

Zeitschrift: Judaica : Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentums
Herausgeber: Zürcher Institut für interreligiösen Dialog
Band: 71 (2015)

Artikel: Paulus Aemilius, convert to catholicism and printer of yiddish books in sixteenth century Augsburg
Autor: Faierstein, Morris M.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-961701>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 17.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Paulus Aemilius, Convert to Catholicism and Printer of Yiddish Books in Sixteenth Century Augsburg

By Morris M. Faienstein*

Abstract

Aemilius was born a Jew in Bavaria in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The first information we have finds him in 1538, a Catholic convert in Rome, working as a copyist of Hebrew manuscripts for Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter, an important Catholic diplomat, Hebraist and Orientalist. We next find Aemilius in Augsburg, in 1542, where he became a printer and printed four Yiddish books, in 1543-1544. His first two publications were the first printings of the Melokhim Bukh and the Shmuel Bukh, Yiddish paraphrases of the Biblical books of Samuel and Kings. He also published the second edition of the Yiddish Humash, following Paulus Fagius' edition, published in Constance a few months earlier. Like Fagius, he published two editions of the Humash, one intended for a Jewish audience and the other for Christian Hebraists, the only difference between the two editions being the title page and Introduction, addressed to its respective audience. In 1547, he was appointed Professor of Hebrew at the University of Ingolstadt, where he remained until his death in 1575.

Jewish converts to Christianity in sixteenth-century Europe, who made an impression on the history of Early Modern Judaism, tend to fall into two categories. In Italy, they converted to Catholicism, and a significant number of them had a connection to the book printing/publishing industry. In Germany, prior to the Protestant Reformation, they converted to Catholicism, too, but tended to the Protestantism afterwards.¹ Many Jewish converts to Christianity in sixteenth-century Germany are known because they were involved in producing anti-Jewish works. The first to create the literary genre called "Christian ethnographies of Judaism" were Jewish converts, followed later by Christian Hebraists.² The best-known and arguably most influential work by a Jewish convert representing this genre was Anthonius Margaritha's (c. 1492–1542) *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub [...]*,

* Morris M. Faienstein, Ph.D., University of Maryland, Kotsker@gmail.com.

1 The classic study of Jewish converts in Germany is ELISHEVA CARLEBACH, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500-1750*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

2 YAACOV DEUTSCH, *Judaism in Christian Eyes: Ethnographic Descriptions of Jews and Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, is the major study of this Early Modern Christian ethnographic literature.

first published in Augsburg 1530.³ As with all generalizations, there are always exceptions to the rules. The subject of this study, Paulus Aemilius, is one of these exceptions. A Jew born in Germany, he converted to Catholicism at an unknown time and place, spent some time in Italy, remained Catholic after his return to Germany, was a printer of Jewish books, and attained what was the rarely achieved dream of many Jewish converts in Germany, a university professorship of Hebrew.

1. Biography

The biographical data for Paulus Aemilius remain sketchy.⁴ He was born in Rödelsee, in Lower Franconia, the northwest part of Bavaria, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. His name before his conversion is unknown. At that time, Rödelsee had a reasonable sized Jewish community. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that he received a decent Jewish education. His Jewish education was advanced sufficiently, so that he was able to correspond in Hebrew and work as a competent copyist of Hebrew manuscripts. The first concrete information we have of Aemilius finds him in Italy, in 1538. There, he entered the employ of Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter (1506–1557), an important jurist, diplomat, government official and, most relevant in this context, a Christian Hebraist and Orientalist, and served him as a copyist of manuscripts. Widmanstetter's best-known scholarly achievement was the first publication of the Syriac Bible in 1555.⁵ The

3 On Margarita and his career see, MICHAEL T. WALTON, *Anthוניus Margaritha and the Jewish Faith: Jewish Life and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Germany*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012; MARIA DIEMLING, "Anthוניus Margaritha on the 'Whole Jewish Faith': A Sixteenth-Century Convert from Judaism and his Depiction of the Jewish Religion," in: DEAN PHILLIP BELL / STEPHEN G. BURNETT (eds.), *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Studies in Central European Histories, vol. 37), Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2006, pp. 303-333.

4 The most recent summary of Aemilius' life and work is HANS JÖRG KÜNST, "Hebräisch-jüdischer Buchdruck in Schwaben in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts," in: ROLF KIESSLING / SABINE ULLMANN (eds.), *Landjudentum im deutschen Südwesten während der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999, pp. 287-291. Additional significant details can be found in: HANS STREIDEL, "Paulus Aemilius an J. A. Widmanstetter. Briefe von 154/44 und 1549. Aus dem Hebräischen übersetzt und kommentiert," in: HORST LEUCHTMANN / ROBERT MÜNSTER (eds.), *Ars iocundissima. Festschrift für Kurt Dorfmueller*, Tutzing: Schneider, 1984, pp. 333-356.

5 The basic study is: MAX MÜLLER, *Johann Albrecht v. Widmanstetter 1506-1557, Sein Leben und Wirken*, Bamberg: Handels-Druckerei, 1907. The most recent

Bavarian State Library that houses Widmanstetter's significant collection of Hebrew books and manuscripts has three cabbalistic manuscripts copied by Aemilius during his stay in Italy in 1538.⁶ In the colophon of one of these manuscripts, he writes, "I completed the copy here in Rome on Friday, the twentieth of Nisan, 5298, after the creation of the world, 1538 after the birth of Jesus our Saviour."⁷ Aemilius published a typical anti-Jewish tract in 1548, shortly after he became a professor at the University of Ingolstadt. In the dedication, he mentions that he was encouraged to convert to Catholicism by Otto Truchsess von Waldburg (1514–1573), who later became bishop of Augsburg and a cardinal.⁸ Though the exact timeline is not certain, it is clear that by 1538 when he copied the manuscripts Aemilius was already a convert to Catholicism. Widmanstetter, who became his patron in Rome, continued to be Aemilius' patron for the rest of his career. In 1539, Widmanstetter left Rome to become councillor to Duke Ludwig X (1495–1545) in Landshut, Bavaria.

We next find Aemilius in Augsburg, in 1542, negotiating a partnership with Hayyim b. David Shachor (Schwarz; d. c. 1547), an important Jewish printer of the first half of the sixteenth century, in fact, the first Jewish printer in Germany. Shachor began his career in Prague and printed books in Oels (near Breslau; today: Oleśnica), Augsburg, Ichenhausen, Hedderneim (near Frankfurt am Main), and finally moving to Lublin, where he ended his days. In Augsburg, he lived from the end of 1530 to 1544. However, it is not clear whether he was a permanent resident of Augsburg during that period, because there are significant gaps in his printing activities.⁹

summary of his life and work is, ROBERT J. WILKINSON, *Orientalism, Aramaic, and Kabbalah in the Catholic Reformation* (Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, vol. 137), Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2007, pp. 137-169.

6 MORITZ STEINSCHNEIDER, "Die hebräischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte dieser Bibliothek," in: *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-philologischen und historischen Classe der k. b. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München*, München 1875, vol. II, no. 2, pp. 185-187.

7 STREIDEL, "Briefe" (note 4), p. 333.

8 STREIDEL, "Briefe" (note 4), p. 342, n. 4. – Aemuilius' book is, *Widerlegung vnd abläinung etlicher fürnemster Articul vnd vrsachen darumb die Juden iren vnd der gantzen welt rechten warhaftigen Messiam Jesum Christum nit annemen*, Ingolstadt, 1548.

9 On Shachor and his career see, ABRAHAM M. HABERMAN, המדפיס חיים שחור, בנו, פרקים בתולדות המדפיסים העבריים, יצחק וחתנו יוסף בן יקר, in: ABRAHAM M. HABERMAN, ועניני ספרים, Jerusalem: Mass, 1978, pp. 103-130. On his Augsburg period, see also, MOSCHE N. ROSENFELD, *Der jüdische Buchdruck in Augsburg in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts*. London, 1985, pp. 14-18; KÜNST, Hebräisch-jüdischer Buchdruck (note 4), pp. 279-291.

What we know is that Paulus Fagius (1504–1549), the Christian Hebraist who was interested in establishing a press to print Hebrew books in Isny, visited Augsburg in late 1539, perhaps to invite Shachor, then working in Augsburg, to move to Isny and help him running his press.¹⁰

In 1542, when Shachor found himself in a difficult financial situation, Widmanstetter sent a letter (written in Hebrew) to Rabbi Isaac of Günzburg (d. 1568), chief rabbi of Swabia, asking him to mediate a business agreement between Shachor and Aemilius who were considering opening a joint printing press in Italy.¹¹ Aemilius was sent to Ferrara, Italy, in order to examine the possibilities of establishing a press and to sell some of Shachor's publications. The mission was not successful, and a dispute broke out between the two partners. Aemilius sued Shachor to recover the costs of his trip, and with the help of Widmanstetter, his patron, Aemilius prevailed. The loss of the lawsuit and the financial losses involved in this venture led to the departure of Shachor and his household from Augsburg for Ichenhausen in 1543.¹² After Shachor's departure, Aemilius set up a press in Augsburg and was able to publish four books that will be discussed below.

The religious climate was changing in Augsburg, and Aemilius was forced to leave the city in 1544.¹³ We do not know where he went from Augsburg, but in 1547, he was appointed professor of Hebrew at Ingolstadt, a position he retained until his death in 1575. He was even able to obtain a doctorate in medicine during his career at Ingolstadt.¹⁴ There, in 1548, he also published an anti-Jewish pamphlet in German; and in 1562, he published an edition of the *Shmuel Bukh* that had some changes from the original 1544 Yiddish edition using Latin letters.¹⁵ This edition makes

10 MOSHE N. ROSENFELD, "The Origins of Yiddish Printing," in: DOVID KATZ (ed.), *Origins of the Yiddish Language* (Language and Communication Library, vol. 10 / Winter Studies in Yiddish, vol. 1), Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987, pp. 111–126, esp. p. 112. – I have dealt with Fagius and his publishing activities in an unpublished study, "Paulus Fagius and the First Published Yiddish *Humash* – Constance, 1544."

11 On Günzburg's mediation see, JOSEPH PERLES, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hebräischen und Aramäischen Studien*, München: Ackermann, 1884, pp. 171–173; STREIDEL, "Briefe" (note 4), pp. 333–334, 341–342 (Letter no. 7).

12 KÜNAST, "Hebräisch-jüdischer Buchdruck" (note 4), p. 288.

13 KÜNAST, "Hebräisch-jüdischer Buchdruck" (note 4), p. 290.

14 Medicine was considered the least significant of the four doctorates in the pre-modern university. The four in order of importance were Theology, Philosophy, Law and Medicine.

15 STREIDEL, "Briefe" (note 4), p. 334.

no mention of the earlier Yiddish edition.¹⁶ In 1574, the Royal Library in Munich commissioned him to compile a catalogue of Hebrew books and manuscripts. However, he was unable to finish his work, as he died on July 9, 1575. The catalog was only half finished at his death.¹⁷ Nevertheless, according to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, this work made Aemilius “the first Jewish bibliographer”.¹⁸

2. Aemilius and the Jewish books he printed.

In the years 1543 and 1544, Aemilius printed four Yiddish items in Augsburg. The first was the *Melokhim Bukh*, a rhymed poetic reworking of the biblical Book of Kings.¹⁹ The second was the *Shmuel Bukh*, likewise a rhymed poetic reworking of the biblical Book of Samuel.²⁰ In both cases, the work was based on earlier manuscripts and the printers name did not appear in the book. Some earlier scholars have attributed these books to the press of Hayyim Shachor. However, Abraham Haberman rejected this theory since the typeface is different from that of Joseph ben Yakar’s Yiddish prayer book that he had printed in Ichenhausen, in 1544. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that in the *Introduction* to his prayer book Joseph mentioned that he intended to publish other Yiddish books and had already begun to work on the *Shmuel Bukh*. However, since Aemilius had already published his edition, Joseph and his staff stopped working on their edition.²¹

Furthermore, new evidence has answered the question who published the *Melokhim Bukh*, and the *Shmuel Bukh*. Some scholars previously maintained that it was a joint project by Hayyim Shachor and Paulus Aemilius, while others suggested that Aemilius published them alone.²² Two letters by Aemilius to Widmanstetter provide conclusive evidence for that. In a

16 ROSENFELD, *Der jüdische Buchdruck in Augsburg* (note 9), p. 17.

17. STREIDEL, “Briefe” (note 4), p. 334.

18 MOSES BEER, “Aemilius, Paulus,” in: *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 12 vols. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901-1916, vol. I, p. 219.

19 The modern scholarly edition is, LAJB FUKS, *Das Altjiddische Epos Melokim Bük*, 2 vols. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965.

20 The modern scholarly edition is, FELIX FALK / LAJB FUKS, *Das Schmuelebuch des Mosche Esrim Wearba: ein biblisches epos aus dem 15. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1961. The most important study of this work is, MAX WEINREICH, “דאס שמואל בוך,” in: MAX WEINREICH, *ליטעראטור געשיכטע פון די אידן*, Vilna: Tomor, 1928, pp. 68-111.

21 HABERMAN, *המדפיס חיים שחור* (note 9), pp. 106-107.

22 STREIDEL, “Briefe” (note 4), p. 343, n. 23, for the history of the theories of who printed this work.

letter to Widmanstetter, dated May 1543, Aemilius writes that he had begun publishing the *Melokhim Bukh*.²³ In another letter to Widmanstetter dated August 23, 1544, Aemilius states that he planned to obtain a privilege to publish a whole series of other books using the same fonts that he used to publish the *Melokhim Bukh*. However, he added in a postscript, “I have heard that they began again to print in the house of Daniel; the darkness of night fell upon me.”²⁴ In other words, he had heard that the famous Bomberg press in Venice had started printing again. Augsburg was a central distribution point for the sale of books by the Venetian publishers, and he realized that he could not compete with such a powerful competitor. This would explain why Aemilius’ career as a printer was so short lived.

Let us now focus on Aemilius’ editions of the Yiddish *Humash*, which – contrary to the *Melokhim Bukh* and *Shmuel Bukh* – has not yet been the subject of any significant scholarly study going beyond the basic information found in histories of Early Modern Yiddish literature. The *Melokhim Bukh* and the *Shmuel Bukh* have not only been studied, but are also available in modern scholarly editions, as noted above.²⁵

Aemilius published two versions of his *Humash*, one intended for Jews and one for Christians. In many respects, his edition was very similar to the edition of Paulus Fagius who published his edition of the *Humash* in Constance²⁶ only a few months earlier than Aemilius.²⁷ Like Fagius, he intentionally also published two editions, one for Christians and one for Jews. The text of Aemilius’ editions seems very close to, if not identical with, the text used by Fagius.²⁸ The primary difference is that Aemilius did not include Fagius’ marginal notes, and his title page and introduction are different. The reason for publishing two editions for two such disparate audiences is that the market for Jewish books designed for Christian Hebraists

23 STREIDEL, “Briefe” (note 4), p. 336 (Letter no. 1).

24 STREIDEL, “Briefe” (note 4), p. 340 (Letter no. 5).

25 See above, notes 19 and 20.

26 Regarding Fagius’ *Humash* translation, see my unpublished study “Paulus Fagius and the First Published Yiddish *Humash* - Constance, 1544”.

27 ROSENFELD, “Origins of Yiddish Printing” (note 10), pp. 122-123, suggests that the [Fagius] Constance edition [no. 13] was printed in March 1544 and the [Aemilius] Augsburg edition [no. 14] was printed in June 1544. Aemilius dated his Introduction as *Sivan*, 1544.

28 Nokhem Shtif (Baal-Dimyon), examined both texts, i.e., Fagius’ and Aemilius’ *Humash*, and concluded that both closely follow the Yiddish *teitsch* – *Humash* translation tradition. See NOKHEM SHTIF, דער טייטש-חומש: צו דער געשיכטע פון יידישער ליטעראטור, in: צוקוגפט 29 (1924), pp. 568-573.

was not large enough to make an edition for them alone financially feasible. With a different title page and introduction, however, the same book could also be sold to Jews, even though they were not the primary audience. A secondary reason was that the Christian version was a defence against the charge of Judaizing, which was a constant problem. The obvious question is, why would Aemilius publish another similar edition so soon after Fagius published his work? This question is even more complicated to be answered, because there is reason to believe that they knew of each other's work.

We know that Paulus Fagius had contacted Hayyim Shachor and discussed with him the possibility of setting up a press in 1539.²⁹ One possible explanation is the growing Protestant–Catholic divide. Each group avoided purchasing and using books printed by the other group.³⁰ The marginal notes in Fagius' edition contain references to Luther's German translation of the Bible.³¹ The typical Jewish reader would not notice this, but a Christian Hebraist would be more sensitive to this addition. Moreover, Aemilius' dedication of the Christian version of the *Humash* to a high profile Catholic figure like Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter would be an endorsement to a Catholic purchaser, but a red flag for a Protestant.

The *Introduction* of Aemilius' *Humash* edition intended for Jews does not give the name of the printer nor does it give reasons for its publication, it mentions only the usual platitudes found in many of the Yiddish books published during the sixteenth century.³² However, the edition intended for Christians is much more informative. The *Introduction* consists of three parts. The first part is a dedication to Leonhard Beck, an important merchant in Augsburg and imperial councillor. Aemilius does not explicitly explain why he has dedicated the book to Beck, but there is reason to assume that he supported Aemilius and his work in some way. Beck's position as wealthy

29 ROSENFELD, "Origins of Yiddish Printing" (note 10), p. 112.

30 On the Protestant–Catholic divide with regard to the publication and purchase of books see, ANDREW PETTEGREE, *The Book in the Renaissance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, chapter 10.

31 Many of Fagius' marginal notes allude to classic medieval Jewish commentators. However, in a number of cases, usually in defining words that Yiddish, but not clearly derived from German or Hebrew, like *daven* or *bentch*, he uses the terms used by Luther in his German Bible Translation. Fagius does not explicitly mention Luther, but uses the neutral term "some say" as the attribution of these comments. This subject needs more study, but I believe it is no coincidence that all the citations sampled are directly paralleled in Luther's German Bible translation.

32 See below for the texts of the title pages and Introductions of both editions.

merchant and imperial councillor could indicate either financial or governmental support or some combination of both. In the second part, a dedication to Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter, Aemilius hails his employer and patron for his noble attitudes as a scholar and sage. The third part explains at length why Aemilius was publishing this work, and why it would be of interest to Christian Hebraists.

The main theme of the third part of the *Introduction* is the claim that for the most part, Jews are ignorant of Hebrew and, therefore, Christian Hebraists who know Hebrew understand the Bible better than the Jews do. Thus, the importance of his work and its intention is to show the Hebraists the many ways in which the Jews misunderstand and misinterpret the Bible. With this knowledge, they would be better able to develop effective strategies to convert the Jews. Aemilius' reasons are typical of what can be found in Jewish books published for Christian Hebraists. An important difference between Fagius and Aemilius is that Fagius directed his work explicitly to students and Christian scholars at early stages of their career, as is evidenced by his numerous marginal notes that were aimed at this audience. Aemilius, on the other hand, is not a teacher but a printer of books who sees a market and tries to supply what he thinks to be needed. In his Augsburg period, he always identified himself as a printer whose profession was printing books. In contrast to Fagius, who was publishing books as aids to his educational endeavours, Aemilius was not a scholar or teacher. Nevertheless, the publication of these books may also have played a role in his efforts to obtain his professorship at Ingolstadt. There is no published evidence that Aemilius could write Latin. All his extant letters to Widmanstetter are in Hebrew. On the other hand, the fact that he was able to maintain his position at the university for almost twenty years after the death of his patron, Widmanstetter, who died in 1557, indicates that he must have mastered Latin to a level that allowed him to function sufficiently in a university. Two other things may have helped Aemilius in his pursuit of an academic career, too: Firstly, his stay in Italy probably had helped him to acquire a competency in Italian, which in turn would have helped him with Latin, and, secondly, his Hebrew dedication and letters to Widmanstetter and others proving his competence in Hebrew.³³

33 An interesting question not sufficiently addressed in the scholarly literature on the Jewish converts in the Early Modern period who published books about Judaism is, how much did they really know? Is there any evidence of their Jewish textual knowledge or competence in Hebrew beyond what might be expected of the average Jew of the period?

The dedication is printed in two languages on facing pages, Hebrew and Latin. Whereas the Hebrew version was written by Aemilius himself, it was Johannes Flinters, who translated it into Latin, as noted on top of the Latin translation. Most surprising, however, is that the dedication is written in Hebrew. There are several reasons for Aemilius' writing this dedication in Hebrew. Firstly, it proved that he had sufficient knowledge of Hebrew, that he was able to write Hebrew and not merely to read it. Secondly, it was a way of flattering his patron. A dedication in Hebrew implied that the recipient was also able to read and appreciate it. As mentioned above, Johannes Albrecht Widmanstetter was a noted orientalist mastering several Semitic languages. This dedication was not the only Hebrew text that Aemilius submitted to Widmanstetter. A significant amount of correspondence to and from Widmanstetter likewise in Hebrew has been preserved.³⁴ As Robert J. Wilkinson explained, "Hebrew correspondence was the celebrated achievement of only a few of the most learned humanists of the sixteenth century."³⁵ Finally, this may be further evidence of Aemilius' abilities. He could competently write Hebrew, but his written Latin was not sufficient, the *Introduction* had to be translated by someone else.

3. Appendix I

Title Pages and Introductions of the Christian edition.

Humash, Megillot, Haftorot, Augsburg, 1554

3.1. Title Page

A. Notes

The title page of the Christian edition has a short title in Hebrew and a longer title in German. My translation is based on a photo of the title page in the copy of Aemilius' *Humash* found in the digital collection of the Bavarian State Library.³⁶

34 PERLES published Hebrew letters to and from Widmanstetter, and STREIDEL published additional letters.

35 WILKINSON, *Orientalism, Aramaic, and Kabbalah* (note 5), p. 78.

36 The title page of this copy contains the signature, Joh. Albrecht Widmanstetter. It is likely that this copy belonged to Widmanstetter, since his personal library is an important foundation of the Judaic and Semitic collection of the Bavarian State Library. A transcription of the title page is also found in JOSEPH PERLES' article, "Bibliographische Mitteilungen aus München," in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 25 (1876), pp. 350-375, esp. p. 362.

B. Text

חמשה חומשי תורה עם חמש מגילות שיר השירים רות קהלת איכה מגילת אסתר גם ההפטורות
(sic) בלשון אשכנז

Five Books of the Torah/ With the Five Scrolls, Song of Songs/ Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, the Scroll of/ Esther, along with the Haftorot / In the language of Ashkenaz.

Die fünff Bücher Mose/ aus dem Hebraischen von wort zū wort / nach der yeztigen Juden art/ inn die Teütsch Sprach gebracht/ vñ doch mit Hebraischen bñchstaben getruckt / allerding wie die Juden sy durchs gantz Jar in die wuchen auftailen / mit sampt den Capitlen / auß allen Propheten außgezogen / wölche sy darzū nemen.

Item auch dise Fünff Biblische bücher / wölche sy lesen/ Nemlich:

Das Hohe lied Salomonis / So sy lesen in Ostertagen.

Die Ruth / wölche sy zū Pfingsten lesen.

Die klag Jeremie / Die sy lesen / wenn sy die zerstörung Jerusalem bedencken.

Das Bñch Hester / So sy brauchen an der Faßnacht, wenn man die Histori vom Haman bedenckt.³⁷

Alles fast dienstlich / nit allain zū übung deß lesens vnd schreibens der Hebraischen sprach / sonder auch / das man sehe / wie die Juden die Geschrift verteütschen / lesen / verstecken / vnd brauchen etc.³⁸

English translation of the German text:

The Five Books of Moses, from the Hebrew language, according to the current Jewish style, brought into the Yiddish language, and yet printed in the Hebrew characters. However, as the Jews do it, divided into chapters according to the weeks of the year. With all the chapters which they add to it from the Prophets.

Also these five Biblical books that they read. Namely:

The Song of Solomon. They read it in the Easter season.

Ruth. Which they read on Pentecost.

The Lament of Jeremiah. They read this, when they reflect on the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Book of Esther that is customary on the festival when they reflect on the story of Haman.

All of it is very useful. Not only to practice reading and writing the Hebrew language, but also to see how the Jews translate Scripture, read, understand, and use it etc.

37 PERLES, "Bibliographische Mitteilungen" (note 36), p. 362 n. 1, notes that Ecclesiastes is missing from this list even though the text is found in its proper place.

38 The spelling of the German is as found in the original.

At the bottom of the frame of the title page [within a cartouche], it is written שער החכמה *The gate of Wisdom*.

3.2. Introduction

A. Notes

The Introduction has three parts. The first part of the *Introduction* is an acrostic mélange of Biblical phrases or paraphrases of Biblical phrases, and phrases found in Hebrew liturgical poetry. There are ten lines and the first letter of each line when read vertically spells out the name Leonhard Beck. I have not maintained the acrostic in my translation. The volume has some damage to the page and there are a few places, where the text cannot be read. I have indicated these gaps with [...].

The second part of the *Introduction* is a dedication to his patron, Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter. Aemilius praises his patron and speaks glowingly of his patron's noble attitudes as a scholar and sage.

In the third part of the *Introduction*, Aemilius explains what motivated him to publish this Yiddish translation of the *Humash*, *Haftorot*, and *Megillot*. He explains that his purpose in publishing a Yiddish translation of the Bible as the Jews use it was to convince his Christian readers that, what many of them may have believed, it is not true that the Jews are able to read Hebrew and have preserved the tradition of *Hebraica Veritas*, the proper understanding of the Hebrew Bible. The Yiddish text is to prove that throughout history, Jews utilized the language of the country where they lived; in Germany, this was a form of German written with Hebrew characters. Equally important, the Christian scholar could see that the long years of exile have also corrupted the Jewish understanding of the meaning of the Hebrew text. The additions to the text, the so-called חיבור *bibbur* of the *teitsch Humash* tradition, were implicitly interpreted by Aemilius as misunderstandings and corruptions of the pristine text, rather than as interpretive comments that they were thought to be.³⁹ Aemilius does not explain (t)his method of translation to his possible Christian reader, but clearly intends them to come to their own negative conclusions and understand how the Jews misunderstood and distorted the Bible.

The whole *Introduction* is in Hebrew with a Latin translation by Johannes Flinters on the facing pages. My translation of the dedication is based on

³⁹ Basic studies of the *teitsch Humash* translation method are, SHTIF, דער טייטש-חומש (note 28), pp. 568-573, and CHAVA TURNIANSKY, "חומש ה'טייטש-חומש'" לתולדות ה'טייטש-חומש"; דברים שנאמרו בערב לכבוד דב סדן במלאת לו שמונים וחמש שנה: מיט חיבור עיונים בספרות; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences, 1988, pp. 21-58.

the Hebrew text of the copy as found in the digital collection of the Bavarian State Library, supplemented by the partial transcription in, Joseph Perles, "Bibliographische Mitteilungen aus München", in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 25 (1876), pp. 363-365.

B. Text

I. Introduction, Part 1

"Much Peace without end, should reach my lord Leonhard Beck:

"To the one whom the king desires to honour.⁴⁰ His garment is majestic splendour. Every man will tell his praises. The heart of the wise will seek his counsel.

"[...]. He advised with wisdom and understanding. He chose wisdom and her daughter. The daughters saw him and praised him.

"[...]. He was chosen from six hundred chosen ones. He brought tithes and firstlings. He hastened to pay his vows.

"How good and how pleasant.⁴¹ His feet are lovely in shoes.⁴² He is far from the path of the sinners. He walks in righteousness.

"Chief of the shepherds.⁴³ Father of the poor. He gives his bread to the indigent. And feeds the hungry.

"A spirit of grace and mercy. A benefactor of goods deeds. God may reward him twofold. His results may be for Jerusalem.

"He may be blessed with generosity. His light shines in the darkness. From this city, from the east. The staff of the man I have chosen shall sprout.⁴⁴

"He does not take lucre. He does not forget the shouts of the pauper. He watches over the poor. His enemies will be gored by his horns.

"His help is from the Lord.⁴⁵ I will praise the Lord in my lifetime. That He has given a man such as this before me. The blessings of his ancestors overcame the blessing of my parents.⁴⁶

"His name is called Leonhard Beck. He may enjoy an abundance of days. Idle words are not found on his lips. Signed Paulus Aemilius the printer."

40 Esther 6:6 and others.

41 Psalms 133:1.

42 Song of Songs 7:2.

43 I Samuel 21:8.

44 Numbers 17:20.

45 Psalms 121:2.

46 A reference to Aemilius' conversion to Catholicism from Judaism.

II. Introduction, Part 2

“My lord, since it has recently become the custom to give honour to nobles and kings with words of Torah, and since this book is the Torah of God, it is not exceptional to honour someone worthy to receive it. Since the Holy One, Blessed be He, has taken a share of His glory and given it to those who fear Him, who can forget His wondrous deeds. Therefore, until today, it is the custom of the Hebrews to honour wise men, even if they are gentiles, who are not of their faith, like this man. If they see a wise man of their community, they say, *Blessed be He who has given part of His glory to those who fear Him*.⁴⁷ If it is a gentile, who is not part of their family, such as a Christian or Ishmaelite, they say, *Blessed be He who has given part of His glory to flesh and blood*.⁴⁸

“My lord, to whom shall I liken you and to whom should I compare you, since there are few to whom the Holy One, Blessed be He, has given the great kindness that He has given to my lord. If there already were some, their name would have been lost and their memory fallen into oblivion, unless they are remembered and recalled. There are a few only, that are still alive and a few, that have died, who have left behind them the scent of good oil, and I will count my lord among them. If someone should ask, who are they, whom the Holy One, Blessed be He, has blessed with everything. Pico Mirandola⁴⁹ and his like who have already died, *his nard gave forth its fragrance*,⁵⁰ since I heard his great praises in all the universities where I was, in Paris, Louvain and the other French universities.⁵¹

“Among those who are still alive, one of them is Johanan Albrecht of Widmanstetten. He is a wise and discerning counsellor and advocate to the duke of Bavaria. It is hard to believe that there was anyone like him from Johanan [John] the Baptist until Johanan Albrecht of Widmanstetten, who

47 This is the Jewish traditional blessing for a scholar of Torah. See, PHILIP BIRNBAUM, *Daily Prayer Book*. New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1977, p. 777.

48 BIRNBAUM, *Daily Prayer Book* (note 47), p. 777.

49 Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) was an Italian Renaissance philosopher who also had a strong interest in Hebrew and Kabbalah in particular. On his relation to Jewish Mysticism see, CHAIM WIRSZUBSKI, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

50 Song of Songs 1:12.

51 The terminology in the Hebrew text is somewhat ambiguous. PERLES, “Bibliographische Mitteilungen” (note 36), p. 363, n. 1, follows the Latin translation, and I follow Perles.

is fluent in all the languages like him.⁵² I worked for him as an experienced scribe, and I copied old books that came from Jerusalem and Egypt. I also saw books belonging to him that came from Babylonia in Aramaic, and I also saw books in Arabic that I had never seen or heard of before, and he was an expert in all of them. Therefore, it is appropriate that my lord be counted among them, since your good name also ascends like an overflowing fountain that will never dry up and like the good oil.

“When the oil is poured from vessel to vessel, its odour is recognized in all corners of the house. Similarly, the name goes out into the whole world, by way of impressive structures, as we find with the Babylonian people. They wanted to establish a name for themselves, so they said, *come let us build a city and a tower with its top in the sky and we will make a name for ourselves*.⁵³ That is to say, that the whole world should talk about this structure and their intentions. The reason for this was so that, *nothing that they may propose to do will be out of their reach*.⁵⁴ As has already been said, *no wisdom and no prudence can prevail against the Lord*.⁵⁵ The structure needs great wisdom, and that which King Solomon said, *the wisest of women builds her house*.⁵⁶ Because his mother admonished him and raised him to do good deeds. Wisdom is depended on the woman who raised her son to good deeds, and the intelligent will understand. Also his honour my lord, because you were wise and wandered for years and kept from becoming antiquated. Therefore, the honour of this latter house is greater the one of the former.”

III. Introduction, Part 3

“Now my lord, I will write briefly the reason that I have come to publish this book. Indeed, it is because many Christians, like the people of France or lower Germany have never seen a Jew. They believe that the Jews are called Hebrews, and all of them speak Hebrew because they have the language of the past, and they say that they have inherited this language from their fathers and mothers. It is not so, since their mouths testify to them that not one out of a thousand of them is found who is able to speak the

52 Elijah Levita (1469–1549) uses the same analogy to praise Paulus Fagius, comparing him to the Apostle Paul of the New Testament. Originally, the formula was used in praise of Moses Maimonides: From (Biblical) Moses to Moses (ben Maimon), there was no Moses like Moses (ben Maimon).

53 Genesis 11:4.

54 Genesis 11:6.

55 Proverbs 21:30.

56 Proverbs 14:1.

Hebrew language properly. In particular, the women, young women, children and an endless numbers of ignorant men cannot speak any Hebrew. When they were exiled in Babylonia, they forgot how to speak Hebrew and spoke the Chaldean language, as we find in Daniel that the king commanded them to learn the Chaldean language. They even lost the Torah itself and they did not observe it at all, because they forgot what they had been commanded in it. Then they took foreign wives, Ammonites and Moabites, that the Torah had commanded that they should not enter the community of God.⁵⁷ They learned from their deeds and their language, as we find in Nehemiah, that *their children were speaking partly Ashdodit and they do not know to speak Yebudit*.⁵⁸ They have forgotten the language to the present day. They do not speak it at all, since in all the lands, where they have been dispersed, they speak the local language. For example, those that were exiled to the land of Ashkenaz speak the language of Ashkenaz, and when they are exiled to the land of Italy, they speak the language of Italy. Similarly, they speak the language of the country to which they have been exiled. If so, why do we call them Hebrews? Among the Christians, I have found those who can speak Hebrew more properly than those found among the Jews. Since the Torah of Moses is the core of their faith, but the majority of them do not understand their language, I took this book since it is something new, and I have never seen something like this in print among them. I have laboured to publish it for those who will read it fluently. Also for the benefit of the many, who err, and think that all the Jews know Hebrew or that all of them read Hebrew.

“As this book is something new, I have brought it, like a servant, to my lord that he should judge the new matter. In case, he would find something erroneous or a mistake, he should forgive me and not account me guilty, for *who can be aware of errors?*⁵⁹ And now, *if I have found favour in the eyes of my lord*,⁶⁰ it is the wish of my soul that this book be accepted before you, and not diminished may be the greatness of my work and the labour of my hands before you, for I have written to my lord because of the great love, which you have for the Hebrew language, for it is after all the teachings of God (תורת ה'), and you know that there is much peace for those, who love His teachings [תורתו]. Thus, I did not add or delete, and I did not change

57 Cf. Nehemiah 13:1.

58 Nehemiah 13:23-24.

59 Psalms 19:13.

60 Cf. Genesis 33:8.

anything in it.⁶¹ The copy, which was before me, was rendered a number of years ago from the Holy Tongue [Hebrew] into the language of Ashkenaz [Yiddish]. I have printed it word for word. Therefore, do not be angry with me. It also should not be evil in the eyes of my lord, for my intention was certainly for good.

“Therefore, I always will implore and call to God that He should establish the house your honour is building and will be worthy to build further buildings. You be fruitful and multiply in wisdom and virtue. So may your name grow and may your throne be exalted to heaven, and obtain peace from the Lord of the world.

“In Augsburg the capital, in the month of Sivan, in the year after the coming of the Messiah, our Saviour, one thousand, five hundred and forty-four, by me, Paulus Aemilius of Rome, your servant and attendant.”

4. Appendix II

Title Pages and Introductions of the Jewish edition:

Humash, Megillot, Haftorot, Augsburg, 1554

1. Title Page

חמשה חומשי תורה עם חמש מגילות שיר השירים רות קהלת איכה מגילת אסתר גם ההפטורות
(sic) בלשון אשכנז

*The Five Books of the Torah / With the Five Scrolls, Song of Songs / Ruth / Ecclesiastes / Lamentations / the Scroll of / Esther, along with the Haftorot / In the language of Ashkenaz.*⁶²

“This Pentateuch is in Yiddish along with everything that belongs to it throughout the whole year. Included are the *Haftorot* for each week. We have them for each Torah portion and, likewise, the *Haftorot* for the festivals, and *the Five Scrolls, Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, the Scroll of Esther*.

All of this is properly and completely translated from an old Pentateuch, written long ago, and now printed in Augsburg.”⁶³

4.2. Introduction

It is noteworthy that in the Jewish edition, there is no *Introduction*. The only explanation of the work and its purpose is the very brief information on the title page.

61 Cf. Deuteronomy 13:1.

62 This section is in Hebrew.

63 These two sections are in Yiddish.

In this edition, the *Haftorot* follow the Torah portion and the special *Haftorot* come at the end of the Pentateuch.

Preceding the Scrolls there is a separate title page that reads:

חמש מגילות שיר השירים רות קהלת איכה מגילת אסתר שיר השירים זאגט מן אם פסח רות זאגט
מן אם שבועות איכה זאגט מן אם תשעה באב קהלת זאגט מן אם סוכות דיא מגילה זאגט מן אם
פורים

*The Five Scrolls, Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations/ the Scroll of Esther/ Song of Songs is recited on Passover./ Ruth is recited on Shavuot./ Lamentations is recited on the Ninth of Ab./ Ecclesiastes is recited on Sukkot./ The Scroll [of Esther] is recited on Purim.*⁶⁴

4.3. Colophon

The colophon is in Hebrew and consists of five verses, each one containing two hemistichs. The last word of each individual verse rhymes in the Hebrew:

Completed and Ended – Praise to the Lord of the World

1. When the printer saw that the work was completed,
He opened his mouth and recited the blessing:
2. Blessed be God who has not forsaken His Mercy,
and gave strength and help to the printer, His servant,
3. to begin and complete the work, in His name.⁶⁵
I know that there is no end to the greatness of His might.
4. I will raise my voice, I will lift up my heart,
to ask for mercy from Him,
5. to undertake works, and to permit the worthy.
Thus, I will begin, with His assistance, to print other books.

⁶⁴ This section is in Yiddish.

⁶⁵ Is this phrase “in His name” a Christological allusion?