

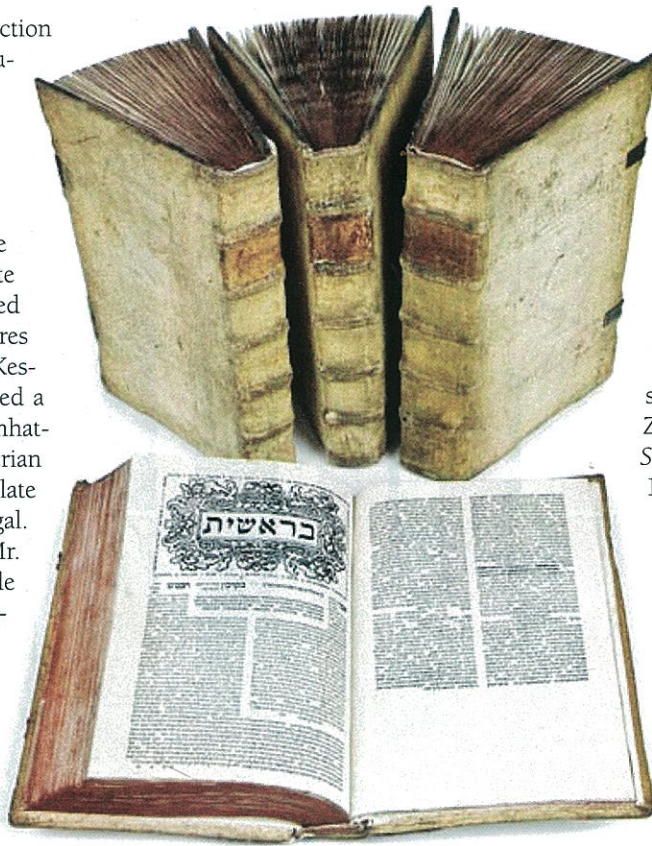
# Rare Iberian Judaica in Upcoming Auction

ITEMS FROM FIFTEENTH THROUGH NINETEENTH CENTURY ON AUCTION BLOCK

When one of the few auction houses that deal with Judaica comes out with a new auction, it provides the public with an opportunity to see the antique literary treasures that are still in existence and examine the circumstances that gave rise to them, the interest they generate among collectors, and the convoluted path by which many of these treasures were preserved through the ages. Kestenbaum & Company has announced a February 24<sup>th</sup> auction at their Manhattan location. They will be selling Iberian Judaica from the collection of the late Alfonso Cassuto of Lisbon, Portugal. Cassuto's foundation was laid by Mr. Cassuto's great-grandfather, Jehuda de Mordehai Cassuto, who in 1835 acquired a sizeable library assembled in the 17th century by the Namias Family of Hamburg. Subsequent generations of the family greatly expanded the library and Alfonso in particular immersed himself enthusiastically in the books and the library's further development.

The collection features theological, historical, and liturgical texts as well as books and manuscripts relating to the Inquisition, literature, science, and medicine. Important lots within the collection include a handsome manuscript by Isaac Orobio de Castro, *Prevençiones Divinas contra la vana ydolatria de las gentes* (*Divine warnings against the vain idolatry of the people*, Amsterdam, circa 1700), and three works bound in one volume by the celebrated mathematician and cartographer, Pedro Nunes.

Further highlights include Isaac da Fonseca Aboab's *Parafraſis Comentado Sobre el Pentateuco* (*Commentary on Tanach*) with



A sixteenth-century Italian Mikraos Gedolos on auction at Kestenbaum's.

the rare frontispiece portrait (Amsterdam, 1681), and Luis de Granada's *Introduction del Symbolo de la Fe* (*Introduction to the symbols of faith*, Salamanca, 1584-85). Also featured are medical texts by noted Marrano physicians Elijah Montalto, Amatus Lusitanus, and Rodrigo de Castro.

Incunabula in the auction include Joseph Albo's classic text of Jewish philosophy—*Sefer HaIkkarim* (Soncino, 1485); and a wide-margined copy of David ben Joseph Abudraham's commentary to the prayers, the second book printed in Lisbon (1489). An important post-incunable

is a crisp set of Daniel Bomberg's *Biblia Rabbinica* in four volumes in a fine, uniform contemporary binding (Venice, 1524-5).

Among the chassidic books, the rarest is undoubtedly an extraordinarily fine copy of Schneur Zalman of Liadi's *Sefer Likutei Amarim*, the fundamental exposition of Chabad Chassidic philosophy (Slavita, 1796). Other notable chassidic texts in the sale include a scarce copy of Schneur Zalman of Liadi's first edition of the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orech Chaim*, Kopyst, 1816), and the first anthology of the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov, *Kether Shem Tov*, two parts bound in one (Zolkiew, 1794).

The autograph letters section of the sale boasts an impressive selection of written correspondences by prominent rabbinic thinkers and chassidic leaders. Included are letters by the Chofetz Chaim, the Halberstam family, and the Schneerson family. Far and away, the most prominent lot to be auctioned in this section is an immensely rare autograph letter written by Reb Nosson of Breslav in 1842 to a close disciple, Reb Meir Mirkis of Teplik, in which he writes him that "joy is the remedy for all sicknesses." The Mirkis family has held on to this letter for two centuries.

Highlights among the manuscripts include an important autographed pedagogic work by Yitzchak Aryeh Zekel Leib Wormser, the Ba'al Shem of Michaelstadt (1768-1847), and a rare illuminated marriage contract from the ancient community of Mountain Jews in the region of Azerbaijan, 1867.