

### III. Music, Poetry and Literature

7. מחזור (*Prayer-book for the Holidays*), Augsburg: Chaim ben David Shahor, 1536.

An example of early Hebrew printing in Germany, this beautiful prayer-book is open to a liturgical poem written for Sabbath *Sheqalim*, one of the four “Special Sabbaths” before Passover. The poem was composed by Eliezer ha-Kalir, a prolific poet in northern Israel during the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. His poetry is noticeable for its rich rhymes, allusive language, and intricate forms. The first line of the poem (אשכול כופר אווי תאוות כל נפש) employs language from the Song of Songs (“a bundle of myrrh”) to create a metaphor for the Jewish people.

8. זמירות ישראל (*The Songs of Israel*) by Israel Najara, Venice: Giovanni di Gara, 1599.

A collection of religious poems by Israel Najara, (1555-1625), one of the greatest Hebrew poets of the early modern period. A kind of wandering troubadour, Najara’s travels took him from Damascus, where the rabbis deplored his unruly ways, to the Kabbalistic center of Safed in the Holy Land, where the great Rabbi Luria pronounced him to be the living spark of King David. Many of his poems were set to the music of well-known Ottoman tunes. Part II of this book (עולת שבת) is devoted to poems in honor of the Sabbath, here open to its beautiful title-page.

9. Music notation for the Sabbath hymn לכה דודי (“Come my beloved”), composed by Leo Kartschmaroff and published in his שירי בית יוסף (*Songs from the House of Joseph*). Vienna: Verlag Josef Eberle, [1911]. Beloved by Jewish communities the world over, *Lekha Dodi* (“Come, my beloved”) is a religious poem welcoming the “Sabbath Bride.” It was written by Solomon Alkabetz in 16<sup>th</sup> century Safed, a center of Jewish mysticism. The poem has often been set to music; here we see the melody composed by Leo Kartschmaroff, Chief Cantor of the Jewish community in Nagykanizsa, Hungary. The title-page is followed by an albumen photograph of the cantor garbed in ceremonial robes and turban.

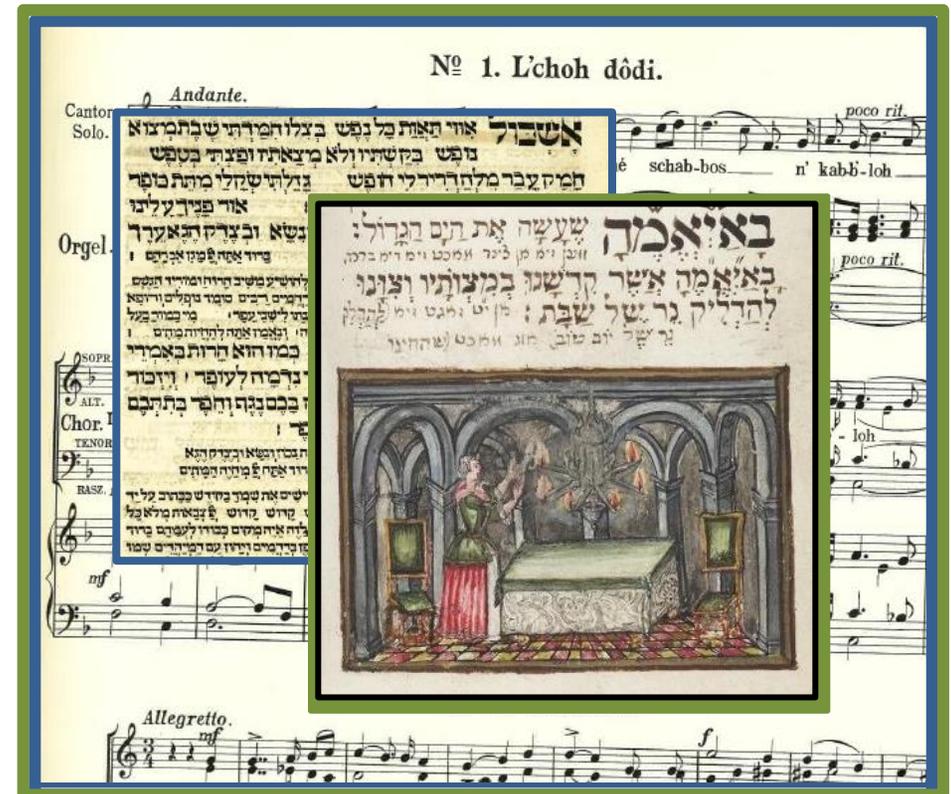
10. יום שישי הקצר (*The Short Friday*) by Chaim Nachman Bialik. A short story published in *Kitvei C. N. Bialik*, Berlin, 1923, Vol. II.

Best-known as the “Father of Modern Hebrew Poetry,” Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873-1934) was also a brilliant writer of essays and short stories. *The Short Friday* tells of a rabbi in one of the little villages of Russia and his race against time to keep from desecrating the Sabbath. With its gentle humor and picturesque details of Hasidic life, *The Short Friday* is surely one of Bialik’s finest prose works.

Presents:

### *Rabbis and Muses:*

A Display of Rare Books Honoring the Sabbath  
from the Collections of the  
Library of Congress



Details from items on display (from left to right: nos. 9, 7, and 4 on the Checklist of Items)

The display follows a lecture by artist and writer  
Debra Band  
on the publication of her new book:  
***Kabbalat Shabbat: The Grand Unification***

Wednesday, September 8, 2016

12 noon – 1:00 p.m.

African and Middle Eastern Reading Room, LJ 220  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.

With its display of ten items, *Rabbis and Muses* is a modest attempt to highlight Jewish traditions honoring the Sabbath both in rabbinic discourse and in the arts. But if the categories below suggest a dichotomy between the two spheres, this is certainly not our intention. Artistic instincts flow from rabbinic texts; modern creations embody layer upon layer of tradition. New and old represent a continuing dialogue between scholarship and the arts - between rabbis and muses - and we hope you will enjoy some examples of this ongoing tradition in our display here today.

- Ann Brener, Hebraic Section  
African and Middle Eastern Division

## Checklist of Items on Display

### I. Rabbinic Literature

1. *Babylonian Talmud*, Treatise *Bava Kama*. Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1521.

In a Jewish tradition going back to antiquity, the Sabbath is frequently depicted as a bride or a queen. The Talmud, for example, attributes the following words to the third-century Rabbi Yannai:

Rabbi Yannai used to say: ‘Come, let us go forth to meet the bride, the queen!’  
Others say: ‘to meet Sabbath, the bride, the queen.’ Rabbi Yannai, [however,] while dressed in his Sabbath attire used to remain standing and say: ‘Come thou, O queen, come thou, O queen!’

Here the passage is displayed in a volume from the seminal first edition of the Talmud printed in Venice by the renowned Daniel Bomberg.

2. *תהלים עם פירוש רד"ק* (*Psalms with Commentary by David Kimhi*). Salonika: Don Judah Gedaliah, 1522.

This classic commentary to the Book of Psalms was written by David Kimhi, a renowned Jewish scholar who flourished in Provence during the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. First printed in Bologna, 1477, the edition displayed here is the work of master printer Judah Gedaliah, one of the first Hebrew printers in the Ottoman Empire.

3. *שער בת רבים* (*Sha'ar Bat Rabim Festival Prayer-book*), Vol. III of I-IV. Venice: Bragadin Appresso Giovanni de Paoli, 1711.

This exceptionally lovely prayer-book was commissioned by Jewish communities in Italy, among them Venice, Padua, and Mantua. Here we see the page marking the beginning of the Sabbath morning prayers and the ancient Hebrew prayer *נשמת כל חי* (“The breath of every living thing”). Decorative woodblock letters form the opening word of the hymn.

### II. The Visual Arts

4. *קריאת שמע של המטה* (*Order of Prayers before Retiring at Night*). Mainz, 1745. Manuscript on vellum written and illuminated by Joseph ben Meir Schmalkalden. Hebrew with Yiddish instructions. Miniature.

With its brightly painted genre scenes and exquisite detail, this miniature is a lovely example of the renaissance of Hebrew manuscripts in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Central Europe. The book is open to an image of a woman reciting the blessing over the Sabbath lights, here represented by an overhead oil lamp, or *Judenstern* as it was called, rather than the candles with which we are familiar today.

5. S. Y. Agnon, *נרות* (*Candles*). Artist’s book with twelve etchings by Neomi Smilanski. Gotttesman Etching Center: Kibbutz Cabri, 2002. 50 signed and numbered copies; LOC copy is P.P.2-2 of edition marked P.P. 1-2.

Less of a story than a dream sequence, *Candles* conveys the sense of a world gone awry, with the Sabbath, or perhaps the lack of Sabbath observance, at the core of the dissonance. It was written by the great Hebrew writer S.Y. Agnon, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1967. In her beautiful introduction to this artist’s edition of *Candles*, Neomi Smilanski calls etching “the crown jewel” of print-making and explains why she used it to accompany Agnon’s story:

An etched page sings like a song and it’s good to listen to its sounds.  
This is the reason I chose etching to translate the music of Agnon’s language.

The artist also describes the impact of this story on her own family and their discussions about its meaning over the years.

6. *בראשית* (*Genesis*). Artist’s book with illustrations by Avner Moriah and calligraphy by Yitshak Pludwinski. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Fine Arts Print Workshop, 2010. 11 of 100 signed and numbered copies. Watercolor and gouache on paper. Elephant folio.

This exquisite artist’s book was created by Avner Moriah, one of the best-known and widely-collected artists in Israel today. Many of the images were inspired by ancient rabbinic tales, and, as Professor Yair Zakovitch of the Hebrew University writes in the Preface, “the figures are identifiable but stylized, their genetic roots tangled. In them, one hears both the familiar greetings from the art of the ancient Near East as well as from the modern world.” Here the book is open to an image of the seven days of Creation.

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