

2005

# Portrait of a People: the Jewish Heritage Collection Dedicated to Mark and Dave Harris: An Exhibit

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THE JEWISH HERITAGE  
COLLECTION  
DEDICATED TO  
MARK AND DAVE HARRIS

*An Exhibit*

*Curated by*

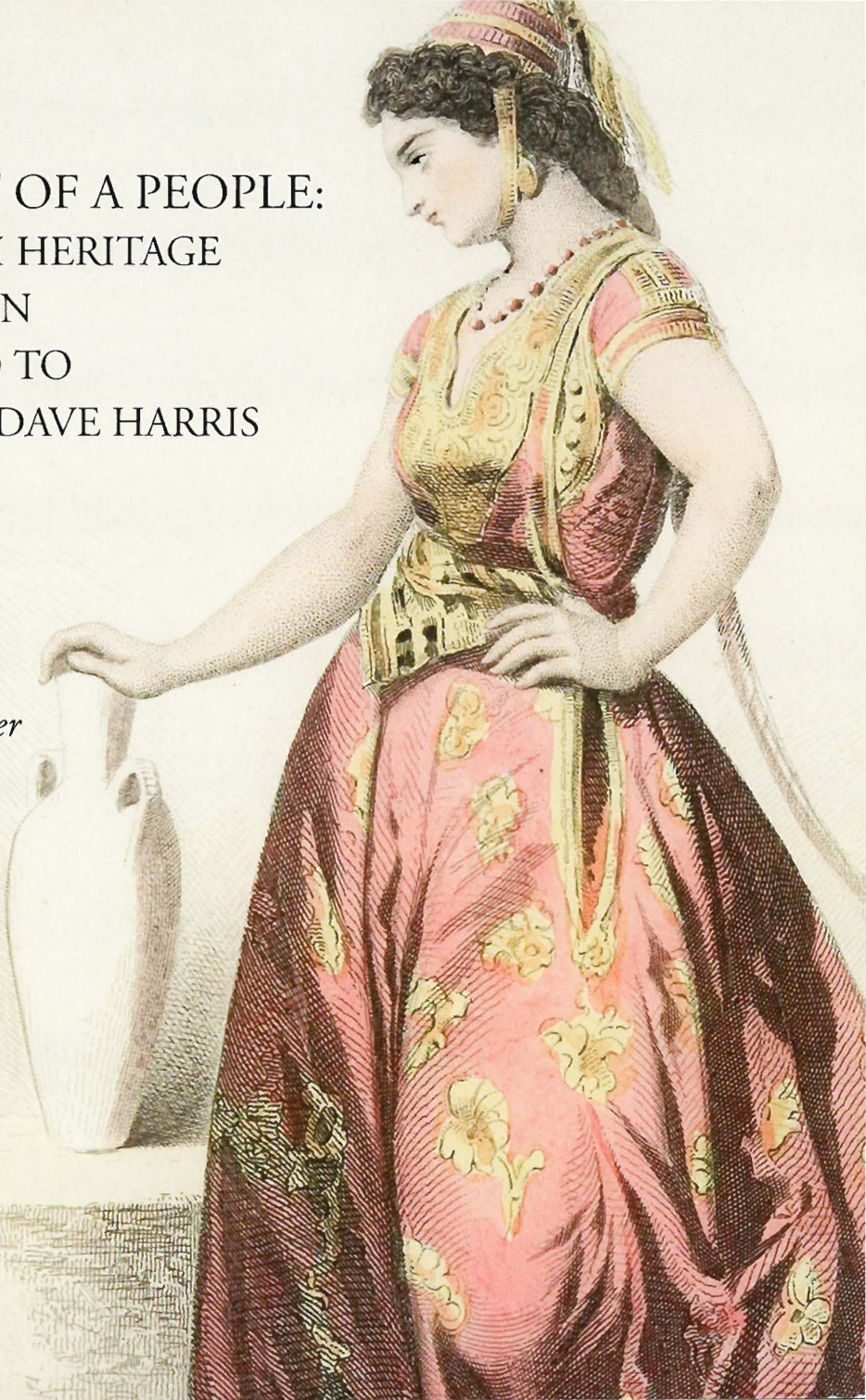
*Peggy E. Daub,*

*Elliot H. Gertel,*

*& Erica T. Lehrer*

APRIL 11 –  
AUGUST 19, 2005

UNIVERSITY OF  
MICHIGAN  
LIBRARY





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*Peggy E. Daub, Elliot H. Gertel,  
& Erica T. Lehrer*

*April 11 – August 19, 2005*

*Special Collections Library and  
North Lobby, Hatcher Graduate Library*

University of Michigan Library  
Ann Arbor, Michigan  
2005

**Cover Art**

Front: "Jeune fille juive d'Alger," in  
*Le Keepsake de Costumes*, Paris, 1853

Back: Tully Filmus, *Chassidic Dance*, 1988

Photography: Paul Jaronski  
Catalog design: Barbara Wood  
1000 copies printed by Printing Services,  
University of Michigan, 2005.

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## DEDICATIONS

The Jewish Heritage Collection is dedicated by Constance Harris  
to her grandsons, Mark and Dave Harris



Mark Harris



Dave Harris

This exhibit is dedicated to Constance Harris, in gratitude for her gift  
and friendship to the University of Michigan

*The Curators*

## FOREWORD

It is our pleasure to welcome you to this exhibit featuring some of the riches of the Jewish Heritage Collection Dedicated to Mark and Dave Harris. The collection was created by Constance Harris of Beverly Hills, California, and graciously donated by her in 2003-04 to the University of Michigan to honor her two grandsons, residents of Birmingham, Michigan.

This exhibit was created by Elliot Gertel (the Irving M. Hermelin Curator of Judaica), Erica Lehrer (Frankel Center Intern), and Peggy Daub (Head of the Special Collections Library). The curators wish to thank Todd Endelman, Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, and William Gosling, University Librarian, for both their enthusiasm for this collection and their generous support of the exhibit and catalogue. They also thank Franki Hand, Kathleen Dow, and Margaret Reges of the Special Collections Library, and Shannon Zachary, Leyla Lau Lamb, and Thomas Hogarth of the Library's Conservation Unit for assistance in preparing this exhibit.





# INTRODUCTION

By Peggy E. Daub

In her book *Portraiture in Prints* (1987) Constance Harris says that “a portrait is simply a pictorial representation of how one person has thought about another.” Similarly, Harris’s own Jewish Heritage Collection is a tangible representation of how its creator has thought about the subject of Jewish art and life. By assembling this collection of artworks, books, ritual objects, and materials of everyday life, Connie Harris has been the artist painting a vivid and lasting portrait of the Jewish people and their lives.

The Jewish Heritage Collection was a gift made jointly to the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and the University Library, which aptly reflects the comprehensive and unique nature of this collection. Housed in the Special Collections Library within the Hatcher Graduate Library, the collection combines materials traditionally found in libraries (e.g., books, pamphlets, printed ephemera, and manuscripts) with objects of museum quality (artwork and historical artifacts) and an assortment of items of humbler nature used in everyday life. There the collection’s unique blend of materials is available for use by scholars and students.

In accepting this collection, the University of Michigan committed to having materials regularly on display in order to encourage its use. This exhibit is the first manifestation of that commitment. In the new home for the Frankel Center (soon to be constructed) there will be a display area for materials from the Jewish Heritage Collection, and cases will be added to the Graduate Library for the same purpose.

This exhibit can give only a tantalizing taste of what the Jewish Heritage Collection contains. The curators have chosen several themes around which to organize the displays, in order to demonstrate both interesting items from the collection and topics for study it can easily support. We have also tried to show a variety of items from the Collection demonstrating its great breadth – from original works of art by world-renowned artists to slight tourist keepsakes, from books centuries old to calendars from 2005, and from beautiful ritual objects to children’s toys.

This catalogue begins with a brief biography of Constance Harris, followed by an excerpt from her forthcoming book, *The Way Jews Lived*, that provides an overview of Jewish art, a topic that was both the basis for the beginning of this collection and one that has provided much of the guidance for its subsequent creation. There follow essays on how the collection was assembled and how it will be used, written by curators Erica Lehrer and Elliot Gertel. An overview of the contents of the collection is provided in outline form, followed by brief descriptions of the themes of the exhibit.

The University of Michigan accepts with gratitude this generous gift of the Jewish Heritage Collection from Constance Harris, understanding it is given for the use and edification of the University of Michigan community as well as scholars and students from across the world.





*Du pont du paquebot qui l'emportait,  
Agar regardait Constantinople s'effacer  
dans la brume matinale.*

Le puits de Jacob, 1927, illus. Soyk

## BIOGRAPHY OF CONSTANCE HARRIS

Constance (Connie) Harris was born into the family of Nell and Henry Feder in New York City, and attended Hunter College, majoring in English Literature. She met her future husband, Theodore Harris, when he was a student at Princeton, and after he received his doctorate they married and moved to the Los Angeles area. After a distinguished career at the RAND Corporation, where he eventually became head of the Mathematics Department, Ted Harris went on to teach at the University of Southern California, receiving an Outstanding Senior Faculty Award in 1985 and becoming a member of the National Academy of Sciences in 1988. Connie and Ted's family expanded to include two children, Marcia and Stephen.

Connie became active in the Jewish Federation Council of Los Angeles, serving on a variety of committees and as President of the Women's Conference. She started a group known as the Women's Interfaith Committee with the purpose of fostering personal relationships so that participants put a face on religions outside their own and came to understand the best parts of each other's religious experiences.

Connie's study of art began in a casual way when she was searching for works for her living room walls. She had read that prints and drawings of great artists were available at reasonable prices, so she proceeded to look up galleries in the yellow pages and made a foray in which she brought home a drawing by sixteenth-century Italian artist Luca Cambiaso. She studied this period of art on her own at first, and then audited a course at UCLA in the history of print making. There she was invited by the instructor to attend a graduate level course on portraiture in prints, and was assigned the topic of seventeenth-century engraved portraits.

Her research soon showed her that there was no authoritative book on the subject, so she wrote one (*Portraiture in Prints*, 1987).

Connie and Ted traveled to many different parts of the world, which gave her the opportunity to seek out items of Jewish interest wherever they went. Her collecting activities, described in more detail below, led to her second book, *The Way Jews Lived*, on Jewish life as seen through prints and illustrated books (forthcoming).

From her birth family, Connie learned the need for charity, as she watched how her parents made giving an important priority throughout their lives. This belief was instilled in her children as well. Her daughter, Marcia Harris, was a nurse practitioner who spent her career working in developing countries until she died in a tragic accident in Ecuador in 2000. Marcia's memory is now honored through a foundation in her name which gives grants to help the people she tried to help during her lifetime. Connie's son and daughter-in-law, Stephen (a physical chemist with Ford) and Ruth (an optometrist) of Birmingham, Michigan, are active volunteers in their community, promoting literacy and music education, as well as helping the elderly and lonely. The name of this collection honors their sons, Mark (a student at Groves High School in Birmingham) and Dave (studying at Michigan State University).

In giving her carefully crafted collection to the University of Michigan, Connie Harris is generously sharing the Jewish art, books, and objects which have so interested her. Her intent, in her own words, is as follows: "In dedicating the collection to my grandchildren, my great hope is not only to sustain their Jewish heritage, but to sustain it from generation to generation."





Hapłętnowani

nikware la-tusa

Czekaj Franciszak

## JEWISH ART

By Constance Harris

[Excerpted from her forthcoming book *The Way Jews Lived*, 2006]

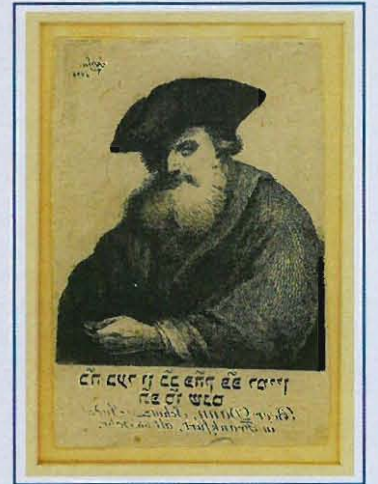
What constitutes Jewish art? Is it a sentimental portrait of a rabbi absorbed in the holy books? Is it a depiction of life in Europe's former ghettos, of the American immigrant experience, or even details of the Holocaust? Does it include any work with Jewish significance regardless of the nationality of its maker, or only work by someone born a Jew? Was the concept of a Jewish art credible during the period when Jews lacked nationhood? Has Israel produced Jewish or Israeli art? These questions, including the problem of whether such a category actually exists at all, are complex and confusing. Stephen Kayser, former director of the Jewish Museum in New York, said that wherever art is applied to Judaism, the result is Jewish art. Other scholars have broadened the definition to something that imparts Jewish symbolic and spiritual meaning, enhances Jewish feelings, conveys Jewish ideals and kinship, or comments on Jewish events, whether created by a Jew or not. Even where there is malevolent intent, such works have been included because of their relationship to Jewish affairs. In his discussion of these issues, the Jewish historian Franz Landsberger claimed that the "individual character of the artist, as well as his national and social background, are expressed in his art. That is why we turn to works of art in order to understand the character of a race or a people."

Most scholars reject such premises, believing that Jewish ancestry alone is no longer relevant. Art critic Harold Rosenberg claimed that "while Jews produce art, they don't produce Jewish art." "The more an artist tries to be 'Jewish,'" wrote Ben-Zion of his colleagues, "the less his work will have creative value. It is

only when the Jewish throb subconsciously emerges from his work that real creativity will result." Most modern artists prefer to be defined in the spirit of their times and

to be remembered for the quality, rather than the religious expression, of their work. Meaningfulness exists for them not to instruct or indoctrinate, but to communicate in imaginative and unconditional terms.

Jewish art did not develop as a universally coherent phenomenon. In its earlier years it borrowed styles from the many places and times where Jews lived, often provoking charges that Jews were simply freeloaders lacking creative intuition. However, with the spread of internationalism at the end of the nineteenth century, art crossed global and native borders and Jewish artists began to shape progressive visions of their own. Those visions have often been credited with capturing the spiritual values of social justice and societal responsibility, and, if only subliminally, penetrating the Jewish psyche.



Nothnagel, *Portrait of the Frankfurt Jew*, Baer, Counterproof





*Le Juif-Errant*, French broadside, ca. 1800

The drive to establish parameters of Jewish art dates to the Second Commandment: “Thou shalt not make any graven (or sculpted) image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in

the earth below, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not prostrate thyself to them, nor serve them.” (Exodus 20: 4,5) It is assumed that the fear of paganism, as expressed in idol or cult worship, was the motive of the commandment rather than any fixed objection to illustration. But because the power of images was believed to suppress the voice of a single god, limitations were instituted against forms that imitated nature, such as human figures (Deuteronomy 4:16) or the golden calf. (Exodus 32:19) “Paganism sees its gods,” wrote the nineteenth century Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz, “Judaism hears Him.”

There were certainly no scriptural assumptions that art would displace the beauty of holiness. On the contrary, the precept of *Hidur Mitzvah*, derived from “This is my God and I will glorify Him” (Exodus 15:2), affirms Jewish sensibilities through its ritual objects. The Talmud later expanded on this injunction: “Make a beautiful *sukkah* in His honor, a beautiful *lulav*, a beautiful shofar, beautiful *tsitsis*, and a beautiful

Scroll of the Law, and have a skilled penman write it with fine ink and a fine reed, and wrap it in beautiful silk.” (Sabbath 133b) With this incentive, the biblical artist embellished his world as a means to sanctification and as an aid to worship, never suspecting the lively commentaries that would follow.

As idolatry and the influence of foreign cultures began to wane, strictures against the visual arts were relaxed. By the third and fourth centuries C.E., some rabbis were already amenable to decorative synagogue architecture, ornamental ceremonial objects, and figurative paintings and mosaic works. Artistic expression was constrained, however, in delineations of the Jewish God. Although the Bible describes God as imparting His likeness to man (Genesis 1:27), it is not often that a traditional Jewish artist, even now, would attempt to depict the forbidden face. Moses reminded Israel that while God’s voice could be heard, His appearance could never be known; the concept of God’s immateriality or invisibility was fundamental. (Deuteronomy 4:12) The Gentile artist was not limited in this way. By the time of the High Renaissance, Michaelangelo and Raphael, among others, reflected the fifteenth century dictum that man is the measure of all things, and felt no compunction in representing God as a burly fellow with a well-developed musculature and snowy beard; their symbolism, in keeping with the new humanistic philosophy, was clearly more anthropomorphic than transcendent or supernatural.

The development of Jewish plastic arts was further narrowed in later years because of concerns that art, as an adjunct to the permissible pleasures of life, would foster materialistic attitudes, that Jewish spirituality and morality might be subverted into a sensually oriented life, and that an emphasis on man’s

creation of the perishable could very well undermine and demean God’s creation of the eternal. According to these views, the search for beauty in the manual arts was in conflict with higher ethical values.

The Victorian painter George Frederick Watts believed that a culture committed to ethics or a philosophy dedicated to reason must also embrace aesthetics: “Art, in partnership with altruism, may kindle all that is best and noblest in humanity; in the future it may speak with the solemn and majestic ring in which the Hebrew prophets spoke to the Jews of old, demanding noble aspirations, condemning in the most trenchant manner private vices, and warning us in deep tones against lapses from morals and duties.” Few contemporary scholars would endorse such views, holding that art in itself is neutral, neither ethical nor unethical; that whether it prompts worthiness or worldliness, or whether it is useful or harmful, rests with the viewer.

Jewish artists make their first appearance in Exodus 35:30-35 when Bezalel and Oholiab receive the “wisdom, understanding, and knowledge with which to do all manner of work of the engraver and of the dexterous workman.” They were charged not only with the teaching of manual skills, but with transmitting moral values, the Hebrew word for teaching connoting both ethical and didactic qualities.

The Christian Church recognized very early that centrally controlled art could be instrumental in shaping religious attitudes, and accordingly spent vast sums commissioning great cathedrals filled with instructive paintings and statues. By contrast, Jews often were barely able to sustain the few synagogues they were permitted in each town. By the end of the fourteenth century, Jews excelled in the production of manuscripts and crafts although at times they farmed out

their trade to Christian artisans; a fifteenth century volume of Maimonides’ code of Jewish law, the Mishneh Torah, was obviously designed by a non-Jew who decorated it with horses and knights in resplendent armor! Yet, because Jews needed a settled and stable environment to produce significant artistic achievements, it was a long time before they made any major or original contributions.

Of all the crafts in which enterprising Jews took part, none compared to their hand-written and meticulously embellished books. More than outward beauty, Jews concentrated on their inner world – Torah, Talmud, and holiday texts. Their most imaginative efforts were reserved for the Haggadah, history’s first and greatest paean to freedom and liberty. As it was used in the home rather than the synagogue, it could be figuratively illustrated – and by the mid-fourteenth century it was often lit with bright pigments and gold leaf that shimmered across the page. Humor, which hardly exists in religious literature, but is so characteristic of the Jewish spirit, sneaked into early editions with a picture of the householder pointing to his wife while holding the plate of bitter herbs.

Though Haggadot were the most popular, many other examples of religious importance



Fechenbach, *Escape*, 1940



survive because, unlike gold or silver objects which were melted down in troubled times, parchment leaves had no intrinsic worth. They did, however, have great personal and sacred value – any manuscript containing God’s name always ranked among the community’s most cherished possessions. But since only the wealthiest members of the congregation could afford them, the humble majority had to rely on access to very limited synagogue collections, or an occasional private generosity.

Unfortunately, after generations of continuous manuscript and illustration copying, errors crept in. Hand-drawn material simply was not able to meet community needs because the process was too slow and duplications could not be reproduced with sufficient accuracy; faster and more precise methods were needed to provide exactly repeatable images and texts. The remedy – the birth of printmaking – arrived in Europe in the early years of the fifteenth century with the most dramatic breakthrough in replication until the invention of the camera in 1839. By modifying the ancient arts of woodcutting and engraving on metal, craftsmen were able to derive

multiple copies of an artist’s work by transferring designs onto paper with absolute fidelity.

Printing made it easy to learn from inexpensive books and to carry them, if necessary, wherever one might settle – a boon, in particular to the peripatetic Jew. Soon all kinds of secular and religious material – as well as anti-Jewish and proselytizing tracts – was readily available. Prints that described religious observances and holiday celebrations, that depicted costumes and worldly goods, that paraded everyday faces and forms, or that offered nostalgia, common traditions, and sincere piety have provided the principal visual documentation of Jewish life. Yet much has been erased from the Jewish memory because so many works were periodically destroyed in bonfires and pogroms, and because much of folk art was neither highly esteemed nor preserved. But the supply of printed pictures and books that remains recalls an entire Jewish culture – in its accomplishments and in its battles to exist. It is through such works that the Jewish experience from the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries is reflected.

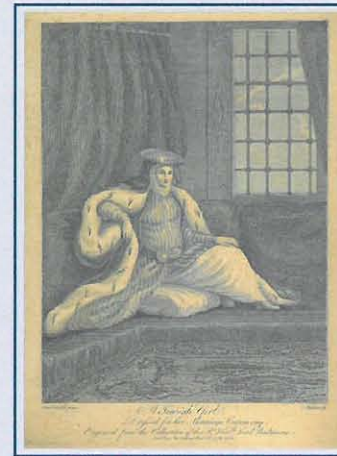


Brangwyn (attrib.), Untitled, n.d.

## THE COLLECTOR AS PORTRAIT ARTIST

By Erica T. Lehrer

*The phenomenon of collecting changes the character of that which is collected.*  
—Grace Cohen Grossman<sup>1</sup>



White, *Jewish Girl Dressed for her Marriage Ceremony*, 1768

Collections do not assemble themselves. They are the product of choices based on principles of organization in the minds of the collectors, and so reveal their assemblers as well as

their objects and the cultures represented. The Jewish Heritage Collection developed over the last fourteen years by Connie Harris remains a work in progress in which we can recognize a particular portrait of the Jewish people that she is painting, with each new acquisition motivated by her desire to preserve a Jewish legacy.

Connie says that, for her, Judaica is anything that reflects the Jewish experience, good or bad. She approaches the task of collecting by casting a very wide net and seeing what might be caught. Her love of art is reflected in the collection’s wealth of important and rare prints and books. But to realize her portrait of Judaism more fully, she also collects objects of daily life. Many of these were obtained in extensive travels with her husband Ted, who learned to say “Do you have anything Jewish?” in every

local language and antique store. By including many items overlooked or ignored by other collectors, Connie has produced a collection with an unusually broad view of the sensibilities, recognitions, hopes, fears and preoccupations that link many Jews today.

Some of the material in the collection was “orphaned,” e.g., items that, due to any number of historical events, some painful to consider, were separated from their owners and their communities. The fall of Communism and the opening of Eastern Europe have provided access to places rich in Jewish memory, resulting in a boom to reclaim pieces that once were Jewish property or were related to Jewish life. Connie remembers a junk shop in Prague where she spotted six sterling silver soup spoons engraved “Shabbat Kodosh” – a holy Sabbath. “Where did you get these,” she asked the saleswoman. “Better you shouldn’t ask,” came the answer. “You don’t want to know.” In whose home were these once? In what soup bowl were they used? Many Jews perceive such objects as in need of Jewish adoption, reunion, or protective custody. “I took everything I could find,” Harris says. “There’s a limited amount, especially in Europe. I wasn’t going to leave it behind.”

The Jewish Heritage collection dwells, in part, on some of the key issues that have surfaced in recent decades. Many Jews today – particularly American Jews – are concerned by statistics reporting increased rates of intermarriage and assimilation, which have sparked fears of cultural decline or even oblivion, and a growing sense



that Jewish identity is fading. The imminent passing of Holocaust survivors has spurred a deep interest in oral histories, along with the literary and visual material associated with that period in history. Overall, there exists a widespread sense of the need to buttress Jewish cultural memory, and collecting Judaica can be seen as one part of this project.

What a collector assembles becomes a portrait of the subject collected, but also becomes a self-portrait. Just as any painter puts essences of themselves into their work, the collector creates an image of the subject that reflects their emotions and interpretations of it. In this collection the boundaries of Jewishness are constructed piece by piece as each item makes a

claim, planting itself as a flag proclaiming a scrap of Jewish terrain.

As long as Jews look at and care about Jewish objects, collecting Judaica does not mean simple “museumizing” in the sense of taking something out of the flow of life and relegating it to a dusty shelf. The Jewish Heritage Collection created by Connie Harris is meant to be displayed and used, and it will be through these interactions with students and scholars that the collection and the items in it will continue to be a part of the ongoing culture.

<sup>1</sup> Grossman, Grace Cohen. *Judaica at the Smithsonian: Cultural Politics as Cultural Model*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997, p. 2.



Rosh Hashanah pop-up cards, ca. 1900

## THE LIBRARY AS MUSEUM: RESEARCH IN TWO AND THREE DIMENSIONS

By Elliot H. Gertel

*Libraries provide an enormous wealth of information through print and electronic formats, but they can also invoke an environment of rich learning without reading a word.*

—Troy Helm<sup>1</sup>

The conventional approach to library research is along a two-dimensional plane, that is, readers consult books, periodicals, photographs, maps, etc., to carry out research. For the last decade, remote visits to the library wherein users search electronic databases have also become customary, and there is great added value in this extended access to library materials. Yet in studying the history and culture of a people, one can learn much more than what one finds on a flat leaf.

Collecting three-dimensional objects has been largely the province of museums, more so than libraries. Art of various kinds and objects ranging from antique relics to recent ephemera have been the primary material acquired by museums, which then present objects for examination in display cases. The distinction between libraries and museums is blurred, however, when considering special collections that appear to have amassed materials more for their artifactual value than for their intellectual content. For example, when a book is acquired because it has a beautiful binding, is it important as a “two-dimensional” or “three-dimensional” object? It is significant as both, of course, because both the text and the artifact have content that can be studied.

To convey something as rich and complex as a people’s culture, three dimensions offer more

opportunities than two. Taking a look at a people “in the round,” through the paintings, textiles, and objects of the culture, can provide a wealth of valuable information about the ways the society functions.

The Jewish Heritage Collection includes about one thousand books and even more objects and works of art. When the University of Michigan first considered Connie Harris’s generous offer of her collection, it was necessary to think through the implications of its unusual juxtapositions of art, artifact, and printed matter. There were no precedents in the Library for a museum-quality painting, a rare three-hundred year old tome, a children’s game, and a recent book from Poland all being considered equal components of one collection.

Considering the strong interdisciplinary approach of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, this collection offers enormous value to its faculty and students. The Collection was accepted as a joint gift by the Center and the Library, with the Library housing and preserving the Collection, while the Frankel Center assists with publicity, preparing exhibits, and increasing access through cataloging.

In support of libraries acquiring art, D. Vanessa Kam, Associate Art Librarian at Stanford



University's Art and Architecture Library, cites a common heritage for museums and libraries as caretakers of the human record:

Librarians and archivists have an important role to play as collectors of art objects. Our instinct to collect art objects, in conjunction with books, manuscripts, and other materials, is an organic one, given our shared institutional histories with those of museums...The creative, artistic, and intellectual work that goes into organizing exhibitions stimulates us while also opening doors to an active dialectic between the objects on display and the viewers, yielding new and dynamic interpretations of our collections.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of the Harris Collection, the art objects are part of a larger cultural collection of artwork, ritual objects, books, periodical clippings, and ephemera. Its acquisition was predicated on its contents helping users gain an enhanced perception of Jewish life, yet the collection supports not just Judaic studies, but invites a deeper understanding of broader social, cultural, and historical issues.

For example, by reading texts and studying images, one can learn how members of a particular religion celebrate holidays or mark major stages in life such as marriage and coming of age, how its adherents pray, and what they wear. It literally adds another dimension to research, however, to be able to pick up a nineteenth-century silver *besamim* container (spice box) from Russia and look at it from all angles, while feeling its texture and smelling the lingering scent of the spices it once contained. Here, several senses are engaged at once, and the observer gains a broader perspective on the *havdalah* ceremony marking the end of the Sabbath than is possible through words or pictures alone. A student of Russian and East European studies, an art history major, a Master of Architecture degree candidate, and a

history student investigating the development of religious culture would all augment their knowledge by handling this spice container and other three dimensional objects.

Pop-up Jewish New Year's cards from the early twentieth century can certainly be viewed to great advantage when reproduced in a printed or electronic format. Yet, one cannot fully appreciate them without experiencing the contours and textures that having the actual three-dimensional artifacts close at hand provides.

As another example, a diminutive matchbook cover such as the one in the Harris Collection advertising "Yiddle with His Fiddle" (Warsaw, 1936) in English and Yiddish conveys the attitude of throwaway American culture while promoting a Yiddish-language movie. There is added value in scrutinizing such a seemingly innocuous object preserved in the Special Collections Library up close.

There is great potential in studying the symbols and cultural artifacts of a particular religion/ethnic group distributed over large geographical areas and over many centuries. Thus, the artwork, household and sacramental objects, clothing, tourist mementos, trinkets, and other ephemera in the Harris Jewish Heritage Collection can serve as useful tools for a variety of research projects. This collection propels the University Library's mission to document the human record and make it accessible.

<sup>1</sup>Helm, Troy. "Music and Art: The Perfect Match," *Arkansas Libraries* vol. 58, no. 6 (Dec. 2001), pp. 16-19.

<sup>2</sup>Kam, D. Vanessa, "On Collecting and Exhibiting Art Objects in Libraries, Archives, and Research Institutes" in *Art Documentation* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2001), p.14.

## A PROFILE OF THE JEWISH HERITAGE COLLECTION

The items in this collection stretch to include the chronological span of 500 years from the 1400s to today, the geographical width of wherever Jews are found on the globe, and the sociological length from ritual to recreation. It documents significant events in history and practices of everyday life, contains examples of artistic creation and practical ingenuity, and can encourage religious practice and intellectual reflection. As such, describing it in any simplified way is a challenging task. The following profile attempts to convey a concrete sense of the size and shape of the collection in a concise form.

### 1000 WORKS OF ART

- Includes drawings, paintings, engravings, woodcuts, lithographs, other kinds of prints
- Includes examples of works by the most famous Jewish artists of the 20th century, including Ben Shahn, Leonard Baskin, Arik Brauer, Jack Levine, Hermann Struck, Anna Ticho, Moshe Gershuni, Pinchas Cohen-Gan, Jules Pascin, William Gropper, Max Lieberman, Reuven Rubin, Abel Pann, Marc Chagall, and Arthur Szyk
- Ranges in date from 1493 (woodcuts from *The Nuremberg Chronicle*) to the present
- Includes numerous pre-1800 engravings of scenes from Jewish life and ritual
- Examples of traditional papercuts

### 1000 BOOKS

- Very strong in books on Jewish art and artists, including exhibit catalogs
- Many other books describe Jewish life and history
- Includes about 150 Haggadahs, ranging in date from 1712 to the present
- Most are illustrated, with notable artists represented, including Joseph Budko, Jacob Steinhardt, Otto Geismar, Zev Raban, Ben Shahn, Arthur Szyk, Leonard Baskin, Yosel Bergner, David Moss, and Ruth Weisberg
- Includes about 20 very scarce Kibbutz Haggadahs
- Range from extremely valuable rare books to free giveaways from food companies and supermarkets



## 700 PIECES OF PRINTED PAPER EPHEMERA

- Pop-up New Year's cards, ca. 1900
- Over 100 Jewish Calendars
- Sheet Music on Jewish themes
- Mementoes from the Holocaust such as Scrip from the Terezin Concentration Camp, antisemitic bank notes from Germany, propaganda and cartoons
- Some 150 Clippings and illustrations on Jewish themes from 19th-century magazines
- Posters from museums and elections
- Postcards on Jewish themes from the early 1900s to the present
- Postage stamps on Jewish themes

## 200 OBJECTS

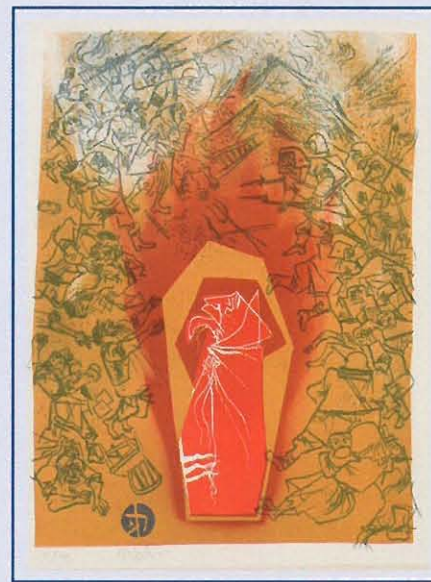
- Ritual items including *Hanukias* and menorahs; *Besamim*, *Simchat Torah* flags and Purim groggers; a prayer shawl and yarmulkes; Phylactery and *tefillin* holders; cloths for Challah and Matzoh
- Children's toys such as dreidels, games, and dolls
- Household items such as Kosher soap, toothpaste, and pepper; Matzoh and salt stick tins; Chanukah candles, serving trays and dishes, nutcrackers, and Matzoh rolling pin and wheel
- Craftwork from Ethiopian Jews
- Mementoes of the Holocaust, including a cloth arm band from a ghetto and carved soapstone objects from a detention camp on Cyprus
- Commemorative buttons and medals
- Tourist objects from Israel

## PORTRAIT OF A PEOPLE: AN EXHIBIT

This exhibit is organized around themes to demonstrate the wide variety of topics that can be illuminated by studying materials in the Jewish Heritage Collection. The themes reflect the major strengths of the Collection through displays of art and Haggadahs, as well as everyday Jewish life in the cases on Rituals, Childhood, Women, and Recreation and

particular topics such as *Erets-Israel*, Persecution and Survival, Jewish Geographies, Jews and Others, and Travel and Tourism. Finally, there is a display devoted to *Di Goldene Medine*, or "the golden land," in honor of this year's 350th anniversary of the first permanent settlement of Jews in America.

### ART



Gropper, *Warsaw Ghetto Memorial*, ca. 1963

The heart of the Jewish Heritage Collection lies in its rich art holdings. Connie Harris's extensive study of Jewish art and artists is reflected in the quality of the works she collected. Almost all of the most notable Jewish artists of the twentieth century are represented in this collection by original works of art, fine art prints, or fine press books containing illustrations.

For this first major exhibition of art from the Collection, samples of some of the finer works were chosen. An important example of art production in the eighteenth century is demonstrated by a print next to its rare counterproof. Two works by American print-maker Jack Levine, an original sketch and a finished print, vividly demonstrate this artist's creative process from first idea to completed work. Two items by another noted American artist, William Gropper, create bookends for his career, with a woodblock print showing a Depression-era sweatshop at one end and a 1960s print of the Warsaw Holocaust Memorial at the other. The tradition of paper cutting in Jewish folk art is represented, as are other similar folk expressions such as needlework and woodcarving.



Further examples by noted artists are found in discrete works of art as well as finely illustrated books used throughout the exhibit in topical cases. The latter include interpretations of stories in the Haggadah, fiction about Jewish life, and children's books, all demonstrating how art can play an important role in the way a book is experienced by a reader.



## RITUAL



Silver *Besamim* (spice) container, ca. 1900

From the candles lit on Friday night to begin the Sabbath to the braided *havdalah* candle burned at the conclusion of the Sabbath to distinguish the day of rest from the workaday week, from the recitation of prayers in the *mahzor* (High Holiday prayer book) on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to the reading of *Ekhah* (*The Book of Lamentations*) in the late summer, from the *bris* ceremony for infant boys to the recitation of the Mourner's *Kaddish* to mark the death of a loved one, Jewish life is filled with intricate, established practices and ceremonies to mark seasonal observances and cycles of life. Festivals, fast days, births, bar- and bat-mitzvahs, weddings, and deaths all require the participation of the *kehillah*, the community, and the people who make up that community need books and objects to fulfill many of the *mitzvot*, or commandments, of the Jewish religion.

The Jewish Heritage Collection illustrates the rituals of Judaism in various communities and in various periods through books and works of art as well as through examples of many of the objects



Ritual objects



DuBourg, *La fête de Purim*, 1720s

used in the rituals. In this exhibit, ceremonies and ritual stories are revealed through the lenses of history and art, with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Bible stories illustrated by noted artists Zev Raban and Arthur Szyk, and twentieth-century art interpreting moments in rituals.

An especially rare item from the collection is a *ketubbah*, or marriage contract, from Teheran. Dating from about 1926, it is in book-form, rather than the more conventional wall hanging, and is beautifully hand-painted in traditional Persian style. Just as Haggadahs demonstrate how items used in ritual may be interpreted by artists, the ritual objects on display, such as the cover of a prayer book, candleholders, spice containers, a prayer shawl, and bread covers, also show useful items whose religious significance is enhanced by their beauty.

Some of the ritual items chosen for this exhibit were used daily or weekly, among them a silver knife for cutting Sabbath *challah* (egg bread) from late nineteenth-century Germany decorated in mother-of-pearl, and a silver *besamim* (spice) box in the form of a gem-studded tower, topped by a pennant. A simple olive-wood *Omer* counter would have been used once a year to tally each of the forty-nine days from the second Seder night of Passover until the next major Jewish holiday, *Shavuot*; it features a clear display window through which labels on a roll of paper change as handles are turned. The fine artistry of the silversmith shown in a menorah and Kiddush cups is matched by the beauty of traditional embroidery of Ethiopian Jews on a prayer shawl.



## PERSECUTION AND SURVIVAL



"The Burning of the Jews", *Nuremberg Chronicle*, 1493



Soapstone carvings, Cyprus, 1946.



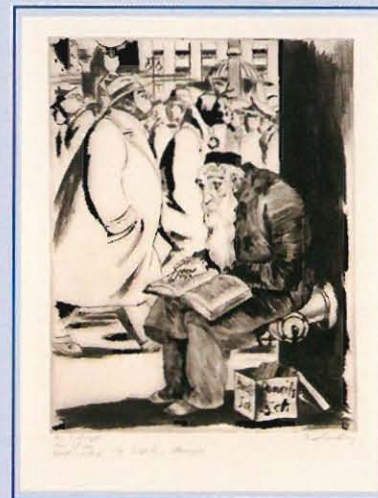
Anon. *Le-or*, 1946

Jewish history has been marked by persecution, oppression, expulsion, and, in the twentieth century, the systematic annihilation of one-third of the world's Jewish population by the Nazis and their collaborators. This nadir in Jewish history did not spring from a vacuum, as antisemitism was neither invented in Nazi Germany nor vanquished with it. There were centuries of precedent in Europe and elsewhere, and, unfortunately, continuing evidence of it today.

Because of the centrality of antisemitism and persecution to the Jewish experience, the Jewish Heritage Collection contains many examples of art and objects showing this history. In this exhibit, the earliest such depiction is a woodcut of the fourteenth-century burning of German Jews from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, published in 1493. A copperplate etching from 1738 shows the hanging of Joseph Süß Oppenheimer, who had been a financial advisor to the Duke of Württemberg, and illustrations in a book show the suffering of Russian Jews in the many pogroms after 1880. In 1894 the trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, who was falsely accused of passing secrets to the Germans, became a widely debated *cause célèbre* in the media of the day.

During and after the Nazi Holocaust, artists translated their anguish, fear, and resilience into their visual work. Hermann Fechenbach created stark woodcuts illustrating the agony of the persecuted Jews. The Polish artist Franciszek Czekaj depicts the horror of the Holocaust in his painting *Branded* from about 1965. Symbols of defiance, survival, and remembrance are found in soapstone carvings made just after the war by Holocaust survivors imprisoned in a British detention camp on Cyprus. Similarly, the painting *Le-or* [*Towards the Light*] by an anonymous artist in a displaced persons camp, marks the Jewish New Year 5706 (1946) in a fantasy of Jewish soldiers under the blue-and-white banner of Israel defeating the Nazi armies in combat.

## AMERICA: *DI GOLDENE MEDINE*



Eichenberg, *Die Schrift*, 1930



Matchbook cover, 1936

Permanent Jewish settlement in what is now the United States began in September 1654 when twenty-three Sephardic Jews fled the Inquisition in Brazil and landed in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam (now New York City). Several waves of immigration followed over the next 350 years. After the Sephardim came the German Ashkenazim from the 1830s until 1870. The first mass immigration occurred when Russian Jews fled the pogroms in the 1880s, but Jewish immigration greatly slowed when strict quotas for Eastern and Southern Europe were introduced in the 1920s. Not until after World War II, when remnants of European Jewry who had survived the Holocaust were finally permitted entry, did Jewish immigrants in sizeable numbers find their way to America again. Although these immigrants, who referred to America as *di Goldene Medine* ("Golden Land"), brought many customs and manners of their old countries with them, most were then quickly acculturated, forging a vibrant and uniquely Jewish way of life in their new country.

The story of American Jewish life is ever evolving as Jewish and American elements fuse into new blends, and materials from the Jewish Heritage Collection help relate that narrative. An early prayer book published in Philadelphia in 1848 and Jewish images on pop-up New Year's cards from the early twentieth century reflect some degree of entry into the mainstream of American life for Jews. Similarly, a matchbook cover exploits a disposable American advertising medium to publicize the 1936 Yiddish film, *Yidl mitn fidl*, starring Molly Picon, while a metal serving tray from the 1940s, advertises Goldberg and Son's Dry Goods stores of Syracuse and Fulton, New York.

But the distance between visitor and resident, immigrant and citizen, was not spanned instantly. In Don Freeman's lithograph, *Ira's First Suit* (1934),



a traditional European Jewish family watches their young son being fitted for his first American clothes while neighborhood boys outside the tailor shop laugh derisively at the transformation of this greenhorn. An etching by Fritz Eichenberg, *Die Schrift* (1930), contrasts well-fed, well-dressed, big city Americans puffing on fat cigars and walking past an old Orthodox Jewish man who is selling pencils while he studies a holy text at the outset of the Great Depression. Hermann Struck's artistic impressions of his visit to America in the early 1920s are recorded in the book *Amerika*, while Isaac Bashevis Singer's narrative of the struggle for and against assimilation in *Lost in America* (1981) is shown both in his text and in Raphael Soyfer's illustrations for it.

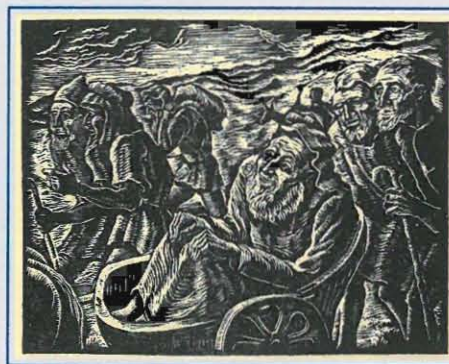
## HAGGADAHS



Birnbaum, *Had Gadyah*, 1920

The Haggadah, the text used to guide the celebration of the Passover Seder, tells the story of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt and the passage from slavery to freedom. Since celebrants are urged to make the story as real as possible for themselves and their children – to relive the Exodus, so to speak – and the story is rich with possibilities for visual images, Haggadahs are usually lavishly illustrated.

Scholars estimate that some 5,000 different editions of the Haggadah have been printed to accompany the celebration of what is one of the most widely observed Jewish religious rituals of the year. The large number of editions is also explained by the fact that the Seder is celebrated in the home, not in a house of worship, and so each household must have its own copies of the text.



Haggadah, 1923, illus. Steinhardt



Haggadah, 1927, Bezalel painted binding

The Jewish Heritage Collection contains some one hundred and fifty Haggadahs, ranging in date from 1712 to the present, and demonstrating the rich variety of presentations of this text. This text has long offered artists the opportunity to make their work known to a wide audience, and so some Haggadahs contain illustrations by great artists. Others contain reprints of illustrations from Haggadahs of previous eras as time-honored traditions that evoke memories of childhood. The Jewish Heritage Collection includes simple Haggadahs given away free to customers by grocery stores and coffee companies, and fine facsimile editions of beautiful manuscript Haggadahs. It also demonstrates the range of modern Jewish practice with a notable group of Haggadahs from Israeli kibbutzim that reflect various degrees of secularization, as well as versions intended for particular sects of Judaism and specific groups such as schools and units of the armed forces.

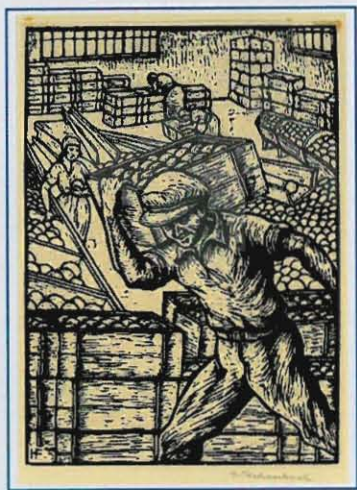
The Haggadahs shown in this exhibit were chosen primarily for the quality or rarity of their artistic content. They include the earliest Haggadah in the collection, published in Amsterdam in 1712, containing a remarkable map purporting to show the route of the Exodus and subsequent wandering in the desert for forty years. Two mid nineteenth-century Haggadahs with well-executed traditional illustrations serve as prelude for three important Haggadahs from the 1920s with illustrations by Joseph Budko, Jacob Steinhardt, and Otto Geismar conveying the rise of the Jewish artist into the mainstream of high art. Two late twentieth-century Haggadahs by famous artists Ben Shahn and David Moss are carefully produced facsimiles of beautiful manuscripts, making these unique works of art available to a wider audience.



## ERETS-ISRAEL



"Jaffa Gate", postcard in *Souvenir de Jerusalem*, ca. 1900



Fechenbach, *Kibbutz Orange Packer*, 1938

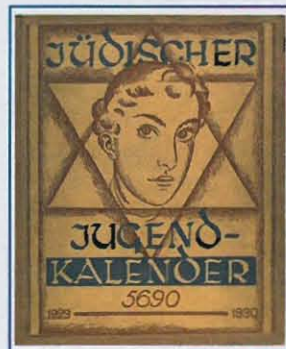
The Jewish Heritage Collection contains a variety of materials that demonstrate how the concept of *Erets-Israel* (literally, the land of Israel, or Palestine) has for thousands of years been both a religious and a personal icon for Jews all over the world, linking them to the land. Art from *Erets-Israel* arose from pioneers settling there before 1900, pilgrims and tourists who returned home with art and crafts, and visiting artists who interpreted their experiences by creating works of art. The Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, founded in Jerusalem in 1906, meant to develop a distinctive Jewish art by fusing European techniques and Middle Eastern influences.

A print by Lesser Ury comes from a rare portfolio of works exhibited at the Zionist Congress of 1921. Products from the Bezalel School in the exhibit include their distinctive silhouettes of life in *Erets-Israel* and Zionist images, as well as tourist artifacts and a painted book cover. Two works of art, Hermann Fechenbach's linocut, *Kibbutz Orange Packer* (1938), and David Rose's etching, *Vegetable Gatherers* (1932), capture agricultural life with simple, bold strokes. Two unusual books of postcards show many images from the region, including those of the British Army's Jewish Legion in World War I. A silver cigarette case with an etched map of Israel and small pocketknives with motifs of maps, scenery, and the twelve tribes of Israel, probably created around 1948, celebrate the creation of *Medinat-Israel*, or the modern State of Israel. Life for the early settlers in the new state is illustrated by a lithograph by Johann Ben Simon from 1950 entitled *Guard Duty*, showing both men and women in military garb. In the domestic arena, a vibrantly colored broadside extols the efficiencies of an electric clothes dryer and its benefits for children's health.

## A JEWISH CHILDHOOD



Simchat Torah flags, alphabet puzzle, toy frog



*Jüdischer Jugend-Kalender*, 5690 (1930)

Children may be the same the world over, but each culture has its own tools to teach its children about itself. In literate cultures these commonly include alphabet charts and books for beginning readers, story books that relate tales of wisdom, morals, and a culture's history, and instructive games and puzzles, all of which are shown in this exhibit.

The Jewish Heritage Collection contains some items specific to children's roles in Jewish rituals. The obligation of the youngest child of the household to ask the Four Questions that lead to the recounting of the Passover narrative is emphasized in many Haggadah texts intended for children that feature lively, child-friendly illustrations. In formal ritual, children play an active role in celebrating the end of the year-long cycle of reading the Torah by marching in parades through synagogues waving *Simchat Torah* flags, several of which are included in the collection. The ceremony of bar or bat mitzvah marking the end of childhood and the beginning of adult responsibility within the religious community is represented in this exhibit by objects intended as gifts on this important occasion and an explanatory, illustrated book for younger children. Other books are shown that teach children about their heritage or give them precepts to live by.



## VIEWS OF JEWISH WOMEN



Postcard, ca. 1930

How cultural groups envision the women among them provides a view into how they conceive of themselves as a whole. In traditional Eastern European religious circles women were often more “worldly” than men; while the latter sat indoors and studied sacred texts in Hebrew, the women were out in the market square, conversing with the surrounding gentile population in their languages and inevitably encountering and navigating ideas outside their intimate community. On the other hand, Jewish women in America were at times charged with guarding the *neshome*, or Jewish spirit, of the domestic sphere while men became part of the broader community through their professional occupations.

The Jewish Heritage Collection contains material illustrating how Jewish women have changed over time and in different places, as well as how representations and images of them have shifted. An eighteenth-century engraving by White portrays “a Jewish girl dressed for her wedding” as an ethereal, exotic creature, while the print by Hyman Katz entitled *Sewing* shows a woman of far more earthly circumstances circa 1930. Later twentieth-century artists offer new visions of women in biblical stories, such as Arik Brauer’s print of Miriam leading her people through the Red Sea and Ruth Weisberg’s portrait of Rachel with a water jug. Ritual objects such as a bat mitzvah girl’s first *Shabbat* candlesticks also reflect shifting demands by and expectations of women, as do greeting cards showing women in the Israeli army.

## TRAVEL AND TOURISM



Tourist art

The needs of Jewish travelers have long been met by special guidebooks or tour agencies that assist in finding sources for kosher foods, opportunities to participate in religious services, and guest accommodations that are welcoming. Trips to Israel remain important pilgrimages for many Jews from around the world. In addition, the massive relocations of the past hundred years coupled with the economic success of the present generation of Western Jews have resulted in many travelers tracing their past and looking for remnants of their family histories, with the most recent focus on the newly open portions of Eastern Europe.

This part of the exhibit follows traveling Jews through the rich illustrations by Arthur Szyk in Pierre Benoit’s *Le Puits de Jacob* detailing Jewish travelers of the 1920s, to a jarring advertisement for a New Jersey hotel of the same period stating that Jews were not admitted. There are several items from Zim, the Israeli ship line that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s, and a number of recent souvenirs designed for Jewish tourists – and others fascinated by Jewishness – such as carved wooden figurines from Poland, a Star of David cut from Hawaiian coral, and a small painting of a courtyard in Kraków made famous by the film *Schindler’s List*.



## JEWISH GEOGRAPHIES

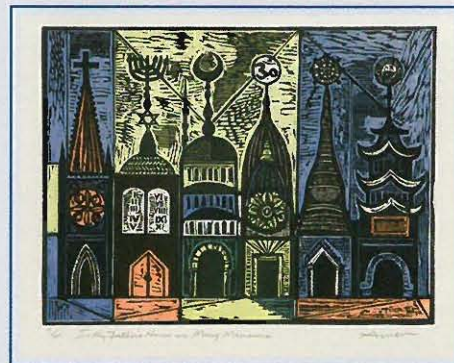


Leaf from Judeo-Persian Manuscript, ca. 1900

While Jews worldwide feel a collective bond based on shared religious or historical links that transcend political boundaries, most American Jews share a more specific heritage of collective identity as descendants of ancestors who lived in Central or Eastern Europe. Places such as Russia, Poland, and former states of the USSR are understood as the “old country” or ancestral home for many. While many parts of the Jewish Heritage Collection underscore the kinship of Jewish culture, there are also items in it that remind the viewer of the cultural diversity present within the religious commonalities of Judaism.

One of the rarest items in the collection is a group of three leaves, all illustrated with images of biblical stories, from a manuscript in Judeo-Persian (a Persian language written in the Hebrew alphabet) and thought to date from about 1900. Fine embroidery work created by Ethiopian Jews now living in Israel, along with brochures appealing for assistance for this group, serve as reminders of their unique story. Many other centers of past Jewish life often overlooked today are represented in a rich assortment of books and ephemera.

## JEWES AND OTHERS



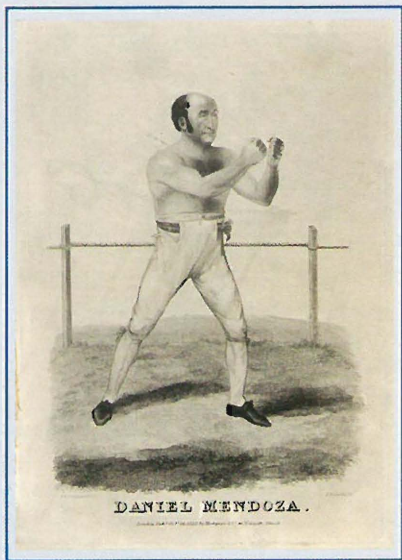
Amen, *In My Father's House*, 1962

The materials in the Jewish Heritage Collection that reflect the interaction of Jews with those of other ethnicities and faiths speak directly to Connie Harris's personal interest and involvement in interfaith dialogue. One of the works of art in the collection that most directly addresses this topic is Irving Amen's *In My Father's House are Many Mansions*, in which spires of houses of worship for several major faiths stand side-by-side.

The collection also contains many publications such as calendars and brochures communicating the work of interfaith groups, and items depicting the assimilation or acculturation of Jews into American life such as the sheet music for *Kosher Kitty Kelly* (in Yiddish), and an illustration from *Life* magazine depicting Jews and many other ethnic groups dancing together on Saint Patrick's Day in New York City. Stamps from many countries commemorating Jewish themes and a medallion honoring the aid given to victims of Nazi persecution by Polish Scouts reflect other, lesser-known aspects of Jewish-Gentile interactions.



## SPORTS AND RECREATION



Roberts, after Cruikshank, *Daniel Mendoza*, 1822

Sports did not become popular and widespread among Jews until the modern period. Among the earliest sports in which Jews are known to have excelled is boxing. The Jewish Heritage Collection contains a rare print from 1822 based on original art by George Cruikshank depicting the famous English boxer Daniel Mendoza and labeled "Champion of England from 1788 to 1795." At the first modern Olympics in Athens in 1896, five Jews won ten medals, a milestone of Jewish athletic pride echoed in the collection's Israeli Olympic pins from the games in Los Angeles, 1984.

The notable sports endeavors of the Maccabi clubs that sprung up around 1900 are represented by apparel from recent Maccabi games, including one in Detroit. Also of local note is the program from the twelfth annual induction dinner for the Michigan Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in which past inductees Hank Greenberg of the Detroit Tigers and former Wolverine footballer Benny Friedman are featured.

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*This exhibit is split between two locations in the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library: the Special Collections Library (7th floor, south building) and the North Lobby (1st floor, off the Diag)*