

SPEAKER ABSTRACTS

WORKSHOP ON THE JEWISH RECEPTION OF JOSEPHUS IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES IN EASTERN EUROPE

The following individuals will be participating in this workshop, to be held in Oxford, at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies in Yarnton Manor, on January 6-7, 2014.

Steven Bowman

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Josephus and Yosippon in the 19th century

In 1840 a Hebrew edition of *Sepher Yosippon* appeared in Calcutta, the date derived from a messianic verse in Isaiah. It is not clear whether this edition *preceded* the messianic call for *bayyit shlishi* by Yehudah Alqala'i or even the Damascus Blood Libel which was likely seen as a prelude to the pangs of the messiah. It is clear however that the continuing influence of *Sepher Yosippon* on Jewish intellectuals throughout the period of discussion – until World War I and even later – would be a factor in the emergence of Zionism both among the religious Ashkenazim and the Sephardim (the latter broadly defined to include all non Ashkenazi Jews) and later the literary and secular leaders of the Yishuv that would develop in Ottoman Palestine after the turn of the twentieth century.

Prior to the appearance of the Calcutta edition, there appeared two editions of *Sepher Yosippon* in English in New England [Worcester, Massachusetts in 1803 and Vermont in 1817], each somewhat anti-Jewish in its Christian interpretation of the fall of Jerusalem but signaling some kind of religious anticipation that would manifest in the Great Revival of the nineteenth century and in particular surrounding 1840. Whiston's translation of Josephus was continually reprinted.

Meanwhile Josephus was being reintroduced by Jewish scholars, primarily the Wissenschaft des Judenthums through the multivolume history of Heinrich Graetz and the later translation (with commentary of course) by Shaul Rabinowitz [1879 - third printing beginning in 1890]. This Hebrew edition emphasized the quality of its Hebrew, its indebtedness to Zunz and Graetz for their research, and its influence since its appearance on the Jews of Russia and the East. Secular history was being taught and so Graetz (and Josephus) would parallel *mutatis mutandis* the influence of Mendelsohn's *Be'ur* on the acquisition of German among the yeshivah students. Already Dubnow was writing his massive history in Russian partly based on Graetz. The earlier translation of Josephus into Hebrew, already called for by the Vilna Gaon at the end of the eighteenth century, was useful for those East European savants who did not have Latin or Greek [Kalman Shulman, *Milhemeth hayehudim im haromaim*, Vilna, 1884, 1913; *kadmaniyoth hayehudim*, Vilna, 1864 and the *Vita* in 1959 (freely from the German)]. A Russian translation of Josephus was also available.

Sepher Yosippon received a new or renewed readership through the efforts of Micah Ben Gurion who drew from its rich drama after his turn to a literary form of Zionism. In a continuing output he introduced his Nietzschean based military heroes drawn from this antique source in contradistinction to the traditional Talmudic sages as taught by the rabbis. His major excursion in his powerful little story of discovery in *Derekh Rehokah* had considerable influence well into the twentieth century and paralleled the rise of secular Zionism.

Nonetheless Josephus in his pedantic and apologetic fashion could not stimulate the growing nationalist sentiment among the Jews in the Russian Empire, the majority of whom had a copy of *Sepher Yosippon* in their *aron hasepharim* as attested in their biographies.

Yotam Cohen

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"One of the Greatest of the Ancient Scholars and Recorders of History": The Image of Josephus Flavius in the Worldview of the Jewish Maskilim

In his long critique on *Judah Leib Gordon's* poetry, *Moshe Leib Lilienblum* attacked *Gordon's* view that the rabbinic leadership was responsible for the failure of the revolt against the Roman Empire. Not the rabbis were to blame for the destruction of the second Temple, *Lilienblum* says, rather, "Only the assimilated Maskilim, those that love the Romans, and are proficient in Greek literature, like Josephus Flavius" were guilty of the destruction.¹ This quote represents of course the common stereotype of Josephus as a 'traitor'. However my interest in *Lilienblum's* words is not in his critique on *Josephus* but in the analogy he suggests between the *Maskilim* and *Josephus*. Inspired by this analogy I want to reflect on the way the *Maskilim* used *Josephus's* persona and writings.

Although it is tempting to examine the attitude of the *Maskilim* to *Josephus* in the context of their interest in the Jewish past, and the significant role that his writings took in the secular Jewish historiography, my paper suggests observing the *Maskilim's* attitude to *Josephus* from a different point of view. In my considered opinion the issue could be placed, similar to what is found in *Lilienblum's* analogy, in their new positive approach to Ancient Greek and Roman Culture.

As I will argue, The *Haskalah* movement was the first to show the Jewish community that the Greco-Roman culture was the basis of European civilization. Acquaintance with the classical world, in this manner, contributes to acquaintance with contemporary Christian culture. In this context, *Josephus* was part of the new pantheon that was built by the *Maskilim*. I will argue that *Josephus* was presented similarly to *Moses Mendelssohn* or *Maimonides*, as a Jew who succeeded in reaching the apex of the culture then extant, thanks, among other reasons, to his excellent knowledge and understanding of Greco-Roman culture, and all this without denying his Jewishness. Moreover, while this positive attitude to Josephus' scholarship began in the first half of the 20th century, with the distinction between Josephus' life and the quality of his work, the autodidactic *Maskilim* admired him not as an outcome of sophisticated scholarly understanding, but because of his persona.

Starting with the *Hame'asef*, the first periodical in Hebrew, which was distributed throughout Jewish communities all over Europe during the years 1783-1811, and ending with the first translations of Josephus' works to Hebrew, at the start of the 20th century, I will show how *Josephus* is presented in the Hebrew literature as "One of the greatest of the ancient scholars and recorders of history",² while emphasis is given to the fact that his "famous books" were written "for the Romans", in "the Greek Language".³

1. Moshe Leib Lilienblum, *'kol kitvey'* (Complete works) iii, Odessa, 1912, P. 61. Emphasis in the original. (אך המשכילים האסימילאטורים אוהבי הרומיים ובקיאם בספרות היונים, (כיוסף פלאוויוס).
2. L, *'sicha'* (conversation), *Hame'asef*, (Iyar, 5569), p. 226. (Hebrew).
3. yitzhak Ber Levinzon, *Te'uddah be-Yisrael* (Testimony in Israel), Vilnius & Grodno 1828, p. 44. (Hebrew).

Shmuel Feiner

Bar-Ilan University

Kalman Schulman's Josephus and the Counter-History of the Haskalah

Kalman Schulman's Hebrew translation of Josephus (*The Life of Josephus*, 1859, *The War of the Jews*, 1862, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1864) was a meaningful event in the history of Jewish culture. My paper will discuss the historical context of Schulman's project and the way it presents Josephus in a positive light to his readers. It was a reformative project within the vast literary project of the *Haskalah* with the aim of enriching the modern Jewish library. It was also a transformative project as part of the *Haskalah's* strong aspiration to remedy Jewish society by opening it to the world and

by disseminating knowledge. At the same time, however, the Josephus translation openly suggested a counter-history. It offered a Jewish East European alternative to German Jewish historiography and depicted a picture of the past that simultaneously fostered the Jewish national identity by exposing the exciting ancient world of the Jews and adopted a clear political position calling on the Jews to be loyal to the state and the government.

Lily Kahn

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Kalman Schulman's Hebrew translation of Josephus' Jewish War

This paper will investigate key translation techniques in Kalman Schulman's 1861-2 work *מלחמות היהודים* (The Wars of the Jews). *מלחמות היהודים* was the earliest full Hebrew version of Josephus' *Jewish War*, translated via Heinrich Paret's 1855 German rendition *Geschichte des jüdischen Krieges*. *מלחמות היהודים* occupies an important place in the history of Maskilic Hebrew literature because Schulman was one of the most prominent and influential authors and translators of the period. As such, analysis of his work from the perspective of translation studies is very instructive because it can shed light not only on hitherto unexamined questions of Maskilic Hebrew translation practice, but also on maskilic perceptions of Josephus and on the implicit cultural and ideological assumptions underpinning such a project.

I shall illustrate Schulman's translation strategies through comparison of the Hebrew text with Paret's German version, placing particular emphasis on practices that elucidate the translator's perception of Jewish and maskilic identity and ideology. These issues will be addressed with reference to the general linguistic context of Maskilic Hebrew prose literature as discussed in Kahn (2009) and to pertinent translation studies theories as presented in Pym (2010) and Venuti (2012). Issues to be discussed include the use of domesticating techniques (e.g. the selection of words, phrases, ethnonyms, etc. with specifically biblical resonance or with particular associations for Jewish audiences as substitutes for terms lacking such connotations in the German version) and instances of literal versus free translation (e.g. trends underlying alterations of the German text, such as the omission of explanatory material deemed unnecessary for a Jewish readership and the desire to keep the translation in line with maskilic ideological norms). In addition, I shall assess both the Hebrew and German translations alongside the Greek original in order to ascertain the extent to which Schulman's treatment of his source text in these respects compares to Paret's. Finally, I shall consider Schulman's work in the light of its reception by his immediate successor: just over sixty years after the appearance of *מלחמות היהודים*, Naftali Herz Simchoni (Simchowitz) published a new Hebrew version of *Jewish War* (Warsaw, 1923), which remained the standard in subsequent decades. In contrast to Schulman, Simchoni translated directly from the Greek original, and in his introduction pointedly criticised his predecessor both for relying on a German intermediary and for use of the typical maskilic literary style of *melitsa*. I shall examine Simchoni's comments in relation to the above points and highlight the ways in which they reflect changing Eastern European Jewish attitudes to Josephus in Hebrew translation following the end of the maskilic era.

References:

Kahn, Lily. 2009. *The verbal system in late Enlightenment Hebrew*. Leiden: Brill.

Pym, Anthony. 2010. *Exploring translation theories*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Venuti, Lawrence, ed. 2012. *The translation studies reader*. 3rd edition. Abingdon: Routledge.

Tessa Rajak

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Masliansky on Josephus: Observations by a Religious Maskil

Rosa Reicher

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The Writings of Josephus and its Significance for the Renewal of the Jewish Youth in the Jewish Youth Movement

This proposal deals with the construction and reconstruction of Jewish youth affected by the historic events of the early twentieth century. The Jewish youth found themselves between a severe conflict of integration and modern self-identification. In this context I would like to explore implication of the oeuvre of Josephus on the Jewish youth.

The young Jews reaffirmed their ethnicity and reconstructed their Jewishness in innovative ways inside the Jewish youth movement as a response to the pressures of anti-Semitism and the outbreak of the first world War I. Josephus writings have left a lasting impression on the youth, especially his *Jewish War*, with the description of the period of the Maccabees, the fall of Jerusalem and the succeeding fall of the fortress of Masada. It promoted particularly the desire of the young Jews to live independently in the biblical land.

The proposal intend to make understand how the Youth movements created a cardinal and decisive influence on these youngsters. Zionism was the central milestone in the history of the Youth movement. The Jewish Youth movement, general a description of a social movement of young people with a more or less loose organizational structure which defines itself by certain true-to-life behavioral patterns and actions or by common attitudes and interests serves as a complex process. As an example of the numerous youth movements, Hashomer Hatzair, the initial Zionist youth movementis presented. It was founded in Eastern Europe on the eve of the First World War. Many Jewish youth, affected by the process of modernization which had begun among Eastern European Jewry, sought a means of maintaining their Jewish identity and culture outside the stifling barriers of the shtetl and of Orthodox Jewish life. Hashomer Hatzair forthwith adopted a Zionist ideology and stressed the need for the Jewish people to normalize their lives by changing their economic structure (as merchants) and to become workers and farmers, who would settle in the Land of Israel and work the land as "*chalutzim*" (pioneers). They were influenced, as well, by the burgeoning socialist movement, and they dreamt of creating in their new homeland a society based on social justice and equality.

The daily life of the Jewish youth was heavily influenced by their membership in a youth movement. Their living conditions and moral values, which were stamped and influenced by their education there, were decisive for their whole future. In *Against Apion* [1,12] Josephus formulated an ideal of Jewish education : "*Our principal care of all is this, to educate our children well; and we think it to be the most necessary business of our whole life to observe the laws that have been given us, and to keep those rules of piety that have been delivered down to us.*" Jewish education is characterized here according to the religious foundations of Judaism. Against the background of the debate led controversially under Jewish intellectuals before the First World War about Jewish religiousness and identity under the conditions of the modern age and under the impression of anti-Semitic resentments took place an essential identity debate in the youth movement. With the discussion about the question "what is Jewish"?; a systematic work in the field of education started about Jewish culture values and Jewish life.

Eliezer Sariel

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Orthodox Use of a Hellenistic Historian: Rabbi Isaac HaLevi's Approach to the Writings of Josephus

Rabbi Isaac HaLevi was one of the most important Orthodox pioneers in the field of historiography in the second half of the Nineteenth Century. On the one hand, he was in the forefront of the Orthodox struggle against the conclusions of "Wissenschaft des Judentums." On the other hand,

he was committed to what he viewed as historical truth. His series of books, "Early Generations," published at the end of the Nineteenth Century, present the most significant Orthodox response to the Wissenschaft school of historiography.

In HaLevi's view, the values of Orthodoxy are perfectly compatible with the principles of the modern science of history, as, in his view, both disciplines are committed to the search for the truth. HaLevi's approach to the writings of Josephus, to whom he refers hundreds of times in his own writings, exemplifies his general approach. HaLevi roundly criticizes Josephus as a traitor who sold out for a Roman pottage of lentils and shamelessly slandered the Jews when his understanding of historical truth warrants this. But this same commitment to historical truth leads him to develop methodologies for extracting reliable historical information from Josephus, on which basis he relies on such information without regard to his view of Josephus as representing values that are in substantial conflict with Orthodox values.