Many of the first Hebrew printers worked in out-of-the-way places. A number of locations are barely remembered as the home to a Hebrew press. Who would recall Reggio di Calabria if not for the fact that it was there that Abraham ben Garton ben Isaac printed the first dated Hebrew printed book, Rashi’s commentary on the Torah (completed 10 Adar, 5235 = Friday, February 17, 1475), or such place names as Isny, Oels, Ichenhausen, and Heddernheim, if not for Hayyim Shahor? What is less common, if not unheard of, is that a printer of Hebrew books for a Jewish market, a non-Jew, one of repute, should leave a major center to print Hebrew books in a less well-known place. Ambrosius Froben, printer in Basle, did just that, transferring his press from Basle to Freiburg im Breisgau.

Freiburg im Breisgau is a beautiful and historic city situated on the Dreisam at the foot of the Schlossberg, one of the heights of the Black Forest range in Baden, Germany. It is known for the Freiburg Münster, one of the finest Gothic churches of Germany, mostly built between 1122 and 1252, possessing a tower, which rises 386 feet in height. It is also home to the famed Ludovica Albertina (Albert Ludwig) University, founded by Albert VI, archduke of Austria, in 1457. Politically, Freiburg was known, from 1112, as the margrave of Baden, becoming a free town in 1120, chartered by the dukes of Zähringen. In 1219 it came under the control of a branch of the family of Urach. Attempts to throw off that yoke by force of arms were in vain, and in 1366 Freiburg purchased its freedom. Unable to reimburse its creditors, Freiburg passed into the hands of the Hapsburgs in 1368. Today, Freiburg is part of the state of Baden-Württemberg.

1 The original version of this article was published in the Gutenberg-Jahrbuch (Mainz, 2005), pp. 137–48.
2 Julian date. The Gregorian date would be February 26, 1475. Unless otherwise noted all dates are Gregorian.
Printing in Freiburg began in the incunabular period. Both Pollard and Proctor, the latter based on the collection of the British Library, record two printers, Killian Fischer and Friedrich Rider, as having been active in Freiburg from 1493, the former with four titles to his credit, the latter with seven titles. More recently, that library has expanded its holdings to twelve titles, although the dates of several works are inexact, the earliest recorded work being given as Fischer’s *Cursus optimarum questionum super Philosophiam Aristotelis*. . ., dated “1490?”4

The situation of the Jews in Freiburg is a different and baleful story. There must have been a Jewish presence in Freiburg from an early date, for German Jews were imprisoned there as early as 1230 by the town’s overlord, but released by King Henry VII. They are recorded as being taxed in 1281, and in 1300 the Jews’ ancient rights were ratified by the counts of Freiburg. In 1349, during the Black Death, Freiburg’s Jews, excepting pregnant women and children, were, after a month’s imprisonment, massacred by burning. Ten years later the counts were permitted by Emperor Charles IV to resettle Jews in Freiburg. They were again expelled and denied admission to Freiburg in the first decades of the fifteenth century, although allowed to dwell in neighboring villages. Jews were forbidden from conducting business there in 1453.5

These events notwithstanding, Hebrew books were printed in Freiburg during a short interval in the sixteenth century. That brief moment occurred when two well-known figures in the annals of Hebrew printing, Ambrosius Froben and his master printer Israel ben Daniel Zifroni, temporarily relocated a Hebrew print shop to Freiburg. They were not, however, the first to print in Freiburg with Hebrew letters, having been preceded in 1503 and 1504 by editions of Gregorius Reisch’s *Margarita Philosophica*, in which the Hebrew alphabet is displayed on a page in woodcut letters.6 This book, and the accompanying letters, are described by Alexander Marx as “A woodcut Hebrew alphabet, fairly large…July 19, 1503, fol. 5 verso, and repeated [40] in the second

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