

11. Tobias Cohen, מעשה טוביה (*“Story of Tobit”*). Venice: Giovanni di Gara, 1708.

The title of the book may sound like the familiar *Book of Tobit*, but it is in fact a play on the author’s name. The book, which is a treatise on various medical and scientific topics, includes a beautifully engraved portrait of the author complete with fur doublet and cap. On the page shown here, the human body is depicted as a house; one scholar has suggested that it served as a mnemonic device for Jewish students of medicine (Etienne Lepicard, M.D.; Ph.D., Sackler School of Medicine, Tel-Aviv University).

12. Barukh Usilio ben Eliah Azriel. Printed broadside of liturgical poems for the holiday of Hoshanah Rabba (בליל החותם הגדול והנורא). Modena, 1751.

Poems in the form of the Italian *ottava*. Their frequent references to musical instruments echo the tradition of musical ceremonies associated with the holiday of Hoshanah Rabba in 18th-century Italy.

13. Rabbi Jacob Saraval and Rabbi Israel Laudadio, הלל והודאות לאל נורא עלילות / *Nell’occasione di essere stata attaccata dal vajuolo e per divina grazia restituita in salute Sua Maestà Maria Teresa*. Venice, 1767.

Prayer service held by the Jews of Mantua in thanksgiving for the recovery of Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria, from smallpox (*vajuolo*). Hebrew and Italian.

14. Hebrew broadside of prayer service for the victorious armies of Empress Maria Theresa. Mantua, 1778. The Hebrew title reads תפלה נאמרה בעלות המנחה אחר תשלום התפלה פה מנטובה בשנה התקל"ח על הצלחת מלחמות רוממות מע' הקיסרית המלכה . . .

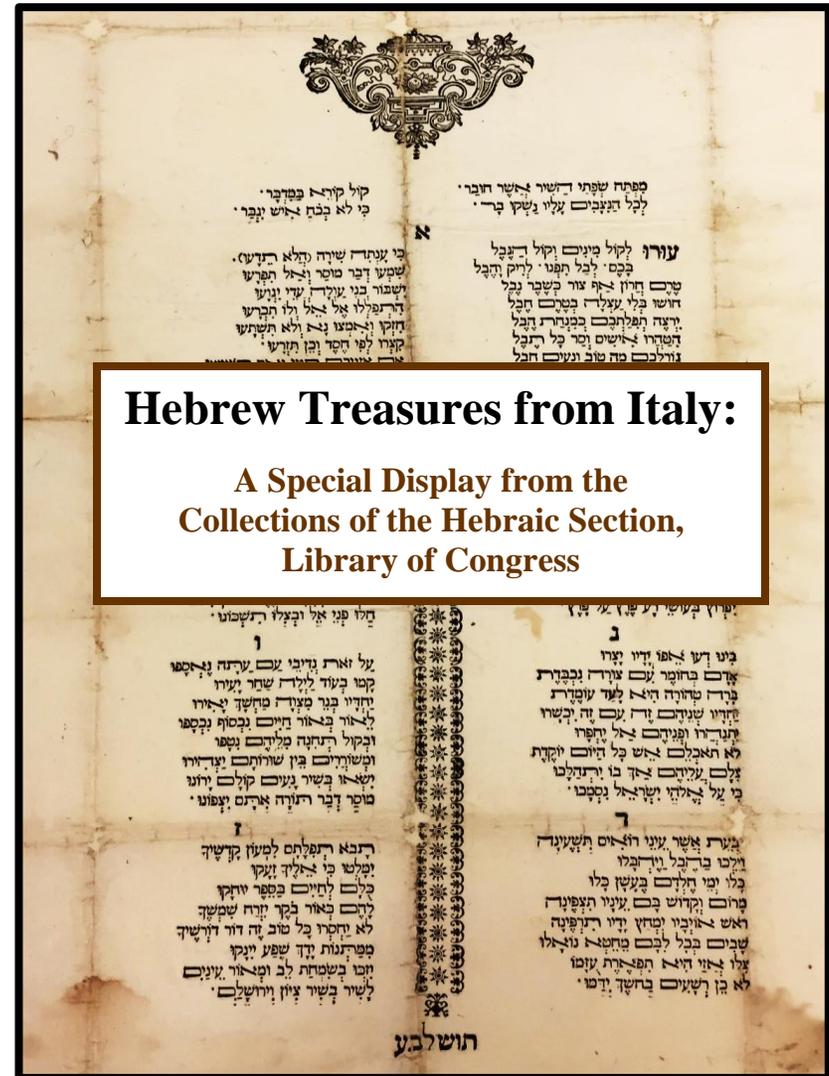
Note the tiny portrait of the Empress, clumsily drawn and showing considerable cleavage, in a rondel printed at the top of the broadsheet.

15. Printed document authorizing payment of medicine by the Charitable Society of the Ashkenazi Jewish Community (חברת גמילות חסדים ק"ק אשכנזים). Venice, 1794.

This large-scale broadside is graced by the image of a skeleton, no less. One clause of the text excludes payment for treatment of what was politely known as “the French disease” (*il morbo Gallico*), namely syphilis.

16. *Ketubbah* (“Wedding Contract”) for Aaron ben Hayim Cesana of Corfu and Sarah Rivka bat Mordecai d’Ovadia. June 12, 1805, Ancona.

Decorated *ketubbot* were a staple of Jewish life in Italy throughout the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The shape of this *ketubbah* is characteristic of Ancona, an important sea port and noted center of *ketubbah* production. Note the stylized rondels of the bride and groom gracing the sides of the text, with “Sarah” wearing an Ottoman-style turban and “Aaron” decked out as the High Priest.



A printed broadside with a liturgical poem for the holiday of *Hoshanah Rabba*. Modena, 1751 (Checklist, no. 12).

Tuesday, May 7, 2019
4:30 – 5:30 pm
Whittall Pavilion
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.



Checklist of Items on Display

1. מסכת פסחים: תלמוד בבלי: מסכת פסחים (Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Pesachim*). Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1520.

The cornerstone of mainstream Judaism, the Babylonian Talmud is a huge compendium of legal traditions going back to Jewish antiquity. It was transmitted orally from generation to generation until around 500 A.D. when Jewish sages in Babylonia committed it to writing. The tractate displayed here comes from the famous first edition of the entire Talmud, and is thought to have been the first volume to come off the press. On the last page of the tractate, open here, we see the printing information supplied at the end concerning the numeration of quires.

2. Abraham de Balme, מקנה אברם (*Avram's Acquisitions*). Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1523.

Many of the Jewish scholars who worked with Daniel Bomberg expressed unqualified admiration of the printer. In this book of Hebrew grammar, for example, our author voiced his praise of Bomberg in the rhymed introduction, referring to him as 'a man of charming attribute / long held in great repute.' De Balme also stressed Bomberg's devotion to Hebrew despite not being Jewish, noting that 'the feet of his forefathers did not draw nigh / to Mount Sinai.'

3. Responsa of R. Nissim Gerondi. Rome: Isaac ben Immanuel de Lattes, Benjamin ben Joseph d'Arignano and Antonio Blado, 1545-1546.

A collection of responsa by one of the most prominent Jewish scholars of 14th-century Catalonia. Professor Bernard D. Cooperman has traced significant developments of Jewish print culture and intellectual history in this seminal edition of the great rabbi's responsa.

4. Sermons of Isaac Joshua b. Immanuel de Lattes. Manuscript (LC Hebr. MS 99). 2-40 ff. Paper. 28 x 18 cm. 16th cent. Italian semi-cursive script.

An incomplete collection of sermons by Isaac de Lattes. Some bear information concerning the place and date in which they were delivered. On fol. 6v, for example, the author notes that he delivered the sermon in 5317 [1556], at the home of Asael Rieti in Bologna, where he was employed as a tutor to the orphaned children of Rieti's brother.

5. Eliezer Melli, לכל חפץ (*"For Every Desire"*). Venice: Daniel ben Cornelius Adelkind, 1552.

This book takes its name from Ecclesiastes 3: 17: "For every purpose there is a time and a rule," and as the title suggests, it deals with the formal side of Jewish religious practice. The book was dedicated to two members of the distinguished Abarbanel family: Judah ben Samuel Abarbanel and his mother, *Signora Benvenida* of Naples. With moving grace and notable alliteration, the author refers to Benvenida as "the most perfect of all" (*kulah kelulah min ha-kol*). The book was printed by the son of Cornelius Adelkind, named after his father's famous employer, Daniel Bomberg.

6. Shem-Tov ibn Shem-Tov, ספר האמונות (*"The Book of Beliefs"*). Ferrara: Abraham Usque, 1557.

A refutation of Maimonidean thought by a well-known rabbi from 15th-century Castile. It was printed at the renowned press of Abraham Usque, a former Portuguese *converso* who returned to Judaism after settling in Ferrara. His famous printer's mark depicts an astrolabe with a streamer bearing a Hebrew quotation from Psalm 130: קויתי יהוה קויתה נפשי ולקברו הוהללתי: ["I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope."]

7. Joseph Caro, שלחן ערוך (*Shulhan Arukh; the "Prepared Table"*). Venice: Giorgio di Cavalli, 1567.

A folio edition of Caro's seminal digest of Jewish law, printed just two years after the appearance of the first edition. Cavalli divided the four sections into 30 parts in order to promote Caro's injunction to study the entire work once a month.

8. Ovadiah ben Jacob Sforno, אור עמים (*"A Light unto the Nations"*). Bologna: Company of Silkworkers, 1537. Censor's mark on last page.

Well-known for his classic commentary on the Bible, Ovadiah Sforno was a rabbi, physician, and, for two years in Rome, the Hebrew teacher of the Christian humanist Johannes Reuchlin. This work, a rebuttal of Aristotelian philosophy, was published in Bologna, where he eventually settled down. A Latin translation of the book, which he dedicated to Henry II of France, was published in Bologna in 1548 under the title *Lumen Gentium*.

9. Responsa concerning the divorce granted by the young man Samuel Venturoso (*"Responsa concerning the divorce granted by the young man Samuel Venturoso"*). Venice: Giorgio di Cavalli, 1566.

Deals with a sensational divorce case that rocked Italian Jewry in the mid-16th century. It began when an impoverished young man got himself secretly engaged to an heiress, Tamar bat Joseph ha-Tamari. Dismayed by this turn of events, the young woman's relatives obtained a rabbinic writ forcing the young man to divorce the girl (since betrothals were as binding as a marriage) – and the battle was on. The Jews of Italy split into two warring camps, each collecting rabbinic opinions bolstering its own side and vilifying the other. This little book was printed by those who supported the dissolution of the engagement and includes a number of rabbinic opinions.

10. Leone Modena, סור מרע: שנים יחד מדברים על דבר הצחוק (*"Turn from Evil: A Dialogue about Gambling"*). Venice: Giovanni di Gara, 1594.

Rabbi, author, composer, and poet, Leone Modena was a man of many talents and a distinctly colorful personality. Much of what we know about Modena today comes from his Hebrew autobiography, a fascinating work in which we hear about his famous sermons to which all Venice flocked, the death of his fiancée, and the tragic murder of his son. We also hear about his obsession with gambling and the grief it brought him – the subject of the small work before us now.