

THREE AMULETS IN COPENHAGEN*

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Amulets are seldom easy to make head or tail of, and the three amulets to which this article is devoted are no exceptions to the rule. The difficulties are mainly due to the genre *per se*. Its enigmatic character is often enhanced by using and/or introducing abbreviations and linguistic archaisms and novelties, as well as features from outside its own religious context.¹ But despite their sometimes syncretistic nature amulets are based on a certain religious tradition, from which they draw their “force” and to whose general tenets they must adhere, in order to be regarded as acceptable. Another reason why they might be viewed as religious objects is that, more often than not, they are written by specialists with a standing within the religious traditions (rabbis, priests, etc.), something that is also a prerequisite for the empowerment of the object.² In my opinion, amulets are therefore to be considered religious texts, since they would be even more enigmatic if we did not use a religious tradition as the backdrop to our discussion of them.

The three amulets to which this article is devoted consist of parchment strips of approximately the same width but of varying length, inscribed with black/brown ink on one side. They have been kept rolled up (though no casings were found), and could only be partially unrolled, due to the dryness of the parchment – the longest one could easily have been used as a clock-spring. The Preservation Division of The Royal Library was able to soften the parchment with alcohol (to preserve any water-soluble ink), unroll the amulets and mount them, so that they can be studied. As they seem to have “escaped” previous cataloguing (they were found among some non-Hebrew materials in a storage room), they have tentatively been assigned shelf marks Cod. Heb. Add. 103–105. In the following, two of the amulets will be edited and analysed; the third one is cursorily described.

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¹ Harviainen 1995.

² For further discussion of the religious framework of amulets, see Jansson 1999: 22–28.

Several “magical” names and acronyms have escaped my attempts at decipherment; these have been left in transcription.³

COD. HEB. ADD. 103

Cod. Heb. Add. 103 is the smallest of the three amulets and measures 490 x 50 mm. It was written to protect the children of a woman called Gargay (?) bat Aziza, and these names, together with the scribal features, make an origin in the Eastern Mediterranean area, perhaps in the late 19th century, the most plausible. The content of the amulets is a spell against diseases, demons and other calamities of various kinds, written in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. The text is divided by the use of two different types of script. After an introductory invocation (בהנו) the first twelve lines are written in cursive script, with the exception of the first word and the name of the beneficiary of the amulet. The remaining 37 lines are written in square script, with an accompanying independent vocalisation.⁴ Its contents are various holy names (among them the forty-two letter name, lines 14–17), other names based on different Psalms (most prominently Psalm 91) and names of angels. The “magic square” (lines 41–44) is based on the number 40, perhaps because forty is the total number of days that a woman is *niddah* after giving birth to a male child, something that might make sense in an amulet for the protection of children. The distribution of the different types of script seems to coincide with the specific and general parts of the amulet, as the cursive part contains the wish specific to the client.

line		
1	בהנו	With the help of God we shall achieve and succeed ⁵
2	יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א"א שתשמור ותציל	May it be Thy will, Lord, our God, and God of our fathers, that you protect and save
3	את הילדים נולדים מן אמתן	the children that are born of their mother,
4	גרגיי בת עזיזה	Gargay daughter of Aziza,

³ The main sources for the decipherment have been Shrire 1966 and Davis & Frenkel 1995; occasional use has also been made of Ashkenazi & Yarden 1998.

⁴ The beginning seems to be a slightly corrupt version of the vocalisation of Gen. 1:1ff.

⁵ This formula appears in both Chassidic and Iraqi amulets, cf. Shrire 1966: 122, 125. Here and in the following, for technical reasons, all footnotes appear in the right-hand column. All translations of biblical verses are taken from the JPS Tanakh, unless otherwise stated.

5	הנושאים קמיע משדין ומזיקין ועלעולין ופחדין	who wears an amulet from demons and whirlwinds (?) and fearsome things
6	וטהירין וללין וללתינ ורוחין בישין ומסערא	and the myriads ⁶ and <i>lilin</i> and <i>lilitin</i> and evil spirits and [the] visitation ⁷
7	דמסאבותא וממקרים רעים ועין הרע ומכל חול'	of the uncleanness and evil events and the evil eye and from all disease
8	ומזלה ומפחד ובהלה ומנזק וחבלה ותנך ותסך	and sickness and from fear and [any] sudden calamity and injury and evil and stench and pour out [blessings?]
9	עליהם ברחמיך ותרפאם רפואה שלימה	over them in your great mercy and heal them, a full recovery,
1	רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף והשכיבם לשלום	recovery of the spirit and recovery of the body, and He shall make them lie down in peace
1	והעשירם לחיים טובים ולשלום ואל יבהילום	and He shall endow them with a good life and for peace. And it shall not frighten them
1	חלומות רעות וחזיונות רעות מעתה ועד	[the] evil dreams and evil visions, from now on and for evermore
1	למען שמותיך הקדושים אלו הנכתבים פה אפי"ר	for the sake of your holy Names, the ones written here. Amen, may it be God's will!
1	אבד יתץ קרע	The 42-letter name ⁸
1	שטן נגד יכש	
1	בטר צתג חקב טנע	
1	יגל פזק שקו צית	
1	חתך אנקתם פסתם	"You open your hands" ⁹

6 Alt. "the myriads".

7 Alt. "the slap" (מסטרא).

8 A 42-letter name is mentioned in the Talmud, and traditionally connected with the hymn אבא בכח, which consists of 42 words (Shrire 1966: 97f; Nulman 1993: 29f).

9 The final letters of פותח את ידיך (Ps. 145:16; Davis & Frenkel 1995: 187).

10 The 22-letter name.

1	פספסים דיונסים	'NQTM PSTM PPSY DYWNSYM ¹⁰
2	לתאר וליב יוהך	"There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." ¹¹
2	כלך אחזהרירירון	KLKh ¹² Achazhaririron
2	מטטרון נורטטמ	Metatron nortateM
2	ינגפט קסטיאל	YNNGPT ¹³ Qastiel
2	רגז בנט מצמצית	RGZ BNT Metsamtsit ¹⁴
2	אזבוגה אגלא חבו	Azbogah `GL` ¹⁵
2	נעורירון צורטק	N'URYRON Tsurtaq ¹⁶
2	טפטפיה רחש תמף	Taftafiyah ¹⁷ RChSh TMF
2	רוטא מהש ללה	rota` ¹⁸ MHS LLH
2	אקמב בוכו ילי מכם	`QNV BWKhW ¹⁹ YLY MKhM
3	אהביאל סמטוריה	Ahaviel ²⁰ Samturia
3	להביאל בית נגף	Lahaviel "Because he is devoted to Me [I will deliver him]" ²¹ NGF

¹¹ Ps. 91:10 (used against epilepsy; Shrire 1966: 133), and the final letters of the words of Ps. 91:11 (Davis & Frenkel 1995: 189).

¹² כוכבי לכה ("planets")?

¹³ Compare בנף נגף on line 31, which contain the same letters, but in a different order.

¹⁴ *Metsamtsit* is a name originating in the Lurianic Kabbalah, and is assumed to be based on the word (and concept of) *tsimtsum* (Shrire 1966: 117).

¹⁵ *Azbugah* has its origins in the Hekhalot literature and can also be found in *Sefer Raziel* (Shrire 1966: 112f; Davis & Frenkel 1995: 46). `GL` is an acronym for the beginning of the second blessing in the *Shmoneh 'esreh*, as well as an anagram for certain words in Gen. 49:8–11; see Davis & Frenkel 1995: 47, 172.

¹⁶ Davis & Frenkel (1995: 45) suggests a number of biblical verses as possible origins of this name.

¹⁷ Angelic name; made from the beginnings of the words in Ps. 119:69,70 ("The proud have forged a lie against me: [but] I will keep thy precepts with [my] whole heart") and Ps. 119:76 ("Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant") (Shrire 1966: 109, 127).

¹⁸ A herb used against the plague and for other protective purposes (Davis & Frenkel 1995: 46).

¹⁹ Names derived from Gen. 9:13 or from every second word of the 42-letter name, and from I Chron. 29:12 respectively (Davis & Frenkel 1995: 174, 176).

²⁰ Names ending in -iel or -el are often angelic names, known from elsewhere or designed for the amulet in question. Ahaviel is thus "the angel of love", Lahaviel "the angel of flames".

²¹ The name is based on letters from Ps. 91:14 (Davis & Frenkel 1995: 176).

3			אסיא רפאל אנרנל	'SY' Rafa'el "Oh God, pray heal her!" ²²
3			תך טת גות טת כץ	TKh TT GWT TT KT _s
3			איתיאל אתלת	Itiel(?) 'TLT ²³
3			ווש נב תרף פסוי נב	WWSH "Josef is a fruitful
3			תרף ילע נייע תונב	bough, a fruitful bough by a
3			הדעץ ילע רוש	spring, its branches run over a
				wall" ²⁴
3			לקי כע ביב בלת	I wait for your deliverance, O
				Lord ²⁵ K' BYB BLT
3			חיל זכע ביט סנוי	ChYL ZK' BYT
				Sanvi
4			סנסנוי סמנגלף	Sansanvi Semangelaf ²⁶
4	ח	גי	יח	א
				["Magic square" based on the
4	וי	ג	ו	ו
				number 40]
4	ב	יט	יב	ז
4	יד	ה	ד	ז
4			יבע בשי אלמ וא	"O you who dwell in the shelter
				of the Most High and abide in
4			אבכ הימי מהב ילו	the protection of Shaddai. I say
				of the Lord, my refuge and
4			כתץ ואל תמל מיי	stronghold, my God in whom I
4			מבי מיץ ימא ומא	

²² The name is based on letters from Num. 12:13 (Davis & Frenkel 1995: 174).

²³ Perhaps a short form of Ps. 71:9, "Do not cast me off in my old age; when my strength fails, do not forsake me!" (cp. Davis & Frenkel 1995: 175, s.v. אתלזככא).

²⁴ Gen 49:22, here written backwards. In the context, this understanding of the text seems better than the alternative, which translates *porat* as "wildass" (JPS Tanakh 1985). The same verse is found on modern (1980s) protective charms for the newborn and their mothers.

²⁵ Acronym of Gen. 49:18.

²⁶ Three angels known from amulets protecting the newborn and their mothers, most commonly against Lilith.

4	לִיר בְּתוֹ רֶתֶךְ אֵימ	stronghold, my God in whom I trust, that He will save you from the fowler's trap, from the destructive plague. He will cover you with His pinions, you will find refuge under his wings; His fidelity is an encircling shield. You need not fear the terror by night, or the arrow that flies by day, the plague that stalks in the darkness, or the scourge that ravages at noon. A thousand may fall at your left side, ten thousand at your right, but it shall not reach you. You will see it with your eyes, you will witness the punishment of the wicked. Because you, Lord, are my refuge." ²⁷
5	בְּשִׁכְמֹלוֹ	Blessed be His glorious sovereign Name forever and ever. ²⁸

COD. HEB. ADD. 104

The second amulet measures 360 x 61mm and is more intriguing. It includes the outline of a hand (i.e. what is traditionally known as a *chamsa*) and a *magen David* with inscribed names of God and angels. The script is mainly cursive, with only a few words in square script. Their somewhat "Oriental" features might, together with the *chamsa*, point to an Oriental or North African origin. If the first amulet was intended to expel all things evil in more general terms, this amulet lists in detail all possible threats. The languages employed are Aramaic and Hebrew, and the listing of threats is – with minor variations – known from other amulets²⁹, and seems to originate with a passage with the title להֲשֵׁלֵךְ הָרַע בְּדוֹק

²⁷ Acronym of Ps. 91:1–9a (last line in translation slightly altered, for syntactic reasons).

²⁸ Shrire 1966: 98.

²⁹ Shachar 1981: 243f, no. 781 (Eretz Israel, parchment, 18th–19th century), where the text is written in the form of a large *heh*; Davis & Frenkel 1995: 95f, no. 246; a printed amulet from

כף אחת (“Incantation against the evil eye, well tested”), found in the work by Chayim Yosef David Azulai (1724–1806).³⁰ With minor differences, the lines 3–25a³¹ in Cod. Heb. Add. 104 seem to be copied from this work; after that point, the passage in כף אחת and the amulet differ from one another. The remaining text of the amulet consists mostly of holy names, some of which can be deciphered as an acronym of Ps. 91. The letters on the sign of a hand also form acronyms. In the present case, the amulet might have been written for a woman called Michal (?), or possibly her child(-ren).

line

1	וראו כל עמי הארץ [כש]ם	And all the peoples of the earth shall see that the Name ³²
2	ה' נקרא עליך	of the Lord is proclaimed over you
3	משביע אני עליכם כל	I adjure you, all
4	תיני עינא בישא	kinds of the evil eye:
5	עינא אוכמא עינא צרובא	the dark eye, the burning eye,
6	עינא תכלתא עינא ירוקא	the blue eye, the green eye,
7	עינא ארוכא עינא קצרא	the long eye, the short eye,
8	עינא רחבא עינא צרא	the wide eye, the narrow eye,
9	עינא ישרא עינא עקומא	the straight eye, the crooked eye,
10	עינא עגולא עינא שוקעת	the round eye, the sunken eye,
11	עינא בולטת עינא רואה	the protruding eye, the seeing eye,
12	עינא מבטת עינא בוקעת	the watching eye, the piercing eye,
13	עינא שואבת עינא דזכורא	the watery eye, the eye of a man,
14	עינא דנוקבא עינא דאיש	eye of a woman, eye of a husband
15	ואשתו עינא דאשה ובתה	and his wife and the eye of a woman and her daughter,
16	עינא דאשה וקרבותיה עינא	the eye of a woman and her female relations, the eye of
17	עין דבחור עין יזקן עין דזקנה	an eye of a young man, an eye of an old man, an eye of an old woman
18	ובתולה עין דבטול'ל עין דאלמנה	and [of] a young woman, and eye between good and evil, ³³ an eye of a widow

Eretz Israel, 19th century; with no similarity in layout apart from the *chamsa*, here in the form of a palm (mirrored compared to our amulet) but with no text on it.

³⁰ Chayim Yosef David Azulai (1724–1806; also known as חיד"א) was born in Jerusalem, but visited and worked in several countries in Europe, the Levant and Northern Africa in connection with his studies of halakhah, Kabbalah and bibliography.

³¹ Azulai 1836, כף אחת, fol 90b, s.v. לא.

³² Deut. 28:10.

19	עין דנשוואה עין דגרושה	an eye of a wife, an eye of a divorcee
20	כל מין עינא בישא שיש	every kind of the evil eye which is
21	בעולם שראתה והביגה את	in the world. When she saw and beheld
22	סימן טוב הנ"מ מיכ"ל	a good sign/a blessing, the one born from [the woman] Mikhal ³⁴
23	גזרנא ואשבענא לכין בההוא	I have ordained and we have sworn so, by this, the
24	עינא עילאה עינא קדישה	Eye [of the] Most High and the Holy Eye,
25	עינא חדא שם השם	the One Eye, Name of the Name
26	הגדול והטהור ואמת	the great and pure and true(?)
27	אל שדי אנקתם	El Shaddai `NQTM ³⁵
28	טפטפיה על צבא	Taftafia over a host(?)
29	סמוי בטר מזריה	Sanvi BTR ³⁶ from lewdness/deviation
30	יבע בשׁי אלמ ואאב	“O you who dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide in the protection of Shaddai. I say of the Lord, my refuge and stronghold, my God in whom I trust,” ³⁷
31	כהי מימ	“that He will save you from the fowler’s trap, from the destructive plague.” ³⁸
32	הבי לוכת	“He will cover you with His pinions” ³⁹
33	סוא לתמל מיי	“you will find refuge under his wings; His fidelity is an encircling shield.” ⁴⁰
34	מבי	“the plague that stalks in the darkness” ⁴¹
35	מיצ	“or the scourge that ravages at noon” ⁴²

33 בן טוב לרע.

34 This reading is based on the text incorporated in אהח כף אהח, where at this point the insertion of the client’s name is indicated by פכ"פ, “N., son/daughter of N.”. The “numerical markings” over what I understand as the name “Mikhal” might be a way of “confusing” any harmful demons, by disguising the name as a number.

35 The first word of the 22-letter name.

36 Part of the 42-letter name.

37 Acronym of Ps. 91:1–2. In the following, the Hebrew text is read as acronyms, unless otherwise stated.

38 Ps. 91:3.

39 Ps. 91:4a

40 Ps. 91:4b–c (the first “word” should have been צוא).

41 Ps. 91:6a

36	מאל		“A thousand may fall at your left side” ⁴³
37		ומאל	“ten thousand at your right, but it shall not reach you.” ⁴⁴
38		וייב	WYYB
39		תורת	TWRT
40		כיבי	KYBY ⁴⁵
41		ואא	“and my stronghold, my God in whom I trust
42		בכה	that He
43		ימי	will save you from the fowler’s trap” ⁴⁶
44		מבי	“the plague that stalks in the darkness
45		מיצ	or the scourge that ravages at noon.
46		ימא ומא לי רבת ורת	You need not fear the terror by night, or the arrow that flies by day, the plague that stalks in the darkness, or the scourge that ravages at noon. You will see it with your eyes, you will witness the punishment of the wicked.” ⁴⁷
47		אסל מתר פתס ופו וה	[The nails:] You are my shelter; You preserve me from distress; You surround me with joyous shouts of deliverance. ⁴⁸ Phinehas stepped forth and intervened, and the plague ceased. ⁴⁹
48		חימל קסטיאל כווח במוכסז כווח חמי סלי	[The thumb:] ChYML Qastiel KWChW BMWKWSZ KWZW ⁵⁰ The angel of the Lord camps around those who fear him and rescues them. ⁵¹

42 Ps. 91:6b.

43 Ps. 91:7a (should be: ימא).

44 Ps. 91:7b (should be: ומאלי).

45 Alt. כימ

46 Ps. 91:2b–3a.

47 Ps. 91:6–8.

48 Ps. 32:7 (Shrire 1966.125).

49 Acronym of Ps. 106:30 (Davis & Frenkel 1995: 186).

50 The 14-letter name, often written on the back of *mezuzot* (cf. Jansson 1999), here in a corrupt form (the normal form is כווח במוכסז כווח).

49	נשחסלו מחש	[The little finger:] NShChSLW MChSh
50	פגמכאל	[The ring finger:] PGMK`L ⁵²
51	צדנלבש	[The middle finger:] “balm, honey, gum, ladanum, pistachio nuts, almonds” ⁵³
52	קהסמגת	[The index finger:] QVSMGT ⁵⁴
53	דיש שדי ישד דשי אדני אראריתא בואל יליאל יחואל ידש שיד אהיה וי פה וו וחח יה וי יה תימ עונה פי עהג מה חי לד צום די מה לו רחח מצמצית ע ביט ש	[Palm:] DYSh ShDY YshD DShY ⁵⁵ Adonai “One is the beginning of His Oneness, the beginning of His Unity, its value is One” ⁵⁶ BW`L Yali`el Yechu`el YDSh ShYD Ehyeh “But the Israelites were fertile and prolific” ⁵⁷ WChCh Yah WY Yah TYM `WNH D Pachad Yitschaq ⁵⁸ Metsamtsit ⁵⁹ BYT ע “When Israel went forth from Egypt” ⁶⁰ ש ⁶¹
54	אהיה אשר אדהיה שדי א י ו י ה ה	[<i>magen David</i> :] Variant on the names given in Ex. 3:14 and the letters contained in the Tetragrammaton]
55	יהוה גבריאל מיכאל אוריאל שמותיאל פחדיאל	[text surrounding the <i>magen David</i> :] Adonai Gabri`el Micha`el `Uri`el Shemoti`el Pachadiel
56	שתסורו טוב מן סימן כל מין רעין	[text upside down on the right hand side of the <i>magen David</i> : ⁶²] that you will turn away from a sign [of] all kinds of evil.

51 Acronym of Ps. 34:8 (Davis & Frenkel 1995: 187).

52 Permutation of the following acronym.

53 Acronym of words from Gen. 43:11 (Davis & Frenkel 1995: 46, 198).

54 Permutation of the preceding acronym.

55 Shaddai and permutations thereof.

56 אראריתא is an acronym for אחד ראש אחדותו ראש יחודו תמורתו אחד, according to Davis & Frenkel 1995: 174, who refer to “ספרי חיד”א”.

57 Ex. 1:7; cf. Davis & Frenkel 1995: 185.

58 Davis & Frenkel 1995: 198.

59 See above, note 14.

60 Ps. 114:1; cf. Davis & Frenkel 1995: 176.

61 *ʿAyin* and *shin* are written as so-called *Brillenbuchstaben*, a mode of writing known from numerous Jewish and Muslim amulets.

62 The text on the left-hand side, apart from the names, seems impossible to decipher.

COD. HEB. ADD. 105

The most interesting of the three amulets – at least from an artistic point of view – is, however, this Tree of Spheres amulet, which measures 877 x 40 mm, and the script employed is a cursive/semi-cursive, with Oriental traits. The Feuchtwanger Collection, contains two amulets at least partially similar to Cod. Heb. Add. 105. One has been dated to the 20th century and was supposedly written in Eretz Israel; the other, which is stylistically different but seems to contain the same elements, is believed to be German and from the 18th century. In his discussion of the origin of the latter, Shachar mentions in his description of this latter amulet a "Tree of Spheres" amulet from Fez, dated 1588.⁶³ There is also a similar text in the Lehmann Collection, labelled as a "Kabbalistic drawing", and originating in North Africa or Eretz Israel.⁶⁴ The Lurianic Kabbalistic contents of the amulet are unmistakable. The heading reads *אין סוף ב"ה עטרה בראש א"ק הרמנותא דמלכא ישתבח שמו לעד אילן ה"ק*, which might be translated as "Ein Sof, blessed be He, [the] crown on the head of Adam Qadmon, the potency of the king⁶⁵, may his/its name be praised forever; the small/holy tree". The amulet contains twelve "ordinary" sefirotic systems, including that of the *sitra achra* at the very bottom of the amulet, together with numerous spherical patterns with inscribed texts. These texts mention different groups of body parts (brain, ears, *pe'ot*, eyes, arms, etc.), undoubtedly inspired by Lurianic traditions regarding the Primordial Man. So far, I have found no identical printed editions of the Lurianic sefirotic tree,⁶⁶ but it is to be hoped that further studies will be able to determine with greater exactness the relationship of this amulet to this branch of Jewish thought.

SUMMARY

These three amulets in the collections of the Royal Library in Copenhagen can all be placed solidly within the context of Rabbinic Judaism. In Cod. Heb. Add. 103 and Cod. Heb. Add. 104, we find acronyms for Psalms and other Biblical texts, in particular Ps. 91, which has a reputation for possessing protective powers. In these

⁶³ Shachar 1981: 242, no. 777; 882x44 mm.: no. 778, 690x285 mm.

⁶⁴ Ohel Chayim 1988: 182, K86.

⁶⁵ *אין סוף ב"ה עטרה בראש א"ק הרמנותא דמלכא* is a quotation from the very beginning of the Zohar (15a, ad Gen 1:1). For further possible translation etc, see Zohar 2004: I.15a.

⁶⁶ Unfortunately, I have not had access to Poppers' editions (cf. Scholem 1972: 581, cf. also Abrams 1997). The versions printed in *Kabbala Denudata* show strong similarities, but any detailed discussions of their relationship must await further studies.

two amulets, we also find angelic and divine names of different types, some of them known from other sources. Cod. Heb. Add. 105 relies heavily on the Lurianic Kabbalah, which must also be said to be an intrinsic part of Rabbinic Judaism, albeit in a more mystical vein. Regardless of what further research might reveal about them, the three texts constitute three more pieces in the great jigsaw puzzle of amulet studies.

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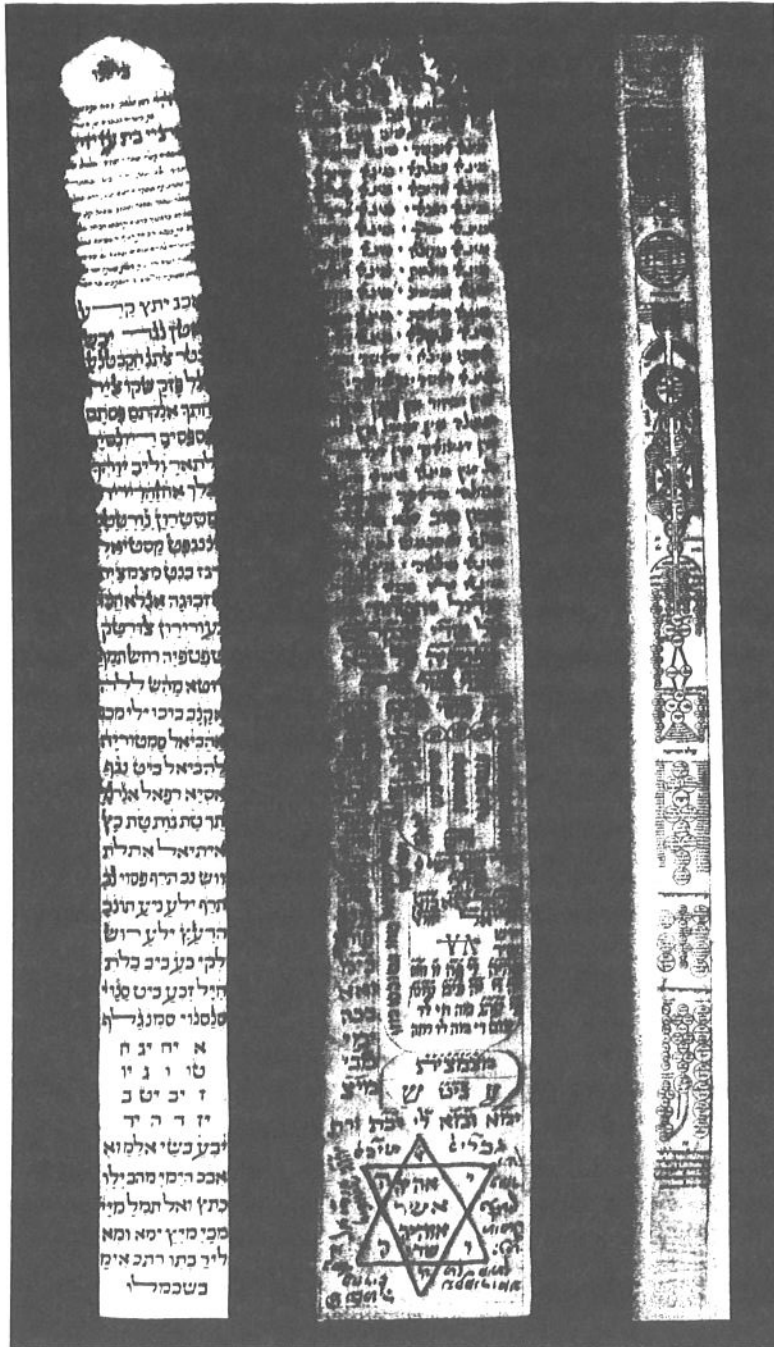


Plate I. (From the left:) Cod. Heb. Add. 103, Cod. Heb. Add. 104 and Cod. Heb. Add. 105. (Photo: The Photographic Studio, The Royal Library, Copenhagen.)