England as the Custodian of the Jewish Past

Gary A. Rendsburg
Rutgers University
Mandelbaum House

The Norman, Angevin, and Early Plantagenet Periods (1066 – 1290)

Battle of Hastings as portrayed in the Bayeux Tapestry
Coin of William the Conqueror

Corpus Christi College, MS 133 (Oxford)

Ashkenazi Siddur (Prayer Book)
England, c. 1200

Blank pages at the end, written by a Sephardi Jew, recording (in Judeo-Arabic) debts owed to him by a variety of Christian dignitaries

Corpus Christi College, MS 133
List of debtors in Judeo-Arabic
List of debtors in Judeo-Arabic

Valmadonna, no. 1 (MOTB GC 858), 1189 C.E.
Torah and Targum, Haftarot, Five Scrolls and Targum

Valmadonna, no. 1 (MOTB GC 858)
Complete Pentateuch, with Targum, and Five Scrolls
fol. 482v
Colophon
with original date and subsequent various owners

completed on
15 Tammuz 4949
= 2 July 1189

Judeo-French and Anglo-Norman glosses for the forbidden birds
Leviticus 11
Merton College, Oxford, established 1262

Deed in Latin, recording the sale of land by Jacob the Jew, to Walter de Merton, with summary statement in Hebrew.

Seal of Jacob the Jew

Merton College Library (oldest library in continuous use)

Merton College, Oxford, established 1262

J. R. Tolkien, among the translators of the Jerusalem Bible (1966)

J. R. Tolkien, professor at Merton College

The seaweed was wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. (JB: Jonah 2:6-7)

The roots of the those mountains must be roots indeed. (Gollum, Lord of the Rings I.i.63)
Longleat House
Warminster, Wiltshire
Home of the Marquess of Bath
built 1580

Longleat MS 21
Hebrew-Latin-(French) Dictionary
Written at Ramsey Abbey (Cambridgeshire) 13th century

Longleat MS 21
Hebrew-Latin-(French) Dictionary
• 3682 entries
• 1392 verbs
• 2290 nouns (plus)
• 1000+ words glossed in Old French
• mentions Rashi 50+ times

Longleat MS 21
Hebrew-Latin Book of Psalms
Written at Ramsey Abbey (Cambridgeshire) 13th century

Longleat MS 21
Hebrew-Latin Book of Psalms
Written at Ramsey Abbey, 13th century

Longleat MS 21
• Grammatical Tables, appearing both in Hebrew and in Latin transcription
Lachrymose History

- Blood libels:
  - Norwich (1144)
  - Lincoln (1255)
- Massacre of the Jews of York (1190)
- Expulsion under Edward I (1290)

No Jews in England: 1290 – 1657

And yet Hebrew learning continued and flourished:

- Ralph Niger, archdeacon of Gloucester (c. 1140 – c. 1217)
- Roger Bacon, polymath (c. 1214 – c. 1292)
- John Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter (served 1327 – 1369)
- Adam Easton, Cardinal (1328 – 1397)
- Laurence Holbeach, Benedictine monk (14th century)
- Thomas Gascoigne, Vice-Chancellor, Univ of Oxford (1404 – 1458)

Ashkenazi Prayer Book
England c. 1200
Corpus Christi College, MS 133 (Oxford)

No Jews in England: 1290 – 1657

English Reformation – 16th Century

- Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge (1540)
- Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford (1546)
- Antoine Rudolphe Chevalier (1523 – 1572)
- Thomas Bodley (1545 – 1613)
First Bodleian Library catalogue (1605) includes 58 books and manuscripts with Hebrew titles. Thomas Bodley added his own notations to the catalogue (in Latin), correcting some misprints in the Hebrew.

MS Bodl. Or. 3 – Book of Psalms (c. 1300)

Sephardic Siddur (Prayer Book), c. 1500, Hebrew and Catalan

MS Bodl. Or. 9

John Selden (1584 – 1654)
Jurist and scholar of Jewish law
His manuscript collection entered the Bodleian Library in 1659

Sefardic Siddur (Prayer Book), c. 1500, Hebrew and Catalan
Bodleian MS Arch. Selden A.4

Bodleian MS Arch. Selden A.5
Sefer Mitzvot ha-Gadol (1247 / c. 1300)

Prayer book for High Holidays c. 1300 – Selden A.6

'Otzar ha-Kavod “Collection of Glory” Kabbalistic work by Todros Abulafia c. 1600 – Selden A.50

Abraham ibn Ezra, 12th cent. Commentary on the Torah MS Pococke 108 / 1431

Edward Pococke (1604 – 1691)
Bust at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford
Chair of Arabic, Regius Professor of Hebrew, 1648–1691, Chaplain to the Levant Company of Aleppo, 1630–1635

Book of Exodus MS Pococke 7, c. 1350

Maimonides, Commentary on the Mishnah, begins with Baba Qama, ch. 8 Bodleian MS Pococke 295, fol. 1v (left), fol. 1r (right) – 12th century
http://bav.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/digitized-items-hebrew-manuscripts
Maimonides, Commentary on the Mishnah

Layout of the Temple, within his commentary to Seder Qodashim

Bodleian MS Pococke 295, fol. 295a – 12th century

http://bav.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/digitized-items-hebrew-manuscripts

Robert Huntington (1637 – 1701)

• Chaplain to the Levant Company of Aleppo, 1671 – 1681
• Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, 1683 – 1701

• Donated 14 manuscripts to Merton College
• Donated 35 manuscripts to Bodleian Library
• Sold 646 manuscripts to the Bodleian Library in 1693 for £700

Pococke Tree, an Aleppo plane tree, now almost 400 years old, on the grounds of Christ Church College

Moses Maimonides (1135 – 1204)

Medical Aphorisms

Fuṣūl Musa  |  פצול מוסא

2 of the 8 extant manuscripts belonged to Robert Huntington

MS Hunt. 356, fol. 2r, c. 1300
MS Hunt. Donat. 33, fol. 2r, c. 1300

http://maimonides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/
Maimonides, Mishneh Torah
‘Code of Jewish Law’
c. 1180
Instructions for the Writing of Deuteronomy 32 and Exodus 15
(fol. 136r)

Maimonides Mishneh Torah ‘Code of Jewish Law’
Bodleian Library MS Huntington 80, folio 165a
“Checked against my book, I, Moshe be-Rabbi Maimon”
(followed by homage to his father in Arabic)

Polonsky Foundation Digitization Project
A collaboration between the Bodleian Libraries and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

http://bav.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/digitized-items-hebrew-manuscripts

Golden Haggadah
Northern Spain, probably Barcelona, c. 1320
British Library Add. MS. 27210, fol. 14v
Purchased by the British Museum in 1865

http://www.bl.uk/paintings/
catrefsets/golden.html

Duke of Sussex Bible
Catalonia, c. 1350
BL Add MS 15252 (fol. 116v)

Prince Augustus Frederick
Duke of Sussex (1773 – 1843)

http://www.bl.uk/paintings/
catrefsets/prince.html
Targum Yerushalmi (= Targum Pseudo-Jonathan)
BL Add. 27031, fol. 231v, colophon

Plus censor’s signature:
Domenico Irosolimitano (1550 – 1620), 1598

Sir Charles Nicholson
(1808 – 1903)
c. 1850

MS Nicholson 37, medieval Yemenite Torah scroll
(Fisher Library), acquired from Moses Wilhelm Shapira

MS Nicholson 38, Genesis portion of a medieval Torah scroll
Both acquired from Shapira or his estate

MS Nicholson 39, Genesis portion of an early modern Torah scroll
MS Nicholson 33, Torah, Haftarot, and Megillot (Italy, 1272), formerly owned by the Duke of Sussex

Library Catalogue of the Duke of Sussex, by Thomas Joseph Pettigrew (1827) 3 volumes

Library Catalogue of the Duke of Sussex, by Thomas J. Pettigrew (1827) 3 volumes

Copy of a Letter from His late Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex. Having had the satisfaction of making the acquaintance of Rabbi Abraham Belais, I have great pleasure in giving him these lines, and to state that I have held various communications at the Palace of Kensington with him, where we have discussed several passages in the Old Testament, from whom I received great information, and for which I feel greatly obliged. (Signed) AUGUSTUS FREDERICK. To Rabbi Abraham Belais.

Copy of a Hebrew Letter from His late Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex.

Letters sent by H. R. H. Augustus Frederick, the Duke of Sussex, c. 1845, to Rabbi Abraham Belais, including one in Hebrew.

John Rylands Library
Manchester
Opened 1900

P. Rylands 458 (Egypt) – John Rylands Library (Manchester)
Oldest fragments of the Septuagint (discovered 1917)

2nd century B.C.E.
Hebrew MS 6
Rylands
Sephardic
Haggadah
(fol. 21b)
Catalonia
14th century
Previously
owned by
the 25th
Earl of Crawford

Hebrew MS 7
Rylands
Ashkenazi
Haggadah
(fol. 5a)
Ulm, Germany
15th century
Previously
owned by
the 25th
Earl of Crawford

Solomon
Schechter
(1847 – 1915)
Professor of
Hebrew at
the University
of Cambridge
Later President
of the Jewish
Theological
Seminary of
America
(New York)

Ben Ezra Synagogue – Cairo, Egypt

Charles Taylor
1840 – 1908
Master of
St. John’s
College,
University
of Cambridge
Hebraist,
Classicist

Agnes Lewis
Margaret Gibson
Portraits in the dining hall of Westminster College, Cambridge
Elkan Nathan Adler (1861 – 1946)
• Son of Chief Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler
• Brother of Chief Rabbi Herschel Adler
Obtained 25,000 Cairo Geniza documents 1888-1895

Cairo Geniza – c. 300,000 documents
University of Cambridge: 200,000
Jewish Theological Seminary: 30,000 (New York)
Bodleian Library (Oxford): 25,000
John Rylands Library: 11,000 (Manchester)
Russian National Library 5,000 (St. Petersburg)
University of Pennsylvania 2,000

Solomon Schechter at the (old) Cambridge University Library, sorting Cairo Geniza documents
Benjamin Kennicott (1718 – 1783), keeper of the Radcliffe Library

Kennicott Bible
Written in La Coruña, Spain, 1476
Now in the Bodleian Library (Oxford)
opening page of the biblical text
Genesis 1 (folio 9v)
Kennicott Bible
Written in La Coruña, Spain, 1476
Parashat Bo (fol. 40v)

Kennicott Bible – folios 43r and 43v – Exodus 14

Kennicott Bible – folios 44r and 44v – Exodus 15

Kennicott Bible
Written in La Coruña, Spain, 1476
final page of the Torah text
Deuteronomy 34 (folio 119v)

Beginning of the Book of Kings

Image of King David based on the king in medieval Spanish playing cards
I, Moshe son of Jacob ibn Zabara, the scribe . . . I wrote and I proofread and I added the Masora and I checked these twenty-four books, in one collection; and I concluded it on Wednesday, the 3rd day of the month of Av, in the year [5235] [=1476 C.E.], here in the place La Coruña . . . for the delightful young man Isaac, dear firstborn son of Don Shelomo de Braga . . .

Second colophon, with the name of the artist, Yosef ben Hayyim, using zoomorphic figures (folio 447r)
Close-up of two lines of the artist’s colophon

"This book I illustrated"

Benjamin Kennicott (1718 – 1783), keeper of the Radcliffe Library

At the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Summer 2018
Inspecting the Kennicott Bible, with César Merchán-Hamann, Hebraica librarian

England as the Custodian of the Jewish Past
Gary A. Rendsburg
Rutgers University
Mandelbaum House 14 April 2019

Kennicott Bible online
http://bav.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/digitized-items-hebrew-manuscripts
(search for MS Kennicott 1)