

FOUR TREASURES

FROM A GREAT LIBRARY

TEMPLE SHOLOM OF WEST ESSEX

VIRTUAL MUSEUM

~ SECOND EXHIBIT ~

OCTOBER — NOVEMBER 2020

HESHVAN 5781

NOTE:

IF YOU ARE AMONG THE LUCKY FEW ABLE TO ATTEND IN-PERSON SHABBAT SERVICES (OR ANY OTHER EVENTS IN THE SYNAGOGUE BUILDING), DO MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE MUSEUM CASE IN THE LOBBY AND ADMIRE THE BEAUTIFUL COPIES OF THE ORIGINALS ON DISPLAY

The Jewish National and University Library of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem was founded in 1892 as the national library of the Jewish people worldwide. Today it serves as the national library of the State of Israel and the central library of Hebrew University. Its holdings include more than three million books!

Displayed here (and in the TSWE museum case) are four samples from the library's extraordinary collection of ten thousand manuscripts.

The first shows a variety of bindings of manuscripts and printed books made from parchment, silver, leather and lacquer.



The second is a segment of a Megillat Esther, to be read on Purim. It comes from Ferrara, Italy, and its exact date is known: 1616. The people depicted here presumably include all of the key characters of the Purim story – Esther (probably in the center panel), Mordecai, King Ahasuerus (seated on his throne) and Haman – dressed in the festive attire of the period in which the megillah was written, not in the clothing people wore in ancient Persia. (We say “presumably” because what is shown here is only a small part of the scroll.)



The third is a page from a Roman Haggadah of the 15th century. The drawings across the bottom depict the exodus from Egypt. Find Moses raising his staff to part the waters of Sea of Reeds. The heavily armed Egyptians, led by Pharaoh in his chariot, follow in pursuit.

The Haggadah was painted and calligraphed on parchment.



The fourth shows two “carpet” pages from a manuscript written in Burgos, Spain in 1260. The book is a masterpiece of micrography. You can see that the pages are composed of an exterior border in easily decipherable Hebrew. The minute lines of the interior design are a superb example of micrography, which is a uniquely Jewish calligraphic form created from tiny letters.

