In recent years, a new field of research has emerged, which is usually referred to as “Jewish Book History.” Jewish Book History is more than the history of the Jewish book, *stricto sensu*. In the past half-century, the study of the Jewish book has developed from a traditional, descriptive bibliographical discipline into an independent field of research in which the book is studied as an expression of Jewish culture and as an instrument for the transmission of Jewish and non-Jewish knowledge. This development is rooted in a more general trend in cultural history, which aims at an understanding of the role of a variety of media in the transmission of knowledge.

The foundations for this new field of Jewish Book History were laid in medieval book research in the fields of Hebrew codicology and Jewish art. In particular, the leading medievalists Malachi Beit-Arié and Colette Sirat have


defined new fundamental research questions, which are closely related to and often anticipate the current research agenda into non-Jewish medieval books. Their research is based on the study of large corpora of selected primary (mostly but not exclusively dated and/or signed) source material, but it is not limited to descriptive work. They have produced a considerable number of monographs in which more fundamental research questions have been dealt with. A number of other researchers have built on this solid foundation, in particular in the fields of Genizah research and in the study of fragments of Hebrew medieval manuscripts found in the bindings of Hebrew and non-Hebrew manuscripts and printed books and in notarial files.

For the study of the Jewish book in the centuries since the invention of printing, a comparable development may be observed, but the results are not yet as definitive as those achieved for medieval Hebrew manuscripts. Part of the reason for this “intermediate” state of research may be the fact that many questions asked by modern researchers of Jewish Book History were taken from the broader field of Book History and do not take the peculiarities of the Jewish book into full account. The singularity of the Jewish book can only be understood in full if it is studied in its own cultural and intercultural context.

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4 The grand summary of Malachi Beit-Arié’s work is his Hebrew Kodeškōliyāh ivrit of 2012, of which an internet pre-publication is available on the website of the National Library of Israel, www.nli.org. Colette Sirat has recently published a full listing of her publications on her own website, www.colette-sirat.com.

5 A useful bibliography can be found online at the website of the Taylor–Schechter Cairo Genizah Collection at Cambridge University Library: http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/bibliographies/genizah.


7 The most important journal of the new field is Book History, an annual published since 1998. So far there have only been two contributions on Jewish Book History to the journal: Shlomo Z. Berger, “An Invitation to Buy and Read: Paratexts of Yiddish Books in Amsterdam, 1650–1800,” Book History 7 (2004), 31–61, and Eva Mroczek, “Thinking Digitally About the Dead Sea Scrolls: Book History Before and Beyond the Book,” Book History 14 (2011), 241–69. A good impression of the most important research questions in this general field may be gleaned from two recent “companions” to the field: Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, eds., A Companion to the History of the Book (Oxford, 2007), and Suarez and Woudhuysen, eds., The Oxford Companion to the Book; both volumes contain introductions on the Jewish book by Emile G. L. Schrijver. A first, relatively unbalanced attempt has also been made by Schrijver to raise some of the relevant questions from the general field of Book History for Jewish books, in particular those of the private Braginsky Collection in Zurich, Switzerland. In English: “Of Books and People: The Braginsky Collection and Book History,” in Evelyn M. Cohen, Sharon Liberman-Mintz, and Emile G. L. Schrijver, eds., A Journey through Jewish Worlds: Highlights from the Braginsky Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books (Zwolle, 2009), 29–33; and, with some relevant improvements, in German: “Ein neues Verständnis jüdischer Schriftkultur und die Braginsky Collection,” in Emile Schrijver and
This goes further than a mere application of research questions from the general field of Book History to the Jewish book, or a comparison of certain phenomena found in non-Jewish – usually Christian – books with their Jewish counterparts. Here the term “Jewish book culture” is preferred, therefore, over “Jewish Book History.”

This chapter deals with Jewish book culture since the invention of printing, thus excluding the production of Jewish handwritten books, the large majority in Hebrew, before that invention. Such a designation is more appropriate than the classical distinction between medieval and post-medieval Hebrew book production. The invention of printing is one of the late Middle Ages, and in the many centuries since the invention of printing Jews have never stopped producing manuscripts. Since this volume deals with the early modern period, here the introduction of the machine press in the first half of the nineteenth century may serve as a terminus ante quem. It must be underscored, however, that this terminus is more artificial than the terminus post quem. Firstly, almost everywhere in the Jewish diaspora, books were copied by hand until the late nineteenth and even the early twentieth centuries. Secondly, perhaps the most important revolution in Hebrew printed book production of the nineteenth century is not so much the introduction of new printing techniques, but rather the changing roles of the main agents in the book production process, such as authors, editors, printers, publishers, booksellers, and even readers.8 This occurred over the course of the entire nineteenth century, straddling the 1815 terminal date of this volume and this chapter.

Further terms that need to be explained are the word “book,” and the phrase “Jewish book.” They are considered here to comprise both manuscripts and printed books, in fact all bound volumes produced by and/or for Jews and/or with a direct Jewish relevance. The often-used distinction between manuscripts and books, referring to handwritten books and printed books, is imprecise; a book is defined by its physical shape, not by the reproduction technique that was used to produce it. Strictly, this definition excludes single-sheet items such as decorated and illuminated marriage contracts and printed broadsides, as well as post-medieval Torah scrolls, Esther scrolls, and other book scrolls, handwritten or printed. Since, however, these items are part of the same Jewish book culture (the German


Schriftkultur is perhaps even more appropriate), they cannot and will not be ignored completely.

The Jewish book has almost always been subclassified into separate entities, defined by a number of modifiers — handwritten or printed, chronological, geographical, decorated, illustrated, etc. This approach is unproductive, since a true understanding of the Jewish book involves a permanent awareness of the complex interrelations between the various techniques, carriers, localities, manufacturers, and so on. There is no such thing as the history of Hebrew printed books, just as there is no such thing as the history of Hebrew manuscripts after the invention of printing. Hebrew printed books cannot be understood without understanding the contemporary Hebrew manuscript tradition, just as Hebrew manuscripts after the invention of printing cannot be understood without understanding Hebrew printing.

There are further dimensions to consider. Hebrew printed books cannot be understood without understanding Jewish books printed in scripts other than Hebrew, and, likewise, neither can Hebrew manuscripts after the invention of printing be understood without understanding Jewish manuscript books, since the invention of printing, in scripts other than Hebrew. An inward-looking perspective is misleading, because Jews never lived in isolation. Local histories of Hebrew books, printed or handwritten, need to take into consideration the book production, printed or handwritten, of the non-Jewish locale. These cultural interrelations are also important when considering the decoration of texts and the use of images in them, as will be clear from the many examples that will follow. Certainly, until the eighteenth century, book illustration and decoration were among the most prominent and widest-spread expressions of Jewish art. In sum: the history of the Jewish book is as complex and multi-faceted as Jewish history. There are numerous general introductions to the history of the printed Hebrew book and even to the production of Hebrew manuscripts since the invention of printing.9

9 Certainly, one of the most comprehensive surveys is Brad Sabin Hill’s “Hebrew Printing,” in Geoffrey Khan, ed., Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics (Leiden, 2013), 233–62. There is special value in Hill’s decision to include the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Others are David Stern, with Evelyn M. Cohen and Emile G. L. Schrijver, Chosen: Philadelphia’s Greatest Hebraica (Philadelphia, 2007); Adri K. Offenberg, “The Spread of Hebrew Printing,” in Saskia de Melker, Emile G. L. Schrijver, and Edward van Voolen, eds., The Image of the Word: Jewish Tradition in Manuscripts and Printed Books: Catalogue of an Exhibition Held at the Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam (14 September – 25 November 1990 (Amsterdam, 1990), 23–32; and Emile G. L. Schrijver, “The Hebraic Book,” in Eliot and Rose, eds., Companion to the History of the Book, 153–64 – some phrases and thoughts already presented in this, and other introductory articles by Schrijver, have been reused in the present chapter. Also see the various highly informative monographs by Marvin J. Heller, such as Printing the
Rather than merely repeating or rephrasing these, this chapter will take the interrelations as a starting point for a new research paradigm, one that takes into account the special nature of Jewish book culture, as well as the latest developments in the field of Book History. The perspective is primarily, but not entirely, diachronic.

**THE ADVENT OF HEBREW PRINTING**

The earliest Hebrew printed books were produced in Rome between 1469 and 1472/3 and were soon to be followed by some 140 to 150 books printed before January 1, 1501, in other Italian places, in Spain and Portugal, and 1 in Constantinople. The publication of these Hebrew incunabula is the result of conscious decisions by the first printers to print particular texts, for commercial, religious, or other reasons. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Venice, where no Hebrew books were printed in the incunabula period, became the main center of Hebrew printed book production, to be followed by a number of other Italian centers. Inevitably, the printers of these first Hebrew books were in constant need of manuscripts to print from. They stressed the importance of “critical” editions, based on “reliable” manuscripts, and were aware of the necessity to find these.

Born into a family of Antwerp merchants with an interest in printing, Daniël van Bomberghen (before 1483 – 1553), or Daniel Bomberg as he is commonly referred to in Jewish sources, was the most influential Christian printer of Hebrew books in Venice. He worked there, with some breaks, between 1516 and 1549. Among the more than 200 books he produced are the first complete editions of the *Biblia Rabbinica*, the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmudim, and important rabbinic texts. For his 1522–4 edition of the Palestinian Talmud, he claimed to have used a number of manuscripts in order to achieve the best possible text. It was proven more than a century ago, however, that this edition was based almost entirely on one manuscript,

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the manuscript that is now known as the Leiden Yerushalmi. His claim nevertheless shows a text-critical awareness and sense of editorial and redactional responsibility, and his edition would set the standard for many generations, even if these high standards were not always reached. Bomberg’s was also one of the first printing offices in which Jewish and non-Jewish specialists worked together intensively, an example that would soon be followed in the most important centers of humanist printing: Basel, Geneva, Isny, Konstanz and Paris.

The case of the Bomberg edition and the Leiden manuscript of the Palestinian Talmud shows how the intricacies of the transmission of medieval Hebrew manuscripts had an enormous influence on the nature of the printed text and on its subsequent century-long reception by a worldwide Jewish readership. In his colophon to the original manuscript, kept in Leiden University Library and finished on Thursday, February 17, 1289 in Rome, the scribe, of what is today the only extant complete medieval manuscript of the Palestinian Talmud, reports that he had felt compelled to correct the text since the copy from which he had been working was full of mistakes. He apologizes for any mistakes of his own:

I, Jehiel, son of Rabbi Jekutiel, son of Rabbi Benjamin Ha-Rofe, of blessed memory, have copied this Talmud Yerushalmi . . . and I copied it from a corrupt and faulty exemplar and what I was able to understand and comprehend I corrected to the best of my knowledge. And I am fully aware that I did not reach at all the corruptions and faults I found in that copy, and not even half of them. And may therefore the reader of this book who will find corruptions and faults therein judge me according to my merit and not blame me for all of them. And may the Lord, in His mercy, forgive me my sins and cleanse me from my errors, as it is said (Psalms 19:13): “Who can be aware of errors, clear me of unperceived guilt.”

Today Bomberg’s edition of the Palestinian Talmud is as authoritative as it has been since its appearance in the first half of the sixteenth century. It is, though, very important to realize that this printed text of the Palestinian Talmud is based on a medieval manuscript that its original scribe claimed to have “corrected to the best of [his] knowledge.”

That the Bomberg family owned Hebrew manuscripts becomes clear from an inscription in an early fifteenth-century Italian manuscript of the Aphorisms and Prognostics of Hippocrates of Kos (fifth century BCE) in an anonymous Hebrew translation, with a commentary on the Aphorisms by

11 Solomon M. Schiller-Szinessy, Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts Preserved in the University Library, Cambridge […] (Cambridge, 1876), appendix.
Moses da Rieti (1388–1460). This is now held in the Special Collections of the University of Amsterdam (HS VI E 7). The manuscript was acquired by the City Library of Amsterdam between 1608 and 1612 from the collection of the Amsterdam preacher Wernerus Helmiichtius (1551–1608). As testified by a Hebrew inscription in the manuscript, Helmichius had apparently received it as a gift from Cornelius van Bomberghen (1533/6–77), a cousin of Daniel Bomberg and a business partner of the famous Antwerp printer Christopher Plantin. It is not unlikely that Cornelius received or inherited the manuscript from his cousin Daniel, who had died on December 21, 1553. Daniel Bomberg had returned to Antwerp at the end of his life and took with him most of his professional material. In later years, the Plantin press would print books “with the Hebrew letters of Bomberg,” as claimed on their title pages, which is ample proof of Bomberg’s life-long Antwerp connections.13

HEBREW PRINTING AND THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION

The first printers of Hebrew books – not only of incunabula (the 140–50 editions that appeared before January 1, 1501), but also of books in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – had always been aware of the strength of the Hebrew manuscript tradition. Printers need letters and, for the design of their letters, as well as for the design of their pages, the early printers of Hebrew books took their inspiration, and their technical standards, from the manuscript tradition.14 One of the clearest examples of this is the case of Menasseh ben Israel, the first Jew to print in Hebrew in Amsterdam. In the preface to Menasseh’s first publication, a 1627 daily prayer book, the corrector Isaac Aboab da Fonseca wrote:

Menasseh ben Joseph ben Israel, seeing the Bomberg types worn out, and since nothing can be imperfect for the Holy Work, arose from within the community and went out, and came to the house of an artisan. And behold, he was standing there at his work, the tools of his trade in his hand. He said to him: behold, the money is given to you and the shapes of the letters to make as is good in the eyes of


the honorable and respected Michael Judah, first among the scribes, may the Lord consummate his work and may his reward from the Lord God of Israel be complete. The man swore in real writing to make them for him and for no other man. He shaped them with a burin and made them good to look at and fine to read, as perfect as if cast in gold. And there were two men who were amazed to see the completeness of the work and its beauty. It lifted up their hearts to bring to the work of printing a little Siddur, the like of which had never been since there were printers on the earth.15

The fact that the local scribe Michael Judah Leon had to approve of the quality of what would later become known as the famous “Otiyyot Amsterdam” (the “Letters of Amsterdam”) is a clear indication of the technical and maybe even religious superiority attributed to the art of writing by hand, and of the value that the intellectual elite in Amsterdam attached to a true Sephardic character of the local Hebrew script. That ideology was indeed a factor in the choice of Hebrew script in Sephardic Amsterdam is also clear from the semicursive scripts used by the local Amsterdam calligraphers. They deliberately chose the most typically Sephardic semicursive hand in existence, the book hand of late medieval Spain, which they imitated painstakingly in their samples of Hebrew calligraphy.16 The selection of a medieval Iberian/Sephardic semicursive book hand, where other more contemporary, but esthetically less appealing and in a way esthetless traditional, scripts could have been chosen, is clear proof of a deliberate political choice. Michael Judah Leon’s involvement in the design of the square printed letters confirms this. For the printed texts, this had the secondary effect that the Sephardic script would become the standard in the world of Hebrew printing, including in the Ashkenazic world, but the intended local effect was different. The strong Iberian/Sephardic choices testify to a conscious policy to strengthen the specific Jewish identity of the community, not only by means of polemical texts, but also by means of a deliberate, conservative choice for particular types of script in which these written testimonies were to convince the projected audience.


16 Compare, for example, the letters of Matatia de Ishack Aboab as published in Emile G. L. Schrijver, “On Matatia de Ishack Aboab (1672–1703) and his calligraphic art,” Studia Rosenthaliana 26 (1992), 193–201, with the 1480 Villalon de Campos samples as published by Ada Yardeni in her The Book of Hebrew Script [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1991), 217, illus. 34.
It is certain that Hebrew manuscripts were also held in great esteem by printers because an authoritative manuscript exemplar for a printed edition will have functioned as a *kashrut* certificate, so to speak, for the edition.\(^{17}\)

In a later period than that of the previous examples, the adherents of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, elevated the status of Sephardic manuscripts of the Middle Ages even to the extent that they considered them of superior and more authentic quality than other primary sources. This is shown by the presence of large numbers of medieval Sephardic manuscripts in the collections of such prominent *maskilim* as David Itzig of Berlin, and it becomes particularly clear in a *cause célèbre* in the history of the Hebrew book, the work *Besamim Rosh* by Saul of Berlin.\(^{18}\)

Saul ben Zevi Hirsh of Berlin is considered one of the most brilliant and most controversial scholars of his period. His father was Zevi Hirsh Levin, a direct relative of the Hakham Zevi, who until his death in 1800 was held in great esteem as the chief rabbi of Berlin. Already in his youth Saul was a talmudic scholar of some repute, serving as the chief rabbi of Frankfurt an der Oder from 1768 until 1792. He left the rabbinate because he was disappointed with the intellectual level of his colleagues. His name is connected with a number of unconventional publications, printed under falsified authorships and displaying revolutionary modernist approaches to classical rabbinic studies. His most (in)famous work, “Spices of the Rosh,” was published in Berlin in 1793 and is a collection of halakhic responsa, written in the style of the *pilpul*, the very traditional over-meticulous study of the law which Saul of Berlin despised. He claimed that the text was written by the medieval scholar Asher ben Jehiel, the Rosh, who was born in Germany but was active mainly in Spain in the first quarter of the fourteenth century. He mentions that the text is based on an old manuscript, which he had bought in Italy. Even during his lifetime, it became clear that the content came from the mind of an eighteenth-century reformer, and it did not take Saul of Berlin’s many enemies long to identify him as the author. Shortly after his unmasking, he decided to flee to his brother in London, where he died on November 16, 1794. What is particularly relevant here is the fact that Saul tried to lend his work additional authority by claiming it was based on an old manuscript by a

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\(^{17}\) Nevertheless, Shlomo Berger’s recent observation that for Yiddish printed books the manuscript sources are generally unknown is quite relevant here, and the extent to which this is true of books other than those in Yiddish needs further research: Berger, *Producing Redemption in Amsterdam*, 1.

medieval Ashkenazic scholar who was associated with the intellectual heydays of medieval Sepharad.\textsuperscript{19}

It is clear, then, that the production of Hebrew printed books cannot be studied without an understanding of the role of manuscripts. But the opposite is also true. It is obvious that the almost omnipresence of numerous printed copies of Jewish works had an enormous impact on the production of Jewish manuscripts. It is only natural that manuscripts would soon become less prominent as a primary source of knowledge. Why would numerous versions of major rabbincal texts still be copied by hand if cheaper printed editions were readily available? It is a major misconception, nevertheless, that Hebrew manuscripts disappeared completely.

One of the most interesting questions that hovers above this field is how many copies of Hebrew books circulated in the Jewish world in the early modern period. Regrettfully, there are no reliable quantitative data available, but the catalogue of the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem (NLI), which may at least be considered to be a representative collection of Hebrew manuscripts and printed books, might be tried nevertheless as a source with some statistical value.\textsuperscript{20} In 2012, the online catalogue of the NLI listed more than 90,000 Hebrew manuscripts produced between 1469 and 1860. Adjusting this figure to account for duplicates and other factors, an educated guess for the number of extant manuscripts from the above period is 40-50,000.\textsuperscript{21} For the same period, almost 22,000 printed editions are listed. It is very difficult to come up with a reliable assessment of the number of copies of Hebrew printed books that have existed, since this assessment will have to be based on an assumed average number of copies per edition. If this is set at a conservative 300 copies per edition, the total number of printed books that will have circulated anywhere in the Jewish world over a period of nearly 400 years adds up to some 6.5 million printed books.

\textsuperscript{19} A further example is the use of manuscripts from David Oppenheim’s unsurpassed private collection for printed editions. In his unpublished 2012 dissertation, Joshua Teplitsky discusses David Oppenheim’s own active role in this process: J. Z. Teplitsky, “Between Court Jew and Jewish Court: David Oppenheim, the Prague Rabbinate, and Eighteenth-Century Jewish Political Culture” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2012), 221–58. I am grateful to Joshua Teplitsky for putting his dissertation at my disposal.

\textsuperscript{20} For the sake of clarity and ease of retrieval, the numbers of printed books present in the databases of the NLI were chosen over those in Yeshayahu Vinograd’s \textit{Thesaurus of the Hebrew Book} (Jerusalem, 1993), since the NLI catalogue now also incorporates the Hebrew Bibliography Project and may be considered sufficiently representative for the purpose of these trial statistics.

\textsuperscript{21} This number is quoted on the authority of Benjamin Richler of the NLI. I am grateful to Benjamin Richler and to Yisrael Dubitsky of the National Library of Israel for their efforts in providing me with these data.
It is almost impossible to break down these very general quantitative data into shorter periods of time, certainly for manuscripts. For Hebrew printing, it can be assumed that, between 1501 and 1600, approximately 1,800 titles were printed, adding up to $1,800 \times 300 = 540,000$ printed copies; between 1601 and 1700, 2,200 titles were printed, adding up to $2,200 \times 300 = 660,000$ printed copies; between 1701 and 1800, 6,600 titles were printed, adding up to $6,600 \times 300 = 1.98$ million printed copies; between 1801 and 1860, 11,000 titles were printed, adding up to $11,000 \times 300 = 3.3$ million printed copies.

Clearly, the value of these pseudo-statistics is extremely limited. It is certainly more likely that a manuscript will have survived the ages than a printed book, but there is no way to know, or even guess, exact figures. It is not known how many copies of the assumed 6.6 million printed books survived the ages (it is known that the 40–50,000 manuscripts survived); neither is it known how many manuscripts got lost across the centuries, or in which century they did so. Furthermore, we have no clue how long all the printed copies survived, and when (and where) the copies that can be assumed to have disappeared did, in fact, disappear. It makes sense that the production of Hebrew manuscripts will have been still considerable in the sixteenth century (2–3 percent of all available books on the basis of the data available in the NLI catalogue), but less than half of that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nonetheless, an estimated number of 15–20,000 Hebrew manuscripts from the eighteenth century, by way of example, presents 15–20,000 unique versions of texts; compared to the 6,600 unique printed editions in that same period, that is anything but a quantité négligeable, certainly in light of the role of the book in the transmission of Jewish knowledge.

The most striking examples of the influence of the Hebrew printing tradition on the production of Hebrew manuscripts are the works of what is known as the Central and Northern European eighteenth-century school of manuscript decoration. These were usually smaller liturgical books, such as Passover Haggadot, Books of Psalms, prayer books for the Sabbath, and smaller collections of occasional prayers, such as Omer calendars, circumcision manuals, and a few Perek Shirah manuscripts. The manuscripts were usually commissioned by upper- and middle-class Jews, whose names appear on many title and dedication pages. The manuscripts vary greatly in artistic quality.

This revival of Hebrew manuscript decoration was initiated in 1712 by an accomplished Moravian scribe in Vienna, Aryeh ben Judah Leib of Trebitsch. Between 1712 and 1714, he copied a daily prayer book which is now in the Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York (MS
This must be considered the first manuscript produced during the revival. Today some dozen manuscripts of his are known, among which at least five are daily prayer books. Aryeh ben Judah Leib is the first recorded scribe to have written his manuscripts “with Amsterdam letters.” Title pages of books printed outside Amsterdam in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries often contained a statement that the books were printed with Amsterdam letters, as an indication of quality. These printed books usually have the word “Amsterdam” printed prominently on the title page, whereas the actual place of printing is printed in much smaller type, or even at the very end of the book. Aryeh ben Judah Leib transposed this custom to manuscripts. As a number of his manuscripts contain images that were printed onto the parchment on which he wrote the text, it can be assumed that he was involved in the printing industry (even though there was no Hebrew printing in Vienna at the time). That is also true of another prominent Viennese scribe of the period, Meshullam Zimmel ben Moses of Polna, who often refers to himself as a “copper engraver” and whose drawn images do indeed resemble copper engravings and etchings (figure 11.2).

From Bohemia and Moravia, the fashion spread over southern Germany, Alsace and northern Germany, whereas the northern Netherlands only joined the picture later in the century. With the exception of a number of manuscripts produced in Rotterdam by the Moravian scribe Nathan ben Simson of Meseritz, there almost all manuscripts were produced in the second half of the century. Some 500 manuscripts produced during the eighteenth-century revival are still extant.23

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Figure 11.1 *Siddur* [Daily Prayers], printed decorated border with handwritten text. Vienna, Aryeh ben Judah Leib of Trebitsch, 1712–14.
Part of the explanation for the renewed interest in Hebrew manuscript decoration in Germanic court circles, and subsequently in the Germanic lands in general, certainly lies in the fact that well-off Jews were experiencing court life, where great emphasis was laid on the possession of books and well-kept libraries. Apart from the fact that scribes responded to the thus growing demand for manuscripts among the well-to-do, there may have been a political reason as well for the increasing popularity of Hebrew manuscript decoration outside the Bohemian/Moravian region. In 1726–7, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI issued the so-called Familiants Law, which aimed at limiting Jewish presence in the Empire. This law resulted in a considerable migration of Bohemian and Moravian Jews to other Germanic lands and to the northern Netherlands. Among the emigrating Jews were indeed some of the manuscript artists. This does not explain, though, the popularity of Hebrew manuscript decoration in the area around Hamburg in the first half of the eighteenth century, where Jacob ben Judah Leib Shammas, or Jacob Sofer, started working as early as in 1718, or even 1717, and during his long career of almost twenty-five years was joined by a number of colleagues.24

An interesting side-effect of the popularity of printed Amsterdam Sephardic letters is the fact that this is the first time in Jewish history Ashkenazic scribes copied Sephardic scripts, at least in their books, Esther scrolls, and various single-sheet manuscripts. Torah scrolls, and usually also Hebrew script appearing in synagogal settings (in wall paintings, on textiles, or on ritual objects) are not part of this trend. And also, more generically, the Ashkenazic handwritten script of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tends to develop more and more toward the Sephardic, even in cases in which such a comparison was not intended, undoubtedly under the influence of the prominence of Sephardic script in printing.

Hebrew manuscripts after the invention of printing should always be studied in connection with printed books for technical reasons too. Many books – or, better, products of Jewish book culture – combine the techniques of production of both manuscripts and printed books. The first books of the eighteenth-century school of manuscript decoration, which contain printed decorative title page frames, have already been mentioned here. These are preceded by some seventy years, however, by a number of megillot (“Esther scrolls”) that have printed decorative borders and handwritten texts. Similarly, there are a number of Ketubbot (“decorated marriage contracts”) that display a mixed technique like this.

The most famous artist associated with this type of mixed-technique object is Salom Italia (1618/19 – after 1664). He was born in Italy, worked in Amsterdam in the 1640s, and created a number of printed borders for megillot and Ketubbot, most likely for a market of local Sephardim. His designs reflected the amalgam of cultures of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, with clear Italian (his own), Iberian, and particularly local Dutch influences. He is also known to have drawn at least two entirely handmade Esther scrolls, for which, however, he most likely did not write the Hebrew texts.25

Another, Christian, artist involved with the production of printed borders for megillot – which, like the work of Salom Italia, would be sold without text and would then be written by hand – is Francesco Griselini (1717–87), who worked in Venice in the eighteenth century. His Esther scroll, one of a number of Judaica items he made, is a masterpiece

25 The most recent, thorough discussion of Salom Italia’s Esther scrolls is Sharon Assaf and Emily D. Bilski, Salom Italia’s Esther Scrolls and the Dutch Golden Age (Amsterdam, [2011]). A discussion of a recently surfaced handmade scroll by Salom Italia, which is now in the Braginsky Collection in Zurich, is Shalom Sabar, “A New Discovery: the Earliest Illustrated Esther Scroll by Salom Italia,” Ars Judaica 8 (2012), 119–36. The scroll is also described by Sharon Liberman-Mintz and Elka Deitsch in Schrijver and Wiesemann, eds., Schöne Seiten, 274–7, no. 86.
of eighteenth-century engraving and a source of inspiration for many artists to follow (figure 11.3).26

And yet another interesting use of two techniques is a famous single-sheet manuscript from the collection of the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam. It is a marriage poem, entitled Orot ha-‘Abavah, and was finished in Amsterdam in 1748 (figure 11.4).27 It has splendid painted decoration and was clearly produced as a gift for the couple, or perhaps for the bride. The guests at the wedding were apparently presented a printed, monochrome version of the poem, with identical decoration, of which the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana also holds a copy. On a different level, this is also an indication of the special value attached in the Jewish tradition to things handwritten – especially, but not exclusively, in Hebrew.

27 It was published more than once, for example in de Melker, Schrijver, and van Voolen, eds., The Image of the Word, 77, no. 110 (image on p. 65).
So far, only deliberate decisions to produce books or other objects by hand in the period of printing have been discussed. Often, however, difficult social circumstances have forced Jewish readers – not scribes – to copy printed books manually. This was quite often the case in the Middle East, where

Figure 11.4 *Otot ha-‘Ahavah* [Signs of Love], Hebrew manuscript on paper. Amsterdam, 1748.
printed books were in constant demand. There are the famous legendary stories of the best pupils of Yemenite teachers who would be better at reading their Hebrew texts upside down, because they would always stand opposite the teacher around the one printed book that was available. There is also the Yemenite custom described by Yosef Kafih, in which pupils in writing classes in Yemen would copy smaller prayer books as writing exercises, resulting in another copy of a book that would subsequently be used as such. There is also the really touching case, described recently by Menahem Schmelzer, of the originally Yemenite scholar Solomon Adeni (b. 1567), who lived in great poverty in Hebron. For decades, he worked on a commentary on the Mishnah, which he originally wrote in the margins of a printed copy that he owned. It was only after a patron provided him with paper that he was able to make his commentary into a coherent work, part of which is now in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, with another part in the Braginsky Collection in Zurich.

This phenomenon, the forced writing of texts by hand because printed versions were extremely rare, is also attested in Genizot throughout the German-speaking countryside of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Falk Wiesemann described a number of such cases, and further, largely unpublished, finds have been made since the late 1990s.

JEWISH PRINTING IN VERNACULAR LANGUAGES

Jews did not just publish in Jewish languages. They also used the vernacular languages, to write – exemplified by the Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Italian manuscripts produced during the Middle Ages – and to print. Some of the best examples of Jewish printing in a non-Jewish language are in Spanish. The most famous example from the sixteenth century is the famous Biblia en lengua Española, in Latin script, published in Ferrara in 1553, which was followed by a fair number of other Spanish-language printed books in Italy. This custom was transferred to Antwerp and later the northern Netherlands (especially Dordrecht, and later Amsterdam), where hundreds of Spanish works were published from 1583 until the first

30 Falk Wiesemann, Genizah – Hidden Legacies of the German Village Jews: An Exhibition by The Hidden Legacy Foundation [English and German] (Munich, 1992), and, more recently, Andreas Lehnardt and Elisabeth Singer, “Religiöse Handschriften,” in Falk Wiesemann, ed., Zeugnisse jüdischen Lebens in Niederzissen. Genisa-Funde in der ehema-
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quarter of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{31} Hamburg, and to a certain extent London, may be considered satellite cities of Amsterdam in this respect. Printing in Spanish was a phenomenon of the western Sephardim. Sephardim of the east printed in Ladino, in Hebrew characters (in the eighteenth century, Livorno would become a major center for this). Likewise, Italian Jews published books in Italian and German Jews in German (although generally not before the nineteenth century). The decision to publish in a particular language, in a particular script, or even to publish bilingual editions, in one or more scripts, was always the result of a conscious decision by an author, a publisher, or a group of intellectuals or other stakeholders.

The same is true of the early modern production of manuscripts by Jews, in Spanish and Italian, in Latin script. There are hundreds of such manuscripts and they have hardly been studied. These manuscripts might be translations of parts of the Bible or prayers, which was often the case in both Spanish and Italian, or literary texts, or even ego documents (for example, the works of Leone Modena\textsuperscript{32}), or they can be polemical texts (in defense of Judaism against Christianity), which were particularly popular in Amsterdam, Hamburg, and London. It is a laudable development that many of these manuscripts have now become available in digital form, enabling scholars to become increasingly aware of their research potential. Examples of these are the recent web publications of non-Hebrew Jewish manuscripts by Ets Haim / Livraria Montezinos in Amsterdam\textsuperscript{33} and by Columbia University in New York.\textsuperscript{34} Nevertheless, a systematic overview of these manuscripts is a major desideratum in Jewish studies.

Manuscripts in non-Jewish languages not produced by Jews are of potential importance to the study of Jewish manuscripts as well. This is true of the so-called Stammbücher – family registers, often luxuriously


\textsuperscript{33} www.etslainmanuscripts.nl.

\textsuperscript{34} A glimpse of the wealth of that collection is provided by https://exhibitions.cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/hebrew_mss.
decorated, copied by hand, with naïve, folkish illustrations – which were very popular in bourgeois circles in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germanic countries. The illustrations contained in these texts are often much more similar to illustrated Jewish books of the period than to the higher-quality Christian art books. This is also true of the calligraphy in Spanish and Italian that was popular among the Jews of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This calligraphy was used by Jews not just for decorative purposes: many polemical books in Spanish (especially in Amsterdam, Hamburg, and London) were copied by hand out of fear of the local authorities, but their very execution, and the particular appreciation for the art of writing they embody, can only be understood in full when taking into account the popularity of calligraphy in the non-Jewish surrounding cultures.

The same is true, of course, of the printing industry. Jews were part of their surrounding culture, and from the very beginning of Hebrew printing Jewish and non-Jewish printers have worked together. The clearest example of this is the humanist interest in the study of the Hebrew language and of Jewish sources, which is a phenomenon of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. As already mentioned above, this led to hundreds of Hebrew (and even Yiddish) publications, both in major humanist centers such as Basle, Geneva, and Paris, and in minor centers, such as Konstanz and Isny. These works were almost always the result of a close cooperation between Christians and Jews. Also later, in Amsterdam, in Germany, in Italy, and in many other less important centers, Hebrew publications were the result of such collaborations. It is important to realize, too, that many of these craftsmen, whether they were printers, typesetters, or involved in some other way, often played a significant part in the publication of non-Jewish books for non-Jewish markets as well. A proper understanding of the non-Jewish book industry of a particular city or region is therefore vital for an understanding of Jewish book production in that same area.

This story of close cooperation, however, does not mean that the Jewish book always existed harmoniously alongside the Christian book. There are many examples of anti-Jewish measures against Jewish books, the most obvious being the Italian Inquisition’s interest in Hebrew publications. The Catholic Church has always taken great interest in defining and identifying heretics and their followers. This increased after the invention of printing, which enabled a much wider dissemination of presumed heretical ideas, and Jews came under particular scrutiny. On September 9, 1553, after Pope Julius III had decreed that all copies of the Talmud in Rome be gathered, thousands of these and other Jewish books were set alight in the Campo de’ Fiori. These public events were part of a strategy...
that developed in the 1540s and 1550s, and resulted in the banning and burning of larger numbers of Jewish and non-Jewish heretical books. On September 12, 1553, another papal decree was issued, demanding that all copies of the Talmud throughout the Catholic world be gathered and destroyed. In Venice, then the world center of Hebrew printing, the order was interpreted to include other Jewish books as well. Not long after these acts of public aggression, from the second half of the sixteenth century onward, Christian censors in Italy, often converts, checked Hebrew books and signed them, often after expurgating passages considered hostile to Christianity. As a result, there are hardly any books, handwritten or printed, from Italy in that period that do not contain the signature of one or more censors (figure 11.5). Although it is important to realize that the Jews were never prevented from reading their own literature per se, it goes without saying that this external censorship led to a variety of forms of internal censorship, avoidance of complex themes, and adaptation, and thus had an enormous influence on “the shaping of the Jewish canon in the sixteenth century.”

CONCLUSION

Hopefully the preceding overview of interrelations existing within early modern Jewish book culture has shown the great potential of these new perspectives, when compared to the more traditional bibliographical view of Jewish book culture after the invention of printing. Traditional non-Jewish analytical bibliography has served textual criticism – e.g., the study of editions of Shakespeare – whereas the traditional bibliographical approach to Jewish books has hardly ever resulted in anything beyond lists and listings. These results can still serve as a good basis for researching many of the new questions raised here but it has become clear, hopefully, that it is necessary to stretch the boundaries of the field considerably.

Apart from the various research topics and angles discussed here already, there are further possible, and necessary, areas of research. The transmission, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, of Jewish mystical


36 It is worthwhile to look beyond the borders of the field, to the work of Roger Chartier, for example, who has discussed many of the angles that have been discussed here too. His approach is vital to an understanding of Jewish post-medieval books; see, for example, his highly informative “The Order of Books Revisited,” Modern Intellectual History 4, 3 (2007), 509–19.
Figure 11.5 Bahya ben Asher, Kad ha-Kemah [Jar of Flour], with five different censors’ signatures: Camillo Jaghel, Luigi da Bologna 1600, Laurentius Franguellus, Renato da Modena 1626, and Girolamo da Durazzano 1640. Constantinople, no printer, 1515.
knowledge largely through manuscripts, and the canonizing of certain
kabbalistic texts through the preparation of printed editions, is now
beginning to be understood.37 Connected with that, but not restricted to
mystical texts, are ongoing studies of the strategies underlying the circula-
tion of printed books and manuscripts, as well as interventions by various
cultural elites.38 An important new topic is the borrowing of illustrations,
between Jewish printed books, between Jewish and non-Jewish printed
books, between Jewish printed books and Jewish and non-Jewish manu-
scripts, and between Jewish manuscripts and Jewish and non-Jewish
printed books. The study of ephemeral publications, such as broadsides,
single-sheet manuscripts, brochures, and so on, is gradually developing,
and the birth of a Jewish press and the emergence of journals have now
been studied in quite some detail. Likewise, the printing of maps and
printing on parchment, tinted papers, and textiles, mostly silk, have
received considerable recent scholarly attention, especially through the
efforts of Brad Sabin Hill.39

Other points of view, not necessarily related, need further development:
the study of rabbinical approbations in printed books, the influence on
Jewish book culture of the transition from the hand press to the machine
press, the emergence of Jewish publishing houses in the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries, and the issue of taste and relative quality in decorated
Jewish manuscripts and printed books. This list can easily be extended.
More vital, however, than summing up all these potential areas of research
is the realization that further stratification of the study of Jewish book
culture is necessary, geographically and chronologically. The goal for the
near future should be an attempt to integrate the various histories of Jewish
books since the invention of printing, in order to gain a deeper under-
standing of the transmission of Jewish knowledge, or information, through
its various media. This is a massive task but important first steps have been
made already and promising new research is in preparation.

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37 Now see Daniel Abrams, Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of
Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism (Jerusalem, 2010).
38 See note 1, as well as other publications by the authors and editors mentioned there.


