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institutodarom@gmail.com

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WHAT IS THIS SORcery? SURVIVAL OF JEWISH MAGIC AND HEBREW
GRIMORES AFTER 1492.

¿Qué es esta hechicería? Pervivencia de la magia judía y de grimorios
hebreos después de 1492.

CARLOS SANTOS CARRETERO*

Israel Institute of Biblical Studies / Israel Bible Center

carlossc@eteachergroup.com

ORCID iD: [0000-0002-6917-2535](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6917-2535).

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Resumen: Pese a que el texto bíblico y la literatura rabínica prohíben de forma tajante la práctica de la brujería y hechicería, a lo largo de los siglos ha habido una asociación intrínseca de lo hebraico y lo mágico, especialmente lo referido a textos de naturaleza esotérica, con especial profusión durante la Edad Media. *Sefer ha-razim*, *Sefer Raziel ha-malak* o *Clavicula Salomonis* entre otros, gozaron de una gran profusión entre la población judía y judaizante. Y aunque la expulsión de los judíos de 1492 pudiera dar a entender que estos textos desaparecieron de la Península Ibérica, un estudio detallado muestra que ciertas prácticas y ritos pudieron haber perdurado entre la población conversa. Testimonios inquisitoriales muestran que había un gran temor ante supuestos libros de magia judía atentaran contra la población cristiana y sus creencias.

Abstract: Despite the fact that the Bible and rabbinic literature emphatically forbid the practice of witchcraft and sorcery, over the centuries there has been an intrinsic association of the Hebrew and the magical, especially those referring to texts of an esoteric nature, with special profusion during the Middle Ages. *Sefer ha-razim*, *Sefer Raziel ha-malak* or *Clavicula Salomonis* among others, enjoyed great profusion among the Jewish population. And although the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 could suggest that these texts disappeared from the Iberian Peninsula, a detailed study shows that certain practices and rites may have persisted among the *conversos*. Inquisitorial testimonies show that there was great fear that alleged Jewish magic books would attack Christian population and their beliefs.

Palabras clave: Magia, judaísmo, Biblia, conversos, grimorios.

Keywords: Magic, Judaism, Bible, conversos, grimoires

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1. Magic and Judaism. A tense affaire

Magic, religion and science were closely linked to Jewish tradition, and Hispanic Judaism was no exception, both in Medieval and Renaissance times. Magic was an alternative form of medicine, both theoretically and formally. As we will describe, the purpose of many spells and incantations described in magic books was none other than healing diseases. At the same time, the connection between magic and astrology in the Middle Ages was common in many Hispanic Jews. Renowned figures such as Ibn Zarza, Ibn Major or Ibn Shaprut discussed about magic and demonology and their connection to astrology thanks to *Sefer ha-asamim*, an astronomy treatise written by Abraham Ibn Ezra or the model of astral magic developed by Judah Halevi, which introduces in Medieval Kabbalah the idea of spirituality of the stars and the action these can produce on earth¹.

However, although magic has been present in Jewish tradition since Biblical antiquity, its relationship with Judaism has also been particularly tense. The Hebrew Bible equates magic with idolatry, witchcraft and considers it as a challenge to the divine cosmic order. Magic is strongly condemned, as can be seen in the following passages of the Torah:

«You shall not permit a female sorcerer to live². No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead. For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the LORD; it is because of such abhorrent practices that the LORD your God is driving them out before you»³.

Kings and prophets harshly attack the use of magic and witchcraft as well:

«Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. Saul had expelled the

¹ Schwartz, 2005: 18.

² Ex 22: 18.

³ Dt 18: 10-12.

mediums and the wizards from the land⁴. Moreover, Josiah put away the mediums, wizards, teraphim, idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he established the words of the law that were written in the book that the priest Hilkiyah had found in the house of the LORD⁵. You, therefore, must not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, “You shall not serve the king of Babylon”⁶. Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts⁷.

Even apocryphal texts such as the Ethiopic Book of Enoch (also known as 1Enoch) associate magical practices with idolatry, along with the veneration of fallen angels and stars, inevitably leading to blooming of evil in the antediluvian era, before the Flood:

«Uriel continued: “Here will remain the angels who have joined the women. In many forms they have corrupted men and seduced them to make offerings to demons as gods, until the day of great judgment, in which they will be judged until they are finished⁸. Then the great chief Semyaza taught them the enchantments of the mind, and the roots of the plants of the earth. Farmaros taught them witchcraft, charms, tricks and antidotes against charms. The ninth taught them the observation of the stars. The fourth, astrology, the eighth, the observation of the air; The third taught them the signs of the earth; The seventh, those of the sun; The twentieth, those of

⁴ 1Sam 28: 3.

⁵ 2Kgs 23: 24.

⁶ Jer, 27: 9.

⁷ Mal 3: 5.

⁸ 1En 19: 1.

the moon. They all began to discover the mysteries of their wives and children. After this, the giants began to eat the flesh of the men»⁹.

The Babylonian Talmud equates magic and witchcraft with prostitution and charlatanry, linking these practices mostly with women:

«Our Rabbis taught: [Thou shalt not suffer] a witch [to live]: this applies to both man and woman. If so, why is a [female] witch stated? — Because mostly women engage in witchcraft»¹⁰.

Among Jews, the main detractor of magic in the Middle Ages was Maimonides, who harshly criticized it, accusing it of fraud and idolatry. Regarding Maimonides, religious faith, Aristotelian logic, rationalism and Greek science are the only true fields of knowledge, and he did not hesitate to mock those who believe in the stars:

«Know, men, that all those things concerning the decrees of the stars, which say that such thing or such will happen, or that the moment of the birth of a person determines that it will be in such a way and that it will happen to him and not such another, to believe in them is not a matter of wise men but of fools».

However, Maimonides' opinion was not predominant in Spanish-medieval Judaism. The attitude of many rabbis was very permissive towards magic, and many of them came to practice it. Where did this permissiveness come from? Were there any magic practices allowed against others which were censored and criticized? Ancient Semitic customs such as the preparation of anointing oil (Ex 30: 23-25), the rite of purifying lepers (Lev 14: 4-7) or the ordeal to women suspected of adultery (Num 5: 11-31) are considered primitive magical practices¹¹ to which Jewish tradition confers a new

⁹ 1En 8: 3.

¹⁰ San. 67a.

¹¹ Cantera Montenegro, 2002: 49.

meaning: absolute submission to God's will. Likewise, Gn 30:37, a passage in which Jacob employs a series of rods to get a higher stock of that of his father-in-law Laban is also seen as an archaic magical practice. The use of the rods by Jacob has often been described as the use of a certain kind of magic related to conception. The white bark contains salicin, which reduces fevers or inflammation of the joints. However, the use of poplar rods has also been understood as a type of *phallus fallax*, an artificial male organ used to deceive ewes and she-goats¹². However, we cannot speak of a magical Hebrew corpus in biblical times. In contrast, the Old Testament apocryphal books as well as the Dead Sea scrolls contain texts with exhortations to angels and God as well as incantations against demons, fallen angels and evil spirits such as Lilit¹³. Second Temple period is a time of religious effervescence¹⁴, teeming with apocalyptic texts such as *The Book of Enoch*, *The Book of Jubilees*, *Apocalypse of Abraham* or *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, among others. The belief in angels and demons, the linkage of these beings to the stars and their influence on the world show a strong esoteric character which will be present in the whole story of Jewish mysticism: from the Merkabah¹⁵ and Hekalot¹⁶ literature (1st century BCE- 10th ACE) to Spanish 16th century. These beliefs overcame the passage of time thanks to the magical books in which they were written, being modified and expanded through centuries. This contribution will focus on two points: the possible influence of the ancient Merkabah literature in Spanish mysticism, along with the possible influence of Jewish magical books in Renaissance Spain.

¹² Noegel, 1997: 10.

¹³ Shaked, 2013: 225-240.

¹⁴ There are several studies regarding magic in Ancient Judaism. For those who want to go deeper into this topic, we suggest the following studies: Mastrocinque, A. *From Jewish Magic to Gnosticism*. Coronet Books, 2005. Print. Dennis, G. W. *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism*. Llewellyn Productions, 2007. Print. Shaked, S. *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls Volume 1*. Leiden: Brill, 2013. Print. Harari, Y. *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah*. Wayne State University Press, 2017. Print.

¹⁵ The Divine Chariot (מרכבה in Hebrew).

¹⁶ Heavenly Palaces (היכלות in Hebrew).

2. Did merkabah mysticism arrive to Spain?

Merkabah mysticism was a gnostic and heterodox movement inside Rabbinic Judaism. Palestine and Babylon were the nuclei of the movement, developed in small pharisaic circles. It was based on a mystical approach of two biblical stories: The Creation (Gn 1) and the vision of God's Throne Chariot (Ez 1). Many of the Merkabah mystics' works have been preserved to this day thanks to some of its practitioners, who spread them throughout Italy and Germany during the Middle Ages. Merkabah texts developed a mysticism based on religious attitudes and practices, revelations and biblical exegesis, all from a fairly free phenomenological perspective within Rabbinic Judaism, giving a very important role to the magical use of the names of God and his angels. This anonymous corpus¹⁷ revolves around two key concepts: the ascensions through the seven celestial palaces, along with the meditation practices employed in order to glimpse the divine chariot¹⁸. And contrary to other types of mysticism, these works do not try to understand the nature of God. They simply try to perceive a glimpse of it through the visions of the throne of glory¹⁹. It could be said, to some extent, that Merkabah mysticism is Jewish Gnosticism, since the concern of Jewish and Gnostic mystics was similar: the ascent/descent of the soul from the Earth through the spheres of hostile and ruling angels in a travel which end leads to the contemplation of the divine light. The magic component of these works is found in the rites and practices the visionary must employ during the journey through the heavenly palaces. Such practices involved sexual and food abstinence along with the use of corporal postures which seek to induce hypnotic autosuggestion and the frequent use of ritual baths in order to purify the mystic. During the journey the soul faces the guardian angels of each palace, who will ask for a password or magic seal which acts both as a protective armor and a magic weapon, whose knowledge allows the mystic to continue the journey safely. Among the magical seals were the so-called "mystical voices", apparently meaningless names, applied to God, angels and demons. This practice was

¹⁷ The main Merkabah and Heḳalot treatises are: *Re'uyot Yehezqel*, *Heḳalot Zutreti*, *Heḳalot Rabbati*, *Maseket Heḳalot*, *Ma'aseh Merkabah* and *Sefer Heḳalot*. Musajoff, 1921: 1-12.

¹⁸ Gruenwald, 2017: 101-139.

¹⁹ Scholem, 2012: 61-100.

similar in many Greek-Egyptian papyri in Late Antiquity, and was common in many of the Jewish magical books that will be mentioned later. Due to the use of these seals and incantations to summon angels, the line between mystic and sorcerer is not clear in this literature and both figures tend to overlap. This is common in some vessels with Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions. The exalted angel Metatron is commonly introduced as guardian and healer, and he even appears as Hermes-Metatron in some inscriptions, thus presenting a noteworthy Jewish-Greek syncretism²⁰. It was previously stated that the survival of these ancient traditions was thanks to their transmission in certain European rabbinical circles. And Hispanic Judaism was not an exception. Ašer ben Yeḥiel, hasid from Aškenaz and rabbi of Toledo later during the 14th century introduced mystical ideas from Medieval German Judaism. Among them was the ancient Merkabah theosophy, leading to the possibility that these ideas could be spread through the city²¹. The presence of the Merkabah mysticism in Medieval Spain has led to the following idea among certain scholars: is it possible to see this mysticism reflected, even tangentially in Medieval and Renaissance Spanish literature? This could be the case of *Las Moradas*, the most famous work of Saint Teresa of Jesús. It is known that her family had *converso* origins and it was from Toledo. Teresa was the daughter of a New Christian, Alonso Sánchez de Cepeda, son of Juan Sánchez de Toledo, *converso* who kept practicing Judaism secretly. There could be a causal relation between Ašer ben Yeḥiel and Teresa. The Aškenaz rabbi could have transmitted the Merkabah ideas to the Jewish population of Toledo, reaching Teresa's family through time, thus resulting in a case or indirect or diffuse transmission. This could be seen as a very large coincidence but reading *Las Moradas* and some Merkabah texts shows similar traits which should be taken into consideration in order to develop a detailed comparative study. In *Las Moradas*, Teresa compares the praying soul with the person who is enclosed within a castle or palace, where God is on His throne. This symbol of the castle and God on the throne is also present and the ascetics and mystics of Osuna and Laredo, but Teresa is the first to use the symbolism of the *siete moradas*, such as St. John of the Cross will express

²⁰ Alexander, 1977: 165-167.

²¹ Varela, 1996: 33.

shortly later through the image of the *siete mansiones* on *The Ascent to Mount Carmel* (1581-1585).

The literary structure is certainly similar in both Merkabah texts and *Las Moradas*: God is sitting on his throne behind seven palaces / dwellings. The adept must face a series of spiritual dangers: guardian angels in the Merkabah literature and the demon in *Las Moradas*. The sixth palace / dwelling is the most dangerous to cross in both literatures, since it is the anteroom to the encounter with the divinity. These two extracts show the similarities between the ascension the palaces in the Merkabah literature and the castles in *Las Moradas*:

«Cuando ascendí al primer palacio, yo era un devoto; en el segundo palacio era un ser puro ; en el tercero, sincero; en el cuarto estaba unido a Dios [tâmîm]; en el quinto mostré mi santidad a Dios; en el sexto dije la quedusá ante Aquel que habló y creó, a fin de que los ángeles guardianes no me hicieran daño; en el séptimo palacio me mantuve erguido con todas mis fuerzas, mientras todo mi cuerpo temblaba, y pronuncié la siguiente plegaria “[...] Loado seas Tú, el exaltado, loado sea el Sublime en los aposentos de la grandeza”»²². Dijo uno de los contemplativos: Puso Dios para todo hijo de Adán siete castillos, dentro de los cuales está El, y fuera de los cuales está Satanás ladrando como un perro. Cuando el hombre deja que se abra brecha en uno de ellos, entra por él Satanás. Conviene por tanto que los vigile y guarde con todo cuidado, particularmente el primer castillo, pues mientras permanezcan incólumes y en pie los cimientos, no hay nada que temer. El primero de los castillos, que es de cándida perla, es la mortificación del alma sensitiva. Dentro de él hay un castillo de esmeralda, que es la pureza y sinceridad de intención. Dentro de él hay un castillo de brillante loza, que es el cumplimiento de los mandatos de Dios, positivos y negativos. Dentro de él hay un castillo de piedra, que es la gratitud a los beneficios divinos y la conformidad con

²² Scholem, 2012: 99.

el divino beneplácito. Dentro de él hay un castillo de hierro, que es el dejamiento en las manos de Dios. Dentro de él hay un castillo de plata, que es la fe mística. Dentro de él hay un castillo de oro, que es la contemplación de Dios - ¡Glorificado y honrado sea!»²³.

However, there are divergences as well: Merkabah mystics consider God as a transcendent and inaccessible being, which can only be perceived. Total union is inconceivable. But for Teresa of Ávila, God is transcendent and immanent, and the love of God is above anything else. Maybe Teresa was able to receive multiple influences: the religious culture of the 16th century, along with a high valuation of theology and interior spirituality, and also the influence of Gnostic ideas which survived from ancient times and circulated from East to West during centuries²⁴. But we also cannot forget the possibility that certain ideas belonging to Merkabah mysticism could have arrived to the mystic nun due to the influence of her *converso* family.

3. Magic books used by Jews and conversos in Spain

The link between Judaism, magic and witchcraft is found in the many cases of *conversos* accused of witchcraft in the inquisitorial processes during the 16th and 17th centuries. During these processes the allusions to Hebrew texts full of magical formulae were relatively frequent. These texts were inspired by magical and cabalistic books, coming from Late Antiquity and medieval times²⁵. They were filled with formulae used to heal all kinds of evils and diseases, along with the possibility to alter the reality and nature that surrounded the user. It is known these texts were used by certain European Jewish communities during the Middle Ages, including Hispanic Judaism²⁶. Some texts can be classified into specific groups due to certain related characteristics, while others, although coming from the same traditions as the previous ones, have clearly differentiating features:

²³ Varela, 1996: 48.

²⁴ Varela, 1996: 57.

²⁵ Baroja, 2000: 402.

²⁶ Cantera Montenegro, 2002: 53.

- Texts whose origin dates back to Late Antiquity: *Sefer ha-razîm*, *Sefer Raziel ha-malak*.
- Magical texts based on the exegesis of the Torah, Psalms and rabbinical literature: *Havdalah de Rabi Akiva*, *Sefer šimuš Tehillim*, *Sefer gematriyot* (also known as *Sefer Eliyahu*).
- Others: Picatrix Hebrew version (*Tahlit he-ḥaḥam*) and *Clavicula Salomonis* (possibly a Christian text presented as a Jewish magic book).
- Texts whose origin dates back to Late Antiquity:

Sefer ha-razîm and *Sefer Raziel ha-malak* base the magical action of the structure of the cosmos, considering that mathematics, geometry, astronomy and astrology would allow the magician to make the superior forces act into his advantage. *Sefer ha-razîm* (*Book of Mysteries*): Discovered by Mordecai Margaliot amongst the remains of the Cairo Geniza in 1963, and published in Hebrew by the same author in 1966²⁷. It was written in Hebrew, probably in Palestine or Egypt, in the late 3rd century or early 4th ACE. The book contains descriptions of the seven heavens, seemingly influenced by the Merkabah literature. At the same time, the structure of the magic spells contained in the book brings it closer to the Greek magical papyri, with prayers in honor of Helios and Bel written in Greek. Its author combined Jewish cosmology, angelology and Hellenistic magic²⁸. The work is presented as a book delivered by the angel Raziel to Noah before the flood, who transmitted it through different generations until King Solomon.

This is a systematic magic manual divided into seven parts, corresponding to the seven heavens. The following excerpt describes the first firmament, its thrones, angels and magical rites the user must perform to observe them:

«The name of the first firmament is called Shamayim. Within it are encampments filled with wrath. And seven thrones are prepared there and upon them are seated overseers, and around them on all sides encampments (of angels) are stationed and are obedient to men at the time when they

²⁷ Fernández Marcos, 2012: 231.

²⁸ Bagnall, 2012: 6112-6113.

practice (magic), to everyone who has learned to stand and pour (libations) to their names and cite them by their signs at the period when (prayer) is heard (so as) to make a magical rite succeed. (Over) all these encampments of angels these seven overseers rule, to dispatch (them) for every (sort of) business so that they will hasten and bring success. These are the names of the seven overseers who sit upon (the) seven thrones: the name of the first is 'WRPY'L, and the name of the second is TYGRH, and the name of the third is DNHL, and the name of the fourth is KLMY', the name of the fifth is 'SYMWR, the name of the sixth is PSKR, the name of the seventh is BW'L. And all of them were created from fire and their appearance is like fire, and their fire is blazing, for from fire they emerged»²⁹.

Sefer ha-razim contains an elaborate angelology, filled with names without concrete semantic meaning, in front of other names that may be combinations of Greco-Roman and Egyptian divinities, emphasizing Kyrybel and Helios. The presence of these deities is to be understood as a prayer to an emissary of a supreme divinity. Synagogues from the Byzantine period (4th-6th ACE) at Bet Alpha, Hammat Tiberias and Naaran present mosaics in which Helios and other divinities are represented on a zodiacal wheel, emissaries of a superior deity³⁰.

«Holy Helios, who rises in the east, good mariner, trustworthy leader of the sun's rays, reliable witness, who of old didst establish the mighty wheel of the heavens, holy orderer, ruler of the axis of heaven, Lord, Brilliant Leader, King, Soldier. I, N son of N, present my supplication before you, that you will appear to me without causing me fear, and you will be revealed to me without causing me terror, and you will conceal nothing from me, and will tell me truthfully all that I desire»³¹.

²⁹ Morgan, 1983: 21.

³⁰ Sznol, 1989: 278.

³¹ Morgan, 1983: 71.

There are formulae whose objective is to attract the attention of kings, noblemen, rich and beautiful women, the chance to see the sun at night, or even winning on bets. Below we present some fragments of spells that seek to seduce women and get rich at races:

«I conjure you, angels of favor and knowledge, to turn to me the heart of N daughter of N, to do nothing without me and let her heart join with mine in love. As a woman will return to the child of her insides, may this N return to me to love me from this day and forever. I conjure you, angels of the race, those who run in the midst of the stars, those who harness with strength and courage to the horses that N is running and to his charioteer who is guiding them. Let them run eagled like an eagle. No animal shall cross before them and no other magic or witchcraft shall affect them»³².

Sefer Raziel ha-malak (*Book of the angel Raziel*): The work is a set of mystical, cosmological and magical writings compiled by the German mystic Eleazar ben Yehuda of Worms during the 13th century. It was written in Hebrew and Aramaic, but there is also a Latin version known as *Liber Razielis Archangeli*, a 13th-century manuscript produced under Alfonso X. Critical historians regard it as a medieval work, most probably originating amongst the Chassidei Ashkenaz, as citations from it begin to appear only in the 13th century, but some of its parts may date back to Late Antiquity. The tradition around the book attributes it to have been revealed to Adam through the revelations of angel Raziel. The title itself is mentioned in another magical work of Late Antiquity, *The Sword of Moses*. *Sefer Raziel ha-malak* is heavily influenced by *Sefer Yeşirah* and *Sefer ha-razîm*. The book addresses with deals several disciplines, including astrology, magical uses of the zodiac, gematria, perfumes, preparations on ritual purity and abstinence, along with the ascent through the seven heavens, and a study of the names of God and angels, their virtues and

³² Sznol, 1989: 272.

properties. The following passage remarks the importance of the holy names in the book:

«Know these are the complete names. They are combined here to reveal the secrets of 72 letters. Prophesy the lives of ancestors by them. Of, Elohim, learn from. Thus far, reveal the miracles of Yod Heh Waw Heh. The name of the glory and honor is divided in 72 names coming forth from the mouth of the high priest. In holiness and purity, it was received therein in a vision. It comes forth from three scriptures. Reveal the going forth from the tribute. Go forth to begin on the path, from beginning to end»³³.

Two reworks of *Sefer Raziel ha-malak*, titled *Sefer Raziel ha-qâtôn* and *Sefer Raziel ha-gâdôl* were written in Italy during the 16th century. The only mention we have of these works comes from Rabbi Yoḥannan Alemanno, Italian Jewish humanist philosopher, exegete and teacher of Pico della Mirandola, as well as the correspondence between two rabbis of the same period³⁴.

- Magical texts based on the exegesis of the Torah, Psalms and rabbinical literature: A different type of Jewish magic books are those revolving around the use of the sacred books of Judaism and prayers. The use of verses of the Torah for therapeutic purposes or exorcization formulae is a very old practice, already mentioned in the Talmud.

Havdalah de Rabi Akiva: The text was written during the period of the Geonim (589 ACE-1038 ACE) in the esoteric circles of Babylon, and then it was spread by the Italian Jewish communities. It is a short treatise that sketches a magical version of the Jewish ceremony of *Havdalah* (separation between the holy and the profane), performed every Saturday evening marking the end of Shabbat. The following passage is a short excerpt from its beginning:

³³ Savedow, 2000: 145-146.

³⁴ Idel, 2011: 160.

«This is the Havdalah of Rabbi Akiba against all witchcrafts and against injury from an evil spirit, or for [one] who his woman is forbidden him, or to open a heart. The one who desires to remember at the going out of Shabbat needs to wash in water and to dress in clean clothes and sit in a pure place or in a synagogue. He will have pure hands»³⁵.

Sefer šimuš Tehillim (Book of Theurgical Use of Psalms). *Sefer Shimush Tehillim* is a short and relatively little-known medieval work providing prescriptive theurgical associations and cabbalistic uses of particular chapters and verses from the Book of Psalms. It has been historically attributed to Rav Hai Gaon (939-1038 ACE) but any definitive statement of authorship is lacking. It would be more accurate to date its origins to the 13th century. Among other uses, it offers protection against demons and the Evil Eye, bad dreams, the effects of drinking water uncovered at night, and other calamities, along with prophylactic and healing spells. Its verses are meant to be either recited alone, frequently multiple times, or in conjunction with some other action or prayer³⁶.

There were also two other magical works used by the Hispanic Jews and conversos: *Sefer šimuš Torah (Book of Theurgical Use of the Torah)*, and *Sefer gematriyot (Book of the Numerical Identities*”, also known as *Sefer Eliyahu, Book of Elijah*). *Sefer gematriyot* was written by Judah he-ḥasid at the beginning of the 13th century. It bases its magic action in the knowledge of the hidden names of the God in the Biblical tradition³⁷.

Picatrix Hebrew version (*Taḥlit he-ḥaḥam, Aim of the Wise*): Al-Qasim Maslama Ibn Ahmad, known as Al-Magrití (the Madrilenian), astronomer and Hispanic-Muslim mathematician, is considered to be the author behind the text known as *Picatrix*. This work synthesizes older works on magic and astrology. One of the most influential interpretations suggests it is to be regarded as a handbook of talismanic magic, considering it as the most important exposition of magic in Arabic³⁸.

³⁵ Dennis, 2007: 16.

³⁶ Klein, 1936: 2-16.

³⁷ Cantera Montenegro, 2002: 53.

³⁸ Pingree, 1980: 1-15.

It was widely known amongst Jewish communities, influencing *conversos* during the 15th and 16th centuries both in Spain and Italy. This version developed a series of magical alphabets, employed to summon the angelic hosts and Metatron³⁹. The three Hebrew versions of *Picatrix* that are preserved nowadays were written in the late 15th century and early 16th century in Italy. In fact, we know about the importance of the Hebrew version of *Picatrix* during Renaissance thanks again to Rabbi Yoḥannan Alemanno, who continued to developing matters of magic that took place in Medieval Spain, thus influencing Florentine intellectuals like Pico della Mirandola and Ficino. Three Hebrew translations of *Picatrix* survive in Italian manuscripts written at the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries⁴⁰.

Clavicula Salomonis (The Key of Solomon the King): This text presents itself as written by King Solomon himself, and it is one of the most known magical books whose origin is considered to be Jew but it probably was not. Thanks to the many magical traditions and legends ascribed to King Solomon, the anonymous author of *Clavicula Salomonis* attributed his work to this well known biblical character. Solomon was considered to be author of several magic books and traditions employing demons and spirits to build the Temple, as the *Testament of Solomon*, an apocryphal text written between 1st century - 5th century ACE describes. Thanks to this pseudoepigraphic authorship, *Clavicula Salomonis* and other “pseudosolomonic” texts spread through many Jewish communities in Western Europe, especially in Italy and Spain, although it was also consulted profusely by Jewish and non-Jewish magicians⁴¹.

Its origin predates the 14th-15th centuries in Italy. Full of astrological content, the text presents numerous incantations, formulae and magical procedures, detailing the instruments that should be used in each case. Despite its very improbable Jewish origin, both Caro Baroja and Cantera Montenegro consider it to maintains a very close relation with *Sefer Raziel ha-malak*, as well as that it would present a markedly Jewish style⁴². However, many grimoires attributed to King Solomon were written during

³⁹ Swart, 2014: 270-271.

⁴⁰ Idel, 2011: 207.

⁴¹ Caro Baroja, 1992: 160-163.

⁴² Cantera Montenegro, 2002: 54.

the Renaissance, ultimately being influenced by earlier works of Jewish kabbalists and Arab alchemists, mixing some aspects of Greco-Roman magic. In fact, the archetype of *Clavicula Salomonis* probably was a Latin or Italian text, and not a Hebrew one⁴³. A Hebrew text survives in two versions, one kept at the British Library, on a parchment manuscript, separated in BL Oriental MSS 6360 and 14759. The BL manuscript was dated to the 16th century by its first editor, but is now thought to be somewhat younger, dating to the 17th or 18th century. The discovery of a second Hebrew text in the library of Samuel H. Gollancz was published by his son Hermann Gollancz in 1903, who also published a facsimile edition in 1914. Gollancz's manuscript had been copied in Amsterdam, in Sephardic cursive script, and is less legible than the BL text⁴⁴.

Clavicula Salomonis diffusion and translation to several languages moved the Spanish Inquisition to persecute the text almost from the moment in which the Tribunal began to work. In the 14th century, Inquisitor Eymerich ordered to burn in Barcelona a certain book called *Liber Salomonis*, and in a later burning in 1434 the same book was burned with *Sefer Razi'el ha-malak* in Barcelona as well as in Aragon. Later pyres throughout the 15th century did not manage to eradicate the presence of the book, and during the next two centuries Spaniards were still copying *Clavicula Salomonis*⁴⁵.

In the 16th century, Jesuit theologian Martin del Río considered *Clavicula Salomonis* to be a product of the Judeo-Arabic-Spanish tradition, reproduced and copied by Muslims and Jews, and burned by Christians, but never fully eliminated. Some Christian authors from the 16th and 17th centuries discussed the solomonic authorship of the text. Father Pineda affirmed that Solomon never was a magician, whereas G. Naudé defended this role of the monarch⁴⁶.

As indicated above, the inquisitorial processes often allude to *Clavicula Salomonis* during the 16th and 17th centuries. Those who owned and employed the text were accused of magicians and sorcerers. Such was the case of the Portuguese gardener Bastián Gonçalez, in Palmas of Gran

⁴³ Waite, 1972: 52.

⁴⁴ Butler, 1999: 47-99.

⁴⁵ Boutet, 2006: 161.

⁴⁶ Caro Baroja, 1992: 163.

Canaria, on April 15 1527. Inquisitor Luis de Padilla received a copy of the book from Gonçalez himself, who insisted on pointing out he really was an Old Christian, considering only *conversos* and Muslims had books like this one⁴⁷. This raises two important points: why was *Clavicula Salomonis* considered such a dangerous text and what was written on it?

Divided into two books, the text describes magical operations and materials the user must employ, along with the appropriate astrological time, magical symbols, blessings and rituals the performer must know. It contains several magic drawings of amulets, as well as the means to purify and prepare them. The first book contains several spells to summon the spirits of the dead and demons in order to compel them to do the operator's will. It also describes how to find stolen items, become invisible, gain favors and love. Here is an excerpt of the seventh chapter, through which the user can learn to perform an extremely powerful conjuration:

«By the holy names of God written in this book, and by the other holy and ineffable names which are written in the Book of Life, we conjure ye to come unto us promptly and without any delay, wherefore tarry not, but appear in a beautiful and agreeable form and figure, by these Holy names: ADONAI, TZABAOth, EL, ELOHI, ELOHIM, SHADDAI; and by EHEIEH, YOD HE VAU HE, which is the great name of God TETRAGRAMMATON written with four letters, ANAPHODITION, and ineffable; by the God of those virtues and potencies, who dwelt in the Heavens, who rideth upon the Kerubim, who moveth upon the wings of the wind, he whose power is in Heaven and in Earth, who spake and it was done, who commanded and the whole Universe was created; and by the holy names and in the holy names, IAH, IAH, IAH, ADONAI TZABAOth; and by all the names of God, the living, and the true, I reiterate the conjuration, and I conjure ye afresh ye Evil and rebellious spirits, abiding in the Abysses of Darkness»⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ Caro Baroja, 1992: 166.

⁴⁸ Macgregor Mathers, 2015: 48-48.

On the other hand, the second book describes several purifications the operator sorcerer must perform: the right clothes to wear, the rituals employed before casting any magic spell, and the animal sacrifices should be made in order to attract the spirits. Regarding such sacrifices we present the following excerpt of the twelfth chapter:

«In many operations it is necessary to make some sort of sacrifice unto the Demons, and in various ways. Sometimes white animals are sacrificed to the good Spirits and black to the evil. Such sacrifices consist of the blood and sometimes of the flesh. They who sacrifice animals, of whatsoever kind they be, should select those which are virgin, as being more agreeable unto the Spirits, and rendering them more obedient»⁴⁹.

As mentioned earlier, there are several references to Hebrew magic books in the inquisitorial documents of from both the 15th and 16th centuries, Evident proof of the profusion of Hebrew writings of magic is the widespread burning of this type of works that took place at the end of the 15th century next to *Convento de San Esteban*, a Dominican monastery in Salamanca. This is the report of inquisitor Pacheco regarding the burning of magic books in San Esteban:

«También ha acostumbrado el Santo Oficio hacer autos públicos de quema de libros como se vio al principio que se instituyó la Inquisición que para quitar todos los dogmas y las artes vanas y ciencias ilícitas, supersticiones de magia y encantamientos recogieron los Inquisidores en la Universidad de Salamanca, como su universidad principal, todos los libros y papeles que hallaron en poder de judíos y los nuevamente convertidos dellos y en otras personas, que llegaron á ser sessenta mil libros y los quemaron por auto público junto al Convento de San Esteban, mandando con edicto público que nadie usase más de aquellas artes vanas y supersticiosas»⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ Macgregor Mathers, 2015: 162.

⁵⁰ Pérez Pastor, 1897: 441-442.

4. Conclusion: The idea of Jewish witchcraft in the Renaissance.

After presenting the main books of magic used in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance that could be used by Jews and *conversos*, it is worth questioning the extent to which Jews were associated with witchcraft during these centuries. Was this a real reflection of reality or, on the contrary, are we facing a distortion of it? Why were Jews identified with magic more than Christians and Muslims if the existence and practice of magic books was common to all three cultures? Although the use of witchcraft should not be more widespread among medieval Jews than among its Muslim and Christian contemporaries, the distrust of the Hebrew community for its religious hermeticism, and the growing hatred of Jews due to economic and social reasons was the cause of them being blamed with the practice of magic and witchcraft, hurting Christians and destroying Christianity⁵¹. It was not uncommon for Jews to raise suspicions among their Christian contemporaries who frequently accused them of invoking the devils and offering sacrifices to them to aid them in their perfidious purposes.

From the first decades of the 14th century, rumors began to spread throughout Europe about allegations of *ritual crime*, in which the Jews, in conspiracy with the lepers, were considered the source of epidemics, poisoning water from wells, rivers and magic formulae prepared from a mixture of human blood and urine, mysterious plants, frog legs and snake heads, all diluted in fetid black liquid⁵². In some Spanish districts the Black Death epidemic of 1348 was attributed to malefic potions prepared by Jewish sorcerers in Toledo, and the anti-Jewish reaction produced violent assaults against Jewish quarters⁵³. These accusations can be linked to the one that considered Jewish doctors as poisoners during the 15th century. A rumor that ran through the Hispanic kingdoms claimed that Jewish doctors, obeying superior instructions, were to poison one in five Christian patients who attended⁵⁴. This is also an accusation directly related to magic (we have already mentioned the intimate relations that throughout the Middle Ages

⁵¹ Cantera Montenegro, 1997: 60-61.

⁵² Poliakov, 1986: 107-113.

⁵³ López de Meneses, 1959: 321-364.

⁵⁴ Trachtenberg, 2002: 93-95.

existed between medicine, magic and astrology) that contributed to increasing fear towards Jews, in this case worsened by the fact that the doctor has in his hands the lives of his patients.

It was also widely believed that Jewish doctors received their healing powers from the devil. Like other multiple traits of the stereotyped image of the Jew, this also transcended the Middle Ages, reaching the Spanish Golden Age⁵⁵, showing the idea of the Jewish sorcerer-doctor remained in the collective consciousness for a long time.

Nor does it seem a coincidence that at least from the beginning of the 15th century witchcraft meetings began to be called *synagogae*, and that from the second half of the same century the term *shabbat* was used to name the *sabbaths* or witch meetings with a goat demon. The origin of the term *sabbath* to denominate these demonic meetings comes from the Hebrew word *shabbat* (rest), which is called the sacred day for the Jewish religion. This shows the progressive identification in the eyes of late-medieval Christians between Judaism and witchcraft. The first author who seems to have applied the term *sabbaths* to witch covens was Pedro Mamoris, theologian of the University of Poitiers who, in the early seventies of the 15th century, uses it in his *Flagellum maleficarum*. Shortly afterwards it is also used by the priest Jean Vincent in his *Liber adversus magicas artes*, published in 1475⁵⁶.

Ultimately, the widespread suspicion about the deep interrelationship between magic and Jewish religion, as well as the frequent intervention of Jews in magical practices was, to a large extent, a result of the fear that throughout the Middle Ages inspired in Christian society everything that was related to Judaism.

Truth is that the Hebrew-Spanish literature and the scarce documentation preserved seems to indicate that the Hispanic Hebrews were devoted to the study of magic, but it was centered on healing and divination. On the contrary, and in the absence of more conclusive evidence, we can determine that they paid little attention to the necromantic studies or to black magic, a subject fully forbidden by the Jewish religion due to the fact it is based on the summoning of the devil.

⁵⁵ Authors like Gonzalo de Berceo, Enrique de Villena or Francisco Delgado reflected the idea of the Jew sorcerer in their texts. Cantera Montenegro, 2002: 79-82.

⁵⁶ Cardini, 1982: 98-99.

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