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Johannes Reuchlin's Collection of Hebrew Books – Its Afterlife and Influence

Abstract: This paper discusses the importance of Reuchlin's Hebrew book collection for Hebrew Studies in Germany (and beyond) and the scientific value of his manuscripts and early prints for Jewish Studies today. It will become clear that the items which are of particular interest are those that are known to have once been part of Reuchlin's library, but were removed and lost at some point in time – either lost completely through physical destruction or lost from the collection in Karlsruhe, but physically preserved at other locations. There seems to be a close correlation in most cases between the disappearance of books and manuscripts and the scholarly interest in these works.

In most of the fields in which Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522) became famous (he was a Doctor of Law, humanist, lover of Greek literature, bibliophile and, last but not least, Hebraist and Kabbalist), he was not the first: he was not the first Christian scholar to learn the Hebrew language, nor was he the first to publish a Hebrew grammar book. Like Reuchlin, other Christians also knew that Jewish literature contained more than the Bible, the Talmud and anti-Christian polemics, and some of them had already revealed a strong interest in the teachings of Jewish mysticism, the Kabbala. For this reason, they collected Hebrew books and built up their own libraries. On the other hand, even if Reuchlin was not the first to deal with these issues, he *was* the one who raised Christian Hebraism and Christian Kabbala to a new level. He had an unusually good command of the Hebrew language, for one thing; no Hebrew grammar of the quality of Reuchlin's had appeared before 1506 when he published his *De Rudimentis Hebraicis*. In the famous dispute over Jewish books ('Bücherstreit') in which he was involved, he revealed his broad knowledge of the different branches and genres of Hebrew literature,¹ which went far beyond anything his Jewish and non-Jewish opponents and supporters had ever heard of; his *De Arte Cabalistica* published in

The present paper is based on research on Reuchlin's collection of Hebrew books published as *Verzeichnis der Hebraica in der Bibliothek Johannes Reuchlins*, von Abel/Leicht 2005. I am grateful for the opportunity to present a few aspects in greater detail, correct a few mistakes and add some information I was unaware of at the time of publication.

1 Cf. Leicht 2013a on Reuchlin's concept of Hebrew literature; cf als. Price 2011 and Shamir 2011.

1517 was effectively the first attempt to present a comprehensive introduction to the major teachings of Jewish mysticism. All this he was able to achieve because he possessed a collection of about forty to fifty Hebrew books – manuscripts and early prints – which formed a Christian Hebraist's library, to which nothing comparable existed north or south of the Alps. In other words, Johannes Reuchlin undoubtedly represented an important turning point in the history of Christian Hebraism and the study of Hebrew literature and Jewish thought.

However, there are also certain disadvantages to being a turning point and the first one in this sense: the long line of Christian Hebraists who followed Reuchlin soon overshadowed his achievements. For them it was much easier to study the Hebrew language at university level; they consulted and composed new books of Hebrew grammar, with the result that Reuchlin's *Rudimenta* soon lost their scholarly importance and were never reprinted. The great bibliographers of Hebrew literature in the 17th and 18th century such as Johann Christian Wolf (*Bibliotheca Hebraea*, Hamburg/Leipzig 1715–1733) had direct or indirect access to a much larger range of Hebrew literature, rendering Reuchlin's descriptions of Hebrew literature into little more than learned guesswork; much progress was made in the creation and development of Christian Kabbala (although his *De Arte Cabalistica* was one of the works that remained important). Lastly – and here we come to the main topic of this paper – Reuchlin's collection of around fifty Hebrew books, which he built up over the course of his lifetime, investing a considerable amount of energy and financial means in it, was no longer something that would have gained worldwide fame after book printing in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries meant that many of these Hebrew works were much more readily available than at the turn of the 16th century.

In other words, cultural changes and technological developments that started off during Reuchlin's lifetime and soon after his death created a profoundly different situation in respect to the study of the Hebrew language and Hebrew literature. This raises the question of how important Reuchlin's Hebraistic library actually was, historically speaking.

Reuchlin himself obviously valued it very highly. This finds its clearest expression in his last will, in which he decreed that his Greek and Hebrew books should not be sold, but remain accessible to scholars. After his death in 1522, they were thus to be transferred to the Collegiate Church of St Michael (*Stiftskirche*) in his hometown of Pforzheim. From there, most of the books were moved to the library of Margrave Charles II in Durlach in 1565, and later to Karlsruhe. Thirteen or fourteen manuscripts and nine early prints survived there until the eve of

World War II, when five of the printed books and one manuscript (or perhaps two, as we will see) were destroyed together with 95% of the library.²

But to come back to the question of how important Reuchlin's collection of Hebrew books actually was, we immediately find ourselves posing a second question, namely how do we evaluate the importance of a historical book collection? This is a difficult task from the outset, not least because 'important' is a highly ambiguous term. In the present case, there can be no doubt that Reuchlin's collection of Hebrew books had a considerable impact on his own intellectual development, but how important was it for subsequent generations of Christian Hebraists? And how important are the manuscripts in the eyes of modern and contemporary scholarship?

In this paper, I will concentrate on the second and third aspect, namely the importance of Reuchlin's Hebrew book collection for Hebrew Studies in Germany (and beyond) and the scientific value of his manuscripts and early prints for Jewish studies today. Perhaps paradoxically, it will turn out that I have to concentrate not so much on the manuscripts and books which are still preserved in the Baden State Library in Karlsruhe, but on those items which we know were once part of Reuchlin's library, but were removed and lost at some point in time – either lost completely through physical destruction or lost from the collection in Karlsruhe, but physically preserved at other locations. The reason for this seemingly paradoxical perspective is the following: it is fair to assume that the books and manuscripts which are still found in the Karlsruhe library are those which enjoyed less intellectual curiosity over the course of history, whereas the works which were removed from the library were those considered important enough to be 'taken away'. This is a slightly problematic assumption, of course, given that it is often purely coincidental historical circumstances which are responsible for the disappearance of certain items – such as the physical destruction caused in World War II – but as we will see, there seems to be a close correlation in most cases between the disappearance of books and manuscripts and the more or less well documented scholarly interest in these works.

Modern research is relatively well informed about the state of Reuchlin's Hebrew book collection at different points in history, giving us a pretty clear idea of what got lost and when. Most of the information presented in the following paragraphs can be found in more detail in the *Verzeichnis der Hebraica*, but in order to give a rough overview of the relevant sources, I would like to mention briefly that the most important sources of our knowledge of Reuchlin's library are naturally the manuscripts and books themselves. Sixteen of these are now

2 Von Abel/Leicht 2005, 64–69.

housed in Karlsruhe, while three more that have survived are kept in various other libraries. Six or seven books (one or two manuscripts and five printed books) were destroyed during World War II, but we know quite a lot about them thanks to catalogue descriptions and other publications.

In addition, we possess a list of titles belonging to Reuchlin's collection, which was probably composed sometime in the second half of the 16th century. This list is preserved in the Bibliotheca Palatina (Cod. Pal. lat. 1925), which is now part of the Vatican Apostolic Library. It originated in Heidelberg and presumably describes the books which were accessible to interested scholars either at the Collegiate Church of St Michael in Pforzheim or later at the margrave's residence in Durlach.³ Although it is not always easy to interpret the entries in the list, it is clear that nearly fifty volumes were still housed at their proper location at that time. However, this was the point at which the long history of losses started, as can be partly observed in later descriptions of Reuchlin's manuscripts found in works such as Johann Heinrich Mai's *Vita Jo. Reuchlini Phorcenis* (published in 1687), Benjamin Kennicott's *Dissertatio generalis in vetus testamentum Hebraicum* (1770), Valentin Molter's *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Litteratur: Aus einigen Handschriften der Markgräflisch Baadischen Bibliothek* (1798) and lastly in Samuel Landauer and Wilhelm Brambach's catalogue of manuscripts in Karlsruhe of the end of the 19th century.⁴

If we turn our attention to the different parts of Reuchlin's collection as reconstructed from the various sources mentioned above, we see that the losses are spread quite unevenly. As regards biblical manuscripts and early printed versions of the Bible, it is relatively difficult to identify the items in the booklist (in fact, we know about more Bibles than we would need for the book list), but it seems that there are no major losses to be recorded in this field – probably because the manuscripts were not very easy to remove (take the monumental Bible Cod. Reuchlin 1, for example), they were of less interest to scholars (Cod. Reuchlin 3, *Targum Yonatan*, for instance) or they became superfluous once printed editions of the Hebrew Bible were easily available. This by no means diminishes the scientific/scholarly relevance of some of these manuscripts for philological research today – especially the monumental Bible codex or the *Targum Yonatan* – but this apparently did not apply for early Christian Hebraists.

³ Cf. von Abel/Leicht 2005, 237–260.

⁴ On the earlier catalogue descriptions, see von Abel/Leicht 2005, 71–78. One can glean a considerable amount of information about Reuchlin's book collection from quotes taken from Hebrew texts found in his own books, although in many cases it is not clear whether he actually possessed a specific book, borrowed it or quoted from a secondary source; cf. von Abel/Leicht 2005, 30–58.



Fig. 1: Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, Cod. Reuchlin 3, Prophets, fol. 294r, beginning of Ezekiel. © Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe (urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-64884).

The same largely holds true for biblical commentaries: Reuchlin's library contained four such manuscripts in addition to four printed volumes. With the exception of one manuscript containing David Qimḥi's commentary on Isaiah, which was bound together with another manuscript of Yehuda ha-Levi's philosophical work *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, was removed from the collection and is now found in the State Library of Württemberg in Stuttgart (Stuttgart, Cod. or. 20 2), all of these items survived and remained in place until World War II. Only two biblical commentaries which were quoted by Reuchlin and may therefore have been in his

possession appear to be lost (they may have already been lost prior to the legacy and the composition of the book list, however): these are the Kabbalistic commentary on the Pentateuch by Menaḥem Recanati and an early print of Gersonides' commentary on Daniel. In other words, biblical commentaries were not deemed attractive enough to be removed permanently from the collection.

The same can be said about the manuscripts and printed books on Hebrew grammar (one manuscript – Cod. Reuchlin 6 – which disappeared as late as the 20th century and two early prints), liturgical works (three manuscripts), books in Yiddish (three manuscripts – Cod. Reuchlin 8 (Fig. 2) and 9, and Munich, Cod. hebr. 425)⁵ and even a manuscript containing the Talmud tractate of Sanhedrin (Cod. Reuchlin 2; Fig. 3), which is still of prime importance for criticism of the text today, but apparently escaped the interest of Christian Hebraists – again probably because printed editions of the Talmud had become available by then.⁶

In which areas of scholarship did books and manuscripts get lost? Perhaps not surprisingly, the lost books belonged to the fields of Kabbala, anti-Christian polemics and philosophy.

Let us start with Kabbala. The disappearance of all the Kabbalistic manuscripts from the Karlsruhe collection is clearly a huge disadvantage for scholarship on Reuchlin since direct access to these manuscripts would have given us a much clearer picture of how Reuchlin prepared the material for writing his *opus magnum* – the *De Arte Cabalistica* of 1517. The book list testifies that by the second half of the 16th century, three Kabbalistic books and one item called *Haichudim* were still part of the library. We know from Reuchlin's quotations that these items were most probably manuscript copies of Joseph Gikatilla's works *Sha'are Ora*, *Sha'are Sedeq* and *Ginnat Egoz* and – as I have mentioned above – a manuscript of Menaḥem Recanati's commentary on the Pentateuch. Furthermore, as Gershom Scholem demonstrated decades ago,⁷ Reuchlin must have used (and possessed) a Kabbalistic *Miscellanea* manuscript which was very similar in content to another manuscript that still exists today: Ms. Halberstam 444, which is now housed in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.⁸

None of these books has remained in the Karlsruhe collection, but interestingly, the manuscript containing Gikatilla's *Ginnat Egoz* has survived and is

⁵ This was removed from the collection during Reuchlin's lifetime.

⁶ The book list contains two entries for such a tractate – one of them perhaps an early print which is now lost.

⁷ Scholem 1960, 284, n. 47.

⁸ Cf. von Abel/Leicht 2005, 35–38.

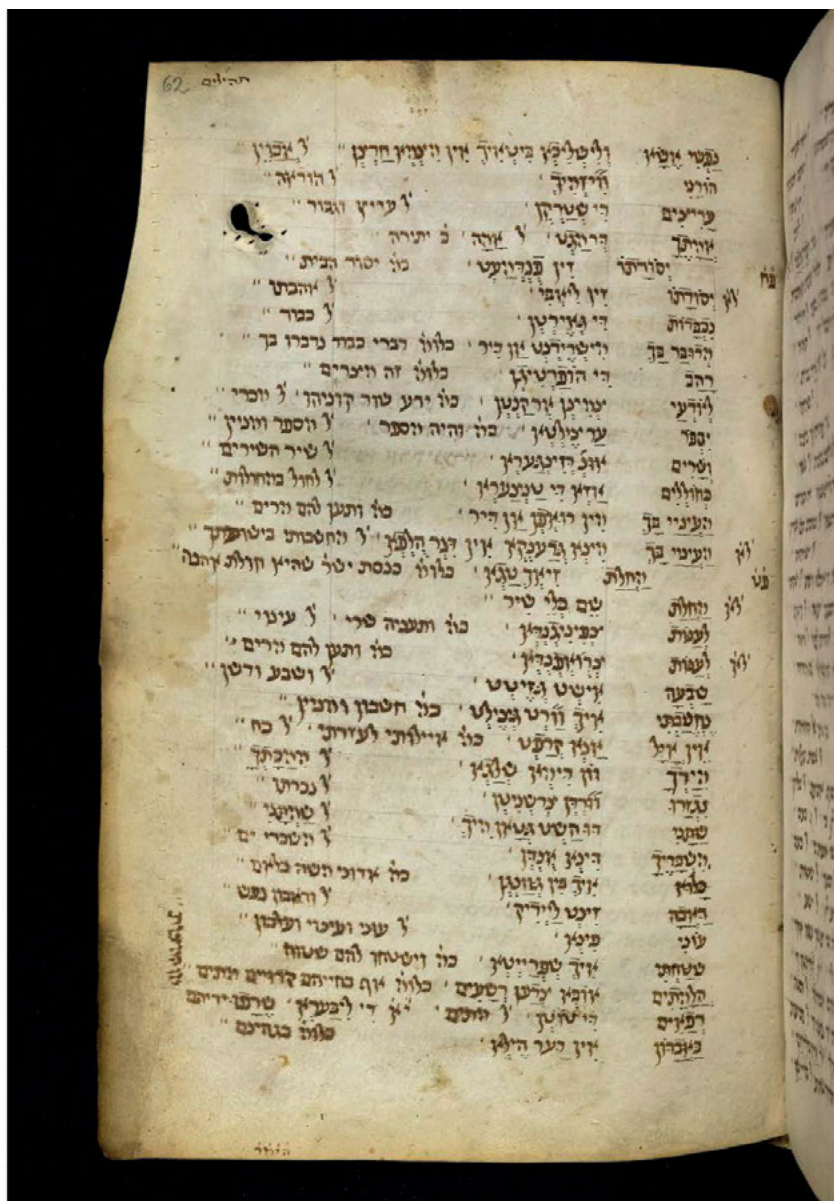


Fig. 2: Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, Cod. Reuchlin 8, Yiddish Bible glossary, fol. 62r.
 © Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe (urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-17443).

now housed at the British Library in London (BL, Ms. Or. 740 = Add. 11416). This manuscript provides us with a better understanding of how and why this particular Kabbalistic book (and perhaps the others, too) was removed from the collection: in addition to Gikatilla's work, the manuscript also contains copies of three letters written by Trithemius and a Latin translation of the *Sefer Yešira* copied in Reuchlin's hand and dated 'Rome 1488'. A closer look reveals that the folios in the volume were recounted in 1576, something that is not seen in any of the other manuscripts. No name is mentioned in the manuscript itself, but Johannes Pistorius is known to have been appointed librarian of the library in Karlsruhe one year earlier in 1575 – the very same Johannes Pistorius who published the one and only volume of his *Artis Cabalisticæ hoc est Reconditæ Theologiæ et Philosophiæ scriptorum Tomus I* in 1587. It is unlikely that this is a mere coincidence, and on reading the volume, it is evident that Pistorius printed the very same Latin translation as found in Reuchlin's manuscript. There can therefore be no doubt that Pistorius intensively used the Reuchlin manuscripts.

There is no evidence of any other Christian Hebraist who may have had access to the Kabbalistic books in Reuchlin's collection before Pistorius. He seems to be the first one to have had a specific interest in the books and apparently used them for his studies of the Kabbala. No more is heard about Reuchlin's Kabbalistic books thereafter. In other words, Reuchlin's Kabbalistic manuscripts did attract the strong interest of at least one Christian Kabbalist at a relatively early stage – probably with fatal results in terms of the preservation of the manuscripts in the Karlsruhe collection.

How big is the loss of the texts for modern scholarship? It is difficult to say. While it is certainly regrettable that we are no longer in possession of Reuchlin's own books, which may have contained glosses and remarks that shed some light on his working methods, almost all of the texts are well documented in other manuscripts and editions, which means that the damage might still be considered limited from a purely textual point of view.

A second area in which considerable losses can be observed is the field of polemical literature. The book list from the Bibliotheca Palatina contains one entry called *Argumenta Judæorum contra Christianos*, although no book of this name was found in the Karlsruhe collection when Karl Christ discovered the list in 1913.⁹ Based upon Reuchlin's frequent mentioning of a *Liber Nişşaḥon* in his own works, Christ concluded in his 1924 publication that this must have been a copy of Yom Tov Lipmann Muehlhausen's popular *Sefer Nişşaḥon*, written in 1399. There was a great surprise a few years later, however: in 1936, the classicist,

⁹ Christ 1924.



Fig. 3: Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, Cod. Reuchlin 2, Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, fol. 1r, with two notes by Reuchlin, above: 'Libri Sanhedrin Jerosolymitani'; below: 'Thalmud Ioannis Reuchlin Phorcei LL. Doctoris'. © Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe (urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-46200).

papyrologist and librarian Karl Preisendanz announced that the Baden State Library had acquired a polemical manuscript originating from Johannes Reuchlin's library. In the aftermath of this acquisition, Preisendanz published a short description of the manuscript which recently had found its way back to the Reuchlin collection after centuries of wandering.¹⁰ The elation surrounding this rediscovery was short-lived, however, as the manuscript was destroyed in 1942 together with 95% of the Karlsruhe library.

In spite of this regrettable second loss, it is fascinating to see that the information about Reuchlin's polemical manuscript, which is scattered about in different places, allows us to say much more about the book, its fate and influence than one might expect of an irretrievably lost item.¹¹ The first point refers to the content of Reuchlin's polemical manuscript: Karl Preisendanz was presumably the only person who studied Reuchlin's polemical manuscript in greater detail after its rediscovery in the early 1930s, but he was not a Hebraist and relied on Christ's statement that Reuchlin's library must have contained a copy of Yom Tov Lipmann Muehlhausen's *Sefer Niṣṣaḥon*. Most of the article is thus limited to a detailed reconstruction of the history of the manuscript, beginning with its confiscation from the house of a Jew named Yo'el in Mainz in 1478 and ending with its reappearance on the antiquarian book market in the early 20th century. In addition, Preisendanz provides some basic codicological data about the 78-folio parchment manuscript and reports in great detail on the Latin and German glosses which featured throughout the work. Any attempt to locate these glosses in Yom Tov Lipmann Muehlhausen's work is not crowned by success. On the other hand, it is possible to refer them all to the *Sefer Niṣṣaḥon ha-Yashan*, printed for the first time by the Christian theologian and Hebraist Johann Christoph Wagenseil in his *Tela Ignea Satanae* (Altdorf, 1681). Moreover, a close comparison of the glosses recorded by Preisendanz reveals that in addition to the *Sefer Niṣṣaḥon Vetus*, Reuchlin's manuscript also contained the reports about the disputations of Paris (in 1240) and Barcelona (in 1263).

Once the correct content of Reuchlin's polemical manuscript has been established, its historical importance and impact becomes clear: as has been shown elsewhere, his lost polemical manuscript – the only known manuscript of the *Sefer Niṣṣaḥon Vetus* written by a Jew – was probably the archetype for the other textual witnesses, all of which presumably originate from Christian hands. It is highly likely that the Hebraist Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), for example, who quotes this book in a number of his own works, read it in Reuchlin's Hebraica col-

¹⁰ Preisendanz 1936, 100–111.

¹¹ Cf. Leicht 2013b for a detailed discussion of this manuscript.

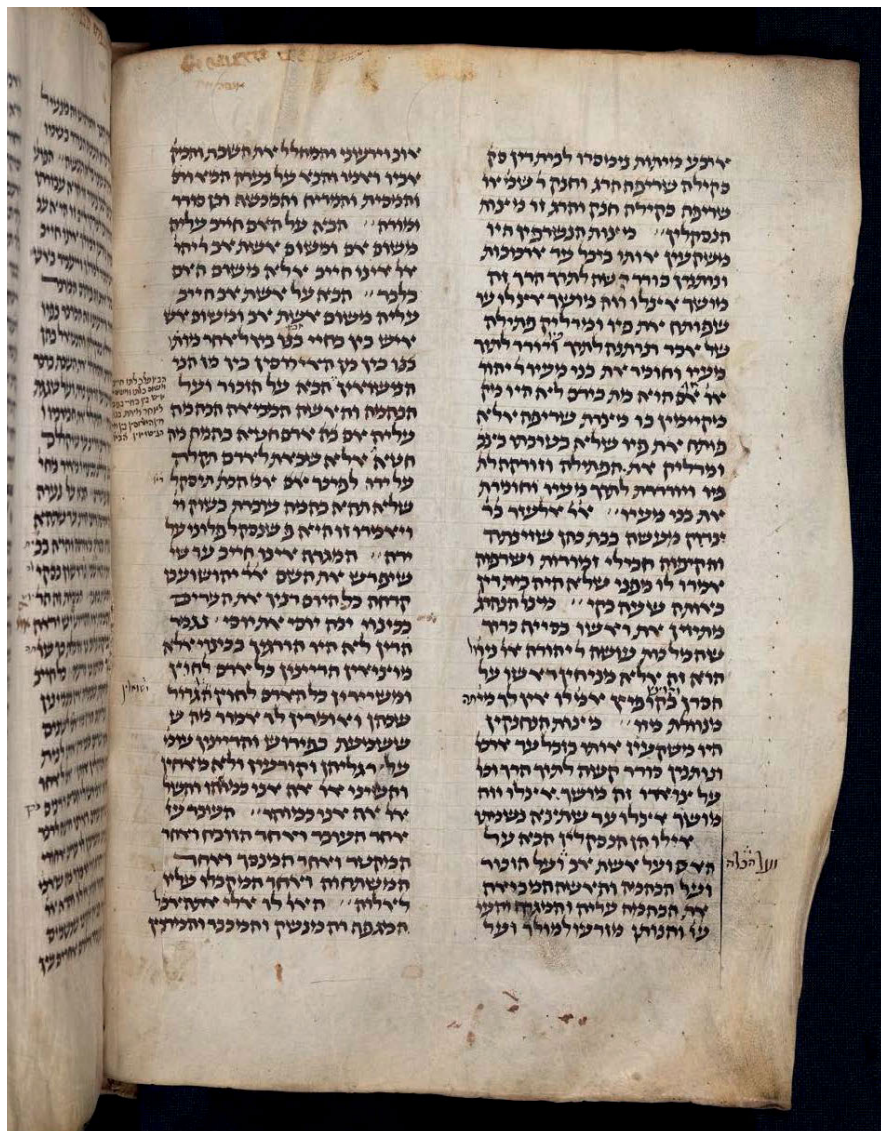


Fig. 4: Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, Cod. Reuchlin 2, Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, fol. 37v.
 © Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe (urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-46200).

lection. Likewise, there is good reason to assume that the Strasbourg manuscript (now lost), which served as a direct source for Wagenseil's edition, was copied from Reuchlin's polemical manuscript. Not until after the printed edition of 1681 do we start to find handwritten Jewish copies of the work again. In other words, this 'classic' of mediaeval Jewish polemical literature in fact goes back to a single archetype found in Reuchlin's library. Information about this lost manuscript is of prime importance not only for the long chain of Christian Hebraists and their anti-Jewish polemics, but also for modern research.

Thus we can see that there was quite a vivid interest in Reuchlin's library in this case, which again ultimately led to the removal of an important item from the Karlsruhe collection sometime during the second half of the 16th century or beginning of the 17th century. An owner's remark indicates that the book was inherited in 1642 by the Protestant theologian Johannes Georgius Hagen of Groß-Ingersheim (d. 1683), who also inherited another manuscript from Reuchlin's library – the volume containing the *Sefer ha-Kuzari* and David Qimḥi's commentary on the Book of Isaiah, which is now housed at the State Library of Württemberg in Stuttgart (Stuttgart, Cod. or. 20 2). I was unable to find out whether any of the ancestors of Georgius Hagen's father were especially involved in these removals, but it might well be that the two works were taken away together as both the *Sefer ha-Kuzari* and the *Sefer ha-Niṣṣaḥon* deal with some kind of religious dispute.

This brings us to the next group of books in the Karlsruhe collection where there are major losses to record: philosophical works. According to the evidence provided by the book list and other indirect sources, we know that, in addition to the *Sefer ha-Kuzari* mentioned above, Reuchlin must have possessed at various stages an early print of Maimonides' *More Nevukhim*, a manuscript of the anonymous philosophical work *Ruah Hen*, a handwritten Hebrew translation of Averroes' *Epitome of Logic* and – if the quotes are not indirect – possibly also copies of Abraham Ibn Ezra's *Yesod Mora*, Albo's *Sefer ha-Iqqarim* and Se'adya's *Sefer Emunot we-De'ot*.¹² Not a single volume of these books still exists in the Karlsruhe collection, and it is only by chance that a manuscript containing Yehuda ha-Levi's *Sefer ha-Kuzari* has survived. No principal suspect can be identified in these cases either, but I would like to briefly mention here that Reuchlin's *Sefer ha-Kuzari* manuscript is, in fact, of considerable importance for modern research on the Hebrew versions of the book. Numerous scholars have tried to solve the intricate problems presented by the different versions of the *Kuzari* translation by Yehuda ibn Tibbon found in the manuscripts and early prints. The Reuchlin

¹² Cf. von Abel/Leicht 2005, 44–51.

manuscript contains a so far unique preface by the well-known translator Shemu'el ben Yehuda ben Meshullam of Marseilles, who tells the reader that he revised Yehuda ibn Tibbon's translation of the *Sefer ha-Kuzari* in 1343 based on the Arabic original. No other manuscript containing this preface is known today, helping us to bring some order into the jungle of textual variants in the various manuscripts and editions.¹³ Shemu'el ben Yehuda was a well-known Provençal translator of the late 13th/early 14th century whom we can now credit with another work. He also lived at least five or six years longer than previously believed.

This survey on the books in Reuchlin's collection which got lost due to scholarly interest can be concluded with a few remarks about one manuscript that remained in Karlsruhe until the 20th century. According to the older catalogue descriptions, Cod. Reuchlin 6 contained copies of two works of grammar: David Qimḥi's *Mikhlol* – allegedly copied in 1282 (which would be extremely early, although the work is attested in dozens of other manuscripts, around 37 complete and 29 incomplete) – and *Sekhel Tov*, a work sometimes attributed to Moses Qimḥi, of which we now possess two manuscripts only. In both cases, the loss – which we dated in the catalogue to World War II¹⁴ – is extremely regrettable from a philological perspective. However, I now have good reason to doubt that this item really vanished in the flames of the war: firstly, all the manuscripts from the Reuchlin collection were evacuated from Karlsruhe before 1942, with the result that they all survived except for this grammar book. Secondly, it is rather conspicuous that this is yet another manuscript which had attracted scholarly interest shortly before its disappearance: a certain Benjamin Meyer, a rabbi from Alsace, submitted a dissertation to the University of Strasbourg in 1894 which included a critical edition of the work with a brief commentary, based upon our Karlsruhe manuscript. The editor explicitly writes the following in the preface:

Auch will ich nicht vergessen, an dieser Stelle der Verwaltung der Grossherzoglichen Hof- und Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe sowie der Kaiserlichen Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek in Strassburg meinen innigsten Dank auszusprechen für die Bereitwilligkeit, mit welcher mir das Manuskript nach meinem damaligen Wohnsitz, Lauterburg, überlassen, beziehungsweise die nöthigen Bücher zur Verfügung gestellt wurden.¹⁵

I am also mindful not to forget on this occasion to express my sincerest thanks to the administration at the Court and State Library of the Grand Duchy in Karlsruhe and the Imperial University and State Library of Strasbourg for the willingness with which they

¹³ Cf. Leicht (forthcoming).

¹⁴ Von Abel/Leicht 2005, 215–220.

¹⁵ Meyer 1894, *Sepher Sechel Tob*, 16.

entrusted the manuscript to my former residence in Lauterburg and provided me with access to the books I required.

This is obviously quite alarming, but in fact we cannot blame Benjamin for the actual loss of the manuscript: in 1926, a certain E. L. Meyer from Karlsruhe edited and published the dissertation of his recently deceased son Arthur, who had been a student at Heidelberg University.¹⁶ This work – which escaped our attention when we composed the *Verzeichnis* in 2005 – contains a detailed description of the manuscript and another critical edition of the text, but does not mention the earlier edition published by Benjamin Meyer about thirty years earlier. Although there does not seem to be any direct relationship between the two men, it is striking that Cod. Reuchlin 6, the grammar book which was clearly still being used in the 1920s, is the only manuscript no longer found in the library today.

In conclusion, one might say that the intensive use made of Reuchlin's Hebrew book collection was one of the main reasons for the losses that occurred in subsequent centuries. But the good thing is that traces were left by the scholars who should probably be held responsible for the removal of certain items from the collection: it is usual for scholars to reveal the influence of what they have read, quote from books they have read, make copies, prepare editions, and so on. This is also what happened with many of the manuscripts that disappeared from Reuchlin's library.

The Hebrew books which Reuchlin made such great efforts to find and collect indeed formed a collection of prime importance from a number of perspectives: the famous Bible codex, the codex containing the *Targum Yonatan* on the Prophets and the Talmud manuscript – all still preserved in the Karlsruhe library – are not the only works that make this collection so impressive today and reveal the true importance of Reuchlin's Hebraica. Many other manuscripts also helped later Christian Kabbalists such as Pistorius to study Kabbala and provided Christian Hebraists like Sebastian Münster and Johann Christoph Wagenseil with a mediaeval anti-Christian polemical text which was to become a classic of the genre; and copy of the *Sefer ha-Kuzari* might be of crucial importance in solving many of the textual problems surrounding the Hebrew translation of the text. Furthermore, the manuscripts contained a rare 13th-century testimony to a grammar compendium from Southern France, making the collection even more outstanding. Given the relatively small quantity of books Reuchlin succeeded in buying, the list of 'important works' becomes even more impressive and shows

16 Meyer 1926, *Sepher Sekhel Tob*.

that Reuchlin's book collection really was one of prime importance not only to the collector himself, but also to subsequent generations of Hebraists and even to modern scholarship. His collection was probably more significant in historical terms than many of the much bigger libraries belonging to Christian Hebraists in later generations.

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