

לקט

יִיִּדִישֶׁע שטודיעס הײַנט

Jiddistik heute

Yiddish Studies Today

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Der vorliegende Sammelband *לקט* eröffnet eine neue Reihe wissenschaftlicher Studien zur Jiddistik sowie philologischer Editionen und Studienausgaben jiddischer Literatur. Jiddisch, Englisch und Deutsch stehen als Publikationssprachen gleichberechtigt nebeneinander.

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יִיִּדִישׁ אױסגאַבעס און פֿאַרשונג

Jiddistik Edition & Forschung

Yiddish Editions & Research

Herausgegeben von Marion Aptroot, Efrat Gal-Ed,
Roland Gruschka und Simon Neuberger

Band 1

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Yiddish Journals for Women in Israel

Immigrant Press and Gender Construction (1948–1952)

Women have played an important role in the development and distribution of Yiddish literature since its early days as a written culture. They were active as writers, typesetters, printers, and owners of printing houses. Most importantly, however, women influenced the development of Yiddish by being a very significant part of its readership. Well-known in this regard is the excerpt from the introduction to the 17th-century *Seyfer brant-shpiql* that states: דאש בוך ווערט גימכט טויטש (This book was written in Yiddish for women and for men who are like women and cannot study much).¹ No wonder then, that for many years, pre-modern, and even modern Yiddish literature has been perceived as “literature for women.”² Though this was never an accurate description, it did emphasize strongly the close connection between Yiddish literature and Jewish women, and even defined Yiddish literature as a feminine sphere aimed at the uneducated.³

This paper will return to the question of the connection between written Yiddish culture and women as readers in modern Yiddish culture by examining journals written specially for women in the nascent State of Israel. The focus on the press is not accidental. The Yiddish press that emerged in the 1860s played a most crucial and leading role in the development of modern Yiddish culture. Most of the significant Yiddish writers from Mendele Moykher Sforim⁴ and Sholem Aleichem to Isaac Bashevis Singer⁵ had a lifelong relationship with the Yiddish press, where they published many of their literary works. In both places – Eastern Europe and the United States – the Yiddish newspapers also played a crucial role in the Jewish public arena. Moreover, in the countries of immigration – especially the US, but also Israel – Yiddish newspapers played an important role in the processes of acculturation and social integration, and were an important factor in shaping the lives of the East European Jewish immigrants there.

1 *Seyfer brant-shpiql* 1596: f 12 v, trsl. J. Frakes in: Baumgarten 2005: 208.

2 Turmiansky 1994: 46–57; Weissler 1998: 39–52.

3 Ibid.

4 Miron 1973: 159–161.

5 Zamir 1994: 30–40.

The Yiddish press never framed itself as a gender-oriented sphere. Although all the editors and almost all the writers were men, women were a significant part of its readership from its earliest days. They also played an active role as contributors to the correspondence section, and even published some literary work.⁶ Nonetheless, as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, special periodicals for women started to come out in Eastern Europe, focusing less on literature, news, and other fields of interest to the general public, and instead dealing with domestic and educational affairs.⁷ In addition, while the Yiddish dailies in Eastern Europe did not have regular women's sections,⁸ those published in the US did, often devoting a significant amount of space to them.⁹ It did not take long for special women's magazines to be issued.¹⁰

So while modern Yiddish culture – and especially the Yiddish press – brought the era of Yiddish written culture as 'women's literature' to an end, the phenomenon of the Yiddish press for women did recreate a gendered defined arena. But while pre-modern Yiddish literature has often been perceived as women's literature (as opposed to Hebrew literature, which was meant for men), the Yiddish press for women was defined as a separate female sphere within Yiddish written culture.

The term "women's press" relates typically to newspapers whose audience is clearly defined as mainly, or even only, women. This definition excludes women's sections in general newspapers, which are defined by some scholars as a separate genre where a struggle takes place to define the borders between the 'general' and the 'feminine.'¹¹ It is also worth noting that the genre of 'women's press' or 'women's magazines' had developed long before the Yiddish press. In England it emerged as early as the end of the 17th century,¹² and in the US about a hundred years later.¹³

6 Orchan 2012: 29–49.

7 Examples include פֿרויען־וועלט, די ייִדישע פֿרויען־וועלט, Cracow, 1902; פֿרויען־טאָג, Moscow, 1921; פֿרויען־שטימ, Warsaw 1925.

8 The Warsaw daily דױטשער־פֿרויען־בליט had an occasional women's section; other dailies did not have such sections at all.

9 Rojanski 2007: 329–348.

10 The first one, די פֿרויען־וועלט, which defined itself as "a monthly for the Jewish home and the Jewish family," was followed by the monthly פֿרויען־זשורנאַל (1922–1923). While the first magazine focused mainly on domestic and educational affairs, the later one expanded its interests to include fashion, romantic literature and news of interest to women. The Yiddish press for women offered, then, a separate feminine sphere, defined by specific fields of interest less serious and sophisticated than those of the general Yiddish press.

11 Herzog 2000: 43

12 Braithwaite 2012: 29–49.

13 Ibid.

The long-time existence of a separate press for women has raised questions about the reasons for its creation as well as the causes of its success. Scholars of communications tend to regard the women's press as a highly important social institution. However, although some see these papers as promoting women's literacy, most scholars elaborate on their repressive influence. In her comprehensive study on 275 years of women's press, Cynthia White has argued that it was written in simple language and limited itself to dealing with household matters, fashion and general information on women's rights (though not necessarily their rights as women).¹⁴ She and other scholars like Gaye Tuchman¹⁵ and Marjorie Ferguson¹⁶ have also argued that, since these papers deal with the world of women, they also frame the contents of this world and restrict it to areas which are secondary to the public arena. However, in her pioneering article on women's journals in Israel, Hanna Herzog has pointed out the underlying dichotomy reflected by this view, namely that the "female world" is secondary to the public and rational male world, which is characterized by progress and modernity.¹⁷

There is a strong tendency for scholars of gender to define the female world as a separate sphere.¹⁸ In the context of this paper, this raises an interesting issue. Because it served a minority, the Yiddish press was already a separate sphere. This poses the question whether Yiddish journals for women were, in fact, a separate sphere within a separate sphere – in other words, were these journals characterized by a double separation from the public sphere? This question is even more valid in the Israeli context.

It should be said that Hebrew journals for women existed in pre-State Israel as early as 1926.¹⁹ Their publishers were women's organizations and they were strong advocates for women's rights. The first commercial women's magazine in Hebrew came out in 1940, under the title, עולם האשה (Woman's World), and appeared until 1948. In 1947, the journal לאשה (For the Woman) began to be published and has continued to appear to this day. Both were popular, light journals that focused mainly on housekeeping, fashion and beauty issues. *Lā-'iššāh* even sponsored the "Miss Israel" and "Ideal Housewife" contests starting as early as 1950.²⁰

14 White 1987.

15 Tuchman 1978: 3–38.

16 Ferguson 1983: 184–193.

17 Herzog 2000: 43.

18 For example: Mitchell 2000: 140–169; Karber 1997: 159–199.

19 Herzog 2000: 48f.

20 *Ibid.*

This even strengthens the question: did Israeli Yiddish journals for women really form a separate sphere? Did they reflect the world of Yiddish culture or were they a phenomenon of immigrant societies? What were the gender images that this press presented, and what can we learn from these images about the press itself?

The Yiddish Press in Israel and the Representation of Women

The first Yiddish newspapers to be founded in Israel immediately following the establishment of the state were naturally aimed at the Yiddish reading public in general rather than at any specific group within it. Nonetheless, women were very well represented in this press and this fact merits some attention.

The first Yiddish newspaper founded in the state of Israel was the illustrated weekly וואָכנבלאַט אילוסטרירטער (Illustrated Weekly), edited and published by Mordkhe Tsanin, later to become the legendary editor of the most important Israeli Yiddish newspaper, לעצטע נייעס (Latest News).²¹ The *Ilustrirter vokhnblat*'s first issue, published on July 1, 1948, already had a special women's section with a Hebrew name: האשה בארצנו (The Woman in Our Land).²² This section is of great interest because it was not a section *for* women, but a section *on* women, which dealt extensively with the contributions of women to the building of the new state in the realms of economy and security.

As its name suggests, *Ilustrirter vokhnblat*, was a photo-magazine, so its illustrations deserve special attention. Every week the journal published photographs of women in different professions, especially in the army, agriculture, and industry. Particularly frequent were photographs of women soldiers and women in military uniform. Photos of this kind were often used for the weekly's cover. During the year of its existence, about half of the issues featured photographs of women on the cover, the inside pages, or both. And the *Ilustrirter vokhnblat* was not the only journal to depict women in this way.

Illustrated magazines (in both Hebrew and Yiddish) were very popular in those days, and in the same year, another illustrated Yiddish periodical, this time a bi-weekly, appeared in Israel. Its name was יידישע בילדער (Jewish Photographs), and it was the continuation of a weekly of the same name that had appeared in Riga (Latvia) before 1939. Towards the end of 1946, a group of Holocaust survivors who had worked on it

21 On the וואָכנבלאַט אילוסטרירטער see Rojanski 2008: 141–148.

22 On the reasons for using Hebrew in the first issues of וואָכנבלאַט אילוסטרירטער, see *ibid.*: 143f.

before the war began to republish it in the Displaced Persons camp in Landsberg under the leadership of Dr. Shmuel Gringhouse.²³ In 1948, some of the group moved to Israel and started publishing the journal there with Salomon Frank as editor.²⁴ Like *Ilustrirter vokhnblat*, *Yidische bilder* printed photographs of women soldiers on its cover, and reported widely and enthusiastically – mainly through photographs and captions – on women’s contributions to Israel’s economy, agriculture, and security.

However, this kind of glorification did not last long, and was soon replaced by a more complex presentation. In November 1949, *Ilustrirter vokhnblat* shut down to be replaced by a newspaper, לעצטע נייעס (Latest News), that later became the most important Yiddish daily in Israel. Like *Ilustrirter vokhnblat*, *Letste naves* dealt with women in Israel a great deal, but in a different and more nuanced way. One of its first issues contained an article that depicted the life of the Israeli woman as divided between raising children and running the household.²⁵ However, soon after that a special section for women began appearing under the name: פֿאַר דער פֿרוי (For the Woman). Almost all the articles in the section were written by one author, Shoshana Khisin, and dealt with matters that scholars have defined as ‘feminine.’ These included discussions of how a woman should dress, how she should treat her husband, and so on.²⁶ But the women’s section of *Letste naves* also had an additional angle: it devoted space to questions of women’s rights,²⁷ and the nature of women’s political roles in the world.²⁸

The broad – and quite progressive – treatment of women in these Yiddish publications raises the question whether it reflected a general and unified attitude towards gender issues and the status of women in the new Israeli society. The answer to this question is not a simple one.

It would seem that the very prominent use of photographs of women as heroic figures, and especially of women in military uniform, was probably not part of a gender-related view, but rather a part of the general view of the nature and characteristics of the Israeli as opposed to the Diaspora Jew. This was because the first Yiddish newspapers that appeared in the state of Israel – and especially the *Ilustrirter vokhnblat* – were very strongly influenced by the Zionist ethos. In that spirit, they presented a narrative – written or pictorial – that described the

23 *Yidische bilder*, December 4, 1946.

24 This information appears in the first issue that came out in Israel in 1948.

25 Tsanin 1949.

26 Devora bat Miriam 1950.

27 Khisin 1949: 7.

28 Khisin 1950: 6.

Israeli Jew, whether born in Israel or an immigrant, as superior to the Diaspora Jew. They were presented as more sophisticated and especially more productive.²⁹ Following what Gershon Shaked has defined as “the Zionist meta-narrative,”³⁰ the army and national defense were presented as if they were the ultimate values. The large amount of space in these papers dedicated to the women’s contribution to the defense of the state was part of this narrative and was meant to strengthen it.

In another way, the women’s section of *Letste naves* was largely modeled on the American Yiddish newspapers in their heyday. Thus, the depiction of women in these Israeli Yiddish publications was a kind of combination of images from the Yiddish press in the countries of immigration and new images popular in the State of Israel.

Yiddish Journals for Women

Two Yiddish journals for women appeared in Israel, both in the 1950s: *די היים* and *דער פֿרויען־בולעטין*. Both journals were highly ideological, and although both were published by political movements, and were probably meant to act as ideological mouthpieces, they could not but present a range of images of, and opinions about, women. In this way, these journals also contributed to the construction of gender images within the community of East European Jewish immigrants in Israel. It is therefore worth examining each of them individually.

A. *Di heyim*

In June 1950, the first issue of the monthly *דער פֿון דער דאָס וואָרט פֿון דער די היים*: דאָס וואָרט פֿון דער (The Home: the Word of the Working Woman in Israel) came out in Tel Aviv. It was published by *Mō‘ezet ha-pō‘alōt*, a women’s organization affiliated with the Israeli Labor movement, which was founded in 1921 and continues to exist today, though under a different name.

The editor of *Di heyim* was Kadya Molodowsky, a well-known Yiddish writer. Born in Poland in 1894, Molodowsky received a traditional Jewish and a secular Hebrew education, becoming a teacher in a Yiddish school in Warsaw. In 1935 she migrated to the US and lived in New York. She moved to Israel in 1950, staying there for two years. At that time she was already a popular author with a number of published col-

29 Rojanski 2008: 141–148.

30 Shaked 1993: 70f.

lections of poems and short stories. She was especially known as a children's writer.³¹

It seems that the reasons for appointing Kadya Molodowsky as editor of *Di heyim* were connected with both her writing and editing skills and her political views. Though Molodowsky never belonged to any political organization, she became close to Labor Zionist circles in America, mainly through her writings. She was a fairly regular contributor to the Labor Zionist weeklies דער ייִדישער אַרבעטער (The Jewish Worker) and דער ייִדישער קעמפֿער (The Jewish Militant), mostly on matters concerning relations between American Jewry and the State of Israel. However, though Molodowsky never wrote anything theoretical on gender issues, *Di heyim* under her editorship became a quality journal for women.

The opening article of the first issue, written by Molodowsky herself, was a kind of editorial manifesto. While it did not spell out the journal's goals, the article did describe it as a journal for and about the working woman in Israel. "The Jewish working woman," it said, "is a full partner in the building of the State of Israel and has to cope with the same problems as the entire Jewish people."³² For that reason, stated Molodowsky, she needs information about working women in general. Molodowsky concluded the article by saying, "The title of the journal is 'Home' (היים). It comes out in Israel and brings good news to the Jewish house in the *Jewish Home* like a message sent from the home of all the Jews" (emphasis in the original).³³ It was Molodowsky's view that this information should also be sent to the Jewish working woman abroad.

The general description of the journal and especially its Zionist emphasis invites a comparison with the פּיאָנירן-פֿרוי (Pioneer Woman), the journal of the American Pioneer Woman organization, a sister organization of the Israeli *Mō'ezet ha-pō'alōt*. However, *Di heyim* was a completely different kind of publication. *Pionirn-froy* was a political tool of the Pioneer Women, which *Di heyim* never was. Unlike *Pionirn-froy*, *Di heyim* rarely reported on the organization's activities or tried to promote them. It was a quality journal that discussed many aspects of Israeli life, while focusing mainly on the experience of women or on issues that women traditionally had to cope with. For the Yiddish female reader of the early 1950s, this was the only place to learn about these matters.

The goal of the new journal was also discussed, more or less directly, in two other articles in the first issue, written by prominent lead-

31 Cohen 1986: 355–360.

32 Molodowsky 1950: 4.

33 *Ibid.*

ers of working women in Israel: Beba Idlson³⁴ and Rachel Katsenelson-Shazar.³⁵

Idlson's article, "וואָס איז מועצת הפועלות",³⁶ did not directly address the question of the need for a women's journal, focusing instead on the role working women played in Israel's economy and on the importance of maintaining regular connections between working women in Israel and Jewish working women abroad, particularly in the US. That was how she actually defined the journal's goal. When she wrote "working women," Idlson actually meant women who were affiliated with the labor movement or at least subscribed to its values. As far as she was concerned, *Di heym* was supposed to be a vehicle for promoting those values among its readers.

Katsenelson-Shazar's article, on the other hand, directly addressed the issue of the need for a women's journal.³⁷ The role of the journal, she wrote, is to showcase the whole range of activities of the Israeli working woman to readers abroad – and, no less importantly, to Yiddish readers in Israel. *Di heym*'s goal, she added, is to strengthen loyalty to the Jewish people among female Yiddish readers and to encourage them to give their children a Zionist education.

In fact, *Di heym* became a journal not just about Israeli women, but for them. Most issues had three sections. One, usually published at the end of each issue, brought news from working women's organizations in Israel and around the world. Another was dedicated to literature and culture, including pieces by Yiddish writers like H. Leyvik, Avrom Sutzkever, Tsvi Ayznman, and Joseph Papiernikov, alongside works by Hebrew writers, including Jacob Fichman, S. Yizhar, and Devorah Baron. However, the opening section of most issues dealt with working women in Israel. It printed articles about women in Israeli industry,³⁸ women in the labor market,³⁹ and female equality.⁴⁰ There were also articles on the contributions of women who were already long-time residents of

34 Beba Idlson, the leader of *Mō'ezet ha-pō'alōt*, one of the organization's founders and a member of the Israeli parliament (the Knesset), was very active in the field of women's rights. As a Knesset member, she was active in passing laws for women: three laws she championed dealt with equal rights, equal pay, and military service for women.

35 Rachel Katsenelson-Shazar was also one of the founders of *Mō'ezet ha-pō'alōt* and the editor of דבר הפועלת (The Word of the Working Woman), the organization's Hebrew-language monthly.

36 Idlson 1950: 5–8.

37 Katsenelson-Shazar 1950: 9.

38 *Di heym* 1951; Filniak 1951.

39 Lamdan 1951: 21f.

40 Meirson 1952: 9f.

Israel to life in the temporary immigrant camps (*ma'barōt*).⁴¹ Perhaps most interesting, however, were articles encouraging women to go back to school and acquire a profession.⁴² These articles described with great appreciation working women and mothers who had studied to become school and kindergarten teachers.

In the summer of 1952, Kadya Molodowsky returned to America and *Di heyim* closed. The journal itself never published any explanation for the closure and there seems to be no archival source that sheds any light on it. We may assume that as a Yiddish journal for women, *Di heyim* did not have a wide distribution, and with the resignation of Molodowsky, *Mō'ezet ha-pō'alōt* simply did not make an effort to keep it alive. One might also assume that, during the time of the austerity regime in Israel, with its accompanying serious shortage of printing paper, the leaders of the organization did not want to use their limited resources on a small journal whose influence was unclear.⁴³

Nonetheless, in the course of its short life, *Di heyim* managed to present some very interesting images of women. In quite a naïve way, it supplied its readers with the Israeli cultural stereotypes of the 1950s, but alongside them gave a clear feminist message that encouraged them to aspire to women's equality in Israel. This message was quite neatly summed up in a fascinating article by Rachel Katsenelson-Shazar,⁴⁴ which described three generations of Jewish women. The first was Puah Rakovsky, a Polish Jewish woman who, after refusing an arranged marriage, becoming a teacher and divorcing her husband, immigrated to Palestine in the 1930's; the second was the Hebrew poet and kibbutz member Fanya Bergstein; the third, Zohara Levitov, who was trained as a pilot and was killed in Israel's War of Independence. This sequence of strong women showed Israeli women breaking traditional gender stereotypes, while at the same time making a major contribution to what were considered Jewish values: education, literature, and above all – at least as far as 1950s Israel was concerned – Israel's security.

Interestingly enough, *Di heyim* did not publish stories about women in the home, and had no cooking, education or fashion sections or any of the other domestic-related sections typical of women's journals. The second Yiddish journal for women, *Froyen-buletin*, was very different.

41 A. Y. 1951; *Di heyim* 1952: 16f.

42 Karl-Amitay 1952: 18f.

43 On the attitude of the Israeli political parties toward Yiddish, see my forthcoming book: *A Jewish Culture in the Land of Hebrew: Yiddish in Israel 1948–2008*.

44 Katzenelson-Shazar 1952: 34f.

B. *Der froyen-buletin*

עלונך פֿרויען-בולעטין (Women's Bulletin), also called in Hebrew דער פֿרויען-בולעטין (Your Bulletin), began to appear in Tel Aviv in October 1950. Its publisher was The Organization of Democratic Women, an organization affiliated with the Israeli Communist party, and it came out on an irregular basis for nine years.

It was a fine, high quality journal that encouraged women to take an active part in the public arena, even though it was clearly created as a propaganda tool for the organization that published it. Among its editors were prominent leftists, including the former partisan and ghetto fighter Batia Berman⁴⁵ and the physician Dr. Hanna Sneh,⁴⁶ both wives of Knesset members: Sneh from the Israeli Communist Party, and Berman from the leftist-Zionist Mapam.

Unlike *Di heym*, this journal did have a credo, which was published on the cover of its first issue in the following terms:

Among the publications for women that come out in Israel, there is not one that really serves the woman who works in the factory, the woman who takes care of the family at home, or the new immigrant. There is no journal that expresses the true joys and concerns of the Israeli woman, and fights for her rights in Israel.

This manifesto conformed completely to the principles of the Communist Party, and it is tempting to see the journal as simply another Party mouthpiece. I would argue, however, that whatever the original intentions may have been, the result was an exceptional and openly feminist journal.

The very first issue of *Der froyen-buletin* presented an interesting and even sophisticated combination of feminism and traditional feminine content. The two main topics of the issue were the black market and the opening of the academic year in the public schools.⁴⁷ Ostensibly, these were the general issues of the day in Israeli society, but both were also connected with the traditional feminine world – the world of keeping house and bringing up children. The articles themselves did not only deal with the details of daily life at home, but had broader horizons, discussing the teachers' strike, tuition for preschools, and so forth. The issue also contained pieces on female peace activists, condemnations of nuclear proliferation from a women's standpoint and so on.

⁴⁵ Temkin-Berman 2008.

⁴⁶ Hana Sneh was a family doctor and one of the founders of the organization of women doctors. Conversation with her son, Dr. Ephraim Sneh, October, 2011.

⁴⁷ *Der froyen-buletin* 1950a, 1950b.

The journal's ideological and feminist nature became much more pronounced from its second issue on. This issue included a lengthy section on the Russian revolution of October 1917,⁴⁸ as well as a discussion of the Democratic Women's Organization, women in the Soviet Union, and world peace. Special attention was paid to Jewish women who had reached high positions in the public arena in Israel and around the world. These included Anna Pauker, the Jewish woman who became vice prime minister in Romania;⁴⁹ Tzila Eyrum, who was appointed a member of Haifa city council,⁵⁰ and various women peace activists.⁵¹

Unlike *Di heym*, *Der froyen-buletin* did not have a formal structure. Each issue had its own central topic, which was related to a current or historical event. Of particular interest is issue 4, which came out in March 1951 to mark International Women's Day, but devoted significant space to the Korean War. The issue opened with a poem by the Yiddish writer Dora Teitlbaum, then in Paris, about the mothers of the Korean soldiers. It was entitled, איך האָב אַ קאָרעאַנישע מאַמע באַגעגנט (I Have Met a Korean Mother).⁵² The poem was followed by an article on the sufferings of Korean women during the war.⁵³ The nexus of women and world peace was very prominent, almost central, in *Der froyen-buletin* and was dealt with in a variety of ways.⁵⁴

The journal dealt widely with motherhood in much the same fashion. In March 1955 it published impressions from a congress of mothers that took place in Lausanne (Switzerland), which about 1,060 women from seventy countries attended to discuss the love of mothers for their children.⁵⁵ From this point the journal developed the idea of fighting for peace as a part of good motherhood. Some articles called for supporting peace as a way of defending children,⁵⁶ and others focused on protesting against nuclear proliferation for the same reason.⁵⁷

As well as covering the general situation in Israel, *Der froyen-buletin* also dedicated significant space to issues of women's rights and women's equality there."⁵⁸ One article protested firmly against the absence

48 *Der froyen-buletin* 1950 d.

49 *Der froyen-buletin* 1951 b.

50 *Der froyen-buletin* 1951 a.

51 *Der froyen-buletin* 1950 c.

52 *Der froyen-buletin* 1951 e: "I met a Korean Mother / / With fever on her lips / Over villages and cities / She was talking peace."

53 *Der froyen-buletin* 1951 d.

54 *Der froyen-buletin* 1955 d.

55 Lubitsh 1955.

56 *Der froyen-buletin* 1955 d.

57 *Der froyen-buletin* 1958.

58 *Der froyen-buletin* 1959.

of civil marriage in Israel, and its implications for the status of women;⁵⁹ another provided information about women in Israeli politics.⁶⁰

Another topic covered by *Der froyen-buletin*, not at all typical for the Israeli Yiddish press, was the situation of Arab women.⁶¹ *Der froyen-buletin* presented them as an example for solidarity between women of different nationalities regardless of political tension and conflicts.

Another issue dealt with widely in *Der froyen-buletin* was women's everyday life. Articles tended to focus on two topics: children's education and household management. Of course, both topics were treated very extensively in most women's magazines, not just those in Yiddish. One might expect that a very ideological publication would consider education as an ideological issue involving passing on progressive ideas to the next generation. However, *Der froyen-buletin* did not discuss education from an ideological point of view. Articles dealt with issues such as helping children with their homework,⁶² keeping them busy during the summertime,⁶³ and children's experience in kindergarten.⁶⁴

Even more interesting than that was the choice to publish articles which dealt with everyday housekeeping matters and women's fashion. As early as 1951, regular sections began to appear on sewing and knitting, cooking, and fashion. aimed at helping women save money from the family budget.⁶⁵ They were thus rather at variance with the highly ideological nature of the rest of the magazine.

The journal also had a humor section,⁶⁶ anecdotes from women's lives,⁶⁷ and articles about health care⁶⁸ and the role of the home in children's education,⁶⁹ alongside stories on everyday life in the *ma'bārāh* (the temporary immigrant camp).⁷⁰

Thus, while *Di heyim* followed the tradition of the Yiddish press by offering its readers Yiddish literature, *Der froyen-buletin* tried to attract the working woman not just with ideological material, but with simple practical information. This may well have helped broaden its readership and perhaps its popularity, too.

59 *Der froyen-buletin* 1955a.

60 *Der froyen-buletin* 1955c, 1955d.

61 *Der froyen-buletin* 1952a; Lubitsh 1959.

62 *Der froyen-buletin* 1956a.

63 *Der froyen-buletin* 1956b.

64 *Der froyen-buletin* 1957.

65 *Der froyen-buletin* 1951c, 1953b.

66 *Der froyen-buletin* 1951g, 1951f, 1953a.

67 *Der froyen-buletin* 1952b, 1951i.

68 *Der froyen-buletin* 1953c.

69 *Der froyen-buletin* 1953d.

70 *Der froyen-buletin* 1952c, 1951h.

Yiddish Press, Women's Literature and Gender Images

Though the Yiddish press in Israel's first years had a clearly ideological aspect, it was first and foremost an immigrant press, the vast majority of whose readership consisted of Yiddish-speaking newcomers. This raises important questions when examining the gender images to be found in it. Were these the same images traditionally to be found in Jewish culture or were they influenced by Israel's new Zionist ethos? To put this in Hannah Herzog's formulation, were these journals "a sphere for the duplicating of female images or a sphere for challenging them"?⁷¹

As mentioned before, Hebrew journals for women have come out in Israel since the second quarter of the twentieth century. The first commercial women's magazine came out in 1940, and since then the genre of commercial light journals that focus mainly on housekeeping, fashion and beauty issues has become very popular.

It is very clear that Yiddish journals for women did not follow this route. In a way, they were more similar to some of the journals published by women's organizations, such as *האשה* (The Woman),⁷² and especially *דבר הפועלת*, that focused on women in the family and at work. However, the Yiddish journals differed not only from the Hebrew-language publications which preceded them but also from each other.

Di heym, which was published by the same organization as *Dévar ha-pō'elet*, was first and foremost a classic product of Yiddish newspaper culture. Like many Yiddish journals and newspapers, it had a regular section on Yiddish literature that had almost nothing to do with women or gender.

Der froyen-buletin, on the other hand, did not follow the tradition of the Yiddish press. It rarely published Yiddish literature, and when it did so, the texts were by women and harnessed directly to the journal's political goals.

Di heym had a very Jewish – and even more Israeli – orientation. All the articles dealing with Jewish women's issues dealt mainly with the situation in Israel. *Der froyen-buletin*, on the other hand, had an international point of departure, dictated by its Communist agenda, and heavily promoted the Party's agenda on peace. Thus, while *Di heym* published articles on women in Israel, *Der froyen-buletin* dealt with Israeli women in the context of the international female labor force.

Both journals advocated equality between the genders and the struggle for women's rights, and encouraged women to participate in the public – and especially the political – arena. However, while *Di heym*

⁷¹ Herzog 2000: 51f.

⁷² Keren 2000: 28–35.

focused more on women's activity as a separate sphere, *Der froyen-buletin* supported both separate activities in women's organizations and striving for leadership roles in general ones. While *Di heyim* tended to print stories about leaders of women's organizations, *Der froyen-buletin* emphasized, for example, the election of a woman to the Haifa city council. Also interesting were the different attitudes toward the individual and the collective. *Di heyim* encouraged women, as individuals, to improve their education, as in the story about women who went back to school in order to get a teacher's diploma. *Der froyen-buletin* preferred to present women's achievements from the point of view of general society. Women were encouraged to ensure that their children grew up to be well-educated members of society, and especially supporters of peace for the benefit of all. In other words, while *Di heyim* focused more on women developing themselves in order to contribute to Israeli and Jewish society, *Der froyen-buletin* focused on women's integrative role in contributing to the collective through their educational and political activities.

However, despite the differences of approach, it seems that both journals had very similar images of women and their gender roles, which, in Hanna Herzog's definition, made them both spheres for challenging accepted images of women. These images differed from the traditional portrayal of women in Yiddish culture, but coincided with common Zionist rhetoric and images of 1950s Israel, though not always with reality. Both journals presented as models for their readership images of progressive women who contributed to the public sphere. The Zionist *Di heyim* showed this directly by emphasizing women's roles in fields such as absorbing new immigrants, promoting Israeli industry and agriculture, and above all Israeli education. The Communist *Der froyen-buletin* preferred to present it through a much more cosmopolitan prism. Nonetheless, it was the same image of a progressive and active woman.

This leads to the conclusion that Yiddish journals for women in Israel did not relate to women as a separate sphere within immigrant society (i. e., a separate sphere within a separate sphere) but tried to bring to new immigrants the same gender images that were considered desirable in general, Israeli society.

Di heyim existed for two years. The reasons for its closure are not known, but since political organizations in 1950s Israel were interested in putting out as many Yiddish publications as possible as a means of reaching the Yiddish speaking population, this seems to have been simply conjunctural. *Der froyen-buletin*, however, came out for almost

a decade, which meant that it had a longer life than many of the other Yiddish publications in Israel. As far as gender issues were concerned, it should be noted that these were the only Yiddish women's journals ever published in the state of Israel. Some of the general Yiddish newspapers, especially the daily *Letste naves* and the weekly *Ilustrirte velt-vokh* (Illustrated World Weekly) which was also published by Tsanin in the late 1950s, did include sections on housekeeping, fashion and cooking. Though these were not always defined as women's sections, they still presented traditional 'feminine' gender images.

Only the two women's journals transcended these traditional images. Three hundred years after the *Brant-shpigl* was first published, they created a new form of written Yiddish culture, one aimed not at "women and men who are like women," but at women who wanted equality with men in every respect.

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⁷³ The issues of *Der froyen-buletin* were not provided with numbers or dates systematically and not all issues have page numbers.

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