RECENT ACQUISITIONS

A HEBREW MANUSCRIPT OF *CLAVICULA SALOMONIS*,
PART II

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Nowadays it is almost a truism to say that there are more and deeper marks of mutual influences between many Christian and Jewish religious traditions of the medieval and early modern period than have long been acknowledged. This is especially true where magic is involved, a branch of knowledge whose adherents seemingly tended to be less concerned than others about questions of religious propriety, and who often displayed a marked interest in foreign beliefs and practices. And yet it is surprising to encounter the manifold traces of inter-religious and cross-cultural contacts and to find even specifically Christian formulae and practices in a Hebrew manuscript which represents an important string of Jewish magical traditions.

Or. MS. 14759, a manuscript of 53 folios which was acquired by the Hebrew Section of the British Library in 1993, proved to be a continuation of Or. MS. 6360, a manuscript of 15 folios. Written by the same hand, in Sephardic ‘rabbinic’ and square script, and in all probability dating back to the seventeenth or eighteenth century, the two manuscripts add up to a complete copy of Sefer Mafteah Shelomoh (‘The Book of the Key of Solomon’). This Hebrew handbook of magic, a *vademecum* of astral magic and necromancy, is part of a very complex flow of traditions which goes back for many centuries. Since the Middle Ages, numerous Latin, Italian, French, German and English versions have appeared of a book entitled *Clavicula Salomonis*, *Clavis Salomonis*, and the like, of which quite a few purport to be translations from the Hebrew. To be sure, the claim that a text of this sort had been translated from a Hebrew original is not very conclusive in itself. Christian interest in the Kabbalah and, above all, in its magical aspects having greatly increased since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such a claim of Jewish provenance more often than not simply served the purpose of establishing the antiquity and authoritative character of certain traditions or practices. Indeed, while there are indications that an old Hebrew version of this book did exist, it has never emerged.

For hundreds of years such a Hebrew version of *Clavicula Salomonis* had been referred to only in the most unreliable terms, and at the end of the nineteenth century was in fact believed to have been lost long ago. It came as a sensation, therefore, when Hermann Gollancz found a Hebrew manuscript entitled *Sefer [Mafteah] Shelomoh* in the library of his father, Samuel H. Gollancz, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gollancz
published a detailed description of this voluminous manuscript,\(^8\) which had been copied around 1700 in Amsterdam in Sephardic (‘Italo-Spanish’) cursive script, and later brought out a facsimile edition.\(^9\) Besides the manuscript edited by Gollancz, there is a second one in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam (MS. Ros. 12).\(^10\) This eighteenth-century transcript by Isaac Zekel ben Yidel Kohen Worms from a copy by Judah Perez (London, 1729) ‘corresponds’ to the Gollancz manuscript but seems to depend upon different exemplars.\(^11\) British Library Or. MSS. 6360 and 14759 now supplement the scanty Hebrew textual basis.

While he did not claim to have discovered the ‘original text’ of the *Clavicula Salomonis* traditions,\(^12\) and although he was aware of the numerous ‘foreign’ elements in his manuscript, Gollancz in a noticeably apologetic manner sought to prove its ‘Jewishness’.\(^13\) According to Gershom Scholem, however, *Mafteah Shelomoh* is a compilation of various traditions of the most diverse provenances: it ‘contains Christian, Jewish, and Arabic elements which either lie unmixed side by side or show in parts a mutual permeation.’\(^14\) In the case of one of the lesser traditions contained in the book, the incantation of King Baraqan,\(^15\) Scholem was able to prove its Arabic origin.\(^16\) The frequency of Christian, Latin, and Italian elements led him to the assumption that the text discovered by Gollancz was a late Jewish adaptation of a ‘Latin (or rather Italian) *Clavicula* text of the renaissance period’.\(^17\) This view, which has been shared by other scholars,\(^18\) is supported by an examination of Or. MS. 14759.

It was probably the scribe himself who translated this text into Hebrew. However, many foreign-language words and even entire passages are not translated but just transliterated into Hebrew characters. It was essential to retain the magical potency of foreign-language names and incantation formulae, and therefore a translation of such names and formulae was not desirable. Or. MS. 14759 contains a considerable number of Greek and Latin elements of this sort.\(^19\) In the long and complex flow of magical traditions, some of these names and formulae may even have been conveyed through several different ‘carrier-languages’ before they were copied down by the scribe of Or. MS. 14759. There are at least two examples in this Hebrew manuscript for the re-emergence of Hebrew/Jewish elements which bear the unmistakable marks of such a history.\(^20\)

More frequently, foreign-language words are retained to preserve their specific meaning, and a Hebrew explanation is often added in parenthesis. In some instances the scribe explicitly admits that he ‘did not understand’ a certain term or ‘did not know what it was’, and he omits a whole paragraph because he ‘did not understand the language’.\(^21\) Sometimes an Arabic equivalent is given. Italian appears to have been the predominant language of the original exemplar, but the scribe seems not to have been fluent in it. The Italian word for ‘badger’ is unknown to him, and so is the word ‘rostri’, for which he gives both a Hebrew translation and an Italian synonym. Some of his translations are rather clumsy, and at least in one case he needs to reintroduce the term he wanted to translate in order to make himself clear.\(^22\)

Apart from many names and words of Christian origin, Or. MS. 14759 contains
Fig. 1. Illustration accompanying magical prescriptions for love, from Part II of the Hebrew Clavicula Salomonis, c. 1700. Or. MS. 14759, f. 37v
Fig. 2. Title-page of Sefer ha-Levanah ['The Book of the Moon'], Part I of the Hebrew Clavicula Salomonis, c. 1700. Or. MS. 6360
numerous recipes which explicitly refer to Christian rituals and symbols. The cross is
depicted time and again in this Hebrew manuscript, which even advises the magical
utilization of a sanctified cross put in holy water.  

The rich pictorial illustrations in Or. MS. 14759 are of special interest. As in Or. MS.
6360, they were obviously executed by the scribe himself. Besides several diagrams, some
remarkably naturalistic drawings (e.g. fig. 1) serve to illustrate magical prescriptions
(segulot). One picture shows the escape of prisoners in a ship which is carried through
the air by demons, the escapees wearing oriental garb. In Or. MS. 6360, a drawing on
the title-page shows Solomon himself, dressed like a European gentleman of the Baroque
(fig. 2). Again, Mafteah Shelomoh proves to be at the crossroads of cultures and religions.

APPENDIX

A selective list of Greek, Latin, Italian, and Arabic
words and passages in Or. MS. 14759

Most of the words listed below appear only once in the manuscript, but some, like
(‘pentacle’), (‘pentagon’), and (‘hexagon’), are more frequent. However,
a full list of all references seemed dispensable. The asterisk indicates that a Hebrew translation
or an explanatory note is added to the relevant word or passage in the manuscript.

Greek

| Κεφάλαιο (f. 8b) = χαρακτήρ (‘sign, letter’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 12b) = δεκτόνυμος (‘of eight names’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 20b) = κατήγορος (‘prosecutor’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 31a, in a magic circle) = κυριακός (‘the Lord’s; Sunday’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 34b, in a magic circle) = παράκλητος (‘consoler’ [Holy Spirit]) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 34b, in a magic circle) = ἀλφα [καὶ] ὄ (‘Alpha and Omega’ [Christ]) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 34b, in a magic circle) = τετραγράμματον (‘tetragram’ [the ineffable
    name of God]) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 35b, in a drawing) = υψιστός (‘Almighty’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 36a, in a magic circle) = ἅγιος (‘holy’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 38a) = μάκελλα (‘pick’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 38b) = ὑψῖλος (‘Supreme Being’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 38b) = οὐσία (‘being; substance; essence’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 38b) = παντοκράτωρ (‘Almighty’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 38b) = σωτήρ Ἑμμανουηλ (‘saviour Emmanuel’ [Christ]) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 41b) = ὁ θεὸς ἅγιος (‘the Holy God’) |
| Κεφάλαιο (f. 42a) = a derivation from ἐρβῆθ and similar names which figure prominently
    in the Papyri Graecae Magicae |
(f. 47a) = παρακαλέω (‘I implore’)

(α) = ἄγιος ὁ θεός ἀθανάτος ἵσχυς

(‘the Holy God, immortal, strong’)

Latin

(α) = atramentum* (‘black dye, ink’)

(β) = tertia ... nona ... vesper (third [hour], none, vespers)

(γ) = pentaculum* (‘pentacle’)

(δ) = quadrigesimali* (‘pertaining to the [Christian] season of fasting’)

(ε) = mirabilia (‘miracles’)

(ζ) = pemaculum* (‘pemacle’)

(η) = foeniculum (‘fennel’)

(θ) = verbena (‘holy herbs; verbena’)

(ι) = valeriana (‘valerian’)

(κ) = mentha (‘mint’)

(λ) = [origanum] majorana (‘marjoram’)

(μ) = salvia (‘sage’)

(ν) = basilicum (‘basil’)

(ξ) = stilus* (‘style’)

(ο) = salve salvator (‘hail saviour’ [Christ])

(π) = lucerna* (‘torch; lantern’)

(ρ) = Arepo, Sator (elements of the pseudo-Latin permutation formula: Sator Arepo Tenet Opera Rotas)

(σ) = dicitur (‘it is said’)

(τ) = zephyrus (‘west wind’)

(υ) = boreas (‘north wind’)

(φ) = subsolanus (‘east wind’)

(χ) = africus (‘south-west wind’)

(ψ) = auster (‘south-east wind’)

This passage is doubtlessly ‘Latin’ in its entirety. The same is true for the following passage, with the remarkable exception of a ‘Greek’ insertion:
(f. 35b) = gratias... in omnibus... in ὑµατος semper... (‘thanks... in all... in the Almighty... always...’)

(f. 36a, in a magic circle) = agnus (‘lamb’, in all probability ‘agnus Dei’ [Christ])

(f. 36b) = mustela* (‘weasel’, but explained to mean ‘bat’)

(f. 37b, in a drawing) = Amor

(f. 37b, in a drawing) = Venus

(f. 37b, in a drawing) = Lucifer

(f. 40b) = rex (‘king’)

(f. 45a, in a magic circle) = Oriens

(f. 46b) = sulfur (‘sulphur’)

(f. 50a) = formator sponsor venator (‘shaper, donor, investigator’)

Italian

(f. 8b) = cinabro* (‘red mercury sulphide’)

(f. gb) = avorio* (‘ivory’)

(f. 9b) = forcellita* (‘little fork’)

(f. 10a) = lanterna (‘lantern’)

(f. 11a) = cotone (‘cotton’)

(f. 16b) = cristallo (‘crystal’)

(f. 19a) = exorcismo (‘exorcism’)

(f. 20a) = pentagono (‘pentagon’)

(f. 20a) = sessagono (‘hexagon’)

(f. 24a) = marzo* (‘March’)

(f. 24a) = giugno* (‘June’)

(f. 24a) = settembre* (‘September’)

(f. 24a) = dicembre (‘December’)

(f. 26a) = rostri* (‘beaks, mouths’, in addition to the Hebrew paraphrase [‘big mouths’], a synonym ‘in the foreign tongue’, likewise Italian, is given as well: becco)
spino (f. 26a) = spino (‘brier’)
sandalo (f. 26a) = sandalo (‘sandalwood’)
mastice (f. 26a) = mastice (‘mastic’)
spiro (f. 27a) = spiro (‘[nine] feet’)
palmo (f. 27a) = palmo (‘palm of the hand’, given as a synonym of ‘span’)
manico (f. 32b) = manico (‘sleeve’, given as a synonym of ‘palm of the hand’)
lastra (f. 33b) = salice* (‘willow’, but the Arabic ‘synonym’ means ‘palm-tree’)
spuma (f. 34a) = spuma (‘foam’; here: ‘albumen’)
cipresso* (f. 34a) = cipresso* (‘cypress’)
trivella* (f. 36a) = trivella* (‘drill’)
tasso (f. 36a) = tasso (‘badger’)
conca* (f. 37a) = conca* (‘dish’)
Napoli (f. 37a) = Virgilio (‘Virgil’)
nigromantico (f. 39a) = nigromantico (‘necromantic’)
perido (f. 39b) = period (‘interval’)
creta* (f. 41b) = creta* (‘clay’, but explained to mean ‘natron’)
incenso (f. 45a) = incenso (‘incense’)
scatola (f. 47a) = scatola (‘small box’)
febbraio (f. 48a) = febbraio (‘February’)
maggio (f. 48a) = maggio (‘May’)
agosto (f. 48a) = agusto (‘August’)
ottobre (f. 48a) = ottobre (‘October’)
anulare (f. 48b) = anulare (‘ring-finger’)
upupa* (f. 48b) = upupa* (‘hoopoe’)
verde (f. 49a) = verde (‘green’)
azzurro (f. 49a) = azzurro (‘blue’)
viole[tto] (f. 49a) = viole[tto] (‘violet’)
specolo* (f. 49b) = specolo* (‘mirror’)

Arabic

zinjafr (f. 8b) = zinjafr (‘red mercury sulphide’, given as a synonym of the Italian word ‘cinabro’)
al-Quran (f. 13a); al-Koran (f. 18a) = al-Quran (‘the Koran’)
Muhammad (f. 18a) = Muhammad
Maimun al-mudhabib (f. 18a) = Maimun al-mudhabab (‘the gilded ‘Maimun’ [a demon])

Greenup, who edited part of Or. MS. 6360, believed it to date from the sixteenth century; see A. W. Greenup, *Sefer ha-Levanah: The Book of the Moon* (London, 1912), p. i.

A preliminary report on Or. MS. 14759 was published by the present writer in ‘Mafteah Shelomoh: A New Acquisition of the British Library’, *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, i (1993/4), pp. 263–70. I would like to express my thanks to Brad Sabin Hill, Oriental and India Office Collections, who first recognized the connection of Or. MS. 14759 with Or. MS. 6360, and who brought the new manuscript to my attention.


Ibid., p. 6.

Ibid.

Cf. e.g. L. H. Schiffman and M. D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah* (Sheffield, 1992), p. 20.

In one case (f. 17b), one is advised to utter a certain formula in Arabic as well. However, the Arabic version is not given.

Cf. the name ‘Sabaoth’ (f. 40a) and the names of the demons Sanvi and Sansanvi (f. 46b).

Ff. 36a, 39b, and more often.

‘Garment of your arm, i.e. *manico* (‘sleeve’), f. 32b.

F. 37a.