

Of Lions and Foxes: Power and Rule in Hebrew Medieval Fables

Leones y zorros: Poder y gobierno en las fábulas medievales hebreas

Recepción: 24/02/09

Aceptación: 28/05/09

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Resumen

Este artículo ofrece un estudio de las relaciones entre el león y el zorro como metáforas de las conexiones en la arena política. Presentaremos un análisis de las relaciones entre gobernadores (león y zorro) y sus súbditos en la filosofía antigua y en la edad media. Este estudio utiliza unas de las fábulas presentadas en la literatura hebrea de la edad media en el libro escrito por Brechia Ha-Nakdan *Mishle Shualim* y el libro *Meshal Haqadmoni* por Isaac Ibn Sahula. En la conclusión de este estudio se presenta una interpretación actual de esas metáforas (del león y el zorro) en las teorías políticas-sociológicas sobre las minorías rectoras de nuestros días.

Palabras clave: Alfonso el sabio, Brechia Ha-Nakdan, Cicero, Dante, elite, Ibn Sahula, león, Machiavelli, Meshal Haqadmoni, Mishle Shualim, zorro.

Abstract

This article examines the relationship between the lion and the fox as an expression of the disposition of powers in the political-governmental arena and their relationship to the governed, in ancient and medieval philosophical thought. This article will also examine the mutual relationships between rulers and their advisors and between rulers and subjects in a kingdom or within a court under their rule, with a focus on Hebrew medieval fables. This article is based on two examples: one from *Mishle Shualim* by Berechiah Hanakdan (England / Provence, at the end of the 12th century or the first half of the 13th century) and the other from *Meshal Haqadmoni*, by Isaac Ibn Sahula (Spain, 1281). The characters of the lion and the fox as metaphors are reflected as well as in modern political thought in theories that discuss the ruling elite, and their relevance seems applicable to our times.

Keywords: Alfonso el sabio, Brechia Ha-Nakdan, Cicero, Dante, Elite, Fox, Ibn Sahula, Lion, Machiavelli, Meshal Haqadmoni, Mishle Shualim.

1. The lion and the fox in philosophical thought

The lion and the fox are common characters in literary works that contain social criticism of leaders, rulers and authority figures. Such allegories are found in medieval Arabic, Hebrew and European literature. The social criticism embodied in these works was designed to highlight shortcomings in the social order and to expose the duplicity of the officials and members of the upper social classes. When those holding the reins of authority - ministers, community leaders or kings - are not fulfilling their obligations properly, but are rather defrauding the public's faith and exploiting their authority for private gain, they are not immune to scathing literary criticism. In such case, the rulers are presented as dealing cruelly with the community or the people subject to their authority, while abandoning their subjects to unbridled oppression.

An examination of the relationship between the lion and the fox in ancient and medieval allegorical literature can reveal the roots of this idea in ancient philosophical thought. This article examines the relationship between the lion and the fox as an expression of the disposition of powers in the political-governmental arena and their relationship to the governed, in ancient and medieval philosophical thought. This article will also examine the mutual relationships between rulers and their advisors and between rulers and subjects in a kingdom or within a court under their rule, with a focus on Hebrew medieval fables. In this literature the lion and the fox fulfill the roles of the leading characteristics, while the stories portray the relationship between the lion (the ruler) and the fox (the courtier, advisor or civil servant) and the rest of the subjects in the kingdom.¹ This article is based on two examples: one from *Mishle Shualim* by Berechiah Hanakdan (England / Provence, at the end of the 12th century or the first half of the 13th century) and the other from *Meshal Haqadmoni*, by Isaac Ibn Sahula (Spain, 1281).

The use of the images of the lion and the fox in medieval fables is deeply rooted in ancient and medieval philosophical tradition. In his book *On the Obligations*,² Marcus Tullios Cicero stressed that the rules of justice must be observed even concerning the least of a ruler's subjects, and that he must be able to consider and relate properly to them. In order to explain this issue, he used the lion and the fox and their relationship as a metaphor for injustice. Cicero explained that two paths lead to injustice. The first is the use of power in the manner reserved for the lion, and the other is the use of deception and falsehood, like the behavior of the fox. The worse of the two is the trait of deceit, which Cicero denounces. He also condemns people who, during an act of deceit pretend that they are honest.³ In another context Cicero explains the importance of observing the rules of war. He describes two diplomatic strategies: one is debate and negotiation, and the other - force. The first befits human beings and the second is the manner of wild animals. Cicero advises using the second option only when the first fails. Only when negotiations collapse can war be declared, in order to for it to be possible to live in peace without being harmed. If victory is achieved, anyone who displayed cruelty or inhumane behavior should be pitied.⁴

Dante Alighieri expresses similar ideas.⁵ Like Cicero, Dante perceived the combination of power and treachery as a source of evil, and likewise deceit viewed as a contemptible trait, much more so than the use of power. This concept of denouncing deceit, falsehood and fraud appears in various contexts in Dante's famous work, *Divine Comedy*. The following examples from Dante's "Inferno" illustrate his disdain for professionals

1 There are many examples, such as Aesop's Fables, The Fables of Marie de France, Brechia Hanakdan's *Mishle Shualim*, Roman de Renart, Reineke Fuchs, *Meshal Haqadmoni*, by Isaac Ibn Sahula, Igert Baale-Haim (Treatise on Animals), by Kalonymus ben (son of) Kalonymus, etc.

2 Cicero (2000); Ciceronis, M.T (2003).

3 Cicero (2000), pp. 16-17; Ciceronis, M.T (2003), p. 52.

4 Cicero (2000), pp. 13-14; Ciceronis, M.T (2003), p. 56.

5 Alighieri, D (1970). Dante lived in Italy from 1265-1321.

and people who behave in socially unacceptable ways. Canto 11: Denouncing usury; Canto 17: Decrying deceivers; Canto 19: The merchants in the service of the church; Canto 21: The swindlers; Canto 22: Sinners and sellers of offices; Canto 23: Hypocrites and prudes; Canto 25; Thieves; Canto 26: Evil counselors; Canto 30: Counterfeiters; Canto 32: Traitors to their families; Canto 33: Those who betray their friends; Canto 34: Those who betray their benefactors.

Niccoló Machiavelli reiterated the thoughts of Dante and Cicero. Chapter 18 of his book *The Prince*,⁶ “How a prince should keep his word,”⁷ he explains that there are two modes of fighting:

...One in accordance with the laws, the other with force. The first is proper to man, the second to beasts. But because the first, in many cases, is not sufficient, it becomes necessary to have recourse to the second: therefore, a prince must know how to make good use of the natures of both the beast and the man.⁸

Hence law and force are dependent the one on the other. Machiavelli believes that the prince must follow the example of the fox and the lion. Like Cicero, Machiavelli describes the relationship between the lion and the fox. The lion does not know how to protect itself from traps, while the fox cannot defend itself from wolves; for that he must be sly like a fox, to recognize the traps, and strong like a lion, to frighten the wolves. Hence a wise ruler cannot behave only like a lion. Man are evil by nature, and do not keep faith, thus a ruler is also exempt from keeping faith and promises when doing so could cause him harm. History has proven that many pacts and promises have been made null and void due to the faithlessness of princes, and those who have learned to be sly like a fox have been the most successful.

But it is necessary to know well how to disguise this characteristic, and to be a great pretender and dissembler.⁹ Therefore it is not necessary for a prince to possess all the good qualities of man, but rather it is very necessary for him to appear to possess them.

“Always observing them is harmful, but appearing to observe them is useful: for instance, to appear merciful, faithful, humane, trustworthy, religious, and to be so; but with his mind disposed in such a way that, should it become necessary not to be so, he will be able and know how to change to the opposite [...] In order to maintain the state he must often act against his faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion.[...] He should not depart from the good if it is possible to do so, but he should know how to enter into evil when forced by necessity.”¹⁰

The subject of the relationship between the lion and the fox as an allegory for the relationship between a ruler and his advisors, and between them and the subjects is expressed in an interesting fashion in the ancient and medieval fables. While political philosophy (in the same vein as Cicero and Machiavelli) uses the lion and the fox imagery to describe the relationship of political forces, in allegorical literature the lion and the fox are an analogy for the subject at hand. The difference between the simile and the parable is in the question of the vehicle’s manner of existence, which David Fishelov explains:

While it is clear that the subject of a simile is its literal element, the existing element in some context in the universe of discourse, and the vehicle [...] does not belong to the same universe of discourse, note that in a parable the vehicle usually has a concrete status in the real world (as an object, an event, occurrence that can be cited) and which serves the parable writer as a starting point for spinning his parables.¹¹

6 Machiavelli, N (2005).

7 Ibid. pp. 60-62.

8 Ibid. p. 60.

9 Ibid. In this regard Machiavelli says that men are so simple-minded, and so controlled by their immediate needs, that he who deceives will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived.

10 Ibid. p. 61.

11 Fishlov, D (1996), pp. 92-93.

12 Berechiah ben Natroni Ha-Nakdan was a Fable writer, a translator, philosopher and Hebrew grammarian. He lived at the end of the 12th century or the first half of the 13 century, probably in Normandy, and for several years in England. The *Mishle Shualim* (Fox Fables) Of Rabbi Berechiah Ha-Nakdan (1946), pp. v-iv (hereinafter: *Mishle Shualim*).

13 Ibid. p. vii

14 Ibid. p. vi; p. a.

15 On originality in the Middle Ages, see, for example: Pagis, D (1970), pp. 101-115. Cf. also Von Grunebaum, Gustav E. (1944), pp.234-253. This essay also appears in: Von Grunebaum, Gustav E. (1981).

16 An important and comprehensive study of his sources, the various versions and the influences of *Mishle Shualim* was conducted by researcher Haim Schwartzbaum in his book: Schwarzbaum, H (1979). This book is a major reference tool in the study of Berechiah's fables.

17 The five fables of Berechiah that are used as to illustrate the ideas in this article do not have a summarizing poem at the end.

18 A parallel fable can be found in Aesopi (1960), fable no. 9 (The Lion and the Old Fox). The sources of this fable and its versions are discussed in Schwarzbaum, H (1979), pp. 137-141.

19 Compare this to another of Berechiah's fables, No. 51: Four Bulls and a Lion - the lion tries unsuccessfully to hunt four bulls that stay together. He lures one bull with his sly words to separate him from the group, and thus succeeds in killing him.

20 Tractate Berachot 9:b.

2. The lion and the fox in *Mishle Shualim*.

In the following examples we will meet the lion and the fox as main characters who will propel the plots of medieval parables. The lion and the fox appear as a duo representing a ruler and his advisor, and the hierarchy between them is clear. The lion is the king, who rules his subjects with a high hand, while the fox is the advisor who serves as a mediator between the ruler and the people, and his interests as an advisor are paramount.

The book *Mishle Shualim*, by Berechiah Hanakdan¹² is the largest collection of fables in Hebrew literature. Berechiah's fables were gleaned from medieval fables literature and mainly from the well-known book of French fables by Marie de France (France, 12th century). Berechiah used foreign sources, translated them, revised them, added and integrated allusions from the Bible, the Talmud and other Judaic sources.¹³ In the preface to his book he states that his fables are well known and familiar to speakers of many languages, but his religion is different from theirs, hence he augmented the fables and adapted them to his culture.¹⁴ The revision and blending of the Jewish and gentile sources yielded a new and original work, in keeping with the aesthetic definitions of medieval originality.¹⁵ Thus Berechiah, as ethicist and educator,¹⁵ on the one hand critiques the society in which he lives and on the other hand tries to teach his generation wisdom, morality and good manners.

Most of his fables have a uniform structure consisting of five parts: 1. Title; 2. motto; 3. The plot of the fable, in rhymed prose; 4. The moral; 5. A short poem summing up the message of the moral. The parables are written in rich biblical language, replete with meaningful biblical references.¹⁶ The lion is featured in twenty-four of fables in *Mishle Shualim*. The fox accompanies the lion in five of these fables, which also portray their relationship. These are the fables that will be discussed in this article.¹⁷

Table 23 - The Lion and the Fox¹⁸

The motto: He who hides when bad things are happening has no fears that evil will befall him.

The plot: A lion is too lazy to hunt, because of the physical effort hunting entails. He pretends to be ill and about to die, so that he can pounce on those who come to visit him, without making any effort. The lion summons the animals, ostensibly to divide his wealth among them before he dies. The animals visit the lion one by one, so as not to tire him.¹⁹ The lion accuses each of them with treason or some other sin and during the visit pounces on them and cruelly tears them apart. The lion kills all the animals until only the fox remains. The fox was afraid to approach because he felt he was in danger. He was suspicious of the king's intentions and did not believe that he was actually giving gifts to his servants. When the lion asked why the fox did not visit, he replied that he saw the footprints of those who visited the king, but not of those who returned.

The moral: Sometimes bad things happen to people, and a person must protect himself and stay in his own place. Unfounded rumors during troubled times can only bode ill, so it is better to hide and not look for adventure, because "there will be time enough for trouble when it comes."²⁰ In other words, the troubles will arrive at your doorstep; there is no need to seek them out elsewhere. This advice is particularly relevant concerning

rumors regarding the royal court, and which could prove very dangerous, such that it is best to keep a distance.

Fable 52 - Lion, Wolf, Fox, Ox and Calf²¹

The motto: During troubled times a man can get killed without a trial, but a wise man in a similar situation can use his wisdom to save himself.

The plot: A lion who rules courageously invites his friends, the wolf and the fox, to go hunting with him for food for the lioness, who has just whelped a cub. The three hunt an ox, a bull and a calf. The lion asks the fox to divide up the catch. The fox politely declined the offer, claiming he is young and inexperienced, and suggests that the wolf, who is renowned for his wisdom be the one to divide the meat. The lion asks the wolf, who divides the meat accordingly: He gives the ox to the lion, the bull to the lioness and shares the calf with the fox. The lion gets angry, because his newborn son received nothing. He accuses the wolf of treason, beats him and skins him. The lion again asks the fox to divide the catch, and he gives the ox to the lion, the bull to the lioness and the calf to the lion cub. The lion was pleased with this distribution, praised the fox's wisdom and asked from whom he had learned to divide a catch. The fox responded that he learned from what happened to the wolf, who failed in his recommendation and was punished. The fox was therefore careful what he said.

The moral: A person must be cautious with his words when he is standing in front of a strong authority in a lofty position. It is better for him to moderate his ideas, plan his moves wisely and above all, to beware that whatever he says could cost him his life. Berechiah explains that the tongue that speaks wisdom holds healing and resourcefulness. It can save a person from trouble and even death. Berechiah concludes this moral with three ethical sayings whose role is to focus the message on the importance of silence and ways to learn proper behavior.

A. "A wise man learns moral behavior from others" - in other words a wise person learn the lessons of other people's experiences rather than trying new things for himself.

B. "Smite a scoffer, and the simple will beware." This is an excerpt from *Proverbs* 19:25. R. Levi ben Gershon (Provence 1288-1344) explains that this means that if you hit an evil person to teach him a lesson, the simple person will see this and become wise and cunning, will stay away from the thing for which the villain was beaten and will learn a lesson from someone else's punishment. The rest of that verse in *Proverbs* is: "Rebuke one that has understanding and he will gain knowledge." This idea is completed by presenting the insightful person as the antithesis of the scorner and the simpleton. It means that verbal reproof is sufficient for an insight person to understand, because seeks goodness. Berechiah probably cited only the first half of the verse in order to emphasize the cunning in the fox's behavior.

C. "The Ishmaelite said: Man's portion from his ear - to his soul, and man's portion from his tongue - to others." "The Ishmaelite" refers to an excerpt from the book *Mivhar Hapninim*.²² The meaning of this saying is that when a man hears words of wisdom he gains for himself in that he listens and is silent. On the other hand, when he speaks, it is not for his own benefit, but for that of others.

²¹ The parallel fable in Aesopi (1960), is fable no. 13 (The Lion, the Donkey and the Fox) and is similarly comparable to fable no. 17 (The Lion and the Crow). For the sources of this fable and its versions, cf. Schwarzbaum, H (1979), pp. 286-295.

²² Mivhar Hapninim, Gate 32 (On Silence), no. 18: "And he said: A man from an Arab country went to a meeting place and remained silent a long time. They said to him: You have earned your reputation as a noble Arab. He said to them: My brothers! Man's portion from his ear - to his soul, and man's portion from his tongue - to others".

Fable 85: Lion, Wolf, Bear, Fox²³

The motto: He who plans evil against his neighbor, will ultimately bring a curse on himself.

The plot: The lion is ill and dying. The bear and the wolf and other animals come to speak with him. Only the fox stays hidden, because he wants to learn what riches he will receive after the lion dies. From his hiding place, the fox listened to the words of the wolf and bear. The wolf advised the lion to send the fox to bring the lion medicine (balm from Gilead), because the fox is very wise and understands such matters. The lion asked for the fox to be brought before him. The wolf's goal was to keep the fox away from the king's court, and to this end he slandered the fox for not coming to visit the ill lion. The fox heard the wolf denouncing him, but said nothing. The lion became angry and sent emissaries to bring the fox. The fox was afraid he would fail, and therefore plotted to bring down the wolf. The fox praised the lion and told him that he had come from afar after many hardships while he was seeking the medicine to cure the king. The wolf was captured and his skin was torn off him and made into a turban for the king. The wolf ran away in shame, because he was naked, and was a disgrace even among his neighbors. The fox captured the wolf and ridiculed him for his unfaithfulness to the king and for his wickedness.

The moral: He who plans evil against his neighbor, and speaks maliciously against him, his misdeeds will be discovered and he will be punished. Berechiah cites *Proverbs* 17:14 in reference to the behavior of a person who incites dissention: "The beginning of strife is like letting out water," in other words, a person who starts an argument is like someone who makes a hole in a dyke. The hole expands and the water escapes. So too a dispute grows and expands. The example here refers to the competition between the courts, which use deceit against one another. This competition is dangerous, as the lion king his powerful and can be influenced, hence his decisions can be very dangerous.

Fable 97 - Lion, Goats and Fox²⁴

The motto: It is important to forgive even those who have wronged you, and to give to someone who has not given when you have asked.

The plot: A lion brutally killed some goats, and hid them. The fox, who knew where the lion hid his kill, cunningly stole the goats and ate them. The lion discovered he had been robbed by the fox and decided to rebuke him with soft words, not with anger. He explained to the fox that the goats were his property, that he had worked hard to kill them, and that the fox should eat animals that he killed for himself, and must not steal ones that the lion had killed. The lion warned the fox, quoting from the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not covet." After rebuking the fox, the lion gave him a clear warning: If the fox repeated his misdeeds his punishment will be terrible death. The fox apologized sweetly, thanked the lion for the kind moral lesson, expressed his remorse and shame for his deeds and promised not to steal anymore.

The moral: A man should be pleasant to others and have good character traits: in the spirit of the teachings of the sages in Tractate Avot, "Hard to anger and easy to pacify,"²⁵ The reason is inherent in the verse, "for deference appeases great offences." This is a reference to Ecclesiastes 10:4,²⁶ which Rashi interprets to mean that the harsh judgments,

²³ The parallel fable in Aesopi (1960) is fable no. 10 (The Lion, Wolf and Fox). The sources of this Fable and its versions are discussed in Schwarzbaum, H (1979), pp. 428-436.

²⁴ The sources of this Fable and its versions are discussed in Schwarzbaum, H (1979), pp. 475-477.

²⁵ Avot, Chapter 5, Mishna 11.

²⁶ Ecclesiastes, 10:4: "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against the, do not leave thy place; for deference appeases great offences." Cf. also the commentary of R. Avraham Ibn Ezra on this verse.

expressed in the tribulations that befall man keep him away from his sins and relieve him of great offences. Thus, a person who sins and deviates from the straight path should be returned to proper behavior by reproving him kindly and teaching him morals, which have great power and influence over his inclinations. However, if after being rebuked two or three times - given an opportunity to change his ways - he still does not behave wisely and returns to his wicked ways, only then is he to be treated harshly. Here too, Berechiah closes with the saying that appears as the motto: “Forgive one who have wronged you, and to give to one who denied your request,” whose source is *Mivhar Hapnanim*,²⁷ and which means that a person should rise above his inclinations and learn to forgive even someone who has hurt him, and learn to give even to someone who has not given to him. Forgiveness and giving of this kind are naturally very important, as they are an expression of mercy and tolerance, and are altruistic acts.

Fable 105 - Pig, Lion and Fox²⁸

The motto: He who hardens his heart and is stubborn brings evil upon himself.

The plot: The lion ousted a pig that was wandering around the lion’s bower. The following day the pig returned to the same place. The lion became angry and cut off one of the pig’s ears. The lion called the fox and told him that if the pig chews up the bower, it is not to be chased away again or shown any mercy, but is to be killed. The stubborn pig hardened its heart, returned to the lion’s bower, and the enraged lion cut off the pig’s other ear and gouge out its eyes. The pig continued to anger the lion and defecate in the lion’s bower. The lion ordered the fox to kill the pig, to cut it up and arrange its organs. The fox fulfilled the king’s wishes, but when the fox found the pig’s fat heart, he could not control himself, and ate it. The lion examined the pig’s organs and discovered that the heart was missing. He accused the fox of theft and wanted to give him the same punishment as the pig. The fox, in his wisdom explained that the stupid pig had no heart at all, because if it had had one, it would not have behaved the way it did. The fox praised the lion king and his wisdom in dealing with the heartless pig and the way it was punished, and asked him to deal justly with him, too, and not to charge him falsely. The lion praised the fox for his wisdom and reinstated him as his chief advisor.

The moral: The author explains that when impulse causes us to behave improperly, we must find a shrewd way to extricate ourselves from the situation. We must not envy people whose hearts and ears are impermeable, because astuteness will grant a wise person life and will save him from his sins. The author notes that he found this idea in “The book of princes, kings who judge the earth and wise men who judge the kings.” An examination of this source reveals that the reference is to the introduction to *Mivhar Hapnanim*, Gate 1, no. 25 (The Gate of Wisdom).

The five fables cited above present two personality types for the lion, and only one for the fox. In the first two fables (fables 23, 52), there is a high correlation between the characters of the lion and the fox. In Fable 23 the lion is lazy and wants to hunt easily. He uses his cunning and power, by pretending to be ill. The sly fox is cautious and reads the situation perfectly. The advisor keeps his own counsel and does not trouble himself to warn the other subjects, who fall into the ruler’s trap. Similarly, in Fable 52, the lion uses power and deceit. Here, too, when he goes out to hunt for his family, he exploits his

27 Mivhar Hapnanim, Gate 4, no. 2 (The Gate of Mercy).

28 The sources of this Fable and its versions are discussed in Schwarzbaum, H (1979), pp. 504-511.

assistants, the wolf and the fox (perhaps because the lion is lazy). His request to divide the spoils of the hunt turns out to be a death trap. The fox is much more ingenious and cunning than the wolf, and understands that there is danger in the lion's request. He therefore gives the task to the wolf. Even when the wolf offers to give the lion and the lioness big animals (the ox and the bull), and divides the small one between himself and the fox, he falls victim to the lion. The fox understands that the entire catch belongs to the lion king.²⁹ The king takes advantage of his assistants and does not give them any reward. The fox, as the king's aide, has sharp senses and "smells danger." He saves himself by remaining silent, waiting, observing and learning from what happens to the king's other aide - the wolf, and even earns a promotion. In this Fable, too, the fox reserves his caution for himself only and does not warn the wolf.

The last two parables reveal a different aspect of the lion's character. In Fable 97 the lion hunts alone, but is betrayed by the fox, who steals the kill from him. One might reasonably expect the lion to punish the fox severely (in keeping with his behavior in the two previous parables), but the lion is merciful and restrained and chooses to reproof the fox pleasantly and even warns him not to repeat his misdeeds. The wise and cunning fox understands he has been caught, confesses, apologizes and mends his ways. In Fable 105, too, the lion initially warns the stubborn pig that is bothering him incessantly. The pig does not listen to the lion and is warned again, emphatically and then violently, but refuses to heed the warnings. The lion orders the fox to kill the pig, and the fox fulfills his task, but not completely. The fox's lust causes him to eat the pig's heart, perhaps as payment for his work. After all, in the previous parables we saw that even when the fox fulfills his duty (regardless of the circumstances) there is no certainty that he will be recompensed by the lion. In order to avoid severe punishment for betraying the lion, the fox uses his cunning, flattering the lion for dealing justly with the pig, and explaining that the missing pig's heart was never there. The comparison between the character of the lion to that of the fox shows that the fox is shrewder and more cunning than the lion. In these two parables the lion is presented in a positive light. Even though he has power and strength, he is presented as merciful, restrained and tolerant, while the fox, who is fully aware of the power and volatile nature of the lion - his king - remains deceitful, manipulative and displays high survival skills. These four parables show that the lion - the king - and the fox, the lion's assistant, maintain an aggressive, self-serving and manipulative relationship, while the subjects - the other animals - are trampled and slaughtered. In the third Fable, Fable 85, the lion king may be weak, because he is ill, but he still rules his subjects with an iron fist. The wolf, bear and fox are a group of courtiers, each of whom looks out for his own interests in his own way. Here, too, the focus of the competition is between the fox and the wolf, and again, the fox is more ingenious and cunning than the wolf. The wolf, who tries to distance the fox from the lion's court in order to gain the king's grace, is unaware that the fox is listening in secret to his conversation and knows his plans. The spying fox uses his cunning and resourcefulness to turn the wolf's plan against him, and the wolf is ultimately hurt, beaten and humiliated.

29 Cf. another of Berechiah's fables, *Mishle Shualim*, fable no. 12: "Lion, Goat, Lamb and Cow" - the lion hunts a deer with his partners, the goat, lamb and cow. He keeps the entire animal for himself, citing various claims, because a weak person who joins a strong one will always lose. The sources of this Fable and its versions are discussed in Schwarzbaum, H (1979), pp. 73-79.

3. The lion in *Igeret Baale Haim* by Kalonymus ben Kalonymus

An interesting description of the lion's character is found in *Igeret Baale Haim* (*Animal's epistle*) This essay is part of "Rasa'il Ikhuan al-safa" (Brethren of Sincerity) a huge encyclopedic philosophical composition, written in Arabic by scholarly members of an extreme Shi' in the cult who live near Basra, Iraq, in the 10th century. This work has 51 sections and presents methodical summaries of Arabic philosophies based on ancient Greek ideas. *Igeret Baale Haim* is the 21st section of the work, which is written in an epistolary style. The central theme in the 21st epistle is a trial at which the animals accuse man of enslaving them. They condemn man for his wickedness and arrogance and prove that the animals are much more ethical than man.³⁰ This work became a familiar part of medieval Hebrew literature after it was translated by Kalonymus ben Kalonymus in 1316.³¹

In *Igeret Baale Haim* there is a debate titled "The Clarification of the Lion's Character and his Greatness among the Animals" (Third Gate, Chapter 9).³² The jackal is the representative of the hyenas and is described as a liar, an informer and a traitor who is terrified of dogs. The jackal describes the lion before the judges of the king of demons. He says that the lion is the king of the desert animals (the [dry] land animals), and lives near lakes and rocks. The battalions and minions of the lion king are the tigers, bears, wolves, wild cats, jackals and all animals that have jaws and claws.³³ The description of the lion's character traits, attributes and mannerisms, portrays him as the largest of the hyenas - a strong physique, courageous and terrifying. His body is impressive, with a broad chest, slim narrow pelvis, large head, round face, bare forehead, wide cheeks, thick legs, sharp teeth, heavy voice, sparkling eyes and strong backbone. He has a brave heart and an awesome presence. He is not deterred by animals taller than him, such as the elephants and oryx, and has no fear of men wearing armor or armed horses. As for his attributes and skills, the lion is quick-thinking and strong-willed. When he decides on a plan, he executes it himself, without asking for assistance from others. He likewise has a generous soul - quite often when he hunts he leaves some of the kill for other animals. In *Igeret Baale Haim* the lion is described as having a precious soul (apparently meaning he is emotional); he does not involve himself in despicable activities, such as harming women, children or slumberers. He is drawn to the light, even in the middle of the night he is capable of walking great distances toward a far-off light, and to observe it from afar, as light calms the lion's anger. The lion also likes good music that delights his soul and comes from far away places. He is not afraid of anything and is troubled only by the tiny ants that crawl over him and his cubs and disrupt his rest.³⁴ The lion is susceptible to malaria, and this is his only weakness. Were it not for this weakness, nothing could overcome him. This chapter concludes by stating that the lion treats his subjects well.

The description of the lion in *Igeret Baale Haim* is very similar to that in Fable 106 in Berechiah Hanakdan's *Mishle Shualim*. This Fable, titled Lion and his Son, is about a large lion who is about to die and summons his eldest son, to hear his father's will and moral beliefs. The lion teaches his cub to be a firm ruler and vicious hunter, and to beware of man, who is crafty and sets traps. The new king, the lion-cub, surrounds himself with courageous animals, such as tigers, bears, wolves and hyenas, who will lead his armies, and foxes - to be his counselors. A similar theme is found in a story from *Meshal Hakadmoni*.

30 *Igeret Baale Haim* written in Arabic and translated, with slight changes, by Kalonymus Ben Kalonymus (1959). Haberman reviews the many editions of *Igeret Baale Haim* and its translations (*Ibid.*, pp. 172-181). Cf. also Schirmann, J (1997), pp. 517-519.

31 *Ibid.* pp. 514-517; 520-541.

32 Kalonymus Ben Kalonymus (1959), pp. 95-96.

33 Elsewhere in *Igeret Baale Haim* (Second Gate, Chapter 5), pp. 53-54, there is a list of the lion's soldiers: hyenas and predators: tigers, wolves, wild rats, hyenas, bears, foxes, wild cats, and other carnivores that have jaws and claws.

34 *Igeret Baale Haim* elaborates that just as the tiny flea irritates the oryx and the elephant, and the flies overcome the mighty heroes, which are the kings and the tyrants among men.

4. The Lion and the fox in *Meshal Haqadmoni*

Isaac Ibn Sahula, who wrote *Meshal Haqadmoni* in 1281, in Spain, devotes considerable space to this subject.

*Meshal Haqadmoni*³⁵ is a unique work in the body of Hebrew literature that was written in Spain. This book is a fascinating literary work, rich in the variety of its content and its format.³⁶ *Meshal Haqadmoni* has a five-part structure, with each section addressing a different subject: wisdom; repentance; good counsel; humility and reverence. In the first part of each section, The Cynic argues against good character traits and praises bad traits, and in the second part of each section, the author responds to The Cynic (featuring the opponent), countering his arguments and lauding good traits. The Cynic's questions and the author's answers in each section are composed of interwoven stories and parables. The narrators and characters in the various stories are men and animals, and both tell stories about themselves and about one another.³⁷

In his introduction to *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Ibn Sahula offers a few reasons that prompted him to write the book, including his return to religious observance at age 37, his love of the Hebrew language, the moral level of the people, the return of the people to its Jewish roots and the production of an alternative to the foreign literature that attracted the Jewish readers of his generation.³⁸ Despite these reasons, Ibn Sahula makes no declaration of any intentions to relate to current affairs. An analysis of the book, however, and the fictitious reality created by the author reveals a faithful reflection of the historical and social reality typical of Jewish life in Spain in the 13th century, during the reign of Alfonso X, King of Castile. Ibn Sahula levels harsh criticism at office holders and social phenomena that were common in the Jewish community at that time. He lambastes the courtiers, the community leaders and the authority they wield, and even covertly decries the harsh attitude of the Christian surroundings in which he lives. Ibn Sahula does not restrain his criticism of the king and his treatment of his subjects. The book reflects the difficult situation of the Jewish community and the double crisis it faces: On the one hand, the community is subject to the authority of the capricious, unpredictable and dangerous Christian king, while at the same time being subject to the authority of the community leaders and other officials, who do not always consider the public good, but rather favor their personal benefit. In addition, the community's leaders and emissaries often benefited from the ruler's graces, while cynically and cruelly exploiting the community they were ostensibly seeking to represent.

The subject of the kingship and the government is one of the dominant themes throughout *Meshal Haqadmoni*, and appears in many contexts. Ibn Sahula employs these stories to express his discontent with the improper procedures of the rulers and leaders. He criticizes the advisors who surround the king and the dynamics of political intrigues that permeates the courts of the kings and ministers. This criticism also leads to Ibn Sahula's denunciation of the manner in which the king makes decisions concerning his court. Even so, the clear message throughout the stories is that no matter what the king says or does, there must be no rebellion against him.

Most of the fables in *Meshal Haqadmoni* feature authority figures, such as the king, minister, estate owner, mayor, spiritual leader or powerful courtier. Most of the stories

35 Ben Sahula Isaac Ben Shelomo (1952). The English translation of this book is Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004). All the quotes from the book are from the English translation and will be referred to as *Meshal Haqadmoni*, Loewe.

36 Ibn Sahula introduced two innovations in his work. First, all the animals in his animal fables are Jewish characters, and second, this book is illustrated. It is the first secular Hebrew book that intersperses illustrations in the text of the stories. This book was a favorite among Hebrew readers in the Middle Ages, as evidenced by the many editions and the publicity they attracted.

37 Cf. Yeffet (Refael-Vivante) R (2001).

38 Cf. Yeffet-Refael, R (2006).

unfold in the castle, the king's court, the home of a minister or the estate owner, or the urban neighborhood where a certain community lives. The relationships presented in the stories are of rulers - authority figures who are not necessarily worthy - who impose their authority on individuals or a community; and the ruled - the subjects of those authority figures, and who are often groaning under the heavy hand of the cruel leaders and rulers.

For illustrative purposes, this article will focus on the first section of *Meshal Haqadmoni*, which deals entirely with the social criticism of rulers and courtiers. The three stories in this section describe the complex and complicated relationship between rulers and ruled and reflects sharp criticism of the authority figure in each story.

In "The Tale of the Fool," the first story in the book, the king is a corrupt, pleasure-seeking fool who enjoys the services of a simpleton who is the court jester. The jester's job is to amuse the king with foolishness, as described by Ibn Sahula:

...He reached the palace gate/ The king on his verandah sat, in state/ The queen beside him, and conceived the wish/ To hear the muttered load of gibberish/ The loon was uttering; he had him brought/ To him forthwith, in order that the court/ Indulged by folly's turns, might be amused/ His antics left the royal pair enthused/ The king gave him his robe, his servants bade/ Bring him refreshment, and an order made/ That he should join the peerage, and should wear/ Ermine, his noble rank thus to declare/ Always thenceforth the daintiest fare was his/ Attending daily on their majesties/[...]/ So he amongst the courtiers did stay/ And the seed royal loved to watch him play/ Making them merry with the things that rule/ The conduct proper in a licensed fool/ And all the townsfolk, young and old, did see/ No harm befell him, by the king's decree.³⁹

The king is described as favoring fools to wise men, as the fools under his rule receive preferred treatment and many pleasures: fine food and expensive clothing. The ruler's love of fools, amusements and nonsense expresses harsh criticism against the reigning authorities, who are often unworthy of such power, might and honor their offices embody. The story also describes the pitiable state of the community under the rule of such a foolish leader.

A different type of royal court is described in "The Tale of the Lion, Hart and Fox". This story takes place in the kingdom of the lion king. Two of the courtiers⁴⁰ at this court - the ministers in charge of taxes - are authority figures who collect taxes from the community for the king's coffers. The two ministers run to do the king's bidding. The fox spies on the other animals and informs the king of their hiding places. The lion uses the information supplied by the fox to find his subjects and treats them savagely:

Leo would then go on the prowl, until/ Snarling, he leapt, to make
A juicy kill/ Midst general panic, and would eat his fill, And sprawl
At ease, to sleep, his roaring done.⁴¹

On the one hand, the animal community in "The Tale of the Lion, Hart and Fox" is heartlessly crushed under the rule of the lion, but on the other hand, it is at the mercy of the cunning, unscrupulous fox, who serves as the tax minister. In this fable tax collection is likened to murder - actual blood-letting. This description of the relationship between the lion and the fox is compatible with Cicero's philosophy, which states that the lion represents power, while the fox serves the king by deceiving others in order to help the

39is Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004), Vol. I, p. 46.

40 Beinart, H (1998), Vol. I, pp.51-62, discusses Jewish courtiers in Christian Spain.

41 is Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004), Vol. I, p. 56.

king rule over the animals. The fox is presented as an informant, and his lowly behavior endangers the entire community. The informant is one of the types of people who have no place in the afterlife: “Nor to some future life may they aspire”⁴² (based on the hart’s lecture to the lion in the first section of *Meshal Haqadmoni*). The fox is “...Defiant: all informers; those whose lies/ Spread slander...”⁴³ Informants, slander and gossip were a serious problem during Ibn Sahula’s time. The community had the authority to sentence informers to death.⁴⁴ Such behavior was far worse when practiced by authority figures and office holders in the community. Ibn Sahula writes about two court officials that interact with the community. The first is the fox, which oppresses the community and endangers it; the second is the hart, which does its job without harming the community or altering its Jewish lifestyle. At the end of this story the informing fox is exposed as a rebel against the king and is executed, while the hart remains in the king’s service. The lion king is cruel toward his subjects, the animals. They flee from him, but in the end reach an agreement with him. In exchange for protection, they will provide him with food = taxes. The story also shows the unstable nature of the king’s relationship with his courtiers: the fox and the hart fear him. The competition between them for the king’s graces turns into a life or death war of survival.⁴⁵

This story reflects the complex relationship between the king and his courtiers. The courtier fox who his commanded to provide the lion king with food fears the disappearance of the animals from the kingdom. The king, who until now had brought the fox closer to his table, changes his attitude and threatens the fox:

Be off, now, and beware/ Not to treat lightly my command. Go, spy/ The eastern desert: find out where lie/ Animals, wild or tame. As thou wouldst live, An envoy, care the master news to give⁴⁶

The fox is greatly fears the lion and goes in search of animals, but does not find any.⁴⁷ He meets two Hebrews who see his great distress. They are surprised in the change in his status and the emotional state of the fox courtier (they hardly recognize him!), and one of them says to the other:

One cried “Tally-ho! The Lion’s lackey since his youth, I trow / He lodges him, and lets him finish up/ His broken meats and drink out of his cup/ To taste his rarest vintage: steward, he/ Is major-domo, too, and ADC/ There he goes hunting, for he must supply/ His master’s board; for, should he game deny/ He’ll find himself in trouble, by and by.”⁴⁸

The fox identifies himself, discloses the cause of his distress and his fears of lion. He realizes that if he returns to the lion empty-handed, his life is in danger and he therefore beseeches the two men:

“... how tell him, who assigned/ My mission, that no venison I could find?”⁴⁹

The lion is shocked by the results of the fox’s mission. The fox tries to explain to the lion that the disappearance of the animals is a sign of redemption, which means peace between the animals, and that the lion must therefore become a vegetarian.⁵⁰ The lion explains to the fox that scientifically, he must eat meat, and all the prophecies of redemption were only parables. The fox suggests that the lion go on a quest after the animals, but the lion counters that he is weak from hunger and his strength will not last on such a journey. The fox declares his total allegiance to the lion and his love for him, and offers his own meat, even though the doctors have warned that his meat is

42 Ibid., p. 104.

43 Ibid., p. 106.

44 Cf. Baer, I.F (1965), pp. 138-139; Beinart, H.(1998) Vol. I, p.59; Stern, S.M.(1955) p. 79. Cf. also Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Avodat Kochavim 10:1

45 There are other examples in fable literature of this motif of cooperation between the lion and the fox, in which the fox uses deceit to provide the lion with food: Aesopi (1960) Fable no. 22 (“The Lion, the Fox and the Hart”). The lion is ill and wants to eat venison. He sends the fox to bring the hart to his cave, and the fox cunningly deceives the hart, luring it to its death.

46 Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004), Vol. I, pp. 70, 72.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004), Vol. I, p. 72.

49 Ibid.

dangerous.⁵¹ In this move the fox intended to offer the meat of the hart courtier, his constant opponent. The fox, whose has reached a low point, tries to persuade the lion to kill the hart. He praises the hart's meat for its nutritional and medicinal value, but mainly slanders the hart before the king's ears, so that the king will no longer favor him. The hungry lion refuses to harm the hart, and says that doing so would be the violation of a covenant, betrayal and a sin against god.

Even in this situation there is competition and tension between the courtiers over the king's favor. The fox will do anything that could improve his situation and compensate for his failure to find food for the king, even at the expense of betraying the other courtier (the hart). There is tremendous tension between the two courtiers, and the risk of death essentially hangs over each of them, and everything depends on the king's will.

Most of the fox's denunciation of the hart concerns his lack of lineage. The fox sought to prove to the king that the hart's attributes and lineage are inferior, by citing records and facts inscribed in a book that documents the lineage of ministers and deputies.⁵²

The fox claims that he has lineage, while the hart does not:

"His name you will not find in any scroll/ On which the heralds noble blood enroll: / Knight of no order, of his lineage/ No scion fit to be a royal page".⁵³

Following the fox's statements, the king decides to open an investigation and a trial concerning the question of lineage. The lion summons all his ministers, including the hart. This causes tremendous turmoil in the palace, as the ministers and courtiers fear for their positions and their lives, and start to glorify their lineage and their family history.⁵⁴ The hart realizes that his life is in danger and prays to god, declares his loyalty and love for the lion, speaks of his lineage and lectures about science of logic and matters of the soul, as well as the punishment and suffering that awaits the wicked.

The lion accepts what the hart says, while the fox has now fallen from the king's favor. The lion calls the fox derogatory names, such as:

"man of blood, a worthless knave who deals/ In trespass, treason, slander, and reveals/ Secrets, ..." ⁵⁵

The lion then relates "The Tale of the Mindless Cow".⁵⁶ When he finishes this fable, he banishes the fox from his court. The fox realizes that his fate has been sealed and there is no way he can rectify matters and regain his former position. He decides to plot a rebellion against the lion and to assassinate him by poisoning his food. The dejected fox speaks to the wolf, slandering the king:

"Well', said the Fox "at last the truth I know/ About this lion – mindless, and also/ Beneath contempt; ennobling those who/ Are quite unsuitable, whilst none of true/ Nobility are near him, for all leave/ Crestfallen..." ⁵⁷

The fox proposes that the wolf, who eats at the lion's table, poison the lion by putting a lethal drug in his food. After the lion dies the wolf can rule in his stead and the fox will be his vizier. The wolf declines the fox's offer. The lion hears about the fox's plot and imprisons the fox, who is later tried and sentenced to death for rebellion. At the end of this story the king suffers from insomnia.⁵⁸ He summons the hart for advice. The hart suggests that he go on a pilgrimage to the Land of Israel.

50 The fox jokingly quotes to the lion from chapters of prophecy, (Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004), Vol. I, pp. 68-69.) : "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." (Isaiah, 11:6); "The lion shall eat straw like an ox." (Isaiah 65:25).

51 Ibid., pp. 78-80

52 Ibid., p. 82.

53 Ibid., p. 84.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., p. 112.

56 Ibid., pp. 113-131.

57 Ibid. p. 132.

58 This is an insertion from the Book of Esther, Chapter 6, verse 1. Incidentally, this last part of the story is reminiscent of the plot in the Book of Esther - Haman, who schemes to kill Mordechai, but his plans are overturned and he and his sons are hanged.

59 Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004), Vol. I, p. 148.

60 Ibid. The king declares: "When the road I took/ Hither, ingenious, I did not look/ For gain, except to learn. Desire I not/ To lay on you a heavy yoke, save what/ You, one and all, approve. I, at your head, Will bring back safe those whom to war I led./ I shall destroy the hides in which your foe/ In ambush lurks – my sword shall lay them low/ Each morn and eve." And the animals respond (Ibid. pp. 148-150): "... We for our lord/ Will furnish each day's need, and keep his board/ Supplied with tasty victuals – goat's flesh, beef,/ And lamb, happy at heart to serve our chief."/ So they drew up a constitution, firm/ In all provisions, permanent each term./ Written and witnessed, all acknowledging./ Both rich and poor, him as liege-lord and king." This is comparable to Samuel I, 8:20 "That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

61 This is comparable to Berechiah Hanakdan's Mishle Shualim: fable no. 70, Lion and Cattle: A cruel lion killed and harmed sheep, but suffered from being attacked by hunters. The lion had mercy only on his friends, the gazelle and the camel. The other animals cursed the lion, but the gazelle and camel blessed him. The gazelle and the camel told the animals that their curses had angered the lion, who then killed them. The gazelle and camel advised the animals to bless the lion and make a covenant with him, and he would let them live in peace, and they accepted this advice.

62 Cicero (2000), pp 13-14.

63 Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004), Vol. I, p. 62.

64 Ibid.

The animals living in the Land of Israel are suffering from a cruel lioness who abuses them, and are glad with the lion arrives. They declare:

"He will console us, and relieve/ The pain and toil that caused our hearts to grieve."⁵⁹

This is an indication that the lion has changed. The lion and the animals make a covenant that is accepted by both parties. The lion promises not to burden the animals; that he will fight and protect the animals, and in exchange they will provide him with food.⁶⁰

Thus the relationship between the lion and the animals becomes a consensual agreement, and they live in peace, happiness and contentment, under the protection of the lion king.

The crisis in the lion king's court prompts him to conduct an investigation among his advisors-courtiers. He realizes that even if he is a strong king, he ultimately needs his subjects - the animals. The lion decides to negotiate with the animal community.⁶¹ This decision resembles Cicero's philosophy. He writes:

At the level of state policy, rights in warfare must be scrupulously observed. There are two types of military dispute, the one settled by negotiation and the other by force. Since the first is characteristic of human beings and the second of beasts, we must have recourse to the second only if we cannot exploit the first. It therefore follows that wars should be undertaken for the one purpose of living peaceably without suffering injustice; and once victory is won, those who have not indulged in cruel monstrosities in the war should be spared.⁶²

This compromise can also be found among Machiavelli's ideas, which suggest that the lion pretend to behave like a fox. The lion accepts meat-taxes based on an agreement between himself and the animals, and he no longer has to exert himself and hunt.

The message that Ibn Sahula is trying to convey through the allegorical character of the lion is that the king who rules his kingdom (Alfonso X or any other king) and the subjects have a common interest in reaching an equitable arrangement, in reaching a compromise via negotiations, whereby even can live in peace and contentment and avoid confrontations that could cost both sides dearly.

5. Jewish historiosophy in allegorical stories

This same ideology that advocates compromise can be seen in the animals' deliberations in search of a solution to the cruel behavior of their king, the lion. The animals consulted the ox and the onager. The advice of the ox - to fight the lion with all their might, to rebel against him and even declare war was rejected. The onager's counsel, on the other hand, which was consistent with the medieval Jewish historiosophic concept that there must be no rebellion against the monarchy - was accepted. The onager suggests fighting in a different way: "War using stratagems – but he referred/ To that much harder warfare, of the word,/ [...] Therefore, against his instincts shall be show/ Cunning in battle, to defeat the foe"⁶³

The onager reflects the Jewish historiosophic ideology. He opines that the animals must be patient, tolerant and restraint and that "Wordly affairs ought be with patience faced."⁶⁴ He oppose any attempt at insurrection against the lion king, stressing the danger inherent in such a measure:

Why, then, should we, to our great hurt, expose/ Ourselves to slander, where folk's gossip goes?/ Was not the Lion's sire liege-lord long since/ Of our sires who now have his son for prince?/ Repression on himself he needs must bring/ Who insurrection moves against his king./ Was ever there a subject raised his arm/ Against the Lord's anointed, without harm?/ If we now rise, who is there on our side/ Could match his might? Hearts he has terrified/ Stay all a-shiver: he confounds with fear/ [...] / loins shudder uncontrolled/ Exactly as the Prophet spoke, of old/ 'A lion calls, set as God's sentinel' / Our sages, too, repeatedly did spell/ Their admonition – 'No less fear accord/ Than you show heaven, to your earthly lord' / And, furthermore, since we within his land/ Reside, as subjects of his realm we stand./ This kingdom is the Lion's, down a chain/ Of sires, passed to their sons: long may he reign! / If you make war on him in treason, know/ That all spears will he snap, and break each bow⁶⁵

The onager's advice indicates that the lion's kingship must not be challenged. He is king by virtue of royal succession and God's will, hence no one can plot against the divinely chosen king without facing punishment. The onager convinces the animals that they are incapable of defeating the king because he is too strong. When a ruthless king deals brutally with his weak subjects, they must remember that he is much stronger than them and not risk a rebellion using force. The onager quotes the Talmudic sages: "No less fear accord/ Than you show heaven, to your earthly lord."⁶⁶ Since the animals are in the land of a lion who rules by virtue of succession, any revolt against him will bring catastrophe on them, and disastrous defeat. The solution the onager proposes is passive emigration, rather than opposition and active rebellion. The animals heed the onager's advice and immigrate to the Land of Israel.

This story is an expression of the medieval Jewish historiosophic concept that Jews do not rebel against their king.⁶⁷ Further corroboration of this concept can be found in the words of the hart, who says that people who rebel against the monarchy have no share in the afterlife.

6. Competition between courtiers

Another aspect of the relationship between masters and servants is reflected in "The Tale of the Mindless Cow", which is related by the lion. This story unfolds in the courtyard of an old Yemenite man who owns agricultural estate. A dog and a cow are the servants of the old Yemenite man. The dog guards the estate and the cow tills the soil. The landowner does not treat them fairly, favoring the cow and feeding her delicacies,⁶⁸ while neglecting and demeaning the dog. When the man's wife comments on his discriminatory behavior toward his faithful dog, he answers her harshly.

The man responded, in his gruffest tone/ 'Sufficient for the Dog is a dry bone./ That Cow must have food, drink, her byre, besides/ Attentions any hostelry provides;/ She is my heart's desire, sent me by fate/ For mine, my toil and sweat to compensate./ As for the Dog, I scarce give him a thought;/ Whether he lives or dies, to me means naught.'⁶⁹

The landowner's discriminatory attitude toward his servants arouses the envy of the dog against the cow. The man's duplicity is evident in his treatment of his subjects: he is kind and merciful to the cow, but harsh and cruel to the dog. This behavior is reminiscent of the lion's capricious character, and similarly reflects the unstable and ambivalent behavior of Alfonso X toward the Jews. The competition for the master's attentions

65 Ibid., pp. 62-64. In the matter cf. for example Tractate Ketubot, 111a, on the verse, "I charge you..." (Song of Songs 2:7, 3:5, 5:8).

66 Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004), Vol. I, p. 64.

67 Cf. for example: Albeck S(1964).

68 Ibn Sahula Isaac (2004), Vol. I, pp. 114-116.

69 Ibid.

becomes a dangerous and violent contest that ultimately leads to the cow's undoing at the hands of the dog, and to her death.

This tale is similar to the Fable, "The Lion, Hart and Fox", which also portrays competition between courtiers for their king's attention, and the privileges granted to courtiers at the community's expense. The rivalry between the courtiers became violent, as evinced by historical records and research of this period. Criticism of rulers in general and the leaders of the community are found in *Meshal Haqadmoni* in the second and fifth sections. In addition to portraying the current leaders and their improper behavior, these two sections also offer descriptions of the ideal leader and practical, detailed advice on the appropriate choices a leader should make, in an attempt to correct the unjust reality of the times.⁷⁰

As illustrated above, the parables reflected the dynamics of the relationships between the king and his courtiers in 13th century Spain on a realistic-historical level.⁷¹ In that reality, the status of the courtiers was largely dependent on the king's will. The lion in *Meshal Haqadmoni* is inconsistent and unpredictable, both in his treatment of his subjects and his attitude toward his courtiers. At first the lion tends to favor the fox, but later favors the hart and has the fox executed. The capriciousness of the lion toward his subjects apparently refers to the character of Alfonso X, the king of Castile. Toward the end of his reign, his attitude toward the Jews changed.⁷² European politics regarding the Jews affected the treatment of Jews in Spain. Further evidence of this is reflected in the service of Todros Ha-Levi Abulafia, the Jewish poet in the court of Alfonso X, and a contemporary of Ibn Sahula. Aviva Doron describes the contradictory elements in the Alfonso X's character:

There are clear contradictions in the king's character: He broke agreements and was conservative at one and the same time; he was a sensitive poet and an equally cruel ruler; he was not prejudiced toward the Jews, but even so, often expressed his hatred of them...⁷³

7. Power, interests and manipulation and their representation in animal fables

The two works examined in this article employ the characters of the lion and the fox to reflect medieval power and authority relationships. The parables presented in the main body of this article present the relationship between rulers and their advisors and between the advisors and the subjects. The fox, who portrays the advisor or courtier, uses deceit (in the spirit of the philosophies of Cicero and Machiavelli). He is cunning, manipulative, adapts himself to the capricious personality of the ruler (the lion); knows how to survive and attends first and foremost to his own needs, similar to the courtier-advisors closest to the ruler. In the examples from *Mishle Shualim*, the fox succeeded in this quest, while in *Meshal Haqadmoni*, he failed, became embroiled in treason and was foiled by the wolf, who in Berechiah's tales actually lost to the fox. In all these parables the lion is the leader and the king. In *Mishle Shualim* he is aggressive and exhibits duplicity of character - he is cruel, violent, exploitative, deceitful and lazy, but also tolerant, ethical and capable of restraint and learning morals. In *Meshal Haqadmoni* the lion is equally two-faced: he is belligerent, vicious, indolent and abusive. He is dependent on his advisors and alters his attitude toward them in keeping with his needs. The lion

⁷⁰ Cf. Yeffet (Refael-Vivante) R(2001), chapter 5.

⁷¹ Cf. Loewe, R(1996).

⁷² Baer, I.F(1965), pp.76-77. Baer writes, for example, that in 1279 the Jewish tax collectors were imprisoned.

⁷³ Doron, A (1989), p. 26.

understands that in order to collect taxes - hunt meat - he must make a covenant with the animals in his kingdom. Strength is not sufficient, and he must use the fox's traits in order to achieve his goals (in keeping with Machiavelli's philosophy). The solution is therefore an agreement acceptable to both sides; one that is not perfect, as it embodies a measure of consensual fraud and exploitation of the subjects, but that serves the common interests of both the ruler and the subjects - order, contentment and peace.

The discussion of the lion and the fox as a metaphor for the ruling class in state and society in ancient times and in the Middle East (Cicero and Machiavelli) was examined in the examples from medieval Hebrew fable literature (Berechiah Hanakdan and Ibn Sahula, in the context of their eras). Still, the characters of the lion and the fox as metaphors are reflected in modern political thought in theories that discuss the ruling elite,⁷⁴ and their relevance seems applicable to our times, too.

One of the clearest examples is the sociological "Theory of the élites,"⁷⁵ propounded by Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), particularly on the subject of "Alternation of governing classes: 'lions' and 'foxes.'"⁷⁶ The following are a number of points that relate to this discussion.

Pareto identifies two groups in every society: A. The higher stratum - this élite group is divided into two classes: a governing élite, of individuals who are office holders of direct or indirect value to the government; and a non-governing élite.⁷⁷ B. The lower stratum - the non-élite, which consists of all the rest of the population that does not belong to the first group. In every society two types of people can be identified. The governing group is always a minority, while the governed group will always be the majority.⁷⁸

As a sociologist, Pareto ponders the behavior of individuals in society, and distinguishes between logical and non-logical action of individuals in social life. We can conclude that most of the actions of people who wish to reach a certain goal are non-logical (irrational).⁷⁹

Pareto's discussion of the circulation of élites focuses on the two types of the ruling élite:⁸⁰ A regime that exists through cunning or a regime that exists through force. Pareto calls these two types of élite 'speculators' and 'rentiers'.⁸¹ Bottomore, who analyzes Pareto's theory, explains: "Pareto's two types of élite[...] types which he also refers to as the 'speculators' and the 'rentiers' - bear a close resemblance to Machiavelli's 'foxes' and 'lions', but they are dressed up in a more scientific garb."⁸² Pareto discusses the complex relationship between the governing classes and between them and their subjects and the significance of the use of force and violence in the relationships between them. As for the use of force, Pareto says, among other things:

To prevent or resist violence, the governing class may use guile, cunning, fraud and corruption - in short, government passes from the lions to the foxes. The governing class bows before the threat of violence, but only appears to give way, endeavouring to manoeuvre round the obstacle it cannot openly surmount. In the long term, this way of dealing with the problem exerts a dominant influence on the selection of the governing class: the foxes alone are called to serve in its ranks the lions are rejected. In such circumstances those best equipped for government are those who are most adept in the art of understanding opponents by bribery and corruption and of regaining by fraud and deception what appeared to have been conceded under the threat of force. Individuals whose impulse is to resist and are incapable of giving

74 The term élite, in the context of social groups came into usage at the end of the 19th century in Europe and in the 1930s in Britain and America. For a broad discussion of this subject, see, for example, Bottomore, T. (1993), particularly the first chapter.

75 Pareto, V (1963), pp. 1423-4. See also Pareto, V, (1966), pp. 77-81.

76 Pareto, V (1966), pp. 57-58.

77 This refers to the aristocracy that does not hold political office, such as wealthy land owners.

78 Mosca uses the terms, "élite" and "masses." Mosca, G. (1939), p. 50.

79 Pareto, V. (1935).

80 Ibid., part 4.

81 Cf. Pareto, V. (1966), pp. 59-62.

82 Bottomore, T. (1993), p. 38. Bottomore proceeds to critique Pareto's theory.

way as time and occasion require are of small value to a governing class, and they can maintain their membership of it only if they make up for this prime defect by outstanding qualities in other respects.⁸³

Thus the characters of the lion and the fox as metaphors in the works of Cicero and Machiavelli, which entered general literature (Dante and others), and mainly medieval Hebrew fable literature, which is the subject of this article, found expression in modern theory regarding the governing elite (Pareto). The study of this concept reveals the complexity of the relations within this governing stratum: The ruler (the king) and his ministers and advisors; or a government and its ministers and officials; as well as the power relations between the rulers (monarchs / governing elite) and their subjects in the kingdom or state.

The metaphorical use of lions and foxes, which come from the animal world (“the world of jungle law”) is still relevant and serves the world of men, and they have become universal metaphors. Similarly, the examples presented above (from Cicero to Pareto) lead to the conclusion that it is better to choose practically any path in order to prevent conflicts that involve violence of any sort. Preventing violent conflicts and war is such a supreme value that it is preferable to do anything, even if it is unethical (guile, cunning, fraud), in order to prevent violent situations. Hence, preventing violence and war is a supreme ethical value even if this requires unethical behavior.

⁸³ Pareto, V (1966), p. 257.

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