

The Colmar Treasure: A Medieval Jewish Legacy



Image: Jewish ceremonial wedding ring, from the Colmar Treasure, ca. 1300–before 1348. Gold, opaque and translucent enamel, 1 3/8 x 7/8 in. (3.5 x 2.3 cm). Musée de Cluny – Musée national du Moyen Âge, © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

For more than 500 years, a small cache of jewelry and coins lay hidden within the walls of a house in Colmar, France. Secreted there in the fourteenth century and discovered in 1863, the Colmar Treasure—now in the collection of the Musée de Cluny, Paris—comprises rings of sapphire, ruby, garnet, and turquoise; jeweled and fanciful brooches; a delicate enameled belt; gilded buttons; and more than 300 coins. The precious possessions of a single family, the inscription *mazel tov* on one ring links the hoard to Colmar’s once-thriving Jewish community, who were brutally scapegoated and put to death when the Plague struck the region with devastating ferocity in 1348–49. *The Colmar Treasure: A Medieval Jewish Legacy*, on view at The Met Cloisters until January 12, 2020, points to both legacy and loss, underscoring the prominence of, and perils faced by, the Jewish minority community in the tumultuous fourteenth century.

Consisting of objects that are small in scale and relatively few in number, the Colmar Treasure is displayed alongside related works from The Cloisters Collection, The Jewish Theological Seminary, the *Bibliothèque municipale* in Colmar, and distinguished private collections in the United States. In the evocative setting of The Met Cloisters—a museum whose very name seems to proclaim a uniquely Christian world—this exhibition offers a poignant tribute to Jewish artistic heritage and its role in art and society in medieval Europe.

The exhibition was organized by Barbara Drake Boehm, the Paul and Jill Ruddock Senior Curator, Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters. The exhibition was made possible by the Michel David-Weill Fund, with additional support provided by the David Berg Foundation.

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