Upcoming Kestenbaum Auction
#51 – Alphonse Cassuto Collection Part 2.

Kestenbaum & Co. will be holding an auction this Thursday, June 23. The catalog is available online at the Kestenbaum site (link). This auction includes the second part of the Alfonso Cassuto collection which is heavily focused on books originating or relating to the Iberian Peninsula. One can read more about that collection at the website or see the last auction catalog.

In addition, there are a few controversial books of note. First, lot 136 is the exceedingly rare first edition of *Toldoth Ya’akov Yosef*, the first Hassidic work published. It is both rare and controversial because it was the first and thus subject to bans and book burnings. Second, lot 153, is R. Azariah de Rossi’s *Me’or Eynaim*, Mantua, 1574. Of course, this book too was subject to a ban, in this case by R. Yosef Karo. De Rossi attempted to preempt his critics by removing certain pages and replacing with “corrected” pages. Third, lot 159, is R. Ya’akov Emden’s polemic against the Frankist movement, *Sefer Shimush*, Altona c. 1758-62. This work too was banned by the Va’ad Arba ha-Artzot. Aside from the controversial nature of the work, the work is also notable for the illustrations it includes at the end depicting the punishment that is due the Frankist. Also see this post by On the Main Line for another notable illustration in *Sefer Shimush*. Here are the illustrations of the punishments:
Fourth, lot 253, R. Manasheh of Ilya’s *Binat Mikra*. R. Menasheh himself was a controversial figure, [see R. D. Kaminetsky, *Ha-Gaon R. Menasheh me-Ilyay*, Yeshurun vol. 20, pp. 729-81]. In addition, this exceedingly rare work is also controversial in part because R. Menasheh records that the Gra himself told him that one is not limited to the interpretations of texts advanced by the Talmud. Finally, we have Nathan of Gaza, *Tikun Krei’ah le-Chol Yom*, Frankfurt
0.M., 1666 (lot 271). Nathan was Sabbatai Tzvi’s “prophet.”

Turning to illustrations, we have a R. Issachar Baer Eilenburg’s Be’er Sheva, Venice, 1614, lot 157. The title page prominently displays a bare-breasted woman. It is worth nothing that this copy belonged to the Sadigur Rebbi, R. Nachum Dov-Baer Friedman, and his stamps also appear prominently on the title page.
This is not the only work belonging to the Sadigur Rebbi that contains such illustrations. Lot 269, is the Sadigur Rebbe’s copy of R. Avraham Rapa’s Mincha Belula, which contains R. Rapa’s herald that similarly contains bare-breasted women. Indeed, as previously discussed here and here some have
attempted to alter the herald to make it less objectionable. Although lot 262 does not appear to have belonged to the Sadigur Rebbi, it too has similarly imagery, this time on the title page. In this case, it is a set of Mishne Torah, Amsterdam, 1702-03. Aside from the figures of Moses and Moses Maimonides apparently dressed as Greek philosophers flanking the title page, on the edifice at the top of the page there are two bare-breasted women.

This is not the only work from Maimonides that contains potentially objectionable imagery. Lot 260, is the Moreh Nevuchim, Sabbionetta, 1553, and in this case, the Greek mythological figures, Mars and Minerva appear at the bottom [for more on this title page see Marvin J. Heller, Mars and Minerva on the Hebrew Title-Page, Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, 98:3, Sept. 2004 (now reprinted in Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book, Brill, 2007)].
Finally, a few other books of note are included in this auction. Lot 244 is R. Shmuel David Luzzato’s personal copy of the first Hebrew bibliography by a Jew, R. Shabbatai Bass’s (author of the popular commentary on Rashi, *Siftei Hakhamim*), *Siftei Yesheinim*. For more on R. Bass, see [this post](https://example.com). Lot 145 is the *Sefer Avreikh*, Munkatch, 1893, which as Marc Shapiro
has pointed out is one of the works that are written by extraordinary precocious authors, in this case, he was nine years old; see this post. Lot 258 is the first English edition of R. Yehudah Areyeh of Modena’s *Riti*, translated by Edmund Chilmead.