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## The earliest printing of Hebrew text books in Buda

At 1948 Prof. A. SCHEIBER called the attention<sup>1</sup> for the need of exploring the relics of Hebrew printing in Hungary and of making a survey of the publications. This bibliographical work began by me still 1960, and up to date the Bibliographia Hebraica of Hungary contains nearly 7000 entries. On the basis of the first years' results it became evident that the history of use the Hebrew types in Hungary goes back to the XVI. century.<sup>2</sup> However, the first book<sup>3</sup> printed with Hebrew characters only, was published not earlier than in 1699 in Kolozsvár (Clausenburg) by Miklós MISZTÓTFALUSI KIS. But after his death at 1702, more as hundred years the Hungarian printing offices used their Hebrew characters only occasionally. So e. g. in the XVIII. century the "Episcopus" press in Eger, Anton ZACHER and Anton PATZKO in Pressburg, Thomas TRATTNER in Pest. And the most important printing office of the period, the University Press of Nagyszombat (Tyrnau) was owing only two Hebrew types. (Pica and Garamond.)<sup>4</sup>

From the sketch as drawn above it seems evident that at the end of the XVIII. century not a single of the printing houses in Hungary were in the position to become a centre of publishing and printing Hebrew books. However the tendency gained ground in Hungary, and JOSEPH the II. was inclined to support<sup>5</sup> the plan of a Hebrew printing office in Hungary. So we can see from some new found documents dated 1784—1785 in Pressburg.<sup>6</sup>

But in spite of these facts, furthermore it was proved, that the first printing office specialised to publish Hebrew text books in Hungary, worked only from 1814 in the University Press in Buda as an independent section of same. Several objective reasons explained the establishment of this section.

First of all the rapid increase of the Jewish population in Hungary. The number of families living in Buda the capital of that time, in Pest and Ó-Buda (Old-Buda) rose

<sup>1</sup> SCHEIBER S.: *Tudományos könyvek és tervek*. Bp. 1948. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> DÁN, R., *Introduction to the history of Hebrew printing in Hungary*. Kirjath Sopher. v. XLII. 1967. pp. 497—502.

<sup>3</sup> KAPOSZ Samuel: *Breviarium Biblicum* ... Kolozsvár, 1699. 8° 8 lev. RMK II. 1953.

<sup>4</sup> The original manuscript of the inventory mentions these types (National Archive of Hungary), the historians of the print mention only one. See IVÁNYI B.—GÁRDONYI A.: *A kir. egy. nyomda története*. Bp. 1927. p. 186.

<sup>5</sup> *Handbuch aller ... regierung des Kaisers Joseph II.* vol. XVII. Wien, 1790. pp. 626—627.

<sup>6</sup> The application of Israel SALOMON and Aaron KOLMANN for privilege of establishment Hebrew print in Pressburg, and the report made by the Chancellery about the need of Hebrew books in Hungary see Nat. Archive Hungary Htt. Depart Jud. n. 13 987 (477) and Htt. Dep. Jud. B—4 (151—156).



to over 1000 by the end of the XVIII. century.<sup>7</sup> Everyday religious life, schools and education required more and more Hebrew books. In the second plane — not an unimportant motive — the high price of books imported from abroad. From 1785 Hebrew books written in Austria—Hungary were printed exclusively at Anton SCHMID's<sup>8</sup> the Viennese book-king. In the third place may we mention a possibility happened by chance. In 1807—1808 the Machzor published at the SCHMID firm in Vienna had been prohibited<sup>9</sup> by the Francfort rabbinical meeting. These factors were noticed first by Elija ROSENTHAL a stationery merchant<sup>10</sup> admitted to the Buda Chancellery. He came from a famous family,<sup>11</sup> his father Naftali ROSENTHAL corresponded with Moses MENDELSON, and we know some letters written to his son studying in Pressburg, containing numerous references to the Enlightenment.<sup>12</sup> Elija ROSENTHAL came to Pest at 1804, and here he got in touch with Israel WAHRMANN, who soon became his friend and introduced him to a religious society called "Shiur"<sup>13</sup> founded by himself. Here ROSENTHAL met the young disciples of MENDELSON coming from Bohemia and Moravia, who practising in different literary genres were all compelled to contact Viennese printers, owing to lack of Hebrew printing houses in Hungary.

When applying in 1807 to the Buda Chancellery for the privilege of printing Hebrew books, ROSENTHAL gave all the abovementioned reasons as justification of his petition.<sup>14</sup> In spite of his well-founded reasons and good connections, the Chancellery rejected his application. ROSENTHAL disregarded the fact that the Chancellery in agreement with the Buda University Press did not see any chance in a possible competition with SCHMID's press in Vienna. On the other hand the University Press owned the licence for printing text-books and the direction counted on the possibility to make use of it incidentally for Hebrew prints too. Thus the plan of a special Hebrew printing office in Pest ended in failure.

The demand for a Hebrew printing house, however did not decrease, moreover it increased rapidly. ROSENTHAL recognized that he needed influential Viennese partners for the realization, and therefore tried to get in touch with the Vienna printing house Thomas TRATTNER through the TRATTNER press in Pest. He took the measure of the competition between the Viennese firms SCHMID and TRATTNER, which sharpened strongly in the first years of the XIX. century. And reckoned upon the possibility that TRATTNER should grasp the opportunity to push SCHMID out from the Hungarian market, thus weakening the latter's position. In 1810 TRATTNER informed the Hungarian authorities that he intends to establish<sup>15</sup> a Hebrew printing house in Pest. The authorities did not reject the appliance but stipulated that the new office should belong to the sphere of the

<sup>7</sup> BÜCHLER S.: *A zsidók története Budapesten*. Bp. 1901. p. 320, 357.

<sup>8</sup> DELLA-TORRE, L.: *Biographie des ... Anton Schmid*. Wien, 1855. About his Hebrew press see Rabinowitz, R., *מאמר על הדפסת התלמוד*. Jerusalem, 1952. pp. 128, 133, 140, 218, 239—240, 242.

<sup>9</sup> *Archive of Zemplén 1808*. no 134. Magyar Zsidó Szemle. v. XXII. 1905. p. 107.

<sup>10</sup> See in his letter written to the Director of the Press, dated 21. May 1821. „Auf solche Art wird bey beiden haben Landes Stellen königl. Stathaltung und Hofkammer die Papier Lieferung überlassen, wo ich bereits schon 17 Jahre und actu mit schreibrevizitoren zu beiden die Ehe haben. . .” University Print Archives. 1821. no. 406.

<sup>11</sup> GRÜNVALD, J. J.: *קורות משפחת ראזנשטאל*. Bp., 1921. The biography of ROSENTHAL (or later Elia Mór): REICH, I.: *Bet El*. v. II. Pest, 1868. pp. 334—335.

<sup>12</sup> BÜCHLER S.: *שי ליהודה*. Bp. 1895. and in the *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*. v. XXII. 1905. p. 229.

<sup>13</sup> BÜCHLER S. op. cit. p. 390.

<sup>14</sup> University Press Archive. 1807. Apr. 18. And in other petitions and letters in the same and next year.

<sup>15</sup> University Press Archive. 1810. no. 690.

University Press of Buda. After on the hand ROSENTHAL and TRATTNER, TRATTNER and the University Press on the other hand concluded an agreement, the latter started with the development of Hebrew types.

The first year's investment amounted to 12 000 florints. Samuel FALKA,<sup>16</sup> the well-known master-printer, who worked in the University Press since 1793, was entrusted with the casting of new Hebrew types and the organization of the printing office. It characterizes the standard of the planned printing house that Master FALKA has been appointed as its leader. He was renowned as one of the inventors of stereotype<sup>17</sup> and celebrities of Hungarian literature highly appreciated his Hungarian types. The serious investments and the appointment of FALKA proved that the new office was meant to be a very important one. Its task being of meeting the demand for Hebrew books and at the same time the monopolizing of Hungarian market according to TRATTNER's a plans.

In 1814 the first Hebrew book — written on Jewish theme — had been printed with FALKA's types, published by the University Press: i. e. the address of welcome by Moses MÜNZ,<sup>18</sup> rabbi of Óbuda on the occasion of the victory of Emperor FRANZ over NAPOLEON. The sermon was published together with its German translation, done by Mordechai BREZNITZ.<sup>19</sup>

דרוש ... אשר דרש ... מורינן ... רבינו ... משה מינין ... הנעתק לשפת אשכנזית מאת מורי ברעונין  
תקע"ד אשכנז.

In the colophon printed: Ofen, gedruckt mit Königlich Ungarischen Universitäts Schriften. 1814. The book contains 24 pages of Hebrew text plus 8 pages German translation, size 21—13 cm. Types: Pica, Mittel.

In the same year FALKA made the mentioned types in vocalized form, and printed the following books, <sup>20</sup>ויקין תורה, the poems of Joseph ROTTENBAUER<sup>21</sup> and its Italien translation, <sup>22</sup>קול השעירה written by Eizak Löwinger. The abovementioned Israel WAHRMANN<sup>23</sup> published a booklet in this year, bearing the title *Andachtübung*,<sup>24</sup> it is the only work of its author where he writes prose and poetry in Hebrew.

The modest results of the first year disappointed ROSENTHAL and his companions. The development was further hindered by the fact that FALKA's time was otherwise engaged and thus he was not able to enlarge the Hebrew stock of printing types. Up to 1817 only one book came out from the press: Jacob AUSPITZ's<sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup>בא-החמה. That is the Hebrew translation of a Latin geographical work, it was published with the approbation of Moses MÜNZ.

ROSENTHAL who regarded the establishment of a Hebrew printing house as a mission did not cease to emphasize in his repeated petitions, that the demand for Hebrew

<sup>16</sup> FALKA was born at 1766 in Transsylvania. He got his Hebrew in Székelyudvarhely as student. On the field of printing art his master was J. Mansfield in Vienna. See Magyar Kurir. 1789. v. II. 128.

<sup>17</sup> KELÉNYI B. O.: *A stereotypia első magyar mestere*. Magyar Bibliofil Szemle. 1925. pp. 121—126.

<sup>18</sup> His publications in Buda: *Lob und Dankrede*. Ofen, 1791.; *Anrede des Alt-Ofner Oberrabbiners* M. M. Ofen, 1792.; *Predigt zur Sieges und Friedensfeyer*. Ofen, 1814; *Anrede nebst Weih-Gedicht*. Übers. M. BREZNITZ. Ofen, 1815.

<sup>19</sup> Teacher in Buda. SZINNYEI J.: *Magyar írók*. v. I. 1894.

<sup>20</sup> Ofen, 1814. 6. p. 20—24 cm.

<sup>21</sup> KAYSERLING, M.: *Századunk elejéről*. — IMIT Yearbook. 1896. pp. 93—99.

<sup>22</sup> Ofen, 1814. 4. p. 19×24 cm.

<sup>23</sup> REICH, I.: op. cit. pp. 123—127.; *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*. v. IX. 1892. p. 702.; v. XXXVII. 1920. pp. 33—34 and BÜCHLER S., op. cit. pp. 389—390.

<sup>24</sup> Ofen, 1814. 18. p. 22×18 cm. and has been published *Patriotische Blume*. Ofen, 1814. 12. p. 23×17.

<sup>25</sup> Ofen, 1817. 12 p. 16×20 cm. The second edition Wien, 1818.

books was far greater than the investment made by the direction up to that time. He proposed that FALKA should be entrusted merely with the casting of Hebrew types and similar tasks. The management of the University Press did not reject the proposal but asked first Master FALKA's opinion. In his reply the printer mentioned that in a letter written several years ago,<sup>26</sup> he asked the direction to employ assistants, because without help he could not undertake the production of the wanted types. According to his plans 18 kinds of types would be enough for the work to run.<sup>27</sup> About this the direction made a quick decision and ordered<sup>28</sup> 200 kilos of types from the Viennese firm Joseph MANSFIELD and type moulds from TAUCHNITZ in Leipzig. Even FALKA could complete his workshop machines and employes. He made about 15 very fine Hebrew types in 1817–1818, it is certain that he took the models from Dutch sources, mainly from J. ENSCHEDE's type specimen-book,<sup>29</sup> but TRATTNER's influence can be also traced among his characters. He reduced the general size of the types, but attached great importance to an easy and graceful sketching in the frame of the small form. His best types are Nonparellel, Collonial and Petit.

Notwithstanding that the costs amounting in 1818 to not less than 30.000 florints<sup>30</sup> charged entirely ROSENTHAL, the management of the Press did not entertain a kindly feeling toward the Hebrew office, because the profit did not meet their expectations. ROSENTHAL had to contact again his friends and at last with success. As we can read in the approbation of Moses MÜNZ to the book *הדפסת רש"ן על ספר החינוך* יצאנו שרי הא"ז הרי לבקש מהמלך רש"ן על הדפסת ...<sup>31</sup> בני עמינו שחינוך ובריתות.

The first material success of the printing office proved to be a Siddur<sup>32</sup> published in 1819, which followed soon by a Haggadah with Abudraham's commentaries.<sup>33</sup> Both publications sold out very quickly, although they were printed in 4000 copies. After the unsuccessful years the first material and moral success encouraged ROSENTHAL and he published<sup>34</sup> *סדר מלכות מכל הדעה* and the second edition of the Haggadah. The Hebrew printing office in Buda aroused the interest of the scholars all over the country. An anonymous author had his Hebrew epigramms<sup>35</sup> printed together with their Hungarian translation, completed with Hebrew vocabulary in 1819, and T. TRATTNER of Pest became to be interested in the publication of Hebrew books. He behaved passively up to this time, but after the achievements of the years 1819–1820 declared, that he wished to participate — on basis of his right of 1810 — in the work. When Moses SAPHIR sends his poems written in honour of the King, in Hebrew and German translation<sup>36</sup> to the University Press — the translation being the work of Moses KUNITZ — TRATTNER allows to print there the Hebrew part only and prints the German text in his own office. So this book had been printed in two offices and was published in 1820. By this time the University Press wished to get rid of TRATTNER and to begin a closer cooperation with the Hebrew office. In 1820 they appointed Karl KOHLMANN to work with them as a

<sup>26</sup> University Press Archive. 1811. no. 342.

<sup>27</sup> University Press Archive. 1817. Oct. 15.

<sup>28</sup> University Press Archive. 1818. no. 126.

<sup>29</sup> Proef van letteren welke gegoten worden in de Nieuwe Haarlemische Lettergisterij van Joh. Enschede. 1768. Magy. Könyvszle. 1939. pp. 69–71.

<sup>30</sup> University Press Archive. 1818. no. 526.

<sup>31</sup> See no. 37.

<sup>32</sup> סדר החנוכה. Ofen, 1819. 400 p. 21×12 cm.

<sup>33</sup> סדר חנוכה של פסח ע"ס. Ofen, 1819. 23 p. 19×24 cm.

<sup>34</sup> Ofen, 1820. 270 p. 12×19 cm.

<sup>35</sup> ראי מוצק חנוכה, avagy újra amalgámozott üveg táblácska. Budán, 1819. 83 p.

<sup>36</sup> עניני מיד. Ofen, 1820. 8 p. 19×23. In the previous year has been published ...<sup>36</sup> עבודת הקודש שהיה ... השב"א. Ofen, 1819. 13 p. 22×34 cm.



the same year Watts had been entrusted by the direction with the leadership of the Hebrew office. In 1821 Rosenthal encouraged perhaps by FALKA, tried again<sup>51</sup> to obtain the privilege of the press. Presumably they intended together the University Press thinking that in possession of the privilege they could easily get the better of every competition especially SCHMID's in Vienna. That is proved by a paragraph in ROSENTHAL's memorandum stressing that the firm SCHMID is unable to achieve good results in Hungary with the exception of calendars. He then failed to get an answer, but later when he repeated his request,<sup>52</sup> he was informed by the Chancellery that the King did not wish to restrict the free competition between the printing houses.<sup>53</sup> The University Press itself was opposed to ROSENTHAL's ambitions. He got a warning that for the time being the University Press owned the rights of printing, further that the investments amounting in 1821 to 50 000 florints went also to the charge of the University Press.

Instead of remote plans ROSENTHAL decided to obtain quick results. In 1822—1823 he published again the Haggadah<sup>54</sup> and the work of Simon OPPENHEIM on matrimonial rights.<sup>55</sup> Next year Jomtov ben Abraham ASVIL's additional article to the tract Avodah ZARAH<sup>56</sup> came out.

The history of the foundation of the Hebrew print in Buda was closed with the specimen book published in 1824, showing the Hebrew types<sup>57</sup> of the office (see pl. 1—4.)

Up to 1875 — the last workyear of the Press in Buda — about 290 Hebrew books came out printed by the University Press of Buda, mostly essential requisites for the everyday religious life. May we mention, however, that individual literary works, books of poetry, funeral addresses had been published too, all of them primary sources to the Hungarian-Hebrew literature. The number and the worth of the published books shows that the print fulfilled a very important task, the turning Buda and Pest into literary centres must be connected with its activity.

The bibliography of the publications printed by the University Press of Buda Hebrew office had been compiled first by István BALOGHY,<sup>58</sup> it consists of 100 items. Wachstein when giving the outlines of the history of the printing house enumerated 104<sup>59</sup> items. His list is completed by S. KRAUSS with an addition of 20 items.<sup>60</sup> S. BETTELHEIM in his *Judaica* enumerates 280 titles<sup>61</sup> without any further data.

The completed list of the publications<sup>62</sup> will be treated in the *Bibliographia Hebraica* of Hungary mentioned above.

<sup>51</sup> University Press Archive. 1821. March. 31.

<sup>52</sup> University Press Archive. 1821. May 4.

<sup>53</sup> University Press Archive. 1821. 305—306, 406.

<sup>54</sup> Ofen, 1823. Spanish rite.

<sup>55</sup> ... דבר השני. Ofen, 1823. 112 p. 12×18 cm.

<sup>56</sup> ... הדוש הדרוש. Ofen, 1823. 40. p.

<sup>57</sup> *Proben aus der Schriftgisserey der Königlichen Ungarischen Universitäts Buchdruckerey*. Ofen, 1824. Some further Hebrew types see Betűalakmutatványsor a Magyar Kir. Egyetemi Könyvnyomtató Intézet betű és címkéöntőjéből. Buda, 1842. pp. 168—186.

<sup>58</sup> BALOGHY I.: *A magyar Kir. Egyetemi nyomda címjegyzéke. 1777—1877*. Bp., 1882. 263—272.

<sup>59</sup> WACHSTEIN, B.: *Die Ofener Hebräischen Drucke*. Festschrift für Heinrich Brody. Berlin, 1930. pp. 144—166. Here recorded by him מאן בניהו Trauerrede auf Wolf Boskovitz von Abraham Chajjim Oppenheim. Ofen, 1818. This book did not come into my hands.

<sup>60</sup> KRAUSS, S.: *Mitteilungen der Soncino Blätter*. 1931. no. 7—10. pp. 42—43.

<sup>61</sup> BETTELHEIM, S.: *Hebräische Editionen der Universitäts Druckerei in Buda*. *Judaica*. v. II. 1935. 10—12 q.

<sup>62</sup> DÁN R.: *A budai Egyetemi Nyomda hebraica bibliográfiája*. Bp., 1961. Manuscript in the University Library.