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Goldman, Yosef. Hebrew Printing in America, 1735–1926: A History and Annotated Bibliography. Research and editing by Ari Kinsberg. Brooklyn, NY, 2006.

Arthur Kiron

University of Pennsylvania, kiron@pobox.upenn.edu

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Reviewed by Arthur Kiron, University of Pennsylvania Library, Philadelphia, PA

Yosef Goldman's superb revitalization of our knowledge of Hebrew printing in America from colonial times through the period of mass migration effectively challenges the widespread prejudice that the United States, and American Jewish history with it, has amounted to a *treyfene medine*, a wasteland unsuitable for Jewish life. Indeed, this beautifully executed two-volume work is not only a hefty counter-weight to that negative opinion; it also raises the bar of expectations for future bibliographies of Judaica of all kinds. The conception and design of this work effectively centralize in one convenient place, for easy reference and research, all the currently available information about printing in Hebrew letters in one region of the world, and the circulation of these imprints around the globe from 1735 to 1926.

Goldman's *Hebrew Printing in America (HPA)*, undergirded by the research and editing of Ari Kinsberg, presents a fully annotated bibliography, with multiple access points, including biographical information, indexes, and a thorough compilation of secondary sources. Meticulous attention was paid to the formatting—what is called “the anatomy of a record”—and font designs of the catalog entries, as well as to methodological issues of orthography (particularly for identifying unfamiliar place names spelled in Hebrew), typography (e.g., noting the occurrence of Rashi type and pointed [vocalized] texts), and dating (because the Hebrew calendar year starts in the fall of the Christian calendar year and continues into the spring of the next, ambiguity often exists about the precise year of publication) which are specific to Hebrew printing. Of particular value are the notes about each entry's collation, book size, illustrations, and paratexts—what the author terms the “includes” part of the record: “prefatory and supplementary sections such as introductions, copyrights, appendices, footnotes, advertisements, etc.” The tables of abbreviations also reflect the great care and thought that was put into referencing the variety of relevant sources, descriptive terms of the modern book trade, and library holdings of extant copies.

Librarians, bibliophiles, book dealers, and collectors—as well as students and scholars of the topic—will be delighted by the navigational tools built into the design of *HPA*. In addition to the historical introduction and explanatory apparatus of how to use the work in Volume I, the conclusion of Volume II features 13 indexes, *inter alia*: Hebrew and English titles; authors; places of publication; names of publishers; approbations (*haskamot*); names of subscription locales (containing a significant list of Asian [India and China], Australian, Canadian, Caribbean, South American, European, South African, North African and Middle Eastern subscribers, a veritable field of research in itself); typesetters; music arrangers, composers, and transcribers of music; and artists, engravers, and photographers. A sub-indexed list of books containing chronograms (dates formed by the sum of the numerical values belonging to individual letters of the Hebrew alphabet) is an innovative addition to “Index 8: Imprint Year” (see *HPA* II: 1,117).

The second volume concludes with two appendixes, featuring reproductions of relevant manuscripts, including engraved and decorated *ketubot*, financial receipts, an eighteenth-century mohel (circumcision) book, and autograph correspondence of prominent nineteenth and early twentieth-century American Jewish leaders, such as Jacob Mordechai, Mordechai Manuel Noah, Isaac Leeser, Abraham Joseph Ash, and Abraham Yudelowitz. Appendix II provides a selection of photo portraits of early American rabbis “originally found in the collection of Benzion Eisenstadt,” a preacher, publisher of the Hebrew journal *Aspeklariyah*, bio-bibliographer, and author of the photographic treasure, *Otsar temunot gedole Yisra'el* (Brooklyn, 1909) [*HPA* #534; cf. #392]. Notably—and usefully—many of the bibliographical entries are illustrated by reproductions of their title pages and occasionally with the images of selected interior illustrated pages.

The final product, printed on glossy, folio-sized (32 cm.) paper and handsomely bound in gold-embossed, cloth-covered boards, will remain the standard in the field for the foreseeable future. Indeed, it is already accepted and being cited by auction houses, such as Kestenbaum and Co., as an authoritative reference bibliography for their auction catalogs containing American Hebraica.

The contents of the two volumes offer numerous new glimpses into the vibrant character of Hebrew publishing in America. The date of the earliest bibliographical entry is 1735, the year of publication of Judah Monis's Hebrew grammar, printed for use in the instruction of the Holy Tongue at Harvard

College, where Monis, a convert to Christianity, taught. The bibliography concludes in 1926, shortly after the “Golden Door” of immigration is virtually closed, and contains a total of 1,208 entries. Of these, 1,190 are arranged chronologically within seventeen chapters, comprising the following subject headings: Bible; Liturgy; Haggadah; Christian Hebraism; Bible Studies; Reference Works; Bibliography; Education and Pedagogy; Drama, Fiction, Humor, and Poetry; Biography and History; Rabbinica; “Derash” (Sermons); Periodicals; Zionism; Miscellaneous; Christian and Missionary publications; and Americana. Most of the subject chapters are preceded by brief historical introductions (though it is not clear why some are chosen and not others for commentary). Following the subject chapters is chapter eighteen, an “Addenda” featuring eighteen printed items (entries 1,191–1,208). Especially noteworthy among them is entry no. 1,192 [*HPA* II, 1,046–1,048] for the *Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, the pioneering Jewish monthly published in Philadelphia and edited by Isaac Leeser from 1843 to 1869 (the last year of publication, following Leeser’s death in 1868, was edited by Mayer Sulzberger in fulfillment of a pledge to his mentor). Conveniently provided here for the first time is a list of all the “complete Hebrew contributions” published in the *Occident*.

Among the remarkable historical details to be gleaned from *HPA* is the fact that a Lithuanian-born *darshan* (preacher) named Yehezkel Preisser living in New York City in 1909 apparently was the first to initiate, albeit unsuccessfully, the now worldwide Jewish religious custom of *Daf Yomi* (the seven-and-a-half year cycle of reading of the entire Babylonian Talmud undertaken by observant Jews around the world reading a page a day). (The practice took hold after 1923, when Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin introduced the study program at the first great assembly of the orthodox Agudas Yisroel world organization.)

For those unacquainted with Hebrew printing in America, perhaps the most startling discovery to be found in *HPA* is the large number of works of Rabbinica and *Derash*, i.e., forms of Jewish legal, sermonic, and exegetical commentaries generally associated with traditional Ashkenazic literary culture, which were published in the United States and circulated well across the Atlantic to Eastern Europe and the Levant. For the English-only reader in particular, these sections offer a much-needed, valuable entrée.

HPA follows in the footsteps of the pioneering bibliographies of *Judaica Americana* of A.S.W. Rosenbach and Ephraim Deinard, both published in

1926 (the *terminus ad quem* for *HPA*), as well as the recent, magisterial labors of Robert Singerman in his *Judaica Americana*, which covers imprints to the year 1900 (Greenwood Press, 1990; 2 vols.). As the introduction makes clear, one of the innovations of *HPA* is to revise the work of Deinard and extend our knowledge of Hebrew printing beyond 1900 through the period of mass migration. Indeed, the author spent over fifteen years tracking down extant copies to compare, whenever possible, physical editions with the descriptions found in previous bibliographies. The end result is an invaluable corrective, with detailed notes about these discrepancies scattered throughout the two volumes of entries. The decision to arrange the entries in subject chapters enables the reader not only to look up a particular individual item but also to see it in the context of the printing history of its genre as it developed over time.

The tension that exists between the dual purposes of doing history and bibliography occasionally show up in *HPA*. The word “America” in the title of this work, for example, leaves open what is the chronological and geographical scope of the work. In terms of chronology—and assuming “America” refers to the British colonies before the American Revolution (given the inclusion of Monis’s grammar) as well as to the United States after its founding—why does *HPA* commence in 1735, when the first example of Hebrew typography in America, as is noted in the prefatory remarks to Chapter One (“Bibles”, *HPA*, I:1), is the *The Whole Book of Psalms*, the so-called “Bay Psalm Book,” printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1640? The criteria for inclusion in *HPA* are unclear: if it is the occurrence of Hebrew type in a printed work, then how much is needed for inclusion?

In terms of geography, a similar ambiguity implicit in the word “America” exists. For example, the index of places of publications shows that Hebrew works printed in Canada (Montreal and Toronto) are included in *HPA*. There is no reason to question the relevance of their inclusion historically, but bibliographically one might ask if the title then should be “Hebrew Printing in North America”—or for that matter, “Hebrew Printing in the Atlantic World,” given the inclusion of imprints from Kingston, Jamaica, and London, England (not to mention a number of works printed in Breslau, Budapest, Haifa, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Mainz, etc.).

The question, then, is the extent to which the bibliographical scope of *HPA*, both chronologically and geographically, should extend beyond the national boundaries of the United States in order to do justice to the historical relationships created by the transat-

lantic networks of commerce and communication that are fully demonstrated in this bibliography.

A related historical question arises when we consider this claim, made in the introduction (p. xii):

From its inception the Hebrew press in America was markedly different from its European predecessors [because] American publications almost always bore the mark of their environment. . . . These works—many of which were of low literary and intellectual caliber, or were of an ephemeral nature—were infused with much material that reflected the American environment. They teem with locale-specific material in a way that the Jewish press of no other country ever did.

Problematically, the primary example brought to support that claim (Monis's grammar), is invoked because he was a "living author and he published his own work in response to local (non-Jewish) needs at Harvard College." The case could be made that a significant amount of early Hebrew publishing, whether by Christian Hebrew teachers and publishers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (which served their students in the monasteries, seminaries, and at the local universities where they taught) or by Jews themselves in the early modern period (to celebrate, mourn, or remember specific local events, and/or address local needs), reflects similar publishing patterns. Indeed, in the introduction to *HPA*'s chapter on "Derash" (I: 607), the author writes, "No genre of traditional literature mirrors the Jewish people of each generation and locale better than *derash*," referring to "refugees crypto-Jews of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, the Talmudic students of 18th-century Metz, and the devotees of the nineteenth-century Mussar movement." In an "Atlantic" context, is not the need to define and explain "American exceptionalism" with respect to Hebrew printing rendered moot?

The relevant comparison, however, would not be with Hebrew printing before 1735 but with the parallel growth of the Hebrew press in other locales around the world after 1735. Within *HPA* itself are entries that offer evidence contradicting the exceptional character of Hebrew publishing in "America." The Canadian publication of Yudel Rosenberg's *Sefer Mikveh Yehudah* (Toronto, 1918 or 1919) [*HPA* I: 558, #631], which deals with "the construction of a *mikvah* (e.g., in a modern city with electricity and modern plumbing)," clearly occurred beyond the borders of the United States of "America." Speaking from the point of view of genre, how different was

the output of Hebrew—and particularly bilingual—editions of Bibles, Prayer books, Haggadot, Rabbinics, belles-lettres (for example) in other countries (e.g., England, France, Germany, and Italy [before and after unification]) during the same time period, from the national output of Hebrew printing in the United States?

Another tension can be found in the organization of the bibliography. The subject chapters are a boon to the reader searching for historical information about one of the thirteen subjects, yet *HPA* winds up *not* providing a subject index. This means that the chief access points to the "subjects" covered in the bibliography are restricted to those seventeen pre-determined categories of chapter headings. So, for example, there is no straightforward way to research Sephardic works, or Hebrew editions containing specimens of Yiddish or Ladino. To be sure, it is readily understandable why one would want to follow the chronological development of genres such as "Haggadot." And yet, because the bibliography *a priori* is broken up into subject chapters, the reader cannot easily witness the chronological development of Hebrew printing *in toto* within a given year, as one can for example with Singerman's *Judaica Americana*. To do so, one has to refer to Index 8 ("Imprint Year") and then page through the two volumes to compare the disparate entries listed there. The latter difficulty is a minor inconvenience but it does highlight one type of navigational trade-off generated by the current organization of *HPA*. For a future edition, however, one might hope that *HPA* would be expanded to embrace Hebrew publishing around the Atlantic and be supplemented by an analytical subject index.

Other matters to consider for a future edition might be to provide transliterated titles as part of the header of each entry, for the reader who is interested in the history but is unable to read Hebrew. Also, as Goldman notes, "The year appears as it is listed on the title page even when internal evidence suggests a different date" (*HPA* I, xxi: "Imprint Year"). However, it is not clear why, when solid information about the exact date of a work (or a date different from that which is printed on the title page) is available, that information is not provided to the reader. Variant dates could be recorded in parentheses—or better yet, both dates could be accompanied with an explanation, especially given the chronological arrangement within the subject chapters.

These criticisms notwithstanding, *HPA* is a splendid achievement that will transform our understanding of Hebrew publishing in the United States and beyond.

372 ספר התלמיד שנה ראשונה

New York, 5674 [1914]-5678 [1918]

Graphics: illustrations.

Pointed text.

KA #893; Rappel (1993) #336; Rappel (1995) #w82.

Copies: HAR; HUC; *YGC.

PART 1 (2nd ed.)

Author: [Zevi Scharfstein {Sharfstein}] [שארפשטיין] צבי שרפשטיין

Author's father: דוב

124 pp. 8vo

New York, 5678 [1918]

Publisher: Bureau of Jewish Education

Title page (p. 1): plain; "ספר התלמיד שנה ראשונה חלק א (תקופות א-ב)".

Includes: copyright, by publisher, 1918 (p. 2); note to 2nd ed. (p. 3).

Musical arrangements (pp. 63, 122-124).

Ben-Ezra, 29.

PART 2 (3rd ed.)

46 pp. 8vo

New York, 5674 [1914]

Publisher: Bureau of Education of the Jewish Community of New York

Title page (p. 1): plain; "ספר התלמיד שנה ראשונה חלק ב מהדורה שלישית".

Includes: copyright, by publisher, 1914 (p. 2).

Ben-Ezra, 29 (?).

PARTS 3-4

[2], 51-112 pp. 8vo

New York, 5674 [1914]

Publisher: Bureau of Education of the Jewish Community of New York

Title page (p. 1): plain; "ספר התלמיד שנה ראשונה חלק ג-ד".

Includes: copyright, by publisher, 1913 (p. 2).

The second edition of this elementary Hebrew reader, published by the Bureau of Education, was "completely different" from the first. A booklet explaining the underlying pedagogical differences between the editions was sent free of charge to all who requested it (part 1, p. 3). "ספר התלמיד" [was] written by Zevi Scharfstein under [Samson] Benderly's supervision and [was] used in pre-Bible classes. It was based on the central-theme technique, in that it dealt with the life of a New York Jewish family" (Goelman, 81). Some of the illustrations are signed by Sol Aronson (vol. 1), Alfred

Feinberg (vols. 3-4), John Frew (vols. 3-4), Lola [Leon Israel] (vol. 2, p. 19) and H. H. Tooker (vols. 2-4). For an illustration of children playing baseball, the all-American pastime, see vol. 1, part 1, p. 56. Rappel records Scharfstein as the author of all the parts and editions, though *BHBI* and Ben-Ezra do not. For further volumes in this series of Hebrew readers, see #349, #350, #368. For other editions, see *BHBI* and Rappel. *KA* records the imprint date of the third edition of part two as 1917; no such edition is in *BHBI* or Rappel.



Sefer ha-talmid, volume 1. New York: 1914.

(Source: Yosef Goldman, *Hebrew Printing in America, 1735-1926*, entry no. 372.)