

THE MONK'S  
*Haggadah*



A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ILLUMINATED CODEX  
FROM THE  
MONASTERY OF TEGERNSEE,

*with a Prologue by*  
FRIAR ERHARD VON PAPPENHEIM

*Edited by*  
DAVID STERN, CHRISTOPH MARKSCHIES,  
*and SARIT SHALEV-EYNI*

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¶1 [1]: Long ago, venerable Abbot,<sup>13</sup> you commissioned this Hebrew book to me so that I might briefly familiarize you in a letter with its contents. To grasp its whole aim quickly and at once, you should know, venerable Abbot, that it contains nothing more than the ritual of eating the paschal lamb—a ritual which the pitiable perfidy of contemporary Jews, who worship a shadow as if it were the truth,<sup>14</sup> has still not stopped practicing every year through the repeated observance of many ceremonies, as the various illustrations in the margins of this book show.

¶2 [2]: Further, I am uncertain whether the ritual of this lamb<sup>15</sup> was introduced at the time of original observance and has continued from the very beginning until now, or whether it has been elaborated through successive additions made by their elders and those who are especially zealous for their religious Law, and which they established through their authority.

¶3 [3]: This one thing I do know: Not in this book or in other booklets describing the eating of such a lamb, have I read or found the injunctions that the divine Law in Exodus 12 (where the first institution of the Passover lamb is recorded) commands must be observed in this ritual. To the contrary: I do not believe that canonical Scripture anywhere contains the tenets they fallaciously teach in these booklets about the eating of the lamb or the additional rules that the booklets command must be kept. Rather, the additional rules found in numerous passages in this booklet often seem to oppose canonical Scripture. And this is no wonder: For, as Truth testifies,<sup>16</sup> these men transgress the commandments of God for the sake of their traditions.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, it appears that both Christ at the Last Supper and the Holy Church in the Office of the Mass imitate the aforementioned ritual. I shall point out some similarities in the following pages.<sup>18</sup>

¶4 [4]: But before I turn to a fuller exposition of this book, your venerable Abbot should know that other Hebrew books describing the ritual of the lamb first discuss how to remove the leaven and prepare the unleavened bread. Then follows the ceremony of the lamb's eating, which is the point where your book begins. In booklets that they have issued in the vernacular language [i.e., Yiddish] for women and less-educated men, they expound in detail the procedure and order of these instructions, a few of which I will briefly touch upon.

¶3 [5]: In Exodus 12, previously mentioned, the Hebrew reads thus: שבעת ימים שבעת ימיו מצות תאכלו etc., that is, For seven days you will eat unleavened bread. On the first day, you will remove the leaven from your homes.<sup>19</sup> Our text<sup>20</sup> says: There shall be no leaven in your homes. Even if these words are slightly different, their meaning is the same. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day to the seventh day, that

person shall be cut off from Israel. [Exod. 12:15]<sup>21</sup> The apostle agrees; taught by divine wisdom,<sup>22</sup> he enjoins us to purge, in a spiritual sense, the prefigured leaven of sins<sup>23</sup> before eating the true paschal lamb. Thus, we may eat the most innocent lamb to our spiritual benefit, not in the old leaven, not in malicious or wicked leaven, but in the unleavened bread of purity and sincerity.<sup>24</sup>

¶4 [6]: In their booklets, the Jews claim on this basis that, on the thirteenth day of the month of Nisan (our April), each household leader—in his own person, if he can; or with the help of others—is required at the onset of night to inspect the entire house thoroughly with a torch in search of leaven and bread, and to remove them entirely. At that time, whosoever is obligated to do this should not undertake or practice any other sort of work or pursuit, lest the time allotted for the search slip away or pass by. Further, the torches used for this search should not in any way be dim or with double wicks, nor should they be oil lamps or candles made with fish oil, lest, through fear of fire or staining one's clothes, the mind of the person conducting the search be distracted by such worries, no matter how minor they seem. The lights ought to be of wax and moderately bright, so that he may use them to scrutinize even the cracks in the wall without fear and danger of causing a fire. The search should be done in this way so that not an inch of the house is left uninspected and all attention can be focused on the search.

¶5: Even before the search begins, all who are about to assist in it are to stand before the head of the household as he utters the following blessing: ברוך אתה, that is, “Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the ages,<sup>25</sup> who has<sup>26</sup> sanctified us with your commandments and instructed us to purge all leaven.” I am now going to skip the rest of the search, since I think that this is enough for us at this point.

¶6 [7]: Once the search is completed, they teach that the leaven and leavened bread they have discovered be guarded diligently lest mice carry any of it back to their holes. In that case, they say, it would be necessary to reinspect the entire house until the rest of the leaven and leavened bread were found again. They also enjoin other things about the search in this text, but it would be too lengthy and pointless for us to go into them here.

¶7 [8]: Finally, once the search for leaven has been satisfactorily executed, the head of the household concludes with this Hebrew prayer: “All leaven and bread that is on my property, which I have not seen or purged, let it become as dirt, and as dust and ash.” Then, on *erefpesah*, the eve of Passover, they are required to burn the leaven and leavened bread which they have discovered and carefully guarded in a secure place.<sup>27</sup> And so, after the last meal on the eve of Passover (when it is still permissible to use leavened bread), no leavened bread should be found in their homes for the following seven days.

¶8 [9]: Now, on to the preparation of the unleavened bread. I have learned that the Jewish<sup>28</sup> rabbis put forward this bizarre idea: Four times a year,<sup>29</sup> at a particular hour and minute, a drop of blood falls from heaven into all the household vessels in which drinking water is kept; and whoever drinks from this water, in which these drops have fallen, contracts hydropsis or another type of swelling on the body.<sup>30</sup> That is, unless an iron object is first dunked into the water, since once this is done it is no longer able to inflict damage.

¶9: In their language, [the Jews] call this drop תְּקוּפָה, that is, *tokofah*. They carefully plot the times and minutes when this *tokofah* ought to fall.

¶[10]: I cannot cease to be amazed how it can be that they find these fantastic claims, not to say superstitions, so persuasive when, so far as I know, no other race or language or nation knows or is even aware of them. Neither divine authority nor any sort of philosophical or human wisdom teaches such things, nor does plain reason.

¶10: I have inserted this belief here for this reason: On the thirteenth day of the month of נִיסָן, our April, which is the day before Passover eve, they order that water for preparing the unleavened bread be drawn late in the day but before nightfall, and kept in a cold place, so that the water will not turn the warm dough mixed with it into the bitterness of leavened bread. Now, even though they always pour out the water kept in the house at the moment when their calculations tell them that drop called *tokofah* is going to fall (so that the water not be contaminated by the drop),<sup>31</sup> they say that the water drawn for the unleavened bread need not be poured out, even if the *tokofah* has already fallen. Indeed, even without thrusting an iron object into it, the water can safely be used to make and prepare the unleavened bread.

¶11 [11]: The desired quantity of dough for the ceremonial unleavened bread should be the equivalent of forty-three and one-fifth eggs. They carefully hand down instructions for the measuring cups and guidelines for determining these measurements as they wish. From the dough that has been prepared, they remove a single tiny portion, which must be guarded for the rest of the year; they call that portion הֶלֶחַ, that is, *ha'elah*. Then, without delay, they forcefully flatten the remaining dough so that it not undergo fermentation, for they say that if the unleavened dough they have prepared were to sit out unbaked for the length of time it takes a man to walk a quarter mile, it too would have to be burned as though it were leavened bread. They also say that no one should eat the unleavened bread before the Passover meal so that, when the meal comes, it can be eaten with greater delight.

¶12 [12]: On the day before Passover, which is always the fourteenth day of April according to their calendar and calculations, they rise at dawn and complete their synagogue service. Then, at noon, they begin to bake the dough of unleavened bread they have prepared. From the dough, they make six principal unleavened cakes, which they call מִצְוֶה, *mitzveh*, that is, prescribed.<sup>32</sup> Those pieces of unleavened bread<sup>33</sup> are the ones described in the court confessions of the Jews of Trent, in accordance with the legal ruling there executed against them, in the documented proceedings<sup>34</sup> I was urged to guard under great care for a long time lest they be stolen or tampered with in any way. When I translated the confessions into our vernacular language, they comprised twenty-four complete notebooks. The legal proceedings and the confessions state clearly that the previously mentioned six principal cakes of unleavened bread are prepared before the others in a very special way with the blood of Christian infants.

¶13: If there is fresh blood, the head of the household sprinkles some drops—more or fewer drops, depending on how much he has—into the prepared batter, even though, they say, a single drop will suffice. If there is no fresh blood, he grinds dried blood into powder, and then hydrates and sprinkles it as explained previously. While he mixes and sprinkles the blood, however, he does not allow in anyone except

the most faithful. The other, regular cakes of unleavened bread, those without blood, are usually called מצות, that is, *matzos*, and in the vernacular spoken in many places, *matizin*.

¶14 [13]: The Jews of Trent themselves admitted that the murder of Christian children and the consumption and drinking of their blood is not done out of any necessity, but only out of hatred and contempt for Christ. They also confessed that they do not commit these matters to writing, except in the most vague terms, so that only those who have participated in the experience will know about it. They, the elders, hand the practice down only by word of mouth and through custom, and entrust it only to the most loyal people.

Now concerning the Rite and the Eating of the Paschal Lamb According to the Law.

¶15 [14]: On the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan (as has been said),<sup>35</sup> [Jews] always solemnly celebrate *ereff pesaêh*, the eve of Passover. After they have gone to synagogue in their finest clothes, and have returned home once the service is completed, they conduct the Passover supper with utmost care as follows: They set the table, then they place on it a *cyathus*, a glass drinking cup or, as it is called in Greek, ποτηριον [*poterion*], namely, a chalice that has been washed out very well and filled with wine for each person.

¶16: A small pillow is also placed to the left of each person, allowing them to lean or recline on it. Then they place three of the previously mentioned six pieces of the prescribed unleavened bread on a tray, not at random, but in this order: one on top of the other, the first piece on the very top, the second in the middle, and the third on the bottom.

¶17: Around these pieces of unleavened bread, they place sprigs of parsley on a small dish; lettuce on a second; vinegar on a third; and some saltwater on a fourth. In many places, however, they also set a dish of a sauce made from pears, nuts, and garlic, which they call חרוסת, that is, *herosses*. They also add double portions of boiled meat; others add eggs and whatever else someone can or might want to eat. And so, without having washed their hands, each person sits in his allotted seat at the table.

¶18: With the exception of the lettuce,<sup>36</sup> I see nothing in all these instructions that corresponds to the legal institution of the lamb in Exodus 12. In fact, the boiled meats seem even to transgress the same divine ordinance therein, since the law there clearly states that on that night nothing raw or cooked in water should be consumed, but only meat roasted over a fire.<sup>37</sup>

Now Your Venerable Abbot's Book and the Order of the Supper of the Lamb According to the Law Begins as Follows: