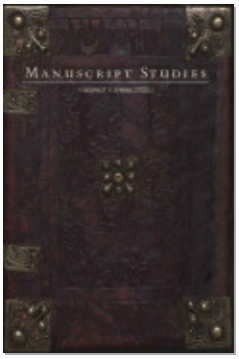
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"Beautiful Books with Beautiful Covers": The Bindings of Hebrew Manuscripts in Late Medieval Ashkenaz

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Unlike jars that were used in the ancient world to protect scrolls from damage and loss, bindings as we know them today were a product of making books in the form of a codex, a design that developed in the first few centuries of Christianity. At the beginning of the medieval period, Jews' adoption of the codex as their main book form made bindings integral to Jewish book culture.[1] The technique, materials, and artistic style of bindings varied greatly across time and space, producing diverse forms ranging from limp covers for small codices, which were often intended for private use, to massive, luxuriously decorated bindings made of leather on wooden boards, which were associated with the manuscripts' public functions and wealthy patrons. The purpose of the bindings was much

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1 For the Jewish adoption of the codex format, see Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, "The Anatomy of Non-biblical Scrolls from the Cairo Geniza," in *Jewish Manuscript Cultures: New Perspectives*, ed. Irina Wandrey (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 50–55.

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more than just to protect the pages of a text; bindings often reflected the status and function of a book.

Our knowledge about the medieval bindings of Hebrew manuscripts is extremely limited, however, as most medieval codices were rebound later.[2] With regard to Ashkenaz (central Europe), scholars have attributed the production of around fifteen bindings to Jewish anonymous craftsmanship.[3] Their focus was on the luxurious examples of the bookbinding craft, leaving simple, undecorated bindings largely unattended. As a result, any evaluation of the scope of extant medieval bindings on Ashkenazic codices, produced by either Jews or Christians, is unfeasible in this stage.

Additionally, between one and more than thirty-two bindings, mainly on Christian codices, were attributed to the fifteenth-century Jewish binder Meir Yaffe of Ulm.[4] The uncertainty of such attributions indicates a larger problem: Jewish and Christian binders seem to have shared the same methods of work so that identifying the binders or their religious affiliation is usually impossible on the basis of the technique or style. Yet, some hints on who bound Ashkenazic manuscripts can be found in the manuscripts themselves, as is discussed below.

To reveal the processes behind Jewish bookbinding practices, the craftsmen involved, and the products of their endeavor, two complementary kinds of evidence are examined in the present article: the five earliest extant examples of the bindings of Ashkenazic manuscripts that may provide evidence of the work of Jewish binders, and the primary written sources that contextualize and supplement the evidence presented by the bindings. A reassessment of these findings provides several new observations relating to Jewish bookbinding in this period and indicates areas of further research. The last section of this article considers the rebinding of Hebrew codices in

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2 Malachi Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology: Historical and Comparative Typology of Hebrew Medieval Codices Based on the Documentation of the Extant Dated Manuscripts Using a Quantitative Approach*, 323, available at https://www.nli.org.il/media/4975/hebrew-codicology-continuously-updated-online-version-eng.pdf (accessed in February 2021).

3 Summarized in Ursula Schubert, *Jüdische Buchkunst* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1992), 2:189–208.

4 Ursula E. Katzenstein, "Mair Jaffe and Bookbinding Research," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 14 (1982): 25.

Christian book collections, juxtaposing Christian approaches to Hebrew books with those of Ashkenazic book owners.

The Craftsmen Behind the Bookbinding

> Once a righteous man was taken out of his tomb [by angels] who proceeded to beat him. He appeared to someone in a dream and told him: "When I saw books that were becoming worn out, I did not have them bound in boards, and that is why I have been taken out of my tomb and beaten."[5]

With this moralizing story, which is one of the earliest references to bookbinding in the Ashkenazic milieu, the early thirteenth-century pietist work *Sefer Ḥasidim* (The Book of the Pious) emphasized the importance of binding books. The damage caused to the man's dead body, which "covered" his soul, was retaliation for endangering the holy content of the books by not providing them with covers. Apart from the practical need to protect books from loss or damage, a binding was thus conceived of as a means of safeguarding the holiness of a text, thereby preventing its desecration.

Moreover, in the Jewish tradition the special status of Jewish religious books (*sifrei kodesh*) was by extension applied to their material manifestations. By way of a host of prescriptions and restrictions, religious authorities instructed Jewish scribes, binders, and book owners on how to produce and handle manuscripts. One leitmotif of such prescriptions was to prevent any physical contact between sifrei kodesh and Christians, especially clerics and monks or their books. With regard to the bindings, *Sefer Ḥasidim* discouraged Jewish binders from training with monks. On the other hand, it permitted binding certain Jewish books in a monastic bindery, offering a compromise to treat Torah scrolls (and possibly also books with public

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5 Judah Wistinetsky, ed., *Sefer Ḥasidim according to the Parma Manuscript* [in Hebrew] (Berlin: Mekitzei nirdamim, 1891), 173, no. 647; translated in Colette Sirat, *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 247. See also Colette Sirat, *La conception du livre chez les piétistes ashkénazes au Moyen Age* (Geneva: Droz, 1996), 77–79.

religious functions, such as those used for liturgical readings) differently than books intended for private study, with the former bound only by Jews and the latter bound by Jews or monks.[6] Like many other aspects of bookcraft mentioned in *Sefer Ḥasidim*, the binding practices referred to there were quite common among Ashkenazic Jews, since monastic binders were considered more proficient than Jews at that time.[7]

If most Christian binders did indeed belong to religious institutions in the earlier centuries, with the rise of universities in Europe around the time of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, the appearance of secular, commercial workshops for book production undoubtedly made it easier for a Jewish book owner to get his manuscripts bound in a Christian bindery and for a Jewish binder to be trained by Christians.[8]

Given the limited number of medieval Jews who could afford books, it is likely that the bookbinder's profession was not particularly profitable on its own. Jewish bookbinders therefore often had several occupations associated with handcrafts. Jewish artisans such as goldsmiths, silversmiths, and masters of silk or leather work sometimes included bookbinding in their services, too.[9] Evidence from archival records from German-speaking regions in Europe suggests that professionals involved in other spheres of book production were especially likely to act as binders.[10] A Jew named Gumprecht of Erfurt, for example, was listed as a "scribe" in the tax register kept by the Jewish community of Erfurt in 1398 and as a "binder" a year later.[11]

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6 Wistinetsky, *Sefer Ḥasidim*, 179, nos. 680–82; also see Mordechai Ansbacher, "Bindings," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2007), 4:74.

7 Malachi Beit-Arié, "Ideals Versus Reality: Scribal Prescriptions in Sefer Ḥasidim and Contemporary Scribal Practices in Franco-German Manuscripts," in *Rashi, 1040–1990. Hommage à Ephraïm E. Urbach. Congrès européen des études juives IV, 1990*, ed. Gabrielle Sed-Rajna (Paris: Cerf, 1993), 561; Joseph Shatzmiller, *Cultural Exchange: Jews, Christians, and Art in the Medieval Marketplace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 144.

8 Nicholas Pickwoad, "Bookbinding," in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 1:112.

9 Jocelyn Hillgarth and Bezalel Narkiss, "A List of Hebrew Books and a Contract to Illuminate Manuscripts (1335) from Majorca," *Revue des études juives* 120 (1961): 297–320.

10 Max Grunwald, "Juden als Buchbinder," *Mitteilungen der Soncino-Gesellschaft* 6 (1930): 17–25.

11 Arthur Süssmann, "Das Erfurter Judenbuch (1357–1407)," *Mitteilungen des Gesamtarchivs der deutschen Juden* 5 (1914): 79, 83–85.

It is also noteworthy that Jewish bookbinders provided services not only to other Jews, but to a private and official Christian clientele as well. In 1490, for instance, the town of Nördlingen paid a Jew to bind a *Stadtbuch* (a book that recorded regulations established by a town council).[12] One of the most well-known Jewish binders, Meir Yaffe from Ulm, was a scribe and artist who copied and illuminated Hebrew manuscripts and bound books for Jews and Christians alike.[13] Among his clients was the Nuremberg City Council, which commissioned him to bind a Hebrew Pentateuch to be used for the Jewry-oath ceremony.[14] Max Husung identified Meir Yaffe as Meyerlein of Ulm, mentioned in a 1468 decree issued by Nuremberg City Council, which granted Meyerlein permission to stay in the city and bind some books for the Council's library.[15] The binding of the Pentateuch Yaffe produced contains a colophon he wrote, in which he called himself "Meir Yaffe, the decorator" (המצייר), apparently referring to the design of the binding (fig. 1).

As a rule, medieval bookbinders tended to remain anonymous, however; apart from Meir Yaffe, no colophons by Ashkenazic binders have come down to us. Binders' colophons are rarely found in any other areas of Jewish settlement either, and when they do appear, it is not before the fifteenth century. One such colophon appears in a manuscript of a *siddur* (lit. "order," a prayer book for personal daily prayer), which was copied by Solomon ben Naḥman for Daniel ben Jacob de Venosa in Lecce in 1485. Around six months later,

12 Daniel Eberhardt Beyschlag, ed., *Beyträge zur Kunstgeschichte der Reichsstadt Nördlingen*, (Nördlingen: Beck, 1800), 19.

13 For more on Yaffe's activities as a scribe, illuminator, and binder, see Franz Landsberger, "The Cincinnati Haggadah and Its Decorator," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 15 (1940): 536–43; and Katzenstein, "Mair Jaffe," 17–28.

14 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSB), Cod. hebr. 212; see Ilona Steimann, "'Das es dasselb puch sey': The Book as Protagonist in the Ceremony of the Jewry-Oath," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 13 (2019): 77–102.

15 Max J. Husung, "Ein jüdischer Lederschnittkünstler," *Soncino-Blätter: Beiträge zur Kunde des jüdischen Buches* 1 (1925–26): 29–43. Other books Yaffe bound for Christian patricians are mentioned in Leila Avrin, *Scribes, Script, and Books: The Book Arts from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2010), 313.

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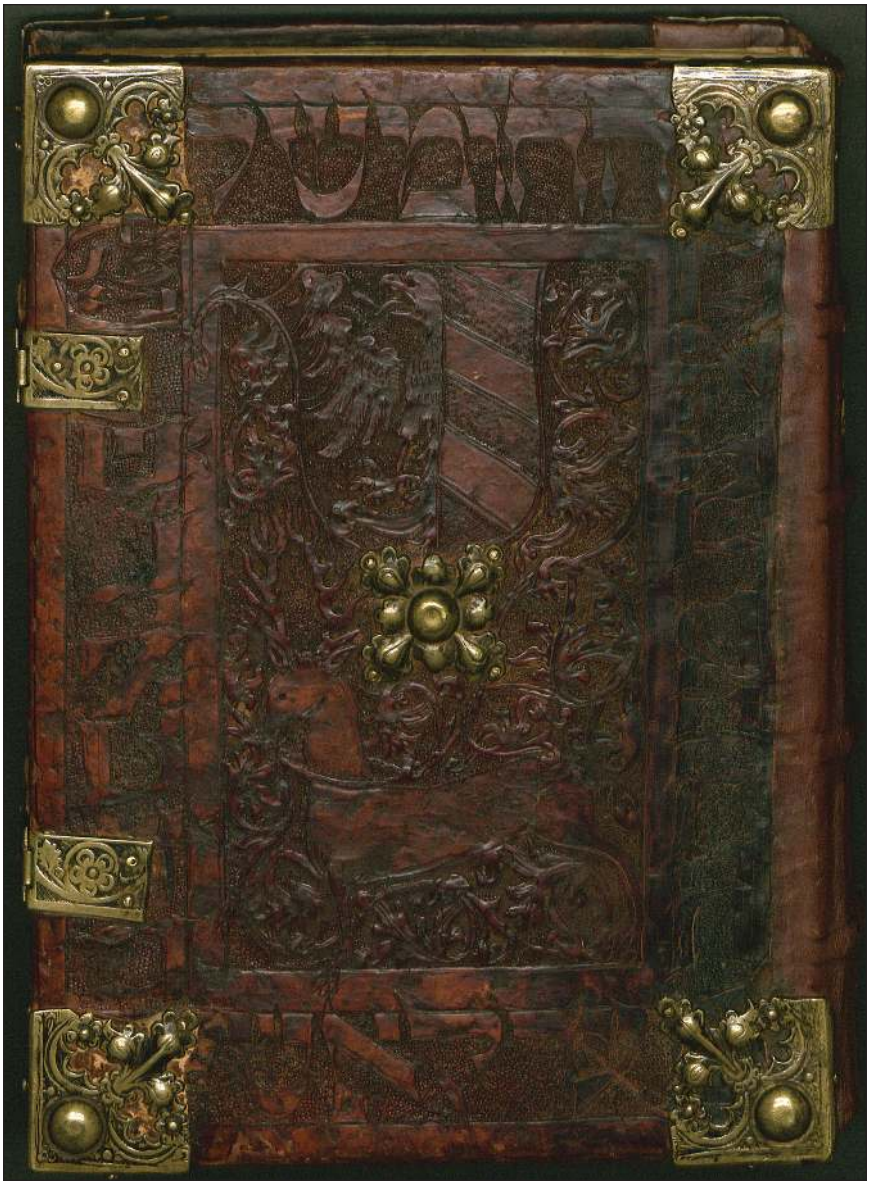


FIGURE 1. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 212, upper cover.

the owner, Daniel ben Jacob, commissioned Crescas Kalonymus to bind the manuscript, as the binder's colophon reveals.[16] Two colophons from early sixteenth-century Italy and Salonika attest to the scribes' work as binders of the manuscripts, which they had copied for their own use.[17] All these codices were bound again later, and the original bindings produced were lost.

It is certainly conceivable that the practices of Ashkenazic bookbinders were similar to those of their Italian and Byzantine counterparts. Ashkenazic binders worked on an individual basis, binding manuscripts for themselves or on demand. The private nature of binding practices was integral to the general, individualistic character of book production and use in Jewish communities. Unlike the scriptoria and professional workshops run by the surrounding Christian society, the production of Hebrew manuscripts was an outcome of private enterprise.[18] It was not until the printing press spread in Europe, which led to a rapid growth in the number of books that were produced and had to be bound, that Jewish bookbinding shops were established, evidence of which could be found in Italy.[19]

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16 BP, Parm. 1782, fol. 230v (Malachi Beit-Arié and Benjamin Richler, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma: Catalogue* [Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 2001], 284); also see Malachi Beit-Arié and Benjamin Richler, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library: Catalogue* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008), 140–41.

17 The first one is a siddur that Samson ben Eliya Ḥalfan Tzarfati copied and vocalized for himself, and it was completed, bound, and wrapped in 1504 (BP, Parm. 1739, fol. 273v; Beit-Arié and Richler, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina*, 249). Judging by this colophon, however, it is unclear whether he bound the manuscript himself or gave it to a binder. For other manuscripts copied by the same scribe for different patrons, see Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, 141; and Beit-Arié and Richler, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina*, 37. The second work is a compilation of Abraham ibn Ezra's astrological works that Crescas ben Shneur Sidis copied and bound for himself in Salonika in 1512 (New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Ms. 2623, fol. 1r; Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, 141).

18 Malachi Beit-Arié, "Were There Any Jewish 'Public' Libraries in the Middle Ages? The Individualistic Nature of the Hebrew Medieval Book Production and Consumption" [in Hebrew], *Tzion* 65 (2000): 441–51.

19 Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, 326.

Anonymous Jewish Bookbinders

Despite the scarcity of extant medieval bindings on Hebrew manuscripts, it seems that Jewish and non-Jewish bindings both shared the same structural characteristics, materials, and decorative repertoire (apart from scenes that were clearly Christian). As a result, no distinctive features of the work of Jewish binders in Ashkenaz or elsewhere could be discerned. Consequently, the "Jewishness" of the bindings attached to Hebrew manuscripts cannot be established unless the binders left a colophon or employed Hebrew script.[20]

However, some methods of producing bindings came to be associated with Jewish craftsmanship more than others.[21] One was the technique of cut-leather (*cuir-ciselé*) decoration, which was highly popular among Jewish binders in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The cut-leather bindings were produced by cutting, scratching, or engraving the outline of the decoration, which often appears in relief. This technique allowed the binders to design the covers in an individual manner without employing ready-made tools to impress the decoration.[22] The best example of a binding decorated this way is the aforementioned binding by Meir Yaffe (see fig. 1).

Precursors of this technique can be found on Coptic bindings.[23] From the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, cut-leather bindings were produced in the Iberian Peninsula and central Europe.[24] Because of the frequent

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20 Another fifteenth-century example of a Jewish binding inscribed in Hebrew letters with a German proverb, which some scholars attributed to Meir Yaffe (e.g., Katzenstein, "Mair Jaffe," 23, 27 n. 37), was reused in a twelfth-century manuscript of Haimo of Halberstadt's *Expositio super Epistolas et Evangelia*, which belonged to the Benedictine monastery in Ochsenhausen (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek [ÖNB], Cod. 919); see Theodor Gottlieb, *Bucheinbände. Auswahl von technisch und geschichtlich bemerkenswerten Stücken* (Vienna: Schroll, 1910), 1: cols. 27 and 72–73 and 2: pl. 80.

21 See, for instance, Max J. Husung, "Über den sogenannten Jüdischen Lederschnitt," *Soncino-Blätter* 1 (1925): 29–43.

22 Ernst Ph. Goldschmidt, "Some Cuir-Ciselé Bookbindings in English Libraries," *The Library* 13 (1933): 339–64 at 337–38.

23 Berthe van Regemorter, *Some Early Bindings from Egypt in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1958), 10.

24 Goldschmidt, "Some Cuir-Ciselé Bookbindings," 339–64.

appearance of the cut-leather decoration on the bindings that attach to Hebrew manuscripts, some scholars have assumed that Jews brought this technique from the East via Spain and introduced it to Christians in Europe.[25] According to Ursula Ephraim Katzenstein, the sudden appearance of the cut-leather bindings in fifteenth-century western Europe and the fact that all examples of such bindings on Christian codices postdate the Hebrew ones support this assumption.[26] However, cut-leather decoration can be found on two eighth-century Irish bindings, which may suggest that this technique applied in bookbinding was known in the West.[27] The lack of other Western examples between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries make any conclusions about the trajectory and dissemination of the cut-leather bindings impossible. As for the bindings of Hebrew manuscripts, because of the general popularity of cut-leather decoration among Jews and Christians in fifteenth-century Europe, cut-leather bindings alone do not necessarily imply that they were a product of Jewish craftsmanship, even if they protect Hebrew texts.[28]

How else can we detect who bound Hebrew manuscripts? Another aspect related to the binding process—and one that has usually been overlooked—provides a firmer basis for identifying such binders, namely vestiges of Hebrew numbering that the binders added to manuscripts to ensure the folios were in the right order when they were bound together. A group of five manuscripts in Vienna that include Mordekhai ben Hillel's Talmudic compendium *Sefer Mordekhai* (The Book of Mordekhai; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek [ÖNB], Cod. hebr. 2) and four liturgical

25 Ernst Ph. Goldschmidt, *Gothic and Renaissance Bookbindings* (Amsterdam: B. de Graaf, 1967), 1:82.

26 Katzenstein, "Mair Jaffe," 17–20.

27 London, British Library, Add. MS 89000; and Fulda, Landesbibliothek, MS Bonifatianus 3, respectively. See also John A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 97.

28 For more on bindings produced by Christians using the cut-leather technique, see Kurt Holter, "Lederschnitteinbände aus Niederösterreich," *Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich* 36 (1964): 685–95; Otto Reichl, "Ein Lederschnittband des. XIV. Jahrhunderts im Schlossmuseum," *Berliner Museen* 52/4 (1931): 79–81.

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Pentateuchs (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6, 13, 19, and 38) attest to this practice.[29] Codicological and paleographical evidence suggests that the manuscripts were copied in Ashkenaz during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The *Sefer Mordekhai* contains a scribal colophon that dates it to 1392.[30] All five codices are bound in dark brown calf leather over wooden boards, sewn on four (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 13 and 38), five (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2 and 19), and six (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6) slit leather supports and reinforced by uncolored endbands.[31] Clasps and bosses originally attached to the covers are missing. The binding of ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 19, which is shaped like a box, is particularly remarkable (fig. 2). Known from the ninth century in the Islamic world, such box bindings are characterized by the side walls added to one of the boards, creating a three-sided tray containing the bookblock. This type of binding was closely associated with Jewish work, as most of its fifteenth-century examples have indeed survived on Hebrew manuscripts from the Iberian Peninsula and Europe.[32]

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29 Arthur Z. Schwarz, *Die hebräischen Handschriften der Nationalbibliothek in Wien* (Vienna: Strache, 1925), 11 (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 19), 11–12 (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 38), 15–16 (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6), 17 (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 13), 66–68 (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2).

30 ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2, fol. 241v.

31 The bindings were described and reproduced in several publications. Regarding ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2 (505 × 355 mm), see Gottlieb, *Bucheinbände*, 1: cols. 66–7 and 2: pl. 69, for example. On ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6 (455 × 315 mm), see Theodor Gottlieb, *K.k. Hofbibliothek. Katalog der Ausstellung von Einbänden* (Vienna: Selbstverlag der Bibliothek [1908]), 146. On ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 13 (365 × 280 mm), see Friedrich Schmidt-Künsemüller, *Corpus der gotischen Lederschnitteinbände aus dem deutschen Sprachgebiet* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1980), 54, 233. On ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 19 (330 × 225 mm), see Gottlieb, *Bucheinbände*, 1: col. 66 and 2: pl. 68. On ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 38 (250 × 185), see Schmidt-Künsemüller, *Corpus,* 54 and 234.

32 Leila Avrin, "The Box Binding in the Klau Library Hebrew Union College," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 17 (1989): 26–35; Goldschmidt, "Some Cuir-Ciselé Bookbindings," 339–40; Szirmai, *Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding,* 60 n. 5; see also *The Language of Bindings Thesaurus,* available at https://www.ligatus.org.uk/lob/concept/3922 (accessed in February 2021). For more on box bindings of Ashkenazic Hebrew manuscripts, see Martin Bollert, "Ein Kastenband mit Lederschnitt in der Sächsischen Landesbibliothek zu Dresden," in *Buch und Bucheinband: Aufsätze und graphische Blätter zum 60. Geburtstage von Hans Loubier* (Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1923), 95–104.



FIGURE 2. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 19, upper cover and lower edge of the box-binding.

All bindings in the Vienna group are decorated in the cut-leather technique. The decorative repertoire of the five bindings includes floral motifs, grotesque and hybrid animals and human figures, and hunting and battle scenes, all arranged within panels or medallions and along the wide frames of the covers. There is nothing particularly "Jewish" about the motifs employed or about the way they were executed, either. Yet the binders of these manuscripts displayed an obvious awareness of how to handle Hebrew books properly, opening them from right to left, and therefore emphasized the upper cover in the books' decoration (in the right-to-left direction of reading Hebrew), as opposed to the lower cover, which was either decorated less or left almost undecorated (e.g., ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6).



FIGURE 3. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 19, fol. 253v, fragment showing Hebrew numbering (ג) at the bottom right.

The types of motifs and the artistic style of the bindings in this group indicate that they were produced between the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, not long after the copying of these codices was completed, and that the bindings were produced by German, Austrian, or Bohemian craftsmen.[33] That these artisans were Jewish is suggested by the Hebrew numeration appearing in the quires, most likely added during the binding process. Some bifolia of ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2 and Cod. hebr. 13, have tiny Hebrew numbers on them from *alef* (1) to *dalet* (4).[34] In ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 19, a similar Hebrew numeration appears in plummet in the lower left-hand corner of the verso pages in the first half of each quire (fig. 3).[35]

If the catchwords for quires—the first word of the quire, which is repeated in the lower margins of the final verso page of each preceding

33 Theodor Gottlieb suggested that the bindings of ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2, and ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 19, were of Bohemian origin (Gottlieb, *Bucheinbände*, 1: col. 26). The decoration motif of hunters riding horses on the upper cover of ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 13, is stylistically similar to the illustrations in the Erna Michael Haggadah (IM, Ms. 181/018, e.g., on fol. 40r), which was produced in Bohemia in 1400–1420. This similarity may support Gottlieb's assumption.

34 Digits in the Hebrew numbering system are almost always expressed by Hebrew letters. ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2, e.g., fols. 38r, 39r, 40r, 79r, 95r, and 96r; ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 13, e.g., fols. 33r, 34r, 43r, and 49r.

35 ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 19, fols. 251v–254v, 259v–261v.

quire—that were written by the scribes of these manuscripts represent the most widespread practice of ensuring the order of the quires in Ashkenazic codices, the Hebrew numeration may reveal unique evidence of the Jewish binders' workflow.[36] These bifolia signatures are similar to what we sometimes find in earlier Hebrew manuscripts from the East and in some instances from Spain and Italy.[37] One may of course argue that the numeration of any kind could be added by scribes or owners to ensure the order of the leaves in a codex as long as the codex was kept unbound. However, in the Vienna group, it was not the scribes who wrote the bifolia signatures, as is evident from their script and writing devices.[38] It is also unlikely that the owners added the numeration. Owners would have numbered all folios in the manuscript to ensure the sequence of leaves of unbound codices or to navigate through already bound texts.[39] Further, bifolia signatures in Hebrew manuscripts are rare. The fact that they appear specifically in this group of the manuscripts, the bindings of which were previously attributed to Jewish craftsmanship on the basis of the cut-leather decoration, supports the conclusion that they were written by the Jewish binders. If this hypothesis is correct, the Ashkenazic binders' practice can be compared to the numbering of quires in some Hebrew codices from the Middle East that may also have been added for or by the binders.[40]

However, the marks do not necessarily imply that the extant bindings are the original bindings. The Pentateuch in ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 13, for example, is probably still in its original binding; the manuscript itself and its binding were produced in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. No text is missing, and the first leaf of the first quire and the last leaf of the last quire were left blank to serve as pastedowns or flyleaves for the covers. By contrast, the Pentateuch, ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6, was probably rebound. Its cut-leather binding was not produced in the earlier fourteenth century when

36 For catchwords, see Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, 338–41.

37 Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, 356–57.

38 See also below the bifolia signatures in plummet in ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 4, which does not preserve its original binding.

39 Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, 357.

40 Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, 348–49.

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this manuscript was copied, but around 1400, after its later Jewish owner had replaced the first three quires. While it is still unclear why the original quires had to be removed from the manuscript, around the year 1400 two Jewish scribes, one of whom could be the new owner, replaced them as follows: for the first quire, they reused a quire opening with a copy of Genesis that was taken from another thirteenth-century manuscript.[41] This quire is therefore older than the original ones in ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6. The next two quires were copied by these two scribes themselves, adjusting the text to the preceding quire and the one that follows it.[42] It was in the same context of adapting the manuscript to the new owner's requirements that the two original colophons in ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6, were partly erased. At the end of the Pentateuch, the erased lines were replaced by updated information stating that Isaac ben Samuel had copied the Targum for Israel ben Moses.[43] At the end of the *megillot* (scrolls), a partly erased inscription repeats the name of the scribe, Isaac ben Samuel ha-Kohen from [. . .]bruck (possibly a town in Austria), who copied the Targum for [. . .] ben Solomon. The replaced inscription preserves the name of the original scribe of the manuscript and attests to the change of ownership from [. . .] ben Solomon to Israel ben Moses. Once the first quires had been replaced and the relevant adjustments had been made, ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6, was bound in its current binding. It is also possible that the scribes who replaced the first quires were the binders as well, in which case they will have had some older Hebrew manuscripts at their disposal, which they used to replace the quires and as waste material for binding.

This manuscript does not contain the bifolia signatures but reveals another means of ensuring the order of leaves in the codex. In addition to catchwords for the quires written by the scribe of the text at the end of each quire, another hand, possibly the binder, wrote the words "up to here" (כאן עד) in

41 ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6, fols. 1r–6v.

42 ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6, fols. 7r–22v.

43 Onkelos's Aramaic translation, suggesting the Pentateuch that contains the Targum after each Hebrew verse; ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6, fol. 211v. Unfortunately, it is impossible to compare the script of the scribes who replaced the first quires to that of the updated ownership information since these are different kinds of script (square script for the biblical text and semicursive for the colophon).

light ink in the lower left-hand corner of the recto side of some leaves.[44] As most of these notes were cropped, it is difficult to reconstruct the pattern of their appearance and their function. If these words were added by the binder, it would suggest that the binder was Jewish and that he was the one who pasted two fourteenth-century fragments of the Babylonian Talmud to the inner side of the front and back boards of the covers.[45] Metal embosses that once embellished both covers (now lost) pierced the pastedown fragments in the corresponding spots, indicating that the pasting of the Talmudic fragments was integral to making the binding (fig. 4).

In the Jewish tradition, the special status of Jewish religious books mentioned above suggests that discarded Jewish codices belonged in a *genizah* (a storeroom for discarded Hebrew books, usually in a synagogue) or that they were ritually buried to protect them from desecration. Although Jewish sages therefore often felt that the reuse of fragments of Hebrew texts for bindings was a dishonorable deed by bookbinders with respect to sifrei kodesh, the reality was quite different.[46] The restrictions had no serious effect on actual practices, and Jewish binders continued to take older manuscripts apart for binding.

On the other hand, some Jewish book owners may have considered the reuse of the Hebrew fragments inappropriate. This could be the reason for the removal of two fragments of a *maḥzor* (lit. "cycle," i.e., a communal prayer book for festivals, fasts, and special occasions) used as binders' waste in *Sefer Mordekhai*, ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2. The imprint of mirrored Hebrew characters of the maḥzor indicates that its fragments were attached to the

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44 ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 6, e.g., fols. 89r, 91r, and 93r (quire: fols. 87–94) and fols. 101r, 103r, and 105r (quire: 99–106). The words "up to here" were a common scribal mark for the end of a text portion. Although we know too little about Jewish binders' practices, it stands to reason that binders' marks were not different from those of the scribes, especially because some scribes were themselves binders.

45 Babylonian Talmud, Nezikin, Baba Kamma: 59b, 54a, 54b, 51a–51b, 62a (Schwarz, *Die hebräischen Handschriften*, 16).

46 See Simcha Emanuel, "The European Genizah: Its Character and the History of Its Study," *Materia Giudaica* 24 (2019): 589–90.



FIGURE 4. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 6, upper part of the upper cover and its pastedown.

covers of ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2, as pastedowns.[47] Whether the fragments were removed by Shemariyah ben Moses, for whom this manuscript was produced, or by someone else in a later period is unknown, however. It is also noteworthy that two quires of these manuscript were lost along with the text on them, probably because the manuscript was rebound shortly after it was bound for the first time.[48]

The Vienna group of Hebrew manuscripts, then, provides rare evidence of the activities of Jewish bookbinders whose "Jewishness" can be established. The manuscripts may be counted among the earliest examples of extant Jewish bindings in Ashkenaz. Establishing the religious affiliation of the binders enables us to reassess a number of interrelated issues ranging from the methods and techniques used in the work of Jewish binders, the stages this work involved, and the visual repertoire employed for decoration, which has been treated only marginally here, to the binders' waste material. The latter furnishes evidence of the actual use of fragments of discarded Hebrew manuscripts among Ashkenazic bookbinders despite the halakhic (i.e., pertaining to Jewish religious laws) problems associated with this practice.

Judging a Book by the Color of Its Cover

The study of bindings has always tended to focus on the fine, lavishly decorated leather bindings that belong to the expensive specimens of the bookbinding craft. Such bindings could only be afforded by the wealthiest members of the Jewish community and are hardly representative of usual Ashkenazic bookbinding practices.[49] Ashkenazic book owners not only

47 ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2, fol. 1r (upper edge) and the inner side of the lower cover (the upper and lower edges) (Schwarz, *Die hebräischen Handschriften*, 68).

48 ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2, between fols. 228v and 229r (also see Schwarz, *Die hebräischen Handschriften*, 67). An imprint of a blue panel that decorated the last leaf of the missing quires on the first leaf of the next extant quire indicates that the missing quires were included in the manuscript, possibly during its first binding (ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 2, fol. 229r).

49 As Neil Harris has shown in the examples of Venetian books from the second half of the fifteenth century, bindings could constitute as much as 70 percent of the purchase price (Neil

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possessed large and expensive volumes of the Bible, prayer books, and the like, which had to be bound in solid bindings in accordance with their size and religious status, but also smaller codices for private religious practices and study, professional use, and leisure. The latter could be bound in simple bindings made of plain wooden boards, wrapped in limp covers (*kopert*), which were widespread in Europe in cheaper codices made for private use, or even remain unbound.[50]

If the rate of survival of the old bindings with wooden boards is low for Hebrew manuscripts, that of original limp covers is close to zero. Yet evidence from Jewish inventories of books provides a glimpse of the material appearance of books in private Jewish libraries. These inventories, or book lists, were added by Jewish book owners on the blank pages of manuscripts in their possession; they can be found from early times in all areas of Jewish settlement. In addition to describing various characteristics of the books such as their textual content, script, and so on, the list compilers sometimes mentioned the bindings.[51] Especially detailed descriptions of bindings appear in the lists of Jewish book owners in Italy.[52] Undoubtedly, a binding was a significant factor in the economic value of a manuscript and for this reason would deserve mention in the book lists, but other possible reasons for including a description of the binding can be deduced from the lists as well.

One such example is found in a fifteenth-century compilation on Kabbalah. The book list at the end of the manuscript in semicursive Ashkenazic script was compiled by a late fifteenth-century owner of this codex,

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Harris, "Costs We Don't Think About: An Unusual Copy of Franciscus de Platea, *Opus restitutionum* [1474], and a Few Other Items," in *Printing R-Evolution and Society, 1450–1500. Fifty Years That Changed Europe*, ed. Cristina Dondi [Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2020], 524).

50 For limp covers, see Szirmai, *Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 285; also see Maren Mau-Pieper, *Koperte als Einband bei Gebrauchsschriftgut in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, unpublished master's thesis (University of Tübingen, 2005).

51 Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, 324 n. 66, and Sirat, *Hebrew Manuscripts*, 248. For a general bibliography of the published book lists, see Eduard Feliu, "Bibliografia sobre inventaris, testaments, llistes i notícies de llibres hebreus medievals," *Tamid: Revista catalana anual d'estudis hebraics* 2 (1998/99): 228–40; 3 (2000/2001): 263.

52 Around forty book lists of Jewish private book collections from Renaissance Italy were assembled by Robert Bonfil; see Robert Bonfil, *The Rabbinate in Renaissance Italy* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 295–98.

who referred to himself as the scribe of one of the codices listed.[53] The list contains around twenty-eight manuscripts (some are miscellaneous volumes and include more than one title) and is arranged in one column. Since the list is not well preserved and many of its items are today hardly legible, it is difficult to detect the item on the list that corresponds to the manuscript in which the list appears. However, this manuscript may be a kabbalistic compilation referred to in the middle of the list as "covered with bound parchment" (מכוסה קלף כרוך) . Indeed, the manuscript is bound in limp parchment binding made of a reused fifteenth-century Latin codex from the Duchy of Savoy.[54] As for the bindings of other codices listed, the compiler of the list distinguished between limp parchment bindings (two items) and those covered in black or red leather (three items). Although none of the manuscripts are described as having boards, in all the cases where the compiler referred to the colored leather, it is reasonable to assume that the leather covered boards.[55] Such a description suggests a well-known type of bindings made of wooden boards covered with colored leather.[56] Any decoration on the covers went unmentioned.

All in all, the owner of these books provided information about the bindings for only five of the manuscripts listed (from what could be deciphered). The fact he did not mention the bindings of other codices does not necessarily imply that they were unbound; the compiler of the list was not always consistent in the details he provided. Yet, it is obvious that some codices were unbound and were referred to as "quires" (קונטרסים) as opposed to "bound volume" (כרך). The bindings as well as other indicators of material

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53 Milan, Ambrosian Library, Ms. & 31 Sup., fol. 56v (published in Carlo Bernheimer, *Codices hebraici Bybliothecae Ambrosianae* [Florence: Leon S. Olschki, 1933], 61–62). I am grateful to Miriam Lange (the University of Hamburg) for bringing this list to my attention.

54 The Latin text mentions the counts of Savoy and Villars.

55 The formulation "covered with [black, red, etc.] leather" often appears in Italian book lists, occasionally omitting the word "boards"; see the book lists in Parma, Biblioteca Palatina (BP), Parm. 3288, fol. 232v; and BP, Parm. 3190, fol. 285v, for example (Beit-Arié and Richler, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina*, 19 and 28–29, respectively), and the list published in Isaiah Sonne, "Book Lists Through Three Centuries," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 2 (1955): 3–19 (Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, Ms. 83, fol. 135v).

56 Szirmai, *Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 233.

appearance of the manuscripts mentioned in the list, such as the size and writing support, helped their owner to distinguish the manuscripts in his library from one another.

As a rule, however, Ashkenazic book lists rarely contain any information on the bindings of the codices they describe—a fact that is noteworthy. While explaining the Ashkenazic book owners' apparent lack of interest in the material appearance of their manuscripts is beyond the scope of this article, it bears mentioning that those few owners who did refer to the bindings focused on their color. The Regensburg Pentateuch from around 1300, for instance, contains a list of nine books compiled shortly after 1530.[57] The compiler referred to eight books by their content (mainly biblical, halakhic, and liturgical texts) and described one book, the content of which he did not mention, as a book in red leather (עוד ספר עור אדם). In this case, the red leather binding was rendered as the main attribute of the book rather than the title.

In another late fifteenth-century Ashkenazic book list containing forty-six titles, which was added to a fourteenth-century compilation on Hebrew grammar and is now kept in Leipzig, one "new" prayer book is mentioned along with its beautiful white binding (תפילה חדשה עם עור לבן נאה) (fig. 5), indicating a remarkably fine binding, possibly decorated, that the owner especially valued.[58] How other books were bound is unclear, but the current binding of the codex that contains the book list was produced around the same time as the list itself. The binding made of wooden boards that are

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57 Jerusalem, Israel Museum, Ms. 180/052, fol. [157v]. For more on the Regensburg Pentateuch, see Hanna Liss, "A Pentateuch to Read In?: The Secrets of the Regensburg Pentateuch," in *Jewish Manuscript Cultures: New Perspectives*, ed. Irina Wandrey (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 89–128.

58 Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. 1107, fol. 101v (Karl Vollers, *Katalog der islamischen, christlich-orientalischen, jüdischen und samaritanischen Handschriften der Universitäts-Bibliothek zu Leipzig* [Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1906], 438). The manuscript itself in which the book list is found does not seem to be referred to explicitly in the list. But the only title that the compiler of the list underlined, קובץ על נייר (a compilation on paper), may stand for this grammatical compilation, even though the compilation is actually on parchment. The word עור (leather) here certainly describes the binding, as opposed to the word קלף (parchment), which describes the material of the manuscripts' leaves in this list.

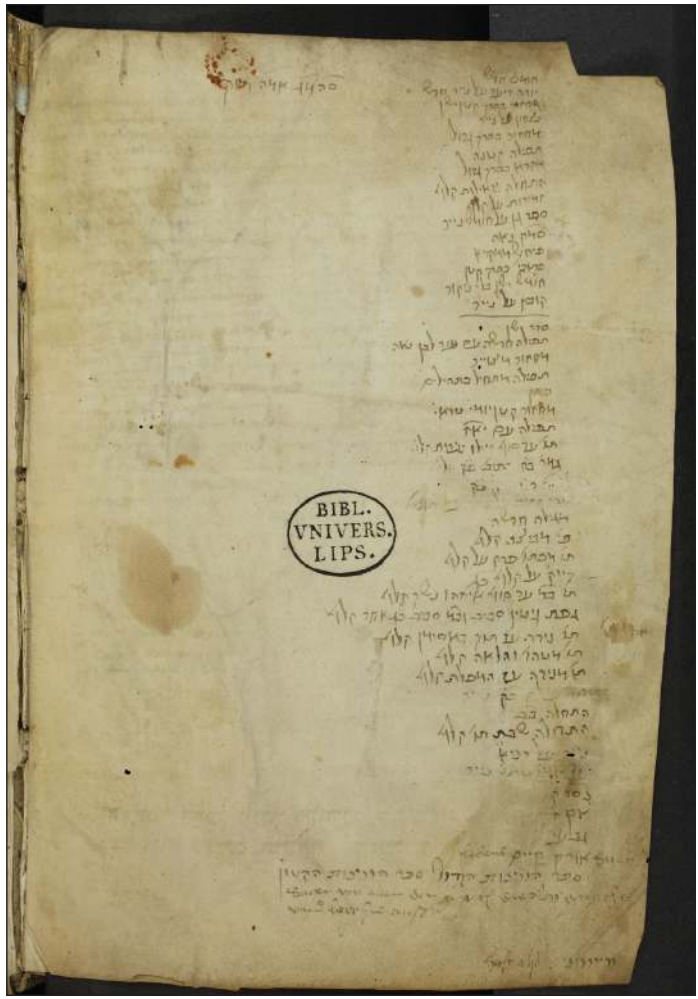


figure 5. Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. 1107, fol. 101v.

largely left uncovered (known as "quarter binding") is typical of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century German manuscripts (fig. 6).[59] The possibility that a Christian Hebraist who owned this manuscript in the first half of the

59 For the term "quarter binding", see *The Language of Bindings Thesaurus*.

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FIGURE 6. Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. 1107, lower cover.

sixteenth century rebound it in its current binding cannot be excluded, however.[60]

Noting the color of bindings was an outcome of the storage system. The usual aids for navigating through large medieval libraries in Christian Europe

60 Ilona Steimann, *Jewish Book—Christian Book: Hebrew Manuscripts in Transition Between Jews and Christians in the Context of German Humanism* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 164.

such as book titles, authors' details, and shelfmarks (mainly in institutional libraries) were placed on the covers or on fore-edges of the books following conventional book storage practice so that they faced the reader.[61] Small private libraries were commonly kept in book chests, which were sometimes equipped with locks.[62] Even if the books bore titles on their covers, keeping them in a chest made the titles impossible to see.

The same holds true for private Ashkenazic libraries, which were not particularly large as a rule. *Sefer Ḥasidim*, for example, refers to book chests on several occasions. In one case, it instructs the reader not to pawn books as a pledge to Christians, even if the books remain in the Jewish owner's home, stored in a chest (תיבה), and a Christian is only given the key to the chest.[63]

Christian registers of confiscations that took place in the wake of Jewish expulsions from German territories are an important source of information about late medieval private libraries in Ashkenaz. When the authorities confiscated goods from Jewish households in 1453 in connection with the expulsion of the Jews from Breslau, for example, they found multiple chest-like containers (*Kastin*) and sacks filled with manuscripts.[64] Chests (*Truhen*) were the main type of furniture used to store books in Jewish houses in Regensburg according to the register of Jewish property compiled by officials there in 1476.[65] Along with chests, the Regensburg register also mentions *Kasten* (similar to *Kastin*) and occasionally an *Almrein* as

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61 See, for example, Albert Derolez, "Medieval Libraries in the Low Countries: Thoughts for an Integrated Approach," *Queeste* 20 (2013): 75; and Szirmai, *Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 268–70.

62 John W. Clark, *The Care of Books: An Essay on the Development of Libraries and Their Fittings, from the Earliest Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 292–93.

63 *Sefer Ḥasidim*, 180, no. 689; for additional references, see 173, no. 646; and 177, no. 668. See Ḥayyim ben Isaac Or Zaru'a, *Responsa* (Jerusalem: Monsohn, 1959), 59b, no. 176.

64 Marcus Brann, *Geschichte der Juden in Schlesien* (Breslau: Schatzky, 1907), 4:114 n. 3; also see Ludwig Oelsner, *Schlesische Urkunden zur Geschichte der Juden im Mittelalter* (Vienna: K.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1864), 80–83. Regarding the term *Kastin*, see Moriz Heyne, *Fünf Bücher deutscher Hausaltertümer von den ältesten geschichtlichen Zeiten bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1899), 1:259 n. 148.

65 Wilhelm Volkert, "Das Regensburger Judenregister vom 1476," in *Festschrift für Andreas Kraus zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Pankraz Fried (Kallmünz: Lassleben, 1982), 125–28, 134–36, 138.

well (a cupboard), in which Jewish books were found.[66] Although many of the manuscripts in Breslau and Regensburg came from the households of Jewish moneylenders and were not necessarily used by their owners for reading but kept as pawned articles, it is still safe to say that books in Ashkenazic households were mainly stored in chest-like containers. The chests could be of various sizes and contained large and small books alike, sometimes stored "dureinander" (in disorder), as the Regensburg register tells us, describing 166 books that belonged to Isaak Straubinger.[67]

How did the outside of the manuscripts stored in a chest indicate what was hidden inside them, and how could a reader find the manuscript he (or she) needed? We do not know for sure whether Jewish book owners employed any devices on the bindings and fore-edges of their books to indicate their contents, such as titles and authors' names, as the extant medieval bindings of Hebrew codices display no such information. Other manuscripts were rebound and their edges were trimmed, so any titles they were given may have disappeared. But even if the titles were once inscribed on the covers or fore-edges, they would still not have been visible on most of the manuscripts piled up in the chests. The binding, and in particular its color, was the only component that remained discernible in a pile and apparently helped the owner to find a specific book. Even if several codices were bound in a red leather binding, for instance (a color that appears to have been especially popular in Italian book lists), the binding would still have been helpful as a way of spotting a particular work.

Returning to the subject of book lists, given their possible function as reference aids, it is reasonable to assume that manuscripts that contained lists of this kind were put on top of other codices and were therefore easiest to access. This does not seem to be the case in reality, however. The order of the books in a pile was actually a halakhic issue: Ashkenazic rabbis prescribed

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66 Volkert, "Das Regensburger Judenregister," 127–29, 135, 139–40. For more on these kinds of furniture, see Heyne, *Fünf Bücher*, 1:259–62.

67 Volkert, "Das Regensburger Judenregister," 141. Isaak Straubinger was a wealthy moneylender and scholar; he owned the largest number of books out of those mentioned in the register (Arie Maimon and Mordechai Breuer, eds., *Germania Judaica* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995], 3, no. 2: 1193, note 30).

a certain hierarchy for religious books according to the merit of their holiness, ascending from the Oral Law to the Written Law, with the Torah scroll on top.[68] Moreover, *Sefer Ḥasidim* recommended the books of the Written Law and those of the Oral Law to be stored separately in different chests.[69] A grammatical compilation like the one in Leipzig belonged to the level below the Oral Law and therefore could not be placed on top of the biblical books (unless its owner was not particularly strict about these kinds of halakhic regulations).

It is unclear to what extent these book lists actually reflect the arrangement of manuscripts in chests and why the book lists were added to these specific manuscripts in the first place. The order of the books in the Leipzig list does not seem to follow any obvious thematic rules, unlike some other lists that were structured in accordance with the books' genres, descending from the Bible to the Oral Law and beyond.[70] Neither variant provides any clues as to whether the manuscripts were physically arranged in the order in which they appear on the lists, however. It is also noteworthy that the manuscript that contains the list is recorded in the middle of the list in many cases—in the Leipzig list, for example. Other Ashkenazic lists sometimes contain a Torah scroll in private possession, which, being the holiest of the Jewish ritual objects, could not be put together with other books; rather, it was probably kept in a separate chest.[71] These book lists were therefore structured according to some other principle. They do not appear to correspond to the actual arrangement of the books, nor do they reflect the number of chests used for storing them.

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68 Joseph Karo, *Shulḥan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah*, ed. Naftali Hirtz Mendelevich (Jerusalem: Imrei shefer, 2001), 662, no. 282: 19.

69 *Sefer Ḥasidim*, 173, no. 646; also see *Sefer Ḥasidim*, 418, no. 1746.

70 See, for instance, a late fifteenth-century Ashkenazic book list published in Isaiah Sonne, "Book Lists Through Three Centuries," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 1 (1953): 55–76 (Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College Library, Ms. 675, fol. 1r). Biblical codices appear at the center of this list, while all the other titles surround them.

71 For example, Moscow, The Russian State Library, Ms. Guenzburg 620, fol. 272r. Also in this case, the manuscript that contains the list (Maimonides's *Repetition of the Torah*) is recorded in the middle of the list.

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The bindings described in the book lists discussed here are no more than the tip of the iceberg. The lists document not only the scope and content of the texts owned and read in the Jewish communities, but also their appearance, which further systematic study in this field promises to reveal in more detail.[72] For the purpose of this article, what is clear is that the binding of a medieval Jewish manuscript not only defined the economic value of the manuscript, but was one of its primary material markers and the first reference aid likely to have been used in its retrieval.

The Afterlife of Hebrew Manuscripts in Christian Libraries

A binding is normally the first thing to suffer from constant use. The turbulent history of the Jewish communities in Ashkenaz, which were often forced to move away because of Christian persecution, also left an unavoidable imprint on the appearance of Jewish books. Manuscript bindings were often damaged during persecutions or were removed by Jews themselves to lessen the weight of the books when they took to the road, leading to the frequent need for rebinding later.

Moreover, the bindings of manuscripts that passed into Christian hands as a result of the confiscations, looting, or legitimate acquisition were often replaced in Christian libraries. One such example is the large volume of the Hebrew Bible in Vienna, copied in Ashkenaz in 1344.[73] The manuscript reveals schematic Hebrew numbers inscribed by the original Jewish binder in plummet in the lower left-hand corner of the recto pages, similar to other codices in the Vienna group already discussed. In this case, the numbers run from *alef* (1) to *ḥet* (8) and are on each folio of the quires, which mostly have eight leaves each.[74] As a result of the Vienna *Gezerah* (edict) of 1420/21, when the Jewish communities were destroyed in in Vienna and its

72 One such study is currently being carried out by Miriam Lange in her doctoral research, entitled *Behind Hebrew Book Lists: Jewish Medieval Libraries in Ashkenaz and Italy*.

73 ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 4 (Schwarz, *Die hebräischen Handschriften*, 1–2).

74 ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 4, e.g., fols. 294r–301r.

surroundings, the Vienna group of Hebrew manuscripts, including this Bible, was confiscated from local Jews and moved to the possession of Vienna University.[75] The university rebound the codex in brown leather on wooden boards, possibly because the original binding of the Bible was damaged. Blind-tooled chains of lozenges enclosing flowers, which were typical of Viennese bindings produced shortly after 1500, decorate the binding.[76] Given the monumental size and importance of this manuscript, one might assume that it had a luxurious cut-leather Jewish binding before it was rebound, just like other Hebrew manuscripts in the Vienna group.

The act of rebinding was not always the result of a practical need to repair a book; it was also done to signify the incorporation of a book into one's own collection. Noble book collectors usually regarded their libraries as a microcosm in which the bindings played a primary role. Bindings made from the same material in a similar style, often imprinted with the name, portrait, or armorial stamps of their owners, produced visual homogeneity within a library, defining the book collection as a single entity and the property of an individual. One example is the mid-sixteenth-century bindings of Ottheinrich (Otto-Henry) of Pfalz-Neuburg, Count Palatine of the Rhine, that were similarly designed and often adorned with his portrait, including his Hebrew volumes.[77]

In contrast, the bindings of the books collected by the Augsburg patrician and humanist Johann Jakob Fugger around the same time do not display any personal symbols, but the covers are uniformly decorated, even

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75 Ilona Steimann, "Forced Journey Between Two Faiths: The Hebrew Manuscripts of the University of Vienna," in *The Jewish Book, 1400–1600: From Production to Reception*, ed. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Ilona Steimann (forthcoming).

76 Kurt Holter, "Verzierte Wiener Bucheinbände der Spätgotik und Frührenaissance. Werkgruppen und Stempeltabellen," in *Buchkunst, Handschriften, Bibliotheken: Beiträge zur mitteleuropäischen Buchkultur vom Frühmittelalter bis zur Renaissance*, ed. Kurt Holter, Georg Heilingsetzer, and Winfried Stelzer (Linz: Gesellschaft für Landeskunde, 1996), 2:449–50.

77 Regarding the bindings of his Hebrew codices, see BSB, Cod. hebr. 422, for example; see also Wolfgang Metzger, "Ottheinrich von der Pfalz: A Princely Bibliophile of the Reformation," paper presented at the annual meeting for the Renaissance Society of America, Los Angeles, California, March 2009, 11–14.

though the texts they protected are in a variety of languages.[78] To distinguish between the languages of the books in his collections, Fugger bound the works in different colors: the wooden boards of the Hebrew books were covered with green leather, for instance, whereas those of the Greek books were in red leather.[79] The color of the bindings was therefore an important attribute of the books; in the context of Fugger's multilingual collection, it reflected a book's language and the culture it represented.

The principles of Renaissance book-collecting practices were designed for multivolume libraries, the books of which were not necessarily collected for reading; such libraries were often built up to enhance the social and intellectual status of their wealthy owners. The function of late medieval Jewish libraries was profoundly different, and the uniformity of the books' appearance rarely played such a crucial role. Manuscripts could end up in a Jewish private library as they were inherited, pawned, exchanged for other books, purchased, or specially commissioned (e.g., a new volume). Apart from the latter, the codices could have had older bindings in a variety of forms and colors, which the new owners were not likely to replace even if the bindings were partly damaged. Thus, a single library could include the entire range from unbound codices to beautifully bound volumes. Despite the importance of making "beautiful books with beautiful covers" (ספרים יפים בתיקון יפה), which was a matter of honor in Jewish tradition, this was not usually the case in reality, not even for sifrei kodesh.[80]

78 Anthony Hobson, *Renaissance Book Collecting: Jean Grolier and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, Their Books and Bindings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 119–29.

79 Otto Hartig, *Die Gründung der Münchener Hofbibliothek durch Albrecht V. und Johann Jakob Fugger* (Munich: Verlag der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1917), 242, 251–52.

80 *Sefer Ḥasidim*, 236, no. 963.