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***Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*: Soul and Dream, from Eleazar of Worms to Renaissance Italy**

***Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*: Seele und Traum, von Eleazar von Worms bis zum Italien der Renaissance**

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Abstract: This article examines the traditions of copying and reading a medieval Ashkenazi treatise, *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* («Wisdom of the Soul») by Eleazar of Worms (1176–1238) in Renaissance Rome. It delves into a manuscript copied in 1515 by Jewish scholar Elias Levita (1469–1549), commissioned by Levita’s patron, Neoplatonist and Hermetic scholar Egidio da Viterbo (1469–1532). In addition to copying the text, Egidio had Jewish interpreters translate *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* into vernacular Italian. The treatise discusses the heavenly nature of the soul, its connections with the angelic world, its prophetic abilities, and its fate and retribution in the afterlife. What role did this Ashkenazi text play in the early modern tradition? How can this text be seen as a testament to kabbalistic perspectives in Renaissance Italy? How did Egidio’s collaborators handle their scribal and translation tasks, and the relationship between the Hebrew original and the vernacular translation of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*? This essay addresses these questions.

Keywords: Egidio da Viterbo; Elias Levita; divination; *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*; *Haside Ashkenaz*

Schlüsselwörter: Egidio da Viterbo; Elias Levita; Wahrsagerei; *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*; *Haside Ashkenaz*

Introduction

In Renaissance Rome, Jewish mystical doctrines dealing with the human soul and its ecstatic and prophetic functions circulated among Christian Hebraists, notably in the group of the Augustinian cardinal and kabbalist Egidio da Viterbo (1469–

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1532).¹ Where did these ideas originate? Some can be traced back to the treatise *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* («Wisdom of the Soul»),² the fifth book of the esoteric collection *Sodei razayya* («Secreta secretorum»), attributed to the celebrated master of *Haside Ashkenaz*, Eleazar of Worms (1176–1238).³ The complete anthology, encompassing the treatises *Sod Ma'aseh Bere'shit* («Secret of the Work of Creation»), *Sod ha-Merkavah* («Secret of the Chariot»), *Sefer ha-Shem* («Secret of the Name»), *Perush Sefer Yetsirah* («Commentary on the Book of Formation») and *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, entered Egidio's library as a manuscript (London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27199), copied in 1515 by scholar Elia Levita (1469–1549), who was Egidio's Hebrew teacher at the time.⁴ To aid him in reading, some of Egidio's collaborators—teachers and scribes from the local Jewish community—translated the text into vernacular Italian. This draft, still unpublished, is preserved into two manuscripts (Rome, Ms. Lat. 44, Biblioteca Angelica and London, British Library, Ms. Add. 16390, vol. B). It is in the latter that we find the version of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*.

1 On Egidio da Viterbo's biography and works, see FRANÇOIS SECRET: *Les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance*. Paris 1964, revised Milano, Neully-sur-Seine 1985, pp. 106–126; JOHN W. O'MALLEY: *Egidio da Viterbo and Renaissance Rome*. In: *Egidio da Viterbo, O. S. A. e il suo tempo. Atti del V Congresso dell'Istituto Storico Agostiniano*. Roma-Viterbo 20–23 oct. 1982. Rome 1983, pp. 67–84; FRANCIS MARTIN: *Friar, Reformer, and Renaissance Scholar. Life and Work of Giles of Viterbo, 1469–1532*. Villanova/PA 1992. On Egidio's collection and his study of kabbalistic manuscripts, see FRANÇOIS SECRET: *Aegidiana Hebraica*. In: *Revue des Études Juives* 121 (1962), pp. 409–416; FRANÇOIS SECRET: *La traduction d'extraits du Zôhar par Gilles de Viterbe*. In: *Le Zôhar chez les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance*. Paris, La Haye 1964, pp. 34–42; FRANÇOIS SECRET: *Notes sur Egidio da Viterbo*. In: *Augustiniana* 15 (1965), pp. 68–72; ADOLFO TURA: *Un codice ebraico di cabala appartenuto a Egidio da Viterbo*. In: *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 68 (2006), pp. 535–543; EMMA ABATE: *Filologia e Qabbalah. La collezione ebraica di Egidio da Viterbo alla Biblioteca Angelica di Roma*. In: *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 26 (2013), pp. 413–451; MARGHERITA PALUMBO: *I codici postillati di Egidio da Viterbo, dal Sant'Uffizio alla Casanatense*. In: *Egidio da Viterbo cardinale agostiniano tra Roma e l'Europa del Rinascimento. Atti del Convegno: Viterbo, 22–23 settembre 2012 – Roma, 26–28 settembre 2012*. Ed. by MYRIAM CHIABÒ, ROCCO RONZANI and ANGELO MARIA VITALE. Roma 2014, pp. 299–322; SAVERIO CAMPANINI: *Dal sacco di Roma alla fine del mondo. Profezie cabbalistiche fra le carte di Egidio da Viterbo*. In: *Rinascimento plurale: Ibridazioni linguistiche e socioculturali tra Quattro e Cinquecento*. Ed. by GIULIO BUSI and SILVANA GRECO. Castiglione delle Stiviere 2021, pp. 71–99.

2 See JOSEPH DAN: *Medieval Jewish Influences on Renaissance Concept of Harmonia Mundi*. In: *Aries* 1 (2001), pp. 135–152.

3 See JOSEPH DAN: *The Esoteric Theology of Ashkenazi Hasidism*. Jerusalem 1968 [Hebrew]; JOSEPH DAN: *Eleazar ben Judah of Worms*. In: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. by CECIL ROTH and GEOFFREY WIGODER. Jerusalem 1973. Vol. 6, coll. 592–594. See ELEAZAR OF WORMS: *Sefer Sode Razayya*. Ed. by S. WEISS. Jerusalem 1988; ELEAZAR OF WORMS: *Sode Razayya*. Ed. by A. EISENBACH. Jerusalem 2004.

4 See GÉRARD E. WEIL: *Elie Lévitá, humaniste et massorète*. Leiden 1963, pp. 70–110; MALACHI BEIT-ARIE: *Eliyahu Levita as a Scribe, Author-Scribe, and Codicologist* (unpublished manuscript); EMMA ABATE: *Elias Levita the Lexicographer and the Legacy of Sefer ha-Shorashim*. In: *Sefarad* 76 (2017), pp. 289–311.

In this essay, after introducing the tradition of *Sodei Razayya* and the contents of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, I will explore two sections of the treatise entitled *Pitron Halom* («Dream Interpretation») and *Hokhmat ha-Halom* («Wisdom of the Dream»), both addressing the soul's functions during oneiric activity.⁵ In what follows, I will transcribe passages from these chapters, translate them into English, and compare them to their Italian vernacular translation. As it appears, these texts reveal different narratives, linking dreaming activity to the supernatural and supernal form of the soul. Accordingly, while dreaming, the soul communicates with angels and spirits, learning about future events as it makes its way to the heavenly world. Dreaming is thus portrayed as an essential religious practice aimed at enhancing dialogue with the invisible world. According to the Hasidic master, dreaming becomes a spiritual practice that provides access to primordial and paradisiacal knowledge. In the final part of *Hokhmat ha-Halom*, individuals who do not dream are viewed with apprehension, as their spirituality and morality lack interaction with the angelic world, missing the opportunity to gain divine favor.

How are *Hokhmat ha-Halom* and *Pitron Halom* related to earlier Jewish traditions on dream revelation,⁶ to the techniques like *she'elot halom* («dream requests»)?⁷

5 See JOSEPH DAN: The Dream Theory of the Hassidim from Ashkenaz. In: Sinai 68 (1971), pp. 288–93; TAMAR ALEXANDER: Dream Narratives in Sefer Hasidim. In: Trumah-Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg 12 (2002), pp. 65–78.

6 On prophetic dreams and oneirocritic in Judaism see MAREN NIEHOFF: A Dream which is not interpreted is like a Letter which is not read. In: Journal of Jewish Studies 43 (1992), pp. 58–84; PHILIP ALEXANDER: A Sixtieth Part of Prophecy. The Problem of Continuing Revelation in Judaism. In: Words Remembered, Texts Renewed. Essays in Honor of John F. A. Sawyer. Ed. by JOHN DAVIES, GRAHAM HARVEY and WILFRED G. E. WATSON. Sheffield 1995, pp. 414–433; JEAN-MARIE HUSSER: Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World. Sheffield 1999; ERIK ALVSTAD: Oneirocritics and Midrash. On reading dreams and the Scripture. In: Nordisk judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies 24 (2003), no. 1–2, pp. 123–148; HAIM WEISS: All Dreams Follow the Mouth. A Reading in the Talmudic Dreams Tractate. Tel Aviv, Beer Sheva 2011.

7 I. e., formulas and techniques for self-inducing revelatory dreams. According to the instructions, the dream request was addressed directly to the angels in charge of dreams, or it was written on parchment as part of a more elaborate procedure evoking the *incubatio* that took place in ancient temples to attract the divine *numen* and obtain answers to all sorts of questions. Ritual baths, fasting and sexual abstinence were prescribed in the instructions as propaedeutic to the incubatory rite, together with the recitation of selected biblical passages (from Psalms, Daniel, etc.), or liturgical prayers (*Shema'*, *'Amidah* or *piyyutim*). Hundreds of *she'elot* are found in medieval and modern manuscripts on liturgical, medical, mystical, and halakhic subjects; they are all different from one another, although they all exhibit a largely formulaic style. See MOSHE IDEL: On She'elat Halom in Hasidei Ashkenaz. Sources and Influences. In: *Materia Judaica* 10 (2005), pp. 99–109; ALESSIA BELLUSCI: Jewish Oneiric Divination. From Daniel's Prayer to Genizah's She'ilat Halom. In: *Unveiling the Hidden – Anticipating the Future. Divinatory Practices among Jews between Qumran and the Modern Period*. Ed. by JOSEFINA RODRÍGUEZ-ARRIBAS and DORIAN GIESELER GREENBAUM. Leiden

and *pitron halomot* (»dream interpretations«)?⁸ How might *Hokhmat ha-Halom* be understood as reflecting kabbalistic views in Renaissance Italy? Additionally, how did Egidio's collaborators approach the copying and translation work, and what is the relationship between the Hebrew *Vorlage* and the vernacular translation of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*? This essay will provide some possible answers to these questions.

The Traditions of *Sodei Razayya* and of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*

The subdivision of *Sodei Razayya* into five books is not found in the tradition preceding Levita's 1515 copy. In the earliest manuscripts, esoteric works of *Haside Ashkenaz* are either transmitted independently or gathered in heterogeneous *recueils*, often combined with kabbalistic works and commentaries on *Sefer Yet-sirah*.⁹ It is likely that Levita himself organized the anthology as a homogeneous

2021, pp. 101–139. More uniform is the tradition (which remained unpublished for a long time) of the *She'elot u-teshuvot min ha-shamayim* (»Responses from Heaven«) by Ya'aqov of Marvège, a French tosafist (12th–13th century) and a contemporary of Eleazar of Worms. See YA'AQOV OF MARVÈGE: *She'elot u-teshuvot min ha-shamayim*. Ed. by REUBEN MARGALIT. Jerusalem; PINCHAS ROTH: *Responsa from Heaven. Fragments of a New Manuscript of She'elot u-Teshuvot min ha Shamayim from Gerona*. In: *Materia Giudaica* 15–16 (2010–2011), pp. 555–564.

⁸ *Pitron halomot* is a divinatory procedure which dates to antiquity and has remained popular until modern times, handed down in fluid textual forms. It is based on the interpretation of dream images that prefigure a future situation. The texts, often found as brief insertions within a miscellany or a treatise on magic, are structured in a protasis–apodosis formulaic sequences: »if one sees this, then this will happen«; the contents are often representative of the daily imaginary of the dreamers. See ARON GRUNBAUM: *Pitron Halomot. History and Sources*. In: *Areshet* 2 (1966), pp. 180–201; ANNELIES KUYT: *With One Foot in the Renaissance. Shlomoh Almoli and his Dream Interpretation*. In: *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999), pp. 205–217; ALESSIA BELLUSCI: *Immaginazione e modelli onirici tardo antichi nei frammenti magici della Genizah del Cairo*. In: *Materia Giudaica* 23 (2018), pp. 65–77; FRANCES FLANNERY-DAILEY: *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests. Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras*. Boston, Leiden 2004.

⁹ The earliest example is the kabbalistic anthology dated to 1286, copied in Rome by the scribe Menahem ben Benyamin (Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms. Parm. 2784). See *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma*. Ed. by BENJAMIN RICHLER and MALACHI BEIT-ARIÉ. Jerusalem 2001, pp. 314–316. An exception is the homogeneous compilation of Ashkenazic mystical works found in a 13th–14th-century manuscript held in a private Australian collection (Ms. 1), which includes *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* (fols. 1r–25r); *Sefer Yetsirah* (fols. 25v–26v), *Perush Sefer Yetsirah* (fols. 26v–49v); *Hilkhot Emunah* (fols. 51r–v); *Sefer ha-Shem* (fols. 50r–75v). However, it is much shorter and its organization is different from *Sodei Razayya*; it lacks the text of *Sod Ma'aseh Bere'shit* and a great part of *Sod ha-Merkavah*.

collection, creating a kind of Pentateuch of Ashkenazic mysticism for his patron. It ranged from the works on the Creation and the structure of the universe to the treatise on the human soul, a microcosm which mirrors and reflects the heavenly form.

The title *Sodei Razayya* appears in the first lines of the introduction to the section called *Sod Ma'aseh Bere'shit*. Notably, a second title, now barely visible, can be found on the upper margin of the first recto of Levita's copy; it reads »Razi'el ha-Gadol Bar 'Esh« (רזיאל הגדול בר אש). This partly echoes the title of the principal work within the renowned later anthology, *Sefer Razi'el ha-Mal'akh* («The Book of the Angel Razi'el», printed in Amsterdam in 1701).¹⁰ It is conceivable that Levita himself (or someone within the Egidian circle) assigned this title to refer to the mystical collection of *Haside Ashkenaz*. This designation was effectively passed down onto subsequent traditions, marking the inclusion of *Sodei Razayya* within the tradition of *Sefer Razi'el*.

Based on Levita's copy, Jewish interpreters prepared translations of *Sodei Razayya* into vernacular Italian for Egidio, a sort of a reader of Hebrew texts.¹¹ Extant drafts of these translations are scattered across different manuscripts. Excerpts, labelled *Raziel* or *Ex Razielle* and covering almost the entire translation of *Sodei Razayya*, are housed in Rome (Biblioteca Angelica, Ms. Lat. 44) and London (British Library, London, Ms. Add. 16390, vol. B).¹² The latter includes vernacular versions of *Sefer ha-Shem*, *Perush Sefer Yetsirah*, and *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*.¹³ The margins of both manuscripts contain several notes in Latin penned by Egidio's hand, showing his keen interest in *Sodei Razayya/Raziel*.

¹⁰ In *Sefer Razi'el ha-mal'akh*, published in Amsterdam in 1701 by Yitshak ben Avraham of Neustadt, the longer treatise is entitled *Sefer Razi'el ha-Gadol* (from fol. 7v to 24v) corresponding to a section of *Sod Ma'aseh Bere'shit* (until the letter *nun*).

¹¹ On the complex tradition of *Sefer Razi'el*, see FRANÇOIS SECRET: Sur quelques traductions du *Sefer Razi'el*. In: *Revue des Études Juives* 128 (1969), pp. 223–245; BILL REBIGER: Zur Redaktionsgeschichte des *Sefer Razi'el ha-Mal'akh*. In: *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 32 (2005), pp. 1–22; EMMA ABATE: Razi'el a Roma, le copie di Egidio da Viterbo (1469–1532). In: *L'eredità di Salomone: La magia ebraica in Italia e nel Mediterraneo*. Ed. by EMMA ABATE. Firenze, Ferrara 2019, pp. 119–142; MOSHE IDEL: *Sefer Razi'el ha-Mal'akh*. *New Inquiries*. In: *L'eredità di Salomone*. Ed. by EMMA ABATE, *ibid.*, pp. 143–68. Cf. also the article of Moshe Idel in this volume.

¹² On the vernacular translation see FLAVIA BUZZETTA: *La Cabbale Vulgarisée au XVI^e siècle. Niccolò Camerario un Cabbaliste Oublié*. In: *Accademia. Revue de la Société Marsile Ficini* 16 (2014), pp. 121–134; EMMA ABATE and MAURIZIO MOTTOLESE: *La Qabbalah in volgare. Manoscritti dall'atelier di Egidio da Viterbo*. In: *Umanesimo e cultura ebraica nel Rinascimento Italiano*. Ed. by STEFANO BALDASSARRI and FABRIZIO LELLI. Firenze 2016, pp. 15–40; EMMA ABATE: *Hebrew Divine Names into Latin and Italian. Shi'va Shemot and other Samples from Egidio da Viterbo's Workshop*. In: *Magic and Language: Perspectives on Jewish and Christian Magic in Early Modern Europe*. Ed. by YUVAL HARARI, GEROLD NECKER and MARCO FRENCHKOWSKI. Wiesbaden 2024, pp. 62–81.

¹³ London, British Library, Ms. Add. 16390, vol. B: *Sefer ha-Shem*, until fol. 31r; *Perush Sefer Yetsirah*, until fol. 81r; *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, until fol. 129v.

Following Levita's copy, other manuscripts adopted the same textual arrangement. For instance, *Sodei Razayya* copied in 1555 by the scribe Moshe Gad (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Ms. hebr. 81) for the Christian Hebraist Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter (1506–1557), who viewed Egidio's library as a model of his own Hebrew collection, is a direct copy of Levita's manuscript. In this manuscript, the label *Razi'el ha-Gadol Bar 'Esh* is clearly visible on the upper margin of the first *recto*. Another sixteenth-century manuscript, now housed in Bibliotheca Laurenziana in Florence, Ms. Plut.I.61, includes a similar compilation created by at least three scribes. The label *Razi'el ha-Gadol* is visible there in the upper margin of the first *recto*, while the text matches Levita's anthology, including his personal comments, except for the absence of the text of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*.¹⁴

Regarding the medieval tradition of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, its oldest witness is found in the kabbalistic compilation copied in Rome in 1286 by the scribe Menahem ben Benyamin (Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms. Parmensis 2784). This compilation encompasses twenty-one titles, with only two sections from *Sodei Razayya*: *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* (fols. 44r–75r) and *Hilkhot ha-Nevu'ah* («Laws of Prophecy», fols. 75r–79v), which is a passage from *Sod ha-Merkavah*. Generally, it may be concluded that the treatise is part of heterogeneous kabbalistic and magical collections, such as British Library, Ms. Add. 15299 or Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mss. hébreu 823 and 850, copied between thirteenth and sixteenth century, each differing from the others.¹⁵ In a few cases, the treatise on the soul is included in collections of Talmudic, halakhic, and astrological works from an Ashkenazic context, such as Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. hébreu 1408; in one case, it is found in a dedicated manuscript.¹⁶ Only in the anthology prepared by Levita, and later reproduced by Moshe Gad, *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* features as the fifth and last treatise of an organized compilation, as if serving to seal the Ashkenazi esoteric corpus.¹⁷

¹⁴ See ABATE, Razi'el a Roma (cf. n. 11), pp. 133–35.

¹⁵ 1. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms. Parm. 2784 (1286), fols. 44r–75r; 2. Private Collection Australia, Ms. 1 (13th–14th c.), fols. 1r–25r; 3. Moscow, The Russian State Library, Ms. Günzburg 606 (collection of Philosophy, Kabbalah and Halakhah, 14th–15th century, copied in Venice), fols. 20v–26v; 4. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. hébreu 823 (collection of twelve kabbalistic treatises, 15th c.), fols. 166v–178r; 5. New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America Ms. 2411 (15th c.), fols. 1r–8v; 6. Moscow, Russian State Library, Ms. Günzburg (collection of kabbalistic texts), fols. 6v–15r; 7. Moscow, Russian State Library, Ms. Günzburg 1170 (*Sod Ma'aseh Bere'shit*; commentaries on *Sefer Yetsirah* by Nahmanides and Eleazar of Worms, 15th–16th c.), fols. 159r–212v; 8. Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Ms. Plut.I.44 (16th c.); 9. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Opp. Add. Qu. 100 (16th c.), fols. 2v–34r; 10. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. hébreu 850 (16th c.), fols. 46r–145r; 11. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Mich. 175 (17th c.), fols. 34r–72v.

¹⁶ See London, The Beth Din & Beth Hamidrash Library Ms. 70 (14th c.).

¹⁷ See London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27199 (1515), fols. 485v–600v; 12. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Ms. hebr. 81 (1555), fols. 312r–368(bis)r.

The Contents and Features of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*

In the manuscript collections mentioned above, *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* is always recognizable by its *incipit* corresponding to the first verse of Ps 103:

בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי, אֶת-יְהוָה; וְכָל-קִרְבִּי, אֶת-שֵׁם קִדְשׁוֹ

(«Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name»).

The treatise opens with the soul expressing blessings and love for its Creator. According to the text, the soul has five names, though only four are listed in the manuscript: *nefesh*, *neshamah*, *ruah*, and *hay*.¹⁸ These names depend on the soul's role and connection to the heavenly realm and the body, consistent with the medieval belief in a layered structure of the soul.¹⁹ In various passages, *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* explores the soul's supernatural formation and knowledge, where *nefesh* and *neshamah* are depicted as intermediaries, linking the angelic world, the universe, and the material body, whether a person is alive or in the after-life.

The focus here is on *nefesh*, the vital breath animating living beings. Its physiological aspects and its connection to bodily movements are explained using a rich medical vocabulary. The language incorporates expressions from astrology and philosophical texts, reflecting how the soul's activities mirror changes and developments in the universe. For instance, the ascension of the soul from its primary residence—the heart—to the head and brain is described in relation with the moon phases. These phases cause alterations and increases in bodily liquids, leading to instability, melancholia, and madness. Consequently, the body is viewed a microcosm that reflects even seasonal turnovers.²⁰ The set of correspondences involves not only the universe but also each human soul, which has its counterpart in the angelic realm. This connection, in turn, links the counterparts of all beings. Such a network of correspondences between the human and celestial dimensions is par-

¹⁸ In other branches of the tradition and in the first edition (Lemberg 1876), a fifth term, *yehidah*, is also mentioned. *Nefesh* is the vital power animating the body; *ruah* is the spirit, remaining post-mortem in a disembodied form linked to the living world; *neshamah* is the rational soul in dialogue with the divine and is the first to return to the heavenly world after death; *hay* is the transcendent and supernal aspect of each person's soul; *yehidah* is the celestial soul of the macrocosm from which individual souls descend.

¹⁹ On the medieval and early modern conception of a layered structure of the soul, see JOSHUA TRACHTENBERG: *Jewish Magic and Superstition. A Study in Folk Religion*. Philadelphia 2004, p. 61; J. H. CHAJES: *Between Worlds. Dybbuks, Exorcists, And Early Modern Judaism*. Philadelphia 2003, p. 16.

²⁰ See DAN, *Medieval Jewish Influences on Renaissance* (cf. n. 2), pp. 135–152.

ticularly evident in the dreamlike state, as it will be shown in the next paragraph, where the human soul receives otherworldly visions.²¹

Furthermore, the treatise discusses topics related to divine judgment, afterlife visions of demons and spirits, and the fate of the souls of wise men devoted to the study of Torah. In some passages, it describes how the faces of Jewish scholars engaged in Torah study shine with divine glory, resembling angelic faces. They are illuminated by this splendor, and their souls are attracted like magnets to the heavens. They ascend on high until reaching the Throne of Glory, where the human soul becomes like one of the four beasts carrying the *merkavah*.²²

One of the central themes of the treatise concerns the difference between *tselem* (»image«) and *demut* (»figure«), as well as the resemblance between the human and the divine. In some crucial sections, the treatise identifies the human soul, the shadow, and the divine name (the Tetragrammaton). This topic is addressed by referencing an old Jewish legend, which states that the shadow vanishes just before a person's death:

A man who will die has no shadow, as it is written: the Tetragrammaton is upon them then they will live. This is why it is written וְתִגַּל הָאֲרָץ וְשִׁמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם, [Ps 96:11, in which the first letters form the acronym of Tetragrammaton] and the last letters of the verse are *TsLMW*. When the divine name is on their head, then *TsLMW* exists, as it is written וַיְהִי קָרַן מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּהְיֶה אֲתָנּוּ וְיֵהוּ קָרַן מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּהְיֶה אֲתָנּוּ. This is clear in the night of *Hosha'na Rabbah*, when the future of water is decided upon.²³

In this passage, the essence of the soul is associated with the Tetragrammaton: just as the Name gives life to the universe, the soul animates the body. Throughout its existence, the soul causes the body casts its shadow, which serves as its spiritual reflection, connecting it to the higher world. Without the Name or soul, the body would remain just an empty shell, a statue, a *golem*. This theme, significant in the architecture and physiology of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, appears also elsewhere in *Sodei Razayya*, and notably in *Hilkhot ha-Nevu'ah* (from *Sod ha-Merkavah*), where it is stated that:

Just as the name [of God] is [found] on the angel, so also the *tefillin* [are found] on the hand and likewise on the head; »and with the shadow of my hands I have covered you« [Is 51:16]. He safeguards the righteous, so that the prophet sees, so that he may know who was upon me,

²¹ See KARL ERICH GRÖZINGER: Between Magic and Religion – Ashkenazi Hasidic Piety. In: *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism: International Symposium held in Frankfurt a. M.* 1991. Ed. by K. E. GRÖZINGER. Berlin 1995, pp. 28–43; IDEL, *On She'elat Halom* (cf. n. 7), pp. 99–109.

²² See DAN, *Medieval Jewish Influences on Renaissance* (cf. n. 2), pp. 135–152.

²³ See MOSHE IDEL: *Enchanted Chains. Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism*. Los Angeles 2005, pp. 109–110. The biblical quotations stem from 1Sam 28:16 and Num 14:9.

and who safeguards me by means of the shadow of his name. This is just as it is now, on the night of *Hosha'na Rabbah*, whoever has a shadow will live, but whoever has no shadow and his head is small, without a neck, he will die within the same year. Since He then decides in relation to the amount of the water [of that year].²⁴

The shadow signifies the presence of the divine Name within a popular divinatory belief observed on the night of *Hosha'na Rabbah*, which marks the end of the New Year festivals in the month of Tishri. This night is considered the day of divine judgment, determining the fate in the upcoming year. This crucial topic connects the second book of the anthology, *Sod ha-Merkavah*, to the fifth book, *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*. Levita also suggests this connection in its colophon, describing *Sodei Razayya* as a unique and integrated corpus:

I wrote this book for a wise man among the Gentiles, a righteous and upright man, priest of the order of St. Augustine, and his name is Egidio. General of all the priests of this Order in all the Christian countries. May God grant him the study and understanding of this book and the rest of his sapphire books that he has purchased and commissioned, in which he invested great money and intends to invest more until he will possess all of our books. I completed this holy book today on Wednesday, *Hosha'na' Rabbah* 276, on which I saw my head in the shadow of the moon, Blessed be God, as I am assured not to die this year. The words are of the scribe Eliyahu bar Asher ha-Levi Ashkenazi. The grammarian.²⁵

Visions and Divinatory Practices Performed by the Soul: Dreaming in *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*

Both in the third book, *Sefer ha-Shem*, and in *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* there are references to dreams and oneiric practices. *Sefer ha-Shem* is an esoteric commentary on the Tetragrammaton and other divine names. It aims at attaining supernatural knowledge and power by mastering the divine name, using special techniques of pronunciation and permutation of the Hebrew letters.²⁶ These techniques include instructions on using the mystical name of seventy-two letters,²⁷ which is considered a tool for accessing the secrets of dreams. The Hebrew letters are combined

²⁴ IDEL, *Enchanted Chains* (cf. n. 23), pp. 110–111.

²⁵ The translation of London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27199, fol. 601r. See also BEIT-ARIE, Eliyahu Levita as a Scribe (cf. n. 4).

²⁶ See JOSEPH DAN: *The Book of the Divine Name* by Rabbi Eleazar of Worms. In: *Jewish Mysticism. The Middle Ages*. Ed. by JOSEPH DAN. Jerusalem, Northvale/New Jersey 1998, vol. 2, pp. 129–176.

²⁷ Composed of seventy-two syllables of three letters each, deriving from a permutation of Exodus 14:19–21. See London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27199, fols. 192r–203r.

with each other, either separately or together with the vowels, and finally permuted to induce a state of drowsiness conducive to the visitation of an angel, to whom questions about the future and the afterlife can be addressed.²⁸

In *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, traditional oneiromantic techniques, such as *she'elat halom*²⁹ and *pitron halomot*,³⁰ are reworked within a discourse focused on the multiple functions of the soul, a transcendental entity mediating between the visible and the invisible. The second part of the treatise introduces a detailed section on *pitron halom* with insights on the »thin, deep, and light« substance of the soul, which permeates, sustains, and guides the body due to its resemblance to the divine.³¹ The divinatory technique relies on the analogy between the soul and the divine sphere, establishing a link between two distant entities, the dream image and its imminent fulfillment, both prefigured in a metaphysical symbolic pattern. The image impressed in the dream anticipates an event about to occur in the dreamer's life. While the first part addresses spiritual and metaphysical questions, the subsequent dream catalogue reflects the essential and yet enigmatic style, typical of the popular genre of dream exegesis:³²

²⁸ On the seventy-two-letter divine name see K. E. GRÖZINGER: The Names of God and Their Celestial Powers. Their Function and Meaning in the Hekhalot Literature. In: Proceedings of the First International Conference of the History of Jewish Mysticism. Ed. by JOSEPH DAN. Jerusalem 1987, pp. 53–69; TRACHTENBERG, Jewish Magic and Superstition (cf. n. 19), pp. 96–7.

²⁹ See IDEL, On She'elat Halom (cf. n. 7), pp. 99–109; BELLUSCI: Jewish Oneiric Divination (cf. n. 7), pp. 101–39.

³⁰ See GRUNBAUM: Pitron Halomot (cf. n. 8), pp. 180–201; BELLUSCI: Immaginazione e modelli onirici (cf. n. 8), pp. 65–77. Cf. HAYM SOLOVEITCHIK: Topics in the *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*. In: Collected Essays. Volume iii. Liverpool, 2020 (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization).

³¹ British Library, London, Ms. Add. 27199, fols. 505r–506v.

³² See London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27199, fols. 505r–v:

הנפש דקה ועמוקה וקלה / יותר מן הגוף וחזקה וקשה שהיא מקיימת הגוף / ועומסת תאוותו על כן נשבעו אברוֹ
 תינו חי ייי אשר / עשה לנו את הנפש הזאת שהיא דומה לה והיא / מראה לנפש סתריה ברפיפת אבר ובחכיכת
 אבר / ובחלומותיה עמה חלומות שיש באיכה רבת' עיני / בלעה עינא ואומ' על ב' אחים שנתקלקלו במשכב /
 זכור. עינו כאבת אחד מאחיו חולה. ב' עיניו / כואבי'. ב' אחיו חולי'. שינו כואב. קרובו חולה. / שינו נופל בנו או
 קרובו מת. רואה מלך הוא אבל / שר אבליים ינחם וכ' חתן או חופה בבית וכן / שמחה אם לנער כואבי' שינים
 יהיו לאב או

לאם. דם יוצא לאביו צער גדול הוא. ואם מכים / על שיניו צער יותר יהי ואם מתחלקלי' בשר סימן / למחלוקת. /
 או אם רואה אש בכבשן או מצות / ואם אין אש בתנור דברים [...] יהיה. ואם / שלג בקיץ יגיד על שרפה. רואה
 עצמו פורח ילך / למרחוק. אם רואה כרם אשתו
 מעוברת. ענבים / הוולד. ואם ילכלך הג' היא תפיל. הולך יחף סימ' / רע. רואה כאילו הולך למרחוק יבואו לו משם
 כתבי' / אם רוחץ סימן רע לו. יום הכפורי' סימן מת שיאמרו // והוא רחום או יסורין באין עליו לכפר. רואה / חרב
 / אחריו חחד מקדש בחרבן יבא מי שיגיד
 לו חרבן המקדש או יראה כת' או בית צדיק / חרב דלת בית נופל היא אשתו. רואה תופש / צפור בחיקו או דגי'
 אשתו תלד. אם היא פנויה / תקח בעל ואם פנוי יקח אשה. ואם יש לה / בעל או הוא יולידו בנים אם פורח' /
 / מחקים צריכים תענית. ובתעניתם יקחו עוף בחיקם

The soul is thinner and deeper and lighter than the body and stronger and harder, because it supports the body and increases its desire. Therefore, our ancestors swore by the life of YYY, who made us this soul that is similar to it and reflects the secret soul by the vibration of a limb or the scratch of a limb, and in its dreams, it dreams with it. As we find in midrash *Eikhah Rabbati* [ch. 1]: [I saw in a dream] »that one of my eyes was devouring the other«, and on this, it is reported about two brothers who fell sick in bed, as it is remembered: if his eye is sore, his brother will get sick; if there are two sore eyes, two brothers will get sick; if a tooth hurts, a neighbor will get sick; if a tooth falls out, a son or a relative will die; if one sees a king, there will be a mourning, the ministering angel of mourning will comfort him; if he sees a groom, or a domestic celebration, it is a joy; if one sees a child whose teeth hurt, it means misfortune for the father or mother; if blood comes out, the father will have a great pain; if they strike his teeth, the affliction will be greater. If one sees someone sharing meat, it means there will be a dispute; if one sees fire in a furnace or unleavened bread, or if there is no fire in an oven, it means bad things. If there is snow in the summer, it means there will be a fire; if one sees himself flowering, he will go far away; if one sees a vineyard, his wife is pregnant; if one sees grapes, a child will be born; and if the vine is stained, she will miscarry; and if one sees someone barefoot, it is a bad sign; if one sees someone coming from far away, the following will happen: if he runs, it is a bad sign; on Yom Kippur, it is a sign of death, as it is written, »He who is full of compassion« [Ps 78:38]; or afflictions are coming to allow him to expiate; if one sees a sword, something fearful will happen; if one dreams about the destruction of the Temple, someone will come to tell him of the destruction of a synagogue; if one sees this written, the house of a righteous person will be destroyed; if the door of the house falls down, it announces the miscarriage of his wife; if one sees that he is carrying a bird or a fish in his womb, it means that his wife will give birth to a son; if he or she is an unmarried person (woman or man), he/she will soon get married; if it is someone who is already married, then he/she will have children; if flowers bloom from one's chest, a fast is necessary; and if during the fast, they carry a bird in their womb and take care of it, or if they take care of a hen (if female) or a rooster (if male), they will perform an act of *tsedakah* for a poor person; if one sees someone climbing a mountain, there will be a sorrow and one must seriously worry about it; if one sees a group of people eating delicacies, it means that everyone will have reasons to cry; if everyone eats except one, everyone will have except one; someone who prays means there will be no reason to pray, if he continues to do it, he will be granted.

ויניחוהו לעוף ויקחו תרנגולת לנקב' ותרגול לזכר / ויתנו לצדקה לעני. עולה בהר צער וצריכ' מחשב' / עמוקה לזאת אוכל מעדני' בני אדם הרבה יבכו. / אוכלי' והוא אינו אוכל הם יבכו ולא הוא מתפלל / יהיה שום דבר שצריך להתפלל לא סיים יהיה נהנה

This initial list of »dream solutions« is followed by a series of dream figures tied to specific days of the month. Eleazar of Worms, a respected halakhic authority, community spiritual guide, and sage, considered the technique of *pitron halom* to be a straightforward and effective method for interpreting dreams. He utilized references deeply embedded in the collective imagination, such as unleavened bread, Yom Kippur, or the destruction of the Temple, to predict natural and daily events, affecting either a few individuals or the entire community.

The prophetic qualities of the soul and their connections with the world of angels are detailed in the section titled *Hokhmat ha-Halom*, at the beginning of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*. In this section, Eleazar of Worms gathers and expands upon earlier Jewish traditions on dreams, which were prevalent in the Bible, Talmudic texts, *midrashim*, and *she'elot halom*.³³ Dreams were envisioned as an integral part of the middle world wherein angels and spirits can appear, and where revelations of future events or spiritual knowledge are anticipated.³⁴

The content of the heart is the content of the spirit, because dreams originate from thoughts, »that came [into your mind] upon your bed« [Dan 2:29]. An idea corresponds to the thoughts of the heart, as it is written »in the thought of his heart« [Koh 2:22] and it is written »and the thoughts of your heart you shall know« [Dan 2:30]. And dreams come [occur] by means of an angel in charge of dreams and, since not all thoughts are true, in the same way not all dreams are true. And how does the angel know all the thoughts of the heart? And it is written »for the Lord is a God of knowledge« [1Sam 2:3], and it is written »is not [God] the one who weighs the hearts?« [Prov. 24:12] and no one else knows the matter of dreams like him: the fact that sometimes you will talk with the dead, and certainly you won't talk with the living in a dream; and the angel in charge of the dreams shows him wonderful things in one moment, for example Reuven [in the story of Joseph and its brothers, Gen 37–46] and also »nuts and apples«. And do not be surprised [if you see in dreams] demons changing their shape. And so

³³ See TRACHTENBERG, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (cf. n. 19), pp. 230–242.

³⁴ London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27199, fols. 488r–v:

תוכן לבות תוכן רוחות / שהחלומות מעין המחשבות רעיוןך על משכבך סליקו. רעיון הוא מחשבות הלב דכתיב ברעיון לבו וכתבי / ורעיוני לבבך תנדע והחלומות על ידי מלאך הממונה / על החלומות ולפי שאין כל המחשבות אמת על כן / אין כל החלומות אמת. והאיך יודע המלאך / כל המחשבות הלב וכתבי כי אל דעות יי וכתבי / הלא תוכן לבות הוא ולא אחר / דע ענין החלום פעמים תדבר עם מתים // ולא ממש שהרי תדבר אל החיים בחלום / אלא הממונה מראה לו דברים מופלאים ברגע אחד / ראובן ... / וכן אגוזיו ותפוחים / ואל תתמה שהרי שדים משתנים / וכ"ש מלאך הממונה על החלום שכל דבר שאין / לו גוף והוא רוח ישתנה וכתבי בשליחותם עושה / מלאכיו רוחות וכתבי רוח סערה עושה דברו / והמלאך הממונה על החלומות משתנה לכל דבר / ומדבר בכל לשון נוח של בני אדם והאדם פעמים / מדבר עם גוי ולעולם לא ידבר לשון / שאינו יודע כ"א במחשבותיו להודיע לבני האדם / גבורותיו כי מה שדבר ביום או חשב הכל גלוי / לפני בוראו. וכתבי כי האלהים בשמים ואתה / על הארץ ע"כ יהיו דברך מעטים: / דע כי הרוח משוטטת בעולם דכתי' / בידך אפקידי רוחי והמלאך הולך / אחריה כאומן אחר היונק וכתבי כי מלאכיו יצוה / לך לשמרך וכתבי חונה מלאך יי וגו' וכשהרוח / כנס בשום דבר בעצמות או בחור אחד נראה לו / בחלומה זה מקום פלוני ופעמי' מדבר' המתים עם / החיים כשיפגעו רוחותם כמו שאמ' אמ' אבא / אתחיו לי אבא בחלום. וכן רוחו' החיים בפגעים // זה בזה

is for an angel in charge of dreams, because every substance without a body, being a spirit, can change his appearance. And it is written, »at the time of sending them He made his angels, like spirits«, and it is written »stormy wind fulfilling his word« [Ps 148:8]. Thus, the angel in charge of dreams can transform himself into everything and can speak in all human languages: a person sometimes can speak with a *goy* but no one can speak a language he does not know; thus, the Lord through his thoughts informs the people of his strength, because whatever somebody has said during the day, or has thought, all is revealed before his Creator. And it is written: »for God is in Heaven, and you upon earth; therefore, let your words be few.« [Koh 5:1] Know that the spirit wanders in the world, as it is written »Into your hand I commit my spirit« [Ps 31:6], so the angel follows him as a nurse follows an infant, and it is written »For He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you« [Ps 91:11], and is written, »The angel of the Lord encamped round etc.« [Ps 34:8] And when the spirit enters the bones or an orifice of someone, in a dream, it seems to him that he is in a certain place, and sometimes the dead talk to the living persons and their spirits clash, as it is said, »Abba said, my father appeared to me in a dream.« And the same thing happens with living people when they hurt each other.

Following a belief stemming from the so-called »Book of Dreams« in the Talmudic treatise *Berakhot* (55b),³⁵ dreams are distinguished based on the time they occur during the night. Dreams at the beginning of the night, when the soul is still engaged in bodily activities like digestion are considered false, while those occurring in the middle of the night can be partially truthful. Finally, dreams at dawn are deemed as the most reliable. As described in midrash *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* (quoted in the treatise by Eleazar), in the early morning, the soul is most free and detached from the ballast of the body,³⁶ allowing it to wander around freely, in ecstatic peregrinations, perceiving visions from the afterlife, the heavenly world, and the realm of the dead:³⁷

When a person is full at the beginning of the night, most of their dreams are false; in the middle of the night, most are true; in the morning, they are all true. This depends on whether they are interpreted according to one's own *halakhah* or within the dream, or whether a person was called by a heavenly voice [*bat kol*], as it is said, »and behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven« [Dan 4:10], and so on, as an angel said through an old man at his

35 PHILIP ALEXANDER: Bavli Berakhot 55a–57b. The Talmudic Dreambook in Context. In: Journal of Jewish Studies 46 (1995), pp. 230–248.

36 See TRACHTENBERG, Jewish Magic and Superstition (cf. n. 19), pp. 230–242.

37 London, BL, Ms. Add. 27199, fol. 489r:

כשהאדם שבע בתחלת הלילה חלומותיו רובן / שקר באמצע הלילה רובן אמת בבקר כולן אמת / אם פותרין כהלכתו או פותרין לו בחלומו או שקרא / לו בת קול שנ' וארי עיר וקדיש משמאי נחית וגו' / למה אמ' עיר לפי שאדם ישן על מטתו והמלאכי' / לא ישנים ואין חלום שאין מקצתו שקר. דכתי' מה / לתבן את הבר שמחשבת האדם מעורבת עם מה שאומרי' / לו חלום סימן טוב לחולה שהנפש עולה למעלה / לשאוב חיים חלום שמחוק הגוף שנ' ותחייני ותחלמיני / דחזקיה. ומי שאינו חולם בז' ימים וקרא רשע כי / הוא מאותן ששבע תועבות בלבו. מחמת שהוא בעל / מחשבות רעות מחלום מחשבות הוודיע שאינו / חביב משל למלך בשר ודם שרוצה לגלות לעבדיו / דבר סתר ורואה שונאו ביניהם אומ' להם תגרשו / שוונאי בחוץ ואגלה לכם סודי. כך זה שאינו חולם / שאין משגיחין עליו מן השמים להראותו כלום / ולמה ז' לילות כנגד ז' ימי בראשית הוודיע שהוא / צופה כל מה שנברא

bedside, »the angels do not sleep«, and there is no dream that is not partly false, since it is written »what has the straw to do with the wheat?« [Jer 23:28] A dream is a good sign for a patient whose soul rises to draw life, [in case it is] a dream that strengthens the body, as Hezekiah said, »you have given me life, and health« [Is 38,16]. And someone who does not dream for seven days is considered a wicked person because they are thought to harbor abominations in their heart. If they have evil thoughts in dreams and thoughts, it is to make them understand that they are not loved, we can compare this to a king in flesh and blood who wants to reveal a secret to his servants and sees his enemies among them and says, »Expel those who are hateful to me, and I will reveal a secret to you.« Thus, the person who does not dream has no one to watch over him from Heaven and to show them everything. Why seven nights? It relates to the seven days of Genesis, to show that [God] watches over everything that has been created.

Here, each sentence is sealed with a biblical quotation from Psalms, Kohelet, Daniel, or the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. The content highlights what is most significant for the Ashkenazi writer: defining the dream dimension as a realm for potential encounters with the supernatural, where angels and humans, as well as the living and the dead, could connect, albeit at specific times (notably, the dawn) when the soul is most detached from its bodily needs.

Compared to the tradition of *she'elat halom*—a technique intended to provoke the descent of angelic beings for divinatory purposes—the mediating role of the angels is amplified in *Hokhmat ha-Halom*. In this tradition, angels actively and spontaneously care for the souls, particularly those of wise individuals. The angels change form and language to be understood by selected individuals, chosen based on their moral qualities. These chosen people receive the privilege of dreams, divine benevolence, and the revelation of secrets. Thus, the absence of dreams is understood as a sign from heaven, indicating the detachment and estrangement of wicked persons, deemed unworthy of celestial protection. The most faithful dreamers are therefore the sages who view dreaming activity as a visionary journey and an ecstatic experience, similar to those found in *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* literature.³⁸ Thus, the oneiric activity can be regarded as a means to foster the soul's ascent to the celestial world, a spiritual event granting access to primordial and otherworldly knowledge.³⁹

38 See RACHEL ELIOR: *Mysticism, Magic, and Angelology. The Perception of Angels in Hekhalot Literature*. In: *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1 (1993–94), no. 1, pp. 3–53; PETER SCHÄFER: *Merkavah Mysticism and Magic*. In: *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*. Ed. by JOSEPH DAN. Tübingen 1993, pp. 59–78; MOSHE IDEL: *On Judaism, Jewish Mysticism, and Magic*. In: *Envisioning Magic. A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*. Ed. by PETER SCHÄFER and H. G. KIPPENBERG. Leiden 1997, pp. 195–214. See also GIULIO BUSI: *Città di luce. La mistica ebraica dei palazzi celesti*. Torino 2019, pp. VII–CLXXI.

39 See ELLIOT R. WOLFSON: *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*. Princeton 1994, pp. 74–187; DAVID B. RUDERMAN: *A Valley of Vision. The Heavenly Journey of Abraham Ben Hananiah Yagel*. Philadelphia 1990.

The Afterlife of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*: Reading and Translating the Text in Renaissance Rome

Egidio, a Neoplatonic philosopher and Christian Kabbalist, was deeply interested in the secrets hidden in the Ashkenazi esoteric corpus of texts. He explored the spiritual description of the universe vivified by the divine name and reflecting the divine image in the human soul. However, what is unusual in the copy of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* provided by Levita is that, unlike other books of *Sodei Razayya*, only the margins of this treatise lack notes, comments, or Latin translations by Egidio's hand. Additionally, a Latin version of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* signed by Egidio is either missing or not preserved, while the other four books of the anthology exist in abbreviated or fragmentary Latin translations prepared and signed by him.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, a close examination of the manuscript copied by Levita shows Egidio's dedication to studying *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*. Here and there, numerical references are noticeable in the margins of the codex, penned in Egidio's handwriting. This reflects his usual practice of numbering parts of the codices in his possession. In doing so, Egidio created a network of correspondences between words and contents recorded in his private notebooks, where he noted terms and translations stemming from his Hebrew readings.⁴¹ Moreover, the numbering matches common terms, topics, and parallel units in the items of Egidio's collection. In our case, sections of the Hebrew text of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* appear linked to their translation in vernacular Italian, found in London, British Library, Ms. Add. 16390 B, fol. 82r.

As for the main features of this translation, the *incipit* of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* (corresponding to Ps 103:1) is, for instance, left in Hebrew:

ברכי נפשי את ה' וכל קרבי את
שם קדשו

In the margin, this first section is entitled *benedizione/ dell'anima* («benediction of the soul»). The main text is written by a different Italian hand: the simultaneous presence of multiple hands at work in the manuscript is significant, as it suggests that the translation was likely the result of a collaborative effort by Jewish interpreters in Egidio's service.⁴² The first lines, as in the Hebrew text, state the uniqueness of the human soul due to its resemblance to the divine figure:

⁴⁰ See Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Lat. 527, vol. 1, fols. 489r–560r; and Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Vaticana, Ms. Lat. 5198, fols. 229r–246v. See ABATE, Raziela a Roma (cf. n. 11), pp. 119–142.

⁴¹ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mss. Lat. 596 and 597.

⁴² See ABATE, Hebrew Divine Names into Latin and Italian (cf. n. 12), pp. 62–81.

*La anima obligato a laudare et benedice / se a dio criatore soa pero che ella / si similia a lui pero
che e spiriata do lui / e non a dato spirito de hanimo se non / alo omo pero che dice a fare sapere /
alo homo la forza soa et hanoto o glorio dello ronto soo [...]»⁴³*

As in the *Vorlage*, *la hanima a cinque nome* (»the soul has five names«), but only four of them are mentioned, just like in the Hebrew manuscript owned by Egidio: *nefesh, neshamah, ruah, hay*⁴⁴ // *hanima, spirito, hanimo, vivo*.⁴⁵ Despite this adherence to the Hebrew text, the Italian vernacular version is not a literal translation, but a paraphrase with explanations. It is characterized by conciseness and a systematic abbreviation of the Hebrew text.

In the passage dedicated to *Hokhmat ha-Halom* (*la sapientia dello sonno*), the abridged translation takes the reader directly to the side of the dreamer, in whose fantasy the encounter with the angelic figure occurs. The essential aspects of the Hebrew text remain, even though most of the biblical and Talmudic citations and references are removed.⁴⁶

*La sapientia dello sonno dice li fantasia sopra
Lo letto too tutti li sonne per via de uno angielo
Che è de sopra e per li mor che tuti li fantesi non
Son tuti iguali pero tutti li sonne non son tuti
Vere et como sai lo angelo tuti le fantesie le
Dice Dio sape li fantasia. Lo angelo parlo
con elle omo in tuti langue et non parlo lengua
che non sa parlare lo homo a fare sapere de bono
la forza soa che non posse pensare lo homo cosa
nullo de di Dio li mostra de nocte amostrare
che Dio sai tuti li fantasie dello homo
ello angelo va dereto dello hanima como la
balia dereto la criatura et dice che lo hangelo
comano a guardare a te in tuti li viai tui
sta scritto Dio è in cello e tu si sopra la terra pero
sereno li parole toi poco, Dio sai tuti li fanta
sie però dimostra alo homo in elle sonne.
Uno homo che non ce sone in e sette di e rasa
E certo huno homo cativo et a sotte mali in ello
E dimostra che Dio non fa la providentia sopra esso
Como uno re che a un nimico quanu vole parlare
li cosi segreti non vole che costa in prisentia lo*

⁴³ London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27199, fol. 486r.

⁴⁴ London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27199, fol. 486v.

⁴⁵ London, British Library, Ms. Add. 16390 B, fol. 83r.

⁴⁶ London, British Library, Ms. Add. 16390 B, f. 84r.

*inimico so così Dio non vole fare sapere alo
omo cativo li segreti soi et perché sette notte
in verso sette nocte della Criatione*

The dreamer is a wise person who sustains their dialogue with the angelic and divine world through an oneiric experience. An angelic dream-correspondent regularly communicates with the human soul, using words pronounced in their own language to ensure understanding. The angel cares for the human soul just like a nursemaid takes care of a newborn baby: *como la balia dereto la criatura*. Then follows a description of the personality of those whose nights are dreamless for more than seven nights. The absence of dreams, meaning the lack of interaction with the angelic world, is considered an interruption of divine benevolence.

The language of the translation can be broadly described as a vernacular dialect of central Italy, characterized by colloquialisms, *hapax legomena*, and various inconsistencies in grammatical agreements.⁴⁷ We can assume that this idiom was used by members of the Italian Jewish community who were more accustomed to writing in Hebrew than in Italian. Transcriptions of the Hebrew words are found in the headings and incipits of the text, or in some terms that were considered too idiosyncratic; sometimes, they are just transliterated into Latin characters. The expression and style are close to the spoken language, without literary ambition. Thus, the text does not look like a literary product: it was possibly not meant as an autonomous work of translation, but as a functional device intended to teach and interpret the Hebrew contents for Egidio. The phrasing seems related to an almost extemporaneous use. Likely, the text served as a framework for the exegesis and the explanation of the Hebrew manuscript. As it appears, Jewish teachers helped their client in the difficult reading of the mystical Ashkenazic doctrines, and the Judeo-Italian abridgment served as a *brouillon* for the interpreters. Consequently, we can posit that the actual translation of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* would be carried out in full only in the context of teachings that took place orally and in dialogic form in the presence of Egidio.⁴⁸

47 ABATE and MOTTOLESE, *La Qabbalah in volgare* (cf. n. 12), pp. 15–40; ABATE, *Hebrew Divine Names into Latin and Italian* (cf. n. 12), pp. 62–81.

48 A thorough study of this translation will be a subject of my forthcoming essay.

Conclusions

In the context of reading and studying the manuscript of *Sodei Razayya* copied for Egidio by Elia Levita, *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* was translated into vernacular Italian; however, unlike the other four treatises found in the same anthology, the Hebrew text was not translated into Latin by Egidio. What is odd is that a Latin translation of this work is not extant even among the Latin versions of treatises related to the soul by Eleazar of Worms translated for Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) by the convert, Flavius Mithridates (15th century) between 1486 and 1487.⁴⁹ And yet, the entire rich *corpus* of Mithridates' translations is referred to as *De Anima* (On the Soul). This anthology once included fifteen titles; however, in Vatican manuscript ebr. 189, the first three books (*Liber Primus*, *Liber Secundus* and *Liber Tertius De Anima*) have disappeared. The extant translations in the manuscript encompass different *Libri de Anima*, starting from the »fourth book« and up to the »fifteenth book«. Moreover, none of them corresponds to the text of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*. According to the Vatican archives, in 1516 Ms. Vat. ebr. 189 was borrowed by Egidio da Viterbo himself, who commissioned a copy of this manuscript. Its translation is now extant in Rome, Ms. Ang. Lat. 1253 held in Biblioteca Angelica. This text, also entitled *De Anima*, lacks the first three books, just like Mithridates' manuscript.⁵⁰ Today, we can only imagine that the first sections, now missing, once included the Latin translation of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*. As far as we know, the only sixteenth-century translation of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* is the abridged version preserved in London, British Library, Ms. Add. 16390 B, based on Levita's Hebrew copy of *Sodei Razayya*.⁵¹

Later in the sixteenth century, *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* was copied in Hebrew manuscripts as an independent work and continued to circulate in the Hebrew tradition, no longer included in the corpus of *Razi'el*.⁵² We do not have enough information

49 This translation is now found in Biblioteca Vaticana, Ms. Vat. ebr. 189. See SAVERIO CAMPANINI: El'azar da Worms nelle traduzioni di Flavio Mitridate per Pico della Mirandola. In: Flavio Mitridate mediatore fra culture nel contesto dell'ebraismo siciliano del XV secolo. Atti del II Congresso Internazionale, Caltabellotta (Agrigento), 30 giugno – 1 luglio 2008. Ed. by MAURO PERANI and GIACOMO CORAZZOL. Palermo 2012, pp. 47–79; FLAVIA BUZZETTA: Liber de homine. Edizione del Ms. Vat. Ebr. 189 (ff. 398r–509v). Lavis 2015.

50 See M. BERTOLA: I due primi registri di prestito della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Codici vaticani latini 3964, 3966. Pubblicati in Fototipia e in trascrizione con note e indici. Città del Vaticano 1942, p. 62; ABATE, *Filologia e Qabbalah* (cf. n. 1), pp. 413–451.

51 A later English version is found in New York, JTS, Ms. 8795.

52 The anthology *Sefer Razi'el ha-ma'alakh* includes two formulas of *she'elat halom* but lacks *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*. On the comparison between *Sefer Razi'el ha-mal'akh* and *Sodei Razayya* see ABATE, *Razi'el a Roma* (cf. n. 11), pp. 119–142; REBIGER, *Zur Redaktionsgeschichte* (cf. n. 11), pp. 1–22. Cf. also the essay of Moshe Idel in this volume.

to determine the reasons for such a change in the textual tradition. What we can assume is that the reflections of *Haside Ashkenaz* on the soul certainly caught the attention of Christian Hebraists of the Renaissance, *in primis* Pico della Mirandola and later Egidio da Viterbo. The reasons for the absence or removal of the Latin translation of *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* from the Ashkenazi anthology remain unknown, although various explanations can be hypothesized. On the one hand, the treatise on the soul has continued to be transmitted separately from the other textual units of *Sodei Razayya* in the Jewish manuscript tradition, gaining popularity in early modern times. *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh*, with its deep examination of the soul, its components, and its relationship to the body, dreams, death, and eternal life, became a sort of spiritual *vademecum* for readers in Jewish communities. On the other hand, this same work refers, albeit with less complex language than the other treatises of *Sodei Razayya*, to the divine nature of the soul, the spiritual superiority of the Jewish soul, and a fundamentally pantheistic conception of the universe, populated by divine and angelic entities. Probably for these reasons—and because of its exoteric and accessible text—it was not translated into Latin: it required greater caution and circumspection in the world of the Christian humanists. Was *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* expunged from the Latin tradition for its blasphemous contents, which did not align with the new context of surveillance over Jewish books established in the latter half of the sixteenth century? We do not yet know how things unfolded. However, we do know that *Hokhmat ha-Nefesh* circulated in several Hebrew compilations, different from the Renaissance anthology, until it was published in Hebrew in 1876 in Lemberg and again in 1913 in Safed. Both editions are based upon a *Vorlage* that is more extensive than Levita's copy.