A Mirror of Jewish Life

A Selection from The Moldovan Family Collection

The Judaica Museum, The Cymbalista Synagogue and Jewish Heritage Center
חיקר יהודים
בראש אמונת יהודת
מרח מילוסף משפטת מולדובנ

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אוסף משפטים מודרנים

cל כל אלה חסן בוולמרן, או שא שיעורי ביברקבאך, המשך עלה י Mazda. שרדון, לב, ברק, מ.ק.ס. ב.ק.
лечינו מהדורה, ראו ב-2000 ככינון חד פעמי, לברק, מ.ק.ס.

החברה של אנשי ביברקבאך של המחקר, ברק, מ.ק.ס. ב.ק.

אוסף משפטים מודרנים - שני חלקים של המחקר, ברק, מ.ק.ס. ב.ק.
The historical documents displayed in the exhibition are all written by hand. For the Moldovans, these unadorned manuscripts are as vital as evidence of Jewish life as are the illuminated ones. The various manuscripts relating to Jews and Jewish life relate to different aspects of the Jews, interrelations within their own world, as well as relations with the external societies in which they resided.

1807 PATENT FÜR DEN KÖNIGLICH WÜRTTEMBERGSCHEN HOF-FACTOR MAIER LOEW

Württemberg, 1807 Parchment, ink, sealing-wax H 38.0 cm W 54.0 cm

The magnificent calligraphy of this document lends it an esthetic value alongside its historical interest. It sets down the appointment of Maier Loew of Sontheim as "Court Factor", an official supplier to the royal court of Württemburg. Many Jews served as "Court Jews" in the petty lands of Germany and Austria, providing financial and military procurement services. This was a profitable but often dangerous occupation, as shown by the fate of a more famous "Court Jew", Joseph Suskind Oppenheimer (see No. 4, below).
LICENSE TO BEAR ARMS
Treviso, 1555
Parchment, ink
H 32.0 cm W 21.0 cm

This is a most unusual document granting official permission, from the chief district magistrate for the territories controlled by Venice, to Calimano, a Jew, to carry a sword – a privilege generally forbidden to Jews. Calimano’s father, a moneylender, had been murdered in the castle of Asolo during a robbery. The privilege to bear arms was given both for self-protection and to assist in recovering moneys owed to the father. The Moldovans persistently sought out such unusual records of Jewish history.

DEED OF LOAN
Neunstadt (?), 1461
Parchment, ink, sealing-wax
H 19.0 cm W 29.0 cm

Much information concerning Jews in early times can be gleaned from legal documents, often from official archives. Such records of commercial and financial transactions are a prime source for the history of European Jewry. The present loan agreement records the indebtedness of Johann Lionhart Parr, Knight, to Joseph Knoflach, a Jew, and bears two seal-impressions in witness thereof. At the lower right of the document there is added a brief summary of the text in Yiddish.
Historical events involving Jews, especially famous ones, were occasionally recorded in popular images. Joseph Suskind Oppenheimer, known as "Jud Soh", had been a Court Jew in Württemberg. The death of his patron brought about his downfall, trial and execution in 1738—and led to the production of numerous illustrations. This print, one of several on this subject, typically depicts the 30-meter high gallows, along with his portraits. In other versions, scenes from his life also appear. The artist, Lucas Conrad Pfandzelt, "drew it from life".
tendril

The feature in such manuscripts.

Beautifully illuminated manuscripts were produced over several centuries, from the 13th century on, for the Jewish communities of Europe. This page, from the Yom Kippur prayers in a Mahzor, provides an excellent example of ornamented initial words—the most common decorative feature in such manuscripts. The delicate colors and the tendi' decoration are characteristic of the time and place.

HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS AND BOOKS

Manuscripts and printed books have played a major role in Jewish ritual and tradition for the last two thousand years. Until the advent of printing, manuscripts were the only means (besides oral tradition) of passing on traditions from one generation to the next. The earliest extant illuminated Hebrew manuscripts are from the 9th century, though such texts probably existed earlier. The tradition of ornamented manuscripts continued even after the invention of printing. In the 18th century there was a renewal of this tradition, largely facilitated by the rise of "Court Jews" and wealthy Jewish merchants. The display includes three miniature manuscripts representing this later phenomenon.

"THE GREAT LEARNED RABBIS OF ISRAEL"

Breslau, ca. 1900
Chromo-lithograph
L 40.0 cm W 52.0 cm

Although portraits of famous rabbis first appeared hundreds of years earlier, such pictures became more numerous as the customary strictures against "graven" images began to be relaxed during the course of the 19th century. The present example, which includes the portraits of 40 famous rabbis, both Ashkenazi and Sephardi, has the traditional depiction of Maimonides at its focus. Breslau was long a center for printing Jewish religious illustrations of this sort, in the colorful and then recently-developed process of chromo-lithography.

PAGE FROM
ILLUMINATED
MAHZOR

Germany, ca. 1300
Parchment, ink, gouache
H 42.0 cm W 32.0 cm

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GRACE AFTER MEALS AND
OTHER OCCASIONAL
PRAYERS AND BLESSINGS
Moravia, 1728
Parchment, ink, gouache
H 7.5 cm  W 5.5 cm

The scribe of this book, Nathan ben Simion of Meseritsch, wrote numerous Haggadot and prayer-books, now scattered in libraries and collections around the world. His distinctive style and charming miniatures have made his productions highly esteemed. Occasional prayer-books like this one were often made for women.
In the 18th century, some Mohalim (circumcisers) preferred to have the order of their ceremony in manuscript form (rather than using a printed edition). Occasionally, the circumcision ceremony itself was illustrated. These illustrations are usually naive in rendition, but have great charm. No other work of this sort, "Jacob ben Avraham, Scribe," is known.

REISEN TEXTE

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MOHEL BOOK

Germany (?), 1787
Parchment, ink, gouache
H 7.3 cm W 4.5 cm

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READINGS OF THE SHEMA AND COUNTING OF THE OMER

Germany (?), 1738
Parchment, ink, gouache
H 6.5 cm W 5.0 cm

This delightful miniature manuscript is unusual both in its size and in its dozens of illuminations and decorated words. The tooled binding has silver clasps, and the book was probably made for a person who traveled often. Though this manuscript is unsigned, it is most likely by the same artist as a parallel manuscript in a Hamburg library—"Isaac ben Yehuda."
Salamone de’ Rossi, the last and most famous of the Jewish court musicians in 16th-century Mantua, was both a musician and a composer. His last contribution was the arrangement for voice, in madrigal style, of psalms, hymns and other religious poems for use in festival services in the synagogue. This rare book, which was published by Bragadini in several fascicles, contains the earliest printed music in a Hebrew book.

The Jews are known as the “People of the Book”, and the Moldovans are no exception. They were interested in documenting book production of Jewish interest, both major works in the history of Hebrew printing and non-Hebrew work which concerned things Jewish. The Moldovan home is in many ways a “temple to the book”, with every room a library in itself. Among their books are many editions of the Bible.

Daniel Bomberg, one of the first, and the most prominent, Christian printers of Hebrew books, published almost two hundred Hebrew titles, including the earliest complete editions of both the Babylonian and the Palestinian Talmud. Indeed, his typographical layout for the Talmud page became the standard form still used today. This Bible was the third that he printed, issued in fascicles over a three-year period, and complete copies are rare. Some of the initial words are enhanced by hand in gold, reminiscent of manuscript ornamentation.
Seder ha-Kunteres. Occasional Prayers and Hymns
Avignon, 1765
Letterpress
H 26.0 cm  W 20.5 cm

Hebrew books have been printed over the last five centuries at hundreds of cities around the world. In some places, such as Amsterdam and Venice, thousands of editions were printed (including the earliest Avignon rite prayer-books, at the former). At Avignon itself, only four such books were published, of which this is the earliest: it was printed by Isaiah Vidal and Marcello Ventura. Prior to this all the special prayers and rites of Comtat-Venaissin were written down only in manuscript.

PRAYERS FOR ROSH HASHANAH, ACCORDING TO THE RITE OF THE HOLY CONGREGATION OF L'isle
Avignon, 1734
Paper, ink
H 29.0 cm  W 21.3 cm

This is an example of the manuscripts used in Comtat-Venaissin prior to the printing of the first prayer-book for their special rites, in Amsterdam in 1765. There are many such manuscripts in libraries, but only a few are decorated, as is this example. The gate motif of the title-page, suited to the High Days, is rather naive in execution. The gate is an unusual custom, with prayers and rituals outside the regular Ashkenazi and Sephardi rites. One such community was in Comtat-Venaissin in the south of France, encompassing the towns of Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon and L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue.

 '"ןלעה השקוחה'
"תפילת אריא-הנשה'
'לפ ימג'ה הקדשא ליל
13
12
1765
1734

RPL07.jpg

The Moldovan Collection displays a fascination for the unusual in Jewish life, for the "out of the ordinary". Thus, several Jewish communities preserved very special customs, with prayers and rituals outside the regular Ashkenazi and Sephardi rites. One such community was in Comtat-Venaissin in the south of France, encompassing the towns of Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon and L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue.

OCCASIONAL PRAYERS
Avignon, 1765

In the extraordinary Avignon rite of prayer-books, the composition and orders of the prayers were quite unusual (such as the title-page, decorated with the gate motif, suited to the High Days). At Avignon itself, only four such books were published, of which this is the earliest: it was printed by Isaiah Vidal and Marcello Ventura. Prior to this all the special prayers and rites of Comtat-Venaissin were written down only in manuscript.

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JEWISH CUSTOMS
For the Moldovan Collection, a full understanding of Jewish life would have been incomplete without the impressions of non-Jewish sources. Books dealing with this views, some of them illustrated, form an important part of the collection. As their own library shows, the Moldovans display a deep interest in other cultures too.
This famous early map, from *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae*, was reprinted numerous times during the 16th and 17th centuries. The schematic depiction of three major continents as leaves, with the city of Jerusalem at the center of the world, is a compelling and indelible image. This neat scheme is somewhat marred by the land-mass of "America, the New World", in the lower left-hand corner.

The first, Latin edition of the *Rudimentum Novitorum* was published in Lübeck and printed by Lucas Brandis de Schass in 1475. The book includes a round map of the world, with "Palestina" and "Judaea" at its center. As if in continuation of the world map, this map shows the walled city of Jerusalem at its center. These maps, the earliest printed maps of clear date, are also the earliest attempt to indicate land features in a realistic relationship to one another. The present map, from the French edition, is almost as rare as the original edition, of which only two copies are known.
Many travel books served as guides to the Holy Sites and buildings of the Holy Land, and to Jerusalem in particular. This volume, by the Franciscan Bernardo Amico, describes the sites, accompanied by illustrations etched by the now famous artist Jacques Callot. (This is the first edition with Callot’s etchings). The de Angelis map of Jerusalem (see No. 18) clearly served as the model for the Jerusalem map seen here.

TOPOGRAPHICA Delineatio Hierosolymae

Rome, 1578
Copper engraving (in two sheets)
H 55.0 cm  W 81.0 cm

Referring to in cartographic literature as the "Lost Map of Jerusalem", this copy was discovered and researched by the Moldovans only some twenty years ago, and is still the only copy known. The map was compiled by a Franciscan monk, Antonio de Angelis of Lesca, who lived in Jerusalem from 1570 to 1578. Made for pilgrims to the Holy City, it served as a prototype for numerous later maps of the city (see No. 19).
HEVRA QADISHA COMB

Bohemia (?), dated 1647/48
Silver, cast, engraved, die-stamped
H 9.6 cm W 7.2 cm (comb only)

The Hevra Qadisha, “Holy [Burial] Society,” of each Jewish community oversees the preparation of the dead for burial, sees to the burial itself, and cares for the cemetery. Many communities had special utensils for the ritual cleansing of the dead, such as the set of comb, fingernail pick and ear scoop. The inscription on the comb reads: “He will destroy death forever” (chronogram, Isaiah 25:8 = (3)408 = 1647/48).

CIRCUMCISION KNIFE

Germany (?), dated 1769/70
Silver, engraved; camellia steel (blade)
L 19.6 cm W 1.5 cm

The special knives for Jewish circumcision are usually double-edged and must be very sharp. This example bears a Hebrew inscription derived from the ceremonial prayers, an appeal to “Elijah, Messenger of the Covenant, stand on my right and support me.” The dotted letters provide a chronogram date for 1769/70.

THE CYCLE OF JEWISH LIFE

The course of Jewish daily life has provided much material for the Moldovan Collection. Jean Moldovan loved the special jewelry worn by Jewish women in many lands, and the collection is rich in such pieces. Dr. Moldovan has a special feeling for the Tefillin cases which a Jew would carry with him to morning services in the synagogue. The variety and richness of this part of their collection has seldom been equaled. Objects from birth (the circumcision knife and some of the amulets) to death (the Hevra Qadisha mortuary comb) are well represented. Such pieces as the three Ketubbot, “Marriage Deeds”, are just a few of the many illuminated examples in the Moldovan Collection, originating in a multitude of locations and periods.
AMULET CASE

Italy, 18th century
Silver, repoussé, cast, gilt
H: 12.0 cm  W: 9.0 cm

This splendid type of amulet case bears the name of "The Almighty", flanked by symbols associated with the Holy Temple in Jerusalem; such symbols are found on Torah ornaments in Italy as well. At the bottom is a bunch of grapes, a classical symbol of fertility and health. Within the hollow case is a parchment inscribed with various Kabbalistic texts, including angels' names, arranged in and around a Star of David. "May they protect... the bearer of this amulet from the Evil Eye and from witchcraft ... and from evil harm and from bad diseases and from every thing bad, from now and until eternity..."
WOMAN'S AMULET

Kurdistan, early 20th century
Silver, chased, engraved, die-stamped; horn
Pendant: H 7.7 cm  W 7.2 cm
Swords: L 6.4 cm; Cases: L 8.9 cm;
Chain: L 121.5 cm

The main pendant bears numerous names of the Lord, angels’ names, together with amuletic texts, “A protection to the bearer of this amulet”. Among the angels are the five archangels, Uriel, Raphael, Gabriel, Michael and Nuriel. The apotropaic texts state, “You shall not be in fear of night, nor of the arrow in flight in daytime... A thousand shall fall at thy side and a myriad at thy right hand.”
Such sword amulets were often given to children, a sibling of whom died young.

AMULET NECKLACE

Italy or Balkans; Middle East, late 19th-early 20th century
Gold, engraved, chased, coral
Pendant: H 5.0 cm  W 2.3 cm;
Case: L 4.5 cm; Chain: L 54.0 cm

The pendant is inscribed Shaddai (“The Almighty”) on one side; on the other side, an inscription has been erased (probably the owner’s name). The pod-shaped amulet case is now empty of its parchment amulet. In its present form, this necklace is a combination of diverse elements.
TALLIT BAG

Morocco, after 1925
Silver, pierced, engraved, velvet
H 20.0 cm W 26.5 cm TH 3.5 cm

Purses for the prayer shawl (tallit), like the one shown here, were often made for a young man’s Bar Mitzvah, when he assumed responsibility for his compliance to the Commandments. In this case, the lad was “Maimon son of Isaac, May the Lord sustain and protect him”. The Hanukkah Lamp No. 74, also from Morocco, was made from a bag such as this. The style of silver openwork here was characteristic of both Fez and Meknes.

As was generally so in Morocco, the silversmiths in those towns were Jewish craftsmen.
This pair of Tefillin Cases bears depictions and a text derived from the Sayings of the Fathers (Pirqe Avot 5:20), “Be strong as the leopard and swift as the eagle, fleet as the gazelle and brave as the lion, to do the will of thy father which is in heaven”, as well as phrases adapted from Jeremiah 50:17, “Israel your people are scattered sheep,” and from the Song of Songs (2:14; 5:2; 6:9), “My dove, my perfection, in the cranny of the rocks”. The latter quote may indicate that the owner’s name was Jonah (lit. “dove” in Hebrew).
Kerkzeden en Gewoonten der ... Joden

Amsterdam, 18th century
Letterpress, engraving
H 16.0 cm W 12.5 cm (book)

In the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, the general enlightenment in European culture was accompanied by an interest on the part of non-Jews in Jewish religion and customs. Many books were published on the subject, mostly by Christians or converted scholars, many of which were accompanied by illustrations of the customs described. Jewish authors occasionally also sought to explain their religion to "the Gentiles", and this volume is a Dutch translation of "Histria de mi Ebraico", published in Venice in 1637, written by the famous Italian rabbi and scholar Leone Modena (1571-1648). This Dutch edition contains illustrations of four Jewish ceremonies, by the well-known engraver Jan Luiken.
This Florentine Ketubbah sanctified the marriage of two members of the Kimhi and Finzi families. In the top panel is a depiction of Adam and Eve, representing the first Jewish couple, rendered in micrography, while the frame is composed of psalms, also written in minute script.

Micrography, the art of forming patterns from very small lines of script, is essentially a unique Jewish art form. It was first formulated by Jewish scribes in Eretz-Israel in the 9th century, and has been used there and in many other lands ever since, spreading among the Jewish communities from Egypt and Eretz-Israel to Yemen in the south and Europe in the north. The present Ketubbah is a good representative of such scribal skill in Italy in recent centuries.
This Ketubbah, among the earliest known from Padua, shows the interesting use of family crests among the Italian Jewish families. Such "coats-of-arms" appear on many personal objects, such as prayer-book covers, textiles and documents of various types. Here, the two crests combined into one, seen in the divided shield, represent the Ha-Cohen and Rieti families.
In the Near East, decorated marriage deeds began appearing already in the late 18th century (although isolated Medieval examples are extant). The vase with flowers and the cypress trees, common in Muslim art, became standard motifs on the Ketubbot of Syria, Eretz-Israel and Egypt, as well as in Persia and other parts of the Ottoman empire. In the 19th century, the cypress tree was often also associated with the Temple Mount as seen in No. 15. The bridal couple here were from the Sasson and Calamano families — that is, of Middle Eastern and Italian origin.
This kabbalistic ring was surely worn for protection and healing in time of stress and need. The text invokes "The Lord, the Almighty ... Amen, for ever, Selah, eternally."
**BRACELET**

Morocco, 20th century
Silver, engraved enamel; glass
H 3.0 cm Ø 7.3 cm

The workmanship and style of this ornament indicates that it came from the Tiznit region in south-western Morocco. Most of the gold- and silversmiths of Morocco – as in many Muslim lands – were Jews. Enameling was practiced only in limited areas of Morocco, and was exclusively a Jewish craft.

**PENDANT**

Morocco, dated 1917
Silver, die-stamped; glass
H 14.3 cm W 11.4 cm

Such pendants, based on five bosses, had an amuletic significance, for this has the same numerical value as the better-known hand-shaped hamsa ("five") amulets used by Muslim and Jews alike – particularly in North Africa. This type of pendant was made by Jewish silversmiths in the coastal town of Essaouira.
BRACELET

Yemen, 20th century
Silver, filigree, gold wash
Ø 9.0 cm

Bracelets such as this one were generally worn in pairs by urban women in Yemen on festive occasions, and were part of a bride's trousseau.

NECKLACE

Yemen, 1930-50
Silver, filigree, gilt, turquoise, glass
H ca. 22.0 cm, W ca. 25.0 cm

This impressive necklace was designed and made by an important Jewish silversmith in San'a during the 1930’s and 1940’s. He was apparently inspired by Turkish or Indian jewelry. Though it was not favored by Jewish women, it was a popular ornament among Muslim women. Such motifs as the birds and the small “hamsa” hand pendants were uncommon in the Yemenite silversmiths’ repertoire.
The Sefer Torah, "Scroll of the Law", and its adornments represent a primary focus of Jewish collecting. Here, too, the Moldovans sought a representative collection, to demonstrate the unity and variety of the Jewish world. Such objects as the large Parokhet, the festive cloth, and the hanging brass lamp were mainstays in synagogue furnishings throughout Europe.

**SMALL TORAH ARK**

Eastern Europe, late 19th century  
Wood, carved, turned, painted; metal (lock, etc.)  
H 83.2 cm  W 50.8 cm  TH 21.3 cm

**Torah Scroll**  
Europe, dated 1890  
Parchment, inc brass, turned, cut-out, plated, engraved

**Torah Shield**  
Galicia, late 19th century  
Silver, repousse, engraved, parti-gilt  
H 11.2 cm  W 8.2 cm

**Torah Pointer**  
Europe, late 19th century  
Silver, cast  
L 11.6 cm  W 1.2 cm

While most Torah Arks are clearly in or from synagogues, there are smaller examples which were apparently made for home use. Some were kept by rabbis at home, while others were a luxury of the wealthy. Several such surviving "private" arks from the 18th century are elaborately crafted in silver. The present ark is made of more modest materials. Its flanking openwork panels on the sides resemble those of the great wooden arks of Eastern European synagogues, and the painted inscriptions within the doors were also quite common there. This ark houses a small Torah Scroll, the silvered staves of which are inscribed: "This Torah Scroll belongs to Rabbi Simcha son of R. Mordechai Shah or, completed in the month of Tishri year 5651" (=1890). The Scroll is covered with a later mantle, dated 1917/18.
Such a Torah Ark Curtain, Parokhet, was very expensive during the 18th century, and most of the extant examples were donated by “Court Jews” (see No. 1). This curtain was the “Donation of... Rabbi Juda Leib son of... the late Rabbi Simeon Ulla and his wife Mme. Gendele, daughter of... Rabbi Issachar Ber... in the year 'Year O Lord the voice of Judah' [chronogram, Deuteronomy 33:7 = (5)484 = 1723/24]; the work of my hands, with the Lord’s help, Elkanah, Cantor from Furth.” Elkanah left his name on several Parokhhot made by him. Indeed, there were several well-known male embroiderers of synagogue textiles, in both Germany and Czechoslovakia.
The Jewish ceremonial art of North Africa was apparently deeply affected by that of the Jews of Spain prior to the Expulsion from that land in 1492. Though we know little of Spanish forms of Rimmonim, the window-shape here - so common in North Africa - may have survived from the days of Judeo-Spanish glory. Most of the silversmiths in Morocco, as in other Muslim lands, were Jews, and they produced objects for Muslims and Jews alike. This type of Torah Finials seems to have been characteristic of the towns of Fez and Meknes.

Ukraine, dated 1889/90
Silver, filigree, engraved, cast, parcel-gilt
H 37.5 cm Ø10.9 cm

These imposing, tower-form Torah Finials (Rimonim) were intended to be placed atop the two rods of the Torah Scroll. The Hebrew dedicatory inscription reads: “This is the donation of Rabbi Zeev Wolf son of R. Hayyim Tennenblatt, in honor of the Torah, Year [5]550” (= 1889/90).
A Torah Pointer, often called "Yad," "Hand," or "Moreh, Moreh Mapam," "Indicator," is used to avoid touching the parchment of the Torah Scroll during reading. The form of this piece is found in Eretz-Israel and the eastern parts of North Africa. The dedication inscription, in Hebrew, reads: "Arturo Goura, Dedicated unto the Lord."
This typically Ashkenazi Torah Pointer was made in the workshop of a family of Jewish silversmiths, named “Becker”. It was "The donation of Yehudah with his spouse Mme. Miniam, Blessed among women, year [5]605" (= 1844/45).

Typical of Italy, this Torah Pointer bears a Hebrew dedication: "Thanks unto the Lord for the healing of the son, a dear child, the blessed, he is (?) the blessed youth, Joshua Hananel Osillio (?) year 5544 of the Creation of the world" (= 1783/84).
Torah Shields in Germany first began appearing in the 16th century, and served to mark the Torah portion to be read. In Galicia, they appeared at about the same time, but were intended merely to enhance the beauty of the Torah. The Ta’arog, “Torah Shield”, shown here is one of a dozen examples of similar form, and still contains its original plaque for “Rosh Hashanah” and “Shavuot”. It was dedicated by “Elihan and his wife Treinele Stedtauer, in the year [5]606” (= 1845/46).
This typically Polish Torah Shield has a feature only rarely encountered: instead of a set of movable plaques to denote the Torah readings to which its Torah Scroll was rolled, it has a dial engraved with the respective readings: "Sabbath", "New Year", "Day of Atonement", "Tabernacles", "Passover", and "Pentecost".

Poland, mid-19th century
Silver, repoussé
H 27.6 cm  W 21.2 cm

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H 27.6 cm  W 21.2 cm
The richness and beauty of Italian textiles is proverbial. The surviving examples were made both for the Church and for the sumptuous homes and palaces of the artistocracy and wealthy merchants. The Italian Jewish community also used the finest textiles, both in the synagogue and at home. As in this piece, many of these textiles are distinguished by their lush floral decoration, richly worked in gold and silver threads. Here, the embroidered Hebrew text is from the Book of Psalms. Though the precise use of this piece is not clear, it was probably a mappa, a cover for a reader’s desk in the synagogue.

**TORAH SHIELD**

Ancona, dated 1791/92
Silver, repoussé, gilt
H 27.6 cm W 21.2 cm

This unique type of Italian Torah Shield was commonly called hatz-steker, “Demi-Crown”; it was used also in the Balkan Jewish communities. The Hebrew inscription reads: “Crown of the Torah. Year 5552 [=1791/92]. Gift presented by ... Shimshon son of ... Abraham Alcostantini of Ancona... to [the congregation of Urbino] in honor of the Lord and his Torah.”

**FESTIVE CLOTH**

Italy, 18th century
Cotton, silk, metal
H 60.0 cm W 60.0 cm

The richness and beauty of Italian textiles is proverbial. The surviving examples were made both for the Church and for the sumptuous homes and palaces of the artistocracy and wealthy merchants. The Italian Jewish community also used the finest textiles, both in the synagogue and at home. As in this piece, many of these textiles are distinguished by their lush floral decoration, richly worked in gold and silver threads. Here, the embroidered Hebrew text is from the Book of Psalms. Though the precise use of this piece is not clear, it was probably a mappa, a cover for a reader’s desk in the synagogue.
The Mizrah ("East") is hung on the eastern wall of the home or synagogue to indicate the direction of prayer. Dov Berl Weiss crafted this colorful papercut example in 1801, exceptionally early for this type of work. He filled it with the animal and floral imagery so popular among the Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. Made from cheap paper, and generally exposed to the effects of light, few have survived. The folk-art of the papercut was a common one in many countries. Jews practiced it primarily in Eastern Europe where papercuts were often made as wedding gifts, many by yeshiva students.
The Sabbath, the day of rest and prayer, is celebrated both at its entrance, with the kindling of candles and a blessing over wine, and at its exit, with the Havdalah ceremony, involving a blessing over the light, with a special candle; over spices, often in special boxes; and over wine, in special cups. These ceremonies gave much scope for the crafting of objects customarily used in them. The Moldovans sought out such objects with an eye to variety of style and material. Some of the Sabbath objects in the exhibition found weekly use in the Moldovan home, which was then always crowded with family and friends.

**WOMAN'S SABBATH RING**

Galicia, 18th century

Gold, engraved, enameled; carnelian, gold inlaid; tourmalines

H 2.2 cm  W 2.0 cm  Bazel: L 1.3  W 2.0 cm

This elaborate, finely wrought ring is probably much older than its Jewish use. The inlaid stone bears the image of a Sabbath candelabrum and the Hebrew inscription: "To kindle a Sabbath light", taken from the blessing made by the woman of the house over the Sabbath candles – one of a Jewish woman’s basic duties. A tax stamp was placed on the shank in Cracow early in the 19th century.

**HANGING CANDELABRUM**

Poland, 18th/19th century

Brass, cast

H 50.0 cm  Ø 51.0 cm

Hanging candelabra such as this were generally used in synagogues, as can be seen in many old photographs of such buildings throughout Europe. The ornamentation here is typical of Eastern Europe.
FESTIVE CLOTH

Iranian Kurdistan, 19th century
Cotton, silk embroidery
Ø 610 cm

This colorful embroidered cloth is one of about a dozen such pieces known in museums and private collections. Among the Jews of Kurdistan it was customary for the families of an engaged couple to exchange gifts on large brass trays. This cloth was traditionally embroidered by the bride, and initially used to cover the gift-laden tray. The motifs are derived from Islamic art.
SABBATH CANDELABRUM

Russia or Poland, first half of 19th century
Brass, cast, turned
H 39.5 cm, 32.5 cm

This is a grand form of candlestick for the Sabbath. It was the woman’s duty to light the Sabbath candles, just before the entrance of the holy day of rest. This splendid example is a Moldovan family heirloom, for it had belonged to Dr. Moldovan’s great-grandmother in Eastern Europe.

SABBATH WALL LAMP

Jerusalem, 1920’s
Brass, chased; semi-precious stones
H 40 cm, W 32.0 cm

At the center is a depiction of the Two Spies, sent by Moses to report on the Holy Land. The Hebrew inscriptions read: “Holy Sabbath”, “It had to be borne on a carrying frame by two of them” (Numbers 13:23); “This is what they told. We came to the land you sent us to: it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit” (Numbers 13:27). This lamp was made in the Bezalel School workshops, and is appropriately signed “Bezalel Jerusalem” in Hebrew. The founders of the Bezalel School sought to “revive” a Jewish art, yielding an eclectic style reflecting, among other elements, both romantic Orientalism and the swirling of Art Nouveau.
BOOK BINDING

Holland. 17th century
Tortoise-shell, silver, gilt
H 9.2 cm  W 6.7 cm  TH 3.8 cm

A style of fancy bookbinding in Holland used tortoise-shell as boards, with silver hinges, clasps and corners. The three edges of the book itself have been gilded and bear a goffered floral pattern as well. The present example encloses a Spanish prayer-book printed in Amsterdam in 1655/56. Indeed most Jewish examples of tortoise-shell bindings are from the wealthy Israelite Portuguese community in Holland.
This cup, which is one of the smallest of its type, may have been made for a child. It is inscribed in Hebrew: "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). This faceted form of hexagonal goblet became the standard type of Jewish cup in Germany during the 18th century.

The Hebrew inscription reads: "The officer Samuel Zeve son of [the Rabbi] Mordechai Hertzenstein". The depiction of a basket containing possibly two lulavim and two etrogim (palm-leaves and citrons) may indicate that the cup had been intended for the Sukkot (Tabernacles) festival. Its naive but charming execution of the decoration would seem to point to a rural Jewish community.
This finely wrought cup was made in the Bezalel School workshops, as one of the inscriptions on it states. The other inscription is from Proverbs 23:3: “Do not ogle that red wine as it lends its color to the cup, as it flows on smoothly.” The depictions show Torah Scrolls, one on the background of a Menorah. This cup was exported to Czechoslovakia, as is indicated by a tax stamp below the rim.

**KIDDUSH CUP**

Ukraine, dated 1898/99
Silver, engraved
H 7.4 cm, Ø 6.7 cm (rim)

The person mentioned is said to have been a descendant of the Dejer Rebbe, a Hasidic leader in Transylvania. Such cups are still treasured among Hasidic families as revered heirlooms.
Filigree spice towers for the Havdalah ceremony were common throughout Ashkenazi Europe. Some of the towers were splendid works, as is this example, and a few of them, as here, have small figures of Jews on them. The figures here are holding a Torah Scroll and a Ram’s-horn; a Matzah (the Passover bread) and the perforator for making it; a cup and a candle for the Havdalah ceremony; and a Torah Shield and a mallet for waking worshippers for the early-morning prayers.
This form of spice box, common in the Polish region, enables those making the blessing over spices — during the transition from the Holy Sabbath to the profane weekdays — to smell the spices as if from a flower on its stem.

**Havdalah Compendium**

**Berlin, ca. 1800**

Silver, cast, repoussé, die-stamped

H 23.2 cm, W 8.4 cm (base)

The brief Havdalah ("separation") ceremony, marking the end of the holy Sabbath and the beginning of the secular week, includes blessings over wine, spices and light. This combined candlestick and spice box was thus used at that time. Such Havdalah compendia were common in the German-speaking areas of Europe.

**Spice Box**

Galicia, mid-19th century

Silver, engraved, die-stamped

H 15.2 cm, W 6.6 cm (base)

This form of spice box, common in the Polish region, enables those making the blessing over spices — during the transition from the Holy Sabbath to the profane weekdays — to smell the spices as if from a flower on its stem.

**Spice Box**

Prague, 1813

Silver, filigree, die-stamped

H 13.3 cm, W 5.0 cm (base)

This modest spice box is of a form typical to 19th-century Prague. This piece bears a series number on the lid and on the base, evidence that it was "mass" produced by the silversmith — probably in batches of five or ten at a time. This early example was made by a Jewish master, Rafael Jonas Goldschimid, who was active in 1804-41: it was the Goldschimid family who seems to have originated the design.
SET OF SUKKAH DECORATIONS

Italy, ca. 1700
Paper, ink, gouache; cut-out
H 32.0 cm  W 41.0 cm (each)

Even today during the festival of Sukkot, the Sukkah (booth) is ornamented, often with pictures or prayers painted or printed for the purpose. Italian tradition favored such decorations in sets of up to seven, inscribed with various blessings for the holiday. This set is hand-lettered and painted, and is more ornate than most. A particularly fine example, it is one of several such decorations in the Moldovan Collection.

THE JEWISH FESTIVALS

The objects used on the major Jewish holidays are well represented in the Moldovan Collection. As in all facets of the collection, there is a balance among the different periods and places. A special love of Dr. Moldovan's is the Passover Haggadah, and the collection includes one of the finest selections in the world, many of which were used around the Moldovan family table at the traditional Seder. Special attention should be paid to the Etrog Box given by Jean Moldovan to her husband, with a note still within it, indicative of their close partnership in Judaica collecting and in life: "Dearest Alfred. Happy Birthday... Dr. Tovely [a New York dealer] kept it a secret for me from you.... It's yours. It's Jewish. I'm yours. I'm Jewish. Take us both."

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ETROG BOX

Germany (1), ca. 1900
Silver, chased, cast, engraved
H 9.5 cm W 18.7 cm

The Hebrew inscription on the lid reads: "And you took unto you the fruit of the citrus tree" (Leviticus 23:40).
Within is the note in Jean Moldovan's hand, mentioned above (in the introduction to this section).

ETROG BOX

Jerusalem, 1920-30
Silver, filigree; glass (gems); copper (coins)
H 8.9 cm W 12.5 cm

This Etrog Box, made at the Bezalel School workshops in Jerusalem, was exported to Latvia for sale there, as hallmarks on the bottom indicate.
There are two ancient Jewish coins set into the sides of the lid, one — from the First Revolt against Rome, inscribed "Year two" [of the revolt = 68 CE], and the other of King Agrippa I.
The Festival of Hanukkah

The festival of Hanukkah is inextricably linked to the Jerusalem Temple, and celebrates the “Rededication” of that Sanctuary over two millennia ago. Nothing has represented the Jewish nation over the last two millennia more than the symbol of the Menorah from the Temple. Representations of it have been found in archaeological excavations in Jerusalem dating from the period when the Temple itself still stood not far away. And today, it is the symbol of the State of Israel. The Hanukkah Menorah (“Lamp”) is used in every Jewish community, in both the home and at the Synagogue. Its appearance is quite variegated, being influenced by local forms and motifs of the many cultures in which the Jews have lived. With examples from both the East and the West, they make up a significant portion of the Moldovan Collection.

HANUKKAH LAMP

Lemberg (Lvov), 1866-72
Silver, cast, chased, engraved
H 85.3 cm W 58.7 cm

Inscription around base: “With You is the fountain of life by Your light do we see light” (Psalms 36:10). Several identical lamps were made, one of which had been in the Great Synagogue in Lvov, and another of which is at the Jewish Museum in New York. This is one of the largest silver Hanukkah Lamps known.
The form of this Hanukkah Lamp reflects that of the Menorah in the Temple in Jerusalem. This lamp, however, with the large figure of a lion on the stem, is most unusual, as is its size, though later in the 19th century mass-produced lamps of similar dimensions were not uncommon.
**Hanukkah Lamp**

Morocco, after 1925
Silver, pierced, engraved
H 32.2 cm W 24.9 cm

This Hanukkah Lamp was made from the silver panels of a Tallit Bag like No. 25, including the piece bearing the name of the original owner of the bag. The name-plate here reads in Hebrew: “The devout Shelomo son of Abraham ben Ezra, May the Lord sustain and protect him.”

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**Hanukkah Lamp**

Italy, 17th/18th century (†)
Brass, cast
H 14.3 cm W 22.7 cm

The decoration of the backwall of this Hanukkah Lamp is unique. At the center is the seven-branched Menorah of the Temple, flanked by a Hebrew inscription often found on Hanukkah Lamps: “For the lamp is the commandment, while the light is the Torah” (Proverbs 6:23).
It is often held that this "Synagogue" form of Hanukkah Lamp, which was popular in the Ukraine and Poland for some 200 years, reflects the facade of a synagogue. The side-pieces are in the form of magnificent rampant lions. Filigree Hanukkah Lamps of this type were made in both the Ukraine and Galicia, just across the border in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In general lines, they imitate the splendid Hanukkah Lamps of this region fashioned in the form of a Torah Ark, as then to be seen in the synagogues there. Such Hanukkah Lamps have wrongly come to be known as the "Baal Shem Tov" type: they were first made many years after the death of the first "Baal Shem Tov", founder of Hasidism.
The form of this case is typical of the later work of the Yaninna silversmiths, whose earlier filigree was much heavier and less refined. The flower finial at the top is derived from Italian prototypes. Much silver Judaica made in Yaninna was exported to other parts of Greece and to the rest of the Balkans. Silver Megillah Cases were for private use, as were illuminated Esther Scrolls. The scrolls used in the synagogue for the public reading on Purim eve are invariably plain and not kept in precious cases.
PURIM PLATE

Germany, dated 1763/64 (or 1766/67)
Pewter, engraved
Ø 22.4 cm

This plate was made for Mishloah Manot, “Sending Gifts”, one of the customs of Purim. On the bottom of the plate, and on the rim, is the name of the sender: “Kalman son of Meir from Bergel”. “This is from me, Kalman, Kalman son of Meir”. Around the rim is the text of Esther 9:31: “These days of Purim shall be observed at their proper time”, and Esther 9:22: “And sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor”. Within the plate “Evil Haman”; “Mordechai”, and “Thus shall be done for the man whom the king desires” (cf. Esther 6:6-11); below, [524] (or [527]) (= 1763/64 or 1766/67); on shield: “AM Katz” (surely the name of the owner).
Purim Noisemaker
("Grager")

United States(?), 20th century
Silver, cast, die-stamped, engraved, aventurine
H 38.3 cm  W 22.0 cm  TH 6.0 cm

Noisemakers – for drowning out the name of Haman during the reading of the Scroll of Esther on the festival of Purim – have taken many forms over the last century or so. This particularly elaborate and precious example even shows in three-dimensions the pendant figure of the Jews’ arch-foe, as related in Esther 7:10 and on the object itself: “So they hanged Haman on the tree.”
Since the first printed Hagaddah, in the 15th century, thousands of editions have been published, many of them with illustrations. The earliest illustrated Hagaddot of the 16th century, beginning with the famous Prague Hagaddah of 1526, are the rarest and most important. This lovely Mantua edition is basically a copy of the Prague edition, with several changes of illustrations and typographical design which bring it more in line with Italian taste. While the Prague Hagaddah shows Abraham crossing the River Euphrates in a rowboat, the Mantua illustration depicts him in a Venetian gondola. Another feature of this Hagaddah is that it is entirely printed from woodblocks, without using metal type.
The inscription around the rim of this goblet, which is of a form common in the eastern German towns, reads: "You shall keep the month of Aviv." The inscription, quoting Deuteronomy 16:1, refers to the Passover holiday, which falls in the Biblical month of Aviv. The silversmith who made this goblet also made a large, magnificent Hanukkah Lamp at the Jewish Museum in New York.

Besides the listing of the stages of the Passover Seder around the rim, the inscriptions give the name of the owner, "Jakel," and the date 1819. The Jewish practice of re-engraving old pewter plates for ritual use was confined to Central Europe.
The Moldovan Collection is particularly rich in costume prints from both West and East. Travel books, which often contain such depictions, were a very popular genre in the 19th century. Those which include costumes are of particular interest still today, especially those of regions considered exotic, such as the Middle East and North Africa. As here, Jews were often represented among the types and costumes illustrated. Wilke refers to this very depiction in his published travel journal, "Sketches in Spain...."

A JEWISH WOMAN OF PERA

London, 1846
Lithograph, by Sir David Wilkie
H 45.0 cm W 31.0 cm

The Moldovan Collection is particularly rich in costume prints from both West and East. Travel books, which often contain such depictions, were a very popular genre in the 19th century. Those which include costumes are of particular interest still today, especially those of regions considered exotic, such as the Middle East and North Africa. As here, Jews were often represented among the types and costumes illustrated. Wilke refers to this very depiction in his published travel journal, "Sketches in Spain...."

ART AND THE JEWS

The large quantity of art works in the Moldovan home, original and printed, by both Jewish and non-Jewish artists and craftsmen, framed on the walls and stacked in drawers, represents a variety from many places and times. These works reflect both Jewish persons, such as "A Jewish Woman from Pera", and the Jewish experience as shown in the Soviet poster against anti-semitism and the wonderful serigraph by Ben Shahn in memory of the martyrs of Warsaw. As with all sections of the Moldovan Family Collection, a large exhibition could be mounted from these works alone.

THE KLEZMERS

Poland, late 19th century
Watercolor, by Kolodorfier
H 21.0 cm W 27.0 cm

One of the most colorful institutions of Eastern European Jewry was the Klezmer band ("Yiddish, from the Hebrew for "musical instruments") – a kaleidoscopic group of Jewish instrumentalists which varied in quality and quantity from occasion to occasion. As pictured in this delicately rendered work, the group – with violins, a base, a zither, a horn, a flute and a clarinet – is under the direction of a badchan, a jokester and entertainer who would provide merriment at celebrations.

"הכילהים"
The world of Ben Shahn (b. Kaunas, 1898; d. New York, 1969) is generally categorized as Social Realism. His strong liberalism, allied with an interest in Jewish sources and the Hebrew letter, has left a broad legacy of powerful works, highly accessible to the viewer. This work, one of an edition of 97 commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto, conveys a strong impression of grief. The Hebrew text is from a medieval lamentation recited on Yom Kippur, commemorating the "Ten Martyrs" put to death by the Romans, archetypes of Jewish martyrology.
ARTISTIC EVENING
Amsterdam, 1933
Lithograph, by Samuel Schwarz
H 92.0 cm  W 72.0 cm

From the late 19th century on, the poster has become a major means of communication and artistic achievement. This medium has concerned many leading artists of our period, and in many cases has led artists to specialize in its production, as commercial graphic artists. This poster announced a fundraising event on behalf of the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. Ironically, the artist eventually perished in Auschwitz.

In the decades following the Russian Revolution, the Soviet government made extensive use of posters as propaganda on many different issues. This was a period of artistic experimentation in new styles and techniques. Many of the artists involved were Jewish, including Alexander Tychler, who made this poster with its striking, stylized graphics. He took a part in the Russian Avant-Garde movement in the 1920's.
This elaborately ornamented Hebrew alphabet book is a collaborative effort of the author of the rhymes, Levin Kipnis, one of Israel’s most prominent children’s authors, and the illustrator, Zeev Raban, the best-known artist of the Bezalel School in Jerusalem. The cheerful rhymes are illustrated in a style combining European ornament, Jewish symbolism and motifs drawn from nature in the landscape of Eretz-Israel.

This delightful Yiddish story, "Tale of a Girl with a Red Scarf," is by Leib Kvitko. A Dovga's colorful illustrations are filled with depictions of heroic farmers and happy proletarian children. Altogether, they have created a wonderful piece of Jewish children's literature, published on the eve of the terrible purges which spelled the beginning of the end to Jewish culture in the Soviet Union.
57. For the family emblems, see C. Roth: "Stemmi di famiglie ebraiche italiane", in D. Carpi et al., ed.: Scritti in memoria di Leone Carpi. Saggi sull'Età viscontea, Jerusalem 1967, pp. 165-184.


63. For other such figures, see S.S. Kayser & G. Schoenberger, eds.: Jewish Ceremonial Art, Philadelphia, 1959, No. 96; and M.G. Košik: Towers of Spice. The Tower-Shape Tradition in Havdalah Spiceboxes, Jerusalem 1982, Nos. 66-68.

64. The maker of this piece, Johann Georg Il Fournier (W. Scheffer: Berliner Goldschmiede, Berlin 1968, No. 1261a) was active 1772-ca. 1810; he and others of his family made Judaica, in both Berlin and Breslau.

69. For mother-of-pearl souvenirs depicting Jewish holy sites, see R. Grafman, "Objets d'art and souvenirs", in Y. Fisher, ed.: Art and Craft in Eretz-Israel in the Nineteenth Century, Jerusalem 1979 (Hebrew), esp. fig. 39.


83. The hallmarks on this piece are identical to those on the magnificent Hanukkah Lamp, S.S. Kayser & G. Schoenberger, eds.: Jewish Ceremonial Art, Philadelphia, 1959, No. 138. In the master's mark ("B/ZK"), the "B" signifies "Brody", while the master's initials were "ZK"; see L. Lepszy: Przemsyl Zlotniczy w Polsce, Krakow 1933, p. 67.


DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
JEAN SORKIN MOLDOVAN 57

Whose spirit and love of Jews and Jewish life helped create this collection and Whose memory is still present in every object
EXHIBITIONS IN WHICH THE MOLDOVAN COLLECTION WAS REPRESENTED

1973 Yeshiva University Museum, New York: Jerusalem through the Eyes of Travelers and Settlers
1975 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: The Passover Story
1977 Yeshiva University Museum, New York: The Jewish Wedding
1979 Yeshiva University Museum, New York: Purim: The Face and the Mask
1979 Yeshiva University Museum, New York: See and Savorify
1981 Israel Museum, Jerusalem: Hebrew Micrography. One Thousand Years of Art in Script
1982/83 Yeshiva University Museum, New York: Raban Remembered: Jerusalem’s Forgotten Master
1984 Hebrew Union College, New York: Jerusalem: Center of the World: Maps & Views
1984-86 Yeshiva University Museum, New York: The Art of Celebration
1985 The Jewish Museum, New York: The Jewish Patrons of Venice
1988 Yeshiva University Museum, New York: Ashkenaz. The German Jewish Heritage
1989 Israel Museum, Jerusalem: Promised Gifts
1989 The Jewish Museum, New York: Gardens and Ghettos. The Art of Jewish Life in Italy
1995 Yeshiva University Museum, New York: Letters Dipped in Honey: Jewish Children’s Literature from the Moldovan Family Collection

NOTES TO THE CATALOGUE ENTRIES

44. For the Becker family, see I. Patoky-Breytsanzky: “The Becker Family: Silversmiths of Bratslav”, Jewish Art 19/20 (1993/94), pp. 181-93; for other Becker Torah Pointers, see R. Grafman: Crowning Glory, New York 1996, Nos. 689 and 670. There is a Pointet in the Moldovan Family Collection by F. Becker, Sr., the hand of which is cast from the same pattern as that on the present example. The mark on No. 44, “BP”, apparently adopted by F. Becker, Jr. following common Hungarian practice, is unrecorded in E. Kissüegy: Merkzeichen der Goldschmiede Ungarns, Budapest 1936.
51. Cf. Torah Pointer No. 75,361,4, with a dedication to a Karaita synagogue in either Cairo or Jerusalem in 1857, now at the J. Magnes Museum in Berkeley.
65. For a very similar depiction and inscription, see Y.L. Bieler & E. Fink: Jewish Life in Art and Tradition, Jerusalem 1980, p. 55, upper right.
For anyone even slightly interested in Judaica, entering the Moldovan home is an experience evoking emotions similar to those of a child entering Disneyland for the first time – pleasurable shock, fascination, stimulation, suspension of belief, total awe. The entrance hall, living-room, dining-room, den, even the bedroom – every wall is covered with framed items of Jewish interest; every shelf is packed with books; all available surfaces display exquisite objects of Jewish life and ritual. A restless, penetrating Jewish spirit underlies the entire Moldovan Family Collection. No visitor can leave without an understanding of the collection’s leitmotifs: family involvement, Jewish commitment, variety, and a comprehensive worldview. Jewish identity is central to the Moldovans. The convergence of this factor with the collectors’ dedication and wide-ranging interests has yielded an extensive collection which provides an overview of all the major aspects of Jewish existence.

The title “The Moldovan Family Collection” is an accurate reflection of its true nature, for it is indeed a family effort. Dr. Alfred Moldovan, his late wife Jean, their two sons Joseph and Micah, their daughter-in-law Susan, and even their grandchildren, Daniel and Jessica. Jean’s active partnership with Al is particularly evident, both in the overall quality of the objects and in the extent of the individual classes of objects, such as children’s literature, posters or Jewish ethnic jewelry – her special passions.

Jean was often the “deciding factor” in purchasing an object which at the time seemed beyond the sum of its components. As with every collection, there is a process of elimination. Each object represents some aspect or another of Jewish life. The materials and forms merely reflect the circumstance of the objects’ creation. From the 15th century “Deed of Loan” of a European Jew to the graphic work of Ben Shahn in 20th century America; from the elaborate silver Synagogue Menorah from Galicia to the brass candelabrum of the Moldovans’ great-grandmother in Hungary; from the delicate micrographic rendering of an Italian Ketubah to the folk art of a papercut Mizrakh from Eastern Europe; from the silver Hanukkah Lamp from Morocco to the gilt-filigree necklace made by a Jewish artisan in Yemen – there is almost no end to the variety of objects by or concerning Jews in both their religious and secular lives.

As with all collections, the Moldovan Family Collection has a personal flavor. Thus, Jerusalem as the center of Jewish life and prayers over the ages finds a focal spot in the collection. It includes one of the finest groups of Holy Land maps and early pilgrimage literature, and some of the rarest Haggadah extent. All these items contain representations of Jerusalem and other Holy Sites, as can be seen throughout the exhibition.

Each object displayed here is only a select representative of many similar items in the Moldovan Collection. Each one represents some particular aspect of the Jewish experience that so fascinates the family; each is but a single stone in the mosaic that they have created. The intellectual acuity, the esthetic sensibility and the nuclear Jewishness of the Moldovans have imbued their collection as an entity with a meaning far beyond the sum of its individual components. It is this comprehensive totality of Jewish experience presented by the collection, through the medium of material objects, which we seek to exhibit here – a true “Mirror on Jewish Life”.

William L. Gross
A Mirror of Jewish Life

A Selection from
The Moldovan Family Collection