



Israel Museum Presents *Maimonides: A Legacy in Script*

Exhibition Assembles International Masterpieces of Maimonides' writings for the first time.

This is part of a joint project of the Israel Museum and the National Library of Israel, including two exhibits and an international symposium on Maimonides – one of the more important and influential figures in the history of Judaism

Jerusalem December 11, 2018 - April 28, 2019

Maimonides, the 12th-century philosopher, physician, and Jewish religious authority, is widely regarded as one of the most prolific and influential scholars in Jewish history. His approach to combining general studies with Torah studies; to making Jewish law accessible to all; his encouragement of moderation in all aspects of life; and even his guidelines on nutrition and preventive medicine, are studied today in diverse academic, rabbinical, and popular circles.

Opening in December 2018, an exhibition at the Israel Museum will explore Maimonides' central role in Jewish history through a comprehensive presentation of his original writings and rare illuminated manuscripts, created in places as diverse as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Yemen, on loan from prestigious institutions worldwide.

The exhibition marks the culmination of a significant two-part collaborative project of the Israel Museum and the National Library of Israel, aimed at facilitating a greater understanding and appreciation of Maimonides and his relevance to Jewish history, life, and practice up to the present day. The National Library will simultaneously host an international symposium featuring leading Maimonides scholars from around the world, as well as present a special exhibit, *Maimonides: From the Invention of Printing to the Digital Age*.

Maimonides changed Jewish practice for all time, making an immense contribution to the religious, philosophical, and ethical principles that have guided Jewish practice since the 12th century. *Maimonides: A Legacy in Script* will shed light on his multifaceted persona, offering a deeper understanding of his legacy through illuminated manuscripts such as his *Mishneh Torah*, a work that standardized and codified Jewish law, making it accessible to all levels of intellectual understanding; and an array of his innovative philosophical treatises that highlight the connection between science, general studies, and Torah, which culminated in his *Guide for the Perplexed*. The exhibition will also shed light on

Maimonides' model of leadership, his authority within his own community and worldwide, and his contribution to medical practice.

"We are excited to be bringing such a comprehensive collection of this pivotal scholar's work to the Israel Museum," states Ido Bruno, Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum. "The exhibition will provide a detailed look at the depth and breadth of Maimonides' influence across centuries of Jewish culture through a remarkable assembly of manuscripts, exploring issues that still bear relevance in our own time."

The extraordinary illuminated manuscripts presented together in this exhibition for the first time, underscore the profound respect and admiration that their creators held for Maimonides. Among the rare manuscripts from his own time, the exhibition will display the authorized proofread version of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, bearing Maimonides' signature and containing the inscription written in his own hand, "it has been corrected from my own book," on loan from the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford. Another central feature of the exhibition will be Volume II of the *Mishneh Torah* from Northern Italy, ca. 1457, jointly owned by the Israel Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Volume I of this remarkable manuscript, owned by the Vatican Library, will also be displayed.

An illuminated medical manuscript will testify to Maimonides' stature as physician to the royal family of Egypt, a profession he undertook to create a source of income for his family since he opposed profiting from the teaching or study of Torah. Doctors throughout the Middle Ages continued to study his writings alongside those of the classic physicians, Hippocrates and Galen. Maimonides' instructions for maintaining a healthy regime for a healthy soul were prescient and are still considered highly relevant today.

The exhibition will be on show from December 11, 2018, through April 28, 2019.

The National Library of Israel houses the world's largest and most diverse collection of Jewish books and manuscripts, with a vast and unique collection dedicated to Maimonides and his works. Two volumes of Maimonides' Commentary on the Mishnah, in his own handwriting, represent the only examples of Maimonides' handwriting in Israeli institutions, and the NLI's manuscript collection houses hundreds of copies of his writings from later copyists. The NLI provides access to original and digital copies of thousands of printed Maimonides volumes, from his Mishnah Torah first printed in the 15th century through contemporary works .

A special exhibit at the National Library of Israel, entitled *Maimonides: From the Invention of Printing to the Digital Age*, will provide an additional dimension to Maimonides' influence, exploring the widespread dissemination of his writings in print and digital culture up to the present day. It will highlight the Jewish,

Christian, and Muslim scholars who studied, translated, and commented on Maimonides works, also including representations of Maimonides in popular culture, ranging from historical magical amulets adorned with his portrait to comic-book biographies.

In conjunction with these two exhibitions, the National Library will host a three-day international symposium, attended by leading scholars in the field, which will address central aspects of Maimonides' legacy. A keynote address by Justice Aharon Barak, retired Chief Justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, will open the symposium on December 11, 2018.

The exhibitions and the international symposium are made possible by grants from the Maimonides Fund, a private grantmaking organization that funds in North America and Israel.

Exhibition Organization

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem:

Exhibition Curator: Anna Nizza Caplan; Associate Curator: Miki Joelson, Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Wing for Jewish Art and Life.

The National Library of Israel:

Exhibit Curator: Dr. Yoel Finkelman, Curator of the Judaica Collection.

Opening: December 11.

About The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, is Israel's foremost cultural institution and one of the world's leading encyclopedic museums. Founded in 1965, the Museum's terraced 20-acre campus houses a wide-ranging collection of art and archaeology of world-class status. Its holdings include the world's most comprehensive collections of the archaeology of the Holy Land, and Jewish Art and Life, as well as significant and extensive holdings in the Fine Arts, the latter encompassing ten separate departments: Israeli Art; European Art; Modern Art; Contemporary Art; Prints and Drawings; Photography; Design and Architecture; Asian Art; the Arts of Africa and Oceania; and the Arts of the Americas. The campus also includes the Shrine of the Book, which houses the 2,000-year-old Dead Sea Scrolls, the world's oldest biblical manuscripts; an extensive model of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period; the Billy Rose Art Garden; and a dynamic Youth Wing for Art Education whose educational programs attract over 100,000 children every year. In just over fifty years, the Museum has built a far-ranging collection of nearly 500,000 objects through an unparalleled legacy of gifts and support from a wide circle of friends and patrons throughout the world. The Museum also embraces a dynamic program of some 20–25 new exhibitions a year, and a rich annual program of publications, educational

activities, and special cultural events that reach out to every sector of the population.

For more information, please contact:

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