

# **"Sepher Ha-Ziquq" by Domenico Yerushalmi (1555-1621) and its Influence on Hebrew Printing/ Gila Prebor**

## **Abstract**

During the second half of the sixteenth century, under the growing threat of the Reformation, the Catholic Church implemented various measures in order to fight heresy. These measures, known collectively as the Counter-Reformation, included internal reforms within the Church, eliminating corruption among the clergy and censorship of books. The Church began institutionalized supervision of printing in general, and of Hebrew printing in particular. The struggle against heresy was nothing new. However, this period saw for the first time the systematic and institutionalized attempt at stopping the spread of literature containing heresy and condemnation of the Church. Papal Bulls were published against forbidden books and, as part of the official policy of censorship, the first indices of forbidden books were composed (Index Librorum Prohibitorum). The popes published indices during the second half of the sixteenth century. Among the works included for censure were the Talmud and other Hebrew books.

The Jews of Italy attempted to save their books by two different tactics. On the one hand the Jewish Communities instituted a policy of internal censorship on Hebrew printing and on the other hand they lobbied the Pope and the Church leadership to ease the policy of book confiscation as well as the prohibition on the printing of the Talmud. One of the compromises that the Italian Jews succeeded in achieving was the institution of censorship on manuscripts and printed books by the Jewish Community instead of the confiscation and destruction of all of their books. The term 'ziquq' (expurgatio), which implies 'purification', was used in this context. In order to implement the 'purification' the Church put at the disposal of the Jewish communities censors, whose salary was paid by the communities. These censors were mainly apostates of Jewish origin who were experts in the Hebrew language. The process of 'purification' included the blotting out or emending of passages in the text which the censors felt to be in opposition to the principles or customs of Christianity or those passages, which were blasphemous, or in error.

In addition to the general indices which were composed and which included allusions to Hebrew literature, a number of indices were composed especially for Hebrew books. The indices of Hebrew books contained lists of forbidden books as well as lists of objectionable passages that require censorship.

The largest and most important of the indices of Hebrew books is 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' by Domenico Yerushalmi. The index was composed at the end of the sixteenth century, with additions that were added into the text at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' includes an introduction, which discusses the principles of censorship and following it, a detailed discussion of the contents of 426 Hebrew books. It contains quotes from these books, which demean the Christian faith which were unacceptable to the author, who recommended that they be blotted out. At times the author would propose emendations to the text. The index was intended to serve as a manual for the censorship of Hebrew books. Despite the importance of the 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' for the study of the history of the Hebrew Book, the history of Church censorship in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the study of reading patterns among Italian Jews, the work is still in manuscript and has never been published.

The author of the 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq', Domenico Yerushalmi, was a rabbi who became an apostate. He was born as Shmuel Vivas in Jerusalem in 1555 and was educated in the Galilee, probably in the city of Safed. He studied Talmud and Qabbalah (Jewish Mysticism) and served as a rabbi and rabbinical judge. He also studied medicine and at the age of 24 went to Cairo, where he worked as a physician. His fame as a physician spread far and wide and he was invited to come to Constantinople to serve as the official physician in the court of the sultan of the Ottoman Empire. He served in this position for sixteen years. At the age of 38, on the sixth of August, 1593, he was baptized as a Christian. According to his own testimony, his motivation for apostasy was religious. After his baptism, like many apostates of the period, Domenico Yerushalmi worked as a censor of Hebrew books. He continued in this position until 1621, the year of his death. Domenico Yerushalmi was one of the most outstanding and prolific figures engaged in Catholic censorship. According to his own estimate he censored more than 20,000 Hebrew books and manuscripts. Evidence of his work can be found in Hebrew books and manuscripts that have survived from his time until today. In addition to his work as a censor Domenico also

composed works in Hebrew aimed at convincing the Jews of the truth of the Christian faith.

The aims of this research are:

1. To provide a codicological description of the various manuscripts of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' and to determine the relationship between them.
2. To publish for the first time 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' according to its various manuscripts. The text of one manuscript (Vat. 273) will serve as the primary text. The bibliographic sources quoted in the text will be identified and the major emendations from the other manuscripts will be mentioned and analyzed.
3. To examine the structure of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq', its composition, its characteristics and its method. This will include: the number of books mentioned in 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' grouped according to subject; the composition of the books according to year of printing and place of printing; the number of required emendations per book. This will also include examining the method of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' in characterizing which elements required emendation and how this was carried out.
4. To examine the effectiveness and the degree of use of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' by the censors (in external censorship) and by members of the Jewish community (in internal censorship). In the framework of external censorship the aim of the research is to examine the work of the censors and determine whether Domenico and his colleagues worked according to the instructions formulated in 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq'. In the framework of internal censorship the aim of the research is to identify the specific principles for internal censorship (if there were such) regarding works printed after the composition of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' that are mentioned in it. Did the printers refrain from printing specific words, sections and expressions in new editions of works mentioned in 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' during the seventeenth century?
5. To collect information on the personality and activity of Domenico Yerushalmi, his activity as censor and translator, the scope of his activity and its location. To provide as detailed as possible a biographical sketch based on the findings of this research and other sources.

This dissertation is the result of an interdisciplinary approach- bibliographic, historical, technical- and is based on quantitative and qualitative methods of research as well as on the principles of textual criticism. The conclusions are reached by combining various research methods: traditional bibliographic research that deals with the description and analysis of manuscripts and rare books from the aspect of material and content; research into the technological development of printing and the history of printing presses and printers; the location of manuscripts and books, their identification, documentation and registration. This multifaceted research method is based on the methods used by the historical school that began to develop in French academic circles in the 1950s and is known as 'Livre et Société'. In this branch of historical research the bibliographic sources are examined in relation to the history of the given culture and society.

The sources that I used were the manuscripts of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' and of other works by Domenico Yerushalmi, sources which shed light on his biography and activity as a censor, as well as a large number of manuscripts and rare books that are kept in various libraries throughout the world. These sources provide a living testimony to his role as a censor through his signature. In addition I referred to many historical and bibliographic studies that have been written until today. In the course of the research 1,082 exemplars of books that are listed in 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' have been checked. These books are housed in the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, the Library of Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan and the Yeshiva University Library in New York. 300 exemplars were found to have been censored and these books served as a sample to check the censorship and its effectiveness. In addition a statistical *arrangement* (?) was carried out on 709 signatures of Domenico Yerushalmi that appear in Hebrew books and manuscripts.

The detailed findings of the research appear in the dissertation. The major conclusions are:

The examination of the various manuscripts showed that the Paris manuscript (housed in the library of the Alliance Israélite Universelle) is the earliest. The next manuscript to have been written (in chronological order) is manuscript Vatican 273. This manuscript served as the source for 2 other manuscripts that were copied from it: London 1157 and the Bologna manuscript. The latest to have been written is manuscript Barberini Or. 53. This dissertation includes the

publication of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' which was until now only in manuscript. The current edition includes the text of the manuscript together with the identification of the bibliographic details that appear in the text as well as the major textual variants from the other manuscripts. In addition this dissertation includes an analysis of the structure and composition of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' and description of its method.

Regarding the question of the practical use of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' in the framework of internal and external censorship, the research shows that 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' did indeed serve as a guide for some of the censors but that the use of it was not widespread. A small number of censors in a certain period that had an interest in 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' did use it in the course of their work. The percentage of agreement between the actual censorship and the requirements of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' was only 33.18%. Even in books checked by Domenico Yerushalmi himself the percentage was similar (33.84%). The influence of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' was felt more in internal censorship. The examination of a sample of books and a comparison between books that appear in 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' and editions of those same books that were printed after 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' was written shows that in a large number of books emendations were introduced into the text of later editions in accordance with the demands of 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq'. Thus 'Sepher Ha-Ziquq' and the demands of Church censorship influenced the content of Hebrew books printed in Italy during the seventeenth century.

Regarding the biography of Domenico Yerushalmi and his work as censor of Hebrew books, author and translator, the research in this dissertation revealed new details and confirmed many of the facts that had already been known about the author. However, despite all of the research that has been done on Domenico Yerushalmi much is still unknown. He seems to have possessed an ambivalent personality. A rabbi who chose apostasy and the profession of censor of Hebrew books; the author of a censorship manual who passed books without censoring them, or censoring them in a perfunctory fashion. Perhaps he had a complex personality structure or perhaps he had motives which are unbeknownst to us. In any event it seems that conscious or unconscious motives helped him preserve Jewish culture. Only further studies will be able to show if this was intentional or not.

The importance of this research is due to the influence of censorship on the development of Hebrew literature, the cultural development of Italian Jewry and on their reading patterns. Since Italy served as the major center of printing for many different Jewish communities, the conclusions of this study have importance regarding Jewish communities outside of Italy and for the understanding of Jewish culture as a whole.

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