

Meḥevah le-Menaḥem

Studies in Honor of Menahem Hayyim Schmelzer

Edited by

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with

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NEW DOCUMENTS CONCERNING BOMBERG'S PRINTING OF THE TALMUD

Angelo M. Piattelli

In 1971, Menahem Schmelzer concluded one of his excellent studies with these words:

In view of our limited knowledge of the events in Venetian Hebrew publishing in the fifteen-twenties and fifteen-thirties no definitive answer can be given to the many questions relating to apparent contradictions, conflicting designations, and sequence of editions of the period.

A thorough new investigation, and the possibility of discovering hitherto unknown documents perhaps in the archives of Venice only can throw much needed new light on this very important period of early Hebrew publishing history.¹

- * I would like to thank Robert Bonfil and Jordan S. Penkower for their invaluable comments and Stefano Palmieri of the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici of Naples for having reviewed the diplomatic transcription of the documents from the Braginsky Collection in Zurich, the subject of the present study. Some of my preliminary findings were presented in a lecture I delivered in the Schocken Institute for Jewish Research, Jerusalem, on April 9, 2018.
- 1. Menahem Schmelzer, "Rashi's Commentary on the Pentateuch and on the Five Scrolls, Venice, Bomberg, 1538," in *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev*, ed. Charles Berlin (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971), 425–433: 431 (reprinted in Menahem Schmelzer, *Studies in Jewish Bibliography and Medieval Hebrew Poetry* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2006, 5766), 96*–105*: 105*).

Since that time, thanks to Abraham Rosenthal,² and Isaac Ron,³ progress has been made in dating various editions of Bomberg's Talmudic tractates; still, some work remains to be done.⁴

On the occasion of the publication of this Festschrift, I would like to dedicate to Menahem Schmelzer these notes based on unpublished documents from the Braginsky Collection in Zurich that shed new light "on this very important period of early Hebrew publishing history."

Christian Hebraists and the Talmud

In the last decades of the Quattrocento the study of the Bible and the Hebrew language, and consequently a large portion of Hebrew literature, aroused greater and greater interest in certain circles of Italian, German, Flemish, and French humanists; among the earliest and most prominent scholars were Pico della Mirandola, Johann Reuchlin, Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo, and Guillaume Postel. A specific conceptual approach known as "Christian Kabbalah" spread among Christian Hebraists. It concerned the research and study of Hebrew texts, particularly Kabbalistic ones, with the intention of discovering mysteries of the Christian faith hidden in them. According to theologians and scholars who shared that approach, in *midrashim* and *targumim*, but above all in the most diverse Kabbalistic texts, it was possible to find arcane

2. Abraham Rosenthal, "Daniel Bomberg and His Talmud Editions," in *Gli Ebrei e Venezia*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1987), 375–416; *The Talmud Editions of Daniel Bomberg: A Comprehensive Collection of All Tractates of the Four Editions by Bomberg, Venice, 1520–1549: Reference List by A. Rosenthal* (Leiden, The Netherlands: IDC, 1997–2000), 433 microfiches.
3. Isaac Ron, "The Talmud Emendations of R. Solomon Luria (Maharshal)," *Alei Sefer* 15 (1988–1989): 64–104 [Hebrew].
4. I share the conviction of the late Bruno Chiesa that the rules for identifying the editions, along with an analysis of the watermarks, should be revisited. The existing differences between various editions and new issues should be clarified with greater precision, taking into account the tractates composed of quires from different editions that were already bound together and put on sale by Bomberg. See: Bruno Chiesa, "Due note di bibliografia ebraica," in *We-Zo' le-Angelo. Raccolta di Studi giudaici in memoria di Angelo Vivian*, ed. Giulio Busi (Bologna: AISG, 1993), 127–147.

secrets intentionally hidden by rabbis who lived at the time of Jesus and even a little later.

In the eyes of Christian Hebraists, some of the ancient sages had interpreted the Bible correctly, and had prophesized the coming of Jesus and other Christian mysteries. They specifically believed that the critical core that continued Jewish mystical tradition testified to some important Christological truths.⁵ According to this approach, even the Talmud could reveal ancient traditions of interest to Christianity. Unlike individuals such as the convert Johannes Pfefferkorn or the Dominican Jakob Hogstraaten, who had attacked the Talmud and claimed it contained heresy and obscenity, the Christian Kabbalists mostly believed in the theory of “two strata,” which will be discussed below.

Pietro Colonna, called Galatinus, (1460–1540), for example, maintained in his work⁶ that among the ancient wise men of Israel were some who understood the true nature of Christ, as well as others who followed the plain interpretation of biblical text, and did not recognize Christological meanings. Moreover, in order to understand fully the meaning of sacred Scriptures — according to Galatinus — it was necessary to follow a specific allegorical method of interpretation.

5. François Secret, *Les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance. Nouvelle édition mise au jour et augmentée* (Milan and Paris: Arche, 1985); Saverio Campanini, “Christian Hebraists: Renaissance Period,” in *Encyclopaedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2013), 440–449; Campanini, “Peculium Abrae. La grammatica ebraico-latina di Avraham de Balmes,” *Annali di Ca’ Foscari* XXXVI, 3, Serie orientale 28 (1997): 5–49; Campanini, “Reuchlins jüdische Lehrer aus Italien,” in *Reuchlin und Italien*, ed. Gerald Dörner (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1999), 69–85; Campanini, “Talmudisti e cabbalisti. Un’immagine dell’ebraismo alle origini della qabbalah cristiana,” in *Civiltà e popoli del Mediterraneo: immagini e pregiudizi*, ed. Domenico Felice and Anselmo Cassani (Bologna: Clueb, 1999), 119–135; Campanini, “Talmudisten vs. Kabbalisten? Der Streit um die Hermeneutik der Gebote im mittelalterlichen Judentum,” in *Das Gesetz / The Law / La Loi*, eds. Andreas Speer and Guy Guldentops (*Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, 38) (Berlin and New York: W. De Gruyter, 2014), 263–277; Campanini, “Nottole ad Atene. La qabbalah cristiana e la conversione degli ebrei,” *Materia Giudaica* 19 (2014): 81–101.
6. *De arcanis catholicae veritatis* (Ortona a Mare: Gershom Soncino, 1518).

This “ancient stratum” in the Talmud was supplemented over time by rabbinic interpretations that Christian Hebraists considered misleading and referred to as a “new stratum.” They believed that the Talmud redactors were no longer able to grasp the hidden truths and were drawing absurd conclusions and assuming blasphemies against the Christian religion. Galatinus believed that as there were still elements of truth in the Talmud, it was worth translating the text into Latin, rather than burning it. By preserving it, Christians would have the opportunity to appreciate the intrinsic value of certain passages.

In 1518 the Jewish printer Gershom Soncino printed Galatinus's *De arcanis catholicae veritatis*. Even though this book is basically anti-Jewish, printing this text was a clever act on the part of Soncino who was trying to support a more liberal movement within the Catholic church of the time, one represented by the Franciscans and Augustinians, along with the Christian Kabbalists, including Galatinus. They were inclined to accede to some of the ideas of the nascent Reformation, as well as allow the printing of Jewish texts, including the Talmud. This was in opposition to the Dominicans, who attacked the Talmud as part of a firm response against the Reform movement.⁷ It is possible that Soncino's goal was to solicit the Roman Curia to take a position against the conservatives and at the same time grant licenses for printing the Talmud.

7. Anna Morisi, “Galatino et la Kabbale chrétienne,” in *Kabbalistes chrétiens*, eds. Antoine Faivre and Frédérick Tristan (Paris: Albin Michel, 1979), 211–231; Saverio Campanini, “Le prefazioni, le dediche e i colophon di Gershom Soncino,” in *L'attività editoriale di Gershom Soncino. 1502–1527*, ed. Giuliano Tamani (Soncino: Edizioni dei Soncino, 1997), 31–58; Campanini, “Quasi post vindemias racemos colligens. Pietro Galatino und seine Verteidigung der christlichen Kabbala,” in *Reuchlins Freunde und Gegner. Kommunikative Konstellationen eines frühneuzeitlichen Medienereignisses*, ed. Wilhelm Kühlmann (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2010), 69–88; William Horbury, “Petrus Galatinus and Jean Thénau on the Talmud and the *Toledot Yeshu*,” in *Jewish Books and Their Readers: Aspects of the Intellectual Life of Christians and Jews in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Scott Mandelbrote and Joanna Weinberg (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 75–99.

Gershom had already published several tractates, but repeatedly encountered difficulties that prevented him from publishing the entire work. On one hand, in an increasingly hostile climate, it had become more difficult to obtain permission to print the Talmud. On the other, he suffered from strong competition from Daniel Bomberg. Soncino soon had to give up the enterprise.

Daniel Bomberg and the Privileges for Publishing Hebrew Books (1515–1518)

Daniel Bomberg, a skillful and cultured entrepreneur, had financial resources and an extensive business network.⁸ Many of his family members engaged in international trade. Daniel, who had moved to Venice after 1508, planned to open a Hebrew printing house together with Felice da Prato, a Jew who converted to Christianity.⁹ At the time Venice was the main center of the book trade and publishing, where the most advanced printing techniques of the age were being put into practice.

8. Moses Marx, *Geschichte und Annalen des hebraeischen Buchdruckes in Italien: 1501–1600. Pt. 1: Venedig, Die Anfaenge Bomberg* (typescript, Hebrew Union College Library, Cincinnati, 1927–31) regrettably has not been published; Avraham M. Habermann, *Ha-madpiss Daniel Bomberg u-reshimath sifre beth defusso. The Printer Daniel Bomberg and the List of Books Published by His Press* (Zefat: Museum of Printing Art, 1978) [Hebrew]; Alfredo Cioni, “Bomberg, Daniel” in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 11, 382–87; Bruce Nielsen, “Daniel van Bomberghen a Bookman of Two Worlds,” in *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy*, eds. Joseph R. Hacker and Adam Shear (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 56–75, 230–252; David W. Amram, *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy* (Philadelphia: J. H. Greenstone, 1909), 146–224; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), passim.
9. See Rosalba Zangari, “Felice da Prato,” in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 46 (1996), also online: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/felice-da-prato_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/felice-da-prato_(Dizionario-Biografico)/); Shlomo Simonsohn, “Some Well-Known Jewish Converts during the Renaissance,” *Revue des études juives* CXLVIII (1989): 26–30, 41; Fausto Parente, “La chiesa e il Talmud,” in *Gli ebrei in Italia*, ed. Corrado Vivanti (*Storia d’Italia Annali*, 11, vol. 1) (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), 569–589.

Daniel was also interested in theological studies; along with Christian Hebraists, he had a particular interest in Jewish studies. Daniel's entrepreneurial abilities and humanistic interests combined to help him achieve success. Felice, after translating two Kabbalistic texts and the book of Psalms into Latin (from the Masoretic text) was busy editing the *Biblia Rabbinica*, when he approached Pope Leo X to request privileges to publish his texts. The pope, a cultured humanist, granted him exclusive rights to do so for ten years.¹⁰ But when the well-known Venetian printer Aldo Manuzio, who had tenaciously opposed the granting of licenses for Hebrew printing in Venice, died (February 6, 1515), Felice and Bomberg presented a request for the privilege to publish Felice's books to the Collegio dei Savi (April 23, 1515).¹¹ The application was also under the name of the German printer Peter Liechtenstein, who already had a printing house operating in Venice. That press printed a translation of the book of Psalms later in 1515.¹² The petitioners then asked to employ four *hominj hebrei, che siano ben docti* (Jewish men, who are well educated) who would be

10. *The Apostolic See and the Jews, Documents: 1465–1521*, ed. Shlomo Simonsohn (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 1555, no. 1242; 1563–1564, no. 1247. The text of the privilege was also published in some copies of the first rabbinic Bible.
11. Rinaldo Fulin, "Documenti per servire alla storia della stampa veneziana," *Archivio Veneto* XII (1882): 182, no. 197.
12. *Psalterium ex hebreo diligentissime ad verbum fere tralatam fratre Felice ordinis Heremitarum sancti Augustini interprete*, Venetiis: Peter Liechtenstein, Daniel Bomberg, 1515. According to the colophon, the printing was completed on 5 September. The two different copies of the volume that belonged previously to the Valmadonna Trust Library are preserved in the Dr. David and Jemima Jeselsohn Collection, Zurich. One (no. 9315) is a standard copy, while the other (no. 3570) contains variants. Probably an unicum, this copy was printed before Bomberg and Felice da Prato obtained the privilege. It varies from the standard copy in three ways. The page bearing the title *Psalterium ex hebreo diligentissime ad verbum fere tralatam Felice eremitano interprete* is undated (fig. 1); a woodcut of King David on fol. 2v (fig. 2) is printed where the privilege dated 10 October 1515 would later appear; and the colophon, which in the standard edition was printed in red ink, was not included (fig. 3). See: Rosenthal, "Daniel Bomberg and His Talmud Editions," 406n28.

allowed to walk around Venice wearing black berets instead of yellow ones.¹³ In May and June patents were issued for at least two Ashkenazic Jews (“Helia” and “Israele” perhaps Elia Levita,¹⁴ and a certain Israel, possibly Israel Cornelio Adelkind). The preparations for establishing the new Hebrew printing house were going well. On December 7, 1515, Bomberg received the privilege from the Signoria, valid for ten years, to print “certain Hebrew books” and the patent for Hebrew characters, and thus was able to inaugurate his printing activities.¹⁵ In the following months, Bomberg published the *editio princeps* of the Rabbinic Bible, the Pentateuch and the Five Megillot with commentaries, and the complete Bible without commentaries.¹⁶

Just as the work was well under way, on August 1, 1517 the Senate of the Republic of Venice revoked the printing licenses of all Venetian printers, with the purpose of establishing more consistent order in printing concessions. To revive the book trade, it was decreed that

13. Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Notariato di Collegio*, 23 April 1515; 27 May 1515; 16 June 1515; Ibid., *Atti del Senato*, Terra, 15 April 1518; Ibid., *Consiglio dei X, Comune*, reg. II, c. 8; Ibid., *Consiglio dei X, Notariato*, reg. II, fols. 154, 278; Marin Sanudo, *Diarii*, XXV (Venezia: Visentini, 1889), col. 339; XL (1894), cols. 45–46; XLI (1894), cols. 34, 55, 75, 118; Fulin, “Documenti per servire alla storia della stampa veneziana,” 181–183, no. 197; Meir Benayahu, *Copyright, Authorization and Imprimatur [sic!] for Hebrew Books Printed in Venice* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute and Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1971) [Hebrew], 15–24, 155–164; Christopher L.C.E. Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance. Prints and Privilegio in Sixteenth-Century Venice and Rome* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 43–45.
14. Gerard E. Weil, *Elie Levita Humaniste et Massorete (1469–1549)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963); Jordan S. Penkower, “A Renewed Inquiry into Massoret Ha-Massoret of Elijah Levita: Lateness of Vocalization and Criticism of the Zohar,” *Italia* 8 (1989): 7–73, esp. 38–48 [Hebrew] = *The Dates of Composition of The Zohar and The Book Bahir: The History of Biblical Vocalization and Accentuation as a Tool for Dating Kabbalistic Works* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2010), 9–74, esp. 38–47 [Hebrew].
15. Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Notariato di Collegio*, reg. 18, fol. 2v (3v n.n.). The document is reproduced in *Venezia gli ebrei e l'Europa 1516–2016* (Venice: Marsilio, 2016), 118–119, no. 15.
16. Jordan S. Penkower, “Bomberg’s First Bible Edition and the Beginning of His Printing Press,” *Kiryat Sefer* 58, 3 (1983): 586–604 [Hebrew].

from that time on printing rights would be granted only for works that had never been published before in Venetian territory.¹⁷ Like many other printers, on April 5, 1518 Bomberg asked for confirmation of the privileges that the Signoria had previously given him, and thereby won the exclusive right to print Hebrew books for ten years.¹⁸ This, in effect, granted him a monopoly for the entire Republic of Venice.

The First Edition of the Babylonian Talmud (1519–1522)

After printing sumptuous Hebrew Bibles, Bomberg published various liturgical works and some first editions of important halakhic texts. He then decided to launch a decisive attack in the competitive war in which he was engaged with the well-known printer Gershom Soncino. The publication of Bomberg's first Rabbinic Bible had already hurt Soncino. In 1517, Soncino had printed a beautiful Bible without commentaries, but it was in no way comparable to Felice da Prato's masterpiece issued by Bomberg. Soncino had a carefully chosen network of contacts and connections among the local authorities in the pontifical legations and the ecclesiastical world. He collaborated successfully with them and sent to press, despite not having a fixed location, works in Latin, Italian, and Greek. He moved his activities from one city to another, from Fano to Pesaro and then to Ortona, when the escalation in competition between the two printers increased considerably.¹⁹ Though managing a more modest enterprise than that of his rich colleague in Venice, and using the labor of family members who had arrived in Italy from the Rhenish Palatinate,

17. Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance*, 41–42; Laura Carnelos, *Libri da grida, da banco e da bottega. Editoria di consumo a Venezia tra norma e contraffazione (XVII–XVIII)*, (PhD diss., Università di Ca' Foscari, 2006–2007/2008–2009), 182 ff. It is available at: http://dspace.unive.it/bitstream/handle/10579/960/Carnelos_955329.pdf&embedded=true?sequence=1.

18. Fulin, "Documenti per servire alla storia della stampa veneziana," 191–192, no. 217.

19. Moses Marx, "Gershom (Hieronymus) Soncino's Wanderyears in Italy, 1498–1527: Exemplar Judaicae Vitae," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 11 (1936): 427–501 (repr., [Cincinnati]: Society of Jewish Bibliophiles, 1969).

Soncino succeeded in printing twenty-three Talmudic tractates,²⁰ some in more than one edition; these are almost all of the most frequently studied tractates. Bomberg, on the other hand, invested enormous sums to search for, and acquire, fine manuscripts. He hired famous Talmudists — some of whom had previously worked with Soncino — who collated and edited the texts. He employed typographers and correctors of proofs without concern for expense, and purchased large quantities of paper (the price of which was a large item in printing budgets). He had in mind the publication of the entire Babylonian Talmud, with the commentary of Rashi, Tosafot, Piske Tosafot, Rabbenu Asher, and commentaries on the Mishnah.²¹ It should be noted that until this time the Talmud had never been published in its entirety. Only individual tractates, such as those printed by Soncino, a few incunabula tractates from Spanish and Portuguese presses, and some early sixteenth-century tractates printed in Salonika and Constantinople, had been issued before this time.²²

20. David Kimhi, *Mikhlol* (Constantinople: Gershom Soncino, 1533-1534), title page.

21. On Bomberg's editions of the Talmud, see Refael N. N. Rabinovitch, *Maamar 'al hadpasat ha-Talmud*, ed. Avraham M. Habermann (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1952) [Hebrew], 35-55; Rosenthal, "Daniel Bomberg and His Talmud Editions;" *The Talmud Editions of Daniel Bomberg*; Ron, "The Talmud Emendations of R. Solomon Luria (Maharshal)." See also Marvin J. Heller, *Printing the Talmud. A History of the Earliest Editions of the Talmud* (Brooklyn, New York: Im Hasefer, 1992), 135-182; Milton McC. Gatch and Bruce E. Nielsen, "The Wittenberg Copy of the Bomberg Talmud," *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 78 (2003): 296-326; *Printing the Talmud. From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, eds. Sharon Liberman Mintz and Gabriel M. Goldstein ([New York]: Yeshiva University Museum, 2005/5765).

22. Adriaan K. Offenbergh, *Hebrew Incunabula in Public Collections: a First International Census* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1990), nos. 118, 120, 121, 124, 125, 127, 128, 130, 132, 136, 137; Haim Z. Dimitrovsky, *S'ridei Bavli: Fragments from Spanish and Portuguese Incunabula and Sixteenth Century Printings of the Babylonian Talmud and Alfasi* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1979), 2 vols; Yisrael Dubitsky, *First International Census of Earliest Printed Editions of [Tractates of] the Babylonian Talmud: Prints from Incunables through Bomberg. Revised Edition*: <http://www.lieberman-institute.com/resources/Dubitsky.html>

Venetian norms for publishing developed in those years, especially with regard to control over the content of unpublished works, an area that was generally entrusted to the Council of Ten, while administrative and legal aspects of the publishing industry continued to be controlled by the Senate. In order to carry out the printing of the Talmud, Bomberg had to obtain the privilege to do so from ecclesiastical authorities. In fact, on May 4, 1515, Leo X issued the bull *Inter sollicitudines nostris*, introducing the requirement that all books intended for printing be submitted to prior censorship. According to Pastor:

The Pope forbids, with the approval of the Council, under pain of excommunication and of heavy fines, the printing of any book without the approbation of the Bishop and the Inquisitor, and in Rome of the Cardinal Vicar and the Master of the Palace. Every book printed contrary to these regulations shall be burned.²³

Soncino continued to print a few tractates after the papal bull was published, most likely relying on papal briefs obtained from local ecclesiastical authorities. Publishing the Talmud in its entirety, however, was a totally different challenge. Bomberg could have applied to the ecclesiastical authorities in Venice, but he preferred to aim higher, just as he had in 1515, through Felice da Prato. Once again, thanks to the assistance of Felice, who maintained cordial relations with the pontifical Curia and with the pope himself, Bomberg submitted a request. On April 13, 1518, the pope granted him the privilege to print the Talmud, and also guaranteed him exclusivity, thereby preventing Soncino, who was operating through pontifical legations, from continuing to print the individual tractates. The summary of this previously unknown papal brief — together with five others relating to privileges granted to Bomberg between the years 1518 and 1537 — is preserved in a folder containing legal acts on the burning of the Talmud in 1553, now housed

23. Ludwig von Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, v. 8 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1908), 398; Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance*, 69–71.

in the Braginsky Collection in Zurich.²⁴ While some scholars imagined that such a papal brief or similar document was not necessary,²⁵ others thought it had to have been drawn up.²⁶ Its existence was confirmed by Shlomo Simonsohn, in a document that was mistakenly dated 1520.²⁷ The 1518 privilege, valid for ten years, was subject to rather onerous limitations: the pope obliged Bomberg to print the Talmud with *responsiones* drawn up by Felice da Prato; he was thus required to attach to the Talmud a text that refuted the Talmudic passages that were offensive to the Christian faith:

Del 1518 adi 13 april papa Leone Xmo conciede a Daniel Bombergo che possa far stampar el Talmut cum le esposition di fra Felice, con privilegio per anni 10 et cetera.²⁸

(On 13 April 1518 Pope Leo X granted Daniel Bomberg the right to print the Talmud with the *esposition* of Fra Felice, with a privilege for ten years etc.)

The condition turned out to be difficult for Bomberg, as it threatened to compromise his entire enterprise. Potential Jewish customers were not likely to purchase expensive copies of the Talmud that bore a libel or annotations written by a convert that criticized the Talmud itself. It is

24. Zurich, Braginsky Collection BCB_283. See *A Journey through Jewish Worlds: Highlights from the Braginsky Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books*, eds. Evelyn M. Cohen, Sharon Liberman Mintz, and Emile G.L. Schrijver (Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2009), 84–85; *Schöne Seiten. Jüdische Schriftkultur aus der Braginsky Collection*, ed. Emile Schrijver and Falk Wiesemann (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2011), 126–127. For a reproduction of the document see: http://braginskycollection.com/ajaxzoom/single.php?zoomDir=/pic/BCB/BCB_283&zoomFile=BCB_283_000.jpg

25. Rosenthal, “Daniel Bomberg and His Talmud Editions,” 384–385.

26. Paul Rieger, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom, vol. 2: 1420-1870* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1896), 37; Marx, “Gershom (Hieronymus) Soncino’s Wanderyears in Italy, 1498–1527. Exemplar Judaicae Vitae,” 452, 469n87; Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text*, 216n33.

27. See: *The Apostolic See and the Jews, Documents: 1465–1521, 1601–1602*, no. 1277.

28. Zurich, Braginsky Collection BCB_283, fol. 1r. See fig. 5.

possible that Bomberg attempted to change the conditions the pontifical authorities imposed on him. On May 25, 1518, Leo X ordered the apostolic nuncio in Venice, Altobello de Averoldi, to meet with Iacobus de Perenis (or Pennis) of Padua, a highly educated man, in order to investigate the activity of some Jews and the content of certain books containing blasphemies against the Christian faith, and to request the collaboration of the Doge.²⁹ It is not known whether the document cited had anything to do with Bomberg's attempts to avoid the requirement to print Felice's arguments, or who Jacob de Perenis or Pennis was, or whether he may have had any role regarding the censure of Hebrew books in general or Bomberg's Talmud in particular. Judging from the text of Bomberg's first edition of the Talmud (1519–1520/1522) edited largely by the scholar Ḥiyya Meir ben David,³⁰ it seems that the hand of the presumed censor was ineffective.³¹ In any case, Bomberg's diplomatic and friendly relations with Christian Kabbalists and various highly placed prelates no doubt contributed to the introduction of a significant modification to the license that Leo X had granted. On February 1519 the pope issued a new version of the document that was far more conciliatory than the original one.

Del 1519 20 fevrer papa Leone conciede licentia al Bombergo
che possa elezer uno over più dotti nella lingua ebra, li quali in

29. See *The Apostolic See and the Jews, Documents: 1465–1521, 1579–1580*, no. 1261 (Simonsohn reads: de Perinis, while Moritz Stern, *Urkundliche Beiträge über die Stellung der Päpste zu den Juden; mit Benutzung des päpstlichen Geheimarchivs zu Rom* (Kiel: H. Fiencke, 1893), 73–74, no. 68, reads de Pennis. See also Benayahu, *Copyright, Authorization and Imprimatur [sic!] for Hebrew Books Printed in Venice*, 159; Solomon Grayzel, "The Talmud and the Medieval Papacy," in *Essays in Honor of Solomon B. Freehof*, eds. Walter Jacob, Frederick C. Schwartz, and Vigdor W. Kavalier (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Rodef Shalom Congregation, 1964), 238–241; Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews. History* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991), 331–337.

30. See Meir Benayahu, *Prolegomenon to the Responsa 'Benjamin Ze'eb' Venice 5299/1539* (Jerusalem: Yad ha-Rav Nissim, 1989) [Hebrew], 39–44.

31. Rabbínovicz, *Maamar 'al hadpasat ha-Talmud*, 41.

loco del soprascritto fra Felice, che è impedito a Roma, possano corezer el Talmut.³²

(On 20 February 1519, Pope Leo granted the license to Bomberg to choose one or more scholars of the Hebrew language to correct the Talmud, in the place of the previously mentioned Fra Felice who was delayed in Rome.)

It is not at all clear, in fact, what Felice had been expected to write, or whether one or two scholars, the choice of whom was left to Bomberg, would have been entrusted with writing a substitute text, or whether any such scholar would censure the few passages in the Talmud considered to be anti-Christian. Bomberg was finally able to go ahead with the printing of the initial volumes of the Babylonian Talmud, most probably beginning with the tractate פסחים, the only undated tractate.³³ Two variations of the title page are extant; this may have resulted from uncertainty as to whether or not the Talmud could be printed without the insertion by Felice da Prato.

In the summer of 1519, Soncino published the tractate חולין, the last one printed during his lifetime. With the exclusive privilege granted to Bomberg in 1518, and confirmed in 1519, Soncino as a printer who operated through pontifical legations could no longer continue to publish the Talmud.

A few months later, the general atmosphere changed. In 1520, Leo X condemned Reuchlin's work *Augenspiegel* (Tübingen, 1511), a pamphlet written to combat attacks on the Talmud by Johannes Pfefferkorn and Jakob Hogstraaten and to preserve the Talmud from the destruction they demanded. The pope's condemnation of the pamphlet had political

32. Zurich, Braginsky Collection BCB_283, fol. 1r.

33. Rabinovitch, *Maamar 'al hadpasat ha-Talmud*, 27, 36n1. Rabinovitch's affirmation that Bomberg began printing the Talmud with פסחים, the only tractate that Soncino had not printed previously in its entirety (even though it was one of the most studied) seems convincing to me. It should be noted that only in three tractates (פסחים, קידושין, עבודה זרה) does the system of the consecutive numbering of the bifolios appear. This system was abandoned after this point. See Institute for Jewish Bibliography (catalogue online), no. 333273 (edited by Isaac Yudlov).

motives that were not necessarily theological; he wanted to oppose Lutheranism, which was attracting many adherents who were close to Reuchlin. A changing climate indicated a pressing need to condemn the Protestant movement and those, including the Christian Humanists, who had not initially adopted an intransigent posture against it.³⁴ In this light Bomberg's public letter to Reuchlin of October 9, 1521, written in Latin and attached to his *Tehillim*³⁵ is clarified: *Talmud, opus certe magni et laboris et impensae, mihi que a Summo pontefice demandatum*. Thus Bomberg publicly emphasized that his printing of the Talmud, which had been laborious and expensive, was in response to the demand of the pope. The book of Psalms was dedicated to Reuchlin, who had been subjected to harsh criticism by German Dominicans and was by now politically isolated.

In the meantime, Bomberg continued to work at a good pace. By the summer of 1521, a large share of the tractates had been printed and he was able to recoup some of his expenses. In addition to the volumes that were ready to be printed, he committed himself to other publishing endeavors: printing the *Hilkhot Rav Alfasi* (the so-called "Small Talmud") and the three main halakhic codices in use at the time, those of the Ashkenazim, the French, and the Sephardim: the *Arba 'ah Turim* of Jacob ben Asher, the *Sefer Miẓvot Gadol* of Moses of Coucy, and the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides. Considering these ambitious plans, it is surprising to find that another unpublished document indicates that Bomberg also applied for the license to print the "Compendium of the Talmud" (*Hilkhot Rav Alfasi* and the other codices of halakha):

Del 1521 5 luglio papa Lion conciede licentia al Bombergo che possa far stampar el compendio del Talmut cioè Sephera misuots, vel Sepher hanibuchim, Rab alphez, iad., attento che ha hauto gran spesa per stampar el Talmut.³⁶

34. David H. Price, *Johannes Reuchlin & the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 95–221.

35. Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 5282 (1521–1522).

36. Zurich, Braginsky Collection BCB_283, fol. 1r. The four legal codices were printed between 1522 and 1523. See Habermann, *Ha-madpiss*, nos. 91, 69, 72, 73. It is

(On 5 July 1521 Pope Leo granted the license to Bomberg to print the compendium of the Talmud, i.e. *Sefer Miẓvot*, and *Sepher Hanibuchim* [sic! *Arba‘ah Ṭurim*],³⁷ *Rab Alphez* (*Hilkhoh Rav Alfaz*), Iad. (Yad = Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*),³⁸ in view of the fact that he had incurred great expense in printing the Talmud.)

Probably in order to avoid an additional charge, Bomberg emphasized that the printing of the Talmud had already cost him a fortune. Possibly for the same reason he used the phrase “compendium of the Talmud” to define the halakhic works, as if they were merely an appendix to the Talmud. With the 1521 papal permission Bomberg blocked Soncino again, preventing him from printing the above mentioned legal codices, which the Soncino family had originally printed between 1488 and 1490.

Before finishing the printing of the *Mishneh Torah*, Bomberg completed the entire Babylonian Talmud in forty-three volumes on Friday, 2 Kislev 5283 (December 1, 1522).³⁹ It was a true masterpiece; one or more copies were printed on parchment⁴⁰ and on blue paper.⁴¹ The paper copies were sold for 22 ducats.⁴²

remarkable that in the license there is no mention of the Talmud Yerushalmi that was printed in those years (Habermann, *Ha-madpiss*, no. 90).

37. This seems to be the *Arba‘ah Ṭurim*. Despite the similar sound, this could not be the *Moreh Nevukhim*, which Bomberg never printed. The *Turim* had many potential readers among the Castilian and German Jews. Cf. Judah D. Galinsky, “‘And this Scholar Achieved more then Everyone for All Studied from his Works’: On the Circulation of Jacob b. Asher’s Four *Turim* from the Time of its Composition until the end of the 15th century,” *Sidra* 19 (January 2004): 25–45 [Hebrew].
38. This is an abbreviation for *Yad ha-Ḥazaqah* or *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides.
39. The *Mishnayot, Seder Ṭahorot* with the commentary of Shimshon of Sens, printed in the month of Sivan 5283 (1523), appears not to have been part of the work. See Rabinovicz, *Maamar ‘al hadpasat ha-Talmud*, 41.
40. Aron Freimann, “Die hebräische Pergamentdrucke,” *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie* XV (1911): 53, no. 47; Robin Carfrae Alston and Brad Sabin Hill, *Books Printed on Vellum in the Collections of the British Library; with a Catalogue of Hebrew Books Printed on Vellum* (London: British Library, 1996), 209–211 (seven tractates); David Sclar, “A Catalogue of Books Printed on Parchment Housed in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary,” in this volume, 238*–239*, nos. 22–24 (three tractates); *Printing the Talmud. From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, no. 22.
41. Sotheby’s Auction Catalogue NO8518, *Property from the Delmonico Collection*

The competition with Soncino, who henceforth was limited almost exclusively to reprinting some works that he or his family had printed in the past, was coming to an end. In January 1525, the two printers met in Venice, apparently to discuss Soncino's exit from the Italian market, or possibly his futile search for a *modus vivendi*.⁴³ In any case, in 1527 Soncino left Italy forever and moved to Salonika.⁴⁴

The Second Edition of the Babylonian Talmud
(1526–1531, 1537–1538)

The first edition of the Talmud achieved such a notable success that only a few years later, in 1525, Bomberg decided to undertake a new one that would include minor corrections to the text. Once again the political situation had changed. Leo X had died on December 1, 1521; the Flemish Adrian VI, who was hostile to Jews, had assumed the papacy briefly (1522–1523). In 1523, Clement VII was elected pope (1523–1534). Before embarking on a new publishing enterprise, Bomberg wanted to ascertain that the existing papal briefs relating to the printing of the Talmud would be honored by the new pope. That occurred on March 14, 1525.⁴⁵

In addition, the original ten-year exclusive privilege from the Council of Ten to print Hebrew books in Venice, which had been granted to

of Important Judaica, Auction in New York, Wednesday 17 December 2008, nos. 131–141; another nine tractates are housed in the collection of the Library of Jewish Theological Seminary see: *Printing the Talmud. From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, no. 21.

42. Aron Freimann, "Daniel Bombergs Bücher-Verzeichnis," *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie* X (1906): 42, no. 60.

43. Allusions to this effect may be found in the booklet *Melizah la-maskil* ([Rimini?]: Gershom Soncino, [1525 or 1526]). The text describes the meeting between the two printers at the Bomberg residence in Venice, in the presence of Adelkind, Camillo Greco, and a "marrano neophyte." See Marx, "Gershom (Hieronymus) Soncino's Wanderyears in Italy, 1498–1527. Exemplar Judaicae Vitae," 473–475.

44. Cf. the study by Joseph R. Hacker in this volume, 207–218.

45. Zurich, Braginsky Collection BCB_283, fol. 1r: "Del 1525 14 marzo papa Clemente conferma li brevi sopradetti."

him in 1515, had expired. On October 16, 1525 Bomberg requested permission again and was refused. He applied again on October 17, 1525, and once more on March 8, 1526 and was denied because the amounts offered with the requests, first of 150 and then of 300 ducats, were considered too modest by the Venetian authorities. He finally succeeded on March 27, 1526 with his offer of 500 ducats.⁴⁶ It is also likely that Bomberg was successful during the last Venetian negotiation for this because five days before, on March 22, he had received the privilege from Clement VII:

Del 1526 22 marzo papa Clemente conciede privilegio al Bombergo per altri anni 10 de stampar la Biblia, et el Talmut ed le exposition de fra Felice.⁴⁷

(On 22 March 1526, Pope Clement granted the privilege to Bomberg for another ten years to print the Bible, and the Talmud and the *exposition* of Fra Felice.)

By obtaining the papal privilege, Bomberg was able to avoid the new requirement that the Council of Ten had decreed on January 29, 1526 that two censors must examine texts and give their imprimatur before printing.⁴⁸ He had used a similar strategy on April 23, 1515, when he submitted the application that he presented to the authorities of the Venetian republic, which stated that he had already obtained the pope's approval.

Although this papal brief of 1526 enabled Bomberg to print the Talmud, once again he was required to include the responses by Felice da Prato in his Talmud, a restriction he ignored. Between 1526 and 1531 he printed only thirty-three of the forty-three volumes. It seems

46. Fulin, "Documenti per servire alla storia della stampa veneziana," 209–211, no. 256.

47. Zurich, Braginsky Collection BCB_283, fol. 1r.

48. Horatio F. Brown, *The Venetian Printing Press* (London: Nimmo, 1891), 67–68, 208; Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, "Censura e controllo della stampa ebraica a Venezia nel '500," in *Manoscritti, frammenti e libri ebraici nell'Italia dei secoli XV–XVI. Atti del VII Congresso internazionale dell' AISG*, eds. Giuliano Tamani and Angelo Vivian (Rome: Carucci editore, 1991), 115–127: 119.

likely that Bomberg could not complete the printing because the governing authorities intervened, albeit late. Proof is found in the text of absolution of July 26, 1532, imparted by Clement VII to *Dilecto filio Danieli Bombergo* (my beloved son Daniel Bomberg) for having printed the Talmud without the *exposition* of Felice da Prato, and other books without permission. In his defense, Bomberg presented the fact that the tractate of Felice had been destroyed during the sack of Rome of 1527, but the belated excuse mitigated the sentence only slightly. From the draft of the letter, preserved in the Vatican archives, it appears that initially the pope was willing to accept Bomberg's explanation and renew his concessions, but he then reconsidered and merely absolved him.⁴⁹ Once Bomberg was forbidden to print and sell the Talmud without Felice's responses, he ceased work on it, leaving the edition incomplete at this point.⁵⁰

In 1534, with the election of the new pope, Paul III (1534–1549), and the resulting changes in the religious and political environment, Bomberg had to reestablish diplomatic relations with the Roman curia. The printer at this time could not fill the demand for copies of the Talmud, as his stocks were running low. In his autograph Hebrew letter to Francesco Parnas⁵¹ dated January 30, 1537 Bomberg revealed his sense of frustration while waiting to receive news from Felice on the papal briefs he was hoping to obtain:

על דבר מיס' פרא פיליצי שאמר לך שתכתוב לי איך הוא היה מבקש לקיים לי הבריוי
ולא רצה לכתוב לי מאומה עד כי יהיה לו הבריוי בטוב אם ימצא כרצונו ואחלה
את פניך שתפקידיני אל מעלת כבוד החשמן מכאפוא שתהי יד מעלתו ולעזרת
עבדו.

49. Simonsohn, "Some Well-Known Jewish Converts during the Renaissance," 30.

50. *The Apostolic See and the Jews, Documents: 1522–1538*, ed. Shlomo Simonsohn (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 1837–1838, no. 1559; Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews. History*, 336–337.

51. Francesco Parnas, previously known as Yesha'yah ben El'azar Parnas, was a converted Jew who prior to conversion edited the *Shorashim* in 1529 and the *'Arukh* in 1531, both printed by Bomberg.

(Concerning Messer Fra Felice who told you to write me in what way he would request the papal brief and he did not want to write me anything until he received them successfully, I entreat, if it pleases you, to remember me to His Eminence the Cardinal of Capua so that he may be of assistance to his servant.)⁵²

Although the text is not clear, as far as one can tell, Felice preferred to communicate with Bomberg through Parnas. This did not prevent Bomberg from asking Parnas to recommend him to the archbishop of Capua⁵³ in order to obtain the desired papal brief through another channel. Overall, Bomberg's situation was far from sunny, because he learned from Parnas that in December 1536 Paul III had granted the privilege of printing Hebrew books to three Jews of Bologna: Menahem (Emanuele) ben Avraham of Modena, Yehiel ben Shelomoh of Ravenna, and Aryeh ben Shelomoh Hayyim of Monselice:

קבלתי בכ"ז מחודש הזה כתבך אחד נכתב בכ' בו אשר בו הודעתני איך אמת הוא
שהיהודים מבולוגנא מצאו חן בעיני הפיפור [!] וקיימו למו הבריוי אשר בקשו.
חן חן אהובי שגילית את אזני.

(On the 27th of this month, I received your letter from the 20th in which you informed me that it is true that the Jews of Bologna found favor in the eyes of the Pope who accepted their request to

52. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Autog. Bomberg, Daniel, letter of January 30, 1537. See Joseph Perles, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hebräischen und aramäischen Studien* (Munich: T. Ackermann, 1884), 155–156. I wish to thank Dani Hacker for bringing to my attention and for supplying me with these and other autographed letters by Bomberg, all dating from 1537, which will be edited and published by Professor Joseph R. Hacker.
53. This was probably Nikolaus von Schönberg (August 11, 1472 – September 7, 1537), the archbishop of Capua for whom the Christian Humanist, Orientalist and Hebraist Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter (1506–1557) was secretary. Widmanstetter, whose library is in fact in Bayerische Staatsbibliothek of Munich, was in touch with Parnas. Cf. Maximilian de Molière, “Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter's Recension of the Zohar,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 41 (2018): 7–52.

grant them the papal brief. I am very grateful, my dear, that you revealed it to my ears.)⁵⁴

A few months later, in 1537, the first two Hebrew books came off the presses of the three partners engaged in silk manufacturing in Bologna: the siddur according to the Roman rite, printed mostly on parchment, and the *Or 'Ammim* of Obadiah Sforno. Evidently the competition from the Bolognese printers, who, up to 1540, printed only nine volumes (none of which was a Bible or Talmudic tractate), did not give Bomberg real cause for concern; nevertheless the letter reveals his apprehension due to the lack of prompt action by Felice and his fear of being displaced by others.

On August 25, 1537, Bomberg finally received the papal brief, which is in the form of a reproof and a final act of pardon for having broken the established rules.

Del 1537 25 agosto papa Paulo assolve el Bomberga de ogni pena che fusse cascado per haver stampado et vendudo el Talmut senza la exposition de fra Felice et li da licentia de vender anchora el restanti, havento hauta information da periti che non importava el venderli senza le anotation de fra Felice.⁵⁵

(On 25 August 1537, Pope Paul absolved Bomberg of any penalties that he had incurred for having printed and sold the Talmud without the *exposition* by Fra Felice and gave him the license to sell the remaining copies, having detailed information from experts that it was not important that he was selling them without the annotation of Fra Felice.)

Although no other documentation is extant, presumably Bomberg moved quickly as soon as the negotiation appeared to have some

54. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Autog. Bomberg, Daniel, Hebrew autograph letter of 30 January 1537. On the papal brief see *The Apostolic See and the Jews, Documents: 1522–1538*, 2054, 2062, nos. 1812, 1821; Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews. History*, 338–339.

55. Zurich, Braginsky Collection BCB_283, fol. 1r.

minor success. In fact, between 1537 and 1538 Bomberg printed eight tractates, of which five were necessary to complete the second edition (בבא קמא, בבא בתרא, תענית, מגילה, חגיגה), while the other three replenished his stocks (מועד קטן, שבועות, אבות). Of these eight tractates, four were printed in 5298 (1537–1538: מגילה, תענית, חגיגה, בבא קמא), two, probably printed in the same year, but undated (בבא בתרא, שבועות) and two in 5299 (1538: מועד קטן, אבות), as mentioned in the colophon of the commentary of Rashi, studied by Menahem Schmelzer.⁵⁶

The pope pardoned Bomberg for having printed these tractates, and those in the process of being printed, allowing him to sell them. Later in 1538, Bomberg left Venice and moved permanently to Antwerp.⁵⁷ His reasons have not been recorded; none of the motivations that scholars have put forward seems satisfactory. Some have advanced the hypothesis of some sort of theological confrontations because Bomberg was a Calvinist. Others have recalled his involvement in the illegal organizations dedicated to transporting ex-Marrano Jews to the Ottoman Empire from Venice.⁵⁸ I believe, instead, that it was impossible for Bomberg to continue to operate legally in a situation that was considerably more hostile and complicated than that of his early years of printing. As a consequence, the only work that emerged from

56. Schmelzer, "Rashi's Commentary on the Pentateuch and on the Five Scrolls, Venice, Bomberg, 1538," 429–430; Rosenthal, "Daniel Bomberg and His Talmud Editions," 401–404. Rosenthal subdivided the Bomberg Tractates into four editions, considering nine tractates printed in 1538 (actually only eight, because מכות should not be included as noted by Ron, "The Talmud Emendations of R. Solomon Luria," 80) as a separate, third edition. As there are only eight tractates, of which five were used to complete the second edition, I prefer to include them as part of the second edition even if typographically they can be considered as a unit in their own right.
57. *Perush Rashi 'al ha-Torah* (Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1538), colophon of Elia Levita (fol. 197r). Levita adds in 1541 that Bomberg did not work again (*Tishby*, Isny: P. Fagius, 1541, introduction). Cf. also *Sheelot u-Teshuvot Maharam mi-Padova* (Venice: Bragadin, 1553), fol. 71v, responsum no. 29.
58. Habermann, *Ha-madpiss*, 20 and Brian S. Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: the Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 514 ff.

his presses in 1539 was an anti-Semitic pamphlet by Gerard Veltuyek,⁵⁹ which certainly was not appreciated by his Jewish clientele. With this pamphlet, the Flemish printer would have shown the authorities that his business was a commercial one, and that he was not a secret defender of nor a sympathizer with Jews. After publishing that pamphlet the Bomberg printing press ceased completely, reappearing only in 1543 under the direction of Cornelius Adelkind.

The Third Edition of the Babylonian Talmud. (1543–1548)

When the press became active again, censorship rules were once more in the process of change. On July 21, 1542, Paul III issued the bull, *Licet ab initio*, by which he instituted the Congregation of the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition, — the Holy Office — a commission of six cardinals and other prelates whose task was to combat heresy, and to examine and forbid theological errors and false doctrines.⁶⁰

In Venice, less than a year later, on February 12, 1543, the Council of Ten decided to give control over printing licenses to the *Esecutori contro la bestemmia* (Executors against Blasphemy). From 1544, the *Riformatori dello Studio di Padova*, a body associated with the university of that city, was entrusted with the task of censoring and revising books, and granting imprimatur. Despite the restrictive laws and heavy sanctions imposed on anyone who printed without authorization, or sold books with false typographical notes, presses often printed without a license, or obtained one by presenting the Council of the Ten declarations that were more or less counterfeit.⁶¹

In 1543, Adelkind began printing Bibles, liturgical works, and grammatical texts that had already been published during the initial years of Bomberg's press; at the same time, he set up a new publishing program modeled on past experience that included reprinting the

59. Habermann, *Ha-madpiss*, no.162.

60. Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance*, 71.

61. Brown, *The Venetian Printing Press*, 78–80, 208–211; Paul F. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540–1605* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 25–62; Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance*, 64–67.

Talmud, the Rabbinic Bible, and major halakhic texts.⁶² Beautiful midrashic and halakhic texts published in Venice for the first time also date from this period. Although Adelkind no longer had specific privileges for the Talmud, he used a practice that was fairly widespread among Venetian printers of those years: he sent to press over twenty tractates with false title pages, bearing dates from their second or first editions, or no date at all. The rarity of the tractates of this last edition may indicate that the number of copies printed was smaller than those of the previous editions. On May 17, 1547, the authorities of the Republic of Venice issued a new law that imposed severe punishments on those who were engaged in the trade of books the contents of which were not in accordance with the Christian faith, or those who stored pirated editions. The confusion that reigned in the Venetian publishing system increased at this time because three Commissioners on Heresy were instituted in addition to the Executors against Blasphemy; thus, jurisdiction on the subject was shared by several offices. In this situation forbidden books were often confiscated by enforcers of the Roman Inquisition and burned publicly in Piazza San Marco.⁶³

With the changed legislation, Adelkind was obliged to find a new legal path to complete the third edition of the Talmud without risking the seizure and destruction of the printed tractates. It seems that in the spring of 1547 he found a way; he began printing the tractate *מעילה* (including other minor tractates) with a counterfeit title page date of 5288 (1527/1528), in addition to the real date of Nissan 5307 (April 1547) in the colophon (figs. 6–7). It seems likely that he received a license to print the Talmud at this time, as he then published sixteen tractates in the years 5308 to 5309 (1547–1548) with correct dates.⁶⁴ The circumstances of this license are unknown.

62. Isaiah Sonne, “Excursions into History and Bibliography,” in *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume*, ed. Saul Lieberman (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), Hebrew Section, 209–219.

63. Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance*, 66–67.

64. I include in the calculation also the tractate *יבמות* dated 5303 לפ"ג, which, like Rabinovicz and Marx, I believe should be dated 5308 (1547/48). It is possible that the tractate had already been published in 1543, as maintained by Rosenthal

Adelkind took on various collaborations in Venice with other printers, thus enabling them to begin printing Hebrew books: the brothers Giovanni and Domenico de Farri,⁶⁵ the brothers Antonio, Francesco and Alessandro Brucioli,⁶⁶ both in 1544, Meir Parenzo⁶⁷ in 1545, and above all, Marcantonio Giustiniani,⁶⁸ from 1545 onward. As Giustiniani printed the entire Talmud in 1546–1551, he was, no doubt, Adelkind's competitor. One must ask why Adelkind, who should have been advancing the interest of the Bomberg press,⁶⁹ collaborated with competitors, and specifically with Giustiniani, thereby risking damage to his own interests. Perhaps he reasoned that by gaining the support of Giustiniani, an influential Venetian patrician who had obtained a regular license for printing the Talmud,⁷⁰ he would be able to share that license in exchange for professional services.

It is interesting to note that documents in the Venetian archives

("Daniel Bomberg and His Talmud Editions," 397), and that the new title page with the correct date had been added later, indicating in a deliberately ambiguous way the true date of the original printing. In any case, I do not believe that the date of printing can be established based solely on what the numbering of the quires indicates in 1544, because in that year Adelkind operated in various presses and may have employed different teams of typographers who used different systems.

65. Mario Infelise, "Farri, Domenico," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 45 (1995), also online: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/domenico-farri_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/domenico-farri_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) Avraham M. Habermann, *The Printer Cornelio Adel Kind, His Son Daniel and a List of Books Printed by Them* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1980) [Hebrew], 18–23.
66. RR. N. Lear, "Brucioli, Antonio," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 14 (1972), also online: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-brucioli_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-brucioli_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).
67. Avraham M. Habermann, *Studies in the History of Hebrew Printers and Books* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1978) [Hebrew], 167–213.
68. Laura Antonucci, "Giustinian, Marcantonio," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 57 (2001), also online: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/marcantonio-giustiniani_res-2132b6c0-87ee-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/marcantonio-giustiniani_res-2132b6c0-87ee-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_(Dizionario-Biografico)/) Habermann, *Ha-Madpiss Cornelio Adel Kind*, 24–72.
69. On May 21, 1547, Adelkind, in a letter to Andrea Maes, refers to Bomberg as *mei padroni bombergi*. See: Perles, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hebräischen und aramäischen Studien*, 209.
70. Ioly Zorattini, "Censura e controllo della stampa ebraica a Venezia nel '500," 120.

reveal that one of the two censors who granted the imprimatur for a Hebrew book in 1544 was named Marco Antonio Giustiniani (di Niccolò). It is not possible to establish whether this is the Venetian printer himself, a relative of his, or just a person with the same name.⁷¹

Suppositions aside, we know that in 5309 (1548) Adelkind completed the third edition of the Talmud, including thirty-nine of forty-three volumes of the entire work. The remaining four tractates (מועד קטן, בבא בתרא, שבועות, אבות) had already been printed in 1538 and apparently were not sold because of the closing of the press.⁷² With this last imprint, the glorious printing activity of the Bomberg press ended, leaving the field to Giustiniani. Daniel Bomberg's connection to the history of the printing of Hebrew books in sixteenth-century Venice was over.

The newly interpreted documents make clear how the enterprising Bomberg, at times in association with others, navigated some exceptionally hazardous waters in order to print the Talmud and other Hebrew books in Venice. These documents indicate how he persevered in his personal dealings with the Roman Curia and Republic of Venice authorities tasked with controlling the emergent print industry in Venice, and used his entrepreneurial instincts and political acumen to secure an important, often protected, position in that world. As foreseen by Menahem Schmelzer in 1971, the investigation and interpretation of new documents about the history of Venetian Hebrew printing in its seminal moments have come together to illuminate an exceptionally important period in the history of Hebrew books.

71. Ibid.

72. The last edition of the Bomberg Talmud is the rarest one. One copy is in the David Sofer Collection, London. For other copies see: Didier Travier, "Un rare Talmud du XV^ele siècle," *Vincentiana, le Bulletin des Amis de l'Abbaye Saint-Vincent* 4 (2008): 3–10; http://numelyo.bm-lyon.fr/f_view/BML:BML_00GOO01001THM0001_hebraica_eng.

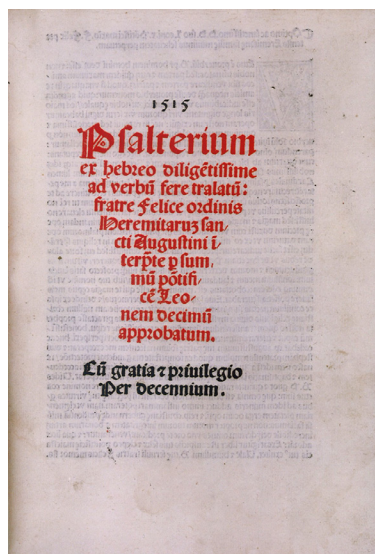
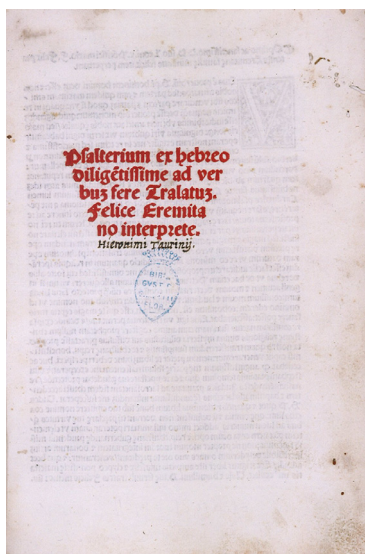


Fig. 1: *Psalterium*, Venetiis: Peter Liechtenstein, Daniel Bomberg, 1515, title page. A comparison of the two copies in Zurich, Dr. David and Jemima Jeselsohn Collection. At the left the unicum. At the right the standard edition.

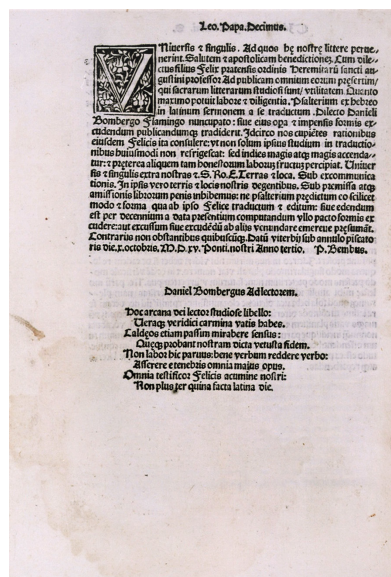


Fig. 2: *Psalterium*, Venetiis: Peter Liechtenstein, Daniel Bomberg, 1515, fol. 2v. A comparison of the two copies in Zurich, Dr. David and Jemima Jeselsohn Collection. At the left the unicum. At the right the standard edition.

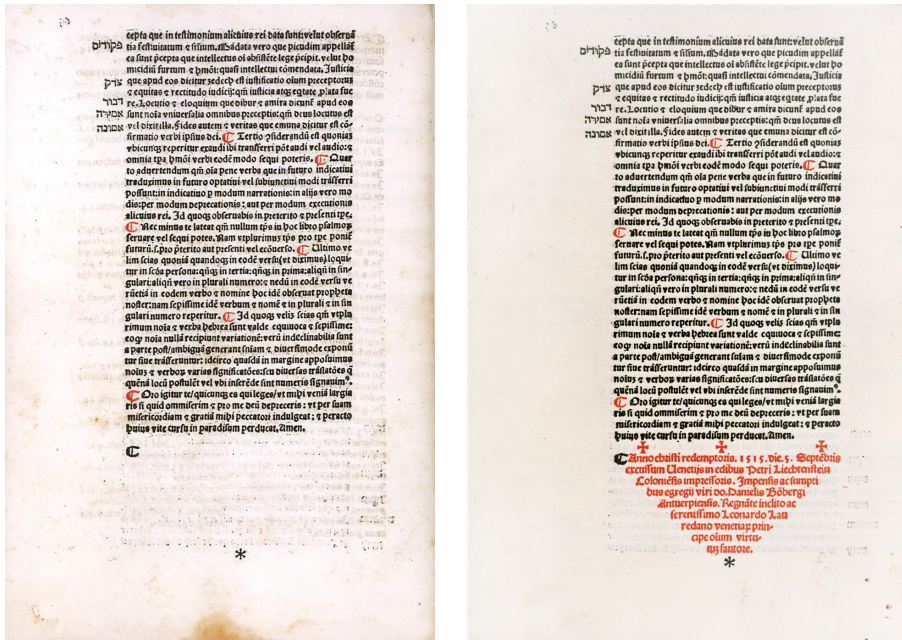


Fig. 3: *Psalterium*, Venetiis: Peter Liechtenstein, Daniel Bomberg, 1515, colophon. A comparison of the two copies in Zurich, Dr. David and Jemima Jeselsohn Collection. At the left the unicum. At the right the standard edition.

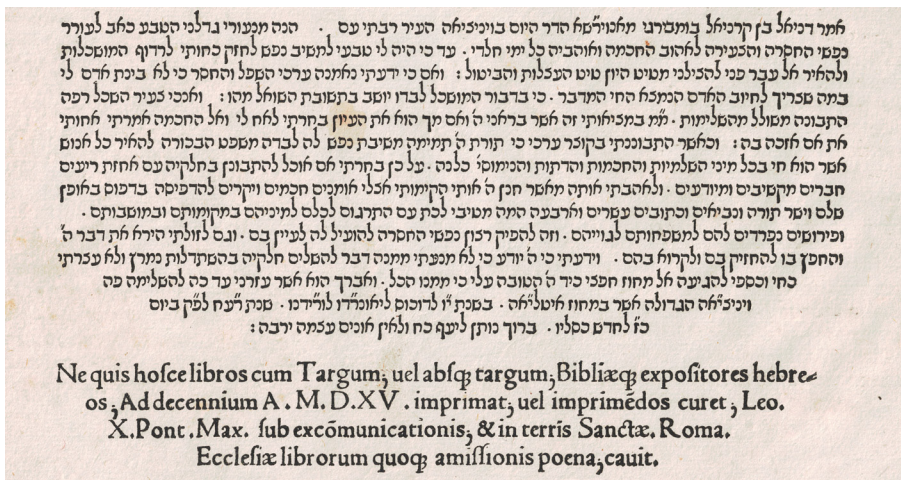


Fig. 4 First Rabbinic Bible, Venezia: D. Bomberg, 1517, vol. 4, colophon and Imprimatur.

Courtesy of the JTS-Schocken Institute Library, Jerusalem

11.
9
Del. 1518. 28. 12. april. P^o Leone 7^{mo} Concedo a Daniel
Bomberg et possit far stampar el Talmut an la
exposition de fra felice, et privilegio 4 ann. 10. g. et.

Del. 1519. 20. feuer. P^o Leone Concedo licentia al bombergo
et possit eleger uno ouer piu dotti nella lingua ebraica, li q^{li}
in loco de solito fra felice et e impedito a roma possano
confer el Talmut /

Del. 1521. 5. iunio. P^o lion Concedo licentia al bombergo
et possit far stampar el Compendio de Talmut, cioè septuaginta
misuoth, uel septuaginta bichim, Pab alpher, Iad, alpher
et la Santa gra spira et stampar el Talmut /

Del. 1525. 12. maio. P^o Clement Confirma li breui soliti
del. 1526. 22. mar. P^o Clement Concedo privilegio al
bomberg et altri ann. 10. de stampar la biblia, et el
Talmut et la exposition de fra felice /

Del. 1537. 25. iunio. P^o paulo, absolue al bombergo
de ogni pena et fuisse cauido et hauer stampado et
venduto el Talmut senza la exposition de fra felice,
et li da licentia de vender and el restante
hauendo Santa Information da periti et no importante
el venderli senza la anotation de fra felice /

Fig. 5: Summary of six papal briefs from 1518–1537 regarding licenses to print the Talmud. Zurich, Braginsky Collection BCB_283, fol. 1r.

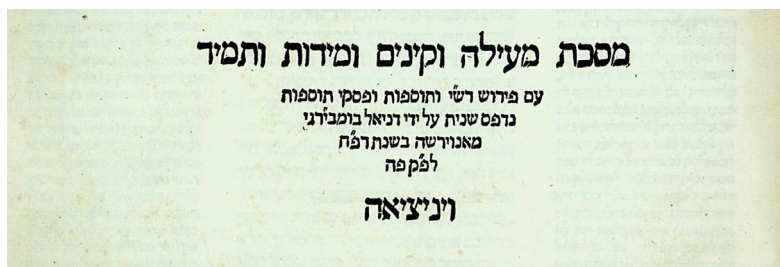


Fig. 6: *Me'ilah*, Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 5288/5307 (1527/1528, actually 1547), title page. Courtesy of the Klau Library at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati

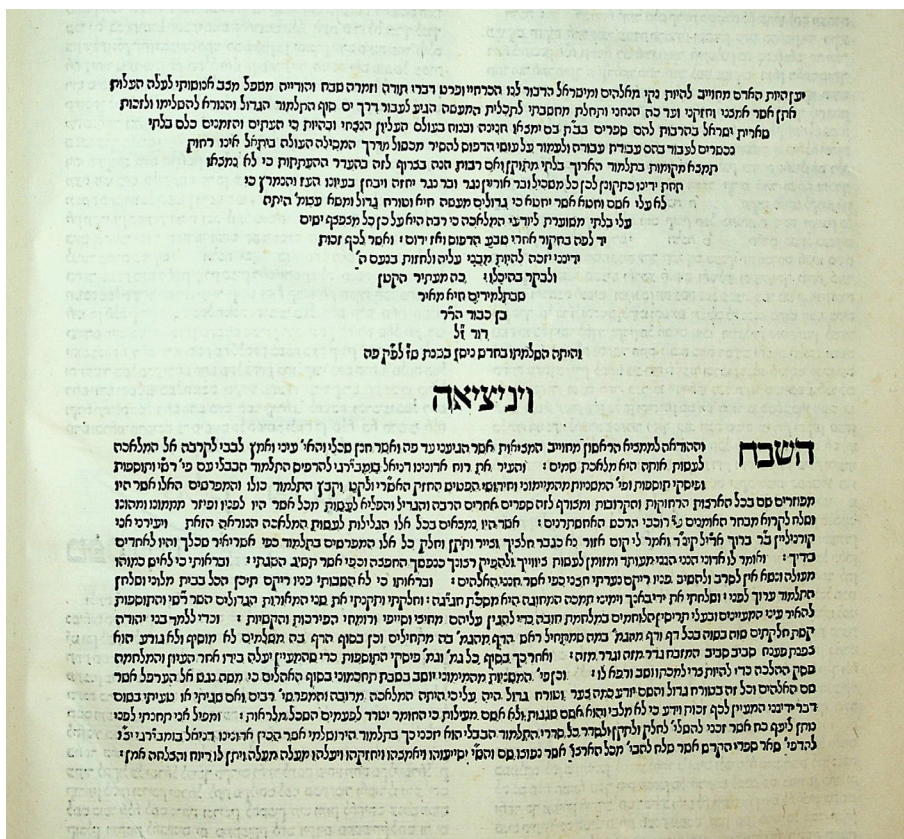


Fig. 7: *Me'ilah*, Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 5288/5307 (1527/1528, actually 1547), colophon. Courtesy of the Klau Library at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati

