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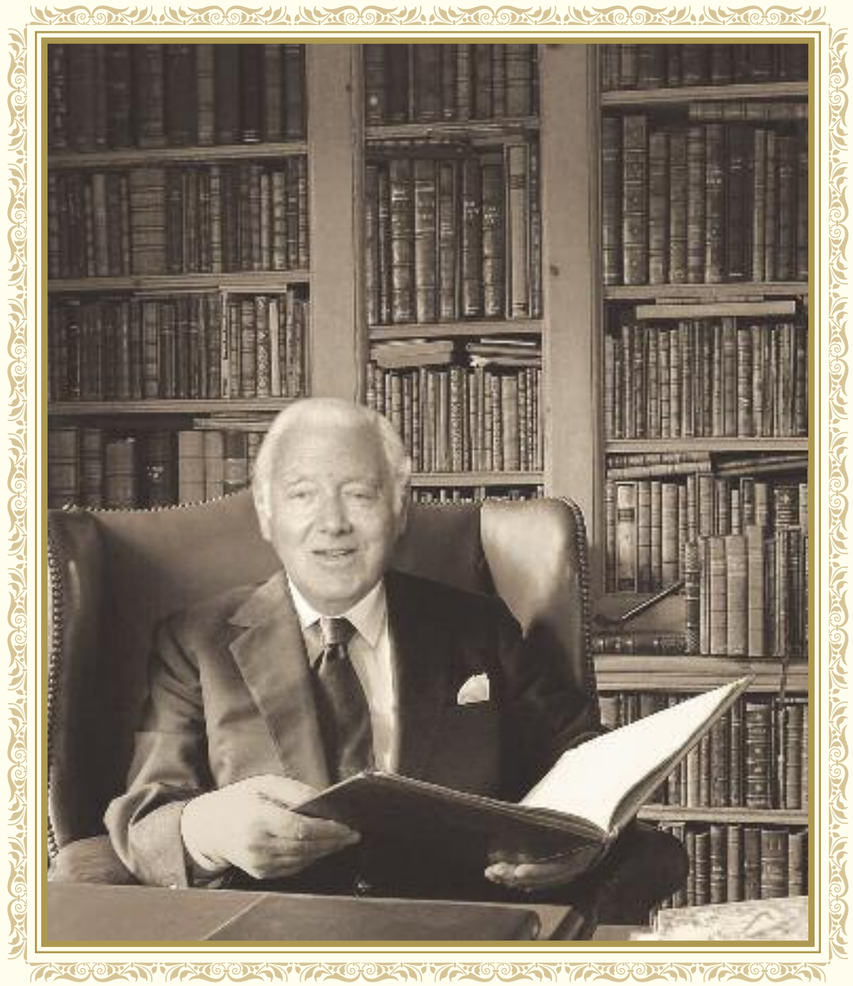


Front cover: The Pentateuch, in Hebrew and Aramaic. Hijar, 1490. The third Spanish edition of the Pentateuch. Printed on vellum.

Left: Jack Lunzer, the Custodian of the Valmadonna Trust Library.

The VALMADONNA TRUST LIBRARY

THE VALMADONNA TRUST IS THE FINEST PRIVATE LIBRARY OF HEBREW BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS IN THE WORLD. INDEED, THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF THIS UNPARALLELED REPOSITORY OF RARE MANUSCRIPT AND PRINTED WORKS PLACE IT SQUARELY IN THE FIRST RANK OF THE GREATEST LIBRARIES OF ITS KIND, private or institutional. The product of the far-reaching vision of a single collector, the Valmadonna Trust remains without equal as the material expression of a centuries-long cultural heritage whose implications remain critical to our understanding of the development of Western Civilization.

The kernel of the Valmadonna Trust was planted at the beginning of the twentieth century but it has been under the seven-decade custodianship of Jack Lunzer that the library has flowered into a great garden of learning, documenting the spread of the Hebrew press and the dissemination of Jewish culture around the globe. The treasures of the Valmadonna Trust cannot be briefly summarized, but they include copies of almost half of all extant Hebrew incunables; the incomparable twelfth-century English manuscript Pentateuch; arguably the finest copy in the world of Daniel Bomberg's edition of the Babylonian Talmud; and scores of incredibly rare and even unique sixteenth-century imprints, many being luxury examples printed on vellum or colored paper.

Perhaps most significant, the size and scope of the Valmadonna Trust allow it to illuminate and help explain subjects, themes, and issues from a myriad of disciplines outside its area of ostensible specialization.

During the first part of the twentieth century, the family of Jack Lunzer's wife had acquired a representative library of Hebrew books printed in Italy during the sixteenth century, a period often referred to as the golden age of Hebrew printing. This cabinet of splendid Hebrew imprints was acquired by the Valmadonna Trust shortly after the end of World War II, and while Mr. Lunzer has expanded the number of original volumes many times over (from a few hundred to nearly 13,000), the aim of the Custodian was never to simply assemble a large library, but a great one. Towards that end, Mr. Lunzer has sought the finest possible copies of books that are not only rare but truly significant for illustrating and understanding the Jewish Diaspora.

Because this collecting criteria has been consistently applied by a single person, every volume in the library has a reason for being there, from the most beautifully printed and accurate texts of the illustrious scholar-printers of the sixteenth century to the rough and ephemeral pamphlets produced by itinerant job printers in nineteenth-century Calcutta. Jack Lunzer's career may have been spent as a diamond merchant, but his life's work was mining far different jewels.

The EARLIEST HEBREW PRINTING

UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST MOMENTOUS TRANSFORMATION THAT JACK LUNZER EFFECTED IN THE PLAN OF THE LIBRARY WAS THE EXTENSION OF ITS PERIOD OF INTEREST BOTH FORWARD, TO THE DAWN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, AND—MORE SIGNIFICANTLY—REARWARD, TO THE BIRTH OF HEBREW PRINTING AND EARLIER.

Books printed during the fifteenth century have always been the pride of any great library. And even though copies of nearly 29,000 incunable editions survive, fewer than 140 of these are printed in Hebrew. (The term "incunable" comes from the Latin for swaddling clothes or cradle and is applied to books produced during the "infancy" of Western typographic printing.) Remarkably the Valmadonna Trust holds copies of nearly half of all Hebrew editions printed during the incunable period. No other private library comes close to this level of comprehensiveness, and only a handful of national and academic libraries are comparable to it.

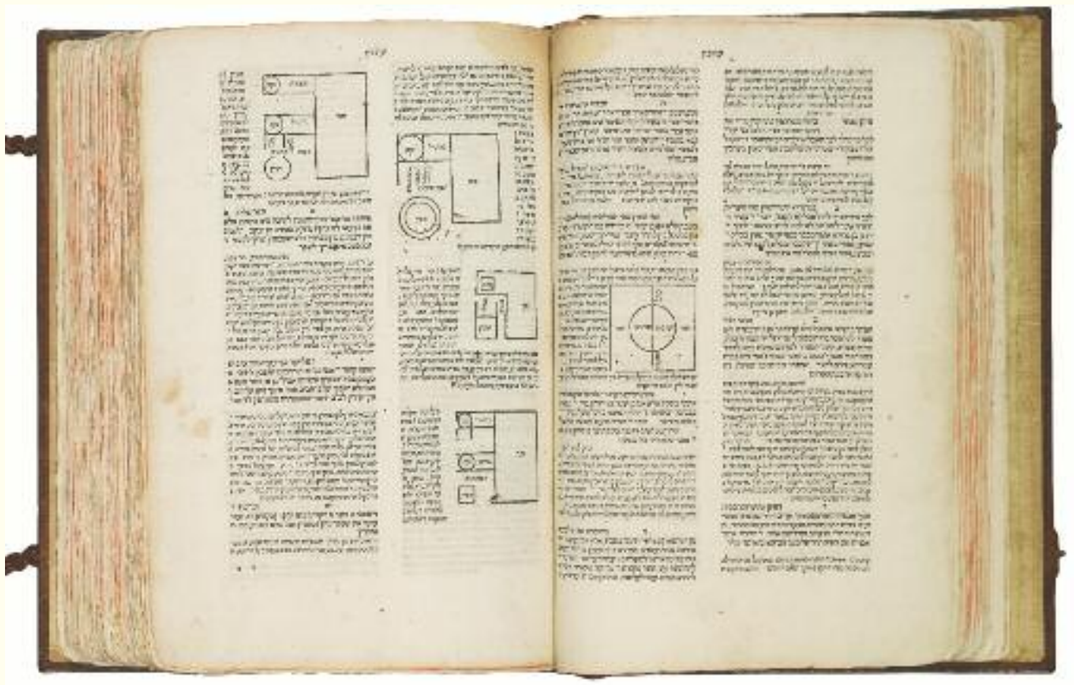
Printing was founded in Germany, at the Mainz shop of Johann Gutenberg in the early 1450s. But because the German guilds would not admit Jewish apprentices, Hebrew printing did not begin until the new technology had spread to Italy. About 1470, shortly after the Germans Sweynheym and Pannartz established their press at Rome, Jews were permitted to work in Italian printing shops and books for the "People of the Book" were being set in newly cast Hebrew type. These first Hebrew books share many similarities with Latin editions printed in Rome at the same period, and it is likely, as Brad Sabin Hill has remarked, "that Jews and Christians collaborated in these early typographic efforts, perhaps even working in the same shop." By the year 1500, at least thirty Hebrew presses had been opened, primarily in Italy and the Iberian Peninsula.

Although he had acquired a few titles earlier, Jack Lunzer began the purposeful acquisition of Hebrew incunables in the 1970s, probably the latest date at which a significant collection could still be assembled. The most frequently printed Hebrew incunable texts were scriptural and legal works, mirroring the predominating trend among non-Jewish printers of the period. Secular titles were also published, including grammars, as well as philosophical, literary, and medical treatises. The Valmadonna Trust is rich in all these categories.

The library contains numerous editions of the Hebrew Bible or divisions thereof, including the David Solomon Sassoon copy of the 1490 Hĭjar Pentateuch in Hebrew and Aramaic, printed on vellum, the last dated Hebrew book printed in Spain before the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. The first printed editions of Hebrew scripture were actually preceded off the press by works of Biblical exegesis, and among its many treasures of early printing, the Valmadonna Trust possesses a complete copy of the only signed imprint from the very first Hebrew printing shop. This *editio princeps* of Nahmanides' commentary on the Pentateuch, *Perush ha-Torah,* contains a proto-colophon announcing that the book was printed "by the hands of Obadiah and Manasseh

Top: The Pentateuch, in Hebrew and Aramaic. Hĭjar, 1490. The third Spanish edition of the Pentateuch. Printed on vellum.

Bottom: Mishnah, with commentary by Maimonides. Naples, 1492. One of the first illustrated Hebrew books.



and Benjamin of Rome." Although this book is undated, scholars have deduced that the three were printing between the years 1469–1473.

Another laurel formerly in the Sassoon collection is a brilliant copy of the sole complete incunable edition of the *Mishnah*—the basic text of rabbinic tradition and the core of the Talmud—with commentary by Maimonides. Printed in Naples by Joshua Solomon Soncino and Joseph ibn Peso, 1492, this sumptuous edition contains forty-seven woodcut diagrams including a series of illustrations interpreting of the rules of *eruvin.* These simple woodcuts are among the earliest functional (as opposed to purely decorative) book illustrations in Hebrew printing.

The Valmadonna shelves hold such remarkable legal incunables as a complete set—four parts bound in one volume—of the second edition of Jacob ben *Asher's Arba'ah Turim* (Soncino, ca. 1490), a comprehensive code of Jewish law as well as of customs and traditions. The title of this of Halakhic compendium translates as "Four Rows" and alludes to the jeweled decoration on the breastplate of the High Priest as well as to the division of the text into four constituent parts.

The library also houses secular Hebrew texts in relative abundance. These include Judah ben Jehiel's *Nofet Zufim,* or "Flow of the Honeycomb," the first Hebrew book printed during the lifetime of its author. This humanist text, likely printed in Mantua about 1475, compares biblical Hebrew rhetoric to the Greek and Roman classics. The range of the non-scriptural incunables in the Valmadonna Trust is surprisingly wide and encompasses, in addition to Hebrew texts, Latin books by Jewish authors and Christian texts of Jewish interest. The subjects of the secular incunables range from science (Abraham ben Samuel Zacuto's *Almanach perpetuum coelestium motuum,* Leiria, 1496) to linguistics (David Kimhi's Hebrew dictionary, *Sefer ha-Shorashim,* Naples, 1490) to travel and exploration (Bernhard von Breydenbach's *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam,* Speier, 1490) to philosophy (Jedaiah ha-Penini's *Behinat ha-Olam,* Soncino, 1484).

Books, especially Hebrew books, were designed as utilitarian objects. But Hebrew incunables not only experienced the repeated reading and study of their owners (whether individuals or communities), but, over time, they were also subject to censorship or mass destruction by Christian authorities. Whole editions have disappeared, and many books survive only in unique or highly imperfect copies. A remarkable proportion of the incunables in the Valmadonna Trust are complete or near-complete, preserving the first fruits of Hebrew printing as they were intended to be read.

Left: The first book printed in Lisbon, 1489, Nahmanides' commentary on Pentateuch, Perush ha-Torah.

Right: Almanach perpetuum coelestium motuum by Abraham ben Samuel Zacuto. Leiria, 1496. The first scientific book (and first non-religious book of any kind) printed in Portugal.

Opposite: Sefer ha-Shorashim by David Kimhi. Naples, 1490. The second edition of what was probably the first Hebrew text ever printed.

A beautifully illuminated Italian Hebrew manuscript of the book of Psalms, signed by its scribe, Shemtov ben Samuel Baruch, in January 1401.

MANUSCRIPTS

THE BIBLE, TALMUD, AND OTHER HEBREW TEXTS WERE RECORDED IN WRITING CENTURIES BEFORE THE EARLIEST PRINTED HEBREW BOOKS APPEARED IN ROME, AND AMONG THE MANUSCRIPT HOLDINGS OF THE VALMADONNA TRUST IS AN EXCEPTIONAL REPOSITORY OF PRECIOUS MEDIEVAL CODICES AND SCROLLS.

The supreme manuscript in the library—and, by consensus, one of the most important privately owned books in the world—is the Pentateuch written in England during the first half of 1189. This is the only extant Hebrew book written in England that can be dated to before the expulsion of Jews from the British Isles in 1290; it endures as one of the matchless monuments of Norman England.

The celebrated Valmadonna English Pentateuch, written in 1189, and one of the greatest of all books in private hands.

The survival of this manuscript is remarkably fortuitous, as it was completed by its scribe on the eve of a tumultuous period in the history of English Jewry. At the coronation of Richard I in September 1189, a riot began which resulted in an attack on the Jewish community of London and the murder of many of its members. Similar assaults were launched on Jews throughout England during the following year, culminating in a massacre at York in spring 1190. A contemporary chronicler, Ephraim of Bonn, reported that "The mob which killed the Jews of York then looted the houses of the slain, took away gold and silver and the beautiful books they wrote, more precious than gold ... and brought them to Cologne and to other places, where they sold them to the Jews." Ironically, then, the Valmadonna English Pentateuch may have been saved for posterity largely as a result of its having been plundered.

This earliest dated Anglo-Hebrew manuscript is not, however, the earliest codex in the Valmadonna Trust Library. Pride of date belongs to a Franco-German copy of the Pentateuch written in an Ashkenazic script during the tenth or eleventh century. This book is one of the earliest texts of the Five Books of Moses written anywhere in Europe. There are sufficient other medieval volumes in the library to fill out a good-sized shelf—including several signed and dated by their scribes and others richly illuminated with decorative and figural ornamentation—but the majority of Valmadonna's three hundred manuscripts are from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. The manuscripts, ranging from single leaves to multi-volumes, originate from communities around the globe

Top left: "Grace After Meals and other Benedictions," a fine illuminated manuscript from eighteenth-century Vienna.

Bottom left: The earliest manuscript in the library, a Franco-German Pentateuch, probably written in the tenth or eleventh century.

Right: A manuscript Yemenite Pentateuch from the early fifteenth century, with characteristic Oriental illumination.

and comprise a vast range of content. They provide an unrivaled first-hand glimpse of the mosaic of Jewish life and culture during a crucial period of the Diaspora.

The majority of Valmadonna manuscripts derive from Italy, but others come from Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Holland, England, Greece, Yemen, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and India. Virtually all branches of Jewish literature are represented: Biblical and Talmudic texts and commentaries, Halakhah and responsa, prayerbooks (according to the rites of Italy, Provence, Yemen, Cochin, Corfu, and Algeria among others), occasional prayers (including, for example, those to be recited during a cholera epidemic and for deliverance from drought), poetry, Kabbalah, polemics, homilies, science, and magic.

Because every manuscript is by definition unique, every manuscript in the Valmadonna library is worthy of preservation and study: an anonymous gloss on the Talmud can be just as revealing of the period and community in which it was written as is a sermon penned by a historically celebrated rabbi. Still, a few of the more intriguing eighteenth-century manuscripts merit individual mention: 32 volumes (of an original 35) of the autograph manuscript of Rabbi Isaac Lampronti's comprehensive Halakhic encyclopedia, *Pahad Yizhak,* written in Ferrara; a small decorated Ashkenazi compendium of "Prayers for Women"; and a gorgeous Viennese manuscript, 1737, of "Grace After Meals and other Benedictions," an archetype of the eighteenth-century revival of Hebrew manuscript illumination.

The "GOLDEN AGE" *of* HEBREW PRINTING

THE CRADLE OF HEBREW PRINTING, ITALY REMAINED THE HOME OF THE MOST PROLIFIC, INNOVATIVE, AND SCHOLARLY HEBREW PRINTERS THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY. BUT HEBREW PRESSES SPREAD EXPONENTIALLY AROUND THE GLOBE AT THE SAME PERIOD—TO AMSTERDAM, ANTWERP, AND AUGSBURG;

to Berlin, Breslau, and Belgrade; to Cologne, Cracow, and Constantinople; and even to Africa, where the Portuguese printer Samuel ben Isaac Nedivot established a press at Fez, Morocco. As a result, the output of Hebrew presses increased nearly twenty-fold: some 2,700 Hebrew imprints appeared during the sixteenth century, as opposed to about 140 fifteenth-century editions. And for the first time, Hebrew works were being printed by (and occasionally for the use of) non-Jews.

Textually and typographically, the Hebrew book made monumental advances during the sixteenth century. The Valmadonna Trust library houses more than two-thirds of all recorded Hebrew printing from 1501 through 1600, attaining an astonishing comprehensiveness that rivals its own holding of incunables—and which, like that collection of earliest printing, could likely never be assembled again. But although the field for collecting sixteenth-century imprints was wider than for incunabula, Jack Lunzer applied the same exacting criteria of selection—profound importance and the finest obtainable condition—and this section of the library contains many volumes whose price is far above rubies.

The only complete copy on blue paper of the Mishneh Torah of Maimonides, Venice, 1574–1575.

ITALY

THE VALMADONNA TRUST INCLUDES VIRTUALLY COMPLETE HOLDINGS OF THE WORK OF THE HEBREW PRINTERS OF MANTUA, VENICE, FERRARA, CREMONA, PISA, VERONA, LIVORNO, AND TRIESTE. SUBJECT TO CONFISCATION AND CENSORSHIP, MANY OF THESE EARLY BOOKS ARE RECORDED IN ONLY A FEW COPIES;

significant numbers of others are either unique survivals or rare luxury examples printed on vellum or on colored (especially blue) paper. Indeed, Valmadonna's collection of approximately 100 sixteenth-century imprints on blue paper eclipses the holdings of any other library, private or institutional. Splendid volumes printed on green, yellow, and red paper (and even on silk) are also scattered along the Valmadonna shelves.

Particularly noteworthy are the collections of books issued by the itinerant printer Gershom Soncino, who at Fano revived the Hebrew press after a still-unexplained hiatus from 1497 to 1503. Soncino established presses in numerous small communities of Italy (Fano, Pesaro, Ortona, Rimini, and Cesena), eventually removing to Salonika and Constantinople. He produced not just Hebrew books, but also humanist texts in Latin, of which the library also has a remarkable range.

Not only is every Italian town with a Hebrew press represented in the Valmadonna Trust library, but virtually all are distinguished by at least one tremendous rarity. For instance, Genoa can claim one of the few vellum copies of Porro's celebrated 1516 edition of the Psalms in five languages, the most ambitious linguistic work published to that time and the first polyglot text ever printed. Bologna can boast a vellum copy, with gilt-lettered headings, of the Roman rite Siddur printed by Talmi in 1537 for the famous Bolognese guild of silk-weavers. The imprints from Mantua include a blue-paper copy of Samuel Zarza's commentary of the Pentateuch, Mekor Hayim, printed in 1559. And just as Venice was the largest center of Hebrew printing in Italy, the Valmadonna collection is also preeminent in Venetian imprints, particularly the works produced by Daniel Bomberg, Marco Antonio Giustiniani, and the Bragadin family.

The
BOMBERG TALMUD

The
BOMBERG TALMUD

DANIEL BOMBERG IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PRINTING THE FIRST COMPLETE EDITION OF THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD (1519/20-1523), UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED NOT SIMPLY AS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT BOOKS IN THE HISTORY OF HEBREW PRINTING, BUT AS ONE OF THE GREAT BOOKS OF THE WESTERN WORLD.

A native of Antwerp, Bomberg established his own printing shop in Venice in 1516. The first Christian printer of Hebraica, Bomberg produced a corpus of nearly two hundred basic texts of Judaism, many of which had never before been printed. Like the other great scholar-printers of the sixteenth-century, notably the family Estienne, Bomberg became known for texts that were scrupulously accurate and beautifully produced. To ensure precision, Bomberg hired Jewish typesetters and proofreaders. He also went to great expense in casting several sizes of Hebrew type, and Bomberg's fonts were so esteemed that they continued to be used by other printers (typically identified as "Bomberg type") long after his own printing career ceased in 1549. Indeed, it is principally due to the enduring legacy of Daniel Bomberg that Venice remained the center of Hebrew printing until well into the eighteenth century.

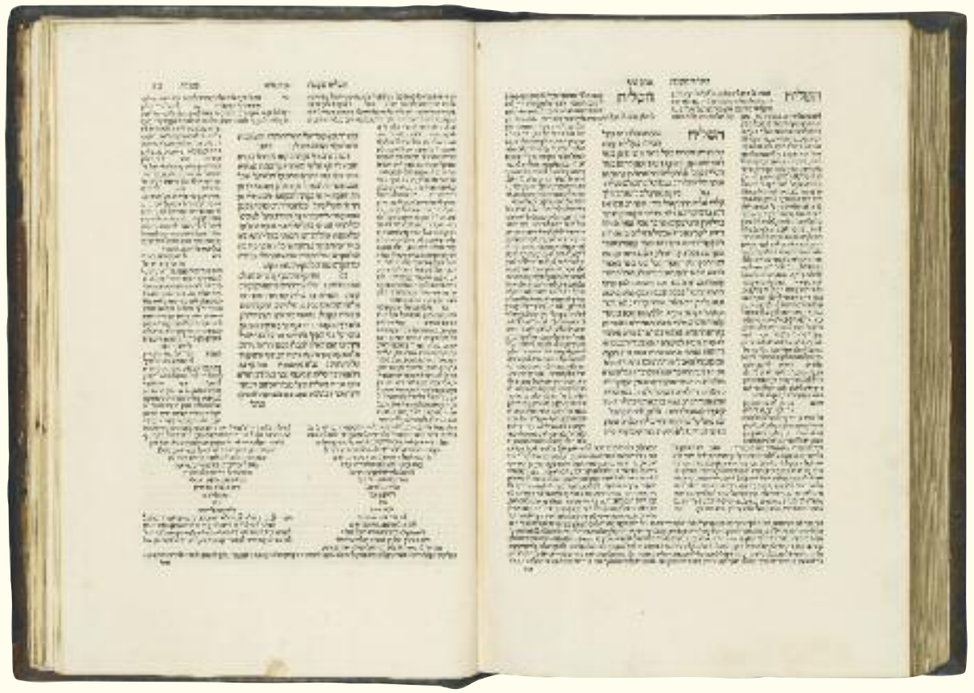
While the Hebrew Bible is undoubtedly the foundation upon which Judaism is built, it is the Talmud that serves as the framework that has given form to Jewish life and ritual observance across the centuries. While the books of the Hebrew Bible are referred to as the "Written Law," signifying their fixed position within the canon, the Talmud is an integral part of the "Oral Law," a body of knowledge whose basic tenets are believed to have been transmitted to Moses at Sinai as a necessary and complementary corollary to the "Written Law" of the Hebrew Bible.

Compiled by Jewish scholars in the fifth century CE, the Talmud was transmitted orally, with written manuscripts first appearing during the Middle Ages. The dissemination of these manuscripts continued until the rise of printing in the fifteenth century. Beginning with the Soncino press in 1483, Hebrew printers interwove the ancient rabbinic texts with the words of later commentators, and the Talmud page began to take on the complex, layered format that is now familiar to modern readers.

A few individual tractates of the Talmud had been printed previously, but Bomberg was the first printer to take on the daunting task of issuing all sixty-three standard tractates. The format of Bomberg's first complete edition of the Talmud remains the model for all subsequent editions to the present day. Bomberg's pagination is still followed, as is his arrangement of the commentary: that of the eleventh-century French scholar Solomon ben Isaac (also known by his acronym, Rashi) appearing in the inner margin, and the collected and distilled discussion of Rashi's students, the *Tosafot*, in the outer margins. Bomberg also printed, 1523–1524, the first complete Jerusalem Talmud, two copies of which are in the Valmadonna library. Both the Babylonian and Jerusalem editions of the Talmud were undertaken with the approbation of the Venetian Senate and Pope Leo X.

In 1956, the Custodian of the Valmadonna Trust attended an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum celebrating 300 years of Jewish resettlement in England. There, he first became aware of Westminster Abbey's magnificent complete copy of the Talmud and spent close to 25 years courting the Westminster Abbey in an attempt to acquire it. Eventually, he purchased a 900-year old copy of the Abbey's original Charter and presented it, along with supporting endowments, to the Abbey in exchange for its copy of the Bomberg Talmud.

The amazingly fresh condition of the nine-volume Valmadonna Talmud is complemented by its distinguished provenance and magnificent contemporary binding. The Valmadonna copy is bound in blind-panelled calf incorporating the central cipher of Richard Bruarne, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford from 1546 to 1556. After Bruarne's death, the Talmud eventually passed to Westminster Abbey, in whose library it resided practically undisturbed for four centuries. In terms of importance, rarity, and condition, the Valmadonna copy of Daniel Bomberg's Babylonian Talmud is virtually without peer. If the first half of the sixteenth century is the "Golden Age" of Hebrew printing, then the Bomberg Talmud is undoubtedly the pinnacle achievement of the period.



Right: A characteristic page-opening illustrating the exquisite layout of the Bomberg Talmud.

Previous page: The Westminster Abbey-Valmadonna set of the Bomberg Talmud.

Left: Detail of the original Oxford binding of one of the Talmud volumes, showing the initials of the first owner, Richard Brauarne, stamped in the center.

NORTHERN, CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

HEBREW PRINTING NORTH OF THE ALPS BEGAN IN PRAGUE IN 1512 WITH THE CIRCLE OF GERSHOM BEN SOLOMON KOHEN. PRAGUE WAS SOON ESTABLISHED AS A GREAT HUB OF LITURGICAL HEBREW PRINTING, AND FROM THERE THE PRESS MIGRATED TO CRACOW AND LUBLIN.

Top left: One of just two surviving copies of the 1556 Prague Haggadah.

Bottom left: Title-page of the 1526 Prague Haggadah, printed on vellum.

Right: The illustrations in this 1695 Amsterdam edition of the Haggadah established a new iconography that would endure in Hebrew books for centuries.

Two of the Valmadonna Library's greatest vellum books were printed in Prague. The first is an extraordinary copy of the *Haggadah shel Pesah*, printed in 1526 by Gerhsom Kohen and his brother Grunim; this is the earliest dated and illustrated edition of the Haggadah, and contains, as a table-song, the first printed verse in Yiddish. The second vellum treasure is also a Haggadah, published in 1556 by the grandsons of the printer of the earlier edition. This was the first Haggadah to be directed at a large, popular audience. Ironically, though, due to heavy demand and the fire that ravaged the Prague Jewish ghetto in 1557, only one other copy of this edition is known to exist, in the British Library.

The Hebrew press spread to Oels, Augsburg, and other smaller towns. As Christian scholars such as Joannes Reuchlin and Sebastian Muenster became interested in Hebrew, scholar-printers like Estienne in Paris, Froben in Basel, and Plantin in Antwerp supplied their needs. The Valmadonna Library contains Christian Hebraica from university towns like Hagenau, Cologne, Tuebingen, a unique copy of Plantin's *Biblia Hebraica* (Antwerp, 1584) printed on green paper, and the Chatsworth copy of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (Alcala de Henares, 1514–1517). Rare eighteenth-century vellum imprints of liturgical texts from Sulzbach and Wilhermsdorf accompany numerous examples from the major printing cities of Basel, Paris, Cracow, Prague, and Geneva. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Hebrew printing in Amsterdam includes a nearly complete collection of the works of Manasseh ben Israel, and a wide selection of Spanish and Portuguese liturgies with several printed on vellum.

The OTTOMAN EMPIRE

EXPELLED FROM SPAIN AND PORTUGAL IN 1492 AND 1497, JEWS FOUND SAFE HAVENS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE CITIES OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND SALONIKA AS WELL AS IN FEZ, MOROCCO. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER THEIR SETTLEMENT IN THESE REGIONS, SEPHARDIC JEWS ESTABLISHED PRINTING PRESSES USING Hebrew type. The first books printed outside Europe were produced on Jewish presses.

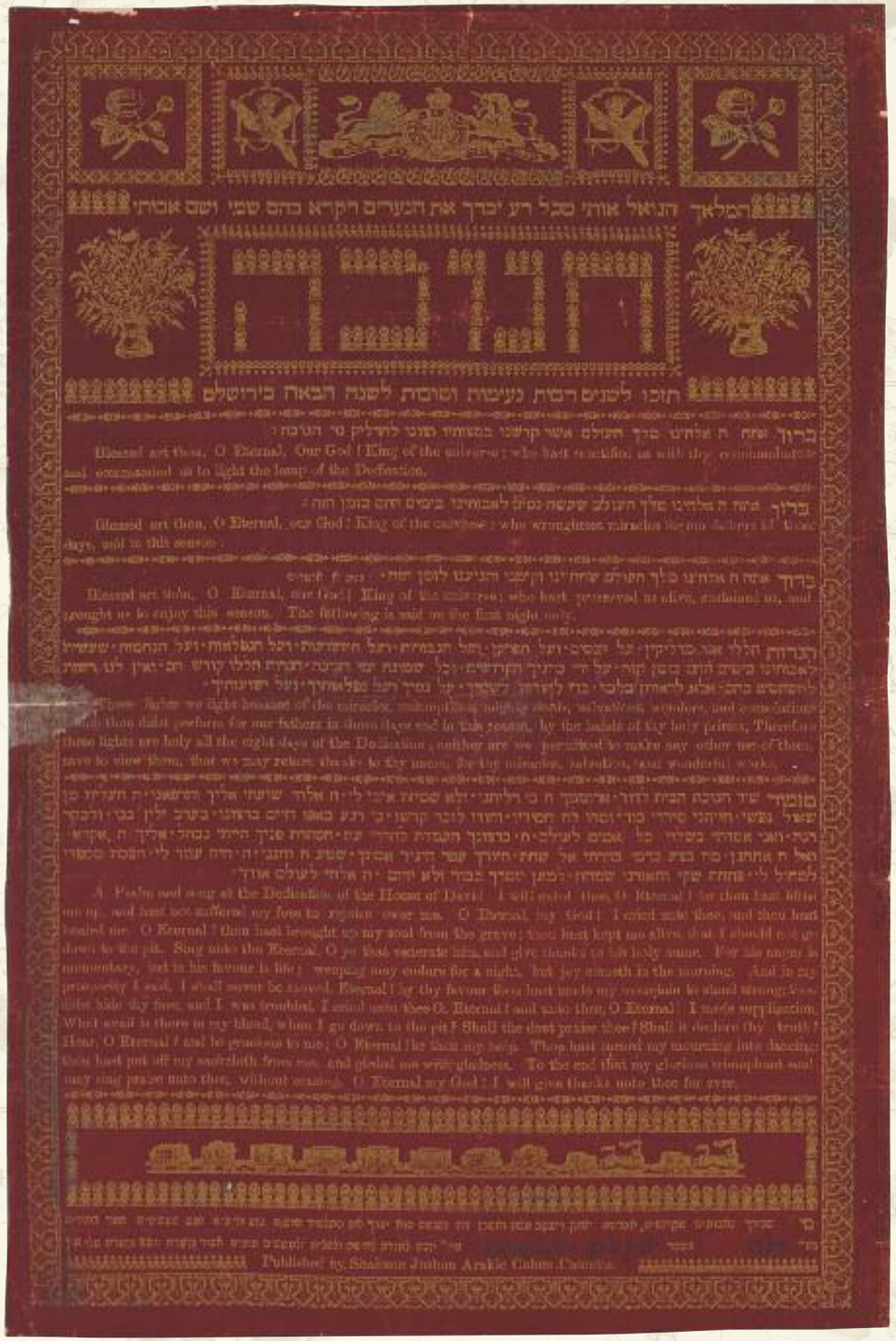
The Valmadonna Trust Library's thorough collection of Ottoman Empire imprints contains over 350 books printed at Constantinople, including the very first book printed in Turkey—Jacob ben Asher's *Arba'ah Turim*, printed in 1493 by David and Samuel ibn Nahmias, exiles from Spain. The Library also maintains a first edition of the first secular book to be printed at Constantinople: *Ben ha-Melekh ve-ha-Nazir* (The Prince and the Hermit), an adaptation of an Arabic philosophical romance long popular in Hebrew manuscript.

Another remarkable acquisition made by the Custodian, from the legendary collection of Salman Schocken, is the first book printed in any language on the African continent, the *Sefer Abudarham*, published by the Portuguese printers Samuel ben Isaac Nedivot and his son Isaac in 1516 and based on an edition of the work produced at Lisbon 27 years earlier. Additionally, the Library comprises about 440 volumes produced in shops in Salonika.

One of the most intriguing books from this portion of the library is a contemporary "Sammelband" (or, collected volume) of five different works published in Constantinople during the second decade of the sixteenth-century. These works were purchased by a single reader, who then had them bound together for easy consultation: Jacob ben Asher's *Perush ha-Torah* (1514); *Halikhot Olam* (1510); *Avodat ha-Levi* (1510); *Ottiyot shel Rabbi Akiva* (1520); and *Alfa Beta d'Ben Sira* (1519).

Left: Teshuvot ha-Rav. Constantinople, 1546-1547. These responsa of Isaac ben Sheshet are a vital source for the social history of Jews in medieval Spain and North Africa.

Right: Perush ha-Torah by Jacob ben Asher, Constantinople, 1514. Bound first in a contemporary Sammelband of five imprints.



INDIA & THE FAR EAST

PERHAPS THE MOST SURPRISING—AND ONE OF THE RICHEST—AREAS OF THE VALMADONNA TRUST LIBRARY IS ITS ASTONISHING COLLECTION OF HEBREW PRINTING FROM INDIA AND THE FAR EAST. COMPOSED LARGELY OF PAMPHLETS AND OTHER EPHEMERAL IMPRINTS, including periodicals, these holdings represent one of the Custodian's greatest collecting achievements.

Left: "Menorah," a Calcutta lithograph printed in gold ink on red paper at the end of the nineteenth century. Such blessing sheets were given to students by teachers as a reward at Hannukah time.

Right: This trilingual broadside, printed in Bombay in 1896, commemorates the centenary of the synagogue Sha'ar ha-Rahamim in Hebrew, English and Marathi, the vernacular of Bombay.

Judaism was among the first non-Dharmic religions recorded in India, with both the Cochin Jews and the Bene Israel Jews settling, respectively, in Kerala and Maharashta (later Bombay) during the early Middle Ages. The first Hebrew presses were established in Calcutta and Bombay in 1840-1841. By the end of the nineteenth century, additional Hebrew presses at Poona and Cochin produced books notable for their linguistic variety and graphics. The Indian imprints of the Valmadonna Library are unequalled both in their number and their quality–no public institution holds so comprehensive a collection. The Valmadonna Trust also includes a small but significant number of Hebrew imprints from China, particularly Shanghai, including a very scarce run of *The Israel Messenger.*

The Hebrew press in Baghdad was one of the last Hebrew presses established in Western Asia. At the end of the 1860s, movable Hebrew type was introduced there by a printer trained in Bombay, transforming Baghdad into one of the prolific centers of Hebrew printing in the Orient. The presence of over 500 books and pamphlets printed in Baghdad in Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, and Aramaic, makes the Valmadonna Trust Library one of the world's vital resources for the study of Asian Hebraica.

WALL CALENDARS & BROADSHEETS

IN ADDITION TO INCUNABLES AND MANUSCRIPTS, THE VALMADONNA TRUST ENCOMPASSES A THIRD COLLECTION OF OBJECTS THAT SHOULD BE STUDIED AS A WHOLE, RATHER THAN SEPARATED BY PERIOD AND PLACE OF ORIGIN: WALL CALENDARS AND BROADSHEETS OF ALL MANNER SPANNING THE SIXTEENTH TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURIES.

Of special interest are the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian wall calendars. Originating largely from Mantua, Venice, and Sabbioneta, these calendars and almanacs provide invaluable insight into the popular beliefs and quotidian life of the Jewish communities they served.

The general broadsides cover a much wider field of subject matter and come from presses around the globe, including India and Jerusalem. Noteworthy are the many celebratory wedding poems and riddles from Italy, usually ornamented with several woodcut illustrations. Others broadsides present occasional poems and prayers, elegies, hymns, polemics, liturgical texts, educational instruction, and rules and regulations to be observed in various communities. Of course, the wall calendars and broadsheets alike were ephemeral publications, and so their survival rates are very low; many of the Valmadonna Trust's nearly 600 examples are unique copies. This is especially true regarding polemical broadsheets, since attempts were often made to destroy all known copies.

Left: An early Hebrew alphabet chart, printed in Frankfurt about 1650 and intended as a teaching tool for children learning the holy tongue.

Right: Broadside wedding poem celebrating the nuptials of Rebecca, daughter of Sabbetai Isaac Ambron and Solomon Judah, son of Gabriel Ambron. Printed on blue paper in Livorno, 1792.

Following page: First printing of the Biblia Rabbinica, and the first great production of Daniel Bomberg's Venetian press, 1516-1517. The Valmadonna copy is one of a very few Renaissance Hebrew printed books with illumination.

Rear cover: The contemporary Oxford binding of the Valmadonna set of the Bomberg Talmud.

בראשית

בקדטן

בראשית

The Valmadonna Trust Library has long been open to scholars and other readers with an interest in perusing its books and manuscripts. Many of its great treasures have been loaned to exhibitions around the world, and the Trust has published catalogues of its holdings, as well as facsimile editions of works that exist nowhere else. But the Sotheby's exhibition that this brochure commemorates is the very first time that the Valmadonna Trust Library has been on view in its entirety.

For more information about the Library, contact David Redden, Vice Chairman, Sotheby's, at +1 212 606 7386.