Manichaean literature includes many tales used as parables to demonstrate dogmatics. They were intended to help the believers to understand the meaning of mythical events and ethical demands, and to act correctly. These parables are very often part of a didactic lecture, illustrating the aim of the speech in a metaphorical way. Unfortunately our stock of Manichaean literature is very defective. Therefore we know in only a few cases the context of the parable. Nevertheless there are also collections of tales such as the Manichaean Parable book. In most cases we cannot know whether the fragment was part of a collection of parables or part of a didactic speech. What we can observe is that most parables are closed with an epimythion identifying the persons and explaining their actions. These explanations give the Manichaean interpretation of the tales, sometimes borrowed from Indian or other traditions, such as the famous story of the pearl-borer. In the case of the following story a small part of the epimythion is preserved. But the epimythion usually follows the story. For this reason, I would like first to introduce the fragments, the preserved parts of the story, and so on. Afterwards we will learn the aim of the story by means of the epimythion.

The two badly damaged Sogdian fragments So 18058 and So 18197, which belong to the same manuscript, contain parts of one story. They can be joined in the way indicated below. So 18197 (16,0 cm × 9,2 cm) is the badly damaged remainder of a nearly complete sheet. It preserves small parts of the headlines and of lines 2–15. So 18058 (6,8 cm × 9,4 cm) is the lower part of this same sheet. It preserves lines 15–22. The joined piece is 18,2 cm × 9,4 cm. One can surmise

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1 Colditz 1987, 275.
2 Sundermann 1985.
4 Henning 1945, 465–469.
that this sheet originally contained 22 lines. The first line of the text is completely lacking. We see the end of a red headline with ornamental blossoms. On the verso side the headline begins with the number five, pnc. There are more fragments with a similar handwriting, although sometimes the letters are a little bit larger, or the distance between the lines is greater. We therefore have no other fragments that belong to precisely this hand.

Transliteration and Translation of So 18058 + So 18197 (See Pls. 1 and 2)

r/hl / [* ](·) *
/1/ [ ]
/2/ [ < l. ] šw
/3/ [ < l. ] wδ’rt
/4/ [ < l. ] w
/5/ [ < l. ] (š)y
/6/ [ 6](·)[ (mr)w[1](.δ)[r] t ðð
/7/ rty pcp’ty ‘y(w) myδδ (·)[ 4 ]
/8/ ’XYW ’z-γ’rt ’rw L [ 3–4 ]
/9/ kδ’rt ZY š(w) ywn’yδδ pty-x(w’y)
/10/ ðð rtms w’n’t) ’dry ’XYW pryμδ
/11/ βry’n(…..)štδ’rt ðð (cy)w’y?)δδ
/12/ (pyδ’r) [p][rwt]y ’z-γ’rt [prm’n’h]
/13/ L’ δβ’rt δ’(r’n)tl[ 6 ]
/14/ γyrtr ZKh ’(β/y)[ 8 ]
/15/ (pncmykw) ’(XY-W)’y pt[3](…) [1–2](·)
/16/ wyšn k.(tr)y mn(t)[ 5 ]
/17/ γrβ’kstr [ 4 ][O] [rt](y) [w’n](k)w
/18/ w’/n.δk) (w)[y]δ)[r](kt) ZKw ctβ’r
/19/ ’(XY)[Wrtt ] ZY m(y) pty-xw’y ZY (kδ)[r]y
/20/ xw w’/nxrδ (cy/β/γ/’n)6 (t)[ 4 ]s’r
/21/ (p)[2–3 ](·) ðð rty nwkr (·)[ 3 ](p/k)’y
/22/ (st’β’t’k)w ZY ’š(kw)[1–2](w/y/r) ’[ 4 ](·)

5 It could also be read wnyrš, “salvation.”
6 The first letter is illegible and it is not clear whether this word consists of three or four letters. Could one read here cyn for cnn?