



PhD title: *Midrash Pirqa de-Rabbenu ha-Qadosh in the popular anthologies from the Cairo Geniza*

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The doctoral thesis *Midrash Pirqa de-Rabbenu ha-Qadosh* in the popular anthologies from the Cairo Geniza identifies, describes, studies and edits 41 unknown Hebrew manuscripts of this popular late midrash. Being a collection of gnology dating from the 9th century it catalogues in the form of an anthology anonymous and short maxims in a numbered list beginning with number three. The maxims cover a wide range of subjects and contain sayings on the customs, ethical attitudes and popular Jewish wisdom of the time. The text of *Pirqa de-Rabbenu ha-Qadosh* (PRQ) was transmitted in a multitude of textual variants in the form of many codices, a fragmentary rotulus and a horizontally scrolling roll (megilla). With the exception of a few late manuscripts, most of these early witnesses and the manner of their use have not been examined or published so far. For this reason the study of PRQ provides an excellent opportunity to study the transmission of these fluid texts and their material aspects in the medieval context at the intersection of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim spheres.

Thus the present research has multiple aims and focuses on the substantive question: how can we approach this kind of text in order to represent its essence adequately? The complexity of this question demands the need to unite the approaches of various disciplines to achieve this task. The approach of this holistic and mixed approach dissects into five parts.

In the first chapter we summarise the results of the previous research and sketch out the book, textual and content characteristics of our manuscripts. These texts are characterised as extracts from authoritative works and longer works such as the Babylonian Talmud forming anthologies. The numbered sequences amplify the mobility of these passage-by units, creating extreme volatility in these texts. Thus its textual structure and probably also the function of PRQ as a utilitarian text (Gebrauchstext) resembles a typically medieval text in its entirety.

The second chapter turns to the manuscripts themselves, which are the focus of the interrogation. We use the methods of Hebrew codicology and palaeography as well as Hebrew philology to describe the state of our manuscripts. This positivist approach allows them to be anchored historically and hints already at their use.

The third chapter uses the approach of book history and cultural history to determine who were the creators and users of PRQ. A comparison with similar texts from Christian and Muslim culture shows that these texts existed en masse during the Middle Ages and that they formed their own, hitherto little studied, didactic genre. These vademecum texts therefore do not belong to the accepted rabbinic category of late midrashim.

Chapter four discusses editorial techniques in order to establish the adequate means which may represent this fluid text best. The advantages and disadvantages of the methods of classical and modern philology as well as numerical approaches are thematised. It is found that the approach proposed by new and material philology allows the most appropriate approximation of our fluid texts.

In the last chapter we test this hypothesis by focusing on PRQ's essence : its textual variants. Various ways of variance are defined, visualised and analysed by hand or numerical tools. It can be seen that the analysis of this kind of text is only feasible by the analysis of units and the distribution of its clusters across textual sequences. A total comparison of the texts by



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electronic tools achieves promising results verifying the diffused hypothesis that no clusters of the studied texts can be established.

The conclusion is that only a multidisciplinary approach can reflect PRQ in all its characteristic aspects and manages to reveal this text from its arcane features. In order to achieve this it was necessary to choose a contextual and coherent approach. Furthermore, the study of PRQ has established it as a functional text which is part of a didactic and liturgical tradition known also in the Christian and Muslim spheres of the time. In addition, small discoveries in the fields of Hebrew codicology and the discussion of the methods of philology allowed to contribute to the medieval history of the book and the reading habits of Jewish communities around the Mediterranean basin.