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TECHNOLOGY

When people think of communications technology today, they often think of cellphones and apps, wireless internet, or online banking. Those advances are new and exciting – and many can still imagine or remember a time without them. We might not think of older tools – such as paper or oil-based ink as technologies. But they are. Developments such as the replacement of the scroll by the bound codex in the ancient world or the invention of the printing press in the West, to say nothing of the much earlier development of the alphabet and writing, played a critical role in transforming knowledge and society.

Technology involves tools that humans develop to take advantage of and manipulate nature for their own ends. Technology influences communication in large part because abstract ideas can become manifest in physical ways when they are written down or transmitted. People translate thoughts into written words or pictures that are embedded in material culture and material culture depends on the raw materials that nature provides and their reworking by humans. Those who developed cheap sources of artificial light in the form of gas or electricity certainly did not realize the role it would play in the radical increase in literacy rates in the West in the twentieth century. The ideas and texts we have access to and the ways in which we access them are dependent on and formed by the technologies available to the actors in the information economy.

People do all kinds of things with ideas and words, just as we do with other commodities. We produce, encode, record, store, copy, recall, preserve, organize, transmit, buy, sell, hide, destroy, censor, search, read, teach, decode, hear, process, rework, and summarize knowledge. Each of these actions entails using some tool or another, be it a quill and parchment or megabytes over Wi-Fi.

The medium and the message thus become intertwined. People say different things and for different purposes if they transmit words by telegraph, carrier pigeon, or text message. The material manifestation helps form the content. Perhaps the most important technology for human intellectual history is writing itself, which has allowed humans to

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communicate over vast distances and through the generations. People who never met each other or even lived in the same millennia can hear one another using the material tools of words on a surface.

Information technology has a profound influence on culture and society. Historians emphasize the role of the printing press in the Protestant Reformation and the scientific revolution. The invention of paper some 2500 years ago played a necessary (but not sufficient) role in the creation of both ancient and modern bureaucratic governments. Even such apparently simple things as consistent page numbering in printed books, which is much more difficult in manuscripts, made indexing more sophisticated, enabling access and reference to knowledge in ways previously inconceivable.

One of the surprising aspects of technology is the way in which new developments move quickly from an exciting novelty to just another part of the scenery. We quickly become accustomed to what was, even one generation earlier, impossible. Our contemporary frustration with a slow internet connection hides how much quicker and more easily we transmit words and sounds today than within even living memory. Examining textual relics from the past can remind us of the role of changing technologies in the making and transmission of meaning throughout history, often in creative and innovative ways. It also enhances our awareness of the roles that technology and materials have played in the past, and continue to play in the present, in the spread of information. We do ourselves a disservice if we think of ideas and understanding only as abstractions, ephemeral thoughts in the minds of human beings.

YOEL FINKELMAN

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Yes

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Timelines of Human History

Werner Rolevinck,
Fasciculus Temporum, 1479

STEFAN LITT

By the end of the fifteenth century, the advent of book printing was influencing Christian intellectuals in Germany and their writings. The new invention enabled authors to widely disseminate their texts for relatively moderate prices. Among those who recognized the opportunities offered by this new technology was the Carthusian monk and prolific writer Werner Rolevinck (1425-1502), who still followed traditional medieval scholasticism in his writing and spent most of his adult life in a Carthusian monastery in Cologne.

Rolevinck's most famous book was the *Fasciculus temporum*, a Latin chronicle starting from the creation of the world and following historic events until 1474. Universal histories were popular in this period and usually combined biblical history with post-biblical occurrences; in Rolevinck's case, these were predominantly Central European events.

The design of this book was revolutionary. Instead of following the usual pattern of printing plain texts in one or two columns, it structured the events in parallel timelines running throughout the volume. Alongside the biblical history and the history of the ancient Roman and German emperors, it also presents papal history and regional events, with those deemed more remarkable circled in print. Woodcut illustrations were added to provide some visual elements. This unusual layout required intensive interaction between the author and the printers. The book was one of the most popular titles among readers for more than ~~1000~~ years. By 1500, thirty-five editions had been printed, and the book had found readers in additional languages throughout Europe.

41 | 41

Werner Rolevinck, *Bundle of Dates Fasciculus temporum*, Cologne, Germany, 1479. A page from Rolevinck's historiographical work, presenting Noah's Ark and the rainbow that appeared after the end of the flood. The circle below the ark marks the beginning of the second cycle of human history, from Noah onward. All the woodcuts and timelines were colored by hand after printing. RI=X2=83 C 41, page 3.

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Exodus Before Expulsion

Passover Haggadah, c. 1480

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YOEL FINKELMAN

As printing spread throughout Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century, Jews in the Iberian Peninsula opened some of the first presses in the region. Printing was an expensive and risky endeavor, but Shlomo ben Moshe Alkabetz, a pioneering printer in Guadalajara, Spain, realized that printing could benefit not only scholars but also Jews celebrating the holidays. A Passover Haggadah, he discerned, could serve as a profitable addition to his inventory. Sometime between 1480 and 1482—just a few years before the expulsion of the Jews from Spain—he produced the first-ever printed Haggadah: a simple edition in two columns containing the traditional text with brief instructions but no commentary. The copy in the National Library is the only known extant copy.

This cutting-edge business decision launched an industry. Over 8000 different editions of the traditional Haggadah have been published over the centuries—more than any other text in the history of Judaism. Some of this popularity stems from the fact that families would read the Passover liturgy in their own homes and use the text to spur a discussion of the lessons of the holiday. Each generation has endeavored to translate the text into its vernacular and make the story of the Exodus relevant to contemporary concerns, prompting editions in multiple languages with a range of commentaries and illustrations. The holiday's focus on educating children has also stimulated publishers and authors to mediate the ancient text for young people and thus encourage discussion around the Passover table. Today, the National Library holds the world's largest collection of Passover Haggadot.

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1480 in heading

Passover Haggadah, Guadalajara, printed by Shlomo ben Moshe Alkabetz, c. 1482. A summary of the laws and customs of the Seder appears prior to the evening's liturgy on the first page of Alkabetz's Haggadah, page 1. Donated by Saliman Schocken. RI Schocken 68.

Early Hebrew Printing in Africa and the Ottoman Empire

Arba'ah Turim and Abudraham in Constantinople and Fez, 1493-1516

ALEXANDER GORDIN

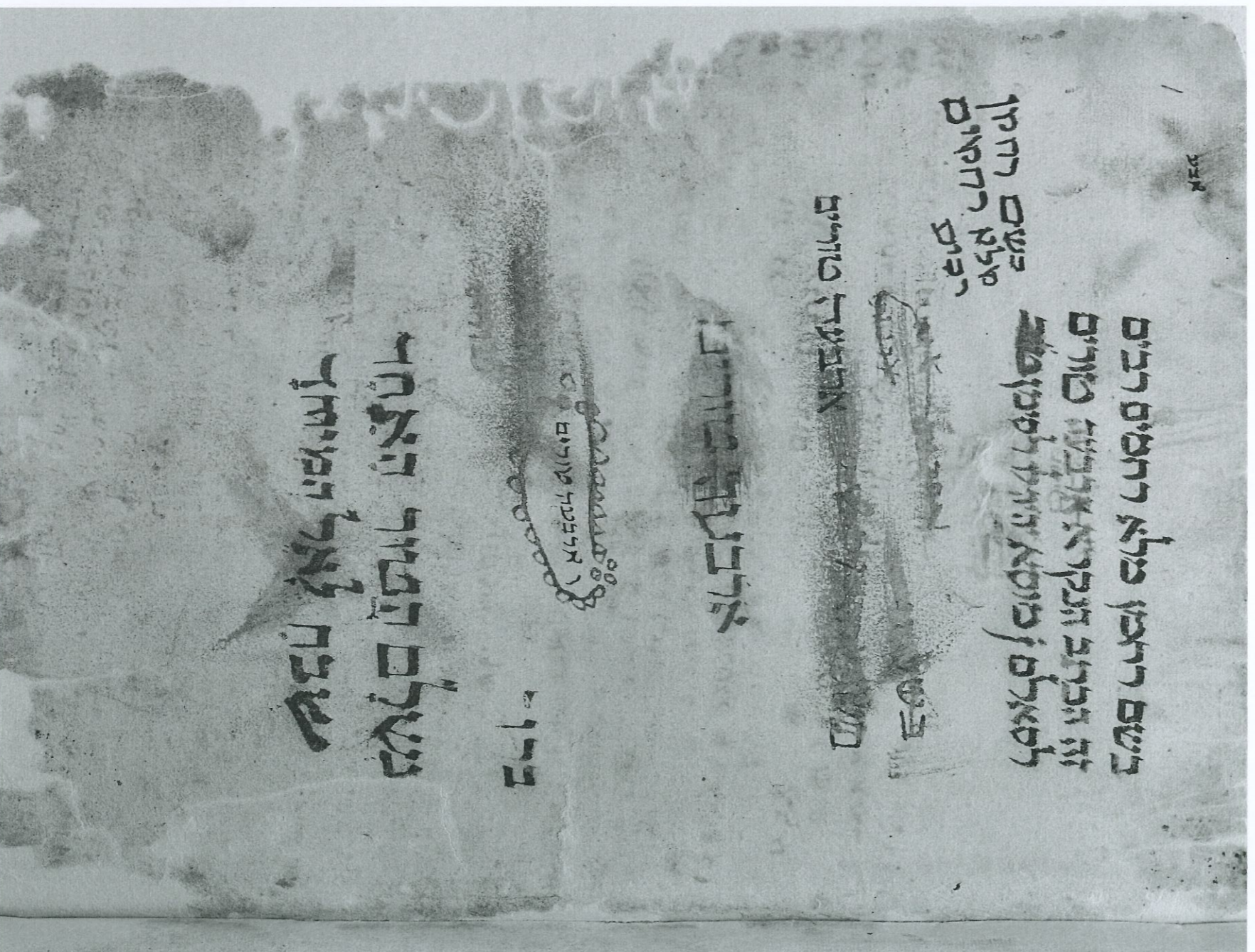
spacing of kay, see below

Jews pioneered print in the Ottoman Empire and Africa. The first printed books outside of Europe using Gutenberg's technology were in Hebrew, and two of the earliest prints were copies of the vastly popular and influential Jewish legal code, *The Four Columns* (Arba'ah Turim), by Rabbi Jacob ben Asher (d. 1269-c. 1343).

Print using movable type spread rapidly in Europe, but the Islamic world preferred to rely on the vast output of manuscripts from guilds of scribes for most textual needs. Whether due to the economic influence of these guilds, the technical difficulties of using movable type with the complex Arabic script, love and respect for the handwritten word, or limitations imposed by the authorities, a significant output of mechanically printed books in Arabic would not arrive until the nineteenth century.

However, when Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and when many left Portugal after the forced conversion of 1497, they took with them both an enthusiasm for print and technological know-how. In 1493, Spanish exiles David and Samuel Ibn Nahmias

word spacing?



יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

בְּהַלְבֵּת כִּתְבֵי מִצְרַיִם וְהַעֲבִירָם אֶלְכֶם וְנִסְתַּחֲבַת וְלֹאֲכֹלֶת עֹרֹתַם
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וְנִתְחַבְּבֵךְ

וְנִתְחַבְּבֵךְ וְנִתְחַבְּבֵךְ וְנִתְחַבְּבֵךְ וְנִתְחַבְּבֵךְ וְנִתְחַבְּבֵךְ וְנִתְחַבְּבֵךְ

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וְנִתְחַבְּבֵךְ

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וְשֵׁלֶם הַמִּטְוָה הַזֹּאת שֶׁנִּתְחַבְּבֵךְ לְאֵל הַמִּטְוָה

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וְשֵׁלֶם הַמִּטְוָה

וְשֵׁלֶם

וְשֵׁלֶם

printed this edition of Arba'ah Turim in Constantinople, newly named Istanbul, making it the first book printed in any language in the Ottoman Empire. In 1516, Jewish printers in Fez produced a one-volume edition (Yoreh De'ah) of the longer Arba'ah Turim.  likely the first book printed in Africa using European technology. In the same year, Samuel ben Isaac Nedivot and his son Isaac, having learned the trade in Lisbon, printed this Sefer Abudraham, a medieval commentary on the prayer book. Thus, after fleeing from the Iberian Peninsula, Jews not only preserved their religious convictions but also spread ideas, knowledge, and technology, as manifested in the three early books here.

Jacob ben Asher, *Four Columns* (Arba'at Turim) Constantinople, 1493. The final page of the first of the four sections, "Orah hayim" includes not only historical owners' signatures but also evidence left by those who practiced their handwriting by copying from the text: 52 A 1666.

A Christian Pioneer of Jewish Printing

The Bomberg Editions of the Talmud and Rabbinic Bible, 16th century

YOEL FINKELMAN

While writing helps the fragile human memory, how can we find what we are looking for in a vast array of written texts? Today, digital tools help solve the problem, but throughout history/innovators developed solutions based on available technologies. Daniel Bomberg (d. 1483–1549), arguably the greatest printer in Jewish history, earned his reputation and inspired a great many imitators by answering this question so effectively.

In 1516, Bomberg, a Christian with a deep interest in Jewish knowledge, opened his printing house after gathering the necessary state privileges and a staff of Jews and Jewish converts to Christianity. He became the first non-Jewish printer of Jewish books and the first Hebrew printer in Venice.

His Rabbinic Bibles (1516–1517 and 1525) are the first Jewish printed bibles to include numbered chapters and verses – an innovation so taken for granted today that we can hardly imagine the Bible without them. He adopted the system of numbered chapters and verses, which had originated among Catholics in the thirteenth century, because it facilitated finding texts and cross-referencing the Bible. The precise version of the text in Bomberg's Second Rabbinic Bible became the standard Hebrew text of the Bible until the nineteenth century.

However, Bomberg's greatest printing feat and most influential innovation was the addition of page (more precisely, folio) numbers to his edition of the Babylonian Talmud, which was the first to contain the Talmud printed in its entirety from beginning to end. After this edition was completed in 1523, it became standard to reference a specific passage by identifying its page number in Bomberg's edition. Thereafter, virtually every printed version of the Talmud had each and every page laid out in the same way as Bomberg's.



Rabbinic Bible with Targum Onkelos, Masoretic notes, and the commentary of Rashi and Ibn Ezra, Venice, printed in the workshop of Daniel Bomberg, 1525–1526. **Left:** The opening page of the book of Isaiah, with the initial word surrounded by a floral woodcut. **Right:** Chapter 41 of Isaiah. 2+ 35 V 3092.

Just 1525 in 1484

Opposite / Above

כא פסוקים

והוא שאלה מן המוסר ומה שאלה מן המוסר ומה שאלה מן המוסר... ומה שאלה מן המוסר ומה שאלה מן המוסר...

הדרן עלך אור לארבעה

כל

והוא שאלה מן המוסר ומה שאלה מן המוסר ומה שאלה מן המוסר... ומה שאלה מן המוסר ומה שאלה מן המוסר...

כב פסוקים

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הדרן עלך אור לארבעה

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והוא שאלה מן המוסר ומה שאלה מן המוסר ומה שאלה מן המוסר... ומה שאלה מן המוסר ומה שאלה מן המוסר...

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A Messiah in Real Time

A Portrait of the Long-Awaited New Jewish King, Sabbatai Zevi, 1666

AVRIEL BAR-LEVAV

In 1648, when Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676) first claimed to be the Jewish messiah, he was largely dismissed and disregarded. This changed in 1665 when he met Nathan of Gaza, who claimed to have foreseen his arrival and encouraged Sabbatai Zevi to accept the role of the Messiah. Nathan sent letters heralding the messianic age to Jewish communities all over the world, engendering an international movement of believers in Sabbatai Zevi. Testimonies from that period speak to the dramatic religious fervor that swept across Europe in response to the messianic hope.

Sabbatai Zevi's messianism evoked enthusiasm among Jews and interest among Muslims and Christians. In seventeenth-century Europe, world news was sometimes printed on broadsheets that were hung in public places around the city as a kind of proto-newspaper. Those who were not fully literate could look at the illustrations and try to make out the headlines in the margins. Broadsheets were useful in spreading information, and, as such, they were portents of some of the major transformations of the modern age as well as testimonies of older existing sentiments.

This broadsheet features the portraits of Sabbatai Zevi and Nathan of Gaza, likely drawn from imagination, and a text about them in Dutch. It was printed in Amsterdam in 1666, presumably by a Dutch Christian printer, and demonstrates the interest of Dutch Christian readers in developments on the Jewish street.

Just a few months later, in 1666, Sabbatai Zevi converted to Islam due to pressure from the Ottoman sultanate. This shocking act weakened the messianic fervor, since a true Jewish messiah would never have converted to Islam. However, the ripple effects of Sabbatai Zevi's transnational messianic movement would be felt in Jewish thought, culture, and politics for the next few centuries.

Wall poster regarding "Sabetha Sebi" Amsterdam, 1666. In the top left appears an image of Sabbatai Zevi, "the new Jewish king." On the right is an image of "the Jewish prophet," Nathan of Gaza. Formerly from the Valmadonna Trust Library. V 2470 08.

رقم محرم شود و برای معرفت مدخل بهر ماه که خواهد آمد جدولی دیگر آوردم که چون
آن ماه را در طول جدول طلب کنند و مدخل سال را در بالای جدول درستی
بهرد و مدخل ماه بود و جدول دیگر اینست

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3	1	7	1	5	9	3	7	1	5	9	3
2	0	6	0	4	8	2	6	0	4	8	2
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8	6	2	6	0	4	8	2	6	0	4	8
7	5	1	5	9	3	7	1	5	9	3	7
6	4	0	4	8	2	6	0	4	8	2	6
5	3	9	3	7	1	5	9	3	7	1	5
4	2	8	2	6	0	4	8	2	6	0	4
3	1	7	1	5	9	3	7	1	5	9	3
2	0	6	0	4	8	2	6	0	4	8	2
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محرم جمع کنند رقم روز ماه معلوم شود و اسد
باب دوم در معرفت تاریخ مدخل

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9	8	5	7	-	1	0	2	4	6

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The Imperial Astronomer

Ulugh Beg, Astronomical Tables, 1676

SAMUEL THROPE

Prince Muhammad Taraghay ibn Shahrukh (1394–1449), better known by his title Ulugh Beg, was bored by politics. Raised in the court of his grandfather Tamerlane, the famous conqueror who established the Timurid Empire in today's Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia, Ulugh Beg was born to rule. But after being appointed governor and then reigning ineffectually as the Timurid Sultan for a scant two years, Ulugh Beg was murdered by his own son in 1449.

What excited Ulugh Beg was mathematics. In 1417, when he was only twenty-three, the young prince founded a madrasa (religious college) in the city of Samargand, already a cultural and intellectual center. At this madrasa, in contrast to others, mathematics and astronomy were emphasized as much as the study of the Qur'an, the law, and the traditions of the Prophet. The madrasa and Ulugh Beg's patronage attracted scientists from far and wide, notably Qadi Zada al-Rumi from Bursa in today's Turkey and Jamshid al-Kashi from Kashan, Iran. Ulugh Beg not only took an active part in these scholars' seminars but in 1420, he also founded and directed an innovative astronomical observatory, the remains of which can still be seen today.

The fruit of these scholars' observations can be found in the manuscript pictured here. Known as the *Zij-i Jadid-i Sultani*, or *Zij-i Ulegh Beg*, it contains a comprehensive set of astronomical tables designed to help astronomers measure time and compute the positions of the stars and planets and to assist in the conversion of dates between the multiple calendars — Islamic, Persian, Seleucid, and others — in use at the time. While many other similar astronomical tables were written, Ulugh Beg's is the most accurate and extensive and continued to be consulted until the nineteenth century.

A mathematical table enabling the conversion of dates among the Islamic, Persian, Seleucid, and other calendars. Ulugh Beg, *Astronomical Tables (Zij-i Jadid-i Ulugh Beg)*, Samargand, 1676. Donated by Yohanan ben David.

Ms. Ar. 14, folio 6v.

title diff. in hand.

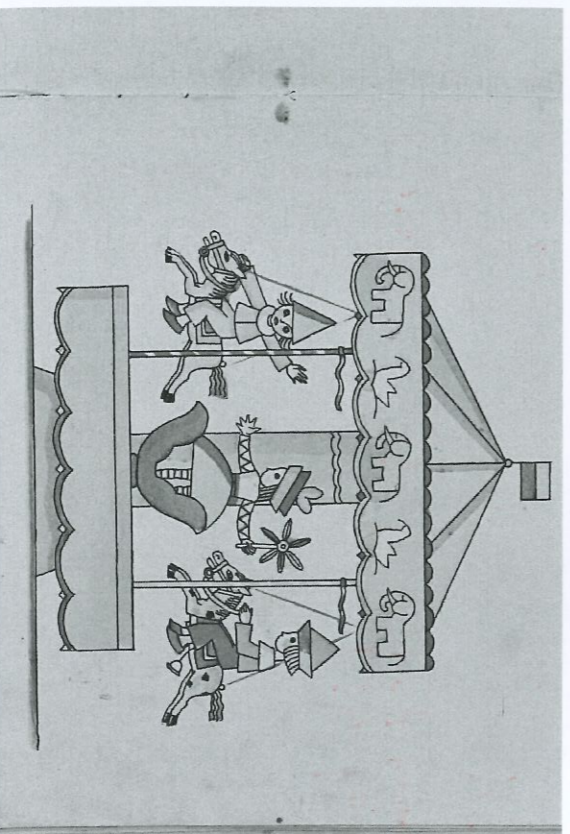
Sublime Art for Children

Tom Freud and H. N. Bialik, *Yotek*
Book of Things, 1923

DORIT GANI

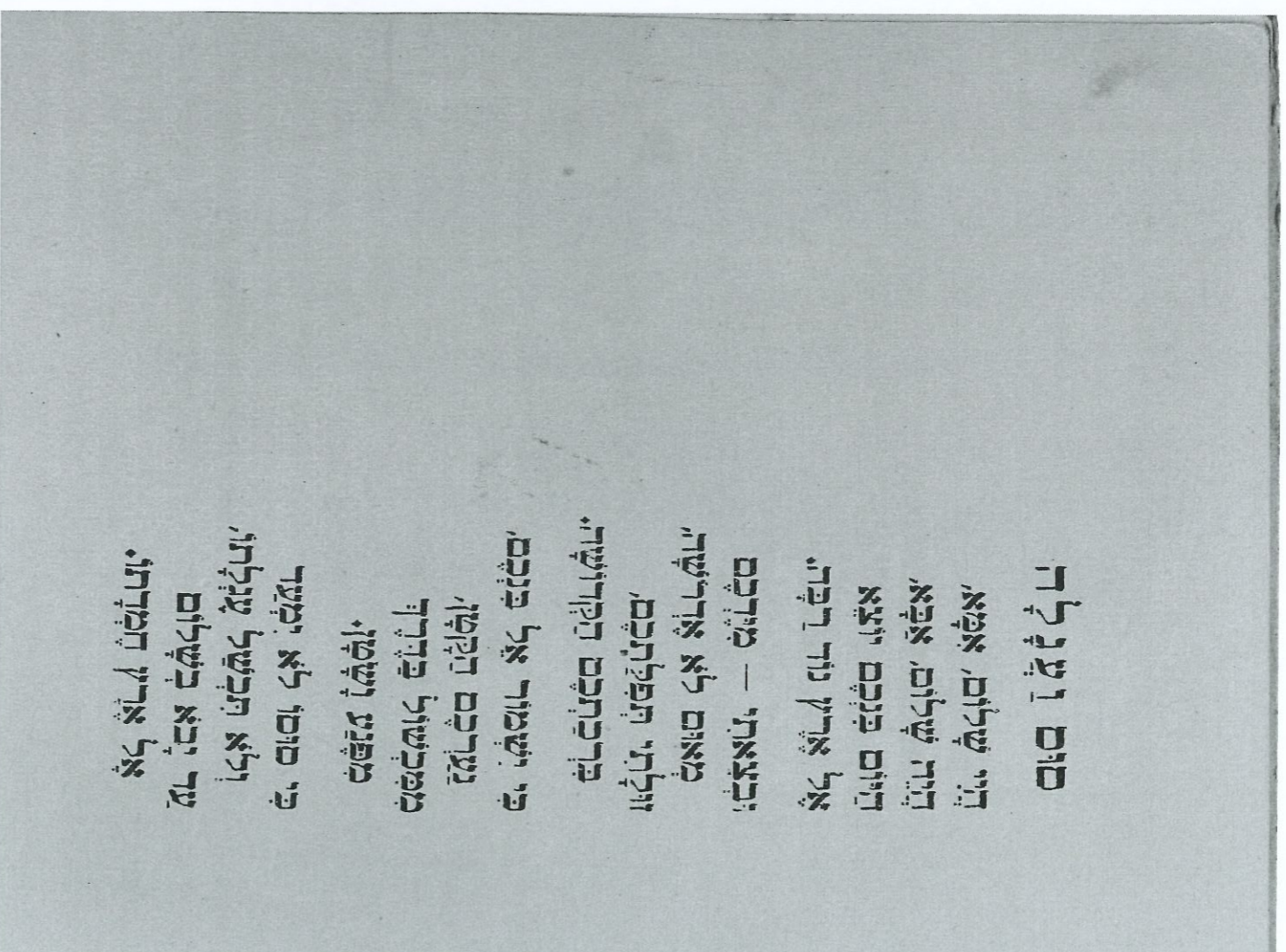
In 1921, the poet Haim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934) left Odessa and resettled in Berlin, where he hoped to resume his activities as a Hebrew publisher in the wake of the blows inflicted on the center of Hebrew culture in Russia. The following year, he met the illustrator Tom Seidmann-Freud (1892-1930) and her husband, Yaakov Seidmann, who had founded a German publishing house in which they published children's books written and illustrated by Seidmann-Freud. In light of the beautifully wrought illustrations and the high quality of the printing, Bialik decided to partner with them to establish a Hebrew publishing house for children. The new publishing house was called Ophir and was based on the revolutionary principle that, in Bialik's words, "the illustrations are primary, and the text is secondary."

Book of Things, Bialik's first book of poems for children, was the first title published by the Ophir publishing house in 1922. It included sixteen of Seidmann-Freud's illustrations, each facing a short poem describing the image in Hebrew rhyme. Bialik's poetic genius was matched by Seidmann-Freud's talents as an illustrator. Her work for children is considered



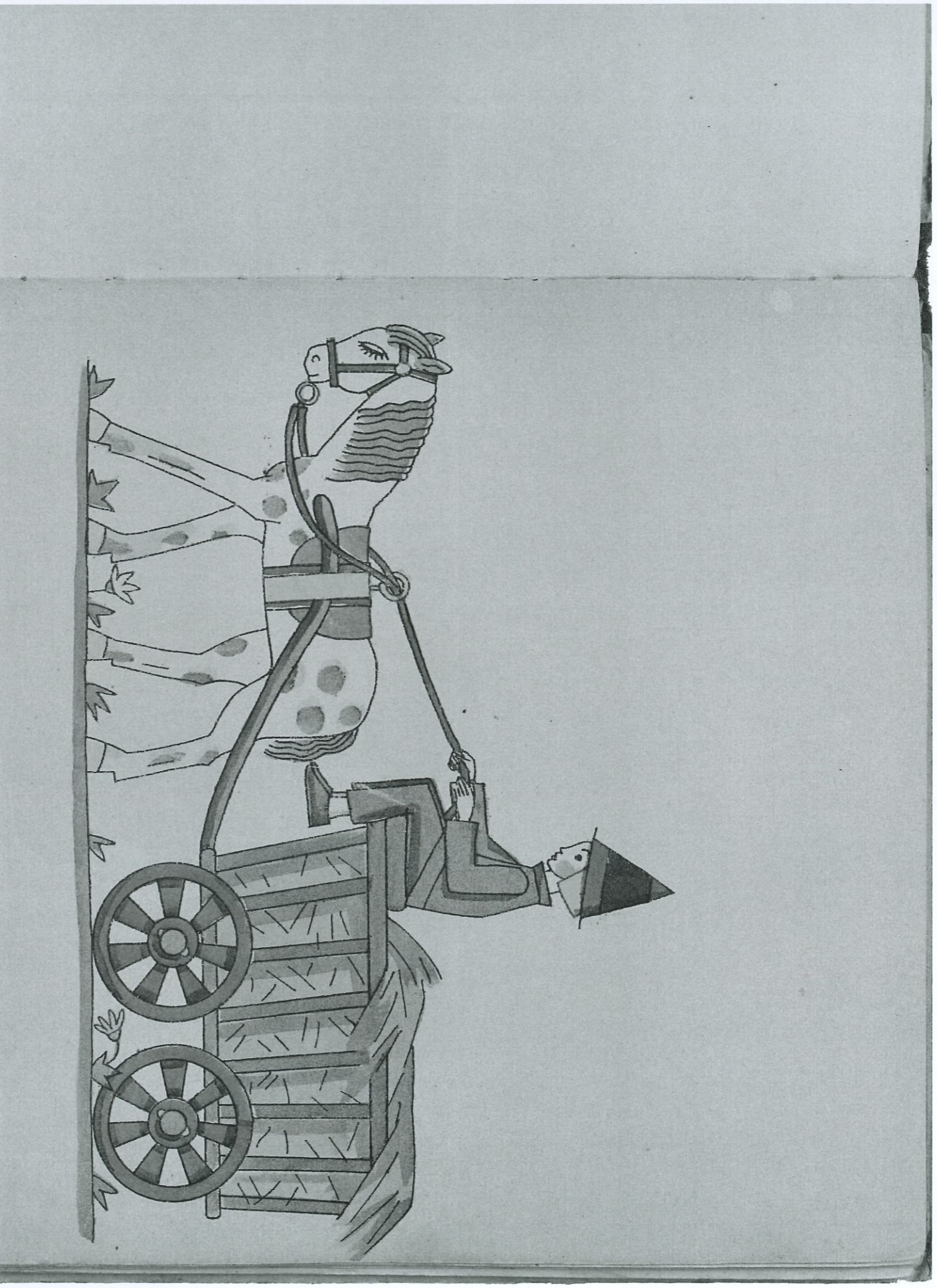
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TECHNOLOGY



one of the pinnacles of twentieth-century German art, and *Book of Things* rivaled the finest European children's literature of its day.

About two years after the publication of *Book of Things*, the Ophir partnership was disbanded. Bialik immigrated to the Land of Israel and continued his work there. However, inadequate printing technologies and a mistrust of the artistic perfectionism that characterized the Ophir publishing house prevented him from establishing a high-quality children's press there. *Book of Things*, along with a number of additional books published by Ophir, attests to a magnificent pioneering experiment in the history of Hebrew picture books.



41/41

Above/ Opposite

For: "Horse and Cart" (Sus ve-tgalah)

Left: "Carousel" (Seharhoret)

41?

Opposite 1st, then Above - left to right

7

Haim Nahman Bialik's and Tom Freud's ~~7th~~ Book of Things (Sefer ha-devarim) Ophir Publishers, Jerusalem and Berlin, 1922. The book features Hebrew rhymes for children written by Bialik alongside illustrations by Freud. 8° 31 V 1211.

✓

The Lost Works of a Legendary Cantor

Yossele Rosenblatt in the Menachem (Emil)

Gross Archive, 1913-1933

GILA FLAM AND AMALIA KEDEM



Yosef (Yossele) Rosenblatt (1882-1933) was a leading performer and composer in the twentieth-century golden age of cantorial music. Born in Ukraine, he began his career singing with his father at the age of eighteen and served as a cantor (hazan) first in Europe and then in New York. His great and continued popularity owes mainly to his pioneering recordings, released commercially on 78 rpm records as early as 1905. His tenor voice, both rich and sweet, and virtuosity reached the homes of Jewish and non-Jewish audiences through these records and later via broadcasts on the emerging radio stations in Europe and America.

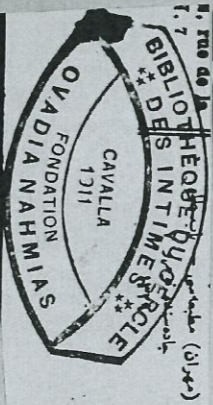
Rosenblatt composed many cantorial pieces but did not leave behind a coherent archive. He died in 1933 in a tragic accident at the Dead Sea while shooting a film about the Holy Land. Some of Rosenblatt's musical manuscripts were found in the archive of cantor Menachem (Emil) Gross. Gross had been studying at the Pressburg Yeshiva when Rosenblatt served there as a cantor and then, in 1907, succeeded Rosenblatt as cantor in Hamburg. In 1939, after serving also in Frankfurt, Gross immigrated to Palestine and became a cantor in Petah Tikva. His *Pinkas Hazzan* several volumes of musical pieces, original and copied, for performance throughout the yearly cycle was passed down to his grandson, who donated them to the National Library in 2015. The manuscripts include at least three (and possibly more) original pieces given to Gross by his friend and mentor, Yossele Rosenblatt, thus explaining how they unwittingly made their way to Jerusalem.



Greece



15



16



17



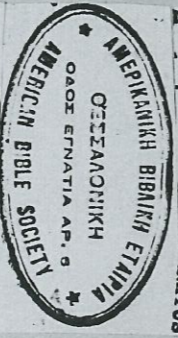
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Salomon
Salonia 14 de Julio 1938

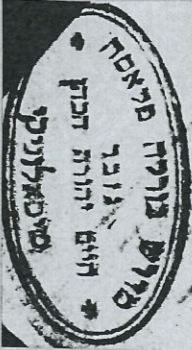
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ΤΗΝΗΝ ΕΦΗΒΩΝ
Σπυρίδης

27

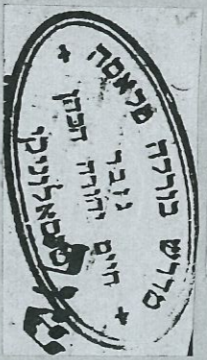


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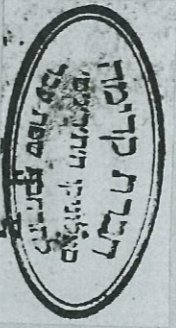
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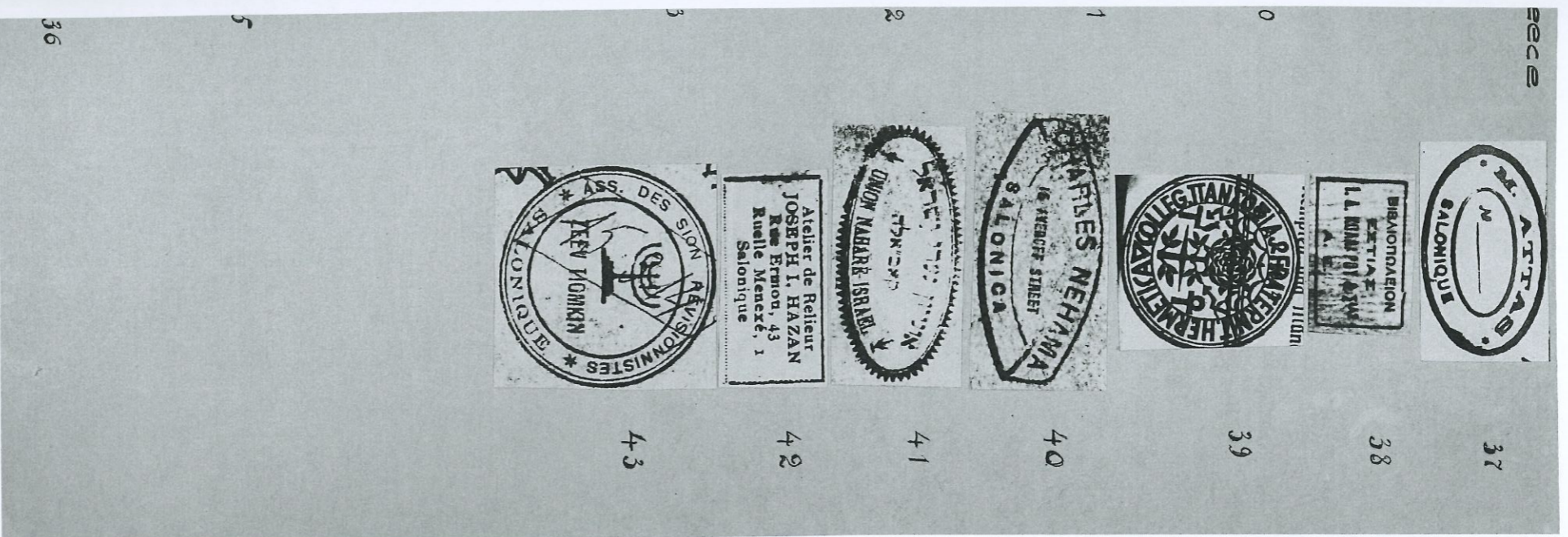


3



CHARLES NEHAMA
DIRECTEUR DE L'INTERASSIR
186 RUE AVENOP
SALONIQUE (Grèce)

Offenbach Archival Depot Library markings, Germany, 1946. This two-page spread includes book stamps from volumes originally owned by Greek Jews that were looted by the Nazis. Volume 1, V 9501.


V




The Banality of Restitution

Offenbach Archival Depot  
 Library Markings, 1946

DANIEL LIPSON

The Nazis stole millions of books from Jewish libraries and private collections across Europe to be used for research by German academic and security institutions. After World War II, the U.S. Army took control of a five-story warehouse in Offenbach, not far from Frankfurt, where they gathered approximately two million of these looted books. 

Isaac Bencowitz (1896–1972) was an officer tasked with returning these books to their former owners. He had over 150 workers at his disposal, but most of them could not read Hebrew, Yiddish, or any other European languages and thus had difficulty understanding the books' stamps, labels, and bookplates. He therefore devised a simple yet brilliant plan. All markings in the books were photographed and cataloged according to country. The catalog was printed and supplied to the book sorters, each of whom learned to recognize the shape and size of the various markings. Thus, even without being able to read them, the sorters were able to organize the books by country of origin and, later, by individual library.

The catalog contains 405 different book stamps from twenty-six countries, creating an index and map of Jewish libraries, collections, and scholars around Europe prior to the Holocaust. With its help, most of the books were restored to their original owners or their heirs. Later, an organization called Jewish Cultural Restitution distributed the books that could not be returned to Jewish institutions around the world, including to the National Library. 

Bencowitz donated his two-volume book catalog to the National Library, where it is preserved together with the books it helped to identify.

Deconstructing the Zohar

Gershom Scholem's Card File of
Zoharic Aramaic, 20th century

ZVI LESHEM

^{5 Ms-1}
Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), the father of modern Kabbalah research, was one of the first to make academic sense of the *Zohar*, the most important work of Kabbalistic lore. Scholem was particularly interested in the peculiar Aramaic of the *Zohar*, which was, in his opinion, actually composed in late thirteenth-century Spain ⁵—a historical and geographic context far removed from its ostensible setting of the ancient Land of Israel.

^{5/1}
Scholem argued that penetrating its eclectic lexicon was key to understanding the *Zohar*. He began taking notes on each word of conceptual significance in the *Zohar*, perhaps anticipating a future dictionary of Zoharic language. He believed that the meaning or meanings of words in the corpus could only be determined by comparing them to other uses and the interpretations of commentators. In the absence of a computer, which would have made this massive undertaking much easier, he wrote on approximately ⁵7000 white index cards, which he stored in a long, narrow drawer in his huge desk.

Each card deals with a different word from the *Zohar* and includes citations of its various senses with references to the *Zohar*, other Kabbalistic texts, and discussions of these words in the works of both early and modern *Zohar* commentators. His notes discuss the meaning of the word and its connotations, along with other usages and explanations that elucidate the origin of the word and its etymological development from the Bible, Rabbinic literature, or medieval texts.

Today, these cards have been digitized and are accessible on the National Library's website. The index allows us an intimate peek into the laboratory of the great Kabbalah scholar at work and is still used by scholars when seeking to interpret terms in the Kabbalistic lexicon.

