



ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

Acronyms in Rabbinic Texts: A Forgotten Episode in Modern Scholarship

Chanan Gafni

The question of whether the sages succeeded in transmitting oral traditions accurately, and what role, if any, they played in shaping these traditions, which are of broad interest to scholars generally, held a special fascination for nineteenth-century scholars. Their heated discussions on the future path of the Halakhah were often inseparable from their examination of its past.

A widely accepted theory, first proposed in the eighteenth century in relation to a *sugya* in *b. Berakhot*, but further developed in nineteenth-century scholarship, attributed the use of acronyms, among other devices, to the *tannaim* and the *amoraim* in their efforts to transmit their teachings. Not only did nineteenth-century scholars identify this phenomenon but, as in many other cases, they also attempted to determine its formation and its potential implications for their day. Some viewed the use of acronyms against the background of the prohibition against recording the Oral Law, placing acronyms among a series of sophisticated mnemonic devices used to preserve the oral tradition. Others emphasized their less positive aspects, highlighting the many corruptions thus caused in the transmission of the Oral Law, and the difficulty later authorities experienced in deciphering their predecessors' intentions. Both viewpoints find backing in the broad spectrum of talmudic literature and appear in varied contexts.

Modern scholarship, with its growing knowledge of ancient manuscripts, has overturned this broad theory and offers alternative explanations also for the passage in *Berakhot*. Nevertheless, even if this theory was mistaken, we cannot overlook the seminal role of nineteenth-century scholars in the development of critical approaches to rabbinic texts.

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**Arabic Writings in Hebrew Manuscripts:
Suhrawardī, Ibn Sinā, and Ibn al-Ṭayyib**

Y. Tzvi Langermann

Many writings in Arabic by non-Jewish authors were transcribed into the Hebrew alphabet. This phenomenon is very instructive with regard to the interests of the Jewish reading public. In not a few cases, the transcription preserves a text, a portion of a text, or a version of a text that is not extant in any other format; thus, the transcriptions are of great importance for the history of literature in general. Moritz Steinschneider blazed the trail in this field of research. In this study we add additional information concerning transcriptions from the writings in science and philosophy of three important medieval thinkers: Suhrawardī, the “father” of the Ishrāqī school of philosophy; Abū ‘Alī Ibn Sinā, who re-set the agenda of philosophy; and Abū-l-Faraj Ibn al-Ṭayyib, an early Christian philosopher and physician.

**The Influence of R. Abraham ibn Daud’s *The Exalted Faith* on
R. Joseph Albo’s *Book of Principles***

Dror Ehrlich

This paper aims to show that R. Abraham ibn Daud’s *The Exalted Faith* had a direct influence on R. Joseph Albo’s *Book of Principles*. There are two known historical facts that place *The Exalted Faith* in Albo’s cultural environment, namely: 1) the appearance of two Hebrew translations of this work in late fourteenth-century Christian Spain; and 2) its influence on the religious philosophy of R. Hasdai Crescas, Albo’s teacher.

The main argument of this study is that not only is it probable that Albo was familiar with Ibn Daud’s thought (due to the aforementioned historical circumstances), but that there is also clear textual evidence of affinity between their treatises. This affinity finds its expression both in similarities between parallel paragraphs, and in the identical use of a number of terms that seem to be unique in medieval Jewish philosophy.

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The Responsa of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg (Lvov Edition)

Simcha Emanuel

This article deals with a collection of Responsa of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg that was published in a fragmented and incomplete manner.

The first part of the article deals with the textual problems of this edition. Part of this collection was published in Lemberg (Lvov) in 1860 by R.N.N Rabinowitz. Another part of the same collection was published by M.A. Bloch in Berlin in 1891, from a parallel manuscript. The collection contains 557 sections, but the manuscript used by Rabinowitz was defective, with 135 sections missing. Rabinowitz totally disregarded another 50 sections, omitted them from his edition, which therefore contains only two-thirds of the original collection.

A part of the manuscript used by Rabinowitz recently reached the HUC library in Cincinnati. However, it is defective in its beginning, its middle, and its ending. Other parts of the same manuscript can probably be found at the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine in Kiev.

The second part of the article presents a revised edition of six Responsa that were published, partially and defectively, by Rabinowitz and Bloch.

**The Jews of the Eastern Mediterranean as Suppliers of Books:
Colophons Found in Thirteenth – Fifteenth-century
Hebrew Manuscripts**

Michael Rigler

This article discusses the production of books (manuscripts) during the Middle Ages on the islands of the eastern basin of the Mediterranean.

Information about the copying of books in this area is based on the colophons of the copyists. From these we learn that Hebrew books were produced not only in the large centers of Jewish population, but even in places where the Jewish population was very small.

The fact that manuscripts originated from these places is an indication of



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the love of books, especially books of philosophy, that were copied by professional copyists as well as by members of the Jewish public who knew how to read and write.

This survey covers the years 1324–1538, the dates of the surviving manuscripts from the islands close to the shores of Greece and Turkey. Although there are over forty populated islands in this area, the manuscripts derive from only seven of them, indicating the existence there of a Jewish community.

The findings documented here are from twenty-nine titles dealing with different aspects of Jewish culture. Some of the manuscripts were copied by Jews who were born in the area (Byzantine script), and some by Jews who migrated there (Sephardic and Italian script).

The locations of the communities, as seen from the place-names, indicate that Jewish communities existed throughout the years on these islands. The colophons thus make an important contribution to the history of the Jewish people in this area during the Middle Ages. In addition, we learn the names of the local copyists and distributors of Jewish books.

The Sermons of R. Ephraim ben Gershon: Sources and Character

Dov Schwartz

R. Ephraim ben Gershon was a mid-fifteenth-century Byzantine philosopher and preacher. The article shows that R. Ephraim copied extensively, word by word, from various books, including philosophical and kabbalistic works, some of which are not even mentioned by their titles. His sermons thus reflect the library of a Byzantine thinker before the Expulsion from Spain.

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**Two Versions of the 1697 Frankfort Edition of the *Shu"t ha-Bach*:
A Product of Prurient Content?**

Dan Rabinowitz

This article explores the history of the two title pages used in the first edition of R. Yoel Sirkes's responsa. In particular, the article examines the theory that one version of the title page was removed due to concerns regarding putatively prurient content. By tracing the history of the title page and other title pages using similar imagery, however, the article questions the thesis that the title pages were altered as a result of such concerns.

**Some Bibliographical Remarks on Undated Ladino Texts Printed in
Jerusalem (1901-1914)**

Ester Lapon-Kandelshein

Throughout the years, bibliographers have documented Ladino texts printed in Eretz-Israel. Different standards, different methods of documentation and different research needs have made bibliographical lists inaccurate or lacking in details. This article describes thirty-two undated Ladino texts, printed between 1901 and 1914. Also presented are seven printed texts announced by the printers, but which were never mentioned by any of the bibliographers.

The attempts to date these materials are based on bibliographic parameters appearing on the title pages, on printers' announcements and on lists of books for sale printed inside the books. Such parameters include: imprint, publisher's name, translator's name, language of origin, books' prices, title pages of other editions, place and date of the first edition as it was printed in the Jerusalem editions, printers' announcements about the next book to appear, business affiliations, etc. These bibliographic details, including even a change in price, can provide a profile for a printed book belonging to a certain period. In addition, there are repeated patterns in imprints that connect books to specific printers in specific periods. Sometimes, when the printer's name was missing, it was possible to connect the book and its printer through the book profile. The lists of books for sale and the printers' announcements helped to map the order in which the books were published.

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**The Book of Visions:
Hillel Zeitlin's Mystical Diary in Light of Unpublished Correspondence**

Jonatan Meir

The first part of Hillel Zeitlin's (1871-1942) mystical diary appeared in print in Warsaw in 1919. Zeitlin continued to write the diary until the European Holocaust, and the manuscript is presumed lost.

In this paper, I will attempt to reconstruct the content of the lost part of the diary on the basis of the manuscript correspondence between Zeitlin and other authors. I will also discuss Zeitlin's unsuccessful attempts to have his diary published. In this discussion, mystical aspects of Zeitlin's work will be revealed.