

Universalism and Racism in the Jewish Religion (32 Books Reviewed by Jan Peczkis)

Antigoyism Confronted [this page]

Jews as the Chosen People: Implications [p. 6]

The Talmud: Universalism and Racism [p. 24]

The Dual Morality, in the Talmud, That Governs Jews and Non-Jews [p. 65]

Rabbis That Wrestled With the Racism in Rabbinic Literature [p. 75]

Uncensored Talmudic Attacks on Jesus Christ [p. 81]

Antigoyism Confronted

Hasidism: A New History Biale, David 2017 ***Antigoyism Confronted. The "Christian" Concept of Redemptive Suffering, as Applied to the Holocaust, Has Definite Parallels in Hasidic Judaism***

This magisterial work is a single-volume encyclopedia on Hasidism. It traces the history of Hasidic Judaism, and highlights the unexpected post-Holocaust rebirth of Hasidism in places such as Brooklyn, New York, and the State of Israel. POLISH-JEWISH RELATIONS CENTURIES AGO: CONFRONTING ANTIGOYISM The authors avoid the usual black-and-white narrative of the innocent Jew and the persecutory Catholic Pole (e. g, the Crucifixion of Christ, and deicide). They recognize episodes of amiability as well as hostility, moreover having gone both ways, between the two communities. (p. 31, 452). And, although they express uncertainty as to how it affected everyday Jewish conduct, Biale et al. are candid about the anti-goyism that is part of the Jewish religion, and the efforts of some Jews to repudiate it. With reference to the SHIVHEI HA-BESHT (hagiographic stories of the Ba'al Shem Tov, first published in 1814: p. 17), the authors comment, "The 'theoretical' Gentile was a monolithic, threatening character and, in the Kabbalistic tradition that formed much of

Polish Jewish culture, even demonic...Stories in SHIVHEI HA-BESHT attest to significant encounters between early Hasidim and Gentiles. The same collection also suggests that SOME wanted to moderate the demonic image that Jewish folklore and Kabbalah assigned to Gentiles, mandating instead relations based on ethical considerations. This would seem to be the implication of a few tales that assert that cheating Gentiles is a sin before God." (p. 31; Emphasis added).

REDEPTIVE SUFFERING IN JUDAISM? INADVERTENT RELEVANCE TO THE AUSCHWITZ CARMELITE CONVENT AND CROSS CONTROVERSY

By way of introduction, certain influential Jews once raised a controversy about Polish Catholic nuns praying for the dead at Auschwitz. We heard that Christians had no right to pray for the Jewish dead because Christians in times past had persecuted Jews. What's more, the convent and crosses were a "Christianization" of the Holocaust, and, worse yet, this "Christianization" featured the "imposition" of a "Christian" understanding of suffering (that is, redemptive suffering) that is foreign to Judaism. According to these critics, Auschwitz must scrupulously be maintained as nothing more than a needless, obscene tragedy. Some Jews went even further, demanding that no one pray at Auschwitz, because (in their opinion), God was soundly disproved there, and so there should be a perpetually empty sky over Auschwitz. Authors Biale et al. inadvertently discredit much of the "basis" behind the ultimately-successful effort to pressure the Polish nuns into leaving. They show that there were aspects of Hasidic thinking on the Shoah that overlapped, if not coincided, with the so-called Christian notion of redemptive suffering (though, of course, within a Judaic framework). First of all, God was not absent at Auschwitz: He was (according to the likes of Kalonymos Kalman Shapiro) suffering alongside with, and even more strongly than, His people. (pp. 660-661). Some Hasidim thought of the Holocaust as a martyrdom that constituted the "birth pangs" (HEVLEI MASHIAH) that will usher-in the Messiah. (p. 659). Interestingly, Yisakhar Shlomo Teichthal (1885-1945) abandoned his earlier anti-Zionism, and came to believe that the Holocaust served to weaken the KELIPPOT (the husks of evil materiality), thus causing the gates of the Land of Israel to open. (pp. 662-663).

JEWISH SINS: THE HOLOCAUST AS GOD'S DISCIPLINE

In terms of generalizations about the Hasidic response to the Shoah, Biale et al. conclude, "However, most thinkers embraced the traditional idea that God's hand must be present in the Holocaust. In its

most simplistic form, this tradition led to a search for the sin (or sins) for which the Holocaust was a punishment or, alternatively, to see the suffering as a goad to repentance. The most common sin identified was assimilation or secularization, although some targeted Zionism." (p. 659). (Note the irony of a few Poles being condemned for suggesting that the Holocaust was God's punishment for Jewish sins, when some Jews correspondingly thought the same thing. Of course, the alleged sins were different, but the principle was the same.)

ASCETISM WAS NOT ONLY CHRISTIAN.

JOY AND ASCETISM: A FALSE DUALISM Critics of Christianity as diverse as Enlightenment rationalists, Hitler, and some Jews, had called Christianity a religion that rebels against the joys of the senses. Although ascetism (e. g, monasticism) was more prominent in traditional Roman Catholicism than in Hasidism, it definitely existed in the latter (for examples, see pp. 715-on). Furthermore, the joy/ascetism dichotomy is an artificial one to begin with, as the authors stress, "Again, however, we must ask whether the opposition between joy and ascetic renunciation is not more an outsider's view than an accurate depiction of life as seen from within. The renunciate (Franciscan or Buddhist as well as Hasidic) might feel great joy in the closeness to God he has achieved precisely by successfully living up to calls for sexual abstinence and control of appetites." (p. 811).

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS: WHO HAS THE "RIGHT" TO MENTION JEWISH ATHEISM? In almost every book on Polish-Jewish relations, Polish Cardinal August Hlond is condemned for his 1936 pastoral letter on Jews as freethinkers, vanguards of Bolshevism, and a bad influence on morals. As elaborated below, authors Biale et al inadvertently show that Hlond was essentially correct in his understanding and appreciation of Jewish atheism--as a real, significant, and relevant development. (Of course, and contrary to the mendacity of some, Hlond never said that all Jews were atheists. Far from it.)

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ATHEIZATION OF POLAND'S JEWS: A HASIDIC VIEW With reference to the timeframe encompassing Cardinal Hlond's statements (post WWI), Biale et al comment, "Ever more Jews, especially younger ones, were abandoning old customs, traditional dress, and lifestyle. Jewish society rapidly embraced modernity, including secularism, and Hasidism began to lose its followers...For a great many people, this meant abandoning Hasidism and embracing political movements such as Bundism, territorialism, Zionism, anarchism, and even Bolshevism." (p.

588). Interestingly, the authors, after discussion the wrongs that Jews had (actually or supposedly) experienced in interwar Poland, nevertheless relegated them into a secondary position relative to the growing atheization of Jews, which they found crucially significant, "Yet the primary challenge for Orthodox Judaism and Hasidism in Poland was the abandonment of religion, especially by the young, who embraced secular movements such as Zionism and socialism in UNPRECEDENTED NUMBERS. Accelerated secularization affected not only ordinary Hasidic families but also the houses of tsaddikim." (p. 597; Emphasis added). APOSTATE HASIDIM ENHANCED THE MILITANT ATHEISM OF SOVIET COMMUNISM

Biale et al. say it all, "Many Orthodox Jews, including Hasidim, were swept up by the revolutionary atmosphere, abandoned religion, and joined the Bolsheviks. Some even enlisted in the secret police [Cheka, then NKVD]; the head of the Kiev branch, for example, was Arkadii Twersky, of the Chernobyl dynasty. Others joined the Yevseksiya...For most of its existence, the Jewish Section was led by Semion Dimanstein, a former student of the Lubavitch, Telz, and Slobodka yeshivot...The presence of former Hasidim in the ranks of the Yevseksiya would prove useful in identifying which institutions should be attacked...In some places, the yeshivah, the Jewish study hall, and rites like circumcision were 'put on trial' by Jewish Communists who wanted to demonstrate they were more Communist than anyone else." (p. 590). FOR FURTHER STUDY To learn more about the modern Hasidim, see: *REBBE: THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON*, by Telushkin; *REAL JEWS*, by Efron; *DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH*, by Heilman; *THE WAR WITHIN*, by Elizur and Malkin; and *A LIFE APART: HASIDISM IN AMERICA*, narrated by Nimoy and Parker.

Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry Heilman, Samuel C. 1992 ***A Peek Into the Onetime Religious-Based Jewish Separatism and Antigoyism That Once Dominated Polish-Jewish Relations!*** The author, a descendant of Polish Jews, became interested in what the Jews of Poland must once have been like. However, he realizes that the modern haredim are not simply "living fossils" of old Jewish ways. They, too, have been modernized in subtle ways relative to their long-gone counterparts. In addition, author Heilman realizes that

Poland's Jews began to depart from traditional Jewish ways well before the Nazi German-made Holocaust destroyed these communities. The author notes that, in the past, religious Jews prayed for their gentile rulers in order to remain in the graces of these rulers. (p. 218). However, the haredim in modern Israel feel no need to pray for their secular Jewish rulers, whom they see as sinful Jews.

ANTI-ASSIMILATIONIST TENDENCIES ORIGINATED FROM THE JEWS Until recent centuries, Jews lived in self-segregation and in self-imposed apartheid (my term). Heilman recounts that, historically, Jewish resistance to assimilation had primarily been driven by religious strictures against Jews adopting the ways of the goyim. This was based on the Bible (Leviticus 20:26) (p. 18) and the Talmud (Sanhedrin 74b). (p. 373). The haredim continue this approach.

ANTIGOYISM: The "us" vs. "them" mentality is obvious. However, can the type of Jewish separatism that is exemplified by the haredim go further--to Jewish elitism and even anti-goyism? Although Heilman does not use either of these terms, he makes it obvious that this has happened. He quotes Shalom Nisan of the Rev Arelach Hasidic movement as follows, (quote) "We know what that world is; it's goyim and PRITZOS (whores). The people who come from that world are FREMDE (foreigners). The world is black and white. We are white." (unquote). (p. 147). At a haredi school in Israel, author Heilman observed the following, (quote) The children smiled; a few giggled. Of course, how foolish to offer the Torah to the goyim! It is well known that goyim like to steal. The teacher told them so. Everyone knew it. Only the Yidn were worthy to receive the Torah. (unquote). (p. 193).

GENTILE LEARNING SPURNED Heilman notes that the haredim are opposed to their members receiving a secular education (e. g, p. 171), notably at the university level, because it is a cesspool of immorality, and it is likely to lure Jews away from the Torah. (pp. 268-269). More fundamentally, non-Jewish knowledge is "alien wisdom" (CHOCHMOS CHITZONIOS). (p. 171). However, Heilman does not inform the reader that, until recent centuries, this attitude was almost universal among Jews! They avoided Gentile learning as pernicious and of no value to them.

DRAFT DODGING: AVOIDANCE OF MILITARY SERVICE Author Samuel Heilman explains why the haredim refuse to serve in the Israeli Army, (quote) How haredi can one be when one must take orders from an officer who is not only not a sage but is probably a sinner and who demands that one act and look like a Gentile? So Israeli haredim continue

to encourage their men to stay away from army service as long as possible, no matter what the cost. (unquote). (p. 37). [The foregoing has broader implications. It was one of the reasons that Poland's Jews commonly avoided service in the Polish Army of the resurrected Polish state. It also illuminates Polish concerns that the Minorities Treaty, if fully enacted, would give Poland's Jews a means to avoid military service to Poland--as by invoking religious objections.] **RELIGIOUS ISSUES** The Christian reader of this work will recognize many of the religious themes featured in it. In fact, all of the following themes recount the critical teachings of Jesus Christ on the Pharisees: Hasidic teachings warn against prayer that has become rote (p. 222) and obedience to the Law that has become perfunctory or mechanical. (p. 241). Personal wealth and spirituality are, or tend to be, incompatible with each other. (p. 251). Finally, adherence to the Law is no guarantee of true spirituality, and it can instead result in self-righteousness, spiritual pride, and self-seeking social status. (p. 241).

OPPOSITION TO SEXUAL LIBERTINISM Now consider sexual morality. [It turns out that there is irony to the argument that Christianity, unlike Judaism, has a repressive policy towards human sexuality, and that it has a negative view of the human body.] In haredi schools, the body is considered impure below the belt. (p. 197). There are strict haredi codes for modest dress and behavior. Self-stimulation is forbidden. (p. 319). Sex is primarily considered a means of procreation, and then only within marriage. (p. 317). [Clearly, when viewed through the lenses of modern sexual libertinism, traditional Jewish sexual morality is no less "negative" and "repressive" than traditional Christian sexual morality.].

Jews as the Chosen People: Implications

Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life Kaplan, Mordecai Menahem 1934 **Jewish**

Chosenness Deconstructed: An In-Depth Analysis This work covers many topics, and I consider a few of them. I focus on Jewish Chosenness.

JEWS AS CHOSEN: ARE JEWS SUPERIOR TO OTHERS? In Deuteronomy 7:6-8 and 9:6, God plainly tells the Jews that He is not choosing them according to any merits of their own. However, this did not

prevent Jewish interpretations from developing that explicitly taught that Jews ARE better than the GOYIM, and that God chose Jews precisely because of their pre-existing superiority. Moreover, these beliefs became a mainstay in the Jewish religion, and persisted to fairly modern times. What today is called Orthodox Judaism is really neo-Orthodox Judaism. Kaplan explains this whole process. He writes, (quote) The Neo-Orthodox conception of Israel, though presumably a reiteration of the traditional view of Israel, turns out, upon examination, to be a decided recasting of that view in a number of ways. The traditional belief as formulated by Judah Ha-Levi is that Israel was privileged to come into the possession of the Torah on account of the inherent superiority which it had inherited from Adam, Noah, and the Patriarchs, and which marked them off as a higher human species. According to Neo-Orthodoxy, it is for the sake of the Torah, for the sake of preserving and propagating the teachings of that Torah, and not because of any hereditary superiority, that God chose Israel. Tradition declares that the Torah is principally a means of maintaining Israel's inborn superiority so that at no time shall Israel descend to the level of the nations...It is evident that Neo-Orthodoxy is not prepared to retain the traditional belief in the inherent superiority of Israel... (unquote). (pp. 145-146). Furthermore, the traditional Jewish belief had unmistakable connotations of innate Jewish moral superiority over non-Jews. Rabbi Kaplan remarks, (quote) According to Judah Ha-Levi, KITAB AL KHAZARI I, PAR. 47, the Jews alone inherited from Adam a capacity for spiritual life. (unquote). (p. 526). JEWS AS THE CHOSEN: A STRONG TALMUDIC PERSPECTIVE Rabbi Kaplan implicitly supports the premise that the Talmud teaches a much stronger form of Jewish elitism than does the Tanakh (Old Testament). He thus describes the reason, according to the Talmud and in contradistinction to the Bible (Old Testament), for God creating the world, (quote) The creation of the world is no longer taken for granted, as in the Bible, as an ultimate act of God which needs no further accounting. It is now interpreted as having been intended mainly for Israel. Rabbinic Judaism represents largely a reversal of centrality in the spiritual realm analogous to the reversal of centrality effected by the change from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican system of astronomy. Instead of Israel existing for the world, it is the world that exists for Israel. (unquote). (p. 380). That says it all! It gets even better. The Talmud teaches that, not only was the world created specifically for the Jews, but the entire universe was

created specifically for the Jews, and, better yet, ONLY for the Jews. [Imagine the white supremacist saying that God created the universe for the white people and only for the white people!] Quoting Berakot 32b (Reference 54, p. 547), Kaplan writes, (quote) It is in no hyperbolic sense that Resh Lakish represents God as saying to Israel, when the latter complains that God seems to have forgotten her, "I have created twelve constellations in heaven, each constellation consists of thirty hosts, etc., and each camp consists of 365 times ten million stars,...and all of them I have created only for thy sake." (unquote). (p. 381). JEWISH CHOSENNESS DROVE THE AGES-OLD JEWISH SEPARATISM--UNTIL IT BECAME IMPRACTICAL FOR THE JEWS Kaplan comments, (quote) The Jews, however, have found it necessary to retreat from the stand taken by them in the past with regard to their being God's chosen people. They realize intuitively that, if they were to persist in the literal acceptance of that doctrine, they would have to exclude themselves from complete self-identification with the state. For, according to the literal interpretation of that doctrine, it is the destiny of the ENTIRE Jewish people to be restored to Palestine. (unquote).(emphasis his).(p. 23). JEWISH CHOSENNESS, ZIONISM, AND MESSIANISM The author quotes Claude Montefiore, who wrote a 1912 book, *OUTLINES OF LIBERAL JUDAISM* [in this collection]. Montefiore considers Jewish Chosenness as having less to do with universalism and more to do with what may be called Jewish nationalism. He writes, (quote) He [Montefiore] recognizes that even the few passages in the Bible which dwell upon the election of Israel were always understood in the national sense. Messianism meant less the universal adoption of the truth concerning God than the prosperity of Israel and its spiritual preeminence. The glory of God was identified with the glory of Israel. (unquote). (p. 531). THE TALMUD AND EXCESSIVE LEGALISM

In the past, Christians had often criticized Judaism not only for rejecting Jesus Christ, but also for fostering, in their opinion, an overly rigid, rote-oriented, and excessive Pharisaic code morality that has largely replaced other aspects of religious devotion. While Rabbi Kaplan does not go this far, he finds merit in this line of thinking. He criticizes rabbinism and talmudism as follows, (quote) Ritualism, purified, to be sure, of its pagan connotations, continued to possess a degree of importance far beyond its intrinsic value. From the traditional or rabbinic point of view, the ethical values are regarded as indispensable, but are not granted the primacy

accorded them by the prophets. Regardless of theory, ritualism acquired a dominant place in practice by reason of the exaggerated amount of attention paid to it in the literature. Compare, for example, the extent of the material in the Talmud dealing with ritual and with the material therein that is devoted to the discussion of the civil law. This legalistic treatment of ritual observance has caused it to bulk large in the consciousness of the Jew, and has laid him open to the charge of being a legalist. (unquote). (pp. 109-110).

LIBERAL JUDAISM: GOD AND THE JEWS DO A ROLE REVERSAL In this 1934 book, Rabbi Kaplan attempts to redefine Judaism. Instead of the Jews being a community that has come into existence because of God, and which exists in order to conserve and to proclaim God's revelation, it is a self-sustaining, creative community that manufactures and re-invents its own concept of God and religion. In other words, God did not create the Jews: The Jews created God.

The Future of the American Jew Kaplan, Mordecai Menahem
1948 ***Confronting Jewish Chosenness. Jews Once Found Germany Worthy and Poland Unworthy of Jewish Assimilation***

Rabbi Mordecai Menahem Kaplan, the author, presents a wealth of ideas. I focus on a few themes. **AMERICAN JEWS ALREADY VERY SECULAR IN 1948** The author engages in what arguably can be called soft atheism. Kaplan consistently rejects the supernatural, including God. (See especially his caricature of God, worthy of a militant atheist, on page 225 and page 538). To Kaplan, "God" is to be re-defined as a cosmic process, or as a Power to help one overcome obstacles, and not a Supreme Being in the conventional sense of the term. (e. g., pp. 171-172, 182-183, 192). Why not just drop the pretense of believing in God at all? Kaplan's attempt to create a "reconstructed" Judaism that re-interprets (or redefines) the elements of Jewish religion (including "God") in an appealing, up-to-date format (e. g, p. 179), is straightforward in motive. It stems from the pervasive atheization of American Jews already in place at the time that Kaplan wrote this book [1948], (quote) ...the majority of Jews today do not identify their Jewishness with any positive religious convictions. This applies not only to the very considerable number of Jews

who are avowed secularists. Legion is the number of Jews who profess adherence to Jewish religion and retain some measure of affiliation with the synagogue, but neither subscribe to a Jewish creed, whether in the Reform or Orthodox version, nor submit to the discipline of Jewish religious practice. (unquote). (p. 64; See also p. 413). There is more. According to a quoted survey, 83% of the American rabbinate, already by the 1940's, had rejected the supernatural origins of the Jewish people. (p. 100). Polish Cardinal Hlond has been roundly condemned for his 1936 pastoral letter in which he referred to Jews as freethinkers. Clearly, Hlond was on to something. [Let the reader also reflect on the following: Over 70 years have now passed since Kaplan wrote this book. American Jews have, by and large, not been inspired by his, or any other, "updated" Jewish religion. Instead, secularization among Jews has advanced even further, and the foundation of the self-identity of American Jews has become something entirely different--the Holocaust.] The atheization of American's Jews already by the 1940s partly explains the Jewish success in driving virtually all religion out of American public life in the 1960s, mostly through Supreme Court decisions.

"JEWS NEVER PERSECUTE OTHERS" IS BASED ON CIRCUMSTANCES, NOT ON THE PRESUMED SUPERIORITY OF JEWISH ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Kaplan tends to adhere to the lachrymose view of Jewish history. However, he briefly departs from it as he writes that, (quote) It is a historical fact that, at the height of the Hasmonean power, the Jews did actually impose Judaism on the Idumeans by force of arms. (unquote). (p. 223). In addition, the main reason that Jews did not more often repress other religions was prosaic. They did not have the power to do so. Kaplan quips, (quote) Judaism, which was at that stage of its development also a proselytizing religion, imposed its faith and law on the conquered Idumeans, but that was its only venture in forcibly spreading its creed, because soon thereafter it lost its own independence and, consequently, the opportunity for propagating the faith by force. (unquote). (p. 152). [Those who contend that Islam and Christianity are persecutory religions--while Judaism is not--are being a bit disingenuous. It is like a quadriplegic claiming moral credit for never stabbing anyone. He is physically incapable of doing so.]

"JEWS AS CHOSEN": NOT ONLY BENEVOLENT CONNOTATIONS

Rabbi Kaplan rejects the common notion (or exculpation) that Jewish Chosenness only implies extra Jewish duties to God. He comments, (quote) No one can question the fact that the

belief of being divinely elect has long been associated in the Jewish mind with consecration and responsibility. However, we cannot ignore the other implications of this belief, especially those which are often sharply stressed, such as in the ALENU and the HAVDALAH prayers. In the latter, the invidiousness of the distinction between Israel and the nations is emphasized by being compared with the distinction between light and darkness. It is that invidiousness which is highly objectionable, and should be eliminated from our religion. (unquote). (p. 218). The author elaborates that, (quote) Is it not more in keeping with spiritual religion, when we recite the "ALENU" to thank God for having given us "the Torah of truth and planted eternal life in us", than for not having made us "like the nations of other lands?" (pp. 217-218). For an example of a Reconstructionist prayer book that puts Kaplan's ideas into practice, please read my review of *Sabbath Prayer Book* [this set of reviews]. Let us consider Jews as Chosen from another angle. Jews commonly frame Jewish Chosenness as the Jewish duty, or privilege, of transmitting ethical insights (or ethical monotheism: pp. 22-23) to the gentiles. Kaplan dismisses this as a form of what nowadays is called benevolent prejudice. It is reminiscent of the 19th century concept of imperialism as something good, in that white people were the "bearers of civilization" to nonwhites--also known as the white man's burden. (p. 221). Unfortunately, Mordecai Kaplan skirts around the most controversial aspects of Jewish Chosenness. This includes the Talmudic implications of Jewish Chosenness, which are examined by an Israeli Jewish scholar. Please read my detailed review of, *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings* (Arbeiten Zur Geschichte Des Antiken Judentums Und Des Urchristentums, Vol 23). (this set of reviews). NOAHIDE LAWS DO NOT SOFTEN THE EXCLUSIVISM OF JEWISH CHOSENNESS Let us expand on the "extra Jewish duties" premise. We often hear the argument (or exculpation) that, whereas Jews have to obey 613 laws in order to be right with God, gentiles have the much lighter burden of obeying only the 7 Noahide laws in order to be right with God. This is disingenuous, and probably of recent origin. Rabbi Kaplan comments, (quote) As for the recognition in Jewish tradition that individuals among the Gentiles might attain salvation by conforming to the ethical laws revealed to mankind through Noah, its application did not extend nearly as far as modern Jewish liberals would like to believe. Maimonides, for example, maintained that for a Gentile to conform to the Noahitic laws was

not enough. To obtain salvation he must look upon those laws as revealed by God. Since the only evidence of any revelation to Noah is to be found in the Torah of Israel, the achievement of salvation by a Gentile was thus made to depend on his recognizing Israel as the chosen vehicle of divine salvation for mankind. (unquote). (p. 223; See also p. 204).

OBSOLESCENCE OF RELIGIOUS-BASED "JEWS AS CHOSEN PEOPLE" Kaplan comments, (quote) Under those circumstances, Jews could not possibly regard themselves as other than the most privileged of all peoples. Those circumstances, however, no longer obtain with the majority of modern-minded men and women. The modern-minded Jew cannot consider the miraculous events recorded in the Torah and the rest of the Bible as other than legendary, he, therefore, cannot accept them as evidence of the traditional Jewish doctrine that Israel is God's Chosen People. (unquote). (pp. 214-215). However, this does not mean that the Jewish belief as the Chosen People declines together with the decline of religion. Instead, it can take on a modernized, secularized form, as elaborated in the next sections of this review.

RACIALIZED "JEWS ARE CHOSEN PEOPLE" REPLACED RELIGIOUS VERSION With allusion to the long quote below in this section, Kaplan refers to the following books (which see, and read my reviews): German Reform rabbi Kaufmann Kohler's *Jewish Theology*, and British rabbi Morris Joseph's *Judaism As Creed And Life*. In addition, he defines the terms he uses below as follows: **MASKILIM**--adherents of a movement, among Eastern European Jews, to westernize Jewish life. **REFORMERS**--the movement among German Jews, which started in 1815, to denationalize and westernize Judaism. **HISTORICAL SCHOOL**--the movement among German Jews, starting in 1845, to introduce changes in Jewish religious practice on the basis of inherent historical principles. (p. 545). Kaplan points out that the centuries-old concept of Jewish Chosenness, based on the Torah [and Talmud], had increasingly been replaced, in 19th-century Germany, by a new-fangled racial concept of Jewish Chosenness. He writes, (quote) Unable to accept literally the traditional version of the doctrine of the chosen people, the religious wing of the early **MASKILIM**, the first **REFORMERS** and the middle group who designated themselves as the **HISTORICAL SCHOOL** reinterpreted that doctrine to mean one or all of the following propositions, which are set forth in Kaufmann Kohler's *JEWISH THEOLOGY*, as justifying the claim of the Jews to being a chosen

people: 1. Jews possess hereditary traits which qualify them to be superior to the rest of the world in the realm of the religious and the ethical. 2. Their ancestors were the first to achieve those religious and ethical conceptions and ideals which will, in the end, become the common possession of mankind and help them to achieve salvation. 3. Jews possess the truest form of the religious and ethical ideals of mankind. 4. Jews are entrusted with the task of communicating those ideals to the rest of the world. (unquote)(p. 215). Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan does not trace the origin of these racialized ideas. Were Jewish racial concepts copied from German racial concepts, was it the other way around, or did both forms of racial identity developed in parallel? **RACIALIZED "JEWS ARE CHOSEN PEOPLE": ACKNOWLEDGED PARALLELS WITH NAZISM!** Mordecai M. Kaplan condemns biologically-based Jewish elitism, which may be considered a form of Jewish racism, with the following scathing words directed against the four propositions quoted above, (quote) What is wrong with the reinterpretations? First, the proposition that Jews possess unusual hereditary traits which entitle them to be God's elect is based on a series of unproved generalizations concerning certain qualities as being characteristic only of Jews, and on biological assumptions concerning heredity, which are entirely unwarranted. It is one thing for the ancient sage to express his love for his people by describing them as unique in the possession of the traits of chastity, benevolence, and compassion. But it is quite another for a modern person seriously to assert that, because Jewish life has manifested these traits, Jews alone are inherently qualified to grasp and promulgate the truth of religion. We expect a greater regard for objective fact than is evidenced by such sweeping statements about hereditary Jewish traits. If Jews were to adopt the foregoing reinterpretation of the doctrine of election, they would, by implication, assent to the most pernicious theory of racial heredity yet advanced to justify racial inequality and the right of a master race to dominate the rest of mankind. (unquote). (pp. 215-216). We thus once again see the manifestation of the **UBERMENSCHEN** and **UNTERMENSCHEN**. Furthermore, the informed reader may be struck by the similarities of the statements of Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, and those of the Polish scholar Feliks Koneczny (in his *JEWISH CIVILIZATION*), regarding the correspondence of Jewish racial supremacy and Nazi German racial supremacy. Unlike Kaplan, Feliks Koneczny has been roundly condemned for making the comparison.

CONCLUSION ON JEWS AS CHOSEN, AND UPDATE The author calls on Christians to repudiate the view that Jews were responsible for the Crucifixion of Christ. He then calls on Jews to not try to remove the mote from the Christians' eye while ignoring the beam in the Jews' eye-- that of Jewish Chosenness. (pp. 78-79). The question of Jewish Chosenness must be extended to modern Holocaust supremacism. It treats the genocide of the Jew as more important than the genocide of any GOY, and furthermore makes the Jews a Chosen People whose self-appointed mission is to prevent genocides by promoting knowledge of the Holocaust.

JEWISH ASSIMILATION: "WORTHY" GERMANY and "UNWORTHY" POLAND In the 19th and 20th century, local Jews decided whether they thought that the surrounding gentile culture was "good enough" for their emulation and assimilation. Although Kaplan does not put it in those terms, he makes it obvious that such was indeed the case, (quote) Emerging into the broad stream of European culture, the Jews sought to adapt their own culture to that of the world around them. In Germany, this led to complete assimilation and to the modernization of the Jewish religious traditions. In eastern Europe, where the surrounding culture was on a low plane, the HASKALAH developed a strong nationalist trend [Yiddishism, or Diaspora nationalism: p. 25], with the renaissance of Hebrew literature as the distinguishing feature. There, too, the process of emancipation, expected or partly achieved, together with enlightenment led, in many instances, to complete assimilation. (unquote). (pp. 553-554). [However, Kaplan does not tell the reader that, unlike in Germany, only a single-digit percentage of Poland's Jews ever became assimilated, even at the late date of the German-made Shoah.] JUDAISM AND MARRIAGE

In pre-WWII Poland, there was a conflict between traditionalist Catholicism and the more liberal Jewish mores on marital issues, including co-habitation and divorce. This was illustrated, for example, by Cardinal August Hlond's much-condemned 1936 statement on Jews as a bad moral influence on Poles. Although Kaplan does not mention the foregoing, he does make it obvious that, even by the standards of that time (1940's), Jewish views of marriage were in fact much more permissive than Catholic ones, (quote) One often hears the complaint voiced against young couples in the collectives [kibbutzim?], who live as husband and wife without the sanction of a religious marriage ritual. This complaint implies that the omission of such sanction is a moral offense. This is not an altogether true

appraisal. Marriage from the standpoint of Jewish law, is not a religious sacrament, as with the Church; it is a civil contract. (unquote). (p. 139).

Sabbath Prayer Book: With a supplement containing prayers, readings and hymns and with a new translation Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation 1945 ***Jewish Reconstructionist Prayer Book Repudiates "Jews are Chosen People"***

This book contains prayers for many different occasions. Many of the prayers are Psalms. Other prayers revolve around the Sabbath itself. Still others deal with doubts about God, recovery from illness, anniversary of a wedding or death, etc. There is Kaddish. There are prayers for Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah, Purim, Hanukah, etc. Other prayers are related to American civic holidays. Here is the text concerning Jewish Chosenness: (Quote) In conformity with this principle, departures have been made in the prayer book from the traditional worship-text, as follows: a. The traditional worship-text on occasion asserts or implies the superiority of Israel over other peoples. This prayer book continues the faith that Israel plays a unique role in God's design for mankind. Believing, however, that all peoples are also called to serve him, each with its unique talents and gifts, it eliminates all invidious contrast between Israel and other peoples. (unquote). (p. xviii).

The Radical American Judaism of Mordecai M. Kaplan Scult, Mel 2003 ***Jews Transform Societies. Jewish Chosenness (Including Its "Benevolent" Form) Repudiated. Polonophobia.***

Judaism Nondogmatic a Myth In order to form my own opinion of Mordecai Menahem Kaplan without being influenced by that of anyone else, I first read Kaplan myself. See my earlier-listed review of *The future of the American Jew*. This book includes biographical information on Kaplan. One learns that Kaplan was born in Vilna (Wilno, Vilnius), in 1881. (p. 9). (This makes Kaplan a Litvak/Litwak). Most of this work focuses on Kaplan's ideas and especially their often-tumultuous encounter with the thinking of other Jews. The reader may be struck by the ways that Kaplan tried to defend himself against charges of atheism by means of his creative re-definitions of God. The purview of this book goes beyond the immediate ideas of Mordecai Kaplan, and includes interesting information pertinent to

many different issues and events. I focus on a few of them.

TRANSFORMING JEWISH RELIGION INTO POLITICS Some of the theological encounters were particularly revealing. Rabbi Kaplan was asked by the author's son Joshua, a boy at the time, what it was that forced the Pharaoh to release the captive Israelites if, as Kaplan taught, the plagues were not factual. Kaplan responded that Pharaoh's release-the-Jews order was not factual either. So what had happened? The Israelites had risen up against the Egyptians, and had departed of their own accord. (p. 117). To Kaplan, the events celebrated every Passover were nothing more than a successful slave revolt. It is easy to see that Kaplan was imaginatively rewriting the Exodus, and bending the facts to conform to his liberal theological and liberal political ideologies.

JEW, LIKE CHRISTIAN, SOMETIMES PUNISHED HERESY It is commonly supposed that Judaism, unlike Christianity, was free of dogma, and generally welcomed independent thinking and religious dissent. Author Mel Scult implicitly challenges this notion. He starts with Kaplan's experience, (quote) The fact that Kaplan was excommunicated in 1945 because of his 'heretical' prayer book reveals the extent of the anger that he generated among traditional Jews, even among his 'friends' and colleagues at the Jewish Theological Seminary. (unquote) (p. 2). Scult puts this in broader historical context, (Quote) Excommunication is usually associated with the Catholic Church and not with the Jews, but, alas, this painful act has been part of Jewish life for centuries. Indeed, the enemies of Maimonides--Jews, of course--burned his books after he died in 1204 and excommunicated anyone who read them. The most famous excommunication in Jewish history took place in Amsterdam in 1656. Its recipient was Baruch Spinoza, one of Kaplan's intellectual inspirations. (unquote). (p. 7). In addition, Scult quips (quote) Though excommunication was one of the most powerful weapons the Jewish community employed during the Middle ages, the authors, explain, it is completely inappropriate in the twentieth century. (unquote). (p. 197). The reader who would like to go further, and examine the ways that Jews even made use of the Catholic Inquisition to punish heresy within Judaism, should read the detailed Peczkis review, of *Militant Messiah: Or, the Flight from the Ghetto: The Story of Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement*.

JEW AS THE CHOSEN PEOPLE REPUDIATED, EVEN IF IT IS "BENEVOLENT" Author Mel Scult deftly summarizes Kaplan's position on this subject, alluding to what nowadays is called

benevolent prejudice (e. g, the "white man's burden"), and the fact that Kaplan rejected the usual exculpatory reasoning behind Jewish Chosenness. Thus, Scult comments, (quote) He [Kaplan] was among the very few who dismissed the notion of the chosen people. American Jews, in his time as in ours, attempt to rationalize their beliefs, insisting that being the chosen people does not mean that Jews are superior. It just means that we have more obligations. But feeling we have more obligations certainly reflects a sense of superiority. (unquote). (p. 208). Indeed it does!

TAKING A RUN AT THE POLES Interestingly, a form of Jewish condescension towards non-Jews, along with Polonophobia, was part of prominent Rabbi Leo Jung's criticism of Kaplan's "heresy". Kaplan had contended that MITZVOT constituted a custom and not law. Scult comments, (quote) Kaplan did not think that this proposal regarding KASHRUT particularly extreme, since he did not "give outright license to violate KASHRUT," but only wanted to illustrate what it meant to treat rituals as folkways instead of legal certainties. Rabbi Jung believed that Kaplanism reduced the Jews to the level of "Eskimos, Poles, and Magyars." He maintained that nationalism plus reform was the essence of Kaplanism and a most dangerous threat to Orthodoxy. (unquote). (pp. 12-13).

JEWS TRANSFORM SOCIETIES When Jews decide to abandon what may be called their self-imposed apartheid, and to integrate themselves into gentile society, they engage in a multifaceted process. They do not merely strive to JOIN the gentile society: They want to RE-MAKE it. Author Scult cites the philosophy of Ahad Ha-Am (Asher Hirsch Ginsberg), (quote) Ahad Ha-Am believed that there were two ways for Jews (or any minority) to relate to the host culture. The first he termed "slavish imitation," by which modern Jews assimilated to the point of self-effacement, abandoning their connection to Judaism. The other way of relating to the host culture entailed a much healthier attitude, an attitude of pride that he called "competitive imitation": Jews would appropriate modalities of the host culture but, at the same time, transform them and make them their own. They would, in other words, "Judaize" aspects of the dominant culture...Ahad Ha-Am's recipe for liberation made a deep impression on the Jewish intelligentsia of both Europe and America. (unquote). (p. 50).

LIKE ENDEKS LIKE JEWS The informed reader may recognize the unmentioned, but striking, implications on Polish-Jewish relations in pre-WWII Poland. Some of the Endeks (National

Democrats) had contended that, were Poland's massive Jewish population to assimilate and to convert to Catholicism on a large scale, this would cause a *zazydzenie* (Judaization) of Poland and of Polish Catholicism. Polish-ness and Polish Catholicism could become transformed beyond recognition, with dilution or even loss of their essences. Asher Hirsch Ginsberg and his thinking provides a Jewish mirror-image to these much-condemned Endek concerns.

Jewish Theology - also includes an annotated bibliography on select works associated with Jewish Literature and History Kohler,

Kaufmann 1923 ***Racialized Jewish Chosenness Preceded Nazi Racism***

The author thinks of Judaism as a community invested in the pursuit of ethics and ethical living, and seems to present a rather visionary, if not platitude-laden, picture of Judaism. This work includes a wealth of information, dealing with such concepts as the Character of God, the afterlife, ethics, angels, the dual nature of the human spirit, and much more. The author presents evidence for the widespread extent of the ancient belief in the immortal soul that is independent of the body (pp. 286). Belief in the immortal soul is also part of Judaism, thus inadvertently refuting the claim that it was copied by Christians from the Greeks. On another subject, author Kaufman Kohler treats the Tosefta as part of the Talmud. (p. 402). JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY Kohler

caricatures Christianity as essentially an invention of the Apostle Paul, consisting of a series of legendary accretions, etc. True to his liberalism, he also treats the miracles in Judaism as dispensable. Not surprisingly, Kohler interprets Isaiah 53 as referring to the sufferings of Israel. Interestingly, however, he mentions one Jewish tradition of the Messiah, based on 4th Ezra 8,28, and dating from before the Bar Kokhba revolt. It states that the true Messiah is to suffer and die, and destroy Rome. (p. 384).

PHARISAISM? LEGALISM AND ROTE RELIGION Kohler defends Jewish religion from charges that it is just a system of orthopraxy. On the other hand, he acknowledges that, (quote) Another shortcoming of the Synagogue and of Rabbinical Judaism in general was its formalism. Too much stress was laid upon the perfunctory 'discharge of duty', the outward performance of the letter of the law, and not enough upon the spiritual basis of the Jewish religion. (unquote). (p. 473). He adds that,

(quote) The Cabbalah [Kabbalah] was but the reaction to the excessive rationalism of the Spanish-Arabic period...The legalism and casuistry of the Talmud and the Codes appealed too much to the intellect, disregarding the deeper emotional sources of religion and morality; on the other hand, the mysticism of the Cabbalists overemphasized the emotional element, and eliminated much of the rational basis of Judaism. (unquote). (p. 474).

Finally, Kohler lauds modern Reform Judaism for having reversed long-established trends of the ceremonial laws and prayers being conducted mechanically and without understanding. (p. 471).

RACIALIZED JEWISH CHOSENNESS: INNATE JEWISH SUPERIORITY OVER THE GOYIM, AND NOT THE OUTCOME OF GOD'S INSCRUTABLE WAYS

Kohler begins with the standard exculpatory approach of framing this issue as a set of extra religious duties that God imposes on Jews, while glossing over the special privileges that Jews get in the process. He then approaches Jewish Chosenness as an outcome of presumed Jewish aptitude, (quote) The belief in the election of Israel rests on the conviction that the Jewish people has a certain superiority over other peoples in being especially qualified to be the messenger and champion of religious truth. (unquote). (p. 325).

The author then goes further, flirting with a racial concept of Jewish elitism. He comments, (quote) All these and similar sayings disprove completely the idea that the election of Israel was an arbitrary act of God. It is due rather to hereditary virtues and to tendencies of mind and spirit which equip Israel for his calling. (unquote). (p. 328).

Kohler's notion of innate and hereditary Jewish characteristics, moreover ones that qualify Jews as Chosen in a quasi-racial or racial sense that parallels that of the Nazi Germans, was forcefully repudiated by Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan. Please read my review, of *The future of the American Jew*.

The Chosen: The History of an Idea, the Anatomy of an Obsession

Beker, Avi

2008

Jewish Chosenness: An Exculpatory Deflection. Tries to Make the Critic of Jewish Chosenness the Problem!

The analysis of Jewish Chosenness, in this book, is quite shallow and exculpatory in content. The most important practical aspect of the concept of Jewish Chosenness, that of Jewish conduct towards the gentile, as exemplified by the contents of the Talmud, is almost completely

ignored. The author confuses "Jews are better" (which is, Biblically speaking, easily dismissed: Deuteronomy 7:6-8; 9:6) with the more subtle "Jews are special". More on this later. This work gives a brief quotation from Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, the co-founder of Reconstructionism (p. 23), concerning Kaplan's repudiation of Jewish Chosenness. However, this does not begin to do justice to Kaplan's reasoning behind his repudiation of Jews as Chosen. Please read my reviews, of Kaplan's classics, *The future of the American Jew*, and his earlier *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life*. In addition to all this, the book is less about Jewish Chosenness per se, and more about anti-Semitism, especially in its modern varieties. Even then, it tends to oversimplify anti-Semitism by reducing it to merely a reaction against Jewish Chosenness.

WHAT DOES "JEWS AS A CHOSEN PEOPLE" ENTAIL?

Author Avi Beker repeats the standard argument that Jewish Chosenness does not mean Jewish superiority, and that it instead implies extra obligations for Jews. (e. g, p. 9, 21, 73, 177-on). The informed reader probably already realizes that the "extra duties" contention is, in some ways, reminiscent of the "white man's burden" concept of 19th century thinking. It may be a benevolent form of elitism, but it is Jewish elitism nevertheless. More important, the "extra obligations" notion is only half the picture. It glosses over the fact that Jews as the Chosen People ALSO believe themselves to be the recipients of expansive favors from God in a way that the GOYIM are not. For instance, the Old Testament is full of examples of God waging battles alongside, and on behalf of, the Jews. For just some of the implications of Jewish Chosenness, as taught by the Talmud, please click on, and read my detailed review, of *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings* (Arbeiten Zur Geschichte Des Antiken Judentums Und Des Urchristentums, Vol 23). The whole concept of Jewish Chosenness, regardless of its ramifications, begs the question of its origins. If one believes in God, one can accept the contention that God acted unilaterally according to His will and chose the Jews, or that He chose the Jews because they agreed to obey the Torah. However, if there is no God, then no One exists to do the choosing, and therefore the Jews themselves must have invented the very idea of themselves as a Chosen People. How could they have come up with such a concept unless they, at some level, had believed themselves to be above the GOYIM? Avi Beker does not explain this. Finally, author Avi Beker avoids the most controversial aspect

of Jewish Chosenness--that of gentiles being servants of Jews (for example, as "wood hewers and water bearers": Joshua 9:27). This view is not merely of historical interest. It enjoys support even today, as exemplified by the teachings of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. [In addition, this does not have to imply a literal, physical subservience of the GOY to the Jew. It can and does exist as a state of mind, or in terms of practical policies, all of which revolve around a tacit "Jews are owed" attitude. For instance, the pre-eminence of the Holocaust over the genocides of all other peoples, regardless of how it is rationalized, is consistent with the premise that the genocidal murder of gentiles is not as morally and historically significant as the genocidal murder of Jews. The potential "dual morality" works in many other contexts. For instance, Poles are called by Jews to "come to terms with the past" in terms of past Polish crimes against Jews, but Jews never recognize the need to "come to terms with the past" in terms of past Jewish crimes against Poles. When all is said and done, "Jews are favored" in some tacit way, and there is one morality for the GOYIM and another morality for the Jews.] JEWISH CHOSENNESS: TRYING TO PASS

THE BUCK TO THE CHRISTIANS The author consistently tries to juxtapose Jewish Chosenness with its (presumed) appropriation by Christianity and Islam. (This is, in a sense, a revenge of unintended consequences. If the Jews invented the concept of a Chosen People to benefit themselves, why is it surprising that other religions imitated this Chosen-People idea for THEIR benefit, and sometimes used it against Jews? As an extreme, Nazi philosophy was, in part, a modernized and Germanized competitive imitation of Jewish Chosenness). However, any juxtaposition of Jewish Chosenness and its presumed Christian counterpart is fundamentally misleading. A Christian is not "Chosen" in any sense. He simply receives the free gift of salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ, and this free gift is available to anyone, regardless of their race or culture. A Jew acquires his Chosenness by being born a Jew (though, of course, a gentile can convert to Judaism). In contrast, the Christian is not bestowed with "Chosenness" merely by being born into a Christian home. He/she must actively believe in, and live for, Jesus Christ, in order to become "Chosen". It is never a privilege that comes about by accident of birth. The author makes an amazing statement. He asserts that Jewish converts to Christianity remain Jews. (p. 22). Huh?? According to most Jews, Jewish believers in Jesus (such as Jews for Jesus) most certainly are not

recognized either by Israel, or by Diaspora Jewish organizations, as valid Jews. CONCLUSION Avi Beker concludes that gentiles are obsessed about Jews in general and Jewish Chosenness in particular. Considering the volumes upon volumes of materials that Jews have written about themselves, and especially about their (often exaggerated) victimhood (the lachrymose view of history), dare the reader suspect that, if anyone is obsessed by the Jews in general and Jewish Chosenness in particular, it is none other than the Jews themselves?

Judaism as Creed and Life Morris, Joseph 1929 ***The Hellenization of Jews; Jewish Chosenness; Hellenization (Implications for Endek Policies)***

My review is based on the sixth edition, published 1929. This work begins with basic issues surrounding the nature of God, faith, humanity, Israel's mission, etc. It then provides especial detail on the Jewish feasts.

JEWISH CUSTOMS ARE NOT NECESSARILY FOREVER: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANITY

Author Morris Joseph includes interesting information. For instance, various Jewish thinkers had suggested that many aspects of Jewish religious observance will disappear in the future, notably during the messianic age. (p. 165). [On this basis, the non-carryover of most Judaic customs into mainstream Christianity is not as foreign to mainstream Judaism as is commonly supposed!]

JEWISH CHOSENNESS: ITS CONNOTATIONS Joseph repeats the familiar premise of Jews as Chosen meaning that Jews have extra duties to God. He compares it to the idea of NOBLESSE OBLIGE--the nobility having the privilege of special access to the king, but also being required to perform special duties. (p. 156). As for Jewish moral superiority, he sees this not as a state of affairs but as a goal. He writes, (quote) We therefore affirm, not that we are better than others, but that we ought to be better. (unquote). (p. 156). But is even that not ITSELF a form of Jewish elitism? The author also believes that Jews are Chosen owing to the implications of having been descended from Abraham. In addition, God has given the Jews special hereditary qualities to perform their role as the Chosen. He comments, (quote) The Israelites thus owe their election to their descent, but not only to the mere physical fact of their descent only. They become the possessors by heredity of the qualities and ideals of the Patriarchs. With the Divine promise which has

made them the elect, there is transmitted to them the moral and spiritual equipment that justifies its fulfillment. They become the chosen because they deserve to be the chosen, because God loves them and they deserve His love. The belief in the one and the only God, and a genius for righteousness--these, in spite of frequent lapses into idolatry and sin during the Biblical age, were Israel's great characteristics. (unquote). (p. 151). Doesn't the notion that "there is transmitted to them [Jews] the moral and spiritual equipment" imply a Jewish belief that Jews are morally superior to others--as governed by genetics? Doesn't the belief in having a "genius for righteousness" further amplify the belief of Jews having a built-in moral superiority over the GOYIM? And doesn't the notion of being "deserved to be chosen" imply a tribal sense of racist elitism over other peoples? The author sidesteps other implications of Jewish Chosenness, such as the Talmudic dual morality that favors Jews over the GOYIM. This makes his analysis of Chosenness a bit disingenuous and apologetic. JEWS RESIST HELLENIZATION, INCLUDING CONSENSUAL HELLENIZATION

The author tells the familiar story of the origins of Chanukah (Feast of Dedication). However, he also mentions an important detail, as elaborated below. It was not only Antiochus attempting to prevent Jews from practicing their religion, and of forcing Greek ways on them. Some of the Jews voluntarily underwent Hellenization. Joseph comments, "Some of them [Jews], too, were attracted by the graceful and sensuous ceremonial of Greek worship, so different from the simple and elevated rites of the Jewish religion. But these Hellenist, i. e, Greek-loving Jews, did not really represent the temper of the people at large." (p. 280). We thus see the efforts by the Jews of that time to repel not only the forced imposition of a foreign culture, but also the voluntary adoption of a foreign culture by Jews themselves. [The informed reader can see the parallel with the oft-condemned Endek warnings, before WWII, of a prospective mass assimilation of Poland's huge Jewish population leading to the *zazydzenie* (Judaization) of Poland. Poles could voluntarily adopt Jewish modes of thinking. This could effectively transform Polish culture from a Polish one to a Polish-Jewish one. Now if Jews can protect their culture, from foreign [Greek] influences, as they see fit, why cannot Poles protect their culture, from foreign [Jewish] influences, as they see fit? The circumstances were different, but the principle is the same.] SCHECHITA Author Joseph suggests that the Rabbins who formulated the regulations governing ritual

slaughter (SCHECHITA) were motivated by causing the least pain to the dying animal. He suggests that, were these Rabbins alive today, they would approve of whatever methods of slaughter are now known to cause the least pain to the animal. (pp. 473-474). (This puts a new spin on the SCHECHITA debate that goes on even today. Is SCHECHITA still necessary, or is it an obsolete relic from the past? Can it seriously be maintained, today, that a conscious animal with its throat cut does not suffer?)

ANIMAL WELFARE The author elaborates on many biblical verses that deal with the humane treatment of animals. (pp. 471-472). This is not only to avoid inflicting pain upon animals, but also to avoid causing moral injury to the human, even if there is little or no pain inflicted upon the animal. (The impairment of character, of the human that inflicts pain on animals, would include an indifference to suffering.)

The Talmud: Universalism and Racism

Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings Stern, Sacha 1994

A British Jewish Scholar Analyzes Talmudic Racism and Universalism. A Talmudic Basis For Some Forms of Holocaust-Related Jewish Anti-Polonism The author is Professor of Rabbinic Judaism at University College London. He identifies himself as an Orthodox Jew. (p. xxii). In his assiduous analysis of rabbinical literature, author Sacha Stern employs Talmudic sources (Mishna, Tosefta, Yerushalmi, and Bavli), many different Midrashim, and other sources. (pp. xi-xii). **A TALMUDIC INSPIRATION FOR EXTREME JEWISH POLONOPHOBIA?**

Sacha Stern elaborates how, in Jewish thinking, the Romans most embody the wickedness of the non-Jews. He comments, (quote) The only reason why they [Romans] do not completely exterminate the Jewish people (besides the fact that it would be impossible) is that they do not want to be called "the murderous kingdom": PESACHIM 87b; AVODA ZARA 10b. (unquote). (p. 16). I was struck by the foregoing, because I hear it today! Some very anti-Polish Jews accuse Poles of having wanted to exterminate their Jews, but not doing so out of incompetence, and for not wanting the onus of "a nation of murderers". Taking this baseless, primal Polonophobia further, once the Germans had exterminated Poland's Jews,

the Poles were satisfied that the Nazis had done the work for them, with the Germans the ones going down in history "a nation of murderers".

IMPLICATIONS OF RACISM Racism can be defined as a strong self-aggrandizement of one's own people and/or a consistently contemptuous attitude towards other peoples. Both are graphically obvious in this book. Let us keep this oft-emotional matter in perspective. The controversial Talmudic verses are not "mistranslated" or "misunderstood". Nor are they just the private opinions of one or two rabbis. Nor are they "cherry picked" out of the Talmud by anti-Semites. Instead of all this, there are very many verses involved, and moreover they come together in the form of specific, irrefutable THEMES. I specify some of these themes below. Moreover, the themes do not "float around" in isolation from each other. Instead, they coalesce together, forming a systematic pattern of Jewish self-exaltation and a systematic pattern of denigration of the gentiles. Author Sacha Stern actually uses the term racism in reference to rabbinic Jewish thinking, albeit in quotations, as he comments, (quote) In way of apologetics, we may note that unlike other forms of "racism", the early rabbinic view of Israel as superior to the non-Jews was almost never called upon to vindicate the use of violence or exploitation. (unquote). (p. 4). [This is a separate issue, and it confuses the issue of racism with the issue of applications of racism. Besides, it is debatable. For instance, please see my review of *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World)*], about mass Jewish violence against Christians. As part of his Talmudic apologetic, Stern also points out that, in his words, the "racial" prejudice of this kind, and rabbinic "racism" (his words "racial", and "racist" in quotes) were common currency in the Late Antique near eastern world. (pp. 4-5). [However, the racism of one people does not negate or excuse the racism of another people.]

ANDREAS EISENMENGER AND HIS ENTDECKTES JUDENTHUM

The author is more critical of Eisenmenger's motives than of his findings. Stern quips, (quote) The passages I have quoted already suggest that the rabbinic image of the non-Jews is xenophobic in the extreme. Indeed, rabbinic sources assume, as we shall see in the course of this study, that non-Jews are intrinsically wicked and dedicated to murder, sexual offences and idolatry (see section I.3.A). They suggest, besides, that whereas the Jews are akin to angels, non-Jews are akin to animals (section I.4.A). Much of this material has

been quoted by anti-Semitic writers of the early modern period--not least, by Eisenmenger in his *ENTDECKTES JUDENTHUM*--with the sole purpose of vilifying the Jews and their religion...Whilst his quotation of original sources is generally reliable, his translation and interpretation of them not always are. Eisenmenger makes no effort to hide his anti-Jewish stance and motives. (unquote). (p. 4). Stern repeats the argument, based on Jacob Katz and his book, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (Scripta Judaica, 3), that medieval Talmudic scholars had ruled that the negative portrayals of non-Jews pertained only to the pagans of Antiquity. They are no longer binding. (p. 5). [Katz is less than convincing. See my review.] THE TORAH ONCE OFFERED TO NON-JEWS—A DODGE? How did Jews become the Chosen People in the first place? Stern cites Israeli scholar Joseph Heinemann. He suggested that the teaching, that God offered the Torah to many nations but only Israel would accept it (e. g, AVODA ZARAH 2b), was an invention designed to ward off gentile criticism of the exclusiveness of Jews as the Chosen People of God. (p. 211).

THEME: GOD'S CREATIVE PURPOSES VERY JEWISH-CENTERED Stern provides numerous, specific rabbinic citations for all the points he raises, as he writes, (quote) The world could not exist without Israel. It was created for the sake of Israel, and is maintained entirely through their merit. Without Israel, there would be no rain or sunrise. Israel brings light to the world. All the blessings in the world are due to Israel. This is because the Almighty attends only to Israel, whence the rest of the world draws indirect benefit. Therefore, the nations could not exist without Israel...This "ethnocentric", highly self-centered worldview, confirms the extent to which the authors of our sources are exclusively concerned with their own identity. The notion that the "others" (the nations, the world) are subordinate to the "self" (Israel) and owe it their existence, suggests a dialectical relationship of self and other where the other serves no purpose, and has no other RAISON D'ETRE, but to define and enhance the essence of the self. (unquote). (p. 46). [Isn't that exactly what racism is all about?] The world-incapable-of-existing-except-for-Israel Talmudic verse is from TAANITH 3b, and the remaining verses are extra-Talmudic. Stern fails to mention the verse in BERAKOT 32b, wherein the stars were created for the Jews and only for the Jews. Please read my detailed review, of *The Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Berakot*. THEME: ONGOING JEWISH

SUPREMACY OVER ALL OTHER PEOPLES, AS IN THE ALENU

Again, Stern provides numerous, specific rabbinic citations for all the points he raises, as he writes, (quote) Righteous and angelic, the superiority of Israel over the nations should be by now self-evident. Rabbinic sources do not shy away from stating that Israel are the choicest of all nations, the best, the greatest, the highest, the most beloved of the Almighty. One Jew outweighs all the nations put together. Appropriately, every morning is recited the daily blessing "that He has not made me a non-Jew". This superiority is said, in Talmudic and other sources, to provide substantial benefits to Israel...A non-Jew who hits a Jew is punishable by death..."Israel are mighty before the nations", like God, they are masters over all the inhabitants of earth...This superiority appears to represent a subjective, "internal" truth, transcending, on some other plane, the experiences of the outside world. (unquote). (pp. 42-44). The Jew-hitting verse is from SANHEDRIN 58b, and the verse in which Jews thank God for not making them gentiles (as in the ALENIU) is from MENAHOT 43b. The remaining verses, for the foregoing quoted statements, are extra-Talmudic. The Jewish privileges are, at least to some extent, ones that come solely from the fact of being born Jewish. For instance, the Divine Presence (the SHEKHINA) rests upon Israel even when they are impure. (YOMA 56b). (p. 41). In addressing the disparity between fancied great Jewish power and the lack of it in reality, Stern comments, (quote) An attempt to rationalize this contradiction may be found in the Talmudic claim that were it not for the TORAH which restrains the Jews, no nation would be able to resist them. (BETZA 25b). (unquote). (p. 44). **THEME: JEWS ARE BETTER THAN EVERYONE ELSE. INCLUDES ANTIGOYISM**

Although this inflammatory theme is strongly denied in discussions of Jewish Chosenness, it is inescapably true. Stern writes, (quote) As well shall see in later sections, the WHOLE of Israel is described indiscriminately as righteous and angelic, just as the WHOLE of "the nations" are wicked and akin to animals. (unquote). (emphasis in original). (p. 7). Furthermore, (quote) The righteousness of Israel stands in direct contrast with the wickedness of the nations...The nature of this righteousness, however, is taken for granted more often than it is described. (unquote). (pp. 30-31). Exceptions to these foregoing themes do not invalidate them. Thus, Stern brings up "wicked" Jews and "righteous non-Jews", but then stresses this salient fact, (quote) Broadly speaking,

these exceptions are presented as marginal in our sources, and do not affect the general, rabbinic image of the non-Jews and Israel. (unquote). (p. 7). The polarity between Jews and gentiles is almost absolute. Israel and the nations are juxtaposed with light and darkness [PESAHIM 103b]. This is repeated in extra-Talmudic literature. (p. 2). Now consider antigoyism (my term) in more detail. The author elaborates on the rabbinical teachings about the abject moral inferiority of the GOYIM relative to the Jews, with the following introduction to this subject (quote) As we shall see, the wickedness of the non-Jews is taken for granted in our sources rather than actually reported and observed: in this respect, it is a purely "cultural", "theoretical" construct. Nevertheless, the rabbinic image of the non-Jew takes on a reality of its own which forms the background to a number of Halakhic rulings. (unquote). (p. 22). **THEME: GENTILES ARE ANIMALS--VIRTUALLY**

In some respects, all humans, according to the Talmud are like animals, and some features of a specific animal may even be applied to Israel. (p. 33-34). However, Stern points out that such comparisons are superficial in scope and significance. (p. 34). In addition, the fact that human-animal comparisons are not always derogatory (p. 34), of course, means that they usually are. In like manner, while some comparisons of animals and gentiles are superficial, others are clearly not. They form distinct themes. Stern comments, (quote) Some passages suggest a more general affinity between non-Jews and animals... These comparisons are not restricted to any specific, superficial feature: they refer to the non-Jewish person AS A WHOLE, and suggest that the latter is generally akin, in his lowliness, to animals. General, all-inclusive associations of this kind are common with reference to dogs... It is quite clear that these statements aim at conveying that the non-Jews share the GENERAL features of the animal world, and particularly the lowliness of dogs. (unquote). (Emphasis in original). (p. 35). The foregoing is based on specified non-Talmudic writings. The author brings up Ezekiel 23:20, and how this reference to Egyptians had been applied, by the Talmud, in his words, indiscriminately to all non-Jews, as in reference to gentiles as donkeys (notably BERAKOT 25b and BERAKOT 58a). Stern assesses this, (quote) Indeed, far from treating this affinity as mere, figurative metaphor, the BABYLONIAN TALMUD treats it as a tangible and concrete reality to the extent that it requires PRACTICAL, Halakhic significance. (unquote). (Emphasis in original). (p. 37). Clearly, Stern goes beyond the usual

Talmudic apologetic about Halakhic fatherhood, which would essentially have us believe that the donkey-gentile equation was nothing more than a fancy way of expressing disapproval of Jewish-gentile marriages. With reference to BERAKOT 25b, Stern writes, (quote) ...the suggestion that the non-Jew may have been treated IN CONCRETE PRACTICE as equal to the donkey suggests far more than mere metaphorical similarity between them. Finally, one passage in the Babylonian Talmud suggests that as donkeys, the CONCRETE PHYSIOLOGY of the non-Jews is different from the Jews'...[NIDA 45a] Here, more than anywhere else, we find that the affinity of non-Jews with donkeys may be treated as tangible and hence, as a form of VIRTUAL IDENTITY. (unquote). (Emphasis in original). (p. 38). Finally, the equation of non-Jews with donkeys has sexual connotations. For instance, with reference to BERAKOT 58a, intercourse with non-Jewish women amounts to bestiality. (p. 39, 165). This, of course, further reinforces the fact that gentiles are virtual donkeys. On a separate issue, non-Jewish slaves of Jews have an affinity with animals. (KIDDUSHIN 22b). (p. 97). However, the foregoing discussion is rather academic. The persistent equating of GOYIM and animals is racist on its face, and the racism is not dependent upon whether the equation is literal, metaphoric, or somewhere in between.

THEME: DEFENDING JEWISH EXCLUSIVENESS The rabbinical authorities, at the time, tended to doubt both the sincerity and permanence of gentile conversions to Judaism. (pp. 93-95). Author Sacha Stern touches on several rabbinic verses that call for the killing, or allowance for death, of gentiles. He calls them variously idiosyncratic, heavily censored, and allowing a Jew to escape punishment for killing a gentile but not thereby allowing a Jew to kill a gentile. (p. 4). He does not elaborate. On the other hand, the command to execute a gentile who observes the Sabbath [SANHEDRIN 58b](pp. 207-208), or even one who studies the Torah [SANHEDRIN 59a], in Stern's opinion, stems from the following, (quote) ...the non-Jews must be PREVENTED from engaging in them, lest this leads to the erosion of the distinctiveness of Israel. (unquote). (Emphasis in original.) (p. 215).

TALMUDIC TERMS FOR PAGANS AND CHRISTIANS AVODA ZARA ("pagan", "idolater")(p. 9) is used throughout rabbinic literature. In fact, Stern suggest that it is used so broadly that it is functionally a loose (though inexact) synonym for non-Jew. (pp. 196-197). According to some heavily-censored passages in the Bavli, AVODA ZARA can apply to

Christians. (p. 28). MIN/MINIM does, or can, refer to Christians. (p. 9, 28, 107-108). [This confirms the much-maligned Polish scholar Feliks Koneczny]. Some Talmudic verses defending the Torah are, or may be, covert anti-Christian polemics. (pp. 74-75, 210). AKUM does not appear in the early manuscripts. It is apparently an invention of censors. (p. 9). Did Jews use code words for peoples? Yes. In the Bible, Edom referred to Idumaea, but, in the rabbinic period, it was applied to Rome. (p. 19).

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN: JEWISH UNIVERSALISM Modern forms of Jewish universalism teach that gentiles can be righteous before God, moreover on a large scale, based solely on their ethical conduct, and can freely do so outside of Judaism. As elaborated below, the early rabbinical concept of Jewish universalism was almost the opposite. Stern comments, (quote) In the TOSEFTA, R. Yehoshua is attributed the view that some exceptional non-Jews are righteous (TZADIKIM) are have a share in the world to come (while R. Eliezer maintains that no non-Jews have any share in it.) [SANHEDRIN 105a]. (unquote). (p. 30). The author then cites a variety of extra-Talmudic rabbinical literature to show that righteous gentiles were thought of as uncommon, and as needing to convert to Judaism. He concludes that, (quote) It seems that to be non-Jewish and righteous are so inherently contradictory that the only viable option, for these exceptional individuals, is to convert. Which confirms the adage: exceptions prove the rule. (unquote). (p. 30). Modern concepts of Jewish universalism teach that the Noahide laws enable a gentile to be righteous by obeying only 7 laws, while Jews have the much greater duty of obeying 613 laws. Early rabbinical concepts, on the other hand, saw this situation as one that only deepened the chasm between Jew and gentile! For instance, it was stressed that the GOYIM were so ethically inferior to Jews that they were incapable of obeying even the 7 Noahide laws, let alone the 613 ones that Jews keep. (pp. 204-205; 215). Moreover, this meant, with some exceptions, that gentiles keeping the Noahide laws get no reward for doing so. [BAVA KAMMA 38a; AVODA ZARA 3a]. (pp. 205-206). Rabbinic verses that praise the gentile who studies the Torah, comparing him to a high priest, refer to one who studies the Noahide laws. Otherwise, they are counteracted by the verses, noted earlier, that condemn gentile study of the Torah, even making it a capital crime. (p. 201, 212-213). On another subject, the acceptance of gentiles in Jewish public worship is identified by Stern as an exception--in fact, virtually the only

practice that Jews were willing to share with non-Jews. (p. 204). However, the later MIDRASHIM expressed hostility to this, even requesting the Almighty not to honor the prayers of non-Jews. (p. 203).

MISCELLANEOUS INTERESTING INFORMATION Circumcision was not limited to the Jews, even in the Middle East. It was also practiced by some Arabs, and Gibeonites/Gabnonites (YEVAMOT 71a). (p. 206). Some commentators had taken SANHREDRIN 74a-b, and related teachings, as requiring Jews to wear distinctive clothing. Stern leans against this. (pp. 191-192). As for Jewish resistance to assimilation, Stern brings up the Biblical prohibition against Jews adopting the ways of the nations (Leviticus 20:23). However, Halakhic prohibitions against specific forms of gentile-imitating acts were quite variable. (pp. 186-on). Pork is exceptionally abominable to Jews--so much so that Jews are cursed merely for breeding pigs. (BABA KAMA 82b). (p. 57). The Star of David has no basis in early rabbinical literature. It is mentioned in medieval Kabbalistic works, and only became a religious and political Jewish symbol in the late 18th century. (p. 86).

Jews, Gentiles, and Other Animals: The Talmud After the Humanities

Wasserman, Mira Beth 2017 ***A Fascinating Work That Confronts the Racist Aspects of the Talmud. [Astonishing Parallels With DER GIFT PILZ]. Dual Morality Tacitly Accounts for the Auschwitz Carmelite Convent Controversy*** Author and Rabbi Mira Beth

Wasserman is Assistant Professor of Rabbinical Literature at Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. This work is centered on the Babylonian Talmud tractate AVODAH ZARAH (sometimes abbreviated AZ). Although the words mean "strange worship", little of its content actually deals with idolatry. (p. 3). Its purview is much broader. Wasserman comments, "...the real danger of relationships with non-Jews is not idolatry, but the threat of more and deeper relationships." (p. 165). I encourage the reader to look up the quoted passages in the online Babylonian Talmud (Soncino edition), as I did. It is a rewarding experience. The abbreviations in the book used in this review are as follows: m--Mishna, b--Bavli (also known as Gemara and Babylonian Talmud), t--Tosefta. AN INSTITUTIONALIZED TALMUDIC DOUBLE STANDARD ON IDOLATROUS OBJECTS: HOW THE CROSS CAN SIMULTANEOUSLY

BE NON-IDOLATROUS AND IDOLATROUS

The author writes, "According to m. AZ 3:4, the idol of a Gentile is banned immediately upon being completed, but an idol belonging to a Jew becomes prohibited only when it is actually worshipped." (p. 184). In addition, "E. E. Urbach argues that the reason an idol manufactured by a Jew is prohibited only once it has been worshipped, while an idol made by a non-Jew is prohibited as soon as it is produced (m. AZ 4:4), is to allow Jews to participate in the idol market." (p. 281). This dual morality has unstated implications for the Auschwitz Carmelite convent and Cross controversies. Some Jews had made a major issue of these, telling the world that the Cross is a painful reminder of past Christian persecution of Jews and, moreover, is idolatrous to the Jew. Polish leaders obediently acceded to the Jews. However, other Poles sagely pointed out the fact that Jews never had problems with Crosses being painful or idolatrous whenever they could make money off them by selling them to Christians. The Talmudic dual morality accounts for this seemingly-inconsistent Jewish conduct: An object is either idolatrous or not idolatrous, to the Jew, in accordance with his interests. That is why a Jew can find a Cross not idolatrous when he wants to sell it to a Christian, and then turn around and find the Cross idolatrous when it is located where he does not want it to be--at Auschwitz. "US" and "THEM": THE POLARITY GOVERNING JEWS AND NON-JEWS

The term GOY means something different in the Talmud from what it meant in the TENACH (Old Testament). Wasserman writes, "A transformation occurs in the early rabbinic period, whereby GOY comes to connote an individual non-Jew, so that the plural GOYIM comes to mean 'Gentiles' rather than 'nations'". (p. 9). This redefinition of GOY had practical implications, "With this term, the rabbis divide the world into two, with Jews on one side and Gentiles, their binary opposite on the other...each law is structured on a binary opposition between Jews and all other people." (p. 9). The prejudices reflected by such dualistic thinking are unambiguous. Wasserman quips, "The Mishna preserves a range of opinions, some more lenient and some more stringent, but none of the rulings in Mishna AVODAH ZARAH distinguish between different categories of Gentiles, or allow for individual difference among GOYIM." (p. 9).

RACISM? ETHNOCENTRISM? OR WHAT?

Author Mira Beth Wasserman does not flat-out state that the Talmud is racist, but she does use euphemistic synonyms such as "ethnocentrism" (p. 14, 94, 242) and "xenophobic content" (p. 8, 13, 95). She also speaks,

in her words, of "vilifications of non-Jews in the Talmud." (p. 13, 14), the "Talmud's degradations of non-Jews" (p. 15), and of "the venom with which non-Jews are denigrated" (p. 219). As for the Jewish sense of moral superiority, and with reference to MISHNA AVODAH ZARAH 2:1, Wasserman comments, "The Mishna paints a picture of non-Jewish society as being bereft of the most basic semblance of law, ethics, and decency, and depicts non-Jews as lacking all moral compunctions." (p. 75). She adds that, "My overarching argument is that ideas about the animal nature of non-Jews, women, and other humans skulk beneath the surface of this entire Talmudic chapter's legal discussions, and coil around almost every account of interpersonal encounter." (p. 91). Wasserman pulls no punches as she tells the reader, in her words, of AVODAH ZARAH's "extreme expressions of malice and revulsion towards non-Jews." (p. 292). She also writes of the push-and-pull of Talmudic dialectic, which can also be pictured as the swing of a pendulum in perpetual motion. (pp. 231-232). There can be a more favorable portrayal of gentiles, as part of this dialectic, but it does not remove or negate the antigoyism. In addition, this dialectic does not change the overall picture, which she confesses to be "the dominant assertions of Jewish supremacy." (p. 219). In addition, what little GOY-favorable teachings are in the Talmud, even these need not be. For instance, the story of King Shapur (b. AVODAH ZARAH 76b) can be interpreted as one where the Gentile, for once, is the "good guy"--moreover one who is more clever, wise, and pious than a Jew. However, the story can be purely Jewish-utilitarian, as described by Wasserman, "On the other hand, the story neutralizes any possible objection to the complex of stringencies and suspicions that segregate Jews from non-Jews, depicting a foreign king who not only accedes to rabbinic strictures but even embraces them...sealing these rabbinic instructions with the imprimatur of the king, and immunizing them from accusations that they are offensive to non-Jews." (p. 252). This is not unusual. The informed reader probably realizes that it was a common strategy, throughout history, for Jews to recruit compliant gentiles in order to advance Jewish interests.

CENSORED TALMUDIC REFERENCES TO JESUS CHRIST

Rabbi Mira Beth Wasserman thus alludes to the uncensored version of b. AVODAH ZARAH 17a, "In the Munich, Paris, and JTS manuscripts for 17a, Ya'akov is identified as 'a disciple of Yeshu the Nazarite,' a reference to Jesus, while the parallel story in t. HULLIN 2:25

identifies Ya'akov as a follower of Yeshe ben Pantera [Pandera], a derogatory epithet for Jesus." (pp. 270-271). On a related subject, the term MIN/MINIM (heretics) can encompass Christians, at least those of Talmudic times. (p. 132; pp. 270-271). **JEWES NEED NOT RESCUE A GENTILE WHO FELL INTO A PIT** Author Wasserman points out that, "According to the baraita [b. AVODAH ZARAH 26a-b] Gentiles and Jewish shepherds (generally reputed to be thieves) are two groups whom a Jew need not trouble himself to save from a pit, while MINIM along with informers and apostates are not only not to be raised from the pit, they may actually be cast into it." (p. 132; See also p. 260). This baraita also appears in b. SANHEDRIN 57a. (p. 271). **ASTONISHING PARALLELS WITH DER GIFTPIELZ** Wasserman stresses the fact that the extensive body of law governing Gentile food and wine, in AVODAH ZARAH, is an elaborate system for distancing Jews from close relationships with non-Jews. (p. 230). But why? She thus summarizes AVODAH ZARAH's characterization of gentiles, "Like the snake who manages to fill a wine cask with water and thus gain access to the drink inside, the Gentile is cunning and resourceful. Like the snake who sneaks into the Temple and contaminates sanctified wine, the Gentile is sly...Non-Jews are menacing not because of any obvious, apparent danger, but because of risks that are hidden and undetectable...the real threat that Gentiles pose is not that they are qualitatively different from Jews, but that they are so very much the same. For the Bavli, it is precisely the invisibility of Jewish-Gentile difference that is the foremost danger posed by Gentiles." (p 146, 147, 148). Although Wasserman does not mention this, the informed reader can see the astonishing similarities of the foregoing with *DER GIFTPIELZ*, a 1938 Nazi German cartoon designed to instill anti-Semitism in German children. Thus:

-----Talmud: GOYS are sly and resourceful. *DER GIFTPIELZ*: Jews are sly and resourceful.

-----Talmud: The toxicity of the GOY (snake) is not always apparent. *DER GIFTPIELZ*: The toxicity of the Jew (poison mushroom) is not always apparent.

-----Talmud: The GOY is especially dangerous because of his similarity to the Jew. *DER GIFTPIELZ*: The German Jew is especially dangerous because of his similarity to the Aryan German.

ENHANCING JEWISH SEPARATISM, NOT "PROTECTING JEWS FROM IDOLATRY" Wasserman upends one common exculpation for Talmudic teachings on gentiles. She writes, "Contrary to the centuries-old tradition of defending AZ from accusations of anti-Christian sentiment by arguing that the only non-Jews that AZ disparages are idolaters, I am arguing that the laws of YEYN NESEKH are fundamentally engaged with separating Jews from non-Jews of all kinds. The strict ban on Gentile wine emblemizes the way that rabbinic law functions as a social barrier." (p. 165).

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION OF JEWS FORCED JEWS TO DISGUISE OFFENSIVE TALMUDIC CONTENT In the Middle Ages, parts of the Talmud were rewritten owing to Christian censorship. That is, fictional redefinitions took place. Thus, GOYIM became AKUM (star-worshippers), or archaisms such as "Canaanite". (p. 12). This fiction served as both a Talmud-apologetic as well as an evolution of Jewish thinking. Wasserman comments, "Replacing the term GOY with 'idolater' addressed the Talmud's most troubling xenophobic content by projecting it into the past, identifying the despised 'Others' of the Talmud as an all but extinct species, unrelated to contemporary non-Jews in Europe. [e. g, as proposed by Rabbi Ha 'Meiri]. The specific changes wrought by censorship allowed for Judaism to be reconceived in universalistic terms, easing Jewish entry into modern Europe." (pp. 12-13). But how much did these once-forced outward changes (redefinitions) actually stop individual Talmud-informed rabbis and everyday Jews from still thinking of Christians as debauched idolaters? As a matter of fact, pre-censorship understandings of the Talmud persist to the present day (e. g, Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef), and one wonders how common they are. Finally, one must ask how many Talmudic memes persist in modern secular Jews who may never have even heard of the Talmud. One example of this was already discussed in conjunction with the Auschwitz Carmelite Convent Controversy.

Why Do the Heathen Rage? Cohon, Samuel Solomon 1939

A Talmud Apologetic That Rests on Speculation and Special Pleading. Deals With Jews and GOYISCH Life and Property.

Consistent with my Judeorealist position (which strives to avoid the extremes of philosemitism and antisemitism), I examine both sides of controversial issues, such as the antigoyism in the Talmud. In reading and

reviewing this book, I "hear out" the Jewish side of the story. The full title of the book reviewed is of *WHY DO THE HEATHEN RAGE? EXPOSING THE DELIBERATE FALSIFICATION AND DISTORTIONS OF THE BIBLE, TALMUD AND OTHER SACRED JEWISH LITERATURE*. The author was Samuel S. Cohon, a scholar at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio. This work is largely a response to the then-current Nazi German attacks on the Jewish religion. The author is internally inconsistent in his apologetic. He dismisses ENTDECKTES JUDENTUM--Eisenmenger's critique of the Talmud (pp. 15-16), and also approvingly citing Eisenmenger's repudiation of the claim that Jews use the Kol Nidre to lie to gentiles. (pp. 44-45). In other words, Cohon accepts Eisenmenger when it suits his purposes, and rejects Eisenmenger when it does not!

PUNISHING (EVEN KILLING) A GOY WHO STUDIES THE TORAH: AN EXPOSITION Cohon rejects the argument that the Talmud is a secret for Jews only. He says that it is secret only to those who do not know Hebrew, just as Goethe and Heine are secret to those who do not know German. (p. 18). He then examines a controversial Talmudic passage, "What about the passages in Sanhedrin 59a, which seem to suggest the contrary? We find there the words of Rabbi Johanan that 'an idolater who studies Torah incurs the guilt of death, for it is added (Dt. XXXIII:4) "Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob"' By a play upon the Hebrew word for "inheritance" *morasha* and *meorasa*, "betroted", Rabbi Johanan maintains that the Torah is betrothed to Israel and hence may not be "wedded" to idolaters. He evidently **SUSPECTED** that idolaters who study Torah are not in earnest or they would not remain idolaters. Experience **MAY HAVE** taught him that some enemies of the Jewish people peruses the Torah only for the sake of fault finding and trouble making. Hence he rules against their study of the Torah." (p. 19; Emphasis added). Cohon then brings up the contrary opinion, in the same passage, of Rabbi Meir--that is, Meir's oft-quoted statement that a GOY who studies the Torah is like a high priest. Cohon then argues that Rabbi Meir's opinion was the majority one and Rabbi Johanan's opinion was the minority one. Cohon supports his argument as follows, "If Johanan's view were the prevailing one a large host of gentile scholars and their Jewish teachers would have incurred the death penalty." (p. 19). **ANALYSIS:** There are several layers of flaws in Cohon's reasoning. To begin with, Cohon acts as he can mind-read Rabbi Johanan

and know his intentions. In addition, note that Cohon's assertions are of a speculative, exculpatory nature, as evidenced by the very choice of words he uses (evidently SUSPECTED, MAY HAVE taught him). His argument about no death penalties is disingenuous. It, first of all, assumes that Jews were free to administer the death penalty while living amongst the gentiles. They generally were not. In fact, elsewhere (p. 34) Cohon plainly states that Jews were not allowed to administer the death penalty under the Romans, Christians, and Mohammedans. (p. 34). So how can credit accrue to the Jews for not doing something that they could not do? It is like a totally paralyzed person taking moral credit for never stabbing anyone. Second, Jews, even if--for the sake of argument--were allowed to administer the death penalty, there were other factors against its enactment. For example, the administration of the death penalty to gentile Torah-studiers would have been bad public relations for Jews. Finally, all this must be placed in broader context. There are other Jewish laws that were apparently never literally followed, yet this does not mean that they had no impact on everyday Jewish thinking and conduct. So it is with the execute-gentiles-for-studying-Torah Talmudic teaching. **JEWES DO NOT HAVE TO RETURN THE LOST PROPERTY OF GENTILES** Cohon quotes Rabbi Simeon Hasida [BABBA KAMMA 115b], who stated that robbing a gentile is forbidden but retaining his lost articles is permitted. (p. 39). Cohon asserts that this, in his words, is "probably due" to the Canaanites not returning lost articles to Jews, as well as Roman law not requiring the return of lost articles. However, even if the Talmudic passages did in fact originate as a Jewish counterpart to Canaanite or Roman laws or policies, the exculpatory value of this fact is vitiated by the fact that legitimate Jewish questions about the non-return of lost gentile belongings persisted for many, many centuries AFTER the times of the Canaanites and the Romans. For instance, the 13th century Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, in his HOSHEN MISHPAT 266:1, is quoted by Cohen as saying that "'Retaining an object lost by a heathen is permitted...', provided that it does not 'dishonor God's name'". (p. 39). [That is, cause bad PR for Jews.] The 17th century Rabbi Moses Rivkes dissented from Rabbi Jacob ben Asher on this matter, effectively contradicting him, and making-up the after-the-fact explanation that the non-return of gentile belongings applied only to the heathen of Talmudic times. (p. 39). If that were so, one would not have needed to wait some 1,200 years, AFTER the last of the Talmud had been

written down, for this teaching to be stated. In fact, had the passages applied merely to the pagan peoples of Talmudic times, this entire subject would have been a centuries-settled, long-defunct matter by the Middle Ages, and it would hardly have been a matter of debate for medieval and post-medieval rabbis! WHEN CAN A JEW CHEAT A GOY? Author Samuel Cohon argues, perhaps too hard, that there are many passages that forbid a Jew to steal from a gentile. However, indirect cheating--the taking advantage of a gentile's mistake--is a different story. In fact, Cohon (pp. 36-39) spends much time elaborating on different rabbinical interpretations as to how far a Jew can go in using a gentile's mistake to the Jew's advantage, thereby validating the fact that this is a legitimate consideration. Moreover, much of this reasoning is clearly driven by public-relations considerations (not giving Jews a bad name), and less out of respect for non-Jews. Pointedly, Cohon cites the famous and progressive medieval rabbi Moses Maimonides [ROBBERY AND LOSS (XI:4-5), "The error of a gentile is like his loss (which need not be returned), but only if the error was made by himself. However, it is forbidden to mislead him. Thus when a gentile has erred in his reckoning the Jew must expressly tell him, 'I rely upon your reckoning, and I accept what you tell me.' But if he did not speak thus to him, taking advantage of the error is forbidden." (p. 28). In other words, it is OK for a Jew to cheat a gentile as long as the gentile made a mistake, and so long as the Jew gave him a subtle warning about his mistake. The 12th century Rabbi Judah Hasid, in SEFER HASIDIM 358 wrote, "Be careful not to take advantage of the error of a gentile who observes the Noachian laws [Noahide laws], and return his losses to him, and do not disparage him, but honor him more than a Jew who does not conduct himself according to the Torah." (pp. 38-39). So we are now in the 12th century, and all is well and fine, but what does it now mean? The Jew, moreover by virtue of being a Jew, has appointed himself to the position of judge over gentile conduct and, from this rather lofty position, decides whether or not the GOY is worthy or not of being spared from being taken advantage of!

From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933 Katz,
Jacob 1980 *Includes an Inadequate Talmud Apologetic*

This book is primarily about anti-Semitism, but the author's treatment

of the Talmud overshadows everything else. For this reason, as well as the fact that other reviews already inform the reader about the general contents of this book, I emphasize the Talmud in my review. Otherwise, the author focuses on traditional Christian teachings against Jews (read: decide).

That is a given. However, he also presents interesting information on the anti-Semitism of leading atheists, including Voltaire (pp. 34-on), Wilhelm Marr (p. 207, 269), Eugen Dühring (p. 269), and others.

HOW

KATZ UNDERSTANDS TALMUDIC INTERPRETATION

By

way of introduction to this subject, Jacob Katz writes, (quote) Indeed, many sections of their books and even entire chapters were no longer regarded as valid and binding--not literally, at any rate. Dialectic and homiletic exegesis enabled those who grew up on Jewish sources to maintain the sanctity of the entire tradition on principle, despite the astounding laws and bizarre legends that were included. The Mishnah and the Talmud did not serve as guides for the daily behavior of the Jews, but as books for study. For guidance in daily life, the Jew relied on what he had been taught by his parents and teachers and on recent legal codes that adapted the requirements of the law to contemporary conditions and dominant ethical views. In the matter of theoretical concepts, beliefs, and opinions, no binding principles were ever established, although there were certain dogmatic assumptions that violation of which was considered heresy. Within the constraints of these assumptions, the faithful were free to interpret the tradition themselves; indeed, preachers in every generation devoted unbounded energy to making the sources--even the most bizarre legends to be found in them--correspond to the demands of reason.

(unquote). (pp. 16-17). The author places all this in the context of the changes in the environment of the Jews, from a pagan one to a Christian and, later, also Muslim one, as elaborated in his earlier book [See my detailed review of]: *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (Scripta Judaica, 3), which includes a Talmud apologetic. In my review of this item, I also critique Katz' apologetic.

ANDREAS EISENMENGER AND HIS ENTDECKTES
JUDENTHUM: BROADER ISSUES

Katz would essentially have us believe that, the Talmud does not say what a straightforward reading of it would indicate, because halakhic rulings had long relegated the "offensive" Talmudic verses only to ancient pagan peoples. Thus, Katz asserts that Andreas Eisenmenger had a solid grasp of the content of the Talmud, but

was also completely wrong about what it meant to Jews. (p. 14). That is because Eisenmenger, and other critics of the Talmud, were and are, according to Katz, reading it through the lenses of outdated interpretations. But how are we to determine the validity of Katz' argument? Does Talmudic antigoyism magically disappear just because it had been redefined to apply to safely long-dead GOYIM? HOW FAR DO HALAKHIC RULINGS GO?

There are numerous unmentioned problems with attempting to nullify the antigoyism of the Talmud by invoking medieval halakhic rulings on this subject. To begin with, there is no sharp boundary between the implications of rabbinical halakhic rulings and the implications of direct intervention of Christian censors. As for halakhic rulings themselves, some are based on sound halakhic principles, while others are an ad hoc concession to circumstances. One rabbi's halakhic ruling does not have to be obeyed by, or even known to, another rabbi. Finally, Talmudic glosses act to distort the meaning of teachings--for instance, the arbitrary substitution of "Canaanites" for Gentiles, in BABA KAMA 113b, on the permissibility of not returning the gentile's lost item or overpayment. For details on all this, and more, please see the following online article by David Goldstein, *"A Lonely Champion of Tolerance: R. Menachem ha-Meiri's Attitude Towards Non-Jews"*. OTHER LIMITATIONS OF

HALAKHIC RULINGS ON THE TALMUD The author touches on nonliteral statements, such as the ones about God studying the Torah or wrapping Himself in a prayer shawl. (p. 17). These are, or should be, intuitively obvious. However, nonliteral interpretations must have a limit somewhere, and it is unclear where these limits are located. The author suggests that verses such as "a Gentile who observes the Sabbath deserves death" or "a Gentile who studies the Torah deserves death", in Talmudic usage, were nonliteral. They mean nothing more than a severe condemnation. (p. 19). However, Katz leaves the reader hanging. On what basis was it decided that it was nonliteral, and who made that determination? [I am asking a probing question; I am not insinuating that Jews kill others.] In addition, there are other rabbinic interpretations that DO accept the literalness of the "death to Gentiles" verses. Finally, the antigoyism does not disappear by being designated non-literal. It is only softened. The literal/nonliteral situation has other implications not considered by Katz. It adopts a pick-and-choose approach to ancient texts, and raises the question if "older" and "newer" interpretations can so easily

be dichotomized. In addition, saying that something is nonliteral can be a facile explanation for the dismissal of any inconvenient verse. Finally, if the exclusivist or controversial verses in the Talmud are nonliteral, then what prevents the humanitarian teachings of the Talmud--at least theoretically--from also being nonliteral?

CONTRAINDICATIONS TO KATZ'

IDEAS ABOUT THE TALMUD

Katz' apologetic for the Talmud is contradicted by quite a few Jews who, even in recent centuries, have testified that normative Jewish interpretation of the Talmud does in fact include some embrace of its Jewish supremacism and antigoyism. Was every single one of them untruthful? For Katz to be correct, the answer would have to be "yes". The informed reader probably realizes that there ARE informed Jews, even today, who accept the controversial Talmudic verses just as they are written. The best known of these is probably the late Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a Talmudic scholar who can hardly be accused of ignorance of the Talmud or of past halakhic rulings on gentiles and the Talmud. Yet he taught that the GOYIM are effectively donkeys that exist to serve Jews. The standard explanation is that Yosef was a singularity. Was he? How many other rabbis have similar views, but do not verbalize them, at least to non-Jews? If a researcher were to do an anonymous survey of Talmud-informed rabbis and ordinary Jews today, what percentage of them would more-or-less agree with Yosef? What would the corresponding percentages be for the Talmud-informed rabbis and ordinary Jews of 100 years ago? 500 years ago? 1,000 years ago? Until the foregoing questions can be definitively answered, and backed up with solid evidence, the rather overgeneralized arguments of Katz should be treated by the reader with caution.

THE TALMUD DOES NOT GOVERN BEHAVIOR? REALLY?

Let me repeat part of my earlier quote of Katz, "The Mishnah and the Talmud did not serve as guides for the daily behavior of the Jews, but as books for study." (pp. 16-17). This is an amazing assertion! Numerous authorities on the Talmud stress the fact that it most definitely DOES serve as a guide for Jewish conduct--even today. For instance, please see: *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*. Holocaust literature is replete with rabbinic decisions, based on the Talmud, of how to act towards the Nazis.

IMPLICATIONS OF KATZ' IDEAS ABOUT THE TALMUD

Let us conclude, however, by assuming that Katz' general reasoning is correct. If so, the reader will have to evaluate the implications of the following considerations, none of which are mentioned by Katz: Halakhic rulings can

only do so much. Literature does not have to be literally true, or to be precisely relevant to the present time, in order to be able to move the reader, and to create or reinforce prejudices. How can the Jew read the Jewish supremacist and anti-gentile verses in the Talmud and not be influenced by them--even if he/she believes that they are nonliteral, nonbinding, and inapplicable since ancient times? In fact, this very consideration was tacitly recognized even in very recent times. In the 20th century, the relevant Jewish prayer, the ALENU, was deliberately changed, in Reconstructionist Judaism, in order to eliminate the admitted Jewish superiority and the admitted invidious contrast of Jews and non-Jews, which are partly based on the Talmud. See the reconstructionist: *Sabbath Prayer Book*.

Everyman's Talmud: The Major Teachings of the Rabbinic Sages

Cohen, Abraham

1949

Addresses Talmudic Racism

and Universalism. Jewish Chosenness. Antigoyism For purposes of this review, I have read the verses quoted in this book, in the online Babylonian Talmud (Soncino Edition), which I specifically cite below, in order to familiarize myself with them and to see their proper context.

However, not all of the material mentioned below comes from the Talmud itself. Some comes from other Rabbinical sources. Whenever possible, I have read them also. **THE TALMUD INFORMS JEWISH DISLOYALTY TO POLAND** Cohen mentions "The law of the land is law". (BABA KAMAH 113a). (p. 190). [Not mentioned by Cohen is the fact that this Talmudic passage, DINA DE'MALKHUTA DINA, was used by Poland's Jews to justify Jewish allegiance to the foreign powers ruling over Poland after the Partitions of Poland (1795-1918) and to justify their usual refusal to support Polish insurrectionary and other independentist efforts. Had Poland's Jews been loyal to Poland, they would have recognized that the REAL "law of the land" is Poland's, as the destruction of Poland by the Partitioning Powers was illegal. This criminal act could only be rectified was the prompt and unequivocal restoration of the Polish nation. Clearly, and to use a little Holocaustspeak, Poland had been outside of the Jews' sphere of moral obligations.] **THE TALMUD INFORMS JEWISH-NAZI COLLABORATION** One Rabbinic passage deals with the issue of whether it is ever acceptable for Jews to turn over one of their own, to the

gentiles, so that the remainder of the Jews is not put to death. (p. 99). [Not mentioned by Cohen is the fact that these verses came up during the Holocaust. The JUDENRAT had to decide whether or not to comply with Nazi German orders to ship some Jews to their deaths in the hope that the Nazis would be placated, and would spare the remaining Jews.

SANHEDRIN 74a and YOMA 82b, neither of which is mentioned by Cohen, are also relevant in this regard. According to them, one should not obey the murderer that orders you to kill somebody (or else he will kill you), because who knows whose blood is redder?]

DISGUISED ANTAGONISM
TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY

The author does not mention Christianity in the Talmud itself. However, he does mention a passage in Numbers Rabbah (xiv, 10). The word "Ishmaelites" is identified by Cohen as an obvious code word for Christians, done in order to circumvent the censor. (p. 147).

JEWISH UNIVERSALISM: NOT A SURE THING

In dealing with controversial passages in the Talmud, I follow a Judeo-realist approach. In doing so, I try my best to avoid the extremes of anti-Semitism (making false or unsubstantiated accusations against Jews) and philo-Semitism (treating Jews as incapable of wrong thinking or action.). The Talmud contains both universal and exclusivist concepts, and one does not negate the other. Author Abraham Cohen emphasizes the universal aspects of traditional Judaism. However, he realizes that even the universalism taught in the Talmud was not a given. He comments, (quote) On the question whether Gentiles will share in the Hereafter there was not an agreed opinion. "R. Eliezer declared, 'No Gentiles will share in the world to come...'" (unquote). (p. 369). R. Joshua disagreed, promoting a universalist view of salvation based on ethical living, and not on whether or not one was Jewish. This was later picked up by Maimonides, and became the official Jewish doctrine on this matter. (p. 369).

THE "KILL THE BEST OF THE GENTILES" VERSES

Cohen quotes this from Mechilta/Mekhilta. (p. 66). He attributes the verses to R. Simeon b. Jochai, and exonerates the statements based on Jochai's life under the Hadrianic persecutions. Jochai is said to have seen his favorite teacher, R. Akiba, fiendishly tortured by the Romans, after which Jochai hid in a cave for 13 years. (p. 66; See also p. 231). Clearly, Cohen is attributing the verses to rabbinic personal opinions and to onetime situational events. In this case, his argument is persuasive. However, he does not explain if these verses have any usage in Jewish life beyond the recollection of onetime historical

events. The informed reader realizes that the early Christians were also subject to hideous tortures, and martyrdom, by the Romans. Yet there are no New Testament verses calling upon Christians to kill the best of the Romans or to kill the best of the non-Christians! HOLLOW

EXCULPATIONS FOR TALMUDIC ANTIGOYISM Cohen writes, (quote) The harsh sayings which are occasionally found in the Talmud with respect to non-Jews often spring from the conviction that "Gentiles are addicted to licentiousness" (JEBAMOTH 98a). The Rabbis were revolted by the low standards of conduct that they saw practiced around them and were thankful for the finer ideals which their religion offered them.

(unquote). (p. 66). [The online Babylonian Talmud, for YEVA MOTH 98a, uses different wording.] Cohen tacitly assumes that he can read the minds of, or otherwise deduce the intentions of, the Rabbis. In any case, his exculpation, even if valid, is hollow. The Rabbis were repeating prejudices. And surely the Rabbis knew, or should have known, that Jews had no monopoly on virtue and the GOYIM had no monopoly on vice. Surely the Rabbis, educated as they were and likely more familiar with various gentiles than the more parochial everyday Jews, knew that not all pagans live in debauchery. Finally, the authors of the Talmud certainly knew, or should have known, that Jews are capable of rivalling, and even exceeding, the debauchery of the heathen (e. g, 2 Kings 21:9; Ezekiel 5:6-7 and 16:47-48). Let us make this clearer. Imagine a white commentator, deliberately overlooking the good people who are African-Americans, and feeling revolted by what he considered the low standards of conduct exhibited by other African-Americans, making the blanket generalization, and racist statement, that "African-Americans are addicted to licentiousness." THE

TALMUDIC ROOTS OF THE ALENIU The author translates MENACHOTH 43b as saying that the man thanks God for making him an Israelite, and for not making him a woman or a boor. (p. 159). [This, of course, is part of the ALENU.] However, the online Babylonian Talmud translates the first part of the passage as thankfully saying "who has not made me a heathen." The Prayer Book says "Who has not made me a heathen, a slave, a woman." (p. 159). Cohen justifies these passages through the Israel-Torah relationship, which is elaborated in the ensuing paragraphs. THE ISRAEL-TORAH RELATIONSHIP: A BLANK

CHECK FOR JEWISH SUPREMACISM? With regards to the following quote, Gen. R. [Genesis Rabbah] and Lev. R. [Leviticus Rabbah], refer to

the extra-Talmudic (and probably post-Talmudic) Midrash Rabba. On the other hand, the Tractate TAANITH is part of the Talmud. The issues revolve around the implications of Jewish Chosenness, which are not, as often claimed, limited to Jews having extra duties to God. Cohen writes, (quote) The main responsibility of Israel is the guardianship of the Torah, the Divine Revelation. Since the purpose of the world's creation was the glorification of God's name through the medium of the Torah, and Israel was to be its recipient, it follows that "Israel was in the thought of God before the creation of the Universe" (Gen. R. 1.4), that "Heaven and earth were only created through the merit of Israel" (Lev. R. xxxvi. 4), and "As the world could not exist without the winds, so is it impossible for the world to exist without Israel" (TAA'NITH 3b). No self-glorification is here meant, since the sayings refer only to Israel as the guardian of the Torah and therefore state a spiritual fact. (unquote). (pp. 60-61). Oh, no? The religious rationalizations notwithstanding, how could the ancient Jew even IMAGINE that God needed the Jewish people, for the creation of the world, unless he believed, at some level, that Jews are superior to the GOYIM? In addition, the verses confuse the issue. To believe that God wants to favor a particular people, in some general way, as the Chosen People, is one thing. To believe that this presumed Chosenness goes as far as God creating the world, through the fact of, or the merit of, the Chosen People, is quite another! The latter does not logically follow from the former. It smacks of racist presumption. To believe that there exists a special Torah-Israel relationship is one thing. To believe that the very existence of heaven and earth is dependent upon the existence of Israel is quite another! The latter does not logically follow from the former. It, too, smacks of racist presumption. Instead, it is evident that Jewish supremacist thinking is riding piggyback on the inferred Torah-Israel relationship. Imagine the white supremacist seriously suggesting that the existence of the Universe, including that of Earth, was dependent upon the existence of white people. Framing it in religious terms would not change its racist essence. Clearly, the Torah-Israel relationship is, or can become, an all-purpose standby explanation (or exculpation) that can be invoked to justify practically any Jewish supremacist assertion in the Talmud or other rabbinical literature.

A GENTILE STUDYING THE TORAH DESERVES DEATH. WHY?

Author Abraham Cohen cites a series of passages that he contends are universalistic with regards to Jews and non-Jews. He then

comments, (quote) On the other hand, it must be admitted that we do occasionally meet with dicta which breathe a very different spirit. Typical examples are: "A Gentile who occupies himself with the study of the Torah is deserving of death; as it is said, "Moses commanded us a Torah, an inheritance for the assembly of Israel" (Deuteronomy xxxiii. 4)--the inheritance is for us, not for them". (SANHEDRIN 59a)...In all probability such declarations as these were called forth by the rise of the Christian Church whose members also studied the Scriptures and claimed that the Divine Grace rested upon them. (unquote). (p. 63). The tone of Cohen's statement is clearly speculative and exculpatory. In addition, it is a non sequitur. Surely, the justified killing of a Torah-studying gentile does not follow from a concern about what Christians believe. It would make sense to execute a GOY for trying to destroy a Torah scroll, or, given the spirit of the times, even for showing disrespect to the Torah. But for studying it? Come on! It has also been argued that the "deserving of death" verses are nonliteral, and only mean "deserving a severe condemnation". This explanation differs from Cohen's, and the disparity itself illustrates the facility and ad hoc character of Talmudic exculpations. Besides, "non-literality" is a two-edged sword. If the objectionable verses in the Talmud are nonliteral, then why cannot the esteemed verses also be nonliteral? Finally, even if "deserving of death" only means "deserving a severe condemnation", for a gentile studying the Torah, it is obviously softer. However, the essential Jewish supremacist thinking and antigoyism, communicated by the verse, remain intact. FOR FURTHER STUDY

The expansive Jewish belief that Jews are so special that the world exists and functions because of them, goes beyond the verses mentioned in this book. For an analysis of the teaching that the stars were created for the Jews, and only for the Jews [BERAKOT 32b], please read my detailed review, of Talmudic scholar Abraham Cohen's *The Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Berakot*. For an analysis of the teaching that the world would have been "un-created" had Israel rejected the Torah [SHABBAT 88a], please read my analysis, of *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, Vol. 1. MISCELLANEOUS INTERESTING RELIGIOUS

INFORMATION According to the Talmud: The Book of Genesis teaches CREATION EX NIHILO. (p. 29). The Earth is several thousand years old. (p. 356). The sins of the fathers may or may not be visited on descendants depending upon whether or not the sinful behavior persists over a number

of generations. (p. 115). This resolves an apparent contradiction in the Bible. Women are prone to witchcraft. (p. 161). As in the Old Testament, polygamy is tolerated in the Talmud. (p. 166). LEX TALIONIS refers to financial compensation for wrongs, not a literal "eye for eye". For instance, it would be impossible for a blind person, who put out someone else's eye, to be literally punished with the loss of the sight of his own eye. (p. 227). As much as possible, animals are to be treated with compassion. (pp. 235-236).

HISTORICALLY-SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION There are two main Talmudic schools of thought on the propriety of divorce. One, the School of Shammai, confessedly converges with the teachings of Jesus Christ (Matthew 19:9) on the indissolubility of marriage except in cases of adultery. (p. 167). On the other hand, the School of Hillel allows divorce for even the most trivial of reasons, such as when the man no longer finds his wife attractive, or if she has spoiled his meal while cooking it. (p. 167). [The permissive attitude towards divorce may partly explain why many Catholics thought of Jewish (Talmudic) ethics as inferior to Catholic ethics.] As for Jewish jurisprudence, there were two Sanhedrins. One was political, and the other religious. (p. 299). The author cites Talmudic and other Rabbinical passages on shopkeeping and usury being "thieving occupations". (pp. 195-196). [This is ironic, as Jews later majored in these occupations, and were, for this very reason, often accused of being cheats and parasites.]

The Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Berakot Cohen, Abraham
1921 ***Racist Memes in the Talmudic Tractate Berachoth (Berakot): Stars Were Created Only for Jews, and the GOYIM as Virtual (Though Not Literal) Animals*** Talmudic scholar Abraham Cohen provides the reader with the entire Tractate Berakot in a handy single volume, and provides brief notes and commentary. This is in the form of small side-notes and brief footnotes. As told by the author, the Tractate commonly features feasts and benedictions. I focus on a few salient topics of lasting interest. By way of introduction, Cohen comments (quote) The Rabbis were not only theologians; they were principally ecclesiastical lawyers. This was necessarily so, because Rabbinic Judaism aimed at controlling the whole life of its adherents. (unquote). (p. xxix).

BERACHOT 32b: THE STARS WERE CREATED FOR THE JEWS

AND ONLY FOR THE JEWS

The following series of passages is quoted in its entirety so that the reader can see the full context. (Quote) "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me" (Is. xlix. 14). But a woman forsaken is the same as a woman forgotten! R. Simeon b. Lakish said: The community spake before the Holy One, blessed be He, "Lord of the universe! Should a man marry a woman after his first wife, he remembers the deeds of the first; but Thou has forsaken me and forgotten me!" The Holy One, blessed is He, replied, "My daughter, twelve constellations have I created in the firmament, and for each constellation I have created thirty hosts, and for each host I have created thirty legions, and for each legion I have created thirty files, and for each file I have created thirty cohorts, and for each cohort I have created thirty camps, and in each camp I have suspended three hundred and sixty-five thousands myriads of stars, in accordance with the days of the solar year, and all of them have I only created for thy sake; and yet thou sayest, "Thou hast forsaken me, Thou hast forgotten me"! "Can a woman forget her sucking child (ULAH)?" (Is. xlix. 15). (unquote). (pp. 216-217). [The online Babylonian Talmud (Soncino Version) is very similar in these verses, with Berakoth 32b including the following wording:and all of them I have created only for thy sake...]

ANALYSIS OF BERACHOT 32b The biblical passages quoted above, Isaiah 49:14-15, present a beautiful picture of God being no more capable of forgetting the Jewish people than a mother would be capable of forgetting her nursing child. They are more than sufficient to capture the essence of God's unending care for the Jewish people. The Talmudic statement, quoted above, and which is inserted between the quote of Isaiah 49:14 and Isaiah 49:15, is something quite different. It clearly elevates the Jews, to a supreme position, above all other peoples. It rests on the rather presumptuous (even self-worshipping) notion that Jewish Chosenness extends as far as God creating the stars exclusively for the Jews. To believe that "Jews are the Chosen people" means that Jews have the duty of obeying 613 Laws (p. xxxiv), while Gentiles only have to obey the 7 Noahide Laws, is one thing. To believe that "Jews are the Chosen people" means that God had created the stars exclusively for the Jews, is quite another. It is racist on its face. To drive the point home, imagine a white supremacist suggesting that God created the stars for white people, and only for white people. The creation of the stars exclusively for the Jews does not shed its racist character merely by being

presented as an expression of God's care for the Jews, any more than its Caucasian counterpart would shed its racist character by being presented as an expression of God's care for white people. Moreover, Berachoth 32b is no isolated instance of Jewish supremacist thinking, even solely in terms of God's creative acts. It follows a theme, in rabbinical literature, wherein Jews are portrayed as effectively the Master Race in that everything that God had created (not only the stars), He had explicitly created for the Jews. For more on this, read my detailed review, of Abraham Cohen's *Everyman's Talmud: The Major Teachings of the Rabbinic Sages*. For another Jewish perspective on Berachoth 32b, see: *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life*, and read my detailed review. In the Tanakh (Old Testament), God does not specify His reasons for creating the Earth and the stars. Consequently, the notion of God creating the Earth and the stars for the Jews is recognizably a groundbreaking notion of Jewish Chosenness! BERAKOTH 58a: THE GOYIM AS ESSENTIAL (THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY LITERAL) ANIMALS The following series of passages is quoted in its entirety so that the reader can see the full context. (Quote) R. Shela flogged a certain man who had had intercourse with a gentile woman; so he went and laid a charge against him before the king, saying, "There is a certain Jew who judges without the king's consent." The king sent an official for him [to appear]. When R. Shela came he was asked, "For what reason didst thou flog this person?" He replied, "Because had had intercourse with a she-ass." They said to him, "Hast thou witnesses?" He answered, "Yes." Elijah came in human guise and gave evidence. (unquote). (p. 382). Author Abraham Cohen points out that some versions substitute "Egyptian" for "gentile" out of fear of the Censor. (p. 382). Otherwise, the online Babylonian Talmud (Soncino Version) is very similar for these verses. A similar juxtaposition of gentiles and donkeys can be found in Berachot 25b, and elsewhere in the Talmud. Clearly, this is part of a consistent pattern, and it therefore cannot be said that some rabbinical author merely misspoke or was misread. ANALYSIS OF BERAKOTH 58a: A JEW MARRYING A GOY IS LIKE A JEW MARRYING A DONKEY To learn how Jews actually understand these verses, I have examined the online Talmud apologetic, *"The Real Truth About the Talmud"*, specifically the "Gentiles Are Human" article therein. The author of the apologetic tells us of Talmudic passages that indicate that gentiles are fully human. His

argument assumes that one verse can nullify another and this, at best, dispenses only with the literal aspects of the donkey-GOYIM equation. The author of the apologetic states that the cross-reference to Ezekiel 23:20, on the "flesh of donkeys", had been broadened to refer to all gentiles.

However, he not explain why. He analysis relies, in part, to the ideas of Talmudic scholar R. Chaim Soloveitchik, and would have essentially have us believe that the passages were only intended to teach us that Jews and gentiles are maritally and sexually incompatible, and that a Jewish-gentile union has no legal standing in Jewish law. Sound pretty lame. This apologetic confuses the issue, which is not the inappropriateness of Jew-gentile marital unions (which is easily declared and customarily practiced at the time), but is something quite different--the conflation of gentiles and donkeys. Besides, the rabbinic author was perfectly capable of expressing his objection to Jewish-gentile marriages without dragging the donkey-GOY equation into the picture. Surely the rabbis who repeatedly equated GOYIM and the animals, throughout the Talmud, were fully cognizant of the fact that the juxtaposition of humans with animals is derogatory in nature. Even a child would know that! The racist antigoyism is palpable, and is inescapable. Imagine the white racist objecting to interracial marriage by saying that a white marrying a black is comparable to a white marrying a donkey. In addition, the racist character of the equation is unchanged merely by the fact that it is framed in terms of its non-literality, and in terms of the opined unique value of white-on-white marriages, the lack of standing of white-black marriages, or some other similar exculpatory construct. MENTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY IN TRACTATE BERAKOTH

Although he does not go into any detail on this subject, Talmudic scholar Abraham Cohen parts ways with those who say that the Talmud has nothing to say about Christianity. He also validates the work of R. T. Herford, *CHRISTIANITY IN TALMUD AND MIDRASH*, by referring to its identifications of often-Censored allusions to Christianity in Tractate Berakot. (p. 113 [referring to 17a] and 189 [referring to 28b]). He also mentions Berakoth 7a in this regard. (p. 37). Cohen also rejects those who say that MIN/MINIM never refers to Christians. Based again on Herford, he defines the term as follows, (quote) A heretic, especially the early Jewish-Christian. (unquote). (p. 429).

The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud Rubenstein, Jeffrey L.
 2003 ***The Contempt of Ancient Babylonian Rabbis for Non-Rabbinic Jews Parallels That Against the GOYIM. Both Were Virtual (Though Not Literal) Animals***

A major theme of this work is that the traditions of the Palestinian Talmud had a much more favorable view of non-learned and non-rabbinic Jews than did the traditions of the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli). (For specifics, see p. 8, 45, 123, 126, 131, and 134.) Populist as well as elitist tendencies could be found among the rabbis throughout Jewish history. (p. 123). However, author Rubenstein makes it unambiguous that the Babylonian rabbis' pronouncements against the AMEI HA'ARETS ("people of the land": p. 124), such as those that use the imagery of animals, were ones of contempt. (p. 14, 123, 126). Furthermore, an elitism operated in the Jewish Community. Thus, according to tractate Berakoth 47b, a Jew was an AMEI HA'ARETS if he failed to attend upon the sages, even if he was learned in Scripture and Mishna. (p. 125). The author elaborates on the obvious hostility between the sages. It was primarily a Babylonian issue. (p. 55).

PASSAGES LITERAL OR NOT? IRRELEVANT Rubenstein repeats the argument that the violent imagery in the Talmud, directed by the sages against both the AMEI HA'ARETS and the GOYIM, were nonliteral and hyperbolic. (p. 131). However, he presents no evidence to substantiate this premise, apart from the overly-broad generalization that the Talmud often uses nonliteral and even bizarre imagery. Rubenstein relies on old apologetic works by rabbis, which are contained in this 13-volume Hebrew-language source: OTSAR HAGEONIM. Thesaurus of the Gaonic Responsa and Commentaries following the order of Talmudic Tractates. (Edited by B. M. Lewin. 13 volumes. Haifa, 1928-1943). (p. 131, 198; especially p. 209). However, whether literal or nonliteral, the essence was the same. This essence consisted of hostility towards the AMEI HA'ARETS and the GOYIM.

UNLEARNED JEWS, LIKE GENTILES, ARE VIRTUAL ANIMALS
 The following subject matter refers to Bavli Pesahim 49a and 49b, and a few other verses. (I invite the reader to read these tractates in the online

Babylonian Talmud--Soncino edition--as I did.) The following [except the titles IN CAPS] are some direct quotes from Rubenstein: The Stammaitic traditions against marriage essentially equate female AMEI HA'ARETS with animals, referring to such wives as vermin... (p. 129). The sources portray the AM HA'ARETS as not fully human, neither behaving in a human manner nor deserving humane treatment...The traditions bear a certain affinity to earlier sources, both Palestinian and Babylonian, that compare slaves and gentiles to animals. Various laws are not applied to slaves or gentiles on the grounds that scriptural exegesis connects them to animals. (p. 130). The animal imagery rather functions as an explanation for mutual hatred and as a justification for violence. (p. 131). The sages perhaps perceived their academic world of Torah study as increasingly professionalized, elitist, and isolated from the general population. As a result, nonrabbis outside of the academy were viewed as 'Others', and even included with other categories of 'Others'--slaves, gentiles, and animals. (p. 141). Because the AMEI HA'ARETS do not study Torah, the Zohar deprives them of the status of "Israel," meaning that they are not fully Jewish, and consequently not fully human. (p. 157).-----End of direct quotes.

EXCULPATORY JEWISH PERSECUTION

EXAGGERATED The "Jews were persecuted" trope is the standard answer (or exculpation) for the antigoyism in the Talmud. (This is an all-purpose response, as virtually everyone can excuse their conduct by saying the same thing. The Germans use the same "we had it bad" argument for their support of Hitler). Although author Jeffrey L. Rubenstein does not approach Jewish persecution from this angle, he does indicate that it had customarily been overstated. He comments, "Earlier Talmudic historians tended to adopt the 'lachrymose conception of Jewish history,' suggesting that persecutions at the end of the Amoraic period forced the closing of rabbinical schools and resulted in a new historical epoch. Recent scholars, however, have generally abandoned this historiographical perspective and its propensity to attribute many significant historical changes to persecutions. Moreover, in a detailed study, Richard Kalmin has argued that Sasanian persecutions do not satisfactorily account for the conclusion of the Amoraic era." (p. 22).

UNDERSTANDING PILPUL: NOT SPECIFICALLY JEWISH OR TALMUDIC

The dialectic approach of "objections and solutions" is a specifically Babylonian theme, and not found in the Yerushalmi or other Palestinian sources. (p. 45). Although pilpul is, in

popular conception, commonly associated closely with the Talmud, such is not the case. Rubenstein comments, "Dialectical approaches to Talmud study were by no means an inevitable or natural development." (p. 147). He then adds that the works of the Geonim, Rashi, and the early Tosafists, were largely free of dialectics. Among the Ashkenazi Jews, the Hasidim commonly frowned on dialectics. (p. 147). Clearly, the strong conflation of pilpul and the Talmud is a relatively recent development. Rubenstein writes, "In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the mark of an outstanding rabbinic student was to excel in pilpulistic disputation...As pilpulistic discourses became increasingly convoluted, hypothetical, and pretentious, a means by which scholars showed off their erudition, a backlash developed that bestowed on the term pilpul a pejorative sense." (p. 147). [The foregoing parallels certain Christian criticisms of Jewish religion, such as those of Feliks Koneczny.]

MODERN AND NON-RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS The decline of Jewish religion, in the last two centuries, did not end Jewish elitism. Instead, the elitist traditions of the rabbis lived-on in secularized form. Thus, the tendency of learned Jews to look down on unlearned Jews (and the GOYIM as a whole) was transferred to a nonreligious plane. It also played a role in the origin of a pro-Communist Jewish intelligentsia, leading to the Zydokomuna. For details, please read my detailed review, of *Jewish Radicals and Radical Jews*.

Experience of Jewish Liturgy: Studies Dedicated to Menahem Schmelzer Blank, Debra Reed 2011 *The ALEINU (a Jewish Prayer) and Its Confessedly anti-Christian and Racist Character* This work is an anthology of many topics. For instance, Neil Gillman repeats the argument that the belief in the immortality of the soul comes from the Greeks. However, he also discusses the presence of this teaching, alongside that of the bodily resurrection of the dead, with which it was later conflated, in early Jewish sources (as early as the First Century CE or AD). (p. 87). So if anybody copied someone else, who copied whom? Or could both the Greek and Jewish traditions, on the survival of the soul after the death of the body, have developed in parallel? Gillman does not consider this.

CHRISTIANS ARE IDOLATERS ACCORDING TO THE ALENU

My review features the excellent article, by Ruth Langer, on the Aleinu [Avenu]. She focuses on the anti-Christian implications of the part of the prayer wherein Jews refer to non-Jews as ones that "bow down to vanity and emptiness and pray to a god that does not save." (p. 156). I elaborate on this in the latter part of my review.

RAMIFICATIONS OF CENSORSHIP, BY CHRISTIAN AUTHORITIES, OF THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN ALEINU

Author Ruth Langer dwells on the Christian censorship of the Aleinu. It happened in both Catholic and Protestant countries, especially after the widespread availability of the printing press. However, the censorship was not serious. It was inconsistent, and this inconsistency was true at different levels. Thus, some manuscripts were censored, while many others were spared. (pp. 156-157). Some censored versions of Aleinu left a space where the offending words were left out, while others were printed as if nothing had been omitted. Again, this practice was inconsistent, even within the different editions of the prayer book, and Langer warns against reading too much into it. (p. 161, 163). Some versions of the Aleinu changed the wording to avoid offending Christians. More on this later. Times have changed, and so, in recent decades, among both Israeli and increasingly American Orthodox Jews, the offending lines have been restored to their original. (p. 161).

JEWISH SUPREMACISM IN THE ALEINU

The author also considers, in less detail, the Jewish supremacist aspects of the Aleinu. Langer begins by contrasting the dispensability of the "bow down" part and the indispensability of the "not made me a gentile" part, (quote) One element is certainly that in the aftermath of censorship, it was permissible simply to omit the sensitive line because Aleinu is fundamentally a piece of liturgical poetry and thus its situation is more parallel to that of other problematic PIYUTIM than to texts like SHE-LO ASANI GOY (who has not made me a gentile) or the Birkat ha-Minim (the twelfth benediction of the daily Amidah), both of which carry Talmudic authority and are hence required. PIYUT, in contrast, could be--and was--simply dropped. (p. 162). (On the latter, please read my detailed review, of *Cursing the Christians?: A History of the Birkat HaMinim.*) Langer acknowledges the Jewish supremacist nature of part of the Aleinu, using other words, and does so in the context of Christian censorship of the prayer. This censorship usually was limited to the "bow down to vanity" part, but sometimes also encompassed the part where Jews thank God that they were not made

gentiles. She writes, "On occasion, censors objected to more of the text, including the statement of Jewish superiority over other nations that precedes this line..." (p. 156). The author mentions Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan, and his 1945 Reconstructionist prayer book, in the context of life after death. (p. 88). However, Kaplan also modified the Aleinu because of what he called "the asserted or implied superiority of Israel over other peoples" and what he called "the invidious contrast between Israel and other peoples".

THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN ASPECTS OF ALEINU

The following paragraphs are direct quotes from Ruth Langer. [THE ALL-CAPITALS IN BRACKETS ARE MINE COMMENTS. The lower-case remarks in brackets are hers]: Aleinu is ancient, though its precise origin is obscure. (p. 148)...While the prayer may indeed have been composed early enough that Jews were contrasting themselves with polytheists, it is also not impossible that this line was a lightly veiled polemical response to Christianity's insistence that salvation comes only through baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection. (p. 149). [FAST FORWARD TO THE 12TH CENTURY] Evidence suggests that for at least some of them, the reference to the gods of other nations did refer explicitly to Jesus, for they elaborated on "vanity and emptiness" as follows: [QUOTED HEBREW TEXT]...The intent of insertion seems to be that other nations prostrate themselves to "a man, of ashes, blood, [and] bile, flesh [an embarrassment] of rot and worms." This is apparently a direct reference to Jesus, emphasizing his base humanity and denying his resurrection; it asserts in graphic terms that his body decomposed like anyone else's. The insert then continues, using terms grammatically in the plural, both masculine and feminine. These must address Jesus's worshippers, and these terms too refute basic Christian claims, asserting that Christians are all "impure and adulterous, dying in their iniquities and rotting in their sins, decomposing in the dust, rotten with worms and maggots." (p. 150). [THE FOLLOWING IS AN ALLUSION TO THE 13TH CENTURY ARUGAT HA-BOSEM OF RABBI ABRAHAM BEN AZRIEL, AND THE GEMATRIA (NUMEROLOGY) REFERRING TO JESUS AND MUHAMMAD] Both VA-RIK (lit., and emptiness) and YESHU have the numerical value of 316, leading many to understand that this prayer embeds within its language a specific anti-Christian intent. It is irrelevant whether or not this intent was original from at least the High Middle Ages, this was the meaning of the line for many Jews. In addition, to add extra emphasis to the word VA-RIK, a

custom arose to spit (ROK) at this point. (p. 153). [RUTH LANGER DOES NOT DEVELOP THIS POINT FURTHER. DOES IT CLARIFY THE OLD JEWISH CUSTOM OF SPITTING IN FRONT OF CHURCHES?] [THE FOLLOWING TOOK PLACE IN THE FACE OF CHRISTIAN CENSORSHIP]: Many change SHE-HEM (for they) into SHE-HAYU (they used to), and some also substitute ELIHIM (false gods, idols) for HEVEL VA-RIK (vanity and emptiness), thus removing the source of the reference to Jesus and also making the entire line refer to some vague ancestral others and not to current practice. (p. 159). [A SIMILAR EXCULPATION HAS COMMONLY BEEN USED FOR THE TALMUD--BY RETROACTIVELY ASSERTING THAT THE ANTI-GOY VERSES REFER TO ANCIENT PAGANS AND NOT TO THE GENTILES OF POST-TALMUDIC TIMES].

Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

Mahler, Raphael

1984

Jewish Racism in Parts of the

Midrash and the Kabbalah. Jewish Prosperity in Poland (Debunks the "Jews had it bad in Poland" myth.)

This work focuses on how the Hasidic movement developed, and how it interacted with other Jews, and gentiles. It also provides insight into the situation facing Jews in the Russian-ruled and the Austrian-ruled parts of Poland. Much attention is devoted to the criticisms against Hasidism that arose in Jewish and gentile circles alike. This work is relatively technical, requiring the reader to have a good background in 19th-century life to appreciate fully. It has a helpful glossary of Jewish terms. THE "JEWS HAD IT BAD" MYTH. QUITE A FEW JEWS ACTUALLY DID QUITE WELL In 19th-century occupied Poland, there was a sharp disparity between poor and rich Jews: "The wealthy Jews did not suffer from the discrimination endured by the masses of their brethren; on the contrary, they enjoyed extensive privileges. For example, the kosher meat tax was hardly felt." (p. 192). Some of the Maskilim (enlightened Jews) considered the small-town and village Hasidic Jews as ones that exploit the peasants. (p. 17). A SEQUEL TO THE TALMUD AND ITS RACIST TEACHINGS ABOUT NON-JEWS Much

has been said about how Christian exclusivity acted against Jews, and how Christians viewed Jews as responsible for the Crucifixion of Christ (deicide). Although some people obviously would rather avoid the truth, or to rationalize it away, Mahler is candid about the fact that Jewish prejudices against Christians were no less severe! Parts of the Jewish religion, even unto recent times, were inescapably racist. Mahler comments: "The views of the Hasidim...were a direct outgrowth and development of the Weltanschauung of the Kabbalah. The Jewish people were not simply the chosen, but were the only people of God...According to the Midrash, the whole world was created only for the sake of the Jews...a negative attitude toward Gentiles, which took the form of contempt, was also an unavoidable consequence of this position. As Mendel of Rymanow put it, 'A Gentile does not have a heart, although he has an organ that resembles a heart.'" (pp. 16-17). The Rabbi of Izbica taught that Jews are innately good, even when they do evil deeds, simply because they are Jews. Gentiles are innately bad, even if they do good deeds. (p. 307). JEWS, LIKE POLISH PEASANTS, COULD BE SUPERSTITIOUS At times, Polish Jews had looked down on Polish peasants as superstitious. Mahler's comment is therefore ironic: "In contrast to the religious and rationalistic Christian sects that opposed superstitions as adamantly as they did secular science, the Hasidic movement was permeated by superstitions of all kinds." (p. 16).

ASPECTS OF HASIDIC THEOLOGY OVERLAP WITH THAT OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY This work includes fascinating theological information. For example, Christians have understood Isaiah 53 as a prophecy foretelling Jesus Christ, while Jews have understood it as referring to Israel. Interestingly, the Hasidim taught of Isaiah 53 as referring to the Messiah suffering for the sins of all of Israel. (p. 257). There is also an interesting theme about two Messiahs--the son of Joseph and the son of David. (p. 260). Jewish Christians have understood these as referring to one Messiah--Jesus--coming at two different times in history: His First and Second Comings.

Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times Katz, Jacob 1961

Talmudic Antigoyism Didn't--As Claimed By Apologists--Die Out in the Talmudic or Even the Medieval Period: It Persisted to Recent Times!

Jews and Christians each had stereotypical views of each other (p. xiv), and Jewish views of Christianity were just as unflattering as the reverse. Katz comments: "The biblical name of Edom was, in Talmudic times, applied to Rome. In medieval poetry, however, it is synonymous with Christianity." (p. 16). Clearly, Jews could and did use various code words for peoples. "CHRISTIANS AS IDOLATERS ' HAD TO BE

DOWNPLAYED FOR UTILITARIAN REASONS Throughout history, Jews had tended to see Christians as idolaters. (e. g., p. 24, 27, 53, 100). Following Talmudic law, this would've forbidden Jews from having business dealings with Christians. Consequently: "Practical considerations required the dissociation of Christianity from idolatry, and this was rationalized by means of halakhic casuistry. But this rationalization cannot be assumed to imply that, from a theological point of view, Christianity was no longer regarded as a 'pagan' religion." (p. 162; see also p. 108). [Indeed, it is doubtful if medieval halakhic decisions, on Christians as non-idolaters, ever had broad application, even in rabbinical circles. In addition, long-entrenched Jewish attitudes, including those on Christianity as idolatry, were as much maintained by emotion and the "inertia" of tradition as they were potentially overruled by halakhic decisions. Please read my detailed review, of *The Pride of Jacob: Essays on Jacob Katz and His Work* (Harvard Center for Jewish Studies)]. (this review set). NON-

APPLICABILITY OF TALMUDIC ANTIGOYISM, TO CHRISTIANS, A FACILE CONTRIVANCE

Author Jacob Katz touches on the disingenuous nature of the medieval argument that Talmudic statements do not apply to Christians: "The disputants claimed that all disparaging references to Gentiles in Talmudic sources applied only to those 'seven nations' which are mentioned in the Bible as the aboriginal inhabitants of the Land of Israel, and remnants of which survived as late as Talmudic times. But this statement is no more than an ad hoc device used in the course of controversy. There is no indication in the Talmud or in the later

halakhic sources that such a view was ever held, or even proposed, by any individual halakhist. In fact, evidence to the contrary exists." (pp. 109-110). In recent centuries, according to Katz, some Jewish thinkers did genuinely reject the Christians-are-idolaters premise--in part because Christians believed in creatio ex nihilo. (pp. 163-166, 191). Put in broader context, Jewish goodwill towards gentiles, according to Katz (p. 58, 101-102), was motivated in part by expediency (e. g., avoid giving all Jews a bad name), and in part by genuine adherence to moral principles. Commensurate with both tendencies, the reader should know that the Talmud includes teachings on the loving-kindness to all human beings, helping the poor and sick, etc. (GITTIN 61a: pp. 59-60).

KATZ' TALMUDIC APOLOGETIC: INTRODUCTION

As noted in the first statements of my review, this book has been cited as proof that the criticisms of the Talmud, as exhibited, for example, in Eisenmenger's *ENTDECKTES JUDENTHUM*, are often accurate in and of themselves, but are completely invalid and irrelevant--all because Jewish interpretations of the Talmud change through time. There are immediate problems with Katz' line of argumentation. To begin with, it is obvious that many antigoy provisions in the Talmud, such as the fullness of the dual morality governing Jews and gentiles, could no longer be practiced, simply because Jews were now a minority, and the gentile authorities would never stand for it. For this reason alone, it is hardly remarkable that Jews outwardly abandoned certain Talmudic teachings. They had no choice! Apart from all this, considerations related to the dual morality in the Talmud, and of Jews cheating gentiles, persisted to modern times. Please read my detailed review, of *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* [this set of reviews.] Now consider more mundane matters, such as the previously-discussed Jewish buying and selling from and to Christians. It is clear that the disuse of certain Talmudic policies relative to gentiles, and the later rabbinic re-interpretations of them, had hardly been voluntary. It had arisen from the compelling economic circumstances that had become part of everyday Jewish life in early Medieval Europe. (pp. 28-30). The implications of this are not hard to deduce. Acting under compulsion under one circumstance (as per the Talmud) does not necessarily translate into acting voluntarily under another circumstance (as per the Talmud). [More on this below, in conjunction with the medieval disputation. In addition, the cynic could argue that, whenever there is a conflict between Jewish commerce and Jewish

religion, it will often be resolved in favor of Jewish commerce.] Next comes the question of normative practice. It does not follow that certain new interpretations of rabbis, about the Talmud, necessarily came into widespread use, even among other rabbis. In tacit concurrence with this premise, Katz comments, "The Rabbinate had never achieved institutional hierarchy and authority to the same degree as had the Catholic Church." (p. 10). The halakhic ruling of one rabbi does not have to be obeyed, or even known to, another rabbi. [Finally, there is no "Jewish pope" that could speak EX CATHEDRA, and dogmatically, authoritatively, and summarily waive or re-interpret sections of the Talmud.] How powerful are the effects of altered understandings of the Talmud in the first place? Just because certain Talmudic verses are variously held in abeyance, de-literalized, reinterpreted, made nonbinding, etc., this does not mean that they have vanished. Instead, they can retain their essence, albeit in a more subtle or modern context. This is especially the case when Talmudic verses are subject to circumvention, casuistry, or glosses. Finally, Yaacov Katz' entire Talmud apologetic does not add up. It is a collection of disparate events and personages, and it is unclear that there is necessarily any substantial connection between them. In addition, the reader has no way of knowing how representative they were of rabbinical Jewish thinking at the time. And even if they were validly representative, they do not, by themselves, tell us much about the course of normative Jewish Talmudic belief and Talmud-inspired conduct over the ages!

A TALMUDIC APOLOGETIC IN MEDIEVAL DISPUTATION Author Yaakov Katz begins his own Talmud apologetic by bringing up a disputation involving a Jewish convert, who had made harsh accusations against the Talmud. (p. 107). The information from this event is of dubious value. Whatever a Jewish disputant says about the Talmud is hardly credible, as the disputation is hardly a neutral Jewish-Christian forum, and the Jewish side is under obvious duress. (p. 106). Even then, the argument is fatally flawed. The Jewish rebuttal centered on the fact that Jews frequently disregard the Talmud, as vividly evidenced by their engaging in prohibited commercial activity with gentiles, and therefore gentiles should realize that Jews ALSO disregard ALL the controversial teachings of the Talmud. (p. 108). The NON SEQUITUR is palpable. The fact that certain Talmudic statements, pertaining to commercial and other practical matters, had fallen into disuse or been re-interpreted, does not necessarily imply the same for all essential Talmudic teachings on Jews

and gentiles. Much less do they imply some kind of fundamental change in traditional Jewish attitudes and practices towards gentiles! FAMOUS

JEWISH SAGES: TALMUDIC ANTIGOYISM PERSISTS TO MODERN TIMES

The author focuses on some Jewish personages. Again, he leaves it unclear as to what extent their ideas animated normative Jewish belief and conduct. However, it soon becomes clear that, whatever their movements towards Jewish universalism, and their rejection of the applicability of certain portions of the Talmud, these quoted sages nonetheless retained much of the standard Talmudic framework of Jewish supremacy and gentile inferiority. Rashi [1040-1105] and his views are described by Katz, "Rashi...included it [Christianity] in the term 'UNMOTH HA-'OLAM or under similar Talmudic expressions differentiating between Israel and all other nations." (p. 137). Judah Ha-Levi [1086-1167] believed that the chasm between the gentile and the Jew is so profound and so permanent that, when a goy converts to Judaism, he can never reach the highest level of religious attainment, and become a prophet. (p. 146). [Furthermore, Judah Ha-Levi not only believed that Jews are spiritually superior to gentiles, but also contended that this superiority was innate to Jews, and moreover was heritable. Moses Maimonides [1138-1204] was probably the most famous of medieval Jewish thinkers. He taught that the Talmudic laws, concerning the relationship between Jews and gentiles, were to be accepted as valid with regard to contemporary Christians. (p. 120). [In addition, Maimonides advocated the persecution of idolaters, including Christians, within a State of Israel, had such a state existed in the Middle Ages. Please click on, and read my detailed review, of *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration Before the Enlightenment*]. All this is perhaps ironic in view of the widespread opinion that Maimonides was very progressive for his time--so much so that his ideas got him in trouble with some rabbis. Menahem Ha-Me'iri [1249-1310(?)] comprehensively tackled the matter of the Talmud on dual morality. [This itself is tacit admission that dual morality is a real teaching in the Talmud, and not an invented anti-Semitic idea about the Talmud.] Ha-Me'iri insisted that Talmudic teachings that allowed for lower standards of Jewish morality, when Jews deal with gentiles as opposed to other Jews, and which failed to put Jew and gentile on the same legal and moral footing, were applicable only to ancient peoples. (p. 118). However, some scholars have suggested that Katz is engaging in an apologetic over-interpretation

of Ha-Meiri. Please read my review, of *How Should Rabbinic Literature Be Read in the Modern World? (Judaism in Context)*. In addition, the validity of Ha-Meiri's halakhic reasoning has been challenged, and there are numerous overall problems with the argument that old halakhic rulings have effectively done away with the antigoyism in the Talmud. [For details, see the online article, titled "*A Lonely Champion of Tolerance*", by David Goldstein]. In any case, Ha-Me'iri retained the standard, pejorative Talmudic view of the GOYIM, as is admitted by Katz, "Neither is there any doubt that, emotionally, Ha-Me'iri felt himself attached to the symbols of the Jewish religion and retained, like any other Jew of the Middle Ages, his aversion to the Gentile world." (p. 127). Maharal [1520-1609] is thus described by Katz, "However, his criticism [of Jews] did not affect his basic conception that Jews were, essentially, of a superior religious and moral caliber to others. Their inadequacies were incidental only, and attributable to the trials of the Exile; at a different level, Jewish deficiencies had a direct relationship to the Jews' superior spiritual nature." (p. 141; See also p. 148). Mordecai Jaffe [1530-1612] presented his interpretation of the Talmudic verse in YEVA MOTH 22a, wherein a convert to Judaism is like a new-born infant. (p. 147). Jaffe, based on the ZOHAR and centuries of Kabbalistic thinking (pp. 146-147), understood this as saying that the gentile convert to Judaism gets an implanted new spirit and soul from God, and it is just as if his former life had never been. (p. 147). [This clearly has traditional Talmudic overtones of the GOYIM being so far beneath Jews that they are effectively soulless savages--even virtual animals.]

JEWS, SLAVERY, AND USURY Until the 11th century, and sometimes later, Jews could own slaves. (p. 41). As for usury, both Christians and Jews employed a double standard. Christianity forbade usury among Christians, but regarded Jewish conduct as outside its jurisdiction. For its part, Judaism forbade Jew-on-Jew usury, but allowed Jew-on-gentile usury. (p. 57). **THE COSSACK REVOLTS** The usual trend nowadays, especially in Jewish-Ukrainian dialogue, is to blame Polish landlords for the Khmel'nitsky Uprising and the massive pogroms that followed. In contrast, Katz implicitly acknowledges that the Jews were also partly at fault. He writes, "Jewish authorities in Poland tried to deter Jews from tax-farming and Rabbi Joel Sirkes gave the reason--lest people should say that Jews wanted to rule over them...This is exactly the complaint uttered by Chmielnicki himself..." (p. 152). **JEWISH SELF-**

SEGREGATION Since time immemorial, Jews had preferred to live among their own kind. Compulsory ghettoization did not come until much later. Katz comments: "But contrary to what might be expected, the institution of the closed Jewish quarter was not in itself resented by Jews. It was accepted as a provision appropriate to a group of their status, and as corresponding to their social and religious needs; moreover, it provided a measure of security. Jews were content to be recognized as a socio-religious unit, distinct from the general population." (pp. 132-133).

Compassion for Humanity in the Jewish Tradition Sears, Dovid
1998 ***Jewish Universalism Mostly a Recent Development. Cheating the GOYIM: Immoral or Unwise?*** This work is an impressive collection of positive Jewish statements about gentiles. For instance, righteous non-Jews deserve a place in the World to Come (SANHREDRIN 105a). (p. 131). Maharal of Prague (1512-1609) taught that he shared the blessings that he got from God with all humankind. (p. 126). According to Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi, God's promise, to wipe away the tears from all faces, includes the faces of non-Jews as well as Jews. (p. 156). This book also includes Jewish concepts of the Messiah and of the Messianic age, especially its universalism. For instance, it interprets Isaiah 53 as describing the antecedent sufferings of the Jewish people, and interprets Isaiah 11 in a purely allegorical manner. Thus, according to this interpretation, the lion and the lamb dwelling together refer to Israel's warlike neighbors, and Israel, living in peace. (p. 153). **SOURCES OF INFORMATION** A small part of this book consists of the universalist verses in the Old Testament and the Talmud. As an example of Talmudic citations, Sears (p. 31) quotes BERAKOT 17a, which speaks of Jews living in peace with gentiles as well as non-Jews. He also (p. 29) quotes GITTIN 61a, which commands Jews to provide for the non-Jewish poor as well as the Jewish poor, to visit non-Jews as well as Jews when they are sick, and to attend the funerals of non-Jews as well as Jews, "for these are the ways of peace." However, the unmentioned preceding verse, in GITTIN 61a, as written in the online Babylonian Talmud (Soncino version), says "to avoid ill feeling". In addition, the portion quoted by Sears ends with "in the interests of peace", instead of "for these are the ways of peace." What, if anything, does all this mean? Sears does not say. Is it all altruism, or is it largely a

public-relations move? THE POST-ENLIGHTENMENT
 APPEARANCE OF LARGE-SCALE JEWISH UNIVERSALISM Most
 of this book consists of quotes and citations from 50 Jewish universalist-
 oriented thinkers, all of whom had lived many centuries after the Talmud
 had been written down, and quite a few of whom had lived in fairly recent
 times. Author David Sears includes biographical paragraphs of these
 Jewish thinkers. (pp. 199-218). Perhaps one shortcoming of this book is
 that it does not put the development of Jewish universalism in historical
 context. For this reason, I have done so, for the benefit of the reader. I
 have taken the 50 Jewish thinkers, and apportioned them by date of birth.
 Of these, 13 were born between 1000 and 1300 AD or CE. None were born
 between 1300 or 1400, and 2 were born between 1400 and 1500. The
 remainder were born in modern times. Of these, 9 were born between 1500
 and 1700. The remainder were born during and after the Enlightenment. Of
 these, 10 were born between 1700 and 1800, 14 were born between 1800
 and 1900, and 2 were born after 1900. (The latter, and total of 50, does not
 include quoted contemporaries, such as R. Ahron Soloveitchik and
 Menachem M. Schneerson.) JEWS SHOULD NOT DEFRAUD
 GENTILES—FOR ETHICAL OR FOR UTILITARIAN REASONS?

Author David Sears devotes an entire chapter (pp. 41-on) in apparent
 rebuttal to the claim that Judaism allows Jews to cheat, or steal from,
 gentiles. For example, he quotes from Rabbi Moshe Rikvah (1595-1761),
 who had lived in Wilno (Vilnius) during the Cossack revolts, and then was
 forced to move to Amsterdam. (p. 213). Rikvah said that, (quote) "I write
 this for future generations: I have seen many people become wealthy by
 causing non-Jews to err in business in order to gain profit thereby.
 However, they did not remain successful, in the end, all their wealth was
 confiscated by the government, and their descendants were left without an
 inheritance." (unquote). (p. 43). Is Rabbi Moshe Rikvah concerned about
 the defrauding of the GOYIM because it is morally wrong? Or is he
 concerned about the defrauding of the GOYIM because Jews may get
 caught and punished? WHY ISRAEL IS CALLED "ADAM" Here
 are some excerpts, from the author, on this subject, (quote) I have always
 found it difficult to understand the statement of our Sages that whenever
 the Torah uses the term ADAM (man), it refers only to Israel (YEVAMOS
 61a)...The Talmud also teaches that non-Jews possess the Divine image
 (AVOS 3:14)...The medieval Talmudic scholars of France (BAALEI

TOSEFOS) in their glosses on the Talmudic passage cited above point out that the collective singular HA-ADAM (man), with the definite article, does include non-Jews. If non-Jews are not designated by the term ADAM, why should the definite article make a difference? (unquote). (pp. 131-132). The justification for the conflation of Jews with ADAM is summarized by the author, with the items in parentheses and brackets done by Sears, (quote) From this point of view, it would be inappropriate to call all people ADAM. Adam was so named because he was formed of the earth (Hebrew: ADAMAH), whereas the rest of his descendants were born of flesh and blood. [That is, he was formed directly by God; the rest of mankind was formed through natural procreation.] Israel alone deserves to be called by this name---not because of greater honor, but because, like Adam, all that happened to them, as well as their spiritual perfection, was the doing of the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, and not primarily the result of their own endeavor. (unquote). (p. 135). In addition, (quote) HA-ADAM (with the definite article) refers to all mankind; for we are all rational beings who possess the Divine image, Jews and non-Jews alike. (unquote). (p. 136). However, the logic here is a bit convoluted. After the Biblical Adam, all the GOYIM arose by natural procreation. However, this is also true of the Jews. The first Jew, Abraham, could perhaps be called ADAM, but all remaining Jews arose from natural procreation.

The Dual Morality, in the Talmud, That Governs Jews and Non-Jews

From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy Fraade, Steven D. 1991

Talmudic Dual Morality Governing Jews and the GOYIM: "It Depends on Whose Ox is Gored" The foregoing teaching appears not only in the Talmud, but in other rabbinical literature. By way of introduction, author Steven D. Fraade writes, "There the context is the interpretation of the mishnaic rule (BABA QAMMA 4:3) that an Israelite is not culpable if his ox gores the ox of a gentile, whereas a gentile whose ox gores that of an Israelite must pay full damages regardless whether or not the gentile's ox was a habitual gorer." (p. 52). RATIONALIZING THE

DOUBLE STANDARD ON THE TREATMENT OF JEWS AND NON-JEWS

Much of this book is a discussion of the means that the rabbis, of Talmudic times, had attempted to warrant the inequality of Jews and the GOYIM in Jewish law. Of course, none of them actually justify the denial to the gentile of basic fairness, such as indemnifying him for a gored ox, or returning his stolen property! Rather, they appear to be religious ways of justifying the racist notion that a Jew, by virtue of being a Jew, is entitled to various contrived entitlements that the GOY is not. However, I provide some examples of the rationalizations for the interested reader. There was the argument that gentiles had rejected the Torah and the Noahide laws. (p. 52). According to the Babylonian Talmud (BABA QAMMA 38a), a Jew could appropriate the property of the gentile because, after all, the GOYIM had rejected the Torah and Noahide laws, one of which prohibits stealing, and so God "loosened" their property to Israel. (p. 216). In addition, the property of a gentile is "fair game" to the Jew because the gentile is not included in "his fellow" as specified in Exodus 21:35 (Bavli BABA QAMMA 38a). (p. 216). Still another Talmudic teaching (Bavli BABA QAMMA 113a-b) normally disallows the stolen property of a gentile, but allows for his lost property. (p. 217). In MEKILTA TO DEUTERONOMY, God proves his greater love to Israel by allowing the Jews to possess the lost, but not stolen, belongings of the gentiles. (p. 217). There was probably no "evolution" in attitudes towards gentiles: Different views of the propriety of stealing from a gentile coexisted in different discursive settings. (p. 218). Finally, the stealing of property from the gentile was forbidden if, using modern language, it would be bad public relations for the Jews. (p. 225).

NO CLEAR REASON FOR ASSUMING THAT JEWS ARE MORALLY SUPERIOR TO NON-JEWS The gentiles-rejected-Torah rationalization is internally inconsistent. For instance, a passage in MEKILTA states that God had never intended for the nations to receive the Torah, as they would never be able to fulfill it. (p. 197). [Parenthetically, does this not imply a bit of Jewish self-righteousness, in that it implies that non-Jews cannot keep the Torah while Jews are presumably morally superior because they can?] There are also contradictory views on whether the nations have no share [HELEQ] in the Torah, or if they do. (p. 201). In fact, SIFRE has an acknowledged "exclusivist attitude towards the nations" (p. 214) that strongly opposes the nations studying the Torah. (p. 214). There is also internal inconsistency in the usage of the doctrine of the

Noahide laws. Fraade quips, "These two somewhat conflicting views of the Noahide laws--that their authority derives from divine fiat or from human acceptance--are found elsewhere in rabbinic sources." (p. 198). [So how can the GOYIM be legally mistreated, in accordance with Jewish law, because of something over which they even had no choice?] The vacuous character of the Noahide-laws argument is further shown the following: According to the SIFRE, the nations rejected the seven Noahide commandments that they had previously accepted. (p. 227). NO JEWISH MORAL SUPERIORITY IS EVEN NEEDED Commentaries in the SIFRE and TOLEDOT ADAM speak of an arbitrary Jewish status that is independent of any presumed superiority of moral conduct of the Jews over the goyim. Fraade comments, "Incidentally, it should be stressed that our commentary does not so much credit Israel with having fulfilled the commandments as with having accepted, and continuing to accept, them. Israel may also include murderers, adulterers, and robbers, but it knows that such behavior does not accord with the covenantal obligations it bears." (p. 198). CONCLUDING REMARKS The author provides a variety of interesting information. For instance, he suggest that stories of meetings between rabbis and Roman officials serve as confirming foils for rabbinic self-understandings. (p. 215). The content of this book overlaps that of another involving author Steven F. Fraade. See my detailed review of: *THE OTHER IN JEWISH THOUGHT AND HISTORY*, by Silberstein and Cohn (next item, this collection).

The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity Silberstein, Laurence J. 1994 ***Rabbinic Dual Morality Governing Jews and Gentiles: A Real Issue. Futility of Exculpations*** Of this anthology, I focus on the scholarly work of Steven D. Fraade. He squarely faces the dual justice system that governs Jews and gentiles, and does so without evasion or apologetics. He notes that, "There are surprisingly few critical treatments of the topic of Jewish attitudes to non-Jews in ancient times." (p. 159). One commonly hears of the dual morality in the Talmud [PODWOJNA MORALNOSC], but the reader quickly learns, from this work, that it is true of other rabbinical literature as well. Steven D. Fraade is Mark Taper Professor of the History of Judaism at Yale University. His candor is refreshing. DUAL

MORALITY ON INDEMNIFICATION FOR A GORED OX. JEWS ARE SELECTIVELY EXEMPT Author Fraade quotes from MISHNAH BABA QAMMA 4:3 'If an ox of an Israelite gored an ox of a gentile, the owner is not culpable. But if an ox of a gentile gored an ox of an Israelite, regardless whether it is harmless (TAM) or an attested danger (MUAD), the owner pays full damage.'" (p. 147)

DUAL MORALITY ON BLOODSHED, RETURN OF STOLEN PROPERTY, ETC. Author Fraade quotes from TOSEFTA ABODAH ZARAH 8(9)4-5: "Concerning bloodshed, how so? A gentile against a gentile or a gentile against an Israelite is culpable (HAYYAB), [whereas] an Israelite against a gentile is exempt (PATUR). Concerning robbery, whether stealing or robbing, or taking a beautiful woman captive (Deut 21:11), or the like: a gentile against a gentile or a gentile against an Israelite is prohibited (ASUR), [whereas] an Israelite against a gentile is permitted (MUTAR)." (p. 149). In addition, author Fraade quotes from SIFRE TO DEUTERONOMY 344 "The robbed property of a gentile is permitted, while the robbed property of an Israelite is forbidden, but we will not report this to the government.'" (p. 153).

A JEW SHOULD AVOID ROBBING A GENTILE--WHEN NECESSARY FOR TACTICAL REASONS (PUBLIC RELATIONS) Author Fraade quotes from TOSEFTA BABA QAMMA 10:15 "One who robs from a gentile is liable to return [what he robbed]. Robbing from a gentile is viewed more strictly than robbing from an Israelite...because of profanation of the divine name.'" (p. 150). In addition, author Fraade quotes from TALMUD BABA QAMMA 4:3 (4b) "At that moment, Rabban Gamaliel decreed that the robbed property of a gentile be forbidden, because of profanation of the divine name.'" (p. 155).

ANALYSIS: JEWS ALLOWED TO KEEP THE STOLEN PROPERTY OF THE GOYIM Fraade comments, "Although the sages disagree whether the robbed property of a gentile must be restored, they all agree that there is no such legal obligation to restore the lost property of a gentile...In other words, a Jew MAY retain the stolen property of a gentile, EXCEPT where by so doing, he would bring disrepute to the Jewish NOMOS. Legally, the gentile's lost property falls outside the scriptural obligation to return the lost property to one's 'brother' (Deut 22:3), but metalegally, under certain circumstances (which cannot be fully predetermined), it should be treated as if within." (p. 157; Emphasis in original).

THE ANTI-GOYISM IN RABBINICAL LITERATURE TROUBLED THE RABBIS. EXCULPATIONS ARE AS CONTRIVED AS

THEY ARE VACUOUS! We sometimes hear arguments that the offending passages variously are mistranslations, misunderstandings, the imaginations of anti-Semites, or are long-defunct teachings that had self-evidently applied only to the pagan peoples of Talmudic times. Not so! Author Steven Fraade concludes, "Rabbinic rules that treat non-Jewish Others other than they treat their own *have troubled interpreters of rabbinic thought from early rabbinic times until the present*. From medieval until most recent times, such troubled interpreters have sought to explain away these embarrassing rules: 1) They represent a merely THEORETICAL position that was never accepted in practice. 2) They represent a MINORITY view but not the halakhah (as first expressed in medieval codes). 3) They represent a necessary short-term response to gentile economic or political oppression of the Jews at a very specific time and place in history. These reductive explanations, whatever their apologetic advantages, fail to engage the diversity and complexity of early rabbinic constructions of our problematic: the anomalous place of the gentile within the Jewish NOMOS." (pp. 157-158; Emphasis added). THE AUTHOR'S OWN ARGUABLY-REDUCTIVE EXPLANATION Fraade attempts to account for the controversial teachings by stating that gentiles had no juridical status within the Jewish NOMOS; that Jewish laws may acknowledge the applicability of gentile laws when they intersect, but without granting them any constitutive bearing on the Jewish NOMOS; and that gentiles are also creatures of God, and so may benefit from the Jewish NOMOS. Thus, the Jewish laws, even when conciliatory to the GOYIM, were essentially based on what, in Fraade's words, are "complete exclusivity and self-sufficiency of the Jewish NOMOS." (p. 158). However, this explanation merely restates the facts: It really doesn't explain anything. After all, belief in being the Chosen People of God, and of being a self-contained exclusive community with its own laws, is one thing. Teaching that a Jew is not required to grant fundamental decencies to the GOY, such as indemnifying his gored ox or returning his lost or stolen property, is quite another. It is racism, pure and simple. Interestingly, Fraade quotes Moses Maimonides, a famous well-learned medieval rabbi who defended the teaching about the Jew not having to indemnify the GOY for a gored ox. Maimonides said, "For whoever lacks the human qualities is not a true person, and his purpose is only to serve the true person." (p. 160). Notice the presumption in deciding who is or is not a "true person", if not

summarily deciding that a Jew, by virtue of being a Jew, is a "true person". This has overtones of Jews as the Master Race!

Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages

Katz, Jacob 1973 ***Jews and the GOYIM: Candor About the Ongoing Implications of Talmudic Dual Morality. Jews and Commerce: Why Endek-Led Boycotts Were Necessary*** This work

is mostly about the internal affairs of Jewish communities in Europe. Owing to its exhaustive detail, I focus on a number of items relevant to Jewish-gentile relations. [My review is based on the 1993 hardback edition, by Jacob Katz and Bernard Dov Cooperman.] CHRISTIANS ARE NOT IDOLATERS. BUT WHAT EXACTLY DOES THAT MEAN? The author repeats his earlier contention that, owing to increasing commercial contacts with Christians, combined with the fact of Talmudic prohibitions against Jews dealing with heathen, the Jews were thereby forced to disavow Christians as idolaters, and to re-imagine the Talmudic antigoyism as applicable only to the non-Jews of ancient times (Canaanites, Romans, etc.). The same line of reasoning was employed as a defense by Jews during medieval disputations. There are numerous problems with Katz' chain of reasoning, which I elaborate in my review of Katz' *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times (Scripta Judaica, 3)*, to which I refer the interested reader. In the present book, Yaacov Katz weakens his own argument, as he admits that, (quote) While contemporary thinkers acknowledged that Christianity at least approximated belief in one God, this view never penetrated deeply into public consciousness, and it is questionable whether it was even integrated into the philosophies of these thinkers themselves. (unquote)(p. 25). R. Moses Isserles (1525-1572) permitted Jews to engage in the trade of Christian religious objects. He called the Rosary "strings of knots called PTOR HAVILIM" (p. 20), which apparently is a play on PATER NOSTER, and which means "unravel vanities". (p. 261). [The informed reader probably realizes that, in Jewish thinking, vanity and polytheism are conflated.] THE DUAL MORALITY OF THE TALMUD IN CONTEXT

Author Jacob Katz portrays, what he acknowledges as the duality in Jewish law and ethics, as something that was primarily relevant to the time when Jews lived on their own land, and needed methods to protect

themselves from the contamination of the pagans that lived among them. This could include such severe Talmudic measures as permitting theft from a gentile, refraining from saving a gentile's life, and even the destruction of gentiles. (p. 32). [So what's this commonly-voiced complaint about Polish anti-Semitism? If Jews can defend their culture from inimical pagan influences, as Jews see fit, why cannot the Poles defend their nation and Catholic culture from inimical Jewish influences, as Poles see fit?] Of course, the issues ran deeper. Elsewhere, Jacob Katz acknowledges (p. 36) that Jews assumed themselves to be better than other peoples.

HALAKHIC DECISIONS REGARDING "JEWS CAN CHEAT GENTILES" The author squarely examines this controversial and oft-emotional issue. He goes into considerable detail. Let the reader first consider, for example, the situation where a gentile thought that a bowl he was selling was made of copper, when it was actually made of gold, and the Jewish buyer knew this, yet took advantage of the goy's mistake by quietly paying the requested price for a bowl made of copper. [BABA KAMMA 113b. I invite the reader to look this up in the online Babylonian Talmud (Soncino version), as I did.] Now let us examine the ramifications of the foregoing. Whatever the merits of the Talmud-does-not-apply-to-Christians argument, many of its provisions certainly can. Consider Ya'ir Hayim Bacharach (b. Moses Samson, d. 1702). Katz comments, "R. Bacharach was not only a halakhic expert; as is well known, he was also possessed of broad erudition and was familiar with current events...Note that Bacharach also ruled that from a halakhic point of view it was permissible to profit from a gentile's error." (pp. 270-271). Note that Bacharach said this now 1,200 years after the last of the Talmud had been written down! We thus clearly see that this was NOT a long-defunct issue of Talmudic times applicable only to ancient pagans. Moreover, it remained a subject of ongoing rabbinical debate, as elaborated in the next section.

HOW UTILITARIAN ARE JEWISH ETHICS? As noted earlier, the antigoyism of the Talmud had to be softened because the circumstances of Jewish life in Europe prevented its full implementation. Thus, Katz writes, (quote) The conditions under which Jewish society lived necessitated the cancellation of those laws concerning relations with gentiles that, if followed, could have brought tragedy down upon the community. Questions of ethics aside, utilitarian considerations forbade the Jews of the Middle Ages and of sixteenth through eighteenth centuries to rule that theft from a

gentile was permissible. But such rules could not simply be arbitrarily revoked. Rather, traditional methods of exegesis, the twisting of the legal ruling in the desired direction, were used to negate the tradition. In this manner, already in the Middle Ages it was declared that theft from a gentile is forbidden. Indeed, IF THE MATTER MIGHT BECOME KNOWN TO GENTILES and thus result in the "desecration of God's name," even misleading a gentile was forbidden. Under similar circumstances one was obliged to return something that a gentile had lost. Still, the fact that these two rulings, returning the lost article and not misleading the gentile, DEPENDED ON WHETHER OR NOT THE MATTER MIGHT BECOME KNOWN bears witness to the fact that the older rule was not negated in principle. Profiting from a gentile's error when the Jew had no part in that error was not forbidden, and the Jew could do so with no pangs of conscience. During the Middle Ages and into the modern era we continue to find halakhic authorities deciding which of two Jews had the right to profit from a gentile's mistake when there was some doubt as to who held the property in question first. (unquote)(Emphasis added). (pp. 33-34).

REAL-LIFE IMPLICATIONS OF TALMUDIC DUAL MORALITY EVEN IN RECENT TIMES The reader should consider the practical implications, of taking advantage of a gentile's mistake, in light of the fact that, for many centuries, Jews had knowledge and experience with monetary matters in a way that few gentiles did. The consequences are not difficult to deduce. How often did it happen, for example, that a Polish peasant or even nobleman turned to a Jewish usurer for help, while not fully understanding either the financial consequences of indebtedness, or his vulnerability to being taken advantaged of? IMPLICATIONS OF JEWISH UTILITARIAN ETHICS We can now move beyond what I call "hard utilitarianism" (e. g., the fear of being caught) with what I call "soft utilitarianism" (e. g, not defiling oneself). Katz (p. 272) cites Zvi Ashkenazi (1660-1718), who wrote that the Torah command for Jews not to harm plants or animals [or the GOYIM] is not for the sake of the object of the action, but for the Jew--so that he can implant upright qualities in his soul. What about the emergence of ethics as abstract--as opposed to utilitarian--principle, among the Jews? Katz consider this a relatively recent development. (p. 37). JEWS, FARMING, AND REAL ESTATE The author rejects the argument that Jews generally avoided land ownership, and agriculture, because they were forbidden to do so. They did so by

choice. In medieval Poland, there had been no restrictions on Jews owning land (p. 273), and the prohibitions against land ownership, in other nations, were no more decisive than those, for example, directed against Jewish involvement in coin minting, in which the Jews nevertheless engaged. (p. 41). Instead, Yaacov Katz repeats the argument that Jews avoided owning land because they constantly anticipated relocation, and so needed their wealth to be portable. This, too, is not supported by the facts. Please see my review of: *The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492* (Paperback)--by Maristella Botticini [2014 Edition].

JEWS ACTIVELY UPHOLD JEWISH ECONOMIC PRIVILEGES. (WHY JEWS WERE BOYCOTTED)

The author dissents from the notion that Jews created capitalism. Instead, Katz sees Jews as eventual large-scale participants in the pre-existing gentile-created state capitalism and free-market capitalism. (pp. 45-on). In particular, Katz rejects Werner Sombart's contention that Jews were long committed to the principles of free trade. He writes, (quote) ...many communal ordinances were intended to protect the economic interests of Jewish society from external competition, and this consideration provided a convincing argument, or at least a rationalization, for maintaining monopolies among members of Jewish society: Unrestrained competition was ultimately to the benefit of the non-Jews upon whom the Jews depended for their livelihood. In order "not to lose Jewish money", it was necessary for Jews to limit competition among themselves. (unquote). (p. 50). According to Katz (p. 278), the foregoing principle was based on the Talmudic phrase, "The Torah cares for the money of the Jews" (YOMA, folio 39a)(and regardless of the exact context of its Talmudic usage). [In the online Babylonian Talmud (Soncino version) YOMA 39a, reads, 'The Torah has consideration for the money of Israel'. See also YOMA 44b.] Consider some implications for this in terms of Polish-Jewish relations. The centuries-old Jewish hegemony over Poles was maintained in part by the naturally self-perpetuating character of inequities, and in part by Jews "sticking together" to drive nascent Polish competitors out of business. This was answered by the (much-condemned but frankly understandable) Endek-led boycotts of Jewish businesses in pre-WWII Poland. There was no other way of ending the Jewish economic dominance of Poland, and of creating appreciable numbers of business opportunities for Poles.

Jews and Words Oz, Amos 2012 ***Insights Into Chutzpah, What "Whoever Saves One Soul" Really Means, and Talmudic Dual Morality***

The authors are identified as a father and daughter--one a historian and the other a writer and literary scholar. (p. ix). This volume is a companion to the Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization. (inside cover). This book clearly adopts the liberal view that almost nothing of the Bible is historically accurate. However, it offers some fascinating insights into certain aspects of Jewish tradition, and I focus on these. I encourage the reader to look up the quoted Talmudic passages in the Online Babylonian Talmud (the site includes halakha.com) as I did. It is a rewarding experience.

TALMUDIC ORIGINS OF THE TERM CHUTZPAH The authors focus on the often-disputatious nature of Judaic discourse, and add that, "The word CHUTZPAH, by the way, stems from the Talmudic concept of an 'impudent court of justice,' BEIT DIN CHATZUF, where two laymen pass judgment on financial disputes, even though the sages decreed that three laymen are a minimal quorum for such decisions. Typically enough, the rabbis disagreed on the question of whether the impudent court's rulings are acceptable. Some said yes. CHUTZPAH may be annoying, but it is here to stay." (p. 17). [The unmentioned Talmudic source, of the discussion surrounding BEIT DIN CHATZUF, is Sanhedrin 3a-b.]

SAVING A SOUL (HUMAN LIFE)--OF A JEW ONLY, OR ALSO THAT OF A NON-JEW? The authors comment, "The Mishnah comments on Genesis crisply and lucidly: 'Therefore man was created singly in the world, to teach you that whoever destroys a single soul [NEFESH], it counts as if he destroyed a full world; and whoever saves one soul, it counts as if he saved a full world.' The Babylonian Talmud repeats this phrase with a small and vital change: 'a single soul of Israel,' it says. Today, some people quote the universal version and others quote the Israel-centered version, at times in edgy political contexts. So let us spell it out very clearly: we are dumping the Talmudic addendum. We are relegating it to the basement, to gather dust among other unwanted heirlooms. The Mishnaic phrase, by contrast, is part of our living room furniture." (pp. 176-177). Oz and Oz-Salzberger specify the sources of this ambivalent interpretation as follows, "'Whoever saves one soul' is in the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5. The rephrasing into 'soul of Israel' is in the

Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 37a." (p. 221). The fact that the authors are relegating the ethnocentric Jewish version to the cellar of history does not necessarily mean that other Jews are also following suit. In fact, their very statements quoted above alone show that the ethnocentric version is still very much in current use! Moreover, this issue has unmentioned implications when it comes to the rescue of Jews, during the German-made Holocaust, by so-termed righteous gentiles. In fact, Yad Vashem includes the "universalist" Mishnaic quote on its medal of the Righteous for eligible awardees. However, to some, the term "righteous gentile" evokes suspicions of Jewish supremacism, in which a Jewish life is considered more valuable than the life of a GOY--especially in light of the ambivalent definition of the "soul" that is rescued. In addition, the term "righteous gentile" may imply that the righteousness of a GOY is defined in terms of his value to the Jew, and, furthermore, that a gentile who could not or did not rescue a Jew was necessarily unrighteous. This also maps into the never-ending Jewish complaints that "so few" Poles rescued Jews during the Shoah.

THE DUAL MORALITY IN THE TALMUD THAT GOVERNS JEWS AND NON-JEWS The authors themselves criticize the Bavli, in this regard, as they quip, "The Babylonian Talmud distinguishes between saving Jews and non-Jews on the Sabbath in Yoma 84b. The rabbis debate detail several hypothetical groups of persons needing to be rescued on the Sabbath: nine Jews and one foreigner, as against nine foreigners and one Jew. NOT THE TALMUD'S FINEST HOUR." (p. 221; Emphasis Added).

Rabbis That Wrestled With the Racism in Rabbinic Literature

Untold Tales of the Hasidim: Crisis and Discontent in the History of Hasidism Assaf, David 2010 ***Not Only Christian Authorities Censored Jews: Jewish Authorities Also Censored Jews! Rabbis Acknowledge and Condemn Talmudic Racism.*** This work focuses on the often-disagreeable and sometimes violent antagonisms between different factions of Jews. This includes conflicts between the followers of different rabbis, and the conflicts between the Hasidim and mitnagdim, and those between traditional Jews and maskilim (enlightened

Jews). Most of the events described in this book took place in the 18th and 19th centuries, in Eastern Europe.

CENSORSHIP OF JEWS NOT ONLY BY CHRISTIAN AUTHORITIES, BUT ALSO BY JEWISH AUTHORITIES

The author describes the suppression of unwanted information within the Jewish community, (quote) Books in disfavor with certain rabbis (or with activists closely associated with them) can therefore be banned and even burned or otherwise destroyed. But this is uncommon...memory-preserving mechanisms largely employ censorship; both external and internal...But the main method of censorship is self-restraint on the author's part...This spontaneous self-censorship was grounded not in fear of revealing Torah secrets, but in the author's piety and sincere desire to preserve the honor of zaddikim. (unquote). (pp. 15-16). Nowadays, censorship of religious text is usually remembered, and lamented, as something imposed, by heavy-handed Christian authorities, on the Jews and their Talmud. In contrast, author David Assaf provides many examples--complete with pictographs--of Jewish writings that were freely censored (deliberately changed, as by retouching and airbrushing), not by Christians, but by other Jews, and solely for the Jews' own purposes. (pp. 16-21).

USE OF JESUS CHRIST AS A DEROGATORY TERM

Author David Assaf describes the polemic of Hayyim Krauss against the real or supposed maskil, Yitshak Satanow (1752-1804). Krauss uses the term "that man" to refer derisively to Satanow, and Assaf identifies "that man" as usually referring to Jesus. (pp. 25-26).

VIOLENCE BY JEWS AGAINST OTHER JEWS In the mid-19th century, the factional conflict between Bratslav Hasidism, and other forms of Hasidism, repeatedly became violent. (pp. 120-153). They were, in effect, Jew-on-Jew pogroms. Jewish violence against Bratslav Hasidim continued into the early 20th century. (pp. 149-150).

JEWISH RACISM IN THE TALMUD SQUARELY FACED! There is a very interesting chapter, in this book, about Rabbi Menahem Nahum Friedman (1879-1933), who was born in Moldava (Romania). Friedman wrote PERUSH MAN, which featured a heated discussion between Friedman and a modern Jew. The setting of this discussion was a train that was travelling from Ancona to Rome. (p. 182). In the opinion of author David Assaf, the discussion between Rabbi Friedman and the modern Jew was a projection of the Rabbi's own troubling questions. (p. 183). Here is a selection of the content of the discussion in PERUSH MAN: (Quote) In response, his

interlocutor posed a further question: how is it possible to explain the unethical attitude toward non-Jews evidenced in Talmudic sources and Halakha? In reply, Friedman quoted a plethora of citations indicating the low moral level and barbarism of non-Jews during the Talmudic period, also noting that the sages treated decent non-Jews and non-Jewish scholars with respect, and moreover demanded fair treatment for them. The conversation between the two unfolds over several pages, with the traveler posing thorny questions and the young rabbi providing apologetic answers. Friedman's companion complained of the sages' and the halakhists's overt racism toward non-Jews, which contradicted his interlocutor's claim regarding their intense humanity and morality. Behold, he noted, an animal can be saved from drowning, as the prevention of cruelty to animals is a Pentateuchal command, but Maimonides rules that a non-Jew drowning in a river is not to be rescued: "Is that love for humanity? Can such laws be considered ethical?" Menahem Nahum replied that this ruling was directed at ancient idolaters, who were baser than, and inferior to, animals. Because these bestial humans not only treated Jews with extreme cruelty but also saw their lives as forfeit, any ethical being would therefore agree with the principle of "if a man comes to kill you, rise early and kill him first" (Babylonian Talmud BERAKHOT 58a) applies to them. But regarding non-Jews who are not suspected of spilling blood, the rabbis displayed a high moral attitude and required that they be treated equitably, like all Jews. (unquote). (p. 185).

ANALYSIS OF THE FOREGOING TALMUDIC APOLOGETIC This discussion, if nothing else, proves that Talmudic racism is not something that is imagined to be in the Talmud by anti-Semites. It is a real issue! The quoted apologetic of Rabbi Friedman, to begin with, only has some plausibility if one accepts the argument that the Talmudic verses applied only to the peoples of Ancient times, and not to gentiles who lived in more recent times. In addition, it only has plausibility if one believes that Jewish universalist sentiments can ipso facto cancel out Jewish racist sentiments. In terms of specifics, Rabbi Friedman's Talmud apologetic is ad hoc and unconvincing, for at least these reasons: 1. Mind reading. The apologist supposes, but has no way of knowing, that the antigoy verses were directed only at very-immoral gentiles. 2. The apologist supposes, but has no way of knowing, the extremity of the circumstances (if any) at the time of the writing of the antigoy verses. Moreover, the "extremity of circumstances" argument skirts around the usage of these

verses in more normal, non-extreme times. 3. The antigoy teachings are a form of presumption. They presuppose that Jews are in a valid position to make summary judgments of the conduct of non-Jews. This, in effect, self-elevates Jews to the position of moral arbiters of non-Jewish conduct. This, at very least, is a form of Jewish elitism that flirts with racism. 4. The antigoy verses are of a sweeping nature, and, for that reason alone, are inescapably racist. Surely the rabbinical authors knew that a large fraction of gentiles, and not just a few individuals, were free from debauchery or gross immorality. 5. The antigoy verses reflect a self-righteous spirit among Jews. Surely the rabbinical authors, of all people, knew that Jews are not some kind of paragons of virtue. Furthermore, the authors of the Talmud certainly knew, or should have known, that Jews are capable of rivaling, and even exceeding, the debauchery of the heathen (e. g, 2 Kings 21:9; Ezekiel 5:6-7 and 16:47-48). 6. Finally, there is no hard evidence of a clear-cut dichotomy between the Jewish attitudes towards ancient peoples and the Jewish attitudes towards gentiles that lived in more recent, post-Talmudic times.

New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations Carlebach, Elisheva 2011 ***Includes Insights on Menahem Ha-Meiri and His After-The-Fact Disavowal of Talmudic Antigoyism Towards Christians***

This work is more technical than the usual works on this subject. Because it presents so much information, I focus on a few topics.

THE TESTIMONIUM FLAVIANUM, ATTRIBUTED TO JOSEPHUS, MAY BE AUTHENTIC AFTER ALL Louis H. Feldman examines the TESTIMONIUM FLAVIANUM. He presents the usual arguments against its authenticity, such as the premise (or preconception) that no Jew would make some of the statements in it. There is also the admittedly ARGUMENTUM EX SILENTIO, but one that is considered to have weight, as no less than eight prominent Christian writers, who lived before Eusebius, fail to mention the TESTIMONIUM FLAVIANUM. (p. 15). [However, this non-mention must be kept in perspective. For instance, how many ancient Roman documents, written at the time of Pontius Pilate, mention him? Yet this hardly constitutes evidence for his nonexistence!]

Interestingly, Feldman discusses the work of David L. Mealand. This scholar compared the TESTIMONIUM with undisputed works of Josephus, and against Greek and Christian literature as "background", focusing on the phraseology used and the complexity of the language, using considerable detail in doing so. He provisionally concluded that the passage about Jesus in Josephus is genuine. (p. 21).

WHY SOME MEDIEVAL JEWS WERE FORCED TO WEAR THE STAR

Some anti-Christian academics read history backwards. They have tried to equate the 20th Century Nazi requirement, of Jews wearing the Star, with the centuries-earlier practices, of some Christian nations, of requiring Jews to wear the Star. The two are not remotely comparable. Debra Kaplan points out that the 1215 Christian decree, institutionalizing the Jewish badge, was designed to distinguish Jew from Christian in order to prevent sexual improprieties. It was unremarkable. In fact, it was a mirror-image of Talmudic law (SHABBAT 17b), wherein the Jew is forbidden from sharing bread, wine, and oil with non-Jews, lest it lead to sexual relations or intermarriage. (p. 258).

RABBI HA-MEIRI'S "MAKEOVER" OF THE TALMUD: A MARGINAL AND CONFLICTED OPINION

Author Yaakov Elman evaluates Menachem Ha-Meiri's teachings on the dual morality in the Talmud as applicable solely to the pagan peoples of Talmudic times, and not to Christians. He writes, (quote) On the other hand, explaining Meir's view of Christianity as stemming from his philosophical orientation, a solution originally proposed by Katz and championed by Halbertal and Stern, has several major drawbacks. First of all, as noted, Maimonides himself--the philosopher PAR EXCELLENCE in Meiri's world--considered Christianity to be 'AVODAH ZARAH even as he considered Islam to be a legitimate Abrahamic religion; significantly, however, he did not remove the halakhic disabilities from Muslims, with the exception of that recorded in B. BAVA' KAMMA" 38a regarding legal discrimination against non-Jews in the area of tort law. This should immediately give us pause. Moreover, Meiri's view is not even typical of Provencal Jewish culture. (unquote). (p. 269). He adds that, (quote) Still, the tentative personal nature of Meiri's interpretive strategy is illustrated by his inconsistencies even in regard to economic and commercial matters. (unquote). (p. 287). Elman then elaborates on these in much detail.

RABBI HA-MEIRI'S "MAKEOVER" OF THE TALMUD: PUBLIC RELATIONS? UNIVERSALISM? BOTH? Author Yaakov Elman further analyzes Menachem Ha-Meiri's teachings on the antigoyism in the

Talmud as applicable solely to the pagan peoples of Talmudic times, and not to Christians. He comments, (quote) Of course, a complicating factor is the strong incentive to apologetic presentation of the "Jewish" view of these matters. Indeed, we must always be cautious about taking statements regarding the "Jewish view" even by halakhists, who may have had at least one eye out for the Christian censors or just for non-Jewish anger at an unvarnished presentation of that view. Despite all this, it would seem that Meiri may indeed have been the first medieval rabbi who discerned the human being behind the rabbinic label--and dared to write about it.

(unquote). (pp. 276-277). **ONLY JEWS ARE DESIGNATED 'ADAM': A FORM OF JEWISH ELITISM** The use of the term ADAM, as a proprietary term for Jews, is commonly argued not to imply that only Jews are human beings. Even if so, Jews='ADAM remains a Jewish supremacist construct--notwithstanding some universalist elements brought into association with it. Interestingly, Ha-Meiri, for all his professed distinction between ancient pagans and medieval Christians, excluded both from 'ADAM-hood. Yaakov Elman assesses this as follows, (quote) Let us be clear about the significance of Meiri's interpretation here. A non-Jew may study Torah and be likened to a Jewish high priest, but he remains a non-Jew who is not called 'ADAM. We may greet him, we may prepare food for him on a festival, we may give him gifts--we may even recognize and acknowledge his spiritual gifts, as Meiri did to that non-Jewish scholar--but he will not reach that exalted status of 'ADAM-hood. (unquote). (p. 283).

INSIGHTS ON NON-JEWS PUNISHED WITH DEATH FOR OBSERVING THE SABBATH OR STUDYING TORAH By way of introduction, author David Schatz writes on certain passages in SANHEDRIN 58b-59a, (quote) The parameters of these prohibitions are a matter of debate. According to Maimonides, a non-Jew may not even establish Sabbath on a weekday. (unquote). (p. 498). Author Schatz evaluates all this in the context of the attempt to preserve Jewish distinctiveness. Ironically, a "live and let live" attitude may itself reinforce this distinctiveness. He quips, (quote) Laws stating that a Gentile who observes the Sabbath or engages in Torah study is deserving of death fit poorly with an irenic understanding of the separation between Jewish and Gentile religion. With regard to Judaism's eschatological vision, the view that Gentiles will not convert to Judaism could likewise reflect a vision that Jewish particularity and separateness will be preserved throughout the

eschaton, which is to say, forever. For that matter, although the notion that a righteous Gentile attains the World to Come can be plausibly traced to a universal sensibility, it could also be seen, following a point made earlier about proselytizing, as a way of rendering conversion pointless and thus preserving Jewish particularity. (unquote). (pp. 498-499).

Uncensored Talmudic Attacks on Jesus Christ

Birkat Haminim Teppler, Yaakov 2007 *The*
Uncensored Talmud Condemning and Cursing Jesus Christ--Which Started Long Before Christians Were Even in a Position to Persecute Jews! The core of BIRKAT HAMINIM derives from the Babylonian Talmud (Berakhot 28b-29a). (p. 2). It was written in the Yavneh period, after the Second Temple, and was presented as a BARAITA, which included the obligation to say it as a whole, and without any mistake. This, in turn, implied that it had a special status. (p. 3). THE FULL TEXT OF THE BABYLONIAN RITE (BIRKAT HAMINIM) Teppler quotes this blessing/curse as follows: For the apostates let there be no hope and the NOTZRIM and the MINIM perish in an instant may they be blotted out of the Book of Life and not inscribed with the righteous Blessed are You, Lord [who] humbles the arrogant. (unquote). (p. 23). THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN CHARACTER OF THE BIRKAT HAMINIM Teppler introduces this subject as follows, (quote) From its text, we may surmise that when it was written, BIRKAT HAMINIM was a curse directed against some group...As already noted, there is wide agreement among scholars that BIRKAT HAMINIM relates to the stage when Christianity separated from Judaism. (unquote). (p. 4). The author continues, (quote) Justin Martyr from Flavia Neapolis [Schechem], write a polemical work against Judaism in the middle of the second century CE, where he mentions several times that the Jews curse the Christians in their synagogues. This is the first evidence of its sort from the Christian side, and we may presume that it is a roundabout mention or allusion to BIRKAT HAMINIM. (unquote). (p. 5). He adds that, (quote) Even if Justine did not relate explicitly to BIRKAT HAMINIM, the blessing was in fact being said in his day. (unquote). (p. 163). Clearly, then, the BIRKAT HAMINIM was not some kind of expression

of Jewish pain and anger in the face of Christian persecution. It originated long before Christianity was even in a position to persecute Jews!

CHRISTIANS AS NOTZRIM AND MINIM Teppler comments, (quote) The ruling opinion among scholars about the identity of the MINIM in the first centuries CE sees them above all as Jewish-Christian sects. (p. 29). However, he adds that, "...in general the relation of the rabbis to the MINIM was more to Christians, and less to an esoteric sectarian phenomenon like the Jewish-Christians." (p. 280). Teppler adds, (quote) Jerome, in the fourth century, is even closer to those of our conclusions which relate to his time. Jerome claims three times that the Jews curse the Christians under the name NOTZRIM. In contrast, in another source, Jerome says that in synagogues in the East there is a sect called MINIM among the Jews. This sect is rejected by the Pharisees, and is also called NOTZRIM by the Jews. Jerome's different use of words in his different works does not necessarily mean that he was confusing terms or contradicting himself. In the situation in the fourth century, these two things could have existed side by side, as we have seen in the Jewish sources. (unquote). (p. 163). Yaakov Y. Teppler concludes, (quote) There can be no doubt that Justin knew BIRKAT HAMINIM and saw it as a curse against Christianity in general. The tannaim constructed BIRKAT HAMINIM against the MINIM, and as we have seen, this included all the Christian manifestations, including Jewish Christianity, pagan Christianity and all the others. (unquote). (p. 357). Furthermore, (quote) The evidence of Epiphanius and Jerome, of a curse which is said three times a day against Christianity, under the title of "Nazarenes/NOTZRIM", is an exact description of BIRKAT HAMINIM in the fourth century, when "MINIM" became a wide-ranging term, while "NOTZRIM" was used specifically to curse Christianity in BIRKAT HAMINIM for religious and political reasons. (unquote). (p. 359). By about 1000 AD, with the Jewish-Christian sects having virtually died out, the term NOTZRIM was all the more unquestionably used by Jews to refer to Christianity in general. (p. 28).

CENSORED MENTIONS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE BAVLI

Teppler remarks, in allusion to Berakhot 17b; Sanhedrin 43a; 150A; 107b, and in the context of a discussion about ben Pantira [ben Pandera], as follows, (quote) In the source under discussion in the Babylonian Talmud, we find the title Jesus of Nazareth [HaNotzri]. (p. 288). Elsewhere, Teppler elaborates, (quote) Berakhot 17b: "such as Jesus the NOTZRI"; Sanhedrin

43a:"On Passover eve they hanged him, Jesus the NOTZRI"; ib103a:"You should not have a child or pupil who misapplies his learning [lit: spoils his food] in public like Jesus the NOTZRI"; ibid.107b:"And not like Joshua ben Perahyah who went to Jesus the NOTZRI with outstretched arms." (unquote). (p. 48). In citing the foregoing, Teppler cites, and thereby implicitly endorses, the conclusions of Travers-Herford and His *CHRISTIANITY IN TALMUD AND MIDRASH* (London, 1903). (p. 48).

DISGUISED ANTI-CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS IN THE TALMUD, BIRKAT HAMINIM, ETC. Author Teppler comments (quote) BIRKAT HAMINIM was still recognized as relating to Christianity by the Jewish rabbinical commentators of the Middle Ages such as Rav Sa'adiah Gaon, Rashi and the Rambam. Thus the foundation was laid which has guided most of the scholars who have dealt with the identity of the MINIM, in spite of the fact that Jewish apologetics of the later Middle Ages attempted from understandable motives to hide the anti-Christian polemic on both the Talmudic literature and the SIDDUR/prayer-book. (unquote). (p. 2; See also p. 231).

Jesus in the Talmud Schaefer, Peter 2007 **Very Scholarly:**
Includes an Ironic Counterpart to Christian Charges of Jewish Deicide

Agree with this author or not, he is no intellectual lightweight. He teaches Judaic studies at Princeton University, and Rabbi Burton L. Vizotzky (on the outside book cover), calls Schaefer the premiere "Christian-Hebraist" of our time. His approach rejects the extremes of Travers Herford, who saw Jesus in many Talmudic texts (p. 4), and Johann Maier, who saw virtually none. Maier had overemphasized the deconstruction of literary sources (pp. 5-8), and relied on a stilted history of manuscripts. (p. 144). The TOLEDOT YESHU is not part of this investigation. (p. 7). Although commonly thought of as being medieval, some versions of TOLEDOT YESHU may go back to Late Antiquity. (p. 2).

THE TALMUD ON JESUS CHRIST The most explicit Jesus passages in the Bavli (Babylonian Talmud) date back, at the earliest, to the late-200/early-300 A. D. (p. 8). Schaeffer includes a helpful tabular Appendix (pp. 132-144) that details the various editions of the Bavli, listing the relevant verses and their comparative translations. [As a non-Jew, I found it a rewarding experience to read the printed and online Talmud

myself. Particularly instructive verses deal with Jesus the Bastard Son (Sanhedrin 67a, Shabbat 104b), His execution (Sanhedrin 43a), and Him burning in hell in hot excrement (Gittin 57a). One useful online source, though in denial about Him in the Talmud, is the English Soncino Babylonian Talmud, located at halakhah.com.] GOING DEEPER: POINTS OF NON-CORRESPONDENCE. WHY? Discrepancies between Bavli and the New Testament accounts have been used to argue that there is no Talmudic reference to Jesus at all. Instead, such discrepancies can be accounted for by 1) The rabbis' superficial knowledge of Christianity reflected by frequent elementary blunders, 2) Accounts written in code so as to afford plausible denial in case of Christian hostility, and/or 3) A creative mockery of Christian doctrines. Schafer emphasizes the latter. RECYCLED PAGAN ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS

Except for not mentioning the name of the Child, the Bavli essentially repeats anti-Christian Celsus' tale of Jesus being the product of an adulterous affair involving the soldier Panthera/Pandera, as also mentioned by several rabbinical sources. (pp. 18-20). Contrary to objections, the name Panthera is not that common, and the story is distinctive and stable enough to refer unambiguously to Jesus. (e. g., p. 20, 141; see also p. 98). The account is a creative mockery of the Virgin Birth of Christ and His claim to be of Messianic Davidic lineage. BLAMING CHRISTIANITY FOR THE EVENTUAL HOLOCAUST: AN IRONY Traditional Christian teachings on Jewish responsibility for the death of Christ, though abandoned by most branches of Christianity, remain relevant. The German-Nazi made Holocaust has been blamed on these Christian teachings even though the connection between the two is, at most, extremely tenuous. Schaefer's research turns this on its head: The Jews not only admit responsibility for the death of Christ, but they actually take credit for it, and throw it back in the face of the Christians. (p. 74). DEICIDE? TAKING UNSTINTING CREDIT FOR THE DEATH OF CHRIST! The fact that the relevant Bavli accounts refer to stoning, and not Crucifixion of the malefactor, has been used to discount their association with the death of Jesus. Schaefer, instead, points out that the reference to stoning, and the ignoring of Pilate's sentence, were a way for Jews to assume complete credit for the execution of this seducing Jewish Heretic according to Jewish law (pp. 71-72). It may even be to take credit for being persistent in manipulating Pilate to have Jesus put to death in accordance with their judgment against Him. (p. 74).

SOME CLARIFICATIONS The reference to the malefactor's closeness to the Roman government has been used to discount it being a reference to Jesus, as He has never been known to have such ties. The answer is straightforward. For a time, Pilate was the Roman governor who was the protector of Jesus, seeing no criminality in Jesus, and trying to have Him spared and Barabbas crucified instead. (pp. 73-74). The reference to Jesus sentenced to an eternity in hell sitting in boiling excrement is a creative mockery of His Resurrection. (p. 82-on). It may even be a more creative mockery--of His teaching that foods pass through the person and come out in the latrine, but do not defile the person (Christ's point being that evil thoughts and deeds actually do.). (p. 91).

CONCLUSION The author provides much to consider. Even if Schaefer is completely mistaken about the Talmudic verses, and even if the Jews had nothing to do with the death of Jesus Christ, it certainly was not for lack of trying. The lucid Talmudic references as to what to do to with idolaters and false messiahs are unambiguous. Finally, even if the passages in the Talmud originally referred to someone else, this does not nullify them. They certainly came in handy as weapons against Jesus Christ.

EXCULPATIONS REJECTED The anti-Christian statements in the Talmud are commonly framed as a Jewish reaction to Christian persecution. Schafer, in contrast, thinks that the relevant persecution in Christian-ruled Palestine has been exaggerated. (p. 116). [Of course, the informed reader realizes that such events as the Crusades, expulsions of Jews from many Christian-majority nations, compulsory ghettoization, etc., were still centuries in the future.] In Babylon, the rulers at the time were Persian Zoroastrians, and they were the ones who persecuted, and they persecuted Christians more than Jews. (pp. 116-117). Far from being a lashing-out against Christian persecution, the anti-Christian teachings in the Bavli actually originated from the freedom of the Babylonian Jews to express their anti-Christian sentiments, and even as an act of Jewish-Persian collaboration against the Christians. (pp. 121-122).

Toledot Yeshu ("The Life Story of Jesus") Revisited: A Princeton Conference Deutsch, Yaacov 2011 ***Venomous Jewish "Counter-Gospel": It Led to Martin Luther's Retaliatory Venom Against Jews. (Why is Only Luther Blamed Today?? Answer: Anti-Christian Prejudice)***

This work contains numerous scholarly articles on TOLEDOT YESHU, and includes historical background on Jewish-Christian relations. For instance, Ora Limor and Israel Jacob Yuval discuss the massacre of Christians by Jews during the conquest of Jerusalem by the Sassanian Persians in the year 614 A. D. The number of Christians killed by Jews is estimated at between 4,000 and 90,000. (p. 207). In my review, I use the information contained in this book to refute the exculpations that posit that: 1) TOLEDOT YESHU was not about Jesus Christ; 2) TOLEDOT YESHU was anti-Jewish disinformation propaganda written by Jewish converts to Christianity; 3) TOLEDOT YESHU had no standing in Jewish thinking; 4) TOLEDOT YESHU came about because of Christian persecutions of Jews.

TOLEDOT YESHU--UNAMBIGUOUSLY ANTI-CHRISTIAN Some commentators would have us believe that the TOLEDOT YESHU does not refer to Jesus Christ, and that it has nothing to do with Christianity. It most certainly does. Philip Alexander comments, (quote) And, of course, if the TOLEDOT YESHU originated in some shape or form in late antiquity, as many would argue it did, then it is relevant to the question, because it has clear anti-Christian intent. (unquote). (p. 141. See also p. 137). Sarit Kattan Gribetz quips, (quote) Like the Book of Esther, which interweaves history with parody, TOLEDOT YESHU might best be understood as straddling these two genres, presenting the historical story of Jesus' life as worthy of mockery and ridicule. (unquote). (p. 180). Most forceful of all is Paola Tartakoff, who points out that, (quote) Like any kind of anti-Christian blasphemy, the TOLEDOT YESHU would have embarrassed apostates by mocking the tenets to which they had subscribed. (unquote). (p. 305).

TOLEDOT YESHU WRITTEN BY JEWS, AND NOT BY JEWISH CONVERTS Some commentators have made the exculpatory conjecture that Jews converting to Christianity fabricated the TOLEDOT YESHU--and did so in order to hopefully incite Christian persecution of Jews. Adina M. Yoffie points out that this argument

is totally without basis. She writes, (quote) While converts were involved in the transmission, and likely to some degree in the composition, of some manuscripts of the TOLEDOT YESHU, there is no reason not to see the TOLEDOT as an internal Jewish response to the Gospels and to Christianity. (unquote). (p. 64). TOLEDOT YESHU MORE IMPORTANT IN JEWISH THINKING THAN IS APPARENT Finally, some commentators have argued that TOLEDOT YESHU was insignificant in Jewish thinking, as it was hardly discussed in Jewish writings. However, Jews, for obvious reasons, were afraid to speak up too strongly and explicitly in a Christian world. (Philip Alexander, p. 142; Yaacov Deutsch, p. 291). In addition, the genre of TOLEDOT YESHU did not favor a prominent visible presence in Jewish thinking. Yaacov Deutsch comments, "Nonetheless, the paucity of references to TOLEDOT YESHU in Jewish sources is not necessarily a sign that it was not known to Jews in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, but a result of its folkloric nature and, also, of the fact that its transmission was mainly through oral venues." (p. 292). WHEN WAS TOLEDOT YESHU WRITTEN? The TOLEDOT YESHU itself was most likely written in the 8th century. (Eli Yassif, p. 102). [Note that it could not have been a reaction to significant Christian persecutions of Jews, such as the Crusade-related massacres (11th century) and the first expulsions of Jews (13th century), as these happened later]. THE TALMUDIC FOUNDATIONS OF TOLEDOT YESHU When exactly the TOLEDOT YESHU was first written is relatively unimportant, as the anti-Christian motifs within it go back at least to the time of the Babylonian Talmud--[BTW, to a time and place (Sassanid and later Islamic Iraq), where Christians were in no position to persecute Jews: Eli Yassif, p. 103. Note that this refutes the exculpatory argument that Jewish polemics against Christianity only developed when Christians were persecuting Jews. Clearly, this was not the case.] Yaacov Deutsch adds that, "Already in the writings of the Church Fathers we can find testimonies about Jewish traditions against Jesus that resemble some of the ideas that will later appear in TOLEDOT YESHU...These traditions do not include elements that are unique to TOLEDOT YESHU, but show that, already at a very early stage, Jews propagated rancorous opinions about Jesus and the holy family [Holy Family]." (p. 285). Let us touch on some Talmudic themes in TOLEDOT YESHU: Bavli Shabbat 104b--Jesus, the sorcerer, the son of Miriam (a hairdresser and adulterous woman), and

Jesus the illegitimate Son of Pandera (Ben Pandera). (Adina M. Yoffie, pp. 72-73; Sarit Kattan Gribetz, p. 155; Yaacov Deutsch, p. 292). [The story of Jesus as the offspring of Ben Pandera also goes back to Celsus, who attributed to a Jew: William Horbury, p. 59; See also Yaacov Deutsch, p. 285]. Bavli Sanhedrin 43a--the death of Jesus Christ, vicariously by stoning, at the hands of the Jews. (Adina M. Yoffie, p. 64). Bavli Gittin 56b-57a--Jesus is forced to spend eternity in hell in boiling excrement. (Adina M. Yoffie, p. 73; Michael Meerson, p. 192; Ora Limor and Israel Jacob Yuval, p. 203).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MARTIN LUTHER'S SELECTIVELY-CONDEMNED COMMENTS Widespread Christian awareness of the TOLEDOT YESHU did not develop until the 14th and 15th centuries (Yaacov Deutsch, p. 289), even though it had been written centuries earlier. Martin Luther became cognizant of the TOLEDOT YESHU owing to a copy of Martinus's text of it, which was located in the work of Porchetus Salvaticus. (Yaacov Deutsch, p. 289). Let us now consider the implications, which are not discussed in this book. Martin Luther, in his *ON THE JEWS AND THEIR LIES*, inveighs against the Jews and their blasphemies against Jesus and Mary. Luther has been constantly excoriated for this, and has even been enlisted as some kind of inspiration for Hitler. In reality, Luther's statements, however ugly, about Jews, had nothing to do with Nazism, and were nothing more than a reaction to the equally-ugly statements in TOLEDOT YESHU! One marvels at the anti-Christian spirit in academia for refusing to be objective about this matter.

When Being Jewish Was A Crime Frydland, Rachmiel 1978

Candor on the Talmud Against Jesus Christ, the Admission of GOYIM to the Temple for Prayer, and the ALEINU The author lived in Lesniczowka, near Chelm. (p. 97). He was an Orthodox Jew. One of the yevishas he attended, in Warsaw, was so strict that it expelled a student for suspected membership in the MIZRACHI--an Orthodox political party that deviated from Orthodoxy by accepting the political aspirations of Zionism and participating in the World Zionist movement. (p. 64). [So much for the myth that Judaism thrives on independent thinking, and thrives on dissent.] Shortly before WWII, Frydland became a believer in Jesus. He miraculously survived the Holocaust, and emigrated to the USA. In this short book, Frydland presents much theological information. I elaborate on

just some of it. THE TALMUD AGAINST JESUS CHRIST Rachmiel Frydland comments, (quote) In these early years I had few contacts of any sort with Christianity. At about this time I learned the stories of Jesus from the Jewish point of view. They are given in the infamous book of legends composed in the Middle Ages and entitled TOLEDOT YESHU (THE HISTORY OF JESUS). Some of the material is already embodied in the Talmud: That Jesus was born an illegitimate child and He forced Mary his mother to admit it; how He learned sorcery in Egypt; how He made Himself fly up into the sky by sewing the ineffable name of Jehovah into the skin of his leg, but a famous rabbi did the same and brought Jesus down. (unquote). (p. 51). Frydland continues, (quote) As I continued studying the Talmud, I came to a passage that told of a cruel punishment for that Sinner of Israel, meaning Jesus. For one sin of deriding the rabbis, He was punished forever and ever with cruelty as to be "judged in boiling excrement." (unquote). (p. 55). [The Talmudic references, to Jesus Christ as being of illegitimate birth, are Sanhedrin 67a and Shabbat 104b. The one about Him burning in hell, in hot excrement, is Gittin 57a. Please see my review of *JESUS IN THE TALMUD* (this set of reviews) by Peter Schaefer]. "It is all about interpretation", we are told, when it comes to the Talmud. Exactly correct. It does not matter what the authors of the passages had in mind when they wrote the passages. From Frydland's testimony quoted above, it is obvious that the Jews did in fact interpret the TOLEDOT YESHU, and the Talmudic verses identified above, as referring to Jesus Christ. This refutes the silly argument, advanced by some, that the Talmud, and the TOLEDOT YESHU, have nothing to say about Jesus Christ. CANDOR ON JEWISH PREJUDICES AGAINST THE GOYIM

Frydland portrays prejudice as a multi-faceted process. He notes that he used to say a prayer (the ALEINU), every morning, in which he thanked God that he was not created a GOY or a woman. (pp. 76-77). He used to think that the reference, in Isaiah 56:7, about the house (temple) being a house of prayer for all peoples, referred exclusively to all types of Jews. (p. 51). (This is ironic, because the alleged admission of non-Jews to the temple, for prayer, is often erroneously quoted as proof of the early universalism of Judaism.) The author freely admits the outworking of his Jewish prejudices, (quote) On the way to school we passed a Roman Catholic church and a Russian Orthodox church, and we spat, pronouncing

the words found in Deuteronomy 7:26, "...thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing." (unquote). (p. 54).

Cursing the Christians?: A History of the Birkat Haminim Langer, Ruth 2011 *The Long History of Jewish Malediction Against Christianity--Long Before Christians Were in a Position to Persecute Jews*

This is a fascinating, technical book. The author traces the history of the BIRKAT HAMINIM from antiquity, through the Middle Ages, and to modern times. In recent times, this prayer has been softened, with removal of reference to enemies, and with the condemnation of evil, as an abstraction, having replaced the condemnation of sinners. (pp. 156-on).

TWO SIDES TO PAST JEWISH-CHRISTIAN ANTAGONISMS: CONFRONTING ANTIGOYISM Author Ruth Langer makes the following candid statements, (quote) For Jews engaged in dialogue, it has been much easier to identify the problems within Christianity than to turn that scrutiny back on our own heritage. Jews, after all, were very much the victims, not just of the Holocaust, but also of centuries of Christian anti-Jewish venom and oppression. Consequently, traditions developed among those studying in the WISSENSCHAFTLICH mode to obscure embarrassing elements of the tradition rather than to confront them. True dialogue, though, requires partnership, mutuality, and adjustment of attitudes on both sides...Thus, full Jewish participation in reconciliation with Christians requires that Jews similarly examine and take responsibility for their own traditions, especially where, as in the case of liturgy, these traditions affect daily life and are not simply dusty books on the shelf. (unquote). (p. 12). (quote) By grappling with Jewish texts that appear xenophobic or racist...In my plenary talk at their conference that summer addressing this point, I suggest that while Jews do indeed need to be self-critical about their traditions of anti-Christianity; the possible methods of implementing change really do depend on where one stands within the spectrum of contemporary approaches to Judaism...There is no question that BIRKAT HAMINIM, for most of its history, is a text that for moderns engaged in Christian-Jewish reconciliation and dialogue is "problematic" or "difficult". (unquote). (pp. 184-185).

HISTORY OF BIRKAT HAMINIM AS DIRECTED AGAINST CHRISTIANS--FROM THE BEGINNING In the decades following the destruction of the temple in

70 CE (or AD), Rabban Gamliel called for the establishment of the BIRKAT HAMINIM. Langer comments, "All later evidence suggests that this BIRKAT HAMINIM, literally 'a blessing of the sectarians', was some sort of CURSE asking that God eliminate the "kinds" of people causing the rabbis trouble...MINIM...can apply to Christians, but it can also apply to various kinds of Jewish heretics who are not Christians." (p. 4, emphasis in original. See also p. 24, 39, 354). "This prayer, in its medieval European manifestation, was very much a curse of the Christians." (p. 12; See also p. 66, 184). Moreover, Jews thought of it both in terms of Jewish converts to Christianity as well as those born Christians. (p. 83). Among medieval rabbis, some of them, notably Rashi, understood MINIM to refer to gentile Christians. (p. 78). Furthermore, the Ritva (R. Tov ben Avraham Ashvili) added that both Christians and Muslims are MINIM, and cannot be considered among the righteous gentiles even if they obey the Noahide laws. (p. 79). In contrast to the non-specificity of MIN/MINIM, the term NOZERIM, found in some versions of the BIRKAT HAMINIM, did refer specifically to Christians. (p. 66, pp. 198-199, 354. See also p. 189). What about code words among Jews? Note that the Biblical Esau/Edom became identified with Rome and Byzantine Rome. (p. 82). Langer also affirms the fact that "Yeshu ben Pandira [Pandera]", in the Babylonian Talmud, clearly refers to Jesus Christ. (p. 287).

BUT WORDS ARE ONLY WORDS...OR ARE THEY?

Nowadays, we think in terms of the premise that Jews could only utter hurtful words against Christians, while Christians could utter hurtful words and then perform hurtful actions against Jews. However, in ancient and medieval thinking, the spoken word itself was a matter of gravity, and could by itself be very much a weapon of aggression. Ruth Langer makes this clear. She writes, (quote) Why should it matter if Jews curse Christians? We live in a world today in which deeds, not words, are real, but this was not the premodern understanding. As in antiquity, medieval Europeans understand curses to be effective means to invoke evil (and coterminously, to remove blessing). In medieval Christian Europe, the Church gains significant political power through granting blessings, understood to protect the recipient in this world and the next, and by removing this protection through curses of various sorts. (unquote). (p. 67). The author adds that, (quote) Cursing was also part of the vocabulary of the larger worlds in which Jews lived. As Anderson points out, significant parts of Ancient Near Eastern treaty documents consisted of

curses designed to force compliance with the treaty. (unquote). (p. 38).

THE MODERN ISRAELI HAREDIM, AND ONGOING ANTI-CHRISTIANITY Finally, author Ruth Langer touches on the persistence of old thinking among some Jews even today. She comments, (quote) In some cases, like the censored line of 'ALEYNU [ALENU], now widely printed in Orthodox prayer books, the community today is widely ignorant of why it might have been an object of sensitivity, and many find other interpretations for its words. Most Jews will never encounter the restored versions of Talmudic texts, but those who are most likely to, among the ultra-Orthodox community, are precisely those who are least likely to approach these texts with historical and critical sensitivity. One wonders about the relationship between this and recent incidents of spitting at Christians and desecrating Christian sites in certain areas of Jerusalem, to which the Jewish community's leadership needed to respond. (unquote). (p. 259).

The Pride of Jacob: Essays on Jacob Katz and His Work Harris, Jay M. 2002 ***Jewish Chosenness Itself Requires That Christians Be Seen By Jews as Idolaters*** This Book Critically Examines Yaacov Katz' Position on Medieval Jews Regarding Christians as Non-Idolaters. This anthology of articles gives many details on the biography of Yaacov Katz (1904-1998), as well as issues raised in his work. By way of introduction, author David Ellenson characterizes Katz' gifts, to modern Jewish scholarship, as "by any standard immense". (p. 97). Jacob Katz has written many books. I invite the reader to click on, and read my detailed reviews, of the following works (in this set of reviews) by Katz: *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* (Scripta Judaica, 3). *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages (Medieval Studies)* and *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933*. Owing to the many themes raised by Katz, and discussed in this anthology, I focus on a few issues in some detail. **ARE CHRISTIANS IDOLATERS? INESCAPABLY YES** The term AVODAH ZARAH, commonly translated as "strange worship", is, according to author David Berger, "imprecisely translated as idolatry". (p. 44). However, the two terms, for practical purposes, can be treated as approximate synonyms, as many

scholars do. Yaacov Katz had focused on the pioneering thinking of Menahem ha-Meiri. This medieval thinker was credited with excluding Christians from the category of idolatry. (p. 61). Berger takes a somewhat skeptical position of Katz' premise. To begin with, ha-Meiri's views were hardly representative of those of medieval rabbinical thinkers. Thus, Berger writes, "...the position of R. Menahem ha-Meiri, which is, in fact, striking in its atypical liberalism." (p. 44). He adds, (quote) We shall soon encounter the emphasis by R. Menahem ha-Meiri on the deep and genuine divide between Christianity and paganism, but in the final analysis it is a daunting task to argue that worship of Jesus of Nazareth as God is not AVODAH ZARAH by the standards of Jewish law. (unquote). (p. 57).

THE MEDIEVAL JEWISH "RELEASE" OF CHRISTIANS FROM IDOLATRY WAS ONLY IN A NARROWLY-TAILORED SENSE, AND DONE FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES

According to Berger, halakhic decisions, regarding Christians as non-idolaters, were not generalized beyond the narrow context (e. g, business relations) that produced them. (pp. 60-61). Even within such narrow tailoring, they did not imply a fundamental Jewish self-transformation of its pejorative attitudes towards Christians! Thus, Berger concludes that (quote) Did medieval Ashkenazic halakhists ever mean to say--even in narrow applications--that Christianity is not AVODAH ZARAH? The answer to this question may well be no...If, as is very likely, TOSAFOT never meant to say that Christian worship is not AVODAH ZARAH for gentiles... (unquote). (pp. 60-61).

EVERYDAY JEWS CONTINUED TO RECKON CHRISTIANS IDOLATERS

Halakhic decisions, regardless of their authority and applicability, had only a limited impact on Jewish attitudes and conduct, including the deeply-embedded notion of Christians as idolaters. Thus, Berger quips, (quote) Visceral reactions, he [Katz] argues, can weigh more heavily than texts. Thus, Jewish revulsion at Christian rituals and symbols is no less important than formal halakhah in determining that Christianity is AVODAH ZARAH and inspiring the decision of martyrs...texts can occasionally be subordinated to "ritual instinct," so that ordinary Jews will ask for permission to violate serious prohibitions that do not repel them while refraining from seeking dispensation to engage in behavior that is less objectionable to the legal mind but unthinkable in light of deeply entrenched emotions...They [intellectual arguments] were decidedly secondary to the emotions of group identification and the attraction of Judaism's entrenched symbols.

(unquote). (pp. 44-45). **THE ONGOING JEWISH VIEW OF GOD AS FOR JEWS ONLY** Jews continued to see Christians as idolaters not only because of Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, and the Roman Catholic use of statuary, as well as the "inertia" of always having viewed Christians through the prism of idolatry, but also because of the implications of Jews as the Chosen People of God. That is, Jews retained an essentially exclusive (in fact, proprietary) view of God. Author David Berger cites the more-complete Hebrew-language edition of Katz' *EXCLUSIVENESS AND TOLERANCE*, and refers to Joseph ben Isaac Bekhor Shor, a 12th-century tosafist, and the Riaz (Isaac Ben Moses of Vienna: 1200-1270; also known as R. Isaac Or Zarua). Berger comments, (quote) Thus, he [Katz] says, both R. Joseph Bekhor Shor and R. Isaac Or Zarua assert that Deuteronomy 6:4 affirms not merely that the Lord is God but that He is OUR God, thereby proclaiming that no other nation can claim Him as its own. (unquote). (Emphasis is by Berger). (p. 45). **JEWS IN A CHRISTIAN WORLD: ALLEGATIONS OF INTOLERANCE AND JEWISH POWERLESSNESS** One common left-wing construct revolves around the power disparity between a minority and the majority. Thus, we often hear that American blacks cannot be racist because blacks are powerless, and whites are the ones with power, so only whites can be racist. A similar line of reasoning is used in relation to the historical relationship of Jews and Christians: The Christian majority could be intolerant while the Jewish minority could not. While power disparity is certainly real, the situation is more complex. Author David Berger writes, (quote) We can speak of theoretical tolerance and intolerance, but because the group in question has no authority to enforce its norms, we sometimes slip into a usage in which intolerance becomes synonymous with hostility...Powerlessness confers freedom to express hostility without the need for a real confrontation with the consequences. One can curse one's enemies, condemn them to hellfire, list the innumerable offenses for which they should be executed and the many obligations that they must be compelled to discharge--and then go to bed. Power brings responsibility and subjects its bearers to the discipline of governing. Powerlessness provides the luxury of both untested tolerance and untested zealotry. Neither the tolerance nor the zealotry may survive the transition to power. (unquote). (p. 63). [In the modern State of Israel, Jews are finally in a position of power. Critics of Israeli policies towards Palestinians could well argue that

traditional Jewish tolerance has not fully survived the Jewish transition to power.] POST-MEDIEVAL POLAND AND GERMANY: A TALE OF TWO JEWRIES Elisheva Carlebach points out that the Jews of Germany were being expelled from the Imperial cities in the first decades of the 16th century, culminating with the Regensburg expulsion of 1519. At that same time, Polish Jewry was flourishing. (p. 75). Nowadays, we sometimes hear the Polonophobic Holocaust myth that the ghettos, in Nazi German-occupied Poland, had first been built by the Poles. In actuality, and unlike in Germany, there was no enforced Jewish space in Poland, even in the 16th century. (p. 76). The Jews chose self-segregation.