

THREE FAITHS

JUDAISM › CHRISTIANITY › ISLAM

Family and Educator Guide

EXHIBITION ON VIEW:

Friday, October 22, 2010–Sunday, February 27, 2011

This Family and Educator Guide is intended to facilitate a thoughtful journey through the *Three Faiths* exhibition by encouraging you to look closely, inspiring discussion of the wonderful items on display. Within each section, we have chosen some images or artifacts we think are particularly compelling for a variety of reasons. We direct you to them and ask you to compare and contrast, make inferences, consider questions, and form opinions about these very special works.

We hope this Guide fosters conversation and further thinking as you interact with all of the items in this exhibition.



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Three Faiths was inspired by the British Library's 2007 exhibition *Sacred: Discover what we share*.

In the section

Highlights

Look at the *Harkness Gospels*, an illuminated manuscript in Latin produced in France in the late 9th–early 10th century.

What are the different figures in the artifact and what are they doing? Why do you think both human and animal parts are combined in the same figure? What do you think makes this a sacred text?

Symbols of Christ and the four Evangelists. In: *Harkness Gospels*. Brittany, France, late 9th–early 10th century. NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives Division.



In the section

Revelation

Look at *Qisas al-Anbiya* in the case about Abraham.

Can you tell what is going on in the image? What is the mood? What makes the mood? Why do you think there is an image that looks like an angel floating down with a ram?

Compare the *Qisas al-Anbiya* image to the one close by on the *ketubah* (marriage contract).

What similarities and differences do you see?

Find the *De la Twyere Psalter*, an early 14th-century English illuminated manuscript.

This is an artifact that shows images from the life of Moses. What different events are depicted?

Examine the 19th-century *Religious Anthology*.

The volume is open to a “written portrait” of the prophet Muhammad. What do you think a “written portrait” is? Would you rather have a written or a drawn portrait done of you? What about a photograph? Why?



Ibrāhīm's [Abraham's] sacrifice of his son Ismā'īl [Ishmael]. In: *Qisas al-Anbiya*. Iran, 1577. NYPL, Spencer Collection.



Abraham's sacrifice of Issac, illustrating a late 18th-century Jewish *ketubah* (marriage contract). NYPL, Dorot Jewish Division.



Full-page miniature with four scenes from the life of Moses. In: *De la Twyere Psalter*. York, England, ca. 1304–10. NYPL, Spencer Collection.



A “written portrait” of the prophet Muhammad. In: *Religious Anthology*. Medina, Arabia 1872. NYPL, Spencer Collection.

In the section

The Scriptures

Look at the Samaritan Pentateuch.

What do you notice about this written text? How is it different from what you have already seen? Where in the world do you think it comes from?



Samaritan Pentateuch. Jerusalem, 1232. NYPL, Dorot Jewish Division.

Look at a different opening from the Harkness Gospels.

Here is another image from the Harkness Gospels. Does it add to the ideas from the one you already saw? What similarities and differences do you notice?



Full-page miniature of the symbol for John. In: Harkness Gospels. Brittany, France, late 9th–early 10th century. NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives Division.

Find the 11th-century Qur'an.

Why do you think there is one line in gold? Can you find any patterns in the text or illustrations? What might these mean?



Qur'an (fragment). Iran or Afghanistan, 11th century. NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives Division.

In the section

The Commentaries

Go to the 18th-century Qur'an with marginal commentary by the imams and interlinear Persian translation.

Examining the page, can you figure out what “marginal commentary” means? Why is it important? What is an “interlinear translation”?

Qur'an. Iran, 1741. NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives Division.



In the section

Spreading the Word: Languages and Locations



left: *Minhah Ketanah*. Fürth, Germany, 1860. NYPL, Dorot Jewish Division.

middle: *Apocalypsis Sancti Johannis*. Germany or Netherlands, ca. 1465. NYPL, Rare Book Division.

right: *Biblia Bohemia*. Prague, 1488. NYPL, Rare Book Division.

Locate the *Minhah Ketanah*.

Why do you think this volume is so small? Do you have anything of deep personal meaning that you carry with you?

Find the *Apocalypsis Sancti Johannis* (*The Apocalypse of St. John*).

Compare these images with the ones of Moses. What similarities and differences do you notice? What story do you think is being told with these images?

Look at the first Czech Bible, published in Prague in 1488. This is the first translation of the Bible into the Czech language.

What do you think of the writing in the margin?

Why would texts have notes in the margin? How is the volume similar to and/or different from the *Qur'an* with marginal commentary you looked at in a previous section of the exhibition?

In the sections

Private Prayer and Public Worship

left: Lectionary. Manuscript on paper of the readings for Holy Week of the Coptic Church in Egypt, copied in 1948. NYPL, Spencer Collection.

middle: DETAIL: Scroll of Esther (Montalto megilah). Amsterdam, 1686. NYPL, Spencer Collection.

right: Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. *Bilder aus Mekka*. Leiden, 1889. NYPL, Rare Book Division.



Look at the two cases of Islamic prayer books.

Why do you think they are so decorative? Why have they been saved?

Find an image in the exhibition featuring a tree.

What do you think the tree represents or symbolizes?

Go to the Lectionary that was copied from a 16th-century manuscript in 1948.

Why do you think the text is so big? What might the manuscript have been used for?

Find the large case with the Scroll of Esther.

What story does it tell?

Look at the photograph on the wall from the portfolio *Bilder aus Mekka*.

Where does it look like this huge gathering is taking place? How can you tell? Have you ever seen public worship that looks like this?