Images of Prayer, Politics, & Everyday Life

The Harry and Branka Sondheim Jewish Heritage Collection
Postcards reproducing paintings by Moritz Oppenheim of scenes from Jewish family life.
Images of Prayer, Politics, and Everyday Life

From the Harry and Branka Sondheim Jewish Heritage Collection

by Leora Auslander and Sara Hume
Private collectors are motivated by personal, intellectual, and aesthetic interests. Each of these factors contributed to the development of the Harry and Branka Sondheim Jewish Heritage Collection. Harry Sondheim, a University of Chicago alumnus (A.B. 1954; J.D. 1957), was born in Germany. The decision to collect in the field of Judaica reflects his family’s history, while the unique focus of the Sondheim collection—depictions of Jewish ceremonies and customs—speaks to the collector’s fascination with the artistic and documentary value of visual representations.

Developed over a period of more than 30 years and now numbering over 400 items, the Sondheim collection includes scenes of everyday life, religious ceremonies, celebrations and festivals, work and play. These images, spanning the sixteenth to the twentieth century, are found in a wide range of materials, from early printed books to newspaper illustrations, prints and drawings, and ephemeral items such as New Year’s greeting cards; and they include engravings, etchings, wood engravings, lithographs, chromolithographs, and photographic reproductions. When multiple versions of images exist, it is possible to trace their dissemination over time and to different audiences. Certain artists were a special focus for the collection, including the work of Bernard Picart, Alphonse Lévy, and Moritz Oppenheim.

Images of Prayer, Politics, and Everyday Life is organized chiefly around the events of the Jewish life cycle—birth, circumcision, naming, marriage, and death—and those of the Jewish calendar (the Sabbath, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Simchat Torah, Sukkot, and Passover); as well as scenes of work and leisure. Some topics covered in
the exhibition, including the Ben Shahn Haggadah and manuscript facsimile Haggadot, are not represented in this publication.

Harry Sondheim wanted a home for his collection where it would be used by students and scholars; and in 2005, he began to present his collection to the University of Chicago. At the University of Chicago, the Harry and Branka Sondheim Jewish Heritage Collection supports an interdisciplinary, vibrant Jewish Studies program; and complements other Library collections, especially the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica.

Images of Prayer, Politics, and Everyday Life from the Harry and Branka Sondheim Collection exemplifies a fruitful collaboration between a private collector, a special collections library, and a scholar. Professor Leora Auslander's enthusiastic engagement with the Sondheim collection was instrumental in demonstrating its importance for teaching and research at the University of Chicago. I am grateful for her many contributions to this project. I would also like to thank Sara Hume, graduate student in History, who organized the exhibition. Patti Gibbons, Special Collections Preservation Manager, ensured the safe physical transfer and handling of the collection; and Kerri Sancomb, Special Collections Exhibition Specialist, produced the exhibition and coordinated this publication with flair and sensitivity. Steven Boozer, Cataloging Department, provided invaluable linguistic advice.

Alice Schreyer | Director, Special Collections Research Center
Working together, they have created one of the most comprehensive, distinguished, and interdisciplinary programs in Jewish Studies available at any American university. Deep and rich Library resources contribute to the unique strength of Jewish Studies at Chicago.

With the addition of the Harry and Branka Sondheim Jewish Heritage Collection, scholars, teachers, and students at the University of Chicago and visiting researchers gain an invaluable and unique resource. Not only does the collection as a whole allow reflection on Jewish collecting practices, but the items included transmit a vibrant, dynamic, and complex image of Jewish ritual life, as well as of Jews at labor and leisure. Equally vitally, the Sondheim collection allows research on the history of representation of Jews and Jewish self-representation. Finally, study of the collection conveys clearly and emphatically the importance of the book, and particularly the illustrated book, in Jewish life.

The Sondheim collection, as a whole, is an eloquent witness to Jewish commitment to transmitting knowledge of the past to future generations. Unlike some collections of Judaica, the focus of this collection is on Jewish life, not on persecution. Harry Sondheim did purchase some early anti-Semitic works, because they, too, shed light on Jewish customs in Early Modern Europe. The vast majority of illustrations, prints, news-clippings, postcards and books, whether produced by Jews or not, were acquired to provide a window on how Jews worshipped, played, worked, loved, and simply lived.
New Year’s greeting cards bearing stamps, addresses, and short messages attest to the dispersion of families even at key holidays, to the multilingual, transnational nature of Jewish society, and to the commercialization of Jewish ritual life. The large and varied collection of Passover Haggadot (ranging from facsimiles of late medieval manuscripts to twentieth-century finely printed, illustrated, and mass-produced versions; and including, among others, Indian, Italian, and American editions) may be studied for likenesses and variations in foods, narratives, and symbols across the Diaspora. The many nineteenth-century illustrations from mainstream English, French, and German newspapers reporting on Jewish weddings, synagogue openings or other significant events in the Jewish world provide both a sense of how ritual practices were performed by Jews integrated into modern urban life and how they were represented to a mass public. Photographs from Eastern Europe in the early twentieth century, by contrast, portray the difficulties and pleasures of shtetl life. Collectively, these works provide a rich image of modern European Jewish life in all of its enormous variation.

Through the very substantial representation of the work of Jewish artists such as Moritz Oppenheim, Ben Shahn, Arthur Szyk, Alphonse Lévy, and E.M. Lilien, the collection bears witness to Jewish artists’ efforts to depict Jewish ritual and everyday life and to use their skill to enhance key Jewish texts. The collection also allows the scholar to trace the diffusion of such work through reproductions (including postcards and prints), exhibitions and their catalogues, and monographs devoted to those artists. These secondary materials, often produced by Jewish institutions, attest to Jewish
communities’ sustained investment in Jewish artistic production. Jewish artists did not confine themselves to producing “Jewish” art. They also sought to lead, or participate in, the aesthetic movements of their time and be recognized simply as artists. The Sondheim collection will thus allow further research and teaching on the complex question of defining “Jewish” artists and Jewish art in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Finally, the importance of both books and illustrations of Jewish life and practices to Jews emerges very clearly in this collection. From the carefully taped small Haggadah Harry Sondheim’s family brought when they emigrated from Germany, to the emendations and commentary in the margins of others, indicating their owners’ engagement with them, to the multiple stamps that allow one to trace successive ownership of some of the books in the collection, to torn pages and stains, it is clear that these books did not simply sit on shelves, but rather were intensively used, part of their owners’ daily lives. The vast production of expensive facsimile editions of rare Jewish books alongside very cheap printings of commonly used texts also speaks to the centrality of books and book art in Jewish life.

Leora Auslander  |  Professor, History Department; Committee on Jewish Studies; Committee on the History of Culture; Center for Gender Studies
Early Books About Judaism

Most early books about Judaism were written by Jews who had converted to Christianity and sought to persuade other Jews to convert and reveal the secrets of Judaism to the Christian world. These early works provide insight into the (often hostile) representations of Jews and Judaism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but they also, through careful reading, yield valuable information about Jewish rituals, clothing, and everyday life.
The illustrations in Johannes Pfefferkorn's *Buchlein der Jude Peicht* (1508) were revised and reused by Antonius Margartha in his similarly critical *Der gantze jüdische Glaube* (1530). Although officially discredited and even exiled for his controversial work, Margartha influenced many later writers and shaped Martin Luther's views of Judaism.

**Johann Buxtorf**

During the Renaissance and Reformation, a number of scholars learned Hebrew as part of their biblical studies. For these Christian Hebraists, Jewish beliefs and customs became a matter of scholarly interest. Johann Buxtorf (1564–1629) was one of the most important Christian Hebraists of his day and was largely responsible for transforming Hebrew studies from an amateur hobby into an established academic discipline in the early seventeenth century. His book, *Synagoga Judaica: Das ist, Judenschul*, was a critique of Judaism, combining a theological study of the religion with an ethnographic portrait of the Jews. *Synagoga Judaica* presented a recognizable if unsympathetic portrayal of the life of Jews in contemporary Germany. Buxtorf's work had far-reaching and long-lasting influence, appearing in a wide variety of editions and languages over the next century.

**Paul Christian Kirchner**

Paul Christian Kirchner first published *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* in 1717, following his 1709 conversion from Judaism to Christianity. The foreword announced his intention to convince other Jews to follow his example. In 1724, the amateur Hebraist Sebastian Jugendres collaborated on a new edition of *Jüdisches Ceremoniel*. Jugendres corrected, refined, and softened Kirchner's language, spelling, grammar, and scornful tone. This
new annotated version included a new foreword and a series of copperplate engravings depicting Jewish customs and rituals. *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* epitomizes the necessary cooperation between converted Jews and Christian Hebraists. While former Jews possessed first-hand knowledge of Jewish beliefs, customs, and language, the Hebraists often had a more extensive education. And, as with other early works on Judaism, the images in *Jüdisches Ceremoniel* have substantial documentary value, even when the text is critical of Judaism.

**Bernard Picart**

The illustrator Bernard Picart (1673–1733) was a French Calvinist forced to relocate to the Netherlands following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Between 1723 and 1737 he collaborated with the publisher Jean-Frédéric Bernard to produce *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, which appeared in a number of English translations over the next century. This encyclopedic documentation of comparative religions exemplifies the Enlightenment project of classification. In the section on Judaism, Picart’s illustrations primarily depicted the wealthy Sephardic community of Amsterdam. Although most of the Jewish population in Holland was Ashkenazi, having emigrated from Germany and further east, Picart’s work focuses almost exclusively on those Jews whose appearance would have been most familiar to a Christian audience. The prints by Picart established the conventional manner of depicting Jewish customs for centuries. Their reinterpretation in nineteenth-century books and twentieth-century postcards attests to the enduring popularity and influence of his images.

Below | Synagogue (left); Tashlikh (right). In: Antonius Margartha. *Der gantz jüdische Glaube*, 1530.
The Sabbath

Shabbat, or the Sabbath, is a key holiday within the Jewish year. Like all Jewish days, the Sabbath begins and ends at sundown. Every week, from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, all work is set aside in fulfillment of the commandment to rest on the seventh day. Celebrating the Sabbath commences with the lighting of candles and recitation of prayers just before sunset and continues with family gatherings, prayer, study, and song through the following day.

Because Shabbat was a home- as much as a synagogue-based holiday, each member of the family had a role to play in its celebration. Women and girls would spend Fridays getting the home ready, cleaning and cooking. By late afternoon, as elaborate a dinner as the family could afford was prepared; and, since no cooking was allowed after sunset, special long-cooking dishes were placed in individual or communal ovens for consumption the following day. Just before sunset, the woman of the house would light and bless the Sabbath candles. Shabbat dinner, ideally a festive, family moment, would start with the man of the house blessing the wine (kiddush) and the woman saying the blessing over the special bread, the challah. Boys and men devoted Saturday morning to study and prayer; by the afternoon, while some continued to study and pray, others turned to rest and sociability. The family reconvened in the home for the conclusion of the Sabbath. The havdalah ceremony marked the day's closure; a special braided candle, wine, and sweet spices were part of the ritual. The central place of the Sabbath in Jewish life, the domestic rituals upon which it rested, and the objects used in its celebration (candlesticks, kiddush cup, havdalah candles, and spice box) inspired many illustrators and artists across Europe and across the centuries.
The High Holidays

In the Jewish calendar, autumn is a time of intense ritual life. Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, the first of the holidays, is joyous but also initiates a ten-day period of intense introspection, repentance, and quest for forgiveness culminating in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Although Yom Kippur concludes the High Holidays, or Days of Awe, the holiday cycle continues as Yom Kippur is followed by Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles; Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth (Day) of Assembly; and Simchat Torah, (the Day of) rejoicing in the Law, in quick succession.

Synagogue worship is central to celebrating the Days of Awe; even Jews who abandon regular Sabbath observance often attend services at this moment of the year. It is not surprising, therefore, that the iconography of these holidays tends to focus on the synagogue and more particularly on the very dramatic blowing of the shofar, or ram’s horn. Tashlikh, the symbolic casting away of sins by throwing a piece of bread into a moving body of water, performed on the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah, has also captured the imagination of illustrators. So, too, has the kaparah ceremony, performed between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, in which a rooster (or money) is offered to the poor. These symbols endured, although their forms changed in the particular context in which Jews found themselves. The body of water used for tashlikh, for example, could be a small rural creek, the Mediterranean, or the Rhine River.

In a classic example of Jewish acculturation, when the practice of sending Christmas and secular New Year’s greeting cards became popular in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth century, Jewish illustrators and publishers started to produce Rosh Hashanah cards and postcards that reflected the styles and tastes of the secular.

Opening of the New Jewish Synagogue, Berlin.
context in which they were produced. Some illustrated the key moments in the Jewish ritual calendar, while others reproduced a well-known painting or engraving of High Holiday synagogue worship, the casting away of sin, or the blowing of the shofar. Yet others use the occasion to emphasize the transmission of Judaism across the generations.

**Feast of Tabernacles**

Beginning five days after Yom Kippur and lasting for seven, Sukkot, or the Feast of the Tabernacles, is a harvest festival. In order to commemorate the forty years that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, practicing Jews construct booths or sukkot outside the synagogue and the house. Sukkot were, ideally, to be constructed of gathered branches and decorated with harvest fruits. The roof, if it had one at all, was to be porous enough to allow the sky to be visible. Traditionally, meals were taken in the sukkah and some people chose to sleep in it as well. European Jews demonstrated extraordinary ingenuity in creating sukkot in urban environments, and artists were equally imaginative in representing their role in Jewish life. The other symbols of this holiday are the lulav and etrog. Lulavim are dried palm branches attached to sprigs of myrtle and willow, while etrogim are citrons, a lemon-like member of the citrus family. Garlands of etrogim were used to decorate the booths and in holiday celebrations in synagogues.

*Simchat Torah*, the holiday that celebrates the conclusion and recommencing of the annual reading cycle of the Torah (the five books of Moses), marks the end of the fall ritual cycle. The synagogue is the locus for observance of this holiday, during which the Torah scrolls are held aloft, paraded through the synagogue, and often transformed for the moment into dancing partners.

_Das Laüberhütten fest._ In: Paul Christian Kirchner. _Jüdisches Ceremoniel_, 1724.
Passover

Preparations and Matzoh

Pesach, or Passover, is a weeklong festival commemorating the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt and their release from slavery. A central symbol of the holiday is matzoh, or unleavened bread. Because the Israelites had to flee Egypt before their bread could fully rise, they ate flat bread throughout their sojourn in the desert. Jews continue to commemorate that episode by removing all leavened products (chameitz) from their homes before the beginning of Passover. In place of leavened bread, Jews may eat matzoh. The flour in matzoh must not be in contact with water for more than eighteen minutes, so that it does not ferment before baking; and no yeast is used.

Images in the Sondheim collection attest to the widespread and continued importance of matzoh in Jewish life. Wherever there were Jews, even in small numbers as in India, strategies for matzoh-baking were devised. While the techniques and situations for baking matzoh have varied over the centuries, its presence at the Passover Seder and throughout the week of Passover has been a constant in Jewish life. By the late nineteenth century, its production and distribution had become highly industrialized.

The Seder

Like the Sabbath, Passover is observed primarily in the home. Central to the celebration of Passover is the Seder. Seder means order, and involves
the reliving, through recounting, of the Exodus from Egypt. After sweeping the last bit of chametz from the home, the Passover Seder begins, including an explanation for the symbols of the holiday laid out on the Seder plate. The text provided guidance on the appearance and offerings of the Seder table, setting the Passover table, arranging the Seder plate, and the foods to be consumed by the gathered family and friends.

The Haggadah

The prayer-book used for the Passover Seder is the Haggadah (plural Haggadot) or compilation of biblical passages, prayers, and hymns. The text tells the story of the Exodus from Egypt and explains the symbols and practices of the holiday. The Haggadah was first compiled over two thousand years ago; and while the story has remained stable, narrative and illustrative styles have changed over time, and commentaries and songs have been added. Since traditionally each Jewish household held a Seder and owned a Haggadah, it became one of the most familiar books in the Jewish home.

The Haggadot in the Sondheim collection suggest the wide distribution of the book, as well as the capacity of the text to inspire both veneration of tradition and radical reimagining. In addition to facsimiles of medieval manuscript Haggadot, there are Dutch, German, and Italian editions; and a facsimile of the printed 1846 Haggadah of the Bene Sefer Haggadah shel Pesach, [1904?].
CAP. III.

de

IPSA CHUPPÆ CONSTITUTIONE,

ET RITIBUS EO SPECTANTIBUS.

§. I.

Equitut ipsa est descriptio cum rituum huc pertinentium narratione. Quae res cum spectari melius, quam describi posset, figura Chuppæ, qualem libet Minhashim, a) representat, nos quod hic in iucunda, sed paullum emenda, exhibebim, ad quam simul oculos subinde Lectore inificiet.

§. II.

In hac iunctura conopeum expansi, & quatuor periclia CHUPPÆ ætatem puerius esse tenuebatur sublavitum representatur, sub quo Sponius & Sponia a Rabbio ipsius adhucante, certis ritibus ac ceremoniis complantur. Quae tota CHUPPA Judaeos constituitio est, quam ut rectius penetreras, hoc ordine singula expedite juvavit, ut Chuppæ I. Materiam, II. Formam, III. Ministratos, IV. Adjunctam, V. Illam, & VI. Finem excitamur.

§. III.

I. Materiam pro condicione peronorum nuptias celebrandam. b) Materiam, variat. Generalem tamem ea requiritur, quæ ad tenetium consecriendum aptat, quæs eis pannus, linum, liniæm, fercum & similis. Dìales ergo & honorabores materiam adhibent pretiosiorem. Pauperiores vero leviori contentos esse oportet. Sic in Gemara Talmudica Maftcheth Sora, b) (נֵי נֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְדֵי לְדֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי לְдֵי LXXI. colis.

§. IV.

II. Forma congitit in expansione, & ornata circa oram expansi inque urum evasit illius, feu cuiusque alienus materiæ ad conopeum consecriendum adhiberet, dependentem, ut fit inaur crépida, cùm illud quam maximè ornatum est. C. 

Tibiti;
The Traditional Jewish Wedding

Marriage is highly valued in Jewish culture and the wedding is one of the most important events in the life cycle. Images from the early eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries show the variety of Jewish wedding traditions and customs that evolved in different countries across the years. Thus, they illustrate the adaptation of religious ceremony to the cultural context and range from the exoticism of the contemporary and ancient Middle East to the exclusive world of the wealthy Rothschilds. Most of the images in the Sondheim collection depict Ashkenazi Jews or those from Eastern Europe; others show Sefardic Jews, whose origins were in Spain and Portugal. Because so many of the books and ephemeral materials in the Sondheim collection were originally written by and for Gentiles, many of the scenes emphasized the otherness of Jewish ritual.

Traditionally Jewish weddings are held outside with a canopy (chuppah) covering the bride (kallah) and groom (chatan). The ceremony includes two distinct rituals, the betrothal (kiddushin) and the completion of the marriage itself (ni’usin). In kiddushin the bride accepts symbolic payment and a signed contract or ketubah from the groom. The payment is generally made with a ring, but in Sefardic weddings it can be paid with a coin. Each of these steps includes wine, which was served in two glasses. Prayers are said over the first glass before the gift of the ring, and then seven blessings are pronounced over the second glass following the reading of the ketubah. Finally, the groom breaks the glass under his foot. The breaking of the glass symbolizes the destruction of the Second Temple, thereby reminding the assembled party of the need to recall suffering even at moments of great joy.

Johann Benedikt Carpzov. De chuppa Hebraeorum, [1710?].
Scenes of Daily Life

Most European Jews, of course, did not spend most of their waking hours engaged in prayer, ritual practice, or even study, but rather at work and (far less) at leisure. European Jewish life was also characterized by movement: Jews migrated often, forced by persecution or expulsion; or in search of relief from a life of poverty; or a world with wider political, cultural, social, or religious horizons. The Sondheim collection includes many wood-engraved illustrations of joyful, tragic, and ordinary scenes of Jewish life produced for readers of nineteenth-century mass-distribution newspapers, among them a ball game in the snow, a crowd waiting at a train station after their expulsion from Saint Petersburg, the inspection of kosher meat, and polishing shoes.

Images of Jews at Work

Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874–1925) is known as the father of Zionist iconography. He received a secular education and in 1899 settled in Germany, where he became involved in the movement to restore Jewish statehood. He was the master of the Jewish motif and fashioned a national Jewish art by blending traditional Jewish symbols with contemporary styles, such as Jugendstil (German Art Nouveau). Lilien introduced striking innovations in book design and illustration, starting with Juda (1900), a book of biblical poetry written by his Christian friend, Börries Freiherr von Münchhausen. Lieder des Ghetto, or Songs of the Ghetto (1903),
contained Morris Rosenfeld's translated Yiddish poems about the suffering masses in the Diaspora. Unlike *Juda*, which focused on the proud ancient Hebrews, *Lieder des Ghetto* concerned the torment of a displaced people with hope for future redemption in the Promised Land.

The images of suffering Eastern European Jews depicted in Lilien's work parallel the tone captured in the photographs collected by Raphael R. Abramovitch in *Die farshvundene velt* or *The Vanished World*, published in 1947. This compilation, a first edition of which is in the Sondheim collection, gathered the works of the few photographers who captured life in ghettos in the years immediately preceding World War II.

**Simon Karczmar**

Born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1903, Simon Karczmar studied art in Paris, where he lived for twenty years. Although he left France for Israel in 1962, most of his work evokes his experiences in Eastern Europe. In a series of images known collectively as *Shtetl*, Karczmar drew inspiration from his childhood memories of the vacations he spent at his grandfather's house in Lithuania. The word *shtetl* is Yiddish for little town and refers to the villages with significant Jewish populations that could once be found throughout Eastern Europe. Karczmar's nostalgic renderings focus on the sense of community and tradition, in contrast with the darker views of life for Jews revealed in the photographs by Roman Vishniac in *The Vanished World* and the drawings of Ephraim Lilien.

Moritz Oppenheim

Moritz Daniel Oppenheim (1800–1882) was the first and most successful Jewish artist of the nineteenth century. Born in Hanau, Germany, he rose to prominence as a portrait painter. The Sondheim collection, with its emphasis on depictions of Jewish daily life and religious ceremonies, has a number of different versions of Oppenheim’s hugely influential series, Bilder aus dem altjüdischen Familienleben, or Scenes from Traditional Jewish Family Life. The popularity of this series, first published in 1866, can be inferred from the many different publications and editions. The original form of the work was a series of twenty paintings which Oppenheim repainted in shades of grey in a technique known as ‘grisaille,’ in order to facilitate lithographic reproduction.

The Sondheim collection includes German and Dutch collections of the Oppenheim images, as well as French and German postcard series. Oppenheim’s images reflected the vogue for sentimental scenes of domesticity current in the first half of the nineteenth century, but they continued to be reproduced through the twentieth century. Like Bernard Picart a century before, Oppenheim established a new iconography for depicting Jewish life and customs.

Alphonse Lévy

Alphonse Lévy (1843–1918) grew up in a rural village in Alsace. Although he moved to Paris at age seventeen and began studying art, his best-known works are the exaggerated yet affectionate portrayals of the rural Jewish community he knew as
a child. He produced his first caricatures of rural Jewish life for Léon Cahun’s *La Vie Juive* published in 1886. This was followed two years later by Sachor Masoch’s *Contes Juives*. In 1902 Lévy published *Scènes familiales juives*, the most complete collection of his depictions of Alsatian Jews, focusing solely on his caricatures. Although Lévy appropriated the stereotypical images of Jews that filled anti-Semitic works, he intended such scenes to demonstrate their traditional charm. He sought to infuse stock images with levity, humanity, and humor—the associations he had with his childhood.

**Arthur Szyk**

Originally from Poland, Arthur Szyk (1894–1951) fought for his native country in World War I. In 1919, Szyk published one of his first books of political cartoons, *Rewolucja w Niemczech* (*Revolution in Germany*), a satirical book about Germany at the end of World War I. This work is characterized by a style of linear rendering that is very different from his later, highly decorative, illuminations.

Between the wars Szyk witnessed cruel pogroms against Jews in Ukraine, which served as inspiration for his continued concentration on themes relevant to Jews throughout his career. For example, in *Le Statut de Kalisz*, Szyk commemorates the guarantee of certain rights to Polish Jews in the thirteenth century and makes a plea for similar tolerance in interwar Poland. Szyk spent most of World War II in the United States, where he produced anti-Nazi political cartoons for newspapers and periodicals. Szyk often looked to medieval illuminated manuscripts for inspiration and covered the page with dense colorful imagery and lines.
Note: The transliteration of Hebrew words in this publication generally follows the Sefardic (Israeli) form. In most instances familiarity has been preferred to strict adherence to a formal system of transliteration.

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