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Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library: Catalogue. Compiled by the staff of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem; edited by Benjamin Richler; paleographical and codicological descriptions Malachi Beit-Arie in collaboration with Nurit Pasternak. Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008. xxvii, 678, 66 p., [8] leaves of plates. ISBN: 978-88- 210-0823-8. 120 Euros.

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Reviews

Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library: Catalogue. Compiled by the staff of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem; edited by Benjamin Richler; paleographical and codicological descriptions Malachi Beit-Arie in collaboration with Nurit Pasternak. Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008. xxvii, 678, 66 p., [8] leaves of plates. ISBN: 978-88-210-0823-8. 120 Euros.*

Reviewed by Roger S. Kohn, Library of Congress

The Roman Catholic Church has had troubled relations with Judaism since the seat of the successor to the first Bishop of Rome, Peter, was honored with a basilica in the fourth century. The Popes gave spiritual guidance to Christian kings all over Europe, and their attitudes toward Jews oscillated between a formal theoretical protection of the Jews and sometime aggressive attempts to convert and coerce Jews living in Italy to embrace Catholicism, forcing them to attend sermons in churches and actively supporting conversion, even of children, to Catholicism.

Because of this history, the publication of *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library* is an extraordinary event. Like most catalogs of manuscripts composed since World War II, it is the fruit of international cooperation, in this case between Israeli scholars and a repository located in Italy.¹

* Editor's note: *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library* was the winner of the 2008 Association of Jewish Libraries Bibliography Award.

¹ This is the second catalog of Hebrew manuscripts preserved in Italy prepared by Israeli scholars. The first one was *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma: Catalogue*, also edited by B. Richler (Jerusalem, 2001), which I reviewed in *Judaica Librarianship*, vol. 12 (2006), pp. 89–91.

Since the 1929 concordat with the Italian Fascist authorities, the Vatican has been recognized as a sovereign state, located in Rome, the “Eternal City.” Its most obvious monument is the current St. Peter's basilica, the construction of which had just begun when in 1527 the armies of Emperor Charles V ransacked the city, pillaging palaces and churches, and the libraries they housed. The manuscripts and books of the Pope were not spared.

We know that there were Hebrew manuscripts in the original Papal library founded in 1475, and a report in 1533 mentions a few Hebrew and Arabic books which probably survived the looting of the imperial armies. A more complete inventory in 1552 includes 189 items in Hebrew, manuscripts and books together. Two large collections received in the seventeenth century significantly increased the number of Hebrew manuscripts in the papal library: in 1623, the Palatine Library of Heidelberg which includes the private collection of the banker Ulrich Fugger (1526–1584), who bought several manuscripts from the head of the Jewish community in Candia; and in 1657 the collection of the Dukes of Urbino. The *Urbينات*, as they are known, preserve about forty manuscripts of a collection of at least 211 manuscripts owned by a wealthy merchant, Menachem ben Aharon Volterra, who lived at the end of the fifteenth century.

Systematic description of the Hebrew manuscripts was undertaken only starting in the eighteenth century. The first comprehensive catalog describing 453 Hebrew manuscripts in the general Vatican collection and 59 in the *Urbينات* was published in 1756. Although individual manuscripts continued to be added over the nineteenth century, no significant collection was acquired until the very end of the nineteenth century, when the Vatican Library acquired the Hebrew manuscripts of the *Neofiti* collection. This was the library of the Pia Casa dei Neofiti, the “neophytes,” an institution that housed Jewish apostates, sever-

al of whom had helped to describe the collection of Hebrew manuscripts in the Vatican Library.

And the collection keeps growing today. A tantalizing piece of information is to be gleaned from the preface of the Librarian of the Holy Roman Church, which announces that the Library acquired 108 additional Hebrew manuscripts while *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library* was being printed. They are manuscripts in Oriental Hebrew scripts, mainly from Yemen and Iran, dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

Until the publication of *Hebrew Manuscripts*, no description of the collection was available in English. The 1756 catalog mentioned above was written in Latin. So was the 1956 catalog written by Umberto Cassuto (1883–1951), and describing in great detail 115 manuscripts of the Vatican collection. In 1968, Nehemya Allony (1906–1983) and David Samuel Loewinger (1904–1980) briefly described 801 manuscripts from all the collections in the Vatican Library, this time in Hebrew. It is rather a handlist or an inventory rather than a full-fledged catalog.

As Benjamin Richler notes in his Editor's Introduction (p. xiii), *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library*

strove to strike a balance between comprehensive, all-inclusive descriptions such as those provided in Cassuto's catalogue and the handlist provided by Allony and Loewinger. We endeavored to provide full identifications of the titles and authors of the texts copied in the manuscripts, comprehensive palaeographical and codicological descriptions as well as basic bibliographical information [for 813 manuscripts].²

The catalog includes information on each manuscript, giving first the shelfmark (call-number), and then the detailed physical description (number of folios, size of the volume, size of the written area, composition of quires). The description of the contents includes titles in Hebrew characters, together with their translations or transliterations. The "pertinent bibliographical information [includes] place and date of the first edition if the text has been published" (p. xiii), a feature not often found in catalogs of Hebrew manuscripts. Intellectual contents

and paleographical evidence are clearly noted. If the manuscript is a collection of various texts,

each text is listed separately and assigned a serial number. If the manuscript consists of parts from several different manuscripts bound together, each unit (which may contain one or more texts) is assigned a Roman numeral but each entry is assigned a separate running serial number (p. xiii).

This feature makes it possible to understand the various units in each manuscript, and it also enables readers to cite precisely the section or sections that they wish to discuss. Colophons and other information regarding the provenance are given in the original language and in English in an abbreviated form. "References are given to publications where individual manuscripts or small groups of manuscripts are described" (p. xiii). As for indexes, there are eight of them: names, subjects, languages,³ illuminated manuscripts, concordance between Benjamin Kennicott's numbers (in his work *Dissertatio generalis in Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum*, published in Oxford in 1780) and the current shelfmark numbers, cited manuscripts from other collections, and (in Hebrew) titles and poems.

In my view, the Editor's Introduction describes accurately the monumental task that has been accomplished by the staff of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library of Israel. Their work in identifying the texts in the manuscripts was complemented by paleographical and codicological descriptions of Malachi Beit-Arié and Nurit Pasternak, who examined each manuscript, one by one, over five years of one-month missions to the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. This catalogue continues the tradition of other catalogs of European collections of Hebrew manuscripts prepared by Malachi Beit-Arié.⁴ [4]

³ The index of languages is not to be found in the book.

⁴ In addition to the catalogs of the Palatina Library in Parma and the Vatican Library, Malachi Beit-Arié was responsible for a revised catalog of the Hebrew manuscripts at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library: Supplement of Addenda and Corrigenda to vol. I (A. Neubauer's Catalogue)* (Oxford, 1994). On this catalog and the collections in Oxford in general, see my article "A Treasured Legacy: Hebrew Manuscripts at the Bodleiana," *Library History*, vol. 20 (July 2004), pp. 95–116.

² Similar language is found in the *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma: Catalogue*, pp. xvi–xvii (quoted in my review of that catalog, cited above, pp. 89–90).

I read the entire catalog with genuine intellectual delectation. The remainder of this review is devoted to a summary of the importance of this reference tool and the most important manuscripts that it describes.

The authors of *Hebrew Manuscripts* frequently acknowledge the work of their predecessors, a revealing sign of intellectual honesty and integrity: for example, the paleographical commentary on *Vat. ebr. 57* begins: "As noted by Cassuto, the manuscript was copied by six different scribes" (p. 41). This type of acknowledgment is not always found in catalogs of manuscripts, especially of Hebrew manuscripts, where more recent compilers liberally use the science of previous ones without mentioning their names.

Hebrew Manuscripts allows us to explore the history of the manuscript as artifact. Unlike Christian manuscripts of the same period, produced by monks in monasteries, Hebrew manuscripts were often compiled for and owned by an individual. A good example is *Vat. ebr. 105* (pp. 72–76), which is a fifteenth-century "collection of texts copied or authored by Michael b. Shabbetai Kohen Balbo or texts collected and bound with this manuscript for him" (p. 72). It contains 21 texts in four codicological units. Another example is *Vat. ebr. 214* (pp. 152–155), a "compilation of six different manuscripts with various compositions of quires," containing twenty-two texts. Three copyists copied *Vat. ebr. 236* (pp. 172–177), but the manuscript is one codicological unit and records 26 texts. It can get quite complicated: *Vat. ebr. 429* (pp. 37–3378) is a "collection of fragments from different manuscripts mostly on paper. There are two sets of foliation." The manuscript contains 34 parts and 42 texts. Finally, *Vat. ebr. 285* (pp. 211–215) contains 35 different texts in one codicological unit, although the editors point to its having been written by at least three hands.

Hebrew manuscripts at the Papal library were not always treated with utmost care over the centuries. There is evidence of poor conservation practices: one folio of *Vat. ebr. 338* (pp. 28–7288) "is missing at the end and is now bound in MS *Vat. ebr. 438* as f. 135" (see p. 370, unit XI, text no. 32). Manuscripts were sometime bound "out of order" and the editors of *Hebrew Manuscripts* provide the correct order (for an example see p. 312, *Vat. ebr. 368*, unit XI, text no. 11). And there are missing manuscripts: *Vat. ebr. 411* (p. 355) "is missing from the library, but a microfilm copy is found in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem." *Vat. ebr.*

226 (p. 163) "was completely restored resulting in blurring of the text . . . making it impossible to verify the date [of the manuscript] by the morphology of the paper, to determine the original size of the leaves or to describe the quiring."

Codicology is crucial in helping establish where a manuscript was written: *Vat. ebr. 40* (p. 27) was written in "Ashkenazic current semi-cursive script" but not in Germany, because "the quires begin with the flesh side according to the practice in Italy" (emphasis added). Paleography is helpful to understand the internal logic of a manuscript. The expertise of the editors allows them to note that *Vat. ebr. 89* (pp. 59–60) was "copied by two scribes writing in collaboration in different scripts and frequently alternating," and to give the detailed list of folios each scribe copied, down to the precise line. For *Vat. ebr. 497* (pp. 427–428), which has two colophons by two different scribes, paleographical evidence leads the editors to state that it is "impossible to substantiate [the claim that each scribe copied half the manuscript] as there are no differences in the script or among the auxiliary graphic marks in the manuscript, which seems to have been copied by one hand with some variants."

Deciphering added notes and jottings written on the manuscripts helps to track their provenance: *Vat. ebr. 416* (pp. 357–358), a *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, by David Kimhi, was sold in Perpignan (France) in 1355, in Naples in 1520, again in 1544, and bought by the Papal library in 1552. *Vat. ebr. 468* (pp. 406–447), a Bible written in La Rochelle (France) in 1215, was owned by Meshullam Cusi—"probably the printer Meshullam Cusi b. Moses Jacob Rapa from Piove di Sacco." Another Bible, also from La Rochelle circa 1216, *Vat. ebr. 482* (pp. 417–418), went from France to Spain, to Avignon in 1494, to a convert grandson of the grammarian Elijah Levita in Italy in 1580. *Cod. Pers. 61* (pp. 564–565), a Judeo-Persian translation of the Pentateuch (late fifteenth century), was purchased by a non-Jewish merchant from Florence in 1606 who lost it on his return to Italy, when he was taken captive to Tunis. He bought it back one year later and it entered the Vatican Library in 1714.

The manuscripts are not described in a vacuum but in relationship with other manuscripts preserved elsewhere in the world and in relation with the existing printed editions. When the text found in the Vatican Library is incomplete, the editors indicate where a more complete copy exists elsewhere, along with the place and date of the first edition of the text. If there is a critical edition, they note whether it refers to a Vatican manuscript: for

example, Israel Levin's edition of *Keter malkhut*, by Ibn Gabirol (Tel Aviv, 2005) "did not make use of" *Vat. ebr.* 292, ff. 91r.–99v. (p. 226). For Burton L. Visotzky's edition of *The Midrash on Proverbs* (New York, 1990), edited from *Vat. ebr.* 44, ff. 324v.–355v., we are told that "Visotzky asserts that the text in this manuscript is closest to the original text of the midrash" (p. 30). The description of *Neofiti 1*, the "only extant copy of [an] Aramaic Targum, erroneously listed as Targum Onkelos in earlier catalogues" (pp. 528–529), is a model of the historiography of a manuscript, providing information about critical editions, translations in various languages, partial editions, and facsimile editions.

Neofiti 1 is not the only remarkable manuscript at the Vatican Library. Among many treasures, there are:

- ◇ a manuscript copied in Jerusalem in the 1380s (*Vat. ebr.* 283, pp. 208–210);
- ◇ "Latin translations of kabbalistic works prepared . . . for Pico della Mirandola" (*Vat. ebr.* 189–191, pp. 132–135);
- ◇ a *Sefer Josippon* copied for the Florentine humanist Giannozzo Manetti in Fano in 1443 (*Vat. ebr.* 408, pp. 353–354); and
- ◇ several manuscripts acquired in 1689–1691 from the library of Queen Christina of Sweden (*Vat. ebr.* 436–444, pp. 383–391).

Some manuscripts have interest beyond the study of the transmission of Hebrew traditional texts: *Vat. ebr.* 425 (p. 365) is an inventory of the pawned items found in the bank of a Jewish moneylender in Florence in 1477. *Vat. ebr.* 346 (p. 294) seems to allude to the passage of Halley's comet in 1506 and *Neofiti 26* (p. 548) mentions the expulsion of the Jews from Naples in 1541. There is even a mention of the United States in the travel diary of David Attias, an emissary from Meknes (Morocco) between 1821 and 1834 (*Neofiti 46*, p. 562).

Since I am not able to compare the descriptions in *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library* to the actual contents of the manuscripts, my review will conclude with general remarks. The 617 manuscripts of the *Vaticani ebraici* are not arranged in any order whatsoever, unlike similar larger collections at other major European repositories. For example, the manuscripts at the Palatina Library in Parma are arranged systematically, starting with Bible, and then Midrash, Talmud, Halakhah, Liturgy, etc. This is not the case with the Vatican

Library's Hebrew manuscripts. Thus, a more detailed index than the two pages of the "index of subjects" (pp. 667–668) would have been welcome, especially considering that the "index of titles" (pp. 28*–66*) is not helpful in this matter. There are three-and-a-half pages (pp. 50*–53*) of *perush* ("Commentaries on") and almost a page (pp. 30*–31*) of *be'ur* ("explanation"), but no cross-references to the works that generated the commentaries. This deficiency will soon be remedied, as the entire catalog is to be mounted as a PDF file on the website of the National Library of Israel and researchers will be able to customize their searches.⁵ [7]

⁵ Posting of Benjamin Richler, "New Catalogues and Books Based on Hebrew Manuscripts," *H-JUDAIC*, December 10, 2008. [Editor's note: the catalog is now accessible via the NLI website.]

Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia. Edited by Paula E. Hyman, Dalia Ofer. Jewish Women's Archives and Shalvi Publishing, 2006. CD-ROM. (Windows- and Macintosh-compatible.) ISBN 965-90937-0-5. Online version: <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia>. Accessed: March 30, 2009.

Reviewed by Yaffa Weisman, Hebrew Union College Frances-Henry Library, Los Angeles, California

If one could only find Jewish liturgy that combines the "Shehecheyanu" and "Al Chet"—the life of this reviewer would be made so much easier. Blessing the enormous effort that went into creating the first large—but by no means comprehensive—historical encyclopedia about Jewish women was an appropriate response in 2006, when the CD-ROM was published. Not revisiting the CD-ROM and correcting the omissions and errors between 2006 and 2009, when the online version was released, is where the sins of intellectual and technological negligence come to mind. The following are descriptive and prescriptive observations of the construction and contents of the online encyclopedia.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

846 female and 225 male scholars and writers contributed to the encyclopedia, which includes 330 topical entries and 1,690 biographies on the subject of Jewish women and their work and achievements throughout history. The online version compares itself to a slightly more scholarly version of Wikipedia, using the number of qualified