Megillat Esther Scrolls from the Collections of the Klau Library, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio: Glimpses into Jewish Sacred Text and Cultural Life

by

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To Stan, always and forever

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DIGEST

Emile Durkheim, a prominent social theorist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, described religion as the unified set of beliefs and practices which serve to unite a single community in their recognition and observance of what is sacred. The Book of Esther, since its late beginnings, has been a controversial book in this regard, in its evolution into being canonized as part of the Hebrew Bible. The absence of any references to God or to Jewish ritual and spiritual life made it a questionable addition to the scriptural foundations of the people. Over time, the Book of Esther, one of the five festival megillot, and the holiday of Purim, with its story of Jewish courage and survival, have become one of the mainstays of the Jewish ritual calendar and the communal religious culture. As part of this evolution, Jewish law prescribed that the Scroll of Esther be read as part of our Purim holiday commemorations, our carnivals. The transmission of Esther as a biblical text, thus, became a central activity of the scribal and religious communities, on behalf of the community at large. In the process of *Hiddur Mitzvah*, beautification of the mitzvah, scribal schools transcribed the text of Esther, and artisans created elaborately decorated scrolls for use as part of the public recitation of the story. The texts tell us a story of the transmission of holy words and meanings and the traditions which shaped them. The ritual artifacts and their illuminations and decorations tell us stories about these texts and also the communities which sponsored their development.

As a student of sociology and culture, in addition to being a student of Jewish theology, history and ritual, this thesis is about my engagement in the process of amassing a more

comprehensive understanding of and familiarity with this genre of religious literature and artifacts, and the role that they played in creating a communal and personal understanding of the sacred.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

> *The role that art can play in the synagogue needs intelligent probing and discussion on the part of artists and art historians, on the one hand, and rabbis and interested laymen, on the other. Out of these confrontations may emerge a deeper understanding of art – an understanding that will not only enrich Reform Judaism, but may, in addition, enhance our . . . personal searches with a new sense of beauty, awe, and spirituality.*[1]

CANON

The book of Esther, also known as Megillat Esther or the "scroll of Esther," is a story about a Jewish heroine who lived in Persia. This story is part of the Ketuvim (Writings) in the Jewish canon and was probably one of the last books which was which was written and became part of the Jewish canon.[2] Megillat Esther is the source of the rabbinic observance of the Jewish holiday of Purim, even if it is not a document which is cited by scholars for its historicity. Biblical scholars cite different dates for the book's canonization, from the 1st century C.E. to the 2nd century C.E. and others date it to as late as the 4th c. C.E. [3] [4] There may have been earlier oral or written versions of the text.

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[1] Joseph Gutmann, "Is There a Place for Art in the Synagogue?," *Central Conference of the American Rabbis Journal*, October 1965, p. 33.
[2] Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: The Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 16, 84.
[3] David N. Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 635..
[4] Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: The Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 552.

HOLIDAY MEGILLAH / COMMUNITY OBSERVANCE

The biblical book of Esther is one of the five Megillot or "Five Rolls,"which are read on different holidays during the Jewish year. The book of Song of Songs is read during Passover, Ruth is read during Shavuot, Ecclesiastes is read during Sukkot and Lamentations is read on Tish B'Av. Originally, only the reading of the Scroll of Esther is specified in the Talmud. In the modern period, the practice of reading from these five books has been reduced, but the public reading of the Scroll of Esther on Purim during the evening and/or in the morning in Hebrew or in the vernacular or a combination of the two is still continued today.[5] One of the four mitzvoth or commandments of the Purim holiday is to hear this public reading, which is done from a roll of parchment which was handwritten by a scribe in the same manner as a Torah. The public reading in the synagogue is done from the same place that the Torah is read from and is preceded and followed by benedictions.[6]

Some scholars contend that the holiday of Purim, whose name is derived from the Babylonian word *puru*, meaning "lot" or "fate," was originally a pagan festival and that Esther was composed for or adapted for this Jewish holiday commemoration, which possibly accounts for the absence of God's name, Jerusalem and the mention of religious rituals and laws as part of the stories in the text.[7] Other scholars look toward the literary setting of Persian and note that Purim resembles, the Persian New Year festival

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[5] Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History, 1st English Edition* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993), pp. 149-150.
[6] Cyrus Adler and I. M. Casanowicz, *Descriptive Catalogue of a Collection of Objects of Jewish Ceremonial Deposited in the U.S. National Museum by Hadji Ephraim Benguit* (Washington D.C.: Govt. Printing Office, 1901), p. 548.
[7] David N. Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 635.-641.

Farvardigan, the Festival of the Dead, while other scholars have suggested a Greek origin to the text because of the common motifs and carnival-like nature of holiday commemorations within the two cultures. There are multiple theories on the origins of the festival, but none have been conclusively determined to be true. In and of itself, Megillat Esther establishes the supposed "historical" context and also the rationale for the observance of the Jewish holiday of Purim, the only ancient Jewish holiday decreed in other biblical books outside of the Torah.[8]

STORY OF ESTHER /HISTORICITY

The story of Esther is about a Jewish community living in the Diaspora, in the Persian Empire. Esther, a Jewish woman, becomes the queen of Ahasuerus, after Vashti is deposed from being Queen when she refuses a royal edict to appear before the King. Mordechai, her cousin and guardian, foils a plot to kill the King by his servants. Esther and Mordechai foil the plans of the King's Chief Advisor, Haman, to kill Mordechai and the whole Jewish people. The historicity of the text is questionable and is not confirmed through historical and anthropological findings. Some scholars consider the text to be a myth set in a historical literary context and others place it in the genre of wisdom texts.[9]

JEWISH/CHRISTIAN CANONS / ADDITIONS

Different versions of the text can be found in early Jewish and Christian canons of the time. Some of these versions contained additions and/or textual variations, in the forms

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[8] Adele Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Esther* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2001), pp. xv-xlix.
[9] David N. Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 635-641.

of dreams, letters and prayers, which inserted theological and historical meanings into the text which were not present in the earlier Hebrew or Aramaic texts or subsequently in the Talmud or the early translation of the Masoretic text into the Greek.[10]

The book of Esther, in different forms, was included in both the Christian and Jewish canons, even though the book was contested from its early beginnings. 19th century scholars, O. F Fritzsche, E.C. Bissell and E. Schurer concluded that the additions were not part of the early Hebrew texts or the Jewish canon. They contend that the Council of Jamnia in Palestine, when they fixed the canon in approximately the year 90 A.D., did not include the additions, because they had not existed in the early Hebrew and Aramaic texts of the time. These additions were written later in the Greek.[11]

FINDINGS AT QUMRAN

Of all the books in the Hebrew Bible, Esther was the only one not included in the biblical texts found at Qumran, even though it was known to have been present in other communities at the time. A numbers of reasons for this have been suggested, that the book did not exist in the Qumran community or that it was excluded by the sect. Other archaeological records that account for the number of copies of the different books demonstrate that absence of the book of Esther is not statistically significant, since only one or two copies were found of other books from the Writings.[12] Some records suggest that the Book of Esther was known to the Qumran community, from similar language

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[10] Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: The Additions* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1977), pp. 3-5.
[11] Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: The Additions* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1977), pp. 3-5.
[12] Lawrence Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1994), pp. 162-164.

which is contained in the book of Esther and which is also present in other textual records. One work, designated as Proto-Esther, is an example of a Proto-Masoretic text in Aramaic which is considered to be earlier version of the text contained in later redactions of the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint. [13] Qumran fragment 4Q386flii:4 contains the word, vav-heh-mem-nun, and is a potential record of a fragment which could confirm that Esther or Proto Esther was known to the scribal community at Qumran. Because this text could be taken as Haman's name and could fit into the contextual meaning of the Hebrew, it is a possibility that this fragment does represent evidence of the existence of an Esther text is one form or another at Qumran. However, these letters can also be used to create an "absolute form of the Hebrew preposition" for the word, heh-yud-mem-nun, meaning "from." Without further portions of these fragments or with other fragments or textual pieces and references, these findings are inconclusive.[14]

CLOSING OF THE CANON / SACREDNESS

The Jewish canon is believed by some to have been closed by the end of the Second Temple period in the 1st c. C.E. Others attribute the canonization of the texts to have occurred later in Jewish history, with decisions being made by the rabbis and in their institutions in Yavneh. This is where it is suggested that the sacred nature of Esther and other books, like Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Ezekiel and Proverbs were debated, for not only their content or lack of it but also for their timing. According to Rabbinic thought,

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[13] Devora Dimant, "Dead Sea Scrolls," *Encyclopedia Judaica (electronic version),* 1974.
[14] Ben Wacholder, Martin G. Abegg and James Bowley, *A Preliminary Edition of the Unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls: The Hebrew and Aramaic Texts from Cave Four*, (Washington D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1996), pp. 372-373.

prophecy ceased with the destruction of the 2nd Temple, at the same time that the power and influence of the priesthood were transitioning to the rabbis and their institutions.[15]

The Talmud records an example of the rabbinic disputes regarding the sacredness of the text on page 7a in Tractate Megillah:

> *Rab Judah said in the name of Samuel; [The scroll] of Esther does not make the hands unclean.14 Are we to infer from this that Samuel was of opinion that Esther was not composed15 under the inspiration of the holy spirit? How can this be, Seeing that Samuel has said that Esther was composed under the inspiration of the holy spirit? — It was composed to be recited [by heart], but not to be written. The following objection was raised: 'R. Meir says that [the scroll of] Koheleth16 does not render the hands unclean, and that about the Song of Songs there is a difference of opinion. R. Jose says that the Song of Songs renders the hands unclean, and about Koheleth there is a difference of opinion. R. Simeon says that Koheleth is one of those matters in regard to which Beth Shammai were more lenient and Beth Hillel more stringent, but Ruth and the Song of Songs and Esther [certainly] make the hands unclean'! — Samuel concurred with R. Joshua.*[16]

The final Talmudic resolution was that Esther made the "hands unclean," a Tannaitic designation which also designated the text as canonical. In rabbinic thought, any hands

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[15] David Biale, ed., *Culture of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), pp. 166-167.
[16] Megillah 7a, Talmud Bavli, *Judaic Classics* (electronic version, 2004).

which came into contact with a biblical book would be considered unclean to the second degree, which required ritual purification before handling any Temple offerings.[17]

This problematic text, which does not contain the name of God or any references to religious rituals, such as prayer, which would bring more theological understandings to the text, also includes such controversies, as intermarriage and the participation in pagan acts. The name of God is inserted into the additions to other versions of the text found within other Christian movements of the time to insert a theology into the text which makes God the focus of the dramatic narrative in which all salvation occurs by the will of God. Other additions cite Esther's distaste for her relationship with the King, a non-Jew, and his pagan practices.[18]

CULTURAL OBSERVANCE / READING OF THE SCROLL / CANONIZATION

Some evidence has been found that Purim was also a time when Jews participated in anti-Christian rites, like linking the portrayal of Haman to Jesus, after the 5th century and also in medieval times. There were accusations against the Jews for hanging depictions of Haman as Jesus on wooden crosses. The Jewish celebrations of Purim, with their drunkenness and carnival gaiety, frequently fell during the Christian time of Lent, a period of somber mourning and reflection. In some areas, Jews even borrowed the Christian practice of wearing elaborate costumes as part of their celebrations. The Jewish gaiety was in sharp contrast, perhaps defiance, to the somber demeanor of their

[17] Norman Snaith, "The Canon," *Encyclopedia Judaica (electronic version)*, 1974.
[18] David Biale, ed., *Culture of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), pp. 112-116.

surrounding Christian communities. These portrayals possibly lent to the overall Christian perception of the Jews as "enemies of Christ."[19]

In Tannaitic literature and in the Talmud, the rabbis expound on the ritual of reading the scroll of Esther.

> *[To turn to] the main text: 'R. Joshua b. Levi said that three things were enacted by the [mundane] Tribunal below and the [Celestial] Tribunal on high gave assent to their action.' These were: The [annual] recital of the Scroll [of Esther];17 saluting with the Divine Name;18 and the [Levite's] tithe to be brought [to the Temple-chamber].19 'The [annual] recital of the Scroll [of Esther],' as it is written, They confirmed,20 and the Jews took upon them and their seed, etc.:21 they 'confirmed' above what they had 'taken upon themselves' below. 'Saluting with the Divine Name,' — as it is written, And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, 'The Lord be with you';22 and [furthermore] it says, The Lord bless thee, thou mighty man of valour.*[20]

In this text, we see a reversal in the development of divine mitzvah, starting from the human tribunal which decreed that the book of Esther should be read, with the accompanying rituals and blessings which contain the holy name of God, which were then agreed to by the heavenly tribunal. The unspoken message in this dispute is the question regarding the sacred nature of the text of Esther itself and whether or not the ritual of reading the Megillah deserved to be considered as one of the Divine laws. The elevation of these three rituals are credited to Rabbi Joshua b. Levi, which suggests to us

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[19] David Biale, ed., *Culture of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), pp. 483-484.
[20] Mattot 23 b, *Judaic Classics* (electronic version, 2004).

the importance of the role of the rabbis in creating an overall design for living a Jewish religious life.

> *Our Rabbis taught: 'Forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses prophesied to Israel, and they neither took away from nor added aught to what is written in the Torah save only the reading of the Megillah'. How did they derive it [from the Torah]? — R. Hiyya b. Abin said in the name of R. Joshua b. Korha: If for being delivered from slavery to freedom we chant a hymn of praise, should we not do so all the more for being delivered from death to life?*[21]

This text goes on to highlight the overall influence of the rabbis in determining who the prophets are for the contemporary and future Jewish community and their prophecies which would shape their theologies and ritual life. The questionable nature of the megillah is manifest in the fact that it is the only text which was added to the Torah which was not decreed by prophetic voice, but rather by rabbinic decree, based on the precedent of our commemoration of our being freed from slavery in Egypt. The rabbis developed Midrashic exegesis to expound upon the Masoretic text, blending it into the overall biblical discourse and its holy context to fit their agenda for shaping the Jewish communal life and its rituals.[22]

In Tractate Megillah, in the Babylonian Talmud, extensive midrashic interpretation and commentaries are used to create the Jewish ritual understanding of the day, starting with

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[21] Megillah 14a, Talmud Bavli, *Judaic Classics* (electronic version, 2004).
[22] Adele Berlin, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Esther* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2001), pp.. lii-liv.

text which establishes its place in the Jewish calendar and the rituals which shall constitute its observance.

> *GEMARA. THE MEGILLAH IS READ ON THE ELEVENTH. Whence is this derived? — [How can you ask,] 'Whence is this derived'? Surely it is as we state further on,12 'The Sages made a concession to the villages, allowing them to push the reading forward to the Court day, so that [they should have leisure to] supply food and water for their brethren in the large towns'? — What we mean [by our question] is this: Let us see now. All these dates were laid down by the Men of the Great Assembly.13 For if you should [deny this and affirm] that the Men of the Great Assembly laid down only the fourteenth and fifteenth, [is it possible that] the [later] Rabbis should have come and annulled a regulation made by the Men of the Great Assembly, seeing that we have learnt, 'One Beth din cannot annul the ordinances of another unless it is superior to it in number14 and in wisdom'*[23]

From these Talmudic passages, the rabbis laid the framework through which Purim would take its place in the Jewish holiday calendar and its relationship to other Jewish holidays in terms of its ritual and sacred natures. They link their discussion of the holiday regulations to the discussions of the Men of the Great Assembly, prophets and sages from the 3rd and 4th century, who preceded the Talmud who made up the Sanhedrin, the "Jewish Supreme Court." By citing and building these supposed conversations of their wise elders, the rabbis establish a chain of biblical tradition through which their writings would take on the status of divine decree or law which would determine communal practice for their Jewish communities, present and future.

[23] Mas. Megilah 2a, Talmud Bavli, *Judaic Classics* (electronic version, 2004).

The rabbis then established the mood of the festive day and any restrictions on work or practice which should be observed on Purim.

> *The fourteenth day and the fifteenth day are the days of Purim on which there is to be no mourning', and Raba said,. . . This applies only to mourning and fasting, but for abstention from work one day and no more is prescribed. Is that so? Did not Rab see a man sowing flax on Purim, and curse him, so that the flax did not grow? — There he [the man] was doing it on the day which he ought to have kept. Rabbah the son of Raba said. You may even say [that Rabbi planted] on the day [which he ought to have kept]: [the Jews] bound themselves [in the days of Esther] to abstain from mourning and fasting, but not from work, since first it is written, 'gladness and feasting and a good day', but afterwards it is written, that they should make them days of feasting and gladness',9 and 'a good day' is not mentioned. . . . they abstain to a certain extent from business, from building and from planting, from betrothing and from marrying,13 and a Tanna taught: 'Building' here means festive building; 'planting' means festive planting. What is festive building? If one builds a wedding residence for his son [on the occasion of his marriage].* [24]

[24] Mas. Megilah 5b, Talmud Bavli, *Judaic Classics* (electronic version, 2004).

The rabbis stipulate the festive nature of the day, and at the same time teach us that it is a time for some work but not all work and that it is a festive day, not the same level of festivity for a day which is properly suited for a wedding. In Megillah chapters 1 & 2, we are instructed on the correct placement of the holiday in the Jewish calendar in the month of Adar, i.e. on the 15th of Adar if you reside in a walled city. In chapter 3, the Talmudic rabbis teach us the parameters for establishing a public forum for the enactment of reading the Megillah for the whole community.

> *R.Jose b. Hanina replied: This contains a reference to the families of the Priests and Levites, [and indicates] that they should desist from their [Temple] service in order to come and hear the reading of the Megillah. For so said Rab Judah in the name of Rab: The Priests at their [Temple] service, the Levites on their platform,27 the lay Israelites at their station28 — all desist from their service in order to hear the reading of the Megillah. It has been taught to the same effect: Priests at their [Temple] service, Levites on their platform, lay Israelites at their station — all desist from their service in order to come and hear the reading of the Megillah. It was in reliance on this dictum that the members of the house of Rabbi29 were wont to desist from the study of the Torah in order to come and hear the reading of the Megillah. They argued a fortiori from the case of the [Temple] service. If the service, which is so important, may be abandoned, how much more the study of the Torah?*[25]

[25] Mas. Megilah 3a, Talmud Bavli, *Judaic Classics* (electronic version, 2004).

In these passages the rabbis describe and elevate this ritual to the realm of holy by admonishing the community that they must leave their work in order to be present at the public reading of the scroll, in the same way that the Priests and Levites must leave their all-importance sacrifices to God to participate in this communal mitzvah of hearing this story of redemption. The rabbis connect this post Toraitic holiday and its rituals to the levitical practices of the priests in the Temple, elevating them to highest level of kedushah, in that the priests must leave their sacrifices and the students must leave their study of Torah in order to fulfill the commandment to hear the communal reading of Megillat Esther. Through this textual interplay, the rabbis solidify the holiday and rituals of Purim in Jewish law and traditional Jewish practice. The Talmud and Targum contain elaborations and commentaries on the book of Esther, in addition to numerous midrashim which have been written regarding the Megillah in various collections. In the Jerusalem Talmud, tractate Megillah (1.5), it teaches that in the Time to Come, only the Torah and the Book of Esther "will retain their value."[26] I suggest that this understanding is important, because it teaches us the importance of religious evolution in society. It is important for us to not only understand our actions and beliefs but also the impacts they have on us as individuals and communities which are part of the larger society and world. When we strive to understand these complexities, we are closer to understanding the "value" or our lives, where we came from and where we our going, and the meanings we create or shape, now, in the future, and in the "time to come."

CULTURAL USE OF TEXT/COMMENTARIES

[26] Phillip Goodman, *The Purim Anthology* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1973), pp. 125-141.

During and after the Medieval ages, super-commentaries were written on the different books of the bible and on their earlier commentaries. In 1589 in Poland, one of these commentaries was a Yiddish version of the book of Esther, Di Lange Megilla. Its portrayal of Esther and the societal influences which shaped it, described a female heroine who was ill-treated by the governing powers. This prompted the emergence of new commentaries, which considered the role of women in Jewish tradition and texts.[27] The popularity of certain books, like Ruth and Esther, also suggests that the commentators and their audiences were possibly motivated by creating materials which were related to the rituals being performed in the synagogue.[28]

Megillat Esther established the holiday of Purim in the Jewish calendar and Tractate Megillah, as compiled by Judah the Prince, in the 1st-2nd centuries of the C.E., set forth the parameters for the celebration and commemoration of Israel's redemption from the hands of her enemies in the form of rituals and traditions. Commentaries and Law codes continued to pass down and enhance the communal understandings of these practices, in work, such as the Mishneh Torah by Maimonides and the Shulkhan Aruk, code of Jewish law, compiled by Joseph, and others.[29] The celebratory spirit is laid out in established rituals which have passed down from one generation to the next. All members of the community, man, woman, guest, servant and child are obligated to be present at the reading.

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[27] David Biale, ed., *Culture of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), pp. .557-558
[28] David Biale, ed., *Culture of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), p. 539.
[29] Phillip Goodman, *The Purim Anthology* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1973), pp. 142-162.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF ILLUMINATION & MATERIALS

The Rabbis of old said that there were a hundred ways to approach the study of the Torah. It is not beside the point to emphasize that the same applies to the study of Jewish art.[30]

Hebrew manuscripts have chronicled the history and legacy of the Jewish people for over a thousand years. Tens of thousands of manuscripts, papyri and fragments have survived as Jews have been expelled or migrated from one country to the next and passed them down through the generations.[31] The earliest illuminated Hebrew manuscripts can be traced back to the Islamic Near East, between the 9th and the 12th centuries. They resembled the artistic creations of the Quran which were prevalent in the surrounding culture. Some scholars suggest that these early manuscripts were created by the Karaite communities, who had fostered ties with the surrounding Muslim communities.[32]

The earliest illumination of Hebrew texts by Western Christian communities can be dated to the period between the 13th to the 15th centuries, with schools of Hebrew manuscript painting being established in Ashkenazi communities in Germany and France, and in Sephardic communities in Portugal and Spain, and in Italy. The artistic trade of Hebrew

[30] Cecil Roth, editor, *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961), in Review by Guttman, Joseph, "Special Reviews," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal*, June, 1962, pp. 70-71.
[31] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, p. 7.
[32] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp. 8-9.

manuscript illumination crossed cultural boundaries between the three communities of Muslims, Christians and Jews.[33]

In the Jewish communities, Hebrew manuscripts were created by scribes or *soferim* and artists and also by common people, demonstrating the widespread literacy manifested within the community. The Hebrew text, itself, was of predominant importance.[34] Most Hebrew manuscripts were written on parchment, which was from the skins of animals, such as sheep, cows and goats. Sheepskin parchment was the most widely used. The finest parchment was also made from calfskin or calf embryos or still-born calves, which was called "uterine vellum" and was used for the finest and costliest of manuscripts which were created. Parchments were chalked to give them stiffness. Most scribes wrote on both sides to create two sided documents, and artists wrote on the flesh side of the skin for one-sided manuscripts, like scrolls, which left the hair side clear. Paper was used, however it was inferior as a material, since it was not as durable and was more absorbent, making it problematic for decorating.[35]

Manuscript pages were typically ruled, by different methods to establish the textual lines and linear structures in which the Hebrew text would be created and the margins which separated each textual column. In the margins between the columns and above and below the text, illuminations would be added to enhance the beauty of the ritual object and to highlight the textual content. Sometimes Parchment ruling would be done using a

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[33] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp. 8-10.
[34] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp. 7-10.
[35] Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*, (New York: Leon Amiel Publisher, 1974), p. 17.

hard point, lead pencil or pen and ink. A later innovation involved pin-pricking the inner and outer margins and then ruling page by page with pencil or hard point.[36]

The scribes in the Sephardic communities typically wrote with reed pens, which lent to the writing of letters which equally broad or even throughout. The Ashkenazi communities typically used quills, which could be tapered so that each stroke could be narrowed or widened as part of the process of embellishing the text.[37] The different inks which were used were made predominately of the materials which were available to the scribes and the artist in their surrounding communities. Most inks were composed of mixtures of charcoal and other natural elements. Charcoal from acorns usually produced a very black ink and iron from charcoal was more reddish-brown. Colors were made of mixtures of natural compounds which included crushed minerals and colored stones. Gold compounds were composed of ground gold which was mixed with yellow or ocher or applied in a manner like gold leaf. Gypsum was used as a binding material for both the gold and the colored inks. The consistency and nature of the colors differed from one community to the next, from one scribal school to another, depending on the location of the scribes and their artistic environment.[38]

The pieces of parchment, when, completed would be sewn by the scribe or *sofer* into the other pieces of the scrolls with thread, called *giddin*, which is made from the leg tendons

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[36] Malachi Beit-Arie, *Hebrew Codicology: Tentative Typology of Technical Practices Employed in Hebrew Dated Medieval Manuscripts, 2nd ed.* (Jerusalem, Israel: Academy of Sciences and Humanities / Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1981), pp. 69-86.
[37] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 8-10.
[38] Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*, (New York: Leon Amiel Publisher, 1974), p. 17.

of a kosher animal.[39] Finally, the completed scroll would be attached to a roller, typically a wood carved roller, by thread being inserted through holes in the roller. Even the rollers were considered part of the work of art and were embellished by stylized carvings and intricate rolling on the wooden roller. Many scrolls were protected by intricately embellished scroll covers made with rich fabrics and embroidery or with precious silver covers crafted by the best silversmiths in the community.

These handwritten manuscripts and scrolls were created for use in the synagogue and also in the private realm. After completion, these one of a kind textual pieces of art were passed from one person to the next, with each person leaving their fingerprints and wear upon these fragile sacred records. Since these manuscripts were created for holy use and contain sacred text bearing God's name, they were not hastily discarded when worn or faded, but rather preserved in *genizot*, until they were buried according to Jewish tradition in Jewish burial places.[40]

Megillat Esther established the holiday of Purim in the Jewish calendar and Tractate Megillah, as compiled by Judah the Prince, in the 1st-2nd centuries of the C.E., set forth the parameters for the celebration and commemoration of Israel's redemption from the hands of her enemies in the form of rituals and traditions. Commentaries and Law codes continued to pass down and enhance the communal understandings of these practices, in work, such as the Mishneh Torah by Maimonides and the Shulkhan Aruk, code of Jewish

[39] Paul Cowan, *A Torah is Written*, (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1986).
[40] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp. 7-10.

law, compiled by Joseph Caro, and others.[41] These legal traditions also shaped the artistic renderings of the community and their use as part of Jewish religious life. There were strict restrictions on figurative art in both the Jewish and Muslim traditions. The Jews interpreted the second commandment to constrain their use of figures as part of religious art and artifacts.[42]

> ***Exodus 20:1*** *God spoke all these words, saying: [2] I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: [3] You shall have no other gods besides Me. [4] You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. [5] You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the LORD your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, [6] but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.*[43]

Thus, Jewish laws banned decorations of any type to be applied to the handwritten Torah scrolls. In the synagogue on the *bimah*, the *Hazan* could read only from scrolls which

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[41] Phillip Goodman, *The Purim Anthology* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1973), pp. 142-162.
[42] Franz Landsberger, *A History of Jewish Art* (Cincinnati, OH: Union of American Hebrew Congregatons, 1946) pp. 172-173.
[43] *Tanakh*, (electronic version), (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

were handwritten according to tradition proscription, which did not include any artistic decorations. [44]

However over time, the rabbis slowly eased the restrictions regarding handwritten scrolls which were created for private or home use.[45] The rabbis reluctantly allowed two dimensional illuminations and figures on certain objects, but three dimensional objects or sculptures were still not allowed. During the Middle Ages, the practice of *"Hiddur Mitzvah"* or "beautification of the commandment" gained in prominence as the rabbis increasingly viewed art as a means of promoting the spirituality of the religious observance and setting. This principle was based on the premise that by beautifying the objects of religious ritual, that we were by association actually participating in the process of "enshrining" God, in the same sense that the creation by Bezalel of the Ark of the Covenant was a means by which we used our artistic talents to create holy works of art which would inspire us in our relationships and covenant with the one God.[46]

> *TNK* ***Exodus 15:2*** *The LORD is my strength and might; He is become my deliverance. This is my God and I will enshrine Him; The God of my father, and I will exalt Him.*[47]

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[44] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), p. 152.
[45] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), p. 152.
[46] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, p. 7.
[47] *Tanakh*, (electronic version), (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

Profiat Duran, a Spanish Jewish philosopher (d. 1414), expounded on the merits of beautifying the religious experience, which had the merits of directing one's heart toward contemplation of the Divine.[48] He wrote:

> *Study should always be in beautiful books, pleasant for their beauty and the splendor of their scripts and parchments, with elegant ornaments and covers. And the places for study should be desirable, the study halls beautifully built so that people's love and desire for study will increase . . . It is also obligatory and appropriate to enhance the books of God and to direct oneself to their beauty, splendor and loveliness. Just as God wished to adorn the place of His Sanctuary with gold, silver and precious stones, so is this appropriate for His holy books, especially for the book that is 'His sanctuary.*[49]

At the same time, this interpretation of biblical tradition was not shared by all contemporary Jewish scholars and their communities. *Sefer Maharil, Hilkhot Yom Kippur* 35b records Rabbi Jakob Ben Moses ha Levi Mollin strenuous objections to the use of decorated prayer books for High Holy Day synagogue services.[50]

As part of religious tradition of "Hiddur Mitzvah" or of beautifying the mitzvah, artisans in the Jewish community created beautiful works of art and Judaica to be used in the

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[48] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp 8-9.
[49] Profiat Duran, *Ma'aseh Efod (The Story of Efodi)* in Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp 8-9.
[50] Joseph Gutmann, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting*, (New York: Braziller, 1978), pp. 8-9.

process of their religious celebrations.[51] Beautiful handcrafted ritual objects, like Kiddush cups and candlesticks, were created, along with the illuminated scrolls which held the Jewish sacred texts. In the Orient, beautiful solid cases of silver, ivory or wood were made to protect these scrolls, and the parchment of the scrolls was pulled through slits in the side of these cases for reading. Elaborately carved wood handles were used to roll the scroll during its ritual use.[52] These ritual objects became status symbols and were considered to be works of art, which were cared for and treasured, while also performing their important functions as religious ritual items. [53]

Increasingly over time, handwritten scrolls were created, not only for use in the synagogue, but also for private use, becoming popular with their elaborate illuminations.[54] Illuminations were secondary to the text. There are examples of Hebrew manuscripts which were written by Jewish scribes and then decorated by non-Jewish artists. [55] The Hebrew texts were written predominately on parchment or on leather.[56] The scribes may have done portions of the decorations around the text. Otherwise, the scribe determined the textual structure and the placement of the illustrations and the

[51] Joyce, Eisenberg and Ellen Scolnic, Dictionary of Jewish Words (JPS Guides). (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006), pp. 64-65.
[52] Franz Landsberger, *A History of Jewish Art* (Cincinnati, OH: Union of American Hebrew Congregatons, 1946) pp. 55-56.
[53] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp 7-8.
[54] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), p. 152.
[55] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp. 7-10.
[56] Joseph Gutmann, *Jewish Ceremonial Art.* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff Publishers, 1964), p. 24.

decorations which may have been created by other craftsmen. Gold or copper work may have been applied by special apprentices.[57]

The existence of divergent views regarding different artistic representations in the sacred realm existed in both Judaism and Christianity. In the Jewish community for the most part, the scribe and the illuminator were one and the same, who adhered to the religiously imposed traditions and also to the desires of less traditional clients. Thus, we do not have decorated scrolls of Esther from the Middle Ages. Rather, these illuminated creations began to appear in the 16th century, as manuscripts increasingly were created for the elite and wealthy in the community or less traditional clients and with the growing societal acceptance of the incorporation of art into the synagogue and its holy objects.[58] The earliest examples these illuminated Scrolls of Esther are dated from 1567 from Italy and another from 1512. [59] The negative pronouncements were for the most part ignored as the practice of artistic illumination and beautification of sacred texts and sacred space spread throughout Europe in the Middle Ages into the Modern Period. [60]

Outside of the Sefer Torah, a scroll with the Five Books of Moses, the scroll of Esther was the only other book written in scroll form, specifically for use in the public reading of the text in the synagogue. [61] The Torah scroll was written double roll, and the shorter book of Esther was written on a single roll. The scrolls which were used in the

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[57] Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*, (New York: Leon Amiel Publisher, 1974), pp. 17-18.
[58] Franz Landsberger, *A History of Jewish Art* (Cincinnati, OH: Union of American Hebrew Congregatons, 1946) p. 259.
[59] Franz Landsberger, *A History of Jewish Art* (Cincinnati, OH: Union of American Hebrew Congregatons, 1946) p. 359.
[60] Joseph Gutmann, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting*, (New York: Braziller, 1978), pp. 8-9.
[61] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 8-11.

synagogue were typically without decoration, while the scrolls which were read in the home were allowed to be decorated with a variety of figures and architectural, floral and geometric designs. The columns of script were typically encased with these designs and separated with scenes from the biblical story. The biblical characters were dressed in the costumes of more contemporary ages, i.e. 16th century. The artists were not concerned with the historical correctness of their depictions, possibly because the story embodied the theological message that the salvation of the Jewish people was possible at any time and place.[62]

In Medieval times, the illustrated manuscript represented the central focus of the art activity of the community and its artists and scribes. The different forms of contemporary European art helped to inspire and influence the artistic illuminations which enhanced their creations.[63] Two important artistic trends or traditions emerged during the rise in the popularity of these hand-created texts and their artistic decorations, 1. manuscripts which were influenced by the artistic styles of the Near East and 2. manuscripts which resembled contemporary manuscripts created by the Christian community. [64]

The period of the Renaissance in the 14th-16th c., with its cultural and intellectual revolutions, permeated all of European society, including Jewish society, with its artistic

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[62] Franz Landsberger, *A History of Jewish Art* (Cincinnati, OH: Union of American Hebrew Congregatons, 1946) pp. 54-55..
[63] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), pp. 149-150.
[64] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp 9-15.

and creative spirit. With the advent of printing in the late 15th century C.E., expensive manuscripts increasingly gave way in many genres to more affordable printed texts.[65] However, Jewish law prescribed that certain Jewish texts be written by hand, i.e. Torah, Esther, for traditional use in the synagogue, so the manuscript tradition continued, even though diminished.[66] The scribes now primarily focused their artistic work toward the ornamentation of the haggadot (Passover seder liturgies), Esther scrolls or Megillot (plural of Megillah), and to ketubbot (marriage contracts).[67] There were efforts made to print the book of Esther, but the rabbis condemned them, so that printing was only allowed for printing of illuminations which might surround a handwritten holy text.[68] Early printed Jewish books and their fonts were modeled after the scribal fonts, and printed illuminations added to these books mimicked the appearance of handwritten texts.[69]

The illumination of Scrolls of Esther began relatively late, in the 16th century, in the development of Jewish art. Scrolls of Esther were typically written on parchment and illustrated with a variety of motifs, including Oriental imagery.[70] At the same time, Roman influences exposed Jewish communities to a world of architecture and beauty which infiltrated all aspects of societal life. More lenient Christian interpretations of

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[65] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 36-38.
[66] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 36-38.
[67] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), p. 152.
[68] Franz Landsberger, *A History of Jewish Art* (Cincinnati, OH: Union of American Hebrew Congregatons, 1946) p. 259.
[69] Malachi Beit-Arie, *The Makings of the Medieval Hebrew Book: Studies in Palaeography and Codicology.* (Jerusalem, Israel: The Magnes Press: Hebrew University, 1993), pp. 253-254.
[70] Elkan Nathan Adler, *About Hebrew Manuscripts* (New York: Oxford University Press Warehouse, 1905), p. 127.

biblical proscriptions influenced Jewish communities toward adopting more lenient practices in the course of creating their own religious art and life. [71] Overall, the illuminations on the manuscripts were created in a societal context, in that they were dependant on the contemporary artistic styles of the region.[72] Scrolls also depicted biblical scenes and portrayals of Jewish life which mimicked community celebrations and practices.[73]

The creation of these decorated scrolls came into prominence in the 16th-17th centuries, with artists from France, Italy and the Netherlands. [74] The use of these illuminated megillot had spread over all of Europe from this time on. [75] This revival continued on into the 18th century which many described as the "Jewish Renaissance." This age was linked to the emergence of the "Court Jews," an upper class group of Jews who served in the realms of non-Jewish rulers and who represented their Jewish communities. This group of Jews helped to create the demand for this hand written illuminated manuscripts. [76] Later megillot from the 17th and 18th centuries include biblical texts which are superimposed on other mediums including silk or surrounded by copperplate borders. [77]

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[71] Franz Landsberger, *A History of Jewish Art* (Cincinnati, OH: Union of American Hebrew Congregatons, 1946) pp. 172-173.
[72] Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*, (New York: Leon Amiel Publisher, 1974), p. 15.
[73] [73] Elkan Nathan Adler, *About Hebrew Manuscripts* (New York: Oxford University Press Warehouse, 1905), p. 127.
[74] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 36-38.
[75] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), p. 152.
[76] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, p.. 11.
[77] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), pp. 154-155.

Two predominant streams of Jewish life and tradition developed through the course of Jewish history, the Ashkenazi with the Palestinian Jews and the Sephardic with the Babylonian Jews of the Diaspora. [78] In the course of community migrations, the Ashkenazi practices were linked to Jewish communities which stretched from Italy to the Rhineland (Germany & Northern France), eventually including Northern and Eastern Europe. Sephardic practices were linked with Jewish communities in the Babylonian Diaspora, which spread throughout Northern Africa, the Iberian peninsula and the Mediterranean.[79]

The religious observances and theologies of both the communities were based on the same biblical and talmudic foundations and were virtually the same. Distinctions emerged in the creation of liturgies, customs and rituals which developed in their societal contexts. These differences influenced the manuscript traditions in their respective communities. [80]

Sephardic manuscript illumination is considered to have originated principally from Portugal and Spain and was later spread to North Africa, influenced by oriental decoration and the art of the Muslim communities who had been forced out. These images mimicked Muslim architecture, which contained arabesques, geometric structures and intricate filigrees, like similarly decorated Arabic manuscripts, such as the Koran and

[78] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 8-10.
[79] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 8-10.
[80] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 8-10.

other Muslim texts.[81] Figurative art demonstrated the French Gothic and Byzantine influences of nearby cultures, with dark colors and fleshy leaves.[82]

The Ashkenazi manuscript illumination tradition developed alongside the Sephardic tradition and spread throughout northern France Germany, England and Eastern Europe. Of the surviving texts, many have sparse decorations, while some display lavish scenes of flora, fauna and other imagery.[83] They exhibit the influences of the French Gothic styles, which also influenced generations of Christian manuscripts.[84] Large numbers of illuminated scrolls of Esther were created in the 17th century in Germany, artistic designs which were strongly influenced by Italian works.[85]

The illuminations in Italian Hebrew manuscripts are not as typically ascribed to either the Sephardic or the Ashkenazi traditions. The Italian Jewish community was composed of Jews who had fled from persecution from many different communities in the West and in the North over a multitude of generations. Italian manuscripts exhibit the influences from many different communities, including the indigenous Jewish Italian community, and artistic styles, including that of Renaissance Italian art with its elaborately painted fauna and animals motifs.[86] Some of the finest Italian artists were known to have created some of the Italian Hebrew manuscripts. Italian Hebrew manuscripts were especially notable

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[81] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 8-10.
[82] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 8-10.
[83] Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*, (New York: Leon Amiel Publisher, 1974), p. 28.
[84] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 8-10.
[85] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), p. 154-155.
[86] David Goldstein, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (London, England: The British Library, 1985), pp. 8-11.

for their introduction of new iconographic themes and for the illumination of books which had not previously been illustrated. [87]

Early Italian Megillot can mainly be ascribed to two types of illuminations. The most frequent motif found is one which is purely ornamental, where the textual columns are surrounded by colorful linear ribbons and designs. Floral and animal depictions or family coat of arms may also be woven into the intricate linear designs. Miniature depictions of characters of the Esther story may also be inserted into the architectural ornamentation surrounding the text, biblical scenes which took into account midrashic interpretations of the text. Other depictions of holiday observances, i.e. dancing, feasting and the giving of gifts, may be included within the borders.[88]

The second type of early Italian Megillot was artistically created in sepia, a deep reddish brown pigment. The ornamentations and figures are depicted against a dark background which surrounds the columns of text. The depictions also include cut out designs of flora, birds and animals, which resemble a wood engraving. These suggest the possibility that early wood engravings existed of the book of Esther in the 16th century. [89]

There were set traditions which proscribed the layout of the Hebrew text and also more informal scribal practices which were shared in common among the handwritten texts

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[87] Joseph Gutmann, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting*, (New York: Braziller, 1978), p. 27.
[88] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), p. 152.
[89] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), p. 153.

from one scribe to the next, from one community to the next. For example, rather than decorating each letter, it was customary for Jewish scribes to use scripts of different sizes to emphasize the beginning words of manuscripts and also to highlight certain portions of the text for theological reasons or based on legal proscriptions.[90] Tradition proscribed that in the writing of the Esther text that the names of the condemned sons of Haman should be boldly inscribed in blank columns. These rendering lent to the creation of illuminations by miniaturists who created depictions of gallows and the hanging of the sons in the midst of the community.[91]

By the 18th century, Jewish communities were experiencing times of relative security and safety. It was during this time that Jewish ritual art peaked in Europe, with ornate creations in the Baroque style which brought "the heavens down into the terrestrial orbit in manifestations of glory and splendor."[92] The art of manuscript calligraphy of the sacred texts and their illuminations were at the centre of Jewish artistic, creative and religious life. The sacred texts created by the scribes and the illuminations which graced their borders were meant to elevate the process of living a Jewish religious ritual life by creating a inspirational context through which the individual community member and the community at large could extend their sights toward the Divine. By reenacting the sacred stories of Esther and Mordechai, Jews celebrated with renewed hope, knowing that God was with them and that redemption was possible in every age through the will of God and

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[90] Ilana Tahan, *Hebrew Manuscripts: The Power of Script and Image* (London, England: The British Library), 2007, pp. 8-9.
[91] Ernest M. Namenyi, "The Illumination of Hebrew Manuscripts after the Invention of Printing," in *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History*, edited by Cecil Roth (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1961), p. 153.
[92] Alfred Werner, "Modern Ritual Art," in *Beauty in Holiness: Studies in Jewish Customs and Ceremonial Art*, edited by Joseph Gutman, (New York Ktav Publishing House, 1970), p. 80.

the acts of a few. By the creation of these works of sacred art, the stories and their beauty extended beyond the synagogue into the home, inspiring awe and observance, setting their eyes toward the holy text and their hearts toward the Divine.

CHAPTER THREE

SELECTED ITALIAN SCROLLS OF ESTHER BELONGING TO THE COLLECTIONS OF THE KLAU LIBRARY, HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION, CINCINNATI, OHIO

Hebrew manuscript illuminations are primarily studied in two ways, one being called the "isolated method" and the other being called the "comparative method." In the isolated method, the researcher would note the features exhibited by the illuminations found in the Hebrew manuscript.[93] The following descriptions shall for the most part follow this methodology as delineated in Dr. I. O. Lehman's system for the "Description of a Manuscript.[94] The comparative method, which cites comparisons to the illuminations found in other manuscripts shall be utilized on limited basis, especially with other scroll manuscripts which can be found in the Collections of the Klau Library, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, in Cincinnati, Ohio. [95]

While not being able to ascribe a certain typology of "Jewish" art form to the illustrations found in these manuscripts, in contrast to the illuminations found in the manuscripts of the surrounding non-Jewish cultures, differences may be found in the choice of subjects,

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[93] G. Margoliouth. "Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts," *The Jewish Quarterly Review,* Vol. 20, No. 1, Oct. 1907, pp. 118-144.
[94] Dr. I. O. Lehman's System for the Description of a Manuscript, as referenced by Dr. David Weisberg's class resources.
[95] G. Margoliouth. "Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts," *The Jewish Quarterly Review,* Vol. 20, No. 1, Oct. 1907, pp. 118-144.

inclusion of Jewish symbols and inclusion or exclusion of other symbolic references. However, the art forms and techniques, such as the pictorial minitiatures, are shared among neighboring cultures in the same societal context. Scholars debate on whether or not the individual illuminations of one manuscript versus another is done by a Jewish or non-Jewish artist, and for the most part, this cannot be conclusively determined since most works are unattributed. However, there is an underlying assumption that a Jewish artist created the majority of these manuscript illuminations, even if they are more secular in nature. Even though the inclusion of an artist's name on a manuscript is rare, scholars, such as Professor David Kaufmann, have been able to identify Jewish artistry lineages which span the history of time over which these Jewish manuscripts have been created.[96]

It is known that first in Italy in France and then spreading throughout Europe, Jewish artists overcame earlier Jewish objections to the inclusion of human figures and angels into their creations. This is also true of their Christian counterparts. As previously noted regarding illuminated rolls of Esther, scrolls which were intended for public reading in the synagogue were non-illuminated texts, which were also not allowed to have any vowel insertions or textual additions. Decorated or illuminated texts were for private use only.[97]

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[96] G. Margoliouth. "Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts," *The Jewish Quarterly Review,* Vol. 20, No. 1, Oct. 1907, pp. 118-144.
[97] G. Margoliouth. "Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts," *The Jewish Quarterly Review,* Vol. 20, No. 1, Oct. 1907, pp. 118-144.

The following scroll descriptions include information from an earlier 1990's cataloguing of this material, which was done by Grace Cohen Grossman, currently Senior Curator at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, Sharon Lieberman Mintz, currently Curator of Jewish Art for the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and Evelyn M. Cohen, currently a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania. JoEllyn Wallen (Zollman) is also listed as participating in this project.

MEGILLAT ESTHER SCROLL: VII-2 WITH A COMPARISON TO SCROLL XV-7

MUSEUM NUMBER: VII-2; Previous Collection Number(s)- S. Kirschstein 473, No. 173, Percil 155 (Check XV-7)

SIZE OF VOLUME: Height 173mm.

DESCRIPTION OF BINDING: Single roll scroll on a turned wood roller

TITLE & CONTENTS: Scroll of Esther

NUMBER OF PAGES: 3 Parchment pieces, which are sewn together.

NUMBER OF COLUMNS: 19 columns, grouped in pairs, last column is a single column

NUMBER OF LINES PER COLUMN: 22-23

METHOD OF FILLING LINES: Lines are filled by extending the final letters of selected words or of selected words at the end or in the middle of the line.

NUMBER OF HANDS: Upon examination, the manuscript shows pinpricking and ruling which define the linear structure of the text. The text seems to be written by at

least two scribes in Sephardic style print. The beginning scribe on Scroll VII-2 has added crowns to selected letters on the first few lines only. The initial 3 panels with pairs of text columns appear to be more evenly and clearly written (Scroll VII-2, Illus. 2) and suggest that different inks were used on these panels, compared to the remaining columns which suggest a less practiced hand and a faded and smudged demeanor. The last column has a correction textual piece superimposed on top of the page (Scroll VII-2, Illus. 2).

The comparison of the writing shows similarities between the writing of the two scrolls, VII-2 and XV-7, in the beginning, but it is not conclusive that the same scribe wrote these portions at the beginning of both scrolls. The writing at the end of VII-2 appears to differ from the writing in other portions of both scrolls (see Scroll VII-2, illus. 1-2, and Scroll XV-7, illus. 5). Both manuscripts show pinpricking and scoring/ruling. I would conclude that the printed illuminations were not colored in but left open so that their colorization would possibly have been done by an apprentice/student or by a member of the household who had purchased/ commissioned the text.

MARGINAL COMMENTS: The scroll is in fair to good condition and would be described as a "HaMelech" scroll, with the word "hamelech" starting most of the columns of the Hebrew text.

ARTISTIC RENDERINGS: The columnar textual pairs are separated by and surrounded by artistic illuminations, which are a combination of dark outlined oriental designs, floral

images and animal profiles, painted or colored in with red and green paint or ink. In the center top and bottom of each panel there are miniature depictions from the Esther narrative with characters dressed in late Medieval or Renaissance age clothing. Based on a comparison with another scroll in the collection, XV-7, it appears as if the illuminations have been printed on the manuscripts and that the handwritten text would have been added after that process. The opening illumination appears to be trimmed back, cutting off portions of the initial design, possibly due to wear or condition. The complete design can be seen on the XV-7 manuscript. The printed illumination is of the outline only. The internal coloration of the two separate manuscripts is different. There are different colors and different painting patterns which decorate the printed sections of the outlined illuminations, some more precise than others but totally distinct, one from the other (The comparisons of decorations between the 2 scrolls can be viewed on the Illustration page for Scroll XV-7, in Illus. 1-4, following the Illustration page for Scroll VII-2.).

Panel 1: The upper depiction is of King Ahasuerus' Court (Scroll VII-2, Illus. 3; see also Scroll XV-7, Illus. 3&4). The King is sitting at a round banquet table surrounded by his nobles. They are dressed in long tunics with turbans from the medieval ages and are surrounded by the architectural columns which depict the royal palace. The scene at the bottom is of Queen Vashti at holding a banquet for women, in the royal palace of King Ahasuerus (Esther 1:9), before she is summoned to appear before the King. She is surrounded by other women, who are attended by the royal eunuch servants, as they dine. At the left side, there is a second scene, showing the servants forcing Queen Vashti from the palace / kingdom for refusing to appear before the King. (Esther 1:19)

Panel 2: The upper depiction shows the King on his throne surrounded by his servants who suggest (Esther 2:2-4) that the King appoint official to go out into kingdom to seek the female virgins as candidates for queen. On the left side, there is a second scene of his officials going out into all the provinces of his kingdom to bring back prospective candidates to become his new queen. The lower scene shows Esther being led by one of the King's officials to come before the King. She is followed by a group of other harem women, but Esther is set apart from them, as she becomes Queen (Esther 2:15-16). .

Panel 3: The upper depiction is of the King on his throne and his first meeting with Esther. She is shown to be self effacing and humble as she cast her eyes to the floor and bows before him (Esther 2:15-16). The lower panel shows Mordechai in the courtyard, as he overhears the plot to kill the king, devised by the King's servants (Esther 2:21). The scene on the left shows the King in the process of giving out his signet ring to Haman who he has just promoted to become the King's highest official in the land (Esther 3:10)

Panel 4: The upper depiction shows the King issuing an edict against the Jews, which was prompted by Haman, who advised the King that Jews would not follow the King's laws. This decree was prompted by Mordechai who had refused to bow down to Haman. In the bottom panel, Esther is in the harem when one of her eunuchs and one of her maids bring news to her of the mourning of the Jews about the decree which was issued against them (Esther 4:4). In the background, the gallows stand as a symbol of the fate which

awaits the Jewish people. The scene on the left shows the messengers bringing back replies and news from Esther back to Mordechai who tells her she must appear before the King, risking her life, even if he has not summoned her (Esther 4:5-13).

Panel 5: The upper panel depicts the scene is which the Esther appears unsummoned before the King. As soon as the King saw her, she won his favor and he extended his golden scepter toward her, which she touched with the tip of her finger (Esther 5:1-2). On the left is the wine feast Esther has prepared for the King and Haman, at which the King asks Esther what her wish is, for he shall grant it (Esther 5:1-6). Esther invites the King and Haman to a royal banquet. On the bottom, Haman goes home and tells his wife and his friends about his fortunes and promotion. They told him to construct a gallows to have Mordechai killed. On the left is the scene of the King who cannot sleep and thus has the Kingdom's records read to him, finding out that Mordechai saved his life. Haman comes in and the King orders him to honor Mordechai (Esther 5:11-5:14; 6:1-6).

Panel 6: The King has found out that Mordechai was the one who foiled the plot to kill him and asks Haman, how he should reward this person. Haman, thinking that he is referring to himself, says that the person should be dressed in the King's royal garments and crown and be paraded around on the King's horse (Esther 6:7-11) Thus, we see the scene of Mordechai riding around in royal garments on a royal horse. In the picture, there is a woman who is throwing the excrement contents of the chamber pot unto the person who he leading the horse with Mordecai riding in the King's clothes. This scene can be traced to a midrash which explains that the woman in the window was Haman's

daughter who thought that her father was the one who was wearing the royal garments and that Mordechai was leading the horse, so she threw the excrement on her father by mistake. When she realized her error, she threw herself out of the window to her death, onto the street below[98] Esther has promised to do the King's bidding after the King and Haman attend a banquet she is creating. The banquet is depicted at the bottom of the page, in addition to the scene where Mordechai refuses to bow down to him (Esther 5:9-12).

Panel 7: In retribution Haman is shown hung from the gallows on which he had intended to hang Mordechai. The upper scene is of Haman's body hanging in the town centre on the gallows meant for Mordechai, by the King's town with a dog licking at his heels. At the bottom, Mordechai is recognized by the King for saving his life, and put Mordechai is charge of the lands which Haman had previously known. The bottom panel shows Mordechai riding around on Haman's horse (Esther 7:8-10 to 8:1-2).

Panel 8: Mordechai is given a prominent place in the King's Court. The King's edict cannot be cancelled, but he does allow the Jews to defend themselves, and 10's of thousands are killed for trying to attack the Jews. Battle scenes are shown on the upper left and the bottom of the panel (Esther 8:9-11).

Panel 9: In the upper depiction, the King is telling Esther of his decree and that the Jewish people are allowed to defend themselves. Haman's 10 sons have also been killed

[98] Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews, Vol. 2,* (Philadelphia, PA, The Jewish Publication Society: 2003), p. 1174.

(Esther 8:9-16). The gallows show the hanging of Haman's sons. The bottom depiction shows that Mordechai now sits at the King's table as part of his court of advisors (Esther 10:1-3).

Panel 10: The depictions on the last panel, show Esther firmly ensconced as Queen where she is attended by servants. She is writing a scroll to create a record of historical wisdom. The final bottom depiction is of the court musicians playing and dancing in a circle, embodying their joy and celebration over the well-being of the kingdom (Esther 10:3).

DATING & SYSTEM USED: 17th century Italy[99]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Scroll XV-7 shows staining spots repeated on different sections of parchment. Scroll VII-2 shows fading and smudging of the ink, throughout the text, more so than XV-7, especially on the last leaves of parchment.

MEGILLAT ESTHER SCROLL: X-4

MUSEUM NUMBER: X-4; Previous Collection Number(s): S. Kirschstein #218, #31

SIZE OF VOLUME: Height 225 mm. Roller 445 mm.

DESCRIPTION OF BINDING: Single roll scroll on a turned wood roller

TITLE & CONTENTS: Scroll of Esther

NUMBER OF PAGES: 5 Pieces of parchment which are sewn together.

NUMBER OF COLUMNS: 18 Columns

NUMBER OF LINES PER COLUMN: 17 lines in most columns

METHOD OF FILLING LINES: Lines are filled by extending the one or more of the letters of the last word in a line for the most part. There is occasional filling of the lines by elongating the letters of intermediate words in the line.

NUMBER OF HANDS: The text appears to have been written by one scribe on manuscript which has signs of graphite ruling which was used to mark the lines.. The text is written in Ashkenazi style print.

ARTISTIC RENDERINGS: The columns of text are bordered on their sides with architectural columns, in which there are flora and fruit designs, possibly suggesting the 7 Species of Fruit from Israel. These flora vines are done in ink, and green, creme and red gouache paint. There is an ending crown shape design in which a rooster is depicted with a wheat or an olive branch in his mouth, which is depicted in ink and colored paints, also including gold pigment (Scroll X-4: Illus. 1). The crown frame has ribbon embellishments and is topped by an eternal light or another crown with flames and jewels. This artistic embellishment might represent a herald or family insignia, for an upper class Jewish family or a family that was part of the class of Court Jews.

DATING SYSTEM USED: This manuscript is dated to approximately 1800 from Italy.

DESCRIPTION OF ACCENTUATION: Hebrew letter crowns are included in the text.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: The scroll is in fair to good shape with some tears and holes. The ending leaf is worn or bent, with tears from uneven rolling.

MEGILLAT ESTHER SCROLL: XVI-2

MUSEUM NUMBER: XVI-2; (c.f. VII-9)

SIZE OF VOLUME: Height 240 mm.

DESCRIPTION OF BINDING: Single roll scroll.

TITLE & CONTENTS: Scroll of Esther

NUMBER OF PAGES: 3 Pieces of Parchment which are sewn together, with an extra attached parchment page with blessings for the ritual of reading the megillah (Scroll XVI-2, Illus. 2).

NUMBER OF COLUMNS: 8 Textual columns

NUMBER OF LINES PER COLUMN: 28

METHOD OF FILLING LINES: Lines are filled by extending letters of selected words in the text.

NUMBER OF HANDS: The text seems to be written by the same scribe in Ashkenazi style print.

MARGINAL COMMENTS: The scroll is in fair condition and would be described as a "HaMelech" scroll, with the word "hamelech" starting most of the columns of the Hebrew text.

ARTISTIC RENDERINGS: The textual columns are outlined by gold with sepia ink linear frames which are surrounded by a broader frame of artistic illuminations. The flora sprouts from vines which grow out of urns filled with various types of fruits and vegetables. Above the urns winged cherubim hold on to the vines which continue to grow toward and fill the top of the frame (Scroll XVI-2, Illus. 1).

There are 17 cameos which are evenly placed in the illuminations about the textual boxes. Each cameo depicts a hand done head and shoulder view of character from the Book of Esther. The name of each character is listed on a ribbon-like label at the bottom of the cameo in Rashi script. .

I. Ahasuerus

II. Vashti

III. Mordechai

IV. Esther

V. Haman

VI. Zeresh

VII. Hegei

VIII. Shaashgaz Bigthan

IX. Bigthan (Scroll XVI-2, Illus. 1)

X. Teresh (Scroll XVI-2, Illus. 1)

XI. Carshena, (XI-XVII: These are the seven ministers of Persia

XII. Shethar,

XIII. Admatha,

XIV. Tarshish,

XV. Meres,

XVI. Marsena,

XVII. and Memucan, the seven ministers of Persia and Media who had access to the royal presence and occupied the first place in the kingdom.

There are sixteen miniature cameos at the bottom of the scroll, two per textual frame which are held together with the wings and talons of a majestic bird (Scroll XVI-2, Illus. 1). Each cameo depicts a portion of the Esther story, a listing of which is included below:

Panel 1: King Ahasuerus and his court/ advisors are seated around a table, laid out with the royal feast.

Panel 2: Vashti is seated at her royal table surrounded by her maids in the harem. The King's messenger stands in the doorway ready to give her the invitation that the King has requested her presence in court.

Panel 3: In this panel, Vashti is about to be beheaded, as the men of the King's guard watch and his servant has his hand on the crown about to remove it as she is put to death.

Panel 4: The King is next shown sitting alone, with two men hanging from the gallows in the distance.

Panel 5: In the next scene, the King is adjudicating over the issues of the kingdom. A woman stands before him with balance scales for weight measure, as she points to 2 baskets of fruit of different sizes and shapes which must be understood, in terms of their being sold for a fair price for their measure.

Panel 6: Over time, the anger the King feels against Vashti begins to subside. The King's servants suggest that he appoint officials who would seek out young virgins from all over the kingdom to find him new queen. In the panel, two of his officials are depicted going out into King Ahasuerus's kingdom, seeking these women. An official is shown inquiring about the two women who are standing, well-protected in their upper story windows. The person he is possibly speaking to is Mordechai. This is possibly an allusion to the midrash that Mordechai kept Esther hidden for 4 years in a chamber, so that the king would not discover her beauty. However, her beauty was well-known in the countryside, and the penalty for hiding her was death, so that Mordechai was forced to bring her before the King.[100]

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[100] Louis Ginzberg, *TheLegends of the Jews, Vol. 2,* (Philadelphia, PA, The Jewish Publication Society: 2003), p. 1139.

Panel 7: The next depiction is of Esther in royal garb as she kneels before the King, seeking his favor. Haman stands in a nearby doorway observing the scene.

Panel 8: Mordechai is given a prominent place in the King's Court. The King's edict cannot be cancelled, but he does allow the Jews to defend themselves, and 10's of thousands are killed for trying to attack the Jews and Haman's sons are hanged in the process.

Panel 9: This panel portrays Haman as he goes about in the provinces and the people bow to him. Mordechai is shown seated inside the doorway of a nearby building, not in the public square and thereby not bowing in homage to Haman.

Panel 10: This scene depicts Esther in bed with King Ahasuerus, which is witnessed by the King's guard, who is proclaiming the King's edicts to the world, and is viewed by other members of the court. Queen Esther faces away from the King, a sign of her resignation, at being forced into marriage with a person of another faith (Scroll XVI-2, Illus. 1)

Panel 11: This scene shows a confrontation between the King, who is seated on his royal stead, and Haman in the public square. A woman from an upper window of the building is tossing out the chamber pot contents on Haman. This portrayal is tied to a midrash about Haman's daughter. Please see Scroll VII-2 for a full discussion of this midrash and accompanying sources. (Scroll XVI-2, Illus. 1)

Panel 12: Esther is shown seated at the banquet table with another person from court, as they toast the King.

Panel 13: This cameo depicts the hanging of Haman on the gallows which were constructed to hang Mordechai.

Panel 14: This scene shows the battle victory of the Jews against the forces which sought their destruction.

Panel 15: The next cameo shows the hanging of Haman's sons in the public square.

Panel 16: The final scene shows the celebratory drinking and dancing in court when the battles have been won and the evil Haman and his sons have been eliminated (no King or Esther in the picture.).

DATING & SYSTEM USED: The original cataloguer dated this scroll to the late 18th c. from Italy.

DESCRIPTION OF VOCALIZATION: None

FRONT MATTER: The blessing sheet is a separate membrane which is attached to the roll. The blessings for before and after the reading are listed. The first word Baruch is

enlarged and Adonai is listed as Yud-Yud with a decorative bracket. Underneath the blessings there is either a statement or attribution by the scribe who created it or to reference the family who commissioned the work.. Parts of it are so small and faded that they are not decipherable.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: The scroll has a fabric runner, possibly silk, which is folded into the roll. It shows signs of age and wear and is possibly original to the text and the time that it was created. But there is insufficient information to determine this conclusively.

The roll is in fair to good condition, showing signs of wear and age, fading and smudging of the text and staining of the manuscript. The original roller is no longer with the roll, however thread remnants tells us that it once was part of a one roll scroll.

A blessing parchment page is attached to the scroll, so that the person using the scroll may participate in the communal blessing over the reading of the Scroll (Scroll XVI-2, Illus. 2). .

MEGILLAT ESTHER SCROLL: XV-5

MUSEUM NUMBER: XV-5; Previous Collection Number(s)- S. Kirschstein 231, No. 44, Percil 155

SIZE OF VOLUME: Scroll height 152 mm. Separate Blessing Sheet 198 mm. w and 140 mm.

DESCRIPTION OF BINDING: Single roll scroll held on a turned wood roller by strings.

TITLE & CONTENTS: Scroll of Esther

NUMBER OF PAGES: 4 Pieces of Parchment which are sewn together, plus a separate blessings page

NUMBER OF COLUMNS: 19 columns

NUMBER OF LINES PER COLUMN: 22

METHOD OF FILLING LINES: Lines are filled by extending the final letters of selected words or of selected words at the end or in the middle of the line.

NUMBER OF HANDS: Upon examination, the text seems to be written by the same person. The manuscript shows pin prickings and hard point ruling from a metal stylus. The text appears to be ink on parchment. In the 2nd textual column, you can find a scribal correction, adding the King's name into the text, between the ruled lines of text, which suggests that it is a handwritten text. The blessing sheet seems to be written with a different type of ink, one which is more brown in color.

MARGINAL COMMENTS: The scroll is in good condition and would be described as a "HaMelech" scroll, with the word "hamelech" starting most of the columns of the Hebrew text.

ARTISTIC RENDERINGS: The text shows a combination of ink and gouache on parchment. The textual columns and the bottom illumination are bordered by a distinct painted gold frame border. Above and underneath the text, there is also a border of hand-painted colored feather-like/scroll illuminations in blue, crimson, gold-yellow and charcoal. The same illumination patterns also decorate the blessing sheet and distinguish the beginning blessings from the blessing after the reading and liturgical reading. The beginning of the scroll is decorated with a painted illumination of leaves and vines with flora and fruit on which a hawk-like bird is perched (Scroll XV-5, Illus. 1).

DATING & SYSTEM USED: Late 18th Century, Italy

DESCRIPTION OF VOCALIZATION: None

FRONT MATTER: On the blessing sheet, the first word Baruch is enlarged in the blessings which are read before and after the reading of the Megillah. In Hebrew since there are no capital letters, it is typical to enlarge or embellish beginning words of texts and or blessings in art. The blessings are divided into two columns, one for the blessing before the reading and one for blessing after. God's name is listed by the Hebrew letters Yud-Yud, followed by a flared bracket to demonstrate it is an abbreviation. In the section to be read after the reading, there is a piyyut, poem or repetitious song like blessing which blesses the Jewish heroines of the story and curses the enemies of the Jews.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: The scroll is in good shape with only a small tear and some minor fading in the text and discoloration of the parchment. The scroll shows some tearing of the threads at the seams where the membranes are sewn together.

The listing of Haman's 10 sons is typically listed in enlarged letters in its own column. In this column, the scribe inserts miniscules letters, shin, tav and zayin, which are part of their names. The zayin, which also equals the number 7, is reduced. The midrashic explanation for this is that Haman said 7 derogatory things against the Jews. I have not been able to locate the midrash regarding the other two letters. Further research is needed on this point (Scroll XV-5, Illus. 2)..[101]

[101] Leah Cohen, *Windows into the Text: Majuscules and Minuscules in the Hebrew Bible*, (Cincinnati, OH, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Thesis: 2000), p. 130.

MEGILLAT ESTHER SCROLL: XVII-7

COLLECTION: Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

MUSEUM NUMBER: XVII-7

SIZE OF VOLUME: Height 390 mm.

DESCRIPTION OF BINDING: Single roll scroll

TITLE & CONTENTS: Scroll of Esther

NUMBER OF PAGES: 6 Pieces of Parchment which are sewn together.

NUMBER OF COLUMNS: 13 Textual columns

NUMBER OF LINES PER COLUMN: 29

METHOD OF FILLING LINES: Lines are filled by extending letters of selected words in the text and by inserting gaps into the text.

NUMBER OF HANDS: The text seems to be written by the same scribe in Ashkenazi style print.

ARTISTIC RENDERINGS: Most of the textual panels are surrounded by illuminations which contain graphic designs and also drawings of flora and fauna, from all over the world, i.e. leopard, monkey. Some of the drawings have similarities to certain animals, like a hippopotamus, but suggest that the artist may not have actually viewed these animals in person, but, rather, was creating their depiction from a written record. There are images of individuals whose costumes and appearances suggest that they come from different countries internationally, including Europe and Africa. Some of these drawings depict these men in contemporary activities which seem totally unrelated to the biblical text, i.e. a man is show shooting his rifle to get a deer, a man training a dog. There are also images of different varieties of birds, fish and urns of flora. The artist also created drawings of mythological creatures to decorate the text, like unicorns and griffins. Interspersed in these secular and mystical images, there are also depictions of characters and scenes from the book of Esther. Together these images suggest the increasing importance of the artist who is creating these works of art and/or of the influences, i.e. Greek, of the surrounding societies and secular interests of the person who is commissioning this work (Scroll XVII-7, Illus. 1 and 2).

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Early cataloging done by Grace Grossman of Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion in the 1990's, references this work as a "Sultan Scroll," which is based on a book printed in Nuremberg in 1703, a copy of which was housed in the Berlin Jewish Museum before being transferred to a museum in Warsaw. I talked with Ms. Grossman, and she confirmed that this designation of a "Sultan Scroll" was to denote the elaborate

and secular artwork which was included in the scroll. It was a not a Jewish reference in regards to the text itself (Scroll XVII-7, Illus. 1 and 2).

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DATING & SYSTEM USED: 1730's from the Hapsburg Empire[102]

DESCRIPTION OF VOCALIZATION: None

DESCRIPTION OF ACCENTUATION: no

In the biblical text the scribe has highlighted and enlarged the first word וַיְהִי of the book, a practice which is not uncommon among biblical and liturgical inscriptions. However, there are also two distinctly enlarged letters in the text. These letters are called majuscule letters. These first of the letters is the chet in the word חָוּר, in verse 1:6, which means "white material" and refers to the hangings in the Temple, ones that could only be found in the Temple and which were suggested to have been stolen from the "Temple of the Lord."[103]

Esther 1:6 חוּר כַּרְפַּס וּתְכֵלֶת

6 *There were hangings of white cotton and blue wool,*

[102] Grossman, Grace. HUC-JIR 1994 Catalogue of Rare Scrolls of Esther.
[103] Leah Cohen, *Windows into the Text: Majuscules and Minuscules in the Hebrew Bible*, (Cincinnati, OH, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Thesis: 2000), pp. 130-131. Rabbinic Thesis (See also, Weirtheimer, "Alphabet,"p. 23a, reference to "Collection of Midrashim Ascribed to Rabbi Akiva Related to Special Markings on the Letters and Embellishments and Majuscule and Miniscule Letters in the Torah," by Joseph Damushkai, 1863.)

Another source interprets the chet which also equals the number 8 to stand for the eight garments which are worn by the High Priest, which Ahasuerus donned for the feast at which he invited Vashti to. King Ahasuerus is punished for this with the embarrassment and evil of Vashti and her death, which caused him great sadness. [104]

וַתִּכְתֹּב אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בַּת־אֲבִיחַיִל וּמָרְדֳּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי
אֶת־כָּל־תֹּקֶף לְקַיֵּם אֵת אִגֶּרֶת הַפּוּרִים הַזֹּאת הַשֵּׁנִית׃

[29] Then Queen Esther daughter of Abihail wrote a second letter of Purim for the purpose of confirming with full authority the aforementioned one of Mordecai the Jew.

The other majuscule letter is a tav in the word in verse Esther 9:29, which means "and she wrote." [105] The enlarged tav can be interpreted to understand that when Esther was writing, she was writing for future generations. [106] Another interpretation of this majuscule tav from the Judeo Spanish medieval 18th century biblical commentary, Me'am Loez, by Jacob Culi.[107] He writes that the enlargement of the tav, the last Hebrew

[104] Leah Cohen, *Windows into the Text: Majuscules and Minuscules in the Hebrew Bible*, (Cincinnati, OH, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Thesis: 2000), pp. 130-131. (See also, Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz, "M'not HaLevi"
[105] Leah Cohen, *Windows into the Text: Majuscules and Minuscules in the Hebrew Bible*, (Cincinnati, OH, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Thesis: 2000), pp. 130-131. (See also, Weirtheimer, "Alphabet,"p. 24a,.)
[106] Leah Cohen, *Windows into the Text: Majuscules and Minuscules in the Hebrew Bible*, (Cincinnati, OH, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Thesis: 2000), pp. 130-131. (See also, Weirtheimer, "Alphabet,"p. 23a, reference to "Collection of Midrashim Ascribed to Rabbi Akiva Related to Special Markings on the Letters and Embellishments and Majuscule and Miniscule Letters in the Torah," by Joseph Damushkai, 1863.)
[107] Guttel, Henri. "Me-am Lo'ez," *Encyclopedia Judaica (electronic version)*, 1974.

alphabet letter, symbolically means that this is the last miracle which shall be expounded in the biblical text.[108]

The listing of Haman's 10 sons is typically listed in enlarged letters in its own column. In this column, the scribe inserts miniscules letters, shin, tav and zayin, which are part of their names. The zayin, which also equals the number 7, is reduced. The midrashic explanation for this is that Haman said 7 derogatory things against the Jews. I have not been able to locate the midrash regarding the other two letters. Further research is needed on this point (Scroll XVII-7, Illus. 2)..[109]

[108] Leah Cohen, *Windows into the Text: Majuscules and Minuscules in the Hebrew Bible*, (Cincinnati, OH, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Thesis: 2000), pp. 149. (See also, R. Jacob Culi, Me'Am Loez.)
[109] Leah Cohen, *Windows into the Text: Majuscules and Minuscules in the Hebrew Bible*, (Cincinnati, OH, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Thesis: 2000), p. 130.

MEGILLAT ESTHER SCROLL: XI-2

COLLECTION: Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

MUSEUM NUMBER: XI-2, Previous Collection Number(s): S. Kirschstein #244

SIZE OF VOLUME: Height 380 mm.

DESCRIPTION OF BINDING: Single roll scroll on a turned wood roller

TITLE & CONTENTS: Scroll of Esther

NUMBER OF PAGES: 4 Pieces of Parchment which are sewn together.

NUMBER OF COLUMNS: 11 Columns

NUMBER OF LINES PER COLUMN: 33 lines in most columns

METHOD OF FILLING LINES: This is a ha-Melech text. Lines are filled by extending the one or more of the letters in selected words in a line or by inserting gaps in the text between the end of the last Hebrew section and the beginning of the next.

NUMBER OF HANDS: The parchment shows prickings and hardpoint ruling, horizontally and vertically. The Ashkenazi Hebrew text appears to have been written by the same hand..

ARTISTIC RENDERINGS: This text is not illuminated with artistic elements and could be assumed to be a text which was appropriate for public reading in the synagogue(Scroll XI-2, Illus. 1).

DATING SYSTEM USED: This manuscript is dated to approximately 1800 from Italy.

DESCRIPTION OF VOCALIZATION: None

DESCRIPTION OF ACCENTUATION: Hebrew letter crowns are included in the text.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: The roll is in good shape with some fading of the Hebrew text. The text contains miniscule letters in the listing of the names of Haman's sons and the majuscule letters het in Esther 1:6 and tav in 9:29 (see previous commentaries, Scroll XVII-7). There are also enlarged Hebrew letters in two sections of the text, the combination of אהיה in 7:5, with selected letters being enlarged from different words to create a reference to God's name, meaning "I will be." This also appears in 1:20, with the combination of the letters הוהי , a backwards reference to the tetragrammaton. In Esther 7:7, there are slightly enlarged letters, הוה which are less enlarged, (Scroll XI-2,

Illus. 1) a possible incomplete reference to God's name in the tetragrammaton. Despite the strict restrictions on the scribal reproductions of the text. The scribes were able to create innovative ways to insert God's name into a text, which had been challenged for generations for its lack of direct references to God.

MEGILLAT ESTHER SCROLL: V-5

MUSEUM NUMBER: V-5, Previously N249, M148

V-5 200mm, couple stretched letters, gaps in writing mostly, crowns on letters, sewn,

SIZE OF VOLUME: Height 200 mm.

DESCRIPTION OF BINDING: Single roll scroll on a wood roller

TITLE & CONTENTS: Scroll of Esther

NUMBER OF PAGES: 3 Pieces of Parchment, which are sewn together.

NUMBER OF COLUMNS: 13 Columns

NUMBER OF LINES PER COLUMN: 24-26 lines in most columns. The text shows signs of graphite ruling to layout the linear placement of the text.

METHOD OF FILLING LINES: Lines are filled mainly by the insertion of gaps in the text. The letters of selected words are also elongated to help in the process of filling the lines. In the beginning the text is written in rectangular columns for the first three columns. These columns are surrounded by illuminations which frame the text in oval shapes. After the third column of rectangular shape text portions, the scribe starts writing

the text on the lines to more mimic the shape of the surrounding illumination, extending the lines more to the right and left and creating more of an oval textual pattern within its artistic context. This possibly suggests that these illuminations or their structure was completed before the texts were added to the manuscripts.

NUMBER OF HANDS: The text appears to have been written by one scribe on manuscript which has signs of graphite ruling which was used to mark the lines.. The text appears to be written in a Sephardic hand.

ARTISTIC RENDERINGS: The texts are surrounded by oval frames of illuminations consisting of intricate designs of different varieties of flowers and greens. The large blooms of the flowers are the primary focus of the illuminations and are decorated in paints with blue, white, pink and burgundy hues. The surrounding foliage is painted in yellow-green muted hues, possibly colors which have faded over time. The intricacy and beauty of the scroll is a testament to the level of craftsmanship and artistry which was present in the Amsterdam community of the time (Scroll V-5, Illus. 1).

DATING SYSTEM USED: The previous cataloguer of these materials does not list a date for this manuscript. However, she writes that the scroll is from Amsterdam "per S Lieberman Mintz." "C.F. Montalto Scroll, in sign and witness." With further research on the internet, I was able to locate an image of a Esther Scroll which is part of the Spencer Collection of the New York Public Library. It is an artistic and ornate black and white oval of various flora, similar to this scroll. It is named the "Montalto Megillah" and is

designated as copied by Raphael Montalto in Amsterdam 1686. The copywrited image may be viewed at: http://www.fathom.com/course/72810016/3_09.htm.

DESCRIPTION OF VOCALIZATION: None

DESCRIPTION OF ACCENTUATION: Hebrew letter crowns are included in the text.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: The scroll is in good shape with some tears and holes.

MEGILLAT ESTHER SCROLL: X-5

MUSEUM NUMBER: X-5, Previously S. Kirchstein #229, no. 42, acquired in 1926

SIZE OF VOLUME: Height 155 mm.

DESCRIPTION OF BINDING: Single roll scroll on a wood roller

TITLE & CONTENTS: Scroll of Esther

NUMBER OF PAGES: 8 Parchment pieces, which are sewn together and tied on a turned wood roller.

NUMBER OF COLUMNS: 26 Columns (including final blessing column).

NUMBER OF LINES PER COLUMN: 17 lines in most columns.

METHOD OF FILLING LINES: Lines are filled mainly by the insertion of gaps in the text. The letters of selected words are also elongated to help in the process of filling the lines. The textual columns are architecturally shaped, with a circular shape inserted slightly into the top of a rectangular shape, or like a room with a round domed roof. The text is written in the shape of these structures with narrow lines at the top of the structure which widen or follow the shape of the curve and the rectangle as one goes to the bottom

of the structure. At the end of the scroll, there is a shortened blessing column, for the blessing after the reading, with is followed by a traditional piyyut or reading which is done after the blessing in which we recite, "Cursed be Haman," and "Blessed be Mordechai." (Scroll X-5, Illus. 2)

NUMBER OF HANDS: The parchment shows signs of pin prickings and scored rulings, and it appears to be written by the same hand. The text appears to be written in a style that mimics the more square and broad Sephardic print.

ARTISTIC RENDERINGS: The original cataloguing compares the artist's drawings to those found in "folk art." There are drawings of birds, lions and fish which decorate the top and portions of the surrounding textual borders. The sides and the bottoms of the columns are decorated with borders, containing various geometric shapes and designs which are painted, primarily, in orange and green.

The opening drawings are of "folk" or less intricate or sophisticated drawings of a horse a deer and a lion with the head of a man. The lion's drawing with a man's head is reminiscent of the Bird's Head Haggadah, renown for being the oldest illuminated German manuscript which had men's bodies topped with the heads of birds from around 13-14th c. This illumination practice is believed to be in response to traditional Jewish views which rejected human portrayal as a sign of idolatry. This inversion of a lion with a man's head could be this artist's view or his client's view of the understanding or interpretation of this tradition (Scroll X-5, Illus. 1).

DATING: 18th Century Morocco

FRONT MATTER: see above

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: The scroll is in fair to good shape with frequent discolorations and water staining which has caused the ink and paint to run. There are a number of tears on the document and signs of wear.

CHAPTER FOUR

18TH TO 19TH CENTURY SCROLLS OF ESTHER AND THEIR GLIMPSES INTO THE SOCIO-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY

> *Cultural Theory insists that sub-cultures often reinterpret the symbols they borrow and may even subvert their original meaning.* [110]

The performances paradigms of putting on Tefillin, acting out the Passover story of the Exodus and the telling of the story of Megillat Esther link the participants and their audiences to their origins and traditions and point them toward the future with long-standing lessons and understandings which shape us through the performance of our rituals. Jose Faur describes this process through which our history or traditions are converted into "signs," which in turn emerge in the form of doctrine, belief and theology: [111]

> *Ritual can best be understood in terms of the encoding and decoding function. Ultimately, it serves to encode and communicate the hereditary mnemonic trace*

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[110] Pamela Sheingorn, Joseph Gutmann, Herbert R. Broderick, and David Berger, "What can Jewish History Learn from Jewish Art: Lecture and Responses," *Occasional Papers in Jewish History and Thought, The Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York*, 1989, p. 21.
[111] Harold Fisch, "Reading and Carnival: On the Semiotics of Purim." *Poetics Today*, Vol. 15, No. 1: Spring, 1994, p. 56.
[112] J. Faur. P. 50-54, from Harold Fisch, "Reading and Carnival: On the Semiotics of Purim." *Poetics Today*, Vol. 15, No. 1: Spring, 1994, p. 56.

of a people . . . An event is "encoded"; the execution of the ritual "decodes" the message, expressing thereby the original trace of the event. [112]

The book of Esther establishes the foundations for this process through which these historical events were initially recorded by Mordechai and authorized by Queen Esther and spread to the Jewish communities of the world.

Esther 9:20 [20] *Mordecai recorded these events. And he sent dispatches to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus, near and far,* [21] *charging them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, every year --* [22] *the same days on which the Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy. They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor.* [26] *For that reason these days were named Purim, after pur. In view, then, of all the instructions in the said letter and of what they had experienced in that matter and what had befallen them,* [27] *the Jews undertook and irrevocably obligated themselves and their descendants, and all who might join them, to observe these two days in the manner prescribed and at the proper time each year.* [28] *Consequently, these days are recalled and observed in every generation: by every family, every province, and every city. And these days of Purim shall never cease among the Jews, and the memory of them shall never perish among their descendants.* [29] *Then Queen Esther daughter of Abihail wrote a second letter of*

Purim for the purpose of confirming with full authority the aforementioned one of Mordecai the Jew. [30] *Dispatches were sent to all the Jews in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the realm of Ahasuerus with an ordinance of "equity and honesty:"* [31] *These days of Purim shall be observed at their proper time, as Mordecai the Jew -- and now Queen Esther -- has obligated them to do, and just as they have assumed for themselves and their descendants the obligation of the fasts with their lamentations.* [32] *And Esther's ordinance validating these observances of Purim was recorded in a scroll.*

Esther 10:1 *King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the mainland and the islands.* [2] *All his mighty and powerful acts, and a full account of the greatness to which the king advanced Mordecai, are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Media and Persia.* [3] *For Mordecai the Jew ranked next to King Ahasuerus and was highly regarded by the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brethren; he sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his kindred.*[113]

The central document for tracing the foundations of the semiotics of Purim is the Mishnah, Tractate Megillah or Scroll (of Esther). The title of this tractate points to its view of the central observance of Purim, the public reading of the scroll. The tractate for the most part is concentrated on the modalities of the process of the reading with a minor reference to another Purim observance, the giving of gifts to the poor. The Mishnah teaches us how to establish the correct date for reading the Megillat Esther and who may

[113] *Tanakh*, (electronic version), (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

or may not read it for the community and under what circumstances the reading and the hearing may be deemed as fulfilling the mitzvah.[114]

This concentration on the reading is "reflexive" in that it also focuses on the act of writing and the reading of the text, which is done internally in the biblical text and also externally in the text of the Mishnah and subsequent legal works. In the Book of Esther, the King's decrees are recorded in annals and Esther's ordinances for Jewish holiday observance are "recorded in a scroll."[115] In the Mishnah, Seder Moed, Tractate Megillah, Mishnah 1-2, the proper reading of the reading of Megillat Esther is laid out and detailed, even so far as detailing the color and make-up of the ink which shall be used to create the scroll.[116] I suggest this reflexive process is also manifested in the creation of these illuminated scrolls which are written by the scribe and then decorated, reflecting inwardly on the text, its accuracy and its purpose, and then also on the artist or scribe who will be illuminating the text and their clients and their societies, the individual and the personal and the communal in interaction with the inherited sacred tradition.

In regards to the communal or public commemoration of the holiday, the text of the Mishnah is virtually silent in regards to setting the stage for its ornamentation and its celebration, its prescribed feasting and festive merrymaking, which are specified in the biblical text. Later Jewish texts step in to help fill this vacuum, like the Talmud, which instructs us to "mellow" ourselves with wine until we cannot tell the difference between

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[114] Harold Fisch, "Reading and Carnival: On the Semiotics of Purim." *Poetics Today*, Vol. 15, No. 1: Spring, 1994, p. 59.
[115] Harold Fisch, "Reading and Carnival: On the Semiotics of Purim." *Poetics Today*, Vol. 15, No. 1: Spring, 1994, p. 59.
[116] Pinchas Kehati, *Mishnah: Seder Moed: Megillah, Vol. 3,* (Jerusalem, Israel: Feldheim, 2005), p. 1-45.

the cursed Haman and the blessed Mordechai. [117] Other religious aspects of the festive celebration must be determined by the community in its historical, cultural and societal context. Thus as we progress through time, we anthropologically see the evolution of the holiday of Purim in all of its rites and rituals, the creation, application and the development of the overall communal and individual religious experiences.

ART IN THE REALMS OF THE SOCIETY AND THE SACRED

Emile Durkheim, a prominent social theorist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, described religion as the "unified set of beliefs and practices" which serve to unite a single community in their recognition and observance of what is sacred.[118] In his essay, "The Cultural Logic of Collective Representations," he writes that "all great social institutions have been born in religion," and that their legal and moral rules are "indistinguishable from their ritual prescriptions." Thus he states:

> *Religious forces are therefore human forces, moral forces. It is true that since collective sentiments can become conscious of themselves only by fixing themselves upon external objects, they have not been able to take form without adopting some of their characteristics from other things: they have thus acquired a sort of physical nature; in this way they have come to mix themselves with the life of the material world, and then have considered themselves capable of*

[117] Harold Fisch, "Reading and Carnival: On the Semiotics of Purim." *Poetics Today*, Vol. 15, No. 1: Spring, 1994, p. 59.
[118] E. Durkheim. 1912, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, in The Essentials of Sociology, by James M. Henslin, p. 342.

explaining what passes there. But when they are considered only from this point of view and this role, only their most superficial aspect is seen. In reality, the essential elements of which these collective sentiments are made have been borrowed by the understanding. It ordinarily seems that they should have a human character only when they are conceived under human forms; but even the most impersonal and the most anonymous are nothing else than objectified sentiments.

It is only by regarding religion from this angle that it is possible to see its real significance. If we stick closely to appearances, rites often give the effect of purely manual operations: they are anointings, washings, and meals. To consecrate something, it is put in contact with a source of religious energy, just as today a body is put in contact with a source of heat or electricity to warm or electrize it; the two processes employed are not essentially different. Thus understood, religious technique seems to be a sort of mystic mechanics. But these material manoeuvres are only the external envelope under which the mental operations are hidden. Finally, there is no question of exercising a physical constraint upon blind and, incidentally, imaginary forces, but rather of reaching individual consciousnesses of giving them a direction and of disciplining them. It is sometimes said that inferior religions are materialistic. Such an expression is inexact. All religions, even the crudest, are in a sense spiritualistic: for the powers they put in play are before all spiritual , and also their principal object is to act upon the moral life. Thus it is seen that whatever has been done in the

name of religion cannot have been done in vain: for it is necessarily the society that did it, and it is humanity that has reaped the fruits. . . .[119]

One of the ways in which these scrolls embody these principles is in the presence of majuscule letters which can be found in a number of the decorated scrolls and most markedly in Scroll XI-2 (Illus. 1), which is the undecorated scroll which is suitable for public reading in the synagogue. Despite the strict laws and traditions which forbade any embellishment of the scriptural text. The scribe or scribal community or the religious community has a whole continued the process of grapping with a sacred text which does not directly refer to God's name and God's intervention on behalf of the people at a time of great danger. In more than one area on this synagogue scroll, selected letters are enlarged in compared to surrounding letters. This method is done in partial order, backward order or even just partially, in multiple attempts to highlight the letters, yud, heh, vav, heh, of the tetragrammaton or of alef, heh, yud, heh, which denotes another of God's names, meaning, "I will be what I will be." In the creation of this text and for every time that a reader shall engage with the text, there is the potential for the participant to see signs of God's name or a partial reflection of the Divine in the sacred text and in their actions and their lives and in the lives of the religious community.

The illuminated scrolls in the collection of the Klau Library of Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio are also examples of these external objects which represent the life of the material world and the sentiments contained therein.

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[119] Emil Durkheim. "The Cultural Logic of Collective Representations," in *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, edited by Charles Lemert, 1912, pp.. 89-90.

These objects have the potential to embody the religious mystical sentiments which interact with the mental consciousness that manifests itself in the individual and to act upon the personal social and moral life of the individual and the society, in all of their complexity. They contain religious and secular symbols and also real and mythological images, of our own experience and beyond. These images and decorations have the potential to expand the individual and his/her experiences beyond the realm of the written word and the ritual. The results of which are not always known.

Part of this complexity is the inclusion of the diverse people who are passionately committed to creation of the ritual and liturgy, according to Daniel Stevick. They comprise historians, theologians, poets, artists, and dancers. They write, teach and create at all different levels, each recognizing the importance and need for the other.[120] Max Weber writes that sociologically in the development of the religion, the new supernatural or religious experiences symbolically play a role in life, because they signify something. He describes this as magic or forces which are directly manipulated into "symbolic activity."[121] This symbolic activity is manifested in the creation and use of illuminated scrolls of Esther. In their use and in their graphic portrayals of the biblical story, these scrolls tell the story of the redemption of the Jewish people from their oppressors. These ageless illuminations also contain contemporary images, from their flora and fauna, architectural columns to the costumes in which the characters are portrayed. Together, these images potentially reinforce the psychological understanding that redemptions are

[120] Daniel B. Stevick, "Responsibility for Liturgy," in *Worship* 50 (1976), pp. 301-302, in Lawrence Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989).
[121] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 1-8.

possible at all times and that God is ever-present in the mundane and the familiar. Some scrolls even contain mythological images beyond the realm of the real-life human experience. These depictions remind us of the spiritual bonds we have to the familiar, the people around us, the material world and the societies in which we function and that these spiritual connections can be made at all levels, internally and externally, spiritually and materially, religiously and communally. At the same time, these images also convey the message that there are things which are beyond our understanding and our experience and that we must be open to an acceptance of what is unknown, that is also religiously reinforced with a belief in a God who is near to us at all times, yet remains beyond the human realm of understanding.

Joseph Gutmann portrays this religious cultural dynamic as an ongoing societal drama:

> *The involvement of Jews and Judaism with medieval European Christianity can be traced in art clearly from the twelfth century on. We behold a revolving stage on which at least two major dramas were playing simultaneously. On one stage we witness how Christians came to view Jews; on the other, how Jews viewed themselves and how they reacted to and were affected by the Christian drama.*[122]

[122] Joseph Gutmann, Pamela Sheingorn, Herbert R. Broderick, and David Berger, "What can Jewish History Learn from Jewish Art: Lecture and Responses," *Occasional Papers in Jewish History and Thought, The Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York*, 1989, p. 2.

Pamela Sheingorn wrote in response to the lecture, from which the above excerpt was taken, that "medieval Christian culture was a visual culture," as noted by Hebert Kessler: [123]

> *Medieval theologians praised sight as the most spiritual of the senses and the source of divine knowledge; and so art, because it is visual, acquired a special dignity. Believers, needing to see and witness, were attracted by the animating character of art, in particular that of three-dimensional objects which, . . . invigorated their faith.* [124]

Ronald Grimes describes this activity as participation in the ritual process which conveys the "image one has of it" and "the experience one has of it," considering all the values, abilities and beliefs which one associates with it in a social, cultural and religious context. In the end, the human element is potentially reconstructed, joined with others in faith and empowered to re-envision the world, reconstructing it and the self for the future.[125] Through this symbolic activity, participants are involved in rituals which raise their mind toward God and also to reconnecting with the human and cultural contexts in which they are surrounded, through which the participants create new self perceptions and

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[123] Pamela Sheingorn, Joseph Gutmann, Herbert R. Broderick, and David Berger, "What can Jewish History Learn from Jewish Art: Lecture and Responses," *Occasional Papers in Jewish History and Thought, The Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York*, 1989, p. 19.

[124] Herbert L. Kessler, "On the State of Medieval Art History," *Art Bulletin*, 70, 1988, pp. 184-185, in Pamela Sheingorn, Joseph Gutmann, Herbert R. Broderick, and David Berger, "What can Jewish History Learn from Jewish Art: Lecture and Responses," *Occasional Papers in Jewish History and Thought, The Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York*, 1989, p. 19.

[125] Ronald Grimes in Ritual Criticism, p. 42. Aune, Michael B, and Valerie Demarinis, eds. *The Subject of Ritual: Ideology and Experience in Action, in Religious and Social Ritual: Interdisciplinary Explorations.* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 164-166.

identities.[126] Through these moments of spiritual and person insights, we have the potential to reflect and reconstruct the individual and societal psyche, building it not only for our time but as mediators and shapers of the human and religious past, present and future.

JEWISH SACRED OBJECTS- CREATING DIVINE UTENSILS

There is a conception that all art was originally "sacred," going back to the mythical times when utensils were created from a design which was revealed by a divine being. This included the creation of worship objects or symbols through which one would acknowledge a sacred power or being, i.e. an altar, an idol. In this process, man is given instructions, regarding the form, symbolism and use of the object, and how the "artistic expression" reveals its "religious expression" or definition and form. This is the artistic by which the invisible is created and made into visible form through, a systematic and philosophical speculation in regards to the attributes of human understanding of the divine. Thus art presents the potential of a human encounter with the Divine. These spiritual encounters may be more personal or more global, an opening to a new understanding of the world or of God in our midst. [127]

Artistic portrayals may depict the divine through their creations or the works or histories of their creations in their religious context, their rituals, dances or gestures which

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[126] Aune, Michael B, and Valerie Demarinis, eds. *The Subject of Ritual: Ideology and Experience in Action, in Religious and Social Ritual: Interdisciplinary Explorations.* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 147-153.

[127] Mircea Eliade, *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), p. 55.

demonstrate their acts for "prolonging life." The human portrayal of the historical interplay of events becomes a record of their God's accomplishments in the world and the consequence of the Divine creation of the human element.[128] Ritual items act as a "medium" of meaning for participants, by representing a "sacred presence" or of bringing different things together in relation to one another, creating "relevance" or traditional ties for individuals or for the community. In this process ritualizing, communal participants "look back" in order to look forward, altering their relationship to present and then future, in the process of resolving the current psychological deteriorations or disjunctions between actual experiences and religious and cultural beliefs and values.[129]

In the creation of Megillot Esther, the human element is shaping a form of the Ark of the covenant, placing the Divine word in their midst and shaping its cover so that they may honor and beautify it and carry it with them into the world. It is a process of reaching up toward the Divine and bringing God's text into our midst, with all of the implications contained therein, a Torah which is not in the hands of the angels but rather one which resides in the human realm in which human hands shape and reshape and interpret its message in their time and for all time, from one generation to the next.

In the initial encounter, between creating these new forms of sacred tools which incorporated Divine and artistic elements, there is the potential of grappling with

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[128] Mircea Eliade, *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 56-58.

[129] Aune, Michael B, and Valerie Demarinis, eds. *The Subject of Ritual: Ideology and Experience in Action, in Religious and Social Ritual: Interdisciplinary Explorations.* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 147-153.

previously handed down traditions and understandings of the self and God in the contemporary societal context and the meanings therein, to understand the implications of creating a new form or sacred "utensil" through which the Divine may be grasped in "form" or "figure" symbolically in the artistic endeavor and its limiting potential, the manifestation of the Divine, i.e. idolatry, a process through which the divine may be limited or misconstrued.[130] At the same time, these new creations have the potential to create new expressions and understandings of the sacred, from which the spirituality of the individual or the community may be enhanced in the world.

CONTEMPORARY CARNIVAL AS A RITUAL CONTEXT

As we study the regulations governing the reading and writing of the Esther Scroll, we note recurring instances, even a pattern, of leniency. While the scroll, like the Sefer Torah, itself, had to be written in Assyrian characters, on prepared parchment, and in ink (Megilla II, 2), there was a great deal of laxity about other requirements. Unlike the parchment of the Sefer Torah, that of the Esther scroll need not be especially designated for sacred use; smudged or torn letters do not disqualify it; if words are missing from the scroll and the reader supplies them from memory, his audience is deemed to have fulfilled the mitzvah.. .[131] This laxity also spreads to the atmosphere of the merrymaking of the holiday in its various cultural contexts in their carnival celebrations. In the absence

[130] Mircea Eliade, *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 55-56.
[131] Harold Fisch, "Reading and Carnival: On the Semiotics of Purim." *Poetics Today*, Vol. 15, No. 1: Spring, 1994, p. 62.

of traditional laws and prescriptions, Jews needed to look at their surrounding cultural contexts to find guides for the creation of their sacred and raucous festivities.

In the realm of studying the holiday of Purim and its ritual observance in its historical, religious, and culture context, scholars are struck by an "awareness" of the similarities between this Jewish carnival celebration and the surrounding society's general understandings of carnival, rites and rituals. The scholar Bakhtin writes that in the world of carnivals, there is a relationship between truth and authority and in their reversal, the temporary liberation from the "established order" and "prevailing truth, an example of which would be the "absurd" and "irreverent" noisemaking, the wearing of costumes and creation of dramatic spiels, drinking and "ritualized aggression," i.e. the public burning and/or hanging of effigies of Haman which could be found in the context of the synagogue and in the surrounding community. To combat these forms of festivity, there are records of decrees which were issued or fines which were assessed in some communities in the 17th and the 18th centuries, to prohibit excessive hammering or noisemaking during the reading of the Megillah, but they had limited effectiveness.[132]

> *"Because of the ribaldry, mockery, parody, and burlesque found in the carnival, its atmosphere of general impiety and profanity in short, it is sometimes difficult to see it as a ritual. It seems to confound the Durkheimian categories of the sacred and the profane, which assign ritual to the sacred and studies the way that as sacred action ritual evokes and confirms the sacred condition an its power to*

[132] Elliott Horowitz, "The Rite to Be Reckless: On the Perpetration and Interpretation of Purim Violence," in *Poetics Today*, 15:1, Spring 1994; pp. 13-41.

order and assuage the human condition. And yet carnival play can be a highly repetitive and ritualized representation of life. And in its profanity it attains the kind of time out of time that is characteristic of ritual action. Its farcical and derisory quality may seem turning low what is high, disorder what is orderly but it also has persuasive powers of assuagement to those afflicted with the discontents of social order."[133]

In 1875, James Picciotto wrote in his introduction to "Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History," that:

It was once the custom among the Jews, during the feast of Purim, for unruly boys and silly men to show their reprobation of Haman's conduct by loudly knocking against the Synagogue benches during the celebration of the service. This absurd and irreverent usage had ever been opposed by the congregational authorities. [134]

Carnival in many ways can be compared to ritual, in that when its frivolous features have been removed, it may be taken quite seriously in the way its functions in the society. It provides a time set apart from the mundane day to day time for "structural re-adjustment" for the "rebalancing of society and the re-solidifying of social bonds." Even though its

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[133] James W. Fernandez. pp21-22 in Eliade, Mircea. *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts.* New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985.

[134] James *Picciotto, 1956 [1875]: pg. 195 in* Elliott Horowitz, "The Rite to Be Reckless: On the Perpetration and Interpretation of Purim Violence," in *Poetics Today*, 15:1, Spring 1994; p. 12.

rituals may contravene normal practice, it represents a re-commitment to the cultural norms. [135]

Some scholars contend that carnival in Europe is used as a means of expressing resistance to authority and oppression, which also functions in changing the normal social order. Frequently, it is juxta-positioned to religiously inspired privations or forfeitures, like Lent for Christians or Passover for Jews, thus creating a political and psychological interpretation of the carnival ritual events. [136]

Carnival is a "widespread human institution" of revitalization and release in the European and Catholic traditions, i.e. with their practices of carnival and fasting prior to Lent. It is a time of political and psychological mixing of ritual which overturns normal social life and its structures, i.e. class, sacred and profane, which in the end bring about transitions into more sacred and pious periods and increased awareness or reassessment of the political order. [137]

These beautifully decorated scrolls represent historic revolutions and evolutions in Jewish thought and practice. They signify the dynamic relationship between the individual and his or her religious community and the community at large. In our struggles to seek the Divine and to also be creators, we discover our journeys to understand ourselves in the

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[135] James W. Fernandez,. p. 23 in Eliade, Mircea. *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts.* New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985.
[136] James W. Fernandez,pp. 21-22 in Eliade, Mircea. *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts.* New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985.
[137] James W. Fernandez,pp. 21-22 in Eliade, Mircea. *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts.* New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985.

socio-cultural, political, psychological and religious worlds, which we are integrally a part of. Through these complex and inter-related dynamics, we change and evolve, also altering the people around us and the worlds we live in, now and into the future. We may reject the norms we are surrounded by and create something new, however at the same time, we may return refreshed or changed and be able to recommit to those core beliefs and understandings which give us meaning and purpose helping to shape the new path toward the future. Therein, we may also see the art or the beauty of the processes at all different levels, human and divine.

CHAPTER V:

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE FOLLOWING IMAGES ARE COPYWRITED

AND BELONG TO:

THE KLAU LIBRARY, HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH

INSTITUTE OF RELIGION, CINCINNATI, OH.

Scroll VII-2


ויהי בימי אחשורוש הוא אחשורוש המלך מהדו
דעד כוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה בימים ההם
כשבת המלך אחשורוש על כסא מלכותו אשר
בשושן הבירה בשנת שלוש למלכו עשה משתה
לכל שריו ועבדיו חיל פרס ומדי הפרתמים ושרי
המדינות לפניו בהראותו את עשר כבוד מלכותו
ואת יקר תפארת גדולתו ימים רבים שמונים
ומאת יום ובמלאות הימים האלה עשה המלך
לכל העם הנמצאים בשושן הבירה למגדול

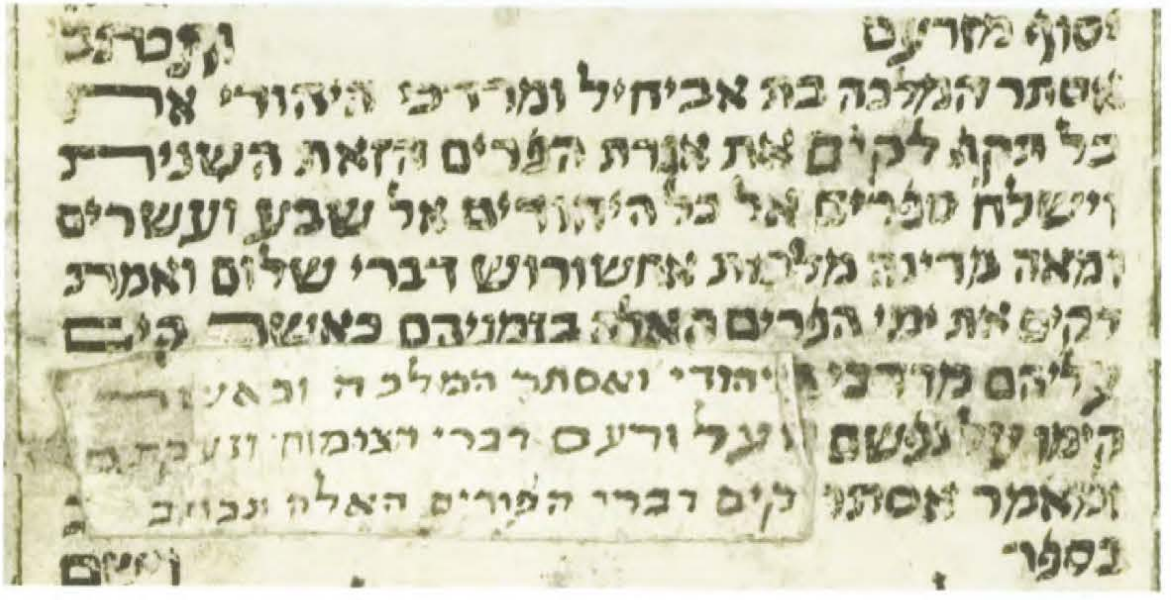

ישוף מחריעם
שושתר המלכה בת אביחיל ומרדכי היהודי אר
כל ותקף לקים את אגרת הפרים הזאת השנית
וישלח ספרים אל כל היהודים אל שבע ועשרים
ומאה מדינה מלכות אחשורוש דברי שלום ואמת
לקים את ימי הפרים האלה בזמניהם כאשר קים
עליהם מרדכי היהודי ואסתר המלכה וכאש
קימו על נפשם ועל זרעם דברי הצומות וזעקתם
וכאמר ואסתר קים דברי הפורים האלה ונכתב
בספר

Illustration 1 (top): Scroll VII-2,
Sample Text from the first column of the scroll.

Illustration 2 (middle): Scroll VII-2,
Sample Text from the last column of the scroll,
with correction overlay.

Illustration 3 (right): Scroll VII-2,
Opening scene of the King sitting at a banquet
table with other members of his Court.

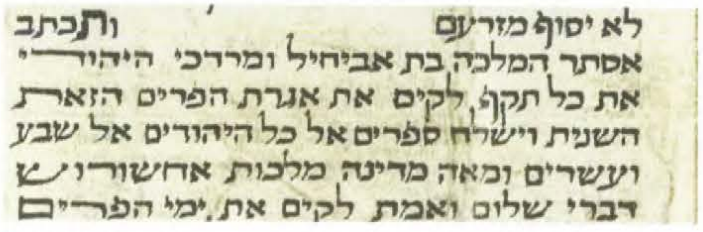
Scroll XV-7

Illustration Floral 1 (left):
Scroll VII-2,
Floral decoration from the end of the scroll (middle, left side of final column).

Illustration Floral 2 (below left):
Scroll XV-7,
Floral decoration from the end of the scroll (middle, left side of final column). Note similar outline to above Scroll VII-2 illustration and different internal coloration.

Illustration 3 (below left):
Scroll VII-2,
Opening scene of the King sitting at a banquet table with other members of his Court.

Illustration 4 (above): Scroll XV-7,
Opening scene of the King sitting at a banquet table with other members of his Court. Note similar outline to above Scroll VII-2 illustration and different internal coloration.



לא יסוף מזרעם
ותכתב
אסתר המלכה בת אביחיל ומרדכי היהודי
את כל תקף לקים את אגרת הפרים הזאת
השנית וישלח ספרים אל כל היהודים אל שבע
ועשרים ומאה מדינה מלכות אחשורוש
דברי שלום ואמת לקים את ימי הפרים

Illustration 5 (above): Scroll XV-7,
Sample Text from the last column of the scroll. Note writing differences to Scroll VII-2.

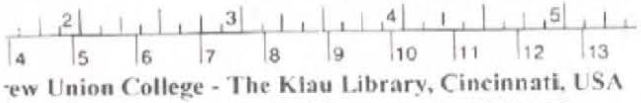
Scroll X-4

Illus. Illustration 1 (above)
Scroll Illimation of a Rooster at the end of the scrole.

Scroll XVI-2

Illustration 1 (above):
Biblical Illuminations and Miniature Cameos intermixed with border decorations with secular themes and figures.

Scroll XVI-2



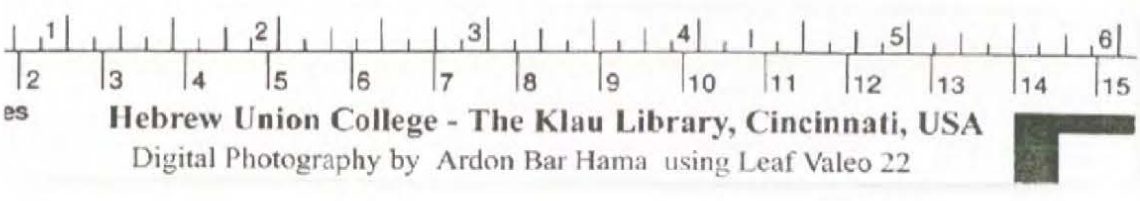
ew Union College - The Klau Library, Cincinnati, USA
ital Photography by Ardon Bar Hama using Leaf Valeo 22

Illustration 2 (above):
Attached blessing Parchment with small faded inscription listed below the page

Scroll XV-5

ויהי בימי אחשורוש הוא אחשורוש המלך
מהדו ועד כוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה
בימים ההם כשבת המלך אחשורוש על כסא
מלכותו אשר בשושן הבירה בשנת שלוש
למלכו עשה משתה לכל שריו ועבדיו חיל
פרס ומדי הפרתמים ושרי המדינות לפניו
בהראותו את עשר כבוד מלכותו ואת יקר
תפארת גדולתו ימים רבים שמונים ומאת
יום ובמלואת הימים האלה עשה המלך לכל
העם הנמצאים בשושן הבירה למגדול ועד
קטן משתה שבעת ימים בחצר גנת בירתן
המלך חור כרפס ותכלת אחוז בחבלי בוץ
וארגמן על גלילי כסף ועמודי שש מטות זהב
וכסף על רצפת בהט ושש ודר וסחרת והשקות
בכלי זהב וכלים מכלים שונים ויין מלכות רב
כיד המלך והשתיה כדת אין אנס כי כן יסד המלך
על כל רב ביתו לעשות כרצון איש ואיש
גם ושתי המלכה עשתה משתה נשים
בית המלכות אשר למלך אחשורוש ביום השביעי
כטוב לב המלך ביין אמר למהומן בזתא חרבונא בגתא
ואבגתא זתר וכרכס שבעת הסריסים המשרתים את
פני המלך אחשורוש להביא את ושתי המלכה לפני

המלך בכתר מלכות להר
יפיה כי טובת מראה היא
בדבר המלך אשר ביד
וחמתו בערה בו
ידעי העתים כי כן דבר
ודין והקרב אליו כרשנ
מרס מרסנא ממוכן שב
המלך הישבים ראשנה
במלכה ושתי על אשר
אחשורוש ביד הסריסי
לפני המלך והשרים לא
ושתי המלכה כי על כ
אשר בכל מדינות המ
על כל הנשים להבזות
המלך אחשורוש אמר
לפניו ולא באה והיום
ומדי אשר שמעו את
המלך וכדי בזיון וקצ
יצא דבר מלכות מל
ומדי ולא יעבור אשו
המלך אחשורוש
לרעותה הטובה



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Digital Photography by Ardon Bar Hama using Leaf Valeo 22

Illustration 1 (above):

Note the majuscule letters or enlarged letters.

איש	ואת	בני המן בן המדתא צרר היהודים הרגו ובבזה
פרשנדתא	ואת	לא שלחו את ידם ביום ההוא בא מספר ההרוגים
דלפון	ואת	בשושן הבירה לפני המלך ויאמר המלך לאסתר
אספתא	ואת	המלכה בשושן הבירה הרגו היהודים ואבד
פורתא	ואת	חמש מאות איש ואת עשרת בני המן בשאר
אדליא	ואת	מדינות המלך מה עשו ומה שאלתך ויינתן לך
ארידתא	ואת	ומה בקשתך עוד ותעש ותאמר אסתר אם על
פרמשתא	ואת	המלך טוב ינתן גם מחר ליהודים אשר בשושן
אריסי	ואת	לעשות כדת היום ואת עשרת בני המן יתלו על
ארידי	ואת	העץ ויאמר המלך להעשות כן ותנתן דת בשושן
ויזתא	עשרת	ואת עשרת בני המן תלו ויקהלו היהודים אשר
		בשושן גם ביום ארבעה עשר לחר שאדר ויהרגו
		בשושן שלש מאות איש ובבזה לא שלחו את
		ידם ושאר היהודים אשר במדינות המלך נקהלו
		ועמד על נפשם ונוח מאיביהם והרוג בשנאיהם
		חמשה ושבעים אלף ובבזה לא שלחו את ידם
		ביום שלשה עשר לחדש אדר ונוח בארבעה
		עשר בו ועשה אתו יום משתה ושמחה
		והיהודיים אשר בשושן נקהלו בשלושה עשר
		בו ובארבעה עשר בו ונוח בחמשה עשר בו
		ועשה אתו יום משתה ושמחה על כן היהודים
		הפרוזים הישבים כערי הפרזות עשים את יום

Illustration 2 (above):

Listing of the names of the 10 aons of Haman who were hanged. It is traditionally mandated that the names appear in this format. Note the miniscule letters in their names.

Scroll XVII-7

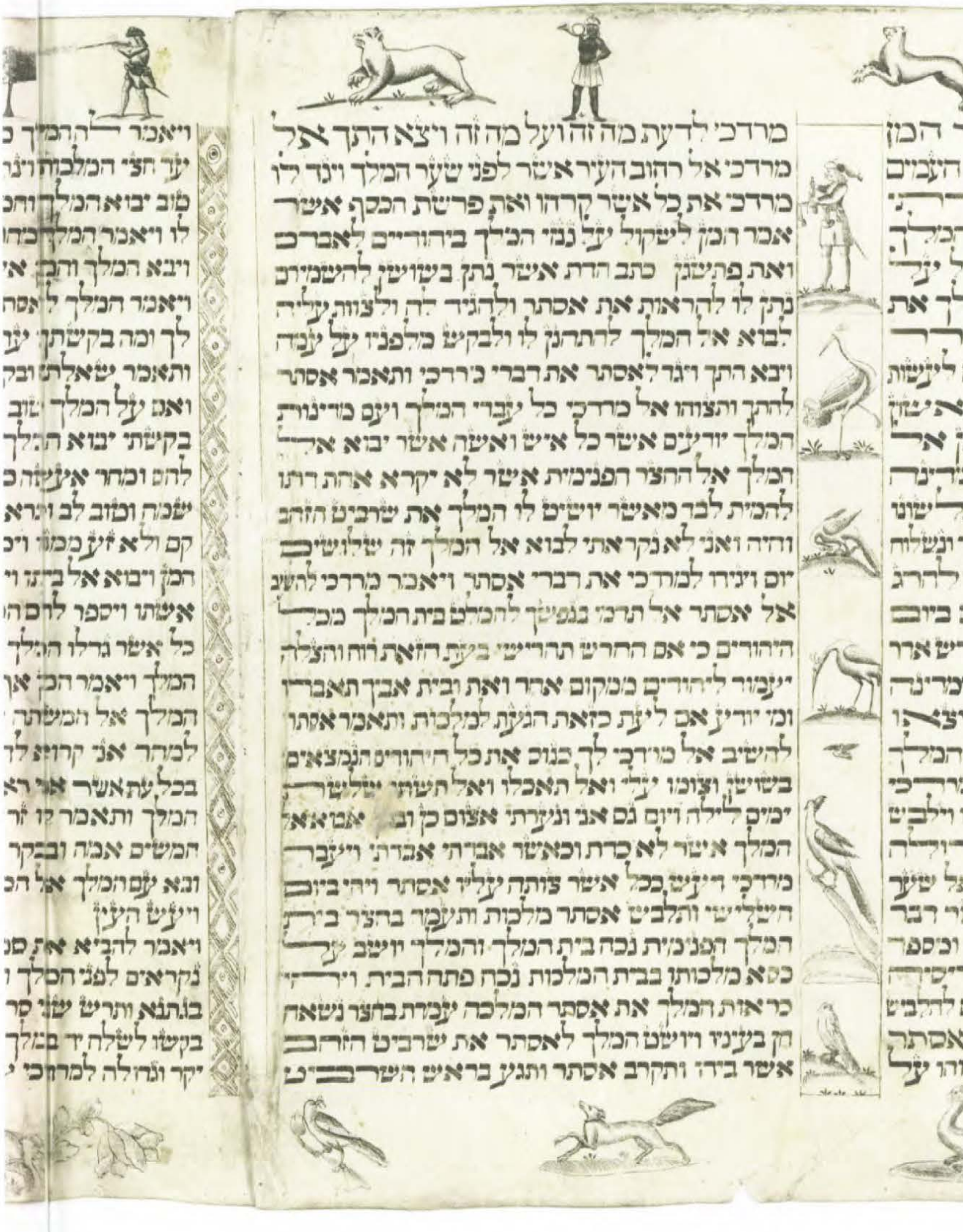


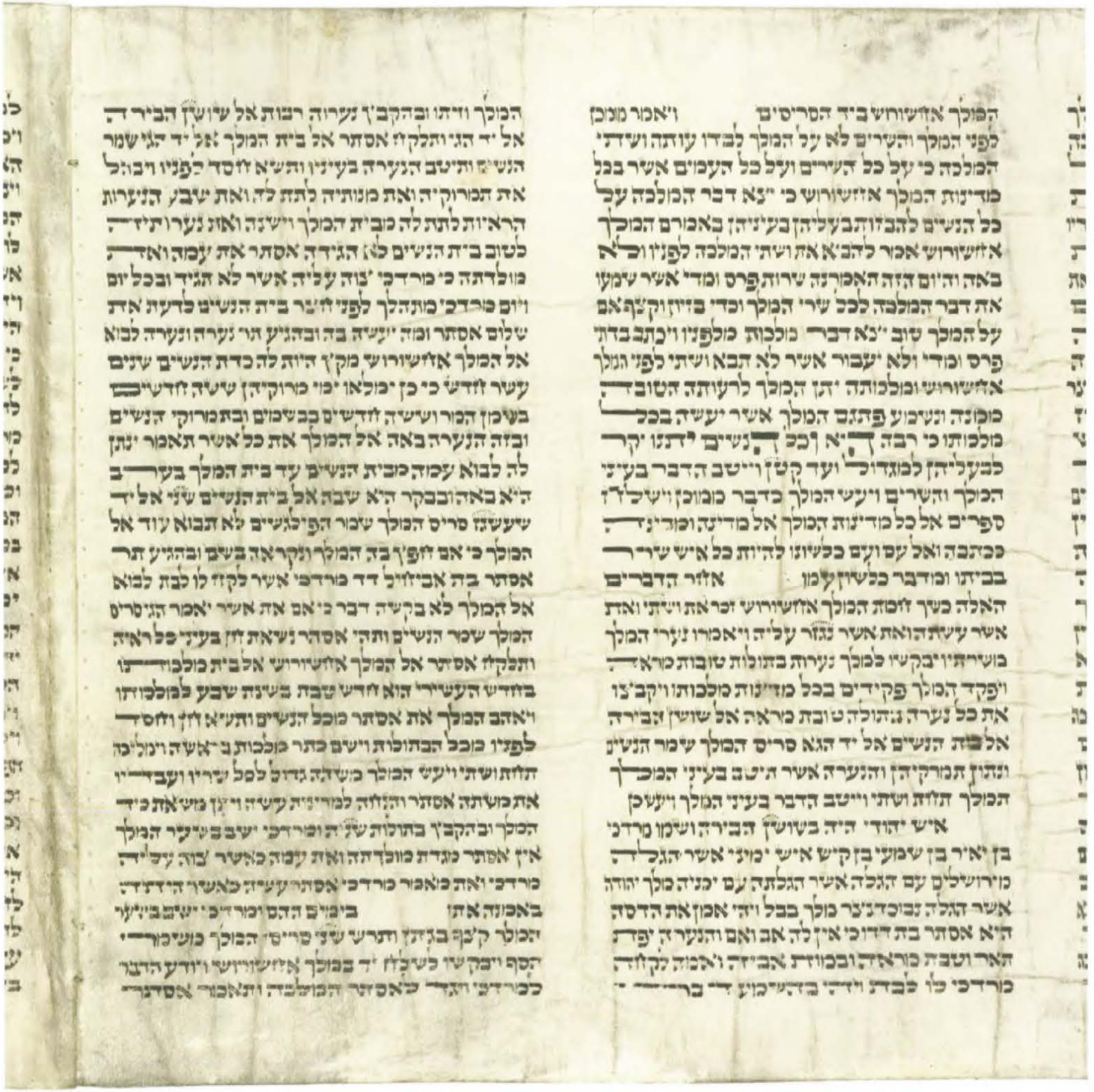
Illustration 1 (above):

Note the mythological and exotic creatures, along with the African man.

Illustration 2 (above):
Note the mythological Creatures.

Scroll XI-2

Illustration 1 (above):
This scroll would be suitable for public reading in the synagogue. Note the enlarged letters in the text.



Scroll V-5

Illustration 1 (below): An Illuminated Scroll from Amsterdam.

Scroll X-5

Illustration 1:

This is the opening page of the scroll.

Note the animal figure with the human head.

Scroll X-5

Illustration 2 :

This is the ending parchment page of the scroll.

Note the ending blessing and piyyut, surrounded by their artistic illuminations.

ADDENDUM I:
MAJUSCULES AND MINUSCULES FOUND IN SELECTED SCROLLS OF ESTHER FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE KLAU LIBRARY, HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION, CINCINNATI, OH.

HEBREW VERSES IN WHICH MAJUSCULES / MINUSCULES MAY BE FOUND	SUGGESTED INTERPRETATIONS WHICH MAY HAVE INFLUENCED THESE HEBRAIC SCRIBAL RENDERINGS
Esther 1:6 חוּר כַּרְפַּס וּתְכֵלֶת [6] *There were hangings of white cotton . . .*	1.The first of the letters is the chet in the word חוּר, in verse 1:6, which means "white material" and refers to the hangings in the Temple, ones that could only be found in the Temple and which were suggested to have been stolen from the "Temple of the Lord." [138] 2. Another source interprets the chet which also equals the number 8 to stand for the eight garments which are worn by the High Priest, which Ahasuerus donned for the feast that he invited Vashti to. King Ahasuerus is punished for this with the embarrassment and evil of Vashti and her death, which caused him great sadness. [139]
הָיְא וְכָל־הַנָּשִׁים יִתְּנוּ Esther 1:20 . . .and all wives will treat . . .	The enlarged Hebrew letters create a reference to God's unknowable name, with a combination of the letters הוהי , a backwards reference to the tetragrammaton.
[5] הַוּא זֶה וְאֵי־זֶה Esther 7:5 . . .Who is he and where is he . . .	The combination of אהיה in 7:5, with selected letters being enlarged from different words to create a reference to God's name אֶהְיֶה which can be found in Exodus 3:14, "And God said to Moses, "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh." meaning "I am that I am."
כִּי־כָלְתָה אֵלָיו הָרָעָה Esther 7:7 . . . for he saw . . .he had resolved to destroy him.	In Esther 7:7, there are slightly enlarged letters, הוה which are less enlarged, (Scroll XI-2, Illus. 1) a possible incomplete reference to God's name in the tetragrammaton. More research would need to be done to determine why the letters are enlarged, but only partially, compared to other majuscules in the same text.
וַתִּכְתֹּב אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה Esther 9:29 Then Queen Esther wrote .	1. The other majuscule letter is a tav in the word in verse Esther 9:29, which means "and she wrote." [140] The enlarged tav can be interpreted to understand that when Esther was writing, she was writing for future

[138] Leah Cohen, *Windows into the Text: Majuscules and Minuscules in the Hebrew Bible*, (Cincinnati, OH, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Thesis: 2000), pp. 130-131. Rabbinic Thesis (See also, Weirtheimer, "Alphabet,"p. 23a, reference to "Collection of Midrashim Ascribed to Rabbi Akiva Related to Special Markings on the Letters and Embellishments and Majuscule and Miniscule Letters in the Torah," by Joseph Damushkai, 1863.)

[139] Ibid. (See also, Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz, "M'not HaLevi"

[140] Ibid. (See also, Weirtheimer, "Alphabet,"p. 24a,.)

[141] Ibid. (See also, Weirtheimer, "Alphabet,"p. 23a, reference to "Collection of Midrashim Ascribed to Rabbi Akiva Related to Special Markings on the Letters and Embellishments and Majuscule and Miniscule Letters in the Torah," by Joseph Damushkai, 1863.)

	generations.[141] 2. Another interpretation of this majuscule tav from the Judeo Spanish medieval 18th century biblical commentary, Me'am Loez, by Jacob Culi.[142] He writes that the enlargement of the tav, the last Hebrew alphabet letter, symbolically means that this is the last miracle which shall be expounded in the biblical text.[143]
7 וְאֵת פַּרְשַׁנְדָּתָא 9 וְאֵת פַּרְמַשְׁתָּא וְאֵת אֲרִיסַי : וְאֵת אֲרִדַי וְאֵת וַיְזָתָא Esther 9:7 They also killed Parshandatha, . . .Parmashta,. . .Vaizatha,	The listing of Haman's 10 sons is typically listed in enlarged letters in its own column. In this column, the scribe inserts miniscules letters, shin, tav and zayin, which are part of their names. The zayin, which also equals the number 7, is reduced. The midrashic explanation for this is that Haman said 7 derogatory things against the Jews. I have not been able to locate the midrash regarding the other two letters. Further research is needed on this point (Scroll XVII-7, Illus. 2).[144]

[141] Ibid. (See also, Weirtheimer, "Alphabet,"p. 23a, reference to "Collection of Midrashim Ascribed to Rabbi Akiva Related to Special Markings on the Letters and Embellishments and Majuscule and Miniscule Letters in the Torah," by Joseph Damushkai, 1863.)

[142] Guttel, Henri. "Me-am Lo'ez," *Encyclopedia Judaica (electronic version),* 1974.

[143] Ibid. pp. 149. (See also, R. Jacob Culi, Me'Am Loez.)

[144] Leah Cohen, *Windows into the Text: Majuscules and Minuscules in the Hebrew Bible*, (Cincinnati, OH, HUC-JIR Rabbinic Thesis: 2000), p. 130.

ADDENDUM II:

THE KIRSCHSTEINS AND THEIR MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

In 1925, the Klau Library of the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion acquired one of its most significant holdings of Jewish cultural objects, the Salli Kirschstein Collection, under the oversight of Adolph Oko, the College librarian. Salli Kirschstein had amassed this major Judaica collection of 6,174 objects from prominent collections and collectors in Europe to bring together a record of Jewish cultural life from the Renaissance to the present. This collection was amassed in Germany and then relocated to the United States when it was given to the museum library of the College in 1925. Most of the rare scrolls of Esther in the collection of the Klau Library were acquired as a result of this generous gift.

(Resource: Capitalizing on Resources: Creating a Model Consortium of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Museum Collections, Thesis by Rebecca S. Levenberg)

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