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### Hebraica Veritas? An Exhibition from the Collection of The Center for Judaic Studies Library

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# Hebraica Veritas?

An Exhibition from the Collection of  
The Center for Judaic Studies Library

Stephen Burnett and Seth Jerchow



Center for Advanced Judaic Studies  
1999–2000 Fellows  
University of Pennsylvania

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## Introduction

Christian Hebraism was an offshoot of Renaissance humanism whose devotees — biblical scholars, theologians, lawyers, physicians, scientists, philosophers, and teachers in Latin schools — borrowed and adapted texts, literary forms, and ideas from Jewish scholarship and tradition to meet Christian cultural and religious needs. Intellectual and cultural exchange did occur between Jew and Christian during the Middle Ages, but paled by comparison with what occurred between 1450 and 1750. Encounters between cultures can be fruitful, but also very painful. Certainly Christian Hebraism had such effects both upon European Jewry, and upon western tradition.

One of the most tangible witnesses to the sudden and sustained popularity of Hebraica and Judaica among Christian writers and readers during this period are books. In addition to our discussions throughout the year and the final conference, we fellows would like to share some of the books that we found most intriguing or most useful in our research. Participating fellows have each chosen a book, written a short description of it and picked an illustration to go with it. Each of these books may be found in the library of the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies or at Van Pelt Library, the main library of the University of Pennsylvania. The understanding of Judaism held by the authors of these works is not always entirely accurate, and frequently they were involved in controversies that either baffle or infuriate contemporary readers, yet some of their work has stood the test of time. Christian Hebraism in its day mediated Jewish thought to the majority of western thinkers who could not read Hebrew and contributed to the emergence of several modern scholarly disciplines including cultural anthropology, comparative religion, and Jewish studies. This encounter with Judaism paradoxically

served both to confirm traditional religious beliefs in some readers, while for others it fostered the skepticism, irreligion, and toleration normally associated with the Enlightenment. While Judaism's claim to be one of the three pillars of Western Civilization, together with Greek and Roman culture, rests primarily on the importance of the Hebrew Bible, Christian Hebraists in early modern Europe made their contribution by enriching western thought with a healthy dose of Jewish education.

**Stephen Burnett**

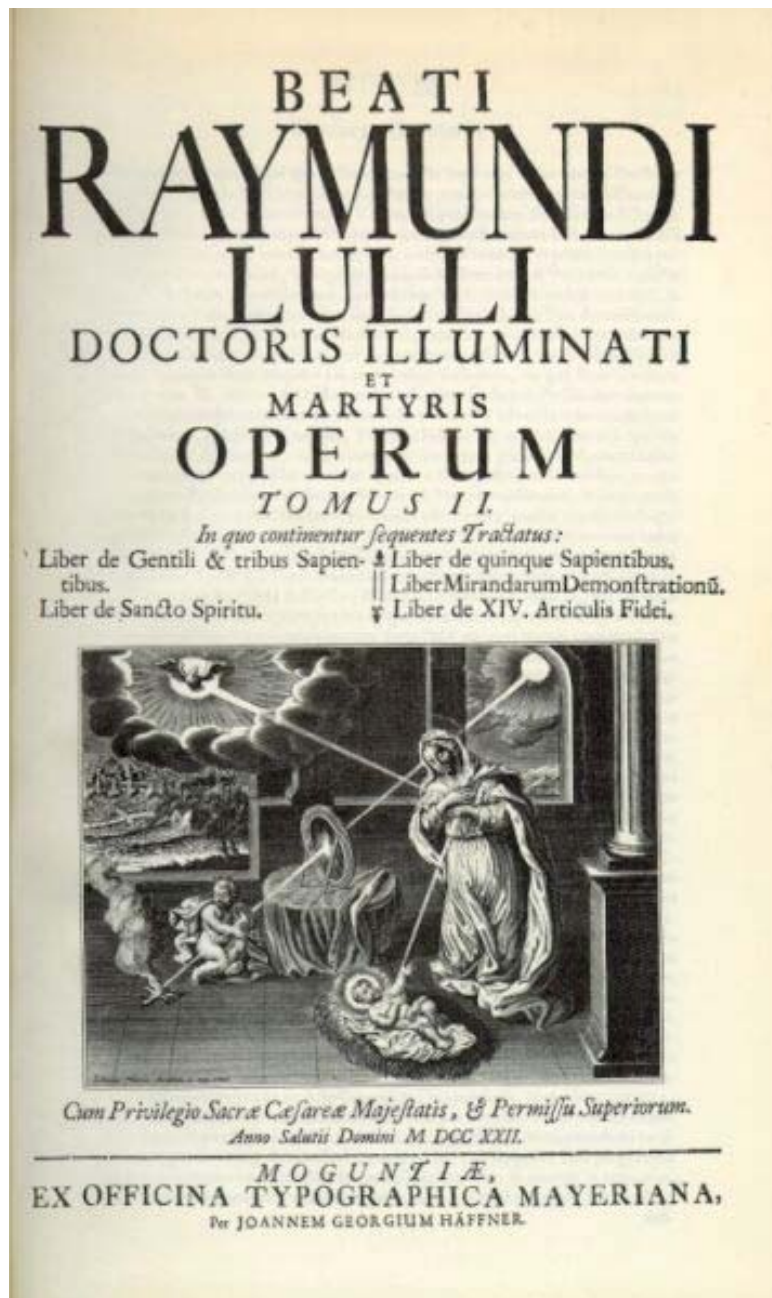
University of Pennsylvania

**Center for Judaic Studies Library**

## Hebraica Veritas?

Itineraria





Llull, Ramón, d. 1315. **Raymundus Lullus Opera.** Mainz, 1721[–1742]

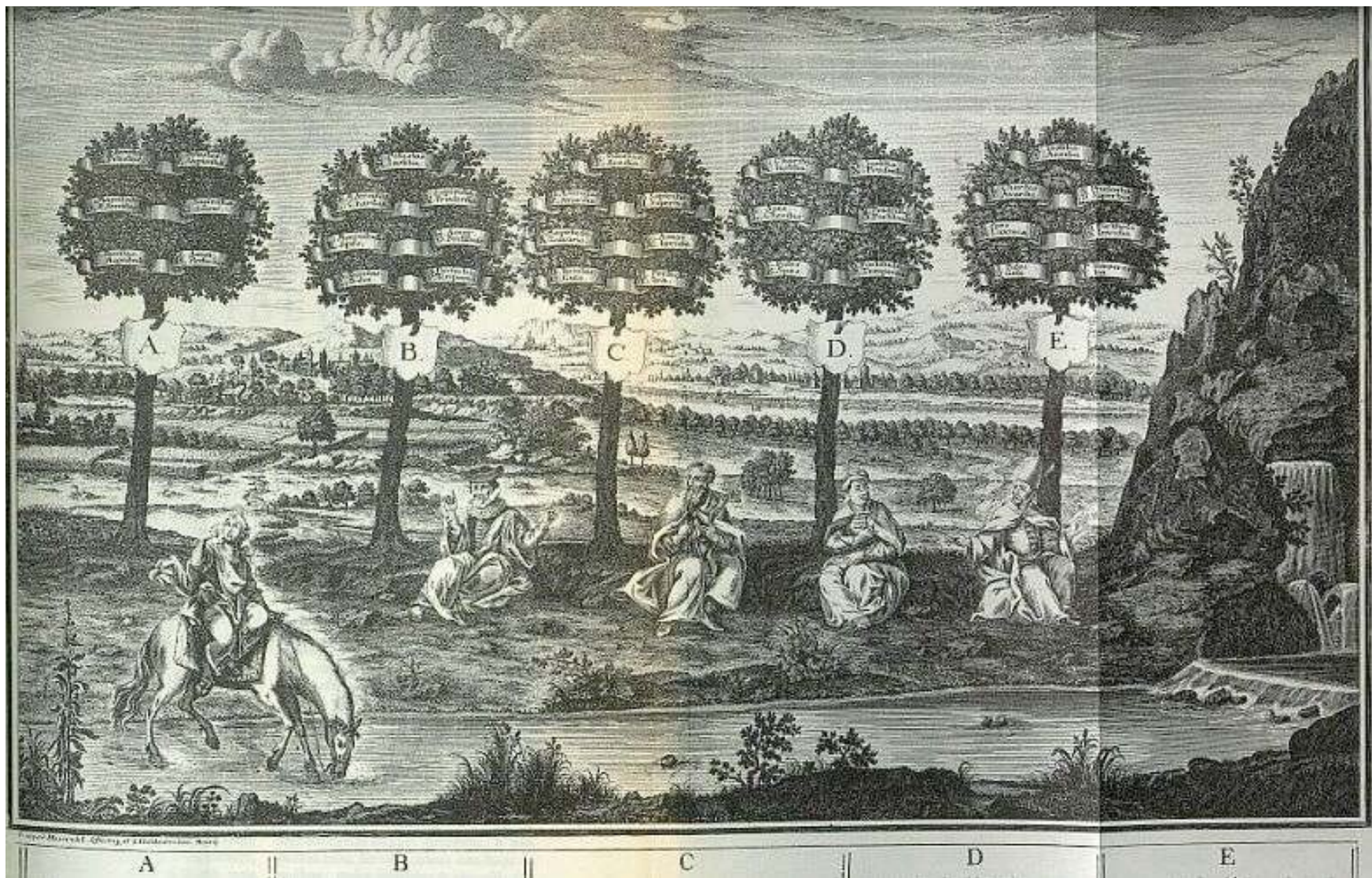
Ramón Llull (ca. 1232–1315) was a Catalan philosopher and mystic who developed in some 265 works, an Art, or science, which he believed conclusively proved the truth of Christianity. During his long and very active life, Llull continuously refined the Art and used it in polemic against Jews and Muslims to bring about their conversion. **The Book of the Gentile**, written between 1274–76 in Catalan and translated very rapidly into Latin, French and Spanish, portrays a cordial disputation between a Jew, Christian and Muslim for the edification of a Gentile utilizing the framework of the *Art*. In the work, a large measure of tolerance is shown toward the other, and Llull reveals remarkable knowledge of contemporary Judaism and Islam. The last redaction of the framework of the *Art* was the **Ars generalis ultima** completed in 1308 along with the very popular **Ars brevis**. The latter is extant in a late fifteenth-century Hebrew translation, and was considered by its Jewish students as an excellent work for achieving divine revelation.

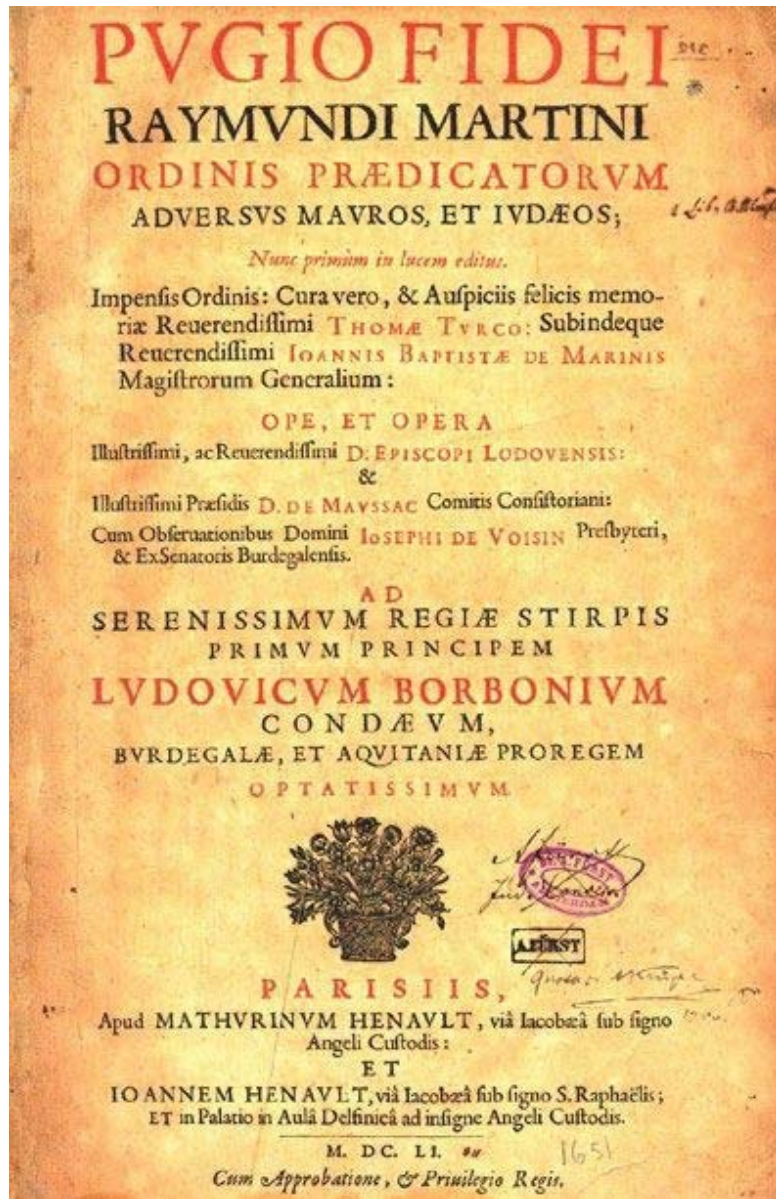
Ivo Salzinger (1669–1728), the editor of the Mainz edition wanted to portray Llull’s *Art* as a system of universal knowledge, and to defend Llull as an alchemist (which he was not). He amassed a large collection of manuscripts (now in the Munich Staatsbibliothek) and although he died after the first three volumes appeared, the work was continued by the new editor Philip Wolff. Only eight (I–VI, IX–X) of the ten volumes originally planned were ever published under the patronage of, first the Elector Palatine, and after his death, the Archbishop of Mainz.

### Chaim (Harvey) Hames

*Opposite:* Titlepage with depiction of dual Annunciation.

*Following page:* Insert (before p. 1): Allegory of the Five Trees of Virtues.





Titlepage

Martí, Ramón, d. ca. 1286. **Pugio Fidei, ... adversus Mauros, et Iudaeos; nunc primùm in lucem editus.** Paris, apud Ioannem Henault, 1651.

Raymundus Martini (Ramón Martí, 1220–1285) was the greatest Hebraist and orientalist of the Middle Ages, and the leading representative of the Spanish Dominican school in the polemic against the Jews. His knowledge of languages and his outstanding command of Biblical and post-Biblical Jewish literature knew no equal, neither in his own time nor in the following centuries.

Raymundus studied Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic. In his opus magnum **Pugio fidei adversus Mauros and Iudaeos** (*Dagger of Faith against Moslems and Jews*), written around 1280, he tried to prove Christianity's truth using Jewish sources: Talmud, Midrashic literature, Jewish exegesis, Jewish philosophy and Kabbalah. He believed that these sources hide old traditions which prove the main tenets of Christianity and which should be extracted from the Jewish books "like pearls from a dunghill." His method was to bring the Jewish section in its Hebrew or Aramaic original, followed by a Latin translation and a commentary. Raymundus' aim was not to refute Jewish sources or to annihilate Jewish books, but to use them for Christian purposes. He looked for the sources — legends in particular — which included, so he believed, Christian truth, but also those that proved that contemporary Judaism was no longer the Biblical Judaism deserving of Christian tolerance.

The **Pugio** made an immense contribution to Christian Hebrew scholarship and to Christian anti-Jewish polemics. For the first time Jewish rabbinical sources were exposed to Christian eyes. Christian polemicists in the following centuries (for example, in the Tortosa Disputation of 1413–1414) based their arguments on the **Pugio**, making it their polemical platform. The work also brings several rabbinical sayings which were later erased from Jewish manuscripts and printed editions, and for which it serves as the only source.

Ten manuscripts of the **Pugio fidei** are known today. The book was printed in 1651 in Paris, and again in 1687 in Leipzig. It still awaits a critical edition.

**Ora Limor**

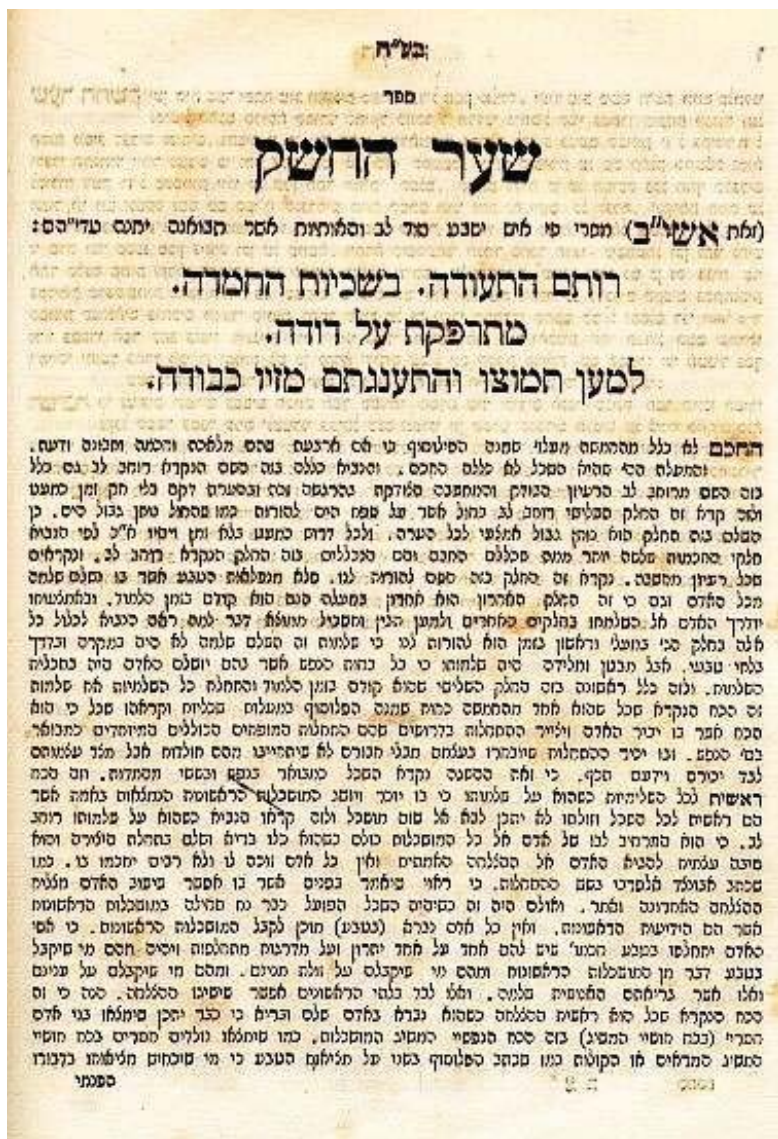


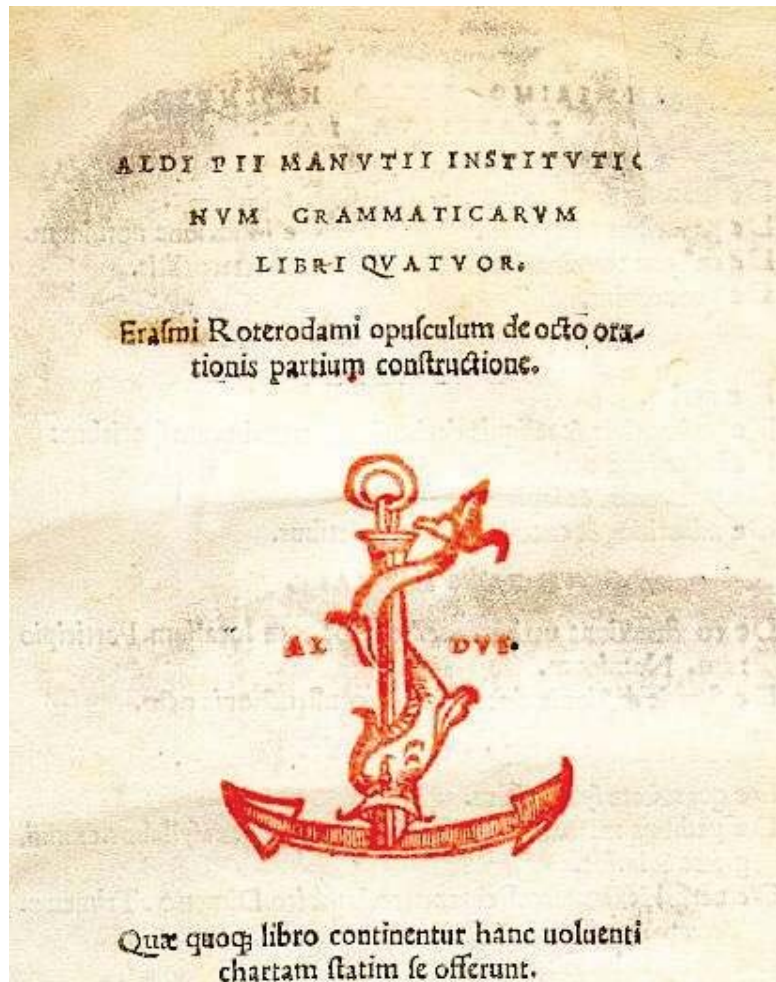
Johanan Allemanno, ca. 1435–ca. 1504. **Sefer sha'ar ha-heshek** (**The Book of the Gate of Desire**). Halberstadt: [1860]

Johanan Allemanno was born in Italy to a French Ashkenazi family. As a philosopher, he appears to have adhered to the major concerns of the Renaissance revival of *studia humanitatis*. His portrayal of King Solomon as an outstanding paragon of both *humanitas* and speculative activism follows Humanistic literary trends. In rendering Solomon a model for the Jew aspiring to the rational and mystical knowledge of God, Allemanno emphasizes Solomon's human qualities, his virtues as well as his vices. Allemanno reinterprets traditional Arabic and Hebrew sources using contemporary Humanistic reappraisals of classical rhetoric and biography.

This nineteenth century edition of the **Sefer sha'ar ha-heshek** (**The Book of the Gate of Desire**) contains Allemanno's introduction to his commentary on the Song of Songs, entitled **Heshek Shelomoh** (**Solomon's Desire**), which he had dedicated to the Humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). Pico, whom Allemanno first met in 1488, had originally turned to the Jewish scholar in search of Kabbalistic hermeneutic devices for a new interpretation of the Song of Songs. Together, they strove towards the formation of a syncretic system of rational and religious thought in an attempt to overcome ideological distinctions within intellectual milieus. Their remarkable collaboration lasted until Pico's death in 1494.

Fabrizio Lelli





Aldo Manuzio 1449 or 50–1515. Desiderius Erasmus, d. 1536.  
**Aldi Pii Manutii Institutionum grammaticarum libri quatuor.**  
**Erasmii Roterodami opusculum de octo orationis partium con-**  
**structione.** Venice : In aedibus Aldi, et Andreae soceri, Mense Iulio.  
 1523.

Aldo Manuzio's importance is not limited to the art and development of typography. The great Venetian printer was a prolific man of letters, having authored a number of extensive tractates on classical language and literature. After having mastered both Latin and Greek printing, he went on to forge a set of Hebrew types, which initially appeared in the 1499 **Hypnerotomachia Polyphili**. Approximately two years later, this font would be integrated into his **Alphabetum hebraicum**, the first Hebrew language primer printed by a Christian for Christians. However, it was also due to Aldus' business intrigues that the Jewish Soncino dynasty of printers was precluded from activity within the Venetian Republic (the privilege would be passed on in 1516 to yet another Christian printer, Daniel Bomberg of Antwerp). The present piece is a 1523 reprint of Aldus' Greek Grammar, accompanied by a handbook of Latin by his contemporary, Desiderius Erasmus.

**Seth Jerchower**



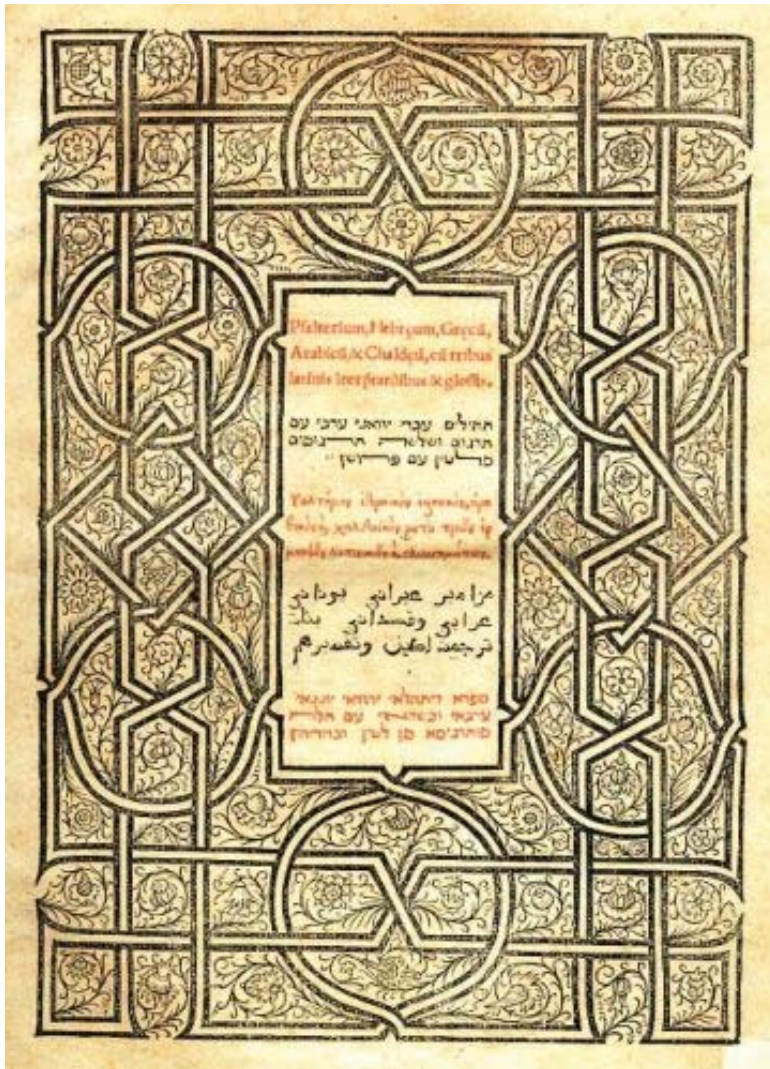
**Vetus testamentum multiplici lingua : nunc primo impres-  
sum; et imprimis Pentateuchus Hebraicus Greco atque Chal-  
daico idioma.** Alcalá de Henares : Arnaldi Guillelmi de Brocario,  
1514–1517.

One of the great achievements of Christian Hebrew Biblical scholarship, this polyglot edition was printed in Alcalá de Henares, Spain by the University of Complutum (and hence known as the *Complutensian Polyglot*). Its six volumes were printed between 1514 and 1517, but difficulty in obtaining papal approval delayed official publication until 1521.

The first four volumes of this *Biblia Polyglotta* contain the Hebrew Bible, volume 5 contains the Greek New Testament, and volume 6 contains various indices and study guides (including a Hebrew-Aramaic dictionary and a Hebrew grammar). The first page reproduced here is Genesis Chapter 1. Jerome's Vulgate translation is in the center of the page, between the Hebrew text on the right (with roots printed in the margin) and the Greek Septuagint (with an interlinear Latin translation) on the left. The Aramaic translation is found on the bottom left of the page, with its Latin translation to the right, and its roots printed in the margin.

The second page reproduced here provides an illuminating example of how the Complutensian Polyglot was used by Christian Hebraists in Early Modern England. The bottom of this page displays verses 1–10 from Proverbs: Chapter 6, and includes the Latin text in the center, with the Hebrew text on the right and the Greek text on the left. John Donne, one of the most famous preachers of his time, discusses these verses in a sermon given in 1621 (*Sermons*, Volume III: pp. 231–232): “In the sixth Chapter of this booke, when Solomon had sent us to the Ant, to learne wisdom, betweene the eight verse and the ninth, he sends us to another schoole, to the Bee: *Vade ad Apem & discite quomodo operationem venerabilem facit*, ‘Goe to the Bee, and learne how reverend and mysterious a worke she works.’ For, though S. Hierome acknowledge, that in his time, this verse was not in the Hebrew text, yet it hath ever been in many Copies of the Septuagint, and though it be now left out in the





**Psalterium, Hebreum, Grecum, Arabicum, & Chaldeum, cum tribus Latinus interpretationibus & glossis.** Edited by Agostino Giustiniani, bishop of Nebbio, 1470–1536. Genoa: Petrus Paulus Porrus, 1516.

While the *Complutensian Bible* may have been the first polyglot to come off the printing press (commencing with the New Testament in 1514) it was not the first to be published. The entire enterprise was to take another three years, and the Inquisition prevented its public release until 1521.

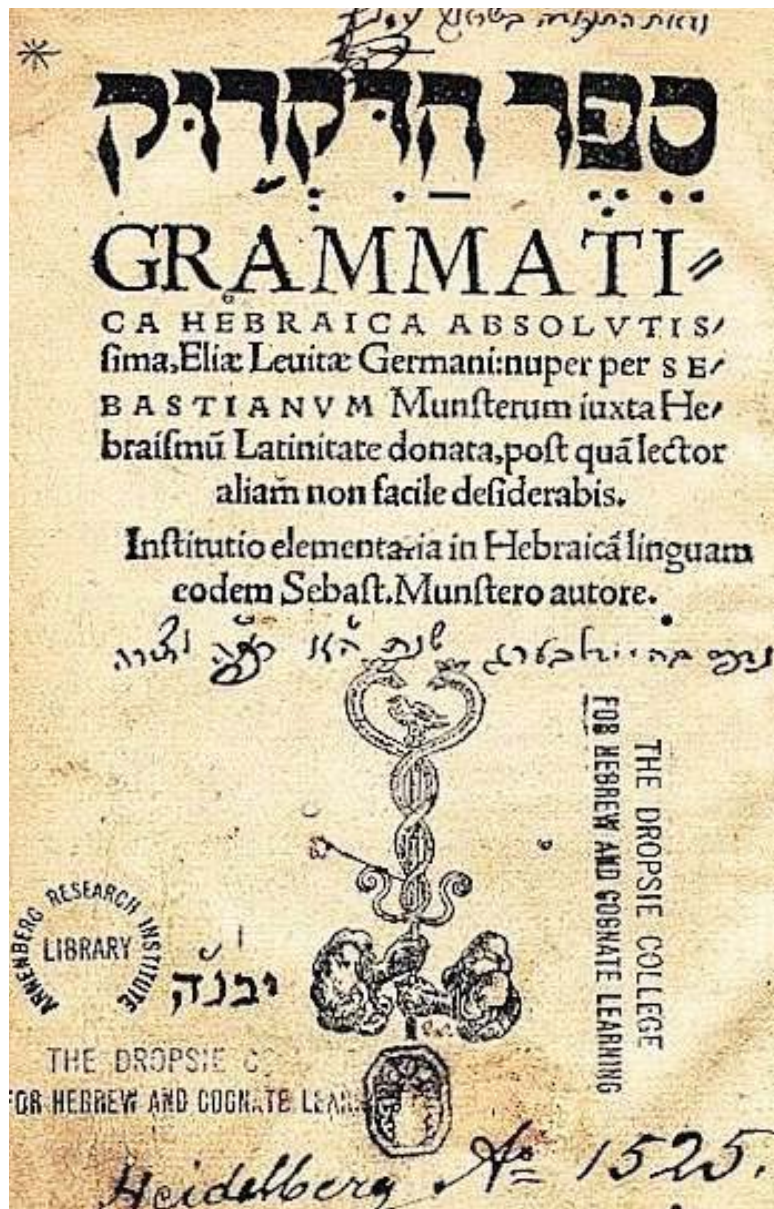
Although more limited in textual scope, the Genoa Psalter was both printed and released in 1516, and therefore qualifies as the first **published** polyglot Bible. An Arabic translation of Psalms was included with the Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and Aramaic versions, and this is arguably the earliest surviving instance of Arabic movable type. The Psalter holds yet an additional “first”: at Psalm 19 verse 4 appears a curious scholium, giving a detailed account of Christopher Columbus’ voyages: the earliest printed record of the discovery of the New World. Its inclusion is attributable to equal doses of mid-millennial fervor and civic pride, as it was a Genoese captain who finally brought together “the four corners of the world.”

### Seth Jerchower

*Opposite:* Title in five languages: Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Aramaic.

*Next page:* Detail of Psalm XIX, 4, with the account of Christopher Columbus.

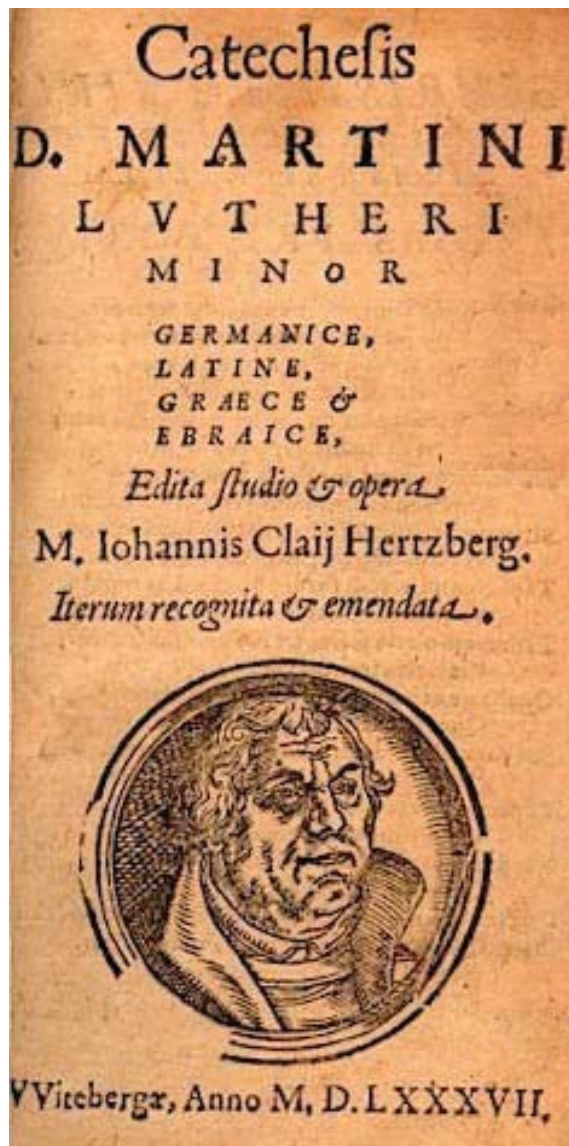




Elijah Levita, 1468 or 9–1549. Sebastian Münster, 1489–1552. **Sefer ha-Dikduk — Grammatica Hebraica Absolutissima, Eliae Levitae Germani, nuper per Sebastianum Munsterum iuxta Hebraismum Latinitate donata . . .** Basel : Johannes Froben, 1525.

Elijah b. Asher ha-Levi (1469–1549), called Elias Levita by Latin authors, was a gifted Hebrew grammarian, teacher and editor/annotator of Jewish books for the Bomberg press of Venice. He also played an instrumental role in the development of Christian Hebrew scholarship, both by tutoring Christian pupils such as Cardinal Viterbo and by writing Hebrew grammar books and lexicons in Hebrew which were easily adapted to Christian use. The first of Levita's books to be translated into Latin, in this case by Sebastian Münster, appeared in this Basel 1525 printing. Münster, Paul Fagius, and Johannes Campensis edited or translated a number of Levita's works, printing them in Basel, Paris, Isny, Cracow, and Louvain. At least 26 more printings of Levita's books, either in Latin or as diglot texts with both the Hebrew original and Latin translation, would appear in print between 1525 and 1610, quite apart from the numerous printings of his works in Hebrew alone, intended for Jewish readers. Although he remained a Jew throughout his life, Levita had a tremendous impact upon Christian Hebrew scholarship through books such as this one.

Stephen Burnett



Luther, Martin, 1483–1546. **Catechesis D. Martini Lutheri minor: germanice, latine, graece, & ebraice edita studio & opera M. Iohannis Claij, Hertzberg; iterum recognita & emendata.** Witebergae: Haeredes Ioannis Cratonis, 1587.

Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**, written originally in German, was intended to instruct ordinary Christians in the proper understanding of the Christian faith through explanations of the *Apostles Creed*, the *Lord's Prayer*, the Ten Commandments, and the sacraments. In 1570, the **Catechism** appeared for the first time in a polyglot form which included not only the original German, but Hebrew, Greek, and Latin translations of the text in parallel columns. This new edition was ideally suited to language instruction in schools since it included familiar texts in the less familiar biblical languages. While the text of the Ten Commandments could be copied from the Hebrew Bible, most of the catechism had to be translated into Hebrew for the first time. The copy held by the Center for Judaic Studies library is a good representative of this work in that it was printed at Wittenberg by the heirs of Johannes Krafft (*Crato*), a fairly successful Hebrew printer for the Protestant market. This firm produced 16 of the 25 printings of the polyglot catechism which appeared between 1570 and 1650, all except one of which were printed in Wittenberg. The perennial popularity of the polyglot catechism in Lutheran cities and territories demonstrates that Lutheran scholars too considered the study of Hebrew important, although their role in the development of Christian Hebrew scholarship has remained largely unacknowledged.

### Stephen Burnett

*Opposite:* Titlepage, with portrait of Martin Luther.

*Next page:* The polyglot catechism: The Ten Commandments.





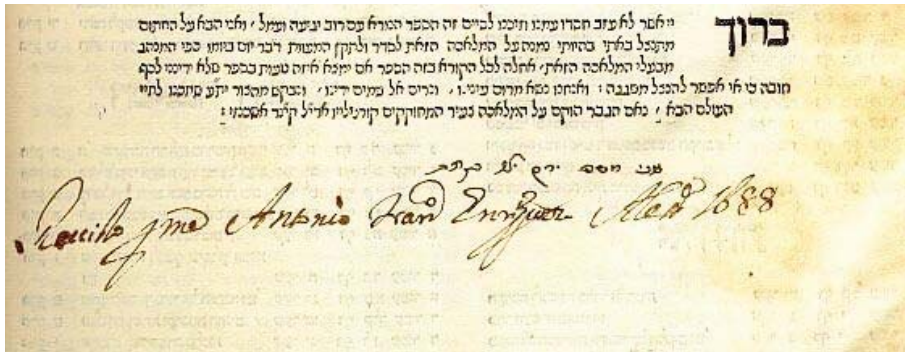


Instances of censorship. The expurgated area appears in the commentary to Behukotai (Leviticus 26:3-27:34), in which Arama discusses the fact that the Torah makes no mention of an afterlife, and disputes the Christian position of eternal life as a reward, and therefore motivator, for one's deeds.

Arama, Isaac ben Moses, ca. 1420–1494. **Sefer 'Akedat Yitshak.** Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1546 or 1547, printed by Cornelius Adelkind.

The decades immediately preceding and ultimately culminating in the Spanish Expulsion were witness to ever-increasing efforts by the Iberian Church in episodes of conversion by coercion: Jews were forced to attend sermons to convince them of the errors of their faith. To counter this, the Aragonese rabbi Isaac ben Moses Arama (ca. 1420–1494) composed his own homilies and delivered them to the Jewish community. These homilies consisted of a philosophical defense of Judaism: the appeal of reason over the terrors of the establishment. Later, Arama collected and reorganized these sermons as his magnum opus, the **'Akedat Yitshak**. The title, which translates as *The Binding of Isaac*, is a fitting one, for indeed Arama masterfully binds the traditions and methods of midrashic exposition with those of philosophical demonstration. The **'Akedah** rapidly gained favor among a Jewish readership whose demography was ironically expanded by the events of 1492. It would also gain notoriety within Christian circles, where it was perceived as a slanderous work against Christendom, its dogmas and its institutions. Like many other Jewish works, particularly core ones such as the Talmud, lexica, commentaries, and entire sections of liturgy, it was liable to censorship.

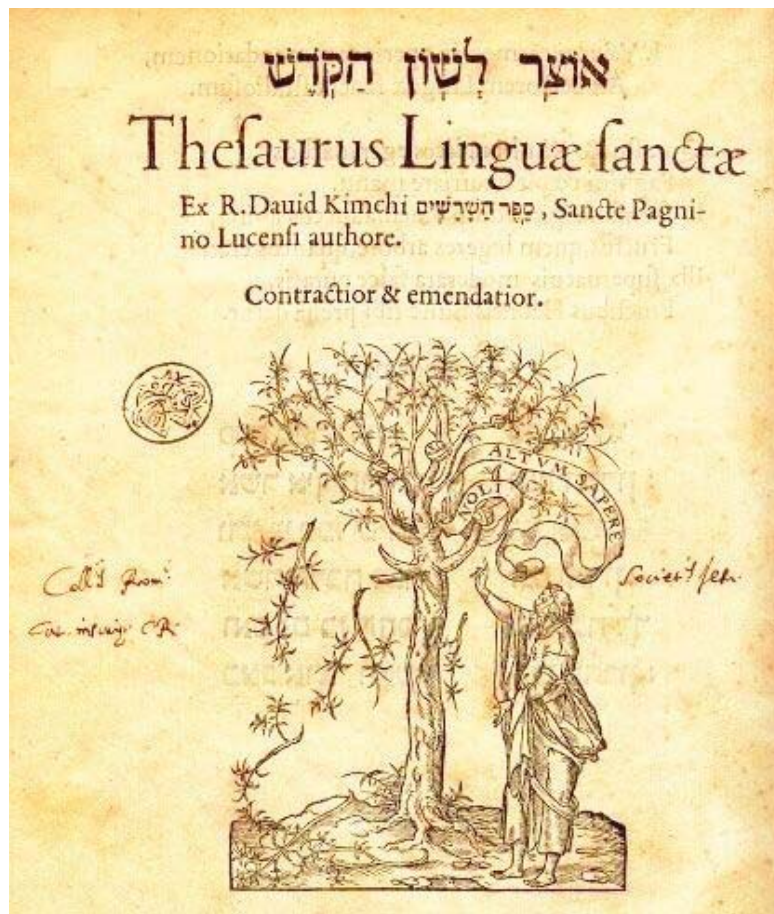
Censorship as an official institution was a response to both the success of the printing press and the [arguably subsequent] threat of Protestantism. A first decree prescribing universal censorship was proclaimed in 1487 in a Bull issued by Innocent VIII. In 1516 a Bull by Leo X instituted the *imprimatur*, the pre-publication approbation. Universal enforcement would not occur, however, until the 1540's, after two events that sanctioned its implementation: the relegation of all censorship matters to the General Inquisition in 1542 by Paul III, and the recommendation of the Council of Trent in 1546 for a more active enforcement. What followed, *inter alia*, was the **Index librorum prohibitorum** [Index of Prohibited Books], an en masse confiscation and “correction” of alleged illicit writings,



The censor's mark reads: "Revisto per me Antonio Francesco Enrique, Alessandria 1688" ("Examined by me, Antonio Francesco Enrique...").

Paul IV's infamous Bull *Cum nimis absurdum*, and the burning of books, not least of which was the Talmud. In 1554 Julius III decreed that any Hebrew book not bearing the *imprimatur* fell subject to confiscation if it was deemed derogatory to Christianity. The book was given to a censor (often an apostate, who brought with him his knowledge of Hebrew; there is also evidence that faithful Jews played an ancillary role, possibly as an endeavour to save Jewish texts from obliteration) who would proceed to blot out the offensive passages. The final step was the placement of a "censor's mark," usually consisting of a signature, date, and brief declaration of examination. Despite an explicit provision in Julius III's Bull, the books were typically not returned to their owners, but kept sequestered in church or convent libraries. Curiously, the same censors' names today recur in Judaica collections throughout the world, yet represent a relatively brief albeit intense period of activity restricted to a relatively minimal area: the Papal State and the Savoy. After having occupied northern Italy (1796–98), Napoleon shut down the convents and monasteries of these regions, leading to an abandonment of the libraries, and a sudden boom for collectors.

**Seth Jerchower**



Santi Pagnini 1470–1541, David Kimhi ca. 1160–ca. 1235.  
**Thesaurus linguae sanctae.** Paris: Carolus Stephanus, 1548.

Pagnini, whose initial formation began under the tutelage of Girolamo Savonarola in Florence, is the likely emblematic albeit arcane figure of post-laurentian Christian Hebraism in Italy. His commentaries, grammars and translations were hailed by Christians and Jews alike, and his erudition and industry so impressed the Medicean Pope Leo X that he assumed the expenses of Pagnini's **Veteris et Novi Testamenti nova translatio** (Lyons, 1527). The **Thesaurus linguae sanctae** is Pagnini's translation of and exposition on the Biblical glossary **Sefer ha-shorashim** (*Book of Roots*) by David Kimhi, the preeminent medieval grammarian of the Hebrew language.

The noted printer's mark of the Stephanus (Estienne) family of Paris epitomizes the attitudes of pre-Counter Reformation Christian Hebraism. Both the tree, a trope for Divine wisdom, and the motto, "Noli altum sapere," are taken from Romans 11, verses 19–20: "Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. **Be not highminded**, but fear."

### Seth Jerchower

*Opposite:* Titlepage, featuring image of Saint Paul and citation from Romans 11, 20.

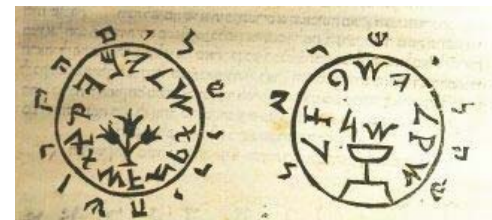
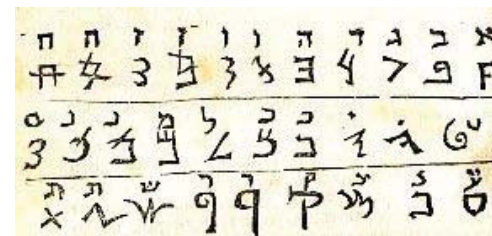


Titlepage and details of ancient Hebrew alphabet.

Azariah ben Moses de Rossi, ca. 1511–ca. 1578. **Me'or `enayim (Light of the Eyes)**. Mantua: 1573–1575.

The *Light of the Eyes* established the foundations of critical Jewish historiography. Its author, the sixteenth-century Italian Jew Azariah de' Rossi, was a polymath who was familiar not only with the texts of his own Jewish tradition, but also with Christian and pagan literature including contemporary Christian Hebraists such as Sebastian Münster, Augustinus Steuchus, and Pico della Mirandola. The book covers a wide range of topics including the origins of the Septuagint, Jewish chronology and the priestly vestments. In every subject de' Rossi was able to innovate, taking heed of the relevant Jewish and Christian scholarship. Subsequent to his death, Christian theologians and historians often cited “Rabbi Azarias” alongside such reputable authors as Maimonides and ibn Ezra, and translated several chapters of his work into Latin. De' Rossi's reputation among Jewish scholars was established in the nineteenth century when the pioneers of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism) hailed de' Rossi as the “first true Jewish historian.”

Joanna Weinberg





Johann Buxtorf, 1564–1629. **Synagoga judaica; hoc est, Schola judæorum in qua natiuitas, institutio, religio, vita, mors, sepulturaque ipsorum e libris eorundem.** Hanau: Apud Guilielmum Antonium, 1604.

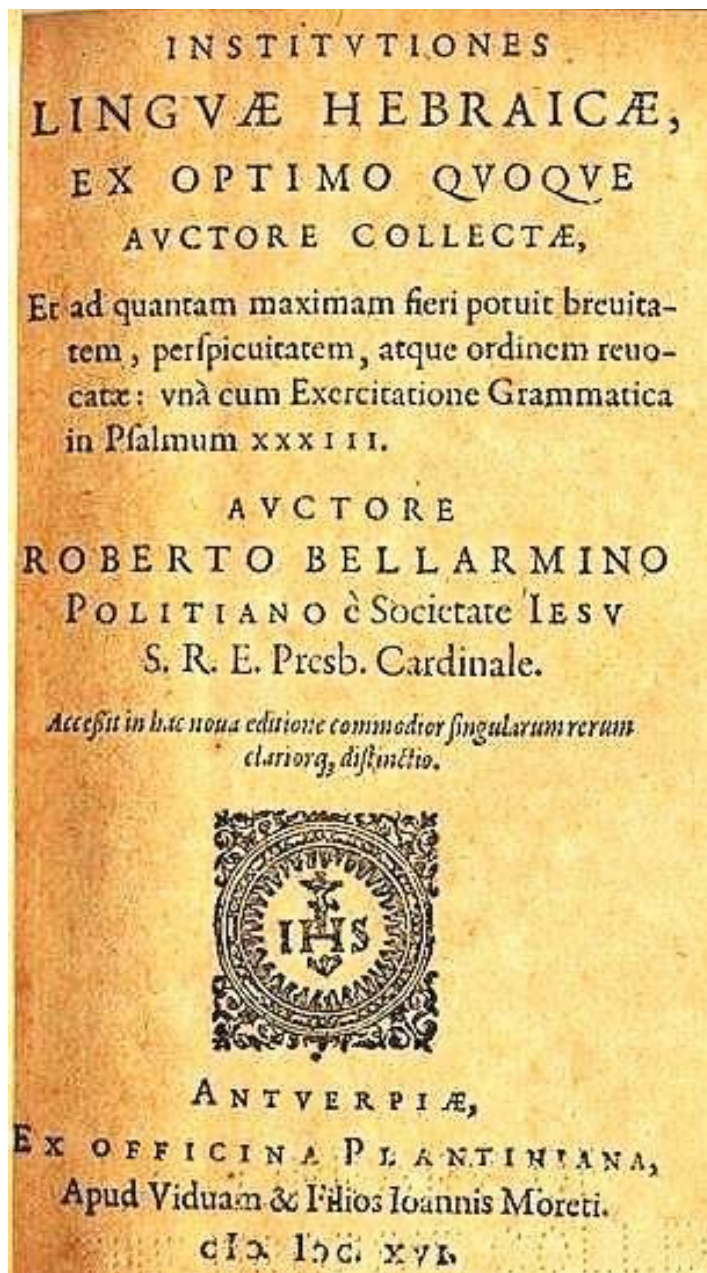
Johannes Buxtorf the elder taught Hebrew at Basel University from 1590–1629 and was justly known as one of the finest European Hebrew scholars of his day. His book *Jewish Synagogue* (*Juden Schul*, Basel, 1603) as one of the first serious attempts by a Christian scholar to portray traditional Judaism in a realistic way, explaining the laws governing Jewish life from cradle to grave, the Jewish week and the Jewish religious calendar using quotations from Joseph Karo's *Shulhan Aruk* and Judeo-German popular works to back up his assertions. His goal in writing the book, however, was not to commend Jews for their faithfulness to Jewish law, but to criticize them for their departures from biblical law and practice. The Center for Advanced Judaic Studies library holds two different Latin translations of this work, but the more important of these was printed in Hanau in 1604, and reprinted in 1614 and 1624. This text was the one which made Buxtorf's impressive analysis available not only to the learned Christian world, but also to R. Leon Modena of Venice who wrote his famous *Historia de riti hebraici* (1637) as a refutation of Buxtorf's work.

Stephen Burnett



*Previous page:* Johann Buxtorf, *Synagoga judaica* (1604), titlepage.

*Opposite:* page 1.



Roberto Francesco Romolo Bellarmino, 1542–1621. **Institutio-nes linguae hebraicae : ex optimo quoque auctore collectae, et ad quantam maximam fieri potuit breuitatem, perspicuitatem, atque ordinem reuocatae: una cum exercitatione grammatica in Psalmum xxxiii.** Antwerp : Viduam & Filios Joannis Moreti, 1616.

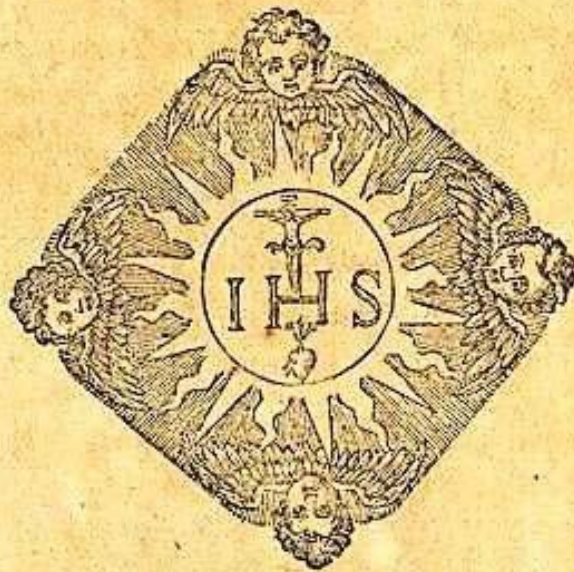
Robert Bellarmine wrote this Hebrew grammar, which was first published in Rome (1578), when teaching biblical exegesis at the Jesuit School in Louvain (1574–1576). Included in the grammar is the **Exercitatio Grammatica in Psalmum XXXIII**, a word for word explanation of the Hebrew text of the Psalm. For his grammar Bellarmine made ample use of Jean Cinquarbres' **Institutiones in Linguam Hebraicam** (Paris, 1559). Later editions of Cinquarbres' grammar include also Bellarmine's **Exercitatio** (Paris: 1582, 1609, and 1619). Bellarmine, who had been a student of the Christian Hebraist Johan Willems (Harlemius) of the famous *Collegium Trilingue*, erected in 1515 on the initiative of Erasmus, became later one of the protagonists of the Counter-Reformation.

#### Piet van Boxel

*Opposite:* Titlepage.

*Next page:* Page one; facing: Jesuit insignia.





5

I N S T I T U T I O N U M  
L I N G V Æ H E B R A I C Æ  
P A R S P R I M A.

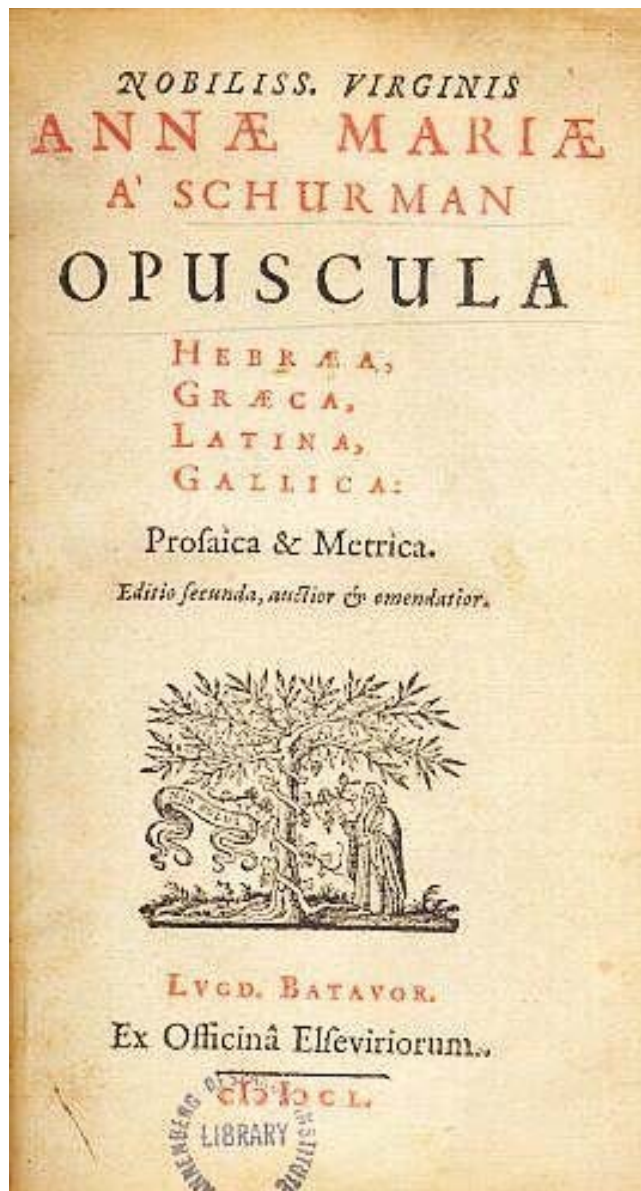
C A P. I.

*De Literis.*

**L**ITERAE Hebræorum, quas ipsi נִימוֹת Othijoth appellant, omnes sunt Consonantes. Earum numerum & ordinem, qui ex Threnis Hieremiæ, aliisque similibus Alphabeticis libris colligitur, nec non figuras, nomina, & ipsorum nominum significationem, denique potestatem siue sonum ipsarum, & quorum numerorum note sint, subiecta Tabella indicabit.

Num.	Fig.	Potestas.	Nomen.	Significatio.
1	א	aspiratio lenissima.	Aleph אֵלֶּפֶת	Quasi אֵלֶּפֶת Aleph, id est, princeps, quod sit principium Alphabeti.
2	ב	B, Græcū siue cōsonans.	Beth בֵּית	Domus, quod figura sua domum imitetur: summa enim

*A 3*

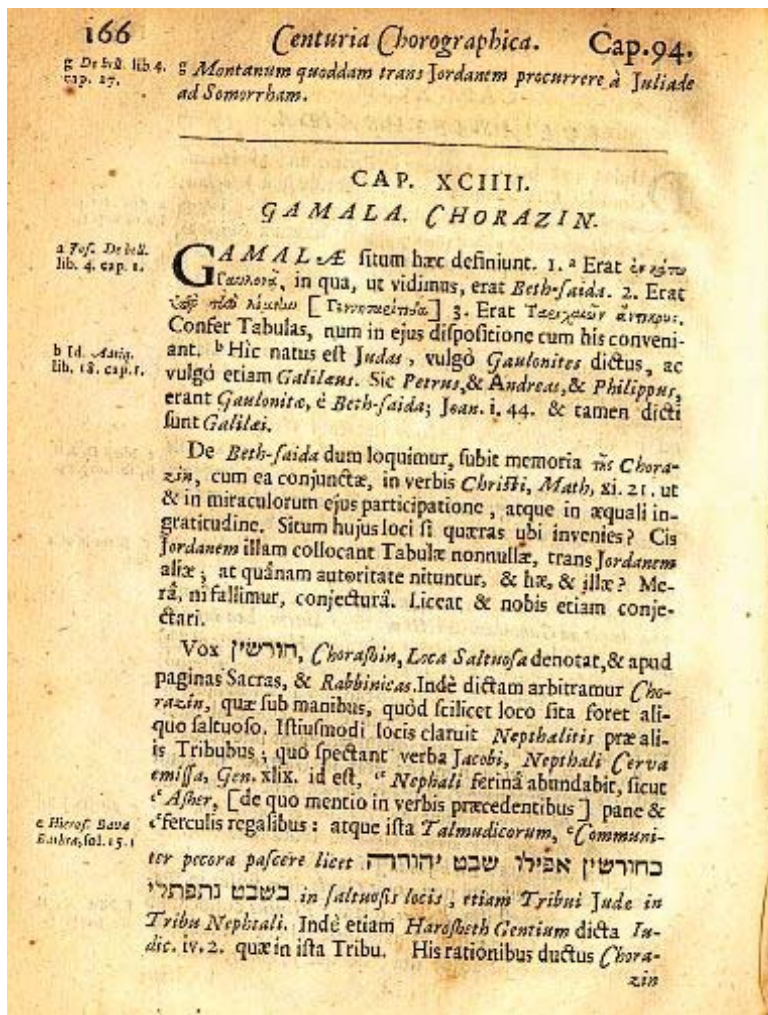


Titlepage.

Anna Maria van Schurman, 1607–1678. **Opuscula hebraea, graeca, latina, gallica: Editio secunda, auctior & emendatior.** Leiden: Ex officinâ Elseviriorum, 1650.

Anna Maria von Schurmann (1607–1678) was the child of a noble family of Protestant Flemish exiles who had fled the anti-Protestant persecution in the Spanish Netherlands. She was born in Cologne, but in 1615 the family moved to Utrecht. She received an excellent education from the tutors hired to teach her brothers, and soon proved to be both a gifted visual artist and an accomplished Latin poet. By the early 1620's she had already become known as an excellent linguist and she developed a broad correspondence, receiving letters and poetry from scholars written in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, French and Dutch. She is reported to have been able to read Arabic, Aramaic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Turkish and Persian as well. Her teachers and friends were some of the best linguists in the Dutch Republic, including scholars such as Gispert Voetius, Andre Rivet, Friedrich Spannheim, and Joannes Beverovicus. She corresponded with Claude Saumaise, G. J. Vossius, and Daniel Heinsius, and theologians such as Voetius, Hornbeek, and Cloppenbergh dedicated works to her. Her book, the **Opuscula**, edited by her friend Friedrich Spannheim, is a collection of her lesser writings, and appeared in three different printings. In 1653, at the height of her fame, she left the Netherlands and returned to Cologne to take care of family responsibilities. She then went into seclusion at a country estate, ceasing to answer her correspondents. In 1661, she became a follower and patroness of Jean de Labadie, once a Jesuit but by then a Protestant mystic who sought to create a new, purified Christian faith, a vision she too sought to fulfill until her death in 1678. Schurmann was able to gain entry into the rarefied world of the Republic of Letters because of her noble birth and her outstanding intellectual gifts, and as a result was able to become acquainted with the famous and learned university scholars who enjoyed such prominence in the learned world. She was one of the few female Christian Hebrew scholars in early modern Europe.

Stephen Burnett



John Lightfoot. (1602–1675). **Horæ hebraicæ et talmudicæ. Impensæ I. In chorographiam aliquam terræ Israeliticæ. II. In Evangelium S. Matthæi.** Cambridge, Joannes Field, Edovardi Story, 1658.

Considered by many to be the greatest English scholar of Jewish literature of his time, Lightfoot was skilled not only in Biblical Hebrew, but also in Mishnaic Hebrew and Talmudic Aramaic. He became Master of St. Catharine's Hall, Cambridge, in 1643, and Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University in 1654. As a member of Parliament, Lightfoot was entrusted with overseeing and administering a large purchase of texts in several Semitic languages for Cambridge in 1647–48. This volume contains the first two installments of a work that was published serially between 1658 and 1674. Drawing extensively on talmudic literature, the writings of Josephus, and other classical sources, the first half offers a detailed geography of all the locations in the Land of Israel mentioned in the Gospels. The second portion shows the talmudic parallels and rabbinic background to the Gospel of Matthew. Later installments offered the same insights for the other Gospels, Acts, I Corinthians, and parts of Romans.

Jeffrey S. Shoulson

Opposite: p. 166. Discussion of place and ethnic names in the Bible.

Cap. 95. Centuria Chorographica.

167

zin nostram in Galilea fuisse suppono potius, quam ubi eam locant Tabulae pleraque, in Perea.

At mirum cum videatur, locum hunc tam celebrem praesentia frequenti, & miraculis Christi, nusquam alibi in historia Evangelica mentionem obtinere, nisi in nuda ista ejus memoria in verbis Christi, Va tibi Chorazin, &c. cum Bethsaida & Capernaum [cum ea ab eo memorata] obtineant; quid si sub hoc nomine, Cana, concludatur & reginula aliqua ei adjacens, quae a situ in Saltu Chorazin diceretur, id est, Saltusosa? Celebratur Cana frequenti praesentia Christi, & miraculis. Sed ablit nimia audacia conjecturae.

CAP. XCV.

Oppida quaedam ab ipsos terra limites.

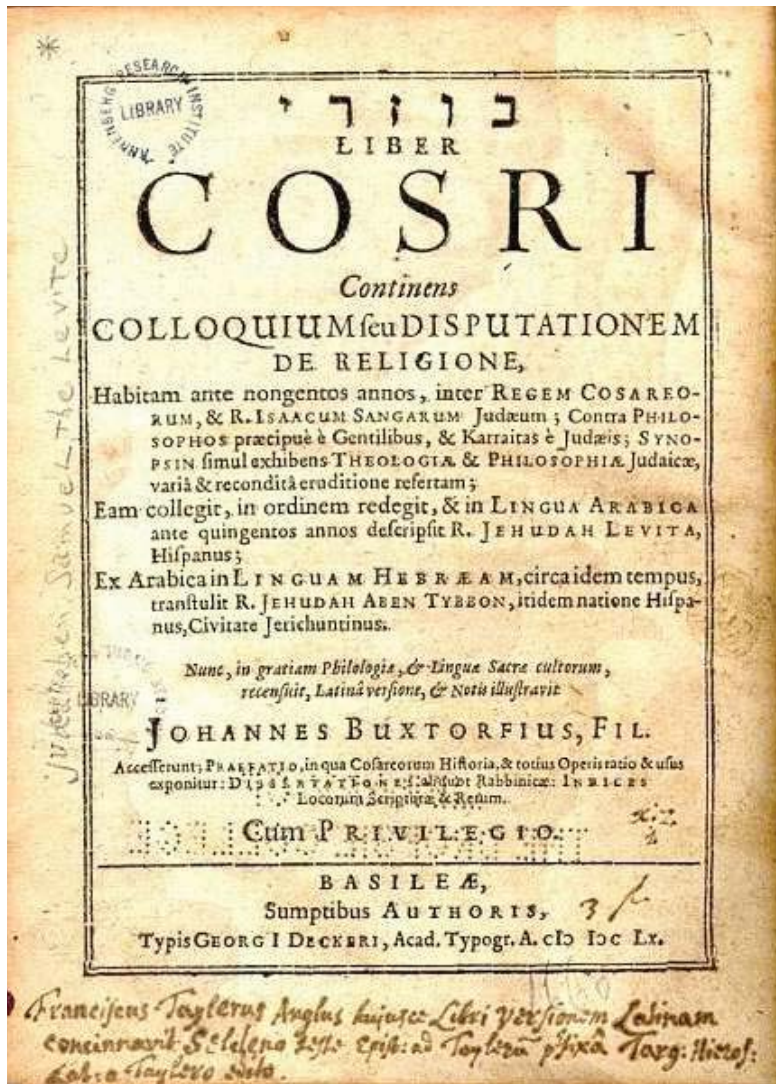
Ex Hierof. Demai. fol. 22.4.

IN loco citato agitur de decimatione olerum ac seminum quorundam, Oryzae scilicet, nucum, ceparum, fabarum & Egyptianum, &c. & quaeritur quid de earum decimatione statuendum, si nascantur in locis, quae videntur extra terram, & haec subinde inferuntur.

אילן עירורת אסורת בתחום צור שצת  
ובצת ופי מצובה חנותה עלייתה וחנותה  
תחתיה ובית בריא וראש מ"א ואמין ומוי:  
אמר ה' מנא הר"א ראתאמר בראשונה אבל  
עכשיו יש מוסתח: עיינוש ועין תרע ורס ברין  
ועיון וערוט וכפר וחריב וחספיה וכפר צמח: אילן  
עירורת שהן מותרות בתחום נבי צור וצייר וגשמי  
הויין ניגרי חטם ודכח חרבתיה וכרכה.

Iste urbes prohibentur in limitibus, Tsur, Sezeth, & Bezeth, Pi Mazabab, Chautabab superior & inferior, Beth Badia, Rosh Maja Amon & Mazi. (R. Menā dicit, Sic

Opposite: John Lightfoot, Horae hebraicae et talmudicae (1658), p. 167.



Judah, ha-Levi, 12th cent. **Liber Cosri : continens colloquium seu disputationem de religione, habitam ante nongentos annos, inter regem cosarreorum, & R. Isaacum Sangarum Judæum; contra philosophos præcipue e gentilibus, & Kairaitas e Judeis...** Basel: Typis Georgl Deckeri, 1660.

Johannes Buxtorf “the younger” (1599–1664), the son of the elder Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629), was professor of Hebrew in Basel. Much of his scholarly work was concerned with Hebrew linguistics and debates over the antiquity of the masoretic text of the Bible. Like his father, however, he also maintained an interest in post-biblical Judaism, and published a new edition of his father’s summary of Jewish practice, **Synagoga Judaica** (1661, repr. 1680.) The younger Buxtorf also developed a strong interest in Jewish theology, and early in his career, he published a new Latin translation of Maimonides’ **Guide of the Perplexed** (1629). One of his last works was this translation of Judah Halevi’s anti-philosophical defense of Judaism, the **Book of the Kuzari**, based on Judah ibn Tibbon’s Hebrew translation. The **Kuzari**, whose literary form was inspired by the eighth-century conversion of the Khazar people to Judaism, consists of an imagined dialogue between a rabbi and the Khazar king. Halevi’s work was popular among Jewish scholars for its arguments for the reliability of the Jewish tradition, and for the superiority of the Jewish people, the land of Israel, and Hebrew. The book also contains extensive discussions of Jewish history, doctrine, and law; the Hebrew language; and various scientific issues. Making use of a sixteenth-century commentary by Judah Moscato, a Mantuan rabbi, as well as other Jewish authors, Buxtorf’s extensive introduction discusses the Khazars, Halevi, as well as the content of the work. He also included Hebrew and Latin versions of letters between a later Khazar king and Hasdai ibn Shaprut (whose authenticity he doubted). One of Buxtorf’s major goals was to make this work accessible to Christian scholars who desired knowledge of Jewish thought but were not themselves Hebraists. In addition to his own notes explaining the text, a citation index, and a detailed subject index, he appended relevant excerpts (in Latin translation) from

works by various Jewish authors including Isaac Abravanel and Azariah de Rossi. Buxtorf's *Liber Cosri* made its way into numerous scholarly libraries in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was instrumental in bringing both Halevi's treatise and the story of the Khazar conversion to the attention of the Christian scholarly world. Buxtorf's work also did not go unnoticed by Jews: in late eighteenth-century Berlin, Moses Mendelssohn used the margins of this work to copy a commentary on the *Kuzari* by his teacher, Israel Zamosc.

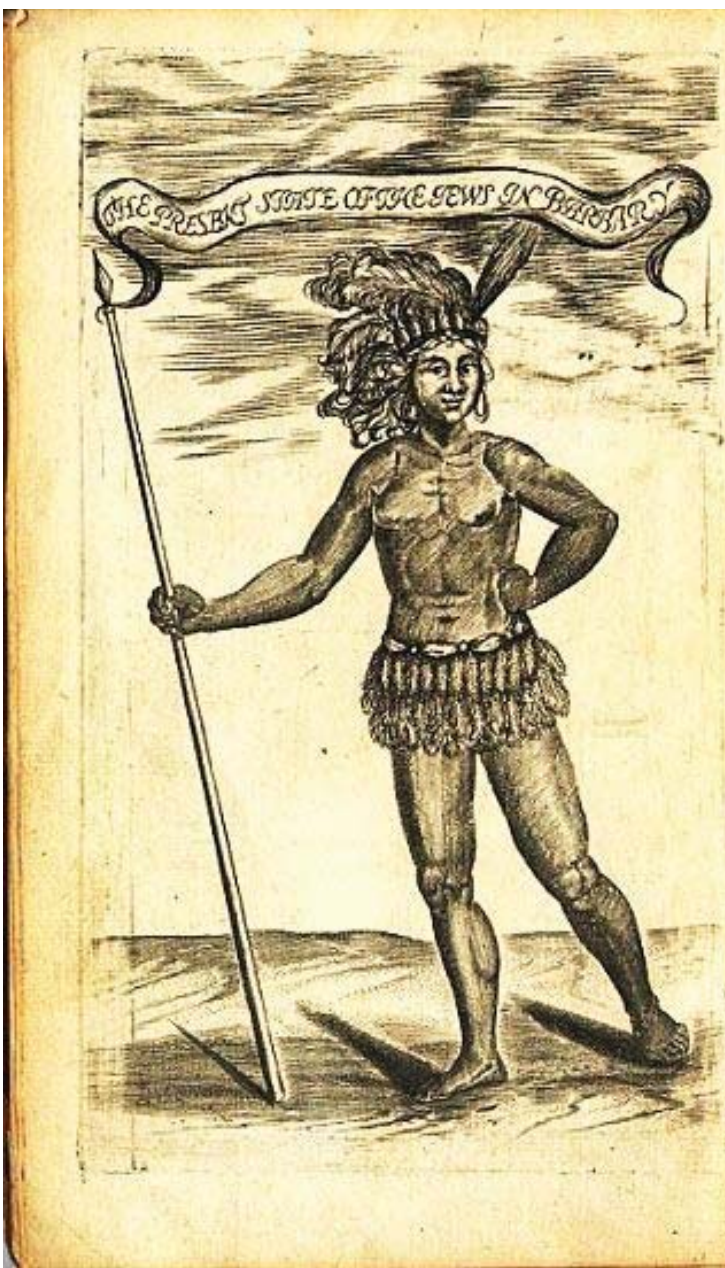
**Adam Shear**

Lancelot Addison, 1632–1703. **The present state of the Jews (more particularly relating to those in Barbary): wherein is contained an exact account of their customs, secular and religious.** London : Printed by J. C. for William Crooke, 1675.

Lancelot Addison was an Anglican clergyman who was assigned to accompany English troops stationed on the Northern Coast of Morocco. There, he came into contact with local Jews, and utilized the experience to write about Jewish life. His **The Present State of the Jews (more particularly relating to those in Barbary)** was published in the decades after Jews were formally permitted to resettle in England. It was reprinted several times, suggesting that the book attracted interest as a source of information on the Jews. A later publication of his on Islam identifies Addison as the author of *The Present State of the Jews*, further pointing to the recognition that the book achieved. A striking feature of the publication is its frontispiece, which depicts a “native” holding a banner proclaiming “The Present State Of The Jews In Barbary”. No explanation is attached to the illustration. Scholars have pointed out that part of Addison's book simply repeats material found in the English translation of Johannes Buxtorf's work, **The Jewish Synagogue, or an Historical Narration of the State of the Jewes** (*Synagoga Judaica*, London, 1657). It is thus likely that when Addison did not have information from his own experience in North Africa, he “cribbed” from Buxtorf who recorded Jewish life in Central Europe. The title page also cites an annex to the book, a **Discourse of the Misna, Talmud and Gemara**.

**Harvey Goldberg**

*Next page:* Titlepage and frontispiece design depicting an African native.



THE <sup>Mini: Wall.</sup>  
Present State <sup>Ma</sup>  
OF THE  
J E W S:

(More particularly relating to those  
in B A R B A R T.)

Wherein is contained an exact  
Account of their CUSTOMS,  
Secular and Religious.

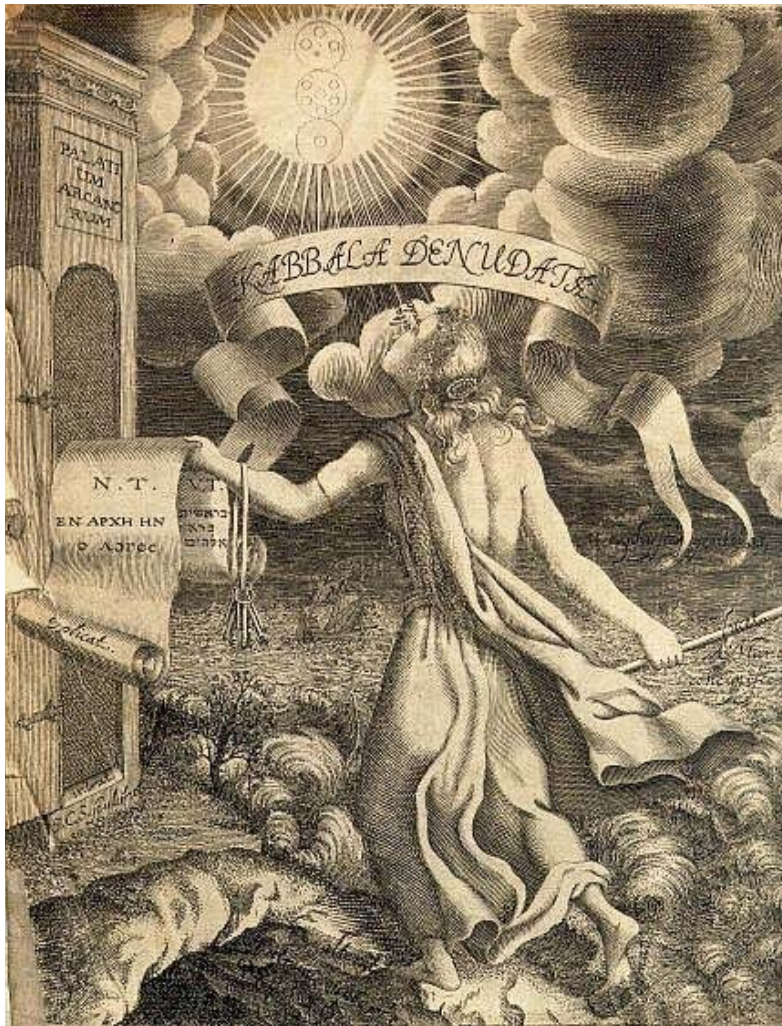
To which is annexed a Summary Dis-  
course of the *Misna*, *Talmud*,  
and *Gemara*.

By *L. Addison*, one of his Majesties Chaplains  
in Ordinary; and the Author of the late  
*Revolutions* and present *Customs* of the King-  
doms of *Fez* and *Morocco*.

*Aliis aliis plura invenire potest, nemo Omnia.*

L O N D O N  
Printed by J.C. for William Crooke, at the Green Dragon  
without Temple-Bar, and to be sold by John Cones-  
ney Bookseller, in Sarum. 1675.





Knorr von Rosenroth, Christian, Freiherr, 1636–1689. **Kabbala denudata : seu, Doctrina Hebraeorum transcendentalis et metaphysica atqve theologica opus antiquissimae philosophiae barbaricae variis speciminibus refertissimum.** Sulzbaci : Typis Abrahami Lichtenthaleri; Francofurti, 1677–1678.

The **Kabbala denudata** offered the Latin reading public selections from the most famous kabbalistic work, the **Zohar**, while providing other kabbalistic treatises and extensive commentaries to help the reader understand this notoriously difficult text. The editor and translator of the work, Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636–1689) was an accomplished Hebrew and Aramaic scholar, who considered the *Kabbalah* the single most important source for recovering the ancient wisdom (*prisca sapientia*) that God imparted orally to Adam before the fall. This is the message of the frontispiece, which shows the *Kabbalah* as a beautiful maiden running towards the palace of secret wisdom with the keys to both the Old and the New Testaments hanging from her wrist.

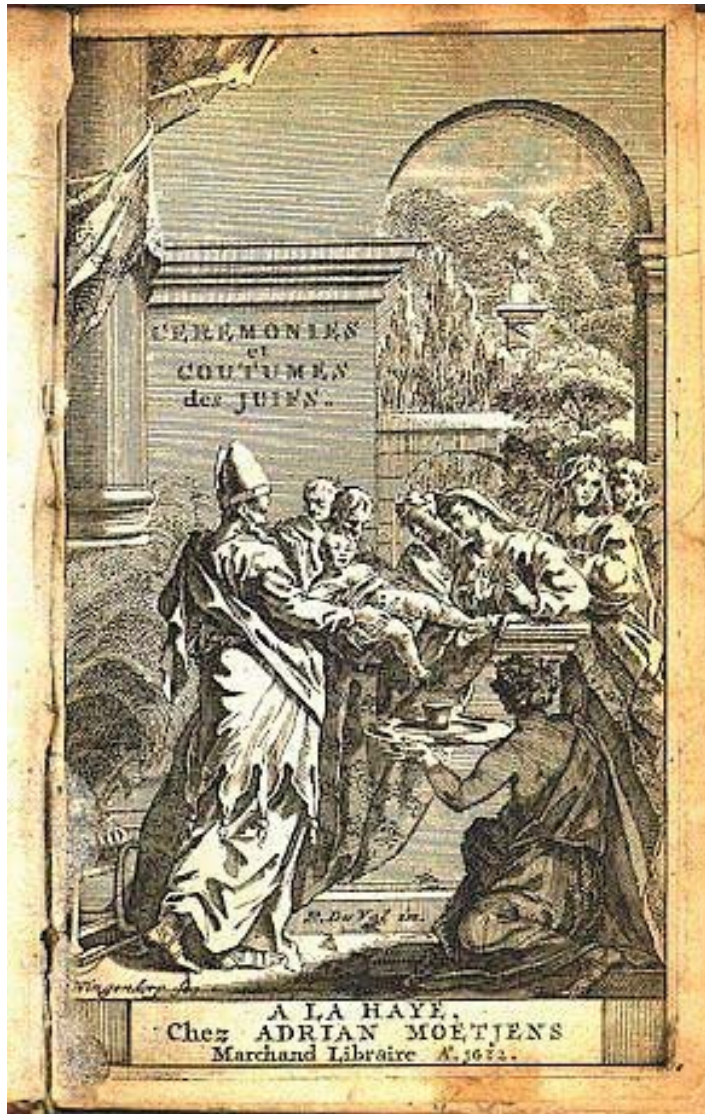
#### Allison Coudert

*Opposite:* Volume 1: Frontispiece allegory showing Kabbalah running towards the Palace of Secret Wisdom with the keys to the Old and New Testaments.





Opposite: *Kabbala denudata*, volume 2 (1678): Frontispiece/amulet AT-BaSh acrostic. "The door opens and evil shall not enter."

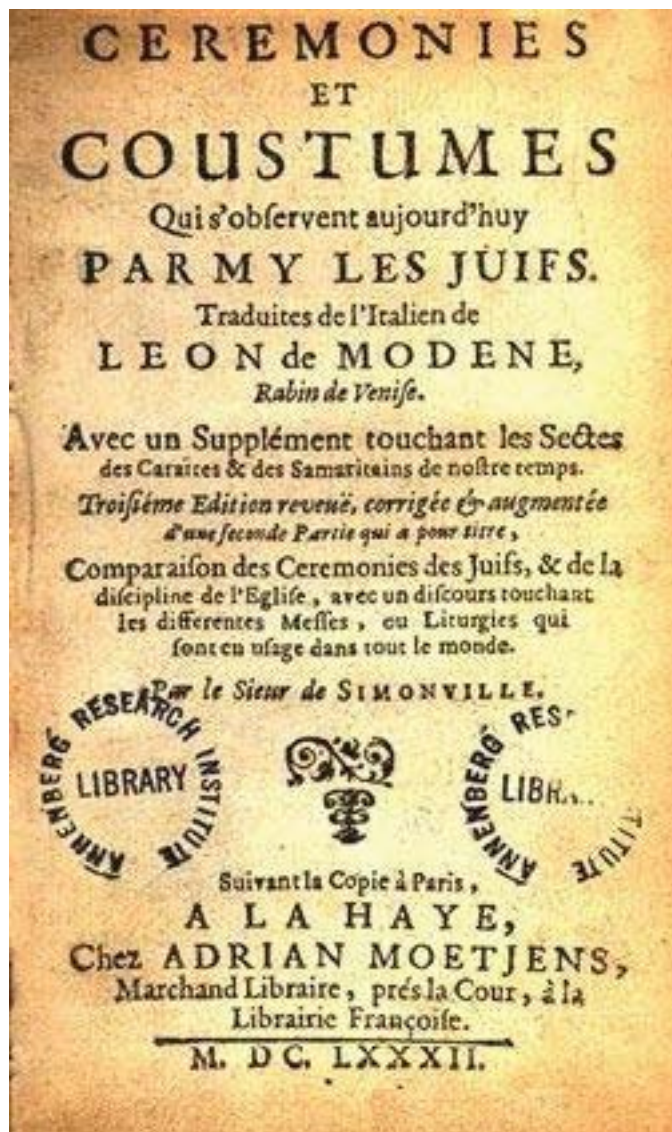


Leone Modena, 1571–1648. **Ceremonies et coutumes qui s’observent aujourd’huy parmy les juifs ... avec un suppliment touchant les sectes des Caraotes & des Samaritains de nostre temps.** A la Haye : Chez Adrian Moetjens, marchand libraire, 1682.

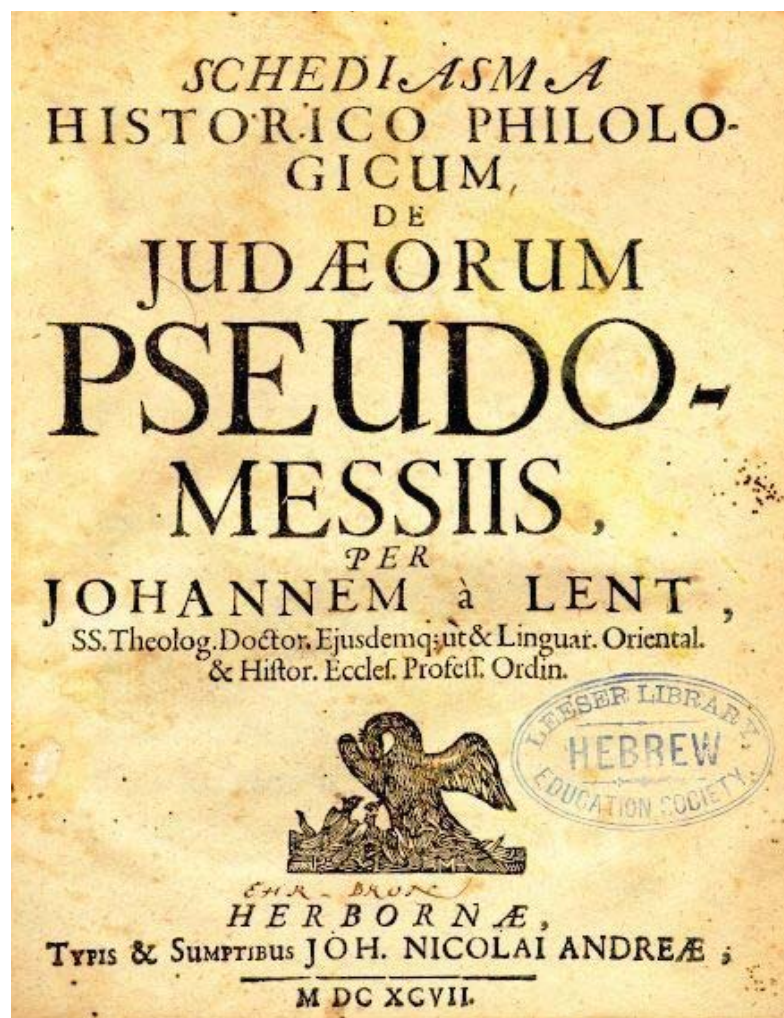
Leone (Yehudah Arie) Modena’s **I riti degli Ebrei** ..., written for the King of England about 1617, and published in Paris (without its author’s permission) in 1637 by the Christian Hebraist Jacques Gaffarel, is the first ethnographic description of Jewish customs written by a Jew in the modern times, with a Christian readership in mind. The **Riti** were translated into various languages, and remained for a long time one of the most important sources of knowledge about Judaism. The great Christian Hebraist Richard Simon translated it into French in 1674, and in a second edition added his own treatise comparing, from a chronological as well as structural viewpoint, Judaism and Christianity.

**Guy Stroumsa**

*Opposite:* Frontispiece engraving depicting circumcision of Christ.



Opposite: Leone Modena, *Ceremonies et coutumes* ... (1682), titlepage.

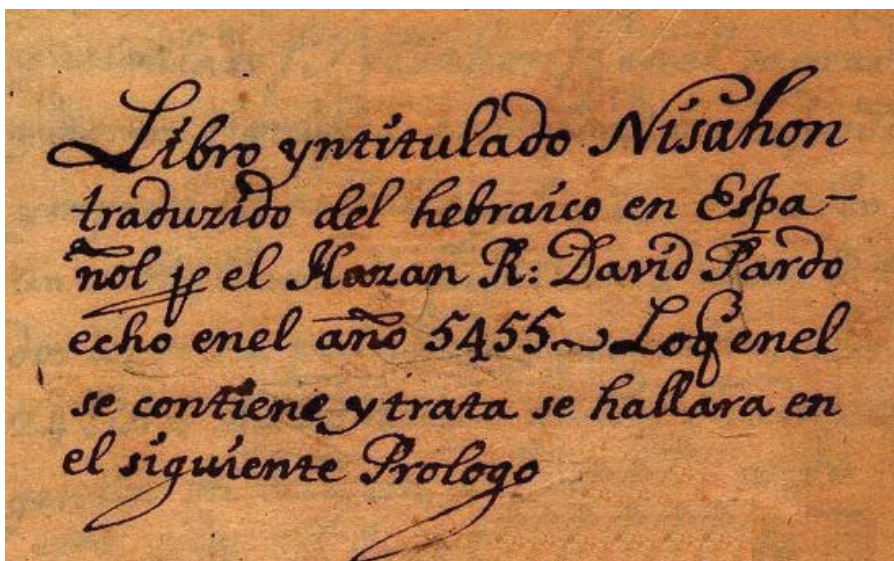


Johann von Lent. **Schediasma historico philologicum de Judæorum pseudo-messiis.** Herbornae : Typis & sumptibus Joh. Nicolai Andree, 1697.

Johann Lent was a doctor of Theology and professor of Oriental Languages and Church history in the Protestant Academy of Herborn, Germany. The book, *An off-hand historical study of Jewish false Messiahs*, was first published in 1683 and is quite rare, as is the second 1697 edition, which the Center for Judaic Studies library possesses. The book consists of a long list of Jewish Pseudo-Messiahs, beginning with Bar Khokhba, and including two chapters (pp. 76–102) on Sabbatai Zevi, chapters which are largely based on the earlier accounts of Paul Rycaut and Thomas Coenen. It ends with a short report of the Pseudo-Messiah Mordechai from Eisenstadt who appeared in 1682. The book was quite influential and often quoted in Christian-Jewish polemics of the following generation.

Michael Heyd

*Opposite:* Titlepage. The printer's mark depicts a pelican nursing its young with its own blood, a popular allegory, as related by the Physiologus, for *Agapj Christi*.

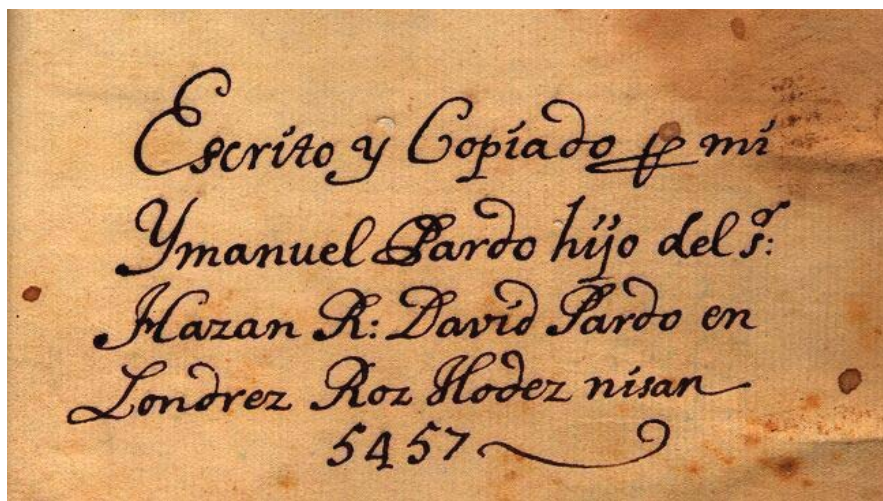


Yom Tov Lipmann Mülhausen, 14th/15th cent. **Libro yntitulado Nisahon, traduzido por David Pardo.** London, 1697

**Sefer ha-Nitsahon** (*Book of Contention* or *Victory*) is a polemical work against Christianity and Jewish heresies written by Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Mülhausen (d. 1421) around 1401, probably in Prague or its vicinities. Lipmann travelled to other places in Bohemia and in the Rheinland as well. On several occasions he was involved in religious disputations, defending his faith and his community against Christian attacks. He is one of the first in medieval German Jewry to study philosophy and Kabbalah along with rabbinical scholarship. Although the author of many treatises — halakhic, liturgical, and hermeneutical — he is known to posterity mainly for his polemical **Sefer ha-Nitsahon**.

The book gained a wide circulation among Jewish readers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Forty-five manuscripts of the book survived — a very impressive number even by Christian standards. The work attracted Christian attention as well: Johann Pfefferkorn considered it to be the ultimate anti-Christian text and a major obstacle on the Jews' way to conversion. In the list of confiscated Hebrew books in Frankfurt for 1509, the municipal notary recorded a declaration the Jews had made concerning the **Sefer ha-Nitsahon**: *Kein haben wir davon* ("We have no copies of it"). For many years Christian polemicists worked in vain to lay their hands on manuscripts of the book. In 1644, Theodor Hackspan, a professor of Hebrew at the University of Altdorf, succeeded in getting a copy, and he sat down a few of his Hebrew students to copy the book, and soon the *editio princeps* came into being. The Hebrew knowledge of the scribes was far from perfect, and the edition is full of mistakes.

Soon after becoming available, sections of the book were translated into Latin, and a full translation appeared in 1645. In 1674 Johann Christoph Wagenseil succeeded Hackspan as Professor of Languages in Altdorf, and during the same year he published his **Correctiones Lipmannianae** according to two other manuscripts he managed to obtain. In his famous collection of Jewish polemical literature, the **Tela ignea Satanae** ('Satan's Fiery Arrows'), Wagenseil



included responses to the **Sefer ha-Nitsahon**. Three Jewish editions appeared in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A critical edition is in preparation by Ora Limor and Israel Yuval.

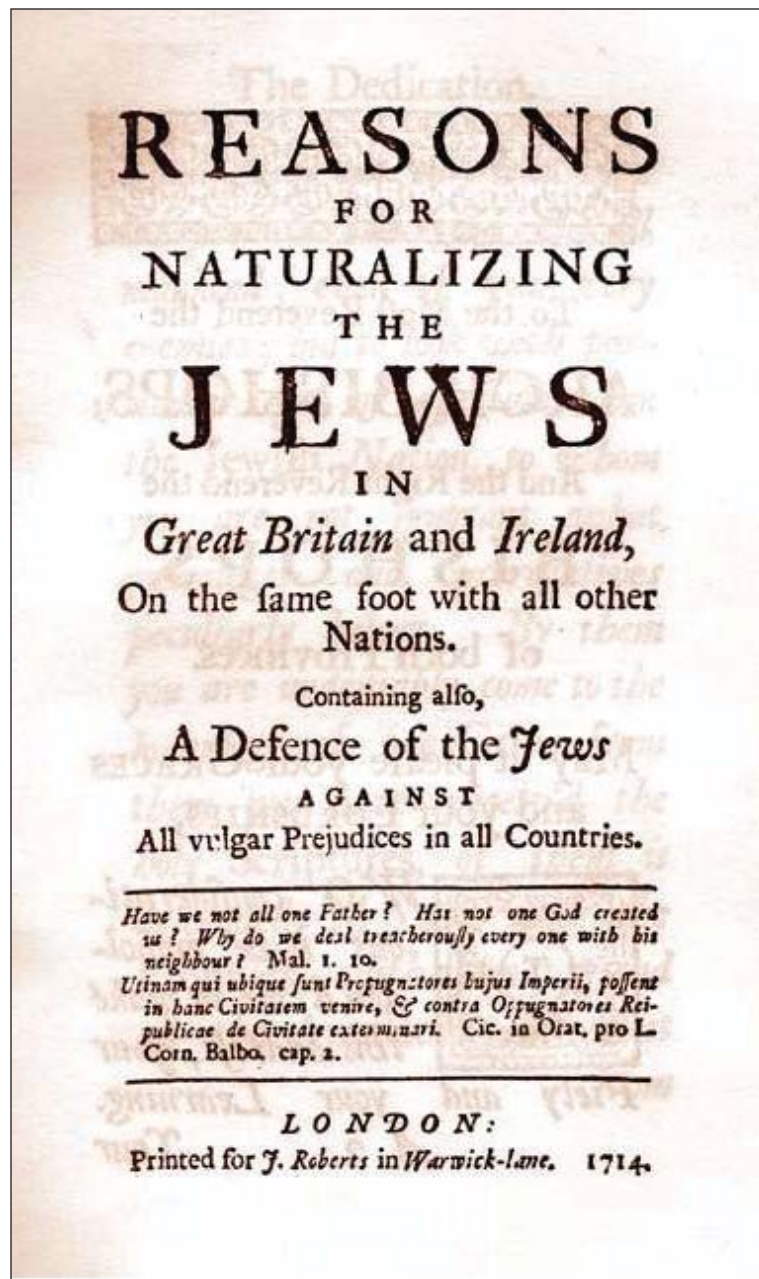
According to the title and to the information given in the translator's introduction, the manuscript here on display contains a Spanish translation of **Sefer ha-Nitsahon** by R. Yom-Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen. The translation was made by the cantor David Prado in London, in 1695. In fact the manuscript contains two different works, neither of them being Lipmann's **Nitsahon**. The first is the **Nitsahon Vetus**, i.e. the older **Nitsahon**, an anthology of Jewish Ashkenazic anti-Christian polemic, probably written in Germany at the end of the 13th century, with several additions (some of which may have been derived from Lipmann's **Nitsahon**). The order of chapters does not always correspond to the known versions of the **Nitsahon Vetus**. It is impossible to tell whether the changes were made by the translator himself. It is also hard to tell why he ascribed the **Nitsahon Vetus** to Lipmann Mühlhausen, but it would seem that the confusion between these two works was quite common.

The second work in this manuscript, also translated by Prado, is the **Sefer Toledoth Yeshu**, a Jewish counter-biography of Jesus, which was very popular among Jews in Early Modern and in Modern Europe.

#### Israel Yuval, Ora Limor

*Preceding page:* Detail of opening title.

*Opposite:* Detail of colophon.



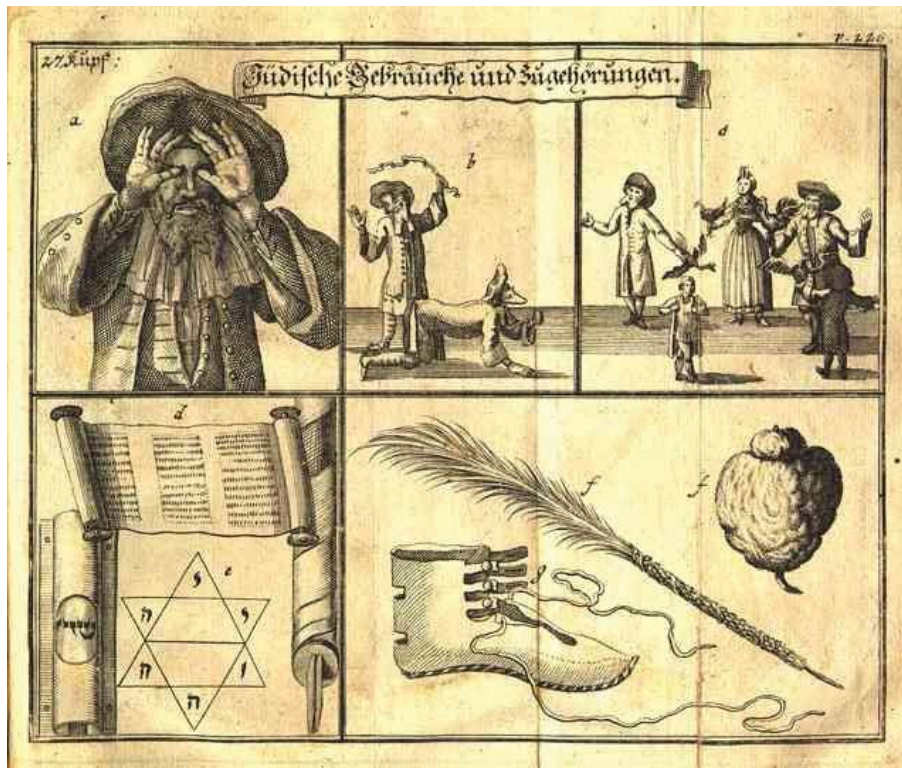
John Toland, 1670–1722. **Reasons for naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland.** Reprint of London, 1714 ed. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1963.

John Toland (1670–1722), Deist philosopher and political writer, was born a Catholic in Londonderry and converted to Protestantism at the age of 16. His embrace of religious toleration, in tension with his powerful animus toward Catholicism, underlay Toland's 1714 pamphlet advocating the naturalization of foreign-born Jews in Great Britain and Ireland.

Historians have traditionally viewed Toland's **Reasons** as a “harbinger” of later Jewish emancipatory ideology. But the work is best seen as a Philo-Judaic tract promoting the author's scheme to employ Jewish colonists as a political and military wedge against Catholic Jacobite insurrection. Jewish naturalization and colonization were in line with Toland's depiction of contemporary Jews as inheritors of the civic and military virtues embedded in the ancient “*Republica Mosaica*,” a model of ancient constitutionalism marked by natural law and religious freedom for non-Jews (outlined in greater detail in Toland's 1718 **Nazarenus or Jewish, Gentile and Mohametan Christianity**). Toland produced his **Reasons** at a moment (the Autumn of 1714) when Whigs had grown euphoric over the recent succession to the British Crown of the Protestant Hanoverians, placing the Tory Party on the defensive and offering — or so Toland believed — a unique opportunity for expanded religious freedom. While Toland's **Reasons** exerted no immediate impact on the status of Jews in Britain, it can be viewed as marking a high point in the intellectual history of a genuine Philo-Semitism, one premised on the presumed historical virtues of Jews and Judaism while eschewing all Christian missionary intent.

Jonathan Karp

*Opposite:* Titlepage.



Paul Christian Kirchner. **Jüdisches Ceremoniel, oder, Beschreibung dererjenigen Gebräuche.** Nürnberg : Verlegts Peter Conrad Monath, 1724.

This book is an example of a specific genre in the writings of Christian Hebraists, which includes works that describe the customs, ceremonies and rituals of contemporary Jews. Like many writers of these books, Kirchner was a convert. Beside this book he published a work in 1719 that was aimed to help with the conversion of the Jews, entitled **Lehar'ot or emet la-yehudim**. The **Jüdisches Ceremoniel** was originally published in 1717 and later on was revised and enlarged by Sebastian Jacob Jungendres (1684–1765). According to Jungendres the original work by Kirchner was inaccurate and biased because he wanted to prove the evilness of the Jews. Another addition to this imprint are 27 engravings that portray various customs and ceremonies held by the Jews. The book was published at least eleven times between 1717 and 1734, including a Dutch translation, and was reprinted in 1974 by Olms and in 1999 by the Reprint-Verlag, Leipzig.

#### Yaakov Deutsch

*Opposite:* Insert, depicting (clockwise from left): Kohen performing Priestly Benediction; flagellation; Kappara ceremony; lulav and etrog, “halitsah” boot for levirate divorce; Torah, mezuzah, and “Seal of Solomon.”





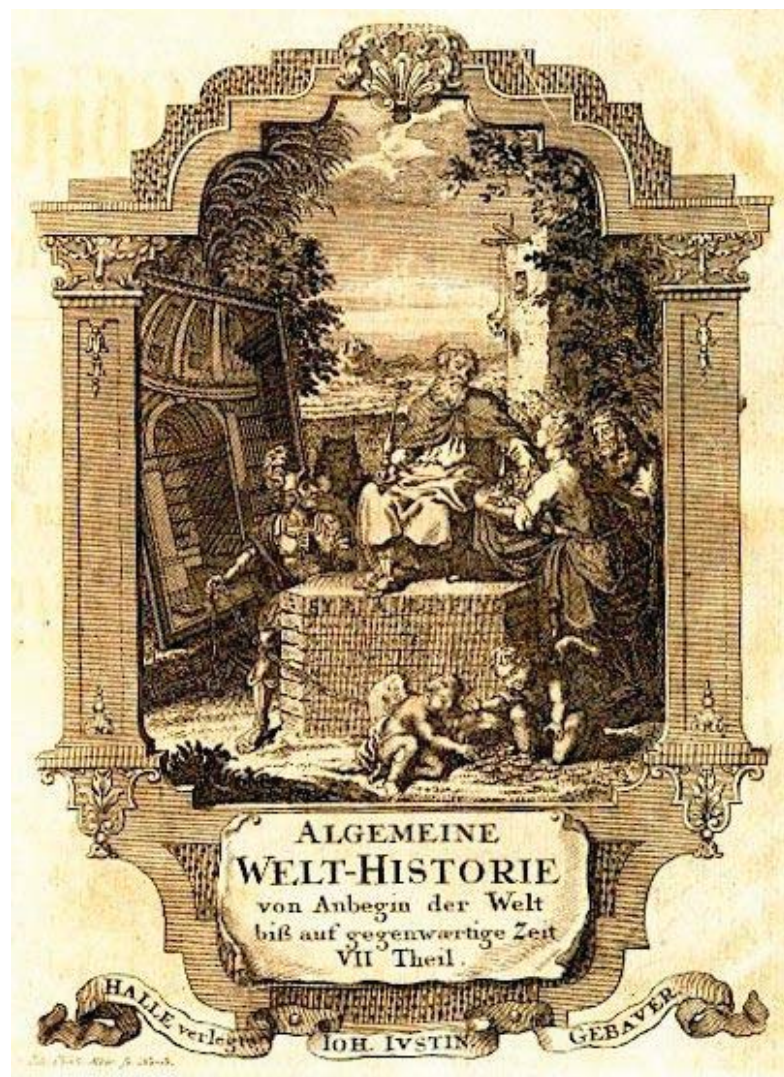
Selden, John, 1584–1654. **Joannis Seldeni jurisconsulti Opera omnia, tam edita quam inedita / collegit ac recensuit, vitam auctoris, praefationes, & indices adjecit, David Wilkins.** Londini : Typis Guil. Bowyer, impensis J. Walthoe, 1726.

John Selden (1584–1654), the most learned person in England in the seventeenth century, was a lawyer, an antiquarian, a member of Parliament, and the greatest expert of his day on British legal matters. A polymath, he also wrote a half dozen rabbinic works, some of them immense, which respect, to an extent remarkable for the times, the self-understanding of Judaic exegesis. **De Diis Syris** (1617), an analysis of the pagan gods of the Hebrew Bible, constitutes a pioneering study of cultural anthropology and comparative religion. Its literary influence extends to the work of Ben Jonson and to the list of pagan gods in John Milton's *Nativity Ode* and Book 1 of *Paradise Lost*. **De Successionibus** (1631) addresses the question of intestate succession according to Jewish law. **De Successione in Pontificum Ebraeorum** (1638) explores the laws relating to the ancient Jewish priesthood. **Uxor Ebraica** (1646) analyzes the theory and practice of the Jewish laws of marriage and divorce, which Selden admired. On the very last page he suggests parenthetically (because he loved to bury the lead) that the canon law of divorce still in force in England be reformed and brought more closely into conformity with Jewish law. Selden's motto was "Above all things, liberty," and **De Synedriis Veterum Ebraeorum** (1650–53), a study of the Sanhedrin written shortly after the execution of Charles I, contains a remarkable Maimonidean discussion of whether that court could try kings not only for crimes like murder that anyone could commit but also for those which only kings could commit. Occupying 1,132 huge folio columns in the *Opera*, **De Synedriis** deals primarily with the constitution of Jewish courts, including the Sanhedrin, which, as Selden notes pointedly, was not priestly in composition. Its understated argument is thoroughly Erastian, demonstrating that matters at present under the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts in England were in ancient times decided by Jewish courts that could well be called secular. **Se**

**Jure Naturali et Gentium** (1640), surely one of the most genuinely philosemitic works produced by a Christian Hebraist in early modern Europe. Selden accepts the universal validity of the *praecepta Noachidarum*, the seven Noachide laws, which for him constitute the law of nature. Selden bases his theory on the Talmud, which for him records a set of doctrines far older than classical antiquity. Natural law consists not of innate rational principles that are intuitively obvious but rather specific divine pronouncements uttered by God at a point in historical time. Selden discusses the rabbinic identification of natural law with the divinely pronounced Adamic and Noachide laws, considered by rabbinic tradition as the minimal moral duties enjoined upon all of humankind. While he accepts the authority of this non-biblically rabbinic law, he dismisses the biblical ten commandments as of purely Jewish interest. Readers of every stripe made amazingly different uses of Selden's scholarship in **De Jure**, which looks back to Grotius and forward to Hobbes, and influences readers as different as Isaac Newton, the zealously antiprelatical Independent Henry Burton (one of the Tower-Hill martyrs shorn of his ears by Archbishop Laud), the Presbyterian John Lightfoot (himself a Hebraist, he called "the great Mr. Selden the Learned man upon the earth"), the proto-deist John Toland, and Bishop Stillingfleet. The last volume of the **Opera** contains Selden's work in English, including his famous *Table-Talk*. According to David Ogg, Selden sought "not fame but truth in an erudition more vast than was ever garnered by any other human mind."

### Jason Rosenblatt

*Preceding page:* Frontispiece portrait of John Selden.



Sigmund Jakob Baumgarten, 1706–1757. **Algemeine Welt-Historie von Anbegin der Welt bis auf gegenwärtige Zeit (Universal history, from the earliest account of time)**. Halle : Johann Justinus Gebauer, 1744–[18--].

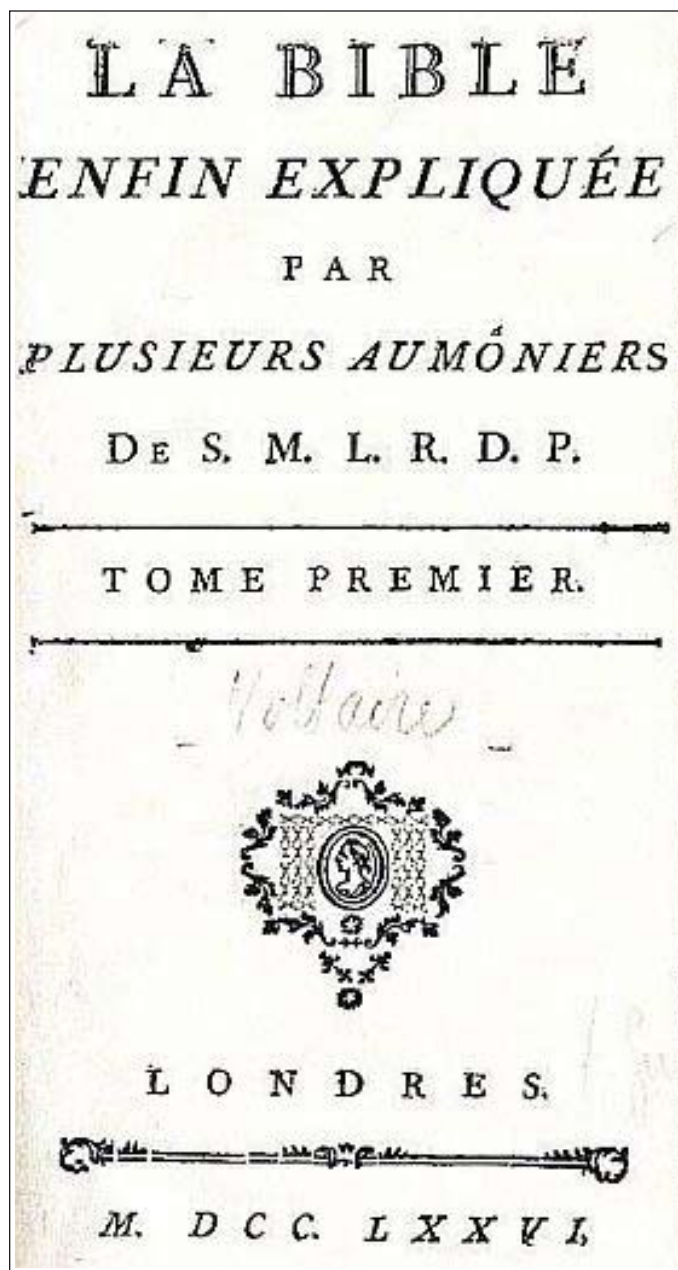
The **Algemeine Welthistorie**, published by the theologians and historians Sigmund Baumgarten and Johann Semler in Halle between 1744 and 1765, provides an elaborate account of Jewish history from antiquity to the end of the seventh century. This encyclopedic and multi-volume universal history represents a truly unique moment in the development of modern historiography, since before the rise of modern historicism, historic accounts of the world restricted the Jewish past to the Biblical period.

**Nils Roemer**

*Opposite:* Frontispiece, Allegory of History.



*Opposite:* Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten, *Allgemeine Welt-Historie*, volume 7 (1748), titlepage.



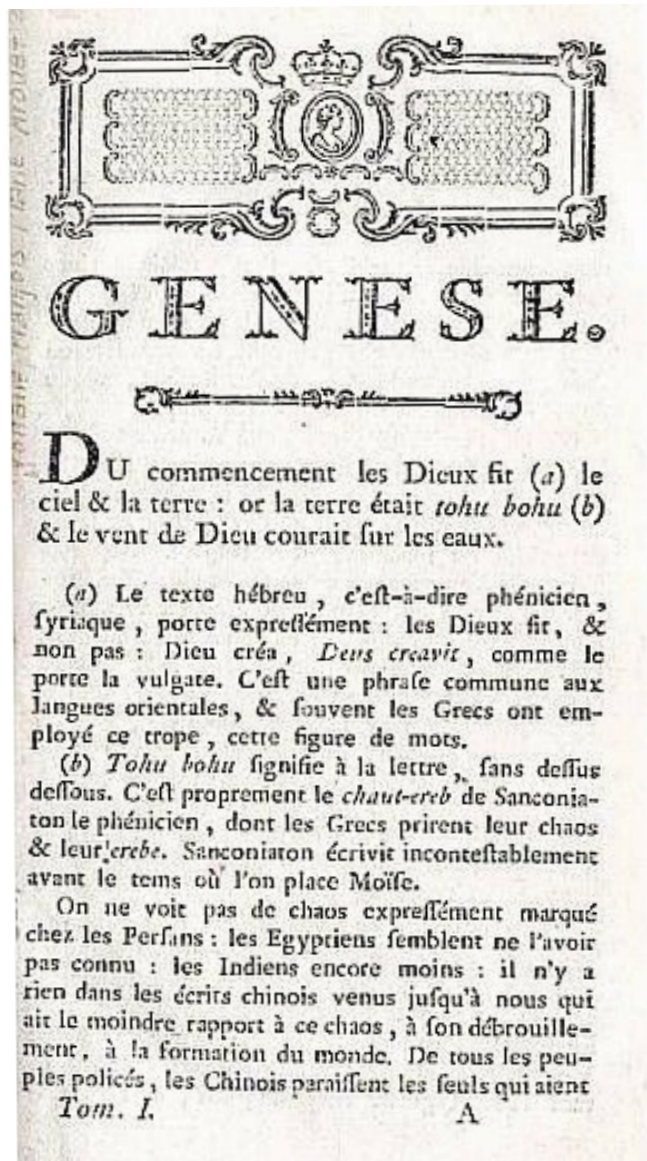
Voltaire, 1694–1778. **La Bible enfin expliquée par plusieurs aumôniers de S. M. L. R. D. P.** Londres [i.e. Genève], 1776.

Voltaire's hostility towards Judaism is notorious. He repeatedly returns in his extremely prolific writings to a cluster of favorite themes: the absurdity and immorality of the Old Testament and the primitivism, historical insignificance and arrogance of the Jewish people. Although his aphoristic style of writing contrasts markedly with the cautious erudition of Christian Hebraism, his anti-Judaic polemics were nonetheless to a large extent based on his own engagement with, and critique of, this tradition. In **La Bible enfin expliquée** (1776) — one of his last major works — Voltaire put forward his most systematic satire of both Christian and Jewish biblical exegesis. His title is manifestly ironic: his concern is not to 'explain' the Bible, but systematically to expose its absurdities, contradictions and ethical shortcomings. Focusing almost exclusively on the Pentateuch, he seldom misses an opportunity to highlight instances of Jewish barbarism or hypocrisy. These textual attacks are at times explicitly broadened out to apply to Jews of all eras: 'still in our times', he writes, 'the people of this nation are extremely dirty and stinking.'

This text is perhaps the most rhetorically powerful statement of the repudiation of Hebraist scholarship by the *philosophes* of the High Enlightenment. Voltaire and his allies regarded rabbinic literature as the very quintessence of obscurantism and pedantry, and as such the defining polar opposite of their own self-consciously engaged intellectual values.

Adam Sutcliffe

*Opposite:* Titlepage.



Above: Voltaire, *La Bible enfin expliquée* (1776), beginning of commentary on Genesis.

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