

PANEL ON CATALOGING ISSUES -- DEDICATED TO ROSALIE KATCHEN ז"ל:

CATALOGING ARCHIVAL MATERIALS
FOR THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN EUROPE:
THE LOUIS LEWIN COLLECTION AT YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Marlene Schiffman

Description: Louis Lewin (1868-1941), German rabbi and scholar, was one of the premier historians of the religious, social and cultural life of the Jews of Poland and Germany. As part of his extensive library, he collected many archival documents from municipal archives and Jewish communal and educational institutions that are now housed at Yeshiva University. These materials include different types of community records and registers, miscellaneous historical documents, and a variety of liturgical works and prayers composed for specific needs or special occasions. These documents are now being cataloged and present particular challenges, especially regarding subject analysis. Many subject headings for these types of materials simply don't exist. Accurately establishing place names for the communities covered in the documents is complicated by the inherent problems of forms of names in different languages, shifting borders, etc. Subject headings have to be established one-by-one, with appropriate research for each topic, and submitted to NACO and SACO, a time-consuming process. On the other hand, this cataloging project could add some useful and creative subject headings and place names to the LC database.

Marlene R. Schiffman received her MLS from Columbia University and an MA in History and Certificate in Archival Management from New York University. She is presently a Judaica cataloger at the Mendel Gottesman Library of Yeshiva University. Ms. Schiffman served as AJL-NYMA Corresponding Secretary (1986-89), NYMA Cataloging Work shop Coordinator (1992-3), Cataloging Workshop Coordinator for the 1993 national AJL Convention in New York, member of the R & S Cataloging Committee, and NACO Funnel Coordinator at Yeshiva. She is the author of *The Library of the Jewish Institute of Religion, 1922-1950*, *Jewish Book Annual 48 (1990-1991)* and other publications.

Some 400 boxes of raw material for the history of the Jews primarily in Poland, Germany, and other Eastern European countries are now preserved in the Rare Book Room of Yeshiva University. They are the fruits of the labor of many years of Louis Lewin, Jewish historian and rabbi in several communities in Poland before World War II.

Born in Znin, Posen in 1868, Lewin was educated in Frankfurt a. Main, and later at the University of Berlin where he acquired a Ph.D. for his biography of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai in 1893, and at the Seminary of Dr. Ezriel Hildesheimer, where he received Semikhah in 1895. He became a rabbi in Pinne, Posen and then in Kempen (Kepno), Poland, in Kattowitz from 1920-1925, and in Breslau until 1939. Unlike most other rabbis, he never published his sermons or addresses. Rather, he spent his spare time collecting materials and writing books on the histories of Jewish communities, mostly in Posen and Silesia. Some of these manuscripts came from genizot, attics, and storage rooms, or were sent to him by collectors in communities he was studying. Others he laboriously copied by hand from non-Jewish repositories in state or municipal archives. Not only are these documents precious for their historical value, but they are unique survivors of the devastation of World War II. In many cases, all that now exists are the copies that Louis Lewin made. In early 1939, he chose to settle in Bene Berak where he continued to study, write, and maintain his extensive library, manuscripts, and archives. Lewin died there in 1941.

His family donated his historical collection to Yeshiva University Library. The cataloging of the Lewin collection is part of a project supported by a grant from the Fund for Jewish Cultural Preservation awarded to Yeshiva University by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

Lewin's collection consists of three basic forms:

- 1) Lists, registers, and records. These are Jewish community records, such as Mohel books, Yizkor books, corporate minutes and financial statements of the Gemeinde, records of various societies such as the Hevra Kadisha. Lewin himself compiled lists of Jewish soldiers, Jewish physicians, Jewish university graduates, family genealogies, lists of books in private libraries, cemetery lists and tombstone inscriptions.
- 2). Lewin's historical notes and miscellaneous items such as correspondence relating to historical facts, student notes on biblical lectures, the Koran, the square root, Hebrew grammar, poetry, etc.
- 3). Sources relating to Judaism: correspondence from some of the most famous rabbis of the day on topics of Jewish law, liturgical compositions, megillot, prayers composed for special occasions or for specific individuals, amulets, Jewish medical remedies, and sermons, including notes that Lewin took for his own sermons.

Each of these categories presents its own cataloging difficulties, especially regarding subject headings.

The first subject heading which must be applied is the place from which the materials come. Researchers often seek materials by looking up a specific locality. We must determine the location of cities and small towns, the name by which they are known today, and the country in which they are found presently. Some of them match authority records, but others require additional reference works, such as gazeteers, atlases, and "shtetl-finders," sometimes including Lewin's own works, in order to locate them.

Next we have certain types of materials for which subject headings are hard to pin down. One genre is the Mohel book with a chronological list of circumcisions performed, specific parts of the ritual performed, prayers for the circumcised child, and Jewish laws pertaining to the procedure. We have assigned the heading BERIT MILAH, but it cannot be qualified by place, or the qualification (JEWISH LAW), nor is there a heading for PRAYERS FOR THE NEWLY CIRCUMCISED or BERIT MILAH SERVICE. We might use BERIT MILAH--PRAYER-BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS and others have used CIRCUMCISION--RELIGIOUS ASPECTS--JUDAISM. I have added REGISTERS OF BIRTHS, ETC. qualified by place, the rather general JUDAISM--PRAYER-BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS--HEBREW or JUDAISM--LITURGY--TEXTS, JEWS--[PLACE]--GENEALOGY, JEWS--[PLACE]--REGISTERS, [PLACE]-HISTORY-SOURCES, and we can occasionally identify and trace the name of the mohel. There is no heading for MOHALIM. Ultimately we created a local heading MOHEL BOOKS.

Yizkor books are lists of the dead in the community, sometimes including famous rabbinical figures not connected with the local community, victims of pogroms or massacres, special prayers for the dead, Kel Maleh Rahamim (cited in the archives as the "maleh"). Again we could use such headings as:

REGISTERS OF BIRTHS, ETC.--[PLACE],
RABBIS--[PLACE],
POGROMS--PRAYER-BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS,
CRUSADES--PRAYER-BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS,
JEWISH MARTYRS--PRAYER-BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS,
GEZEROT Taï VE-TAT--PRAYER-BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS.

I have also used:

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD,
MEMORIAL SERVICE, and
PASTORAL PRAYERS.

None of these can be subdivided by religion, rite, or place. Heidi Lerner directed me to the heading HAZKARAT NESHAMOT, but this heading is a 130 (uniform title) not a 650 so its usefulness is limited. I have applied it only in instances which the manuscript actually contains prayers. Also this heading seems to apply to the Yizkor prayer recited in the synagogue on specific holidays, not to other memorial prayers.

The Lewin collection also contains many original prayers. The rabbi of Berlin, Elhanan Rosenstein, composed a prayer for the king, the queen, and their son (In some cases it takes considerable research to identify them, if we can at all.), a prayer on the death of a specific individual, a prayer for success in raising children, a prayer for livelihood, prayer on the occasion of the king's having survived an assassination attempt (which we were able to identify as King William I, of Prussia, in 1878), a prayer for the government, etc. According to the Subject Authority File, petitionary prayer on behalf of others is called INTERCESSORY PRAYER. While I am not sure a library patron would naturally access this heading, there are subject authorities for PRAYERS FOR RAIN, and PRAYERS FOR PEACE. We have OCCASIONAL SERMONS, JEWISH and OCCASIONAL VERSE, but no OCCASIONAL PRAYERS. In the case of King William I [NAF is WILLIAM I, GERMAN EMPEROR, 1797-1888], I have traced him without qualification, and I fear the heading is misleading. When the researcher looks up the SH, he expects to find some information about King William I; rather he only finds a prayer written by someone else in his honor. We cannot add PRAYER-BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS to the name of the king because the definition there states that this subdivision can follow only "Classes of persons for whose USE the prayers are intended" or "names of saints, deities, etc. TO WHOM the devotions are directed," not prayers ON BEHALF of a particular individual.

Other prayers are described in the manuscripts as "Prayers to be recited by the cantor from the bimah," the "maleh" and the "mi-she-berakh." I have found the headings: PASTORAL PRAYERS, to be applied to "works containing the formal or general prayers used in public worship." Does that match prayers recited at the bimah? So we use INTERCESSORY PRAYER for the mi-she-berakh? Is PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD with its reference to "A Prayers for the poor souls in purgatory," a heading we can use in a Jewish context? I have added JUDAISM--PRAYER-BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS--HEBREW, but such a heading does not allude to the dead, rather only generally to prayers.

Another heading with few qualifications is Torah scrolls. There is no differentiation between the laws of the Sefer Torah, the completion of the writing of a new Sefer Torah and its dedication (HAKHNASAT SEFER TORAH) (except if we use the heading SCRIBES, JEWISH which does not always apply), or the desecration of the Sefer Torah for which someone wrote a lament in the Lewin collection. An inventory of the accessories of the Torah collectively may be designated as TORAH ORNAMENTS. There is also a heading TORAH SCROLLS (JEWISH LAW), but it doesn't describe the dedication or the desecration of a Torah scroll.

Similarly, the heading SYNAGOGUES cannot express desecration or destruction. Other headings in the SAF: DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, MALICIOUS MISCHIEF, SABOTAGE, VANDALISM, and POGROM--[PLACE] do not express the desecration of a synagogue, albeit in a pogrom.

The most appropriate heading for lists of gravestones in the cemetery is REGISTERS OF BIRTHS, ETC. subdivided by place. One of the cross refs is REGISTERS OF DEATHS, but I prefer [PLACE]--REGISTERS and other cemetery headings such as JEWISH CEMETERIES and JEWISH EPITAPHS. The subdivision REGISTERS OF DEAD can only be used under wars and armies, not places, cemeteries, or institutions. NECROLOGIES cannot be divided geographically but only by order. Is this an appropriate heading for Jewish lists?

Proposing a heading is difficult to do because when dealing with manuscripts, often in German or Hebrew, we are thinking of a descriptive heading which comes to mind in English rather than a term which is specifically used in the material we are cataloging or in a standard reference work. For example, I asked about possible headings for the Yizkor books listing the dead and the memorial prayers. There were suggestions of an array of headings, none of which quite accurately expressed the topic: JEWS--[PLACE]; the ubiquitous REGISTER OF BIRTHS, ETC.--[PLACE]; HEVRA KADISHA--[PLACE] (although the hevra kadisha is not always a component of the manuscript); PLACE--GENEALOGY; JEWISH MOURNING CUSTOMS (again, not always a component of the manuscript); JUDAISM--PRAYER-BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS; MANUSCRIPTS, HEBREW. This "array" is a circumlocution for MEMORIAL BOOKS or Yizkor books. There is a heading MEMORIAL BOOKS (HOLOCAUST), implying similar materials before 1945? I proposed a heading for my manuscript, basing the form on a work which discussed such materials and called them MEMORIAL BOOKS, but the heading was rejected because the work in which I found the heading did not itself warrant the heading since the "topic itself did not comprise 20% of the work's contents." Also in communication with LC, I was told that this heading can only be used for works ABOUT such book, not as a form or genre. They suggested that I submit a proposal for Memorbu(e)ch/er or Jewish memorial books.

Conclusions

- 1) Place names should always have geographical coordinates in the authority file. That way we can definitely find correspondences with places mentioned in reference works and distinguish them from other places with the same name.
- 2) Authorities must be very clear and specific in outlining the definitions and scope notes of each heading. They should also direct the user to other headings that might be more appropriate to what he or she is searching for.

- 3) In the case of the many different types of prayers, a generic heading such as PRAYERS FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS or PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS or OCCASIONAL PRAYERS might be considered. I proposed PRAYERS FOR...(which LC says is not compatible with its automatic system validation). Perhaps we could formulate [NAME]--PRAYERS FOR or [NAME]--MEMORIAL PRAYERS under a personal name. It doesn't seem likely that I (or anyone else in the near future) will submit all the headings on an individual basis. (Besides none of these headings covers over 20% of the material in any manuscript.) Another less specific solution would be to use JUDAISM--PRAYER BOOKS AND DEVOTIONS along with other headings as an "array."
- 4) The suggestions of LC to propose the heading MEMORBUCH for the Yizkor books is exactly the definition in EJ (11:1299-1301). It represents:
 - A. A collection of prayers intoned by the reader at the bimah, mi-she-berakh,
 - B. Necrology of distinguished persons of local or general Jewish importance,
 - C. Martyrology of persons and places.This exactly describes the material. I would propose it if it were not limited to books about, but as a form/genre heading.
- 5) To have more options in subdivision such as (JEWISH LAW) or-RITUALS or-DESECRATION OF that could be applied to various headings.

All in all, working on this collection has been interesting because of the historical material itself, and it has been quite instructive in learning how LC constructs subject headings. A few new headings, both names and subjects, have also resulted from cataloging the Louis Lewin Collection.

Marlene Schiffman
Gottesman Library
Yeshiva University
500 W. 185th St.
New York, NY 10033
schiffman@ymail.yu.edu