Liturgical texts figure prominently among the Hebrew fragments which have been discovered in German libraries and archives to date.\(^1\) While several pages of statutory prayers have been identified, the majority of liturgical texts found among these fragments are Piyutim (liturgical poetry), a pattern which reflects the overall state of fully preserved medieval liturgical manuscripts.\(^2\) Using the example of liturgical fragments from the Stadtbibliothek Trier, this paper discusses how studying these fragments can contribute to current knowledge of medieval Ashkenazic culture.

Liturgical fragments from the Stadtbibliothek Trier represent the first set of Hebrew binding fragments from Germany to receive scholarly attention. In 1892, Dr Max Keuffer, who headed the Stadtbibliothek Trier, noticed that numerous volumes of incunabula and manuscripts in the library’s collection contained fragments of Hebrew manuscripts in their bindings. He then consulted the local rabbi, Dr Jakob Bassfreund, to join him in conducting a comprehensive search for Hebrew fragments in the manuscripts and incunabula from the Augustine monastery at Eberhardsklause that were owned by the Stadtbibliothek Trier. Bassfreund estimated that some 300 fragments were found. Most were left in situ, with the exception of liturgical fragments, which were all removed due to the special interest that Bassfreund showed in them, as evidenced by the catalogue of Hebrew liturgical fragments which he published in 1895, “Hebräische Handschriften-Fragmente in der

---

\(^1\) A preliminary survey of the fragments catalogued at the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts (IMHM) of the Jewish National and University Library (JNUL) indicates that roughly 25% of its entries can be categorized as liturgical and another 25% as Biblical; however, since many liturgical entries refer to more than one leaf, the proportion of liturgical content may actually be greater than the Biblical material.

\(^2\) Many Maḥzor manuscripts contain catch phrases in lieu of the full version of statutory prayers, since the ḥazan and the community were expected to know those prayers from memory.
The only traces of this search that remain are files of detached fragments, often without clear indication of the volumes where they were found, and corresponding publications by Bassfreund. No further record of the non-liturgical findings exists.

The Trier fragments provide a paradigm for the theoretical, methodological and analytical questions that contemporary research into liturgical fragments entails, because of the fundamental soundness of the model for analysis that Bassfreund developed, as presented in his publications. His approach remains pertinent, despite the passage of time. Unfortunately his work has been nearly forgotten, notwithstanding its relevance for scholars during the past century.

Bassfreund ascribed the one hundred thirteen and a half liturgical fragments from Trier to five different manuscripts, according to the dimensions of the (original) page, the number of lines per page and the style of its script. These manuscripts each belong to Minhag Tsarfat. Bassfreund assigned the fragments as follows: thirty-seven to Mahzor 1; fifty-three to Mahzor 2; twelve to Mahzor 3; two to Mahzor 4; and, nine and a half to Mahzor 5. By 1965, when Ernst Róth was analyzing Hebrew manuscripts in Germany, several additional leaves had been found in the Trier Stadtbibliothek: one belonging to Bassfreund’s Mahzor 2, and two to Mahzor 3. Two more leaves from Bassfreund’s Mahzor 2 have also been identified in volumes that remain at the

---


4 Numbers were marked on some fragments, corresponding to the call numbers of the incunabula and manuscripts where they originated, but this was done erratically. Systematically documenting the source bindings for fragments in a guard-book was not common during the late 19th century. The restorations of bindings from Trier during the second half of the 20th century have included a higher standard of record keeping, either the binder included a note specifying which fragment was detached or the fragments themselves were included in the newly bound volumes.

5 E.g. Daniel Goldschmidt and Jonah Fraenkel did not examine the Trier fragments for their critical edition of Mahzor Ashkenaz, despite their inclusion of piyyutim from Minhag Tsarfat, cf. Daniel Goldschmidt, Mahzor Seḥiṭah, Shevet Ṭevah Shelomoh Lehod, edited by J. Fraenkel (Jerusalem: Leo Baeck Institute, 1981); Jonah Fraenkel, Mahzor Feḥiṭah Afel Meneḥem Bey Beschve, (Jerusalem: Leo Baeck Institute, 1993); Jonah Fraenkel, Mahzor Shobuḥa Afel Meneḥem Bey Beschve (Jerusalem: Leo Baeck Institute, 2000). While these fragments are not among the oldest sources for Tsarfatic piyyutim, they transmit one piyyut that has not been found elsewhere (see below).