

The first Hebrew newspapers in Europe. Economic and Organizational Aspects

Los primeros periódicos hebreos en Europa. Aspectos económicos y organizacionales

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the characteristics of the Hebrew press published in Europe in the second half of the XIXth century, as well as its special economic and organizational aspects. Although the Hebrew press emerged at the time of technological advances in printing, financial problems and the circulation limitation imposed by its linguistic distinctiveness were obstacles to success. Individual efforts of entrepreneurs and journalists had to mark step by step the way to modernization.

KEY WORDS

Press
Europe
Judaism

RESUMEN

El artículo describe las características de la prensa hebrea publicada en Europa en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, así como sus especiales aspectos económicos y organizativos. Aunque la prensa hebrea emergió al mismo tiempo que los avances tecnológicos en técnicas de impresión, los problemas financieros y las limitaciones de circulación impuestas por sus diferencias lingüísticas fueron obstáculos para su éxito. Los esfuerzos individuales de emprendedores y periodistas lograron poco a poco su modernización.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Prensa
Europa
Judaísmo

The transition from a «journalism of private men of letters» to the «public consumer services of the mass media» diagnosed by Habermas¹, was particularly hard for the Hebrew-language press in the Jewish public sphere of Europe in the second half of the 19th century. This, among other factors, because the separation of functions between publisher and editor became a fact in this press much later than in the general European newspapers.

The Hebrew-writing journalist and his writings enjoyed respectable social standing, a consequence of the honor accorded to Holy Books and to those who produced them, because of the special prestige of the «written word» in Jewish society, that encouraged its members to read and write in order to preserve its national and cultural identity and to ensure its survival. This fact facilitated processes of secularization and democratization of culture, as well as other transformations that took place in the 19th century. However, the journalist's elevated social standing was not translated into financial reward.

¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, MA 1989, pp. 181-190.

The first Hebrew weeklies in western Europe ² could make use of an existing infrastructure of presses that printed Hebrew books, particularly religious tracts (because of this, there was a need for the «*imprimatur*» of rabbis in order to use them for printing journals). Many printing presses were established in eastern Europe³, and even non-Jewish printers were employed.

Establishing a printing press and acquiring the technical equipment required for printing involved financing a large initial investment. In most cases, these financial resources were not available to the promoters, who had to depend on the assistance of wealthy supporters within the Jewish community. This brought about a «patronization» of the financial sponsors, so that the newspapers they financed were not independent, but were subject to pressures and in particular to political dependence (cf. the relations between *Hamelitz*, *Hazefira* and *Hacarmel* with the «Marbei Haskalah» society, and the relations between *Halebanon* with the Orthodox establishment), in addition to external pressures from the government.

The papers that appeared in Western Europe succeeded in setting up in a relatively short time printing presses of their own. Silberman, founder of the first weekly, *Hamagid* (Lyck, Eastern Prussia, 1856), owned from the beginning a printing shop that also served his book publishing house «Awakener of Sleepers». He allowed himself to employ a (Christian) printer paying a salary of «peanuts»⁴, while the type-setter received a monthly salary of 24 rubles. Yechiel Brill, who at first printed his *Halebanon* in Paris, at the Guerin printers, succeeded in establishing in 1869 a printing press for his newspaper (owned by one of the leaders of the community, Michel Erlanger), and he remarked with pride that he himself set the type.

In Russia, as well, Alexander Zederbaum set up a printing press for *Hamelitz*, journal of the «Haskala» (Jewish Enlightenment) movement, in which he also printed his Yiddish paper «*The Informative Voice*». To set the type, he employed the writer M. L. Lilienblum, paying 20 rubles per month. Sometimes, writers and editors were fictitiously registered as type-setters in order to receive a permit that enabled them to reside in the capital city, Petersburg. The most prominent among them was David Frishman.

The newspapers were distributed by subscription, and for this purpose a network of agents was set up, first of all in the population centers of the Russian empire, which constituted the principal public for this journalism. There, the newspapers also had to pass previous censorship, and for this reason it was essential to concentrate them before distribution. The agents were generally distributors of Hebrew literature and sometimes even merchants of religious

² See: Gideon Kouts, *La Presse Hebraique en Europe, ses Origines et son Evolution de 1856 a 1897*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Lille, 1999.

Gideon Kouts, *Studies in the History of the Hebrew Press*, Golan, Tel Aviv, 1999.

³ According to Chaim Dov Friedberg, in Poland alone were more than sixty printers in the second half of the 19th century. *History of Jewish Printing in Poland* (Hebrew), Tel-Aviv, 1959.

⁴ Sh. L. Zitron, «Salaries of writers in Hebrew literature and journalism», *Haolam*, XIII, 13.7.1927, p. 4.

artifacts; in other cases, as in the «Haskala» movement, some were activists who distributed certain publications without receiving compensation.

In general, the newspaper editors suffered many problems with the distributors: these delayed payment and took for themselves high commissions, exploiting the weakness of the editors in view of the communication difficulties of those times, and the quasi-underground condition of the Hebrew press.

Following the pattern set by the first Hebrew weekly, *Hamagid*, the distribution system was divided into main distributors - such as those for *Hamagid* in Vilna and Warsaw - where the central censors were located, and local distributors in the small cities, who received the publications from the main distributors after they had been approved by the censorship. Small towns and villages received the papers through carriers: the «cart drivers». In comparison with the cumbersome distribution within the Russian Empire, distribution of the newspapers to other Jewish centers in the world - even distant ones such as India - was relatively easy and direct. The price of a year's subscription to *Hamagid* (and to other journals) was six rubles. From this sum, the agents took one third: two rubles. After deducting the printing costs, the publisher was left with a theoretical balance of 3.5 rubles per subscriber.

Some of the agents were also reporters for the paper and their work as distributors represented a form of remuneration.

The importance of these newspapers and their correspondents cannot be measured by the number of subscribers. *Hamagid*, first of the weeklies (Lyck, 1856) had a peak circulation of 1,800 subscribers, and with the appearance of *Hacarmel* (Vilna, 1860), it lost 800 subscribers who opted for the new publication⁵. In the year 1881 *Hamagid* distributed a thousand copies, seven hundred of which in Russia and one hundred in Germany⁶.

Hamelitz (1860) had 2,500 subscribers in Odessa. When it moved (in 1871) to Petersburg, the number of subscribers fell to 1,200. Its deficits, however, were covered by the editor, Alexander Zederbaum (Ere"z) who inserted a Yiddish supplement: *The Informative Voice* (1862-1873), and during a shorter period also a supplement in Russian. In 1881, Zederbaum founded a Yiddish weekly, *Folkesblatt*.

Hazefira (Warsaw) had 1,500 subscribers in 1880. The number of subscribers to *Hamelitz* in 1882, according to the testimony of Yala"g⁷ (Judah Leib Gordon), reached a peak circulation of 4,000.

The first daily newspaper, *Hayom* (Petersburg, 1886), started with a circulation of 2,400 copies, but after a year the number of subscribers had dropped to 1,600⁸. The number of readers was in fact much greater. The newspapers were read by other persons apart from

5 Nahum Sokolov, *Personalities II* (Hebrew), Tel Aviv, 5695, pp. 27-28.

6 Sh. Bernfeld, "David Gordon" (Hebrew), *Haolam* 1926, pp. 469, 599.

7 Yala"g letters, Volume 2, p. 25.

8 Letter from Y. L. Kantor to I. A. Treivish, December 28, 1886. Collection of Abraham Sharon, National and University Library, Jerusalem.

subscribers, in places such as the homes of the agents who were supposed to distribute them, and the homes of the writers.

Two examples will show the estimated value of the Hebrew newspapers. In 1880, Silberman sold *Hamagid* to David Gordon for the sum of 1,000 Prussian thalers⁹, equivalent to 1,600 Russian rubles (while at the beginning Silberman had demanded 20,000 thalers for his paper!). *Hamelitz* was sold in 1893 to Leon Rabinowitz and Shabtai Rapaport for ten thousand Russian rubles. These two papers achieved annual profits estimated at 4,800 rubles (*Hamagid*) and 4,000 rubles (*Hamelitz*).

In the era of daily newspapers that started in 1886, the price of the annual subscription was increased to only eight rubles. *Hazefira* also introduced a new method of distribution, according to which, although subscribers paid their subscription to the agent, they received the paper directly to their homes by post.

At the end of the 19th century, the Hebrew daily newspapers achieved their maximum circulation. In the years 1897-1898, during the time of the Dreyfus affair in France, the daily *Hazefira* reached a circulation of ten thousand copies. In 1903, the circulation of *Hazofe*, the Zionist paper of A. Friedman in Warsaw, reached 12,000 subscribers¹⁰. The total circulation of the three Hebrew daily newspapers in Russia (*Hazefira*, *Hazofe* and *Hazman*), at the beginning of the 20th century (1905) reached 20,000 subscribers, which was less than the circulation of the single Yiddish newspaper, *Der Friend*¹¹.

Although from a technical point of view, the Hebrew weeklies were spared the primitive stages that world journalism had to go through, and they could have been able to make use of the advances of the time, the fact is that financial problems on the one hand, and their language particularity on the other, prevented them from doing so. Reports from distant places were usually sent by mail, written by hand, and until they appeared in print they were no longer current. None of the weeklies made use of the services of the telegraph of the general news agencies. Only the first Hebrew daily, *Hayom* (1886), signed a contract with the Russian «Northern Company» (the telegraph). Until that time, the Hebrew newspapers used to copy the news of a «general» nature from the newspapers in other languages, and sometimes one from another, not always bothering to mention the source. This service cost it 3,000 rubles per year¹². This caused financial problems also to his competitors, like *Hamelitz*, the daily paper, that was obliged to follow suit, but cancelled its contract as soon as *Hayom* disappeared.

The Hebrew weeklies were «one-man papers», and their fate was generally dependant on the fate of that man. Some were founded by persons with political and public ambitions who, owing to the standing of Jews in the world of that time, were unable to fulfill their aspirations,

⁹ Sh. L. Zitron, *ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰ Sh. L. Zitron, *Haolam*, 26, 14.4.1921, p. 13

¹¹ Ben-Zion Katz, *On Newspapers and People* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv, 1983, p. 56.

¹² Sh. L. Zitron, «Notes on the History of the Hebrew Press - *Hamelitz*», *Haolam*, 15, 1914, p. 12.

and others were started by businessmen who were also involved in public affairs and who wanted to make their influence felt in the community, and later also by men with nationalist ideology (Silberman). The *Haskala* members were educators or scientists who were in search of a tribune (Slonimski's *Hazefira* newspaper was established at first in order to publicize natural sciences).

The publisher was also the editor in chief (the «Editorialist») but, because not all of them were good writers, or did not want to spend too much time editing, they took an «Assistant» - in fact the editor, who had a good command of language - and sometimes they also hired junior assistants to help the chief assistant, but all of them were subordinate to the «Editorialist» - Publisher. Most of them did not last long in their job.

The assistants received wages, but in return they had to save other expenses from the publisher, that is to say, to secure articles without payment, or to fill out themselves a considerable portion of the newspaper. At the beginning, this press did not make payments to the writers. The honor of having their work published was regarded as the only and sufficient compensation for writers and reporters, and this is what they received. The first assistant, David Gordon, received from the start of his work, at the age of 24, and during no less than 22 years, a modest salary of 25 Prussian thalers - some 40 Russian rubles, per month. When, after twenty years, his additional (and main) source of income, a youth pension from Russia, dried out, he was forced to wage a prolonged battle (thus he complains in a letter published in *Treasure of Literature*, Year 1) with Silberman, who rejected his entreaties. After some community leaders intervened, he agreed to add the yearly sum of 200 thalers, that is, he raised the salary to 66 rubles. Gordon described as follows the bitter fate of the assistant editor:

For twenty years I have worked at *Hamagid*, and I will not be making a false claim, if I assert that it benefited from my work. All that I wrote was appreciated by the readers and drew their attention. In the course of time, the income of *Hamagid* grew. After deducting all the expenses, its profit was about three thousand R.T. [Reichs Thalers] per year. Our friend, the owner of *Hamagid*, gained wealth and also reputation, and people called him Rabbi and Scholar, and his fame fills the world, and also his wealth is not insignificant. And myself? Believe me, my esteemed friend, that I will not feel bogus pride, although everything I did was in his favor. I was modest and unassuming, and I was delighted with the success of our friend, the owner of *Hamagid*, as long as I had enough to eat. During all these twenty years, when I dedicated all my skill and power to my work at *Hamagid*, and while my hair became white there, I received as salary only three hundred R.T. per year, I swear to God, who made my soul, that I speak the truth. Although the owner of *Hamagid* promised me, both by word and in a letter he sent to me in England, to come to him (and I was then 24 years old), that in proportion to the increase in *Hamagid's* income, so will my salary increase and I shall not be without sustenance, but he did not fulfill his undertaking, and all this long time he didn't add a single cent. And if you ask me, why did I stay? I shall answer that for me it was hard to get leave of my work, that I loved so much, and to my sorrow I belong to the world of imagination (idealist) in everything, and not

to the practical world, and my desire to instruct and improve the fate of my people was uppermost in my mind and so I bent down under my burden. And when the [above] sum was no longer sufficient to sustain my family, I was obliged to establish a young man's pension for our brethren Israelites in Russia and Poland, and this was my main income. Although the work was very hard, I was happy with my lot, since I was able to sustain my wife and child. However, at the end of the winter of 1877, that source of income also dried out; because of the war and other reasons they stopped sending their children to my pension and then I was truly destitute. Then I started demanding from our friend the owner of *Hamagid* to add now at least (what was lost, was lost) to my salary, so that I could support my family. However, he replied thus: «To give I cannot!». I know that such a thing is almost unbelievable, but that is what happened, though I am ashamed to tell my troubles. Nevertheless, I requested the help of friends, whose words and opinions - I knew - were important to him, such as Rabbi Mattitiah Stershon of Vilna, Rabbi Shlomo Buber and others, who told him what to do, and he agreed to add two hundred per year, and though even this was not sufficient to sustain my family, I accepted this willingly and I shall suffer.

Yecheil Brill, Editor of *Halebanon*, did not require assistants and his enormous work load included, as mentioned before, also type setting. Chaim Zelig Slonimski, Editor of *Hazefira*, hired in 1874 the services of Y. L. Kantor as chief assistant, with a monthly salary of 40 thalers, some 64 rubles. In 1876 Slonimski invited the poet Judah Leib Gordon (Yala"g) to join the editorial staff. Yala"g, whose correspondence constitutes an important testimony on the organizational and economic conditions of the Hebrew press, and who, unlike David Gordon, devoted to these conditions time and effort not inferior to that accorded to writing, answered with a detailed letter that included, among others, the first practical advise to «separate powers», that is, to distribute the work between publisher and editor, as a condition for the independent operation of modern general journalism¹³.

... and the conditions under which we could participate in the business, are two that are three. It would be better if we could obtain from the start the license from the government on our two names, and the journal [newspaper] will be in principle the property of both of us. But you say that for the good of the business, it is necessary that *Hazofe* be registered in your name, while I don't see what will be detracted from it if in the heading of the journal will be written «Published by Ch.Z.S. [Chaim Zelig Slonimski] in Warsaw and by J. L. Gordon in Petersburg», since even if I am not half as good as you in wisdom, and I didn't make myself a reputation such as yours, yet our people knows me as a writer, and I hope that this also will be good for the business, and if the journal will not derive great advantage from that of having my name on it, I trust it will not cause it harm either.

¹³ Copied by Sh. L. Zitron, «Author's salaries in Hebrew Literature and Journalism», *Haolam*, 13, 13.2.1921, p. 5.

And if the government refuses to give a license to publish a journal to two persons who live in different cities, and the journal is forced to appear with only your name, what is appropriate is to make a contract of partnership between us, signed and valid, according to the laws of the state. In any case, whether the journal appears in our two names or if it appears in your name alone, I think it will be better if we find a printer to publish the journal at our expense, and we shall receive salary for editing from him, either a fixed salary, while the responsibility will be his, or a portion of the proceeds of the business, approximately one half.

According to my calculations, it will be hard for me to invest in this business any amount, apart from my work in it. If you have some thousands of silver rubles that don't produce income, on my part I have very little capital, and it is invested in loans that give me a nice income, and which I cannot contribute to the business in Warsaw because that income is most needed, since I require it for my daily sustenance and my salary is insufficient to make my living; furthermore, I live far away and will be unable to inspect the printer's accounts, and they are not reliable in what they do, as you yourself have testified about your first printer.

And if you don't find it correct to turn this over to a printer, or if you cannot find a trustworthy printer, or if you prefer to put up out of your own pocket all the capital required for this business, then apart from the income from the business that we shall divide by equal parts, you will receive a percentage of the total profits until recovering your total investment.

The partnership was not finalized, and Slonimski was content with hiring the services of Saul Pinchas Rabinowitz, who was in charge of writing the news items - «Chronicle», and occasional articles, for a monthly salary of 40 rubles. In 1883, Nahum Sokolow took up the job of chief assistant editor and had no difficulty in filling up the paper with his own writings. Only in the brief golden days of *Hayom*, Slonimski hired the services of A. S. Friedberg for 120 rubles per month, and fired him after the danger had passed. Sokolow conducted a prolonged fight with the aged Slonimski for the control of *Hazefira*, and finally succeeded in breaking his hold.

J. L. Gordon started his journalistic career in 1880 at *Hamelitz*, (which had renewed its publication in 1878 in its own printing shop). As Chief Assistant he received at first 75 rubles per month and in April 1880 he signed a work contract, «special personal contract», as it is known today, which is the first known of its kind in Hebrew journalism. The text of the contract signed between him and Alexander Zederbaum, Editor of *Hamelitz*, is quoted by A. S. Friedberg in «Remembrances of Alexander Zederbaum», in the *Hadoar Yearbook*, p. 245 :

We, the undersigned, have made an agreement on the Editing of *Hamelitz* under the following conditions:

(a) *Hamelitz* will appear twice every week. (b) Mr. J. L. Gordon undertakes to be in charge of its literary contents: (1) to write the section «World Events» and «Outside our Country»; (2) to correct the columns written by others; (3) to correspond with the best Hebrew writers in order to bring them to *Hamelitz*. (c) Alexander Zederbaum undertakes: (1) to pay to J. L. Gordon the sum of 225 rubles per month, apart from editorial articles and serials that he will

write, for which he will be paid 5 kopeks for each line; (2) A. Z. undertakes not to interfere in what J.L. Gordon writes, and never change even an iota; (3) not to print anything of his without Gordon's previous consent; (4) find him a second assistant for *Hamelitz*, who will be under Gordon's decision and who will have no authority to intervene about anything. Also, to feed him and the second assistant, who will be selected by Gordon, and to pay him 50 rubles per month, to be deducted from Gordon's salary, amounting to 225 rubles, that he is obliged to pay to him, so as long as the assistant is in the editorial staff, Gordon shall receive no more than 175 rubles per month.

In witness whereof both parties are signing hereon.

Therefore, *Hamelitz* started paying a writer's fee of 5 kopeks per line, first to Gordon himself, who complains in a letter to the writer Zeev Kaplan¹⁴ that Zederbaum tries to save money by asking less writing from him:

I have serious doubts whether Zederbaum will pay you for your articles, since he tries to avoid taking stories from me - you saw that throughout December no serial came from me, and for January he didn't ask either, because he has material sent to him for free...

The willingness of famous writers to work without pay and even to pay out of pocket in order to publish their work in a popular newspaper (in comparison with their books) is well demonstrated in the brief and cutting letter sent by Moshe Leib Lilienblum to the editor of *Hakol* in K?nigsberg, Michael Levy Rodkinsohn, together with his important article «Petah-Tikva»:

Here is my article, on which I labored a full month, and often worked until late at night. If I had written it in the Russian language, there is no doubt that I would receive for it some ruble, but now I should add some forty kopeks from my pocket in order to send it to you, but I seek no payment...

However, after the newspaper became a success, and after threats of resignation, and within the framework of improved conditions, Gordon received the editor's agreement for payment of a writer's fee as mentioned before (5 kopeks) to selected writers (Lilienblum, Hadar, Shlomo Rubin, ZKN), while others continued writing without pay. This was also the payment offered to the writer A. S. Friedberg in 1882, for his article «Vision of the Future», where he called for a solution to the Jewish problem by settling in Eretz Israel. At the beginning of 1883, Friedberg joined the editorial staff of *Hamelitz* as Chief Assistant, with a salary of 120 rubles per month, apart from food, and work as teacher that the Editor arranged for him. 50 rubles were deducted from Gordon's salary, as stipulated in his contract. A conflict

¹⁴ *Correspondence of J. L. Gordon*, Warsaw, 5654, vol. 1, p. 301.

of powers broke out between Gordon and his new assistant, and Gordon left the paper, returning to it only in 1886, when Friedberg went out.

From 1886, after *Hamelitz* had turned into a daily newspaper, it became the central forum of the *Haskala* [Jewish Enlightenment] and hence of the Hibat Zion [a pioneer Zionist movement], a representative example of the economic and organizational changes in Hebrew journalism. In this paper, for the first time, although for a short while only, the historical separation of duties between publisher and editor took place.

As a daily, the financial situation of *Hamelitz* deteriorated, because of the initial success of the first Hebrew daily *Hayom*, and to a certain extent, that of *Hazefira*, which also became a daily, and because the support of the well-to-do Jews and institutions of Petersburg stopped. The printers of the newspaper, Halevy and Lifshitz, who were also printers of the Yiddish *Folksblatt*, refused to continue printing it on credit, and in the end ownership of the paper passed to their hands (officially, until the full amount of the debt was paid up). The arrangement was, that if at the end of one year the debt was not cancelled, ownership of the paper would be finally transferred to them. In the mean time, the new publishers announced (1886, issues 156, 160) that the paper's format would not change and that the editors would remain in their post. Nevertheless, in order to face the competition, the publishers pushed the paper into a process of modernization. The paper subscribed to a selection of cables from the official news agency «Novosty», which appeared in a section called «Telegrams» under the headline «From First Hand». Distribution of prizes and the sale of books to subscribers at reduced prices was also introduced.

«Ere"z» (Alexander Zederbaum), who remained in the paper as junior editor, became the enemy of the «Hovevei Zion», many of whom subscribed to *Hayom* instead of saving his paper, that supported their ideology. In protest, he stopped his «lobbying» with the authorities, in order to gain official permission to found the «Hovevei Zion» society. «Why none of the Hovevei Zion applies to *Hayom* ?», he answered to those who requested his help. «Let Kantor [Editor of *Hayom*] come and approve them their society...».

The improvement in the financial situation allowed Gordon to hire Abraham Jacob Slutzki as senior editorial assistant. He wrote to the leaders of the «Hovevei Zion» calling on them to return to *Hamelitz* and to abandon *Hayom*. In fact, he also proposed to turn the paper into their mouthpiece. This really happened, and after their first enthusiasm, subscribers began returning to *Hamelitz*. Gordon turned to literary endeavors, writing editorials and feuilletons. The paper was managed correctly. The wages of thirty (!) reporters¹⁵ was raised and regular salaries help *Hamelitz* to build a network of permanent reporters in the big cities, particularly abroad, including Palestine (in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Safed, and the first agricultural settlements). The separation of functions, then, was good for the paper, although the idyll did not last long. In the interest of good management, however, the right to distribute the salaries to

¹⁵ Sh. L. Zitron, «Notes on the History of the Hebrew Press - *Hamelitz*», *Haolam*, 15, 1914, p. 9.

the journalists was left in the hands of the Editor. The correspondence of Yala»g with his reporters constitutes an amusing and valuable testimony on this painful subject¹⁶.

Replying to a correspondent who had requested a raise in the pay per line (two and one-half kopeks) he wrote: «I cannot comply with your petition for additional payment, since *Hamelitz* is incapable of increasing the writers' wages. And if people tell you that other writers receive up to five kopeks, that's a lie! ... in fact, very few writers deal with us for money, otherwise we could not survive. For this reason, not long ago I was forced, to my regret, to turn a deaf ear to the pleading of our friend, the brilliant writer Silberbush, who dared to cry give, give, more than what we were able to give. Therefore, be gracious, my brother, restrain your ambition and be content with the little we can provide you with. For your work with us, the little is also a gift from heaven... and may the Lord help you and fill your needs from the treasures in heaven, because the gold is His and the silver is His, since He has more readers than *Hamelitz*...».

To a correspondent who had requested an advance, Gordon wrote: «We don't give advances to anybody, except that to our friend Silberbush I sent thirty silver rubles in advance, as an exception, and he went and told this to others, and now I can see that among us it is true that *L'appétit vient en mangeant* [Appetite comes with eating - in French in the original].

Jewish writers never received for the product of their writing even a little finger, and now, when I extended to them some honey from the honeycomb, are emboldened to eat the honeycomb with the honey...». From this letter we learn that the threatened suspension of Silberbush's work did not last long.

To a correspondent who published the same article on *Hamelitz* and on other papers, he wrote: «The decision has been made, not to credit your account with the reports that were made irresponsibly, being published also in other journals... and although you justify yourself... please tell us now, after you have masters other than us, which of the masters will be responsible for sustenance? For «clothing and sex»? [Sarcastic quote of the obligations of husband to wife in the marriage contract]. Will *Hamelitz* be the only one that pays... or also *Hamagid* and *Hazefira* will give their share?».

To a correspondent who stopped working, because he didn't receive his wages in time, Gordon wrote: «From your articles... I knew that you are punctilious about the language, but until now I knew not that you are so meticulous about accounts, because today you have sent your last article... you intend to leave and your voice will not be heard among us, and this is certainly because there was no time to send you what you are owed for the articles already printed... and I already told you, that since your words are set in printing, your money is as sure as in a safe, and even if it takes its time, it will surely come...».

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

To a correspondent who wanted the paper sent free of charge to a personality in the community, he wrote: «What you request is a difficult matter, sending the papers free of charge. If the publishers would tell us to send the newspaper to all the rabbis and learned men and to all the important Jews and to orphanages and libraries, where shall we stop? As the Editor, I am entitled to send the paper as a gift to all those writers who help us in our work, but to all other persons, who do not support us, even if they are community leaders in the Diaspora, it's out of my hands.»

In November 1887, the year that had been set in the contract between Ere"z and his printer as the time to reimburse the debt came to its end. The income was insufficient to cover the deficits, but these were covered instead by the publisher, who became in a final and legal way the owner of the paper. He asked to retain for himself the Yiddish newspaper, *Folksblatt*, where he also wrote, and to get rid of *Hamelitz*. The alternative then was to sell the paper (in fact, the list of subscribers) to his competitor, Kantor, the Editor of *Hayom*, who was planning to exploit the disappearance of *Hamelitz* in order to send to the subscribers his own paper during the remaining months of the year, in expectation that they would come and subscribe to it. The community leaders, who were part of the «intellectuals» (belonging to the Haskala movement) approved the move. Yala"g did as well, since he was promised the editing post of the literary journal *Ben Ami*.

Pressures on the part of the «Hovevei Zion», particularly the editor A. I. Slutzki, who, it is said, begged Halevi with tears in his eyes and even kissed his feet, the project was abandoned¹⁷. *Hamelitz* returned to the control of Zederbaum and turned into an official organ of the «Hovevei Zion», who secured subscribers for the paper. The publication even passed to a better printer, Etinger, and started to use new fonts. The number of subscribers increased after the collapse of *Hayom*, but there were recurrent publication irregularities. These took expression, for instance, by adding to the paper the *Hakerem* almanac of Eliezer Atlas (1887, issue number 130), although it included sections that Yala"g denounced as «fanatic and reactionary». As Zederbaum's position became stronger, the disputes between him and Yala"g became more strident. The final rupture took place in August 1888, when Ere"z traveled to southern Russia, appointing Moshe Proser as the administrator. In response, Yala"g made use of the clauses in the license to publish the paper and withdrew his signature, without which it was impossible to continue publishing *Hamelitz*. Only with the consent of the official responsible for printing licenses, a temporary and unofficial arrangement allowed printing to continue until the return of Ere"z from his journey. Y. L. Kantor, the former editor of *Hayom*, was recruited to replace Gordon.

When Kantor was at the head of *Hayom*, he paid his permanent correspondents, appointed in the main Jewish centers (Warsaw, Odessa), a salary of three kopeks per line, and forced

¹⁷ Sh. L. Zitron, *ibid.*, 18, p. 11.

his competitors that had become dailies to follow his example. When coming to *Hamelitz*, he was obliged to obey Zederbaum's orders to cut down on expenses.

At the end of the century, Leon Rabinowitz, despite the success of *Hamelitz*, cut down the writer's wages to three or four kopeks per line. *Hazofe*, that appeared in 1903 in Warsaw, was the first Hebrew newspaper that paid for everything it published, and the other dailies followed suit. These newspapers already had permanent editorial staff numbering numerous persons. Publishers employed experienced workers, although not so regularly as the literary journals¹⁸, despite the fact that sometimes these were under the same publishers (Ben Avigdor, senior publisher of Hebrew literature in Warsaw, also dealt with the publishing of the journal *Hazman* in Vilna). The publisher was not necessarily the capitalist. Owners of capital were found to make the investment, and sometimes established a sort of corporation. In *Hazman*, twenty persons invested 500 rubles each¹⁹. When the paper fell into financial difficulties, it turned over the publication of its advertisements to an agency that specialized in that area, Michael's advertising agency, for a term of five years. The Hebrew press economy had entered the modern age.

¹⁸ About the structural changes that took place then in the world of Hebrew literature publishing see: Zohar Shavit, «Rise and Fall of Literary Centers in Europe and America, and Establishment of the Center in Eretz Israel», *Studies on Israel's Rebirth*, vol. 4, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 1994, pp. 422-439.

¹⁹ Ben Zion Katz, *ibidem*, p. 38.