

Guide to the Jews of Italy Collection of Manuscripts and Documents

MS 1890



compiled by Julie Cohen

May 2008

Yale University Library
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 1890

CREATOR: Yale University. Library. Judaica Collection

TITLE: Jews of Italy collection of manuscripts and documents

DATES: 1568-1974

BULK DATES: 1750–1900

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 7.17 linear feet (10 containers)

LANGUAGE: The documents are in Italian, Hebrew, Latin, and English.

SUMMARY: The collection consists of a variety of documents from Jewish communities in Italy, mainly in the northern regions of Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto. The documents include records of Jewish communal organizations, correspondence of rabbis and community leaders, legal decisions, and liturgy. There are also official notices and rulings from various Italian authorities pertaining to the Jewish community. A portion of the documents in this collection relate to the emancipation of the Jews of Italy following Napoleon's conquest. Most of the documents are entirely hand-written, but some are printed or written on printed forms or letter-heads.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1890>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1890>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

- b. box
- f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Collection materials were purchased from various vendors by the Judaica Collection and transferred to Manuscripts and Archives, 2008, 2015.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright status for collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

Preferred Citation

Jews of Italy Collection of Manuscripts and Documents (MS 1890). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of a variety of documents from Jewish communities in Italy, mainly in the northern regions of Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto. The documents include records of Jewish communal organizations, correspondence of rabbis and community leaders, legal decisions, and liturgy. There are also official notices and rulings from various Italian authorities pertaining to the Jewish community. A portion of the documents in this collection relate to the emancipation of the Jews of Italy following Napoleon's conquest. Most of the documents are entirely hand-written, but some are printed or written on printed forms or letter-heads.

Arrangement

Arrangement of the materials reflects their purchase from various rare materials dealers. Manuscripts are usually accompanied by an inventory supplied by the dealer, typically in Hebrew.

Collection Contents

Inventory of Original Accession

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|---------------|---|-----------------|
| b. 1 | Documents concerning the Jews of Italy, 16th-19th century Rare manuscripts, including documents concerning property of Jews in Ancona from the 16th century; many documents signed by leading rabbis of Italy 16th-19th century; a report with decisions of the school <i>Yehi Eide ha-kl'ahal</i> ; a declaration from the 18th century forbidding Jews from using the secular Italian courts; a document concerning "transfer" of a Jew from the ghetto of Reggio Emilia; and three letters from the rabbi of Corfu [Kerkyra (Greece)]. Also includes correspondence, legal rulings, liturgical documents, and records concerning communal welfare funds and institutions from Ancona, Livorno, Modena, Carpi, and other communities. In Italian, Hebrew, and Latin. | Circa 1500-1899 |
| b. 6, f. 2-4 | Oversize materials | Circa 1500-1899 |
| b. 2, f. 1 | Costituzioni della compagnia ebraica della misericordia della citta di Modena By-laws of the Jewish community of Modena, Italy, originally written in 1654 and updated in 1791. Topics include: marriage, circumcision, death and burial, care for the sick, and other matters concerning the synagogue and Jewish community. In Italian, with some words in Hebrew. | 1654-1791 |
| b. 2, f. 2-16 | Modena Jewish manuscripts 16 documents, including correspondence, from Modena, Italy concerning a variety of matters relating to its Jewish community in the eighteenth century. Manuscripts written in sepia ink on paper. In Italian and Hebrew. | Circa 1700-1799 |
| | Northern Italy: manuscripts from Jewish communities Documents from Jewish communities in northern Italy relating to the internal affairs of the communities as well as relations with the larger Italian society. Includes minutes of the board of trustees of the Jewish community of Reggio Emilia, Italy, with its regulations and names of members of the board. Other documents concern a new rabbinical school in Padua, the Jewish cemetery in Mantua, and the ghetto in Cherasco. In Italian and Hebrew. | |
| b. 2, f. 17 | Articles of association of a rabbinical seminary in Padua planned for opening in 1827, manuscript draft Item 1. Detailed regulations for personnel and students, including matters relating to Jewish religious practice and education (18 leaves). | Circa 1827 |
| b. 2, f. 18 | Two documents concerning the rabbinical seminary in Padua Item 2. The first document records a meeting of rabbis and representatives of the Italian Jewish communities of Venice, Mantua, Verona, Padua and Rovigo concerning the establishment of the rabbinical seminary, its goals and curriculum, 1826 (2 leaves). The second document is an official proclamation from the provincial delegation of Mantua granting permission for the planned rabbinical seminary. Among the stipulations are that all expenses will be covered by the Jewish community ("nazione Ebreia") and that admitted students will have high school and university educations from Italian institutions. Dated 27 January 1826; released for publication by the Israelite commission of religion and philanthropy, Mantua, 12 February 1826 (2 leaves). | 1826 |

Northern Italy: manuscripts from Jewish communities (continued)

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|-------------|--|-----------------|
| b. 2, f. 19 | <p>Ruling of a court [Corte di Cassazione, or Supreme Court] in Turin Item 3.</p> <p>Ruling concerns a case, which had advanced through several levels of the Italian legal system, in which the Jewish community ("Università Israelitica") of Ancona filed a claim for payment due from a Jewish man who left the community, 1872 (4 leaves).</p> | 1872 |
| b. 2, f. 20 | <p>Power of attorney granting authority for translations of liturgical books Item 4.</p> <p>Document grants authority to representatives of the communities of Padua, Verona, and Rovigo to go to Venice to prepare translations into Italian of liturgical books and sermons to be presented to the government. Mentions the book Bene Zion. Società Israelitica, La Commissione di Culto e Beneficenza, Mantua, 1826 (1 leaf).</p> | 1826 |
| b. 2, f. 21 | <p>Description of the ghetto of the city of Cherasco Item 5.</p> <p>Contains an itemized list of rooms, shops, balconies, stables, schools, and their occupants (4 leaves).</p> | Circa 1800-1899 |
| b. 2, f. 22 | <p>Letter from the community of Mantua recounting the desecration of graves in the Jewish cemetery, Commissione Israelitica di Culto e Beneficenza in Mantova Item 6.</p> <p>Includes suggestions and recommendations on how to build protective architectural structures (3 leaves).</p> | 1856 |
| b. 2, f. 23 | <p>Minutes of a meeting of the board of trustees of the Jewish community of Reggio Item 7.</p> <p>Includes a list of members, in Hebrew and Italian (11 leaves).</p> | 1761 |
| b. 2, f. 24 | <p>Minutes of a meeting of the board of trustees of the Jewish community of Reggio Item 8.</p> <p>Includes the names of those present at the meeting followed by their Hebrew names. Among those listed is R. Solomon David Sanguinetti (2 leaves).</p> | 1774 |
| b. 2, f. 25 | <p>Minutes of meeting of the board of trustees of the community, beginning with the words, "<i>Ha-yom yashavnu yahl'ad mamonim...</i>" ["Today the trustees met together..."] Item 9.</p> <p>In Hebrew and Italian. Signed by those present (1 leaf).</p> | Circa 1750-1899 |
| b. 2, f. 26 | <p>Meeting of the leadership of the board of trustees Item 10.</p> <p>List of the names of members of the Jewish community and the leadership (1 leaf).</p> | 1761 |
| b. 2, f. 27 | <p>Text beginning with the words, "<i>Ha-yom yom ... noadu yahad m. bene ha-hevrah shel ... me-taam ha-mamonim...</i>" Item 11.</p> <p>Includes names of members (2 leaves).</p> | Circa 1750-1899 |

Northern Italy: manuscripts from Jewish communities (continued)

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| b. 2, f. 28 | Minutes of the board of trustees Item 12. Includes signatures and names of those present (1 leaf). | 1774 |
| b. 2, f. 29 | Minutes of meeting of the trustees Item 13. Held on the evening of 17 Shevat, 5629 (1 leaf). | 1769 |
| b. 2, f. 30 | Meeting of the board of trustees (" <i>maalat bene ha-hevrah mi-taam kevod ha-mamonim</i> ") Item 14. Includes the names of the trustees in Hebrew (2 leaves). | Circa 1760 |
| b. 3, f. 1 | Manuscript account of Assembly of Jewish Notables convened by Napoleon. Important manuscript account of a meeting of the Assembly of Jewish Notables convened by Napoleon to address questions of legal-religious relations between the Jewish community and the state before Napoleon's Declaration of Emancipation of the Jews. The first section is a poem of praise in honor of Napoleon, in the handwriting of R. Abraham Hl̥ai de Cologne, with instructions to the government printer to translate to French and Hebrew (the poem was printed that year, 1807, also in Hebrew). The larger section is a description and report of the first session of Napoleon's Assembly of Jewish Notables headed by R. Joseph David Sinzheimer, R. Joshua Benzion Segre of Vercelli, and the apparent author of this manuscript R. Abraham Hl̥ai de Cologne. Some of the issues Napoleon had asked the Assembly of Jewish notables to address were: the allegiance of Jews to the secular state, the relative authority of rabbinic and secular law, and the relations of Jews to non-Jews under Jewish law, for example, concerning interest-bearing loans. Manuscript in Italian. | 1806-1807 |
| Documents related to the emancipation of Jews in Italy Documents are mostly handwritten in Italian. | | |
| b. 3, f. 2 | Official document from the legal authorities of Mantua Item 1. Concerns rights of the Jews by royal decree: Jews were permitted to engage in professions including business, medicine, and surgery (4 pages). | 1780 |
| b. 3, f. 3 | Official document from the legal authorities of Mantua Item 2. Concerns rights of the Jews, mentioning two Jews who did not receive positions as judges, and granting permission for Jews to deal in real estate, (4 pages). | Circa 1780-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 4 | Legal notice, Mantua Item 3. Instructions from the royal government concerning relations to Jews following Napoleon's improvements of 1791. | 1818 |
| b. 3, f. 5 | Document forbidding Jews to function as pharmacists Item 4. | Circa 1780-1818 |

Documents related to the emancipation of Jews in Italy (continued)

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| b. 3, f. 6 | Two documents from the education department of the royal government Item 5. Documents concern the king's order to improve the education of Jewish children, participation in civic duties, and the self-financing of the synagogue by the community. | Circa 1780-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 7 | Three documents from the royal secretariat, Vienna and Milano Item 6. Order to clean up the areas where the Jews reside, even though the kingdom had already banned ghettos. Also, fines levied upon the Jews and other prerogatives. | 1835 |
| b. 3, f. 8 | Notice from the royal secretary in the name of Napoleon Item 7. Announces the appointment of Signor Treves as president of the merchants' council. | 1808 |
| b. 3, f. 9 | Order from the royal government to the Jewish community of Casali Item 8. Orders the community to supply a list of the names of all males born after 1784 for the draft into Napoleon's army, as all males in the country were required to enlist. | Circa 1780-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 10 | Report of the French representative in Italy Item 9. Concerns the present situation of the Jews and expectations for the future. Mentions the massive purchasing of property by the Jews of Mantua after it was permitted by Napoleon (5 pages). | Circa 1780-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 11 | Instruction from the foreign ministry of the city of Spalato Item 10. Forbids Jews from hiring Christian workers in their homes. | Circa 1780-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 12 | Royal dispatch. Mantua Item 11. Confirms the privileges that Napoleon had granted in the Emancipation of 1791, including community's authority concerning marriage. | 1818 |
| b. 3, f. 13 | Request in Italian from the community of Prague Item 12. Requests a change in the wording of an oath of loyalty to the kingdom, given the emancipation and new privileges. | Circa 1780-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 14 | Letter from an English Lord Item 13. Concerns Jewish rights and the emancipation under Napoleon's rule. Mentions a document of equal rights given in England in what appears to be 1179, although possibly 1129 and a reference to a royal charter issued during the reign of Henry I (1100-1135). | Circa 1780-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 15 | Satire by a Jew Item 14. Concerns Jews in the free professions who, despite the laws, do not advance to high positions in public service. The author makes fun of Jews who put faith in the royal decrees. | Circa 1780-1818 |

Documents related to the emancipation of Jews in Italy (continued)

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| b. 3, f. 16 | <p>Thank you letter written by members of the Jewish assembly of the Lombardo-Veneto region Item 15.</p> <p>Letter regarding the establishment of a rabbinical school.</p> | Circa 1780-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 17 | <p>Minutes of meeting with king, central assembly of Paris Item 16.</p> <p>Dated 5 November. Mr. Cremieu raises the problem of Jews not being allowed to purchase land, despite having been granted rights by Napoleon in 1808.</p> | Circa 1809-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 18 | <p>Report of meeting with the king Item 17.</p> <p>Includes the king's responses to what was discussed.</p> | Circa 1780-1818 |
| b. 3, f. 19 | <p>Notice from the mayor of Casale, Giorgio Rivetta, to citizen rabbi Isac Ghiron Item 18.</p> <p>Requests him to read alphabetical list to the class of 11 and 12 year olds, possibly concerning registration for military conscription, and then post the list on the synagogue door. Dated 27 Brumajo, anno 12 Rep.</p> | 1805 November |
| b. 6, f. 1 | <p>Official document concerning vital records from the mayor of Casale, Giorgio Rivetta, to all citizens Item 19.</p> <p>Originally posted at the city hall. Remnants of the seals are on the back of the document. Requires civil registration for all newborns, marriages and deaths. Dated 26 Ventoso anno 12 Rep.</p> | 1804 March |
| b. 4, f. 1 | <p>Discorso da pronunziarsi nella sera de 15 Scevat 5631 (Domenica 5 Febbrajo 1871) in occasione dell'anniversario della fondazione delle Pie confraternite <i>Hevrat Gemilut Hasadim</i>, <i>Hevrat Malbish Arumim</i> in Rovigo</p> <p>Address given to commemorate the anniversary of the founding of social welfare ("pious") societies in Rovigo, Italy: <i>Hil'evrat Gemilut Hil'asadim</i> and <i>Hil'evrat Malbish Arumim</i>. Speech written in purple ink in Italian and Hebrew calligraphy, followed by Hebrew memorial prayers in honor of members and donors to the societies. Manuscript in Italian and Hebrew.</p> <p>A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.</p> | 1871 |
| b. 4, f. 2 | <p>Manuscripts from Vercelli, Italy</p> <p>Documents from the Jewish community of Vercelli, in northern Italy. Includes community by-laws, correspondence with Italian authorities, requests from individuals for various certificates, and items relating to business and trade. Many documents signed by leaders and rabbis of the community, including Rabbi Jacob Foa. In Italian.</p> | 1766-1796 |
| b. 4, f. 3 | <p>Manuscripts from Acqui, Italy</p> <p>Official correspondence from Italian Jewish communities in the nineteenth century, mainly from Acqui [Acqui Terme (Italy)], with some letters from Casale, Turin, Vercelli, and Moncalvo. In Italian (50 letters).</p> | Circa 1800-1900 |

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| b. 5 | <p>Universita Israelitica: Libro dei Verballi</p> <p>Manuscript register of a Jewish community in the town of Vercelli, located in northern Italy between Milan and Venice. This Jewish community dates back to the middle ages. The register, which begins in 1904, contains minutes of meetings of the Jewish community leaders that took place during World War I, the period leading up to the Holocaust, and the time under Mussolini's rule. It continues until the middle of 1943, when the remaining Jews of Vercelli were sent to extermination camps. A blank page with three stamps of the Jewish community marks the two years when no Jews remained in Vercelli. The few survivors who returned to Vercelli after the war resumed recording Jewish communal activities from 1945 until the community dwindled in the 1970's. The minutes include decisions on a wide range of matters that arose in this Italian Jewish community in the twentieth century. In Italian.</p> | 1904-1974 |
| b. 7, f. 1 | <p>Prayer booklet: <i>Kol Shirah ve-zimrah le-Simhat Torah</i>, Reggio</p> <p>Prayers for the holiday of Simhat Torah that were read in the Reggio Synagogue in 1836, with notes for the prayer leaders and a list on the last page of the eight members of the choir. Includes a blessing for the Duke of Modena and Reggio, Francis IV. In Hebrew.</p> | 1836 |
| b. 7, f. 2 | <p>Notebook with sermons, liturgical texts, and poems</p> <p>Written on cover: B C D M, Badsabea Coen de Mantova. Hebrew liturgy and biblical texts with Italian translations, as well as other writings. The notebook includes hymns for the festival of Shavuot (<i>azharot</i>) arranged in the order of the positive and negative commandments; a variant of the Sabbath prayer <i>Lekha dodi</i>; an Italian translation of Solomon ibn Gabirol's liturgical poem, <i>Shokhne vate h'Eomer</i>; a section of the parody, <i>Masekhet Purim</i>, with the Esther story in Italian; sermons for Purim and Passover; and interlinear, bilingual presentations of the Song of Songs and the Scroll of Ruth.</p> | Circa 1700-1799 |

Accession 2016-M-072: Additional Material, Circa 1600-1900

Materials in this accession consist of compositions, mostly in verse, written in Hebrew in various Italian Jewish communities between the beginning of the seventeenth century and the end of the nineteenth century. The collection includes liturgical poems, poems written for specific occasions, and wedding riddles.

b. 1

Poems and wedding riddles

Circa 1600-1900

Accession 2016-M-073: Additional Material, Circa 1770-1800

Materials in this accession consist of hand-written documents from Modena, Italy, mainly concerning business and legal transactions, such as the valuation of property disputed in inheritance cases. Although the people mentioned in these documents are Jews, they relied on the Italian legal system, not rabbinical courts, to adjudicate the matters discussed in these documents. Document types include approximately 300 copies of official legal documents from the late 18th century. It is possible that originals also still exist, perhaps residing in the municipal archives of Modena. Also included are receipts and notes.

b. 1, f. 1-12b. 2, f. 1-4 Materials from the Jewish community of Modena, Italy

Circa 1770-1800

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Jews -- Emancipation -- Italy
Jews -- France -- History
Jews -- Italy -- Acqui Terme -- History
Jews -- Italy -- History
Jews -- Italy -- Lombardy -- History
Jews -- Italy -- Modena -- History
Jews -- Italy -- Piedmont -- History
Jews -- Italy -- Reggio Emilia -- History
Jews -- Italy -- Veneto -- History
Jews -- Italy -- Vercelli -- History
Judaism and state -- Italy

Preferred Titles

Collection of documents concerning the Jews of Italy, 16th-19th century
Costituzioni della compagnia ebraica della misericordia della citta di Modena
Documents related to the emancipation of Jews in Italy
Manuscript account of Assembly of Jewish Notables convened by Napoleon
Manuscripts from Acqui, Italy
Manuscripts from Vercelli, Italy
Modena Jewish manuscript collection
Northern Italy: manuscripts from Jewish communities

Names

Napoleon, Emperor of the French, I, 1769-1821 --
Relations with Jews

Corporate Bodies

Assemblée des Israélites de France et du royaume d'Italie (1806-1807 Paris, France)
Sanhédryn (1807 Paris, France)

Contributors

Yale University. Library. Judaica Collection
Cologna, Abraham de, 1755-1832