

Heaven and Hell: Why Jews Worry More About Yom Kippur Than Their Final Judgment Day

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What do philosophers, scientists, and theologians have in common? It's not a joke—in all seriousness.They like to ask big questions, and they often devote their entire lives to answering them. To be sure, the answers they come up with are different, and that's what makes them philosophers, scientists, or theologians, but they often ask the same big questions. What is a big question? A big question is one like: How was the universe formed? What is the meaning of life? What happens to us after we die?

From time immemorial, humans have pondered the same questions, and each generation has produced its own answers. Jewish thinkers have also produced many answers to these big questions, some of them contradictory. It's like that old joke: Ask two Jews and you'll get three opinions. But in this case it's really true. Nowhere is Jewish tradition more diverse than in its answers to one of the big questions we human beings know the least about: what happens to us after we die.

It's a question posed by children and considered throughout adulthood. Do we have souls? Are these souls eternal? Is there an afterlife? Is it bodily? Is there a Heaven? What about Hell? These are the questions we ask about our individual afterlife. And then there are the universal questions: Will the human race end? Will human history end? What happens at the end of Time? Will there be another kind of human existence? Will the world as we know it be destroyed or transformed? These are big, heavy questions. And our efforts to answer them are frustrated by the fact that we have no way to check whether our answers are right or wrong.

Only time will tell. These are such big questions that, despite all the answers we Jews have recorded over the last 2500 years or so, we continue asking them.

Tonight I will discuss some of the more popular answers that Jews throughout the centuries have given to these questions about personal life-after-death. And over the course of this weekend, we will study some of the stranger approaches that lurk in more remote corners of our Jewish heritage, including what God has in store for the whole human race and Judaism's End-Time scenarios.

Tonight, I will lay out the history of Jewish views on personal life-after-death in two parts. Part one: what about us is immortal? Part two: where does this immortal part of us go?

So to the first question: What about us is immortal? Judaism answers that human beings have souls—in Hebrew, *neshamot*, or in Yiddish, *neshamos*. While our bodies are comprised of material substances, like water, minerals, and cells, these bodies house and protect the very essence of our individual and unique identities, namely our souls.

This belief in souls derives from the Bible, from the second creation story of the book of Genesis that describes how God formed man—*adam*, the first human being. Scripture relates how God fashioned *adam* from the “dust of the earth,” then blew the “breath of life” into this lifeless structure and, Scripture says, “*adam* became a living being.” The “breath of life—*nishmat chayyim*” was understood as something akin to the soul—*neshamah*. Such a view was common in the ancient world.

Later, Judaism detached from the Ancient Near Eastern context of Biblical times and moved into the ancient Greek world. There, this dualism of the life-force and its bodily vessel evolved into a radical distinction between the soul and the body.

Jewish tradition offers various opinions about when a human embryo receives its soul, ranging from 40 days after conception at the earliest, to birth at the latest. Some traditions assign the task of putting souls into embryos to an angel, others to God himself. Although there are many different understandings of what the soul is and does, they all agree that the soul is what makes you “you”. It is what makes each and every human being unique. Even identical twins. Each soul is thought to have its own will and determine its own destiny.

The soul is understood as that aspect of the human person that mirrors the divine image. Therefore Jewish tradition asserts that souls do not consist of the kind of physical substance that our bodies are made of. Unlike our bodies, which consist of matter that is subject to decay, souls are made of something altogether different, something that is eternal, that lasts forever. That’s one of the reasons why Jewish tradition rejected the practice of embalming the dead, so as not to be deceived into thinking that the body lives on after its soul has departed. Only the soul is eternal.

We Jews affirm the eternity of the human soul at every funeral and yizkor service. At these memorial occasions, we recite a prayer written in the 12th century called “El Maleh Rachamim,” *God full of Compassion*. The prayer asks that the souls, the *neshamot*, of our beloved be bound up in the bond of everlasting life, the “*tzror hachayyim*”. This bond of everlasting life connects the soul to God for all eternity.

So now that we have learned what part of us is immortal, we take up the second question: where do souls go after they leave their bodies? This is a very complicated question. Let’s consider the funeral service again: the medieval *El Maleh Rachamim* prayer says that the souls of the dead go to “their world,” *olamam*. The Hebrew word *olam*, world, refers to the

olam habah, the world to come. The world to come was understood as a place. Back in Biblical times, even before the concept of *olam habah* developed, Israelites referred to a dark, shadowy netherworld called *Sheol*. In this place *Sheol*, the dead would be reunited with all previous dead, what the Bible refers to as “joining their ancestors”.¹ The Bible does not view this reunion as a particularly happy occasion, but rather a time of despair and resignation. Posthumous existence in *sheol* was a mere shadow of what had once been in life. While the dead were no longer plagued by sickness, they were weak. They could not fully act or speak, and were consigned to making chirping noises and muttering.² On occasion these shadowy souls or ghosts could be summoned through necromancy, but such practices were regarded as dangerous and illicit.³

A famous archaeological discovery in Jerusalem revealed another dimension of ancient Israelite understanding of the afterlife. I am referring to the Ketef Hinnom excavation, on a hill overlooking the Hinnom Valley, southwest of the Old City of Jerusalem. The excavations unearthed several rock-hewn burial caves dating from the end of the Kingdom of Judah, in the 7th century BCE. These burial chambers had wide rock-cut benches on which bodies were laid. The tombs contained an abundance of personal effects, including gold and silver jewelry. The ancient Israelites buried their dead with domestic objects, suggesting that they believed the deceased would use these objects in the afterlife. The most significant of these objects were two silver amulets, rolled up in a way that suggests they may have been worn by the corpses. These silver amulets contained early versions of what we know from the Bible as the priestly blessing, “May God bless you and keep you, May God’s face shine on you.” The presence of these amulets suggests that not only did the ancient Israelites believe their dead would live on

in some kind of afterlife, but that God continued to protect them in their new existence. This is a much more hopeful understanding of the afterlife than what the Biblical texts alone suggest.

Ideas about the afterlife expanded even more under Persian and Greek influence, following the Babylonian exile in 586 BCE. As you know, the ancient Greeks believed in an underworld called “Hades,” named for the Greek god who ruled over it. Early Greek texts portray Hades as misty and gloomy, where all mortals go, much like the Biblical notion of Sheol. Under Persian influence, Greek ideas about the afterlife included the idea that all mortals are judged after death and are either rewarded or punished. Unlike Sheol, which was value-neutral, this understanding projected notions of this-worldly justice onto the afterlife. As we know from texts as well as tomb inscriptions, Jews adopted the Greek word “Hades” to refer to the place of the afterlife. And with this adoption of Greek vocabulary came Greek ideas. Jews were deeply influenced by the Hellenistic world view. The Greeks believed that the dead had to cross the river Styx to gain entry into Hades. In order to get across the river, each soul had to pay the boatman Charon. This coin of payment came to be known as “Charon’s obol,” the obol being a Greek monetary denomination. Greeks, and subsequently Romans, would bury their dead with coins placed in the corpse’s mouth, thereby equipping them with their transit fare into Hades.

Another, rather surprising, Israeli archaeological discovery revealed that this burial practice was adopted by Jews in the Greco-Roman period. When the tomb of the first century Jewish High Priest Caiaphas and his family was excavated, one of the corpses was found with a coin in its mouth. So **even** the family of the Jewish High Priest used Charon’s obol. The idea of Charon’s obol persisted into later rabbinic circles, as evidenced by a funeral lament recorded in

the Talmud that describes how a deceased man was so poor that he had to *borrow* Charon's obol in order to pay the boatman to get across the river Styx into Hades.⁴

As ideas about what happened to the dead developed, the place where the dead were punished came to be associated with an actual place on earth—the burial site I mentioned earlier—the Hinnom valley. This valley is situated between the Jerusalem Temple mount and the opposing Mount of Olives. By the second century BCE of the Greek period, the Hinnom valley—in Hebrew *Gei Hinnom*—signified the place of fiery punishment.⁵ The Hebrew *Gei Hinnom* was transliterated into Greek and Aramaic as Gehinnom, then Gehenna, and the Jewish notion of Hell was born.

On the other hand, the place of reward was associated with the primordial *Garden of Eden*, described in Genesis as created by God for Adam and Eve. Early images of this idyllic Paradise depict *Gan Eden*, the Garden of Eden, as a series of gardens flowing with fresh rivers and ripe fruit, a place of eternal peace. Initially the Garden was believed to be located on the outermost reaches of the flat earth.⁶ The regions above the earth were reserved for the angels and God. Gradually, Jewish mystics living in the Greek and Roman eras began to use contemplation to imagine themselves ascending to the heavens. They envisioned multiple levels of heavens numbering 7 or 10. The uppermost levels were reserved for angels and the divine abode of God. Just below them, at levels 2 and 3, were the Garden of Eden and Gehinnom. The Garden of Eden was reserved for the righteous, providing its residents with sweet-flowering trees and streams flowing with milk and honey, oil and wine. Correspondingly, Gehennom—the place for sinners—was divided into areas with tortures and punishments

meted out according to the sinfulness of its occupants, including fiery pits amid frost and ice, which alternatively burnt and froze the sinners, who were plagued by eternal thirst.⁷

These mystical texts are not the only sources we have for understanding Jewish ideas of the afterlife during this Greco-Roman period.⁸ Again archaeology helps us to fill in the gaps.

Inscriptions on Jewish tombs reveal a broader range of ideas about the afterlife that go beyond Paradise and Gehinnom. Some epitaphs refer to peaceful rest in the tomb. No other **world**, no place, just eternal sleep. Some epitaphs express the idea that the soul ascends to the heavens and becomes a star, kind of like in the Disney movie which you may recall, the *Lion King*, when the Lion King Mufasa shows his cub son Simba the night sky and says, “Look at the stars. The great kings of the past look down on us from those stars.” Other inscriptions mention resurrection, which we will discuss on Sunday morning.⁹

By about the sixth century of the Common Era, this diversity of ideas about the afterlife had merged into one central concept, the *olam habah*, the world-to-come. Images of the *olam habah* are quite different, generally reflecting the values of those who envision them. Some sages imagined the world-to-come as a place where souls basked in the radiance of the divine presence, sustained by the spiritual manna that came from heaven—mentioned in this week’s Torah portion. No physical eating or drinking, just a spiritual type of existence.¹⁰ Other scholars fantasized about banquets, material opulence, and even sexual relations.¹¹ As the world-to-come became the dominant image of the afterlife in classical rabbinic tradition, ideas about Gehenna became more well-defined. Some rabbis believed that the righteous were rewarded with Gan Eden, or Paradise, and that the wicked were punished with Gehennom, or Hell. But other rabbis understood Gehenna as a place of **temporary** punishment rather than a place of

eternal condemnation; Gehenna was a place where ordinary sinners were given the opportunity to atone for their sins.¹²

In the mind of these 4th, 5th, and 6th century rabbis, Gehenna was more akin to the Christian idea of purgatory than to the notion of Hell. The dead would be sent to Gehenna for up to 12 months and then, once they had repented, they would be granted eternal life in the world-to-come. Those who were incorrigible, unrepentant sinners would be denied eternal life, and their souls would either be destroyed or consigned eternally to Gehenna. Some rabbis maintained that only righteous Jews could enter the *olam habah*. Others believed that the world-to-come was open to all the righteous, regardless of their national origin or religious beliefs.

Certain Jews were automatically barred from entering the *olam habah*, the world to come. At a time when Jewish freedoms were shrinking, and the safety of Jewish communities was increasingly threatened, actions that endangered the Jewish community could disqualify a Jew from the afterlife. These actions included betraying the Jewish community, abandoning or disparaging Judaism, publicly denying the resurrection of the dead, or rejecting the divine authorship of Torah. Besides these few actions which were considered “beyond the pale,” all other Jewish sinners were given the chance to atone and could then join the righteous in the world-to-come.

Belief in the afterlife was not understood as esoteric or even abstract. It was thought to be based on actual experiences. Like the ancient Greeks and Romans and later Christians, Jews understood the souls of the dead to linger around their graves and around their surviving family members. The Bible mentions that spirits of the dead could be conjured up and consulted.¹³

The Talmud recounts how people would converse with their deceased loved ones, or hear the souls of the dead talking, from which they learned about future events. When these future events came to pass just as the dead had apparently predicted, the experience of interacting with the dead was thought to have been validated. The Talmud also preserves reports of ghostly apparitions, interpreted as faint visual projections of the deceased's souls, some of whom are said to talk to their living relatives. The ghosts of the dead are also said to have appeared to the living in dreams. Proper respect for the dead ensured that these encounters would be benevolent and would not bring disaster to the living. In order to prevent misfortune, the dead had to be appeased, especially if there had been some sort of conflict while the deceased was alive. Suitable burial, visiting and maintaining graves were some of the ways that the living demonstrated appropriate respect for their dead.

In addition to showing proper respect, surviving family members could offer prayers on behalf of their dead. These prayers were thought to help the dead atone for their sins. This tradition of praying for the dead goes back at least to the end of the second century BCE. The book of second Maccabees, written by a Greek-speaking Jew but preserved only in Catholic Bibles, records that such prayers were offered only if the deceased had any hope of eternal life, that is—if he or she had led a righteous life. Otherwise, the text says, “it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead”.¹⁴ We don't know precisely which prayers were recited over the dead, but no reference in Second Temple literature suggests that they included the Kaddish. That developed later.

As you may already know, the roots of the practice of reciting Kaddish have nothing to do with the dead. The prayer developed as a hymn of praise to God that was recited after Torah

or Talmud study. The practice of reciting Kaddish came to be associated with mourning rituals when students gathered for study sessions in memory of their deceased rabbinic teachers. Most scholars attribute the origins of this practice to 4th century Persia, based on references in Babylonian sources.¹⁵

Ideas about the afterlife found their way into ideas about reciting Kaddish. As Kaddish became associated with mourning rituals for all Jews, not just rabbis, the prayer took on the function of those Maccabean-period prayers from the second century BCE I mentioned earlier. Reciting Kaddish was understood as **interceding** on behalf of the dead to shorten their time in Gehenna and to help them gain admission to the world-to-come. In simple terms, it functioned like a Monopoly get-out-of-jail-free card. The tradition of mourning for deceased parents for 11 months rather than a full year developed out of the idea that no parents should be dishonored by acting as though they had so many sins to atone for that they needed all 12 months of intercessory prayer.¹⁶ No parent could be so sinful as to require the maximum penance. Thus was born the tradition of reciting Kaddish for parents for 11 months, just shy of a full year.

Following the rabbinic period, the Middle Ages saw tremendous developments in ideas about Paradise and Gehenna. The *olam habah* took on two meanings: On the one hand, it could refer to the world following the Messianic Era, when God's Sovereignty would be established for all eternity on earth. (More on that idea Sunday morning.) On the other hand, the term *olam habah* could also refer to the experience of an individual soul after death. The great 12th century rabbinic authority Maimonides distinguished the *olam haneshamot*, world of souls—the individual post-mortem existence—from the collective resurrection of humankind at the End of Days, the *olam habah*.¹⁷

A 14th century Jewish chronicle reveals that other views, besides those of the Talmud and Maimonides, were becoming popular as well.¹⁸ Likely influenced by growing mystical speculation, the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* give a graphic description of the final judgment and punishments of the afterlife. The author, Eleazer ben Asher, lived in an area between France and Germany called the Rhineland and was a member of the rabbinic elite.

Rabbi Eleazer describes how after someone is buried, angels arrive at the grave to interrogate the soul and beat him for two days. The angels judge the soul “measure for measure”.¹⁹ Then the soul receives the punishment commensurate with his judgment. The first day of punishment is administered at the grave. The subsequent punishment is dispensed in Gehenna. Gehenna is depicted as a series of separate compartments, each with successively harsh tortures for punishing the wicked according to the measure of their sins. One room after another, each equipped with tools of torture.²⁰ This picture may remind you of Dante’s *Inferno*, part of his trilogy, *The Divine Comedy*.²¹ Whether or not there was actual influence, both Rabbi Eleazer ben Asher and Dante Alighieri wrote during the same century and shared a 14th-century world-view.

Rabbi Eleazer writes that

Whoever slanders his neighbor shall be suspended by his tongue; and whoever has committed adultery shall hang in a disgraceful fashion.²² ...Those who have violated the whole of the law and the precepts and have sinned against the law of God, pursuing the idolatrous way of the nations, shall have their bodies and souls burnt. Gehinnom expels them, and the north wind scatters them, so that they become ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous. ... Furthermore, those who abandon the community, the apostates, traitors, renegades, scoffers, those who despise the festivals, deny the resurrection of the dead and the divinity of the law, are swallowed up by Gehinnom; the doors are locked behind them, and they are left there to be subjected to eternal punishment.²³

We might find it strange that a tradition that so emphasizes morality would single out sins like “despising the festivals” as condemning someone to eternal damnation. But let us recall the time in which this was written. The middle ages were the dark ages for Jews, in many respects. In the eleventh century, Jewish Rhineland communities were destroyed during the first crusade. The twelfth century witnessed the burning of Jews alive under the false charge of ritual murder and the failure of secular rulers to protect their Jewish subjects. In the thirteenth century, Jewish apostates exposed the Talmud to Christian scrutiny, resulting in public burnings of Jewish books and Talmud censorship. Under these pressures, the 13th century saw 10% of the Jewish European population convert to Christianity.²⁴ In the following century, Jews were blamed for the black death, and were publicly tortured and massacred. The glue which held Jews together throughout all of these tribulations was the very set of practices that made them vulnerable to persecution and conversion. Thus, our 14th century Chronicle emphasizes those distinctively Jewish practices as the dividing line between salvation in Paradise and eternal damnation in Hell.

Having described Hell in the gruesomest of detail, our Chronicle author Eleazer turns his attention to heaven. His descriptions of Paradise are as delightful as his descriptions of Hell were horrific. Aside from the beauty of the description, we should note that Eleazer emphasizes the values of scholarship and piety as requirements for admission to Paradise. This is probably because the majority of those medieval Jews who succumbed to the pressure of conversion were scholars, Rabbi Eleazer’s own colleagues. Bearing that context in mind, he writes that

Paradise has two gates of ruby, and 600,000 ministering angels keep watch over them. Each of these angels shines with the radiance of the heavens. When the just man approaches them they strip him of the clothes in which he had been buried, and clothe him with eight cloths, woven out of clouds of glory, and place upon his head two

crowns, one of precious stones and pearls, and the other of gold, and they place eight myrtles in his hand and praise him, and say to him, "Go and eat your meal with joy." And they lead him to a place full of rivers (waters) surrounded by 800 species of roses and myrtles.... And through it flow four rivers, one of oil, the other of fragrant oil, the third of wine, and the fourth of honey. Every canopy [one per person] is overgrown by a vine of gold, and thirty pearls hang down from it, each of them shining like the morning star. In every canopy there is a table of precious stones and pearls, and sixty angels stand at the head of every just man, saying unto him, "Go and eat with joy of the honey, for you have obeyed the law. ... and drink the wine preserved since the six days of Creation." ... and 600,000 ministering angels attend them and feed them, while 600,000 angels of mercy sing and dance before them, and they bring spiced wine and the juice of the pomegranates, which they drink with delight.²⁵

So they knew pomegranate juice had beneficial properties even back in the 14th century!

No Jewish gathering would be complete without food, not even heaven. Fellow foodies will relish the culinary descriptions of Heavenly repast.

This reminds me of an old joke about a pious ultra-orthodox man who dies and goes to heaven. This man had spent his entire life studying the rules of keeping kosher, making sure that every morsel he put in his mouth followed the law to the letter. If the kashrut of a meal was ever in question, he stuck to fruits or raw vegetables. So this kosher-observant man is ushered to his lovely accommodations in heaven, he makes himself comfortable, and one of the angels comes by to take lunch orders. "Finally!" the man thinks to himself, "finally I can eat whatever I want!" So the angel asks him whether he wants the beef or the chicken, and the man replies, "Beef." But then he hesitates, and in a moment of doubt, he asks, "I don't want to seem rude, but may I ask who is the kosher supervisor, the *mashgiach*, here in heaven?" And the angel smiles and replies, "Why, the kosher supervisor is none other than God himself!" And the man thinks for a moment and answers, "On second thought, I'll have the fruit plate."

Food aside, these images of Paradise and Hell lay out two very stark options. You might be thinking to yourself that given these two choices, it's obvious which one you're supposed to

want. In the words of Monty Hall's "Let's Make a Deal," behind door number one is fire and excruciating tortures, behind door number two, luxury and bliss. Well that's a no-brainer. So here's the kicker—why would anyone save up all their sins over the course of their whole life and have to atone for them all at once after they die? Wouldn't you rather repent on Yom Kippur, wiping the slate clean year after year, and showing up at your final judgment with less than a year's worth of sins to atone for?

That's why Jews came to think that it was a blessing if you died right after Yom Kippur, with a clean slate and no opportunity to accumulate any sins at all. This is why our High Holy day prayer book reminds us of the final day of judgment, of which the Day of Atonement is a mere glimpse.²⁶ Our prayers compare the approaching night at the end of Yom Kippur to the darkness of the end of life.²⁷ In the Middle Ages it became customary for Jews to wear a white burial shroud to Yom Kippur services, for they stood before God in judgment as if on their final judgment day. And some Orthodox Jews maintain this custom today. This reminder of final judgment on the Day of Atonement is supposed to inspire us to take the process of repentance more seriously because of its long-term consequences. If we play our cards right, hopefully we'll get door number two—Paradise.

Our tours of heaven and hell have now reached their end, and we have followed the possible journeys of a soul after death. As we have seen, Jewish ideas about the afterlife are diverse, and are not *per se* considered essential tenets of the faith.²⁸ Of course as Reform Jews, we are even more free to pick and choose what speaks to our own hearts, or even to reject it all, as many contemporary scholars have.

Some current Jewish philosophers understand these visions of the afterlife as the hope of a species attempting to pacify the sheer dread of its own mortality. By envisioning an aspect of ourselves as eternal, we mollify the existential fear of our own death. Others see heaven and hell as imaginative fantasies aiming to resolve the intolerable moral dilemma of why bad things happen to good people and vice versa. Historians understand these ideas as products of community leaders trying to inspire a specific course of action among their fellow Jews in particular places and times. All of these Jewish interpretations are among the choices available to us as Reform Jews.

To draw our discussion to a close, the many views of the afterlife contained in our tradition make clear, above all else, that one's perspective on this issue is deeply personal, and no one can decide this matter on our behalf. I believe this is why such beliefs were never codified, or standardized, in Judaism. Descriptions of the afterlife are tucked into the more esoteric of Jewish texts; they barely make even cameo appearances in our prayers. What we have in our prayers are oblique references to "eternal life" and the "world-to-come." While this variety and vagueness might not satisfy those looking for definitive answers, it shows that in areas where there is no verification, Judaism is reluctant to make absolute pronouncements. This attitude of humility and cautiousness is something I find very reassuring, for not only does it recognize and value the individual conscience of each person, it wisely admits that life's experiences shape our understanding of the world around us. This understanding will not only vary from one person to another—for no two people have the exact same experiences—but it may even change over the course of a single lifetime.

As we continue to study and reflect over the course of the weekend on what happens to us after we die, I look forward to hearing **your** thoughts on the topic and learning from your insights.

¹ 1 Kings 2:10, e.g.

² Isaiah 8:19.

³ 1 Samuel 28:11-14.

⁴ b. *Moed Katan* 28b: “c[ame] hurrying and scurrying, tumbling aboard the ferry, having to borrow his fare.”

⁵ 1 En 90:23, 1 QS 2.

⁶ Jubilees 4:26.

⁷ 1 Enoch 26.

⁸ Scholars actually categorize these texts as “apocalyptic,” but since that term means something altogether different in common parlance, I use the broader term “mystical.”

⁹ P.W. Van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs* (Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing, 1991:1996).

¹⁰ b. *Berachot* 17a.

¹¹ b. *Berachot* 57b.

¹² *Eduyot* 2:10, b. *Rosh HaShana* 16b-17a.

¹³ 1 Samuel 28:11-14.

¹⁴ 2 Macc 12:44-5.

¹⁵ *Masseket Soferim* 19:12 and T. *Berachot* 3a.

¹⁶ *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh De'ah*, 376. 4, Isserles' gloss.

¹⁷ Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 8:8, as interpreted by Ramban, tr. Chavel, *The Gate of Reward* (New York: Shilo Publishing, 1983), p. 107.

¹⁸ *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel; or, The Hebrew Bible Historiale*, tr. M. Gaster (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1899). Written by Eleasar ben Asher the Levite from the Rhineland, named for an earlier source Jerahmeel ben Solomon, thought to have flourished in Italy around 1150, perhaps based on Pseudo-Philo, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*. The text is dated to the 13th-14th c.

¹⁹ *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 13:2.

²⁰ *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 16:6-17:4.

²¹ Written between 1308 and 1321

²² I have reversed the order of these first two clauses for a public audience which might have been uncomfortable leading off with adultery.

²³ *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 13:6, 8, 9. Another version of punishments given: “The punishment of the sinner is thus: The angels of destruction throw him to the flame of hell; this opens its mouth wide and swallows him. ... This all happens to him who has not done one single pious act which would incline the balance towards mercy; while that man who possesses many virtues and good actions and learning, and who has suffered much, he is saved from hell. ... [There are] men hanging by their hair [because they] let their hair grow to adorn themselves for sin. Others were hanging by their eyes; these were they that followed their eyes to sin, and did not set God before them. Others were hanging by their noses; these were they that perfumed themselves to sin. Others were hanging by their tongues; these were they that had slandered. Others were hanging by their hands; these were they that had stolen and robbed. Others were hanging ignominiously; these were they that had committed adultery. Others were hanging by their feet; these were they that had run to sin. He showed me women hanging by their breasts; these were they that revealed their breasts to men to entice them. He showed me further men that were fed on fiery coals; these were they who had blasphemed. Others were forced to eat bitter gall; these were they that ate on fast-days. He showed me further men eating fine sand; they are forced to eat it, and their teeth are broken; ... [There were] men who are thrown from fire to snow, and from snow to fire; these were they that abused the poor

who came to them for assistance; therefore are they thus punished. ... others ... were driven from mountain to mountain, as a shepherd leads the flock from one mountain to another" (14.6-15.4).

²⁴ Joseph Shatzmiller, "Jewish Converts to Christianity in Medieval Europe: 1200-1500," *Cross-Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period: Essays Presented to Aryeh Grabois on his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Goodich, Sophia Menache, and Sylvia Schein (New York: Lang, 1995), 297-318.

²⁵ *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, 18.1-3, 20.1-2.

²⁶ *Gates of Repentance: Shaarei Teshuva; The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* (New York: CCAR Press, 1999), pp. 370, 499, 519.

²⁷ *Gates of Repentance*, p. 499.

²⁸ With the exception of resurrection, as noted above.