

Is He a Good Knight or a Bad Knight? Methodologies in the Study of Polemics and Warriors in Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*

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Abstract

In this essay, I will map a range of different methodological approaches to the study of illuminated manuscripts that contain images of warriors and put them in the context of Jewish-Christian polemics, examining the images and the texts together in conjunction with military history. The importance of this study lies in its holistic reappraisal of the manner in which we think about illustrations in connection with text, the Christian milieu, and the possible meaning that the images had for the patron. Going into great detail regarding the displays of warfare allows us to broaden our understanding of the role these images played in the thought of the Jewish patrons and the reasons why they were included. I will apply the methodology of a close examination of weapons in a Jewish context. After deciphering the iconography, I will turn to the textual context and the meaning it affords the images. This article will focus on examples from four manuscripts, all displaying “bad knights,” that is, warriors and knights who represent persecution and the enemies of the Jews; beginning with a close examination of the text and images of a micrography scene from the book of Jeremiah in an Ashkenazi Bible, continuing with the associative nature of images of warriors in the *North French Hebrew Miscellany*, and finally ending with examples of the wicked son in two haggadahs.

The aesthetics of warfare was a ubiquitous motif in medieval European Christian literature, theology, drama, and visual culture. Arms and armor signaled a Christian warrior or knight’s rank in the feudal hierarchy, and displaying aristocratic symbols also conveyed the difference in rank between warriors engaged in combat through which they could earn knighthoods regardless of their social status and those who were noblemen from birth. As this article will

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elaborate, Jews were aware of this means of self-representing social rank and social codes. They imitated — and at times even attached original adapted spiritual meanings to — the borrowed symbols, thus demonstrating less religious and cultural differentiation between Jewish and Christian social codes than one might expect.¹ The appropriation and use of these subjects in Jewish art enhanced the polemical aspects of these images.² Historians have discussed the concept of Jewish writings about knighthood, as well as evidence regarding armed Jewish fighters; Eyal Levinson, Markus J. Wenninger, and Israel Yuval have studied historical documents related to Jewish warriors and have identified occasional cases of Jewish knights, mainly in the German lands.³ Based primarily on textual sources, Ivan G. Marcus distinguishes between actual Christian knights in the Middle Ages, whom he identifies with the Crusaders, and Jews who imagined themselves as knights.⁴ Warriors, especially knights, are portrayed in Hebrew illuminated manuscripts as Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.⁵ In my studies of thirteenth and fourteenth-century

¹ On the Jews' differentiation and adaptation from their Christian surroundings in medieval Ashkenaz, see Elisheva Baumgarten, "Appropriation and Differentiation: Jewish Identity in Medieval Ashkenaz," *AJS Review* 42 (2018): 39–63.

² On appropriation in art history, see Robert S. Nelson, "Appropriation," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 160–73.

³ Eyal Levinson, *Gender and Sexuality in Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Shazar, 2022); idem, "'Those Who Grow Their Forelocks and Wear the Clothes of a Knight': Young Jewish Men in Medieval Germany — Between Rabbinical Masculinity and Chivalric Masculinity" [Hebrew], *Chidushim* 21 (2019): 14–46; Markus J. Wenninger, "Von jüdischen Rittern und anderen waffentragenden Juden im mittelalterlichen Deutschland," *Aschkenas* 13 (2003): 35–82; Israel Jacob Yuval, "A German-Jewish Autobiography of the Fourteenth Century," trans. Zippora Brody, *Binah* 3 (1994): 79–99; idem, "Rabbinical Perspectives on the Bearing of Weapons by the Jews," *Jewish Studies* 41 (2002): 51–55. Joseph Isaac Lifshitz explores the Jewish view of these elements — that is, the approach to warfare aesthetics along with the concept of beauty in Ashkenazi medieval texts — see Lifshitz, "War and Aesthetics in Jewish Law," in *War and Peace in Jewish Tradition: From the Biblical World to the Present*, ed. Yigal Levin and Amnon Shapira (New York: Routledge, 2012), 103–15.

⁴ Ivan G. Marcus, "Why Is This Knight Different? A Jewish Self-Representation in Medieval Europe," in *Tov Elem: Memory, Community and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Societies. Essays in Honor of Robert Bonfil*, ed. Elisheva Baumgarten, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, and Roni Weinstein (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2011), 139–52 [English section].

⁵ Jane Barlow, "The Muslim Warrior at the Seder Meal: Dynamics between Minorities in the Rylands Haggadah," in *Postcolonising the Medieval Image*, ed. Eva

Ashkenazi Bibles, *maḥzorim*, and a Provençal Passover haggadah, I have focused on the visual and conceptual differences between the violence exhibited by warriors and the lofty noble aspects of knighthood.⁶ My work separates warriors and knights in Hebrew manuscripts into two categories: “good knight” and “bad knight” — that is, warriors and knights who stand for positive noble traits and knights who represent persecution and the enemies of the Jews, generally depicted as the Egyptian army in scenes portraying the crossing of the Red Sea or as the wicked son in illuminated haggadahs.⁷

In this essay, I will map a range of different methodological approaches to the study of illuminated manuscripts that contain images of warriors and put them in the context of Jewish-Christian polemics, examining the images and the texts together in conjunction with military history. The importance of this study lies in its holistic reappraisal of the manner in which we think about illustrations in connection with text, the Christian milieu, and the possible meaning that the images had

Frojmovic and Catherine E. Karkov (London: Routledge, 2017), 218–40; Julie Harris, “Good Jews, Bad Jews, and No Jews at All: Ritual Imagery and Social Strands in the Catalan Haggadot,” in *Church, State, Vellum, and Stone: Essays on Medieval Spain in Honor of John Williams*, ed. Therese Martin and Julie Harris (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 275–96; Sarit Shalev-Eyni, *Jews among Christians: Hebrew Book Illumination from Lake Constance* (London: Harvey Miller, 2010), 85–92; eadem, “Jews of Means in a Christian City: Artistic and Textual Aspects” [Hebrew], in *Image and Sound: Art, Music and History*, ed. Richard I. Cohen (Jerusalem: Shazar, 2007), 107–30; Joseph Shatzmiller, “Fromme Juden und christlich-höfische Ideale im Mittelalter,” *Arye-Maimon-Vortrag an der Universität Trier*, 7. November 2007 (Trier: Universität Trier, 2008), 9–29.

⁶ Sara Offenberger, “Jacob the Knight in Ezekiel’s Chariot: Imagined Identity in a Micrography Decoration of an Ashkenazi Bible,” *AJS Review* 40 (2016): 1–16; eadem, “‘Noblesse Oblige’: Symbolic Portrayals of Nobility and Jewish-Christian Relations in the Provençal Barcelona Haggadah,” in *Wisdom and Morals in Medieval Literature*, ed. Tovi Bibring and Revital Refael-Vivante (Jerusalem: Misgav, 2022), 169–88; eadem, “Sword and Buckler in Masorah Figurata: Traces of Early Illuminated Fight Books in the Micrography of Bible, Paris, BnF, MS héb. 9,” *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 9 (2021): 1–32; eadem, *Up in Arms: Images of Knights and the Divine Chariot in Esoteric Ashkenazi Manuscripts of the Middle Ages* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2019).

⁷ Sara Offenberger, “‘And He Put on Righteousness as a Coat of Mail, and a Helmet of Salvation upon His Head’: Double Meaning of Warriors in the Haggadah from the British Library, Add. 14761” [Hebrew], *Pe’amim* 150–152 (2017): 315–39.

for the patron. After analyzing the iconography, I will turn to the meaning of the scene displayed.⁸ Images are not merely illustrations of the texts, but also extend their meaning; moreover, they unpack or divulge latent traditions of the culture not articulated in discursive text. When exploring an illuminated manuscript, it is important to note that the modern dichotomy between art history and Jewish thought did not exist for the manuscript's patron. Rather, for him/her, it was a complete corpus ordered for a specific intention. This is especially true when it comes to micrography,⁹ which "forces" the viewer/reader to look at the visual aspects created by the text; thus, one cannot study the image without the text and vice versa. Although in the past two decades, many art historical studies have been undertaken hand-in-hand with other fields of research,¹⁰ the point I wish to make is that this very notion of the possibility of employing an interdisciplinary approach has not been fully adopted by all scholars engaged in the study of Hebrew illuminated manuscripts with military aesthetics. This does not mean that the study of texts or images on their own is not of significant value, but rather that

⁸ On recent studies of how we think about the meaning of iconography, see Lena Eva Liepe, "The Study of the Iconography and Iconology of Medieval Art: A Historiographic Survey," in *The Locus of Meaning in Medieval Art: Iconography, Iconology, and Interpreting the Visual Imagery of the Middle Ages*, ed. Lena Eva Liepe (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2019), 16–45; Pamela A. Patton and Henry D. Schilb, "Introduction," in *The Lives and Afterlives of Medieval Iconography*, ed. Pamela A. Patton and Henry D. Schilb (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020), 1–8.

⁹ "Micrography, also termed 'masorah figurata,' has been adopted as the name for a unique Jewish art that creates the outlines of miniature ornamentation in manuscripts of the Bible and adorns their margins, carpet pages, opening word panels, verse counts, and colophons. It is generally fashioned from Masoretic Texts, which are lexical texts that are designed to preserve the biblical text and its precision": see Dalia-Ruth Halperin, "Micrography," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception: Volume 18, Mass-Midnight*, ed. Constance M. Furey et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 1179.

¹⁰ Gabrielle Sed-Rajna, "The Image in the Text: Methodological Aspects of the Analysis of Illustrations and Their Relation to the Text," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 75, no. 3 (1993): 25–32. The claims made by Sed-Rajna and the categories and divisions in this article have been refined by other art historians in studies published over the years.

as scholars, we should be wary of forgetting the person who actually used the illuminated manuscript. With this point in mind, this study will examine the manuscript's texts and illuminations together, not as discrete units.

Going into great detail regarding the displays of warfare allows us to broaden our understanding of the role these images played in the thought of the Jewish patrons and the reasons why they were included. In what follows, I will apply the methodology of a close examination of weapons in a Jewish context. After deciphering the iconography, I will turn to the textual context and the meaning it affords the images. This article will focus on examples from four manuscripts, all displaying "bad knights," beginning with a close examination of the text and images of a micrography scene from the book of Jeremiah in an Ashkenazi Bible, continuing with the associative nature of images of warriors in the *North French Hebrew Miscellany*, and finally ending with examples of the wicked son in two haggadahs.

Sword and Buckler in Hebrew Letters: Micrography in Paris, BnF Hébr. 9

Four fighting figures brandishing swords are depicted in *masorah figurata* ("figurative masorah") in the lower margins of the opening page of a Hebrew Bible, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France hébr. 9, fols. 104v–105r, which was produced in the German lands (Ashkenaz) in 1304 (figs. 1, 2).¹¹ All four are wearing gloves with long cuffs and their outer garments are rolled up to their waists and tucked

¹¹ This volume of Prophets is part of a three-volume Bible, now Paris, BnF MS hébr. 8-9-10. Gabrielle Sed-Rajna, *Les manuscrits hébreux enluminés des bibliothèques de France* (Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 1994), 187–91; Colette Sirat and Malachi Beit-Arié, *Manuscrits médiévaux en caractères hébraïques portant des indications de date jusqu'à 1540*, 3 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1972–1986), 1:28; Javier del Barco, *Bibliothèque nationale de France: Hébreu 1 à 32. Manuscrits de la bible hébraïque* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 51–60; Michel Garel, *D'une main forte: Manuscrits hébreux des collections françaises* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), n° 89; idem, "Un ornement propre aux manuscrits hébreux médiévaux: La micrographie," *Bulletin de la Bibliothèque nationale* 3 (1978): 158–66. The manuscript is available online: [https://www.nli.org.il/he/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH000128732/NLI#\\$FL54549935](https://www.nli.org.il/he/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH000128732/NLI#$FL54549935).

into their belts in order to free their legs, so we can see how they are positioned and the iconography, which was adapted from German *Fechtbücher* (fight books): books of instructions, usually with illustrations, detailing the fencing arts.¹² The micrography-forming text on fols. 104v–105r of the Bible is from Jeremiah 10:22–13:1, mostly 11:22: “The young men shall die by the sword, their boys and girls shall die by famine.” Thus, it is clear that the artist’s choice of text for the micrography was intended to relate not only to Jeremiah’s words, but also to the meaning of the opening page, with a focus on the sword and the danger about which the prophecy speaks.¹³



Figure 1: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, héb. 9, fols. 104^v–105^r, Germany, 1304

¹² For the iconography of fight books, see Heidemarie Bodemer, “Das Fechtbuch: Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der bildkünstlerischen Darstellung der Fechtkunst in den Fechtbüchern des mediterranen und westeuropäischen Raumes vom Mittelalter bis Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts” (PhD diss., University of Stuttgart, 2008); Jens Peter Kleinau, “Visualised Motion: Iconography of Medieval and Renaissance Fencing Books,” in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Fight Books Transmission and Tradition of Martial Arts in Europe (14th–17th Centuries)*, ed. Daniel Jaquet, Karin Verelst, and Timothy Dawson (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 88–116.

¹³ Offenberg, “Sword and Buckler in Masorah Figurata.”



Figure 2: Detail, Paris, BnF, MS héb. 9, fols. 104v-105r.

Before deciphering the texts in the micrography, I should mention that the in-tandem study of texts and images in the micrography of Ashkenazi Bibles has received increased attention in recent years. The most cutting-edge research is presently being conducted by a group headed by Hanna Liss, which is working on a project entitled “Corpus Masoreticum: The Inculturation of the Masorah into Jewish Law and Lore from the 11th to the 13th Centuries: Digital Acquisition of a Forgotten Domain of Knowledge” and will continue to do so throughout 2023. These scholars are exploring both the philological and artistic aspects of the *masorah* and are in the process of creating an important digital humanities tool by building an accessible online database of their findings,¹⁴ though it should be noted that MS héb. 8-9-10 is not part of this project. Important methodological issues regarding Masoretic Bibles and micrography have been discussed in recently published books by Jordan S.

¹⁴ <https://corpusmasoreticum.de/>. See the recent studies by Hanna Liss, “Introduction: Editorial State of the Art of the Masoretic Corpus and Research Desiderata,” in *Philology and Aesthetics: Figurative Masorah in Western European Manuscripts*, ed. Hanna Liss and Jonas Leipziger (Frankfurt, New York, and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2021), 3–39; Hanna Liss and Kay Joe Petzold, “Die Erforschung der westeuropäischen Bibeltexttradition als Aufgabe der Jüdischen Studien,” in *Judaistik im Wandel: Ein halbes Jahrhundert Forschung und Lehre über das Judentum in Deutschland Herausgegeben*, ed. Andreas Lehnardt (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 189–210.

Penkower, David Stern, and Yosef Ofer.¹⁵ Apart from the studies of Leila Avrin, Joseph Guttmann, and Ursula and Kurt Schubert in the early 1980s,¹⁶ it seems that this scholarly field only came to life at the beginning of the new millennium, especially with the work of Dalia-Ruth Halperin on the fourteenth-century Catalan Mahzor.¹⁷ Recent years have also seen an ongoing interest in Ashkenazi Masoretic Bibles.¹⁸ Rahel Fronda has published several articles on micrography in Ashkenazi Bibles in which she discusses their decorative program.¹⁹ Moreover, Annette Weber has discussed the meaning of the initial word micrography decorations in Ashkenazi Bibles, mostly in Erfurt Bible 1, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz MS Or. fol. 1211, which was produced in 1343, and Erfurt Bible 2 in relation to esoteric concepts found in the writings of Rabbi Judah the Pious and Rabbi Eleazar of Worms.²⁰ In my recent publications, I have discussed the connection between esoteric texts from Ashkenaz and the micrography of knights in Masoretic Ashkenazi Bibles.²¹

¹⁵ Jordan S. Penkower, *Masorah and Text Criticism in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Moses Ibn Zabara and Menahem de Lonzano* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2014); Yosef Ofer, *The Masora on Scriptures and Its Methods*, trans. Michael Glatzer (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019); David Stern, *The Jewish Bible: A Material History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).

¹⁶ Leila Avrin, "Micrography as Art," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 43 (1981): 377–88; eadem, *Scribes, Script, and Books: The Book Arts from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Chicago: American Library Association; London: British Library, 1991); Joseph Guttmann, "Masorah Figurata: The Origins and Development of a Jewish Art Form," in *Sacred Images: Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph Guttmann (Northampton: Variorum Reprints, 1989), 49–62; Ursula Schubert and Kurt Schubert, *Jüdische Buchkunst*, 2 vols. (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1983–1992).

¹⁷ Dalia-Ruth Halperin, *Illuminating in Micrography: The Catalan Micrography Mahzor—MS Hebrew 8⁶⁵²⁷ in the National Library of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

¹⁸ Élodie Attia, ed., *The Masorah of Elijah ha-Naqdan: An Edition of Ashkenazic Micrographical Notes* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2015).

¹⁹ Rahel Fronda, "Micrographic Illustrations in a Group of Thirteenth Century Hebrew Bibles from Germany," in *Hebräische Schrift zwischen Juden-und Christentum in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit: Beiträge zur 45. Internationalen Hebräischlehrerkonferenz (IÖKH) vom 8. bis 10. Mai 2015 in Erfurt*, ed. Peter Stein (Kamen: Hartmut Spenner, 2016), 37–73.

²⁰ Annette Weber, "The Masoret Is a Fence to the Torah: Monumental Letters and Micrography in Medieval Ashkenazi Bibles," *Ars Judaica* 11 (2015): 7–30.

²¹ Sara Offenberg, "'For Your Eyes Only': Military Secrets, Text and Image in a Manuscript from Erfurt" [Hebrew], *Jewish Thought* 2 (2020): 376–400; eadem, *Up in Arms*.

Returning to our manuscript, Bible BnF 9, we should first look at the *masorah magna* (upper Masorah), as well as the *masorah parva* (between columns of text). On fol. 104v, it matches the MS Halle *Okhla we-Okhla* list #165 under the letter *lamed*;²² however, I could not find the upper Masorah on fol. 105^v, nor the lower Masorah — that is, the text in the micrography and between the figures — in any of the *Okhla we-Okhla* lists, so we can probably assume that it was compiled by the masorator (i.e., the individual who copied the Masorah text) and not copied from a list, at least not one that has survived.²³ The text between the figures is mainly based on verses from the Prophets. On fol. 104^v, the immediate connection is the word “no” (לא):²⁴

When you pass through water, I will be with you (Isa 43:2). Evil is coming upon you. Which you will not (Isa 47:11). You had never heard, you had never known (Isa 48:8). Fear not, you shall not be shamed (Isa 54:4). Whom do you dread and fear (Isa 57:11) had never been heard or noted (Isa 64:3); never asked themselves, “Where is the LORD?” (Jer 2:8). Assuredly, thus said the LORD: Because (Jer 23:38). Shall not return to what he sold (Ezek 7:13). Throw their silver into the streets, and their gold (Ezek 7:19). My hand will be against the prophets (Ezek 13:9). He has not eaten [on the mountains or raised] his eyes (Ezek 18:16). He has not

²² *Okhla we-Okhla* is a Masoretic list. See Fernando Díaz Esteban, *Sefer 'Oklah we-'Oklah: Colección de listas de palabras destinadas a conservar la integridad del texto hebreo de la Biblia entre los judíos de la Edad Media* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1975), 236.

²³ Salomon Frensdorff, *Das Buch Ochlah W'ochlah (Massora)* (Hannover: Hahn'sche Hofbuchhandlung, 1864); Ofer, *The Masora on Scriptures*, 56–60; Bruno Ognibeni, *La seconda parte del Sefer 'Oklah we 'Oklah: Edizione del ms. Halle, Universitätsbibliothek, 2 Y b 4 10, ff. 68–124* (Fribourg: Université de Fribourg, 1995); Sebastian Seemann, “The Okhla Lists in MS Berlin Or. Fol. 1213 (Erfurt 3),” in *Philology and Aesthetics: Figurative Masorah in Western European Manuscripts*, ed. Hanna Liss and Jonas Leipziger (Frankfurt, New York, and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2021), 275–99.

²⁴ Most of the verses were cut, so they were not copied in full. I have modeled the English translation after the Hebrew text and have used square brackets to mark the words that were not included in the manuscript.

במים אתך אני. ובה עליך רעה לא. גם לא שמעת גם לא ידעת. אל תראי כי לא תבושי. את מי דאגת ותיראי. לא שמעו לא האזינו. לא אמרו איה יי'. לכן כה אמר יי'. יען. אל הממכר לא. בחצת ישליכו וזהבם. והיתה ידי אל הנביאים. לא אכל ועיניו. תני' דפס'. דספ'. ואיש לא הונה חבלת. ואמרתם לא יתכן דרך. ואמרו בית ישראל דרך. בני עמך לא. ואתה בן אדם אמר אל. ויאמר קרא שמו לא עמי. לא יעמד וקל. כי לא יכלו (!) לעשות. וארבעם שנה כלכלתם במדבר. כי לא ישנו אם לא. לא יסיף להביטם. אשרי האיש אשר לא. לא נתן בנשך. לחם חמדות לא אכלתי. על לשנו

wronged anyone; he has not seized a pledge (Ezek 18:17). Yet you say, “The way [of the Lord] is unfair” (Ezek 18:25). Yet the House of Israel say (Ezek 18:29). Your fellow countrymen say, [“The way of the Lord] is unfair” (Ezek 33:17). Now, O mortal, say to (Ezek 33:10). Then He said, “Name him Lo[-ammi]” (Hos 1:9). Shall not hold his ground, And the fleet-footed (Amos 2:15). For I cannot do (Gen 19:22). Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness (Neh 9:21). For they cannot sleep unless (Prov 4:16); has turned away from them (Job 4:16). Happy is the man who has not (Ps 1:1), who has never lent money at interest (Ps 15:5). I ate no tasty food (Dan 10:3); whose tongue is not given (Ps 15:3).

Further, on fol. 105^r, the words are “and the Lord” (וַיְי):²⁵

But the LORD is truly God (Jer 10:10). The LORD of Hosts, who planted (Jer 11:17). The LORD informed me, and I knew (Jer 11:18). O LORD of Hosts, O [just] Judge (Jer 11:20). But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior (Jer 20:11). O LORD of Hosts, You who test the righteous (Jer 20:12). But the Lord GOD will help me (Isa 50:7). But the LORD chose to crush him (Isa 53:10). Yet the LORD, the God of Hosts, [must be invoked as] “LORD” (Hos 12:6). And the LORD roars aloud (Joel 2:11). And the LORD will roar from Zion (Joel 4:16). It is my Lord the GOD of Hosts. At whose touch (Amos 9:5). But the LORD cast a mighty wind (Job 1:4). And the LORD will manifest Himself to them (Zech 9:14). The LORD restored Job’s fortunes (Job 42:10). Thus the LORD blessed the latter years of Job’s life (Job 42:12). No flesh (Jer 12:12). O God, Source of the breath of all flesh (Num 16:22). The first issue of the womb of every being (Num 18:15). Let the LORD, source of the breath of all flesh, appoint someone (Num 27:16). Tumult has reached the ends of the earth (Jer 25:31). Upon all the bare heights (Jer 12:12). They shall be a horror to all flesh (Isa 66:24). Reaped thorns (Jer 12:13). Not concerned (Amos 6:6).

²⁵

Most of the text is based on the first words of the verses.

וַיְי אֱלֹהִים אִמְתָּ. וַיְי צְבָאוֹת הַנוֹטֵעַ. וַיְי הוֹדִיעֵנִי וְאִדְעָה. וַיְי צְבָאוֹת צֶדֶק. וַיְי אוֹתִי כִגְבוּר. וַיְי צְבָאוֹת בּוֹחֵן צֶדֶק. וַיְי אֱלֹהִים יַעֲזוֹר לִי. וַיְי חִפְץ דְּכָאוֹ. וַיְי אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת יְיָ. וַיְי נָתַן קוֹלוֹ. וַיְי מַצִּיּוֹן יִשְׂאֵג. וַיְי אֱלֹהִים הַצְבָּאוֹת הַנוֹגֵעַ. וַיְי הַטִּיל רוּחַ גְּדוּלָּה. וַיְי בְּהִיכֵל קִדְשׁוֹ. וַיְי עֲלֵיהֶם יִרְאָה. וַיְי שֶׁבֶת אֶת שְׁבוֹת אִיּוֹב. וַיְי בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַחֲרֵית אִיּוֹב. ~ לְכָל בֶּשֶׂר ז'. דְּסִמָּ' בְּקָרִי

The relationships between the verses are quite understandable, as the words are connected by one word following another in a chain of similar words (or words written in the same manner, even if their meanings are different), even in cases where the word is part of the verse but has not been copied in the folio.²⁶ For example, **רָאִי** is the Hebrew word for both “looking” and “fearing,” but it has a different meaning in each verse: “You had never heard, you had never known” (Isa 48:8), “Fear not, you shall not be shamed” (Isa 54:4). Another example can be seen in the use of verses from the same chapter, “Yet you say, ‘The way [of the Lord] is unfair’” (Ezek 18:25), with a verse from the same chapter, but with the repeating words omitted, appearing immediately afterwards: “Yet the House of Israel say [‘The way of the Lord is unfair’]” (Ezek 18:29).

Since the importance of the image is related not only to the copied words, but also to the relevant complete verse (or even the chapter), I have reproduced the micrography-forming verses in their entirety and have marked the words used for the *masorah figurata* in bold (the original Hebrew text is in the footnotes). Not all the words composing the image are based on Jeremiah 10–13, but most of them are taken from there. The following verse is connected to the main text of Jeremiah 11:22: “Assuredly, thus said the LORD of Hosts: ‘I am going to deal with them: the young men shall die by the sword, their boys and girls shall die by famine.’” I would suggest that the choice of particular verses for the micrography was intended to relate not only to Jeremiah’s words, but also to the meaning of the opening page with its focus on the sword and the danger against which the prophecy warns.

On fol. 104v (fig. 3), the sword in the hand of the figure on the right is based on Deuteronomy 11:2:²⁷ **“Take thought this day that it was not your children, who neither experienced nor** witnessed the lesson of the LORD your God — His majesty, His mighty hand, His outstretched arm.” The buckler is based on Deuteronomy 32:17; 32:25:²⁸ **“They sacrificed to demons, no-gods, gods they had never**

²⁶ On a similar technique in the Ashkenazi Erfurt Bible 2, see Offenberg, “For Your Eyes Only.”

²⁷ וידעתם היום כי לא את בניכם אשר לא ידעו ואשר לא ראו את מוסר ה' אלהיכם: Deut 11:2: את גדלו את ידו הטובה והנעוזה.

²⁸ The buckler is based on Deut 32:17; 32:25: יִזְכְּחוּ לַשִּׁדִּים לֹא אֱלֹהִים לֹא יְדָעוּם: ... (כה) מִחוּץ תִּשְׁקַל קֶרֶב וּמִתְקָרִים אִמָּה גַם בְּחוּר גַּם תִּדְּשִׁים מִקְרָב בָּאוּ לֹא שָׁעָרוּם אֲבֹתֵיכֶם: ... בתולה יונק עם איש שיבה.

known, new ones, who came but lately, who stirred not your fathers' fears. ... The sword shall deal death without, As shall the terror within, to youth and maiden alike, the suckling as well as the aged." The neck is based on Exodus 33:19-20:²⁹ **"And He answered,** "I will make **all My goodness** pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name LORD, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show. But, He said, 'you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live.'" The abdomen is based on Numbers 6:3:³⁰ "He shall abstain from **wine and any other intoxicant**; he shall not drink vinegar of wine or of any other intoxicant, neither shall he drink anything in which grapes have been steeped, nor eat grapes fresh or dried." The garments' folds are based on Leviticus 21:5:³¹ "They shall not shave **smooth any part of their heads**, or cut the side-growth of their beards, or make gashes in their flesh." The back is based on 1 Kings 1:18:³² "Yet now Adonijah has become king, **and you, my lord the king, know nothing about it.**"

²⁹ The neck and upper back are based on Exod 33:19–20: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֶעֱבֹר כֵּל טוֹבִי עַל: לְפָנָי וְקִרְאתִי בְשֵׁם ה' לְפָנָי וְסַמֹּתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹן וְרַסְמִתִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲרַסֵּם: וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאוֹת אֶת פָּנַי כִּי לֹא יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי.

³⁰ The abdomen is based on Num 6:3: **מִיֵּינוּ וְשֶׁכֶר יִדִּיר חֲמִץ יֵינוּ וְחֲמִץ שֶׁכֶר לֹא יִשְׁתֶּה וְכֹל**
מִשְׁרַת עֲנִיבִים לֹא יִשְׁתֶּה וְעֲנִיבִים לֶחִים וִיבָשִׁים לֹא יֵאָכֵל.

31 The dress folds are based on Lev 21:5: **לֹא יִקְרַחַהּ יִקְרַחוּ קִרְחָהּ בְּרֹאשָׁהּ** וּפָתָה וּקְנָנֶהּ לֹא יִגְלַחוּ וּבִבְשָׁתָם לֹא יִשְׂרְטוּ שְׂרָפֶת: (1) קְדוּשִׁים יִהְיוּ לֹאֲלֹהֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִחַלְלוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי אֵת אֲשֵׁי ה' לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הֵם מִקְרִיבִים וְהֵיוּ קֹדֶשׁ.

³² The back is based on 1 Kgs 1:18: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה אֲנִי מֵלֶכְךָ וְעַתָּה אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא יָדָעַתָּה



Figure 3: Detail, Paris, BnF, MS héb. 9, fol. 104v

In the figure on the left (fig. 4), the coif contains only one word from Jeremiah 11:20:³³ “O LORD of Hosts, O just Judge, Who tests the thoughts and the mind, let me see Your retribution upon them, for I lay **my case** before You.” The lower part of the garment is based on 2 Chronicles 36:17:³⁴ “He therefore brought the king of the Chaldeans

³³ וְהָאֵלֹהִים שֹׁפֵט צֶדֶק בְּחֹן כְּלִיּוֹת וְלֵב אֲרָאָה נִקְמָתוֹ מִמֶּה כִּי אֵלֶיךָ גָּלִיתִי אֶת רִיבִי
³⁴ וַיַּעַל עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת מֶלֶךְ כַּשְׁדִּיִּים פְּשֻׁדִּים וַיְהַרֵּג בַּחֲוִרֵיהֶם בַּחֶרֶב בְּבֵית מִקְדָּשָׁם וְלֹא תָמַל עַל בְּחוּרֵי וּבְתוּלָהּ זָנוֹ וַיִּשֶׁשׁ הַכָּל נָמוֹן בְּיָדוֹ

upon them, who killed their youths by the sword in their sanctuary; he did not spare **youth**, maiden, elder, or graybeard, but delivered all into his hands.” The lower garment and the right leg are based on Isaiah 27:17.³⁵ “When its **crown is withered, they break**; women come and make fires with them. For they are a people without understanding; that is why their Maker will show them no mercy, their Creator will deny them grace.” The left leg is based on Isaiah 43:2.³⁶ “When you pass **through water, I will be with you**; through streams, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire, you shall not be scorched; through flame, it shall not burn you.” you shall not be scorched; through flame, it shall not burn you.”



Figure 4: Detail, Paris, BnF, MS héb. 9, fol. 104v.

³⁵ בִּיבֶשׁ קִצְיָה תִשְׁבְּרָנָה נָשִׁים בָּאוֹת מְאִירוֹת אוֹתָהּ כִּי לֹא עִם בִּינוֹת הוּא עַל כֵּן לֹא יִרְחֻמְנָה עֲשֹׂהוּ וַיִּצְרוּ לֹא יִחַנְנוּ

³⁶ כִּי תַעֲבֹר בַּמַּיִם אֲנִי וּבְנִהְרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטָפוּדָּךְ כִּי תִלָּךְ בְּמֹו אֵשׁ לֹא תִקְהָה וְלִקְהָה לֹא תִבְעַר בָּךְ

The abdomen of the figure on the left is based on 2 Chronicles 25:4, which is also used for the figures on fol. 105:³⁷ **“But he did not put their children to death for [he acted] in accordance with what is written in the Teaching, in the Book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, ‘Parents shall not die for children, nor shall children die for parents, but every person shall die only for his own crime.’”** The margins and the lower part of the garment are based on Isaiah 16:10:³⁸ **“Rejoicing and gladness are gone from the farmland;** in the vineyards no shouting or cheering is heard. No more does the treader tread wine in the presses. The shouts have been silenced.” The upper back of the garment is based on Ezekiel 3:6:³⁹ **“Not to the many peoples** of unintelligible speech and difficult language, whose talk you cannot understand. If I sent you to them, they would listen to you.”

The garment’s folds are based on Isaiah 10:7:⁴⁰ **“But he has evil plans,** his mind harbors evil designs; for he means to destroy, to wipe out nations, not a few.” The right arm is based on 2 Kings 14:6:⁴¹ **“But he did not put to death the children of the assassins,** in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Teaching of Moses, where the LORD commanded, ‘Parents shall not be put to death for children, nor children be put to death for parents; a person shall be put to death only for his own crime.’” The left arm (holding the shield) is based on 1 Samuel 17:39:⁴² **“David girded** his sword over his garment. Then he tried to walk; but he was not used to it. And David said to Saul, ‘I cannot walk in these, for I am not used to them.’ So David took them off.” The sword includes two words: the upper one, “tombs,” is associated with the verses used to design the figures on fol. 105r based on 2 Chronicles 32:33.

The appearance of the word at the top of the swords suggests an attempt at a correction, as the ink is thicker there, and it was perhaps

³⁷ וְאֵת בְּנֵיהֶם לֹא הִמִּית כִּי כְּכָתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה בְּסֵפֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לֵאמֹר לֹא יָמוּתוּ אָבוֹת עַל בָּנִים וּבָנִים לֹא יָמוּתוּ עַל אָבוֹת כִּי אִישׁ בְּחַטָּאוֹ יָמוּת

³⁸ וְנֶאֱסַף שְׂמִיחָה וְגִיל מִן הַכְּרָמִל וּבְכַרְמִים לֹא יִרְנָן לֹא יִרְעֶעַ יֵין בְּיָקְבִים לֹא יִדְרֹךְ הַדְרֹךְ הַיֵּדֶד הַשְּׂבָתִי

³⁹ לֹא אֵל עַמִּים רַבִּים עַמִּי שְׂפָה וְכַבְדִּי לְשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִשְׁמַע דְּבָרֵיהֶם אִם לֹא אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁלַחְתִּיד הַמָּה יִשְׁמְעוּ אֵלַיִךְ

⁴⁰ וְהוּא לֹא כֵן יִדְמָה וּלְקַבּוֹ לֹא כֵן יִחְשַׁב כִּי לְהִשְׁמִיד בְּלִקְבּוֹ וּלְהַקְרִית גּוֹיִם לֹא מַעֵט

⁴¹ וְאֵת בְּנֵי הַמַּכִּים לֹא הִמִּית כְּכָתוּב תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לֵאמֹר לֹא יָמוּתוּ אָבוֹת עַל בָּנִים וּבָנִים לֹא יָמוּתוּ עַל אָבוֹת כִּי אִם אִישׁ בְּחַטָּאוֹ יָמוּת יוֹמָת

⁴² וַיַּחְגֹּר דָּוִד אֶת חֶרְבוֹ מֵעַל לְמַדְיוֹ וַיֵּאֵל לְלֶכֶת כִּי לֹא נִסָּה וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֵל שְׂאוּל לֹא אוֹכַל לְלֶכֶת בְּאַלְהֵי כִּי לֹא נִסִּיתִי וְנִסְרָם דָּוִד מֵעַלְיוֹ

meant to be “his sword” (חרבו), but the *resh* has been replaced with a *heth* so that it reads “his length” (רחבו). The buckler is based on 2 Samuel 18:3:⁴³ **“But the troops replied, ‘No! For if some of us flee, the rest will not be concerned about us; even if half of us should die, the others will not be concerned about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. Therefore, it is better for you to support us from the town.’”**

The text of the *masorah figurata* on fol. 105r (fig. 5) is based on Jeremiah 12:12:⁴⁴ “Spoilers have come upon all the bare heights of the wilderness. For a sword of the LORD devours from one end of the land to the other; no flesh is safe.” The phrase that dominates the chosen Masorah is the “sword of the LORD.” The figure on the right is based on 1 Kings 11:42:⁴⁵ **“Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him as king.”** It is also based on 1 Kings 22:51:⁴⁶ **“Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of his father David, and his son Jehoram succeeded him as king.”**



Figure 5: Detail, Paris, BnF, MS héb. 9, fol. 105r

- ⁴³ ויאמר העם לא תצא כי אם נס ננוס לא ישימו אלינו לב ואם ימתו תצנינו לא ישימו אלינו לב כי עתה קמנו עשרה אלפים ועתה טוב כי תהיה לנו מעיר לעזר לעזור
- ⁴⁴ על כל שפים במדבר באו שדדים כי חרב לה' אכלה מקצה ארץ ועד קצה הארץ אין שלום לכל בשר
- ⁴⁵ וישכב שלמה עם אבתיו וייקבר בעיר דוד אביו וימלך רחבעם בנו תחתיו
- ⁴⁶ וישכב יהושפט עם אבתיו וייקבר עם אבתיו בעיר דוד אביו וימלך יהורם בנו תחתיו

The figure on the left (fig. 6) is based on 2 Chronicles 32:33:⁴⁷ **“Hezekiah slept with his fathers and was buried on the upper part of the tombs of the sons of David. When he died, all the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem accorded him much honor. Manasseh, his son, succeeded him.”** The buckler is based on 2 Chronicles 25:27–28:⁴⁸ **“From the time that Amaziah turned from following the LORD, a conspiracy was formed against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish; but they sent men after him to Lachish and they put him to death there. They brought his body back on horses and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.”**

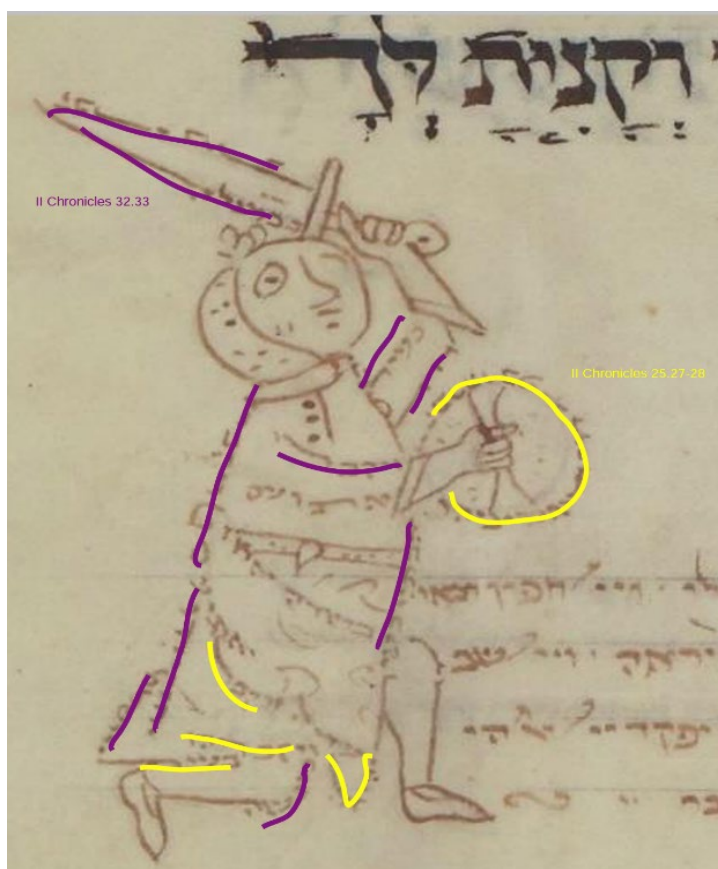


Figure 6: Detail, Paris, BnF, MS héb. 9, fol. 105r

⁴⁷ וַיִּשְׁכַּב יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ עִם אָבִיתָיו וַיִּקְבְּרוּהוּ בְּמַעְלֵה קְבָרֵי בְנֵי דָוִד וַיִּכְבְּדוּ עָשׂוּ לוֹ כְּמוֹתוֹ כָּל יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׁבֵּי יְרוּשָׁלַם וַיִּמְלֹךְ מְנַשֶּׁה בְּנֹו תַחְתָּיו

⁴⁸ וּמִצֵּת אֲשֶׁר סָר אֲמַצְיָהוּ מֵאַחֲרֵי ה' וַיִּקְשְׁרוּ עָלָיו קֶשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלַם וַיִּגָּס לְכִישָׁה וַיִּשְׁלַחוּ אַחֲרָיו לְכִישָׁה וַיִּמְיִתוּהוּ שָׁם: וַיִּשְׂאֻהוּ עַל הַסּוּסִים וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ עִם אָבִיתָיו בְּעִיר יְהוּדָה

In this manuscript, the *masorah figurata* in the book of Jeremiah are depicted in clothes that are not typically identified with any group or religion, unlike those on fols. 111v–112r, who are wearing Jewish hats⁴⁹ and are thus specifically identified as Jewish. As the texts imply, the figures with the swords were supposed to evoke fear in the hearts of the viewers, as they may have represented the inhabitants of the non-Jewish urban space; in other words, the imagery may point to the Jews' fear of their Christian neighbors. We should take into account the message that the book of Jeremiah conveyed to the readers/viewers in the context of contemporary Jewish-Christian relations in the German lands.

The figures' clothing is not typically identified with any particular group or religion; they are wearing coifs, which were common among all of the contemporary societal strata. The sword and buckler were used by unarmored combatants in civilian settings and ordinary foot soldiers and was carried for self-defense.⁵⁰ Thus, the figures in the micrography were deliberately portrayed as commoners rather than as aristocratic or knightly warriors. As the text implies, the figures with the swords were designed to arouse fear in their viewers' hearts, as they might well have represented the Gentile inhabitants of the urban space; that is, they might have reflected a fear of the Jews' Christian neighbors. The manuscript was produced six years after the 1298 riots known as the Rindfleisch Massacres,⁵¹ so this micrography may contain an echo of the pogrom's

⁴⁹ As a result of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, Jews were forced to wear clothing that distinguished them from Christians, which in the German lands was the pointed hat: see Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century: A Study of Their Relations during the Years 1198–1254, Based on the Papal Letters and the Conciliar Decrees of the Period* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1966), 308–9. There is a vast body of research on the subject; see recently Flora Cassen, *Marking the Jews in Renaissance Italy: Politics, Religion and the Power of Symbols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 20–49; Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014).

⁵⁰ David Edge and John Miles Paddock, *Arms & Armor of the Medieval Knight: An Illustrated History of Weaponry in the Middle Ages* (New York: Crescent Books, 1996), 65, 121, 129.

⁵¹ For the Rindfleisch Massacres, see Friedrich Lotter, "Die Judenverfolgung des 'König Rintfleisch in Franken um 1298,'" *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 15 (1988): 385–422; Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 48–56; Haym Soloveitchik,

outcome, especially as the text of Jeremiah and the micrography-forming verses tell of severe judgment and harsh prophecy; the emphasis is on the sword that brings death. As the masorator also created the image, even though someone else may have designed it, there is a close connection between the text and the image it forms.

“Are You One of Us or of Our Enemies?” On Two Types of Warriors in the *North French Hebrew Miscellany*

The methodology of studying the associative connection between texts and images can prove to be productive, especially when it comes to the writings of the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* (German Pietists)⁵² and the illuminations in the manuscripts that are related to their writings. One example is found in two illustrations in the *North French Hebrew Miscellany*, London, British Library Add. MS 11639, also known as the *London Miscellany*, which was produced in Northern France sometime between 1278 and 1280.⁵³ This book includes several different texts: the Pentateuch; a *maḥzor* according to the French rite; a commentary on the prayers; aspects of *halakhah*; and esoteric writings. It is rich in marginal illustrations and also features full-page depictions of biblical stories. In previous publications, I have explored the close connection between the texts (especially those written by the Qalonymos family) and illustrations in this manuscript,⁵⁴ focusing on the paratext — that is, the entire book design⁵⁵ — including extra texts (in relation to the

“Catastrophe and Halakhic Creativity: Ashkenaz—1096, 1242, 1306 and 1298,” *Jewish History* 12 (1998): 71–85.

⁵² For the associative nature of the writings in Ashkenaz, see Haym Soloveitchik, “Piety, Pietism and German Pietism: *Sefer Ḥasidim* I and the Influence of *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz*,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 92 (2002): 455–93, esp. 462–63. For more on the issue of the urtext, see Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Los Angeles, Cherub Press, 2013), 486–500. On the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz*’s unsystematic way of writing, see David I. Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders: Nature and the Supernatural in Medieval Ashkenaz* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 16–18.

⁵³ The entire manuscript is online: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_11639.

⁵⁴ Sara Offenberger, *Illuminated Piety: Pietistic Texts and Images in the North French Hebrew Miscellany* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2013); eadem, “‘It Was Said Before’: Repetition of Biblical Illuminated Stories in the *London Miscellany*” [Hebrew], in *Festschrift in Honor of Professor Shamir Yona*, ed. Elie Assis et al. (Samakh: Ostrakon, 2022), 273–81.

⁵⁵ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin

time period in which they were copied into the manuscript), as well as on other contemporaneous writings and images that may have influenced the author of the manuscript's conceptual space. On fol. 138r, we find an Aramaic translation of the *haftarah* [reading from Prophets] for the first day of Passover (fig. 7). The initial is adorned with a knight in chainmail and a surcoat, who is holding a triangular shield and is about to stab a dragon on his left. Even though not every miniature painting in a manuscript has to have a special meaning and at times they may be only decorative,⁵⁶ here I would like to suggest a possible meaning based on a methodology of examining the relationships between connected texts and images in the manuscript and also drawing conclusions based on other manuscripts.



Figure 7: *London Miscellany*, London, British Library, Add. MS 11639, fol. 138r, Northern France, c. 1280

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) (originally published in French as *Seuils* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987]).

⁵⁶ The illuminated initials in this manuscript have not received any scholarly attention beyond the stylistic study undertaken by Yael Zirlin, "The Decoration of the Miscellany, Its Iconography and Style," in *The North French Hebrew Miscellany: British Library Add. MS 11639*, ed. Jeremy Schonfield (London: Facsimile Editions, 2003), 75–161.

A few pages before the Aramaic translation, the Hebrew *haftarah* is copied on fols. 126v–127r, and the initial there displays two hybrids with a human upper body and a lower body with animal legs and a tail (figs. 8–9); each is holding a sword and buckler,⁵⁷ thus besides the text, there is also a connection between the fighting figures in the two scenes. The *haftarah* begins from Joshua 5:2: “At that time the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives for yourselves and again circumcise the children of Israel a second time.’” I believe that the key to understanding the artistic choice here is found later on, in Joshua 5:13: “Once, when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him, drawn sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and asked him, ‘Are you one of us or of our enemies?’” Here, we may ask the same question regarding the image of the knight: “Are you a good knight or a bad one?” If we consider the swords, it may be the case that it is meant to represent a flint knife rather than a sword. This could be one explanation, and moreover, the scene takes place just before the battle of Jericho, so it makes sense that Joshua is wearing full knightly gear, except for a helmet. Nevertheless, the dragon in the scene is puzzling; what does a dragon have to do with this?⁵⁸ Usually, if we see a dragon and a knight, most of us will think of St. George slaying the dragon, but here this does not make much sense, since this is a Jewish manuscript. However, even though the Jews were copying from a Christian manuscript, and at times, such as here, used Christian artists,⁵⁹ there must be more to it than that.

⁵⁷ This is one of the earliest images of a sword and buckler in medieval art. Cornelius Berthold has found fighting figures with swords and bucklers in marginalia of Hebrew manuscripts, such as on fols. 38r and 219v of this manuscript: see Berthold, “Marginalised Fighting: Depictions of Sword & Buckler Fencers in 13th and 14th Century Manuscript Miniatures from Europe.” I thank the author for generously sharing his paper with me before publication.

⁵⁸ For dragons in Hebrew illuminated manuscripts, primarily from Ashkenaz, see Marc Michael Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1997), 70–95; Shulamit Laderman, “The Great Whales and the Great Dragons in Medieval Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts” [Hebrew], in *Zekhor Davar le-Avdekha: Essays and Studies in Memory of Dov Rappel*, ed. S. Glick (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2007), 319–35; Ilia Rodov, “Dragons: A Symbol of Evil in European Synagogue Decorations,” *Ars Judaica* 1 (2005): 63–84.

⁵⁹ Zirlin, “The Decoration of the Miscellany.”



Figure 8: London Miscellany, fols. 127v-128r



Figure 9: Detail, London Miscellany, fol. 127v

In order to explain the appearance of the dragon, I will briefly discuss a later manuscript, the *Second Nuremberg Haggadah*, London, private collection of David Sofer, produced in fifteenth-century Ashkenaz (fig. 10).⁶⁰ On fol. 13v, we see a description based on Exodus 4:24–26: “At a night encampment on the way, the LORD encountered him [Moses] and sought to kill him. So Zipporah took a flint, cut off her son’s foreskin, and touched his legs with it, saying, ‘You are truly a bridegroom of blood to me!’ And when He let him alone, she added, ‘A bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision.’” We see a dragon attempting to swallow Moses, and the inscription above it explains, based on Rashi’s commentary on Exodus 4:24.⁶¹



Figure 10: *Second Nuremberg Haggadah*, London, private collection of David Sofer, fol. 13v, fifteenth-century Ashkenaz

⁶⁰ Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Die Zweite Nürnberger und die Jehuda Haggada: Jüdische Illustratoren zwischen Tradition und Fortschritt* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999). The ms is available online: https://www.nli.org.il/he/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH002534788/NLI.

⁶¹ Kogman-Appel, *Die Zweite Nürnberger und die Jehuda Haggada*, 45–46.

“The angel sought to kill him,” because he had not circumcised his son Eliezer; and because he had shown himself remiss in this, he brought upon himself the punishment of death. ... The angel became a kind of serpent and swallowed him (Moses) from his head to his thigh, spued him forth, and then again swallowed him from his legs to that place (the membrum). Zipporah thus understood that this had happened on account of the delay in the circumcision of her son.

Thus, according to the image and commentary, the angel that came before Moses became a kind of serpent and swallowed him. This informs us that sometimes the angel of death is portrayed as a serpent or a dragon⁶² and that he tried to swallow Moses from head to thigh and also another time from leg to thigh. His wife Zipporah thus understood that this had happened on account of the delay in the circumcision of her son, which is why she simply took out the knife and circumcised them both. When we look at a dragon eating Moses, or the illustration from the *London Miscellany*, we actually understand that the circumcision of the people of Israel is like fighting the dragon, which represents the angel of death rather than an actual serpent/dragon.

If we look at the whole of the opening of the *London Miscellany*, where the *haftarah* for Passover is written, we see fighting figures. The swords can be explained by another source, which is not only related to slaying the dragon or circumcision, but is also in accordance with what is written at the bottom and around the main text. The text in the outermost margins is from Psalms 44:4: “It was not by their sword that they took the land, their arm did not give them victory, but Your right hand, Your arm, and Your goodwill, for You favored them ... it is not my sword that gives me victory.” The emphasis here is on the fact that the Lord says to his people that it is not by the power of the sword that victory is achieved, but only by the power of the Lord himself: thus, the sword here is not a motif of salvation; on the contrary, the hybrid fighting figures are meant to remind the viewer/reader that the true power comes not from human force, but from obeying the Lord’s commands. Since the characters in the initial of the Haftara are hybrids and holding a sword and buckler — which, as already mentioned, were the weapons of common men — here, they represent

⁶² Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion*, 73–74.

the negative aspect of non-believers. On the other hand, the human knight in the translation of the *haftarah* is dressed and armed with knightly gear and weapons, thus representing Joshua and the positive requirement to perform circumcision.

The Wicked Son: An Apostate Warrior

I would like to point to the importance of deciphering the details portrayed in the clothing of the wicked son in two illuminated Passover haggadahs.⁶³ I will begin with the fourteenth-century *Barcelona Haggadah* and continue with the fifteenth-century *Ashkenazi Rylands Haggadah*. The point I wish to make here is that examining the weapons and military gear together with the text helps us to draw conclusions regarding the negative connotation the wicked son receives, even beyond the obvious one. Adam Cohen has described how illuminated haggadahs can portray their patrons' desire for elevated status in the community, similar to contemporary personal Christian manuscripts, showing how illustrations aroused the five senses in ways that mere text could not, especially the sense of sight via the creative direction of the viewer's gaze.⁶⁴ Following Cohen's methodology, I will concentrate on an illumination portraying the "wicked son." Unsurprisingly, in most haggadahs, the illustrations of the wicked son are more negative in nature than those of the other sons. As I will demonstrate, his immoral conduct is evident both in his actions and from his appearance.

In the so-called *Barcelona Haggadah*, London, British Library, Add. 14761, which was produced in Languedoc in the fourteenth century,⁶⁵

⁶³ For images of the wicked son in illuminated haggadahs, see Mira Friedman, "The Four Sons of the Haggadah and the Ages of Man," *Journal of Jewish Art* 11 (1985): 16–40; Barlow, "The Muslim Warrior at the Seder Meal"; Harris, "Good Jews, Bad Jews, and No Jews at All"; Offenber, "'And He Put on Righteousness as a Coat of Mail.'"

⁶⁴ Adam S. Cohen, "The Multisensory Haggadah," in *Les cinq sens au Moyen Âge*, ed. Éric Palazzo (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2016), 317–20. His article mainly focuses on two manuscripts: the *Birds' Head Haggadah*, which was produced in Ashkenaz around 1300, and the *Sarajevo Haggadah*, which was produced under the Crown of Aragon during the third quarter of the fourteenth century.

⁶⁵ The ms is available online: www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_14761. See also the facsimile edition: Jeremy Schonfield, ed., *The Barcelona Haggadah: An Illuminated Passover Compendium from 14th-Century Catalonia in Facsimile* (MS British Library Additional 14761) (London: Facsimile Editions, 1992). See also

a distinction between social ranks is evident: the wicked son wears the helmet of a common warrior, but on the opposite page, the simple son is pictured above two tournament helmets of the kind worn by normal knights (figs. 11–12). The large crest on the great helm used for tournaments was a technological development of the 1220s. Great helms with crests were worn in tournaments, but never on the field of battle.⁶⁶ Scant written and visual evidence informs us about how crests were physically attached to helms. According to Dirk H. Breiding, during the thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth century, most crests were probably attached with laces passing around the helm's crown through pairs of holes in the top and sides; these laces apparently secured both the internal lining and the crest and/or mantling.⁶⁷ Well-preserved tournament crests are rare and even Christian art provides very few descriptions of how the crest was attached to the helmet; thus, such exact detail in Jewish art is of considerable note. The helmets underneath the simple son even depict minutiae of the component that connects the crest to the helmet. This rare detail suggests that we should consider an additional layer of meaning emerging from its emphasis of the fact that the tournament knights were of higher rank.

Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain: Biblical Imagery and Passover Holiday* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006), 24–25, 41; eadem, “Une Haggada de Pâques provenant du Midi de la France. Le programme des images dans le manuscrit de Londres Add. 14761,” in *Culture religieuse méridionale: Les manuscrits et leur contexte artistique*, ed. Michelle Fournié, Daniel Le Blévec, and Alison Stones (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 2016), 327–47.

⁶⁶ Unlike the battlefield, when the warrior required total control and maximum flexibility, tournaments were a “safer” space, so during the thirteenth century, different armor and helmets were designed for tournament knights. See Charles Henry Ashdown, *European Arms & Armor* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1995), 90–92; Dirk H. Breiding, “Some Notes on Great Helms, Crests and Early Tournament Reinforces,” *The Park Lane Arms Fair* 30 (2003): 18–35; Tobias Capwell, *Arms and Armour of the Medieval Joust* (Leeds: Royal Armouries Museum, 2018), 17–19, 45–49; Edge and Paddock, *Arms & Armor of the Medieval Knight*, 53–55.

⁶⁷ In fact, from this period onward, the available documentary and pictorial evidence suggest that crests were fastened to helms in a variety of ways: see Breiding, “Some Notes on Great Helms.”



Figure 11: The so-called *Barcelona Haggadah*, London, British Library, Add. 14761, fols. 34v–35r, Languedoc, fourteenth century



Figure 12: Detail, *Barcelona Haggadah*, London, BL, Add. 14761, fol. 35r

The context in which the helmets appear is important: a tournament helm is shown beneath the simple son, while the wicked son appears wearing a conical helmet and with a spear belonging to a lower-class warrior, not a nobleman or knight (fig. 13). As Mira Friedman showed, the wicked son is commonly portrayed as a soldier in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian and Spanish illuminated haggadahs.⁶⁸ Here, he wears a short robe, aiming his spear toward the man standing before him, who is dressed in a simple pinkish robe, and pulling his beard.⁶⁹ His wickedness is stressed by this act of humiliation. The wicked son is also bearded; however, his face has been deliberately destroyed, as mentioned by Evelyn Cohen.⁷⁰ Additional evidence for his degradation being a symbol of his lower rank is found in the similarity between him and Laban (fig. 14), whose face has also been mutilated.⁷¹ Laban is depicted as a common warrior without the symbols of a noble knight (such as armor or a great helm). Since these chivalric displays suggest a keen awareness of social rank, as well as moral behavior, unlike the deeds of the wicked son or Laban, the symbolic meanings intended by the patrons should be interpreted in this context.



Figure 13: Detail, *Barcelona Haggadah*, London, BL, Add. 14761, fol. 34v

⁶⁸ Friedman, “The Four Sons.”

⁶⁹ On the pulling of the beard and its connotations, see Elliot Horowitz, “On the Significance of the Beard in Jewish Communities in the East and Europe in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period” [Hebrew], *Pe’amin* 59 (1994): 124–48. See also Tova Rosen, “The Beard as Spectacle and Scandal in a Thirteenth-Century Hebrew Maqāma,” *Intellectual History of the Islamic World* 10 (2021): 1–24.

⁷⁰ Evelyn Cohen, “The Decoration,” in Schonfield, *The Barcelona Haggadah*, 24–43, esp. 31.

⁷¹ Cohen, “The Decoration,” 33.



Figure 14: Detail, *Barcelona Haggadah*, London, BL, Add. 14761, fol. 39v

Next to the initial word *tam* (“simple”), an elderly bearded man is seated on a chair, like other contemporary depictions of scholars. The young man before him was identified by Friedman and Cohen as the simple son, who is asking, “What is this?” (fig. 11).⁷² Both characters wear long robes and their heads are covered, like the wise son in the previous illumination (fol. 34a). The simple son points toward the tournament helms so that the viewer’s eyes are directed toward them, amplifying the dissonance between the wicked son’s plain helmet and the higher-ranking helmets beneath the simple son. The illumination visually directs the viewer toward details in the decorated folio. The patron’s choice to enhance certain items rather than others triggered symbolic meanings and encoded textual and visual messages about how he envisioned himself. Social codes express spiritual concepts, which enhances the viewer’s faith. The manuscript’s artistic program juxtaposes historical depictions of Egyptian slavery with the redemption, with hope for future salvation being portrayed as an upside-down world. This sophisticated mechanism updates the haggadah and its traditional Passover symbols with contemporary images meaningful to the medieval Jew. As for the relationships between different aspects of the page — that is, paratexts—the connection between text and image is evident in hand gestures that direct the viewer toward the encoded message in the illustration and text. The warriors have dual meanings: on the one hand, they represent forces hostile to Jews; on the other, Jews adopted

⁷² Cohen, “The Decoration,” 31; Friedman, “The Four Sons,” 24. Mendel Metzger refuses to determine which of the two is the simple son; however, I agree with the opinion that it is the younger figure. See Metzger, *La Haggadah enlumineé* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 157.

the chivalric code of knighthood in order to depict their ancient spiritual status as the Lord's chosen people, transmitting and updating this heritage in the contemporary visual language of medieval Europe.

Another image of the wicked son as a warrior appears in the fifteenth-century haggadah in Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Ms. 7, also known as the *Ashkenazi Rylands Haggadah*, which was produced in Ashkenaz in the fifteenth century and features a unique iconographical program.⁷³ This lavish haggadah has not received much scholarly attention beyond the preliminary work of David Heinrich Müller and Julius von Schlosser,⁷⁴ Bruno Italiener,⁷⁵ and material in Mendel Metzger's book.⁷⁶ In my book, I focused on the paratext, as well as on other contemporaneous writings and images that might have influenced the author of the manuscript's conceptual space.⁷⁷ The margins of the haggadah text contain commentaries attributed to leaders of the *Hasidei Ashkenaz*, Rabbi Judah the Pious and Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, as well as the work of other Tosafists.⁷⁸ Another commentary on the Passover rituals is that of the Maharil (Jacob b. Moses Moellin, d. 1427). Schlosser and Italiener referred to these commentaries in their analyses of the manuscript and even published some of the marginal texts, but their studies of the miniatures did not consider these texts. Here, I will briefly mention one image of the wicked son in which he is portrayed as a warrior and its relationship to different texts.

The wicked son (fig. 15) is portrayed along the entire right side of fol. 10r, opposite the wise son and the simple one (*tam*), who

⁷³ The manuscript is available online on the John Rylands University Library website: <http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Manchester~10~10~607~154965?qvq=q:haggadah&mi=0&trs=191>.

⁷⁴ David Heinrich Müller and Julius von Schlosser, *Die Haggadah von Sarajevo: Eine Spanisch-Jüdische Bilderhandschrift des Mittelalters* (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1898), I, 181–87.

⁷⁵ Bruno Italiener, *Die Darmstädter Pessach-Haggadah: Codex orientalis 8 der Landesbibliothek zu Darmstadt aus dem Vierzehnten Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1927–1928), I, 220–31.

⁷⁶ Metzger, *La Haggada enluminée*.

⁷⁷ Offenberg, *Up in Arms*, chap. 5.

⁷⁸ This manuscript's commentaries were not included in Jacob Gellis, *Sefer Tosafot Hashalem—Passover Haggadah: Treasure of the Tosafists Commentaries* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mifal Tosafot Hashalem, 1989). They are fully published for the first time in the Hebrew appendix of my book: Offenberg, *Up in Arms*, appendix 2.



Figure 15: Ashkenazi Rylands Haggadah, Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Ms. 7, fols. 9v-10r

appear in a small window.⁷⁹ At first glance, the bearded wicked son with long blond hair, who is wearing armor along with a sort of cape, seems to be dressed like the type of knight we find in other haggadahs, as described by Mira Friedman.⁸⁰ He is holding a curved sword, which Müller and Schlosser identified as a sixteenth-century weapon, although Metzger claimed that it was widely used in the fifteenth century.⁸¹ As a point of fact, I should mention here that this is a

⁷⁹ The wise son is portrayed with a beard and grey hair holding a book in his hand. The simple son, who is young and clean-shaven and wearing a fool's hat, is also holding an open book and pointing at himself. On the son who does not know how to ask being portrayed as a fool in a fifteenth-century haggadah, see Katrin Kogman Appel, *The Washington Haggadah: Copied and Illustrated by Joel ben Simeon* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2011), 93-96; Metzger, *La Haggada enluminée*, 159-60.

⁸⁰ Friedman, "The Four Sons."

⁸¹ Metzger, *La Haggada enluminée*, 154; Müller and Schlosser, *Die Haggadah von Sarajevo*, I, 185.

European sword of the *falchion* type,⁸² a light single-blade weapon that was in use as early as the thirteenth century. It was employed by all classes, not only by noble knights,⁸³ thus hinting at the lesser rank of this warrior (i.e., he was not necessarily a knight). However, there are ridiculous elements to the figure's appearance. Instead of a helmet, he is wearing a large crown; his right stocking is falling down, and there is no shoe on his left foot. Joachim Bumke noted that in the fifteenth century, it was fashionable for men to show their legs, often through cuts in their pants; called "knightly" or "imperial" legs, they were praised by poets.⁸⁴ Here, we find an exaggerated version of this fashion where the figure's penis appears to be visible, which suggests that the artist was making fun of men who imitate nobles without the proper decorum.

This image can be further elucidated by other texts in the manuscript. On fol. 11v, a commentary on the word *nekhar* נכר ("foreigner") is based on Onkelos's *Translation of Exodus* 12:43: "And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron: 'This is the Law of the Passover offering: No foreigner shall eat of it.'" Onkelos explained that the *nekhar* was a son who had converted. The commentary in our haggadah goes on to say that he is like the wicked son, who converted: ומתרגמ' כל בר ישר' דאישתמד ואגב אותו בן רשע שהוזכרנו למעלה בארבע בנים שדברה תורה. כי הואיל שהוציא עצמ' מן הכלל אי אפשר ליתן לו פסח ומצה לאכול. Thus, the image here might well be a caricature of an apostate Jew. We should compare this "knight" to the other knight in this manuscript. In the scene of *Shefokh Chamatkha* (Pour Out Your Wrath; שפוך המתך) on fol. 33a, the Messiah appears as a charging knight mounted on an ass, with his long sword raised high. This depiction as a noble knight and the true savior is set in opposition to the ridiculous wicked apostate son "knight." Elsewhere, I have shown that this haggadah was probably given to a woman as a wedding gift, where the main idea behind the artistic program of the manuscript as a whole was to educate the bride on the proper behavior; here, we find a visual warning that if she misbehaves, her son will prance about in a

⁸² On types of medieval swords, see R. Ewart Oakeshott, *A Knight and His Weapons*, 2nd ed. (Chester Springs, PA: Dufour Editions, 1997); idem, *Records of the Medieval Sword*, reprint ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000); idem, *Sword in Hand: A Brief Survey of the Knightly Sword* (Minneapolis: Arms & Armor Inc, 2000).

⁸³ Ashdown, *European Arms & Armor*, 62, 87–89.

⁸⁴ Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature & Society in the High Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 146.

similarly ridiculous outfit, bringing scorn and shame upon her family.⁸⁵

I mentioned that all the examples discussed in this essay follow Christian warfare aesthetics. David Stern, among other scholars, deals with the issue of the close relationship between the Christian illuminated manuscripts and Hebrew illuminated Bibles, especially in France and Germany. He contends that when discussing Hebrew manuscripts,⁸⁶

there is no question that they mirror Christian book art of the period. Rather than viewing them as mere “borrowings,” however, it might be more correct to characterize them, along with the other material features of the Ashkenazic Bible, as deliberate appropriations of gentile culture on the part of Jewish scribes, that is to say, active efforts to Judaize the imagery of their surrounding gentile culture.

Thus, if the manuscripts discussed here seem to follow the Christian artistic preference in book illumination, it is likely that it was done in this way in order to enhance the viewer’s fear and sense of danger, or to convey a message of warning to the reader/viewer. In the words of Hans Robert Jauss:

The historical essence of the work of art lies not only in its representational or expressive function but also in its influence ... literature and art only obtain a history that has the character of a process when the succession of works is mediated not only through the production subject but also through the consuming subject.⁸⁷

By studying the material aspects of the objects painted in their manuscripts, we can see that medieval Jews were very much aware of their neighbors’ symbols of social rank. As in Christian society, the visual aspects of the social stratum were very much present for some Jewish patrons. However, I should stress that my conclusion here does

⁸⁵ Offenberg, *Up in Arms*, chap. 5.

⁸⁶ Stern, “The Hebrew Bible in Europe in the Middle Ages: A Preliminary Typology,” *Jewish Studies: An Internet Journal* 11 (2012): 1–88, esp. 55.

⁸⁷ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 15.

not hold for all portrayals of warriors and knights in Jewish art and that each work of art should be studied in depth in order to determine whether it warrants such a conclusion. A thorough examination of the texts and images in Hebrew illuminated manuscripts could bring us closer to understanding the message behind the artistic program and lead to further conjectures in connection with Jewish-Christian relations in the Middle Ages.