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You Can Judge Books by Their Covers

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You Can Judge Books by Their Covers

A Jewish History through Used Books

Fordham University, 2019
You Can Judge Books by Their Covers
Jewish History through Used Books

Essays by Students from HIST 1851: Jews in the Modern World
Fall 2018

Edited by
Magda Teter, The Shvidler Chair in Judaic Studies

O’Hare Special Collections
Walsh Family Library, Fordham University
“Judging Books by Their Covers: Exploring Jewish History through Used Books”

Books are more than just texts transmitted to their readers. Books are also objects that are produced and used. They are commodities that are sold, bought, owned, and passed on. Fordham’s Judaica Collection prides itself on collecting books that show traces of life: readers' notes, censors' signatures, owners’ marks, wax from candles that dripped when the books were read after dark, food and wine stains from a Passover seder, and more. These signs of use and past ownership tell stories. A book could be a valued part of inheritance, as was the copy of *She’erit Yosef* printed in 1593. Books could also serve as places to practice writing; or to record the deaths of loved ones, as was a prayer book from Egypt. And finally books were read and used for what they were intended to. Jews and non-Jews used them, and learned from them, readers' notes and censors’ signatures are a testimony.

Collectively the books discussed here provide a glimpse onto Jewish history, Jews’ cultural creativity, their geographic reach, and interactions with non-Jewish neighbors, authorities, and censors. Each book can tell its own story—a vegetarian Haggadah shines light on contemporary Judaism in the US. The 1542 *Sefer Leshon Limudim* printed in Istanbul/Constantinople by Eliezer ben Gershon Soncino tells a story of migration and printing competition, while Daniel Bomberg’s 1546/7 *SeMaG* reveals the tides of Jewish learning, the book would not be republished until the nineteenth century.

Sometimes book’s specific moments in history tell a story of their own, as do Yeshayahu Klinov’s *Israel Reborn/Israel Renaissant*, the 1969 *El Al Haggadah*, or the 1999 *Prince of Egypt* Haggadah. Many of the books were not intended for exquisite collections, yet they capture important parts of the Jewish past. This can be said of the 1924 Baghdad siddur, the 1947 Ladino prayer book from Turkey, or the 1985 Amharic Haggadah published in Israel. The 1580 *Masekhet Menahot* of the Babylonian Talmud exemplifies the impact of Counter-Reformation on Jewish texts—this is indeed a Counter-Reformation Talmud. So, too, books with censors’ signatures. But Cardinal Bellarmine’s Hebrew grammar complicates the Counter-Reformation story, while Bernard Picart’s *Ceremonies* marks the beginning of cultural shift in eighteenth-century Europe.

In 2015, Fordham began collecting Judaica. In the fall of 2018, first students began to explore Jewish history through books and objects. Here a group in a Modern Jewish History course (HIST 1851) at the Rose Hill campus
worked on some twenty-seven books from our collection. It was a challenging task. Some students had never before seen a Hebrew book, and did not even know how to open it and handle, and yet they wrote terrific papers telling compelling stories, providing vignettes from the Jewish past. The stories here are arranged chronologically, from the sixteenth through the twentieth century, from Venice, to Istanbul, Baghdad, Cairo, Basel, and New York.

In the 1490s, the Naples printer of the Hebrew book by Jacob Landau *Agur* included an approbation that admitted to an unsavory truth about the new printing technology. “It happens, since it is in the manner of craft of printing for many errors to fall in books” and that such errors “have also fallen into this book,” here too, undoubtedly some errors probably snuck in. We’ll make it better next time. For now, we hope you’ll enjoy reading about the secret lives of books.

I thank Vivian (Wei) Shen from the Special Collections at Fordham for her patience and enthusiasm for our students’ work, and to Tierney Gleason for introducing students to a variety of research resources so they could write these essays.

It turns out one *can* judge books by their covers, and tell fascinating stories without even reading them.

*Magda Teter*

*Professor of History*

*The Shvidler Chair in Judaic Studies*
The Language of Learning: a 16th Century Grammar Exploration
Andrew Hof

Moses ben Jacob of Coucy’s SeMaG, Sefer Mitsvot Ha-Gadol, 1546/7
Andrew Pace

Masekhet Menahot of the 1580 Basel Edition of the Babylonian Talmud
Justin Luu

Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at: dine ’isur ye-heter- An Influential Jewish Dietary Guidebook
Katy Delahunt

Books as Inheritance, Sefer She'erit Yosef of 1593
Andrea Nestico

Joseph Ibn Verga’s Sefer She’erit Yosef, a Methodology of the Talmud
Geraldine Riveros

Maḥzor: ke-minhag k.k. Ashkenazim from Venice 1599/1600
Michael Pappano

Robert Bellarmine’s Institutiones linguae Hebraicae
Cullen McCarthy

Georg Mayr’s Hebrew Language Book
Jenn Hoang

Yom Tov ben Moses Zahalon’s Sefer she’elot u teshuvot
Zowie Kemery
The 1698 Amsterdam Edition of Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh Deah
Seth McGettigan

Bernard Picart’s The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations
Fiona Pilch

Light of Worlds: Detailing the Impact and History of Menorat ha-Ma’or
Margaret Keiley

Sefer Eshle Ravreve, Commentaries on the Shulhan `arukh
Muharest Murataj

Sefer Ape Ravreve, A Commentary on the Shulhan `arukh
Jack McClatchy

A 1782 Haggadah with Yiddish Commentary
Henry Poehlein

Kipur tamim: A Prayer Book from Baghdad (1924)
Claudia Tagliavia

Hagadah Erets-Yisra’elit le-Pesah: A Palestinian Haggadah from 1938
Dhruv Gajiwala

1941 Maxwell House Haggadah
Josh Eberle
Sidur Minhat ‘Erev: A French/Hebrew Prayer Book from Cairo
Sophie Hamlin

A Ladino Prayer Book
Tiffany Le

Understanding Yeshayahu Klinov’s Israel Reborn/Israel Renaissant
Joseph Monga

The El Al Haggadah of 1969
Brandon Aptilon

The Hagadah shel Pesah, Amharit or Passover Haggadah Amharic
Blake Wynn

Roberta Kalechofsky’s Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb
Isabel Logios

The Exodus Haggadah: A History of Survival
Emily DeVivo

The Family Passover Haggadah: The Prince of Egypt Edition
Isabella Iazzetta
David ben Solomon ibn Yahya first published his grammar book, *Sefer Leshon Limudim*, in Constantinople using the printer Shemu'el ben Nahmiyas in 1506.¹ The Fordham University copy of this book, whose title roughly translates to “the language of learning,” was published in Constantinople in 1542. Eliezer Gershom Soncino, of the Soncino family printers, was responsible for the printing of this second edition copy of *Sefer Leshon Limudim*.² In total, there have only been two editions of *Sefer Leshon Limudim* published.

This edition of ibn Yahya’s book has many notable characteristics, including its text layout and pages. The title page utilizes three font sizes and has an intricately printed border design (Figure 1). Throughout the book, the type is set in many different arrangements, seemingly corresponding with different

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¹ David ben Solomon approximately Ibn Yahya, *Sefer Leshon Limudim* (Kushtantina: k r David ve-k r Shemu'el ben Nahmiyas, Place: Turkey; Istanbul, 1506).
² David ben Solomon Ibn Yahya et al., *Sefer Leshon Limudim* (Kushtantina: Nidpas be-vet Eliezer ben h.r. Gershom 'Sontsino, 1542).
grammar topics (Figure 2). Irregular indentations throughout the book draw attention to the words in a larger font. While the book does not have page numbers, the title of the book is printed on the top of every page, an indicator of a book that would be used as an educational resource (Figure 2).

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2

The physical book is bound by high quality leather that is thick and durable. A pattern of symmetrical diamonds and triangles decorates the front and back covers, subtly complementing the sturdy leather. The title of the book is printed in gold lettering on the spine of the book, indicating that this book was meant to be stored on a bookshelf so that only the spine would be exposed. The pristine condition of the book’s binding is attributable to the book being recently rebound.

The inner cover has an intricate marble design of contoured lines in abstract formations with earthly
colors resembling a topographic map or sedimentary layers of a canyon. The pages of the book are coarse, but strong, parchment. Finally, the book has a bound bookmark, which could be helpful for saving a place in the book in order to resume a lesson at a later time (Figure 2). The book is approximately ten inches by six inches, an ideal size for personal use.

The features of Fordham University’s copy of *Sefer Leshon Limudim* allude to the unique historical story that the physicality of this book can tell. Annotations on the first page and a few other pages throughout the book suggest that, though the book was certainly used, perhaps only particular sections were relevant for the reader (Figure 1). A hand pointing to a specific paragraph on the second page of the book, for instance, draws attention to a section that must have had notable importance to the book’s owner.

The physical pages of the book are inconsistently cut, often being curved or jagged at the bottom (Figure 2). Since early modern books were individually bound, the exact imperfections are unique to each individual copy of the book. Additionally, Fordham’s copy has a hole approximately one-inch long and less than a quarter-inch wide through nine pages in the center of the book, most likely attributable to an insect which bore through the book. The edges of most pages have a strong orange tint, perhaps derived from water damage and the colorful inner cover design (Figure 2). The final four pages of the book have been cropped more tightly on the top, with the printed running title at the top of the page noticeably higher than all other pages (Figure 3).
Esteemed as a rabbi, grammarian, and scholar, David ben Solomon ibn Yahya, author of *Sefer Leshon Limudim*, originally lived in Portugal. After being accused of encouraging conversos to revert to Judaism, ibn Yahya fled to Naples at the end of the fifteenth century. Since Jewish life in Naples became increasingly difficult in Naples following the Spanish conquest in 1495, ibn Yahya ultimately fled to Constantinople in 1503. After arriving in Constantinople, ibn Yahya lived in poverty, but he successfully managed to escape the troubles which had plagued him for over a decade. He wrote *Sefer Leshon Limudim* in 1506 while in his mid-sixties. Ibn Yahya is the author of a few other works, including *Hilkhot Terefot*, a book of laws, and *Kav ve-Naki*, a book of commentary on Proverbs.

Deriving their name from the town of Soncino in the Duchy of Milan, the Soncino family was known for publishing many important Hebrew, Italian, Latin, and Greek books. After establishing themselves in Italy, the first record of Soncino family printing in Constantinople occurred with the publishing of *Sefer ha-mispar* in 1533. Esteemed for their perfection of type and their correctness, the Soncinos were no strangers to publishing grammar books as Gershon Soncino published the Hebrew grammar book *Miklol*, meaning “perfection,” prior to Eliezer Soncino’s publishing of *Sefer Leshon Limudim*. Eliezer’s other notable works include printing a Hebrew translation of the Spanish romance *Amadis de Gaula*, the first secular work in Hebrew to be printed in Constantinople. The last of the Soncino family

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5 David ben Solomon Ibn Yahya, *エブ,* (תור sidel: קבשיא) נumper הלכות (1515-1518) קונסטנטינול : [publisher not identified], 1510.
6 יבנ י子ど פורום יבנ יזוחא דואד: יבנ י子ど פאוורון; הלכות (1518) יבנ י子ど פאוורון יבנ י子ど פאוורון; הלכות (1518) יבנ י子ど פאוורון יבנ י子ど פאוורון; הלכות (1518) יבנ י子ど פאוורון יבנ י子ど פאוורון; הלכות (1518) יבנ י子ど פאוורון יבנ י子ど פאוורון; הלכות (1518) יבנ י子ど פאוורון יבנ י子ど פאוורון; הלכות (1518) יבנ י子ど פאוורון יבנ יFirstChildה perpetrator of the crimes of the year 1515 and 1518) Constantinople: [publisher not identified], 1510.
8 Elijah approximately Mizrahi, *Sefer Ha-Mispar*, [First].
10 ben Yosef ben Yizhaq ibn Qimhi ca-ca Dawid, *Sefer Miklol : Yevaer Be-Rison Kol Helqe Ha-Diqduq We-Aharaw Heleq Ha-Yinan* (Bqostantina [Constantinopel]: 'Al yede Gersom is Sonzin [Gershon Soncino], 1533).
printers, Eliezer Soncino actively printed in Constantinople until 1547, when his final documented work, *Teshuvot ha-rav Yitshak bar Sheshet*, was published.\(^{13}\)

In the 16th century, there were few exhibits of Jewish texts that dealt with rhetorical prose, so ibn Yahya’s authoring of grammar books during this period was an exceptional achievement.\(^{14}\) On the other hand, despite being a scholarly book, *Sefer Leshon Limudim* was not unduly complicated. In fact, it seems that this book was too elementary to be used by adult students already well versed in Latin and Greek.\(^{15}\) Ultimately, the background of *Sefer Leshon Limudim* and Fordham’s copy of the second edition are emblematic of how the printing press revolutionized access to educational resources across the world. The advent of the printing press enabled genres of books beyond the realm of religion to flourish, and it galvanized a new era of pupils who had access to more information than any generation before them.

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\(^{13}\) Parnas Moses ben Eliezer Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet et al., *Teshuvot Ha-Rav Yitshak Bar Sheshet* ([Kushtantinah]: [Eli`ezer Sontsino], Place: Turkey; Istanbul, 1547).


Kushtantina: Nidpas be-vet Eliezer ben h.r. Gershom 'Sontsino, 1542.

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Mizrahi, Elijah approximately. *Sefer Ha-Mispar.* [in Hebrew (Show non-Roman characters)] [First].
Place: Turkey; Istanbul. ed. [Constantinople]: [Gershom ben Moses Soncino], 1533.


Aben Ijhide, Davud ben Shlomo ben Jacob Elmol; Sefer Kav Ve-Naki Perush Mishle." 250 leaves. Fès: Place: Morocco; Fès.
Moses ben Jacob of Coucy’s *Sefer Mitsvot Ha-Gadol* of 1546/7  
by Andrew Pace

The physical qualities of books, regardless of the content of the text itself, such as condition, format, design, fonts, and many more are valuable pointers to show how and by whom a book would have been used during its lifetime. Bibliographical records on the author and publisher can also help the reader understand the style in which the book was written and published. There is no better instance where this is the case than in *Sefer Mitsvot ha-gadol* by Moses ben Jacob of Coucy and published by the world-renowned Venetian publisher Daniel Bomberg in 1546/7.

*Sefer Mitsvot ha-gadol* is arguably Moses ben Jacob of Coucy’s most celebrated work. Fordham owns two copies of the 1546/7 edition. The *Mitsvot ha-gadol*, as it is commonly known, or “Se-Ma-G,” for short, includes the principles of the Rabbinic Oral Law and is divided into two sections: positive and negative precepts.¹ Due to its popularity and importance to rabbinic learning, the *Mitsvot ha-gadol*

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had been widely distributed in the Middle Ages and published in print several times as well.²

Its first publication took place in Rome sometime between 1469 and 1480, by Obadiah, Menasheh and Benjamin of Rome.³ Subsequently, it was published in 1488 by Gershom Soncino in Soncino, the Duchy of Milan.⁴ According to Israel Moses Ta-Shema, the final publication of this book during the pre-modern era took place in 1546 by Daniel Bomberg.⁵ This edition was the last until the nineteenth century. Bomberg’s print shop in Venice, Italy, became famous for its Hebrew publications, including the first full edition of the Talmud, with what would become a standard foliation of the work. There have also been a number of great scholars who have written commentaries on this work including, Isaac Stein, Joseph Colon, Elijah Mizrachi, Solomon Luria, and Hayyim Benveniste. However, as demonstrated by the lack of publications after 1546/7, the Mitsvot ha-gadol fell out of use, likely because it was replaced by the Shulhan Arukh around the time it was published in 1565.⁶

Fordham’s unexpurgated copy of Sefer Mitsvot ha-gadol is bound in a green cardboard cover with brown leather spine. The book measures thirty-two-point-five centimeters by twenty-three centimeters (Figure 1).

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² Ta-Shema, "Moses Ben Jacob of Coucy."
⁴ Of Coucy Moses ben Jacob, Sefer Mizot Gadol (Book of Precepts). (Duchy of Milan Gershom Soncino, 1488).
⁵ Ta-Shema, "Moses Ben Jacob of Coucy."
⁶ Conversation with Professor Teter; September 26, 2018
Although the outside of the book gives the reader a general understanding of its use, the pages tell a whole story in themselves. The title page of the 
*Mitsvot ha-gadol* has a large image of an archway with words embedded under the arch, known as a head-piece (Figure 2).  

These words are divided into three sections. The topmost set of words is arranged in two lines of dark black letters which are written in the largest font size out of the four sections. This is the title of the respective section of the book which follows this page. The second section of words is split into two identically-shaped paragraphs, preceded by a line of words with a larger text size than the two paragraphs, but smaller than the first section of words. These paragraphs taper down from a full line to one word at the bottom, resembling two upside-down triangles on top of each other. Moreover, the size of the text of this section is quite smaller than that of the first section and is printed in a different typeset. This text briefly explains the purpose and usefulness the positives precepts which are held in the first part of the book.  

The third and final section of text presents itself in three lines which are separated by a space. The first line is very similar to the second, except that the first line is written in more of a rounded Hebrew font, while the font of the second line seems to be much more boxlike or square. However, the third line is much different than both. This line is very short and has a larger, broader font than lines one and two.

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8 Yehuda Dov Galinsky, "The Significance of Form: R. Moses of Coucy's Reading Audience and His 'Sefer Ha-Mizvot'," *AJS Review*, no. 2 (2011).
These three lines are likely the closing remarks of the paragraphs in the second section of words.

While there is much to say about the text of the title page, the relatively poor physical condition of the page is immediately apparent as well (Fig. 2). There is tape all around the edges of the page indicating that there was damage which needed to be repaired. The binding is visibly very worn, weak and appears to have water damage. Finally, there is also writing which was done by hand in between the lines and letters of the above-mentioned three sections of words. Ironically enough, on the inside cover of the book and adjacent to the title page, someone had written, “Writing in this book is prohibited,” about fifteen times in Hebrew (Fig. 3). The age of this book is apparent on the page following the title page as well (Figure 4). All over the page are spots and browning that come with the book aging process. This process is known as “foxing.” Besides the foxing on this page, there are also holes in the paper which are seen on the majority of the pages, known as “wormholes.”

As consistent with the title page, there is also water damage and tape on the edges of the paper. Besides the physical qualities of this page, there is also

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9 Dialogue with Professor Teter; September 26, 2018
evidence of Daniel Bomberg’s employment of foliation in the top left corner above the text, which made it easier to navigate a large resource such as the *Mitsvot ha-gadol*. Furthermore, this page has three large Hebrew letters at the top of the page boxed in by an ornate design, which is displayed in a similar fashion to a head-piece or vignette. One may also note that at the top of the page and besides the ornate box there are large words which most likely identify the section of the book that the reader is currently in. Finally, where the text begins in the first paragraph, the first Hebrew word is capitalized. This typographical method is used to add emphasis and is known as an initial or drop cap. While the first page holds many particular observations, the rest of the book is more or less quite uniformly designed.

The standard page in the *Mitsvot ha-gadol* includes two columns of text (Figure 5). Beside the columns and in indented sections of the paragraphs are notes in a smaller font size than the text. These serve as references to the sources in which Moses ben Jacob used. Many of these, but not all, are direct references to the Sephardic Jewish philosopher Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*, which is said to be directly cited on at least every page. These pages are numbered in the top outer corners and have large words at the top of the page which identify the section of the book as either the positive or negative precepts.

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10 Professor Magda Teter Class Lecture; September 6, 2018
11 Carter and Barker, *Abc for Book Collectors*.
12 Ina Saltz, *Typography Essentials: 100 Design Principles for Working with Type*, Design Essentials (Quayside Publishing Group, 2009).
13 Ta-Shema, "Moses Ben Jacob of Coucy."
14 Ta-Shema, "Moses Ben Jacob of Coucy."
Additionally, at the end of the first section, there are large darkened words which specify that the section is over, and a new section begins with the same archway that is observed on the title page of the book (Figure 6).

The *Sefer Mitsvot ha-gadol* was written by Moses ben Jacob of Coucy, who was born in France and, in 1236, became an itinerant preacher in Spain. During the rise of rationalization in Spain, the adherence to the precepts of the Jewish faith became fairly permissive. Consequently, Moses ben Jacob began his work on the *Mitsvot ha-gadol* to address the precepts and commandments. He arranged, as is traditional, the precepts into positive and negative sections of the book and organized them in such a way that the reader could distinguish which applied to their time and which did not. Although educating its reader on the precepts may have been a primary motivating factor behind the writing of the *Mitsvot ha-gadol*, Moses ben Jacob also states in the introduction of the positive precepts that, “A man may learn his entire life and still fail to attain knowledge of a particular commandment, and this is due to the length of the Talmud, the dialectic reasoning, and to the fact that one commandment may appear in several places.” So, this book was also meant to be used alongside the Talmud as a reference due to its complexity, and, therefore, the target audience would have been narrowed to scholars who were already immersed in Talmudic studies. Following the great

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15 Ta-Shema, "Moses Ben Jacob of Coucy."
16 Galinsky, "The Significance of Form."
17 Galinsky, "The Significance of Form."
success of the *Sefer Mitsvot ha-gadol*, Moses ben Jacob also went on to author another work. He wrote a commentary on the tractate Yoma which was titled “Tosefot Yeshanim.” This commentary, however, was not published until 1735 in Berlin.\(^{18}\)

Daniel Bomberg, the printer of Fordham’s *Sefer Mitsvot ha-gadol*, was one of the most prolific publishers of Jewish texts during the 16th century. Bomberg, a native of Antwerp, moved to Venice in 1516, which was the center of Jewish and Christian writing in the 15th century.\(^{19}\) Here, he opened a print shop and began specializing in printing Hebrew bibles, famously printing the Rabbinic Bible, which became known as the Bomberg Bible in 1517. The Bomberg Bible solidified Daniel Bomberg’s reputation amongst 16th-century printers because, through its many successive printings, it became the golden standard for Hebrew scriptures in the Jewish tradition.\(^{20}\) In dominating the competitive printing scene, Bomberg also took business from other printers, such as Gershom Soncino, the preeminent printer of medieval Hebrew works and one of the earlier publishers of the *Sefer Mitsvot ha-gadol* (in 1488). Years later, Soncino wrote, “The Venetian printers copied my books and published, in addition, whatever they could lay their hands on. They tried hard to ruin me…”\(^{21}\) Clearly referring to Bomberg as a “Venetian printer,” Soncino admits that Bomberg was outpacing him and, subsequently, ruining his career. The very notion that Bomberg could take a work, such as the *Mitsvot ha-gadol*, from the distinguished Gershom Soncino and print a superior version in his own style is a testament to his success.

Daniel Bomberg also published dozens of other influential pieces of Hebrew literature. This included works like *Sefer ha-shorashim* by David Kimhi and Elijah Levita, which goes into detail about the Hebrew language itself, and *Hamishah humshe Torah ; Neviim Rishonim ; Arba`a Neviim Aharonim ; [Ketuvim]*, a collection of commentaries on the Old Testament of the Bible compiled from four volumes into one book in 1521.\(^{22}\) Bomberg also famously printed the first full foliated edition of the Talmud in 1520. A specialty of his, the addition of page numbers made reading texts

\(^{18}\) of Coucy Moses ben Jacob, *Tosefot Yeshanim.* (Berlin1735).
\(^{19}\) “Bomberg, Daniel (1483–1553) [Bomberg, Daniel]," *The Oxford Dictionary of the Renaissance*.
\(^{20}\) David Shepherd, "Before Bomberg: The Case of the Targum of Job in the Rabbinic Bible and the Solger Codex (Ms Nürnberg)," *Biblica* 79, no. 3 (1998).
\(^{22}\) Daniel Bomberg, *Hamishah Humshe Torah ; Neviim Rishonim ; Arba`a Neviim Aharonim ; [Ketuvim].* Nidpas shenit ed. (Venice, Italy: Daniel Bomberg, 1521); David Kimhi and Elijah Levita, *Sefer Ha-Shorashim.* (Daniel Bomberg, 1546).
like the Talmud much more accessible because it allowed people to easily locate sections of the book without having to refer to the chapter and verse. This foliation became standardized in the printing of the Talmud.\(^\text{23}\)

The *Sefer Mitsvot ha-gadol* has engraved its name as one of the most distinguished pieces of Hebrew works in medieval Europe. It presented the negative and positive precepts in a clear and usable way. When the printing press was invented, it was one of the first Hebrew works to be printed, and the book had such success that several distinguished scholars wrote commentaries on the work. Fordham’s copy of the *Mitsvot ha-gadol* was printed in 1546/7, by the notable printer, Daniel Bomberg, in Venice. This was the last publication of this important halakhic compendium in the pre-modern period and was not republished again until the 19\(^{th}\) century. The fact that it survived throughout the centuries and was still studied by scholars in Europe even after it ceased to be published points towards its importance. Furthermore, as evidenced by the physical examination of this book, it was undeniably frequently used, its owners trying to repair and preserve the work. Although it was not published again until the 1800s, it is beyond doubt that the *Sefer Mitsvot ha-gadol* has left a lasting impact on the history of Jewish law and culture.

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\(^{23}\) Professor Magda Teter Class Lecture; September 6, 2018

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The edition of Masekhet Menahot, a tractate of the Babylonian Talmud, was published by Ambrosius Froben in the city of Basel in 1580.\(^1\) This edition of the Talmud is unique because it was printed during a time of censorship on Jewish books, and in compliance with the Catholic Church’s rules.

The Talmud is a compilation of Hebraic teachings.\(^2\) It contains two main parts, the Mishnah and Gemara. The Mishnah is the law itself. Gemara is commentary and interpretation of the Mishnah. Throughout history there have been different versions and editions of the Talmud, for example the Jerusalem Talmud and Babylonian Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud has made its way to become the most prominent version as it has shaped many aspects of the Jewish religion since the medieval times. Two notable editions of the Talmud before Froben’s version were from Gershom Soncino and Daniel Bomberg.

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Gershom Soncino was a famous printer, known for innovation in printing books.\(^3\) His contribution to the development of the Talmud was the inclusion of the Tosafot to be printed with the Talmud. The significance of the Tosafot was that it was a supplement to Rashi commentaries, as scholars felt the need to correct, improve, or add to Rashi commentaries.\(^4\) He printed some of the Talmud tractates from 1508 to 1519 in Pesaro, Italy.\(^5\) These volumes differed in many ways such as size and decoration of the border. Commentaries that he included were Piskei Tosafot, Maimonides, and the Mordekhai. Soncino printed tractates based on differences but did not necessarily intend to print the full Talmud.

The full edition of the Talmud was printed by Daniel Bomberg, one of the most known Hebrew printers despite the fact that he was not a Jew himself.\(^6\) Bomberg printed his first edition of the Talmud from 1519-1523 in Venice, Italy. According to Moses Marx, Bomberg’s Talmud was more beautiful, bigger, featuring more commentaries, and of higher quantity than Soncino’s partial edition.\(^7\)

Moreover, Bomberg printed tractates that had never been seen before that required a different preparation than previous manuscripts.\(^8\) Bomberg’s Talmud became the standard in terms of foliation and formatting.

The publisher of Fordham’s Masekhet Menahot is Ambrosius Forben. Ambrosius followed the footsteps of both his grandfather, Johann Froben, and his father, Hieronymous Froben, in pursuing the printing business.\(^9\) Johann started printing in 1491.\(^10\) He printed religious texts, mostly Christian books with some Hebrew.\(^11\) Hieronymous and his son and law continued his father’s business and printed the same genre of texts but wanted to make their work appealing to Jewish readers. They attempted to get permission to print the Babylonian Talmud in 1561 but were denied as there was a ban placed on the Talmud.

Ambrosius eventually achieved his father’s goal to print the Babylonian Talmud.\(^12\) The time and place that Ambrosius published *Masekhet Menahot* has two significant facts. The first is that during this time, the Talmud was banned, and Pope Julius III

\(^3\) Marvin J. Heller, “Earliest Printings of the Talmud” in *Printing the Talmud*, 69-70.
\(^4\) Haym Soloveitchik, "The Printed Page of the Talmud the Commentaries and Their Authors" in *Printing the Talmud*, 35.
\(^6\) Heller, "Earliest Printings of the Talmud," 72.
\(^7\) Moses Marx as quoted in Heller, "Earliest Printings of the Talmud," 72.
\(^8\) Heller, "Earliest Printings of the Talmud," 72, 74.
\(^9\) Skloot, *Printing, Hebrew Book Culture and Sefer Ḥasidim*, 105-06.
\(^12\) Ibid., 106.
issued a bull *Cum Sicut Nuper* that enforced the earlier Inquisition decree condemning the Talmud to flames.\(^{13}\) In 1557, Pope Paul IV prohibited Jews from owning any Hebrew books, except of the Bible.\(^{14}\) This was done because the Church looked to use this decree as a tool of conversion, rather than because they considered the Jewish beliefs blasphemy.

In 1559, the Index of Prohibited Books included the Talmud.\(^{15}\) Ambrosius Froben eventually received permission to print the Talmud under the conditions that the book did use the name Talmud and that the text was subject to censor’s approval.\(^{16}\) The edition included Catholic commentaries in the margins, omitted tractates that were considered blasphemous, and changed or expurgated any references that did not align with the Church doctrines.\(^{17}\) This made it “The most heavily censored edition of the Babylonian Talmud.”\(^{18}\)

A copy of the Basel edition of *Masekhet Menahot* can be found in Fordham Library’s special collections. This copy is fairly large and has dimensions of 38.5 centimeters by 27.5 centimeters. The size of the book suggests that the book was not meant for personal use, but to rather for a library. It also has a hard, black cover with not lettering or decoration.

**Title page of Maskhet Menahot**

At the top of the title page there are wood block images that spell out the title of the book, *Masekhet Menahot*. There are different sizes of Hebrew text of 0.5 centimeters and 0.3 centimeters. The middle of the page has Ambrosius Froben’s printer’s mark, two hands holding up a rod, with a bird is sitting on it, two snakes are coiled around the rod, their heads hovering over the bird. The bottom of the page has Latin text in fonts of 0.7 centimeters and 0.4 centimeters, as well as Latin text in italics, saying that the book complied with the decrees of the Council of Trent. The title page also shows the previous owners of the book, a rabbinic seminary in Berlin and another place that is unknown because the stamps have faded, and the words are unreadable.

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14 Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553," 405-406.
16 Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes toward the Talmud," 418.
18 Ibid.
Text from Masekhet Menahot

Looking at the text, each page has the title of the section and uses foliation, page numbers only on the left pages. The text of the book is split into three different sections with three different styles and sizes of fonts. The middle of the text is of the text of the Talmud and is written in a larger square Hebrew font. The two side texts take the form of an “L” shape and are Rashi (in Rashi font) and Tosafot commentaries and sources. The margins contain crossreferences within the book.
The lack of annotations suggest that this book was not used much. At the bottom left of some of the pages are a Latin letter, ranging from A-O, and Roman numerals. These are guides used to order the quires before binding the book. There is a table of contents located in the back of the book.

Most of the pages have water damage, especially on the corners and front pages. There are pieces of the pages missing from the water damage, as well as some pages being torn out of the book. The water damage suggests that the book was stored and preserved in a damp place.

Masekhet Menahot is an important edition of the Talmud because it shows the result of Christian censorship on Jewish texts. This edition was published to make financial gains for the Froben press and as a way for the Church to try to convert Jews. Ultimately, this edition of the Talmud failed because of its censorship and was therefore never republished.

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Fordham University’s copy of Moses ben Israel Isserles’s *Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at: dine ’isur ye-heter* published in 1591 in Cracow, Poland is relatively small- measuring approximately 19 x 14 centimeters with 104 quarto pages. The book was recently rebound in a simple solid red half-leather cover with no. The book is also quite simple. Only the title page of the book is decorated with an woodcut frame with an intricate floral design and soldiers; the rest of the book consists solely of 4-5 different Hebrew fonts of various sizes with 2 columns of text per page.

Compared to many other Jewish books printed in this time, including held within Fordham’s Special Collections, this copy of the *Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at* appears quite plain. Unassuming as it seems, further analysis of the appearance, publication, and historical context of the book demonstrates that the *Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at* was highly influential in allowing the layman to understand Jewish dietary law (*kashrut*) and ritual purity.
Fig. 1. Layout of the 1591 edition of Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at by Moses Isserles, printed in Cracow by Yitsḥak (Isaac) Prostits.

The book’s plain appearance (fig. 1) likely lowered the cost of production, making it more affordable. This claim of affordability is further validated by the relative low quality of the paper and the use of only a few different fonts. The only place where more inventive formatting is visible is the end of the introductory section and before the text of Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at begins, where the end of the text of the introduction is designed in a slanted triangle (fig. 2).

The small size of the book indicates that it was meant to be carried around, and used as a quick reference, which is corroborated by its apparent heavy use. Throughout the book, there are copious water stains and tears that suggest that the book has been read many times. This condition is reflected in the book’s purpose as a guidebook meant to serve as an everyday instructional tool for the Jewish layman. However, as is typical with Jewish books printed in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at this time, Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at is written is Hebrew rather than the Polish vernacular, or Yiddish, the Jewish spoken
language. This choice of language made the book accessible only among those who knew Hebrew, and less accessible to the general public. Therefore, Isserles likely intended for his book to have a relatively educated Jewish audience.

In order to fully understand the significance of the Zot Torat ḫaṭ‘at, one must first look critically at the book’s main author, Moses ben Israel Isserles, Joseph ben Ephraim Karo (the 1591 edition also includes sections on purity by him), and the publisher, Yitsḥaḵ (Isaac) Proṣṭits. Moses Isserles was a renowned 16th-century Polish Jewish scholar whose “influence shaped the development of halakhah for many generations.”1 The Rema, as he was called, stood apart from other rabbis at the time by accepting the use of the printing press rather than viewing it as a threat.2 He arose as one of the leading Jewish scholars of his time and his many legal rulings “remain in force to this day.”3 His body of work includes commentary on Jewish law (such as the ha-Mappah) and legal guidebooks (such as the Zot Torat ḫaṭ‘at). Isserles’s best known work is ha-Mappah, a gloss on his Joseph Karo’s immensely influential legal code Shulchan Aruch.4 Thanks to Isserles’s commentary, the Shulchan Aruch “became the normative code of law for Ashkenazic Jews”.5 Moreover, when the publisher, Yitsḥaḵ Proṣṭits, was active, he published many similar books to the Zot Torat ḫaṭ‘at. Based out of Krakow, Poland, this printer published a large number of books on Jewish law, rabbinic literature, and sermons.6 And, of course, Isserles’s Zot Torat ḫaṭ‘at.7

The majority of the publisher’s books are similar in size (18-20 cm) and length (80-170 pages) and are written in Hebrew, although a few are in Aramaic8 and Yiddish.9 As this edition of the Zot

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1 Gershon Hundert, Jews in Early Modern Poland (London: Littman, 1997), 93.
6 E.g. Joshua ibn Shaub, Sefer Derashot 'al Ha-Torah (Ḳara: Yitshaḵ ben Aharon mi-Proṣṭits, Place: Poland; Kraków, 1573); Isaac ben Jacob Yitsḥaḵ ben Aharon Alfasi et al., Sefer rav Alfasi, (Ḳara : Yitsḥaḵ Proṣṭits, 357 [1596 or 1597]); Sefer Yuḥasin: Le-Horot Shalshelet Kabalat Ha-Torah Mi-Mosheh Rabenu 'a. Ha. 'ad 'et Zeman Ha-MehAber (Ḳara: [Yitsḥaḵ ben Aharon mi-Proṣṭits], 1580).
7 Moses ben Israel Isserles, Zot Torat ḫaṭ‘at (Krakow: Yitshaḵ ben Aharon mi-Proṣṭits, [350] 1590/1).
8 Talmud Yerushalmi : 'al pi Hotsa 'at K.rotohin (626) ... 'im Perush Kasar ... 'a.Y. YitsḥAḵ Ben Aharon Mi-ProṣṭIts ... YE-'im Shaʻar Ha-ʻayin ... Me-
Torat ḥaṭ’at falls within all these criteria, it clearly also fits within Yitsḥaḵ Prostīts’s realm of usually published books.

Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at describes Jewish dietary restrictions and ritual purity. Over centuries, it has approximately dozens of editions from Krakow, Furth, Jerusalem, and Prague. The book was first published in 1569, with the most recent publication being in 2009 in Bnei Brak, Israel. Even though the book was written in Hebrew, and not translated, the large number of editions published in many different locations alongside the longevity of publication implies that the Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at was quite popular. As a matter of fact, the book has been cited as a source of Jewish dietary law in popular media as recently as 2003. Additionally, a great number of prominent Jewish scholars have written commentaries on the work, including Jacob ben Joseph Reischer, whose Minḥat Ya’akov was included with many publications of the Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at after 1688. These widespread commentaries demonstrate the book’s influence throughout the Jewish community.

When Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at was written in the second half of the 16th-century in Krakow, the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth was a center of Jewish life and learning. The Jewish population has been estimated to have been between 20,000 and 300,000 people, with the majority of them living in towns with relative legal autonomy. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was, according to a Polish scholar, “a country of great ethnic and religious differences” with a great deal of Jewish-Christian interaction and acculturation.

This diversity of thought helped spur the development of new interpretations. As the shift from manuscript to printing had occurred in Poland earlier in the century, the rate by which information spread and the number of people who had access to it was rapidly increasing “so that practically anyone could

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13 Jacob ben Joseph Reischer, and Moses Isserles, Sefer Minḥat Yaakov (Polna'ah : [H m o 1], 1801).
14 Hundert, Jews in Early Modern Poland, xxxi-xxxiv.
17 Fram, Ideals Face Reality: Jewish Law and Life in Poland, 1550-1655, 29-32.
now obtain any text.” These two influences combined to inspire Isserles to write *Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at* to replace the *Sha’arei Dura*, an earlier legal handbook, with a more modern text that, according to Elhanan Reiner, “departed from the customary modes of knowledge transmission of medieval Ashkenazi society and internalized the new communicative values of the printing press.” In other words, he wanted to make Jewish dietary law and ritual purity accessible to the new audience through printing, the layman, rather than the traditionally wealthy audience of manuscript.

The absence of design, small size, and use of lower-quality paper reinforces this idea, as discussed previously. Clearly, Isserles wanted the *Zot Torat ḥaṭ’at* to make Jewish law available to the everyday individual by creating an accessible guidebook. The book’s long duration of publication around the world and its position as a common reference suggest that he was successful in this endeavor.

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19 Ibid, 86-87.

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[Hebrew (Hide non-Roman characters)]

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Joseph ibn Verga, *Sefer She'erit Yosef* (Mantua: ha-Aḥim Yitsḥaḳ u-Shelomoh bene Shemu’el mi-Nortsi 1593)

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**Sefer She'erit Yosef of 1593**

by Andrea Nestico

**Editions of the *Sefer She'erit Yosef***

Fordham’s copy of the *Sefer She'erit Yosef* by Joseph Ibn Verga was published in Mantua, Italy, by brothers Isaac and Samuel A. Nordi, sons of Solomon, in 1593.¹ Theirs is the second edition of the book, it was printed with the permission of the Christian authorities. There are a total of 10 editions. Some also printed in Mantua by Nordi, and some, also in Mantua, by Tomaso Rupinelo. The *Sefer She'erit Yosef* is a commentary on Jewish law.

**About the Author:**

Joseph Ibn Verga, the author of the *Sefer She'erit Yosef*, was born in Spain, but Ibn Verga emigrated to the Ottoman Empire in 1492 after the expulsion of Jews from Spain.² Ibn Verga later became a rabbi and dayyan, a religious judge, of his adopted town Adrianople. He began writing in 1550

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¹ Ibn Verga, Joseph. *Sefer She’erit Yosef*. Manṭovah : ha-Aḥim

when he finished and published his father’s, Solomon Ibn Verga, book, *Shevet Yehudah*.

**Physical Appearance:**

Fordham’s *Sefer She'erit Yosef* 1593 edition has withstood time well without much significant damage. The 1593 *Sefer She'erit Yosef* consists of forty-four pages, and is rather small in size, 20 x 14.5 cm, which indicates that the book could be carried around somewhat easily.

The book has been rebound recently, and during this or previous binding pages have been cut down to fit the size of the binding. The binding has no decorative elements, except for silver letters on the spine with Hebrew title and “Mantova 1593.” The hardcover binding is brown and has a leather texture with some lighter brown scratches scattered throughout.

On the back of the title page, with the printer’s preface, at the bottom there is a small element of decoration that appears once or twice throughout, designed black rectangle with diamond shapes and vine-like structures (fig. 1).

Fig. 1

At the bottom of the title page, a signature of Girolamo da Durallano appears, along with the date 1640. Girolamo da Durallano was a censor active at the time in Modena and Reggio, Italy. Girolamo da
Durallano reviewed the book in 1640, even though, as the phrase *Con Licenza dei Superiori* on the title page suggests the book was published with the permission from the Christian authorities. Since the Catholic Church first decreed regulations of books in the sixteenth century, each Hebrew book had to be examined for potential heretical content or any offensive language towards the Church. If any book was deemed inappropriate, the book would have to be censored; if already printed, expurgated; or if the book was banned, then confiscated and often destroyed. In many cases, when certain parts of the book that failed to comply with the Church’s regulations, the author, or printer, would be forced to either take out those parts or revise them.³ This edition was censored at least three time and passed each inspection.

On the back of the last printed page of the book, there are three additional handwritten signatures, also by censors: “Visto per me frate Renato da Modena, 1626”, “Revisto per fra Luigi da Balogna marzo 1599”), and “Camillo Jaghel 1613.” Luigi da Bologna was active in 1596-1606 in Mantua, Modena, Ancona, and Reggio; Camillo Jaghel in 1611-21, in Ancona, Urbino, and Lugo; and Renato da Modena, apparently between 1620-1626.⁴

The title page has in the corner an additional annotation in Hebrew (fig. 2): ⁵

It translates to:

“With the help of the Almighty (brothers) divided up inheritance 6th day in the month of Kislev in the year (5)365 <November 28, 1604> This became my portion”


⁵ Transliterated and translated by Meir Turner from whom Fordham purchased the copy.
A detailed list of inheritance appears in the back of the book on the end paper, upside down (fig. 3). It also mentions other books.

The quality of the paper is fairly good, though there is some discoloration from water damage, and some corners are ripped off. The ripped edges have been repaired and dressed in a new paper. An example of such repairs is on the title page, where the corner is a lighter color than the rest of the page which clearly shows where the repairs were done (fig.2). These
repairs may not have been done correctly because of the obvious discoloration.\textsuperscript{6}

The text of the book is laid out for the ease of use, with clear paragraph breaks (fig. 4).

The book was published with an index of subjects, set up as two columns of writing per page (fig. 5).

These pages are printed in strictly black ink, and the fonts vary in seven sizes. It is clear that Soncino, a known printer, took care to publish well even the smallest books.

\textsuperscript{6} Book Repair and Restoration Articles. Alibris. \url{https://www.alibris.com/article/book-restoration}
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Joseph Ibn Verga’s *Sefer She’erit Yosef*, a Methodology of the Talmud

By Geraldine Riveros

Printed in Mantua, Italy, in 1593 by brothers Isaac and Solomon, sons of Samuel Norzi, Fordham’s copy of Joseph Ibn Verga’s *Sefer She’erit Yosef*, a book about Talmudic methodology, is the book’s second edition. Fordham’s copy is very unique in that it has, on the front and back pages, several signatures of censors who examined it over the years between 1599 until 1640 (fig 1). The book also includes also a note stating that one of the Jewish owners received it as a portion of his inheritance. The list of the inheritance, divided between three brothers in 1604, is on the back of the book (fig 2).¹ The book travelled from the printing press then to a family into the hands of several censors only to finally end up in the Special Collections Library at Fordham University. The history of this book as well as the time periods in which it was printed can provide a greater insight into the historical events in the history of Jews in early modern Italy.

Though this book went through the hands of censors, there were no expurgations, which means

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¹ Joseph Ibn Verga, *Sefer Sheerit Yosef* (Mantovah: ha-Ahim Yitshak u-
they found nothing objectionable was found in this edition of the book. Fordham’s copy truly captures the essence of printing and censorship of Jewish books in Italy.

At 44 pages long and 20 cm long by 14.5 cm wide, the tiny book is small enough to carry in a pocket or to comfortable fit in a small purse. Since the book is in a squarish size it was printed in Quarto. The exterior of the book is recently bound in leather.

Fig. 1 Sefer she’erit Yosef, back page with censors’ signatures.

Fig. 3. List of inheritance divided between the brothers.
The title, *She'erit Yosef*, comes from the verse “Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord God of Hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.” The title page explains that the book discusses the rules of the Talmud that were not explained by earlier sages. In the 1554 first edition from Adrianople, Joseph ibn Verga noted that he had compiled the small book in the year of the plague, and was very aware that errors crept into his book due to the fright that spread throughout society at the time. The book was brief, he said, also due to the plague, in these highly uncertain times, it was not known who would be sickened next. But he wanted to finish the book as fast and effectively as possible in order to avoid any of his thoughts being lost due to the dangers of contracting the illness.

The book is divided into eight paths which include the Mishnah; the difficulty; the resolution; the commentary; the query and plain explanation; the argument; the traditional interpretation; and the halakhah. It fully breaks down the Talmud into subsections that clarify each part individually. Ibn Verga tried to explain the book in a manner that most people can understand in order to make more people educated on the methodology of the Talmud.

The first edition book was first published during 1554 in the Ottoman Empire in Edirne, Adrianople by the brothers Solomon and Yosef, sons of Issac Yabes.  

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3 Heller, *Further Studies*, 85
4 Heller, *Further Studies*, 85
5 Joseph Ibn Verga, *Sefer She'erit Yosef : Yeva'er Bo Rabim Mikhla'le Ha-Talmud Asher Lo' Hivi'u Ha-Rishonim ... Mi-Mah She-Matsa' Mefuzar Ba-Talmud U-Mefurad Be-Tosafot Ve-Shitot Ge'onim Aharonim* (Adrianopoli: al yede ha-ahim Shelomoh ve-Yosef bene Yitshak Yabets, Place: Turkey; Edirne, 1554).
Joseph Ibn Verga ended up in the Ottoman Empire after he emigrated there following the expulsion of Jews from Spain. There he became a rabbi and judge in Adrianople, the same location where the book ended up being published.6

Aside from the Norzi 1593 edition from Mantua, there appears to be another Mantua edition also published in the year 1593 by Rufinelli.7 After 1593, there appear no other editions until 1909 when it was published in Warsaw by N. Sokolov, that edition has a co-author, Yeruham Lainer, a Hasidic rabbi in Radzyn. The book is 99 page long and is 23 cm in size.8

In 1948, New York: Menorah published a limited-edition book called *Sefer Sheerit Yosef ler-rabenu Yosef ben Verga*, it appears together with works by Bezalel ben Abraham Ashkenazi.9 In 1959, a 26 cm version of Sheerit Yosef is published again in New York: Menorah. The book was published in New York, Poland, Warsaw, Germany, and Berlin under the author names of Joseph Ibn Verga, Yeruham Meir Lainer, and Bezalel Ashkenazi.10

The gap from the 1593 to the 1900s suggests that interest in the book dropped. Perhaps since the Talmud became banned in Italy in the 16th century, the drop in interest may be attributed to censorship after all *Sefer She’erit Yosef* discussed the methodology of the Talmud. Once the book resurfaced in 1909, interest in it increased

While the Talmud comments upon the Mishnah, Joseph ibn Verga tried to break it down even further and explain why things are the way they are written in the text of the Talmud.11

Joseph ibn Verga lived a life on the move. Born in Spain, from which they were expelled in 1492, the family sought refuge first in Lisbon, and, then after the forced conversions of Jews in 1496, and the Lisbon massacre of 1506, in the Ottoman Empire, only to settle in Adrianople. It can be inferred that the moment in his life when he had to live as a converso strengthened his faith in Judaism. Once he was set free and allowed to believe in Judaism again, he spent his life focused on deepening his faith by studying

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8 *Sefer Sheerit Yosef = Sefer Shairis Iosif* (Varsha: Bi-defus N Sokolov, 1909).


under rabbis. The path and journey of his faith very much promoted his hard work and devotion towards *Sefer She’erit Yosef*.¹²

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¹² Heller.
**Maḥzor: ke-minhag k.k. Ashkenazim** from Venice 1599/1600

By Michael Pappano

The **Maḥzor: ke-minhag k.k. Ashkenazim** in Fordham’s collection was published in Venice in 1599/1600 (5360). It was published by the prominent printing business in the Venetian Republic of the era, Bragadina by Zan di Gara. This **Maḥzor**, a Jewish prayer book used on the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, was intended for the Ashkenazi Jewish community.

The copy in Fordham’s collection measures 6.1875 inches x 8 inches x 2.25 inches. It contains approximately 500 pages, but is missing the title page, and the first pages are hand-written.

Its cover is made of cloth-covered board and the binding is made from small twine wrapped tightly together. The cover is torn off the spine of the book, revealing the binding, which is in extremely poor shape. The individual threads of the binding can be seen when viewing the front and back covers of the book. The condition of the book, its binding, missing pages, and handwritten restorations signify that the book was heavily used very much and must have been passed down to many generations, attested by multiple signatures on the book’s inside covers, in Hebrew and Italian.

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*Maḥzor ke-minhag k.k. Ashkenazim* (Venice, 1599/1600), Spec Coll Judaica 1600 1
For a book so heavily used, it is no surprise that many of the pages have blemishes on them. There is water damage on many of the pages and there is a very large number of tears, folded corners, and creases on most all of the pages. Some of the pages also have holes, likely caused by worms.

This book contains both printed pages and handwritten pages. The manuscript pages are written in a handwriting strikingly similar to the font used by the print shop, signifying that the printed pages were copied in manuscript to replace missing pages.

Fig. 1 Signatures and notes by previous owners.

Fig. 2 Printed page on the left, manuscript replacement on the right.
Some printed pages have two columns with detailed page borders and intricate borders around titles.

This book was published by a family-owned print shop that eventually became known as “Stamperia Bragadina,”¹ founded by Alvise Bragadin (c.1500 – 1575) who settled in Venice. A Christian, he eventually began printing Hebrew books when offered the chance. First established and managed by Alvise, his descendants would take over the family business and would keep the business successful into the 18th century.² The first book that Bragadin printed in Hebrew was, according to most scholars, Maimonides’ (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon) Mishnah Torah in 1550.³ See also the significance of Maimonides Torah in this article.⁴ This was a very popular book that was published in many editions. The Bragadin family business held a monopoly in the printing business of Hebrew texts for some time in Venice. As a result, the books they published spread to many people and places in Europe, North Africa,

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¹ Squarcini, F. & P. Capelli. 2016-2017. TRACING THE HEBREW BOOK


³ Maimonides, Moses. 1550. [Mishneh Torah ... Helek Rishon. Venets’ah: nidpas ... Alovizi Bragadin.

and the Fertile Crescent. The monopoly ended when a new printing house was established, *Stamperia Vendramina* in 1630 by Giovanni Vendramin.\(^5\)

The *Maḥzor* was printed by a named printer, Zuan di Gara, better known as Giovanni di Gara, who operated his own printing press but also cooperated closely with the Bragadina, as this *Maḥzor* attests.

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**Fig. 4. A colophon with Giovanni (Zuan) di Gara’s name.**

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**Publishing Competition and Feud in Venice**

Marco Antonio Giustiniani, another Venetian publisher, was an ambitious printer. He came before Alvise Bragadin, who began to compete with Giustiniani, and put him out of business. Giustiniani printed many different types of books, including a famous edition of the Talmud, different editions of the Pentateuch with commentaries, works on Jewish law, and more. The feud between him and Bragadin arose over the printing of, Maimonides’ *Mishne Torah*. Rabbi Katzenellenbogen wrote commentaries in this edition and Giustiniani refused to print. Angered, Katzenellenbogen brought the task to the printshop of Alvise Bragadin who at this point hadn’t yet been publishing Hebrew books.\(^6\) Bragadin accepted the task, and thus began his role as a printer of Hebrew books. Annoyed, Giustiniani printed the book as well, and began to sell it for less than his rival.\(^7\) In response, Rabbi Katzenellenbogen, who had paid for the printing, went to his distant cousin and leading authority among Ashkenazim in Europe, Rabbi Moses Isserles, seeking to protect his investment in his

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\(^7\) Neil Weinstock Netanel, and David Nimmer. 2016. “Maharam of Padua versus Giustiniani: Rival Editions of Maimonides’s *Mishneh Torah*.”
commentaries. Giustinian’s book was banned as Rabbi Moses Isserles found him guilty under Jewish laws for unfair competition. Angered by the verdict, Giustinian took the issue to Pope Julius III for a trial, urging the pope to examine Katzenellenbogen’s commentaries for heresy. The end result was, that in 1553, Julius III issued a bull ordering the burning of the Talmud and other halakhic works.8 This all occurred at a time when Hebrew publications were becoming increasingly questioned and accused of containing blasphemous context.

*Historical Context: Burning of the Talmud*

The Venetian Republic, in October of 1553, ordered all publications of the Talmud to be burned.9 Catholics, those behind the Inquisition, claimed that the Talmud was full of blasphemous assertions regarding God, Mary, and Jesus. Burning the Talmud, a Hebrew publication, affected the printers of Hebrew texts. As a result, the prominent printers Giustinian and Bragadin lost money. Six years later in 1559, the Esecutori ruled that Hebrew books could only be published if they were censored. The printed text would undergo expurgation, and if anyone were to hold unexpurgated books, they would be subject to punishment, such as imprisonment. The Talmud was not allowed to be printed again until 1564.10 In 1571, Jews were not even allowed to work at a print shop. The Hebrew presses were now controlled by Christian owners and typesetters. This caused problems as more mistakes were made, complicating the whole process. Jews were then hired to correct and curate the texts if it was permitted by the Catholics in power.11

*Bragadin Family in Year of Publishing*

In 1599/1600 the Bragadin printshop, where the *Maḥzor* was published, was managed by Giovanni Bragadin, the son of Alvise who took over the press after Alvise had died. He was the head of the *Stamperia Bragadina*, from 1579 to 1614. Giovanni Bragadin had a standing professional relationship with Aser Parenzo, a prominent editor of the time in Venice. Working with the company for a long time, his loyalty and good-standing relationship with the Bragadin’s was evident.12 Giovanni Bragadin’s main

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8 Squarcini, F & P. Capelli. 2016-2017. TRACING THE HEBREW BOOK COLLECTION
12 Squarcini, F&P. Capelli. 2016-2017. TRACING THE HEBREW BOOK COLLECTION
competitor at this time was Giovanni Di Gara, though the two frequently collaborated. Di Gara was a prominent Venetian printer that enriched the cultural aspects of Venice with the influence of his press. Between 1565 and 1608, his press issued eight editions of the complete Jewish Bible. Although competitors, both Bragadin and Di Gara published a Torah, *Perush ha-Torah meha-ḥakham ha-shalem Don Yitshaḥ Abrabanel z[ekher] ts[adik] le-[verakhah].* The colophon of the Torah states that the present work was printed "in the house of the skilled craftsman Zuani di Gara." Also in this text can be seen 4 crowns; the three represent *Stamperia Bragadina*, and the added fourth marks the collaboration with Di Gara.13

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Mahzor: ke-minhag k.k. Ashkenazim (Venice, Bragadina, 1599-1600), vol 1, handwritten pages

Maimonides, Moses. 1550. [Mishneh Torah ... Helek Rishon. Ȳenetsi’ah: nidpas ... Aloyizi Bragadin.


Robert Bellarmine, *Institutiones linguae Hebraicae*

By Cullen McCarthy

Written by Robert Bellarmine, *Institutiones linguae Hebraicae* is a book teaching grammar elements of Hebrew. The full title of the book, *Institutiones linguae Hebraicae: postremo recognitae, ac locupletatae Huic editioni accesserunt tabulae duae, quarum prima Hebraicae linguae elementa praecipua, altera vero omnium coniugationum tam analogarum quam anomalarum varietatem comprehendi; item Linguae Syriacae Iesu Christo vernaculae Elementa prima, syriacis characteribus edita,* describes the grammar points mentioned in this book and points out that the Syriac language is in this book as well. The book was written in Latin, but contains also Hebrew. *Institutiones linguae Hebraicae* was published in Coloniae Allobrogum [Geneva] in the year, 1616 by Petrum de la Rouiere. Robert Bellarmino’s book was printed eighteen times between 1578–1624, about once every six years. More specifically it was printed in 1578, 1580 (twice), 1585, 1596 (twice), 1606 (twice), 1609, 1615, 1616 (thrice), 1617, 1618, 1619, 1622 (twice), and 1624. The edition at

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1 Roberto Bellarmino, *Institutiones Linguae Hebraicae* :
Fordham’s collection is the 11th edition, published in 1616.²

The 1616 edition published by Roviere is a small book, about 4” by 7”, and around two inches thick, enough to contain all 334 pages. The quality of the paper was relatively low, and it is now yellowed. There are three different main fonts, the normal font that is common throughout the entire book, the title and section header font, and the teaching font, for the Hebrew and notes on the lessons. Decorative fleurons are very prevalent in this edition. Usually, there was a small horizontal illustration above each section header, as seen in the image above, but also there were illustrated letters at the beginning of many sections. This copy is in great condition, but the “wear and tear” is visible. The cover is of parchment and has clearly experienced discoloration, but is still in good condition.

In his lifetime, Bellarmine wrote many books from *How to Die Well* to the preface of *Sixto-Clementine Vulgate*, but including two grammar books written for college students, one teaching Greek grammar, the other one being the *Institutiones Linguae Hebraicae*.³ At one point in his life, Bellarmine taught students at a University and showed them to speak Hebrew. Bellarmine

apparently didn’t know Hebrew himself, so he always made sure he was one lesson ahead of all his students. This book is something of a college textbook; it was meant for students to read to improve their Hebrew grammar. Later, Bellarmine did this same thing with Greek, not knowing the language he taught his students one lesson behind where he was himself. It seems that these two books about Greek and Hebrew grammar are the only books Bellarmine wrote that were published by Petrum de la Rouiere.

The two grammar books are “outliers” of Bellarmine’s writing. Most all his books are religious writings, he was known for extensive research into certain aspects of religion, such as the difference between Catholics and Protestants.


Similarly, the publisher of the book, Apud Petrum de la Rouiere, did not publish any similar books except for the different editions. Most of the books published were religious books including many different versions of the Biblia Hebraica and Novum Testamentum Graece. To my knowledge, my book is the only one of Bellarmine’s works that were published by Apud Petrum de la Rouiere. Therefore the relationship between the two is very random.

This book was so small because it was used for personal use in a classroom setting. Robert Bellarmine, when teaching theology in Louvain, wrote this book to teach Hebrew to students who spoke Latin.

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Fordham University’s copy of Georg Mayr’s *Institutiones linguae Hebraicae in sex partes distributa: quibus accessit exercitatio grammatica in Ionam prophetam* was published in 1649 by Antonii Iullieron in Lyon. It appears that this is the third edition of the book; the first edition was published in 1616. It is a Hebrew language book for Christians, written in both Latin and Hebrew.

At 18 centimeters long by 12 centimeters wide, which appears to be the standard size of all editions, the size is suitable and convenient for learners to use and carry around. Its dimensions also suggest that it was utilized for personal use, as most books intended for public use were much larger. The grammar book has a total of 463 pages, in which all pages are numbered. It is printed on laid paper, with visible wire lines and chain lines.

Fordham’s copy is heavily used, and the cover is quite damaged. There are tears on both front and back covers, and the color is parched and weathered.

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The paper is dull and shows signs of water damage. No title or decoration can be seen on the front cover of the book, so the design is simple and minimal. However, the inside of the front cover is filled with handwriting that appears to be signatures and notes written in cursive in multiple languages, including Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and English.

![Image of handwritten notes]

Fig 1. The owners’ handwritten notes on the first two pages

The first two pages contain handwritten notes that cover the entirety of them. These markings of provenance belong to one, or possibly more than one, owner(s), which is completely unique about this specific copy. It appears that the previous owner(s) might have used these two pages to practice their grammar or write their personal notes. Overall, the book remains in its entirety, but the first and last few pages are more worn than the others. The notes were written in multiple languages, including English and Latin, which shows that the owners were from different places. The title page displays the book’s title in a large font size, along with the author’s name, Georg Mayr, and the publisher, Antonius Iullierion. There is a small drawing of what appears to be two snakes and two lions, possibly the printer’s marks, and a few Latin words (Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris), meaning “Do unto other as you would have done unto you,” in the center of the piece.
Some pages of the book have round edges, and the words printed on these pages also appear larger than those of other regular pages. There is little to no decoration on each page, which is not surprising since this is a Hebrew grammar book. The book has Hebrew characters and explanations, or definitions, written in Latin for the learner to be able to read and understand. Only two or three types of fonts were used throughout, further adding to the simplicity of the book. The format of the book varies, as some pages are divided into columns and some are in the form of paragraphs. There are no reader’s marks, or annotations, along the text. Each page has a title or chapter number in Latin. The book seems clear and easy to navigate, since it is intended for learners to utilize. Overall, these features hint that the book was written for a Latin reading community who wished to learn Hebrew.

Georg Mayr, the book’s author, was born in 1564 and died in 1623. Before writing *Institutiones linguae Hebraicæ in sex partes distributæ*, he translated *A shorte catechisme of Cardall Bellarmine: illustrated with the images*, a Catechism, in 1614\(^3\). Most of his works were religious books, written in Latin. They were not published by the same printer; each book seems to have been published in a different place, at a different time. The book subtly fits into Mayr’s general scope of writing—his oeuvre—in a sense that he was a religious writer and linguist, therefore, he focused on these fields the most in his writings. Although Mayr had quite a large volume of works, his life remains unknown since scholars did not write about him.

The printer of the book, Antonius Iullieron published other books, most of which were religious books, written in Latin. They were not published by the same printer; each book seems to have been published in a different place, at a different time. The book subtly fits into Mayr’s general scope of writing—his oeuvre—in a sense that he was a religious writer and linguist, therefore, he focused on these fields the most in his writings. Although Mayr had quite a large volume of works, his life remains unknown since scholars did not write about him.

texts written in Latin. In 1652, a few years after the publication of *Institutiones linguae Hebraicæ*, he published *Sacrorum Bibliorum Vulgatae editionis concordantiae* for the first time. It was a Bible concordance, or verbal index, specifically for scholarly use.4 Another example of a book published by this printer is *Thesaurus sacerdotum et clericorum locupletissimus*, which translates to “The most comprehensive catalogue of priests and clerics.” Similar to the Bible concordance, this book was also religious and intended for scholarly use. The fonts and format of this book are very similar to those of *Institutiones linguae Hebraicæ in sex partes distributæ*; perhaps they were the printer’s signature style5. From these two examples, one can see that the Hebrew language book was quite distinctive in terms of content, format, and audience, as Antonii Iullieron mainly published religious books for the general public or for scholars to use in libraries. Because of their purpose, they were printed on paper of higher quality, with leather cover and careful binding.

There does not seem to be a relationship between the printer and the author. The place of publication was Lyon, and it is clear that the audience was a Christian, Latin reading group. The book had about three editions in total, printed in 1616, 1622, and 1649 in Lyon and Augsburg, in Latin.

The book is an example of the Christians’ interest in Hebrew, a part of “Christian Hebraism,” referring to the “study of Hebrew by Christian scholars during a certain period in the past.”6 To contribute to their scholarship and understand religious texts, Christian scholars began to want to study ancient documents written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Therefore, these scholars needed a guide to help them learn Hebrew to be able to read and comprehend the historical texts they found. *Institutiones linguae Hebraicæ in sex partes distributæ* served as a useful tool for Christian scholars to further their studies in the seventeenth century.

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Yom Tov ben Moses Zahalon’s *Sefer she’elot u-teshuvot*

by Zowie Kemery

Fordham’s *Sefer she’elot u-teshuvot* by Yom Tov ben Moses Zahalon, a reference book of questions and answers, was published in Venice by Giovanni Vendramin in 1694. This is the first edition. Vendramin was a publisher in Venice who specialized in Hebrew texts; his press was one of the better-known presses in Venice specializing in Hebrew texts at the time.¹

The cover of Fordham’s copy is made of a hard paper material—almost like cardboard—and is bound in brown leather, which is very worn, faded, and torn in a line across the front cover, as if it was scraped by something sharp (Image 1). Despite its worn condition, the ornate decorations on the leather on the front cover can still be observed: there is a border embossed into the leather on the front cover and in the middle of the cover there is a diamond shaped floral

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design stamped into the leather which somewhat resembles a fleur de lis.

The book is rather large and fairly heavy, and was probably expensive meant to be used as a reference rather than as a personal volume to be carried around. The outside of the book also shows some signs of aging and deterioration, most notably along the spine. The spine is covered in white tape, reflecting a repair job done many years after the book was originally printed and bound. The book’s title, author, and the printer are handwritten in brown ink on the spine. There is also the number “58” in Arabic numerals and “23” in Hebrew numerals written in white ink which appear to be library call numbers (Image 2).

Fig. 1 Cover of Fordham’s copy Ẓahalon’s Sefer she’elot u-teshuvot
Upon opening the book there are many interesting things to see: the book has many signs of former ownership and stamps of censorship from Poland under Tsarist Russian rule. On the very first page of the book (a blank page before the title page) one can see handwriting; in particular, the name “Jakob Frohman,” written multiple times all over the page in brown ink (Image 3). This name is written over and over as if Jakob Frohman was trying to practice his signature. On the same page there are two stamps: a blue stamp in Hebrew reading “Ya’akov Itzhak Halevi Ruderman, Rosh Ha-Yeshiva, Ner Israel” and a black stamp reading “Jacob I. Ruderman, Dean of Rabb--” (and the rest is illegible). The black stamp features an anglicized version of the Hebrew name featured in the blue stamp—both indicating that this book was part of the library collection at the Rabbinic College Ner Israel.
The title page is highly decorated and features three different stamps. There is an ornate flowery border stamped around all of the text on the cover page. The typesets used on this page are particularly interesting: there are four font sizes and four different fonts used. Of the seven lines of writing on the title page lines 1 and 5 share a font, lines 2 and 4 share a font, lines 6 and 7 share a font, and line 3 does not share its font with any other line. In terms of font sizing, lines 2, 4, 6, and 7 are the largest, followed by line 1, then line 5, and, finally, line 3 (fig. 4). Underneath the writing there is a graphic design of what appears to be the Temple in Jerusalem.

On the reverse side of the page there is an ornate graphic design featuring an image of a temple that takes up nearly the entire page (fig 5). Below the image of the temple there is an image of a menorah. All of these images point to the fact that this book has a religious context.
Before the main text of the book begins, there is a small section at the start of the book which appears to serve as an introduction. The text of the introduction is divided into two columns per page, as is the text of the rest of the book. On the back of the third (un-numbered) folio in this section there is an image of the Temple Mount (Fig. 6).
There is a bolded font underneath the image, a different font than what is used in the rest of the page. This introduction section continues for 8 folios.

The main text of the book is foliated. The foliation numbers are represented by Hebrew numerals and begin with the number 1. The text is divided into two columns on each page and there are two fonts used: a more bolded font (which is used to notate questions and answers) and a separate, un-bolded font used for the bulk of the text. Image 7 is an example of a typical page of the main section of the book; this specific page (folio 2) also features a starred footnote in the margin (the only one of its kind that appears in the book). At the bottom left corner of the page there are some numbers (in both Hebrew and Arabic numerals). These numbers appear every four pages and were a device used by printers to help with the assembly of folios.
Image 8 shows the watermark that appear in the pages all throughout the book. The watermark is made up of a line that runs down the edge of the page, ending with a design near the corner of the page. The design features a three leaf clover, the letter “A”, and the letter “P”. The presence of a watermark in the paper is reflective of the generally high quality of this book, as only expensive paper would feature a watermark.
After this main section of the book ends, there begins another, much smaller, section of the book—an addition or appendix of rabbinic novellae that follows directly after the main text. This section does not follow the foliation of the main section of the book, but rather begins with the number 1. This section is much more ornately decorated, containing floral graphics throughout. See Image 9 below. Like the previous sections, the text of the appendix is also divided into two columns.
There are a few characteristics that are unique to this specific volume, namely, water damage, pagination errors, and reader’s marks. There is evidence of water damage throughout a large portion of the book; there are water stains that begin on folio 125 and appear on every page through folio 194. See Image 10 below.

There are very few reader’s marks in this book. The two in this text were both very small Hebrew lettering written in brown ink and boxed in at the top corner of a page. This type of reader’s mark can be observed in Image 10, which reads “Abraham” in the top left corner of the page.

There are significant pagination errors in this volume. While there are slight pagination issues in various spots throughout the book, the pagination errors occur most notably in two spots. In the late 90’s the pagination goes as follows: 90, 91, 92, 93, 98, 99, 100, 99, 100, 101, 102, 101, 102, 103. The other notable error is at the very end of the main section of the book. The pagination of the final pages goes as following: 245, 246, 246, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223. Thus, the section ends on folio 223 which is erroneously numbered. These foliation issues likely reflect the margin of human error in the process of hand assembling the folios before binding them.
There were only three editions of this book ever printed: one in 1694 (Fordham’s copy), one in 1967, and one in 2016. Fordham’s was the only of these three books that was published in Venice; the other two were published in Jerusalem. All three versions were published in Hebrew. The small number of publications most likely reflects the relative unpopularity of this book, as only three versions were published in a span on 322 years. Vendramin, the Venetian publisher, was extremely prolific and published numerous (at least twenty) books—all in Hebrew.

Fordham University’s copy of Sefer she’elot u-teshuvot by Yom Tov ben Moses Zahalon has unique features that have developed over the past 325 years as it has passed through the hands of various owners, librarians, rabbis, and students. The book—a large, sturdy, expensive, and well-made volume—remains a treasure to this day: it, as an object, has weathered through a lot the last few centuries, leaving it with marks that make it truly one of a kind.

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Yom Tov ben Moses Zahalon, *Sefer she’elot u-teshuvot* (Venice: Vendramin, 1694)


Yom Tov ben Moses Zahalon, *Sefer she’elot u-teshuvot* (Jerusalem: Zikhron Aharon, 2016)
The Yoreh Deah, printed here in one volume, is a part of the Shulhan Arukh, a compilation of Jewish law, the halakha.¹ Yoreh Deah covers topics from honoring parents and permitted foods to circumcision and foreign worship.

The Shulhan Arukh was authored by Joseph Caro and was created to give Jews of different backgrounds a singular reference. After Jews from the Iberian Peninsula were banished Sephardic and Ashkenazi began to have a chance to encounter each other. These encounters, which coincided with the rise of the printing press demonstrated that Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews did not have exactly similar traditions.

Joseph Caro created a straightforward compilation of all laws, mostly Sephardic, that was both comprehensible and applicable for all Jews. First, Beth Yosef then the Shulhan Arukh, written in a simple language to reach such a wider audience. With later, commentaries by a Polish rabbi Moses Isserles, the Shulhan Arukh became the most trusted and concise compilation of Jewish law.

¹“Shulhan ‘Arukh,” YIVO Encyclopedia,
This 1698 edition of the Shulhan Arukh issued by Emanuel ben Yosef Attias in Amsterdam is a pocket sized version, 8” by 6”. The book was clearly used since the binding on the inside of the book is mildly compromised (fig. 1).

And while the binding is weakened, the leather spine is torn, and the corners of the cover show wear and tear (fig. 2), pages are in rather good condition.

Considering the book’s intent, the book was probably owned by a student or a rabbi.

Upon opening the first page the reader is greeted by a title page adorned with an image of four, winged cherubs, lavishly displaying a Hebrew text on what seems to be a pedestal with an open book spelling the title “Shulhan Arukh.” According to the
Jewish Encyclopedia, in early Jewish history, pre-printing press era, cherubs were thought of as a spirit that would transfer a human’s data from the body up to God. As time went on and certain images became more widespread they became similarly depicted as angels in Christianity. However, cherubs still do not have a specific meaning in Judaism.

Handwritten, on the inside cover, is what appears to be a name and then a location. “Tel Aviv Palestine”. This writing in pencil suggests an informal note by an owner, or a seller, clearly before 1948, when Israel became an independent state.

The book has an index or a table of contents. This is the only place in the entire book with a few stained pages. The stains are rather small, brown, and contains a smaller darker inner circle leading one to believe that it is from something hot, maybe a candle (fig. 3). There is also smaller decorative elements throughout the rest of the book on some pages in combination with the texts. At the very end of the book is a multicolored design spanning across two pages (fig. 2, above).

The Editor and Printer

In some areas, like Italy, Jewish texts were heavily censored or even banned. However, in Amsterdam, an area with no anti-Jewish persecution,
Jewish printing flourished unencumbered. That is where the Attias family, first Yosef then his son, Emanuel ben Yosef Attias became top printers of Jewish literature. Before printing the Yoreh Deah in 1698, Attias also printed two editions of the Hebrew Bible in 1661 and 1667. Attias rivaled the other popular printers such as Halevi and Tartas in the competitive printing market of Amsterdam. In fact, in 1679 Attias printed a Judaeo-German edition of the Bible just a year after one printed by Uri Phoebus.

Jews in Amsterdam

In 1579 Holland joined the Union of Utrecht, which prohibited persecution. The first Jews to settle in Amsterdam were the conversos from Portugal, many Jews from Portugal would follow in the coming years. Amsterdam became a center of European, including Jewish printing. Hebrew books became so renowned that foreign prints would claim to be from Amsterdam, or at least would promote Amsterdam fonts (Fig. 4). There was a competitive atmosphere around the printing as well creating better and better editions of each book.

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3 http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14603-uri-phoebus-ben-aaron-ha-levi


5 “Printing in Amsterdam,”

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Bernard Picart’s, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations* by Fiona Pilch

Fordham’s Special Collection archive has the first English edition of Bernard Picart’s, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Unknown World: Together with Historical Annotations, and Several Curious Discourse Equally Instructive and Entertaining*. It was printed in London in 1733.1 The first edition of the book was in French, published in 1723 in Amsterdam.2 Picart’s *Ceremonies* is a remarkable, multi-volume, heavily illustrated work that seeks to cover religions around the world. The 1733 version of Picart’s Ceremonies is around the size of a large encyclopedia. It is about 16 inches long by 10.5 inches wide. It is about 2 inches in depth. Volume I focuses on “the ceremonies of the Jews and the Roman Catholics.”

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This English edition was printed by William Jackson for Claude Du Bosc, a famous French engraver. Jackson primarily printed larger books that involved elaborate artwork and different sized fonts.

Fordham’s copy of Picart’s text has a cover has a plain dark exterior, and it is in pristine condition. The appearance of Fordham’s copy shows that it was used lightly used and handled with care. On the spine of the book there are minor gold embellishments. Once opened, the tan paper has subtle water stains and darker marks. The book is in good condition. There are little to no rips of the pages.

The title page, though originally intended to keep out dirt from damaging the other pages and a way to advertise the book, is here beautifully designed. The variety of colors and or smaller or larger font can catch the reader’s eye. The red ink emphasized certain words and names.

Given the size of the book and its sophisticated content and illustrations, the potential audience reading Picart’s book would not be the general public, rather, a more affluent group in the society. Picart’s past writings and works show that he is known for his

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detailed illustrations.\textsuperscript{5} According historian Samantha Baskind, this book was just one of twenty-three Picart had created.\textsuperscript{6} Picart did not see the whole of Ceremonies through print. Picart had passed away before in 1733. However, his colleague and fellow printer, Jean Frederic Bernard, saw the volumes to finish.\textsuperscript{7}

The 1733 edition is primarily printed in black ink. The only page that has red ink on are the title page. A large portion of this volume is focused on Jewish traditions and customs. The remaining sections of the book is based around Catholic practices. As the title suggests The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Unknown World: Together with Historical Annotations, and Several Curious Discourse Equally Instructive and Entertaining presented Picart’s conception of religion.

Each of the page’s writings are organized into columns. However, throughout the whole book, there are numerous copper and black illustrations. Towards the middle of the book, contains a neatly folded extendable strip of images of the pope and the clergy. The quote under the illustration is, “The pope going in Ceremony to take possession of the pontificate in Saint John’s…” This description of the pope asserted the pope’s reign. The image above the quote displays armies of men on horseback defending the pope. There are eleven volumes to this book, and the text is written in five different languages.\textsuperscript{8}

The work, though elaborate and expensive became very popular. Within two decades there editions in French (1723-1743), Dutch (1726-1738), English (1733-1739), and German (1746).\textsuperscript{9} Many more editions followed.\textsuperscript{10}

The existence of these books and translations exhibit a broad appreciation of the book. Picart was an engraver, and an author during this period well-known as 'Picart le Romain.'\textsuperscript{11} Picart first started his training

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{8} The Origins of Comparative Religion: Bernard and Picart's Religious Ceremonies and Customs of All the Peoples of the World (1723-1743), http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/picart/
\bibitem{9} “Editions of Picart’s Religious Ceremonies and Customs” http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/picart/research.html
\end{thebibliography}
in engraving in France. Bernard Picart’s father was a well-known engraver. Bernard Picart discovered his talent of engraving when he was just twelve years of age.

Fordham’s copy has a few peculiar features. There are curves within the book. In the front pages, the edge between the opening blank page and the title page was very worn. The first page of the book is blank and very flat; However, the following pages are bumpy. Due to improper binding, the pages may have curled. This also could have been the affect types of paper that was used. Within Fordham’s copy, an additional peculiar feature was in the first opening pages. It looked as if they were cleanly cut out. I noticed that there are multiple splotching marks and discoloring throughout the pages, which did not match the untouched look of the cover. There were also minor burn marks within the book.

Fordham’s 1733 copy of Picart’s Ceremonies represents a door opening to other cultures and religions. He desired to incorporate important traditions of different religions within the book. His descriptions of the religions had a lasting impact on the name of Western religions. Through publishing this book, his point of view of these religions were comprehended by many people of the world who were not exposed to these religions.

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Picart, Bernard Bernard Jean-Frédéric, and Antoine Augustin Bruzen de La Martinière. The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World: Together with Historical Annotations and Several Curious Discourses Equally Instructive and Entertaining: Written Originally in French, and Illustrated with a Large Number of Folio Copper Plates [in English]. London: Printed by William Jackson, 1733.


Light of Worlds: Detailing the Impact and History of Menorat ha-Ma’or

By Margaret Keiley

Before the immense advances in the accessibility of literary works of reference, especially in the development of online search engines, historical texts such as the fourteenth-century Menorat ha-Ma’or, or in English, “Candle of Light,” by R. Isaac Aboab spread Jewish thought and understanding, particularly through the translation of Jewish texts such as the Talmud. Menorat ha-Ma’or is not a body of text meant to entertain the reader, instead it is meant to inform, and serve as reference when a rabbi couldn’t. Menorat ha-Ma’or is the only surviving work out of the three written by Isaac Aboab.

Fordham’s copy at the Special Collection Library at Fordham University is the 1739 edition, published by Zalman B. Aaron in Sulzbach, one of the 70 editions of Menorat ha-Ma’or to be published, demonstrating the book’s exceeding popularity. The text is organized in columns for the Hebrew text style, and commentary in Yiddish. Different fonts are used for the Hebrew and Yiddish texts.

The 1739 edition of Menorat ha-Ma’or was designed to stay in one place. With its large dimensions (21.6cm x 32.4cm x 6.35cm), and its weight of almost 1kg, it wouldn’t have been very easy to carry around. The binding and spine (Figure 2, A) appear contemporary, with intricate leather tooling (Figure 2, C), in particular, the Star of David (Figure 2, E); one can also see remnants of a book clasp (Figure 2, F).

Typically of the era, the book was printed on rag paper. Fordham’s copy has visible staining from candle wax (Fig. 3), suggesting that the book was read in the dark, and insect borings (Fig. 4).
The text contains little signs of usage, almost no inscriptions, besides the front cover which includes the owner’s signature, a couple of candle wax drops, and the occasional brush stroke.
Inside the book is a heavily-detailed title page (Figure 6), that of which includes many references towards religious figures, Moses and Aaron (Figure 6, A), stories (Figure 6, G), and symbols, in particular the Menorah (Figure 6, C). These components would’ve added to the value of the text, which was originally supposed to be a reference work.

Written by a fourteenth-century Talmudic scholar Isaac Aboab I, *Menorat ha-Ma’or* sought to reveal knowledge that was inaccessible to the wider Jewish masses. At the time of the text’s creation, the 14th century, Talmudic scholars shared their ideas amongst other scholars, in a way that left out parts they did not consider valuable.² Aboab took it upon himself to employ his extensive knowledge of the Talmud with his appreciation of classical philosophers (such as Plato and Aristotle) by grouping material within religious texts such as the aggadah and then approach it from a religious and ethical point of view.

In *Menorat ha-Maor*, Aboab utilizes the spiritual and symbolic importance of the Menorah on Judaism, and applies it towards determine what is proper behavior and ethics. The organization of the text takes the form of the Menorah itself: Where there are 7 Chapters for the 7 lamps.³ “The First Lamp – not to pursue luxury. The Second Lamp – not to open the mouth with sinful talk. The Third Lamp – to observe the mitzvot. The Fourth Lamp – about study of the Torah. The Fifth Lamp – about repentance. The Sixth Lamp – about the

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² “Aboab, Isaac.” In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Detroit: MacMillan Reference 2007. “These Talmudists...consider it their duty to propose difficult questions and answer them in a witty and subtle manner, but leave unnoticed the precious pearls that lie upon the bed of the Talmudic ocean, the haggadic passages so rich in beauty and sweetness.”

paths of peace and love. The Seventh Lamp – about humility… 

Fig. 7, beginning of the first chapter, “The First Candle.”

While discussing questions overlookes by many of his scholarly peers, Aboab turned to philosophical elements, and *Menorat ha-Ma'or* became one of the most popular books on Jewish ethics. and this is in part due to the spiritual independence it provided. It has remained popular over the centuries. Translated into Yiddish it became accessible to women. the success of *Menorat ha-Ma’or* nonetheless brought numerous renewals throughout subsequent centuries, one of which being this particular edition, which was published in 1739.

Zalman ben Aaron, the Sulzbach printer active between 1721-1763, published many other Jewish texts, including the

5 Jean Baumgarten (2017) _Listening, reading and understanding: how Jewish women read the Yiddish ethical literature (seventeenth to eighteenth century),_ Journal of Modern Jewish Studies, 16:2, 256-9, DOI: 10.1080/14725886.2016.1246700 “[Menorat ha-Ma’or], one of the most widely read of Jewish ethical literature, reproduces the gender division between men’s activities, connected mainly to political power, juridical authority, study, divine service and women’s activities, confined to the domestic sphere, especially the children’s education.”

6 Eliyana R. Adler, "Reading Rayna Batya: The Rebellious Rebbetzin as Self-Reflection." *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, no. 16 (2008): 130. doi:10.2979/nas.2008.-.16.130. “Such was her way, to sit always near the winter oven that was in her kitchen (even during the summer) with all sorts of books spread before her on the table: Bible, Mishnah, Ein-Yaakov, various midrashim, Menorat hamaor, Kav hayashar, Tzemah David, Shevet Yehudah, and many other books of this nature, as well as volumes of Aggadah.”

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Talmud. Sulzbach became an important printing center, even though its Jewish community was rather small. In 1745, just six years after the printing of *Menorat Ha-Ma’or* there were some 22 Jewish families in Sulzbach.7

*Menorat Ha-Ma’or* went through several translations throughout the centuries, going from Hebrew8 to Spanish9 and Yiddish, and then finally German by the mid 19th Century10. Aboab’s original intentions in trying to provide the Jewish people with better understanding of the Talmud were fulfilled in the book’s exceeding popularity. So ubiquitous was the book, that it’s collectors’ value is not high (the copy Fordham owns was bought for under $100). But the book shows an important part of Jewish culture—this is a book that thousands of people read, including women, allowing us a glimpse into Jewish households. To ignore such works means ignoring greater Jewish culture, for not all Jews were rabbis or highly trained Talmudic scholars.

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Ben-Menahem, Naftali. 1952. "Rabi Yitsḥaḳ Abohab ye-sifro Menorat ha-ma’or". *Menorat Ha-Ma’or*.


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"Menorat Ha-Ma'or, R. Isaac Aboab, Sulzbach 1739 (42699)."
Photographs of item held by Fordham University, Rare Books & Special Collection, Bronx, NY 10458
Fordham University’s copy of Sefer Eshle Ravreve (sometimes listed as Sefer Ashle Revreve) is the 1756 edition of the book published in 1756 in Amsterdam. The first edition was published in Wilhermsdorf by Yitsḥaḳ bar Yehudah Kats in 1671. It had five additional editions in the seventeenth century; seventeen in the eighteenth century, at least twenty four in the nineteenth, and Furth. Four editions in twenty six years suggest that the book was quite popular, not as popular as it would become in the nineteenth and twentieth century, with eleven editions in the former, and nearly twenty in the twentieth century, sixteenth in the latter, including over a dozen published after 1945.

Sefer Eshle Ravreve is a collection of commentaries on the Shulhan Arukh by Shabbetai ben Meir ha-Kohen and David ben Samuel ha-Levi, and became of the most important works of Jewish law. Since the Shulhan Arukh by Joseph Karo, was rather sparse, it spurred many commentaries, such as the popular Sefer Eshle Ravreve.

The actual physical condition of Fordham’s copy attests to the popularity and use of this book. The 1756 edition is quite large, which means it was intended for scholarly libraries or studies. Fordham’s
copy, bound in simple black cloth with embossed title, appears as if it was in some kind of institution or a library (fig. 1)

where you can see the sides of the pages, and binding. That the book has been heavily used can be seen in the front cover of the book, while it has completely been detached from the binding of the book and is simply just lying flat on top of the rest of the book, unattached from the pages and back cover.

An ornate frontispiece can be seen immediately under the loose cover (see above), depicting Moses, Aaron, Kings Solomon and David. Fordham’s copy shows multiple signature in Latin and Cyrillic scripts, including dates, such as 1894, and 1897. There is also a censorship stamp from the Tsarist era, with the Tsarist Russia double eagle but in Polish.

On the back of the frontispiece, there some sort of math calculations, as well as doodles and handwritten notes by previous owners, scholars, or individuals that had access to the book, (fig. 2). It is followed by a proper title page (fig 3), also showing signatures in Hebrew letters and in Cyrillic, and a partial censorship stamp. The title page is nicely laid out.

The spine seems to have been either completely removed or fallen off from the book, to the point
Following the title page, is the introduction, nicely laid out and also showing signatures in Cyrillic, perhaps signatures of the Tsarist era censors (fig. 4). The pages within the book also show heavy use. Almost every page or every other page has soiling and water stains, and in some places little tears.
Works Cited

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WorldCat (search for Eshle Ravreve)
Sefer Ape ravreve, a commentary on the Shulhan 'arukh

By Jack McClatchy

Sefer Ape ravreve: ve-hem beurim nehmadim 'al Shulhan 'arukh Even ha-'ezzer is a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch, a seventeenth-century compilation of Jewish Law, by Lithuanian rabbi Moses ben Isaac Judah Lima, who was a rabbi in Slonim, Vilna, and Brisk in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and who died in 1658. Moses ben Isaac Judah Lima wrote an incomplete commentary on Joseph Karo’s Shulchan Aruch as well as a responsa on the remarriage of ‘agunot women (women whose husbands’ deaths could not be confirmed).1

Fordham’s edition of his commentary on Shulchan Aruch was published in 1761 in the Bavarian city of Fürth, almost a full century after his death. But this was not the first edition of Lima’s commentary; there were three previous editions published in 1669,2 1725,3 and 1739,4 published in

2 Moses ben Isaac Judah Lima, Refael ben Mosheh Lima, and Joseph ben Ephraim Karo, Shulhan 'Arukh Mi-Tur Even Ha-'Ezer 'Im Beur Helkat Mehokek ... / (Krako: Yehuda Leb Maizls, 1669-1670).
3 Moses ben Isaac Judah Lima, Joseph ben Ephraim Karo, and Samuel ben Uri Shraga Phoebus, Ape Ravreve :Ve-Hem Be'urim ... 'Al Shulhan 'Arukh Even Ha-'Ezer ... / (Fürth: Bi-defus Shemu'el Bansat ben Yosef Shne'or, 1725).
Krakow, Fürth, and Wilsmersdorf, respectively. The book is printed entirely in Hebrew, thus the intended audience was learned Jews such as rabbis, though Christians able to read Hebrew would have been able to use it as well. It is a large book; the folio measures 34 by 21 cm. It certainly was not meant to be taken outside of a home or library.

The format of the text itself is characteristic of many Jewish commentaries, with a body of the subject (in this case the *Shulchan Aruch*) at the center and commentary – here that of Lima, as well as his contemporary rabbi Samuel ben Uri Shraga – surrounding it with clear formatting breaks and differentiation in fonts to signal the subject and the two commentaries to the reader (fig. 1).


For the most part the text is printed with good quality ink, though there are very few smudges or discolorations (the pictured page is one of the few pages with blots of ink). The paper has largely stood
the test of time considering how thin it is, but there are tears, discolorations, and pages where the ink has bled through from the other side. This suggests that the quality of the paper was mediocre, and also that the book may not have been handled in the best of care, perhaps due to heavy use.

The binding and covers are in the worst condition of all: the bottom third of the spine is completely gone, exposing the thread of the binding and pages to the elements (this also has the effect of all the pages tearing at the binding at the bottom third, fig. 2).

The inside cover is interesting as we see a page of Latin text (which is absent from the rest of the book itself), with notes reading Anno 1761 and 1769 and the page itself has a large tear in the middle exposing the inside of the hardwood covering. If the years 1761 and 1769 marked ownership in those years, it means that when the book was published, the binders used a page of Latin text on the inside cover for binding. A curious fact given the text was written entirely in Hebrew (fig. 3)
The binding is also fairly exposed when we look at the inside cover, with all three ropes that hold the pages together being visible. (Fig. 4)

As mentioned before the book measures 34 by 21 cm, suggesting it was meant to remain in the home or library and was not meant to be carried around as one went about their day. Considering the subject matter, rabbinical commentaries on the *Shulhan Arukh*, this is not surprising. The format corresponds to other rabbinic, halakhic printed. For example, there is foliation – not pagination – which means that page numbers appear only on one page of two sides of a folio, hence the term “foliation” as compared to pagination, which has numbers on every page (fig. 5).

There are only a few marginal notes or annotations throughout the volume. On the front cover...
there are the notes reading “Anno 1769” and “Anno 1761,” as well as two indistinguishable scrawls which can be interpreted as signatures of ownership (although one is markedly damaged by the aforementioned tears). There are also some rare notes in what in what appears to be Latin alphabet (the way in which it is written suggests a left-right alphabet, not the right-left of Hebrew), as well as a drawing of a three-dimensional rectangular prism (figs. 6-7).
The Latin annotations suggest that at least one owner was a Christian, as learned Jews in Europe would have written notes in Hebrew or a language with Hebrew script, and not in Latin.

It is difficult to draw a conclusion as to why the drawing (fig. 6) is present besides just a mindless doodle, reading the text might explain it, but the fact that it is present is interesting as it shows the book was used, and gives it a feeling of life that other annotations or marginal notes would not.

Other signs of use tell us more about the studying habits of the book’s owner. A few wax stains in the book suggest a not-too neat nighttime scholar studying the text under candlelight (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8 Candle wax stains.

There is one other marking that is interesting when examining the book, and that is a stamp that is
present on the front cover and in the book itself. It is purple or bluish in color, and written in German. The only writing that can be made out due to fading is the word “Breslau”, a city in Silesia under Prussian rule in 1761 when this book was printed (fig.9).

Fig. 9. Ownership stamp from Breslau.

The complexity of the stamp and the color don’t suggest it came from the 18th century; it is very possible the stamps came from the 19th or early 20th centuries and were kept in a library or study in Breslau.

As an early modern book, *Sefer Ape Ravreve* is scarcely decorated by means of illustrations or marginal ornaments. The most splendid is an illustration on the cover page (which is quite detailed) and ornamentation on the very next page, the book is entirely composed of text.

The cover image depicts two men standing on the sides of the title text: Moses holding the Ten Commandments, and Aaron, in priestly garments. Both were revered as lawgivers in ancient Israel, and their presence on the cover is to be expected. Behind Moses and Aaron is an elaborate structure or building, perhaps an artistic rendition of the Temple.

On the back of the page, where the text begins, there is some creative formatting of the Hebrew text: the margins get thinner and thinner towards the ends of the blocks of text that makes for an intriguing shape of text. These are introductions by the two authors of the commentaries, *Hakdamot ha-mehabrim* (Fig. 10).
Since the main focus of the book was the *Shulchan Aruch* and the commentary on it, it is not surprising that not much focus was given to decoration or ornamentation: very much like a modern academic works.

The *Shulchan Aruch* was a seminal text in Jewish history, and many a rabbi lent his commentary to Rabbi Joseph Karo’s work on Jewish Law. Lima’s commentary is published in many a pressing of commentary on Karo, his having been reprinted over a dozen times throughout the centuries (the most recent being this decade)\(^5\) across central and eastern Europe\(^6\), modern Israel\(^7\), and the United States\(^8\). This is an obvious indication that Moses Lima had very worthwhile commentary on Jewish Law if he has been republished more than a dozen times across almost 400 years. This is but one version in a long line of rabbinic interpretation of one of the most important aspects of Jewish life and culture and has reached an

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7 Itah, Phoebus, and Lima, *Even Sapir :Hidushim, Beurim, Hearot Ve-He`Arot `Al Shulhan `Arukh Even Ha-`Ezer Veno"K Helkat Mehokek, Bet Shemuel Ve-`Od /*.

immeasurable amount of academics and the faithful alike.

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A 1782 Haggadah with Yiddish Commentary
By Henry Poehlein

Printed in Amsterdam in 1782 by Yohanan Levi Rofe and his brother-in-law Barukh, *Haggadah shel Pesah: an merkung Enyeh Hagodeh oyf zolkhe ahrt in es Taytshe izt nimahlen in der velt geyezn* is a Passover Haggadah with contains two sections, one written in Hebrew containing the Haggadah with commentaries, and the other, written in Yiddish containing Jewish songs and commentaries pertaining to the Passover holiday. It also contains a kabbalistic commentary by Elhanan ben Moses of Schnaittach (Elḥanan Shnaṭikh), *Arba’ Yesodot*.

The book itself is not fancy in any way. It has a simple dark brown cover with no writing on it, with leather spine, which has faded Hebrew characters on it, and very small toolings. The book is 24 centimeters wide and contains 54 leaves. A book this size would not be able to fit into a pocket but could most likely be used in a household at the Passover Seder. The book is must have been used relatively often or for a long time, as many pages have dirt marks on them, water and wine stains, and ripped corners. Some pages are completely discolored from the stains. Some

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1 *Hagadah Shel Pesah : An Merkung Eyneh Hagodeh Oyf Zolkhe Ahṛt in Eš Ṭayṭshe Iṣṭ Nimahlen in Der Ṭeṣṭ Geṿezn ... Ez Zaynen Arba’ Yesodot Ṭe-
of the stains appear to be from water. Other stains are
darker and look like wine, not unusual for Passover
Haggadot. Some drop stains in yellow color; they
appear to be wax from a candle. On one page, there
are three small burn holes (fig. 1).

![Fig. 1. Burn holes](image)

The condition of this book clearly indicates
frequent usage and handling. The typeset used shows
many fonts, distinct for Hebrew and Yiddish sections.
The printer uses larger fonts at the beginning of a
section, or verse and as titles (fig. 2). The printer uses
bigger fonts as he states the laws in the second half of
the book. A section from Elhanan Shnatikh’s
commentary on the Haggadah has a classic layout
with a central text surrounded by commentaries (Fig.
3)

![Fig. 2. Fragment of a page with laws concerning the counting of Omer, running head in large square Hebrew font, with laws in Yiddish, each paragraph beginning with a word in larger font.](image)

In the book there are no annotations of any
kind. There is one word written in the book, along
with a few drawn lines. There is also no color in this
book, and almost no illustrations, indicating that it
was not incredibly expensive. The one decorative
illustration in the book is in black ink and looks like a
bush of some kind. The illustration is also not very
large, taking up less than a quarter of a page.
Although most of the pages are in poor condition, the binding of the book is still very tight, and indicates that the book has been recently rebound.

Passover is a Jewish holiday, which reminds Jews of their ancestors’ history as slaves in Egypt and how they managed to survive and flee. The celebration usually takes place around the dinner table, as family members get together and read from the Haggadah. The holiday continues to be widely celebrated across the Jewish community, as recent studies show that over 90% of all Jews celebrate yearly.\(^2\) To celebrate Passover, however, a family must have a Haggadah. During Passover, family members are asked to spill droplets of wine on the book itself, which explains many, but not all, of the stains in the book.

The Haggadah with Shatnikh’s commentary *Arba Yesodot* was four times in the eighteenth century: 1782, 1788, and 1789 in Offenbach, and the 1782/3 Amsterdam edition, discussed here. The printer Yoḥanan Leyi Rofe in Amsterdam came from a family of printers and booksellers, who began printing in Amsterdam in mid-eighteenth century: Hirsz Levi Rofe, Yohanan’s brother, and Barukh, their brother-in-law.\(^3\) In 1797, Yohanan was joined by his son Benjamin, and they continued to print together till 1818.\(^4\) It is clear that they specialized in prayer books and liturgical texts for Ashkenazi Jews across Europe.

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\(^2\) Hizky Shoham, “You Can’t Pick Your Family: Celebrating Israeli Familism around the Seder Table,” *Journal of Family History* 39, no. 3 (2014).

\(^3\) *Sefer Magishe minḥah* (Amsterdam : Be-vet uvi-defus ha-meshutafim Hirts Leyi Rofe ye-ḥatano Kashman mokhre sefarim, 514- [1753 or 1754]); *Maḥzor ke-minḥag Polin, Raisen, Liṭa, Fihem, Merherin* (Amsterdam : Yoḥanan Leyi Rofe ye-gizo Barukh ye-ehay Hirts mokhre sefarim, 526 [1766]).

Their books were published in Hebrew and Yiddish, the most common language spoken by Jews of northern and eastern Europe. The use of the Yiddish language has been used for centuries, with the first known writing dating back to the 14th century. This language was used predominantly by Ashkenazi Jews, and the language itself combined both Hebrew and German. After printing was introduced in the Jewish community in the 15th century, the majority of works printed were in Hebrew, however, it was not long until works were translated and printed into Yiddish, the first book in Yiddish was published in 1534 in Cracow. Although this new, exciting idea of printing brought with it many books for people to buy, certain communities did not always agree with what was printed.

The book discussed here incorporates both Hebrew and Yiddish, making the laws and meaning of Passover accessible for those who may have only spoken Yiddish (Fig. 4).

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6 Weinstein.
Bibliography:


Kipur tamim: A Prayer Book from Baghdad
By Claudia Tagliavia

Kipur tamim Fordham University is a prayer book for Yom Kippur for Sephardic Jews and Jews following the Baghdadi rite printed in 1924 in Baghdad by Ezra Sofer and Itzhak A`budi supported by the publisher Ezra Dangour (or Dangur). It is the third edition. Other editions of this book were published in not only Baghdad, Iraq, but also in Livorno, Italy.1 There appear to have been six editions of this book that were published in 1907, 1908, 1924, 1927, 1934, and most recently in 1985. The earliest edition of this book was issued in Baghdad in 1907 by Hayim `E. Dangur,2 sometimes listed as H `Ezra Dangur.3 The 1907 edition consists of two volumes and is nineteen centimeters long. The 1908, or the next edition that was published, was also published in Baghdad by the publisher Ezra Dangur.4 This edition

1 Kipur Tamim: Sefer Tefilah Le-Yom Ha-Kipurim Ke-Minhag Kehilat Sefaradim U-Minhage Bagdad (Bagdad: Nidpas behotsaot `Ezra Sofer ve-Yitshak A`budi, 1924)
also has two volumes and is about 256 pages long. The 1924 edition, at Fordham, was printed by Ezra Sofer and Itzhak Aboudi, and published by Ezra Dangour. But there appears to be another edition by Sh. Belforte va-havero (Sh. Belforte and his friend). This edition similarly has two volumes and is about nineteen centimeters in length.

Then in 1927, Sh. Belforte va-havero published yet another edition of the Kipur Tamin with support of Ezra Sasson ben Reuben, however this edition, unlike the last one he published, was published in Livorno, Italy. This edition has two parts, and is compiled of about five hundred and twenty-six pages. It is about nineteen centimeter long and was also written in Hebrew. The next edition of the Kipur tamim came out in 1934, and was published by two different printers Yitshak A’budi and Sh Belforte va-havero, the publisher of the 1927 edition. Yitzhak A’budi published this edition in Baghdad. Sh. Belforte va-


quality of the paper is pretty thick and made of good material. Both volumes have good binding and have cardboard front and back covers. The book is in decent condition and for the most part does not have any extra notes on any of the inside pages. There seem to only be marks or stamps on the inside front cover of the texts made by former libraries. The cover pages of these books are fairly nice and have decorative borders. The cover page has a couple of notes, such as the title of the book, where it was published, and by whom it was published. Right after the cover page, in one of the volumes, there is a picture of a head Rabbi. There are many different types, and sizes of fonts throughout the entire book. There were about five different fonts on the cover pages alone.

Ezra Sofer, the publisher of the 1924 edition of the Kipur tamim, was a mainly active in Baghdad only around 1924-1925. Though his partner, Itzhak A`budi was still involved in the 1934 edition. Sider published other works such as Sidur Minhat Yerushalaim in 1924, and the Zikaron tov in 1925.

The history of Jews in Baghdad dates back to 600 BCE. In the twentieth century, during the 1900-1940s, Jewish books published in Baghdad were texts of religious nature, such as prayer books and sermons. Some examples of books that were published during this time, beside the Kipur Tamim include books such as; Sefer Birkhot Shamayim, Megilat Paras, and Sefer Nevuat ha-yeled.

Jewish publishing in Baghdad in the 20th century experienced a decline. During the early 1900s there were about 100 Hebrew books published in Baghdad. Around 1910 the number of books went down to around 60. By the 1920-1930s there was a slight increase of about 80 books being published. Yet, the number of books being published in Baghdad went back down to the 50s between 1940-1950s. The publication of Hebrew books went down during this time because the country itself was divided, and due to a mass migration to Israel that followed the establishment of the state of Israel and persecution of Jews in Iraq that followed.12


The Hagadah Erets – Yisra’el le-Pesah was published in “Tel Aviv, Palestine” by Palestine Publishing Co. Ltd. in 1938, and edited by Jacob Smilansky. The book itself is very small, measuring about nineteen centimeters. Jacob Smilansky does not have any other published works, but there are, of course, many editions of the Hagadah. The Hagadah contains prayers, rituals, songs, stories, and other information that are used during the Passover seder. Since it is such an important part of Jewish culture and religion, it is not a surprise that there are so many editions of it. Hagadot have been translated into different languages, published in different sizes, and all kinds of other variations.

Smilansky’s Hagadah, also known as the Palestinian Hagadah, is bilingual, written in both Hebrew and English. This holds great significance because it shows a wider intended audience of the book.

Since the Palestinian Hagadah was rather small, it could be easily transported and handled at the Passover table. The book has forty-seven double-sided pages, and the paper is significantly worn down and
shows many signs of frequent use. The pages are yellow and stained, and some have minor tears or folds. The book’s cover is white with blue patterns. The cover also has several water, or perhaps food, stains, discolorations, and signs of wear. The back cover has an illustration that appears to be fading, while the front of the cover has Hebrew writing in decorative blue font that is rather large. The printed title is surrounded by a decorative pattern, also in blue. The edges of the cover are significantly worn down, faded, and discolored and they have started to round out. Furthermore, the binding of the book, which was originally blue, has begun to fade as well and now contains streaks of white where the color is coming off. The book is not incredibly ornate or extravagant. For this reason, it is fair to assume that the book a common edition of the Haggadah for home use. Most definitely, it is not an exquisite edition that were owned by wealthier families and rarely used.

The inside pages of the Palestinian Haggadah feature one side of Hebrew writing, written in somewhat large and neat font. The text on the opposite side has English translations in standard English font. For the most part, the font is simple and easy to read and understand. Since the Haggadah is such a common and important book in Judaism, there are many iterations of the book, including other bilingual editions. Here the book could be read by Hebrew and English readers. English was likely chosen because Palestine was under British Mandate rule.

The Palestinian Haggadah contains nine black and white photographs. The images in this Haggadah depict the cities of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Kibbutzim. The images help add another element to the book, because they help provide context by portraying some of the major cities at the time, including new ones, like Tel Aviv. The photos identify the areas associated with the Zionist movement that was growing rapidly during this time. The Haggadah also has musical notes to aid in the singing of the hymns, a relatively unique feature.

Lastly, another interesting aspect about this Haggadah is the fact that it was published in “Tel Aviv, Palestine” in 1938. This was a prime showcase of the Zionist movement. The Zionist program, initiated by Theodor Herzl and eastern European pioneers and thinkers, hoped to establish a Jewish State in the land of Palestine. The Jewish presence in the land of Palestine grew from the late nineteenth century into the 1930s when this Haggadah was printed. The fact that a Haggadah was printed by the Palestinian Publishing Company shows how significant the Jewish presence actually was in what was then British Palestine, which also still had a large Muslim presence. This trend continued even a decade after the book was published, when Tel Aviv officially became a part of the new State of Israel in
1948. The significance of this book is that it represents a piece of the Jewish culture at a crucial time for Jews in Palestine. This Palestinian edition of the Haggadah was probably written to give the Jewish people in Palestine another way to get in touch with their culture, and to promote the Zionist movement even further by showcasing images from the land. The bilingual edition make the book much more accessible to a larger audience.

Works Cited


1941 Maxwell House Haggadah

by Josh Eberle

Fordham’s copy of the Haggadah Shel Pesah = Haggadah, Passover Seder Service / Compliments of Maxwell House Coffee, was published by Maxwell House Coffee and General Foods Corporation in 1941 in New York. The book was prepared by Joseph Jacobs Jewish Market a marketing firm that specialized in marketing to Jewish customers. The English translation was done by an unknown translator.

The Maxwell House Haggadah began as part of a promotional plan by Maxwell House to sell their coffee to Jews as kosher for Passover. For years coffee beans were labeled as not kosher for Passover due to an old Ashkenazi tradition of categorizing coffee beans as legumes. Copies were given out at stores along with purchases of Maxwell House coffee products. The Maxwell House Haggadah has been published every year since 1932, except for two years

1 Marketplace Staff, “Wonder why Maxwell House Makes a Passover
3 Ibid.
during World War II when the United States was suffering from a paper shortage, most likely at the peak of America’s paper shortage around 1944.\(^5\)

There have been very few changes to the Maxwell House Hagadah over the years in terms of content and format. The exceptions to this include the “Deluxe version” introduced in the 1960s, which contained an Ashkenazic transliteration for those who could not read Hebrew and a blue cover.\(^6\) Additional changes included the illustrations within the Hagadah being replaced by pictures of families observing Passover and a move away from the simple single colored covers in 2000,\(^7\) and an update to the English translation in 2011 making the Haggadah’s language more suitable to a modern audience and including the use of gender-neutral pronouns. The 2011 translation was by Henry Frisch, a high school English teacher from Teaneck, New Jersey.\(^8\)


\(^6\) Lawrence Hoffman & David Arnow, My People’s Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries Vol.1, (Vermont, Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008), 85-90

\(^7\) Kerri P. Steinberg, Jewish Mad Men: Advertising and the Design of the American Jewish Experience, (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2015), 115-118


The Maxwell House Haggadah is a small book, approximately seven inches long by five inches wide. It has around sixty pages read from right to left like many traditional Jewish texts.\(^9\) The pages are formatted so that the Hebrew translation is on the right side of each page and the English translation is on the left side. The font only varies in size on occasion within the text: in the captions below the printed pictures, which are a smaller bolded font, and in the form of smaller text which is placed throughout the Hagadah to provide specific instructions for parts of the Seder in the English section and references to biblical verses in the Hebrew section.\(^10\) Towards the end of the 1941 copy of the Maxwell House Hagadah there are some specific Passover recitations in smaller English and Hebrew fonts.

When the Maxwell House Haggadah’s were introduced they were intended to be unobtrusive regarding the advertisement for Maxwell House brand coffee products. Because of this all copies of the Maxwell House Hagadah include an advertisement page only on the back inside cover of the text.\(^11\) The front inside cover of the Maxwell House Hagadah

\(^9\) Steinberg, Jewish Mad Men, 115-118

\(^10\) Arnow & Hoffman, My People’s Passover, 85-90

includes an abridged 5-year calendar of the Jewish Holidays as well as a description of the origin of the pictures printed within the text.

Fordham University’s copy contains 15 printed pictures, which the book states are reproductions of Medieval paintings and woodcuts. The pictures depict various Biblical scenes from the book of Exodus and beyond. The original Haggadah printed in 1932 had fewer pictures that were reproductions of pictures from the 1695 Amsterdam Haggadah.¹²

The first few pages of the Haggadah provide a brief introduction to the Passover holiday and its foundations in the book of Exodus.¹³ They also contain a “thank you” from Maxwell House Coffee and General Foods Corporation that stresses Maxwell House Coffee’s friendly relationship with the Jewish community, stating that the company takes, “great pleasure in extending best wishes for a happy and joyous holiday.”

The Maxwell House Haggadot are mass produced and are printed on cheaper quality paper. The 1941 copy of the Maxwell House Haggadah found in the Fordham Library Special Collections has pages that have turned yellow due to age and a dull greenish-blue cover that has faded over the years.

The size and quality of the Maxwell House Haggadah show that this book was intended for individual use. The Maxwell House Haggadah is bilingual in Hebrew and English aimed to fulfill the needs of a Jewish-American audience. The Haggadah also contains directions to follow during the Passover Seder in the text, including directions on when to say specific prayers, directions on when to perform certain actions, such as breaking the matzo, and cues for when to read parts of the Haggadah suggests that it could be used even by those who knew little about the ritual. These books were made to be free and accessible to average Jewish-American families and were produced as part of an advertisement campaign to increase the sale of coffee around Passover. In fact that the books were handed out in bulk along with purchase of Maxwell House Coffee products.¹⁴

During its long history over fifty million copies Maxwell House Haggadot have been distributed turning the Maxwell House Haggadah into something of a cultural icon in the Jewish-American community.¹⁵ It is the most widely used Haggadah in the world and is only distributed in the United States. It has been issued to U.S. soldiers in every campaign

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¹⁴ Arnow & Hoffman, My People’s Passover, 85-90
¹⁵ Berger, “Giving a Haggadah a Makeover”, (2011)
since 1932. From 2009-2016 during the Obama Administration, a copy of the Maxwell House Haggadah was used for White House Passover Seders.

The Maxwell House Haggadah has achieved great success because it was able to accomplish a major marketing goal of becoming a regular tradition for many Jewish-American families, many of whom make it a tradition to go out every year to pick up their new Haggadot. It played a role in the Americanization of Jews.

Maxwell House Coffee and General Foods Corporation have published several books over the decades. There have not been any other books targeted at specific religious or ethnic groups published by Maxwell House Coffee. Many of the books that have been published by these companies are cookbooks and books about proper storage of and enjoyment of coffee. However, some of the books published by these companies are a bit more random in their nature and are more like the Haggadah because they were created as promotional materials for the companies or made in collaboration with other companies. Two such books are the Maxwell House

17 Berger, “Giving a Haggadah a Makeover”, (2011)

Chiswick, Carmel U. *Judaism in Transition: How Economic Choices Shape Religious Tradition*. Stanford, CA


Sidur Minhat ‘Erev: A French/Hebrew Prayer Book from Cairo

By Sophie Hamlin

Measuring only 4.5 by 5.5 inches, the French and Hebrew prayer book *Sidur Minhat ‘Erev*[^1], is not eye-catching in the slightest. It has a plain, peach-colored cover, void of any markings beside those accidentally added over time. The binding is falling apart but the pages are in good condition, suggesting that while this book was certainly used, it may not have been the well-loved, well-worn prayer book carried everywhere with a person. It appears to be cheaply made and boasts no grandeur in the slightest. However, this book can shed an interesting light on the life of Jews, specifically French-speaking Jews living in Cairo at the time of World War II.

This prayer book was published in 1943 in Cairo, Egypt by the publisher Editions Dath. It is a Jewish prayer book meant specifically for everyday use and the Sabbath as is described in the subtitle “Pour la semaine et le samedi”. It contains prayers written in Hebrew characters juxtaposed against French translations of the same prayers. There is no available information as to who precisely translated this prayer book, other than the ambiguous note

[^1]: *Sidur Minhat ‘erev: Minhav Ye-‘aravit = Office De Prières*:
“French translation by a group of rabbis”. In fact, the only name actually mentioned is that of Rabbi Dr. Moses Ventura, the chief rabbi of Alexandria (1937 – 1948), who wrote the French foreword to the text. Upon further research, there appears to be only one other reference to Rabbi Ventura on databases available at Fordham. In the footnotes of Dr. Nadia Malinovich’s PhD dissertation “Le Reveil D’israel: Jewish Identity and Culture in France, 1900 – 1932,” there is a reference to another book in which a man named Moishe Ventura wrote a foreword. Rabbi Ventura’s involvement in the two books book illustrates the vibrancy of the Egyptian Jewish community in the early-mid 20th century. Although the Sidur Minhat ‘Erev had limited circulation throughout Cairo, it still contained a foreword from the chief rabbi of Alexandria, a rabbi who had two works published in French, evidencing the widespread influence of French schooling in Egypt.

Another mystery lies in the publisher of this prayer book, Editions Dath. Editions Dath appears not to have published any other books, at least none on record. In fact, even the book at hand, Sidur Minhat ‘Erev, has only two recorded copies in the world. One at Fordham University and the other in The National Library of Israel. However, the lack of information concerning the publisher can actually reveal quite a bit about the circumstances of this book’s publication. It is more than likely that only one edition of these siddurim was ever circulated, due to the lack of surviving copies. Furthermore, it is clear that the printing was done cheaply, as many pages are printed quite crookedly.

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The book was printed specifically for the French-speaking Jews in Cairo, not for a large-scale audience, and Editions Dath was likely a publishing company set up by those in this community, influenced by schools founded by the French. The question remains, who precisely made up the French speaking Jewish community in Cairo? While one could a group of French immigrants, more likely it was educated Egyptian Jews. In the 20th century, many Cairo Jews went to French schools established by Alliance Israelite Universelle. According to Joel Beinin, “… the use of French in the community schools [was] a result of the proselytization of the Alliance Israelite Universelle”5. Alliance Israelite Universelle, a French Jewish organization focused on educating Jews in the Balkans and the Middle East on Jewish and French culture,6 came to Cairo around 1903. By the time this siddur was written, French was the language being taught in schools to most Sephardic Jews. Consequently, this prayer book could be used not only by the French Jews in Cairo, but by all French speaking Sephardic Jews.


This book is not ornate; it has no pictures and is in mediocre condition. There are water stains throughout and, as earlier mentioned, is falling apart at the binding. This is not the book of a religious official, nor a remarkably wealthy man. This is the book of an average man, leading one to conclude that even the average man at the time spoke Hebrew. (It is clearly a man’s book because women at the time could not practice religion in the same way. This is evidenced by the distinct lack of mention of female prophets in prayers such as the Amidah, as is common in traditional Sephardic practice.)

The book in Fordham’s Special Collections likely belonged to an average, yet educated Cairo Sephardic man. The font is large enough that it can be assumed the book was meant for personal use. However, there is a distinct lack of transliteration meaning that either a) the intended user spoke Hebrew or b) simply would follow along with the French translation as the rabbi conducted a service.

On the inside the front cover of this copy of Sidur Minhat ‘Erev at some point the owner wrote a note in Hebrew script about the owner’s migration to Israel with the book. The book was owned by an Egyptian family Mansour (Mantsur), and was still used after they migrated to Israel.
Hebrew notes on the inside cover demonstrate that the owner of this book spoke Hebrew, at least after he and the family moved to Israel.

Published in 1943, the book appeared at the height of World War II, soon after the Allied defeat of the Nazis in Egypt. In the 1940s, Egyptian Jews appear to have published other texts: at least two Haggadot, another siddur, and a fiction book. To contrast, WorldCat only revealed one French Jewish text originating in Cairo outside of that era—a siddur written in 1917. Jews in Cairo were thriving in the early 1940s, and yet they were so close to a mass exodus out of Egypt. It is remarkable that just years before many of the Jews left for Israel, they were a thriving, intellectually stimulating community living with enough stability to produce a number of books.

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7 Hagadah Shel Pesah : Ke-Fi Minhag Sefaradim = La Haggadah De Pessach a L’usage Du Rite Sefardi (Cairo, Egypt: Feliks Mizrahi, 1945); Hagadah shel Pesah kefi minhag k’k sefardim im targum aravi be-otiyot araviot (Cairo: Hotsa’at ha-Mizraḥ, 5706 [1945 or 1946]), SPEC COLL JUDAICA 1946 1.
8 Alexandre Créhange, Sidur Sha’Are Tefilah (Cairo, Egypt: Defus Yosef Yehezkel, 1940).
9 Segulah: Le-Hantsal Hu U-Vene Beto Min Ha-Sakanah Umi-Mikrim Ra’im (Cairo: Defus Yosef Yehezkel, 1940).
11 Beinin.
An interesting picture is painted of 1940s Jewish Cairo. It seems to be a productive, educated community, and yet it is only a few years away from a major disruption. The fact that many would have spoken not only Arabic but, also French and Hebrew points to a level of literacy higher than average. The number of surviving volumes from this era also shows the emphasis placed on furthering Jewish education. This small, 213-paged, peach-colored book originated, Sidur Minhat ‘Erev, which, stand-alone, is certainly quite obscure, actually has much to tell about World War II era Cairo, and offers a glimpse into the life of Jews there.

Works Cited


Créhange, Alexandre. Sidur Sha’Are Tefilah. Cairo, Egypt1946.


Segulah :Le-Hantsal Hu U-Vene Beto Min Ha-Sakanah Umi-Mikrim Ra ’Im. Cairo, Egypt: Kahir: Defus Yosef Yehezkel, 1940.


Fordham University’s *Seder Minḥah ye-‘Arvit shel ḥol ye-Shabat : en este livroko topara todas as oraciones de Minha i arvit* is a Jewish prayer book that contains a set of daily prayers and liturgy texts in Hebrew with instructions in Ladino.¹ The book was prepared by Nisim Behar Avraam, who also published *Hagadah shel Pesah = La Agada de Pesah*.² His various works are printed in Hebrew, Ladino, Spanish, and Turkish. *Seder Minḥah* in Fordham’s Special Collections was published in 1947 by Güler Basimevi in Galata, Istanbul. Two copies of this book are available in the United States (at Fordham University and Stanford University), and one copy is available at the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. Given a lack of additional editions and translations, this particular prayer book does not appear very popular although there are numerous other Jewish prayer books. Its audience is limited to Ladino speaking Jews in Turkey.

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¹ Nisim Behar, *Seder Minḥah Ve-‘arvit Shel Hol Ve-Shabat : En Este Livroko Topara Todas as Oraçoes De Minha I Arvit*
Although the prayers are printed in Hebrew, and the book opens from right to left, the table of contents and instructions are printed in Judaeo-Spanish, which is known as Ladino. *Seder Minḥah ye-ʻArvit shel ḥol ye-Shabat* is sometimes referred to also as Minḥah, Sider tefila, and Siddur. The word siddur means order of prayers in Hebrew, and comes from the same root as seder, the Passover meal, from which it was derived from.³

![Fig. 1 Seder Minḥah. Title page.](image1)


![Fig. 2 Seder Minḥah. Table of contents.](image2)

This 1947 Galata prayer book is pocketsize, and measures only 10 cm long and 6.5 cm wide making it easy to carry around and read at home or a synagogue. There are 194 pages in total, and the pages are thin and lightweight. The smaller dimensions allow for the printing to be less costly than the printing of a full-sized book. Not only is it cost-efficient, but the pocket-sized prayer book also makes it easier to distribute and pass around.⁴

⁴ Keith Beaty, "Book Printing: 5 Tips for Making Pocket-Sized Books More User Friendly," Formax Printing,
The cover of the prayer book is reddish orange, and is made of leather with board to support its structure and binding. The book is not in the best condition. There has been some significant wear and tear to the cover and pages most likely due to handling, as well as water and binding damage. This prayer book seems to have been frequently used and handled a lot. The binding seems to be weak, but everything is well-preserved and the pages are still attached together. There are no missing or ripped pages, but the pages and cover are slightly stained and discolored. The pages are folded into six sections, and the sections are then sewn and bound with a string. When the book is opened to specific pages, the strings can be seen in the center of the two pages. Although the front and back cover are attached to the pages, the pages are not entirely secured to the spine of the book, and looks as though the prayer book is falling apart.

The front cover contains the title of the prayer book written in Hebrew, as well as a description written in Ladino, while the back cover remains blank. The description includes what is written in the prayer book, the author, the publisher, place of publication, and the date of when it was published with a border around the text.

When the book is opened, there are some partially erased inscriptions from the previous owner(s), now difficult to decipher.

On the next page after that, the description that was printed on the cover is printed yet again (fig. 1). The table of contents and instructions direct the readers to refer to a specific page when needed. The prayers in this book are in order, and there is pagination at the bottom center of the pages to help guide readers. The pagination runs from 3, where the prayers begin, to 194, where the table of contents ends, and there are 15 sections listed with the


Fig. 3. Previous owner’s inscriptions.
corresponding page numbers. The table of contents at the very top of page 193 is printed in all capital letters, while the listed sections are printed in both uppercase and lowercase letters.

Although the prayer book itself is small, the font size used in the text is not too small, making it easy to read. The letters are evenly spaced out, and not crowded. The Hebrew letters are printed in black ink on smooth tan paper. There is approximately 15 or fewer lines on one page. This prayer book is written and read from right to left like most Hebrew prayer books, rather than left to right, as one would expect from a Ladino book in Latin characters. There are no uppercase or lowercase letters in Hebrew, but some words in the text are of different size most likely for emphasis. The size of the text written in Ladino is smaller than the Hebrew text. Some parts of the text appear faded, while others appear bolded.

Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, and many immigrated to the Ottoman Empire. These Jews known as Sephardic Jews, used Ladino or Judeo-Español, as their language. Sephardic Jews chose to use Hebrew in religious education, while maintaining Ladino as a form of communication. However, many could no longer comprehend Hebrew liturgical texts. Because of this, some rabbis decided that liturgical texts which were originally written in Hebrew should also include Ladino. This is why Nisim Behar Avraam included Ladino in this prayer book, and not only Hebrew. He wanted Sephardic Jews to be able to read and understand the prayers in their language.

Ladino literature did not emerge before the 18th century, and it was not just limited to religious

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translations. Ladino then became a written language after being an oral language for centuries, and Sephardic Jews were now also able to read in it. They retained this language for centuries. Ladino literature flourished and became very popular throughout the Ottoman Empire, where many works in that language were written and published.

Nisim Behar Avraam was born in 1913 in Hasköy, Istanbul and died in 1990. He was not only an author, translator, and editor, but a religious personality and rabbi as well. He authored and edited 46 works in 4 languages, which are now in 175 library holdings.

Nisim Behar Avraam’s books were published by Güler Basimevi, among them More Adereh – Silaberyo Para Embezarse A Meldar En Ebreo Sin Profesor (Syllabus for Learning How To Read Hebrew Without A Teacher) in 1962 and Ibranice Silaber. These are not prayer books, but rather, books about the Hebrew language and instructions on how to read it. All of his books are about the Jewish religion, and his goal was to preserve and pass down the Jewish traditions and customs through his written works. Nisim Behar had a religious family, and was religious himself. He read the Torah, and gave religious lessons in synagogues. He even created a youth organization for Sephardic Jews to make his religious teachings more efficient and to reach a larger audience. He was a very influential man and had a powerful network and contacts with a lot of people. Jews were present in Turkey after World War II, and there were Turkish – Jewish communities that followed his teachings. Nisim Behar is said to have been the last person as an author to write in Ladino, not including those who have recently translated Hebrew to Ladino.

Seder Minhah ve-‘Arvit shel ḥol ye-Shabat : en este livroko topara todas as oraciones de Minha i arvit … is an instructional Jewish prayer book written by Rabbi Nisim Behar Avraam so that Sephardic Jews could read and understand Hebrew prayers accompanied by Ladino. This prayer book is significant because Sephardic Jews were not able to comprehend liturgical texts or prayers because they

6 Weiss, Around the Point: Studies in Jewish Literature and Culture in Multiple Languages, 185.
7 Weiss, Around the Point: Studies in Jewish Literature and Culture in Multiple Languages, 188.

10 Weiss, Around the Point: Studies in Jewish Literature and Culture in Multiple Languages, 192.
11 Weiss, Around the Point: Studies in Jewish Literature and Culture in Multiple Languages, 190.
12 Weiss, Around the Point: Studies in Jewish Literature and Culture in Multiple Languages, 195.
were only written in Hebrew, so Nisim Behar took it upon himself to include Ladino. This encouraged Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire to engage themselves in prayer and synagogues more often now that there were able to not only speak Ladino, but also see and read it in books as well. This might have made them feel more inclusive in the Jewish community, and encouraged them to hold on to their religion and their customs.

Bibliography
Understanding Yeshayahu Klinov’s
*Israel Reborn/Israel Renaissant*

By Joseph Monga

The book *Israel Reborn/Israel Renaissant* was written by Yeshayahu Klinov, designed by Ben-David, and photographed by Benno Rothenberg. It is a trilingual book, with the English by M.Lask, the French by M.Caraco, and the Hebrew by Klinov himself. The photos included in the book display every important events in cities and regions during the war for independence of the state of Israel in 1948 and the formation of the state.¹ The book was published by Laam: Israel Publishing CO. LTD in Tel-Aviv in 1951, just three years after the independence of the state of Israel.² The book was first published in 1949.³

*Israel Reborn/Israel Renaissant* can be described as an album, a picture book. It has a rectangular shape, and is twenty-two to twenty-four centimeters with one hundred and fifty-four pages.⁴ The cover of the book contains a sort of metal plate, an imprint of a rolled scroll. Not a Torah scroll but a

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¹ I. Klinov, *Tekumat Yiśra’el : Albom = Israel Reborn = Israel Renaissant:*
² Ibid.
⁴ Klinov, Benno Rothenberg, and S. Ben-David, , (Tel-Aviv : Hotsa’at "La-am", c1951., 1951).
representation of the declaration of independence of Israel, reproduced in photo later in the book (fig. 1).⁵

Fig. 1.

The writing is in Hebrew, and there are signatures of the people who signed on the declaration of independence. At the same time, the decorative title of the book is also written in that metal plate. It is done in the following order: Hebrew, English, and French. The rest of the cover is made of brown artificial leather, which has a design pattern around the metal plate at the front cover.

After flipping the cover of the book open, the first thing displayed is a yellowish paper with multiple candles in two different colors: white and brown. The candles are small and repetitive in a specific pattern. However, each half of the candles is different from the other.

After the title page, the next few pages of the book are about how Israel became an independent sovereign state in November 1948. As the reader pays close attention to the book, they will notice how the edges of the pages are not cut properly like other modern books, likely a sign of production error. (fig. 2)

Fig. 2

On the side of each photo, there is a brief description of the scene captured by the photographer. An example can be see on fig. 3:

⁵ Ibid.
Weizmann, a scientist and leader of the Zionist movement during the first years after declaring their independence in 1948. The two books are very similar: they both were trilingual and included pictorial work to better visualize the events.

Klinov discussed the pre and post-independence era. He reinforced the idea that the Zionist movement emerged as a result of the centuries of persecution of the exiled Jewish people in Europe and the Middle-East, and illustrated the desperation with an image of the plight of European Jewish refugees denied safe entry (fig. 4).

The image displays Ben-Gurion and members of the first temporary government of Israel at the historic proclamation of the State of Israel, Friday, May 14th, 1948.

The 1951 edition of *Israel Reborn/Israel Renaissant* was the third and last edition, with the first in 1949, the second in 1950. Klinov also published others books about early years of the state of Israel. One was on a related topic, *Chaim Weizmann: The First President of The State of Israel*, published in 1950 by the same publishing company, and was trilingual as well. The book talks about how the first president of the independent state of Israel, Dr. Chaim...

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were making their way to Palestine, but they reached the country they were not authorized to disembark. The British government, in charge of Palestine at the time, sent troops to block the mass migration.⁸

The blockade and the UN partition of Palestine prompted the declaration of independence and sparked a war with Arab states opposing the new Jewish state (fig. 5). This violence was not new, decades of flare-ups preceded the war, after the first Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe, who were victims of violent pogroms came to the Palestine, seeking to a Jewish state as in their homeland.⁹

The image above shows how the new state of Israel attacked by neighboring Arabs states. Heavy casualties ensued.

Klinov wrote this book in order to portray the sequences of events during the fight for independence. Given the French and English text, the book may have been also aimed at to Jews of the diaspora to reach western who did not know Hebrew.

The photos included in the book with brief details next to them is made in a way to help the reader visualize the sequence of event from the celebration of the approval of the partition plan by United Nations in 1947 to the war. This book is not a just a celebratory publication, but a commemorative book as well.

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⁸ Moshe Naor, "Israel's 1948 War of Independence as a Total War," Journal of Contemporary History 43, no. 2 (2008).
Bibliography:


The El Al Haggadah of 1969

by Brandon Aptilon

Printed exclusively for El Al, Israel’s commercial passenger airline, the *Haggadah shel Pesah* is the first of some nine El Al Haggadah editions. It was designed by Jean David, edited by Shaham Lewensohn Aylon, and printed by Peli Printing Works in Israel in 1969.¹ The Haggadah is printed in Hebrew, but has English translations in the margins, for those who cannot read Hebrew. This Haggadah printed shortly after the Six-Day War in 1967 responds to recent historical events.

The *Haggadah shel Pesah* is printed on thick Israeli paper and bound by sturdy Bristol board covers. The title of the text is debossed in the plain cover, which contrasts the intricate illustrations through the text. This Haggadah may have had an attractive dust jacket at the time of publication, now lost.

The Haggadah is read at the Seder on the first night (or, in the Diaspora, first two nights) of Passover. Most diaspora communities observe two Seders, whereas in Israel, only one Seder on the first

night of Passover is observed. The Haggadah tells the story of the exodus of Israelites from Egypt, and contains blessings, prayers, and excerpts from the Bible. Haggadot are to be read aloud and shared with people at the Seder table. The illustrations, size, and shape of this El Al Haggadah fit the nature and use of the text.

When examined closely, there are many intricacies in the text of the El Al Haggadah. Different Hebrew fonts are used, and, corresponding to the English translation of the text, the smaller and Hebrew font is for commentary, whereas the larger bold Hebrew font is for the body the Haggadah. As a principally Hebrew text, this edition of the Haggadah opens and reads from right to left. Following the title page from right to left, there is an introduction page in Hebrew, titled “In the beginning”, alluding to the first words in the book of Genesis. A similar page can be found in English when opening the book, as one would an English book, from left to right. The fact that this Haggadah caters to both Hebrew and English readers shows that this text was intended for an international audience, as the El Al customers would be.

This Haggadah does not have pagination, which is not uncommon for Haggadot, and Fordham’s copy has a minor printing error in the margin on the first page. One word in the English translation is only half printed. But this printing error does not have a major significance.

The publisher of the El Al Haggadah shel Pesah, Peli Printing Works, was located in Rishon Lezion, and published maps, journals, periodicals, and various types of literature, mostly related to Israel and Judaism. The editor of this Haggadah, Shaham Lewensohn Aylon, was involved in many other works printed for El Al. He worked on the later editions of the El Al Haggadah, as well as advertising for El Al. One of his books was a travel book called *Kibbutz: The Unique Social Environment for an El Al Passenger Who Seeks More Than Sun, Fun and Historical Sites in Israel.*

The designer of this text, Jean David, also designed the other editions of the Haggadah shel Pesah, and became a famous artist later in his life. Jean David was born in Bucharest, Romania in 1908.


War II, Jean David found his new home in Jerusalem. In Tel Aviv he met his wife, who was one of El Al’s first flight attendants. Jean David began his work for El Al in the early 1960s.

Jean David’s preferred medium of art was drawing. Many of his illustrations bordering the text are merely decorative, whereas others both relate to the text and enhance one’s understanding. The subtleties of Jean David’s illustrations provide the reader with a deeper insight into the text. For example, there is a noteworthy illustration of a Seder table with a plate. Interestingly there is only one of the six traditional items found on a Seder plate. The only item is Zeroah, which is the shank bone of a lamb. Each item on a Seder plate is symbolic. Zeroah symbolizes the outstretched arm of God.5

The illustration of the Seder plate with the Zeroah.

Before designing and illustrating the El Al Haggadah, Jean David designed travel posters for El Al, and in 1971 the interior of El Al’s first Boeing aircraft.6 Jean David’s connection with El Al provided him the platform to become one of Israel’s most transcending artists. His achievements were honored in 2003, in an exhibit called “Many Faces”, which was held at the Rubin Museum in Tel Aviv.


After the founding of the State of Israel, enlistment to Israeli Defense Forces became mandatory for all citizens over 18 years old. Many of El Al’s employees were assigned to the IDF’s military reserve force. They would provide reinforcements during times of emergency. This happened in June 1967 when many of El Al’s employees were called into action for the Six-Day War. This war was fought between Israel and its neighboring countries, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan.7

This war was seen as an overwhelming victory for Israel. According to Israeli scholar Dalia Gavrieli-Nuri, the Israeli public “received the victory as a miraculous-messianic event,”8 which was amplified by the fact that the Six-Day War ended a recession and lead to a period of economic prosperity in Israel. El Al joined the celebrations by commissioning Shaham Lewensohn Aylon and Jean David to make this Haggadah. At the end of the Haggadah it says, “And may we of El Al wish that when you do come you fly El Al, the airline of the people of Israel.” This Haggadah was meant to be a marketing tool for El Al. It was a way for El Al to make a political statement.

The Haggadah shel Pesah was more than a normal Haggadah, as it instilled a sense of national pride in Israelis after a time of war.

Bibliography:


Oren, Michael B. "Did Israel Want the Six Day War?" Azure (1999): 47-86.

7 Michael B. Oren, "Did Israel Want the Six Day War?," Azure (1999).

The *Hagadah shel Pesah, Amharit or Passover Haggadah Amharic* edited and composed by Rabbi Joseph Hadana is a first translation of the Haggadah into Amharic, a Semitic language descended from Ge'ez that is the official language of Ethiopia, which is only spoken by about 9 million people. The book is published in three languages, as can be seen by evaluating the image below. If one looks at this page (pictured to the right) below where it reads “Yosefe Hadane”, one can tell that immediately adjacent of his name, there is his name written in two other scripts and languages. Additionally, this text was translated by Yona Bugale and Arie Gilad.

The Amharic Haggadah was published by The Ministry of Absorption, Jewish Agency, and Immigration and Absorption Department in the year 1985. The book was intended for an individual or small group of practicing Jews that spoke Amharic. The size of the book indicates it was intended for a more personal use. It is also important to note just

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how many illustrations are contained in this particular text on most pages along with the intricacies of each illustration. There are single words or phrases directly below each illustration, which are written in a different sized font than the text itself. Furthermore, even on the pages where no illustration of an object is included, there tends to be a red border.

The paper itself seems to be good quality, however, it appears as if it could have been treated much better. There is a green marking of some sort, which may have been added by a library that possessed this book at some point in time, but there are also signs of quite a bit of water damage on this page along with many others as well. Overall, the book was used and shows signs of damage.

Next, there is a definite component of design included within this text. On the first page there is a bold font that almost appears as if it is a title of some sort because it is placed on top of smaller text, which appears to be the actual substance of the text.
Additionally, “Passover Haggadah” is written in English in a large, bold text. Below this, there appears to be something else written in either another language or at least certainly a far different style of font.

The physical condition of the book is that the binding of the book has held up well over time as it appears to be held together quite securely, there is a slight yellow and brown discoloration on many of the pages, which is likely a combination of aging of the text as well as water damage of some sort, and the corners of the book are actually in very good shape as there are little to no bends, creases, or tears. This text is a translation of the Passover Haggadah, which has been translated in many other languages, however, the popularity of this popular edition is restricted because Amharic is not a particularly popular language.

The historical context of this goes to the importance of why it was written in that it comes at a time in which many Ethiopian Jews were being forced to immigrate to Israel as a result of persistent religious persecution in Ethiopia², which had been the case for much of their history. “Ethiopian Jews were completely isolated from Jewish communities in other parts of the world. Yet, they adhered to biblical Judaism for many centuries”³. This book is significant is because it helps to educate followers of the Jewish religion that are either from Ethiopia or only speak Amharic. Keeping in mind that there are only about 9 million of these Amharic- speaking and Jewish

individuals, it goes to show the lengths to which the Jewish community and specifically Joseph Hadana went in this case to make sure that all people interested in having access to this text in this language would have such access. The purpose of having the Haggadah written in Amharic was not to spread the religion further necessarily because there were already practicing Ethiopian Jews, however, they had some of their own traditions and customs. In fact, “the book also includes extensive photographs and detailed explanations of Ethiopian Jewish traditions and customs connected with Pessah”\(^4\). There are many other sources that discuss and show the importance of having an Amharic version of the passover Haggadah; some of which are presented below in the bibliography section, and it is important to note that this is listed as a first translation of such text, and it only came to be in the early 1980s.

Hoveret meda‘ ye-hakhyanah ba-noše zehuyot ha-ezraḥ be-Yišra‘el = Ba‘Esrā‘el kahegenā kazegenat mabetoč gār geneņunat bālāčaw gudayoč lāy yawaṭā maglačē mašehēt.


http://books.google.com/books?id=GddtAAAAMAAJ


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Robert Kalechofsky’s *Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb*  
by Isabel Logios

Published in 1985 by Micah Publications in Marblehead, Massachusetts, Roberta Kalechofsky’s *Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb*¹ is the first-edition of a Vegetarian Haggadah. The book was published in both English and Hebrew. The author and translator of the text is Roberta Kalechofsky. The history of this text begins with Kalechofsky’s struggle as a Jewish vegetarian. From a young age she was conflicted because her parents insisted that she eat meat for the Seder, but she was a passionate Animal Rights Activist. She described being “raised in Brooklyn by carnivores”, and this inspired her to create such a text. The purpose of *Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb* was to promote Animal Rights through a religious text.²

The Haggadah is a text that is made in many forms, sizes, and depends on who is using it and what for. The copy of the *Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb* at Fordham University is a used, paperback book. The fonts used are very visible and easy to read, which also attributes to the observation that this book

¹Roberta, Kalechofsky, *Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb* [in
²Roberta Kalechofsky, interview by Susan Schnur, *Lillith*, 200
is used for personal reasons. The font on the cover of the text is somewhat ornate and less legible than the fonts inside the book. The cover of the book includes an illustration and the title of the Haggadah.

The illustrations symbolize the purpose of the text: to recognize the portions of the Torah that accept and encourage Animal Rights. The illustrations, done by artist Barbara Bock, include abstract animal figures bordering the text. In the center of the cover is an illustration of animals with the lamb in the center of the image. The lamb in the title and in the center of the image indicates that this text may be targeted towards Ashkenazi Jews, for they eat lamb on Passover whereas some Sephardic Jews do not eat any form of roasted lamb. The cover also has symbolism with the lamb in the center. The lamb is a symbol to represent sacrifice and purity. In connection to the text, Kalechofsky may be insinuating that animals, specifically lamb, are unnecessarily sacrificed by humans.

The title of the text is also purposeful. Kalechofsky made the Haggadah for the “Liberated Lamb” to promote animal rights. The introduction of the text serves as an explanation as to why vegetarianism is a valid practice in Judaism, and as to why a text like this is necessary in the contemporary era.

The cover of the book is not typical of many Judaic texts, for it is read from left to right. This means that this text was prepared for an English reading audience. The number of pages is a total of sixty-two, and twelve of those pages are the introduction of the text.

Founded by Kalechofsky, Micah publications has published a myriad of texts on the topic of Judaism and contemporary topics. Their audience is a group that seeks to redefine Judaic ideology so that it coexists with Animal Rights Activism. The publishing company has not been afraid of introducing unorthodox traditions. The earliest publications of the company was in 1978, which is when Kalechofsky became inspired to contribute to the Animal Rights movement through her books.4 Micah Publication has a trend of publishing books that advocate reform. For example, the text Judaism and Animal Issues was published by Micah Publications to integrate religion and the Animal Rights Movement.5 The Global Anthology of Jewish Women Writers,6 a book also

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4 Kalechofsky, Lillith.
published by Micah, contributes to the women’s rights movement through Judaism. Micah published *South African Jewish Voices* to reflect how South African voices needed to be recognized in the Liberation Movement. Women’s Rights, Animal Rights and South African voices are all examples of activist movements that Micah contributed towards through literature.

The *Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb* and other Micah books are fitting for the period in which they were published. During the 1970’s and 1980’s there was an explosion of activism movements in the United States. Though protest and reform are widely known as practices of the 1960’s America, Simon Hall argues that this lifestyle bled into Activism movements of the 1970’s. During the 1970’s there was debate over why reform was occurring. Hall argues that it was an abandoning of “an Americanism that they [activists] viewed as inherently flawed by sexism, racism, militarism and capitalist excess”. This means that the cause of this movement was not because people were suddenly passionate about these issues, but rather that the 1960’s inspired Americans to use their voices. Women’s movements, the Gay Rights movement, and the animal rights movements are a few examples of activism movements in the 1970’s. These movements consisted of public protest, media coverage, music, art and literature being used as tools to spark change in American society.

The listed elements of activism movements explain why Micah Publications was producing texts about women, animals and South African voices--they were contributing to an activist movement. By publishing these texts they enforced that the United States was inherently flawed, and that social change was the way to fix this issue. Roberta Kalechofsky created *Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb* to contribute to the Animal Rights Movement by normalizing vegetarianism in Judaism.

Though *Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb* fits into the larger picture of reform movements of the 1970’s, it was made to specifically contribute to the Animal Rights Movement. Animal Rights are respecting the rights that animals have. Animal Rights Activists argue that it is immoral for humans to abuse their power because we are different species. The animal rights movement is known to have been inspired by ethicist Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* published in 1975. He insisted that animals have the ability to suffer as greatly as humans can, and so we must not murder them for our own greed. He claims, “it is a demand that we cease to regard the

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exploitation of other species as natural and inevitable, and that, instead, we see it as a continuing moral outrage”. In other words, we need to recognize animals as other humans. This book created the basis for the contemporary Animal Rights movement. By 1980, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) organization was formed and currently has 6.5 million members worldwide. Furthermore, the spread of animal rights activism caused ideological change in Americans. Every state now has laws against animal cruelty, and studies how that Americans are more likely to be opposed to animal testing in makeup. This rapid change showed how Singer’s book was a way to reform through literature. The Animal Rights Movement has shown great progress due to the persistence of Animal Rights Activists; These activists are not only the leaders, but the millions of Americans who support this movement.

Animal Rights Activist Jonathan Benthall argues that those who are Animal Rights Activists are also those who wish to refrain from eating animals. In other words, the Animal Rights campaign in the 1970’s consisted of vegetarians because they respect animals as much as humans.

This means that Kalechofsky, a vegetarian, wanted to advocate for respecting the rights of animals. The argument against vegetarianism is often times a religious one, for meat is considered a sacred aspect in one’s devotion to God. This notion explains why there would be a need for a vegetarian Haggadah. Halakha was used against Jewish vegetarians because God commands that he slaughters a lamb at Passover. This creates a major conflict for vegetarian Jews.

Jewish vegetarianism is a history that dates back to the 13th century when Rabbi Bahya Asher insisted that Jews are obligated to eat meat. Author Jonathan Brumberg Kraus claims that Asher used the following excerpt from the Talmud to defend his claim: “This is the Torah of beast and fowl; for all who engage in Torah, it is permitted to eat the flesh of beast and fowl (Lev 11:46)” Stating that the Torah is of ‘beast and fowl’ is how people were able to justify animal abuse. If the Talmud permitted it, then vegetarianism was not widely accepted in Judaism.

Conversely, Kalechofsky’s Haggadah is significant because she highlights where the Torah accepts vegetarianism. The significance of the book is that it does not separate Animal Rights and religion as two different entities. Linda Hajjar Leib’s book Human Rights and the Environment: Philosophical, Theoretical and Legal Perspectives, argues that Judeo-Christian texts are the beginnings of an anthropocentric understanding of the world. Our environmental ethics are centered around humans, and not animals. This is because Judaism and Christianity view humans as leaders, and not at one with the other organisms of the Earth. Humans also accept since animals do not have agency, then they are only for the purpose of human satisfaction. This phenomena that stems from religion is called, “The Agency Requirement”. Published the same year as Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb, Steve Saponitz’s journal article claims that there is a religious conflict within the agency requirement. It is that we view animals as our own, but we also want to be pious under the eyes of God. Naturally, religious ideology infiltrated is into everyday life. Humans were permitted to treat animals poorly because they can use the Torah and Judaic law to justify it.

Kalechofsky and another animal rights activist, Morton S. Silberman, agree that we should reconstruct our religious beliefs to mirror the era that we are practicing in. For example, when the Agricultural Act (1968) was passed, a law that forbids any individual from causing unnecessary pain to livestock on agricultural land, then kashrut laws should change as well. Kalechofsky rejects ideas of Jews having an anthropocentric view by creating her text. Within the introduction of Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb she is not stating that Jews are wrong in thinking that the animal should be killed to be eaten, but rather she argues that there are portions of the Torah that actually advocate for Animal Rights.

The reason a book like Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb is important is because it reinforces an inherent value of Judaism: Tikkun Olam, to repair

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the world. Roberta Kalechofsky does this through her creation of a contemporary Haggadah because she is repairing the world through religion.

The copy of Roberta Kalechofsky’s Haggadah for the Liberated Lamb that Fordham University holds has discoloration around the edges of the cover, the binding is slightly loose and the pages have been bent. On the inside cover is written in cursive that it belongs to “Eva Shane”. It seems that the owner of this copy valued the message of Animal Rights in relation to Judaism.

**Bibliography**


Schnur, Susan. Interview with Roberta Kalechofsky. *Lilith Magazine*.


The Exodus Haggadah: An Evolution of Survival

By Emily DeVivo

Passover celebration focuses on the text of the Haggadah, which is recited and discussed on the first two nights of Passover. The Haggadah tells the story of the exodus of Israelites from Egypt. Each act the text describes, such as spilling wine while reciting the Ten Plagues or opening the door for Elijah, is symbolic of the long and arduous story. The 1990 Exodus Haggadah here was prepared by the United Jewish Appeal Rabbinic Cabinet in support of the freedom of Soviet Jews. “in cooperation with the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.” This version of the Haggadah is a thin, simple, pamphlet with a fundraising goal. It combines the traditional elements of the Haggadah and new elements specific to the Soviet Jews’ plight.

The simplicity and accessibility of this Haggadah stands in sharp contrast with the illuminated Haggadot from the medieval period, but it demonstrates longevity of the text’s message. The Exodus Haggadah demonstrates how the Haggadah has been repurposed throughout history to reflect and raise awareness of struggles within the Jewish faith.

From the earliest days of the Soviet era, Judaism, along with other religions, was viewed as an obstacle in the path of obtaining true Communism.
What elements of the religion were allowed were very strictly controlled under the state, by a commission called the Yevesektsiia, meant to direct the affairs of Soviet Jews and push the anti-religious agenda of the Communist government at the same time.\(^1\) They even printed their own Haggadah in 1927 which, ironically, called for Passover to be abolished, and transmitted communist ideology.\(^2\) As the Cold War continued, with time, antisemitism became more explicit in the USSR. From the early 1970s on, a movement developed among Jews in the West to “free” Soviet Jews. As a result, many Soviet Jewish refugees were able to seek a new life in Israel, and in America.

In 1971, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry was formed in the hopes to reviving elements of Judaism in the USSR. The group was focused on supporting the well-being of Jews in Soviet nations, and it is now renamed as National Conference on the Support of Eurasian Jews.\(^3\)

Cover of the *Exodus Haggadah*

At face value, the 1990 *Exodus Haggadah* is a thin white book, with what looks to be a hand drawn depiction of the Star of David, with a tail made of Hebrew letters, in front of the famous Red Square.

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\(^1\) Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History: A Panorama in*

\(^2\) Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History*.

\(^3\) “About Us.” NCSEJ, ncsej.org/about_us1.
It also contains a description of the costs of resettlement of the Soviet Jews, and an envelope for donations, already addressed to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, for the purpose of supporting the new lives of Soviet Jewish refugees (fig 2). The inexpensive format of this Haggadah allowed for the raised funds to be stretched further.

The use of a Haggadah for the purpose of fundraising, however, was not a new concept. In a Haggadah printed during the 18th century, Rabbi Hayim Yoaf David Azulai used the sales of his Haggadah, which was printed in Italy, to raise money for a Jewish-Palestinian state. 4

An Excerpt from the Exodus Haggadah

If in the medieval period Haggadot were luxury items, today they can be, like this Haggadah, an inexpensive pamphlet-like publication, allowing for the text to be accessible to all Jews, regardless of economic or social class. Each year new versions of Haggadot are printed, making it possible for the Jewish community to respond to new issues, and, in times of persecution or stress on the community, raise awareness of different hardships. The Exodus Haggadah provides a glimpse into one moment of Jewish history—an American Jewish concern with the Soviet Jews, just a few years before the Soviet Union would collapse.

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Primary


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4 Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History*. 

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Secondary


The author of 1999 *The Family Passover Haggadah: The Prince of Egypt Edition* is Michel S. Schwartz, who is the illustrator of all the pictures not from the 1998 DreamWorks movie *Prince of Egypt*. Some of Schwartz’s other popular books are *Complete Story of Passover; Complete Story of Shavuoth; Complete Story of Chanukah; Complete Story of Purim*, where he also worked as the illustrator. It was published in 2012.¹

The printer of *The Family Passover Haggadah* is Circa Press, a relatively new printing company founded by David Jenkins in London. For the past twenty-five years Jenkins has created various “critically acclaimed books on architecture and design for some of the world’s leading publishers.”² Circa Press, according to their own profile, aims to reflect passion and artistry in all of the books they publish. They strive to have the

² “About.” CIRCA, 2018, circapress.com/about.
best production value that reflects incredible writing and riveting interests “for students, critics and practitioners of architecture, to titles on art, design, culture and society” whole also including interesting topics for younger readers. DreamWorks animation studios contributed with the pictures from *Prince of Egypt* and helped the book to be printed.

**Passover Haggadah and Seder Origins**

Many seder customs were innovations of the post-70 CE period, following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem; this means “that there was no seder or haggadah while the Temple [of Jerusalem] still stood.” Some scholars believe these advances occurred specifically within 70–220 CE. Studying specific rituals like this one can help one understand rabbinic Judaism through wider lens. By definition, seder means order; this refers to the strict rules involved with the consumption of wine and preparation and presentation and order of the meal as a whole. One also had to recite specific prayers while consuming the meal, hence the importance of an instructional Passover Haggadah.

Haggadah, by etymology, means “a ritual retelling of the story of the [Jewish] exodus from Egypt” or a written work of the text recited on Passover eve. The ritual retelling Haggadah with the aid of a book is very much alive; and there are countless versions and translations through the ages, each with additional prayers and songs and styles of worship.

It is often thought that Passover seder meal is directly reflected in the Catholic Last Supper as described in the Christian New Testament. Recently, however, scholars have begun to focus different “attempts of Jewish parties […] to provide religious meaning and sanctity to the Passover celebration after the death of Jesus and the destruction of the Temple.” There are three focal points that forced the development of the seder ritual relevant to biblical texts. They include the disasters of “the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the Bar- Kokhba revolt; competition with emerging Christian groups; assimilation of Greco-Roman customs and manners,” These gave way to numerous stricter new practices, ideas, and works. When discussing the emergence of the seder ritual, one must also take into account the emergence of rabbinic Judaism as a reaction to the

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5 Kulp, “The Origins of the Seder and Haggadah.”

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6 Kulp, “The Origins of the Seder and Haggadah.”
7 Kulp, “The Origins of the Seder and Haggadah.”
8 Kulp, “The Origins of the Seder and Haggadah.”
destruction of the Temple, and emergence of Christianity.

Interestingly, the seder used today was most likely not customary; many historians conclude “that Jesus’ last supper, even if it did occur on the eve of Passover, was not a ‘seder’, for there was no ‘seder’ in the Second Temple period.”\(^9\) Most scholars believe the seder and Haggadah most likely come from the rabbinic movement, which was post-destruction. Because the Haggadah tells the story of the exodus, it should “not be interpreted in the context of second-century Passover polemics.”\(^10\) It is not even known how many Jews participated in the seder or used the haggadah on Passover; rabbis had little authority until the fourth century. It should not be assumed that these new practices were customary across the board.

**American Culture Leading Up To 1999**

As of 1992, Jews made up less than 5% of the American population.\(^11\) Still, Jews have, however, heavily impacted American culture, specifically in the literary and arts world. Both non-fiction and fiction authors wrote about Jewish persons and/or ideas. And though Jews had been considered aliens and experienced antisemitism, especially in the late nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth century, now, Jews are hardly considered alien, and, until recently, antisemitism has actually receded since WWII.\(^12\)

In 1937, 46% of American citizens that responded to a poll “about their willingness to vote for a Jew or a Catholic or a woman for President” said that they would be open to voting for a Jewish candidate.\(^13\) By 1999, they year of the publication of the *Family Passover Haggadah* only 6% of voters polled that “they would *not* vote for a Jew, no matter who the candidate was.”\(^14\) Circa Press and DreamWorks must have been aware of this change, and hoped that the film *The Prince of Egypt* and the accompanying *Haggadah* would be well-received.

Not only did DreamWorks want America to receive the movie well, it was desperately counting on it. Before *The Prince of Egypt*, the startup company had only produced three movies: *Amistad*, *Peacemaker*, and *Mouse Hunt*.\(^15\) While *Peacemaker*, and *Mouse Hunt* did well, *Amistad* brought in only a fraction of the revenue.

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9 Kulp, “The Origins of the Seder and Haggadah.”
10 Kulp, “The Origins of the Seder and Haggadah.”
12 Whitfield, “Why America has Not Seemed Like Exile.”
13 Whitfield, “Why America has Not Seemed Like Exile.”
14 Whitfield, “Why America has Not Seemed Like Exile.”
After seeing a short clip of the new movie, Korean investment advisor David Shim, managing director at the Cheil Jedang Corporation, gave $300 million to DreamWorks for an 11% stake in the company three years prior to the release of *Prince of Egypt*. In order for that investment to pay off, the next movie had to be big; he truly believed *Prince of Egypt* was that movie. *Prince of Egypt* alone cost around $60 million dollars to produce. In an increasingly secular world, this was taking quite the gamble. Well-established companies like Paramount and Walt Disney Company had movies coming out at a similar time. While those companies had their marketing tie-ins to draw crowds into the movie theaters, *Prince of Egypt* dubbed “the Moses film,” had only itself as a means to get people to the theaters.

Despite the pressure for DreamWorks, and the unknown reaction of the public, Schwartz chose some of the images from the movie for his Haggadah, which was to be released soon after the movie. Negative movie reception would have been detrimental not only to DreamWorks but also to book sales. While animation was new and exiting at the time, Schwartz was truly taking a gamble; but he seems to have trusted the general positive reception by the American audiences of a movie focused on a religious theme. The link between the film, focused on Moses and the Haggadah is also interesting—Schwartz included images from the film, even though the Passover Haggadah does not explicitly mention Moses.

**Moses**

*Prince of Egypt* tells the story of the exodus of the Jewish people entirely through the lens of Moses. The movie follows his life from birth, and draws not only on religious tradition but also history, emotion, and song. Moses is such a pivotal person through the Exodus story. He, with God’s hand, leads the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea and into the Promised Land. He walks with them as they receive manna in the desert; Moses is chosen to lead God’s chosen people. He warns the pharaoh of God’s plagues and teaches the Israelites to put the blood of a spotless lamb on the doorpost. For God said to the Israelites: “I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.” The Passover that is laid out in the Bible states is “a day of remembrance for

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16 Fabrikant, “Media: Entertainment.”
17 Fabrikant, “Media: Entertainment.”
18 Fabrikant, “Media: Entertainment.”
[The Israelites. They] shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord"\textsuperscript{22} While this passage and the rest of Exodus Chapter 12 sounds similar to what happens today, scholars still say this is not the Passover practiced today that is instituted by rabbinic Jewish leaders.

One of the main songs in the movie, “When You Believe,” discusses the deep faith the Israelites have as they leave Egypt. They trust \textit{Adonai}, God, to lead them with a hopeful song in their hearts.\textsuperscript{23} It discusses the miracles that happen when one follows God. The Haggadah draws from these rich traditions, yet it still does not focus on Moses. If Moses is mentioned at all in Haggadahs, it is often only once, and Moses is often referred to simply as God’s servant.\textsuperscript{24} As with most Haggadahs, scholars theorize that Moses is removed to readers can focus purely on God; any mention of someone else would take away from God and His miracles, and as a counter to Christian focus on Jesus.\textsuperscript{25} After all, the Haggadah is focused on tradition and personal reverence. It is not meant to compare oneself to another religious figure or imitate another specific personality’s ways. The Haggadah writers most likely did not want to obscure the readers’ perceptions of God.\textsuperscript{26}

Other theories include the fact that anti-Samaritan rabbis did not want Samaritan people having the satisfaction of reading about Moses, as he was of high importance to them.\textsuperscript{27} This theory is not as heavily supported as the reverence to God theory, but it is still important to consider. During biblical times especially, Samaritan people were not accepted as equals to Israelites, so it would not be impossible to think that later Jewish leaders would want to keep those feelings.\textsuperscript{28} All avenues of thought are interesting to consider, as historians will never truly know why this tradition begun, and more importantly why it still stands.

\textbf{Audience}

By looking at Schwartz’s \textit{Family Haggadah}, it is clear that it is meant, as the title suggests, for a family: there are pieces that appeal to both an older and a younger audience. The colorful cover directly appeals to children. Yet the book has valuable information for older children and adults. Upon opening the book, one can see the vivid pictures – intertwined throughout the reading and also spectacular full-page spreads – and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Holy Bible: New Standard version, The. Exodus 12: 14.
\item \textsuperscript{23} “Prince of Egypt.” 1998.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Avioz, " Why Is Moses Missing?"
\item \textsuperscript{27} Avioz, " Why Is Moses Missing?"
\item \textsuperscript{28} Avioz, " Why Is Moses Missing?"
\end{itemize}
The book is laid out in a simple, informative fashion to teach families how to celebrate the Seder meal. The introduction to the book is entirely in English, clearly meant for an English speaking audience (fig. 4).
Fonts and Design
The largest fonts show areas of the book are meant to be read aloud (fig. 5).

Fig. 5

The areas the adult is meant to read, for or to the children, have smaller fonts (fig. 6).29

Fig. 6

Though the majority of the text, the introduction, and explanations are in English, the DreamWorks Family Haggadah has both English and Hebrew (fig. 7)

29 Image 12.
There are some areas where just one language is shown, but often, there are both next to one another. In a few titles and key words, they have the English in English characters, the Hebrew in English characters, and the Hebrew in Hebrew characters, satisfying all audiences, regardless of their level of Hebrew knowledge (fig. 8).
Sometimes, important words of expressions are often written in red instead of black ink (fig. 9).

The paper quality is sturdy enough to withstand children flipping the pages, but would still rip if intentionally torn. The pages are not stiff; they are a modern paper. The book has a modern design.

The book is 9 7/8 inches long, 7 7/8 inches across, and 3/8 of an inch in depth. It is a thin book, meant to be used to celebrate the Seder.

**Editions and Languages**

While there are no other editions of this exact Haggadah, there are thousands of Haggadah versions that have been printed since the sixteenth-century. *The Family Passover Haggadah* draws from that long tradition.

There are no annotations in the Fordham copy of *The Family Passover Haggadah*, even though there is an area in the back of the book where one can write their name and the date the book was completed, essentially a place to keep track of prayer and acknowledge completion of the Passover season (fig. 10).\(^ {30} \)

\(^ {30} \) Image 16.
But the book does have signs of use: a cracked spine, a few loose pages, and some staining from being used for the Seder meal. Fig. 11 shows the Seder meal staining on the prayer pages of the book.

There are no other editions or translation of *The Family Passover Haggadah: The Prince of Egypt Edition*, but the book itself is written in both English and Hebrew.
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**Books Cited**


**Source Cited**

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**Related Books and Articles**

31 Works not directly used in the paper, but could be used as additional information to help the reader have a better understanding of the topic.


