

8. Aḥai Gaon of Sabḥa, שאילתות דרב אחאי גאון משבחה. Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1546.

Homilies on Jewish law and ethics, written in Aramaic by a great Talmudic scholar from eighth-century Babylonia who later settled in the Land of Israel. This is the first printing of this important book.

9. מדרש רבות (*Midrash on the Pentateuch and Five Scrolls*). Venice: Marco Antonio Giustiniani, 1545.

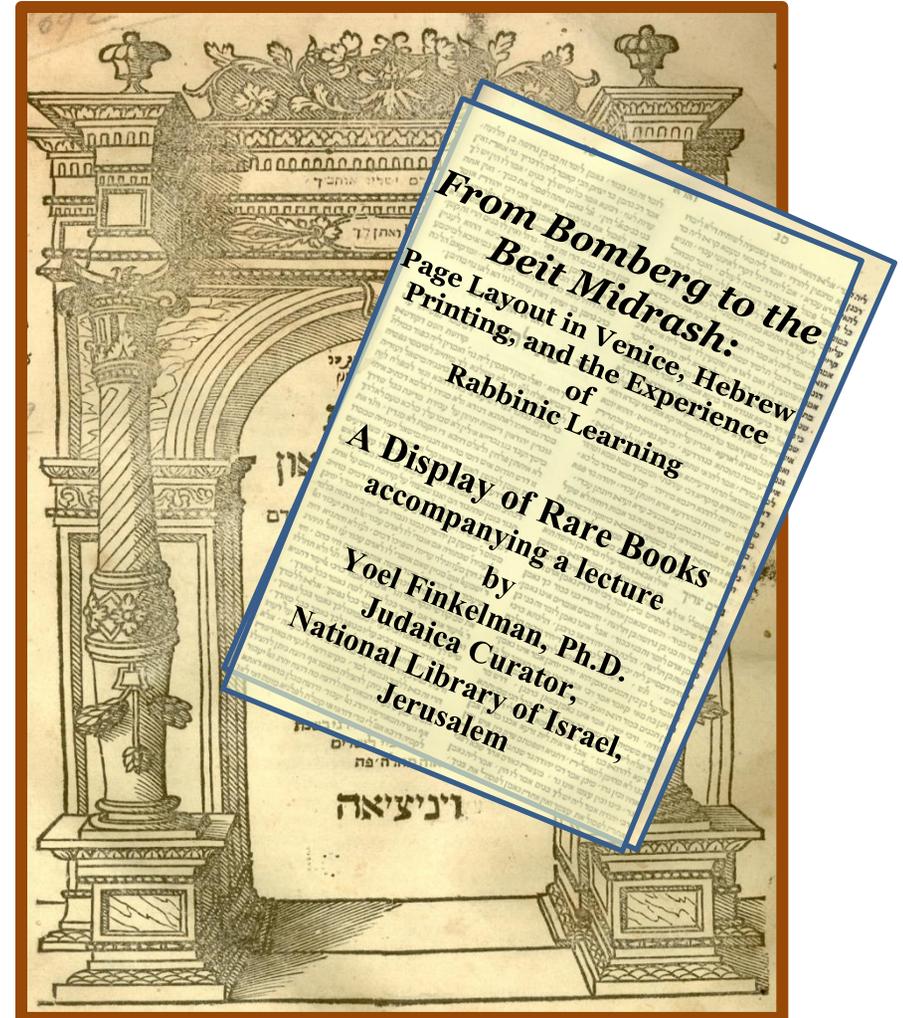
By 1545, Daniel Bomberg was no longer the only printer of Hebrew books in Venice, as this book from the Giustiniani Press demonstrates. It was printed by Cornelius Adelkind, best-known as Daniel Bomberg's master-printer but also associated with other presses as well. Interestingly, Bomberg printed an almost exact edition of the book in the same year, giving rise to the possibility that this edition represents a case of cooperation between the two printing houses usually regarded as rivals.

10. Solomon ben Abraham Urbino, אוהל מועד (*Tent of Assembly*). Venice: Marco Antonio Giustiniani, 1548. Bound in vellum.

A book of Hebrew synonyms printed by Cornelius Adelkind. Each entry includes examples of usage.

11. Eliezer Melli, לכל חפץ (*For Every Desire*). Venice: Daniel ben Cornelius Adelkind, 1552.

This book takes its name from a biblical verse: "For every purpose there is a time and a rule" (Ecclesiastes 3: 17), and as the title suggests, it deals with the formal side of Jewish religious practice. The book was dedicated to two members of the distinguished Abarbanel family: Judah ben Samuel Abarbanel and his mother, *Signora* Benvenida of Naples. With moving grace and notable alliteration, the author refers to Benvenida as "the most perfect of all" (*kulah kelulah min ha-kol*). The book was printed by the son of Cornelius Adelkind, who named him after his famous employer, Daniel Bomberg.



Detail from שאילתות דרב אחאי גאון משבחה, Venice, 1546 (no. 8 on Checklist).

Thursday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016  
12 noon - 1:00 p.m.

African and Middle Eastern Reading Room,  
Thomas Jefferson Building  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.

Visit the Hebraic Section online!  
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/amed/hs/index.html>

The fabled press of Daniel Bomberg was responsible for the *editio princeps* of many classics of the Jewish bookshelf. A wealthy Christian originally from Antwerp, Bomberg purchased the exclusive right to print Hebrew books from the Venetian Senate in 1515. Thanks to the great Jewish scholars who worked in his print shop and to his own commitment to excellence, Bomberg's books set the standard for generations to come in everything from textual accuracy to the layout of the printed page. Today's display offers a rare opportunity to view some of these masterpieces of Hebrew printing first-hand, and we hope you enjoy seeing them.

- Ann Brener, Hebraic Section,  
African and Middle Eastern Division

## Checklist of Books on Display

1. ארבעה טורים (*Four Rows*). Jacob ben Asher. Fano: Gershom Soncino, 1516.  
An important compendium of Jewish law, written by Jacob ben Asher (1270-1340), one of the greatest Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages. The title reflects the book's division into four parts and alludes to the row of gemstones on the High Priest's breastplate. This edition of the medieval masterpiece was printed by Gershom Soncino, the great pioneer of early Hebrew printing.
2. מקראות גדולות (*First Rabbinic Bible*). Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1516-1517. Volumes I-IV. On display: Volume I, the Torah.  
The *First Rabbinic Bible* was first in many ways: the first printed Bible to include the ancient *masorah* and the first Hebrew book to use chapter and verse headings. The edition, however, was sharply criticized, and it was left to the *Second Rabbinic Bible*, published by Bomberg in 1525, to set the standard for all subsequent editions. One contemporary authority, the renowned Elias Levita, sniffed that 'the editor did not know his right hand from his left' and sternly bade his readers to pay no attention to 'the false remarks printed in the margins.' Open here to the Book of Numbers with woodcuts of the initial word both in Hebrew and in Aramaic translation.
3. תלמוד בבלי: מסכת מדות (Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Midot*). Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1520.  
The cornerstone of mainstream Judaism, the Babylonian Talmud is a huge compendium of legal traditions going back to Jewish antiquity. It was transmitted orally from generation to generation until around 500 A.D. when Jewish sages in Babylonia committed it to writing. The tractate displayed here comes from Bomberg's famous first edition of the entire Talmud, printed in Venice in 1520-1523. Today, copies of this first Bomberg edition are exceedingly rare and exceedingly prized; the Library of Congress holds precisely one-half of the original forty-four tractates. On display is *Tractate Midot*, with its lovely woodcut of the initial word.

4. - מסכת יבמות: תלמוד בבלי: (Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Yebamoth*). Pesaro: Gershom Soncino, 1508-1510. Printed without title-page or pagination. Contemporary leather binding.

- מסכת יבמות: תלמוד בבלי: (Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Yebamoth*). Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1520.

Daniel Bomberg's printing of the entire Talmud in 1520-1523 was a magnificent achievement, but a number of tractates were printed even before that by Gershom Soncino, and these greatly influenced Bomberg's own work. On display is *Tractate Yebamoth* by each of the two printers.

5. Abraham de Balmes, *Mikneh Avram (Avram's Acquisitions)*. Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1523.

Many of the Jewish scholars who worked with Daniel Bomberg expressed their unqualified admiration of the printer. In this book, for example, a work of Hebrew grammar, our author voiced his praise of Bomberg in the rhymed introduction, referring to him as 'a man of charming attribute / long held in great repute.' De Balmes also stressed Bomberg's devotion to Hebrew despite not being Jewish, noting that 'the feet of his forefathers did not draw nigh / to Mount Sinai.'

6. Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides), משנה תורה (*Mishneh Torah*). Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1524.

One of the most influential Jewish thinkers of all time, Maimonides (1135-1204), was an intellectual giant who lived and wrote in twelfth-century Egypt. His *Mishneh Torah* was the first comprehensive code of Jewish Law, designed to teach the Oral Law since, in his words, "wise men are no longer, and understanding is lost." It was one of the first Hebrew books to be printed (Rome, ca. 1469) and remains highly popular to this day.

7. מכילתא ספרי וספרא (*Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, Sifra and Sifrei*). Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1545.

Three separate works of ancient legal midrash: the *Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael* on the Book of Exodus, *Sifra* on Leviticus, and *Sifrei* on Numbers and Deuteronomy. This is only the second printing of these seminal works, and it differs markedly from the first edition, which was printed in Constantinople, 1515. From the ornamental title-page we learn the name of the printer: Cornelius Adelkind, Bomberg's master printer; and also the name of the proof-reader: Jonathan Treves, a Talmudic scholar of great renown who authored a commentary on the Jewish prayer-book of the Roman rites.

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