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Stephen G. Burnett

*University of Nebraska - Lincoln*, [sburnett1@unl.edu](mailto:sburnett1@unl.edu)

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## The Strange Career of the *Biblia Rabbinica* among Christian Hebraists, 1517–1620

Stephen G. Burnett

*University of Nebraska–Lincoln*

On 18 April 1572, Luis de Leon underwent interrogation, yet again, by officials of the Spanish Inquisition. He was questioned concerning his use of the Rabbinic Bible that was found in his library. Leon asserted that he had never read the Jewish Bible commentaries printed in it. He also expressed some surprise that they considered it a forbidden book, since there was a copy in the Salamanca University Library and many Spanish scholars owned it as well. He himself received his copy as a gift from the late Archbishop of Valencia.<sup>1</sup> The confusion of Luis de Leon’s interrogators is easily understood, however, since the book was printed in Hebrew type and intended primarily for Jewish readers. Yet Leon’s comment raises a further question: why did he and his fellow Spanish Hebraists, let alone Hebraists in other parts of Europe, consider this book so valuable for their studies?

The Rabbinic Bible became a standard reference tool, above all for Protestant Hebraists during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It contained not only the Hebrew Bible text, but also Aramaic-language Targums (periphrastic translations of the biblical text, mostly dating from before 500) and Jewish biblical commentaries written between ca. 1100 and 1500. To use these works required that a Christian Hebraist know not only the language of the Bible, but also Targumic Aramaic and medieval Hebrew, which was rather different from biblical or mishnaic Hebrew. For Christian scholars who mastered these languages and were able to read these different texts, the Rabbinic Bibles offered information and insights from Jewish tradition

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<sup>1</sup> Franz H. Reusch, *Luis de Leon und die spanische Inquisition*, Weber, Bonn, 1873, p. 49, summarizing *Collección de Documentos Inéditos para La Historia de España*, vol. 10, Kraus Reprints, 1964, pp. 196-197. The book itself was described in the latter as “Biblia hebrea y caldea con los comentarios de los hebreos en su lengua ....”

concerning the linguistic, historical, and exegetical features of particular biblical passages. Sometimes these texts provide greater clarity when a biblical passage was difficult to interpret, but at others both the Targums and the commentators suggested different, often conflicting answers to interpretive puzzles. Whatever answers they did provide, however, the books were written by Jewish authors and intended for Jewish readers. Their comments presupposed that Judaism was the one true religion and at times included critical remarks about Christianity. They could make rather bracing reading for the unwary.

In this essay I will describe the features of the first two editions of the Rabbinic Bible, trace their use by Christian Hebraists of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and consider the use of Jewish Bible commentaries by Christian Hebraists, focusing on Sebastian Münster's annotations to his famous *Hebraica Biblia* (1534-1535, 1546). Münster's annotations are an important witness to his experience as a reader of the *Biblia Rabbinica*, and they also served as a Latin language digest of information found there for those whose Hebrew was not good enough to read it at first hand. In the final section I will reflect on the significance of the *Biblia Rabbinica* as a source of Jewish scholarly opinion for Christian scholars, which also exposed them to critical questions from Jewish interlocutors as they read these texts.

The Rabbinic Bible as a genre was invented by Daniel Bomberg of Venice, but the first two printings were the work of two gifted editors: Felix Praetensis and Jacob ben Hayyim. In partnership with Praetensis and Peter Lichtenstein, Daniel Bomberg applied to the Venetian Senate for a printing privilege in October 1515, informing it that among his proposed projects would be "a Hebrew Bible, in Hebrew letters, both with and without the Aramaic Targum and with Hebrew commentaries." The first of these works was a Bible with the Targum and commentaries printed around the Hebrew Bible text, the first edition of the Rabbinic Bible.<sup>2</sup>

The Rabbinic Bible of 1517 was a departure from previous manuscript and printed versions of the Hebrew Bible both in its physical form and in its bold claim to greater textual authenticity.<sup>3</sup> While it was not uncommon for manuscript copies of the Pentateuch to include either the Targum or Rashi's biblical commentary, or sometimes both, Bomberg provided them

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2 David Stern, "The Rabbinic Bible in its Sixteenth Century Context," in: *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Adam Shear and Joseph Hacker, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2011.

3 I have derived my discussion on the significance of Felix Praetensis and Jacob ben Hayyim's work as editors primarily from Jordan S. Penkower's outstanding work "Jacob ben Hayyim and the Rise of the *Biblia Rabbinica*," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1982.

for the entire Bible for the first time. During the Middle Ages, Hebrew Bibles were sometimes copied together with commentaries, but commentaries were most commonly copied in separate volumes called *kuntrasim* rather than in the margins of Bibles.<sup>4</sup> Jewish Biblical commentaries printed before 1500 were produced more often than not as separate volumes as well.<sup>5</sup> The 1517 Bible contained Rashi's commentary on the entire Bible together with David Kimhi on most of the prophetic books and some of the writings, including the Psalms.<sup>6</sup> By bundling these features together in a single work, Bomberg offered Jewish readers what amounted to a mini-library of biblical interpretation.

From the perspective of biblical studies, the most important feature of this work was not its innovative physical form, but its precedent-setting Hebrew Bible text. Felix Praetensis was a Jewish convert who became an Augustinian friar but who had forgotten none of his Hebrew editing skills. In his letter of dedication to Pope Leo X, he boasted:

Many manuscript Bibles have hitherto been in circulation, but their splendor was diminished by having almost as many errors as words in them

**Table 1.** Biblical Commentaries in the 1517 Rabbinic Bible<sup>7</sup>

Commentator	Biblical Books
Rashi = R. Solomon b. Isaac	Pentateuch, Five Scrolls, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles
David Kimhi	Former, Latter Prophets, Psalms
David ibn Yahya, <i>Qab ve-Naqi</i>	Proverbs
Moses b. Nahman = Nahmanides	Job
Abraham Farissol	Job
Levi b. Gerson	Daniel
Simeon Darshan	Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles (with Rashi commentary)

4 David Stern, "The Hebrew Bible in Europe in the Middle Ages: A Preliminary Typology," *Jewish Studies: An Internet Journal*, <http://www.biu.ac.il/JS/JSIJ> (forthcoming in 2010 or 2011).

5 Herbert C. Zafren, "Bible Editions, Bible Study and the Early History of Hebrew Printing," *Eretz Israel*, vol. 16, 1982, pp. 240-251.

6 Stern, "Rabbinic Bible."

7 See Moritz Steinschneider, *Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, Kestnbaum & Company/Martino Fine Books, New York, n.d., pp. 6-7, no. 28. (hereafter abbreviated StCB) and A. E. Cowley, *A Concise Catalogue of the Hebrew Printed Books in the Bodleian Library*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971, p. 76.

and nothing was more needed than restitution to their true and genuine purity. That this result has been attained by us will be understood by all who read our edition.<sup>8</sup>

Praetensis was the creator of the first Hebrew Bible *edition*, a printed text based upon more than one Hebrew Bible manuscript.<sup>9</sup> Jordan Penkower's exhaustive analysis of the Hebrew Bible text indicates that it, like the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (first released for sale in 1522), was probably based upon accurate Spanish manuscripts. With Bomberg's permission and assistance, Praetensis collected manuscripts and produced what he believed was the most accurate text of the Bible.<sup>10</sup> Praetensis apparently also used some early printed Hebrew Bibles at times in the vocalization of the text and when he added accents.<sup>11</sup>

While unquestionably the first Rabbinic Bible was produced primarily with Jewish customers in mind, Bomberg also sought to market the work to Christians. The clearest evidence for this was Praetensis's Latin letter of dedication to Pope Leo X, which was bound with some copies of the work. Praetensis explained that the work contained "the ancient Hebrew and Chaldee Schola, to wit the common Targum and that of Jerusalem. These contain many obscure and recondite mysteries, not only useful but necessary to the devout Christian."<sup>12</sup> He concluded, "Accept this, therefore, with that favourable countenance which you have been wont to show to me and my works, and continue to extend that favour and protection which you have hitherto shown to literary and artistic studies."<sup>13</sup> While certainly conventional and appropriate for a writer seeking legitimacy and acceptance for a new, potentially controversial work, Praetensis' appeal for favor and protection may have carried with it a hope for financial support as well. Grendler asserts that Praetensis' expectations may not have been quite so lofty.

The combination of a dedicatory letter to the pope ... and papal privilege indicates that the papacy had some knowledge of Fra Felice's biblical scholarship and approved, or at least did not object to being associated with it."<sup>14</sup>

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8 Christian D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the massoretico-critical edition of the Hebrew Bible*, Trinitarian Bible Society, London, 1897, pp. 945-946.

9 Penkower, "Jacob ben Hayyim," p. I.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. I-II.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. XXXVI.

12 Ginsburg printed both the original text and his English translation in *Introduction*, p. 946.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Paul F Grendler, "Italian Biblical Humanism and the Papacy, 1515-1535," in *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Erika Rummel, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition (Book 9), Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 227-276; here p. 230.

Praetensis was not the first Hebraist, nor would he be the last, to seek such tangible help from Pope Leo X, who was known to be sympathetic to Hebrew scholarship.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from its Latin letter of dedication, the 1517 Bible contained further evidence that Bomberg intended it for sale to Christians in the form of a modest number of helps that would be useful for a Christian reader. First, Praetensis added chapter divisions based upon those in the Vulgate. The earliest Hebrew Bible printings, including the Soncino Bibles that were used by both Luther and Pellican, contained none of these at all.<sup>16</sup> Following Christian practice, Praetensis also divided the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles into two parts each. For benefit of Jewish readers he explained (in Hebrew), “Here non-Jews (ha-lo’azim) begin the second book of Samuel, which is the second book of Kings to them.”<sup>17</sup>

Although the first Rabbinic Bible would have been a forbidding book to many Christian Hebraists, it was purchased by a number of them. Georg Spalatin purchased a copy for Philip Melanchthon at the Leipzig fall book fair of 1518.<sup>18</sup> Johannes Reuchlin presumably obtained a copy of it around the same time. Before 1530, Martin Bucer, Sebastian Münster, and Johannes Oecolampadius all had copies of the work. At some point Paul Fagius also obtained a copy of the 1517 Rabbinic Bible. By the 1570s copies of the work were held by the university libraries of Jena, Strasbourg, Geneva, and Zurich.<sup>19</sup> Sebastian Münster would reprint it as the Hebrew text in his *Hebraica Biblia* (1534-1535), and he translated the accompanying Latin version of the Old Testament from it.<sup>20</sup> Bomberg also reprinted the Hebrew text of the 1517 Rabbinic Bible in quarto versions during 1517, in 1521, and in a revised form, reflecting to some extent changes made in the 1525 Rabbinic Bible, in 1525–1528.<sup>21</sup> These smaller Hebrew Bibles were a popular, less expensive alternative to Rabbinic Bibles among Christian customers. Ulrich Zwingli

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15 *Ibid.*, pp. 237, 241-242.

16 Jordan Penkower, “The Chapter Divisions in the 1525 Rabbinic Bible,” *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 48/3, 1998, pp. 350-374; here pp. 350-351.

17 Stern, “Rabbinic Bible.”

18 Philip Melanchthon to [Georg Spalatin], [Wittenberg, 24 September 1518], *Melanchthon Briefwechsel Kritische und Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Heinz Scheible, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1991ff, Teil 1, p. 75, lines 1-3 (letter no. 24).

19 See below, Appendix 1.

20 Joseph Prijs, *Die Basler Hebräischen Drucke* (1492-1866), ed. Bernhard Prijs, Urs Graf, Olten and Freiburg i. Br., 1964, pp. 67-70. no. 38.

21 Ginsburg, *Introduction*, pp. 951, 953-954, 975.

owned a Bomberg quarto Hebrew Bible, as did Wittenbergers Johann Agricola and perhaps Martin Luther.<sup>22</sup>

The greatest impact that the 1517 Rabbinic Bible had upon Reformation-era biblical scholarship was on the interpretation of the book of Psalms. Alone among the various printings of the Rabbinic Bible, it was the only one to feature David Kimhi's commentary on the book of Psalms. In seeking to interpret the Psalms, Kimhi did not shy away from controversy with Christians. Seeking perhaps to minimize conflict with the authorities, Bomberg (or Praetensis) carefully pruned the commentary of its most incendiary remarks, gathering them into a single folio leaf of text that could be added or left out of a copy of the Bible as the buyer wished.<sup>23</sup> Martin Bucer's commentary on the Psalms and Paul Fagius's two printings of Kimhi's Psalms commentary, one in the original Hebrew and the other a partial Latin translation, contain evidence that their copies contained the polemical additions, as did Sebastian Münster's copy.<sup>24</sup>

Seven years later Bomberg decided to publish a completely new edition of the *Biblia Rabbinica* in 1524-1525, appointing a new editor, Jacob ben Hayyim of Tunis, to complete the task. The new Bible was itself innovative in several important ways. First, Jacob ben Hayyim was more consistent in his editing of the text, employing only accurate Spanish manuscripts and following their conventions for vowel pointing and accentuation.<sup>25</sup> He was also an expert on the Masorah, the intricate apparatus that Jewish scribes used to ensure that biblical scrolls were accurately copied. Jacob ben Hayyim convinced Bomberg to buy a considerable number of masoretic manuscripts, allowing Jacob the chance to compile the most complete printed Masorah ever assembled. It included not only the cryptic masoretic notations present in the 1517 Bible, but also the *Masorah magna* above and below the biblical text, and the *Masorah finalis*, an enormous concordance

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22 Herbert Migsch, "Noch einmal: Huldreich Zwinglis hebräische Bibel," *Zwingliana*, vol. 36, 2009, pp. 41-48. Agricola's copy is on display in the Luther Halle in Wittenberg. On Luther's purported copy, see T. H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture in the British and Foreign Bible Society*, vol. 2, part 1: *Polyglots and languages other than English*, Martino, Mansfield Center, CT, 2005, pp. 705, no. 5086.

23 Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Jackie Feldman, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2007, pp. 149, 259, and n. 54

24 *Ibid.*, p. 259, n. 55. R. Gerald Hobbs, "Martin Bucer on Psalm 22: A Study in the Application of Rabbinic Exegesis by a Christian Hebraist," in *Histoire de l'exégèse au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Textes du Colloque International tenu à Genève en 1976*, ed. Olivier Fatio and Pierre Fraenkel, Droz, Genève, 1978, pp. 144-163.

25 Penkower, "Rabbinic Bible," p. 363.

of masoretic lists, detailing variations of all kinds within the Hebrew Bible text, especially in the use/non-use of vowel letters.<sup>26</sup> Jordan Penkower has argued that Jacob ben Hayyim believed that his text was superior to Praetensis for two reasons, first because the latter had not in fact produced a genuine and pure Hebrew Bible text, since it was deficient in its marking of unusual letters, the traditional variant readings indicated by qeri/ketiv notations, and in accentuation and punctuation.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, Jacob ben Hayyim believed that without the Masorah, the biblical text was incomplete. The masoretic apparatus contained its own teachings, including kabbalistic secrets, hidden within them.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to Jacob ben Hayyim's new recension of the Hebrew Bible text and masoras, the second edition of the *Biblia Rabbinica* provided a different set of biblical commentaries from the 1517 version.

Rashi's commentary was retained for most books, but Abraham Ibn Ezra's commentary replaced David Kimhi's for some of the prophetic books, and Kimhi's Psalms commentary was also left out of the second printing.

Bomberg's new edition of the Rabbinic Bible was well received by both Jewish and Christian readers. Bomberg reprinted this Rabbinic Bible with a

**Table 2.** Biblical Commentaries in the Second Rabbinic Bible (1524- 1525)<sup>29</sup>

Commentator	Biblical Books
Rashi = R Solomon b. Isaac	All books (except Proverbs, Job, Daniel)
Abraham ibn Ezra	All books( except Former prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Chronicles)
David Kimhi	Former Prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
Levi ben Gerson	Former Prophets, Proverbs, Job
Saadia Gaon	Daniel
Moses Kimhi	Proverbs, Ezra

26 See Aron Dotan, "Masorah," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, second edition, Macmillan Reference USA, Detroit, 2007, vol. 13, pp. 603-656, here pp. 614-620.

27 Penkower's analysis of the Hebrew text present in both Bibles reveals that the texts probably differ no more than one percent, and that both texts were largely based upon accurate Spanish manuscripts. "Jacob ben Hayyim," 363.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 362, and *idem*, "Jacob ben Hayyim," pp. IV-VII.

29 StCB, pp. 11-12, no. 52, and Cowley, *Concise Catalogue*, p. 77.

few changes in 1548, and it was again reprinted in 1568.<sup>30</sup> By this time the Rabbinic Bible had become a genre in and of itself and it has been reprinted by Jews ever since.<sup>31</sup> The 1525 Rabbinic Bible was especially popular among Christian Hebraists. Martin Bucer, Johannes Buxton, Johannes Drusius, Sebastian Münster, Conrad Pellican, Joseph Scaliger, Peter Martyr Vermigli, and Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter all owned copies.<sup>32</sup> By the 1570s so did the Geneva Academy, the Palatine Library in Heidelberg, the Strasbourg Academy library, and Jena University Library. Leiden University Library (1595) and the Bodleian Library (1605) would follow their example. Robert Estienne reprinted the Hebrew Bible text of the second Rabbinic Bible in his two widely circulated Hebrew Bible printings of 1539-1544 and 1544-1546.<sup>33</sup>

In perhaps the sincerest form of flattery of all, Johannes Buxtorf the elder devoted two years of labor to creating a new, improved, and thoroughly censored edition of the Rabbinic Bible, which he had printed in Basel (1618-1619) not only to sell to prospective Jewish customers, but above all to meet the needs of theology students. In his successful appeal to the Basel City Council, he and theology professor Sebastian Beck reported that second-hand copies of these Bibles now cost between 30 and 50 Gulden, far beyond the means of most scholars. A new edition was needed to ensure the “spread, proclamation and preservation of the Divine Word” for the benefit of both students and scholars so that they might “teach and explain the Word of God in its Original languages.”<sup>34</sup>

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30 This printing was largely destroyed during a campaign against Jewish books in Venice. See Paul F. Grendler, “The Destruction of Hebrew Books in Venice, 1568,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. 45, 1978, pp. 103-130, p. 113.

31 B. Barry Levy, “Rabbinic Bible, Mikra’ot Gedolot, and Other Great Books,” *Tradition*, vol. 25/4, 1991, pp. 65-81.

32 Max Engammare has recently analyzed Vermigli’s heavily annotated copies of both editions in his “Humanism, Hebraism, and Scriptural Hermeneutics,” in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James III, Brill, Leiden, 2009, pp. 161-174.

33 Basil Hall, “Biblical Scholarship: Editions and Commentaries,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3: *The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, ed. S. L. Greenslade, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1963), pp. 38-93, here p. 54.

34 Beck and Buxtorf argued that the Bible should be published, “das auch solche Bibel in ihren ursprünglichen Sprachen, zu mehrere fortpflanzung, erkundigung und erhaltung Göttliches worts, zu erbawung der in Gottswort studierenden und diser Sprachen liebhabenden Jugend, auch zu mehrer underrichtung aller deren gelehrten so Gottes wort in seinen Original und ursprünglichen Sprachen ... lehren und erklehren ....” Sebastian Beck and Johannes Buxton. *Bericht über das Biblisch Truck, so man jetzt und zu trucken begehret*, September 5, 1617, Basel Staatsarchiv, Handel und Gewerbe, JJJ 1.

Although Bomberg planned to sell at least some of his original Rabbinic Bibles to Christian customers, Buxtorf's "new and improved" version was intended primarily for Christian customers. This innovative Jewish book had undergone a transformation little short of baptism into a Christian standard work. The Hebrew text of the 1525 Rabbinic Bible, in part thanks to Buxtorf's efforts, became the standard text used by Christians, and it would remain so until the editors of the third edition of the *Biblia Hebraica* replaced it with Codex Leningradensis in 1937.<sup>35</sup>

These Rabbinic Bibles did not, however, merely adorn the shelves of these and other Hebraists. They were mined consistently for texts and insights that were transmitted through editions and translations of specific Jewish texts, biblical annotations, and of course translations of the Old Testament. It is striking how quickly Christian Hebraists recognized the value of reading Jewish biblical commentaries and how they came to expect that Christian exegetical work on the Hebrew Bible would reflect them at least to some degree. Matthaeus Goldhahn provided a list of common abbreviations used in Jewish Bible commentaries in his *Compendium Hebraeae Grammatices* (Wittenberg, 1523), indicating the early interest of Wittenberg Hebraists in the use of these commentaries.<sup>36</sup> In the same year Santes Pagninus published his Hebrew dictionary *Enchiridion expositionis vocabulorum Haruch* in Rome, also including a (slightly different) list of such abbreviations.<sup>37</sup>

Even armed with a list of Hebrew abbreviations and a good Hebrew dictionary, Christian Hebrew students for the most part could not be expected to go right to the Rabbinic Bible and learn by doing. Several of the most important Christian Hebraists reprinted the commentaries of David Kimhi, Abraham Ibn Ezra, and occasionally other commentators on shorter biblical books, often providing them with Latin translations and usually with explanatory notes to help students learn commentary Hebrew. In the second appendix I have listed the student editions that I have been able to find, the earliest by Protestants Sebastian Münster and Paul Fagius, followed later by Paris Catholic scholars François Vatable, Jean Cinquarbres, and Gilbert Géné-

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35 Karl Elliger, Wilhelm Rudolf, and Gérard E. Weil, "Praefationes Anglicae," in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ed. A. Alt, et. al, revised by Karl Elliger et al., Deutsche Bibelstiftung, Stuttgart, 1967-1977, pp. XI-XVIII, here pp. XI-XIII.

36 VD 16 G 2550. (VD 16 = Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts).

37 I examined the Bavarian State Library copy, Sig. 2 A Hebr. 182 Beibd.1.

brard, and their crypto-Protestant colleague Jean Mercier.<sup>38</sup> Since Hebrew students had similar problems learning targumic Aramaic, I have also included both student editions of various individual books of the Targum. To these we can add Immanuel Tremellius's Latin translation of the Minor Prophets.<sup>39</sup> Clearly there was a market for textbooks in commentary Hebrew and Targumic Aramaic among Christian students, books that would have prepared them to use Rabbinic Bibles.<sup>40</sup>

This expectation that scholars would use Jewish Bible commentaries is reflected in a variety of ways outside of exegetical literature. Conrad Gesner's *Bibliotheca universalis*, Luther's polemical works, and the Jesuit *Ratio studiorum* of 1599 all bear witness to the inclusion of these Jewish works in the exegetical toolbox of sixteenth-century Hebraists. Conrad Gesner's *Bibliotheca universalis* (1545-1555) served not only as a bibliographical checklist, but also as a kind of reader's guide to books in particular fields of study. In the third volume, which he devoted to theology, Gesner provides lists of biblical commentaries for each biblical book, and he included Jewish biblical commentaries as well. To give only one striking example, he listed Abraham Perizol (= Farissol) and Moses Nahmanides, Abraham ibn Ezra and Levi ben Gerson, all as commentators on the book of Job. The commentaries of Perizol and Nahmanides were printed in the first Bomberg Rabbinic Bible (1517), the latter two in the second edition (1524-1525).<sup>41</sup> Luther's *Defense of the Translation of the Psalms* (1531) contains a further admission of the value of Jewish commentaries, if a rather grudging one. He wrote, "... we have not acted out of a misunderstanding of the languages or out of igno-

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38 On Mercier, see Mireille Olmière and Pierre Pelissero, "Jean Mercier et sa Famille," in *Jean (c. 1525-1570) et Josias (c. 1560-1626) Mercier. L'amour de La philologie à la Renaissance et au début de l'âge classique*. ed. François Roudaut, Honoré Champion, Paris, 2006, pp. 17-22; pp.20-21.

39 Immanuel Tremellius. *Ionathae Filii Uzielis.. Antiquissimi & summae apud Hebraeos auctoritatis Chaldaea paraphrasis in duodecim minores Prophetas*. Agricola, Heidelberg, 1567. VD 16 ZV1791.

40 William Bedwell's unusual *Prophetia Hhobadyah ex fonte Hebraica et antiquissima Ionathanis paraphrasi Chaldaica: cum commentarijs trium doctissimorum & praecipuae inter Iudaeos auctoritatis rabbinorum, Schelomoh Yarchi [Rashi], Aben Hhezra [Ibn Ezra] & David Kimchi*, Richard Field, London, 1601, STC no. 2787.7 contains no Hebrew type at all, but is a Latin translation of the Targum and three Jewish biblical commentaries, presumably to aid beginning Hebrew students in learning to read the Rabbinic Bible.

41 Conrad Gesner, *Bibliotheca universalis sive catalogus omnium scriptorum locupletissimus ...*, vol. 2: *Pandectarum Uniuersalium*, part 2: *Partitiones Theologicæ, Pandectarum*, Froschouer, Zurich, 1549, fol. 23b. viewed at: <http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/199-4-theol-2f-2/start.htm>, accessed June 8, 2010.

rance of the rabbinic commentaries, but knowingly and deliberately.”<sup>42</sup> Jesuit professors of Sacred Scripture were allowed to quote Jewish commentators, but to do so sparingly and judiciously.

If there is anything in Hebraic rabbinical writings that can be applied to good effect, either in support of the common Latin edition, or in support of Catholic dogmas, he should apply it in such a way that it does not win them authority on that account, so that no one becomes well disposed toward them. This holds especially if they are among those who wrote after the times of Christ the Lord.<sup>43</sup>

The uneasiness of the framers of the *Ratio Studiorum* toward Jewish biblical commentators was not unique to them, nor were their fears that Christians might become too enamored by their interpretations.

Jewish biblical commentaries often provided considerable grammatical help and exegetical insight into the Hebrew Bible text, but they also necessarily reflected a Jewish milieu and their authors’ firm conviction that Judaism was the one true religion. David Kimhi’s commentaries provided the most challenging reading for Christians. Kimhi’s Psalms commentary, for example, contains these comments on Psalm 2:

And the Nazarenes interpret it of Jesus; and the verse that they adduce by way of proof and make a support of their error is really their stumbling block: it is The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son. For if they should say to you that he was the Son of God, answer that it is not proper to say “Son of God” in the manner of flesh and blood: for a son is of the species of his father. Thus it would not be proper to say, “This horse is the son of Reuben.”<sup>44</sup>

Even Johannes Buxton, a vigorous proponent of their use, asserted that they contained interpretations that were “perverse and false.”<sup>45</sup> When preparing his own edition of the *Biblia Rabbinica*, Buxtorf went through the biblical commentaries with a fine-toothed comb, removing any offensive passages

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42 Luther, *Ursachen des Dolmetschens*, WA 38:9, 9-14 = LW 35: 209. WA = *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Hennann Böhlau, Weimar, 1883ff, LW = *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav J. Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehman, 55 vols., Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, 1955-1986.

43 *The Ratio Studiorum: The Official Plan for Jesuit Education*, ed. and trans. Claude Pavor, Institute of Jesuit Sources, Saint Louis, 2005, p. 58.

44 David Kimhi, *The Longer Commentary of R. David. Kimhi on the First Book of the Psalms*, trans. R. G. Finch, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1919, p. 18 (Google Books).

45 Stephen G. Burnett: *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564-1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century*, Brill, Leiden, 1996, p.187.

or expressions that he could find, while retaining the parts he felt were useful to Christian readers.<sup>46</sup>

One of the best sixteenth-century examples of how Rabbinic Bibles had an impact upon the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament text is Sebastian Münster's *Hebraica Biblia* (1534-1535). In this work Münster provided not only the Hebrew Bible text, taken from the first *Biblia Rabbinica* of 1517, but also his own Latin translation and a digest of annotations taken mainly from the biblical commentaries of the two Rabbinic Bible editions.<sup>47</sup> Münster, in effect, provided a Latin-digest of Jewish commentaries for those whose Hebrew was not adequate for reading them directly, and a literal Latin translation to aid those who were still struggling to learn biblical Hebrew.

In his annotations on Genesis Münster focused upon the meanings of words and phrases, specifically the meanings of individual words and names, but he also discussed some theological points, especially those that emphasized the different interpretations that Jews and Christians offered for the same passage. When clarifying the meaning of particular words, Münster most commonly referred either to David Kimhi's Hebrew dictionary or to the Targum Onkelos, the latter printed in both editions of the Rabbinic Bible. For example, in Genesis 47:22 he translated *choq* as "portion," following *chulqa'* in Targum Onkelos.<sup>48</sup> In other passages where the dictionaries failed Münster, he quoted or summarized discussions he found in these commentaries. For example, when explaining Hagar's wondering words in Genesis 16:13, "You are the Almighty who sees," Münster quoted the interpretations of Rashi, Kimhi, and Ibn Ezra on how to explain it without preferring one above the other.<sup>49</sup> For Luther, one of Münster's most assiduous contemporary readers, the latter's apparent indifference to the actual meaning of the text provoked an outburst in his comments on the passage.

The blinded Jews ... have lost all knowledge of the subject matter and confine themselves to grammatical discussions of words. Rabbi Solomon

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-190.

<sup>47</sup> Münster used the second edition as well as other Jewish commentaries such as Abraham Saba's *Zeror ha-Mor* and Moses ben Nahman's Pentateuch Commentary. See Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "Sebastian Münster's Knowledge of and Use of Jewish Exegesis," in *idem*, *Studia Semitica*, vol. 1: *Jewish Themes*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 127-145, here pp. 130-133.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140 and *The Targum Onkelos to Genesis*, trans. and ed. Bernard Grossman, The Aramaic Bible, vol. 6, Michael Glazier, Wilmington, 1988, p. 154.

<sup>49</sup> Rosenthal, "Sebastian Münster's Knowledge," 140.

<sup>50</sup> Luther, LW, vol. 3, pp. 70-71.

[Rashi] thinks that Hagar's words show amazement at seeing the angel in the wilderness, since she has been accustomed to see angels in Abraham's home. Lyra follows the lead of Rabbi Kimalthi [sic] and translates thus: "I saw after my seeing," that is, "At first I did not recognize the angel but when he disappeared before my eyes then I realized for the first time that it was an angel." Thus because they have no knowledge of the subject matter, they confine themselves to the explanation of words, but they never arrive at the true meaning.<sup>50</sup>

Luther frequently complained that Jewish interpreters did not know the meanings of particular words in his Genesis lectures.<sup>51</sup>

An excellent example of a theologically charged passage is Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man in our own image and likeness." The commentators Münster quoted did not disagree that the subject of the verb was first person plural, only with the Christian supposition that the three members of the triune Godhead were in conversation with each other. Rashi, for example, wrote:

"Let us make man": From here we learn the humility of God. Since man was created in the image of the angels they were jealous of him. He, therefore, consulted them. Similarly, when he judges kings He consults his heavenly court. We find this concerning Achav [Ahab] when Michah [Micaiah] said to him, "I have seen God upon his throne and all the heavenly counsel standing by him on his right and on his left. .... Let us make man: Though they did not help in his creation, and may give the heretics [minim] an opportunity to rebel, nevertheless, Scripture does not refrain from teaching courtesy and the attribute of humility. That the greater one might consult and ask permission of a smaller one."<sup>52</sup>

While Christian readers could easily have found much the same information in Nicholas of Lyra's commentary at this point, being confronted with it, sometimes in the original language, made the experience of reading a much more confrontative one for Christian Hebraists, even at one remove from the Rabbinic Bible, filtered through Münster's annotations.

Within the Christian tradition it had long been understood not only that Christians and Jews did not interpret the texts of the Old Testament

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51 WA vol. 44. pp. 108, lines 28-29 (Gen. 32:32-33), vol. 44, pp. 197, lines 34ff (Gen 35:16), vol. 44, p. 438, lines 25ff (Gen 41:43), vol. 44, p. 459, line 27 (Gen. 42:2), vol. 44, p. 631, line 25 (Gen 45:25), vol. 44, p. 721, lines 32-33 (Gen 48:22). Luther's source of rabbinic knowledge in all cases was Münster's annotations. See Hans-Ulrich Delius, *Die Quellen von Martin Luthers Genesisvorlesung*, Chr. Kaiser Verlag, München, 1992, 45-46.

52 *The Metsudah Chumash/Rashi*, vol. 1: *Bereishis*, trans. Avrohom Davis, KTAV Publishing Houses, Hoboken, NJ, 1991, vol. I, pp.14-15. Cf. Münster, *Hebraica Biblia*, fol. 2a.

in similar ways, but that Christians had a duty to explain passages in such a way that Jews could understand their plausibility. Nicholas of Lyra, for example, “strove to demonstrate that it was possible to know Jesus as messiah from a Jewish perspective as well as a Christian one.”<sup>53</sup> At times, especially when polemics were written in the form of a dialogue, the presence of a Jewish interlocutor made the general sense of conflict over interpretation more palpable to readers. For Christian readers, the *Biblia Rabbinica*, and especially the Jewish biblical commentaries contained in them, were a rich source of information about the Hebrew Bible, but they also, I believe, were a source of interpretive conflict. Christian Hebraists who used them too enthusiastically could themselves be suspected of divided loyalties.

The question of how much credence Christians should give these commentaries was already a matter of private worry, if not public discussion, by the 1520s. Conrad Pellican was worried rather than encouraged by Bucer’s use of Jewish commentaries in the Psalms commentary.

I ... have read almost all of the first book of Hymns (Ps. 1-41), and am compelled to approve your effort and your judgment, save that I am pained by your labors in searching out and sifting the opinions of the rabbis, which you repeat time and again while they disagree with one another both in grammar and in sense.

He went on to comment that the Jews generally have some wisdom where it concerns the grammatical sense of the Bible, “though not always.”<sup>54</sup> In 1530, Luther made it clear that not only were he and his colleagues aware that Jewish biblical commentaries existed, but that they had consulted them in their work, but that they did so “deliberately,” and not carelessly.<sup>55</sup> Münster too declared that he was “careful” in his use of Jewish commentaries, but as we have seen, not careful enough for Luther’s taste. That Hebraists made “careful” use of these commentaries, however defined, is beyond dispute. The impact of these commentaries upon sixteenth and seventeenth

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53 Deena Copeland Klepper, *The Insight of Unbelievers: Nicholas of Lyra and Christian Readings of Jewish Text in the Later Middle Ages*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2007, p.85.

54 Pellican to Bucer, 6 August 1529, quoted and translated by R. Gerald Hobbs, idem, ‘Conrad Pellican and the Psalms. The Ambivalent Legacy of a Pioneer Hebraist,’ *Reformation and Renaissance Review. Journal of the Society for Reformation Studies* vol. 1, 1999, pp. 72-99, here pp. 97-98.

55 Luther, *Ursachen des Dolmetschen*, WA vol. 38. p. 9, lines 9-14 = LW vol. 35, p. 209.

century Bible translations and exposition remains a desideratum, though it is commonly thought to be significant.<sup>56</sup>

Christian readers of Jewish commentaries were sometimes inspired by the more polemical passages to strike back by writing polemics of their own. Sebastian Münster's own polemical treatise *Messiahs of the Christians and Jews* (1529, 1539) contains extensive quotations from David Kimhi's biblical commentaries on the prophets, roughly 30% of the quotations by the Jewish participant in the "disputation."<sup>57</sup> In addition to Luther's waspish remarks about Jewish interpreters, largely inspired by Münster's summaries and reports of them, some of his arguments in *On the Jews and their Lies*, the longest of the three anti-Jewish polemical works that he wrote in 1543-1544, were written to refute Jewish interpretations of Scripture that Luther had read in Münster's annotations and in his *Messiahs of the Christians and Jews*.<sup>58</sup>

Daniel Bomberg's bold printing venture, creating a new kind of printed Jewish Bible that would within its pages contain a rich library for biblical study, found a wide readership not only among Jewish readers but surprisingly among Christian Hebraists as well. Copies of the book were to be found not only in the major libraries such as the Bodleian and the Vatican libraries, but also in the possession of private scholars. Even as early as the 1520s an expectation began to grow among Christian Hebraists that serious biblical scholars should learn not only enough biblical Hebrew to read the Bible in its original language, but should also have some knowledge of the post-biblical Aramaic and even commentary Hebrew as Goldhahn's 1523 Hebrew grammar suggests. By the time an expurgated Christian edition of the *Biblia Rabbinica* was published by Johannes Buxtorf it had clearly become part of the Christian exegetical and polemical arsenal for scholars throughout Europe. While we might still feel the perplexity of Luis de Leon's interrogators that a Jewish book found such wide circulation among Christians, Leon's account of their wide use by Hebraists was also accurate.

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56 See the pioneering study by Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, 'Rashi and the English Bible,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 24, 1940, pp. 138-167.

57 Stephen G. Burnett, 'Dialogue of the Deaf: Hebrew Pedagogy and Anti-Jewish Polemic in Sebastian Münster's *Messiahs of the Christians and the Jews* (1529/39),' *Archive for Reformation History*, vol. 91, 2000, pp. 168-190, here pp. 174-175.

58 Idem, 'Reassessing the Basel-Wittenberg Conflict: Dimensions of the Reformation-Era Discussion of Hebrew Scholarship,' in: *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulsen, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004, pp. 181-190, here pp. 200-201.

### Appendix 1.

Christian Hebraists and Libraries that Owned a *Biblia Rabbinica*, c. 1520-1620

#### Individual Owners<sup>59</sup>

Name	Printing	Source
Borrhaus, Martin	1517	Basel UB Sig. FG I 23-24
Bucer, Martin	1517,1525	R. Gerald Hobbes, personal communication, 6 March 2001
Buxtorf, Johannes	1517,1525	Burnett, <i>Buxtorf</i> , 273
Casaubon, Isaac	unknown	Bodleian Ms Casaubon 22/12, f. 122r
Drusius, Johannes d. 1616	1517,1525	Leeuwarden Provincial Library Sig. 97 Gdg. 2 vols. [1517]; Sig. 98 Gdg. [1525]
Fagius, Paul	Probably 1517	Leedham-Green, <i>Books in Cambridge Inventories</i> , 1:109
Leon, Luis de	unknown	Baranda, <i>Coleccion</i> , 10: 184, 196-197
Melanchthon, Philip	1517	Burnett, "Basel-Wittenberg," 187
Münster, Sebastian	1517,1525	Burmeister, <i>Münster</i> , 77. Basel UB Sig. FG II 11 [1517]
Oecolampadius, Johannes	1517	Staehelin, <i>Brieje und Akten</i> , 1:87
Pappus, Johannes d.1610	unknown	HAB Ms 42 Aug 20
Pellican, Conrad	1525,1548	Zürcher, <i>Konrad Pellikans Wirkung</i> , 234
Reuchlin, Johann	1517	Karlsruhe LB KS 101 [destroyed in World War II]
Scaliger, Joseph d. 1609	1525	Heinsius, <i>Catalogus Bibliothecae Publicae Lugduno-Batavae</i> , (1636), 159
Vermigli, Peter	1517,1525	Ganoczy, #1, 2
Widmanstetter, Johann Albert	1525	Striedl, "Bücherei," 215

<sup>59</sup> The tables in Appendix 1 list only scholars and institutions that I am sure owned copies of Rabbinic Bibles. When we include Hebraists who probably used these works as a source to publish Jewish commentaries or Targum portions of single books, this list be-

## Institutional Owners

Name	Printing	Year Attested	Source
Edinburgh University Library	Unknown	1580	<i>Miscellany of the Maitland Club</i> , v. 1, 292
Geneva Academy Library	1517, 1525	1572	Ganoczy, #1, 2
Heidelberg Palatine Library	1525	1629	Stevenson, <i>Inventario</i> , 1: *3-*5
Leiden	1525	1595	Bertius, <i>Nomenclator</i> , CC1r
Oxford Bodleian	unknown	1605	James, <i>Catalogus</i> , 22
Salamanca University Library	unknown	1572	Baranda, <i>Coleccion</i> , 10: 184,196-197
Strasbourg Academy Library	1517, 1525	c.1572	Burnett, "Christian Aramaism," 435
Wittenberg University Library	1517, 1525	1536, 1547	Jena UB Ms App B (5A)-(9), 1r and Kusukawa#2
Zurich Stiftbibliothek	1517	551	Germann #143

comes considerably longer. These scholars include Sanctes Pagninus, François Vatable, Jean Cinqarbres, Jean Mercier, Gilbert Générard, Arnauld Pontac, Oswald Schreckenfuchs, Sebastian Lepusculus, Johannes Isaac, and Johannes Draconites before 1600, and Pierre Vignal, Simeon de Muis, and Jean Bourdelot during the early seventeenth century. Andreas Masius used Jewish Bible commentaries from both the first and second Rabbinic Bibles to prepare his *Joshua imperatoris historia*, Plantin, Antwerp, 1574, fol. Hh6v. Robert Bellarmine used them as well. Piet van Boxel, 'Robert Bellarmine, Christian Hebraist and Censor,' in: *History of Scholarship: A Selection of Papers from the Seminar on the History of Scholarship Held Annually at the Warburg Institute*, ed. C. R. Ligota and J.-L. Quantin, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, pp. 251-275, here pp. 267-275.

Appendix 2. Printings of Jewish Commentaries and Targums for individual biblical books, 1501-1600<sup>60</sup>

Book	Commentary	Targum	Editor	Place	Year	Translation	Source
Psalms	y		Giustiniani, Agostino	Genoa	1516		CNCE Edit 16 #5916 <sup>61</sup>
Psalms 1-28	y		Pagninus	Rome	1521	y	Grendler, "Italian Biblical Humanism, 242-243.
Decalogue		Ibn Ezra	Münster	Basel	1527	y	Prijs 29
Joel Malachi		D Kimhi	Münster	Basel	1530	n	Prijs 31
Amos		D Kimhi	Münster	Basel	1531	n	Prijs 34
Genesis	y		Fagius	Isny	1542	y	VD 16 F552
Minor Prophets		D Kimhi	Vatable	Paris	1539	n	Schwarzfuchs 88-92, 99-105 <sup>62</sup>
Isaiah		D Kirnhi	Münster	Basel	15421	n	Prijs 64
Psalms		D Kirnhi	Fagius	Isny	1542	n	VD 16 B3105
Psalms		D Kimhi	Fagius	Constance	1544	y	VD 16 ZV1634
Pentateuch	y		Fagius	Strasbourg	1546	y	VD 16 B2978

60 In addition to these partial printings of the Targum by Christians, the Complutensian Polyglot contained the Targum for the Pentateuch with Latin translation, while the Antwerp Polyglot contained Targums for the entire Hebrew Bible with Latin translation. Elias Hutter's Polyglot Bible contained the Targum without translation for the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth.

61 CNCE Edit 16 = Censimento nazionale delle edizioni italiane del xvi secolo.

62 The Minor Prophets could be sold as individual books or be bound together.

Lamentations	y	Cinqarbres	Paris	1549	y	Schwarzfuchs 196
Obadiah, Jonah	y	Mercier	Paris	1550	y	Schwarzfuchs 204
Haggai	y	Mercier	Paris	1551	y	Schwarzfuchs 213
Canticles	y	Schreckenfuchs	Basel	1553	y	Prijs 90
Ecclesiastes	y	Costau	Lyons	1554	y	Schwarzfuchs, <i>Lyon</i> , 87
Hosea	y	Cinqarbres	Paris	1554	y	Schwarzfuchs 226
Minor Prophets	y	Cinqarbres	Paris	1556	y	Schwarzfuchs 242
Minor Prophets	y	Mercier	Paris	1557- 1558	n	Schwarzfuchs 251
Joel		Vatable	Paris	1557	n	Schwarzfuchs 248
Decalogue		Lepusculus, Sebastian	Basel	1559	y	Prijs 105
Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Malachi	y	Mercier	Paris	1559	y	Schwarzfuchs 259
Hosea, Joel, Amos, y Obadiah, Haggai		Mercier	Paris	1559	y	Schwarzfuchs 258
Habakkuk		Vatable	Paris	1559	n	Schwarzfuchs 256
Proverbs	y	Mercier	Paris	1561	n	Schwarzfuchs 268
Ecclesiastes	y	Mercier	Paris	1562	y	Schwarzfuchs 273
Malachi	y	Johannes Isaac	Cologne	1563	y	VD 16 B3995

(Continued)

Appendix 2 (*Continued*)

Book	Commentary	Targum	Editor	Place	Year	Translation	Source
Joel	D Kimhi, Rashi, Ibn Ezra	y	Genebrard	Paris	1563	y	Schwarzfuchs 279
Ruth	D Kimhi		Mercier	Paris	1563	n	Schwarzfuchs 277
Genesis, Isaiah, Malachi, Proverbs, Joel, Micah, Zechariah <sup>63</sup>		y	Draconites	Leipzig/ Wittenberg	1563- 1565	y	VD 16 B3008, B3402, B3561, B3857, B3922, B3982
Decalogue	Ibn Ezra	y	Mercier	Paris	1566	y	Schwarzfuchs 307
Obadiah, Jonah Zephaniah		y	Pontac	Paris	1566	y	Schwarzfuchs 305
Jonah	D Kimhi		Vatable	Paris	1567	n	Schwarzfuchs 314
Decalogue	Ibn Ezra	y	Mercier	Paris	1568	y	Schwarzfuchs 322
Ruth	D Kimhi		Vignal, Pierre	Paris	1609	n	Delaveau & Hillard #3618
Psalms 1	D Kimhi		Muis, Simeon de	Paris	1612		StCB p. 65/398

<sup>63</sup> These books were printed individually, but intended to be a set.

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Nahum	D Kimhi	Vignal, Pierre	Paris	1615	n	London: British Library 1560 1653 (2).
Malachi	D Kimhi		Paris	1618	n	Delaveau & Hillard #1991
Psalms 20-21, 45, 62	D Kimhi	Bourdelot, Jean	Paris	1619	y	Sammlung Wagenseil VK 125
Psalms 19	D Kimhi, Rashi, Ibn Ezra	Muis, Simeon de	Paris	1620	y	Basel UB FA VII 3/3