


1-1-2003

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Lehman College of City University

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Recommended Citation

Kabakoff, Jacob. 2003. "Some Notable Bibliographers I Have Known." *Judaica Librarianship* 11: 67-75. doi:10.14263/2330-2976.1126.

Some Notable Bibliographers I Have Known*

Jacob Kabakoff

Lehman College of City University
New York, NY

Excerpts from the Introduction by Zachary M. Baker

Since 1996, Judaica librarians have had the honor of hearing one of their distinguished colleagues speak at a plenary gathering of the Association of Jewish Libraries. Jacob Kabakoff is now the fourth Feinsein Lecturer, succeeding Herbert Zafren, Menahem Schmelzer, and Dina Abramowicz. It is a special honor for me to introduce Professor Jacob Kabakoff as the 1999 Myer and Rosaline Feinsein Lecturer. The Feinsein Lecture is a program of the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies and is sponsored by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture's Jewish Endowment for the Arts and Humanities. . . .

Jacob Kabakoff is an American Hebraist par excellence and a well-rounded Judaica scholar. Literary and bio-bibliographical studies have been hallmarks of his long and productive scholarly career. Jacob Kabakoff himself is an important link to a generation of Hebrew bibliographers that has passed from the scene in recent years, and his lecture constitutes a rich contribution to our knowledge of Judaica bibliography and Hebrew letters.

Until his retirement, Jacob Kabakoff served as Professor of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Lehman College of the City University of New York; before that, he was Dean of the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies. A graduate of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, he was awarded the Doctor of Hebrew Letters

degree in 1958. Dr. Kabakoff is also a graduate of Yeshiva University and its Teachers' Institute. He holds honorary degrees from the JTSA (1972) and Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion (1988).

The Festschrift *Migvan* [Spectrum]: *Studies in Hebrew Literature in Honor of Jacob Kabakoff*, edited by Stanley Nash (Lod: Habermann Institute for Literary Research, 1988), includes a selected bibliography of Dr. Kabakoff's own writings. As of 1988, these numbered six books, four pamphlets, and no fewer than 221 articles - in Hebrew, Yiddish and English. Among his books are: *Master of Hope: Selected Writings of Naphtali Herz Imber* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1985), and the Hebrew volumes *Pioneers of American Hebrew Literature* (Tel-Aviv: Yavneh; Cleveland: Cleveland College of Jewish Studies Press, 1967), *Stalwarts and Seekers: Essays on American Hebrew Literature and Culture* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1978), *Naphtali Herz Imber: "Ba'al ha-Tikvah"* (Lod: Habermann Institute for Literary Research, 1991). Dr. Kabakoff has been a regular and devoted contributor to *Ha-Do'ar* - he served as editor of the *Sefer ha-Do'ar* (1982), published on that eminent American Hebrew journal's 60th anniversary - and has also written for the *Congress Weekly/Biweekly/Monthly*, *Jewish Social Studies*, *Judaism*, and *The Reconstructionist*.

To many Judaica librarians, Dr. Kabakoff's name is associated above all with the *Jewish Book Annual*, which he ably served

as Editor for almost 20 years, from 1977 to 1996. Having been a contributor to the *Jewish Book Annual* throughout Dr. Kabakoff's tenure, I can personally testify to the close attention that he paid to all of the articles and bibliographies that were published there under his editorial supervision, and to the thoroughness with which he proofread these contributions.

Stanley Nash has written: "[Jacob] Kabakoff is one of the principal researchers in the field of American Hebrew literature Many of those who devoted themselves to the neglected subject of Hebrew literary creativity in America received assistance and encouragement from him. Often our friend Kabakoff would contact those working in this arena, either by letter or by telephone, bringing to their attention new materials, a remote archive, or an obscure manuscript known only to "initiates" (*Migvan*, introduction, p. 9). We are grateful to Jacob Kabakoff for his generosity in sharing with us a modest quotient of his vast storehouse of knowledge, in this latest in the ongoing series of Feinsein Lectures.

Zachary M. Baker is the Reinhard Family Curator of Judaica and Hebrew Collections at Stanford University, and is the President of the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies (CARLJS).

*Originally presented at the 34th Annual Convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries, Boca Raton, June 21, 1999. Originally published as a pamphlet (New York: National Foundation for Jewish Culture/Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies), 2000. (NFJC Lecture Series no. 4).

Lecture by Jacob Kabakoff

Opinions are divided regarding the field of bibliography. For some it is characterized by the Hebrew phrase *hokhmat shearim*, which may be loosely translated as the skill or expertise of dealing with title pages. Those who would invoke this phrase would seem to imply that the bibliographer's knowledge encompasses only the externals of the books and does not necessarily presuppose a familiarity with their contents.

Others, however, view the bibliographer's skill as having to do with far more than title pages. The basic meaning of the word *shaar* is gate. When we use the phrase *hokhmat shearim* we refer to that skill which opens the gates to the vast realm of Jewish learning. Bibliography then is viewed from this vantage point as the key to the treasures of the past and to the writings of the scholars and bookmen who have mined these treasures.

It is my purpose today to deal with four leading bibliographers – two from Israel and two who did their work here — and to share with you some recollections of their personalities and activities over many years. To each of these notable figures we can apply the phrase *be-hokhma poteah shearim*. As used in our Maariv service it applies to the Almighty Himself who with wisdom opens the gates of heaven. In our case it is meant to apply to a few exceptional and unique individuals who utilized their God-given skill to enable us to enter the portals of many fields and branches of learning that might not otherwise have been readily revealed to us.



ABRAHAM MEIR HABERMANN

Our first bibliographer, **Abraham Meir Habermann**, was born in Zurawno, Galicia, in 1901. He received a traditional education, but like many other young men of his generation in Galicia he left his hometown for Germany in order to obtain a university education. He was about 18 years of age when he moved to Wurzburg. For some months he worked for his uncle who was in the wine business. However, he soon abandoned the business world to continue with his studies. At the age of 21 he took up residence in Zwickau where he obtained a position as a teacher.

It was in Zwickau that Habermann met Salman Schocken, whose department-store concern was based there. This meeting was to have a far-reaching influence on Habermann's career. Schocken had already become known as a collector of Hebrew books and manuscripts. His library grew when he acquired the collection of Moses Marx; it was then that Schocken invited Habermann to catalog his books. At first Habermann divided his time between mornings at the library and afternoons at the school. He acquired his expertise firsthand within the confines of the library, and was instrumental in aiding Schocken make valuable acquisitions of rare books and manuscripts. Among these were manuscripts of medieval Hebrew poetry, a field in which Habermann was to become a productive worker at the Schocken Institute For Hebrew Poetry, which was established in Berlin in 1930. In his lifework Habermann was undoubtedly influenced by his mentor Schocken who took him under his wing and employed him as a librarian in Berlin. When the Schocken Library was transferred to Jerusalem, Habermann "made *aliyah*" and continued in his post. He remained in charge of the Library for a period of over four decades until 1967.

I first met Habermann as a result of a telephone conversation that we had in 1950 when I had gone to Jerusalem to take a position as a member of the editorial staff of the *Encyclopedia Hebraica*. I spent some two years in Jerusalem and from time to time I would call Habermann to verify bibliographical data. Habermann inquired as to my family origins and I told him that I was American-born. He admitted that on the basis of my name and my fluent Hebrew he had thought that I stemmed from an Oriental background. At any rate, he invited me to his home, and thus began a friendship that lasted through the years down to his passing in 1981 when he was close to his 80th birthday. After my return to the United States in 1952 we kept up a regular correspondence. His letters enumerated the literary projects in which he

was engaged, so that they offer an insight into his activities during this period. Habermann did not fail to favor me with his many warmly-inscribed books and reprints as they appeared.

I often benefited from Habermann's courtesies in connection with my research on American Hebrew literature. For my monograph on the writings of the satirist Gerson Rosenzweig he made available to me a rare four-page parody that Rosenzweig had published in New York in 1893. On another occasion he wrote me that his library had acquired a number of issues of *ha-Zofeh ba-Aretz ha-Hadasha*, the first American Hebrew weekly, which appeared in the 1870's. When I informed him that some of these issues were unavailable in the United States, he took the trouble to microfilm them for me. Among the items he was kind enough to send me were rare printed items by Judah David Eisenstein and Ephraim Deinard.

While still in Germany, Habermann began to publish the fruits of his research in the history of Hebrew printing and in the field of *piyyut* and medieval Hebrew poetry. Among his early publications were such items as *The Soncino Family as Printers* (Hebrew, 1933) and *Hebrew Women as Printers, Typesetters and Supporters of Writers* (Hebrew, 1933). He devoted himself to the publishing of Hebrew texts, particularly from the medieval period. In many instances he provided pertinent bibliographies. He was diligent in making available from manuscripts poems and *piyyutim*, which he contributed to scores of volumes and periodicals. For some time he also conducted a weekly feature in the literary section of *Ha'aretz* that he devoted to this branch of our literature.

We cannot hope to enumerate even a part of Habermann's extensive writings. In retirement he began to issue a series of eight volumes in which he collected some of his essays and studies. Fortunately, available is a detailed bibliography of his books and edited poems, as well as articles and reviews. The bibliography appeared in the *A.M. Habermann Jubilee Volume* (Hebrew, 1977), published in Jerusalem on the occasion of his 75th birthday. Habermann continued his work until his dying day; he passed away while reading the proofs of his latest volume. The main areas of his writing included medieval literature, history of the Hebrew book and Hebrew printing, and studies on the Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Haskalah literature. His essays covered a wide variety of topics in Jewish studies.

In 1967 I invited Habermann to offer a series of lectures on *piyyut* at the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies as part of our teacher-in-service program. He had been serving for some years as professor of medieval Hebrew literature at the Tel Aviv University and taught as well at the Graduate Library School of the Hebrew University. During his visit to Cleveland he also took part in a conference on the Holocaust and lectured on the reaction to persecution in the *piyyut*, a subject to which he had devoted some of his works. When S.Y. Agnon received the Nobel Prize, a community-wide celebration was planned to mark the event in Cleveland. Because of Habermann's closeness to Agnon, I asked him whether he could prevail upon Agnon to send us a taped message. Agnon was besieged by many requests but he could not turn down this one, for Habermann had been among the proofreaders of his collected works. He was also the compiler of the first bibliography of Agnon's early writings, which the author had published under his family name Czaczkes.

We have already made mention of Habermann's early bibliographical study of the Soncino family of printers. This publication, which was dedicated to Schocken offers, in addition to an introduction, detailed annotated listings of the items printed by Soncino family members arranged according to various cities. The study was followed by monographs on Hebrew printing presses in Tarnopol, Corfu and Safed, on the printers Abraham Conat, Hayyim Shahor, Hayyim Helitz and others. He traced the printing history of such popular works as *Mishlei Shualim* (Fox Fables, 1946) and *Ben ha-Melekh v'ha-Nazir* (The Prince and the Nazir, 1951). His interest in Hasidism led him to compile a comprehensive bibliography of some 300 items of Habad literature, which he contributed to a *Festschrift* in honor of Schocken's 70th birthday.

Habermann's research on Hebrew printing served as the basis for his volume *ha-Sefer ha-Ivri be-Hitpathuto* (The History of the Hebrew Book, 1968). Subtitled "From Marks to Letters; From Scroll to Book," it offers a survey of the subject against the background of the general history of printing and serves as a useful guide to the field.

Habermann projected the preparation of a comprehensive series of books on the history of Hebrew printing in Italy. He completed two volumes, one on the printer Daniel Bomberg and another on the printer Cornelio Adel Kind and his son Daniel. Both books contain descriptions of the books

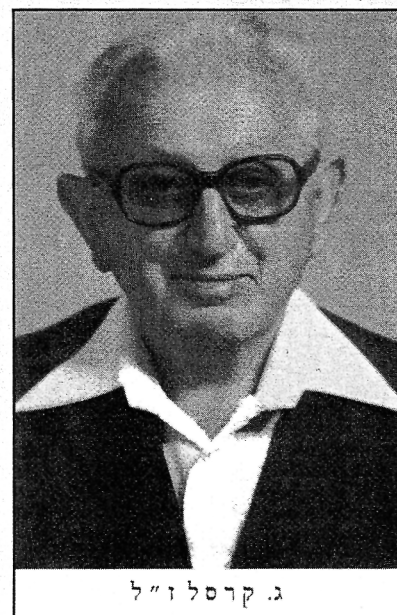
that came from their presses. Habermann had begun work also on the press of the Christian Venetian printer Giovanni de Gara. He was unable to complete this effort and it was published posthumously and edited with notes and additions by Yizhak Yudlov of the Hebrew University Library staff.

Habermann followed a time-honored custom of sending unique greetings to friends in form of unpublished verses found in manuscript. On the occasion of the Bar Mitzvah of my youngest son, he sent two epigrams by Isaac Cohen Belinfante, an eighteenth century poet and preacher, who served as the *hakham* of the Portuguese synagogue Etz Hayyim in Amsterdam. He showered such thoughtful gifts upon his many friends and acquaintances. He was also the author of a number of miniature books and collector's items. As a connoisseur of books he always had the book lovers and bibliophiles in mind. Two of his publications are especially geared to them. In 1964 the Museum of Printing Art in Safed and the National Union of Printing Workers in Israel issued his book *Shaarei Sefarim Ivrim* (Title Pages of Hebrew Books), containing reproductions of 123 decorated title pages. The custom of having such pages was introduced in the sixteenth century by Gershon Soncino and its use is traced down to the publications of the displaced refugees in Europe. The same sponsors joined with Massada Publishing to issue his *Tavei Sefer Yehudim* (Jewish Bookplates, 1972), which offers a collection of facsimiles of manuscript and engraved *ex-libris* from the collection of Avrom Weiss at the Museum of Printing Art at Safed. Some 165 samples are presented, together with introductions in Hebrew and English and commentary.

There is still another side to Habermann's creativity, which is represented by his pen-name, Heman ha-Yerushalmi. In the Bible, Heman is said to have been the head of the singers during the days of King David. He is also mentioned as one of the wise men of old. In addition, this is the name of the narrator in Judah Al-Harizi's celebrated work the *Tahkemoni*. Under his pen-name of Heman ha-Yerushalmi, Habermann published some original *maqamot*, a literary form that was cultivated by Al-Harizi and that is written in rhymed prose. In addition, he authored under his pen-name various folkloristic collections dealing with such themes as redemption and Jerusalem.

In his correspondence Habermann referred again and again to his satisfaction

at being a resident of Jerusalem, and stressed his growing attachment to the city. Once, after I had paid him a visit when he was recovering from an operation, he insisted on accompanying me to the taxi station. I tried to discourage him from taking the walk but his response was "It is a mitzvah to walk in Jerusalem." After his death, his widow Bilha decided to present his extensive library, consisting of some 30,000 items, to the city of Lod, which undertook to provide a building for what became known as the Habermann Institute for Literary Research. The Institute has kept Habermann's name alive through a series of publications, including a few posthumous ones by Habermann himself. One of the activities of the Institute is the sponsorship of a museum with a program of ongoing exhibits and one of its major interests is research into the modes of Jewish life of the Oriental Jews and particularly of the communities in North Africa. The director is Dr. Zvi Malachi, of the faculty of Tel Aviv University, who served as the editor both of the *Festschrift Shai le-Heman*, published on the occasion of Habermann's 75th birthday, and the memorial volume *Yad le-Heman*, which contains in addition to literary studies a section devoted to appreciations of Habermann's life's work.



GETZEL KRESSEL

A second bibliographer with whom I had close contact over the years was **Getzel Kressel**. I first met Kressel in 1949 when

he came to New York at the invitation of the Zionist Archive and Library, which was in existence at that time. I invited him to prepare a biographical sketch of the poet "Shin" Shalom for a Hebrew brochure we were preparing for publication in connection with the forthcoming visit of the poet that year. We maintained our relationship for well over three decades, both through correspondence and mutual visits. Kressel continued to send me his varied books as they appeared. He often enclosed also copies of articles that he had published in the press.

Kressel's numerous contributions to such fields as the history of Zionism and the Yishuv and modern Hebrew literature and the press, would be difficult to trace and record were it not for the fact that he decided to prepare his own bibliography. It was published by the Habermann Institute for Jewish Research shortly before his death in 1986 and in time for his 75th birthday. Encompassing the years 1925-1985, it lists more than 100 items that cover his original books and pamphlets as well as the books he edited. Together with his contributions to the press, journals, encyclopedias and collective volumes, the total number of items reaches 3,284. A special listing of the periodicals and volumes in which he participated contains 250 titles, a sum seldom equaled by others.

As an introduction to his bibliography Kressel penned a memoir in which he related how he entered upon his literary career. He was born in the town of Zablottov, Eastern Galicia, in 1911 and, with the death of his father, was orphaned at the age of four. His brother, who was active in Zionist work and his sister who "made *aliyah*," served as role models. From his earliest years he read voraciously everything he could get a hold of and he kept up his romance with the printed Hebrew word throughout his life. After settling in Palestine in 1930 he became an agricultural worker in Petah Tikvah, where he remained for some eight years. Kressel considered his first major literary effort to be his article on Leopold Zunz, which he submitted to the literary section of *Davar* in 1936 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the scholar's death. The literary editor of the newspaper was then Dov Sadan, who was impressed by the expertise exhibited by the author and continued to publish his articles. It was through Sadan that Kressel met Berl Katznelson, the then editor of *Davar* who recognized the young writer's potential and urged him to undertake various literary projects. Among his early bibliographical efforts was a guide to *Madaei ha-Hevrah*

(Social Sciences, 1939; 1948) which covered materials that were available in Hebrew. Similar functional bibliographies were his *Eretz Yisrael ve-Toledoteha* (Palestine and Its History, 1943) and *Mada ha-Mikra* (Biblical Studies, 1953).

In his memoir Kressel outlined his views on the aims and purpose of bibliography. He valued of course the kind of specialized bibliography that was cultivated by the JNUL quarterly *Kiryat Sefer*, but he stressed also the value of practical guides to various fields that would meet contemporary needs. He felt that Hebrew bibliography should deal not only with Jewish subject matter but also with general areas of interest. His bibliographies, which were devoted to the Histadrut and its activities, exemplify this approach.

Another field in which Kressel pioneered was indexing, an activity in which he was helped by his wife Isa. Together they prepared indexes for the Histadrut publications *Kuntres* (1946) and *ha-Ahdut* (1961). Their most ambitious project was the index to fifty years of *Hapoel Hatzair* (1968), which not only presented alphabetical listings but also a wide variety of subject headings, thus enhancing its use. Because of the complications in printing this album-sized, double-columned book the volume took some 14 years to set up and print.

Kressel viewed as his most important contribution to the field of bibliography his two-volume *Lexicon ha-Sifrut ha-Ivrit ba-Dorot ha-Aharonim* (Cyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature), published in 1965-1967. This work, which earned for its compiler the prestigious Bialik Prize, represents a remarkable accomplishment, for it covers 3,100 authors beginning with the end of the eighteenth century. Of these, more than 250 entries deal with American Hebrew authors and scholars. Kressel often complained that he had to tackle his project single-handedly, whereas in other countries it would probably have been carried out by a suitable staff of workers and with foundation support. The work is the fruit of more than thirty years of assiduous collecting of books and pamphlets and of newspaper accounts dealing with personalities. In addition, questionnaires were sent to authors in order to augment the available information. The aim of the work is to present basic biographical data about each writer and to list his major works. Whenever warranted, brief bibliographies of further references to books and monographs are provided. Because of its authoritativeness the *Lexicon* became the standard handbook in the field of modern

Hebrew literature. In a number of interviews which Kressel gave over the years he decried the fact that no other literary workers were ready to bring the *Lexicon* up to date. He stated that budgetary constraints had forced him to omit many entries and that he was ready to make his material available to anyone who would undertake the task.

Kressel's name is associated with the bibliographical institute Genazim which he helped found in 1951 under the auspices of the Hebrew Writers' Association in Israel. It was novelist Asher Barash who had urged Kressel and Dov Sadan to set up such a depository where the manuscripts and letters of Hebrew writers could be stored and where a record could be kept of their writings. Kressel served as the first director of Genazim (1951-1960) and helped guide its development. He also edited the first number of the volume *Genazim* (1961), which was devoted to the publication of documentary materials from its holdings, including memoirs and autobiographies, as well as correspondence by a whole series of authors.

An indication of Kressel's lifelong preoccupation with the Hebrew press is his detailed listing of newspapers and periodicals, which he prepared for the index volume of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. The listing records not only the dates and frequency of publication but offers also a brief characterization of each item. Similarly, he contributed an extended survey article on the Hebrew press to vol. 6 of the *Encyclopaedia Hebraica*. Kressel devoted studies to various publications and their editors. He republished *Yehuda vi-Yrushalayim*, the Palestine newspaper edited by Yoel Moshe Salomon, together with an introduction. The writings of Israel Dov Frumkin, editor of *Havazelet*, and of Yehiel Brill, editor of *ha-Levanon*, were also ably edited by him. His summary volume *Toledot ha-Itonut ha-Ivrit be-Eretz Yisrael* (History of the Hebrew Press in Eretz Yisrael) appeared in 1964. His useful *Guide to the Hebrew Press*, published in 1979, is not limited to Palestine and Israel but offers a general introduction as well as information on more than thirty items. It serves also as a lexicon of the Hebrew serials that are available in microfiche.

In his articles and studies Kressel covered a wide range of subjects. He accounted for this spread by stating that he found that many of the areas included in Jewish studies were interlinked. He became a one-man information bureau and received countless queries about literary and Zionist

matters. Among the many fields he dealt with were the history of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement. He devoted monographs to the leading personalities of the Yishuv and Zionism. Moses Hess, David Gordon, editor of *Hamagid*, Zvi Hirsh Kalisher, Yehuda Alkalay, and Yehiel Michel Pines are among the figures he dealt with and whose writings he collected and presented to the reader. He issued the collected writings of Shimon Menahem Lazar, editor of *ha-Mitzpeh*. He also issued the writings of Abraham Moshe Lunz and Nahum Sokolow and provided introductory monographs on them.

Kressel served as the division editor of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* for Zionism and the history of the Yishuv and contributed hundreds of entries not only to this encyclopedia but also to the *Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel* and other reference works. Seldom did he leave an anniversary date unnoticed and among the literary figures to whom he devoted many articles were Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Dov Sadan, Zalman Shazar and Naphtali Herz Imber.

Kressel had fond memories of his early years in Petah Tikvah, and he devoted a monograph and various studies to the history and development of this "Mother of Settlements." On the basis of his research he published the volume *Potehe ha-Tikvah* (Planters of Hope, 1976) in which he traced the early efforts to break away from the *halukah* system that was followed in Jerusalem. He intended to bring his account down to the founding of Petah Tikvah itself but was able to complete only six chapters (1852-1863), in which he described the struggle between the philanthropic and the productivization approaches in the old Yishuv. The volume was brought to the press by the author's widow in 1992.

For the bibliophile and booklover Kressel was sure to provide some choice items. In 1975 the Museum of Printing Art in Safed issued his *Sitrei Sefer ve-Sofer*, whose English title reads "On Hebrew and Jewish Booklore." Readers interested in bibliography will find enlightening Kressel's surveys of pioneering efforts in the field and his essays on leading figures like Steinschneider, Ben Yaakov, Freimann, Yaari and other giants of booklore down to the modern period. Kressel was responsible also for the reissue of rare items, such as Mendelssohn's introduction to the Humash, *Or la-Netiva*, and Ben Ze'ev's introduction to the Bible, *Mavo el Mikra Kodesh*. A more recent work was his new edition of *Sefer Zikaron le-Sofrei Yisrael*,

originally issued in 1889. He republished it with additions in 1980 under the title *Lexicon shel Sofrei Yisrael ba-Meah ha-Kodemet* (Lexicon of Hebrew Writers of the Previous Century). His *Otzar Sifrut ha-Humor, ha-Satira ve-ha-Karikatura* (Treasury of Humor, Satire, and Caricature Publications, 1984) contains a bibliography of the collection of Yaakov Zidkoni of over 700 items of this genre. Included are a selection of facsimiles of rare publications, an introduction by Dov Sadan and two appendices by E.R. Malachi.

One of the last matters that Kressel touched upon in the memoir to his bibliography was the fate of his collection. After completing work on his Lexicon and his many encyclopedia entries he sought to find a suitable place where the collection could be maintained. Kressel's home was in Holon, where I was privileged to see the materials with which he worked. He told me that in order to house his collection he found it necessary to add a second story to his house.

Kressel's collection consisted of an extensive library of thousands of books and pamphlets, a catalog file of bibliographical references, a massive trove of thousands of newspaper clippings dealing with personalities and literary matters. He spent several years in seeking a permanent home for his material, but to no avail. One of his stipulations was that the collection be maintained and augmented. Finally, the Oxford Centre For Postgraduate Hebrew Studies agreed to house the collection on its grounds in Yarnton. A barn was renovated for this purpose and place was made for both the library and the archival materials. The library consisted of 25,000 volumes and the archive comprised about 300,000 newspaper clippings on personalities, Jewish settlements, the State of Israel and the Jewish press. In addition, some 3,000 pamphlets and many letters were included. Both the library and the archive are described in detail in a pamphlet issued by the Oxford Centre in 1981 and reprinted in vol. 40 of the *Jewish Book Annual* under the title "The Kressel Collection." According to prior agreement, Kressel continued for some time to add to the library and to update its archival materials.

It was Dov Sadan who once characterized Kressel as a *maskil rabbim*, as one who brought enlightenment and information to a wide public. His books and bibliographical articles and researches did much to enhance our knowledge of Jewish studies and to keep us abreast of new developments in the field.



ELIEZER REFAEL MALACHI

Eliezer Refael Malachi, our third notable bibliographer, has been ranked by many as the greatest Hebrew bibliographer of recent times. Like Kressel, he enriched both our knowledge of the history of the Yishuv and the Hebrew press. Because of his significant contributions he soon became the acknowledged master in these fields. In quantity alone he was our most productive Hebrew bibliographer. One has only to consult S. Shunami's *Bibliography of Jewish Bibliographies* to see the amazing record he compiled.

Malachi prided himself on the fact that he seldom missed a day of writing, and the number of his articles and studies can be measured in the thousands. While writing mainly in Hebrew, his oeuvre included a wealth of material in Yiddish as well.

I first met Malachi in 1936 at the office of the Histadrut Ivrit, the National Organization For Hebrew Culture, which together with the Hebrew weekly *Hadoar*, was housed in the quarters of the Zionist Organization of America. When the Histadrut Hanoar Haivri, the Hebrew Youth Organization, was organized I became active in its work and often would come to the office on Fridays. A coffee shop was located on the same floor and it was here that members of the *Hadoar* staff and other visiting writers would congregate. Those of us who were interested in Hebrew writing and who contemplated the publication of the magazine *Niv* for young writers often had occasion to benefit from our discussions with Malachi.

While Malachi was a member of the editorial staff of *Hadoar* and served also as its proofreader, he spent most of his time in the libraries of New York. On my visits to the Jewish room of the New York Public Library or the reading room of the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary I would find him poring over books and periodicals. From time to time he would leave to go out for a “smoke” and would then exchange some remarks. Malachi had done much spadework in the field of the American Hebrew press and literature and from time to time he would send me comments and corrections on my work.

When Malachi reached his 80th birthday I published an appreciation of his work in *Hadoar*. That he remained a soft-spoken and unassuming person can be seen from the letter of thanks he sent me. His letter dated 4 Sivan, 5735 (May 14, 1975), reads as follows in translation:

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for your fine article about me in *Hadoar*. An anniversary is an anniversary and I have no choice but to accept your bounty. For myself I don't think my reaching 80 is an historic occasion which has to be marked publicly. It is true that I have made some contributions to Hebrew and Yiddish literature, as you indicated in your article. But in the last analysis I am neither Isaac Hirsch Weiss nor Yehuda Behak and I do not measure up to many who are of lesser importance than them.

Malachi was born in Jerusalem in 1895 and made his debut at the age of 15 as the author of an historical survey of the Palestine press which was published in A.M. Luncz's *Luah Eretz-Yisrael* (Palestine Miscellany). He arrived in America in 1912 and remained in the United States during the war years. He returned to Palestine in 1919 but three years later took up permanent residence in New York. In a sense he may be said never to have left Jerusalem, for his contacts with the leading figures of Jerusalem life remained vivid in his memory. He devoted numerous articles to the institutions and activities of the old Yishuv, which he had come to know first-hand.

Already in 1913 Malachi became a contributor of the newly established monthly *Hatoren* and he revealed his expertise as a bibliographer in his pioneering historical survey of the American Hebrew press, which he traced from its beginnings in the 1870s. When Yitzhak Dov Berkowitz became editor of *Hatoren* he encouraged Malachi and published his well-annotated

bibliography of the writings of Mendele Mokher Sefarim, which remains a model to this day.

Because of his phenomenal memory and his gift of total recall Malachi was able during his career to compile the bibliographies of a whole roster of authors and scholars, including such major figures as Bialik, Tchernichowsky, Dubnow and Sokolow, among many others. He was invited to prepare an extensive Sokolow bibliography that was to comprise 7,000 items, including writings in Hebrew, Yiddish and other languages. The bibliography was intended for a commemorative volume on Sokolow that was being sponsored by the World Zionist Organization. Regrettably, the editor could include only the introductory part. In 1929 Malachi published a plea in *Bitzaron* asking that the bulk of the bibliography be preserved and transferred to Jerusalem together with Sokolow's papers. In compiling his bibliographies Malachi paid special attention to the writings of his fellow American Hebrew writers. Among these were two bibliographies that appeared in book form and were devoted to Chaim Tchernowitz and Hillel Bavli respectively.

Malachi's expertise on the history of the press encompassed journals and newspapers that had appeared in Palestine, Europe and the United States. In many instances he reconstructed historical accounts on the basis of rare publications. We have already referred to his pioneering survey of the Palestine press. He continued to mine it and devoted several articles to *ha-Levanon*, the earliest newspaper, which underwent many changes of venue. *Ha-Levanon* was transferred by its editor to Paris and Mainz and finally found a haven in London. He devoted articles to Yoel Moshe Salomon's contribution to both printing and the periodical *Yehuda vi-Yrushalayim*. A special study dealt with *Havazelet* and its editor Israel Dov Frumkin. The central role of Yehiel Michel Pines in bridging the old and the new was highlighted.

Without reference to the European press Malachi could not have dealt adequately with life in Palestine, which received much coverage there. Among the periodicals he analyzed were *ha-Melitz*, *ha-Zefirah*, and *ha-Yom*, and he pointed out the characteristics of each. He indicated that Alexander Zederbaum, editor of *ha-Melitz*, had introduced the editorial. He marked the centennial of the publication of *ha-Zefirah*, which was edited first by Hayyim Zelig Slonimsky and then by Sokolow. He

wrote a series of articles on editors, including Yehuda Leib Kantor of the daily *ha-Yom*, for whom he had a special regard, and Ahad Ha'am, editor of *ha-Shiloah*. In another series he described a number of “firsts” among the periodicals— the first to deal with satire, linguistics, pedagogy and bibliography.

During his many decades of activity in America, Malachi paid special attention to the American Hebrew press and on a number of occasions offered accounts of its development. He dealt with the first periodical *ha-Zofeh ba-Aretz ha-Hadasha* and devoted a monograph to Aharon Yehuda Leib Horowitz, one of its leading contributors. He followed the work of Wolf Schur, editor of the weekly *ha-Pisgah* and supporter of Hibbat Zion and of Herzl. He presented a portrait of Gerson Rosenzweig, the talented satirist who edited the weekly *ha-Ivri* and the satiric monthly *ha-Devorah*. His greatest contribution was his work for *Hadoar*, where he faithfully published his many studies and researches. He described the singular role of Menahem Ribalow, the weekly's longtime editor, and listed his writings in a special bibliography. The bibliography was appended to Ribalow's last book, *Me'Olam le-Olam* (From World to World, 1955).

Regrettably, most of Malachi's articles remain scattered in periodicals and collective volumes. Malachi himself collected some of his essays on Hebrew authors in a slim volume entitled *Massot u'Reshumot* (Essays and Jottings, 1937). He dealt with modern Hebrew literature from the Haskalah on and explored such themes as the early writings of Bialik and the Hebrew writings of Shalom Aleikhem. Among his other publications was a critical edition of the letters of David Frishman (1927) and *Iggerot Sofrim* (1932), a collection of letters by other writers, accompanied by introductions and notes. He was also the author of a collection of historical sketches entitled *Tsilelei Dorot* (Shadowy Generations, 1940), which drew upon various martyrological chapters in Jewish history. Previously, he had brought together his series of articles published in the Yiddish press in a volume entitled *Mekubolim in Erets Yisroel* (Kabbalists in Palestine, 1929), which dealt with the leading figures in the mystical movement.

Malachi exhibited his versatility in his choice of authors and scholars to whom he devoted bibliographies. He amazed his readers by his ability to prepare bibliographical surveys that covered a variety of

subject matter. In 1955 there was published his *Otzar ha-Lexicographia ha-Ivrit* (Treasury of Hebrew Lexicography), which appeared as an appendix to the American edition of Mandelkorn's Concordance to the Bible. Here he offered detailed descriptions of all the biblical concordances and dictionaries that had been published in Hebrew and other languages. Other examples of his thematic approach are his Hebrew monograph on "The Kishinev Pogroms in the Mirror of Yiddish and Hebrew Poetry," published in vol. 3 of *Al Admat Bessarabia*, ed. G.Kressel, 1964, and his bibliography of "Hebrew Educational Literature in America" (*Jubilee Volume of the Hebrew Teachers Ass'n.*, ed. Zvi Scharfstein, 1944), which covers references from the 1870s down to the early 1940s. An example of a monograph written on the basis of isolated details buried in the press is his "History of the Hebrew Movement in America" (*Hagut Ivrit ba-Amerika*, vol.3, 1974), which traces Hebrew activities from the founding of the first society in 1880 down through the 1890s.

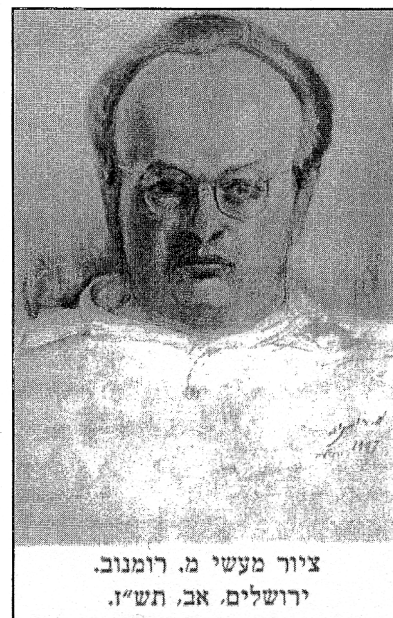
Malachi contributed regularly on Palestine subjects to the yearbooks of the Histadrut B'nei Eretz-Yisrael ba-Amerika, the organization of American Jews of Palestinian origin. In 1950 he edited the organization's volume *Yisrael* in honor of the establishment of the Jewish State. His central role in the area of Palestine research was recognized when the Institute of Zionist Research of Tel-Aviv University saw fit to republish twenty-three of his studies in the volume *Perakim be-Toledot ha-Yishuv ha-Yashan* (Chapters in the History of the Old Yishuv. These studies cover a period of more than a century, from the aliyah in 1810 of the Gaon of Vilna's disciples to the strivings of the new settlement movement.

Following Malachi's death in 1980 his papers, containing his collection of letters and documents, were transferred to the archive of the Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem. Some years ago, I had occasion to examine some of these papers, which were then still in a state of disorganization. I chanced upon the draft of a letter sent in 1949 to Simon Halkin, who had then been appointed Professor of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University. Apparently Halkin had asked Malachi to furnish him with a list of his bibliographies and articles, which he wanted to have for the guidance of his students. Although I had long been aware of Malachi's productivity I was still amazed at what his letter revealed.

In the first part of his letter Malachi listed his bibliographies of individuals beginning with Bialik and including such additional names as A.A. Kabak, A. Zeitlin, S.A. Horodetzky, B.N. Silkiner, S. Maximon, N.Touroff, and J.N. Simchoni. He also made reference to a number of sources on Frishman, whose writings he had dealt with. Another listing of more than 40 articles and studies on Palestine and Zionism included articles on subjects from "Jerusalem Jews Under the Protection of America" to "Napoleon's Zionist Declaration." Most useful is the list Malachi provided of the newspapers and periodicals to which he had contributed up to 1949. They range from the European *ha-Zefirah* to the modern Israeli newspapers *Haaretz* and *Davar* and to many American publications. An additional list of 18 Yiddish publications begins with *Unser Leben*, published in Odessa, and included the New York dailies *Der Tog* and *Der Forverts*.

Among Malachi's papers I found references to many additional Yiddish periodicals and publications in which he was represented. These include such publications as *Zukunft*, *Freie Arbeiter Shtimme*, *Yiddishe Kultur*, *Yivo Bletter*, etc. These sources offer a gold mine of information on such subjects as Judah Leib Gordon as a Yiddish Poet, a Bibliography of the Yiddish Press in Eretz-Yisrael, and the Early Writings of Morris Winchevsky. Finally, there is a brief listing of contributions to periodicals in Russian.

These are but a few examples of the wealth of material that awaits the researcher. It is to be hoped that the Ben Zvi Institute will continue to direct scholars and students to this treasure trove of knowledge and information.



ISAAC RIVKIND

Isaac Rivkind, our fourth bibliographer, had a varied career as a Hebrew-Yiddish author and cultural historian. In his article "Variants in Old Hebrew Books," which he contributed to the *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* in 1950, he described how he came to become the Hebraic librarian of the Jewish Theological Seminary library. When he began to work there in the summer of 1923 he was assigned the task of examining the Hebraica of the Elkan N. Adler collection, which had recently been acquired by the library. At the outset it was his task to determine which rare books were unduplicated. With regard to any duplicates it was necessary to compare the copies for any changes or discrepancies. Rivkind described the thrill of handling these volumes, and how he was intrigued to discover many interesting variants in copies of incunabula and other old books.

Rivkind confessed that he was then still a novice in bibliography but that in the course of his work he acquired the expertise that earned him his reputation. He had begun to publish his unique findings regarding the variants in rare Hebrew books in 1925, two years after becoming a librarian. After twenty-five years of association with Alexander Marx, the head of the Jewish Theological Seminary library, he was led to share his findings about forty additional books.

That Rivkind was able to achieve his position in the world of books is understandable in the light of his rich background. He was born in Lodz in 1895 to a family

steeped in Jewish tradition and learning. He was the product of years of study in the *yeshivot* of Volozhin and Ponevezh. Already in his student years he became an active Zionist and was among the leaders of the Mizrahi youth movement. In 1920 he was sent to America on behalf of the Mizrahi movement.

In a Hebrew essay that Rivkind published on librarianship he underscored the importance of the profession on the Jewish scene. He compared it to teaching. The library was like the school and the librarian was akin to the teacher who transmitted knowledge. Both teaching and librarianship were sacred tasks. In a review of the volume *Studies in Jewish Bibliography in Memory of Abraham Solomon Freidus* (1929), he dwelled further on the subject of librarianship. It was not a matter of talent and expertise alone. It also involved idealism and dedication. To serve others was the true calling of the librarian.

In his own work Rivkind exemplified his ideal of the librarian. He soon became a source for students and scholars who turned to him with their queries. As a student of the Jewish Theological Seminary I would often receive permission to enter the stacks in the old library tower. I recall meeting Rivkind during one of these visits to the stacks. He beckoned to me and said "You see this wall of books. They are all North African prints. Many do not realize how much creativity is represented here." Some years later, when I had begun my research on American Hebrew literature, I consulted Rivkind in his office. He encouraged me in my efforts and made available to me a catalog drawer listing the early American Hebrew prints in the library. On another occasion he made available to me a sheaf of unpublished letters by Hebrew writers, which I used to good advantage. I had still other opportunities to meet Rivkind at the end of the 1940s when I resided in Flatbush. Rivkind was among the leading spirits of the Hebrew speaking minyan that I attended and that met at the Yeshivah of Flatbush. He was a gifted speaker and he often had words of disdain for those in the Jewish community he deemed guilty of sham and fakery.

An indication of the esteem in which Rivkind was held as a librarian-scholar can be had from the volume *Minha le-Yitshaq* (An Offering to Isaac, 1949) which was published by the then existing Jewish Librarians Association in honor of his completion of a quarter century of service

in the Jewish Theological Seminary library. The volume consists of Rivkind's bibliography compiled by Mordecai Kosover and Abraham G. Duker, together with appreciations of his work. We are presented with a detailed listing of Rivkind's writings, arranged by category. The compilers did well to provide, where available, information concerning reviews and reactions to Rivkind's published work. The bibliography covers Rivkind's output through 1949. A supplement which appeared in *Hadoar* in 1965, on the occasion of Rivkind's 70th birthday, updated his publications through that year.

From the arrangement of the bibliography one can see how diverse were Rivkind's interests. It is organized according to the following sections: Cultural History and Folklore; Booklore; Studies in Old Yiddish; Essays and Criticism; Personalities; Eretz Israel; Publicist, Historical and Various Writings; In the Tents of Torah; Holidays and Festivals; and Miscellaneous. A special section lists more than 80 scholarly works in which the authors expressed their appreciation to Rivkind for his guidance and assistance.

As in the case of our other bibliographers we cannot hope to deal with but a few examples of his writing. Some of Rivkind's earliest contributions had to do with the history of Hebrew printing. He continued to publish his findings on variants in old Hebrew books in such journals as *Kiryat Sefer* and *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*. His keen eye enabled him to discover important variations in pagination, decorative title pages, and the like. Rivkind was especially intent upon highlighting the literary accomplishments of Eastern European Jewry. This motivation can be said to account for his lifelong interest in Jewish folklore and the field of Old Yiddish. He was convinced that Old Yiddish texts and philology could be valuable keys to an understanding of the rich cultural life of Eastern European Jewry.

The Bar Mitzvah of his son, coupled with an abiding interest in Jewish cultural history, led Rivkind to deal with the background and beginnings of the time-honored ceremony. The first part of his volume *Le-Ot u'le-Zikkaron* (For a Sign and a Reminder, 1942) consists of seven chapters that are devoted to various aspects of the custom. Rivkind traced its origins to as far back as Geonic times in the eighth century, and reviewed the manner of its observance in various communities the world over. The synagogue ceremony, the Bar Mitzvah speech, and

the festive meal are among the subjects that are authoritatively dealt with. The second part of the volume presents a comprehensive annotated bibliography of 468 items which cover halakhic literature and responsa, speech collections, poetry and *piyyut*, as well as other types of literature.

A fascinating and little-explored area of Jewish life was illuminated by Rivkind in his Yiddish work *Der Kamf Kegn Azartshpiln bay Yidn* (The Fight Versus Gambling Among Jews, 1946). In this work he undertook the ambitious task of producing what he called in his subtitle "A Study of Five Centuries of Yiddish Poetry and Cultural History." He uncovered many games and ditties that had to do with games of chance and revealed that the life of our forebears had also a lighter side. He drew attention as well to the strong words of condemnation regarding the widespread practice of card playing, which are found in the works of *mussar* and ethical admonition.

Rivkind considered his major work to be his lexicological volume *Yidish Gelt in Lebenshteyger Kultur-Geshichte un Folklor* (Jewish Money in Folkways, Cultural History and Folklore, 1939). He offered numerous insights into the ways that money was used to enhance Jewish life and which by inference gave the lie to the charge that Jews were "money mad." Parenthetically, I might add that I wonder whether Rivkind's many years of subsistence on a librarian's salary caused him to concentrate on the subject of money.

In his introductory chapters to the volume Rivkind described how money was used to carry out various religious and cultural functions. Hundreds of detailed alphabetical entries are listed and explicated in order to demonstrate how special terms were created for these functions that embraced the life-cycle and daily regimen of the Jew. The entire gamut of Jewish literature and folklore is explored in order to determine the origin and the popular usage of these terms. Typical entries include *shadkhones gelt* (the matchmaker's fee); *rebbe gelt* (tuition); *dire gelt* (rent); *Khanike gelt* (Hanukkah money gift); and *oysleyz gelt* (ransom). To give but one example of how Rivkind treats such terms let us look at the detailed entry on *shadkhones gelt* to which four double-columned pages are devoted. We find here quotations from the responsa, rabbinic *takkanot* or enactments, and historic sources. Rivkind then goes on to survey modern writings on the subject and draws upon such varied works as Judge Shneur Zalman's Heshin's *Tears and*

Laughter in an Israel Courtroom, Druyanow's collection of humor, the Spivak-Yehoash Yiddish dictionary and others. Among the representatives of Yiddish and Hebrew writing are Israel Ochsensfeld, Eliakum Zunzer, Shalom Aleikhem and Bialik.

Rivkind skillfully showed how material concerns were transformed into spiritual concepts and erected a lexicological memorial to the Jewish way of life as practiced particularly in Eastern Europe. He effectively demonstrated how a Yiddish dictionary based on cultural foundations could be constructed.

Rivkind's extensive use of source materials and documents gave scholarly weight to his studies and articles. Whether he dealt with the history of printing, the variants of rare Hebrew books, or historical

and folklore themes, he produced authoritative work. His 36 years of service as a librarian were distinguished for the example he gave of devotion to and love of the book.

In a moving essay entitled *Dos Geveyn fun Seforim* (The Weeping Books), which he penned in 1956, Rivkind related that on the way to synagogue one Sabbath morning he was shocked to find that a pile of *seforim* had been placed at the curb for removal as trash. Apparently, the family had no longer any use for these sacred volumes that probably belonged to their deceased father. Despite the fact that this sacrilege had occurred on the Sabbath, Rivkind hastened to take the necessary steps to assure that the volumes were saved. Throughout his productive life Rivkind was ever the guardian of the book.

In the introduction to his bibliography of the writings of the historian Saul M. Ginsburg, Rivkind wrote that every bibliography of a scholar is in a certain sense also the biography of that person. One reflects the other. He added further: Every man of the spirit may declare: my work is my life; my life is my work.

The four bibliographers we have discussed eminently qualify to be considered among these men of the spirit. We can do no better than to follow in their footsteps.

Dr. Jacob Kabakoff is the Professor Emeritus of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Lehman College of City University of New York.