

Communal Life

Wherever they settled, Jews organized their lives around a communal structure, whose organization, institutions, and powers varied and were shaped by both external and internal factors. One such external factor was the restriction on the Jewish rights of residence; this could take the form of quotas or outright prohibition of Jews from living in specific cities, regions, and even entire kingdoms. Where they were permitted to live, they were often confined to a specific lane (such as the Frankfurt Judengasse) or “ghetto,” as Jewish quarters were often called after the establishment of the Venice ghetto in 1516. Another factor was that governments often recognized Jewish communities as corporate entities—levying a tax, for instance, on the community as a whole while expecting and empowering it to collect from its members.

Communities were also shaped by internal factors. Traditional Jewish lifestyle required services and institutions that could only be provided in

a communal setting: education, provision of food that met Jewish dietary restrictions, places of worship, cemeteries, and more. The communities developed systems of self-governance, including mechanisms to legislate, adjudicate, and enforce internal affairs. This meant that Jews often preferred to live among themselves. Occasionally, communities banded together to form regional councils, the most famous of which was the Council of Four Lands, which functioned in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for nearly 200 years until 1764.

Notwithstanding their relative segregation and autonomy, Jewish communities were an integral part of European life—socially, economically, intellectually, culturally, politically, and religiously. In all periods and all regions, Jews fused elements of local culture with their own traditions, to create music, architecture, styles of dress, cuisine, and language that reflect this hybridity.

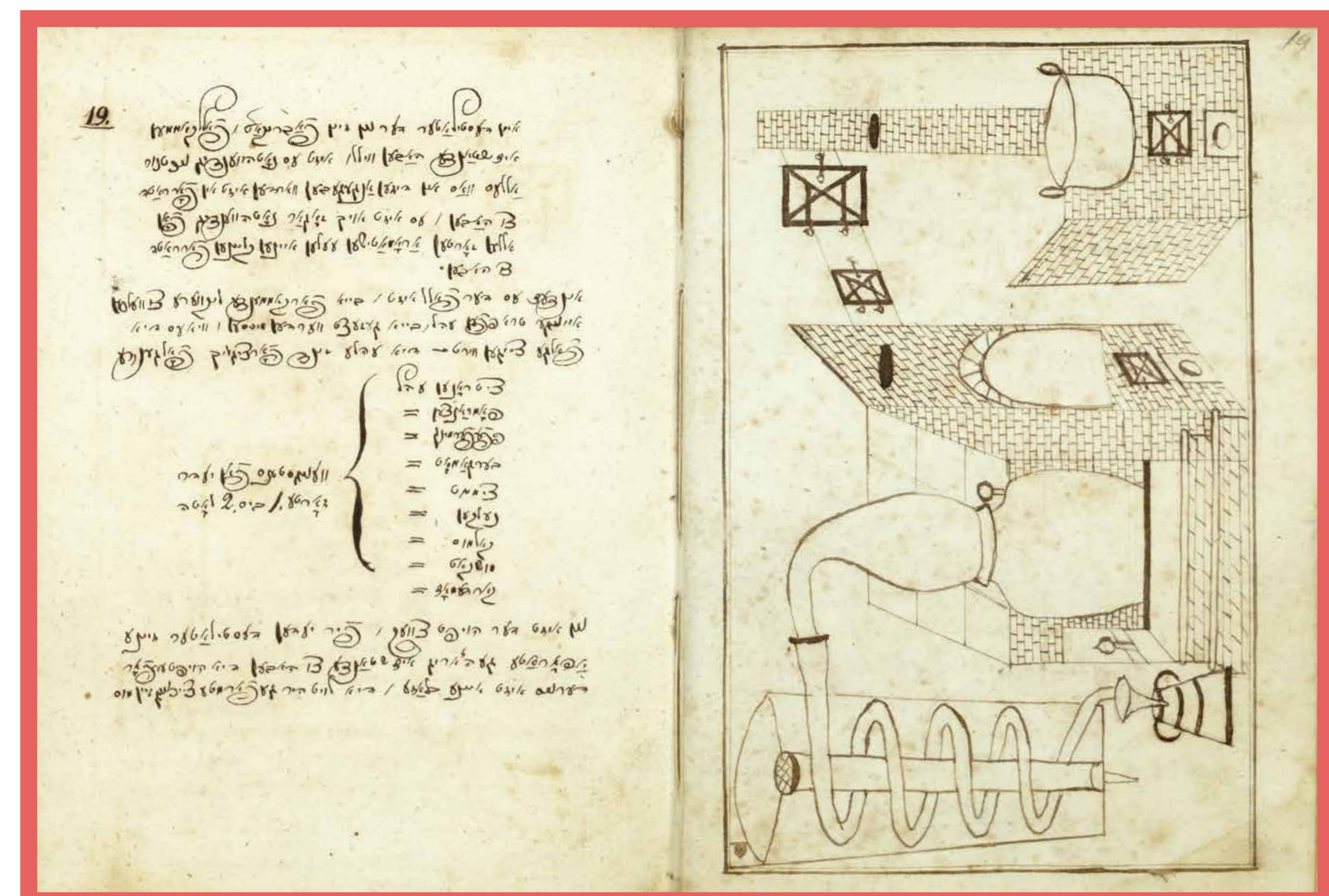
The Venice Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century

From the thirteenth through eighteenth centuries, European Jews were often required to wear distinguishing clothing or badges of a particular color in public—a red hat in the case of Venice after 1500.

The Venice ghetto was far from homogeneous. Italian, Spanish-Portuguese, German, and Levantine Jews

each had their own synagogue. Venice's status as a center of print culture resulted in a constant exchange of ideas between Jews and non-Jews. It was also home to renowned physicians, rabbis, poets, philosophers, and their patrons. Shylock, the Jewish moneylender of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, would have lived in the ghetto.

Venice map, by Frans Hogenburg, 1572
The National Library of Israel, ct 219



Mittheilung der Neusten und Vortheilhafthen Practischen Destileur Kunst und Liquerfabrikation, 1800
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 2878519

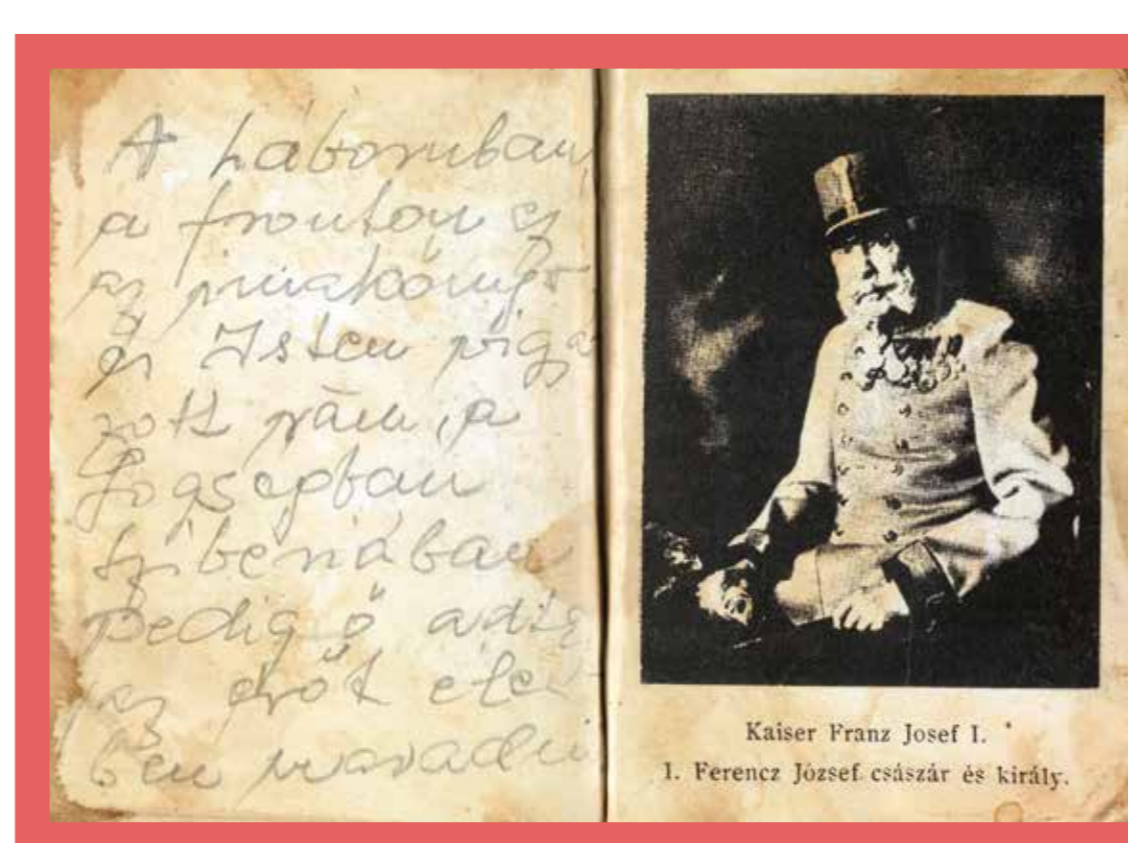
One of the ways that Jews interacted with wider society was through occupations that brought them into contact with the general public. A curious example, widespread in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and

into the modern era, was the production and sale of alcohol. Landowners would often lease these rights to Jewish innkeepers and tavern keepers. The Jews therefore were considered to be in a ‘middle class’, between the peasants and the feudal lords. This distillation book from 1800 contains recipes, in Yiddish, for brewing alcoholic beverages.



A Marital Contract (Ketubah)
Rome, Italy, 1797
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 901.331-1

Since antiquity, a ketubah (Jewish prenuptial contract) is drawn up before a couple weds, in order to give the bride financial protections and security. Over the centuries, these Aramaic documents were often rendered artistically, reflecting local style and color. This ketubah is from Rome, 1797. The ornamentation surrounding the main text of the contract incorporates Hebrew verses as well as Italian motifs.



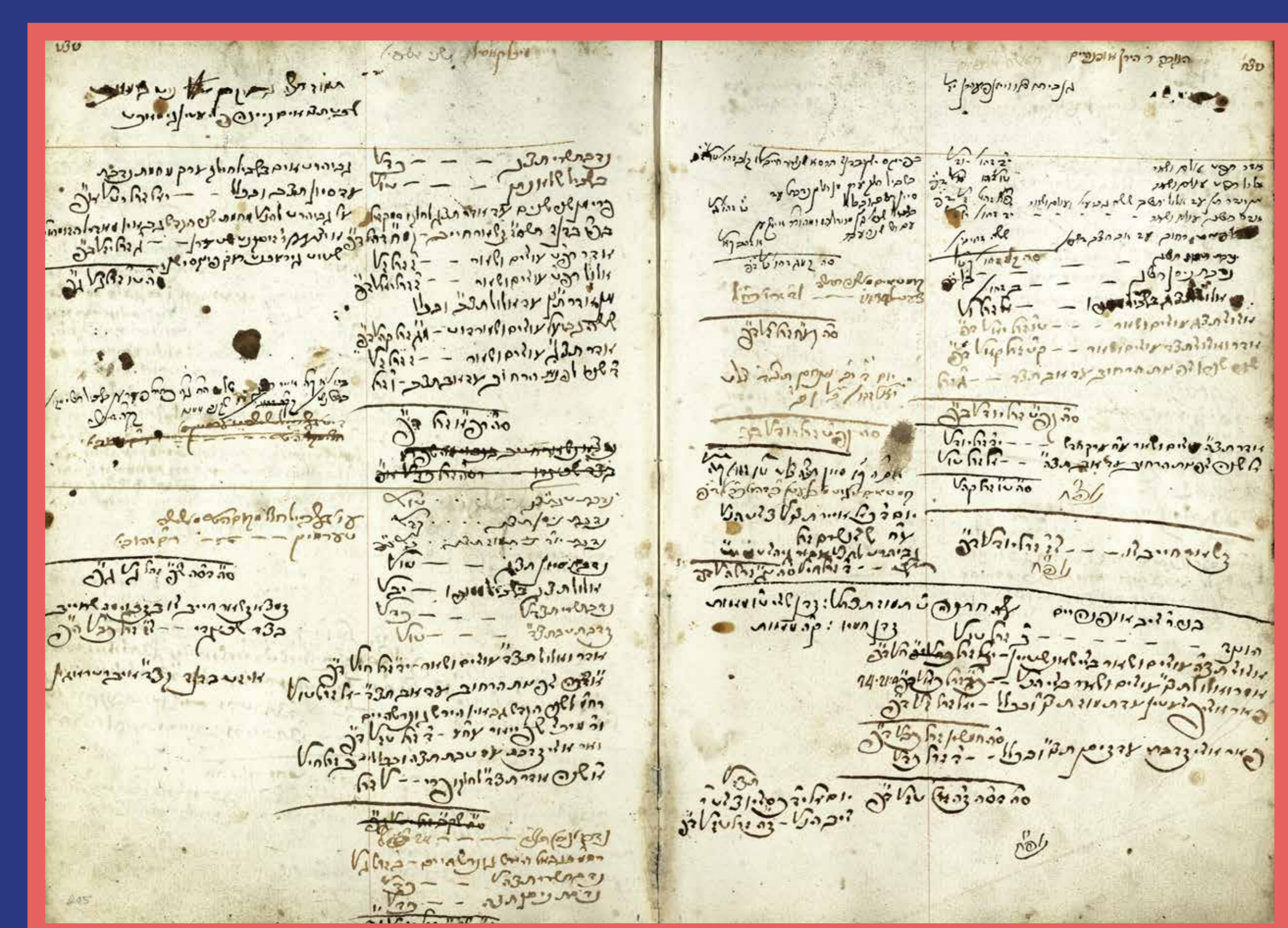
Siddur, Hungary, 1915
The National Library of Israel, 92 B 4820=0

Many Jews in Europe served in the army, through volunteering or conscription. This soldier's prayer book features a handwritten prayer for the wellbeing of the ruling monarch. Rezzo Geschwind, a Jewish soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I, carried this prayer book with him during the war and his captivity in Siberia.

Pinkasim: Communal Protocols

European Jewish communities, especially in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, recorded financial dealings, minutes of meetings, judicial rulings, executive decisions, voting results, and communal enactments in books called pinkasim (“record books” or “protocols”). A community's pinkas in effect chronicled and, in some ways, embodied the community itself. The sacrosanct quality of pinkasim led one prominent eighteenth-century Alsatian rabbi to quip: “If only the Ten Commandments had been recorded in the community pinkas, nobody would violate them.”

The pinkas in the image comes from Frankfurt am Main and is one of the oldest and most extensive such documents to have survived from early modern Europe, covering the period from 1552 to 1802 and containing over 500 pages. It is written in a mixture of Hebrew and Judeo-German. Jews have lived in Frankfurt almost continuously for close to 900 years. During the years chronicled in the pinkas, Frankfurt was the most prominent community in the Rhineland and the primary representative of Ashkenazic culture.



Frans Hogenburg, Georg Braun, Cologne, 1574
The National Library of Israel, 2= YAH. C. 1909

Frankfurt Map

In the map of Frankfurt you can see where the Judengasse was — it is the rounded street at the eastern edge of the city.

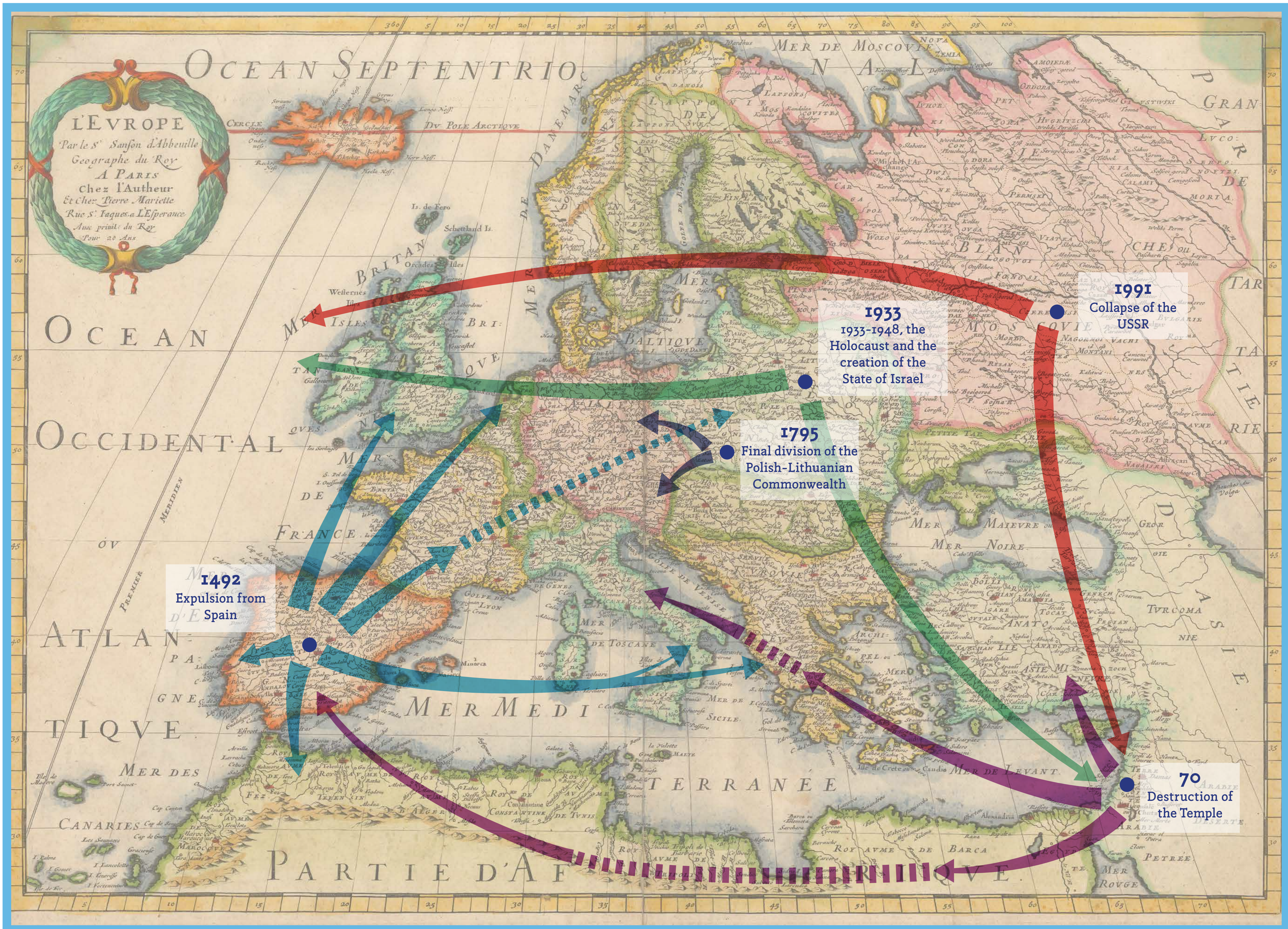
Pinkas Frankfurt am Main, 1552-1802
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 662=24

Jewish Journeys

A diaspora (from Greek διασπορά, “scattering, dispersion”) is a scattered population that maintains collective memory of a shared homeland. In the case of the Jews, the original homeland is Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel. The first Jewish diaspora community consisted of exiles from Judah, the territory around Jerusalem, to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE. They continued to identify as “Yehudim”—Judeans, Jews, Judeans, Juden, Juifs, Zsidok, Zydzi—even after several generations.

After the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE and the Roman occupation of Eretz Yisrael, which they renamed “Palestina,” new Jewish centers emerged in Mesopotamia and around the Mediterranean. With the rise of Islam in the seventh century, the Jews were divided between lands under Muslim rule and Christendom, each influencing the evolution of their respective communities. Migrations continued

as the Jews kept seeking religious toleration and economic opportunity. In the tenth century, two major Jewish cultural centers emerged in Europe: Muslim Spain and the Rhineland, known in Jewish sources as Sepharad and Ashkenaz, respectively. Yet even as these communities flourished and expanded, they faced persecution: the Crusades, the Almohad invasion, the Inquisition, Blood Libels, local massacres and expulsions. The most notorious of these took place in 1492, when Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain expelled all Jews who would not convert to Catholicism from Spain. Jews fled to the safer environments of North Africa, southern France, the Ottoman Empire, Holland, Italy, and the New World. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire and the Polish Commonwealth had emerged as new centers of Jewish life. There, too, periodic upheavals—most notably the Khmelnytsky uprisings of 1648–9—kept the Jews moving in every direction.



Map of Europe by Sanson d'Abbeville Paris, 1653, The National Library of Israel, Laor Map Collection, Europe 15 - - - - - Areas where some Jews settled, forming communities, and others continued on

During the late-eighteenth century, Poland was partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, each experiencing the advent of modernity in vastly different ways. The emancipation of most Jews of western and central Europe by the mid-nineteenth century granted them individual rights as citizens and, changed the very fabric of Jewish religious communal life. New philosophies, like that of **Moses Mendelssohn** and his circle in Berlin, sought to harmonize Judaism with Enlightenment principles and civic values, leading to Reform Judaism which made significant changes to Jewish liturgy and practice. Their opponents in Germany and Austria-Hungary, known as “Orthodox,” sought to maintain commitment to traditional forms of Jewish law and life even in the face of a rapidly changing world.

In the Russian sphere, Jews were restricted to the “Pale of Settlement” stretching from the Baltic to the Black Seas. The Jewish population

there increased dramatically during the nineteenth century, ultimately comprising almost half of the world’s Jews. Millions emigrated westward, especially to the United States, but were replaced through natural growth. Like elsewhere, Jews of the Pale underwent secularization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, developing a new cultural identity manifested through the emergence of Hebrew and Yiddish secular literatures and of Jewish interpretations of universalist revolutionary politics and ideologies.

The Pale was finally abolished with the overthrow of the Tsar in 1917 and the reconstitution of Poland and the Baltic states. A generation later, most of this population was wiped out in the Holocaust, and many survivors found themselves stuck behind the Iron Curtain. It was only in the 1990s that hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews were finally able to emigrate to Israel and other countries.

Babylonian Talmud, published by Daniel Bomberg, Venice, 1548
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 174.2=24



Bomberg Talmud

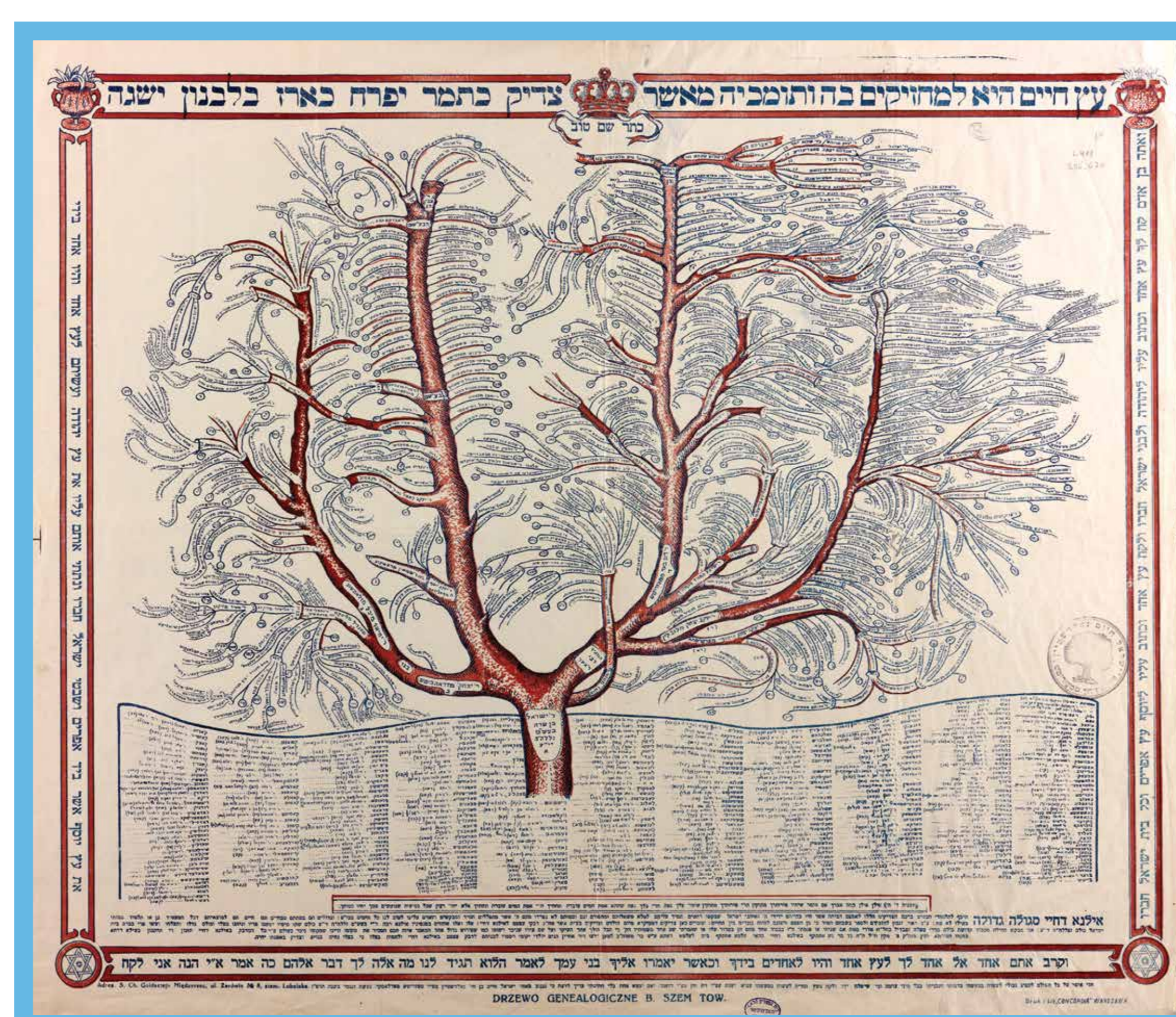
In the sixteenth century, Venice emerged as one of the most influential centers of Hebrew printing, with prolific printing houses such as Bomberg, Giustiniani, and Bragadini. These printing houses set the enduring layouts of the classic Jewish texts, most notably the Talmud. The Talmud is the formative work

and cultural masterpiece of rabbinic Judaism, the unparalleled source of Jewish law and lore. It was produced between the second and sixth centuries CE in Eretz Yisrael and Babylonia, and is written in Hebrew and Aramaic. In the words of **Heinrich Heine**, it was a “portable homeland” to the Jews.

Genealogy of a Movement

Hassidism is a mystical movement with an emphasis on personal piety, originating in the Western Ukraine in the mid-eighteenth century. Its founding figure was charismatic mystical healer the **Baal Shem Tov**. Through his disciples, the movement spread through Eastern Europe, developing different Hassidic courts each with unique doctrines and dynasties. This tree, by Mikhel Leib Rosenfeld of Oradea Mare, Romania, represents the genealogy of the Hasidic movement. The trunk bears the name of the Baal Shem Tov; the largest branches name his leading disciples, and so forth through the generations. Around the tree are Biblical verses that use trees as symbols for life and endurance.

Baal Shem Tov family tree, Warsaw, 1927
The National Library of Israel, L 413



Private collection of **Natan Sharansky** and the archive of the organization “**Shomer Achi Anochi**” (P333), the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP)

In this photo, young women are campaigning for the release of Soviet refuseniks, Jews who were denied the right to leave the USSR and go to Israel, among them **Natan Sharansky**, who was accused of high treason for his activism, and went on to become a prominent public figure in Israel.

aepj association européenne pour la préservation et la valorisation de la culture et du patrimoine juifs

הספרייה הלאומית
المكتبة الوطنية الاسرائيلية
THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ISRAEL

Renowned Figures

Throughout the generations, Jewish scholarship has flourished in Europe, producing individuals whose influence has extended far beyond the Jewish world, and contributed to the advancement of culture and society in many ways. Migration, the need to survive and adapt to new environments, and the state of being both insiders and outsiders, perhaps helped to create the conditions for innovation and creativity, and a willingness to challenge norms.

From antiquity, Jews contributed to European literature by translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek and Latin. Jewish poets and statesmen of

the eleventh and twelfth centuries are leading examples of the profound mutual influence of Jewish and Islamic thought during Muslim Spain's "Golden Age." The Renaissance brought about Jewish involvement in medicine, Christian Hebrew scholarship and printing. After Emancipation and the Enlightenment, Jewish contributions to European art and literature, science and technology, increased dramatically; winning worldwide recognition.

This panel highlights the achievements of a few selected Jewish men and women, from different times and places in Europe.



Portrait of Spinoza,
The National Library of Israel, Schwad 02 21 166
Baruch Spinoza, 1632–1677. Dutch philosopher from a Spanish/Portuguese family of conversos who returned to Judaism upon reaching Amsterdam. He was one of the great rational philosophers of the 17th century, laying the groundwork for the Enlightenment and modern biblical criticism. However, he was ostracized by the Jewish community for his controversial ideas about the Divine.



Photo of Marc Chagall with his signature,
Paris, June 1925
The National Library of Israel, Schwad 02 21 07
Marc Chagall, 1887–1985. Born in Vitebsk (today in Belarus), he studied art in St. Petersburg and then moved to France, where he gained renown as a modernist who worked in many different styles and media. His work featured elements of Eastern European Jewish folk art, inspired by his youth in Vitebsk.



Postcard reproducing a painting by Samuel Hirszenberg, 1907.
The National Library of Israel, postcard collection, TM 8* 739

In the painting, "Spinoza excommunicated", the philosopher is portrayed walking the street as religious Jews recoil from him.



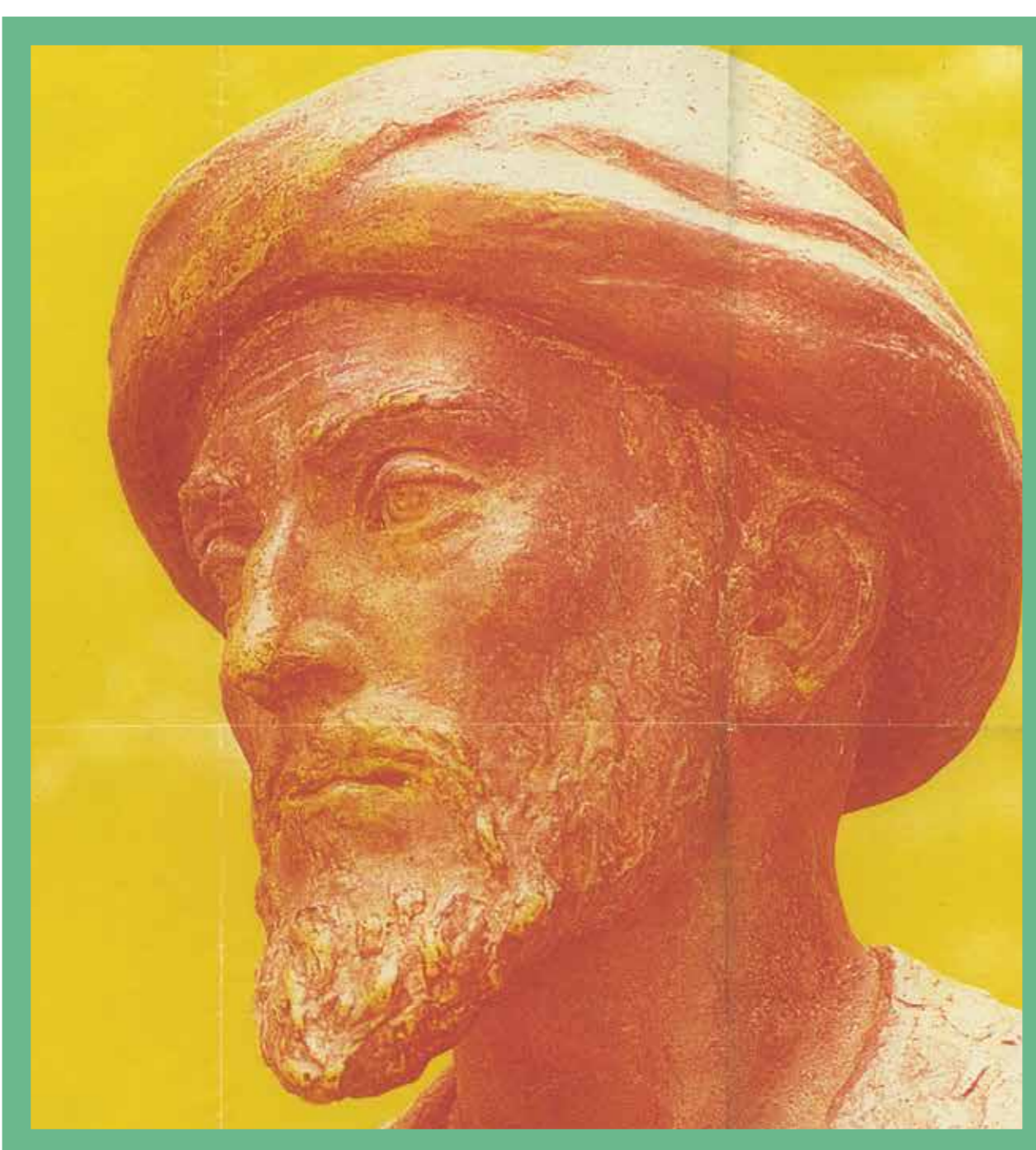
National Library of Israel Archives

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam or Maimonides), 1135–1204. Born in Cordoba, Spain, his family fled the Almohads when he was a young man, and he eventually settled in Egypt. Rambam was a prominent Jewish philosopher who had also mastered disciplines such as astronomy and medicine. The bulk of his writings, and especially his greatest work, Mishneh Torah, are on the subject of Jewish law and jurisprudence. His major philosophical treatise was The Guide for the Perplexed, written in Judeo-Arabic.



Postcard reproducing Chagall's windows, 1965.
The National Library of Israel, postcard collection, TM 8* 495

This postcard shows six of Chagall's twelve famed stained-glass windows that adorn the synagogue of Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital. Each window depicts one of Biblical Israel's twelve tribes.

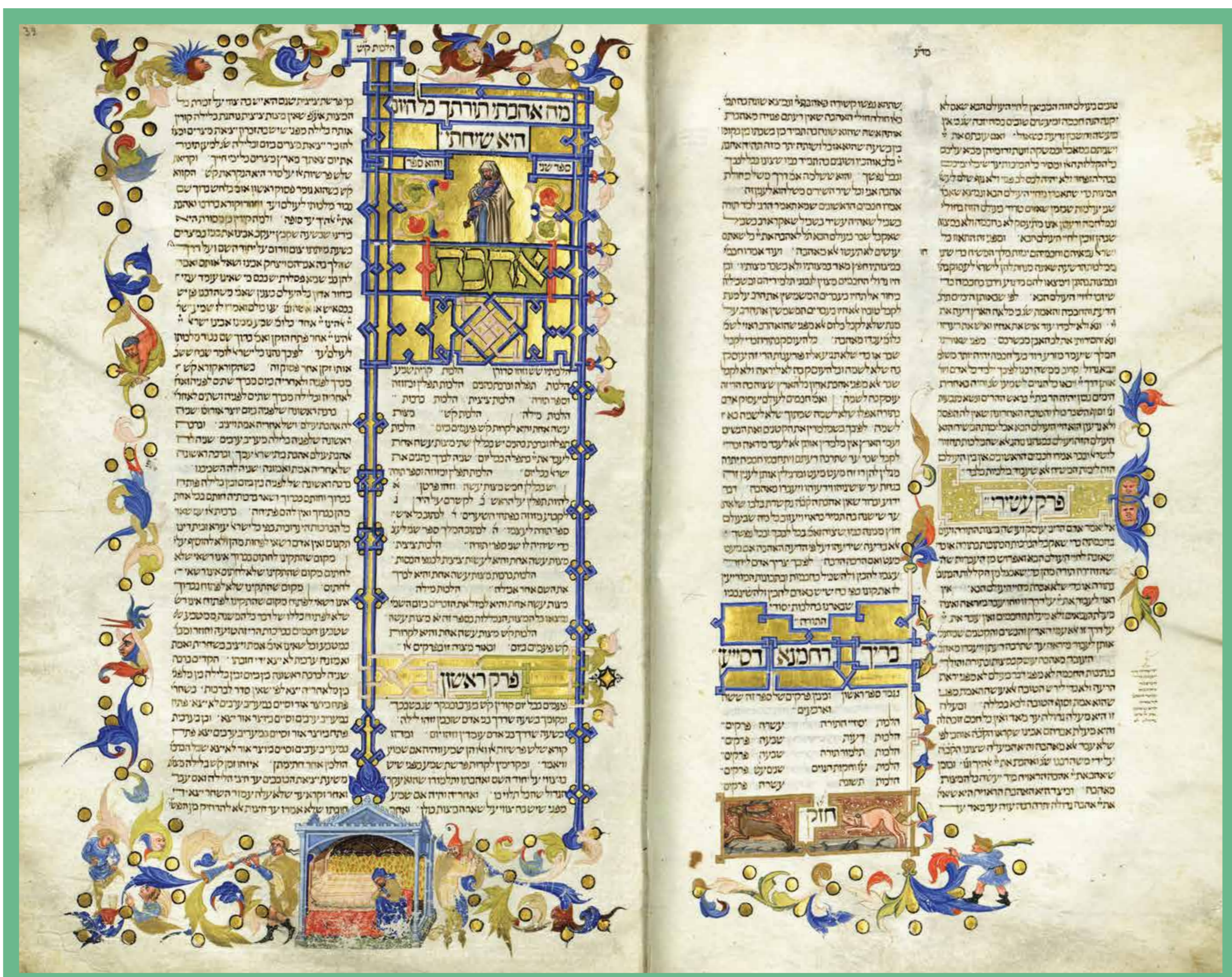


Portrait of Bertha Pappenheim in 17th century costume, posing as Glückel for painter Leopold Pilichowski

Glückel of Hamelin, 1646–1724. Born in Hamburg, died in Metz, Lorraine. She was a Jewish businesswoman who engaged in trade, ran a factory, and provided for her 14 children, while keeping a diary that affords us a rare glimpse into the ordinary life of a Jewish woman of the 17th and early-18th century in the Rhineland. Because her family was so well documented, we know that her descendants include figures such as the poet Heinrich Heine, the social worker **Bertha Pappenheim**, and **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch**.

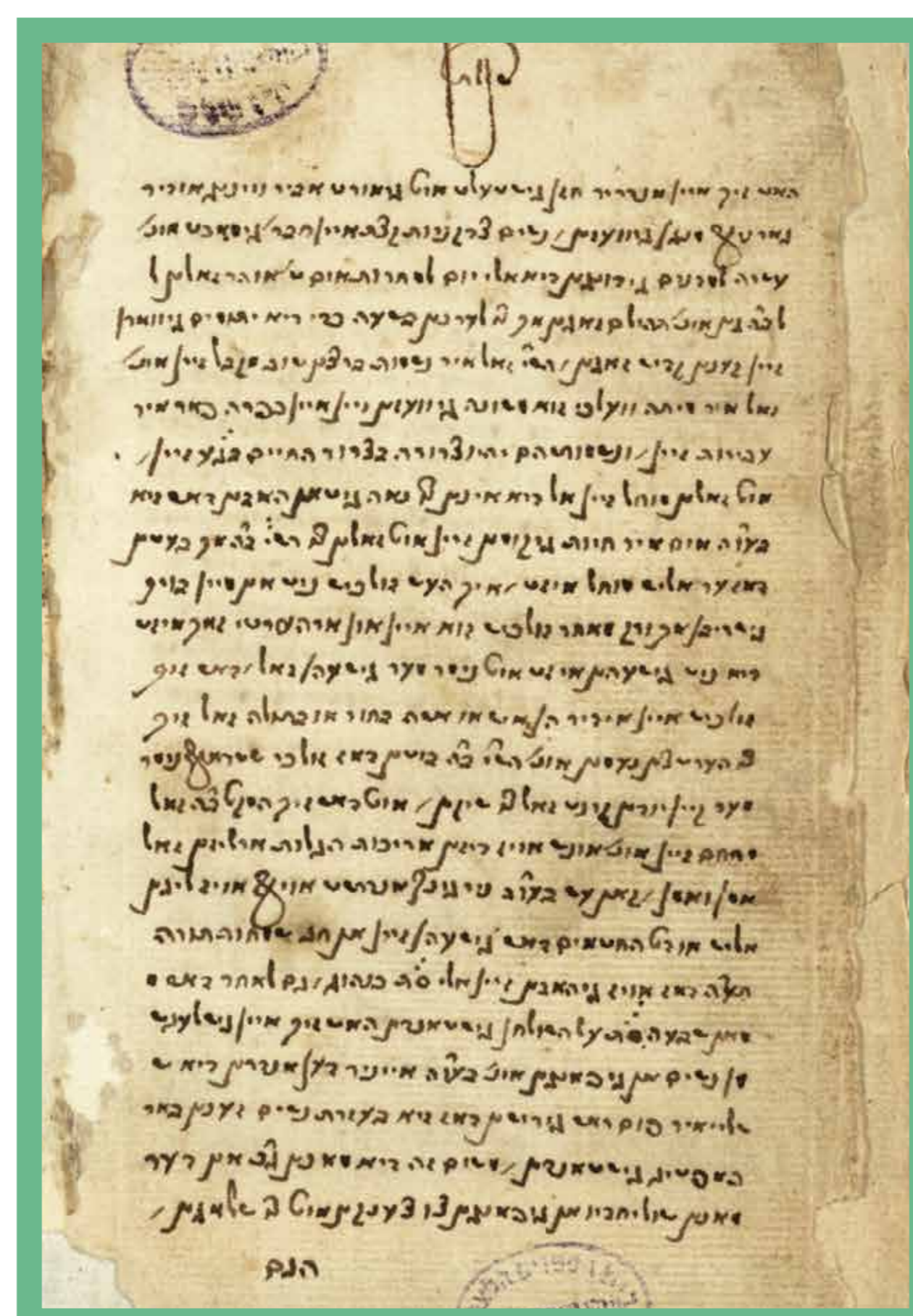


Excerpt from Glückel's memoir, manuscript, 18th century
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 4311-8



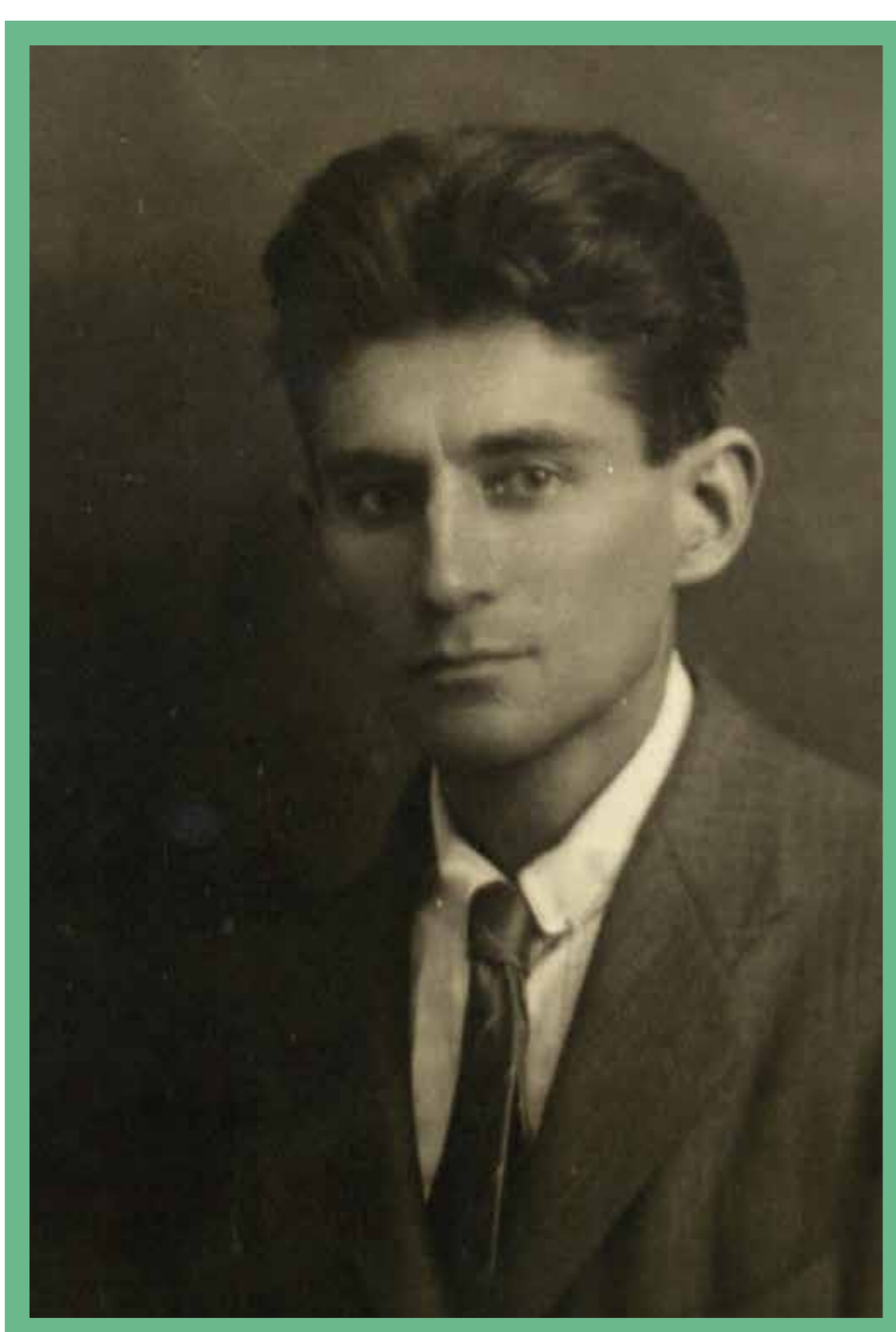
Mishneh Torah, ca. 1350
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb. 4*1193

A lavishly illustrated manuscript of Maimonides' major treatise on Jewish law.



Reproduction of a medal.
The National Library of Israel, Schwad 02 14 59

Gracia Mendes Nasi, 1510–1569. A wealthy Jewish businesswoman, born in Portugal to a family of conversos (Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism and who often practiced Judaism secretly, placing them under constant threat from the Inquisition). Doña Gracia's international business took her to Antwerp, where she developed an escape network that helped hundreds of fellow conversos escape the Inquisition, transporting them on her spice ships to the safety of the Ottoman Empire where Jews were welcomed. She lived in Ferrara, Venice, and finally settled in Constantinople.



Franz Kafka, portrait
The National Library of Israel, Schwad 02 19 136

Franz Kafka, 1883–1924. German-language novelist and short story writer who lived most of his life in Prague. Kafka is widely regarded as one of the major figures of 20th-century literature. The surrealistic and absurd situations described in his books are the source of the word "Kafkaesque". He worked as an insurance clerk, writing in his spare time, and had little recognition when alive. He ordered his friend, **Max Brod**, to destroy his unfinished work after his death from tuberculosis at the age of forty, but Brod went against his wishes and published them.

Franz Kafka, notebook with Hebrew-German word list

Autograph manuscript in pencil. Prague, ca. 1922. The National Library of Israel, Schwad. 01 19 18

Kafka considered moving to Palestine at some point, and he began studying Hebrew in preparation. This is his practice notebook, featuring such words as "innocent," "snitch," "genius," and "tuberculosis" in Hebrew and in his native German.



Rosalind Franklin at work
© Henry Grant Collection/Museum of London.

Rosalind Elsie Franklin, 1920–1958. An English chemist, she worked on the nature of viruses, earning wide recognition for this work in her time. Her research into the structures of DNA and RNA led to the discovery that was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1962, and for which she was only recognized after her death.

Longing for Jerusalem

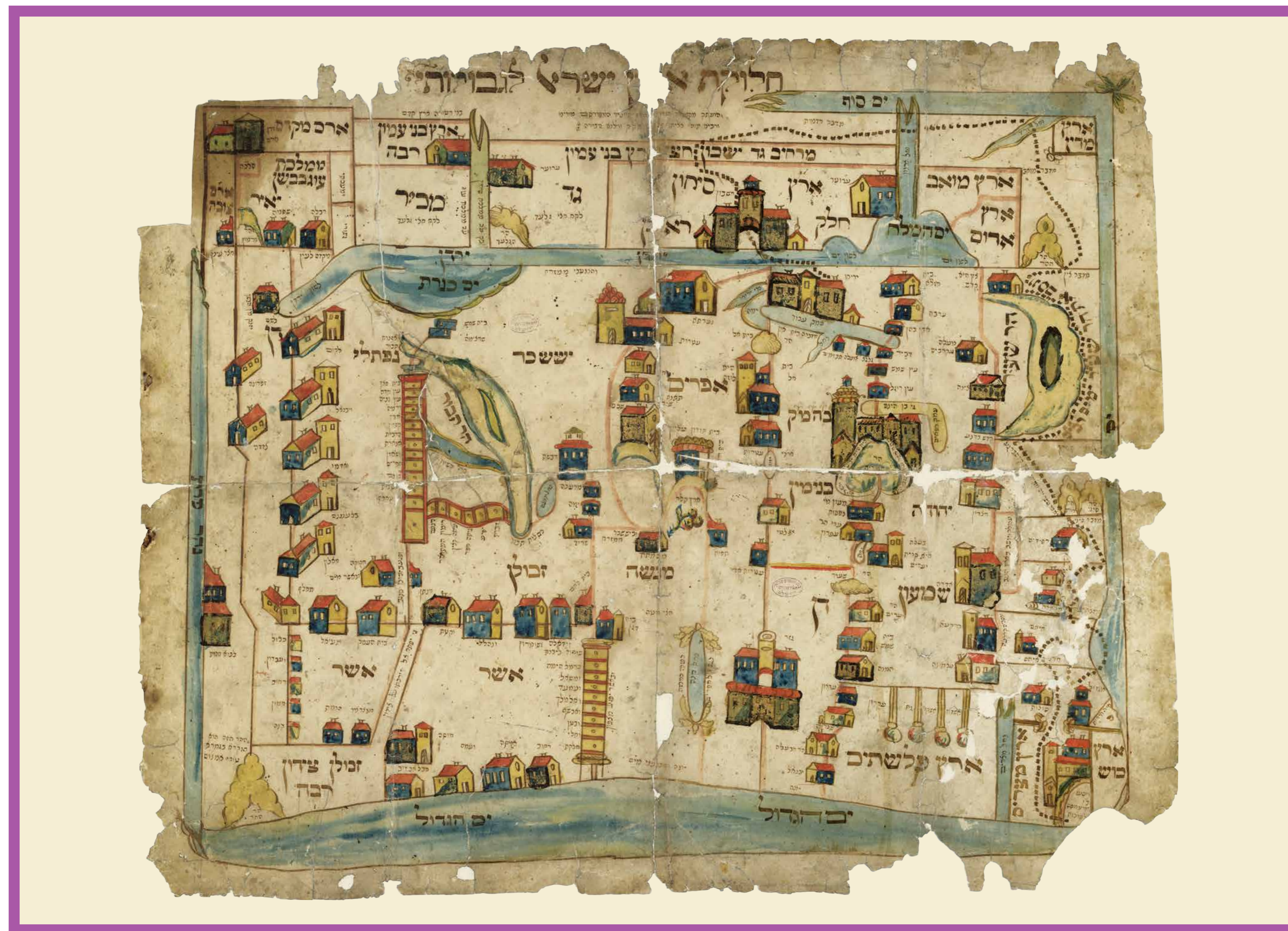
When King Solomon inaugurated the Jerusalem Temple, he expressed hope that, even in exile, the Israelites would “pray to You toward their land which You have given to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name” (1 Kings 8:48). It has indeed become a universal practice for Jews to pray toward Zion (a Biblical name for Jerusalem). Jerusalem thus remained the symbolic center of the Jewish world, binding together Jews scattered all across the globe.

In almost 2,000 years since the final destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the Jewish people never forgot that they are in exile or lost hope that they would eventually return to Zion. Various rituals for remembering Jerusalem developed: Temple observances were re-enacted from afar; synagogue architecture reflected the structure of the Temple; days of fasting and mourning for the destroyed Temple were observed; and

Jerusalem was mentioned at the times of greatest joy, as no joy could be complete while Zion remained in ruins.

The rise of modern nationalism raised questions about whether Jewish minorities could fully integrate into European nations and be accepted as equal citizens. By the late nineteenth century, it was clear from incidents like the **Dreyfus** Affair that even the most the most integrated Jew could be considered foreign, awakening the Jewish desire to establish a nation-state in its homeland. Jews also began returning to the Holy Land in increasing numbers.

All these elements converged in the establishment of a formal political movement, Zionism, by **Theodor Herzl** in 1897. It achieved its aspirations with the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948, but not before the Nazis implemented their horrific “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.”



The Twelve Tribes of Israel
Color manuscript.
Vilnius, early 1800s.
The National Library of Israel, Pal 100r - D3 (Pas.); Laor 887

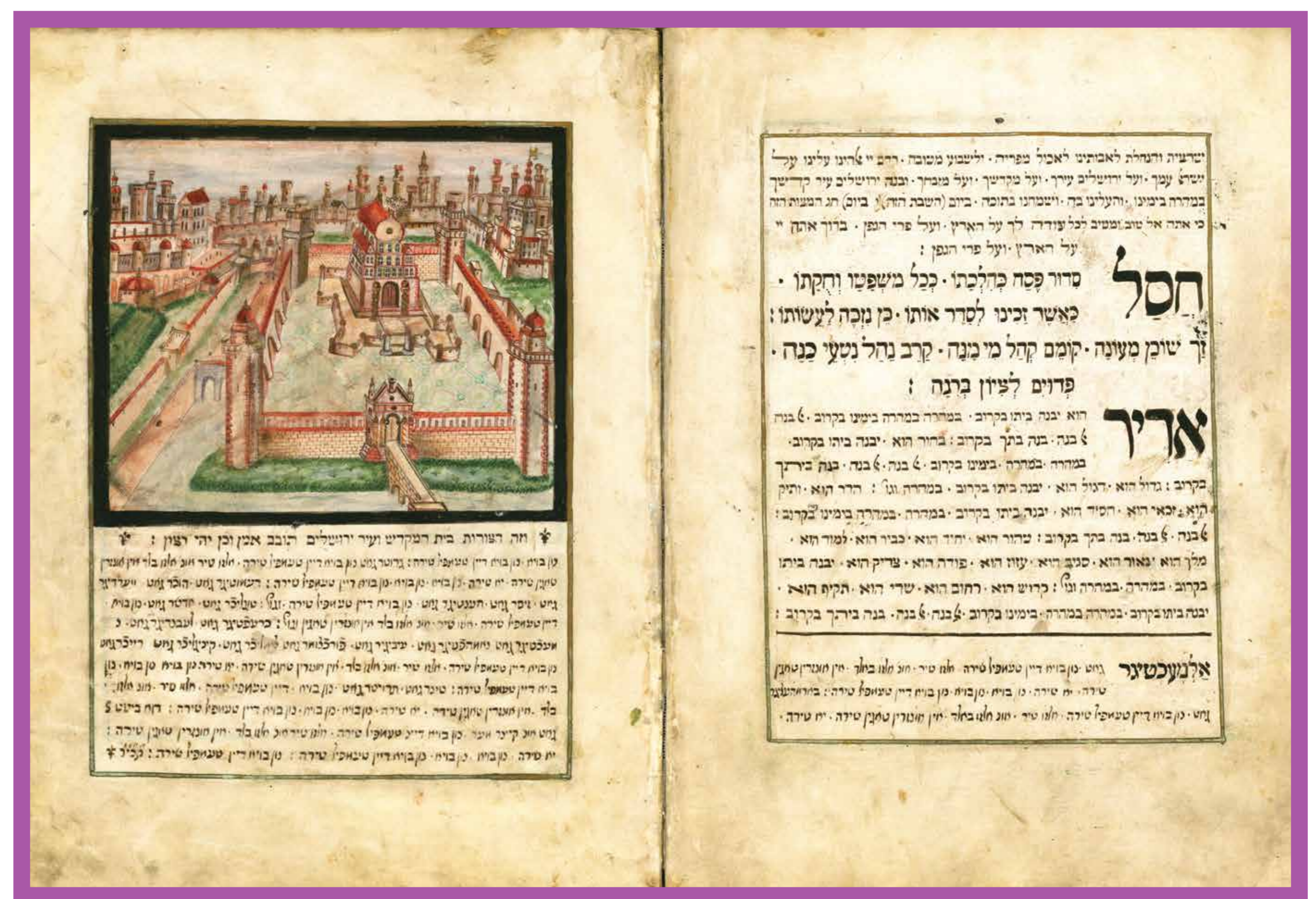
This map, probably copied from a drawing made by the **Vilna Gaon**, shows the boundaries of Israel's twelve tribes according to the partition described in the Biblical book of Joshua. The Vilna Gaon had never been to Israel and the map represents the symbolic significance of the land, rather than its actual geography.

Leipnik Haggadah
Illuminated manuscript
Darmstadt, 1733
The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel Ms. Heb. 8°983

The Haggadah is comprised of prayers, hymns, and recitations that form the script for the Passover Seder, the ritual meal at which Jews all over the world tell the story of the Israelite

exodus from Egyptian slavery. The Haggadah has been illustrated more often than any other Jewish sacred text.

At the conclusion of the Seder, participants exclaim, “Next Year in Jerusalem”, expressing faith in their eventual return to their homeland to bring the Paschal offering in the rebuilt Temple, as depicted in this illustration of the Jerusalem Temple.

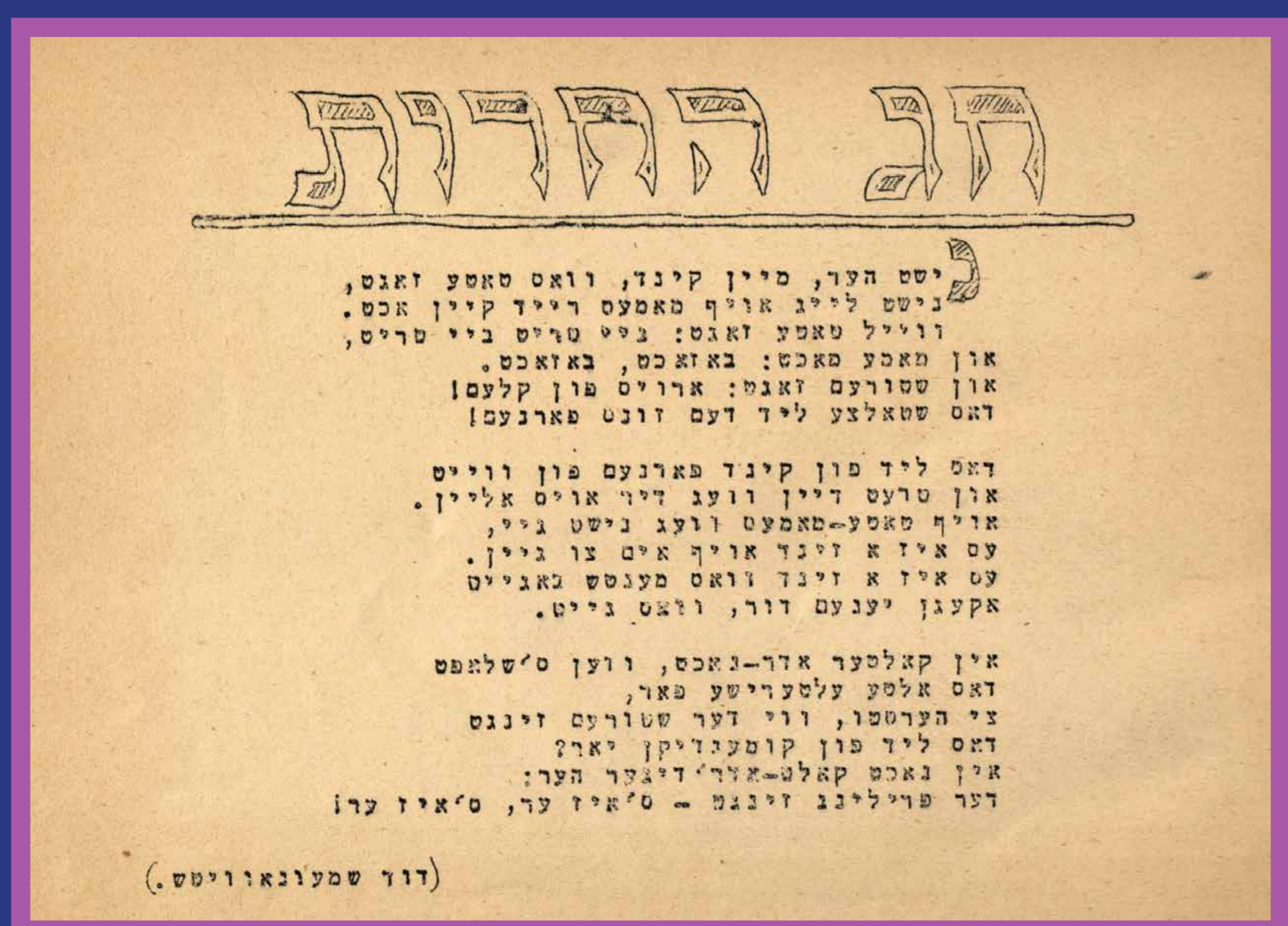


“Haggadah” of the Halutz Movement

The text of this “Haggadah” deviates greatly from the traditional text. This compilation in Hebrew and Yiddish was created by the members of the Halutz (Pioneer) Zionist youth movement in 1937 to reflect its reinvented Passover rituals, its passionate desire to the return to Zion, and its ideas about creating a new Jewish culture based on modern secular values yet rooted in Jewish tradition. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Eastern Europe witnessed the

rise of many youth movements devoted to the idea of creating a Jewish home in their historical homeland. Many of these movements promoted an agrarian way of life and trained young people to become farmers and live in communes called kibbutzim upon arrival in Palestine. Halutz, founded in 1905 and headquartered in Warsaw, had 100,000 members in 25 countries throughout the world by the eve of World War II.

Non-traditional Haggadah
Warsaw, 1937
The National Library of Israel, 37 A 1201

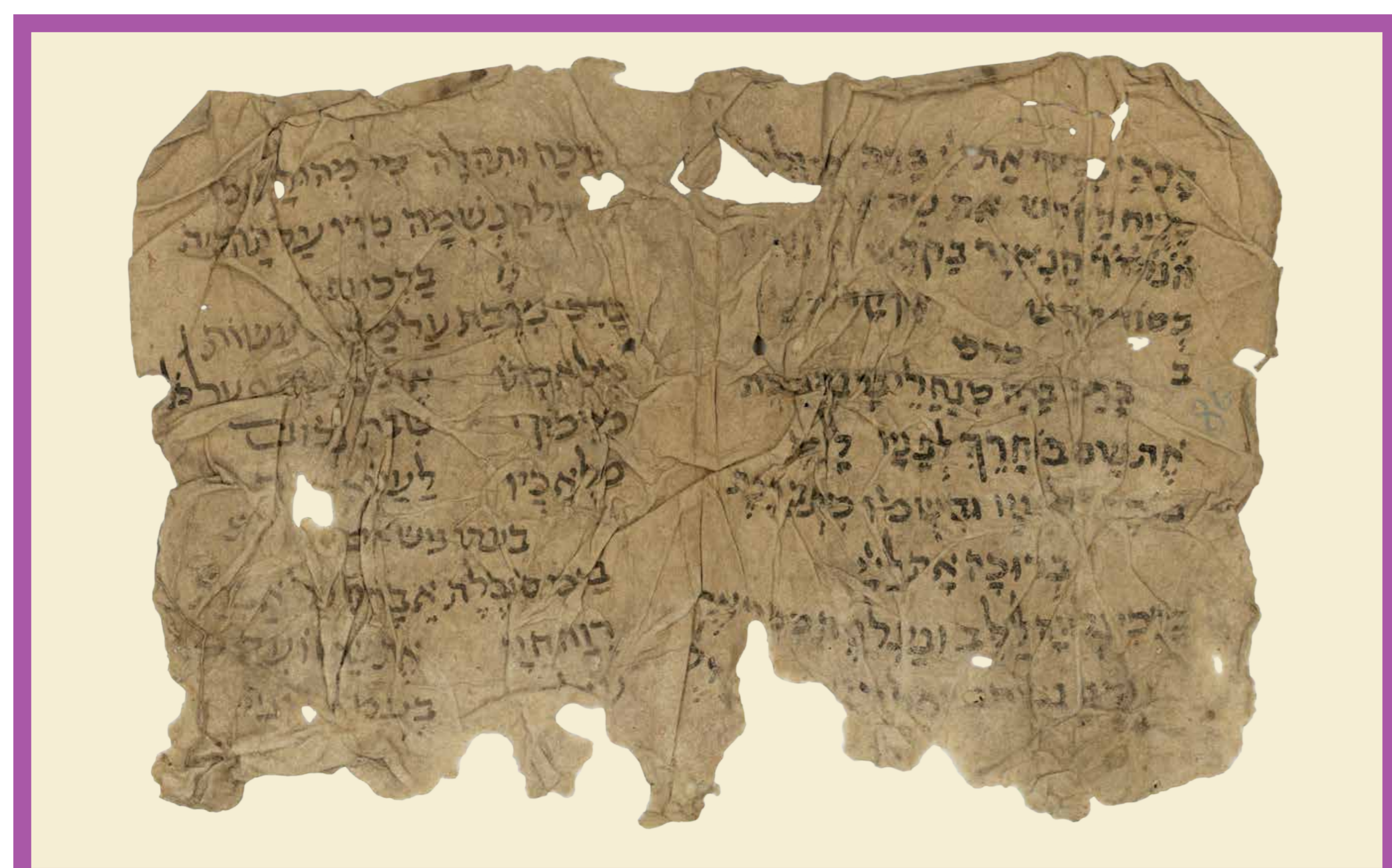


Yehudah Halevi, “Bless, O Emanation of the Holy Spirit”, poem manuscript fragment
The National Library of Israel, Ms. Heb.
8°1800/7

Despite the comforts of Spain and his personal and professional success there, the poet and philosopher **Yehudah Halevi** pined for Zion, the subject of some of his most evocative poems. Eventually he decided to undertake the perilous journey to the Holy Land, but he died soon after reaching its shores.

These verses are from the most famous of Halevi's odes to Zion, translated into English by **Nina Salaman**:

My heart is in the east, and I in the
uttermost west--
How can I find savour in food? How shall
it be sweet to me?



Europe and the Jewish Diaspora

Jews have been living in Europe continuously for two thousand years through a shifting landscape of integration and segregation; dislocation and migration; tolerance and discrimination; opportunity and persecution.

Although Europe has been home for Jews in different places at different times, they have also remained aware, even in the best of times, that they have another home. Jewish life, ritual, and prayer remained literally and figuratively facing East: to Jerusalem and the Land of Israel.

Yet these yearnings did not prevent Jews from creating “homes away from home”— autonomous communities with highly developed systems of self-government, and there was a fertile cultural dialogue between the Jewish community and the wider society in which they lived*. Tradition requires Jews to “pray for the peace of the kingdom”— whichever kingdom that may be— expressing loyalty to the ruling power, even to those who were less hospitable to them. When circumstance

allowed, Jews rose to positions of prominence and authority within the government and participated in European cultural life. This was most apparent in the modern era, after the Enlightenment, when the walls of the ghettos came down.

Well over a million Jews live in Europe today. They are an integral part of multi-cultural Europe, active participants in almost all aspects of their countries’ civic and public life. Jewish contributions to the arts and sciences continue unabated in Europe. Yet, the memory of the twentieth century still lingers, heightening the need for continued tolerance and mutual understanding between Jewish communities and their neighbors.

This exhibition gives a brief overview of the fascinating story of the Jewish Diaspora in Europe, stretching over two millennia, as told through selected historic and contemporary materials in the collections of the National Library of Israel.



*This cultural dialogue, which was evident everywhere the Jews lived, is especially clear in art. The National Library of Israel has collections of Jewish art from many countries. To see them and find art created near you, scan this code.



The National Library of Israel

Founded in Jerusalem in 1892, the National Library of Israel (NLI) has a dual mandate, serving as the national library for both the State of Israel and the Jewish people worldwide. Its vast holdings contain a wealth of material in a variety of formats, telling the historical, cultural, and intellectual story of the Jewish people, the State of Israel and the Land of Israel throughout the ages.

‘Gesher L’Europa’ (a Bridge to Europe) is an initiative of the NLI and the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe to create opportunities for knowledge sharing and cultural exchange between the National Library of Israel and Europe.

Supported by the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe

AEPJ

The AEPJ - European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage was created in 2005, encouraged by the Council of Europe. The AEPJ’s two main projects are the European Route of Jewish Heritage, one of the foremost among the Council of Europe’s European Cultural Routes, comprising of 16 geographical and 3 themed routes, and the European Days of Jewish Culture, which is celebrated in more than 30 cities, carrying out nearly 900 activities, with more than 169,000 visitors.



aepj association européenne pour la préservation et la valorisation de la culture et du patrimoine juifs



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