2. THE PURIM SCROLL OF THE CAIRENE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Benjamin Hary

The Purim Scroll of the Cairene Jewish Community (megillat pūrīm il-miṣrīyyīn) was probably composed by the spiritual leader of the Jewish community in Cairo, Rabbi Samuel (or Solomon) Sidilio. The Scroll records events following the deliverance of the Jews from the tyrannical rule of Ahmad Pasha, self-appointed governor in Ottoman Egypt in 1524. The community established the 27th of Adar as a day of fasting and the 28th of Adar as a festive holiday to be celebrated after the manner of Purim. On that day the Scroll was read in the local synagogues. There are two versions of the Scroll among the Cairene Jewish community. One is more detailed, mentions names of people and places, and exists in both Hebrew and Egyptian Judaeo-Arabic. The other is shorter, more general, and has survived only in Hebrew. Both versions are critically edited using several manuscripts, translated, and linguistically analysed in Hary (1992).

Transcription

Adler, Folio 4b

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Adler, Folio 5a

1. פַּיְצָר צָלַל יִסְלָל
2. אָרָאוֹחָהוּמָו. פַּיְצָר כְּלַ מְרִיתָה
3. מְדוּרָהוּ זָכוֹל בְּכָל בְּכָל
4. מַחְלֹלָא אֶחֱטָהָוּ בַּאֵשֶׁא
5. עָנָה עָלֶה עָלֶה מִלְּכָל סָלִימָאָה
6. עָנָה מַחְלֹלָא אָוֶנָא אֲזַה אֶל
7. אָרָאָא מְנָעָה. לַמְלָא סָמָעָה
8. אֶל צִיוּדָא אֶחֱטָהָוּ בַּאֵשֶׁא
9. עָלֶה אֵל סָלִימָאָא סִלִימָאָאָו וָאוֹנָה
10. עָלֶה סָלִימָאָה פַּי מְצָר
11. פַּתְוֹנָא חוֹתְנָא שַׁדְיָדָא וָעֶטְיָא
12. הַנְּאָפָא נַפְּסַ עָֹיָמָא
13. נַשַּׁקָא אֶל אָתוֹאָאָא לָל נְאָה
14. אַרְאָא נַגְמִיל אַהֲלָא אֵל מְדִי נַמְפְּאָא
15. נַפְּסַ עֶטְיָא. נַשַּׁקָא מַצְעָבְהוּמָא
16. בָּבִרָהוּמָא נַגְזִירָהוּמָא. מַחְתַּוְו אַהֲלָא
17. אֶל בָּכָל אָתוֹאָאָא נַגְמִיל סְכָאָנָהא

Arabic Transcription

Adler, Folio 4b

11. وفي ذلك ال يوم
12. وقت طلوع احمد باشه لى قلعة
13. جعلوه سلطان عليههم ونادو في
14. جميع رحبات مصر عمل احمد
15. باشه سلطان علا مصر وخلا جميع
Translation

(4b) On that day when Ahmad Pasha went up to the Citadel, they appointed him Sultan and (subsequently) people proclaimed in all the squares of Cairo that Ahmad Pasha had become the Sultan of Egypt and all of its towns. When (Ahmad) became the Sultan, he renewed the oppression over the people in Cairo, (5a) seeking to rob them of their wealth. In every district and town, whenever it was heard that Ahmad Pasha had rebelled against King Suleiman, the people of the countryside also rebelled with him. When
the Jews heard that the Pasha had rebelled against Sultan Suleiman and that he had become the Sultan in Egypt, they grieved tremendously, became very fearful, and tore their clothes into pieces. Furthermore, all the residents of the city became anxious, too, and both the young as well as the old tore their clothes. The townspeople became sorrowful and all of its dwellers became humiliated.

**Commentary**

**Folio 4b**

Line 11

And the Jews heard that the Pasha had rebelled against Sultan Suleiman and that he had become the Sultan in Egypt, they grieved tremendously, became very fearful, and tore their clothes into pieces.\(^1\) Furthermore, all the residents of the city became anxious, too, and both the young as well as the old tore their clothes. The townspeople became sorrowful and all of its dwellers became humiliated.

\(^1\) Literally: ‘they tore their clothes very much’. As is well known, the tearing of clothes is a sign of mourning in the Jewish tradition.
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reflects the (almost) obligatory spelling of short /u/ with a waw in the Hebraised orthography in Late Egyptian Judaeo-Arabic (Hary 2017, 16–17).

Line 15
עלא reflects the Hebraised orthography (Hary 1996) where the ʾalif maqṣūra bi-šūrati l-yāʾ is not spelled with a yod (as is more common in the Arabicised orthography in Classical Judaeo-Arabic); rather it is spelled with an ʾalef here, perhaps due to Aramaic influence (Hary 1992, 252–53).

Line 17
אלד֗י reflects the frozen form of the relative pronoun in Late Judaeo-Arabic (Hary 1992, 308).

Folio 5a

Line 8
אל יאוד reflects scribes’ avoidance of the combination יהו for its perceived sacred significance (Blanc 1985, 306; Hary 1992, 90, 270).

Line 11
זיף זיד and also ניף שיד in lines 12 and 15 reflect the spelling of the tanwin accusative in Late Judaeo-Arabic (when is appears in the texts) with a final nun, rather than final ʾalef, as is more common in the Arabicised orthography of Classical Judaeo-Arabic (Khan 1991; Hary 1992, 296–98).