

The Hebraic Section

The Hebraic Section, one of the three sections forming the African and Middle Eastern Division in 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. Today, its collections number well over 250,000 books and items in a variety of formats in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian, as well as Amharic and Syriac.

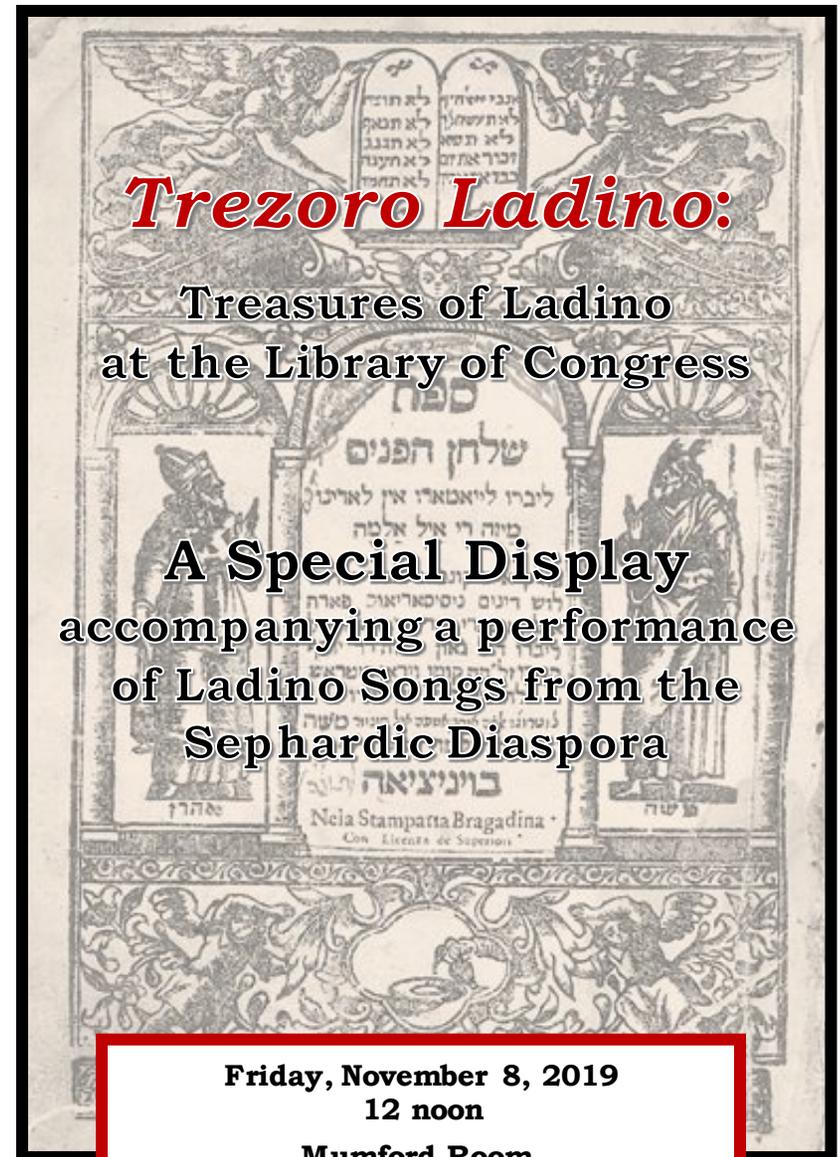
The Hebraic Section strives to share the rich treasures in its holdings with visitors at home and abroad. To this end it has held two major exhibitions within the past twenty years, each showcasing special items from the collections: *From the Ends of the Earth* (1989) and *Words like Sapphires* (2012), 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 Website*:

<http://blogs.loc.gov/international-collections/>

We welcome groups interested in viewing our collections. To learn more about this or to be placed on a mailing list for programs and events, please feel free to contact us!

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Trezero Ladino:

Treasures of Ladino
at the Library of Congress

A Special Display
accompanying a performance
of Ladino Songs from the
Sephardic Diaspora

Friday, November 8, 2019
12 noon

Mumford Room,
6th Floor James Madison Bldg.

Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.

In the late 15th century, when the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal, one thing they did not have to leave behind was their language. This language, Old Spanish, eventually took root in many lands around the world, adding rich layers of other linguistic traditions to create the language we know today as Ladino. The Jews treasured this language, passing it down from one generation to the next in communities across the globe. But no matter how far-flung these communities were, in time and in space, the books they created meet today on the shelves of the Library of Congress, and it is our pleasure to show some of these to you today.

- The Hebraic Section

Checklist of Items on Display

I. Prayer Books

1. **מחזור** [Festival Prayer Book]. Salonica: Moses Soncino, 1526.
A Hebrew prayer book printed in Salonica, destined to become one of the great centers of Ladino culture. It preserves genres of Hebrew poetry and prayers known only in Spain. Together with its moving colophon, which notes that the book was printed “at the request of the remnants of the Exile of Catalonia,” this prayer book speaks eloquently to the desire of Spanish Jewry to preserve its heritage – the cornerstone of the Ladino tradition.
2. *Seder Haggadah shel Pesah*. Venice: Bragadini, 1716.
Haggadah, according to the Sephardi rite, richly illustrated with woodcuts. Includes a translation in Judeo-Italian by Leone Modena, the well-known rabbi, poet, and scholar whose autobiography (translated into English) offers a fascinating glimpse into Jewish life in 17th-century Italy. There is also an abridged version of *Zevah Pesah*, the classic commentary written by Spanish exile Isaac Abravanel at the end of the 15th century.
3. **מחזור מנהג ספרד ליום כיפור** [Prayer-book for Yom Kippur], ca. 1839.
Manuscript in Persian semi-cursive script.
Services for *Yom Kippur* according to the Sephardic rite, with kabalistic overtones. Some words are translated into Ladino, and the service for the closing service, *Ne' ilah* (shown here), also has a Ladino introduction.
4. **שארית יוסף** [The Remains of Joseph] by Joseph ben Shem-Tov ben Joshua.
Salonica: Joseph ben Isaac Jabez, 1568.
Contains a Ladino translation of the *Almanach perpetuum* by Abraham Zacuto, the Jewish astronomer and rabbi from Spain who revolutionized ocean navigation for the likes of Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama.

II. Rabbinical Thought

5. **ספר שלחן הפנים** [The Table of Showbread; in Ladino **מיזה די איל אלמה**], by Joseph Karo. Venice: Bragadin, 1712.
A Ladino translation of Karo’s authoritative Code of Jewish Law, *Shulhan Arukh* [The Prepared Table]. It was printed in Venice, still a flourishing hub of Hebrew printing though no longer the center it had been during the sixteenth century.
6. **דמשק אליעזר** [Damesek Eliezer], by Eliezer Zussman-Sofer. Belgrade, 1861.
A commentary on the first volume of Joseph Karo’s *Beit Yosef*, written by Eliezer Zussman-Sofer (1828–1902), a rabbi and Talmudic scholar in Hungary. Up till World War II, Belgrade was home to a vibrant Ladino-speaking community and an active Ladino press.

III. Belles-Lettres

7. **שיר אמונים** [Poems of Faith]. Printed by the “Widow and orphans of Jacob Proops Katz” in Amsterdam, 1792.
An anthology of religious poems; some in Ladino. On display is a trophic poem mostly in Ladino, with the refrain: **קואנדו איל דייו דיחו אנכי**, (*Quando El Dio dice “I”*). Though Ladino was not commonly spoken among the Jews of Amsterdam, quite a few Ladino books were printed in Amsterdam’s renowned Hebrew presses.
8. **ספר בן-גוריון** [traditionally attributed to Josephus]. Istanbul, 1743.
A Ladino translation of one of the all-time Jewish classics, *Sefer Yosippon*. Though traditionally attributed to Josephus (he of dubious fame from the Judean Revolt against the Romans), the book was in fact composed by a Jew from the Greek-speaking sphere of the Byzantine Empire in southern Italy.
9. **ספר דברי שירה הנאמרים בקול רינה ותודה בליל שמחת תורה** [Words of Song Recited in Joy and Gratitude on the Eve of Simhat Torah]. Livorno: Abraham Isaac Castillo and Eliezer Sedon, 1780.
Poems celebrating the Giving of the Torah, according to the rites of the Sephardic community in Livorno. Some of the poems have instructions for the melody in Ladino, such as the one displayed here (fol. 19b): **אין קאנפוס דואירמה**. According to bibliographer Avraham Ya’ari, this is the only printed work preserving the Simhat Torah rites for the Ladino community in Livorno (תולדות הג שמחת תורה, no. 72). On fol. 25v, the book includes the traditional Hebrew blessing for the welfare of the monarch, here Pedro Leopold I, Grand Duke of Tuscany.
10. *La Vara* (לה בארה; *The Voice*). Ladino weekly published in New York, 1922-1948. Shown here are several issues from the early 1940s.
La Vara was the longest running Ladino newspaper in the United States. Founded in 1922 by Albert Levy, an immigrant from Salonica, *La Vara* was also the last Ladino newspaper to use Hebrew letters. The masthead during the early years reflected Levy’s tendency towards satire; the masthead on display here reflects the change in tone following the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s.