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Barry Dov Walfish, the Cataloger-Bibliographer-Scholar Librarian

Rachel Leket-Mor

Arizona State University, rachel.leket-mor@asu.edu

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Judaica Librarianship editorial board member, Dr. Barry Walfish retired this year from University of Toronto Libraries and stepped down from our editorial board. Barry served on JL's editorial board since 2006 and contributed several review essays to the journal, including in this very issue.

A renowned scholar of Medieval Jewish intellectual history, Jewish biblical interpretation and reception, and Karaism, Barry earned his degree in Library Science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His MLS thesis, *Ishe ha-mikra ba-sifrut ha-batar-mikra'it: bibliyografyah nivheret* (People of the Bible in post-biblical literature: selected bibliography) was published in 1975 in the HU library school's periodical for selected student works (*'Al sefarim ye-qor'im: mi-vhar 'avodot talmidim*) and as a stand-alone, 63-page book.¹ Barry went on to pursue a Ph.D. in the University of Toronto and graduated in 1983 (his 2-volume dissertation was titled *Medieval Jewish Exegesis of the Book of Esther*).

Barry's scholarly output, both in English and Hebrew, is significant and diverse. This medievalist authored and co-authored dozens of articles, book chapters, and books, ranging from cataloging ("Hebrew and Yiddish personal name authorities under AACR2")² to biblical interpretation (*Esther in Medieval Garb: Jewish Interpretation of the Book of Esther in the Middle Ages*)³ to biblical reception (*The Bible Retold by Jewish Artists, Writers, Composers and Filmmakers*)⁴ to critical editions of Hebrew manuscripts (*The way of Lovers: The Oxford Anonymous Commentary on the Song of Songs [Bodleian Library, ms opp. 625]*).⁵ He also edited the Frank Talmage Memorial Volume (Haifa University Press, 1993), co-edited the volume *With Reverence for the Word: Scriptural Interpretation in Medieval Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2003), and for the last decade has been the Judaism editor of the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (De Gruyter, 2009–).

The comprehensive *Bibliographia Karaitica: An Annotated Bibliography of Karaites and Karaism* that Barry co-authored with Mikhail Kizilov (Brill, 2011) was awarded the AJL 2011 Bib-

¹ *Ishe ha-mikra ba-sifrut ha-batar-mikra'it: bibliyografyah nivheret*. Yerushalayim: ha-Universitah ha-'ivrit bi-Yerushalayim, Bet-ha-sefer le-safranut ule-arkhiyona'ut, 1975.

² Barry Walfish, "Hebrew and Yiddish personal name authorities under AACR2." *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1983), 51–64, doi:[10.1300/J104v03n04_05](https://doi.org/10.1300/J104v03n04_05).

³ Walfish, Barry. 1993. *Esther in Medieval Garb: Jewish Interpretation of the Book of Esther in the Middle Ages*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

⁴ Helen Leneman and Barry Walfish. *The Bible Retold by Jewish Artists, Writers, Composers and Filmmakers*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015.

⁵ *The way of Lovers: The Oxford Anonymous Commentary on the Song of Songs [Bodleian Library, ms opp. 625]: An Edition of the Hebrew Text, with English Translation and Introduction*, co-authored with Sara Japhet, 2017

liography Award. Being the chair of RAS Awards Committee at the time, I am glad to cite from my own prepared speech for the 2012 convention banquet:

Bibliographia Karaitica is a magnificent scholarly work that will stand out for its quality and serve generations of scholars for many years to come. The over 8,000 bibliographic entries that make up this volume are painstakingly annotated. In many cases, annotations include additional references and eye-opening comments. It is hard to imagine a bibliography more encompassing than this one.

The bibliography is arranged in four parts: Generalia, History, Religion, and Culture. Each of the thirty chapters subdividing these parts includes further topical sections, described in the 38-page long table of contents (xiii-li). The extensive internal subdivision allows the reader easy browsing through the lengthy work. The other reader-friendly tool is the index system at the end of the book, consisting of no less than eight indexes for Author; Reviewer; Title; Subject; Geographical; Scriptural; Manuscript; and Printing indexes (further subdivided into another seven sections: Printers and Publishers; Typesetters; Proofreaders/ Correctors; Copyists; Patrons/ Sponsors/ Subscribers; Provenance; and Places of Karaite Printing). Entries of the same language are grouped together in the indexes to ease the searching.

Chapter 1 of Part One pertains to manuscripts, archives, bibliographies, and printing, listing all available manuscripts in private and public libraries, while the second chapter covers reference works, including general bibliographies. A browse through the short bibliographies section reveals how crucial the current bibliography is for this field of studies. Indeed, most of the six items listed in this section cover Karaite writings in the larger context of Jewish Studies. Even the 1959 bibliography listed as the most significant of its time in Walfish's Introduction (liii)—Zvi Ankori's *Karates in Byzantium: The Formative Years, 970-1100* (NY: Columbia University Press; Item 1351)—was not comprehensive and called for one to be compiled as an “urgent desideratum” (cited there). Walfish accepted this challenge in the late 1980s, thinking there would be about 2,000 items to be compiled, only to find out thirty years later that this estimate should have been quadrupled.

Barry's critical reading is also apparent in his JL-published reviews, starting with the 1985 “IDC Jewish Studies on Microfiche: a Critique” (*Judaica Librarianship* 2 No. 1–2, 12–14) and culminating in one of the top downloaded articles on our website, “Encyclopedia Interrupta, or Gale's Unfinished: the Scandal of the EJ2” (*Judaica Librarianship* 16, 195–209, doi:[10.14263/2330-2976.1012](https://doi.org/10.14263/2330-2976.1012)).

Dear Barry, thank you for enriching our collective library and for your service at AJL. We wish you all the best on your retirement!