

**Zeitschrift:** Judaica : Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentums  
**Herausgeber:** Zürcher Institut für interreligiösen Dialog  
**Band:** 73 (2017)  
  
**Artikel:** Paulus Fagius and the first published Yiddish translation of the Humash  
- Constance, 1544  
**Autor:** Faierstein, Morris M.  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-961025>

### **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:** 03.09.2025

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

# Paulus Fagius and the First Published Yiddish Translation of the *Humash* – Constance, 1544

By Morris M. Faierstein\*

## *Abstract*

*This article examines the first published Yiddish translation of the Humash by Paulus Fagius, a well-known Christian Hebraist of the first half of the sixteenth century. It discusses Fagius' background, his work as a Hebraist and his reasons for publishing this Yiddish text. The previous scholarship on this topic is reviewed and many assumptions that have been accepted as settled are shown to be incorrect or in need of further examination. The central question is what motivated Fagius to publish this work in two versions and who was his intended audience for each edition. My research shows that his primary audience was Christian Hebraists and the "Jewish" edition was a means to pay for the "Christian" edition, as the intended Christian audience was not large enough to cover the financial expenses of publication. The article concludes with translations of the Introductions of both editions that shed much light on Fagius' intentions.*

*Im Mittelpunkt des Artikels steht die erste gedruckte jiddische Übersetzung des Humash von Paulus Fagius, einem bekannten christlichen Hebraisten der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts. Behandelt werden Fagius' Hintergrund, sein Wirken als Hebraist und seine Gründe für die Veröffentlichung des jiddischen Texts. Zugleich wird die vorangegangene Forschung hierzu gesichtet, und manche als bislang sicher angenommene Annahme erweist sich dabei als unzutreffend oder weiterer Untersuchung bedürftig. Die zentrale Frage ist, was Fagius bewogen hat, sein Werk in zwei Versionen zu drucken, und welche Leserkreise er für jede seiner Ausgaben im Blick hatte. Meine Forschung zeigt, dass sein vordringlicher Leserkreis christliche Hebraisten waren, und die „jüdische“ Ausgabe nur dem Zweck diente, Geld für die „christliche“ Ausgabe zu erwirtschaften, da die angenommene christliche Leserschaft nicht zahlreich genug war, die finanziellen Kosten des Drucks zu decken. Der Artikel schliesst mit der Übersetzung der Vorreden beider Drucke, die Fagius' Absichten in neuem Licht erscheinen lassen.*

The sixteenth century was the great age of the printed Bible. Though Gutenberg's Bible is usually considered the first printed book, and many Bibles were published in the fifteenth century, it was the sixteenth century where the importance of the printed Bible reached its apogee. Scholarly editions and polyglot Bibles were prepared, but the most influential innovation was the widespread dissemination of the Bible in the vernacular. Spurred by the Protestant Reformation, the Bible was translated into numerous vernaculars and published in innumerable editions.<sup>1</sup>

---

\* Morris M. Faierstein Ph.D., Research Associate, Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies, University of Maryland; kotsker@yahoo.com.

1 For an overview of the Christian Bible in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, see the appropriate chapters in, STANLEY L. GREENSLADE (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible*:

The Hebrew Bible was also widely printed in a variety of versions, liturgical Bibles,<sup>2</sup> Psalms, and other individual or collected Biblical books. Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907) in his Bodleian catalog lists one hundred and fifty-four items relating to the Hebrew Bible from the beginning of Hebrew printing until 1558.<sup>3</sup> In comparison, Moshe Rosenfeld in his study of the origins of Yiddish printing lists forty-seven books in Yiddish from the first Yiddish printed book in 1536 until 1558.<sup>4</sup> Of these forty-seven books, only fifteen have a connection to the Bible.<sup>5</sup> The remaining books are in a variety of genres. Not only did Yiddish printing begin sixty years after Hebrew printing, but the total number of printed works relating to the Bible in Yiddish was one-tenth the number of the books relating to the Bible printed in Hebrew. In part, this was because the market for Hebrew books was much wider than for Yiddish. The market for Yiddish was primarily in Germany, Poland and Italy, while the market for Hebrew books was worldwide.

The first Yiddish translation of the *Humash* was printed by Paulus Fagius (1504–1549), an important Christian Hebraist and scholar, who was also a publisher and author. He was born in Rheinzabern (near Speyer) where his father was the town clerk. At the age of eleven he was sent to Heidelberg to study at the Neckarschule and afterwards at the university in Heidelberg. He moved to Strasbourg after completing his baccalaureate to study Hebrew with Wolfgang Capito (1478–1541), an important Christian Hebraist of the day. He studied in Strasbourg for five years and then was appointed

---

*The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963. See also, ANDREW PETTEGREE, *The Book in the Renaissance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, Index, s.v., *bibles*.

- 2 The liturgical Bible is a uniquely Jewish construct consisting of those parts of the Bible that are part of the synagogue service. They include, the *Humash*, *Haftorot*, and the five *Megillot*.
- 3 MORITZ STEINSCHNEIDER, *Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana* (Berlin: Friedlander, 1852–1860), nos. 1-154.
- 4 MOSHE N. ROSENFELD, “The Origins of Yiddish Printing,” in: DOVID KATZ (ed.), *Origins of the Yiddish Language*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987, pp. 111-126. The reason for the arbitrary date of 1558 to compare the Hebrew and Yiddish editions of Biblical books is that the list appended to Rosenfeld’s article is the only comprehensive list of printed Yiddish books for the sixteenth century. A comprehensive bibliography of all Yiddish books in the sixteenth century remains an urgent desideratum.
- 5 This number does not include the Yiddish translation of the New Testament (no. 4) and a translation of Job whose existence is doubtful (no. 28).

head of the Latin school in Isny (Allgäu), in 1527. Martin Bucer (1491–1551), the reformer and Strasbourg professor, visited Isny in 1535 and convinced him to complete his theological studies in Strasbourg. Fagius returned to Isny in 1538 and served as pastor until 1543, when he was invited to be pastor in Constance. He stayed in Constance for two years before returning again to Strasbourg in 1546 to replace his former teacher, Wolfgang Capito, as professor of Hebrew. Fagius was forced to leave Strasbourg in 1548 because he, along with a number of other Lutheran Pastors, refused to accept the provisions of the Augsburg Interim agreement promulgated by the Emperor Charles V (1500/1519–1558) after his victory over the armies of the Schmalkaldic League. Fagius accepted an invitation from the University of Cambridge in England in 1549. Shortly after his arrival he succumbed to the plague, and was buried in Cambridge.<sup>6</sup>

Fagius conceived of establishing a printing press upon his return to Isny from Strasbourg in 1538. He convinced some local patricians, notably Ratsherr Paulus Buffler, to support the establishment of a Hebrew press in Isny. Fagius was the first Christian to establish a significant Hebrew press in Germany. Daniel Bomberg (c. 1470/80–1549) had been the first Christian to establish a significant Hebrew press in Venice,<sup>7</sup> which became the most famous and influential Hebrew press of the sixteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Bomberg, whose interest in printing Hebrew books was primarily commercial, Fagius had a specifically religious agenda in the establishment of his press. His mission was to spread the knowledge of Hebrew among Protestant scholars and clergy and also to produce literature in Hebrew that would aid in

---

6 RICHARD RAUBENHEIMER, *Paulus Fagius aus Rheinzabern: Sein Leben und Wirken als Reformator und Gelehrter*, Grunstadt (Pfalz), 1957, is the most comprehensive study of his life. The biographical information is taken from this work. An informative brief overview of Fagius' career as printer and publisher 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. 292-303.

7 ABRAHAM M. HABERMAN, "המדפיס פאולוס באגיוס וספרי בית דפוסו," in: ABRAHAM M. HABERMAN, *פרקים בתולדות המדפיסים העבריים ועניני ספרים*, Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1978, pp. 149-166, esp. p. 150.

8 The classic study of Daniel Bomberg and his press is, DAVID AMRAM, *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy*, Philadelphia: Greenstone, 1909, pp. 146-224. A more recent study is, BRUCE E. NIELSEN, "Daniel van Bombergen, a Bookman of Two Worlds," in: JOSEPH HACKER & ADAM SHEAR (eds.), *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, pp. 56-75.



the missionary efforts to convert the Jews.<sup>9</sup> The majority of the books Fagius published were for Christian Hebraists and their students. One book, *Sefer Amana*, was an explicitly conversionary work in Hebrew aimed at a Jewish audience. Fagius published more than twenty books in Isny, Constance and Strasbourg. He was also the author or translator of the majority of the books that he published.<sup>10</sup>

Fagius visited Augsburg in late 1539,<sup>11</sup> perhaps hoping to invite Hayyim Shachor, the Jewish printer then working in Augsburg, to join him in establishing his press in Isny.<sup>12</sup> We know that Fagius' patron, Ratsherr Buffler, wrote to a number of Jewish scholars in Germany and Italy inviting them to come to Isny to collaborate with Fagius and his press.<sup>13</sup> In the end it was the famous Jewish scholar, Elijah Levita (1469–1549)<sup>14</sup> who accepted the invitation and joined Fagius in Isny to help him with his press that he established in 1540. Levita arrived in Isny at the beginning of December 1540.<sup>15</sup> Bomberg's press in Venice, where Levita had worked and where he had made many significant contributions, had closed in 1538, and this was an opportunity for Levita to publish a number of his own unpublished works. In the year that he spent in Isny Levita was able to publish five of his own books, both Hebrew and Yiddish works. Fagius and Levita had the highest regard for each other as is evident from Levita's Introduction to his *Tishbi*, published in Isny, 1541:

---

9 HABERMAN, "המדפיס פאולוס באגיוס" (note 7), p. 150.

10 HABERMAN, "המדפיס פאולוס באגיוס" (note 7), pp. 153-166, has a detailed bibliography. RAUBENHEIMER, *Paulus Fagius* (note 6), pp. 129-134, also has a bibliography that varies in some ways from that of Haberman. The discrepancy is the result of their differing emphases. Haberman concentrates on the Yiddish and Hebrew works, while Raubenhimer is more concerned with the Latin works, including some that are purely Christian.

11 ROSENFELD, "The Origins of Yiddish Printing" (note 4), p. 112.

12 On Shachor and his press see, ABRAHAM M. HABERMAN, "המדפיס חיים שחור, בנו, יקר יצחק, וחתנו יוסף ב"ר יקר" in: HABERMAN, *פרקים בתולדות המדפיסים העבריים* (note 7), pp. 103-130.

13 ROSENFELD, "The Origins of Yiddish Printing" (note 4), p. 112.

14 The classic work on Levita is GÉRARD E. WEIL, *Élie Levita, Humaniste et Massorete (1469–1549)*, Leiden: Brill, 1963. A more recent study is, DEENA ARANOFF, "Elijah Levita: A Jewish Hebraist," in: *Jewish History* 23 (2009), pp. 17-40.

15 STEPHEN G. BURNETT, "German Jewish Printing in the Reformation Era (1530-1633)," in: DEAN P. BELL & STEPHEN G. BURNETT (eds.), *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth Century Germany* (Studies in Central European histories; vol. 37), Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp. 503-529, esp. p. 506, n. 15.

When I arrived here [at Isny] I examined his barrel and found it to be full of old wine. I had not been told of even half his wisdom and knowledge [...]. In truth, it would be worthy that among his people they should say about him as we say about Moses Maimonides, “From Moses to Moses no one has emerged as Moses.” Similarly, they should say about him “from Paul to Paul, no one has emerged as Paul.” Upon seeing this book that I have composed, its great merit and utility, he hastened to translate it into Latin, which our ancestors called Roman, and he placed the two languages together, page facing page. He did not add or subtract. We agreed to print them together. We shall give careful attention to it, with all of our strength, he from one side, and I from the other. And each of us shall call to our God that we might succeed in our labors. *May the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, may the work of our hands prosper for us, O prosper the work of our hands.* Amen.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship was mutually beneficial. Levita was able to publish a number of his books and Fagius’ knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic and Judaism was enhanced through his association with Levita. Levita returned to Venice at the end of 1541, in part because he found the winters too severe for a seventy year old accustomed to the milder climate of Italy.<sup>17</sup> Levita departed before Fagius published either of his two works on the *Humash* and there is no evidence that he contributed to that project.

In 1543, Fagius published a small book in Constance that consisted of the first four chapters of Genesis, and included the Hebrew text, the Yiddish text on a facing page, and a number of marginal comments clarifying specific words.<sup>18</sup> The long title of the work explains its purpose and intended audience.

Paulus Fagius

‘A Concise Method for Reading Hebrew-German,’

from: *The First Four Chapters of Genesis in Hebrew with a Translation in the German Dialect, Written in the Hebrew Alphabet, according to the Customary Literal Interpretation of the Jews, together with Concise comments Added at the end, for Students of the Hebrew Language* (1543)<sup>19</sup>

---

16 *Tishbi* (Isny, 1541), Hebrew introduction. The English translation is from ARANOFF, “Elijah Levita” (note 14), pp. 23-24.

17 RAUBENHEIMER, *Paulus Fagius* (note 6), p. 27. WEIL, *Élie Levita* (note 14), p. 143, suggests that Levita had already left Isny when Fagius was called to Strasbourg in November of 1541.

18 For bibliographical details, see ROSENFELD, “The Origins of Yiddish Printing” (note 4), p. 122, no. 10.

19 The original text is in Latin. The English translation is taken from, JEROLD

It consisted of the Hebrew text, a Yiddish translation, marginal notes, and an extensive Latin commentary.<sup>20</sup> He writes in the Introduction that this book was intended for Christian students studying the Bible in Hebrew. He reasoned that since Yiddish was more or less German written in the Hebrew alphabet, with the addition of Hebrew religious terms, a Yiddish translation of Torah would be a transitional work helping the budding Christian Hebraist more quickly acquire a knowledge of Hebrew. When he saw that this was successful, he decided to make it more accessible to a wider audience. He also added a brief explanation of how to read Yiddish. At the end of his Introduction, he mentions that he hoped to publish a Yiddish edition of the whole *Humash* in the near future.<sup>21</sup> It is noteworthy that the Yiddish text and the marginal comments in the 1543 abbreviated work are identical to the text found in the later Constance full edition of the Yiddish *Humash*.

Fagius published the full *Humash* the next year. He published it in two versions, one for a Jewish audience and the other for a Christian audience. Fagius' edition was primarily based on a transcription of a Yiddish manuscript translation, which is known as a "טייטש חומש" *teitsch Humash*.<sup>22</sup> There are a number of manuscripts extant from the 15<sup>th</sup> century that could have served as Fagius' source.<sup>23</sup> The "*teitsch Humash*" is a traditional Yiddish translation that incorporates glosses and comments that were added to the text when it was taught to children. These additional glosses and comments were also known by the Hebrew term, "חיבור" *hibbur*. Two illustrative examples: "Noah was a righteous man" [Genesis, 6:9]. The translation with *hibbur* would be – Noah was a righteous man in his generation, but in Abraham's generation he would not have been considered righteous. In the story of Joseph and his brothers, "The pit was empty; there was no water in it" [Genesis, 37:24]. The translation with *hibbur* would be – the pit was empty; there was no water in it, but it contained snakes and scorpions. These *hibbur* comments

---

FRAKES, *The Cultural Study of Yiddish in Early Modern Europe*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 101.

20 *Prima quatuor capita geneseos Hebraice, cum versione Germanica è regione, Hebraicis tamen characteribus exarata, eaque juxta usitatam judaeorum interpretationem ad verbu translata, unà cum succinctis in fine adiectis scholiis, pro studiosis linguae Hebraicae, Constantiae [Konstanz], 1543.*

21 MAX WEINREICH, שטאַפּלען פֿיר עטיודן צו דער ייִדישער שפּראַכֿוויסנשאַפֿט און ליטעראַטור - געשיכטע, Berlin: Farlag Vostok, 1923, p. 97.

22 Fagius' additions and revisions will be discussed below.

23 A study of this manuscript tradition remains an important desideratum.

were mostly taken from comments by Rashi or other traditional commentaries.<sup>24</sup> This mode of *Humash* study and translation was already found in medieval Ashkenaz and continued well into the twentieth century in traditional *heders* and *yeshivas* where the language of instruction was still Yiddish.<sup>25</sup>

It was not unusual for Fagius to publish a book for a Jewish and a Christian audience in the context of the times. Christians publishing books for a Jewish market was common. In many places Jews were not allowed to own presses and Christians would hire Jews as editors or typesetters to publish books for the Jewish market. The same publisher might also publish another version of the same book for a Christian audience, primarily Christian Hebraists. The most famous example of this was the “Great Rabbinic Bible” [מקראות גדולות *Miqraot Gedolot*] first published in 1517 by Daniel Bomberg in Venice. The only differences between the two versions were the contents of the Title Page and Introduction. The Jewish version was addressed to Jews in Hebrew and the Christian version addressed to Christian Hebraists in Latin. The Biblical text and commentaries were left in their original form and not changed. Publishers like Bomberg, who printed Jewish books for commercial reasons did not have serious problems with accusations of Judaizing, but many Christian Hebraists had to deal with accusations of Judaizing and becoming a heretic. A standard defense was that one was studying Hebrew or publishing Jewish books in order to better understand how to missionize to the Jews and bring them to the true faith.<sup>26</sup>

Like Bomberg, Fagius, published two versions of his *Humash*, one with a German Title Page and Introduction, aimed at an audience of Christian Hebraists, and a second one with a Hebrew Title Page and a Yiddish Introduction, aimed at a Jewish audience. These two versions differed only in the title page, Introduction and colophon. The full texts of these Introductions will be found below. How does one understand Fagius’ motivation in publishing

---

24 Basic studies of this translation method are, NOKHEM SHTIF (Baal-Dimyön), “דער טייטש חומש צו דער געשיכטע פון דער יידישער ליטעראטור,” in: *Di Zukunft* 29 (1924), pp. 568-573. CHAVA TURNIANSKY, “חומש מיט – חומש-חומש – חומש מיט,” in: עיונים בספרות: דברים שנאמרו בערב לכבוד דב סדן במלאת לו שמונים וחמש שנה, Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences, 1988, pp. 21-58.

25 SHLOMO NOBLE describes the history of this method of instruction in, חומש טייטש, אן אויספארשונג וועגן דער טראדיציע פון טייטשן חומש אין די חדרים, New York: YIVO, 1943.

26 JEROME FRIEDMAN, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983, pp. 178-263.

the Yiddish *Humash*, particularly in light of the two versions that were printed? The only difference was in the respective Introductions, where the content and tone were radically different. The question is, which edition was the priority and which was the afterthought? Did Fagius publish his *Humash* primarily as a text for Christian Hebraists and missionaries, and the Jewish version was a secondary product printed to help defray the cost of the Christian edition or vice versa?

Nokhem Shtif (1879–1933) and Max Weinreich (1894–1969) examined the same evidence and reached opposite conclusions. Shtif argued that Fagius was primarily interested in the commercial possibilities of publishing a *Humash* for Jews and the edition with the German preface was a front to hide behind. He wanted to protect himself from the charge of Judaizing, which had been hurled at many of the Christian Hebraists in the first half of the sixteenth century. For Shtif, the primary audience were the Jews and not the Christian scholars and missionaries.<sup>27</sup>

Max Weinreich reached conclusions that are the opposite of Shtif. For Weinreich, the Christian edition was the primary one and the true reason for Fagius' publication of the *Humash*. The publication of the Jewish edition was a commercial decision. The audience of Christian Hebraists and missionaries was not large enough to cover the cost of an edition just for them. Thus, the Jewish edition was designed to subsidize the Christian edition. Weinreich offered further evidence to support his perspective. He asked: why would Fagius, a pious Christian clergyman, be concerned about Jews in rural areas being able to teach the *Humash* to their children? This was the primary reason given for publishing the Jewish edition. It makes no sense as a reason for him to publish a book for this purpose. On the other hand, the reasons mentioned in the German preface make a great deal of sense and are in accord with Fagius' other publications and his career as a pastor and Christian Hebraist. Jerold Frakes in his study of the interest in Yiddish by Christian Humanists has reexamined the evidence regarding Fagius and his Yiddish publications. His conclusions are in accord with those of Weinreich.<sup>28</sup>

The best evidence for Fagius' intentions in publishing this *Humash* are his own words in the German Introduction, where he explains his intentions in great detail. The following two extracts highlight the primary reasons that

---

27 SHTIF, "דער טייטש חומש" (note 24), pp. 568-569.

28 FRAKES, *The Cultural Study of Yiddish* (note 19), pp. 23-31. The relationship between Christian Hebraists and Yiddish is explored more fully in: AYA ELYADA, *A Goy Who Speaks Yiddish: Christians and the Jewish Language in Early Modern Germany*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.



Fagius gives to his Christian readers that motivated him to publish this work. The first reason is to show Christians what the Jews believe and that Christians have the better and truer Bible. The second reason, which applies more to the Jewish version, was to make the Biblical text available in the Jewish vernacular so that it would encourage Jews to read the Bible instead of studying the Talmud. It was his hope that this would bring Jews closer to the truths of Christianity. Jews would not read anything in the Christian alphabet, thus necessitating the publication of a Bible in the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>29</sup> Fagius writes:

One might wonder, not unjustly about my promotion of this Jewish Bible that is being brought out now. Are there not enough good Bibles to be found? Rather, one must first deposit the Jewish drool on this important holy book of the Bible, and must also guzzle it. These people should know that this has not been done without important reasons. The first is because the Jews unashamedly shout and put forth whether we Christians do not have a correct, complete and true Bible. With this, the lay, unlearned, ordinary, and simple Christians are caused to have doubts, errors, and become uneasy. Some goodhearted people asked me if it was possible to do this, since the Jews used to translate the Bible from the Hebrew. With this, one might see if they or we Christians have the purer and better Bible. I have pleased those who requested it, and as a test have published the Five Books of Moses, and the others that they call the Five Scrolls. These are Solomon's Song of Songs, Ruth, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, Ecclesiastes of Solomon, and the Book of Esther, presented in every measure, way and form how the Jews have translated it for common usage.

The other reason for publishing this Jewish Bible is this. It is not to be hoped at this time that the poor, pitiful Jewish people might be helped, but they might again turn to Holy Scriptures, and study them earnestly, wherein they might also know the Lord Christ, as is shown in John, 5. Search in the Scriptures, they testify on my behalf.<sup>30</sup> I consulted carefully and with much advice with several good hearted people who contributed financially to publish this Bible, so that perhaps the ordinary person, who has been misled by the rabbis, and through this might be caused to read the Bible more, and might become more removed from other books of fables and lies. Even though I would rather see that they would read other Bibles that are better, and which we have in our times (God be praised). However, unfortunately I know all too well the stubbornness of this poor, pitiful people, who do not read what is not made in their script.<sup>31</sup> It

---

29 The full text of his Introduction can be found below.

30 John, 5:39.

31 A reference to the well-known idea that Jews in the early modern period did not normally read works in the Latin alphabet. It was called "גלוקבס" *galokbes* [Christian clerical script].



is forbidden by their rabbis to read anything other than their books. May they soon be helped with this.

Another feature unique to the Constance edition, but not repeated in the two other sixteenth century editions of the *Humash* are the annotations on the margins of the page. The Augsburg Humash edition by Paulus Aemilius has no marginal annotations;<sup>32</sup> while the Cremona Humash edition by Loeb Bresch (i.e. Judah Loeb ben Moses Naphtali, called Leyb Brześć) has annotations based the commentary of Rashi on one side of the page and Midrashic comments on the other side of the page.<sup>33</sup> Aemilius published two editions of his Humash, one for Jews and one for Christian Hebraists, but unlike Fagius he had no history of involvement in conversionary efforts. When one examines his work as a printer and publisher, it is clear that his motivation was to sell books to Jews, and his Christian edition was more likely a means of protecting himself from charges of Judaizing, particularly as he was a convert from Judaism to Catholicism. Bresch, who was a Jewish printer working in Italy, only published an edition aimed at a Jewish market.

An examination of the glosses in Fagius' edition shows that they are on specific words or phrases. The word or phrase is enclosed in parentheses and a brief comment or explanation is found as a gloss in the margin. Each gloss begins with an abbreviation that indicates the source of the gloss. This preliminary examination of the glosses in the first few chapters in Genesis shows that they are drawn from four sources. Three of the sources are, Rashi, David Kimchi, and Abraham Ibn Ezra, three of the classic medieval Jewish commentators on the Torah.<sup>34</sup> The fourth would seem to be anonymous; it is, "some say" [יש אומרים]. An examination of several of these glosses leads to the conclusion that these references may be from Martin Luther's German Bible translation. Additionally, the glosses are also found

---

32 Concerning Aemilius and his edition of the Humash see, MORRIS M. FAIERSTEIN, "Paulus Aemilius, Convert to Catholicism and Printer of Yiddish Books in Sixteenth Century Augsburg," in: *Judaica: Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentums* 71 (2015), pp. 349-365.

33 Concerning Loeb Bresch and his edition of the Humash see, EDWARD FRAM, "Some Preliminary Observations on the First Published Translation of Rashi's Commentary on the Pentateuch in Yiddish (Cremona, 1560)," in: *Hebrew Union College Annual* 86 (2016), pp. 305-342.

34 It is worth noting that the commentaries of David Kimchi and Abraham Ibn Ezra were of the medieval Spanish school that emphasized rational explanations and grammatical questions. They were not particularly popular among Early Modern Ashkenazi Jews, but were closer to the type of questions favored by Christian biblical scholars.

in Fagius' earlier publication of the first four chapters of Genesis, and are identical to the glosses found in the 1544 *Humash*.<sup>35</sup>

Everything about these glosses reinforces the earlier conclusion that Fagius' primary audience was Christian Hebraists and students, and the Jewish version was a commercial endeavor to support the Christian edition. He favored the Spanish commentators who were more interested in stylistic and grammatical issues, rather than the midrashic exposition that was favored in Ashkenazi Jewish society and was the core of the "*Teitsch Humash*" tradition. The conclusive evidence is the reliance on the Luther translation, something that would be anathema to Jews. The gloss to Genesis, 1:22, is a particularly illustrative example of his use of Luther's translation. The word to be glossed in Hebrew is "ויברך" (*va-yevarekh*), "He blessed". The Yiddish translation is "ער בענטשט" (*er bentsht*), the standard Yiddish term. The gloss is, "some say, *er segnet*", the way one says it in German, and the term used in Luther's Bible. The word "*bentsht*" would be immediately understandable by any Jew and is the standard Yiddish term even in modern Yiddish. However, it would be difficult for a Christian, since it is not German and also not a pure Hebrew word. Thus, it needed explanation for someone who did not have direct contact with Jews.

Another question that has been the subject of discussion is whether Fagius published the *Humash* by himself or did he have the assistance of a Jew or a Jewish convert to Christianity? The unspoken assumption underlying this question was the idea that Fagius did not have sufficient knowledge to prepare this book by himself, and he could only have done it with the assistance of a Jew or a convert. The Jews who were put forth were Elijah Levita or the convert, Michael Adam. Shabbetai Bass (1641–1718), the seventeenth century bibliographer, based the connection to Levita on a misunderstanding of the colophon of the "Jewish" version of the Constance edition. He writes in his bibliographical work, שפתי ישנים (*Siftei yesenim*), "Copied/translated (העתק) by Rabbi Eliyahu Bahur in the language of Ashkenaz (Yiddish). Printed in Constancia, in the year 1544."<sup>36</sup> This comment was the result of his misreading a comment in the colophon, which states, "So says Elijah ha-Levi", followed by an excerpt from Levita's book, *Tishbi*, giving the definition of the term *Haftorah*. Some later authors quoted Bass, without further examination of the sources. However, Levita left Isny two years before the publication of the *Humash*, and Bass' misunderstanding is

---

35 Concerning this work, see above.

36 SHABBETAI BASS, שפתי ישנים, Amsterdam, 1680, p. 86, no. 61.

the only source to connect him to the *Humash*. Thus, there is no reason to connect Levita to Fagius' publication of the *Humash*.

Much more widespread and more firmly established is the perception that Michael Adam,<sup>37</sup> a Jewish convert to Reformed Christianity who lived in Zurich and elsewhere, was Fagius' assistant in publishing his *Humash*, and there are even suggestions that he was the translator. It is also suggested that Adam may have had a connection to two Yiddish books published in 1546 by Christoph Froschauer (c. 1490–1564) in Zürich, the *Sefer Yossipon* and the *Sefer ha-Yirah*.<sup>38</sup> One can even call it the “conventional wisdom” and it is found in all of the surveys of Early Yiddish literature. The primary evidence for this view is a statement by the famous Christian Hebraist Johann Christoph Wolf (1683–1739), in his *Bibliographia Hebraea*. Wolf quoted a statement by Conrad Gesner (1516–1565), a contemporary of Adam's who also lived in Zurich, who wrote in his, *Bibliographia Universalis – Pandectarum Sive Partitionum uniuersalium*,<sup>39</sup> that Michael Adam was the translator of the Constance *Humash*. Wolf adds that Adam's name is not found in the work because Adam feared that the appearance of his name would hurt sales in the Jewish book market.<sup>40</sup>

The first one to question Wolf's assertion was Moritz Steinschneider. He suggested that that Adam had no connection to Fagius' *Humash* edition, but did not provide supporting evidence.<sup>41</sup> Nokhem Shtif in his article,

---

37 For a summary of what is known about Michael Adam's biography see, CLEMENS P. SIDORKO, “The Most Beautiful Printed Book in Old Yiddish” – Zum Bildschmuck des Zürcher *Sefer Yosippon* von 1546,” in: *Judaica: Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentums* 72 (2016), pp. 1-48, esp. pp. 4-6.

38 CLEMENS P. SIDORKO, “Zürich und der hebräische Buchdruck in der Frühen Neuzeit – eine verpasste Gelegenheit?” in: *Judaica: Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentums* 69 (2013), pp. 109-137. Concerning Froschauer and his press see, PAUL LEEMAN-VAN ELCK. *Die Offizin Froschauer, Zürichs berühmte Druckerei im 16. Jahrhundert*, Zurich: Orell Füssli Verlag, 1939. The most recent studies of the Yiddish *Sefer Yossipon* are, SIDORKO, “The Most Beautiful Printed Book in Old Yiddish” (note 37), pp. 1-48; SIDORKO, “Zürich und der hebräische Buchdruck” (note 38), pp. 113-124; SASKIA DÖNITZ, “Josephus im jiddischen Gewand – die jiddische Übersetzung des *Sefer Yosippon*,” in: *Aschkenas* 25 (2015), pp. 53-61.

39 Zurich, 1548. Wolf cites, Book XXI, vol. 1, p. 92, as the source. I was not able to verify this citation.

40 JOHANN CHRISTOPH WOLF, *Bibliotheca Hebraea*, 4 vols., Hamburg / Leipzig: Christian Liebezeit / Theodor Christoph Felginer, 1715-1733, vol. IV, pp. 193-194.

41 MORITZ STEINSCHNEIDER, “Hebräische Drucke in Deutschland,” in: *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 1 (1887), pp. 281-287, esp. pp. 286-287.

“מיכאָעל אַדאַמס דריי יידישע ביכער” (*Michael Adam’s Three Yiddish Books*), is the strongest advocate for Michael Adam’s role in the Constance *Humash*.<sup>42</sup> He did modify Gesner’s statement somewhat, since he had argued in an earlier article that the texts of the three sixteenth century editions of the Yiddish *Humash* are essentially the same, based on the earlier “*Teitsch Humash*.”<sup>43</sup> Rather than calling him the translator, Shtif made him the editor.<sup>44</sup> Shtif assumed that Adam was also responsible for two other books published in Zurich in 1546, the *Sefer Yossipon* and the *Sefer ha-Yirah*.<sup>45</sup> He then attempted to show through a careful philological analysis of the vocabulary, style and grammar of the three works that they were the work of the same author. It is beyond the purview of this study to evaluate Shtif’s method and results. However, it should be noted that Shtif cited no direct evidence to demonstrate his claims of editorship for Adam, beyond his own philological analysis.

Max Weinreich raised questions about the extent of Adam’s participation in the project. He suggested that the earlier edition of the *First Four Chapters of Genesis* (Constance, 1543) demonstrated Fagius’ ability to publish the *Humash* without outside assistance.<sup>46</sup> Thus, an obvious question was, if Fagius was capable of editing and publishing the work alone, what did Michael Adam do to make him, the “editor” of this work? One could further ask, is there any evidence that connects Adam with Fagius and his edition of the *Humash* other than Wolf’s citation of the passage in Gesner?

Christoph Zürcher, in the course of his biographical study of Konrad Pellikan (1478–1556), the sixteenth century Christian Hebraist active in Zürich, has uncovered significant new information about Michael Adam that gives us a better picture of who he was and what he did.<sup>47</sup> In 1538, Pellikan wrote Wolfgang Capito in Strasbourg asking him if he could obtain a complete set of the Talmud for him. Capito not only sent him the set of Talmud, but also sent along a teacher to help him, the Jewish convert Michael Adam.

---

42 NOKHEM SHTIF, “מיכאָעל אַדאַמס דריי יידישע ביכער,” in: פּילאָלאָגישע שריפטן (YIVO) 2 (1928), pp. 135-168.

43 SHTIF, “דער טייטש חומש” (note 24), pp. 568.

44 SHTIF, “מיכאָעל אַדאַמס דריי יידישע ביכער” (note 42), p. 137.

45 See above, note 38.

46 WEINREICH, שטאַפּלען (note 21), p. 97.

47 CHRISTOPH ZÜRCHER, *Konrad Pellikans Wirken in Zürich 1526-1556*, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975, pp. 169-174. Zürchers main sources in this section are Pellikan’s diary and letters that he sent or received from others, with one significant exception, as we will see below.

Pellikan studied Talmud with Adam, but complained that Adam did not know Latin and this made things more difficult, as Pellikan had to transcribe the notes into Latin himself.<sup>48</sup> In July 1538 Pellikan received a letter from Johannes Zwick from Constance asking him to “strengthen his soul in Christ.”<sup>49</sup> In December of that year Pellikan heard from Paulus Fagius in Isny, who said, “I am very happy that Michael, my Hebrew, is staying with you.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, he was known to Fagius and Zwick, and may have been converted by them or at least had connections to both of them and may have been a native of that region. In the end of 1539 and the first half of 1540, Adam stayed with Fagius in Isny.<sup>51</sup> From then until 1546 his whereabouts and activities are not known. In that year Froschauer publishes his two Yiddish books, *Sefer ha-Yirah* and *Yossipon* with the contribution of Adam. It is not clear when Adam left Zürich, but he is found in Basel in 1550. He went to Sebastian Münster and demanded a guarantee of two Kronen to work with him. However, Münster wrote Pellikan that he did not want to throw away this money for such a good for nothing. His further whereabouts are unknown.<sup>52</sup>

Reading between the lines, it would seem that Adam did not make a particularly strong scholarly impression on his would be benefactors, since he seems to have been passed off from one to another. Had he been a serious scholar, he would have been treated very differently. The departure date of Adam and the arrival of Elijah Levita to work with Paulus Fagius also point to this conclusion. This would also explain why Fagius was so happy to find Elijah Levita as a collaborator. He would not have needed him if Adam were a scholar of any serious learning. Most likely Adam was like a number of other converts who are known to have had a basic Jewish education who tried to “sell” themselves as experts in Judaism for the Christian Hebraist community.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the best known Jewish convert of the first half of the sixteenth century, Anthonius Margharita, has been considered a learned Jew before his conversion and his writings often quoted as a reliable source. When a Jewishly knowledgeable scholar examined his writings, his

---

48 ZÜRCHER, *Konrad Pellikans* (note 47), p. 171.

49 Adam was the one whose soul needed strengthening.

50 ZÜRCHER, *Konrad Pellikans* (note 47), p. 170.

51 ZÜRCHER, *Konrad Pellikans* (note 47), p. 173.

52 ZÜRCHER, *Konrad Pellikans* (note 47), pp. 173-174.

53 ELISHEVA CARLEBACH's important study, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500-1750*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, has many examples of similar types.



translations were found to be full of mistakes. This would also explain his lack of success as a teacher of Hebrew to Christian Hebraists and students.<sup>54</sup>

This brings us back to the question of Adam's participation in Fagius' publication of the *Humash*. An examination of Fagius' other publications shows that there is no reason to assume that he needed a collaborator. Rather, he was quite capable of publishing this edition of the *Humash* without the assistance of a Jewish "expert". Without new evidence one must conclude Michael Adam did not contribute to Fagius' *Humash* edition. Rather, the comment in Gesner could well have been nothing more than an idle boast by Michael Adam. He may well have worked with Leo Jud (1482–1542) and Christoph Froschauer on their respective publications, but in what capacity? He might have been a typesetter or fulfilled some other function. However, without some further evidence it would be difficult to argue that he was the translator of the *Sefer Yosippon* or *Sefer ha-Yirah*. Both were learned works and would have required a translator of substantial Jewish learning, which does not appear to describe Michael Adam and his level of rabbinic knowledge and abilities in Hebrew. A good starting point would be a careful comparison of the Hebrew originals with the Yiddish editions attributed to Michael Adam. This and further archival research might lead to clarification of the conundrum that was Michael Adam.

Another common misperception about Michael Adam is that he may have been the same person as Leo Jud, who was active in Zurich and printed three editions of the German Bible. Joseph Perles was the first to suggest this identification.<sup>55</sup> However, this is impossible, since Leo Jud (1482–1542), despite his Jewish sounding name was born a Christian and was a significant figure in the Swiss Reformation.<sup>56</sup> In addition, Adam worked with Jud on the printing of the third edition of Jud's German Bible edition.<sup>57</sup>

---

54 This question has been explored by MARIA DIEMLING, "Anthonius Margaritha on the 'Whole Jewish Faith': A Sixteenth-Century Convert from Judaism and his Depiction of the Jewish Religion," in: DEAN P. BELL & STEPHEN G. BURNETT (eds.), *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth Century Germany*, Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp. 303-333.

55 JOSEPH PERLES, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hebräischen und Aramäischen Studien*, München: Ackermann, 1884, p. 164.

56 Concerning his biography and work see, BRUCE GORDON, *The Swiss Reformation*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, index, s.v. *Leo Jud*.

57 ZÜRCHER, *Konrad Pellikans* (note 47), p. 173.



## APPENDIX

### I. *The Title Page and Introduction to the Jewish Edition of the Constance Humash.*

The Jewish version had no author listed on the title page. The Title page is in Hebrew. The Introduction is in Yiddish. The Introduction is in two parts. The first part explains why he has published the translation and its uses for a Jewish audience. The basic ideas and motivations expressed in the first part of the Introduction are drawn from the Introduction the first Yiddish book, the *מרכבת המשנה* (*Mirkevet ha-Mishneh*) (Cracow, 1534–35), which is a bilingual Hebrew/Yiddish Biblical concordance.<sup>58</sup> The second part of the Introduction that is not translated here is a basic explanation of Hebrew grammar. It is also copied from the Introduction of the *Mirkevet ha-Mishneh*. Fagius also copied this grammatical Introduction in his earlier publication of the first four chapters of Genesis (Constance, 1543).<sup>59</sup>

Though the Introduction is intended for a Jewish audience, several elements intrude that betray the editor's Christian Hebraist background. The paragraph where he explains that names will be in their Hebrew form is something that would be self-evident to any Jewish reader, even one not particularly knowledgeable. This is a standard convention. They are never written in any other form, even in Yiddish. The same is true Yiddish terms that are Hebrew in origin, such as the religious vocabulary. Additionally, the glosses that he introduces and mentions are irrelevant for the reader of the *Teitsch Humash* and go against the concept of this *Humash*. The glosses are incorporated into the translation of the text in such a way that they form a seamless whole, making external glosses unnecessary.

#### 1. *Title Page*

The Five Books of the Torah with the Five Scrolls and the *Haftorot*, properly explained, with much consideration, from Hebrew to the language of Ashkenaz [Yiddish], and printed here in Costanzia the capital, in the year [5]304 [1544], of creation.

*“No longer will they need to teach one another and say to one another, heed the Lord, for all of them, from the least of them to the greatest, shall heed Me – declares the Lord”* [Jeremiah, 31:33].

*“He issued His commands to Jacob, His statutes and rules to Israel. He did not do so for any other nation; of such rules, they know nothing”* [Psalms, 147:19-20].

---

58 On the *Mirkevet ha-Mishneh* see, CHONE SHMERUK, ספרות יידיש בפולין, Jerusalem: Magnes: 1981, pp. 75-76 n. 1; JEROLD FRANKS, *Early Yiddish Texts 1100-1750*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 174-176 no. 40.

59 WEINREICH, שטאַפלען (note 21), p. 116.

# חמשה חומשי תורה עם חמש מגלות וחהפטרות מפורשים בא

היטב ברוב העיון מלשח עברי ללשח  
אשכנזי ונדפס פה קונסטאנציה  
הבירה שנת דש  
ליצור

לא ילמדו פה אדם את דעה ואדם את דעה ולא ילמדו פה אדם את דעה כי כלם ידעו  
לשונם פה גרמלם כלם ידעו

מגיד דבריו ליעקב ויעקב שמואל לישראל : לא נססו כל גוי ונכחשו  
בל ידעו

אב

אב

*ḥamišša ḥumše Tora 'im  
ḥameš megillot we-haftarot meforašim be'er  
beṭev be-rov ha-'iyyun mi-lašon 'ivri le-lašon  
aškenazi we-nidpas poh Qonstanšia  
ha-bira šenat dš  
li-yešira*

## 2. Yiddish Introduction [English translation]

We have seen in our time that the hearts diminish, from day to day, in their understanding and knowledge, as our sages said, “*the hearts of the ancients were like the doors of the Temple [...] the hearts of the last generations are like the eye of a needle.*”<sup>60</sup> In Yiddish this is, the hearts and understanding of the early generations were as wide as the doors of the Temple, and the hearts of the later generations were like the eye of a needle. In addition, we see that the communities, because of our many sins, are constantly declining and are being destroyed because of the frequent expulsions. Where we previously found communities, we now find, because of our many sins and these expulsions, the householders have to dwell in villages. Not everyone can afford to hire a teacher to teach his children. As a result, the ignorance has grown. Therefore, we were moved to print the *Humash* with the *Five Scrolls* and *Haftorot* in Yiddish, in the same way that some learned Jews and rabbis translated it from Hebrew into Yiddish. We have added glosses and versions.<sup>61</sup> We have compared them all and took from them those that we thought were most appropriate for the verse. Woe to the one whose intellect is limited. This book is comparable to the whole Bible<sup>62</sup> and this can easily be seen.

Thus, each householder, who can only read Yiddish, can teach his children himself and explain the *Humash* to them. Therefore, we also added many glosses that were before us and that were in Hebrew and we translated them, word for word, so that the householder and the ordinary uneducated teachers will be better able to teach the *Humash* and the other books more easily.

Where we found variant interpretations and Yiddish translations for some words, we have noted them in the margins of the page. With this, where someone does not like an interpretation or a translation of a particular word, he can choose an alternate one. Yet, we have endeavored to have the Hebrew translated in the text in its plain meaning, which is the most similar or most customary. Rabbi Solomon, of blessed memory,<sup>63</sup> was followed as he interpreted the *Twenty-Four* [books of the *TaNakh*]. Those words where we found more than one translation, we put two half moons around them and noted the other translation in the margins. Also, where we found words that might be hard or difficult to understand, we have

---

60 bEruvin 53a.

61 A reference to the glosses on the side margin that consist of short notes and alternate translations of words.

62 The term used here is “עשרים וארבע” (*esrim ve-arba*), literally the *Twenty-Four*, a traditional term for the whole Hebrew Bible [*TaNakh*].

63 Better known by his acronym, Rashi.

placed in the margin the commentary of Rashi, Ibn Ezra or RaDaK and how they interpret it.<sup>64</sup>

One should also know that in this book, some names of men, women, lands, cities, etc. or similar things that are customary and known to be written in their Hebrew form, such as, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel, Moses Er, Haran, etc.; Flood, Sabbath, Cohen, *Mishkan* [Tabernacle], Altar, *Yovel* [Jubilee], Bride, etc. With the word “*please*” [Na], we followed the *Targum*. Where he translates it as asking, we have also translated it that way. Where he translates it as presently, we have also translated it in this way. Everyone who reads this book and has a question about this can look into the *Targum* and compare. It should also be known that where the two names, YHVH *Elohim* or YHVH YHYH are next to each other, we have translated the first name YHVH as *Herr*, a term of Lordship, and *Elohim*, as God. In this way there will be a distinction between YHVH and *Elohim*. Also, where there is the need in the whole *Esrim ve-Arba*, when one finds YHVH YHVH next to each other, one reads it as *Adonai Elohim*. The first name is a term of Lordship.

This book is also good for the women and girls who can read Yiddish well, but they spend their time with foolish books like Dietrich von Bern, Hildebrandt, and similar books. They are nothing but lies and are earthly things. These same women and girls can read this *Humash* and have their amusement, and unlike the other is the pure, clear truth. Through this, they will also attain greater fear of Heaven when they will read and hear how the Holy One, blessed be He, dealt with our ancestors and performed miracles for them. He always punished those who committed transgressions, but the other ones, who kept His commandments; he rewarded them with everything good. Also, the women who are in the synagogue and hear the cantor read the weekly portion in the Torah, they will be able to read in the Yiddish *Humash* the same portion and the *Haftorah*, and attune their hearts for the sake of Heaven, along with the cantor. However, since no person is so righteous and wholehearted, “*who does what is best and does not err*” [Ecclesiastes, 7:20]. Thus, we ask everyone who reads this book and finds mistakes, he should judge us positively and understand that this book is acceptable and find favor in the eyes of its many readers, and that we have created it and printed it. We intend to soon bring to print, the other books of the whole *Twenty-Four*, such as the Early and latter Prophets, the Writings, etc.

---

64 Ibn Ezra is Abraham Ibn Ezra; Radak is Rabbi David Kimchi. All are important medieval commentaries.

# הקדמה

# זיטבאל

**זיטמאל**  
ווייזען דאס זיך די הערצן בון טאן צו טאן ווינדרן אין  
דעם ורשטאנד אונז אין דער וויסנהייט וויא אויך אונזער  
כחמים נייאנט הבן אבות האטונשים היז כספתו של אולם \* לבנות האחרונים  
כחטט של סרקית דאס איז צו טייטש דאס הערצן דער אירשטן דורען די זיין וו  
ורשטענדיג. ה"ב ווייט אונז אז די טור בון דעם אולם \* אונז די הערצן דער  
ביז קומען דורען די זיין גלייך ווא אין אורן וואלן בון איינער שניידר גאל \* צו  
דעם דאס ווייזען דאס די קהילות בעבות הרבים אונז אימדרר אבנעמן אונז צו  
שטערט ווערן דורך וואלפאטיג גירושים די וואו וואו בור זייןט הט זעהן קהילות  
ניכערן נבינט וואו איז נדר קום איינע בעה אונז דורך מאלץ גירושים ווערן די  
בעלי הבתים נביטיגט מוין דען דורערן צו זיין אונז איז אבר נישט אין איינע אטאל-  
ור מוין די ער קין אין ווארד האטן דער אים זיינע קינד ארענט דא דורך דען  
גרושע עס הארנים דר וואלסן דאס זיין ווייזען ווארן די ווייזען דעם חושש  
חושש מילת הפסדה צו דייטש גערוקט האבן וויא די זעלבנע אטאל-ניאטערי  
יהודים מ"ב רבנים איזט אשון הקדש אן אשון אשכנזי ור דייטשט הבן אונז דווי-  
וויא דא העתקת א"ב נוסחאות ב' איז נכדד נהפס הבן וויא זי א"ב אונז גלייך אונז  
דא דין געווארן דא אונז גלייך דעם ספר אס און גלייכשטן זיין וואו דאן אין  
איינלייך דער בור אין וואנען שכל הט אונז דין ספר גלייך דעם עשרים וארבע  
העט איינלייך זעהן קאן \* אונז דין בון אין איינלייך בעל הבית דער בור דייטש  
אין קאן זיינע קינדד גאלב וואו גלייך אונז איינע חושש צו ור שטין נעבן דאס  
ווייזען דאס ווייזען העתקת די ווייזען בור אונז גאלבט געווארן האבן דא איזט דעם  
אשון הקדש וואו באלא הייז ור דייטש געווען די אייזען דאס אונז די טעכטע  
איינפאל ג' ווארדים דא קינדד די חושש אונז די אנדערע ספרים דעשטער איינלייך  
אערן מוין \* אונז וואו ווייזען אונז איינלייך אונז איינלייך פירוש א"ב דייטש נכדד  
האבן הבן ווייזען די זעלבנע גלייך הספר אונז גלייך דא איזט וואו איינע עטוואן אין  
פירוש א"ב דייטש אונז אין ווארט נישט געאלט וואו ער אין אנדערש געווארן  
דורך האבן ווייזען אונז ביזאסן אים פנים די דייטש צו זיין די דעם עברי כספוטו  
אס גלייך שטן א"ב דאס ברייטלייכשטן איז אונז גלייך גלייך רבי טוהה צו ביז  
נכדד וויא ער מוין די עשרים וארבע ווייזען גלייך \* א"ב א"ב וואו אונז ווייזען  
הייז דאן אין דייטש נכדדד האבן דא האבן ווייזען אונז פנים ווייזען גלייך האבן  
וואו גלייך אונז אין גלייך דייטש ספר די אנדערע דייטש אונז גלייך \* אונז דא  
הייז וואו די הערבי אונז שווערי וואו דעשטער באש ורשטן וואו האבן ווייזען  
אונז גלייך הספר געאלט די פירוש דייטש אונז אונז דא דא וויא גלייך א"ב  
פירוש ס האבן \* ער איז אויך צו ווייזען דייטש ווייזען ספר עטלייך שטות





## הקדמה

זו עבר כמו בנים נרדתי ודמותי איך האב דר צהן עבר איך האב דר הולט  
 עבר ויא ויא ודמותי גולט בידך איין עתיד זיין ווען וז שבז איז אלווען איין  
 עתיד דעבך זיטמאל דז נרדתי איז איין עבר ווערט ודמותי אורד איין עבר וכן  
 טעמתי ורביתי • איין וז הינטן אס ווארט מיט איינס וואספוס דש מאכט  
 איר אנדז יא אשון רביס כמו תשואה איר גולט היטן ווארו אב זי גולן זאגן אורד  
 מאכט איין וואספוס הינטן אס ווארט אשון חיד כמו עשהו טון אין צוהער נייכטי  
 אין • אורד מאכט איין וז הינטן אס ווארט מיט איינס חיריק אין כמו בתתיו  
 איך האב נעבן אין אורד מאכט איין וז מיט איינס חולם זיין כמו שורו זיין אורס  
 חמורו זיין איין • אורד מאכט איין וז ביא איינר ת קאן זייבי כמו חמורו זייבי  
 נייבט אשון רביס תורותיו זייבי אערבונק אשון רביס  
 דז איז איין ווארט ווארן אורד הינטן אס ווארט ווארן אס ווארט מאכט יא דז  
 דז איז איין בוכה זוכר אנדז מאכט זי דז איז איין נסתר אנקידה • אור  
 איין ת ווארן אס ווארט עז יא זוכר אנדז אנקידה איז אל ווען איין עתיד כמו תדבר  
 דז גולט רידן עתיד תאכל דז גולט עסן עתיד אבר איין ת הינטן אס ווארט מאכט  
 אורד דז אבר עז איז אל ווען איין עבר כמו דברת דז השט נירעט וכן אמרת דז  
 הושט ניאנט • אור ויס צו איינר נקידה בוכה נען ווערט אור עבר גול דז הינטן  
 גיט מיט איינס קאן נייבונטל זיין אז ביא איינס זכר דברת בור דיא ת וז  
 נייבונטל זיין מיט איינס שבא כמו דברת אמרת אורד ויכט איין ת אשון רביס  
 אכן בת כמו פרה איין קוא פרעתי קוא תורה תורות • אורד מאכט איין ת  
 הינטן איין רביקת כמו בבילג נבולט טעמתי שפוזת

ת

זכר וזכר משה עבדי אשר צויתו בחיבת על כל  
 ישראל חזים ומשפטים

## II. *The Title Page and Introduction to the Christian Edition of the Constance Humash*

The Christian edition, which has a German title page and a German Introduction, is much more rare than the Jewish edition. The Jewish edition is available in a number of libraries and is part of the IDC Microfiche collection of Early Yiddish books from the Bodleian library edited by Chone Shmeruk. After much effort my friend, Pfarrer Helmut Foth, was able to find a copy of this edition in the Zentralbibliothek in Zurich. The staff of the library very kindly provided me with a scan of the Introduction. I have transcribed the German text and included it here, in light of its rarity. It is noteworthy that Fagius mentions his name in this edition, but does not mention it in the “Jewish” edition, for obvious reasons.

### 1. *Title page [German Text]*

Die fünff Bücher Mosis sampt dem Hohenlied Salomonis / Ruth / Claglied Hieremie / Prediger Salomonis und Esther: auch der Juden Evangelien die sie Haphtaroth nennen / und all Sabbath in iren Schulen lesen, auß hebraischer Sprach nach jüdischer art / von wort zu wort ins Teutsch verdolmetschet / und mit hebraischer Schrifft / deren sich die Juden in irem Teutsch schreiben gemainlich gebrauchen gedruckt, nit on sondere Ursach beschehen / wie man findt in der Vorrede. Gedruckt zuo Costentz durch Paulum Fagium und Jacobum Froschesser / Anno M.D.XLiiii.

### *[English translation]*

The Five Books of Moses, together with the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Kohelet and Esther as well as the Jewish gospels which they call Haftarot, translated from the Hebrew language, according to the Jewish style, into Yiddish, in the Hebrew script that the Jews normally use to write Yiddish. Printed, for certain reasons, as can be found in the Introduction. Printed in Constance, by Paulus Fagius and Jacob Froschesser, in the year, 1544.]

### 2. *Introduction [German Text]*

#### VORREDE ZUM LESER

durch Paulum Fagium

ES möchte ain nit vnbillich wunder nemen / das durch mein fürdernus / dise Jüdisch Bibel an tag gebracht wirt / als ob zu disen vnseren zeiten / nit guter Biblen gnug vor handen seyen. Sonder man erst der Juden geiffer do mit sie das köstlich hailig Buch der Bibel beschmeißen / auch sauffen miesse. Diser soll nun wissen / das söllichs nit on sondere bewegliche vrsach beschicht. Die erst / die weyl die Juden vnverschempt schreyen vnn fürgeben / alß ob wir Christen nit ain rechte grundliche / warhafftige Bibel

haben / vnnnd domit die laische / vngelernte / schlechte / vnnnd ainfeltige Christen vnderston zweiffelhafftig / irrig vnd vnrüwig zumachen. Binn ich von Ettlichen guthertzigen angelant worden / wo müglich an tag zu thon / wie doch die Juden pflegen die Bibel auss dem Hebraischen zu verdolmetschen / damit man sehe / ob sie od[er] wir Christen die rainere vnd bössere Bibel haben. Denen hab ich nun gewilfaret / vnd zû ainer prob die fünff bücher Mosis sampt anderen die sie Hamesch megilloth nennen / welche sint. Das Hochlied Salomonis / Ruth / die claglieder Hieremie / der Prediger / Salomonis / vnn das buch Esthter / herfürgeben / in aller moß / weiß und gestalt / wie die Juden die Bibel in gemainen brauch haben zu deutschen. Nemlich also / das sie ain wort nach dem anderen nemen / wie es im hebraischen stodt / und eß verdeutschen / vnangesehen wie übel es im deutschen lautet. Das ainer möchte gedencken der es liset / oder hört / es were mehr rot oder kud[er] welsch dann deutsche sprach / Wie dann ein ieder leichtlich sehen khan / der dise Bibel lißt / was für hohe künstler unn maister die Juden in der Bibel seyen. Aber laß dich das nit wunder nemen lieber frommer Christ / dan die Juden also seer in der Bibel studieren / das wo tausent Juden bey ainander sint / khom ainer drunder ist / der etwas rechtgeschaffes in der Bibel khan vnn verstodt. Ja auch ire ge[2]lertesten Rabini / dz macht das sie all ire zeit vnd tag in irem Talmant (wie heißt es) Thalmud verzeren / dz sie etwan nit wissen wo der minst verß / oder das minst wort in der Bibel stadt / ich geschweyg das sie eß recht und wol verston solten / wie ichs dann offft selbs erfahren hab. Darumb kein wunder dz sie in sölliche greuwliche erschrockenliche blindheit vnd irthumb geraten. Darin sie noch für vnd für stecken / vnd ewigklichen stecken bleiben / so lang sie sich nit zu dem rechten brunnen der göttlichen schrifft wenden. Ja wie man im Bapstumb daher am aller meisten in grosse abgötterey vn irthumb geraten ist / das man die hailige göttliche schrifft verlassen / vnd menschen tand mehr dann die selbige gelesen vnd geliebt / also ist das auch warlich die vrsach bey den Juden irer grossen blindthait / das man daher gar fein sehen kan / wie der böß gaist der die welt verführt / vnn ein vatter der lügen ist / allenthalben bey allen völkern im selber in seinen kindern gleich und änlich ist. Dann wie er die bapstler verführt hatt / also verführt er auch die Juden / vnd wie man im Bapstumb manchen grossen Doctor der Theology gefunten hatt / der doch sein leben lang kain Biblisch büch nie außglesen hatt. Ja mancher nit gewüßt / wie vil der Biblischen bücher deß alten vnd neüwen Testaments weren. Also soltu manchen grossen Jüdischen Rabbi finden / der alle seine tag nichts in der Bibel gelesen hatt / dann villeicht da er ain kindt gewesen ist / dann also habens die

Juden im brauch / dz sie iren kindren so bald sie lesen kunden / die fünff bücher Mosy fürlegen / die mießen sie von wort zu wort / wie dise Bybel lautet / lernen exponieren / vnn da bey bleiben sy / dz ist ir gröstes lesen vnn studieren / dz sie in der Bibel thun. Dann so bald ein knab etwas erwachßt / so müß er den Thalmud lernen / vnd die Bibel lassen faren / die sieht er nymmer mehr an. Der Thalmud aber ist ein söllich groß [3] weit meer / das iren kainer nymmer ans end khomet / Ja wan sie lang lernen / schreyen vnd disputieren / so wissen sie selbs nit waß eß ist / ist eyttel kinder vnd lappen werck / da mit sie vmb ghon. Dan was güt im Thalmud ist / vnd etwas rechtgeschaffens / des achten sie gar nit / vnd haben eß niergen für / als do ist / wo etwan meldung geschicht mangerley breuchen / wie eß vor zeitten in Israël ist gehalten worden / welcher breuchen und gewonhaiten erkantnuß / an vilen orten der hailigen geschriff / gantz dienstlich ist zû gûtem verstand. Item wo hystorien sint / oder gûte sittliche leeren / des achten sie wenig / vnd ist all ir kunst vnd übung in sölchen Stempeneyen / wie ein Jud vff das Louberfest / die hütten die sie Succoth nennen / machen soll / das sie nit zû gross / zû hoch / zû nider / zû breit / zû dick oder zû dünn seyen. Item wie sie die Zizith / das ist zotten / an dz humeral machen sollen das sie all tag an hals hencken wann sie ir morgen gebet thun. Item wie man die Tphillin machen / schreyben / vnn all tag brauchen sol / Tphillin aber nennen sie die denckzettel die sie all tag vff das haupt vnd arm leggen / wan sie ir gebett thun. Item wie sie den Chametz / dz ist / den saur taig vff das Osterfest auß iren heusern fegen sollen. Wie dz selb liecht soll gemacht sein / damit sie in sûchen miessen / vnd wo sy in suchen sollen / vnd das sie wol in den spalten / klümssen vnn meußlechern lügen / dz nicks drynnen bleyb. Item wie man nit flaisch vnd milch in aim haffen kochen soll / darumb auch ein ieder Jud soll zwey messer haben / mit dem ainen soll er fleisch schneiden / mit dem anderen / vnn dz muß kerbet sein / soll er käß schneiden. Der Stempeneyen haben sie ain gantzen hauffen. Doryn ist all ir Limud / wie sie sprechen / dz ist lernen vn studieren. In summa / damit ich nur ain klaine anzeigung thüe / so ruwet der ytzigen Juden glaub / auff die disen zweyen fürnemesten stucken. Das erst / dz ein ieder Jud schuldig [4] sey all tag Tphillin zû leggen / vnd welcher dz thût dz sey so vil alß wan er tag vnd nacht im gesatz Gottes lernet / wie dann ir Commentator Rabbi Dauid Kimhi schreibt in seim Comment über den ersten psalmen Davids. כל המקיים מצות תפילין מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו למד יומם ולילה Das ist so vil geredt / wer das gebot von den Tphillin helt / den helt die schrift in sölcher würde de alß ob er tag vnn nacht in Gottes gesatz lerne. Deren Tphillin sint zwo / die eine leggen sie auff das haupt /

die die sie heissen תפלין של ראש / die ander auff das lincken arm / die nennen sie תפלין של יד vnn in aim ieglichen sint vier Parschyen / wie sie eß heissen / dz sint vier stuck auß der schrifft genomen. Die miessen ordenlich geschriben sein / das ir aber miessen vier stuck vnn nit mehr sein / das nemen sy auß dem Hebraischen wort טוטפוח Totaphoth / welches der Moses braucht Exod. 13. cap. Deutero. 6. vnd 11. cap. da er redet von den denck zetteln die sie sollen machen. Da wissen sie selber nit was das wort Totaphoth für ain wort ist / vnd was eß im grundt heißt / dan das ir Commentator Rabi Schlomo schreibt / Toth in Caspia / heißt zweye / vnd Poth in Affrica heißt auch zweye / daher schliessen sie nun dz der Capitel die in den denck zettel die sie Tphillin nennen / begriffen sint / miessen eben vier sein / dann wo ir minder oder mehr weren / so wer eß ein grosse sünd wider das / dz Gott redt Deut. 12. dz man seinen wort weder zû noch von thûn sölle. Dz ist ie wol probiert / vnd ain gewißding / vff sölchen gründen stadt der Jüdisch gloub / vnd das ist der stuck ains daran alleß glück vnd hail der Juden / wie sie mainen / hanget. Das ander stuck ist / das der Jud nit flaisch vnn milch in aim hafen kochen soll / nit flaisch / milch oder käß zûmal essen / er habe dan zûuor das maul nach dem er flaisch gessen wol gespielt / vnn das er nit flaisch vnd käß mit aim messer schneiden soll / das nemen sie auss dem [5] spruch Mosis Exod. 23. 34. Deut. 14. Da also geschriben stadt לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו Non coquas hoedum in lacte matris suae. Das ver-  
deutschen sie also / du solt dz böcklin nit in seiner müter milch siedен oder kochen. Schliessen dorauß / das man gar khein flaisch in milch siedен soll / haben eß so weit außgetönt / das man nit in aim haffen milch vnnd flaisch kochen soll / nit mit aim messer flaisch / milch / vnnd käß schneyden soll / vnd sind deren casus on zal / dorauff sies ziehen / haben ein groß büch darum geschriben / welches Issur Vehetter<sup>65</sup> heißt / darynn allein gehandelt würt / was zû essen verboten oder erlaubt ist / wers nun dreffen khan / der ist ein rechter Jud. Dozû müß nun der angezogen spruch Mosis dienen / der doch vil ain anders gemaint hatt / vnnd wann im schon also wer / das es die mainung hette / das man das böcklin nit in seiner müter milch siedен oder kochen solt / wie eß die Jude verdolmetschen / so hat eß doch gar nit den sinn vnnd verstand den die Juden drauß schliessen. Moses mainet vil ain anders / eß hat auch ire gelerten ettliche selber gedaucht / eß hab nit die mainung / darumb marteren sie sich hoch wie sie sölchen verstand erzwingen / wie man sieht bey irem Commentator Aben Ezra genant. Dises

---

65 The phrase is Hebrew for “Forbidden and Permitted”: אסור והתר, as written on the margin.



hab ich nur alß in aim fürgang wellen anregen / damitt die Christen daher mögen abnehmen / auff waß grundt der Juden gloub gebauet ist / vnnd mit waß stempeneyen sie vmb ghon. Darvon ich mitt der zeytt (wils Gott) ain aigen büch machen will / zů eeren dem Herren Christo vnserem sätigmacher / vnnd widerlegung der Jüdischen fablen. Ob villeicht Gott der Herr gnad gebe / das ettliche da her erleücht wurden / die rechte warheit erkantent / vnd den Herren Christum im gaist vnnd in der warheit lerneten anbetten.

Die ander vrsach deß herfurbringens diser Jüdischen Bi[6]bel ist dise. Die weil nit zu hoffen / dz dem armen ellenden Jüdischen volck möge geholffen werden / eß sey dann dz sie sich wider zů der hailigen geschrifft wenden / vnd die selbige mitt ernst lesen / wie sie dann auch selber der Herr Christus dohin gewisen hatt Joan. 5. Sůchet in der schrifft / sie ists / die von mir zeuget. Hab ich mich dester ehe durch radt vnn gut beduncken ettlicher güthertzigen lassen vermögen / dise Bibel herfür zů geben / ob villeicht / vorab der gemein man / der durch die Rabinen iemerlich verfürd würdt / dadurch verursacht würde / die Bibel dester mehr zůlesen / vnd also von anderen fablen vnnd lügen büchern dester mehr möchte abgezogen werden. Wie wol ich vil lieber sehen wolt / das sie andere Biblien lesen / die wir zů disen vnseren zeitten (Gott hab lob) zum besten haben. Aber ich weiß leyder zů vil wol die verstockung deß armen ellenden volcks / das sie ja nit lessen / was nitt noch irem schrot gemacht ist ja von iren Rabinen verboten ist / andere dann ire bücher zůlesen / eß solt inen sunst bald geholffen werden. Aber darbey sicht man wie erschrockenlich sie Gott der Herr gestrafft vnnd geplaget hatt / das er inen nitt allein den rechten waren aigentlichen verstandt / der hailigen geschrifft / sonder auch die mittel dadurch sie zů rechtem verstand khommen möchten / entzogen hatt. Sie haissen wol die Hebreer / aber khein volk ist vnder der Sonnen / das minder verstand hatt / der rechten waren Hebraische sprach / wie vnd wo zů man sie brauchen solle. Sie mainen sie habends fast wol troffen / thüen im fein vnnrecht / das sie die Bibel von wort zů wort / wie die ordnung der worten gesetzt ist / exponieren / vnnd nitt von worten abweichen / wo man im anderst thüe / sey eß grosse sünd / gedenken nit / das eß den hailigen gaist vmb den rechten eigentlichen sinn / den er durch die wort hat wellen fürgeben / mer [7] dann vmb die ordnung der worten zu thůn ist. Aber daneben scheyhen sich die ellende leüt nit / von worten vnn dem ainfaltigen text vnd natürlicher ordnung desselbigen abzűdretten / wo inen die warheit will zů trang thůn / vnd sich die sach will vff Christum reimen. Da muß gelten waß ire Rabinen erdicht vnd glosiert haben / mehr dann



Gott / sein wort / text / ordnung / vnd alle vmbstend / die das widerspiel erzwingen. Nim deß ein exempel. Gene. .49. cap. stadt also geschriben in der prophecey Jacob לא יסור שבט מיהודה ומחקה מבין רגליו עד כי יבא שילה ולו יקחת das ist so vil geredt. Eß wirt dz Scepter von Juda nit entwent werden / noch ein Meister von seinen füßen / biß der Helt (das ist Christus) khome / vnd dem selbigen werden die völcker anhangen etc. Disen spruch deß hailigen ertz vatters Jacob / darinn er will anzeigen / das alß dann der scepter / das ist / der gewalt vnn regiment werde auffhören in Juda / wann der Messias werde vorhanden sein / wie dann auch beschehen ist / marteren vnd ratprechen sie also / damit sie nit die warheit bekennen miessen. Eß wirt der scepter von Juda nit abkeren / noch der meister von seinen füßen Ewigklich / wenn Silo khommen wirt etc. Hie muß inen das wörtlin עד ewig<sup>66</sup> haissen / vnd כי wenn<sup>67</sup> / wider alle Grammatic vnd natürlich verstand dises orts / wie alle gelerten vnd erfarnen der sprach wol wissen / da ist eß nit sünd vnn vnrecht / wo sie also mit der heiligen schrift gaucklen vnn spielen / vnd sie mit gewalt vß irem natürlichen eigentlichen vnn einfaltigen sinn reißen / Got gebs inen zů erkennen vnn straff sie drum / aber ich main sie seyen wol gestrafft / dz sie sölche kot / treck / vnn mistlachen saüffen miessen / dieweil sie deß rainen lauteren wassers nit wellen / vnn den lebendigen brunnen verlassen haben / dauon Hier. sagt cap. 2. Du solt auch wissen lieber leser / dz die Juden im brauch haben / all Sabbath in iren Synagogen ain stuck auß [8] ainem propheten zůlesen / vnnd das nennen sie הפטרה Haphtara / das ist / ain abscheydung / von wegen das sies erst lesen / wan das ander ir gesang vnnd gebett / alles ain end hatt / vnnd sie auß der Synagog wellen haim gon. Deren stuck sint. 52. dann wie sie sunst die fünff bücher Mosi in. 52. Tractat abgetailt haben / vnd alle wuch pflegen einen zůlesen. Also haben sie auch die propheten abgetailt / nemen ain stuck auß ainem propheten / das sie mainen das sich zum tractat deß gesetzes der matery halben reimet. Dise Haphtaroth wie sies haissen / hab ich zu end dises büchs gesetzt / damit man sehe wie die Juden mit den propheten vmgangen / dann das ist ir höchstes vnd gröstes lesen / dz sie in den propheten thůn / on alle frucht vnd außlegung / ist nichts dann ein stym vnd lār gethön / vnd bleibt ein stym vnd gethön / dann do ist niemand der predige oder außlege / das der gemain man dorab möchte gebessert werden. In summa / wie man im Bapstumb ein lymphen oder stuck auß den Euanglien vnd Episteln der Aposteln genomen hatt / vnd dasselbig in den

---

66 In the margin the word is transliterated, *Ad*.

67 In the margin the word is transliterated, *Chi*.

Chor gezogen / in frömbder lateinischer sprach / on alle frucht deß gemainen volck gelesen vnd gesungen hatt / vnnd damit vermainet die sach wol außgericht / also ghon auch die Juden mit der hailigen schrift vmb. Domit man aber sehe / wie der Sathan an allen orten im selber so gleich ist / vnnd wie er ainerlay weiß vnd art füret / alle welt zû uerfieren. So aber yemant möchte frömbd duncken / das ich dise Bibel mit Jüdischer schrift / vnd mit irem current das sie im brauch haben / wan sie deütsch schreiben / hab lassen drucken / der soll wissen / das ich sölche Bibel nit für den gemainen man / sonder für die gelerten vnd verstendige / deren ettliche sölchs an mich begert / hab herfürgeben. Vnd zum anderen / das ich in willens bin / mit Gots hilff / anders mehr in sölcher Jüdischer [9] schrift / auß iren geheimnüssen herfürzubringen. Derhalben ich wol möchte leyden / das man solche geschrift zû lesen sich auch gewonete / wie ich dann deß hie bey auch ain bericht vnd anzaygung geben hab. Bitt hiemit ain yetlichen leser dises büchs / das er mir diß mein arbeit wölle zû gûtt halten / vnd Gott den Herren für mich bitten / das ich sein eer vnd lob was zû seiner hailigen kirchen auffbauung dienet / mit beystand seiner gnad vnnd hilff allzeit treuwlich fûrdren möge / vnnd ich im endtlich das pfündlin so er mit befohlen vnn eingestrickt hat / mit vil wûcher vnd nutz wider geben möge Amen.

*Introduction [English Translation]*

One might wonder, not unjustly about my promotion of this Jewish Bible that is being brought out now. Are there not enough good Bibles to be found? Rather, one must first deposit the Jewish drool on this important holy book of the Bible, and must also guzzle it. These people should know that this has not been done without important reasons. The first is because the Jews unashamedly shout and put forth whether we Christians do not have a correct, complete and true Bible. With this, the lay, unlearned, ordinary, and simple Christians are caused to have doubts, errors, and become uneasy. Some goodhearted people asked me if it was possible to do this, since the Jews used to translate the Bible from the Hebrew. With this, one might see if they or we Christians have the purer and better Bible. I have pleased those who requested it, and as a test have published the Five Books of Moses, and the others that they call the Five Scrolls. These are Solomon's Song of Songs, Ruth, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, Ecclesiastes of Solomon, and the Book of Esther, presented in every measure, way and form how the Jews have translated it for common usage. Namely, they take one word after another, as it is written in Hebrew and translate it, without regard

as to how badly it sounds in German.<sup>68</sup> Thus, one might think that they are reading or learning something that is more gibberish than the German language. Everyone who reads this Bible can easily see what kind of great artists and masters the Jews are in the Bible. Dear pious Christian, do not be surprised by this, since the Jews also study the Bible intensively. Yet, where a thousand Jews are assembled, there is barely one among them who knows the Bible thoroughly and understands it. Yes, also their most learned rabbis, who spend all their time and all their days consuming their sham (how is it called) Talmud,<sup>69</sup> they cannot cite and do not know where the smallest verse or the smallest word is found in the Bible. I was silent [and agreed] that they had understood it, correctly and well. I have often experienced this myself. Therefore, it is no wonder that they fall into such horrible, frightening blindness and erroneous ideas. They are still stuck in this and will continue to remain forever, as long as they do not turn to the true fountain, the divine scriptures. Yes, like the Papacy, which engages in great idolatry and falls into erroneous ideas. They have left the divine scriptures, and play with useless trinkets, rather than what they read and loved. This is also truly the reason for the great blindness of the Jews. One can very well see how the evil spirit misleads the world, and is a father of lies. He and his offspring are present everywhere among all the nations. Just as he has misled the papists, he also misleads the Jews, and just like in the Papacy some great doctors of theology were found, yet they never completely read any book of the Bible in their lifetime. Some of them did not even know how many Biblical books there were in the Old and New Testaments. You might find some great Jewish Rabbi who never read the Bible in his whole life, except perhaps when he was a child. The Jews have the custom that as soon as their children can read the five books of Moses, they must learn to expound the Bible, word for word, as the Bible sounds and they remain with this. This is the most that they do in reading and studying the Bible. As soon as the boy has grown a bit, he must study the Talmud, and must leave the Bible and they never look at it again. The Talmud is such a large and wide sea that nobody comes to its shores. When they study for a long time, shouting and

---

68 In the 16<sup>th</sup> century both Jewish and Christian authors did not make a clear distinction between Yiddish and German, using the term “Deutsch” or “Teutsch” for both languages. Sometimes the distinction is apparent from the context and sometimes not.

69 There is a play on words here, as the word for sham is “Talmi”, which sounds much like Talmud.

disputing, so that they themselves do not know what it is about. It is all childish and a patchwork. They occupy themselves with this. That which is good in the Talmud and somewhat upright, they pay no attention to it and consider it nothing. All there is are a few historical notices and defective customs, and how they were observed in Israel in the past. These customs and practices known from many places in the Holy Scriptures are quite useful and well understood. Item, things that are stories or good ethical teachings concern them very little. All of their ingenuity and training is in such useless hair-splitting; like how should a Jew on the feast of Tabernacles make the hut that they call *Sukkot*. It should not be too big, too high, too low, too wide, too thick or too thin. Item, how they should tie the *Zizit*, that is tassels on the prayer shawl, and they place it on their neck every day when they do their morning prayers. Item, how they cause the tefillin to be written and should be used every day. However, they call tefillin a reminder that they place on their head and arm every day when they do their prayers. Item, how they should remove the Chametz, that is the leaven, from their houses before Passover. How this must be made with a light, with which they must search, and where should they search? They do it well in the cracks, crevices, and mouse holes, so that nothing is left in them. Item, how they should not cook meat and milk together in one pot. Therefore, every Jew should also have two knives. With one, he should cut the meat, and with the other one, which cannot have a nick, he should use to cut cheese. They have a whole pile of hair splitting. Their whole study is in this, as they say, this is learning and studying. In summary, I am only giving a brief report. Thus, the contemporary Jewish belief rests on these two important things. The first is that every Jew is obligated to don tefillin every day, and whoever does this, it is as if he had studied God's law day and night, as the commentator, Rabbi David Kimchi, writes in his commentary to the first Psalm of David.<sup>70</sup> *Everyone who fulfills the commandment of Tefillin, Scripture accounts it for him as if he had studied day and night.*<sup>71</sup> This means, whoever observes the commandment of *tefillin*, he holds Scripture in the same regard as if he had studied God's law day and night. There are two tefillin. One is placed on the head; this one they call, *Tefillin for the head*.<sup>72</sup> The other one is put on the left arm;

---

70 Commentary of R. David Kimchi (or Qimḥi; acronym: RaDaK) on Psalms, 1:2.

71 This sentence and all other phrases in italics are in Hebrew letters in the original text.

72 In the margin is written, *Tphillin schel rosch*, a transcription into Latin letters of the Hebrew phrase.

they call this one, *Tefillin for the hand*.<sup>73</sup> There are four Parschyen, as they call it. These are four passages that must be taken from Scripture. These must be written in order. There must be four passages and no more. They take this from the Hebrew word *Totaphoth*, Totaphoth, which Moses requires in Exodus, chapter 13, Deuteronomy, chapters 6 and 11.<sup>74</sup> There he speaks about the reminders that they should make. They themselves do not know what the word Totaphoth is, or what is its basic meaning. Their commentator Rabbi Schlomo writes, Toth in Caspia means two, and Poth also means two in Africa.<sup>75</sup> Thus, they connect this chapter in which the reminders that they call Tefillin, and understand that there must be four. If there were more or fewer, it would be a great sin. God says this in Deuteronomy, [chap.] 12, that one should neither add to nor take away from His word.<sup>76</sup> This is well examined and it is known that Jewish belief stands on this foundation, and this is the one thing on which all fortune and success depends, as they believe. The second piece is that the Jew should not cook meat and milk in one pot, and should not eat meat and milk or cheese at one time. He must clean his mouth after he has eaten meat. He should not cut meat and cheese with the same knife. They take this from the sayings of Moses, Exodus [chapters] 23, 34, Deuteronomy, 14.<sup>77</sup> Here it is written, *do not cook a goat in its mothers milk*. Non coquas hoeun in lacte matris suae. They translate it as: you should not cook or boil the kid in its mother's milk. From this, they conclude that one should not boil any meat in milk. They extend it so far that one should not cook meat and milk in one pot, and one should not cut meat and milk with one knife. If by chance, they do this, they have a large book that is called Issur vehetter.<sup>78</sup> It deals with what is forbidden to eat and what is allowed. Whoever can follow it, he is a proper Jew. In addition, he must follow the public teachings of Moses, even though he had meant something quite different. Even if it has the meaning that one should

---

73 In the margin is written, *Tphillin schel iad*, a transcription into Latin letters of the Hebrew phrase.

74 The four passages in the *Tefillin* are: Exodus 13:1-10, Exodus, 13:11-16, Deuteronomy, 6:4-9, and Deuteronomy, 11:13-21.

75 Commentary of Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac) on Exodus, 13:16.

76 This verse is Deuteronomy, 12:32 in Christian Bibles, and 13:1 in Jewish Bibles.

77 The reference is to Exodus, 23:19, 34:26 and Deuteronomy, 14:21.

78 The phrase is Hebrew for "Forbidden and Permitted". The phrase appears in the margin in Hebrew letters. This is a genre of halakhic literature, and there are a number of books with this title.



not cook a kid in its mother's milk, as the Jews translate it, yet it still does not have the sense and meaning, since the Jews extract from it. Moses meant something very different. Their scholars also thought so in some places, that it did not have this meaning. Therefore, they tortured themselves greatly in order to force the meaning, as we find in their commentator, who is called Ibn Ezra.<sup>79</sup> I only want to suggest in the Introduction, so that the Christians might see on what grounds Jewish belief is built, and what kind of hair splitting that they engage in. Therefore, I will in time (God willing) write my own book, to honor the Lord Christ our Savior, and refute the Jewish fables. If perhaps the Lord God will be gracious, that He will have enlightened some, who have recognized the proper truth, and learn to worship the Lord Christ in the spirit and the truth.

The other reason for publishing this Jewish Bible is this. It is not to be hoped at this time that the poor, pitiful Jewish people might be helped, but they might again turn to Holy Scriptures, and study them earnestly, wherein they might also know the Lord Christ, as is shown in John, 5. Search in the Scriptures, they testify on my behalf.<sup>80</sup> I consulted carefully and with much advice with several good hearted people who contributed financially to publish this Bible, so that perhaps the ordinary person, who has been misled by the rabbis, and through this might be caused to read the Bible more, and might become more removed from other books of fables and lies. Even though I would rather see that they would read other Bibles that are better, and which we have in our times (God be praised). However, unfortunately I know all too well the stubbornness of this poor, pitiful people, who do not read what is not made in their script.<sup>81</sup> It is forbidden by their rabbis to read anything other than their books. May they soon be helped with this. However, in addition one sees how frighteningly the Lord God punished and tormented them, that not even He could make them properly understand the Holy Scriptures. Rather, He has also withdrawn the means through which they might come to the proper understanding. They are indeed called Hebrews, but no people under the sun has a poorer understanding of the proper Hebrew language, where and how it should be utilized. They think that they have done properly, but they are completely wrong in

---

79 Perhaps a reference to Abraham Ibn Ezra's comment on Exodus, 34:26.

80 John, 5:39.

81 A reference to the well-known idea that Jews in the early modern period did not normally read works in the Latin alphabet. It was called "*galokhes*" [Christian clerical script].

that they explicate the Bible word for word in the order that the words are found, and do not deviate from the words, as others do. It is a great sin not to remember that it is the Holy Spirit that wants to lead them to the true and proper meaning, more than the order of the words. In addition, these impoverished people do not hurry to disentangle themselves from words and the simple text and natural order, to where the text wants to push them, and the matter wants to allude to Christ. Here what their rabbis have devised and commented on must carry more weight than God's word, text, regulation, and circumstance that demand the contrary. Take an example from Genesis, chapter, 49, it is written in the prophecy of Jacob. "*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and the obedience of the peoples is his,*"<sup>82</sup> which is spoken about so much. The scepter of Judah will not be stolen, nor the mastery from his feet, until the Hero (this is Christ) comes, and the people will depend on him, etc. With this saying, the holy ancestor Jacob wanted to show that everything relating to the scepter, that is, the power and authority will cease in Judah when the Messiah will be present. When they are shown it, they torture and twist it, so that they cannot recognize the truth. The scepter will not be withdrawn from Judah or from the master's feet forever, when Shiloh will come, etc. The word *Unti*<sup>83</sup> must never mean eternal and *Khi*,<sup>84</sup> when, for them, contrary to all grammatical and natural understanding of this word, as all scholars and those with experience with this language well know that it is not found and is incorrect, how they play with and engage in trickery with the Holy Scriptures. They tear it out of its natural, proper and plain meaning by force. God gives it to them to recognize it and punishes them because of this, but I think that they are well punished, that they must guzzle such filth, excrement, and liquid manure. They did not want to rely on the pure clean waters, that they could have from the flow of the living fountain, about which Jeremiah speaks in chapter, 2.<sup>85</sup> You should also know dear reader that the Jews have a custom, to read a section from one of the prophets in their synagogue every Sabbath. They call it the *Haftorah* Haphtara. This is a separate section about which they first read when their other songs and prayers are ended and they are ready to go home from the synagogue. There are 52 sections, since they have divided the Five Books of Moses into

---

82 Genesis, 49: 10. This passage is in Hebrew in the German text.

83 In the margin the word is transliterated, *Ad*.

84 In the margin the word is transliterated, *Chi*.

85 A reference to Jeremiah, 2:13.

52 portions and they read one every week. They have also divided the Prophets. They take a section from a prophet that they think the material is related to the portion that is read. This Haphtorah, as they call it, has been placed at the end of the book, so that one might see how the Jews dealt with the Prophets. The greatest and most important read the section of the prophets, without any result or explanation. It is nothing other than a mute and empty groaning wisdom, and remains a silent groaning. There is nobody who preaches or explains, so that the ordinary person might be improved through this. In summary, like in the Papacy, a verse or a piece from the Gospels and Epistles of the Apostles were taken and twisted in the choir, in the foreign Latin language, without any product that the ordinary people had read or sung. With this, they thought that they had fully understood it. The Jews also behave in this way with the Holy Scriptures. However, with this, see how Satan himself is found in all places, and how he misleads the whole world, with one kind of knowledge. So, a stranger might think, why have I had this Bible printed in the Jewish script, and with their cursive that is their custom when they write Yiddish?<sup>86</sup> He should know that I have not published this for the ordinary person, but for the one who is learned and understands, several of whom have desired this from me. On account of my desire that others should also become accustomed to reading this script, I have added a report and Instruction. I ask every reader of this book that they should consider this, my work, positively, and pray to God the Lord for me, that I serve for His honor and praise to establish His holy Church, with the help of His Grace and constant help always to faithfully be able to promote it. And in the end, the talents that He commanded me and entrusted to me, may I return it with much usury and usefulness, amen.<sup>87</sup>

[The Introduction continues with another two and a half pages that are a tutorial on how to read the Hebrew alphabet and the Yiddish language. This is a common feature of many Christian Hebraist books that discuss Yiddish texts in the sixteenth century.<sup>88</sup>]

---

86 The word in the original is “deutsch”, meaning Yiddish in this case. The cursive is the Ashkenazi cursive called *Mashkit* or also called *weiberteitsch* [women’s script], which was reserved for books in Yiddish.

87 This last verse is an allusion to the story of the servant and the talents in Matthew, 25:14-30.

88 For a study of these Introductions see, FRAKES, *The Cultural Study of Yiddish* (note 19).