Discoveries in the 2018 Gift of the Moldovan Family Judaica Collection

Louis (Chaim) Meiselman, University of Pennsylvania Libraries
In December 2018, a gift of over 75 items was given to the Penn Libraries by Joseph and Susan Moldovan. In this collection, there were:

- Printed documents
- Ephemera (postcards, gift receipts)
- Broadsides
- Art illustrations and title pages

However, the most prominent items in the collection were over 25 codex manuscripts and other important manuscript fragments.

Pictured: The Moldovan Family Holy Land Map Collection at the Penn Libraries.
• Map and detailed plan proposing a Jewish plan of Toulouse (pictured)

• A Samaritan text

• Early 19th century Italian sermons (pictured next slide)
The Asti sermons are 17 surviving leaves of a work of derashot delivered on the weekly Torah portions and Holidays. Dates range from 30 September 1828 to June 1830.

Writing is neat Hebrew (“Ketav Iṭalki”) and Italian scripts. Includes a sermon on Parashat Zakhor, halakhic reading of Torah verses describing the Amalekite War (Deut. 17-19), generally a staple of Ashkenazic derashot.
Jews settled in Asti and the קהילות אפ”ם fleeing from France during the 14th century and onwards. Their customs were the preserved French (including liturgy and minhagim).

The Asti sermons were written during Asti’s greatest growth (over 400 inhabitants) and after the abolition of the ghetto by Napoleon Bonaparte. They show a rabbinical writer who was scholarly and erudite.
The Moldovan Gift included a number of liturgical items written by the scribe of Carpentras, France. ʻImanu’el ben Gad de Milhaud (יעמואל בן גד ד밀יאוב) was a prolific scribe who operated in Carpentras at writing liturgical manuscripts of the Shalosh ʻKehilot, or the three communities of the Comtat Venaissin.
תארא
שם...
לעזרו שלום...
ишעא י yelling סט.
יווואו על בועה קוקוס.
ב㎞橋, גש
ויהו כר.
וחיה על ים, חוף.
כשו יר, יוב אבר מים.
כשה חוף, חוף קוקוס.
והיה על ים, יוב אבר מימים.
Previous slide: UPenn CAJS Rar Ms. 498, Seliḥot le-arba‘ tsomot ke-minhag ḵahal Ḵarpinṭrats?, dated 1663. Written by Emmanuel ben Gad de Milhaud, likely in Carpentras, probably among the first of his liturgical manuscripts.

This manuscript includes a kinah (mournful liturgical poem) created by a poet in Carpentras named Monsieur de Chissur (מישייר די חיששור) for a local tragedy, which isn’t named.
This is a fragment of a Rosh Ha-shanah liturgy in the Carpentras rite in the hand of Emmanuel ben Gad de Milhaud. This shows the scribe’s late hand, and his use of reddish iron inks.
ALSACE AND LORRAINE

PICTURED: INSCRIPTIONS IN HEBREW AND YIDDISH OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS OF AN ALSATIAN JEWISH FAMILY, DATED 1824
THE BISCHHEIM PINKAS

“The Pinkas Bische”, 1798-1799 (CAJS Rar Ms. 493)

The Bischheim Pinkas was written by Avraham Freimann of Prague, and is a remarkable Mohel book recording life in Bischheim and Strasbourg during the Napoleonic Wars. Reading the pinkas, Freimann’s own son was sent to the Swiss front and his synagogue was attacked. He was finally reunited with his son at a later time.

Following slide: image of the Bischheim Pinkas.
The title of this manuscript is “Reshimah” (רשימה), and is a price-list of printed volumes of a wider rabbinic interest. Prices are in franc and centime. Mentions the Metz editions of volumes of the Talmud, and other famous rabbinic works; when mentioning earlier printings, it calls them ‘defus yashan’.

Such a manuscript is very uncommon to have survived. It is heavily worn from traveling and constant page turning.
In 1837, Rafael Wormser of Soultz-Haut-Rhin commissioned a pinkas of the events of the rural community of neighboring Hartmannswiller. Community records of a tiny group building a Hevra Kadisha, synagogue building, mikvah, loan society, and hiring a schoolteacher. A record and view into Alsatian Jewish rural life.
THE AACHEN INSCRIPTION

A UNIQUE DOCUMENT FROM AACHEN, GERMANY, DOCUMENTING A YESHIVAH AND ROSH HA-YESHIVAH IN EARLY 18TH CENTURY AACHEN.
THE AACHEN INSCRIPTION WAS PLACED NEAR AN ILLUSTRATED TITLE PAGE OF THE 1697-1699 FRANKFURT AN DER ODER PRINTING OF THE TALMUD (PICTURED). WHILE IT IS FAR FROM CERTAIN, THE INSCRIPTION MAY HAVE BEEN PLACED TOGETHER WITH THE VOLUME AND MAY HAVE BEEN THE VOLUME DEDICATED TO THE TALMUD TEACHER OF AACHEN.

WE DO KNOW THAT THIS TALMUD EDITION, COMMISSIONED BY ISSACHAR BEREND LEHMANN, COURT JEW OF AUGUSTUS II OF SAXONY, REACHED FAR-OFF JEWISH COMMUNITIES AND MANY WHICH COULDN’T AFFORD A SET OF TALMUD.
A separate sheet that was originally meant to wrap a ream of paper, this was manufactured by a paper maker in Lille, Flanders (today Belgium) during the middle of the 17th century. On the verso, an inscription is written to “… the honorable Rabbi, R. Aharon Eibeś [or Abisch], son of the generous, … learned, outstanding in Torah, the dayan, the prominent … Avraham Unna of the holy community of Aachen … who studies in the synagogue called Tsevi Rol heims [Rüllheims] kloyz … with the ga’on Avraham Śṭein”… signed by Mosheh, who authored the inscription.
ליכת דע תສארה
בלוחות שבורה
מריחל שמתתשה:
בידם בין תחתית בפור הפרים