

Illuminated Bibles and the Re-written Bible: The Place of Moses dal Castellazzo in Early Modern Book History

Katrin Kogman-Appel

Shortly after the end of World War II the Russian Army discovered a collection of Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts in the cellars of the former Gestapo headquarters in Warsaw. The collection was transferred to the Jewish Historical Institute in that city. Among these books was an illuminated Bible of 123 pages, which received the shelfmark Cod. 926, later changed to Cod. 1164.¹ The book was removed from the Library in 1980 to be photographed, and a facsimile edition was published in 1986.² On the way back to Warsaw it apparently disappeared and has never been recovered. In preparation for the production of the facsimile edition, the codex was described in detail and preliminary research was undertaken by Kurt Schubert and the late Ursula Schubert of the University of Vienna.

The book contains a series of 211 drawings illustrating the entire Pentateuch, accompanied by captions in Hebrew, above, and Italian, below, the latter in a sixteenth-century Venetian dialect. The Hebrew captions quote the Bible, but rather inaccurately. The wording tends to diverge from the masoretic text and there are numerous orthographic mistakes. This led Kurt Schubert to conclude that the captions were either written by an unprofessional scribe or by a Christian Hebraist. On the other hand, as Schubert pointed out, the abbreviation *He* for *Ha-Shem*, and the frequent reference to *Elokim* instead of *Elohim* places the

texts, or their original source, in a Jewish milieu. Whatever the case, however, it can be assumed that they were copied from a Jewish original manuscript.³ The Italian texts, too, tend to be inaccurate, and were probably not written by a native Venetian.⁴

The images are fairly crude and simple pen drawings, colored schematically in watercolor (fig. 1). The technique of drawing the contours and hatching them to create a degree of illusion of volume strongly recalls the practice common in fifteenth-century woodcuts. A kinship to woodcuts was confirmed by Ursula Schubert, who discovered that two of the images have faithful counterparts in a pair of woodcuts published by Ernst Weil in 1925, who attributed them to early sixteenth-century Venice (fig. 2).⁵ The Warsaw picture Bible was thus, in all likelihood, copied from a woodcut series, now lost.

The commentary to the 1986 facsimile edition traces the author of the original cycle and discusses its pictorial and textual sources in traditional art-historical terms. The present article adopts a different point of view and seeks to determine the place of the cycle in late medieval and early modern popular culture and book history. The archival material concerning the cycle published in the 1986 edition provides some initial insight into its intentions and purpose; the woodcut technique of the original has a

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1 On the history of the codex as part of the Wolf collection in Berlin, prior to World War II, see Mendel Metzger, "Le pentateuque en images de l'ancienne collection Wolf de Dresde et de la Communauté juive

de Berlin – Codex 1164 de l'Institut historique juif de Varsovie," in *Bilder-Pentateuch von Moses dal Castellazzo – Venedig 1521: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Original Format des Codex 1164 aus dem Besitz des Jüdischen Historischen Instituts Warschau*, ed. Kurt Schubert (Vienna, 1986), 119–31.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 103, 105–6.

4 Ibid., 104, 107–9 in a section written by Giosuè Lachin.

5 Ernst Weil, "Venezianische Haggada-Holzschnitte aus dem 15. Jahrhundert," *Soncino Blätter* 1 (1925): 45–47.

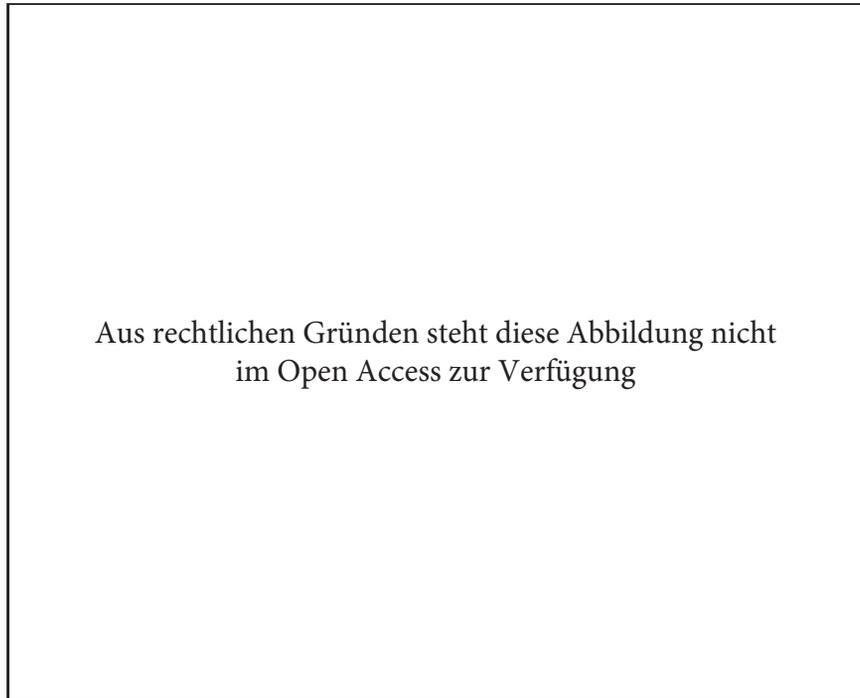


Fig. 1. *The Pesah Meal*, Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 84. All reproductions from this manuscript courtesy of Professor Kurt Schubert, Universität Wien)

well-established place in late medieval and early modern popular culture; and finally, the particular genre of texts used to enrich the visual versions of the biblical stories throws an even brighter light on the particulars of its cultural background.

Archival material discussed by Ursula Schubert led her to Moses, a Jew from Castellazzo,⁶ who in 1521 applied to the Signoria of Venice for a license to print a series of woodcuts illustrating the five Books of Moses. In his letter⁷ Moses explains that the woodcuts were to be cut by his daughters (or sons),⁸ that he himself intended to add captions in various languages to the illustrations, and that he wished to sell the series in the Venice region.

Permission was granted on 27 July 1521.⁹ From further archival documentation¹⁰ we learn that Moses was a well-known Jewish painter and craftsman, active in the regions of Milan, Mantua, Ferrara, and Venice, who worked for and was well respected by the Christian authorities.

Moses owned a house in Mestre, from which he conducted business in nearby Venice. He moved to the Venice Ghetto after it was established in 1516. In 1523 he was visited by the Jewish traveler David Reubeni who lived in Moses' home until March 1524, when he managed to raise funds for further travel. Moses helped out in this matter and arranged a meeting of communal leaders to help David finance his plans. David refers to his

6 For a detailed record of the data available on Moses dal Castellazzo and references to archival sources, see Ursula Schubert's contribution to *Bilder-Pentateuch*, 12–15; see also Meir Benayahu, *Haskamot u-reshut bi-defusei Venezia: ha-sefer ha-ivri me-hava'ato li-defus ve-ad zeto le-or* (Copyright, Authorization, and Imprimatur for Hebrew Books Printed in Venice) (Ramat Gan, 1971), 20 (Hebrew); David Kaufmann, "Der Maler Mose de Castellazzo," in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt, 1908–15), 1:169–73.

7 A copy of the lost original letter is kept in Venice, Archivio di Stato, Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Notario, n. 5, fol. 121v–122r; for a facsimile

of this copy, see *Bilder-Pentateuch*, fig. 54; for a translation of the letter into German, see *ibid.*, 134.

8 The letter mentions first "my daughters" (*mie fiole*) and a few lines later "my sons" (*mie fioli*). One of these must have been an error in writing. As the extant text is a copy of the original one, such errors may have occurred; Ursula Schubert assumes that Moses was referring to his sons, although she mentions that women artisans were employed in early print workshops (*Bilder-Pentateuch*, 134).

9 *Ibid.*

10 See, for example, three documents issued by Federicus II Gonzaga in

host as Moses, the painter.¹¹ Thus Moses, was respected as a painter and craftsman, not only by the Christian authorities of northern Italy, but also within the Jewish community.

On 11 October 1526 the death of Moses, at the age of sixty, was registered in the archives of the town of Mantua.¹² Thus, he must have been born in 1466, moving back to his home town shortly before his death.

No surviving work can be attributed to Moses. However, the Schuberts' assumption that the Warsaw series was a faithful copy of an illuminated Bible produced by Moses, as described in his application to obtain the permission of the Signoria, is highly plausible.¹³ Moses refers to his project as an illuminated Bible illustrating the entire Pentateuch from the creation of the world. He also explicitly mentions the captions in different languages, as we find them in the Warsaw copy. This evidence, together with the juxtaposition of the Warsaw drawings to the two woodcuts published by Weil, suggests that the latter were

part of an extensive cycle, that they were printed from Moses' blocks, and that they are all that has survived of the original series.

As was common in early print workshops, Moses used a variety of models for his enterprise. Many of them, especially Christian counterparts, were traced by Ursula Schubert and discussed extensively in the commentary to the facsimile edition. Illuminated Bibles, as such, are a phenomenon well known in Christian art since the twelfth century. An example from northern Italy was produced around 1400, most likely in Padua.¹⁴ It contains an extensive series of images, all accompanied by explanatory captions in the vernacular. From an inscription in the book we learn that during the sixteenth century it belonged to Venetian Jews.¹⁵ It was thus naturally considered by Ursula Schubert as one of Moses' pictorial sources. As another such model she suggested a Bible in Italian, translated by Nicolò Malermi and printed in Venice in 1490, and again in 1492, by Lucantonio

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Fig. 2. *The Pesah Meal*, woodcut published in *Soncino Blätter*, identified as a fragment from Moses dal Castellazzo's picture Bible. From *Bilder-Pentateuch von Moses dal Castellazzo – Venedig 1521: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Original Format des Codex 1164 aus dem Besitz des jüdischen Historischen Instituts Warschau*, ed. Kurt Schubert (Vienna, 1986), Abb. 1

Mantua, Archivio de Stato, Archivio Gonzaga, Registri Decreti, n. 34, fol. 224r; n. 38, c. 61r; F. II. 9, copia lettere busta 2926, libro 258, fol. 72, 13v; for a German translation, see *Bilder-Pentateuch*, 132–33; see also Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Jews in the Duchy of Milan*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1982–86), 2:997–98.

11 *Sippur David Reuveni* (The Narrative of David Reubeni), ed. Aharon Z. Eshkoli (Jerusalem, 1993), 101–2 (Hebrew).

12 Mantua, Archivio de Stato, Archivio Gonzaga, Libri Mortuari, vol. 4, a. 1526–1528, fol. 14; see *Bilder-Pentateuch*, 14.

13 Already in 1917 Moritz Stern suggested that the Warsaw drawings were

intended to serve as a model for Moses' illuminated Bible, which – being unaware of the woodcuts published later by Weil – he believed never to have been executed. See his article on an exhibit in Berlin in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 81, no. 12 (23 March 1917): 138–41 and no. 13 (30 March 1917): 150–52; see also Metzger, “Le pentateuque en images,” 124–26, n. 13.

14 Cod. 212, Biblioteca dell'Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo and MS Add. 15277, BL, London; Gianfranco Folena and Gian L. Mellini, *Bibbia Istoriata Padovana della Fine del Trecento* (Venice, 1962).

15 See notations in Hebrew on fol. 38v of the Rovigo volume.

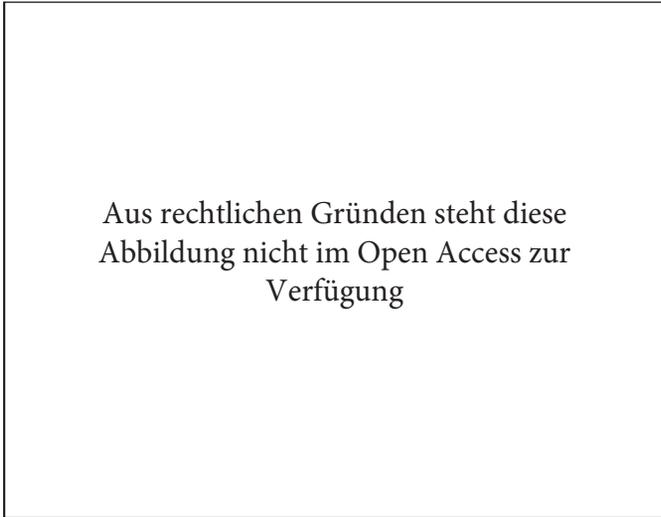


Fig. 3. *Discovery of Moses*, Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. I 164, fol. 73

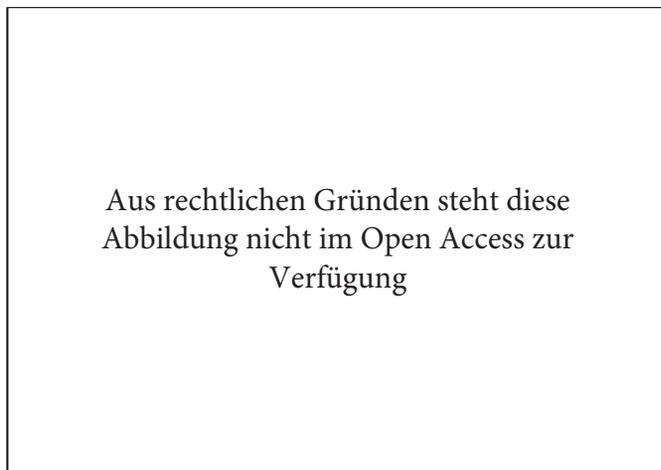


Fig. 4. *Discovery of Moses*, Kaufmann Haggadah, Library of the Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Kaufmann Collection A 422, fol. 10r. Courtesy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

di Giunta. This Bible, although not belonging to the category of illuminated Bibles, is richly illustrated.¹⁶ Another source was probably Hartmann Schedel's history of the world printed by Anton Koberger in Nuremberg in 1493.¹⁷ Since Koberger had a branch of his printing shop in Venice, it is not surprising that Moses may have had access to a copy.

Apart from such Christian sources that were available in early sixteenth-century Venice or Mantua, the Castellazzo Bible bears a clear Jewish imprint: as Kurt Schubert has already demonstrated in detail, many images depict midrashic material.¹⁸ It has been shown frequently and in various contexts that the interpolation of midrashic legends was a common phenomenon in Jewish narrative art. Wherever and whenever narrative art played a role in Jewish culture throughout late antiquity¹⁹ and the Middle Ages we find it heavily elaborated with elements from rabbinic exegesis. Enriching the biblical narrative with midrashic legendary material comes naturally, in view of the fact that midrashic exegesis is itself essentially narrative. It is frequently the Midrash that offers more narrativity than the somewhat dry and concise biblical account. Whereas in most discussions of these midrashic details it has been assumed that they account for a continuous Jewish pictorial tradition stretching from late antiquity to the Italian renaissance,²⁰ it seems certain, that they are spontaneous additions that should be judged individually.²¹

Midrashic exegesis flourished in certain cultural realms, where it had a strong direct impact on narrative

16 Johannes Wieninger, "Die Illustration der Malermi-Bibeln von 1490–1492: Ein Beitrag zur italienischen Inkunabelillustration," PhD dissertation, Vienna University, 1980.

17 Hartmann Schedel, *Weltchronik: Kolorierte Gesamtausgabe von 1493*, ed. Stephan Füssel (Cologne, 2001).

18 Kurt Schubert, in *Bilder-Pentateuch*, 110–18, lists all the midrashic elements with reference to the relevant text sources. Most of these sources are from late antiquity; sometimes medieval equivalents are also quoted.

19 On midrashic iconography in late antique Jewish and Christian art with further reference to primary sources and modern scholarship, see Katrin Kogman-Appel, "Bible Illustration and the Jewish Tradition," in *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, ed. John W. Williams (University Park and London, 1999), 61–96.

20 This was proposed by Bezalel Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah: A Fourteenth-Century Illuminated Hebrew Manuscript in the British Museum*

(London, 1970), 62–67; see also Kurt Schubert and Ursula Schubert, *Jüdische Buchkunst*, vol. 1 (Graz, 1984), chap. 3; Gabrielle Sed Rajna, *The Hebrew Bible in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts* (New York 1987), 155–56; eadem, "Haggadah and Aggadah: Reconsidering the Origins of the Biblical Illustrations in Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts," in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, eds. Doula Mouriki and Christopher Moss (Princeton, 1995), 415–23; in the context of the Castellazzo cycle, see *Bilder-Pentateuch*, 3; Ursula Schubert, "Die Auffindung des Mosesknaben im Nil durch die Pharaonentochter sowie die Darstellung der vierten Plage in den beiden Pamplona-Bibeln im Licht der jüdischen Ikonographie," in *Aachener Kunstblätter: Festschrift für Hermann Fillitz zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Martina Pippal et al. (Aachen, 1994), 285–92.

21 Katrin Kogman-Appel, "The Sephardic Picture Cycles and the Rabbinic Tradition: Continuity and Innovation in Jewish Iconography," *ZK* 60, no. 4 (1997), 451–82.

art. This, naturally, is the case for late antique Jewish art in synagogues, where the midrashic commentary was part of the translation of the weekly pericope for the congregants. The *midrashim* came into being during that period. In fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Germany midrashic iconography arose as a by-product of renewed interest in late antique biblical exegesis, and the need to collect this material in a more practical form than provided by the original texts.²² During the 1320s and 1330s a group of Haggadahs with extensive biblical picture cycles was produced in Spain. In these the midrashic interpolations reflect the Sephardi revival of midrashic exegesis rather than the use of late antique pictorial prototypes as hitherto proposed. The Midrash played a lively part in the cultural fabric of late medieval Spanish Jewry, where in some Jewish circles preoccupation with the Midrash came as an anti-rationalist reaction to the linguistic, philological, and in particular the allegorical and metaphorical, exegesis practiced for centuries by rationalist Spanish-Jewish scholars.²³

Certain iconographic settings found in the Sephardi Haggadahs were also among Moses dal Castellazzo's sources. The discovery of the infant Moses (Exod. 3) is depicted in the Castellazzo Bible (fig. 3) as a scene of four nude women – Pharaoh's daughter and her servants – in the river. A similar interpretation – although different in style and composition – is implied in the version of the Kaufmann Haggadah (fig. 4).²⁴ Here again four nude women are shown, one of them clearly singled out by her headgear as Pharaoh's daughter. She, too, stands in the

water, and one of her maidens approaches the ark, at some distance. This appears to be a variant of an iconographic formula common in the Sephardi Haggadahs.²⁵ In contrast to the Castellazzo cycle and the Kaufmann Haggadah, however, most of the Jewish renderings of the discovery in the river, follow the rabbinic tradition,²⁶ implying that it was the princess herself who rescued the infant. Christian Old Testament iconography, on the other hand, is based on the assumption that it was one of the maidservants who pulled the ark out of the water. The rendering in the Kaufmann Haggadah is most likely the result of a Christian Spanish artist dealing with a Jewish picture cycle.²⁷ He used a formula common in Jewish art, but re-interpreted it according to his own understanding of the scene. In the general figure arrangement the Kaufmann illustration is closer to the Castellazzo cycle than are other Sephardi Haggadahs.²⁸

The Castellazzo Bible contains an image of Jacob wrestling with an angel during the night his family crossed the Jabbok (Gen. 32:22–32, fig. 5). The picture shows small pitchers next to Jacob's feet. A Midrash explains that Jacob remained behind because of small pitchers that had been forgotten, and because he wanted to keep his belongings in good order.²⁹ This motif also figures similarly in one of the Sephardi Haggadahs (fig. 6).

Another such link to the Sephardi cycles is the rehabilitation of Joseph, shown on horseback accompanied by a musician (fig. 7). The Bible (Gen. 41:43) here assigns a chariot to the viceroy. *Sefer ha-Yashar*, a well-known example of the literary genre of the re-written Bible,

22 On midrashic anthologies, see Yaakov Elbaum, "Yalkut Shim'oni and the Medieval Midrashic Anthology," *Prooftexts* 17, no. 2 (1997): 140.

23 Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain: Biblical Imagery and the Passover Holiday* (forthcoming, University Park, PA, 2006), chap. 6 and 7; see also Katrin Kogman-Appel and Shulamit Laderman, "The Sarajevo Haggadah: *Creatio ex Nihilo* and the Hermeneutical Concept behind It," in *Studies in Iconography* 25 (2004), 89–128.

24 MS A 422, Kaufmann collection, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest; see Gabrielle Sed-Rajna, *Kaufmann Haggada* (Budapest, 1990).

25 For example, MS Add. 27210, BL, London, fol. 9r; see Narkiss, *Golden Haggadah*, fig. 24.

26 Most rabbinic commentaries emphasize that it was the princess who drew out the child. The pre-masoretic, unvocalized text is ambiguous

regarding whether the princess reached for the ark with her own arm (*amma*), or sent one of her maidens (*ama*). The latter interpretation entered the Latin translations, whereas the rabbinic texts prefer the former; see, for example, BT Sotah 12b. Some midrashic versions imply that she was bathing in the river, *ibid*.

27 For the assumption that the Kaufmann Haggadah was probably illuminated by a Christian miniaturist, see Alexander Scheiber (ed.), *The Kaufmann Haggadah. Facsimile Edition of MS 422 of the Kaufmann Collection in the Oriental Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences* (Budapest, 1957), 16–17; Sed-Rajna, *Kaufmann Haggada*, 19–21.

28 For a different view on this relationship, arguing in favor of an unbroken chain of Jewish iconography in this case, see Schubert, "Auffindung des Mosesknaben."

29 See, for example, BT Hullin 91a; Rashi on Gen. 32:24.

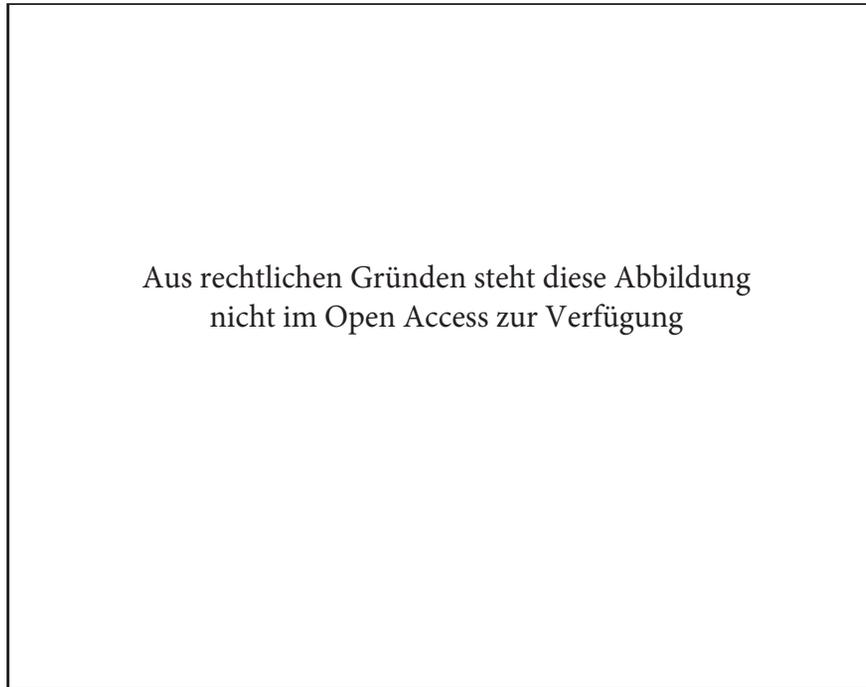


Fig. 5. *Jacob's Family Crosses the Jabbok; Jacob Wrestling with an Angel.* Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 44

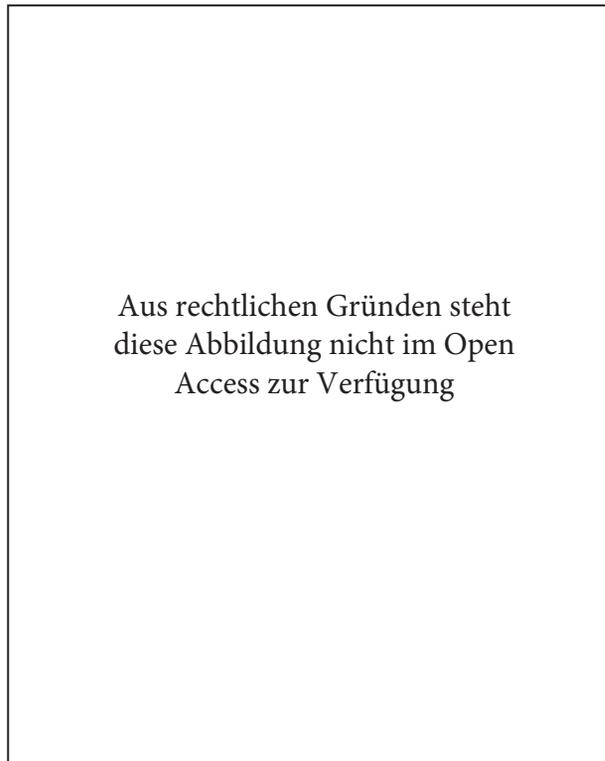


Fig. 6. *Jacob Wrestling with an Angel,* BL MS Or. 2884, fol. 5v. Courtesy of the British Library, London

describes the scene differently and has Joseph riding on horseback, accompanied by musicians.³⁰ This version corresponds fully to the Castellazzo image. A similar motif is reflected in one of the Sephardi Haggadahs (fig. 8). This notion of Joseph on horseback, is only very rarely rendered in other texts. It is unknown in late antique *midrashim*. Only in the twelfth-century commentary of Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam), is the “viceroy’s chariot” explained as “a special horse or a mule on which the viceroy is mounted.”³¹ The Italian caption, finally, also refers to the circumstance: “Joseph rode the king’s horse.”

Such links to iconographic settings of the Sephardi Haggadahs suggest that Moses dal Castellazzo was aware of the pictorial repertoire and imagery of some of the Sephardi cycles and used them together with numerous

30 *Sefer ha-Yashar*, ed. Joseph Dan (Jerusalem, 1986), 219 (Hebrew); on this work, see below.

31 Commentary to Gen. 41:43, Abraham Y. Bromberg (ed.), *Perush ha-Torah le-Rashbam Rabbenu Shemuel ben Rabbi Meir* (Commentary on the Bible by Rashbam, Our Rabbi Shmuel ben Rabbi Meir) (Tel Aviv, 1965), 56 (Hebrew).

32 The Golden Haggadah, for example, was presented as a wedding gift in Carpi, Italy, in 1602, see inscription on fol. 2r; another Haggadah,

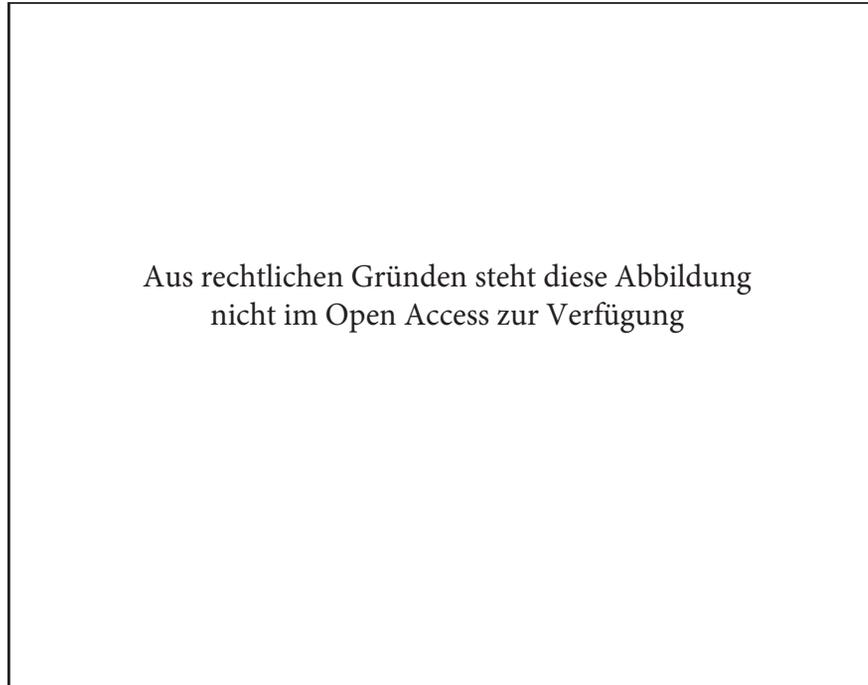


Fig. 7. *Joseph's Rehabilitation*, Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 59

other sources. Thus, the Castellazzo cycle shares some of the iconographic idiosyncrasies of the Sephardi cycles, though naturally not their style or their compositional schemes. Many Sephardi Jews lived in Venice after the expulsion from Spain, and illuminated Haggadahs were counted among the belongings of some of them. Inscriptions mentioning or written by Italian owners can be found in some of the surviving Haggadahs.³² Castellazzo may have seen such cycles and used some of their imagery among his many other sources, if only for very few scenes.

Moses dal Castellazzo designed most of his specific Jewish themes spontaneously, and independently of any of his pictorial sources. Moreover, it is a particular literary genre – that of the so-called “re-written Bible” – that

MS Or. 2884, BL, mentioned above in connection with the image of Joseph on horseback and Jacob's pitchers, bears an undated Italian inscription, indicating that it was used in Italy, see Bezalel Narkiss, Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, and Anat Tcherikover, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles*, vol. 1: *Spanish and Portuguese Manuscripts* (Jerusalem and Oxford, 1982), 67. Another Sephardi Haggadah (now MS Add. 14761, BL, London) was sold in Bologna already in 1459, see *ibid.*, 78.

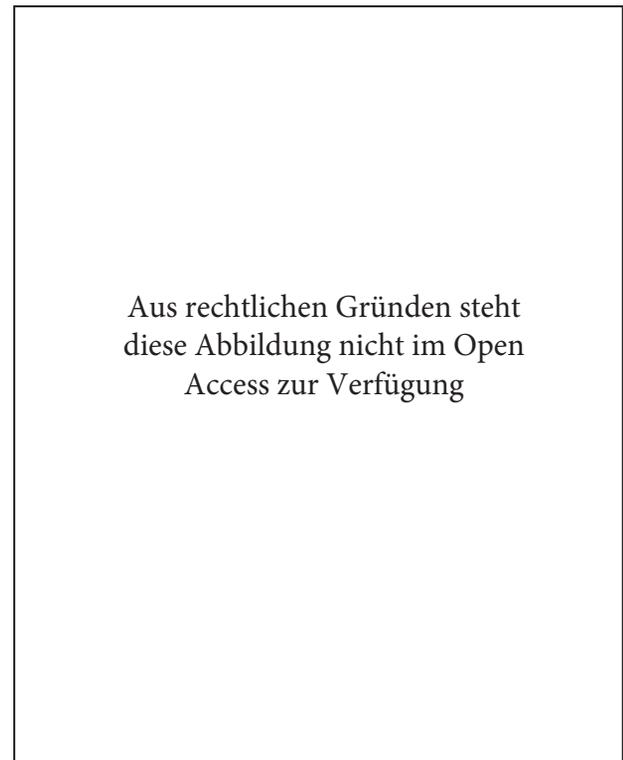


Fig. 8. *Joseph's Rehabilitation*, BL MS Or. 2884, fol. 8r. Courtesy of the British Library, London

influenced Moses more than any other source. The term “re-written Bible,” coined by Geza Vermes,³³ refers to texts whose purpose – unlike the Midrash – was not commentary and exegesis, but narration proper, either as single episodes or as entire books. Such works became increasingly popular from about the eighth century, when the first example of a re-written Bible, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, was composed.³⁴ Works like *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* tell the story of the Israelites as a homogeneous account incorporating a whole range of midrashic material, but abandoning the latter’s language and literary forms.³⁵

For the Genesis cycle of Castellazzo’s Bible, the above mentioned *Sefer ha-Yashar* – an outstanding example of the re-written Bible that supplies most of the relevant midrashic material. In some cases the specific version found in *Sefer ha-Yashar* is reflected in the imagery, where it can be distinguished from other versions. Moreover, some of the midrashic elements interpolated in such imagery are based on rather rare stories and are not necessarily reported in medieval collections of *midrashim*.

Sefer ha-Yashar was long believed to be a medieval Sephardi text. It was referred to as such by Leopold Zunz in the early days of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.³⁶ Bezalel Narkiss later pointed to it as a major source for the Sephardi Haggadahs.³⁷ No direct links to the text of the *Sefer ha-Yashar* can, however, be established for the Sephardi cycles, which rather reflect the *midrashim* as communicated by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Sephardi preachers and exegetes.³⁸ In the 1970s, Joseph Dan proposed, quite convincingly, that *Sefer ha-Yashar* originated in sixteenth-century Naples.³⁹ The book contains two prefaces, one that can be attributed to

the author and one apparently by the first publisher, who intended to print the book in 1552 in Naples. It is doubtful that this printing ever materialized, for no exemplar survives and there was heavy rabbinic objection to its publication. Only in 1625 did it appear in Venice.⁴⁰

Ignoring Dan’s conclusions, in 1984 Narkiss persisted in his assumption, suggesting that some Ashkenazi cycles of the fifteenth century were also inspired by *Sefer ha-Yashar*. He went so far as to propose that the latter were copies of a hypothetical cycle of illustrations in a manuscript of this work.⁴¹

From the thorough recent analyses of the two prefaces by later scholars, it is evident that the book itself or the material it contains was available and aroused interest in sixteenth-century Italy, around the time Moses dal Castellazzo designed his image cycle. Its first edition appeared in Italy, strongly criticized by Rabbi Judah of Modena, who objected to its publication and lamented that printers produce whatever comes to their mind, without rabbinic consultation and consent.⁴² Its later history, however, shows that it enjoyed great popularity. There was certainly a market for this book which, in Dan’s words, “summarizes the medieval genre of the re-written Bible [...]”⁴³

Moses dal Castellazzo referred to the material incorporated in *Sefer ha-Yashar* when he wanted to enrich the pictorial narrative by extra-biblical legends. The following paragraphs will demonstrate this link to *Sefer ha-Yashar* with a selection of examples.

According to the Book of Genesis, Lamech accidentally killed not only Cain (Gen. 4:23), but also his own young son Tubal-Cain, who had led him to the hunt (fig. 9). The

33 Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (Leiden, 1961), 67–126.

34 Avigdor Shinan, “Divrei ha-yamim shel Moshe Rabbenu” (The Chronicle of Moses), *Hasifrut* 4 (1977/78): 100 (Hebrew); for an edition of *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, see *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great)* [...] translated and annotated with introduction and indices by Gerald Friedlander (New York, 1970). For conclusions as to when and where *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* was authored, see Moshe D. Herr, “Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer,” *EJ*, vol. 13, 558–60.

35 For questions of language and literary forms, see Shinan, “Divrei ha-yamim”: 101–2.

36 Leopold Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (Berlin, 1832), 154.

37 Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* (Jerusalem, 1969), 34–35.

38 Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot* (n. 23 above), chap. 6 and 7.

39 Joseph Dan, “*Matai nithaber Sefer ha-Yashar?*” (When Was *Sefer ha-Yashar* Written?) (Hebrew), in: *Sefer Dov Sadan: koveẓ mehkarim mugashim bi-melot shiv'im ve-hamesh shanah* (The Dov Sadan Jubilee Volume: A Volume of Essays Presented on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday), eds. Shmuel Verses, Nathan Rotenstreich, and Chone Shmeruk (Tel Aviv, 1977), 105–10 (Hebrew); see also his introduction to the critical edition of *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 7–17 (n. 30 above); see also Jacqueline Genot, “Censure idéologique et discours chiffré: le *Sefer Hayashar* – oeuvre d’un exilé espagnol réfugié à Naples,” *REJ* 140 (1981): 433–51, who dates the

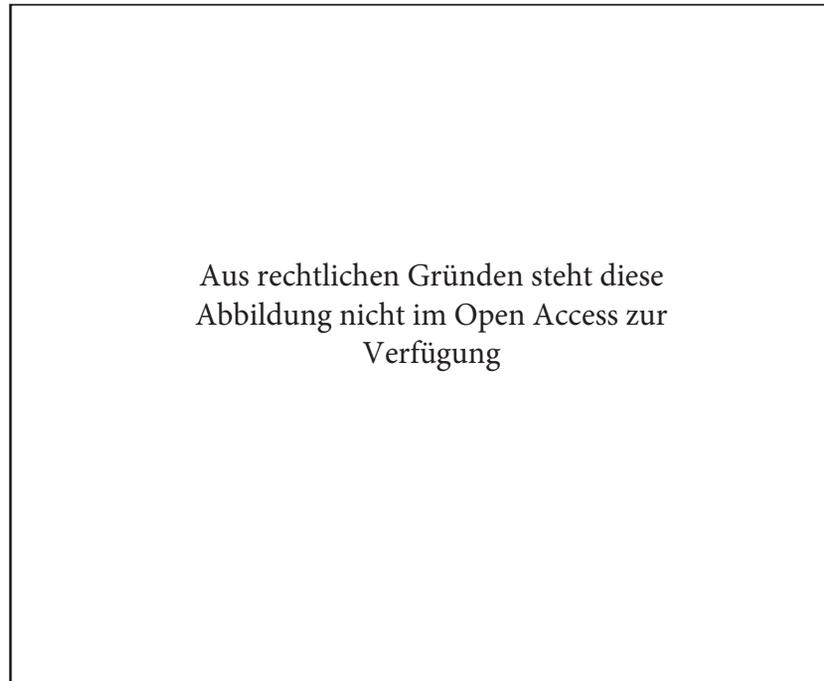


Fig. 9. *Lamech Killing Tubal-Cain*. Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 4

Bible reports that Lamech told his wives that he had killed Cain, but the killing itself is not described in any way.⁴⁴ Biblical commentaries, *midrashim*, and re-written Bibles elaborate on this short and ambiguous intimation: Assisted by Tubal-Cain, the old and nearly blind Lamech went out to hunt and killed Cain by mistake. When he realized his error he clapped his hands in distress and accidentally struck Tubal-Cain, a fatal blow. *Sefer ha-Yashar* not only tells the entire story in detail, but also refers to the wives accusing Lamech and the latter's attempt to explain the accident:

And Lamech's wives heard what Lamech had done and intended to kill him, and Lamech's wives hated him from the day he killed Cain and Tubal-Cain. And Lamech's wives separated from him and did no longer obey him. And Lamech approached his wives and begged them to listen to him about the incident; and Lamech said to his wives [...].⁴⁵

The image shows the wounded Cain, having fallen to the ground, as well as the young boy lying dead. Standing next to Lamech are his two wives.

book to the early sixteenth century and locates it in the milieu of the first generation of Spanish exiles; for a re-examination of the question of origin, see also Carmela Sarenga, "Sefer ha-Yashar kizirah sifrutit historiografit" (The *Sefer ha-Yashar* as a Literary and Historiographic Work), PhD dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 1994 (Hebrew), 86, and chap. 4 discussing the different options without taking a particular side. The claim made there that the text reflecting a friendly attitude towards Muslims and an antagonistic one towards Christianity points at a Moroccan origin is not very convincing; rather, the pre-occupation with Christianity points to a Christian environment.

⁴⁰ On the question of the original publication of *Sefer ha-Yashar*, see Yitzhak Yudlov, "Od al 'Sefer ha-Yashar' Venezia 1625" (More on the *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Venice 1625), *Sinai* 79 (1976): 94–95; Avraham

Rosenthal, "Hiddot hadpasato shel *Sefer ha-Yashar*" (The Riddles of the Publication of *Sefer ha-Yashar*), *ibid.*: 275–88.

⁴¹ Bezalel Narkiss, *Kitvei yad ivriyim me'uyarim* (Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts) (Jerusalem, 1984), 56, 147 (Hebrew). This is a Hebrew version of the earlier English edition (n. 37 above).

⁴² *Ibid.*, introduction, 20; see also Günter Stemberger, *Geschichte der jüdischen Literatur* (Munich, 1977), 138.

⁴³ "Introduction," *Sefer ha-Yashar* (ed. Dan), 17.

⁴⁴ Gen. 4:23: "Lamech said to his wives: Adah and Zillah, listen to me: wives of Lamech, mark what I say: I kill a man for wounding me, a young man for a blow. If sevenfold vengeance was to be exacted for Cain, for Lamech it would be seventy-sevenfold."

⁴⁵ *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 47.

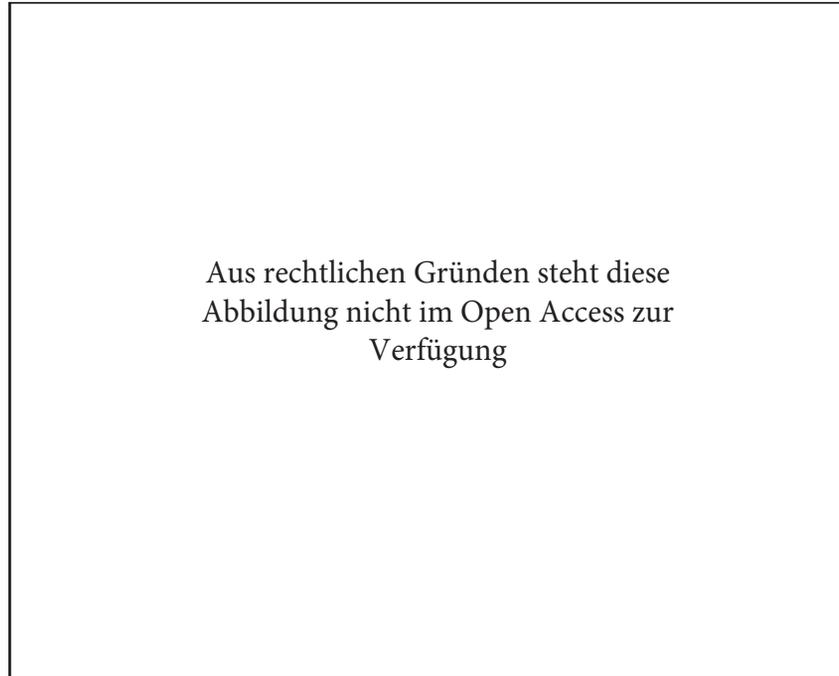


Fig. 10. *The Tower of Babel*, Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 11

Another, quite common, Midrash gives some details as to the events that occurred at the building site of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9). Playing on the Hebrew words “*novla et sefatam*” – “let’s confound their languages” and “*nevelah*” – “corpse,” the *midrashim* explain that the workers at the site could not understand one another. The conflicts that arose eventually resulted in an exchange of fatal blows. The late antique and medieval *midrashim* are not very detailed in their account,⁴⁶ but *Sefer ha-Yashar* gives a more explicit narrative, which corresponds in some of the details to the image included in the Castellazzo Bible (fig. 10). *Sefer ha-Yashar* provides numerous details unknown from other texts: the people of Babylon built a city and a “great, strong tower” within the city. The height of the tower and the difficulty of getting building material to the top are elaborated upon, and there is a detailed

description of how the workers step up and down, passing material and bricks from hand to hand. The bricks were highly treasured and mourned by everyone when they fell to the ground: “When a brick fell out of their hands and broke, they all would cry about it; but when a man fell dead, nobody would even look at him.” Watching all this, the Lord decided to confound the languages, so that

the people would hear one another, but could not understand their fellows’ language [...]. One man said to his fellow: give me a stone to build, and the latter gave him clay; but when he would ask for clay, he would give him a stone. When he took the clay or the stone that he did not ask for from his fellow’s hands he would throw them on him, they fell on his fellow, who died.⁴⁷

46 For a late antique source, see *Gen. Rabbah* 38:10 (*Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis: A New American Translation*, tr. by Jacob Neusner, 3 vols. [Atlanta 1985], 2:53); for a medieval version, see *Midrash Bereshit Zuta*, Gen. 11:7, ed. Mordehai Cohen (Jerusalem, 1962), 55 (Hebrew).

47 *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 69–70.

48 An exception is the Golden Haggadah, fol. 3r, Narkiss, *Golden Haggadah*, fig. 18, showing a man throwing a stone at one of his fellows. As *Sefer*

ha-Yashar is the only source that explicitly mentions a stoning, we can only conclude that this motif must also have been known earlier in some form to the designer of the Golden Haggadah’s image cycle; see Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, chap. 6.

49 For example, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Gen. 14:18; for an English translation, see *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, tr. Michael Maher (Collegeville, 1992); see also BT Nedarim 32b; *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 94.

50 *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 98; for a late antique version, see *Gen. Rabbah*

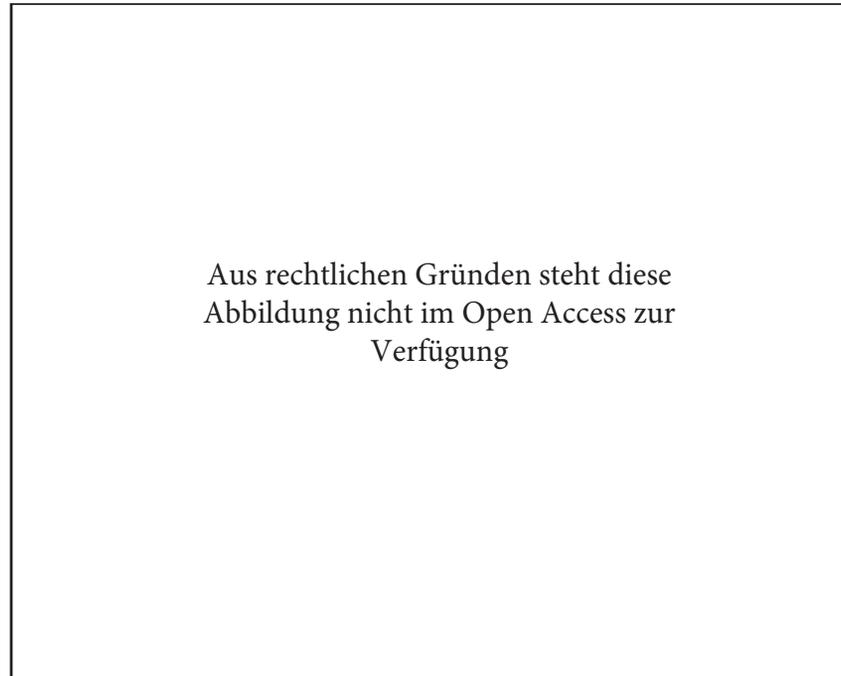


Fig. 11. *Abraham Recovering from Circumcision*, Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 17

The tower in the image is tall and massive in comparison with the people, and in comparison with parallels in the Sephardi *Haggadot*, which also refer to the midrash but without the specific elements offered in the *Sefer ha-Yashar* narrative.⁴⁸ In Castellazzo's image the workers climb up and down the ladder as described in the text, and two of them pass building materials to each other. A man falls from the top – thrown by another – recalling the unlamented builders in the text.

Melchizedek presenting bread and wine also figures in the cycle (fol. 16), and the Italian caption identifies him with Noah's firstborn son Shem, as indicated in numerous *midrashim* and in *Sefer ha-Yashar*.⁴⁹

When Abraham received the angels in Mamre (Gen. 18:1–2), he sat in front of his tent, recovering from the circumcision performed earlier. Whereas the Bible only

mentions the heat of the day, *Sefer ha-Yashar* and some earlier *midrashim* explicitly mention the sun, shown prominently in the Castellazzo Bible (fig. 11):

Also Abraham and Ismael, his son, circumcised themselves. Ismael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised. And it occurred on the third day that Abraham walked out of his tent and sat down at the door of the tent to warm up in the heat of the sun to recover from the pain of his flesh.⁵⁰

In the right panel Abraham appears sitting in front of his tent; in the following picture, to the left on the same page he faces the angels while a large, red sun dominates the upper part of the composition. In addition, the Italian caption is explicit about weather conditions: “Abram in el più caldo dil sole [...]”⁵¹

48:8 (Neusner translation, 2:182).

51 This midrash is also rendered in a late fourteenth-century *Maḥzor*, maybe from the Rhineland (A 387, Kaufmann collection, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, fol. 417v). This image differs widely from Moses' version, as it is detached from its original biblical context and appears as a marginal allusion to “he sits in the heat of the day” quoted in the adjacent *piyyut*. Instead of Abraham in front of the tent,

the picture shows a man seated on an elaborate throne decorated with architectural motifs. Whether in this particular case the image in the Castellazzo Bible follows a midrashic version, or borrows an image of the glowing sun included in one of Moses' iconographical sources, cannot be determined. As in the case of Sephardi sources, knowledge of a pictorial source does not, in any event, exclude the possibility that Moses was also familiar with a textual version.

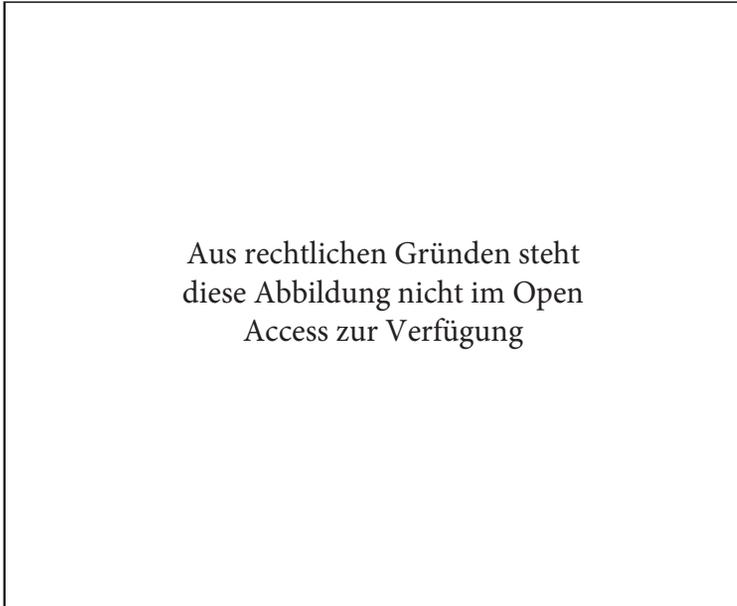


Fig. 12. *The People of Sodom*, Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 19

Another image in the Castellazzo cycle shows the angels visiting Lot to warn him about the disaster soon to strike Sodom (Gen. 19:1–3, fig. 12, right panel). In the background a man lies on some sort of bed, and one of the Sodomites pulls at his legs. The *midrashim* and *Sefer ha-Yashar* expatiate on the Sodomites’ xenophobia and the things they did to foreigners. One of these was to put them on a bed and to stretch or shorten their legs according to its size.⁵²

Lot’s wife turning back to look at Sodom (Gen. 19:26) is shown in the Warsaw codex as a pillar of salt, with a goat licking it (fig. 13). A Midrash in the earliest version of the re-written Bible, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, and later in *Sefer ha-Yashar*, mention bulls licking the salt, which regenerates again and again while more bulls come to lick it.⁵³ The goat in the Warsaw codex is perhaps the result of a misinterpretation of Castellazzo’s original image.

Another image in the Castellazzo cycle shows Isaac

52 *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 102–3.

53 *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (ed. Friedlander, n. 34 above), 186, n. 8, referring to the first edition of *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*; *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 106.

54 *Gen. Rabbah* 63:5 (Neusner trans., 2:352); *Yalqut Shim’oni*, no. 110.

55 *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 130.

56 Linking biblical figures from different periods such as Rebecca and

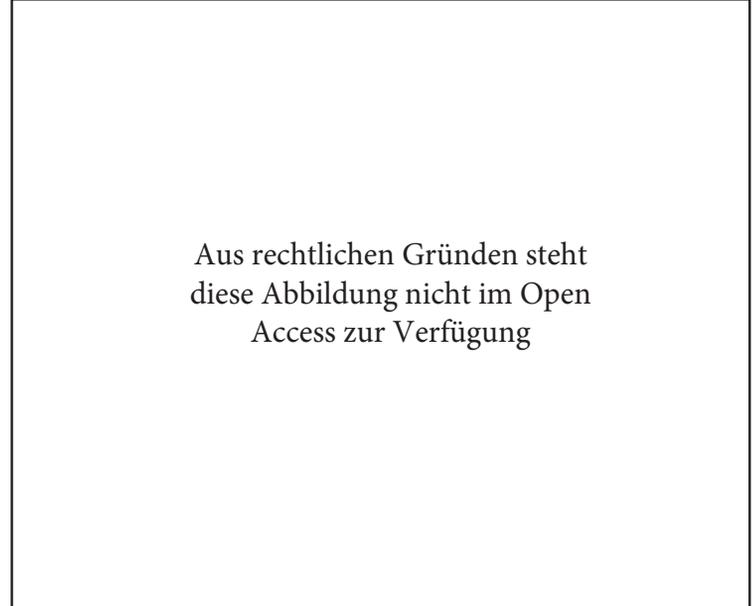


Fig. 13. *Lot’s Escape from Sodom*, Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 20

and Rebecca together praying for offspring (fig. 14). The biblical text (Gen. 25:21) reads: “Isaac appealed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless.” The biblical *lenokhach* – “on behalf of” can also be understood as “in front of” and accordingly the commentaries tend to interpret it as “in the presence of.”⁵⁴ Castellazzo’s image alludes to this understanding. The version in *Sefer ha-Yashar* reads as follows:

And Isaac listened to his wife [asking him to pray for offspring] and Isaac and Rebecca stood up and went to the Land of Moriah to pray there and to seek the Lord. And they arrived at the place and Isaac stood and prayed to the Lord in the presence of his wife, as she was barren.⁵⁵

After finally becoming pregnant Rebecca consults Shem, the son of Noah, in his school about the infants in her

Shem, the son of Noah corresponds to the hermeneutical rule that “there is no before and after in the Torah [...]”

57 *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 131.

58 See, for example, *Gen. Rabbah* 68:5 (Neusner trans., 3:4); Rashi on *Gen. 25:27*.

59 *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 131.

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Fig. 14. *Isaac and Rebecca Praying for Offspring*. Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 33

womb (fig. 14, left panel).⁵⁶ This is the common rabbinic interpretation of Gen. 25:22–23: “she went to seek the guidance of the Lord, who said to her [...]” Wondering if it were possible that the Lord should address a woman, the *midrashim* and other texts, among them *Sefer ha-Yashar*, explain that she consulted Shem.⁵⁷

Another miniature in the cycle shows Esau selling Jacob his birthrights (Gen. 25:30, fol. 35). The Italian caption characterizes Esau as a warrior and Jacob as a scholar. This is based on Gen. 25:27: “And when they grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, and a husbandman; but Jacob a plain man dwelt in tents.” The characterization of Jacob as a rabbinic scholar specifically refers to the midrashic tradition – reported in numerous late antique and medieval sources – that Jacob spent fourteen years studying in the school of Shem and Eber. All these texts stress Jacob’s scholarly abilities.⁵⁸ *Sefer ha-Yashar* characterizes Jacob in simple terms: “Jacob was a plain and studious man who

⁵⁶ Ibid., 250.

⁵⁷ Similar ratios are found in Christian illuminated Bibles, such as the Pamplona bibles of ca. 1200, MS lat. 108, Bibliothèque municipale, Amiens; Spain, ca. 1200, MS I, 2 lat. 4^o (formerly Harburg), Universitätsbibliothek, Augsburg; see François Bucher, *The Pamplona Bibles: A Facsimile Compiled of Two Picture Bibles with Martyrologies Commissioned*

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Fig. 15. *Jacob’s Coffin Transferred to Canaan*. Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw Cod. 1164, fol. 69

sat in the tents, guarded the herds, and studied the laws of the Lord and the precepts of his father and mother.”⁵⁹ Similarly, the Italian caption reads: “Iachob fu studiante” (Jacob was studious).

The cycle also includes a detailed depiction of Jacob’s coffin being transferred to Canaan (fig. 15). Various *midrashim* explain that Joseph placed his crown on the coffin. *Sefer ha-Yashar* expands further on this motif: the coffin is described as decorated with precious stones, and Egyptian forces accompany the funerary procession.⁶⁰ All these elements are clearly discernible in Castellazzo’s image.

For the rest of the Pentateuch Moses dal Castellazzo relied to a lesser degree on re-written Bibles. Of the 211 scenes of his cycle, 132 follow the Book of Genesis and 79 the rest of the Pentateuch. Considering that the books Exodus to Deuteronomy are only of limited narrativity, this is a fairly balanced division.⁶¹ In some twenty-nine scenes

by King Sancho el Fuerte of Navarra (1194–1234), Amiens, *Manuscript Latin 108 and Harburg*, Ms. I, 2 lat. 4^o (New Haven and London, 1970). The Morgan Bible, made in the 1240s for Louis IX of France, gives even more weight to the Genesis section in proportion to the rest of the Pentateuch, MS 683, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; see Daniel H. Weiss et al., *The Morgan Crusader Bible* (Lucerne, 1999).

of the Castellazzo cycle midrashic elements are involved.⁶² Eighteen of these appear in the Genesis cycle; of them twelve – two thirds – are based on material included in *Sefer ha-Yashar*. Only eleven midrashic themes occur in the rest of the Pentateuch; of these, however, only four can be linked to the genre of re-written Bibles.⁶³

As noted, the book of Genesis is narrative to a much greater degree than any of the other books of the Pentateuch. The first fifteen chapters of Exodus are similarly narrative, but after the Crossing of the Red Sea the account becomes much more concise. Most of the texts of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are naturally related to the Law. In *Sefer ha-Yashar* sixteen chapters (260 pages of Dan's edition) cover the events narrated in Genesis; only four chapters (67 pages) refer to the rest of the Pentateuch. One of these focuses on the figure of Moses; a large part of it tells the story of Moses in the Land of Kush. Much of the last four chapters of the book is devoted to descriptions of the wars the Israelites fought on their way to the promised land, an aspect almost entirely neglected by Moses dal Castellazzo. *The Chronicle of Moses*,⁶⁴ a short account of his life, counted among the sources used by the author of *Sefer ha-Yashar*, is similarly concise. Most of it covers the story of Moses and the

Exodus; only one page gives a brief account of later events.

This means that in comparison with *Sefer ha-Yashar* Moses dal Castellazzo presents the pentateuchal narrative in a more balanced way. Much as he was interested in the narrative style of the re-written Bible, he was guided by the flow of events as they were related in the Bible. For the Genesis part of his work materials from re-written Bibles served him well; for the rest of the Pentateuch they appear to have been less suitable and too concise for Moses' taste.

The genre of the re-written Bible is unlike the late antique Midrash in many respects. The latter's purpose was exegetical, whereas that of the re-written Bible was narrative and didactic. These texts were widely known and highly popular during the late Middle Ages and early modern period. The medium of print led to a still wider circulation of the genre from the early sixteenth century on. A look at the history of early Hebrew printing and at lists of books published in early workshops suggests that the market for re-written Bibles may perhaps have been better than for "classical" *midrashim*.

Hebrew incunabula⁶⁵ were printed in Iberia and Italy. Printing in the former ceased with the expulsion from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1496.⁶⁶ In Italy the

62 This is, in some cases, a matter of interpretation. Kurt Schubert suggests 37 midrashic interpolations. Some of these are widely accepted pictorial conventions, such as the wild beasts in the Fourth Plague, fol. 80. Other are ambiguous interpolations, such as the story of Ismael in the desert, fol. 22, where none of the pictorial elements creates a clear link to the midrash quoted by Schubert in *Bilder-Pentateuch*, 111.

63 Examples are the depiction of Pharaoh repenting in the returning waters of the Red Sea (fol. 88); rabbinic traditions, including *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 319, declare in a variety of versions that Pharaoh repented and therefore survived the flooding. The scene of Aaron's Death (fol. 112) on Mt. Hor features two angels on the mountain next to a bier, and thus recalls the account in *Midrash petirat Aharon* (Midrash of the Death of Aaron), a short text that can also be included in the genre of the re-written Bible, Adolf Jellinek, *Beit Hamidrash* (Leipzig, 1853–57; repr. Jerusalem, 1967, 6 vols. in 2) 1:91–95 (Hebrew), discussed in detail in *Bilder-Pentateuch*, 117. Similarly the depiction of the death of Moses on Mt. Nebo (fol. 121) reflects the account in the *Midrash petirat Moshe Rabbenu* (Midrash of the Death of Moses), Jellinek, *Beit Hamidrash*, 1:115–29; discussed in detail in *Bilder-Pentateuch*, 118.

64 Shinan, "Divrei ha-yamim" (n. 34 above).

65 For a short survey of early Hebrew printing, see Mordechai Glatzer, "Early Hebrew Printing," in *A Sign and a Witness: 2,000 Years of Hebrew Books and*

Illuminated Manuscripts [catalogue, New York Public Library], ed. Leonard S. Gold (New York and Oxford, 1988), 86–89; for a focus on Venice, see Benayahu, *Haskamot* (n. 6 above) Most notable are more recent papers by Zeev Gries dealing with early Hebrew printing from a cultural-historical point of view: Zeev Gries, "Li-demuto shel ha-mevi li-defus ha-yehudi be-shilhei yemei ha-beinayim" (On Jewish Publishers at the End of the Middle Ages), *Iggeret ha-akademyah ha-le'umit ha-yisre'elit le-mada'im* 11 (July 1992): 7–11 (Hebrew); idem, "Ha-defus ke-emza'i keshet bein kehilot Israel ba-tekufah ha-semukhah la-gerush mi-Sefarad: hakddamot le-iyun ve-diyun" (Print as a Means of Communication between Jewish Communities after the Expulsion from Spain – Introductory Notes Toward Further Study), *Da'at* 28 (1992): 5–17 (Hebrew); idem, *Ha-sefer ke-sokhen tarbut* (The Book as an Agent of Culture 1700–1900) (Tel Aviv, 2002), 11–20 (Hebrew; forthcoming in English, Oxford University Press).

66 On Hebrew printing in Iberia, see Isaiah Sonne, "Le-reshito shel ha-defus ha-ivri bi-Sefarad" (The Beginning of Hebrew Printing in Spain) *KS* 14 (1937/38), 174–75 (Hebrew); Joshua Bloch, "Early Hebrew Printing in Spain and Portugal," in *Hebrew Printing and Bibliography*, ed. Charles Berlin (New York, 1976), 23–36.

67 On the difficulties faced by Jewish printers of Hebrew books in Italy, see Glatzer, "Early Hebrew Printing."

68 *Ibid.*, 86; on early Hebrew types in relation to manuscripts, see Malachi

craft soon faced severe problems. Not only was the market in central Europe and northern Italy not easily exploitable in the early days of printing, but it was also extremely difficult for Jews to obtain a license to print Hebrew books.⁶⁷ After the expulsion from Spain early Jewish printers, such as Gershom Soncino, for example, began to explore other marketing options in areas where Sephardi refugees were concentrated, such as southern Italy and Sicily. That is also the reason why Gershom Soncino chose to print most of his books in Sephardi type.⁶⁸

Judging from lists of books printed in Italy,⁶⁹ *midrashim* were not among the most urgent concerns of early publishers and printers. This applies to all types of *midrashim* – late antique texts, medieval anthologies, and examples of the re-written Bible. The first texts to be printed were Bibles, biblical commentaries,⁷⁰ talmudic tractates, later halakhic works, grammatical treatises, and prayer books. A pioneer in Italy was Abraham Conat,⁷¹ active between 1471 and 1477 in Mantua. He was followed by the Soncino family,⁷² whose members worked at various locations from 1482 onwards, first in Soncino, the town after which they were named, and later in Naples.⁷³ Other Italian incunabula printers, such as Meshullam Cusi and Abraham ben Haim dei Tintori,

were active in Reggio di Calabria, Piove di Sacco, and Ferrara. Joseph ben Jacob Gumpenhauser (Ashkenazi) worked in Naples in the 1480s. Owing to the unfavorable situation in Italy, Hebrew printing slowed down around 1494; between that year and 1503 Gershom Soncino is the only documented printer of Hebrew books. From 1499 to 1502 no Hebrew books were printed. In the subsequent decades, and after the Soncinos had moved to the south, Hebrew books continued to be produced occasionally in northern Italy, primarily in Pesaro. Among these we find the biblical commentaries by Bahye ben Asher and Levi ben Gershom, Nahmanides, Abraham Ibn Ezra, and Rashi. However, licenses were issued only occasionally and temporarily, and the Soncinos eventually migrated beyond Italy. In 1521 Moses Soncino left for Salonika, and in 1527 Gershom also traveled to the Ottoman Empire, printing in both Salonika and Constantinople.⁷⁴ Scholars disagree as to the reasons for the Soncinos' departure from Italy. Mordechai Glatzer suggests that it was the above-described condition of the market in the early sixteenth century.⁷⁵ Abraham Habermann and Meir Benayahu believe that the difficulties Jews experienced in obtaining a license to print encouraged them to leave Italy.⁷⁶ Zipporah Baruchson and Avraham Rosenthal,⁷⁷

Beit-Arié, "The Relationship between Early Hebrew Printing and Handwritten Books: Attachment or Detachment," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 29 (1989): 1–26.

69 Abraham M. Habermann, "Ha-madpis Avraham Konat ve-otiyotav" (The Printer Abraham Conat and His Types), idem, *Prakim betoldot hamadpisim ha'ivri'im ve'inyane sfarim* (Chapters in the History of Jewish Printers and Notes about Their Books) (Jerusalem, 1978), 3–12 (Hebrew); idem, "Ha-madpisim benei Soncino" (The Printers in the Soncino Family), *ibid.*, 15–96 (Hebrew); idem, "Ha-madpisim Yizhak, Yom-Tov ve-Ya'akov benei Avigdor Halevi Kazav mi-Padua" (The Printers Isaac, Yom-Tov, and Jacob, the Sons of Avigdor Halevi Katsav of Padua), *ibid.*, 97–101 (Hebrew); Peretz Tishbi, "Defusei eres (inkunabulim) ivriyim (4): Italia" (Hebrew Incunabula [4], Italy) *KS* 57 (1983), 805–57; 60 (1986), 865–962; 62 (1988/89), 361–401; 63 (1990/91), 603–36; 64 (1992/93), 689–726 (Hebrew); idem., "Defusei eres (inkunabulim) ivriyim (3), Italia: Bologna" (Hebrew Incunabula [3], Italy: Bologna), *Ohev Sefer* 1 (1987): 29–39 (Hebrew).

70 On biblical commentaries in particular, see Herbert C. Zafren, "Bible Editions, Bible Study, and the Early History of Hebrew Printing," *EI* 16 (1982): 240–51 (Eng. section).

71 Habermann, "Conat"; Tishbi, "Incunabula" (1986): 880–907.

72 Moses Marx, "Gershom (Hieronymus) Soncino's Wanderyears in Italy,

1498–1527: Exemplar Judaicae Vitae," *HUCA* 11 (1936): 427–501; see also Habermann, "Soncino"; Tishbi "Incunabula" (1988/89): 367–68, who believes that Gershom Soncino left northern Italy because of anti-Jewish persecutions, and not in search of better marketing options among Sephardi immigrants in southern Italy.

73 Joshua Bloch, "Hebrew Printing in Naples," in *Hebrew Printing and Bibliography*, ed. Charles Berlin (New York, 1976), 121–22.

74 Although the official name of the city has been Istanbul since 1453, the Jewish tradition, and printers in particular, continued to refer to it as Constantinople ("Kushta") until the early twentieth century.

75 Glatzer, "Early Hebrew Printing," 86.

76 Benayahu, *Haskamot*; idem, "Defusei Turkiyah she'einam ela defusei Italia" (Turkish Prints that Are Actually Italian Prints), *Sinai* 72 (1973): 163 (Hebrew); Habermann on Italian printing, see n. 69 above.

77 Zipporah Baruchson, "Yedi'ot al ha-mishar bi-sefarim ivriyim bein Italia ve-ha-impereyah ha-othmanit ba-me'ah ha-16" (Information on Trade of Hebrew Books between Italy and the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth Century), *Mi-mizrah u-mi-ma'arav* 5 (1986): 58 n. 13 (Hebrew); Avraham Rosenthal, "Daniel Bomberg and His Talmud Editions," in *Gli Ebrei e Venezia: Atti del convegno internazionale organizzato dall'Istituto di Storia della Societa e dello Stato Veneziano della Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venezia, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, 5–10 giugno 1983*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi (Milan, 1987), 384–86.

however, assume that it was Daniel Bomberg's competition that led Gershom Soncino to move eastwards. Bomberg, a Christian humanist from Flanders, received a permit to print Hebrew books in Venice in 1516.⁷⁸

The first workshop in Constantinople was established in 1504 and this city soon turned into a center of Hebrew printing.⁷⁹ It was rivaled by European Hebrew printing only when Bomberg began to print in Venice. The earliest workshop was that of the Nahmias brothers, who concentrated particularly on halakhic works. They were followed by Astruk of Toulon, Judah ben Joseph Sassoon, and others. In 1527 Gershom Soncino began printing in Constantinople.

The earliest printed edition of *Midrash Rabbah* was produced in 1512 by the Nahmias brothers, to be followed in 1514 by the earliest re-written Bible, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, both in Constantinople. Shorter texts were printed in the same city soon afterwards, such as the *Midrash on the Death of Aaron* in 1515, the *Midrash on the Death of Moses* and the *Chronicle of Moses*, both in 1516. Late antique *midrashim* – with the exception of the late antique parts of *Midrash Rabbah* – and late medieval anthologies were printed only later. *The Mekhilta de Rabbi Ismael* first appeared in 1515 in Constantinople; the *midrashim* on the five *Megillot* were published in 1519 in Pesaro; *Tanḥuma* only in 1520, again in Constantinople; *Yalkut Shim'oni* was printed in Salonika, in two parts, the first in 1521, the second in 1526. Another example of the anthological approach, *Lekah Tov*, followed only in 1546, printed in Venice.

In short, in terms of printing history the genre of the re-written Bible seems to have done quite well. It could

not compete with biblical commentaries and halakhic literature, but in the sphere of Midrash these texts cannot be overlooked. Moreover, they indicate that popular culture still held a particular interest in the Midrash.

The question is, of course, to what degree the situation in Constantinople, where – according to the opening pages – most of these books were printed, helps us assess the market in Italy around the 1520s, when Moses dal Castellazzo designed his picture cycle. At that time Jewish typographical printing was almost unfeasible in Italy. Gershom Soncino's biography indicates that in the earliest decades of Hebrew printing the Italian market was weak a trend that had changed by the time Daniel Bomberg began to print in Venice. The difficulty of obtaining a license in Italy apparently favored anonymous printing there. It has been argued that a group of books from the second half of the sixteenth century, whose title pages indicated that they were printed in Constantinople, were actually produced in Italy, indicated by the style of the opening pages and the fonts. This may have been a way to cope with the unfavorable situation in Italy.⁸⁰

Early printers and their books played a crucial part in establishing and maintaining contact and cultural exchange between Jewish communities all over the Mediterranean and central Europe.⁸¹ Although little is known about the book trade in the early decades of printing, a 1542 catalogue of Bomberg's Venice bookshop published by Baruchson⁸² affirms that the latter kept numerous Hebrew books from Constantinople in stock. This catalogue appeared only a few years before Bomberg's shop and workshop were shut down in 1548, and apparently reflects the market at its weakest point. During the 1520–30s this

78 On Daniel Bomberg, see Abraham Berliner, *Ketavim nivḥarim meturgamim mi-germanit* (Selected Writings Translated from German) (Jerusalem, 1969), 163–75 (Hebrew); Abraham M. Habermann, *Hamadpis Daniel Bomberg u-reshimot sifrei beit defuso* (The Printer Daniel Bomberg and the List of Books from His Workshop) (Safed, 1978) (Hebrew); Rosenthal, "Daniel Bomberg," 375–416.

79 For a survey of Hebrew printing in Constantinople and lists of books printed there, see Abraham Ya'ari, *Ha-defus ha-ivri be-Kushta* (Hebrew Printing in Constantinople) (Jerusalem, 1967) (Hebrew); for more bibliography, see also Baruchson, "Yedi'ot": 54, n. 2.

80 Benayahu, "Defusei Turkiyah": 163–84.

81 Gries, "Ha-defus ke-emza'i keshet". On Constantinople and Italy see in

particular: 7–8; see also Baruchson, "Yedi'ot": 53–57.

82 Baruchson, "Yedi'ot," see in particular the diagram on p. 66. Baruchson also discusses lists of books in Mantua libraries from 1595, containing numerous *midrashim*, among them *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, printed in Constantinople. These lists, however, are not only too remote from Castellazzo's work, but also reflect the cultural needs of a rather small community and cannot be compared with those of larger ones, such as Venice; see Baruchson, *ibid.*: 66–71; eadem, "Ha-sifriyot ha-peratiyot shel yehudei zefon Italia be-shilhei ha-Renaissance" (The Private Libraries of Jews in Northern Italy at the End of the Renaissance)," PhD dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 1985 (Hebrew).

market was most likely far stronger. Bomberg apparently imported especially works whose marketability he wanted to try out before printing them himself, and others that could not be supplied by the local market. Twenty-seven out of seventy-five books in the catalogue were printed in Constantinople. Only eleven were printed in places other than Italy or Constantinople. An analysis of this catalogue confirms that all the midrashic works Bomberg kept in his shop at this time were printed in Constantinople.

To judge from the situation in Italy, on the one hand, and the status of Constantinople in the early history of Hebrew printing and the marketing of Hebrew books, on the other, the prominence of the re-written Bible in comparison to other midrashic books is also indicative of other parts of the Jewish world. The popularity of this genre in printing may have stimulated the writing of *Sefer ha-Yashar* in the first place.

Like numerous Jewish illustrators, painters, and miniaturists before him, Moses dal Castellazzo enriched the biblical narrative with midrashic elaborations. Such enrichments, widespread also in late antique and medieval Jewish art, have been discussed in earlier research as characteristic of Jewish art. The fact that midrashic iconography recurs again and again throughout the history of Jewish art appeared to supply proof that an unbroken tradition of midrashic imagery continued to exist throughout the centuries.

The interpolation of *midrashim* is common in Jewish art of all times, yet culturally it can mean different things. The diversity of midrashic themes, the variability in iconography, and the fact that every generation had its own and new themes make it quite clear that this aspect of Jewish art was particularly variable and changeable, representing the personal input of every illustrator. Many of the midrashic themes from the Castellazzo Bible discussed here have no parallels in extant earlier Jewish works of art – the bull licking Lot's wife, the bed in Sodom, Jacob's richly decorated coffin – all these and others are Moses' own unique compositions.

Applying the method of midrashic interpolation, Moses dal Castellazzo created a pictorial equivalent of a re-written Bible. It was this literary genre that inspired

him most in enriching his imagery. A dominant source was *Sefer ha-Yashar*, composed in Naples in the sixteenth century. Whether it was this particular work itself that was available to Moses in an early version before it appeared in print, or its material in some other form, is uncertain. The fact that the earliest printed copy was produced only in 1625 suggests the latter. If *Sefer ha-Yashar* already existed by the time Moses composed his cycle, and if he had access to a copy, he decided to include narratives from the Book of Genesis, but only a few midrashic details from the last four chapters. If, however, he did not deal with *Sefer ha-Yashar* as we know it but with its sources or an earlier version of it, the material available to him probably covered only the narrative of the patriarchs. For the second part of the cycle he also used independent episodes, such as the two texts on the deaths of Moses and Aaron. In other cases, however, he relied on traditional *midrashim*.

I do not imply that Moses – or any other Jewish artist, for that matter – necessarily created with a particular text before his eyes, translating it minutely and literally into a visual idiom. This, in my opinion, would lead to a misunderstanding of text-image relationships in late medieval or early modern art, and popular art in particular. The midrashic contents of re-written Bibles were part of the cultural atmosphere of the time and educated Jews were familiar with them from reading, studying, and attending synagogue services and sermons. It is not necessarily, or only, in the details that this relationship to the re-written Bible is evident, but rather, and more importantly, in the general approach to this particular literary genre, that creates this link between the re-written Bible and imagery.

Like the re-written Bibles, Moses' cycle turned the biblical account into a sort of popular tale, a popular visual text. Both the simplistic drawing style of the Warsaw copy and the woodcut technique in Castellazzo's Bible are typical for such books, not only in Jewish culture. The fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries produced an entirely new type of book – easily reproducible, accessible in price, and offered for sale to members of a well-to-do middle class – whereas earlier illuminated manuscripts were commissioned and purchased only by the upper

classes.⁸³ Like *Sefer ha-Yashar*, intended to be a popular version of the re-written Bible – and indeed it did become one of the most popular of Hebrew books from the seventeenth century on, Moses’ illuminated Bible was intended to be a pictorial equivalent of this genre. However, it was by no means an illustrated version of such a work, but a fully independent production in its own right.

Moses’ application to the Venetian Signoria demonstrates that he fully understood the economic potential of his illuminated Bible. Moreover, he writes explicitly that his renderings, together with the captions, would be clearly comprehensible and thus useful for everyone.

Having reached old age and obliged to provide for my family I am seeking to make use of my own inventiveness [...]. I have made my daughters cut all the five books of Moses into wood, beginning

with the creation of the world and proceeding chapter by chapter. The meaning of the images [...] I have explained in various languages. In the same manner we wish to proceed, if it pleases the Lord, with the entire Old Testament with the purpose of making it intelligible to everybody and to produce a document useful to everybody.⁸⁴

Whether Moses was successful in his enterprise, is not known. No copies of his original woodcut Bible have survived. Were they all worn out or were they lost because there was no market for them? The prints published by Weil indicate that the blocks were used in secondary printings. The Warsaw drawings, finally, are clear evidence that Moses’ cycle did arouse the interest he had hoped for. At the time when the copy was drawn or commissioned, the original edition was most probably out of print.

83 Fifteenth-century Germany was a pioneer in this process; see, for example, Liselotte E. Stamm-Saurma, “Zucht und wicze: Zum Bildgehalt spätmittelalterlicher Epenhandschriften,” *Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft* 41 (1987): 302–9; eadem, “Auftragsfertigung und Vorratsarbeit: Kriterien zu ihrer Unterscheidung am Beispiele der Werkstatt Diebold Laubers,” *Unsere Kunstdenkmäler* 36 (1985): 42–70; eadem (Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch), *Spätformen mittelalterlicher*

Buchherstellung: Bilderhandschriften aus der Werkstatt Diebold Laubers in Hagenau (Wiesbaden, 2001); Norbert Ott, “Deutschsprachige Bilderhandschriften des Spätmittelalters (zu den illustrierten Handschriften der 24 Alten Ottos von Passau),” *Münchener Jahrbuch für bildende Kunst* ser. 3, 38 (1987): 107–48.

84 See n. 7 above.