

The Hebrew Section of the Library of Congress has long been recognized as one of the world's foremost centers for the study of Hebrew and Yiddish materials.

Established in 1914 as part of the Division of Semitica and Oriental Literature, its beginnings can be traced to **Jacob H. Schiff's gift in 1912 of nearly 10,000 books and pamphlets from the private collection of Ephraim Deinard**, a well-known bibliographer and bookseller who combed the world in search of rare Hebrew books and manuscripts. In the years since this initial gift, the Library has developed and expanded its Hebraic holdings to include all materials of research value in Hebrew and cognate languages. **Today the section houses works in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Persian, Judeo-Arabic, Aramaic, Syriac, and the languages of Ethiopia.**



Opening page from the Washington Haggadah.

Handwritten and illustrated by Joel ben Simeon. Vellum. Italy or Germany, 1478. Acquired from the collections of Ephraim Deinard.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

In addition to its more general holdings, the Hebrew Section houses a number of special collections. **Digitized Finding Aids** for these collections can be accessed at: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/amed/>

Highlights include:

Hebrew Manuscripts: approximately 225 manuscripts dating from the 11th to early 20th centuries, among them the Washington Haggadah of 1478, the chief jewel of the Hebraic Section. The collection is currently being digitized in its entirety.

Hebrew Incunabula: 37 books printed before 1501. These rare Hebrew "cradle-books" span the three major centers of early Hebrew printing: Spain, Portugal, and Italy.

Sixteenth-Century Hebrew Books: over 675 books printed in Italy, Eastern Europe, and the Ottoman Empire over the course of the sixteenth century, among them a number of first printings of classic works.

Ladino Books: books written in the language of the Sephardi Jews following the expulsions from Spain and Portugal. Its online Finding Aid was recently updated with approximately 200 titles.

Yizkor Books: Holocaust memorial books commemorating the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe destroyed in World War II.

Artist's Books: limited-edition books created at fine art presses. The Hebraic Section currently holds over 75 of these innovative books in Hebrew and Yiddish.

Rare Children's Books: a magnificent collection of some of the earliest illustrated books for children in Hebrew and Yiddish.



Order of Prayers before Retiring at Night. Manuscript on vellum. Hand written and illuminated by Joseph ben Schmalkalden. Mainz, Germany, 1745. Acquired in 2016.

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SECTION
COLLECTIONS

GROWTH OF THE COLLECTIONS

In 1958, the Hebraic Section received a second major boost through the enactment of *Public Law 480*. Thanks to this law, twenty-five American research libraries (including the Library of Congress) were supplied with a copy of virtually every book and journal of research value published in Israel. The PL-480 program for Israeli imprints, coordinated by the Library of Congress, lasted nine years (1964 - 1973) and provided each of the participating institutions with an average of 65,000 items.

Since the cessation of the program in 1973, substantial efforts and resources have been expended to maintain this high level of acquisition, as testified by the comprehensiveness of the Library's current collection of Hebrew-language materials in all genres.

Today, the Library's holdings continue to grow through purchase, donation, and exchange. Copyright law, another source of acquisition, has proved invaluable for at least one collection unique to the Hebraic Section, the *Lawrence Marwick Collection of Copyrighted Yiddish Plays*. These are more than 1000 original Yiddish plays in manuscript or typescript, written between the end of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th. Intended for the American Yiddish theater, the plays were submitted for copyright registration to the Library of Congress - and thus preserved for posterity.

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THE HEBRAIC SECTION TODAY

The rich holdings of the Hebraic Section reflect virtually every aspect of Jewish life through the ages. Over 250, 000 items are housed in a stack area adjacent to the section and are available for examination by researchers. They include an extensive range of books; a broad selection of periodicals current and historical; and a variety of Yiddish and Hebrew newspapers reflecting every possible shade of opinion.

The Hebraic Section strives to share the rich treasures in its holdings with visitors home and abroad. To this end, it has held two major exhibitions within the past twenty years, each showcasing special items from the collections: *From the Ends of the Earth* (1989) and *Words like Sapphires* (2012), the latter celebrating 100 years of the Hebraic Section. It also highlights items from its collections through blogs posted regularly on the:

Library's 4 Corners of the World Blog:
<http://blogs.loc.gov/international-collections/>



Portrait of Menelik II, Emperor of Ethiopia, as imagined by an unknown Spanish artist in 1896.

(Library of Congress African and Middle Eastern Division, Ethiopian Collection of Trade Cards)

The Hebraic Section welcomes groups interested in viewing its collections. To learn more about this or to be placed on a mailing list for its programs and events, please feel free to contact us!

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THE ETHIOPIAN COLLECTIONS

The Library of Congress holds the largest collection of materials from Ethiopia and Eritrea in North America. In addition to its many books in Amharic and Tigrinya, the Ethiopian Collection has significant holdings of newspapers and serials with over 350 serials to date and about the same number of newspapers, among them *Aemero*, the first newspaper in Amharic. Twenty of these newspapers have already been microfilmed and the two national newspapers, *Adis Zaman* of Ethiopia and *Hadas Eretra* of Eritrea, are also available on microfilm. *Berhanena Salam*, published from 1925 till 1934, is available in digital format. Other languages represented in the collection include Oromo and Ge'ez.

The acquisition of the Thomas Leiper Kane Collection in 2001 added a number of books printed before 1960 as well as an important collection of pamphlets. The crown jewel of the Kane Collection is its manuscripts, with about 250 codices on vellum and paper.

The Ethiopian Collection also offers researchers a significant number of photographs, postcards, and other items useful for researching the Italo-Ethiopian wars.

For more information about the Ethiopian Collection and its ongoing program of events, please contact:

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