

ABSTRACT

DISCOVERIES FROM CONSTANTINE:  
NEW LITURGICAL POEMS BY YOSEF IBN AVITUR  
AND EVIDENCE OF THE INCLUSION OF BYZANTINE POEMS  
IN A NORTH AFRICAN *MAḤZOR*

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This article examines the only two Jewish liturgical corpora that have reached us from the city of Constantine (Algeria): The collection of *Seliḥot* (liturgical penitential poems), and the *Maḥzor* (prayerbook) for the High Holidays. Those compilations include three new liturgical poems by Yosef Ibn Avitur: A *Siluq* poem for the *Musaf* service of the Day of Atonement, and two new *Seliḥot*. The liturgical poems by Ibn Avitur are edited here based on several manuscripts and old printed editions, with a full commentary. One of the *Seliḥot* shares many similarities with the well-known *Seliḥa* “*El Nora ‘Alila*” by Moses Ibn ‘Ezra. Following the analysis of their style and poetics, the paper argues that Moses Ibn ‘Ezra’s *Seliḥa* is an adaptation of the earlier poem by Ibn Avitur.

Extraordinary evidence is also found in the *Maḥzor* of the inclusion of Byzantine liturgical poems, amongst them by Yannai and El‘azar Berabbi Qillir, juxtaposed with Andalusian poems. This unusual feature is explained in the paper as a local merging of two liturgical sources, one of them of an Andalusian origin, while the other is probably Italian.