

**Five, 20th Century scholar Librarians: Moritz Steinschneider,
Alexander Marx, Umberto Cassutto, Gerschom Scholem, and Chaim
Leib Aryeh Vilsker (ztsl)**

by David B. Levy

1 Steinschneider 1816 [Moravia]- 1907 (Berlin)

Steinschneider is the father of modern Jewish bibliography , orientalist, historian, and scholar of medieval Judaica, among the founders of the "Science of Judaism" (**Wissenschaft des Judentums**) as reflected on in **Die Zukunft der Juedischen Wissenschaft** (1869) a half a century after Zunz had issued his programmatic statement on **Etwas ueber die rabbinische Literature**.

“Unilke other 19th century Jewish scholars of the Wissenschaft des Judentums Bewegung initiated by Immanuel Wolf and made great by Zunz and Geiger, Steinschneider’s work was not limited to subjects with a direct Jewish connection. He was familiar with almost everything that had been written about premodern science, philosophy, and medicine. Manekin in an essay, “Moritz Steinschneider’s Indecent Burial” does detective sleuthing to uncover how it is an unfair caricature that it is “reportedly” said by Gershom Scholem in his criticism of Wissenschaft in **Mi-tokh hirhurim al hokhmat yisrael in Devarim be-go** published first in **Luah ha-Arez** later reissued in **Wissenschaft vom Judentum einst und jetzt in Zur Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland** and **Hokhmat yisrael ve-yahadut** reprinted in **Od Davar**. [In reality in **Mi Berlin li-Yerushalayim** actually confesses admiration for Steinschneider and Zunz]. Unfactually Scholem ended up inadvertently framing Steinschneider in his diatribe against Wissenschaft published in 1945, as a “cold, antiquarian.”

Thus Steinschneider is misquoted as saying :

Wir haben nur noch die Aufgabe die Ueberrest des Judentums ehrenvoll zu bestatten

“The task of Jewish studies is to provide the remnants of Judaism a decent burial”.

As for Steinschneider’s alleged comment that “it is the task of scholars to provide the remnants of Judaism with a decent burial,” it is not found among his writings but was attributed to him in a necrology published by the German Zionist periodical **Juedische Rundschau** by the orientalist Gotthold Weil, who had been Steinschneider’s student and participated in the short lived Zionist **National-Juedische Verein der Hoerer an der Lehranstalt fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums** in Berlin.

The clue to this puzzle is we must understand this alleged comment by Steinschneider in the light of Shimshon Raphael Hirsch's attack on **Wissenschaft des Judentums**. Hirsch wrote that the scholars of Wissenschaft keep alive the memory of the old Judaism as it is carried to its grave. Hirsch called Wissenschaft "*the fine dust wafting from the stone coffins of moldering corpses.*" Steinschneider as a master of ironic retort was saying to his student Weil, "*Just as Hirsch and the orthodox have said, we are burial societies- let's at least make sure that the burial is an honorable one.*"

Many of his students later became prominent Jewish scholars, including Ignaz Goldziher, Aron Freiman, Solomon Schechter, Isaac Markon, Ḥayyim Brody, Judah L. Magnes, H. Malter, A. Marx, Arthur Biram, George A. Kohut, Samuel Poznanski, and H.L. Strack etc. Rebecca Kohut refers to Marx's students as Steinschneider's **lieblingsschueler**.

Steinschneider published so many books and journals that if they were stacked up would be taller than his height. Let us note however the Journal Ha-Mazkir. (**Hebraeische Bibliographie. Blaetter fuer neuere und aeltere Literatur des Judentums**, 1858–65, 1869–81) to which he contributed more than 500 articles concerning bibliography, library history, booklore, philology and cultural history. The motto at the top of each issue is the biblical verse from Isaiah 42:9; הַרְאֵנוּת, הִנֵּה-בָאוּ; וְהַדְּשׁוּת אֲנִי מְגִיד, בְּטָרִם תִּצְמַחְנָה אֲשֶׁמִיעַ אֶתְכֶם meaning, "*Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.*" Each issue of the Journal attempted to give a systematic layout of the year in Jewish scholarship, not just a "scatter of the output" but a systematic accounting of all articles published or appearing for that particular year.

Library Catalogs

Steinschneider's unbelievable industry and erudition also manifested itself in a series of catalogs and bibliographies, among which the most important is his **Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana** (1852–60). Upon the request of the chief librarian of the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, Steinschneider prepared a catalog of all the printed books up to 1732 in the Bodleian. Steinschneider raised Hebrew bibliography to a scholarly level and corrected misinformation. Steinschneider also published classic catalogs of the Hebrew manuscript collections of the following libraries: *Leiden* (1858), *Munich* (1875; 2nd ed. enlarged, 1896), *Hamburg* (1878, reprint with new introduction, Hellmut Braun, 1969), and *Berlin* (1878–97). In all of these he identified many hitherto unknown writings and historical research.

II Alexander Marx MARX (1878–1953)

Marx was not only a historian, bibliographer and librarian, but a man who destined the development of the building of the JTSA library by drawing on Steinschneider's work as the GPS for JTSA acquisition policies, making it into a world renowned resource for Jewish scholarly research. Schmelzer writes "*without Marx's conception of what*

juedische Wissenschaft entailed and what a library that was supposed to serve it should contain, the Seminary library would not have become what it did.” Schmelzer continues “For Marx, the study of Judaism encompassed besides rabbinical sources, the history of sciences, philosophy, medicine, and mathematics as pursued and practiced by Jews mainly in the Middle Ages. These were subjects of Steinschneider’s many studies, and Marx was deeply influenced by them. Cultural and intellectual contacts between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, were at the center of Steinschneider’s interest. The study of mutual influences, of translations from one culture into another, became significant aspects of the **Wissenschaft des Judentums**.”

Born in Elberfeld Germany and growing up in Koenigsberg East Prussia, Marx moved to Berlin where he learned under Drs. Abraham Berliner and Moritz Steinschneider. He studied at the University of Berlin and at the Rabbiner-Seminar (Berlin), marrying in 1905 Hannah the daughter of D.Z. Hoffmann, rector of the Seminar. In Berlin, he was influenced by Moritz Steinschneider. Marx visited Solomon Schechter at Cambridge University and they developed a friendship in their shared love of learning and enthusiasm for Hebrew literature. The reason Marx sought out Schechter was because of Marx research on *Seder Olam*. Schechter was impressed with Marx knowledge

In 1903 Marx accepted Solomon Schechter's invitation to teach history at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and be its head librarian with a joint appointment to teach. Solomon Goldman : According to Goldman we may say of Marx as with Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai and the Geonim of Rav **שלא שח שיחה בטלה כל ימיו** “that he had never, in all his days, engaged in idle conversation.”

Marx also brought to light many obscure and lost texts, contributed to authorship questions, cleared up demographica and statistical approximations, orthographical font identification. Marx devoted great attention as well to accurate dating. In womens' history For example Marx showed that Rashi's daughter Rachel and her husband Eliezer changed their names calling themselves Belle-Assez and Joselin With regards to Christian-Jewish interaction Marx also made discoveries and brought to light subjects in certain rishonim. Marx had a way to uncover blind spots and interdisciplinary connections and relate disparate texts. Marx was the quintessential biographer and wrote hundreds of portraits of great rabbis. Marx contributed monographs and articles to journals on a wide variety of subjects, published two volumes of collected essays (Studies in Jewish History and Booklore=26 essays (1944); Essays in Jewish Biography (1947)), and with Max L. Margolis wrote A History of the Jewish people (1927, 1962). His annual reports of the library's growth, containing a detailed description of materials acquired, were eagerly awaited by bookmen and scholars. 600 page volume under title, Bibliographical Studies and Notes on Rare books and Manuscripts in the library of the JTSA. Marx brought out a 1st 10 chapters of critical edition of *Seder Olam*. And Rabbi Bezalel Aschkenazi's *Kelalei Ha-Talmud* and the textual traditions of Seder Rav Amram Gaon. JQR

Umberto Cassuto 1883-1951

CASSUTO, (Moses David; 1883–1951), was more than an Italian historian and biblical and Semitic scholar. Cassuto's unique academic refutation of "Higher biblical criticism" which Solomon Schechter called the "higher anti-semitism" was enabled in ways that did not conflict with tradition, as laid out in his path breaking book, *The Documentary Hypothesis*, in which Cassuto likens himself to Shimshon pulling down the whole edifice and fallacious foundation on which largely protestant biblical criticism from the 19th century was so foolishly grounded by assuming that such questions had not been asked millennia earlier by previous Rabbinic authorities.

As Solomon Schechter understood perhaps best in labeling the 'higher criticism' "the higher anti-semitism" the hidden agenda and bias of this new fangled modern bible criticism was to undermine rabbinic authority as part of the spirit of its times, and the historical factors that contributed during the enlightenment to the acculturation, assimilation, and weakening of not only historical Jewish memory among the masses, but indeed any notion of the sacred by preserving recollection of authoritative masorah by which the text received its proper reception history, rather than some "Johny come lately" modern biblical critics, representing the forces of alienation from tradition, and destruction of that tradition, as emblematically represented in Shimshon Raphael Hirsch' *_The Letters of Ben Uzziel_*

From 1925 to 1933 Cassuto served as a Professor of Hebrew language and literature at the University of Florence. In 1933 Cassuto received a similar appointment at the University of Rome. **While there, he cataloged the Hebrew manuscripts of the Vatican Library.** Cassuto, like all the other Jewish professors, was dismissed from the University of Rome with the Racial Laws in 1938. A life-long Zionist, Cassuto accepted an invitation to fill the chair of Bible studies at the Hebrew University in 1939, where he taught till his death in 1951.

Cassuto also published, in various scholarly periodicals, catalogs of the Hebrew manuscripts and incunabula in various Florentine libraries that were models of their type. Cassuto's historical researches culminated in his great work ***Gli ebrei a Firenze nell' età del rinascimento*** (1918), which displays a remarkable mastery of the source material from both the Florentine archives and Hebrew manuscripts in many countries. He also contributed articles on Jewish subjects to the ***Enciclopedia Italiana***; those on Jewish literature were republished in book form as ***Storia della letteratura ebraica postbiblica*** (1938). In addition, Cassuto published basic articles on the Judeo-Italian dialect, the Hebrew inscriptions of southern Italy, and various allied subjects. His primary contribution, "***Shirat ha-Alilah be-Yisrael***," was published in 1944 in *Knesset 8* (English translation in *Biblical and Oriental Studies II*). Among his books on biblical research are a critique of the documentary hypothesis of the composition of Genesis in Italian (***La questione della Genesi***, 1934); and in Hebrew (***Perush al Sefer Bereshit***, 2 vols., 1944–49; English: *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2 vols., 1961–64); a commentary on Exodus (***Perush al Sefer Shemot***, 1942; *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 1967); and ***Torat ha-Te'udot*** (1941; *The Documentary*

Hypothesis, 1961). He was the chief editor of the biblical encyclopedia *Enziklopedyah Mikra'it*.

Cassutto's scholarship was not independent of his bibliographic and librarian detective sleuthing when identifying the Aleppo Codex. This genius of Cassutto not only shows his knowledge of what is in the books of the library but his ability to apply the authoritative Masoretic knowledge to the Bibliographic act of identifying and verifying that "what was supposed for a century to be a pious legend of the Jewish community of Aleppo and was disbelieved by most scholars- named, that the Aleppo Codex is the selfsame model codex declared authoritative by Maimonides in his great halakhic compendium (the Code of MT) with regard to certain fundamental questions of preparing Torah scrolls- is true." Cassutto with his knowledge of the Rambam was able to verify and identify that the Aleppo Codex is the codex of Maimonides, and as such became the halakhically binding model for later generations. Cassutto's "proof" is based on Rambam identifying an odd irregular number of pesukim in the Aleppo Codex in *Shirat Hayam* in *parashah Beshallah* (Shemot 14] (2) and in *parashah Hazinu* the Song of Moses (Deut. 32), and (3) open and closed sections.

From Jacob ben Hayyim to Baer and Ginsburg determining if the Aleppo Codex indeed is the text sanctioned by Maimonides became an ultimate goal for the ideological (*sit venia verbo*) assumptions of editors of the printed Bibles. Heinrich Graetz in 1871 attempted to authenticate the claim of the community of Aleppo of the authenticity of the Aleppo Codex. The Aleppo Rabbinate was cautious and distrustful of *Wissenschaft* scholars. Thus no modern scholar was allowed to investigate in general the codex of photograph it for microfilm. A number of scholars, including Paul Kahle, doubted the Aleppo communities claims and dated the manuscript later than the time of the Rambam.

As history would have it, Cassutto played the key role in the identification of the Aleppo Codex. This was based on Cassutto's physical examination of the text after permission from the Aleppo Community.

Cassutto based his proof on Rambam's own rules and remarks about the Codex: (1) Maimonides notes the copy he examined had 67 verses found in Spanish and Yeminite scrolls as opposed to the regular 70 # of verses found in many Ashkenaz manuscripts. Which may be based on an esoteric gematria. Maimonides states that he noted down the open and closed sections as well as the layout of the two Pentateuchal songs according to that model codex. Thus the point of focus for Rambam is (1) open and closed sections, (b) Song of Moses (Deut32) and (c) Song of Moses (Shemot 14), (d) numbers of lines preceding and following Song of Moses. Rambam writes:

The layout of the Song of Moses: Every single line has a space in its middle like a closed section, so that every line is divided into two. And it is written in seventy lines.

Maimonides states that the number of lines is 70. This statement destined halakhah. Rambam decided that Song of Moses should be written in 70 lines and the verses of the following prose section in 5 lines. Ha-Meiri held however that the correct way is 67 lines for the Song and 6 lines for the closing section Maimonides decision was accepted by many later decisors such as Rav Yosef Karo.

The Aleppo Codex is not only the oldest complete codex of the Tiberian bible text known, but is it altogether the earliest complete Codex of the Masoretic subsystem which had been perfected by the Ben Asher family. Maimonides identification of the Aleppo Codex as containing the complete Bible proved significant. In the ***Mishneh Torah, Sefer Ahavah, Hilkhoh Sefer Tora, 8:4 Rambam.***

the Cario MS of Moses ben Asher was reconsidered by Cassutto with the qualification and caveat “*Ule*” (perhaps), to the rank of the “MS which Maimonides consulted” and thus it was chosen for the bible edition which Cassutto was planning.

Gershom Scholem, 1897-1982

Speaking on the occasion of Scholem’s 60th birthday in 1958, Agnon expressed the esteem in which the Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig held his younger scholar Scholem. Rosenzweig knew Scholem before Scholem made Aliyah. Rosenzweig noted Scholem’s “*great knowledge, his precision to cite sources, and his striving to return to the mikor of primary sources, for his critical analysis, the astounding breadth and strength of his memory, and his ability to cast off and break through “shells” that are outer, superfluous, and mere intellectual klippot, to penetrate to the core,*” generating the intellectual equivalent of nuclear fission (shibeir hageronim). When Agnon once visited Rosenzweig after Scholem had just called, Rosenzweig remarked to Agnon, “*I believe Gershom (scholem) may become a sacrifice to the bibliography of the Kabbala. But he added “the sacrifice is worthy of the altar.”* Scholem as a bibliographer went beyond mere listing of books, and annotating bibliographies. His multi-faceted scholarship, which operated 24/7, even when strolling in Meah Shearim, to scour used Jewish book stores for texts, always viewed books themselves as the noble sepulchers and keystones enabling his creative work.

Scholem purchased his first book on Kabbala in Berlin in 1915. It was a copy of the Zohar on which he inscribed on the title page, “***Gershom Ish Schalom.***” Twenty two years later in his home in Jerusalem, he owned multiple editions and impressions of the Zohar, over 222 editions. This Derridean “archive fever” cannot be described as bourgeois “a Basbanes gentle madness.” Rather Scholem’s library was a reflection of the extension of his intellectual quest and kindred soul for the subject. Scholem paid to bring to Israel when he made Aliyah 2000 books, six hundred of them on Kabbalah. One reason driving Scholem to make Aliyah, besides being a strong unrepentant Zionist, is his desire to explore the abundance of books to be found in Jerusalem. Scholem was captivated by the prospect of the book trade in Israel at the time post WWI. Immediately upon his arrival Scholem began to scour all the book shops of the

Old City's Jewish Quarter and the Mea Shearim neighborhood. As he put it in his memoirs, while the JNUL, located at the time in the *Bnei Brith* House, was his place of work, nearby *Me'a She'arim* was his playground."

In 1937 Scholem printed ***Quntres alu le-shalom*** (come to Peace, a pun on the bibliophile's last name), a list of rare titles on Kabbalah and Hasidism. It contained 80 rare titles in Hebrew and 31 in other languages, Scholem holding that translations as a form of interpretation were essential to understand as Walter Benjamin his friend put it in "***Die Aufgabe des Uebersetzers***" to discern the "cultural spirit of an age." Scholem, like the last scene in the film *Amadeus Mozart*, in which the genius composure on his deathbed writes his own resurrection symphony, analogously on Scholem's deathbed gave instructions for purchasing books. Scholem's magnanimity is seen in his donation of a magnificent library of more than 20 thousand Jewish volumes which he gifted to the JNUL while still alive, containing not only printed books but manuscripts (ms.), pamphlets, broadsheets, offprints, in the field of Jewish mysticism.

Scholem arrived in Jerusalem in 1923 and opted to work in the library dealing with books, rather than as he wrote working teaching math at a teacher's seminary. Scholem noted, the choice motivated because at the library he would be dealing with books, and "almost everything about them, that interested (Scholem)." From 1923 to 1927 Scholem was head of the JNUL's Hebraica and Judaica department. His post was financed by what he called "*the schnorring fund*" a euphemism for cash donations left by visiting tourists, and only later formerly established in trust. Therefor under difficult circumstance with lacks of financial resources Scholem helped Bergmann build the library collection. In 1927 the library published a classification system for Judaica developed and introduced by Scholem. The system provided more room by enumeration of the Dewey system call numbers to the special requirements of Jewish studies for Jewish mysticism.

In 1930 Scholem published a **catalogue of the Kabbalistic manuscripts** (ms.) owned by the JNUL prepared with the help of scholar Issachar Yoel which is an essential research source to this day

The relationship of Scholem's research and teaching to his bibliographic and library activities are essential to each other, working in tandem. Two of Scholem's works are devoted completely to bibliography. As early as 1927 he published ***his Bibliographia Cabbalistica***. It contains 1302 entries on Kabbalah and a list of 273 editions of *Sefer Zohar* and its addenda and pirushim. How the young 14 year olds first purchase of a set of ***Sefer HaZohar*** in Berlin grew into a definitive editions of its recencions and offshoots is remarkable. Malachi Beit Arie notes that Scholems own working copy is so marked up with hundreds of additional handwritten entries, that it itself is a treasure trove of insights

Further in 1928 Scholem published an ***annotated bibliography of the literature of Bratslav Hassidim***. He dedicated this as a 50th anniversary birthday present to his friend Martin Buber. This booklet was playfully endowed with an apposite *gematria* for

the year of the books publication. Scholem's dedication of the announcement of the published work to his friend Martin Buber was a way Scholem linked bibliography and academic scholarship in general not as a game with words but as an act of intellectual friendship .

Scholem put himself at risk, to retrieve and bring back to JNUL confiscated Nazi "loot" of the treasury of the Rabbinic library that the Nazis wanted for "display" (learning about, rather than from) a Museum to the murdered Jewish race. Scholem risked all to bring back these "captive books" likened in Jewish law to having "gone over a waterfall" in a **mabual** (see gemarah) to the Jewish homeland, rather than let them sit unused unconsulted, merely as so much investment capital on libraries in Europe, whose host culture has played a significant role in the eradication of the living culture to which these books in part testify to long living and vibrant cultural presence in Europe. Scholem is reported for instance to have "wept" while walking in the Jewish cemetery of Prague home to gedolim such as the Maharal, Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz (author of Shneu Luchot HaBrit), the Tosofot Yom Tov, and even Franz Kafka, because Scholem took to heart his dedication and love of the cultural legacy of the Jewish people and Rabbinic elites.

Scholem also in his lifetime supervised the committee of the **Hebrew Palaeography Project**. In 1965 his proposal to the *Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* to study all dated medieval Hebrew manuscripts (ms) and gather information about their technical, technological, and graphic features, and then to computerize this data, for further analysis, to arrive at knowledge of Hebrew typology was a mission in which Scholem invested great enthusiasm.

Thirdly Scholem supported the project of the **Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts** (ms.) from collections around the world in order to identify and catalogue them. 25 years before David ben Gurion, initiated the establishment of this Institute, Scholem wrote to his friend Chaim Nachman Bialik, "the requisite ms.,... must be photographed... and assembled in a special collection under the aegis of the JNUL, so that those which are not published (by scholars) will yet be available for all the generations to come."

Dr. Aryeh Chaim Leib Vilsker 1919-1988

Dr. Vilsker was married to my grandmother Miriam's (zl) cousin Dr. Gita Gluskin. My grandmother's mother was Keila Lieba Gluskin Helfgott (zl) whose brother was Rav Menachem Mendel Gluskin (ztsl) the Av Bet Din of Minsk, whose father was Rabbi Aaron Ori gluskin of Paritch after Chabad Luminary Rabbi Hillel of Paritch. While Rav Menachem's father in law was Rabbi Eliezer Rabinowitch (ztsl) who was the son in law of the Minsker Gadol Rav Eliyahu Pearlman (ztsl), one of Rav Menachem's son in law was Dr. Vilsker. Vilsker's sister-in laws and brother in law were very accomplished. His wife Gita received a doctorate from St. Petersburg University on the work of Rabbi Yehudah Alharizi [author of the Takamoni] and his sister in law Leah Gluskin Amusin was formidable expert in 2nd Temple Judaism, and married to Dead Sea Scroll scholar Josef David Amusin (zl). In January of 1949 Vilsker proposed to my aunt Gita Gluskin and in December of 1949 there son Dr. Emanuel Gluskin Shlita who became a

prominent Israeli Electrical engineer, getting a visa out in 1975, was born, now living in Jerusalem. The younger son, Boris, with his mother Gita, wife Katya and two sons, had relocated to Israel in 1990. The grandchildren Misha and Sasha grew up and served in the army

Vilsker had two grandfathers that were Talmud scholars with whom Lev learned. Later a Talmud teacher was employed but his grandfathers also continued teaching and testing Lev on Friday at the end of the week. Meanwhile a grandmother would invite Lejbele to another room where she secretly gave him a small glass of wine and piece of Lekach honey cake as reward for his learning, "a taste fo the world to come." That was an incenstive but later he learned lishma. His mother would servet he Talmud teacher with great respect and honor always preparing a glass of tea for the teacher. The Melamed would say, "Gemara never cools down, yet a tea can cool down." Die gemorah vaet nit kalt vern, oon dee tay ken kalt vern." The Talmud teacher initiated Vilsker into the rythms and warp and woof of the Aramaic of the Bavli with its sing song cadences of **מאי קא משמע לן** (what does this mean?) and **מנא הני מלי** (how do we know this?)

My focus on Vilsker the librarian illustrates how a great scholar drew on his research and linguistic knowledge to unravel one of the most important discoveries, namely 22 unkown poems of Rav Yehudah halevi. Vilsker's example also shows how difficult it was in Russia for Jews to not only pursue scholarly careers in Hebrew philology but also be Jews as Vilsker we will see was surveilled continuously by the KGB. Vilsker in his semi-retirement accessed fragments to the Cairo Geniza that previously had been unknown to the world at large. This is because Firkovitch excavated the Cairo Geniza before Solomon Schechter. Schechter had access to the "left overs" of Firkovitch's gathering of Geniza fragments. Vilsker played a key role in clandestinely disseminating knowledge of these unkown Geniza works that Firkovitch assembled for the Saltkykov Library in St. Petersburg before Schechter's efforts.

In 1950 Lev graduated from the University with a diploma of Linguist-Semitologist and received a position in the State Public Library named after ME *Saltykov Shcedrin* at the department of Hebrew and Yiddish books, which was later renamed the Department of literatures of Asia and Africa. There he was renamed Lev Yefimovich by the staff. He was a librarian and advanced to senior bibliographic researcher.

Professor Vinnikov wrote a letter of recommendation that Dr. Vilsker saved and later relayed to his son Dr. Emanuel Gluskin who made Aliyah and lives in Jerusalem. Dr. Gluskin sent me the letter in Russian which in translation reads:

Letter of Recommendation

Vilsker, L. H, born in 1919, had entered the Oriental Department of Leningrad State University (named after L. A. Zhdanov and awarded the State medal after Lenin) as a second-year student of the Division of Assyriology and Hebraistics in 1996. / Before that, Vilsker had attended the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute of Foreign languages/. L. H. Vilsker have been studying seriously the Semitic languages / Arabic, ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, Syrian/ and he also devoted a lot of attention to philosophy and

history by taking a number of both general and special courses of lectures, and by conducting an extensive review of literature. In addition, comrade Vilsker has been studying independently the recently found Ugarit manuscripts that represent the extremely important cultural monuments. These resulted in his course project, "**Laryngeal sounds in Ugarit language**," which demonstrates a profoundness of the author's approach to the analysis of the poorly understood and complex linguistic problems.

He dedicated his Diploma project to the *word-formation in Hebrew language* — this is a question of considerable interest for linguistics, which was not explored properly by science. This Diploma project had received the highest praise from the *Committee of the Department of Arabic Philology* in May of 1950.

The solid training received by comrade Vilsker at the University, as well as completion by him, independently, the serious scientific works mention above, give reason to believe that he is thoroughly prepared for conducting scientific work and scientific research.

[Senior researcher of Institute of Oriental Studies of Academy of Sciences, USSR Professor Vinnikov]

Despite strong recommendations, His scholarly life was not easy particularly do to the lack of publishing opportunities in Russia. He was to many an unknown. Who could know the Russian Hebrew philologist Vilsker if there was nowhere for him to be published? Vilsker wrote countless items (100 have been identified) in Russian and other European languages on a great breadth and depth of subjects. Vilsker scorned narrow specialization and his knowledge was broad and immense. His works on ancient manuscripts found in the Dead Sea area and the linguistic works on various Semitic languages, as well as his work in lexicography were just a few of his accomplishments. A total of 100 scientific papers have been ascribed to Vilsker but he had no place often to publish his findings. Some were published in Yiddish in the journal **Sovietish Heimland**, but it was not easy for Vilsker to "find a *shtetl* and forum to share his research." However RAMBI only retains 2 items relating to Vilskers work on the Samaritans and their language: "On Leib H. Vilsker **Manuel d'arameen samaritain** translated from Russian by J. Margain in **Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Sceintifique**, 1981, reviewed by Maurice Baillet in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 42, 4 (1983), p. 295-297. Yes, Vilsker taught himself as an auto-didact Samaritan language and Samaritan graphics and like Avraham Berliner took pride as at being an autodidact.

Vilsker as an autodidact Hebrew philologist focused primarily on the linguistic aspects of the Samaritan language. His scholarly interests included the *whole gamut of Jewish studies*. He wrote articles on a wide range of topics. The following are the tip of the iceberg of a few of his essays characterized by thoroughness and depth:

- (1) At the root of Pushkiniana among the Jews
- (2) Works of *Scholem Aleichem* translated into Hebrew
- (3) A review of a bibliography of *Mendel Moykher Sforim*
- (4) The *Medzhybizh tombstone (the kever of the Baal Shem Tov)*

- (5) *Unknown letters of Hayyim Nahman Bialik*
- (6) etc

The Saltykov's libraries publication, Oriental Collection, included Vilsker's published work that appeared during the years of *perestroika*, after his passing. This work is called, *The Book of Wisdom* by Saeed bin Babshada . It became the basis for numerous studies and publications. *Babshad* was a philosopher and poet who lived in Babylon. *Frikovich* obtained this book from a grave in the Jewish cemetery in Egypt. Small fragments of the book were found by different archaeologists in different times and are now located in different libraries of the world. The Israeli scientist *E Shearman* who visited the Leningrad library in 1960 mentioned the manuscript. Vilsker gave the name to the manuscript ***Sefer haHokmah***. Vilsker's knowledge of the literature of the Middle Ages and totality of foreign languages allowed Vilsker to establish a genuine name of the author and the time of his life that belonged to the second half of the 10th century and first half of the 11th century during the bridge between the Geonim and Rishonim

Dr. Fleischer argued that the author was a *Persian Jew* and wrote a whole book about *Saeed Ben Babshad*. *Vladimir Lazaris* made another translation of 37 couplets from this book chapter "***Hymn to Wisdom***" which was published in *Ariel* journal number 15, 1993. The following is a fragment prose translation by Vilsker:

***The moon and the sun are shining- thee are the greatest of the stars
But in the light of Wisdom, all stars are pale
The tiaras are numerous, the decorations are luxurious
But Before the crown of Wisdom, all tiaras deteriorate
The pure gold is magnificent, the precious stones are splendid
But before the charm of Wisdom they all fade***

In the preface to his book ***Mishlei shel Saeed bin Babshad*** Dr. Ezra Fleischer wrote that the Vilsker labors towards rescuing these fragments are simply infinitely invaluable. "*I was looking for ways to see Firkowicz manuscripts. Professor Shearman saw them, but did not study them, and I had been waiting for 15 years.*" In Fleischer's book that number over 300 pages, Fleischer constantly refers to "***the conclusions and findings of Lev Yefimovich as invaluable.***" *Fleischer refers to Vilsker as ha-iluei*

Vilsker was known to some extent at the Leningrad State Public Library named after M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, where Vilsker worked for almost 30 years and of course was admired by other Hebraists and friends including *Alex Tarn, James Lieberman, Eliezer Rabinovitch,*

Dr. Ezra Fleischer, expert in Medieval Hebrew poetry, and pioneer of the Hebrew poems in the Cairo Geniza, memorialized the following about Vilsker in the ***Yediot Achronot*** on March 13, 1988:

“The passing of Leo Vilsker is a great loss. Our world mourns not just the important research of this great man, an aristocrat of spirit, who was a messenger from an unfriendly country that persecuted him and Jewish scholarship. Leo Vilsker was a colleague with a generous and selfless soul. Many Israeli scientists have lost a friend who inspired us from afar (in Leningrad) with his never tiring research and quest for understanding, with his fiery supreme creative passion, and who at the same time astounded us with his knowledge, and rare modesty.”

Fleischer had fought hard to bring Vilsker to serve in a joint appointment as Professor and head librarian at the Wiedner Harvard Library. Dr. Isadore Twerski tried to bring Dr. Vilsker to the Harvard Wiedner collection of Judaica, with a joint appointment to lecture on the holdings of the Firkovitch Saltykov library, but could not secure a visa for the scholar/librarian.

Shulamit Shalit writes of this connection with Harvard by noting:

When E. Fleischer was visiting the United States for his research for a whole year, he came to a brilliant idea - to organize a trip for Vilsker to the United States. Finally, he would meet with the dear friend, if not in Israel then in the United States, on the neutral ground. Lev Efimovich was delighted with the official invitation from Harvard University to read lectures about the collection of Hebrew manuscripts in the Leningrad Public Library. He decided to tempt the fate. He was redirected from one office to another, and then to another... He came, he wrote, he was refused, and he continued coming again. Oh, dear naive Professor Fleischer! Maybe it was not worth to start this fight, a fight with not the (don Quixtian) windmills – but with the reinforced-concrete Soviet mills...

The scholarly journal **Kiryat Sefer**, featured Vilsker’s photo portrait with a long article by Professor Fleischer dedicated to the Vilsker’s discovery of unpublished poems of Rav Yehudah HaLevy and Rav HaLevy’s friendship with *Rabbi Moshe ibn Ezra*. This article had been ready to send to print, but then came the unexpected and untimely passing of Leib Vilsker suddenly in St. Petersburg. Fleischer made changes in the introduction and footnotes and the editors accepted Fleischer’s request to include a special page with a photo of Vilsker. This publishing of a photo in **Kiryat Sefer** was the first time in the 62 year history of journal **Kiryat Sefer** first published since 1926. In this photo Vilsker is wearing a white sweater that he inherited from his scholar brother in Law *Joseph Amusin* who married my maternal grandmother’s cousin Leah Gluskina Amusin, the sister of Vilsker’s wife Gita Gluskiina. In the article by Dr. Fleischer focus was upon the youthful years of Yehudah HaLevy and to the beginning of his friendship with Rabbi Moses ibn Ezra, a venerable poet. The subtitle reads, “*according to the research of Arie Vilsker.*” The article was already sent for printing when a message about the sudden death of Lev Vilsker had arrived from Leningrad. Professor Fleischer hastened to make necessary changes in the introduction, main text, and notes The

present text had to be changed to past tense. Fleischer insisted that for the first time in 62 years the journal allocate a special page for Arie Vilsker's photograph. What followed after Vilsker's passing was a *tidal wave* of popular newspaper articles and scholarly publications broadcasting the importance of Vilsker's research however clandestinely smuggled out of Russia.

An obituary appeared in Journal "Sovetish Heimland" (Soviet motherland), No 5, May 1988, Translated into by L. Belov on July 6th 1988, Jerusalem and reads:

Obituary for Vilsker

In the beginning of 70-s, there were publication by a new author in a journal "Sovetish Geimland." The readers were immediately captivated by the unusual character of his materials that were published generally under the rubric "Our announcements." It is possible to recognize the wide diapason of the author's research by mentioning only some titles of his papers: "New materials for the History of Jews in Russia," "Hymn to wisdom: chapter from the unknown book by Said ben Babshad," "The unknown selected aphorisms by philosophers," "About the history of printing among Jews," "The source of Pushkiniana among Jews," "A recently-found parable of Aesop, a Syrian version written in Jewish shrift," "The unknown poems by Yehuda Ha-Levi...." The author of these materials was Leib Vilsker, a Leningrad scientist, candidate of philological sciences.

Leib Vilsker was born in 1919 in a small town of Shumsk of Ternopol region in Ukraine. / From 1940 and till the end of WWII, he served in the Soviet Army. In 1950, he had completed his studies at the Department of Semitology and Hebraistics of Leningrad University. For several years he was in charge of the Department of Semitology at the Leningrad Public Library named after M. E. Saltykov-Schedrin. In 1970, he had defended his dissertation, "Samaritan Language" and received a degree of "candidate of philological sciences." When this dissertation was published as a book in 1974, it was highly appreciated as an important study in semitology as well as a significant contribution to research in the history of Samaritans.

By dedicating his life to the problems of ancient Hebrew literature, Vilsker chose an unbeaten path. Each of his works, undoubtedly, manifests a unique discovery. Almost all his research papers that were published in the journal "Sovetish Geimland," have been reprinted in Jewish and Hebrew press abroad, particularly his works about Yehuda Ha-Levi.

As a scientist, Leib Vilsker accomplished a lot in a field of deciphering the unknown ancient Jewish texts which are located in the library archives in our country [Russia] and which nobody but him was able to study with such competence and pedantic attention to details. In this field, his work has the extreme significance for the world culture. Several Vilsker works were left unfinished, on his desk. A few days before he died, he had sent to the journal an article about the unknown letters of H.-N. Byalik, which Vilsker had been working on during last few months of his life.

"Sovetish Geimland" has published two collections of L. Vilsker' works, which were added to the journal publications under the name "Discovered Treasures," and which included only some of his research papers; both these small books made a strong impression on readers. One can tell with confidence that there will be in the future no researchers of ancient Jewish literature, who would be able to do without discoveries made by L. Vilsker. For the history of ancient Jewish literature, his discoveries have made an invaluable contribution.

In bright memory of Vilsker

Journal "Sovetish Geimland" (Soviet motherland), No 5, May 1988

Translation from Hebrew to Russian by L. Belov July 6th 1988, Jerusalem

Unfortunately while Vilsker was alive the importance of his research was relatively unknown, except after the publication in *Kiryat Sefer* in Israel where he had never been

able to get a VISA out of Russia to go to. Vilsker's scholarship was obscured due to the difficulties of publishing in Jewish related subjects in Russia where such research during Vilsker's lifetime was not only not a priority but frowned upon. One could not even publish any letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Vilsker was a relative unknown, who faced discrimination in Russia against Jewish scholarly matters in general which trickled down to his workplace the Leningrad State Public Library, named after ME Saltykov –Shehedrin. Shalit touches upon the great persecution of Jews under Soviet Hegemony. She writes,

“In 1962 in Leningrad Vilsker visited a cousin of Gita, an Israeli. Gita says, “Leib went to greet her, on the street and they met other people from the Israeli group, one of the KGB photographed them. And for the “communication with foreigners”, the head of the library, a hefty anti-Semite made Vilsker to be removed from the department, where he worked in the speciality of Oriental Manuscripts, and was transferred to the acquisitions department. “

The discomfort of surveillance under the Communists manifested itself throughout the Vilsker family as it did for many Soviet Jews. Gita Gluskina Vilsker told Shulamith Shalit:

“At various times she and Lev were summoned by the authorities. He was "asked" to collect readers' conversations. "What kind of readers?" - He asked in response. - "But there are Jewish elders that visit your library – they dig in the Talmud and other religious literature, they converse..." And then he [the official] added that Vilsker must keep this conversation secret. Vilsker replied: "I have no secrets from my wife." He paused and added: "You know, everyone has his vocation, profession. You cannot do my job, and I cannot do yours."

After that, Lev was not summoned anymore.

As for Gita – this is a different story.” Gita's sister Esther who joined **Hashomer HaTzair** was sent to Siberia for her Zionist activities. Although **HaShomer Hatzair** was a secular Zionist organization, in Russia there was not differentiation, for a Zionist was a Zionist of any political stripe. Thus the **Baal HaTanya** was arrested because of sending funds to Eretz Yisrael and his date of release is celebrated by Chabad Lubabitch to this day as a national and religious holiday. The pattern of the **Baal HaTanya's** arrest under the Tzars, repeated itself in a different modality under the communists when Rav Menachem Mendel Gluskin (father of Gita Gluskina Vilsker) and Vilsker's father in law Rabbi Eliezer Rabinowitch were arrested for religious activities. Reports indicate that the Rabbis were kept awake for 48 hours and then made to sign the false form: There is no religious persecution in Russia. It is told that Rav Gluskin's flock tried to bring their Rabbi his *talis and tefillin* but the communists would not allow this, as the state was opposed to all religious activities amongst not only Jews but also Christians in their religionless state which Marx had warred against in proclaiming ‘*religion as the opiate of the masses.*’

Five years later after being transferred to acquisitions, a new head of the department categorically demanded to bring Vilsker back, for without him, the entire special collection became "*stripped*."

In 1979 Vilsker enjoyed a banquet in honor of his 60th anniversary. That evening, he heard a lot of good things. The next morning he was asked to retire. Vilsker was forced to continue only as a *bookbinder*. With extra time on his hand Vilsker plowed ahead with Hebraica research in the Firkowicz collection.

Abraham Firkowicz, A lover of antiquities, traveled extensively in different countries of the Middle East. At the end of the XIX century, he sold to the Leningrad (then Imperial Public) Library *two collections* that were particularly valuable thanks to the manuscripts from the Cairo Geniza. Abraham Garkavi, Paul Kokovtsov, and prof. Khvolson worked with the manuscripts. Scientists from different countries used to come to have a chance to just take a look at the collection. And now Vilsker decided to "to delve into them." Being free from a job, he directed all his energies to the study of Jewish texts of the collection. He was well versed in different handwritings and fonts and he had a sharp eye for the things that were left unnoticed by others. And his labor was bringing discoveries almost every day. He felt that he had found unknown poetry of the medieval Jewish poets, including poems of Yehuda ħa-Levi, but he could not know that for sure?

When Lev Efimovich would "stumble" on such a poem, he did not know whether it was known to the world or was it a discovery. It was risky to publicly declare a discovery of the poem, and it was premature to publish about it. What if the poem was already published in some unknown edition?

What did he do? He would write down the cached clandestine first line, only a single line, and send it in a letter to Israel, to Ezra Fleischer; Vilsker knew that prof. Fleischer was the preeminent specialist in medieval Hebrew poetry. The venerable professor, extremely excited, would rush, like a high-spirited young man, to **ĥeyhal Shlomo** (Solomon's Palace) to dig for hours in a huge catalogue containing records of all famous poems of medieval poets, and then send a response to Leningrad.

No! Nope! Unpublished! And by this way Vilsker discovers not one or two, but as many as 22 completely unknown poems of the great Yehuda ħa-Levy. He analyses them and publishes his findings, with great difficulties, in "**Sovetish Heimland**" journal, that is, in *Yiddish*, while feeling undisguised suspicion towards himself. Gita's reminiscences:

"Lev was not a poet, but he was forced [by the circumstances] to make translations into Yiddish of the words by the great Yehuda ħa-Levy! The journal was terribly afraid of any word in Hebrew. As an honest researcher, Lev would supplant the translation with a photocopy of an original. An editorial board' footnote would say: "Original photo was omitted because of the lack of space."

But there was an instance when, either by mistake or because the superiors were not present, one fragment' facsimile in Hebrew was printed in the journal and the happy

scientists in Israel, among them Ezra Fleischer, examined and studied every letter in it. What a story!

So, the first publication of Lev Vilsker' research about the unknown poems of Yehuda ħa-Levy (born not later than 1075 - died in 1141) appeared in the February issue of "**Sovetish Heimland**" journal, in 1982. Eight pages altogether. On April 7, there was an announcement about the publication in Israeli newspaper "**Maariv**".

Among those who first responded to this terrific publication were such connoisseurs of medieval poetry and literary historians and experts in Yiddish and Hebrew as Yosef Haim Crunch and Nagid, *leħuda Ratshabi, David Iosifon, Dov Yarden and Nehemiah Aloni*. **The sensation literally rocked the whole scientific world.**

Newspapers were first to respond and then the serious journals started responding. The precious treasure was not buried somewhere in a wilderness in a corner of the earth, not in a cave, but in one of the centers of the civilized world. Many rave responses and reviews reached the author. Inspired by them, Vilsker directed his intelligence and passion of a pioneer on the continued search and analysis of the findings.

A year later, he published a new and almost twenty-page long article entitled "198 poems of Yehuda ħa-Levy in unknown edition." This is how the term "*Vilsker List*" had appeared in the scientific literature, for among the mentioned 198 "first lines" of the works of Yehuda ħa-Levy, the 111 were not mentioned in any other indexes, including the classic catalog by **Shmuel David Luzzatto**, that had been studied by the scientists for more than 150 years.

Among the first who responded to the first and the second publication of Vilsker in "Sovetish Heimland" was a rabbi and scholar *David Yosifon*, who, among other things, was the editor of three volumes - the books of Tanakh (Torah, Prophets, Writings) - with a translation into Russian (published by "Mossad ħa-Rav Kook" in 1978). Originally from Poland, David Yosifon knew both Russian and Yiddish. David Yosifon wrote his second article for the newspaper "**ħa-Tsofe**" on his deathbed. His relatives had sent the article to an editor along with his letter:

"I am writing these words in a hospital fortress" ħadassa," after a major surgery. It turned out that while walking on Jaffa street, I fell and lost consciousness. And though I cannot yet get out of bed, I think that this is my duty and pleasure to tell you that the scientist Leib Vilsker, from Leningrad, had made a new discovery and he had written about it in "Sovetish Heimland." I want and must ask for the attention of all the scientists and researchers towards that fact of immense scholarly impact."

Last letter. The words of greeting from one scientist to another – across the Iron Curtain. Of course, they [Vilsker and Yosifon] were not acquaintances.

Later on, others will reference this article by David Yosifon. It is intelligent, insightful, and full of light and love.

In the similar way, "while descending to a grave" (in the same in 1983), Professor **Nehemiah Aloni** had blessed Vilsker and his labors. That was a reaction to the first article by Vilsker. Professor Aloni wrote in a journal "**Sinai**"(number 93),

"We are waiting with great impatience (bhe kil'on eynaim) a continuation of his [Vilsker'] work in all its brilliance and depth. We learned more from his concise article than from the thick-winded volumes of other voluble authors." After enumerating orderly the seven discoveries of Vilsker in the eight-page article, while giving them a clear scientific analysis, Aloni adds, "... **and the most important discovery is the author himself, who, until yesterday, was not listed among the researcher-experts in the works of Yehuda ħa-Levi but who had become the one from today.**"

*Nehemiah Aloni named the poem of Yehuda ħa-Levy about **pogrom in Toledo** in the XII century the fourth discovery in the first article by Vilsker. Aloni writes that the historians knew about the anti-Jewish pogroms perpetrated by Muslims in southern Spain.*

"I wondered, why until now there have been no studies on elegies (mournful songs) in the works of Yehuda ħa-Levy. And here came Vilsker and presented us with a new poem filled with the clear hints about participation of northern Christians in the pogroms. And he presents two expressions that were competently treated by Vilsker: " am seir" (hairy) – most likely that was a nickname for Christians; and "Yad Esau"- the hand of Esau (recall his hairiness) that could be a hint about Christians as well.

*The poem is called "**On the pogrom in Toledo.**" Let me to give you first its rough translation,, so that the poem content would become clear for the reader. The phonetics of each strophe in Hebrew (each stanza ends with the word "day" - yom)*

Then the poem develops a topic of the former prosperity:

Jews lived in Seira, in Christian Spain, in prosperity and benevolence, their children were counselors for the kings, their elders looked regal and stately, everybody studied Torah, observed the Jewish laws, and lived in peace with the neighbors - " And Esau's hand was with me," but "in his heart, he dreamed about evil deeds, he was thinking about my blood every day."

Here is how Yehuda ħa-Levi sounds in Hebrew:

*Lo Aleichem shomey Shimi / ħa mitablim al-Nigi / Haim kulhem ħa-yom.
Schaal them shmatem lo / lo agidhem them yedatem / sim lvavhem minutes ħa-yom.
Ned nirdefa Eich kalta / ħa-paa-in BAME Hite / ħa-htaat ħa-Zot ħa-yom.*

Ve-ħodiyu golaten Ariel / ki Shevet E-Israel / Nowhere ħa-yom ...

*The fifth discovery, according Aloni, is a **song of love "Yonim Yaraneinu."** Here is a brief story. When this song was not known yet in Israel, Vilsker' friend in Leningrad, the **composer Hirsch Paikin**, created music for the poem, whereas his wife, Clara Yakovlevna, performed the song. At that time, they both started learning Hebrew with Vilsker, secretly. Inspired by the work of the scientist, Paikin wrote a lot of music for the poems by Yehuda ħa-Levy and he even composed an opera about this great poet. They performed this repertoire on many occasions in Israel. But Paikins are not anymore. Clara Yakovlevna made a cassette recording of their songs whose words are:*

:

Yonim Yaron ka-ka-moni chem / Al Bein MASHAV zaaku Mei Mayhew / Homim al Yamim ħalhu bli hemda / u-Zman peyrud Khalaf ki bi-Mayhew / (Here performers repeat the first two lines as the chorus).

Ve-ezkor Dodi dadey Yonati / Ki Emergency aloft bosmeyhem alai ...

(Doves are cooing, and I am like them /. Here is the watering. And the waters are pure and they murmur like a sea. /Joyless is my wandering. It's time to part. / Doves are cooing. I remember my little dove, the scent of her breasts. /

A great scientific discovery gives impetus to entire scientific field and entails an avalanche of new investigations and publications. Lev Vilsker managed to publish three more articles (altogether five), but there was already written the sixth paper that came out after his death. Professor **Yosef Yahalom** writes:

"In the last article, Vilsker presents for the first time the entirely message of ħa-Levy to his great patron in Granada, the poet Moshe Ibn Ezra, but ... in Yiddish. The text of the Hebrew original of this important manuscript was prohibited for printing, and the death of Vilsker had closed the last window through which we looked furtively, almost like thieves, into the world of Hebrew manuscripts in Leningrad, which was unknown to us."

I hear in these words both anger and bitterness; don't we completely agree with them, while pondering over the fate of such scholars trapped in Communist Russia, and heroes as Lev Vilsker, Joseph Amusin, and many others? Once the Iron Curtain fell, the notable *Yosef Yahalom* hurried to Leningrad; he then told about the trip and about how he was getting acquainted with the "treasure" of Vilsker ("**Peamim**" journal, number 46-7, 1991).

Conclusion

The 5 scholar librarians introduced today, namely **Steinschneider, Marx, Cassutto, Scholem, and Vilsker** were scholars first but saw their research as working in tandem with their being librarians and bibliographers. Today the fusion of librarians who are

both technologists and bureaucrats, let us call (it) *technocracy*, is making the inspiring model of the scholar librarian on par with the equivalent of a rare species such as the great horned owl in environmental terms. Without such librarian models of scholarly excellence not only will librarianship be the less for it, but if you read my paper in the proceedings, librarianship by neglecting the importance of Jewish scholarship as something not separate from Judaica librarianship but essential to its continuity. Technocracy in librarianship is digging its own grave and will be fatal to the profession of Judaica Librarianship. Stefen Reif hints towards these changes in his speech that was sent in at the AJL 2008 Cleveland Conference. We recall:

Once upon a time dear colleagues, it was not unusual- it was perhaps even perfectly regular- for those with responsibilities for great libraries or outstanding collections of books to function all at once as librarians, bibliophiles, bibliographers, researchers, scholars, and managers. What is more some of the greatest names in the history of modern Jewish scholarship including Moritz Steinschneider, Abraham Berliner, Adolf Neubauer, Alexander Marx, and Gershom Scholem, played such a variety of roles not so much because they were imposed upon them but rather in response to what 'book learning' meant to them.

Alas at some point in more recent decades libraries and educational institutions of which they are a part have taken to splitting such functions and assigning each of them to a different post, while at the same time adding additional breeds of librarians whose sole function is "technology" or fund raising. When seen in the broader bibliographical context, this may or may not be a favorable development. What is beyond question is that it has led to a most unfavorable suspicion of any member of the profession who attempts to be a kind of factotum that was once the norm.

For reasons which I have attempted to explain elsewhere my career led me to a commitment to a multi-faceted librarianship and a dogged determination to combine scholarship with bibliography, research with cataloguing, lecturing with fundraising, and paleography with technology. Because this was not always understood or appreciated by the colleagues, institutions and societies with which I came into contact in the world of learning, I sometimes seriously doubted whether I had made the right decision or whether I could have recorded greater achievements had I pursued a more conventional interpretation of a librarians role.

Recalling Steinschneider's remark which he did not say but was attributed to him in a necrology: ***Wir haben nur noch die Aufgabe die Ueberrest des Judentums ehrenvoll zu bestatten***" my goal is not so much "give a decent burial "to these 5 historical scholar librarian giants, but rather to let the contributions made by these scholar librarians not be forgotten as the Besht notes, "***BiZikronot Yesh HaGeulah***" and to warn about the greater danger and risk today as Judaica librarianship does not cherish, revere, or celebrate the model of the scholarly librarian as it once did due as

Reif notes to the **specialization** that is the nature of *technocracy* or what continental philosophy calls “**Verlassenheit.**” Yet the “**shicksal laddenkeit des Langesprache**” dictates that if we abandon the model of the scholarly Judaica librarian this will be fatal and suicidal for Judaica librarianship.

The sketch of the above 5, 20th century librarians is a larger project of mine to write a **systematische WirkungsGeschichte** of the cultural history (**Bildungs Roman**) of Judaica Librarianship . Not only does the 20th century scholarly librarians include many more than 5 scholar librarians featured above, including also other great 20th century librarians including **Stefen Reif, Menachem Schmelzer, Jacob Dienstag, and Malachi Beit Arie**, for three of which I have obtained primary document interview archival testimony. However even this historical preservation of the endangered scholar librarian is part of a larger project too. This focus on 19th and 20th century librarians is part of a larger project. which in the big picture is to write a multivolume work on the history of Judaica textual collections from antiquity to the middle ages noting the *dynamic of orality and written texts*, to the present Etext and digital generation. I have already published on ancient 2nd Temple Hebraica collections at <https://sites.google.com/site/mtevensco/elazar-> classification relying on hints from Josephus and Talmudic texts, and on medieval Hebraica collections at <http://databases.jewishlibraries.org/node/49232> relying on Talmudic and historical texts by scholars of the Middle Ages . The above attachment is merely a small piece (from the 19th and 20th C) of this larger project to a **systematische WirkungsGeschichte of the cultural history (Bildungs Roman) of Judaica Librarianship**, booklore, and Jewish textual collections from antiquity to the post-modern present. This could be 1 volume or even 7 volumes:

1. Jewish textual collections in antiquity drawing on Josephus and Ancient Near Eastern Studies
2. Jewish textual collections in early middle ages drawing on primary Rabbinic texts
3. Jewish textual collections in the Renaissance drawing on Shabbatai Bass’ and other catalogs, the Phenomena of Christian Hebraism, Records of the Inquisition, and transition from ms.and incunabula to the Revolution of Hebrew Printing by Soncino and Bomberg
4. Jewish textual collection in the 19th and 20th centuries and Great scholar librarians (current paper/piece of this puzzle)
- 5 Post-modern Judaica Librarianship born digital- revolutions in database construction (Bar Ilan, Otzar HaHokmah, Hebrewbooks.org,, Kotar) and digitization of archival primary ms. such as the Cairo Geniza, DSS, and JNUL ketubot collectson for example
6. The Dangers and risks of post-modern Judaica Librarianship based on Continental Philosophies critique of "techn-crazy"
7. Afterward “once upon a time dear readers....”

All of these Judaica librarians lives are a Kiddush Hashem and it is a great blessing that we can sit at their feet and still learn from the findings of their research and the eternal monologues of their scholarship.