

*Who can discern his errors? Misdates,
Errors, and Deceptions, in and about
Hebrew Books, Intentional and Otherwise*

By: MARVIN J. HELLER

Who can discern his errors? Clean me from hidden faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. (Psalms 19:13-14)

Book errors come in many shapes and forms. Some are significant, others are of little consequence; most are unintentional, others are purposeful. When found, errors may be corrected, left unchanged, or found in both corrected and uncorrected forms. All of these conditions are true of books in Hebrew and other letters, but in some instances more to be found, with good reason, in the former than in the latter. Other errors are not to be found in the book *per se* but rather in our understanding of the book. This article is concerned with errors in and about Hebrew books only. It is not intended to be and certainly is not comprehensive, but rather explores the variety of errors, providing several interesting examples for the readers' edification and perhaps enjoyment.¹

¹ This subject has been explored previously by me in several articles and in books. Some of the material in this article revisits earlier works, here organized differently, with varied emphasis and many new examples. Errors

Marvin J. Heller writes books and articles on Hebrew printing and bibliography. His *Printing the Talmud: A History of the Individual Treatises Printed from 1700 to 1750* (Brill, Leiden, 1999), and *The Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book: An Abridged Thesaurus* (Brill, Leiden, 2004) were, respectively, recipients of the 1999 and 2004 Research and Special Libraries Division Award of the Association of Jewish Libraries for Bibliography.

We begin with a book and a printer, the former known with great certainty, the latter less so but still well described. These examples represent a discrepancy in the historical record, one that occurs when an error, repeated on a recurring basis, is accepted as fact, so that it soon becomes widely accepted and believed with certainty. The two examples offered here concern the second Soncino printing of tractate *Bezah* (1493) and David Bomberg, son of the renowned Venetian printer of Hebrew books, Daniel Bomberg.

The Soncino family, among the foremost pioneers of Hebrew printing, began their distinguished career when Joshua Solomon ben Israel Nathan Soncino, who traced his ancestry to the medieval Tosafot, published his first work, tractate *Berakhot* from the Babylonian Talmud, in the year *gemara* גמרא (244 = 1483/84) in the town of Soncino, from which the family takes its name. *Berakhot*, excluding possible undated Spanish tractates, was the first Talmudic treatise to be printed. That initial printing of a Talmudic tractate is significant because the format of that tractate, albeit not the foliation, with the placement of the Talmudic text and the accompanying exegetical works, Rashi and Tosafot, has been the standard composition of the Talmud to the present day.² *Berakhot* was followed immediately afterwards by tractate *Bezah* (1484). The editor of both tractates was R. Gabriel ben Aaron of Strassburg. Slightly less than a decade later, in 1493, The Soncinos are known to have reprinted *Bezah*. This edition is reported in the following encyclopedias, separated by a century.

and variations in books, both Hebrew and otherwise, have also been addressed elsewhere. Among the bibliographers who have written articles on the subject are Avraham Habermann, Isaac Rivkind, Aryeh Tauber, and Avraham Yaari.

² Foliation follows the first Bomberg Talmud (Venice, 1519/20-23). Concerning the development of the Talmudic page see my "Designing the Talmud: The Origins of the Printed Talmudic Page," *Tradition* v. 29 n. 3 (New York, 1995), pp. 40-51, reprinted in *Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book* (Leiden/Boston, 2008), pp. 92-105.

Jewish Encyclopedia (1901-06)

Incunabula

No.	Date	Author and Title	Place	Printer	Bibliography	Location
90.	1493...	Talmud <i>Bezah</i> ...	Soncino...	Gershon	Soncino...	B. Soncino
40.		Talmud <i>Bezah</i> .	Soncino,	1493		

Encyclopedia Judaica (2007)

Incunabula

66. (-) [Brescia, Gershom Soncino, 1493]. Folio. Thes A88; S-TC88.³

It is not only the above encyclopedias that include references to the 1493 *Bezah*; an entry for that edition of the tractate can also be found in many other works, among them Hebrew bibliographies such as the *Bet Eked Sefarim* and the *Thesaurus of the Hebrew Book*, the former giving the place of printing as Brescia. Avraham Habermann includes brief references to the second edition of *Bezah* in his *B'nei Soncino* and in his update of the *Ma'amar al Hadpasat ha-Talmud*. Additional references can be found in histories of the Hebrew book, such as David Amram's *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy*, where it is recorded in a list of Soncino publications, and in Ch. B. Friedberg's *History of Hebrew Typography*, which informs us that the 1493 *Bezah* was "published as a large folio like the other tractates."⁴

³ Richard Gottheil and Joseph Jacobs, "Incunabula," M. Seligsohn and Joseph Jacobs, "Soncino" <<http://www.jewish-encyclopedia.com/>>; Meyer, Herrmann M.Z., and Angel Sáenz-Badillos. "Incunabula." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 9. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 757-769. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 13 Aug. 2010.

⁴ David Amram, *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy* (Philadelphia, 1909, reprint London, 1963) p. 141; Ch. B. Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sepharim*, (Israel, n.d), tav 1324 [Hebrew]; idem., *History of Hebrew Typography in Italy, Spain-Portugal and the Turkey, from its beginning and formation about the year 1470* (Tel Aviv, 1956), p. 51 [Hebrew]; A. M. Habermann, *Ha-Madpesim B'nei Soncino* (Vienna, 1933, reprinted in *Studies in the History of Hebrew Printers*, Jerusalem, 1978), p. 51 no. 3 [Hebrew]; Raphael Natan Nuta Rabbinovicz, *Ma'amar al Hadpasat ha-Talmud with Additions*, ed. A. M. Habermann, (Jerusalem, 1952), p. 20 [Hebrew]; Yeshayahu Vinograd, *Thesaurus of the Hebrew Book*. Part II Places of print... (Jerusalem,

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* article on Incunabula was prepared by Richard Gottheil and Joseph Jacobs, the Soncino article by M. Seligsohn and Joseph Jacobs. In the former article the authors write, “Very few works went into a second edition, Maḥzor Romi... and the tractate *Bezah*... being the chief exceptions. The reprinting of *Bezah* seems to show that this treatise was the one selected then, as it is now, for initial instruction in the Talmud.” The authors confirm that “Each of the following lists has been checked and authenticated by the librarian or owner of the collection, and is here published for the first time.” It should be noted that the reference column for the 1493 *Bezah* is empty, that is, there are no reference works pertaining to that edition of the tractate, and that the location is given as B., that is, one copy only is known, B. standing for the British Museum (today British Library).

The librarian of the British Museum at the time was S. van Straalen. In his *Catalogue of Hebrew Books in the British Museum acquired during the years 1868–1892* there is an entry for a 1493 edition of tractate *Bezah* that begins:

Tractate Yom Tov... [*Joshua Solomon Soncino; Soncino, 1493.*] Fol.

Van Straalen’s description of Tractate *Yom Tov* (*Bezah*) is identical to the 1483/84 edition of *Bezah*, but that might be due to the previous printing having been used as a copy-book for the reprint. However, the entry for Tractate *Yom Yov* concludes, “The title given above is taken from the epilogue of Gabriel Strassburg, the corrector, appearing on the recto of the last leaf, which is dated 1484...” Apparently, the authors of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* entries “checked and authenticated” this entry by reviewing the current catalogue of the British Museum rather than by corresponding directly with van Straalen. This would not have been a problem if the subject entry had not begun with a typographical error, 1493 for 1484. The authors of the encyclopedia entries were concerned only with the volume title, date, and place of printing, so that it appears that they did not read the entire description, resulting in our by now well known,

1993), p. 688:41 [Hebrew]. Also see Marvin J. Heller, *Printing the Talmud: A History of the Earliest Printed Editions of the Talmud* (Brooklyn, 1992), pp. 87–95.

accepted, and frequently recorded 1493 edition of *Bezab*. This error is compounded by the occasional misidentification of tractates of unknown provenance as a 1493 *Bezab*, a tractate that did not and does not exist.⁵

Daniel Bomberg has been described, with great exuberance, by Joshua Bloch, who, noting difficulties Bomberg had to overcome to print Hebrew books at this time, finds him responsible for

the most tremendous and important accomplishment in the whole history of Hebrew publishing... No one can again contribute so much to the external and internal advancement of the Hebrew book. As a pioneer in Hebrew printing in Venice he established so high a standard that no one has surpassed his work, even with the aid of modern mechanical improvements, and it is a question whether any Hebrew printing has yet equaled the quality and taste shown in the productions of the Bomberg press.⁶

Bloch's exuberance notwithstanding, there is no gainsaying Bomberg's importance or the high quality of his works. His many accomplishments include printing the *editio princeps* of the Babylonian Talmud (1519/20-23), the first Jerusalem Talmud (1522-23), the first *Mikra'ot Gedolot* (a four-volume Rabbinic Bible with commentaries, 1515-17), and the first printed Karaite book, a four-volume prayer book for the Karaite communities in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Crimean Peninsula (1528-29).

Bomberg was a non-Jew who came to Venice from Antwerp on family business. His father, Cornelius Van Bombergen, was a merchant, his mother was Agnes Vranex, and his two brothers were Anton and Francis; little however was known of Daniel Bomberg's immediate family-life. New insights into Bomberg's family-life ap-

⁵ S. van Straalen, *Catalogue of Hebrew Books in the British Museum acquired during the years 1868-1892* 1894, reprint Hildesheim, New York, 1977), p. 233. One additional incunabula edition of *Bezab*, but not from 1493, is recorded by A. K. Offenbergh, *Hebrew Incunabula in Public Collections: a First International Census* (Nieuwkoop, 1990), pp. 157. It is 121 "[Guadajara, Solomon ben Meses ben Alqabiz Halevi, about 1480]. 2°."

⁶ Joshua Bloch, "Venetian Printers of Hebrew Books," in *Hebrew Printing and Bibliography* (New York, 1976), pp. 78-79.

peared to become available due to an edition of tractate *Shekalim* published by the Bomberg press in 1527. This edition is described by Moritz Steinschneider in his catalogue of the Bodleian Library as:

1867b - f. Ven. 1527
[3. Tischri 282, ff. 14 inclusa Maimonidis Introd. in Ord. II. Wf. II p. 897. -b) „Per. Dav. b. Corn. Bomberg”; ff. 13 usque ad marg., deest Index tractatum ordinis II. Opp. 416f. ap. Wf. II p. 897.]⁷

This entry, with its reference to Dav. b. Corn. Bomberg, developed into a biography of David Bomberg, Daniel Bomberg’s son. Amram writes that:

About the year 1527 Bomberg’s son David began his work at the press of his father, afterwards to become his partner and to be among those who inherited his press. It seems to have escaped bibliographers that there was more than one Bomberg, although Guillaume le Bé speaks of “des Bombergues” and Cornelio Adelkind of “Li Nostri siniori bombergi.”⁸

We find a more detailed description of David Bomberg by Joshua Bloch who informs us:

That Daniel Bomberg and his son David bore distinctly biblical names and that they were engaged in the production of Hebrew books, probably account for the frequency with which they are spoken of—by both Jews and non-Jews—as having been of Jewish origin. David Bomberg became an apprentice in his father's printing establishment in the year 1527. Subsequently, he appears as a partner in the business, and after his father's death, which occurred in December, 1553, David is among those who inherited the famous press. In 1538, Daniel is said to have left Venice and returned to Antwerp, his native city, leaving his son David in charge of his press at Venice.⁹

⁷ Moritz Steinschneider, *Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana* (Berlin, 1852-60), col. 269 no. 1867b .

⁸ Amram, pp. 182-83.

⁹ Bloch, p. 77.

Avraham Habermann addresses these references and additional comments that “des Bombergues,” as well as “Li Nostri siniori bombergi,” is plural, further proof that more than one Bomberg was active at the press. He observes that both Amram and Bloch based their assumptions that Bomberg had a son named David on the Steinschneider description of the title page of the 1527 edition of *Shekalim*. An immediate difficulty is that the catalogue entry records David as the son of Cornelius Bomberg, which would make him Daniel Bomberg’s brother, not his son. Habermann concludes,

This David is a mistake. When I read Steinschneider’s words I felt that a serious error had been made in his list, and in place of Dav. it should have said Dan. This edition of *Shekalim* is very rare. Therefore, I turned to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, requesting information on what was written on the title page. The response from Mr. R. May confirmed my supposition, for the title page says: “Tractate *Shekalim*... printed by Daniel ben Cornelio Bomberg in the year 287 [= 1527] here, Venice.” Therefore, this David never existed.

Concerning the error in the catalogue prepared by Steinschneider, who was known for his exactitude, this is not a regular printer’s error, but a copyist mistake, made at the time the listing was being prepared. Steinschneider would copy the [information from] the books in Oxford, but would work on the material in Berlin, when the books were not available to him. Since he found the name Dav. written in his own hand, it was printed that way.¹⁰

¹⁰ A. M. Habermann, “Further errors caused by an error,” *Kiryat Sefer*, XLVIII (Jerusalem, 1973), p. 528 [Hebrew]; *idem.*, *The Printer Daniel Bomberg* (Safed, 1978), pp. 11-12 [Hebrew]. Concerning possible Bomberg offspring believed to have been active somewhat later in Antwerp at the Plantin press see Abraham Berliner, “The Hebrew Printing Press of Daniel Bomberg,” in *Abraham Berliner, Selected Works*, II (Jerusalem, 1944), p. 165 [Hebrew] and Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, XV, p. 380. Further information as to Daniel Bomberg’s family is provided by Avraham Rosenthal, “Daniel Bomberg and his Talmud Editions,” in *Gli Ebrei e Venezia* (Milan, 1987), p. 388, who informs that he has seen a photocopy of a rare book entitled *Genealogie de la famille Van Bomberghen*, by A. Coovaerts and H. van Bomberghen, printed in Brus-

Among the earliest and most frequent errors are stop-press corrections. This refers to compositor errors caught by the corrector during the press-run, when the latter had not had the opportunity to correct the page before the press-run began. When an error was found the press would be stopped, the error would be quickly corrected—the stop-press correction—and printing resumed. To replace a sheet with a single error would necessitate replacing several pages, the number depending on the book format. The normal practice, therefore, was to retain the original defective sheet and use both it and the corrected sheet in copies of the book. Due to cost factors, both of paper and labor, the sheet with the error would be replaced only if the error was substantial or substantive. It is therefore possible for books to consist of non-uniform copies, having several sheets with variant readings.

A striking example of such an error is *Sha'ar ha-Gemul*. That book, on eschatology by R. Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides, Ramban, רמבן, 1194–1270) also addresses Maimonides' (Rambam, רמבם, 1135–1204) position on related subjects. First printed in Naples (1490) and again in Constantinople (1519), this edition, the third printing, by Abraham ibn Usque in Ferrara (1556), is noteworthy to us because the title-page states that the author was the Rambam רמבם rather than Ramban רמבן, the error resulting from the substitution of a *mem* ם for a nun ן. The error was quickly caught, for most copies have the correct attribution on the title-page. Nevertheless, the first title-pages were not discarded; examples of both title-pages are extant. Another error on the title-page is the date given for completion of *Sha'ar ha-Gemul*, *Tammuz*, 316 (June/July, 1556). That date is likely the start date, for the colophon dates completion of *Sha'ar ha-Gemul* to *Tishrei*, 317 (September/October, 1556). The date error on the title-page was not rectified when the attribution error was corrected.¹¹

sels in 1914. According to this work, Daniel Bomberg married Marie de Clark at the age of about forty in approximately 1525. The wedding took place in Antwerp and the marriage is said to have produced seven children, none of whom could have been our David Bomberg.

¹¹ Marvin J. Heller, "Variations in and Between Early Hebrew Books," *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* (Mainz, 2009), pp. 147–56.

Another source of compositor errors, here primarily confined to Hebrew books, resulted from the prohibition on Jews being compositors after the Counter-Reformation. Type had to be set by non-Jews, and the correctors, who were Jewish, would afterwards review the text. Type was set by the non-Jewish typesetter from a copy-book in which text, lines, and margins served as an example to be followed by the compositor. Ideally, the corrector, who was Jewish, would review and correct sheets prior to printing. Here, too, if printing had begun, errors found would be corrected by stop-press corrections. A complication arose, however, when the compositors would set type and print in the absence of the corrector, that is, late *erev* (eve of) Shabbat or on Shabbat, when the Jewish corrector would have already left or would not come to the press. The sheets, having been printed without being read or corrected, might have errors, which, when printing resumed the following week, were generally left uncorrected. This situation is recorded in the colophons of a number of Jewish correctors.

Indeed, Abraham Yaari quotes from thirty-three books with complaints from correctors who state that they should not be held responsible for errors resulting from work done late *erev* Shabbat or on Shabbat. Two examples are from R. Joel ibn Shuaib's (15th century) *Olat Shabbat* (Venice, 1577), discourses on the Torah, printed at the press of the Christian Giovanni di Gara and from R. Samuel ben Isaac Uceda's (Uzedah, 16th century) *Lehem Dimah* (Venice, 1600), a commentary on the book of Lamentations, printed at the press of Daniel Zanetti, also a non-Jew. The unnamed editor of *Olat Shabbat* writes in the colophon that despite his efforts some errors remained.

This was due to many reasons. The craftsmen were not Jewish, to know "a word fitly spoken" (Proverbs 25:11). At times they hastened to complete their work as it was *erev* Shabbat or *erev yom tov*." In a brief moment" (cf. Isaiah 54:7) *bein hashmashot* (twilight) it was not possible to see everything as was necessary.

Similarly, R. Isaac Gershon, editor of *Lehem Dimah*, writes “Who can discern his errors?” (Psalms 19:13), for so is the way of the workers, and particularly the owners who print on Shabbat.”¹²

Certainly not all errors can be blamed on gentile compositors. Jewish compositors are also responsible for their share of mistakes. This is the case with the many editions of the popular and much reprinted ethical work *Kav ha-Yashar* by R. Zevi Hirsch ben Aaron Samuel Koidonover (Kaidanover, d. 1712). The title, *Kav ha-Yashar*, equals the number of chapters (*Kav* קב = 102), as well as the author’s first name, Zevi (צבי = 102), and is an anagram of the author’s second name (ha-Yashar הישר = Hirsch הירש). *Kav ha-Yashar* is an unusual ethical work, being kabbalistic and replete with wondrous tales. R. Avraham Shainberger, editor of a recent edition of *Kav ha-Yashar*, writes in the preface that *Kav ha-Yashar* is practically unique among printed works for its numerous printing and copyist errors,

Just as there is no light without shade nor “lily without thorns” (cf. Song of Songs 2:2) so too it is impossible to print without errors and to transcribe without alterations. However, a book with so many errors as this is appalling, “not to be seen nor found” (*Pesahim* 95a), not customary, not to be numbered in the tens, not in the hundreds, also not the thousands, but the tens of thousands. The corrector of this work (1819 edition) has written “the *Kav ha-Yashar* that I edited from was full of ‘thorns, and nettles’” (cf. Proverbs 24:31). At times even errors in individual words can result in more than ten variant readings, changing the meaning. In places the many errors

¹² Avraham Yaari, “Editor’s complaints regarding printing on the Sabbath by non-Jews,” *Studies in Hebrew Booklore* (Jerusalem, 1958), pp. 172 no. 7, 174 no. 19 [Hebrew]. For errors that are unwitting, not because the information is incorrect but specifically because the non-Jewish compositor did set the correct date, a Shabbat, see my “And the Work, the Work of Heaven, was Performed on Shabbat,” *The Torah u-Maddah Journal* 11 (New York, 2002-03), pp. 174–85, reprinted in *Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book*, pp. 266–77.

render the book a sealed work, the reader unable to understand or able to correct it...¹³

Several examples are provided by Shainberger, who notes that the inclusion of considerable kabbalistic content, often in Aramaic, not understood by the compositor, has resulted in further confusion. Among the examples he provides are the following, in which changing a word or even a single letter alters the intent:

The heart is opposite (represents) the divine name ה' and the mouth is opposite the divine name אד'... This is a great sin of one who makes a separation between the souls הנשמות. This, the reading in most editions, is wondrous to all, for what are souls doing here? In truth, the error is here due to the addition of one single letter. The correct text is, as in the first edition, and makes a separation between the [divine] names השמות. (ch. 5)

The angels say in the first watch of the night “Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord?” (Psalms 24:3) because the souls of men ascend to above to the heavenly Temple, and the text in all printed editions reads “because the first four hours are a time of weeping בכייה and the souls of men ascend to above” . . . and it is a matter of wonder as to why it is a time of weeping and what is its connection here. In the work *Yesod Yosef* we see that this is a great error, for it should say: it is a time of repose שכיבה, and so the souls of men go out at the time of slumber and ascend to above, as is explained well in the Talmud (*Berakhot* 3a), that man goes to rest in the first four hours of the night. (ch. 37)

To paraphrase what was said above, certainly not all errors can be blamed on compositors, editors, or others. Most discomfoting to an author has to be his own error. An apparently inadvertent error, one that certainly would have been embarrassing to the author if, as seems likely, he had intended to modify the verse he employed, appears in the introduction to *Zekher Rav* (Amsterdam, 1635) by R. Benjamin ben Immanuel Mussafia (Dionysius, 1606–

¹³ Zevi Hirsch Koidonover, *Kav ha-Yashar ha-Shalem*, editor Avraham Shainberger (Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 28–33 [Hebrew].

1675). Mussafia, who was related to R. Menasseh Ben Israel (1604–1657) by marriage, is believed to have been born in Spain to a Marrano (*converso*) family, moving to Hamburg where he became physician-in-ordinary to Christian IV of Denmark. When that monarch died in 1648, Mussafia relocated first to Glückstadt in Holstein and then to Amsterdam, where he spent the remainder of his life. He served there as Rosh Yeshiva of the *bet midrash* Keter Torah and was among the leaders of the Sephardic community. An individual of broad education and great erudition, Mussafia was, in addition to his Talmudic scholarship, a philologist competent in Latin, Greek, and Arabic. In his last years Mussafia became an enthusiastic advocate of the false messiah Shabbatei Zevi, resulting in his being attacked by the eminent R. Jacob Sasportas (1610–98) in the latter's *Oholei Ya'akov* (Amsterdam, 1737, no. 66). Mussafia later repudiated his support for Shabbatei Zevi. Mussafia was also the author of *Musaf he-Arukh* (Amsterdam, 1655), a popular supplement to R. Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome's lexicography, the *Arukh*; *Mei Zahav* (Hamburg, 1638), on the therapeutic properties of gold; *Mei ha-Yam* (Amsterdam, 1642), on the flow of the tides; and well-received medical works. His responsa are included in other collections, and a commentary on the Jerusalem Talmud remains in manuscript.

Zekher Rav, Mussafia's first published book, was printed by Menasseh Ben Israel. It is a versified philological work praising creation, in which all roots are used once. The text is divided into seven parts, reflecting the seven days of creation. Mussafia cleverly wrote this versified praise of creation in such a manner that all of the three-letter roots of biblical Hebrew words and most of their derivatives appear only one time. Mussafia's name does not appear on the title page of the first edition but is found in the colophon, which records his name and that he was a physician. The title-page states that it is:

“A recollection of your great (*zekher rav*) [goodness]” (Psalms 145:7). “He remembered the days of old” (Isaiah 63:11), “the root of the matter found” (Job 19:28) in our holy language. Continually before Sarah... Printed in the month of Adar 5395 (1635).

The reference to Sarah is to Mussafia's wife. The introduction (2a-3a) begins, “With a recollection of your great (*zekher rav*) [good-

ness], ‘To You I lift up my eye [with tears], O You who are enthroned in the heavens’ (Psalms 123:1),” recounting that his Sarah was born on II *Adar* 372 (1612), the only daughter to her father Dr. Samuel de Silva and her mother Rivkah, sister of his mother, whom he married in *Sivan* 388 (1628) “And it came to pass at the end of two full [years]” (Genesis 41:1) that his wife became ill and “Rachel (*sic*) died by me” (Genesis 48:7) in Hamburg, *motzae Nahamu* (13 *Av* 5394 = August 7, 1634) and he buried her in Altona. *Zekher Rav* had been written in her memory. Alas, it appears that in preparing the introduction for *Zekher Rav* Mussafia neglected to substitute Sarah for Rachel. Several subsequent editions—and *Zekher Rav* has been reprinted at least fourteen times—including translations and a Karaite adaptation, omit this paragraph in its entirety.¹⁴

Some errors, omissions really, lead to confusion. For example, *Birkat ha-Zevah* (Amsterdam, 1669) on the Talmud, Rashi and Tosafot in *Seder Kodashim* and its commentaries, excepting *Hullin* and *Bekhorot*, by R. Aaron Samuel ben Israel Koidonover (Kaidanover, Maharshak, c. 1614–1676), was printed, in part, by David de Castro Tartas. Koidonover, father of Zevi Hirsch (*Kav ha-Yashar*, above), was a distinguished rabbi. He had studied under R. Jacob Heschel and his son R. Joshua of Lublin, and, at an early age, began to serve on the *bet din* of R. Moses Lima (*Helkat Mehokek*, c. 1605-68). During the Chmielnicki pogroms Koidonover took refuge in Vilna, afterwards officiating in Kurow. In 1656, during hostilities in Poland between Russia and Sweden, Koidonover’s two young daughters were murdered by Cossacks and he, with his only son, Zevi Hirsch, fled to Austria, subsequently assuming rabbinic positions in several communities, among them Nikolsburg, Fuerth, Frankfurt am Main, lastly becoming *av bet din* Cracow. Among Aaron Samuel

¹⁴ Shimeon Brisman, *History and Guide to Judaic Dictionaries and Concordances* (Hoboken, 2000), p. 18; L. Fuks and R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography in the Northern Netherlands 1585–1815* (Leiden, 1984-87), I p. 121 no. 161; Hayyim Michael, *Or ha-Hayyim* (Frankfurt am Main, 1891, reprint, Jerusalem, 1965), pp. 284-85 no. 604; Meyer Kayserling, *Biblioteca Espanola-Portuguesa-Judaica* (1890, reprint with Prolegomen by Y. H. Yerushalmi, New York, 1971), p. 97; Cecil Roth, *A Life of Menasseh ben Israel. Rabbi, Printer, and Diplomat* (Philadelphia, 1945), pp. 119-20.

Koidonover's other titles are *Birkat Shemu'el* (Frankfurt am Main, 1682) discourses; *Emumat Shemu'el* (Frankfurt am Main, 1683), responsa, and *Tiferet Shemu'el* (Frankfurt am Main, 1696) novellae, all three brought to press by his son.

The title page of *Birkat ha-Zevah* states that *Birkat ha-Zevah* was printed from 133 f. until the end by David de Castro. R. Nahum (Menahem) ben Meir Katz of Vilna, Koidonover's son-in-law, was the editor. In his epilogue, Katz informs that the work was moved from the first print-shop to that of de Castro because the previous workmanship was unsatisfactory. Katz does not, however, identify the first printer. At the time there were two additional print-shops in Amsterdam, that of Joseph Athias and Uri Phoebus. As Katz does not name the first printer, both printers were possibly responsible for the unsatisfactory work. Haim Liberman, however, discovered that in a very small number of copies an additional leaf has been added at the end, also from the editor, which states that the first printer was Athias and praises Uri Phoebus ben Aaron ha-Levi, who is very exact in his work. Phoebus had complained that his reputation was being harmed by the doubts as to the identity of the first printer, necessitating this rectification. By the time this was done, however, most of the copies had already been distributed, so that this last leaf is very rare.¹⁵

A unique and appealing characteristic of Hebrew books is the manner in which many title pages, and even colophons, are dated.¹⁶ This is in contrast to the numerous titles dated in a straightforward manner, such as *Sha'ar ha-Gemul*, שי"ו ([5]316 = 1546) and *Zekher Rav* השצ"ה (5395 = 1635), the five standing for the fifth millennium in the Hebrew calendar, it being understood, as in *Sha'ar ha-Gemul* and therefore not part of the computation, or given, as in *Zekher Rav*, and therefore included in the computation. Other titles are dated with chronograms, biblical verses selected because they allude

¹⁵ Fuks, II p. 338 no. 431; Haim Liberman, *Ohel Rachel* I (Brooklyn, 1980-84), pp. 197-98 [Hebrew].

¹⁶ Concerning the use of chronograms see my "Chronograms on Title Pages in Selected Eighteenth Century Editions of the Talmud," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore (SBB)* XVIII (Cincinnati, 1993), pp. 3-14, reprinted in *Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book*, pp. 54-71.

to the book's contents, or to external conditions, or even to the author. *Birkat ha-Zevah* is dated with the chronogram "And this shall be the priest's due משפט (429 = 1669) [from the people], from those who offer a sacrifice" (cf. Deuteronomy 18:3), that work being concerned with the Temple service and its offerings. *Olat Shabbat* is dated "the light of his Torah shone in Aragon in the kingdom of Sefarad in the exile of Jerusalem in the year, '[And now men see not] the bright הוא בהיר (229 = 1469) [light] which is in the clouds'" (Job 37:21), alluding to the fact that the author, ibn Shuaib, was among the exiles from Spain.

When a chronogram is used for the date, it is not uncommon for only some of the letters to be part of the date. The reader determines the date by adding the value of the letters utilized—Hebrew letters have numeric value—identified by their being emphasized by being enlarged or designated by asterisks placed above the letters. Chronograms can be of varying complexity. For example, *Kav ha-Yashar* is dated "Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel מן השקיפה ממעון קדשך מן ישראל [את] ישראל (465 = 1705)" (Deuteronomy 26:15). That date is followed, immediately below it, by the straightforward date תס"ה (465) thereby avoiding any confusion.

This is not always the case, and complex dates can not only be confusing, but also lead to misunderstandings or errors. In the edition of the Talmud printed in Dyhernfurth (1816-21) by David Sklower, son-in-law of the late Joseph May, founder of the press, tractate *Niddah*, which deals with the *halakhot* of women's bodily issues, is dated "[But if she is cleansed of her discharge], then she shall count to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean וטהרה לה שבעה ימים ואחר תטהר (Leviticus 15:28). The value of the letters to date the tractate is 773, equivalent to 2013. Printed and bound with *Niddah* is *Seder Tohorot*, which deals with the laws of purity. It is dated "[Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you], and you shall be clean from all your filthiness וטהרתם מכל טומאותיכם (579 = 1819); [and from all your idols, will I cleanse you]" (Ezekiel 36:25). Raphael Natan Nuta Rabbinovicz notes the error and several suggestions made by others as to the correct placement of the asterisks. His own suggestion is that in the last word תטהר the asterisks were misplaced and it should instead read תטהר which changes

the enumeration to 582, or 1822, an acceptable completion date, as *Niddah* is the last tractate in the Talmud.¹⁷ This is, however, inconsistent with the date (1819) of *Seder Tohorot*, normally printed and bound with *Niddah*, as appears to be the case here.

Misdates are not the only date-issue with Hebrew books. Over the centuries several books have been intentionally misdated, the purpose being to foil the censor or government restrictions on the publishing of Hebrew books. It has been suggested that in several instances the Bomberg press backdated Talmudic tractates to avoid potential problems.¹⁸ We know with greater certitude that books printed in Austria after the Napoleonic Wars were backdated. Selected categories of Hebrew books, particularly Hasidic and kabbalistic books, were prohibited from 1794. Hassidic books were repressed and Yiddish books were banned regardless of their content. The office of *Die Oberste Polizei und Zensurhofstelle* (Supreme Imperial Police and Censorship Office) was established, headed by Count Joseph Sedlnitzky, disparagingly known as Metternich's lackey, monkey and poodle, and footsoles. Even earlier, a series of decrees against Hasidic and kabbalistic books were issued by Herz Homberg, censor of Jewish books in Galicia from 1787. Books such as *Seder ha-Yom* and *Shivhei ha-Besht* were forbidden, the latter because "it contains praise of the Hasid and has therefore been recognized to be just as harmful as the Hasidic sect in general."¹⁹ This

¹⁷ Rabbinovicz, p. 130.

¹⁸ Avraham Rosenthal (pp. 392-95) suggests, convincingly, that a solution to the problem of Bomberg treatises with title pages dated from the same year but with textual variants is 'forged title pages.' Those tractates are, in fact, part of the later last Bomberg Talmud. These tractates were misdated to forestall anticipated censorship. Perhaps the most famous instance of a book presumed to be misdated, one that was an issue with bibliographers for a century, is the date of the Nahmias brothers' edition of the *Arba'ah Turim* (Constantinople, 1493). Although the colophon is clearly dated *Tevet* 5254 (= 1493), many bibliographers disputed that date, the issue finally being resolved by A. K. Offenberg, "The first printed book produced at Constantinople," *Studia Rosenthaliana*, III, no. 1 (Amsterdam, 1969), pp. 96-112), who proved conclusively that the date was correct.

¹⁹ Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* translated from the Yiddish by Eugene Orenstein; translated from the Hebrew

period of repression continued until the revolution of 1848, was briefly renewed in 1851, but then lasted only about a decade.

A response to the prohibition on printing such titles was to backdate books. Such is the case with *Birkhat David*, a Hasidic Torah commentary by R. Abraham David ben Asher Anshel Wahrmann (c. 1771–1840), who served as rabbi from the age of twenty in Jazlowce (Jazlowice), and afterwards was a Hassidic rebbe in Buczacz (Buchach), succeeding his father-in-law, R. Zevi Hirsch Kro, (*Neta Sha'ashu'im*, 1829). The title page of *Birkhat David* is dated both 1805 in Hebrew and 1800 in Arabic numerals. R. Aaron Ya'akov Brandwein informs us that the noted bibliographer Dov Ber (Bernard) Wachstein (1868–1935) in his *Katalog der Salo Cohn'schen Schenkungen* (Vienna, 1911), which includes *Minhat Shelomo*, a catalogue of the collection of R. Nahum Dov Ber Friedman of Sadigura, records *Birkhat David* as an 1805 imprint but notes the discrepancy on the title page. Furthermore, Wachstein observes not only that the dates are contradictory, but that there are further inconsistencies. The author is mentioned on the title page as being among the living, but in the introduction by his student, R. David, who brought the book to press, he is mentioned as deceased. R. Shimon Wahrmann, the author's grandson, in the introduction to Abraham David's *Mabazeh Avraham* (Lvov, 1876) writes that his grandfather served as rabbi in Jazlowce for twenty-four years and for twenty-six years in Buczacz. According to this, Abraham David only came to Buczacz in 1814 and could not have served as rabbi in 1805. R. Brandwein concludes that the source of many of the uncertainties as to the date of *Birkhat David* and other similar works can be attributed to the prohibition on printing Hasidic works in Galicia. The title pages of *Birkhat David* and similar works were, therefore, backdated to mislead the censor.²⁰

Avraham Yaari addresses the issue of censorship and enumerates the books printed at the Rosannes press that he believes are backdated. Among them is *Birkhat David*. He deduces that the correct

by Aaron Klein and Jenny Machlowitz Klein (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 105–112.

²⁰ Aaron Ya'akov Brandwein, *Tal Orot II* (Brooklyn, 1975), p. 368 [Hebrew].

publication date for *Birkhat David* is 1845, for the colophon has, in enlarged letters, the phrase Tephilah le-Elohai David תפילה לאלקי דוד, the numerical value of the letters (605) resulting in that date.²¹

It is not only dates that are meant to conceal the true identity of publication. There are also instances of false publication places on the title pages; well known are pseudo-Basel, pseudo-Hanau, and pseudo-Lublin publications. Most are intended, as with the cases noted above, to avoid censors' restrictions or prohibitions on Hebrew books. There are, however, instances when the objective was to compete with other editions of Hebrew books published for the Jewish market. Joseph Prijs, at the end of his monumental study of Hebrew printing in Basle, records several works considered to be pseudo-Basel imprints. Among those titles are four Talmudic tractates, *Sanhedrin*, *Shevu'ot*, *Makkot*, and *Gittin*, dated from 1759-60.²² Here the misidentification was due to competitive Jewish editions of the Talmud rather than Christian censorship. The title page of *Shevu'ot* has a brief text that gives the tractate name and states it is printed:

²¹ Abraham Yaari, "Miscellaneous bibliographical notes. Judith Rosanes' Hebrew press at Lvov." *KS*, XVII (1940), pp. 95-108.

²² Joseph Prijs, *Die Basler Hebräischen Drucke (1492-1866)* (Olten, 1964), pp. 481-82 no. 322. The other titles recorded by Prijs as pseudo-Basle are pp. 475-81 nos. 319, *Ze'ena u-Re'ena* (1622); 320, *Ta'alumot Hokhmah* (1629-32); 320*, *Manuale Hebraicum et Chadaicum* (1634); and 321, *Si'ah Yitzhak* (1676). Another book with a false title page and misleading information, also published for the Jewish market, is *Sefer ha-Kavvanot*, the first book of the kabbalistic teachings of R. Isaac ben Solomon Luria (ha-Ari, 1534-72) to be published. First printed in Venice in 1620, a reprint using the first edition as a copy-book was published in 1624, possibly in Hanau or Frankfurt am Main. The title pages of the two editions have identical information, including the Venetian place of publication and printer's name (Bragadin) and the Roman numeral date 1620 and, it is the sole textual variation, the Hebrew date on the title page of the second edition ב' שלום (384 = 1624). The Hebrew date is confirmed by the colophon, which dates completion to Monday, 9 Sivan ב' שלום (= May 27, 1624). Concerning this edition of *Sefer ha-Kavvanot* see my "Clarifying the Obfuscation Surrounding the Reissue of *Sefer ha-Kavvanot*," *Quntres* 1:1 <<https://taljournal.jtsa.edu/index.php/quntres>> (winter, 2009), pp. 1-8.

With Rashi's commentary and Tosafot
to correct the errors that have entered the previous editions.
Printed with beautiful letters, exactly proportioned page by
page. With *Ner Mitzvah*, *Torah Ohr*, *Mesorat ha-Shas*, and *Ein
Mishpat*; all properly aligned:
Printed
In Basle
In [5]519 (= 1759)

The ornate title page has depictions on the sides of Moses and Aaron with his priestly garments, at the top a menorah with what appears to be King David playing the harp and sitting on his throne, at the bottom Isaac blessing Jacob and Jacob dreaming, and in the center a vignette of *Akedat Yitzhak*. This title page appears on such Sulzbach imprints as the *Midrash Rabbah* (1755) and *Eliya Rabbah* (1756). Although the title page states it was printed in Basle, Prijs records it as a pseudo-Basle, giving Fuerth as the actual place of printing. The reason for the misleading location in this instance, according to Prijs, apparently is the absence of rabbinic approbations to print tractates at Fuerth at this time due to the publication of the Talmud in nearby Sulzbach (1756-63).²³

We also know of cases, less serious and certainly not malicious, in which the author's introduction was modified, for reasons that may be obvious but certainly violate his intent. *Shullhan ha-Panim* (*Misa de El Almah*) is a Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) translation and ab-

²³ Raphael Posner and Israel Ya-Shema, editors, *The Hebrew Book, An Historical Survey* (Jerusalem, 1975), p. 75, observe that some of the title pages used in Sulzbach were also used in Fuerth and Dyhernfurth. The attribution of the pseudo-Basle tractates has been questioned by Dr. Moshe N. Rosenfeld, "Der Fürther Talmuddruck. Geschichte und Bibliographie." *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Fürth* (Fuerth, September, 1993), p. 32, who writes, "Die Pseudo-Basel Gemarot vom Jahr 1759-60 (Prijs, Basel Nr. 322) sind nicht in Fürth, sondern in Sulzbach gedruckt..." It is not only Hebrew books that have false imprints. For example, Luigi Balsamo "Dealing Across Frontiers: Italian Bookselling in the 18th Century" in *A Genius for Letters. Booksellers and Bookselling from the 16th to the 20th Century* Ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (New Castle, 1995), p. 29, informs us that "In 1765, about one book in four printed in the Venetian republic bore a false place-name."

ridgment of R. Joseph Caro's (1488–1575) authoritative halakhic compendium, *Shulḥan Arukh*, by R. Meir ben Jacob ibn Me'iri. *Shulḥan ha-Panim* is primarily the laws in the first two parts of the *Shulḥan Arukh*, that is, *Orah Ḥayyim* (5a-113b) and *Yoreh De'ah* (114a-166b), with selections from *Even ha-Ezer* (177a-180b) and *Ḥoshen Mishpat* (181a-187a). There is a preface on the verso of the title-page in Ladino and there are both Hebrew and Ladino introductions, as well as an index at the end (187b-188a). The text is in vocalized square letters, the Hebrew introduction in a considerably smaller rabbinic type.

Shulḥan ha-Panim was printed previously in Salonika at the Jabez press (1568), with introductory remarks by ibn Me'iri. He defends translating the work, noting that Maimonides wrote in Arabic, that many do not know Hebrew, and that perhaps this will encourage them to learn the holy language. Ibn Me'iri forbids with an oath the reprinting of this book in Latin letters, even if the intention is well meant, out of a concern that it will then be reproduced by someone unfamiliar with Hebrew writing, as has been done with the prayer book, and he requires that one swear by His holy name not to do so, so that non-Jews will not read it. Ibn Me'iri further includes in this oath a prohibition on printing the book anywhere in Italy because the censors alter the text, and unsuspecting readers will be unaware that this has been done.

In this edition the editor, R. Joseph ben David Franco, omits any mention that *Shulḥan ha-Panim* was printed previously. However, as ibn Me'iri's introduction is of value, Franco includes it, but not wishing to show that he has transgressed the translator's oath prohibiting printing the book in Italy, he modified the prohibition to a restriction on printing anywhere in Italy but Venice, since there the censors remove only that which is explicitly against their religion, so that nothing has to be removed. The reference to non-Jews has been modified to read *Ishma'elim*.²⁴

²⁴ Meir Benayahu, *Copyright, Authorization, and Imprimatur for Hebrew Books Printed in Venice* (Jerusalem, 1971), 218-22 [Hebrew]. The title page has a frame with images of Mars and Minerva. Concerning the widespread and varied use of this frame see my "Mars and Minerva on the Hebrew Title Page," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 98:3

Forgeries, here books attributed to other authors with intent to deceive, are a malicious example of errors. One of the most fascinating forgeries, one initially widely accepted, is a bogus edition of *Seder Kodashim* of the Jerusalem Talmud, reputedly discovered and printed from a recently discovered manuscript by Solomon Judah Algazi-Friedlander.²⁵ Tractates from the Jerusalem Talmud in *Seder Kodashim* are not extant, and this printing of *Seder Kodashim* was based on the reported (reputed) discovery of a lost manuscript. Wide acceptance by many rabbis, with some notable exceptions, was due to the quality of the forgery and also fostered by the knowledge that prominent *rishonim* (earlier sages), such as Maimonides, stated that at one time there was such a Jerusalem Talmud.

Printed in two volumes, *Zevahim* and *Arakhin* in 1907, and *Hullin* and *Bekhorot* in 1909, the title page states that the gemara to these tractates has been well edited and is published with the commentary *Heshek Shelomo*, attributed to R. Shalom Mordecai Shvardon (1835–1911). The text consists of the Gemara in the middle of the page and the commentaries about it in the margins modeled after Rashi and *Tosafot*. *Seder Kodashim* was published with approba-

(New York, N. Y., 2004), pp. 269-92, reprinted in *Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book*, pp. 1-17. Also see Nahum Rakover, *Copyright in Jewish law* (Jerusalem, 1991), who addresses the *halakhic* implications of several different situations, including publishing works posthumously against the author's wishes.

²⁵ Another famous forgery is *Besamin Rosh*, 392, responsa alleged to have been written by R. Asher ben Jehiel (Rosh, c. 1250–1327). It is now believed that R. Saul Berlin (1740-94) was the author, having written the work in support of his reformist tendencies. Concerning *Besamin Rosh* see Shmuel Glick, *Kuntress ha-Teshuvot I* (Jerusalem, 2006), pp. 166-67 no. 665 [Hebrew]; Dan Rabinowitz, "Besamin Rosh," The Seforim Blog (October 21, 2005), <<http://seforim.blogspot.com/2005/10/besamim-rosh.html>>; and Dan Rabinowitz & Eliezer Brodt, "Benefits of the Internet: *Besamin Rosh* and its History" The Seforim Blog (April 26, 2010), <<http://seforim.blogspot.com/search?q=samet&updated-max=2010-04-26T15%3A36%3A00-04%3A00&max-results=20>>. Also see several posts at the Seforim Blog by Dr. Marc Shapiro concerning the edition of *Sefer ha-Eshkol* attributed to R. Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne (Ravad II, c. 1110–1179) published by R. Zevi Benjamin Auerbach (1808-72) and now believed to be a forgery.

tions from well respected rabbinic authorities representing a wide spectrum of Judaism.

Algazi-Friedlander presented himself at different times with dissimilar identities. It is now believed that he was an Ashkenazi, from Beshenkovichi, Belorussia. However, he initially identified himself as a *Sephardi tabor* (pure Sephardi) from the Algazi family of Izmir. R. Jekuthiel Judah Greenwald (1889–1955) described Friedlander's appearance in 1907 as that of a Sephardi who spoke Hebrew with a Sephardic accent and did not know Yiddish. Friedlander claimed that his brother, Elijah Algazi, acquired the manuscript, which had originally belonged to R. Joshua Benveniste (*Sedeh Yehoshu'a*, 1590–1665), an earlier authority on the Jerusalem Talmud, on a business trip to Izmir. Not everyone accepted the authenticity of this newly discovered *Seder Kodashim*. Scholarly criticism soon appeared from such authorities as B. Ritter of Rotterdam, R. V. Aptowitzer, W. Bacher, R. D. B. Ratner and R. Meir Dan Plotzki, several of whom wrote books and articles exposing the work as a forgery. Prominent rabbis such as R. Meir Simhah Ha-Kohen of Dvinsk, R. Joseph Rozin (Rosen, Rogachover), R. Meir Jehiel ha-Levi of Ostrowiec, and the Gerrer Rebbe questioned the genuineness of Friedlander's *Seder Kodashim*. Among the criticisms raised is that of the Rogachover, who observed that each Talmudic tractate mentions at least one *amora* (Talmudic sage) not mentioned elsewhere, whereas in this work there are no amoraic *hapax legomena*.

Friedlander was unable to produce the manuscript, and it was soon discovered that he had perpetrated other frauds. At one point, Friedlander orally confessed to R. Greenwald that he had indeed perpetrated a fraud, although he later denied doing so. R. Greenwald later wrote about the entire incident, informing the public that for fourteen years Friedlander had been a fish merchant and was an Ashkenazi, not a Sephardi. That Friedlander could initially fool so many authorities is due his rearrangement and modification of extant *gemaras*, from both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, as well as other rabbinic sources. His *Seder Kodashim* is a clever compilation of that material, with names and other pertinent data altered to serve his purposes. Perhaps the greatest tragedy is that Friedlander's forgery does reflect scholarship, one that, if pre-

sented on its own merits, might have been considered to be of value.²⁶

We began with a tractate and a printer that were not in fact real and concluded with tractates from the Jerusalem Talmud that are fictitious, although the cases are otherwise completely dissimilar. Between them we have explored a variety of errors, misprints, and misdates, intentional and unintentional. What they have in common is the consequence of inadvertently or deliberately misleading the reader. This is a subject that fascinates and certainly deserves further study. Nevertheless, even this overview should caution the reader that not everything in print, no matter how innocuous or well received, is necessarily genuine, for “Who can discern his errors?” ❧

²⁶ Yosef Gavriel Bechofer, “The Talmud Yerushalmi on Kodashim,” *Or Shmuel* (Skoki, 1992), pp. 15–30; Bernard Oberländer, “Forgery vs. Authenticity,” Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Debrecen (2009); and Sharon Liberman Mintz and Gabriel M. Goldstein, editors, *Printing the Talmud: from Bomberg to Schottenstein* (New York, 2005), pp. 288–89.