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# The Life and Research of Rabbi Dr Julius Theodor

By Tamar Kadari\*

## *Abstract*

*This article is a biography of the prominent scholar of Aggadic literature, Rabbi Dr Julius Theodor (1849–1923). It describes Theodor's childhood and family and his formative years spent studying at the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary. It explores the thirty one years he served as a rabbi in the town of Bojanowo, and his final years in Berlin. The article highlights Theodor's research and includes a list of his publications. Specifically, it focuses on his monumental, pioneering work preparing a critical edition of Bereshit Rabbah (completed by Chanoch Albeck), a project which has left a deep imprint on Aggadic research to this day.*

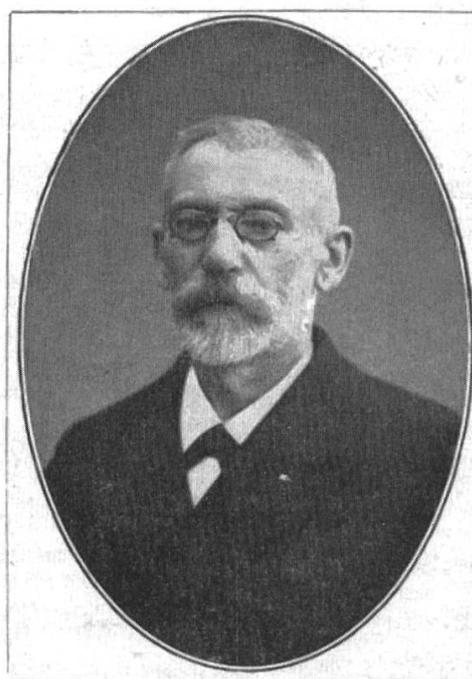
*Der folgende Artikel beinhaltet eine Biographie des bedeutenden Erforschers der aggadischen Literatur Rabbiner Dr. Julius Theodor (1849–1923). Er beschreibt Theodors Kindheit und Familie und die ihn prägenden Jahre des Studiums am Breslauer Rabbinerseminar. Er schildert die einunddreissig Jahre, die er als Rabbiner in der Stadt Bojanowo wirkte, und seine letzten Jahre in Berlin. Besonders eingegangen wird auf Theodors Forschungsleistung, die nicht zuletzt an der angefügten Liste seiner Veröffentlichungen ablesbar ist. Im Mittelpunkt steht dabei seine präzedenzlose monumentale kritische Edition des Midrasch Bereshit Rabbah (die Chanoch Albeck weitergeführt und abgeschlossen hat), ein Werk, das in der Erforschung aggadischer Literatur bis heute nachwirkende Spuren hinterlassen hat.*

Julius Theodor (1849–1923) is one of the leading experts of the Aggadic literature. His major work, a scholarly edition of the Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* (BerR), completed by Chanoch Albeck (1890–1972), is a milestone and foundation of Jewish studies research. His important articles deal with key topics still relevant to Midrashic research even today. Theodor's research activity did not take place within the walls of academia. He wrote the majority of his scholarly works in his home in the small town of Bojanowo, located in the Prussian province of Posen (today: Powiat Rawicki, Województwo wielkopolskie, Poland), where he served as rabbi for thirty-one years. From his home, he corresponded closely with various researchers but left no disciples to perpetuate his legacy and work after his death. These facts may explain why so little was known about Julius Theodor before I began

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this research.<sup>1</sup> Aside from an article by Akiva Posner,<sup>2</sup> a short entry in the *The Jewish Encyclopedia*<sup>3</sup> and in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*,<sup>4</sup> in addition to some concise biographical information that appears in lists of the rabbis of the German Reich,<sup>5</sup> virtually nothing has been written about this leading, significant scholar. The absence of information about his life is also connected to the bitter fate of his small family which suffered great hardships during the two world wars. As far as I was able to verify, probably no direct descendants of Julius Theodor are alive today, so that all the knowledge pertaining to this great scholar has nearly been erased. Even Theodor's photograph seemed to have disappeared from the pages of history; it did not appear among the photographs of the students of the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary, nor in the few entries and information regarding his town Bojanowo. Only with great effort, I was able to obtain it. The information in this article was collected and put together from small, scattered pieces of information gathered with the gracious assistance of scholars worldwide, through searches in archives, letters that survived, journals and information from the web. May this article be a memorial to this great scholar, his family and the small Jewish community of Bojanowo.



Photograph 1: Julius Theodor on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, Bojanowo 1919

Rabbiner Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo).

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- 1 TAMAR KADARI, מנחה ליהודה: יהודה תיאודור ועריכתם של מדרשי האגדה הארץ-ישראליים (Jerusalem: Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies and Leo Baeck Institute, 2017).
  - 2 AKIVA BARUCH POSNER, "ד"ר יהודה תיאודור," in: SIMON FEDERBUSH (ed.), חכמת ישראל במערב אירופה, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Ogen and Newman, 1958–1963), vol. II (1963), pp. 286-91.
  - 3 FREDERICK T. HANEMAN, "Julius Theodor," in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (New York & London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1905), p. 125.
  - 4 MOSHE DAVID HERR, "Theodor, Julius," in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, second edition, vol. 19 (Detroit etc.: Macmillan, 2007), col. 692.
  - 5 MICHAEL BROCKE and JULIUS CARLEBACH (eds.), *Biographisches Handbuch der Rabbiner*, Pt. II: *Die Rabbiner im Deutschen Reich 1871-1945*, 2 vols. (München: de Gruyter and Saur, 2009), vol. II, pp. 608-9.

(1) *From Childhood to the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary*

Julius Judah Noah son of Tuvia Theodor was born on 13 Tevet 5650, i.e. December 28, 1849, in the town of Schmallingken in Eastern Prussia (today: Šmalininkai, Lithuania).<sup>6</sup> Julius' father, Tuvia Goldberg of Kovno (today: Kaunas, Lithuania), was adopted as a child by distant relatives from Königsberg (today: Kaliningrad, Russia) and took on their family name, Theodor.<sup>7</sup> Julius Theodor studied at the Friedrichs Gymnasiums in Königsberg and sat for the matriculation exams in the Elizabeth gymnasium (*Abitur am Elisabethaneum*) in Breslau (today: Wrocław, Poland). In 1868, he began to study philosophy and Middle Eastern studies at the University of Breslau. Simultaneously, he studied at the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary between the years 1868 and 1878.<sup>8</sup>

Photograph 2: Symbol of the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary



The Breslau Rabbinical Seminary was a prolific centre for the research of Jewish studies during this period, and the first of its kind in all of Germany. It offered a Jewish-Rabbinic education in the spirit of the scientific approach to the study of Judaism (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) and trained rabbis

6 Little is known about this town of the government region of Gumbinnen (Regierungsbezirk Gumbinnen), now in Lithuania. See JOSEF ROSIN, "סמלינינק" / Šmalininkai," in: DOV LEVIN and JOSEF ROSIN (eds.), פנקס הקהילות) ליטא, vol. VIII) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), p. 437; online English version: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_lita/lit\\_00437b.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_lita/lit_00437b.html) (retrieved 21 Nov 2017).

7 Tuvia's adoptive father was a watchmaker. His sons were Hermann, a banker, and Jacob, who established a well-known tea company in Königsberg. – I thank Nancy and Peter Theodore for the information about the family and for the family tree, they sent me in their letter of 13.11.2015.

8 See the articles mentioned in the above notes 2 to 5. Furthermore, SHMUEL NOAH BEN DUBER GOTLIB, ספר אהלי-שם: יכלכל תולדותיהם ויחוסיהם של רבני וגדולי הדור מכל תפוצות ישראל (Pinsk: Glauberman Publishing House, 5672 [1912]), p. 523. Additional important information appears in a newspaper article published in honour of Theodor's seventieth birthday by FELIX GOLDMANN, "Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo)," in: *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* No. 83 (Dec. 19, 1919), pp. 581-83.

who also held academic degrees.<sup>9</sup> The Seminary, which opened in August of 1854, was headed during its first twenty years by Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875) and remained active until it was closed by the Nazis in November 1938, the day after the so-called “Kristallnacht”.<sup>10</sup> Frankel was the scion of a prominent rabbinic family from Prague. He earned a reputation as an expert in Jewish studies as well as a man who held moderate religious views.<sup>11</sup> As opposed to the pioneers of Jewish studies in Germany Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907) and Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), who wished to conduct the study of theology and Jewish philology within German universities – Frankel was of the opinion that Jewish studies should be learned in an independent, Jewish institution. This position was in line with popular opinion during that period in the Jewish communities of Germany and Austria.<sup>12</sup>

One of the issues the Rabbinical Seminary had to deal with was how students should be trained for the rabbinate and what the Seminary’s curriculum should include. The role and status of rabbis had evolved since the Emancipation. The old model of the Torah scholar—a figure emerging from the Yeshiva world, learning Torah for its own sake, only sometimes taking the time to obtain ordination—was no longer sufficient for the needs of communities in the new era. Communities in Germany required a rabbi

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9 ISMAR SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (New Haven: New England University Press, 1994), p. 26.

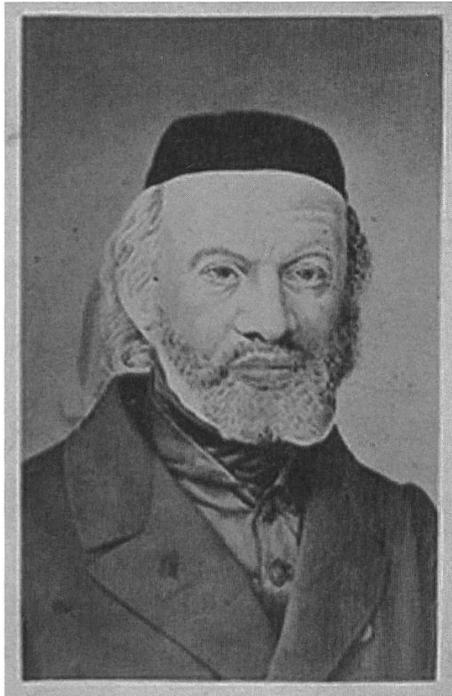
10 GUY MIRON, “הסמינר לרבנים בברסלאו: הדור האחרון,” in: GUY MIRON (ed.), *מברסלאו* (Jerusalem: Schechter Institute, 2009), pp. 86-99, here pp. 98-9.

11 On Frankel’s religious-ideological approach against the backdrop of the clashes between Reform and Orthodox Judaism, see: RIVKA HOROWITZ, *Zacharias Frankel and the Beginnings of Positive-Historical Judaism* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 1984), pp. 11-41; SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 255-65, and ANDREAS BRÄMER, *Rabbiner Zacharias Frankel. Wissenschaft des Judentums und konservative Reform im 19. Jahrhundert* (Netiva, vol. 3) (Hildesheim etc.: Olms, 2000).

12 ANDREAS BRÄMER, “Die Anfangsjahre des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars. Zum Wandel des Rabbinerberufs im 19. Jahrhundert,” in: MANFRED HETTLING, ANDREAS REINKE and NORBERT (eds.), *In Breslau zu Hause? Juden in einer mitteleuropäischen Metropole der Neuzeit* (Studien zur Jüdischen Geschichte, vol. 9) (Hamburg, 2003), pp. 99-112, here p.102; SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 260-61. Regarding the perceptions of Leopold Zunz and Moritz Steinschneider, see: CÉLINE TRAUTMANN-WALLER, “Leopold Zunz and Moritz Steinschneider,” in: REIMUND LEICHT and GAD FREUDENTHAL (eds.), *Studies on Steinschneider* (Studies in Jewish History and Culture, vol. 33) (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 81-107.

who also held a PhD, possessed a general education, and combined Torah erudition with an academic approach.<sup>13</sup> The Breslau Rabbinical Seminary was a result of these developments. In 1835, about twenty years before the opening of the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary, Frankel wrote a long memorandum in which he systematically presented his opinions regarding the major role of the rabbinate in Jewish life. In his words:

If the Rabbi is to be respected as a learned man, he must be academically trained. To be intimately familiar with the Talmud is not enough; the Muses



must also not be strange to him. Furthermore, his perception will be so purified by a faith combined with a pure and elevated philosophy [...]. He should stand at the head of the community not as a blind fanatic, but as a believer imbued by a lofty deity [...]. He should be the teacher and guide of the people. Would our age in fact take instruction from a man trained otherwise?<sup>14</sup>

Photograph 3: Zacharias Frankel

Frankel believed that the research of rabbinical literature should be the focus of the studies of the Seminar students. He also emphasized the importance of observing Jewish law. In his opinion, a rabbi should carefully integrate religious, Jewish creativity with the critical approach of academic Jewish studies.<sup>15</sup> Thus, for example, according to him, it was permitted to study the Talmud with a critical approach, but not the Bible.<sup>16</sup>

13 SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 9-50, 260-2; BRÄMER, “Anfangsjahre des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars” (note 12), pp. 99-101; DAVID GOLINKIN, “From Breslau to Jerusalem: A Vision for the Future Based on the Past,” in: *Insight Israel: The View from Schechter: Reflections on Israel, Jewish Law and the Jewish Calendar*, Second Series, (Jerusalem: The Schechter Institute, 2006), pp. 230-1, 235-7; ASAF YEDIDYA, בתי מדרש נוסח אשכנז: זיכרונות של בוגרי הסמינרים לרבנים בגרמניה ובאוסטריה (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2010), pp. 13-21.

14 Cited and translated by SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), p. 14. See also Frankel’s view of the nature of the *Wissenschaft des Judentum* in: ZACHARIAS FRANKEL, “Einleitendes,” in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 1 (1852), pp. 1-6.

15 SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 25-6.

16 YEDIDYA, בתי מדרש נוסח אשכנז (note 13), pp. 19-20.

The teachers who were chosen to teach at the Seminary were experts hailing from the world of academia. At the time, Jewish researchers were denied free access to academic positions in Prussian universities, so that the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary was privileged to have as lecturers the greatest Jewish studies scholars of the time.<sup>17</sup> In addition to Frankel himself who taught Talmud, other noted teachers from the Seminary's first generation included Heinrich Zvi Graetz (1817–1891) (history and Bible), Benedict Zuckerman (1818–1891) (natural sciences) and Jacob Bernays (1824–1881) (classical philology).<sup>18</sup> Members of the teaching staff were required to observe Jewish law. Their role was to bridge the gap between Jewish tradition and the scientific-critical approach.<sup>19</sup> Frankel, with his impressive personality, represented the ideal combination of profound education in rabbinic literature and knowledge of classical studies. The students admired him as expressed by his student Moritz Güdemann (1835–1918):

Frankel impressed all of us with his scientific expertise and his respectable appearance [...] not only we, his students, looked upon him with admiration, but the teachers as well [...] he was exceptionally diligent. His fulfilment of commitments was impeccable. He had real love for his students [...]. In a nutshell, he was a perfect man who never fell apart, who never once lost his gravity.<sup>20</sup>

Initially, the schedule of the Seminary was flexible, but it solidified as the years went by. Talmud was part of the curriculum in all seven years of study. In fact, more than half the curriculum was dedicated to a comprehensive, methodical probe of rabbinic literature. Critical tools were used for learning,

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17 SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 51-70. Jacob Bernays received an appointment as a lecturer at the University in Bonn, but after being refused a promotion to Associate Professor by the King, he joined the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary (pp. 61-2). See also: BRÄMER, “Anfangsjahre des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars” (note 12), pp. 102-3.

18 BRÄMER in his “Anfangsjahre des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars” (note 12) mentions that with the exception of Frankel, none of them had ever served as rabbi before. For more about the opening ceremony, its speeches and the unique personality of each teacher see the memoirs of MORITZ GÜDEMANN, “Zacharias Frankel: Von ihm und über ihn,” in: MARKUS BRANN (ed.), *Zacharias Frankel. Gedenkblätter zu seinem hundertsten Geburtstage* (Breslau: W. Koebner, 1901), pp 55-6; GOLINKIN, *From Breslau to Jerusalem* (note 13), pp. 235-7.

19 YEDIDYA, *בתי מדרש נוסח אשכנז* (note 13), pp. 77-87.

20 YEDIDYA, *בתי מדרש נוסח אשכנז* (note 13), p. 81; GÜDEMANN, “Zacharias Frankel” (note 18), pp. 51-61. Güdemann studied at the Rabbinical Seminary between 1862–1866, served as a rabbi in Magdeburg and was later appointed the Chief Rabbi of Vienna (*ibid.*, p. 77).

in line with Frankel's positive-historical approach. Nevertheless, Frankel preferred to teach his own lessons using traditional methods, wishing, primarily, to imbue his students with an understanding of the material and familiarity with the sources, before exposing them to the critical approach.<sup>21</sup> Philosophy and philology were mandatory as well, and beginning in 1857, the curriculum included an Introduction to Midrash. Rabbinical training also included the development of homiletics skills. Students practiced writing sermons using materials they had learned in Midrash classes. They would deliver their speeches to their classmates during the Shabbat prayer service.<sup>22</sup>

Following seven years of study, students took oral and written exams in order to receive התרת הוראה (*battarat hora'ab*, i.e. ordination certificate).<sup>23</sup> The future rabbis were required to prove their skill as halachic decisors in practical areas such as marriage and divorce, the laws of כשרות (*kašrut*) and שחיטה (*šehiṭab*) and marital laws.



Photograph 4: The Breslau Rabbinical Seminary building in 1904

The historian Andreas Brämer comments that during this period, rabbis did not have judicial autonomy in their communities, not even for family issues, and Jews were required to marry in civil ceremonies. But although the material was not put into practice, these exams made an ideological statement.<sup>24</sup> More than anything, halakhic training

was an expression of Frankel's positive-historical approach. He viewed Judaism as a religion based on law, and halakha as a fundamental component of Jewish religious life.<sup>25</sup> Aside from their study of Jewish legal rulings, students demonstrated their ability to conduct theological discussions

21 SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 260-1.

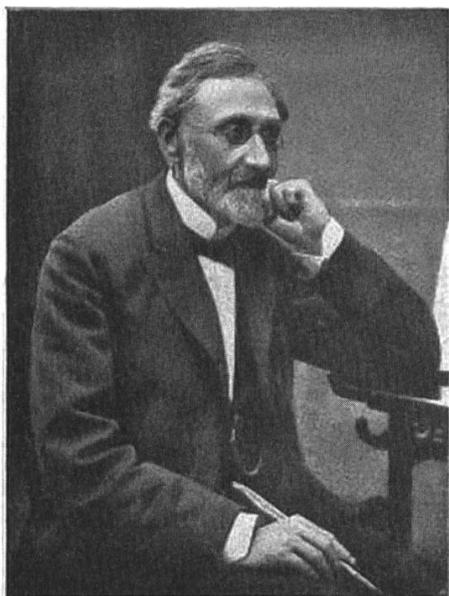
22 BRÄMER, "Anfangsjahre des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars" (note 12), pp. 105-6.

23 GOLINKIN, *From Breslau to Jerusalem* (note 13), p. 235 and note 21. – התרת הוראה is a substitute for the סמיכה *semikhab* ("ordination" which could be conferred only in Palestine by a member of the Sanhedrin).

24 BRÄMER, "Anfangsjahre des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars" (note 12), p. 109.

25 On Frankel's worldview, see SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 256-9.

through the exegesis of Psalms. Concurrently, most students also studied at the University of Breslau. The curriculum was designed to accommodate



*Heinrich Graetz*

the participation of students in university courses. These studies were not required by the Seminary but meshed well with their professional futures as community rabbis.<sup>26</sup>

Photograph 5: Heinrich Graetz

As a Rabbinical Seminary student, Theodor acquired extensive knowledge in the areas of Bible, history, Talmud and Midrash. He internalized the philological-critical research approach to Jewish texts in the lectures of leading scholars: Zacharias Frankel (Talmud), Heinrich Zvi Graetz (history and Bible), Jakob Freudenthal (1839–1907) (classical philology and philosophy) David Rosin (1823–1894) (Midrash and homiletics), Benedict Zuckermann (natural sciences) and Leyser [Lesser] Lazarus (1820–1879), who succeeded Frankel upon his death in 1875.<sup>27</sup> Besides his academic approach, Theodor absorbed Frankel’s ideological principles: historical awareness and respect toward Judaism, as well as viewing the past as a source of values and commitment.<sup>28</sup> Theodor’s rabbinical training included academic studies in philosophy and Oriental studies at the University of Breslau, and, in 1876, at the age of twenty seven, he received his PhD from the University of Königsberg. His PhD thesis was entitled *Der Unendlichkeitsbegriff bei Kant und Aristoteles. Eine Vergleichung der Kantischen Antinomien mit der Abhandlung des Aristoteles über das apeiron (Phys. III, c. 4-8)*. (“The concept of infinity in the

26 Thus, the Rabbinical Seminary reflected the changes that occurred in the modern rabbinate. See SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 9-50.

27 The list of Theodor’s teachers is mentioned in GOLDMANN, “Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo)” (note 8). For a list of the individuals who taught in the Seminary, see: MARKUS BRANN, *Geschichte des Jüdisch-theologischen Seminars (Fraenckel’sche Stiftung) in Breslau, Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Jubiläum der Anstalt* (Breslau: Schatzky, 1904 [reprint: Hildesheim etc.: Olms, 2010]), pp. 83-116.

28 SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 257-58; YEDIDYA, בתי מדרש נוסח אשכנז (note 13), p. 19.

thought of Kant and Aristotle. A comparison of Kant's antinomies and Aristotle's treatise on the apeiron").<sup>29</sup>

Theodor received rabbinical ordination in January 1878 at the age of twenty-nine. In his letter to Zunz about a year and a half later, he notes that he was among the youngest students to graduate from the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary.<sup>30</sup> Following his ordination, Theodor served in various roles in several small communities in Eastern Germany: He taught religious studies at the Realschule in Tarnowitz in Upper Silesia (today: Tarnowskie Góry, Poland). In 1880, he relocated to Bromberg (today: Bydgoszcz, Poland) in the Prussian province of Posen, where for five years, he served as a teacher and second rabbi alongside Rabbi Dr Julius Gebhardt (1810–1885).<sup>31</sup> For the next three years (1886–1888) he relocated to the city of Berent in Western Prussia (today: Kościerzyna, Poland) where he served as rabbi.<sup>32</sup> Finally, in 1888, he settled in Bojanowo and served as the town's rabbi for thirty-one years.<sup>33</sup>

### 1. *Bojanowo*

Bojanowo was a small town in the Prussian province of Posen (today in Poland) which was founded in 1638 and was located between Rawitsch (today: Rawicz, Poland) and Lissa (today: Leszno, Poland). The earliest

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29 POSNER, "ד"ר יהודה תיאודור" (note 2), p. 287. The thesis was defended on October 26, 1876. See the website of the University of Königsberg: <https://www.forschungen-engi.ch/Koenigsberge/suchen.htm>. – I am grateful to Manfred Komorowski and Hanspeter Marti for assisting me in locating the information. Ulrich Berzbach mentioned the idea that there may be a connection between Theodor's doctoral thesis and his interest in the creation stories in Genesis. I also thank him for his referral to the Kant scholar, Dr Ralf Buttermann in this matter. The first section of the dissertation was published as a book (Wilhelm Köbner, Breslau 1887). The second part was probably not published in a printed edition.

30 The letter appears below on pp. 411-412.

31 Frequently, religious studies teachers served as "stand-in rabbis" in small and medium sized communities. See BRÄMER, "Anfangsjahre des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars" (note 12), p. 106.

32 In a letter to Salomon Buber, dated December 4, 1885, Theodor wrote: "Friday, eve of the Shabbat of Hanukkah 5645. I would like to thank your honour, for it was just as your honour had advised me. On the holy Shabbat, I gave a sermon in the city of Berent and was immediately chosen unanimously as a teacher and leader of the community [...]" Salomon Buber Archive, ARC. 4\* 1222 / 1412, The National Library, Jerusalem.

33 POSNER, "ד"ר יהודה תיאודור" (note 2), pp. 286-91; GOTLIB, ספר אהלי-שם (note 8), p. 523; BROCKE and CARLEBACH, *Die Rabbiner im Deutschen Reich* (note 5), pp. 608-9.

accounts of Jewish settlement in the town are from the first half of the eighteenth century. The rights afforded to Jews were determined by the town governor, who allowed them to own land, to practice a profession and conduct free trade, but did not permit belonging to guilds.<sup>34</sup> Bojanowo was an important centre for the trade of cloth and woven materials in which the Jews took part. The elaborate synagogue (constructed of wood in 1793) and the Jewish cemetery (opened in 1817), testify to the established status of the local Jewish community. There are testimonies that a Jewish school existed there since 1797. As a result of reforms in 1833, Jews with property were granted equal rights to those of other town residents and were even permitted to vote in local elections, and at one point, even held two out of nine seats in the city council. The Jews enjoyed judicial autonomy and community leaders were authorized to make decisions regarding internal matters, and to conduct Jewish marriage ceremonies. Thus, their circumstances were

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34 On the history of the Jewish population of Southwestern Poland before World War I, see AARON HEPPNER and ISAAK HERZBERG, *Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der Juden und der jüdischen Gemeinden in den Posener Landen* (Koschmin-Bromberg: Self-Published, 1909), pp. 308-314; DARIUSZ CZWOJDRAK, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej w Południowo-Zachodniej Wielkopolsce* (Grabonóg: Muzeum im. Edmunda Bojanowskiego, 2004). The main sections on Bojanowo in both these books were translated into English by Anna Józefowicz and they appear on the Virtual Shtetl website <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/bojanowo>. ZVI AVITAL, DANUTA DABROWSKA, SHMUEL LEVIN, ET AL., “Bojanowo,” in: ABRAHAM WEIN (ed.), פנקס הקהילות: פולין, vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1984), p. 131; online English version: [https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_poland/pinkas\\_poland6.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pinkas_poland6.html) (retrieved 21 Nov 2017). Bojanowo is mentioned in the appendices. Important information regarding the Bojanowo Jewish community appears in the Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People in the Posner collection, A. POSNER, *Zur Geschichte der Jüdischen Gemeinde und der Jüdischen Familien in Bojanowo*, P 40/44. – Rabbi Dr Akiva Baruch (Arthur Bernhard) Posner (1890–1962), German born alumnus of the Berlin Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary, held a doctoral degree from Tübingen University (1923). Posner served as the rabbi of Kiel, and was a researcher, a teacher, a bibliographer and a librarian. He collected a large quantity of material on the history of the Jewish communities in the Posen district and Schleswig-Holstein, only part of which was published and is located in the Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People, P 40 [https://cahjp.nli.org.il/webfm\\_send/694](https://cahjp.nli.org.il/webfm_send/694). – I am indebted to Yochai Ben Gedaliah and to Benyamin Lukin for their help in locating the material on Bojanowo. On Posner see ABRAHAM ZVI GIVON, זכרון בספר לר' ד"ר עקיבא ברוך פוזנר (Jerusalem: Hechal Shlomo, 1964), pp. 14-8; YEDIDYA, בתי מדרש נוסח אשכנז (note 13), p. 257 and at the Posner collection.

better than in other communities.<sup>35</sup> In 1857, a large fire broke out, causing damage to the entire town, and burning down the synagogue. About two



years later, a new stone synagogue was constructed with the assistance of the Rothschild family of Frankfurt am Main.<sup>36</sup>

Photograph 6: The synagogue in Bojanowo as it looks today (photo by Jerzy Wodynski)

When Theodor moved to Bojanowo in 1888, the Jewish community was small. In 1900, fifty-eight Jews lived in the town of 2,200 residents.<sup>37</sup> Hiring a community rabbi was made possible thanks to the Rohr family who lived in Lang Guhle (today: Golina Wielka, Poland), a large estate nearby, and had the means to afford this expenditure.<sup>38</sup> Theodor's name is mentioned in the descrip-

tion of a ceremony for the establishment of the Jewish home for the elderly in the town in 1900, donated by the philanthropist Moritz Rohr. The home boasted 40 rooms and housed the Jewish elderly and sick residents of the area who enjoyed social and medical assistance free of charge. Theodor was

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35 Cf. BRÄMER, "Anfangsjahre des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars" (note 12), p. 109.

36 According to Anna Józefowicz (see note 34), the synagogue building in Bojanowo was expropriated by the municipal authority in 1947 and transformed into the gymnasium of the agricultural school. It was later used as an art gallery and studio, and then by a cosmetician's clinic. Today, the building is privately owned. The area of the cemetery is today used for agricultural purposes by a private owner. See the website: International Jewish Cemetery Project, Bojanowo <https://www.iajgsjewishcemeteryproject.org/poland/bojanowo.html>. Photos of the few remaining Jewish headstones can be viewed there. Today, no Jews live in Bojanowo. – I thank Jerzy Wodynski, a Bojanowo resident, for the picture of the synagogue and current information regarding the town.

37 MOSES L. BAMBERG and HERMAN ROSENTHAL, "Bojanowo," in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1902), p. 292.

38 The information appears in the draft of Posner's article "Dr. Julius Theodor," the Posner Collection, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People.

a member of the board of trustees who determined the character of the institution.<sup>39</sup>

Photograph 7: Moritz Rohr

Aside from his role as rabbi of Bojanowo, Theodor was a member of the Jewish Teachers Association of Silesia and the province of Posen (*Mitglied des Vereins israelitischer Lehrer in Schlesien und Posen*), the Union of Rabbis of the Posen Province for Observance of Traditional Judaism (*Vereinigung von Rabbinern der Provinz Posen zur Wahrung des überlieferten Judentums*), and the general assembly of German Rabbis. In 1912, his name appeared in a proclamation opposing the establish-



ment of an organization of liberal rabbis in Germany.<sup>40</sup> Theodor's involvement in these different activities reflects the deep influence of Frankel, who thought that the role of rabbinic leadership is to guide community life and encourage Jews through instruction and example.<sup>41</sup>



Photograph 8: Jewish home for the aged in Bojanowo

39 In 1924, the institution was converted into a shelter for Jewish deaf-mute children from all areas of Poland which functioned until 1939. See JÓZEFOWICZ, "Bojanowo" (note 34), Posner Collection, Bojanowo.

40 POSNER, "ד"ר יהודה תיאודור" (note 2), p. 286; BROCKE and CARLEBACH, *Die Rabbiner im Deutschen Reich* (note 5), pp. 608-9.

41 On Frankel's view see SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), p. 259.

The following is an excerpt from a newspaper article written about the conference of the Union of Rabbis of Posen dated 06.02.1914:

Posen, January 30, [1914]. The Union of Rabbis of the Posen Province for Observance of Traditional Judaism held its fourth meeting in the local Jewish community building. The chairman, Dr Brachner (Samter) opened the meeting and delivered a survey of administrative matters. This was followed by the lecture of Theodor (Bojanowo) on “Halakhic Matters in *Beresbit Rabbab*”. The lecture was extensive, clear and inspiring, and the personality of this unique, thorough scholar came through in all of its sections. He is deeply entrenched in his research and conducts it with love.<sup>42</sup>

## 2. *Theodor’s Family*

Theodor married Rosa Meyer and they had three sons: Max, Hugo and Walter.<sup>43</sup> His eldest son, Max (Michael), was born in Berent on May 13, 1886. As an adult, Dr Max Theodor worked as a lawyer in Posen and served in World War I as a foot artillery officer in the German army. Julius Theodor wrote the following in a letter to Jacob Nahum Epstein who resided at that time in Charlottenburg (dated May 6, 1917):

I am occupied today with receiving a respected visitor, my eldest son Michael (Max), who is a lawyer (Rechtsanwalt) in the city of Posen and is also enlisted in the military, holding the title of lieutenant and battery commander (Batterieführer), and has already been decorated with the Iron Cross [a German medal of valour]. My other two sons work in the army as well. May God protect them and us.<sup>44</sup>

About a year and a half, after this letter was written, on October 22, 1918, Max Theodor died on the battlefield of a severe illness.<sup>45</sup> His wife Betty (Bertha) Bernhardt immigrated to the United States in 1939 and died in 1972 in New Jersey. They had only been married one year and did not have any children.<sup>46</sup>

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42 *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, “Der Gemeindebote,” Heft 6 (1914), p. 2. transl. Hanan Birenzweig.

43 Posner Collection, Bojanowo, 20a.

44 Jacob Nahum Epstein Archive, ARC. 4\* 1453 02 211. The letter was written in Hebrew with German terms in brackets. I thank Hanan Birenzweig and Rainer Josef Barzen for deciphering the legal and military terms. The draft of the Jews of Bojanowo into the German Military during World War I is also mentioned by JÓZEFOWICZ, “Bojanowo” (note 34).

45 GOLDMANN, “Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo)” (note 8).

46 Posner Collection, Bojanowo, p. 16. Additional details can be found on the Ancestry website: <http://search.ancestry.com>.

His second son, Dr Hugo Theodor, was born in Bojanowo on July 21, 1889. He resided in Berlin, was arrested by the Nazis on December 16, 1938 and was incarcerated in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. On October 26, 1942, he was transported to a concentration camp for German Jews in Riga and died there three days later, on October 29, 1942.<sup>47</sup>

The youngest son, Dr Walter Theodor, was born in December 1895. He worked as a doctor in Breslau until 1938. It appears that he immigrated to Israel but did not leave any descendants.<sup>48</sup>

When World War I ended and Bojanowo was handed over to Poland (on January 17, 1920) the majority of its Jewish residents immigrated to Reich territories.<sup>49</sup> In 1919, shortly after celebrating his seventieth birthday, Theodor and his family relocated to Berlin and resided there until his death on August 3, 1923.<sup>50</sup>

### 3. *Theodor and his Research of Aggadic Literature*

Alongside his work as a community rabbi, Theodor devoted his time to the research of Aggadic literature. In a letter to his friend, Dr Joseph Cohen in 1893, he wrote: “each day I am engrossed in my book [...] and why do I work with such diligence? So that life is filled with much content in a small place”.<sup>51</sup> Theodor maintained contact with many scholars, to whom he would send his studies and from whom he would receive books and various articles.<sup>52</sup> He began to publish his first series of articles “The Composition

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47 My thanks are due to Barbara Welker of the Stiftung *Neue Synagoge Berlin – Centrum Judaicum* Archive for providing me this information. The information on Hugo Theodor appears in the lists of *Das Gedenkbuch des Bundesarchivs für die Opfer der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung in Deutschland (1933-1945)* ([www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch](http://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch)) as well as on the Yad Vashem website: The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, <http://db.yadvashem.org/names/search.html?language=iw>).

48 Posner writes: “It is said that Dr Walter Theodor lives in Tel Aviv, and he is unmarried”. Posner Collection, Bojanowo, 20a.

49 JÓZEFOWICZ, “Bojanowo” (note 34).

50 POSNER, “ד"ר יהודה תיאודור” (note 2), pp. 286-91; GOTLIB, ספר אהלי-שם (note 8), p. 523; BROCKE and CARLEBACH, *Die Rabbiner im Deutschen Reich* (note 5), pp. 608-9.

51 The letter, translated by Posner, appears in the draft he prepared for his aforementioned article found in the Posner Collection, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People.

52 In the Salomon Buber archive in the Israel National Library, there are seventy-eight letters from Theodor to Buber, in which they discuss the articles they sent

of the Aggadic Midrashim,” in 1879, about a year after he graduated from his studies in the Rabbinical Seminary, when he was only thirty years of age.

The following is a rare letter (in German) sent by the thirty-year-old Dr Julius Theodor to the esteemed eighty-five-year-old scholar, Leopold Zunz:<sup>53</sup>

Tarnowitz, 18 August 1879

My esteemed master!

It is with deep reverence and great anxiety that I allow myself to send you my attached work “The Composition of the Aggadic Midrashim” that appears in Graetz’s *Monatsschrift*<sup>54</sup> and to express my humble thanks to you for all I owe you and for all that I learn from your writings each day. Up until now, I never dared to present you with these scattered pages<sup>55</sup> for your perusal, but the positive interest of Mr. Dr Jellinek<sup>56</sup> in my writings and the supportive letters I

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to each other. Theodor also thanks Buber for books he sent to him. In one of the articles, Theodor published a letter he received from Adolph Jellinek. There are also letters Theodor wrote to Prof Samuel Klein, to Dr Markus Brann the editor of *Monatsschrift*, to Dr Max Schloessinger and to Dr Jacob Nahum Epstein. Letters he sent to Rabbi Dr Joseph Perles and Rabbi Jacob Freimann are in the Leo Baeck Archive in New York. A letter Theodor sent to Zunz in 1879 and letters written to members of the board of the Zunz Foundation are located in the Leopold Zunz archive.

53 Zunz Archive, ARC. 4\* 792 11 9, number 163. A transcript and photo of the letter appears in the appendix, pp. 429-431.

54 JULIUS THEODOR, “Zur Composition der agadischen Homilien,” in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 28 (1879), pp. 97-113, 164-75, 271-78, 337-50, 408-18, 455-62; 29 (1880), pp. 19-23, and 30 (1881), pp. 500-10. The first four articles had already been published before this letter was sent.

55 He is most likely referring to the drafts of the articles which had not yet been published.

56 Dr Adolph Jellinek (1821-1893), was a researcher of Midrash, Jewish philosophy and Kabbalah, and was a collector of manuscripts and a bibliographer. His important work in the area of Midrash was collecting texts of short Midrashim which were scattered among various manuscripts, which he published in the six-volume collection *Bet ha-Midrash* (1853–1877). Jellinek was a Reform rabbi and a sermonizer in Vienna, and was one of the founders of the Vienna Rabbinical Seminary (1862). See: MOSES ROSENMAN, *Dr. Adolf Jellinek: sein Leben und Schaffen: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien in der zweiten Hälfte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Wien: J. Schlesinger, 1931); ROBERT S. WISTRICH, “The Modernization of Viennese Jewry: The Impact of German Culture in a Multi-Ethnic State,” in: JACOB KATZ (ed.), *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction

have received from him and from Mr. Buber<sup>57</sup> encourage me to follow the dictates of my heart.

As one of the youngest graduates of the Seminary, I attended the anniversary celebration last week<sup>58</sup> during which a telegram of congratulations was sent to you.

The subject is certainly close to your heart as well so that you will look favourably upon our efforts and work.

Allow me, esteemed sir, to attach my dissertation as well.

Of my work, which is currently being published, I would especially appreciate if you would have a look at the last section<sup>59</sup> on *Shir Hashirim Rabbah* and provide your good counsel.

With great respect and thanks,  
Dr. J. Theodor, Tarnowitz.

[Added to Theodor's letter, in Zunz's handwriting:

Replied 20 August

- my mind and body are no longer in good health.

- I see that your research is thorough.

- an 85-year-old man is not immune to punishment!]

Theodor's teachers in Breslau and his fellow researchers assisted him with publishing his studies. Many of his articles were published in the *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums (MGWJ)* (the monthly journal of history and the scientific study of Judaism) established by Zacharias

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Books, 1987), pp. 43-70. – On his contribution to Kabbalah research, see: MOSHE IDEL, “על אהרן ילינק והקבלה,” in: פעמים (*Pe'amim*) 100 (2004), pp. 15-22.

57 Salomon Buber (1827–1906) devoted himself to the research of Midrash and Aggadah, and published an extensive number of Midrashim. See J. K. MIKLI-SZANSKI, “שלמה בובר,” in: FEDERBUSH (ed.), חכמת ישראל במערב אירופה (note 2), vol. 3 (1965), pp. 41-58. The two scholars conducted an active correspondence (see note 47\* above). The opening words of Theodor's letter of February 23, 1885 to Buber are a testimony to their warm relationship: “To my beloved, cherished one, who is like a father to me with his love and my master with his wisdom and Torah, who is always bestowing charity upon those in need of knowledge and the youngest of his colleagues, our Rabbi Salomon (שלמה), whose peace (שלום) shall be everlasting”. Salomon Buber Archive, ARC. 4\* 1222/1412.

58 On August 10, 1879, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary was celebrated. See the annual report: *Bericht des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars Fraenckel'scher Stiftung* (1880).

59 Literally: The last continuation. This probably refers to the seventh article which ends the discussion on *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah*, THEODOR, “Zur Composition der agadischen Homilien” (note 54), 29 (1880), pp. 19-23 (published in January 1880).

Frankel. The *Monatsschrift* began to appear in Breslau in 1851 and was published until the autumn of 1939. Frankel, who was the editor of the periodical between 1851 and 1868, wrote the following in the introduction to the first issue: “*Wissenschaft des Judentums* is the great impetus of Judaism; without it, it cannot exist.” In his opinion, the main goal of the journal was to spark the interest of Jews in their past and their culture. Thus, the journal was to deal with “the historical problems of the Jewish people and the scientific study of their independent culture”.<sup>60</sup> This statement was directed against members of the Reform movement who were, in his opinion, excessively influenced by external criticism of Judaism, and also against the conservative stream of Orthodoxy which opposed the usage of critical tools for the research of Jewish sources. The journal consisted of two parts: the first was called ‘the history section’ (*Geschichte*) and it addressed an educated but non-scholarly body of readers. Its goal was to inspire Jews and uplift their spirits through translations of sources and essays about heroic history. The second part was called ‘the scientific section’ (*Wissenschaft*) which was intended for the scholarly community.<sup>61</sup> It was in this section that Theodor’s articles were published.

In the period when Theodor published his articles, Heinrich Graetz was the editor-in-chief of the journal (1869–1887). Pinkus Friedrich Frankl (1848–1887) stood at his side (1882–1886). Graetz encouraged his students to publish their studies in the journal, and Theodor’s first articles appeared in the years 1879–1881, a short while after he completed his studies. Another series of articles was published in the years 1885–1887.<sup>62</sup> The journal was not published from 1888–1892. This fact explains why Theodor did not publish any articles during those years. When the journal resumed its activity, Theodor published several more articles. During these years, the

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60 FRANKEL, “Einleitendes” (note 14), pp. 1-6. See also: DAVID SAMUEL LOEWINGER, “Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums,” in: FEDERBUSH (ed.), חכמת ישראל במערב אירופה (note 2), vol. 1 (1958), pp. 529-42; Schorsch, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 259 ff.

61 LOEWINGER, “Monatsschrift” (note 60), p. 532; SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 259-61.

62 In a letter sent to Salomon Buber from Bromberg on June 8, 1885, Theodor writes: “At this very moment I received an urgent letter [emphasis in original] from Prof. Graetz who implored with me to send him the article regarding the Sedarim,” in: Salomon Buber Archive, ARC. 4\* 1222 / 1412. Theodor’s great admiration for Graetz is evident from the manner in which he accepts the editor’s comment and mentions it outright in his article. See THEODOR, “Zur Composition der agadischen Homilien” (note 54), 28 (1879), p. 105, note 1.

journal was edited by Markus (Mordekhai) Brann (1849–1920), who served as editor between 1892 and 1919, and David Kaufmann of Budapest (1892–1899). In 1903, the periodical was turned over to the Association for the Promotion of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Germany (*Die Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums*).<sup>63</sup> Theodor published several book reviews during those years.

The topics explored by Theodor, which were published in the journal and in other forums, stand at the centre of Midrash research even today. Among his studies is the series of articles “The Composition of the Aggadic Midrashim” (1879–1881).<sup>64</sup> Another important, and pioneering series of articles is “The Midrashim on the Torah and the Three-Year Torah Reading Cycle in the Land of Israel” (1885–1887) in which Theodor pointed out the connection between the internal division of Aggadic Midrashim into *parashot* and the three-year Torah reading cycle in the Land of Israel.<sup>65</sup> In addition, he published a series of articles on the textual witnesses of *Bereshit Rabbah* (1893–1895), words of appreciation for Zunz and his contribution to the research of Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* (1894), an article on the commentary attributed to Rashi on Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* (1911), an article on three unknown *parashot* of *Bereshit Rabbah* (1915), as well as an article on the foreign words in the early commentaries of *Bereshit Rabbah* (1917).<sup>66</sup>

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63 The last editor of the *Monatsschrift* was Isaak Heinemann (1920–1939). See LOEWINGER, “Monatsschrift” (note 60), pp. 529-42. – For a list of editors and their years of office, see the website of the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main: <https://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/cm/periodical/titleinfo/2829132>. – On this *Association* see: HENRY C. SOUSSAN, *The Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums in Its Historical Context* (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts, vol. 75) (Tübingen: Mohr, 2013).

64 See list of Theodor’s publications below, pp. 432-434, item no. 3. For a Hebrew annotated and updated edition and translation see: KADARI, *מנחה ליהודה* (note 1), including THEODOR’s “Zur Composition der agadischen Homilien,” transl. by Hanan Birenzweig.

65 See list of Theodor’s publications below, pp. 432-434, item no. 4. The articles were published against the backdrop of the publication of Buber’s edition of *Midrash Tanchuma*; see MARC BREGMAN, *ספרות תנחומא-ילמדנו* (Jerusalem / New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2003), p. 5. JOSEPH HEINEMANN, “מבנהו וחלוקתו של מדרש,” in: H. Z. HIRSCHBERG (ed.), *תרט"ב-תש"ל*, 2 vols. (Bar Ilan, 1972), vol. I, pp. 279-89, here p. 279, wrote the following about the series of articles: “Ever since J. Theodor’s discovery that most Aggadic Midrashim on the Torah reflect the three-year cycle Torah reading, the internal division of these Midrashim into Parashot is clear to us.”

66 See list of Theodor’s publications below, pp. 432-434, items no. 5-9.

Aside from the above, Theodor published book reviews on Wilhelm (Benjamin Ze'ev) Bacher's (1850–1913) book, *The Aggadab of the Babylonian Amoraim* (1879) and on August Wünsche's (1838–1912) German translation of *Midrash Kobleth* (1880). He wrote a comprehensive, detailed article on Salomon Buber's (1827–1906) edition of *Midrash Tanchuma* (1885) and on Meir Friedmann's (1831–1908) edition of *Seder Eliabu Rabba and Zuta* (1903). In addition, he published a review of David Künstlinger's (1867–1940) book *Early Jewish Exegesis of the Bible* (1911).<sup>67</sup>

Between 1902 and 1904, Theodor wrote several English encyclopaedia entries for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, on the following Midrashic works: *Bereshit Rabbah*, *Bemidbar Rabbah*, *Debarim Rabbah*, *Ekhav Rabbati*, *Esther Rabbah*, *Koblet Rabbah* and the smaller Midrashim. Additionally, he wrote a general entry on *Midrash Haggadah*.<sup>68</sup> This list demonstrates well that Theodor had earned international recognition as a leading scholar, and was appreciated by the Jewish studies scholars of his time.

#### 4. *A Critical Edition of Bereshit Rabbah*

Theodor's life's work, which left a deep imprint on Midrash and Aggadah research and enjoys extensive popularity even today, was his critical edition of *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah*.<sup>69</sup> In this edition, Theodor adopted the methodology of Western philology, applying it to the Hebrew language. The modern Western philology of the nineteenth century gave rise to a tremendous increase in the research of historical and literary sources in a variety of languages.<sup>70</sup> It utilized critical methods in the areas of textual criticism and the verification of manuscripts with the goal of determining the original text of ancient works. Theodor's critical edition of *Bereshit Rabbah* accorded well with this general trend. Moreover, it realized the vision of the founders of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* who believed that the study of post-Biblical Jewish texts should be integrated into the curriculum of the German universities

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67 See list of Theodor's publications below, pp. 432-434, items no. 10-14.

68 See list of Theodor's publications below, pp. 432-434, items no. 15-22.

69 The purpose of a critical edition is to retrace the ancient text of the Midrash before it was subject to the errors of copiers and printers. In the centre is the text, from an early manuscript or several manuscripts. Beneath it, there is a column of alternate texts, or *apparatus criticus*, a system that identifies the differences between the basic text chosen for the edition and other textual witnesses. The important part of the edition is the critical commentary based on information from various areas of research: philology, linguistics, history and others.

70 JAMES TURNER, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 123 ff.

and given institutional support as an inseparable part of the academic research of classical literature. An objective, academic portrayal of Judaism, so they thought, would help Jews achieve equal civil rights and enable them to integrate into European culture.<sup>71</sup>

In 1890, Theodor travelled to London to examine a manuscript in the British Museum, which he used as the basis for his critical edition of Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah*. He also journeyed to Oxford, Cambridge, Rome and Paris to examine other textual witnesses. The impression he made during his visit to Paris is described in the periodical *המליץ* (*Ha-Melitz*) dated Sunday, August 8, 1890:

Paris, July 25 – The respected scholar, Dr J. Theodor, rabbi and sermonizer in the town of Bojanowo which is near Lissa (Leszno) completed his work copying the *Midrash Rabbah* from the manuscript ensconced in the British Museum in London. On Thursday of last week, he appeared in our city to visit the large library here [...] following the advice of the scholar Isidore Löw, scribe of the kollel and a discreet advisor in the KIAH (*Kol Israel Haverim*) society here. The aforementioned rabbi entrusted me with the copying of the *Midrash Rabbah* [...]. The above-mentioned Dr Theodor is an alumnus of the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary whom God has endowed with talents. On the occasion of his work on the *Midrash Rabbah* [...] he has also visited the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge and London. I. I. G. [Isidore Israel Goldblum].

Upon his return, Theodor wrote a series of articles, which include a comprehensive study of Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* and its various textual witnesses.<sup>72</sup> This survey served as a kind of introduction to the publication of the critical edition on this Midrash, which he worked on for many years. In a letter from 1895, he writes to his friend, Rabbi Dr Joseph Cohen:

I am thankful to the Almighty that I can work on such an important matter. Otherwise, what will become of me in my town, Bojanowo [...] the research invigorates me, and it leads to extensive correspondences, so that eminent scholars know my name and work. I pray that God should guard my path and my work.<sup>73</sup>

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71 TRAUTMANN-WALLER, “Leopold Zunz and Moritz Steinschneider” (note 12), pp. 81-2, 102-7; SCHORSCH, *From Text to Context* (note 9), pp. 151-52. While some hoped that the research of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* would help bring about a religious reform, Theodor was not among them, and, as mentioned, his name appears in a proclamation opposing the establishment of an organization of liberal rabbis in Germany (see note 35 above).

72 See Theodor’s list of publications, below pp. 432-434, item no. 5.

73 The letter appeared in a Hebrew draft Posner prepared for his article (see note 46 above).

The critical edition of *Beresbit Rabbah* (known today as the Theodor-Albeck edition) came out in a series of fascicles in Berlin, the first printed in 1903. It included the text of the Midrash according to London Manuscript, a critical apparatus of textual variants, and an extensive critical commentary which Julius (Judah) Theodor named מנחת יהודה (*Minḥat Yehudah*, i.e. “Judah’s offering”).

Yonah Fraenkel wrote that the critical edition of *Beresbit Rabbah* marks the advent of a new era in the history of the publishing of texts of Aggadic Midrashim.<sup>74</sup> Theodor’s main innovation in his critical edition was the apparatus: an entire column devoted to displaying the variant readings in different manuscripts, in accordance with the Western philological method. This was the first apparatus to appear in Hebrew.<sup>75</sup> The מנחת יהודה includes a commentary, a linguistic exploration of Greek and Galilean Aramaic words appearing in the Midrash, as well as a comparison with parallel texts. However, the extensive quotations from the parallel texts made the commentary lengthy and cumbersome.<sup>76</sup>

While Theodor was working on his critical edition, MS Vatican 30 was discovered, a manuscript with superior versions in comparison to all other manuscripts.<sup>77</sup> Theodor was able to include it in his apparatus.<sup>78</sup> The advantage of this manuscript is its usage of early Rabbinic Hebrew and Galilean

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74 YONAH FRAENKEL, *מדרש ואגדה*, 3 vols. (Tel Aviv: The Open University, 1996), vol. III, pp. 967-8. Theodor’s edition is mentioned by URI KOBER, “בית המדרש מוסדות תורה באירופה בבניינם ובחורבנם,” in: SAMUEL K. MIRSKY (ed.), (New York: Ogen Publishing, 1956), pp. 605-33, here p. 618, in the notes listing the contribution of the Rabbinical Seminary to *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the area of Talmud and Midrash. See also the words of praise for Theodor’s work in: MARC HIRSHMAN, “The Final Chapters of Genesis Rabbah,” in: SARIT KATTAN GRIBETZ, DAVID M. GROSSBERG, MARTHA HIMMELFARB, AND PETER SCHÄFER (eds.), *Genesis Rabbah in Text and Contexts*, (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, vol. 166) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), pp. 233-42.

75 FRAENKEL, *מדרש ואגדה* (note 74). – I thank Menahem Kahana who confirmed this fact. See also Goldmann’s description of the edition, p. 423 below. Theodor sets out the rules for the editor’s work in his review on Buber’s edition of *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana*, THEODOR, “Zur Composition der agadischen Homilien” (note 54), pp. 168-9.

76 FRAENKEL, *מדרש ואגדה* (note 74), pp. 967-8.

77 THEODOR, “Three Unknown Parshiot” (Theodor’s list of publications below, item no. 8) note 1, wrote that it is “an early, valuable manuscript”.

78 The Vatican 30 manuscript was copied for Theodor by Reuben Spizzichino during the years 1894-1895 “for thirty franco”. The copy is held by The Jewish Historical Institute, Ms. Warsaw 689. Theodor writes: “I have in my possession

Aramaic (without the influence of Babylonian Aramaic) and its text, which is similar to that of Genizah fragments. This is why contemporary scholars are of the opinion that it would have been preferable to use the MS Vatican 30 text as the basis for the critical edition, despite the fact that it is missing the first few pages.<sup>79</sup> Theodor and Albeck were unaware of the existence of MS Vatican 60, and it is not recorded in the edition.<sup>80</sup>

The first six fascicles (Lieferungen)<sup>81</sup> of the critical edition of Midrash *Beresbit Rabbah* were published between 1903 and 1912 in the following order:

[1] Parashot 1-10, Berlin 1903, pp. 1-80.<sup>82</sup>

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an accurate copy I commissioned of the Vatican 30 manuscript up to the end of Parasha 53 which I have compared to the original in Rome. For page 81b until the end I have in my possession an excellent facsimile of the manuscript” (THEODOR, *ibid*).

79 The manuscript was published in a facsimile edition by MICHAEL SOKOLOFF, 30 ואטיקן ואתייד ואתיקן רבה: מדרש בראשית רבה: כתבייד ואתיקן 30 (Jerusalem: Maqor, 1971). On the text of this manuscript see CHANOCH ALBECK, *Einleitung und Register zum Bereschit Rabba* (Wahrman Books, Jerusalem 1965, pp. 107-8 and p. 137; YECHEZQEL KUTSCHER, “מחקרים בארמית גלילית,” in: *Tarbiz* 21 (1950), pp. 192-205, here p. 198; LEWIS M. BARTH, *An Analysis of Vatican 30* (Cincinnati: HUC, 1973); MICHAEL SOKOLOFF, “The Hebrew of Vatican 30,” introduction to facsimile edition, pp. 257-301 (Hebrew). The text of *Beresbit Rabbah* according to the Vatican 30 manuscript has been uploaded to the *Maagarim* website of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, <http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il>, with a linguistic analysis of each word.

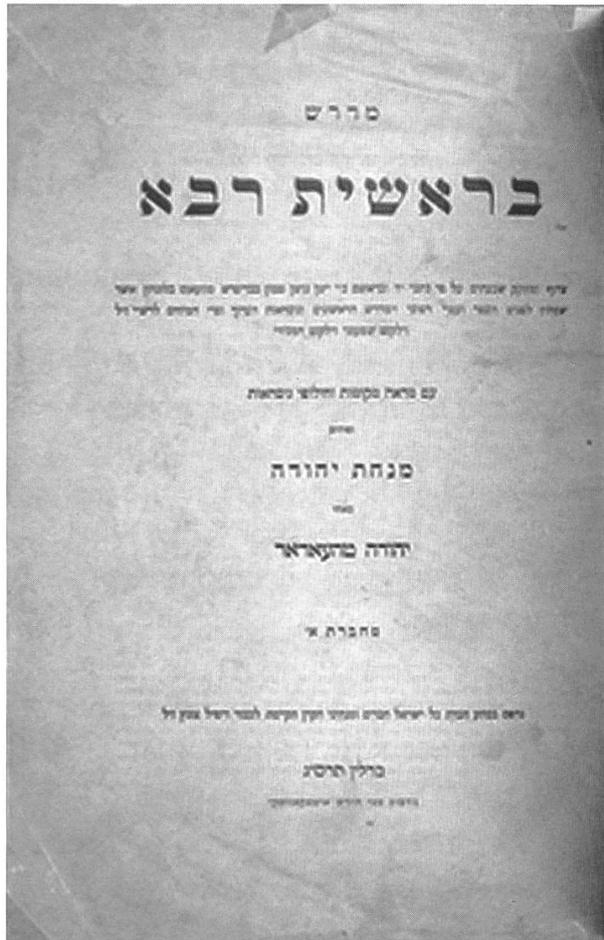
80 The manuscript was published in a facsimile edition, מדרש בראשית רבה: כתבייד ואתיקן 60 (Jerusalem: Maqor, 1972). The first half of MS Vatican 60 was “amended” periodically under the influence of later Midrashim, but its original versions still have great importance and are closely connected to MS Vatican 30. See MENAHEM KAHANA, “זיקת כתבייד ואתיקן 60 של בראשית רבה למקבילותיו,” in: *Te'uda* 11: M. A. FRIEDMAN and M. B. LERNER (eds.), *מחקרים במדרש* (Tel Aviv: Graphit, 1996), pp. 17-60. Kahana disagrees with some of Sokoloff's conclusions in his “The Geniza fragments of Genesis Rabbah and Ms. Vatican Ebr. 60 of Genesis Rabbah” (PhD diss., Hebrew University, 1971), pp. 211-335.

81 Each fascicle consisted of five galley sheets (leaflets), which were folded, cut and bound together as a booklet, or a fascicle containing 40 pages printed on both sides (80 altogether). At a later stage, the fascicles were bound together into a book. For this reason, the fascicles division temporarily interrupts the inner division of the Midrash to parashot.

82 The first fascicle (Lieferung I) was printed with the assistance of Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris, and the Zunz Foundation (der Zunz-Stiftung). Theodor

- [2] Parashot 10-18, Berlin 1904, pp. 81-160.
- [3] Parashot 18-25, Berlin 1906, pp. 161-240.
- [4] Parashot 25-34, Berlin 1908, pp. 241-320.
- [5] Parashot 34-41, Berlin 1909, pp. 321-400.
- [6] Parashot 41-47, Berlin 1912, pp. 401-478.

In 1912, Theodor published all six printed fascicles as a book: Parashot 1-47, *Beresbit* through *Lekh-Lekha*. This was the first volume of the three-volume



edition of *Beresbit Rabbah*.<sup>83</sup> Three additional fascicles were published later (the ninth was printed in two parts):

- [7] Parashot 48-53, Berlin 1913, pp. 479-560.
- [8] Parashot 53-60, Berlin 1914, pp. 561-640.
- [9] a. Parashot 60-63, Berlin 1916, pp. 641-680.
- b. Parashot 63-65, Berlin 1921, pp. 681-720.<sup>84</sup>

In total, nine fascicles were published during Theodor's lifetime, between 1903 and 1921, and the first two galley sheets of the next fascicle, up to page 752.

Photograph 9: The cover page of the first fascicle of *Beresbit Rabbah*, Berlin 1903

signed the first fascicle: Bojanowo, Prov. Posen, Januar, 1903.

83 The first volume was printed by H. Itzkowski with the assistance of Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris, the Zunz Foundation, the Königswarter Foundation in Frankfurt am Main and the Society for the Encouragement of the research of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin.

84 Each section consisted of 40 pages, half the length of the other fascicles. The cover of both sections read: "fascicle 9". Albeck, when summarizing Theodor's part in the edition, wrote: "The ninth (and last) fascicle appeared in 1921," he was referring to the second part of the ninth fascicle. His statement appears at the beginning of the second volume of *Beresbit Rabbah*, under the heading "To the Reader" (the page is not numbered).

Theodor did not have a publisher and he printed and distributed the fascicles on his own. The first fascicle included a short introduction in German in which Theodor lists the different manuscripts of *Beresbit Rabbah*, which he used in his edition. He describes MS London, which Samuel David Luzzatto (1800–1865) mentioned as an ancient and important manuscript. Theodor thanks three scholars in his introduction: Moses Gaster (1856–1939), who reviewed and compared the copied text with the original manuscript, Wilhelm Bacher of Budapest and Immanuel Löw of Szeged (1854–1944) who proof-read the edition.

The announcement that a new edition of Midrash *Beresbit Rabbah* was about to be published appeared in 1902 in Alexander Marx's (1878–1953) article in the newspaper of the Orthodox movement in Berlin,<sup>85</sup> as well as an article by Dr David Künstlinger<sup>86</sup> of Kraków in the *המגייד* (*Ha-Maggid*) newspaper (edition 33, Thursday, August 14, 1902, entitled “Heralding a Book”):

Admiration and respect are due to Mr. Dr Theodor who has commenced publishing the above-mentioned cherished, ancient Midrash [...] for he is known as a researcher loyal to Midrash criticism and excels in his marvellous proficiency [...] no secret of the Midrash caused him trouble. His expertise is infused into every page and comment of this new edition, the work of an artisan [...] We have not found one fault with this fascicle, so that we shall announce publicly that *Beresbit Rabbah*, to the great joy of all those who seek it, has found for itself a loyal redeemer.

The first fascicle and the following ones, gained many positive reviews, which were published in journals and in the press by Ludwig Blau (1861–1936), Wilhelm Bacher, Philipp Bloch (1841–1923), Benno Jacob (1862–1945) and Ismar Elbogen (1874–1943).<sup>87</sup> Consequently, Theodor received financial support from several sources for publishing subsequent fascicles.

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85 ALEXANDER MARX, *Israelitische Monatsschrift, Beilage zur Jüdischen Presse in Berlin*, Nr. 7 (1902), pp. 25-6, zu J. Pr., 33; ALEXANDER MARX, in: *Zeitschrift für Hebraeische Bibliographie* 6 (1902), p. 67.

86 Dr David Künstlinger (1867–1939) was a member of the Kraków Academy of Sciences, a researcher of Bible and Semitic languages. He founded the Krakow community archive and published a book on early Jewish exegesis of the Bible (1911) which Theodor reviewed (item no. 14, p.\*). Künstlinger took his own life when Kraków was occupied by Nazi Germany in early World War II. See MEIR BOSSAK, *בין צללי עיר* (Tel Aviv: Eked, 1986), p. 8.

87 LUDWIG BLAU, in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 47 (1903), p. 379; WILHELM BACHER, in: *Revue des Études Juives* 46 (1903), pp. 301-10; PHILIPP BLOCH, in: *Zeitschrift für Hebraeische Bibliographie* 8 (1904), pp. 6-11;

During World War I, the publishing was slowed down. The first part of the ninth fascicle was printed in 1916, at which time Theodor was forced to halt his work. Due to the war, he was unable to access manuscripts held in the libraries of other countries.<sup>88</sup> The death of his firstborn son in the battlefield in 1918 affected his mood and his relocation from Bojanowo to Berlin in 1919 must have taken a toll on Theodor. The financial situation also caused a slowdown in the publication of fascicles. Indeed, Theodor was supported by Jewish organizations, but he had to publish the edition from his own resources and he was dependent on sales. In 1919, Dr Felix Goldmann (1882–1934) of Leipzig wrote:

Today, it can be said that the continued publication of the edition is in a jeopardy [...] if not more extensive circles show some interest in and support of the edition [...].

I do hope that this call will be heeded and that this humble, quiet scholar from Bojanowo will be spared, at the very least, of the need to worry about the material aspect of his work.<sup>89</sup>

The second part of the ninth fascicle was published in 1921 (five years after the first part was published). Immediately afterwards, the first two galley sheets of the following fascicle were also printed, for Parashot 65-67 (pp. 721-752), but due to Theodor's death, the printing was halted on p. 752.<sup>90</sup> A total of 60 % of the critical edition of *Beresbit Rabbah* was published during Theodor's lifetime.

Following Theodor's death, the Academy for the Scientific Study of Judaism in Berlin (*Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*)<sup>91</sup> turned to Chanoch Albeck and requested that he complete Theodor's work.<sup>92</sup> Albeck's

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BENNO JACOB, *Sonder-Abdruck aus den Göttingischen Gelehrten Anzeigen* 5 (1905), pp. 359-76; ISMAR ELBOGEN, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* (1910), Heft 10, p. 118. Later reviews were published by BERNHARD HELLER, in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 71 (1927), pp. 466-72; 76 (1932), pp. 199-206, 542; 78 (1934), pp. 609-15.

88 GOLDMANN, "Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo)" (note 8).

89 GOLDMANN, "Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo)" (note 8).

90 See Albeck's description at the beginning of the second volume of *Beresbit Rabbah* under the heading "To the Reader".

91 On the establishment of the Academy see: DANIEL R. SCHWARTZ, "מבתי מדרש" תולדות האוניברסיטה, in: STEVEN KATZ and M. HEYD (eds.), *העברית בירושלים: שורשים והתחלות* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997), pp. 457-75.

92 Prof Chanoch Albeck (1890–1972), researcher of Talmudic literature, published many studies on the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and Aggadic Midrashim, the Talmud, Halakhic literature and Commentators. He edited and completed

introduction to the second volume of *Bereshit Rabbah* clarifies that the second part of the edition is also infused with Theodor's work.<sup>93</sup> According to Albeck, Theodor had prepared an apparatus and commentary until the end of Parashah 86 (the end of the second volume, p. 1059). The textual variants of three witnesses (two manuscripts from Oxford and the Adler Yemenite manuscript) were missing in the apparatus from Parashah 68:5 until the middle of Parashah 78 (about 150 pages). From there until the end of Parashah 86 the two Oxford manuscript variants were missing (about 130 pages).

Albeck completed the missing textual variants in the apparatus. He also shortened Theodor's commentary significantly, from page 769 on, omitting the long quotations of the parallel texts, referencing only the most important ones. He used square brackets to note his additions to Theodor's *Minḥat Yebudah* commentary in this section. The second volume of *Bereshit Rabbah* appeared in seven fascicles between 1913 and 1927 (fascicles 7-13; fascicles 7-9 appeared in Theodor's lifetime. They were published in a book and printed in Berlin in 1927).<sup>94</sup>

According to Albeck, it was up to him to write the edition as well as the commentary from Parasha 87 to 101 (third volume, pp. 1061-1291). Appropriately, on the cover page of the third volume of the edition, only Chanoch Albeck's name appears. In this volume too, Theodor's contribution should be noted, as he had published Parashot 95-97 (pp. 1231-1244) earlier

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Zunz's book *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (Frankfurt am Main: Kauffman, 1892), translated into Hebrew: *הדרשות בישראל והשתלשלותן ההיסטורית* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1947). When he took on the task of completing Theodor's edition (in his thirties), he had already been ordained as a rabbi at the Vienna Rabbinical Seminary (1905), received a PhD from Vienna University (1921) and had become famous due to his edition of the Meiri's commentary on Yevamot (which was published from 1910 onward). From 1926 to 1934, he lectured at the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin (*Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*). When he came to Israel, he served as the head of the Talmudic department at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. See ABRAHAM ME'IR HABERMAN, *אנשי ספר ואנשי מעשה: סופרים, חוקרים, ביבליוגרפים, מדפיסים* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1974), pp. 133-8; SHALOM ALBECK, "כתבי חנוך אלבק," in: *ספר היוכל לרבי חנוך אלבק* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1963), pp. 9-16.

93 *Bereshit Rabbah*, Theodor-Albeck, vol. 2, under the Hebrew heading "אל הקורא" "To the Reader" (the page is not numbered). This page initially appeared at the end of the tenth fascicle, the first one Albeck published.

94 The second volume of *Bereshit Rabbah* was printed by H. Itzkowski, M. Popelauer publishers.

on with references to parallel texts and detailed comments.<sup>95</sup> The third volume appeared initially in three fascicles between 1928 and 1929 (fascicles 14-16), which were published as a book in 1929 in Berlin.<sup>96</sup>

This data demonstrates that Theodor's work encompasses approximately 80 % of Midrash *Beresbit Rabbah*.<sup>97</sup> Theodor was unable to publish the complete introduction he had promised in the preface to the first fascicle (although he laid an important foundation for it in his various articles on *Beresbit Rabbah*) and the task was completed by Albeck. The introductory volume was printed in Berlin and Jerusalem between the years 1931 and 1936 and includes a comprehensive introduction and important indexes by Chanoch Albeck (part 1: Introduction, 1931; part 2: fascicle 1, indexes, 1932; fascicle 2, supplements, 1936).<sup>98</sup> Today, these sections appear at the end of the third volume of the printed edition.

Praise for Theodor's edition appeared in an article penned by Dr Felix Goldmann:

The crowning glory of his work is his edition of Midrash *Beresbit Rabbah*, a work that has received exceptionally excellent reviews from all experts in the field. This edition is the first critical edition of an early rabbinic text, which utilizes all auxiliary tools, with precision and according to scientific rules. It reflects the entire essence of the man, who himself embodies an awe-inspiring synthesis of traditional Jewish learnedness and modesty along with German accuracy and thoroughness.<sup>99</sup>

After the publication of the Midrash with the introduction and indexes, two facsimile editions appeared: one of MS Vatican 30 – the chief manuscript of *Beresbit Rabbah* – as well as of MS Vatican 60, which was not included in

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95 *Three Unknown Parshiot of Beresbit Rabbah* (List of Theodor's publications, item no. 8). Albeck comments on this in the edition of *Beresbit Rabbah*, vol. 3, p. 1231.

96 Publications of the *Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Berlin.

97 Theodor's significant part in the *Beresbit Rabbah* edition was forgotten over time. As GOLDBERG writes in his "רבי חנוך אלבק ז"ל," in: YA'AQOV KATZ (ed.), על פרופסור חנוך אלבק: דברים שאמרו לזכרו ביום השלושים לפטירתו (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973), pp. 14-9: "Only the first part, Parashot 1-48, appeared in Theodor's lifetime. But most of the remainder, Volumes 2 and 3, was accomplished by R. C. Albeck". In the last edition of the Midrash by Shalem Publishers, only Albeck's name appears on the spine.

98 Published by Writings of *Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Berlin: Part 1 was printed by D. Rotenberg (Breslau 1930); Part 2 by Merkaz Printers, Jerusalem 1936. Second printing with additional corrections by Albeck, Wahrmann Books, Jerusalem 1965.

99 Goldmann, "Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo)" (note 8).

the edition.<sup>100</sup> The Genizah fragments of *Beresbit Rabbah*, which were discovered after the publication of the edition, were published by Michael Sokoloff. Among them is an important Genizah fragment which was apparently one of the textual ancestors of MS Vatican 30.<sup>101</sup>

Looking at Theodor's edition from a perspective of the history of the Hebrew book indicates that aside from the innovation in a critical edition for *Beresbit Rabbah*, Theodor's project also reflects continuity in the practice of study and research of Aggadic Midrashim. The printing revolution in the 15<sup>th</sup> century significantly widened the circle of Hebrew book readers.<sup>102</sup> At first, canonical literature was printed—including the collection of Midrashim on the Pentateuch entitled "Midrash Rabbah", printed in Constantinople in 1512.<sup>103</sup> A few years later, an additional volume was printed with *Midrash Rabbah* on the five *Megillot*.<sup>104</sup> The two collections appeared as one book entitled *Midrash Rabbah* printed in Venice in 1545, which have since been printed numerous times in the same format. The printing of *Midrash Rabbah* widened the circle of readers of Midrashic literature, resulting in the flourishing of commentaries on the Midrash from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.<sup>105</sup> In the early eighteenth century, *Midrash Rabbah* was printed along with some commentaries at the bottom of the page. A large

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100 see notes 75-76\* above.

101 MICHAEL SOKOLOFF, *The Geniza Fragments of Beresbit Rabbah* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982). On the importance of Genizah fragment No. 2, see 26-50.

102 ZEEV GRIES, (1900-1700) הספר כסוכן תרבות בשנים ת"ס-ת"ר"ס (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2002), p. 17. In a broader context, see Adrian Johns, "The Coming of Print to Europe," in: LESLIE HOWSAM (ed.), *The History of the Book* (Cambridge: Oxford Academic, 2015), pp. 107-24.

103 MARC BREGMAN, "Midrash Rabbah and the Medieval Collector Mentality," in: *Prooftexts 17* (1997), pp. 63-76; MYRON B. LERNER, "The Works of Aggadic Midrash and the Esther Midrashim," in: SHMUEL SAFRAI (ed.), *The Literature of the Sages, Second Part: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2007), pp. 133-229, here pp. 166-8.

104 Probably in Constantinople 1514, See MYRON B. LERNER, "הדפוס הראשון של", "מדרש חמש מגילות": עיונים בדרכי פעולתם של המדפיסים העבריים בקושטא ובפיזארו (Lod: Tel Aviv University, Haberman Institute for Literary Research, 1983), pp. 289-311.

105 See JACOB ELBAUM, להבין דברי חכמים: מבחר דברי מבוא לאגדה ולמדרש משל חכמי ימי הביניים (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2000), pp. 40-1. On the commentators of *Midrash Rabbah* and their goals see JACOB ELBAUM, היצירה הרוחנית-הספרותית בפולין, ובארצות אשכנז בשלהי המאה השש-עשרה (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), pp. 95-6, 118-127.

number of commentaries were included in the Vilna 1887 edition (The Widow and Brothers Romm Publishing House). These developments were the catalyst of an additional expansion of the circles of Midrashic literature learners.<sup>106</sup> However, the printed editions also preserved textual errors stabilizing them into the collective consciousness of their readers.<sup>107</sup> Against this backdrop, the critical edition (which was published from 1903 on) sought to determine the ancient text through the study of manuscripts. Thus, the critical edition expanded the circle of Midrash readers to include an additional audience of intellectuals and academics (both Jewish and non-Jewish) who are interested in philological aspects and in the scientific commentary and are proficient in Hebrew.<sup>108</sup>

### 5. Theodor's Final Years in Berlin

In December 1919, Theodor celebrated his seventieth birthday in Bojanowo. At that point, he was already planning to relocate to Berlin. Many Jews left Bojanowo in the aftermath of the change of sovereignty from German rule to independent Polish rule. Dr Felix Goldmann wrote the following in an article published on December 28, 1919, in honour of Theodor's birthday in the Jewish newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*:

Theodor enjoyed the harmony of a wonderful family life. He and his lovely wife raised three sons to become talented men. In the tranquillity of a small town, he devoted himself entirely to his scientific research [...] until the War broke out and undermined the peacefulness of the pleasant house in Bojanowo and brought about the tragedy. One of his sons, a talented lawyer in every measure, a man of great stature who had a good name and reputation as a

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106 AVRIEL BAR-LEVAV, "בין תודעת הספריה לרפובליקה הספרותית היהודית," in: ZALMAN SHAZAR, Y. KAPLAN and M. SLUHOVSKY (eds.), ספריות ואוספי ספרים (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2006), pp. 201-24, here p. 216; YAAKOV S. SPIEGEL, הגהות ומגיהים: עמודים בתולדות הספר העברי (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2005), p. 573; GRIES, הספר כסוכן תרבות (note 102), p. 51. According to Gries, there was actually a decline in the number of printings of *Midrash Rabbah* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it was printed 11 times, in contrast to 26 times until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, possibly due to the rise in popularity of Mussar anthologies which served as the source for sermons.

107 See ALBECK, "Introduction to Bereshit Rabbah," pp. 127-128, where he complains about the changes and amendments introduced by the printers; GRIES, הספר כסוכן תרבות (note 102), p. 13; SPIEGEL, עמודים בתולדות הספר העברי (note 106), pp. 224, 248, 573-4.

108 On the role of literature in defining a new community of readers, see BAR-LEVAV, "בין תודעת הספריה" (note 106), p. 223.

lawyer in Posen, had served in the War as an artillery officer and died as a sacrifice in the battlefield of a terrible disease on October 22, 1918 shortly before the war was over. I hope the elderly father finds comfort for the tragedy in the only place our ancestors sought it: in devoting oneself to the common good. His life's work is not yet complete. The War destroyed connections with enemy countries. It was no longer possible to compare manuscripts, so that Theodor was forced to stop his work. *Bereshit Rabbah* is awaiting its completion.<sup>109</sup>

Despite the hardships, Theodor continued his scientific work in Berlin and the *Bereshit Rabbah* fascicles continued to be printed.<sup>110</sup> Four years later, on August 3, 1923, Theodor passed away in the Jewish hospital at the age of 74. He was buried in the cemetery of the Jewish community in Berlin, in the plot for notable persons in the Weissensee quarter (Jüdischer Friedhof Berlin-Weissensee).<sup>111</sup> The signatures on the obituary notice published in the *Berliner Tageblatt* newspaper of August 6, 1923 include those of Rosa Theodor (nee Meyer), Betty Theodor (nee Bernhardt), Dr Hugo Theodor and Frau Gleiwitz of Breslau, Dr Walter Theodor of Berlin, Schönhauser Allee 23.<sup>112</sup>

The following Hebrew inscription appeared on the front, the German inscription on the other side of his headstone:<sup>113</sup>

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109 GOLDMANN, "Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo)" (note 8). Additional articles in honour of Theodor's birthday were published by SIMON EPPENSTEIN, in: *Jüdische Presse* 50, no. 52 [1919], p. 433), as well as in a short report in the newspaper: *Israelit* 15.01.1920 (Jg. 61, no. 2), p. 6: "zum 70. Geburtstag".

110 During his stay in Berlin, he completed the printing of the second half of the ninth fascicle which was 40 pages long (1921) as well as 32 pages from the tenth fascicle, see pp. 422-423.

111 Theodor died in the Jewish hospital in Berlin-Wedding (*Jüdisches Krankenhaus in Berlin-Wedding*) and was laid to rest in Weissensee in plot G, grave no. 64815. The death was registered with the Population Registry of Berlin, 13a, no. 1094/192. The burial was commissioned by his son, Dr Hugo Theodor. I thank Barbara Welker of the Archives of the New Synagogue of Berlin (*Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin*) for the information.

112 Posner Collection, Bojanowo, 16.

113 My most sincere thanks to Reut Merom for the beautiful photographs of Theodor's grave. I also thank Hanan Birenzweig, Michael Brocke, Shlomi Efrati, Adiel Kadari, and Abraham (Rami) Reiner, who assisted me in deciphering the inscriptions on the headstone. The German inscription on the front side of the headstone also appears in the Posner collection, Bojanowo. In a reply to the letter sent by Posner to the management of the Berlin cemetery in 1953, he was told that the Hebrew inscription is illegible.



Theodor  
 Here rests  
 Our Rabbi R. Judah son of R. Tuvia  
 born 13 Tevet 5610  
 died 21 Av 5683  
 Judah, your brethren shall praise you  
 Your soul is pure  
 and your spirit devoid of all guile  
 Your hands are filled  
 with your offering  
*Minhat Yebudah*

Die  
 jüdische Gemeinde Berlin  
 dem früheren Rabbiner der  
 Gemeinde Bojanowo  
 Dr. Julius Theodor  
 geb. 28.XII.1849 gest. 3.VIII.1923  
 תנצב"ה  
 [The Jewish Community of Berlin  
 to the former rabbi of the  
 Bojanowo community  
 Dr. Julius Theodor  
 born 28.12.1849, died 3.8.1923]



Hier ruht in Frieden  
 mein geliebter Mann  
 unser lieber Vater  
 und Schwiegervater

[Translation:  
 Here rests in peace  
 My beloved husband  
 Our dear father  
 And father-in-law]

Photographs 10 and 11: Julius Theodor's headstone (front and rear by Reut Merom)

According to Prof. Michael Brocke, the burial of Theodor in the plot for notable persons of the cemetery is a testimony to the respected position he acquired in the Jewish community in Berlin although he had only arrived four years earlier.<sup>114</sup> Brocke identifies the headstone design as the work of the well-known German-Jewish architect Alexander Beer (1874–1944 Theresienstadt), who was the chief architect of the Berlin Jewish community. The style of the headstone, in his words, is typical of the 1920's.

The inscription on the headstone was phrased by Leo Baeck<sup>115</sup> and embedded with Biblical verses from Jacob's blessing to Judah: "Judah, your brethren shall praise you" (Gen. 49:8); a paraphrase of Moses' blessing to Judah: "let his hands be sufficient for him" (Deut. 33:7, literally: "his hands are full"); and a verse from the Psalms: "And his spirit has no guile" (Ps. 32:2).<sup>116</sup> The inscription expresses the deep admiration for Theodor's scientific work, his academic honesty and his important contribution in writing the critical edition of *Bereshit Rabbah*. Theodor's commentary is alluded to in the final words: "Your hands are filled with your offering [מנחתך *minhatekha*] מנחת יהודה (*Minhat Yehudah*, literally: Judah's offering).

It is appropriate to conclude this survey with the beautiful words of Dr Felix Goldmann:

Whoever knows Theodor, whoever has had the pleasure of getting to know him closely, not only in terms of his knowledge, but also his pleasant personality, his humour that was so original and refreshing, his honesty and friendliness, would certainly wish him that he should merit witnessing the crowning glory of his life's work, the last fascicle [of *Bereshit Rabbah*], being published soon [...] as a scion of a devout family, he has remained devout all of his life [...] with the tranquillity of an honest, patient man, capable of understanding the opinion of other's [...]. I sincerely hope that future generations of Jewish studies scholars continue in his ways with the same loyalty and the same success. This would certainly be his finest reward.<sup>117</sup>

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114 These are excerpts from correspondences with Prof. Michael Brocke. I would like to thank him for the great generosity with which he shared his extensive knowledge.

115 Posner Collection, Bojanowo, 17.

116 It is possible that Leo Baeck was influenced in this line by fixed headstones formulas such as the headstone of Yehudah ben Elyakim, son of the Ro"sh, which appears in GIUSEPPE ALMANZI, אבני זכרון, Denksteine, Prag 1841, p. 46: "A pure soul [נפש נקי] *nefesh naqi*, his spirit knows no guile". The phrase "נפש נקי" appears in the eulogy for Rav Hamnuna in BT *Moed Qatan* 25b: "The One who rides on high is happy and rejoices when the pure soul [נפש נקי] and צדיק (*saddiq*) comes to him".

117 Goldmann, "Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo)" (note 8).

Tarnowitz den 18 August 1879

Hochzuverehrender Herr!

Ehrerbietigst und ehrfurchtsvoll erlaube ich mir Ihnen meine in der Grätz'schen Monatsschrift erscheinenden Arbeit, über die "Composition der agadischen Homilien" beifolgend zu übersenden, um Ihnen den geringen Dank auszusprechen, für alles was ich Ihnen schulde, was ich täglich aus Ihren Werken empfangen. Ich hatte bisher nicht gewagt diese losen Blätter Ihrer Prüfung zu unterbreiten, aber das freundliche Interesse, mit dem Herr Dr. Jellinek meine Arbeit verfolgt, die zustimmenden Briefe, die ich von ihm, wie von Herrn Buber empfangen habe, ermuthigen mich zu thun, was mein Herz mir gebietet.

Ich war, als einer der jüngsten der aus dem Seminar Entlassenen, bei der Jubelfeier der vorigen Woche Zeuge von der Begeisterung, mit welcher das Begrüßungstelegramm an Sie abgesandt worden ist. Gewiss sind Sie auch uns[?] so nahe und blicken freundlich auf unsere Bestrebungen, auf unsere Arbeiten.

Gestatten Sie, hochzuverehrender Herr, dass ich noch meine Dissertationschrift beilegen darf; von meiner jetzt erscheinenden Arbeit bitte ich besonders die letzte Fortsetzung über ש"ש רבה Ihrer gütigen Prüfung würdigen zu wollen.

In tiefster Ergebenheit und Dankbarkeit  
Dr. J. Theodor  
Tarnowitz o/s [Oberschlesien]

beantw. 20. Aug.

- Gemüth u. Leib sind bei mir nicht mehr gesund.
- dass Ihre Arbeiten gründlich angelegt sind sehe ich.
- Man wird nicht ungestraft 85 Jahre alt!

---

118 The letter is written in Kurrentschrift, characters used in Germany from the Middle Ages until the early twentieth century. The handwriting was deciphered by Hanan Birenzweig. – I thank Dr Birke Rapp De-Lange and her father Wolfgang Rapp for the meticulous check of the German transcription. The English translation appears above on pp. 411-412.

Tarnowitz den 15 August 1829

1

Gedächtnisrede Herr!

Es freut mich mit großem Vergnügen zu erörtern  
auf Ihre Frau meine in der Gräfinnen  
Monatschrift erschienenen Arbeit, über die  
Lagerstätte der sogenannten Familienbriefe,  
zumal so interessant, wie Frau in geringen  
Satz ausgedrückt, für alles was ich Ihnen  
schreibe, und ich täglich auf Ihre Arbeiten  
empfangen. Ich hatte schon nicht gewagt,  
diese hohen Stellen Ihre Prüfung zu  
unterbreiten, aber das freundliche Jahrbuch,  
mit dem Frau Dr. Jellinek meine Arbeit vor-  
setzt, die gütigen Worte, die ich von  
Ihrer Frau Vater empfangen habe,  
verpflichten mich so sehr, was meine Frau  
mir gebietet.

Ich war, als einer der jüngsten der mit  
dem Seminar zusammen, bei der Jubelfeier  
der einzigen Kirche zu den höchsten  
Worten, mit welcher das Gedächtnisbuch  
gerade an Sie abgehandelt werden ist.

ARC 4° 732/E - 5/163.1

2

Gerniß hat Sie mich mit so wohl nicht  
bleiben freundlich auf meine Betrachtungen,  
auf meine Arbeiten.

Gefallen Sie, Herzlichen Dank für die  
auf meine Dissertationsschrift beilegen  
wert; von meiner selbst verpöndlichen Arbeit  
bitte ich besonders die letzte Fortsetzung über  
an die für gütigen Prüfung würdigen  
zu werden.

In tieffter Verehrung mit Dankbarkeit

H. J. Theodor  
(Tarnowitz 1/5).

Leipzig 20. Aug.

- Genes 2. Teil sind bei mir nicht angeordnet.
- 1. Theil sind gütlich angelegt sind 1/5. in
- Das wird nicht angeordnet 85. 1/5. ist.

*Julius Theodor: A List of Publications*<sup>119</sup>

A. Books

- 1) JULIUS THEODOR, *Der Unendlichkeitsbegriff bei Kant und Aristoteles. Eine Vergleichung der Kantischen Antinomien mit der Abhandlung des Aristoteles über das apeiron* (Phys. III, c. 4-8) (Breslau: Wilhelm Köbner, 1887).
- 2) JULIUS THEODOR [nach dem Ableben des Verfassers bearbeitet und ergänzt von CHANOCH ALBECK], *Bereschit Rabba, mit kritischem Apparate und Kommentare*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Poppelauer / Akademie Verlag, 1912–1929).  
מדרש בראשית רבה, *Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Wahrmund, 1936) (Hebrew)<sup>120</sup>

B. Articles

- 3) JULIUS THEODOR, “Zur Composition der agadischen Homilien,” in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 28 (1879), pp. 97-113, 164-75, 271-78, 337-50, 408-18, 455-62; 29 (1880), pp. 19-23; 30 (1881), pp. 500-10.  
For a Hebrew annotated and updated edition and translation see: TAMAR KADARI, מנחה ליהודה: יהודה תיאודור ועריכתם של מדרשי האגדה הארץ-ישראלים, including Julius Theodor, “Zur Composition der Agadischen Homilien,” translated by Hanan Birenzweig (Jerusalem: Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies and Leo Baeck Institute, 2017).
- 4) JULIUS THEODOR, “Die Midraschim zum Pentateuch und der dreijährige palästinensische Cyclus,” in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 34 (1885), pp. 351-66, 405-21, 454-67; 35 (1886), pp. 212-18, 252-65, 299-313, 406-15, 443-59, 458-64; 36 (1887), pp. 35-48, 357-61.
- 5) JULIUS THEODOR, “Der Midrasch Bereschit Rabba,” in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 37 (1893), pp. 169-73, 206-13, 452-8; 38 (1894), pp. 9-26, 436-40; 39 (1895), pp. 106-10, 241-7, 289-95, 337-43, 385-90, 433-41, 481-91.
- 6) JULIUS THEODOR, “Das Zunz’sche Buch über ‘die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge’ und der heutige Stand der Midraschforschung,” in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 38 (1894), pp. 514-23.
- 7) JULIUS THEODOR, “An article on the commentary of Bereschit Rabbah,” in: MARKUS BRANN and ISMAR ELBOGEN (eds.), תפארת ישראל – *Festschrift zu Israel*

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119 A partial list of Theodor’s articles is mentioned in BRANN, *Geschichte des Jüdisch-theologischen Seminars* (note 27), pp. 197-8; BROCKE and CARLEBACH, *Die Rabbiner im Deutschen Reich* (note 5), pp. 608-9 and in the Posner Collection, Bojanowo (note 29), 16-16a.

120 Volume I and several fascicles from Volume II were published during Theodor’s lifetime. The edition was completed after his death by Chanoch Albeck. See pp. 421-423 above.

*Lewy's siebzigstem Geburtstag*, 2 vols. (Breslau, 1911 (reprinted Jerusalem: Maqor, 1972; New York: Arno Press, 1980), vol. 1 (Hebrew section), pp. 132-54.

- 8) JULIUS THEODOR, "Drei unbekannte Paraschas aus Bereschit Rabba," in: GESELLSCHAFT ZUR FÖRDERUNG DER WISSENSCHAFT DES JUDENTUMS (ed.), *Festschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstage Jakob Guttmanns* (Leipzig: G. Fock / Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann, 1915), pp. 148-71.
- 9) JULIUS THEODOR, "Die Laazim in den alten Kommentaren zu Bereschit Rabba," in: SAMUEL KRAUSS (ed.), *Festschrift Adolf Schwarz zum siebzigsten Geburtstage, 15 Juli 1916, gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern* (Berlin und Wien: R. Löwit, 1917), pp. 361-88.

#### C. *Book reviews*

- 10) JULIUS THEODOR, "Wilhelm Bacher, Die Agada der babylonischen Amoräer, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Agada und zur Einleitung in den babylonischen Talmud, Budapest 1878," in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 28 (1879), pp. 43-47, 84-7.
- 11) JULIUS THEODOR, "Bibliotheca Rabbinica, eine Sammlung alter Midraschim, zum ersten Male ins Deutsche übertragen von Dr. August Wünsche. Erste Lieferung: der Midrasch Kohelet, Leipzig 1880," in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 29 (1880), pp. 181-90.
- 12) JULIUS THEODOR, "Buber's Tanchuma," in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 34 (1885), pp. 35-42, 422-31.<sup>121</sup>
- 13) JULIUS THEODOR, "Friedmann, M. Seder Eliahu rabba und Seder Eliahu zuta (Tanna d'be Eliahu). Nach einem vaticanischen Manuscripte aus dem Jahre 1073 ediert, kritisch bearbeitet und commentiert. (Wissensch. Beilage zum VII. Jahresbericht der Isr.-theol. Lehranstalt). Wien 1900," in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 44 (1900), pp. 380-4, 550-61; 47 (1903), pp. 70-9.
- 14) JULIUS THEODOR, "Künstlinger, Dr. David, Altjüdische Bibeldeutung, Berlin 1911," in: *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 55 (1911), pp. 503-509.

#### D. *Encyclopedia entries*

- 15) JULIUS THEODOR, "Bemidbar Rabbah", in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, New York and London 1902, pp. 669-71.
- 16) JULIUS THEODOR, "Bereshit Rabbah", in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, New York and London 1902, pp. 62-5.

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<sup>121</sup> *Midrasch Tanchuma: ein agadischer Commentar zum Pentateuch / von Rabbi Tanchuma ben Rabbi Abba. Zum 1. male nach Hs. aus den Bibliotheken zu Oxford, Rom, Parma und München*, hrsg., kritisch bearbeitet, commentirt und mit einer ausführlichen Einleitung versehen von Salomon Buber, Wilna: Romm, 1885.

- 17) JULIUS THEODOR, "Debarim Rabbah", in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, New York and London 1903, pp. 487-8.
- 18) JULIUS THEODOR, "Ekah (Lamentations) Rabbati," in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, New York and London 1903, pp. 85-7.
- 19) JULIUS THEODOR, "Esther Rabbah," in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, New York and London 1903, p. 241.
- 20) JULIUS THEODOR, "Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) Rabbah," in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, New York and London 1904, pp. 529-32.
- 21) JULIUS THEODOR, "Midrash Haggadah," in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, New York and London 1904, pp. 550-69.
- 22) JULIUS THEODOR, "Midrashim, Smaller," in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, New York and London 1904, pp. 572-80.

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*List of Photographs and acknowledgements:*

- Photograph 1: Julius Theodor on his 70th birthday, Bojanowo 1919  
 FELIX GOLDMANN, "Dr. J. Theodor (Bojanowo)," in: *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* No. 83 (Dec. 19, 1919), pp. 581-83.
- Photograph 2: Symbol of the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary
- Photograph 3: Zacharias Frankel  
 With courtesy of the Abraham Schwadron collection 02 17 253, Archives Department, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.
- Photograph 4: The Breslau Rabbinical Seminary building in 1904  
 MARKUS BRANN, *Geschichte des Jüdisch-theologischen Seminars (Fraenckel'sche Stiftung) in Breslau, Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Jubiläum der Anstalt* (Breslau: Schatzky, 1904 [reprint: Hildesheim etc.: Olms, 2010]), p. 197.
- Photograph 5: Heinrich Graetz  
 With courtesy of the Abraham Schwadron collection 02 03 152, Archives Department, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.
- Photograph 6: The synagogue in Bojanowo as it looks today  
 Photo by Jerzy Wodynski.
- Photographs 7 and 8: Moritz Rohr and Jewish home for the aged in Bojanowo  
 AARON HEPPNER and ISAAK HERZBERG, *Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der Juden und der jüdischen Gemeinden in den Posener Landen* (Koschmin-Bromberg: Self-Published, 1909), pp. 312-13.
- Photograph 9: Cover page of the first fascicle of *Beresbit Rabbah*, Berlin 1903
- Photographs 10 and 11: Julius Theodor's headstone (front and rear)  
 Jüdischer Friedhof Berlin-Weissensee, plot G, grave no. 64815. Photo by Reut Merom.
- Photographs 12 and 13: Theodor's letter to Leopold Zunz (sides 1-2)  
 Leopold Zunz Archive, ARC. 4\* 792 11 9 no. 163, Archives Department, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.