

Book Reviews

These Are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics, vol. 3, ed. by Aaron Demsky, Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002, 154 pp. English + 170 pp. Hebrew, \$25.00, ISBN 965-226-246-3

If John Stuart Mill intended to end the age-old controversy over the philosophical and linguistic status of proper names when he affirmed authoritatively that names are but meaningless marks,¹ he failed utterly. Names – given, taken, and forsaken – have always played a primary role in all cultures and literatures, and hold an irresistible fascination for scholars in a wide range of fields.

Of course, Mill's statement was confined to the putative connection between name and bearer, which he held to be wholly arbitrary, at least in modern times, so that nothing can be inferred from a name as to the bearer's nature or attributes, the etymological derivation of the name notwithstanding. The contrary popular belief is succinctly expressed as *nomen est omen*, or the Hebrew *ki-shmo ken hu'*, applied to the "churlish and evil", inhospitable Naval, in 1 Sam 25:25: *ki naval shmo u-nevala imo* – "for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him." The King James (non)translation of the play on the root *n-v-l*, ("villainy, abomination"), begs the perennial question of the translation of literary proper names, my own area of interest. In their historical and cultural milieus, rather than in isolation, names serve not only to identify or to describe an individual or place, but to contextualize and even assert control over them. Moreover, onomastics, the study of proper names, is not confined to the name-bearer relationship, but elicits invaluable social, economic, and political information about an individual or entire community from the morphological, phonological and semantic features of names.

The present volume in the series² comprises 17 contributions³ reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. Essays dealing with aspects of Jewish onomastics in antiquity undermine the view that Jewish names are conclusive evidence of the Jewishness of an inscription. Thus, Tal Ilan shows in her "Yohana bar Makoutha and Other Pagans Bearing Jewish Names" (English) that pagans bore Jewish theophoric names in the Roman period. Conversely, Emmanuel Friedheim shows that Jews bore polytheistic names in his "The

¹ See his *A System of Logic ratiocinative and inductive*, London 1884, book I, ch. 2.

² Vol. 1 was published in 1997, vol. 2 in 1999 and vol. 4 in 2003.

³ Seven in the English section, ten in the Hebrew section, with abstracts in the other language, and indices in the Hebrew, Latin, and Greek alphabets of the names appearing in the volume; four articles – Bornstein-Makovetsky, Spitzer, Gaimani and Demsky – have additional lists of names that are not indexed.

Names ‘Gad,’ ‘Gada’ and ‘Gadya’ Among Palestinian and Babylonian Sages, and the Rabbinic Struggle Against Pagan Influences” (Hebrew). Even the rabbinic patriarchate adopted a Roman name for propagandistic reasons, to hint at their ties with the Julii, as shown in Ephrat Habas-Rubin’s “Joul(l)us – a Jewish Name in Late Antiquity” (English). The inscribed ostraca and storage jars found at Masada yielded some 380 personal or family names as well as nicknames, several of them unique to the site, providing a valuable source of information on Jewish life and society, studied by Rachel Hachlili in “Names and Nicknames at Masada” (English).

Yoel Elitzur’s “*Talmi – Talim – Talmayim?*” (Hebrew) analyzes the sophisticated Hebrew “literary sobriquet” *Talmi* designating Ptolemy II Philadelphus in rabbinic sources as the conflation of a biblical name with a phonetic similarity to the first element, and a word deriving from the Akkadian for “most beloved brother” with a semantic resemblance to the second element. David Lifshiz discusses the literary function of Talmudic word plays in “Humorous Names and Nicknames in the Talmud” (Hebrew), and concludes that the rabbis were more derisive in their puns on men’s names than on women’s. Three articles discuss toponyms: Aaron Demsky proposes a phonetic – rather than morphological – explanation for the so-called dual form of biblical place-names, in “Hebrew Names in the Dual Form and the Toponym *Yerushalayim*” (English), two other occurrences being “*Mizrayim*” (Egypt) and “*Efrayim*”. Estée Dvorjetski’s “The Names of Kefar Agon (Umm Jūni) and their Geographical-Historical Significance” (Hebrew) derives the name of the village from the Greek term for the competitive water sports held nearby in the Roman-Hellenistic period; and Yuval Shahar re-opens the debate over the present-day identification of a unique place-name in Josephus in “Mount Asamon – Har Iesemon – Jebel Tur’an” (Hebrew).

Another category of studies focuses on naming traditions of particular Jewish communities: Aaron Gaimani’s “Family Names and Appellations among Yemenite Jews” (English) surveys the community’s names, extending from those reflecting ancient offices and tribes, through medieval family names deriving from places, professions, and attributes, to modern last names assigned by Israeli officials to new immigrants. Although, as one such official observes, “when those waiting were called by their family names, which were new to some of them, considerable disorder ensued”. (p. 26) Leah Borstein-Makovetsky’s “Jewish First Names in Smyrna in the 18th and 19th Centuries: A Study Based on the Bills of Divorce and the Community Gravestones” (Hebrew) traces French, Italian, Spanish, and Romaniot ethnic influences on the community; Chana Tolmas’ “Name-change Patterns of Bukharan Jews: 1940s to Present Day” (Hebrew) reveals a tendency to abandon Hebrew names in favor of

Russian names, a trend that reversed itself with the waves of mass immigration to Israel. Shlomo Spitzer's "The *Shemot Gittin* literature as a Source for the Research of Jewish Names" (Hebrew) also draws on bills of divorce, as well as on the accompanying registers of Jewish names. The validity of the divorce depended on the correct spelling of the names and nicknames of the parties, so registers were compiled listing variant spellings. Precisely the same problem is being tackled today with the aid of computers, as Marlene Schiffman explains in "The Role of the Library of Congress in the Establishment of English Names for Authors of Hebrew and Yiddish Works" (English), describing the Library's valiant attempts to standardize the 28 variants of the name of Sa'adya Gaon (spelling used here is that of the present volume), not to mention the unfortunate "Wispish" for "Vaysfish". This brings to mind the English-language Israeli newspaper that gave the name of the bride in a marriage announcement as Miss Behirat Lebow (mistaking the Hebrew for "his fiancée"). If transcribing names presents such a complex problem, their translation seems hopeless: Yosef Tobi, in "Translation of Personal Names in Medieval Judeo-Arabic Bible Translation" (Hebrew), focuses on one aspect of the surprising discovery made by Genizah scholars: namely that an anonymous translation of the Bible into Arabic pre-dates that of Sa'adya Gaon; the earlier translator followed a completely different approach in the translation of names, opting for Arabic equivalents throughout, rather than transcribing, or giving semantic translations.

The editor notes that this volume introduces a new area of onomastic research to the series: the religious significance of names in Jewish ritual and halakhic law. David Golinkin's "The Use of the Matronymic in Prayers for the Sick" (English) tracks the origins of the practice, which departs from the Biblical genealogies that follow the father's line, and from the use of the patronymic in the blessing for being called to the Torah, to the talmudic assertion that women practiced sorcery and witchcraft more than men. The matronymic was used among ancient peoples in curse tablets, spells, and incantations, and among Jews in spells and amulets, and was transferred from magical applications to prayer.

In fact, this volume marks the inclusion of yet another area of onomastic study in the series. Novelist Aharon Megged's paper "Names with Meaning" (Hebrew) is, as the editor describes, "a glimpse of how an author creates names for his fictional characters", but it is more than that. Literary onomastics is a well-developed area of scholarly research, and in the Hebrew literary tradition, a natural extension of the metalinguistic exploitation of morphological and semantic features of names, from biblical narratorial comments on the aptness of a personal or place name, to the rabbinic technique of *midreshbey shemot* – word play on names. Investigating literary onomastic webs can provide a key to

the interpretation of an author's poetics or ideology. It is my hope that this area will be expanded in forthcoming volumes of the series.

The diverse topics included in this anthology all hinge on the paradox of proper names: they are revealing, the first essential information we need about a person or place to give them a national or cultural identity. Yet at the same time they are elusive, as often as not evincing foreign cultural influences on a given community – in short, an enigma requiring interpretation.

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The Great Parchment: Flavius Mithridates' Latin Translation, the Hebrew Text, and an English Version, edited by Giulio Busi with Simonetta M. Bondoni and Saverio Campanini, Torino: Nino Aragno Editore, 2004, [The Kabbalistic Library of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola 1], 272 Seiten, €50.–, ISBN 88-8419-189-0

Mit der Edition eines in Vergessenheit geratenen kabbalistischen Werkes aus der Bibliothek des Grafen Giovanni Pico della Mirandola beginnt unter der Leitung von Giulio Busi ein ehrgeiziges Gemeinschaftsprojekt zwischen dem Institut für Judaistik in Berlin und dem Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento in Florenz. Ziel ist die weitgehende Erschließung der zahlreichen lateinischen Übersetzungen, die der jüdische Konvertit Raimundo Moncada alias Flavius Mithridates in Picos Auftrag anfertigte, nachdem dieser 1486 mit dem Studium des Hebräischen und der kabbalistischen Literatur begonnen hatte. Mit einem Umfang von etwa 1500 Folioseiten gilt dieses Übersetzungswerk als bedeutendstes seiner Art, dessen Einfluß auf die Entwicklung der christlichen Kabbala kaum überschätzt werden kann. Ähnlich wie die Wiederentdeckung des *Corpus Hermeticum* prägten auch die übersetzten hebräischen Quellen die Gedankenwelt der Renaissance entscheidend mit. Der philologische Zugang des Projektes soll allerdings nicht auf die Übersetzungen allein beschränkt bleiben, sondern, soweit möglich, auch die Identifikation der von Mithridates herangezogenen hebräischen Handschriften und ihre editorische Bearbeitung ermöglichen. Damit kann ein präziseres Bild der Textgeschichte mystischer Literatur insgesamt entstehen: "We will gain a much clearer picture of the diffusion of kabbalistic texts in Italy during the second half of the fifteenth century, and therefore we will be able to contribute further to the history of Jewish kabbalah." (S. 15f.)

Der vorliegende Band enthält nach der Beschreibung des Gesamtprojektes durch Giulio Busi und Michele Ciliberto vier Hauptteile: eine allgemeine Einleitung zur Bedeutung der Übersetzung hebräischer Quellen in der Renaissance und zum Stellenwert der edierten Schrift im besonderen; die Edition der lateinischen Übersetzung mit einigen interessanten historischen Beobachtungen;

die kritische Edition des hebräischen Textes *Ha-Yeri'ah ha-Gedolah* ("The Great Parchment"); schließlich noch eine englische Übersetzung von Flavius Mithridates' lateinischem Text. In der Einleitung geht Busi auch auf den bisherigen Forschungsstand ein, der maßgeblich von den (z. T. posthum veröffentlichten) Arbeiten Chaim Wirszubskis bestimmt wurde. Bezeichnenderweise blieb das Manuskript von *The Great Parchment* jedoch sowohl im hebräischen Original als auch in der lateinischen Übersetzung weitgehend unbekannt. Diese schon fast vergessene Schrift bildet nun den gelungenen Auftakt zur Erschließung von Picos lateinischer, kabbalistischer Bibliothek, die als verborgener Schatz in der Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana in Rom ruht: "The editorial project on Pico's kabbalistic library begins therefore with reconnaissance into new territory, which enables the reader to discover a very allusive as well as a very difficult book." (S. 22) Das zu Beginn des 14. Jahrhunderts von einem unbekanntem italienischen Kabbalisten verfaßte Werk wird von Busi zum ersten Mal genauer lokalisiert: In einigen Manuskripten finden sich Hinweise auf die Provinz Macerata und die Familie Finzi, zu der auch Menahem Recanati gehörte. Der ihm eigentümliche Sprachgebrauch, den *Zohar* als *ha-Zohar ha-gadol* zu zitieren, findet sich auch in *The Great Parchment*, und Busi zieht den Schluß: "We can therefore suppose that the author of the *Great Parchment* was familiar with Recanati's writings or even belonged to this circle." (S. 25)

Seinen Titel *Ha-Yeri'ah ha-Gedolah* verdankt das Werk seiner materiellen Beschaffenheit. Wie aus Kopistenbemerkungen hervorgeht, war es ursprünglich auf eine einzige Schriftrolle geschrieben und als Abfolge von Geschichten (*sippurim*) über biblische Gestalten zur Symbolik der einzelnen *Sefirot* von *Keter* bis *Malkhut* konzipiert, deren graphische Darstellung in Baumform vom Text als Erklärung umgeben wurde. Nur Skizzen des ursprünglichen Aufrisses blieben erhalten (die einzige vollständige Skizze, die sich in MS Parma, Biblioteca Palatina 2419 findet, wird auf Seite 104 wiedergegeben). Dafür ist dem Großteil der Handschriften der Kommentar eines der bedeutendsten italienischen Kabbalisten des 14. Jahrhunderts beigegeben, allerdings oft in den Text eingearbeitet. Anhand der Erklärungen dieses Kommentars von Re'uven Zarfatti faßt Busi den Inhalt des sonst schwer verständlichen Werkes zusammen: "The Great Parchment is one of the most obscure texts of the whole Kabbalah." (S. 29) Die Anordnung der siebzehn *sippurim* ist in den Handschriften unterschiedlich, Busi folgt der Edition der lateinischen Übersetzung, in der die Unterschiede zur Vorlage angegeben sind. Wie originell diese Schrift mitunter die kabbalistische Symbolik gestaltet, zeigt sich beispielsweise im dritten Kapitel, das von der vierten *Sefira* – *Hesed* – handelt. Sie wird zwar ganz traditionell mit dem Patriarchen Abraham verbunden, statt der üblichen Platzierung auf der rechten Seite und der synonymen Verwendung des Begriffs *Gedula* findet sich *Hesed Avra-*

ham jedoch auf der linken Seite, bei *Gevura*, der Eigenschaft der Strenge und des Gerichts, gegenüber von *Gedula*, wie auch auf der Skizze auf S. 104 zu erkennen ist. Trotz dieser intensivierten Verschränkung von Gut und Böse bleibt die positive Zuordnung und damit die Eigenschaft der Barmherzigkeit für Abraham *lifnim mi-shurat ha-din*, wie es in der hebräischen Edition auf S. 135 heißt, erhalten.

Der zweite Hauptteil besteht aus der sorgfältigen Edition der lateinischen Übersetzung von Flavius Mithridates, die Saverio Campanini bearbeitet hat. Die Handschrift Vatikan, ebr. 190 (fol. 150v–165r) enthält den Text ohne Titelkennzeichnung, voraus gehen Teile des Gebetkommentars von Yehuda ibn Nissim Malka und ein ohne Zusammenhang stehender lateinischer Satz, der auf das *Sefer Yezira* zurückgeht (»Sunt enim viginti due litere et decem numerationes que indicant triginta duo calles et numeri earum decem«; S. 51). Von Mithridates und Pico stammen die Bemerkungen am Rand, die in den Fußnoten der Edition nachzulesen sind. Den historischen Anspielungen, die Mithridates – offensichtlich auch der Schreiber der Handschrift – in den Text einfügte, widmet sich Campanini in der anschließenden „Historical Note“ (S. 95–101). Neben wertvollen Einblicken in die Zeitgeschichte verraten sie auch einiges über das persönliche Verhältnis, das Mithridates zu seinem Arbeitgeber hatte: Der Übersetzer konnte sich nicht zurückhalten, immer wenn das Wort *margarita*, mit dem er das hebräische *margalit* („Perle“) wiedergab, im Text erschien, einen ironischen Hinweis auf Picos Geliebte Margherita, der Frau eines Vettters von Lorenzo il Magnifico, einzuflechten. Diese Liebesgeschichte war stadtbekannt: Pico entführte seine Margherita, wurde von den Soldaten ihres Mannes eingeholt und mußte sie nach blutigem Kampf wieder mit ihrem Gemahl ziehen lassen. Campanini vermutet, daß dieser Skandal zum Zeitpunkt der Übersetzung noch nicht stattgefunden hatte: „Pico was still hoping to crown his dream of love with Margherita, and Mithridates, himself a homosexual, mocks Pico’s passion.“ (S. 99) Die Anspielungen auf Picos Affäre sind schließlich auch eher harmloser Art; die Metaphorik der Perle, die für die Seele steht, die von ihren körperlichen Banden befreit werden muß, sorgt durchaus für einen hintergründigen Humor, mit dem die lateinische Übersetzung auch schließt: „In fact, by the prolongation of the body the soul is shortened while the shortening of the body sublimates the soul [...] One (that is Pico) should take the pearl, cut its bondages and throw them away.“ (S. 256)

Seiner kritischen Edition von *Ha-Yeri’ah ha-Gedolah* stellt Busi eine Diskussion der Handschriften voran und unterscheidet drei Gruppen: den Text allein, die Einarbeitung des Kommentars von Re’uven Zarfatti und den Kommentar als getrennte Beigabe zum Textkontinuum. Die relativ junge Handschrift München cod. hebr. 58 aus dem 16. Jahrhundert hat den Vorteil, daß der

Schreiber angibt, eine Kopie mit der ursprünglichen Gestalt des Textes, also mit der Illustration des *Sefirot*-Baumes, benutzt zu haben. Die Unterschiede in der Anordnung der bis zu 18 Geschichten werden in vier Spalten synoptisch aufgelistet (S. 114f.). Für die Edition werden die MSS Mantua, Biblioteca Comunale ebr. 129, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek hebr. 58, Parma, Biblioteca Palatina 2486 und New York, JTS Mic. 2367 herangezogen. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit gilt der aus dem 14. Jahrhundert stammenden ältesten Handschrift Parma. Textgrundlage ist München hebr. 58, allerdings mit Korrekturen entsprechend den anderen Lesarten. Ein Druckfehler hat sich bei der Folioangabe der Münchner Handschrift eingeschlichen: während am Beginn der Edition die Paginierung fol. 341a lautet (S. 119), steht in der Katalogangabe fol. 342r am Anfang (S. 116). Hilfreich sind die eingearbeiteten Bibelnachweise und die vergleichenden Kapitelangaben.

Der letzte Hauptteil enthält Busi kommentierte englische Übersetzung des lateinischen Textes von Flavius Mithridates. Der Kommentar in den Anmerkungen bietet sehr viele philologische Informationen, nicht nur in bezug auf die Handschriftenüberlieferung, sondern auch zu Mithridates' Übersetzungstechnik. Ein gutes Beispiel ist der Kommentar zu Mithridates' "remarkably creative [translation]" (S. 200) von Dan 9,19 im ersten Kapitel: "This is what eternity said: O number ten, hear; O number ten, forgive; O number ten, hearken." Statt des biblischen „oh Herr“ übersetzt Mithridates *denarie*. Busi verweist auf die übliche hebräische Abkürzung mit doppeltem *Yud* für den Gottesnamen, der sich tatsächlich in MS Parma findet; doch neben dem Zahlenwert Zehn, den der hebräische Buchstabe hat, wird auf dessen lange kabbalistische Tradition aufmerksam gemacht: Busi zitiert als Beispiel aus Joseph Gikatillas *Sha'are Orab* eine längere Passage (Erste Pforte: Die zehnte *Sefira*), die durchaus zum Kontext in *The Great Parchment* paßt. Der Kommentar zur lateinischen Übersetzung läßt jedoch auch erkennen, welche Schwierigkeiten das Werk enthält, über dessen Charakter bereits Mithridates äußerte: „Et vere est liber divinus, et parum intelligibilis.“ (S. 22)

Die beiden Editionen dieser seltenen kabbalistischen Schrift und ihre Bearbeitung durch die Herausgeber stellen eine solide Grundlage für die weitere Erschließung der Geschichte der Kabbala in der Renaissance dar. Man darf auf die Fortsetzung des Projektes, das unter anderem einen Band dem Buch *Bahir* widmen will, gespannt sein. Mit der hebräischen Handschrift, die Mithridates für dieses älteste kabbalistische Werk benutzte, begann Gershom Scholem sein Studium der Kabbala in München und initiierte die moderne Kabbala-Forschung. Die von Giulio Busi herausgegebene Reihe *The Kabbalistic Library of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola* kann ein wichtiger Baustein für das Studium der Kulturgeschichte und der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaftsgeschichte werden.

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Isaak Euchel, *Reb Henoch, oder: Woß tut me damit. Eine jüdische Komödie der Aufklärungszeit*, Textedition von Marion Aptroot und Roland Gruschka mit einleitenden Beiträgen von Marion Aptroot, Delphine Bechtel, Shmuel Feiner und Roland Gruschka, Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004, [jidische shtudies. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprache und Literatur der aschkenasischen Juden 11], xii + 282 pp., € 58.–, ISBN 3-87548-379-0

For years now, the Buske Verlag has been publishing one of the most exciting series within the field of Yiddish studies. Under the editorship of Erika Timm and Walter Röhl, renowned scholars for German and Yiddish literature and linguistics, the series has brought out several first editions of important Yiddish literary documents as well as studies about the development of the Yiddish language and its literature.

In saying this it may seem as if this series is meant for experts only. But, as it has been the case with the other editions of the *jidische shtudies* before, the play about Reb Henoch certainly is an outstanding and entertaining piece that amuses specialists and laymen alike. It allows a deep insight into the inner perspective of Jewish enlightenment and as such must be regarded as a fascinating document for everybody dealing with Jewish history of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and anyone who has an interest in theatre as such.

The play itself was written by Isaak Euchel, a Jewish adherent of the enlightenment, in Berlin in 1793. It is one of the last Yiddish works ever produced within the German-speaking lands and deals with the process of acculturation and assimilation of the Jewish population as well as their aspiration to become a part of the German bourgeoisie. The editors of the play, Marion Aptroot and Roland Gruschka, call it a “black comedy” that criticises not only the conditions within the Jewish society itself but also the situation of Jews in Germany. By means of language and its expert use in depicting the various characters, this comedy becomes lively and vibrant. Among the languages and dialects used are Yiddish, colloquial and dialectal German, Hebrew, English, and French.

Euchel himself was born in Copenhagen in 1756. He was raised by his mother within the framework of an orthodox Jewish tradition. As a result of circumstances (his father died, his mother was unable to educate and raise all the children by herself), Isaak was sent to his uncle in Berlin in order to study at the yeshivah. He obviously was a gifted young man, and his talents were soon discovered. But although he had the possibility to make a career within the world of traditional Jewish learning, he left Berlin and the supervision of his uncle. He decided instead to earn his money as a private teacher in the homes of rich and influential Jewish families, a step that opened up a whole new world of thought for him. While he was teaching he had enough time to study the

subjects and topics that interested him, among them literature and languages, as well as natural sciences. After various positions he finally came to Königsberg where he enrolled as a student at the university. In so doing he became the first Jewish student ever to study humanities at a German university. Euchel opted for Oriental languages, philosophy and pedagogical studies as subjects and was obviously one of the favourite students of his professors Koehler (Oriental Studies) and Immanuel Kant (Philosophy). In spite of his success as a student, the university denied him the “Magister” degree because of his Jewish origin. Among those who did not support him was, disappointingly, Kant himself.

Although this was a bitter experience for Euchel, it also became a turning point in his life and work, since from then on he was determined to support the Jewish enlightenment. He was the one who in 1782 founded the *Gesellschaft der Freunde der hebräischen Sprache* (“Society of Friends of the Hebrew Language”) and even launched the Hebrew newspaper *Ha-Meassef*. Through his activity, the centres of enlightenment, Königsberg and Berlin, were closely connected. It is unfair that down to today, only the great philosopher of Jewish enlightenment, Moses Mendelssohn, is widely known, whereas Isaak Euchel’s name sank into oblivion. Euchel’s works and the references to his name prove that it was Euchel who really shaped and established the Jewish enlightenment as a movement.

Reb Henoch is, as noted, a biting satire on the life of the *nouveaux riches*, the new Jewish bourgeoisie in the cities and towns of the Prussian empire. It is a play about generations that are estranged and unable to come to a mutual understanding. Reb Henoch himself is the orthodox Jewish patriarch of the older generation who has made enough money to provide his children a modern education. But with money and education comes enlightenment, and his two sons and daughters start to lead a life departing from traditions. But the break with the old system is not what Euchel scorns. He denounces the way enlightenment is misinterpreted and misunderstood by Jews as the abolition of all moral values and norms. Henoch, on the one hand, represents the too traditional, too orthodox head of the family, whereas his children, on the other hand, are morally corrupt young people who use their freedom for engaging in sexual indecency.

Adherents of the enlightenment like Isaak Euchel or Aaron Halle-Wolfssohn (1754–1835) witnessed the process of disintegration within the Jewish community. They, like Mendelssohn himself, wanted a reformed Judaism that would still value and uphold its faith and moral standards. What they were forced to witness instead was a Jewish community that wanted to be an integral part of the higher strata of Christian society at all costs – even conversion. So authors like Euchel or Wolfssohn used *the* medium of enlightenment, the

theatre, in order to reach a Jewish audience that had already moved into the “modern world” and had experienced the loss of tradition and the breakup of families themselves. But the authors had to fight on two fronts at the same time: against the backward attitude of Jewish orthodoxy as well as against the unrestrained and limitless aspirations of the younger generation.

It should be noted that Marion Aptroot and Roland Gruschka have dedicated their scholarship to one of the many desiderata within the field of Yiddish literature, here presenting an interested readership with an excellent edition. This edition allows real insight into the language and characters, both for experts and those who cannot read Hebrew script, through the transcription of the text and the presentation of the original version. The work M. Aptroot and R. Gruschka have submitted may truly be called a ‘labor of love’. The excellent introductions to the text given by Marion Aptroot, Roland Gruschka, Shmuel Feiner, and Delphine Bechtel allow a very clear idea about the circumstances of the time when the play was written, its language, and the cultural world that was masterfully captured within it.

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Diane Wolfthal, *Picturing Yiddish. Gender, Identity, and Memory in the Illustrated Yiddish Books of Renaissance Italy*, Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2004, [Brill’s Series in Jewish Studies 36], xxxiv + 282 pp. + 188 ill., €108.00/\$154.00, ISBN 90-04-13905-2

Many things have changed in the field of Old Yiddish literature research. In recent years, numerous remarkable works have appeared on this subject and, most of all, many manuscripts and old printed books have been published, especially from Italy. The volume *Yiddish in Italia* (in English and Italian) edited by Chava Turniansky and Erika Timm in 2003 allows us to revise our picture of the general evaluation of the production of Yiddish works in Italy during the Renaissance and to understand that it is not a marginal phenomenon, but rather a golden age of Old Yiddish literature, with a remarkable level of creativity and output. A new work about the place and the role of illustrations in Yiddish books from Italy can therefore be an important contribution to the field.

Diane Wolfthal’s volume deals principally with a famous manuscript of *Minbagim* from Paris, composed in Italy in the 15th century, with the *Minbagim* edition printed in Venice in the years 1593 and 1600 (but 1601 according to the colophon) and, in the last part, with the chivalry poem *Paris un Wiene*, printed in Verona in 1594, and the *Book of Cows*, in Yiddish *Kub-bukh*, a collection of tales printed as well in Verona in 1595. While *minbagim* books are basically

volumes of customs and rituals, an important part of Jewish religious life, the two last works are considered to be more secular; for example, *Paris un Wiene* is a Yiddish reworking of an Italian chivalry romance. In the second part of the volume, the author adds many reproductions of the illustrations she describes in her research. The copious and outstanding bibliography bears witness to the author's diligence and enthusiasm for the subject.

I would like to add a few short remarks. Not an expert in the field of art, I look at this volume primarily from the point of view of Yiddish studies. Diane Wolfthal is a very well trained art historian and her research is full of interesting suggestions, but she seems to wish to take a stand not only regarding the illustrations, rather also Yiddish literature and Jewish history more generally. In this she goes against assumptions of scholars and historians who over the years have offered us some very convincing results.

In the "Introduction", Wolfthal writes for example that "Shmeruk unjustly excluded the secular texts from the field of Jewish Studies, mistakenly argued that they were meant for children [...]". (p. xxvii) I think this sentence is quite strange and surprising, since Chone Shmeruk is the author of some of the most important works on 'secular Yiddish literature'. He prepared an edition of the chivalry poem *Paris un Wiene*, the 'secular' chivalry-poem par excellence, which is also the subject of Wolfthal's book. She refers to Shmeruk's 1986 book about illustrations, where he commented on Yiddish books from the 16th and 17th centuries as follows: "in these same books it is possible to find the possibility to assume that we are dealing here with a literature *also* intended for children and young people. [...] The illustrations constitute evidence that the book is not intended only for adults."¹ Shmeruk's remark is phrased quite prudently and refers only to the illustrations.

Wolfthal also misunderstood Erika Timm's and Chava Turniansky's remarks concerning the *Minhagim* manuscript. The quotation she gives is taken from the description of the Yiddish books shown at an exhibition at the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense in Milan in 1996. There, the illustrations of the *Minhagim* manuscript are indeed described as "somewhat clumsy illustrations". In the volume *Yiddish in Italia* published in 2003 and based on the catalogue of the exhibition we can read: "somewhat clumsy but informative illustrations", and one of them has been chosen for the cover of the book.² Anyway Wolfthal

¹ Chone Shmeruk, *Illustrations in Yiddish Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. The Texts, the Pictures and Their Audience* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem 1986, p. 39. The word "also" is bold in the Hebrew text. For Shmeruk's works, cf. Chava Turniansky, "Bibliography of Chone Shmeruk's Writings, 1953–1992", in: *Studies in Jewish Culture in Honour of Chone Shmeruk*, ed. by Israel Bartal, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Chava Turniansky, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 413–428.

doesn't agree with the fact that Erika Timm and Chava Turniansky "dismissed the drawings as 'clumsy'" (p. 6), but some pages later Wolfthal writes that "[r]ather than writing neatly in a fine hand on costly parchment or vellum, the scribe wrote on less expensive paper in a careless fashion, crossing out words and not bothering to maintain a straight left margin". (p. 15) She says Jean Baumgarten understood much better the value of these illustrations, but Baumgarten just describes them as *naïve*.³ I don't find Wolfthal's opinion so far removed from that of Erika Timm and Chava Turniansky.

To give a final example, Wolfthal strongly disagrees with Robert Bonfil's "conclusion that Italian Renaissance Jewry uniformly perceived rabbis as central and women as peripheral" (p. xxix and p. 62) and that the Italian Renaissance rabbinate is "so central to Jewish society that 'the institution's history faithfully reflects the entire history of those Jews'". (p. 66) In quoting Bonfil, she omits the second part of his sentence: "touching as it does upon many aspects of Jewish society's relation to those individuals and institutions which, in its eyes, represented the normative framework of their unique collective life".⁴ The *Halakhab* has been and still is central for Jewish Orthodox life and is connected with all aspects of cultural and material Jewish life. It is true that much can be added to Bonfil's work. But I believe some illustrations, even if very interesting, cannot be used as sufficient evidence against the considerable amount of written material we have from Italian Jewry, which is the source of Bonfil's historical research. In regard to Wolfthal's critique to the effect that Bonfil has written too little about women, I would like to quote from the "Afterword" to his *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*: "Many important themes [...] have been left to one side, since the relevant historical research is still in an initial, not to say embryonic, stage of development. Problems such as the image of childhood, of women [...] have been touched upon only in passing. These are all topics that cry out for detailed treatment."⁵ Down to today he has not wanted to write a history of Jewish women in Italy during the Renaissance.

² Cf. Chava Turniansky and Erika Timm, *Yiddish in Italia / Yidish in Italye. Manoscritti e libri a stampa in yiddish dei secoli XV–XVII / Yiddish Manuscripts and Printed Books from the 15th to the 17th Century*, ed. with the collaboration of Claudia Rosenzweig, Milano 2003, p. 70 (and the illustrations at pp. 71–73).

³ "L'originalité de ce manuscrit est de posséder un ensemble d'illustrations exécutées par le scribe, d'une facture naïve"; Jean Baumgarten, »Les Manuscrits Yidich de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris«, in: *The Field of Yiddish, Fifth Collection*, ed. by David Goldberg, Evanston/IL 1993, pp. 121–151, and in particular p. 130.

⁴ Robert Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy*, trans. by Jonathan Chapman, London – Washington 1993, p. v.

⁵ Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. by Anthony Oldcorn, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1994, p. 285.

After his book was published in 1994, many important works about these themes appeared, but I still think Bonfil has been honest in carefully limiting his research and in leaving the field open to further investigations.

Claudia Rosenzweig, Hebrew University Jerusalem

Ilana Tahan, *Memorial Volumes to Jewish Communities destroyed in the Holocaust: A bibliography of British Library holdings*, London: The British Library, 2004, 104 pp., 4 plates, £ 14.95/\$ 33.00, ISBN 0-7123-4820-4

Yizkor books are in many cases the only testimony left of Eastern and Central European Jewish communities destroyed during the Sho'ah. Some of them were written and sponsored by members of *Landsmannschaft* organizations in Israel or in the Americas. But many are the result of the commitment on the part of single survivors or individual researchers to attempt to preserve the memory of the lost communities by compiling lists of names of both survivors and the dead, as well as photographs and documents illustrating daily and institutional life before the Holocaust. Priceless for genealogists, historians, or descendants of that particular Jewish community, Yizkor books are rare, extremely limited in number (in toto there are some 1,000 titles), and highly perishable. As some of the books were written and published either still during the War or in the early 1950s, the quality of the materials is often poor and the volumes are now in fragile condition. So it is all the more important to collect those books and make them accessible to a broader public.

The British Library has been bringing together Yizkor books for more than forty years, but only now has a concerted attempt been made to record and systematically list all these volumes. Ilana Tahan, Hebraica Curator at the British Library, presents an elaborate bibliography of the more than 300 different volumes commemorating a total of 290 Jewish communities. The Yizkor books are divided into three groups, the main section being an alphabetical list of the localities which the books are dedicated to. The names of the towns and villages are given in one principal form supplemented by other possible spellings, along with a special index connecting all the variants with each other. However, one criticism of the catalogue is the fact that Slavonic names are never given with all their diacritic marks. Some of the names are connected to more than one Yizkor book. Chelm, for instance, is commemorated with one volume in Yiddish and English published in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1954 and one in Hebrew and Yiddish brought out in Israel in 1980. The catalogue gives the names of the localities, the titles of the memorial volumes in the original script, generally Hebrew or Yiddish, a transliteration in Latin letters, an English translation as well as all bibliographical standard data; it also provides the reader with the

approximate geographic location of the community, the language(s) of the Yizkor book, references to additional sources for information on the locality, and of course the volume's shelfmark in the British Library.

The two other sections contain similar lists of memorial volumes for larger regions or whole countries and the different volumes of some larger encyclopedic works.

Several indexes (authors and locations) and appendices (communities by current location, language, year and country of publication) allow for a quick orientation and at the same time give the reader an overall first impression of the phenomenon of Yizkor books as such. Thus, the arrangement according to language(s) shows that books combining Hebrew and Yiddish or Hebrew, Yiddish and English respectively clearly predominate. We can see at first glance from the appendix listing the communities by current location that volumes on Polish communities make up almost half of the holdings. As the author states in her preface, "this finding was to be expected, bearing in mind that Poland had the largest Jewish population in Europe before the Second World War [...], most of which perished." Interesting is also the finding that two thirds of the library's memorial volumes were written between 1950–1980, the 1960s apparently constituting a 'peak time' for this kind of literature.

This volume is a very useful bibliography, but it is more than that. The bibliographical data are accompanied by a number of carefully chosen photographs of men, women and children who were murdered during the Sho'ah and a map tracing the battles in the Warsaw Ghetto. Last but not least, they make the book a kind of 'meta Yizkor book', a macro-memorial volume in its own right, remembering in its own way all the communities mentioned and the persons who perished or survived and were forced to start a new live after the Sho'ah.

Evelyn Burkhardt, Leopold-Zunz-Zentrum Halle-Wittenberg

Books received

Joseph H. Prouser, *Noble Soul: The Life and Legend of the Vilna Ger Tzedek Count Walenty Potocki*, Piscataway/NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005 [Judaism in Context 1], xi + 226 pp., \$ 65.00, ISBN 1-59333-097-9

Walenty Potocki, the “Vilna Ger Tzedek”, was burned at the stake in 1749 for the crime of conversion to Judaism. His story is that of a principled and sensitive spiritual seeker who abandoned wealth, power and virtually unlimited prospects for material success in order to adopt Judaism, a religious tradition that was anathema to his noble class. Potocki was betrayed by a member of the religious community he embraced, and executed as an apostate by the church he left behind. Joseph H. Prouser examines eleven versions (Polish, Hebrew, Yiddish, German, English) of Potocki’s life story as well as the correspondence between the powerful Potocki clan and an early Ger Tzedek biographer.

The book is the first of the new series “Judaism in Context”, edited by Lieve Teugels, Naomi Koltun-Fromm and Rivka Ulmer. It focuses on relations between Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture and the other peoples, religions, and cultures among whom Jews have lived and flourished. The studies in this series pay close attention to the nature and results of these cross-cultural interactions throughout the ages and also cover various aspects of Jewish religion, history and society, such as cultural manifestations, religious identity, ethnicity, theology, and literary creations.

Lieve M. Teugels and Rivka Ulmer (eds.), *Recent Developments in Midrash Research*, Piscataway/NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005 [Judaism in Context 2], 200 pp., \$ 65.00, ISBN 1-59333-201-7

This volume contains a selection of the papers that were presented in the sessions of the first two years of the Society of Biblical Literature Midrash Consultation. It demonstrates innovative scholarly approaches to midrashic texts and hermeneutic reflections on the similarities/differences between the interpretations of the Bible. The first session (Toronto, 2002) of the midrash program unit presented an introduction to midrash and the exploration of the limits of midrash. The second year (Atlanta, 2003) dealt with the question “Where do we stand in midrashic text editions and translations?” (from the cover). Contributions by Yaakov Elman, John Townsend, Willem Smelik, Vered Noam, David Nelson, Rivka Ulmer, Lieve Teugels, Burton Visotzky.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Joseph P. Ansell, *Arthur Szyk: Artist, Jew, Pole*, Oxford – Portland/OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004, 380 pp. + 39 plates, £29.95/\$49.95, 1-874774-94-3

Best known among Jews for his illustrated Haggadah, Arthur Szyk was also a political artist whose work went beyond a narrow definition of the Jewish cause. In the early twentieth century, he worked tirelessly to strengthen the Jews' position in Poland; later on in the United States, he placed his art at the service of the war effort. He crusaded against the Nazis through newspaper and magazine cartoons, posters and public exhibitions. After the war he turned his efforts to promoting Zionist ideas. In every phase of his career, one finds Szyk looking to the past but hoping for the future. He believed that art could make a difference in the world, politically and socially. Joseph Ansell's biography makes a singular contribution to the history of Polish-Jewish relations and of Jewish art in the first half of the twentieth century.

Maurizio Mottolese, *La via della qabbalah. Egesi mistica nel «Commento alla Torah» di Rabbi Bahya ben Ašer*, Introduzione di Moshe Idel, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004, 264 pp., €21.00, ISBN 88-15-097589

La mistica ebraica medievale fu innanzitutto una nuova interpretazione della tradizione, in un confronto serrato con le interpretazioni precedenti. Quando sul finire del Duecento il rabbino spagnolo Bahya ben Ašer compose il suo «Commento alla Torah», egli interpretò la Scrittura attraverso un sistema a più livelli, capace di utilizzare le «vie» esegetiche classiche della tradizione rabbinica, di abbracciare la «via dell'intelletto» (il discorso esegetico della scienza e della filosofia) e di aprire, al culmine della lettura, la «via della qabbalah»: il discorso esegetico della tradizione esoterica, relativo ai «segreti della Torah», trasmesso dalle diverse scuole dei cabalisti. Tale carattere inclusivo e divulgativo fu senza dubbio uno dei motivi della popolarità che il testo riscosse nel mondo ebraico (e non solo); ed è ciò che rende tuttora estremamente interessante la sua disamina. Qui, per la prima volta, il «Commento» di Rabbi Bahya viene analizzato in modo organico, fornendo una chiave di accesso all'ermeneutica della Qabbalah (un terreno che peraltro sta suscitando grande interesse negli ultimi anni, come sottolinea nell'introduzione Moshe Idel, forse il massimo esperto vivente sulla mistica ebraica). Vengono esplorate le linee di integrazione e di conflitto fra i diversi livelli esegetici (in particolare, fra quello filosofico e quello cabalistico). Si illuminano i momenti essenziali dell'esegesi cabalistica: la sua decifrazione testuale, la sua narrazione teosofica, la sua ri-significazione teurgica e mistica dell'esperienza religiosa. E si torna quindi ad affrontare una delle questioni cruciali della ricerca: il rapporto della Qabbalah con il mito (text from the cover).

Mauro Perani and Enrica Sagradini, *Talmudic and Midrashic Fragments from the "Italian Genizah": Reunification of the Manuscripts*, Firenze: Giuntina, 2004 [Quaderni di Materia giudaica 1], 358 pp., 250 ill., € 30.00, ISBN 88-8057-204-0

I manoscritti dei testi rabbinici giunti fino a noi sono davvero pochi: rari sono i testimoni della Mishnah, soltanto un manoscritto completo della Tosefta, un solo manoscritto quasi completo del Talmud palestinese ed uno del Talmud babilonese. Per questo ogni ulteriore scoperta di un nuovo testimone prima sconosciuto è da considerarsi un evento importante. In tal senso, la scoperta di migliaia di fogli di manoscritti ebraici in archivi e biblioteche italiane, riciclati tra il XVI e il XVII secolo come legature di registri e di libri, è da considerarsi un contributo molto importante, perché ci permette di accrescere la nostra conoscenza della letteratura rabbinica. Il presente volume, in lingua inglese per una maggiore diffusione, costituisce un notevole passo avanti, poiché rappresenta il primo catalogo completo di tutti i frammenti contenenti testi talmudici ossia: Mishnah, Tosefta, i due Talmudim (che comprendono, quale testimone indiretto del testo talmudico, il *Sefer ha-Halakhhot di Alfasi*) ed il Midrash. Questo corpus comprende 474 frammenti, la maggior parte dei quali sono fogli e bifogli completi. I frammenti più antichi scoperti sino ad oggi, ritrovati in parte a Norcia ed in parte a Faenza, appartengono ad una Tosefta copiata prima dell'anno 1000, che costituisce il testimone manoscritto dell'opera, non solo in Italia ma in tutto il mondo, ora in nostro possesso. La maggior parte dei manoscritti è datata ai secoli XII–XIII, e conseguentemente molti manoscritti risultano essere più antichi di quelli completi in nostro possesso. Questo volume presenta il catalogo più completo ed aggiornato dei frammenti talmudici e midrashici scoperti nella «Ghenizà italiana». Sotto la guida del prof. Mauro Perani, Enrica Sagradini li ha sottoposti tutti ad un accurato esame paleografico e codicologico, si da ricomporre tutti i testi che una volta erano appartenuti ad un medesimo manoscritto. Particolarmente interessanti nel volume sono le descrizioni paleografiche, gli indici, e le tavole con la riproduzione fotografica una pagina di ogni singolo manoscritto. I 474 frammenti esaminati hanno permesso di ricomporre 158 codici differenti di cui 150 talmudici e 8 midrashici. (Testo dell'editrice, vedi: <http://www.giuntina.it>.)

Chiara Pilocane, *Frammenti dei più antichi manoscritti biblici italiani (secc. XI–XII)*, Firenze: Giuntina, 2004 [Quaderni di Materia giudaica 2], 148 pp., 46 ill., € 25.00, ISBN 88-8057-206-7

Frutto di una rielaborazione e di un ampliamento della tesi di laurea dell'autrice, la monografia ha come oggetto i frammenti pergamenei dei quattro manoscritti biblici italiani più antichi fino ad oggi rinvenuti (secc. XI–XII): i frammenti sono stati ritrovati, nell'ambito del «Progetto Ghenizà italiana», dispersi

fra Emilia Romagna e Umbria, dove furono riutilizzati negli archivi come copertine e rilegature di registri notarili. I frammenti rinvenuti ci restituiscono una sessantina di pagine, la maggior parte delle quali appartenenti ad un solo codice che, proprio in virtù del fatto di essere il più ampiamente documentato dai fogli recuperati, costituisce il manoscritto guida per l'analisi filologica e linguistica. Il lavoro consiste in uno studio filologico dettagliato del piccolo gruppo di codici documentati dai frammenti: il punto di maggior interesse dei manoscritti è rappresentato proprio dalle peculiarità filologiche e grammaticali che presentano; essi non condividono soltanto l'antichità, ma anche una serie di caratteristiche insolite e significative, relative alla vocalizzazione e alla punteggiatura del testo ebraico consonantico. Grazie ad un approfondito lavoro di collazione dei manoscritti con il *textus receptus*, ad un confronto con un codice conservato a Karlsruhe che presenta tratti analoghi, nonché allo studio del contesto storico-culturale in cui il codice-guida dovrebbe esser stato prodotto, il libro giunge a formulare un'ipotesi sull'origine e sulla storia dell'insolita tradizione di vocalizzazione e accentazione riscontrata nei codici italiani. Si apre così uno spiraglio su un periodo ancora oscuro della storia del testo dell'Antico Testamento ebraico in Italia, si aggiunge un tassello al mosaico dei rapporti che all'epoca il Sud Italia intratteneva con la Palestina, e si sottolinea come nel XII secolo la tradizione tiberiense di vocalizzazione della Bibbia fosse ben lungi dall'aver soppiantato definitivamente in Italia le altre letture. (Testo dell'editrice, vedi: <http://www.giuntina.it>.)

Leopold Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden Historisch entwickelt, with an introduction by Rivka Kern-Ulmer*, Piscataway/NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003 [Jewish Studies Classics 1], xvi + 516 pp., \$ 65.00 ISBN 1-59333-034-0

Leopold Zunz (1794–1886) was the founding father of the 'Wissenschaft des Judentums', an intellectual movement that originated among Jewish academics in Germany in the early 1900's. His pamphlet *Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur* ("Something about Rabbinic Literature"), published in 1818, marked the official start of this new, academic, approach to the traditional Jewish Literature. He co-founded the *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* in 1819, and its journal, the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Besides a revolutionary new approach to the study of Jewish Literature and History, Zunz aimed at reforms in Jewish Liturgy and strived for political and cultural recognition of Jews in German society. *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden* deals with biblical interpretation and homiletics from the Bible up to his own time. It is still a standard work on this subject (from the cover).