
The commission estimated the first collection at "twenty or twenty-five thousand silver rubles at the most (On the collection of manuscripts and other antiques offered by Messrs. Firkoviches for sale to the Imperial Public Library see: The Report of academicians Brosse, Kunik, Schifner and Veliaminov-Zernov made on March 7, 1860, in Transactions of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, SPB, 1869, vol. 15, p. 263). However, the memorial edition of The Imperial Public Library over the Past 100 Years: 1814-1914 (SPB, 1914, p. 347) gave the figure of 125,000 rubles. See also: Viknovich, V.L., Lebedev, V.V., Zagadka 15000 drevnikh rukopisei: K sporam vokrug samoi bolshei v mire kollektiviy vostochnykh rukopisei, khramiashchikhsya v Leningradskoi publicnoi biblioteke im. M.E. Saltykova-Shchedrina, i-lichnosti eyo sobiratelya - karaimskogo uchenogo A.S. Firkovicha in Materialy po arkeologii, istorii i etnografii Tayiri. Ed. and comp. by A.I. Aibabin, Simferopol, 1991, issue 2, p. 133.


The influence of Islamic art is also seen in the geometrical ornament of some "carpet-pages." Thus, I.A. Mayer sees elements of the mosque interior in sheet 476 rev. - a mihrab with two side columns and a hanging lamp in the center. See: Mayer, I.A. "Jewish Art in the Moslem World" in Jewish Art: An Illustrated History / Ed. by C. Roth, New York a.o., [1961], p. 369.


For his detailed biography see: Viknovich B.L. Karaim Avraam Firkovich, SPB., 1997.


Otech Imperatorskoi Publicnoi biblioteki za 1899, SPB, 1903, pp. 59-89.

Ibidem for 1866, SPB, 1867, pp. 35-36.


See: Harkavy, A. Altjudische Denkmaler aus der Krim, mitgetheilt von Abraham Firkovitsh: 1839-1872, SPB., 1876; Chwolson, D.A. Sbornik yevreiskikh naidenii, soderzhashchihii nadgruboie naidip iz Kryma i nadgroboie i drugie naidipi iz inykh mest v drevenim yevreiskom kvadratnom shifrte, takie i obraztsy shriftov iz rukopisei iz IX-XV stoletii, SPB., 1884.

FOREWORD
TO THE "L'ORNEMENT HEBREU"

By David Gunzburg

1. How the Album has been Compiled

Habent sua fata libelli ... We now present only part of our work, an album compiled with the love of the relics of another age and the traces of a vanished civilization which lives on beneath the accumulated debris of centuries of ignorance and destruction. And yet this work should have appeared in its entirety twenty years ago; twenty year – grande mortalis aevi spatium! Many unforeseen chances have intervened to prevent the completion of a work entered upon by M. Vladimir Stassov under the auspices of smiling good fortune. Research throughout the countries of Europe, supplementary information, the accumulation of new documents, important debates concerning the fundamental idea of the book, various researches in libraries, the fear of appearing before the public ill prepared; all these originally delayed the publication of L'Ornement Hébreu. In addition, we had to reckon with the practical difficulties which had to be overcome. Indeed, it was far from easy to select from manuscripts, often in tatters, the decorations to appear in the album, or to find the means of reproducing them exactly, in all their richness of colouring, without removing the originals from the walls where they are reverently and jealously guarded. These difficulties were smoothed away by the zeal of our friend Elie Gunzburg, to-day a famous sculptor, and of Bogdanoff, the draughtsman, as well as by the expertise of the Management of the State Paper Manufactory. At the beginning of one of his best works a word of eulogy will not be out of place for

Olga Vasilieva. Oriential Collection department head,
Manuscript Department, Russian National Library
M. Netchajew, who traced the drawings and noted to perfection the shades of colour, whether brilliant or faded. It is with emotion that we recall the name of a truly good man, the late Theodore Vinberg, who was manager of this model institution when we entrusted the publication of our work to it; and with gratitude that of his learned successor, M. Lentz, who directed the craftsmen, superintending the use of colours with consummate skill, and above all the application of the pure gold leaf in order to avoid any contamination by chemical impurities.

In both Paris and London the authors received the most enthusiastic welcome and the greatest goodwill, which notably simplified their task. It goes without saying that the senior members of the staff of the Imperial Library, as always, evinced perfect courtesy and equal attentiveness over a quarter of a century, without exception.

With this support and encouragement from all sides, I was also fortunate enough to receive, by way of a gift, an extremely rare copy of the Hagioiographa executed by a Yemenite hand; this was immediately pressed into service, and enabled us to append a worthy tailpiece to our series of vignettes chosen in accordance with strict criteria from illuminations which, apart from the beauty of their execution, commended themselves by their incontestable originality of composition and harmony of outline, whose very existence provides concrete proof of the existence of Jewish Art. Thus, in addition to the 22 plates unearthed from the dust of the cupboards of the St. Petersburg Imperial Public Library, folios A, B and C have been appended, representing, in my opinion the most interesting and the most authentic specimens preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, in the British Museum in London, and in my private collection. We have ruthlessly excluded examples, however beautiful, when they did not meet the standard of originality demanded by Stassoff for inclusion in our work; for it is not a museum of Hebrew manuscript illumination, but a selection of what we consider reflects the aesthetic aspirations of a race which, from the very dawn of its history, discerned the divine seal imprinted on the forehead of artists who, wandering through a frightful desert in quest for fatherland, nationhood and religion, spent its time embroidering precious hangings and engraving vessels for the needs of a new faith.

Left: ornamental page of the Petersburg Codex, Cairo, 1010
Right: ornamental page of the Barcelona Bible, Barcelona, late fourteenth century, National Library of Paris

Слева: орнаментальная полоса Петербургского кодекса. Каир, 1010 г.
Справа: орнаментальная полоса Барселонской Библии. Барселона, конец XIV в. Национальная библиотека в Париже

The overall impression gained from this confused mass of scrolls and arabesques has been felicitously rendered by Ropet, the architect, in his frontispiece, where he has made use only of motifs from the manuscripts used to compile the album. For this he only had to hand the first 22 folios, those from the Imperial Library; however, this is a matter for congratulation, since he was working with a homogeneous collection of manuscripts, to which the parchments form France and the Yemen have been appended as a sort of epilogue, demonstrating to the full the persistence of a tradition, variously modified by the influence of the local conditions at the two poles of the world formerly inhabited by the Jews.

The frontispiece bears the date 1886; it was designed the previous year, and Stassov and I hoped that our book would see the light of day without further delay, for we considered we should lose no more time after the many long years of waiting. Our hope was to be disappointed yet again; the period of waiting lasted almost a generation; we gleaned a few facts here and there, we were able to
give our beliefs a wider basis, but we bitterly regretted the years lost, perhaps thoughtlessly, through the fault of the writer of these lines. Public calamities, reversals of fortune, cruel bereavements, affliction at every point have strewn stumbling blocks along the path of my life; I have suffered greatly for myself and for others, and that is the only excuse I can plead for my silence in the face of my old friend’s earnest entreaties.

2. Earlier Publications Concerning the Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts

In 1901 a work appeared in London entitled Hebrew Illuminated Bibles of the IXth and Xth Centuries, which in certain respects is analogous to ours; the learned author of this little work, Mr. M. Gaster, did not address himself to question preoccupying us, since his attention was focused on the intrinsic qualities of the marvelous manuscripts, or rather, fragments with which he had managed to enrich his wonderful collection. We shall have the opportunity to compare these fragments with the parchments on which our investigations are based, and we shall not fail to examine thoroughly the theses put forward by Mr. Gaster and which confirm our ideas, although only in part; we shall be forced to disagree with him on some point, and on others to indicate a wider field for his researches. However, this was not the first time that illuminations from Hebrew manuscripts were reproduced; we would draw attention to the magnificent edition of the Sarajevo Haggadah published in Vienna in 1898 thanks to the efforts of D.H. Muller and Schlosser; not to mention Westwood’s Palaeographia Sacra Pictoria, which saw the light of day in London in 1843-1845, the facsimile of the Bologna Bible published by Silvestre in 1850 in hos Palaeographie Universelle, the plate appended to Steinheizer’s Berlin Catalogue (1878), the contributions of the famous Palaeographical Society of England, or the publications of the Society for the Study of Jewish Works of Art (founded in Frankfurt in October 1900), and other more or less fortuitous reproductions.

However, the few pages published by Mr. Gaster only constitute a fraction of a subject which calls for treatment at length, and the execution of the plates leaves much to be desired; the Haggadah involved considerable expenditure and its value cannot be questioned, although it should be noted that only the frontispiece is in colour and the style of the vignettes lacks all originality.

3. Hebrew Decoration – the Most Recent Manifestations

Our album, on the other hand, presents one aspect which contrasts with what one normally sees, and in the Hebrew Style which Stassoff recognized takes on a striking liveliness and unity. The Russian artists who have become familiar with it have been struck by the seal of originality impressed by the obscure illuminators on their beautiful and unusual work. Motifs for our selection have been chosen from the decorations on many items: a dish presented to Their Majesties on the occasion of the Coronation in 1884, a lamp placed in the synagogue in 1888 in commemoration of the Borki accident, many congratulatory addresses presented to scholars, the megilah given to Antokolsky the sculptor on the day of his silver jubilee, and the curtain covering the Holy Arc in the St. Petersburg Temple on the solemn feast days.

As I have already said, with the exception of plate A, a Bible of 1300 from Perpignan in Catalonia, which gives an idea of the richness of illumination in Roussillon and plates B and C, which are devoted to the Yemen and which date from the same rather late epoch, the rest of the work gives a rough idea of the full flowering which we were led to suspect from the treasures brought back from the East by Firkovitch.

4. Abraham Firkovitch (Born at Lutsk, Volhynia, in 1780)

This handsome patriarch, this indefatigable traveler is a curious figure, a disturbing personality who, having begun his career with excavations at Chufut-Kale (the Jews’ Rock) in the Crimea in 1839, from 1840 on traveled through the Caucasus, followed by Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia. He was an able contender who carried on famous debates with the Jews of Russia before 1830, a skilful writer who contrived to mingle truth inextricably with falsehood, a convinced patriot who fabricated his nation’s characters with the
help of authentic documents, a crafty Karaite who turned the communities of the Talmudists and their ideas on their heads, an intrepid forger with the courage publicity to reveal his arsenal of lies, a lucky archaeologist whose name became linked with the most beautiful Hebrew library ever assembled and with the foundation of Semitic palaeography!

It is now 60 years since the world re-echoed to the ceaseless battles in which the most learned and cleverest men from Odessa to Oxford, from St. Petersburg to the heart of America were ranged on opposing sides in order to establish the extent of reality in invention in Firkovitch’s discoveries. Many sciences grew out of these debates: the study of the development of writing among the Jews and the Syrians, of the history of the masorah and primitive exegesis, of the origins of the great schism of Anan (founder of the Karaite movement), of the fate of Hebrew-Arabic literature at the dawn of Islam, and finally, we hope, of Jewish Art. The controversies were violent, even unjust – but once again, as in Judaea of old, de fort i egressa est dulcedo (“out of the strong came forth sweetness”, Judges 14:14), and the cause of truth was to profit greatly from the outcome of these impassioned contests. The history of the Firkovitch collections still has to be written, following the work of Pinner, Pinsker, Chwolson, Tischendorf, Neubauer, Harkavy, Strack, Geiger, Gratz, Jellinek, Ibn Sappir, Deinhard, Firkovitch himself, and many more of varying men whose names escape my impatient pen.

When one has seen all the evil instincts unleashed, and the flowering of all the scientific virtues which accompanied the decipherment of the inscriptions from the Chufut-Kale cemetery, as well as the investigations of the vast field opened up to the research by the acquisition of the manuscripts collected by this adventurous hakham, one can only read with astonishment the official reports printed in 1863, 1864, 1875 and 1878 where the facts are related with epic tranquility and strict impartiality.

5. The Genizot

Abraham Firkovitch collected the greater part of the manuscripts which today excite the astonishment and admiration of connoisseurs and scholars from the cellars and the attics of the synagogues of the Orient. It is a fact that respect for holy books is so great among the adherents of Mosaism that they do not dare to destroy them or to make any other use of them except for study or prayer: they may not be torn up, they may not be burnt, they may not be thrown out as rubbish, they may not be subjected to the torture of the “palimpsest” (the reuse of parchment); nevertheless, as faithful devotees of the truths enshrined in them, the Children of Israel desist from using for their orisons or for following the reading of the Law defective or time-worn copies which could, through lacunae or imperfections in the text, occasion doubts and give birth to errors in those who might study them. This twofold scruple leads to the setting aside of books which were defaced or blemished by age and to the preservation of their remains in lumber-rooms until the day when it is decided to entrust them to the earth to decay irrevocably, like human bodies which have ceased to live, unless chance discovery restores them to the light of day. This explains why Hebrew manuscripts of great antiquity have
disappeared, and is the reason for the dilapidated state in which most of the books saved from oblivion by Firkovitch have reached us. The genizot (hiding places) where he discovered them were placed at his disposal thanks to the influence he possessed with his brethren and to the persuasive gifts which distinguished him; we cannot but to be infinitely grateful for his patient and obstinate insistence, for the methods he used and whose value he demonstrated, for the trail which he blazed for his followers and which later gained us access to the astounding genizah of Cairo. Since he worked in Crimea, the Caucasus, Egypt, Palestine, Damascus, Aleppo and Hit in Babylonia, at a time when no one yet dreamed of exploring the matchless archives of rabbinic and Karaitic prayer books, he reaped an abundant harvest of items which had escaped the eyes of the shrewdest observers. Pursued by the demon of the antique, haunted by the hope of immense profit, uniting the most ardent patriotism with the keenest acquisitive sense, he contrived to charm, to plot, to tempt, to push himself forward, to awaken cupidity, to satisfy curiosity, to stage-manage effects and neither to take nor to give all the first attempt.

6. The acquisition of the Firkovitch Collections

Thus it is that the Imperial Library had to busy itself three times over with the purchase of his collections: the first purchase, announced with great ostentation and originally proposed in 1856, was carefully studied by Tischendorf and more particularly by the eminent Professor Chwolson, who filed their reports in 1859; however, the collection was only incorporated into the Library at the end of 1862 amid a storm of reprimandations. Financially enriched and satisfied with his success, Firkovitch immediately sent out to make another sweep in the countries he had explored; this journey was easier, as much because of the growing influence of the European states as because of his previous contacts, of the resources at his disposal, of the experience acquired from dealing with manuscripts and from his law suits with the professionals, as well as because of the support furnished by his son-in-law, Gabriel Firkovitch of Troki; the harvest was abundant, even more extensive than the first time. Installed at Chuput-Kale in the midst of his immense collections, he set to work to dazzle the eyes of the government and of the specialists with their beauty, and to compile and publish books as disconcerting as his life and personality. In 1870 his Samaritan manuscripts were bought by Imperial Library, and Harkavy described them in a thick octavo volume (1874). At the time of his death (in the spring of 1874), the Minister of Public Education sent a famous Hebraist from Germany, Dr. Strack, and Dr. Harkavy, both of whom had already made a name for themselves in the field, by listing and cataloguing the biblical manuscripts of the first collection; their suspicions had been aroused by the malleability of which the champion of the Karaites had been guilty in manipulating the funerary inscriptions and in modifying or drawing up deeds and reports on old parchment; they were captivated and truly enraptured by what they were shown, and the second Hebrew collection took the road to Petersburg (1876).

In 1875 the very remarkable Katalog der hebräischen Bibliotheks schriften appeared from the hands of Harkavy and Strack, and in 1879 the latter’s Digbyhei Hate’amim, to both of which we shall have recourse more than once in the description of the manuscripts.

7. Stassov and Hebrew Decoration

But when Stassov, that indefatigable and shrewd historian, critic and promoter of art in all its forms in Russia, a refined connoisseur where style was concerned and an erudite researcher into the forms of decoration among the Slavs and in the East, had become familiar with the beautiful books and the shapeless scraps brought back from the synagogues and genizot of distant countries, he immediately conceived the plan of gathering together the scattered fragments of what from then on he called “Hebrew Decoration”. He preached by word and by example, he reproached the Jewish race eloquently for their complete indifference to the whereabouts of the products of their national genius, he searched, he debated, he commented, he moved men’s spirits, and resolved to substantiate his fertile idea by publishing these plates and making public his theory in all its overwhelming interest. He was kind enough to approach me with the request that I carry out the archaeological work and establish, as far as was possible and within our power, the age and provenance of the manuscripts,
how they were composed and copied, and the artistic tradition of the Jews; he hoped this would enrich the history of art. I am not ashamed to admit that on the contrary I owe to my old friend everything outside the limited fields of palaeography and exegesis.

The choice of the vignettes, the plan of the work, its basic idea are entirely his I claim the honour of having contributed, at his side, to propagating the magnanimous thought of his noble old man, whose particular dream it was to see L’Orienmet Hebreu published at last.

St. Petersburg, 9/22 September 1904.

NOTES

1 The original publication had a dedicatory page which read: “To my Mathilde, ‘my dove, my innocent’, to the star that has directed me entire life with its light and led me towards the ideal, I dedicate this work, which mirrors astonishingly well the ideal to which our nation has striven. St. Petersburg, 13 September 1904. David Gunzburg”.

2 “Books have their own fate”. This quotation from the Roman poet Terentianus Maurs relates in D. Gunzburg’s eyes to this Album as well (B. Narkiss).

3 A period which is “a great part of a mortal’s life”. The phrase designating the 15-year reign of the Emperor Domitian, used by the Roman historian Tacitus in his Life of Agricola, chapter 3 (B. Narkiss).

4 Gaster, Illuminated Bibles. The text was included in June 1900 in the Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology; the plates only appeared in the separate edition published by Harrison & Sons in 1901.

5 The Bible, in the Abbey of San Salvatore, Bologna, is of the thirteenth century from southern Germany. Silvestre (pl. XXII) published it as a tenth-century Bible. In his English translation Madonna dates it to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries (B. Narkiss).


7 Frankfurter Gesellschaft für Erforschung jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler, 1900-1905. For other illustrations, see the large Jewish Encyclopedia at present in press in New York.

8 In fact, Firkovitch was born in 1786 and died in 1874 (B. Narkiss).

9 See the Imperial Publication of the Bible (Russian) for the years 1862, 1868 and 1876 and the March 1875 issue of the Journal of the Ministry of Public Education (Russian).

10 To arouse this religious respect, it is enough for the name of God to be mentioned in a book.
ON JEWISH ART
by Vladimir Stassov

"I am again beginning to hope now that our beloved project - the publication of Hebrew Ornament - will indeed materialize. Favorable responses are already beginning to come from abroad! Wonderful, wonderful. I am full of joy and congratulate you! Let us wait until the matter is finally decided - and then to work."[2]

We are living in an age of the re-awakening of nationalities. No nation or tribe is any longer content with any common obscure characteristics, but each would like to identify and put across, on every meaningful occasion, its very own distinctive makeup of lifestyle, originality and beauty. Energetic efforts have been launched everywhere to study old historical monuments of every kind, and most diverse works of art have been produced as a result, from cathedrals and huge frescoes to women’s earrings and bracelets, fashionable book bindings and initials, all representative of studies of the history of every nation and the public desire to relate to it. However dispersed the Jewish tribe across Europe is, it could not have stayed aloof from the overall trend, it could not help hankering after synagogues in the true Jewish tradition everywhere as churches and cathedrals - Gothic, Romanesque, Byzantine, Italian, Spanish, British, French and Russian - went up across all lands.

But where could one find Jewish style, how could one go about exploring and studying it? What was the point of most ardent desires when what was to be aspired to, searched for and displayed in all
glory anew for everyone to see - seemed non-existent?

Art historians and critics of every ilk kept arguing in their books that the Jews had never had any art of their own - neither architecture, nor sculpture, nor painting. The latter two, they claimed, could not have ever existed because the Commandments forbade any reproduction of the image or semblance of any living creature, while the former, architecture, had never had any importance or originality due to the Jews’ overall ineptitude for art since times immemorial. That was why, supposedly, in order to meet their artistic needs, the Jews had always had to turn to one Asian nation or another, such as the Phoenicians, the Assyrians and the Babylonians, to borrow samples, plans and labour; they even had to seek beyond Asia and borrow art from Egypt.

More than that, many of the best modern writers keep telling us why Jewish art could not have ever emerged. “The ban asserted by the Commandment has never been accepted or applied to the arts in all its severity,” the famous art historian Choise said in his Geschichte der bildenden Kunst (I, 252). “Cherubim were portrayed on the Ark of the Covenant; and had there been no sculptors among the Jews, the Golden Calf could not have been made in the desert in such a short time. There also were immense figures of cherubim in Solomon’s Temple, and countless cherubim were duplicated on the walls amidst various decorations as well. Therefore, not just the ban imposed by ‘law’ impeded the progress of the plastic arts among the Jewish people; if the whole matter were limited only to the religious ban, a secular plastic art could have boldly emerged side by side, as was the case in Persia, where the reproduction of the divine image was also prohibited by ‘law’... No, the reason for the lack of art among the Jews ought to be sought not in extraneous circumstances or bans, but in the very depths of their national character. One cannot fail to see the main trait of that character, one that comes through in all its manifestations, including poetry. It was precisely what constitutes the strength and beauty of Jewish poetry that suppressed the thought and desire to capture an outward image and would have nipped in the bud any attempt to do so. That trait can be summed up in one word: Jewish imagination is too fluid, and its fluctuations are too ardent, strong and bold to allow a plastic creation to be produced in

Left: ornamental page of the Petersburg Codex, Cairo, 1010
Right: ornamental page of the Svyatoslav Codex
Kiev, 1073, State History Museum, Moscow

Слева: орнаментальная полоса Петербургского кодекса. Каир, 1010 г.
Справа: орнаментальная полоса Кодекса Святослава. Киев 1073 г.
Государственный Исторический музей, Москва

peace... Spiritualism was sapping any interest in an outward image; the shaken and perturbed spirit could not have concentrated on shaping it up. A detached approach, balance, symmetry and form were therefore altogether unimportant to the Jews; movement, rhythm, counterpoise and purpose alone predominated, and they blocked the rise of anything else...”

At the same time, going beyond art and extending their reasoning to most general and broad views, other writers of modern times, no less famous and imposing than Choise, argued that the creative spirit of not only the Jews but the entire Semitic family of human race was poor and monotonous as distinct from our Aryan group. “In general,” Renan said in Histoire des langues semitiques, I, II, “the Semitic peoples profoundly lack in the shades of feeling. Their comprehension is integral and, indisputably, encompasses few things at once, but encompasses them extraordinarily firmly. Polygamy, a consequence of initially nomadic life, prevented the
Semites from developing everything that we call society and formed an exceptionally courageous race devoid of any flexibility or finesse. Hence their forbidding bearing, their serious turn of thought hostile to fantasy and their importance that prevents them from ever smoothing their wrinkles. The Semites are nearly utterly devoid of the ability to laugh, and the diametrically opposite propensity of the French is a constant cause of wonder for the Algerian Arabs. Hence the full absence of the plastic arts. Decoration of manuscripts with miniatures, in which the Turks and the Persians revealed such a lively sense of colour, is antipathetic to the Arabs and utterly unknown in lands where the Arab spirit has survived undiluted, for example, Morocco. Music, a predominantly subjective art, is alone known to the Semites. Painting and sculpture among them have always been affected by the religious ban; their naïve realism defied fantasy, meanwhile the latter is an essential precondition of those two arts. The constantly repeated orders of the books of Moses forbidding any reproduction of the living creature and the iconoclastic zeal of Mohammed clearly demonstrate these peoples’ propensity to take a statue for the actual and living creature. The most artistic races, capable of distinguishing between an idea and a symbol, have never been submitted to such strictness."

We deem it sufficient to cite these two capital examples of the modern view of the artistic abilities of the Semites in general, and the Jews in particular. These very ideas, borrowed directly from high authorities or brought into the world by writers on the basis of old prejudice, are now brimming in all history textbooks and being dinned into every student starting school.

There is no Jewish art, throughout the ages the Jews have shown their utter ineptitude for art — this is what all Europeans, children and adults alike, are saying, and that was a firm presumption that ruled out any objection.

But great was the amazement of the mass of people when it began to dawn on them that all those pronouncements were absolutely groundless, that all of them were nothing but the crude vestiges of the erstwhile prejudices and misconceptions.

The age of study and discoveries began in the 1850s for ancient Jewish art, just as it had earlier set in for the hitherto unknown
step forward from darkness into the light and enrich our knowledge with thousands of new facts. Although a new science, the science of ancient Jewish art emerged but recently, it has already borne rich fruit, and museums of Paris and London have become graced, quite unexpectedly, with new, Hebrew departments. They are brimming with sculpture, metalware, enamels, carvings, coins, glass, containers, treasures and jewellery. Aren’t all those works of art, and can anyone still deny an artistic taste and creative artistic verve to the people who have produced all that?

Simultaneously, more light was shed on much of what had never been hidden in the earth entails but had always been visible to the eye, and what had always been dismissed as something commonplace and not noteworthy. The so-called tombs of “kings,” Absalom and Zechariah, etc., and in general many architectural monuments strewn across Judea were suddenly no longer seen as meaningless works of late Roman art and at a fresh glance revealed striking, unexpected details that obviously could belong to neither Greece nor Rome but bore an imprint of old Asiatic art, and local Jewish art at that. All references to the artistic activity of old Jews scattered in the Bible began to be retracted - and they proved to be many and important - and then finally, brought together into an integral whole and lit up by a fresh and no longer hostile thought, it all left no doubt of the existence of art among the Jews. A modern writer who did especially much to clarify the present issue, Sauckey, a member of the French Academy famous for his Journey around the Dead Sea, told in the preface to his History of Jewish Art (1858) how he went to Palestine with usual European prejudice about the non-existence of Jewish art and how soon all his preconceived theories vanished like a mist in the face of genuine monuments and unearthed relics of the old Jewish world. “As notes and drawings,” he wrote, “kept accumulating in my portfolio, like a child learning letter by letter the entire alphabet, I finally arrived at the full conviction, substantiated by facts, that not only the generally accepted axiom was false but that the Jewish nation had brought art to a high degree of perfection. I’ll try to prove this by sufficient data, and the reader will certainly see, with the same amazement that I was the first to feel, how large the list of Jewish monuments is and especially how sufficient it is to prove the thesis taken by me now in opposition to all my predecessors.” Sauckey cleverly pointed, among other things, to the fact that, if the Bible so often mentioned forbiddance to produce sculptural and other representations, that was the best proof that, precisely despite all bans, that activity was constantly in vogue. Why otherwise those bans constantly repeated from century to century?

A Palestine Exploration Society was formed recently in London, and it has accumulated a mass of remarkable facts disproving former prejudice, while its museum and publications with every passing day increasingly prove the richness and diversity of old Jewish artistic activity.

The existence of Jewish art is therefore indisputable nowadays. The former prejudice has crumbled. It has gone off like a dead leaf. The Jews ceased to be rotten and inept in arts, they ceased to be some unheard-of and unseen exception in the row of nations. Nobody has deprived the savage inhabitants of Oceania, the ancient and coarsest Asians and Americans, and the very red-skinned Indians of the ability for art - the Jews alone were to be considered some inconceivable monster, the Jews whose history is so full and rich and who lived long centuries filled now with savage and fierce tragedy, now with most picturesque and fragrant poetry, now with bigotry and boundless despotism, now with pastoral meekness. Such diverse features and elements have never before gone without a trace in any nation: they have always left a reflection and an imprint in imminent works of art. And should no record of the Bible, not a single truly surviving work
of Jewish plastic art have reached us, their grandiose and profound lyrical poetry alone, the very remnants of their sacred psalms that survived in numerous religious melodies of the entire Christendom would have sufficed to convince us of the profound poetic spirit and artistic ability of the whole Jewish tribe.

To repeat the old absurdities about the inartistic Jews and their alienation, allegedly by nature itself, from the common work of all peoples in the field of art is permissible nowadays only to the people utterly blind and ignorant or those consumed by the same intolerance, hatred and fanaticism that used to be always ascribed to the Jews themselves. Unfortunately, these people are still in plenty, and one of the current European celebrities, the German composer Richard Wagner is distinguished among them. In his booklet Jewry in Music, 1869, he repeated all the old accusations against the Jews and with exemplary hatred added many of the new ones. He sees in this tribe the lack of all things noble, pure, elevated and talented; even the outward physical appearance of the Jews seems to him disgusting, repugnant and remote from any artistic element: he believes that in all possible respects the Jewish tribe did Europe only the worst service and infected it with a host of most uncommendable qualities and that it would be able to follow the true course of development and perfection only when it finally rid itself of their oppression and widespread interference.

However, this modern crusade against the Jewish nationality has become proof of fanaticism and obscurantism to such an extent that it has found few followers and, on the contrary, stirred everywhere general indignation and caused a heated rebuff by the best part of the German press. It seems too strange to speak of the general and radical antipathy for the physical type of the Jewish people when the whole of Europe has been filled from olden days with handsome specimens from among the Jews; it seems too strange to speak of their profound moral and intellectual poverty when rows of great people advancing the human generation are to be found in all pages of history, engaged in most diverse fields of activity and hailing from the depth of the Jewish family; it seems too strange to accuse the Jews of low and contemptible qualities alone when chronicles of old and modern times cited before the eyes of all people numer-
free and easy life in the past two millennia, under no circumstances being second to the rest of the nations?

The wretched slander and shameful howling of Richard Wagner and the likes of him advocating old rotten views could no longer be a success or of any importance and fell on their own without a trace.

The absence of outstanding personalities among the Jews in the field of art was pointed out more than once. “Well, of course,” many people said, “there is no denying, and nobody disputes the fact that in the Middle Ages and the past centuries the Jewish tribe gave many notable scientists, writers, philosophers, doctors, publicists, musicians and actors to the world, but where do you find Jewish architects, painters and sculptors?” There could be only one answer to that, “Small wonder they can’t be found. Their social standing has always been such that it prevented them from engaging precisely in that type of activity. Those among the Jews, who stood at a lower level of development and intelligence, had to think exclusively of their daily bread and became salesmen, industrialists, speculators or doctors, and bearing in mind only heaps of gold, were not weary of direct contact with the mass of the people. But those who stood above, who felt they had in them great and lofty powers became scientists, writers, publicists, actors or musicians, and bearing in mind the mighty influence on human ideas, acted from the dark depths of their studies, or the sparkling, brightly lit surface of a concert hall or theatre stage, remaining independent from the mob and never coming into contact with it. It is quite another matter to be an architect, a painter or a sculptor. They must combine in their activity two sides, that is, dependence on the client, buyer or customer and also dependence on their own talent and spiritual mood. And a correct balance between the two sides is only possible where there is no prejudice or antipathy against the artist’s personality, where he is profoundly respected, where he is deemed superior and not inferior to his surroundings, considered an enlightened leader rather than a hired hack to meet one’s whims. Until now a Jewish artist could not aspire to equality with any other artist. Until quite recently nobody would have thought twice before entrusting a Protestant to build a Catholic cathedral, or a Catholic to build a Russian Orthodox church, or else a Russian Orthodox to build a Protestant church. However, who wouldn’t have thought it downright impossible and even criminal to have a Jew build a temple for them? Furthermore, who would until quite recently have entrusted a Jew to build a palace? Who would have placed an order with him to paint the Madonna, an angel or a saint? Who would have asked him to do interior decoration in a cathedral or even palace, or aristocratic chambers for that matter. After all, not so long ago entire painting and sculpture rested almost exclusively on religious themes and did not want to know anything else. True, in the past two centuries or so things began to change, and other themes, too, little by little made it to the surface. The themes did change, but habits remained the same, so that it is the modern times that are called upon to bring order and justice, too, to this branch of human activity. How can one call the Jews to account for something they were not to blame until now, how can one demand from them what they were physically unable to receive? They have until now been bound hand and foot on all sides by the Europeans themselves, to say nothing of the commandments of their own law. Now the situation has changed, and public opinion and ideas are different everywhere, so start turning to them, from this moment and no sooner, with expectations, call them to account, insist on their delivering and castigate them, if they fail to do what they should and can do.

The Jewish tribe is so talented and has capacities for so many things that as soon as you free these people of fetters, they immediately rush with irrepressible and impetuous force, introducing new, fresh and hot elements in the mass of the Jewish genius, knowledge and creativity. There is no doubt that Europe won’t have to wait long for powerful personalities and leaders in the field of architecture, painting and sculpture to appear in its midst, just like the talented Spinoza, Heine, Bernet, Lassalle and Rachel were in the field of philosophy, poetry, social matters and acting art in the past, or just as gifted as Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn and a host of other remarkable figures in different fields of science and applied knowledge.

NOTES
1 Vladimir Stassov’s thoughts on Jewish art given here come from his article “On the Construction of a Synagogue in St. Petersburg” first published in volume 2 of Yevreiskaya biblioteka (Jewish
Library)/SPb., 1872, pp. 453-473/. The excerpt is reproduced from Stassov V.V., *Sobranie sochinenii* (Collected Works), vol. 1, St.
Petersburg, 1894, pp. 298-306.

2 From a letter by Vladimir Stassov to David Gunzburg of January 11, 1893.

The Manuscripts Department of the Russian National Library of St. Petersburg. The Baron David Gunzburg Collection (f. 183, storage unit 1096, sheet 1)

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


GLOSSARY

A. C. (Lat. "anno creationis"): the "year of creation"; the reckoning from the creation of the world according to the Jewish calendar.

Aggadah (Heb. "tale" or "lesson"): name given to those sections of rabbinic literature which contain homiletic expositions of the Bible, stories, legends, folklore, anecdotes, or maxims. In contra distinction to halakhah.

A.H. (Lat. "anno hegridae"): "in the year of the hegira (flight)" of Muhammad to Medina; date at which Muslims set the beginning of their time reckoning.

Ashkenazim: term applied to the Jews of Germany and thereafter to their descendents, wherever resident. In contradistinction to Sephardim.

Bible (in Hebrew – mikra, kitve – kodesh, Tanakh): The sacred canonical books. Hebrew Bible, originally divided into 24 books, contains 3 sections – Torah (Pentateuch), Neviim (Prophets), Ketuvim (Hagiographa).

Genizah: depository for used sacred books. The best known was discovered in the synagogue of Fostat, (Old Cairo).

Haggadah: ritual recited in the home on Passover eve at the seder table.

Halakhah (pl. halakhot): an accepted decision in rabbinic law. Also refers to those parts of the Talmud concerned with legal matters. In contradistinction to aggadah.

Hazzan (Heb."cantor"): precentor who intones the liturgy and leads the prayers in the synagogue.
**Karaites:** name given to members of a Jewish sect which rejected the Oral Law. Originating in the eight century.

**Ketubah** (Heb. “a written document”): wife’s marriage contract specifying the obligations and sums she is entitled to receive in the event of divorce or the death of her husband.

**Koran:** The holy book of Islam containing the utterances of Mohammed during his prophetic career.

**Mishnah:** festival prayer book.

**Mishneh Torah:** body of traditions regarding the correct spelling, writing, and reading of the Hebrew Bible. Masora magna: long lists of variant readings of the Bible written in the margins of the text. Masora parva: short notes of variant readings of the Bible written in the margins of the text.

**Masorete:** scholar of the masoretic tradition.

**Megillah** (pl. megillot) (Heb. “a scroll”): scroll; especially the Scroll of Esther.

**Menorah:** seven-branched oil lamp used in the Tebernacle and Temple.

**Midrash:** method for the interpretation of Scripture by finding new meaning in addition to the literal one. Also the name for collection of such rabbincic interpretations.

**Mishne Torah:** Hebrew compendium of Jewish law written by Moses b.Maimon (Maimonides; 1135-1204).

**Pentateuch (Torah):** the first five books of the Bible.

**Sephardim:** term applied to the Jews of Spain and thereafter to their descendants, wherever resident. In contradistinction to Ashkenazim.

**Siddur:** daily prayer book in distinction to the mahzor, which contains the festival prayers.

**Targum:** Aramaic translation of the Bible.

**Vocalization:** the indication of vowels in Hebrew script.
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The compilers of the album used some of the material from the catalogue "Hebrew Manuscripts of the 10th to the 19th Century," which was put together by V.V. Lebedev but remained unpublished. B.I. Zaikovsky and O.V. Vasilyeva annotated illustrations. The chronological principle of presenting the material could only partially be observed because, first, dating was often established by convention and, second, it seems expedient to show manuscripts coming from one area side by side. The most complicated and moot problem was that of provenance. In most cases a question mark was used in parenthesis, and wherever unambiguous evidence was lacking, the place of origin was altogether omitted.

1-6
Eup. II B 17
Pentateuch
Kislev 8, 1241 (Seleucid Era)/November 13, 929
Scribe - Shlomo ben Buya'a, vocalizer and masorator - Ephraim ben Buya'a, commissioned by Avraham and Zaliah, sons Maimon V + 242 folios, 43 x 37 (33 x 29), parchment
1. Eup. II B17, folio II
2. Eup. II B17, folio III
3. Eup. II B17, folio IV rev.
4. Eup. II B17, folio IV rev., fragment
5. Eup. II B17, folio V
6. Eup. II B17, folio V, fragment

7-26
Eup. I B 19A
Petersburg (Leningrad) Codex
The oldest complete Hebrew Bible manuscript extant
Cairo. The manuscript contains several dates according to different calendars, ranging from Sivan 1319 (Seleucid Era) to Sivan 4770/ May 1008 - June 1010.

Scribe - Shmuel ben Ya'aqov, commissioned by Mevorakh ben Yosef ha-Kohen 491 folios, 33x29.5 (21x22), parchment
7. Eup. I B 19A, 14th-century binding with metal mounts of an earlier period
8. Eup. I B 19A, folio 2, fragment
9. Eup. I B 19A, folio 474
11. Eup. I B 19A, folio 475
12. Eup. I B 19A, folio 475, fragment
14. Eup. I B 19A, folio 476
17. Eup. I B 19A, folio 477
18. Eup. I B 19A, folio 477, fragment
20. Eup. I B 19A, folio 478
22. Eup. I B 19A, folio 478 rev., fragment
24. Eup. I B 19A, folio 489
26. Eup. I B 19A, folio 490

27-28
Eup. I C 5
Masorah magna
Attributed: [4]717 / 956-957
2 folios, 40x36 (27x33), parchment
27. Eup. I C5, folio 2 rev.
A transparent brown substance was laid over the micrographic ornament of the masorah notes in the 19th century to "conserve" the text. The foliate ornament has lost its gilt, revealing pink priming.
28. Eup. I C5, folio 2 rev., fragment
29-34
Esp. II B 49
Pentateuch, fragment
11th c.
12 folios, 42x36 (30x30), parchment
29. Esp. II B49, folio 1 rev.
30. Esp. II B49, folio 2
32. Esp. II B49, folio 2 rev., fragment
33. Esp. II B49, folio 3
34. Esp. II B49, folio 3 rev.

35-39
Esp. II B 341
Bible
11th c.
110 folios, 18x16 (12x11), parchment
35. Esp. II B 341, folio 14 rev.
36. Esp. II B 341, folio 15, fragment
37. Esp. II B 341, folio 71
38. Esp. II B 341, folio 110

40-44
Esp. I B 111
Masorah, fragment
Scribe – Isaac ben Shmuel
1 folio, 39x36 (35x28.5), parchment
The rosette ornament is remotely similar to the decorative elements of Byzantine manuscripts of the same period.
40. Esp. I B 111, folio 1
41. Esp. I B 111, folio 1, fragment
42. Esp. I B 111, folio 1 , fragment
43. Esp. I B 111, folio 1, fragment

44. Esp. I B 111, folio 1 rev.

45-50
Esp. II B 10
Pentateuch
235 folios, 44x37 (20x27), parchment
45. Esp. II B10, folio 67
46. Esp. II B10, folio 67 rev.
47. Esp. II B10, folio 218
48. Esp. II B10, folio 231, fragment
49. Esp. II B10, folio 227
50. Esp. II B10, folio 227, fragment

51-59
Esp. II B 8
Pentateuch
Egypt (?); 48111 (?) / 1051 (?) (Colophon date is largely obliterated.)
Vignettes between the columns and on the margins were added later, possibly, in the 13th c. in North Africa.
Scribe - Moshe ha-Sofer
177 folios, 40x37 (28x28), parchment
51. Esp. II 138, folio 14, fragment
52. Esp. II 138, folio 56, fragment
53. Esp. II 138, folio 162
54. Esp. II 138, folio 176, fragment
55. Esp. II 138, folio 176, fragment
56. Esp. II 138, folio 178
57. Esp. II 138, folio 178, fragment
59. Esp. II 138, folio 178 rev., fragment
60
Esp. II B 266
Masorah
11th c.
1 folio, 39x36 (20x16), parchment
Esp. II B266, folio 1

61-67
Esp. II B 262
Masorah
11th c.
Commissioned by Mevorakh ben Zedaqah ben Yonah ben Shelah
6 folios, 42x37 (27x24), parchment
61. Esp. II B262, folio 2
63. Esp. II B262, folio 3
64. Esp. II B262, folio 3 rev.
65. Esp. II B262, folio 4
66. Esp. II B262, folio 5
67. Esp. II B262, folio 5 rev.

68-69
Esp. II B 269
Pentateuch
Purchase date: Kislev 4836 / November-December 1075
1 folio, 32x32, parchment
68. Esp. II B 269, folio 1
69. Esp. II B 269, folio 1, fragment

70-71
Esp. II B 267
Two Folios of Bible Manuscript
Commissioned by Aharon ben Avraham
Egypt (?), 11th c.

2 folios, 40x33 (21x33), parchment
70. Esp. II B267, folio 1
71. Esp. II B267, folio 2

72
Esp. II B 263
Ornamented Folio of Bible Manuscript
According to a record made on the reverse, the manuscript was finished on Av 10, 1356 (Seleucid Era) / July 1045 (The record is attributed to the 14th-15th cc.)
1 folio, 32x28.5 (27x26), parchment
Esp. II B 263, folio 1

73
Esp. II B 270
Ornamented Folio of Bible Manuscript
Egypt (?), 11th c.
1 folio, 39x34 (34.5x29), parchment
Esp. II B 270, folio 1

74
Esp. II B 268
Pentateuch
Latest date of attribution: 1301 (Seleucid Era) / 989-990
Commissioned by Nasa ben Nedlan ben Benjamin ben Moshe
4 folios, 46x38 (31x27), parchment
Space between the characters is filled with light brown paint imitating gold.
Esp. II B 268, folio 2 rev.

75-83
Esp. II B 12
Masorah

62

63
84-88
Ép. II C 144
Bible
Alexandria, 4881/1122
Scribe - Yoseph ben Ya’aqov ha-Sofer
II + 315 folios, 18x13 (10x7), paper
Some elements of the ornament are reminiscent of the rosettes on
the margins of the Ép. I B 111 Masorah manuscript.
84. Ép. II C 144, folio 287 rev.
85. Ép. II C 144, folio 289
86. Ép. II C 144, folio 291 rev.
87. Ép. II C 144, folio 306
88. Ép. II C 144, folio 309

89-92
Ép. I 97-102
Avraham ibn Ezra, Collection of Treatises on Hebrew
Grammar
Byzantium (?), 5057/1296-1297
Scribe - Haggai ha-Sofer
114 folios, 18.5x14 (11.5x8.5), parchment
89. Ép. I 97-102, folio 47 rev., fragment
90. Ép. I 97-102, folio 58 rev., fragment

91. Ép. I 97-102, folio 79 rev., with later drawing
92. Ép. I 97-102, folio 112

93
Ép. II B 1580
First Folio of a Bible or Pentateuch
Iraq (?), 13th-14th cc.
1 folio, 12x10.5 (7.5x6.5), parchment
Ép. II B 1580, folio 1 rev.

94-95
Ép. II B 1577
Bible. Beginning or End of the Codex
Iraq (?), 14th c.
2 folios, 19.5x14.5 (13x10), parchment
94. Ép. II B 1577, folio 1 rev.
95. Ép. II B 1577, folio 2

96-99
Ép. I 802
Moshe b. Avraham ha-Rophe Dar’e, Divan, a book of poetry
Late 14th – 15th cc.
A note added in a different handwriting says that the manuscript
was copied by Aharon ben Ezra in 1474 (Seleucid Era)/1163.
This date, however, looks questionable and leaves room for
a different reading: 1804 / 1493.
In the manner of representation the golden flowers against a pale
blue background in the cartouches and medallions are reminiscent
of the design of late 14th-century manuscripts from Western Iran
(for instance, Shiraz).
138 folios, 26.5x16.5 (16x13), paper
96. Ép. I 802, folio 44
97. Ép. I 802, folio 44, fragment
100-101
Eup. II Vellum Scrolls, 160
Damascus Torah Scroll
14th-15th cc.
42 sheets; height 60 cm, 130 columns (46.5x11), vellum
100. Eup. II Vellum Scrolls, 160
101. Eup. II Vellum Scrolls, 160, fragment
A metal case (20x77) with engraved medallions and the names
of clients: ‘‘The holy ark and the enclosed Torah scroll (...) are
dedicated to the Lord, God of Israel, by Karaites living in
Damascus: Joshiyahu Halevi (levite) ben (son) rabbi Jepheth ben
rabbbi Aharon Halevi (May he rest in the Garden of Eden) and
Azrikam ben Eleazar ben rabbi Joshua (May he rest in the Garden
of Eden)’’

102-103
Eup. II B 168
Pentateuch
Tlemcen (Algeria), Sivan 27, 4985 / June 4, 1225
Scribe - Yoseph bar Avraham
2 folios, 18.5x17.3 (12.5x11), parchment
102. Eup. II B 168, folio 1 rev.
103. Eup. II B 168, folio 2

104-109
Eup. II B 101
Pentateuch
North Africa or Spain, 13th-14th cc.
98 folios, 24x20.5 (18.5x13.5), parchment
104. Eup. II B 101, folio 96

105. Eup. II B 101, folio 96 rev.
106. Eup. II B 101, folio 97
107. Eup. II B 101, folio 97 rev.
108. Eup. II B 101, folio 98.
109. Eup. II B 101, folio 98, fragment
In colours and elegant lines the ornament of this folio differs
markedly from the preceding folios. As all of them initially formed
part of one codex, to judge by some evidence, it can be suggested
that the ornament dates to a later period.

110
Eup. II B 1550
Mesorah in an Ornamented Frame
Spain or Portugal, 14th c.
8 folios, 33x25.5 (23.5x17), parchment
Eup. II B 1550, folio 6 rev.

111
Eup. I בִּינָם, 67
The Minor Prophets
1 folio, 33.5x28.5 (24x21), parchment
Eup. I בִּינָם, 67, folio 1 rev.

112
Eup. II B 334
Bible
Spain (?), 14th-15th cc.
12 folios, 24x18.5 (15.5x11.5), parchment
Eup. II B 334, folio 3 rev.
113-115
Eap. II B 292
Bible
Spain, 15th c.
27 folios, 28x21, parchment
113. Eap. II B 292, folio 1 rev., fragment
114. Eap. II B 292, folio 17 rev., fragment
115. Eap. II B 292, folio 19 rev., fragment

116-117
Eap. II B 1525
Pentateuch. Frontispiece of the Book of Genesis with Ornamented Margins
Spain or Portugal. Ownership mark dated: 1418
2 folios, 25x19 (18.5x13.5), parchment
116. Eap. II B 1525, folio 1
117. Eap. II B 1525, folio 1, fragment

118-119
Eap. I C 8
Moses Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon, Rambam)
Mishneh Torah (Yad ha-Hazakah)
Italy. Late 14th-15th cc.
95 folios, 51x36.5 (29x19), parchment
118. Eap. I C 8, folio 18 rev.
119. Eap. I C 8, folio 63 rev.

120-127
Eap. I B 2
Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos (Aramaic translation)
France or Germany, 14th c.
200 folios (Initially 279 folios; the first 79 folios were lost in the early 1990s.), 53x39 (33x23.5), parchment

128-144
Eap. n.c. 1
Siddur (Ashkenazi prayer-book)
198 folios, 27x20 (18.5x9.5), parchment
128. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 11 rev.
129. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 16, fragment
130. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 24, fragment
131. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 28, fragment
132. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 36 rev.
133. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 58 rev., fragment
134. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 87 rev., fragment
135. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 95 rev.
136. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 100 rev., fragment
137. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 108
138. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 108 rev., fragment
139. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 126, fragment
140. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 130 rev., fragment
141. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 140 rev., fragment
142. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 142, fragment
143. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 143 rev., fragment
144. Eap. n.c. 1, folio 151 rev.
Later Manuscripts

145-147
Esp. n.c. 176
Machzor katan, a Prayer-book for New Moon's Eve (beginning of the month)
5501 / 1740-1741, Vienna
16 folio, 13.5x7.5, paper
Lost in the early 1990s
145. Esp. n.c. 176. 18th-century binding, vellum, metal mounts
146. Esp. n.c. 176. Title-page
147. Esp. n.c. 176, folio 10

148-152
Esp. n.c. 55
Book, containing the Story of Christ (in Yiddish), the Story of pseudo-Messiah Shabbetai Tzevi (in Hebrew) and a Parody of the Book of Esther (Esther Megillah in Hebrew)
Scribe – Leiser ben Wiener
Tevet 3, 5516 – Nisan 1, 5517/ December 9, 1755 - March 22, 1757, Amsterdam
34 folios, 15.5x9.5 (12x6), paper
148. Esp. n.c. 55, 18th-century binding
149. Esp. n.c. 55, folio 1
150. Esp. n.c. 55, folio 15
151. Esp. n.c. 55, folio 34 rev.
152. Esp. n.c. 55, folio 39 rev.

153-154
Esp. n.c. 88
Picture of King Solomon and His Bride (made up from the micrography of the Song of Songs and some verses of other biblical texts)

155-156
Esp. II K 27
Ketubbah
Marriage contract of Karaite Avraham Yerushalmi son of Mordechai ha-Habira with Marat-Fumia daughter of Elijaahu Fauki ha-Habira
Kirkijer (Chufut-kale, the Crimea, 1719
1 folio, 70x50, paper
Lost in the early 1990s, bought by the Museum of Israel and returned to the RNL in 1995
155. Esp. II K 27, folio 1
156. Esp. II K 27, folio 1, fragment

157
Esp. II K 76
Ketubbah
Marriage contract of Jezekiel son of Ezra with Mariam daughter of Moshe
Calcutta, 1851
1 folio, 66.5x41.5, paper
Esp. II K 76, folio 1

158
Esp. n.c. 92
Solomon Zakin
Ode to Emperor Alexander I (in Hebrew and French)
Early 19th c.
1 folio, 62x59 (40x36), parchment
159-160
Fund 25, M.M. Antokolsky, No. 1
Address on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of
Antokolsky’s Career
(in the form of a scroll in a case)
Petersburg, 1896, Carl Faberge Studio, made by Andreyev,
designed by I. Ropett (?)
2 sheets, 33x130, parchment
Case (77x12), silver, brass (?), gilding, enamel
Fund 25, M.M. Antokolsky, No. 1
Fund 25, M.M. Antokolsky, No. 1, fragment

161
Ejr. No. 87
Torah Scroll
Yelisavetgrad, 1888
34 sheets, 11.5x42.5, 243 columns (9x4.5), parchment
The case is upholstered with dark blue velvet. Staves have bone
handles. Two silver shutters inside the case bear gold inscriptions,
including: “To His Imperial Majesty Sovereign Emperor
Alexander III from the loyal Jews of Yelisavetgrad 1888”

List of Abbreviations Used in Pressmarks

Ejr. I — the first collection of Firkovich, basic part
Ejr. I Bibli. — the first collection of Firkovich, Bible
Manuscripts
Ejr. I B — the first collection of Firkovich, Odessa Collection,
Bible Codices
Ejr. I C — the first collection of Firkovich, Odessa Collection,
the Talmud and rabbinic writings
Ejr. II B — the second collection of Firkovich, Bible Codices on
parchment
Ejr. II C — the second collection of Firkovich, Bible Codices on
paper
Ejr. II K — the second collection of Firkovich, marriage
contracts
Ejr. n.c. — Hebrew Manuscripts, new series

Details of Hebrew manuscripts from the Russian National Library
collection reproduced in this book were used in the design of its
jacket, cover, endsheet and title page.
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