


12-31-2007

Brisman, Shimeon. *A History and Guide to Judaic Dictionaries and Concordances*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 2000.

Roger S. Kohn

Library of Congress, rogerkohn@hotmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ajlpublishing.org/jl>

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Information Literacy Commons](#), [Jewish Studies Commons](#), and the [Reading and Language Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kohn, Roger S.. 2007. "Brisman, Shimeon. *A History and Guide to Judaic Dictionaries and Concordances*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 2000.." *Judaica Librarianship* 13: 41-42. doi:10.14263/2330-2976.1083.

Book Reviews

Brisman, Shimeon. *A History and Guide to Judaic Dictionaries and Concordances*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 2000. xxiii, 337 p. (*Jewish Research Literature*; vol. 3, part 1) \$79.50. ISBN 0881256587

Reviewed by Roger S. Kohn, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

This is volume 3, part 1 in the *Jewish Research Literature* series by Shimeon Brisman, the late Jewish Studies Bibliographer at the University of California, Los Angeles.* In his preface, Brisman describes the book's arrangement:

Part One, consisting of nine chapters, offers detailed descriptions of the various Judaic dictionaries with biographical information of the compilers. The work begins with Rav Saadia Gaon's *Egron*, compiled in the tenth century, and concludes with modern Judaic dictionaries compiled during the late twentieth century. Bibliographical lists and summaries, arranged chronologically by dates of publication, with listing of editions and reviews, supplement the text. The narrative is written in a non-technical style; technical material is treated in the notes.

Opening the volume, after the preface and a list of abbreviations the reader finds a selective list of sources, periodicals, collective works, and monographs. This list, eleven pages long, contains reference works that are mostly in English, Hebrew, German, and Yiddish. This list is followed by the nine narrative chapters, each of which opens with a summary (in italics) of the topics addressed in the chapter. This summary is followed by the list of paragraph headings in the chapter.

* Editor's note: See David Hirsch's obituary, "Shimeon Brisman (1920–2004), Z"l, in *Judaica Librarianship* 12 (2006): p. 1–2.

The "Chronological lists and summaries of printed Hebraic dictionaries" that follow the narrative chapters occupy over 100 pages (pp. 157–263), i.e., almost one third of the volume. This section contains the same information that is found in the narrative, but in a more concise format. A rigorously precise bibliographical citation is provided for each work discussed in the book's main section, and the citation is accompanied by a paragraph-long presentation of the work's salient points. Where warranted, the description concludes with a statement on the work's editions and citations to periodicals where it was reviewed. (Reviewers' names are not provided.)

The volume concludes with almost 50 pages of notes (pp. 265–312), in small type, and an index. The index does not do full justice to the text, as it covers only the narrative and the chronological lists and summaries, but not the footnotes (as was the case in the previous volumes in the series). Even taking this into account, the index is not exhaustive. To take just one example, the scholar Solomon Leon Skoss's name appears on page 3, but this page reference is not noted in the index entry for Skoss (p. 334).

There seems to have been a long delay between the completion of the manuscript by Brisman and its publication. There is evidence that the core of his research was carried out in the mid-1980s (for example, the author's observation, "it was *recently* suggested . . ." [page 281, note 32, emphasis added], appears to date from 1984). The last book noted in the chronological lists (p. 263) was published in 1993; in addition, there is no reference to Yeshayahu Vinograd's *Otsar ha-sefer ha-Ivri*, a two-volume bibliography published in Jerusalem between 1993 and 1995.

It is the thoroughness and extreme attention to the bibliographical details, and the breath of literature surveyed that make this volume (like the other volumes in the *Jewish Research Literature* series) a

bibliographic delight. Brisman details the efforts of generations of Jewish scholars, from 1869 to 1969, surrounding the *Sefer ha-egron* of Saadia Gaon, “the first dictionary of the Hebrew language,” and lists all of its editions until that of Nehemyah Alony (1969). Buried in a footnote (p. 283, note 47) is Brisman’s terse judgment that two classics of Jewish bibliography, Isaac Benjacob’s *Otsar ha-sefarim*, and Bernhard Friedberg’s *Bet ‘eked sefarim*, both contain inaccurate descriptions of a particular book. Elsewhere (p. 40), Brisman recalls that it was Adolf Neubauer, author of the *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, who established the identity of the author of a book, *Maḳre dardeḳe*, first published in Naples in 1488.

Rabbi Brisman, a giant in Hebrew bibliography in the second half of the twentieth century, left his work unfinished. “Part two, dealing with concordances, citation collections, proverbs and folk sayings, will be published separately,” he wrote in his preface to this volume. Sadly, it is now uncertain whether that volume will ever be published. Scholars will sorely miss Rabbi Brisman, whose contri-

butions to the field of Jewish bibliography were so outstanding.

SOURCES

Benjacob, Isaac. *Otsar ha-sefarim*. Vilna: ha-almanah veva-ahim Rom, 1880.

Friedberg, Bernhard. *Bet ‘eked sefarim*. Tel Aviv: M. A. Bar-Yoda, 1951–1956. 4 vols.

Neubauer, Adolf. *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Sa’adia ben Joseph. *ha-Egbron: kitab utsul alshi’r al-‘ibrani*. Mavo u-ferush me’et Nehemyah Aloni. Jerusalem: ha-Akademyah la-lashon ha-‘Ivrit, 1969.

[Trabot, Perets.] *Maḳre dardeḳe*. Naples, 1488.

Vinograd, Yeshayahu. *Otsar ha-sefer ha-‘ivri = Thesaurus of the Hebrew Book*. Jerusalem: ha-Makhon le-bibliyografyah memuḥshevet, 1993–1995. 2 vols.

820 אוצר דרשות

Author: J[udah]. D[avid]. Eisenstein [אייזנשטיין [אייזנשטיין]

Author’s father: זאב וולף

VIII, 407 pp. (two cols. per page) 4to

New York, 5679/1919

Publisher: J. D. Eisenstein

Printer: J. D. Eisenstein, 123 Canal St.

Title page #1 (p. I): art, by Lola [Leon Israel]; English; “אוצר דרשות Anthology of Jewish Sermons Edited by J.D. Eisenstein.”

Title page #2 (p. II): border; extended writing; “אוצר דרשות מאתים דרשות... מגדולי הדרשנים בספרות ישראל”.

Title page #3 (p. III): border; English only; extended writing; “Ozar D’rashoth An Anthology of Two Hundred Sermons and Lectures by Mediaeval and Modern Authors on Festivals and Various Occasions Edited by J.D. Eisenstein.”

Includes: copyright, 1919 (p. II); dedication to Balfour Declaration (p. IV); bibliography (p. V); preface (pp. VI-VII); addendum (p. VIII); contents (pp. 403-4); subject index (pp. 405-7).

BHBI.

Copies: HUC; JNUL; *YGC.



Judah David Eisenstein. *Otsar ha-derashot* (Anthology of Jewish Sermons). New York: J. D. Eisenstein, 1919.

(Source: Yosef Goldman, Hebrew Printing in America, 1735–1926, entry no. 820.)