

Sid Z. LEIMAN - Simon SCHWARZFUCHS  
*Brooklyn College, New York - Université de Bar Ilan*

NEW EVIDENCE  
ON THE EMDEN-EIBESCHUETZ CONTROVERSY:  
THE AMULETS FROM METZ

RÉSUMÉ

On a retrouvé la copie authentifiée par-devant notaire de cinq amulettes écrites par R. Jonathan Eibeschütz alors qu'il occupait le siège de grand-rabbin de Metz. C'est un document de quatre pages, dicté le 17 mars 1751, enregistré par des responsables de la communauté juive de la ville. Il le fut à nouveau, par les mêmes officiels, le 17 novembre suivant, cette fois sous le sceau des autorités civiles. Le document est ici reproduit et analysé quant à la lumière qu'il jette sur la controverse entre Eibeschütz et R. Jacob Emden. Les textes, tels qu'ils ont été préservés dans ce document, confirment plutôt l'interprétation qu'en a donnée Emden que celle de leur auteur.

SUMMARY

The original notarized copy of five amulets — written by Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschuetz during his tenure as Chief Rabbi of Metz — has been rediscovered. The four-page document, dated March 17, 1751, was notarized by officials of the Jewish community of Metz. It was renotarized by the same officials on November 17, 1751, this time under the aegis of the French civil authorities. The document is reproduced here and analyzed for the light it sheds on the Emden-Eibeschuetz controversy. The texts of the amulets, as they are preserved in the rediscovered original notarized copy, support Emden's reading of them rather than that of Eibeschuetz.

The rediscovery of the original notarized copy of the amulets from Metz affords scholars the opportunity to reassess the claims of the key players in the Emden-Eibeschuetz controversy. The document itself, as we shall see, cannot resolve the controversy, but it certainly sheds light — and provides some new and welcome perspectives — on it.

## I. The Rediscovery

Jean Fleury, while researching Jewish marriage contracts in the Moselle region,<sup>1</sup> discovered in the Moselle department archives a rather curious document which was not relevant to his research. He mentioned the discovery to M. Gilbert Cahen who served at the time as a Conservateur of the Departmental Archives. M. Cahen, to whom we wish to express our thanks here, brought it to our attention. A mere glance at the four-page document sufficed to indicate that it was connected to the famous debate surrounding the nature of the amulets written by the celebrated Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschuetz during his Metz rabbinate. In fact, the document is the original notarized copy of 5 amulets written by Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschuetz during his tenure as Chief Rabbi of Metz.<sup>2</sup>

Due to circumstances which will be explained below, the King's Procureur — i.e., his procurator or attorney general — was requested to produce a notarized copy of the Eibeschuetz amulets. In view of his ignorance of Hebrew, he proceeded according to local custom and requested the official representatives of the Jewish community to locate the necessary documents, have them copied, and vouch for the conformity of the copies to the original. This document — it has the reference number A.M. Moselle 3 E 4194, pièce 502 — consists of four pages, the first three of which are reproduced here:

Reconnaissance de signatures,  
Procest verbal et depost d'acte  
hébraïque du 17e 9bre 1751.

L'an mil sept cens cinquante un le dix septième novembre neuf heures du matin les notaires royaux à Metz soussignez s'étans rendu à l'hôtel de M. Pierre François Romain Lajeunesse, Conseiller du Roy et son Procureur au Bailliage et de la Police de Metz et ce sur la convocation, où étans, ils y ont trouvés les nommés Isaac Zée de Coblantz et Mardoché Biriet, tous deux Juifs habitans de Metz, secrétaires et sergens jurés de la Communauté des Juifs de cette ville. Lesquels mondît Sieur le Procureur du Roy a requis de reconnaître leur signatures apposées au bas d'un acte écrit en lettres hébraïques par ledit de Coblantz en forme de certificat et collation daté du mercredi vingtième du mois d'Auder<sup>3</sup> de l'année cinq cent onze du petit nombre, ainsi que l'on compte à la manière accoutumée des Juifs, qui a raport au dix septième mars dernier. Ledit acte de certificat et collation inseré sur une feuille de papier blanc au bas des caracteres hebraïques qui précédent. Lesquels Zée et Biriet

1. Published under the title: *Contrats de mariage juifs en Moselle avant 1792, Recensement à usage généalogique de 2021 contrats de mariage notariés*, Flappeville, 1989.

2. The document was on display at the exhibition entitled "Juifs et citoyens" held in Paris in 1989. See the exhibition catalogue *Juifs et citoyens* (Paris, 1989), p. 35, number 30, where the document is reproduced but not identified.

3. Adar in Hebrew.

ont reconnu que ledit acte de collation a été par eux dressé et signé. Que laditte feuille est la même et contient la copie figurée des cinq talismans qui leur ont été représenté en originaux ledit jour. Que leur ditte collation écrite en caracteres hébraïques ne contient autres chosses que ce qui suit.

“Les dits cinq talismans tirés mot à mot et les lignes pareilles comme ils sont écrits aux originaux qui ont été en mains de cinq particuliers de notre Communauté et ont été remis en leur mains propres par le Rabin actuellement à Hambourg, dont nous avons fait des traits à l’entour des dittes copies, en foi de quoi nous sergens jurés de la Communauté de Metz ont signéz le mercredi 20e jour d’Auder 511 au petit nombre. Signé en hébreux Isaac Zée Coblentz et Mardoché Biriet sergens et secrétaires des Juifs de Metz.”<sup>4</sup>

Lesdits Zée et Biriet aians pareillement reconnu que la copie sur papier timbré écrite en caracteres hébraïques et qui leur a pareillement été représentée par mondit Sieur le Procureur du Roy est conforme à la feuille susditte, en observant que sur la seconde colonne l’on a obmis d’inserer une ligne hébraïque qui se trouve sur la copie originale susditte au bas du premier talisman, laquelle ligne obmise signifie ces mots<sup>5</sup>

“le présent talisman a été donné à Moïse fils d’Orly Faïs, le nom de sa mère Mariem.”

Qu’au bas du second talisman sur la même colonne il y a pareillement une ligne obmise contenant ces mots<sup>6</sup>

“le présent talisman a été donné à Abraham fils d’Orly Faïs.”<sup>7</sup>

Le surplus étant conforme de mot à mot de tout quoi mondit Sieur le Procureur du Roy a requis acte et que dépôt soit fait de la feuille susditte, laquelle demeurera jointe et annexée aux présentes après qu’elle a été parafée par mondit Sr. le Procureur du Roy, lesdits Zée, Biriet et lesdits notaires, la copie susditte aussi paraphée des dittes parties aiant été remise à Lajeunesse, l’un desdits notaires pour être par lui délivrée une copie des présentes au bas à qui il apartiendra pour servir valoir ce que de raison. Fait et passé à Metz audit hôtel lesdits jour, mois et an que dessus ont lesdites parties signées avec mondit Sr. le Procureur du Roy, lecture faite.

Isaac Zey Coblence  
Secrétaire et sergent de la Communauté  
des Juifs de Metz

הקטן יצחק קאבלענץ מוֹיָא שמש ונאמן דק"ק מיץ  
מרדכי גומפריך ביריע שמש ונאמן דק"ק מ'ץ יע"א  
תק"ב

Droit Lajeunesse  
Co[llation] né à Metz le 17 9bre  
1751 reçu douze sols  
[Reine]

4. This paragraph is a French translation of the brief Hebrew text on the fourth page of the document, for which see below.

5. קמיע זה נתן למשה בן אורי פייבש ושם אמו מרים.

6. קמיע זה נתן לאברהם בן אורי פייבש.

7. Moïse and Abraham were probably brothers; they are not otherwise identified.

The fourth page of the document reproduces the five amulets as shown in the accompanying photograph, with the addition of a brief Hebrew text which reads as follows:

אלו חמשה קמיעות שלשה בצדו מלמעלה למטה ושנים למעלה  
 מזה מועתק אות באות ושורה כשורה כמו שהמה נכתבו  
 בגוף הקמיעות שהיו ביד חמשה יחידי' מבני קהלתינו  
 ובאו לידם ממש מן אב"ד שהוא כעת בק"ק המבורג  
 ועשינו ציונים בהעתק הנ"ל לראי' באנו אנחנו נאמני  
 הקהלה ק"ק מיץ יע"א על חהתום היום יום הרביעי  
 עשרים יום לחדש אדר תיו קוף יוד אלף לפ"ק  
 הקטן יצחק איצק קאבלעניץ מו"א<sup>8</sup> שמש ונאמן דק"ק מיץ  
 מרדכי גומפריך ביריע שמש ונאמן דק"ק מיץ יע"א  
 תקי"א

The Hebrew text is followed by the certification: Paraphé au désir de l'acte de dépost du dix septième novembre mil sept cent cinquante un.

Thus, the two agents of the Jewish community of Metz attested to the accuracy of the transcription of the texts of the amulets ascribed to Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschuetz.

## II. The Controversy

The Emden-Eibeschuetz controversy erupted on Thursday, February 4, 1751 (9 Shevat, 5511), when R. Jacob Emden announced at a private synagogue service held in his home that an amulet ascribed to the Chief Rabbi could only have been written by a secret believer in the false messiah, Shabbetai Zevi.<sup>9</sup> The Chief Rabbi, R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz, was a renowned talmudist who had served with distinction as rabbi, teacher, and preacher in Prague and Metz, prior to his assuming the post of Chief Rabbi of the triple community of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbeck in September of 1750.<sup>10</sup> Emden's announcement initiated what was perhaps the most explosive rabbinic controversy in the last three hundred years. The controversy would involve not only the leading rabbis of the eighteenth century

8. <sup>ד</sup> צרויה is clearly pointed in the text.

9. For the fullest account of the opening stages of the controversy, see Emden's *אגרת פורים* (Bodleian Library Hebrew ms. Michael 618, catalogue 2190:1). Several excerpts from this manuscript were published in J.J. SCHACTER, "Rabbi Jacob Emden's 'Iggeret Purim,'" in I. TWERSKY, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. 2, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 441-446.

10. Eibeschuetz arrived in Altona on Wednesday evening, September 16, 1750 (16 Elul, 5710). Cf. H.A. WAGENAAR, *תולדות יעב"ץ*, Amsterdam, 1868, p. 12.

(e.g., R. Ezekiel Landau of Prague<sup>11</sup>; R. Elijah b. Solomon of Vilna<sup>12</sup>; R. Jacob Joshua Falk of Frankfurt<sup>13</sup>), but also Christian scholars and foreign governments. The controversy was widely reported in the newspaper and periodical literature of the time, and continues to be a rich topic of investigation for modern scholarship.

The rediscovery of the original notarized copy of the Metz amulets provides a window of opportunity to investigate those amulets and the key role they played in the early stages of the controversy.

Eibeschetz, a distinguished kabbalist, wrote amulets to help ward off evil spirits, to protect those in danger — especially pregnant women —, and to heal the sick. Indeed, as early as 1743, while serving as Chief Rabbi of Metz, he was widely known as a *בעל שם*, i.e., as a master of the secrets of the kabbalah who wrote amulets.<sup>14</sup> In Metz itself, and throughout the surrounding Jewish communities of Alsace-Lorraine, Eibeschetz wrote amulets. When he left Metz in 1750 and made his way northward through the Rhineland, he wrote and sold amulets in the various Jewish communities on the Rhine, including several in Frankfurt. Upon his arrival in Altona (which then belonged to the Kingdom of Denmark) and Hamburg (a free city in Germany) in September of 1750, he had barely unpacked his bags when rumors were rife about the new Chief Rabbi's Sabbatian leanings. Apparently, some of the amulets written in Frankfurt were shown to leading rabbinic scholars in that city, who immediately designated them as Sabbatian in character. Letters from Frankfurt were sent to private individuals in Altona and Hamburg, warning them about the heretical leanings of their new Chief Rabbi. When these rumors came to Eibeschetz' attention, he dismissed the charges as a recycling by his enemies of similar charges levelled against him in the 1720's.<sup>15</sup> Eibeschetz claimed they were false

11. See S. Z. LEIMAN, "When a Rabbi is Accused of Heresy: R. Ezekiel Landau's Attitude Toward R. Jonathan Eibeschetz in the Emden-Eibeschetz Controversy," in J. NEUSNER *et al.*, eds., *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, Atlanta, 1989, vol. 3, pp. 179-194.

12. See S. Z. LEIMAN, "When a Rabbi is Accused of Heresy: The Stance of the Gaon of Vilna in the Emden-Eibeschetz Controversy," in E. FLEISCHER *et al.*, eds., *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 251-263.

13. See S. Z. LEIMAN, "When a Rabbi is Accused of Heresy: The Stance of Rabbi Jacob Joshua Falk in the Emden-Eibeschetz Controversy," forthcoming in a conference volume sponsored by the Melton Center for Jewish Studies at the Ohio State University. Cf. below, section VI.

14. See the pamphlet *מעשה נורא זכה ברורה*, Fürth, 1743 (precise date of publication uncertain), reprinted in G. NIGAL, *סיפורי דיבוק בספרות ישראל*, Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 107-114. The reference to Eibeschetz as a *בעל שם* residing in Metz appears on pp. 108-109.

15. See D. KAHANA, *תולדות המקובלים השבתאים והחסידים*, Tel-Aviv, 1926, vol. 2, pp. 22-23.

charges then, as they were now. Nonetheless, several members of the triple community were now alerted to a potential problem, and they decided to monitor Eibeschuetz' amulets to the extent possible. It did not take long before an amulet written by Eibeschuetz in Hamburg fell into their hands. It appeared to them to be Sabbatian in character, and they eventually consulted with Emden, who concurred. The triple community was once again rife with rumors. The Chief Rabbi, when first consulted, explained away the key word that appeared to represent the name Shabbetai in code form as really being an acrostic for a series of consecutive words from a biblical verse. When pressed further, he claimed that he wrote the text exactly as he had been taught by a **בעל שם**, without fathoming its true meaning. Eventually, he denied that he wrote the amulet in question. Matters came to a head when Emden was summoned to a meeting with representatives of the Jewish council of the triple community in Altona on Tuesday, February 2, 1751 (7 Shevat, 5511). A second meeting was scheduled for Thursday, February 4 (9 Shevat). It never convened. Emden realized that he was going up against a stacked deck of cards; the triple community was intent on vindicating its Chief Rabbi. And so Emden decided to go public on that fateful Thursday morning. The scheduled meeting, of course, was cancelled. The next day, Friday, February 5 (10 Shevat), the Jewish council officially disbanded the private synagogue service that had convened in Emden's home for almost twenty years. Shortly thereafter, Emden was placed under house arrest; all social contact with Emden was banned. He was notified that within six months he would have to leave Altona permanently. That very Friday, Emden managed to send out letters to several of the leading rabbinic authorities of the time: R. Jacob Joshua Falk of Frankfurt, R. Samuel Hilman of Metz<sup>16</sup>, and R. Aryeh Leib of Amsterdam. Each received a synopsis of the events that had occurred — similar to the summary presented here — and an urgent appeal for aid. Emden's appeal did not fall on deaf ears.<sup>17</sup>

16. On Hilman, see the entry "Heilprin, Samuel Helmann ben Israel," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 1971, vol. 8, column 269, and the bibliographical references listed there.

17. In general, see the accounts in Emden's **עדות ביעקב**, Altona, 1755-56, and **התאבקות**, Altona, 1762-69. For Eibeschuetz' equivocating, see **שפת אמת ולשון זהרית**, n.p., 1752, pp. 37-38. [Often ascribed to Emden, the name of the author/editor of **שפת אמת** is unknown. Recently published materials suggest the author was Nehemiah Reischer, a disenchanted Eibeschuetz enthusiast who became an admirer of Emden. No place of publication appears on the title page; Amsterdam is a likely candidate. The volume was published without pagination. For purposes of this study, we will use the pagination entered in the Jerusalem, 1971 photomechanical reproduction of the 1752 edition.] Of the three letters sent out by Emden to the leading rabbinic authorities on that Friday, only the text of the letter to Hilman is extant. It was published in **שפת אמת**, pp. 36-38, and in **ביעקב**, pp. 30a-31a, but dated incorrectly in the printed versions. The correct date (of when it was written and sent out) is Friday, February 5, 1751 (10 Shevat, 5511). Cf. H. A. WAGENAAR, *op. cit.* (above, note 9), p. 56, n. 139.

The first to respond was Hilman. Even before the Emden-Eibeschutz controversy had erupted, Hilman was busy collecting amulets written by Eibeschutz. Hilman had long suspected Eibeschutz of being a Sabbatian, and found confirmation of his suspicions in the amulets. In Hilman's response to Emden's appeal for aid, dated February 21, 1751 (26 Shevat, 5511), he writes:<sup>18</sup>

Let me first state that Eibeschutz' amulets are public knowledge here in Metz. Even prior to my departure from Mannheim, I discovered amulets of his with the same abominable language. When I arrived in Metz, I publicized the matter here. We examined many of his amulets; all of them are Sabbatian in character. The Jewish council of Metz passed a resolution, with my signature, requiring that all such amulets be handed over to the communal authorities. The resolution was implemented... I would advise that the Jewish council of Metz send copies of ten of the Metz amulets — as samples — to the Jewish council of Altona. Indeed, we have many more. Let them ask Eibeschutz to explain them immediately when shown to him, without providing him time to provide a contrived answer.<sup>19</sup>

From the above letter, it is obvious that the Metz amulets were already gathered in February of 1751. The impetus came from Hilman himself, who wanted to cleanse Metz of its impure amulets. It is likely, too, that Hilman was deliberately gathering the evidence with which he hoped to bring down Eibeschutz.

### III. The Notarized Amulets

On February 24, 1751 (29 Shevat, 5511), Hilman addressed a plea to R. Aryeh Leib of Amsterdam, urging him to enter the fray.<sup>20</sup> Appended to the letter were copies of the Metz amulets. These would appear to be the first copies of the Metz amulets sent abroad. One suspects that about this

18. Hilman's response was published in *עדות ביעקב*, pp. 31a-b. All translations from Hebrew in this essay are paraphrastic. The intent is to capture the essence of what was said, and not the flavor of the ornate rabbinic Hebrew of the originals.

19. וטרם כל אידי לרפ"מ אשר הקמיעות הללו כבר נגלה לעין כל פה קהלתנו כי טרם נסיעתי מק"ק מנהיים מצאתי בעו"ה בקמיעות הללו דבריו כהויתן ומשתמש בלשון הגלעג ומתועב. וכאשר באתי וקבעתי אהלי אוהל של תורה פה, פרסמתי הענין פה וחפשנו בקמיעות רבות ומצאנו בכולם שמשתמש ורודף אחר צבי הנדה והנשבר, עד שנועדו יחד האלופים קצינים פרנסים, ושמי מתהלך בראשם לטהר מחנתינו ויהיה קדוש, ולבער הגלגל הזה מאחינו בני ישראל, ובכר עשינו מעשה בידינו ושלחנו בחרם גדול מבית לבית ומפינה לפינה, שכל איש יקרבו מנחתו מנחת קנאות לידי וליד האלופים קהל יצ"ו... והאת העצה היעוצה אפשר שאלופים קהל יצ"ו פה ושמי מתהלך בראשם יכתבו להאלופים קהל יצ"ו שמה, ולשלוח להם קמיעות עשרה לדונמא, וכהנה רבות אתנו, ולשאול את פיו הטמא ליתן מהר מענה כוונתו בעומד על עמדו במהירות, ולא בשהייה מתחלה שילמוד שקר.

20. Joseph PRAEGER, *גחלי אש* (Bodleian Library Hebrew ms. Michael 106-108, catalogue 2189), vol. 2, pp. 50a-53a.

time, perhaps early in March, Hilman realized (or: was advised) that it would be prudent to notarize all copies of the Metz amulets sent abroad. Unless notarized, Eibeschuetz could always claim that the Metz amulets were forgeries. Indeed, Emden had already indicated that Eibeschuetz was wont to use this strategy when it suited him.<sup>21</sup> Hilman cleverly had five of the Metz amulets notarized by the two official notaries<sup>22</sup> of the Jewish council of Metz, Isaac Zey Koblentz and Mordechai Gumprecht Birié. Both had been admirers and ardent supporters of Eibeschuetz during his tenure in Metz. Eibeschuetz would not be able to claim that he had been done in by his enemies. The act of notarization took place on Wednesday, March 17, 1751 (20 Adar, 5511). In the presence of the notaries, a scribe copied on to a single page the texts of five amulets written by Eibeschuetz, and drew a circle around the texts of the individual amulets in order to set them apart and to guard against any tampering with the texts. Three amulets were drawn, one under the other, at the right of the page. Two amulets were drawn, one under the other, at the left of the page. The notaries added some markings, numbering the amulets, and indicating doubtful readings. Under the two amulets on the left of the page they wrote in Hebrew (see above, section I):

These five amulets, three at the right from top to bottom and two above this text, were copied letter by letter and line by line exactly as they appeared in the original amulets that were in the possession of five individual members of our community. They received them from the Chief Rabbi [Jonathan Eibeschuetz] who now serves in Hamburg. We entered markings in the above copies of the texts. As proof, we, the official notaries of the Jewish community of Metz, sign our names on this Wednesday, the 20th day of Adar, 5511.

Isaac Itzik Koblentz from Zey, notary of the  
Jewish community of Metz

Mordechai Gumprecht Birié, notary of the  
Jewish community of Metz<sup>23</sup>

At about the same time that Hilman arranged for the notarized copies of the five Metz amulets, R. Aryeh Leib of Amsterdam and R. Jacob Joshua

21. See Emden's letter dated February 5, 1751 (10 Shevat 5711 [cf. above, note 17]), published in *שפת אמת*, pp. 37-38.

22. The title *שמש ונאמן*, here rendered "notary," is more properly rendered "executive secretary and official recorder." The *שמש ונאמן* implemented the policies established by the Jewish communal leaders, and duly recorded and notarized all legal proceedings in the community ledger (*פנקס*).

23. The ornate signatures of Koblentz and Gumprecht on the notarized copy of the amulets match precisely their signatures on the numerous legal proceedings recorded in *פנקס מייץ* (Jewish Theological Seminary ms. 8136/1668:18).

Falk addressed missives to Hilman, stressing the need for notarized copies of the Metz amulets. In a letter dated March 8, 1751 (11 Adar, 5511), R. Aryeh Leib wrote:<sup>24</sup>

Pardon me, but one request I must make of you. Send me copies of the amulets that are notarized by the official notaries of the [Metz] community. For these sorcerers would deny the testimony of the heavenly entourage, how much more so the testimony of those down below!<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, in a letter dated March 31, 1751 (5 Nisan, 5511), R. Jacob Joshua Falk instructed Hilman as follows:<sup>26</sup>

Even though I have no doubt about the matter [of Eibeschuetz' guilt] —it was known to me previously and now even more so —, nonetheless since all the members of his community follow him and are devoted to him, claiming that his enemies, out of jealousy, are simply seeking a pretext to do him in, you will understand then how essential it is that what you send be established beyond doubt. It matters not whether it is by testimony solicited by a rabbinic court, or by the Jewish council, or by the official notaries of the community. The text [accompanying the amulets] must read: These amulets are exact copies of the handwritten originals by R. Jonathan. Not an iota has been changed.<sup>27</sup>

It would appear that Hilman knew what he had to do even before receiving these letters.<sup>28</sup> We now have before us the original copy of the Metz amulets notarized by the official notaries of the Jewish community on March 17, 1751 — with an addendum. As it became apparent that the Emden-Eibeschuetz controversy would not be resolved quickly, and that its ultimate disposition would probably take place in civil court (involving perhaps the governments of Denmark, Germany, or France), it became necessary to notarize the Metz amulets for a possible civil court action.<sup>29</sup> This

24. שפת אמת, p. 42.

25. והנה שאלתי מאהו' ידידי שימחול על כבודו ולשלוח לי הקמיעות ויהיו חתומי' בחותם נאמני הקהלה, כי המכשפי' הללו מכחישין פמליא של מעלה, ק"ו למטה.

26. שפת אמת, p. 43.

27. ואף דלגבי ידידי ליכא ספיקא בענין זה כלל, כנודע מקדם ועכשיו ביותר, עכ"ז כיון שכל אנשי קהילתו גרורין אבתרי' ואדיקא ב' טובא באומרם כי תואנה מבקשים כל הקמים עליו מחמת קנאה וקנטור, לכן יבין וישכיל רפ"מ בדעתו ושכלו לשלוח לידי בירור הדברים כשמלה, הן ע"פ גביות ב"ד או מפרנסי קהלתכם או מנאמני הקהלה, ופתשן הכתב יהי' שאות הקמיעות ששלח רפ"מ לידי בתבניתן ממש יצאו מכתיבת ידו של הרב מהר"י ולא נשתנו בהן דבר.

28. It is possible that R. Aryeh Leib of Amsterdam's letter of March 8 provided the immediate impetus for Hilman's action. Unfortunately, the sources do not reveal when R. Aryeh Leib's letter reached Metz. In the 1750's, it sometimes took 15 days and more for letters to reach Metz from either Amsterdam or Altona. Thus, e.g., a letter mailed in Amsterdam on April 22, 1751 (see שפת אמת, p. 45) arrived in Metz on May 9, 1751 (*op. cit.*, p. 47). Similarly, a letter mailed in Altona on February 5, 1751 (see *עדות ביעקב*, p. 30a) arrived in Metz on February 20, 1751 (see *נחלי אש*, vol. 2, p. 50a and b).

29. Eibeschuetz was bitter about this course of action, i.e., the decision of the anti-Eibeschuetz forces to bring the case before the non-Jewish authorities. Emden countered that

was done on Wednesday morning, November 17, 1751 (29 Heshvan, 5512).<sup>30</sup> The two official notaries of the Jewish community of Metz, Isaac Koblentz and Mordechai Gumprecht Birié, reconfirmed the authenticity and accuracy of the March 17 document, as well as that of a second copy “on stamped paper” which, apparently, has not survived.

Copies of the notarized amulets were widely distributed by Hilman. A copy reached R. Aryeh Leib of Amsterdam by the beginning of April, 1751. Other copies were sent to Hamburg, Frankfurt, and elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> The impact was immediate and devastating. Emden’s charges could no longer be dismissed. Even more devastating was the appearance in print of the notarized Metz amulets in *שפת אמת ולשון זהורית*, [probably] Amsterdam, 1752. The entire original document was printed on a fold-out page among

Eibeschuetz’ protest rang hollow, since he surely had been provided with every opportunity to bring his case before a Jewish court of law. See, e.g., EIBESCHUETZ, *לוחת עדות*, Altona, 1755, pp. 5 and 17b. [The pagination of the first edition of *לוחת עדות* begins in the middle of its many introductory pages. The first twelve leaves are unpaginated. Page 5 (above) refers to the pagination of the introductory pages in the Jerusalem, 1966 photomechanical reproduction of *לוחת עדות*. Except for the pagination of the first twelve leaves (pp. 1-22, each page number referring to one side of a page), all page numbers in this essay refer to the pagination of the first edition of *לוחת עדות*.] Cf. EMDEN, *שבירת לוחות האון*, Altona, 1756, p. 42a. See, however, the report cited below, in note 30, which seems to imply that the notarization was intended primarily for Jewish eyes. According to the report, the purpose of the notarization by the anti-Eibeschuetz forces was to win Jewish support for its cause in Poland, a stronghold of pro-Eibeschuetz sentiment. Cf. *שפת אמת*, p. 4, where it is stated that the Jewish council of Metz distributed copies of the notarized amulets “to the Gaonim of the land.”

30. See EIBESCHUETZ, *לוחת עדות*, p. 16b, for a letter from Metz confirming the date of this event. The letter, dated Saturday night, November 20, 1751 (3 Kislev, 5512), reads in part [obvious printer’s errors in the original Hebrew have been corrected]:

I come to inform you that last Wednesday the official notaries of Metz, R. Itzik and R. Gumprecht were summoned before the Procureur du Roy, where they were forced to sign on the amulets again, in the presence of notaries. They say that they intend to send the notarized copies to Poland. But I am certain that it will be of no avail to them. The deceitful will realize no gain from their deceit. Rather, the whole world will recognize that, from beginning to end, the official notaries were forced to act as they did.

באתי להודיעו לידע שביום ד' העבר הנאמנים מכאן, דהיינו ר' איצק ור' גומפריך, נקראו לפראקרא דערוהי והוכרחו לחתום בפני נאטריוס עוד פעם החתימות על הקמיעות, ואמרו שדעתם לשלחו לפולין, אבל בטחתי שלא יהי' להם לעזר, מה אהני לרמאי ברמאתי, עכ"פ יכירו כל העולם שהכל מתחילה ועד סוף נעשה בהכרח ואונס.

Regarding the claim of use of “force,” see below, section IV.

31. See *שפת אמת*, pp. 63 and 76. [See above, note 17; the last page of text in the Jerusalem, 1971 reproduction of *שפת אמת* is p. 65. Twelve additional (single-sided) pages are missing from most copies of the first edition, and were missing from the copy used for the reproduction. Counting the first of the additional pages as p. 66, the reference here is to p. 76.] Cf. *אגרת פורים*, p. 24a. Copies of the notarized Metz amulets were appended to a letter sent by R. Jacob Joshua Falk of Frankfurt to members of the rabbinic court (דיינים המצויינים בי דינא) of Prague on March 15, 1752 (29 Adar, 5512). See the broadside *שפתים ישק*, Amsterdam [?], 1752 (a copy of which is preserved in *גחלי אש*, vol. 2, pp. 36a — 37b). Falk’s letter was reprinted in *שפת אמת*, pp. 73-74, and in *לוחת עדות*, p. 7a and b.

the opening pages of the volume. It was followed by a decoded transcription of the text of each of the amulets, with commentary. The alleged Sabbatian character of these amulets was now exposed for all to see.

#### IV. The Notaries

In his attempt to undermine the confidence of the anti-Eibeschuetz forces (and neutral observers) in the notarized Metz amulets, Eibeschuetz claimed that the two Jewish officials who notarized the amulets did so against their will. Indeed, they were forced to do so against their will a second time in the presence of the Procureur du Roy. Several letters are adduced in *לוחת עדות* which state that Mordechai Gumprecht was “forced” to notarize the Metz amulets.<sup>32</sup> Implicit in this argument was the suggestion that Gumprecht notarized a text he knew to be erroneous or forged. Emden, in his critique of *לוחת עדות*, correctly noted that the notaries were admirers of Eibeschuetz who certainly wished him no harm.<sup>33</sup> They understood fully the import of the Metz amulets and, indeed, notarized them against their will. They did not tamper with the texts of the amulets; nor did they imagine that anyone else had done so. They simply followed the orders of the Chief Rabbi and the officers of the Jewish Council of Metz, and notarized the amulets. They did so honestly and accurately.

That Emden correctly understood the “forced” nature of the activity of the Jewish notaries is clear from a previously unpublished letter of Gumprecht.<sup>34</sup> In translation it reads:

This is to inform all regarding my signature and that of my colleague R. Itzik, notary [of the Jewish community of Metz], may his Rock and Redeemer protect him, that appeared on the amulets that were copied at the behest of the officers of the Jewish council of Metz and by their scribe. I just saw a letter by the Gaon R. Jacob Joshua, Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt am Main. He saw a letter from Hamburg that stated that “R. Gumprecht, notary of the Jewish council of Metz wrote to the Jewish community of Hamburg and indicated that he was forced to sign his name on the above amulets.” I therefore wish to indicate that my recollection is that I wrote to a student in Hamburg named Leib Pressburg as follows: “I have heard that my master and Rabbi [R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz] was angry at me for signing the amulets. I cannot believe this is true. For surely he knows that I am the notary of the Jewish community [of Metz]. Whatever they order me to do, I must do.” I certainly never wrote that I was forced to sign. Nevertheless, since humans are prone to forget, if

32. *לוחת עדות*, pp. 3, 5, and 15a-16b.

33. *שבירת לוחות האון*, p. 42a.

34. *גחלי אש*, vol. 2, pp. 117a-118a. We wish to thank the Curators of the Bodleian Library for their permission to publish this and other excerpts from *גחלי אש*.

indeed I wrote that I was forced to sign, my intent was as described above. My instincts tell me that I never wrote the word “forced.” Other than this, I made no mention of any matter relating to the amulets.

Done on Wednesday, 3 Tishre 5512 (September 22, 1751).

Mordechai Gumprecht Birié, notary of the Jewish community of Metz<sup>35</sup>

In fact, Gumprecht’s recollection was impeccable. His original letter to Leib Pressburg was published in 1755 by Eibeschuetz himself!<sup>36</sup> It, of course, makes no mention of his being “forced” (Hebrew: שהייתי אונס) to notarize the amulets.<sup>37</sup>

## V. The Transcription of the Notarized Metz Amulets in שפת אמת

Since, as we shall see, Eibeschuetz challenged the accuracy of the transcription of the notarized Metz amulets, as distributed by Hilman and as printed in שפת אמת, our immediate task is to compare the recovered original text of the notarized Metz amulets with the printed version. The printed

35. להודיע לכל מחמת שחתמתי את עצמי עם חברי ה"ה כהר"ר איצק שמש יצ"ו על הקמיעות שהעתיקו האלופים הקצינים פו"מ יצ"ו דקהלתנו מיץ יע"א על ידי סופר שלהם.

וכעת ראיתי שכתב לכאן אדמ"ו הגאון מוהר"ר יעקב יהושע אב"ד דק"ק פ"פ דמין ושראה כתב אחד מק"ק המבורג שכתב כהר"ר גומפריך שמש מק"ק מיץ לשם, שהי' אונס [sic] בחתימתו על הקמיעו' הנ"ל, בכך באתי להודיע שזכרוני היא שבוה הלשון כתבתי לשם, לבחור א' הנקרא ליב פרעשבורג, ושמעתי שאדמ"ו קצף עלי עבד שחתמתי את עצמי על הקמיעות, ולא אוכל להאמין אותו בכך כי הלא ידוע לו שאני שמש דקהל י"ץ, ומה שיצו עלי חסדם אני מוכרח לעשות, ומעולם לא כתבתי הדבר שהייתי אונס [sic] רק באשר שאנוש הוא עלול לשכוח, בכך אם יהא כן שכתבתי שהייתי אונס [sic] על החתימה הנ"ל, כוונתי ה' כנ"ל, עבד שצו עלי חסדם קהל י"ץ, אבל לבי אומר לי שלא זכרתי שום תיבת אונס [sic], וזולת זה לא זכרתי שום דבר מן הקמיעות כלל.

נעשה יום רביעי שלשה ימים להדש תשרי, תי"ו קו"ף יו"ד בי"ת לפ"ק, מרדכי גומפריך ביריע שמש ונאמן דק"ק מיץ יע"א

36. לוחת עדות, p. 16b. Cf. Joseph PRAEGER, סדר נויקין (Bodleian Library Hebrew ms. Michael 529, catalogue 2229), p. 210a and b.

37. Much nonsense has been written about Gumprecht’s various letters on the amulets. Due to a misleading rubric in גחלי אש, vol. 2, p. 115a (printed in A. NEUBAUER, “Der Wahnwitz und die Schwindleien der Sabbatianer nach ungedruckten Quellen,” *MGWJ* 36 (1887), p. 263), several modern scholars concluded that Gumprecht’s letters were contradictory and, in effect, were reflections of his duplicity. Indeed, one scholar — in order to account for the alleged contradictory letters — suggested that one of Gumprecht’s letters was forged by the pro-Eibeschuetz forces. Another scholar claimed that Emden was the first to notice that one of Gumprecht’s letters was a forgery. See D. KAHANA, *op. cit.* (above, note 15), vol. 2, p. 56; M. COHEN, *Jacob Emden: A Man of Controversy*, Philadelphia, 1937, p. 226; and cf. G. Scholem’s review of Cohen’s *Jacob Emden* in *קרית ספר* 16 (1939), p. 337-338. In fact, Gumprecht’s letters are perfectly consistent with each other; he was clearly a man of integrity and honest to the core. Neither Emden nor Eibeschuetz, nor anyone else in the eighteenth century, suggested that a letter ascribed to Gumprecht was a forgery. We are indebted to Rabbi Eliezer Katzman of Brooklyn, N.Y., who first called our attention to these misreadings of the evidence.

version contains many printers' errors, almost all of which were corrected on the list of corrigenda printed at the back of the volume. Once these corrections are entered — and the corrigenda appear in every copy of the printed volume —, the differences between the recovered original text and the printed version are negligible.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the recovery of the original text allows us to state unequivocally that the reproduction of the notarized Metz amulets in *שפת אמת* is, for all intents and purpose, a perfect replica of the original document. All that could be faulted — indeed, as Eibeschuetz would claim — was the original transcription by the scribe who copied the amulets onto one page on March 17, 1751. Alas, the original amulets are no longer extant, and this particular claim of Eibeschuetz can neither be proven nor disproven. All that can be said is that the Jewish officials who notarized the document were persuaded that it was an accurate transcription of the original amulets.

## VI. Eibeschuetz' Response to the Metz Amulets and the Charge of Heresy

The most distinguished member of the anti-Eibeschuetz forces was neither R. Jacob Emden of Altona, nor R. Samuel Hilman of Metz, nor R. Aryeh Leib of Amsterdam. While they led the battle against Eibeschuetz in its opening stages, they eventually gave way to R. Jacob Joshua Falk of Frankfurt. From April 1751 until his death on January 16, 1756, Falk directed the campaign against Eibeschuetz. A clever strategist, he began by forging a coalition of German rabbis against Eibeschuetz. The goal was to isolate Eibeschuetz, and then force him to appear before a Jewish court of law. There, he would either be vindicated or found guilty. If found guilty, he could be rehabilitated. By “rehabilitated,” Falk meant that Eibeschuetz would be given the opportunity to repent, i.e., to express genuine regret for the sins of his past and to accept upon himself the penance prescribed by the court. But Eibeschuetz was in no hurry to make a court appearance. Instead, he engaged in a battle of wits against Falk and his rabbinic coalition. Ultimately, Falk published a series of letters and broadsides against

38. The three remaining differences are:

	Original Text	שפת אמת
1. Amulet 1, line 6:	גזוג	גזוג
2. Amulet 2, seal:	הן ם בם [אין] ס	הן בם [אין] ס
3. Amulet 3, line 3:	קבבתי	קבכתי

Eibeschuetz, threatening to “defrock” him if he continued to refuse to appear before a rabbinic court of law.<sup>39</sup> In them, Falk made prominent mention of the notarized Metz amulets, stating openly that they proved Eibeschuetz’ guilt. Moreover, argued Falk, if these amulets could be explained away, why had Eibeschuetz not done so in print?

In 1755, after Eibeschuetz had been “defrocked” by Falk,<sup>40</sup> he finally decided to take up Falk’s challenge in print. He published *לוחת עדות* in Altona. It would be the only book or pamphlet Eibeschuetz would publish on the controversy. Our concern here will be exclusively with his remarks concerning the five notarized amulets from Metz. Eibeschuetz admitted he had written them, but vigorously denied their Sabbatian character. Regarding the text of the amulets, Eibeschuetz noted that at the time he had written them he was suffering from an eye disorder, and could hardly see what he was writing. Also, the amulets were written in square Hebrew characters, a script he was not adept in using. Wear and tear of amulets that passed from hand to hand and were worn on various parts of the body also took their toll on the written text. For all these reasons, it is no wonder that the scribe who copied the amulets misconstrued certain Hebrew letters, especially those that look alike, e.g., **ב** and **כ**, **ד** and **ר**, and the like. Some of the distortions, suggested Eibeschuetz, may have been made deliberately. It was these distortions, charged Eibeschuetz, that enabled his enemies to misread the amulets as Sabbatian prayers.<sup>41</sup>

If one adds up all the distortions specifically noted by Eibeschuetz in *לוחת עדות*, they add up to a handful of miscopied letters. In effect, they prove that, for the most part, the notarized Metz amulets accurately reflect what Eibeschuetz wrote. By Eibeschuetz own admission, the notarized Metz amulets neither added nor subtracted from the original texts written by Eibeschuetz.<sup>42</sup> Only look-alike letters were misconstrued.

Despite Falk’s demand that all five Metz amulets be explained, Eibeschuetz chose to comment fully only on one of the amulets, amulet 5.<sup>43</sup> Af-

39. See, e.g., the broadside *אזהרה אחרונה* (beginning with the words: *השוכן בשמי מרומים*), Amsterdam, 1751, reprinted in *שפת אמת*, pp. 56-58; the broadside *אספקלריה המאירה*, Altona, 1753, reprinted in the second edition of Emden’s *התאבקות*, Lemberg, 1877, pp. 91b-96b; and the letter dated March 12, 1753 (6 Adar Sheni, 5513) in *גחלי אש*, vol. 2, pp. 169a-173a.

40. Eibeschuetz was “defrocked” temporarily, i.e., until such time that he would appear before a Jewish court of law, in *אספקלריה המאירה*; and permanently in the letter of March 12, 1753 (see previous note).

41. *לוחת עדות*, pp. 1, 3, 6, and 17.

42. This was in stark contrast to the deciphered versions of the amulets (which accompanied their texts and were) printed in *שפת אמת*. These added and omitted letters freely. Eibeschuetz complained bitterly about this in *לוחת עדות*, p. 1.

43. Eibeschuetz justified the frugality of his comments by indicating that he was pressured by colleagues not to reveal more kabbalistic secrets than necessary. Thus, he confined

ter presenting a hand drawn copy of the amulet, Eibeschuetz provided sixteen pages of explanation for the fourteen words of the amulet.<sup>44</sup> For our purposes, it is important to note that Eibeschuetz' hand drawn copy of the amulet is virtually identical with the notarized copy. Only two differences appear, one of which is inconsequential.<sup>45</sup>

Far more significant was Eibeschuetz claim regarding how the amulets were to be read. The Metz amulets (and all the others he wrote) were not to be read as connected texts.<sup>46</sup> Each word was a Holy Name (שם קדוש), whose true meaning was known only to masters of the kabbalah; it did not need to connect to the immediately preceding or following Name. According to Eibeschuetz, the anti-Eibeschuetz forces, who insisted on reading each amulet as a connected text (and, specifically, as a prayer addressed to God, with mention of His Messiah Shabbetai Zevi) were simply ignorant of the secrets of the kabbalah. Suffice to note here that, consistent with his general approach, Eibeschuetz saw no connected words in the one Metz amulet he chose to comment on, amulet 5. Nonetheless, it is astounding that he made no mention of the fact that if one reads clockwise from the bottom triangle of amulet 5, one discovers, in order, the first seven words of Isaiah 9:5, a messianic verse of no small significance.<sup>47</sup>

his full commentary to one amulet only (amulet 5). See *לוחת עדות*, p.4b. He selected for commentary the one Metz amulet that had an outer seal without an inner text. The other four amulets had both outer seals and inner texts. The pro-Emden forces proffered a less favorable explanation for Eibeschuetz' frugality. They claimed that he obviously could not explain away the Sabbatian character of the inner texts, which read like connected texts and not like a series of unrelated Holy Names — as had been suggested by Eibeschuetz. For the pro-Emden forces critique of Eibeschuetz' commentary (or: lack thereof) on the Metz amulets, see the broadside *מאירת עינים*, Amsterdam, 1753. Portions of the texts of two other Metz amulets, however, are referred to in *לוחת עדות*:

1. Pp. 3 and 17 cite two words from amulet 2, lines 3 and 8.

2. P. 60a cites the full inner text of amulet 4, based upon a copy of the notarized Metz amulets sent from Vienna to Holleschau. The differences between this text and the original notarized copy are interesting but negligible.

44. *לוחת עדות*, pp. 63a — 71a.

45. The two differences are:

	Original Text	לוחת עדות
1. In the upper triangle:	בן נדיכש יבק	יבק נדיכש בן
2. In the center:	בבתמים	בבהמים

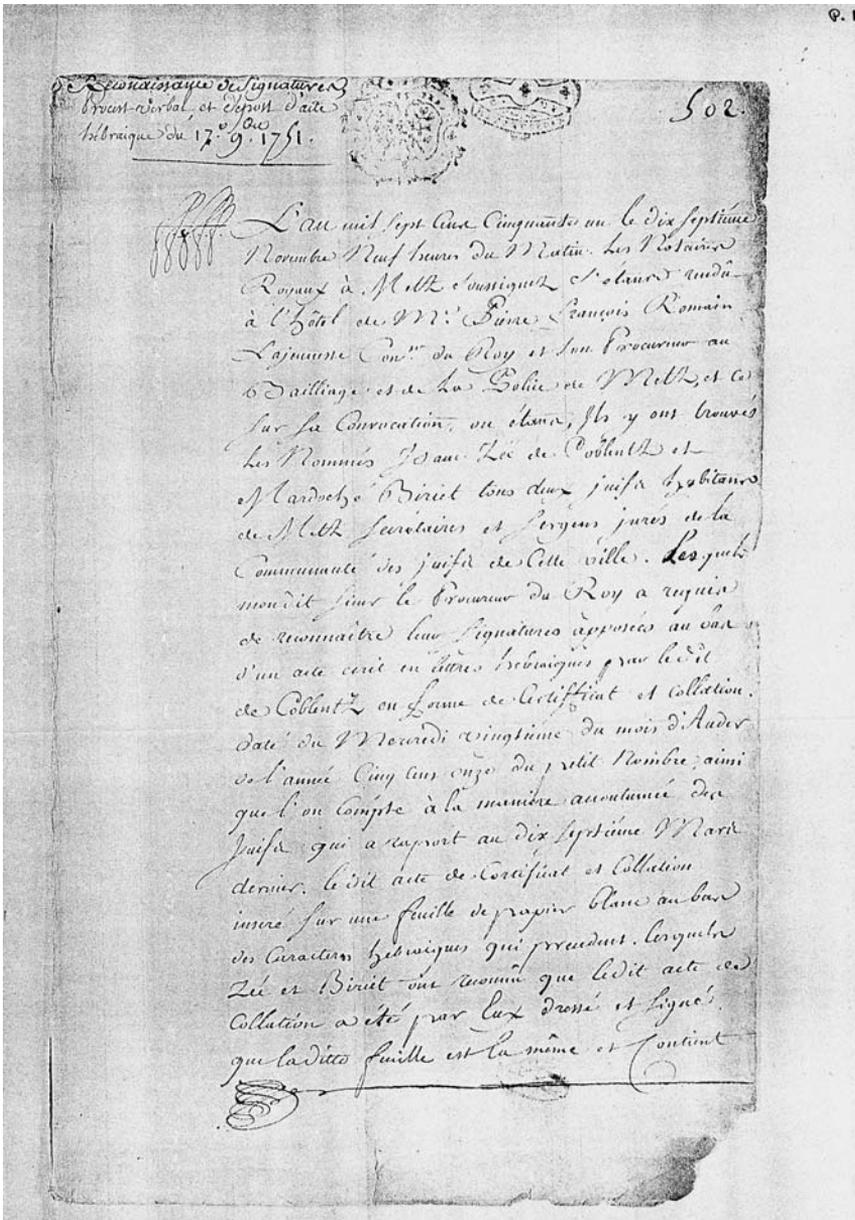
46. *לוחת עדות*, pp. 1, 64b, and 73b. Cf. G. SCHOLEM, "יהונתן אייבשיץ", *Tarbiz* 13 (1942), pp. 226-244, reissued in his *מחקרי שבתאות*, Tel- Aviv, 1991, pp. 707-733.

47. That this verse loomed large in amulets written by Eibeschuetz is clear from two of his amulets retrieved from Alsace and printed in *שפת אמת*, pp. 18 and 21 (and cf. p. 43).

Ultimately, the issue of connected text is the key issue with regard to the Metz amulets and the Emden-Eibeschetz controversy. While the recovery of the original copy of the notarized Metz amulets cannot, by itself, resolve this issue, the text it presents supports Emden's claim that the amulets were to be read as connected texts.

In sum, the recovery of the original copy of the notarized Metz amulets proves that they had been transcribed accurately by the editor of *שפת אמת* in 1752, and —presumably — in the various copies sent to rabbis and government officials throughout Europe. The copy that Eibeschetz received via the Danish authorities<sup>48</sup> and cited in his *לוחת עדות* agrees fully with our text. What remains to be established is whether the relatively minor discrepancies between the text Eibeschetz claimed he wrote originally and the preserved text of the notarized Metz amulets are real or imaginary. Only the discovery of the original amulets themselves can resolve this issue definitively. The more substantive issue of whether these amulets were Sabbatian in character or not ultimately depends upon how they are read and deciphered. In the form they are preserved in the recovered original notarized copy, they support Emden's reading sooner than that of Eibeschetz. But, then, that is precisely why Eibeschetz dismissed the notarized copy of the Metz amulets as a distortion of what he really wrote.

48. *לוחת עדות*, p. 15a.



Pl. 1

