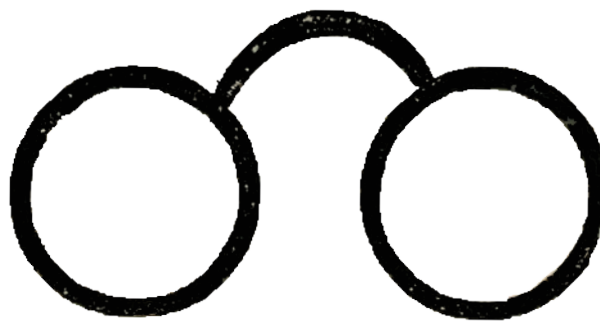


Miracle within a Miracle

JOHANNES REUCHLIN AND THE
JEWISH BOOK CONTROVERSY

Augenspiegel



An Exhibition Commemorating the
500th Anniversary of Reuchlin's
Defense of Jewish Writings

VALERIE HOTCHKISS
AND DAVID PRICE

Published with assistance from the Chatterjee Fund.

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Designed by Marten Stromberg
Printed on acid-free archival quality paper

Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hotchkiss, Valerie, and David Price.

Miracle within a miracle : Johannes Reuchlin and the Jewish book controversy : an exhibition commemorating the 500th anniversary of Reuchlin's defense of Jewish writings / Valerie Hotchkiss and David Price. — Urbana, Ill. : Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, c2011.

p. : col. ill. ; cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-9788134-8-2

1. Reuchlin, Johann, 1455-1522. 2. Judaism—Relations—Christianity. 3. Christianity and other religions—Judaism. 4. Jewish literature—Censorship—Germany—History—16th century. 5. Humanism—Germany—History—16th century. 6. Scholasticism—Germany—History—16th century. 7. Censorship—Exhibitions.

I. Price, David, 1957– II. Title.

B785.R64H68 2011 261.2609031

Miracle within a Miracle

JOHANNES REUCHLIN AND THE JEWISH BOOK CONTROVERSY

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

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Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Museum Johannes Reuchlin
Pforzheim, Germany

Foreword

What better way to mark the anniversary of a famous book controversy than with an exhibition of books? When Johannes Reuchlin published his *Augenspiegel* (*Eye Glasses*) in 1511, just in time for the Frankfurt Book Fair, he knew it would cause a tremendous stir. After all, Reuchlin had decided to defend Jewish writings—and Judaism itself—against the combined forces of the emperor and the highest ecclesiastical authorities in Germany. It is remarkable, or, as Josel of Rosheim said, “miraculous,” that the Jews and Reuchlin prevailed and the books were preserved. The dramatic story of this moment in Jewish-Christian relations is retold in this exhibition through the very books that flamed the controversy.

The exhibition is an international effort involving two American libraries and two German institutions. Inspired by the 500th anniversary of the appearance of Reuchlin’s *Eye Glasses*, we have undertaken this project on two continents and at four venues. The Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati, Ohio, collaborated with the Museum Johannes Reuchlin in Pforzheim, Reuchlin’s birthplace, and with the Jewish Museum of Frankfurt, the crucial location for the historic events 500 years ago. Rare imprints from the pamphlet wars surrounding the Jewish Book Controversy are on display, as well as important works on both sides of the Renaissance humanist movement to recover ancient sources, including those written in Hebrew.

Working together, David Gilner of the HUC-JIR, Fritz Backhaus of the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt, Christoph Timm, Isabel Greschat, and Hans-Peter Becht of the city of Pforzheim, David Price and I have produced this exhibition to celebrate Johannes Reuchlin and the successful outcome of the Jewish Book Controversy. But we are also celebrating what Reuchlin stands for today, most importantly, religious tolerance, respect for books and people, and the power of knowledge to break down prejudice and build respect and understanding for cultural differences.

Special thanks go to Angela Waarla and Laura Buchholz, who took the photographs, and to Marten Stromberg, who designed the catalog. We also thank Michael Matthäus of the Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main for scholarly support. And finally, we are grateful to Ellen and Nirmal Chatterjee, who supported the printing of this catalog for the American exhibitions.

Valerie Hotchkiss
Head of The Rare Book & Manuscript Library
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Doctor Johanssen Reuchlins
 der R.M. als Erzhertzogen zu Osterreich auch Chur
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Augenspiegel



¶ Am end dieses Büchlins finde man ain correctur etlicher wör
 ter so inn dem truck versehen sind im teutschen vnnnd latin. Bezeich
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Item IV.1, title page. Reuchlin's Eye Glasses (1511). From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).

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vnd Churfürsten.

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Burgund/ zu Brabant vnd Pfalzgraff etc. Embietten den ersa
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I
Ratschlag ob man den Juden alle
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 gent von rechts wegen genomen. abgethon oder verbrent werden
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 die cristen gemachte/ Zum andern sie schmeheñ Jesum/ Mariā vñ
 die zwelfß botten/ auch vnns vnd vnser cristenliche ordnung. Zum
 dritten dann sie seien falsch. Zum vierden so werden dar durch die
 iuden verfürte das sie verharren in irer iüdischait vnd nie zum cri-
 sten glauben kommen. Welcher aber solch gros übel were möcht

Five hundred years ago, in September 1511, a compact book entitled *Eye Glasses* appeared at the international Frankfurt Book Fair and immediately polarized Europe. The author was the universally respected scholar and jurist Johannes Reuchlin, but the subject of *Eye Glasses* was not destined to find universal acclaim: it was a comprehensive legal and theological defense of Jewish writings. The context of the publication heightened the controversy, for Reuchlin wrote the defense in order to thwart a dangerous persecution that was aiming to destroy every Jewish book in the Holy Roman Empire. After the ensuing intellectual and political storms had passed, Josel of Rosheim, the most influential Jewish leader of Renaissance Germany, described the historic intervention as a “miracle within a miracle,”¹ remembering with unabated amazement that a Christian scholar had defended the Jews and, more astonishing, that he had prevailed.

The unprecedented defense of Judaism was a response to an unprecedented attack that began in earnest in 1509. Until then, campaigns against German Jews, though numerous and often effective, had been limited to individual territories within the empire. The goal of the 1509 persecution was to weaken and break the surviving Jewish communities in one comprehensive effort by confiscating and destroying every Jewish book except the Hebrew Bible, thereby making it impossible to practice the religion properly. This aggressive strategy, carefully formulated to be compatible with imperial law, was initially spearheaded by Johannes Pfefferkorn, a recent convert to Christianity who had been agitating against Jewish communities in Germany since 1505. By the end of 1509, the confiscation campaign was being supported by the emperor, the archbishop of Mainz, the University of Mainz, the University of Cologne, the powerful Dominican convent in Cologne, the Observant Franciscan Order, and the papal Inquisitor Jacob Hoogstraeten.

Initially, the most potent weapon against the Jews was the printing press. Before Emperor Maximilian authorized destruction of Jewish books, Pfefferkorn and the faculty of theology at Cologne published a series of stridently anti-Jewish tracts: *Mirror of the Jews* (1507), *Confession of the Jews* (1508), *How the Blind Jews Observe Their Easter* (1509), and *The Enemy of the Jews* (1509), all of which appeared simultaneously in both German and Latin editions. Counting the German originals and the Latin translations, these books went through an astounding twenty-one editions within three years. Although ostensibly published as missionary tracts, the inflammatory

pamphlets were designed to stoke the fires of Christian anti-Semitism. They assailed contemporary Judaism as a heresy (i.e., as being a perversion of biblical Judaism) that must be rooted out, and they depicted Jewish customs and prayers as intolerable blasphemies against God. Moreover, the pamphlets insisted that Jewish moneylenders were engaged in a pervasive effort to destroy Christian society. These pamphlets rapidly built the political momentum that, in August 1509, secured the decisive step from Maximilian: a mandate to confiscate and destroy the offending Jewish books.

Implementation of the new policy began in September 1509 in Frankfurt am Main, home to one of the three most prominent Jewish communities in Germany (the other two being Worms and Regensburg). Despite strong resistance from Jewish leaders, a complete confiscation in Frankfurt was carried out by April 1510, and other Rhineland communities, including Worms, also suffered confiscations in 1509 and 1510.

This action occurred at a time when all of Europe was contemplating the end of Judaism. After the expulsion of the world's largest Jewish community from Spain in 1492 and the forced Portuguese conversion of 1497, European Judaism was tottering at the edge of the abyss. Jews had long since disappeared from England (expulsion 1290) and France (expulsion from crown territories, 1394). Expulsions had also been mandated in many individual territories across the Holy Roman Empire—Vienna (1420/21), Cologne (1424), Bavaria (1442/50), Würzburg (1453), Passau (1478), Mecklenburg (1492), Magdeburg (1493), Württemberg (1498), Nuremberg (1498–99), Ulm (1499), and Brandenburg (1510), to name but a few. During the second half of the fifteenth century, the area open to Jewish residency contracted with every passing year. Various jurisdictions in Italy, the only major homeland to western European Jewry outside of the empire in 1509, were following suit. As a result of the spread of Spanish rule, Jews were banished from Sicily in 1492 and from the Kingdom of Naples through a series of expulsions, with the strongest intensity during 1511–14, that concluded in 1541. This moment in history, which instigated the early modern exodus to Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire, marks the nadir of Jewish life in western and central Europe prior to the Holocaust.

The New Scholarship: Christian Hebrew Studies

While this curtain was falling on European Jewry, act one, scene one of a new Christian-Jewish drama began. A tiny number of Christian scholars

were starting to cultivate contacts with learned Jews for a rather different purpose—they were seeking Hebrew and Jewish scholarship, hoping to acquire new methods for theological education and research. Ultimately they would succeed, for the embrace of Hebrew in the Renaissance would invigorate Christian scholarship and lay a permanent foundation for the modern study of the Bible. This started in the 1480s, when suddenly the Renaissance ideal of returning “to the sources” of ancient culture was applied to Christianity, introducing the biblical methodology that would include the recovery of Hebrew Scriptures and would soon undergird the Protestant reform movements. Despite explicit repudiations of Judaism, this development amounted to implicit acknowledgment by Christians that Jewish tradition and learning possessed value for them. A few Christians, virtually for the first time in the history of their religion, expressed enthusiasm for Jewish studies.

By 1506, a watershed in the history of Christian scholarship, Johannes Reuchlin had learned enough from leading Jewish scholars to publish the first Hebrew grammar and dictionary written for Christians, his *Rudiments of Hebrew*. No less an authority than the modern Jewish historian Gershom Scholem aptly described him as “the first scholar of Judaism, its language and its world, especially the Cabala ... the man who, nearly five centuries ago, brought to life the discipline of Jewish studies in Europe.”² Reuchlin’s grammar was the first step in a sweeping movement. In the 1510s and 1520s, scholars in the leading centers of humanist culture—Florence, Venice, and, above all, Rome—promoted Hebrew scholarship as one of the great promises for a renewal of Christianity. In the 1520s, the inchoate Protestant movement decisively embraced Hebrew philology, and, by the 1530s, Hebrew studies were firmly established at universities throughout western Europe.

Dispute over Jewish Books

The worlds of academia and anti-Jewish agitation were not separate realms in medieval and early modern Europe. Soon after the publication of his Hebrew grammar, the father of Christian Hebrew studies found himself at the center of the anti-Jewish maelstrom, when Emperor Maximilian declared a moratorium on the book confiscation in a mandate of 23 May 1510. In no way connected to Reuchlin’s intervention, this initial suspension of the campaign resulted from tough negotiations between the emperor, the

12 opuscula 13

Nandt Spiegel.

Johannis Pfefferkorn/wider vnd gegē die Jūden/vnd
Jūdischen Thalmudischen schrifftenn So/sie vber das
Cristenlich Regimēt/singer vñ lesen Welche pillich Gots
lesterer/etzer vnd aberglauber/des altē Newen/vnd des
Natürlichen gesetzen gezelt/geheissen/verthümbe vñ ab-
gethan/werden mögen. Darumb sich etliche cristen wider
mich setzen/anfechten Solliche artickeł zñ widlegen Dar-
gegen ich antwurdē vñ mit bescheidenē redē vffgelöst hab.

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So er vber die glüende kolen flüchtē Vñ gelesen/vnd we-
nig verstanden ist besser vnterlassen.

1

Item III.3, title page. Pfefferkorn's *Magnifying Glass* (1511), the first volley in the Reuchlin-Pfefferkorn pamphlet war. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).

archbishop of Mainz, the city of Frankfurt, and the Jewish community of Frankfurt.³ Nonetheless, as a prelude to resuming the pogrom, the emperor issued a new mandate on 6 July 1510 that required legal and theological evaluations of the confiscation policy from four universities and three individual scholars, including Reuchlin. While all the other experts submitted enthusiastic endorsements for implementing the new policy, to everyone's astonishment, Reuchlin argued against Maximilian's tactic, forcefully contending that the book confiscation did not accord with imperial law and was not justified on religious or theological grounds. He carefully elaborated this defense in an extensive legal analysis he sent the emperor in October 1510 and, then, published in 1511, under extreme provocation, as the centerpiece of *Eye Glasses*. Although his conclusion stood alone among the seven evaluations, Reuchlin's defense was so powerfully argued that it effectively stymied the new and dangerously potent method of persecution. As far as we know, all the books were returned to their Jewish owners and, despite determined efforts, the strategy was never again attempted in early modern Germany.

Nonetheless, *Eye Glasses* plunged Christian Europe into a wrenching controversy. The acrimony originated in the massive efforts undertaken to refute Reuchlin's defense in order to secure imperial permission to restart the campaign against Jewish culture. Although a confidential brief, once Reuchlin's recommendation had been submitted, Pfefferkorn, Hoogstraeten, and the archbishop of Mainz had access to it. All interested parties immediately realized that because of Reuchlin's stature and the comprehensiveness of his analysis, his recommendation posed a substantial impediment to any resumption of the confiscations. Apparently even before the report was forwarded to the emperor, the archbishop of Mainz arranged for a commission, led by the Carthusian Gregor Reisch, to condemn Reuchlin's views as "scandalous." For his part, Johannes Pfefferkorn reached for his customary weapons—pen and paper—and attempted to obliterate Reuchlin's legal argument in *Magnifying Glass*, a scorching invective that was released for distribution at the Frankfurt Book Fair in spring 1511. As indicated on the title page, *Magnifying Glass* attacked both the Jews and "several Christians" who defended them. In fact, this was the book that initiated the Reuchlin Affair, for it was only in response to *Magnifying Glass* that Reuchlin decided to publish his defense of Jewish books for all the world to read.

Prefiguring the inquisition's heresy charges, Pfefferkorn assailed the argumentation of Reuchlin's defense with an impressive apparatus of legal

and ecclesiastical authorities. The bulk of Pfefferkorn's poisonous rhetoric, however, is not directed at Reuchlin, for, as Pfefferkorn said in 1512, "I did not publish [*Magnifying Glass*] against him but against the Jews." In this new diatribe against Judaism, he portrays contemporary Jews not only as blasphemers and heretics, but also as murderous enemies of Christians. Most dangerously, Pfefferkorn conjures up the deadly specter of blood libel and host desecration cases. The pamphlet cites four recent cases of host desecration, along with breaking news about a major incident, the Berlin host desecration travesty of 1510. The Berlin case resulted in the execution of thirty-eight Jewish victims as well as the banishment of all Jews from Brandenburg. Pfefferkorn's endorsement of these terrible judicial hoaxes is unusual—other prominent converts who became anti-Jewish campaigners did not malign their former brethren with such patently false—and deadly—accusations. Many Christian authorities knew that these witch hunts were illegitimate. Popes and emperors routinely forbade their prosecution—often to little avail with local authorities. The Brandenburg convictions would even be rescinded in 1539 and Jews would be able to resettle there. But Pfefferkorn chose to exploit these myths in order to dramatize his contention that Jews are dangerous and nefarious enemies of Christianity and to denounce Reuchlin for claiming that the Jews could be a benign presence in Christian society.

Moreover, since the campaign to destroy Jewish writings remained his goal, Pfefferkorn meticulously repeated the specific allegation used in his previous tracts. In particular, he offered a direct rebuttal to Reuchlin's philological defense of Jewish prayers, insisting, on the strength of further quotations from Hebrew writings, that Jews blaspheme Christianity. Now he presents twenty articles against the Talmud, contending that his sampling of Talmudic perversions of Judaism was sufficient to warrant eradication of the book. *Magnifying Glass* also reveals the close collaboration between Pfefferkorn and the Cologne theologians. The tract was dedicated to Professor Arnold van Tongern and deploys the same arguments the faculty would make later in their attacks on Reuchlin. When citing canon law against Reuchlin, Pfefferkorn explicitly says that theologians provided him with all the references.

Inquisitor Jacob Hoogstraeten and the University of Cologne soon brought forward formal charges of heresy, alleging on the basis of forty-three statements that Reuchlin's *Eye Glasses* was "impermissibly favorable to Jews." In 1512, these charges were published under the authorship of

Professor Tongern as part of the effort to discredit Reuchlin, and, while the heresy trial was wending its way through ecclesiastical courts, the University of Cologne also raised the stakes for academia by securing formal condemnations of Reuchlin's *Eye Glasses* from other major theological faculties across Europe, including Paris and Louvain.

By 1513, the controversy was being discussed everywhere in Europe in part because it implicated the champion of the new Renaissance humanist methodology for biblical studies and in part because eradication of European Jewry was then such a burning issue. Many authorities tried to influence the outcome of the case, one way or the other—the emperor (Maximilian I), the future emperor (Charles V), the current pope (Leo X), a future pope (Adrian VI), two kings of France (Louis XII and Francis I), other princes, secular and ecclesiastical, some fifty cities in the Holy Roman Empire, university faculties, professors and scholars all over the Continent and even in England. The resulting trials, which persisted until Pope Leo X handed down a final ruling in 1520, reveal some of the most unstable fault lines in European intellectual culture, some of which would shift violently as the century progressed. Reuchlin's writings and the chain reaction they touched off mark the first time in European history that some Christians undertook an academic study of Judaism and its history.

Initially, Reuchlin's opponents were motivated by their resolve to annihilate Judaism but soon some began to express additional concerns about where Renaissance humanism might lead—not only to increased toleration of Jews but also to new approaches to Christian theology, and perhaps even to a different conceptualization of Christianity. On the other hand, Reuchlin's path-breaking research in Hebrew elicited admiration from many enthusiasts of the humanist movement. The ability to associate his position on Jewish writings with humanist scholarship, specifically to the process of Christianity returning to its Bible in the original languages, immediately mustered an elite cohort of supporters for his cause. This configuration not only created a public forum for debate on the proper Christian attitude toward Judaism but also led to a major confrontation between scholasticism and humanism. Together, these two conflicts made up the Reuchlin Affair.

Eye Glasses

In *Eye Glasses*, Reuchlin based much of his argument on civil law, especially on his contention that Jews residing in the empire were not serfs or slaves

but rather fellow citizens (“concives”): “We and they are fellow citizens of one and the same Roman Empire.”⁵ Although he did not intend this as an assertion that, over all, Christians and Jews had equal legal rights, it did mean that, as fellow citizens, Jews were protected from state seizure of their property.⁵

Reuchlin’s “concives” argument immediately encountered a torrent of opposition. Many theologians, such as Duns Scotus, had held the view that Jews fell under the category of slaves and were therefore excluded from many basic rights of citizens. The jurist Ulrich Zasius, perhaps the most influential German legal scholar of the early sixteenth century, had even used the concept of Jewish servitude as a basis for arguing, in a notorious case, that Jewish children could be taken legally from their parents by force and baptized. Reuchlin vehemently rejected the legality of coercive baptism in *Eye Glasses* and elsewhere.

But even on these issues, it is important to observe Reuchlin’s deeper reliance on ecclesiastical law codes. Referring specifically to passages in the *Decretales* of Pope Gregory IX, Reuchlin wrote, “Therefore, we are ordered in ecclesiastical law, in *Sicut Judaeis*, not to take their belongings from the Jews, whether money or something of monetary value.”⁶ Indeed, basic property rights had been enshrined in the foundational medieval law governing Christian-Jewish relations: the *Sicut Judaeis*, often called the *Constitution for the Jews*, a papal bull first issued in the 1120s but harking back to policies formulated by Pope Gregory the Great (590-604). When he composed the defense in 1510, Reuchlin had not yet read Hoogstraeten’s evaluation and was unaware of his plan to convene a new inquisition against Jewish books in the empire. According to his own account, Reuchlin was motivated by a desire to stop Maximilian, not the church, from an illegal and destructive blunder. Apparently, however, Reuchlin could already envision the campaign as a matter headed for ecclesiastical adjudication. Moreover, the specific questions in Maximilian’s request for evaluation—such as, would destruction of the Jewish books benefit Christianity?—suggested that the ultimate legal authority would be ecclesiastical. Consequently, Reuchlin’s analysis often sounds like a preemptive defense against putative inquisitorial charges in addition to being a legal memorandum prepared for the Holy Roman emperor.

Even if under both civil and ecclesiastical law the Jews enjoyed the right to own such things as religious books, those books would still be subject to

seizure and destruction by the state, if they were heretical, blasphemous, or libelous. Reuchlin addressed this as the most serious legal question. And, to his mind, the answer hinged on an accurate analysis of the evidence—the Jewish books themselves.

In the end, Reuchlin's assessment of Jewish literature was a devastating blow to the campaign to destroy Jewish books. This was the prime reason that so many authorities attacked him with such fury and resolve. After compressing a comprehensive review of Jewish writing to pamphlet size, Reuchlin authoritatively pronounced Jewish books innocent of all charges of blasphemy and heresy, with the exception of two minor books that, according to Reuchlin, were taboo among Jews anyway. Moreover, Reuchlin pursued the secondary goal of narrating a theological history in which Christianity acknowledged benefits from Jewish writings.

Representing Jews and Judaism

Overall, when assessing Reuchlin's thought, it is important to note that he never departed from the then orthodox principle that Christianity was the one true form of religion; thus, in his eyes, Judaism could never be fully equal to Christianity. Nonetheless, his writings on Judaism evince, over time, a growing willingness to affirm elements and examples of Jewish theology and piety. This was a gradual development, but one that we can detect as Reuchlin expressed successively higher levels of appreciation as he wrote *Rudiments of Hebrew* (1506), *Eye Glasses* (1511), and *Art of the Kabbalah* (1517).

Reuchlin did not formulate a theology or philosophy of toleration, but he did defend Jewish life in two effective ways: he meticulously asserted the legal rights of Jews and the legality of Jewish writings, and, more distinctively, he created a new Christian discourse that represented Jews and Judaism favorably, thereby not only invoking a concept of justice for Jews (in accord with his general principle that "injustice is a monstrosity"⁷) but also encouraging Christians to develop respect for the beleaguered minority and its religious heritage. In his 1517 *Art of the Kabbalah* (a book dedicated to Pope Leo X), a Christian scholar proclaims a rabbi "our glory," expressing admiration for the Jew's piety and learning.⁸ Indeed, the writer Max Brod, literary executor for the estate of Franz Kafka, characterized *Art of the Kabbalah* as "a work in which he dared to say more and more substantial things to benefit the persecuted Jews and

their disdained and misunderstood intellectual champions than in all of his earlier works combined.”⁹ In a book of 1519 (on the ancient Christian exegete Athanasius), Reuchlin repeatedly cited the Jewish philosopher Maimonides as the most significant theological authority on such fundamental topics as the nature of God and the relationship of the soul to God.¹⁰ The elevation of Jewish scholarship was a purely academic judgment but it ultimately fostered Reuchlin’s creation of a new discourse of Christian admiration of the Jewish tradition and individual Jews. In *Eye Glasses*, Reuchlin had the temerity to criticize the misguided prayer for the “perfidious Jews” in the Good Friday liturgy with the assertion that no people observe their religion as faithfully as do the Jews. In 1513, he went so far as to proclaim: “I know my enemies have been vexed because I said the Jews are our fellow citizens. Now I want them to rage even more in anger ... because I am saying that the Jews are our brothers.”¹¹ When, in 1514, he published a letter that addressed his first Hebrew teacher, Rabbi Jacob ben Jehiel Loans, as “My Lord, dear master Jacob, my companion, and my good friend, ... with deep longing I wish to see your blessed face to delight in the radiance of your bright countenance by hearing your most pure doctrine,”¹² Reuchlin was redefining the boundaries for Christian representation of Jews and Judaism, and defiantly so since he was already embroiled in the heresy trial. He included the letter to Loans in an anthology that featured correspondence with such eminent Christian scholars as Erasmus, Willibald Pirckheimer, Giles of Viterbo, and Aldo Manuzio. After this letter appeared, Johannes Pfefferkorn attacked it as yet another intolerable example of Reuchlin’s favorable treatment of Jews and Judaism.¹³ Despite that and despite the travails of the ongoing heresy trial, Reuchlin republished the letter with a Latin translation in 1519.¹⁴

The Verdicts

The trials of Reuchlin elicited many defenses and attacks and also resulted in two preliminary verdicts. A 1514 episcopal court in Speyer pronounced Reuchlin innocent of all charges of having “favored” Jews and, in an unprecedented ruling, assessed the papal inquisition (in the person of Jacob Hoogstraeten) for the defendant’s court costs. An appeals court at the Roman Curia reached a similar verdict in 1516. Nonetheless, on 23 June 1520, just eight days after signing the first thundering condemnation of

103 d

Acta Iudiciorum inter

F. Iacobum Hochstraten Inquisito-
rem Colonienfium & Iohan-
nem Reuchlin. LL. Dōc.
ex Registro publico,
autentico & figil-
lato.

AD LECTOREM

Vtilis hic liber erit studentibus in iure canonico & ciuili in
quo uidebunt practicam in materia inquisitionis, citationis,
recusationis, appellationis, libelli accusatorii, libelli defen-
fionis. Contumaciarum, fententiæ, executionis, inhibitionis
mandati de fuperfedendo, & notæ Turpiliani.

*factis pluribus factis parochis sub quibus
Nro Naaman, abbas nro Sam nro vinit. Helias*

*Canones a vobis qui habent abbas in dōp-
fua dōm pōtētiā pōtētiā pōtētiā
dis lignum vobis in dōm*

4

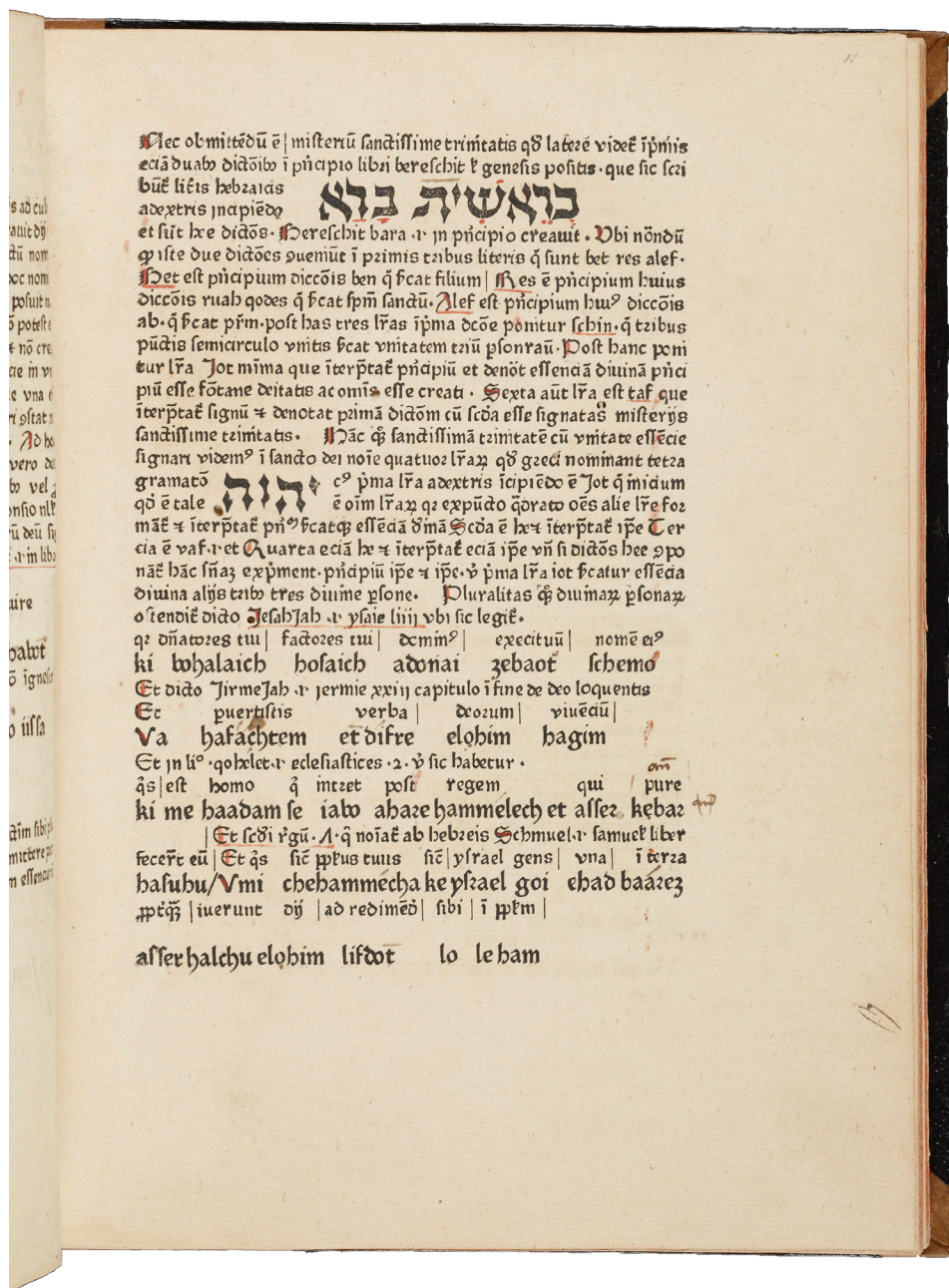
Martin Luther, Leo X issued a verdict against Reuchlin. In the aftermath of Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* (1517), the Vatican was simply no longer in a position to allow challenges against inquisitional forces in Germany to go forward. Indeed, in April 1521, at the beginning of the Diet of Worms (where Luther would be condemned by the estates of the empire), Pfefferkorn wrote: "Yes, Reuchlin, if the Pope had done this to you eight years ago, Martin Luther and your disciples ... would not have dared to wish or contemplate what they are now publicly pursuing to the detriment of the Christian faith. Of all this, you alone are the spark and the enabler, to drive the holy church into error and superstition."¹⁵ Reuchlin, however, ultimately repudiated Luther's movement and remained a Catholic until his death on 30 June 1522.

Despite the papal condemnation, a permanent foundation had been laid for Christian Hebrew studies. We can assume that Reuchlin was not the only Christian of his generation who admired his Jewish books and acquaintances, but he was the first to represent Jewish theology and Jews themselves with a measure of benevolence, sometimes even unqualified admiration, in public discourse. When it came to a few Jewish thinkers, his opponents' accusations, though bitterly formulated, that he valued Jewish authorities more than the doctors of the church were not entirely specious. Major Jewish scholars such as David Kimhi, Rashi, Joseph Gikatilla, and, above all, Moses Maimonides impressed him at a very deep level. It is not astonishing that he acknowledged the importance of Talmudic and medieval Jewish scholarship—even Luther consulted Jewish scholarship for his Old Testament exegesis—but it is striking that he so openly registered agreement with the wisdom and piety of the Jewish authors he studied. Yet, once again, Reuchlin would have considered his attitude nothing more (and nothing less) than a reasonable and just academic judgment of the works themselves.

Reuchlin would not be the only Christian scholar to defend Jews and Judaism against injustice. One of his students, Andreas Osiander, the leading reformer of Nuremberg, diligently continued his studies of Hebrew and Jewish writings as part of his ministry and, in 1529, emulated his teacher by composing an academic refutation of the pernicious accusations that Jews used the blood of murdered Christians in their rituals. But Osiander's theological rejection of the blood libel innuendo, grounded in knowledge of Jewish practices, provoked an unusually strident objection from another of Reuchlin's students, the Catholic theologian Johannes Eck. In this

clash between two Reuchlin followers, we can plainly see that Christian Hebraists in the aftermath of Reuchlin would not by any means develop a uniformly favorable attitude toward Judaism, even if by the beginning of the seventeenth century a detectable “philosemitism” existed among some Christian scholars. Several of Reuchlin’s supporters, including a few of the most influential theologians on all sides of the confessional divides, would advocate using political force and, in the case of Luther, violence to end the practice of Judaism in Germany. Like Pfefferkorn and Hoogstraeten, they assailed Judaism not only as a defective faith but also as a menace to Christian society that had to be eliminated by political means, no matter how inhumane.

Although a “miracle within a miracle” to a Renaissance rabbi, Johannes Reuchlin can be understood in historical terms as the beginning of a significant development: Christians acquiring accurate knowledge of Judaism and its history. Reuchlin was arguably the first Christian to read ancient and medieval Jewish texts with primarily scholarly rather than polemical interests. Over time, Jewish books and Jewish teachers equipped him with the knowledge, and ultimately inspired him with the conviction, to explain and defend the integrity of the Jewish tradition to his Christian world.



Item I.1, 10r. Peter Schwarz's anti-Jewish tract, *Star of the Messiah* (1475), the earliest example of Hebrew printing in Germany. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).

Exhibition items

I. THE NEW WEAPON: PRINTING ANTI-SEMITISM

I.1

Peter Schwarz. *Star of the Messiah* [*Contra perfidos Judaeos de conditionibus veri Messiae*]. Esslingen: Konrad Fyner, 1475.

Peter Schwarz (1434–1483) was a German Dominican who managed to learn Hebrew for use in his missionary campaigns against Jewish communities in the Holy Roman Empire. He published two extensive anti-Jewish polemics that advocated destruction of the Talmud as a blasphemous and heretical work. Though focused sharply on ending Judaism, his books also explained Hebrew vocalization and printed a few Jewish Bible passages and prayers in the original Hebrew.

This is the first attempt to print Hebrew in Germany.

I.2

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *Mirror of the Jews* [*Speculum adhortationis iudaice ad Christum*]. Cologne: Martin von Werden, 1507.

Johannes Pfefferkorn (ca. 1469-1521) converted to Christianity in 1505 and became an active anti-Jewish agitator. His mission had support from many sources, including the Franciscan and Dominican orders as well as the University of Cologne and several German princes. His pamphlets quoted (and distorted) authentic Jewish texts in order to stir Christian passions against toleration of Jewish communities in their midst. This, his first pamphlet, claims that Jewish books contain “hideous lies against Christ and Mary” and urges princes “to take the books from them and leave them nothing but the text of the Holy Scriptures.”

Pfefferkorn’s tracts were published simultaneously in separate German and Latin editions. *Mirror of the Jews* was first published in German (*Der Joeden Spiegel* [Cologne: Johannes Landen, 1507]). The item on display is the first edition of the Latin version.



Item I.3, B2r. Johannes Pfefferkorn's *Confession of the Jews* (1508) with a woodcut depicting rituals of atonement. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).

Dei Evangelii, Johannes.

In diesem buchlein vñ des Jeram entlichenn

sürtrag wie die blinden Juden y Ostern halten vñnd be-
sunderlich wie das Abentmal gessen wirt / Weiter würde
aufgetruckt das die Juden ketter seyn des alten vñd new
em testaments / Deshalb sy schuldig seyn des gericht
nach dem gesatz Moysi.



a
Aug. 1509

Item I.4, title page. *How the Blind Jews Celebrate Their Easter* includes polemical descriptions of Passover and also the threat to prosecute Jews for heresy. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).

I.3

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *The Confession of the Jews* [*Ich heysch eyn boichelgyn der ioeden bicht*]. Cologne: Johannes Landen, 1508.

In *Confession of the Jews* (which first appeared in February 1508), Pfefferkorn scornfully describes Jewish holidays, especially various rituals of atonement associated with Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, in order “to hold up the Jews to ridicule.” Pfefferkorn also emphasizes the accusation that Jewish prayers foment hatred of Christianity, especially *Avinu Malkenu* (“Our Father, Our King”), which is recited during the interval from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur: “the curse you have just heard [i.e., an imprecation in *Avinu Malkenu* against enemies of Israel] is especially against us and no one else. Therefore it is my sincere advice according to my slight understanding that such books of curses should be taken from them.”

I.4

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *How the Blind Jews Celebrate Their Easter* [*In disem buchlein vindet Ier ain entlichenn furtrag wie die blinden Juden yr Ostern halten*]. Augsburg: Erhard Öglein, 1509.

Pfefferkorn’s tracts were so inflammatory that Johannes Reuchlin claimed the author should be prosecuted for inciting civil unrest. This pamphlet, as indicated by the title page, insisted that Jews should no longer be tolerated because they had become “heretics of the Old and New Testament.” Pfefferkorn also repeats his mantra that Christian authorities should outlaw Jewish moneylending, compel Jews to attend Christian sermons, and confiscate all Jewish books because they are “the mother of their criminality.” The final pages include an endorsement of forced baptism of Jewish children and a plea that recalcitrant Jews be driven from the empire like “criminal dogs.”

I.5

Victor Carben. *A Splendid and New Work That Shows All the Errors of the Jews* [*Opus aureum ac novum ... in quo omnes iudeorum errores manifestantur*]. Cologne: Heinrich Neuß, 1509.

Victor Carben (ca. 1422-1515), formerly a rabbi, converted to Christianity in 1472 and became involved in campaigns against Jews. Like Pfefferkorn, he composed several extensive anti-Jewish polemics with support from the church and the university in Cologne. Moreover, he also published his works in Latin and

Op^{us} aureum ac no

num et a doctis viris diu expectatum
 dñi Victoris de Carben olim iudei s; mō xpiani z sacerdotis
 in quo oēs iudeoz errores manifestant qui hacten^{us} nobis
 ignoti fuisse Declarant etiā in hoc opere oēs iudeoz mores
 quos circa quocunq; opera exercere cōsueverunt ac tandem
 (id qđ inauditū est) ex veteri tñ testamēto vincunt.

Dr. Iovinii Gratij bonarū artium professoris in p̄menda
 tionē huius pulcherrimi operis epigramma leculentū.

Res noua sed grauius v̄bis grādīq; cothurno
 Et simul heroo glouificanda pede.
 Duc properent oēs numeris cantare periti
 Adsit pegasei turba verenda choi.
 Aurea plectra ferat nobis patbare^{us} Apollo
 Postre sit maior gloria parua lyre
 Aurea plectra ferat clavis ipse poetis
 Ut pulsant querulā me resonante chelyn.
 Sic genus infelix solymoz z pessima proles
 Gentis idumee noxia dāna subit.
 Vincatur z tante lugens spectacula pugne
 Heret in vmbroso rustica turba lacu.
 Vincitur z lutea pallet sub imagine verpus
 Palli dñi Iesus concidit ense miser.
 Tantā seruat ouans docto certamie palmā
 Victor z a magno nomie nomē habet.
 Vir opibus cunctis vix toto vendit auro
 Quo caput extollit religionis bonos

Ioannes Reuchlin Phorcenfis, præceptor
suo Iacobo Iehiel Loans Iudæo

שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם לְרַחוּק וּלְקָרוֹב אֲרוֹנִי רַ
יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹפִי וּמִיּוֹדְעִי מִמֶּנִּי
הַמְשִׁתּוֹקֵק וְהַנִּבְכֵּס לִרְאוֹת פְּנֵיךְ
הַנְּעִימִים לְהַתְעַנֵּג מִזִּין פְּנֵיךְ הַמְאִירוֹת
לְשִׁמּוֹעַ לַמּוֹדֵד הַטְּחוֹר וְעַתָּה בָּאתִי
בַּמַּגִּלָּה סֵפֶר לְהוֹדִיעַךְ כִּי שָׁבָה לֵאלֹהִי
אַחֲרֵי נִסְעִי מִמֶּדֶד הַצִּלְחָתִי בַּלְמוּדִי
וְהַגַּעְתִּי לְהַשְׁגָּה גְדוֹלָה יָדַעְתִּי
הַשְׂמִיחַ וְהַגִּיל אֲנִי יוֹחֵן רוּחֵלִין
מִפּוֹרְצוֹ הַכּוֹתֵב רֹאשׁ הָרֶשׁ בְּסֵלוֹ
שְׁנַת הָרֶסֶם לִיד הַנִּכְבֵּר רַיַּעֲקֹב
בְּכֹמֶר יְחִיאל לִוְאַנְשִׁי

Latine sic.

Pax pax longinquo & propinquo, Domine mi magister Iacobe
dux meus & notus meus, a me qui desydero & concupisco cernere
vultum tuum suauissimum ad delectandum de splendore vultus tui
lucentis, audiendo doctrinam tuam purissimam, & nunc ueni episto
lio libello ut tibi notificem, q̄ (laus deo) post recessum meum abs te
profeci in doctrina mea, & perueni ad consecutionem magnā, scio
lataberis & gaudebis. Ego Ioannes Reuchlin ex Phorcen, scribēs.
Kalendis Nouembris Anno quinto millenario ducentesimo sexa
gesimo primo. Ad manum honorabilis magistri Iacobi filii, ho
nore excellentis magistri Iehiel Loans.

Alia epistola.

i iiii

German editions to reach both academic and popular audiences. In a formal recommendation (now lost), he strongly endorsed Emperor Maximilian's proposal to destroy all Jewish books except the Hebrew Bible.

II. THE NEW SCHOLARSHIP: CHRISTIAN HEBREW STUDIES

II.1

Johannes Reuchlin. *Letter to Jacob ben Jehiel Loans, from The Letters of Famous Men* [*Clarorum virorum epistolae latinae graecae & hebraicae variis temporibus missae ad Ioannem Reuchlin Phorcensem ll. Doctorem*].

Tübingen: Thomas Anshelm, 1514.

In 1492-93, Johannes Reuchlin undertook an intensive study of Hebrew under Rabbi Jacob ben Jehiel Loans, a learned physician at the Innsbruck court of Emperor Friedrich III. Reuchlin was so successful (and his accomplishment so distinctive) that the emperor honored him with the presentation of a sumptuous Hebrew Bible manuscript from the twelfth century. This letter is an excellent example of Reuchlin's development of a discourse of respect for Jews, Judaism, and Jewish learning. Although charged with being "impermissibly favorable to Judaism," Reuchlin published the letter in 1514, the midst of his heresy trial: "My dear master Jacob, ... with deep longing I wish to see your blessed face to delight in the radiance of your bright countenance by hearing your most pure doctrine."

II.2

Johannes Reuchlin. *The Rudiments of Hebrew* [*Principium libri Ioannis Reuchlin ... de rudimentis hebraicis*].

Pforzheim: Thomas Anshelm, 1506.

In 1498-99, as ambassador of the Palatinate, Reuchlin also studied Hebrew under the renowned Jewish scholar Obadiah Sforno in Rome. With the intensive instruction from Loans and Sforno, as well as his own efforts, Reuchlin was able to publish the first Hebrew grammar and lexicon for Christians. The book, written in Latin, is based heavily on the medieval Jewish grammar of Moses Kimhi and the famous Hebrew dictionary, the *Book of Roots*, by David Kimhi. A notable feature of the lexicon is the frequent correction of Jerome's Vulgate translation of the Bible.

TERTIVS

Genitiuo **וְהָאִישׁ שֵׁם הָאִישׁ** viri.Ruth.ij. **הָאִישׁ** viri nomen et dixit

Datiuo **בְּכַח מִשְׁחָ לְאִישׁ** viro.Ester.vi. **לְאִישׁ** viro fiet sic

Accusato **אֶת אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים** virū.iiiij.Regū.vij. **אֶת אִישׁ** dei virum

Ablatiuo **מֵאִישׁ הַמֵּס** a uiro.p̄s.xviij. **מֵאִישׁ** iniquo a uiro

IN NVMERO PLVRALI

אִישִׁים uiri **אֲנָשִׁים** uirorum **אֲנָשִׁים** uiri **אֲנָשִׁים** uiri **אֲנָשִׁים** uiri

מֵאִישִׁים uiri a

ALIVD **מֵאִישִׁים**

דָּבַר דָּבַר לְדָבָר אֶת דָּבָר מִדָּבָר verbo a uerbum uerbo uerbi uerbum

דָּבָר דָּבָר לְדָבָר אֶת דָּבָר מִדָּבָר a uerbis uerba uerbis uerborum uerba

דָּבָר דָּבָר לְדָבָר אֶת דָּבָר מִדָּבָר

Vbi in quibusdam duplicem articulum reperiēs.
Huius itaq; declinationis primę cōmunis est regula. ut cuiuscūq; ter-
minationis nomen masculinū numeri singularis tibi propositū fuerit.
simpliter ei cata paragogē addas iod & mem qđ p hirek sonabit in
qđ si regat post se casum, aut ei cohreat pnomē subiūctiuū. qđ dicās
affixū. deponit mem finale. exemplū Deute.i. **אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים**

Idest hęc sunt uerba. iam hoc uocabulū nihil regit. sed psalmo.xxxiiij.

בְּרַבְרֵי יְהוָה idest uerbo dñi. hęc uox uerbū. regit post se gñi

scilicet dñi ut infra de regimine ac cōstructiōe dicemus. nūc qđ ad hęc

LIBER

munda est generis fœminini. Ceterum reperitur ea dictio in Talmud etiā in forma et terminatōe generis fœminini ꝑ thau finale **עפרת** sic de aliis speciebus animalū. ut Gen. xxxij. Camelos fœtas cū pullis suis triginta. Item **יד** idest manus reperit masculine. Exodi. xvij. Manus enim Moyſi erant graues. Fœminine uero Ezechiel. ij. Et ecce manus miſſa ad me. sic **כוס**. i. calix. In masculino ꝑs. lxxv. Calix in manu dñi. et in fœminino ꝑs. xxiij. Calix meus inebrians. et alia plura quę de nostro dictionario cognoscere poteris si diligenter aduertas animū. et lecta memorię commendes.

DE DECLINATIONE

omnis Iudaicorum nominū inflectio per solos numeros fit singularē et pluralē. non autē per casus. Nullū igit obliquū uideris nisi quē uel articulus demonstrat. uel ex uirtute sermonis oratio lecta requirit. Et quāuis de articulis plene tractabimus infra de ꝑnomine. tamen quantū ad ostendendā declinatōē necesse fuerit. eos hic solū obiter enumeramus. Sunt autē isti uidelicet **ה ל את מ** Nominatiuo articulus nō est opus. Sequūt genitiuus datiuus accusatiuus & ablatiuus. Nam uocatiuus imitat nominatiuū. hęc tam in singulari quā in plurali numero locū habent. Declinant ergo singula nomia ꝑ inflexionē terminatōis a numero singulari ad numerū pluralē cuiuscūq; sint generis. Ex q intelligis duas tantū hebreis esse declinatōes. Prima est secundū formā masculinorū. quę a nominatiuo singulari flectit in nominatiuū pluralē simpliciter addendo im. ut **דבר דברים** Secūda declinatio est secundū formam fœmininorū. quę a nominatiuo singulari in he uel thau cū patha uel camez desinente. uel alias undecūq; fœminini generis. flectitur in nominatiuum pluralem. solum mutādo he uel thau in oth. ut **היה היות** De prima declinatione prius est docendum. quod compendiosius fieri nequit quam per exempla.

IN NUMERO SINGVLARI.

Nominatiuo	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: right;"> איש vir. Job. i. </div> <div style="text-align: left;"> איש היה בארץ </div> </div>
	terra in erat vir

II.3

Johannes Reuchlin. *Miracle-Making Word* [*De verbo mirifico*].
Basel: Johannes Amerbach, 1494.

Reuchlin's first major publication was this tract on Jewish Kabbalah, an interest inspired by the Florentine humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. *Miracle Making Word* indicates Reuchlin's goal of "Christianizing" Jewish mysticism. In this work, for example, he claims that the ineffable tetragrammaton of God's name (YHVH) has become effable and efficacious in the new form of Jesus's name (YHSVH). This early work is notable for claiming the prime importance of the Hebrew language but also explicit in its rejections of Judaism.

II.4

Johannes Reuchlin. *Art of the Kabbalah* [*Ioannis Reuchlin Phorcensis ll. doc. de arte cabalistica libri tres Leoni X. dicati*].
Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1517.

This is a major work of Christian scholarship on Judaism, one that is richly nourished by the use of several dozen Jewish sources (especially, the *Zohar* and works by Joseph Gikatilla). Reuchlin presents a tremendous amount of recondite and technical matters of Kabbalah (for example, Kabbalistic emanations of God as well as Kabbalistic methods of biblical interpretation), but, most importantly he portrays Jewish piety and Jewish mysticism as exemplary for Christians. Max Brod claimed that in this work Reuchlin "dared to say more and more substantial things to benefit the persecuted Jews and their disdained and misunderstood intellectual champions than in all of his earlier books combined."

II.5

Johannes Reuchlin. *Accents and Orthography of Hebrew* [*De accentibus et orthographia linguae hebraicae*].
Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1518.

This is a comprehensive study of Hebrew accentuation (and vocalization). An important subtext in this work is Reuchlin's determination to sanction Christian use of Jewish authorities. He continues to give lavish credit to Jewish scholarship:

IOANNIS
REUCHLIN
PHORCENSIS LL. DOC.
DE ARTE
CABALISTICA
LIBRI TRES LEONI
X. DICATI.



Lum Privilegio Imperiali.

Item II.4, title page. Reuchlin's *Art of the Kabbalah* (1517), showing the author's coat of arms. From the University of Illinois.

“I have written all of this according to the teachings of the Jews in the way in which they have analyzed this material in their grammatical and musical books.” Once again, a major source was the medieval grammarian David Kimhi.

This book marks the first time Hebrew was printed with musical notation (here used to indicate cantillation).

III. THE IMPERIAL MANDATE TO DESTROY JEWISH BOOKS

III.1

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *The Enemy of the Jews* [*Hostis iudeorum*].
Cologne: Heinrich Neuß, 1509.

The last pamphlet to appear before the confiscations began was Pfefferkorn's *The Enemy of the Jews*, a harsh diatribe against alleged Jewish blasphemy and hostility to Christian society. Pfefferkorn argues that Jews will never be converted and must therefore be driven out of Christian societies. Moreover, he claims that Jewish books are full of heresy and blasphemy and must be destroyed. The pamphlet is notable for carefully printing two Jewish prayers in Hebrew, with roman transliteration of the Hebrew and German translation, all of which is presented as evidence of Jewish hostility to Christianity.

III.2

The Imperial Confiscation Mandate, as printed in Johannes Pfefferkorn's Defense against the ... Letters of Obscure Men [*Defensio Joannis Pepericorni contra famosas et criminales obscurorum virorum epistolas*].
Cologne: Heinrich Neuß, 1516.

With strong support from German Franciscans as well as Duchess Kunigunde of Bavaria, the emperor's sister, Pfefferkorn persuaded Emperor Maximilian to authorize confiscation and destruction of Jewish books. The first mandate, issued on 19 August 1509, has survived in several slightly different versions. In response to political challenges, Maximilian issued a second confiscation mandate (dated 10 November 1509) that gave overall authority for the action to the archbishop of Mainz. The mandates were implemented in Frankfurt am Main and other Rhine-land communities until the emperor suspended the action (in a mandate of 23 May 1510) pending a review.

Altus



סגול מונח רביע זרקא



מחבר פשטא זקא קטן זרקא

Tenor



סגול מונח רביע זרקא



מחבר פשטא זקא קטן זרקא

x ii

Item II.5, x2r. Reuchlin's *Accents and Orthography of Hebrew* (1518), the earliest example of Hebrew printed with musical notation. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).

III.3

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *Magnifying Glass* [*Handt Spiegel*].
Mainz: Johannes Schöffer, 1511.

From the moment Reuchlin submitted his recommendation against confiscation of Jewish books, Pfefferkorn and the anti-Jewish campaign had access to it. This work, *Magnifying Glass* (*Handt Spiegel*), was the first response to Reuchlin's objections as well as a pernicious escalation of the assault on Jewish culture. In *Magnifying Glass*, Jews now appear not only as corrosive usurers and despicable blasphemers but also as bloodthirsty murderers of Christians. This work unleashed a new and dangerous wave of public anti-Jewish agitation that sought to restart the book confiscations.

Magnifying Glass appeared in early spring 1511 and immediately became the hottest item at the Frankfurt Book Fair that April. Reuchlin managed to publish his rebuttal (*Eye Glasses*) in time for distribution at the autumn book fair, September 1511, in Frankfurt. Thus began the international debate and pamphlet war.

Illustrated on page 12.

IV. JOHANNES REUCHLIN'S DEFENSE OF JEWISH BOOKS

IV.1

Johannes Reuchlin. *Eye Glasses* [*Doctor Johannsen Reuchlins ... Augenspiegel*].
Tübingen: Thomas Anshelm, 1511.

The *Eye Glasses*, though also a response to Pfefferkorn's *Magnifying Glass*, publishes Reuchlin's comprehensive (forty-two page) defense of Jewish writings against the confiscation persecution. It features technical arguments based on Roman and ecclesiastical law as well as theological (and biblically based) expostulations that Christians should tolerate Jews and their writings. Reuchlin insists that Jewish learning and theology are crucial for the vitality of Christianity, and he defends Jewish writings against the charges of blasphemy and heresy. In the end, Reuchlin's academic assessment of Jewish literature was devastating to the campaign. This was the prime reason that Hoogstraeten, Tongern, Pfefferkorn and others immediately attacked him with such fury and resolve.

Illustrated on pages 6-8.

IV.2

Johannes Reuchlin. *Defense* [*Defensio Joannis Reuchlin Phorcensis ll. doctoris contra calumniatores suos Colonienses*].

Tübingen: Thomas Anshelm, 1513.

Reuchlin published this as a response to Professor Arnold van Tongern's *Articles*, the first formal list of articles of heresy drawn up against his *Eye Glasses*. It features strident invective against the professors of theology at Cologne (whom he calls "devilogians") and Johannes Pfefferkorn (who is an "ignorant butcher," "heretic," and "half-Jew"), but it is also a serious rebuke against the anti-Jewish campaign: "With these pamphlets from Cologne they are propagating the contention everywhere that the Jews are no longer Jews, but rather heretics and our enemies." He was so bold as to write: "I know my enemies have been vexed because I said that the Jews are our fellow citizens. Now I want them to rage even more, and I hope their guts burst, because I am saying that the Jews are our brothers."

IV.3

The Letters of Illustrious Men [*Illustrium virorum epistolae*]. Second, expanded edition. Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1519.

Reuchlin published the *Letters of Illustrious Men* in 1514 to illustrate his leading position in the Renaissance humanist movement. The work also features some of his correspondence with Jewish scholars and elicited further charges of heresy (excessively favorable attitudes toward Jews) from Johannes Pfefferkorn.

The second edition adds significant material that documents Reuchlin's close ties to the Vatican, including endorsements from cardinals who had pronounced him innocent of heresy in 1516. One letter quotes Pope Leo X saying "I will not allow that man to suffer any harm." The second edition also includes a 1518 letter of support from Martin Luther.

EPI S. ILLVST. VIRORVM AD

Philippus Melanchthon Brettanus Sueuus, Ioanni
Reuchlin Cognato suo Salutem.

SERIVS q̄ uolebam ad te scribo, expectandæ enim erant far-
cinæ Bibliopolarum nostrorum, si quos hi forte libellos Asta-
rothæ adferret, aut alia quorum nostra in re quis usus esset. Ni-
hil afferunt, id ut egerime patiar, qui cœpi argumentum quod
sum pollicitus ludere ἐλεγκτικὸν κατὰ τῶν ἀσεβούνων. Fortasse
coniicis, de amore, studio ac pietate in te mea. Non deferam, ne
dubita, signa nostra, μήποτε ῥιψάσῃς ἐσθλὸς. Excuditor Pisca-
tor Bilibaldi cum Nazareni libellis, mittā eum ad te. πρὶ ἀφρασιν
Erasmus in epistolam Pauli edidit, quā si uis mittam quoq; ὃ λέει
exclames ὃ βροῦται. Habes rursus Simplicium tuum & Ammoni-
um ac Philoponum. Gratia tibi qui nostro tantisper usui tam bo-
nos libros induleris. Quæso te, si qua habes Alberti, quorum nul-
lus est usus tibi, mitte ad me. Plutarchi & πρὶ ἀκούειν à me uersū
cui uis dicabo. Franciscus sese tibi noster nexum scribit, & uindica-
ri uult, non ceu in gregem tuum immisus aries, ut Iuricon: inq̄t
sed ceu arbuscula quæ in agrum aliquando tuum radices egit. Va-
le, & Philippum ne desere. Tubingæ.

Martinus Luther Augustinensis, Ioanni
Reuchlin Phorcensi.

DOMINVS tecum uir fortissime. Gratulor misericordiae
dei quæ in te est, uir & eruditissime & humanissime, qua tā-
dem præualuisti obstruere osloquentium iniqua. Fuisti tu
sanè organum consilii diuini, sicut tibi ipsi incognitum, ita oib̄
puræ Theologiæ studiosis expectatissimum, à deo longe alia fie-
bant à Deo, & alia uidebātur geri per uos. Eram ego unus eorum
qui tecum esse cupiebant, sed nulla dabatur occasio. Eram tamē
oratione & uoto tibi semper præsentissimus. Sed quod tunc nega-
tum est socio, nūc cumulatissime tributum est successori. Inuadūt
dentes istius Behemoth me, si quo modo sartire queant ignomi-
niam quam retulerunt ex te. Occurro & ego ipsis longe quidem
minoribus ingenii & eruditionis uiribus q̄ tu occurristi & prostra-
uisti, sed non minore animi fiducia. Congredi mihi detrectant, re-
spondere recusant, sed mera ui & uolentia in me uiam affectant.

Item IV.3, C3v. The second edition of the *Letters of Illustrious Men* includes an enthusiastic letter of support for Reuchlin from Martin Luther. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).

Articuli siue
ppōes de iudaico fauore nimis
suspecte. ex libello theutonico dñi Joānis Reuchlin legū doctoris
(cui speculi ocularis titul⁹ inscrip⁹) extracte. cū annotatōib⁹ et im-
probationib⁹ venerabilis ac zelosi viri mḡri nostri Arnoldi de Tū-
geri. artiū et sacre theologie p̄fessoris p̄fundissimi. et Collegij qđ vni-
uersitatis Lauretj vocat regēis p̄marij semper honoradi.

¶ Alpha beta. eiusdem sacre theologie professoris. in maledi-
cos iudeos et thalmud.

Responsiones ad argumēta quinquaginta q̄b⁹ dicit⁹ legū doctor
in sup̄rafato speculo vltus est iudeis suū thalmud saluare voluisse
diuersis scripture et sacroz doctorū auctoritatib⁹ roborate sequunt⁹

¶ Hermannus Buschij Palsphili in Iudeos iudeos/
rumq; amatores preposteris. Elogiū.

¶ Integra. sancta. nitens. certa. inconcussa. perennis
In toto. late p̄sident. orbefides
Huic nulli maculam poterunt. nec fingere rugam
Sacilegi. specie tota decēte placet
Dec te victrix. iudee insane. triumphat
Rumpare inuidia. tu licet vsq; tua
Nec tantum de te. sed et quocūq; triumphat
Infelix alio. qui tibi. Verpe. fauet

V. HERESY TRIAL AND DEBATE: “IMPERMISSIBLY FAVORABLE TO JEWS”?

V.1

Arnold van Tongern. *Articles Suspected of Being Excessively Favorable to the Jews* [*Articuli sive propositiones de iudaico favore nimis suspecte ex libello theutonico domini Ioannis Reuchlin ... extracte*].

Cologne: Quentel, 1512.

Arnold van Tongern (ca. 1468/70-1540) was a respected professor of scholastic theology at the University of Cologne. The dedicatee of Pfefferkorn's *Magnifying Glass*, Tongern wrote and published this first set of articles against Reuchlin's defense of Jewish writings. He claimed that Reuchlin's writings were “impermissibly favorable to Jews and Judaism” and contained some forty-three heretical or erroneous statements, which he duly listed. As condemnatory as Tongern's *Articles* may have been of Reuchlin, the most significant aspect of their ultimate publication is the professor's general assault against Judaism. He repeated all the insinuations against the Talmud and Jewish prayers. Moreover, he insisted that Jews poisoned wells, desecrated the Christian Eucharist, and ritually murdered Christian children, issues that had nothing to do with Reuchlin's defense. While these vile innuendos marred Christian-Jewish relations in the late Middle Ages, it was unusual for an academic authority to propagate them.

V.2

Jacob Hoogstraeten. *Destruction of the Kabbalah* [*Destructio cabale, seu cabalistiche perfidie ab Ioanne Reuchlin Capnione iampridem in lucem edite*].

Cologne: Quentel, 1519.

Jacob Hoogstraeten (ca. 1460-1527) was professor of theology, prior of the Cologne Dominican convent, papal inquisitor for the province of Teutonia, and Johannes Reuchlin's most determined prosecutor. He brought several cases against Reuchlin in Germany and personally prosecuted the effort against him in Rome from 1514 until 1518. This tract, which is an extensive critique of Reuchlin's *Art of the Kabbalah*, challenges the new humanist methodology of biblical philology. At one point, Hoogstraeten also threatens inquisitorial proceedings against Erasmus's new edition of the Bible (1516, etc.).

estructio Ca-

bale. seu Cabalistice perfidie ab
Ioanne Reuchlin Capnione iam pridem in lucem
edite. Sāctissimo dño nostro Leoni pape decimo
per Reuerendū patrem Iacobū Hochstraten, ar-
tiū & sacre Theologię Professorē eximiū, & here-
rice prauitatis, per Colonien. Magūtiū, Treueren
prouincias Inquisitorē æquissimū, vigilatissimū
q̃, ad totius ecclīę honorē reuerenter dedicata.

Opus nouū.

Anno a natali christiano. M.CCCCC.XIX.

V.2

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *Fire Glass* [*Abzotraiben und aus zuleschen eines vngegrunten laster buechleyn mit namen Augenspiegell ... Dar gegen ich meyn vnschult allen menschen gruntlich tzu vernemen vnd tzu vercleren in dese gegenwyrdigen buechgelgyn genant Brantspiegell gethan hab*].

Cologne: Herman Gutschaiff, 1512.

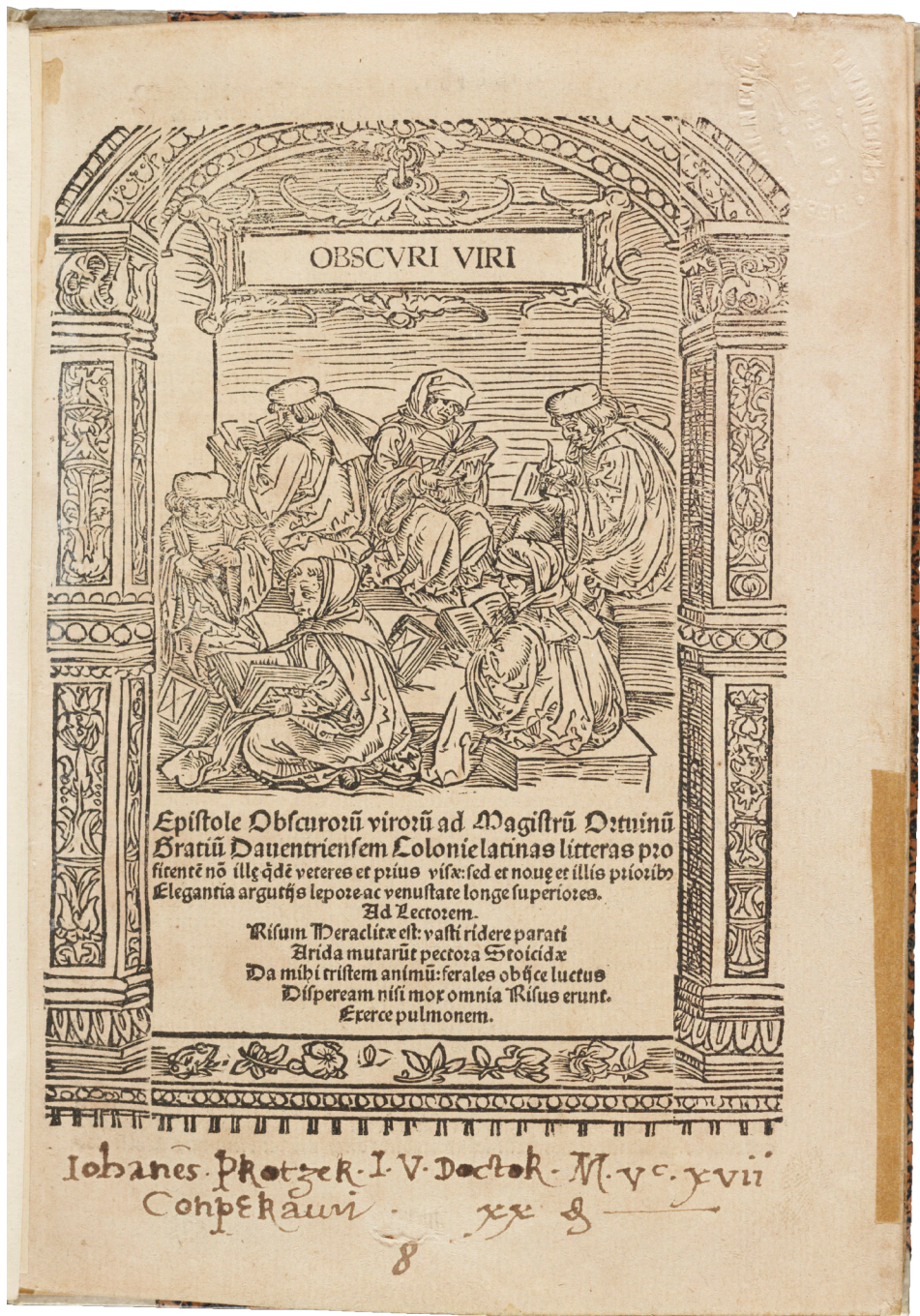
This response to Reuchlin's *Eye Glasses* is one of Pfefferkorn's most venomous pamphlets. It lists some thirty-four errors in *Eye Glasses*, excoriates Reuchlin's Hebrew scholarship, and alleges Jews have bribed and corrupted their defender. It also calls for an immediate end of Judaism in the empire (even urging forced baptism of Jewish children). The pamphlet reveals that Pfefferkorn's strategy was to focus first on the destruction of the the three most important Jewish communities in Germany: Frankfurt, Worms, and Regensburg.

V.3

The Letters of Obscure Men [*Epistolae obscurorum virorum*]. First edition of second part. Publisher and place of publication unknown, 1517.

Ranked among the classics of humoristic literature, *The Letters of Obscure Men* made a mockery of Reuchlin's opponents (especially Pfefferkorn, Hoogstraeten, Tongern, and another Cologne professor, Ortwin Gratius). The fake letters of the "obscure men" describe their various sexual escapades, drunken and gluttonous entertainments, absurd disputations on theological issues, and petty squabbles with humanist professors throughout the empire. Despite the coarse, slap-stick humor, many serious issues appear, such as clerical discipline, humanist studies, scholastic theology, and speculative philosophy. By far the most frequently reprinted tract from the Reuchlin Affair, *The Letters of Obscure Men* illustrates the tendency in Germany after 1514 to focus on the issue of humanism versus scholasticism in addition to the campaign against Judaism.

Publication of such brazen lampoons of a papal inquisitor and professors of theology carried extreme peril, making it necessary to print the work anonymously and preserve strict secrecy about its authorship. We now know that it was the work of three men, Crotus Rubeanus, Ulrich von Hutten, and Hermann Busch. The second part, on exhibition, features Hutten's acerbic contributions.



Item V.3, title page. *The Letters of Obscure Men* (1517), the first edition of part two. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).

V.4

Acts of the Trials [*Acta iudiciorum*].
Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1518.

Likely edited by Reuchlin himself or one of his supporters, the *Acts of the Trials* is an early history of the Reuchlin Affair that faithfully quotes many official documents from the trial, including prosecutorial statements against Reuchlin. It is of extreme value for any reconstruction of the Reuchlin trials. The work records Reuchlin's success in preliminary trials in Speyer (1514) and at the Roman Curia (1516). The work ends with a premature celebration of Reuchlin's victory: "Finally, ... (Hoogstraeten) departed from the Roman curia, where he had personally labored for four years with various methods to invalidate the Speyer trial, and he returned to Cologne with empty hands. The Speyer judgment still remains in force and will remain so forever."

Illustrated on page 19.

V.5

Johannes Pfefferkorn. *An Impassioned Protest* [*Ajn mitleydliche claeg vber alle claeg*].
Cologne: Servas Kruffter, 1521.

Despite Reuchlin's many victories, *Eye Glasses* was finally condemned by Leo X on 23 June 1520: "The named book, *Eye Glasses*, was and is scandalous and offensive to the pious ears of Christians and is excessively favorable to the impious Jews and moreover it must be removed from circulation and from the hands of Christians and its use must be inhibited, etc." The pope almost certainly made this decision in order to bolster the authority of the church in Germany as it faced the major threat of Luther's movement.

In this book, the last publication in the Reuchlin Affair, Pfefferkorn calls for a civil trial of Reuchlin at the Diet of Worms and for the public execution of Reuchlin as a heretic. Although Reuchlin, too, had called for a civil trial, it did not take place and he was not condemned and executed. He died in Stuttgart on 30 June 1522.

V.6

Martin Luther. *Von den Jüden vnd jren Lügen*.
Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1543.

In the aftermath of Reuchlin, many scholars continued the study of Hebrew and Jewish scholarship. Some would adopt relatively favorable positions on the status

of Judaism, but many would not. Martin Luther was a supporter of Reuchlin and also an early example of a biblical scholar who learned Hebrew from Reuchlin's grammar. Nonetheless, during the 1530s and 1540s, he advocated violent destruction of Jewish books and communities in several of his publications, including his notorious *On the Jews and Their Lies*. Horrified by the violence of Luther's anti-Semitism, the Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger wrote: "If today that famous hero Reuchlin were to return to life, he would declare that Tongern, Hoogstraeten, and Pfefferkorn had returned to life in this one person, Luther."



Item V.6, title page. Martin Luther's anti-Semitic tract, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543). From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).

Notes

¹ See Ludwig Feilchenfeld, *Rabbi Josel von Rosheim* (Strassburg: Heitz, 1898), 22. Quote is according to Isidor Kracauer, "Rabbi Joselmann de Rosheim," *Revue des Etudes Juives* 16 (1885): 88 (section 5). See also Chava Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, *The Historical Writings of Joseph of Rosheim* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 312.

² Gershom Scholem, *Die Erforschung der Kabbala von Reuchlin bis zur Gegenwart* (Pforzheim: Im Selbstverlag der Stadt, 1969), 7.

³ See David H. Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 113-37.

⁴ Johannes Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel* (1511), in Reuchlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers, Hans-Gert Roloff, and Peter Schäfer (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt, Frohmann-Holzboog, 1996-), 4/1:35, ll. 5-6.

⁵ Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel* (1511), in *Sämtliche Werke* 4/1:28, ll. 7-8.

⁶ Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel* (1511), in *Sämtliche Werke* 4/1:62, ll. 13-15.

⁷ See Reuchlin, *Defensio* (1513), in *Sämtliche Werke* 4/1:342.

⁸ See Johannes Reuchlin, *De arte cabalistica* (Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1517), fol. O7v.

⁹ Max Brod, *Johannes Reuchlin und sein Kampf* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965), 271.

¹⁰ Johannes Reuchlin, trans., *Liber S. Athanasii de variis quaestionibus* (Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1519), esp. fol. I3v and N1r. Reuchlin quoted Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* some ten times (in Hebrew with Latin translation) in his annotations to this text he attributed to Athanasius.

¹¹ Reuchlin, *Defensio* (1513), in *Sämtliche Werke* 4/1:344, ll. 19-25.

¹² Johannes Reuchlin, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Matthias Dall'Asta and Gerald Dörner (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt, Frohmann-Holzboog, 1999-), 1:338 (no. 105, 1 November 1500).

¹³ Johannes Pfefferkorn, *Defensio* (Cologne: Heinrich Neuß, 1516), fol. O3v.

¹⁴ The letter was reprinted in Latin and Hebrew in *Illustrium virorum epistolae*, ed. Johannes Reuchlin (Hagenau: Thomas Anshelm, 1519), fol. m1r.

¹⁵ Johannes Pfefferkorn, *Ajn mitleydliche claeg* (Cologne: Servas Kruffter, 1521), fol. H2r.

For further reading

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—. *Recommendation Whether to Confiscate, Destroy and Burn All Jewish Books*. Trans. Peter Wortsman. New York: Paulist, 2000.



II.5, colophon. Device of Reuchlin's printer, Thomas Anselm, showing Reuchlin's expansion of the tetragrammaton into Jesus' name. From the Klau Library, HUC-JIR (Cincinnati).