

Passover Haggadah; ISAAC BEN MEIR HA-LEVI DUEREN, *Sha'arei dura* [The Gates of Dueren] (table of contents only)

In Hebrew, manuscript on parchment

Northern France or Germany, late 14th-early 15th centuries

22 folios on parchment, unfoliated (collation i^s [-1 and 2] ii-iii^s), decorated catchwords on several folio rectos and versos, ruled in blind, remnants of prickings in upper margin on ff. 18-22 (justification 100 x 75 mm.), ff. 1-21, the Passover Haggadah, written in neat square (body of Haggadah) and semi-cursive (commentary) Ashkenazic scripts in dark brown ink in seventeen lines of Haggadah text throughout (except when commentary interferes), ff. 21v-22v, table of contents of Sha'arei dura, written in neat semi-cursive Ashkenazic script in dark brown ink in eighteen lines throughout, enlarged incipits, partial vocalization on ff. 1, 4v-5, diagram in commentary on f. 10, marginalia in hand of primary scribe in lighter brown ink on ff. 17-19, periodic justification of lines using verbal and ornamental space holders, slight staining on several folios, most noticeably on ff. 2v-3 (a wine stain in text that contains the blessing over wine), five-mm. slit on f. 12 not affecting text, two wormholes on ff. 16-17 not affecting legibility of text, two words partially erased and bored through on f. 17, trimmed at outer margins with loss of some marginalia on ff. 17-18. Bound in modern blind-tooled calf, title and subtitle on spine and front cover, respectively, in gilt, marbled flyleaves and pastedowns, spine with five raised bands forming five compartments, blind-tooled modern calf slipcase lined with marbled paper. Dimensions, page size 150 x 120 mm., binding 160 x 130 mm.

This Passover Haggadah of medieval Franco-German origin combines liturgical text with halakhic (Jewish legal) and homiletical commentary in a beautifully arranged geometric pattern. Its excellent condition, as well as its many unique features, make it an important and visually pleasing source for the study of the history of the Ashkenazic Haggadah. The final three pages are the table of contents of Rabbi Isaac ben Meir ha-Levi Dueren's *Sha'arei dura* on the Jewish dietary laws.

PROVENANCE

1. While the manuscript has no colophon, it is possible to date and localize it approximately to the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries in Northern France or Germany based on the Ashkenazic scripts in which it is written, the liturgical rite it follows, and the halakhic authorities cited. In fact, on f. 1v, the practices of *Tsarefat* (France) and *Ashkenaz* (Germany) are quoted explicitly and the French word *cerfeuil* (parsley) is used (German *Lattich* [lettuce] appears on f. 13v).

TEXT

f. 1, "The Order of the Passover," listing the various steps of the Passover Seder;

ff. 2-4, first step, *Kaddesh* (blessing recited over wine);

f. 3v, "Abridged Seder by Rabbi Meir [ben Baruch of Rothenburg; c. 1215-1293], of Blessed Memory," a poetic mnemonic, arranged in two columns, for remembering the various steps of the Seder;

f. 4, second through fourth steps: *U-rebats* (washing the hands), *Karpas* (dipping vegetables in vinegar), and *Yabats* (breaking the middle *matsah* and saving half for later; see below);

ff. 4v-13v, fifth step, *Maggid* (narrating the story of the Exodus);

ff. 4v-5, the Four Questions;

ff. 5v-6, the Four Sons;

ff. 10v-11v, *Dayyenu* (It Would Have Sufficed) litany arranged in three columns;

f. 13v, sixth through ninth steps: *Robtsab* (washing the hands), *Motsi* (blessing recited over bread in general), *Matsab* (blessing recited over *matsab* specifically), and *Maror* (blessing recited over bitter herbs);

f. 14, tenth through twelfth steps: *Korekh* (eating *matsab* and bitter herbs together in a sandwich), *Shulhan orekh* (eating the main meal), and *Tsafun* (eating the *matsab* saved from *Yabats*);

ff. 14-16v, thirteenth step, *Berekh* (grace after meals);

ff. 17-19, fourteenth step, *Hallel* (reciting Ps. 115-118), with marginalia providing a digest of the laws of waving the four species on the Festival of Tabernacles;

ff. 19-21, fifteenth step, *Nirtsab* (singing songs of praise), including the poems *Az rov nissim bifleta ba-lailab* (Of Old, You Wondrously Performed Many Miracles at Night), *Ometz gevurotekha bifleta ba-pesah* (The Strength of Your Might You Wondrously Displayed on Passover), and *Ki lo na'eb, ki lo ya'eb* (For to Him is It Fitting, to Him is It Seemly);

ff. 21v-22v, "Gates Formulated by Rabbi Isaac, of Blessed Memory, of Dueren," table of contents of the *Sba'arei dura*.

This manuscript consists of two texts: the Passover Haggadah according to the Ashkenazic rite and the table of contents of the *Sba'arei dura* of Rabbi Isaac ben Meir ha-Levi Dueren (thirteenth century). It seems clear that these texts were excised from a larger volume, perhaps a miscellany, given both the apparent randomness of the juxtaposition between these two vastly different works, as well as the collation, according to which the first two leaves of the first quire have been removed. In addition, f. 19 references *Hallel ba-gadol* (Ps. 136) "as transcribed above," and yet *Hallel ba-gadol* does not appear in our manuscript. (This would also account for the absence of a colophon.)

Their removal from the presumed larger work can be explained by the fact that while, in earlier periods, Passover Haggadot tended to be included as part of broader (non-Passover-specific) liturgical or halakhic texts, with time, it became more common for them to be copied as independent volumes so that they could more easily be used at the Seder. Because the Haggadah itself concludes on f. 21, however, it could not be isolated from the larger volume without also incorporating the beginning of the table of contents of the *Sba'arei dura* on f. 21v, and so the bookbinder seems to have decided to include the entire table of contents for the sake of completeness (and perhaps in order not to split the quire).

The first of our two texts is the Passover Haggadah, the fundamental core of which ultimately derives from the period of the Second Commonwealth. Over the centuries, and especially after the

destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE, the service of the Seder night changed, expanded, and crystallized into the formalized, written liturgical rite that we refer to as the Haggadah. Special foods are eaten, texts are recited, and songs are sung as a way of retelling – the word *Haggadah* comes from a root that means “to recount” – the story of the Israelite’s Exodus from Egypt, in fulfillment of the biblical injunction (Ex. 13:8), “And thou shalt tell [*ve-higgadta*] thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.”

Most of the body of the traditional Haggadah took shape before the year 1000, but texts, especially songs, continued to be added to it through the High Middle Ages and even later, as explored at length by Jewish liturgical scholars Ernst Daniel Goldschmidt and Joseph Tabory. This fact helps us date our manuscript. In particular, the absence of the concluding verse *Hasal seder pesah* (The Order of the Passover Has Come to an End) and of the song *Addir hu* (Mighty is He), which became popular in the Ashkenazic rite in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, suggests that this manuscript dates from the fourteenth century. (The songs *Ehad mi yodea* [Who Knows One?] and *Had gadya* [One Goat] were added to the Ashkenazic Haggadah later still, so their absence helps little in dating this work.)

As noted above, our Haggadah includes a commentary written in semi-cursive script and arranged geometrically around the core text, which is written in square script. The material in the commentary was culled from a wide variety of sources, ranging chronologically and geographically from Rabbis Sherira Gaon (906-1006) and his son Hai (939-1038) in Babylonia to Rabbis Perez ben Elijah of Corbeil (d. 1295) and Asher ben Jehiel of Germany and Spain (1250/1259-1327) – though the vast majority are Ashkenazic authorities, especially Rabbi Meir ha-Kohen of Rothenburg (end of the thirteenth century), author of *Haggabot maimuniyyot*, and Rabbi Jacob ben Asher (c. 1269-c. 1343), author of *Orah hayyim* (part one of his four-volume compendium of Jewish law). Much of the commentary consists of halakhic instructions for how to conduct the Seder and its rituals, but there are also homiletical expansions on, and explanations of, some of the Haggadah’s passages.

Aside from the beautifully balanced arrangement of the text and its commentary, some particularly unique features of this Haggadah are the following:

First, the Tetragrammaton, or four-letter Ineffable Name of God, is abbreviated throughout with the letters *yod-vav-yod*, an unusual (for Ashkenaz) and ancient method of representing the Name (see Lauterbach, 1930-1931);

Second, the commentary on f. 8v cites a homiletical interpretation of the end of Ex. 12:12, deriving from the *Midrash ha-gadol* to Exodus, that was extremely rare in Ashkenaz after the time of Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (1040-1105) (Tabory goes so far as to say that it “does not appear in European *haggadot*” after his death, though our manuscript proves otherwise);

Third, a diagram in the commentary on f. 10 illustrates that aligning the words *hoshekb* (darkness), *shebin* (boils), and *kimmim* (lice), three of the Ten Plagues, on top of each other spells out the same words when read both from top to bottom and from right to left, demonstrating that all three plagues were intermingled when they struck the Egyptians;

Fourth, f. 15 includes the paragraph *Nahmeinu* (Comfort Us) in the grace after meals for occasions when Passover coincides with the Sabbath, a text sanctioned by medieval Ashkenazic authorities like Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel but not generally recited in modern rites;

Fifth, f. 17 contains the *Shfokh hamatekha* (Pour out Your Wrath) prayer, with the words *goyim* (Gentiles) and *ha-mamlakhot* (the kingdoms) partially erased and bored through, most probably by a Christian censor. While the prayer in today's Ashkenazic Haggadot usually consists of four verses, here we have only one (as would eventually become the standard practice among Italian Jews);

And finally, ff. 17-19 feature geometrically arranged marginalia (in the same hand, but in a lighter brown ink) summarizing the laws of waving the four species on the Festival of Tabernacles by quoting many of the same authorities cited in the commentary on the Haggadah itself. The reason given for their inclusion here is that the four species are waved during the *Hallel*, which is also recited as part of the liturgy for the Festival of Tabernacles.

As noted above, immediately following the Haggadah is the table of contents of the *Sba'arei dura*, written in the same semi-cursive hand. Rabbi Isaac ben Meir ha-Levi Dueren was a prominent member of the school of Ashkenazic Talmudic commentators known as the Tosafists. His most important contribution to Jewish scholarship was the present work, a halakhic anthology of the dietary laws. Much of the material derives from the *Sefer ha-terumah* (Book of the Heave-Offering) of Rabbi Baruch ben Isaac of Worms (late twelfth-early thirteenth centuries), but other sources cited include the rulings of Rabbis Eliezer ben Nathan of Mainz (c. 1090-c. 1170), Eliezer ben Joel ha-Levi of Bonn (1140-1225), Moses ben Jacob of Coucy (thirteenth century), Isaac ben Joseph of Corbeil (d. 1280), and Meir ben Baruch of Rothenburg, among others.

The work quickly became an influential classic of Ashkenazic jurisprudence in this complicated area of religious law, and over the years many subsequent authorities wrote commentaries and glosses on it, some of which were eventually incorporated by copyists and printers into the text of the book itself. Because of this quirk in the history of the book's transmission, textual differences among manuscripts and editions abound. It is not altogether surprising, then, that the table of contents reproduced in our manuscript diverges in some significant ways from those of most modern editions of the *Sba'arei dura*.

In his discussion of the state of Haggadah manuscript research, Goldschmidt writes the following:

Many recensions, differing from one another to a greater or lesser degree, have been preserved in various manuscripts mostly dating from the 13th to the 15th century, and also in fragments from the Cairo *Genizah*. These manuscripts originate from all countries in which Jews have lived. Some halakhic works also contain the text of and commentaries on the *Haggadah*. Others are found in daily or festival prayer books; the majority, however, are separate works for use on the eve of Passover only. These manuscripts have not yet been adequately investigated; only a selected few, particularly the illuminated copies, have engaged the attention of scholars (Goldschmidt, 2007, p. 210).

This assessment, originally made over forty years ago, unfortunately remains largely true to this day, despite the immense value these texts hold for the study of the history of the Haggadah.

Complete manuscripts of the Haggadah from France and Germany in the period before the year 1500 are relatively rare; only between fifty and seventy-five have survived to the present. Furthermore, it is extremely unusual for such texts to reach the public market, especially in such wonderful condition as is our manuscript. Indeed, since 1980, only four pre-1500 Ashkenazic Haggadah manuscripts (other than ours) are known to have been sold by major auction houses. These statistics, coupled with the aforementioned distinctive features of our text, make the present Haggadah an exceptional and valuable exemplar of this classic of Jewish liturgy.

LITERATURE

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