

# CONTENTS

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<b>What's in <i>Kesher</i> 59: "The Death of Television?" – Change, Crisis, and Confrontation in the Media</b>	7e
<b>English Abstracts</b>	9e
<b>On "The Death of Television": Virtual Dialogue with Elihu Katz</b> – Gabriel Weimann	9
<b>"Tweety": Patterns of Activity of Israeli Journalists on Twitter</b> – Tal Laor	16
<b>The New Challenge: Cyber Communication Crises</b> – Yarden Vatikay and Yehiel Limor	40
<b>Collection Networks of US Jewish Donations and Their Distribution to Jewish Refugees in Eastern Europe during World War I as a Self-Organizing System</b> – Moshe Harpaz	60
<b>The Genesis of Ben-Yehuda's <i>Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew</i></b> – Zohar Shavit	85
<b>"A Stage Show": "Old" and "Young" as Pioneers of Criticism of the Hebrew Press</b> – Gideon Kouts	132
<b>Abba Ahimeir and the Hebrew Press in Mandatory Palestine</b> – Ouzi Elyada	148
<b>The Impact of Articles in Israeli Media on Judges and Their Rulings</b> – Tal Laor and Anat Peleg	164
<b>Israeli Cinema in the Early Twenty-First Century: Contradictions in Traditional Sephardi-Mizrahi Religious Practice, Community Hierarchies, and Family Life</b> – Yvonne Kozlovsky Golan	188
<b>Documentation</b>	212
<b>Research Reports</b>	228
<b>Book Reviews</b>	232
<b>Contributors to This Issue</b>	250

Germany and Austria in April 1917, during those times of crisis and instability, in response to which local committees were established to solve economic problems and new or alternative routes were found to transfer money to refugees, a process that can be seen as generating a new order leading to periods of stability.

The research is based on a discourse analysis of articles, news items, and reports about financial aid by American Jews to Jewish refugees in Eastern Europe that appeared in Hebrew in newspapers during the war. The period reviewed was from the outbreak of the war (August 1, 1914) until its end (November 11, 1918). Thirteen relevant newspapers published in the United States, Eretz Israel under Ottoman rule, and Eastern Europe formed part of the collection. The body of these newspapers constituted the textual search space in which 67 news items or articles were located that dealt directly with the collection of specific donations of money for Jewish refugees in Eastern Europe and their approach to them.

Those were halcyon days for committees, both small and large, in the United States and in Eastern Europe. Whenever a problem arose, a committee was established which was tasked with providing assistance to refugees. The committees arose, as a rule, not from a directive or instruction from above but from the practical need for a solution. The transfer of support to Jewish refugees in Eastern Europe was carried out in two main ways: public and private. The public route was based on community donations that were coordinated by the Joint Distribution Committee of American Jews (the Joint) and through it, using US diplomatic missions, to local committees in Eastern Europe for dispersal among the needy. The private route, for people who supported their relatives and families outside the United States, generally used the same infrastructure that was set up as part of the public route. Diplomatic missions received sums of money along with payment instructions to the recipients.

During the war, the Joint supported about 800,000 Jewish refugees in Eastern Europe to the extent of about 15 million dollars. This was the contribution of American Jews as a public. The scope of the private sector's contribution, that is, people's support for their relatives outside the United States who became refugees, is difficult to quantify.

## **THE GENESIS OF BEN-YEHUDA'S *COMPLETE DICTIONARY OF ANCIENT AND MODERN HEBREW***

ZOHAR SHAVIT

The circumstances under which Eliezer Ben-Yehuda conceived of and created one of the most important assets of modern Hebrew culture, the *Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew*, have to date scarcely been explored. This article seeks to remedy this deficiency with the help of materials recently discovered in the archives of the Alliance israélite universelle (AIU) in Paris. The file consists of more than one hundred letters, mostly in French and some in German, written by and to Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and his spouse Hemda between 1880 and 1909 – the period during which the *Dictionary* came into being.

The letters uncover the circumstances and motivations that led Eliezer Ben-Yehuda to alter his original plan to compose a practical dictionary on a relatively small scale and instead to take on the immense project of compiling a seventeen-volume historical-scientific dictionary, complete with an extensive introductory volume. They tell the unknown story of an enormous intellectual and scholarly enterprise – and of the tireless fundraising required to ensure its publication. Indeed, the letters make clear that it was the philanthropists that provided support for the Dictionary and insisted that Ben-Yehuda change the project from a practical reference intended for learners of Hebrew into a work of academic significance that would fully encompass the richness and evolution of the Hebrew language over generations.

The letters also shed light on a perhaps unexpected obstacle: The enterprise of composing the Dictionary failed to win the support of Zionist institutions and organizations; Ben-Yehuda was instead forced to plead for support from non-Zionist sources in order to secure funding. Not only did Zionist organizations not cooperate with Ben-Yehuda, but they sought to discourage the project and at times even stood in his way. In contrast, Ben-Yehuda was able to recruit several non-Zionist organizations and individuals whose assistance would ultimately enable the realization of his endeavor. Their support for what would become one of the flagship projects of the Hebrew national revival stemmed not from national-Zionist motives but from a desire to enrich the corpus of Jewish literature with a monumental reference that would stand proudly alongside the great dictionaries of other major languages.

The article proposes that the history of Ben-Yehuda's Dictionary be read as a heroic and moving story of determination, sacrifice, and devotion. The *Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew* – one of the most important enterprises in the revival and development of Hebrew culture – was above all the vision of one man and his spouse, who together defied obstacles and opposition in order to bring it to fruition.

## **“A STAGE SHOW”: “OLD” AND “YOUNG” AS PIONEERS OF CRITICISM OF THE HEBREW PRESS**

GIDEON KOUTS

Shalom Yaakov Abramovich, otherwise known as “Mendele the Bookseller,” and Abraham Uri Kovner, appear to symbolize two opposites, two poles in the last generation of Hebrew Haskalah: one, a figure revered and respected by his lovers as well as rivals, the official “grandfather” of Hebrew and Yiddish literature; the other, the “accursed” rebel of Hebrew society and literature who “concocted” scathing and scandalous criticism, a man of quarrels who did not hesitate to live an equally scandalous life, to break the law, and also to convert his religion. Both these figures often collided with each other.

Nevertheless, both are entitled to be designated “the first critics of the Hebrew press,” and in this field they actually showed, each in his own style, great similarities to one another in positions, analyses, and conclusions.