A New Discovery:
The Earliest Illustrated Esther Scroll by Shalom Italia

Shalom Sabar

The artistic careers of Jewish artists active in Europe during the early modern period are little known. In fact, the vast majority of Judaic works of art from this period do not even bear the names of their makers. Unlike the growing trend in the general society, most Jewish artists of this period did not deem it necessary or important to even sign their work, and thus the number of known names is relatively small.[1] Moreover, the artists generally did not enjoy any special status within Jewish circles, and commonly no stories or folktales were told about their skills or creations, as was the case with venerated figures in Jewish society.[2] Due to the paucity of records, modern scholars of Jewish art are naturally fascinated by any piece

of information that may be gathered about the activities of the artists of the past, and constantly search for evidence that would shed light on the role of visual culture in the life of Jewish societies.

One of the artists whose career and oeuvre have been attracting the attention of scholars since the very beginning of research in the field of Jewish art is the noted Jewish engraver, etcher, and draftsman of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, Shalom, son of Mordecai Italia (1618/19–after 1664).[3] As his name implies, Italia was not of Dutch origin but came to Holland from his native town of Mantua, where members of his family were involved in Hebrew printing.[4] Scholars assume that the aspiring young

1   Many years ago the noted Jewish art historian Franz Landsberger (1883–1964) made an admirable effort to sum up the information known at the time about identifiable Jewish artists; see his essays: "The Jewish Artist before the Time of Emancipation," *HUCA* 16 (1941): 321–414; "New Studies in Early Jewish Artists," ibid. 18 (1943/44): 279–318. Since Landsberger's pioneering studies, the efforts of scholars have naturally yielded much more information on individual Jewish artists (see, for example, the evidence gathered on five scribe-artists of the eighteenth-century, the so-called "Moravia school," by Iris Fishof, *Jüdische Buchmalerei in Hamburg und Altona: Zur Geschichte der Illumination hebräischer Handschriften im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 1999).

2   For this genre in Jewish folklore, see Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning* (Bloomington, IN, 1999), 106–20, 321–42, 393–429, and more.

3   Italia signed his name in Hebrew שלום בכמ״ר מרדכי מאיטאליאה and in Latin letters Salom Italia. In the sources and the scholarly literature the name has been transliterated in several forms – Salom, Salomon, Selemon, Salomo, Schalom, etc. The form selected here reflects the

transliteration of his name in Hebrew (see Bezalel Narkiss, "Italia, Shalom," in *EJ*[2] 10:787). The earliest study on Italia concerns the publication of a document describing his presence in Amsterdam published by a Dutch scholar writing as early as 1885: A.D. de Vries, "Biographische aanteekeningen betreffende voorrnaamelijk Amsterdamsche schilders, plaastnijders, enz. en hunneverwanten," *Oud Holland* 3 (1885): 156. In 1918, the noted Judaica collector, Salli Kirschstein, tried to trace his life and work (with evident mistakes); see Salli Kirschstein, *Jüdische Graphiker aus der Zeit von 1625–1825* (Berlin, 1918), 9–14 and pls. I–VI. The most comprehensive and still the essential survey and list of his works is Mordecai Narkiss, "Yeẓurato shel Shalom ben rabbi Mordechai Italia (1619–1655?)" [The Oeuvre of the Jewish Engraver Salom Italia (1619–55?)], *Tarbiz* 25 (1956): 441–51; 26 (1957): 87–101 (Hebrew; English summary, pp. v–viii). Most recently an exhibition of Italia's Esther scrolls was held at the Jewish Historical Museum of Amsterdam and accompanied by a detailed essay on the artist and his scrolls: Sharon Assaf and Emily D. Bilski, *Salom Italia's Esther Scrolls and the Dutch Golden Age* (Amsterdam, 2011).

4   On the Italia family and some of its distinguished members in Mantua, see Shlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Jerusalem, 1977), s.v. index; and on the printing press of the Italia family, first occasionally by Jacob d'Italia and then by his son Eliezer

Fig. 1. Shalom Italia, Scroll of Esther, Netherlands, ca. 1640–41. Hand drawn and manuscript on parchment. General view. Braginsky Collection, Zurich. Photography by Ardon Bar-Hama, Ra'anana, Israel (Figs. 1–34 are all from this scroll)

artist possibly acquired his skills in the family printing shop before moving to Amsterdam as a young man of 21 or 22, in or before 1641. The new "Sephardi capital"

attracted skilled Jewish craftsmen seeking to find their livelihood in the service of the wealthy former Marrano patrons, who sought to enrich their culture with costly

d'Italia, who printed a few books in the shop that he opened in 1612, see ibid., 681–85, 715; Narkiss, "Yeẓurato shel Shalom Italia," *Tarbiẓ* 25: 441, n. 3.

5 On the Portuguese elite as patrons of art, see Briana Preminger, "Yehudei he-ḥaẓer ke-fatronim shel ommanuyyot: bein tarbut ha-barok le-ḥayyei

beit ha-kneset ha-portugali be-Amsterdam ba-me'ot ha-17 ve-ha-18" [Amsterdam's "Court Jews" as Patrons of Art – Between Baroque Culture to the Life in the Portuguese Synagogue in the 17th and 18th Centuries, M.A. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998] (Hebrew). See also Susan W. Morgenstein and Ruth E. Levine, eds. *The Jews in the Age of*

Judaic objects.[5] A Jewish artist from one of the leading art capitals of Italy must have been a welcome addition to the newly revived community. Indeed, Italia worked

Rembrandt (Rockville, MD, 1981); Steven M. Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews* (Chicago, 2003), esp. 42–103. For Italia's relationships with the Portuguese community, see Assaf and Bilski, *Salom Italia's Esther Scrolls*, 9–12.

6 Simonsohn, *History*, 654 and n. 261 quotes a "Bill of compromise" drawn up in Mantua in 1664, between Italia and two women of his family.

in the service of the Amsterdam community throughout the 1640s and early 1650s, producing significant graphic works using the technique of copper engraving and etching. Italia returned to his hometown in the late 1650s and apparently died there some time after 1664.[6]

Most prominent in Italia's oeuvre are the engraved and hand-painted borders of Esther scrolls. The craft of enhancing the private parchment scroll read on the Purim

holiday with colorful decorations or episodes from the Book of Esther was most likely "invented" in Renaissance Italy, quite probably influenced by the popularity of the figure of Esther and the events in her story in various fields of contemporary culture, including the theater, poetry, and the visual arts.[7] Shalom Italia was definitely instrumental in importing this popular Jewish art form of his native land to Holland – the country that perfected this genre and raised it to new heights.[8] The late Mordecai Narkiss attributed five *megillot* (scrolls) to Italia, copies of which are found in selected collections and libraries.[9] Since Narkiss' publication other scrolls have surfaced, some of which originally appeared in Judaica auctions.[10]

In this paper I would like to present a recently discovered illustrated *megillah* that sheds light on the beginning of this genre in Holland (fig. 1). This important *megillah*, as we shall see, ranks amongst the earliest illustrated scrolls produced during the formative years of the newly established Portuguese community, and its form and content contributed significantly to the dissemination and popularity of this genre in Holland. Above all, I will try to establish that the talented anonymous artist of this scroll cannot be other than Shalom Italia himself, creating his first influential scroll on Dutch soil.

Physical Description of the Scroll

The scroll here under discussion was for many years in the collection of the late Dutch scholar and author Mozes Heiman Gans, and was recently acquired for another prominent collection of Hebrew manuscripts and books, that of Mr. René Braginsky.[11] The scroll is comprised of four parchment sheets, sewn to each other with the sinews of kosher animals; its total length is 245.5 cm and its average height is 127 mm. The first sheet is heavily stained – as it is commonly the most exposed section and thus often preserved in inferior condition. Here this section attests

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7 See, for example, Diana Robin, Anne R. Larsen, and Carole Levin, eds. *Encyclopedia of Women in the Renaissance: Italy, France, and England* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2007), 368. In the field of the visual arts, the story of Esther is most prominently displayed on fifteenth-century *cassone* and *spalliere* panels, where the biblical heroine serves as a virtuous model for contemporary brides. See Paola Tinagli, "Womanly Virtues in Quattrocento Florentine Marriage Furnishings," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. Letizia Panizza (Oxford, 2000), 265–84; Mary Rogers and Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italy, 1350-1650: Ideals and Realities – a Sourcebook* (Manchester and New York, 2005), 77–78, 91, 336–67; Anna Drummond, "The Meek and Mighty Bride: Representations of Esther, Old Testament Queen of Persia, on Fifteenth-Century Italian Marriage Furniture" [electronic journal: *e-maj*, issue 1 July-December 2005, pp. 4.1–4.11]. For an attempt to associate these images with Jewish culture, see Marianne Haraszti-Takács, "Fifteenth-Century Painted Furniture with Scenes from the Esther Story," *JA* 15 (1989): 14–25. Despite the relatively large number of studies on Italian Esther scrolls, the whole subject and its relationships to non-Jewish Italian culture still awaits a comprehensive and in-depth study. For some of the studies on individual Italian scrolls, see Mendel Metzger, "The John Rylands Megillah and Some Other Illustrated Megilloth of the XVth to XVIIth Centuries," *BJRUL* 45 (1962): 148–84; idem, "A Study of Some Unknown Hand-Painted Megilloth of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," ibid. 46 (1963): 84–126; idem, "The Earliest Engraved Italian Megilloth," ibid. 48 (1966): 381–432; idem, "La Meghillàh illustrata della Comunità israelitica di Padova," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 32 (1966): 88–98; Chaya Benjamin, "An Illustrated Venetian Esther Scroll and the Commedia dell'Arte," *The Israel Museum News* 14 (1978): 50–59; Eva Frojmovic, "The Perfect Scribe and an Early

Engraved Esther Scroll," *British Library Journal* 23, no. 1 (1997): 68-80; Cornelia Bodea, *Treasures of Jewish Art: The 1673 Illuminated Scroll of Esther Offered to a Romanian Hierarch* (Iasi, 2002); Florence Soulam, "Unveiling the Secrets of the Scrolls of Moshe Pescarolo, Scribe and Artist: An Analysis of Pescarolo's Scrolls in the Historical Context of Italy in the Early 17th Century," PhD diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006.

8 For brief introductions on the dissemination of the art of the Esther scrolls in other European countries and selected communities in Islamic lands, see the following encyclopedia entries (and the additional literature quoted in them): Joseph Gutmann, "Estherrolle," *Reallexicon zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1969), vol. 6, cols. 88–103; Shalom Sabar, "Esther Scroll in Art," *EJ2*, 18: 218–20.

9 Narkiss, "Yeẓurato shel Shalom," vol. 25: 445–49; vol. 26: 87–90.

10 See, for example, Christie's *East – The A. L. Shane Collection of Judaica and Hebraica* (New York, 1998), lots 452, 453, and 454 (the latter is not in Narkiss' list). For a recent summary of the evidence, see Assaf and Bilski, *Salom Italia's Esther Scrolls*.

11 Gans is especially known for his massive volume *Memorbook: History of Dutch Jewry from the Renaissance to 1940* (Baarn, 1977). The image of this scroll is not included in the book, which features many items from the author's collection (though it does reproduce a familiar type of an Esther scroll by Shalom Italia on p. 38). For the Braginsky Collection, see Evelyn M. Cohen, Sharon Liberman Mintz, and Emile G.L. Schrijver, eds., *A Journey through Jewish Worlds: Highlights from the Braginsky Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books* (Amsterdam, 2009); Esther scrolls are reproduced and described on pp. 226–89 (the present scroll, though, is not included as it was acquired later; it does appear in the recent German edition of the catalogue, where the conclusions

additionally to the frequent usage of the scroll since the time it was first produced. A total of thirty text columns are divided in the following manner: 8 columns in the first sheet; 9 in the second; 5 in the third and shortest sheet; and 8 in the fourth and last sheet. Most columns contain 22 lines of text, but there are some exceptions with 21 and 23 lines. Another obvious exception is the column with the list of Haman's sons, which is written in larger capitals and has only eleven lines – the minimum number required by the *halakhah* for this section (fig. 2).[12] The text columns were produced by a proficient scribe who closely followed the illustrated background (see below) and are thus of varying sizes – short within the upper part of the decorative arch, wider and even at the bottom. The average measurements of a text column (width and height) are 58×27 mm.[13]

The scribe used black ink and wrote the text in minuscule square letters. The letters are generally not provided with crownlets (*taggin*), which indeed are not mandatory in Esther scrolls, though there are many illustrated private *megillot* that do have them.[14] An exception to this rule is the column with the list of Haman's sons – perhaps because it is inscribed, as is traditionally the case with other Esther scrolls, in much larger letters – and its crownlets are marked by their sharpness and clarity (fig. 2).[15]

Tiny holes appearing along the upper and lower borders of the first membrane indicate that the parchment had a textile backing. This procedure obviously served to protect the opening section of the *megillah* (in some extant scrolls the textile is still preserved).[16] The textile backing, however, apparently continued throughout the scroll, as narrow stained strips along the upper and lower margins

Fig. 2. Column with the list of Haman's sons

of all the other membranes are clearly visible, indicating that the owner of the scroll apparently wished to further protect his precious *megillah*.[17]

The Illustration of the Scroll

The scroll was decorated by a folk artist with aesthetic sensitivity and talent for drawing tiny miniatures containing many details. The dominant and orderly decorative program apparently preceded the scribal

of the present essay have been incorporated: Emile Schrijver and Falk Wiesemann, eds., *Schöne Seiten: Jüdische Schriftkultur aus der Braginsky Collection* [Zurich, 2011], 274–79).

12 For a summary of the halakhic requirements concerning the writing of Esther scrolls, see Yisrael Kraus (Kroiz), *Oẓar Torah, tfillin u-mezuzot: "Mlekhet Yisra'el,"* 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1983), 3:169–81 (Hebrew) (and see there, 174–55, for the standard rules of writing the list of Haman's sons).

13 This rule applies also to the column with the list of Haman's sons.

14 According to the *Shulḥan Arukh*, "there are those who require *taggin* in Esther scrolls, and there are those who don't" (*Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, 691:2). Modern authorities usually recommend writing *taggin* for a kosher

Esther scroll; see Kraus, *Oẓar Torah*, 173.

15 As in Torah scrolls, *tfillin*, and *mezuzot*, in this column the scribe decorated the seven letters of שעטנז גץ with three crownlets, and the six letters of בדק חיה with a single crownlet (the rest of the letters, מלאבת סופר, traditionally remain without any crownlets).

16 All of them are apparently Dutch, which helps to prove the provenance of the scroll (see below).

17 Textile backings for the entire scroll were commonly used in the case of *megillot* with cutout designs in order to protect the tiny and delicate parchment cutouts and provide a colored background so that they are visible. For one such Dutch scroll see n. 24 below.

work – as becomes clear when we notice that in several text columns the inscribed words cover the decoration beneath. On the other hand, the illustrations are closely related to the immediate text that they accompany, indicating that even if two hands were involved, it definitely was a close collaborative venture. We will try to identify the artist (and scribe?) later in this analysis. Drawn in brown ink, the designs with their tiny details give the impression of copper engravings executed by a proficient craftsman. It

takes time and effort to discover, however, that the images were not printed from typical copper plates but rather the entire decorative program was drawn by hand. This unusual, even surprising, choice of medium by the artist actually provides a key for understanding the place of this scroll in his career; we shall attempt to reconstruct and explain the process below.

The dominant decorative motif, which runs along the entire *megillah*, is architectural: an impressive Baroque portal with a central rusticated arch supported by a pair of massive piers, which serve as the framing device for each and every text column. There is a total of thirty nearly identical portals – corresponding to the number of text columns. In each portal the artist carefully depicted many architectural details in fine designs that closely imitate realistic contemporary architecture: a set of voussoirs with a prominent keystone; delicate intrados (the interior surface of the arch) and extrados (the exterior surface of the arch), columns and ornamental bases, etc. The piers of the portals are topped by decorative balls in Dutch style flanking an open pediment broken at the apex, and the gap is filled with a vase with flowers. Over the two parts of the pediment appears a pair of reclining nude *putti*, facing each other as they touch or point at the flowers springing from the vase. The rectangular panels beneath the pediment depict two alternating images of typical Dutch landscapes: a view of a cityscape with a sailing boat

Fig. 3. Detail: Broken gable, putti and cityscape
Fig. 4. Detail: Floral amphorae, broken gable, putti and landscape with a boat

Fig. 5. King Ahasuerus (right) and Queen Esther (left) flank the arch

at its left, or a slightly different cityscape with a large tree to the left (figs. 3, 4).

The space between the text columns – actually between each pair of portals – is occupied by a large delicately drawn figure, standing over and topped by a magnificent ornamental amphora with a narrow neck and two peacock-headed handles (fig. 4). The amphorae are filled with flowers, each carefully delineated, and beneath them are additional floral swags. There are two figures that appear alternatively, depicting the royal couple of the Book of Esther: King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther (fig. 5). The king is shown in frontal position, his

Fig. 6. Ahasuerus seated on his throne (Esther 1:1)

Fig. 7. "The Feast of Ahasuerus" (Esther 1:3)

Fig. 8. "The Feast of Vashti" (Esther 1:9)

Fig. 9. Ahasuerus and his advisors (Esther 1:13)

Fig. 10. The king's couriers are set to go (Esther 1:22)

Fig. 11. Mordecai leading Esther (taking care of her as his daughter; Esther 2:7)

head in profile, standing tall and erect, dressed in royal garb, a crown on his head and a scepter in his left hand. Alternating with the figure of the king is Esther dressed in attractive Baroque costume, wearing a tiny crown and a necklace, and like Ahasuerus, she holds an ornamental scepter in her left hand. Unlike the king's head, hers is frontal, looking at the viewer, perhaps implying that she is the more important figure among the two. The figure of the king appears fifteen times, while that of the queen fourteen times.

The base beneath each of the twenty-nine figures is actually a framed picture containing a scene from the Book of Esther. Despite their minuscule size, the artist managed to insert an episode with several figures within each such tiny frame. Starting from the first scene, appearing between the first and second portals, the scenes are:

Scene No. 1 (fig. 6) – Ahasuerus, the king "who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush" (Esther 1:1). The king is shown seated on his throne beneath a baldachin on the right, looking at his capital city of Shushan on the left.

Scene No. 2 (fig. 7) – "The Feast of Ahasuerus" (Esther 1:3). This is a crowded scene with six male figures around a table.

Scene No. 3 (fig. 8) – "The Feast of Vashti" (Esther 1:9). The queen is seated on her baldachin throne on the right with a group of women standing on the left.

Scene No. 4 (fig. 9) – The advisors of Ahasuerus stand in front of him: "Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times" (Esther 1:13).

Scene No. 5 (fig. 10) – The king's couriers are set to go on foot and horseback, blowing their trumpets: "He [Ahasuerus] sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language…" (Esther 1:22).

Fig. 12. Ahasuerus crowns Esther (Esther 2:17)

Fig. 13. Mordecai overhears Bigthan and Teresh (Esther 2:21)

Fig. 14. Hanging of Bigthan and Teresh (Esther 2:23)

Fig. 15. Ahasuerus gives his ring to Haman (Esther 3:10)

Fig. 16. Ahasuerus and Haman sitting down to drink (Esther 3:15)

Fig. 17. Queen Esther in distress (Esther 4:4)

Scene No. 6 (fig. 11) – Elderly Mordecai is in the center while young Esther walks before him as he supports her – apparently referring to the words: "Mordecai had taken her [Esther] as his own daughter when her father and mother died" (Esther 2:7).

Scene No. 7 (fig. 12) – The enthroned king is shown crowning Esther, who kneels in front of him, while three courtiers watch the scene (Esther 2:17).

Scene No. 8 (fig. 13) – [Between the first and second membranes]: Mordecai overhears Bigthan and Teresh plotting against the king (Esther 2:21).

Scene No. 9 (fig. 14) – The hanging of Bigthan and Teresh is shown in the background of a central gate of a palace with people standing and watching the scene (Esther 2:23).

Scene No. 10 (fig. 15) – The king, seated on the right, removes his ring and gives it to Haman standing on the center, while a figure on horseback is shown in the background (Esther 3:10).

Scene No. 11 (fig. 16) – The king is seated at the table with Haman: "The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered" (Esther 3:15).

Scene No. 12 (fig. 17) – Enthroned Queen Esther bewails while two figures (Mordecai and Hatach?) look on: "When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress" (Esther 4:4).

Scene No. 13 (fig. 18) – "When the [king] saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand" (Esther 5:2).

Scene No. 14 (fig. 19) – Esther's wine banquet with Ahasuerus and Haman (Esther 5:5). The three figures are seated around the table in a familiar and most popular scene.

Scene No. 15 (fig. 20) – Haman is coming to Mordecai to lead him on the horse: "Have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head" (Esther 6:8).

Fig. 18. Ahasuerus extending his gold scepter to Esther (Esther 5:2)

Fig. 19. Esther's first wine banquet with Ahasuerus and Haman (Esther 5:5)

Fig. 20. Haman with the king's horse comes to Mordecai (Esther 6:8)

Fig. 21. Haman dresses Mordecai (Esther 6:11)

Fig. 22. The triumph of Mordecai (Esther 6:11)

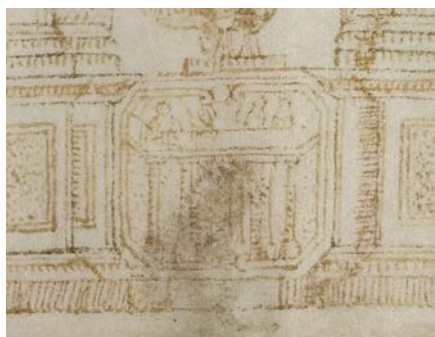**Fig. 23.** Esther's second wine banquet with the king, as she accuses Haman (Esther 7:6)

Fig. 24. The hanging of Haman (Esther 7:10)

Scene No. 16 (fig. 21) – Haman at left is apparently dressing Mordecai at right in royal garb (Esther 6:11).

Scene No. 17 (fig. 22) – [Between the second and third membranes]: Haman leads Mordecai on horseback through the streets of Shushan (Esther 6:11).

Scene No. 18 (fig. 23) – Esther's second banquet with Ahasuerus and Haman, where she points at "the adversary and evil Haman" (Esther 7:6).

Scene No. 19 (fig. 24) – The hanging of Haman (Esther 7:10). The scene is designed like the one with the hanging of Bigthan and Teresh (scene no. 8, above).

Scene No. 20 (fig. 25) – Esther pleading with the king, "falling at his feet and weeping. She begs him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews" (Esther 8:3). In the background is the king's courier on horseback, set to deliver the news.

Scene No. 21 (fig. 26) – Unclear episode: showing two figures, one crowned (Ahasuerus) in front of the city (right) and a horse (left) – perhaps illustrating the verse: "Mordecai wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king" (Esther 8:10).
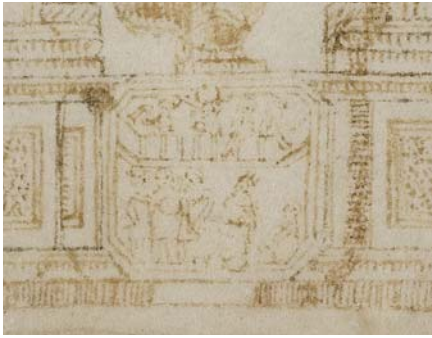

Fig. 25. Esther pleading with the king (Esther 8:3) and a courier

Fig. 26. Mordecai sending dispatches sealed with the king's signet ring (Esther 8:10)

Fig. 27. Hanging of Haman's sons (Esther 9:14)

Fig. 28. Armed Jews march as soldiers in Shushan (Esther 9:15)

Fig. 29. Purim Banquet in Shushan (Esther 9:18)

Fig. 30. Delivering Purim portions (Esther 9:19)

Fig. 31. Delivering portions to the poor (Esther 9:22)

Scene No. 22 (fig. 27) – [Between the third and fourth membranes]: The hanging of Haman's ten sons (Esther 9:14) on a horizontal pole. Two figures on the right, possibly Jews, watch the scene.

Scene No. 23 (fig. 28) – Armed Jews are marching as soldiers: "The Jews in Shushan came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men" (Esther 9:15).

Scene No. 24 (fig. 29) – Purim Banquet – the Jews of Shushan are seated, feasting around a table (Esther 9:18).

Scene No. 25 (fig. 30) – Delivering Purim portions. Note that each figure holds two portions (plates), as required by the *halakhah* (Esther 9:19).

Scene No. 26 (fig. 31) – Apparently delivering portions to the poor (Esther 9:22).

Scene No. 27 (fig. 32) – Mordecai and Queen Esther as leaders of their people (Esther 9:29), shown preparing the letters to their people (see next scene).

Scene No. 28 (fig. 33) – Sending dispatches to all the Jews of the kingdom: "And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus – words of goodwill and assurance" (Esther 9:30).

Fig. 32. Mordecai and Esther as leaders of their people (Esther 9:29)

Fig. 33. Mordecai's dispatches are distributed by couriers (Esther 9:30)

Fig. 34. Mordecai in royal garb, second in importance to the king (Esther 10:3)

Scene No. 29 (fig. 34) – Mordecai in royal garb, as the Jews look at him in admiration: "For Mordecai was now powerful in the royal palace" (Esther 10:3).

Origins and Probable Identity of the Artist

Of the several European countries in which figural representations were common in Esther scrolls, Holland must be considered the most likely place of origin of this scroll. Despite some Baroque Italian influences, several characteristics of the artwork, as well as the script, support this hypothesis. The script indeed clearly points at a western Sephardi hand, the type that was popular among the *sofrim* (scribes) in seventeenth-century Amsterdam.[18] The architectural designs, however, in particular the

massive rusticated portal, are reminiscent of Italy rather than Holland. It was in Renaissance Italy that architects popularized rustication, using it for façades of influential structures such as Palazzo Strozzi or Medici Riccardi – both in Florence.[19] This architectural feature continued to capture the imagination of architects and artists, becoming more fanciful, as is evident, for example, in the many designs devoted to the topic by the Italian Mannerist architect Sebastiano Serlio (1475–1554).[20] Some of the later rusticated archways, such as the triumphal arch Porta Nuova, designed by the Piedmontese architect Carlo di Castellamonte (1560–1641) in 1620–22 (fig. 35),[21] bear close resemblance to the framing device in our scroll (fig. 5): a rusticated archway with a broken Baroque pediment, flanked by spheres placed atop the side pillars; the central arch is flanked by a pair of niches with "sculptured" figures, and instead of the dedicatory inscription in the Porta Nuova architectural drawing the *megillah* artist inserted a landscape scene. Indeed, actual archways as well as fanciful architectural designs had a great impact on the Jewish visual arts in Italy, appearing in various shapes and designs on many types of objects,[22] notably Esther scrolls. In fact, it was in Italy that scrolls were decorated early on with archways or an arcade that runs throughout the borders of the scroll, long before this feature spread to other lands.[23]

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18 Later, Ashkenazi scribes imitated this script, calling it "*otiyyot Amsterdam*" (Amsterdam lettering). See Emile G.L. Schrijver, "'Be-otiyyot Amsterdam': Eighteenth-century Hebrew Manuscript Production in Central Europe – The Case of Jacob ben Judah Leib Shamas," *Quaerendo* 20, no. 1 (1990): 24–62.

19 See Rikke Lyngsø Christensen, "Live Stones: On the Phenomenon of Rustication and its Relations to the all'Antica Practice in Italian Architecture of the 16th Century," *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 31 (2005): 77–104.

20 On the importance of rustication in Serlio's work, see James S. Ackerman, "The Tuscan/Rustic Order: A Study in the Metaphorical Language of Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 42, no. 1 (Mar 1983): 15–34. A contemporary of Serlio, the painter and architect Giulio Romano, built a somewhat similar rusticated archway in Mantua (only the arch is similar but not the imposts and spandrels); on its significance in the context of Italia's work see below, fig. 40 (and the references in n. 36).

21 On the contribution of Castellamonte and his son, Amedeo, to Turin's architectural revival in the seventeenth century, see Martha Pollak, *Turin, 1564–1680: Urban Design, Military Culture and the Creation of the*

Absolutist Capital (Chicago, 1991), s.v. index; idem, "Castellamonte," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, 34 vols. (New York, 1996), 6:18–19, and additional bibliography there. For the Porta Nuova arch, see also *Guarino Guarini e l'internazionalità del Barocco: Atti del convegno internazionale promosso dall'Accademia delle scienze di Torino. 30 settembre-5 ottobre 1968*, vol. 2 (Turin, 1970), 364. The triumphal arch was eventually destroyed in 1831.

22 For the influence of architectural designs in Jewish art of Italy on such diverse objects as marriage contracts and Hanukkah lamps, see Shalom Sabar, "The Use and Meaning of Christian Motifs in Illustrations of Jewish Marriage Contracts in Italy," *JJA* 10 (1984): esp. 49–53 (and see there pp. 52–53, for the possible influence of the Porta Nuova on a Torinese *ketubbah*); Suzanne Landau, ed. *Architecture in the Hanukkah Lamp: Architectural Forms in the Design of Hanukkah Lamps from the Collection of Hanukkah Lamps at the Israel Museum* [catalogue, Israel Museum] (Jerusalem, 1978), items 8–10, 27–32 (in the context of the discussion here note especially lamps nos. 9 and 10, decorated with rusticated arches).

23 See, for example, the stylized colorful arcade supported by female caryatid figures in the earliest complete Esther scroll, decorated by Estellina,

Fig. 35. **(Left)** Carlo di Castellamonte, Design for the Porta Nuova Arch, Torino, 1620–22 (after *Theatrum Sabaudiae*, 1682)

Aside from the architecture, the treatment of the figures, their costumes, the small intimate landscapes, and many other features betray the Dutch ambience – familiar from several scrolls, though they are apparently of later dates. Even such a "technical" feature as backing the first section with a piece of protective cloth is familiar from other Dutch scrolls and hardly known in other communities.[24] Moreover the great and laborious efforts of the artist to create a design that imitates so perfectly an engraving fits the high esteem in which this craft was held in seventeenth-century Holland. This is in sharp contrast with Italy, for known, where hand-painted scrolls were much more common and popular than engraved ones.[25] Accordingly, the script, the style of

daughter of Menahem, in Venice 1564 – see *Sotheby's Important Judaica* [auction catalogue, Nov. 2009] (New York, 2009), lot 166 (currently in the Braginsky Collection – see Schrijver and Wiesemann, eds., *Schöne Seiten*, 256–59). In later periods, framing each individual column of the text by means of an arch or an arcade became a common decorative device in the Esther scrolls of nearly all the European communities, as well as in some communities in Islamic lands (notably Morocco). Though this feature is, as mentioned above, common in other types of Judaic manuscripts and objects, in Esther scrolls another meaning may be attributed to it: a symbolic "triumphal arch" that evokes the triumph of Mordecai and Esther. In fact, some Dutch scrolls feature a massive triumphal arch even before the text begins. For this concept in the scrolls of Shalom Italia, see, for example, Cohen, Liberman Mintz, and Schrijver, eds., *A Journey through Jewish Worlds*, 228; for a more detailed

analysis, see Assaf and Bilski, *Salom Italia's Esther Scrolls*, 14–18 (and see also the Torinese triumphal arch discussed above, fig. 35).

24 See, for example, a seventeenth-century Dutch scroll with cutout designs preserved in the Amsterdam Jewish Museum, reproduced in: Judith C.E. Belifante, *Joods Historisch Museum / Jewish Historical Museum* (Amsterdam, 1978), 47. For an example by Shalom Italia, dated ca. 1641, see the aforementioned scroll in Cohen, Liberman Mintz, and Schrijver, eds., *A Journey through Jewish Worlds*, 229.

25 Though no full survey was conducted, a general evaluation of extant examples in public and private collections clearly shows that the number of hand-painted Italian scrolls outnumbers the engraved ones. This is even more so in the case of marriage contracts: though some engraved examples are known from Italy (produced chiefly in the second half of the seventeenth century), they constitute about 5

Fig. 36. Shalom Italia, Scroll of Esther, Netherlands, ca. 1641. Hand drawn and manuscript on parchment. Image after Parke-Bernet Galleries, *The Charles E. Feinberg Collection...* (New York, 1967), lot 317
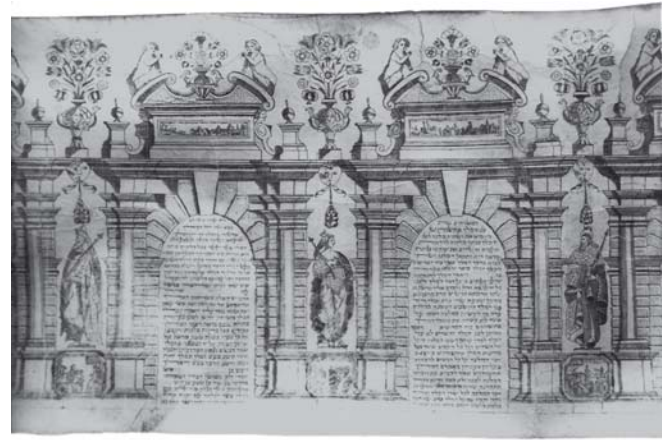

Fig. 37. Shalom Italia, Scroll of Esther, Netherlands, ca. 1641. Hand drawn and manuscript on parchment. General view. Private collection

the decorations, the architecture in the miniatures, the landscape vignettes, etc. lead to the conclusion that Amsterdam must be considered the most plausible site for this venture. Moreover, when compared with known Esther scrolls of Amsterdam, the stylistic and other features point to a mid-seventeenth-century date, or more exactly the 1640s.[26]

Aside from the stylistic and iconographic details mentioned above, the most convincing evidence for the date and place of origin of the scroll comes from its striking resemblance to engraved scrolls signed by Shalom Italia. The typical decorations in Italia's Esther scrolls are

in the form of arcades framing the text, with the heroes of the Book of Esther between the columns and scenes from the *megillah* in cartouches at the bottom of the text columns. Of the known borders that Italia engraved for Esther scrolls, the one that resembles most our *megillah* is number 1 in Narkiss' list (figs. 36–39, 41).[27] The two scrolls share a parallel decorative program, comprised of the same Baroque portals with a rusticated arch, a pair of pillars, a pair of nude *putti*, Dutch landscapes, heroes of the *megillah*, and framed scenes from the Book of Esther along the lower border.[28] However, despite the striking similarities, there are several very important and telling

percent of the total extant specimens. See Shalom Sabar, "Between Judaism and Christianity: The Unusual Engraved Border of a Ketubbah from Mantua, 1689, in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 69, no. 1 (2003): 1–30, esp. 3–4.

26 Especially the scrolls of Shalom Italia of the 1640s – see below.

27 Narkiss, "Yeẓurato shel Shalom Italia," vol. 25: 445–46, no. 1. At the time of his writing Narkiss knew of only one copy of this scroll – that in the important Judaica collection of the late Mr. Charles E. Feinberg (1899–1988) of Detroit. The Feinberg *megillah* was exhibited in the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Toledo Museum of Art in 1951. See *Exhibition of Jewish Ceremonial Art* (Detroit, 1951), 38, no. 135 (defined: "Dutch, about 1670"). It was later included in the sale of his collection: Parke-Bernet Galleries, *The Charles E. Feinberg Collection of Valuable Judaica* (New York, 1967), 84–85, lot 317 (illustrated; note that though the sales catalogue was issued over a decade after Narkiss' essay appeared, the scroll is dated "circa 1673"). Figure 36 is taken from this sale catalogue. The scroll is presently in a private collection. A

related example, in which the pair of the reclining nude *putti* atop the pediments is replaced by a pair of lions, is catalogued as no. 2 in Narkiss' list ("Yeẓurato shel Shalom Italia," vol. 25: 446). This scroll is likewise known from a rare copy, preserved in the Jewish Museum, New York (gift of the Danzig Jewish community; see Vivian B. Mann and Joseph Gutmann, *Danzig, 1939: Treasures of a Destroyed Community* [catalogue, Jewish Museum] (New York, 1980, 80–81, no. 48).

28 A thorough, however pioneering analysis of the stylistic and iconographic sources in the work of Italia is offered by Narkiss, "Yeẓurato shel Shalom Italia," vol. 26: 94–101. The sources of influence he identified – for example, that of two contemporary graphic artists, the French engraver Daniel Rabel (in the design of the cartouches) and the Dutch etcher Hans Janssen (for the landscapes) – have been generally accepted by later scholars (see, for example, Michel Garel, "An Esther Scroll by Shalom Italia," *IMJ* 5 [1986]: 107–8). For a recent analysis, adding additional sources, see Assaf and Bilski, *Salom Italia's Esther Scrolls*, 14–27.

differences between the two *megillot*:

- Instead of the four alternating landscape vignettes in the engraved *megillah* (fig. 37), here there are only two.
- Instead of the four major characters of the Esther story (Ahasuerus, Esther, Mordecai and Haman) that are in the engraved scroll (figs. 37–38), here there are only two (Ahasuerus and Esther).
- Instead of the nineteen episodes in the engraved scroll here there are twenty-nine!
- The engraved scroll has an opening decorative section, missing altogether in the present *megillah*.
- Some of the scenes in the engraved scroll show a reverse image of the same episodes in the present *megillah*.

How are we to explain the relationships between the two scrolls, especially given the fact that one is engraved and the other delineated throughout by hand? The real puzzle is which of them was created first and influenced the other – that is, must we assume that the engraved scroll was the basis for the hand-drawn scroll, as is usually the case, or could it be that here the opposite is more likely? The differences between the two scrolls in the number of landscapes, characters, and scenes indicate first and foremost that the creator of our *megillah* could not have based his work entirely and solely on the engraved one. The second assumption is that either he or Italia must have been intimately familiar with the work of the other. If we were to say "our artist" copied Italia's engraved scroll, why would he have done so only partially in some sections while in others adding to it? This naturally doesn't make much sense, since if he was just a copyist, he would not have created new scenes and invested much effort to improve the work of another artist.

Denying this seemingly obvious postulation, we must consider therefore the surprising, but in fact much more logical, opposite – namely, that the creator of the engraved *megillah*, that is, Shalom Italia, based his work on this very scroll. This course of events would actually clarify many issues. It is the only possible explanation for adding more figures and landscapes to the engraved scroll – in which each copper plate consists of four portals, forcing Italia to introduce four figures and four landscape vignettes instead

Fig. 38. Arch with the figures of Mordecai (right) and Haman. Shalom Italia, Scroll of Esther, Netherlands, ca. 1641. Hand drawn and manuscript on parchment. Private collection
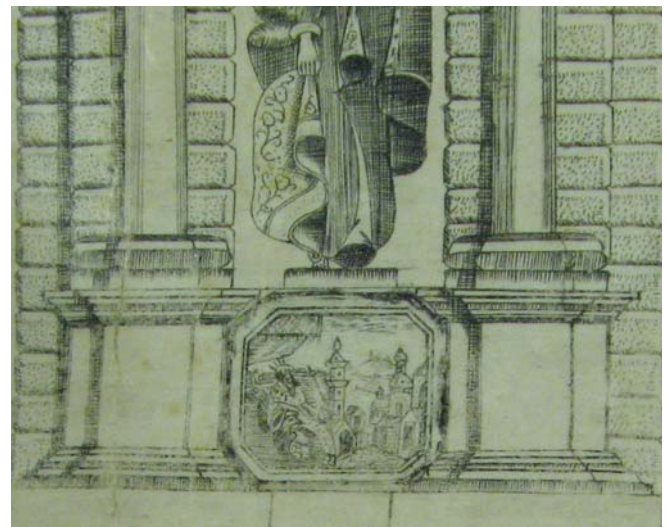

Fig. 39. Detail: Ahasuerus seated on his throne. Shalom Italia, Scroll of Esther, Netherlands, ca. 1641. Hand drawn and manuscript on parchment. General view. Private collection

of the two in the original scroll.[29] At the same time, he had to eliminate some scenes which did not fit his plates, and apparently chose to delete those that he deemed to be less significant. In fact, all the scenes in the engraved *megillah* are in the hand-drawn scroll – but here there are ten additional ones.[30] Moreover, the "new" or additional scenes closely follow the text, indicating that the artist worked intimately with the scribe (or that they are identical) and did not need to "import" scenes. Thus, for example, there are five episodes for chapter 1 – following the order of events and verses very closely. In addition, the iconography of these additional scenes deviates from the other Dutch scrolls and must be considered original. Finally, most telling is the fact that a couple of the scenes in the engraved *megillah* show reverse images of the parallel scenes, drawn by hand. For example in the first scene (fig. 6), Ahasuerus is shown seated beneath his baldachin on the right and the city of Shushan is on the left, while in the engraved scroll the king is on the left and the city on the right (fig. 39). Obviously, the engraver copied the first scene without paying attention that in the printing process the scene would be reversed, as he apparently did in the subsequent scenes.[31] It is thus clear that the maker of our *megillah* created it independently, not basing himself on earlier models.

Having shown the intimate relationships between the two scrolls and that the hand-drawn one served Shalom Italia in creating his engraved scroll, the next question concerns the possible identity of the unsigned hand-

drawn version. Either each of the scrolls was produced by a different hand or else Shalom Italia is responsible for both. Though the hand-drawn scroll has more scenes, it is less accomplished from a stylistic point of view. Italia's lines in the engraved scroll are more firm and exact, evidence of a more mature hand. Accordingly, it is hard to believe that at this stage of his development, when he was creating more accomplished engraved *megillot*, he would obsessively and slavishly copy every stroke by another artist. Moreover, the hand-drawn designs share much in common with his style and betray a mutual hand. In both there is a peculiar preference for combining an Italianate architectural framework with Dutch vignettes and motifs – indeed the hallmark of Italia's style in his early scrolls.[32] Thus, we must conclude that rather than imitating the work of another unknown artist, it is more logical to assume the hand-drawn scroll to be Italia's own work.

Having ascertained the identity of the maker, the last question concerns the date. Upon first examination of the scroll, my initial thoughts, based primarily on stylistic and comparative evidence, were to date it to the ca. mid-seventeenth century, a hypothesis shared at the time by other colleagues who have examined it.[33] Now that we know this work precedes Italia's engraved scroll, the dating should be adapted accordingly. Narkiss showed that the engraved scroll must be stylistically considered the earliest by Italia amongst the scrolls known to him at that time.[34] Thus he placed it as the first (no. 1) in Italia's

29 Naturally, this was not a problem in the hand-drawn scroll, where the artist could have selected the topics more freely.
30 The Esther cycle in the engraved scroll ends with the hanging of the sons of Haman (see the list of the nineteen scenes in Narkiss, "Yeẓurato shel Shalom Italia," vol. 25: 445). In the present scroll there are additional scenes preceding this episode, but most of them are in the last section of the scroll (the additional scenes are nos. 13, 16, 19, 21, and 24–29 in the list above).
31 Only one other scene in the cycle is reversed – this is scene no. 14, depicting Esther's Banquet: in the engraved *megillah* Esther is shown on the left and Haman on the right, while in the present scroll (fig. 19) they are reversed. All the other scenes I was able to check apparently show the right direction.
32 As accepted by nearly all the scholars who have dealt with his scrolls. For support for this opinion before the publication of Narkiss' work,

see, for example, Rachel Wischnitzer, "The Esther Story in Art," in *The Purim Anthology*, ed. Philip Goodman (Philadelphia, 1952), 232.
33 And see Sharon Liberman Mintz in Schrijver and Wiesemann, eds., *Schöne Seiten*, 274.
34 Prior to Narkiss' essay, scholars pointed to an Esther scroll by Italia in the old Howitt collection that is now in the Jewish Museum, London, as the earliest *megillah* by the artist. Said scroll contains a chronogram that was deciphered by Cecil Roth as 1637 (Messrs Christie, Manson & Woods, *The Collection of Jewish Antiquities and Ritual Art … Property of Councillor Arthur Howitt …* [London, 1932], 26, lot 213). Based on this dating, other scholars have alternatively suggested that it was created in Italy or that Italia arrived in Amsterdam as early as 1637 (see, for example, Landsberger, "Jewish Artist": 379). Both assumptions are, of course, implausible, and as Narkiss "Yeẓurato shel Shalom Italia," vol. 26: 88–89, n. 39 and p. 97) shows, the scroll should be dated to 1647–

career – laboriously sketched by hand but imitating with great skill the art of copper engraving. The architectural elements that embellish the scroll throughout obviously originate from Italy, and its basic arch form is reminiscent, as Assaf and Bilksi have noted, of the rusticated archway in the renowned Mannerist Pallazo del Te (1524–34) near his native town of Mantua (fig. 40).[36] In the Italian tradition, the decorative architectural setting is embedded with detailed narrative scenes, which demonstrate in addition the extensive knowledge of the artist and his close familiarity with the Hebrew text. At the same time the decorative program capably incorporates tiny architectural designs and landscape vignettes that reflect the local Dutch scene.

Whether Italia created his first scroll for a patron or for himself is a mute question. However, the fact that it conspicuously lacks an opening section perhaps implies that no patron was involved at this stage and that he may have intended it for himself. At any rate, the new scroll apparently won favor and the young artist was called upon to recreate a similar scroll, or more likely decided himself that it was good enough to be used as a model for a more popular type, which could be produced in a large number of copies. Thus, based on the model of his carefully designed scroll he created copper engravings for a new scroll.[37] In this process he had to adapt the previous program and accordingly reduced the number of scenes, while doubling the number of landscapes and figures to fit the plates of the copper engravings. At this stage he introduced another feature that would become a familiar hallmark of his later scrolls – a decorative opening section in which the proud owner could insert by hand his name (or another personal text

Fig. 40. Giulio Romano, Arches in Palazzo del Te. Mantua, 1524–34

group of works dated 1641 or earlier. This date has been generally accepted in the recent scholarly research on the scrolls of Italia included in this group.[35] The hand-drawn scroll should thus be dated slightly earlier – which makes it the earliest known by Italia, representing the beginning of his career in Amsterdam.

In an attempt to reconstruct the story of the scroll, we may offer the following possible course of events. Shortly after his arrival in Amsterdam, young Shalom Italia started to produce Judaic works in line with his talents and education, in his native town of Mantua. Apparently in an attempt to acquire a name for himself and find patrons among the upper class of Amsterdam's Portuguese community, he was quick to adopt the local popular designs and techniques. This hand-drawn scroll was in all likelihood created at this stage in his

49, as is clearly proved by its rather mature style; the correct reading of the chronogram is 1707, referring not to the year of its making but apparently added by one of the later owners of the scroll.

35 For example, Mann and Gutmann, *Danzig, 1939*, 80–81, no. 48; Emily D. Bilski, "Scroll of Esther," in: *Treasures of the Jewish Museum*, eds. Norman L. Kleeblatt and Vivian B. Mann (New York, 1986), 64–65; Laurence Sigal, ed., *Guide des collections – Musée d'art et d'histoire du judaïsme* (Paris, 1998), 46–7; Cohen, Liberman Mintz, and Schrijver, eds., *A Journey through Jewish Worlds*, 228–31; Assaf and Bilski, *Salom Italia's Esther Scrolls*, fig. 2 facing p. 29. The quoted authors have slightly modified the date by using terms such as "circa 1641," "vers 1641,"

"before 1641," or "after 1641."

36 Assaf and Bilski, *Salom Italia's Esther Scrolls*, 16–17. The Mantuan villa Palazzo del Te was designed by Giulio Romano (1499–1546) for Federico II Gonzaga, Marquess of Mantua. As noted above (n. 20), the similarity is limited to the arch itself and not the complex, stepped Baroque entablature and broken pediments in Italia's designs, which resemble architectural drawings (such as that of the Porta Nuova cited above) more than actual buildings.

37 In fact, for another scroll as well – the one at the Jewish Museum, New York (no. 2 in Narkiss' list – see above, n. 27), where he used the model to create a variation of the engraved scroll.

or image) (fig. 41).[38] Pleased with the new engraved scroll, Italia proudly signed his name (in Hebrew),[39] as he did with subsequent successful engraved examples that followed suit in the 1640s. Gradually, the designs Italia helped to introduce in the Netherlands penetrated the local Jewish arts and even the influential printers of Hebrew books in Amsterdam started to employ Italian-influenced rusticated archways (fig. 42).[40] All in all, the present scroll should be considered the earliest created by Shalom Italia in Amsterdam, paving the way for the career of the young aspiring artist, whose Esther scrolls eventually "established a vocabulary for subsequent *megillah* design throughout Europe."[41]

Fig. 42. Title page of Solomon ibn Melekh, *Sefer Mikhlal Yofi*, printed by Uri Phoebus Ha-Levi, Amsterdam, 1659–60, NLI

Fig. 41. Opening Section. Shalom Italia, Scroll of Esther, Netherlands, ca. 1641. Hand drawn and manuscript on parchment. Private collection

38 As was done with some of the other engraved scrolls – including the engraved copy discussed here from the Feinberg collection (see above n. 27). The name of the owner, written by hand at the base of the amphora, is "Solomon Oheb" (שלמה אוהב) – see fig. 41. Narkiss, "Yeẓurato shel Shalom Italia," vol. 25: 445 and n. 16, thought the scribe erred in the spelling of the owner's last name, which could have been, in his opinion, אבוהב (Aboab). However, as Dutch-Jewish scholar Benjamin De Vries rightly indicated in his notes to Narkiss' essay (*Tarbiz* 26 [1957]: 101), Oheb is a typical Sephardi last name and in Amsterdam of his time there was still a family called Oëb Brandão (or Oheb Brandon). For this name and its diffusion in the "Sephardi Diaspora," see Guilherme Faiguenboim et al., *Dicionário sefaradi de sobrenomes: Inclusive cristãos novos, conversos, marranos, italianos, berberes e sua história na Espanha, Portugal e Itália* (Rio de Janeiro, 2003), 347.

39 The signature reads: ע״י [על ידי] שלום איטאליאה ("by Shalom Italia") – see fig. 41; and see also Narkiss, "Yeẓurato shel Shalom Italia," vol. 25: 445.

40 See, for example, the title pages of the books of the Amsterdam printers Imanoel (Emanuel) Benveniste (active 1640–64) and Uri Phoebus Ha-Levi (active 1658–89). On these printers and for detailed lists of the books produced in their shops, see Lajb Fuks and Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography in the Northern Netherlands, 1585-1815: Historical Evaluation and Descriptive Bibliography*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1984–87), 1:146–84, 2:233–38, respectively.

41 The words of Elka Deitch and Sharon Liberman Mintz in Cohen, Liberman Mintz, and Schrijver, eds., *A Journey through Jewish Worlds*, 228. Narkiss compares the vast influence of Italia's scrolls on the field of *megillah* illustration and individual artists, including those from Italy, to the influence of the famous Amsterdam Haggadah of 1695 by Abraham bar Ya'akov on future Haggadot; Narkiss, "Yeẓurato shel Shalom Italia," vol. 26: 99. While this evaluation may be an exaggeration, the influence of Italia's *megillot* on many later Esther scrolls can be convincingly shown (an initial list appears in ibid., vol. 26: 98–100).