JEWISH DIASPORAS EUROPEAN JOURNEYS

MUSEUM OF JEWISH HISTORY
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PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA

aepj

In collaboration with:

Ajuntament de Girona

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1. EUROPE AND THE JEWISH DIASPORA

Jewish communities have been living in Europe continuously for two thousand years through a shifting landscape of integration and segregation; dislocation and migration; tolerance and discrimination; opportunity and persecution.

Although Europe has been home for Jewish people in different places at different times, they have also remained aware, even in the best of times, that they have another home. Jewish life, ritual, and prayer remained literally and figuratively facing East: to Jerusalem and the Land of Israel.

Yet these yearnings did not prevent Jews from creating "homes away from home": autonomous communities with highly developed systems of self-government, and there was a fertile cultural dialogue between the Jewish community and the wider society in which they lived. When circumstance allowed, Jews rose to positions of prominence and authority within the government and participated in European cultural life. This was most apparent in the modern era, after the Enlightenment, when the walls of the ghettos came down.

Well over a million Jews live in Europe today. They are an integral part of multi-cultural Europe, active participants in almost all aspects of their countries' civic and public life. Jewish contributions to the arts and sciences continue unabated in Europe. Yet, the memory of the twentieth century still lingers, heightening the need for continued tolerance and mutual understanding between Jewish communities and their neighbours.



Barcelona Haggadah. Catalonia and Provence, 14th century
British Library, Ms. Add. 14761

2. COMMUNAL LIFE

Wherever they settled, Jews organized their lives around a communal structure, whose organization, institutions, and powers varied and were shaped by both external and internal factors.

Where they were permitted to live, they were often confined to a specific lane (such as the Frankfurt *Judengasse*) or "ghetto" (as Jewish quarters were often called after the establishment of the Venice ghetto in 1516). In Catalonia the Jewish quarters were known as *calls.*

Communities were also shaped by internal factors. Traditional Jewish lifestyle required services and institutions that could only be provided in a communal setting: education, provision of food that met Jewish dietary restrictions, places of worship, cemeteries, and more. It was like this in most of western European cities, as well as the medieval Catalonia villages.

Life in the Venice Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century

Venice map, by Frans (Franciscus) Hogenburg, 1572
The National Library of Israel, CT 219



From the thirteenth through eighteenth centuries, European laws required Jewish people to wear distinguishing clothing or badges of a particular colour in public: a yellow and red rowel in 14th century Catalonia, or a red hat in the case of Venice after 1500.
The Venice ghetto was far from homogeneous. Italian, Catalan, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and Levantine Jewish communities had each their own synagogue. Venice's status as a centre of print culture resulted in a constant exchange of ideas between Jews and non-Jews. It was also home to renowned physicians, rabbis, poets, philosophers, and their patrons. Shylock, the Jewish moneylender of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice,* would have lived in the ghetto.

Pinkasim: Communal Protocols

Pinkas Frankfurt am Main, 1552-1802
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 662=24



European Jewish communities, especially in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, recorded financial dealings, minutes of meetings, judicial rulings, executive decisions, voting results, and communal enactments in books called *pinkasim* ("record books" or "protocols"). A community's *pinkas* in effect chronicled and, in some ways, embodied the community itself. The sacrosanct quality of *pinkasim* led one prominent eighteenth-century Alsatian rabbi to quip: "If only the Ten Commandments had been recorded in the community *pinkas*, nobody would violate them." Also in Catalonia the Jewish communities used to record their internal activities (social, political and financial) in a book.

The *pinkas* in the image comes from Frankfurt am Main and is one of the oldest and most extensive such documents to have survived from early modern Europe, covering the period from 1552 to 1802 and containing over 500 pages. It is written in a mixture of Hebrew and Judeo-German. Jews have lived in Frankfurt almost continuously for close to 900 years. During the years chronicled in the *pinkas,* Frankfurt was the most prominent community in the Rhineland and the primary representative of Ashkenazic culture.

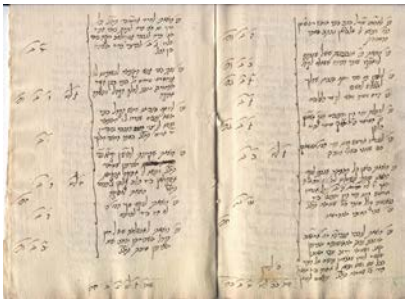


Map of Frankfurt, by Frans Hogenberg. Cologne, Georg Braun, 1574
The National Library of Israel, 2=YAH. C 1909

In the map of Frankfurt you can see where the *Judengasse* was located. It is the rounded street at the eastern edge of the city.

Account book of Jucef Zabara, tax collector of the Jewish community of Girona, 1443

Facsimile copy (Historic Archives of Girona, Notarial files Gi-2, vol. 212, f. 8 & f. 9)
Museum of Jewish History, Girona



Another magnificent example is the ledger of accounts of Jucef Zabara, dated back to mid-15th century and preserved among the Hebrew documents of the Historic Archives of Girona. It is an exceptional document which provides much good information about the tax system and organization of the Catalan medieval Jewish communities, specifically, the ones of Girona and Castelló d'Empúries.

The communities developed systems of self-governance, including mechanisms to legislate, adjudicate, and enforce internal affairs. Occasionally, communities banded together to form regional councils, such the Council of Four Lands, which functioned in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for nearly 200 years until 1764. In Catalonia, the groupings of *aljamas* were known as *colectas* and had basically tax purposes: their function was to collect taxes uniformly and also uniformly transfer them to the Christian authorities that might require them.

Notwithstanding the cultural and religious segregation and autonomy in all periods and all regions, the Jewish communities fused elements of local culture with their own traditions: to create music, in the architecture, styles of dress, cuisine, and language, elements that feature the hybridity of the Jewish culture.

Likewise, non Jewish cultures assimilated some aspects, most of all cultural, but also material and social, from the Jewish tradition with which they coexisted for centuries. In short, interaction and influences in the ways of life occurred from both sides and this is one of the bases of the European wealth: its important cultural diversity.

A Marital Contract *(Ketubah)*

Ketubah. Rome, Italy, 1797
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 901.331=1

Since antiquity, a *ketubah* (Jewish prenuptial contract) is drawn up before a couple weds, in order to give the bride financial protections and security. Over the centuries, these Aramaic documents were often rendered artistically, reflecting local style and colour.

This *ketubah* is from Rome, dated back to 1797. The ornamentation surrounding the main text of the contract incorporates Hebrew verses as well as Italian motifs.



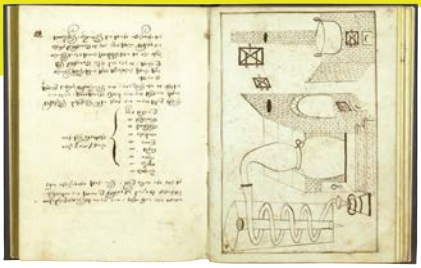
Ketubah. Tudela, August 18th, 1300
Facsimile copy (Royal and General Archives of Navarra)
Museum of Jewish History, Girona



Some very interesting *ketubot* have been preserved in the regions of Navarra, Castile and in the Catalan-Aragonese Crown, all of them dated back to the 13th and 15th centuries. They do not show many ornamentation but are very important objects to know about the women condition in the Jewish marriage, their names and their life stories. This shown in the case is a facsimile reproduction of the *ketubah* of the city of Tudela.

Recipe liquor book

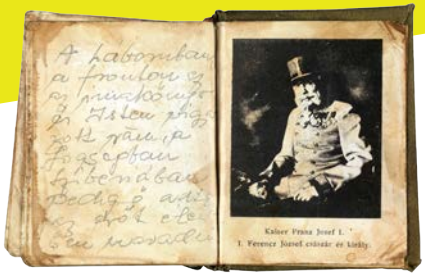
Mittheilung der Neusten und Vorteilhaften Practischen Destileur Kunst und Liquerfabrikation (Notice about the newest advantages in the practice of the art of distillation and production of spirits) 1800
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 28°8519



One of the ways that Jews interacted with wider society was through occupations that brought them into contact with the general public. A curious example, widespread in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and into the modern era, was the production and sale of alcohol. Landowners would often lease these rights to Jewish innkeepers and tavern keepers.
This distillation book from 1800 contains recipes, in Yiddish, for brewing alcoholic beverages.

Loyalty to the government

Siddur, Hungary, 1915
The National Library of Israel, 92 B 4820=0



Many Jews in Europe served in the army, through volunteering or conscription. This soldier's prayer book reflects his loyalty, featuring a handwritten prayer for the wellbeing of the ruling monarch. Rezso Geschwind, a Jewish soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I, carried this prayer book with him during the war period and his captivity in Siberia.

3. JEWISH JOURNEYS

A Diaspora (from Greek διασπορά, "scattering, dispersion") is a scattered population that maintains collective memory of a shared homeland. In the case of the Jews, the original homeland is Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel. The first Jewish Diaspora community consisted of exiles from Judah, the territory around Jerusalem, to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE. The exile to Babylon resulted, oddly, in a great intellectual productivity, and the Jewish culture which flourished during this period was very big, very important and very outstanding.

After the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE and following the repression that the Roman army imposed on the raised population of the province they renamed "Palestina," new Jewish centres emerged in Mesopotamia and around the Mediterranean. With the rise of Islam in the seventh century, the Jews were divided between lands under Muslim rule and Christendom, each influencing the evolution of their respective communities.

In the tenth century, two major Jewish cultural centres emerged in Europe: al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) and the Rhineland, known in Jewish sources as Sepharad and Ashkenaz, respectively. These communities also faced different persecutions: the Almohad and Almoravid invasion in the Islamic environment; the Crusades, the Inquisition, Blood Libels or accusation of ritual murder, local and national massacres and expulsions. In the Hispanic kingdoms the most rough times were under the attacks of 1391 and in 1492 with the Expulsion. Jews fled to the safer environments of North Africa, southern France, Holland, Italy but they mainly headed for the Ottoman Empire, and later to the New World. In these places they formed communities called "Sephardic", which had quite an impact on the politics of their countries (Morocco, Holland, Turkey…) Most of them have survived up to the present days, keeping their customs, traditions and the own language of their country of origin.

Today, some families maintain the names and the own patronymics from the times they lived in Catalonia, and they still keep that feeling to have a Hispanic and Catalan origin. That is the case of the Saltiel, the Lobel or the Gerondí, Barceloní, Tarraconí or Tortosí, with clear references to the cities where the families come from.

4. TOWARDS THE MODERN WORLD

By the middle of the sixteenth century and after the Expulsion of the Hispanic kingdoms, the Ottoman lands and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had emerged as new centres of Jewish life. There, too, periodic upheavals kept the Jews moving in every direction, looking for an escape to massacres and constant harassment.

During the late-eighteenth century, Poland was partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, each experiencing the advent of modernity. The emancipation of most Jews of western and central Europe by the mid-nineteenth century granted them individual rights as citizens and changed the very fabric of Jewish religious communal life. New philosophies, like the one of Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) and his circle in Berlin, sought to harmonize Judaism with Enlightenment principles and civic values, leading to Reform Judaism, which made significant changes to Jewish liturgy and practice. Their opponents to these reforms and modernization (known as "Orthodox", living mainly in Germany and Austria-Hungary) sought however to maintain commitment to traditional forms of Jewish law and life. The religious and spiritual extremism of some sectors led to the formation of ultra-Orthodox groups, known as *Chassidim, Maskilim, Misnagdim.* These movements largely changed the ways of living and the behaviour of many Jewish populations in Eastern Europe.

Bomberg Talmud

Babylonian Talmud, published by Daniel Bomberg, Venice, 1548
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 174.2=24

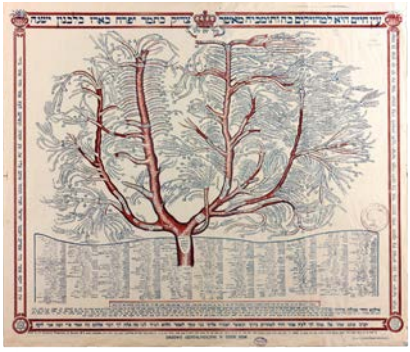


In the sixteenth century, Venice emerged as one of the most influential centres of Hebrew printing, with prolific printing houses such as Bomberg, Giustiniani, and Bragadini. These printing houses set the enduring layouts of the classic Jewish texts, most notably the Talmud.

The Talmud is the formative work and cultural masterpiece of rabbinic Judaism, the unparalleled source of Jewish law and lore. It was produced between the second and sixth centuries CE in Eretz Yisrael and Babylonia, and is written in Hebrew and Aramaic. In the words of Heinrich Heine, it was a "portable homeland" to the Jews.

Genealogy of a Movement

Baal Shem Tov family tree, Warsaw, 1927
The National Library of Israel, L 413



Hassidism is a mystical movement with an emphasis on personal piety, founded in Western Ukraine in the mid-eighteenth century. Its founding figure was charismatic mystical healer Baal Shem Tov. Through his disciples, the movement spread through Eastern Europe, developing different Hassidic courts each with unique doctrines and dynasties.

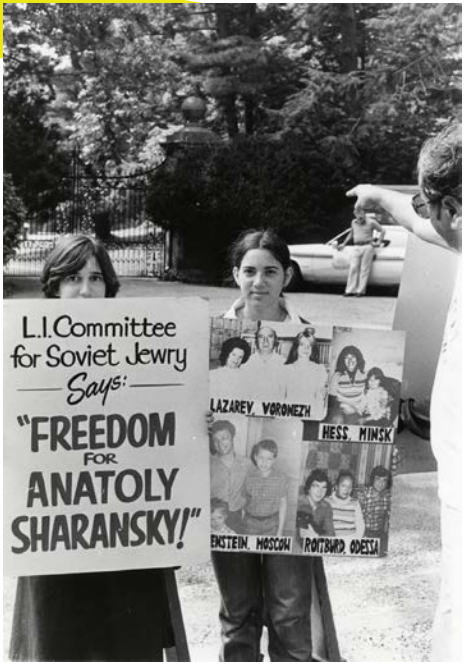
This tree, by Mikhel Leib Rosenfeld of Oradea Mare, Romania, represents the genealogy of the Hasidic movement. The trunk bears the name of the Baal Shem Tov; the largest branches name his leading disciples, and so forth through the generations. Around the tree are Biblical verses that use trees as symbols for life and endurance.

In the Russian sphere, Jews were restricted to the "Pale of Settlement" stretching from the Baltic to the Black Seas. The Jewish population increased dramatically there during the nineteenth century, ultimately comprising almost half of the world's Jews. Millions emigrated westward, especially to the United States, but were replaced through natural growth. Like elsewhere, Jews of the Pale underwent secularization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, developing a new cultural identity manifested through the emergence of Hebrew and Yiddish secular literatures and Jewish interpretations of Universalist revolutionary politics and ideologies.

The Pale was finally abolished with the overthrow of the Tsar in 1917 and the reconstitution of Poland and the Baltic states. A generation later, most of this population was wiped out in the Holocaust, and many survivors found themselves stuck behind the Iron Curtain. It was only in the 1990s that hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews were finally able to emigrate to Israel and other countries.

In support of the Soviet *refuseniks*

Photograph from the Natan Sharansky private collection
The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, P333



In this photo, young women are campaigning for the release of Soviet *refuseniks*, Jews who were denied the right to leave the USSR and go to Israel, among them Natan Sharansky (Donetsk, 1948), who was accused of high treason for his activism, and went on to become a prominent public figure in Israel.

5. LONGING FOR JERUSALEM

When King Solomon inaugurated the Jerusalem Temple, he expressed hope that, even in exile, the Israelites would "pray to You toward their land which You have given to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name" (I Kings 8:48). It has indeed become a universal practice for Jews to pray toward Zion (a Biblical name for Jerusalem). Jerusalem thus remained the symbolic centre of the Jewish world, binding together Jews scattered all across the globe.

In almost 2,000 years since the final destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the Jewish people never forgot that they are in exile or lost hope that they would eventually return to Zion. Various rituals for remembering Jerusalem developed: Temple observances were re-enacted from afar; synagogue architecture reflected the structure of the Temple; days of fasting and mourning for the destroyed Temple were observed; and Jerusalem was mentioned at the times of greatest joy, as no joy could be complete while Zion remained in ruins.

The Twelve Tribes of Israel

Colour manuscript. Vilnius, early 1800s.
The National Library of Israel, Pal 1001 - D3 (Pas.); Laor 887

This map, probably copied from a drawing made by the Vilna Gaon, shows the boundaries of Israel's twelve tribes according to the partition described in the Biblical book of Joshua. The Vilna Gaon had never been to Israel and the map represents the symbolic significance of the land, rather than its actual geography.



The rise of modern nationalism raised questions about whether Jewish minorities could fully integrate into European nations and be accepted as equal citizens. By the late nineteenth century, it was clear from incidents like the Dreyfus Affair that even the most assimilated Jew could be considered foreign, awakening the Jewish desire to establish a nation-state in its homeland. Jews also began returning to the Holy Land in increasing numbers.

All these elements converged in the establishment in 1897 of a formal political movement, Zionism, by Theodor Herzl. It achieved its aspirations with the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948, but only after the Nazis implemented their horrific "Final Solution to the Jewish Question."

Theatrvm Terrae Sanctae et biblicarvm historiarvm: cum tabulis geographicis aere expressis avctore Christiano Adrichomio Delpho (Christiaan van Adrichem, 1533-1585). Cologne, ca. 1533
E. E. Schalit Library. Nahmanides Institute for Jewish Studies

Christian Kruik van Adrichem, a catholic priest born in the Netherlands, is the author of several works based on the Holy Land and Jerusalem (late 16th ct and beginning of the 17th) such this *Theatrum.* This work includes different idealized maps of the dispersion of the twelve tribes of Israel in the ancient times, a very recurrent theme in the Christian thought of modern Europe.



The Haggadah

Leipnik Haggadah. Illuminated manuscript. Darmstadt, 1733
The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel Ms. Heb. 8°983



The Haggadah is comprised of prayers, hymns, and recitations that form the script for the Passover Seder, the ritual meal at which Jews all over the world tell the story of the Israelite exodus from Egyptian slavery. The Haggadah has been illustrated more often than any other Jewish sacred text.

At the conclusion of the Seder, participants exclaim, "Next year in the rebuilt Jerusalem," expressing faith in their eventual return to their homeland to bring the Paschal offering in the rebuilt Temple, as depicted in this illustration of the Jerusalem Temple.

Non-traditional Haggadah

"Haggadah" of the Halutz Movement. Warsaw, 1937
The National Library of Israel, 37 A 1201



The text of this "Haggadah" deviates greatly from the traditional text. This compilation in Hebrew and Yiddish was created by the members of the Halutz (Pioneer) Zionist youth movement in 1937 to reflect its reinvented Passover rituals, its passionate desire to the return to Zion, and its ideas about creating a new Jewish culture based on modern secular values yet rooted in Jewish tradition.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Eastern Europe witnessed the rise of many youth movements devoted to the idea of creating a Jewish home in their historical homeland. Many of these movements promoted an agricultural way of life and trained young people to become farmers and live in communes called kibbutzim upon arrival in Palestine. Halutz, founded in 1905 and headquartered in Warsaw, had 100,000 members in 25 countries throughout the world by the eve of World War II.

Fragment of a manuscript poem

Yehudah Halevi's "Bless, O Emanation of the Holy Spirit" fragment
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 8°1800/7



Despite the comforts of Spain and his personal and professional success there, Yehudah Halevi pined for Zion, the subject of some of his most evocative poems. Eventually he decided to undertake the perilous journey to the Holy Land, but he died soon after reaching its shores.

These verses are from the most famous of Halevi's odes to Zion, translated into English by Nina Salaman:

"My heart is in the east, and I in the uttermost west--
-How can I find savour in food? How shall it be sweet to me?"

6. MOSES BEN NAHMAN JOURNEY OF EXILE

Before the major attacks and extreme violence towards the Hispanic Jewish communities took place, and before the issue of the 1492 Decree of Expulsion, some Jewish people of Catalonia had already decided to make *Alyah* (migration) to the Holy Land, aiming to fulfil the commitment (*mitzva*) to die in the so called *Eretz Israel* (Land of Israel). This was the case of the renowned Nachmanides, the Girona rabbi, who towards the year 1263, already older than sixty, decided to quit the city where he was born and lived all his life, to set up in the "Holy Land of Israel". His Hebrew name was Mosheh ben Nahman, and in his time he was also known under the Catalan name Bonastruc ça Porta. The name Nachmanides was given to him later and comes from the Latin designation. In the Jewish world he is today also known under the acrostic: RaMBaN.

Moses ben Nahman (ca. 1194-ca. 1270) is, undoubtedly, one of the most famous figures of the medieval Jewish history. He was a rabbi, Talmudist, kabbalist, exegete and poet. He earned a major respect by his contemporaries, for his studies, his considerable knowledge and for his condition of spiritual and religious leadership. He maintained an excellent relationship with king James the 1st, who with he shared friendship and also a professional link: he most probably operated as royal counsellor in the affairs of the Catalan *aljamas*, that is why the King granted him with revenues, interests and profits all over his life. He was part of the Royal Court, keeping close, continued and advantageous relations. Some Jewish chronics tell, later on time that King James "was a very wise man, and this wisdom came from him [referring to Moses ben Nahman]".

In the summer of 1263, the King summoned, at the Royal Palace, the famous Barcelona Disputation (a public Dialectic among Christian and Jews). Nachmanides headed the list of the Jewish delegation and the converted Dominican friar Pablo Christiani, the Christian's one. The Hebrew documents which have come to our days, describe the eloquently defense of Judaism made by Moses ben Nahman, and ensure that the King praised him as speaker.

Shortly after, and with the aim to fulfil the precept to travel to the Land of Israel, he abandoned Girona to visit Jerusalem. Some defend the theory that the Master of Girona was expelled from the city and from Catalonia by King James, as a sentence to have blasphemed against Christianity. This, however, is questioned by a large sector of historians who consider very unlikely that such a figure as Moses ben Nahman, so respected everywhere, might have been victimized to defend Judaism. It is a true fact that the Dominic friars had thrown a serious accusation against his person, and influenced the King to provoke his expulsion, but a new interpretation of the historical facts points up that the King reversed any verdict and process against the Master of Girona. Thus it is that Moses ben Nahman might have quit Girona on his own free will and would have start a willing Diaspora, with the aim to fulfil a divine commandment, with a deep sense of longing to return to the Holy Land of Israel.

The Master of Girona died in the Land of Israel, in the city of Acre or in Haifa, by 1270. There is where they "dig the grave" as he refers in one of the letters sent to his son, who remained in Girona. The letter appears printed in the last page of a Venetian edition (1595) of his book *Torat ha-Adam*. A copy is displayed here. From the reading we can realize his longing for his city and depicts the dramatic situation (for the Jewish people) of the Jerusalem of that time.

"May the Lord bless thee, my son Nahman, and mayst thou see the good of Jerusalem. Yea, mayst thou see thy children's children*, and may thy table be like that of our father Abraham.*

I write this letter in Jerusalem, the Holy City. For, thanks and praise unto the Rock of my Salvation, I was privileged to arrive safely there on the 9th of the month Ellul, and stayed there till the day after the Day of Atonement. Now I intend going to Hebron, to the sepulchre of our ancestors, to prostrate myself, and there, to dig my grave.

But what shall I say to you concerning the country? Great is the solitude and great the devastation, and, to put it briefly, the more sacred the places, the grater their desolation. Jerusalem is more desolate than the rest of the country; Judaea more than Galilee. But even in this destruction it is a blessed land.

It has about 2000 inhabitants, about 300 Christians live there who escaped the sword of the Sultan. There are no Jews. For, after the arrival of the Tartars, some fled while others died by the sword. There are only two brothers, dyers by trade, who have to buy their ingredients from government. There the Ten Men meet, and on Sabbaths they hold the service at their home.

But we encouraged them, and we succeeded in finding a vacant house, built on pillars of marble with a beautiful arch. That we took for a synagogue; for the town is without a ruler, so that whoever desires tot take possession of the ruins can do so. We gave our offering towards the repairs of the house. We have sent already to Scechem to fetch some scrolls of the Law, which had been brought thither from Jerusalem on the invasion of the Tartars. Thus they will organize a synagogue and worship here. For continually people crowd into Jerusalem, men and women, from Damascus, Zobah (Aleppo), and from all parts of the country, to see the Sanctuary and to mourn there.

May He who thought us worthy to let us see Jerusalem in her desertion, grant us that we behold her rebuilt and restored, when the glory of the Lord shall return to her. But you, my son, and your brothers and the whole of our family, may you all live to see the salvation of Jerusalem and the comfort of Zion.

These are the words of your father, who is yearning and forgetting, who is seeing and enjoying.

Moses son of Nahman

Give my greeting also to my pupil Mose, the son of Solomon, the nephew of your mother. Tell him […] that there, before the Holy Temple, I have read his verses, weeping bitterly over them. May He who caused His name to rest in the Holy Temple increase your peace together with the peace of the whole community."

*translated by Franz Klober, *Letters of Jews through the Ages*, New York 1952

Torat ha-Adam, Moses ben Nahman. Venise, Imp. de Giovanni di Gara, 1595
Facsimile copy
Museum of Jewish History, Girona

The Jewish communities were internally governed by religious and ritual regulations, many of which were compiled in books that families had at home and were consulted with great assiduity and transferred from generation to generation. An example was the text written by the famous Rabbi of Girona Moses ben Nahman in the 13th century. It is a compilation of ritual norms aimed to fulfil an exemplary Jewish behaviour, in accordance with the Law of Moses. The title *Torat ha-Adam* means the Law of the man. The book of the Master of Girona was part of the small (or not so small) private libraries of the *call* (Jewish quarter), as we have found it in various medieval documents, such as inventories and wills of Jewish people in the city. The showcase shows the replica of a copy printed in Venice in the sixteenth century and it should be noted, as seen on the first page, that it passed through ecclesiastical censorship with no problems.


ספר תורת האדם
על דברות בני האדם ובית מועד לכל חי
Con licentia de' Superiori.

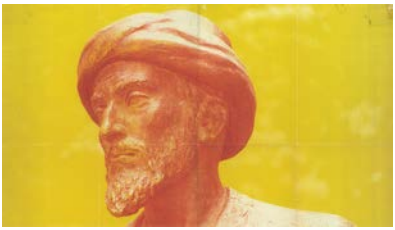
Throughout the generations, Jewish scholarship has flourished in Europe, producing individuals whose influence has extended far beyond the Jewish world, and contributed to the advancement of culture and society in many ways. Migration, the need to survive and adapt to new environments, and the state of being both insiders and outsiders, perhaps helped to create the conditions for innovation and creativity, and a willingness to challenge norms.

From antiquity, Jews contributed to European literature by translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek and Latin. Jewish poets and statesmen of the eleventh and twelfth centuries are leading examples of the profound mutual influence of Jewish and Islamic thought during Al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) "Golden Age." The Renaissance brought about Jewish involvement in medicine, Christian-Hebrew scholarship and printing. After Emancipation and the Enlightenment, Jewish contributions to European art and literature, science and technology, increased dramatically, with some notable individuals winning worldwide recognition.

Therefore, the contributions to the culture and the knowledge of some Jewish personalities, men and women, of different times and places of Europe, are very remarkable.

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Rambam or Maimonides), 1135-1204

Born in Cordoba, Spain, his family fled the Almohads when he was a young man, and he eventually settled in Egypt. Rambam was a prominent Jewish philosopher who had also mastered disciplines such as astronomy and medicine. The bulk of his writings, and especially his greatest work, *Mishneh Torah*, are on the subject of Jewish law and jurisprudence. His major philosophical treatise was T*he Guide of the Perplexed,* written in Judeo-Arabic.



Maimonides, by sculptor Amadeo Ruiz Olmos. Cordoba, 1964
Image files, The National Library of Israel

Mishneh Torah, ca. 1350
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 4°1193

A lavishly illustrated manuscript of Maimonides' major treaty on Jewish law.



Isaac Bashevis Singer, 1904-1991

Born in Leoncin, a village near Warsaw, Poland (then part of the Russian Empire). Singer was the son and grandson of rabbis; brother of the novelist Israel Joshua Singer (1893-1944) and writer Esther Kreitman (1891-1954). He grew up in the Jewish quarter of Warsaw, where Yiddish was spoken, in a scenario of recurrent pogroms. He studied in the rabbinical Seminary of the city. In 1935, due to the rise of Nazism and the threat to the Jews of Poland, he emigrate to the United Stated, where he began to write as a journalist and columnist for the newspaper *The Daily Forward* (written in Yiddish language for the New York Jewish people). He wrote in this language almost all his entire work, for which it was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1978. He died in Miami.

La Senhora, Gracia Mendes Nasi, 1510-1569

A wealthy Jewish businesswoman, born in Portugal from a family of *conversos* (Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism and who often practiced Judaism secretly, placing them under the constant threat of the Inquisition). Doña Gracia's international business took her to Antwerp, where she developed an escape network that helped hundreds of fellow *conversos* to escape the Inquisition, transporting them on her spice ships to the safety of the Ottoman Empire where Jews were welcomed. She lived in Ferrara, Venice, and later finally settled in Constantinople.



Reproduction of a silver medal by Pastonino de Pastori, 1553
The National Library of Israel, Schwad 02 14 59

Baruch Spinoza, 1632-1677

Dutch philosopher from a Spanish/Portuguese family of *conversos* who returned to Judaism upon reaching Amsterdam. He was one of the great rational philosophers of the 17th century, laying the groundwork for the Enlightenment and modern biblical criticism. However, he was ostracized by the Jewish community for his controversial ideas about the Divine.



Portrait of Baruch Spinoza
The National Library of Israel, Schwad 02 21 166

Postcard reproducing a painting by Samuel Hirszenberg, 1907.
The National Library of Israel, postcard collection, TM 8* 739



In the painting *Spinoza excommunicated*, the philosopher is portrayed walking the street, while religious Jews recoil from him.

Glückel of Hamelin, 1646-1724

Born in Hamburg, died in Metz, Lorraine. She was a Jewish businesswoman who engaged in trade, ran a factory, and provided for her 14 children, while keeping a diary that affords us a rare glimpse into the ordinary life of a Jewish woman of the 17th and early-18th century in the Rhineland. Because her family was so well documented, we know that her descendants include figures such as the poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), the social worker Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936), and Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888).



Portrait of Bertha Pappenheim in a 17th century costume, posing as Glückel for painter Leopold Pilichowski
The National Library of Israel



Excerpt from Glückel 's memoir, manuscript, 18th century
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 4311=8

Franz Kafka, 1883-1924

German-language novelist and short story writer who lived most of his life in Prague. Kafka is widely considered as one of the major figures of 20th-century literature. The surrealistic and absurd situations described in his books are the source of the word "Kafkaesque". He worked as an insurance clerk, writing in his spare time, and had little recognition when alive. He ordered his friend, Max Brod (1884-1968), to destroy his unfinished work after his death from tuberculosis at the age of forty, but Brod went against his will, and published it.



Kafka considered moving to Palestine at some point, and he began studying Hebrew in preparation. This is his practice notebook, featuring such words as "innocent," "snitch," "genius," and "tuberculosis" in Hebrew and in his native German.

Portrait of Franz Kafka
The National Library of Israel, Schwad 02 19 136



Franz Kafka, notebook with Hebrew-German word list. Autograph manuscript in pencil. Prague, ca. 1922.
The National Library of Israel, Schwad. 01 19 18

Marc Chagall, 1887-1985

Born in Vitebsk (today in Belarus), he studied art in St. Petersburg and then moved to France, where he gained renown as a modernist who worked in many different styles and media. His work featured elements of Eastern European Jewish folk art, inspired by his youth in Vitebsk.



Photograph by Marc Chagall with his signature. Paris, June 1925
The National Library of Israel, Schwad 02 21 07



This postcard shows six of Chagall's twelve famed stained-glass windows that adorn the synagogue of Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital. Each window depicts one of the Biblical Israel's twelve tribes.

Postcard reproducing Chagall's windows, 1965.
The National Library of Israel, postcard collection, TM 8* 495

Rosalind Elsie Franklin, 1920-1958

An English chemist, she worked on the nature of viruses, earning wide recognition for this work in her time. Her research into the structures of DNA and RNA led to the discovery that was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1962, and for which she was only recognized after her death.



Rosalind Franklin at work
© Henry Grant Collection.
Museum of London.

JEWISH DIASPORAS EUROPEAN JOURNEYS

MUSEUM OF JEWISH HISTORY
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