Sutro Library Hebraica, 1200s-1800s

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2016
Descriptive Summary

Title: Sutro Library Hebraica, 1200s-1800s

Dates: 1200s-1800s

Collection Number: No call number

Creator/Collector:

Extent: 32 linear feet

Repository: California State Library. Sutro Library
San Francisco, California 94132-4030

Abstract: This collection contains Bible fragments and scrolls, as well as books and documents ranging in subject matter from Bible commentaries to hermeneutics, lexicons, prayerbooks, philosophy, Cabalistic works, poetry, and medicine.

Language of Material: Hebrew

Access

Please contact the Sutro Library directly.

Preferred Citation

Sutro Library Hebraica, 1200s-1800s. California State Library. Sutro Library

Biography/Administrative History

This collection was acquired by San Francisco businessman and politician Adolph Sutro in 1884 from the estate of Moses W. Shapira, a Jerusalem bookseller and antiquities dealer. Shapira committed suicide just three months prior as the result of a scandal surrounding his proposed sale of a Deuteronomy scroll to the British Museum. Although the Hebraica collection has been cataloged four times, it is highly under-researched. The fourth and final cataloging/indexing was done in 1966 by Dr. William Brinner of the University of California, Berkeley with the goal to create an unbiased and well-researched description of the collection. Brinner’s list has provided the final arrangement. To obtain his descriptions, open the collection guide PDF. At the bottom is a link to the document with this list. This collection is primarily Yemenite in origin and has the potential to shed light on the intellectual and religious life of Jewish Yemenites. It is not known how the manuscripts and scrolls ended up with Shapira. However, as Brinner points out, the 1880s were a period of mass migration from not just Eastern Europe to Palestine, but from Yemen to Palestine as well. It seems likely that these items “may well have been among the articles of value brought from Yemen which these immigrants were forced to sell in a time of economic distress.”

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection consists of approximately 167 items including scrolls, books, and scroll fragments. Many of the items are undated.

Indexing Terms

Bible Commentaries.
Esther.
Prophets.
Midrash ha-gadol.
Hilkhot shehtiah.
Hermeneutics.
Preaching.
Judaism prayers and devotions.

Hebraica item list