

COMMENTARIES

July 8, 1990

Dear Bella,

I am most appreciative of your gift of the latest issue [vol. 5, no. 1] of *Judaica Librarianship*. It is a most impressive and instructive periodical. I spent several enjoyable hours reading it. Especially moving, for me, was Leonard Gold's article on Abraham Berger, who was a cherished friend. Just as Gold received a book from Abe Berger, I was also the recipient from him of *Sefer Toldot Aharon* by Aaron of Z[h]itomir, which I have still, although most of my book collection I have distributed to libraries and some individuals.

Libby Kahane's list of reference books called to my attention a most useful source that I hope to use in connection with research I am doing.

Warm regards,

Rabbi Philip (& Hanna) Goodman
Former Editor, Jewish Book Annual
Jerusalem, Israel

Editor's Note: Rabbi Goodman and his wife were guests at the AJL banquet held in conjunction with the First International Conference of Judaica and Israeli Librarians in July 1990. Ten years earlier, I spent a year in Jerusalem; my residence was down the block from the Goodmans', and I had the honor of being invited to their home. In speaking with them at the banquet, I learned that Rabbi Goodman had never seen the journal, and I gave him one of the three copies I had brought with me to Israel.—B.H.W.

IN THE BEGINNING

August 7, 1990

To the Editor,

In reflecting on the serious issues raised in your most recent editorial, "Negative Attitudes to Judaica Reference Works" (*JL*, vol. 5, no. 1, Spring 1989–Winter 1990), primarily on the question posed in the opening paragraph, "Are Judaism and ref-

erence librarianship antithetical?", I believe that clear-cut distinctions need to be drawn as to the intent and ultimate purpose of the reference works. When reference works are produced and used in order to facilitate and enhance Torah learning, then Judaism would commend and encourage their use. If, on the other hand, reference works are produced and used in order to short-cut and circumvent the long, intensive, and toil-filled process necessary for Torah learning, then I believe that Judaism would not simply not recommend, but would also abhor the use of such reference works.

Distinctions need to be made regarding the use of reference works for *lomdim* (specialists and experts in the field of Torah and Halakhah) and for *amkha* (the masses of Jews learning on a regular basis, in fulfillment of the mitzvah of Talmud Torah). Certainly we cannot contemplate or imagine a *rav* or a *posek* (halakhic decisor) arriving at a major, precedent-making, novel, and original halakhic decision or approach based on examination and analysis of a quick-reference halakhic volume, or of a secondary, "do-it-yourself" halakhic compilation or digest, and certainly not through "study" of primary sources in translation. We would not expect a physician to render a diagnosis by consulting a layman's medical desk reference volume or a judge to issue a verdict by researching the 1990 edition of *All You Ever Wanted to Know About Law*. We likewise do not expect the serious-minded, astute, and scholarly student of Torah to gain the broad scope of Torah knowledge from the quickie, "do-it-yourself" digests, anthologies, and compendiums.

Torah study and knowledge, our Sages taught, is acquired by means of forty-eight qualities, which require time, effort, understanding, sharp discussion, and deliberation, to name just a few. None of the forty-eight qualities suggest or tolerate the "instant" or "express" method.

Historically, the classic *talmid hakham* was one who was fluent and conversant in the classical sources and texts, which were written and studied in Hebrew. Indeed, it is

not at all surprising that *Hazal* (our Sages) were chagrined and disappointed when the Torah was translated into Greek ("as the day when the golden calf was made"). Studying the Torah in a foreign tongue was viewed as taking a giant step away from the traditional mode in which Torah was to be transmitted. Today, when Torah is being taught to many more students than in previous generations, we tend to compromise on one of the most essential elements necessary to achieve excellence, fluency, and competence in the Torah material being studied—the language. Our generation seems to bask in the "glory" of abundant English translations of Talmudic, medieval, and contemporary Judaica classics being disseminated, marketed, and used not merely among the uninitiated or newcomers to Torah study, but among *Bene Yeshiva* (yeshiva students) and *lomdim* as well, if not more so.

The element and vital experience of *amalah shel Torah* (the labor involved in mastering primary Jewish texts) or the *horeven* (the struggle and toil) over a piece of Ramban, Midrash, Rashi, or Metsudot ultimately leaves the potential *lamdan* with skills and tools that will in the long run allow him/her to study on his or her own. This, after all, is one of the main goals of any good system of education!

The "instant," "express" approach skips over the toil, time, effort, usage, and investment necessary to appreciate the language of Torah—the actual text. The "instant" translation/quickie-reference/compendium/anthologies approach also removes from students the opportunities and necessary experiences of actually handling the *sefarim* [books], leafing through the *dapim* [leaves], familiarizing themselves with the particular nuances, flavor, phraseology, methodology, and *derekh* [approach] of a given *mefares* (commentator), *sefer*, and even of a *masekhet* [tractate]—all critical features of the art of being a true *talmid hakham* (scholar/student).

When the primacy of genuine Torah learning is maintained and the study of the original sources is carefully safeguarded, it then becomes part of the *talmid hakham's*

agenda to augment and reinforce the learning process with additional reference materials and sources. It could even be postulated that a reference work that may serve as a learning aid or tool could and should be used, as long as it hails from a legitimate and credible source.

A quick glance at a *daf* [leaf] of the Talmud or of an entire Talmudic tractate reveals many and varied supplementary reference-like sources, aids, and tools. These include the cross-references of the *'En Mishpat - Ner Mitsvah* (which gives easy access to the Rambam's and Karo's codes), Rabenu Hananel's highlights of the Talmudic text, the Rif's digest of the Talmud's discussion, the Rosh's compendium of Halakhic elements in the Talmudic text (plus the *Kitsur Piske Ha-Rosh* by his son Rabenu Ya'akov Ba'al Ha-Turim - an "abridged" version), the Hilufeir Girsat'ot to verify differing textual emendations, the Metargem translating foreign terms and phrases found in Rashi and Tosafot, plus the many indexes (e.g., *Sefer Sedeh Tsotim*, by Bezalel Ranshburg) designed to facilitate use of *sefarim* and *mefarshim*.

Judaism and reference librarianship are not antithetical when the latter is used to augment, supplement, enrich, and reinforce the primary sources of Torah study. Throughout the generations, great scholars and authors have produced supplementary reference works, digests, and compendiums to enhance, help review, and reinforce knowledge previously gained and transmitted through more detailed, difficult, and demanding sources, particularly Talmudic and legal texts and commentaries. This was the intent of Rishonim such as the Rif and the Meiri in the area of Talmud study and commentary, of R' Yosef Karo in authoring the *Shulhan 'Arukh* to enable students to review the highlights of the longer and more detailed *Bet Yosef*, or of the Arukh Ha-Shulhan, who systematically reviewed and highlighted previous Talmudic and legal opinions before rendering his own *pesak*. Many examples can be cited of major and minor reference works authored throughout the ages with the sole intent of augmenting and facilitating study and scholarship. Some of the works reinforced the efforts of the accomplished scholar, while others enabled the less able or more pressured layman to pursue Torah study on a regular basis. The latter was certainly the Rambam's intent in authoring the *Yad ha-ḥazakah*. It is interesting to note that, whereas the shorter, more systematic, and condensed works served the immediate needs and concerns of a learned and interested laity, these very same works also served as the basis for

further intensive, in-depth, analytical, and refined commentaries by scholars. What better examples need one cite than the *Shulhan 'Arukh* of Karo and the *Yad ha-ḥazakah* of Rambam! I don't believe that this approach was necessarily a result of the fact that "earlier decisions [are] again scrutinized, justified and interpreted," (J.M. Baumgarten, as quoted in your editorial) because of negative responses to halakhic codes etc., but rather because continued probing, verification, and analysis of previous texts and sources is the very essence of the *Torah shebe-'al peh* [oral law] mode of learning. Whether or not "abridged" reference compendiums such as Karo's *Shulhan 'Arukh*, *Yad ha-ḥazakah*, *'Arukh ha-shulhan* or *Haye Adam* can or should be compared to the contemporary proliferation of secondary, abridged, and super-abridged "sources" is left to the reader.

Your point about "certain rabbis [who] have expressed negative opinions on indexes to halakhic codes that may allow the layman to decide questions of Jewish law" is well taken. It is not, however, to be interpreted as a universal rejection of reference works. Deciding questions of Jewish law is a highly specialized, intricate, and difficult process, requiring much learning, training, and apprenticeship (*shimush*), which when missing may create confusing and erroneous impressions and conclusions for the unlearned or amateurish *pseudoposek*. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein z"l was opposed to having his responsa published in an abridged English edition for similar reasons. The compilation and study of codes, however, have become part and parcel of standard Torah learning and curricula, and continue to serve as springboards for further in-depth scholarship and novellae (*hidushim*). Moreover, the fact that the Mishnah and Talmud were originally compiled as a concession to *yeridat ha-dorot* (the decline of the generations), is proof of the foresight and wisdom of our ancestors in recognizing the need to introduce innovative, creative, and even radical approaches to assure continued and consistent Torah study. If only all of contemporary Jewry were well versed in the Rambam's *Yad ha-ḥazakah*!

Sincerely,

*Rabbi Eliyahu Safran
Principal, Samuel H. Wang Yeshiva
University High School for Girls
Holliswood, NY*

ALEF BIT

July 6, 1990

Dear Bella,

Congratulations on another excellent issue of *Judaica Librarianship*. As I stated in my letter (*JL*, vol. 5, no. 1, Spring 1989–Winter 1990), I am most impressed with the quality and content of your work.

I would like to correct an error in the name of our computer users group. "Communal Computing" is the name of our group, which includes many librarians and Jewish educators. For information about membership, please contact me at the address below.

In response to Dorothy Wasserman's piece on Hebrew software resources, a more extensive list of Hebrew software packages on the market is appended. I was also pleased to read Ralph Simon's article on synagogue library automation.

Keep up the good work. I enjoy reading your publication.

B'shalom,

*Glenn S. Easton
President
Communal Computing
20 West Gude Drive
Rockville, MD 20850-1150*

Editor's Note: The name of the organization in Mr. Easton's prior letter was: National Jewish Computer Users Group. For the benefit of our readers, we are publishing the software directory. Some entries do not include complete addresses.

Directory of Hebrew Software Packages

(Note: Though not all are multiscrypt, bidirectional programs, they may be of use in the library setting.)

1. KESHET-PRINT (IBM)
Keshet Limited
P.O. Box 1537
Bethesda, MD 20817
2. Multi-Lingual Scholar (IBM)
Gamma Productions
Santa Monica, CA
3. PC/Hebrew (IBM)
H & A Consultants
P.O. Box 1468
Spring Valley, NY 10977
4. MacHebrew (Macintosh)
Linguist's Software
P.O. Box 580
Edmonds, WA 98020

5. HebrewWriter (IBM)
Practical Office Systems
3972 Walnut Street
Fairfax, VA 22030

6. HebrewStar (IBM)
Pangloss
P.O. Box 70742
Eugene, OR 97401

7. Grafeas (IBM)
Apollon Engineering
Columbia, MD

8. MacInHebrew (Macintosh)
MIT Hillel
312 Memorial Drive
Cambridge, MA 02139

9. Diplomat Software Service
Diplomat Software
3700 Campus Drive, Suite 202
Newport Beach, CA 92660

The software packages Mrs. Wasserman noted may be purchased through her or through the following:

1. Nota Bene (IBM)
Dragonfly Software
258 W. Broadway, Suite 500
New York, NY 10013

2. MegaWriter (IBM)
Paraclete Software
1000 E. 14th Street, Suite 425
Plano, TX 75074

3. Rav K'Tav & Mac K'tav (Macintosh)
DAVKA Corporation
845 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 843
Chicago, IL 60611

Erratum

The diacritics in Figure 2 of Joan Ali-prand's article, "Hebrew on RLIN—An Update" (vol. 5, no. 1, Spring 1989—Winter 1990, p. 13), were inverted as a result of a printer's error. Reprints of the article, with the figure correctly positioned, are available from the Research Libraries Group.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

June 3, 1990

Dear Ms. Weinberg,

I am writing to thank you for the [galleys of] two articles [from *JL* vol. 5, no. 1 that] you sent me for my paper on children's Holocaust literature ["Historical Accuracy in Children's Literature of the Holocaust," by Freda Kleinburd, and the Sydney Taylor Book Award Acceptance Speech of Jane

Yolen, for *The Devil's Arithmetic*]. They were both extremely helpful and I used them extensively for my paper, of course crediting them "in press."

Your publication is an excellent one, and I look forward to new issues.

Again, many thanks.

Sincerely,

Mrs. T. D. Frank
Bethesda, Maryland

P.S. I got an A on my paper.

PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

July 12, 1990

Dear Editor,

I was pleased to see the article entitled "Jewish Public Library: a Portrait of the Founders" (*JL*, vol. 5, no. 1, Spring 1989—Winter 1990). The article is based on one of the chapters in *Folk's Lore: a History of the Jewish Public Library, 1914—1989*, published in honor of the Library's 75th Anniversary.

Permit me to make two corrections for the benefit of your readers. The captions identifying the photographs of the two founding fathers of the Jewish Public Library are incorrect: Reuven Brainin is identified as Yehuda Kaufman, and Kaufman as Brainin.

The author of the article, Naomi Caruso, is the former Director of Public Services at the Jewish Public Library.

Sincerely,

Zipporah Dunskey Shnay
Executive Director
Jewish Public Library
Montreal, Quebec

August 1, 1990

Dear Mrs. Dunskey Shnay:

I was amazed to discover from your letter that the photographs in Ms. Caruso's article were incorrectly identified, as I had taken great pains to prevent such an error. Ms. Caruso had submitted two slides without identification. Although we usually require authors to submit black and white glossies, we absorbed the expense of having these produced.

Recalling Ms. Caruso's prior article on Brainin (*JL* vol. 3, no. 1—2, 1986—87), I identified the photos correctly, as you can see from the enclosed photocopy of the pasteup. I found the names in lightface unattractive, and asked the typesetter to change them to bold. Because the Caruso article started on the same page as another article, positioning of the text was complicated, and it had to be shifted several times. It was at one of the page proof stages that the error in figure legends was introduced by the person handling layout. I regret that neither I nor my co-editor caught the error. This is the second printer's error affecting illustrations that has been found in this issue [see ALEF BIT, above], and I have asked that a new person be assigned to layout when the next issue is produced.

We can take no responsibility for the second error, however, since, as you can see from the enclosed, Ms. Caruso provided the title *Director* on the cover letter accompanying her manuscript. She also read the galley and found no need to correct her title.

I assure you that we try to make *Judaica Librarianship* as accurate a publication as possible. I recently submitted a report to the AJL Council detailing all the verification stages in the journal's production. I see now that the layout of figures needs to be reviewed in a separate pass, but I cannot assume the responsibility of verifying the job titles of authors.

Thank you again for your interest in the journal.

Sincerely,

Bella Hass Weinberg
Editor

RESPONSA

October 1, 1990

Dear Bella:

I am responding to your letter of August 16, 1990 and especially want to thank you for the copy of *Judaica Librarianship*, which I had not seen before.

I read your interesting editorial on page 3 of the Spring 1989—Winter 1990 issue (vol. 5, no. 1) and have sent copies of it to several friends. I hadn't realized that there were people who are opposed to indexes for the reasons given. Somehow, this reminds me of the old discussions about

Current Contents and the scanning of the original journals. I personally don't know anyone who reads *CC* who does not also regularly scan many journals. There are, however, plenty of people who read a few journals and don't use *CC* or indexes of any kind.

Your reference to the article by Eliezer Wise (Wyncote, PA) stimulated my reading of his article and the brief discussion of the pros and cons of digests. I find it farfetched to believe that, as he says, digests of original sources will cause people to forget them. I've read many opera digests and would never imagine they would serve as a substitute to the libretto or a performance.

Upon further scanning of the issue you sent me, I came across the article by Zachary Baker on indexes to Jewish periodicals. I think you will understand when I say it is ironical that he is at YIVO Institute.

He asks how to find the article by Alex Bein on "The Jewish Parasite." Well, I asked myself if, by chance, this work was cited in the *SSCI* [Social Sciences Citation Index]. I checked in our new cum[ulation] for 1956-65 but found reference to other works by Bein. The same was true for the period 1966-70. But, lo and behold, in the 1971-75 *SSCI* there is the reference he was seeking. Ironically, it is cited in an article by G. Korman of Cornell University in the *YIVO ANNU. J.*, #15:280-296, 1974 along with 43 other references.

Since I don't have access to the journal in my office, I assume the full citation will be found in the article. Unfortunately, the *YIVO* journal was not selected as a source journal for the 1956-65 cumulation, where I would have expected to find the full source entry.

So, while I'm quelling a little about this, I regret that our journal coverage for the back issues was not as comprehensive as it was in later years.

You may use any of this information for your journal, or you may simply wish to transmit this information to Zachary Baker. I don't know if the *YIVO* Institute receives *SSCI*, but this could also have been checked out on *Social SCISEARCH* online.

Best wishes,

Eugene Garfield, Ph.D.
President
Institute for Scientific
Information
Philadelphia, PA

October 22, 1990

Dear Dr. Garfield:

I was very pleased to receive your letter concerning the latest issue of *Judaica Librarianship*, and shared a copy with Zachary Baker.

In your letter, you indicate that it is ironical that Zachary is at YIVO. This would have been true if the sought article had turned out to be in the *YIVO Annual*, but it was only cited in that journal. Since *YIVO* specializes in Holocaust research, that is not surprising. (I prepared an author-title index to the *YIVO Annual* some time ago, but no individual citation index to the journal exists.)

You also state that "Unfortunately, the *YIVO* journal was not selected as a source journal for the 1956-65 cumulation where I would have expected to find the full source entry." The citation was in the 1974 volume of *YIVO Annual*, while the cited and sought article was in the *Yearbook* of the Leo Baeck Institute (1964).

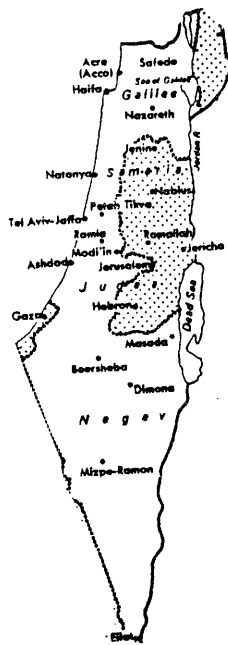
Your search results are interesting, but I contend that given a reference question in which both the journal title and the year of publication are unknown, searching a citation index that does not include article title is a rather indirect method. As *Social Sciences Citation Index* (SSCI) shows, Bein published several papers in English-language journals, so there were multiple possibilities.

Like many other specialized *Judaica* libraries, *YIVO* cannot afford to subscribe to general indexes, nor does it currently have access to online databases. Zachary Baker is aware of *SSCI*, and is a crackerjack *Judaica* reference librarian. I believe that in the context of printed indexes specific to the field of Jewish studies, his search was both thorough and systematic.

Let me take this opportunity to let you know that I have recently corresponded with a member of your staff regarding *ISI* coverage of proceedings of conferences in *Judaica* librarianship that have been published in the journal.

Sincerely,

Bella Hass Weinberg
Editor



Zion Liberated

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MAX SELIGMAN. DEFENDER OF JEWISH UNDERGROUND FIGHTERS BEFORE THE BRITISH MILITARY COURTS • JEWISH NATION-BUILDING UNDER THE BRITISH PALESTINE MANDATE.



In chapters that describe the activities of the Underground, the partition plan, the Jewish rebellion, the illegal immigration, and the Military Courts, Max Seligman, lawyer for the underground, strides center stage, in this fascinating history of the struggles of the pre-Israel period.

The story is complete with many photographs and copies of original records, making the book an important historical presentation of the events leading up to the establishment of the State of Israel. Including Sources, Bibliography, Chronology of Events, Glossary, and Index.

288 pages, cloth bound.



Joseph Simon/Pangloss Press
P.O. BOX 4071, MALIBU, CA 90265

ISBN 0-934710-22-8

\$27.50