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Miscellaneous
MalkaʾaʾArsimā (ʾImage of Hripsimeʾ):
An Ethiopic Hymn for an Armenian Saint
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Introduction

Hripsime, the popular Armenian martyr of Roman origin persecuted under Diocletian, is the subject of widespread devotion among Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia and Eritrea, her name being rendered in Ethiopic as ʾArsimā or ʾArsemā (አርсимสิ้น(747,489),(784,514)፡); or እርሰማ፡ respectively). As noted by Marcin Krawczuk, at least nine Ethiopic manuscripts of Gadla Samāʿtāt, the collection of martyrdoms, contain the martyrdom of Hripsime and she also receives two entries in the Ethiopic translation of the Synaxary, 29 Maskaram and 6 Tāḥšāš. Important centres for her cult in Ethiopia include Daq Island (Lake Ṭānā) and ʾAmbā Gəšan (Wallo) which, according to local traditions, date as far back as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries respectively.

A key component of any saint’s liturgical commemoration within the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches is the composition of a malkəʾ-hymn. The existence of a malkəʾ-hymn for Hripsime is confirmed in a list of malkəʾ-hymns present in four manuscripts, the earliest of which likely dates to the second half of the seventeenth century (thus giving a terminus ante quem): MS London, British...
Library, Or. 574 (Wright 189), fols 137ra–vb; 6 MS Dabra Zammado, EMML 6993, fols 205rc–206rb; 8 MS Gundā Gunde 144, fols 2ra–va; 9 and MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticani Etiopici 276, fol. 233r–v. 10 The version of the list found in the latter two manuscripts further gives an indication that the text has seventeen stanzas. Despite its inclusion in this list, there are only two extant witnesses of this Malkəʾa ʾArsimā, namely, MS London, British Library, Or. 574 (Wright 189) and MS Dabra Zammado, EMML 6993. Marius Chaîne in his ‘Répertoire des salam et malkeʾe’ assigned it number 181 11 while in the Clavis Aethiopica it was designated CAe 2900. 12 This article will present an edition of the Ethiopic text, hitherto unpublished, based on the two extant manuscript witnesses alongside an English translation. It should be noted that the malkəʾ hymn for Hripsime now found in printed collections, 13 which is considerably longer at thirty-four stanzas, seems to have no manuscript witnesses. Aside from these two, no other malkəʾ hymns for Hripsime are attested, either in manuscripts or in printed books, though there is also a sort of hymn, or rather a set of antiphons—one ‘without parallel’ according to Paolo Marrassini—titled Mawāšəʾ ṭaʾ ʾArsimā bayṣ ṭiʾ (‘Antiphons for Blessed Hripsime’), extant in a single fifteenth-century manuscript, MS Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Palatino Orientale 148 (Marrassini 16). 14 Unlike a malkəʾ hymn, its stanzas have no common headword and consist only of three rhymed lines.

6 Wright 1877, 122–126. It is a composite manuscript, with various quires having been added at different times, and since the list of titles and the list of dates are written on a separate quire at the end of the manuscript they may, in fact, be later additions. The contents of the manuscript itself hardly relate to either list.
7 EMML is the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, deposited at Addis Ababa, National Archives and Library of Ethiopia, and at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John’s Abbey and University, Collegeville, MN.
8 Uncatalogued, but it can be dated based on the presence of many supplications for King Yohannäs I (r.1667–1682) and his wife Sabla Wangel (d.1690), most (though not all) of which have been erased and then rewritten with the addition ‘አስርት፡ነፍሳ硐፡ለንጉሥ፡[…]’ (‘Give rest to the souls of our king […]’), presumably done after they both had died.
9 Chaîne 1913, 337.
11 Chaîne 1913, 337.
12 Lantschoot 1962, 479–482.
13 The manuscript was described in Marrassini 1984–1986, 90–97. The text was translated by Enrico Cerulli in Cerulli 1968, 213–214.
While the primary feast day assigned to Hripsime in the Synaxary is 29 Maskaram, the date of her martyrdom, there is a second feast on 6 Tāḫśāś commemorating the consecration of her church and the translation of her relics, which is also the date indicated in manuscripts of Gadla Samāʿtāt.15 It is the latter feast which is indicated for the recitation of Malkəʾ aʿArsimā in the list of feast days found in three Malkəʾ a Gubāʾ e manuscripts: MS London, British Library, Or. 574, fols 137vb–139rc; MS Dabra Zammado, EMML 6993, fols 204va–205rb; and MS Gundā Gunde 144, fols 2va–3rb. That its recitation is assigned to 6 Tāḫśāś explains why the malkəʾ -hymn incorporates references to the Virgin Mary, the flight to Egypt and Mount Koskam (stanzas 4, 7, 8 and 11) since the feast day commemorating the consecration of Mount Koskam is 6 Ḫədār and thus is observed monthly on the sixth day of the month. In addition to this calendrical link between the consecration of Mount Koskam and the consecration of Hripsime’s church there is also a thematic link, as both Hripsime and Mary fled persecution amid great distress.

It is clear from the text that the composer of the malkəʾ -hymn could not have relied solely upon the two Synaxary entries concerning the events of Hripsime’s martyrdom but must also have consulted the account found in Gadla Samāʿtāt. While the Synaxary only describes her being pulled by ropes, beheaded, and dismembered,16 the malkəʾ -hymn also references her standing in a fiery furnace (stanza 3) and an outpouring of blood and milk from her severed neck (stanza G), details which are only given in Gadla Samāʿtāt.17 The text also juxtaposes Hripsime with heroic female figures from the Bible, namely, Judith who killed the Assyrian general Holofernes (stanza 4) and Esther who defeated the Persian vizier Haman (stanza 6).

Description of Manuscripts

MS London, British Library, Or. 577 (MS A) is a Malkəʾ a Gubāʾ e manuscript which, according to its colophon, was commissioned by King Bakāffā and thus can be dated to 1721–1730.18 It is a smaller manuscript, measuring 181 × 149 mm with 196 folios and having rather small writing.19 The manuscript contains solely malkəʾ -hymns dedicated to prophets, apostles, righteous (monastic) saints and

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15 For example, this date is given in the upper margin of MS London, British Library, Or. 686, fol. 92v; MS London, British Library, Or. 687/688, fol. 131r; and MS London, British Library, Or. 689, fol. 155r.
17 Krawczuk 2012, 77, 165.
18 Wright 1877, 128–129.
19 Wright 1877, 128–129.
martyrs and has no other liturgical texts or prayers. Excluding malkə ’-hymns for the Trinity, for Mary and for angels, the selection of texts is largely consistent with those specified in the aforementioned list.\footnote{In fact, this manuscript is the only extant witness to two titles from the list, namely, Malkə’a Yā qob za-gomud and Malkə’a Gerəllos. For those saints who have two or more malkə ’-hymns dedicated to them, the one found in the manuscript conforms to the numbers of stanzas specified in the list.}

MS Dabra Zammado, EMML 6993 (MS B) is a nineteenth or twentieth century Malkə’a Gubā ’e manuscript from the monastery of Dabra Zamamado measuring 320 × 280 mm with 208 folios.\footnote{The manuscript was described in Getatchew Haile 2013, 6.} It contains a diverse selection of malkə ’-hymns that closely follows the list of titles given at the end of the manuscript, although it does not contain every single one, as well as some additional liturgical prayers, including the Mystagogia (Təmhərta Ḫəbu ’āt) and ’Ǝgziʾəboher za-horhānāt which is not uncommon in Malkə’a Gubā ’e manuscripts. This manuscript lacks the tarafa malkə’\footnote{The tarafa malkə’ (lit. ‘remainder of the malkə’) is a shorter composition, typically having fewer than ten stanzas, each with only three or four rhymed lines, that accompanies a malkə’-hymn.} that accompanies Malkə’a ’Arsimā in MS A.

Method of Edition

The edition and translation below are based on the only two extant witnesses, MS London, British Library, Or. 577 (fols 167vb–169vb) and MS Dabra Zammado, EMML 6993 (fols 125vc–126vc), assigned the sigla A and B respectively. In editing the text I have normalized the punctuation, keeping only the standard two-dotted word separator (፡) between words and a nine-dotted asterisk (፨) at the end of each line. The orthography has been normalized as well. Variations in punctuation and orthography found in the manuscripts are not indicated in the apparatus as they do not substantially affect the text. For the translation, the order of the lines has been preserved as much as possible; instances where the lines have been reordered in order to make sense have the original line number given in parentheses at the start of the line. While many manuscripts containing malkə ’-hymns number the stanzas in the margin, neither MS A nor B includes such numerals and so Arabic numerals have been added to aid the reader. Words which are implied and need to be supplied in the translation are also given in parentheses.
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Text

1  | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያቲሁ፡አርባዕ | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያתיሁ፡አርባዕ | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያቲሁ፡አርባዕ

2  | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያቲሁ፡አርባዕ | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያתיሁ፡አርባዕ | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያቲሁ፡አርባዕ

3  | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያቲሁ፡አርባዕ | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያתיሁ፡አርባዕ | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያቲሁ፡አርባዕ

4  | ለልማ፡ለወከ፡ስምኪ፡ወሆህያቲሁ፡አርባዕ | ለልማ∷ለወከ∷ስምኪ∷ወሆህያቲሁ∷አርባዕ | ለልማ∷ለወከ∷ስምኪ∷ወሆህያቲሁ∷አርባዕ

5  | ለልማ∷ለወከ∷ስምኪ∷ወሆህያቲሁ∷አርባዕ | ለልማ∷ለወከ∷ስምኪ∷ወሆህያቲሁ∷አርባዕ | ለልማ∷ለወከ∷ስምኪ∷ወሆህያቲሁ∷አርባዕ

APPARATUS  |  ለልማ∷ለወከ∷ስምኪ∷ወሆህያቲሁ∷አርባዕ  |  ለልማ∷ለወከ∷ስምኪ∷ወሆህያתיሁ∷አርባዕ  |  ለልማ∷ለወከ∷ስምኪ∷ወሆህያቲሁ∷አርባዕ

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Translation

1 Salutation to the memory of your name which has four letters
Like the four fashioned parts of the Cross of Christ the Lord.
Blessed Hripsime, patient through trial and martyrdom,
Feed me from your breasts with the milk of joy and gladness
So that I may read the words of your praise with an eloquent tongue.

2 Salutation to your hair and your crowned head
And to your face, red like a pomegranate or an apple.
Hripsime, victorious over the judges of error and perdition,
Give me a waterskin of knowledge from the pool (of) your praise
So that I may draw a little and pour out a fountain.

3 Salutation to your eyelashes and your eyes (which are like) a full moon,
And to your ears which were inclined to the words of the glad angel.
Galilean Hripsime, dressed in glorious faith,
How were you not afraid of the frightening furnace of flames?
And how were you not terrified at all by its boiling pot?

4 Salutation to your cheeks which were beaten and lacerated
When the fragrance of the Bride of Koskam’s love entered your nostrils.
Cut off the head of my enemy, Hripsime, and hang it in the tent
(Like) the daughter of Merari did to Holofernes, her enemy,
When, having cut his neck, she hung his head upon the top of his bed’s canopy.

5 Salutation to your lips, your mouth and your teeth, the beauty of ḫência.
Also to your tongue with its breath and voice.
Hripsime, turn to me, a poor seeker of happiness,
So that you will give me a portion of the bread of your grace
And the richness of your existing goodness.

1 In Ǝ=Gǝʿǝz, Hripsime is called ʾArsemā (or ʾArsemā) which is written with four characters ( hton; ʾA-r-si-mā).
2 The Ǝ=Gǝʿǝz word used here, ba-ʾil (MS A) or ba-ʾel (MS B) is unclear, but may be understood to mean ḫelā, a well or fountain, which closely fits what is clearly the intended meaning of the composer.
3 I.e. Christian. In the martyrdom account, Hripsime’s persecutors refer to the Christians as ‘Galilean magicians’ (_winner:_) and this usage of ‘Galilean’ could be found elsewhere in Antiquity (e.g. the polemic of Julian the Apostate, Against the Galileans).
4 I.e. the Virgin Mary.
5 Judith, the daughter of Merari, cut off the head of the Assyrian general Holofernes, leading the Assyrians to retreat from Israel (Judith 13).
6 The second of the four names of the moon (Enoch 78:2).
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6 ኢለም፡እብል፡ Ironically, this line is not provided in the image.

7 ኢለም፡ እትሮፋን፡ ወለውፋን፡ ወለድርኔ። አርሲማ፡ መንክርፋ፡ ለወርቅ፡ ቀይህንፋፋ

8 ኢለም፡ እትሮፋን፡ ወለውፋን፡ ወለድርኔ። አርሲማ፡ መንክርፋ፡ ለወርቅ፡ ቀይህንፋፋ

9 ኢለም፡ እትሮፋን፡ ወለውፋን፡ ወለድርኔ። አርሲማ፡ መንክርፋ፡ ለወርቅ፡ ቀይህንፋፋ

10 ኢለም፡ እትሮፋን፡ ወለውፋን፡ ወለድርኔ። አርሲማ፡ መንክርፋ፡ ለወርቅ፡ ቀይህንፋፋ

11 ኢለም፡ እትሮፋን፡ ወለውፋን፡ ወለድርኔ። አርሲማ፡ መንክርፋ፡ ለወርቅ፡ ቀይህንፋፋ

12 ኢለም፡ እትሮፋን፡ ወለውፋን፡ ወለድርኔ። አርሲማ፡ መንክርፋ፡ ለወርቅ፡ ቀይህንፋፋ

APPARATUS

A fol. 168v

B fol. 126v

APPARATUS | 5 ኢለም፡ ወለውፋን፡ ወለድርኔ። አርሲማ፡ መንክርፋ፡ ለወርቅ፡ ቀይህንፋፋ

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6 ‘Salutation,’ I say to your throat and your neck I salute;
Salutation to your shoulders and your back, clothed in magnificence.
For your weakened daughter you are a wearer of strength, Hripsime.
Toss the enemy of my soul into a chasm of pain and toil
Like Esther threw Haman from his couch.8

7 Salutation to your chest and your honoured bosom
And to your hands, also, with their tormented arms.
Hripsime, a litter for your Lady,
Salutation to her flight and the story of her wondrous oppression,9
As she is Queen in heaven and on earth.

8 Salutation to your elbows, your forearms and your palms; ‘Salutation,’ I say
To your ten fingers and their nails.
Hripsime, on account of the sorrowful flight of the Virgin,
Renew the days of this season for me,
For impiety has seized them from me.

9 Salutation to your breasts and your sides which are adorned with a verdure of gold
And to your belly with its heart and kidneys.
(5) Hripsime, intercede with your God
(3) On account of the flight of the Virgin and the exile of her only Son
(4) That you might freely make me, a worthless sinner, righteous.

10 Salutation to your mind which ponders good things
And to your intestines and your equal bowels.
Be vigilant, that you might awaken my heart to repentance!
O how the shadow of sin conceals me, Hripsime,
As your lamp goes before me.

11 Salutation to your navel and your sealed virginity
And to your hips and your pleasant thighs.
‘Salutation,’ I say to you, Hripsime, with a sweet kiss.
Salutation, also, to holy Mary’s dwelling place:
Salutation, salutation to you, (Mount) Koskam.

12 Salutation to your knees which laboured in prostrating to the Most High,
With (your) feet and heels which are adjacent to them.
Hripsime, grant that I may traverse with you the paths
To the Eastern Paradise and leap for joy in wandering it
Like the young of an ox, which is called a heifer.

7 This seems to suggest that the reciter is female, as Hripsime was herself a virgin.
8 The Persian vizier Haman was killed by King Ahasuerus when he was found sitting on a couch with Esther (Esther 7:8).
9 I.e. the flight of the Virgin Mary to Egypt.
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A fol. 169r

13 ወልም፡ለመከየድኪ፡ወለአፃብ

14 ወልም፡ለወለአፃባረን፡በመዐርየ፨

15 ወልም፡ለወለአፃባረን፡በመዐርየ፨

16 ወልም፡ለወለአፃባረን፡በመዐርየ፨

17 ወልም፡ለወለአፃባረን፡በመዐርየ፨

A fol. 169v

A ወልም፡ትልወለስል፡በቀልተ፨

B ወልም፡ታልወለስል፡በቀልተ፨

APPARATUS  15 ወልም፡ልጉርኪኒ፡A ወልም፡ልጉርኪኒ፡B

16 ወልም፡ልጉርኪኒ፡A ወልም፡ልጉርኪኒ፡B ወልም፡ልጉርኪኒ፡A ወልም፡ልጉርኪኒ፡B ወልም፡ልጉርኪኒ፡A ወልም፡ልጉርኪኒ፡B ወልም፡ልጉርኪ旎፡A ወልም፡ልጉርኪ旎፡B

19 ወልም፡ለወለአፃብ፡በመዐርየ፨

20 ወልም፡ለወለአፃብ፡በመዐርየ፨

21 ወልም፡ለወለአፃብ፡በመዐርየ፨

22 ወልም፡ለወለአፃብ፡በመዐርየ፨

This portion of the text is extant only in MS A
Salutation to the soles of your feet and your toes equally
And to your toenails, whose whiteness (is like) a pearl.
Bind me, Hripsime, with a cord of good spirit
Lest (my tongue’s) ensnarer kill me with the poison of its evil utterance,
(For it is) a small (part) of my flesh (yet) its sound (is) loud.¹⁰
Salutation to your stature which resembles a date palm
And to your entire image, lest I should forget a single part.
Hripsime, give me, as much as I want,
A life pleasing to Christ, the benefactor of delight,
For I am exceedingly afraid to die.
Salutation to the departure of your soul on the day that they cut off your head
And to the remains of your body and your shrouding together.
Wealthy Hripsime, lest poverty come upon me,
Feed me from your storehouse, for I am unable to cultivate (anything for myself)
And I am ashamed to beg.
Salutation to your sepulchre together with the translation of your body,
As I bring a psalm for it like those of Asaph.¹¹
Hripsime, the lady adorned with honour,
Do not cast me into exile from the Creator (because) He is displeased;
Fetter the feet of my mind.
Out of my poverty I have offered you the wealth of this song
In which is the praise of your entire image.
Blessed Hripsime, martyr of the Lord,
Make it ascend before your face and receive it
In the place where the offering of Abel rose before God.¹²

A Salutation to you, chosen Hripsime:
Handmaiden of blessed Mary,
You who did not fear the furnace of fire,
A white bird of paradise.

B Salutation to you! When Satan aroused
The waves of strong time,
You were not afraid of a fiery furnace,
Hripsime, the Saviour’s martyr.

¹¹ Twelve psalms (49, 72–82) are attributed to Asaph, who was a Levite appointed by David for the purpose of singing praises to God (1 Chronicles 15:16–17).
¹² God accepted the offering of Abel but disregarded that of Cain (Genesis 4:4).
ሰላም፡ለኪ፡ለብፅዕት፡አርሲማ፨
ሰማዕተ፡ኢየሱስ፡ፌማ፨
እቶነ፡እሳት፡ዘኢያሕመማ፨
ክልልት፡በአክሊለ፡ግርማ፨

D ሰላም፡ለኪ፡ለንጉሠ፡ስሕተት፡በዐውዱ፨
እንተ፡ላዕሌኪ፡ዕልዋን፡ሥቃየ፡ኵነኔ፡አክበዱ፨
እስከ፡አባልኪ፡በእሳት፡አንደዱ፨
ምዕዝት፡እምናርዱ፨

E ሰላም፡ለኪ፡አርሲማ፡ሥጋኪ፡ሶቤ፡ሰተሩ፨
ወአዕፅምተኪ
\textsuperscript{23}ሳበሩ፨
ክሳደ基辅፡መጦ基辅፡በመጥባሕት፡ይምትሩ፨
ይክሩ፡ቡለስ፨

F ሰላም፡ለኪ፡አርሲማ፡ባሕርይ፨
ለነፍሰ፡ኵሉ፡ምስካይ፨
ከማ基辅፡አልቦ፡እምታሕተ፡ሰማይ፨
በሥን፡ወበላሕይ፨

G ሰላም፡ለኪ፡ሶቤ፡መተሩ፡ክሳዳ፨
ለስምዐ፡ኵነኔ፡በዐውዳ፨
ደም፡ውሕዘ፡ወሐሊብ፡ፀዓዳ፨
ምዕዝት፡እምጽጌ፡ረዳ፨

H ሰላም፡ለኪ፡መጠነ፡አማኅኩ基辅፡ሊተ፡አርሲማ፡እምየ፨
ልበ፡መዋቲ፡ዘኢሐለየ፨
ወዐይነ፡ሰብእ፡ዘኢርእየ፨
ለፍቁ基辅፡ዘድንግል፡ድልዊ፡ወስብየ፨

APPARATUS  |  \textsuperscript{23}ሳልእስሚምተኪ | A
C Salutation to you, blessed Hripsime:  
Martyr of Jesus the Creator  
Whom a furnace of fire did not harm,  
Crowned with a crown of awesomeness.

D Salutation to you, Hripsime! In the king of error’s court,  
The unbelievers burdened you with a torturous judgement  
Until they burned your flesh with fire,  
More fragrant than nard.

E Salutation to you, Hripsime! When they lacerated your flesh  
And broke your bones  
You surrendered your neck that they might cut it with a sword  
For the sake of the love of Christ.

F Salutation to you, Hripsime, a pearl  
For the soul of every desolate person.  
There is no one like you below heaven  
In splendour and beauty.\(^{13}\)

G Salutation to you! When they cut her neck  
In the arena of martyrdom’s suffering  
Blood flowed with white milk\(^{14}\)  
More fragrant than a rose.

H Salutation to you! As much as I have greeted you, Hripsime my mother,  
(4) Prepare for me, your beloved Zadəngəl,\(^{15}\) a reward  
(2) Of which the heart of mortals cannot conceive  
(3) And which the eye of men cannot see.\(^{16}\)

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\(^{13}\) It was on account of her beauty that Hripsime was forced to flee from Diocletian. See Colin 1986, 496–497.

\(^{14}\) This event is described in the martyrdom: Krawczuk 2012, 165.

\(^{15}\) According to the manuscript’s colophon, MS A was copied for King Bakāffā and I did not find other references to Zadəngəl in the manuscript. Nonetheless, Zadəngəl may have been the scribe, a person connected to the production of the manuscript from which this was copied, or even the name of the composer himself.

\(^{16}\) A reference to 1 Corinthians 2:9.
List of References


Ḫayla Mikāʾel ṬasfâʾĪyasus and Zaybe Mikāʾel, eds, n. d. ሗክረልበው መልክአzeigt (Zəkra ’abaw: Malkǝ’ a gubâ’e, ’Commemoration of the fathers: Collection of Malkǝ’’) (n. p.: n. pub., n. d.).


Miscellaneous


**Summary**

Despite the growth of a cult for the Armenian martyr Hripsime in Ethiopia during the Middle Ages, no *malkə* -hymn dedicated to her can be found in manuscripts predating the eighteenth century. There are two extant witnesses, one from the early eighteenth century and one from the nineteenth or twentieth century, to a *Malkə a `Arsimā* containing seventeen stanzas. Evidently this hymn is the one named in a list of titles of *malkə* -hymns extant in four manuscripts, two of which indicate that the hymn should have seventeen stanzas. While shorter than most, the hymn skilfully incorporates allusions to biblical stories, including Esther and Judith, paraphrases of and references to verses from the Old and New Testaments, and references to the flight to Egypt and Mount Koskam. While the text seemingly fell out of use, there being no later manuscript witnesses or printed editions of it, a different, longer *malkə* -hymn was at some point composed and is now widespread in printed collections.