

10. *Ketubbah (Jewish Wedding Contract)* from Bijar, in Iranian Kurdistan, for the bride Zikher Khanom Bradarani bat Ya'ir Arabbi and the groom Musa Khalami ben Aziz. 5 Tammuz, 5696 [June 25, 1936].

The *ketubbah* is the Jewish marriage contract, given by the groom to the bride at their wedding. Richly decorated with bright floral motifs, this *ketubbah* follows the norms of art in Islamic lands and does not include human figures, in striking contrast to *ketubbot* created in the European sphere. Though Iran was an important center of *ketubbah* illustration, this is the only one known from Bijar, a community in Iranian Kurdistan with approximately 650 Jews prior to 1948. The dowry specifies the gold *toman* ("coinage") that was "minted under Rezā Shāh Pahlavi," who ruled from 1878 - 1944.

11. Sasson ben Mordechai Shendukh, אמרי ששון (*The Words of Sasson / Joyfulness*). Baghdad: Solomon Bekhor Hussayn (הוצ'ין), 1891.

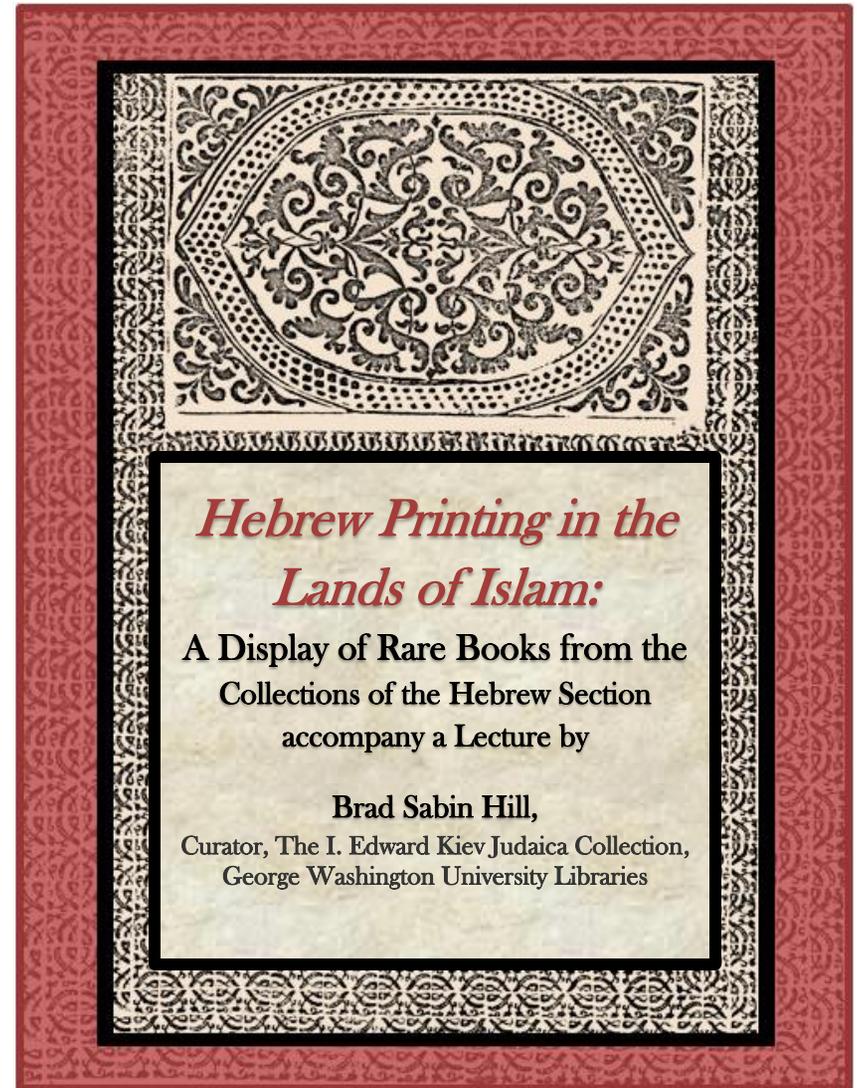
A collection of moral axioms by a Jewish scholar in Baghdad whose first name, Sasson, means "joyfulness" in Hebrew - hence the double meaning of the title. In his preface, the printer notes that the book came from a manuscript in the home of the author's grandson, Moses Shapir, together with many other writings. But in 1861, most of these were destroyed in a fire in Shapir's home, leaving only this single title which, as the printer remarks, remained like "content without form" until he printed it.

12. שפתי רננות (*Lips of Rejoicing*). Tripoli: Abraham Teshuvah, 1926.

One of fifty or so Hebrew books published in Tripoli, this book is a collection of penitential prayers and poems for the High Holy Days according to the rites of Tripoli and Djerba. Many of the poems were composed by Isaac ibn Ghiyyat, one of the great Hebrew poets who flourished in Muslim Spain during the 11th century. The title page displays a filigree frame printed in red and green ink.

13. *Kitāb-i mazāmīr-i Ḥaẓrat-i Dāvid* / Book of Psalms in Hebrew and Persian. Teheran, Iran, 2004. 570 pages. Calligraphy by Abdol-Hamid Masoumi of Teheran; illuminations by Mehdi Bahman.

This sumptuous, hand-illuminated Book of Psalms was created by Ayatolla Abdol-Hamid Masoumi of Teheran and donated to the American people in memory of the victims of 9/11. Fully illuminated and gilded in 24-carat gold, this is one of several books produced by Ayatolla Masoumi over the years as a means of fostering peace and reconciliation between members of all faiths.



Detail from *שפתי רננות* printed in Salonica, 1653 (Checklist no. 5).
Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress.

African and Middle Eastern Reading Room
Thomas Jefferson Building
Library of Congress

Thursday, September 15, 2016
12:00 noon – 1:00 pm

Baghdad and Tripoli, Aleppo and Tunis . . . these and other cities across the Middle East may fill today's headlines, but let us not forget that once – and indeed not so long ago - they were home to much of world Jewry and to vibrant, living centers of Hebrew printing and culture. Tonight's display, chosen from the shelves of the Library of Congress, highlights rare and unusual Hebrew books from this part of the globe. We hope you enjoy seeing them.

- Ann Brener, Hebraic Section,
African and Middle Eastern Division

Checklist of Items on Display

1. מדרש תהלים (*Midrash on Psalms*), Parts I-II. Printed by David ibn Nahmias in Constantinople (1512) and in Salonica, 1515.
This first printed edition of the classic Midrash on Psalms (also known as *Shoher tov*) was printed in the Ottoman Empire in two cities destined to become centers of Jewish life and Hebrew printing for centuries to come.
2. David ben Joseph Abudarham, פירוש התפילות (*Commentary on the Prayers*). Fez: Samuel Nedivot, 1516 (Kislev, 5277).
This classic commentary on Jewish prayers was composed in Seville, 1340, and is here shown in an extremely rare edition printed in Fez by Jewish refugees from the Iberian Peninsula. It is, moreover, the first dated book printed on the continent of Africa in any language. An exact copy of an earlier edition printed in Lisbon in 1489, it reflects the odyssey of Hebrew printers and their equipment during the early years of Hebrew printing.
3. מחזור לנסח ברצלונה מנהג קאטאלוניה (*Festival Prayer Book according to the Catalan Rites, Barcelona*). Salonica, 1526.
Prayers for the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement according to the rituals practiced by the Jews of Catalonia, many of whom had recently settled in Salonica and other places across the Ottoman Empire following the expulsions from the Iberian Peninsula.
4. Yom Tov Zahalon, לקה טוב (*Goodly Learning*). Safed: Eliezer ben Ashkenazi of Prague, 1577.
This commentary on the biblical Scroll of Esther was printed in Safed, a small town perched high above the hills of Galilee and a thriving center of Jewish mysticism during the second half of the sixteenth century. It was the first book printed in the Land of Israel in any language, and one of only six to roll off the press before it closed down several years later, thus bringing an end to Hebrew printing in the Holy Land for almost two and a half centuries. To learn about its resumption some 250 years later, see item no. 7, below.

5. Shabbetai ben Jonah, שי למורא (*A Gift unto Him that is Feared*). Salonica: Abraham Hagar, 1653.
A collection of responsa and novellae on Joseph Karo's *Shulhan Arukh*. The author, who lived in Salonica during the first half of the seventeenth century, took his title from a verse in the Book of Psalms (76:12).
6. Hayyim ben Joseph Vital and Isaac Luria, חוק לישראל (*A Law unto Israel*). Egypt [i.e., Cairo]: Abraham ben Moses Yatom, 1740.
A study-program consisting of readings from various parts of the Bible with selected texts culled from commentaries, the Talmud and the Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism). This is only the third Hebrew book ever printed in Egypt.
7. הגדה של פסח (*Passover Haggadah*). Jerusalem: Israel Bak, 1842.
First Haggadah printed in the Land of Israel, then under Ottoman rule, and the first Hebrew book printed in Jerusalem. Israel Bak, originally a printer in Berdichev, began his pioneering career in Safed, 1832, where he printed half a dozen books before an earthquake destroyed the city in 1837. Bak eventually relocated to Jerusalem, printing over one hundred Hebrew books before his death in 1875.
8. בקשת החיים והשלום (*Prayers for the Wellbeing of Muhammad as-Sadik Basha, King of Tunisia*). Tunis, 1860. In Hebrew, Arabic, and Judeo-Arabic.
This unique little book contains prayers and poems for the wellbeing of Muhammad III as-Sadik, King of Tunis from 1859-1882, offered up by the "Israelites dwelling under his rule in the city of Tunis." Hebrew poems in praise of the reigning sovereign are a known genre throughout Jewish history, and the Library of Congress preserves a number of interesting examples for members of other royal families, such as Joseph II, William of Orange, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Elizabeth of Austria.
9. ספר עלים לתרופה: אגרות מוסר (*Leaves of Healing: Ethical Letters*). Aram Tzoba [Aleppo]: Elijah Hai ben Abraham Sasson, 1866.
This volume contains two Hebrew letters considered classics of Jewish ethical literature: one written by Moses ben Nachman (Spain, 14th century) to his son; the other by the Gaon of Vilna (Poland, 19th century.) to his family. The book was printed in Aleppo, Syria, a city known in ancient Jewish sources as "Aram Tzoba" and an important center of Jewish culture well into the 20th century. According to Hebrew scholar Avraham Ya'ari, this is the 2nd of 66 Hebrew books printed in Aleppo from 1866 to 1933.

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