

## Out of Egypt:

Friedberg Geniza Project  
at Spring Reference Workshop  
by MARION STEIN  
Librarian, Yeshiva Har Torah

On March 9, 2000, at Ramaz Lower School, NYMA members were treated to a special presentation by Rabbi Yaakov Elman of Yeshiva University and coordinator of the Friedberg Geniza Project. Rabbi Elman spoke about the unprecedented work being done by this worldwide group of scholars on the collections of fragments taken from the Cairo Geniza.

### Introduction

The Geniza fragments are distributed among several collections throughout the world. The largest, the Schechter-Taylor collection, is located at Cambridge University, England. The other main repositories are the Elhanan Adler collection at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the Firkovich collection in St. Petersburg, Russia (see article on page 3), the Goitein archives at Princeton University, and the collections at the Jewish National and University Library, in Jerusalem.

The people involved in the Friedberg Project specialize in particular subject matters. The fragments, for example, that contain examples of *piyyut* (liturgy) are being worked on by Ezra Fleischer in Jerusalem at JNUL, the *teshuvot* (responsa) of the Geonic period by a group of scholars in New York. All together twelve teams are working in different areas of Geniza scholarship. Their ultimate goal is the creation of a union catalog of *all* the fragments worldwide which would enable scholars to find scattered pieces of the same manuscript and make better analyses.

Rabbi Elman mentioned a few of these scholars and their specialties:

– Mark Bregman is working on some of the earliest fragments of *Talmud Bavli* dating before the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These include 10 folio pages of *Hullin* (from 20-25). He is also

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## From the President

The 1999-2000 academic year was quite busy and productive for AJL-NYMA. Let me begin by thanking the devoted, hard-working members of the NYMA board. I particularly want to thank Tzivia Atik, a long-term board member, who will be retiring from the board this year. Tzivia has served in many positions, including NYMA President and cataloging workshop coordinator. The entire board will miss her eye to detail and her calm approach.

This year we had two successful conferences and three workshops. The cataloging workshop is described at great length in this issue, as well as the reference workshop on the Friedberg Geniza project, which offered a unique glimpse into the world of Geniza research. Thank you to all our coordinators and our presenters. I also want to thank the hosts of our events: New York Public Library, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Theological Seminary, and Ramaz Lower and Middle School. Without them our events would be without venue.

Lastly, I want to thank our Newsletter editors, Hallie Cantor and Marion Stein. They do a spectacular and time-consuming job in creating this publication.

As summertime approaches, think about ways in which you can participate in NYMA. Perhaps you have an interesting project which you have been working on and would like to share your work with others, or perhaps you would like to join our NYMA board. Perhaps you would like to write an article for the newsletter – a library profile or any other related topic. Please contact us and let us know your interests and your input.

Have a wonderful summer,

Naomi M. Steinberger,  
Chapter President

### **AJL-NYMA needs YOU!**

Wanted: administrative assistant in the New York AJL office. Please refer anyone who might be interested in a 4-8 hr/week part-time job in New York (115 East 26<sup>th</sup> Street) to Elizabeth F. Stabler ([lizastabler@aol.com](mailto:lizastabler@aol.com)) or to Toby Rossner ([tobyross@home.com](mailto:tobyross@home.com)). The job involves answering and forwarding snail mail, e-mail and telephone inquiries, providing stationery to Board and Council members, helping with mailings and most importantly, developing the AJL publicity database. All requests may still be sent to [ajl@jewishbooks.org](mailto:ajl@jewishbooks.org) with a cc to [lizastabler@aol.com](mailto:lizastabler@aol.com).

## Internet Rules! And Hebrew Rules Cataloging Workshop Spells It All Out for You

by Marlene Schiffman and Sharon Hammer  
Technical Services, Gottesman Library, Yeshiva University

Internet. Romanization. Lifelines. When technical and Jewish issues become one, all come together at NYMA's Cataloging Workshop, held February 2, 2000, at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

### Forging the Links

Opening the workshop was George Prager, Head of Cataloging at Brooklyn Law School, whose topic, "Cataloging Internet Resources," reflects the dilemmas faced by many libraries in the digital age. Mr. Prager described how his library became involved with cataloging remotely-accessed electronic resources, and some of the considerations a library or library professional must go through, regardless of the type of library, before deciding to catalog Internet materials.

Mr. Prager cultivated an interest in cataloging Internet resources through his library's voluntary participation in OCLC's Internet Cataloging Project, begun in October 1994. The project's goal was the creation of a searchable database of bibliographic records, containing hotlinks to electronic resources through the use of USMARC field 856. Field 856 identifies the electronic location with the item or the source from which it is available, and contains information needed to access the item. Users of a web-based catalog, or WebPAC, would then be able to click on the link and connect directly to the resource.

By the project's end in late 1996, there were 231 participating libraries and 5000 records in the resulting InterCAT catalog. As of February 2000 this number has grown to a total of 128,911 records containing URLs, with about 5600 records being added per month. As more and more libraries are becoming familiar with the rules of cataloging electronic resources and contributing such records to OCLC's database, copy cataloging is a more likely occurrence, and the quality of the cataloging is steadily improving.

Mr. Prager then displayed Brooklyn Law School's library catalog via their website <http://brkl.brooklaw.edu>. The catalogers at Brooklyn Law do full level cataloging of websites, establish name authorities via NACO, and add their "holdings" to OCLC and the titles to their new books list.

Brooklyn Law also chooses to apply LC call numbers to each of their Internet file records, rather than using the URL itself, or leaving out a number altogether. This is another way of including rather than segregating these records from the remainder of the catalog, allowing for easier browsing and research. Public notes are customized to indicate the existence of a "clickable" URL within the bibliographic records, as well as on the browse screens, to alert users to the source's electronic format.

The library uses Innovative Interfaces' new Millennium catalog, which is a totally web-based, open platform system. Mr. Prager noted that it is an improvement over their original, rushed attempt at creating a webpage, and that it approaches the level of

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### Join Us!

- ☞ *What are the particular issues facing synagogue and center librarians and libraries?*
- ☞ *Which programs work – and which don't?*
- ☞ *What constituencies do you serve?*
- ☞ *How is your library funded?*
- ☞ *Do you have paid staff or volunteers?*
- ☞ *Any "must have" titles you would recommend?*
- ☞ *Are you a Dewey, LC, Weine, or Elazar library?*
- ☞ *Is your library automated?*

Two librarians – Helen Singer, Edward E. Klein Memorial Library at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, and Liza Stabler, Ivan M. Stettenheim Library at Congregation Emanu-El – have been comparing notes. Helen and Liza find that discussing matters with a colleague is wonderfully beneficial because they, like many center and synagogue librarians, work in one-person libraries. They would like to hear from librarians in other center and synagogue libraries, including part-timers, full-timers, volunteers or paid staff. Their goal is a workshop get-together sometime next fall or early winter.

If you are interested in helping or have any suggestions for a workshop topic, please call Liza Stabler at 212-744-1400, ext. 360, or Helen Singer at 212-877-4050, ext. 38.

### EVENTS

*35<sup>th</sup> Annual AJL Convention, Washington D.C.,  
June 18-21, 2000.*

### MAZEL TOV!

*To Micha and Doris Oppenheim on the engagement of  
their daughter Penina to Avi Freud.*

*To Susan and Irving Young on the marriage of their  
daughter Lauren to Eli Bacharach.*

### To an Esteemed Colleague

by Aviva Astrinsky,  
Librarian, YIVO

It is with great sadness that I report the passing away of our esteemed colleague and role model, Dina Abramowicz, just one month before her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Those of us who had the privilege of working with her could not help but feel great affection and admiration for Dina. She was one of those rare people who embodied the essence of reference librarianship – enabling other library patrons find the information that would move their research efforts forward. Participants in the AJL 1998 Convention in Philadelphia will no doubt remember her moving presentation about her experiences in the Vilna Ghetto Library during World War II.

May her memory be for a blessing

## From Russia with Glasnost

### Hebrew Manuscript Collections of St. Petersburg Topic of Stern College Lecture

by Hallie Cantor Acquisitions, Hedi Steinberg Library, Yeshiva University

*Perestroika*. A word meaning openness, freedom. A word affecting many grateful, liberated Jews. Even the libraries have something to rejoice about: the Hebrew manuscript collections of St. Petersburg, for decades sealed off by the communist regime, have once again become available to the public and to scholars.

Dr. Shimon Iakerson, Senior Researcher of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, introduced Western audiences to these collections. The lecture, held February 29, 2000, at Stern College for Women, was hosted by Arthur Hyman, Chairman of Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University, who spoke of the importance of these collections for scholars and researchers of Judaica. Not only do the libraries of St. Petersburg house one of the few major collections of Judaica in the world, but they are unique for their massive amount of Oriental manuscripts which show the Jewish interaction with the Moslem world.

#### Colorful Legacy

Dr. Iakerson, a specialist in Hebrew manuscripts and the history of the Hebrew printed book, began with a brief history of the city's two major libraries. The Russian National Library (including the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences), contains 17,000 Hebrew books, fragments, and documents. The Imperial Public Library, founded in 1775, gained precedence as the cultural center of Russia. Its 11 million books include a substantial collection of Hebrew incunabula and manuscripts. Much of this is the fusion of two private donations of Avraham Ben Schmu'el Firkovich, a figure of equally colorful background.

Born in 1786, into a Karaite sect in Lithuania, Firkovich started out his adult life as a simple laborer. As a Karaite, he was spared much of the rampant persecution toward Jews of Tsarist Russia, including forced conscription and taxation, and was therefore allowed greater freedom to travel. During a trip to Jerusalem in 1822, Firkovich purchased a few manuscripts, which marked the beginning of an obsessive collection of anything in Hebrew letters.

His desire to export holy books from the Holy Land stemmed from the verse "From Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the L-rd from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3), which with Karaite literalness he interpreted as the holy necessity of importing Hebrew books from Palestine. Indeed, much of his life's work was motivated by the urge to further the Karaite cause.

Although the Karaites by the 19<sup>th</sup> century were declining in numbers and influence, their community in Crimea had reached its peak. It was here that Firkovich eventually settled and acquired the title of *chaham gacham*, community leader. His work brought him into contact – and friction – with the local rabbis, who were working out the legal status of Jews and Karaites. Needing literary sources of the Karaite movement on which to base his answers to the Tsarist authorities, Firkovich began an exhaustive search for old manuscripts which took him all over Russia and Asia Minor.

#### Hidden Treasures

An accompanying slide show displayed some of the acquisitions. In 1851 Firkovich sold 50 manuscripts to the Society for Oriental Study, in Odessa, among them a Codex of the Bible, dated 1008-1013 CE – and according to five different systems: the Greek calendar, the end of the Hebrew prophets, the exile of King Joachim, the destruction of the Second Temple, and *hajira*, the Moslem calendar. Other Moslem traditions permeate the works, as

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## IN MEMORIAM

Dina Abramowicz (1909-2000)

by Zachary Baker

With the passing of Dina Abramowicz, who died in New York City on Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, we have lost one of our last vital links to Eastern European Jewish civilization. In her capacity as librarian of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (where she worked for over half a century), Dina would have disapproved being described as a symbol of Eastern European Jewry, though those who came in contact with her often regarded her as such. Symbols tend to be static, and there was nothing static about Dina's probing curiosity or her desire to learn new things, to be *au courant* with current events or the newest books to cross her desk.

Tenacity, energy, strength, and above all dedication – these are the main characteristics that marked Dina Abramowicz's personality. She was dedicated to her work, to her public that she served, to the legacy of Vilna, and to the memory of her father, Hirs Abramowicz. Dina was also blessed with a phenomenal memory, which she was always able to plumb for elusive facts and helpful research strategies. In addition, she was a polyglot, with native or near-native fluency in Russian, Yiddish, and Polish, with a superb knowledge of English (which she learned as an adult).

Dina Abramowicz was a true product of the *Haskalah*, raised in a Russian-speaking home, educated in a Yiddish gymnasium and Polish

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evidenced by the gold and blue Hebrew letters that undulate through the page. The Masoretic text is based on the tradition of Moses ben Asher.

The discrepancies in the dating systems point to  
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## NEED A JOB?

*(The following have been posted on Hasafan. Some have been edited for space.)*

**Torah Academy of Bergen County, a boys' Yeshiva High School in Teaneck, NJ, is looking for a technology coordinator.** This is a full-time position with a competitive salary and lots of room for creativity and independence. Please contact Rabbi Zvi Grumet at 201-837-7676 or at [zgrumet@idt.net](mailto:zgrumet@idt.net).

**Manhattan Day School (Nursery-8) is looking for a librarian beginning September 2000.** Please contact Rabbi Besser, 310 West 75<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, New York, 10023. Telephone: (212) 376-6800, ext. 214.

**A search has begun for a librarian for Stella K. Abraham High School for Girls, Hewlett (Long Island), NY.** This is a part-time position, up to 20 hours per week. Please apply to the principal, Mrs. Helen Spirn, SKA High School, 291 Meadowview Ave., Hewlett, NY 11557. Fax: 516-374-2532. Feel free to call the current librarian with any questions: 516-374-6851, ext. 115, M-Th., in the AM.

**The Midway Jewish Center Library Media Center needs a librarian for September 2000.** They are looking for a creative, motivated professional with a knowledge of Judaica and children's literature. Computer skills necessary. Student/provisional certification OK. Send/fax resume to: Dina Bar Ze'ev Hochbaum, Hebrew School Principal, Midway Jewish Center, 330 South Oyster Bay Road, Syosset, NY, 11791. Phone: 516-938-8390. FAX: 516-938-3906.

**Dynamic Librarian wanted for newly established and growing Jewish library in Riverdale NY (Northern Bronx).** This is a full-time, year-round position requiring an MLS degree, with computer and technical services knowledge in order to maintain and circulate the collection. Most especially necessary is the ability to welcome and work with the public: adults, young adults, and children. Salary commensurate with experience. Benefits. Fax resume: Rabbi Shemtov, 718-549-4397. E-mail: [library@chabadrivdale.org](mailto:library@chabadrivdale.org).

**American Jewish Historical Society seeks a Director of Archives and Library.** Responsibilities: Evaluate, administer, and develop the archival and library collections and services of the Society, which include appraisal and acquisition of materials, arrangement and description, cataloging, reference services and access (including electronic access), public programs, security, and preservation. Organize and allocate the available resources to meet objectives and achieve the goals of the archives and library. Prepare annual reports, direct the preparation of statistical compilations, and prepare budgets for archives and library activities. Assist other Society staff in the creation of exhibits, publications, educational and outreach programs as well as fund raising and grant proposals. Work with scholars and academicians to expand the reach of the Society and fulfill its collecting and research missions. Qualifications: Enthusiastic, experienced, innovative and proactive

archivist or individual with experience as director of special collections. Ph.D. preferred; MLA or equivalent required. Minimum of five years work experience with an archival or manuscript repository or other historical organization or program is required, as well as two years of administrative or supervisory experience. Extensive experience working with personal papers of significant individuals and large, complex organizational collections. Knowledge of current issues and trends in technical services management and library technology. Knowledge of United States history, Jewish history, Hebrew, and Yiddish desirable but not required. Please send resume and salary requirements to: A & L Search Committee, American Jewish Historical Society, 15 West 16th Street, Fifth Floor, New York NY 10011. Or e-mail same to [mfeldberg@ajhs.cjh.org](mailto:mfeldberg@ajhs.cjh.org). No phone calls, please.

**The Library of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research seeks a Reference Librarian to assist the public in its new Reading Room,** located at the Center for Jewish History. The Reference Librarian reports to the Public Services Librarian and provides reference assistance in person, by phone or in written form, using a wide array of print and electronic resources; participates in the reference desk rotation; provides basic instruction on the use of YIVO's paper and electronic resources; prepares research guides and shares in other library activities as needed. Experience in Web page creation and maintenance is a plus. Success in this position requires knowledge of Yiddish, a strong service orientation, creative approach to locating and obtaining hard to find materials; excellent analytical skills, and the ability to work cooperatively with others. Salary commensurate with experience and qualifications. Application review will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Required: M.L.S. degree from ALA accredited library school; knowledge of Yiddish and/or Hebrew; background in Judaic studies; excellent communications skills. Preferred: 1-2 years Judaica library experience; supervisory experience; knowledge of RLIN or OCLC; knowledge of Jewish genealogy resources. Send resume and the names of three references to: Aviva Astrinsky, Head Librarian, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research 15 West 16th Street, New York NY 10011. These materials may also be sent via e-mail to [avastrinsky@yivo.cjh.org](mailto:avastrinsky@yivo.cjh.org).

**Technical & Electronic Services Librarian, fulltime, at Touro College,** 27-33 West 23<sup>rd</sup> St., New York, NY 10010.

Responsibilities: Copy & modified copy cataloging of new print & nonprint materials using OCLC. Retrospective conversion of print collections. Edit OPAC records. Evaluate options for providing information resources. Test electronic products. Enhance the Libraries' website. Serve as liaison with vendors & the College's computing departments. Qualifications: An MLS from an ALA-accredited program. Experience with OCLC, Windows, HTML, and spreadsheet applications highly desirable. Knowledge of Hebrew & Judaica, supervisory experience, desirable. Contact: Evelyn W. Behar, MLS, ACLIS, Coordinator, Technical & Electronic Services. Fax: 212-627-9144. E-mail: [evelynb@touro.edu](mailto:evelynb@touro.edu). Or mail to address above. No phone calls, please.

*(Egypt, cont'd)*

working on *Avot de Rabbi Natan*, using these manuscripts which predate the Codex.

- Ezra Fleischer at JNUL is working on 50,000 fragments of *piyyut*. He expects to publish these within the next two years.
- Shamma Friedman is working on the linguistic aspects of the *Hullin* materials.
- Menachem Kahana, the *midrash* specialist at Hebrew University, is working on *halachic* manuscripts.
- Meira Poliack, a world class expert on Judeo-Arabic, is working on Judeo-Arabic commentaries on the *Tanach* and on Rabbenu Hanano's commentary on *Nashim*, soon to be published.
- Stefan Reif, of Cambridge University, on preservation and cataloging. Unfortunately, there simply aren't enough people to work on some of these projects.

**Digitizing Demos**

After the overview of the Geniza contents, Rabbi Elman gave a demonstration of the VTLS proposal for digitizing fragments. After observing a sample document fragment in its archival form, we were shown the fragment in full color with its holes and washed-out ink sections, followed by the enhancement capabilities of the program (a feature of Adobe Photo Shop) being used. Remarkably, the faded sections could be filled in in order to allow easier reading. This, of course in no way affects the original digitized version. Rather, it is meant to be used simply as a study aid. When questioned about the availability of these digitized manuscripts online, Dr. Elman answered that all manuscripts that are put up on the Web are corrupted in some way to prevent the production of unauthorized copies.

Interestingly, the quantities of fragments on various subjects are not what any of us might have expected. There are many more fragments of the *Rif* (Rabbi Itzhak ben Jacob Alfasi) than there are of the *Gemarah*. But from the examples mentioned, there is apparently a vast quantity of material on a wealth of different subjects.

The window which this store of knowledge opens on our cultural and religious past has created an explosion of research. As the materials become more accessible through the Friedberg Geniza Project, we will all benefit through the many discoveries. ✧

**Help Needed! 1889 NY Immigrant Index**

Volunteers are being sought to help create the index of 1889 New York immigrants from Austria, Poland, and Galicia. No special training is needed. It would involve looking through microfilms of ship's records for that year, listing people with those citizenships, and mailing (or e-mailing) your list for inclusion in the total list.

You would be added to an important and permanent index for everyone's free search capabilities. To get an idea of what the final product will look like, you can examine the corresponding index for 1890 at <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/1890ny.htm>.

Access to the 1889 microfilms of ship's records are available at the NYC National Archives brands several large public libraries (i.e. NYC; Jamaica, NY), and through any of the almost 4000 local LDS Family History Centers throughout the U.S. and around the world.

Anyone interested should contact Howard Relles: [rellesh@nycap.rr.com](mailto:rellesh@nycap.rr.com).

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*Committee chairs are not elected officers. We welcome volunteers for committees. Please contact committee chairs.*

*(Cataloging, cont'd)*

functionality of a standard text-based catalog. Using some OCLC records as a guide, Mr. Prager reviewed the MARC fields that are affected or added when cataloging electronic resources, particularly field 856 with all its subfields. He discussed guidelines for coding code "m" in Leader/06 (Type of record), approved by MARBI and the Library of Congress in 1997 (see proposal at <http://lcweb.loc.gov/marc/marbi/1997/97-03R.html>). Mr. Prager stressed that catalogers need to be involved not just in the nitty-gritty of cataloging but also in collection development of pertinent websites. Initially subject specialists or professors may need some encouragement to volunteer sites for inclusion. Should the site be cataloged in its entirety, or should only a subset be treated? Which webpage offers the best approach to the material?

The decisions can be complicated. Time must be spent reviewing the sites, a factor which can play a part in a library's decision to catalog Internet resources.

Mr. Prager's thorough presentation, however, argues strongly that Internet resources are certainly worth the cataloging trouble they might cause. He ended his lecture with a display of his library's interface and some of the records he has created for websites, pointing out the pertinent MARC fields and recent changes to AACR2 concerning computer files.

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(Cataloging, cont'd)

“Ch” or “H”?

Hebrew-to-English dominated the subject for the following two lectures. In "*Ekh kotvim et Zeh Be-Otiyot Latiniyot: or, How in the World Do We Express Hebrew with English Letters?*," Joyce Levine – Director, Nathan Liebman Memorial Library, Hebrew Academy of Nassau County – discussed the exasperating choices facing Judaica catalogers.

This new school library at HANC started last year is using the Follett system for their automation. Ms. Levine cited the Princeton University website as a good source for an aid to romanization (tables for consonants and vowels). Most transliteration seems logical, that is, the letters used express the sound. Like most school libraries, the HANC Library has no Hebrew capability on its system. As a rule, transliteration follows the rules of orthography rather than pronunciation. For example, *ayin* and *alef* are represented differently even though many people pronounce them the same. The primary authorities for headings and spellings are *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and *Even Shoshan*.

How do we make the catalog accessible to students when some things are counterintuitive to the user? A short survey in the library shows that most people would look up *Humash* as *Chumash*. No inferior dot is one of the biggest problems. So *ch* comes out as just an *h*. Other examples: *Mikhtav me-Eliyahu*. No one thinks it has a *k* in it. *Shema*, because initial *sheva* is transcribed as *e*, yet most people look it up as *shma*. *Yud* is a big problem. When followed by a vowel, it is romanized as *y* but otherwise it is not written as one. New York as *Nyu-York* seems strange for most people.

What to recommend? Basically, a lot of allowances for people who don't know the rules. As it says in *Hebraica Cataloging*, "Aid the user who may not be not entirely familiar with ALA-LC Hebraica romanization." Bend a little and be a little pragmatic, Ms. Levine urged – give a lot of hints to help people find the book. Students would look up *brakhot* instead of *benedictions*, *Gra* instead of *Elijah ben Solomon*. Because no place else has an authority file that is accessible online, HANC is creating one that will give all cross references and misspellings to facilitate searches. Students, for instance, would look up *Ramchal* instead of *Ramhal*, *Abrabanel* instead of *Abarbanel*.

Without special characters, importing a record results in representing the inferior dot under the *k* as a blotch. Can we incorporate the special diacritics that we need? Perhaps, Ms. Levine suggested, enough people can urge Lingua Software and Follett to make such changes.

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(Abramowicz, cont'd)

university. Her chosen profession, that of librarian, provided the ideal outlet for the development of her intellectual interests and her desire to educate the public.

She endured the traumas of Nazi occupation, and for a time was protected from the fate suffered by tens of thousands of Vilna Jews in 1941 by serving as a staff member of the Vilna Ghetto Library (which was led by Herman Kruk). She found refuge with Jewish partisans in

the forests surrounding Vilna, and that enabled her to survive until liberation by the Soviet army, in 1944.

In 1946 Dina was reunited with her father, an educator and journalist who was visiting the United States when war broke out in 1939. Her association with YIVO began in 1947, and continued until the very end. (One of her YIVO Library volunteers, Elaine Adamenko, was with her when she died). During the decades that she worked at YIVO she oversaw the acquisition and absorption of major collections (including pre-war holdings from Vilna that were restored to YIVO shortly after World War II), participated in ambitious Holocaust documentation projects, assisted thousands of readers (in person, by phone, fax and mail), compiled bibliographies, and published numerous articles in scholarly and more general-interest journals.

Dina Abramowicz was not one to call attention to her achievements. Once, when the idea of a *festschrift* was broached, she strongly objected of the implication (in her mind) that its publication might signify that she had reached the end of her productive life. The premise of her protest indicated a fierce pride in her work, combined with a strong sense of personal privacy and a determination not to permit her name to become grist for anyone's mill (including her own). In later years she began to open up a bit, and both spoke and wrote about her experiences before and during World War II, most memorably at the 1998 convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries, in Philadelphia. Her lecture about the Vilna Ghetto library, "Guardians of a Tragic Heritage: Reminiscences and Observations of an Eyewitness," was published in the Association's proceedings and also issued as a separate publication by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

By and large, though, in her autobiographical writing Dina elected to focus on others rather than on herself. This was reflected in her touching memoir, "The World of My Parents," published in vol. 23 of the *YIVO Annual* (1996), and above all in the English translation of her father's book *Portraits of a Vanished World* (originally published in Yiddish as *Farshvundene Geshtaltn*), which was published in 1999 by Wayne State University Press. In her later years, all of her energies were concentrated on getting that literary monument to her father's memory published, and she was profoundly grateful when it finally did come out.

If Dina's home was YIVO, she was also involved in other activities. She belonged to a Workmen's Circle branch, and participated in the deliberations of that unique hometown organization, Nusakh Vilne. During the years when YIVO was still located on Fifth Avenue she could often be spotted walking across Central Park, on her way home or to work. In short, she had become a genuine New Yorker.

We will all miss her.

*Zachary Baker is the Reinhard Family Curator of Judaica and Hebraica Collections, Humanities and Area Studies Resource Group, Stanford University Libraries, Green Library 321B. The above originally appeared in Hasafran.*

*(Cataloging, cont'd)*

BookWhere-imported records (from many university libraries) display differently in the OPAC. They don't have the blotches, but instead an extra line before the *h* for the inferior dot. One of the problems in searching in BookWhere, especially older books, is that the romanization rules have changed many times. According to *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, we do not follow the rule of romanization that we have now. *Vav* is a *w*, so think of this when searching older records.

Ms. Levine concluded with this piece of advice: For the librarian, finding the records is important. Equally important is making them accessible for the students, many of whom don't even know how to spell in English, let alone in Hebrew. Rule of thumb: remain flexible and try to figure out what the students will be looking for and anticipate their needs.

**Do as the Romanizers Do?**

In the final lecture "*Ivri, Ketov Ivrit!* How to Write Hebrew Words Without Hebrew Letters," Rabbi Clifford B. Miller – Cataloger, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, put an amusing twist on the problem above and helped take some of the pain out of Judaica cataloging.

"Who wants to be a romanizer?" he asked. "At least we always have more time to press the buttons than on TV.

"We can also use lifelines," he continued, "calling friends in the office or e-mail." Rabbi Miller's bibliography handout mentions these other reference "lifelines." People who love Hebrew tend to hate romanization, he explained. Rightly so, perhaps. However, most libraries cannot display searches in Hebrew, so if we want these books to be available, like it or not, we have to romanize.

If you the librarian are lucky enough to figure out the romanization, he explained, it depends on what questions you get. Take the word *Tu bi-Shevat* (*b'Shevat, be-Shevat?*). To elaborate on Ms. Levine's remark, the system of transliteration we use changed in 1948, and the 1960's and 1970's. *Bar Mitzvah, Bava Me'zia* (from the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*) and remainders of German scholarship (*Muk.zeh* – uniform title or subject heading) may use forms with *.z* although they are not the modern standard romanization. Rabbi Miller mentioned other problems: *Midrash Aseret hadibrot* or *dibberot?* *Sfardi, Sefardi, Sephardi, Sefardi?* All are correct, technically. But in romanizing there is only one way to do it: don't forget the *e* for the *sheva*.

Another problem: Hebrew abbreviations. Is it *Yad HaHazakah* or the 14 volumes of Maimonides' code? What about *Or le-Yad* or *Or le-arba esre*? Finally, *Ko'a.h BY"D* – is it *Ko'a.h Be[t] D[in]* or *Ko'a.h ba-Yad*?

Diphthongs (i.e., *ei*) – are not correct in romanization because one Hebrew vowel should ideally be represented by

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Comments? Ideas? Suggestions?  
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**Sylvia Avner, A"H**

by Steven Siegel

Library Director, 92<sup>nd</sup> Street YM-YWHA

With sadness I report the passing of Sylvia Avner on April 6, 2000, in New York City, at the age of 71, after a long, well-fought battle against cancer.

Sylvia was a devoted member of AJL and of NYMA, the NYC chapter. For ten years, until her retirement of 1993, she was Librarian at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street YM-YWHA in Manhattan. Subsequently she became a dedicated volunteer at the Y and frequently attended concerts and lectures there.

Sylvia touched the lives of so many people, both in the Jewish library field and in the numerous circles in which she lived, worked, played and traveled. She was a friend and valued confidante to those who knew her, and she will be missed very much.

She is survived by three children: Phil Avner, Ken Avner, and Annette Feldman; by Phil's wife Elaine and their two sons; and by Annette's husband Richard and their two daughters and a son.

May her memory be for a blessing.

*(Manuscripts, cont'd)*

possible tamperings in some of manuscripts, for which Firkovich himself may have been responsible – changing names or dates to make them appear of Karaite origin in order to "prove" his people's roots. Dr. Iakerson pointed out some of the forgeries, detectible through ultraviolet light. Firkovich, in fact, had written a book of his own: *Avnei Zikaron*, in which he describes his discovery of Karaite tombstones. An engraving shows him seated on a throne, bearing a staff and wearing the miter and robe of a Karaite leader.

By the time of his death in 1874, Firkovich had sold a collection of 700 manuscripts to the Imperial Library. His second collection, of 10,000 Jewish and Arabian manuscripts, was acquired by the Imperial Library two years later. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Library intensified its own collections development, obtaining manuscripts from the Russian Archbishop in the Holy Land, who had an active interest in Oriental literature and archaeology. Over 1,000 Cairo Geniza fragments were donated as well.

The Institute of Oriental Studies, the second depository, also houses the Imperial Asiatic Museum. The Hebrew collection, which contains 1,200 manuscripts, traces its beginnings to a private donor, Moshe Friedland (1826-1899), who spent his time trying to synthesize Orthodoxy with the *Haskalah* movement. In 1892 he contributed some 300 manuscripts to the library. In 1910 famed Orientalist Daniel Borsin donated dozens of manuscripts, including an Italian *siddur*, 14th-17th century European incunabula – all in excellent condition – and a Lisbon manuscript, dated 1491, showing Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and other biblical books.

Somehow these collections, which survived centuries of warfare, pilferage, and neglect, outlived the Bolsheviks as well. After the Revolution the library and its museums, were closed, and the manuscripts languished. Thanks to Dr. Iakerson, and the Russian government, they are once again in the forefront. A large chunk of printed Jewish history is being rediscovered and, slowly but lovingly, restored. ☆

*(Cataloging, cont'd)*

one English vowel. But in the case of *Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer*, you can use it because that is a uniform title or a standardized subject heading.

Learn all the rules of romanization, Rabbi Miller exhorted, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it will help you! Knowing Hebrew grammar is a plus, and it is extremely valuable if you are an Israeli or have lived in Israel. Yet knowing Hebrew grammar might even ruin your romanization.

Rules for the prefixes *bet*, *kaf*, *lamed*, *mem*, *shin*, different meanings of *heh* and *vav*, etc. often give trouble.

Quoting Professor Schmelzer, Rabbi Miller explained that when studying *piyut*, "look up every phrase that comes from the Bible." How do you know it comes from the Bible?

Examples that have been romanized different ways include: *Gal enei* (Psalms), *ha-ven yakir li Efrayim* (Jeremiah), *atah vehartanu* (*Siddur*), *Hasde H.*, etc. But will readers recognize *H*? You can use as an alternative title: *Hasde Ha-shem*. These could have been easily resolved since they are biblical phrases. The question is harder for liturgy, where there is no single, unified text for the *siddur*, *Haggadah*, or *mahzor*.

In addition, there is a difference between the pronunciation of Ashkenazim and Sephardim. With *ha-yom* and *ha-lailah*, is the *heh* a separable prefix? The Library of Congress decided to separate the prefix. What about *likrat* or *li-kerat*? Again, the Library of Congress uses *likrat*.

Under a terminal *het--ayin*, *het*, and *heh*, LC romanization writes the letter first, then the vowel. Rules are different for foreign words. *Admor* or *admur*? The Library of Congress uses *Admur*. There are problems created by the evolution of language: *historyah* or *historiyah*. And, Yiddish vs. Hebrew romanization: *Tsien* instead of *Tsiyon*; *Yisroel* instead of *Yisra'el*. Geographical and personal names pose problems: *Amshterdam* or *Amsterdam*? *Presburg* or *Preshburg*? "Check for a precedent," advised Rabbi Miller, "look it up. You can never really know, because no one knows everything!"

The lecture was accompanied by a Bibliography for Catalogers, including websites, dictionaries, geographical gazetteers, and romanization rules for prefixes and *kamatz-katan*.

"And that's all there is to it." Thus spoke Rabbi Miller, ending his lecture and a highly informative workshop. ☆

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