Anomalies in RLIN Hebraica Records: Reflections of a Recent Arrival on the Cataloging Scene

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Anomalies in RLIN Hebraica Records: Reflections of a Recent Arrival on the Cataloging Scene*

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Abstract: Hebraica records on the Research Libraries Information Network feature many inconsistencies in romanization, descriptive cataloging, and form of heading. The categories of inconsistency are outlined, and examples of the variations found on RLIN are provided and discussed from the perspective of a novice cataloger. Classic Hebrew grammar and Biblical sources are often cited as authorities for the correct forms, which may not be found in Library of Congress records. Local policies of the Jewish Theological Seminary regarding name and subject headings for Judaica are included.

Why was I invited to participate in this panel? It cannot be that I am an expert, having been a librarian cataloger for only about three years. My function must be to raise questions more than to answer them, to learn, not merely to speak. It is not to find fault or to hold others up to ridicule that I offer examples of Hebraica cataloging with which I disagree. There is much of cataloging rules and policies and the history of this discussion of which I am ignorant, and some of my questions may have answers in published sources.

JTS Cataloging Policy

How and why does the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) Library modify RLIN records before we derive them for our Aleph online catalog? As is true for so many questions in Judaism and in the world, the answer is: It depends.

With only three remaining full-time professional catalogers and at least ten para-professionals and part-time inputters, there is a great deal of variation in cataloging in our library, despite our attempts at implementing uniform policy and uniform practices.

On the one hand, the administration of the library desires that the largest number of catalog records be completed in the least amount of time. After all, we have a backlog of tens of thousands of titles: some of them gifts and bequests, some from the Rare Book collection that have never been cataloged in a modern way, others remaining to be recataloged since the disastrous fire of nearly three decades ago, and still others—current purchases.

"Just input anything, fast and dirty, so that we can let the monograph circulate without further delay!"

On the other hand, as professionals with pride in our work, eager to make the information as accessible as possible to students, faculty, and other users of the JTS Library—who may not know what additional author or title or subject is in a book if the access point does not appear in the catalog record—we would like to bring every record up to the fullest possible level, to what the RLIN standard for cataloging category designates "9114," meeting the latest standards for spacing and punctuation, AACR2 (Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd ed., rev. 1988) description, and LC classification.

The result is that some of us make a great many enhancements and modifications to RLIN records, and hence add USMARC field 040 (cataloging source) delimiter d (modifying institution) and our library's identifying initials NNJ, while others of us make no modifications or very few to existing records. Sometimes the very same cataloger will accept one record as is, and introduce considerable modifications in others.

Seminary Library catalogers may modify an RLIN record for any of the following reasons:

1. It contains a character which our in-house Aleph system cannot display;
2. There is an error in spelling or punctuation, in spacing, in romanization according to the rules of Hebrew grammar; we disagree on the interpretation of AACR2, or we change romanization better to match the vocalization of a Biblical source;
3. We have a theological objection to a Christological established heading;
4. We have already established an author heading or uniform title in a different form from the one found in the national authority file.

Bearing these categories in mind, let us turn to specific examples.

Changes Relating to Limitations of the Aleph System

Ellipses—When some text from a title page is omitted, many catalogers input "word, no space, three dots, no space, word," but for Aleph to file properly, we must add a space before and after ellipses: to alphabetize correctly, words must be separated from the three dots.

Digraphs—RLIN can display double vav or double yod in a single space, but Aleph cannot interpret this, and so we change digraphs to two separate vavs or two separate yods.

Special characters—Aleph is not able to produce nor to read Polish slash L, nor Z with top dot or bottom curve or semi-enata vowels. Neither Aleph nor RLIN is able to produce script L = leaves.

Changes Made Because of Jewish Theological Seminary Library Policy

The changes listed below are left in our RLIN records. Unlike other libraries, we do not pass modified records to the local system and then change them back to "standard" forms on the network.

1. We do not number years "Before Christ" nor "Anno Domini." Thus the heading 100 0 $aHillel, $d1st cent. B.C. / 1st cent. A.D. becomes: 100 0 $aHillel, $d1st cent. B.C.E. / 1st cent.
2. We do not accept the New Testament

nor the Apocrypha as parts of the Bible. Hence we change:
(a) Bible. S.O.T. to Bible ...
(b) Bible. N.T. to N.T. ...
We do not spell out N.T.
(c) Bible. ... Apocrypha to Apocrypha ...
[Deleted: The Library of Congress Name Authority File shows a broad diversity among the headings Bible, O.T. Apocrypha, Bible. N.T. Apocrypha, and just plain Apocrypha.]

3. We do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, nor do we add honorifics to headings for Christian saints. Hence we change the following names in subject fields:
(a) 600 00 Jesus Christ to Jesus
(b) 600 00 Saint Paul $cApostle to Paul, $cApostle.

4. Maimonides' 'Tham-aniyat fu.sul. $lJudeo-German is a heading established nationally, but at JTS, the established uniform title is in Hebrew, not Arabic: Shemonah pera.kim. $lYiddish.

5. The "kosher" Library of Congress subject heading for Responsa leaves the date open:
   650 0 Responsa$y—1800—
but JTS adds a closing date:
   650 4 Responsa$y—1900–1945

6. For the LC subject heading Passover customs and ... , which implies volition, JTS substitutes the subject heading "Passover (Jewish law)," implying obligation.

Romanaization

Changes Mandated by LC Practice

Vowels—Is there a danger of misreading two consecutive vowels if they are not separated by an apostrophe?

Har yeraeh vs Har yera'eh?

LC (Maher, 1987, p. 12) does require an alif (apostrophe) before an alef that begins a new syllable. Should we supply it in records that lack it?

Hyphenation—Where do you hyphenate the prefix in the books of Torah and other titles? The following inconsistencies are found in the contents notes of RLIN Hebraica records:

1. Be-reshit be-Reshit Bereshit
2. Shmot Shemot
3. 'va-Yi.kra 'Va-yi.kra Vayi.kra

If we are transcribing the fifth word in the fourth book of scripture, all Masoretes agree that the initial vowel is sheva, not patah. The following variations are found on RLIN:

4. Ba-midbar ba-Midbar be-Midbar [nismakh]

Acronyms—Hebraica Cataloging (Maher, 1987, p. 30) allows us to romanize an acronym or initialism as a word only if it appears vocalized for pronunciation as a word in Even-Shoshan; JTS's latest edition of this dictionary does not treat the abbreviation for "Responsa" as a word; therefore we change Shut to Sh. u-t, the LC form.

For the Hasidic honorific, LC consistently has the romanization Admur, while all our references agree on Admor.

An obsolete practice reflected in older RLIN records that we derive was to use capital letters for consonants and lower case for vowels in acronyms, as in: .HAYyim BLA'A Mosheh; but now: .Hayyim b. le-a. (a.) Mosheh. We no longer transcribe double apostrophe or quotation marks (gershayim) that indicate a Hebrew abbreviation with the equivalent English punctuation mark, but use periods.

Changes Mandated by Hebrew Grammar

Position of 'ayin—Just as patah under final het is pronounced before the consonant (tapua, Rha'h), and patah under final he is pronounced before it (Gavoah: Eloah), so too patah under final 'ayin is pronounced before the (Ashkenazically-silent but Sefardically semi-glottal stop) 'ayin.1 Hence NOT

Pola.k, Yehoshua'a but
Pola.k, Yehoshua '[ayin .ha.tufah]

NOT Sha'ashu'a, Yosef Shalom but Sha'asha'ua, Yosef Shalom ben .Hayim
Note: NOT Be'er Sheva'a but Be'er Sheva' (the patah is under the ve).

Kamats katan—Hebrew grammarians agree that all semivowels combining sheva with a vowel are treated as moving sheva, i.e., sheva na', which cannot be accented, and which makes the previous syllable always end with a vowel sound and always have some emphasis.2 A kamats katan cannot be accented and cannot be in a syllable ending with a vowel sound, but rather always in a syllable ending with a sheva or consonant sound.

Nonetheless, in speaking Sefardic Hebrew, Ashkenazic Jews pronounce kamats before hataf-kamats as katan (like English AW /0), while Sefardim pronounce it as ordinary kamats gado (like English AH/A); ergo the correct romanization according to Sefardic pronunciation, which LC purports to follow, is NOT .Tahorat ha-metim but .Tahorat ha-metim.

Conjunctions—Rules for vocalizing prefixed vav ha-hibur (for example, those found in the grammatical supplement to Even-Shoshan's Hebrew dictionary) sometimes allow latitude for style, for "the beauty of the language": Halakhah ve-agadah / Halakhah .va-agadah 'E'srim .ve-hamesh / 'E'srim .va-hamesh.

How should catalogers handle this?

Rafeh—If a title alludes to a Biblical phrase, should we ignore pausal vowel shift and the rafeh (undotted) form?

Imre binah / vinah [bgd kpt after the letters alef, he, vav, yod] Mishnah berurah / verurah 'Amude kesef / khesef / kasef / khasef?

Modern Hebrew may ignore the rule requiring removal of dagesh from initial bet, gimel, dalet, kaf, pe, and tav, immediately following final alef, he, vav, or yod, but if a title contains a Biblical allusion, should the romanization preserve the classical vocalization? We trace both forms to enhance access.

.Kishu.te kalah / Kishu.te khalah.

Popular pronunciation—Should the cataloger follow Yiddishized Hebrew, or provide a strict, grammatical romanization?

Lashon ha-ra' [nifrad] or Leshon ha-ra' [nismakh]?
Shalom bayit or Shelom bayit?

Do we transcribe what the author/editor intended, or the correct form?

In a Brooklyn publisher statement we find the word nun kaf dalet yod. Is the correct romanization nekhide or nikhide? (Even-Shoshan has nekhide.)

Changes to Conform with Biblical Vocalization

Sometimes a given romanization is grammatical, but not correct because the title is a Biblical Hebrew pausal form; sometimes a dictionary cannot resolve the dilemma; a concordance of the Bible or Talmudic literature is needed: Rishpe .keshet should be romanized Rishpe .keshet [Psalm 76:4].

Another Biblical pausal: Imre shefer / Imre shafer.

A rabbinic title may allude to Midrashic literature: 'Ale be'er or 'Ale ve'er [Exodus Raba 1: 37] rather than to a Biblical source: 'Ali be'er or 'Ali ve'er [Numbers 21:17].
Although aware of the possible variations, I generally accept the romanization found in the RLIN database.

Vowel reduction—Is the correct vowel sheva or patah?
Tosof / Tosafot / Tosofot ha-Rosh? According to Alcalay (1974), Tosofet is correct, but all 3 forms are found on RLIN.

Indeterminate Romanization—How can one distinguish a Hebrew noun from a verb? Daber tov le-Yisrael versus Dabar (or diber?) tov le-Yisrael?

How do we know which vowels an author intended in an ambiguous verb/noun form? Hashav or H. Hishe Soffer or Heshe Soffer?

Some simple old Hebrew titles defy agreement in romanization: Ebronot [Harvard]
Evronot [Yale, Princeton, Stanford]
Ibronot [Jewish Encyclopedia]
Ivronot [LC]

Why use intensive verb forms when simple (kal pa’al) forms convey the same meaning? Asher Izen ve-kiker or ashar azan ve-ha-ker?

Sometimes authorities differ on the romanization of the same title: Kehilat Shelomoh [LC] versus Kohelet Shelomoh [Ed].

In the following case, did the author intend modern Hebrew or Biblical Hebrew?

Maša Damaše.k or Maša Damaše.k?

Lamed fe yod space s<sh>in fe resh yod: le-fi sifre or le-fi sifre or le-fi sefarai; entsi, klopedyah le-‘inyene halakah u-minhag Yisra’el.

Tet lamed yod space s<sh>in nun he:

.Talele shanah or shanah?

.Talele shanah or shanah? Bet resh k<sh>af tav space s<sh>in nun yod mem sofit:

Brekhat shnayim or Berekhat shenayim or Birkah sheni’im or Birkah shanim? derashot?

When a classic quotation is printed in Ketiv hader (defective spelling), how do you tell singular from plural without looking it up in a concordance? Is the correct romanization of the following title

Kelal setirat zekenim binyan or
Kelal setirot zekenim binyan?

Weinberg (1980, p. 324) provides additional examples of biblical phrases in titles whose romanization is uncertain.

Yiddish

Language tagging—If the body of a book is in Yiddish, but the title page is in Hebrew, do you romanize the title: in Hebrew or in Yiddish?
mem alef vav resh tav space he gimel dalet vav lamed yod mem sofit:
Me’orot ha-gedolim?
Meyyres ha-gadolim?
Me’oro’s ha-gedolim?

For an all-Yiddish translation: Zohar or Zohayer?

Variant orthography—A Yiddish title page has a word spelled alef, vav, or sofit; Should the romanization be of or oy?

Diacritics—If Yiddish romanization requires the same diacritics for consonants as Hebrew, why do some catalogers omit diacritical marks for .va,v, .het, .tet, .kuf, and ‘sin?

Descriptive Cataloging

Capitalization—When a title plays on the author’s name, I use a capital letter for the word corresponding to the name, rather than treat it as a common noun. For example, I input NOT ‘Oho/ey Hayim but Aholei Hayim / Isaac ben Hayim, of Volozhin.

Hebrew and Yiddish books often have added title pages in other languages. The rules for cataloging in those languages are therefore relevant to Hebrewica cataloging. Old German title pages print nouns in lowercase, but modern German orthography requires that all nouns begin with capital letters: AACR2 (1988, rule 1.1B1) authorizes a cataloger transcribing data to change title-page capitalization: Do you change German lowercase nouns to capitals in accordance with AACR2 (1988, Appendix A, rule A.40A1)?

Punctuation—When a Yiddish t.p. prints every Hebrew word in parentheses, in descriptive cataloging we omit these marks of punctuation, e.g.: .Dos ersh.t (.hele.k) os den (Sefer ha-Yoshor) in (Sefer Yehoshua’). Other libraries retain them.

Place of publication—If a title page says Gross Brothers, but includes no place, but you know Gross Brothers published that year in Brooklyn, would you code place as nju (New York) or xx (unknown)? If you know they are now in Union, NJ, should you fill in fixed field CP with nju (New Jersey) or xx?

If a title page and field 260 do name place of publication, I do not like to leave field CP with the code xx (country of publication unknown).

Where is Hiberniae Berolini (a place of publication found in rare books)?

If the verso of a title page (t.p.) tells you that Yits.ha.k Broch lives in Monroe, spelled only in English, but works in Brooklyn, and the work is printed in Brooklyn (spelled in Hebrew on the t.p., [for both PC is nju] which place of publication do you put in field 260?

Homographic place names—How do you know whether a publication emanates from Mogilev Belorus or from Mogilev-Podolek, Ukraine, since many Jews lived and wrote in both places? Piotrk’ow Trybulsan, Poland, or Piotrkow, Belarus?

Publisher—If a title page names a publisher OR printer, I do not like to leave field 260 subfield $$b$$: sine nomine (= s.n., i.e., no name) or [tsi or (a-or)]. I do not like to leave field 260 subfield $$b$$: sine nomine (= s.n., i.e., no name) or [tsi or (a-or)]., but we are required to use s.n. if no publisher is named.

What to transcribe in MARC field 260? I name printer in the 260 field only when no publisher is named, and I do not input “distributed by,” but what would you do when a book indicates PRINTED: Bene Bera.k : Y. Zinger But publisher is London : G. J. George & Co., Ltd. but the introduction says London : Shelomoh ben Zekhariah Hayim Dziialo.vs.ki et al.

Is objective, mechanical romanization possible for publisher, or does it require researching who was publishing in that city in that year, as well as discretion? Y’hil me-yakhol fe-zey (romanization found on RLIN) or Ye’hil el Mikhel Le.vi (presuming lamed zayin yod is a typographical error for lamed vav yod)?

An Amsterdam publisher is represented as kof alef shin (or sin) mem alef nun; should we romanize the name as spelled and pronounced in Dutch or systematically from the Hebrew? The possibilities include:

Cashman or Cashmann
Ca’sman or Ca’smann
Coshman (n) or Co’sman(n)
Kashman(n) or Ka’sman(n)
Kosman (n) or Ko’sman(n)

A Jerusalem publisher is represented as dalet vet yod resh. Is the romanization Dabeir or Devir? (The former transcription was found on RLIN.)
Given name or Surname spelled in the Slavic or Germanic original. JTS does Hebrew forms in both the original script for every author is a roman form, with references from the Yiddish and/or Hebrew forms in both the original script and romanization, which may take any or all of the above forms, and/or acronyms. The cataloger's choices include: input the author's Hebrew name, coded 100 1 (main entry) or 796 10/796 0 (local heading), or not at all (many libraries do not input headings in Hebrew script).

The Hebraica catalogs of the Bodleian Library, the British Museum, etc., can help us decide how to romanize names of older authors:

Haida or Haide (British Museum, 1867) versus Heida (Oxford University, 1852; 1929) or Heide.

We must bear in mind that some bibliographers, such as Steinschneider, were thinking in German or writing in Latin.

Linking names and titles—How do you decide whether the author of a previously unknown work appearing for the first time, e.g., "Maharam Galanti" is: Galante, Mosheh ben Mordecai, d. 1608 or Galante, Mosheh ben Yehonatan, 1620–1689 or Galante, Mordekhai, d. 1781 or Galante, Mosheh, d. 1804?

Variant authorities—Should we spell an author's name as the Library of Congress (LC) decided: Holz, Abraham, 1934 [NAF] or as the author does: Holtz, Avraham [my doctoral dissertation advisor at JTS]?

Is the best heading for an author's name the spelling provided by LC: Zaritsky, David [NAF] or the one found in the book? Zaritsky, David [title page, plus other sources] or systematic romanization? Zaritski, Da.vid?

Who knows an author's name better, LC: Shaiit, Isaac [NAF; ne Grinshpan, Yits.ha.k] or the author: Shilat, Yits.ha.k [presentation autograph]?

Conflicts—How should we deal with conflicts in the Name Authority File? NAF: Luzzatto, , Hayyim, 1707–1747. Sha'are Ramha! NAF: Luzzatto, , Hayyim, 1707–1747.

Ben/Bin—How should we romanize the vowel in the word bet, nun sofit, and how do we know whether to treat yod as a consonant or as part of a vowel? Yosef ben Gurion ha-Kohen or Yosef bin Gurion ha-Kohen?

Dates—if we know an author's dates of birth and death, why establish a heading without this element? Schif, David Tev'ele NOT Schif, David Tebele, d. 1791?

When you give the dates of an author's birth and death with the Hebrew name, do you read the dates from left to right or from right to left? How do you represent in Hebrew the abbreviations: b. (= born; nolad?) d. (= died; niftar?) ca. (= circa; be'eretz? 15th cent. (= ha-me'ah ha-tet yay?)

On which side do you enter question marks: ?1204?—71199? Because this is so awkward, I prefer to omit questionable dates from Hebrew author headings.

Surnames

How shall we romanize the surname zayin nun gimmel resh for which we do not know the correct vowels? There is no record in the Name Authority File (NAF), and there are no prior publications by the author. Singer, Yom .Tov ben Ya'akov Yisra'el Sanger / Senger / Zanger / Zenger / Zinger

For the sequence of letters pe<or fe> lamed bet<or vet> nun yod, what is the correct romanization? Flavni, Daniyel or Falvagni, Daniel; Pelavny, Daniel or Palbani, Daniyel?

Which is the objective romanization? Does it depend on the language of the author's native land?

Who is familiar with (French?) North African Judeo-Arabic surnames? The sequence alef gimmel apostrophe yod nun yod may be Ag'iani, Ra.hamim Yosef or Agyiani or Adjeni; in records contributed by the New York Public Library (NYPX), Yale University (CTYH), and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (OHJHH), we find A'geni or Ag'aini. Forms found in Israel phone books include Adjanni, Agueni, Ajany, and Ajjenii. Should we change the heading for the ancestor in light of the Israeli pronunciation and spelling used now by his descendants?

Zini, Yehonatan and Ag'yini, 'Amram Sha'ul, de-mit.kari 'Ama'sa.

Forenames

On RLIN, we find the following variant headings for a single author:

Princeton University (NJPG): Aaron New York University (NYCG): Aaron, of
Yiddish forenames—Mosheh Ya'akov Ya'a'kel—isn’t the final Yiddish nickname merely a variant of the Hebrew given name? Why include both?

Added forenames—Perlov, Hayim Mordekhai, a.k.a. Mordekhai, mi-Kherson or Perlo v. Mordekhai ben Da vid, ha-Levi—was he always called Haim or Perlov? Mordekhai ben David, ha-Levi, 16th cent.

The author says he was always called Mordekhai, but the name Haim was added when he was critically ill.

Biblical names—Yisakhar: One sin or two? One shin or two? Or one of each? The pronunciation may be Yish'sakhar or Y'i'sakhar, according to different Masoretic spellings. Do we try to replicate the way each author pronounced his own name and how those who knew him pronounced his book title? Or should we always romanize a given name in the same way?

Corporate headings

I’m confused by the heading Algemeyner Idisher archei.ter bund in Lita, Poylen un Rusland—which is NOT IDENTICAL WITH Ogólny Zydowski Zwiasek Robotniczy “Bund” w Polsce, although the Name Authority File equates them.

Uniform Titles

Who defines designations such as: Siddur (Persian rite)? What distinguishes Siddur (Hasidic) from Siddur (Habad) from Siddur (Ari) from Siddur (Hasidic, Sephardic)?

Uniform titles are not the same as romanized transcriptions; so in titles of tractates, we have inconsistent ‘ayin without apostrophe, dotted z for tsade, sometimes doubled and sometimes ungeminated letters with dagesh, and yav, het, tet, kuf without dots:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arakhin</th>
<th>Avodah zarah</th>
<th>Be. zah</th>
<th>Derekh ere.z</th>
<th>Eruvin</th>
<th>Gittin</th>
<th>Hullin</th>
<th>Keritot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Although unhappy with the inconsistency, we do not change the official headings.

For parts of works, various catalogers supply inconsistent punctuation and capitals:

| Midrash. Aggadat Bereshit Midrash agadat Be-reshit Midrash Agadat Be-reshit Aggadat Bereshit Agagad Bereshit Midrash Agagad Bereshit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

What is the point in having identical, redundant Uniform titles (240 10) and Added titles (740 01)? If I can enter a 500 subject heading (240 10) for a book title or spine title or running title or cover title or spine title or running title or added title (240 10), I do so; if I find no justification except convenience, I add a uniform title (240 10).

Subject Access

If a book was published in Vilna during the Nazi occupation, is the correct subject heading:

Jews$z—Poland$z—Vilna or Jews$z—Lithuania$z—Vilnius?

Several LC subject headings approximate peripherally the concept of charms / talismans, but neither of these is really the equivalent of segulot.

There is an LC class number for Christian liturgical use, but no official class number for Jewish liturgical use of Psalms.

There is a suitable subject heading for Piety—Christianity, but no “Piety$z—Judaism”! There is no Jewish piety?

Notes

1. All of these are in the category of patah genuvah, as explained in the 7th edition of Even-Shoshan’s Hebrew dictionary (1960), Vol. 4, Appendix 6, Chapter 1, Section 9.

2. Loc. cit., Section 5, states that a hataf is like a sheva naf: Section 7 deals with the rules for open and closed syllables.