהוֹמוֹת יְכִסְיוֹמוֹ יָרְדוּ' <שמ' טו, ה>

XIV

Who is this <Cant. 3:6> who lights the torch from which the sparks are flying up,

From the desert she [Israel] ascends, with all her gifts [Torah] as an inheritance,
The gathered peoples gaze at <Num. 21:17> the glance of her columns:
As soon as they saw, they were astounded, they were affrighted <Ps. 48:6>

- 200 *Behold* <Cant. 3:7>, the chosen ones, a total of six hundred thousand,
Adorned with sixty letters [Priestly Blessing] by which they were distinguished,
The [sixty] prominent heads of the wards [of Temple service] utter *the song*
<Num. 21:17>:
In the Lord they shall be justified, shall be glory <Is. 45:25>

All <Cant. 3:8> who are skilful are enquiring Halakhic rules in the Testimony [Torah],

- 205 They instruct and deal wisely with rules of receiving, sprinkling and dispersing [blood],
This [Torah] <Num. 21:17> they study orderly and associatively in accordance with tradition:
The wise shall inherit honour <Prov. 3:35>

The [wise] shall inherit three hundred and ten [worlds], thus they receive much praise,

- Those who loathe them will perish and be set apart from life:
210 *The inhabitants of the villages ceased, in Israel they ceased* <Judg. 5:7>

מי זאת | לופדת וזיקוקיה יהיו
ממדבר עילוייה וכל מתנותיה ההונחלו
את | נוגה תימרותיה לחזות עמים נקחלו
'המה ראו כן תמחו נבחלו' <תח' מה, ו>

- 200 הנה | סגולים ששים ריבוא נכללו
עטורים בששים אותיות וכם נדלו
השירה | פוצחים שרי משמרותיה כהודגלו
'בין יצדקו ויתחללו' <יש' מה, כה>

- 205 כולם | צורפים הלכות בתעודה ריגלו
קבלה וזריקה ותזנה יורו וישפילו
הזאת | רוצפים וחורזים כמו קיבלו
'קבוד חכמים יתחלו' <מש' ג, לה>

- 210 יתחלו | שלש מאות ועשרה ויתגדלו
תועביהם יכלו ומן החיים יובדלו
'הדלו פרזון ב'שראל הדלו' <שו' ה, ז>

Samuel the Third composed his Seder in a manner much different from Seders 1 and 2. This can be seen in the digest of motifs and themes as well as in his language and style. His oeuvre testifies to his excellent command of the Hebrew language and his familiarity with rabbinic literature.¹⁷ His Seder for Wayyosha complies with this overall estimation in every sense. Each stanza is potentially an independent hymn, but Samuel at the same time strictly keeps to the requirements of the genre. The high quality of these Wayyosha verses on a linguistic and stylistic level contributes to this Seder's practical use and popularity. Samuel's Seder for Wayyosha was important in contemporary Jewish liturgy, as proven by the wealth of manuscripts containing complete or fragmentary pieces of his Seder. Samuel is a fine example of a paytan who tries his best to integrate linguistic, stylistic and thematic components, reaching a most sophisticated level of communicating the motifs of Wayyosha. The linguistic and grammatical tendencies in his work can be considered post-classical: in spite of his rather independent employment of the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, he adheres to the features of language and lexicon that were current in the tenth and eleventh centuries.¹⁸ Samuel accepted the challenges that the scriptural framework imposed on this type of poetry, particularly caused by the opening words of each verse from Canticles. He succeeded in attributing to these fixed openings a meaningful connection within the first line of each quatrain, and also managed to refer to additional words from the same verse in Canticles.

Let us turn to stanza XIII, ll. 181–3. The watchmen who are the Gentile kings were planning the destruction of Israel. The first part of Cant. 3:3 reads: *מַצְאוּנֵי הַשְּׁמָרִים הַסֹּבְבִים בְּעִיר* ('The watchmen that go about the city found me'). The noun 'watchmen' occurs in the second line – this is a lexical choice echoing Cant. 3:3 and Ps. 31:7: *הַשְּׁמָרִים הַבְּלִי שָׂא* ('those who guard vain idols'). Also, in the third line this noun is intentionally inserted with reference to a passage from *Midrash Lekah Tov* in Cant. 3:3: 'The watchmen found me – these are the watchmen in each generation; those who go

17. W. van Bakkum, 'Lyrical Aspects of Samuel the Third's Poetry', *Ginzei Qedem, Genizah Research Annual* 11 (2015), pp. 39*–49*.

18. M. Zulay, *The Liturgical Poetry of Sa'adya Gaon and His School* (Jerusalem: Schocken Institute, 1964), pp. 19–40; *The Yotserot of R. Samuel the Third*, vol. 1, pp. 81–104. Initially, Samuel the Third was seen by Zulay as one of the disciples of Sa'adya Gaon, imitating his peculiar language and style, but this supposition is too far-fetched. Although there are resemblances between the two paytanim, Samuel the Third is today considered to be an independent literary figure, resounding some first echoes of the early Sephardic school.

about the city – those who go about the world, these are the nations to whom Israel has been subdued’. In the second strophe (ll. 185–8) Israel was expected to be overrun by the adversaries, but they themselves were trapped in their own snare – this seems an obvious reason for Israel to sing a song of victory. Parallel to Seder 2, Samuel the Third asks for patience as well as understanding not to hasten divine redemption and to be compliant with the present imperfect situation that he explicitly compares with the day of salvation (he uses the expression כיום, ‘like the day’, in ll. 194–5). The verbal form ירדו (‘they sank’ – l. 195) cannot be seen as a logical stop within the original quotation, but defines the rhyme scheme of the entire stanza. These and similar remarkable verse breaks indicate Samuel’s artistic achievements, which are unique in Hebrew hymnography. This adventurous style can also be detected in a number of scriptural quotations from Exod. 14–15 or Judg. 5 at the end of the stanzas, as well as in line 195 of stanza XIII here.

Stanza XIV is predominantly a paytanic elaboration of *Canticles Rabba* chapter 3 on the basis of some of the intriguing phrases in the underlying scriptural verses, Cant. 3:6–8. The words ‘like columns of smoke’ (Cant. 3:6) are connected with the Midrashic explanation that

when Israel was moving from one journey to another, the column of cloud used to descend and the column of fire to expand, and the smoke of the altar fire went up, and two flashes of fire came forth from between the two sticks of the ark and burnt up serpents, snakes and scorpions. When the nations of the world saw this, they said: ‘These are deities; they are always busy with fire.’ Because of their fear of Israel dread and fright fell upon them. (*Canticles Rabba* 3,6,2)

The details of these Midrashic comments recur in l. 196 and ll. 198–9, in which Samuel stresses the elements of fire, light and brightness, on the one hand, and the fear of the nations, on the other. In l. 197 the paytan also refers to yet another phrase from the same scriptural verse: ‘who is this that comes out of the desert’. This is explained as Israel’s elevation from the desert because all the good gifts that God offered to Israel came from the desert (*Canticles Rabba* 3,6,1).

The second strophe is based on Cant. 3:7 (‘Behold his bed, that of Solomon, sixty valiant men are round about it’). Of the four different explanations that the Midrash offers for the valiant men, Samuel employs three. In l. 200 they are described as a multitude of 600,000 (literally 60 times 10,000) selected people, who went out of Egypt, from the age of 20 years old and upwards

(*Canticles Rabba* 3,7,4). Line 201 implicitly refers to the valiant men as Temple priests who are the only distinguished persons to recite the 60 letters of the Priestly Blessing (Num. 6:24–6 – *Canticles Rabba* 3,7,1). Line 202 alludes to a different aspect of the Temple service by means of a reference to the 24 factions of the priests, the 24 factions of the Levites, and the 12 tribal divisions described in I Chron. 27:2–15 (therefore counted as $24 + 24 + 12 = 60$). This tradition is found in *Canticles Rabba* 3,7,2, where the phrase from Cant. 3:8 ('they all hold swords, being experts in war') is explained and applied in the third strophe as scholars who teach the priests the rules of slaughter and sacrificial rituals. This rich and artful stanza concludes with matters of reward for those who keep to Torah and tradition (on the basis of *Eliahu Rabbah* 14: 'I will enquire and probe all the words of the entire Torah'). They will be offered the gift of God to exist forever, as it is stated in *mUktzin* 3,12: 'R. Joshua b. Levi said: The Holy One, blessed be He, will cause every righteous person to inherit three hundred and ten worlds, because it is written (Prov. 8:21): That I may cause those who love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures.'¹⁹ Contrary to the reward for those who love God, the punishment for those who detest the Torah (l. 209) is to be cut off from life. This is how Samuel the Third understands the exegetical difficulties of Judg. 5:7.

Conclusions

The three Sedarim under discussion are deeply and intrinsically connected to the essential elements of the Jewish religious tradition concerning Passover, with self-evident emphasis on the Seventh Day, *Yom Wayyosha*. As we have shown, these poetic works offer many parallels for scholarly investigation of their form and structure as well as their commonly shared themes. Undoubtedly, the obligatory scriptural verses are the same in each Seder, but astonishingly enough this cannot be said of the scriptural endings which conclude the quatrains. The composers of all three Sedarim had a strong preference for verse endings taken from the Book of Psalms, and to a lesser extent from the Book of Isaiah. The psalm verse endings abound because they contain song and praise, as well as many references to water, rivers and

19. 'Substance' in Hebrew is *ḥay* with the numerical value of 10 + 300.

seas. Equally, the scriptural endings derived from the Book of Isaiah pertain to water, but also to the end of days and the enemies of Israel. However, none of the scriptural endings is identical in all three Sedarim, not even in the stanzas that have the same rhyme scheme, when one would expect the same scriptural quotations. This fact adds to the impression that each paytan individually selected scriptural endings within each stanza and throughout the work. Only rarely does one find identical endings in two of the three Sedarim. The impact of the scriptural endings upon the quatrains to which they are attached is manifest in a rather sudden transition of subject, which can be found in the preceding line, apparently intended as a kind of introduction to the scriptural closure. The composer possibly felt the urge to move away from the themes of Canticles and adjacent topics, employing the third line as a bridge to the contents of the last line of the quatrain, at the same time causing a deliberate caesura between lines 2 and 3. This can be illustrated by the following quatrain (ll. 65–8) from Seder 1:²⁰

אֶשְׁכּוּל | דְּלִיּוֹתָיו אִם לִשְׁעַבְר הַנָּשִׁיר
הָעֵתִיד לְבוֹא בְּלִי יָבוּל וְקִשִׁיר
וַיֹּאמְרוּ | וַיְדִי תִשַׁע שִׁירֹת וּבַעֲשִׂירִית יִשְׁלִימוּ שִׁיר
'מִזְמוֹר שִׁירוֹ לִיִּי שִׁיר' <תה' צה, א>

The branches of the cluster [Israel] <Cant. 1:14>: although He [God]
dropped them in the past,
In the future He will miraculously restore them;
And they thus said <Exod. 15:1> nine songs, and in the tenth song they
will accomplish singing:
O sing to the Lord a [new] song <Ps. 98:1>

In Seder 2 we encounter in ll. 219–22:²¹

צֵאִינָה וּרְאִינָה | עֲטֶרֶת מִשְׁרְתֵי דּוֹכְנֵי
סִגְנֵי בְנֵי צִדּוֹק מִקְרִיבֵי קֶרְבָּנֵי
שְׁמָעוּ מְלָכִים | נוֹאֵם נִיגוּנֵי
'כֹּה אָמַר הָאֵל יי' <יש' מב, ח>

Go out and see <Cant. 3:11> the glory of those who serve [on] My
pulpits,
The intendants of the sons of Zadok who bring near My sacrifices;
Hear, O kings <Judg. 5:3> the utterance of My melodies:
Thus said God the Lord <Is. 42:5>

20. Van Bakkum, 'Shir Ha-Shirim', p. 37.

21. Van Bakkum and Katsumata, 'Divine Love', p. 72*.

Although Samuel the Third would have tried hard to be harmonious in his manner of formulating poetic idiom and to avoid such a caesura, we come across, among others, the following quatrain (ll. 91–4):²²

כְּשׁוֹשְׁנָה | תְּאוֹרֶה בֵּין קִנִּים נְטוּעָה
שׁוֹלְמִית נִדְמִיתָה בְּעוֹשׂ מִצְרִים אַחֲרֶיהָ לְנִסְעָה
מֹשֶׁה | רָחַשׁ תְּפִילָּה וְצַעַק וּפָעָה
נֹהֵג בְּצֵאן יוֹסֵף יוֹשֵׁב הַכְּרוּבִים הוֹפִיעָה 'תִּהְיֶה פֹּה בִּי

Like a lily <Cant. 2:2> she [Israel] appears, planted among the thorns,
She resembles Shulamith, hurrying to leave Egypt behind her;
Moses <Exod. 15:1> spoke and uttered and said a prayer:
[Listen, O shepherd of Israel,] who leads Yosef like a flock, You who
are enthroned upon the Keruvim, shine forth! <Ps. 80:2>

The absence of identical scriptural endings in all three compositions does not contradict the presence of shared motifs. Exodus 24:7 is the point of departure for the following outstanding example: וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא (‘And he took the Book of the Covenant, and read in the audience of the people, and they said: All that the Lord has said will we do, and we will hear’). In rabbinic literature, the famous phrase ‘We will do, and we will hear’ is connected with Cant. 2:3, כְּתֵפוֹחַ בְּעֵצֵי הַיַּעַר כֵּן דֹּדִי בֵּין הַבָּנִים בְּצֵלוֹ חִמְדָּתִי וּיְשֻׁבִתִּי וּפִרְיוֹ מְתוֹק לְחֹבֵי (‘Like the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste’). With regard to the scriptural and rabbinic context, one finds the well-known motif of the crucial moment that God asks the Israelites to accept the Torah for themselves: even before they heard the Torah, they replied to God that they would keep all the commandments that have been prescribed in it. This explanation is specified in *Canticles Rabba* 2:3: ‘Like the apple tree among the trees of the wood: R. Aha ben R. Ze’ira made a comparison: just as the apple tree brings out its blossom before its leaves, so Israel at Sinai puts doing before hearing, as it says, We will do, and we will hear.’²³

Each of the composers of the three Sedarim employs this tradition for paytanian elaboration in the strophe that opens with Cant. 2:3. In Seder 1, ll. 95–6 (p. 38), we find the versification of this tradition; כְּתֵפוֹחַ קוֹדֵם פִּירָיו

22. Yahalom and Katsumata, *The Yotserot of R. Samuel the Third*, vol. 2, p. 859.

23. Similar to *Canticles Rabba* 8:5: ‘It is the way of any other tree to produce its leaves before its fruit, but the apple tree produces its fruit first and afterwards its leaves. So Israel placed doing before hearing, as it says: We will do, and we will hear.’

הקדימה ענייה פריה / ציני נעשה ונשמע דיברה פוריה ('Like the apple tree bears its fruit firstly, the afflicted one [Israel] bears her fruit firstly, / the commandment of 'we will do and we will hear', the fruitful one [Israel] has spoken'). In Seder 2, one reads in the same ll. 95–6 (p. 64^{*}): קתפוח קידמה עשירה לשמיעה: / צין רפיה כדיברה נעשה ונשמעה ('Like the apple tree she has put doing before hearing, / her beauty shines forth, when she said: we will do and we will hear'). Samuel the Third attaches to the same motif an additional explanation with regard to the traditional belief that 50 days elapsed between the Exodus and the reception of the Torah, also derived from *Canticles Rabba* 2:3. In ll. 95–7 (p. 859), one reads: קתפוח קצב גמר פירותיו לחמשים לרועעה / וצנועים / ובני פדוייה הקדימו עשירה לשמיעה ('Like the apple tree needs 50 [days] for enjoying its fruits, / so the modest ones [Israel] received the Law after 50 [days] for enjoyment, / and the sons <Exod. 15:1> of Your redeemed ones [Israel] have put doing before hearing').

A second remarkable example, an exception to paytanic elaborations of Midrashic and other rabbinic themes, is to be found in the last stanza of each of the three Sedarim. As we have observed above, this stanza seems at first sight superfluous within the structural framework of each composition, although adding it brings the number of stanzas to the round number of 40 and the number of lines to 600. The exceptional position of the last stanza is clearly visible in the different choices of opening words, each in its own peculiar way. Let us start with Seder 2: the opening words of the last verse of *Canticles* (Cant. 8:14: ברח דודי) are found in stanza 39, l. 579 (p. 96^{*}). In the last stanza, each quatrain opens with a word that possibly belongs to an acrostic name, עליון לומדי ישרת, thus rendering the name 'Eli. Samuel the Third keeps to the sequence of opening words from *Canticles* and begins the first and third lines of stanza 40 with each word of the last verse from Cant. 8:14: ברח דודי ודמה לך לצבי או לעפר האילים על הרי בשמים ('Make haste, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of spices'). Both methods of insertion are distinct from that in Seder 1, where the last two stanzas, 39 and 40 (p. 54), are intertwined with the opening words of *Canticles* and all the words from Ps. 98:1.

The obvious distinctions in the patterns of scriptural words, in accordance with the overall requirements of these Sedarim for Wayyosha, are contrary to the presence of a direct thematic parallel in each fortieth stanza. This extended parallel concerns the following subjects and numbers: in the last stanza of

Seder 1 the 12 signs of the zodiac are mentioned along with the seven planets. Contrary to these lists we find in the last stanza of Seder 2 the 12 signs of the zodiac as the 12 stars, and notably the 12 tribes. Samuel the Third has chosen to insert the 12 signs of the zodiac, followed by the reference to the seven planets, as in Seder 1.²⁴ The paytanim shared these motifs, although each took his own approach, based on a literal understanding of l. 600, the last identical line in all of the three compositions – that is, Judg. 5:20 ('The stars in their courses fought'). To begin with, the last stanza of Seder 2 offers a kind of explicit introduction in ll. 586–7 (p. 97*): עֲלִיוֹן כִּילָלָהּ שְׁמוֹת שְׁנַיִם / עֲשָׂר שְׁבָטִים הַחֲבוּבִים / יִיחַדְתָּם כְּשְׁנַיִם עֲשָׂר כּוֹכָבִים ('You have glorified the twelve beloved tribes; You have unified them like the twelve constellations of the zodiac').²⁵ In the sequence of lines devoted to this theme we encounter, among other things, the following two lines (ll. 594–5, p. 97*): יִשְׂרָת הַדְרֹת / נֹד אֲשֶׁר וְיִשְׁשַׁכָּר הָאֲדוּבִים / דְּמִיּוֹן מֵאֲזֵנִים עַקְרָב וְקֶשֶׁת נְצוּבִים ('The splendid righteousness of the beloved [tribes] Gad, Asher and Issachar, resembling the fixed [constellations] Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius'). The two opening lines (ll. 586–7) of the last stanza in Seder 1 and in Samuel's Seder can be compared as well. In the example of Seder 1 we read (p. 54): הוֹשִׁיעָה כְּטֹלָה / וְשׁוֹר רִיבְצָם בְּתֵלָאוּבִים / יִרְבִּיצָם בְּתֵלָאוּבִים וְסִרְטָן מִשְׁאִיבִים ('He brought salvation <Ps. 98:1> like a Ram [Aries] and a Bull [Taurus] He made them lie down in lands of drought, He will sprinkle [water on] them, like Twins [Gemini] and Crab [Cancer] they will receive supplies of water'). In the example of Samuel the Third we encounter a more sophisticated formulation (p. 892): לָךְ בְּנֵי טֹלְאֵי גֹעִים בְּשׁוּעָתָם / חָמָס יִזְעָקוּ מִתֵּלָאוּבִים זִוגוֹת סוֹרְטֵי מִקְהָלוֹתָם ('To You <Cant. 8:14> the young Rams [Aries] are lowing [like a Bull – Taurus] in their supplication, Out of violence they [Israel] cry because of the twin pairs [Edom and Ishmael – Gemini], who scratch [Cancer] their assemblies'). In conclusion, the elaborate employment of this illustrious selection of motifs reflects the aspiration of the three composers to finish their comprehensive poems with a festive and ornamental closure.

24. The signs of the zodiac belong to a fixed subject in Hebrew hymnography; see Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry*, pp. 110–13; see also Qilir in his famous poem for Dew in which he versifies the names of the 12 months, the signs of the zodiac, and the 12 tribes: Y. Frankel, *Mahzor la-Regalim – Pesach* (Jerusalem: Leo Baeck Institute, 1993), pp. 225–34.

25. Van Bakkum and Katsumata, 'Divine Love', p. 52*.