

Miscellany, including form for writ of divorce; ELEAZAR BEN JUDAH OF WORMS, *Eser havayot* [Ten Essences]; kabbalistic *tefillot* and *shemirot ha-derekh* (prayers and charms)  
In Hebrew, manuscript on parchment  
Italy, c. 1375-1400

18 folios on parchment, modern foliation in pencil in Arabic numerals, complete (collation i-iv<sup>4</sup> v<sup>2</sup>), written by two scribes in neat Italian semi-cursive scripts in brown ink: (1) ff. 2r-9v, ruled in blind (justification 128 x 95 mm.), single-column text of 24 lines, enlarged incipits, periodic vocalization, diagrams on ff. 4rv, and 9, marginalia in hand of primary scribe intermittently throughout (see especially ff. 4rv), catchwords on f. 6v, decorated final words on f. 9; (2) ff. 1v, 10-18, ruled in blind (justification 145-160 x 110 mm.), single-column text of 22-25 lines (f. 1v contains twelve lines in square script with six in semi-cursive below), horizontal lines drawn to separate prayers, partial vocalization on ff. 10, 15v-16, and 17v, small decorative flourishes on ff. 13v, 14v, 15v, scattered worming on ff. 1, 17-18, strong browning throughout, dampstaining on ff. 1, 10, 15-18, small tear in upper margin of f. 10, loss of upper-outer corner of f. 10 affecting a number of words, some text faded or flaked (see especially ff. 12v-13v, 15v-18), puncture affecting some words on ff. 14-16, inner margins reinforced. Late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century limp vellum binding, original ties now missing, lightly soiled, paper pastedowns and flyleaves. Dimensions, page size 185 x 140 mm., binding 190 x 145 mm.

Rabbi Eleazar ben Judah of Worms' *Eser havayot* on the esoteric meanings of God's Hebrew Names is one of the most important expressions of Ashkenazi Hasidic thought. This beautiful manuscript is one of the earliest extant copies. Of particular interest is the fact that it is preserved here in the context of a substantial collection of prayers and charms for success and for safety (especially during travel), as well an early exemplar of the standard form used to prepare a *get* (Jewish writ of divorce).

## PROVENANCE

1. While the manuscript has no colophon, it is possible to date and localize it approximately to the end of the fourteenth century in Italy based primarily on the characteristic Italian scripts in which it is written.
2. Solomon Joachim Halberstam (1832-1900), a wealthy Polish Jewish scholar and bibliophile who had acquired hundreds of valuable manuscripts from the libraries of Leopold Zunz (1794-1886) and Samuel David Luzzatto (1800-1865), came into possession of this manuscript and included it when cataloging his own personal collection. The first folio contains his Hebrew initials in pen followed by the manuscript's shelf mark: "N<sup>o</sup> 146".
3. The Judith Lady Montefiore College in Ramsgate, England, purchased 412 manuscripts from Halberstam's collection, including ours. The transaction was carried out by Rabbi Moses Gaster (1856-1939), principal of the College between 1891 and 1896. The manuscript contains the library stamp of the institution, known in Hebrew as Yeshivat Ohel Mosheh vi-Yehudit, on its first and final folios, as well as the library's shelf mark (MS 256) on both its spine and the pastedown of the upper board.
4. Between 1898 and 2001, most of the Montefiore manuscripts, including ours, were placed on permanent loan at Jews' College in London. In 2001, they were returned to the Montefiore Endowment Committee.

5. In 2004, part of the Montefiore Collection, including our manuscript, was sold at auction by Sotheby's in New York (lot 213).

## TEXT

f. 1v, Faded text of the form for a *get* in twelve lines followed, in smaller script, by instructions for the preparation of the document;

ff. 2-9, Rabbi Eleazar ben Judah of Worms, *Eser havayot*, containing expositions on the divine Names; ff. 2rv, introductory description of the ceremony to be performed prior to the transmission of the secrets of God's Names from rabbi to student; [f. 9v, blank];

Eleazar ben Judah of Worms, *Eser havayot* (the introductory section of his longer treatise, *Sefer ha-shem*); ed. Aaron Eisenbach, Eleazar ben Judah of Worms, *Sefer ha-shem*, in *Sodei razyei*, ed. Jerusalem, 2004, vol. 1, pp. 1-7.

ff. 10-18, Kabbalistic prayers and charms for success and safety during travel and throughout the day: f. 10, standard text of *tefillat ha-derekh* (the wayfarer's prayer) with added petitions to angels;

f. 10v, Advice on what to say in order to have one's prayers answered, followed by a *tefillat ha-derekh* attributed Rabbi Judah ben Samuel he-Hasid (c. 1150-1217) and a prayer of one Rabbi Joshua for protection against Gentiles with evil intentions;

f. 11, *Tefillat yibud ha-shem* (prayer unifying God's Name) to be recited every day as a protection against all forms of danger;

f. 11v, Prayer for the welfare of the Jewish people and the coming of the messianic era, followed by a charm for protection on a journey involving gathering seven stones and throwing four of them in each of the four directions while reciting angelic names, as well as yet another *tefillat ha-derekh*;

f. 12, Statement promising a share in the World to Come to those who recite Psalm 29 four times daily without interruption, followed by a *tefillat ha-derekh* appealing to God to save the petitioner just as He saved David, Elijah, and Enoch;

ff. 12rv, Text of Psalm 90;

f. 12v, Prayer to God to send the petitioner Yohakh (whose name is spelled out by the last letters of Psalm 90:11a: *ki mal'akhav yetsavveh lakh*) and other angels considered to be patrons and protectors of wayfarers;

f. 13, Directions to recite Psalm 91 and have in mind Yohakh's name;

ff. 13rv, Text of Psalm 17;

f. 13v, Short prayer for success on a journey;

ff. 13v-14, A *shemirat ba-derekb* (wayfarer's charm) attributed to Rabbi Moses ben Nahman(?) (1194-1270) consisting of fifteen verses, five each taken from the Torah, Prophets, and Writings, followed by a blessing requesting that the same angels sent to protect Jacob (Gen. 32:2-3) do so for the petitioner as well;

f. 14, Prophylactic verses;

f. 14v, The traditional text of the *viddui* (confessional);

ff. 14v-15, Text of Psalm 25, followed by a prayer for health and for protection against all manner of evil spirit;

ff. 15-16, Prayer attributed to Rabbi Ishmael the High Priest, containing references to angels' names and petitions for protection, success, forgiveness, not forgetting one's knowledge, etc.;

ff. 16-17, Prayer attributed to Elijah the Prophet, containing requests for material blessing and protection from all forms of danger;

ff. 17v-18, Two prayers for those traveling by sea; [f. 18v, blank].

Our manuscript consists of three sections: the standard form of a Jewish writ of divorce, Rabbi Eleazar ben Judah of Worms's *Eser havayot* (the introductory section of his longer treatise, *Sefer ha-shem*) and an extensive collection of prayers and charms for success and protection. The first and third elements were likely added by a slightly later scribe after the second work had been copied: the first presumably to take advantage of the blank folio preceding *Eser havayot*, and the third because of its authorial and thematic connections to the esoteric material in that work.

Rabbi Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (c. 1165-c. 1230) was the last great expositor of the traditions of the Hasidei Ashkenaz, a group of pietists living in Germany in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. His oeuvre includes a wide array of writings, ranging from liturgical poetry and halakhic (Jewish legal) discourse to commentaries on the prayers and esoteric exegesis. His major theological work was *Sodei razayya* (Secrets of Secrets), a five-part mystical compendium consisting of *Sod ma'aseh be-resbit* (The Secret of Genesis), *Sod ha-merkavah* (The Secret of the Chariot), *Sefer ha-shem* (The Book of the Name), *Hokhmat ha-nefes* (The Wisdom of the Soul), and a commentary to the ancient *Sefer yetsirah* (Book of Creation).

*Sefer ha-shem*, the largest of the five parts of *Sodei razayya*, which was written by Rabbi Eleazar around 1220 in Speyer, constitutes the first attempt in Jewish literature to discuss and analyze systematically the various theological and ethical meanings of the Names of God. Despite the fact that, in the estimation of the modern historian Joseph Dan, the book's first major expositor, it should be seen as "the most important expression of the inner core of the Ashkenazi Hasidic religious world" (Dan, 1998, p. 132), *Sefer ha-shem* was not printed until 2004, in Jerusalem. It was subsequently republished in 2014 as part of a four-volume set of Rabbi Eleazar's writings (Eleazar ben Judah of Worms, ed. Aaron Eisenbach, Jerusalem, 2004, vol. 1, pp. 1-7).

*Eser havayot* (Ten Essences) is the name given in several manuscripts (though not ours) to the introductory section of *Sefer ha-shem*. It begins with an outline of the magical ritual to be observed in transmitting the secrets of God's Names from rabbi to student (on which, see Dan, 1998, 1996,

2002, and Wolfson, 1994, at length). It then proceeds to expound on the Tetragrammaton, the four-letter Name of God, with particular reference to the *yod* with which the Name begins. *Yod* in Jewish numerology equals ten, and so much of the discussion turns on the various tens to which the *yod* of God's Name corresponds. One of these is the *eser havayot*, the ten "essences," which Rabbi Eleazar understands to refer to up, down, north, south, east, west, beginning, end, light, and darkness (or: good and evil). The ensuing mystical-theological discussion draws heavily upon ideas in the *Sefer yetzirah* and *Heikhalot* (divine palace) literature.

Immediately following *Eser havayot* is a collection of prayers and magical formulas to be recited for the purpose of defense against evil spiritual forces or physical threats to one's safety. The latter half of the twelfth century saw a steady growth in the popularity of mystically- and angelologically-tinged private petitions, especially among the Hasidei Ashkenaz (Ta-Shma, 2003). According to Ephraim Kanarfogel, in subsequent generations, these types of texts were often attributed to the most prominent leaders of this group, particularly Rabbi Eleazar and his teacher, Rabbi Judah ben Samuel he-Hasid (as in our manuscript). It makes sense, then, that the later copyist in our manuscript would have appended this series of kabbalistic *tefillot* and *shemiot ha-derekh* to an esoteric theological treatise authored by Rabbi Eleazar.

Approximately twenty-four manuscripts of *Sefer ha-shem*, in whole or in part (most often in the form of *Eser havayot*), have come down to us. Of these, the vast majority (eighteen) reside in European public collections in Budapest, Florence, Leiden, London, Milan, Moscow, Munich, Oxford, Paris, Parma, and Zurich; two are housed in the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York; and one can be found at the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. Only three are owned privately. Our copy is one of five surviving manuscripts of the work dating prior to the year 1400. The fact that it is accompanied by one of the earliest and most varied manuscript collections of *tefillot* and *shemiot ha-derekh*, as well as an important witness to the tradition of how to write a *get*, makes it a unique and valuable repository of Jewish law, theology, and liturgy.

## LITERATURE

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#### ONLINE RESOURCES

Our MS (accessible from within the National Library of Israel)

[http://rosetta.nli.org.il/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE20209715](http://rosetta.nli.org.il/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE20209715)

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