The field of Judaeo-Persian studies is still underdeveloped, as most Judaeo-Persian texts continue to lie buried in uncatalogued collections of manuscripts scattered throughout the world. Although their importance was already recognized at the end of the nineteenth century, and despite the fact that they constitute one of the largest untapped groups of Jewish vernacular texts in Hebrew characters, Judaeo-Persian texts continue to be little known and studied. Significant numbers of Judaeo-Persian manuscripts can be found in major European libraries, such as the British Library (formerly the British Museum Library), the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and the library of the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Russian National Library (formerly the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library), both at St Petersburg. The largest collections are those of the Jewish National and University Library and the library of the Ben Zvi Institute, both in Jerusalem, the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, and the Klau Library of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati. It is also known that many Judaeo-Persian manuscripts are still privately owned in and outside Iran; some of these continue to trickle into the libraries just mentioned.

The British Library’s manuscripts in Judaeo-Persian, or containing some text in this language, acquired from various sources, were first described in several catalogues and studies by G. Margoliouh and others at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Special mention must be made of the Judaeo-Persian fragment, a mercantile document, discovered at the turn of the century by Sir Aurel Stein at Dandan-Uilik, in East Turkestan, in the region of Khotan (Sinkiang). This fragment, Or. MS. 8212, has been the subject of some scholarly attention; dated by D. S. Margoliouh as circa A.D. 718, it is the earliest Judaeo-Persian manuscript in existence. A few more Judaeo-Persian manuscripts were added to the Museum’s collection in the first decades of the century, including a very early manuscript, Or. MS. 8659, perhaps from the twelfth century or earlier, acquired in 1920 from the orientalist A. S. Yahuda. Some Judaeo-Persian Genizah fragments, Or. MS. 5557(2), of much later date, were also acquired by the Museum early in the century. The holdings of Judaeo-Persian were considerably enriched in 1925 by the addition of no less than twenty manuscripts from the collection of Moses Gaster. In 1966, the late curator of Hebrew manuscripts, Dr Joseph Rosenwasser, published a short but comprehensive catalogue,
**Supplementary List of Judaeo-Persian MSS.**

**Or. 13189** *Ma'asiyot* ['tales'] in Judaeo-Persian prose. The manuscript is imperfect, lacking the beginning, and many pages are stained and damaged. Blue paper. Probably XIXth century. 209 f. 17.4 × 10.3 cm.

**Or. 13190** A section of the fourteenth-century epic by Shāhn of Shirāz, based on the Pentateuch. Containing the story of Joseph and the wife of Potiphar, this section is based on the weekly reading [parashah] 'Va-yeshev', and can often be found copied separately in Judaeo-Persian manuscripts bearing the title *Yūsuf o Zulaykha*, the title of Muslim epics on this theme. (Cf. Rosenwasser, Or. 10773.) Colophon on f. 108r: copied by Bābāi b. ha-Mullā Rahamīm ... Lārī, on 7 Tevet 5672 [1912]. 108 f. 21 × 17 cm.

**Or. 13191** (1) *Shāhzādah o Šũfī* ['The Prince and the Mystic'], by Elisha b. Samuel (nom de plume 'Rāghib'), written in the second half of the seventeenth century. This work is based on Abraham b. Hasdai's *Ben ha-melekh ve-ha-nazir*, a thirteenth-century Hebrew version of the Barlaam and Josaphat
story\textsuperscript{15} (ff. 1r–61v). (Cf. Rosenwasser, Or. MSS. 4731, 4732, 4744, 10196, 10711.) Imperfect. (2) An incomplete text of *Hikayat-i an seh Yahudiyyân-i tājîr* ['The story of Solomon and the Three Merchants']\textsuperscript{16} (ff. 62r–62v). (Cf. Rosenwasser, Or. MSS. 4731, 4744, 10196, 10711). Embossed leather binding with clasps. Probably late XVIIIth or early XIXth century. 62 f. 21 \times 17.4 cm.

Or. 13704 *Fath-nâmah* ['The Book of Conquest'] by the Judaeo-Persian poet ʿImrānī (d. after 1536), a poetic rendering of the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel I and part of Samuel II. One of the most beautiful illuminated Judaeo-Persian manuscripts known, it contains seven large illuminated pages and numerous smaller page designs. Fine calligraphy throughout; the hands of several copyists are discernible. Ff. 145v, 146r, 159v list names of various owners. There is no colophon, but the owner on f. 159v notes that he received the manuscript on 1 Nisan 5499, corresponding to 9 March 1739. (Cf. Rosenwasser, Or. MSS. 2453, 4731, 10774.) First two leaves badly damaged; restored and bound by the British Library. [Isfahan], probably from the end of the XVIIth or beginning of the XVIIIth century. 334 f. 28.8 \times 20 cm. (see plate II).

This manuscript was acquired by the British Library from the Sassoon collection, at the Sotheby's sale in Zürich, November 1975. See D. S. Sassoon, *Ohel David* (Ohel Dawid): Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the Sassoon Library, London (Oxford, 1932), vol. i, pp. 473–6, no. 614 [Kitab Shahin]; the catalogue of the Sotheby's sale prepared by Ch. Abramsky, Catalogue of Thirty-eight Highly Important Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts from the collection formed by the late David Solomon Sassoon (Zürich, 1975), lot no. 34; [David Goldstein], Hebrew Manuscripts from the Sassoon Collection [British Library exhibition notes] (London, 1982), no. 8 (with reproduction of f. 31v). The manuscript and its illuminations are discussed in V. B. Moreen, *Miniature Paintings in Judaeo-Persian Manuscripts* (Cincinnati, 1985), pp. 49–50;\textsuperscript{17} see also M. I. Waley, Supplementary Catalogue of Persian Miniatures (in preparation).


This manuscript was acquired by the British Library from the Sassoon collection, at the Sotheby's sale in Zürich, November 1978. See D. S. Sassoon, *Ohel David*, vol. i, p. 500, no. 710; the catalogue of the Sotheby's
sale prepared by Ch. Abramsky, Catalogue of [A Further] Thirty-three Highly Important Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts from the collection formed by the late David Solomon Sassoon (Zürich, 1978), lot no. 30; and [David Goldstein], Hebrew Manuscripts from the Sassoon Collection [exhibition notes], no. 16.

Or. 13913

(1) **Alfa Beta de-Ben Sira** ['The Alphabet of Ben Sira'] in Judaeo-Persian prose (ff. 1r–20v). (Cf. Rosenwasser, Or. 4731.) Imperfect at beginning but complete at end. Colophon on f. 20v: copied by Jacob Kohen Sa‘ir Joseph... on Friday, 23 Tevet 5649 [1889]. (2) **Parashat 'Va-yeshev'** by Shâhin of Shirâz (ff. 21r–94r). (Cf. Or. 13190, above.) In the same hand as the previous text in this manuscript. Colophon indicates 1889 as the year of the copy. (3) **Shâhzâdah o Şûfi** by Elisha b. Samuel. (ff. 96r–168v). (Cf. Or. 13191, above.) In excellent condition up to f. 164v; ff. 165r–168v damaged but still legible, restored. Colophon on f. 168v: copied by Jacob b. Mullâ Bakhshî Sa‘ir Joseph for Bâbî b. ha-Mullâ Imâm Lâri, on Tuesday, in the month of Sivan 5648 [1888]. (3a) An owner's statement (?), or a colophon (?), beginning ‘Kitab Rahamîm Hayîm Shim’on’, and dated 1892; seemingly misbound (?), possibly prior to acquisition of the manuscript by the British Library. (4) **Kitab Haidar Beg** (ff. 171r–190v). Imperfect at end. Copied by Rahamîm Jacob Kohen, possibly in Allahabad, in 1888–9. 168 f. (ff. 95r–95v blank). 19 × 15 cm.

Or. 13914

Scene of Joshua, on a white horse, fighting before the walls of Jericho, from the Judaeo-Persian epic by ʻImrānī, *Fath-nāmah*, copied *circa* 1700. Or. MS. 13704, f. 32r


1 See Paul de Lagarde, *Persische Studien, Abhandlungen der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, xxxi, (Göttingen, 1884); Wilhelm Bacher, ‘*Ein hebräisch-persisches Wörterbuch aus dem 15. Jahrhundert*, Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, xvi (1896), pp. 201–47, xvii (1897), 75
There is still no detailed union catalogue of Judaeo-Persian manuscripts per se are those by E. Spicehandler, 'A Descriptive List of Judeo-Persian Manuscripts at the Klau Library of the Hebrew Union College', Studies in Bibliography and Booklore, viii (Cincinnati, 1968), pp. 114–36; J. Rosenwasser, Judaeo-Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum, offprinted (with additional indexes of persons and titles) from G. M. Meredith-Owens, Handlist of Persian Manuscripts, 1895–1966 (London, 1968), pp. 38–44; and A. Netzer, Otsar kitve ha-yad shel yehude paras be-makhon Ben Tsevi [Manuscripts of the Jews of Persia in the Ben Zvi Institute] (Jerusalem, 1985). (In the present supplementary list that follows here, these three standard catalogues are cited as Spicehandler, Rosenwasser, and Netzer.) Dr E. Wust is currently preparing a catalogue of the Judaeo-Persian manuscripts held in the JNUL itself, and the present writer has been engaged to catalogue those housed at the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York.


There is still no detailed union catalogue of Judaeo-Persian manuscripts. Manuscripts in this language have usually been recorded together with Hebrew manuscripts in the catalogues of Hebrew libraries or collections, and are often found scattered, sometimes virtually hidden, within these catalogues. There is, however, a separate section on 'Judeo-Persian', bringing together brief records for manuscripts in this language held in libraries around the world, in the Collective Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts (Paris, 1989, on microfiche). The Collective Catalogue records the extensive, if still incomplete, holdings of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the Jewish National and University Library (JNUL), Jerusalem.

The most important recent single-library catalogues of Judaeo-Persian manuscripts are those by E. Spicehandler, 'A Descriptive List of Judeo-Persian Manuscripts at the Klau Library of the Hebrew Union College', Studies in Bibliography and Booklore, viii (Cincinnati, 1968), pp. 114–36; J. Rosenwasser, Judaeo-Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum, offprinted from Jewish Quarterly Review, xi], reflecting the contents of Adler's private collection, which passed to the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York.

The core of this latter collection, to which other manuscripts have been added over the years, consists of those purchased by E. N. Adler; see Adler's Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts in the Collection of Elkan Nathan Adler (Cambridge, 1921), as well as his earlier Ginze Paras.

Eight manuscripts containing Judaeo-Persian text, acquired from the antiquarian Shapira, were first listed briefly by H. Derenbourg in 'Les Manuscrits judaïques entrés au British Museum de 1867 à 1890 [nos. Or. 11 to Or. 4117]', Revue des études juives, xxiii (Paris, 1891), pp. 279–80 (Judaeo-Persian MSS. Or. 2451–2456, 2459–2460). These manuscripts were also included in the catalogue by G. Margoliouth, Descriptive List of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum (London, 1893), pp. 11, 21, 42, 69, 72, and 85. A further eight manuscripts acquired from S. A. J. Churchill, a diplomat in Teheran, were described by the same Margoliouth in 'Persian Hebrew Manuscripts in the British Museum', Jewish Quarterly Review, vii (1894/5), pp. 119–20 (Or. MSS. 4729–4732 and 4742–4745). Two of these, Or. 4743 and Or. 4745, being Hebrew-character transcriptions of Muslim works, were included by C. Rieu in his Supplement to the Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum (London, 1895; reprinted 1977), p. 156, no. 230, and pp. 179–80, no. 272 (cf. also the preface, p. vi) One of the Churchill manuscripts, Or. 4742, and a later acquisition, Or. 5446, were described in some detail by M. Seligsohn in the first instalment of his 'The Hebrew Persian Manu-
scripts of the British Museum', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, xxv (1903), pp. 278–301.


All of the Judaeo-Persian manuscripts acquired by the British Museum during the first third of the present century, with the exception of those in the Gaster Collection, were described in much greater detail by G. Margoliouth in the *Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1899–1935; reprinted 1967–77), with indexes and ‘Supplementary List of Manuscripts’ by J. Leveen in vol. iv, esp. pp. 119–20 under ‘Liturgy: Yemenite and Persian Rites’, and p. 133 under ‘Poetry: Persian (in the Hebrew character)’; see Leveen’s introduction in the same volume, p. ix, and supplementary nos. Or. 8695 and Or. 9804. On the palaeography of four of the Judaeo-Persian manuscripts, with facsimile plates, see the two volumes of S. Birnbaum, *The Hebrew Scripts* (London and Leiden, 1954–71), nos. 208 (Add. 7701), 211 (Or. 8212), 212 (Or. 5446), and 214 (Or. 4729).

The manuscript acquired from A. S. Yahuda, Or. 8659 (not recorded in Margoliouth-Leveen) – it is one of the earliest Judaeo-Persian manuscripts, apparently older than Or. 5446, the Pentateuch translation dated A.D. 1319 – has been edited and studied by D. N. MacKenzie, ‘An Early Jewish-Persian Argument’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, xxxi (1968), pp. 249–69; see also J. P. Asmussen, *Jewish-Persian Texts: Introduction, Selection, and Glossary* (Wiesbaden, 1968), pp. 6–7 (also providing specimens and notes on two other British Library manuscripts, Or. 4742 and Or. 8695).

The Gaster manuscripts were described in Gaster’s own handlist (nos. 69, 75, 77, 94, 774–82, 936–7, 1081–2, 1084, and 1281), and in the typescript catalogue of the British Library’s Gaster Collection prepared by N. Allony and D. S. Loewinger for the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, *Reshimat tatlume kitve ha-yad han-sel'irim be-makhon: K.h.y. be-sifriyat ha-Muzey'um ha-IVriyim be-makhon: K.h.y. be-sifriyat ha-briti, osaf Gaster* (Jerusalem, 1960) (see under ‘Judaeo-Persian’ in the ‘Index of Languages’). All of the Judaeo-Persian manuscripts in the British Library (formerly British Museum) are recorded in the Institute’s *Collective Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts* (Paris, 1989), in various sequences (‘London, Gaster Collection’, ‘Judaeo-Persian’, etc). Rosenwasser’s *Judaeo-Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* is the most concise guide to all of these manuscripts, including those in the Gaster collection, up to Or. MS. 12191.

4 I am indebted to Brad Sabin Hill for bringing these manuscripts to my attention and for his assistance in the redaction of this article, and to Mrs Devora Coutts for kindly providing dimensions of these manuscripts for inclusion in the supplementary list.


6 [EDITOR’S NOTE: One should also mention here two manuscripts once thought to contain Judaeo-Persian, which have been excluded from the lists of Judaeo-Persian manuscripts. Or. 10254 (Codex Gaster no. 1400), incorrectly identified by Allony and Loewinger (op. cit., no. 345, and in the ‘Index of Languages’) as Judaeo-Persian,
is entirely in Hebrew. Or. 12352 (Codex Gaster no. 388), comprised of *pizmonim* or *pyutim* by *Asahel bar Hanukah of Daghestan, includes on ff. 7r-7v a bilingual hymn with strophes alternating between Hebrew and a vernacular in Hebrew characters. Although Allony and Loewinger (op. cit., no. 1070, and in the 'Index of Languages') describe the language as 'perhaps Persian(?)' or 'Dagestani' [sic], it has been correctly identified as a Turkic dialect close to Azeri; the first vernacular strophe reads: *gelün gidakh i dakhlar üshe göz alakh i yollar üshe belki gele David bize belki gele Farnas bize.* The manuscript (10ff., 22.6 x 18.6 cm.) was probably copied in the eighteenth century somewhere in the Caucasus. Cf. Meredith-Owens’s typescript, *Temporary Handlist of Turkish M.S. 1888-1958*, p. 40 (a single entry under ‘Judeo-Turkish’, listing this manuscript). There are a few other instances of Judeo-Turkic texts, or Turkish in Hebrew characters, among the Hebrew manuscripts in the British Library; see for example Margoliouth, vol. iii, p. 367, no. 1037 (describing Add. 15455, containing two short pieces on the plague in Turkish, and a Hebrew-Turkish vocabulary).

In this context, one may call attention to one other British Library manuscript in an Islamic language, Urdu – a language very influenced by Persian – likewise written in Hebrew characters. This is Or. 13287, fully illustrated in Indian style, containing the text of the popular nineteenth-century drama by Aghā Hasan Amānāt known as *Indra Sādhā* (*‘The Court of Indra’*). The entire manuscript is in Urdu (written in Hebrew characters), except for the abbreviated Hebrew invocation, and the colophon in Judeo-Arabic indicating its completion in Calcutta in 1887. (A Hebrew-character lithograph of the Urdu drama, printed in Calcutta in 1880, has survived in two incomplete copies, one held in the Sassoon collection, Jerusalem, and the other in the Valmadonna Trust, London.)

A unique instance of another Islamic language, Malay, written in Hebrew characters, is described in the supplementary list of Judeo-Persian manuscripts, under Or. 13014.[7]


Individual and collected tales are common in Judeo-Persian manuscript collections. See, for example, Netzer, *Otsar*, index, under *sipurim u-maʿāsiyot*, and Spicehandler, ‘A Descriptive List’, index, under *Sefer maʿāsiyot*.

9 This epic is frequently referred to as *Sefer Sharhi Shāhin ‘al ha-Torah* ['The Book of Shāhin’s commentaries on the Torah'], a title bestowed upon it by Simon Ḥakham, who prepared an uncritical edition of the work published in Jerusalem, 1902–5.


11 The most famous Muslim treatment of this subject is that of the Persian poet ‘Abd-ur-Rahmān Jāmī (d. 1492).

12 Intimating that either he or his family came from the city of Lār, one of the major centres for the copying and transmission of Judeo-Persian manuscripts; see Fischel, ‘Israel in Iran’, p. 1159.

13 I am indebted to Gilad Gevaryaḥu’s help for the accurate reading of the dates in this and subsequent colophons.

15 Cf. the edition by A. M. Habermann, *Ben hamelekh ve-ha-naṣir* (Tel Aviv, 1950). There are numerous copies of this epic in all Judeo-Persian manuscript collections; see Netzer, *Otsar*, index, under *Shāhzādah o Sūfī*, and Spicehandler, ‘A Descriptive List’, index, under *Shā[ḥ]zāda Sūfī* [sic].

16 Explicitly written in the metre of Firdausi’s (d. c. 1020–5) *Shāh-nāmeh*, the national epic of Iran. This popular tale can be found in numerous Judeo-Persian manuscripts.

17 Since the publication of this book another illuminated *Fath-nāmeh* was found at the Ben
Zvi Institute, Jerusalem (see Netzer, Otsar, p. 175, MS. no. 4602, and plates 3–12), which seems to date from the seventeenth century, and appears to be the iconographic precursor of Or. 13704. There exist quite a few copies of Fath-nâmâh; see Netzer, Otsar, and Spicehandler, ‘A Descriptive List’, index, under Fath-nâmâh.

20 Most curiously, it is followed on f. 170V by a short fragment of the tale is transliterated by Asmussen in his Jewish-Persian Texts (Wiesbaden, 1968), pp. 27–8. He translates the entire text, basing his translations on manuscripts additional to those mentioned above, in his Studies in Judeo-Persian Literature (Leiden, 1973), pp. 76–87.

21 This munajât genre, comparable to the Hebrew bakashah, is frequently used by Persian and Judaeo-Persian authors. Cf. Netzer, Otsar, p. 185, MSS. under bet so, and Spicehandler, ‘A Descriptive List’, index, under Munajât-nâmâh.

22 Several such poems are in Spicehandler, ‘A Descriptive List’, e.g. p. 127, MS. 2171.

23 Cf. the numerous manuscripts of it listed in Netzer, Otsar, MS. 1023, ff. 9r–10v; MS. 1049, ff. 42v–45r; MS. 4550, ff. 12v–14v; and MS. 4592, ff. ir–4r.

24 For more poems by this poet, see Netzer, Index of Poets, p. 214, and Spicehandler, ‘A Descriptive List’, p. 124, MS. 2153.


27 This is a much loved poem among Iranian Jews; cf. the numerous manuscripts of it listed in Netzer, Otsar, p. 213, shin, 20.

28 This unique manuscript, described as ‘Malay vocabulary in Hebrew characters’, has also been filmed in the series of Microfilms of Malay Manuscripts from The British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, presented by the British Council, Brunei Darussalam, 1992, film no. O/C Pos. 310/A.

29 I am indebted to Mrs Dipali Ghosh for her assistance in reading the text on this leaf.

30 As such it reflects the very cosmopolitan experience of Jewish merchants in South-East Asia at the turn of this century. On Jews in Malay-speaking territories, see E. Nathan, The History of the Jews in Singapore, 1830–1945 (Singapore, 1986), and the review by D. Lombard, with further references, in Archipel, xxxviii (Paris, 1989), pp. 143–4.

31 Najara’s poems were particularly loved by Iranian Jewry. All manuscript collections abound in Hebrew texts of the poems and Judaeo-Persian translations/commentaries. It may well be that these manuscripts contain hitherto unknown poems by Najara. See Netzer, Otsar, and Spicehandler, ‘A Descriptive List’, index, under ‘Najara’.

32 Cf. Netzer, Otsar, p. 201, alef, 49.

33 Cf. above, n. 22. Some of the best Judaeo-Persian poets, such as ‘Imrānī and Benjamin b.
Misha’el (‘Amīnā’) (d. mid-eighteenth century) have written similar books of devotion. See A. Netzer, *Montakhab-i ash'ar-i fārisī az āsār-i yahudiyan-i Iran* [‘An Anthology of Persian Poetry of the Jews of Iran’] (Tehran, 1973), pp. 44 and 50, and also his *Otsar*, p. 32.