

# Rosaline and Myer Feinstein Lecture Series, 2000

## The Hebrew Book in the New World: From Bibliography To History By Abraham Karp

### The Hebrew Language Comes to the New World

The Hebrew language arrived in the New World with the galleons of Columbus in 1492. Luis De Torres, the expedition's interpreter, was chosen for his knowledge of "oriental tongues"—Hebrew among them. Born a Jew and but recently converted to Christianity, he chose to remain in the New World, settling in Cuba, where, in the words of Cecil Roth, "he soon set up his own small empire."<sup>[1]</sup> If Torres's reason for not returning to the Iberian Peninsula was a Marrano's fear of the Inquisition, which ruled then in all its fury, the Hebrew language not only arrived, but was, from time to time, heard in the New World. That the Holy Tongue arrived in the person of De Torres, and remained there with him, is a pure romantic conjecture. That Hebrew came here on the Mayflower in 1620 can be documented. Shalom Goldman, in his *Introduction to Hebrew and the Bible in America*, writes:

On the Mayflower there were two Hebraists of competence, William Bradford and William Brewster. Bradford, author of colonial America's first narrative history, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, was governor of the colony (for three decades). Brewster, who was both teacher and preacher at Plymouth, was regarded by many as leader of the Pilgrims. Both men, busy as they were ... set time aside each day for the study of the Bible in the sacred tongue.<sup>[2]</sup>

In Bradford's "Hebrew Exercises," there are over one thousand Hebrew words and a lovely paean of praise of the Hebrew language:

Though, I am growne aged, yet I have had a longing desire to see with my own eyes, something of that most ancient language, the holy tongue, in which the law and oracles of God were writ; and in which God and angels spake to the holy patriarchs of old time; ... My aime and desire is, to see how the words and phrases lye in the holy texte ... for my owne contente.<sup>[3]</sup>

Having gotten the ancient holy tongue to the newly discovered continents, we turn to the Hebrew Book in this New World—to the first Hebrew book, by examining the three most worthy contenders. The First Hebrew Book in the New World The first "Hebrew book" written in the New World is still awaiting publication. The holograph manuscript, inscribed by the author, Haham Isaac Aboab Da Fonseca, is in the Etz Hayim Library in Amsterdam. A portion was published by M. Kayserling as "Isaac Aboab, The First Jewish Author in America."<sup>[4]</sup> Its lengthy titles describes its contents:

I have composed a memorial to the miracles of God and to the great kindness which He, in His compassion and great mercy showed to the House of Israel in Brazil, when there came upon them the hosts of Portugal, a base and haughty nation, to destroy and exterminate all who call

themselves Israelites, children and women, all in one day, in the year 5406 (1646).

Born to a Marrano family in Portugal in 1605, the Aboab family escaped to Amsterdam where their precocious son, at age 21, was appointed Haham of Congregation Beth Israel. With the consolidation of the Amsterdam Sephardi congregations in 1639, he became one of the four communal rabbis. Two years later he left for Recife, Brazil, where for the next thirteen years he served this pioneer New World Jewish community as its Haham. The Dutch welcomed all, including Jews, to its new world colonies, extending to them unprecedented rights and protection, so that by 1645, the Jewish community grew to some 1,500 souls (a number not matched by the North American community for a century and a half). But the war waged upon Dutch Brazil began to diminish the community. In 1646, the victory of the Portuguese forces seemed certain—when the arrival of a Dutch armada averted defeat. In gratitude the Haham composed a poem describing the “miracle,” as well as prayers of gratitude to God. With the later defeat of the Dutch, in 1654, Aboab and most of his flock returned to Amsterdam, where for the next four decades he served as Haham of a great and growing Jewish community.

Despite the distinction of its author and its important Americana content, this first Hebrew book of the New World seems certain not to enter the bibliographies of Americana Judaica or Judaica Americana. We are notoriously U.S.A. centered. Our interest and our definition of Americana seldom goes beyond the borders of what is now the United States of America. A.S.W. Rosenbach’s American Jewish Bibliography limits itself to “Books and pamphlets by Jews or relating to them, printed in the United States from the establishment of the press in the Colonies until 1805.”<sup>[5]</sup> The three addenda to Rosenbach, those of Jacob Marcus, <sup>[6]</sup> Edwin Wolf II,<sup>[7]</sup> and Nathan Kaganoff,<sup>[8]</sup> add to and broaden the list, but retain the parameters of space and time: the U.S.A. and 1850. Robert Singerman’s splendid two-volume *Judaica Americana*<sup>[9]</sup>—a must for every student of American cultural history and bibliography and American Jewish history—expands time to 1900, but retains the parameter of place.

Aboab’s little volume has a much better chance of notice and listing in general Hebrew bibliography. Indeed, the Father of Modern Hebrew bibliography, Isaac Benjacob, lists it in his *Otsar Ha-Sefarim* <sup>[10]</sup> as *Zecher Rav*, and adds to its contents a Hebrew grammar which Aboab composed, *Melekheth ha-Dikduk*. It does not, however, appear in Chaim B. Friedberg’s comprehensive bibliography *Bet Eked Sepharim*,<sup>[11]</sup> nor in Yeshayahu Vinograd’s *Otsar Ha-Sefer Ha-Ivri (Thesaurus of the Hebrew Book)*, Jerusalem, 1995. Its fatal flaw: it was written but, alas, it was not published.

It would, of course, be an all but impossible task to list all written but yet unpublished works. But in this age of technological miracles, is the day far off when library listings would incorporate all written library manuscript holdings and published works in one comprehensive bibliography (as is already being done)?

### **A Hebrew Grammar: Mexico/France**

Seventy-five years ago, in 1926, in celebration of his eightieth birthday, the justly renowned rare-book-dealer/bibliographer Ephraim Deinard, a long-time resident in the United States, issued his (*Kohelet America*)<sup>[12]</sup> which he describes as a “Catalogue of Hebrew books printed in

America from 1735-1925.” Truth to tell, it is a tract to “pay off old debts” as it is a serious annotated bibliography. But, it must be added, it is still the most useful work of its kind, never having been superseded by a better one. Number 165 of 989 books listed is *A Grammar of the Hebrew Language* by Judah Monis, Cambridge, Massachusetts (in North America, a suburb of Boston), 94 pages, 2 pages of Title and Introduction, Boston 1735, 4°—“This book,” Deinard proclaims, “is the first book printed in Hebrew letters in the land of Columbus.” The same year, 1926, in his report on recent acquisitions by the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Dr. Alexander Marx, its librarian, announces:

Mr. Felix Warburg presented the first Hebrew grammar by an American. The book is so rare that the author’s name, Martin del Castillo, is given in Kayserling’s bibliography as Martyr del Castillo with a remark that it is the pseudonym of a Spanish Jew. Neither he nor Steinschneider give the title of this book correctly. It is *Arte Hebraispano, Dikduk leschon hakkodesch bilshan sipharadith. Grammatica de la Lengua santa en idioma Castellano: Por el R. P. F. Martin del Castillo, natural de Burgos: del Orden N. P. S. Francisco, Lector Jubilado en Santa Theología; y Provinciál que a fido, en la Provincia de S. Evangélio de México ... En Leon [i.e., Lyons] de Francia. A Costa de Florian Anisson, Mercador de Libros en Madrid, 1676, 12.*

Dr. Marx continues:

The author, a native of Burgos, probably a Marrano, had studied Hebrew under an old convert, Rabbi Moyses alias Francisco del Hoyo, an influential man of the royal court at Madrid, who had taught him the proper pronunciation. The book curiously starts with errata which the author asks [be] excused in consideration of the distance between his residence, Mexico, and the French printing place Lyons.[\[13\]](#)

How will this volume fare bibliographically? It is a book, a published book, composed in the New, printed in the Old—will it be listed as a book of the New? What should determine its provenance, the place of creation or of publication? Further, is it a Hebrew book? The subject is the Hebrew language, it contains Hebrew words, sentences and paragraphs, but is it really a Hebrew book? Its orientation is from left to right and its language of discourse is Spanish, not Hebrew. What should a bibliographer of the Hebrew book do? *A Prayerbook for Curaçao (Seder Tefilot Li-Shealat Matar)*[\[14\]](#) is certainly a Hebrew book by every criterion—language, orientation, content and authorship. It describes itself as a prayerbook containing: “... the repetition of the Amidah, twenty benedictions and the order of shofar blasts for the fast day imposed upon the community for supplication for rain.” Its provenance is the New World, composed by Samuel Mendes Sola, Haham of Congregation Mikveh Israel on the Isle of Curaçao (1749-1761), edited with addenda by his successor, Jacob Lopes Fonseca (who served till 1815), and published under the auspices of the Mahamad (Board) of the congregation. Its title page also informs us that it was given for publication in 1772, and published a year later. It took the better part of a year for the two emissaries appointed by the congregation to sail to Holland and arrange for its publication, for the fifty-seven pages of text to be copy edited, for the compositors to set the type and the printing house to print it.

This small volume is all the more a New World product because its composition and publication had been motivated by the weather in this portion of the New World. Curaçao’s periods of

drought drove the hahamim to compose and the congregation to sponsor a book of prayers supplicating for rain. It may have the right to the claim of first in the New World—but its publisher, editors and printers were of the Old—and it includes, amid a full description of its composition and publication, the approbation of Amsterdam’s haham and the comments of its Old World copy editors. But should we not argue that literary creativity should outweigh technological accomplishment—that a compendium of prayers imposed by New World climatic conditions, composed in and for use in the New World be just that: a Hebrew book of the New World—indeed the first of the very many which would follow?

Which indeed was the first Hebrew book in/of the New World? The First Hebrew Book Printed in America’s United States? A. S. W. Rosenbach lists *The Whole Booke of Psalms Faithfully Translated into English Metre* (Cambridge), 1640, as the first. It was the first book published by the colonial press. It contains three Hebrew words in its Preface: , and the whole Hebrew alphabet in the octuplet alphabetical acrostic, Psalm 119. Ephraim Deinard’s *Kohelet America*, published in the same year as the Rosenbach volume, 1926, limiting itself to Hebrewbooks, extends its terminus to 1925 and claims primacy for Judah Monis’s *Dikdook Leshon Gnebreet*, Boston, 1735, which the author describes as: “An Essay to bring the Hebrew Grammar into English, to Facilitate the Instruction of all those who are desirous of acquiring a clear Idea of this Primitive Tongue, by their own studies . . . Published more especially for the use of the STUDENTS of HARVARD-COLLEGE.” Born in the Barbary States or in Italy in 1683, educated in Leghorn and Amsterdam, Monis migrated to the New World, where he served as a minor synagogal functionary in Jamaica and New York. In 1720, we find him in Boston petitioning the Harvard authorities for an appointment to teach Hebrew at the college, and for aid in publishing his textbook. When informed that the price of an instructorship was conversion to Christianity, he was pleased to comply, and on his conversion in 1722 published three pamphlets in support of and in service of his new faith: *The Truth, The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth*, asserting that he embraced Christianity as “the only religion wherein I thought I could be saved, and not because I had self ends.”<sup>[15]</sup> His appointment secured, he prepared this Hebrew grammar for the instruction of his students, in 1726. All Harvard men, beyond the freshman year, had to attend his classes four days a week. By 1735 he had so well succeeded as a teacher that the college joined him in publishing his *Grammar* in an edition of 1,000. A good number of copies have survived—almost all bearing evidence of the students’ struggles with the roots, tenses and punctuation of the Holy Tongue. Deinard’s description of the Monis *Grammar* knows no bounds of eulogistic acclaim:

This book is the first to be published in Hebrew letters in the Land of Columbus. An earlier one is not known to this day. The book is exceedingly rare, unknown even to bibliographers.

Deinard’s description is more that of an eager purveyor of rare books than a serious bibliographer. The book was not printed in Hebrew. It does have some Hebrew words, sentences and paragraphs, but it is written in English and its pagination is from left to right.

### **Holy Books in the Holy Land**

It wasn’t until four score years later that “the more distinct Acquaintance with sacred oracles of the Old Testament, according to the original,” which Monis held forth to serious students of his

grammar, became available to the American public through an American publication. In 1814, *Biblia Hebraica ... editio prima Americana, sine punctis Masorethicis*,<sup>[16]</sup> was published in Philadelphia in two volumes. The title page indicates that it was a reprinting of the second edition of the Athias Amsterdam Hebrew Bible, edited by Johannes Leusden with Latin notes by Van der Hought, and that it is printed without vowel marks. In some of the first copies off the press, an inserted page provides the history of its publication:

In the year 1812, Mr. Horwitz had proposed the publication of an edition of the Hebrew Bible, being the first proposal of the kind ever offered in the United States. The undertaking was strongly recommended by many clergymen ... and a considerable number of subscriptions were obtained by him. Early in 1813, Mr. Horwitz transferred his right to the edition with his list of subscribers to Thomas Dobson, the present publisher.<sup>[17]</sup>

Mr. Horwitz's was not in fact the first proposal. In 1810, Mills Day of New Haven issued a proposal "For publishing by subscription an edition of the Hebrew Bible." The Prospectus argues:

Biblical criticism, which, during the infancy of our country, has been left, almost exclusively, to the men of learning in Europe, is beginning to assume a new aspect in the United States ... At a time when an important controversy is commencing in the United States ... an American edition of the Hebrew Bible seems peculiarly seasonable.

American pride and Christian need are wed to promote the need for an American-produced Hebrew Bible. Attached to the proposal is a sample printing of the first chapter and a half of Genesis. The price was to be \$3.25 for each of the two volumes planned. But two years into the project, Mills Day died at age twenty-nine, and the project with him. It was then that Horwitz arrived, apparently representing Amsterdam Jewish publishing interests. He quickly obtained Harvard's patronage—a promise to purchase forty copies. But the competition was formidable. The New York firm, Whiting and Watson, announced its plan to publish a Hebrew Bible under the patronage of Andover Theological Seminary, the influential seat of Hebrew studies in America. Even more formidable was the powerful missionary establishment's plan to enter the field; while in London the apostate president of the Society for Promoting Christianity Among Jews, Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick Frey, having already published Volume I of a vocalized edition of the Hebrew Bible "for the English speaking countries," let it be known that as soon as both volumes were completed, he was ready to come to the U.S. to see to their distribution. With such competition—real and threatened—what was a bright and ambitious young Jewish immigrant to do? In 1813, Horwitz sold the type he brought to the Philadelphia printer William Fry, sold his subscription lists to the bookseller Thomas Dobson, and entered the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania, from which he received his M.D. in 1815. In that year, yet a new proposal for a vocalized edition appeared with a large sampling of pages printed. All three biblical printing enterprises are prominently recorded in the Rosenbach bibliography, the successful 1814 edition, as well as the two aborted attempts.<sup>[18]</sup>

A successful vocalized edition had to wait till 1848. It was the Athias-Leusden-Van der Hooght edition, which also lists the participation of (the Rev.) Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia's Mikve Israel Congregation. So successful was this edition that it was reprinted in 1849 and 1850—and

many times thereafter.<sup>[19]</sup> Prayerbooks For America With the dramatic growth of the Jewish population of the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century, we transfer our interest from bibliography to history. While European Jewry doubled in size, the Jewish community in America increased twenty-five fold, from less than 2,000 to 50,000, a rate of growth which continued to the end of the century.<sup>[20]</sup> The rapidly growing population needed new synagogues and built them, an ever growing corps of religious functionaries, and imported and trained them. Most of all they needed the chief tool for worship, prayer books. They sent for them, and, more and more, they fashioned their own and published them. The first two, the Pinto prayerbooks of 1761 and 1767, were auxiliary works, English translations of the Hebrew prayer book without the Hebrew text. The first true prayerbook was the Jackson-Lazarus version: *The Form of Daily Prayers, According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews. As Read in their Synagogues, and Used in Their Families.* Translated into English from the Hebrew, by Solomon Henry Jackson. The Hebrew Text Carefully Revised and Corrected by E. S. Lazarus. First Edition, New York: Printed by H. S. Jackson, at the Hebrew and English Printing Office, 23 Mercer Street A. M. 5586 (1826). Jackson was the first Hebrew printer in America; Lazarus, American Jewry's first expert liturgist (and the grandfather of Emma Lazarus). Jackson was also the printer of the "First American Edition of the Haggadah, "According to the Custom of German and Spanish Jews."

Of the prayerbook, a volume of 466 pages of text and translation, the publisher boasts: "It will be perceived that the American Hebrew type, is the handsomest face in the world ... the paper is of American manufacture." Truth to tell, the type is rather ordinary, and the paper was not of the quality to withstand the ravages of time. Few copies in good condition remain. But it was a monumental accomplishment for a community of Jews numbering no more than four thousand. It certainly would occupy a place of distinction in any list of American Hebraica. Within a decade it was replaced by the truly magnificent six volume edition of the Sephardi liturgy: Daily, Sabbath, Festivals, Holy Days, and Fast Days; all edited, translated and published by the Rev. Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia, the finest work of Hebrew publishing in America in the entire nineteenth century. The Jewish population in America at the time of its publication: 12,000.<sup>[21]</sup> We would also add to the list of American Hebrew book firsts, the first American Reform prayerbook, a two volume work, altered, abridged and edited by Rabbi L. Merzbacher of Temple Emanuel, New York's pioneer Reform congregation. Published in 1855, it is oriented from right to left and its text is in Hebrew, with English translation on each facing page.<sup>[22]</sup>

Before leaving the American prayerbooks I would like to introduce you to a particular favorite of mine, a twenty-four page pamphlet which I would suggest is the first Hebrew book composed and published in the United States: *Form of Service at the Dedication of the New Synagogue of Kahal Kadosh Shearith Israel, N.Y. 5578 (1818)*. It is a Hebrew book running from right to left. The Hebrew text is basic in it, the English being a translation of the Hebrew. It contains the Psalms recited or chanted for the parade of Torahs at a synagogue dedication. What makes this little volume above mere printing of traditional liturgy, is eight pages in Hebrew only, containing two acrostic poems composed for the occasion by Rabbi Dob Pique: The first acrostic using (Shearith Israel); the second, (I, Dob Pique) first in regular order, then in reverse order—a mirror acrostic. We should note also that the first poem contains the first printing of the name of an American president in Hebrew transliteration: (Jimmy Monroe the chief leader [i.e. the

president]).

Fortunately, the pages of Shearith Israel's minutes record the story of Rabbi Dob Pique at this synagogue. Rabbi David De Sola Pool tells of his unfortunate tenure at the congregation. He was brought from Bordeaux, France in 1817 to serve the congregation as the teacher of its Polonies Talmud Torah. His tenure was not destined to be a long one. While the community profoundly respected his Hebrew learning, parents were unwilling to entrust children to him because of his propensity for strong drink. By the beginning of 1821 he had only one paying pupil in addition to the five free pupils. In May of that year he ceased to be head of the school.<sup>[23]</sup> The Form of Service which he edited and the Hebrew poems which he composed remain as his only monument.

### Three Significant Firsts

1. Should not a Hebrew book, the first written in America, containing material—responsa, sermons, essays—illuminating the American Jewish experience, but published elsewhere, find a place in any listing of the Hebrew book in the New World? Rabbi Moses Aaronson, the first published rabbinic author to come to America, arrived in New York in 1861, and became the rabbi of the Allen Street Beth Hamedrash. His two rabbinic volumes, *Pardes Hahahma* and *Pardes HaBinah*, published in 1836 and 1855, afforded him some renown in Eastern Europe's rabbinic community, but his contentious nature made his rabbinic tenure in a number of communities difficult, so on to America. His career in America was no less tempestuous, so on to the Holy Land. On a lecture tour to finance his final migration, he died in Chicago in 1875 at the age of 70. He had been drawn to Jerusalem, which had become a center of rabbinic publication, to publish his third and final book. He, alas, never reached his destination—but his book did! His widow continued on to Palestine, where three years later, she and her son were able to publish his magnum opus, (*The Plantings of Moses*)<sup>[24]</sup> of which they distributed a good number of free copies to synagogues and study houses, asking that there be study from it dedicated to his memory on his Yahrzeit (anniversary of death).

2. The first biblical commentary in Hebrew published in America is Benjamin Szold's, *The Book of Job, Baltimore*, 1886. <sup>[25]</sup> Born in Hungary in 1829, he pursued his Talmudic studies at the Yeshiva (Seminary) of Presburg, and received his secular education at the University of Breslau. Called to Baltimore's Oheb Shalom Congregation in 1859, he remained its rabbi and rabbi emeritus to the end of his life in 1902. Traditional in his religious observance, kashrut, tefillin, mezuzah, tallit etc., and liberal in religious ideology, he wrote the commentary in the spirit of adherence to both tradition and change—as he phrased it and expressed it on the title page of his work “in accordance to the strict rules of grammar and the rhetorical nature of biblical Hebrew.” His commentary has been praised for its “classical Hebrew” and for its being “conceived in an original and deeply Jewish spirit.” Not only is the work marked by expert scholarship and elegant style, it is aesthetically one of the most beautiful Hebrew books published in America. The typography and the composition of the page makes it easy to read and a joy to behold. Two of the most delicately hued chromolithographs adorn it. Truly, a delight for the eye, the mind and the heart.

3. *Masekhet Bikkurim min Talmud Yerushalmi* (Tractate “First Fruits” of the Palestinian

*Talmud*),<sup>[26]</sup> Chicago, 1887 and 1890, is the first printing of a section of the Talmud in America. Published with a triad of commentaries by Rabbi Abraham Eliezer Alperstein of Congregation Ohabei Shalom Mariampoler (Lovers of Peace of Mariampol) in Chicago, the title-page text is in an artistic frame of base and columns, topped by crowned lions supporting a majestic crown. The typography is in the classic style of Talmud printing of text surrounded by commentaries. Text and commentary compare favorably with the finest European productions. In its introduction, the author commends friends in New York, Pittsburgh, Buffalo and Montreal who made the book's publication possible. The warmest praise is reserved for his congregation, which opened its heart to receive him "to bestow upon me blessings without end." In the second printing, three years after the first, the ninety-six pages of text remain the same, but a brief poetic dirge is added:

In the country of my wandering In the city of my distress My honor was cast to the ground ...  
Robbed of abundance and increase My household looks for food.

Not God's punishment is this, but the work of his formerly extolled congregation, whom he now calls "wild boars" who have "despoiled me." Sad indeed were this scholarly rabbi's days in Chicago; his subsequent career as an instructor in Talmud at New York's newly established Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary was more tranquil and rewarding. The Stones of Joshua or The Valley of the Dead Our quest for the first Hebrew book in America continues. Two contend for the honor. It now depends on how tightly we draw our parameters. The colophon of (*The Book of the Stones of Joshua*) reads:

I give thanks that it was my good fortune to be the typesetters of this scholarly book, the first of its kind in America. Blessed be the God of Israel, who surely will not deny us the Redeemer. I am Naphtali son of Kathriel Samuel of Thorn.

This commentary on the Ethics of the Fathers is the first book written in Hebrew to be published in America other than the Bible and prayerbooks. Its author, Joshua ben Mordecai Falk, was born in the Prussian-Polish province, Posen, in 1799, and came to America in 1858. He served briefly as a rabbinic functionary in Newburgh and Poughkeepsie, New York, and became an itinerant preacher. His highest priority, personally and professionally, was to publish his work on Jewish law and thought which he had brought with him. Its two parts, "The Stones of Joshua" and "The Walls of Joshua" would bear the title The House of Joshua, as he notes in the Introduction to the finally published small volume. He had little success in obtaining subscribers for his projected work and turned for advice to New York's most prominent rabbi, Morris J. Raphall, who advised him to first publish a modest excerpt from the large work to use as a sample for soliciting prospective purchasers—a practice widely utilized by authors at that time.

In the course of their discussion, Raphall suggested that the title should be MyFirst Fruit, which would carry a double meaning, the first work of the author, and, far more appealing, the first work published in Hebrew in America. He preferred, however, a title which had the name of the author in it, as was widely done in the titles of rabbinic works, so the Stones of Joshua remained its title. In his Introduction, the author alludes to its being the "first in America." The typesetter noticed this in the text, and adopted it for his proud assertion that he played a role in the printing of such an historic first.

Falk never got to fulfil his desire to publish his larger volume—he was forced even to delete a

section towards the end of his small volume when he ran out of money—nor his promise to have his sample volume translated into English. As for so many authors, his vision was large, his accomplishment small, but his reward was great—“father of the Hebrew book in America.”

Those who would award that role to the author of a book written and published in America will have to turn to a much thinner volume published five years later, *Emek Refaim, The Valley of the Dead*, New York, 1865.

Elijah M. Holzman, by trade a Hebrew religious scribe, by avocation a satirical polemicist, makes Reform Judaism the target of his barbs in this twenty-eight page Hebrew pamphlet. It is the second Hebrew book, other than biblical and liturgical works, published in America. But its predecessor, *Emek Yehoshua*, had been in whole or in great part written in Europe. Not this volume, *Emek Refaim*. Its theme is Reform Judaism in America, and nothing more; its villains are Reform rabbis Isaac Mayer Wise and Max Lilienthal of Cincinnati and Samuel Adler of New York. The book's title is a play on the Hebrew word *Refaim* (the dead; ghosts) which can also be read as *Rofim* (doctors). He avers that these rabbis who call themselves Doctors will yet be the death of Judaism. An English foreword by Rabbi M. J. Raphall, Dr., synopsis its argument:

A sect has arisen in Israel who attempt to form a new code for public worship, embracing instrumental and vocal music. Choristers composed of male and female voices. Israelites and non-Israelites, erasing the name synagogue and substituting the term temple. The whole of these changes emanate from men who call themselves Doctors who are in fact destroyers of that which is sacred; their lips move in sanctity, and deception is in their hearts. The author ... has issued this work to prevent further encroachment in our holy ritual ... by these innovators who sow seeds of discord detrimental to the welfare of Israel.

The “First Hebrew Book in America,” which is it, Falk's *Avnei Yehoshua* or Holzman's *Emek Refaim*? I suggest that the palm of primogeniture be awarded to both and to the other eleven I have brought to your attention: all thirteen are cornerstones of Hebrew Culture in the New World. All who are the people of the books of the People of the Book should hail them all. They are:

1. *Arte Hebraispano, Dikduk leschon hakkodesch*, Martin del Castillo. (Written in Mexico.) Published: Lyons, France, 1676.
2. *Seder Tefilot Li-Shealat Matar*, Samuel Mendes Sola. (Composed Curaçao, W.I.) Published: Amsterdam, 1773.
3. *Dickdook Leshon Gnebreet*, Judah Monis. Cambridge, U.S.A., 1735.
4. *Biblia Hebraica* (2 vols.), Philadelphia, 1814.
5. “Form of Service at Dedication of Synagogue . . . Shearith Israel,” Hebrew poems by Dob Pique, New York, 1818.
6. *The Form of Daily Prayers*, Trans. Solomon Henry Jackson, Ed. E. S. Lazarus, New York,

5586 (1826).

7. The Form of Prayers According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews, 6 Vol., Edited by Isaac Leeser, Philadelphia, 5597-98 (1837-38).

8. Order of Prayers for Divine Service (2 Vol.), Revised by Dr. L. Merzbacher, New York, 1855.

9. Avnei Yehoshuah, Joshua Falk, New York, 1860.

10. Emek Refaim, Elijah Holzman, New York, 1865.

11. Matta-ei Moshe, Moses Aronson, written in America, published Jerusalem, 1878. 12. The Book of Job (Sefer Iyob), Benjamin Szold, Baltimore, 1886. 13. Maseket Bikkurim min Talmud Yerushalmi (Tractate First Fruits of Palestinian Talmud). Commentaries: Abraham E. Alperstein, Chicago, 1887.

## NOTES

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[1]Encyclopedia Judaica. Vol. 15, p. 1266.

[2]Shalom Goldman, Hebrew and the Bible in America, Hanover, 1993, p. XV, VI.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, No. 5, n.p., 1897, p. 125ff.

[5]A.S.W. Rosenbach, An American Jewish Bibliography, Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, No. 30, n.p., 1926.

[6]Jacob Marcus, Jewish Americana, Cincinnati, 1954.

[7]Edwin Wolf II, "Some Unrecorded American Judaica Printed Before 1851" in Essays in American Jewish History. The American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, 1958.

[8]Nathan Kaganoff, "Supplement III: Judaica Americana Printed Before 1851," in Charles Berlin, ed., Studies in Jewish Bibliography . . . , New York, 1971.

[9]Nathan Singerman, Judaica Americana: A Bibliography of Publications to 1900, New York, 1990.

[10]Isaac A. Benjacob, Otsar Ha-Sefarim, Vilna, 1880.

[11]Chaim B. Friedberg, Bet Eked Sepharim, Second Edition, Tel Aviv, 1951

[12]Ephraim Deinard, Kohelet America, Catalogue of Hebrew books printed in America from 1735-1925, St. Louis, Mo. (1926), p. 35.

[13]Alexander Marx, On Rare Books and Manuscripts in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, ed. Menahem Schmelzer, New York, 1977, p. 171.

[14]Seder Tefukkit Li-Shealat Matar, ed. Samuel Mendes Sola, Amsterdam, 1773.

[15]R. Judah Monis, The Truth . . . , Boston, 1722. For Judah Monis and his grammar, see Abraham J. Karp, From the Ends of the Earth, Judaic Treasures at the Library of Congress, Washington, 1991.

[16]For an account of the publication of the first Hebrew Bible in America, see: Menashe Vaxer, "The First Hebrew Bible Printed in America" in Journal of Jewish Bibliography, Vol. II, No. 1, New York, January, 1940.

[17]See e.g. Transfer of copyright page tipped in after title page of 1814 Bible in the Abraham

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orah Karp Collection of Early American Judaica at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, N.Y.

[18]See Rosenbach, *op. cit.*, numbers: 154 (pp. 140, 142); no. 171 (pp. 156, 157); no. 175 (pp. 157-158).

[19]*Ibid.*, No. 625 (p. 431); No. 643 (p. 443) and No. 661 (pp. 451-52).

[20]See: Abraham J. Karp, *Haven and Home: A History of the Jews in America*, New York 1985, pp. 374 and 375.

[21]*The Form of Prayers According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews ... Edited, and with former Translations carefully compared and corrected, by Isaac Leeser, Reader of the Congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia. Printed by Haswell, Barrington, and Haswell for the editor. 5597 (1837-8).*

[22]*The Order of Prayer for Divine Service. Revised by Dr. L. Merzbacher, Rabbi at the Temple "Emanuel." N.Y., 1855, 2 vol.*

[23]David and Tamar De Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World*, N. Y., 1955, p. 220.

[24]Moses Aaronson, *Mata-ey Moshe (The Plantings of Moshe)*, Jerusalem, 1878.

[25]Benjamin Szold, *Sefer Iyob (The Book of Job)*, Baltimore, 1886.

[26]Abraham Eliezer Alperstein, *Masekhet Bikkurim min Talmud Yerushalmi*. Chicago, 1887, 1890.