



The Original Manuscript



"And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed." - Esther Ch. 9.28.

The story of Esther is read aloud in Jewish communities the world over to celebrate the deliverance of the Jews from evil. In kabbalistic



and Hasidic literature, Purim is a day of friendship and joy when Jews are encouraged to drink wine merrily and to abstain from water!

Over the centuries, Esther scrolls have become a symbol of celebration and continuity of Jewish life and they form the core of several major collections. The Gross family in Israel owns one of the finest collections in the world and they allowed their most treasured illuminated megillah to be reproduced in a fine limited edition.

Written scrolls of Esther are not rare, but it was only in unusual instances that they were illuminated. This megillah, written on fine parchment, is exceptional because the entire Purim story is illustrated in meticulous detail. Virtually every aspect of the Book of Esther is depicted in the miniatures, where heroes and villains are playfully painted around the clear, square text to illustrate the victory of good over evil.

There are scenes of baroque buildings and genteel characters in typical eighteenth-century dress; even Haman's sons hang in droll positions from the gallows. The wealth of detail contained within the intricately-drawn buildings and costumed figures adds weight to the theory that it was written in Germany around 1700.

Although the exact date and location that the manuscript was commissioned remains a mystery, the words '*STATT SHUSONN*' written in Latin letters



above one of the illustrations at the beginning of the scroll reinforce the German provenance of the manuscript. Only one other Esther scroll, in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, is known to make use of Latin letters.

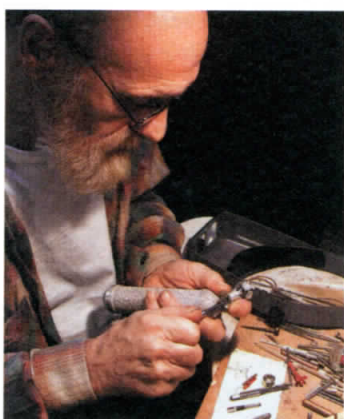
This megillah is unique in other ways too. The varying shapes of the 18 text panels (18 is the numeric value of the Hebrew word *Chai*, meaning living), none of which are identical, indicate that unusually the text was written after decoration.

It is known that the manuscript was in Vienna in the late 1920s (an illustration appears in the 1928 issue of *Menorah* published in Vienna) and came into the collection of Eliahu Sachar, the first Israeli ambassador to Austria, around 1950. He brought it to Israel and sold it to an American collector. The manuscript eventually returned to Israel where it remains today.



Sterling Silver Case

A megillah of this importance required an exquisite case. The Gross collection contains a fine silver megillah case signed by Lorenz Pfalzer in 1824 in Vienna, Austria. This particularly delicate and elaborate style of case was favoured by Viennese silver workshops for nearly 80 years until the end of the 19th century.



The silversmith in his atelier

A Russian silversmith living in Israel, renowned for his fine craftsmanship, was commissioned to make all 295 cases, each one of which comprises some 20 parts. Working in sterling silver, he cast, polished and assembled each one by hand.



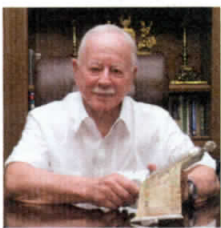
Each part is polished by hand

The result is a lavish work of art which will be treasured for generations to come.

Hallmark

Once completed, the silver cases will be submitted to the Standards Institute of Israel where they will be tested, issued with a Certificate of Purity and hallmarked. During this process a random selection of Megillah cases are given a full Assay during which they will be destroyed in order to establish beyond doubt the purity of the silver.

Every case is also engraved with the edition number and accompanied by a signed and numbered certificate.



The Idea

Muzi Wertheim, a friend of the publishers and collector of their books, proposed the idea to reproduce a Megillat Esther. It was his enthusiasm and energy that brought the project to life. While Facsimile Editions have worked with silversmiths in the past, they have never made a silver *objet d'art* and consider it the perfect project to celebrate twenty-five years of publishing. Muzi Wertheim's close collaboration with the silversmith has resulted in a replica of extraordinary accuracy.

The Gross Family Collection

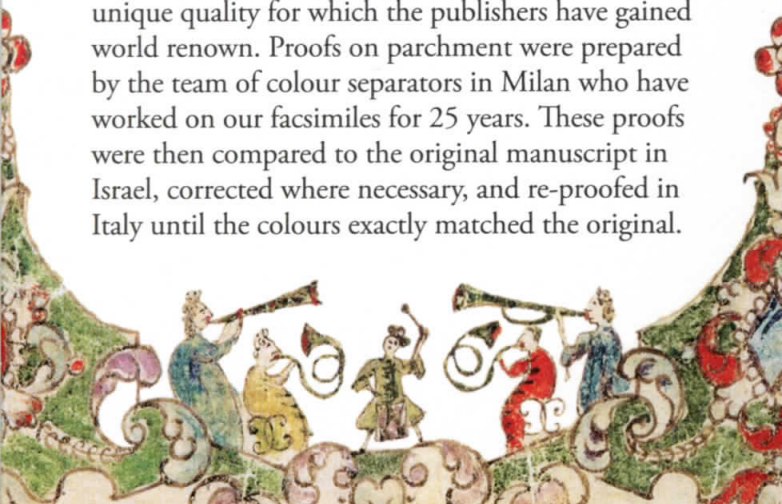
Bill Gross started collecting at the age of six and his extensive collection, focused on the field of Judaica in all its aspects, contains books, manuscripts, and objects with Jewish connections. They are part of what he calls his '*window theory of Judaica*' through which we can view and learn about Jewish life of the past. This megillah provides an especially rich view.



Photography & Reproduction

Excellent photography is the key to accurate reproduction. David Harris in Jerusalem photographed the manuscript with digital equipment as the technology is now mature enough to deliver the level of accuracy required to capture the detail of the original.

Great attention was paid to the delicate colours, including the stains which give the facsimile the character of the original and contribute to the unique quality for which the publishers have gained world renown. Proofs on parchment were prepared by the team of colour separators in Milan who have worked on our facsimiles for 25 years. These proofs were then compared to the original manuscript in Israel, corrected where necessary, and re-proofed in Italy until the colours exactly matched the original.





Parchment

The parchment was made by hand in England using techniques that have been passed down through the generations, unchanged since medieval times. It took two months to prepare each skin which, when finished, was identical in texture, weight, and quality to the parchment originally chosen by the scribe.

The long manufacturing process is highly labour intensive. Hair is first removed from the sheepskin which is then scraped before being washed and softened in vats of lime.



The soft clean skins are then fixed to frames and repeatedly wetted, scraped and stretched until a smooth, even finish has been achieved.



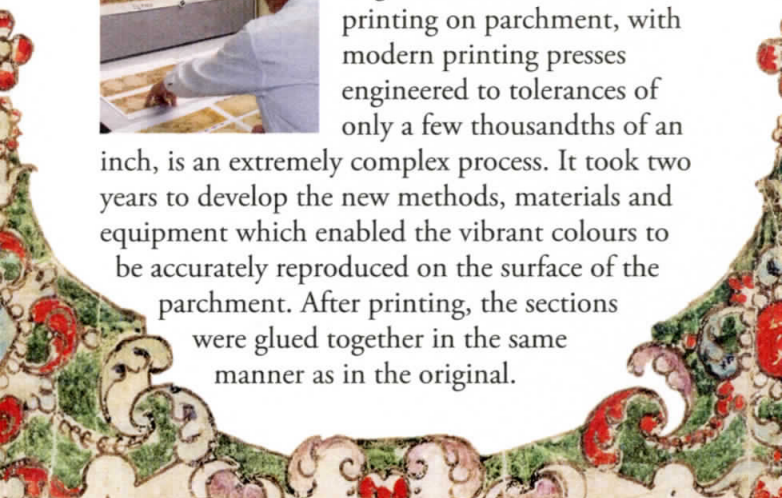
Checking the skins

When dry, the skins are cut from the frames into sheets and sanded. The skins are then graded and the publishers personally select only the very best.



Printing

High definition colour printing on parchment, with modern printing presses engineered to tolerances of only a few thousandths of an inch, is an extremely complex process. It took two years to develop the new methods, materials and equipment which enabled the vibrant colours to be accurately reproduced on the surface of the parchment. After printing, the sections were glued together in the same manner as in the original.





Presentation

The megillah is elegantly presented in a museum-quality case which can be displayed horizontally or vertically. Whether the facsimile is intended as a gift to an institution or a private individual a personal dedication can be inscribed on parchment by our calligrapher.

When the facsimile and case are displayed vertically, the dedication can be seen in the base. A soft leather carrying pouch is also included.



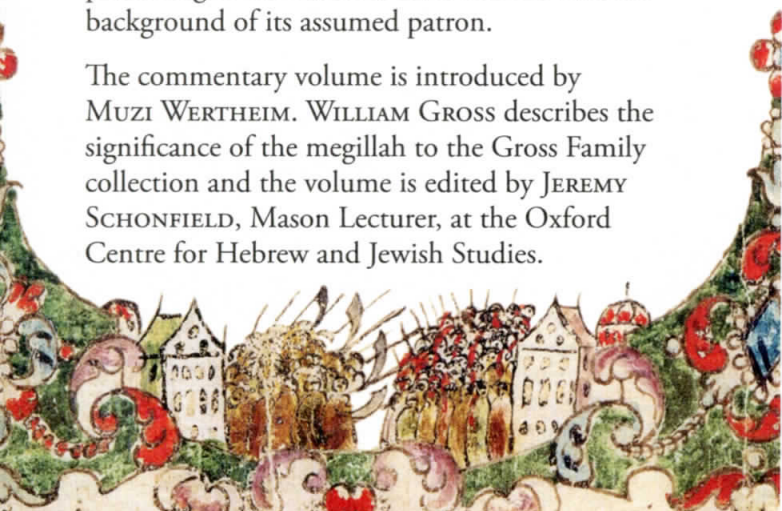
The presentation case

Commentary Volume

EMILE SCHRIJVER, Curator of the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Amsterdam), an expert on eighteenth-century Hebrew manuscripts and printed books, and FALK WIESEMANN, Professor of Modern History at the Heinrich Heine University (Düsseldorf), a specialist in German Jewish history and folk art, take the reader on an illustrated tour of the scroll closely following the text.

The authors discuss the materials employed, the nature of the script, the localisation and the dating of the scroll, and the intricate silver cylinder case. They also provide comparative background information on the sophisticated iconography, parallel themes and motifs in other scrolls, the printed sources behind the illustrations, customs pertaining to the Purim festival and the cultural background of its assumed patron.

The commentary volume is introduced by MUZI WERTHEIM. WILLIAM GROSS describes the significance of the megillah to the Gross Family collection and the volume is edited by JEREMY SCHONFIELD, Mason Lecturer, at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.



Specification

SCROLL

10.8cm x 168cm (4¼" x 66")

Printed both sides on fine sheepskin parchment

Attached to the central spindle
and puller with silver fastenings

The scroll is reproduced at
1.17x original size

CUTTING

Each scroll has been hand-cut to
the exact outline of the original

SCROLL CASE

27cm x 3.7cm diameter (10½" x 1½")

Hallmarked sterling silver (925)

Weight approximately 262 grams (9¼ oz.)

PRESENTATION

Clear acrylic presentation case for
horizontal or vertical display

Size: 33cm x 12.5 cm x 11cm (13" x 5" x 4¼")

A soft leather carrying pouch is included



DEDICATION

A specially made dedication can be
supplied at no additional cost if
requested at the time of ordering

COMMENTARY VOLUME

64 pages

Printed on 90 gsm Fabriano Ingres

Bound in 160 gsm Fabriano Ingres

EDITION

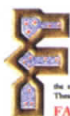
Strictly limited edition
of 295 copies

Each scroll case is hallmarked
and individually numbered

A signed and numbered certificate
accompanies each set

SHIPPING, PACKAGING & INSURANCE

The price includes protective packaging,
worldwide courier delivery and insurance



To the ancients, the same goes in all the world were signs of thought. The book was the temple and visible expression of man's intellect, worthy of the noblest presentation. These true lovers of books

FACSIMILE engaged scribes to write the text in minuscule of our brilliant brought from India or Spain, or in Byzantine ink of pure Oriental gold; they selected the finest virgin parchment; they employed the greatest artists to draw decorations or to paint miniatures, and they enclosed these

glorified thoughts of man in covers of finest materials precisely modelled in labyrinthine designs. For centuries, this glorification was primarily bestowed upon religious manuscripts, but by the fourteenth century wealthy persons began using that is offered an splendid a medium of expression to private libraries, employed by artists to add their talents in increasing the illustrated treasures of the world. By the fourteenth century thousands of these manuscripts had succumbed to time, war and accident. Facsimile Editions now come to bring to light from obscurity obscure manuscripts, and to re-create them for the delight and enrichment of our own and future generations.

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