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The Catalog of Thirty-One Kings: Thoughts in the Twenty-First Century on Old Yiddish Epic

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Abstract: This study focuses on a poetic Yiddish retelling of Joshua 12:7–24—the biblical passage that glorifies Joshua’s “epic” accomplishments on the battlefield, presenting a catalog of the thirty-one kings of Canaan he defeated. This Yiddish poem, numbering thirty-six lines, is found within a larger work entitled *Sefer Yehoshua* (The Book of Joshua), an Old Yiddish epic that retells the entire book of Joshua, composed by an unknown author and printed in Krakow in 1594. Several aspects distinguish the poem at hand from the remainder of the epic, and their discussion touches upon questions of composition and transmission of the Old Yiddish epic genre at large.

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The following study focuses on a poetic Yiddish retelling of Joshua 12:7–24—the biblical passage that glorifies Joshua’s accomplishments on the battlefield, presenting a catalog of the thirty-one kings of Canaan he defeated. In order to understand this poetic passage, this article begins with presenting the points of overlap between the Jewish Bible and epic in general, and focuses on the significance of catalogs within that context. It then focuses on the original Hebrew catalog of thirty-one kings, highlighting epic traits within it, and additional relevant aspects of its transmission and reception throughout the generations. In its second part, this article offers a brief introduction to Old Yiddish epic, and in particular epic retellings of biblical themes, the literary genre to which the focus of this study belongs. A close reading of the Yiddish version of the catalog of thirty-one kings is then offered, taking into consideration aspects of accuracy and aesthetics, as well as comparing the

Yiddish passage under discussion to the original Hebrew and to the rest of the Yiddish epic in which it is found.

Epic Material in the Jewish Bible

In 1930–1934 poet Shaul Tchernichovsky published the first full Hebrew translation of the *Iliad*, and in 1940 he published the first full Hebrew translation of the *Odyssey*.¹ Retaining the dactylic hexameter used in the original Greek texts, his achievement was subsequently crowned as one of the best translations of these masterpieces into any language.² In his preface to the *Iliad*'s translation, perhaps unavoidably, Tchernichovsky drew a comparison between Greek and Jewish cultures, from the perspective of the latter:

We often say that a huge gap separates Judaism and Hellenism, and that upon entering the Hellenic sphere one ostensibly steps into a completely foreign world. But is it truly so? Let anyone who knows the books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel step forward and confess! Is Homer's world so foreign to him? Is it not a world similar to that of the conquerors of Canaan, following their entrance to the Promised Land, which is laid out before him?³

Indeed, although mostly written in prose, the books of the Tanakh (Jewish Bible) contain narratives that can be considered epic: they relate scenes from the heroic past of the Jewish people, describing the trials and triumphs of exemplary figures. As Tchernichovsky wrote, this is particularly evident in the books of the Former Prophets, which are replete with war scenes such as Joshua's conquests (Jos. 6–13), Samson's battles with the Philistines (Jud. 14–16), or David's victory over Goliath (1 Sam. 17). These books also contain dramatic scenes from the royal court, a further aspect of epics, e.g., Saul's coronation (1 Sam. 9–10), or the rape of Tamar (2 Sam. 13). Moreover, scholars have suggested that certain biblical passages are in fact remnants of an ancient Hebrew epic that were interpolated into the biblical text. For instance, the Song of Deborah (Jud. 5), which – parallel to the prose narration of Jud. 4 – recounts the Israelites' battle with the Canaanites and their warlord Sisera.⁴

The Hebrew Catalog of Thirty-One Kings (Jos. 12)

The elaborate listing of the thirty-one kings of Canaan whom Joshua defeated (Jos. 12:7–24) is another biblical passage that presents epic traits. It is found amid further, shorter, lists of defeated kings and kingdoms (chapters 10–12) and stands out as the

¹ Homeros, *Sefer Ilias*, trans. Shaul Tchernichovsky (Berlin: Stybel, 1930, Vol. 1; 1934, Vol. 2); Homeros, *Iliada ve-Odiseya*, trans. Shaul Tchernichovsky (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1940).

² On the history of Tchernichovsky's and others' translations of Homer into Hebrew, see Aminadav Dikman, "Homeros shel Tchernichovsky," in *Saul Tchernichovsky: Studies and Documents*, ed. Boaz Arpaly (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1994), 421–471 [in Hebrew]. A full translation of the *Odyssey* from Greek into Yiddish appeared a few years prior to Tchernichovsky's Hebrew translation: Homer, *Odiseye*, trans. M. L. Petshenik, intro. Shloyme Sheynberg (Warsaw: Yidishe universal bibliotek, 1937).

³ *Sefer Ilias*, trans. Tchernichovsky (1930), xxxiii.

⁴ *Judges*, introd., translation and commentary by Robert G. Boling (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 101–120; W. M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 52–56.

longest and most complete example.⁵ Scholars noticed that this cluster of lists represents a turning point in the narrative of the biblical book: on the one hand it marks Joshua's completion of the conquest of the Land of Canaan (the so-called "Conquest Book") and on the other it signals the land's partition into the territories in which the tribes of Israel would dwell ("Settlement Book").⁶ Moreover, some discern textual and literary indications that the catalog of thirty-one kings was edited at a later stage than the rest of the Conquest chapters.⁷

The epic nature of the passage derives not only from its heroic content, but also from its form. Literary scholars have endeavored to understand the purpose and meaning of catalogs within the framework of larger works, e.g., the catalog of ships in the *Iliad* (Book 2, 494–759) or the catalogs of heroes in the German Dietrich and Parzival epics.⁸ Holger Homann highlights that some such lists were meant to record and transmit knowledge and cultural or religious views, like Jesus' pedigree in the New Testament.⁹ However, within the context of epic poetry, catalogs seem to have served additional purposes; arguably, such long lists might bore the audience of an otherwise intriguing and dynamic narrative. Homann further argues that catalogs within epics constitute a stylistic element drawn from orally transmitted literature, one that cannot be fully appreciated through solitary reading today. While many readers will often breeze through catalogs and the ostensibly meaningless details they convey, the original mode of transmitting such works was the live voice and performance of a singer standing before an audience. This lector would then excite his audience with a multitude of details about a certain theme or idea, such as a military triumph, opulent wealth, aspects of cultural heritage, etc. Supporting this assumption is the fact that catalogs often open with a statement aimed at rousing the audience regarding the forthcoming passage.¹⁰

Returning to Joshua 12, thirty-one is a large number, and there is no way to determine whether audiences were acquainted with each and every one of the kings listed here. As such, it seems that the biblical catalog was intended to educate the audience as well as boasting of Joshua's might.

The Hebrew Catalog's Poetic Structure

The list in Jos. 12 stands out from the remainder of the biblical text in terms of its poetic texture, adhering to a somewhat crude formula, "The King of [place

⁵ For a thorough review of the lists and the possible connections between them, including references to additional research, see Shira J. Golani, "Lists of Persons within the Narrative of the Former Prophets" (PhD diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2016), 25–45 [in Hebrew].

⁶ Nili Wazana, *All the Boundaries of the Land: The Promised Land in Biblical Thought in Light of the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007), 177–179, 190–191 [in Hebrew].

⁷ R. D. Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 159, 162; Volkmar Fritz, *Das Buch Josua* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1994), 137.

⁸ Holger Homann, "Die Heldenkataloge in der historischen Dietrichsepik und die Theorie der mündlichen Dichtung," *Modern Language Notes* 92, no. 3 (1977): 415–435; C. J. Lofmark, "Name Lists in Parzival," in *Mediaeval German Studies presented to Frederick Norman by his Students, Colleagues and Friends on the Occasion of his Retirement* (London: University of London Institute of Germanic Studies, 1965), 157–173; Vera Keller, "Lists," in *Information: A Historical Companion*, ed. Ann Blair et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2021), 579–582.

⁹ Homann, "Die Heldenkataloge," 416–417.

¹⁰ Homann, "Die Heldenkataloge," 417; Charles Rowan Beye, *The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Epic Tradition* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1966), 89; Lofmark, "Name Lists," 166.

name]—One,” which is repeated thirty-one times.¹¹ This structure is enhanced by the traditional manner in which this passage is written: a large space is inserted between each king’s name and the word “One,” creating two vertical columns in the text. This writing practice, known as stichography, is used also for other catalogs and poetic passages in the Tanakh.¹² While it may have stemmed from the desire to represent the metric (and perhaps melodic) aspect of those texts, the talmudic discourse suggests another reason for its use:

The Song at the Sea and the Song of Deborah are written in the manner of setting bricks, that is, two halves of a brick over a whole brick, and a whole brick over two half-bricks. The names of the ten sons of Haman and the kings of Canaan are written with a half-brick over a half-brick and a whole brick over a whole brick, for no building could stand if built that way.

Palestinian Talmud, Megillah, Chapter 3¹³

The Babylonian Talmud contains a similar passage yet cites a different reason for this manner of writing: “So that they should never rise again from their downfall.”¹⁴ We thus see that the sages addressed the paradox of recording the names of enemies and unintentionally perpetuating their memory using a metaphor from the field of construction: the two columns are compared to an unstable pile of bricks that can easily be completely toppled – revealing the writers’ true feelings about the content of the lists. This kind of stichography is thus interpreted as a measure of derision, indicating that as early as biblical and talmudic times these catalogs elicited an emotional reaction among Jewish audiences.

Epic Poetry in Old Yiddish

As suggested in the beginning of this article, epic poetry, describing the trials and triumphs of exemplary figures, excited, and at times even inspired, (also) Jewish audiences since time immemorial.¹⁵ A review of Yiddish literature reveals that this genre encompasses some of the earliest surviving documents in the Ashkenazic vernacular, such as the epic poems recorded in the so-called Cambridge Manuscript

¹¹ Fritz, *Das Buch Josua*, 132. See also Aharon Mirsky, *Ha-pissuk shel ha-signon ha-ivri* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1978).

¹² Shem Miller, “The Oral-Written Textuality of Stichographic Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 22 (2015): 162–188.

¹³ English translation taken from Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: A Preliminary Translation and Explanation*, vol. 19 *Megillah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 137.

¹⁴ Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 16a. English translation taken from: *The Babylonian Talmud*, translated into English with notes, glossary and indices under the editorship of I. Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1961).

¹⁵ See, for example, the medieval Hebrew *Midrash va-yisa’u*, retelling battle scenes from Genesis. On this work and its transmission see: Tamar Alexander and Yosef Dan, “Midrash va-yissa’u ha-shalem,” *Folklore Research Center Studies* 3 (1973): 67–76 [in Hebrew]; Menahem Kister, “Ancient material in ‘Pirque de-Rabbi Eli’ezer’: Basilides, Qumran, the ‘Book of Jubilees,’” in “Go Out and Study the Land” (*Judges 18:2*): *Archaeological, Historical and Textual Studies in Honor of Hanan Eshel*, eds. Aren M. Maeir, Jodi Magness, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 69–93, esp. 69 and 80, fn. 47.

(1382).¹⁶ Moreover, as the unusually large extant corpus proves,¹⁷ this genre enjoyed popularity for over three centuries: its latest known work was the now-lost edition of the epic on the book of Daniel, printed in Berlin in 1730.¹⁸ Since many epic poems have reached us in a single copy (a phenomenon common to Old Yiddish literature in general), it is likely that additional works have not survived.

The extant corpus of Yiddish epics can be divided into two sub-groups. The first constitutes a “third space,” cultural hybrid creations in which German epic and chivalric adventures were retold by Jews, recorded in Hebrew characters, often neutralizing the Christian elements they originally entailed.¹⁹ The proximity of Yiddish and German allowed for this cultural transference to occur easily, but in some cases it blurred the linguistic distinction between the languages, so that it became difficult to ascertain whether these works are indeed written in Old Yiddish, or simply in German in Hebrew characters.²⁰ Bearing in mind that many of these German narratives were transmitted through public recitals, it seems logical that the Jewish writers (or scribes) who produced the extant Yiddish texts were present at such performances.²¹

The texts of the second sub-group are retellings of Jewish biblical narratives, in particular scenes from Genesis, and the lion’s share of the books of Esther, Daniel, and the Former Prophets.²² On the one hand, in terms of content, these texts draw on

¹⁶ This manuscript is kept in the Cambridge University Library, MS. T-S.10.K.22. See Lajb Fuks, ed., *The Oldest Known Literary Documents of Yiddish Literature* (c. 1382), 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957). English translations of most works in this manuscript, as well as concise reviews and references to further studies are found in Jerold C. Frakes, ed. and trans., *Early Yiddish Epic* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014).

¹⁷ On this genre and its extant corpus see: Khone Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature: Aspects of Its History* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1978), 118–124 [in Hebrew]; Chava Turniansky, “On Old-Yiddish Biblical Epics,” *International Folklore Review* 8 (1991): 26–33; Frakes, *Early Yiddish Epic*.

¹⁸ Wulf-Otto Dreeßen and Hermann-Josef Müller, eds., *Doniel: Das altjiddische Danielbuch nach dem Basler Druck von 1557*, 2 vols. (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1978), 15, 17.

¹⁹ See Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature*, 31; Joseph Pereles, “Bibliographische Mittheilungen aus München,” *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 25, no. 9 (1876): 351–61; Leo Landau, *Arthurian Legends: Or the Hebrew-German Rhymed Version of the Legend of King Arthur* (Leipzig: E. Uvenarins, 1912); Peter Ganz, Frederick Norman, and Werner Schwartz, eds., *Dukus Horant* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1964); Frakes, *Early Yiddish Epic*; Astrid Lembke, Tatjana Meisler and Ina Spetzke, “Ein jiddischer Artusroman: Werkstattbericht zur Edition des Widuwilt,” in Laura Auteri, et al. (eds.), *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik. Wege der Germanistik in transkultureller Perspektive* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2022), 625–636. On the third space theory see Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). Following Ashkenazic migration to northern Italy, a similar process of retelling Italian chivalric literature in Yiddish also took place. See Claudia Rosenzweig, *Bovo d’Antona by Elye Bokher: A Yiddish Romance* (Brill: Leiden 2016); Chava Turniansky and Erika Timm, *Yiddish in Italia: Yiddish Manuscripts and Printed Books from the 15th to the 17th Century*, with the collaboration of Claudia Rosenzweig (Milano: Associazione italiana amici dell’Università di Gerusalemme, 2003).

²⁰ See for instance the debate about *Dukus Horant*, e.g., J. W. Marchand, [Review of Fuks 1957], *Word* 15 (1959): 383–394; Max Weinreich, “Old Yiddish Poetry in Linguistic-Literary Research,” *Word* 16 (1960): 100–118.

²¹ A strong argument supporting the assumption that this kind of cultural exchange between Christians and Jews took place following social encounters can be discerned from the use of melodies of German songs for various other texts in Yiddish literature. See Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature*, 70–71.

²² See Oren Cohen Roman, *Joshua and Judges in Yiddish Verse: Four Early Modern Epics. An Annotated Edition* (De Gruyter: Berlin, 2022), xxii–xxv.

Jewish sources, namely the biblical text, traditional commentary, and exegetical interpretations (midrash). In formal terms, on the other hand, these poems were strongly influenced by German epic and chivalric literature, both stylistically and linguistically. This is evident, for example, in their register and vocabulary—including formulae and recurring rhymes—when describing the warriors, the weapons they use (among them guns!), the titles applied to the characters, and their direct speech. This influence also manifests itself in formal aspects, such as the stanzaic structure (including perhaps the melody, as discussed below), and the presence of an intrusive narrator relating the story to a live audience.²³ All these factors, along with bluntly anachronistic details (such as the above-mentioned guns or references to European countries and Christianity),²⁴ translocated the biblical narrative into a contemporary European setting, arguably bringing it closer to its intended Ashkenazi audience.

The following passage from *Shmuel-bukh*, the epic retelling of the Books of Samuel, provides an example of most of the above-mentioned aspects:²⁵

אין דען זעלבן צייטן אז איך אויך זאגן קאן
דא הטן עש דיא פלישתים גאר איין גרושן מאן
איין ריש אונגיהווייער איין דעגן און בור צייט
ער ווש גליות רעכטר ברודר אז אונש דש בוך זייט

During that same time, as I can tell you,
the Philistines had a very large man, an
enormous giant, a dauntless warrior. He
was Goliath's own brother, as the book
tells us.

ער היש אויך גליות אונ' טרוג גוטן הארניש אן
ער ווש צו גת דר צוגן דער אונגיהווייער מאן
ער קליידט זיך אין שטאהיל רינג אונ' איין שטאנג אין זיינר הנט
דא צוהן דיא היידן דען יודן אבר אין איר לנט

He was also named Goliath and wore good
armor. This enormous man was raised in
Gath. He clothed himself in a steel
mail-coat and bore a pole in his hand.
Then the heathens again invaded the land
of the Jews.

קויניג דוד אונ' דיא זיינן אין אנטגיגן צוך
דא ווש דעם שטארקן ריזן צו הער דוד גוך
שטארקר קויניג דוד דיר זייא רעכט ווידר זייט
הוייט וויל איך אן דיר רעכנן מיין גרושש הערצן לייט

King David and his men marched out
against them. The mighty giant rushed
toward Sir David. "Mighty King David,
herewith are you properly challenged.
Today I wish to avenge on you my great
heartache.

אין טאל אילה דר שלוגשט דוא מיר דען ברודר מיין
דאש קלאג איך מיינר שטאנגן דיין ענד מוש עש זיין
שייש ניט שפראך דער קויניג דוד אייא וויא בורכט איך מיך
דר שלוג איך דיין ברודר זוא דר שלאג איך לעכט אויך דיר

In the valley of Elah you slew my brother,
which I lament. My pole will certainly
bring about the end of you." "Do not fool
yourself," said King David. "Oh my, how
frightened I am! If I slew your brother,
perhaps I will slay you, too.

היט דיר בור מיינם שווערט ווו דיר ביגרייפט דיא שנייד
איך צו הויא דיר דיין שטאנגן אז איין בויליא ווייד
ווש קאנשט דוא נויארט קלאפן שרייא דער ריז זוא הוך
נון וויל איך דיר דר טרוקן אלש איין אנדריא ולוך

Beware of my sword – there where the
blade bites you. I will hack your pole to
pieces like a rotten willow twig." "What,
can you do nothing but babble!?" shouted

²³ This setting is drawn from German literature and was also unknown in Ashkenazic Hebrew literature, see Cohen Roman, *Joshua and Judges*, xlv–xlvi.

²⁴ Turniansky, "Biblical Epics," 31; Cohen Roman, *Joshua and Judges*, xcvi–cvi.

²⁵ *Shmuel-bukh*, 1091–1097; English translation taken from Frakes, *Early Yiddish Epic*, 96–97.

the huge giant. “Now, I will squash you like any other flea.”

זיא לישן בון דען ווארטן עש דוכט זיא אן דער צייט דא ווארד בון אין גיבירט גאר איין הערטער שטרייט דער ריז וואש אונגילענק דוד ווש ביהענד דא נם דער גרוש גליות אויך איין בויו ענדא	They stopped their waiting; it seemed to them that it was time. Then they fought quite a fierce battle. The giant was clumsy; David was agile. The enormous Goliath also came to a bad end there.
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This Yiddish battle scene is an extensive animation of an episode to which biblical and/or exegetical Hebrew texts only allude.²⁶ It places direct speech in the mouths of David and Goliath’s brother, in the form of an intense verbal confrontation replete with emotion and scorn that is reminiscent of the verbal exchange between the young David and Goliath (cf. 1 Sam. 17:43–48). It also offers a detailed description of the characters’ weapons and battle gear.

From a chronological perspective, we find examples of both sub-groups of Old Yiddish epic already in the Cambridge Manuscript: respectively, the German epic *Dukus Horant* and poems based on scenes from Genesis.²⁷ However, it appears logical that while the Jews arrived in the German-speaking area with a cultural inventory of epic narratives, the birth of Yiddish epic poetry necessarily followed the “fertilization” carried out by their encounter with the German epic. Presumably, having become acquainted with this German genre, certain skilled Jewish individuals succeeded in mastering its literary style. They retold German narratives, and later expanded their corpus to include Jewish-biblical materials. In addition, it seems that a gradual process of growth took place – from retelling single scenes (“small texts”) to entire books (“large texts”). Khone Shmeruk suggests that while the former could have been transmitted orally, the latter were composed in writing:

Based on the chronology of the biblical poems in Yiddish, there is room to assume that at first this poetry was limited to depictions of single episodes from the Bible, of a relatively limited narrative size, such as the poems in the Cambridge Manuscript or the *Akedah* poem. Gradually entire biblical books were tackled. [...] one may also presume that at first this biblical poetry was intended for oral transmission, while adhering to a set melody. [...] It appears that as the biblical poems grew longer, it became more difficult to transmit them orally, and poems exceeding the length of a few hundred lines were already intended for private reading.²⁸

For unknown reasons, the genre of Old Yiddish epic began to lose popularity in the seventeenth century and, following the above-mentioned 1730 epic on Daniel, sank into oblivion.²⁹ Consequently, its pertinent melodies and performative traditions were lost, and only the verbal texts of the epics were preserved in manuscripts and prints on the shelves of various libraries.

²⁶ The basis for the passage in *Shmuel-bukh* is unclear; it seems to rely on 2 Sam. 21:15–22 as well as 1 Chron. 20:5–8, and their interpretation in Babylonian Talmud Sotah 42b.

²⁷ See note 16 above.

²⁸ Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature*, 118–119.

²⁹ Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature*, 124.

In the late nineteenth century, researchers rediscovered the surviving Yiddish works of this genre and began to devote attention to them. At first, the discourse concerning them was conducted in German,³⁰ but in the early twentieth century they were also presented and discussed in modern Yiddish.³¹ The aesthetics and lively content of these centuries-old epics quickly became popular among modern Yiddish readers, and scholars of Yiddish literature devoted particular attention to the texts' first-person narration and the implied setting in which a narrator speaks to a live audience (in both sub-groups). Phrases such as "Listen and I will tell you" or "I say this to you truthfully" were understood at face value, and, in turn, gave rise to the famous *Shpilman* Theory.³²

Influenced by an eponymous theory in the study of German literature,³³ this view attributed the creation of the Yiddish epic to wandering entertainers, minstrels of sorts, known as "Shpilman" (musician, performer). Nearly all scholars of Old Yiddish literature active before the Second World War concurred regarding this theory,³⁴ and only after their passing away, and following its decline in the study of German literature, was it contested by Khone Shmeruk.³⁵ His main arguments against the Shpilman Theory were the rabbinic education that the epics' authors evidently received, implying that they were connected to central social circles within the Jewish community; the great length of some epics, making their oral transmission impossible; and the interpretation of the recital descriptions as petrified literary norms rather than the protocol of an actual performance.

It is important to stress that to date no systematic historical study has discussed the modes of transmitting Old Yiddish epics – whether they were publicly recited or privately read. At any rate, it appears that for the most part the relevant information must be gleaned from the texts themselves.

Judging from statements in the epics regarding the melodies to which they were to be sung, it seems impossible to deny that Old Yiddish epics were performed

³⁰ See, for example: Joseph Perles, "Bibliographische Mittheilungen"; Max Grünbaum, *Jüdisch-deutsche Chrestomatie* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1882); Felix Falk, "Die Bücher Samuelis in deutschen Nibelungenstrophen des XV. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen zur jüdischen Volkskunde* 11, no. 2 (1908): 79–85; Willy Staerk and Albert Leitzmann, *Die Jüdisch-deutschen Bibelübersetzungen: von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a. M.: J. Kauffmann, 1923).

³¹ See, for example: Moyshe Basin, *Finf hundert yor yidishe poezye* (New York: Dos bukh, 1917); Max Erik, *Di geshikhte fun der yiddisher literature: Fun di eltste tsaytn biz der haskole-tkufe* (Warsaw: Kultur lige, 1928); Max Weinreich, *Bilder fun der yidisher literatur-geshikhte: Fun di onheybn biz Mendele Moykher-sforim* (Vilna: Tomor, 1928).

³² Elazar Shulman, *Sefat yehudit ashkenazit ve-sifruta* (Riga: Levin, 1913), viii–ix; Leo Landau, *Arthurian Legends: Or the Hebrew-German Rhymed Version of the Legend of King Arthur* (Leipzig: E. Uvenarins, 1912), xliii–xliv; Erik, *Geshikhte*, 67–129; Roman, *Joshua and Judges*, xlvi–xlviii.

³³ Paul Piper, *Die Spielmannsdichtung* (Berlin: Spemann, 1890), 3–74; Walter Johannes Schröder, *Spielmannsepik* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1967); Rüdiger Brandt, "Spielmannsepik': Literaturwissenschaft zwischen Edition, Überlieferung und Literaturgeschichte," *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* 2 (2005): 9–49.

³⁴ See Eliyohu Shulman, "Arayfir," in Max Erik, *Di geshikhte fun der yiddisher literature: Fun di eltste tsaytn biz der haskole-tkufe* (New York: Alveltlekhn yidisher kultur-kongres, 1979), viii.

³⁵ Khone Shmeruk, "Tsi ken der keymbridzher manuskript shtitsn di shpilman-teorye in der yidisher literatur?" *Di goldene keyt* 100 (1979): 251–271 [in English translation: Shmeruk, "Can the Cambridge Manuscript Support the 'Spielmann' Theory in Yiddish Literature?" in *Studies in Yiddish Literature and Folklore* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1986), 1–36]; Shmeruk, *Prokim fun der yidisher literatur-geshikhte* (Tel Aviv: Y. L. Perets Farlag, 1988), 97–120.

publicly.³⁶ Likewise, and following Shmeruk's insight in the passage quoted above, presumably at first some shorter texts were created and transmitted as an oral tradition (fortunately, a few of them were recorded in writing and have reached us). It is likely, however, that the longer epics, e.g., the retellings of the books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, were composed in writing. However, even in those cases, their authors followed the poetic principles developed in the oral phase of the genre. It is also possible that some short oral songs were interpolated into those longer epics.³⁷

The Yiddish Retelling of Jos. 12

The Yiddish poem at the center of this study, retelling Jos. 12, is in fact a passage within a larger work entitled *Sefer Yehoshua* (The Book of Joshua), an Old Yiddish epic that retells the entire book of Joshua, replete with elaborations drawn from midrashic sources and traditional commentary (e.g., by Rashi and Radak).³⁸ The name of the work's author is unknown, and it was printed, presumably only once, by Aharon Prostits in Krakow in 1594.³⁹

Like most other Old Yiddish biblical epics, *Sefer Yehoshua* is written in the stanzaic structure known as *nign Shmuel-bukh*: stanzas of four long lines with a rhyming scheme of *aabb, ccdd*, etc. All lines are divided by a medial caesura with three stressed syllables and a changing number of unstressed ones in each hemistich. The stanza also had a unique melody to accompany it, which has, unfortunately, not reached us.⁴⁰ To be precise, *Sefer Yehoshua* endeavors to adhere to a modified and more developed form of *nign Shmuel-bukh* known as *akht-gezets*, in which two additional rhyming pairs are added at the caesuras.⁴¹ However, the author succeeded in implementing this norm in only two-thirds of its 344 stanzas.⁴²

Sefer Yehoshua differs from other epic retellings of the Former Prophets in that it is more paraphrastic and its narrator is more intrusive.⁴³ While it follows the biblical text systematically and aims to retell it in its entirety (with the clear exception of omitting most lists; see below), it has relatively few traces of the traditional manner of translating the Bible into Yiddish (the so-called *taytsh* tradition), which is characterized by a distinct register, as well as literal calque translations and the preservation of the original Hebrew word order.⁴⁴

³⁶ Nathan Süßkind, *Das Šmuel Buch: Eine jüdisch-deutsche Umdichtung der zwei Bücher Samuelis im Stile der mittelhochdeutschen Heldendichtung* (PhD diss., New York University, 1941), 244; Oren Roman, "Be-nign Shmuel-bukh: On the Melody or Melodies Mentioned in Old-Yiddish Epics," *Aschkenas: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 25, no. 1 (2015): 145–60.

³⁷ Roman, *Joshua and Judges*, xxv–xxx.

³⁸ This epic has been recently published, see Roman, *Joshua and Judges*. See also, Chava Turniansky, "Shetey shirot epiyot al sefer Yehoshua," *Tarbiz* 51, no. 4 (1982): 589–632.

³⁹ Numbering 48 pages in octavo size, this book survived in a unicum copy kept today in the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford (4°W.67.Th. (3)).

⁴⁰ On this melody and its possible German origin see Roman, "Be-nign Shmuel-bukh."

⁴¹ Roman, "Be-nign Shmuel-bukh," 151–159.

⁴² Turniansky, "Shetey shirot," 611.

⁴³ Roman, *Joshua and Judges*, lvii.

⁴⁴ On the *taytsh* tradition of translating the Tankh into Yiddish see: Shloyme Nobl, *Khumesht-taytsh: An oysforshung vegn der traditsye fun taytshn khumesht in di khadorim* (New York: YIVO, 1943); Chava Turniansky, "Le-toldot ha-'taytsh-khumesht' – 'khumesht mit khiber,'" in *Iyyunim be-sifrut: Devarim she-ne'emru li-khvod Dov Sadan bi-melot lo shemonim ve-ḥamesht shanah* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1988), 21–58; Jean Baumgarten, "Yiddish Bibles," in

As was noted, the author of *Sefer Yehoshua* omits most of the biblical lists that enumerate people or describe the distribution of the Promised Land among the tribes. These omissions are usually marked by the words, “I will leave it,” in various phrasings.⁴⁵ We also find such an omission in the case of chapter 12: the author replaced the entire chapter with eight stanzas that interweave some of the information found in the biblical original (including the beginning of Jos. 13) with praise to Joshua (230–237). He clearly acknowledges omitting the list of kings:

... עש ווער ויל צו שרייבן ... זיא הטן דיא ועלקר זיר גישלאגן ... איך וויל עש לאזן בלייבן ... אזו ויל קיניגרייך.⁴⁶ They defeated the nations greatly [...] It would be much to write [...] I will leave it [...] so many kings.

Surprisingly, however, immediately afterwards the narrator recounts the catalog of thirty-one kings in a very elaborate manner (238–246)! He even adds a range of details not found in any other source, which present the kings as powerful opponents and amplify Joshua’s achievements in defeating them. How can this contradiction be resolved?

Before attempting to understand this inconsistency, I would like to note, for reference purposes, that an additional Old Yiddish epic retelling of Joshua⁴⁷ also tends to omit its many lists. Specifically, it omits chapters 11 and 12 entirely, its narrator claiming that the length of the detailed report would not be pleasing:

וויר וואלן עש אן שטין לושן מיר קונין עש ניט שרייבן
איין אונ' דריישיג קונין די ווייל דו מיט בור טרייבן.
אונ' דש לאנט צו טיילן דש ווער איין גרולייג זאך
דרום אישט עש בעשר וויר הון אנדרש גטראכט:⁴⁸ We will leave it standing, we cannot write it!
To spend our time with [naming]
thirty-one kings,
And the partitioning of the land, that
would be a terrible thing
Therefore it is better that we thought
otherwise!

A third Old Yiddish epic retelling of Joshua, found within Yakov Segal Katz’s *Kehillat Yaakov*,⁴⁹ provides a rhymed translation of the kings’ names. It adds very little material beyond the translation, mostly for rhyming purposes, saying, for instance, that the kings were killed or that they wished they had never been born.⁵⁰ However, it does not provide substantial detail for any one individual king, as we find in the poem at the center of this study.

Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature, edited and translated by Jerold C. Frakes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 82–127.

⁴⁵ E.g., איך וויל עז אזו לאזן בלייבן, וויל איך עש לאזן שטין (263c), (249a).

⁴⁶ *Sefer Yehoshua* (Krakow 1594), stanzas 234–235. As cited in Roman, *Joshua and Judges*, 265–66.

⁴⁷ This untitled retelling is reserved in a manuscript dated 1510–1511, kept in the Palatine Library, Parma (Cod. Parm. 2513). It differs entirely from *Sefer Yehoshua* (Krakow, 1594), except for the fact that they retell the same text. See Roman, *Joshua and Judges*.

⁴⁸ Untitled epic on Joshua 175. As cited in Roman, *Joshua and Judges*, 37.

⁴⁹ This work is a retelling of the Pentateuch as well as parts of Joshua and Judges in rhymed quatrains. At least two editions of this work are known: Wilhermsdorf (1718) and Prague (1762). See Staerk and Leitzmann, *Die Jüdisch-deutschen Bibelübersetzungen*, 261–270.

⁵⁰ Yakov Segal Katz, *Kehillat Yaakov* (Wilhermsdorf, 1718), 96b.

We thus see that the decision of *Sefer Yehoshua*'s author to include an elaborate retelling of the catalog of thirty-one kings (238–246) is extraordinary not only when compared to his own approach but also to the common practice of other Old Yiddish authors when tackling long biblical lists. This contradiction becomes even more glaring when we realize that *Sefer Yehoshua*'s author mentions the thirty-one kings of Canaan on seven other occasions in the epic,⁵¹ without any parallel in the source text! (Indeed, the other epic on Joshua does not mention them at all, apart from the single quote above). This might imply that *Sefer Yehoshua*'s author, as part of his unique epic style, had planned from the start to use the catalog of thirty-one kings as an entertaining aspect of the biblical book. A further interpretation of these mentions, which cannot be proven at this point, is that this narrative was popular among Jews, and may have been the subject of other retellings that have not reached us.

Let us consider the Yiddish poem on the catalog of thirty-one kings found in *Sefer Yehoshua* (stanzas 238–246, see the original text and its English translation in the appendix below). Already at first glance, several aspects of this passage distinguish it from the remainder of the epic and cause us to speculate that this may have constituted an independent work, composed by a different author, which was later interpolated into the 1594 epic.

Beyond the fact that the narrator declared he did not intend to translate this catalog, and the hints that this narrative was popular among Jews, the distinct opening and closing sections of the poem (238a–b and 245d–246d) also suggest that this may have constituted an external, independent poem. Moreover, while the Hebrew original sums up the number of kings at the end of the counting (Jos. 12:24), the epic mentions their number also at its beginning – an addition that can be seen as a stimulating opening of an epic catalog.⁵² Additionally, this opening further strengthens the notion that the addressees of the Yiddish poem were already acquainted with this story (but perhaps not with all its details).

Furthermore, the poem uses a different meter from the rest of *Sefer Yehoshua*—the classical *nign Shmuel-bukh* rather than the modified *akht-gezets* that is used in the rest of the epic (see above).⁵³ Likewise, the poem exhibits a much stronger oral-epic texture than the remainder of the 1594 work: the narrator is particularly present in this poem, speaking in the first person and using repetitive, formulaic speech (e.g., within its thirty-six lines, the word שטרייט [battle] appears six times in various forms, and גישווינד [here: mighty]⁵⁴ appears three times).⁵⁵ Also,

⁵¹ See in *Sefer Yehoshua*: 4d, 20c, 78b, 121d, 315b (“thirty-one battles”), 327c, 335d.

⁵² Homann, “Die Heldenkataloge,” 417.

⁵³ Only once, in 246a–b, is there a rhyme in the caesura, but clearly the lion’s share of the poem lacks this kind of rhyming technique. In a private communication, Simon Neuberg suggested that according to a poetic norm, the Hebrew words were perceived as particularly prestigious and thus exempt from the rules of sound applied to other rhyming words. However, non-Hebrew words in the caesura also do not rhyme in this passage. See Roman, *Joshua and Judges*, xcvi–xcvii.

⁵⁴ See “Geschwind” in Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 2021 [1854 – 1961]). <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/>.

⁵⁵ The author’s use of the verb “to write” as describing his action (240a) may support the assumption that this poem was composed in writing. It may have also been added at a later stage to a particular text that was indeed in writing. At the same time, it could be used by a singer wishing to impress a literate audience, similar to story tellers in northern France, who even in the twentieth century held books during their recitals and pretended to read out of them, even though they told their story by heart. See Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1996), 120.

thematically, hardly any of the poem's elaborations of the biblical text draw on Jewish sources.⁵⁶ Instead of merely naming the kings as the biblical text does, the author of *Sefer Yehoshua* brought the catalog to life, adding some information about the majority of the kings—mostly how mighty one king was,⁵⁷ or alternatively, he ridicules them.⁵⁸ Identifying with Joshua and the Israelites, this alteration would elicit the audience's awe at the potential threat to Joshua or relief and joy (and at times even laughter)⁵⁹ at the enemy's fall, respectively. The fact that these two functions are used irregularly in the poem suggests an element of surprise and a performative dialogue between the epic singer and his audience.

At the same time, however, there are also indications that the poem is based on a translation of the Hebrew text, similarly to the rest of the epic. Most significantly, the names of all thirty-one kings (or actually the kingdoms) are mentioned, in the same order as they appear in the Hebrew original. Likewise, the formulation קיניג יריחו וואר איינר "The King of Jericho was one" (238c) can be seen as a *taytsh* translation of sorts for the Hebrew מֶלֶךְ יְרִיחוֹ אֶחָד (Jos 12:9), echoing the most central poetic feature of the biblical original. Moreover, the kings' names, in the form "King" + place name, are in fact calque translations of the Hebrew, e.g., קיניג יריחו ("King Jericho") for מֶלֶךְ יְרִיחוֹ, instead of the more grammatically appropriate דר קיניג יריחו ("the King of Jericho") or other possible formulations.⁶⁰ An exception to this is קיניג צו מקידה ("King of Makeda," 241c), which still lacks the definite article. It is important to note that, in the poem, while carefully adhering to this repetitive formal element, the kings are presented alternately as grammatical subjects (e.g., 240a) or objects (e.g., 240b), which may confuse the listeners at times.

A meaningful difference between the Hebrew original and the Yiddish poem are the mistakes that occur in no less than sixteen of the kings' names. Researchers have suggested that these are corruptions caused by oral transmission,⁶¹ and additional scenarios can account for them: they may be copying mistakes, mistakes based on a text drawn up from memory, or even the typesetter's fault.

A close look at the mistakes reveals that they are mostly misspellings of rare Hebrew names which nevertheless reflect a rather similar pronunciation (according to the Ashkenazic norm), for instance אכשוף instead of אכשף, or גבר instead of גֶּדֶר.⁶² Three city names that encompass more than one word were shortened (erroneously) to one word, clearly for aesthetic and metrical reasons: שומרון instead of שְׁמֶרֶן מְרָאוֹן, גוים instead of גוֹיִם לְגַלְגָּל, and דור לנפת דור instead of דוֹר לְנֶפֶת דוֹר. A comparison to the rest of *Sefer Yehoshua* revealed, to my surprise, similar spelling mistakes in Hebrew words,

⁵⁶ One exception is the indication that the conquest lasted seven years in total (238b), which is based on Rashi's commentary to Jos. 14:10 (cf. Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 118b and Babylonian Talmud Arakhin 13a).

⁵⁷ 23 times, e.g., 241a, 242a, 243a.

⁵⁸ See 239d, 240b, and 244c.

⁵⁹ Erik, *Geshikhte*, 88.

⁶⁰ Such a formulation is common in Yiddish for the king's given name (e.g., קעניג אהשוורש) but here clearly these are the names of the kingdoms.

⁶¹ Turniansky, "Shetey shirot," 625, fn. 107.

⁶² Here is a list of all incorrect Yiddish names within the poem, with the original biblical form in parentheses:

גבר (גֶּדֶר), דביר (דָּבָר), גבר (גֶּדֶר), חרמון (חֶרְמוֹן), ערוז (עֶרֶד), ליבנה (לִבְנָה), עדולים (עֲדוּלַיִם), מקידה (מִקְדָּה), שומרון (שְׁמֶרֶן מְרָאוֹן), עפרון (אֶפְרַיִם), אכשוף (אֶכְשָׁף), תענוך (תַּעֲנֹךְ), מגידון (מִגְדוֹן), יתנעים (יְתַנְעִים), נופת (דוֹר לְנֶפֶת דוֹר), גוים (גוֹיִם לְגַלְגָּל), תירצה (תִּרְצָה).

in particular place names, although at a lower intensity.⁶³ Two possible explanations for this phenomenon seem plausible: one, the epic was read aloud to the typesetter while preparing the text for printing; the other, the epic's author created his work in live recitation while consulting the Hebrew original, and it was simultaneously protocolled by a scribe. Both scenarios may also account for additional mistakes, such as rhyming 240c–d with the same word, or repeating the same phrasing for 242d (which does not rhyme with its pair, 242c) and 243d.

Comparing the rhymes used in the Yiddish catalog of kings with the rest of the epic did not yield decisive findings. Out of the sixteen rhyme pairs it contains, seven appear in the rest of *Sefer Yehoshua*,⁶⁴ but nine others do not.⁶⁵ Moreover, it appears that the rhymes in common are mostly conventional ones. As such, the rhyming technique does not rule out the possibility that the catalog of kings has been interpolated into *Sefer Yehoshua*.

Conclusion

If only we could peek into the poetic laboratory of *Sefer Yehoshua*'s author, we would know whether the studied Yiddish retelling of the catalog of kings was a popular epic poem that was recorded in writing and interpolated into his larger epic on Joshua, or whether our author decided to create a particularly embellished passage within his long epic. Unfortunately, we can only judge the texts that have reached us in writing, and arguments regarding undocumented epic traditions that may have existed centuries ago will forever remain speculation.⁶⁶ We must remember that even an oral poem that was recorded in writing might change and absorb forms of written transmission in the process of being recorded, thus ceasing to be a purely oral text.⁶⁷

The similarities that this study discerned between the catalog of kings and the rest of *Sefer Yehoshua* suggest that at the very least the epic's author left his poetic mark on the passage, if he did not compose it entirely. However, the striking epic texture and the content of the catalog indicate differences from the rest of the epic and suggest that this poetic passage stems from, and was intended for, a live recital. Moreover, as suggested above, it is quite possible that there may have been more than one Yiddish retellings of the catalog of thirty-one kings.

In this respect, the contradiction in the narrator's words—the intention not to recount the catalog of kings nevertheless followed by its inclusion—requires resolution. Based on his previous references to the thirty-one kings elsewhere, it would appear that elaborating the biblical catalog was not a spontaneous decision. Rather, the catalog of kings was a popular topic and the author assumed that his audience was familiar with it. Accordingly, one possible explanation of the contradiction in the text is that the author was tired and wanted to take a break from his work. However, when he returned to it later, he realized he had made a mistake,

⁶³ E.g. מקידה (200b) instead of גלגל (92a) instead of גלגול; יריהו (31c) instead of ירחו; תתים (10c) instead of היתית.

⁶⁴ הוך/צוך (103c–d, 104c–d); מאן/האן (24a–b, 30c–d); אויש/הויז (192a–b); צו/וואו (39a–b, 83c–d); גאר/יאר (232a–b); ביצייטן (229c–d); ביצייטן/שטרייטן (203a–b); ביציוואונגן/גידרונגן (227c–d); הולד/גאלד, היר/זיר, הונט/קונט, שניץ/גנץ.

⁶⁵ קינד/גישווינד, קארן/אורן, ניין/זיין, גאר/פאר, העלד/ועלד, הולד/גאלד, היר/זיר, הונט/קונט, שניץ/גנץ.

⁶⁶ Homann, "Die Heldenkataloge," 416.

⁶⁷ Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 124–126, 131; Jacob Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity: Late Sixteenth Century Jewish Literature in Poland and Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 242 [in Hebrew].

and added the missing text. Alternatively, perhaps someone other than the author (e.g., the publisher) introduced this poem at his own initiative and without the author's knowledge or permission. Such an ad hoc change may explain why the contradiction in the text was not corrected. A further possibility that can explain this contradiction is that the 1594 epic is an exact protocol of a live performance, in which the singer (unlike a writing author) was unable to rephrase what had already been said.⁶⁸

However, once again, all these thoughts are mere speculation, and the circumstances in which the beautiful catalog of kings was composed remain a mystery. Its very existence, however, illuminates the complexities and mysteries of the Old Yiddish epic – its intricate processes of composition and dissemination – and hence sheds light on an intriguing chapter in the history of Yiddish and early modern Ashkenaz.

⁶⁸ Homann, "Die Heldenkataloge," 434–435.

Appendix: A Poem on the Catalog of Thirty-One Kings

Anonymous, *Sefer Yehoshua* (Krakow, 1594), 17a–17b (stanzas 238–246).
English Translation by Oren Cohen Roman and Rebecca Wolpe

- .238
נון וויל איך ווייטער זאגן. אונ' די איינן אונ' דרייסיק קיניג
מעלדן גאר.
דיא יהושע הוט דר שלאגן. אין זיבן יאר.
קיניג יריחו וואר איינר. קיניג העי דר צו.
קיניג ירושלים דר דריט. קיניג חברון פֿון אנדרש וואו:
Now I want to tell further, and announce
in full the thirty-one kings
Whom Joshua slew, during seven years
The King of Jericho was one, also the King
of the Ai
The King of Jerusalem was the third, the
King of Hebron came from somewhere else
- .239
קיניג ירמות מוז איך אויך גידענקן. ווען ער וואר קיין קינד.
קיניג לכיש טעט מען עש ניט שענקן. ער וואר איין מאן גאר
גישווינד.
מלך עגלון. איין קיניג איבר אויש.
קיניג גבר. זיכט מען איבר אין הויז:
The King of Jarmuth I must also recall, as
he was no child
The King of Lachish was not given an easy
defeat,⁶⁹ he was a very mighty man
The King of Eglon, a king evermore
The King of Gever [Gezer]⁷⁰ was
disrespected in his own house
- .240
קיניג דביר אזו איך אויך אן שרייבן. ער וואר איין קיניג אויש
דר קארן.
קיניג גבר זעצט מען. דען קאפ צווישן דען אורן.
קיניג חרמון. מעכטיג גלייך.
קיניג ערוד. וואר אין וואל גלייך:
The King of Debir, as I also mention, he
was a distinguished king
The King of Gever [Geder] was
reprimanded harshly⁷¹
The King of Hermon [Hormah] was just as
mighty
The King of Arod [Arad] was equally good
- .241
נון וואר קיניג ליבנה. דער דונקט זיך ניט הילצן זיין.
קיניג עדולים. הט מין אז אנדרי ניין.
קיניג צו מקידה. דער וואלט עש זיין גאר.
קיניג בית אל. גינג אין אליון שטרייטן פֿאר:
Well, the King of Libnah, he had a high
opinion of himself⁷²
The King of Adulim [Adullam] had greater
power than nine others
The King of Makedah wanted the matter
to be all done
The King of Bethel went to all battles in the
frontline
- .242
דער קיניג תפוח. איין קינר מאן.
קיניג חפר. דען זולט איך אויך האבן פֿר גימעלט האן.
קיניג עפרון. איין מאן גישיץ.
קיניג לשרון. וואר רייך פֿון גאלד:
The King of Tappuah, a brave man
The King of Hopher, him I should also
have mentioned
The King of Ephron [Aphek], a man skillful
at shooting
The King of Lasharon was rich in gold

⁶⁹ Lit. "One did not give it to him as a present."

⁷⁰ Names in brackets are taken from the parallel position in the King James Bible.

⁷¹ Lit. "His head was put between his ears" (cf. Grimm and Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, "Ohr," II 5) m).

⁷² Lit. "He was not made of wood" (cf. Grimm and Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, "hölzern" 3) c).

- .243
נון וואר קיניג מדון. איין אויז דר ווילטר העלד.
קיניג חצור. איין גישווינדר קיניג צו ועלד.
קיניג שומרון. הט אלי קיניגן הולד.
קיניג אכשוף. דר וואר רייך פון גאלד:
Well, the King of Madon, an extraordinary hero
The King of Hazor, a mighty king in the battlefield
The King of Shomron [Shimronmeron] was liked by all other kings
The King of Achshuph [Achshaph], he was rich in gold
- .244
דער וואר קיניג תענוך. דער הוט איין גישווינדש היר.
קיניג מגידון. שטרייט אזו זיר.
קיניג קדש. וואר איין קברות הונט.
אבר קיניג יתנעים. וואר איינר דער וואל מיט דער שטרייט קונט:
There was the King of Taanach, he had a mighty regiment
The King of Megidon [Megiddo] fought so much
The King of Kedesh was a grave dog
Further, the King of Yotnaim [Jokneam] was well versed in battle
- .245
נון וואר קיניג נופת. גאר מעכטיג אונ' גאר הוך.
אודר קיניג גוים. דער אין אלין שטרייטן צוך.
קיניג תירצה דער וואר דער אירשט. אן דען שטרייט אונ' אן דען שנץ.
ישראל טעטן זי אלי שטרצן. דא האב איך זיא גירעכנט גנץ:
Now the King of Nofet [Dor in the coast of Dor] was very powerful and tall
Or the King of the Goyim [the nations of Gilgal], who set out to every battle
The King of Tirzah was the first in battle and in fortification
Israel toppled them all, here I have enumerated them entirely.
- .246
דאז ווארן דיא איין אונ' דרייסיג קיניג. די יהושע הט ביצוואונגן.
איר שטערק האלף זיא וויניג. זיא ווארן אויש אירן לנד גידרונגן.
ווען גוט' וואר מיט זיא. אונ' הילף זיא שטרייטן.
אונ' הוט זיא וער לאזן ניט. אין דען זעלכץ⁷³ צייטן:
Those were the thirty-one kings that Joshua vanquished
Their strength helped them very little, they were forced out of their land
For God was with them, and He helped them to fight
And did not leave them in such times.

⁷³ Perhaps this should be זעלבן, “in those times.”