

PANEL ON CATALOGING ISSUES -- DEDICATED TO ROSALIE KATCHEN z"l:

AUTHORITY WORK IN RURITANIA

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Description: An attempt to enliven the dry-as-dust science of authority works, this paper traces the career of a peripatetic 18th-19th century rabbi from Ruritania, and the modern cataloger's strategies for dealing with his names and residences.

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Rosabeth Cratchit, mild-mannered cataloger for a great university library, leaned back in her ergonomic chair and took a deep breath. Her first task of the morning was almost finished--there was but one more book to catalog in the battered cardboard carton recently unearthed from the basement of the Acquisitions Department. The antique Hebraica and Judaica the box had contained had been easy

to deal with, on the whole, but Rosabeth didn't like the look of the last item, an unhealthily short, fat volume bound in crumbling leather.

Gathering her courage, Rosabeth lifted out the ancient tome, using both hands to secure the many loose pages protruding from its covers. She turned it over carefully, wrinkling her nose at the furry red-brown smears transferring themselves to her palms and fingers. The front and spine were bare of title or other information. She laid the book carefully on her desk and opened it to the title page.

An ornate Turkish carpet of a border met her eye, enclosing a seething ant's nest of tiny, ill-printed Rashi script dotted here and there with intelligible--though peculiar--words in a larger and clearer font. The title was readable: *Hidushe Ba'al ha-Tarnegolet ha-nekudah*, "Novellae of the Master of the Speckled hen" (Fig. 1). An author referred to by the title of one of his other books, oh, dear. Rosabeth hoped he wasn't referred to *only* by the name of one of his other books. She could also make out the place of publication, "Sht relzoya," and the name rang a faint bell in her memory. But another observation preempted her attention: she could see that the pages of the volume fell into two parts, in sections of slightly unequal size.

Oh, no. It was a "bound with," two separately published items bound as one at a later date! Rosabeth hated "bound withs"--they turned up so rarely that she could never remember the applicable rules and rule interpretations from one occasion to the next. Perhaps this



would be a good project to deal with after lunch ... but curiosity prompted her to turn to the second title page (Fig. 2).

This one had a similar but still more elaborate border. The enclosed script, though sparser, was as tiny and daunting as in the first example. Again the title was legible: *Ki-tsevi mudah*. Rosabeth recognized this as a quotation from the book of Isaiah, and quickly verified it: verse 14 of chapter 13: "Like a hunted gazelle." She drew a quick conclusion: the author of the book was probably named Tsevi--it was hard to imagine another justification for the title. She reminded herself to capitalize the "Tsevi" when she romanized it.

Slowly she puzzled out the tiny printing:

Rabbi Tsevi Hirshl, of blessed memory, revered teacher in Zende and Hentsoi (site of his grave), may God protect him, son-in-law of the revered and holy teacher, the famous holy scholar, righteous from the foundation of the world, prince of the Torah and the fear of God, great one of Israel, wonder of the age and its glory and so forth, our lord the rabbi Rabbi Yekl the Half-Angel, of blessed memory, revered and holy teacher from Hentsoi, may God protect him.

"They seem a lot more interested in his father-in-law than in him," she muttered to herself. And what an odd epithet for the father-in-law--"the Half-Angel"! Did that mean he was actually the child of an angel, or that he was half as good as an angel? And would being half as good as an angel mean being very good indeed, or not very good at all?

And what about Shtrelzoi and Hentsoi? German names ending in "au," she told herself--they always turn to "oi" in these Yiddish-style spellings. So, Strelsau and Hentzau. Oh, sure! Strelsau was the capital of Ruritania, one of those little German-speaking Balkan kingdoms, like Graustark. Two books published in Strelsau, and she couldn't remember seeing even one ever before! Not a well-known center of Jewish publishing, for sure.

So, *Ki-Tsevi mudah* was by this Tsevi Hirshl, and what about the other one? Would its author have to be established as "Ba%l ha-Tarnegolet ha-nekudah"? Rosabeth hated that rule 22.11 kind of name--"entry under phrase." She had found that if she plugged away hard enough in the reference sources she could usually come up with such modest authors' real names. But she dug through the Rashi script on that title page too, and found a useful nugget fairly soon: it seemed that "Ba%l ha-Tarnegolet" and "Ba%l ha-Tsevi ha-mudah" were one and the same. Hurrah! Two for the price of one.

Rosabeth's memory needed no refreshing, but she glanced, as she always did at this point in cataloging, at the wall behind her computer where she had posted the following words to live by from Library of Congress Rule Interpretation 22.3C:



### ***Names of Persons With Surnames Written in the Hebraic Alphabet***

Follow this order of preference when establishing headings for Hebrew and Yiddish persons with surnames:

- 1) If the name is found in *Academic American Encyclopedia*, and in *The Encyclopedia Americana*, and in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.), use the form found in these three sources; if the form varies in these three sources, use the form found in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.).
- 2) If the name is found prominently in a romanized form on the person's works in Hebrew or Yiddish, use this form.
- 3) If the name is found in *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*, use this form.
- 4) Otherwise, use the systematically romanized form of the name.

She laughed a moment over the first possibility--to make it into the *Academic American Encyclopedia* her author would have to be approximately as famous as Maimonides, and she was pretty sure he wasn't. So scratch that instruction! And as for number two, she had already assured herself that the man's name did not appear in a romanized form in either of the books in front of her. Now, for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* ...

She pushed back her chair with a creak and moved to the reference alcove, where the English *EJ* weighed down a shelf of its own. She pulled out the index volume and turned to "Zevi Hirsch." Already shaking her head, she ran her eyes along a column and a half of rabbis, well-known and scarcely-known, only a few in capital letters (thus covered by articles of their own) and none sounding anything like her man. She tried "Tarnegolet" and could almost hear a dry chuckle from the rustling pages as she failed to find the word. At last she turned to the RED-SL volume and read up on Ruritania. The article was short, and referred to only one rabbi by name, Jekel the Half-Angel of Hentzau, an eighteenth-century Talmudist of, it seemed, qualified saintliness, with a day-job as a poultry-farmer. No further information given.

Fig. 3



At least she had identified her author's father-in-law.

For a moment, she studied the map of Ruritania (Fig. 3) included in the article. Pulling a magnifying glass from her desk drawer, she identified Strelsau and Hentzau in the wide valley between the Carpathians and the Danube (Fig. 4), and, looking still closer, she made out the borders of the vast green forest which stretched between them--the Grünewald, as it was unimaginatively called (Fig. 5). She shook her head and closed the book.



Fig. 4

How sad it was, Rosabeth mused, that her author's name began with Z in non-standard romanization. She felt quite certain that the German *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, if it had progressed to the end of the alphabet, would have provided the detailed and comprehensive study that she needed. Even though, according to RI22.3C, the German *EJ* could not supply a heading, a cross-reference or two and a citation from a major source would have made nice additions to her authority record.

She returned to her desk and typed up a 675 field for the two encyclopedias, as sources checked but unhelpful. Years of experience told her that if she had not found her author in these works, he would not be found in *ha-Entsiklopedyah ha-<sup>9</sup>writ* or the *Jewish Encyclopedia* of 1916. One developed a sense for these things.

Then, with grim determination and an intention to be thorough, she dragged a chair into the reference area and checked, in turn, the *Catalogue of the Hebrew books in the Library of the British Museum* (1867), the *Catalogue of Hebrew books in the British Museum acquired during the years 1868-1892* (1894), the *Concise catalogue of the Hebrew printed books in the Bodleian Library* (1929), Friedberg's *Bet <sup>9</sup>ked sefarim* (1951-1956), and the *Harvard University Library catalogue of Hebrew books* (1968), including the 1972 supplements. She thought about consulting the St. Petersburg Imperial Library catalog, but that book was, if anything, in worse shape than the books she was cataloging, and she decided to skip it. She returned to her desk and did a number of searches in the RLIN database, and all these searches, *ALL* these searches, came up with no result.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Perhaps she had in her hand the only copies of these two books in the Western world!

The thought was disturbing. Should she call up the Brothers Biegeleisen and ask if they wanted to xerox the things? Or go straight to Copy Corner? Or maybe just ... take a coffee break.

Fortified with caffeine, Rosabeth returned to her desk. With some idea of tidying the bedraggled book, Rosabeth picked up the works of Tsevi Hirshl and began tapping the loose pages into place.

Eventually she found herself grasping the edge of a folded sheet glued along its left edge to the inside of the back cover. She spread it out: a hand-drawn map covered with curling lines in red ink. A few towns were marked: Strelsau, Hentzau, Zenda. So, Ruritania! In a spidery hand at the bottom of the map was a Hebrew caption: "Wanderings of the Speckled Hen, 1743-1758" (Fig. 6).

She turned to the verso of the map and gazed in amazement at the water-spotted document penned on it in the same shaky hand. It was headed "Toldot ha-Tarnegolet ha-Nekudah"--The Story of the Speckled Hen! A quick examination made her heart beat faster, and she began to read carefully between the damaged sections.

When our teacher Reb Hirshl was twelve years old, he sat with other boys on the bank of the river and made images of clay. Reb Hirshl made a little stag [Fig. 7] of mud and scratched the letter tsade on its forehead, intending to write his own Hebrew name, Tsevi. To the wonderment of all, the clay figure came alive and bounded away into the woods. The sages of the region questioned Hirshl as to the mystical meaning of the letter tsade, and he was wholly unable to answer them. Nor did he succeed in bringing other clay figures to life. But when he reached man's estate, he vowed to follow his little stag into the forest until he found it, and his fortune.



Fig. 7 צבי (1740)

"The Hunted Gazelle!" thought Rosabeth. She read on.

Reb Hirshl followed the path of the stag for fifteen years, never leaving the Grünewald and subsisting on nuts, berries, and the occasional bowl of cabbage soup provided by pious woodcutters and their families. On a very hot day in the summer of the year 1758 he reached the outskirts of the town of Hentzau and lay down for a nap under a great oak, first removing his enormous furry shtreiml [Fig. 8] and setting it carefully beside him on the ground.



Fig. 8 שטריימל

In Hentzau that day a festival of a kind was in progress, for the rabbi of the town, the pious Yekl the Half-Angel, had determined to marry off all thirteen of his daughters before the setting of the sun. To this end he had released into the Grünewald thirteen birds from his poultry-farm, each with a strip of paper bearing the name of one of his daughters tied to its foot. Thus the turkey bore the name of Hinde, the goose the name of Shprintze, and so forth. The suitor who captured each bird would wed the maiden whose name it bore.



Fig. 9 תרנגול (זכר) (male)

In the afternoon Reb Hirshl woke under the oak tree to find a speckled hen [Fig. 9] nesting in his shtreiml.

"The Speckled Hen!" thought Rosabeth.

With his customary reverence for all that drew breath, Reb Hirshl lifted the hat to his head, hen and all, and proceeded into the town of Hentzau.

There he was hailed as the successful suitor of Feygele, the youngest daughter of Reb Yekl, and married to her immediately. He lived the rest of his life in Hentzau raising chickens and studying Kabbalah with his father-in-law, and died at the age of 99.

The rest of the manuscript was almost completely illegible, except for the signature, place of writing, and date: Mosheh David Yelenek, Prague, 1854.

Hmmmm, thought Rosabeth. Maybe they called Tsevi Hirshl "Ba%l ha-Tarnegolet ha-nekudah" because he married the speckled-hen girl, not because he wrote a book called *The Speckled Hen*. That would explain, in part, why none of her reference sources knew of a book called *ha-Tarnegolet ha-nekudah*.

Rosabeth sighed. How interesting, and yet how useless! The document gave no surname for Reb Hirshl, no dates of birth or death, none of the prescribed information she needed to establish a sound version of the author's name. She didn't even know the name of his father, though she did know that of his father-in-law. And she certainly didn't know why the letter tsade had brought the clay stag to life--it looked as if no one else did, either. To be sure, she now understood the titles of his two books. But in terms of RI22.3C, he still fell into the catch-all category--a couple of forenames in standard romanization with nothing but an epithet or two to differentiate him from ten thousand other Tsevi Hirshls. She felt she was not doing him justice!

Gazing at the document on the back of the map dreamily, Rosabeth wondered who its author might have been. Too bad she wasn't trying to establish *him*--at least he had a surname. A Slavic sort of surname, she thought; maybe Czech. That "ek" at the end could be a diminutive. Now, where had she heard the word "yelen," or maybe "jelen," before? ... Over the years, Rosabeth had picked up many odd bits of information vaguely connected with her work, and occasionally one would surface when she needed it. Could this be happening now?

She called up Netscape. Her homepage was the Yahoo search engine. Quickly she typed the keywords she wanted: czech--english--dictionary. The very first hit looked promising; she typed in "jelen" and clicked on "go." And there it was: the word meant "stag." And so did "tsevi," and so did "hirsh"! Well, allowing for the varying fauna of different continents. So "jelenek" would mean "little stag" ... "hirshl"!

Suddenly she understood everything. Who would have troubled to record the history of such a completely insignificant author except a member of his own family? A descendant! And that

descendant claimed a surname! Rosabeth had seen cases like this before ... confusion of forenames and surnames ... translations of surnames ...

She pushed back her chair and stood up slowly. Moving like a woman in a dream, she returned to the English *EJ*. The index volume? No--a higher power was guiding her now, and she lifted down the IS-JER volume without hesitation. She riffled through its last pages, utterly confident that she would find what she needed.

It was there. A tiny article, but an *ARTICLE*, headed with the name of the author she sought to establish. And what was that name ... ?

JELENEK, ZEVI HIRSCHHEL (1730-1829): Ruritanian wonder-worker, known as "Ba%al ha-Tarnegolet ha-nekudah" ("Master of the Speckled Hen"). Author of at least two incomprehensible, possibly kabbalistic works (*Ki-Zevi mudah*, Strelsau, 1777 and *Hidushim*, Strelsau, 1785).

Rosabeth marveled. Where did the *EJ* GET all this stuff? The dates, especially. It occurred to her that she herself might have deduced them from the document ... if Hirshl had begun to wander at the age of thirteen, and had wandered for fifteen years, and had stopped wandering in 1758, and had lived to the age of 99 ... Ha! But that sort of reasoning was not allowed in Library of Congress practice, and Rosabeth despised it. Pure speculation! But she was allowed to adopt the *EJ*'s dates, no matter how they had been arrived at, because the *EJ* was a "reference source"!

She returned to her desk and began to type up the name authority record, with due attention to RI22.3C. She entered it into the database and sat back with a sigh. All that cogitation on her part, all those reference sources consulted (she'd have to recheck them now, but that would be a piece of cake), and the man had had an article in the *EJ* all along ... she wasn't sure whether to be glad or sorry.

Oh, well. At least no other cataloger, years down the road, would find what she had missed and correct her work, causing ripples across a thousand OPACs where the author's heading would have to be changed--that is, if a thousand libraries ever cataloged these works. Which was maybe not too likely.

Still, this sort of thing was why the major university library paid her the medium-sized bucks, and on the whole Rosabeth Cratchit, Super-Cataloger, was well satisfied with her morning's work.

*Note 1:* Facsimiles, maps, quotations, etc., in this narrative should not be accepted at face value. All persons and places (excepting Prague and Ruritania) named herein were invented by the author. Ruritania was invented by Anthony Hope in 1894. Prague may really exist.

*Note 2:* I have abbreviated the list of reference sources consulted by Rosabeth. Suffice it to say that her author was missing from all of those not mentioned.

100 0	Jelenek, Zevi Hirschel, d1730-1829
400 0	Tsevi Hirshl, admur be-Zende uvi-Shtrelzoi, d1730-1829
400 0	Ba%l ha-Tarnegolet ha-nekudah, d1730-1829
400 0	Ba%l ha-Tsevi ha-mudah, d1730-1829
400 0	Master of the Speckled Hen, d1730-1829
670	Sefer Ki-Tsevi mudah, 1776 or 1777: bt.p. (Rabi Tsevi Hirshl, z. ts. ve-k.l.l.h., admur be-Zende uvi-Shtrelzoi; son-in-law of Rabi Yekl ha-Hatsi-Mal%kh)
670	Sefer Hidushe Ba%l ha-Tarnegolet ha-nekudah, 1785 or 1785: bt.p. (Ba%l ha-Tsevi ha-mudah)
670	Encyc. Judaica, c1971: b(Jelenek, Zevi Hirschel; 1731-1830; Ruritanian wonder-worker and kabbalist; known as Ba%l ha-Tarnegolet ha-nekudah = Master of the Speckled Hen)
675	Encyc. Judaica, 1928-1934: aCatalogue of the Hebrew books in the Library of the British Museum, 1867; aCatalogue of Hebrew books in the British Museum acquired during the years 1868-1892, 1894; aConcise catalogue of the Hebrew printed books in the Bodleian Library, 1929; aBet %ked sefarim, 1951-1956; aHarvard University Library catalogue of Hebrew books, 1968-1972.