NUREMBERG MAHZOR, PRAYERS FOR THE ENTIRE YEAR, INTERSPERSED WITH ILLUMINATED INITIAL-WORD PANELS AT THE BEGINNING OF IMPORTANT SECTIONS OF FEASTS, SPECIAL SABBATHS AND BIBLICAL SCROLLS, ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT ON VELLUM, SOUTH GERMANY, C. 1330-1331

521 folios 50cm by 37cm, square Ashkenazi script, mostly 30 lines per page in dark brown ink, commentary is written on the three outer margins, in smaller round script, up to 105 lines per page. Two conjoint vellum leaves were attached to the end of the manuscript by the nineteenth century in the Library in Nuremberg, and two loose paper leaves at the beginning and end of the manuscript were part of the binding. The manuscript is composed of sixty-seven quires, mostly of eight conjoint leaves each, except for quires IV of nine leaves, one added at the end for additional text; XLV and XLVI of ten leaves each; LXV of four leaves, with text of Torah reading; LXV and LXVI are one quire of eight leaves: quire LXVI of six leaves was originally inserted between the two leaves of quire LXV, this and the last quire LXVII consist of Haftara readings. Quires XXXIII-ALXV are incorrectly bound and should be rearranged: XXXII, XL-IX XIV, XXXIV, XLV, XXXV-XXXIX, XLVI. Ruling by stylus (see especially fols.273ff.), Pricking noticeable in all four margins.

Five hands, related to the contents of the Mahzor, wrote the manuscript.
Hand 1. Fols.1v-32v with preliminary prayers.
Hand 2. Fols. 33v-233 scribe of the first part. The name of the scribe who wrote the first part of the Mahzor and some sections of the second part is Matan Ben Menahem. The letters of his full name are marked on fol.400. Additional marked letters: Matan appears on fols.143v, 304, 314. However this scribe did not write the colophon.
Hand 3. Fols.234-512v second part of the Mahzor, written together with hand 2 of part one.
Hand 4. Fols.513-528v the Haftarot ending with the colophon of 1331.
Hand 5. The scribe who wrote the commentaries is named Yaakov. His name is indicated by marked letters on fol.437 Colophon, fol.528v(517v) '...I wrote this mahzor for Rabbi Joshua bar Isaac and completed it on Thursday, the fourth of Elul in 5091 (August 8, 1331)....'

THE GIANT NUREMBERG MAHZOR IS ONE OF THE MOST SUMPTUOUS ASHKENAZI MAHZORIM EXTANT INCLUDING A RICH TREASURE OF PIYYUTIM

PROVENANCE
(1)The manuscript belonged to the Jewish Community of Nuremberg until the expulsion of the Jews from the city in 1499. It was then taken to the municipal library of Nuremberg (shelf marked Ms.centus, Nr.100).

(2) In 1808, during the Napoleonic conquest of Nuremberg, eleven leaves were cut out of the manuscript. Five of these detached leaves found their way to the Meir Selig Goldschmidt collection from Frankfurt. After his daughter's marriage in 1918, they were transferred to the Heinrich Eisemann collection. In 1937, one page was given to S.Z. Schocken. In 1938, he bought three more pages, while the fifth leaf is in the Ernst Bodenheimer collection in New York.

(3) The manuscript was acquired by the Schocken Library in Jerusalem in 1951.

TEXT
The Nuremberg Mahzor, like other Ashkenazi mahzorim consists mainly of a large section of piyyutim (liturgical hymns), which are added to the regular prayers, for holidays and special Sabbaths. However, the ordinary prayers of Shachrit (morning), Minhah (afternoon) and Ma'ariv (evening), including the regular Shmounteh-esreh (eighteen) benedictions, are lacking here and normally do not appear in an Ashkenazi mahzor.

Dividing the giant Mahzor into two parts, at times bound in two volumes, was quite common in Ashkenazi mahzorim of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, mainly because of their content, but also because of their size. The assumption that there are two parts to the Nuremberg Mahzor is supported by the fact that following the Additional Occasional benedictions, there is a blank folio 233v (later foliation:227v), which is followed by the prayers for the New Year on fol. 234 (228). Moreover, the first part was written by two scribes, whereas the second was written by three scribes, and only one of them is the main scribe of the first part (see Scribes below). The Nuremberg Mahzor was, however, never bound in two volumes, since the recto of fol.233 (227) contains the end of the text of the occasional benedictions, and is not blank.
The First Part
Preliminary Section
The Mahzor starts with a preliminary section (fols. 1v-32v), written by a scribe who did not participate in the rest of the manuscript. The section begins on fol.1v with introductory benedictions to the prayers. This formula is repeated in the beginning of the morning prayer of the New Year in the second part on fol. 321 (315). It continues with some instructions and additional piyyutim for different occasions. Fols.2v-7 are variations of Shahrit (morning) and Mussaf (additional) prayers for Sabbaths and holidays. Fol.8 piyyutim for Shabbat Bereshit (Genesis Sabbath, first after Sukkot); fol.10 Shabbat and Rosh Hodesh (new moon); fol.12 Selihot (penitential hymns) for Mondays and Thursdays; piyyutim for Sabbaths of pericopes; (fol.17v) Vayera,(fol.18) Toldot; (fol18v) Hanukkah; fol.26v-32v Selihot for tenth of Tevet.

Yearly Prayers
The Mahzor then follows (from fol.33v on) the yearly calendar, written by the main scribe of the first part. It starts with the piyyutim for the Four Special Sabbaths and for the Feast of Purim. From here on most of the piyyutim have an extensive commentary in the margins. Fol.33v Sabbath Shekalim; fol.40 (later foliation 39) Sabbath Zakhor; fol.47 (46) Purim; fol.52v (51v) Esther scroll; fol.60 (59) Sabbath Parah; fol.64 (63) Sabbath Hakodesh; fol.69v (68) Great Sabbath before Passover.

Passover Section
Fol.78.v (added cut out fol.76a v) First Day of Passover; Fol.91 (88) Second Day of Passover; fol. 98v (95v) Sabbath during Passover; fol.102 (99) Song of Songs; fol.107 (104) Seventh Day of Passover; fol.120 (added cut out fol.116a) Last Day of Passover. Following are collections of piyyutim for six Sabbaths between Passover and for Shavu’ot (Pentecost).

Shavu’ot Section
Fol.186 (180) Sabbath Beha’alotkha; fol.189v 9183v) Scroll of Lamentations; fol.194 (188) Ninth of Av; fol.219v (213v) Sabbath Nahamu.

Additional Occasional Prayers
Following are piyyutim: for Wedding on fol.223.(217), for Circumcision fol.229v(223v), and for Sabbath before New Year fol.231v(225v). It is possible that these occasional piyyutim were placed here because this may have been the end of the intended first part of the Mahzor.

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Second Part
The second part consists of prayers for the New Year, Day of Atonement and Sukkot.

The following quires 32-45 (originally fols.249-362) were apparently wrongly bound during the seventeenth century, when the entire volume was probably bound by a Christian binder, who could not read Hebrew, mixed the quires and thereby the order of the prayers and piyutim of New Year and Day of Atonement (see Codicology below). This error in binding was apparently made in the Municipal Library of Nuremberg, before the early foliation of the nineteenth century, since this foliation does not take into account the correct order of the prayers in the Feasts.

The correct order of the folios and the quires according to the sequence of prayers is as follows:

Sukkot Section

Haftarot
The biblical passages form the Prophets, which are recited after the reading of the Torah, were written by another hand, the one that writes the colophon on fol.528v(517v). This last section of the manuscript is now bound erroneously in three quires (65-67). Quire 66 of 6 leaves, fols. 515-520 (504-509) should be placed in the middle of quire 65 of 2 leaves 513 and

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514 (502-503) to form one quire of 8 leaves. Quire 67 on fols.521-528 (570-517) follows the text on fol.514. The text of the Haftorot for the morning prayers of Passover, Pentecost, New Year, Day of Atonement and for Sukkot are written in one column, while their Aramaic Targum is in the second column aside. The Haftara for Passover starts on fol.513 (502). The Haftara for the first day of Passover starts in Joshua 3:5, and not as was common in Ashkenazi rite in Joshua 5:2. It continues on fols.516-519 (504-508): Pentecost starts on fols. 519v-520v (508v-509v), continues on fols.514 (503), and then on fol.521 (510): New Year’s Haftarot are on fols.521v-522v (510v-511v). Instead of the Aramaic Targum to the first day of New Year, in I Samuel 1:1-2:10, an enlarged prayer of Hanna appears in Aramaic in the side column; Day of Atonement on fols.522v-524 (511v-513); Sukkot on fols.524v-528 (513-517).

Peculiar Prayers

There are some prayers and piyyutim, which are not usual in Ashkenazi Mahzorim. Examples are the piyyutim for the Tenth of Tavet, the day the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed (fol.26v). Amongst them is one by an Italian author, Rabbi Hayim Paltiel (fol.30).

ILLUSTRATION

1. Full page painted portal(fol.1v) at the opening of the Mahzor. The top elongated rectangular part is composed of four Gothic pointed trefoil arches, topped by building roofs with pinnacles. The initial-word in the center arches is written in gold over a pink dense field of squares. The flanking arches expose trefoil windows, with an orange criss-cross ground. The two supporting columns are decorated with hybrid dragons, with tails ending in foliate scrolls. They have foliate type capitals and bases resting on the backs of an elephant on the right and a bear on the left.

2. Twenty-one painted initial-word panels at important sections of the yearly prayers, mostly in the first part of the Mahzor. They are on fols. 33v, 40(39), 47v(46v), 52v (51v), 60(59), 64 (63), 69v(68v), 78(76), 91(88), 98v(95v), 102(99), 107(104), 120(116a), 145(141), 171(165), 180(174), 194v(188), 321v(315v), 340(334), 364(357a), 372v(364av), 475(464). Sixteen of these panels are in the first part of the Mahzor, and only five are in the second part. Most panels are elongated rectangles, with the initial-word covered in gold leaf, mostly stamped with small rosettes. All of the panels but one, fol.98v(95v), are filled with a densely decorated ground of consecutive small squares (e.g. fols.33v, 91, 180), lozenges (e.g. fols.40, 102, 364) or roundels (e.g. fols.51v, 340) in different colours: blue, orange, pink, green or magenta.
דף בistra, לגליל ע actividad, מה בורח ב אברכה, ב orderBy נפשו, ב...
The panels are framed either by several lines and fillets of different colors (e.g. fols.33v, 40, 364), or by a thicker band of geometric (e.g. fols.102, 51v, 107, 145), and foliate motifs (e.g. fols.91, 180). Some have two thicker bars flanking the initial-word (e.g. fols.51v, 68v, 321v, 340), decorated with geometric forms or foliate scrolls. Some of them have small animals (e.g.fol.68v), or birds (e.g. fol.321v) interspersed within them. One of them (fol.47v) has two roundels on the side frames, filled with a blue bird on the left and a seated bear holding a banner on the right. Another frame (fol.120) with interspersed animals within the foliate scrolls, exposes four lions in the corners of the panel, a deer on top and a camel below. In the most elaborate panel (fol.78v) the ground of lozenges is in three colors: blue, pink and magenta, topped by a double trefol arch, flanked by bars decorated with four hybrids within the medallions. One unique panel was probably done by a different artist (fol.98v), who mistreated two of the Hebrew letters in the panel (bet and final kha). The ground of the panel is done using a pen, in a grisaille-like style, exposing foliate scrolls interspersed with two dogs hunting a hare at top; a goat, two dragons and a dog hunting a deer at the bottom.

3. Many large initial-words in black ink surrounded by pen flourishes in red, mostly in the second part of the Mahzor. The large initial-words are over the most important sections of the prayers, where there are not painted panels. Only five of them are in the first part of the Mahzor (fols.154, 165, 182v, 189v, 194v), and eleven are in the second part (fols.234, 261v, 348, 355v, 408v, 443v, 461v, 479v, 485v, 497v, 506). All but one (fol. 355v Kol Nidrei) are written in black, surrounded by pen flourishes in red. The one on fol.355v is written in red with black flourishes. Many of them spread over the entire text space, while others are over some part of the text.

4. Many smaller initial-words at the beginning of most of the piyyutim, either in red, black or alternating red and black.

5. The commentary written in smaller script in the outer margins as carmina figurata type, forming different geometric shapes, such as roundels, lozenges, triangles and tapering elongated rectangles. Some are outlined in red ink. This may have been done by the scribe who wrote the commentary, or one of the main scribes.

6. Some linear decorations in acrostic to names of authors of piyyutim, as well as to the main scribe of the Mahzor: Matania Ben Menahem. His name is indicated by marked letters within the text: (fol.143v - a flower upon the name Matan; fol.304 - Matania; fol.400 - Matan ben Menachem; fol.314 - Matan). The name of the scribe who wrote the commentaries is also marked (fol.437 - Yaakov). Some linear decorations in acrostic to names of authors of piyyutim (fol.462v- Meir bar Yitzhak; fol. 134v - Yoseph bar Shmuel Tov Elelm).

7. One text illustration of a shofar on New Year (fol.343). A text illustration of a curved shofar is sketched in red ink beside the sentence ‘u’bitko’a shofar’ (and when the shofar is blowing), part of the piyyut ‘Adar ve-Hod’ recited in New Year (fol.343).

8. Some of the catch-words are illustrated with brown ink: a stork (in Hebrew Hadidah) illustrating the word ‘Haside’ha’, a lamb’s head tops the word ‘tla’ei’ (fol.420) (your followers - fol.23v), a flag upon the word ‘ve-haniglot’(fol. 404); a hind’s head top; a hoopoe’s head with a large beak (fol.412)

The style of the painted panels is directly related to the Upper Rhine during the first half of the fourteenth century. Most telling are the frames with animals, birds and hybrids interlaced with foliate scrolls. They resemble the soft undulating scrolls and animals of illuminated manuscripts from the Upper Rhine (see Ellen J. Beer, Beitaage zur oberrheinischen Buchmalerei, Basel & Stuttgart, 1959), somewhat later than the famous ‘Gradual of St. Katharinenthal’ of around 1312 (see E.J. Beer, ‘Die Buchkunst des Graduale von St. Katharinenthal’, in Das Graduale von St Katharinenthal. Kommentar zur Faksimile Ausgabe des Graduale von St. Katharinenthal, ed. L. Wutrich, Luzern, 1983, pp.103-224).

Stylistically, it is hard to assume that the illumination was done later than 1331, when the colophon was written.

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