In the past few years, Polish scholars have demonstrated an increased interest in the history and culture of Polish Jews. Nonetheless, there are still issues which have not yet been adequately researched. One of them is Jewish press, which only recently has become the object of comprehensive studies. In this context, it seems necessary to define the concept of a “Jewish press”. The term is not synonymous with the Hebrew press which constitutes the subject of the present essay. By Jewish press, I refer to all the periodicals established on the Jewish initiative and targeted at Jewish readers, regardless of the language of publication. Hence, the Jewish press is not limited only to Yiddish and Hebrew, but it also encompasses all the local languages of the places where Jews resided, for example the Polish language.

In Poland, the research on Jewish press was initiated by Marian Fuks. He is the author of twenty-two articles on this topic. In 1993, Michael Steinlauf

* Research financed from the budget for academia for the years 2015-2019 as part of the „Diamond Grant” programme.
1 Similar definition was provided by J. Nalewajko-Kulikov in Studia z dziejów trójjęzycznej prasy żydowskiej na ziemiach polskich (XIX-XXw.), Warszawa 2012, p. 7.
asserted that Jewish press still constituted a neglected area of study on the Jewish history in Poland. Chone Shmeruk evaluated the state of research on Jewish publishing houses and the Hebrew-language press in Poland in a similar manner. Since then, the studies gathered momentum. In 2014, an international conference titled “The Jewish Press in Poland. Yesterday and Today” was held in Zamość. At the conference, scholars from Europe and Israel presented their research on the Jewish press from the 19th century until the present day. Within the last couple of years, numerous publications tackling the subject of Jewish press in the interwar period appeared. So far (as of the year 2016), approximately 100 works on Jewish periodicals in Poland were published. Nonetheless, a large number of newspapers and periodicals remain not properly researched. I refer here to the Jewish press published in the Polish lands (Congress Poland and Galicia) in the 19th century. Until now, the biggest interest amongst Polish scholars was directed at the Polish-language weekly Izraelita which reflects on the ideas of assimilated Jews in Warsaw. Yet, the Hebrew and Yiddish press, in contrast to the Polish press, has not received an appropriate attention on the part of Polish scholars. This gap in research is complemented, to a small extent, by foreign publications. The longest functioning Hebrew periodical in the Kingdom of Poland, Ha-Tsefirah (Hebr. – The Dawn), became the subject of a comprehensive study of

6 A. Landau-Czajka, Polska to nie oni..., p. 7.
8 In the recent years the issue of Hebrew literary periodicals in the interwar period was raised by Magda Sara Szwabowicz. See for example: Hebajruskojęzyczne czasopisma literackie ukazujące się w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym, unpublished M.A. thesis, The Faculty of Hebrew Language and Literature, Oriental Department, University of Warsaw, 2010; eadem, „Literatura polska w zwierciadle hebrajskojęzycznej krytyki literackiej", Teksty Drugie, 2012, 1–2, pp. 242–254.
Israeli researchers. Aside from Ha-Tsefirah, other Hebrew periodicals published in Warsaw appeared ephemerally and perhaps for this reason they were not considered important. Ha-Tsofe (Hebr. – The Spectator) and Ha-Dor (Hebr. – The Generation), despite their evanescence, were popular and had a considerably high circulation. The monograph by Ali Attia and the works by Shoshana Ronen, Menuha Gilboa, Gedalia Elkoshi, Ela Bauer, and Avner Holtzman cast some light on the type of Jewish readership and the character of the publishing milieus in Warsaw.

The state of research is by no means satisfactory. Warsaw was the biggest centre of the Jewish Diaspora in the 19th century and Jews accounted for one third of the total city population. The Jewish press reflected social, economic and political processes taking place within the Jewish society in Poland. Moreover, the turn of the 20th century was the time when periodicals began to play an important role in social life. As Scott Ury asserts, by the late 19th century Jewish press began to replace Jewish traditional community institutions which were by then slowly losing their authority as a consequence of advancing politicization and secularization of the Jewish masses.

It is therefore requisite to examine this area of Polish-Jewish expression in order to fully comprehend the extent of transformation and the history of Polish Jewry. Hence, it is vital to meticulously research Hebrew periodicals published in Warsaw and try to seek answers to a number of questions. For instance, who were the target group of readers? What was the extent of the periodicals’ influence on the Jewish community? Why were the newspapers, usually, of evanescent nature? What does the character of Hebrew press tell us about the Jewish community in Poland and its degree of modernization? Were there any specific features that differentiated Hebrew press from Yiddish and Polish-language Jewish press published concurrently in Eastern Europe?

The Potential Readers of the Hebrew Press

Who read the Jewish press? The answer to this question is as complicated as complex were the internal divisions within the Jewish society of Warsaw. First of all, it is crucial to determine the general potential readership among Warsaw Jewry. By the end of the 19th century, Jews constituted one third of the city’s population and accounted for more than 200,000 people.\(^{13}\) Obviously, not all of them were among potential readers of the Jewish press. As a result of obligatory traditional education in cheders,\(^{14}\) Jewish adult men demonstrated the highest level of alphabetization. In cheders they learned how to write and read in the Hebrew alphabet. The mother tongue was Yiddish but, thanks to the studies in Jewish and state schools, Jewish men acquired the knowledge (usually scant) of Hebrew and European languages (for example Polish or Russian). The group labeled “Poles of the Mosaic faith”, supporting the integration of Jews within Polish society, postulated the renunciation of Jewish languages and promoted the shift to Polish language. This language change was supposed to accompany the process of complete acculturation. The advocates of Jewish integration with the Polish culture were most numerous in the capital of Congress Poland, where they set the tone of Jewish life. From the beginning of the 19th century, the milieu of integrationists attempted to create a press organ which would reflect their ideology. In 1823, they established bilingual (Polish and Germanized Yiddish) periodical Beobakhter an der Vayksel – (Yid. - The Observer from the Wisła River Shore). The paper survived, however, for one year only. The next attempt of this milieu to have its own press organ was Polski Izraelita (Pol. - Polish Israelite) – published briefly during the November Uprising. The subsequent attempt proved to be unsuccessful as well. Jutrzenka (Pol. - The Dawn), published in Polish (as its predecessor), was issued for two years only, between 1861 and 1863.

Although the integrationist milieu was rather strong in Warsaw until the 1890s, it cannot be considered as representative of the entire Jewish population in Warsaw. The majority of Jews remained faithful to tradition and spoke only Yiddish. This part of the society, due to its hermeticism, was less pliant to modernizing processes. The emergence of press organs was yet another symptom of modern changes within European societies. Jewish masses who lived according to tradition did not feel the need to read newspapers as a result of which there was no Yiddish periodical in Warsaw until the late 19th century. Yiddish periodicals appeared in the Polish capital only along with politicization and modernization of the Jewish masses. In Eastern Europe, only one Yiddish daily had been in circulation thus far - Kol Mevaser (Hebr.

\(^{13}\) M. Nietyksza, Ludność Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku, Warszawa 1971, p. 122.

\(^{14}\) cheder – traditional Jewish elementary school, where boys up to 13 years old were learning how to read and write in Hebrew alphabet. Main text read were Torah and Talmud.
The other factor that also contributed to the limited press publication in Yiddish was the Jewish attitude toward Jewish languages. For a long period of time, Yiddish was considered a jargon rather than an autonomous language. The contemptuous attitude toward Yiddish prevailed at least until 1903 when the first conference dedicated to the Yiddish language was held. Integrationists fought against the use of Yiddish because it was hampering the process of assimilation. However, not only assimilationist milieu had its reasons to combat Yiddish. The Zionists were also against the vernacular Jewish language, due to the fact that it embodied the weakness of the Diaspora. The adherents of Zionist ideology supported the use of Hebrew instead, a true mother tongue of Jews. The absence of Yiddish press was caused by other factors as well. One of them was Russian censorship, especially strict in the case of Yiddish publications. Russian authorities suspected that revolutionary ideas could be concealed in Yiddish publications; hence, the Yiddish press would stimulate the Jewish masses to oppose the Russians. It was, therefore, more difficult to receive publication permit for a Yiddish periodical than for a Hebrew one. Nonetheless, there were many ways of evading the restrained possibilities of publishing Yiddish newspapers. For instance, one of the options was to issue non-periodical publications or to camouflage newspapers under holidays cards. In 1888, Sholem Aleichem published *Di yidishe folksbiblyotek* – (Yid. - The Jewish folk library) in Kiev. In the same year, Mordke Spektor began to print *Der Hoyzfraynd* (Yid. - The Friend of the House) in Warsaw. Concurrently, from 1891 in Warsaw, I.L. Perets was publishing an anthology titled *Di yidishe biblyotek* (Yid. - The Jewish library), *Literatur un lebn* (Yid. - Literature and life) and *Yontev bletlekh* (Yid. - Holiday Papers).

Who was, therefore, a potential reader of a Hebrew periodical in Warsaw? As I have already pointed out, Yiddish rather than Hebrew was the mother tongue (Yid. *mame-loshn*) of Polish Jews. The knowledge of Hebrew was acquired in *cheders* and through more advanced studies in *yeshivot*. In addition, Hebrew was usually used for religious rather than secular purposes. Boys and men were instructed to read religious texts in Hebrew. As Shaul Stampfer indicates, all Jewish men read and wrote in Hebrew only in theory. Education in *cheders* was usually on a low level and the knowledge of Hebrew was practically limited to reading religious texts only. By the end of the 18th century and

---

19 yeshiva – Jewish educational institution in which boys after the bar-mitzvah ceremony could continue their education and deepen their knowledge of Talmud.
the beginning of the 19th century, the attitude towards the Hebrew language underwent a significant change. Jews from Congress Poland were influenced by the Haskalah – the Jewish Enlightenment. The followers of this movement - referred to as maskilim (Hebr. - the educated) contributed significantly to the revival of the Hebrew language. Having rejected the possibility of using Yiddish as a language of science and art, they began to use Hebrew in non-religious works, such as academic treatises, poetry, prose and private correspondence. In the Kingdom of Poland and other parts of the Russian Empire, this group also fought for the establishment of Jewish publications in Hebrew. Their initiatives will be described closely in the subsequent part of the present study. Taking all the above into consideration, let us try to answer the question: who were the readers of Hebrew periodicals in Warsaw?

Based on the data collected by S. Corrsin, one may safely declare that the number of potential readers was not high. Barely 8,000 Warsaw Jews declared knowledge of Hebrew (the category of “knowing only Hebrew”).\(^{21}\) It means that mere 12.8% of Jewish men used Hebrew only. Corrsin considered this data as understated. Information from the same source indicates that 51.5% of Jewish men in Warsaw were literate. One may assume that they could use more than one language, such as Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish. It is therefore highly likely that much more than 8,000 people read Hebrew and would be interested in the press published in this language. It is worth taking a closer look at the people who had declared knowledge of the Hebrew language only (12.8%). Each member of the Jewish community had to use Yiddish. As I have already pointed out, Yiddish was the mother tongue of Polish Jews. Therefore, declaration of literacy solely in Hebrew was, possibly, an ideological manifestation. It is plausible that this small group of 8,000 Jews from Warsaw were adherents of the Haskalah or supporters of Zionism, which was gaining in popularity at the time of the census. Consequently, Warsaw became one of the major centres of Hebrew culture in Eastern Europe.

Warsaw as a Hebrew Publishing Centre

From the mid-19th century until the First World War, Warsaw was an important place for Haskalah and Zionism.\(^{22}\) Both movements supported the use of Hebrew among Polish Jews. Hence, in some measure, naturally, Warsaw became the centre of Hebrew publishing market. Already in 1797, there were two Hebrew printing houses in Warsaw; however, they were not run by Jews. Following the prohibition of Jewish publishing in the remaining part of the Russian Empire in 1835, the role of Warsaw as a Hebrew publishing centre increased. In comparison to other cities, such as Vilna, Odessa or Sankt Peters-


\(^{22}\) Sh. Ronen, Kitvey Et... , p. 158.
Hebrew Language Press in Warsaw until 1905

burg. Hebrew printing market in Warsaw was considerably young. In 1859, in the capital of partitioned Poland, 8 Hebrew printing houses run by Jews were in operation. Soon, two dynasties of Jewish printers were established in Warsaw – the Lebensohns and the Morgensterns. By the 1830s, Warsaw had grown to be the most important centre of Hebrew printing, sharing the title only with Odessa. Jacob Shatsky estimated that until the late 1870s there were about 50 writers publishing in Hebrew in Warsaw. In addition, from the 1890s, the fame of I.L. Perets residing on Ceglana Street enticed many maskilim and Jewish writers to come to Warsaw. Among the guests of famed Tuesday’s meetings at Perets’ home were Haim Nahman Bialik, David Frishman, Yosef Klausner, and Zvi David Nomberg. Soon, Frishman and Klausner became the editors of Hebrew newspapers, Bialik and Nomberg, on the other hand, frequently sent their works for publication in Warsaw based Hebrew periodicals.

An important moment for the Hebrew printing market in Warsaw was the year 1893, when a Zionist Hebrew printing house “Ahiasaf” was established. Among the founders of this venture were writer and journalist Abraham Leyb Shalkovitsch and Eliezer Kaplan. The initiative was applauded by Ahad Ha-Am himself – a writer, journalist, and Zionist advocate. “Ahiasaf” issued both academic and popular works about Jewish history and Judaism, and, more importantly, Jewish periodicals, i.a. Luah Ahiasaf (1893/4-1904 and 1923), Ha-Shiloah (1896-1926), Ha-Dor (1901-1902), and Der Yud (1899-1902). Among contributors to the aforementioned journals were the biggest Jewish writers – Haim Nahman Bialik and Shaul Tchernikovsky. The publications of “Ahiasaf” became a literary and scientific forum for Jewish elites in the Kingdom of Poland and even the entire Russian Empire.

Concurrently, there was another influential Hebrew publishing house – “Tushiyah” - in operation in Warsaw. It was founded three years after “Ahiasaf”, in 1896, by Abraham Leyb Shalkovitsch who had left the milieu of “Ahiasaf”. Although “Tushiyah” did not publish Jewish periodicals, it nonetheless played a vital role in raising the prestige of Hebrew culture and literature. “Tushiyah” promoted the most prominent Hebrew poets – Haim Nahman Bialik and Yosef Brenner. The volumes of Ha-biblyoteka ha-ivrit (Hebr. – The Hebrew Library) – issued weekly from 1889, thanks to its affordable price, contributed to the expansion of Hebrew readership.

23 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
Aside from the aforementioned initiatives in the field of Hebrew printing, other literary Hebrew periodicals were also published in Warsaw. In the same period, from the late 19th century until 1905, Warsaw Jews could read a very popular annual *Ha-Asif* (Hebr. – The Harvest, 1884-1889)\(^{30}\), annual *Sefer ha-shana* (Hebr. – The Yearbook, 1900-1906), and, published irregularly until 1909, *Reshafim* (Hebr. – Sparks).\(^{31}\)

In this context, it is worth taking a closer look at the milieu of founders and contributors of Hebrew periodicals in Warsaw. As I have already mentioned above, those who were interested in promoting publications in Hebrew were proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment. They were a rather small group. The following analysis of specific periodicals will reveal that many titles repeat themselves which is an indication that the same people initiated and established Hebrew press organs in Warsaw. For instance, David Frishman was the editor of at least three periodicals – *Ha-Boker* (Hebr. – The Morning), *Ha-Tkufa* (Hebr. – The Epoch), and *Ha-Dor* (Hebr. – The Generation). Ezriel Natan Frenk published his texts in almost all of the Hebrew periodicals issued in Eastern Europe (in Warsaw alone he published in *Ha-Shiloah* (Hebr. - The Messenger), *Ha-Tsefirah* (Hebr. The Dawn), and *Ha-Boker* (Hebr. – The Morning). Apparently, Jewish journalists sent their text wherever it was possible to publish them. The creators of the Hebrew press were not, however, truly faithful to the ideas of the *Haskalah* and simultaneously contributed to the development of Yiddish press.

Until 1905, in comparison with the Yiddish, Hebrew press was more popular and had a greater influence on Jewish Warsaw.\(^{32}\) Only following the revolution of 1905 Jews gained broader rights to publish in Yiddish. As a result, while many Yiddish periodicals appeared in the Kingdom of Poland, the popularity of the Hebrew newspapers decreased. Simultaneously, the elites, hitherto supporting the development of the Hebrew language and Hebrew publishing, started to read newspapers in Russian, as indicated by the increase in popularity of Jewish periodicals published in Russian, e.g. *Rozvet*. (Rus. – The Dawn).\(^{33}\) In the Kingdom of Poland, the elites read press published in Polish, Russian, and Yiddish.

**Ha-Tsefirah**

*Ha-Tsefirah* (Hebr. - The Dawn) – was in all likelihood the most important Hebrew periodical in the Kingdom of Poland and thereby in Warsaw as well. Nevertheless, its role will be presented in this article as an overview. It results

---


33 While the Russian *Rozvet* had 8,000 subscribers, *Ha-Olam* (Hebr. – The World) – issued in Russia - had only 3,000 subscribers. According to: Sh. Stampfer, _What Did „Knowing Hebrew” mean..._, p. 137.
from the following: firstly, Ha-Tsefiraḥ was issued for more than twenty years and for this reason it cannot be presented in a satisfactory manner in such a short essay. Secondly, the periodical continued to be published after 1905, which is the closing date of the article’s time framework. Finally, there exist comprehensive studies on Ha-Tsefiraḥ and some of them are accessible for the Polish reader.  

Ha-Tsefiraḥ was the first Hebrew periodical published in the Kingdom of Poland. Its founder, Haim Zelig Słonimski, was a maskil from Białystok residing for many years in Warsaw. Thanks to his good relations with Russian authorities, he managed to obtain a permit for publishing a Hebrew newspaper in 1862. There were four main goals of the periodical expressed in its prospectus: it intended to publish the governmental decrees concerning Jewish population, news about latest publications on Jewish history in the Kingdom of Poland and other countries, articles dedicated to morality and decency, as well as information about science and technology, with special emphasis on natural science. The newspaper had mainly didactic objectives. Słonimski strived to transmit to conservative Jews news from the world of technology, e.g. by printing articles on the way a telegraph works. Ha-Tsefiraḥ was widely read in the Hasidic circles, both by younger and older readers. The periodical was distributed among rabbis and yeshivas where it was made available for young students to read as well.  

For many Hasids, Ha-Tsefiraḥ was the only source of knowledge about the non-Jewish world. The newspaper became a counterpart for other periodicals published by enlightened Jews – Ha-Karmel (Hebr. – Mount Carmel) and Ha-Melits (The Advocate). Over time, despite Słonimski’s aversion toward literary publications, Ha-Tsefiraḥ began to print also Hebrew literary works of famous Maskilim – Yehudah Leib Gordon, Moshe Leib Lilienblum, and Mendele Mokher Sforim. 

In the course of its existence, Ha-Tsefiraḥ underwent several transformations. Already in 1862, due to Słonimski’s departure to Zhytomyr, the publication of the periodical was suspended. Twelve months later, when Słonimski wished to resume the newspaper, he encountered numerous difficulties. In 1863, he finally accepted Alexander Zederbaum’s proposal of issuing Ha-Tsefiraḥ in the form of a scientific supplement to Ha-Melits. However, Słonimski withdrew from this venture and Ha-Tsefiraḥ did not appear until 1874, when he managed to resume publishing of the newspaper in Berlin. One year later Ha-Tsefiraḥ returned for good to Warsaw.

34 All of the publications were listed in the first section of the paper. See footnote no. 9.  
35 Haim Zelig Słonimski (1810–1904), an inventor, journalist, censor of Hebrew books and head of rabbinical seminary in Zhytomyr. He published works on mathematics and astronomy in Hebrew. From 1838, he lived in Warsaw, where he joined the milieu of Maskilim and integrationists.  
37 M. Gilboa, Leksikon ha-yitonut ha-ivrit be-meat ha-shmone-esre ve-ha-tsha-esre, Tel Aviv-Yaffo 1986, p. 169.  
38 A. Attia, The Hebrew Periodical Ha-Shiloah..., p. 31.
In 1876, Nahum Sokolow\textsuperscript{39} joined the circle of Ha-Tsefirah and already in the 1880s he became the editor-in-chief of the newspaper. Under his management, the periodical acquired a new form and content. In 1886, following the example of other Hebrew periodicals in Eastern Europe, Ha-Tsefirah turned into a daily. Sokolow expanded significantly the news section, devoting a lot of space to the Zionist issue. In 1897, after his participation in the First Zionist Congress, Ha-Tsefirah became press organ of the Zionist movement. Thereafter, many articles in Ha-Tsefirah concerned Herzl, Jewish settlement in Palestine and Argentina, as well as plans for resolving the “Jewish Question”. Sokolow’s objective was to convince Hasidim to support the movement, as they constituted a high percentage of the newspaper’s readership. In this period, the popularity of Ha-Tsefirah reached its peak.\textsuperscript{40} Gideon Kuts asserts that the number of subscribers reached as much as 10,000.\textsuperscript{41} Due to their ideological and political involvement, the newspaper’s contributors readily discussed events which had direct impact on the Jewry not merely in the Russian Empire but all over Europe. Much attention was given to the Dreyfuss affair, the pogrom in Kishinev, and the Uganda crisis.\textsuperscript{42}

Ha-Tsefirah was deeply rooted in the Polish and Warsaw’s reality. Majority of the articles was reprinted from Polish press. Two sections were devoted to local events – “News from our country” (edited by Michał Weber) and “Views from Warsaw”.\textsuperscript{43} The editors frequently referred to Polish publications, such as Kurier Warszawski or Goniec Poranny. Despite a clearly discernible focus on Polish-Jewish audience, Ha-Tsefirah was widely read in the Russian Empire, Galicia, Western Europe, the Ottoman Empire as well as on both American continents.\textsuperscript{44}

In the so-called “Sokolow era”, the feuilleton section became a permanent feature of the newspaper. The majority of essays were devoted to literature. In the 1880s, the feuilleton section, edited by Naphtali Herts Yehuda Nemanowits, enjoyed enormous popularity.\textsuperscript{45} Short stories, usually translated from European languages, were also printed in the newspaper. From 1904, each Thursday, a literary supplement came out in both Yiddish and Hebrew.\textsuperscript{46}

In February of 1906, the censorship office closed Ha-Tsefirah. The publication of the newspaper was resumed only in 1910, without the involvement of Sokolow. David Frishman and Shmuel Tschernovits were appointed the newspaper’s editors. The articles on Polish issues penned by Ezriel Natan Frenk

\textsuperscript{39} Nahum Sokolow – (1859-1936) writer, journalist, active proponent of Zionism. He published in both Russian and Polish newspapers. He was the editor of many Jewish periodicals, such as weekly Izraelita (in 1895), annual Sefer ha-shana, weekly Ha-Olam, and daily Der Telegraf. In 1906, he was appointed General Secretary of the World Zionist Organization. In 1919, he represented the Zionist movement at the Versaille Peace Conference.

\textsuperscript{40} M. Gilboa, Leksikon ha-yitonut ha-ivrit..., p. 177.

\textsuperscript{41} G. Kuts, Hadashot ve-korot ha-yamim..., p. 15.

\textsuperscript{42} M. Gilboa, Leksikon ha-yitonut ha-ivrit..., p. 177.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 174.

\textsuperscript{44} E. Bauer, „Ha-Cefira” (1862-1931)..., p. 33.

\textsuperscript{45} M. Gilboa, Leksikon ha-yitonut ha-ivrit..., p. 174.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 177.
became a permanent feature of Ha-Tsefirah. In 1911, Frenk was promoted to the rank of newspaper’s editor and – during World War I – he took care of its assets.47 The daily was issued on and off, until 1931, but never reached the same level of popularity as in the “Sokolow era”.

**Ha-Tsofe**

*Ha-Tsofe* (Hebr.– The Spectator), considered by researchers one of the best Hebrew newspapers in Europe, was founded in 1903 by Icchak Asher Eliashov48 and Eliezer Eliahu Friedman49. While many Hebrew periodicals in Russia were subsidized by the “The Society for the Spreading of Enlightenment Among Jews in Russia”, *Ha-Tsofe* was sponsored by private donors – Stawski, Ze’ev Gluskin and Isidor Elishu. For the first year of its existence, *Ha-Tsofe* was edited by an acclaimed journalist Abraham Ludwipol50. Following his resignation, the editorship was seized by Eliezer Eliachu Friedman, his son Yehoshua51, and Hirsh David Nomberg.52 The newspaper’s popularity did not decrease due to structural modifications. In the first issue, published on 21 December 1902/6 January 1903, the editorial board printed the prospectus; according to it, *Ha-Tsofe* was supposed to be a daily and its main goal was informing the Jewish readership on the goings-on in “the world big and small”. Although the editors focused on the news section of the newspaper, already at the beginning they boasted about their cooperation with writers such as Perets, Klausner, and Bernfeld. Apart from publishing the news, the paper’s objective was “to sketch out the background to let the reader understand what it is all about […], since sometimes it is difficult to comprehend the news without having sufficient context”53. *Ha-Tsofe* was a periodical “with a mission” – acting in favour of Jewish national revival and being a “lantern for those who still oppose the

---

48 Icchak Asher Eliashov (1871-1955), born in Sluck (Minsk district), active member of “Hovevei Zion”. In his youth he moved to Warsaw, where he was among the founders of the publishing house “Ahiasaf”. Eliashov was also member of “Bnei Moshe” secret Zionist fraternity. Shortly before the First World War he moved to Moscow, where he became member of local Zionist organizations. He emigrated to Palestine in 1930.
49 Eliezer Eliahu Friedman (1857-1936), born in Kelme (Lithuania), writer, journalist, and Zionist activist. He emigrated to Palestine, where he published his memoirs – Sefer Zikhronot, Tel Aviv-Yaffo 1926.
50 Abraham Ludwipol (1865-1921), a journalist, active member of a Zionist group “Hibbat Zion” in Odessa. In 1890, he tried unsuccessfully to reach Palestine. He travelled through Egypt and France, where he started his journalist career in French, Yiddish, and Hebrew (e.g. in Ha-Melits) newspapers. He became famous for his series of articles devoted to the Dreyfuss affair.
51 Yehoshua Friedman (1885-1934), a scholar, pedagogue, writer, and translator of Romance poetry to Hebrew.
52 Hirsh David Nomberg (1876-1927), a writer, journalist, social activist and politician (he was a deputy for the Legislative Parliament in Independent Poland). He was fluent in three languages: Polish, German, and Russian. Initially, he published only in Hebrew, among others in Ha-Zman (The Time), Ha-Tsofe, Ha-Dor. From 1897, he lived in Warsaw, where he worked as a Hebrew teacher. He soon started to write for Yiddish newspapers, such as Hoynt and Der Moment.
Zionist idea”. Evidently, the newspaper had Zionist inclination. However, since the editor Ludwiopol was the adherent of the “Hovevei Zion” movement, *Ha-Tsofe* did not represent the views of the Zionist mainstream. Actually, advocating the “Hovevei Zion” brought to the newspapers many readers. Hitherto, the supporters of “Hovevei Zion” movement could have read two Hebrew periodicals, hostile to each other – *Ha-Tsefirah* which represented the Zionist mainstream and *Ha-Melits* which never officially advocated Zionist ideology. Many followers of “Hovevei Zion” unsubscribed *Ha-Tsefirah*, due to ideological reasons (Sokolow represented the Herzlian stream), and became readers of *Ha-Melits*. After the emergence of *Ha-Tsofe*, many of them discontinued the subscription of *Ha-Melits* in favour of *Ha-Tsofe*. The periodical contributed to the increased popularity of Zionism, as well as the development of the Hebrew language. The editors’ objective was to create a new form and content which would comply with the standard of European periodicals. Among achievements of *Ha-Tsofe* were, for example, a development of a Hebrew feuilleton, promotion of debutant Hebrew writers, and even organizing Hebrew literary contest - first in history - for the best short story in Hebrew on the topic of Jewish life.

The subscription for *Ha-Tsofe* cost similarly to other Hebrew newspapers published in Eastern Europe. For the readers from Warsaw it was an expense of 6 rubles per year. As the editorial board advertised the newspaper – *Ha-Tsofe* was a very low price paper which was most valuable for everybody and could compete with the cheapest newspapers in the language in the country”. From 1904, the daily was available for purchase also at the newsstands as one issue for the price of 3 kopecks (for Warsaw and the provinces). Moreover, there was a possibility of subscription outside the Kingdom of Poland at the cost of 10 rubles per year. The editors boasted about the scope of the newspaper’s readership by postin the information about new subscribers and advertising new locations for ordering a subscription. *Ha-Tsofe* was subscribed, among others, in Pińsk, Kraków, Berlin, Kursk, Homel, Siemiatycze, Novgorod-Seversky, and Bessarabia. Interestingly, despite the discernible interest of Jews from the Russian Empire in the newspaper, *Ha-Tsofe* did not publish information concerning Russia. The editors focused on the news from Western Europe and the local reports from Warsaw. They frequently published Warsaw’s stock quotes, timetables of buses, winners of the local lottery, as well as information on Jewish migration from and to Warsaw. All

---

54 Ibid.
55 Hovevei Zion (Hebr. – ‘The Lovers of Zion’), also known as “Hibbat Zion” (Hebr. – ‘The Love of Zion’). The movement emerged in the early 1880s as a response to anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia, before the onset of political Zionism. Leon Pinsker was its leader. The proponents of the movement supported emigration to Palestine. The organization was based in Romania and had branches in Warsaw and Odessa.
56 A. Attia, op.cit., p. 152.
58 Re-printing advertisment of *Ha-Tsofe* in *Ha-Dor* in 1904.
of these suggest that Ha-Tsofe was profoundly immersed in the reality of the city of Warsaw. Except for news from the country and the world, other important elements of Ha-Tsofe were Jewish Eastern European press reviews, telegrams “from our brothers”, and a column of letters from subscribers entitled “Legal questions and answers”. Indeed, Ha-Tsofe provided its readers all sorts of advice, even legal. One of the letters to the periodical was sent by a deserter of the tsarist army residing for the past seven years in Austria. After those years he came to the conclusion that he had made a wrong decision because he could not return to the country and see his relatives and friends. Therefore, he turned to the editors with the question what punishment awaited him upon his return to the Russian Empire.

Ha-Tsofe was not only a daily “with a mission”, exerting an enormous influence on Jews in Eastern Europe. It was also an enterprise. Besides subscriptions, the newspaper profited from numerous advertisements and obituaries. The fourth – and last - page of the newspaper was dedicated to them. A single announcement (be it an advertisement or obituary) on the fourth page cost ten kopecks and on the first page even forty kopecks.

The daily enjoyed great popularity. Already in the first year of existence, its circulation reached 3,000 copies. After the contract with Ha-Shiloah, issued by “Ahiasaf” publishing house, the circulation increased to 10,000 copies. The newspaper rapidly gained larger popularity than the leading Hebrew periodicals – Ha-Tsefralah and Ha-Melits, which lost their readers in favour of Ha-Tsofe. However, despite substantial income from subscriptions and announcements, the newspaper begun to experience financial difficulties which lead to the rapid collapse of the enterprise. The budget of Ha-Tsofe was laden by considerable expenses related to regular payments to editors, journalists, and writers. Ha-Tsofe was the first Hebrew periodical paying royalties. Other newspapers soon followed suit. The editor Ludwipol received monthly salary of 150 rubles; following his resignation, the new editor Friedman earned 250 rubles per month. Every published article cost 100 rubles. In sum, all the expenses accounted for more than 10,000 rubles annually. On 29 April 1905, Ha-Tsofe suspended its operation, abandoning its 8,000 subscribers.

Despite its evanescence, Ha-Tsofe exerted immense influence on Jews in Eastern Europe, as well as other Hebrew periodicals, by dictating new standards of Jewish journalism in the Hebrew language.

Ha-Dor

In 1901, Warsaw’s publishing house “Ahiasaf” resolved to issue a weekly which would become more popular than Ha-Shiloah. The latter had been generating losses for a long time, and the publishing house was hoping to cover

59 "Taharut ha-sipur ha-katsar shel Ha-Tsofe", [in:] Or rishon: sipureha..., p. 33.
60 G. Kuts, Hadashot ve-korot ha-yamim..., p. 21.
the losses by way of a new successful periodical. David Frishman became the editor-in-chief of Ha-Dor (Hebr. - The Generation), but it was Yosef Fisher, a printer from Kraków, who officially performed this function. Ahad Ha-Am, the editor of Ha-Shiloah, opposed the new periodical issued by “Ahiasaf”, suspecting that it would decrease the popularity of his newspaper. To reduce the expenses, the publishing house decided to print Ha-Dor in Kraków, where not only the prices of printing were lower than in Warsaw, but also the censorship was less severe. Finally, the Zionist periodical published by “Ahiasaf” in Yiddish – Der Yud covered the losses induced by Ha-Shiloah, and afterward also by Ha-Dor. Ha-Dor supposed to be both an alternative for Hebrew readers, discouraged by the style of Ha-Shiloah imposed by Ahad Ha-Am, and the paper focusing exclusively on Jewish topics.

Frishman considered Ha-Dor as the forum for Hebrew publications and literary critique. He wished that the weekly would represent a high literary level. “What's new in literature?” was a permanent section of the periodical and its main element was the evaluation of Hebrew readership and the latest publications. In 1904, the author of this column bemoaned the condition of Hebrew readership. He indicated that in his hometown four most popular Hebrew periodicals (Ha-Zman, Ha-Tsefirah, Ha-Melits, and Ha-Tsofe) had three times lower circulation than two Yiddish newspapers. The literary section of Ha-Dor included works of the greatest Jewish writers – Mendele Mocher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, Haim Nahman Bialik, and Shaul Tchernichovsky. The periodical also featured an academic column with essays on European writers and philosophers, such as Nietzsche or Baudelaire. There was an additional section at Frishman’s disposal. He devoted it to his commentary on the newest trends in European culture, with the aim of elevating the Jewish life and culture to the European level. Nonetheless, Ha-Dor was not only a literary journal. The current problems of Jewish society were also among the raised subjects. The authors of essays were great writers and social activists – Yitskhok Leybush Perets and Hillel Zeitlin. Among the issues that were brought up in the periodical were the situation of Jews in Europe, debate over ritual slaughter in Germany, and the preoccupation over sexual promiscuity among Jews. The authors also commented on the articles devoted to the “Jewish Question”.

Ha-Dor proved to be a great failure. In the first year of existence, it gained merely 1,000 subscribers. By the end of the first year, this number decreased to 800. The weekly was soon suspended. In the last issue in 1901, the edito-

61 David Frishman (1865-1922), translator and journalist. Between 1895 and 1910 he lived in Warsaw, where he worked as editor-in-chief of Ha-Boker. He adopted a very critical stance toward Zionism. He translated many literary works into Hebrew, i.a. works by Andersen, Byron and Shakespeare.
62 A. Attia, The Hebrew Periodical Ha-Shiloah..., p. 70.
64 "Ba-sifrut ha-itit", Ha-Dor, 8 March 1904, p. 9.
65 A. Holtzman, Ha-Dor... [online]
66 Ibid.
rial board published an article in which it blamed the readers for the paper’s collapse. It appears that the reason for the low popularity of Ha-Dor was its exclusive character. The content of the periodical was not interesting and accessible for the Jewish masses. The audience of Ha-Dor consisted mainly of educated representatives of elites. At the beginning of 1904, Ha-Dor was resumed, but only 37 issues came out. In October of the same year, the periodical was definitely closed due to financial difficulties. The prospectus for the year 1905 indicates that the editorial board of Ha-Dor did not plan to cease the publication. They deluded themselves that the low number of subscribers was the result of the exorbitant price of the weekly. According to Frishman, the last resort for Ha-Dor was to reduce by half the current price of 8 rubles. “We have learned that the price of the periodical is too high and the majority of people [interested in purchasing the periodical] cannot afford it” – the editorial board stated. In addition, from the following year Ha-Dor was supposed to be a bi-weekly. This modification also was to increase the number of subscribers, according to Frishman. Nevertheless, the introduced changes did not improve the situation of Ha-Dor and its editors had to cease the publication.

Ha-Dor played a significant role in shaping modernist Hebrew literature. Despite its evanescence and exclusiveness, it is considered to be the first major Hebrew literary weekly. One should not forget either the important role Ha-Dor played among the Jewish society during this short period. The holiday wishes and information about philanthropic activities published in the weekly indicate that it had assumed the functions of Jewish communal institutions, which were losing their authority in the urbanized society.

Hebrew Press in Warsaw after 1905

As I have already mentioned, the year 1905 was a harbinger of positive changes for the Jewish press in the Russian Empire. Yiddish press profited most from the reform, because its publication had been subjected to the most severe censorship. Suddenly, there was an influx of Yiddish periodicals, in Warsaw alone the following papers were published: Unzer lebn, Der veg, Haynt, Der momen, and Fraytag.

After 1905, from all the Hebrew periodicals in operation prior to this year only Ha-Tsefirah survived. In fact, it was the only Hebrew periodical in Warsaw that stayed in business for more than three years. Despite temporary gaps in publication, Ha-Tsefirah outlasted the First World War and continued to be published until the 1930s.
In the period of 1905-1914, there three more Hebrew periodicals of more informative than literary character were published in Warsaw. In July 1906, daily *Ha-Yom* (Hebr. - The Day) appeared, edited by Zvi Prilucki.\(^72\) Similarly to other Hebrew periodicals, *Ha-Yom* represented the Zionist stand. It was connected to the Yiddish daily *Der Veg*, issued in Warsaw between 1905 and 1907, also edited by Prilucki. Despite great popularity - *Der Veg* had a huge circulation of 15,000 copies - the paper was closed due to financial difficulties.\(^73\) The closure of the more lucrative Yiddish paper entailed the closure of *Ha-Yom*. As a result, *Ha-Yom* appeared for mere couple of months.

In 1907\(^74\), Warsaw witnessed the appearance of a new Hebrew periodical – *Ha-Kol* (Hebr. - The Voice). Its editor was I.L. Akerman. *Ha-Kol* was supposed to be a weekly dedicated to the Orthodox Jewish audience. The founders of this venture were Hasidic rabbi Abraham Mordechai Alter\(^75\) (from the Ger dynasty) and his brother Menachem Mendel.\(^76\) It was not the first Jewish newspaper addressed to the Orthodox Jewish circles. In 1879, Hebrew periodical of Orthodox affiliation – *Kol Mahzike Ha-Dat*\(^77\) (Hebr. - The Voice of the Upholders of Religion) appeared in Lwów and in 1897 a weekly under the same title was issued in Kraków.\(^78\) The aim of *Ha-Kol* was to fight the influence of *Ha-Tsefirah*, published in this period by Nahum Sokolow. It is difficult to determine what exactly the fight against *Ha-Tsefirah* meant. Probably, the representatives of the Orthodox circles believed that *Ha-Tsefirah* was endangering the future of traditional Jewish society. As we know, *Ha-Tsefirah* was very popular among the Hasidic youth providing them with a window to the non-religious and even non-Jewish world. In yeshivot, boys were so absorbed in *Ha-Tsefirah* that they did not put it aside while studying Talmud. Already after the publication *Ha-Kol*’s first issue, the censorship blocked its further publication.\(^79\)

Regardless of the short period of publication, it is necessary to record the existence of

---

\(^72\) Zvi Prilucki (1862-1942), born in Warsaw journalist and adherent of the "Hovevei Zion" Zionist movement. He published his literary work in *Ha-Boker-Or*, *Ha-Melits*, and *Ha-Tsefirah*. Between 1900 and 1905, Prilucki lived in Sankt Petersburg where he contributed to the establishment of a very popular Yiddish daily *Der Fraynd*. Upon his return to Warsaw in 1905, he became editor of the daily *Der Veg* and its twin Hebrew equivalent *Ha-Yom*.


\(^74\) In *Toldot yehudey varsha: mi-reshitam ve-ad yameynu* (Michigan 1991), Israel Gutman mentions the year 1907, but Nathan Cohen speaks about the years 1906-1907, which would indicate that there was more than one issue of the periodical.

\(^75\) Abraham Mordehai Alter (1866-1948), the fourth rebe of the Ger dynasty, authority among the Orthodox Jewish population in Poland. He was one of the founders of "Agudat Israel", Jewish Orthodox organization and political party.

\(^76\) Menahem Mendel Alter (1877-1942), rabbi from the Ger dynasty. Until the First World War he did not fulfill any important communal functions. He was involved in several press initiatives (except for *Ha-Kol* he initiated *Dos Varshaver Togblat*) having the aim of combating the influence of *Ha-Tsefirah* on the traditional Jewish society. In the interwar period, he served as a chief rabbi in Pabianice and Kalisz. He was also an active member of "Agudat Israel".


\(^79\) I. Gutman, op.cit., p. 77.
Hebrew Language Press in Warsaw until 1905

Ha-Kol because of its Orthodox character. Ha-Kol paved the way to other newspapers addressed to the Orthodox audience in Poland. 80

In 1909, a weekly Ha-Boker appeared for eight months in Warsaw. It was yet another editorial attempt of David Frishman which again turned out to be a failure. A publisher and writer Abraham Akavia 81 became the co-editor of the periodical. Officially, Ha-Boker had no political affiliation, which was probably based on Frishman’s decision. This time, he was not forced by the publishing house to set the Zionist tone to his periodical. Ha-Boker appeared every Tuesday. It is held that - similarly to Ha-Dor also edited by Frishman, Ha-Boker also represented very high literary level. As Israel Gutman emphasized, Ha-Boker distinguished itself by journalistic articles and the literary section. Many great Jewish journalists and writers cooperated with the periodical. 82

The Role of the Hebrew Press in the Warsaw Jewish Community

As Scott Ury points out, Jewish periodicals replaced communal institutions and leaders in their social roles. Press became the medium between individuals, creating a kind of social network. People used periodicals to send each other wishes, for example on the occasion of engagement, and swagger about their philanthropic activity informing about their donations to Jewish institutions and organizations, for example to the establishment of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Usually, the donations were given to Zionist initiatives. The function of a social medium fulfilled by the Jewish press contributed to the “fundamental changes in the nature of a community and the feeling of belonging in Warsaw and in the entire Eastern Europe”. 83 Due to Jewish community’s crisis, Warsaw Jews - whose high percentage were the new-comers - searched for a foster social institution. 84 Exactly then Jewish press became the medium between the residents of Warsaw who by reading the same periodical had a feeling of belonging to the community of readers. 85 Moreover, by publishing information about the miserable situation of particular social groups, the Jewish press stimulated the readers to launch charitable work and establish organizations supporting the poor, women, and newcomers. 86 At the turn of the 20th century, Warsaw witnessed the boom of mutual-help organizations, e.g. “Ahi-ezer” (Hebr. - Fraternal aid), initiated by Kotik, and the War-

81 Abraham Akavia (1882-1964), real name: Arie Leyb Jakubowicz, writer and journalist. He debuted in Ha-Dor. He published in Hebrew and Yiddish. He issued a bi-weekly for Jewish youth Shibbolim and in the interwar period he was the publisher of Ha-Tsefirah and Ha-Yom. In the 1930s he emigrated to Palestine.
83 S. Ury, Barricades and Banners...p. 75.
84 According to Scott Ury, in 1897, about 50% of Warsaw Jews were born outside of Warsaw. Ibidem, p. 51.
85 Ibid., p. 50.
saw Jewish Society For the Protection of Women.\textsuperscript{87} The press news about the dangers entailed by the immigration to Warsaw and the plight of newcomers only incited the Warsaw Jews’ belief in perilous and immoral life in the big city. Thanks to the anonymity offered by the big city, people felt free to distance themselves from the Jewish tradition, behave immorally, and even get involved in criminal activity. Recurrent sensational news on Jewish thieves, procurers and prostitutes convinced Jewish readers, and even the journalists themselves, that the traditional Jewish society was in deep crisis.\textsuperscript{88}

The Jewish press, regardless of the language of publication, shaped also the Jewish politics. As it was already repeatedly emphasized, the language choice made by Jews was an ideological and political demonstration. Polish language periodicals boosted the idea of integration with the Polish society. Hebrew were usually oriented toward Jewish nationalism and Zionism; also Yiddish periodicals frequently represented the Jewish nationalist stand (for example, Warsaw’s \textit{Haynt} and \textit{Der Veg} were pro-Zionist, while \textit{Der Moment} supported Dubnow’s idea of national autonomy). Jewish periodicals encouraged the readers to actively support Zionism. For instance, by fundraisers and donations to Zionist organizations, institutions and initiatives, among others to Hebrew schools, hospitals in Palestine, and settlements in Erets Israel (Hebr. - The Land of Israel).

Besides forming the opinions of Jewish masses and elites about politics, the Jewish press, similarly to Polish and other periodicals, shaped the public opinion as well. The press articles widely discussed social problems, such as persecutions of Jews in Russia, anti-Semitism, troubles of impoverished Jews from Galicia (the so-called Galician poverty), and Jewish criminality. It is worth mentioning the issue of white slavery trade, prevalent in the Kingdom of Poland and Galicia. Until 1905, Jewish press in general, and Hebrew press in particular, widely debated over this issue. The journalists, most of them intellectuals and rabbis, strived to minimize the scale of the problem by calling the attention of the readers. Then the power of Jewish media revealed itself. The press managed to create an exaggerated picture of moral corruption among Jews and to incite a “moral panic” in the Jewish population of the Congress Poland. This example illustrates clearly the crucial role of the press in the life of Eastern European Jews in this period, as well as the immense power of the press news (despite their usually exclusive character).

Hebrew periodicals played one more function, resulting from the Hebrew language. In contrast to Polish or Yiddish, Hebrew was generally considered


as a dead language. Although Jews never ceased to publish treatises in Hebrew, they did not use this language for everyday speech. Jewish journalists and writers publishing in the Hebrew press undoubtedly advanced the revival and even the evolution of Hebrew language. As it has already been indicated in the previous part of the present research, the journalism of Frishman and Sokolow contributed to the development, if not the creation, of a Hebrew feuilleton. Hebrew newspapers became a convenient forum for the Hebrew literature. Jewish poets and writers producing their works in Hebrew such as Bialik, Tchernichovsky and Gordon made their debuts in the Hebrew periodicals. It appears that a debut in a Hebrew periodical was the easiest way for young writers to make an appearance in the literary world. Moreover, the great and well-respected writers were among the editors of those periodicals. The acceptance of a literary work to print meant recognition of the editors – writers and literary critics such as Frishman or Ahad Ha-Am. Thus, publication in a Hebrew periodical was definitely a reason to be proud for debutant writers. In this respect, the Hebrew press served as a medium of promoting Jewish writers and poets.

Hebrew language press in Warsaw until 1905 – summary

The article is an attempt at a thorough study of the Hebrew language press published in Warsaw prior to 1905. The capital of the Kingdom of Poland became a vibrant Hebrew publishing centre in the second half of the 19th century. Despite a limited number of potential readers, already at the very beginning of the 19th century, a group of Jews from Warsaw strove to establish a Hebrew press organ which would promote the ideas of the Jewish enlightenment – the Haskalah. Their attempts proved successful in 1862, when Chaim Zelig Słonimski launched Ha-Tsefirah, the longest functioning Jewish periodical in Warsaw. Soon, the proponents of Zionism undertook the initiative to publish Hebrew language press and Hebrew periodicals became a Zionist platform. In the early 20th century in Warsaw a number of important Hebrew language newspapers were being published – the aforementioned Ha-Tsefirah, Ha-Tsofe, Ha-Dor and Ha-Shiloah. The Hebrew press coming out in the capital of the Kingdom of Poland not only promoted the ideas of Zionism and the enlightenment amongst the Jews, but also significantly contributed to the revival of the Hebrew language.

Key words: hebrew-language press, press in Warsaw, Jews in Warsaw