



Early Yiddish Epic (Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music, and Art)

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Unlike most other ancient European, Near Eastern, and Mediterranean civilizations, Jewish culture surprisingly developed no early epic tradition: while the Bible comprises a broad range of literary genres, epic is not among them. Not until the late medieval period, Beginning in the fourteenth century, did an extensive and thriving epic tradition emerge in Yiddish. Among the few dozen extant early epics, there are several masterpieces, of which ten are translated into English in this volume. Divided between the religious and the secular, the book includes eight epics presented in their entirety, an illustrative excerpt from another epic, and a brief heroic prose tale. These texts have been chosen as the best and the most interesting representatives of the genre in terms of cultural history and literary quality: the pious “epicizing” of biblical narrative, the swashbuckling medieval courtly epic, Arthurian romance, heroic vignettes, intellectual high art, and popular camp.

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