CANON

"Write me for future generations!" In a Talmudic discussion in Tractate Megillah about the biblical canon, the sages imagine Queen Esther staking her claim to be included in the Bible. Does the Book of Esther, in which God never appears, deserve to appear alongside the Torah and the Prophets?

While the Bible we know seems fixed and unchanging, for hundreds of years it remained a work in flux. In particular, rabbinic scholars debated the status of the later books, like Esther and Ecclesiastes (Kohelet). At different points in history, believers drew the boundaries of the Bible anew – on account of new revelations and new interpretations, but also due to issues of politics and power. For example, the second-century BCE ethical treatise Ben Sira, also known as Ecclesiasticus, was included in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible and in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Old Testaments, but not in the Tanakh or in the Lutheran and Anglican canon.

The question of the canon is not a biblical problem alone. Communities of all types, from antiquity to the present, have argued over their scriptures, classics, constitutions, and guides, asking: Which works deserve to be so venerated and treasured? In all these cases, it is not only a community of like-minded individuals who create the canon, but also the canon that creates the community. This process of reciprocal formation can occur in numerous ways. A charismatic authority can lead a community and in a single act dictate its most important texts. Or canonization can occur over generations in a diffuse process of accretion, curation, and reification.

Even the selection of a canon does not mean the end of the process. Communities continue to reinvent their scriptures and to understand them anew. Philosophers have parsed the Bible to reconcile with Aristotelian physics, and Kabbalists have found in the Bible the ideal of mystical union with the divine – just as some today see the insights of particle physics presaged there. This constant reframing of the sacred text is no trivial process. On the contrary, reinterpretation is essential for keeping scriptures relevant and alive.

The great canonical scriptures – the Bible, the Gospels, the Qur'an, the Vedas – are all products of the distant past. But new canons are formed and new works are canonized even now: the canon of modern film, the canon of science fiction novels, the canon of contemporary classics. Israel, an old-new nation with a new culture, is awash in canonical works composed within the short span of the last hundred years. While we have precious little information about the formation of canons long ago, even the most cursory glance in the archives – full of false starts, rejected drafts, and alternative endings – illuminates how Israel's central texts came to be.

In the same spirit, the greatest crises of Jewish history in the twentieth century have caused seemingly sealed canons to break open. Does the rise of liberal Judaism, the Holocaust, or the founding of the State of Israel necessitate rewriting the canonical texts of the Jewish tradition? If so, what should be rejected and what retained of the received text and liturgy? Jewish communities are struggling now to formulate their answers to these fundamental questions. Their ultimate conclusions will define not only the content of the canon but the arc of the Jewish future.

SAMUEL THROPE

Trade, Translation, and the Holy Scripture

Peshitta – Syriac Christian Bible, 9th century

MILKA LEVY-RUBIN

The Peshitta, which means "simple" or "common," is the standard version of the Bible in the eastern Aramaic dialect, which was used by Syriac-speaking churches in the East. The specific Peshitta featured here – dating back to the ninth century – is an early version of the Latter Prophets. Like the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible that was later adopted by the Christian church, the Peshitta, too, originated in Jewish circles.

This translation was made between the second and third centuries in the city of Edessa (present-day Urfa in Turkey), an important Silk Road trading hub on the Euphrates in Upper Mesopotamia, whose dominant language was an eastern dialect of Aramaic known as Syriac. Edessa was populated by a vibrant community comprising pagans, Jews, and new converts to Christianity, many of whom were of Jewish origin. The ruling dynasty was connected to the house of Adiabene, which was famous for having converted to Judaism in the first century. Edessa, however, would become the cradle of Syriac Christendom, and the synagogue located in the town center would be transformed into a church by the fifth century.

The city's growing Christian community was in need of a vernacular version of the Scriptures, and this, scholars now agree, was provided by Jews or, more precisely, new Christian converts of Jewish origin. This is evident from later Midrashic traditions and from phraseology found in the Peshitta that derives from Jewish Targum traditions.

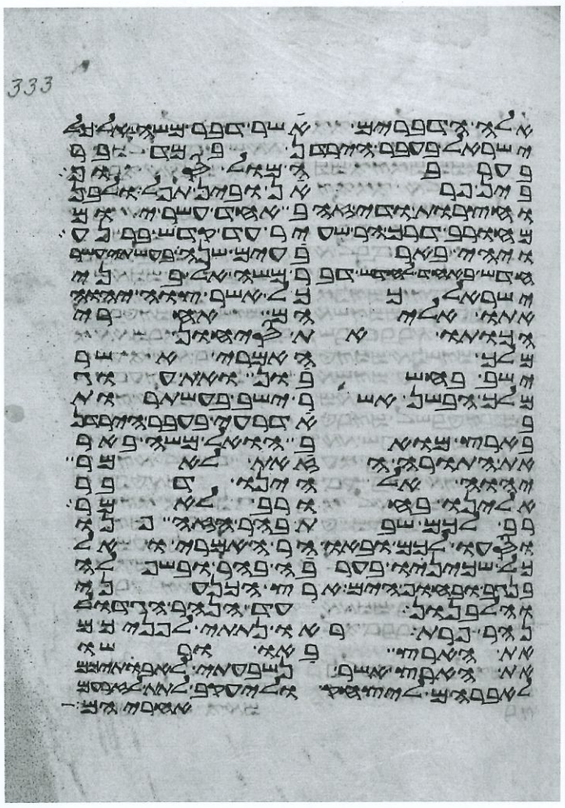
Thus, while Greek Christianity was undoubtedly greatly influenced by pagan culture, the Peshitta is a testament to the central role played by Jews in the development of Christianity in the Syriac-speaking East.

Peshitta, Urfa (Edessa), ninth century. Last page of the Minor Prophets, also the last page of Malachi. The red lines mark the end of the section. Donated by Erica Jesselson in 1995. Ms. Or. 63, folio 63v.

A Proud Minority in the Middle East

Arhuta Kadishta, Samaritan Pentateuch, 1215–1216

YAEL OKUN



Samaritan Pentateuch (*Arhuta Kadishta*), Nablus, 1215–16.

Left: The colophon, called a *tashkil*, in which the scribe, Abi Barkhatah ben Abzahutah, writes his name vertically in the space between the two columns of text, page 333.

Right: The text of Numbers 34:1–12 is arranged in a circular design, representing Mount Gerizim, the Samaritan sacred mountain, page 326. Ms. Sam. 2° 86.

The *Arhuta Kadishta* is the Samaritan term for the Pentateuch or the Torah. Today, the Samaritans—an ancient religious minority—are concentrated in Mount Gerizim, Kiryat Luza, and Holon. Mount Gerizim, where Joshua built the Tabernacle, is considered the holiest site for Samaritans.

Unlike traditional Jews and Karaites, the Samaritans believe only in the *Arhuta Kadishta* and not the other biblical books. Their version of the Torah differs from the Masoretic text in 6230 places. The most significant discrepancy relates to the location of the Temple, identified by the Samaritans as Mount Gerizim. In addition, the Samaritan version of the Ten Commandments states: "When you enter the land that the Lord your God is giving to you as a heritage...you shall build an altar there...by the terebinths of Moreh facing Shechem."

The Samaritan Pentateuch is written in an ancient Hebrew script, with each word marked off by a period and the end of a sentence marked by a colon. The letters *mem*, *nun*, *tzadi*, *peh*, and *kaf* do not take on final forms at the end of the word.

This manuscript of the *Arhuta Kadishta* was copied between 1215 and 1216 and is one of the most ancient extant copies. It resembles a singular group of manuscripts referred to as the *Pinhasia*, a term for the Samaritan bibles written by Samaritan priestly leadership. The artistic role of the scribe is evident in several places. For example, in verses from Numbers 34:1–12 and 35:1–8, which deal with the borders of the Land of Israel, the scribe depicted a map by forming a circle out of some of the letters and leaving gaps between it and the rest of the text, which is in the shape of a square.

This manuscript testifies to the mighty efforts of a religious minority to maintain its distinctive identity and beliefs in the Holy Land.

Loyalty and Poetry

The Catalan Mahzor, 1336–1346

IDAN PEREZ

Mahzor for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur according to the Catalonian Rite, Catalonia, Spain, 1280.

Left: Flora emerges from the mouth of a micrographic dragon decorating an opening page of the siddur, folio 3v.

Right: A decorated gold-leaf illumination opens a liturgical poem for Yom Kippur, folio 15v. Donated by Ludwig and Erica Jesselson, 1986. Ms. Heb. 8° 6527.

Don't let its beauty blind you. Underneath the gold leaf and creative micrographic drawings of the Catalan Mahzor lies one of the most important historical witnesses to the unique medieval liturgy of the small but influential Catalan Jewish community.

Written in Barcelona between 1336 and 1346, it includes a compilation of all the *piyyutim* (liturgical poems) recited on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The Catalan tradition placed great emphasis on these *piyyutim*, inserted into the traditional Shema and Amidah blessings.

Catalan Jews suffered intensely after the massacres of 1391, which were followed by immense pressure to convert to Christianity. Some fled the Iberian Peninsula even before the forced expulsion of 1492. After 1492, the Jews of Catalonia established communities in Italy, the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, and the Land of Israel, where they maintained their traditions and continued praying following the *Nusach* Catalonia (the Catalonian liturgy).

Many leading Jewish scholars – including some of the early medieval Geonim (Babylonian rabbinic and political leaders), Maimonides, and, later, Rabbi Joseph Karo, the influential sixteenth-century legal decisor and author of the canonical code of Jewish law, *Shulhan Arukh* – opposed the emphasis on piyyutim. Nevertheless, those who prayed according to the Catalon rite maintained their dedication to the recitation of *piyyutim*.

This Mahzor manuscript was taken by the Catalan exiles to Italy, then to Greece, and finally to Germany. It was smuggled out of Europe during World War II, sold in a public auction in 1984, and subsequently donated to the National Library.

Canonizing the Poets

Nur al-Din Jami, Gift of the Noble, 1484

SAMUEL THROPE

Imitation is said to be the sincerest form of flattery. This was certainly the case for Nur al-Din Jami (1414–1492), a Persian poet, Sufi mystic, philosopher, and courtier. Born near the village of Jam in 1414, Jami was a central figure in the renaissance of Persian culture in eastern Iran and Central Asia during the Timurid era (1370–1500).

Among the many scientists, thinkers, and artists who flocked to the Timurid capital of Samarkand, Jami stands out for both his voluminous output and his preoccupation with the literary past. During his fifty-year career, alongside numerous prose works in Persian and Arabic, Jami produced examples of every single genre of classical Persian poetry. Each of these compositions is either modeled on or responds to an earlier work. For example, *Gift of the Noble* (*Tuhfat al-ahrar*), a rare example of which, copied during Jami's lifetime, can be seen here, was written in response to Nizami Ganjavi's didactic poem *Treasury of Secrets* (*Makhzan al-asrar*).

Jami did not aim to merely repeat earlier works or conventions; rather, his goal was to establish the canon: the topics, style, and form of the poetic tradition up to his own time. He was largely successful in this, and his poems were celebrated wherever Persian served as the language of culture, from Turkey to India. While his reputation declined with changing tastes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the late eighteenth century, Jami was again elevated by the *Bazgasht* (*Return*) Movement in Iran, which lauded him as "the seal of the poets."

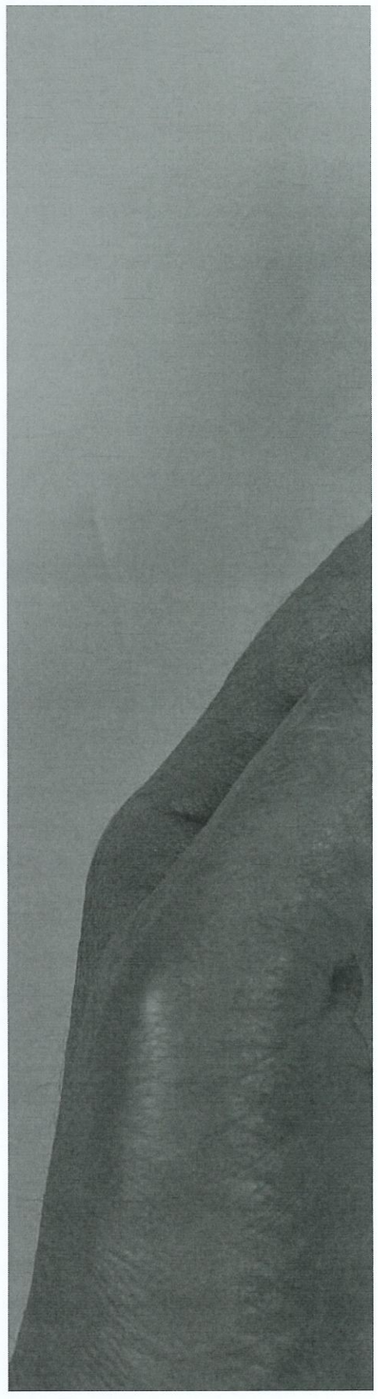
okay? Add rest of name?

Jami, *Gift of the Noble* (*Tuhfat al-ahrar*), Iran, 1484. Right: Opening page of the composition, folio 1v. Following page: Two miniatures, likely added after the manuscript was copied; on the right, a court scene depicting the Sultan attending a polo match, folio 1r. The Abraham Shalom Yahuda Collection. Ms. Yah. Ar. 1013.

Praying in Her Language

Women's Siddur from Salonica (Seder Nashim), c. 1550

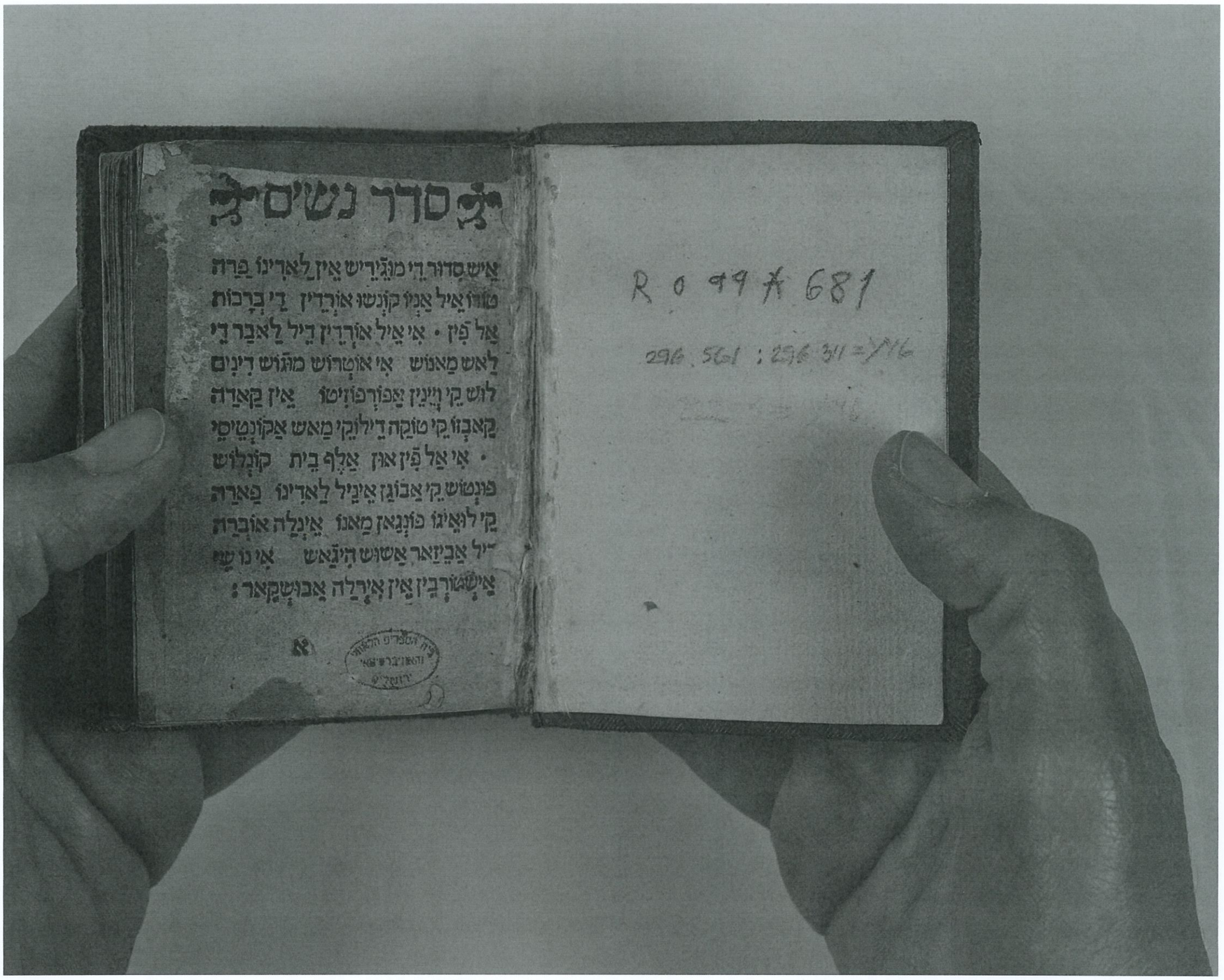
ALIZA MWENO



Pre-modern synagogue life was largely organized by and for men. Women, nonetheless, prayed and sometimes did so from standardized prayer books. This Ladino siddur for women, *Seder Nashim* – one of the earliest printed works in this language – appeared in Thessaloniki (Salonica) as early as 1565. Ladino, also called Judeo-Spanish or Judesmo, is a vernacular language that originated in Spain and developed primarily in the Balkans, Greece, and Turkey among descendants of the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492. The siddur includes prayers and instructions for prayer for the whole year, brief summaries of the laws traditionally associated with women (Sabbath candles, dough offering, and menstrual purity), and a translation of the Passover Haggadah.

Seder Nashim is the first printed work to translate the prayers into Ladino. Translating an entire siddur into the vernacular was revolutionary in the sixteenth century, reflecting the popularization of printed books and the assumption of a female audience who were less comfortable with Hebrew. The book even included an alphabet table (unfortunately removed from the copy held at the National Library), suggesting that some women might not have been fluent in reading Hebrew letters.

Although the translator's name does not appear, it has been recognized as the work of Rabbi Meir Benvenisti, a prominent rabbinic figure in Thessaloniki. It is difficult to reach any firm conclusions regarding the actual knowledge or practice of Jewish women based on this prayer book since it is an educational and didactical text that may reflect its authors' expectations of women rather than their lived experiences. Nonetheless, *Seder Nashim* exemplifies a sociocultural context in which it was expected, or at least hoped, that women would pray regularly, if not in the synagogue then in their own homes, and fulfill the specific traditions associated with women.



Seder Nashim, a women's siddur that includes instructions for following Jewish practice, Salonica, c. 1550. The opening page of the siddur contains what is likely the first printed appearance of the word "Ladino," page 1. 0° 99 A 681.

A Royal Qur'an in Contest

Shirazi Qur'an, 16th century

SAMUEL THROPE

What began as an order of mystics and saints ended as a line of kings. The Safavid order originated in the northwestern Iranian city of Ardabil. While the Safavids first adhered to the dominant Sunni stream of Islam, in the mid-fifteenth century, they gravitated toward Shi'a beliefs, namely that the true spiritual and political leadership of the Islamic community resides with the direct line of the Prophet Muhammad, first among them Ali ibn Abi Talib – the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law.

While the Safavids were already becoming a military power in the fourteenth century, it was under Shah Ismail I (1487–1524) that they completed their conquest of Iran. Ismail declared Shi'ism the official creed of the Safavid realm – a declaration the Safavids violently enforced. However, his expansion was ultimately blocked by Ottoman Sultan Selim I (1470–1520), whose troops routed the Safavid forces in the 1514 battle of Chalderan and occupied the Iranian capital of Tabriz. The self-proclaimed defenders of Sunni Islam, the Ottomans remained the Safavids' greatest rivals for the next two centuries.

A magnificent manuscript of the Qur'an bears witness to this Safavid–Ottoman religious rivalry. Copied for the Safavid royal court in the sixteenth century, one of the final pages includes the text of the Shi'a declaration of faith: "There is no God but God, Muhammad is his Prophet, and Ali is the Viceregent of God." Sometime thereafter, this manuscript passed into Ottoman hands, as evidenced by the impression of the seal of Selim's royal library – a seal that remained in use long after Selim's own reign. A later censor removed the final portion of the declaration of faith, which would have seemed unacceptable to Sunni ears, covering the final phrase "Ali is the Viceregent of God" in a thick layer of gold leaf.

Qur'an, Shiraz, ~~16th~~ century.
~~Left~~: One of two sunburst medallions, which include verse 88 from Surat al-Isra'. The page also shows impressions of stamps from the Ottoman royal libraries of Sultan Selim and Sultan Mustafa I, folio 2r.
~~Right~~: The manuscript's final folio includes the Shi'ite version of the Muslim declaration of faith. The end of the declaration has been deliberately obscured by gold leaf, folio 408r.
Following page: The opening carpet page illuminated with floral designs in gold and lapis lazuli, containing the first chapter of the Qur'an, Surat al-Fatiha, folios 1r–2v. The Abraham Shalom Yahuda Collection. Ms. Yah. Ar. 910.

Gathering the Shards of Lurianic Kabbalah

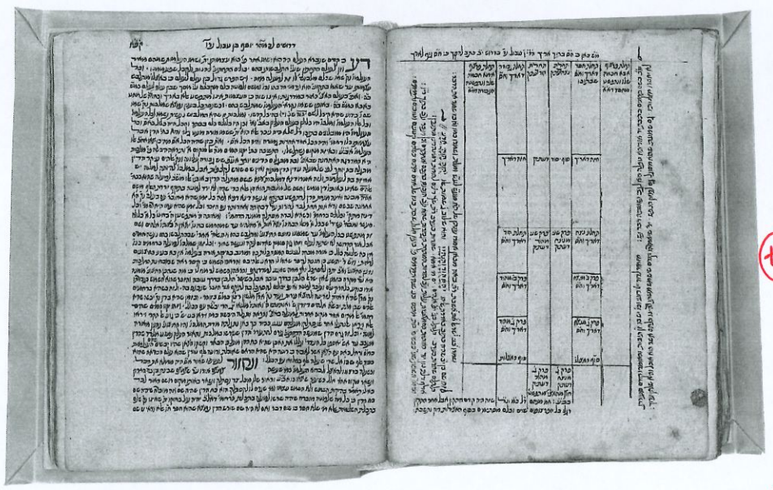
Menahem di Lonzano, Sermons, 1610

ZVI LESHEM

In the mid-sixteenth century, the sleepy Galilean town of Safed became home to some of the most creative mystical speculation in Jewish history. A circle of the greatest Kabbalists articulated a new mystical mythos. At the center of this mystical society stood Rabbi Isaac Luria, known as the Holy Ari (1534–1572).

In his mere two and a half years in Safed before his untimely death, Luria spun the mythical tale of creation and created new kabbalistic rituals that were to change Judaism forever. He did not record his teachings; this task fell to his leading student, Rabbi Haim Vital, who compiled *The Writings of the Ari*, a multi-volume work that includes a summary of Luria's cosmological system entitled *The Brief Order of Emanation* (*Kitzur Seder HaAtzilut*).

However, the fact that the thought of the most important early modern Kabbalist survived only through the writings of his student left the door open to questions about the writings' accuracy. A key critic was Rabbi Menahem di Lonzano (1550–1626), an Italian scholar from Pisa who arrived in the Land of Israel in 1609 and insisted that Vital had misunderstood some important aspects of Luria's thought. Di Lonzano's own handwritten copy of *The Brief Order of Emanation* represents one of the most important copies of Vital's summary while also identifying key disputes regarding the true meaning of Luria's Kabbalah. It has been claimed that di Lonzano did more than just copy this long manuscript. He also made changes, meaning that his work actually constitutes copying blended with editing. In his marginal notes, di Lonzano occasionally disagrees with Vital, whom he criticized for not always faithfully conveying Luria's system. The manuscript testifies to the critical role of students in transmitting – and sometimes changing – the ideas of their teachers.



Homilies (*Derushim*), Menachem di Lonzano, Land of Israel, 1610.

Left: Di Lonzano's copy of and comments on the summaries of the Ari's teachings by Josef ibn Tabul, one of the Ari's most influential students, folios 180v–181r.

Right: A map of the upper worlds according to di Lonzano's Kabbalistic understanding, folio 10r. Ms. Heb. 28° 7991.

Across the Wilderness

Orit, The Sacred Scripture of Ethiopian Jews, 18th century

YAEL OKUN

The sacred scriptures of the Beta Israel, the Jewish community of Ethiopia, are referred to as the Orit. Written in Geʾez, a Semitic language written from left to right and sacred to both Christians and Beta Israel, the Orit includes the Torah and the Books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. It is written on parchment and was usually kept in the home of the Kes, the community's priest, who would read from the manuscript on holidays, such as Rosh Hashanah and Sigd, a unique holiday of the Beta Israel community celebrated fifty days after Yom Kippur.

Unlike the Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox Christian codices in Geʾez, which include references to the New Testament, the Orit contains only Beta Israel traditions. Notes in the margins refer to the custom of reading the Orit on Passover and to the dietary laws. This copy of the Orit also includes an essay about the life of Moses and one of the two known pre-twentieth-century historiographical works about the Beta Israel, namely a detailed genealogy of the first Beta Israel *melokse* (home for celibate Beta Israel priests) in Hohwarwa.

This copy of the Orit was owned by a single family, handed down from generation to generation, and believed by the family to have been written over ~~400~~ years ago. Kes Yitzhak Yassu, or "Yitzhak the Teacher," as he was known by the Jews of Tigray, received this Orit from his father and would study it and read from it before the entire community. At the beginning of the 1980s, the Orit began its long journey to Sudan and, from there, to Israel. It was almost stolen in transit, but, fortunately, the bandits preferred money, clothes, and cattle to the sacred Orit. The family donated this Orit to the National Library in 2016.

Orit, Ethiopia, ~~18th~~ century.

~~Left~~: A passage from Exodus chapters 13–14 in Ge'ez. The red marks separate between verses and chapters, folio. 36r. Donated by Kes Isaac Yaso and his family in 2016. Ms. Or. 87.

~~Right~~: The fabric decorating the cover.

A Moment of Reform

Seckel Isaac Fränkel and Meyer Israel Bresslau, Order of Public Prayer for the Sabbath and Festival Days, 1819

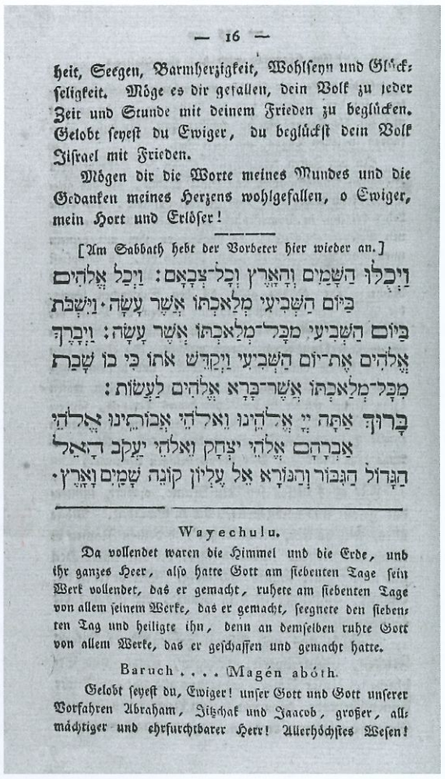
YAEL LEVI

Liturgical changes are often signs of seismic shifts in religious beliefs and identities. A shorter service, the addition of prayers in the German language, and the removal of some references to sacrifices in this early Reform siddur of 1819 were portents of more radical changes in later Reform liturgy.

In October 1818, the Hamburg Temple was inaugurated as the first permanent Reform synagogue. A year later, Seckel Isaac Fränkel and Meyer Israel Bresselau published the first Reform siddur in Hebrew and German, *Ordnung der öffentlichen Andacht für die Sabbath-und Festtage des ganzen Jahres* (*Order of Public Prayer for the Sabbath and Festival Days Throughout the Year*).

Early Reform prayer books maintained significant continuity with older prayer books but also incorporated the values and aesthetics of the Haskalah – the German Jewish Enlightenment. Read from left to right, with the Hebrew above the line and a German translation below it, the siddur aimed to create an accessible text, appeal to aesthetic sentiment, and find a new balance between European acculturation and Jewish distinctiveness. As knowledge of Yiddish and Hebrew declined, German translation was needed to provide Jews access to the prayers.

While the liturgy of this prayer book is quite similar to that of traditional siddurim, later Reform prayer books made more significant changes, including omitting some sections of the prayers – such as the Mussaf service – and the omission or weakening of concepts such as angelology, the return to Zion, particularism, and sacrifices. This first Reform prayer book and its successors serve as a microcosm of the history of the movement, embodying through liturgy the quest to maintain Jewish heritage in a German cultural environment and a rapidly changing modern world.



— 16 —

heit, Seegen, Barmherzigkeit, Wohlseyn und Glückseligkeit. Möge es dir gefallen, dein Volk zu jeder Zeit und Stunde mit deinem Frieden zu beglücken. Gelobt seyest du Ewiger, du beglückst dein Volk Jisrael mit Frieden.

Mögen dir die Worte meines Mundes und die Gedanken meines Herzens wohlgefallen, o Ewiger, mein Hort und Erlöser!

[Am Sabbath hebt der Vorbeter hier wieder an.]

וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־צְבָאָם: וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֶךְ
אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בוֹ שָׁבַת
מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי
אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב הָאֵל
הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא אֵל עֶלְיוֹן קוֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.

Wayechulu.

Da vollendet waren die Himmel und die Erde, und ihr ganzes Heer, also hatte Gott am siebenten Tage sein Werk vollendet, das er gemacht, ruhete am siebenten Tage von allem seinem Werke, das er gemacht, segnete den siebenten Tag und heiligte ihn, denn an demselben ruhte Gott von allem Werke, das er geschaffen und gemacht hatte.

Baruch .... Magén abóth.

Gelobt seyest du, Ewiger! unser Gott und Gott unserer Vorfahren Abraham, Jitzchak und Jaacob, großer, allmächtiger und ehrfurchtbarer Herr! Allerhöchstes Wesen!

Sabbath and festival prayer book, New Temple Association, Hamburg, 1819.

Opposite/ ~~Left~~: Hebrew and German title pages facing one another.

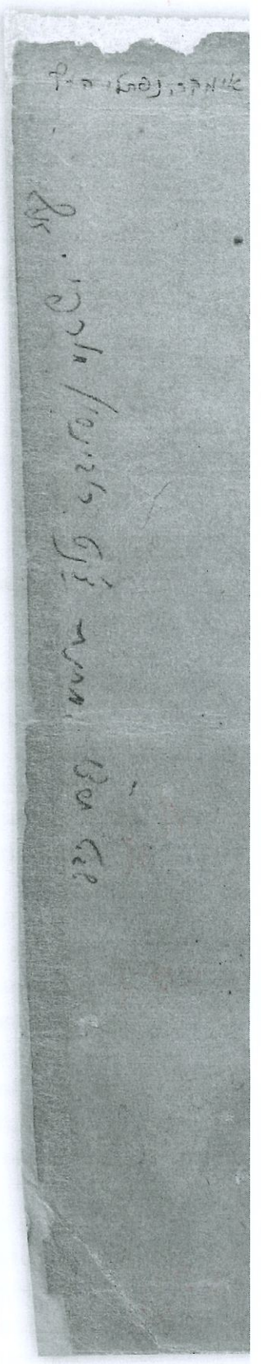
Above/ ~~Right~~: The Sabbath-eve kiddush with a German translation in the siddur for the innovative New Temple in Hamburg, page 16. 8° 38 B 1211.

why cap.?

A National Anthem Comes Home

Naftali Herz Imber, Hatikva, 1908

HEZI AMIUR



Most national anthems are not originally composed as such. This is also true of the Israeli national anthem written by Naftali Herz Imber (1856–1909), which received its status by virtue of the tremendous love and appreciation accorded to it by the Jewish people.

"Tikvatenu" ("Our Hope") was first published in the Land of Israel in 1886 as a nine-stanza poem written in the genre of songs expressing yearning for Jerusalem. Settlers of Rishon LeZion set it to a Romanian folk tune, and it spread widely throughout the Land of Israel and the entire Jewish world. When Imber moved to the United States, he found that his song was far more well known than he was; having been abridged to two stanzas, it had become the unofficial anthem of the Zionist Congress. In the Land of Israel, the closing line "to return to the land of our ancestors" was changed to "to be a free nation in our land" to indicate that the return to Zion was already taking place. In time, this shortened version became well-established and known simply as "Hatikva."

In 1908, Imber was hospitalized in a Jewish hospital in New York. There he met Jeannette Robinson-Murphy, an American ethnomusicologist, who asked him to write down the lyrics of the only Hebrew song she knew how to sing. He took a piece of hospital stationery and jotted down the original first two stanzas. A moment before handing it to her, he decided to rip off the top of the page where the hospital logo was printed so as to accord the song its proper honor.

In 1933, the eighteenth Zionist Congress declared "Hatikva" the Jewish national anthem. Three years later, Robinson-Murphy decided that the page she had received from Imber belonged in "the land of Zion, Jerusalem" and entrusted it to the National Library. This is the sole known autographed copy of "Hatikva" in the world.

Next Year We Will Be Free

Non-Traditional Haggadot, 1945–1948

HEZI AMIUR

The 1940s were a fateful decade for the Jewish people, beginning with persecution and genocide and culminating in freedom and independence. The story of the Exodus from Egypt as retold in the Haggadah, which has inspired both Jews and non-Jews throughout the ages, became the story of this generation as well, which they expressed in various non-traditional Haggadot written for their communal Passover seders.

How did it feel to be a young Holocaust survivor celebrating the first Passover seder following liberation? In 1946, members of the United Zionist Youth Movement prepared their own Haggadah in the DP camps in Germany. Their version of the rabbinic text voiced their deep regret at having been blind to the Nazi threat and their unequivocal commitment to "the exodus from Europe," namely to Zionism and immigration to the Land of Israel.

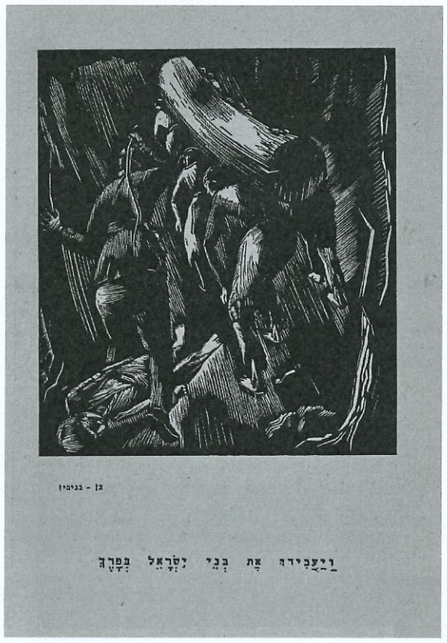
The verses describing Egyptian bondage were dramatized in a series of woodcuts created by one of the survivors, Zvi Miklos Adler (Ben-Binyamin), and depict the starvation, back-breaking labor, and precariousness of life in the concentration camps.

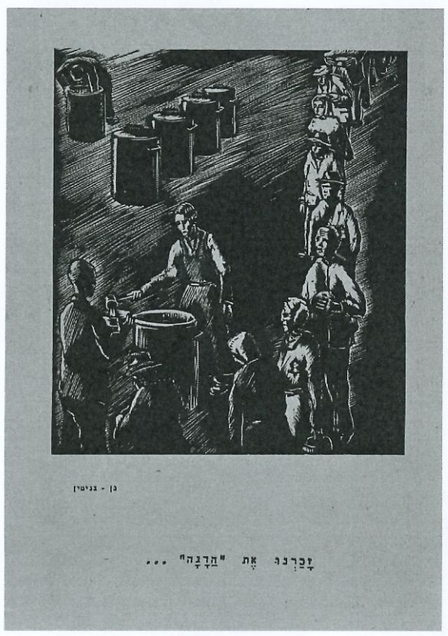
Two years later, the struggle for freedom took on a new aspect, this time involving the Jewish defense forces in pre-State Palestine. In 1948, in the decisive days of the War of Independence – the week preceding Passover, just three weeks before the declaration of statehood – the Palmach twice tried and failed to conquer the Nabi Yusha fort in the Upper Galilee, losing twenty-six soldiers. The Haggadah created for the Palmach unit celebrates Passover with hope for imminent national renewal. It also acknowledges the toll exacted by freedom and glorifies the sacrifices made to complete the Jewish people's journey from slavery to freedom.

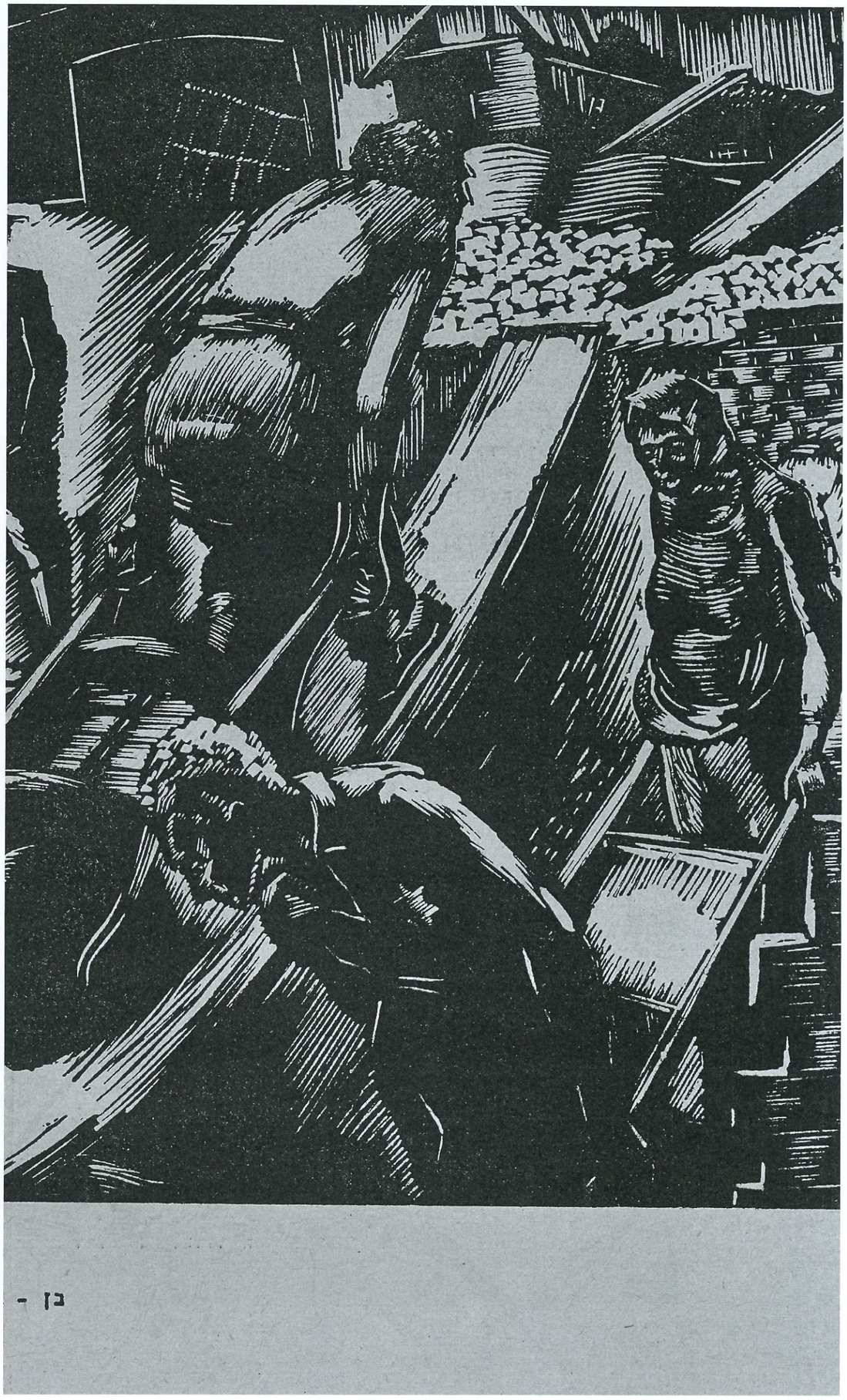
These non-traditional Haggadot are original Israeli artifacts. Both Jews fighting for the establishment of Israel and those participating in Zionist movements in the Diaspora fulfilled the Haggadah's ancient injunction to regard themselves as if they, too, had been freed from bondage by telling and retelling their story.

Passover Haggadah, Munich, 1946. The Haggadah was printed in a displaced person's camp near Munich for the first Passover following the conclusion of World War II.

Right: Illustration within the letter "Bet" draws a stark connection between bondage in ancient Egypt and the forced labor camps of the Holocaust. 46 A 1711.







Passover Haggadah, Munich, 1946. The Haggadah was printed in a displaced person's camp near Munich for the first Passover following the conclusion of World War II.

Above left: Three woodcuts by Zvi Miklos Adler ("Ben-Binyamin") illustrating the verses relating to Egyptian bondage found in the Book of Exodus. 46 A 1711.