Travel in al-Ḍāhirī's *Sefer ha-musar*: Between Reality and Imagination

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Abstract: This article meticulously and systematically analyzes travel accounts appearing in al-Ḍāhirī's *Sefer ha-musar* (Book of *adab*), which is divided into forty-five *maqāmāt*, written in rhymed prose in Hebrew and according to the literary rules of the Arabic and Hebrew *Maqama* genres. The theme of travel forms a large portion of this sixteenth-century Yemenite book, as it depicts the protagonist's travels among several countries and regions in the East. Through such descriptions, some details about the places he visited are given, with special attention and significance being paid to Jerusalem and other holy places in Palestine (Eretz Yisrael). Some scholars and historians have utilized these literary passages as reliable historical sources to understand the period. By comparing al-Ḍāhirī with other Arabic and Hebrew *Maqama* authors with reference to authentic historical documents, this article tackles, in a comprehensive manner, the question of reality and imagination in his travel accounts.

Keywords: al-Ḍāhirī – *Sefer ha-musar* – Arabic *Maqama* – Hebrew *Maqama* – travel

El viaje en el *Sefer ha-musar* de al-Ḍāhirī: entre la realidad y la imaginación

Este artículo presenta un análisis detallado y meticuloso de los relatos de viaje que aparecen en el *Sefer ha-musar* (Libro de adab) de al-Ḍāhirī. Esta obra, escrita en Yemen en el siglo XVI, consta de cuarenta y cinco *maqāmāt* escritas en prosa rimada hebrea según los fundamentos literarios de las *maqāmāt* árabes y hebreas. El tema del viaje constituye una parte central de la misma, pues en ella se describen los viajes del protagonista a varios países y regiones de Oriente. En sus descripciones figuran detalles relevantes sobre los destinos que visitó, entre los que destacan Jerusalén y otros lugares santos de Palestina (Eretz Yisrael). Algunos investigadores e historiadores han utilizado los textos literarios incluidos en el *Sefer ha-musar* como fuente fiable para comprender el periodo histórico en el que se escribió la obra. En este artículo, al comparar la obra de al-Ḍāhirī con la de otros escritores de *maqāmāt* árabes y hebreas, se atiende a sus relatos de viajes en cuanto que documentos históricos, a la vez que se analiza de manera detallada la cuestión de la relación entre realidad e imaginación.

Palabras clave: al-Ḍāhirī – *Sefer ha-musar* – *maqāma* árabe – *maqāma* hebrea – relatos de viaje

A. Introduction

The Yemeni Zecharia al-Ḍāhirī[1] was a poet, a writer, a traveler, and an author of the Hebrew *Maqama*[2] who lived in the sixteenth century. Historians and scholars have not yet succeeded in identifying the exact dates of his birth and death. Most of the opinions suggested on this matter are taken from al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama* itself, which, of course, cannot be isolated from its literary nature. Yehuda Ratzaby claims that al-Ḍāhirī lived roughly from 1516 through 1585,[3] whereas Yehuda Amir believes that he lived from 1531 through 1608.[4] During his travels, al-Ḍāhirī was interested, not only in engaging in trade, but also in investigating the conditions of Jewish communities, and also delved into religion, philosophy, and literature. His fame was achieved thanks to *Sefer ha-musar* or *the Book of belles-lettres (adab)*.[5] Furthermore, he wrote some works,

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[1] There is some controversary among scholars whether the true form of his nickname should be written with the Arabic *ḍād* (الضاهري, al-Ḍāhirī) or *ẓā'* (الظاهري, al-Ẓāhirī). In Hebrew, the nickname is written as אלצ'אהרי, with the letter צ *tsadi* followed by a tiny horizontal line on the top (named *geresh* in Hebrew). The nickname in such a form is preceded by the Arabic definite article (*al-*), and all are put into Hebrew characters. The Jews of Yemen in the medieval era used to use the letter *tsadi*, not only for the Arabic *ṣād*, but also for two other Arabic letters (*ḍād* and *ẓā'*) by adding a *geresh* sign. See Mark S. Wagner, *Like Joseph in Beauty: Yemeni Vernacular Poetry and Arab Jewish Symbiosis* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 160, note 69. According to Yehuda Ratzaby, he was nicknamed al-Ḍāhirī in connection with a place in Yemen. See Yehuda Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar: maḥberot rabbi zecharya al-ḍāhrī* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute,1965), 41. Wagner shows that the Judge Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Ḥajrī al-Yamānī mentioned two places with the name Ḍahr in Yemen, and also that there are several places with the name al-Ẓāhir, used as a name referring to a high place. See Al-Qādī al-Ḥajrī, taḥqīq Ismā'īl al-Akwa', *majmū' buldān al-yaman wa-qabā'iliha* (Sanaa: Dār al-Ḥikma, 1966), 554, 563. See also Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *mu'jam al-buldān wal-qabā'il al-yamaniyya* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-Jāmi'iyya, 2002), 950, 971–972. Wagner's opinion that the nickname of our poet originally derives from the place name al-Ẓāhir, rather than Ḍahr, is also shared with Yosef Tobi, who writes this name in English as al-Zahiri. See Yosef Tobi, *The Jews of Yemen: Studies in Their History and Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 276. See also Haytham Turkī, *al-madāris al-fikriyya wa-ta'thīrha fī "kitāb al-'akhlāq" li- zechariah al-ḍāhirī*, unpublished master's thesis, The Faculty of Art, Cairo University 2016, 28. In this paper, we will write this name as al-Ḍāhirī, not necessarily for the sake of correctness, but rather for the sake of ease of identification because of his popularity by this form of name.

[2] In this article, the term *Maqama* (as an English word) is used when we refer to the genre as a whole or the entire book. When we are dealing with a single chapter of the book of *Maqama*, the Arabic word *maqāma* (and its plural form *maqāmāt*) is used.

[3] Ratzaby estimates that al-Ḍāhirī was born between the years of 1516 and 1519 and speculates that the year of his death was between 1581 and 1585. See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 41.

[4] See Yehuda Amir, "ḥayye rabbi zecharya al-ḍāhirī," in Shalom Seri and Israel Kesar (eds.), *haliḥot qedem be-mishkenot teman* (Tel Aviv: E'ele be-Tamar, 2005), 459.

[5] *Sefer ha-musar* should be translated as *the Book of belles-lettres*, an equivalent to *adab* in Arabic. We prefer the usage of *belles-lettres* or *adab* to that of *ethics*, which is a literal translation of the Hebrew word *musar*, by taking into consideration the meaning of the Arabic word *adab* in that age, especially when it comes to the title of the book we study here. The term *adab* was related to some restricted representations in the Islamic Middle Ages, after its meaning had already been narrowed among pre-Islamic Arabs. As a call for a meal, Ṭarafa ibn al-'Abd, for example, says: "Even in winter, we invite the public to eat, and no one among us (*'ādib*) does not make any exception regarding whom to invite." See Mahdy Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn, *dīwān ṭarafa ibn al-'abd al-bakrī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002), 43. After Islam, the term was used for politeness, as appears in the prophet's words: "My Lord perfected my good manners and conduct (*'addabanī ... ta'dībī*)." Later in the Middle Ages, the term acquired new indications including all types of written knowledge such as religious, linguistic, literary, and natural sciences. Some used the term especially for stories, wisdoms, proverbs, and wisdom poems with rhetorical traits. The term appears in many

such as *Sefer ha-ʻanaq*, or *the Book of necklace*, in addition to poems written either in Hebrew or in Arabic.

Al-Ḍāhirī created *Sefer ha-musar* modelled on a literary genre written in rhymed prose (*sajʻ*) and known in Arabic as *maqāma* and in Hebrew as *maḥberet*. Al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama*, which can be regarded as the masterpiece among his works, did not receive as much attention as the previous Hebrew *Maqama* works had, apparently because of the paucity of literary works of Yemenite Jews compared to the Jews of al-Andalus or other lands during the medieval period. Most parts of his *Maqama* had been hidden in manuscripts until a volume containing a part of the introduction and the whole of the last forty-fifth *maqāma* was published by Hayyim Brody at the end of the nineteenth century.[6] Following this publication, scholars continued to publish some sections of the text, especially those with contents conveying historical allusions,[7] until Yehuda Ratzaby finally succeeded in editing the whole work in a critical edition based on four manuscripts and published it in 1965.[8]

The importance of al-Ḍāhirī stems from his role in the revival of classical *Maqama*[9] in Hebrew literature after a period of decline that lasted for almost two

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of the Arab works from the medieval era, such as *al-ʾadab al-kabīr* and *al-ʾadab al-ṣaghīr* by Ibn al-Muqaffaʻ, *kitāb al-ʾadab* by Ibn al-Muʻtazz, *zahr al-ʾādāb* by al-Ḥusarī, *ʾadab al-dunyā wal-dīn* by al-Māwardī, and *ʾādāb al-falāsifa* by Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq. The best evidence justifying our understanding of the word *musar* in this sense comes from a medieval translator and writer Yehuda al-Ḥarīzī, who used it in his Hebrew translation of the book *ʾādāb al-falāsifa* by Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, under the title of *Musre ha-philosofim*. See Yehuda Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar: maḥberot rabbi zecharya al-ḍāhrī*, 9, 298; Adena Tanenbaum, "Of a Pietist Gone Bad and Des(s)erts Not Had: The Fourteenth Chapter of Zechariah Aldahiri's Sefer hamusar," *Prooftexts* 23 (2003), 317, note 31; Adena Tanenbaum, "Hidden Gems: The Hebrew Maqāma from Yemen," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 10 (2022), 196. For an important discussion of the genre of *musar* or *adab* in medieval Hebrew narrative works in Spain dealing with the themes of wine, traveling, and wisdom, see David Torollo, "On Wine, Wandering, and Wisdom: *Musar* and *Adab* in Medieval Sepharad," *Miscelánea De Estudios Árabes Y Hebraicos. Sección Hebreo* 70 (2021), 31–49.

[6] Hayyim Brody, *matmone mistarim*, 1 (Kraków: Yosef Fisher, 1894), 9–14.

[7] Yehuda Ratzaby (ed.), *Sefer ha-musar: maḥberot rabbi zecharya al-ḍāhrī*, 23.

[8] In 2008, the work was again published in an allegedly "new" edition by Mordechai Yitzhari based on a manuscript available at his hands; the editor claims himself to belong to al-Ḍāhirī's family. See Mordechai Yitzhari, *sefer ha-musar le-rabbenu zecharya al-ḍāhirī* (Rosh Ha-ayin: Nosaḥ Teman, 2008).

[9] There are some basic principles of *Maqama* that came to be known since it emerged in Arabic literature by means of *maqāmāt* of Badīʻ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī and of al-Ḥarīrī al-Baṣrī. The most important principles are: A) The two main characters are maintained throughout the collection of *maqāmāt*, namely the narrator who tells stories and the protagonist who performs adventures and dramatic tricks. B) Individual incidents occur only within the framework of each *maqāma*, as it usually starts with a preface, mostly concerning the travel from one place to another. C) The subject of *Maqama* is mostly related to fraud or social criticism by means of the protagonist's disguise in a certain character. D) In the concluding part, the identity of the protagonist and the objective of each *maqāma* are revealed. Only those works written according to these principles can be called classical *Maqama* and are distinguished from other works that ignore some, or even most of these principles. Arie Schippers says in this regard: "In Hebrew literature, other stories and narrative pieces in rhymed prose are called *maqāmāt* even though they do not contain the scheme of the Arabic classical *maqāma* of al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī." See Arie Schippers, "Medieval Hebrew Narrative and the Arabic Literary Tradition," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 29 (2002), 87; Arie Schipper, "The Hebrew maqama," in Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama: A History of a Genre* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002), 302.

centuries. After the Hebrew *Maqama* enjoyed a strong presence and widespread popularity in al-Andalus and Italy during the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, it could not retain its glory until the appearance of al-Ḍāhirī in the sixteenth century, as he wrote forty-five individual *maqāmāt* to be collected as a book named *Sefer ha-musar*. Although historians usually agree on determining the end of the mediaeval era to be in the fifteenth century, the characteristics al-Ḍāhirī's works undoubtedly show that the literary tradition of the Middle Ages did not completely end with its termination in Europe, but that it continued to flourish in Yemen in both poetry and prose. This is also because printing press (such as Gutenberg's) had not yet reached the 16th century Yemen, and the manuscript tradition of copying Arabic (and Hebrew) books continued to flourish there.

Sefer ha-musar has been highly appreciated by some Jewish scholars and historians, whose research relies on the materials and events mentioned in al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama*.[10] This work is believed to include some indications of real historical events in Yemen during the Ottoman Era (1539–1634). Its importance also lies in the noticeable scarcity of historical resources during this period. Moreover, there are events written in his *Maqama* about famous Jewish personalities in several places. Such descriptions of events constitute a source for our study, through which we wish to analyze the contents of text that include elements of both reality and imagination[11] by paying close attention to the distinctive features of the art of *Maqama* in a comparative way.[12]

B. Relationship between Travel and Maqama

There are various opinions concerning the identification of the main objective in the composition of *Maqama*. Naturally, a writer of *Maqama* (*al-maqāmī*) composes his *Maqama* according to his mind and imagination and tries to put it into words using rhymed prose. Therefore, his objective in each *maqāma* may differ so greatly that we

[10] Many historical studies based on *Sefer ha-musar* were written in Hebrew. See, for example, Walter J. Fischel, "ha-yehudim be-iran ba-me'ot 16–18," *pe'amim* 6 (1980), 11–12; Aviva Klein-Franke, "ha-yehudim be-aden ba-me'a ha-19," *pe'amim* 10 (1981), 43; Aviva Klein-Franke, "ha-mishlaḥat ha-mada'it ha-rishona li-drom 'arav ke-maqor le-toldot yehude teman," *pe'amim* 18 (1984), 91, 98.

[11] Adena Tanenbaum states regarding this matter: "it is often impossible to know whether a particular detail in this inventive literary work is real or imaginary." See Adena Tanenbaum, "Of Poetry and Printed Books: Cultural Contacts and Contrasts Between the Jews of Yemen and the Land of Israel in Zechariah Alḍāhirī's Sefer Hamusar," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 12:3 (2005), 262; Adena Tanenbaum, "sefer ha-musar le-rabbi zechariah al-ḍāhirī: tekhniqot sifrutiyot ve-tokhen," *tema* 13 (2015), 34–35. For a discussion of imagination and reality in the Hebrew *Maqama* in general, see Dan Pagis, "Variety in Medieval Rhymed Narratives," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 27 (1978), 79–98; Ross Brann, *Power in the Portrayal: Representations of Jews and Muslims in Eleventh- and Twelfth Islamic Spain* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 140, note 3. For a question of the real and the imagined in the Jewish travel accounts written between the mid-twelfth and the early sixteenth centuries (not including al-Ḍāhirī), see Martin Jacobs, *Reorienting the East: Jewish Travelers to the Medieval Muslim World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 9–10, 43.

[12] For a comparative and typological study of the genre of Maqama in Hebrew, Arabic, and other languages, see Naoya Katsumata, "The Style of the Maqama: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 5:2 (2002), 117–137.

cannot consider only one objective of the entire *Maqama*. In each new adventure of the hero, a new space is allotted to a new subject. In any case, there is no doubt that travelling is the central spatial core of *Maqama*. Along with the diversity of travel, the writer of *Maqama* narrates events and stories in a way that is appropriate for the nature of *Maqama*. The moving of the *Maqama* writer from one subject to another corresponds to the moving of the narrator or protagonist from one place to another. Below, we seek to reconfirm the relationship between travels and *Maqama* from the emergence of the genre until the time of al-Ḍāhirī. This connection helps us reconsider the reality of the travels narrated in *Maqama*.

An accurate and deep examination of the accounts of travels written by Arabic and Hebrew writers of traditional *Maqama* throughout the history of the genre shows that many such travels are just the outcomes of imaginary visions used by the writers as a focal point inside *Maqama*. Of course, the objective of this imagination differs from one writer to another. However, most of the travels are based on the context of innovation and suspense, which corresponds to the nature of *Maqama*'s protagonist, who is always known by his movement in different places and countries. This continuous movement is a key factor in the distinctive narrative nature of *Maqama*, through which the writer is able to widen the space for the narration of various subjects.[13]

Regarding the ways of presenting travels in the traditional *Maqama* both in Arabic and Hebrew, the existence of movement is evident in most *Maqama* compositions. This leads us to a main question concerning the objective of providing different images of travel in *Maqama*. It is significant to note that there are two main functions of travel in *Maqama*: In the first and very common function, it is used by *Maqama* writers just as a fixed opening of each *maqāma*. The travel in this function, obviously common to most Hebrew and Arab *Maqama* writers, can be understood as a literary tool used by *Maqama* writers to move from one *maqāma* to another. Travel can also appear in *Maqama* in another function. In the second function, it serves as the main subject of a specific *maqāma* itself.

The first function of travel flourished and was established in the traditional *Maqama* from its origin by Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (969–1008).[14] Following his footsteps, most *Maqama* writers connected travel to their *Maqama*. Travelling appears in the opening of al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt*, starting from his first *maqāma* (*al-Qarīdiyya*), in which his narrator states: "Separation once hurled me hither and thither until I reached the utmost confines of Jurjān."[15] Perhaps this inspired Abdelfattah Kilito to declare at the beginning of his study of *Maqama* that "travelling is existent in all its

[13] See Jonathan P. Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature between al-Andalus and Christian Europe* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 189–190.

[14] Abū al-Faḍl 'Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Yaḥya Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī was born in Hamadan, moved around extensively among the countries of Persia, and was popular because of his *maqāmāt*. He is considered the first to have written a complete book of *Maqama*. Most writers of *Maqama* adopted his approach. He wrote also a *dīwān* of poems and epistles. See Khayr al-Dīn al-Zarkalī, *al-aʻlām*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 15th edition, 2002), 115–116.

[15] Al-Hamadhānī, *maqāmāt badīʻ al-zamān al-hamadhānī*, edited by Muḥammad 'Abdu (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 3rd edition, 2005), 7. For an English translation, see W. J. Prendergast (trans.), *The Maqāmāt of Badīʻ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī* (London: Luzac, 1915), 26.

forms in al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt*, maps appeared, and some activities were revealed throughout pages of the *Maqama*."[16] Likewise, travel is widely used by al-Ḥarīrī,[17] particularly in the opening of most of his *maqāmāt*, such as in the first *maqāma*: "The shocks of the time cast me to Sanaa of Yemen."[18] Similarly, al-Saraqustī's[19] narrator states: "I rode continuously on the mount of Time, from one situation to another, experiencing abundance and privation, arrival and departure … and I traveled to the port of Shaḥar."[20] It is no wonder to see the prevalence of travel in the Hebrew *Maqama* of Yehuda al-Ḥarīzī,[21] as he imitates Arab *Maqama* writers. So, for example, he mentions in the twenty-eighth *maqāma*: "Wandering bore me upon her pinions, and set sparks ablaze in my heart … it was in my heart to return to the land of my dwelling."[22]

Below, we will compare the prominent authors of the Arabic *Maqama* (al-Hamadhānī, al-Ḥarīrī, al-Saraqustī) with their equivalents in Hebrew *Maqama* (al-

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[16] Abdelfattah Kilito, *Les séances: récits et codes culturels chez Hamadhânî et Harîrî* (Paris: Sindbad, 1983), 19. See also Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama: A History of a Genre*, 53–54.

[17] Al-Qāsim ibn ʻAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʻUthmān ibn al-Ḥarīrī abū Muḥammad al-Baṣrī was born and died in Basra. He, too, was intelligent and eloquent, and his most important work was his *maqāmāt*. See Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *muʻjam al-ʾudabāʾ (ʾirshād al-ʾarīb ʾilā maʻrifat al-ʾadīb)*, edited by ʾIḥsān ʻAbbās, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-ʾIslāmī, 1993), 2202–2216.

[18] Michael Cooperson (ed.), *Al-Ḥarīrī, Maqāmāt Abī Zayd al-Sarūjī* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 7. For an English translation, see Thomas Chenery (trans.), *The Assemblies of Ḥarīri*, vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1867), 108. See also Michael Cooperson (trans.), *Impostures by Al-Hariri* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 13.

[19] Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ʻAbdallah ibn Yūsuf al-Tamīmī al-Māzinī abū al-Tāhir, known as Ibn al-Ashtarkūnī, was born in Zaragoza and died in Cordoba. He imitated al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* and gave his own 50 *maqāmāt* the name *al-maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*, in which he made clear what was unnecessary in prose and poetry. See Khayr al-Dīn al-Zarkalī, *al-aʻlām*, vol. 7, 149.

[20] Al-Saraqustī, *al-maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*, edited by Ḥasan al-Warāklī (Oman: Jidār lil-Kitāb al-ʻĀlamī, 2006), 65. For an English translation, see James T. Monroe (trans.), *Al-Maqāmāt Al-Luzūmīyah* (Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill, 2002), 149.

[21] There was debate among researchers concerning the dates of his birth and death until the issue was clarified by the discovery of an important manuscript attributed to one of his contemporaries, al-Mubārak ibn al-Shaʻʻār al-Mawṣilī, who writes about "a Jewish Yaḥyā ibn Sulaymān ibn Shāʾūl abū Zakaryā al-Ḥarīzī." Depending on Ibn Shaʻʻār's manuscript, Yosef Sadan showed that al-Ḥarīzī was born in 1165 somewhere in al-Andalus and died in Syria in 1225. Al-Ḥarīzī lived for a long time in al-Andalus and used to move from one place to another. He was popular in Southern France as a translator of Arabic works into Hebrew, until he left for the East and traveled there during the last ten years of his life. The most important of his works are *Taḥkemoni*, *Sefer ha-ʻanaq* or *the Book of necklace*, *Sefer ha-goralot* or *the Book of destiny*, and *Kitāb al-durar* or *the Book of pearls*. For further details, see Yosef Sadan, "rabbi yehuda al-ḥarīzī ke-tzomet tarbuti," *Peʾamim* 68 (1996), 16–76; Joseph Sadan, "Un intellectuel juif au confluent de deux cultures Yehūda al-Ḥarīzī et sa biographie arabe," in Maribel Fierro (ed.), *Judíos y musulmanes en al-Andalus y el Magreb: Contactos intelectuales* (Madrid: Casa de Velázques, 2002), 105–151; Ibn al-Shaʻʻār al-Mawṣilī, *qalāʾid al-jumān fī farāʾid shuʻarāʾ hādhā al-zamān*, edited by Kāmil Salmān al-Jabūrī, vol. 9 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmiyya, 2005), 257.

[22] Yehuda al-Ḥarīzī, *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-ʾezraḥi*, edited by Joseph Yahalom and Naoya Katsumata (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2010), 351. The twenty-eighth *maqāma* in Recension A is the thirty-eighth in Recension B. For an English translation, see Victor Emanuel Reichert (trans.), *The Tahkemoni of Judah Al-Ḥarizi*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Raphael Haim Cohen's Publishers, 1973), 235; David Simha Segal (trans.), *The Book of Taḥkemoni: Jewish Tales from Medieval Spain* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002), 294.

Ḥarīzī and al-Ḍāhirī).[23] By concentrating on the presence of travel and examining how it is implicated and connected to the *Maqama*, we will tackle the important question: Was travel just a means used by the narrator in the opening of each *maqāma*, or was it sometimes the main subject of a specific *maqāma*?

B-1. Travels as mentioned in the opening of each *maqāma*

The mention of travels in the opening of al-Hamadhānī's *Maqama* is prevalent in his work, as he describes the travels of the narrator or the protagonist from one place to another in 44[24] out of his 51 *maqāmāt*. His style of describing the journey is similar in most of his *maqāmāt*, though using different linguistic expressions, such as his words in the opening of the above-mentioned first *maqāma*: "Separation once hurled me hither and thither until I reached the utmost confines of Jurjān,"[25] in the seventh *maqāma*: "while we were at Jurjān,"[26] and in the twenty-second *maqāma*: "I was in Basra."[27]

Al-Ḥarīrī imitated and adjusted al-Hamadhānī's methods as travel is mentioned in 41[28] out of his total 50 *maqāmāt*. He used his own vocabulary and distinctive lexis to describe the acts of travel and movement. For example, the words in the opening of his first *maqāma* run as follows: "The shocks of the time cast me to Sanaa of Yemen."[29] In the fourth *maqāma* he says: "I journeyed to Damietta,"[30] and in the thirty-fifth *maqāma*: "in my roamings I met in Shiraz."[31]

Likewise, travel is obviously manifested by al-Saraqustī in 43[32] out of his total 50 *maqāmāt*. He describes the narrator's adventures and travels among several cities, from China and India in the east to Morocco in the west. Surprisingly, he mentions travel to his homeland, al-Andalus, only once, in the forty-third *maqāma*, where he travels to the peninsula of Tarif.[33] There is no evidence that he visited these distant

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[23] We excluded from our discussion another full-fledged classical Hebrew *Maqama*, usually counted as such along with al-Ḥarīzī's and al-Ḍāhirī's, namely *Maḥberot immanuel* by Immanuel ha-Romi (ca. 1261–1335), since travel does not necessarily open each *maqāma* in this work.

[24] *Maqama* numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, and 48.

[25] Muḥammad 'Abdu (ed.), *maqāmāt badī' al-zamān al-hamadhānī*, 7; Prendergast (trans.), *The Maqāmāt of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*, 26.

[26] Muḥammad 'Abdu (ed.), *maqāmāt badī' al-zamān al-hamadhānī*, 46; Prendergast (trans.), *The Maqāmāt of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*, 46.

[27] Muḥammad 'Abdu (ed.), *maqāmāt badī' al-zamān al-hamadhānī*, 122; Prendergast (trans.), *The Maqāmāt of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*, 88.

[28] *Maqama* numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, and 50.

[29] Cooperson (ed.), *Maqāmāt Abī Zayd al-Sarūjī*, 7; Chenery (trans.), The Assemblies of Ḥarīri, vol. 1, 108; Cooperson (trans.), *Impostures by Al-Hariri*, 13.

[30] Cooperson (ed.), *Maqāmāt Abī Zayd al-Sarūjī*, 19; Chenery (trans.), The Assemblies of Ḥarīri, vol. 1, 121; Cooperson (trans.), *Impostures by Al-Hariri*, 38.

[31] Cooperson (ed.), *Maqāmāt Abī Zayd al-Sarūjī*, 190; F. Steingass (trans.), *The Assemblies of Ḥarīri*, vol. 2 (London: The Patronage of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1898), 71 ; Cooperson (trans.), *Impostures by Al-Hariri*, 326.

[32] *Maqama* numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, and 49.

[33] Ḥasan al-Warāklī (ed.), *al-maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*, 401; Monroe (trans.), *Al-Maqāmāt Al-Luzūmīyah*, 431.

countries and places mentioned in his *Maqama*.[34] Examples of travelling as the opening are found in the third *maqāma*: "I went down to the land of Hulwan,"[35] in the twenty-seventh *maqāma*: "I was in one of the lands of India,"[36] and in the thirty-sixth *maqāma*: "I halted in the land of China."[37]

Al-Ḥarīzī also adopted the approach of the Arabic *Maqama* writers, as he puts travel in the opening of 40[38] out of 50 of his *maqāmāt*. He uses the names of cities and places as mentioned in the Bible, for example: "And I set my purpose to range to the ends of the earth, until I came to the boundary of Babylon and Persia,"[39] "I came to Egypt,"[40] "I journeyed with merchandise to the land of Basra."[41]

Regarding al-Ḍāhirī, he surpassed all these other writers, as he considered travel as a means by which to start ٤٢[42] out of his 45 *maqāmāt*. So, for example, his words in the opening of the second *maqāma*: "I traveled from the land of Egypt facing towards Yemen."[43] Moreover, in the fifth *maqāma,* he mentions: "I traveled from the land of Babylon to the land of Syria for trading of 50 cargoes of expensive and cheap goods."[44] The twenty-second *maqāma* opens with the saying, "My heart lifted me up to travel to Jerusalem."[45]

B-2. Travels as the main subject of a specific *maqāma*

In addition to the above-mentioned function of travel as a tool to open each *maqāma*, it sometimes serves as the main subject of a specific *maqāma* itself. Admittedly, there are also *maqāmāt* that contain some partial images of travel within their subject matter, but we will rather focus on *maqāmāt* where a complete image of

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[34] See Decter, *Iberian Jewish Literature between al-Andalus and Christian Europe*, 192–193.
[35] Ḥasan al-Warāklī (ed.), *al-maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*; 33, Monroe (trans.), *Al-Maqāmāt Al-Luzūmīyah*, 125.
[36] Ḥasan al-Warāklī (ed.), *al-maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*, 244; Monroe (trans.), *Al-Maqāmāt Al-Luzūmīyah*, 291.
[37] Ḥasan al-Warāklī (ed.), *al-maqāmāt al-luzūmiyya*, 336; Monroe (trans.), *Al-Maqāmāt Al-Luzūmīyah*, 370.
[38] *Maqama* numbers according to Recension A (Recension B in parentheses) 1(1), 2(2), 3(3), 4(14), 5(13), 7(8), 9(21), 10(10), 12(18), 13(20), 15(23), 16(28), 17(29), 20(11), 21(44), 22(15), 23(35), 24(22), 25(34), 26(31), 27(26), 28(38), 29(6), 30(24), 32(7), 33(39), 34(41), 37(43), 38(47), 39(46), 40(33), 41(45), 43(30), 45(19), 46(36), 47(25), 48(48), 49(49), and 50(50).
[39] Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 103; Reichert (trans.), *The Tahkemoni of Judah Al-Ḥarizi*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Raphael Haim Cohen's Publishers, 1965), 70; Segal (trans.), *The Book of Taḥkemoni*, 39.
[40] Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 153; Reichert (trans.), *The Tahkemoni of Judah Al-Ḥarizi*, vol. 1, 136; Segal (trans.), *The Book of Taḥkemoni*, 86.
[41] Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 345; Reichert (trans.), *The Tahkemoni of Judah Al-Ḥarizi*, vol. 2, 129; Segal (trans.), *The Book of Taḥkemoni*, 228.
[42] *Maqama* numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, and 45.
[43] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 64.
[44] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 100.
[45] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 253.

travel functions as their core subject. This kind of function is only found in Hebrew *Maqama* by al-Ḥarīzī and al-Ḍāhirī.[46]

A *maqāma* of al-Ḥarīzī, *maḥberet mozne ha-dor*, or "the Gate of the evaluations of people of the age," has long been known as the forty-sixth *maqāma* of *Taḥkemoni*,[47] but now it may be counted as the thirty-ninth.[48] This *maqāma* contains a complete description of al-Ḥarīzī's travels among several cities in the Middle East at the beginning of the thirteenth century. There has long been controversy among scholars and historians concerning al-Ḥarīzī's travel depicted in this *maqāma*. Some of these depictions were thought to be reliable, while others were doubtful or uncertain. The important change in scholarship occurred with the emergence of Yahalom and Blau's study in 2003, *Mas'e Yehuda*, or "the Travels of Yehuda."[49] They collected and compared for the first time the literary descriptions of travel in al-Ḥarīzī's Hebrew *Maqama* together with the autobiographical descriptions of travel that al-Ḥarīzī composed in Judeo-Arabic. After the discovery of an important new manuscript that belonged to the above-mentioned Arabic descriptions of travel, Blau and Yahalom, now joined by Paul Fenton, published *Kitāb al-durar* in a critical edition in 2009.[50] It was thereby verified that some instances of travel mentioned in the Hebrew *Maqama* of al-Ḥarīzī were indeed real. By analyzing such descriptions, we can regard a *maqāma* like *maḥberet mozne ha-dor* as belonging to the second type of *maqāma*, in which travel functions as the central core subject.

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[46] However, it should be noted that this second type of travel can be found in the *non-traditional* Arabic *Maqama* that developed in al-Andalus and other places. See Haitham M. Sharqawi, *sūrat al-mujtama' bayn al-maqāma al-'arabiyya wa-al-'ibriyya fī al-'andalus–dirasā 'adabiyya muqārana*, PhD Dissertation (South Valley University, 2014), 25–26. For example, travel is employed as the main subject matter in an eleventh-century Andalusian *Maqama* written by Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar ibn al-Shahīd, part of which appears in Ibn Bassām's famous anthology. See Iḥsān 'Abbās (ed.), Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī, *al-dhakhīra fī maḥāsin 'ahl al-jazīra* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1997) vol. 1, part 2, 674–685; Haitham M. Sharqawy, *sūrat al-mujtama' bayn al-maqāma al-'arabiyya wa-al-'ibriyya fī al-'andalus*, 90–96. Travel accounts also appear frequently in several writings by Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb (1313–1374), especially in his *Maqama*-like composition *mi'yār al-ikhtiyār fī dhikr al-ma'āhid wal-diyār*. See Ḥusayn Mu'nis, *tārīkh al-jughrāfiya wal-jughrāfiyyīn fī al-andalus* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1986), 580–588. When it comes to Hebrew and Jewish literature, travel literature comprises various subgenres, not only of travelogues such as the *Travels* of Rabbi Petachia of Regensburg, the *Travels* of Binyamin of Tudela, and Yehuda al-Ḥarīzī's *Kitāb al-Durar*, but also personal letters describing journeys or travel diaries. Perhaps, it is also worth regarding a travel *Maqama* as one of the subgenres of this broad travel literature.

[47] This number is according to Recension B. See, for example, Yisrael Toporovsky (ed.), *taḥkemoni* (Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot le-Sifrut, 1952), 344–366.

[48] This number is according to Recension A. See Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 433–457. Compare Reimund Leicht, "A Maimonidean Life – Joseph ben Judah Ibn Shim'on of Ceuta's Biography Reconstructed," *Maimonides Review of Philosophy and Religion* 1 (2022), 18–25. Regarding al-Ḥarīzī's descriptions of Yosef ibn Shime'on in this *maqāma*, at least, Leicht "sees version A as the better-informed iteration of the text, which might also reflect later developments" (page 21) and "is easily tempted to believe that version A […] represent *later* stages than […] version B" (page 25).

[49] Joseph Yahalom and Joshua Blau, *mas'e yehuda: ḥamisha pirqe masa' meḥorazim le-alḥarizi*, (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003), 47–187.

[50] Joshua Blau, Joseph Yahalom, and Paul Fenton (eds.), *kitāb al-durar, ve-hu sefer penine ha-musarim ve-shivḥe ha-qehalim* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2009), 26–36.

Concerning al-Ḍāhirī, his thirty-ninth *maqāma* contains the most significant descriptions, upon which Ratzaby relied in identifying the real nature of al-Ḍāhirī's travels. This *maqāma* includes descriptions of travel among a number of countries such as India, Persia, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Yemen,[51] and is, like the thirty-ninth of al-Ḥarīzī, regarded as an example of this type of *maqāma*.

As previously stated, there is an obvious relationship between travel and *Maqama*. First, a *Maqama* writer mentions travel in the opening of each *maqāma*, which is to be observed by both Arabic and Hebrew authors. As for a possible relationship between the writers' own biographies and their real travels on the one hand and their descriptions of travels in their *Maqama* on the other, we can safely say that the travel accounts in the Arabic *Maqama* of al-Hamadhānī, al-Ḥarīrī, and al-Saraqustī are just outcomes of their imagination, because there is no evidence, at least until now, that these Arab writers had indeed visited some of the places mentioned in their *Maqama*. Therefore, one can assume that travel in Arabic *Maqama* serves only as a function of opening each *maqāma*.

On the other hand, both Hebrew writers, al-Ḥarīzī and al-Ḍāhirī, had no problem mixing these two types of travel accounts in their *Maqama*. For example, the first type of purely literary and imaginary nature appears in the opening of al-Ḥarīzī's thirty-second *maqāma*: "I journeyed in the days of my youth from the land of Persia to the lands of Meshekh and Tiras."[52] There is no proof that al-Ḥarīzī visited these places.[53] Regarding this matter, Yahalom and Katsumata stated that al-Ḥarīzī usually opens each of his *maqāmāt* by mentioning travel from one place to another, but some of these names are just imaginary ones taken from the Bible.[54]

Likewise, al-Ḍāhirī adopted the same method to narrate travel in the opening of his *maqāma*. Sometimes, the place's name is taken from the Bible just for the sake of a rhyming effect with the word before or after it, without taking into consideration the subject of the particular *maqāma* or geographical reality.[55] For example, he opens the seventeenth *maqāma*: "I traveled from Mount Shefer (Num 33:23) to Qiryat Sefer (Jos 15:15)." According to Ratzaby, al-Ḍāhirī had never visited these two places before, but mentioned them just to start his *maqāma* by describing a movement from one place to

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[51] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 417–422.

[52] The thirty-second in Recension A is the seventh in Recension B. See Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 387; Reichert (trans.), *The Tahkemoni of Judah Al-Ḥarizi*, vol. 1, 129; Segal (trans.), *The Book of Taḥkemoni*, 81. The same combination of place names (Persia, Meshekh, Tiras) also appears in the twelfth *maqāma* (the eighteenth in Recension B): "the communities of Persia and Meshekh and Tiras." See Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 217; Reichert (trans.), *The Tahkemoni of Judah Al-Ḥarizi*, vol. 2, 56; Segal (trans.), *The Book of Taḥkemoni*, 180.

[53] First, there is no proof that al-Ḥarīzī visited Persia, as it is evident from *Kitāb al-durar* in which al-Ḥarīzī apparently described his real travel. Second, the places of his alleged destination are not clear at all. According to Jewish sources, there is no definite place in which both Meshekh and Tiras, sons of Yefet (cf. Gen 10:2), lived. Moreover, it is also possible that al-Ḥarīzī may only have chosen these places in order to keep the rhyme: *paras* (= Perisia) and *tiras*. See also Michael Rand, *The Evolution of al-Ḥarizi's Taḥkemoni* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018) 18–19.

[54] Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 16.

[55] See Adena Tanenbaum, "The Uses of Scripture in Zechariah al-Ḍāhirī's Sēfer ha-mūsār," in Joachim Yeshaya and Elisabeth Hollender (eds.), *Exegesis and Poetry in Medieval Karaite and Rabbanite Texts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 152–153.

another as well as to maintain the rhyme scheme.[56] Another example is in the sixth *maqāma* where he states: "I traveled from the land of Syria, via the Upper Galilee, to the city[57] of Safed, the land of Canaan, son of Yefet's brother, and on this route I passed by Hamat, Damascus, and Aram-Naharaim, in which there are sons of Judah and Ephraim."[58] Here al-Ḍāhirī misplaces Aram Naharaim geographically, because it is not situated on the path of his travel from Syria to Safed. Nevertheless, he uses it for consistency with rhyme of the word Ephraim in the following sentence.

It is worth mentioning that since al-Ḍāhirī drew materials from various sources for the sake of his *Maqama*, sometimes he had to form his *Maqama* according to the original without any consideration of the geographical reality of the travel. For example, in the thirty-third *maqāma*, he describes the city of Qeriat Sefer without geographical correctness as follows: "it is located on the Euphrates like a splendid vine."[59] This is because the entire *maqāma* is taken from the twenty-second *maqāma* (*al-furātiyya*) of al-Ḥarīrī al-Baṣrī,[60] where the events occur around the Euphrates.

As seen above, the second type of travel accounts as the main subject exist both in the thirty-ninth *maqāma* of al-Ḥarīzī and in the thirty-ninth *maqāma* of al-Ḍāhirī. A common factor between the two is vividly noticeable, since the travel is narrated in these *maqāmāt* by the protagonist himself, as opposed to other *maqāmāt*, in which it is narrated by the narrator.

C. Itinerary of al-Ḍāhirī's Maqama

Here, we will try to follow the supposed itinerary of al-Ḍāhirī as it appears in his *Maqama*, whether the travel was real or imaginary. Our aim is to follow the travel and identify the places by examining their geographical reality. Thus, it will pave the way for some important findings that will reveal the purposes of narrating travels in al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama*.

Ratzaby identifies the sequence of al-Ḍāhirī's travels in different countries based on his own assumptions. According to Ratzaby, the countries include the following: Yemen, India, Persia, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Palestine (Eretz Yisrael), Egypt, Ethiopia, and Yemen. He also adds and says, "The thirty-ninth *maqāma* reflects the real itinerary of his travels. Al-Ḍāhirī places the countries that visited in the following order: India, Persia, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Yemen. Admittedly, in three other *maqāmāt* (the twelfth, the twenty-third, and the thirty-second), al-Ḍāhirī says that he visited Egypt first and then Palestine. In such an itinerary, he may speak about his second visit to Palestine. On the other hand, he mentions in the twenty-eighth *maqāma*

[56] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 201.
[57] Al-Ḍāhirī uses the Hebrew word *medina*, not only in the Hebrew original meaning of "country," but also in the meaning of "city," as in Arabic.
[58] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 116.
[59] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 373.
[60] Yehuda Ratzaby, "hashpa'at alḥariri 'al alḍahiri," *Biqqoret u-Farshanut* 11–12 (1978), 59–60.

that he visited Persia and Medes before visiting Palestine."[61] It should be noted that Ethiopia was never included in any *maqāma* mentioned here by Ratzaby.

In addition to these *maqāmāt* on which Ratzaby relied for the reconstruction of the itinerary of al-Ḍāhirī, there are some other *maqāmāt* in which the countries al-Ḍāhirī apparently visited are mentioned. So, for example, in the twenty-fifth *maqāma* he tells us: "when God caused me to wander from my father's house, and the fire of exile burned inside me to the extent of madness, I traveled to the lands of India, Basra, Iraq,[62] Erekh, Akkad, Kalne and Nusaybin … and Hamat, Damascus, Syria, Safed, and Tiberias … and I moved from there to Kafr Kanna, the city of Jonah ben Amittai, then to Shechem, Jerusalem, Hebron, the homelands of my ancestors. And I moved to Jaffa, feeling highly worried. From there I boarded a ship to the land of Egypt in the wide sea … and finally I reached Ethiopia and came to al-Ṣalīf.[63] Then, the time was tough for me. When I moved to the city of Sanaa …"[64]

In the forty-fifth and last *maqāma*, al-Ḍāhirī summerizes his travels by describing the protagonist, Avner ben Ḥeleq, visiting all over India, Hormuz, and Basra, then passing by Iraq, Aleppo, and Damascus, and reaching the Upper Galilee, the cities of Safed and Tiberias, the whole land of Palestine, and Jerusalem. After that, he reached Egypt and Ethiopia, and finally, his homeland, Yemen.[65]

Therefore, the itinerary proposed by Ratzaby for the travels in al-Ḍāhirī may cause some confusion, particularly concerning the places of his travels in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Palestine, and Egypt. This will be scrutinized and clarified below by carefully examining the descriptions of his travels appearing in his *Maqama*.

In the eighth *maqāma*, al-Ḍāhirī apparently states that he started his travel from his homeland, Yemen, onboard a ship going to India. After 20 days, he reached Calicut,[66] and then Kochi:[67] "I traveled from the land of Yemen to the land of India and

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[61] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 28.

[62] Ratzaby is of the opinion that the order of these sentences should be as follows: when God caused me to wander from my father's house *in the lands of India, Basra, and Iraq*, and the fire of exile burned inside me to the extent of madness.

[63] Ratzaby does not succeed in identifying this place's name, but, in our opinion, it can be identified as the city of al-Ṣalīf in Yemen, located near the southern reaches of the Red Sea. The city is popular because of its old harbor, and it looks like a tongue stretching into the Red Sea, surrounded by water from three sides. See al-Maqḥafī, *mu'jam al-buldān wal-qabā'il al-yamaniyya*, 917–918.

[64] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 287. For a very free translation of this passage, see Ophir Münz-Manor, "Imagined Journeys: Travel Narratives in Judah Alharizi's *Tahkemoni* and Zachariah Aldahiri's *Sefer Hamusar*," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 26 (2019), 56.

[65] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 463. For an English translation of this passage, see Adena Tanenbaum, "The Urge to Be Immortalized: Zechariah Alḍāhirī's Poetic Epitaphs for Himself," in Jonathan Decter and Michael Rand (eds.), *Studies in Arabic and Hebrew Letters in Honor of Raymond P. Scheindlin* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2007), 184–185.

[66] An Indian city on the south-western coast of India. Its popularity as a center of trade resulted from its famous port. During the Middle Ages, it was known as *mādīnat al-tawābil*, which is an important city in the trade of spices. See Yāsir ʻAbd al-Jawād al-Mashhadānī*: al-ʻilāqāt al-miṣriyya al-hindiyya fī al-ʻaṣr al-mamlūkī* (Cairo: al-Maktab al-ʻArabī lil-Muʻārif, 2015), 99.

[67] Kochi or Cochin is an Indian city in the Indian state of Kerala on the south-western coast of India. It is considered the most important port in the country. It is nicknamed the queen of the Arabian Sea. See Government of Kerala, *State Annual Action Plan 2015–16*, 38.

Kochi[68] to make profit through trading … Then I travelled to Sefara (Gen 10:30),[69] and then boarded a ship in the wide sea with the help of my God for 20 days until reaching the city of Calicut … From there I traveled to the city of Kochi."[70] From India, al-Ḍāhirī sailed to Hormuz in Persia, where he also visited the city of Tabriz.[71] He then seemingly moved to Iraq, as affirmed in different places in his *Maqama*. In the fourth *maqāma*, he said: "I traveled from the city of Hormuz to Iraq, situated on Tigris River."[72] In the ninth *maqāma*, he says, "I stayed with him in Hormuz for six months, and then I left him and moved to the city of Basra."[73] In Mesopotamia, al-Ḍāhirī visited cities such as Basra, Baghdad, Erbil, Mosul, Maritime, and Kfar. Like other Jewish travelers, he also visited holy places there.[74] Regarding the direction of his travel after leaving Iraq, there is not enough available data or references to identify the next place he traveled to, but supposedly it would be in one of the two directions:

The first possible direction is Turkey. This is evidently one of the directions of his travels that he repeatedly mentioned in his *Maqama*. It is reasonable to suppose that he arrived there from Erbil, east of Iraq. He visited Constantinople and Bursa in Turkey. In addition, he might have traveled from Turkey to Greece, as he mentioned in the forty-first *maqāma*: "I traveled from Turkey to a city in the Greek region."[75] The second possible direction is Syria. This is what Ratzaby thinks, although he seems to rely on inconclusive proof that al-Ḍāhirī speaks in his thirteenth *maqāma* that he was in Mosul and that he begins the next fourteenth *maqāma* mentioning his trade in the Hadrakh region in Syria.[76] However, we cannot rely on the order of *maqāmāt* in determining the sequence of places that he visited because they are not compatible along the line.[77]

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[68] The Hebrew text has: *kush*, which is usually identified with *ḥabash*, Ethiopia. But this identification cannot be accepted here, either logically or geographically. It is impossible to visit India and Ethiopia at the same time because they are in different directions from Yemen. Ratzaby supposes that the meaning of the word *kush* here should be Kochi in India, which is mentioned again later in this passage as *medinat kushi*, the city of Kochi. It seems that al-Ḍāhirī wrote the word in this way *kush* for the sake of the rhyme with the last word of the following sentence *u-rekhush*. See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*,130, note 2.

[69] The eastern mountainous region of Yemen, including Sanaa and its suburbs. See Avraham Ḥayyim Alnaddaf, "sefer otzar sifre teman," in *ḥoveret seride teman* (Jerusalem: Defus Halevi Tzuqerman,1928), 6.

[70] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 130.

[71] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 327.

[72] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 90.

[73] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 145.

[74] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 28.

[75] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 431. On the other hand, al-Ḍāhirī mentions the opposite direction. In the twenty-first *maqāma*, he says that he arrived in Bursa aboard the ship from *porvitza*. Ratzaby thinks that it can be identified with the city of Prèveza, a sea city on the western side of Greece. See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 240.

[76] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 29, note 2 (below).

[77] To mention but a few, al-Ḍāhirī opens his first *maqāma* by mentioning his travel from Alexandria in Egypt to Mount Hermon, and then to Damascus. In the following second *maqāma*, his itinerary is from Egypt to Yemen, and in the third *maqāma*, from Iraq to Erbil, and so on in most of his *maqāmāt*. This negates any link between the arrangement of places that he visited and the arrangement of different *maqāmāt*.

In Syria, he visited Aleppo, Hama, Damascus, and other cities that he did not mention explicitly.[78] From Syria, he appears to have been heading towards Palestine.[79] Just as there is disagreement among researchers regarding al-Ḍāhirī's destination after leaving Mesopotamia: Was he heading to Turkey or Syria?, the situation is very similar with regard to Palestine. To this land, al-Ḍāhirī paid great attention. This fact reflects his commitment to its national and religious importance at the same time. He mentions its cities and their conditions, sometimes only in general descriptions, and in other cases in minute detail.

The abundant detailed pieces of information that al-Ḍāhirī documented about Palestine, its cities, their sacred places, and people, show that he was not only concerned with its historical and geographic aspects, but also with social and religious aspects of the Jewish People, which could raise several serious questions, the most important among them being posed by Ratzaby: When did al-Ḍāhirī visit Palestine? With our humble respect for his painstaking effort in collecting all the relevant information as well as discovering all the significant details, Ratzaby does not seem to have fully succeeded in reaching a convincing conclusion.[80]

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[78] See *maqāmāt* 10, 14, 27, 39.

[79] Al-Ḍāhirī mentions his travel from Syria to Palestine in several places; most notable is his saying in the sixth *maqāma*: "I traveled from the land of Syria, via the Upper Galilee, to the city of Safed." See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 116.

[80] In determining the date of al-Ḍāhirī's visit to Palestine, Ratzaby relies on pieces of evidence taken from the *Maqama* of al-Ḍāhirī himself. The most important piece of evidence is the date set by al-Ḍāhirī in 1562 when he described the rabbis of Safed and Tiberias (the twenty-fifth *maqāma*, Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 287). At the outset, Ratzaby accepts this date and comments that "his visit in 1562 does not bear the slightest doubt because al-Ḍāhirī mentions in his twenty-fifth *maqāma* the names of the rabbis Cordovero and Caro without the honorific for the dead Z"L, *may he rest in peace*. Indeed, Cordovero died in 1570 and Caro in 1575." But Ratzaby comes back and wonders whether the number for the year that al-Ḍāhirī uses in Hebrew letters (H-K-B-Sh) is to be counted according to the calculation system of *perat gadol*, in which the thousands are also included, or according to the calculation system of *perat qatan* without including the thousands. If we count it according to the *perat gadol* system, the sum of H = 5000, K = 20, B = 2 and Sh = 300 is Anno Mundi 5322, which is equivalent to Anno Domini 1562. However, if we count it according to the *perat qatan* system, the sum of H = 5, K = 20, B = 2 and Sh = 300 is AM (5)327, which is equivalent with AD 1567. Ratzaby seems to think that the calculation according to the *perat gadol* system should be used here, because this is the very system employed by al-Ḍāhirī himself regarding other dates mentioned in his *Maqama*, and also because this date of his visit to Palestine (1562) does not contradict the statement of al-Ḍāhirī elsewhere that the harsh pogrom against the Yemeni Jews (1568) happened five years after he had returned from Palestine. On the other hand, this calculation collides with another reality noted by al-Ḍāhirī, in which he describes his travel to Palestine and the *yeshiva* in Tiberias and its rabbis. It is known that the wall of Tiberias started to be built at the end of 1563 and was completed in the month of Kislev in 1568. Ratzhaby asks how al-Ḍāhirī in 1562 could describe the *yeshiva*, which was built after 1565. For this problem, Ratzhaby presents two possible solutions. The first solution (according to Avraham Yaari) is to suppose that al-Ḍāhirī violated his own method of calculating the years according to the *perat gadol* system and employed here the *perat qatan* system, according to which his visit to Palestine must have been in 1567. But this assumption collides now with the above-mentioned statement of al-Ḍāhirī that the pogrom in Yemen in 1568 was five years after. The second solution (according to Yosef Braslavsky) is to suppose that al-Ḍāhirī visited Palestine twice: the first time in 1562 and the second after being released from imprisonment in 1573. The description of the *yeshiva* and its rabbis in Tiberias must have been made during his second visit. However, this second assumption also has a serious problem. It contradicts the fact that al-Ḍāhirī states that the injustice and suffering that he had experienced

In addition to the question posed by Ratzaby about the time of al-Ḍāhirī's visit to Palestine, we may also ask another question that is no less important: How did al-Ḍāhirī arrive in Palestine? Was it from Syria, Turkey, or Egypt? In fact, answering such a question is very complicated, and considering geographical reality, it seems almost impossible to reach an overall conclusion. As stated above, al-Ḍāhirī paid great attention to Palestine, to such an extent that he mentioned his travel to Palestine in seventeen out of forty-five *maqāmāt*.[81] Such an emphasis on his travels becomes all the more evident when we note that in four *maqāmāt*[82] he states that the direction of his travel was from Syria to Palestine, then in the thirty-second *maqāma,* he tells about this travel from Egypt to Palestine,[83] and not the opposite (from Palestine to Egypt), as could be understood from the context of his entire *Maqama*. Moreover, the claim of Braslavsky (mentioned in note 80) that al-Ḍāhirī visited Palestine twice turns the supposed itinerary of his travel altogether upside-down and eventually makes us uncertain of such pieces of information about his travels, just as Ratzaby was.

Al-Ḍāhirī made various reports about his travel from Syria to Palestine. As was cited above in our discussion, in the sixth *maqāma* he states: "I traveled from the land of Syria, via the Upper Galilee, to the city of Safed."[84] In the seventh *maqāma* he mentions: "I traveled from Jerusalem, the city of righteousness, to the land of Egypt, in an attempt to meet repairers of the bleaches."[85] In the twelfth *maqāma* he says: "I traveled from Sidon to the land of Egypt, because there live sons of Judah and Ephraim, and I boarded a ship to Damietta port (*kaftor*)."[86] In the twenty-fifth *maqāma* he states (also discussed above): "And I moved to Jaffa … From there I boarded a ship to the land of Egypt in the wide sea."[87] And in the thirty-ninth *maqāma* he states: "I wandered around most regions of Palestine . . . From there I boarded a ship in the sea towards the land of Egypt."[88] On the other hand, in the thirty-second *maqāma* he mentions his travel from Egypt to Palestine: "I traveled from Memphis (*nof*) to Jerusalem (*yefe nof*,

during the severe pogrom of 1568 in Yemen were due to his own guilt of leaving the land of Israel. Why then would he return again to Yemen after his second visit to Palestine (if indeed he visited it for a second time)? For more details, see Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 31. Despite all these painstaking efforts to solve any contradictions that might be found in al-Ḍāhirī's description of "historical" events in his *Maqama*, they do not always provide us a convincing solution, which inevitably leads us to reconsider the nature of the text in question. What we are dealing with is not a purely historical text, but a literary text that belongs to the art of *Maqama*, created by the first authors of the genre based on tales woven with their imagination. These tales may sometimes include indications or facts related to the reality of their time and society, but sometimes they are simply in the realm of fiction. Hence comes the idea of researching the place of al-Ḍāhirī's travel accounts between reality and fiction.

[81] *Maqama* numbers 6, 7, 12, 22, 23, 24, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 42, and 45.
[82] *Maqama* numbers 6, 7, 12, and 39.
[83] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 365.
[84] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 116.
[85] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 124.
[86] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 165.
[87] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 278.
[88] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 418.

"beautiful for situation"),[89] and then I left Hebron via Samaria and arrived at Usha and Shefaram."[90]

According to al-Ḍāhirī, he visited Tiberias, Safed, Sidon, Galilee, Shechem, Jerusalem, Hebron, Jaffa, and many other cities in Palestine,[91] and Damietta, Cairo, Alexandria, and Bima in Egypt. As is told in the thirty-ninth *maqāma*, while in Egypt, he received disturbing news from his homeland, Yemen: "From there I boarded a ship in the sea towards the land of Egypt, and I was sitting there between the oven and the stove (in trouble and distress),[92] because of what I heard about my homeland."[93] Al-Ḍāhirī does not clarify the truthfulness of this news, but apparently decides to return to Yemen because of it, passing Ethiopia on his way back, as is told in the twenty-fifth *maqāma*: "From there I boarded a ship to the land of Egypt in the wide sea. There, I sat between the oven and the stove (in trouble and distress),[94] and finally I reached Ethiopia and came to al-Ṣalīf."[95]

In the second *maqāma*, al-Ḍāhirī depicts his travel from Egypt to Yemen in detail as follows: "I traveled from the land of Egypt, and my destination was to Yemen, so I hired a ship in the Nile River (*pishon*) … I sailed about twenty days in the river, in the presence of God (*nora ve-ayom*, "terrible and dreadful"). Then I got out of the river, and my heart was rash, so I walked on land for three days with my weak soul, and we rested on the seashore, where the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments (Exod 33:6). From there I harnessed the chariots of departure, took provision for my travel, and hired a ship with 20 coins … I prepared there my place and residence, and traveled on board. Twenty days later, the wind became very rough, so that the ship seemed likely to be wrecked (Jonah 1:4), and I got very much terrified. Then I raised my eyes up to God who makes a way in the sea (Isa 43:16), and He heard my calling and saved me, and from the depths of the sea He guided me to the rest. We remained about a month and a half, and God of Israel brought my salvation. Then I began to change my clothes, when I arrived at the port of al-Ṣalīf."[96]

This text reveals the character of al-Ḍāhirī the traveler, and his ingenuity in combining the key elements to describe his travel in a *Maqama* style. First of all, he identifies the starting and ending points of travel, namely from Egypt to Yemen. He then provides details about the route of sailing in the Nile River first and then in the Red Sea, means of transportation by ship, fares to be paid, reservation and preparation of a place, and the time limit for each distance covered. This is in addition to the

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[89] See Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 216: "I traveled from the land of Memphis (*nof*) to Jerusalem (*yefe nof*)."
[90] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 365.
[91] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 32.
[92] The expression *yoshev ben tannur ve-khirayim* is already found in the Talmud (*ta'anit* 30a–b), meaning "sitting in a very despised place." Here the meaning is as Ratzaby understands: "in trouble and distress." See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 418. See also See Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 179, 261.
[93] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 418.
[94] The same expression *ben tannur ve-khirayim* is understood here by Ratzaby differently, as a metaphor for the hot climate of Egypt at this time. See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 287. We are of the opinion that it should be understood the same way as above.
[95] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 287.
[96] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 64.

description of the excitement of the travel and the horrors and risks at sea, which are also found in the writings of many travelers.[97] Eventually, he reveals the habit of changing clothes shortly before arrival, metaphorically regarded as a symbol of hardship and suffering on board. On a practical level, this is also an indication of the completion of a travel and the beginning of a new one of a special nature and different preparation, of course with new clothes.

D. Between reality and imagination

As indicated and discussed above, al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama* has acquired a distinctive significance among some historians and scholars, because they regarded this book as a major historical source of the conditions and lifestyle of the Yemeni Jews in the sixteenth century. This is in addition to other historical materials mentioned and recorded inside *Maqama* during his visit to other cities and countries. Despite the significance of what al-Ḍāhirī has recorded in his *Maqama* about sights and events, some of which can indeed reflect reality, any attempt to rely on all the narratives appearing in his *Maqama* and to count them as facts is incompatible with the nature of the art of *Maqama* and its literary and rhetorical features.[98]

Foremost among these "historical" materials is the introduction by which al-Ḍāhirī begins his *Maqama*, about which the Yemeni historian and rabbi 'Amram Koraḥ (1871–1952) says: "As for the situation of the Jews during their period of control (the Ottomans' control of Yemen 1546–1628), we do not know what happened in detail; we only have simple references by Zechariah al-Ḍāhirī in his introduction to *Sefer ha-musar*."[99] This is in addition to other plentiful historical materials and references mentioned in al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama*, from which Jewish historiographer Ḥayyim Ḥabashush learned about Yemeni Jews in the sixteenth century.[100] Al-Ḍāhirī says in his introduction: "Thus the events began by the judgment of God (*temim de'ot*, "perfect in knowledge," Job 36:4), in the year of 'Has God forgotten (*hashakhaḥ*, H(5000)-Sh(300)-K(20)-Ḥ(8) = AM 5328 = AD 1568) to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies (Ps 77:10) to the remnant of His heritage (Micah 7:18) and people?'

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[97] See Shawqī Ḍayf, *al-riḥlāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Mu'ārif, 1956), 27.

[98] Al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama* was and continues to be an important source for Jewish historians, as they can learn about the conditions of their people in Yemen in a bygone era, which are obscure due to the scarcity of historical sources for the situation of the Yemeni Jews in that period. When we take into consideration this dependence that Jewish historians have had upon the materials from the *Maqama* of al-Ḍāhirī, there is something in their claims that we can accept, but also something we should disagree with or reject. What is acceptable here is, in our view, what corresponds to other historical sources and does not contradict either the geography of places or the logic of reason. See Adena Tanenbaum: "Polemics Real and Imagined in Zechariah Alḍāhirī's *Sefer Ha-Musar*," Wout van Bekkum and Naoya Katsumata (eds.), *Giving a Diamond: Essays in Honor of Joseph Yahalom on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 243: "Although *Sefer ha-Musar* is a literary, belletristic work that interweaves fictional and realistic elements, scholars have been tempted to approach the text as though it were a documentary record from which 'factual' information can be elicited. In large measure, this is due to the paucity of historical sources for Yemenite Jewish life in the sixteenth century."

[99] 'Amram ben Yaḥya Qoraḥ, *sa'arat teman* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1954), 5.

[100] S. D. Goitein (ed.), Ḥayyim ben Yaḥya Ḥabashush, *mas'ot ḥabashush: ḥezyon teman* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1983), 6–7.

In that year, the Arabs overcame the Ottomans and smote them shrewdly, and put us in prison."[101] Al-Ḍāhirī devoted seven places to the events of Yemen, once in the introduction and six times in his *Maqama*,[102] in which he is likely to be presenting a real history of events that cannot be separated from the historical facts of that period, because most of them are compatible and correspond to other historical sources.

The most prominent among these events are the long wars that took place between al-'Imām al-Zaydī al-Muṭahhar ibn Sharaf al-Dīn[103] and the Ottomans. As a result of these wars, al-Muṭahhar abused the Jews and humiliated them in imprisonment. Moreover, al-Ḍāhirī was one of those prisoners until the restrictions were abolished. According to al-Ḍāhirī,[104] the Jews were set free immediately after the death of al-Muṭahhar in 1572, a statement that is also supported by al-Kabsī and al-Wāsi'ī.[105] However, the reason for the exemplary punishment of the Jews by al-Muṭahhar remains unclear. Speculation suggests that the Yemeni Jews at the time were on terms with the Ottomans or at least maintained a relationship with them. What Ratzaby says about the tolerance of the Ottoman Sultan at that time Selim II (1524–1574 AD) toward the Jews and his relationship with them[106] could be both acceptable and reliable. Moreover, al-Ḍāhirī, particularly in his second *maqāma*, states that the Ottoman soldiers had apparently camped in the homes of the Yemeni Jews without objection,[107] which could be a reliable indicator of a good relationship, or at least a pro-Ottoman relationship.

Perhaps this view is also to be reinforced by the epithet that al-Ḍāhirī uses for al-Muṭahhar by mentioning his lameness (*ḥigger*);[108] This epithet aroused the curiosity of Ratzaby, but he was unable to interpret it.[109] However, after reviewing the Arabic sources for this period, it becomes clear to us that al-Muṭahhar was nicknamed "lame" because he had a birth defect in his foot that made him unable to walk normally, and

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[101] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar,* 51.
[102] *Maqama* numbers 2, 11, 12, 15, 17, and 20.
[103] Al-Muṭahhar ibn Sharaf al-Dīn (1503–1572), a Yemeni Zaydī 'Imām, rebelled against his father al-'Imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥya Sharaf al-Dīn, who ruled large parts of Yemen in the thirties and forties of the fifteenth century. He entered Sanaa in 1546, declared himself 'imām, and fought long wars against the Ottomans. He was known for treason and vetoing covenants, cruelty of heart, and brutality in killing prisoners and abusing them. See Muḥammad ibn 'Ismā'īl al-Kabsī, *al-laṭā'if al-sunniyya fi 'akhbār al-mamālik al-yamaniyya* (Sanaa: Maktabat al-Jīl al-Jadīd, 2005), 239–267; 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Batūl, *khuyūt al-ẓalām 'aṣr al-'imāma al-zaydiyya fī al-yaman (284–1382 AH)* (Sanaa: Markaz Nashwān al-Ḥamīrī lil-dirāsāt wal-nashr, 2006), 192–193.
[104] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar,* 166.
[105] Al-Kabsī, *al-laṭā'if al-sunniyya fi 'akhbār al-mamālik al-yamaniyya*, 267; 'Abd al-Wāsi' al-Wāsi'ī, *tārīkh al-yaman* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salfiyya, 1927), 51.
[106] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar,* 33.
[107] Al-Ḍāhirī pointed out this matter through the second hemistich of a line of a poem, which he singled out, apparently, for what happened to the Jews at the hands of al-Muṭahhar, by saying: "and the Ottomans (*edom*) camped in their (Jews') dwellings, but they did not reject that." See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar,* 71. The Ottomans apparently maintained a close relationship with the Jews when they returned to Yemen again in the 19th century. According to Todor Parfitt: "the Ottomans punished those who threw stones at Jews or he who pulls their sidelocks in the street." See Tudor Parfitt, *The Road to Redemption: The Jews of the Yemen, 1900–1950* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 88.
[108] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar,* 69, 72, 166, 419.
[109] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar,* 33, note 1.

therefore was known as ignorant and defected.[110] It is also noted that this epithet was attached to al-Muṭahhar only in historical sources that tended to favor the Ottomans; such an epithet and details about al-Muṭahhar were not mentioned by al-Kabsī, al-Wāsi‘ī, or al-Shawkānī.[111]

Despite some degree of reliability of what al-Ḍāhirī mentioned and recorded regarding historical events and incidents in Yemen as well as its compatibility with other historical sources, it is not without contradictions that could challenge reality and violate logicality. For example, al-Ḍāhirī mentions the duration of years of imprisonment as six years,[112] while in the fortieth *maqāma*, he contradicts this number by determining the duration to be twenty-seven years,[113] and in the forty-fifth *maqāma*, he claims that it was almost forty years.[114] This contradiction does not undervalue al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama*, since it is not just devoted to the description of pure historical events; on the contrary, he releases his literary fantasy to compose his *Maqama* in rhymed prose. This is clearly indicated in his introduction, which reveals his intention to blend reality with imagination. That is, his *Maqama* is a narration of reality and fiction mingled together. Al-Ḍāhirī states in his introduction that some parts of his *Maqama* contain historical events related to the Jews; however, before concluding this part, he frankly points out that he tracks the approach adopted by al-Ḥarīrī and al-Ḥarīzī in his writing of *Maqama*.[115]

To a large extent, the same is true of al-Ḍāhirī's travel accounts, which he loaded with observations and imagination that cannot by any means be detached or separated. This is because the material is very complicated and significantly intertwined. It would be both appropriate and accurate to say that al-Ḍāhirī himself connected all the strings together to such an extent that they are too tough to untangle.

In his Introduction, he begins by declaring that he is a narrator of the events: "the humble Zecharya ben Se‘adya ben Ya‘akov al-Ḍāhirī said …"[116] After thanking God, he starts saying: "My heart guided me to narrate some events we, the inhabitants of the city of Sanaa, have faced, as well as ordeals we have been through …"[117] Then, he continues: "Thus the events began by the judgment of God in the year of 1568."[118] At that point, he refers to his *Maqama*: "I wrote a book to be read by every depressed person, and while suffering the plight of prison, I named it *Sefer ha-musar*."[119] He concludes his introduction with a simple description of the form and content of his *Maqama*, from which one can deduce the features of the literary imagination in this

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[110] Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī al-Makkī, *ghazawāt al-jirākisa wal-'atrāk fī janūb al-jazīra al-musamma al-barq al-yamānī fī al-fatḥ al-uthmānī* (Riyad: Dār al-Yamāma, 1967), 95.
[111] Al-Kabsī, *al-laṭā'if al-sunniyya fi 'akhbār al-mamālik al-yamaniyya*, 239–267; Al-Wāsi‘ī, *tārīkh al-yaman*, 51; Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Shawkānī, *al-badr al-tāli‘ bi-maḥāsin man ba‘d al-qarn al-sābi‘*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Matba‘a al-Sa‘āda, 1929), 309–310.
[112] Al-Ḍāhirī says in the sixteenth *maqāma*: "We spent six years in prison." See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 195.
[113] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 426.
[114] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 463.
[115] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 53.
[116] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 51.
[117] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 51.
[118] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 51.
[119] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 52.

book. Concerning the form, he states that he will narrate it through the mouths of two characters: Mordechai the Sidonian and Avner ben Ḥeleq the Yemeni, as is customary for Arabic and Hebrew *Maqama*.

Al-Ḍāhirī repeatedly mentions that he followed in the footsteps of his predecessors, admitting that: "Rabbi Yehuda Ḥarīzī preceded me in his book … as he had derived his working from the wise Arab al-Ḥarīrī."[120] The *Maqama* is considered originally a literary and imaginary product of its composer, with its rhymed prose that sometimes echoes and resonates with real events from the composer's own life. However, al-Ḍāhirī also states: "I divided the book into *maqāmāt* that contain different subjects related to what happened to me when I was a stranger during my travels."[121] Therefore, one can understand that al-Ḍāhirī recorded his real travels under different themes. Although one cannot refute this altogether, it should also be noted that most, if not all, of his observations contain much imagination. This is because al-Ḍāhirī's travel accounts do not necessarily prove that they really took place. Moreover, many of the descriptions of his travels are marked by outright contradictions if they are analyzed geographically, historically, or logically, as follows:

(1) India and Persia

Al-Ḍāhirī included indications of his travels to India and Persia in nine *maqāmāt*. They differ from one another in terms of the space allocated. Despite their importance for containing observations and recordings of the conditions of the Jews he had met during his path of travel,[122] what is worthy of note here is to trace his narrated movements and to make it clear if they can indeed be understood as reflecting the actual time and place, or rather as a literary imagination, especially with various and multiple contradictions that could defect the path of his travels in different places.

In the eighth *maqāma* (as is cited and discussed above), al-Ḍāhirī states that he began his travel from Yemen to India: "I traveled from the land of Yemen to the land of India and *kush* to make profit through trading. My way was chosen, and I travelled to Sefara … until reaching the city of Calicut … From there I traveled to the city of Kochi."[123] What is interesting here is that al-Ḍāhirī has completely neglected geographical fact when he admits that he boarded the ship from Sefara, namely Sanaa, which is located at the center of Yemen and does not overlook the water;[124] not to

[120] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 53.
[121] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 52.
[122] Al-Ḍāhirī used to talk about the conditions of Jews in cities and countries mentioned in his *Maqama*, in terms of their religious, social, and sometimes moral status, which gives this book such a significant position among scholars that they have adopted it as a major historical source. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that based on al-Ḍāhirī's mention of the demographic situation of Jews in the Indian city of Kochi, Naphtali Bar-Giorah accepted this statement in his study. See Naphtali Bar-Giorah, "meqorot le-toldot ha-yeḥasim ben ha-yehudim ha-levanim ve-ha-sheḥorim be-qochin," *Sefunot* 1 (1957), 246.
[123] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 130.
[124] See Se'adya Gaon's commentary on Gen 10:30 (*bo'akha sefara har ha-qedem*): "*sefara – medina, har ha-qedem – al-jabal al-sharqī*," and Yemenite *midrash* "*nūr al-ẓalām*": *bo'akha sefara har ha-qedem – hu al-jabal al-sharqī, ve-hiya san'ā' wa-bilādha*). Against the opinion of Se'adya Gaon that Sefara is Medina and that of the *midrash* that it is Sanaa, Ratzaby is of the opinion that it

mention his statement at the beginning: "I traveled from the land of Yemen to the land of India and *kush*," which literally means that he traveled from Yemen to India and Ethiopia. This is an obvious geographical contradiction. Even if one accepts the assumption that he meant the Indian city of Kochi, which is also mentioned later ("From there I traveled to the city of Kochi"), and that he used this spelling to conform to his rhymed prose style, it must be pointed out that al-Ḍāhirī indeed mentioned *kush* in a different place in his *Maqama* to refer to Ethiopia.[125] Hence, one realizes that al-Ḍāhirī is often mixing reality with imagination, as he originally wrote his *Maqama* with all its literary implications and imaginable features.

Another contradiction can be noticed in his travels to India and Persia. In his ninth *maqāma*, he states that he traveled from India to Hormuz: "I traveled in the month of *tammuz* from the land of India to the land of Persia and to the city of Hormuz. I sailed onboard the wide sea for seven days. During the voyage, the terrors fell upon me (Ps 55:5) because the stormy wind was getting stronger and stronger, making the ship almost broken."[126] This narration is supposed to coincide with the path of his travel, as he has referred to it in other places in his *Maqama*. However, he contradicts himself in the nineteenth *maqāma* by saying that he traveled from Hormuz to India: "When I was in Hormuz, a city given to pleasures more than any other city, I decided to go to the land of India by sea, so I divided its waves and their roaring … After eight days of voyage, the terrors fell upon me (Ps 55:5), because the outrageous waves of the sea stood before us."[127] In these two similar descriptions of the voyage, al-Ḍāhirī has added an interesting narration about the incident of the ship with the horrors of the sea. These descriptions recall the repetitive stories of horror at sea in travelogue literature, where "fear affects the imagination of the travelers, and so under the delusion, they believe unreal events to be true and magnify trivial incidents to be serious ones,"[128] and so do some *Maqama* writers. The contradiction here raises several questions: Why did al-Ḍāhirī change the path of his travel? Did he fall into this contradiction? Or is it intended to have a certain significance?

Most of the travel contradictions in al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama* can be attributed to literary imagination or the structures of rhymed prose. Conversely, regarding this nineteenth *maqāma*, the situation is different because it was not al-Ḍāhirī's original literal product, but rather, according to Ratzaby, taken from the thirty-ninth *maqāma* of al-Ḥarīrī (*al-ʿummāniyya*).[129] This answers questions about the contradictions that

should be identified with Aden, a coastal city. See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*,130, note 3. In our opinion, this identification is not very convincing, because Aden does not have any "eastern" mountain.

[125] Al-Ḍāhirī refers to Ethiopia as *kush* in his last *maqāma* when he talks about the path of his last travel, where he arrived in Egypt and Ethiopia and ended his travel in his homeland, Yemen. See Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 463.

[126] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 138.

[127] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 222.

[128] Shawqī Ḍayf, *al-riḥlāt*, 27. The psychological aspect of the medieval traveler in particular, and the entire mindset and worldview of individuals in the medieval period as reflected in travel narratives were addressed by a Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1872–1945) and a Russian medievalist historian Aron Gurevich (1924–2006) in many of their works.

[129] Ratzaby, "hashpaʿat alḥariri ʿal alḍahiri," 71–72. See also Adena Tanenbaum, "'Credit is Due to the One Who Completes It': Zechariah Alḍahiri on Poetic Originality and Plagiarism," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 56 (2005), 115.

occur. Al-Ḍāhirī composed this *maqāma* by translating al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāma* into Hebrew, though with minor modifications, without paying sufficient attention to geographical reality or a true itinerary. Consequently, this leads us to reassess the incident of the ship; as it constitutes the core theme of al-Ḥarīrī's thirty-ninth *maqāma*, al-Ḍāhirī also makes it the central theme of his ninteenth *maqāma*. Therefore, it would also be defensible to doubt the truth of the incident of the ship described by al-Ḍāhirī in his ninth *maqāma*.

(2) The Levant

Al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama* is filled with various indications of his travels from and around the Levant, as this region extends from the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the borders of Mesopotamia. Today, it includes Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. Al-Ḍāhirī's narration in the opening of the fifth *maqāma* is considered the most significant description about his travel to the Levant, as he says: "I traveled from the land of Babylon to the land of Syria for trading of 50 cargoes of expensive and cheap goods. On the way, there are several cities located on the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, including Assyria, Erekh, Akkad, Kalne, and Nusaybin."[130] Although this passage is significant for determining the locations of his movements and travels from Iraq to the Levant, it is doubtful if we can rely on it completely, especially after Ratzaby showed that the contents of this fifth *maqāma* have been taken from *mishle shu'alim* (Fox fables) by Berakhya ha-Naqdan.[131] It is clear, therefore, that al-Ḍāhirī's narration about travel serves here only as an opening to his fifth *maqāma*, which is typical, as we have seen above, of both the Arabic and Hebrew *Maqama* composers' writing and narrative style.

Palestine (Eretz Yisrael) is the center of al-Ḍāhirī's travels in the Levant and is the most important for him. This is highlighted by the many travels in which he mentioned Palestine and its cities. Therefore, his *Maqama* is replete with multiple signs of Palestine. He mentions holy places and rabbis, as well as some precise details about the conditions of society, as if we were seeing a vivid picture of the important features of society of that period. This gives Palestine a special character compared to the other cities and countries mentioned in his *Maqama*.

The significance of some details lies in their correspondence and compatibility with other sources in a realistic manner. For instance, in the city of Safed, al-Ḍāhirī estimates the number of the Jewish community to be about 14,000 people, which is in accord with the consensus of some travelers who visited the city at nearly the same time.[132] Al-Ḍāhirī also mentions some of the prominent Palestinian sages, such as Yosef Caro, Moshe of Trani, and Moshe Cordovero, while presenting a detailed

[130] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar,* 100.
[131] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 20. Al-Ḍāhirī's fifth *maqāma* revolves around tales about animals that he created in the form of short stories drawn from the fox fables. They are: The Dog and the Ass, The Frog and the Mouse, The Lion and the Mouse, and The Sick Lion.
[132] Shemuel Avitzur, "tzefat – merkaz le-ta'asiyat arige tzemer ba-me'a ha-15," *Sefunot* 6 (1962), 48.

description of the Caro's yeshiva in Safed.[133] It is worth mentioning here that this detailed description is used by Eyal Davidson, who considers it reliable evidence in documenting the teaching methods in Caro Yeshiva.[134] In another place, however, he lessens its importance as he says: "As this narration (referring to al-Ḍāhirī's discussion of the power of the soul in the Caro's yeshiva) is not a true historical evidence but a fictional literary writing reflecting only the writer's vision, and it is highly doubtful if it is to be used to scrutinize the mentioned teaching methods of the yeshiva."[135]

This matter is very similar to Tiberias, which receives a significant place in al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama* through the description of important facts and events that are not free from historical contradictions. However, some descriptions of Tiberias are consistent with other sources, giving them a realistic nature, whether they come from al-Ḍāhirī's own recording of events or from what he heard, which seems to be quite possible. The most prominent of these facts is the detailed narrative of the conditions of the yeshiva of Tiberias after the support of Doña Gracia Mendes Nasi (d. 1569): "Know that our Yeshiva in the past had about seventy scholars, and they were supported by an honorable lady from Great Constantinople, who worked for God."[136]

As mentioned and elucidated earlier, the descriptions of his travel to some cities of Palestine contain historical as well as geographical contradictions; it is natural that al-Ḍāhirī moves from Syria to Palestine from north to south, but he does not do so in two of his *maqāmāt*. In his twenty-second *maqāma,* he says that he arrived in Jaffa by sea, without explaining from where, and that he went from south to north: "I decided to visit Jerusalem, the Holy City, because of an idea that had occurred in my heart, and then I boarded a ship in the sea and arrived to Jaffa on the night the stars lit up. I first went to Hebron, from there to Kidron Valley, and then on to Mount Zion."[137] In his thirty-second *maqāma,* he states that he traveled from south to north as well: "I traveled from Memphis to Jerusalem, and then I left Hebron via Samaria and arrived at Usha and Shefaram."[138]

In fact, it is not possible to rely on the evidence of these two *maqāmāt* because they are not the original literary creation of al-Ḍāhirī; this is because the twenty-second *maqāma* is heavily dependent on the twenty-eighth *maqāma* (the thirty-eighth in Recension B) of al-Ḥarīzī. Concerning the thirty-second *maqāma* of al-Ḍāhirī, its travel introduction corresponds to the travel introduction of the sixteenth *maqāma* (the twenty-eighth in Recension B) of al-Ḥarīzī, who says at the beginning of his *maqāma*:

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[133] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 116. See also Adena Tanenbaum, "Didacticism or Literary Legerdemain? Philosophical and Ethical Themes in Zechariah Aldahiri's *Sefer Hamusar*," in Y. Tzvi Langermann and Josef Stern (eds.), *Adaptations and Innovations: Studies on the Interaction Between Jewish and Islamic Thought and Literature from the Early Middle Ages to the Late Twentieth Century, Dedicated to Professor Joel L. Kraemer* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2008), 358–364.

[134] Eyal Davidson, *ḥakhme tzefat ben ha-shanim 1540–1615 – ma'amadam ha-dati ve-ha-ḥevrati*, PhD Dissertation (Jerusalem: the Hebrew University, 2010), 117.

[135] Davidson, *ḥakhme tzefat ben ha-shanim 1540–1615*, 120. See also Adena Tanenbaum, "Kabbalah in a Literary Key: Mystical Motifs in Zechariah Aldāhirī's Sefer hamusar," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 17:1 (2009), 60–61.

[136] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 277.

[137] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 253.

[138] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 365.

"I traveled from the land of Memphis to Jerusalem,"[139] while al-Ḍāhirī says: "I traveled from Memphis to Jerusalem."[140] Regarding other descriptions of the travels of al-Ḍāhirī to Palestine, no one has proven so far whether they are the original creativity of al-Ḍāhirī himself or whether he has derived them from other sources. Moreover, his *Maqama* is not free of geographic inaccuracies. For example, he tells us about his travel on the Euphrates River to Gaza, and on the way there is the Egyptian city of Tahpanhes, which is a complete contradiction to logic and geography.[141]

(3) Egypt

As is told more than once in his *Maqama*, Egypt is supposed to be the penultimate place and position in al-Ḍāhirī's travel track, from which he moved to Ethiopia before returning to his homeland, Yemen. In tracking the different places of Egyptian cities and locations he visited, it may be seen that such travels are incompatible with any possible reality because of the frequent contradictions that could hinder any attempt to form a logical reliable image of the entire route.

Al-Ḍāhirī states in three different places that he moved from Palestine to Egypt; in the seventh *maqāma*, he traveled from Jaffa to Damietta,[142] in the twelfth *maqāma*, he moved from Sidon to Damietta,[143] and in the twenty-fifth *maqāma* he traveled from Jaffa to Egypt.[144] This is completely contrary to the opposite direction, when he refers in two other places to his move from Egypt to Palestine: In the thirty-second *maqāma* he traveled from Memphis to Jerusalem,[145] and in the first *maqāma*, he traveled from Alexandria to Mount Hermon.[146]

Thus, these movements can be understood as inspired by al-Ḍāhirī's imagination in order to provide a spark of excitement for the subjects of his *Maqama*, such as the traditional books of *Maqama*. Perhaps this also confirms that there are other movements appearing in Egypt in his *Maqama* that are completely contrary to logic and geographical reality, which could only be explained for the preservation of the rhyme scheme. An example of such cases is what he mentions in his thirty-eighth *maqāma* about his travel to the land of Maritime[147] in Iraq: "The happenings of time rolled me up to the land of Maritime, located beyond the rivers of Egypt."[148]

E. Conclusion

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[139] Yahalom and Katsumata (eds.), *taḥkemoni o maḥberot heman ha-'ezraḥi*, 261; Reichert (trans.), *The Tahkemoni of Judah Al-Ḥarizi*, vol. 2, 143; Segal (trans.), *The Book of Taḥkemoni*, 238.
[140] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 365.
[141] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 190.
[142] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 124.
[143] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 165.
[144] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 287.
[145] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 365.
[146] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 59.
[147] Maritime is the name of an area in southern Iraq located on the Arabian Gulf. See *entziklopedya miqra'it*, vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1978), 480.
[148] Ratzaby (ed.), *sefer ha-musar*, 409.

As elucidated and scrutinized throughout this study, the travel in al-Ḍāhirī's Hebrew *Maqama* is basically similar to that of the traditional Arabic *Maqama* of al-Hamadhānī, al-Ḥarīrī, and al-Saraqustī, and that of al-Ḥarizi's Hebrew *Maqama*; the travel is a literary prerequisite as is stipulated by the genre of *Maqama*. However, two different functions of travel have been observed. In the first function, travel is narrated in the opening of each *maqāma*, which is followed by both Arabic and Hebrew traditional *Maqama* writers. In the second function, travel serves as part of a specific *maqāma* subject, and this function is almost unique to the Hebrew *Maqama* of al-Ḥarizi and al-Ḍāhirī. Moreover, it is possible to understand the existence of this second function in Hebrew *Maqama* as reflecting in some way or another the real travels that al-Ḥarizi and al-Ḍāhirī both undertook in different countries.

Many *maqāmāt* in which al-Ḍāhirī uses the technique of mentioning the travel in their opening sentences show that he exactly follows the conventional pattern established by the writers of the classical Arabic and Hebrew *Maqama* who preceded him. Accordingly, when the described travel clearly contradicts geographic reality and logic, it should be attributed to imagination rather than reality. This also results from a significant trait of the *Maqama* genre of maintaining the rhyme scheme between sentences. By adopting this principle, al-Ḍāhirī often keeps the rhyme scheme by borrowing place names from the Bible that do not correspond to any geographical reality or logical itinerary. Al-Ḍāhirī also borrows some subjects from several Arabic and Hebrew resources in composing some of his *maqāmāt*. This shows that these travel accounts are not necessarily real, such as his travels to Iraq or the horrors faced by travelers during travel by sea.

On the other hand, al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama* seems to include some actual events, such as the persecution of the Yemeni Jews by al-'Imām al-Zaydī al-Muṭahhar and his soldiers, in addition to the flood in Yemen and its resultant consequences. Moreover, he speaks about the Jews of Tabriz, who became Muslim and then desired to return to Judaism. He truly describes some countries and their conditions, such as the renaissance achieved by the people of Safed and Tiberias and his estimation of the number of Jewish inhabitants in Safed.[149]

This study recommends not relying automatically on all the information mentioned in al-Ḍāhirī's *Maqama*, as it is not completely real, especially when it comes to his travel accounts. However, as is true with his Jewish predecessor, al-Ḥarīzī, there also exists some information concerning his travels that does correspond to other historical sources and can be logically accepted as reflecting in some way al-Ḍāhirī's own travel.

[149] For further research, we should investigate this phenomenon against the background of various developments and changes that the genre of Arabic *Maqama* itself underwent in al-Andalus, such as in the works of Ibn al-Shahīd and Lisān al-Dīn (referred to above), and also in the contemporary Yemenite Arabic *Maqama*. See, Tanenbaum, "Hidden Gems," 213–214.