

# REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

## Harold Mason Judaica Reference Book Award, 1987\*

**Robert Singerman**  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida

We honor on this occasion Shimeon Brisman, the author of *A History and Guide to Judaic Encyclopedias and Lexicons*, forming volume two of his *Jewish Research Literature* series. As many of you know, Mr. Brisman has served the UCLA Library since 1962 as its distinguished Jewish Studies Bibliographer and Lecturer. Owing to his retirement this month and relocation in July to Brooklyn, he is not able to be with us to accept the Harold Mason Judaica Reference Book Award for the best Jewish reference work published in 1987.

In the festschrift for David Noel Freedman (*The Word of the Lord shall go Forth; Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of his Sixtieth Birthday*; Winona Lake, 1983), there is a short and accurate text found in the introduction that I would like to share with you: "Scholarship of its nature is an enterprise which must be shared; it is too vast to be done effectively in isolation. Certain individuals may conduct

*\*Remarks made at the Banquet of the 23rd Annual Convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries held in Kansas City, MO, June, 1988.*

original research in the privacy of libraries or laboratories, but they must communicate their findings to colleagues for testing and refinement."

It is traditional that a scholar be honored with a jubilee volume, or festschrift, on the occasion of a significant anniversary or milestone. Festschriften for academic librarians with records of distinguished service and publications in the field of Jewish studies are few in number, perhaps because so few of us possess doctoral degrees. By means of this award, however, we recognize Shimeon Brisman for his many years of scholarship, dedication, and commitment to sharing his vast knowledge of Jewish research literature with the world at large. Needless to say, volumes three and four are eagerly awaited, and we trust that in retirement, and without the day-to-day administrative pressures of curating a major collection of Judaica and Hebraica, Mr. Brisman's writing will have fewer interruptions, and we will not have to wait another ten years for volume three to appear.

We have heard a great deal in recent years about the shortage of professional

librarians in our rather specialized field. What does this have to do with reference books, you ask? I can think of no better recruiting and training tool than Shimeon Brisman's set as an inspiration for younger librarians to join our ranks. I am reminded of a verse in the Book of Daniel (12:3): "And the knowledgeable will be radiant like the bright expanse of sky, and those who lead the many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever."

I now call upon Dr. Herbert Zafren, our colleague and editor of Hebrew Union College's "Bibliographica Judaica" series, in which the Brisman set appears, to share Shimeon Brisman's acceptance statement with us.

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*Robert Singerman is Head of the Price Library of Judaica at the University of Florida at Gainesville. He is also Vice President of the Research and Special Library Division of the Association of Jewish Libraries and Chairman of its Reference Book Award Committee.*

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### Letter of Acceptance by the

### Recipient of the Mason Judaica Reference Book Award

**Shimeon Brisman**  
Brooklyn, NY

It is an old Jewish custom to make a *siyum* upon the completion of writing a Torah scroll or upon the completion of studying a Talmudic tractate. Usually, a community-wide celebration follows the *siyum* ceremony. However, there are no celebrations prescribed by tradition for the completion of a volume by an individual author. I am, therefore, very grateful to my colleagues and friends of the Association of Jewish Libraries, and particularly the members of the Harold Mason Reference [Book] Award Committee, for honoring me and my *History and Guide to Judaic Encyclopedias*

and *Lexicons* at this community-wide gathering of Judaica librarians. Many thanks to all of you.

The relationship between an author and his work is similar to the relationship between a parent and child. First comes the idea. Soon the idea takes on flesh and bone and gradually begins to develop. By the time the idea is ready to be born in print, many an author feels sorry for ever conceiving it. Still, regardless of all the difficulties connected with the birth of a child—the sleepless nights and overburdened days—

parents feel proud of their children; the children's success is their success. An author feels the same.

The road from conception to birth of my *History and Guide* series was a very long one: almost three decades long. I started out on the road in reaction to a remark by a lecturer at a library science class that "... there is also *one* Jewish encyclopedia in existence," and, believe me, there were occasions during which I was ready to give up, even to forswear undertaking such a project  
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*Dr. Charles Cutter is Head, Judaic Department, Brandeis University Libraries. Micha F. Oppenheim, is Head, Bibliographic Control, Jewish Theological Seminary of America. They are co-authors of Jewish Reference Sources: A Selective, Annotated Bibliographic Guide. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982).*

## BRISMAN

(Continued from p. 185, col. 3)

again. Still, here we are marking the publication of the volume, the second in a series of three, while the third volume is nearing completion, and a fourth—a dictionary of Hebrew printing—is already moving out of the planning stage.

During a *siyum*, the participants recite a prayer in which they say: "Just as You had helped us in completing this tractate, so please help us to begin and finish other tractates and works." On the threshold of my double *siyum*—the publication of *A History and Guide to Judaic Encyclopedias*

***The relationship between an author and his work is similar to the relationship between a parent and child.***

*and Lexicons* and the forthcoming conclusion of my close to four decades as a Judaica librarian—I pray that I be granted the privilege to complete the projects I have already begun and to be able to start and finish new ones. All for the sake of *Lilmod U-lelamed*.

*For a detailed description and review of A History and Guide to Judaic Encyclopedias and Lexicons, see the APPROBATIONS section in this issue.—Ed.*

## GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

*Shimeon Brisman, Editor, APPROBATIONS*

Book reviews are expected to include descriptions, evaluations, and critical comments (preferably in this order).

The descriptive part should acquaint the reader sufficiently with both the purpose and contents of the work. Data about the author, or additional information about the work (part of a series, illustrations, etc), may be included in this part.

The evaluation of the material should consist of an objective examination of the contents, a spot checking of sources, and summarization of findings (whether the work meets the stated objectives of the author, whether the work meets scholarly standards, etc.). Critical comments pertaining to the technical aspects of the work (arrangement of material, order of chapters, bibliography, etc.) may be included in this section.

Basic criticism, including the reviewer's opinions and final judgment of the work, should be relegated to the end of the review.

*Note to publishers:* Reference books for review should be sent to Charles Cutter or Micha Oppenheim.