

9-1-1994

Epistle from Israel (1994)

Yaakov Aronson

Bar Ilan University, Yaakov.Aronson@biu.ac.il

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

Aronson, Yaakov. 1994. "Epistle from Israel (1994)." *Judaica Librarianship* 8: 129-131. doi:10.14263/2330-2976.1255.

EPISTLE FROM ISRAEL

Ya'akov Aronson
Bar-Ilan University
Ramat Gan, Israel

Abstract: Reported on in this column are recently issued Judaica databases on CD-ROM; activities of the Jewish National and University Library and other libraries, both university and yeshiva; librarian participation in Judaica conferences in Israel; and programs of the Judaica Librarians' Group.

August, 1993

CD-ROM

The CD-ROM (compact disk) revolution has taken off in Israel, as elsewhere in the western world. The prior column (*JL*, vol. 7), noted that Bar-Ilan University's Responsa Project, accompanied by other classic Jewish texts, was published on CD-ROM as the *Global Jewish Database*. The first edition was issued in two versions: the Torah disk, which offered a number of traditional Jewish texts, and the Responsa ("Shoot") disk, which included all the material on the Torah disk except the Jerusalem Talmud and the contents of 253 volumes of responsa. After several months of marketing experience it was decided to merge the two versions, and in Spring 1993 a disk of the combined databases was issued (Bar-Ilan, 1993). Added to the new disk were the text of the Mishnah, halakhic midrashim, and the text of *Arba'ah Turim*, Ya'akov ben Asher's compilation of Jewish laws. In addition new, improved search software was supplied.

Subsequently, *Index to Hebrew Periodicals* and the *Land of Israel Database* appeared on a CD-ROM (Haifa University Library, 1993), which also includes the *Index to [Israeli] Daily Newspapers*, produced by the Tel-Hai College. Semi-annual updates are to be issued. In a parallel move, access to the online versions of these databases, which are maintained at the Haifa University Library, has been made available. Daily updates to the *Index* will be instantly available in the libraries of subscribing institutions.

Other CD-ROM databases recently produced in Israel are: (1) a disk containing two databases produced at the Szold Institute in Jerusalem, one recording bibliographic information and abstracts of documents in education and the social sciences, and the second, an index to publications on the use of computers in the field of education; (2) a disk containing (a) decisions of the Israel Supreme Court, 1985–1993, (b) the laws of the State of Israel, 1948–1993, and (c) legal articles and various indexes; and (3) the *Jerusalem Post* for the years 1989–1993. (Information about these databases can be obtained from their publisher, CDI, whose address is given in the reference for Haifa University's CD-ROM.)

Jewish National and University Library (JNUL)

Now available on the ALEPH network—and accessible to libraries worldwide through the Internet—is *RAMBI (Index of Articles on Jewish Studies)*. Material from 1987 and subsequent years has been input by the *RAMBI* staff at JNUL; a team at Ben-Gurion University Library led by Pinchas Ziv, the library's Judaica Bibliographer, has undertaken the retrospective conversion of *RAMBI*. As of this writing, work is under way on the material contained in the 1985 issue, conversion of the 1986 issue having been completed and available online.

After making significant contributions in his first three years as Director of JNUL, Dr. Israel Shatzman, who is also Professor of History at the Hebrew University, was scheduled to spend the 1993–94 academic year on sabbatical at the University of California, Berkeley. Prof. Reuven Bonfil of the Hebrew University's Jewish History Department was appointed as his replacement for the year. In March 1993, Prof. Shatzman led a group of JNUL staff members on a visit to Russia and the Ukraine, where agreements for the copying of Judaica materials were worked out. In Moscow, at

the Russian State Library (formerly the Lenin Library), arrangements were made for the photocopying of the entire catalog of Hebrew and Yiddish holdings, as well as the microfilming of Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian-language Jewish periodicals in the library's collection. These microfilms will not only add new titles to JNUL's collection; they will also complete partial collections of many items it already holds.

At the Russian National Library (St. Petersburg), a number of problems were raised during negotiations, but appropriate solutions were found. The microfilming of the manuscript collection will be executed by the Russian State Library's staff, after training by JNUL personnel. In addition, the Russian National Library's experts will begin participating in the Hebrew Paleography Project headed by Prof. Malachi Beit-Arié, former Director of JNUL.

Another collection visited was that of the Vernadsky Library of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences (Kiev). Prior to the visit, available information had indicated that the periodical collection would be worthy of filming. To the surprise of the visitors, the collection of 800 manuscripts proved to be of much greater importance, and negotiations were initiated to begin a project similar to that already completed in Moscow.

Arrangements have also been made with the Library of the Romanian Academy for the filming of its collection of Romanian-Jewish, German-Jewish, and Yiddish periodicals. This project will be a joint undertaking of the Romanian Academy and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

In February and June 1993, issues 5 and 6 of JNUL's publication *Books & People* appeared. Highlights of these issues are articles on: interesting items from the recently acquired Allony manuscript collection, gathered by Prof. Nehemia

Allony, who was the first Director of the Institute of Hebrew Manuscripts (forerunner of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts); a group of rare books purchased from the Schocken family; microfilming the Guenzburg Hebrew manuscript collection in Moscow; selected documents relating to the early years of JNUL; JNUL's Albert Einstein and Stefan Zweig archives, the Jack Mosseri Collection of Genizah Fragments, and the A.U. Boscovich Archives in the Music Department; plus notes on rare Hebrew items recently added to the collection.

In July and August 1993, an exhibit entitled "The History of the Jews in the U.S.S.R. in Documents from the State Archive of the Russian Federation" was on display at JNUL. It included reproductions of previously secret documents, primarily from the Jewish Sections of the Communist Party (Evseksii), the Society for Land Settlement of Toiling Jews (OZET), 1918–1930, and the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, 1941–1948.

Judaica Librarians' Group

The Israel Judaica Librarians' Group held one meeting (study day) in late 1992 and two during the first half of 1993. The circumstances under which the study day in 1992 was held demonstrate the dedication of Israel's Judaica librarians. On a day in December when Jerusalem was isolated from the rest of the country by snow, and many roads were closed because of flooding, 25 librarians braved the weather to participate in a program held at the Wiener Library of Tel Aviv University. Dr. Dan Simon, Director of Tel Aviv University's Central Library, discussed the history and current operations of the Wiener Library, whose collection deals primarily with the Holocaust and antisemitism. Founded in Amsterdam in 1934, the library moved to England in 1939 as the situation in continental Europe became more precarious. In the 1980s, the library was moved to Israel, where it is now part of Tel Aviv University's Central Library. Today, the Wiener Library is housed in its own modern building, equipped with the latest technology. In addition to its collections, the Wiener Library includes a learning center.

The Judaica librarians met at Bar-Ilan University in March 1993, for a day devoted to the theme of ultra-Orthodox children's literature. An introduction to the subject was presented by Dr. Moshe Yitzhaki, Director of Bar-Ilan's Judaica Library and Senior Lecturer in Bar-Ilan's

Department of Information and Library Science. The remainder of the program was composed of presentations by noted authors in the field, including Yaffa Ganz, recipient of AJL's Sydney Taylor Body-of-Work Award, presented at the First International Conference of Judaica and Israeli Librarians, held in Jerusalem in 1990 [see *JL* vol. 6 (1992), pp. 113–114.—Ed.]. The program concluded with a panel discussion on the future direction of this genre of literature, in which six authors participated (Uri Auerbach, Rivkah Feuchtwanger, Leah Fried, Yaffa Ganz, Yocheved Sachs, and Rachael Weingarten).

In June 1993, the Judaica Librarians' Group gathered again at the Hebrew University's Givat-Ram campus. This program centered on projects under way at JNUL. Yitzhak Yudelov, Director of the Hebrew Bibliography Project, discussed the project's history, present operations, and future plans. The project's records list more than 110,000 Hebrew books published until 1960, and a CD-ROM will be published in the near future (*Bibliography of the Hebrew Book*), affording the scholarly community the opportunity to benefit from the results of the project's 30-plus years of work. The data will also be issued in book form. In the near future, the project plans to publish a book listing over 4,000 editions of the Pass-over Hag-gadah.

The second lecture of the day was presented by Binyamin Richler, Acting Director of the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, during which he presented a thorough description of the Institute and its projects. Of the more than 70,000 known Hebrew manuscripts, the Institute has copies of almost all that are located in the western world. With the opening of libraries in the former Soviet Union to scholars and institutions in the West, the Jerusalem collection of microfilmed manuscripts has been significantly augmented. For example, of the approximately 17,000 Hebrew manuscripts in St. Petersburg, about 90 percent were not found in the Institute's collection. The most recent offering to the scholarly community by the Institute is a microfilm edition of the complete texts of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Guenzburg collection in the Russian State Library in Moscow.

Libby Kahane, Head of JNUL's Reference Service and editor of the column "Reference Works from Israel" in this journal, represented the Israeli Judaica Librarians' Group at the AJL Convention in New York,

held in June 1993. Her formal participation included (a) delivering a report on the Israeli group's activities at AJL's annual membership meeting, and (b) chairing a convention session. After the convention, AJL President Dr. Ralph Simon visited Israel; during his visit he met with Judaica librarians from the Tel Aviv area at Bar-Ilan University, and with librarians from the Jerusalem area at JNUL.

Other Developments

Bar-Ilan University's Wurzweiler Central Library (1993) has issued the first supplement to its publication *Hebrew Subject Headings*. The 100-plus page supplement includes 1,200 new or revised listings. [For a thorough description and review of the basic set, see *JL* vol. 7 (1993), pp 64–70.] Also at Bar-Ilan, a sizable donation was received for the cataloging of the Rabbi Meir Kahane Archive of the Institute for the Study of Religious Zionism. The archive will be located in a special section of the building of the Central Library. This donation will make the contents of the archive available to researchers much in advance of previous expectations. A new collection recently received at Bar-Ilan is that of Prof. Hugo Mantel, who once taught in the University's Jewish History Department. This collection is especially strong in the history of the Second Temple period, Prof. Mantel's area of specialization.

Yeshiva Birkat Moshe, located in Ma'ale Adumim (east of Jerusalem), received a Torah library containing thousands of volumes. The collection was built by Jacob Lowy of Montreal, a noted collector of Hebrew books, and was donated to the yeshiva by his daughters "in recognition of the yeshiva's educational and Zionist work in Erez Yisrael." The collection is housed in the Stavisky Library, a facility donated by one of Mr. Lowy's sons-in-law. The Stavisky Library serves not only students studying in the yeshiva and those enrolled in its *kollel*, but also the staff of Mekhon Ma'aliyot, a research branch of the yeshiva that specializes in the publication of scholarly editions of classic Jewish works. (See my prior column in *JL* vol. 7 for a description of the Makhon's edition of Maimonides' introductions to the Mishnah.)

In May 1993, the Judaica Section of Harvard College Library sponsored a conference, "Documenting Israel: A Case Study." In addition to the main lecturers who came from Israel, librarians from JNUL, the Hebrew University's Bloomfield

Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Bar-Ilan's Wurzweiler Central Library, and Tel Aviv University's Social Sciences Library attended, attesting to the growing internationalization of Judaica librarianship.

In June 1993, the eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies was held in Jerusalem. This Congress, held every four years, brought together thousands of Judaica scholars and librarians from all over the world. Librarians lectured in a number of the Congress subsections. Topics of special interest to Judaica librarians included: archival resources in Europe, North America, and Israel (five sessions); illustrated books and manuscripts (two sessions); Hebrew codicology and paleography, critical editions of Talmudic literature, and Hebrew books and printing in Italy (one session each).

Among the participants in the Congress was Ivan (Yohanan) Petrovsky of the Vernadsky Library in Kiev. After the Congress, he delivered lectures at the JNUL and at the sixth International Conference of the Society of Judaeo-Arabic Studies, held at Bar-Ilan University. Reporting on manuscripts and printed books in his library's collections, Mr. Petrovsky related that a group of manuscripts from the Albert Harkavy collection that had not been seen in about 50 years were "discovered" four years ago in storage areas of the library and are now being cataloged. He also reported that western scholars using the collection have noted hundreds of Yiddish titles previously unknown in the West.

In Memoriam

Israeli librarians who had worked closely with Amnon Zipin while planning the First International Conference of Judaica and Israeli Librarians in 1990 were shocked and saddened by the news of his death. [See *JL* vol. 6 for proceedings of the conference; see also *JL* vol. 7, p. 7, a page dedicated to Amnon's memory.—Ed.] To honor his memory, Israeli librarians, joined by their American colleagues in AJL, made a contribution to the Netiv ha-Hesed organization, a free loan fund for medical equipment. In recognition of the donation a plaque was mounted on the organization's memorial board, reading: "In memoriam: AMNON ZIPIN, by his colleagues in the Israeli and world library communities."

References

References followed by a superscript have corresponding Hebrew bibliographic data.

Bar-Ilan University. *Global Jewish Database (Responsa Project)*. [CD-ROM. New edition.] Ramat Gan: Responsa Project, Bar-Ilan University, 1993.¹

Bar-Ilan University. Wurzweiler Central Library. *Hebrew Subject Headings: New and Revised Headings, Tamuz 5752—Shevat 5753*. Ramat Gan: Wurzweiler Central Library, Bar-Ilan University, 5753 [1993].²

The Bibliography of the Hebrew Book, 1473—1960. (CD-ROM). Jerusalem: EPI (Electronic Publishing International) Ltd., 1994.

Haifa University. Library. *Index to Hebrew Periodicals; Land of Israel Database; Index to [Israeli] Daily Newspapers*—Tel-Hai College (CD-ROM). Jerusalem: CDI (Sales office: 5 Jabotinsky St., Ramat-Gan, Israel 52520), 1993.³

Hebrew Bibliographic Data

1. אוניברסיטת בר-אילן. מאגר היהדות הממוחשב (פרוייקט השומ"ת). רמת-גן: אוניברסיטת בר-אילן, תשנ"ג.
2. אוניברסיטת בר-אילן. ספריה מרכזית ע"ש וורצוויילר. כותרות נושאים... כותרות חדשות ועדכונים, תמוז תשנ"ב-שבט תשנ"ג, יולי 1992-פברואר 1993. רמת-גן: אוניברסיטת בר-אילן, תשנ"ג.
3. אוניברסיטת חיפה. הספריה. מפתח לכתבי-עת בעברית, מאגר מידע ארץ ישראל, מפתח לעתונות היומית-מכללת תל-חי. ירושלים: סי. די. א., 1993.

Ya'akov Aronson is University Librarian and Director of the Wurzweiler Central Library of Bar-Ilan University in Israel, where he is also a doctoral candidate in American History.

PUBLICATIONS FROM ISRAEL

A single address for monographs, serials and periodicals published in Israel

- Bible & Archaeology
- Hebrew Language & Literature
 - History
 - Art & Music
 - Jewish Thought
 - Law
 - Holocaust
 - Sifrei Kodesh
 - Israel & Zionism
 - Jewish Communities

Efficient service at competitive prices.

Please write for a free catalog.

Jerusalem Books LTD.

P.O.B. 18189 Jerusalem 91181 Israel Tel. & Fax. 972-2-850858