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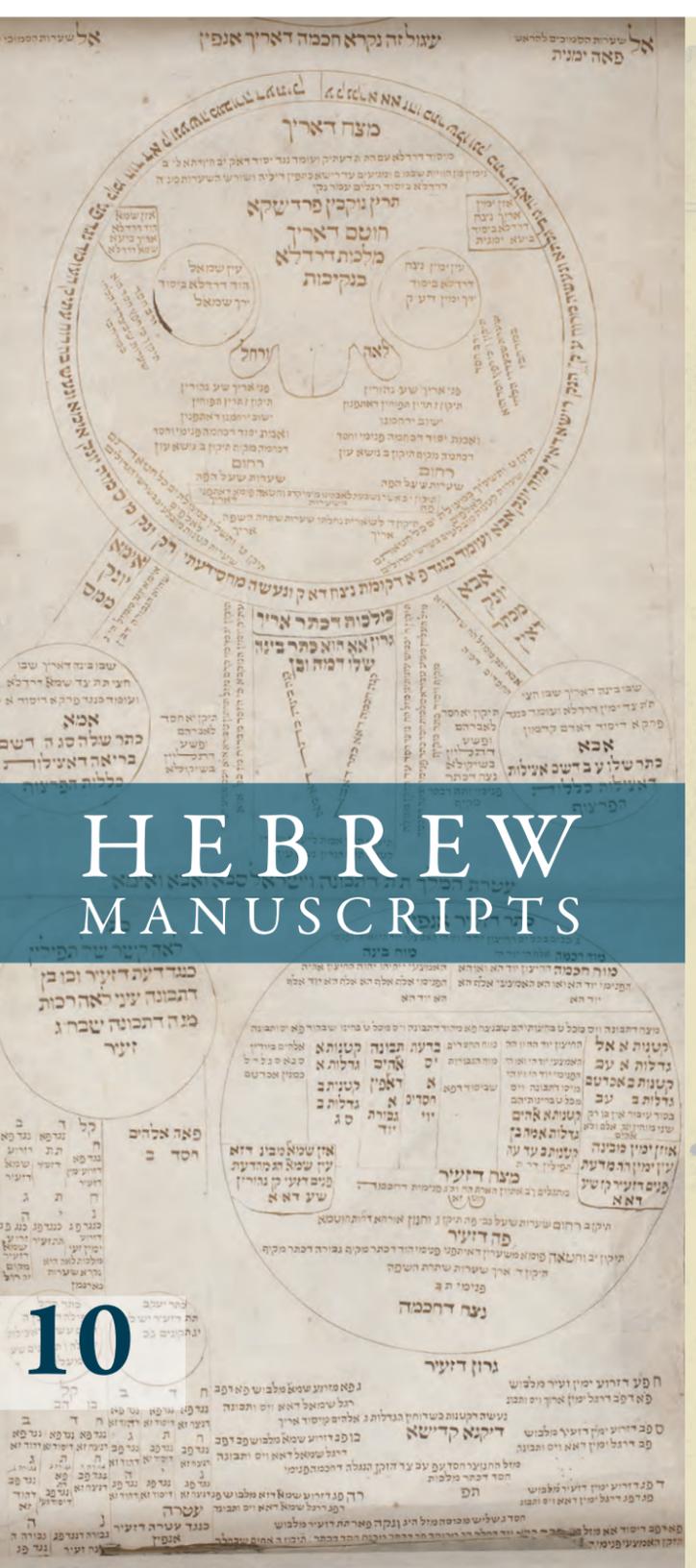
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HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS

Each volume in the series of "primers" introduces one genre of medieval manuscripts to a wider audience by providing a brief general introduction, followed by descriptions of manuscripts, study aids, and suggestions for further reading.

Jews are often referred to as one of the "Peoples of the Book." Throughout the ages, the production and consumption of Hebrew texts has played a prominent role in the transmission of the Jewish intellectual and spiritual heritage. Despite this rich tradition, Jewish manuscripts do not survive in great numbers. Only an estimated sixty thousand medieval Hebrew codices exist today.

Like all of our primers, this is designed as an introduction. But this collection is special. Originating across Europe and in the Middle East, dating as early as the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, and representing many different genres, these manuscripts are precious survivals that bear witness to this treasured legacy. We are honored to be able to bring them together here.



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“Now, therefore, write ye this song for you” (Deut. 31:19): Hebrew Manuscripts as Agents of Jewish Cultural Transmission

Jews have been referred to as one of the “Peoples of the Book” – and with good reason. The Hebrew Scriptures occupy a central place in Jewish cultural and political life and consciousness. Moreover, the traditional requirements to both teach and copy the words of the Bible have endowed Hebrew book production with the utmost religious significance. Throughout the ages, in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora, the production and consumption of Hebrew texts has played a prominent role in the transmission of the Jewish intellectual and spiritual heritage from one generation to the next.

The earliest surviving Hebrew texts (aside from those inscribed on stone or clay) have been preserved in the form of numerous papyri from Elephantine and Aswan in Egypt (494-407 BCE). The next corpus of material, consisting of over one thousand parchment scrolls and fragments dating from the third century BCE to 135 CE, was discovered in the Judean Desert, including, most famously, the Dead Sea Scrolls. Unfortunately, however, for students of the history of the Jewish book, the documentary record is almost completely silent with respect to Hebrew manuscripts for the next seven and a half centuries. One explanation for this gaping hole that lasted until the ninth century may be that the transmission of Jewish knowledge during this period was primarily an oral process that favored memorization and recitation, rather than inscription of Hebrew texts.





In the ninth century, following the Muslim conquests, the use of the codex spread among Jews, first in the Near East and eventually throughout the Diaspora. While scribes continued the practice of writing Torah scrolls meant for ritual use in the synagogue, most other books, including Bibles intended for study, were written in the form of codices.

With time, six main centers of Hebrew book production emerged, each with its own distinctive codicological and paleographic practices: the **Near East** (also referred to as the Orient in the scholarly literature), including Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Persia, Syria, Eastern Turkey, Bukhara, and Uzbekistan; **Italy**, including both the mainland and Sicily; **Sepharad**, including Spain, Portugal, Provence, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia; **Ashkenaz**, including England, Central and Northern France, and Germany; **Yemen**; and **Byzantium**, including the Balkans, Crete, Greece, and Western Turkey.

Genres of Medieval Hebrew Books

Hebrew literature of the Middle Ages embraced a wide range of genres. As might be expected, Bibles and biblical commentaries were the most popular Hebrew books, accounting for approximately 25% of the surviving codices (nos. 1-5). These were followed, in turn, by legal texts, such as the Talmud, Talmudic commentaries, codes, and responsa literature (approximately 20%) (no. 7); mystical compendia (approximately 13%) (nos. 9, 10, 11); prayers and liturgical poetry (approximately 10%) (no. 6); and smaller corpora of polemical, ethical, homiletical, philosophical, scientific, calendrical, historical, grammatical, secular, and belletristic works (nos. 8 and 12).

In addition to varying by subject matter, the corpus of surviving medieval Hebrew manuscripts also varies by language: most of these texts are written in the Hebrew language itself, but a sizeable minority were





composed in the vernacular using Hebrew characters (rather than Arabic, Latin, etc.). Especially prominent among this latter group of texts are those written in Judeo-Arabic, but medieval manuscripts written in Judeo-Persian, Yiddish (Judeo-German), and Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) have also come down to us.

Medieval Hebrew Manuscript Production

In stark contrast to medieval books produced for a Christian audience, such as religious works written in Latin and Greek, and secular books penned in the vernacular, whose production and dissemination were usually overseen by centralized authorities such as monastic scriptoria, cathedral schools, and universities, Hebrew manuscripts were largely created through private initiative and most commonly intended for private use. Indeed, because there generally were no institutional repositories of Hebrew manuscripts available to the masses, an individual who sought to acquire a copy of a given text had one of three options: he could buy an existing exemplar, hire a scribe to produce a new one, or locate and copy the book himself. An analysis of the four thousand or so colophons in extant medieval manuscripts reveals that this latter option accounted for the production of approximately 60% of Hebrew codices, a fact which may speak to the high level of Jewish literacy in this period.

The private nature of Hebrew manuscript production carried with it a number of consequences. First, it meant that the quantity and genres of available books varied from locale to locale. It also resulted in the proliferation of different versions of the texts, not only when the copyist was careless in his task and imprecise in his execution, but perhaps even more so when he was a scholar who took it upon himself to edit the work based on his own insight. This fact would have important ramifications for the integrity of a given book's transmission over the course of time. Finally, because they depended on the patronage of individuals, rather than





communities, professional scribes often traveled from one city to the next to find clients who could engage their services, a phenomenon which helps explain why the colophons of various books inscribed by the very same copyist often attest to their production in a diverse cities and even different countries.

Illumination of Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts

Aside from their religious, literary, and cultural value, medieval Hebrew manuscripts can also inform us about the history of art in the Middle Ages. The earliest surviving specimens of decorated Hebrew texts derive from the tenth century and were created in the Near East. In the following centuries, the practice of ornamenting and illustrating Hebrew books spread to the centers of Hebrew manuscript production in Europe, including Spain, Germany, France, and Italy, reaching its zenith during the Italian Renaissance.

At all times and in all places, decorated Hebrew manuscripts reflected the aesthetic influence of the predominant surrounding culture, whether Islamic or Christian. For example, Hebrew codices produced in the Near East avoided portraying the human form, following the accepted conventions of the Islamic host culture which discouraged human representation in art. By contrast, figurative art appears in Hebrew manuscripts produced in Western Europe, where such a taboo did not prevail. In many instances, Hebrew manuscripts written by Jewish scribes were then handed over to Christian artists or workshops for decoration and illustration. A comparison with contemporary non-Judaic books reveals that Christian motifs, especially biblical ones, were sometimes adapted to suit their new Jewish environments. Still, medieval European Jewry produced a number of talented Hebrew book artists, the most famous of these being Joseph ha-Tsarefati, Joseph ibn Hayyim, Joshua ibn Gaon (Spain), Joel ben Simeon (Germany and Italy), and Abraham Farissol (Italy).





Hebrew manuscripts distinguished themselves from their non-Jewish counterparts by the extensive use of micrography, words written in miniature script to form geometric and floral designs, and even figurative illustrations. Micrography was especially used to create decorative designs using the texts of the *Masorah magna* and *parva* in Hebrew biblical codices (nos. 4, 5). This artwork was found most often in the upper and lower margins of biblical texts but also in highly decorative initial word panels and on separate carpet pages preceding and following the main body of the text. Thus, Jewish scribes and illuminators both adapted the predominant artistic aesthetic and developed their own distinctive art forms when decorating Hebrew books.

Number and Distribution of Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts

Despite the prominence of the book in Jewish intellectual and religious culture, only an estimated sixty thousand medieval Hebrew codices (in addition to the more than 300,000 Genizah fragments) have come down to us. Indeed, and astonishingly, the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, two of the most central texts in the rabbinic tradition, are each preserved in only one complete surviving medieval manuscript copy (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Cod. Or. 4720 and Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 95). The most important reason for the paucity of extant Hebrew manuscripts from this period is that Jewish books were, at various points, actively targeted for destruction. Famous burnings of Hebrew books took place in Paris in 1242, Toulouse and Perpignan in 1319, Rome in 1322, and again in Rome and throughout the Papal States in 1553. In addition, the expulsion of Jewish communities from virtually all of Western and Central Europe at various points throughout the Middle Ages – not to mention massacres like those associated with the Crusades, the Black Death, the Chmielnicki Uprising of 1648-1649, and the Holocaust – had tragic consequences for both Jews and their books.





Sometimes, despite the violence, texts survived because they were reused for the bindings of non-Jewish manuscripts and printed books. Recent research in libraries throughout Europe has uncovered over seven thousand such fragments in Italy alone, as well as hundreds more in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Spain, and France. A new collaborative project, called “Books with Books,” seeks to document these findings in an effort to fill out the historical record of surviving medieval Hebrew works (Online, and Lehnardt and Olszowy-Schlanger, eds., 2014).

Today, Hebrew manuscripts are scattered throughout the world in approximately eight hundred collections, both public and private, mostly concentrated in Europe, Israel, and the United States. The Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts affiliated with the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem has, since 1950, sought to locate and photograph as many of these texts as possible and maintains an important online catalogue of these items. In addition, the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, as well as the Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society, have revolutionized the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Cairo Genizah, respectively, by making their texts available to researchers for free online. Finally, several prominent institutions with extensive Judaica and Hebraica collections, like the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Biblioteca Palatina, Bodleian Libraries, British Library, Frankfurt am Main Universitätsbibliothek, The Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary, the National Library of France, and the National Library of Israel, have also begun digitizing their holdings in an effort to make them more widely accessible to the public.

Hebrew Manuscripts in the Age of Print

Hebrew manuscript production slowed, but by no means ended, with the invention of print in the mid-fifteenth century. This was certainly the case in places like Yemen and other parts of the Near East, where the





printing press did not arrive until the nineteenth century and therefore necessitated the continuous production of books written by hand. In the Jewish communities of Europe, where Hebrew printing began in Rome c. 1469 and spread rapidly throughout the continent, scribes continued to write Torah scrolls as well as other texts meant for ritual use (primarily Scrolls of Esther and phylacteries). In addition, certain genres of Hebrew literature continued to be produced in manuscript form despite the availability of the new technology of printing. These include ephemera like calendrical treatises, kabbalistic texts that, by tradition, were not meant for wide dissemination, and ritual manuals meant for private use. The first half of the eighteenth century also witnessed a revival of luxury Hebrew manuscript production and decoration. This began in Vienna and subsequently spread throughout the Habsburg Empire and Western Europe. Talented scribe-artists were commissioned to produce a variety of lavishly decorated prayer books, Haggadot, miniature books of blessings, Psalters, and circumcision manuals for the wealthy aristocratic Jews of the period. Even today, in the age of self-publication both in print and online, artists in Israel and the United States continue to produce Hebrew manuscripts for private individuals, thereby preserving this ancient tradition and ensuring the transmission of Jewish culture and knowledge into the future.

Sharon Liberman Mintz

Curator of Jewish Art at The Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary



שט"מכרי				דיטעכרי				גריסן				גון			
תשרי				טבת				שבט				תמוז			
א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז
א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז
ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז
ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח
ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט
ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ
ו	ז	ח	ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא
ז	ח	ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב
ח	ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג
ט	י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד
י	יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה
יא	יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו
יב	יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז
יג	יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח
יד	טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט
טו	טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל
טז	יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל	
יז	יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל		
יח	יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל			
יט	כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל				
כ	כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל					
כא	כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל						
כב	כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל							
כג	כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל								
כד	כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל									
כה	כו	כז	כח	כט	ל										
כו	כז	כח	כט	ל											
כז	כח	כט	ל												
כח	כט	ל													
כט	ל														
ל															

וחזקין תתנה לשלם

הקדמה לזאת הקופה של לוח זו ידע א
 כמה שנים שלמות עברו ובר"ה העולם
 נגד שנה שאנה רעה לזאת הקופה וישלם
 לז' כ"ן והכסף אשר שמוג ויבין יראה ככ"ב
 הקדמה ויחזק כל הקופות של שנת חסדו
 בע"ה באי זה יום יגיעי הסכום ואי זה שנה
 אכל בגמ' בחזק יתעל הישב בדברי הלוח
 האחרת -



1

[Bible] Psalms (incomplete)

In Hebrew, manuscript on parchment

Spain, 12th-13th centuries

The earliest surviving Hebrew Bibles in codex form (i.e., copied as a book rather than a scroll) date only from the tenth century. This Psalter is important both for its early date and for its likely origin in Spain. Spanish scribes were famed throughout the Middle Ages for their skill and accuracy as copyists. The graceful square script and the artistic stichographic layout of the text in this manuscript are notable. This layout, although it originally may have been functional, early-on became a pleasing aesthetic feature, especially used for the poetic books of the Bible. The evidence suggests that this was never part of a longer manuscript, but was rather always an independent copy of the psalms for religious devotion and/or study.

The number of surviving Psalters (usually occurring as part of complete Hebrew Bibles) deriving from Sephardic lands in the period before 1300 is probably no more than about thirty, the vast majority of them residing in public collections in Europe, with only one each in Israel and the United States. At no point in the years since 1980 has another copy of the psalms with such an early Sephardic pedigree been available on the market. Did this manuscript eventually make its way eastward, ultimately to be deposited in the famous Cairo Geniza? It seems quite possible; if so, it is one of the most complete copies of the psalms surviving from that storied treasure trove of Judaica (see also nos. 4 and 5). **[TM 867]**

DESCRIPTION: 34 (of approximately 100) folios, written in neat Sephardic square script in 16 long lines, full vocalization and accentuation of text by primary scribe, traditional stichographic layout, dampstaining, foxing, small holes and tears, with some damage to text, modern brown cloth binding. Dimensions 220-225 x 170-175 mm.

LITERATURE: Goshen-Gottstein, 1962; James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History*, New Haven, 1981, pp. 119-127; Stern, 2012; William Yarchin, "Is There an Authoritative Shape for the Hebrew Book of Psalms? Profiling the Manuscripts of the Hebrew Psalter," *Revue Biblique* 122,3 (2015), pp. 355-370.



קלה

על פירותיו: נטלה מן שירו על הררי
ציון כי שם צוה יהוה את הברכה חיים על
העולם: שר המיעלות

הנה ברכו את יהוה בלעזת יהוה
העמרי סבבית יהוה בלילת: שצא
ידכם קדשו וברכו את יהוה: ברוך יהוה
מיצוק עשה שמים וארץ:

קלה

הלל את שם יהוה הללו עברי
יהוה: שיעבדים ביה יהוה בודות
בית אלהינו: הלל הכי טע יהוה
זמרו לשמו כי מצים: כיי עבבחר ליה
ישראל לטעלות: כי אע ידעת כי עזר
יהוה וצד נעמל אלהים: כלאשד
חפץ יהוה עשה בשמים ובארץ
במים ככל העמות: מעלה שמים מקצה
הארץ בקסו צטר עשה כוצארו חכ

2

[Bible] Genesis (incomplete)

In Hebrew, manuscript on parchment

Northern France or Germany, c. 1250-1300

This is an early example of an Ashkenazic biblical codex. Written on exceptionally smooth parchment in a convenient, portable format, it is remarkable for its gothic Hebrew calligraphy and several unique features of the text and format. It is written in a single column, unlike most other contemporary Bible codices. Its text is divided according to the weekly Torah portions read in the synagogue, but several of the *parashah* (pericope) breaks diverge from the accepted scribal practice among Ashkenazim today. Only about eighty-three, or slightly over one-third, of surviving Ashkenazic Pentateuch manuscripts were copied before the year 1300, and it is most uncommon for such texts to reach the market. Since 1980, only three (other than ours) are known to have been sold by major auction houses.

Books were a rare commodity in Ashkenazic communities prior to the thirteenth century. Most Jews in Germany and France had neither the skills necessary to copy their own texts, nor the resources available to pay others to do so. As a result, the average Ashkenazic Jew living in this period generally prayed from memory and followed along with the weekly Torah portion simply by listening carefully. This appears to have begun to change in the thirteenth century. Liturgical Pentateuchs are the most common type of Bible surviving from Ashkenaz in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a fact that David Stern suggests may be linked to a change in how members of the congregation participated in the liturgy, replacing listening with following the readings in their own books (Stern, 2012). The miniature size and layout of this copy of Genesis suggest that it may well have been used in just this way. **[TM 865]**

DESCRIPTION: 125 folios, missing 3 leaves, written in neat Ashkenazic gothic semi-cursive script in 14-17 long lines, partial vocalization and/or accentuation on some pages, enlarged initial word panels at the start of traditional Torah portions, some headings, some stains and foxing, small holes and tears occasionally affecting text, modern quarter binding. Dimensions 170 x 115 mm.

LITERATURE: Goshen-Gottstein, 1962; Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Prayer, Literacy, and Literary Memory in the Jewish Communities of Medieval Europe," in *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History: Authority, Diaspora, Tradition*, ed. Ra'anan S. Boustan, Oren Kosansky, and Marina Rustow, Philadelphia, 2011, pp. 250-270, 397-404; Stern, 2012.

3

[Bible] Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1 Kings (incomplete), with Targum Jonathan, attributed to JONATHAN BEN UZZIEL

In Hebrew, manuscript on parchment

Yemen, early 13th century

The roots of the Jewish community in Yemen stretch back to antiquity (possibly to the Second Temple period), and the Jews who settled there inherited a unique, and ancient, biblical reading and writing tradition. Yemenites also continued (as they do to this day) the ancient practice of reciting the Aramaic translations of the weekly Pentateuch lectionary, as well as of its corresponding *haftarah* (lectionary from the Prophets), during synagogue services. The “official” translation (known in Hebrew by the term Targum) of the Prophets is attributed to Rabbi Jonathan ben Uzziel (first century BCE–first century CE).

This early manuscript with most of Joshua, and small sections of Judges and I Kings, faithfully reproduces the Yemenite version of the biblical text. The biblical verses are copied alternately with the Aramaic translation according to Targum Jonathan, both vocalized with Babylonian vowel signs. It is a substantial and early witness to the Targum, and the evidence of its text will be important in any future edition. Biblical codices from Yemen dating this early are rare survivals; in fact, the texts included here only survived because they were used as filling material inside several book bindings. Holes from their use in bindings can still be seen along the outer edges of the leaves. Yemenite Jews often reused old, worn manuscripts to bind newer ones, a phenomenon one scholar has called the “moving Genizah” (Nahum, 1971). [TM 911]

DESCRIPTION: 23 folios, fragments mounted in modern paper, missing 10-11 leaves from Joshua, and most of Judges and 1 Kings, written in neat Yemenite square script in two columns of 27 lines, with biblical and Targum text alternating verse-by-verse, complete Babylonian (supralinear) vocalization, *sedarim* marked by decorative flourishes, many losses (sometimes as much as half a column), marginal holes and tears, f. 23 a small fragment, f. 5 bound out of order (should follow f. 8), f. 15 bound backwards, all pages silked, words often faded or rubbed, modern vellum binding. Dimensions 350 x 240 mm.

LITERATURE: Goshen-Gottstein, 1962; Isaac, 1999; Yehuda Levi Nahum, “Mevo ha-sefer,” in *Hasifat genuzim mi-teiman*, ed. Shimon Greidi, Holon, 1971; Alexander Sperber, ed. *The Bible in Aramaic based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts*, Leiden, 1959.

4

[Bible] Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (incomplete)

In Hebrew, manuscript on paper

Yemen, c. 1400-1450

Yemenite Jews have been referring to their codices of the Bible, and especially of the Pentateuch, as *tijan* (singular, *taj*; Arabic for “crown”) since the High Middle Ages. This *taj*, the second volume of a two-volume set of the Hebrew Pentateuch (see also no. 5), includes Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy along with *Masorah parva* in micrography. Its elegant, balanced layout and its marginal decorations are notable. It is also a relatively early example. The majority of surviving Yemenite biblical codices, including those in American collections, were copied in the seventeenth century or later.

Yemenite scribes were famous for their high degree of exactitude when copying the Bible and their close adherence to the prescriptions reflected in the *Masorah* (lists of information containing the details of both the consonantal skeleton of the Bible, as well as its proper vocalization and accentuation). Modern researchers therefore consider these codices to be particularly valuable textual witnesses (Ya’akov, 2013; cf. Goshen-Gottstein, 1962). It is likely that this codex was recovered from the Cairo Genizah (see also nos. 1 and 5). It was owned by Solomon Aaron Wertheimer (1866-1935), a Jerusalem-based rabbinic scholar and antique book dealer, who was the first person to publish manuscripts discovered in the Cairo Genizah and openly acknowledge their source – three years before Solomon Schechter (1846-1915) made his famous journey to Egypt to acquire over one hundred thousand Genizah fragments on behalf of Cambridge University Library (Bar-Ilan, 2013). [TM 909]

DESCRIPTION: 154 folios on Oriental paper (expertly restored and mounted in modern paper), missing about 28 leaves, written in neat Yemenite square and semi-cursive scripts in 17 long lines, complete Tiberian vocalization and accentuation, *Masorah parva* in micrography in outer margins, new Torah portions marked by marginal decorative flourishes, three special decorative *Masorah* notations, some losses especially in corners and outer margins, f. 23 an early replacement, f. 131 bound upside-down and backwards, stains, some worming, modern blind-tooled red morocco binding. Dimensions 220 x 175 mm.

LITERATURE: Meir Bar-Ilan, “Ha-genizah: osefei antonin u-wertheimer,” *Alei sefer* 23 (2013), pp. 121-137; Goshen-Gottstein, 1962; Isaac, 1999; Doron Ya’akov, “Yemen, Pronunciation Traditions,” in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan, Shmuel Bolokzy, Steven Fassberg, et al., Leiden, 2013.

זכור
א

לפני העדות אשר אועד לכם שמה והיה
האיש אשר אחרבו מטהו יצח והשפתי
מעלי את תלנות בני ישראל אשר הם מלנים
עליכם וידברו משה אל בני ישראל ויתנו אלי
כר נשי איהם מטה ונשיא אחד מטה לנשיא
אחד רבית אנתם שנים עשר מטות ומטה
אחר בחרו מטותם וינתן משה את המטות
לפני יתה באהל העדות ויהי ממחרת יבא
מש... אהל העדות והנה פרה מטה אהרן
לביתו ויבא פרה ויצא פרה ויצא ויצא ויצא
ויבא משה את המטות מרכני יתה אלפל
בני ישראל ויראו ויקחו איש מטתו

זכור
א

ויאמר יתה אל משה השב את מטה אהרן
לפני העדות למשמרת לאת לפני מרי ותכר
הינתם מעלי ולא ימתו ויעש משה כאשר צוה
יתה את בני עשרה

את המטה
במטהו
עא הקנה
כאשר
והנה המטה
העם ויעמד
בפני ויהיו
לפי ושבט מות
בארוץ אר
יה נעצרה
בר אל בני
לבית אב
שנים עשר
למטה ואת
כי מטה אחד
הל מועד

[Bible] Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (incomplete)

In Hebrew, manuscript on paper

Yemen, c. 1450-1500

This *taj*, also the second volume of a Pentateuch, likely from the Cairo Genizah (see also nos. 1 and 4), was probably copied by David ben Benayah ben Saadiah, a member of the famous Benayah family of professional Yemenite scribes active at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries in and around Sana'a (Beit-Arié, Engel, Yardeni, 1987). All told, 40% of dated Yemenite manuscripts that have reached us from the period between 1461 and 1540 were produced by members of the Benayah clan. To this day, they are considered by many to be the most important family of Yemenite scribes, and the books they produced are highly regarded for both their accuracy and beauty of execution.

In addition to the *Masorah magna* and *Masorah parva*, a number of other marginalia appear throughout this manuscript. These include short, anonymous comments on the meanings of words, references to rabbinic discussions of laws and, most prominently, red-colored numbering of the biblical commandments according to Maimonides's reckoning. The Talmud famously relates that the Torah contains six hundred thirteen commandments (b*Makkot* 23b-24a), but does not spell out exactly what they are. Medieval rabbinic authorities subsequently undertook to draw up lists of these laws, with Maimonides's achieving particular renown. This *taj* also features *aliyyah* (lectionary break) and Torah portion markers illuminated in red. [TM 910]

DESCRIPTION: 137 folios on Oriental paper (expertly restored and mounted in modern paper), missing about 46 leaves, written in neat Yemenite square and semi-cursive scripts in 17 long lines, complete Tiberian vocalization and accentuation, *Masorah magna* and *parva* in micrography, new Torah portions marked by marginal decorative flourishes, some *aliyyah* markers and decorative flourishes in red, special decorative *Masorah* notations, some losses throughout, f. 32 bound upside-down and backwards, ff. 130 and 135 bound out of order, strips of paper glued over mistakes on three folios, dampstaining, words rubbed, some vocalization washed out, modern blind-tooled red morocco binding. Dimensions 238 x 175 mm.

LITERATURE: Beit-Arié, Engel, Yardeni, 1987, no. 150; Richard Ettinghausen, "Yemenite Bible Manuscripts of the XVth Century," *Eretz-Israel* 7 (1964), pp. 32*-39*; Goshen-Gottstein, 1962; Isaac, 1999; Michael Riegler, "Benayah ha-sofer ve-tse'etsa'av: mishpahat soferim mi-teiman," *Pe'amim* 64 (1995), pp. 54-67.



52
וישמע ייחזקאל לפני העדה בחדר במקדש וישמע עניו ויבין

קדשים וכתובם יהוה ומדוע התנשא ועל
קהל קהוה וישמע משה ויפל על פניו
ויבצר אל קדח ואל כל עדתו לאמר במקד
וידע יהוה את אשר דרו ואת הקדוש והקריב
אליו ואת אשר יבחר בו יקר יב אליו זאת
עשו קח ולכם מחתות קדח ופל עדתו ותנו
בחזקאש ושימו עליהן קטרת לפני יהוה מחור
והיה האיש אשר יבחר יהוה הוא הקדוש ויב
לכם בני לוי ויאמר משה אל קדח שמעו
גא בני לוי המענט מכם כיהבדיל אל לוי
ישראל אתכם מעדת ישראל להקריב אתכם
אליו לעבד את עבודת משכן יהוה ולעמד
לפני העדה לשרתם ויקרב אתך ואת בני
אחיי בני לוי אתך ובקשתם גם מהנה לכן
אתה ובר עדתך הנעדים על יהוה ואהרן
מה הוא כן תקונו עליו וישלח משה דבר
לדבן ולאמר בני אל יאב ואמרו לא נע

ל
הא
ג
ויטב
ל
זכ
ל
ד
וכ
ש
ה
ב
זכ

והיו יוסף וישראל

בכר אל בני
לחם עיעת על
ועל ציעת הנח
ת וראיתם אתו
עש יב אדם
זרי עיניכם אשר
זכרו ועשיתם
ולא להיבם אע
אתכם מארץ
ועי יהוה אלופם

דלוי ויבין
לפני יוסף
ועי ישראל
קרא מועד
על אהרן
עיה כלל

וישמע ייחזקאל לפני העדה

6

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

In Hebrew, manuscript on parchment

Northern France or Germany, 14th-15th centuries

Some of the most beloved Hebrew manuscripts are Haggadot, the liturgical manuscripts that contain the service of the Seder night when special foods are eaten, texts are recited, and songs are sung as a way of retelling the story of the Israelites's Exodus from Egypt (the word *Haggadah* comes from a root that means "to recount"). 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.

This Passover Haggadah of medieval Franco-German origin combines liturgical text with halakhic (Jewish legal) and homiletical commentary in a beautifully arranged geometric pattern. One diagram in the commentary illustrates that aligning the words *hoshekh* (darkness), *shehin* (boils), and *kinnim* (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. Its pages bear witness to its use. There is a wine stain in the text that contains the blessing over wine. In the *Shefokh hamatekha* (Pour out Your Wrath) prayer, the words *goyim* (Gentiles) and *ha-mamlakhot* (the kingdoms) have been partially erased and bored through, most probably by a Christian censor. The final three pages of the text include the table of contents of Rabbi Isaac ben Meir ha-Levi Dueren's *Sha'arei dura* on the Jewish dietary laws, suggesting this Haggadah may once have been part of a longer volume. [TM 866]

DESCRIPTION: 22 folios, Haggadah text complete, written in neat square and semi-cursive Ashkenazic scripts in 17 long lines, enlarged incipits, diagram in commentary on f. 10, decorated catchwords, slight staining on several folios, two words partially erased and bored through on f. 17, trimmed at outer margins with loss of some marginalia on ff. 17-18, modern blind-tooled calf binding. Dimensions 150 x 120 mm.

LITERATURE: Ernst Daniel Goldschmidt, et al., "Haggadah, Passover," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., Detroit, 2007, vol. 8, pp. 207-217; Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Philadelphia, 2008.

נשה יזי לי בצאתי
 אל הקב"ה בלבד אלא
 תנו הוציא משם למען
 יזן אשר נשבע לאבותינו
 דות ונעבה לו אחר סוף
 לשמחה כדלעיל
 אר
 לקלם למי שעשדה
 נסים האלו הוציאנו
 וזה מאבל ליום טוב
 לנאולה ונאמר
 נגד לפני שירה חרטה לשון נקבה
 כי צולה מעצבים ט
 ללות שמדברי זה שירה
 אכל אחריה קב"ה סבלי
 אכילה ילדה
 נגד
 נגד טהומיל והפתיק יוא רגין
 באשו ולא במוס סון רמפתין
 עבאו דבר וסנהג לברך ענין
 טרין צמדין תקווא ובימים
 טר וימלכנו נגד היה אוכל לעיל

גיה

שמש עד מכואו
 מהודל שם יזי
 רם על כל גנים
 יזי על השמים
 כבודו מי כיוי אלהינו המגביהי לשכת המשפילי
 לראות בשמים ובארץ מקימי מעפר דל מאשפות
 ירים אכיון להושיבני עם נדיבים עם נדיבי עמו
 מושיבי עקרת הבית אם
 הכנס שמחה הללו יה
 בצאת ישראל ממצרים
 בית יעקב מעם
 לועז היתה יהודה לקדשו ישראל ממשדורניו
 הים ראה ויגוס הירדן יסוב לאחור ההרים רקדו
 כאלים גבעות ככב צאן מה לך הים כי תגוס ?
 הירדן תסוב לאחור ההרים תרקדו כאלים גבעות
 ככב צאן מלפני אדון חולי ארץ מלפני אלוה יעקב
 ההופכי הצור אגם מים הלמיש למעיניו מים

לקיוו סן ילג אבל לאביה היה מסבך נגד
 לנער דל צמיר הכתי מנעול ויחד אוכל הל
 אבל מנעה לחור אחר טעם שיען אחריו
 ראשי פרקים וטוב לאומרו עם הצבור אף
 קודם הפכה קף

וסמכותן על הכל אפי להפתי
 לרבי אף לשון הקדש יזיגן
 כמשיב וטואל מפת הכבוד
 והליאה בן מרץ לפיק ונאמעה
 קף

SAMSON BEN ISAAC OF CHINON, *Sefer keritut* (Book of Ratification)

In Hebrew, manuscript on paper

Candia [Crete], c. 1375-1400

Rabbi Samson ben Isaac of Chinon (fl. late thirteenth-early fourteenth centuries), one of the last members of the school of Ashkenazic Talmudic commentators known as the Tosafists, was a well-respected scholar; Rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet (1326-1408) refers to him in one of his responsa as “the greatest rabbi of his generation.” This work discussing Talmudic methodology and hermeneutics is his most important. Each of its five sections begins with an explanation of its title in verse; it opens with a poem explaining the name of the book: “See this book, full of delights / And devote your hearts to it in perpetuity / Which has sealed [*karat*] a covenant of love with the Law of God; / Therefore is it called *Sefer keritut*.” Over half of the known twenty-five or so copies of this text are now incomplete, and only five date from the fourteenth century. The textual importance of this complete and early copy is such that, together with a New York manuscript (Jewish Theological Seminary, MS R933), it was used extensively in establishing the text of the semi-critical edition of the work published in Jerusalem in 1965.

The scribe of our manuscript, who copied it in Byzantine scripts, signed his name in the colophon (f. 61v): “This work, composed by Rabbi Samson son of our teacher Rabbi Isaac of Chinon, of blessed memory, is complete. And its scribe, who copied it from a mistaken and corrupt exemplar under great pressure, is Abraham son of the honorable Rabbi Judah – may he be remembered for life in the World to Come – of Crete.” [TM 806]

DESCRIPTION: 61 folios, complete, written in Byzantine square and semi-cursive scripts in 25-30 long lines, minor wormholes and stains, modern vellum binding. Dimensions 200 x 145 mm.

LITERATURE: Wilhelm Bacher and Isaac Broydé, “Samson ben Isaac of Chinon,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer, New York, 1906, vol. 11, p. 3; Paul Buchholz, “Die Tossafisten als Methodologen: Ein Beitrag zur Einleitung in den Talmud,” ed. Joël Müller, *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 2,8-12 (n.s.) (1893-1894), pp. 552-556; Samson ben Isaac of Chinon, *Sefer keritut*, ed. Simhah Bunem David Sofer and Joseph Moses Sofer, Jerusalem, 1965 (reprint, Jerusalem, 1983).

יין כי תורת הקדשים מקושרת אצל נאמר בכלמוד בכל מקרה ולמד
 יוש למד תורת מידתי ולא יבא אחרי השנה הכביעי קדש קדשים
 יען כי בומן הזה מקושר בלבנו דיועי נדתיים שונות מכל לעונות
 חקי פצת והנהגות כלמד מן הלמד נאמנות ואלה קראו ויקדו
 הוהב עבודת יש מהלך למדות ומלמודות זמון במלעל נחידות
 מן עמלנו מסודות נלב חכמי נחידות יש מאן למדות ויניח
 על אדוב הדכתי השאה הדיני כלל לתינת ולה מימיק מוארי השכל
 זרק ממלך אבקת דוכל עלה כמר דדודי לאפי שונות עם הקדש ממלך
 כהנש והחלק הזה אקרא כיה מקדש יען כי בקדש העל ימצא כוצין
 ומדש ואקרא לנשם כעונות נאמרים ויקדים

אל הלאה מחצית יומם וגם לילה אם תרעה ישן השמע אל
 חדש תשב באהל דת תשכון ולא תנוש תורת אבך
 חקות קדש ופית מקדש

החדק השע למד מן הלמד בקדשים דחלק לנחלקי החלק המאעו
 המדות שאין למד מן הלמד והחלק השע במלך
 דמספקא ליה אם למדין אם לאו ופשיטא כמה דפשיטא לן דמלמד
 דכר הלמד כנש אם חוור נמלמד במקש כזה פשיטא לדכפא דמלך
 זמירעא עב למד ווערא דרמי דאיתו ללבך כהבוג מדוה ונחלק
 השפן נחלק הפשיטות דמלמדי נפמכני עלה דאמ הנה למדן
 דאית לה דכפא ממש דחל דמלמדי אך יחול כל התורה כולל
 למד מן הלמד מן מן הקדשים ונתחיל לצאכ בהלן אין מלמדי
 בקדש נבמה מיבעא לן איתו אי אין למדין נבמה למדין
 זכא ליה פאי והו נוקמן החלק הראשון נבמה אין למדין הקדש מן הלמד
 כדאמרי ההש להב אקשייה לחיאת ואקשייה לעגלה לומ דכר הלמד
 במקש אין חוור נמלמד בקדש כבא אמ דכר הלמד בתי איתו חוור
 וימוד בהקש מהסא כאשר יולס משור זכאיש העמים נביכא שיעהקש

היבש

אכן אמונתם ישמעו
 כניס ועצ ועצבמא
 בל עפר הפת דכר
 וז אבט ועצ ועפר
 ע העלש ופי כיעד
 אפ מן העמים דכר
 ו לשכך מלמ שהרס
 אם מן העמי וכלהן
 לפי הכי מן העמים
 הן מן העמים השמי
 י ליש ולא היועו
 כך האע לא מן העמי
 ד אסיה דקד דכר
 ל חז אב הדכסי

תורת קדשים



8

ABBA MARI BEN MOSES ASTRUC OF LUNEL, *Minhat kena'ot* (Jealous Offering)

In Hebrew, manuscript on paper

Northern Italy, Sermide [Mantua], signed and dated 6 Tammuz 5218 [June 27, 1458]

This codex is one of only five manuscripts of a collection of letters and pamphlets concerning the controversy over the philosophical writings of Maimonides; it is dated and signed by its scribe (the only manuscript in this small group that is dated), who may also have been a wealthy Jewish patron in Mantua. The present manuscript differs significantly from the Pressburg edition and also presents textual variants from two of the other four manuscripts.

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, Maimonides (1138-1204), was by far the most influential figure in medieval Jewish philosophy, and one who also exercised considerable influence in the non-Jewish world. Even in his own day, his works were considered daring; drawing on Aristotle, Plato, and the neo-Platonists, as transmitted in the writings of Muslim thinkers, in particular Averroes and Avicenna, he sought to interpret the Bible and the principles of Judaism in a rational manner. Jewish scholars in the centuries that followed fell into two camps, the Maimonideans and the anti-Maimonideans. The *Minhat kena'ot* was compiled by a vehement opponent of the teachings of Maimonides, the Provençal Rabbi Abba Mari ben Moses Astruc, who was born in Lunel toward the end of the thirteenth century. Abba Mari held that through its reliance on Aristotelian rationalism, the work of Maimonides threatened to undermine the authority of the Hebrew Bible. Enlisting the aid of the famous Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham Adret of Barcelona, Abba Mari therefore conducted a forceful propaganda campaign against Maimonides and was able to enact a fifty-year ban on all those who studied science and metaphysics before their twenty-fifth birthday. After settling in Perpignan in 1306, Abba Mari assembled and had transcribed the letters connected with the controversy, the basis for the manuscript tradition. [TM 121]

DESCRIPTION: 162 folios, watermark dated 1447-1450, written in an Italian semi-cursive script in 25 long lines, minor foxing, modern black buckram binding. Dimensions 233 x 164 mm.

LITERATURE: Abba Mari ben Moses Astruc of Lunel, *Sefer minhat kena'ot*, ed. Mordecai Bislichis, Pressburg, 1838; Hartwig Hirschfeld, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew Mss. of the Montefiore Library*, London and New York, 1904, p. 87 (MS 271).

במקום כי פשוטת קול הנפך הווא יתרה נשותן של ישראל ומטע זה עו
היוו למה דבר הזה נמנע וכשמעו נאל ידבר נמנע להם כן נאות וקבל
ה' דבריהם ונאל הטיבו אשר דברו . וכאן ונתלך היהמה לבן אומע ופי
הקדש ועל כל יסוד נובח היה משיבו להם . וכן נענה לפי מה שרש"י ז"ל נאכלתו
וכמיש חיות . אבל הקול ההוא הנפך אשר נמנע הווא הנפך כצד הרבנות או
העצב לא למה כדרך שהיה מעצב לו נאחל מועד כמו שצמיו ז"ל וישמע את
הקול והכר עליו קול לא קול עליו . ומה שמתעל וכלי שחל לו שמעו והו שומר
הסתו מנבו עומד כן . ונעטם . וכל זה שאמרנו שהיה הקול נפסק לא היה
לא מן הקול הנפך והנודו היוצו מפי הקדש שומעו הווא הרמז . אבל אשר ק'
קולת הרבנים נקול השוטר ומקנה הלמדים לא נפקו עד שהעצב להם אז
אשר הרבנות עתה חל חחה כדרך שהיה שומע מפי המגירה ולפון הדבורים
חוכח כן שאר הרבנות המאשונות כהן ענבו . להיך אשר הוצעתך ולפי
יהיה לך זהים אחיכם על סג . נענה שה' ית' נעצמנו וכברנו העצב עומם
לשרם ומטע זה נאמר טעם כפנים דבר ה' נחכס . וכאר הרבנות שנה
הלפון נאל לא תשא דת'ס . להיך נענה . ולא עולו אפי . ומח כן שעת ית'
ימים נעה ה' את השמים נות הנחך ולא נאל נשותי . ואל למען יחביבו
ימיך על המורה אשר ה' להיך עתה לך ולא מנו אשר דע נחמ לך . נענה
ומשה רמז העצב שהיה על דבר נכוח כמו שצמנו מפי הקדש .

פרק ט **עצב** שמרנו כי כחה הידרות המאשונות העצב למה
ולפי ישר מפי המגירה עצמם לא הייתה השגת כלם שורה
כמו שרש"י ז"ל ואל משה עומד עלה על ה' . וכן . ומה מחיזה לבצמן . ומה
מחיזה לבצמן . ועד ונכוחו מחיזה לבצמן . וקטע מחיזה לבצמן . והס
והשגת משה נכוח לא היה לה נכח ומהוון להשגת אשר הנכוחים ואל זה דגו
הכח כמחיו למה של ענף שהיה מופשט מן החומר למחיו ולא היה לבח

לח
שהע
שער
הגלו
הנכב
יחי
מהוון
כמו
בשה
הס
מטע
כפנס
הכנס
והפול
הוהי
משה
ה' ע
מפי
הפנס
הלכי
יד
דמיה
הינס
מפי
מרט



9

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, late 14th century

Rabbi Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (c. 1165-c. 1230) was the last great expositor of the traditions of the Hasidei Ashkenaz, pietists living in Germany in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. *Sefer ha-shem* (The Book of the Name), the longest section of his five-part *Sodei razayya* (Secrets of Secrets), constitutes the first attempt in Jewish literature to systematically analyze the theological and ethical meanings of the Names of God. The introductory section of work, the *Eser havayot* (Ten Essences), often circulated independently, as in this manuscript. Approximately twenty-four manuscripts of *Sefer ha-shem* are known (most often in the form of *Eser havayot*). This is an early copy, one of only five dating before 1400. It begins with an outline of the magical ritual used to communicate the secrets of God's Names from rabbi to student, and then expounds on the numerological significance of the Tetragrammaton, the four-letter Name of God.

Immediately following *Eser havayot* is a collection of prayers (*tefillot*) and magical charms (*shemirot ha-derekh*) for defense against evil spiritual forces or physical threats. 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. 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 here would have appended this series of kabbalistic *tefillot* and *shemirot ha-derekh* to an esoteric theological treatise authored by Rabbi Eleazar. The manuscript also includes an early exemplar of the standard form used to prepare a *get* (Jewish writ of divorce). [TM 807]

DESCRIPTION: 18 folios, complete, written in Italian semi-cursive scripts by two scribes in 22-25 long lines, periodic vocalization, diagrams on ff. 4rv and 9, horizontal lines drawn between prayers, small decorative flourishes, worming, browning, stains, some text faded, bound in late 17th-early 18th-century limp vellum. Dimensions 185 x 140 mm.

LITERATURE: Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, Northvale and Jerusalem, 1998, pp. 129-176; Eleazar ben Judah of Worms, *Sefer ha-shem*, in *Sodei razyei*, ed. Aaron Eisenbach, Jerusalem, 2004, vol. 1, pp. 1-7; Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices: Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period*, Detroit, 2000.

10

Collection of Texts on Geomancy, three attributed to ABRAHAM IBN EZRA

In Hebrew, illustrated manuscript on paper

Italy (Northern?), c. 1550-1575

Geomancy is a medieval Islamic form of divination that was introduced to the West in the eleventh century and became popular in the thirteenth. The word “geomancy” is derived from the Latin “geomantia,” from the Greek for “divination by earth” (the Arabic name for geomancy means “the science of the sand”). Early practitioners constructed the geomantic figure by making lines of random numbers of dots in the sand, but medieval writers believed that it was acceptable to draw the dots on a piece of parchment or paper. Using these dots, the geomancer would draw a series of figures which were then arranged into a geomantic tableau. There are sixteen possible figures consisting of single or pairs of points. Interpretation depends on the meanings of the figures in particular locations in the tableau. Some of the most prominent representatives of occult sciences down through the Renaissance, including Bernardus Silvestris (d. 1178), Albertus Magnus (d. 1280), Roger Bacon (d. 1292), Cornelius Agrippa (d. 1535), and Robert Fludd (d. 1637), wrote on geomancy. The system was further popularized through “books of fate” and “punctuation” (as it was called after its characteristic patterns of dots) and became a self-help oracle even in the rural peripheries of European life.

Like many other medieval Islamic sciences, geomancy was quickly assimilated into Jewish culture. The famous biblical commentator, poet, philosopher, and astronomer Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164) composed at least one treatise on the subject; three of the treatises in this manuscript are attributed to him. From at least as early as the fourteenth century, hundreds of Hebrew works on the subject, surviving in as many as three hundred fifty manuscripts, were composed; few of them have been systematically studied. To date, there is no comprehensive bibliography of Hebrew treatises on geomancy or divination either in printed or in manuscript form. [TM 302]

DESCRIPTION: 74 folios, watermarks dating 1560-1586, apparently complete, written in an Italian current semi-cursive script, decorated catchwords and diagrams, some worming, modern vellum binding. Dimensions 220 x 135 mm.

LITERATURE: Thérèse Charmasson, *Recherches sur une technique divinatoire: la géomancie dans l'Occident médiéval*, Geneva, Droz, and Paris, 1980; Hartwig Hirschfeld, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew Mss. of the Montefiore Library*, London and New York, 1904, p. 131 (MS 436).

11

Ilan ha-gadol (The Great Tree), attributed to MEIR HA-KOHEN POPPERS

In Hebrew, vertical scroll on parchment with diagrams and tables

East-Central Europe, late 17th century-early 18th century

This is a fine example of a kabbalistic scroll, known as an *ilan* (pl. *ilanot*) for its tree-like diagrams, nearly fourteen feet long. Fundamental to the understanding of Kabbalah is the overarching vision of the divine realm as constituted as a series of ten divine elements called *Sefirot*, originally a term for mystical numbers. An *ilan* is a representation of this kabbalistic cosmology in the form of a diagram of the *Sefirot* and the interconnected pathways between them. By understanding the interaction of the *Sefirot*, kabbalists sought to grasp the deeper meanings of the esoteric teachings of the Kabbalah. They used charts and diagrams such as *ilanot* to teach this secret wisdom to their students.

Kabbalah in general combines two strands in Jewish thought: the speculative Kabbalah concerning mystical and theosophical meditation on the Creation, which in Kabbalah is thought to have occurred through a series of emanations of the divine Will, the ten *Sefirot*; and the practical side, which believes that the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are God's true language and that the correct interpretation and use of them conveys magical powers (see also no. 9). The form of kabbalistic speculation found here is that of Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572). This is one version of the *ilan* that can be attributed to the important Lurianic kabbalist Rabbi Meir ben Judah Poppers (c. 1624-1662) (combined here with several other *ilanot*). Text and drawings vary in the several dozen surviving examples. The version found in this scroll, earlier than the printed version and different from it in a number of striking details, is known in only two or three similar manuscripts.

[TM 773]

DESCRIPTION: Six membranes of a vertical scroll, complete, written in an elegant Ashkenazic script, eleven large circular diagrams, in fine condition, housed in a modern tubular case. Dimensions 4245 x 285 mm.

LITERATURE: J. H. Chajes, "Kabbalah and the Diagrammatic Phase of the Scientific Revolution," in *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of David B. Ruderman*, ed. Richard I. Cohen, Natalie B. Dohrmann, Adam Shear, and Elchanan Reiner, Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, 2014, pp. 109-123; Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*, Stanford, 2003; *Ilanot Project*, Haifa University, <http://ilanot.haifa.ac.il/>.



עשרת המלך תת דתמונה וישראל טהא ואבא ואמא



reduced

12

Miscellany, including Calendrical, Poetic, Sapiential, Ethical, Esoteric, Kabbalistic, Mathematical, Liturgical, Legal, and Exegetical treatises

In Hebrew and Italian, manuscript on paper

Italy, c. 1400-1450; c. 1370-1400; c. 1400-1425; c. 1450-1500; sixteenth century

An eclectic compilation of works, probably assembled in its current form from disparate treatises at some point in the sixteenth century in Italy. The contents reflect the religious and literary interests of a learned layman or mid-level functionary, perhaps a *gabbai* (sexton) in a synagogue, who was responsible for the smooth operation of the public life of his community. Its contents are remarkably varied, but there is some discernible coherence within each section. Section I mostly includes calendrical material, and section II is largely dedicated to the holidays, particularly Passover. Section III features an array of midrashic and kabbalistic-theological texts, while section IV focuses especially on ethical and sapiential teachings. Section V contains a halakhic tract on the laws of ritual slaughter, and section VI picks up on that theme, but also adds material relevant to the calendar, including Sabbath-related laws and dream interpretations, hygiene regimens, and weather predictions. Section VII features both a short lexicon of difficult terms in the Talmudic tractate *Shabbat* and a number of recipes in Italian for various potions, while section VIII simply continues the discussion of dream interpretations.

The scholarly value of the manuscript is therefore dual: on the one hand, it includes many rare texts (some of them unica) that have never been published or properly studied; on the other, the combination of folkish and learned texts reveals a good deal about the intellectual orientation of Jews in sixteenth-century Italy. This manuscript deserves to be analyzed not only for its content but for what it can tell us about the society that produced it. [TM 808]

DESCRIPTION: 92 folios, written by numerous scribes at different times in: I. ff. 1-18, Sephardic semi-cursive script; II. ff. 19-37, rapid Sephardic cursive script; III. ff. 38-51, Italian semi-cursive script; IV. ff. 52-61, Italian semi-cursive script; V. ff. 62-70, Sephardic semi-cursive script; VI. ff. 71-84, Italian semi-cursive script; VII. ff. 85-90, casual Sephardic semi-cursive script; VIII. f. 91, Italian semi-cursive script, worming, extensive, mostly marginal waterstaining and foxing, ff. 1-2 loose, lower third of f. 5 torn away with loss, ff. 57-91 gnawed (some modern repairs) with loss, late 16th-century calf binding, worn. Dimensions 220 x 147 mm.

LITERATURE: Hartwig Hirschfeld, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew Mss. of the Montefiore Library*, London and New York, 1904, pp. 128-130 (MS 431).

Glossary

AGGADAH – The non-legal parts of rabbinic literature, including ethical and moral teachings, legends, and folklore, as distinct from **HALAKHAH**, those elements of a strictly legal nature.

ASHKENAZ – A biblical name which, beginning from the eleventh century CE, was identified by European Jews with Germany. Jews in medieval Germany, Northern France, England, and Central and most of Eastern Europe and their descendants are now known as **ASHKENAZIM**.

GAON – The formal title of the heads of the religious academies of Sura and Pumbedita in Babylonia. The **GEONIM** were recognized by Jews from approximately the end of the sixth century to the middle of the eleventh as the highest authority of legal instruction. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, this title was also applied to the heads of the religious academies in Palestine.

GENIZAH – A storeroom, often located within a synagogue, where sacred texts are placed when they become too worn to be used. “The Genizah” usually refers to the collection of early documents stored in the Ben-Ezra synagogue of Fustat (Old Cairo), built in the ninth century. This treasure-trove was rediscovered by European scholars in the nineteenth century and its contents subsequently made their way into public and private collections throughout the world.

HAFTARAH – A selection of verses from the Prophets which is read publicly in the synagogue on the Sabbath and holidays.

HAGGADAH – A book of prayers and readings to be recited as part of the Passover **SEDER**, the core of which focuses on the story of the Israelites’ redemption from slavery in Egypt. **MAHZORIM** often also contain the text of the **HAGGADAH** as part of the yearly cycle of festival prayers.

HALAKHAH – The legal parts of rabbinic literature, including observances mandated by scriptural and rabbinic ordinance, as distinct from **AGGADAH**, those elements of a non-legal nature.

HASIDEI ASHKENAZ – A group of scholars active in **ASHKENAZ** in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries who advocated a strict, pietistic ritual regimen and espoused an esoteric, mystical theology.

HUMMASH – The Pentateuch (first five books of the Hebrew Bible) divided into the **PARASHIYYOT** read publicly in the synagogue and typically accompanied by the **HAFTAROT**.

KABBALAH – The esoteric and mystical teachings of Judaism, especially those developed in the Middle Ages from the twelfth century onward.

MAHZOR – A book containing the prayers for the cycle of the year. In common modern usage, **MAHZOR** denotes the festival prayer book, which includes special poetical and ritual additions to the service, as distinct from the **SIDDUR**, which features the prayers for weekdays and Sabbaths.

MASORAH – The body of traditional information, compiled in antiquity and the early Middle Ages, that documents in exacting detail the consonantal skeleton of the Bible, as well as its proper vocalization and accentuation. The **MASORAH** can take one of two forms: *Masorah magna* and *Masorah parva*, the latter (usually written in the outer margins of the biblical text) essentially denoting an abbreviated version of the former (usually written in the upper and lower margins).



MICROGRAPHY – Minute script, often used to transcribe the **MASORAH** and woven into decorative geometric patterns, abstract forms, or the images of people, animals, or other objects.

MIDRASH – A genre of rabbinic literature, usually forming a running commentary on specific books of the Bible, that contains material of an exegetical, homiletical, aggadic, ethical, legendary, or halakhic nature. The earliest **MIDRASHIM** are associated with the period of the **MISHNAH**, but midrashic works continued to be composed well into the Middle Ages.

MINHAG – The body of Jewish customs or usages that have developed over the ages, some of which are considered to have been accepted throughout the Jewish world and have assumed a binding force similar to that of **HALAKHAH** proper, and others of which are limited to one particular locality or community.

MISHNAH – A systematic collection of rabbinic traditions, opinions, and legal rulings edited by Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi at the beginning of the third century CE. Its contents are organized into six broad categories: *Zera'im* (Agricultural Law), *Mo'ed* (Festival Law), *Nashim* (Laws Relating to Women and Marriage), *Nezikin* (Laws of Torts and the Justice System), *Kodoshim* (Temple Law), *Tohorot* (Ritual Purity Law).

PARASHAH – One of the fifty-four defined portions of the Pentateuch read publicly in the synagogue on Sabbaths, Mondays, and Thursdays throughout the year as part of the annual lectionary cycle. The term may also refer to the paragraph breaks in the biblical text itself, as preserved by the **MASORAH**. See also **SIDRAH**.

SEDER – The celebration on the first evening of Passover (first two evenings outside the Land of Israel) which includes recitation of the **HAGGADAH** and partaking of a festive meal.

SEPHARAD – A biblical name which, beginning at least from the end of the eighth century, was identified by European Jews with the Iberian Peninsula. Following the expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century, **SEPHARDIM** settled in Northern Europe, North Africa, Italy, the Balkans, and the eastern Mediterranean.

SIDDUR – A book containing the text of the organized prayer rite. In common modern usage, **SIDDUR** denotes the weekday and Sabbath prayer book, as distinct from the **MAHZOR**, which features the prayers for the festivals.

SIDRAH – One of the 154 (or, according to another tradition, 167) defined portions of the Pentateuch read publicly in ancient times in the synagogue as part of the Palestinian triennial lectionary cycle. See also **PARASHAH**.

TALMUD – A body of commentary on, discussion of, and expansion upon the **MISHNAH** by the rabbis of the third to fifth centuries. There are two geographically-denominated Talmudic collections: the Jerusalem (or Palestinian) Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. When reference is made simply to “the Talmud,” it is assumed that the latter is meant. Compilation of the Jerusalem Talmud was finished c. 400 CE; the Babylonian Talmud was virtually completed about a hundred years later.

TARGUM – Any of a number of ancient translations of the Bible (or parts of it) into Aramaic, some of them deriving from Palestine and others from Babylonia. When reference is made simply to “the Targum,” it is assumed that the **TARGUM** of Onkelos (second century CE) to the Pentateuch is meant.

TORAH – A term generally used to refer to the Pentateuch specifically or the Hebrew Bible as a whole (including the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa). See also **HUMMASH**.

TOSAFOT – Collections of comments on the **TALMUD** written by the descendants and pupils of Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (1040-1065) and their followers, who flourished in France and Germany from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.





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Online Resources

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Hebrew Manuscripts

<http://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?projekt=1157527575&ordnung=sig&recherche=ja&l=en>

Bodleian Libraries and Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Hebrew Manuscripts

<http://bav.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/digitized-items-hebrew-manuscripts>

Books within Books: Hebrew Fragments in European Libraries

<http://www.hebrewmanuscript.com>

The Braginsky Collection

<http://braginskycollection.com>

British Library Hebrew Manuscripts

<http://www.bl.uk/hebrew-manuscripts>

Crossing Borders: Hebrew Manuscripts as a Meeting-place of Cultures

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/whatson/whats-on/online/crossing-borders>

<http://bodleian.thejewishmuseum.org>

Ets Haim Library Hebrew Manuscripts

<http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl>

Frankfurt am Main Universitätsbibliothek Hebrew Manuscripts

<http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/mshebr2>

<http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/mshebr2/nav/index/all>

The Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society

<http://www.jewishmanuscripts.org>

The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts

<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/mhmf/>

Jewish Theological Seminary Library Hebrew Manuscripts

<http://www.jtsa.edu/library-special-collections>

The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library

<http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/home>





National Library of France Hebrew Manuscripts

[http://gallica.bnf.fr/services/engine/search/sru?operation=searchRetrieve&version=1.2&page=1&query=\(gallica%20all%20%22Hébreu%22\)%20and%20\(dc.type%20all%20%22manuscrit%22\)](http://gallica.bnf.fr/services/engine/search/sru?operation=searchRetrieve&version=1.2&page=1&query=(gallica%20all%20%22Hébreu%22)%20and%20(dc.type%20all%20%22manuscrit%22))

SfarData: The Codicological Data-Base of the Hebrew Palaeography Project

<http://sfardata.nli.org.il/sfardatanew/home.aspx>

Other Resources

History of the Jewish Book (DVD collection)

Recordings of the Manfred R. Lehmann Memorial Master Workshop in the History of the Jewish Book, held at the University of Pennsylvania (available for 2003-2014)





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