Overall description of the *Biqqure ha-Ittim* Index Project

Pursuant to the publication of the *Ha-Me’assef* Index – *Sha’ar LaHaskalah: An Annotated Index to Ha-Me’assef, the First Hebrew Periodical (1783-1811)* – in 2000 by Magnes Press, I continued with the indexing project of the early Hebrew Haskalah periodicals. Now, upon completion of this phase, I am presenting the second monograph and Index – a computerized and annotated index to *Biqqure ha-Ittim*, the journal of the Haskalah in Galicia and the Austrian empire that was published in Vienna from 1820 to 1831. The book is titled *Biqqure ha-Ittim – Biqqure ha-Haskalah* [*Biqqure ha-Ittim* – the ‘First Fruits’ of Haskalah].

*Biqqure ha-Ittim* was the second major Hebrew periodical, which was published continuously for several years after the demise of *Ha-Me’assef.* Some critics even considered *Biqqure ha-Ittim* to be a direct continuation of *ha-Me’assef,* notwithstanding the difference in style and contents. Undoubtedly, the launching of the Viennese journal marks the transition of the centre of Hebrew Haskalah literature from Germany to the Austrian empire.

The pages of the new periodical attest to the transition of the ‘centre of gravity’ to Vienna as the *maskilim* were attempting to establish their own version of the Enlightenment. Having gotten their ideology from Berlin, they endeavoured to translate it to the needs of the new local circumstances. In the 1820s, the journal became the central organ of publication by established Haskalah writers as well as by aspiring writers who were destined to make a name for themselves in years to come. Now, with the assistance of the current Index, it is possible to trace the developmental

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processes of these writers and of the Galician school in its formative years.

As its name implies, *Biqqure ha-‘Ittim* represented the ‘first fruits’ harvested by the maskilim in the Austrian empire, ranging from Galicia to Moravia and Italy. Their creative writings, as well as their intellectual and scholarly essays in Judaica and Hebraica and in the general area of the humanities and the sciences, can be found in the journal. Their works covered a diversified range of topics and disciplines such as literature, language, Scripture commentary, history, science, and education. As a scholarly journal, *Biqqure ha-‘Ittim* published essays on ethics, religion and philosophy as well as learned biographies of past Jewish luminaries, especially in the field of Jewish scholarship.

All in all, this periodical facilitates a glimpse into the Hebrew Enlightenment in the Austro-Hungarian empire as the so-called Galician Haskalah was attempting to carry on the tradition established by the German Haskalah. Like its German predecessor, its main goal was to resuscitate the Jewish people by reviving the Hebrew language and its literature and by modernizing and updating Hebrew culture.⁴

The Index to *Biqqure ha-‘Ittim*, which will be published shortly, is an alphabetical author-and-subject index, which covers all articles, essays, biographies, poems, stories, fables, epigrams, news, editorial comments, and announcements included in all sections and departments of the 12-volume journal. This comprehensive list contains cross-references to items reprinted from the first Haskalah journal, *ha-Me’assef*. In addition, the Index lists all title pages (covers) of the volumes and title pages of sections and departments as well as the publisher’s notices usually printed in German with Hebrew letters. Also, all communal reports, general and practical information and monetary tables, printed in German with Hebrew letters. All articles and items printed in the only German supplement bound with volume five were also included. These German titles, whether in Hebrew characters or in Gothic script, were translated into

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