Reference Works from Israel, 1992–1993

Libby Kahane
Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, Israel

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Recommended Citation
Reference Works from Israel, 1992–1993

Libby Kahane
Jewish National and University Library
Jerusalem, Israel

The directories, encyclopedias, biographical dictionaries, and bibliographies listed below are part of the collection of the Jewish National and University Library. Most were published in Israel, but some of them are in the Library because it is the Library’s aim, as the National Library of the Jewish people, to collect Judaica from all over the world. Some non-Israeli publications that may not have come to the attention of U.S. librarians are therefore included in this list.

The works are arranged in the following categories:

I. Manuscripts
II. Hebrew Printing
III. Archives
IV. Encyclopedias
V. Periodicals
VI. Dictionaries
VII. Jewish Law
VIII. Proverbs
IX. Biography
X. Jewish History
XI. Guides
XII. Judaica in Various Languages
XIII. Israel—Atlases
XIV. Israel—Encyclopedias
XV. Israel—Social Sciences
XVI. Israel—History

Hebrew bibliographic data is given at the end of the article for all the starred entries. Translated titles in brackets are supplied for Hebrew works lacking English title pages. Stared page numbers indicate pagination in Hebrew letters. Price in dollars is given where known, otherwise, in NIS (New Israeli Shekels)—or other currencies—with approximate dollar equivalents.

I. Manuscripts


The 335 manuscripts described here were written by rabbis and scholars who lived in North Africa, or were written elsewhere and copied there. Many are compositions originally written in Spanish, which would have been lost had they not been copied in North Africa. Others are works brought by emissaries from the Holy Land to North Africa and copied there. This volume lists Torah commentaries and works dealing with Jewish law. Volume 2 will list manuscripts of poetry and literature.


Manuscripts of 246 books composed or copied in Baghdad are described. Benayahu, a well-known bibliographer, found these manuscripts in public and private collections—mostly at the Jewish National and University Library and in the private collection of Solomon David Sassoon, whose family originated in Baghdad. The description of each manuscript includes its printing history. There are indexes of titles, persons, places, names of prayers or piyyutim, and locations of manuscripts.


The Cambridge Genizah Collections are made more accessible with this excellent work. It identifies over 1,600 fragments of Targum, of every known genre and form. The collection includes over 1,000 fragments of Onkelos, as well as numerous fragments of Targum to the Prophets. Each fragment is described in detail. There is a general index as well as a canonical index (by names of Biblical books).

II. Hebrew Printing


A total of 1,660 facsimiles of title-pages of Hebrew books are found in these three volumes. They are useful for identifying rare and out-of-print books. The arrangement in each volume is alphabetical. Place and date of printing are given in the index of titles. Among the books are a Mahzor printed in Sabionetta, 1557, Megillas Sefer (Prague, 1710), and B’er Mayim Hayim (Krakow, 1616).


The facsimiles of the title-pages in this publication are each on one full quarto page, while those in Catalog of Rare Seforim (no. 5) are four to a page. An alphabetical list of the contents by titles includes author, title, and place.


This is an important undertaking—the listing of all books printed in Hebrew characters up to 1863. Approximately 32,000 books are described in Part II, which is the main volume of the Thesaurus.

It is arranged by place of printing, from alef (Edinburgh) to tav (Tunis), with a chronological arrangement under each place. The place names are given in both Hebrew and Latin characters, and the corresponding civil and Jewish dates head each page. Entries include author, title, subject, place, name of printer, year, number of pages, format, and bibliographic references. Among the bibliographic references is one for the book Petah ‘Enayim, which Vinograd attributes to Saloniki,
1602, but notes Meir Benayahu’s study which maintains that, on the basis of the type of letters and the frame of the title page, it was actually printed in Venice (in Reuven Margulies Memorial Volume, Jerusalem, 1973).

Another interesting reference is for Minhat Natan, by Nathan Feitel ben Shmuel Teumim. Vinograd enters this under Prag, 1613, noting the bibliographies that list this book, some of which put its date at 1623. Among them is Isaac Yudlov’s Ginzei Yisrael: The Israel Mehman Collection (Jerusalem, 1984). Yudlov points out that this book could not have been printed in 1623, because two of the persons mentioned in the book as being alive were no longer living in 1623. Part I of the Thesaurus, which will include an introduction and indexes, is to be published shortly. [Editor’s note: A review copy of Part I has been received and assigned to a reviewer. We hope that the full-length review will appear in the forthcoming issue of the journal.]


This handsome book reproduces the title-pages and sample pages—including facsimiles of printers’ notes and approbations—of each of 55 editions of the Talmud, from the first, printed in Soncino, Italy in 1484, to the one printed in Vilna in 1876. Each entry is accompanied by a detailed discussion. There are many tables, lists, and indexes; among them is an index of the commentaries printed in the various tractates and editions. A recent book in English on the same subject is Printing the Talmud: A History of the Earliest Printed Editions of the Talmud, by Marvin J. Heller (Brooklyn, NY: Im Hasefer, 1992).

III. Archives


The recordings listed here have been collected for the purpose of studying the language traditions of Jews from various communities, before these traditions are forgotten or absorbed into the general Israeli culture. They are arranged under categories such as reading of the Bible, reading of the Talmud, reading of the Hagadah. Under each, the recordings are arranged by place of origin of the reader, e.g., Tiszafüred in Hungary, Arbil in Kurdistan, and Tashkent in Bukhara. Volume 1 lists recordings made up to 1977. Volume 2 lists the recordings made from 1977 to 1986 under the same categories as vol. 1. In addition to the readings, it lists recordings of “Hebrew freely spoken.”

Other volumes of the series ‘Edah ve-lashon consist of studies on the various Jewish dialects and Torah-reading traditions.


This work is useful for students of Zionist history. It lists the files of the archives of the various departments of the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund, and other Zionist organizations, including those that are no longer in existence. It also lists the publications of about 200 individuals involved in Zionist activities, and has details about the photographic archives.


This is the sixth in a series listing the publications of the Jerusalem municipality. The first five, published between 1979 and 1991, listed publications that appeared between 1948 and 1991. It includes works issued by public bodies connected with the municipality.

IV. Encyclopedias

*11. [Encyclopedia for the Jewish Home. Editor: Raphael Halperin.] Bnei-Brak: Raphael Halperin—Hekdesh Ruach Ya’akov (POB 266), 1993–. In Hebrew. NIS 1,484 (about $500) for the 20-volume set. As of May 1994, six volumes had been published.

A general encyclopedia intended for the religious public, handsomely-illustrated but without immodest pictures.

In addition to the entries on general subjects in the fields of geography, history, the sciences, and the arts, it has many entries on Jewish subjects—liturgy, Bible, and Jewish law—as well as many biographical entries. The Jewish entries are given prominence. An example is the entry avedah (loss), which summarizes the entire Talmudic tractate concerning the finding of lost objects. This encyclopedia is recommended for its Judaica entries.


This excellent four-volume encyclopedia (see JL, vol. 4, 1988/89, p. 195) will be available shortly on CD-ROM, enhancing access to the wealth of information in its pages.

The publisher, C.D.I. Systems (1992) Ltd., has another product that may be of interest to genealogical researchers who are looking for their relatives in Israel. It is called Tafton and contains all the Israeli telephone books on one CD-ROM.


This translation of Wigoder’s Encyclopaedia of Judaism will be useful for those whose native language is French.

V. Periodicals


Gilboa has arranged this work in two parts: the first covers periodicals published from 1691 to 1856; the second begins with Ha-Magid, the first weekly in newspaper format to be published in Hebrew. Each entry includes dates, places of publication, formats, pagination, names of editors and chief contributors, and bibliographic references, as well as an essay discussing the aims and content of the periodical.


This bibliography gives full information in Russian and English for 78 newspapers, magazines, almanacs, and samizdat publications, with facsimiles from each. There

Judaica Librarianship Vol. 8 No. 1-2 Spring 1993-Winter 1994 167
are indexes in Russian and English of titles, editors, organizations, and places of printing.

This is number 3/1 in a series planned as a comprehensive bibliography of the Russian-Jewish press. Volume 1, for 1860–1945, and volume 2, for 1946–1985, are planned, as are two additional volumes for the perestroika and post-perestroika period: volume 3/2, for 1986–1992 in the U.S.S.R. except for Russia, and volume 3/3 for 1986–1992 in Israel and other countries.

VI. Dictionaries


This Hebrew-English dictionary is arranged by topics and has many diagrams. An earlier version, compiled by then Major Abraham Akavia in 1951, was titled Dictionary of Military Terms (Milon munaha tsava).

Other recent dictionaries of military terms are:


This work was published under the auspices of the Language Traditions Project, Institute of Jewish Studies, Hebrew University. The project aims to produce a dictionary of the Hebrew and Aramaic components in the Jewish languages of the Mediterranean basin. Bunis lists the Hebrew and Aramaic words found in Ladino, illustrating them with proverbs and sayings. He includes tables for the transliteration and transcription of Ladino into Latin characters.


This dictionary is an important aid to understanding the Aramaic of the Talmud. It will be useful to all students of Talmud. Each word is translated into Hebrew, with a citation of the tractate and page on which it appears. An appendix lists Aramaic words which were, according to recent manuscript research, misspelled in the printed editions of the Talmud.

The late Professor Melamed also compiled Milon arami ‘ivri la-targumim vela-aramit sheba-Mikra (Aramaic-Hebrew Dictionary to the Targum and Biblical Aramaic) in 1975. This was produced by offset printing from his handwritten manuscripts and covers mainly the Biblical books of Job, Psalms, and Proverbs, and the translations of Onkelos and Jonathan.


Other recent legal dictionaries are:


VII. Jewish Law


This one-volume edition of the complete Shulhan 'Arukh features punctuation as well as a detailed table of contents and subject index. Also included is the commentary Ha-Mapah, by Rabbi Moses Isserles, and an index of Biblical references.

Preiser, a lawyer by profession, has also published Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah in one volume with punctuation, indexes and Biblical references (Jerusalem: Ketuvim, 1985). [See the review of this work by Avraham Greenbaum in JL vol. 3 (1986/87), p. 24.—Ed.]

Preiser’s legal expertise insures that the subject indexes to these works are professionally sound. He has also published indexes to Israeli legislation. Among them are:

Legislation in the State of Israel: By Subject, with Indexes. (Ha-Hakikah bi-medinat Yisra'el.) Jerusalem: Ketuvim, 1989. In looseleaf binder.


Close to 1,000 scholarly books and articles are listed in these multilingual bibliographies, which are part of a comprehensive bibliography on the Oral Law being compiled at the Department of Talmud at Bar-Ilan University.


A translation of the Hebrew Entsiklopediah Talmudit, which was begun in 1947. Volume 21, covering part of the letter yud, was published in 1993. Like the original, the English translation provides an excellent digest of Jewish law arranged by subject. Explanatory notes have been added to elucidate the material in this edition, on the assumption that most of those who consult the translation are less conversant with the original halakhic literature than those who use the Hebrew version.

The translation lags far behind the original—only four volumes have been published so far. Volume four covers part of the letter bet (betsah to brerah). Among the subjects in the table of contents of volume 4 are the egg (betsah) as a standard of measurement, the definition and legal relevance of a house (bayit), and the mandatory precepts for non-Jews (Bene Noah).


The Jew needs to know when the Sabbath begins and ends, and when morning and evening prayers can start. This book
supplies tables for computing sunrise and sunset in any location in the world. There are also tables that give the exact times for specific cities, such as Safed, Seattle, Stockholm, Strasbourg and Sydney.

In addition, there is an explanation of how the Jewish calendar works, as well as tables for converting from the civil to the Jewish date and vice-versa, and a "permanent" Jewish calendar, up to the year 2240.


This multilingual bibliography lists over 5,000 articles from periodicals, fest-schriften and other collections. Books are not included, because they can be found by subject in library catalogs. The work is arranged under categories such as the meaning of prayer, history of prayer, weekday prayers, holidays, and holiday prayers.

Under the heading Passover, there are 732 entries subdivided by topics such as the Passover Sacrifice, the customs of the Seder, and the Hagadah. An interesting entry under Passover is no. 33–321: "Passover Raisin Wine, The American Temperance Movement, and Mordecai Noah: The Origins, Meaning, and Wider Significance of a Nineteenth-century American-Jewish Religious Practice."

A supplement to this bibliography was published in 1994 in ["Siddur Hanau Shin Peh Het"]; (Prayerbook Hanau 1628), a special publication of the Department of Talmud of Bar-Ilan University, to mark its annual conference. The bibliography, on pp. 55–86, lists entries culled from Index of Articles on Jewish Studies (RAMBI), and arranged under the category headings of the original bibliography.

VIII. Proverbs


This handsome volume lists Ladino proverbs under topics such as marriage, health, wealth, jealousy, and laziness. Each proverb is given in Hebrew as well.


Published under the auspices of the Russian and Slavic Studies Department of the Hebrew University, this work lists only those proverbs that have a corresponding proverb in Hebrew, Yiddish, English, and Russian. Proverbs in all four languages are given for each of the 200 entries. There are two alphabetical arrangements—one in English, the second in Yiddish.

The existence of so many corresponding proverbs may be due to the penetration of Biblical proverbs into English, Russian, and Yiddish, and the penetration of Russian and Yiddish proverbs into Hebrew. Among the proverbs are: A new broom sweeps clean; In the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king.


These proverbs of Iraqi Jews are given in Arabic characters, in Hebrew transliteration, and in Hebrew translation. Each one is explained in light of Jewish customs, and similar proverbs in Jewish sources are quoted. There is a detailed subject index and a list of source books.

Sample proverbs (paraphrased): Seeing is believing; Penny by penny the jar is filled; There is no escape from death.


The author is an expert in the field of folklore and in the theoretical study of proverbs. She lists 101 proverbs used by Georgian Jews in Israel, and analyzes each one. Each proverb is given in Georgian, with its transcription in Latin characters. There is an index of the proverbs in Georgian and a general index in Hebrew. The title of the book is taken from the first proverb which may be paraphrased as: The experi-ences of the present generation serve to teach the next one.


Rosen aims to present here the lesser-known sayings of the sages. The book is arranged under categories such as modesty, stinginess, the family, and dreams. Full citations are given for each saying.

IX. Biography


A selected bibliography of genealogical research on Jewish families. The coverage is multilingual, but German-language materials predominate. The 2,596 entries are arranged under broad categories and indexed by personal names, place names, and authors.


Full-page biographies are given for about 65 Yemenite sages.


The authors listed here have had their works translated into English or other languages, and thus represent the "best-sellers" of Hebrew literature. A full page is devoted to each of the 130 authors. In addition to biographical and bibliographical data, there is a brief critical analysis of the author's work, and a portrait.


Rabbi Moses Sofer, better known as the Hatam Sofer, the title of his volumes of responsa, was the undisputed religious authority from the early 19th century up to his death in 1839. Biographical and genealogical information and samples of handwriting are given for over 1,000 rabbis and scholars who wrote to Rabbi Sofer concerning halakhic problems. The handwriting samples may be useful in identifying manuscripts of that period.

This is a valuable book because many of the persons listed here are not represented in other biographical dictionaries. The work is indexed by names and places.
NIS 5 (about $35).


... ugraphy are as in Shem ha-gedolim, the bio­bibliographical work first published by Hayyim Joseph David Azulai in 1774 and reprinted since in more than 20 editions. Like Shem ha-gedolim, the arrangement is by personal name rather than family name, which detracts from the book’s usefulness for genealogical searches.


More than 2,000 members of the Jewish community of Würzburg who lived between 1900 and 1945 are listed here. Many of the entries have genealogical information as well as the usual bibliographical data. An appendix lists the deportees from Würzburg.


This is a fine example of tracing one’s family tree. It lists 1174 ancestors of Israel Arie Margolies in great detail, back to Biblical times. Many diagrams are included.


X. Jewish History


This edition of Attal’s bibliography about North African Jews contains over 10,000 entries, almost twice as many entries as in the first edition. Most of the works cited are in French or Hebrew, but a large number are in English. The bibliography includes material on all aspects of Jewish life in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco—Hebrew printing, health, education, art, and the history of North African Jews in Israel and in Canada.

A detailed subject index lists such topics as elections, elegies, El-Alamein, Elmleh family, and 'Emek Ha-bakha (book).


In his introduction to this detailed index, Dr. Ben-Avner discusses the background and aims of the periodical “Der Israelit.” The articles reflect its outlook on the political situation in Germany during the period of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Nazism.

This is a useful source for the study of Orthodoxy in Germany and its attitude toward Zionism and toward the Reform movement. Among the articles listed are one on new methods for training Jewish teachers (January 15, 1925) and one on the elections to the Reichstag (August 4, 1932).


Hesse, in central Germany, where Jews have lived since the Middle Ages, is the subject of this bibliography. The 2,500 entries are arranged under broad categories, and indexed by authors and subjects. Among the subjects in the index are teachers, synagogues, proselytizing, and concentration camps.


This is a comprehensive bibliography, covering all aspects of Jewish life in England, and including books, articles, and theses. Like her earlier Anglo-Jewish Bibliography, 1937–1970, this is arranged by subject, with an index of authors and subjects—and with the same fine typography. Among the subjects are History of the Jews in the British Isles, Social and Communal Life and Organizations, Cultural and Literary History, Anglo-Jewish Press, the Jew in English Literature, and Biography.

Among other bibliographies compiled by Mrs. Goldschmidt-Lehmann are:


• Sir Moses Montefiore ... a Bibliography. Jerusalem, 1984.

She has also published bibliographies in the Hebrew periodical Cathedra. Among them:


This bibliography on the history of the Jews in Switzerland is arranged under categories such as antisemitism, synagogues, biographies, missionaries and conversions, and Jews in literature and the arts. The broad category History is subdivided by place and period. There are indexes of place names, persons, subjects, and authors.

This is the fourth in the series of bibliographies on Jewish history published by Saur: Bibliographien zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte. The first three are:


Very little has been written about the Jews of Portugal and the Azores in the 19th and 20th centuries. Most of them came from Morocco to seek their fortune, and did not remain for long. Included in this book are descriptions of the 54 Hebrew books printed in Portugal, with facsimiles. There is also a biographical list of the rabbis and heads of communities. Marciano, an accomplished bibliographer, compiled Sefer Bene Melakhim, a bibliography of the Hebrew books printed in Morocco from 1517 to 1989 (see JL, vol. 6, 1991/92, p. 153).


This comprehensive bibliography is arranged by categories such as local history (according to locality), ethnicity, organizations, congregations, education, the Jew in Canadian literature, biographies, and more. It is indexed by author.

XI. Guides


This bilingual (English, French) directory gives addresses of schools, synagogues, communal organizations, nursing homes, and food stores, among other categories. Background information is given for many of the entries. A useful source about the Jews of Montreal.

XII. Judaica in Various Languages


Books about: the Jewish religion and the Holocaust in Hungarian, the history of Hungarian Jewry, and Jewish language and literature in Hungarian are among the 610 publications listed here. The work is arranged by categories, with an index of names and subjects.


Published to commemorate 500 years since the expulsion from Spain, this aims to be a comprehensive list of books about Jews and Judaism in Spanish that are currently in print. Listed are 592 books under categories such as Jewish religion, philosophy, history, Ladino literature, and fiction on Jewish themes. Most are translations from other languages. Indexed by author and subject.


Arranged by author, with indexes of titles and subjects, this bibliography covers Portuguese translations of Israeli literature and other belles-lettres concerning Jews, as well as books dealing with all aspects of Jewish life.

The author has been compiling bibliographies of Brazilian Judaica since 1974, when he participated in Marcos Margulies' Judaica Brasiliensis: Repertório Bibliográfico das Publicações Relacionadas com o Judaísmo e Questões Afins. Schlesinger published two up-dates to this bibliography—one for the years 1974-1984, and part 3, for the years 1984-1988.

Of note is an early attempt at a bibliography of Brazilian Judaica by Bruno Basseches: Bibliogra-fía dos Livros, Folhetos e Artigos Referentes a História dos Judeus no Brasil (1961).

XIII. Israel—Atlasses


Each map in this generously illustrated atlas includes essays detailing the Biblical and rabbinic sources for each section of the Holy Land and the areas around it. Part I, published in 1988, was subtitled "Yesodot Heker" [Foundations for Research] and dealt with the basic sources concerning the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael.


The atlas is arranged chronologically; each map is accompanied by a detailed discussion of events and places. Among the maps are: places where Isaac lived, cities built by the sons of Reuben and Gad, Canaanite kings smitten by Joshua, the war of Gideon against the Midianites, the wanderings of David, the countries with which Solomon traded, the travels of Elijah, Hezezkiah's kingdom. This handsome work accompanies the series of Biblical commentaries Daat Mikra, published by Mossad Harav Kook. It is indexed by personal and place names.

XIV. Israel—Encyclopedias


This encyclopedia lists persons, places, historical events, the different units connected with the Israel Defense Forces, Haganah songs, and more. It includes an annotated bibliography, appendices, diagrams, and indexes of names, places, and subjects.


This attractive work is the definitive authority on all that has been discovered by archeologists in Israel.


This handsome illustrated work was written by Ze'ev Vilnay, noted authority on the history and geography of the Holy Land, shortly before his death. There are
entries for neighborhoods, streets, buildings, and other sites in the greater Jerusalem area, as well as for persons and groups involved in settling and building the city. Vilnay’s Guide to Israel appeared in several languages. He published many studies in Hebrew on the history, geography, and folklore of Israel. One of his outstanding works is the ten-volume Hebrew encyclopedia of the geography of the Holy Land, Ariel: entsiklopedyah li-yedi’at Erets Yisra’el (Tel-Aviv, 1969–1984). The first nine volumes are arranged by place name; volume 10 is a bio-bibliographical dictionary of travelers to the Holy Land.

XV. Israel—Social Sciences


This bibliography covers the religious system of Israeli education, which was founded by the religious Zionist parties in the early years of the State. The 363 books, articles, and reports and their abstracts are arranged under broad categories, such as aims of the religious education system, its history, educational values, family life, social integration, and the religious kibbutz schools. Most of the entries are in Hebrew, with some periodical articles in English. There are indexes of authors, project sponsors, and subjects. The author index gives names in Hebrew only.


The lessons learned after several years of dealing with the problems presented by the aliyah of Ethiopian Jews are described in this list of 270 books, articles, and reports with abstracts. The entries are arranged under categories such as absorption policy, social and cultural changes, and reports with abstracts. The years of effort which went into listing about 9,000 names will benefit researchers dealing with primary materials of the pre-State era.

Hebrew Bibliographic Data

2. נחום מתוך, יעקב. מארשי שהנ”נ יחצינאר

Hebrew Bibliographic Data

2. נחום מתוך, יעקב. מארשי שהנ”נ יחצינאר

XVI. Israel—History


Arranged under broad topics, the 3,100 entries are indexed by authors. The documents listed are in Hebrew and English, and include books and periodical articles. Among the topics are Israel’s military policy, the Arab-Israeli wars, terrorism, and Israel in the Middle East.


This is a list of code names used by members of the pre-State underground, including the Haganah, Etzel, Lehi, and others. The years of effort which went into listing about 9,000 names will benefit researchers dealing with primary materials of the pre-State era.

Yad Vashem Research Guide.
Index of Hebrew Titles

Arami, Levan 28
Aẓor ha-mafteii 6
Aẓor rishon shel ha-atzor 48
Aẓor ha-atzor 27
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 9
Aẓor ha-atzor 36
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 51
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 12
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 11
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 52
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 34
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 55
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 42
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 25
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 23
Aẓor ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor ve-ha-atzor 56
Rishon ha-mafteii shel ha-atzor 53

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