

THE SECOND NUREMBERG HAGGADAH AND THE YEHUDAH HAGGADAH:
ARE THEY MADE BY THE SAME ARTIST?

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The Second Nuremberg Haggadah at the Schocken Library in Jerusalem (1) and the Yahuda Haggadah at the Israel Museum (2) are illustrated sister manuscripts, each containing about forty pages of text, with each page accompanied by two or three marginal illustrations. These cycles are - with few exceptions - of almost identical iconography and of very similar style and technique. A large number of pictures show Old Testament scenes; others show different stages of the Passover ceremony, or the preparation of the *seder*. Two pictures are of eschatological content. The iconography of the cycles is strongly influenced by rabbinic literature. As most of the medieval Passover manuscripts neither of the two Haggadot contains a colophon, therefore we do not know the exact date and provenance. Both were mentioned by a number of authors (3) all of whom agree that the manuscripts are of typical southern German character and were produced between 1450 and 1500.(4) In my opinion they were produced in Franconia - either Bamberg or Nuremberg - in the late sixties of the 15th century.(5) Beside the question of date and provenance another problem puzzled most of the scholars of Jewish art: how are the two manuscripts related? Iconographically of almost identical program, they also share a very similar style. Were they illustrated by the same artist, by two different illuminators, but in the same workshop? Were they copied one from the other? Was the Second Nuremberg Haggadah copied from the Yahuda Haggadah or reversely, or were both copied from a common lost model?(6) No answer has yet been given to these questions. A comprehensive comparison of the manuscripts, their general layout, their drawing technique, their style and the relation of the pictures to the text may throw new light on these questions.

The main characteristics of style are the following: the unframed little pictures are drawn in dark, almost black, ink in rather heavy lines - outlines and the inner lines are of the same thickness and heaviness. The lines are closed and uninterrupted, there are no double lines. In comparison to the style of contemporary pen drawings, in Germany they seem much more controlled and disciplined. The lines

are straight, meeting in mostly right angles, there are almost no rounded lines. There is no hatching. This kind of linear style is typical of the German woodcut of the second phase to be dated around the middle of the century, until 1470 approximately. Also the facial design recalls woodcuts rather than the pointed technique of the eyes of the pen drawings of the same period. The figures are stiff and awkward, short with big heads, their movements are clumsy, sometimes grotesque. The design of the background, landscapes or architecture is extremely simple and archaic in comparison to the graphic arts around 1450 and the period following. Paging through the two manuscripts in order to identify stylistic characteristics that would indicate two different hands, we find mixed feelings. In some cases of comparison we might conclude, that the manuscripts are made by the same artist. We see the same kind of composition, the same way of planning the pictures, the same types of gestures and movements of the figures, the same types of outlines. On the other hand we may notice differences that will not allow us to assume that one single hand is responsible for the drawings in both manuscripts. This dilemma accompanies us while we page through the two books from the first to the very last page. To solve this puzzling problem we shall consider first of all the technique of drawing and coloring. The pictures are colored in gouache, with neither shading nor gradation. The heavy black lines happen to be above the color and not underneath. This fact led Essenwein, the late 19th century Director of the German National Museum in Nuremberg, where the Second Nuremberg Haggadah was until 1957,(7) to the conclusion that these lines were added later and were not a part of the original decoration. He believed that these black lines are responsible for the somewhat rude character of the drawings, while the original design might have been much finer. The original lines - as Essenwein explains - are not to be seen anymore.(8) Essenwein of course had not seen the Yahuda Haggadah. The fact is, that these lines are to be seen quite clearly in some of the pictures. They happen to be underneath the color, they are very fine and thin and drawn in light brown ink. This situation is exactly the same in the case of the Yahuda Haggadah. Therefore there can be no doubt that the black lines are part of the original design, because there is no reason to believe that both manuscripts suffered independently from the same "rude" addition. The production process was the following: The pictures were drawn with a very thin pen in fine lines - outlines as well as the inner lines, hair, faces etc. - in light brown ink. These drawings were colored in a rather rude, even careless manner, the colors often go beyond the outlines. The next step was adding the black lines. Although this technique was common in manuscript illumination since the late antique period, in 15th century German manuscripts with quickly pen-drawn illustrations it is not especially fashionable. However we find a similar technique in other Franconian manuscripts of the fifties or sixties of the 15th century.(9) It also reminds us to a certain extent the working process of woodcutting: the picture is to be drawn on the woodblock, then cut, printed and

colored. In the early printing workshops each stage of this process was executed by a different person.

Every picture is accompanied by at least one rhymed title mostly written within a scroll. These scrolls are drawn in arbitrary shapes. Surprisingly, it happens twice that we meet the exact same shape of scroll in both manuscripts next to the very same scene, as in the case of the sacrifice of Abraham as well as Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh. In the latter case we note a mistake of perspective in the design of the scroll. It is the same mistake in both pictures, although in other cases the scroll of this type is designed in correct perspective. This excludes the possibility that the two manuscripts were copied from a common model, and we must assume that one was copied from the other. There is no reason to believe that one shape of the scroll was copied twice from one model at exactly the same place. If this would have happened on purpose, we had to expect that the shapes of the scrolls would be parallel on every page. In my opinion this happened without any doubt unconsciously.

Our next point of discussion concerns the relation between the text and the pictures. The text of the Haggadah is accompanied by about 80 biblical scenes. Biblical cycles of such a size are rather uncommon in Ashkenasi Haggadot. However the drawer made strong efforts to adjust the cycles to the text of the Haggadah. In both manuscripts the biblical cycle starts at the beginning of the Midrashic part of the Haggadah ("we have been slaves...", Second Nuremberg Haggadah fol 7v, Yahuda Haggadah, fol 7r). The next four pages are decorated with Exodus scenes depicting the childhood and youth of Moses, followed in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah by three pages dedicated to the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt (until fol 11r). In the Yahuda Haggadah this small cycle of the bondage is reduced to two pages only. The emphasis of the bondage is quite natural in a Haggadah, and on fol 11r of the Second Nuremberg Haggadah the bondage is mentioned in the text leading us to the conclusion, that the drawer extended this bondage cycle in order to accommodate the biblical pictures to the text. From now on - since the bondage cycle in the Yahuda Haggadah contains only two pages, the pictures of the two manuscripts no longer appear next to the same text. Continuing in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah we come to fol 18r, where the *dayenu* prayer starts. The illustration to this text is the preparation of the Passover meal,⁽¹⁰⁾ because - as the text in the scrolls tells us - it is now time for the wife to care for the meal.⁽¹¹⁾ In order to accommodate this also in the Yahuda Haggadah, the drawer had to insert on the page before a depiction of the angel of death killing the Egyptian firstborn (Yahuda Haggadah, fol 17r), a repetition of this subject, which appears in the Yahuda Haggadah already on

fol 16r. The cycle was extended at this point in order to adjust the depiction of the preparation of the meal to the text of the *dayenu* prayer. But already at this same page of the Yahuda Haggadah comes the next contraction of the cycle. On the bottom margin we find a depiction of the Israelite women searching for goods in the houses of the Egyptians, a scene, which appears in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah on the following page where it fills the whole margin. These contractions and extensions occur often in the Yahuda Haggadah and the question is: What is the reason for these changes? The portions of text on each page are in both manuscripts exactly the same. The problem is, however, that in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah the text starts on a recto-page (fol 3r), while in the Yahuda Haggadah it starts on a verso-page (fol 2v). On the first pages every scene, which appears in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah on a recto-page, appears therefore in the Yahuda Haggadah on a verso-page. The picture cycles run parallel until the first double-page illustration, which causes a problem: what is now in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah on a recto-page needs to be on recto-page also in the Yahuda Haggadah, as in the case of the visit of Moses and Aaron before the Pharaoh, the Exodus or the Crossing of the Red Sea. At these points of the cycle the program has to be changed. This effort, together with adjusting the scenes to the text, results in the contractions and extensions in the Yahuda Haggadah. Such a contraction of the cycle eliminates the depiction of Adam and Eve in the Yahuda Haggadah (Second Nuremberg Haggadah, fol 30v). The most puzzling fact is that both manuscripts end with the same picture, but not with the same text. In the Yahuda Haggadah the last page of text is missing - it was supposed to be without a picture. Altogether it appears that the cycle in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah is the more successful one, it is more organic, more clear, without unexpected contractions and extensions and maximal adjustment of scenes to text, we miss in some cases in the Yahuda Haggadah. Therefore we assume that the cycle of the Second Nuremberg Haggadah was the original one, the Yahuda Haggadah having been copied from it. The trouble with the Yahuda Haggadah was caused by the scribe, who did not care about the arrangement of the text as parallel to the Second Nuremberg Haggadah and started it on a verso-page instead of a recto-page.

Let us turn now to the style of the pictures. It was already mentioned that the spectator is puzzled by a dilemma between similarities that indicate the possibility that the two picture cycles were produced by the same artist, and differences on the other hand, which seem to deny such a conclusion. Of what character are the similarities? A few comparisons will illustrate them: in general the compositions are very similar, the proportions of figures, the character of movements. Arms awkwardly extend from shoulders in a very similar way, the lines on the the shoulders as well as the folds of some of the sleeves at the elbows are com-

pletely analogous. Some scenes appear in complete analogous compositions, the figures appear in analogous gestures and movements. In short these analogies concern the general outline, the compositions, the figure style, the gestures, and the movements.

But finally, what are the differences? The main differences are found in the coloring of the manuscripts. In the Second Nuremberg Haggadah the coloring is less carefully done than in the Yahuda Haggadah. More often the colors go beyond the outlines. The landscape grounds are sometimes not filled with green color, but only the outline is followed by one thick green brush stroke. The floors of indoor scenes are made in a more rude way than in the Yahuda Haggadah - with a few thick grey brush strokes. The colorist of the Second Nuremberg Haggadah uses more blue, while the colorist of the Yahuda Haggadah had a greenish blue, which he uses less. He on the other hand - beside the fact that he worked more carefully - often used a very bright green, the quality of which was rather mediocre - it flaked off in the course of the centuries. This color was also used by the colorist of the Second Nuremberg Haggadah, but much less. Altogether the colors in the Yahuda Haggadah seem to be more pale, more diluted, than in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah. Concerning the other colors there are no significant differences. Another difference appears in some cases concerning the black outlining. In some drawings of the Yahuda Haggadah these black lines seem to be quicker, less carefully, rather freely drawn, sometimes softer. Again a few comparisons will illustrate this: differences of this kind appear in the lines of water, in the drawing of leaves, of women's hair, of animal fur. In these cases the woodcut character of the Yahuda Haggadah is less dominant than in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah. However, this is the case only in a part of the pictures. There are differences concerning the coloring and the black outlining, but they are of minor importance.

Now we come to the last point which leads us back to the scrolls. The outlines of the scrolls are made in the same light brown ink and with the same fine lines like the first drawing of the pictures. They are indeed of very similar character. The script within the scrolls is written with the same light brown ink. It is a small, cursive script and, we assume, that it was made in both manuscripts by the same hand since the forms of the letters are completely analogous. It is, on the other hand, very different from the cursive script, which appears from time to time in the course of the text of the Haggadah. The layout of text considers clearly the compositions of the pictures. Without a doubt they were written after the pictures were drawn. In all likelihood they were executed after the first drawing with the same ink, that is different from the ink, in which the text of the Haggadah was written and different from the ink, the black outlining made later. The texts

relate very clearly to the pictures explaining the content of the scenes and citing biblical or rabbinic sources. Not even slightly do they ever contradict the content of the pictures, although they may give further explanations. It might be possible that the scrolls with the text were made by the same person who produced the light brown drawings. Concerning the shaping of the scrolls we observe another interesting fact: In the first ten pages of the Second Nuremberg Haggadah these scrolls are shaped very delicately. Their outline is double, and the rolling at the ends of the scrolls is soft and round. Then, after approximately ten pages the careful execution of the scrolls begins to diminish. This process happens gradually, not suddenly. We have the impression that the drawer accelerated his working process. The scrolls in the Yahuda Haggadah seem to continue this process. At the beginning we find similar scrolls as those in the middle and at the end of the Second Nuremberg Haggadah; toward the end of the manuscript the scrolls are mostly missing; at the last ten pages they are completely missing, and only the texts are present. But it is clear, that the person who wrote the texts intended to give up the scrolling, because from now on the texts are in straight, instead of curved lines. This is yet a further step of accelerating the working process. These differences concerning the layout of the text and the shaping of the scrolls therefore do not lead us to the conclusion, that they were made by different hands. Rather it indicates that the writer and drawer of the scrolls accelerated his working process more and more, a process which starts at the beginning of the Second Nuremberg Haggadah and develops gradually in the course of this manuscript, continues in the Yahuda Haggadah and concludes on the last pages of the book. This is an other argument which leads us to the conclusion that the Second Nuremberg Haggadah was the first manuscript to be produced and was immediately followed by the production of the Yahuda Haggadah, the pictures of which were copied from the Second Nuremberg Haggadah.

My conclusions therefore are the following: The manuscripts were produced in one single working process, while the Second Nuremberg Haggadah was the first to be worked on. The light brown drawings of both manuscripts were made by the same person. This explains the similarities in composition, general layout, figure style, movements and gestures. The next step was the execution of the texts and the scrolls most likely by the same person who made the drawings. This stage of work was followed by the coloring of the pictures. Most of the colors are analogous and seem to be prepared in the same workshop. Besides that we have to assume that the two manuscripts were colored by different colorists. To this conclusion leads the fact, that the coloring of the Second Nuremberg Haggadah is slightly less careful than that of the Yahuda Haggadah, and it seems that the colorists had different preferences of dominant colors. The last stage of work was the final outlining in dark black ink in thick and heavy lines. It seems, that this work

was also done by different persons which could explain the slight differences as the somewhat freer lines of the Yahuda Haggadah. However the dominant artist was the one, who planned and composed the pictures and made the light brown drawings. He provided the framework of the compositions and he was responsible for their general character. It is due to his work that the differences resulting from the coloring and the black outlining are almost negligible. The two manuscripts are therefore interesting evidence of the late medieval division of labor, common in other southern German workshops of the 15th century, like that of Rüdiger Schopf in Freiburg or Diebold Lauber in Hagenau, Alsace. There is strong evidence that these workshops produced manuscripts not only on order, but also - or even mostly - on stock.⁽¹²⁾ Regarding the working process of our two manuscripts we may assume that Jewish workshops of the 15th century worked in a similar economic way like their Christian counterparts.

Notes

1. Ms. 24087. My thanks are due to the Robert and Clarice Smith Foundation, to the Franz Rosenzweig Center and to the Federman Foundation, Hebrew University - Jerusalem of supporting my research, of which this paper is a part.
2. Ms. 180/50.
3. For detailed bibliographical reference s. B. Narkiss and G. Sed Rajna, *Index of Jewish Art. Iconographical Index of Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*, Paris - Jerusalem 1978, vol. II/2 and 3.
4. Narkiss believes that the two manuscripts were produced in the Middle Rhine region around 1450, as he pointed out again recently in his commentary to the facsimile of the Washington Haggadah, M. M. Weinstein (ed.), *The Washington Haggadah: A Facsimile Edition of an Illuminated Fifteenth Century Hebrew Manuscript at the Library of Congress Signed by Joel ben Simeon*, Washington 1991, p. 52.
5. To be discussed in my dissertation on the manuscripts to be submitted in 1993.
6. Recently Narkiss touched these questions again in his commentary on the Washington Haggadah, Weinstein, *Washington Haggadah*, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

7. Former signatur Hs. 7121.
8. A. v. Essenwein, "Bilder aus dem bürgerlichen Haushalte des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts", *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* N. F. 27 (1880), c. 1.
9. For example Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek Lit. 110 from Nuremberg, middle of the 15th century.
10. It is not the roasting of the Passover lamb, as Narkiss describes the scene, Weinstein, *Washington Haggadah*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
11. S. M. Metzger, *La Haggada enluminée. Etude iconographique et stylistique des manuscrits enluminés et décorés de la haggada du XIIIe au XVIe siècle*, Leiden 1973, p. 62.
12. L. E. Stamm, "Auftragsfertigung und Vorratsarbeit: Kriterien zu ihrer Unterscheidung am Beispiele der Werkstatt Diebold Laubers", *Unser Kunstdenkmäler* 36 (1985), pp. 302-309.