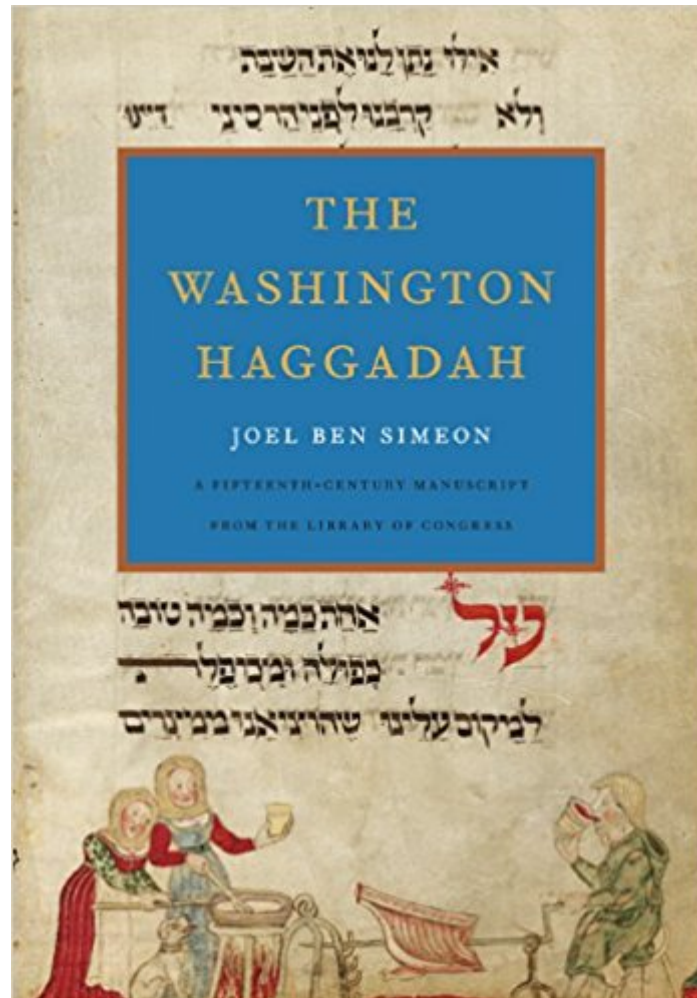




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The Washington Haggadah



Synopsis

After the Bible, the Passover haggadah is the most widely read classic text in the Jewish tradition. More than four thousand editions have been published since the late fifteenth century, but few are as exquisite as the Washington Haggadah, which resides in the Library of Congress. Now, a stunning facsimile edition meticulously reproduced in full color brings this beautiful illuminated manuscript to a new generation. Joel ben Simeon, the creator of this unusually well-preserved codex, was among the most gifted and prolific scribe-artists in the history of the Jewish book. David Stern's introduction reconstructs his professional biography and situates this masterwork within the historical development of the haggadah, tracing the different forms the text took in the Jewish centers of Europe at the dawn of modernity. Katrin Kogman-Appel shows how ben Simeon, more than just a copyist, was an active agent of cultural exchange. As he traveled between Jewish communities, he brought elements of Ashkenazi haggadah illustration to Italy and returned with stylistic devices acquired during his journeys. In addition to traditional Passover images, realistic illustrations of day-to-day life provide a rare window into the world of late fifteenth-century Europe. This edition faithfully preserves the original text, with the Hebrew facsimile appearing in the original right-to-left orientation. It will be read and treasured by anyone interested in Jewish history, medieval illuminated manuscripts, and the history of the haggadah.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Belknap Press of Harvard University Press has published an absolutely gorgeous volume, complete with a facsimile edition (in full color!) of The Washington Haggadah...Anyone who comes to the

seder with The Washington Haggadah will easily win "most beautiful haggadah of the seder" award, and it'll make an absolutely delightful bar/bat mitzvah present. (Menachem Butler The Michtavim blog 2011-04-05) If you're interested in deepening your Seder with a visual testimony of the ritual's antiquity, [The Washington Haggadah] can be a beautiful addition to your table. (Jay Michaelson Forward 2011-04-15) The work is illuminating in more ways than one, and includes a color facsimile of the original 38 pages, as well as a description and explanation of each of the 11 illustrations. This academic review leaves one excited about medieval manuscripts, and wanting to delve into additional works created by ben Simeon. (Mark Rebacz In Jerusalem 2011-04-01) No run-of-the-mill haggadah is quite as effective at making the past present as The Washington Haggadah. This beautifully produced book is a detailed facsimile of a 500-year-old haggadah in the collection of the Library of Congress, which explains the name...[Joel ben Simeon] is described by David Stern, in the introduction to this edition, as one of the most important and prolific scribes and illustrators in the history of the Jewish book...More powerful still, however, are the illustrations that Joel ben Simeon added to the margins of the text (usefully, The Washington Haggadah includes a descriptive catalog of all these illustrations)...The publishers have reproduced the manuscript so accurately that you can see wine and food spots on several pages, as well as places where the ink has smeared after being touched with a wet hand...From the Exodus to the Rabbis to 1478 to 1879 to 2011--in these pages, if anywhere, the past is present and the present past. (Adam Kirsch Tablet Magazine 2011-04-12) The illustrations of contemporary Jewish life in the margins of the text draw one back into a lost world, shifting between medieval and modern. Even after all these years, the text is remarkably readable...David Stern provides a concise and enlightening introduction to the development of the Haggadah and ben Simeon's work, while Katrin Kogman-Appel reveals a sharp-eyed attention to detail in her examination of the Washington Haggadah itself and its place in the context of the artistic development revealed in other Haggadah manuscripts of the time. (Ralph Amelan Jerusalem Report 2011-04-25) Belknap Press [is] to be complimented on bringing out a reasonably priced, attractively presented and scholarly facsimile of one of the treasures of the art of the illuminated Hebrew manuscript in its golden period. (Yerachmiel Rubin Jewish Tribune 2011-04-14) This facsimile edition of one of Joel's best preserved manuscripts opens many doors on the Jewish world of the late Middle Ages...The pleasure in this facsimile lies in its delightful illustrations and innovative calligraphy, graced with Joel's unique decorative touches, and the wine stains and notes left by its various owners, indicating that the haggadah was actually used. In turning the pages of Joel's haggadah at leisure, readers may well imagine its use for over four centuries. (Jewish Book World 2011-09-01)

David Stern is Moritz and Josephine Berg Professor of Classical Hebrew Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. Katrin Kogman-Appel is Evelyn Metz Memorial Research Chair in Art, Department of the Arts, at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Fascinating. It proved of great interest to compare this Haggadah to other versions I have. Very nicely printed and bound.

It has very good translation, and easy to follow. I would recommend it to add to your collection of Hagadahs.

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