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Jewish History and Jewish Memory
Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi

Edited by
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David N. Myers

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PREFACE

History and memory have often been cast in dialectical opposition to one another, the former connoting the quest for objective knowledge of what actually happened in the past and the latter marking the subjective use of the past to sustain a vision of individual or collective identity. Interest in the relationship between history and memory may well be a function of what Pierre Nora has called the acceleration of history in the modern age. For as the pace of historical change quickens, the perception arises that we moderns inhabit a radically destabilized world in which the pillars of communal structure and memory no longer stand. Heightening this perception is the now familiar anxiety and trepidation that attend the *fin de siècle*. And so it is perhaps not accidental that at such a historical juncture, in a period in which the end of history has been declared (though not for the first time), scholarly attention has been increasingly devoted to the relationship between history and memory. The list of researchers who have addressed the subject is vast and extends across the disciplines of history, literature, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and psychology. Further testimony to the intensity of scholarly interest in the subject lies in the journal *History and Memory*, which has published over the past decade an eclectic and impressive range of papers that engage and refine the relationship between the two erstwhile foils. Perhaps an even more telling sign of the importance and maturity of this discourse is that its very history has now become the subject of scholarly work. This recent development recalls the utter inescapability of our historical-mindedness: our instinct to apprehend, even reduce, our existence to a string of historical data.

For Yosef Yerushalmi, this historicist instinct has become the faith of the fallen modern Jew. Yerushalmi diagnosed this condition in his

1982 book *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, one of the earliest, most original, and most brilliant contributions to the discourse of history and memory. This small volume inaugurated a new scholarly debate regarding the contours of history and memory in a religious and cultural tradition in which remembrance was a deeply ingrained, ritualized imperative. The focus of *Zakhor* was on the shifting attitudes toward history and memory among Jews, but the book's influence has not been limited to the province of Jewish history. It has been widely read and translated, engaging intellectuals not only in the United States but in Europe and Israel as well.

The current volume marks both an acknowledgment of and an effort to expand on Yerushalmi's seminal contribution to the discourse of history and memory. In reading the essays collected here, one can see the diverse components of an expansive intellectual personality who moves with great ease from medieval and early modern Sephardic Jewry to the history of his own profession. At the

same time, one apprehends in these essays, as in Yerushalmi's oeuvre itself, the connection of such diverse themes to the larger and recurrent theme of the relationship between history and memory. The fact that the majority of contributors to the volume are students of Professor Yerushalmi, with a number of professional colleagues also participating, further affirms the breadth, diversity, and yet conceptual coherence of his body of scholarship.

The volume commences with David Myers's essay, *Of Marranos and Memory: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and the Writing of Jewish History*, which attempts to provide an introductory synthesis to Yerushalmi's scholarship as a whole. The volume is subsequently divided into four clusters of original essays, each of which is inspired by an important thematic and/or chronological emphasis in Yerushalmi's work. The first thematic cluster, *Tradition and the Construction of Jewish History*, draws together leading scholars to address the questions of historical consciousness and the construction of memory in medieval and early modern Jewish texts. In this section, David Berger investigates the ways in which medieval Jews applied their sense of history to the polemical construction of the image of Jesus; Elisheva Carlebach explores the role of apostates as alien and hostile Other in medieval Jewish historical writing; Robert Chazan explicates the historiographical layering in the Hebrew Crusade chronicles; Talya Fishman analyzes a modern invention of a medieval rabbinic classical work; Edward Fram examines the manipulation of texts by the chroniclers of the pogroms of 1648; Marc Saperstein studies the historical aspects of the homiletical sermons of Saul Levi Morteira; and Michael Stanislawski traces the transformation of *Shevet Yehudah* from its formative Sephardic milieu to a new Ashkenazic context.

The second thematic cluster, *Time and History in Jewish Thought*, addresses the relationship between time and history in key areas of premodern Jewish thought. Moshe Idel considers concepts of time and

history in Jewish mysticism; Hava Tirosh-Samuelson discusses the transcendence of history in medieval Jewish philosophy; Elliot Wolfson follows the construction of a particular type of memory within the classic text of Kabbalah, the Zohar.

The third thematic cluster, *The Rupture of Modernity*, issues from Yerushalmi's well-known belief that the modern age marked the demise of traditional forms of collective memory and identity. The contributors in this section explore the formation of modern Jewish identities: Pierre Birnbaum proposes a theoretical construction of Jewish identity in exile; Lois Dubin writes on the notion of the reform of Judaism in comparative Italian and German perspective; John Efron analyzes the image of Jewish doctors into the modern age; Todd Endelman addresses the persistence of Jewish memory among those who opt out of Judaism; Arthur Goren provides an incisive account of the attempt to create a new locus of Jewish memory on Mt. Scopus; Hillel Kieval explores the uses of the past in the construction of national identities; Michael Meyer provides an insightful analysis of the concept of modernization vis-à-vis Jews; and Pierre Vidal-Naquet assesses the imprint of Auschwitz on modern culture, literature, and history.

The final thematic cluster, Jewish Memory and Historical Writing in the Modern Age, builds upon Yerushalmi's probing research on the writing of Jewish history in modern times. Michael Brenner reflects on the first fledgling attempts to locate Jewish sectarianism within Jewish history; Ira Robinson points to the use of the modern scholarly methods used by hagiographic Hasidic writers; Aron Rodrigue explores a seminal and understudied figure in modern French Jewish historiography; and Jacob J. Schacter researches the use of autobiography in early modern rabbinic writing.

Concluding the volume is a moving reminiscence by John Efron of Yosef Yerushalmi as teacher and a bibliography of Professor Yerushalmi's writings. As a whole, the volume attempts to capture the animating tension between diversity and coherence that is such a distinguishing characteristic of Yosef Yerushalmi's scholarship.

The editors wish to thank the following individuals for their assistance with this volume: Michael Brenner, Stephanie Chasin, Mark Cohen, Malka Gold, Elliot Wolfson, and the editors at University Press of New England.

D.N.M.

1

Of Marranos and Memory: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and the Writing of Jewish History

David N. Myers

Surveying the scholarly oeuvre of Yosef Yerushalmi, one is struck by a command of Jewish history reminiscent of his great teacher Salo Barona command that allows him to visit many past eras with the intimate familiarity of a specialist. Yerushalmi's broad knowledge of European history Iberian, Italian, French, German, and Russian among others affords him a rich understanding of the various contexts in which European Jews have lived and created. This catholicity of knowledge is matched by an unerring instinct to identify historical links not always visible to the eye. Indeed, those who have studied with him will not easily forget Professor Yerushalmi's frequent invocation of the historian's olfactory sense; it is incumbent upon a good scholar, he insists, to sniff out connections hidden beneath the surface or between the lines of historical documents. Yerushalmi's own labors as historical detective, ranging from the account of Isaac Cardoso's transformation in *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* to the probing of Sigmund Freud's Jewishness in *Freud's Moses*, have produced exemplary achievements in European and European-Jewish history.

While few historians can lay claim to such a level of scholarly distinction, even fewer can lay claim to the skills of a novelist or the lyricism of a poet. And yet many of Yosef Yerushalmi's essays and monographs are works of fine literature, sculpted with precision and beauty, and capable of eliciting deep passion from the reader. Within

the annals of twentieth-century Jewish historiography, Yerushalmi's graceful descriptive powers recall the eloquence of the Englishmen Israel Abrahams and Cecil Roth. At the same time, his powers of analysis and command of sources do not fall below the standards of two predecessors whom he held in the highest esteem: his fellow traveler in Iberian Jewish history, Yitzhak Baer, and the great scholar of mysticism, Gershom Scholem.

Yerushalmi's talents converge most seamlessly in his book *Zakhor*, which deserves recognition as one of the most important works of Jewish history and thought in the post-Holocaust age. Initially published in 1982, this small volume of four lectures explores with erudition and elegance the relationship between historical knowledge and Jewish collective memory from antiquity to the modern age. Its widespread success: frequent and enthusiastic praise from a wide

range of critics, reissuance in paperback form, and translation into six languages cannot merely be attributed to its appearance at the proverbial right time, as Professor Yerushalmi modestly claims.

¹ It is indeed true that *Zakhor* was written in the same period as works such as Pierre Nora's collaborative project, *Les lieux de memoire*, that sought to clarify the relationship between history and memory. However, *Zakhor* echoed with such clarity and poignant force that it initiated an important and ongoing debate among students of historiography, scholars of Jewish history, and a wide array of intellectuals. Like earlier works, *Zakhor* offered no bold programmatic declarations nor prescriptions for a fixed methodological regimen. But the absence of ideological or methodological dogmatism, not to mention polemical rancor, did not preclude a deeply engaged and engaging historical study.² On the contrary, Yerushalmi succeeded in raising a question of great contemporary relevance: can Jewish identity survive the modern secular age, the historicist age, with its impulse to dissect and atomize the past?

Although distinctive in many respects, *Zakhor* is part of a larger body of work whose main thematic concerns are the problematics and permutations of Jewish identity created by modernity's ruptures. The prototypical modern Jewish identity for Yerushalmi is that of the Marranos, to whom he devoted his first scholarly monograph. Marranos, Yerushalmi once asserted to an interviewer, were perhaps the first Jews to live in two radically different universes, with all the internal tensions and conflicts that resulted from this.³ It is not a dissimilar quality that intrigues him in two of his modern Jewish heroes, Kafka and Freud, the latter of whom was the subject of his latest English book. Nor does the Marranos duality, as Yerushalmi put

it, seem far removed from the modern Jewish historian's predicament in *Zakhor*.⁴ And yet, notwithstanding the thematic thread running throughout his writings, it is Yerushalmi's attention to the fissures marking the landscape of modern Jewish history that prevents us from arriving at a monodimensional picture of his work. The challenge of the present essay, then, is to comprehend Yerushalmi's historiographical labors, taking note of the common features while also recognizing important shifts in geographic and conceptual focus.

Entering the Spanish Court

Professor Yerushalmi recalls that he first encountered Marranos at the ripe age of ten. It was then that he received a gift from his parents, a children's biography in Yiddish of the great Spanish scholar and community leader, Don Isaac Abravanel.⁵ That he would receive such a gift sheds light on some of the unique qualities of the Jewish milieu in which Yerushalmi was raised. His home in New York was presided over by immigrant parents, each of whom spoke to their son in a different Jewish language—Yiddish and Hebrew. They sought to nurture a lively interest in Jewish history and culture to complement the yeshiva education their

son would receive.

6 In this regard, his parents, with their mix of tradition and cultural innovation, represented an interesting generational moment; they (particularly the father) were among the last *maskilim*, Diaspora Hebraists in America, struggling to impart a distinct sense of Jewish cultural identity in a new and often alien world and hence bearing with them a vestige of the duality that their son would explore in his Marrano researches.

Despite this formative influence and Yosef Yerushalmi's early encounter with Isaac Abravanel, it was hardly predestined that he would become a historian of the Marranos. In fact, he initially planned to study law, before having a change of heart and deciding, after graduating from Yeshiva College in 1953, to enter the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. There he met an extraordinary group of scholars who exerted a deep influence on his thinking, including Zvi Ankori, H. L. Ginsberg, Saul Lieberman, and Shalom Spiegel. Yerushalmi's years at JTS made it clear to him that his true passion was not the rabbinate but rather the study of history. Thus, after receiving rabbinic ordination in 1957 (and commencing a brief career as a pulpit rabbi), he entered the graduate program in history at Columbia University, working with a number of distinguished medieval and Renaissance scholars. Among them was his teacher and mentor, Salo Wittmayer Baron, then in the midst of the early volumes of the second edition of his monumental *Social and Religious History of the Jews*.

Under Baron's guidance, Yerushalmi began to study Jewish history in earnest. His initial scholarly forays did not lead to the Iberian Peninsula. Rather, Baron encouraged him to focus on the relationship between the Albigensian heresy and the rise of Kabbalah in southern

France in the thirteenth century.⁷ Yerushalmi never actually conducted serious research on this intriguing subject, but he did develop an interest in the phenomenon of Jewish heresy in medieval France. Indeed, his first published article, a dense sixty-page study, *The Inquisition and the Jews of France in the time of Bernard Gui*, was written in 1964 while Yerushalmi was still at work on his doctorate.⁸ Although its geographic focus was France, this article manifested a number of tendencies that would surface in later work. Most obviously, the institution and functioning of the Inquisitorial mechanism were scrutinized carefully. More particularly, Yerushalmi was interested in the perceptions of Judaizing activity and of anti-Christian blasphemy held by officials of the newly established Inquisition in fourteenth-century France. To address this subject, he studied the Inquisition's claims about Jewish practices and books found among converted Jews. Even at this point, his essay demonstrated the kind of textual mastery that would characterize his later monographic work. So too it revealed his early interest in cryptoJews, known in this context as *relapsi*, whose predicament adumbrates that of Isaac Cardoso and other Spanish Marranos in Yerushalmi's first book, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*. The connection is patent enough; Yerushalmi himself acknowledges in this article that [t]here is surprisingly little in the theoretical, procedural, and even the practical approach of the Spanish Inquisition to Jewish affairs for which one cannot find the archetype in the earlier Inquisition.⁹

What links the French and Spanish contexts is not merely the Inquisition nor the phenomenon of crypto-Judaism but the interplay between Jewish attitudes and knowledge and Christian assumptions about Jewish attitudes and knowledge. Yosef Yerushalmi's decades-long attempt to understand this process rests on the foundation of his award-winning doctoral dissertation from Columbia, published in 1970 as *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*. This study traces the fascinating career of Isaac (ne Fernando) Cardoso, born a New Christian in Portugal in the first years of the seventeenth century, later a prominent intellectual and royal physician in Madrid, who, at the pinnacle of his professional life, decided to abandon his charmed Spanish existence and return to Judaism in Italy. At the outset, Yerushalmi was drawn to the Cardoso name because of Isaac's brother Abraham, who was a major theologian of the Sabbatian movement. His curiosity was piqued further when he came across a copy of Isaac Cardoso's apologetic treatise on behalf of the Jews, *Las excelencias de los hebreos*, written after Cardoso's removal to Italy. The juxtaposition of the two Cardoso brothers—one a Marrano turned Sabbatian, the other a Marrano returnee to Judaism—exposed to Yerushalmi the radically divergent paths on which crypto-Jews embarked when beyond the reach of the Inquisition. Moreover, the figure of Isaac Cardoso provided him with the opportunity to describe an extraordinary physical and psychological journey, one that struck him as paradigmatic of the modern Jew's quest for a stable source of identity.

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The story Yerushalmi tells is a gripping one, novelistic in its rendering of Isaac Cardoso's dramatic flight. But it is unmistakably a work of history, a point affirmed by the meticulous analysis of sources, including a large trove of archival material as well as biblical and postbiblical Jewish literature, medieval and early modern apologetics,

and modern historiography. In analyzing these sources, Yerushalmi respectfully acknowledges methods and conceptual approaches used by predecessors but then sets out to propose new ways of looking at old questions. Thus, he seeks to overcome what he regards as unproductive oppositions in previous Iberian and Iberian Jewish historiography for instance, between social and literary history, between Jewish and Christian sources, or between Iberian Jewish and Sephardic diaspora experiences.¹¹ The eclectic mix of social, cultural, and intellectual history in *From Spanish Court* yields fascinating excursions on a wide range of subjects, ranging from New Christian life in the Portuguese province of Beira Alta to the shared messianic fervor of Sabbatianism and Sebastianism. Moreover, it yields a rich and complex historical picture, noteworthy for its resistance to essentializing clichés about the plight of the crypto-Jew.

Not only is Yerushalmi sensitive to the shifting faces of human nature; he brings to his subject psychological insight and empathy. Indeed, one of the distinctive features of his work is his ability to avoid harsh judgments of the protagonists in his story. Yerushalmi's great precursor in Spanish Jewish history, Yitzhak Baer, was both a master of archival sources and an author possessed of tremendous passion. And yet, Baer could not restrain his contempt either for assimilated Spanish Jews or for their spiritual heirs, the *converses*.¹² By contrast, Yerushalmi

writes of Marrano life in Spain with no less passion and a good deal more empathy than did Baer; his description of Isaac Cardoso's entry to the most fashionable courtly and artistic circles in Madrid is presented without a trace of condemnation.

¹³ At the same time, Yerushalmi does not romanticize the difficult passage of a Marrano like Cardoso from Jewish ignorance to ritual observance. While Marranos in Spain lived a life of constant threat of discovery, they also occupied a spiritual space in which submission to clerical authority was deferred. Consequently, the return to Judaism, as the famous case of Uriel da Costa tragically reveals, was fraught with its own dangers. In *From Spanish Court* and at greater length in a number of subsequent essays, Yerushalmi describes the problems that returning Jews had in embracing rabbinic authority and rites after leaving the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁴ Curiously, Isaac Cardoso was not among those who experienced such difficulties. He readily embraced the whole of traditional Judaism down to its most minute details, and without reservation.¹⁵ And yet the Jewish world he was entering was a world in crisis, riven by the cataclysm of Expulsion and the resulting religious and social disruption.¹⁶ In concluding the tale of Cardoso's journey, Yerushalmi avers that the former New Christian came, in a sense, to a mansion whose halls enchanted him, but whose foundations, unknown even to most of its own inhabitants, were already seriously weakened.¹⁷

The paradox of Cardoso's return—the flight from an outwardly stable and inwardly fractured life in Spain to a state of inner tranquility and communal instability in post-Expulsion Italy—clearly excites Yerushalmi's historical imagination. At the heart of this paradox lies the persistent duality that marked the Marrano's life both in Spain and beyond. Indeed, return to a Jewish community often did not expunge

the Marrano's ambivalence toward normative religious authority. Nor, for that matter, did this ambivalence necessarily lead to paralysis or self-negation. It actually opened up the possibility for new sources of group identity (e.g., ethnic national sources) that recur frequently in the modern age.¹⁸ Yerushalmi is intrigued by the dialectical workings of history, in which the dismantling of one source of authority eventuates another or more likely, a set of others. In the case of Jewish identity, he is well aware that this process unfolds against the backdrop of Jewish-Christian tensions in an increasingly secular age.

Of particular importance to the emergence of new forms of Jewish identity is the emergence of new forms of anti-Jewish expression. In a pair of lectures published in the early 1980s, Yerushalmi investigated this interdependence within the context of Marrano history. His 1982 Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture, *Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism*, was an interesting attempt to compare the historical experience of fifteenth-century Spanish Jews and modern German Jews. The focus of his analysis was not only the common motif of acculturation but the emergence in both instances of a racial conception of the Jews.¹⁹ In particular, Yerushalmi pointed to the novelty of the *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) statutes enacted against Spanish New Christians in the mid-fifteenth century. He noted the ironic effect of such statutes in revealing the Jewish origins of those *conversos* with only the slimmest knowledge of their roots. At the same time, he

identified in the new Spanish emphasis on blood a potential source for more modern racist claims to the essential immutability of the Jewish condition.

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Yerushalmi analyzed a related theme in a lecture to the Israel Academy of Sciences delivered in 1977 but published in 1983. Here his subject was that notorious son of Portuguese Marranos and bête noire of Amsterdam Jewry, Baruch Spinoza.²¹ In this engrossing essay, as yet available only in Hebrew, Yerushalmi sought to explain Spinoza's idiosyncratic understanding of Jewish history and particularly of the survival of the Jews through recourse to his Marrano heritage.²² He did so with a characteristically varied amalgam of approaches, combining his knowledge of Marrano history with careful scrutiny of Spinoza's library holdings on Spanish subjects and a close reading of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*. On the basis of this mix, Yerushalmi offered a nuanced reconstruction of Spinoza's argument that it was adherence to a lapsed set of legal norms that explained the historic segregation of Jews. This segregation led, in turn, to Gentile hatred, which itself provided a new and important rationale for Jewish identity. For Yerushalmi, Spinoza's assertion of a close link between Gentile hatred and Jewish identity represented a genuinely innovative insightindeed, a prescient understanding of the negative criterion that undergirds Jewish identity in the modern age.²³

In addition to their shared concern for anti-Jewish expression in its incipient modern form, the Spinoza and Leo Baeck lectures exhibited Yosef Yerushalmi's skill in considering old historical sources or issues from novel perspectives. This quality is already present in *From Spanish Court*, where Yerushalmi builds on the work of previous historians to open new gateways of understanding into the Marrano

personality. And it is present in his second scholarly monograph dealing with Iberian Jewish history, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976). At the heart of this study is Yerushalmi's analysis of a contemporaneous German account describing the mob violence against Portuguese New Christians in April 1506 that culminated in more than one thousand deaths. His close reading of this and other sources provides the most in-depth treatment of the Lisbon massacre produced to date. Typically, though, Yerushalmi's interests are not confined to the unfortunate events in Lisbon. He is fascinated by a recurrent pattern according to which Jews, or New Christians, forged bonds of loyalty with royal authority. It is not merely the model of contractual arrangements regulating Jewish residence in European realms (e.g., charters and privilegia) that intrigues him. Rather, it is the profound internalization and concomitant glorification of the myth of the royal alliance. In the specific case of early-sixteenth-century Portugal, Yerushalmi seeks to understand why Portuguese New Christians, forcibly converted en masse by King Manuel in 1497, would still feel deep allegiance to the Portuguese monarch during and after the massacre in Lisbon. In fact, Yerushalmi demonstrates that this allegiance survived not only the mob violence but the dilatory attitude of King Manuel toward the outbreaks.²⁴

Yerushalmi's efforts to make sense of this phenomenon bear the traces of his

teacher, Salo Baron. One of the most important insights stemming from Baron's celebrated opposition to the lachrymose conception of Jewish history was that medieval and early modern Jews often developed closer and more dependent relationships with political sovereigns than did other groups in European society.

²⁵ Yerushalmi continued Baron's work on medieval Jewish political allegiances in his study of the Lisbon massacre. At the same time, he integrated into his work the penetrating criticisms of Jewish political behavior offered by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Yerushalmi was particularly interested in two features of Arendt's work: first, her analysis of the Jews' uncritical faith in the capacity and willingness of the state to protect them; and second, her understanding of the vulnerability in which such uncritical faith placed Jews vis-à-vis groups radically disaffected with the state itself.²⁶ These two concerns helped shape his own treatment of the events of 1506. The dissonance between actual historical events and New Christian perceptions of them was a function of a deeply rooted article of faith; indeed, even before the Expulsion, the royal alliance flowered beyond its obvious mundane realities into a guiding myth which gripped many of the Hispano-Jewish elite.²⁷

This guiding myth of the royal alliance withstood the disruption of Expulsion. As hinted above, it continued to inform those Jews who fled Spain and were converted against their will by King Manuel in Portugal in 1497. Yerushalmi probes this bewildering persistence in a Hebrew text that has engaged his attention for many years, Solomon ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah*. In this exemplary work of sixteenth-century Jewish historiography, ibn Verga makes reference to the Lisbon massacre, noting that King Manuel was a gracious king who wept and cried out against the evil event.²⁸ How, Yerushalmi asks,

could such generous praise be showered on the man responsible for the mass conversion of 1497? It was impossible that ibn Verga did not know of 1497. Undeterred by facts of which . . . he was surely cognizant, ibn Verga can only be understood against the backdrop of the myth of the royal alliance. That is his distorted, at times blatantly fictional depiction of royal behavior in *Shevet Yehudah*, in which Manuel was not only exonerated but celebrated, reflected the very uncritical faith that Jews had repeatedly invested in political rulers.²⁹ For Yerushalmi, ibn Verga was a link in a chain of Jewish political tradition extending from antiquity to the modern age.³⁰

Apart from the lingering question of Jewish political behavior, Yerushalmi is chiefly concerned in *The Lisbon Massacre* with the manner in which Jews, as exemplified by ibn Verga, refashioned their past to suit contemporary sensibilities. Not without warrant, Harold Bloom has suggested that this study may signal Yerushalmi's first grappling with the problematic that would later animate *Zakhor* namely, how Jewish memory and Jewish history fail to inform each other.³¹ One sees further evidence of the tension-filled relationship between history and memory in Yerushalmi's Spinoza lecture. There Yerushalmi analyzes a curious historical inversion made by Spinoza in the third chapter of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* it was in Portugal, Spinoza insists, that *conversos*

encountered widespread social opposition that eventually took the form of protoracial discrimination (through purity of blood statutes). In fact, Yerushalmi clarifies, Portuguese New Christians gained access to the highest strata of Portuguese society for nearly a half-century after their conversion. Moreover, it was in Spain, not Portugal, that blood standards were first introduced to segregate New from Old Christians.

Yerushalmi speculates that Spinoza may have been influenced in his historical thesis by a Portuguese Jesuit, Antonio Vieira, whose mission was to eradicate discrimination against *conversos* so as to realize the larger goal of eradicating Judaism.

³² Proceeding on this assumption, Yerushalmi wondered whether Spinoza might have derived his views on Jewish survival from Vieira's claim that it was discrimination that invigorated the Jewish identity of New Christians. Without conclusively proving the Vieira connection, Yerushalmi was certain that Spinoza deliberately manipulated the history of Iberian New Christians in order to advance his central point. The articulation of that point—that it was antisemitism, not Divine Providence, that sustained Jewish identity—heralded a momentous shift in Jewish consciousness. Indeed, this idea constituted, according to Yerushalmi, an important station on the path to the secularization of Jewish history, as well as to the historicization of Judaism.³³

Between History and Memory

One of the main threads running through Yerushalmi's historical work is his stubborn resistance to unbending scholarly conventions and methods; in fact, this resistance to methodological orthodoxy is as dogmatic as Yerushalmi ever becomes. It is also noteworthy that, in

striking out on his own path, Yerushalmi rarely directs a harsh word at his predecessor. Rather, Yerushalmi prefers to recognize with appreciation the work of such diverse nineteenth-and twentieth-century figures as Alexandre Herculano, Meyer Kayserling, Henry Charles Lea, Carl Gebhardt, Cecil Roth, Americo Castro, Albert Sicroff, I. S. Revah, and of course Yitzhak Baer. His own research, meanwhile, has served as a model for new work in Sephardic history or thought, including that undertaken by the noted Israeli scholars Yosef Kaplan and Yirmiyahu Yovel, as well as that of his students Elisheva Carlebach, Benjamin Gampel, and Aron Rodrigue.

And yet, just as Yerushalmi has resisted conventional assumptions in his scholarly studies, so too his restless intellect defies facile depiction. In the midst of his explorations of the plight of the Marrano, Yerushalmi was planting the seeds for a major shift in scholarly focus from the Iberian Peninsula and Sephardic diaspora to the dispersed precincts of Jewish collective memory. The first hints of this new direction appear in *Haggadah and History*, published a year before *The Lisbon Massacre*, in 1975.³⁴ This book contains facsimile plates of nearly two hundred printed Passover Haggadahs from the late fifteenth century to the late twentieth. The panoramic sweep of texts presented here, ranging from the Soncino

Haggadah of 1486 to the Moscow Communist Haggadah of 1927, reveals the remarkable interplay between liturgical norms, on the one hand, and stylistic and ideological innovations, on the other. In his introduction, Yerushalmi surveys with a keen eye for artistic detail the many versions and languages in which the Passover Haggadah has appeared; notwithstanding the diversity reflected in these versions, it is in the Haggadah that the memory of the nation is annually revived and replenished, and the collective hope sustained. Moreover, Yerushalmi describes the Haggadah as the literary foundation for the great historical festival of the Jewish people.

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Yerushalmi's explicit interest in the transmission of Jewish memory is informed by the intuitive appreciation that collective memory is neither an undifferentiated monolith nor the product of an ahistorical vacuum. The broad sample of printed material in *Haggadah and History* suggests that collective memory assumes literary form within specific and distinct contexts. The sample also reveals that stylistic and substantive diversity in Haggadot becomes more pronounced with the passage of time. Indeed, the modern (e.g., the Communist, kibbutz, or Holocaust-era) texts offer more radical deviations than do early modern texts, suggesting that the forces of secularization were at work reshaping, even undermining, traditional forms of memory.

Yerushalmi continues his inquiry into the history of Jewish collective memory in *Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century*.³⁶ This 1980 essay constituted, by Yerushalmi's own admission, an important stage in the crystallization of *Zakhor*. And indeed, it anticipates many of the important themes of the later book. In the first instance, it reflects Yerushalmi's desire to overcome the reticence on the part of Judaic scholars to examine and

articulate the latent assumptions of the enterprise in which they are engaged. Yerushalmi's desire for a new introspection emerges out of the ongoing crisis of the historicist view of the world.³⁷ He does not fully pursue the contemporary Jewish incarnation of this crisis in *Clio* and the Jews preferring to leave that task for *Zakhor*. Rather, *Clio* and the Jews is an examination of Jewish historical thinking and writing between antiquity and the modern age that is, in the long Jewish Middle Ages running from the destruction of the Second Temple to the late eighteenth century.

Curiously, Yerushalmi's remarks concerning the term *historiography* are more explicit and edifying here than in *Zakhor*. His efforts at terminological clarity prompt him to mediate between two extreme positions: on the one hand, that there was *no* Jewish historiography until modern times; and on the other, that any text that has an historical dimension, or that exhibits any interest whatever in history, is historiographical.³⁸ Between those poles lies a limited corpus of medieval Jewish works that move beyond general ideas about Jewish history to a recital of concrete events that possess a temporal specificity.³⁹ Among them are the *Iggeret Rab Sherira*, the *Sefer Yosippon*, the Hebrew Crusades Chronicles, and the *shalshelet ha-kabbalah* (chain of tradition) literature. Yerushalmi tends to see these works as largely unrelated to one another and as atypical of medieval

Jewish writing in general. It was not out of lack of talent, nor even for lack of knowledge that medieval Jews neglected to write history but primarily because they felt no need to do so.

⁴⁰ Indeed, the medievalist concern was not the random event but the enduring moment, the religious *longue duree*. According to Yerushalmi, rituals and liturgy proved to be far more suitable agents of preservation than historiography.

An apparent break in this tradition was the proliferation of Jewish historiography that occurred in the sixteenth century. Yerushalmi identifies this body of literature as one among a gamut of Jewish responses to the trauma of the expulsion from Spain. Although some scholars have challenged the catalyzing effect of the Expulsion on this historiographical activity, that issue need not detain us here.⁴¹ It is rather the novel properties of this literature—the new attention to postbiblical Jewish history and to non-Jewish history that merit scrutiny. Yerushalmi's teacher, Baron, suggested in 1928 that it was in the sixteenth century that the foundations for a major evolution of Jewish historic criticism were laid.⁴² Within the general field of European historiography, scholars have debated for decades whether a new historicist spirit was born in the Renaissance.⁴³ Yerushalmi is cognizant of these currents but sets out on his own course. His close analysis of the works of Solomon ibn Verga, Yosef Ha-Kohen, Samuel Usque, and others reveals not only new elements, but also conceptions and modes of thought that had been deeply rooted among Jews for many ages.⁴⁴

Perhaps the most intriguing among this generation of scholars was the Italian Azariah de' Rossi, whose evaluation of aggadic sources marked, for Yerushalmi, a genuine advance in critical historical method. But, Yerushalmi avers, (t)here were no heirs to his method.⁴⁵

De Rossi's major work, *Me or enayim*, with its innovative reading of traditional legends, met a hostile reception among many Italian Jews, reflecting the considerable gap in historical understanding between author and audience. Yerushalmi concludes from this experience that neither Azariah de Rossi nor his contemporaries can be seen as the progenitors of modern Jewish historiography. To the extent that they bore protohistoricist impulses, they did so in a relative vacuum. Thus, at the end of *Clio and the Jews*, Yerushalmi suggests that the true progenitors of modern Jewish historiography were not Jews at all but rather the founding figures of modern German historiography, such as Niebuhr and Ranke, who introduced a new ethos of critical dispassion and distance into nineteenth-century scholarship.⁴⁶

The assertion that a vast sea separates medieval from modern Jewish historical writing receives even more powerful expression in *Zakhor*. The skeletal outline for this book was traced in 1977 when Yerushalmi gave the lecture that eventually became *Clio and the Jews*. In the spring of 1980, Yerushalmi was invited to the University of Washington to deliver the annual Stroum Lectures. These four lectures in Seattle fleshed out the argument of *Clio and the Jews* while adding a soulful note to the analysis. Indeed, in *Zakhor*, Yerushalmi seems discomfited by the idea that modern Jewish historiography is not only different in kind from earlier modes of historical writing but that it is severed from the

vital sources of Jewish collective memory. Rather than succumb to paralysis, however, Yerushalmi overcame the long-held inhibitions of Jewish historians and directly confronted the limits of modern historiographical practice.

To be sure, Yerushalmi's concerns about this practice were embedded in a much broader historical framework, namely, the relationship between historical knowledge and collective memory throughout Jewish history. Each of the chapters in *Zakhor* focuses on this relationship in a distinct time period, though each stands on its own as a model of scholarly and stylistic grace. In the first chapter, Yerushalmi roams through the thicket of biblical and rabbinic literature in an attempt to explain how ancient Jews used and understood history. Eschewing standard contrasts drawn between Greek and Hebrew notions of history and time, Yerushalmi posited that it was ancient Israel that first assigned a decisive significance to history. In Israelite thought, there was no longer a struggle between pagan gods and the forces of chaos in a mythic void, but rather between the divine will of an omnipotent Creator and the free will of his creature, man, in the course of history.

47 Biblical historiography reflected this historical struggle, which is why the Israelites were repeatedly enjoined on one hundred and sixtynine occasions in the Bible, Yerushalmi informs us to remember.

The imperative of *zakhor* was not rooted in curiosity about the past for its own sake. It reflected the ancient Jewish belief that past deeds revealed the presence of the Divine Hand and hence were replete with meaning. In fact, the act of remembering, centering on the great and critical moments of Israel's history, was constitutive of the very collective identity of the Jews.⁴⁸ On the basis of this proposition, Yerushalmi offers the following refinement of standard views of

ancient historical thought: If Herodotus was the father of history, the fathers of meaning in history were the Jews.⁴⁹

It is not the contention of *Zakhor* that Jews subsequently abandoned their quest for meaning in history. Rather, it is that they no longer saw fit to write narrative accounts of past events. Unlike the rich descriptions of political and military exploits in the Bible (e. g., Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles) or by Josephus in the first century C.E., Jews in the postSecond Temple age showed little interest in the concrete particulars of the past.⁵⁰ To a certain extent, the loss of political sovereignty deadened the sensitivity of Jews to such particulars. But the lack of historical writing was also due in good measure to their (i. e., the Jews) total and unqualified absorption of the biblical interpretation of history. Indeed, the Bible provided late ancient and medieval Jews with all the history they required with exemplary events by which to comprehend their own passage through history.⁵¹ Recollection of the past became highly ritualized in the form of prayers (*selihot and kinot*), practices (fast days and second Purims), and new literary genres (chains of tradition and *Memorbucher*). These media came to serve as the vessels and vehicles of Jewish memory in the Middle Ages. Drawing extensively on Clio and the Jews, Yerushalmi analyzes these vessels of memory in the second and third chapters of *Zakhor*. It is here that Yerushalmi seeks to demonstrate, with a sure command of medieval Hebrew literature, that

neither Jewish memory nor the impulse to derive meaning from history necessitated historiography. The former were very much alive in the Jewish Middle Ages, while the latter was largely absent.

The final chapter of *Zakhor*, to which much scholarly and popular attention has been devoted, examines the converse phenomenon. The modern age is the historicist age par excellence, in which all human knowledge is refracted through historical lenses. Research that emanates from this new perspective may provide us with a more textured understanding of where we come from. But it exacts, in Yerushalmi's view, a heavy toll. The subtitle of this chapter, *Historiography and Its Discontents*, laden with its ominous Freudian allusion, hints not so subtly at the troubling consequences of a historicist perspective: all events of the past are to be treated with equal and critical rigor; none is privileged with the claim of divine inspiration. The new secularized attitude to the past levels the landscape of Jewish collective memory, reducing the monumental to the merely historical. The result is a stunning conceptual inversion: it is not history that must prove its utility to Judaism, but Judaism that must prove its validity to history.

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Yerushalmi's tone turns plaintive as he analyzes this transformation. The force of his argument is enhanced by the recognition that he is not merely a diagnostician of the historicist condition but also a product of it. Yerushalmi is aware that as a Jew and historian, he cannot escape this condition; it is a, perhaps *the*, defining feature of modern life. His uncompromising reflexivity, as he holds a mirror up to himself, lends *Zakhor* the quality of a *cri de coeur*.

Echoes of Friedrich Nietzsche's antihistoricism reverberate throughout the final chapter. Nietzsche, as is well known, had once been a

promising classical philologist, dedicated to the historical excavation of past languages and cultures.⁵³ By 1874, however, he had arrived at a sharply critical posture we might even say an attitude of revulsion toward his earlier pursuits. Historical-mindedness had not only become the regnant mode of cognition in his day; in its most exaggerated form, it had become a hindrance to life, to the conduct of a vital and vibrant existence. Indeed, hyperhistoricism disrupted the continuous flow of human activity by freezing each past moment in its own context. In doing so, it prevented access to the sources of mythic inspiration that were necessary to replenish human energies.⁵⁴

Although Yerushalmi does not consciously embrace Nietzsche, he clearly shares Nietzsche's concern over the excesses of history.⁵⁵ Nietzsche might well have concurred with Yerushalmi that Ireneo Funes, protagonist of a Jorge Luis Borges short story, was representative of a most dangerous malady of our time the surfeit of history. As the result of an accident, Funes was rendered incapable of forgetting. Not only did he remember everything, but his mind ground every chunk of memory down to infinitesimal detail. In Yerushalmi's reading, Funes symbolizes a larger plight, a demonic parable for a potential denouement to modern historiography as a whole.⁵⁶ Mindful of this potential, Yerushalmi himself wonders what the use of studying the past is.⁵⁷

At the end of the day, Yerushalmi assumes the existentialist position that he, as

a historian, has no choice but to continue even as he confronts this foreboding question.

58 And yet, with an apparent glance at both Nietzsche and Gershom Scholem, he declares himself open to a new, metahistorical myth that might transport the Jew beyond the historical realm.⁵⁹ Yerushalmi mentions neither Nietzsche nor Scholem in the context of this statement. In fact, he professes in *Zakhor* that his ruminations about the nature of Jewish history and memory and his own stake in them took place in isolation, cut off from the work of historians with whose ideas he later became intimately familiar.

In retrospect, Yerushalmi acknowledges the existence of a cultural climate that was ripe for such efforts as *Zakhor* or Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de, memoire*, both of which explore the relationship between history and memory.⁶⁰ From a broad perspective, this climate has resulted from the ever-expanding technologizing of modern society. The quickened pace of social existence, perhaps best symbolized by the dizzying tempo of information transmission, has led to what Nora calls the acceleration of history—a process in which atoms of history careen around in seeming disarray.⁶¹ For many observers, this rapid pace has dispossessed once tightly knit communities of a somewhat timeless sense of group memory. It is at this point that the owl of Minerva, in the form of historians, arrives to pass judgment on the past.

To the extent that Yerushalmi is part of or in the vanguard of this cohort of scholars, he seems also to be the product of a post-Holocaust world. His introspection, one might say angst, over the fate of the present historicist age, and surely of the traditional world of old, hints of the abrupt moral and epistemological rupture created by the Shoah. After all, the living centers of Jewish collective memory in Europe

were largely destroyed. Moreover, it is Auschwitz, according to JeanFrancois Lyotard, that marks the confines where historical knowledge sees its boundaries impugned.⁶² Yerushalmi notes that the Holocaust has already engendered more historical research than any single event in Jewish history, and yet this massive body of scholarship neither answers the question of how the Final Solution occurred nor offers an enduring image to sustain contemporary Jewish identity.⁶³ Is it not from the depths of this historical void, in which the utility and integrity of history are questioned, that Yerushalmi's meditations issue?

Undoubtedly, there is a particular poignancy to critical reflections on the enterprise of history in the wake of the Holocaust. However, as Nietzsche's case clearly reveals, discontent with the enterprise of critical history long preceded the Second World War. Indeed, the malaise of history was but a reflection of the broader malaise of modernity that has plagued European cultural life for well over a century.⁶⁴ Taking stock of the fragile state of affairs at the fin de siecle, Ernst Troeltsch once proclaimed to a group of fellow scholars of theology: Gentlemen, everything is tottering.⁶⁵ Symptomatic of the new intellectual instability was historicism whose relativizing instincts threatened existing foundations of belief and identity. Among the important twentieth-century thinkers who feared these instincts was the idiosyncratic Jewish philosopher Leo Strauss, who expressed concern in the 1930s about the hubristic claims made by modern

scholars in their efforts to clarify the past.

66 Writing on the eve of the Nazi terror, Strauss is an oddly appropriate companion to Yerushalmi, who writes in its aftermath. Both manifest an intense appreciation for what they respectively understood as tradition. Both apprehend the defects of modern scholarly practices, particularly historiographical. And both opted to forge on in the midst of their fears. Consequently, the two scholars are among the most intellectually compelling critics of Jewish historicism in our century.

It is perhaps the quality of profound existential deliberation that explains the wide popular acclaim for *Zakhor*. A long list of commentators has praised the book in newspapers and academic journals, drawn not only by its learning but by its sad and strict reflections on the Jewish condition.⁶⁷ Some have pointed to weaknesses in one or another of the chapters. Invariably, in a book of its small size and considerable breadth, questions will remain unaddressed. For instance, there is relatively little attention paid to the question of whether historicism was itself a causal agent or merely symptomatic of the rupture of modernity. This question is related to a larger question repeatedly raised in discussions of *Zakhor*: did Yerushalmi overstate the gulf between history and memory in his analysis? Perhaps the most significant critique of the book, the late Amos Funkenstein's *Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness* in the first number of the journal *History and Memory*, engages this very issue.⁶⁸ In this essay, Funkenstein proposes a third category, historical consciousness, to temper Yerushalmi's opposition between historiography and collective memory.

This is not the appropriate place to reprise Funkenstein's argument.⁶⁹ But it is important to note that his engagement—that of a great scholar

whose intellectual breadth matches Yerushalmi's symbolizes what might be *Zakhor's* most enduring achievement: its role in inaugurating a major scholarly debate over the relationship between history and memory. Within the field of Jewish history, this debate has resulted in a new reflexivity on the part of scholars and, concomitantly, in a new spate of works dealing with Jewish historical consciousness and historiography.⁷⁰ Even though it was published some fifteen years ago, *Zakhor* remains the touchstone for this new literature and sensibility. A further sign of its distinction is that the book's influence has not been felt only in the United States, where Yerushalmi has spent almost his entire academic career. It has also received widespread exposure in Israel and in Europe, especially France, where Yerushalmi regularly traveled in the 1980s and early 1990s to teach and converse with leading French intellectuals.

Beyond the Rupture: Freud and the Jewish Question

It has been a hallmark of Yosef Yerushalmi's historical research to draw out the universal and the profound from the arcane, to render visible that which previously lay concealed from view. Moreover, he has repeatedly challenged conventional scholarly assumptions without bitter polemic, all the while pushing toward

new paths of inquiry. The former ability was clearly present in his early work on Iberian Marranos. The latter typified his work on Jewish history and memory in *Zakhor*.

An impressive marriage of these abilities can be found in *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*. It is in this book that Yerushalmi's shift in scholarly focus reaches its culmination.

⁷¹ The transition from Iberian to modern Central European Jewish history, with the intervening foray into Jewish history and memory, was hardly coincidental. Indeed, the motif of a latent or cryptic Jewish identity that animated his earlier work on Marranos lay at the core of the Freud book. Yerushalmi approaches Freud through the portal of Jewish history, bringing to his reading insights that other scholars had not generated or could not generate (because of linguistic or contextual ignorance). He does so without reclaiming Freud for the Jews in a simple-minded and self-serving fashion. Yet there can be no doubts about Yerushalmi's deep sense of identification with Freud and his Jewish predicament, never more evident than in the daring Monologue with Freud with which Yerushalmi concludes his narrative.

Freud's Moses assumed form in a fashion similar to much of Yerushalmi's work in the 1980s as a series of lectures. The very nature of oral presentation demands attention to and interaction with an audience in a way that a purely written text does not. Yerushalmi quite consciously maintains this dialogic quality, opening his book with a Prelude for the Listener rather than the usual preface for the reader.⁷² The effort to preserve some echo of the spoken word lends an air of intimacy to *Freud's Moses*. And this intimacy fuels Yerushalmi's empathic powers, which are much needed for the central task at hand: to understand anew Freud's controversial analysis in *Moses and*

Monotheism. Published in 1939 in the midst of the Nazi campaign against the Jews, this enigmatic book makes a number of astonishing claims about ancient Judaism, beginning with the proposition that monotheism was not a Jewish invention. Rather, it was the discovery of the Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep IV, whose new heresy did not gain wide favor among the Egyptian masses. In order to invigorate this new monotheistic creed, an Egyptian nobleman named Moses sought to transplant the faith to an oppressed Semitic tribe then living in Egypt, the Hebrews. However, the new practices imposed by Moses proved too onerous for the tribe, which rose up in revolt and killed Moses. Subsequently, the memory of Moses' murder was repressed, even as his monotheistic idea was incorporated into the new religious system of Judaism.⁷³

As Yerushalmi notes, Freud's analysis of Moses and the origins of monotheism struck some contemporaries as the epitome of Jewish self-negation.⁷⁴ How could a proud and self-confident Jew deny to his people the source of its greatest contribution to civilization or its most outstanding and inspirational leader especially in a period when the clouds over European Jewry were darkening?⁷⁵

Yerushalmi's response to these questions is a nuanced reading of new and old sources that yields a far more complicated picture of Freud than had emerged from previous scholarship.

Yerushalmi's Freud was not intent on disavowing his Jewish bonds of affiliation in *Moses and Monotheism*. On the contrary, he was intent on examining the source of ancient Judaism precisely in order to clarify what gave Jews their distinctive character. His aim, thus, was historical, an approach that Yerushalmi finds thoroughly unsurprising. After all, [h]istoricism of one kind or another has been a dominant characteristic of modern Jewish thought since the early nineteenth century, while the historical bent of psychoanalysis itself is, theoretically and therapeutically, part of its very essence.

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In assessing Freud's journey into the ancient Jewish past, Yerushalmi argues that the great master possessed a far deeper and more varied knowledge of Jewish history and culture than he let on. This knowledge sensitized him to the importance of tradition and the problem of its transmission, issues that occupied him in *Moses and Monotheism*. Yerushalmi does not conclude from his close scrutiny that Freud secretly believed in an unbroken chain of Jewish religious tradition.⁷⁷ He does, however, maintain that Freud believed in a process of identity transmission whose early stages were emphatically religious and whose later stages were of an entirely different character. Indeed, Yerushalmi identifies in Freud a Lamarckian instinct, a belief that Jewish group traits were passed on from generation to generation even as those traits were outwardly modified in response to shifting circumstances. In particular, Yerushalmi suggests that Freud held to a psycho-Lamarckism in which the group transmits collective memories phylogenetically through the unconscious.⁷⁸

Freud's neo-Lamarckism was not, according to Yerushalmi, a mere analytic schema. It was both an explanation and rationale for his own Jewishness. And indeed, it was *Jewishness, not Judaism*, that served

as the basis of Freud's own identity. The former, for Freud, is interminable even if the latter be terminated.⁷⁹ Yerushalmi's Freud exemplified this interminability in the peculiarly modern form of the Psychological Jew. While outwardly assimilated, Psychological Jews lay claim to a number of shared qualities: [i]ntellectuality and independence of mind, the highest ethical and moral standards, concern for social justice, tenacity in the face of persecution, and a deep sensitivity to antisemitism. Yerushalmi insists that far from submitting to Jewish self-denial in the face of social pressure, Freud was a conscious and proud Jew of the psychological variety, an exemplary specimen of the genus *Judaeus Psychologicus*.⁸⁰

What is of particular interest to Yerushalmi is that the Psychological Jew is both a product of and response to the forces of modernity that wreaked such havoc on Jewish community and collective memory. And what is interesting to us is that, at the point of rupture, Yerushalmi sees glimmers of hope. He conveys this sense when he relates that, for him, the abiding significance of *Moses and Monotheism* was to discover the fiercely godless Jew who emerges and persists out of what seems to be a final and irreparable rupture in the tradition. In fact, Yerushalmi assures Freud in the Monologue that hardly you alone struggle to overcome this rupture.

There is something noble in Yerushalmi's Freud, a desperate desire to retain a

link to an elusive and malleable ideal. That Yerushalmi identifies with this attempt is manifest on every page of *Freud's Moses*. Contrary to popular opinion, he reads *Moses and Monotheism* as a profoundly Jewish and modern book, as an elucidation of the sources of Jewish identity through *historical inquiry*. Indeed, he admits that his preoccupation with Freud's book arises out of a profound interest in the various modalities of modern Jewish historicism, of that quest for the meaning of Judaism and Jewish identity through an unprecedented reexamination of the Jewish past which is itself the consequence of a radical break with that past.

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Unlikely as it may seem, Freud serves as a model for a Jewish historian seeking to heal the rift in Jewish collective memory. In this respect, *Freud's Moses offers*, in its own way, an important reply to *Zakhor*. The sense of despair over the utility of the modern historical enterprise gives way to a more sanguine, though tempered, sentiment. Yerushalmi had already sought to mitigate the sense of despair prior to *Freud's Moses*, most notably in a 1987 address entitled *Reflections on Forgetting*.⁸² And yet it is in *Freud's Moses* that we witness the clearest articulation of modern historiography's potential, albeit limited, to find meaning in the wake of the radical break with the past. And it is here, especially in the Monologue with Freud, that we are most exposed to Yerushalmi's own existential concerns as a Jew.

As a whole, Yosef Yerushalmi's work illumines the richly complex and tensionfilled condition of the modern Jewish historian. In search of both historical truth and spiritual meaning, the Jewish historian attempts to cross, with alternating bouts of hubris and self-doubt, the bridge spanning the traditional and the modern. Rather than fall victim

to the abyss of despair, the great historian skillfully negotiates this bridge, always possessed of perspective and empathy. In his profound meditations on Marranos and memory, ranging from Cardoso to Freud, from Isaac Luria the kabbalist to Alexandr Luria the psychologist, Yosef Yerushalmi integrates the historical and the spiritual with intellectual creativity and audacity. He *defines* the condition of the modern Jewish historian by simultaneously analyzing and embodying the animating features of that condition.

And yet Yosef Yerushalmi has never limited his concerns exclusively to Jewish history, nor has he imagined that the implications of his work redound only to Jews. His work transcends, quite deliberately, rigid lines of group identity or scholarly method. In fact, it is perhaps the ultimate tribute to ascribe to him the ability to merge the particular and the general, the work of the archival historian and the profound thinker, the mind-set of the Jew and the human. In this regard, Yerushalmi achieved or worked through that which (he laments) Freud could not: the possibility to lay to rest the false and insidious dichotomy between the parochial and the universal, that canard of the Enlightenment which became and remains a major neurosis of modern Jewish intellectuals.⁸³ Challenging this false and insidious dichotomy may well be the signal achievement to date in the brilliant and accomplished career of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi.

Notes

1. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 2d ed. (New York, 1989), xxvii. Throughout this essay I have relied on this edition, rather than the earlier 1982 version, because it contains a new foreword by Harold Bloom, a new preface by the author, and a new essay, Reflections on Forgetting, at the end of the book.
2. Harold Bloom notes that *Zakhor* is pragmatically agonistic though almost never agonistic in tone. *Zakhor*, xxv.
3. Yerushalmi's interview with Dominique Bourel is in the French edition of *Zakhor* (Paris, 1984), 152.
4. Ibid.
5. Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics*, rev. ed. (Seattle, 1981), xvii.
6. *Zakhor* (French), 151.
7. Professor Yerushalmi related Baron's desire to me in a conversation in New York on April 9, 1995.
8. Though written in 1964, this article was not published until 1970. Yerushalmi, The Inquisition and the Jews of France in the time of Bernard Gui, *Harvard Theological Review* 63 (July 1970): 317-76. Referring to his earlier interest, Yerushalmi declares in this article that there is no evidence to support a link between Albigensian heretics and French crypto-Jews (pp. 341-42).
9. Ibid., 318.
10. Yerushalmi observes that [i]n all the welter of competing ideas the Marrano emigrants stand out as perhaps the first modern Jews. *From*

Spanish Court, 44.

11. Ibid.,xiv.

12. Yitzhak F. Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia, 1961), 1:240.

13. *From Spanish Court*, 95.

14. Ibid., 194206. See also Marranos Returning to Judaism in the 17th Century, (in Hebrew) in *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 1972), 2:2019, or *The Re-education of Marranos in the Seventeenth Century* (Third Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies) (Cincinnati, 1980).

15. Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court*, 370.

16. In the spirit of Gershom Scholem, Yerushalmi argues that the Expulsion from Spain raised the perennial problem of Jewish exile and suffering to a new level of urgency.*From Spanish Court*, 43.

17. Ibid., 477.

18. Ibid., 21.

19. Yerushalmi, *Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models* (Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture) (New York, 1982), 18.

20. Ibid., 1222.

21. Divre Spinoza al kiyum ha-am ha-yehudi, in *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences* (Jerusalem, 1983), 6:171213.

22. Yerushalmi acknowledges and then builds upon the work of such Spinoza scholars as Carl Gebhardt and I. S. Revah. Divre Spinoza, 17273.

23. Ibid., 17679.

24. *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976), 2627.

25. See, for example, Baron's seminal article, Ghetto and Emancipation, *The Menorah Journal* (June 1928), 51526. In a series of articles, Baron argued further that medieval Jews were often accorded the status of servants of the chamber (*servi camerae*) by political sovereigns in order to merit protection. See Baron's studies, Plenitude of

Apostolic Powers and Medieval Jewish Serfdom and Medieval Nationalism and Jewish Serfdom, in idem, *Ancient and Medieval Jewish History* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1972), 284307, 30822. See also Yerushalmi, *Lisbon Massacre*, 38.

26. *Lisbon Massacre*, xii.

27. Ibid., 39.

28. Quoted in ibid., 23.

29. Ibid., 50.

30. Yerushalmi extends his interest in Jewish alliance with state authority to modern times in a recent booklet, *Diener von Konigen und nicht Diener von Dienern: Einige Aspekte der politischen Geschichte der Juden* (Munich, 1995).

31. Bloom, foreword to *Zakhor*, xv.

32. *Divre Spinoza*, 186.

33. Ibid., 190.

34. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History: A Panorama in Facsimile of Five Centuries of the Printed Haggadah from the Collections of Harvard University and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America* (Philadelphia, 1975).

35. *Haggadah and History*, 15.

36. See Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* (Jubilee Volume) 4647 (197980), 60738.

37. Ibid., 607.

38. Ibid., 609.

39. Ibid., 611.

40. Ibid., 619.

41. See, for instance, Robert Bonfil's criticism of Yerushalmi in *How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography*, in *History and Theory: Essays in Jewish Historiography* (Middletown, Conn., 1988), 9293. It might also be noted that Yerushalmi follows Gershom Scholem in holding that the Spanish Expulsion marked so monumental a rupture in Jewish history and consciousness as to impel new forms of religious and literary expression. This point has been challenged most notably by Moshe Idel in *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, Conn., 1988) and other writings.

42. Baron's article, Azariah de Rossi's Historical Method, was originally published in French in the *Revue des Etudes Juives* 86 (1928) and is republished in Baron's *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia, 1964), 239.

43. See, for instance, Eric Cochrane's review of divergent scholarly views in *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981), xii-xiii. For a sampling of divergent views, see Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London, 1969), 144; and E. B. Fryde, *Humanism and Renaissance Historiography* (London, 1983), 31.

44. *Clio and the Jews*, 626.

45. Ibid., 635.

46. Ibid., 637.

47. *Zakhor*, 8. The nineteenth-century Italian Jewish savant, Samuel David Luzzatto, provided an interesting adumbration of this point when he observed that throughout our history, the spirit of God, which is our nation's inheritance, warred with the human spirit. See *Igrot ShaDaL* (Premsl, 1882), 136667, quoted in Paul Mendes-Flohr and

Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World* (New York, 1980), 209.

48. *Zakhor*, 9.

49. Ibid., 8.

50. Ibid., 21.

51. Ibid., 25.

52. Ibid., 84.

53. See, for instance, the recent study by Peter Levine, *Nietzsche and the Modern Crisis of the Humanities* (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 25ff.

54. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. Peter Preuss (Indianapolis, 1980), 1113, 4145, 64.

55. Only in the penultimate endnote to *Zakhor*, and as an afterthought, does Yerushalmi recognize the parallel to Nietzsche. *Zakhor*, 145, n. 33.

56. *Zakhor*, 102. A stark literary foil to Funes is Yudka, the hero of Haim Hazaz's story *Ha-derashah*, who announces to his colleagues in a kibbutz meeting that he is opposed to Jewish history and advocates its eradication from Jewish consciousness (p. 97).

57. *Ibid.*, 98.

58. Interestingly, in a later essay entitled *Reflections on Forgetting*, Yerushalmi declares essentially banal Nietzsche's view that the unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary to the health of an individual, a community, and a system of culture. See the Postscript to the second edition of *Zakhor*, p. 107.

59. Scholem himself raised the possibility that what appeared to nineteenth-century historians to be an impotent hallucination will be revealed as great and vibrant. See his article, *Mi-tokh hirhurim àl Hokhmat Yisra'el*, reprinted in Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Hokhmat Yisra'el: hebetim historiyim u-filosofiyim* (Jerusalem, 1979), 165.

60. See Yerushalmi's preface to the second edition of *Zakhor*, p. xxvii.

61. Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1, *La République* (Paris, 1984), xvii.

62. Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van

Den Abbeele (Minneapolis, 1988), 58.

63. *Zakhor*, 98.

64. Yerushalmi himself acknowledges that the crisis of historicism is but a reflection of the crisis of our culture, of our spiritual life. See his *Reflections on Forgetting*, *Zakhor*, 115.

65. Quoted in H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1800-1930*, rev. ed. (New York, 1977), 230.

66. See Strauss's critical remarks on Julius Guttman's *Die Philosophie des Judentums in Philosophie und Gesetz* (Berlin, 1935), translated by Eve Adler as *Philosophy and Law* (Albany, N.Y., 1995).

67. See Leon Wieseltier's review of *Zakhor* in *New York Times Book Review*, 15 January 1984, 10.

68. Funkenstein, *Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness*, *History and Memory* 1 (spring/summer 1989): 526.

69. I have discussed Funkenstein's essay in David N. Myers, *Remembering Zakhor: A Super-Commentary*, *History and Memory* 4 (fall/winter 1992), 129-46.

70. Among the scholars whose attention has focused on Jewish historiography in recent years are Jacob Barnai, Israel Bartal, David Biale, Robert Bonfil, Robert Chazan, Shmuel Feiner, Amos Funkenstein, Ivan Marcus, Michael Meyer, Reuven Michael, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, David Myers, Arielle Rein, Ismar Schorsch, and Perrine Simon-Nahum.

71. Yerushalmi asserts the shift was first signalled in his 1982 Leo Baeck lecture on Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, 1991), xvi.

72. *Freud's Moses*, xv.

73. See the précis in *Freud's Moses*, 56.

74. *Freud's Moses*, 113, n. 5.

75. Freud himself poses this question in the opening paragraph of the book. See *Moses and Monotheism* (New York, 1939; 1955), 3.

76. *Freud's Moses*, 19.

77. See Yerushalmi's insightful analysis of Freud's Jewish background, including a

new reading of the Hebrew inscription by Freud's father to him on his thirty-fifth birthday. *Freud's Moses*, 3779.

78. Ibid., 30.

79. Ibid., 90.

80. Ibid., 10.

81. Ibid., 2.

82. Reflections on Forgetting, in *Zakhor*, 11617.

83. *Freud's Moses*, 98.

I TRADITION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF JEWISH HISTORY

2

On the Uses of History in Medieval Jewish Polemic Against Christianity: The Quest for the Historical Jesus

David Berger

History is not a simple term, and the uses of history are even more diverse than its meanings. Historical investigation can mean the critical examination of sources, often with a measure of empathy, always with a skeptical eye, to refine our image of the personalities and events of the past. But it can also be a didactic enterprise, accepting of unscrutinized data, highlighting heroes and villains, mobilizing past and present in the service of an overarching end. It is a commonplace that the first approach is most characteristic of post-Enlightenment historiography, while the second was the hallmark of the medieval mind.

Like most commonplaces, this one is essentially true. At the same time, the boundaries between the approaches are hardly impermeable. We have long abandoned perhaps too eagerly the historicist fantasy that contemporary historians work in a rarefied atmosphere of wholly objective truth. With respect to the Middle Ages, we will indeed search in vain for a systematic application of critical historical perspectives, but some intellectual challenges produced insights foreshadowing the historiographical orientation that became increasingly evident first during the Renaissance and ultimately in modern times.

Within a Jewish context, critical comments by biblical exegetes, debates about the antiquity of kabbalistic works, historical reasons

proposed for the commandments, and halakhic approaches to changing conditions have sharpened our awareness of medieval sensitivity to textual, theological, and social change. Jewish polemic against Christianity is a particularly promising field for the pursuit of this inquiry. Christianity emerged out of Judaism in historical times; its founder was a Jew; its sacred text is largely a collection of purportedly historical narratives about that Jew and his immediate successors; its fundamental claim speaks of the end of one age and the birth of another; it pointed to the historical condition of contemporary Jews as a confirmation of that claim, while Jews pointed to the unfolding of history in a patently unredeemed world as its most effective refutation. We usually identify exegesis and philosophy as the core of the Jewish-Christian debate, but the role of history was no less central.

This role took many forms. Historical context could help determine the plausibility of a scriptural argument; historical analysis could shed light on talmudic references to Jesus and to Gentiles; the history of the Jewish people in exile demanded explanation often theological but sometimes naturalistic; the larger pattern of history might reveal the character of the age in which medieval Jews and Christians lived. While I hope to examine all these issues and more in a fuller study, this essay will concentrate on a basic concern of many Jewish polemicists, which can be described without serious anachronism as the search for the historical Jesus. From late antiquity through the early seventeenth century this quest moved from hostile legends to unsystematic criticisms, both naive and penetrating, and finally produced flashes of genuine historical reconstruction. In the course of their investigations, Jews honed their sense of historical skepticism while remaining checked by an invisible hand that prevented them from taking steps that sometimes appear self-evident to the modern eye. An inquiry into both the breakthroughs and the inhibitions of these polemicists can provide a fascinating look at the historical *mentalités* of medieval and Renaissance Jews.

Medieval Jewry was heir to two sets of internal sources about Jesus: a handful of scattered remarks in rabbinic texts and the various versions of the counter-Gospel known as *Toledot Yeshu*.

¹ There is little we can say about the image of Jesus held by early medieval Jews, although there is no reason to doubt that many of them accepted as simple truth *Toledot Yeshu's* depiction of an idolatrous enticer and bastard sorcerer who was hanged from a stalk of cabbage.²

By the twelfth century, when European Jews began to write polemical works, they had far more information, which made their task easier in

some respects and more complex in others. Polemicists were familiar with at least parts of the New Testament, and they were also in possession of a short Jewish work written in Arabic by an unknown author and translated into Hebrew as *Sefer Nestor hakomer*.³ *Nestor* already contains, in however embryonic a form, some of the key points about Jesus that Jewish polemicists were to make for the remainder of the Middle Ages and into modern times.

The relationship of Jesus to Judaism is most critically defined by two issues: his attitude toward the laws of the Torah and his own self-perception. While *Nestor*, which is a work containing several redactional layers, criticizes Jesus for violating the Law and asserting that he and his Father are one, the most sustained passage argues for his loyalty to the classic positions of Judaism with respect to both points. In his programmatic declaration in Matthew (5:17-18), Jesus affirmed that the Torah must be observed, and in several other passages he made it perfectly clear that he did not consider himself God. Thus, he maintained that he did not know the time of the resurrection because such knowledge is confined to God alone (Mark 13:32), and he refused to be called righteous because such a term is reserved for God (Mark 10:18). Know, continues *Nestor*, that you have deviated greatly by forsaking the deeds which he performed: circumci-

sion, Passover, the Sabbath, the great fast, the ten commandments, indeed, all the commandments.

4

Despite this approach and its manifest polemical utility, Jews could not readily embrace the simple proposition that Jesus was a perfectly good Jew. First of all, Jewish tradition itself spoke of his sinfulness and well-deserved execution. Second, both psychological and polemical reasons impelled Jews to criticize Jesus rather than embrace him. Finally, the New Testament material, with which Jews were increasingly familiar, presented a bewildering array of conflicting evidence, particularly with respect to the law but to some degree even with respect to the question of divinity. Not only did this create genuine historical perplexity; it presented an opportunity for criticizing the Christians sacred text no less tempting than the chance to denounce its hero.

The polemicists of Northern Europe made no attempt to produce a coherent portrait of Jesus but were satisfied with ad hoc criticisms. The critique of the New Testament in the standard version of Joseph Official's thirteenth-century polemic consists of a series of snippets.⁵ The more elaborate discussions in the *Nizzahon Vetus* and an alternate version of *Yosef hamekanne* are far more interesting, not only because of the richness of the argumentation but precisely because they confirm the narrow focus and the absence of any effort to come away with a comprehensive picture.

In discussing the New Testament, the *Nizzahon Vetus* repeatedly maintains that Jesus denied he was divine; in other sections of what is admittedly an anthology, the author reiterates on several occasions that Jesus made himself into a god.⁶ In one passage where the polemicist points to Jesus use of the term son of man, his point is not

primarily that Jesus had no pretensions to divinity. It is, rather, that if Jesus were God, it would have been wrong of him to use this term. In fact, the passage continues, Jesus would be lying in his assertion (Luke 9:58) that he has no place to lay his head, when the Psalmist testifies that the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof (Ps. 24:1), and Jesus himself said elsewhere, Dominion is given unto me in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18).⁷ To the extent that this text, which also appears in modified form in both versions of *Yosef hamekanne* and in another Ashkenazic collection,⁸ presents a straightforward argument, it is not that Jesus did not consider himself divine but rather that, for someone who claimed to be God, he made some peculiarly inappropriate remarks.

An even less clear but nonetheless similar impression emerges from a different discussion in the standard text of *Yosef hamekanne*, which cites two New Testament verses in which Jesus appears to deny his divinity: the above-cited statement in Mark that only God can be called good and a verse in John (probably 12:49). The author's formulation does not address Jesus self-perception. Rather, he asks why Jesus would say these things if he was God (not if he thought he was God), much as he goes on to ask why he was hungry and thirsty if he was God.⁹

With respect to the law, the fullest array of Northern European arguments appears in the *Nizzahon Vetus*. On the one hand, we are repeatedly presented with the evidence of Matthew 5:17¹⁸ that Jesus declared his intention to complete

(*lehashlim*) or to fulfill (*lekayyem*) the law, not to destroy it. The author argues that the Christian assertion that the new covenant of Jeremiah replaces the old Torah contradicts the Gospel passage. Despite this, Christians maintain that Jesus caused the Torah of Moses to be truncated by abolishing circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, and many commandments.

¹⁰ The same Matthean passage, reinforced by the author's version of Luke 16:17 (Even if heaven and earth shall pass, the words of Moses and the other prophets shall not pass), refutes the antinomian Christian interpretation of Isaiah's declaration that God hates the Jewish festivals (Isa. 1:14); Jesus, after all, accept[ed] the Jewish religion circumcision, the Sabbath, indeed, the entire religion all the days of his life.¹¹ Jesus circumcision along with his observance of the Sabbath and festivals (for he did observe all these commandments), particularly in light of his statement in Matthew, surely establishes a precedent that Christians should follow.¹²

Elsewhere, however, the *Nizzahon Vetus* presents a rather different picture. In discussing the assertion that baptism has replaced circumcision, the author begins with his usual response that this would contradict Matthew. He continues, It would follow, then (*nimza*), that Jesus annulled the law of Moses and thereby gave the lie to his own Torah where he wrote, Not one thing will pass from the Law, *for he added and diminished from the law in several places* (emphasis added).¹³ This appears to go further than the earlier citation, which said only that Christians attributed such deviations to him.

Other passages surely go further. In a discussion that also appears in both versions of *Yosef ha-mekanne*, the *Nizzahon Vetus* uses one of the most clearly nomian passages in the Gospels as a foundation for an

attack on Jesus for his violations of the law. After curing a leper, Jesus instructs him to bring a sacrifice of purification as Moses has commanded in the Torah (Matt. 8:4). One expects a Jew to pounce on this passage as further evidence of Christian failure to emulate Jesus devotion to the Torah. But the Northern European polemicists find themselves in a particularly churlish frame of mind: Now, I am surprised at his commanding the leper to go to the priest and bring his sacrifice. Once he was cured by Jesus why should he have to go to the priest? Moreover, from the time of his birth we don't see that he commanded the observance of any other commandments in the Torah, such as those regarding the Sabbath, circumcision, pork, and the mixing of species, and several others which, in fact, he permitted people to transgress after his advent. Indeed, even this commandment was not observed from that day on.¹⁴

Shortly thereafter, the author criticizes Jesus for permitting work on the Sabbath by justifying his disciples plucking of corn (Matt. 12:112) and asks how this squares with his instructions to the leper.¹⁵ Finally, along with one version of *Yosef ha-mekanne* and the above-cited Ashkenazic collection, he objects to Jesus instructing a man to carry his bed on the Sabbath.¹⁶ Thus, as in the case of Jesus self-perception, the polemical need, or even whim, of the moment appears to prevail. Jesus is a loyal adherent of the law, a man awash in contradiction, or a systematic, committed violator.

It is tempting to proffer the highly tentative suggestion that this is precisely the sort of approach we should expect from Ashkenazic Jews in the High Middle Ages. The genius of this culture did not lie in integrative works. Its relative lack of interest in philosophy left its literature even more focused on exegesis, whether biblical or talmudic, than that of other Jewish centers. Even in works whose primary purpose was harmonization of conflicting evidence drawn from a vast corpus, broad applications were often avoided in the absence of a concrete motivation. The ad hoc character of Ashkenazic pronouncements about Christianity has been analyzed in Jacob Katz's classic discussion, and this is only one example of a wider phenomenon.

¹⁷ In our context, the search for contradictions that so characterized the initial step of the Tosafist approach to the Talmud became the final step as well. There was no motive for Jews to seek the concord of discordant passages in the New Testament even on an ad hoc basis, and Northern European polemicists evince little interest in penetrating the psyche of Jesus of Nazareth.

The concentration on specific texts coupled with the absence of a wider perspective stands in sharp contrast to Maimonides approach to the history of deviations from the true faith. In his account of Christianity and Islam in *The Epistle to Yemen* and more strikingly in the history of idolatry in his code, Maimonides is interested precisely in the large picture, the critical deviations, and the underlying causes.¹⁸ It matters little if he can point to specific evidence for his contentions; a verse here, an aggadah there constitute sufficient building blocks for a structure that rests upon ideology and theory far more than on texts and testimony. Maimonides vistas are too broad; his historiographic weaknesses are those of a philosopher. The vistas

of the Northern European polemicists are too narrow; their drawbacks are those of legists and exegetes.

The earliest European Jewish polemic, the Provençal *Milhamot ha-Shem* by Jacob ben Reuben, also attempts no resolution of key contradictions, but it does not fall prey to inconsistency in quite the same degree and reflects a somewhat greater concern with understanding Jesus. From a polemical perspective, it is difficult to decide which is better to fault Jesus himself for self-contradiction or to question the reliability of Christian tradition and the basis of Christian practice by emphasizing his devotion to the law. Jacob resolves the problem by doing both. Like his successors in the North, who may well have borrowed the argument from him, he criticizes Christians for saying that Jesus did not come to add to the law or to change it and then citing Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant to defend precisely such a change. Elsewhere, he blames Jesus for inconsistency, but he does not leave this as an ad hoc assertion here and there. Rather, he views Jesus neither as an uncompromising upholder of the law nor as an antinomian ideologue. Inconsistency is precisely what characterizes him. In the very same sermon in which he declared the law eternal and unchanging, he changed it, and such vacillation is evident in other passages about the law as well as in his changing position regarding the public revelation of his miracles. With respect to the law, he did not maintain a single stance but rather followed a variety of

approaches, and with respect to self-revelation, no one can determine his position because whatever he said on one occasion he contradicted on another.

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In the fourteenth century a work partially dependent upon *Milhamot ha-Shem* reflects the persistence of this tension even as it reaffirms Jesus observance of the law. Moses ha-Kohen of Tordesillas also responded to the Christian interpretation of Jeremiah's new covenant by pointing to Jesus exhortations affirming the eternity of the law, but he translated I have not come to destroy but to fulfill [*plerosai; adimplere*] as I have not come to take away but to add [*lehosif*]. Thus, Jesus may have added to the law by requiring baptism in addition to circumcision, but he never abolished the earlier obligation. Moses comment that Jesus observed many of the commandments of the Torah may also reflect some reservations about his full commitment, although there is no question that the fundamental thrust of the passage ascribes to him a deep loyalty to the Torah.²⁰

The breakthrough toward a Jewish picture of Jesus that attempted to account for all the New Testament evidence in a coherent fashion came at the end of the fourteenth century in Profiat Duran's *Kelimat ha-goyim*, which reflects a maturity that owes much to the accumulation of polemical experience, the cultural breadth and sophistication of Spanish Jewry, and the stellar qualities of the author. For the first time, a Jewish polemic reflects more than just extensive familiarity with Christian sources; it handles those sources with a sense of confidence and command.²¹ With respect to the law, Duran was not content to point to the well-worn passage from the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus did not come to destroy but to fulfill. (Duran, like *Nestor ha-komer* and one passage in the *Nizzahon Vetus*,

translates *adimplere* as to complete (*lehashlim*), which stands somewhere between to fulfill and Moses ha-Kohen's to add). He made a concerted, impressive effort to explain all contrary evidence from the Gospels to accord with his portrait of a nomian Jesus. To take a particularly difficult example, the assertion that what goes into the mouth does not defile a man (Matt. 15:11) cannot mean that forbidden foods are permitted, since we can prove that Jesus own disciples refrained from eating such food (a historical argument of continuing relevance). Rather, Jesus must have meant that the food is not intrinsically unclean; it is only the divine command that renders it so.²²

Profiat Duran's proof texts that Jesus advocated observance of the law include the verse in which he instructs his disciples to do what the scribes and Pharisees say because they sit on the seat of Moses (Matt. 23:23); the passage, however, is not explicitly utilized to make the point that Jesus has thereby endorsed the oral as well as the written law.²³ Influenced by *Kelimat ha-goyim*, R. Simon Duran repeated the citation in his *Keshet u-Magen*, again without drawing the explicit conclusion about the oral law, although several lines later he argued that Jesus disciples were scrupulous even about rabbinic injunctions.²⁴ Simon's son Solomon; however, took this development to its logical conclusion in a highly charged context. His *Milhemet mizvah* is devoted to a defense of the Talmud against an increasingly dangerous Christian attack. Here the citation from

Matthew demonstrates that an attack on the Talmud is an attack on Jesus himself, and Solomon proceeds with additional arguments that the oral law underlies several of Jesus legal dicta.

25 The contradictory New Testament passages of Joseph Official and the *Nizzahon Vetus*, the inconsistent Jesus of *Milhamot ha-Shem*, and the partially nomian figure of Moses ha-Kohen have given way to a Jesus thoroughly committed to the written and oral law so cavalierly rejected by his putative medieval disciples.

To reinforce the contrast between contemporary Christians and the founder or presumed founder of their faith, the later polemicists also portrayed a strongly Jewish Jesus with respect to the question of his self-perception. We have already seen the contradictory assertions of some of the Ashkenazic authors on this issue. Here too, Profiat Duran resolved the issue in favor of the option that is most compatible with traditional Judaism, and he provided an overarching explanation to account for any contrary evidence. Jesus, we know, used poetic language and spoke in parables. Through a careful examination of specific texts, Duran concluded that when Jesus said that he and his Father were one or called himself Son of God, he meant to affirm nothing more than a special relationship with God, not to describe himself as the First Cause and Creator of the world.²⁶

More subtle shifts in matters of detail also demonstrate Duran's changing emphasis. Jewish polemicists had regularly pointed to the story of Jesus cursing the fig tree when he discovered it had no fruit as evidence that he could not have been divine. The primary argument, of course, was that God would have known from the outset that he would find no fruit. Several polemicists added the rather amusing point that the curse contradicts Jesus exhortation to love one's enemies, and Meir of Narbonne argued that instead of making the tree

with it he should have commanded it to produce fruit.²⁷ Although one manuscript tradition of *Kelimat ha-goyim* contains the standard argument about Jesus ungodlike ignorance, Duran's first (and perhaps only) use of this story is to argue that the disciples' amazement at the miraculous withering of the tree demonstrates that they did not believe that Jesus was divine.²⁸ Duran was surely interested in showing that Jesus was not God, but he was more interested in the historical assertion that neither he nor his disciples thought he was.

Simon Duran cited the arguments from Jesus' ignorance and the disciples' amazement in one breath,²⁹ and his general treatment of Jesus is more complex and more problematic than that of *Kelimat ha-goyim*. Simon attempted a fairly ambitious reconstruction of Jesus' life and ideas, utilizing rabbinic as well as Christian sources. The methodology is essentially that rabbinic information is always correct, that in many important matters the Jewish sources correspond to what we learn from Christian works, and that instances of irreconcilable difference reveal errors in Christian tradition. After all, he says, even the reports of Jesus' disciples in the Gospels are not in agreement with respect to all matters; there is contradiction and difference among them whether as a result of forgetfulness or as a result of the desire to make matters look more attractive.³⁰

Occasionally, this approach can yield flashes of very interesting historical

skepticism. Simon describes the connection that Christians made between Micah 5:1 and Jesus presumed birth in Bethlehem, shows that the verse cannot refer to this, and then argues that the rabbinic name Jesus of Nazareth indicates that he was not born in Bethlehem at all. The force of the rabbinic evidence here seems weak, and it appears that Simon uses it as a peg on which to hang a skeptical look at the Gospel report. Later, he argues that talmudic sources indicate that Jesus indeed went to Egypt but not under the circumstances described in Matthew 2. Finally, Simon expends considerable effort to reconstruct Jesus lineage and associations utilizing the full array of sources at his disposal. In this discussion, the primary purpose of New Testament citations is not to criticize them but to use them constructively to buttress and clarify rabbinic sources. The result has much in common with Christian efforts to harmonize the Gospels, except that one set of sources is in the final analysis not authoritative.

31

The effort to coordinate rabbinic and Gospel evidence in the context of a Jewish portrayal of Jesus views raised the question of how to assess his overall character and mission. Needless to say, the assertion that he observed the commandments and did not consider himself God was by no means sufficient to generate an enthusiastic evaluation, and it was hardly feasible for medieval Jews for reasons both emotional and talmudic to produce a literature of *laudes Jesu*.

For Jews like the Durans, one solution was to depict Jesus as a pietistic fool (*hasid shoteh*). Jacob ben Reuben had already described him as an ignoramus preaching to ignoramuses. Isaiah 30:20, which speaks of a presumably great teacher, cannot, said Jacob, refer to Jesus, who taught rustics and fishermen because he was as devoid of understanding as they.³² To Profiat Duran, the ignorance of Jesus and

his disciples is evident from the many errors in their citations of the Bible as well as from Jesus' apparent belief that reward and punishment in the afterlife are physical.³³ The balance between a Jesus who did not affirm the key theological errors of Christianity but was nonetheless very far from a role model appears in particularly striking fashion in Duran's analysis of a lengthy passage in John (6:47-66) in which Jesus promises eternal life to whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood. Although this statement points to his foolishness and insanity, as the Jews indicated and, in fact, many of his students were taken aback by it, it does not necessarily follow from it that the intention was that they actually eat his flesh and drink his blood.³⁴

Simon Duran repeated Profiat's assessment, citing the same evidence of errors in biblical citation, and described most of the Sermon on the Mount as a quintessential example of pietistic foolishness.³⁵ A century and a half later, Yair ben Shabbetai da Correggio was prepared to regard Jesus as a learned man who had studied with R. Yehoshua ben Perahiah but continued to insist on the ignorance of his disciples: If he taught wisdom to his students, a negligible number actually absorbed it, because they were not men of culture.³⁶

An ignorant, foolish, even insane Jesus may have satisfied the psychic needs and resolved some of the historical questions of medieval Jews, but a key problem remained unresolved. Ignorance, foolishness, and insanity are not grounds

for execution. Since the Talmud as well as the Gospels assign responsibility for Jesus execution to his own people, Jews were impelled not only to acknowledge responsibility but to argue that the decision was justified. What did a man who observed the Torah and never claimed to be divine do to deserve his fate? For the compartmentalizing polemicists of thirteenth-century Ashkenaz, this was no problem. Not only was Jesus a sorcerer; he also claimed to be God. In other contexts, as we have seen, they said that he disclaimed divinity, but this was not the place for that position. As it happens, however, it was precisely a Jew from thirteenth-century France who opened the door to a different, if highly problematic solution and then refrained from walking through that door with more than one foot.

It is well known that when R. Yehiel of Paris was confronted in 1240 with the argument that the Talmud should be banned partly because of blasphemies against Jesus, he maintained that the Jesus of the Talmud and the Jesus of the Christians are two different people. The actual presentation, however, is far more complicated. R. Yehiel was initially confronted with a talmudic passage about a Yeschu who is punished in the afterlife with boiling excrement for mocking the words of the sages. Because the passage does not say Jesus of Nazareth (*Yeschu ha-Nozri*) and does not mention the latter's more serious sins, R. Yehiel denies that the two are one and the same. He then responds to a talmudic citation about the execution of Jesus of Nazareth for sorcery and for leading Jews into idolatry with a concession that this is the Christian Jesus. However, in the discussion of yet a third passage he concludes, on the basis of chronological considerations, that the Christian Jesus is never mentioned in the Talmud at all. Now, if his argument that the Jesus of the boiling excrement is not the Talmud's Jesus of Nazareth still stands, then R. Yehiel has not two Jesuses but three, two of whom came from Nazareth, and this is in fact strongly implied in the Christian response recorded in the Oxford manuscript

of the Hebrew text and is explicitly stated in the Moscow manuscript.

37

This position would have made it possible to argue that the execution of the Christian Jesus was primarily the responsibility of the Roman authorities or that only a handful of Jews were involved; in short, all the options of modern Jewish apologetics became available once rabbinic statements about Jesus villainy and execution had been made to vanish into thin air. But R. Yehiel does nothing of the sort, and the edited Hebrew version retains his initial statement about the Christian Jesus as an inciter to idolatry. Whatever one thinks of the sincerity of the multiple Jesus theory, R. Yehiel found a way to neutralize some dangerous rabbinic statements, and yet the essential Ashkenazic evaluation of Jesus remains even in the text of this disputation.

In the fourteenth century, Moses ha-Kohen of Tordesillas made much stronger use of the theory of the two Jesuses in defending Judaism and the Talmud against renewed attack. For Moses, the lack of identity between the Talmud's Jesus and the hero of the New Testament is demonstrated not only by the chronological problem raised by R. Yehiel but by an additional, striking point.

The Jesus of the Talmud erected a brick and bowed to it (*B. Sanhedrin 107b*), while the Jesus of the Gospels was an uncompromising monotheist!

38

And so we return to our original question. Why was an observant Jew who made no claims of divinity executed by Jewish authorities?

Profiat Duran addressed this question only in passing as part of his argument that Jesus did not annul the law. If the crucifixion stories about him are true, you will find that they condemned him to death not for destroying the Torah but for saying that he is the son of God and the Messiah.³⁹ Duran, who was not a halakhist, does not seem disturbed by the fact that these accusations in themselves given the assumption that son of God was not meant literally do not clearly generate a death sentence according to Jewish law.⁴⁰ It would be much too facile to solve this problem by suggesting that Duran's declared methodology of refuting Christianity from its own sources (*ke-fi ma'amar ha-omer*) means that he really did not believe what he said about Jesus and that his ultimate loyalty was to the talmudic reports about an inciter to idolatry. His entire discussion of the historical development of Christianity, which is beyond the purview of this essay, shows that he took New Testament evidence seriously and that he regarded both idolatry and the rejection of the law as later developments. In discussing when Jesus lived, he accords rabbinic tradition great respect but does not appear unequivocally bound by it. Thus, after examining Christian sources, he concludes that the statement of the true sages (*hakhmei ha-emet*) that Jesus was a student of R. Yehoshua ben Perahiah appears [*yera'eh*] to be the truth.⁴¹ I suppose one could insist on a literal translation of *yera'eh emet* as is seen to be the truth, but I doubt very much that this is correct. In the

final analysis, Profiat Duran's Jesus is that of a critical reading of the Gospels, not of a straightforward reading of the Talmud.

R. Simon Duran, who was a preeminent halakhist, could not avoid the question of Jesus capital crime, nor could he marginalize talmudic traditions, and the problem appears to have created a tension in his image of Jesus almost reminiscent of earlier Ashkenazic contradictions. In a lengthy passage borrowing many of Profiat Duran's arguments, Simon maintained that Jesus made no claim of divinity and that the term son of God means the most exalted of men.⁴² In his general reconstruction of Jesus biography, however, the emphasis differs. There, the New Testament report that Jesus was executed for describing himself as the son of God is connected with the talmudic assertions that he led Israel astray (*hesit ve-hiddiah*, which is really a *terminus technicus* for encouraging idolatry) and that he set up a brick to which he bowed. This rabbinic report, which does not contend that Jesus claimed divinity for himself, is the historical truth, while the Gospel assertion that he was executed for claiming to be the son of God is a confused reflection of his condemnation for incitement to idolatry.⁴³ Through the miasma of New Testament misunderstanding, one can nonetheless glimpse the kernel of truth that reinforces talmudic tradition.

Thus, Profiat Duran's assertion that son of God in the Gospels does not denote that divinity is a key element in the depiction of Jesus as a monotheist who never condoned idolatry. Simon Duran, while accepting his predecessor's un-

derstanding of the Gospels son of God, sought what was for him the best of both worlds: a Jesus who never endorsed the Christian doctrine that he himself was God (a position confirmed by both Talmud and Gospels) but who incited Jews to worship a different, old-fashioned form of idolatry (the stone cult that the Talmud calls *Merqulis*) and who worshipped it himself all this while affirming the eternity and inviolability of the Torah! In Simon Duran's case it may be that the assertions of Jesus devotion to the law are indeed a purely tactical use of Christian evidence. (We have cited their words verbatim to speak for us against those who believe in him by demonstrating that they have been untrue to Jesus intention).

44 Nonetheless, it is hard to come away from much of *Keshet umagen*, including the discussion of the apostles, without assuming that Duran was serious about the argument that Jesus observed the law, and this is a position that is very difficult to square with his endorsement of the talmudic account of an inciter to idolatry.

As the Middle Ages gave way to the Renaissance and early modern times, access to historical sources, interest in history, and a critical sense of the past changed the face of at least some historical literature. It is hardly necessary to say that among Jews, the quintessential example of these developments is the sixteenth-century Italian scholar Azariah de Rossi, and it should come as no surprise that the next level of sophistication in the polemical reconstruction of the historical Jesus was reached by an Italian Jew of the seventeenth century.

Leone da Modena's *Magen va-herev* reflects philosophical sophistication, thorough familiarity with Christian literature, and an unusual degree of historical acumen. This last characteristic is manifest in Leone's analysis of the development of Christian doctrine, which cannot detain us here, but it is also evident in a brief chapter

that attempts to paint a portrait of Jesus beliefs and the unfolding of his career. Like Simon Duran, Leone tells us that he will utilize Christian and Jewish sources to produce his reconstruction, but the difference in both methodology and conclusions illustrates strikingly the differences of time, place, and author.

Leone begins with a vehement dismissal of an unnamed Jewish version of Jesus career, which is surely *Toledot Yeshu*. For various reasons, it is a disgrace for any Jew to believe it. He goes on to say with great confidence that from perusing our books and theirs, he has attained an understanding of Jesus which I believe to be as firmly true as if I had lived in his generation and sat with him. Jesus observed the Torah. If he had not done so, he would have had no credibility at all in that society. Rather, he rejected a number of minor practices, one of the first of which was the ritual washing of hands with a blessing, which probably accounts for a talmudic statement that whoever is lax with respect to this ritual is uprooted from the world (*Sotah 4b*).

We must remember, continues Leone, that this was a period of sectarian diversity, which has been described in historical works ranging from *Josippon* to Caroli Sigonii's *De Republica Hebraeorum*.⁴⁵ That Jesus himself identified with the Pharisees, who were the bearers of the true tradition, is evident from his statement that they sit on the seat of Moses. Despite this indication that he acknowl-

edged both the written and the oral law, his minor deviations alarmed the Sages, who feared that Sadducees, Boethusians, Essenes, and others would soon be joined by an additional sect. In response to their opposition, Jesus strengthened himself by claiming the mantle of son of God. This is not a claim of divinity but of a status higher than that of the prophets. Jesus was no fool; he knew perfectly well that even the masses would have stoned him had he made the preposterous assertion that a man who was seen to eat, drink, sleep, and defecate was God. He certainly could not have anticipated the incredible truth: that after his death people would actually concoct arguments to affirm such absurdities.

46

For all its spirited partisanship, this is serious history. It attempts to account for all the evidence; it utilizes secondary as well as primary historical literature; it dismisses contemptuously the fantasies of *Toledot Yeshu*; it examines historical context; it speculates in sober, informed fashion about the possible motivations, concerns, even the personal development of the major protagonists. Leone really cares about understanding the hero of the Gospels, so that his Jesus is not a stick figure; he has a texture that even Profiat Duran's Jesus lacks.

In light of Azariah de Rossi's well-known skepticism about some historical material in the Talmud, the role of rabbinic traditions in Leone's reconstruction is particularly intriguing. He declares that he reached his conclusions on the basis of our books and theirs, but the only Jewish material explicitly cited is *Josippon* and a single talmudic reference to washing one's hands. Even if we recognize the relevance of other rabbinic sources to his portrait of sectarianism, the absence of any reference to R. Yehoshua ben Perahiah's idolatrous student or to the man executed for sorcery and incitement to idolatry is striking.

When Simon Duran produced a portrait of Jesus on the basis of our books and theirs, these talmudic passages took center stage. Unless we assume that Leone endorsed the two-Jesus theory, which strikes me as improbable in the extreme, he has silently rejected the historicity not only of *Toledot Yeshu* but of the major rabbinic sources as well.⁴⁷

Whatever one thinks of the number of Jesuses in antiquity, no one can question the multiplicity of Jesuses in medieval Jewish polemic. Many Jews with no interest at all in history were forced to confront a historical/biographical question that continues to bedevil historians to our own day. Once the issue was joined, it produced a series of analyses that reflect profound differences among varying Jewish centers in different periods, and it demonstrates a development in which Jews who deal with history in grudging, limited fashion, as if compelled by the proverbial demon, give way to polemicists who, within the limits of their time, seem inspired by the historical Muse.

Notes

1. For a list of the rabbinic passages, see H. H. Ben Sasson, Disputations and Polemics, *Encyclopedia Judaica* 6: cols. 8182. The standard collection and discussion of

Toledot Yeshu material remains Samuel Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach Jüdischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1902).

2. Later Jews quite familiar with the Gospels had no trouble accepting this information at face value. See the *Nizzahon Vetus* (henceforth N.V.) in my *Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1979; reprint, Northvale, N.J., 1996), sec. 202, p. 202 (English) =141 (Hebrew); sec. 205, pp. 2034 (English) =142 (Hebrew), and my notes to both passages.

3. Daniel J. Lasker and Sarah Stroumsa, *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest: Qissat Mujadilat al-Usquf and Sefer Nestor ha-komer* (Jerusalem, 1996). On the impact of this work, see Joel Rembaum, The Influence of *Sefer Nestor ha-Komer* on Medieval Jewish Polemics, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 45 (1978): 155-85.

4. On violations of the Law, see *Nestor*, paragraphs 127, 135. On the identity of Jesus and his Father, see paragraphs 68, 145, and cf. the assertion in paragraph 150 that he contradicted himself on this point. On Jesus loyalty to the positions of Judaism, see paragraphs 3557, 63, 105. I have translated a version of paragraph 63 (on circumcision, Passover, etc.) which appears only in the Hebrew section (p. 124) of Lasker and Stroumsa's edition.

5. *Sefer Yosef ha-mekanne*, ed. Judah Rosenthal (Jerusalem, 1970), 125-38.

6. N.V., sec. 194, p. 200 (English) =138-39 (Hebrew); secs. 197-99, p. 201 (Eng.)=140 (Heb.); sec. 207, pp. 204-5 (Eng.)=143 (Heb.). Contrast with sec. 9, p. 46 (Eng.)=7 (Heb.); sec. 50, p. 75 (Eng.)=3435 (Heb.); sec. 67, p. 86 (Eng.)=44 (Heb.). On N.V. as an anthology (at least in part), see my discussion, *Jewish-Christian Debate*, 3536. For the alternate version of the *Yosef ha-mekanne*

critique of the New Testament, see Judah Rosenthal, Bikkoret yehudit shel *ha-Berit ha-hadashah* min ha-meah ha-yod-gimel, in *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History, and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev*, ed. Charles Berlin (New York, 1971), Heb. sec., pp. 123-39.

7. N.V., sec. 168, p. 181 (Eng.)=119 (Heb.).

8. *Sefer Yosef ha-mekanne*, 132; *Kiev Festschrift*, 125 (without the reference to Matt. 28:18). By another Ashkenazic collection, I refer to the nonphilosophical section of *Liqqutei R. Mosheh ben Shlomoh mi-Salerno*, unpublished edition by A. Posnanski, p. 35 (including the reference to Matt. 28:18). I am now convinced that this section of the work, which differs dramatically from the philosophical material published by S. Simon (*Moseben Salomo von Salerno und seine philosophischen Auseinandersetzung mit den Lehren des Christentums* [Breslau, 1932]), is a Northern European polemical mélange.

9. *Sefer Yosef ha-mekanne*, 134. Cf. p. 54 for an indication that Jesus did claim divinity.

10. N.V., sec. 71, p. 89 (Eng.)=47 (Heb.). The verse about not coming to destroy the law was also cited by Meir of Narbonne, Parma MS, 4a, and Moses of Salerno, Posnanski MS, 33. Peter Damian's *Dialogus inter Judaeum Requirentem et Christianum e Contrario Respondentem* (pt. 2 of his *Antilogus-Dialogus*) begins with a series of ten Jewish questions, each of which is prefaced by the phrase, If Christ did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (PL 145:57-59). However, as I showed in detail in St. Peter Damian: His Attitude toward the Jews and the Old Testament, *Yavneh Review* 4 (1965): 99-104, this section of Damian's polemic is borrowed from an essentially exegetical work by Isidore of Seville (*Quaestiones in Leviticum*, PL 83:336-39); it consequently proves nothing about actual Jewish citations of this verse.

11. N.V., sec. 79, p. 96 (Eng.)=52 (Heb.).
12. N.V., sec. 158, p. 173 (Eng.)=110 (Heb.), and see also sec. 184, p. 191 (Eng.)=129 (Heb.), and sec. 221, p. 215 (Eng.)=150 (Heb.).
13. N.V., sec. 157, p. 172 (Eng.)=109-10 (Heb.).
14. N.V., sec. 166, p. 178 (Eng.)=p. 116 (Heb.). See too *Sefer Yosef ha-mekanne*, 131; *Kiev Festschrift*, 129. Cf. *Nestor ha-komer*, par. 127.
15. N.V., sec. 171, pp. 182-83 (Eng.)=120 (Heb.). Cf. Meir of Narbonne's citation of

the leper story as contradicting the Christian assertion that Jesus annulled the commandments (*Milhemet mizvah*, Parma MS, 97b).

16. N.V., sec. 169, p. 181 (Eng.)=119 (Heb.); *Kiev Festschrift*, 125; Moses of Salerno, Posnanski MS, 40.

17. See Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (New York, 1961). Also see Haym Soloveitchik's comments in *Halakhah kalkalah ve-dimmuy azmi* (Jerusalem, 1985), 36, and for a somewhat later period, the discussion on pp. 7981, where he speaks of halakhic federalism. See also his possibly relevant observation in *Can Halakhic Texts Talk History? AS Review* 3 (1978): 155, n. 2. Though the sources analyzed there are primarily Ashkenazic, the issue is the tendency of law, not just Ashkenazic halakhah, to prefer local definitions; still, a culture trained primarily in law is more likely to reflect this orientation in other contexts.

18. Maimonides, *Epistle to Yemen*, in Abraham Halkin and David Hartman, *Crisis and Leadership: Epistles of Maimonides* (Philadelphia, 1985), 9899; *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Avodah Zarah* 1.

19. Jacob ben Reuben, *Milhamot ha-Shem*, ed. Judah Rosenthal (Jerusalem, 1963), 81, 146, 148-49; cf. 151, 152-53. Joseph Kimhi's *Sefer ha-berit* was written at about the same time as *Milhamot ha-Shem* and hence shares its distinction as a pioneering work.

20. *Ezer ha-emunah*, ed. Yehuda Shamir (*Rabbi Moses Ha-Kohen of Tordesillas and His Book Ezer ha-emunah A Chapter in the History of the Judeo-Christian Controversy, Part II* [Coconut Grove, Fla., 1972]), 93. Moses translation of *adimplere* is particularly interesting in light of the fact that Jacob ben Reuben twice asserted that Jesus declared that he had not come to add to the Torah of Moses (*Milhamot ha-Shem*, 81, 148). There are two readings of the talmudic citation of this passage (*B. Shabbat* 116b): either I have not come to take away

from the Torah of Moses or (*ve-lo*) to add to the Torah of Moses or I have not come to take away from the Torah of Moses but (*ella*) to add to it. The first version, which corresponds to Jacob ben Reuben's citation, is also quoted by Simon Duran in his *keshet u-magen* (see n. 24, below), 4.

21. *Kelimat ha-goyim*, in *Kitvei pulmus li-Profiat Duran*, ed. Frank Talmage (Jerusalem, 1981). Eleazar Gutwirth, in an article which makes the general point that polemic helped produce a critical historical sense, discussed *Kelimat ha-goyim* as his prime example; see History and Apologetics in XVth Century Hispano-Jewish Thought, *Helmantica* 35 (1984): 231-42, which also contains several observations about Simon Duran. For a discussion of the context that produced Duran's approach, see Jeremy Cohen, Profiat Duran's *The Reproach of the Gentiles* and the Development of Jewish anti-Christian Polemic, in *Shlomoh Simonsohn Jubilee Volume* (Tel Aviv, 1993), 7184. Cohen's well-argued thesis, which sees Duran's approach as a response to Raymund Martini's *Pugio Fidei*, is, I think, partly correct, but I would formulate the polemical context somewhat differently.

22. *Kelimat ha-goyim*, 2425. (The discussion continues through p. 34.) Needless to say, my encomium to Duran does not mean that I necessarily endorse his interpretation.

23. Ibid., 25.

24. Simon ben Zemah Duran, *Keshet u-magen: A Critical Edition*, ed. Prosper Murciano (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1975), 34; cf. 45. To preserve consistency of transliteration, I will be citing this edition as *Keshet u-magen*.

25. *Milhemet mizvah*, appended to *Keshet u-magen*, Makor reprint (Jerusalem, 1970), 28b29a.

26. *Kelimat ha-goyim*, 7 (full discussion on pp. 410).

27. *Milhamot ha-Shem*, 151; *Kiev Festschrift*, 126; Meir's *Milhemet mizvah*, Parma MS, 90b, 220ab; N.V., sec. 181, pp. 188-89 (Eng.)=126-27 (Heb).

28. *Kelimat ha-goyim*, 5.

29. *Keshet u-magen*, 24.

30. *Ibid.*, 16.

31. Ibid., 1521. I hope to examine the mixture of skepticism and credulousness with which Jews approached Christian sources on another occasion.

32. *Milhamot ha-Shem*, 96.

33. *Kelimat ha-goyim*, 4959, 2021, 24. See also p. 40 for the assertion that John the Baptist, like Jesus, was a *hasid shoteh*. Gutwirth's suggestion (*History and Apologetics*, 237) that the term may reflect an association with the historical sect of hasidim in talmudic times seems to me highly improbable.

34. *Kelimat ha-goyim*, 39.

35. *Keshet u-magen*, 3839, 5661.

36. Yair ben Shabbetai, *Herev pifiyyot*, ed. Judah Rosenthal (Jerusalem, 1958), 65.

37. *Vikkuah R. Yehiel mi-Paris*, ed. R. Margaliyyot (Lwow, n.d.), 1517.

38. *Ezer ha-emunah*, 141-42. Cf. my Christians, Gentiles, and the Talmud: A Fourteenth-Century Jewish Response to the Attack on Rabbinic Judaism in *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner (Wiesbaden, 1992), 128.

39. *Kelimat ha-goyim*, 25, a statement repeated by Simon Duran in *Keshet u-magen*, 4. (The reference is to the account in Matthew 26:63-66.) Elsewhere, Profiat Duran maintained that Jesus considered himself superior even to Moses (4). Again, cf. the reiteration of this passage by Simon Duran, *Keshet u-magen*, 25.

40. See my remarks in Religion, Nationalism, and Historiography: Yehezkel Kaufmann's Account of Jesus and Early Christianity, in *Scholars and Scholarship: The Interaction between Judaism and*

Other Cultures, ed. Leo Landman (New York, 1990), 167:

Kaufmann argues that Jesus could properly have been executed as a false prophet, even according to Mishnaic law, for refusing to provide a sign authenticating his messianic claims. In fact, a person who refused to provide a sign might well forfeit his right to be believed, but he would not forfeit his life. Only a prediction or sign that did not materialize would be grounds for execution, and nothing in the sources indicates that this had occurred. If Jesus claimed to be the Messiah but refused to produce a sign, the only evidence strong enough to justify his execution would be the fact that he died without redeeming the world. Jews presented that evidence to the court of history, but it was too late to present it to a court of law.

41. *Kelimat ha-goyim*, 63. This discussion makes it perfectly clear that Duran gave no credence to a theory of two Jesuses.

42. *Keshet u-magen*, 2225.

43. *Ibid.*, 1315.

44. *Ibid.*, 4.

45. Bologna, 1582.

46. *Magen va-herev*, 4345.

47. Because Profiat Duran's work explicitly focused on Christian sources exclusively, his ignoring of the crucial talmudic assertions is considerably less striking than Leone's. I am not suggesting that dismissing rabbinic material is the mark of a good historian. What is genuinely significant, however, is the transformation that allowed a rabbinic figure to place all the sources, including those in the Talmud, into the crucible of critical historical assessment.

3

Between History and Myth: The Regensburg Expulsion in Josel of Rosheim's *Sefer Ha-Miknah*

Elisheva Carlebach

Behold the destruction of Regensburg; its origins were brought about by none other than two informers. . . . These two informers, who initiated the transgression, came to a bad end [they converted to Christianity] (emphasis added).

1

In this brief passage in his chronicle *Sefer ha-miknah*, Josel of Rosheim, the foremost figure of sixteenth-century German Jewry, explained the sorrowful expulsion of the Jewish community from the imperial city of Regensburg in 1519. In his capacity as commander (Befehlshaber) of imperial German Jewry, Josel traversed the Holy Roman Empire on a mission to forestall the ever increasing number of libels and persecutions that beset the Jews of German lands.² Josel's meetings with emperors, princes, bishops, and magistrates were often crowned with success; his grasp of the political forces that shaped the fate of Jews in German lands was unparalleled. Josel's extensive experience in the realpolitik of his day and his mastery of political and polemical writing have led some historians to read his *Sefer ha-miknah* at face value.³ While *Sefer ha-miknah* appears to possess all the contours of a simple chronicle, a closer examination reveals it to be a complex layering of Josel's individual historiosophy with particular forms of Ashkenazic historical memory. By analyzing one much chronicled event that forms a small chapter within *Sefer ha-*

miknah, we can begin to apprehend the contexts and motives that converged in Josel's reshaping of the event in his unique text.

This event was the expulsion of the Jews from Regensburg, which Josel attributed to the destructive machinations of two Jewish renegades, but was in fact the culmination of decades of rising tensions concerning the Jewish community. The profuse sources that document the causes of the events of February 1519 in Regensburg still provoke astonishment due to their abundance, variety, and colorful detail. They make it possible to examine both the distant and proximate causes with greater assurance than for any of the other expulsions of Jews from German cities in the decades that Josel recorded in *Sefer ha-miknah*.

Sixteenth-century sources, both Jewish and Christian, regarded Regensburg as an exemplar, its Jewish community among the most noble and ancient on

German soil.

4 After the decline of the Rhine communities, Regensburg emerged as the intellectual and cultural center of German Jewry toward the end of the twelfth century. This transition was personified by Judah Hasid, a central figure among the Ashkenazic Pietists, who was born in Speyer in the mid-twelfth century and died in Regensburg. Ostrofrancus, a fifteenth-century German chronicler, considered the Regensburg Jewish academy in 1478 a *studium generale*, the most important seat of Jewish learning in German lands at that time.⁵ Regensburg's yeshiva was one of several Bavarian academies to leave its imprint on the dialectical methods of rabbinic study. Regensburg's language became the basis for the Yiddish that spread throughout the Ashkenazic world.⁶ Martin Luther chose Regensburg to illustrate the long duration of Jewish settlement in German lands: It's said that Jews were living in Regensburg long before the time of Christ.⁷ The caprices of fate have turned the modern historiography of Regensburg's medieval Jews into a model of excellence as well as a symbol of the distorting forces of antisemitic pseudoscholarship in the twentieth century.⁸

In its broadest context, the expulsion from Regensburg may be seen as the final step in a wave of similar expulsions from German cities throughout the second half of the fifteenth century.⁹ They emptied urban areas of Jewish population and permanently altered the settlement pattern of German Jews, who remained primarily in rural areas and small towns. The impact of this change on German Jewry can scarcely be exaggerated. The new configuration shaped the internal organization of German Jews, as well as their self-image and interaction with their environment. Jews were organized into *Landjudenschaften*, regional associations that included both urban and

rural Jews, often settled in very small clusters throughout the region.¹⁰ The perception of Jews as transient and marginal, secretive and peripatetic, even as criminal and unstable, deepened as a result of their ever thinning and more widely dispersed communities.

At the local level the expulsion was the result of long-simmering political and social conflict between rulers, artists and craftsmen, and the city council. In 1452, Ludwig of Bavaria expelled Jews from his lands and demanded that the city council of Regensburg do the same to its Jewish population. Fearing economic disaster, the city council refused. Ludwig then turned to the bishop, Heinrich, who enacted, for the first time in Regensburg, the centuries-old papal prescription of wearing the yellow sign on their clothes. In 1475 the council ordained a measure that severely limited Jewish mobility, instructing that the gates to their quarter not be opened until noon. One individual would be permitted to leave each morning, in Christian garb, and attend to the needs of the entire community.¹¹

A general economic decline in Regensburg saw imperial and local forces competing for the diminishing resources of the Jewish community. A series of powerful preachers reshaped and reconstrued Regensburg's economic decline into a social, political, and religious crisis in which the Jews were to blame.¹² The wandering preachers saw the extirpation of the Regensburg Jewish community as the ultimate challenge. In the mid-fifteenth century, Johannes Capistrano, successful agitator for Jewish expulsions throughout Bavaria, visited Regensburg.

When Peter Schwartz/Nigri returned from the University of Salamanca to German lands, he attempted to apply his new skills as a Hebraist to best polemical advantage in Regensburg.

¹³ In 1474 he petitioned Duke Ludwig to force the Jews of Regensburg to attend his inflammatory, conversionist sermons.¹⁴ Preacher Balthasar Hubmaier cried out against the sin of usury in general and the laziness and avarice of Jews in particular. Regensburg is thus exemplary in demonstrating how clerical agitation fanned hostilities against Jews by blaming them for developments unrelated to their presence.¹⁵

The preachers tapped into current forms of popular piety, accusing the Jews of defamation of Mary, whose cult had recently experienced a revival. The synagogue made famous by R. Judah Hasid was replaced by a shrine to the Virgin.¹⁶ The ritual murder myth still exerted its potent and malevolent influence over every Jewish-Christian transaction. The blood accusation in Trent of the late fifteenth century, which engulfed the Jews of Regensburg as well, was revived in Regensburg in 1513.¹⁷ By the early sixteenth century all that stood between the Jews of Regensburg and expulsion was the imperial will, now deeply resented by the burghers.

If Jewish informers-turned-apostates played any role in the expulsion of Jews from Regensburg, it would have been a most minor one, not the central role that Josel attributed to them. This impression is confirmed in an account told by one of the very renegades designated by Josel. Antonius Margaritha, son of Samuel Margolioth, Regensburg's chief rabbi at the time of the expulsion, converted to Christianity in 1522, three years after the expulsion.¹⁸ A link between the expulsion of 1519 and Margaritha's subsequent baptism has been assumed but never proved.¹⁹ In his book *The Entire Jewish Faith*

(*Der gantz jüdisch Glaub*), Margaritha sought to emphasize the discord that punctuated Jewish communal life, adhering to the role of critic who was simultaneously insider and outsider, the signal posture of Jewish converts in medieval Christendom. Margaritha recalled a time, when I was some 13 or 14 years of age, and not then in the city, that there were great divisions among its Jewish inhabitants, particularly between the older, less wealthy residents, and recent, affluent, arrivals.²⁰ Margaritha recounted in vivid detail one episode in which a relative newcomer to Regensburg, Moses Wolf, wished to establish himself within the leadership ranks of the community. His attempts were fiercely resisted because he was a recent arrival.

The wealthy Moses went to the *Hauptman* Rorbeck, and asked, Didn't you ride on Thursday through the Jewish streets? He replied, Yes. Moses continued, I will now show you to whom the longtime Jewish residents have compared you, namely to Haman. They say among themselves, Here rides Haman, while they mean, Here rides the one who should come to the same end as Haman, our foe who was hanged. I urge you to call these Jews and interrogate them, and if they don't admit to it, I'll owe you one thousand gulden.

The *Hauptman* sent for and imprisoned the Jews, Jeidlia, Heberlin, and Elkono. . . . My father, who was then chief rabbi, began proceedings to put the rich Moses under the ban, and came before the *Hauptman* to plead for the imprisoned. . . . The *Hauptman* was happy to see this. . . . He punished all three parties with a fine of 3000 gulden. The fine

was borne mostly by the rich Moses who became leader of the Jewish community. . . . Such divisiveness prevailed in the Regensburg community, *that they were expelled as a result of it [dadurch sie vertriben worden seindt] for had they remained united, they would have been able to forestall the expulsion.* But God willed it.

21 (emphasis added)

The primary purpose of Margaritha's tale was to provide an instance from his immediate experience of Jewish internecine strife. Margaritha's criticism of Jewish discord remained a staple of his anti-Jewish polemical career. He devoted a substantial amount of space to a historical survey of Jewish sectarianism, to counter the notion among Christians that Jewish communal life was more harmonious and unified than the Christian world, rent by conflict in the wake of the Reformation.²² Margaritha did not claim that the incident in Regensburg was the direct cause of the expulsion, only that it set the city's Jewish inhabitants against one another so that they could not deal with adversity in a united way. Margaritha still felt some emotional link to these events, in which his father had been involved and imperiled, even after more than a decade. If God pleases, I will shortly write a brief pamphlet concerning this Wolf. Margaritha implied that the Wolf clan was aptly named, considering its predatory role in Regensburg's Jewish community. He portrayed the Wolfs in a highly unflattering light, referring to the protagonist repeatedly as the rich Moses.²³ While his own personal involvement still cannot be ruled out, it is highly unlikely that he was himself a confederate of people he so vilified years later.

While the expulsion loomed large and triumphant in Regensburg's chronicles and oral traditions, none of the non-Jewish sources mention the apostates or the internal communal conflict as contributing causes of the expulsion. Oral tradition in Regensburg celebrated the

expulsion of the Jews in a long and detailed *lied*:

For forty years we pressed our case
Against the murderous Jewish race . . .
We're free at last of their oppressions;
May God forgive them their transgressions.²⁴

The tensions between burghers, emperor, clergy, and Jews that led to the expulsion had been activated long before Margaritha was born; the final event that sealed the fate of Regensburg's Jews in 1519 was not an episode of Jewish informing but the interregnum that deprived the Jews of Regensburg of an imperial protector. Josel's parallel account in *Sefer ha-miknah*, accurate in its other characterizations of Margaritha, stands in glaring contrast to all other accounts of the causes of the Regensburg expulsion.

Behold the destruction of Regensburg; *its origins were brought about by none other than two informers*. . . . These two informers, who initiated the transgression, came to a bad end [they converted]; one with all his offspring; the other with his fiancée. Despite the greatness of their forebears, this transgression, informing, is so severe that ancestral merit cannot protect them. That one man [Margaritha] caused suffering to the entire diaspora, by publishing heretical books that emitted the poison and heresy that had flickered within him. He made three libelous charges to His Majesty, the Emperor: Jews curse the gentiles, mock Jesus, and circumcise proselytes.²⁵ (emphasis added)

Josel's highly specialized chronicle is singular in its focus on the role of informers and apostates as the driving force behind calamities that befell the Jewish communities.

²⁶ In it, Josel linked one informer turned apostate to each unfortunate incident. The apostasy was usually preceded by an act of treachery, some form of *mesira* (informing) while the traitor was still a Jew. Josel's account served as a warning that betrayal of communal solidarity was an inevitable first step toward apostasy, complete severance from the House of Israel. This message, which informs the entire chronicle, was not directed at the apostates but at Jews.

If Josel's purpose had been to establish a solid historical link between apostates and the expulsion from Regensburg, there were several other candidates who could have better served Josel's purpose. The string of accusations of ritual murder against the Jews of Regensburg in the 1470s featured several apostates and one potential convert as the significant informants.²⁷ While the ritual murder accusations did not lead directly to the expulsion, they certainly contributed to the poisoned atmosphere. Reputed convert Johannes Boschenstein, along with other Christian preachers, called for the expulsion of Jews from Regensburg years before the event.²⁸ Most severely implicated in the expulsion from Regensburg was Johannes Pfefferkorn, the century's most infamous apostate, who publicly called for the banishment of the Jews and exulted when the event occurred. After the expulsion from Regensburg, Pfefferkorn even encouraged the burghers to make good use of the Jewish tombstones; the Latin account of the expulsion reports that 4,200 stones were dispersed and recycled throughout the city.²⁹ Despite Pfefferkorn's public role in the Regensburg expulsion, he is not mentioned in Josel's chronicle in connection with Regensburg. Pfefferkorn was the central figure of a previous chapter,

devoted to the near confiscation of the Talmud and the Reuchlin controversy; therefore, he had already served his purpose and was not named twice. While Josel probably did not intend deliberate distortion of this event, the purpose of his chronicle was not an objective reconstruction of the course of events. Josel's chronicle provides a conspicuous example of how apostates came to play the role of the darkest alter ego in Jewish perception of calamity. The traditional formula, Due to our sins we have been exiled, has here been transfigured into Due to *their* treachery, we suffered. Josel attributed Jewish suffering in exile to the malefaction of its own worst sons.

Josel's chronicle poses the question of the role of apostates in the Jewish historical imagination. Much material relating to this issue from a Jewish perspective was never committed to writing, for obvious reasons: condemnation of a convert to Christianity could end up as a death sentence for its Jewish author. Josel's unusually frank projection of malevolent agency onto converts cannot be dismissed as a simple example of Jewish self-hatred. Jews and Judaism had no more eloquent defenders in the sixteenth century than Josel of Rosheim. Yet even in his private papers, Josel rarely rendered a harsh opinion of any segment of the Christian society that inflicted gruesome ends on the martyred victims he had devoted his life to saving and whose memory he revered.³⁰ Perhaps Josel rationalized that while mobs as well as magistrates could convince themselves that

in the persecution of Jews they were engaged in God's work, for a Jew or former Jew to supply the persecuting mechanism with more victims constituted the gravest breach of acceptable morality.

31 Josel's chronicle constituted a warning that no Jew could plead ignorance of the dangers involved in informing.³² Such acts of betrayal profoundly marred the Jewish status of the perpetrator, leaving an indelible blemish unto all generations. Josel's resentment toward oppressors turned back on a part of the Jewish communal self that could be legitimately differentiated and reviled.

Another dimension of Josel's historical worldview was the self-perception of Ashkenazic Jewry as a pure and holy community. At the apex of the ideal community stood individuals such as Josel, who devoted their lives and resources to protect the Jewish community. Josel's description of Judah Baumes, a good man, who saved an entire Jewish community from certain death with his quick action and personal resources, is a typical characterization of this ideal. As a result of his selflessness; [t]he offspring of that man are good, all merited wealth and honor, . . . From this we see that a person who risks his own life and fortune to save others, will eat the fruits [of his good deeds] in this world and the principle will remain for him and his children after him in the world to come.³³

Sefer ha-miknah may be seen as an attempt to reconcile this ideal image to which Josel subscribed with historical and personal experience of a different order. The grim reality was that German Jewry contained elements and individuals who were weak, selfish, or criminal, who would endanger the welfare of an entire community for the sake of power, money, or revenge. The mystical perfection of the community and its paragons of devoted service found their absolute antithesis in its traitors, rendered as mythically evil elements: Their

nourishment is from the filth of the primordial serpent, which has reached Esau, Eliphaz, and their offspring, Amalek and Haman . . . there is nothing so vile in the eyes of God as the class of informers [*mosrim*] for they are accursed.³⁴ Josel blurred the distinction among *mosrim* (traitors), *meshumadim* (apostates), and *minim* (heretics), to indicate that they were all part of one phenomenological continuum, the dark forces in an epic struggle within Jewish society throughout history: The sages have numbered the informers together with heretics and apostates; they will all descend to eternal hell.³⁵ Josel elevated his belief in the inevitability of apostasy for informers to the level of doctrine. In each generation thorns and brambles have sprouted up; they have caused Israel to falter in their exile and have maligned [*hilshinu*] in order to deliver the people of God to their death. Most have gone onto the evil path and apostasized publicly; it is a tradition from our scribes: Whomsoever has been tainted by the impure spirit and become involved in *mesira*, either he or his descendants will end up in apostasy.³⁶

Josel cited numerous examples of the trajectory that led directly from betrayal to apostasy. This was the destiny of tainted souls, from which even an illustrious pedigree could not shield them. If it were not fulfilled immediately, the evil destiny would be fulfilled in a later generation; if the marked person did not convert, his children would. In his journal, Josel wrote of an oral tradition he heard

from his father, which provided a striking example of this doctrine: Of the eighty Jewish victims of the blood libel at Ensheim, seventy-four were martyred and six were forcibly converted. Of the six who were baptized, all managed to revert to Judaism, except for one man, Raphael, who died in Colmar before he had a chance to escape and revert to Judaism. Josel repeated the tradition that this man's doom was already sealed while he was Jewish because he had his wife immerse herself, contrary to Jewish Law, during the days of her ritual impurity. Surely for this reason he did not merit repentance, for sin had long ago taken root in his soul.

³⁷ Ritual impurity, linked in Jewish mystical sources to Christianity, emerged in Josel's family tradition as the cause of involuntary apostasy.³⁸

Josel's systematic application of an archetypal function of the apostate to the entire course of Jewish history is unique in its consistency; however, in its underlying conceptions it parallels other exemplars of sixteenth-century Jewish historiographical creativity. By his elevation of apostates to the status of primary hostile Other, Josel deflected the ultimate responsibility for oppression of Jews from the highest power in the land, where responsibility manifestly resided, to an internal malefactor. Josel's distortion of the record allowed him to project a benevolent royal image; it signifies that *Sefer ha-miknah* was informed by one of the principal myths underlying medieval Jewish political life, the belief in a special relationship between a sovereign and his Jewish subjects. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi has shown how the myth of a benign royal figure and a special royal alliance, informed such classics of sixteenth-century Sephardic historiography as ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah*.³⁹ *Sefer ha-miknah* provides an introduction into the ways that this myth operated within Ashkenazic

historiography. That a myth of royal alliance operated in sixteenth-century Ashkenazic transmission of history can be seen both from Josel's writing and from other sources.⁴⁰ Josel enunciated the principle that [t]he greater the ruler, the greater grace of God they have, and they are gracious to all. When Josel mentioned the father of the current Elector of Brandenburg, during whose reign thirty-eight innocent Jews were burned, Josel exonerated the prince by saying he was not informed of the full circumstances.⁴¹

The preeminent sixteenth-century Jewish chronicler with strong ties to German Jewry was David Gans. His *Zemah David*, concerned with other goals and relying on Sephardic predecessors, passed in silence over the expulsion from Regensburg. The Jewish segment of his chronicle accommodated other events of similar nature but has no entry for 1519. The general section contains a panegyric announcement concerning the event that was the immediate precipitator of the expulsion from Regensburg, the death of Maximilian I:

Emperor Maximilian was a wise, pious, and honest man, humble and God-fearing, a lover of scholars who honored and supported them, and a lover of Israel who did many great deeds for them, may the Lord remember him for good. He erected many fences and established order, justice, and charity in the land. He died at age 63 in the year [A.M.] 5279, 1519 to the Christian calendar, 28 years into his reign. During the days of this Emperor . . . the prestige of the Austrian princes [the Habsburgs] was raised, and they ruled over Spain, Burgundy, Hungary and Bohemia.⁴²

This notice contains no hint of the many anti-Jewish measures supported or countenanced by the emperor nor of the dire consequences of his death for one of the oldest and largest German Jewish communities. An anonymous Hebrew chronicle from Prague likewise passes over the year 1519 in silence, although other calamities and news from the west are included.

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It is for the protection afforded by the umbrella of imperial law that Josel chose to remain loyal to imperial-Catholic interests rather than to support the Protestant princes.⁴⁴ Emperors had a long-standing legacy of dealing with Jewish subjects, dating back to Roman imperial times, whereas local princes simply did not have comparable experience. Individual princes could be swayed by special constituencies or the gratification of their own personal needs. Josel reasoned that there would be greater benefit from a stable relationship with an emperor than from constant negotiation with many individual local authorities. Although Josel came to his conclusion before Luther published his violently anti-Jewish diatribes, they provided Josel with additional justification of his position. He claimed that Luther was the first to contend, that no [authority] was bound to honor any obligations towards us or keep the peace of the land where we are concerned because we decline to believe what Luther believes.⁴⁵ Princes took this as permission to bar Jews from their lands, while the masses interpreted Luther's words as an invitation to commit violence against Jewish persons and property without fear of retribution. The emperors, on the other hand, could not simply ignore a tradition they had inherited from the days of imperial antiquity. Josel championed the emperors as Israel's defenders against the forces of lawlessness. Moreover, it appears that the emperors did go out of their way to protect their German-Jewish subjects (in contrast to their policy in

Iberia) as the strength of the German Protestant princes grew. This reinforced their claim on Jews as their *servi camerae* and provided them with a pretext to intervene in Protestant estates.

In choosing to bind the fate of imperial Jewry to the emperor, and in supposing that the empire had some stake in maintaining its German Jews, Josel's decision was based on a realistic assessment of the Jewish position and a choice of the lesser of two evils. In order to maintain a cognitive framework necessary for continued dependence on the emperors, Josel endowed the authorities who protected Jews with the status of divine emissaries; he associated imperial actions with the divine order of things.⁴⁶ To explain Jewish suffering at the hands of secular authorities, another root cause was necessary. Drawing upon the Ashkenazic ideal of communal piety and its revulsion for apostates, Josel elaborated the ahistorical myth of agency that informs the *Sefer ha-miknah*. In Josel's chronicle the apostates bore a negative valence beyond their historical role. By using apostates as a foil and counterimage to the benign imperial image, Josel of Rosheim added new contours to the figure of the apostate as a topology in sixteenth-century Ashkenazic historical writing.⁴⁷

Josel of Rosheim transcribed *Sefer ha-miknah* into a larger manuscript, a collection of several works, which he intended to leave his children as a legacy for

posterity.

48 Medieval German Jews had developed distinctive frameworks and mechanisms through which they transmitted their cultural icons and archetypes, as well as their posture toward the world within and without. One of these mechanisms was the transmission within the family circle of anthologies of texts that preserved some Jewish historical memories or local traditions.⁴⁹ Personalized libraries of secondary works, including martyrologies, chronologies, works on Ashkenazic *minhag* and historical *midrashim* commissioned by the owners and copied in beautiful scripts, survive in manuscript collections. While we cannot reconstruct an entire mind-set from collections of manuscripts, they clearly emanated from their compilers perception that they were transmitting the Ashkenazic historical patrimony.

It is this tradition of chronicle and collection that served Josel of Rosheim as a model for his own compilation. It included portions of noted earlier chronicles of persecution, bits of polemical writing, and other works of a semihistorical nature. Like similar anthologies, Josel's work was written as a family keepsake.⁵⁰ It is distinguished from some of the others chiefly by its inclusion of his own composition, *Sefer ha-miknah*. By ensuring the preservation and transmission of his chronicle into future generations, Josel passed the myth of the royal alliance forward, where, in transmuted form, it left its indelible imprint on the consciousness of German Jews until modern times.⁵¹

Notes

No historian of the Jewish people in the last generation has explored the divide between history, memory, and myth more profoundly than

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. His meditations on the depths and limits of Jewish identity in Christian milieux, the myth of Jewish alliance with power and its price, and the condition of exile and domicile within the diaspora, constitute only some of the milestones in a signal career which has opened new avenues of thought and charted the course for an entire generation of historians of the Jewish people. The following close reading of a brief chapter in *Sefer ha-miknah*, a unique sixteenth-century chronicle written by Josel of Rosheim, is dedicated with affectionate homage to Professor Yerushalmi, whose work on sixteenth-century Jewish historiography served as my introduction to its riches.

1. *Sefer ha-miknah*, ed. Hava Fraenkel-Goldschmidt (Jerusalem, 1970), 1415.
2. On Josel's career, see Selma Stern, *Josel of Rosheim: Commander of Jewry in the Holy Roman Empire*, trans. Gertrude Hirschler (Philadelphia, 1965).
3. Heinrich Graetz identified Antonius Margaritha as one of the informers and blamed the expulsion on Margaritha's machinations. *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig, 1877) vol. 9, appendix 4 (in Hebrew translation by P. Shefer, 7:4024). This view was repeated by Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1967), 13:426, n. 21: Margarita had played a sinister role at the expulsion of the Jews from Ratisbon in 1519. See Hava Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, introduction to *Sefer ha-miknah*, xxvixxvii.
4. Regensburg served as Heiko A. Oberman's prototype in *The Roots of Anti-Semitism: In the Age of Renaissance and Reformation*, trans. James I. Porter (Philadelphia, 1984), 7579. On Regensburg in the eyes of German humanists, see Ingrid D. Rowland, *Revenge of the Regensburg Humanists, 1493*, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (1994): 308.

5. On the term *studium generale*, see Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in*

the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1936), 1:820. A. Freimann, *Aus der Geschichte der Juden in Regensburg von der Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts bis zur Vertreibung im Jahre 1519*, in *Festschrift . . . Martin Phillipsons* (Leipzig, 1916), 8889, argued that the expulsion of 1519 was responsible for the shift of the *pilpul* method into Poland; if so, the event may be seen as a watershed in Jewish intellectual history. On the once well known Regensburg method of scholarly dialectic, see Shmuel Ha-kohen Weingarten, *The Study Methods of Nürnberg-Regensburg*, Sinai 37 (1956): 26776.

6. Dovid Katz, *East and West, khes and shin and the Origin of Yiddish*, *Studies in Jewish Culture in Honor of Chone Shmeruk*, ed. Israel Bartal *et al.* (Jerusalem, 1993), 35.

7. *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia, 1971), ed. Helmut T. Lehman, *Tabletalk*, vol. 54, no. 3990. Regarding the legend that Jews had lived in Regensburg some 300 years B.C. and had venerated a relic of Moses tablet of the Law, see Straus, *Urkunden*, 388, no. 1040 (n. 8, below).

8. Carl Theodor Gemeiner, Regensburg's eighteenth-century historian, was the first to collect sources concerning the Jewish community. On those sources, see Moritz Stern, *Aus Regensburg. Urkundliche Mitteilungen*, *Jahrbuch der jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 22 (1931): 121. Raphael Straus's history, *Die Judengemeinde Regensburg im ausgehenden Mittelalter* (Heidelberg, 1932), is based on this unparalleled collection of documents, which he later published as *Urkunden und Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Juden in Regensburg, 1453-1738* (Munich, 1960). Wilhelm Grau, *Antisemitismus im späten Mittelalter: Das Ende der Regensburger Judengemeinde, 1450-1519* (Munich and Leipzig, 1934; 2nd ed., Berlin, 1939), twisted Straus's Regensburg sources to the service of his anti-Jewish ideology. See

Straus, introduction to *Regensburg and Augsburg*, trans. Felix N. Gerson (Philadelphia, 1939); Peter Herde, Gestaltung und Krisis des christlichjüdischen Verhältnisses in Regensburg am Ende des Mittelalters, *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 22 (1959): 35960.

9. Salo W. Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 11:27577, for cities that expelled their Jewish population in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. On the wave of expulsions from German imperial cities beginning in the second half of the fifteenth century, see Markus J. Wenninger, *Man bedarf keinen Juden mehr: Ursachen und Hintergründe ihrer Vertreibung aus der deutschen Reichsstädten im 15. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 1981). For the view that the expulsion process began in the plague years of 1348/1349 and continued through the fifteenth century, see, e.g., Anna-Dorothee v. den Brincken, Das Rechtfertigungsschreiben der Stadt Köln wegen Ausweisung der Juden in Jahre 1424, in Köln, *Das Reich und Europa*, ed. Hugo Stehkämper (Cologne, 1971), 30539. For a contrary view, that the expulsions continued through the sixteenth century, see R. Po-chia Hsia, The Jews and the Emperors, in *State and Society in Early Modern Austria*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao (West Lafayette, Ind., 1994), 76.

10. Meir Hildesheimer, German Jewry in the Seventeenth Century in Light of the Responsa Literature (master's thesis, Bar Ilan University, 1972), 191 ff.; Daniel Y. Cohen, The Vaad Qatan of the People of the State of Ansbach, in *The Jewish Community in the Middle Ages* (in Hebrew), ed. H. H. Ben Sasson (Jerusalem, 1976), 14445; idem, The Organization of the *Landjudenschaften* in Germany during the XVII-XVIII Centuries (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1967).

11. A. Freimann, *Aus der Geschichte*, 79; Moritz Stern, *Aus Regensburg*, 9.

12. John Theibault, *Jeremiah in the Village: Prophecy, Preaching,*

Pamphlets, and Penance in the Thirty Years War, *Central European History* 27 (1994): 446; Paul Mai, Predigstiftungen des späten Mittelalters im Bistum Regensburg, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bistums Regensburg* 2 (1968): 734.

13. Salamanca was one of five medieval universities selected by the Council of Vienne in 1311 to teach oriental languages, including Hebrew and Aramaic, for missionary purposes. Helene Wieruszowski, *The Medieval University: Masters, Students, Learning*

(Princeton, N.J., 1966), 90. Whether Schwarz/Nigri was part of a larger attempt to import Iberian-style conversionary tactics into German lands is a question that remains to be explored.

14. His Holy Week sermon of April 1474 was attended by large crowds, including some seventy Jews. Herde, Gestaltung und Krisis, 377. Eberhard Nestle, Nigri, Böhm, und Pellican. *Ein Beitrag zur Anfangsgeschichte des hebräischen Sprachstudiums in Deutschland* (Tübingen, 1893) surveyed the printing history of Nigri's disputation with the Jews of Regensburg. His *Treatise against the Perfidious Jews* (*Tractatus ad perfid. Judaeorum*) published in Esslingen in Latin in 1475 is the basis for the German translation, in a greatly expanded version of 1477, *Stella Messiae*. On the subsequent influence of this work on the anti-Jewish discourse in German literature, see R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven, Conn., 1988), 7172, n. 25.

15. R. Po-chia Hsia, The Usurious Jew, in *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann (Cambridge, 1995), 16265.

16. The best account of the Marian cult at Regensburg is Gerlinde Stahl, *Die Wallfahrt zur Schönen Maria in Regensburg*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bistums Regensburg* 2 (1968): 35282.

17. For an account of the persecutions and trials of Regensburg's Jews, see Hsia, *Myth of Ritual Murder*, 6684.

18. Anthonius Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch Glaub* (Augsburg, 1530). Margaritha's grandfather, Jacob Margolioth, served as chief rabbi of Nuremberg and was one of the outstanding rabbinic figures of fifteenth-century Germany. His son Samuel held a similar position in Regensburg at the time of the expulsion.

19. Joseph Mieses, *Die "Alteste gedruckte deutsche Uebersetzung des jüdischen Gebetbuches a.d. Jahre 1530 und ihr Autor Anthonius Margaritha* (Vienna, 1916), 9.

20. Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch Glaub*, 43b44a. Margaritha introduced his discussion of Jewish internal disunity with the definition of a *moser* (informer): When one Jew complains to the authorities about another, or shows their treachery and deceit, he is called a *moser* by them, and they consider him to be a godless man, and harshly cursed. Straus, *Regensburg and Augsburg*, 157, rejected communal discord as a cause of the expulsion.

21. Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch Glaub* 44a; Hava Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, introduction to *Sefer ha-miknah*, xxvixxvii.

22. Margaritha, *Erklerung: Wie aus dem heylligen* 53.

Capittel . . . (Vienna, 1534), iiiiv. Josel of Rosheim advanced a similar view in *Sefer ha-miknah* 1011, in his recounting of the expulsion from Augsburg (see Hava Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, introduction to *Sefer ha-miknah*, xxxxi): The burghers said, If this nation, so scattered and dispersed among us, could nevertheless plan conspiracies to harm one another with wiles and deceit, . . . how much more so must they be plotting evil deeds against us, and it is not worth our while to allow them to remain. So they stood and expelled them all from the city walls.

23. For some additional material, see M. Wiener, *Der reiche Michel und der reiche Moses*, *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 16 (1867): 390. Margaritha criticized Jews for internecine quarreling in many pages of *Der gantz Jüdisch Glaub*, 40ab; 80a (on Simhat Torah practices): Note well, Christian reader, that on this one occasion, there is more enmity and blasphemy, than in all Christendom. No matter who the sexton calls up, they all begin to mutter and complain. Some even complain to the Christian ruler. What a fine way to read God's Law!

Almost two centuries later, a similar scene on the same holiday provoked a similar criticism from the diarist Glikl of Hameln. See the description in Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth Century Lives* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 62.

24. Emphasis added. Rochus von Liliencron, *Die historischen Volkslieder der Deutschen vom 13. bis 16. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim, 1966), 3:322, no. 336. This rhymed

translation is by Gerald Strauss, *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation* (Bloomington, Ind., 1971), 129.

25. *Sefer ha-miknah*, 1415.

26. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, introduction to *Sefer ha-miknah*, xxvixxvii.

27. The potential apostate, a Jew named Kalman, later regretted his conversionary intentions. His confession, extracted by torture in 1470, accused the Jews of Regensburg of murdering another Jew who intended to convert. In this instance the magistrates supported the Jews, and Kalman was sentenced to death. In 1474, Hans Veyol, a converted Jew arrested for theft, implicated the chief rabbi, Israel Bruna. In this case too, powerful imperial patrons intervened to protect the accused, and the convert was eventually sentenced to death. In 1475 another multiply baptized Jew, Reichart of Mosbach, implicated the Jews of several cities, including Regensburg, in stealing the host. On these figures and the subsequent role of converts in the famous trial concerning Simon of Trent, see Hsia, *Myth*, 6772; *idem.*, *Trent, 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder* (New Haven, Conn., 1992), 95104.

28. Boschenstein's origins have never been fully clarified. During his second sojourn in Augsburg, Boschenstein published a denial that he was a convert from Judaism. *Ain diemietige Versprechung . . . wider etlich die von jm sagen er seye von Jüdischem stamen . . . zu gesant*. Cited in Mosche Rosenfeld, *Der Jüdische Buchdruck in Augsburg in der Ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (London, 1905), 27, no. 24.

29. Hans-Martin Kirn, *Das Bild vom Juden im Deutschland des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1989), 8788, nn. 154,155.

30. Although Josel refrained from maligning the emperors, invective

against the Christian religion was not absent from his writing. For example, They were tortured until forced to acknowledge the false bastard who had been inside the impure tomb. Hava Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, *Joseph of Rosheim: Historical Writings* (Jerusalem, 1996), 277, and similarly, 280, 292. Anti-Christian invective appeared in his writing when he recounted cases of martyrdom or forced baptism under extreme circumstances, reminiscent of invective used for similar purposes in the Crusade chronicles. On these, see Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Invectives against Christianity in the Hebrew Chronicles of the First Crusade*, in *Crusade and Settlement*, 6672.

31. Talal Asad, *Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, 1993), 83124; G. R. Elton, *Persecution and Toleration: Papers Read at the Twenty-Second Summer Meeting and the Twenty-Third Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford, 1984), xiii; Margaret Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion*, 13501600 (London, 1993), 291313, on rituals of burning both objects and objectionable people. In the anonymous pamphlet attributed to Thomas Murner, *Disgrace and Effrontery Done by the Jews*, cited and analyzed by Oberman, *Roots*, 89, n. 44: The intent of the entire pamphlet is to depict . . . the expulsion and annihilation of Jews, as Christian obligations. See Ben-Zion Degani, *Strands of Medieval Jew Hatred in the Works of Luther and Their Influence on anti-Jewish Writing in Germany* (in Hebrew), *Eshel Be'er Sheva* 3 (1986): 179227, on the use of standard medieval anti-Jewish canards to influence the policy of ruling authorities toward their Jewish subjects.

32. A case in Bavaria, in which informing by one individual in a tax dispute resulted in disaster for an entire community, provided Josel with an example of how every act of *mesira* no matter how limited the intention of the *moser*, was deeply evil: Although he had no evil intent, since the calamity came about as a result of his actions, both he and his offspring will be doubly afflicted. *Sefer ha-miknah*, 1013.

33. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, *Joseph of Rosheim*, 282.

34. *Sefer ha-miknah*, 24; repeated by Josel from an old text of a ban against *mosrim*. Hava Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, Introduction, xvii.

35. *Sefer ha-miknah*, 3.

36. Ibid., 7.

37. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, *Joseph of Rosheim*, 28081.

38. Medieval Jewish anti-Christian sources such as the *Toledot Yeshu* linked Jesus with menstrual impurity to counter the Christian story of virgin birth. On the identification of Christianity with ritual impurity in zoharic sources, see the article by Elliot Wolfson in this volume. Convert Lotharius Franz Fried, *Neupolierter und wohlgeschliffener JudenSpiegel* (Mainz, 1715), 31, reported a Jewish superstition that children conceived on Christmas Eve would end up converting to Christianity.

39. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976).

40. An example of idealization of a personal relationship with a king, from an anonymous Ashkenazic chronicler of 1470: The King of the land took a liking to him [R. Avigdor Kara] and this grew to a feeling of intense love, until the king learned from him to acknowledge the true monotheism of the Jewish faith. Shortly afterwards the king passed away. As leader he had appointed a man named Hush Lanu [Hus]. Hayim Hillel BenSasson, *The Reformation in Contemporary Jewish Eyes, Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 4 (1970): 8. As BenSasson noted (p. 11), this emperor, Wenceslas, who inspired such intense love of the Jews, annulled debts owed to Jews, impoverished them, and failed to come to their aid when they were exposed to violence.

For another striking example of the reliance of German Jews on a personal royal relationship, see the case of Worms Jewry in the early seventeenth century, in Christopher R. Friedrichs, *Anti Jewish Politics in Early Modern Germany: The Uprising in Worms, 161317, Central European History* 23 (1990): 91152. See also R. Po-chia Hsia, *The*

Jews and the Emperors, in *State and Society in Early Modern Austria*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao (West Lafayette, Ind., 1994), 7182.

41. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, *Joseph of Rosheim*, 332.

42. David Gans, *Zemah David*, [e.p. Prague, 1592]; ed. Mordechai Breuer (Jerusalem, 1983), 385.

43. *A Hebrew Chronicle from Prague*, c. 1615, ed. Abraham David, trans. Leon J. Weinberger with Dena Ordan (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1993), 26. In the two additional anonymous Ashkenazic chronologies included in this volume, only one, A in David's edition (p. 78), stressed the importance of the Regensburg expulsion by viewing it as the culmination of the entire list (however, the date is incorrect). The second, B writes of the expulsion of Austrian Jews, with the explicit permission of King Maximilian, *may he be exalted*, who took money from the local populace and allowed them to expel [the Jews] and appropriate their houses, the synagogue, and the cemetery (p. 85).

44. Josel referred often to his reliance on prior imperial legislation in his campaigns to procure and preserve Jewish rights, e.g., I had to bring all the old privilegia of Popes and Emperors to Günzburg, where I copied them, together with words of justification, into a pamphlet. I sent it to the king and his councillors, who became aware of the truth of our position. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, *Joseph of Rosheim*, 292, no. 13. I succeeded in getting the Emperor to renew all the privilegia from the time of the Emperor Sigismund, *ibid.*, 294, no. 15.

45. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, *Joseph of Rosheim*, 378.

46. Josel's posture toward the imperial image may also be a reflection of the selfaggrandizing propaganda churned out by Maximilian's minions, such as the *Theuerdank*, an allegorical romance that celebrated his adventures. Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany*, trans. Sarah Austin, ed. Robert Johnson (London, 1905), 1:17172, has already noted the contrast between

Maximilian's image and achievements.

47. In ibn Verga's chronicle, *Shevet Yehudah*, the hated tax collector Mascarenhas played a parallel role in the section on the massacre of New Christians in Lisbon. Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre*, 6061. The Jews were themselves partly to blame . . .

some said that all the Christian hatred was due to their hatred of a Jewish tax-collector named Mascarenhas (cited and translated by Yerushalmi, p. 60). Whereas the bad Jew served in this role in one incident in ibn Verga, it is the central thesis of *Sefer ha-miknah*.

48. MS, Bodleian Opp. 712, Catalogue Neubauer No. 2240. I thank the staff of the Jewish Theological Seminary Library, whose microfilm copy I consulted.

49. For example, in the first half of the fourteenth century, Eliezer ben Asher Halevy compiled a series of manuscripts that he entitled *Sefer ha-zikhronot* [*Book of Remembrances*] (MS, Neubauer Bodleian No. 2797). The compiler had made it his lifelong preoccupation to search out and copy these particular texts, from books which were widely scattered about. He characterized the compilation as the persecutions and ordeals which were visited upon our ancestors in their exile. The family chain of transmission ensured the safety and continuity of the artifact while shielding it from hostile eyes. The compiler of *Sefer ha-zikhronot* intended it to remain within his family in perpetuity, a remembrance for the generations. He took great care to ascertain that the fate of so many manuscripts, oblivion, should not befall it. He forbade his son and future heirs to sell the manuscript, to give it as a gift, to use it as a security for a loan, or to divide it among their children.

50. Josel's chronicle opened with family testimonials concerning his three greatuncles who were martyred during the Endigen blood libel of 1461. When I arrived here I said to myself it is appropriate to write as a remembrance [*le-zikkaron*] those things which I heard from my teacher, my father. Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, *Joseph of Rosheim*, 277.

51. On the myth of a royal alliance and its transformation in modern times, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Diener von Königen und nicht Diener von Dienern in Einige Aspekte der politischen Geschichte der*

Juden (Munich, 1995), 4555.

I regret that I became aware of the fine study by J. M. Minty, *Judengasse to Christian Quarter: The Phenomenon of the Converted Synagogue in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Holy Roman Empire*, in Bob Scribner and Trevor Johnson, eds., *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe, 1400-1800* (New York, 1996) 588-6, too late to include it. The conversion of the Regensburg synagogue forms its central case study.

4

The Mainz Anonymous: Historiographic Perspectives

Robert Chazan

The Hebrew First Crusade narratives are among the most valuable and at the same time most intriguing and problematic sources bequeathed to us by medieval Jews. They provide rich historical data for reconstructing an important episode in Jewish history, the anti-Jewish animosity and violence that exploded in 1096 and the diverse Jewish responses, and reveal striking historiographic-theological perspectives on these events. The relationship between historical data and historiographic-theological perspectives has attracted considerable attention of late. For some researchers the Hebrew narratives afford historically accurate data; for others, they do not, representing merely the retrojection of mid-twelfth-century attitudes onto late-eleventh-century realities; for yet others, the narratives offer both reliable information and innovative Jewish perspectives on the sanguinary incidents of 1096.

1

Study of the Hebrew First Crusade narratives has been very much complicated by the existence of three alternative versions, with significant materials shared sometimes by two of the three and sometimes by all three.² Subsequent to the critical publication of these three accounts, much energy has been invested in unraveling the complex relationships among them.³ These efforts at clarifying interrelationships have regularly posited broad similarity among the three records. Indeed, in a more general way, research on these

narratives has been pursued on the tacit assumption that the three are essentially identical three slightly divergent accounts that offer much the same information and/or advance much the same historiographic-theological perspective. An interesting instance of this tacit assumption is provided by the recent study of Jeremy Cohen, in which he posits, from the reference to 1140 in the lengthiest of the three narratives (henceforth designated L), that all three were composed during the middle decades of the twelfth century.⁴ In fact, however, the assumption of similarity indeed, even interchangeability is not at all warranted. There are considerable differences among the three accounts. What is called for at this juncture is careful examination of each narrative in its own right. Only after the particular characteristics of each narrative and indeed of the separate component elements in L have been properly identified can fruitful discussion of the relationships among them be reopened; more broadly, identification of the particularities of

each narrative will much advance our understanding of numerous issues related to these valuable texts.

5

This essay will focus exclusively on the shortest of the three narratives, the one often referred to as the Mainz Anonymous and herein designated S.⁶ I shall examine closely the construction of the narrative, the foci of the author's interest, and some of the major themes developed by the narrator with respect to the events depicted. This close examination will eventuate in a set of broad observations on S, with which the study will close.⁷

What has survived of S is presented in an uninterrupted third-person narrative; unlike L, S includes no first-person interjections.⁸ S, as we have it, divides neatly into four consecutive segments: the early development of the crusade and its attendant anti-Jewish hostilities, the abortive assault on Speyer Jewry, the two costly attacks on the Jewish community of Worms, and deadly anti-Jewish violence in Mainz.⁹ The progression of the narrative is seamless; the story moves effortlessly along a chronological continuum that stretches from the first announcement of the crusade, which took place in late 1095, through the destruction of Mainz Jewry in late May 1096.¹⁰

While L begins with a broad and theologically oriented prologue to the events of spring 1096, S whisks the reader immediately into a careful sequential report on the events of late 1095 and early 1096.¹¹ This sequence was initiated by the enthusiasm of both the nobility and the broad populace in France for the crusading enterprise.¹² The goal of conquering Jerusalem and reclaiming the Holy Sepulcher evoked powerful anti-Jewish sentiment among the French attracted to the crusading enterprise. The reportage of these related developments is crisp, to the point, and thoroughly accurate.¹³

Having set in motion the crusade and its attendant anti-Jewish hostility, the author of S next turns our attention to the reactions of French Jewry. Given their proximity to the point of earliest development of the crusade, the Jews of northern France sensed immediately the destructive potential of the new venture. In their fright they turned to the revered communities of the Rhineland, seeking the prayers of their distinguished brethren on their behalf. Allowing himself to indulge in a bit of tragic irony, the author of S almost certainly a Rhineland Jew highlights utter ignorance of the new danger among his confreres, specifically the leaders of Mainz Jewry. To be sure, they were not to remain oblivious for very long.

Immediately after depicting the insulation of Rhineland Jewry from awareness of the crusade and its dangers, the author of S portrays the early movement of French crusading bands eastward into areas of western Germany. The author describes these crusading bands as seeking provisions and indicates that the German Jews acceded quickly to the requests (perhaps demands might be more accurate). These observations are thoroughly corroborated by the Trier unit of L, which depicts the arrival of the crusading band that coalesced around Peter the Hermit.¹⁴ The Trier unit describes in fuller detail the crusader demand for provisions and the Jewish acquiescence.¹⁵ Indeed, the Trier unit and the opening

segment of S agree further in noting that, while Jewish contribution to the provisioning of the French crusaders successfully obviated any anti-Jewish violence by these crusaders, their movement through western Germany occasioned arousal of the heretofore peaceful burghers. Both sources indicate that the passage of the French crusaders sparked hostility among the Jews burgher neighbors.

16

The passage of the French crusaders set in motion yet another dangerous development. A number of German barons were attracted to the crusading ideal, moved by promises of otherworldly reward for participation in the sacred mission.¹⁷ As had already happened in France, the arousal of the nobility was accompanied by broader enthusiasm on the part of the lower classes as well. All this is well attested in the Christian sources.¹⁸ We might note in particular that Peter the Hermit left the Rhineland fairly rapidly, thus eliminating any possibility that the new crusading recruits might be brought under his direct control. The German bands, stirred up by the passage of the French and by the preaching of their leaders, were yet more radical in their thinking and behavior than the French forces of Peter.¹⁹

Just as had happened in France, crusading ardor was quickly refracted against the Jews. Once again, the author of S introduces the leadership of Mainz Jewry. Now, these leaders undertook prayers and fasts on behalf of Rhineland Jewry itself. What had earlier been a distant danger, the problem of others, had come far closer to home. Indeed, this rich segment of S ends with indication that the entreaties of the Rhineland Jews went unanswered, that hostility turned into overt, although as yet random, acts of violence: For the crusaders came wearing their signs [i.e., their crosses], with their standards planted before our houses. When they saw one of us, they ran after him and

pierced him with their spears, to the point that we were fearful of stepping beyond our thresholds.²⁰

What we have seen thus far is careful reconstruction of early anti-Jewish violence in the Rhineland. Our author is anxious to provide accurate information on the broad development of the crusade, on the elements in the Christian population that were aroused against the Jews, on the thinking that animated these hostile parties, and on the diverse forms of anti-Jewish behavior to which this thinking led. In all this there is no significant theological speculation; this portrayal is the work of an observer committed, for a variety of reasons, to accurate reconstruction of a set of events. Christian sources provide recurrent confirmation of the reliability of the broad lines of S's account.

All these same interests and tendencies are apparent in the Speyer segment of S. The author of S is concerned to portray intensifying dangers and does so effectively. By the end of the opening section of his account he had reached the point of random violence, with Jews fearful of stepping outside their homes. Events in Speyer take this incipient violence yet a step further. S indicates that the persecution in Speyer was the work of a coalition of crusaders and burghers (*toim veironim*), a combination of anti-Jewish forces that was to recur elsewhere. In fact, S had already noted that German burghers and German crusaders had both been aroused by the passage of the French forces. Now these two groups began to

collaborate with one another, although only in the most rudimentary way. The violence depicted in Speyer was relatively casual. At no point in the account of events that took place on the Sabbath, May 3, 1096, does an organized crusading force make an appearance. Rather, a loose combination of crusaders and burghers planned to seize the Jews at their Sabbath morning prayers in the synagogue. Forewarned, the Jews of Speyer prayed earlier than usual and regained the safety of their homes. All this suggests a relatively low level of danger. A few weeks later, the Jews of Worms and Mainz would hardly be slipping into the synagogue a bit early and then heading home. At this slightly later juncture, only the strongest fortifications might offer the possibility of safety. Clearly, the coalition of crusaders and burghers that threatened the Jews of Speyer was as yet somewhat weak. Nonetheless, eleven Jews lost their lives in this ill-conceived and ill-prepared anti-Jewish assault.

The relative weakness of the attack is reflected in the successful countermeasures taken by Bishop John of Speyer. While there is no reason to suspect the sincerity of John's desire to save his Jews, there is similarly no real doubt as to the parallel commitment of the bishop of Worms and the archbishop of Mainz to save their Jews.

21 The critical difference, it seems, lay in the strength of the anti-Jewish forces at work. The author of S is concerned to specify the precise actions taken by Bishop John. They were three: he took the Jews into his fortified chambers for immediate protection, he punished a number of the burgher malefactors by chopping off their hands,²² and he subsequently removed the Jews of Speyer into rural fortifications, in which they managed to survive the dangerous weeks of May 1096.

The author of S is lavish in his praise of Bishop John of Speyer. Two

more figures are, at the same time, noted positively. The first is the emperor. According to S, Bishop John's sequestering of the Jews of Speyer was achieved through some kind of imperial assistance, although the precise nature of that intervention is not spelled out. Mentioned more clearly is the energetic *parnas* of Speyer Jewry, Moses ben Yekutiel. This highly placed Jew is cited as having influenced the bishop toward his protection of the Jews of Speyer; he is also praised for his subsequent activities on behalf of those forcibly converted, activities that eventuated in their return to Judaism.²³

S makes a passing but important observation with respect to the Jews of Speyer and their circumstances in the rural fortifications to which they were removed: They remained there, fasting, weeping, and mourning; they were deeply despairing of their lives. For every day, there gathered against them crusaders, gentiles, Emichomay his bones be ground up!, and the populace, in order to seize them and to destroy them.²⁴ Thus, S, in telling the story of Speyer Jewry, was well aware of Count Emicho and his followers. The decision not to accord Emicho a role in the abortive assault on Speyer Jewry was conscious on the part of our author. Emicho was in the vicinity but was not part of the disorganized Sabbath attack on the Jews of Speyer.

Indeed, it is yet more striking that the author of S did not make Count Emicho part of his tale of Worms Jewry. Again, this was not a casual oversight. The

assault on Worms Jewry is portrayed as an intermediary stage between the random violence inflicted by the German crusaders in general and, more specifically, by a loose coalition of crusaders and burghers in Speyer and the thoroughly militarized crusading attack launched by Count Emicho and his band in Mainz. Worms Jewry was the victim of more organized violence than had taken place heretofore; it was not yet exposed to the most organized and intensive effort at destruction of a Rhineland Jewish community.

Worms Jewry is presented as learning quickly of the loss of life in Speyer and recognizing although hardly fully the extent of the threat it now faced. Seemingly alerted as none of their peers had yet been, the Jews of Worms were still uncertain as to how profound the threat was and how best to meet it. The community divided into two groups. The more confident chose to remain at home, while the more anxious opted for safety in the bishop's palace.

25

According to S, a loose coalition of crusaders and burghers was once more aroused, this time through a ruse.²⁶ A Christian corpse was paraded through town, with the suggestion that the Jews had boiled this recently buried corpse and had poured the resultant fluids into the town water supply in an effort to poison the populace of Worms.²⁷ In the supercharged atmosphere of 1096 this allegation was sufficient to spark a riot against those Jews who had elected to remain in their homes. It is at this juncture that the author, for the first time, depicts acts of Jewish martyrdom and introduces a dirge of sorts in honor of these martyrs. This is the first point at which the relatively spare historical account is broken. Interestingly, at precisely this point the author of S also speaks for the first time of Jews who chose to convert. He goes to considerable lengths to present the honorable

motives that led to this decision, the obvious insincerity of the conversion, and the support that the converts received from their brethren who had more wisely sought safety in the bishop's palace.

While the decision to seek safety in the bishop's palace was surely the saner course, the intensifying animosities of May 1096 made this seeming haven ultimately unavailing. Even here, at the point of the most fully orchestrated assault thus far depicted, no organized crusader army yet makes its appearance. The author of S is once more quite concerned to specify the anti-Jewish elements involved. They include the two groupings recurrently noted, crusaders and burghers, augmented by a new factor: villagers from the surrounding countryside. For the first time, the author of S portrays full-scale battle. The bishop's palace represented a formidable challenge to the anti-Jewish coalition. The kind of random violence heretofore described was no longer possible because the remaining Worms Jews were ensconced in a defensible refuge. What was required now was military siege by the coalition of crusaders, burghers, and villagers. They [the members of this coalition] besieged them [the Jews ensconced in the palace] and warred against them. There took place a very great battle, one force against the other, until they [the crusaders, burghers, and villagers] seized the chambers where the children of the sacred covenant were.²⁸ The author of S has carefully and explicitly identified a new level of hostilities.

Not surprisingly, at precisely this point he also portrays a new level of Jewish martyrdom. For Speyer, S provided only the briefest mention of eleven Jews losing their lives. For the first assault in Worms, he described more fully and more feelingly the killing of larger numbers of Jews, with a first dirge in honor of the martyrs. The second assault on Worms Jewry, which constituted a new stage in the anti-Jewish violence, called forth a new form of Jewish response. Here, for the first time, we encounter Jews killing themselves and their kin, a far more radical style of martyrdom than the submission to death at the hands of the crusaders encountered thus far.

At this juncture, S introduces a pattern that is utilized in the Mainz segment as well. This pattern involves generalized statements that provide an overview of Jewish martyrological responses, followed by lavishly detailed and highly moving depictions of individual martyrs and their actions. Thus, after his broad statement on the willingness of Worms Jews to offer themselves as sacrifices and to slaughter their children out of devotion to the God of Israel, the author of S proceeds to reconstruct the unusual act of a Jew named Meshullam ben Isaac, who projected himself into an Abraham-like posture and prepared to emulate the patriarch's readiness to offer up his son Isaac. After a spirited interchange with his wife and after securing the assent of the boy to the sacrifice, Meshullam ben Isaac proceeded to move beyond the patriarch Abraham, actually taking the life of the lad before rushing forth with his wife to encounter death at the hands of the enemy. Striking in this account is the felt need on the part of the Jewish martyrs to make their radical acts willful by articulating their allegiance to God. While the articulations of the martyrs were, in all likelihood, uttered in the vernacular, the author of S artfully presents them in a Hebrew version that highlights intertextual reference to the biblical story in Genesis 22, thereby reinforcing Meshullam ben Isaac's emulation of the patriarch Abraham.

The author of S provides three more discrete episodes, intended to flesh out the general portrait of Jewish martyrdom and to highlight some of its salient features. The story of Isaac ben Daniel focuses reader attention on the bestiality of the enemy in their effort to bring Jews to conversion and, in the process, affords an opportunity to reiterate the unflagging devotion of the Jewish martyrs, all human pain notwithstanding.

The story of Simhah the *cohen* introduces for the first time the Christian argument that the catastrophe itself serves as overwhelming evidence of divine abandonment, meaning that any Jewish behavior other than conversion is absurd. The same episode also introduces the theme of Jewish aggression, with Simhah feigning willingness for conversion in order to be brought into the presence of the bishop and to take vengeance for the episcopal failure. Simhah is portrayed as killing three Christians and utterly terrifying others, until the breaking of his knife turned him into a defenseless target.

The last of the four specific episodes presented by the author of S involves a Jewess who had been successful in escaping the two rounds of slaughter in Worms proper by hiding with sympathetic Christians outside town. The story has

its puzzling aspects. After protecting her through the periods of actual assault, her Christian friends turned on her, seemingly moved by the notion that the carnage in Worms served as irrefutable proof of divine rejection, in the face of which surviving Jews had no reasonable option other than baptism. These strangely sympathetic protectors implored her to convert. Precisely why such erstwhile friends should then be moved to put this Jewess to death is not altogether clear. What the author seems to be trying to convey is a broad message of the ultimate unreliability of Christian associates, no matter how well-disposed they might seem. The chaos spawned by the crusade turned once trustworthy allies into unpredictable enemies. Again, the individual episodes allow for substantiation of the general pattern, as well as for introduction of diversified and nuanced Jewish behaviors.

The portrayal of the martyrdom of Worms Jewry ends with a return to the level of generalization, concluding with praise of the martyrs and prayerful conviction of their eternal reward. The combination of detailed information and mournful praise is in no sense problematic. We regularly find the same combination in the Christian crusade narratives, with respect to which researchers have not been inclined to reject the information provided because of occasional interjections of praise and/or prayer.

30

The Mainz unit of S is the fullest of its four component segments. The broad tendencies already noted in depiction of both Christian and Jewish behaviors remain very much in evidence. The sense of progressive deepening of hostility and danger established throughout the prior three sections of the narrative is carefully maintained. The fate of Mainz Jewry shows, on the one hand, direct continuity with foregoing developments; at the same time, the Mainz story introduces

new elements into the picture. The Mainz unit represents in effect the culmination of tendencies so precisely plotted by the author of S.

Events in Mainz are presented as the next stage in the escalation of the anti-Jewish violence that began sporadically and then spiraled into the Speyer and Worms episodes. The Mainz segment begins with indication of that Jewry's awareness of the preceding events in Speyer and Worms, moving the Jews of Mainz to address prayers to the divine authority and to initiate negotiations with the local terrestrial powers.³¹ Depiction of the latter negotiations is particularly striking. Writing in the wake of the near-total destruction of Mainz Jewry, the author of S vacillates in his portrait of the local archbishop and his associates, accusing them first of harmful intentions and then reversing himself and indicating a genuine desire to assist that turned out badly.³²

While the author describes the Mainz episode as a culmination of the tensions that had expressed themselves in random violence and in the assaults on Speyer and Worms, he at the same time acknowledges that Mainz Jewry did not need the evidence from neighboring communities to become unsettled by the dangers threatening it. We recall that the French Jews had written to their Rhineland brethren in the closing months of 1095 and had elicited a tragically insouciant response from the Jewish leadership in Mainz. Subsequently, the

passage of French crusaders and the animosities they stirred up had already occasioned intense fasting and prayer in Mainz. Indeed, the narrator deftly informs us that there had been warning signs in the town of Mainz itself. He depicts a fascinating incident in which an allegedly wondrous goose and its mistress had aroused some of the Mainz burghers with the argument already encountered that divine favor for the crusaders was indication of the rupture of God's covenant with the Jews.

33 Jewish straits were projected as evidence of Jewish error and divine repudiation. This claim divided a group of Christians, with crusaders and their burgher allies railing against the Jews and a separate group of burghers stepping forth to protect their endangered Jewish neighbors. This incident frightened the Jews of Mainz profoundly, moving them to abandon their homes and their synagogue.

A second incident deepened Jewish fears. A pair of Jews who lived near the synagogue allegedly heard the sounds of weeping emanating from the abandoned sanctuary. Assuming that some of the Jews sequestered in the archbishop's palace had made their way surreptitiously to the synagogue, these two Jews who had curiously enough elected to remain in their homes hastened there.³⁴ Finding the building in fact locked, these two Jews perceived the weeping to be a divine sign of impending disaster and informed their brethren in the archbishop's palace and in the burgrave's palace of their experience. The latter shared the sense of a divine portent of catastrophe.

At this juncture, with most of Mainz Jewry holed up in fortified buildings and profoundly shaken, a new stage in the anti-Jewish violence is introduced, with the appearance for the first time of an organized crusader band, the band that had coalesced around the central figure of Count Emicho.³⁵ Because of the precautionary

closing of the town gates, Emicho and his troops were forced to camp for two days outside Mainz. The Jews utilized this period to attempt negotiations with the count. In effect, the Jews of Mainz tried unsuccessfully to emulate the tactics of their French brethren, offering both immediate support and letters addressed to other Jewish communities urging similar assistance to the crusaders. What had worked in France, at an earlier and different stage of the development of anti-Jewish hostility, failed utterly outside Mainz.

Emicho's army did not have to storm the gates of Mainz. Smooth entrance into town was effected through the collaboration of sympathetic burghers, who simply opened the gates in defiance of the authorities. Emicho and his crusaders made their way directly to the palace of the archbishop, besieging it in formal military fashion. The militia of the archbishop, as well as the archbishop himself, beat a hasty retreat. The Jews organized their own protective force and attempted to carry on the battle against Emicho's army, but their efforts were unavailing. The crusaders fought their way into the palace, and the fate of the Jews gathered therein was sealed.

The martyrdom of the Jews gathered in the archbishop's palace in Mainz is described in somewhat more detail than any prior martyrdom. Even here, however, while arguing the uniqueness of this martyrdom and portraying it in

broadeven cosmic terms, the author of S remains sensitive to specifics. Thus, he begins with the efforts of those Jews who fought to keep the crusaders at bay and notes the escape of some of these armed Jews, under the leadership of Kalonymous bar Meshullam, into the recesses of the archbishop's palace. The first unarmed victims of crusader fury were Isaac bar Moses and a group of followers, who chose to submit passively to the blows of Count Emicho's troops as they made their way into the courtyard.

Still proceeding sequentially, the narrator focuses on the activist martyrdom of most of the Jews now exposed to crusader wrath. The radical pattern of Jews dying at their own hands, noted first in Worms, predominates in the courtyard of the archbishop of Mainz. These Jews are made to proclaim in the most moving terms their absolute devotion to the God of Israel and their willingness to die on his behalf. Imagery of the Temple and its cultic practice abounds in these exhortations, as does conviction of immediate otherworldly reward. Special notice is made of the role of the Jewesses in the courtyard. The pure women threw money outside [that is to say, out of the courtyard], in order to distract them [the crusaders] a bit, until they [the Jews in the courtyard] might slaughter their children. Moreover, the hands of merciful women strangled their children, in order to do the will of their Creator.

36

Ever focused on the detailed picture, the author of S next has the crusaders moving from the courtyard up into the chambers of the palace. Breaking down the doors to these chambers, the crusaders found the Jews in the throes of selfinflicted death. The narrator highlights one room that held out longer than the others. He depicts general behaviors on the part of the Jews in that room, including

reviling of the crusaders, the killing of children by the adult Jews, and then their own suicide. At this point, the narrator once more fills out the broad picture by focusing on one specific Jewess and her children. The story of Rachel the daughter of Isaac is the fullest and most moving of the specific martyrological accounts in S.

From the archbishop's palace the exhilarated crusaders proceeded to the second major refuge of Mainz Jewry, the palace of the local burgrave. There too battle took place, with the crusaders victorious. Once more, a set of Jews lost their protection and lay exposed to death. Again, the author fills out the general depiction by describing in some detail the behaviors of specific Jews. The end result was thorough destruction of this second large enclave of Mainz Jews.

According to S, Count Emicho and his followers were determined to hunt down every last Jewish refuge. While the bulk of Mainz Jewry had already perished, the crusaders continued to seek out Jews who had hidden themselves elsewhere. The story of David the *gabbai*, who had sought safety with a friendly priest, is told in some detail. More sketchily drawn is the portrait of Samuel ben Naaman, a Jew who had elected to remain in his home.³⁷ It is at this point that S's account of the fate of Mainz Jewry is abruptly terminated. How much more might have remained is impossible to know.³⁸

Having completed a close look at S, what have we learned? I would argue,

first of all, that our scrutiny of S indicates decisively the hand of one author. The seamless flow of the narrative and the recurrent interests and themes all point to one historical imagination underlying the narrative. To be sure, no single Jew could have witnessed the successive stages of crusader violence portrayed in S. Clearly, our author absorbed evidence from a variety of oral and, perhaps, written sources. Nonetheless, the anonymous narrator spun his materials into a well-organized and coherent record that moved from the incipient violence of late 1095 in France down through the near-total destruction of Mainz Jewry in May 1096.

S was clearly not intended by its author as a history of Jewish fate during the early stages of the First Crusade. Our author was concerned with the story of a linked set of Jewish communities, whose behaviors were fairly consistent with one another. Viewed in terms of focus, a reasonable title for the work might be *The Martyrdom of the ShUM (Speyer-Worms-Mainz) Communities*. Such a title captures both the geographic concentration on the ShUM settlements and the unifying and highlighted element in their diversified behaviors: the preponderance of willing acceptance of martyrdom in the face of the crusader-imposed alternatives of death or baptism.

39

Martyrdom as the unifying and highlighted element in the behaviors of ShUM Jewry does not mean a limited set of interests on the part of the author of S. To the contrary, one of the most striking features of the narrative is the extent to which the shared and lauded behavioral pattern of martyrdom is embedded in a multifaceted portrait of Christian and Jewish thinking and activity.

Our author is concerned with transmitting to the Jewish reader a precise sense of Christian attitudes and behaviors. As we have seen, S

depicts carefully the range of Christians who participated in the anti-Jewish assaults, the varied actions of Christians at this crucial juncture, in some instances the contradictory behaviors of specific groups of Christians (e.g., the burghers of Worms who first protected and then persecuted the Jewess Minna), the steady deepening of anti-Jewish sentiment, and the increasingly intense violence to which these feelings led. The author of *S* shows considerable interest in informing his Jewish readers as fully as possible with respect to their Christian contemporaries. The assumption rather clearly is that Jews would go on living among these Christian neighbors and that accurate information on patterns of Christian thinking and behavior would be extremely useful for this future coexistence.

S's interest in a variety of Jewish responses is similarly manifest. *S* does not focus exclusively on Jewish martyrdom. Diverse Jewish attempts to assure safety through the increasingly turbulent months of late 1095 and early 1096 are highlighted. These efforts were on occasion successful and on occasion unsuccessful. The Worms segment of the narrative introduces, along with the first significant martyrdoms, the initial instances of Jewish conversion. To be sure, the most stirring of the Jewish responses recounted involve Jewish willingness to sacrifice life for the God of Israel. The heroic nature of these behaviors and the intensity with which our author describes them do not obscure, however, his broader concerns.

Even in the realm of Jewish martyrdom, the commitment to diversity and nuance remains. Jewish martyrdom is portrayed in all its specificity. Jews fought and died; Jews were slaughtered by their enemies; Jews provoked their foes by words and deeds of opposition, thus hastening their death at the hands of these aggressors; Jews took their own lives in a number of ways; Jews took the lives of their family members, most strikingly the lives of their children, again in a variety of ways. The Jewish martyrs fall into no simple categories; they include men and women, the aged and the young, high-born and lowly. The commitment to accurate portrayal of complex realities on the Christian side is paralleled by a similar commitment to nuanced depiction of diversified Jewish thinking and behavior. Again, while by no means denying or downplaying the author's interest in projecting certain central themes through his account of the events of 1095-1096, I see in *S* evidence of a profound desire to capture the complexities of both Christian and Jewish actions and feelings.

40

I would further argue that *S* is probably of relatively early provenance.⁴¹ It is hard to imagine a mid-twelfth-century Jewish author so vitally interested in the detailed development of the First Crusade and even harder to imagine a mid-twelfth-century Jewish narrator so well informed as to that detailed development. As we have seen, the careful depiction of the onset of the crusade is corroborated repeatedly by the more copious evidence from Christian sources. The richness and accuracy of the portrayal of the arousal of both the nobility and populace across northern France, the penetration of the French crusaders into Germany, and their impact on German society combine to point strongly to *S*'s early provenance.

A close look at two specific passages in *S* may serve to reinforce the

sense of early composition. An interesting digression during S's portrait of the fate of Speyer Jewry provides two useful pieces of evidence with respect to date of composition. While lauding Bishop John of Speyer for his energetic and effective protection of Speyer Jewry, the author of S praises Moses the *parnas* of Speyer Jewry for his role also: R. Moses ben Yekuti'el the *parnas* stood in the breach as well and dedicated himself to them [the Jews of Speyer]. Through him, all those forcibly converted who remained throughout the empire of Henry returned [to the Jewish faith].⁴² This brief digression provides us, first of all, with a clear terminus a quo for the composition of S. Since the return to Judaism of those forcibly converted took place in June 1097, S cannot have been written prior to that date.⁴³ At the same time, reference to the empire of Henry suggests a fairly early date, at least prior to the death of Henry IV in 1106. It seems highly unlikely that a much later Jewish author would designate the empire as Henry's long after his demise.⁴⁴

A second reference in the text is more ambiguous. In depicting the passage of the French crusaders through German territory, S describes them as battalion after battalion, like the army of Sennacherib.⁴⁵ The image of the army of Sennacherib was seemingly introduced to imply failure to conquer Jerusalem.⁴⁶ This image might conceivably be taken to refer to the crusaders in their entirety and

to suggest a Jewish hope expressed prior to the stunning victory of 1099. Given S's excellent information and precision, however, it seems likelier that the image was introduced to highlight the failure of the French bands that crossed Germany to reach their destination and to participate in the achievement of 1099. This likelier reading of the army of Sennacherib thus shows Jewish awareness of the disasters that befell the popular French crusading forces during the late spring and summer of 1096. The overall sense with which we are left is composition of S no sooner than a year after the events depicted but surely not decades later.

47

While the focus of this study has been the so-called Mainz Anonymous, let me close by noting that L differs from S in many respects. It is, first of all, a composite of several independent units, drawn together by a later editor.⁴⁸ The independent units reveal a variety of historical interests and theological points of departure. Even the lengthy opening ShUM unit, which roughly parallels S and which I would now argue derives essentially from S, differs markedly from its source, diminishing, for example, S's rigorous organization and high concern for accuracy.⁴⁹

The Jewish experience of 1095-1096 engaged a number of subsequent Jewish narrators, whose work is preserved for us in S, in the various independent units that compose L, and in the even later Eliezer bar Nathan narrative.⁵⁰ Of these, the most interesting, I would urge, is the anonymous author of S, whose work is distinguished by a remarkably high level of historical sensitivity and sophistication. It seems appropriate that the sensitivity and sophistication of this anonymous late-eleventh-and early-twelfth-century observer be resurrected and dissected in a volume compiled in honor of a twentieth-century

historian of the Jews widely acknowledged for exemplary sensitivity and sophistication in his treatment of the Jewish past.

Notes

1. Most modern historians of medieval Jewry have cited the three Hebrew narratives without serious attention to their reliability. Of late, both Ivan G. Marcus and Jeremy Cohen have questioned the accuracy of these narratives. In a review of my *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987) that appeared in *Speculum* 64 (1989): 685-88, Marcus took a highly skeptical position on the reliability of the Hebrew records. More recently, Cohen has raised more limited questions about the narratives. He argues, in *The Persecutions of 1096 from Martyrdom to Martyrology: The Sociocultural Context of the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles* (in Hebrew), *Zion* 59 (1994): 169-208, that the Hebrew narratives reflect Jewish engagement with major themes of mid-twelfth-century Christian thought and that, to a considerable extent, the mid-twelfth-century Hebrew accounts are contaminated by such engagement. For my response to the Marcus views, see *The Facticity of Medieval Narrative: A Case Study of the Hebrew First Crusade Narratives*, *AJS Review* 16 (1991): 315-6. It is my sense that Marcus no longer espouses the radically skeptical position expressed in his *Speculum* review. For some issues regarding the Cohen thesis, see n. 4, below. In my *European Jewry and the First Crusade* and elsewhere,

I have attempted to address the issues related to the Hebrew narratives and have concluded in a general way that they offer both accurate data and fascinating historiographic perspectives. The present essay and the book-length study of the Hebrew First Crusade narratives into which it will be absorbed will continue to address these important issues.

2. These narratives were published in a fine scholarly edition by Adolf Neubauer and Moritz Stern (henceforth, N&S), *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin, 1892), and were reedited by Abraham Habermann (henceforth, Habermann), *Sefer gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Zarfat* (Jerusalem, 1945). An English translation of all three narratives can be found in Shlomo Eidelberg (henceforth, Eidelberg), *The Jews and the Crusaders* (Madison, Wis., 1977). Translations of the Mainz Anonymous and the so-called Solomon bar Simson narrative can be found as an appendix to *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (henceforth, Chazan).

3. For a valuable study of the diverse positions taken on these complex relationships, see Anna Sapir Abulafia, The Interrelationships between the Hebrew Chronicles of the First Crusade, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 27 (1982): 22139.

4. Cohen, The Persecutions of 1096. At the close of this essay, I make the argument that S is in fact of relatively early provenance, which would in effect undermine the Cohen thesis. A second challenge to the Cohen thesis is provided by the fact that at least one of the themes he suggests as a later retrojection, the centrality of Temple ritual, is highlighted in poetic dirges written immediately after the events of 1096.

5. Three sizable and quite different elements in L can be readily identified: the Speyer-Worms-Mainz unit, which I am now inclined to see as a reworking of S; the Cologne unit; and the Trier unit. Each

unit reflects a separate historical imagination that requires independent analysis. See my recent study, *The Trier Unit of the Lengthy Hebrew First-Crusade Narrative, Between History and Literature: Studies in Honor of Isaac Barzilay*, ed. Stanley Nash (Tel Aviv, 1997), 3749.

6. In fact, the traditional designation Mainz Anonymous is quite satisfactory. As we shall see by the close of this essay, S portrays events in Mainz as a culmination of tendencies notable from late 1095 onward. The designation S is simply more convenient.

7. Use of the term author presages one of the findings of this essay, the coherent historical imagination that lies at the core of S. I shall utilize the term throughout, understanding that a full case for its use will be apparent only at the end.

8. S is truncated, with the copyist indicating that he was uncertain as to how much was missing. Examples of first-person interjection abound all through L.

9. I would suggest tentatively that S ended in fact with Mainz. As noted already (n. 5, above), I am now inclined to see the Speyer-Worms-Mainz segment of L as a reworking of S. Certainly, the Cologne segment of L reflects completely different authorship and historical perspective, indicating that the editor of L, who made use of S, had no continuation of S beyond Mainz available to him.

10. Because of the clear sequential progression in S, I shall make no reference to specific pages in the available editions, except when quoting directly. When quoting directly, I shall translate afresh from the N&S text. The manuscript of S contains numerous scribal errors. In translating, I shall regularly accept the emendations proposed in N&S.

11. I have studied the intertextual messages in L's introductory reflections in the forthcoming *Festschrift* in honor of my colleague

and friend Baruch A. Levine.

12. Note the absence of any awareness of papal initiative in the crusading endeavor.

13. Note in particular the author's awareness of both baronial and popular response to the crusading message. Guibert of Nogent's well-known story of an assault on the Jews of Rouen serves as indication of the deflection of some French crusading zeal in an anti-Jewish direction, although clearly there was little overt expression of such sentiments in France.

14. See N&S, 25; Habermann, 5253; Eidelberg, 62; Chazan, 28788.
15. Compare the citation in the previous note with N&S, 4748; Habermann, 9394; Eidelberg, 100; Chazan, 226.
16. Again, compare the Trier unit and S in the citations indicated in the previous two notes.
17. Note the recent controversy over the point at which martyrdom emerged as a central ideal of the crusade. Jonathan Riley-Smith has argued for the gradual development of martyrdom as an ideal during the grueling march eastward; see his *Death on the First Crusade*, in *The End of Strife*, ed. D. M. Loades (Edinburgh, 1984), 1431, and in *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London, 1986). His argument has been vigorously challenged by Jean Flori, *Mort et martyre des guerriers vers 1000: L'exemple de la première croisade*, *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 34 (1991): 12139, who sees martyrdom as a core ideal of the crusading venture. Given the scrupulous attention of the author of S to the development of the crusading movement, it may well be that his inclusion of martyrdom as a motivating factor affords additional weight to the Flori position.
18. The two Christian chroniclers that focus most heavily on popular crusading in Germany are Albert of Aachen and Ekkehard of Aura.
19. Highlighted in the depictions of both Albert and Ekkehard.
20. N&S, 48; Habermann, 94; Eidelberg, 100; Chazan, 22627.
21. The extensive portrayal of the failed efforts of the bishop of Trier in the Trier unit of L leaves not a shadow of doubt as to his sincere desire to protect his Jews.
22. Note the specification of punishment of burghers, not crusaders.
23. For the importance of this reference to the return of converts to

Judaism for the dating of S, see below.

24. N&S, 48; Habermann, 94; Eidelberg, 101; Chazan, 227.

25. Note the Jewess Minna, cited a bit further on, who neither remained in her home nor sought refuge in the episcopal palace.

26. S and L, while agreeing on their dating of the assaults in Speyer and Mainz, diverge in their dating of the two Worms episodes. S dates the first attack on May 5 and the second on May 18; L gives dates of May 18 and May 25. L's dates pose internal problems for his narrative. L, like S, dates Emicho's arrival in Mainz on May 25. He also has Mainz Jewry disquieted over the reports of both assaults in Worms and involved in efforts at selfprotection prior to Emicho's arrival. Dating the second assault in Worms on the day of Emicho's arrival thus presents serious internal difficulties. By contrast, S's sequence is smooth.

27. This item was one of the considerations that led some early analysts of S to suggest a late, fourteenth-century dating. However, mention of a well-poisoning accusation by no means necessitates fourteenth-century provenance. Again, by the end of this study I shall argue for early composition of the narrative.

28. N&S, 49; Habermann, 96; Eidelberg, 103; Chazan, 230.

29. Among the intertextual clues are (1) Do not raise your hand against the boy (Gen. 22:12); (2) Let me not look on as the child dies (Gen. 21:16); (3) He bound his son Isaac (Gen. 22:9); and (4) use of the designation *ma'akhelet* for the knife used in the slaughter (Gen. 22:10), whereas the term *sakin* is regularly utilized throughout all the rest of S for a knife.

30. Most of the ten books into which the *Gesta Francorum* is divided end with either God's praise or a prayer directed to the divine.

31. Recall the issue of dating noted in n. 26, above.

32. After reporting the advice of the archbishop and his advisors that the Jews of Mainz bring their families and their possessions into the archepiscopal palace, S notes, with uncertainty: They fashioned and gave this advice in order to surrender us and to gather us up and to seize us like fish caught in an evil snare. Indeed, the archbishop gathered his

ministers and his minions great ministers, grandees, and nobles in order to assist us and to save us from the crusaders. At the outset, it was his desire to save us, but in the end he failed. See N&S, 51; Habermann, 98; Eidelberg, 106; Chazan, 233.

33. Recall Albert of Aachen's excoriation of the popular German crusading bands for their belief in a wondrous goose that would lead them to the Holy Sepulcher.

34. For another Jew who chose to remain at home, see below.

35. The identity of this Count Emicho has given rise to reconsideration of late. Long identified as Count Emicho of Leiningen, recent scholars have shifted the identification to Count Emicho of Flonheim. See Ingo Toussaint, *Die Grafen von Leinigen: Studien zur leiningischen Genealogie und Territorialgeschichte bis zur Teilung von 1317/18* (Sigmaringen, 1982), 2528, and H. Möhring, *Graf Emicho und die Judenverfolgungen von 1096*, *Rheinische Vierteljahresblätter* 56 (1992): 97-111.

36. N&S, 54; Habermann, 101; Eidelberg, 110; Chazan, 238. Jews killing children by strangulation is not mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew narratives.

37. Recall the prior mention of Jews staying at home, even in Mainz. See n. 34, above.

38. Recall the suggestion that Mainz was the end point of S in its original form. See n. 9, above.

39. By contrast, one of the latter segments of L depicts the fate of the Jewish communities of Trier, Metz, and Ratisbon, all of which were converted almost in their entirety. The author of S chose to focus upon related Jewish communities that, in the main, opted for death.

40. I have earlier argued that this desire to capture complexity reflects

an essential element in the so-called twelfth-century renaissance. See Chazan, *The Facticity of Medieval Narrative*, 5052.

41. Upon publication of S in the late nineteenth century, there was a tendency to date it quite late, down into the fourteenth century. This tendency was based on the copyist's designation of the text as *The Tale of the Persecutions of Yore* and on the reference, in the account of the first assault on Worms Jewry, to an accusation of well poisoning. With the passage of time, both of these bases for late dating have been properly rejected. A copyist's observation tells us nothing of the date of composition of the text that he copied. The ubiquity of well-poisoning accusations during the fourteenth century provides no proof that such accusations were not leveled earlier. In a lecture delivered in 1979 and published posthumously as *The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles and the Ashkenazic Tradition*, in *Minhah le-Nahum*, ed. Marc Brettler and Michael Fishbane (Sheffield, 1993), 3653, Gerson D. Cohen argued for a modestly late dating for S, subsequent to 1161; see pp. 3738. His case is based on two considerations. The first is once again the copyists's designation, already noted. The second consideration is the suggested influence of Abraham ibn Daud on two phrases in S. Both phrases, however, are standard rabbinic usages and need betray no ibn Daud influence. The most common recent tendency in dating S is to generalize from the mention of 1140 provided in L and to see S as composed during the middle decades of the twelfth century as well.

42. N&S, 48; Habermann, 94; Eidelberg, 101; Chazan, 227.

43. The return of the converts to Judaism in June 1097 is reported by Ekkehard of Aura in his *Chronicon universale in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, 6:208.

44. Surely, by the middle decades of the twelfth century a more general designation for the empire would have been appropriate. It might be argued that the reference to Henry IV reflects the author's

awareness of the imperial role in the return to Judaism.

45. N&S, 48, 94; Eidelberg, 100; Chazan, 226.

46. For the failure of the army of Sennacherib, see 2 Kings 18:13-19:37 and 2 Chron. 32:1-22, the former more fully developed than the latter. Striking in the biblical Sennacherib story are the arrogance of the ultimately unsuccessful Assyrians and their taunting

emphasis on the hopelessness of Jewish circumstances; both themes recur in S's depiction of the popular German crusading bands.

47. Again, my proof for early composition is drawn essentially from the general traits of the texts and only secondarily from the specific passages cited.

48. This point will be discussed at length in my forthcoming book-length study of the First Crusade Hebrew narratives. Let me simply note here the important contribution of the editor of L in bringing together preexistent local reports in order to fashion an overall portrait of German-Jewish suffering and heroism in 1096.

49. This too will be argued in my book-length study.

50. I have consistently suggested that the Eliezer bar Nathan narrative is a reworking of the prior L. Recall my earlier contention (n. 5) that each of the separate units of L requires independent analysis.

5

Forging Jewish memory: Besamim Rosh and the invention of preemancipation Jewish culture

Talya Fishman

Memory is always problematic, usually deceptive, sometimes treacherous.

Y. H. Yerushalmi, Zakhon

The Double Life of Besamim Rosh

On each of the occasions that the collection of responsa entitled *She-
elot uteshuvot besamim Rosh* has appeared in print,

¹ reactions have been radically polarized. Labeling it a forgery, rabbinic critics have rejected the claim that it was compiled by the sixteenth-century R. Isaac de Molina who had discovered a manuscript in Alexandria containing previously unknown responsa by the Rosh, R. Asher b. Yehiel (d. 1327) and other medieval scholars. Rather, charged the critics, the entire text was written by R. Saul Berlin (1740-1794), scion of a prominent German rabbinic family and author of the appended glosses, who had brought the volume to press. Had he not, after all, published a pseudonymous treatise a few years earlier attacking R. Raphael HaCohen (the rabbi of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbeck) who had led the campaign against Mendelssohn's *Biur*?² *Besamim Rosh*'s detractors declared that the volume's scandalous contents reflected Berlin's *maskilic* sympathies.³

Subsequent republications of the volume evoked further tirades. One reviewer described the 1984 edition of *Besamim Rosh* as ugly Torah

in a beautiful vessel⁴ and reminded readers of the caustic reaction of the Sochatchover rebbe, R. Avraham Bornstein (1839-1910): Anyone filled with the fear of heaven should not keep the work of *Spices, Gall and Wormwood* [*besamim rosh vi-la'anah*] [Deut. 29:17] in his home. . . . And in my opinion, it deserves to be burned on Yom Kippur which falls on the Sabbath.⁵

The perspective of *Besamim Rosh's* rabbinic critics overlaps with the evaluation

rendered by *maskilim*

6 and by their academic heirs.⁷ Certain passages in the work (e.g., the opinion that a *shohet* must check his slaughtering knife for nicks by running the blade, not over his fingernail, but over his tongue [no. 200]) can be read as parodies of what *maskilim* and reformers portrayed as rabbinic culture's insatiable hunger for greater legal stringencies. And *maskilic* readers might have assumed that the exaggeratedly hypothetical cases in *Besamim Rosh* reflected the author's contempt for excesses of casuistry in halakhic literature. (To give but one example, the text indulges in a learned discussion of whether the guests at a wedding are to rejoice and partake of the *se'udat mizvah* [wedding feast] if extenuating circumstancesnamely, the bride's immanent abduction by a Christian noblemanecessitate that the wedding take place on the fast day of Tish'a beAv [no. 174].)

Yet *Besamim Rosh* has always had its admirers within the world of rabbinic learning; indeed, since its initial publication in 1793, the work has continued to be cited in the contexts of teaching and adjudication alike.⁸ While some admirers deny that the work is anything other than what it purports to be,⁹ others, astonishingly, affirm *Besamim Rosh's* merit while questioning (and even impugning) the volume's self-presentation.¹⁰

Besamim Rosh's strange double lifeits appeal to disparate Jewish readerships who have radically different understandings of its importunderscores the important role that readers play in shaping a work's very message. The present study aims at making sense of *Besamim Rosh's* bizarrely polarized *rezeptionsgeschichte* and at bridging views that appear irreconcilable: (a) the claim that the text is a forgery composed by Rabbi Saul Berlin, who hoped to use it to reform rabbinic culture from within, and (b) the seemingly

paradoxical testimony of halakhists who acknowledge that the claims about *Besamim Rosh's* compilation and authorship are false yet regard it as a reputable rabbinic work. I would argue that the very conception of these views as incompatible—that is, the claim that *Besamim Rosh* is *either* reformist (and therefore insincere in aping halakhic discourse) *or* that it is an authentic work of halakhic literature (and therefore remote from any reformist intent) is emblematic of a broader problem, rooted in the nineteenth-century reinvention of the Jewish past.

A myth of the credulous Jewish past, propagated in the period immediately following the Emancipation by Jews who were (justifiably) anxious about the identity and definition of Judaism in a modern world, has convinced subsequent generations that pre-Emancipation Jewish culture was slavishly obedient to rabbinic authority and to an intellectually monolithic halakhic corpus. Ironically, this myth was purveyed by two diametrically opposed movements of the nineteenth century, Orthodoxy and Reform Judaism.¹¹

The bestowal of civic emancipation upon European Jewries irrevocably changed the status of rabbinic authority. As newly emancipated Jews became subject to the law of their respective lands, many came to regard rabbinic law, previously the only legal system governing daily Jewish life, as superfluous. Orthodox Judaism emerged as a response to this crisis; its founders self-consciously

portrayed themselves as a conservative rampart, stemming the tide of unbelief and of religious transgression.

¹² As its very nomenclature suggests, Orthodoxy literally correct profession presented itself as monolithic; it defined itself in relation to that which was excluded. While rabbinic society prior to the Emancipation had produced a rich culture of rebuke, it was never able to define itself with this sort of exclusivity, for it encompassed the lax along with the rigorously observant.¹³ Yet this chasm separating Orthodoxy from rabbinic society in the premodern era, a byproduct of the Emancipation, was not acknowledged; indeed ideologues of Orthodoxy (e.g., the Hatam Sofer [1762-1839]) claimed that theirs was the only approach to Judaism that was identical to that which had prevailed prior to the Emancipation. Creating a highly successful optical illusion, they remade the Jewish past into a mirror image of their own exclusivist outlook.¹⁴

Nineteenth-century ideologues of Reform Judaism unwittingly reinforced the very same myth while giving it a radically different spin. Reformers such as Abraham Geiger (1810-1874) portrayed premodern Jews as inhabitants of a Dark Age, incapable of thinking thoughts other than those dictated by the very rabbinic authorities who had kept them in a stranglehold for centuries.¹⁵ Reform Judaism gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the premodern Judaism of its own imagination, and like their Orthodox contemporaries, Reform ideologues portrayed their ancestors as a homogeneous group of obedient practitioners. The partisan portraits of pre-Emancipation Jewish culture produced for self-serving purposes by the nascent Orthodox and Reform movements of the modern period thus converged, suppressing the intellectual vibrancy and variegated texture of premodern Jewish life and thought, and grossly

distorting the evidence of sources such as *Besamim Rosh*.¹⁶

The very enigma of *Besamim Rosh*'s reception points to a bifurcation that has its roots not in the divide between unquestioning credulity and critical acuity but in these nineteenth-century inventions of the Jewish past. Were we but able to escape the influence of these coincident myths and capture some sense of rabbinic culture at sunset on the eve of Emancipation, we might better understand *Besamim Rosh*'s tortured author¹⁷ not as a cynic, determined to undermine the halakhic system, but as someone who genuinely loved rabbinic culture and wished to reform it, using all the methods it had placed at his disposal.¹⁸ The Emancipation's impact on subsequent Jewish life has made certain configurations of thought seem unthinkable and has led to (among other things) a radical polarization of perspectives on *Besamim Rosh*. Yet the volume itself, which is both a legitimate, late-eighteenth-century rabbinic work and simultaneously an in-house critique of Halakhah, constitutes a snapshot of a highly nuanced approach to rabbinic culture that was not only imaginable in its time but perhaps even viable.

This study will attempt to bridge the gap between these perspectives on *Besamim Rosh* by highlighting certain features of halakhic literary culture in the milieu that gave rise to its composition. The earliest defenses of *Besamim Rosh* adumbrate two of the topics to be explored: (a) the endorsement and justification of halakhic study that is devoid of any practical application and (b) expressions of

tolerance for a work's content, irrespective of its authorship. Exploration of these issues in the context of Ashkenazi rabbinic culture in the early modern period prompts reflection on the significance of the *dramatis personae* featured in Saul Berlin's contrapuntal work and ultimately serves to focus speculation about the forger's motives.

Justifications of Nonapplied Law

The earliest defenses of *Besamim Rosh*, written by Saul Berlin's father, R. Zvi Hirsch Levin, chief rabbi of Berlin and by Saul Berlin himself, valorize many of the very features that have led both rabbinic critics and *maskilic*-academic readers to assume that the work is a wicked parody of halakhic literature. In two letters to the work's critics,

19 R. Zvi Hirsch Levin explicitly acknowledges the lenient, eccentric, and even aberrant nature of *Besamim Rosh*'s legal perspectives (which he does not accept), yet he nonetheless affirms the work's merit. Claiming that the entire campaign to disparage *Besamim Rosh* and Saul Berlin was but a vendetta emanating from R. Raphael HaCohen, R. Zvi Hirsch suggests that the critics examine their own motives carefully and refrain from inciting controversy.²⁰ His son, he asserts, had changed nothing in the text of *Besamim Rosh* since acquiring it on one of his travels; indeed, he himself had given instructions that it be copied, and it was he who had indexed the work to the order of the *Tur* more than ten years earlier.²¹ Turning to the work's strange content, R. Zvi Hirsch writes:

I have not seen in it [. . .]²² regarding the words of the sages. Rather, it accords with the judgments of the *rishonim* [medieval adjudicators]. And if matters are found in it which, in my opinion, are not in accord with halakhah, or in accord with which we do not behave, mishnah [though

retracted,] remains in its original form.²³ If we had come to judge every book of the *rishonim* and *aharonim*²⁴ of blessed memory, we would find . . . ²⁵ several lenient rulings in matters which are biblically prohibited. And this is why the Torah lends itself to a *fortiori* exegesis, these prohibiting and these permitting.

And he [i.e., *Besamim Rosh's* detractor] has permitted himself to label that which is holy a desecration. And if a rabbinic scholar has indeed found several things which he regards as leniencies, I have not found in them any desecration. There are some which I, too, am inclined to regard as legally authoritative, and some which I am not. But heaven forbid that one loosen his tongue [to impugn],²⁶ and it is necessary to examine the proofs, whether strong or weak. Woe to Creation when the Torah is insulted . . . and when people utter slander and say, this one permits the prohibited! This is not the way of Torah! And in truth, a book like this was not intended for the masses of the people who cannot distinguish between their right and their left. . . . While matters which do not accord with law as practiced [i.e., *halakhah li-ma'aseh*] will clearly be found [therein]and in the glosses which my son composed there are also matters with which I don't agreein any event, it [too] is Torah, and there is no place for disparagement.²⁷

R. Zvi Hirsch Levin's impassioned defense of *Besamim Rosh* not only legitimates a playful approach to the study of Halakhah, it identifies such an approach as an ideal. By invoking the talmudic phrase *mishnah lo zaza mimekoma*, he

implies that nonapplicable positions in *Besamim Rosh* should have the status of discarded legal positions that may once have been legitimate and that should be retained for the sake of their plausibility, if not for their accuracy.

²⁸ This, asserts R. Levin, is nothing less than what was done throughout the history of halakhic literature. He identifies two phenomena that have enabled rabbinic culture to record nonapplicable perspectives even when these flout legal norms. The careful restriction of readership, which he fully supports, constitutes a sociological safeguard. And, R. Levin implies, rabbinic thought has its own toolkit for adapting positions that do not accord with law as practiced: the midrashic modes of inference.²⁹ In his opinion, perspectives that are derived from dialogue with halakhic literature partake of the holy irrespective of their conclusions (or of their conformity to legal norms); they deserve to be regarded as Torah even if they cannot be put into practice.

R. Saul Berlin offers a similar line of defense in responding to the attack on a particularly provocative responsum and gloss in *Besamim Rosh* and *Kassa deharsena* (which is omitted from the second edition of the work).³⁰ After suggesting that a sustained search of halakhic sources might yield textual precedents for the controversial remarks, Berlin goes on to imply that the obvious love of Torah reflected in his deliberations constitutes proof of their legitimacy: How is it that he [R. Banet, the detractor] doesn't persist and comb through [other halakhic sources]? In this passage in particular, I have shown every student of Torah matters which are sharp and sweet. . . . Moreover, anyone who is not blind can see the depth of my soul's enthusiasm for the teachings of Torah and Gemara. . . . And if he were [truly] a scholar, he would savor everything in this section.³¹

One wonders whether, in their defenses of *Besamim Rosh* (and in Saul Berlin's explicit description of himself as one who learns *Torah li-shma*,³² i.e., without ulterior motive), father and son were not making the paradoxical argument that the most sublime form of Torah study is represented by the entertainment of learned interpretations that cannot or ought not be applied in practice for within a halakhically informed society, at least, such outrageous perspectives could never give rise to practical conclusions. Where *talmud Torah* (Torah study) is truly sacramental and Torah is not being used as a tool,³³ the student brings no ulterior motive to his encounter with the text and no desire to derive any practical (i.e., legal) applications; it is the quest, rather than the end, that is of supreme importance.³⁴ Under these circumstances, interaction with the divine word can, in a sense, be playful, lacking any specific goal or end point. It might even be said that study devoid of practical benefits most closely embodies the oral law, an enterprise that is, by definition, open-ended.³⁵

A range of rabbinic texts composed over the course of many centuries endorses the study or citation of halakhic positions that have no practical application or that flout legal norms. Whether engagement with such nonapplied positions is justified on the grounds that it is labor for the sake of heaven, (i.e., *melekheth shamayyim*)³⁶ that it constitutes the religious fulfillment of a dead or neglected mitzvah,³⁷ or that it is the embodiment of *Torah li-shma*,³⁸ the effect is

the same. These theories of legitimation stretch the boundaries of halakhic culture, and they sacralize all that is within its newly expanded purview.

The Penchant for the Hypothetical in Early Modern Ashkenazi Halakha

The valorization of study devoid of practical benefits is integrally related to other features in the rabbinic culture that shaped *Besamim Rosh*: (a) the nature and practice of *pilpul* (i.e., dialectical reasoning) in Ashkenazi yeshivot from the mid-seventeenth century onward, and (b) the penchant for purely hypothetical legal cases, a trend that reached its peak in halakhic works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

While *pilpul* denoted an exegetical approach throughout the Middle Ages, it had, by the early fifteenth century, become a subject in its own right, designed to sharpen the logical acuity of students in preparation for adjudication.

39 In the course of a session devoted to *pilpul*, a talmudic passage served merely as a springboard for discussion. The ensuing deliberations, carried on by the students themselves, were not tethered to any text, and the outcome of the discussion was ascribed no practical significance.⁴⁰

Institutional developments of the mid-seventeenth century transformed the curriculum of the Ashkenazi yeshiva and indirectly encouraged new trends in the practice of *pilpul*. The professionalization of the rabbinate meant that only the salaried congregational rabbi, one yeshiva student out of many, would be called upon to render legal decisions. Moreover, Isserles' adaptation of the *Shulhan 'arukh* for Ashkenazi usage meant that even the few who

would adjudicate would no longer need to rely on their own logical acuity.

The session in *pilpul* was thus divested of its initial *raison d'être*, having ceased to serve any pedagogic purpose and having lost its last surviving (if indirect) connection with applied jurisprudence. The time allotted for the cultivation of *pilpul* came to be monopolized by the Rosh Yeshiva himself, who, in a virtuoso solo performance, created *hilukim*⁴¹ new and independent halakhic texts (some of which were subsequently published in volumes of novellas [i.e., *hiddushim*]).⁴² Unencumbered by the responsibility of issuing practical rulings, the creators of *hilukim* focused not on the legal import of a talmudic *sugya* (i.e., unit) but on its architectonic structure. By posing questions about a given talmudic *sugya* from other *sugyot* (using the commentaries of Rashi, Tosafot, and the *rishonim* as refractory lenses), Ashkenazi halakhic scholars of the early modern period raised numerous unrelated strands of thought, jumping from one theme to another until they ultimately wove the loose ends together in a denouement of dialectical pyrotechnics.⁴³

Halakhic literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thus climbed to new (and fantastic) heights of theoretical speculation, creating, in effect, a body of nonapplied law. It is therefore not surprising to discover that some of the

most striking or outrageous topics raised in *Besamim Rosh* are evocative of issues raised in the Ashkenazi halakhic corpus of the early modern period. For example, the text's bizarre question (no. 100) about whether a one-armed man should don *tefilin shel yad* on his forehead alongside *tefilin shel rosh* plays off a passage in *Hiddushei Maharam Schiff* (1605/1641) that considers the situation of a soldier in armor who cannot bare his arm to don *tefilin shel yad*.

⁴⁴ *Besamim Rosh*'s deliberations regarding the *kashrut* of liver fried in butter (no. 285) evoke discussions of this peculiar topic found both in *Hiddushei Maharam Schiff* and in the *Noda' bi-Yehuda*,⁴⁵ while its question about the *kashrut* of a bird with two gallbladders (no. 61) calls to mind an issue raised by Saul Berlin's ancestor, Hakham Zevi Ashkenazi, who had scandalized the rabbinic world of the seventeenth century by considering, among other questions,⁴⁶ whether a bird without a heart would be kosher.⁴⁷

In short, while *Besamim Rosh-Kassa de-harsena* has an unusually high concentration of eyebrow-raising cases, awareness of context may temper the critical reader's impression of the author's provocative intent by demonstrating that the text was hardly unique in its appetite for purely hypothetical issues. Though the Emancipation ultimately exacerbated rabbinic literature's predilection for the hypothetical by bringing Jews under the jurisdiction of the secular state, thereby obliterating much of the remaining market for applied Halakhah,⁴⁸ the world of rabbinic literary culture that Saul Berlin inhabited was already defined by its penchant for nonapplied law. R. Saul Berlin played off this phenomenon in *Besamim Rosh*, and he played it to the hilt.

Avoiding Juridical Responsibility: Saul Berlin's Choice of Masks

Impelled by a variety of motivations, rabbinic sources from antiquity onward subjected the hypothetical (and even the impossible) to legal exploration. The Talmud's identification of *taharat ha-sheretz* as a necessary (though not a sufficient) condition for appointment to the Sanhedrin presumably reflects the premium placed on rhetorical abilities in tannaitic times.⁴⁹ Medieval rabbinic scholars, motivated by their belief that *talmud Torah* (i.e., the sacral act of study) must continually yield fresh insights in order to magnify and glorify [His] teaching (Isa. 42:21)⁵⁰ investigated the legal ramifications of purely hypothetical cases to identify the limits of a rule's applicability. R. Israel Isserlein seems to have included hypothetical (though hardly bizarre) responsa in his fifteenth-century *Terumat hadeshen*⁵¹ in order to address halakhic issues with a thoroughness rarely available to a legal decisor burdened by the pressure of giving a quick response.⁵²

Ashkenazi scholars of the seventeenth century who took a renewed interest in *Terumat hadeshen* emphasized a different dimension of the halakhic exploration of hypotheticals. Focusing not on the content of Isserlein's work but on its status within the context of adjudication, R. Shabbetai Cohen, R. Joel Sirkes,

and David b. Samuel Halevi all commentators on halakhic codes and towering practitioners of applied law

⁵³ affirmed that a rabbinic text's weak connection with reality diminished its relative legal authority.⁵⁴ One wonders whether Ashkenazi rabbis of the early modern period (who were well aware of this principle) might not have been attracted to the exploration of hypothetical cases precisely because they could enjoy the mental stimulation of halakhic discourse without incurring juridical responsibility.

The desire to engage in risk-free legal deliberations undoubtedly played a role in Saul Berlin's decision to give the Rosh a starring role in his oeuvre. To be sure, *Besamim Rosh's* placement of medieval Halakhah at center stage is itself a reflection of the rabbinic literary agenda in Saul Berlin's time. Yeshiva students who would not be appointed as community rabbis and who toiled in the vineyards of Torah expecting no material reward impugned representatives of the upstart professional rabbinate for relying upon the Ashkenazified Shulhan 'arukh (which they regarded as the halakhic equivalent of Cliff and Monarch notes) rather than grappling directly with the underlying texts.⁵⁵ Fashioning themselves as the heirs of the old Ashkenazi religious elitean aristocracy whose status was at least partly a function of halakhic eruditionthey revived the study of the medieval sources that had comprised the core of the Ashkenazi rabbinic curriculum.⁵⁶

Beyond this, vagaries of publishing led Ashkenazi halakhists from the mid-eighteenth century onward to take renewed interest in medieval rabbinic literature. Prior to the second decade of the eighteenth century, the Ashkenazi halakhic tradition had displayed a fairly linear reliance on the foundational works of the Ashkenazi Middle Ages and

only spotty acquaintance with medieval Sephardi halakhic literature. Between 1715 and the late 1720s, however, the halakhic works of the Sephardi *rishonim* (Nahmanides and his students, R. Shlomo b. Adret, R. Yom Tov Ishbili, and the author of the *Shita mekubetzet*) became available to Ashkenazi scholars,⁵⁷ enticing such figures as the Vilna Gaon, along with the authors of the *Pnei Yehoshua*, the *Noda bi-Yehuda* and the *Shaagat Aryei*, to revisit halakhic discussions that had lain dormant since their formulation in the *Shulhan arukh*. Exposure to the thinking of the great medieval Sephardi talmudic exegetes altered the perspectives of Ashkenazi *aharonim*, leading them to revive the agenda of the *rishonim* and to insert their own voices into conversations that had not been heard for hundreds of years.⁵⁸

Saul Berlin's decision to create a period piece thus assumes greater meaning when seen against the backdrop of these trends in Ashkenazi rabbinic culture. Yet his ascription of the volume to R. Asher b. Yehiel (notwithstanding the fact that its constituent responsa are attributed to twenty-three different medieval rabbinic scholars) was not arbitrary. On the contrary, it was a strategic choice based on an abstruse point that *Besamim Rosh's* learned readers were expected to know.⁵⁹

Adjudicators who lived after the time of R. Asher b. Yehiel were uncertain about which of his legal writings were to be regarded as authoritative, for the conclusions drawn in his acknowledged responsa at times contradict those set forth

in his *pesakim* (i.e., legal decisions). In order to resolve the dilemma, later halakhists relied on the testimonies provided by the Rosh's sons, R. Jacob Baal haTurim and R. Judah b. Asher, regarding the sequence in which their father had composed his halakhic writings. Both sons observed that where the *pesakim* contradict the responsa, the *pesakim* are to be followed, for they were written later.

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This point, which is mentioned obliquely in Isaac de Molina's introduction to *Besamim Rosh*, meant that even troubling passages in the volume could be read without concern for their legal import. In other words, Saul Berlin had created a safe literary format. Were his identity as author to be disclosed, he might convincingly argue that he had never intended to interfere with the actual process of adjudication. In selecting this particular combination of genre and author, the work's creator freed himself of the obligation to issue juridically responsible statements and gained license to revel in intellectual playfulness. Like other features of *Besamim Rosh* that take on different nuances when viewed within the context of rabbinic literature, the work's very title defuses its radical import.

A similar calculation may have impelled Saul Berlin to single out R. Isaac de Molina as the compiler (and occasional glossator) of *Besamim Rosh*. While de Molina might have made an appealing candidate simply because so little is known about him,⁶¹ it is probably of significance that this halakhist was ridiculed by the *Shulhan arukh*'s author as one who failed to understand the teachings of his predecessors and who said things of his own opinion, as if prophetically, with no basis in Gemara or *poskim* [i.e., decisors].⁶² Halakhically erudite readers of *Besamim Rosh* who learned that it was discovered and compiled by R. Isaac de Molina might not have

suspected the volume's dubious provenance, but they might well have been negatively prejudiced in their assessment of its reliability as a legal source.

Mi-pi sefarim, velo mi-pi sofrim?⁶³ Between Authors and Their Works

In defending *Besamim Rosh*, R. Zvi Hirsch Levin dismisses the charge of misattribution as an insignificant detail: [E]verything which is collected in it [literally: selected from it] is praiseworthy, and [i.e., though] I don't know who did the selecting, but God knows and is witness. The Av Bet Din of Berlin's astonishing profession of disinterest in the whole question of the work's authorship brings to mind two *haskamot* (i.e., approbations) to a kabbalistic work published in Berlin around ten years before the publication of *Besamim Rosh*, written, in all likelihood, by the notorious *maskil*-forger, Isaac Satanow.⁶⁴ The first *haskama* questions the authenticity of the work at hand but nonetheless recommends the treatise to readers:

However, I do not know from whence these matters stem, and perhaps he who brought them [to press] wrote them himself. For I have known the man [the *maskil* Isaac Satanow] and his conversation, [and] that he is one of those who steals words. Only he is different

from them, inasmuch as all those who steal words, steal those of others and attribute them to themselves, and this one steals from himself and attributes them [i.e., the words] to others. And the sages have already permitted this, saying [Pes. 112a], If you wish to strangle yourself, hang yourself on a big tree.

65

The writer of the *haskamah* goes on to cite the opinion expressed in *Mitpahat sefarim* (1768) by R. Jacob Emden (Saul Berlin's ancestor) regarding the pseudepigraphic attribution of the Zohar: Moses [de Leon] added [matters] of his own, and felt that he had the right to hang these on a big tree⁶⁶ . . . in keeping with R. Akiva's advice to R. Shimon bar Yohai.⁶⁷ Rashi's explanation of this elliptical talmudic dictum, which Emden appropriated, suggests that acts of misattribution are occasionally necessary.⁶⁸ Emden thus implied that R. Moses de Leon was justified in passing off his words in the *Zohar* as those of a great man, since this act of misrepresentation would facilitate their broad acceptance.

The writer of the *haskamah* concludes his remarks with a programmatic distinction between an author and his work: And similarly, everyone who gives an approbation does not approve the probity of the author, but rather, the probity of the composition. . . . We receive the truth from [whomever] speaks it. This affirmation of the validity of truth irrespective of its source (a topos richly represented in premodern rabbinic writings)⁶⁹ also appears in the work's second approbation.⁷⁰ Here, too, the writer cites Pes. 112a and then raises the possibility that the work was composed by some recent author who, after the fashion of poets, attributed his work to a great figure. Insofar as the teachings themselves are worthy, he asserts, there is no need to ask who said them, for Truth is its own witness.⁷¹

While these *haskamot* are probably forgeries written by Satanow himself,⁷² and while they (like the remarks of R. Jacob Emden, in his justification of forgery) were prompted by consideration of a *non-halakhic* text, the distinctions they make between a composition and its creator in the evaluation of a text's merit seems to have its counterpart where halakhic literature is concerned. Indeed, this approach, taken by R. Zvi Hirsch Levin in the late eighteenth century, has been seconded by later halakhists. Thus, while R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin declared *Besamim Rosh* an unequivocal forgery composed by R. Saul Berlin, sympathizer of the Berlin *maskilim*, he offered a qualified endorsement, distinguishing between the author, who lacked authority, and the possible authority of the volume's teachings: And one may only learn from what is said in this book, and not from the one who says it.⁷³

A similar approach is taken by R. Ovadia Yosef, who ultimately wrote a *haskamah* for the 1984 edition of *Besamim Rosh*. In a responsum written in Cairo in 1950, which addresses the question of whether relatives are permitted to mourn a suicide, R. Yosef offered a characteristically encyclopedic review of rabbinic literature on this issue, discussed its treatment in *Besamim Rosh*,⁷⁴ and in a lengthy digression recapitulated the attitudes of previous rabbis toward this controversial work. Arriving, finally, at his own opinion, R. Yosef pointedly echoed a comment made by the *tanna* R. Joseph regarding the status of Ben Siraa noncanonical

text:

⁷⁵ And I say that, in any event [*BT*, San. 100b], we expound the fine material within it.⁷⁶

From the perspective of halakhists who view *Besamim Rosh* as a forgery, yet affirm its place in halakhic literature, Saul Berlin's impersonation of the Rosh and other medieval scholars is beside the point, if regrettable. Halakhists who hold this outlook and who have cited *Besamim Rosh* have been attracted not to its underlying medieval stratum but to the glosses of *Kassa de-harsena*,⁷⁷ whose author never hid his identity and whose *pilpulistic* forays they easily recognize as embodiments of *talmud Torah*.

Trojan Horse in the Camp of Halakha?

What was the intention of the forger R. Shaul Berlin? In his preface to the volume he presents the text of *Besamim Rosh* as peace offering to the rabbis of his day and expresses the hope that it might reinstate him in their good graces after his scandalous attack on R. Raphael HaCohen.⁷⁸ Perhaps the motive expressed here ought to be taken at face value, even if it does not tell the whole story. Recognized at an early age for his prodigious erudition and genius for *pilpul*,⁷⁹ the more mature Saul Berlin may well have sought a vehicle that would showcase his talents and facilitate his entry into the conversations of the giants among his rabbinic contemporaries and predecessors. If the misattribution of authorship could be condoned, at least by some, as an excusable impropriety, then Saul Berlin's creation of a work that interwove rabbinic voices and idioms from three discrete periods in the history of Jewish law—*rishonim* (i.e., the Rosh and other medieval rabbis), the generation of the *Shulhan arukh* (de Molina), and *aharonim* (*Kassa de-harsena*)—was, if anything, even *more* formidable

testimony to his mastery of the halakhic corpus. Indeed, had the impassioned involvement of family members on both sides of the fray not turned the work's publication into a domestic scandal,⁸⁰ one wonders whether Saul Berlin might not have owned up to his literary tour de force and admitted his authorship, while denying that he was engaging in anything other than *melekheth shamayyim* and the pursuit of *Torah li-shma*.

None of the above is incompatible with the likelihood that Saul Berlin intended *Besamim Rosh* to be an instrument of reform, targeting rabbinic culture's misplaced pedagogic emphases as well as certain specifics of its legal system. While his demonstration of the virtually infinite plasticity of halakhic texts in the hands of a master *pilpulist* would surely have endeared him to *maskilim* critical of imbalances in the rabbinic curriculum,⁸¹ it would also have resonated with certain Ashkenazi masters of *hilukim* who experienced changes of heart, among them the author of *Shaagat Aryei* (who complained of his childhood training) and the author of *Pnei Yehoshua* (who vowed to write in accord with the plain manner of study).⁸²

The fact that *Besamim Rosh* contains lenient decisions, some of which echo

other perspectives found in Ashkenazi halakhic texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,

⁸³ similarly suggests that the author hardly wished to wash his hands of the existing system. Yet, writing well before any *ideology* of Reform had crystallized (indeed, before the battle for the Emancipation of Prussian Jewry), Saul Berlin attempted to reform aspects of rabbinic culture from the inside⁸⁴ by forging Jewish memory. The encounter with philosophical passages in *Besamim Rosh* might have led readers to (re)envision medieval rabbinic culture⁸⁵ as one that recognized the rootedness of theological doctrines in historical coordinates (no. 251), while the halakhic sections of the work might have reshaped conceptions of the past by means of subliminal advertising.

In most of the stranger *teshuvot*, the text's elusive style makes it difficult for the reader to pinpoint its precise conclusions. Most of the constituent units present a pastiche of voices that includes the questioner, the respondent, the teachers and texts to whom the respondent refers, occasionally the comments of Isaac de Molina, and ultimately, the multivocal reflections of Saul Berlin. Both the responsa themselves and the *Kassa de-harsena* commentary revel in *pilpul*. When unconventional opinions are ventured, the discussion tends to wander and become increasingly indecisive. Indeed, in such instances the counterpoint of different voices is so muddy that the author might legitimately deny that he was endorsing any legally aberrant perspective. Though various lenient positions set forth in *Besamim Rosh* with full textual justification are subsequently rejected in *Kassa de-harsena*, their presence is subversive in that they demonstrate how such perspectives could be incorporated into the halakhic corpus without doing violence to its method.⁸⁶ And unlike other, similarly

pseudonymous, in-house critiques of halakhah produced within the Rabbanic world prior to the emergence of the Reform movement (such as *Sefer alilot devarim*,⁸⁷ *Sefer ha-kanah*,⁸⁸ and *Kol sakhal* ⁸⁹), *Besamim Rosh* does not take a self-consciously confrontational stance toward the halakhic status quo but maintains a constant tone of respectful curiosity. Moreover, of all these works, only *Besamim Rosh* is itself cast as a work of rabbinic literature, a Trojan horse of sorts, capable of injecting reformist viewpoints directly into the camp of halakhic discourse. Indeed, the sheer frequency with which *Besamim Rosh* has been cited in subsequent halakhic writings (documented by Samet) raises the question of whether the work may not have been effective in introducing unconventional perspectives into rabbinic thought.⁹⁰

Besamim Rosh's invocation of traditional categories, even when deviating from the legal norm, underscores the vast tactical gulf that separates it from the later Reform movement, which came, increasingly, to impugn the notion of tradition altogether. If early reformers like Aharon Horin, Eliezer Liebermann, and Shem Tov Samun were still attempting to bring about reform through recognized halakhic channels,⁹¹ later leaders, like Geiger, attempted to effect change through ideological manifesto, having espoused distinct political and social platforms.⁹²

The emergence of a revolutionary Reform movement ultimately diverted attention from *Besamim Rosh's* more subtle tactics; indeed, they became moot

once political emancipation transformed adherence to rabbinic law into a matter of individual choice. Polemics of the post-Emancipation period have obscured rabbinic culture's tradition of in-house critique, and Saul Berlin's forged memories of the Jewish past have themselves become a subject for reinvention.

Notes

I began research for this study while in Jerusalem on a Yad HaNadiv Barecha Fellowship. I am grateful to that Foundation and to the people who have helped me improve this essay: Professor Arnold Eisen, Professor Martin Jaffee, Professor Hillel Kieval, Professor Shnayer Leiman, Dr. David Malkiel, Rabbi Dr. J. J. Schacter, and Dr. Michael Silber. Special thanks are due to Dr. Moshe Samet, who was generous in sharing his vast knowledge of the subject.

1. First edition, Berlin, 1793; second edition, Cracow, 1881, third edition, Jerusalem, 1984. *Besamim Rosh* also has been reproduced photostatically. *Besamim Rosh* contains 392 (*Besamim* in *gematria*) previously unknown responsa attributed to a number of medieval rabbis; the bulk, however, are attributed to R. Asher b. Yehiel, whose acronym Rosh is reflected in the title.

2. Saul Berlin's *Mitzpeh Yokt'el* (Berlin, 1789) was a scathing send-up of R. Raphael HaCohen's *Torat Yekutiel*. See M. Samet, Mendelssohn, Veisel vi-rabbanei doram, in *Sefer Avineri* (Haifa, 1970), 230 ff; Samet, Rav Shaul Berlin u-khetavav, *KS* 34 (1967/68): 432.

Though Berlin's *Ketav yosher*, a satiric attack on the critics of Naftali Herz Wessely's *Divrei shalom ve-emet*, was composed in 1784, it was not published until after Saul Berlin's death in 1794. See Y. Friedlander, Vi-hakham be-ahor yishabbehena Avdon ben Hillel ha-Yidoni: al ha-satira *Ketav yosher* me-et Shaul Berlin Levin (in Hebrew), *AJS Review* 2 (1977): 120, and M. Pelli, Saul Berlin's *Ktav*

yosher: The Beginning of Satire in Modern Hebrew Literature of the Haskalah in Germany, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 20 (1975): 10927.

3. The earliest criticisms include Wolf Landsberger, *Ze-ev yitrof* (1793), the letter of R. Yaakov Katzenellenbogen to R. Meshulam, printed in A. Berliner, ed., *Vi-heimah baketuvim* (Berlin, 1909), 1316, the letter of R. Mordecai Banet to R. Yaacov Katzenellenbogen, in Berliner, 1920; Hasagot ha-Rav Mordecai Banet al Shut Besamim Rosh, in Shimon Buechler, *Shai la-moreh* (Budapest, 1891), 1116.

4. Rabbinic critics charged that *Besamim Rosh's* bizarre legal cases were designed to mock rabbinic tradition. They were scandalized by the text's assertion that the thirteen principles of the faith formulated by Maimonides require revision in light of changing historical conditions. The text's endorsement of Greek philosophy as a necessary tool for the understanding of Torah and mitzvot was seen as particularly galling since it was placed in the mouth of the Rosh. (Cf. the Rosh's comment on the incompatibility of the modes of apprehension used by Torah and philosophy, respectively, in *She-elot u-teshuvot ha-Rosh*, no. 54.) The volume's detractors asserted that some of the responsa attributed to R. Asher b. Yehiel contradict opinions of his expressed in other writings and that none of the constituent responsa attributed to various medieval scholars have ever been discovered in manuscripts housed in any of the libraries of the world. Moreover, they claimed, many of the text's legal conclusions were aberrant, if not outrightly antinomian. Indeed, charged the critics, in calling his commentary *Kassa de-harsenaa* title alluding to heres Berlin was lexically signaling the heretical import of the *entire* volume, which smacked of *maskilic* aims and Reformist sympathies. See Torah mekhoeret bikhli mefoar, in D. Tamar, *Iturei sofrim u-sefarim: Olelot taanit bekhorot, Ha-zofeh*, April 23, 1986.

5. Tamar's citation of Avraham Bornstein, *Avnei nezer*, EH, 8. Due to

its extreme

nature, this comment was omitted from the printed edition of the work. See Z. Y. Abramowitz, *Besamim Rosh be-aspaklarya hasidit, Tagim: kovetz bibliographi toranimaddai* 34 (1972): 5658.

6. Fifty copies of *Besamim Rosh* were ordered by Avraham Peretz, son-in-law of Joshua Zeitlin of Shklov. M. Samet, *Besamim Rosh shel R. Shaul Berlin: Bibliografya, historiografya ve-ideologya, Kiryat Sefer* 48 (1972/73): 516. The latter was patron to Baruch Schick, leader of the Galician Haskalah. Shaul Ginzberg, *Meshumodim in tsarischen Russland* (New York, 1946), 3453.

According to Reuven Amar, *Yafeh li-vesamim* (Jerusalem, 1984), 15, who refers to R. Moshe Friedland, *Al sefarim u-mehabrim*, the handwritten copy of *Besamim Rosh* is in Geiger's collection in the Berlin Seminary. It has been reported that certain Reformers tried to republish *Besamim Rosh* in 1820. I have not been able to consult the evidence for this claim: Iggeret meha'a negged nissayon le-hotzi mahadura hadasha shel *Besamim Rosh* bi-sevivot 1820, *Toldot R. Mordecai Banet* (Tarnow, 1929).

7. See, e.g., L. Zunz, *Der Ritus des synagogalen Gottesdienstes* (Berlin, 1859), 22628; Raphael Mahler, *Divrei yemei yisrael: dorot ahronim* (Merhaviah, 1954), 2:7779; 33642; L. Jacobs, *Theology in the Responsa* (London, 1975), 34748; Jay Harris, *How Do We Know This?* (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 14850.

8. See the lists compiled in Reuven Amar, *Yafeh li-vesamim* (Jerusalem, 1984), 1819, and from a rather different angle, Samet, *Besamim Rosh shel R. Shaul Berlin*, 50910. Samet notes that this list is hardly exhaustive. And see, surprisingly, Jose Faur, *In the Shadow of History* (Albany, N.Y., 1992), 227, n. 82.

9. See, e.g., the remarks of Reuven Amar, who compiled the 1984 edition, adding his own glosses, *Reah Besamim*, and a monograph,

Yafeh li-vesamim, which defends *Besamim Rosh* against the charges of its critics.

10. This peculiar situation is also noted in L. Jacobs, *Theology in the Responsa*, 347.

11. The modern effort to reconstruct the Jewish past begins at a time that witnesses a sharp break in the continuity of Jewish living and hence also an ever growing decay of Jewish group memory. Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* (Seattle, 1982), 86.

12. On Orthodoxy as a product of the modern world, see J. Katz, Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective, in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, ed. P. Medding (Bloomington, Ind., 1986) 2:317, esp. 35; M. Samet, The Beginnings of Orthodoxy, *Modern Judaism* 8 (1988): 249-52; M. Silber, The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition, *The Uses of Tradition*, ed. J. Wertheimer (New York, 1992), 2384.

13. A distinction between the tradition-bound Jews of the premodern world and the Orthodox traditionalists of the modern world is made by Katz, Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective, 34.

14. Ibid., 4; cf. Silber, 26, n. 4; Samet, The Beginnings, 249-69.

15. Abraham Geiger, *Literatur-Blatt: Beilage zum Israeliten des 19 Jahrhundert* 1 (1846): 666-7. Cf. M. Meyer, Abraham Geiger's Historical Judaism, in *New Perspectives on Abraham Geiger*, ed. J. Petuchowski (Cincinnati, 1973), 316.

16. See T. Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars of Exile* (Stanford, 1997), esp. introduction.

17. See, e.g., the will found on Saul Berlin at the time of his death in London, published in R. Amar, *Yafeh li-vesamim*, 20. Berlin's father alludes to his son's sensitivity in responding to criticisms of *Besamim Rosh* leveled by family members.

18. A similar perspective is offered in the last paragraph of Samet, *Besamim Rosh*, 523.

19. Teshuvat ha-rav R. Zvi Hirsch al mikhtav shel R. Mordecai Banet, in Buechler, *Shai la-moreh*, 1819; Berliner, *Vi-heimah ba-ketuvim*, 1011. On the background of this letter, see Samet, *Besamim Rosh*, 51819.

20. Samet amplifies the point that the entire *Besamim Rosh* affair was conducted by individuals who had ulterior motives in pressing their grievances against Saul Berlin (*Besamim Rosh*, 48).

21. Samet points to textual evidence from R. Zvi Hirsch Levin's own halakhic writings that confirms that *Besamim Rosh* existed as early as 1786 (ibid., 519, n. 21). R. Levin claims that he had seen the work as early as 1782 (in Berliner, *Vi-heimah ba-ketuvim*, 10).

22. I have omitted two words, *tyuha u-li-eil*, whose meaning I am uncertain about. From its context the phrase *lo hazina bei tyuha u-li-eil al divrei hakhamim* I would guess that they denote mockery or disrespect.

23. This phrase appears, e.g., in *BT*, Yeb. 30a; 32a; Kid. 25a; Shev. 4a; AZ 35b; Hul. 32b; 116b.

24. I.e., rabbinic scholars who rendered decisions after the sixteenth-century publication of the *Shulhan Arukh* with the glosses of R. Moses Isserles.

25. The letter's copyist, Berliner, is himself uncertain about the text at this juncture. I have omitted several additional words to render the sense more easily.

26. This is a speculative translation of *li-aftorei safah*.

27. In Berliner, *Vi-heimah ba-ketuvim*, 1011.

28. See *Mishna Eduyyot* 1:45. A range of other reasons for the literary retention of incorrect halakhic positions appears in D. W. Halivni, *Midrash, Mishna and Gemara*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 10910.

29. One wonders whether R. Levin is not implying that the very presence of problematic passages in halakhic works serves a creative purpose by fueling further midrashic exegesis. Cf. Rashi's second explanation of why R. Huna offered a problematic a fortiori argument in *BT*, Zeb. 13: In order that pupils be trained in acuity [*yitlamdu lihiyot harifim*], that they might pose their own a fortiori exegeses.

30. The responsum, no. 301, questions whether the injunction to choose death rather than comply with an order to commit idolatry, incest, or murder is still valid.

31. Hasagot ha-rav Shaul Berlin al divrei R. Mordecai Banet, in Buechler, *Shai lamoreh*, 1718.

32. *Besamim Rosh*, *Hakdamat ha-mevi li-veit ha-defus*, unpaginated, sixth paragraph. Professor Sid Leiman has aptly pointed out to me that this claim is belied by Saul Berlin's very admission that he hoped, by means of *Besamim Rosh*, to restore his tarnished reputation among the scholars of his generation.

33. See the injunctions against this in Mishna Avot 4:5; *BT*, Ned. 62a.

34. Hayyim of Volozhin, *Ruah Hayyim* on 3:9, 47, in N. Lamm, *Torah Lishma: Torah for Torah's Sake in the Works of R. Hayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries* (New York, 1989), 243. Were *Besamim Rosh* to be plugged into Lamm's schema of different conceptions of *Torah li-shma*, it might be seen to combine the non-utilitarian dimension of the devotional (Hasidic) definition of *li-shma* with the study-oriented intellectual focus characteristic of R. Hayyim of Volozhin's definition. Cf. Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah and Gemara*, 110ff; idem, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (Oxford, 1990), 82 and preface.

35. See Martin Jaffee, How Much Orality in Oral Torah? New Perspectives on the Composition and Transmission of Early Rabbinic Tradition, *Shofar* 10 (1992): 5372, esp. 6667.

36. Alfasi, *Halakhot* on Gittin 86b, shalosh gitin pesulin; cf. Maimonides characterization of the geonic approach to Torah as *melekhet shamayyim* in his introduction to the *Mishneh Torah*. The double-edged thrust of the concept of *melekhet shamayyim* is emphasized in I. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven, Conn., 1980), 17075.

37. The Rhineland Pietists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries ranked the study of neglected (scorned, or dead) tractates at the top of their hierarchy of religious behavior, precisely because there could be no observable benefit. On the Pietist ideal of fulfilling *met mizvah*, see *Sefer Hasidim*, ed. J. Freimann and Y. Wistinetzki, (Frankfurt, 1924), 2.

38. Thus, R. Hayyim of Volozhin introduced the study of the mishnaic tractates of

Kodashim and Toharot into his yeshiva precisely *because* their content was moot after the destruction of the Temple. See Lamm, *Torah Lishma*, 240; R. Meir Berlin, *Rabban shel Yisrael* (New York, 1943), 108. A similar idea was expressed in the nineteenth century in R. Israel Salanter, *Or Yisrael* (Cracow, 1900), chap. 31.

39. The first turning point in the history of *pilpul* seems to have been the composition of *Tosfot Gornish*, which is presumed to be the work of students of R. Israel Isserlein. See I. Ta-Shma, *Tosfot Gornish*, *Sinai* 68: 15361. I would speculate that there is a direct linkage between this text's pronounced disinterest in the practical content of the halakhic *sugya* and Isserlein's own foray into the realm of nonapplied law in *Terumat ha-deshen* (see below).

Among the significant works that review the history of developments in Ashkenazi *pilpul*, see E. Reiner, *Temurot bi-yeshivot Polin vi-Ashkenaz ba-meot ha-1617 vi-havikkuah al ha-pilpul*, in *Ki-minhag Ashkenaz u-Polin: Sefer Yovel li-Chone Shmeruk* (Jerusalem, 1993), 980; H. Dimitrovsky, *Al derekh ha-pilpul*, in *Baron Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1973), 3:11181; M. Breuer, *Aliyat ha-pilpul vi-ha-hilukim bi-yeshivot Ashkenaz*, in *Sefer ha-zikkaron le-Rav Yehiel Yaacov Weinberg* (Jerusalem, 1970), 24155.

40. I have relied heavily on Reiner's clarification of this point. See description of R. Judah Mintz of Padua's yeshiva in Elijah Capsali, *Seder Eliyau Zuta* (Jerusalem, 1977), 24647, and the description of a seventeenth-century Polish yeshiva in Natan Neta Hanover, *Yeven metzulah* (Tel Aviv, 1945), 8385.

41. See Dimitrovsky, *Al derekh ha-pilpul*, 11419; 13738.

42. See Reiner, *Temurot*, 29.

43. The two collections of *hilukim* that are deemed the most perfect are Yaacov Yehoshua Falk's *Pnei Yehoshua* and Yehezkel Landau's

Tziyyun li-nefesh hayyah. Ibid., 44.

44. *Hiddushei Maharam Schiff* (Hamburg, 1737), on Gittin 58.

45. Ibid., end of Hullin; *Noda bi-Yehuda*, YD 29.

46. A particularly striking hypothetical case raised by the Hakham Zevi concerned the inclusion of a golem created by magical means in a minyan. Cf. *Shut Hakham Zevi* (Fuerth, 1767), 93; *She-elat Yavetz* (Lemberg, 1884), pt. 2, 82. The Hakham Zvi was the uncle of Saul Berlin's paternal grandmother.

47. *She-elot u-teshuvot Hakham Zvi Ashkenazi*, 74, 76, 77. R. Jacob Emden supported his father's controversial contention that such a bird would be deemed kosher.

48. M. Elon, *Ha-mishpat ha-ivri* (Jerusalem, 1973), 3:1248, 1267. Elon notes (p. 1246ff.) that, with the Emancipation, the laws of Hoshen Mishpat (pertaining to financial transactions and torts), which had made up over 80 percent of any given collection of responsa, became unnecessary.

49. *BT*, San. 17a. The Talmud asserts that no one was appointed to the Sanhedrin who could not, through virtuoso forensics, convince listeners of the ritual purity of a reptile creature that is ritually impure by biblical definition. The identification of this verbal tour de force as a contest element in the process of admission to the High Court may well reflect the influence of Roman approaches to the study of rhetoric. On the exploration of the hypothetical as part of Roman training in rhetoric, see S. F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation in the Late Republic and Early Empire* (Berkeley, Calif., 1949). (Thanks to Margaret Imber for bringing this work to my attention.)

50. See R. Joseph Kara, *Perush al nevi-im rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1972), 47. And cf. *BT*, Hul. 66b, Tosafot, *yagdil*; I. Ta Shma, Seder hadpasatam shel hiddushel ha-rishonim laTalmud, *Kiryat sefer* 50

(1975): 335.

51. The features that distinguish the responsa in *Terumat ha-deshen* from those in other volumes are discussed in Y. Dinari, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz bi-shalhei yemei ha-beinayyim* (Jerusalem, 1984), 30213. See also A. Berliner, Isserlein, *MGWJ* 18 (1869): 27274; Y. Freimann, introduction to R. Yosef b. Moshe, *Leket yosher*, xivxv (prior to Yoreh deah); Elon, *Ha-mishpat*, 3:126667. Researchers who have found parallels between passages in

Terumat ha-deshen and in Isserlein's *Pesakim u-khtavim* (which records real cases) have concluded that the former are real as well. See Y. Dinari, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 304ff. and bibliography cited there.

52. Thus, in one instance, Isserlein mentions the desire to be prepared should the question actually arise (*She-elot u-teshuvot Maharil* [Cracow, 1881] after no. 192, *kankan*; *Tashbetz*, pt. 2, 292, end). In another, he cites sheer intellectual curiosity. This is not an actual case before us, but I wished to know the law, in Isserlein, *Terumat ha-deshen, pesakim u-khtavim*, 104. See Dinari's comment (*Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, 309) that the advantages are evident when one compares *Terumat ha-deshen* with Isserlein's *Pesakim u-khetavim*.

53. R. Shabbetai Cohen also excelled in *hilukim*.

54. See, e.g., *Siftei Kohen* on *Shulhan Arukh*, YD 196.20, end; *Bayyit hadash* on *Tur*, YD 196; *Turei zahav*, *Shulhan arukh*, YD 328, 2 (end).

55. See, e.g., Maharshal's introduction to *Yam shel Shlomo*; Isserles introduction to *Darkhei Moshe*, the remarks of the Maharal and his brother, R. Hayyim b. Bezalel, in *Vikkuah mayim hayyim* (Amsterdam, 1711). Introduction. On opposition to this act of codification, see Elon, *Ha-mishpat*, 114553; Reiner, *Temurot*, 46.

56. Foremost among these medieval sources were the writings of R. Asher b. Yehiel, the *Tur*, *Sefer mizvot gadol*, *Sefer mizvot katan*, *Mordecai*, the writings of R. Meir of Rothenburg, and *Shaarei dura*. See Reiner, *Temurot*, 21.

57. *Ta Shma*, *Seder hadpasatam*, 32535.

58. In formulating the material in this manner, I am indebted to Haym Soloveitchik, who discussed this in a talk entitled *The Background to the Emergence of the Lithuanian Approach to Talmudic Studies*, at the

annual conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, December 1995.

59. Indeed, this point is explicitly mentioned in Isaac de Molina's introduction to *Besamim Rosh*.

60. *Tur*, HM end of no. 72; R. Judah b. Asher, *Zikhron Yehuda* (Berlin, 1846), no. 15. In keeping with this perspective, see, e.g., *Beit Yosef on Tur* YD 341, u-ve-inyan havdalah; *Perisha on Tur*, HM 340; Joseph Colon, *She-elot u-teshuvot Maharik* (Warsaw, 1884), Shores 159, 2, 87a; Hayyim Mikhel, *Or ha-hayyim* (Frankfurt am Main, 1851), 25960. It was this perspective that was taken by Saul Berlin's nineteenth-century relative, the Netziv. See Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, *She-elot u-teshuvot meshiv davar*, 1:24.

However, taking a narrow interpretation, some scholars accepted the conclusions of the Rosh's *pesakim* over those of his responsa only in the specific cases singled out by his sons. See the sources cited in Elon, *Ha-mishpat*, 121718, n. 19.

61. See Hakham Yosef David Azulai, *Shem ha-gedolim* (Jerusalem, 1992), *Maarekhet gedolim*, *Ot yod*, no. 336, 121.

62. Yosef Caro, *Sefer avkat rokhel* (Leipzig, 1859), no. 131, 11819. Caro fumed that de Molina had devalued the authority of acquisition via documents to the point where one might think it possible to renege on any acquisitions backed only by rabbinic (and not biblical) authority, as long as money had not changed hands.

63. This phrase (From books, not from authors) is an inversion of the medieval Jewish trope, *Mipi sofrim, ve-lo mipi sefarim* (i.e., From authors, and not from books) found, for example, in *Kuzari* 2:72 and in Ibn Caspi, *Mishneh Kesef* 1:124, 2:42. Cf. *BT*, Git. 71a, *mipihem, ve-lo mipi ketavam*.

64. The *haskamot* are to *Kuntresei Zohar: hibbura tinyena* (i.e., Zohar

Fragments: The Second Composition). See M. Pelli, Yizhak Satanow u-she-elat ha-ziyyuf ba-sifrut, *Kiryat Sefer* 54 (1979): 81724; N. Rezler Bersohn, Isaac Satanow: An Epitome of an Era, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 25 (1980): 8199. Though the title page of *Kuntresei Zohar* is dated 1783, Shmuel Feiner informed me that the press that published this work (as well as *Besamim Rosh*) was only licensed in 1784, i.e., after the 1783 death of R. Hayyim of Zanz, to whom the second approbation is attributed.

65. Approbation of Yosef Teomim to *Kuntresei Zoharhibbura tinyena* (Berlin, 1783). See N. Rakover, *Zekhut ha-yozrim bi-mekorot ha-yehudiyim* (Jerusalem, 1991), 2930. R. Yosef Teomim, reputed author of the first approbation, was R. Saul Berlin's relative and successor to his position as Av Beit Din of Frankfurt on the Oder. He had studied in the yeshiva established by Daniel Yaffe, one of the press's founders. See L. Loewenstein, *Die Teomim Familie*, *MGWJ* 57 (1918): 354.

66. Jacob Emden, *Mitpahat sefarim* (Altona, 1768), end of chap. 2.

67. *Ibid.*, end of chap. 3.

68. For other explanations of *BT*, Pes. 112a, see R. Hananel, *loc. cit.*; *Arukh, henek*.

69. See, e.g., Maimonides introduction to *Shmoneh perakim*, and H. Malter, Shem Tob ben Joseph Palquera, *JQR*, n.s. 10 (1910): 16869, n. 31. Thanks to Dr. Daniel Frank for bringing this to my attention.

70. The writer is ostensibly R. Hayyim of Zanz (1720-1783), kabbalist leader of the Brody *kloyz*. But see the note above regarding the date of this work's publication.

71. The phrase itself is striking: *Akh behiyyot ki divreihem nehmedu li-haskil biyir'ah u-vi-hokhma bi-Torah u-vi-mizvah*. See Rakover, *Zekhut ha-yozrim*, 31, illustration.

72. I am inclined to agree with Zinberg and Pelli that the *haskamot themselves*, no less than the work they endorse, are the creations of the master forger, Isaac Satanow. I. Zinberg, *Toldot sifrut Yisrael* (Tel Aviv, 1959), 5:119; Pelli, Yitzhak Satanow, 822, n. 31. However, Klausner and Fin contend that the first approbation was truly written by R. Teomim, for it would have been difficult to misattribute a *haskama* to a rabbi living in the very same region. Y. Klausner,

Historya shel ha-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-hadasha (Jerusalem, 1952), 168; Shmuel Fin, *Knesset Yisrael* (Warsaw, 1886), 644. Frankfurt on the Oder was regarded as part of Berlin. See Samet, *Besamim Rosh shel R. Shaul Berlin*, 512, n. 6.

73. This remarkable inversion of *mipi sofrim ve-lo mipi sefarim* is found in Rabbi S. Y. Zevin, *Ha-moadim ba-halakha* (Jerusalem, 1944), 257.

74. *Besamim Rosh*, no. 345, omitted from the second edition.

75. *BT*, San. 100b. See Solomon Schechter, The Quotations from Ecclesiasticus in Rabbinic Literature, *JQR* 3 (1891): 682706.

76. R. Ovadia Yosef, *Yabia omer* (Jerusalem, 1956), 2:YD, 24. The same citation from the Talmud also appears 34 years later in R. Yosef's approbation to the 1984 edition of *Besamim Rosh*.

77. Examination and categorization of all the ways in which the volume is cited and used in subsequent rabbinic literature remains a desideratum.

78. *Hakdamat ha-mevi le-veit ha-defus* omitted from the second edition of *Besamim Rosh* and reprinted in the 1984 edition. See Samet, *Besamim Rosh shel R. Shaul Berlin*, 517.

79. Saul Berlin's father testifies that his son had gained renown as an *oker harim* when he was still in his twenties, having been praised as such by the author of the *Sha'agat Aryei*, the *Noda bi-Yehuda*, and R. Berush, who had served as Av Bet Din in Glogau. Teshuvat ha-rav Zvi Hirsch al mikhtav shel Mordecai Banet, in Buechler, *Shai lamoreh*, 18. Other testimonies to Berlin's halakhic prowess are offered by his uncle, R. Yitzhak ha-Levi, rabbi of Cracow, and by his childhood friend, R. Alexander Margaliyot, rabbi of Satanow.

80. Samet stresses that the controversy that ensued after the publication of *Besamim Rosh* was actually more contained than

generally portrayed and that none of the key figures were disinterested parties. Samet, *Besamim Rosh shel R. Shaul Berlin*, 510, 516ff.

81. Of course, it could also have been used to underscore the point made in the nineteenth century by R. Yisrael Salanter, who claimed that *pilpulistic* extremes served a higher purpose since they lead one who is used to such mental gymnastics to recognize his own fallibility, thereby teaching him not to rely on his own intellect.

82. R. Aryei Leib Gunzberg, *Sha'agat Aryei*, introduction; R. Joshua Falk, *Pnei*

Yehoshua, introduction. And cf. the fact that both R. Ezekiel Landau and R. Akiva Eger were careful to omit *pilpul* from the printed editions of their works. See *Noda bi-Yehuda*, 2nd ed., HM 6; R. Akiva Eger, *Ha-derush vi-ha-hiddush*, introduction. The Vilna Gaon's sons claimed that their father had advised that even the absent students should be prevented from pursuing *divrei hiddudin*, i.e., *pilpul*. Introduction to *Beur ha-Gra* on *Shulhan arukh*, OH.

83. *Besamim Rosh's* discussion (no. 40) of shaving on *Hol ha-mo'ed* must be seen in relation to the controversial 1776 responsum on this topic by R. Ezekiel Landau, *Noda bi-Yehuda*, OH 13. See Landshut, *Toldot anshei ha-shem*, 1:86; M. Samet, *Halakha ve-reforma* (Hebrew University dissertation, 1967). Similarly, *Besamim Rosh's* lenient position regarding the consumption of legumes by Ashkenazim on Passover (no. 346) evokes the highly controversial perspectives of Berlin's relatives, the Hakham Zevi Ashkenazi and his son R. Jacob Emden. Emden, *She-elat Yavetz*, 2:147; Emden, *Mor u-ketzi'a*, 453.

84. See Harris, *How Do We Know This?*, 148; Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars*, chap. 2.

85. See A. Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (Princeton, N.J., 1990), 124, regarding encounters with hitherto unknown old texts that lead to the re-creation of the past.

86. On insinuation as a component of theological lying and the introduction of subversive views by negating them, see David Berman, Disclaimers as Offence Mechanisms in Charles Blount and John Toland in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, ed. M. Hunter and D. Wootton (Oxford, 1992), 25572; idem, Censorship and the Displacement of Irreligion, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (1989): 6014.

87. In *Otzar nehmah* 4 (Vienna, 1864): 17995. See R. Bonfil, *Sefer alilot devarim: perek bi-toledot he-hagut ha-yehudit ba-meah ha-14*, *Eshel Be-er Sheva* 2 (1980): 22964.
88. *Sefer ha-kanah* (Poritsk, 1786). See M. Kushnir-Oron, *Ha-peliah ve-ha-kanah: Yesodot ha-kabbalah she-ba-hem* (Jerusalem, 1980); T. Fishman, A Kabbalistic Perspective on Gender-Specific Commandments, *AJS Review* 17 (1992): 199245.
89. In I. S. Reggio, ed., *Behinat ha-kabbalah* (Gorizia, 1852). See Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars of Exile*.
90. Citation of *Besamim Rosh's* views on suicide (as in R. Ovadia Yosef's *Yabia omer*, cited in n. 76, above) constitutes a case in point.
91. See, e.g., M. Meyer, *Response to Modernity* (New York, 1988), 5051, 55, 58, 15859, 168, 177, 193, 309; M. Pelli, *Milhamto ha-ra'ayonit vi-ha-hilkhatit shel ha-rav Aharon Horin bi-ad reforma datit ba-yahadut*, *HUCA* 39 (1968): 6379; Avraham Benedict, *Gilui hadash bi-farashat ha-rav ha-reformator Aharon Horin*, *Moriah* 8 (1979): 8995; M. Samet, *Ha-shinuyyim bi-sidrei beit ha-knesset Emdat ha-rabbanim kinegged ha-mehaddeshim ha-reformiyyim*, *Asufot* 5 (1991): 345404; Meir Benayahu, *Da'at hakhmei Italya al ha-negina bi-'ugav ba-tefila*, *Asufot* 1 (1987): 265318; idem, *Yomtov sheni shel galuyyot* (Jerusalem, 1987), 1797.
92. See, e.g., M. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, chap. 2.

6

Creating a Tale of Martyrdom in Tulczyn, 1648

Edward Fram

Among the most poignant descriptions in Jewish historiography in the premodern period must rank the tale of the Jews of Tulczyn, who, together with local Poles, met a frightening death at the hands of Cossack and peasant attackers in June 1648. The tale of mass Jewish martyrdom in Tulczyn was told by a number of contemporary Hebrew chroniclers but perhaps none of the stories is better known than the one found in *Yeven metsulah (Abyss of Despair)*, Nathan Hanover's story of the fate of Polish and Lithuanian Jewry during the Chmielnicki rebellion in 1648/1649.

1

Modern historians have questioned the veracity of a number of aspects of Hanover's chronicle, particularly the numerical data, stressing instead the work's importance as a reflection of contemporary Jewish attitudes and an attempt to convey an image of Polish Jewry to survivors and Jews elsewhere.² Yet the specific question of Jewish martyrdom in Tulczyn, central to Hanover's narrative and perhaps to the work's place in the collective memory of Polish Jewry, has not been examined.

All sources, Polish, Ukrainian, and Hebrew, concur that there was a massacre in Tulczyn in late June 1648 in which large numbers of Poles and Jews were slaughtered.³ There is, however, no unanimity in the chronicles of the events of 1648/1649 regarding what actually happened during the massacre, particularly with respect to the Jews.⁴

None of the Hebrew chroniclers, including Hanover, witnessed the events in Tulczyn. To be sure, Hanover was an eyewitness to certain events in his town of Zaslaw, but as the Cossacks drew near, he and his family fled the town for Miedzyrzecz.⁵ Hanover did not see events elsewhere.⁶ He heard about the fate of Jews in a number of places from those who survived the carnage as he sometimes noted.⁷ After the events of 1648-1649, Hanover wandered westward, preaching in various towns as he crossed the German lands, eventually arriving in Amsterdam and later Venice. No doubt, his travels afforded him additional opportunities to hear the stories of survivors who had migrated to the west.⁸ Yet Hanover's primary sources of information about the events in Tulczyn in 1648 were the three Hebrew chronicles of 1648-1649 whose publication preceded that of *Yeven metsulah*: (1) Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepieszyn's *Tsok ha-ittim* (*Cry of the Times*), published in Cracow, 1650; (2) Rabbi Shabbetai ben Me'ir Katz's so-called *Megillat efah* (*Scroll of Terror*) that served as an introduction to his *Selihot ve-kinot*, or penitential prayers and dirges, that appeared in

Amsterdam in 1651; and (3) *Petah teshuvah (An Opening for Repentance)* by Gabriel Shusburg, Amsterdam, 1651.

⁹ At times Hanover copied from these works verbatim, at other times he paraphrased, and in some instances he took events said to have happened elsewhere and wove them into his own tale of Tulczyn.¹⁰ Without ever acknowledging his debt, Hanover used each of these accounts of 1648 to create his own story of the massacre of Jews in Tulczyn (see Appendix).

Hanover's single most important source in developing the story of Tulczyn was Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepieszyn's *Tsok ha-ittim*.¹¹ From here, Hanover took not only numerous phrases but specific information, such as the number of soldiers in the fortress in Tulczyn (600) as well as the number of Jews in the town (2,000).¹² The stirring cry of Rabbi Aaron urging the Jews not to attack the Poles for fear of the consequences to other Jewish communities that appeared in *Tsok ha-ittim* was altered slightly and retold in *Yeven metsulah*. Hanover did not, however, copy blindly. Me'ir ben Samuel recorded that Duke Janusz Czetwertynski was killed by Eastern Orthodox who brutally cut off his head with a saw. Hanover refined this and noted that a former serf who had worked in Czetwertynski's flour mill brutally cut off his [Czetwertynski's] head with a saw to avenge earlier mistreatment. This account is in fundamental agreement with rumors recorded by a member of the Polish nobility, Adam Mielzynski, and conveyed to a colleague in a letter dated 18 August 1648.¹³ Me'ir ben Samuel reported that Czetwertynski's wife was raped and killed by the Cossacks; Hanover mentioned her rape, no more. Perhaps she was raped, but she was certainly not killed as she remarried some years later.¹⁴

In addition to copying details about events in Tulczyn from Me'ir ben

Samuel, Hanover essentially followed the organization of *Tsok ha-ittim*. Both works began their descriptions of Tulczyn by listing the number of Jews seeking protection there, followed by a discussion of the pact between the Poles and the Jews and the Jews active and initially successful role in defending the town.¹⁵ The Cossacks plan, the nobles acquiescence to their demands, the Jews angry response, the soliloquy of a rabbinic leader, and the acceptance of his plea differ in some details, but all follow the same pattern in both works. However, while Hanover followed Me'ir ben Samuel's lead in developing the story of Tulczyn, he made several significant emendations, the most striking of which was his portrayal of how, just before the massacre of Tulczyn Jewry, the Eastern Orthodox offered the Jews the possibility of escaping death.¹⁶ Hanover wrote, After these things one of their intermediaries appeared, and planting a banner in the ground, he said to them in a loud voice: Whoever wishes to change his faith and remain alive, let him sit under this banner. No one answered him. Thus he announced three times and no one responded. Immediately the gate of the garden opened and the infuriated mob rushed in and killed a large number of Jews.¹⁷

An offer of salvation through conversion had indeed appeared in the story of Tulczyn in *Tsok ha-ittim*. Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepieszyn had written:

With black flags and strange noises, they fell upon the Jews who were weak, exhausted,

and powerless (Isa. 40:29). And they killed the Jews with sharpened swords; the young and the old, parents and children.

The Jews fell on their faces in order that they not see the atrocities and the killing of their children. And the children cried out to the Lord their God. And they [the attackers] stood over them like army officers and asked them if they would convert to Eastern Orthodoxy. If so, they will live and if not they will die like their fathers and fall on the corpses of their dead.

Immediately they stretched forth their necks to be slaughtered and they said, let our blood be accepted as a sacrifice. And they gave praise and glory to God.

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In *Tsok ha-'ittim*, only a segment of the community apparently the young was offered salvation through conversion. While these particular victims defiantly proclaimed their belief in the One God, the work leaves the impression that not everyone had a similar opportunity.

How Jews died was not merely an academic issue for Hanover. In his introduction to *Yeven metsulah*, Hanover had declared that the Cossack attacks of 1648/1649 were intended to destroy His chosen Israel by giving the Jews the choice of conversion or death.¹⁹ Such a characterization of the Cossack revolt, with its inherent opportunity for an unambiguous rejection of Christianity through Jewish martyrdom, made the story of the Jews of Tulczyn critical to Hanover's narrative. The martyrdom of the Jews of Tulczyn would be the example par excellence of what Hanover had said in his prefatory remarks was the paradigmatic Jewish response to the Cossack threat: the Jews, however, heeded not their words but stretched out their necks to be slaughtered for the sanctification of His Holy Name.²⁰ No less significantly, within the frame of reference of midseventeenth-

century Polish Jewry, a community that adhered to traditional religious values, defiant martyrdom would not only glorify the victims of 1648/1649 but place the tragedies squarely within the continuum of perceived medieval Ashkenazic piety and religious heroism.²¹

The story of Jewish martyrdom as found in *Tsok ha-'ittim*, however, was not compelling enough to accomplish this. If Hanover was to emphasize the religious fealty of Polish Jewry in its time of despair and successfully place 1648 in the tradition of past tragedies, a more resolute image of martyrdom would be necessary, one that could serve as a model of Polish Jewry's response to the events of 1648/1649 and, by association, bring all Jewish victims of Chmielnicki within the Ashkenazic ideal of martyrdom.²² Hanover therefore enhanced his story of Tulczyn.

Unfortunately for Hanover, neither of the other two major Hebrew sources available to him offered more vivid examples of Jewish martyrdom in Tulczyn. Quite the contrary. Katz and Shusburg made no mention of classic martyrdom in Tulczyn, that is, cases in which given the choice between death and conversion to Christianity, Jews chose to die. In *Megillat efah*, the Jews of Tulczyn were simply mercilessly slaughtered;²³ in *Petah teshuvah*, although deemed martyrs by Shusburg, the Jews accepted death in order not to endanger Jews elsewhere, not as an unequivocal rejection of Greek Orthodoxy. Only late in his narrative, almost as an afterthought, did Shusburg tell of how they rejected the

temptation of conversion while they sat in thirst and hunger awaiting their fate.

24 A glowing example of martyrdom in 1648 was, however, to be found in Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczebrzeszyn, Shusburg, and Katz's description of the massacre of the Jews of Gomel, a town in the easternmost region of Lithuania, north of Kiev. Each portrayed Gomel' as being one of the outstanding, if not *the* outstanding, example of classic martyrdom in 1648.²⁵

In his portrayal of events in Gomel, events that Katz, a resident of Vilnius at the time, did not see, Katz described how Cossacks tried to tempt the Jewish community to worship our gods.

Jews were promised that if they agreed to apostatize, not only would they be spared but they would come to enjoy wealth and power. According to Katz, the Jewish response was unequivocal. Not only did the Jews reject any notion of apostasy but they cried out: to God who dwells in the heavens, Hear Lord our God, the one God, King of the worlds, Because for You we are killed all the day (Ps. 44.23).²⁶ Lord, God of Israel, give a perfect lot [1 Sam. 14.41 with Rashi's comments]. We will not sit with vain men nor will we join with scoundrels [see Ps. 26.4]. And they admitted their sins and said, We are guilty. They submitted themselves to Divine punishment and said, The Lord's ways are perfect.²⁷

Yet an even more powerful description of martyrdom in Gomel was to be found in *Tsok ha-'ittim*, where the very R. Eliezer who assumed such a central role in admonishing the Jews of Tulczyn to die a martyr's death in *Yeven metsulah* not only entreated the Jews of Gomel to stand firm and die as martyrs but he himself was a model of such behavior:

The rabbi, our master and strength, the brilliant Rabbi Eliezer, the head of the rabbinic court in our generation, may the Lord avenge his blood, My brothers, remember the killing of our brothers who were martyred for the sake of our God. We too will stretch forth our necks and merit eternal life according to our suffering because there is no holiness like the Lord, our God. The rabbi called, Our brothers, come forward, stretch out your necks, make haste and do His word. You will see me and you will do the same and with the martyring of your souls you will inherit the Garden of Eden. And all your enemies will be embarrassed. Immediately, thousands were willing to give up their lives. They rejected this world and sanctified the Holy Name.

The aforementioned head of the yeshiva martyred himself first for the Great God and answered and said in happiness and joy, I am not coming to an end; at the very same time I will ascend to heaven and I will attain and rise up to the Garden of Eden. Perhaps I will be accepted as an *olah* offering.

The venerable and elderly, young men and women, saw the torment, the wounds, the breaking [of bones], the strange and difficult deaths; that the rabbi was tormented with troubles and from his mouth went forth pure words and he did not listen to the strangeness [i.e., the temptation of conversion?] and he admonished his brothers with warnings that they should die a martyr's death for the sake of the Creator.

Our brothers, our flesh and blood, were pure. They all yelled out, our master and teacher, we have heard your words, the words of God. If we have sinned against God then how sweet it will be to the Lord our God that with the blood of our souls we will stretch forth our necks to the slaughter. Maybe this will atone for our sins.

All those standing there opened their mouths and said in unison, boys and girls in awe and fear: We will forgive one another and the Almighty will forgive us and we will give

our souls to the Lord and our flesh to the terrible waters. And our enemies, the seed of the Greeks [the Eastern Orthodox], will raise our souls to He who dwells in heaven. They said to the empty ones [the Eastern Orthodox]: Fulfill your wishes. Do with us as you see fit and we will not worship according to your religion because of the fear (of Heaven) that is of old and the love of Our Blessed God who will resurrect us to live in the everlasting day. And when the Cossacks heard this they attacked the Jews and wounded them with clubs so that they should not die quickly. And the rebellious Greek attackers killed many Jews who were loved in their lives and who in their deaths were not separated (from God).

28

What eased the blending of the tale of Gomel into that of Tulczyn was Katz's claim that the massacre in Gomel took place on the very Friday in June 1648 on which Tulczyn Jewry was destroyed. Katz's specific differentiation between the two events notwithstanding, the date alone created an instant connection between the events and effectively offered Hanover additional material with which to create a legend of classic Jewish martyrdom in Tulczyn.

Hanover did not simply transpose this account of events in Gomel onto Tulczyn but appears to have been inspired by it. The Gomel story supplied a model of defiant communal rejection of idolatry, something that was missing in the story of Tulczyn as told in *Tsok ha-'ittim*. Here all the Jews of the town were forced to choose between Christianity and death, and death was the unanimous choice. That Hanover, who wanted to accentuate martyrdom, simply gleaned from the story of Gomel was only natural.²⁹

To be sure, Hanover looked to other Hebrew sources for material.³⁰ Neither the testimonies of Jews who survived the attacks of 1648⁴⁹ nor the printed Hebrew Chronicles were the only sources available to Hanover in composing *Yeven metsulah*. In an age and region where

religion stood at the center of Jewish self expression, *kinot* (dirges) were composed almost immediately after the events to perpetuate within the rubric of prayer the memory of those who perished. In Hanover's description of Tulczyn, R. Eliezer charged the people to die a martyr's death together with rabbis Solomon and Chaim, rabbis that do not appear in the Gomel³¹ story but do, however, recall characters from Ephraim ben Joseph of Wrzesnia's dirge about the Jews of Niemirow, where three shepherds of Israel and heads of *yeshivot* were slaughtered in the town.³² Such martyrs were most appropriate candidates to help exhort the people of Tulczyn to die rather than accept Greek Orthodoxy. As for the nature of the offer to convert by sitting under the banner, the image of asking a Jew to submit to an idolatrous authority in an indirect fashion was familiar to every Jew who knew the story of Hannah and her seven sons.³³

If comparisons to other sources raise questions about the historical reliability of the story of Tulczyn as found in

Yeven metsulah, an examination of other contemporary accounts of events in Tulczyn only strengthen doubts about Hanover's tale.

The Hebrew chronicles were not the first documented accounts of the fate of the Jews in Tulczyn in 1648. On 8 July 1648, a member of the local government in Lwow, Samuel Kuszewicz (1607-1666), reported to Warsaw that after a military struggle the Cossack commander Maksym Kryvonis and his followers had

captured Tulczyn and had killed many Catholic priests, nobles, and Jews there.

³⁴ Two weeks earlier, on 24 June 1648, Kuszewicz had noted that the Cossacks were killing randomly without distinction for religion, gender, or age.³⁵ According to Kuszewicz's reports, the Cossacks sought to kill as many people as they could. Calculated offers of salvation to Jews who would convert to Greek Orthodoxy do not appear to have been part of their battle plan.³⁶

Just a number of weeks after the devastation in Tulczyn, on 6 August 1648, a young Jewish man came to the rabbinic court in Lwow with testimony regarding the marital status of a woman whose husband was thought to have been murdered in Tulczyn during the Cossack attacks. The man gave the following eyewitness testimony in Judeo-German that was recorded by the court:

And about eight days before the killing in Tulczyn, R. Leb and his brother, the young man, [Eli]melech from Krotniza(?), came. Then there was an attack and they did not want to allow anyone to leave; and with great difficulty and with the aid of the noble everyone fled from Komrahid(?) and came to Tulczyn. Also Leb son of Pesah and his brother [Eli]melech were in danger there and I was with them with others in the fortress . . . and so the noble, Duke Czetwertynski made a compromise with the Cossacks and turned over the Jews. And so, on Thursday, they took prisoners to the commander of the fortress, a man from Uman. Then on Friday, the peasants ran into the courtyard before the fortress and Jeremiah was standing there with members of his family in a corner at the edge of the place. Also R. Leb, the previously mentioned R. Pesah, and [Eli]melech's brother were all standing in the corner at the edge [of the area] and I was standing with them. After that [i.e., the entrance of the peasants], I ran from them with other people and I immediately saw that they raised up the people who were in that very corner to kill them. I saw that Jeremiah's wife was killed as well as my father's wife. The people who

were there were killed and no one could escape since there were thousands of peasants in the fortress. Whoever tried to escape was killed there. In general, no one escaped the slaughter, only those who were in the best physical condition and whoever was very fast. I was among the first to run out through the cemetery.³⁷

The witness's sworn statement indeed supported the contention that the Jews were given over to the Cossacks by Czetwertyński.³⁸ There was no mention, however, of an offer to the Jews to convert or of mass martyrdom in Tulczyn. According to the testimony, there appears to have been mass hysteria during the attack. Those who were physically able tried desperately to run from the slaughter. There was no report of organized resistance or brave communal acceptance of death as Hanover claimed. Additional testimony from Lwów was given the very following day (7 August 1648) by a second eyewitness, who told of how he and a comrade had fled the killings in Tulczyn and hid in the forest. There his friend was found by the Cossacks and brutally attacked. He died screaming for his companion to save him.³⁹

If there were instances of martyrdom in Tulczyn, neither of these two witnesses, men who were present in Tulczyn at the time of the massacre, made any mention of it. Perhaps more significantly, neither tried to associate either themselves or their loved ones who died in the town with martyrs and martyrdom.⁴⁰ They evidenced no embarrassment in stating that the Jews who had died in Tulczyn had been mercilessly killed by their attackers and that they themselves and others had tried to flee for their lives.

One seemingly impartial Hebrew source did, however, suggest that there was martyrdom, perhaps even mass martyrdom, in Tulczyn. In the responsa of R. Gershon Ashkenazi (ca. 1620-1698) appears a question with respect to an *agunah* (a woman who cannot remarry because the fate of her husband remains legally uncertain) named Temril dating from after the spring of 1652

⁴¹ Three testimonies were brought to support the claim that Temril's husband, Moses ben Samuel, the former beadle of Luboml, had been killed in Tulczyn during the carnage in June 1648. While two of the accounts simply noted that Moses had been killed in Tulczyn, the third witness, Judah Leb Katz, reported the following: It is true that we who are signed below know with total certainty and it is as clear to us as day that Mr. Moses ben Samuel, who was called by all Ber Mirver and who was the beadle in our community, the holy community of Luboml, was killed for the sake of the Holy Name [*ve-neharag al kiddush ha-Shem*] like the other holy ones who were killed for the sake of the Name.⁴² This perception of events in Tulczyn would appear to support the contention that individuals, if not the entire community, died martyrs' deaths during the Cossack assault on Tulczyn. R. Ashkenazi, however, did not think so.

In considering the legal admissibility of Katz's testimony, R. Ashkenazi, who had studied in Poland before serving as a rabbi in Moravia and later in Vienna, noted that

. . . there is room for some doubt [in Katz's testimony] since perhaps this that he said, it is clear as day to us that he died a martyr's death, means that it is clear to him that he [Moses] did not apostatize and not [that it was clear to him] that he was killed. And so it seems somewhat from his language since he said, like the other holy ones who were killed for the sanctity of the Name. This implies that he only came to say that he [Moses] was killed as a Jew and that he had not apostatized, for if this is

not so, why did he compare it to the others who died?

In the context of a legal discussion in which he expressed grave reservations about allowing Temril to remarry, R. Ashkenazi was willing to interpret Katz to mean that Moses had been killed as but not necessarily because of being a Jew.⁴³ According to R. Ashkenazi, the phrase *neherag al kiddush ha-Shem* that traditionally meant killed for the sake of the sanctity of the Name did not mean martyrdom but rather killed while still attached to the Divine Name, that is, as a Jew. Using Katz's comparison of Moses' death to that of the other Jewish victims in Tulczyn to support his argument, Ashkenazi concluded that Katz had testified that, like the other Jews in Tulczyn, Moses had remained a Jew; he was not a martyr.⁴⁴ That the phrase *kiddush ha-Shem* in the context of Tulczyn did not conjure up immediate images of mass martyrdom suggests that R. Ashkenazi did not know of Tulczyn as a place of heroic Jewish resistance. If he had, his seemingly novel interpretation would have certainly sullied the name of a holy community and its martyrs.

Indirect testimony from a Jew in an Arabic source from the years immediately following the publication of the Hebrew chronicles also made no correlation between Tulczyn and Jewish martyrdom. Marcarius, patriarch of Antioch, visited

Orthodox countries in Europe from 1652 to 1659 seeking assistance for the Orthodox community in Syria that was experiencing hardships under Turkish rule. The trip was recorded by his son, Paul of Aleppo, who accompanied him on his journey. According to the chronicle, in 1654 the entourage met a Jew whom they asked about Chmielnicki and the Jews:

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They questioned the Jew, Yenachi, who was a refugee in Moldavia, regarding the manner in which the hetman Chmielnicki treated Polish Jews. He responded that he massacred and tyrannized, that he was worse with respect to them than Vespasian was during antiquity. We silently laughed to ourselves at his response. He told us of when Chmielnicki appeared in this country and cleansed⁴⁶ the land of several thousand Jews. And when he arrived in this place where the wealthy and notable Jews who remained had gathered themselves and sought refuge, in the fortress called Tulczyn, with their provisions and money,⁴⁷ they [those in Tulczyn] fortified themselves with cannons, with [gun]powder, and with provisions. The Cossacks came to lay siege to the town and conquer it by sword; they entered the town and killed everyone whom they found with blows of cudgels and logs but not by the sword; there were about 20,000 of the [Cossacks]. They also killed the children in the wombs of their pregnant mothers; they pulled them through with the lance. In this way they exterminated them.⁴⁸

No mention of Jewish martyrdom was to be expected in the report of churchman who spoke proudly of how Chmielnicki had cleansed (Arabic, *futuh*) the land of several thousand Jews and had exterminated foreign people from the region leaving only pure Cossack Orthodox.⁴⁹ If the Eastern Orthodox who participated in the attack on Tulczyn held views of racial purity similar to this clergyman's, there would have been little room for offers to Jews or anyone else to convert.⁵⁰ Moreover, although missionary activities

were not unknown in the Eastern Church, such tendencies were far weaker than they were in the Roman Catholic Church.⁵¹

Unquestionably there were instances in which Jews converted out of fear or due to various tortures in the hope of saving their lives. Some were able to flee to Poland when the opportunity presented itself, where they could resume their lives as Jews, while others tried to endure among the Eastern Orthodox.⁵² The number of such conversions was significant enough to prompt King Jan Kazimierz to declare in May 1649 that such Jews could openly return to Judaism.⁵³ Yet readiness to convert in 1648/1649, as at least one Jew who reportedly told his captors that he wanted to convert found out, was not a guarantee of deliverance because conversion of the Jews (as well as the Poles) to Eastern Orthodoxy was not a goal of the Cossack rebellion.⁵⁴ The uprising of 1648/1649 was a political and economic struggle in which religion played a crucial role in self-definition and identifying the enemy but religious doctrine was not the central issue in the conflict.⁵⁵ It was Nathan Hanover and other Hebrew chroniclers who made the conversion of the Jews one of the Cossacks primary goals of the 1648 revolt. Once presented in this way, the attacks on the Jews became part of a pattern of the past familiar to every Jew. The task of the Hebrew chronicler, as well as of the composers of many of the dirges who accepted this point of view, was to show how the Jews of Poland were faithful bearers of the tradition and, like their forefathers,

withstood temptation and accepted death as Jews rather than life as Christians.

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When discussing the fate of Polish Jewry in 1648 in a more neutral context, Hanover lamented the death, destruction, and pauperization of the community but made no mention of martyrdom of any kind.⁵⁷ In preparing a chronicle, the challenge was to construct the stage on which Polish Jewry could publicly demonstrate not only its piety but its unwavering faith.

Hanover created his tale of mass martyrdom in Tulczyn by combining stories told of other places and adding classic Jewish motifs of martyrdom. This left readers, very few of whom even in Poland knew the true story of what had happened in Tulczyn, with the image of defiant Jewish resistance to a religious threat. Such an image strengthened the traditional Jewish ideal of martyrdom as well as general religious commitment. More important, it transformed the Jews slaughtered in Tulczyn in June 1648 and by association those killed elsewhere in Poland and Lithuania in 1648¹⁶⁴⁹ from simple victims of war to classic Jewish martyrs. In the eyes of Nathan Hanover and most likely of his contemporaries as well, this type of memorialization of the Jewish victims of 1648¹⁶⁴⁹ was far more important than simply trying to reconstruct and record the true fate of the victims for the sake of posterity.

Notes

1. Nathan Hanover, *Yeven metsulah* (Venice, 1653). Hanover's book was reprinted no less than nineteen times before 1900, including six Yiddish-, one Polish-, one French-, one German-, and two Russian-language editions. No other chronicle of the events of 1648 has

enjoyed such broad circulation. A photo-offset of the first edition appears in *Sippure ha-gezerot be-shnot TaH ve-TaT*, ed. M. Rosman, Texts and Studies no. 19 (Jerusalem, 1981), 2345. The work has appeared in a generally reliable English translation by Abraham Mesch under the title *Abyss of Despair* (1950; reprinted with a foreword by William Helmreich, New Brunswick, N.J., 1983). For ease of reference, I have used Mesch's translation, emending when necessary based on the first edition. Hanover's description of the killings in Tulczyn appears on pp. 5459 of Mesch's text.

2. See Bernard Weinryb, The Hebrew Chronicles on Bohdan Khmelnyts'kyi and the Cossack-Polish War, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 1 (1977): 164, 17475, 176; and Rosman's introduction to *Sippure ha-gezerot be-shanot TaH ve-TaT*, ix. Also see Yoel Rabba, *Ben zikkaron le-hakhashah* (Tel Aviv, 1994), 3842, 6061.

3. See the material gathered by Rabba, *Ben zikkaron le-hakhashah*, 6465, 7980, 8889, as well as Letopis samovidtsa o voynakh Bogdana Khmel'nitskago i o mezhdusobiiakh, byvskikh v Maloi Rossii po ego smerti (An eyewitness chronicle of the wars of Bogdan Chmielnicki and the inner conflicts that took place in Little Russia after his death), in *Chteniia v obshchestve istorii i drevnostei Rossiiskikh* [Readings in ancient Russian society and history], vol. 2, pt. 1, ed. O. Bodianskii, (1846/1847), 11, a source kindly brought to my attention and provided to me by Dr. Rabba and graciously translated for me by Professor Shimon Redlich.

4. An emphasis on Judeo-German and Hebrew sources is necessitated by the lack of Ukrainian and Polish sources discussing the fate of the Jews in Tulczyn. While Tulczyn holds an important place in Polish historiography as the site of vicious massacres of Poles, the fate of the Jews was not expanded upon in contemporary Polish historiography (see

Rabba, *Ben zikkaron le-hakhashah*, 6465, 7980, 8889). As Frank Sysyn, *The Jewish Factor in the Khmelnytsky Uprising*, in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Howard Aster and Peter Potichnjy, 2d ed. (Edmonton, 1990), 46, 51, has noted, the fate of Jews was of little interest to contemporary Polish and Ukrainian chroniclers, just as, it should be added, the fate of others was of little inherent concern to Jewish writers.

5. Hanover, *Abyss of Despair*, 6468.

6. See Jacob Shatzky, *Histarish keritisher araynfir tsum Yeven metsulah fun R. Natan Neta Hanover*, in *Gezeros TaH* (Vilnius, 1938), 1415, who noted that Hanover made numerous geographic errors, underlining his lack of familiarity with the field of battle and suggesting a lack of firsthand knowledge of the events.

7. Hanover, *Abyss of Despair*, 6566, 88. Hanover did not specifically mention having heard reports from survivors of Tulczyn.

8. The suggestion that Hanover gathered facts from refugees as he himself traveled in Holland, Germany, and Italy, was made by Shatzky, *Histarish keritisher*, 1314.

9. A fourth work, *Tit ha-yeven* by Samuel Feitel, also may have been available to Hanover. The work was printed in Venice around 1650 but is essentially a listing of communities destroyed in 1648/1649. Feitel's entire account of Tulczyn consisted of the following: and from there they came to Tulczyn and there [in Tulczyn] there were 100 householders and there was a great evil decree there and about 6,000 souls were killed and there remained only a few women. Such a meager description would have been of limited use to Hanover in preparing his narrative.

10. In trying to create a chronicle to serve future generations . . . in [a] lucid and intelligible language (*Abyss of Despair*, 25), Hanover could

not simply plagiarize from his predecessors, for each work posed inherent stylistic difficulties for Hanover. Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepieszyn and Shusburg both adhered to set rhyme and form. Katz, in particular, but Me'ir ben Samuel and Shusburg as well, made extensive use of biblical verses, making the works difficult to understand for anyone lacking a good knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. Thus, Hanover generally had to reformat information from these sources in his own style.

11. Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepieszyn appears to have spent 1648 in Zamoś'c. See the publisher's introduction to *Tsok ha-ittim* (Cracow, 1650), 1b. A photo-offset of the Cracow 1650 edition appears in *Sippure ha-gezerot*, 122.

12. See, for example, *Abyss of Despair*, 55, where a number of brief phrases such as And as the days passed and the Jews understood the trickery appear in exactly or almost exactly the same form as they are found in Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepieszyn, *Tsok ha-ittim*, 3b. Regarding statistical information, cf. *Tsok ha-ittim*, 3b; *Abyss of Despair*, 54.

13. Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepieszyn, *Tsok ha-ittim*, 4a; Hanover, *Abyss of Despair*, 58. Adam Mielzyński reported that the duke was killed by an ax-wielding miller who had been his serf (Jakób Michalowski's *Jakuba Michalowskiego. . . . księga pamiętnicza z dawnego rekopisma* [Jakób Michalowski's memoirs from early manuscripts; Cracow, 1864], no. 61, 157). My thanks to Ms. Magdalena Teter for her assistance in locating information about Czetwertyński.

14. Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepieszyn, *Tsok ha-ittim*, 4a; Hanover, *Abyss of Despair*, 57. The 18 August letter from Mielzyński reported that the duchess had been captured and was being held in a most miserable Cossack camp (Michalowski, *Jakuba Michalowskiego*, no. 61, 157). On the duchess's remarriage, see Stanisław Kossakowski,

Monografie historyczno-genealogiczne niektórych rodzin polskich (A historical-genealogical monograph of some Polish families), 2d ed., vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1876), s.v. Czetwertyński, Janusz, 94.

15. Jews were actively involved in communal defense in Poland well before 1648. In the 1620s, Jews helped defend Lwów from Tartar incursions. See Maurycy Horn, *Powinności wojenne Żydów w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI i XVII wieku* [Jewish military service

in the Polish Republic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries] (Warsaw, 1978), 72, 75, 8587.

16. Hanover's other notable addition was that, after describing the massacre of over 1,500 Jews in Tulczyn, he recorded that then the Eastern Orthodox took ten rabbis who were alive and placed them in prison, in irons, to await their ransom for ten thousand gold pieces (*Abyss of Despair*, 57). This information did not appear in *Tsok ha-ittim* but originated in Shusburg's *Petah teshuvah*. Here Hanover used Shusburg's work to supplement his primary source, albeit without being totally faithful to Shusburg's own account. In *Petah teshuvah* the Jews of Tulczyn, starved by their captors, agreed to pay 10,000 Polish gold pieces to save their entire community, and the hostages were taken as collateral (7b). There remained a glimmer of hope, however faint, to save their lives. In *Yeven metsulah* the community, was destroyed before the rabbis were taken hostage. Their capture was portrayed by Hanover as but another attempt to pillage an already decimated community, further vilifying the Cossacks without seriously compromising the image of mass martyrdom. While Hanover repeats the same 10,000 gold sum mentioned by Shusburg, the suggestion of Israel Halperin that Hanover relied on eyewitness testimony for his information about the captives cannot be dismissed. See Shevyah u-fedut be-gezerot Ukra'enah veLita she-mi-shenat TaH ve-'ad shenat TaT, reprinted in his *Yehudim ve-Yahadut bemizrah Eropah* (Jerusalem, 1979), 217.

17. Hanover, *Abyss of Despair*, 5657.

18. Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepreszyn, *Tsok ha-ittim*, 4a.

19. Hanover, *Abyss of Despair*, 23, 27. A similar notion is found in the publisher's introduction to *Tsok ha-ittim*, 1b. Hanover evidenced greater historical sophistication elsewhere in *Yeven metsulah* where he attributed the Cossack rebellion to additional causes including the

Poles poor treatment of the Eastern Orthodox (*Abyss of Despair*, 2935, 38).

20. See Hanover, *Abyss of Despair*, 23.

21. See Jacob Katz, Ben TaTN"U le-Ta"H-Ta"T, reprinted in his *Halakhah ve-kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1984), 328, and David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 4851.

22. Professor Yerushalmi has already pointed out that Polish Jewry sought to link 1648 with earlier catastrophes in medieval Franco-Germany, most notably with the events in Blois in 1171. See his *Zakhor* (Seattle, 1982), 4950, 51, as well as Katz, Ben TaTN"U le-Ta"H-Ta"T, 328, Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, 51, and Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York, 1984), xi, 89, 104. Gershon Bacon and M. Rosman, Kehillah nivhar be-metsukah: Yahadut Polin be-'ikbot gezerot Ta'H Ta'T, in *Re'ayon ha-behirah*, ed. S. Almog and M. Heyd (Jerusalem, 1991), 215, have noted that all the chronicles and dirges began with the destruction of the Jewish community of Nemirów on 20 Sivan even though it was not the first community destroyed. They suggest that this may have been intended to create an immediate connection between the events of 1648/1649 and Blois. Such a connection was explicitly made by Shabbetai ben Me'ir Katz, *Selihat ve-kinot* (1651), 2b.

23. Katz, *Selihat ve-kinot*, 2b.

24. Shusburg, *Petah teshuvah*, 7b8a.

25. Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczepieszyn, *Tsok ha-'ittim*, 5a5b; Katz, *Selihat ve-kinot*, 2b3a; Shusburg, *Petah teshuvah*, 9a.

26. This is a central verse in classic Jewish martyrology. See, for example, *Sifre, Devarim*, ed. Louis Finkelstein (1939; reprint, New York, 1969), Pisqa 32, 55.

27. Katz, *Selihat ve-kinot*, 3a.

28. Meir ben Samel of Szczebrzeszyn, *Tsok ha-'ittim*, 5b6a.

29. As for his own reference to Gomel, in his chapter on the massacres of Jews in Lithuania, Hanover simply wrote that, in the city of Gomel countless thousands were martyred for the glorification of the Name (*Abyss of Despair*, 78). Perhaps Hanover chose

to emphasize the massacres in Tulczyn and essentially ignore the events in Gomel because of Tulczyn's place following both *Tsok ha-ittim* and *Megillat efahas* the second center mentioned in the narrative.

30. Hanover may well have made use of non-Hebrew material in developing his narrative of Tulczyn, just as he did in writing of the events in Niemirów. See Rabba, *Ben zikkaron le-hakhashah*, 57. A search of this material remains to be done.

31. Meir ben Samuel of Szczebrzeszyn, *Tsok ha-ittim*, 5b.

32. Ephraim ben Joseph's *kinah* appeared as an addition to Jacob ben Naphtali Sopher of Gneizno's *Nahalat Ya'akov melitsat [sic]* (Amsterdam, 1652), 9b, together with a *kinah* for the victims of 1648 written by Hanoah ben Abraham and a memorial prayer for Jews killed in Niemirów by a relative of Sopher, a certain Rabbi Joseph, that also mentioned the three rabbis by name (10b). The three works were reprinted by Jonas Gurland, *Le-korot ha-gezerot al Yisra'el* (1887; reprint, Jerusalem, 1972), 1216. According to the *kinah*, two of the rabbis murdered in Niemirów were our teacher and master R. Solomon of Szarygród and our teacher and master R. Chaim. There is little reason to doubt that Hanover had read the additions to Sopher's work. On the final page (12a) of the 1653 edition of *Yeven metsulah* appeared a brief attestation to the veracity of Hanover's work by none other than Jacob ben Naphtali [Sopher] of Gneizno. The third rabbi said to have been killed in Niemirów was the scholar R. Yehi'el Michael ben Eliezer. However, Me'ir ben Samuel of Szczebrzeszyn (2b3a), Katz (2b), Shusburg (4b), and Hanoah ben Abraham (10a) had all made R. Michael's death a central event in the annals of Niemirów, a model adhered to by Hanover.

33. See Gershon Cohen, *Maaseh Hannah ve-shivat beneha be-sifrut ha-ivrit*, in *Sefer ha-yovel le-kavod Mordekhai Menahem Kaplan*, ed.

M. Davis (New York, 1953), 11314. The reply of the Jews to the Cossacks in Katz's description of events at Gomel And if you do not kill us, the Lord has many messengers regarding us. Our Master has many lions and bears appears in several rabbinic sources, including *Lamentations Rabbah* 1.50 and *Midrash Lamentations* 1.7, both of which discuss Hannah and her sons.

34. Cited in Rabba, *Ben zikkaron le-hakhashah*, 65.

35. Ibid.

36. See also Rabba, *Ben zikkaron le-hakhashah*, 58.

37. Abraham Rappoport, *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot ha-etan ha-ezrahi* (Ostrog, 1796), no. 22, a problem addressed to him by Rabbis Joseph Goetz, Me'ir Sack (no. 23), and Rappoport (no. 24), all of whom were rabbis in Lwów. I have incorporated into the text the minor corrections suggested by Israel Halperin, *Shevyah u-fedut*, 221. The witness's identification of the attackers as peasants is essentially correct. The Cossack leader of the attack on Tulczyn, Maksym Kryvonis, had been ordered by Chmielnicki in the summer of 1648 to organize mass peasant uprisings in the Ukraine.

38. A Ukrainian account notes that this was typical of the Polish nobility. Fearing for their own lives, members of the *szlachta* (Polish nobility) turned over the Jews and their property to the Cossacks in many towns in the hope that by so doing they would save their own lives. See *Letopis samovidtsa o voynakh Bogdana Khmel'nitskago*, 11.

39. See Rappoport, *Responsa*, no. 22.

40. A third testimony based on hearsay was given in this matter in Lwów on 12 August 1648 (Rappoport, *Responsa*, no. 22). A woman told of how she heard from two of her sister-in-laws, eyewitness reports, that after the man, Leb, had been wounded by his attackers, he shouted out to the scoundrels, please, I beg you, kill me! (*ich bit*

euch der schlägt mich recht), which they promptly did. Perhaps this can be construed as an act of defiance by Leb; however, it may well have been a plea for a merciful death. Like the other witnesses, the woman made no attempt to connect Leb's death with martyrdom.

41. Gershon Ashkenazi, *She'elot u-teshuvot avodot ha-gershuni* (Frankfurt, 1699), no. 106. One of the statements, indeed the only eyewitness report, dated 26 Ab [5]409 (4 August

1649), stated that Moses was killed in Shultshin. This appears to be a printer/copier's error (in the typeface used in the 1699 edition the difference between a *tet* and a *shin* is ever so slight) that should be emended to read Tultshin, or Tulczyn in Polish orthography.

According to the testimony of one of these witnesses, only twelve people escaped the slaughter with me. Weinryb, *The Hebrew Chronicles*, 175, n. 57, took this to mean that only thirteen Jews escaped the slaughter in Tulczyn. The phrase with me, however, is the operative one here. It is doubtful whether the witness could have known the fate of all other Jews who tried to escape from Tulczyn.

42. Ashkenazi, *Responsa*, no. 106.

43. R. Ashkenazi could not question the witness. One of the special leniencies allowed in evidence with regard to an *agunah* was the acceptance of written testimony. Since witnesses could move or die before a case was prepared and presented and even if they were available they were unlikely to want to bother to travel long distances to the rabbinic court of a leading authority (in this case, the testimony of Judah Leb Katz was taken and signed in Węgrów, far from R. Ashkenazi), testimony was often recorded in a local rabbinic court, signed by the witnesses and the court, and then given to the family to use. Families or the community then continued to gather what they believed to be pertinent information on the case and delivered it to a rabbinic authority for consideration.

44. A scanning of the Bar Ilan Responsa Project, version 3.0, offers no similar interpretation of the term *neherag al kiddush ha-Shem* in previous Ashkenazic responsa literature. However, this and several other sources from mid-seventeenth-century Poland suggest an evolving and expanding popular definition of Jewish martyrdom, a matter that

requires further study.

45. See *Voyage du Patriarche Macaire d'Antioche*, trans. Basile Radu, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, ed. R. Graffin, vol. 22, no. 1 (Paris, 1930), 56.

46. Dr. Nimrod Hurvitz has informed me that the Arabic futuh is used by Arabs to describe their vast conquests in the seventh century and has the meaning of purify with a religious tinge to it. Radu translated the word as *d,ebarrassa*. Obviously, a Jew would have been unlikely to use such a word.

47. Radu renders as biens.

48. *Voyage du Patriarche Macaire d'Antioche*, vol. 26, no. 5 (1949), 666. Paul of Aleppo attributed the attacks against the Jews to Divine retribution. These infidels were not content to tyrannize the Cossacks, but they had sexual relations with their wives and daughters. This is why God poured his wrath upon them and the Poles who had given them the authority [over the Cossacks] (vol. 26, no. 5, p. 667). The text had already been noticed by Rabba, *Ben zikkaron le-hakhashah*, 1089.

49. By comparison, Jewish martyrdom was noticed by certain Christian chroniclers of the First Crusades and beyond during the Middle Ages. See the material gathered by Mary Minty, Kiddush ha-Shem be-ene notsrim be-Germanyah be-yeme ha-benayim, *Zion* 59 (23) (1994): 21426.

50. Halperin, *Shevyah u-fedut*, 220, noted that a contemporary Muscovite emissary reported that Jews who converted were accepted into the Ukrainian army, whereas Poles were killed even if they asked to convert. It would seem unlikely, however, that Ukrainian forces would have immediately accepted new converts baptized at gunpoint into their ranks.

51. On possible reasons for this difference that are relevant to this period, see Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, (1938; reprint, Exeter, 1966), 2:22425.

52. See Letopis samovidtsa o voynakh Bogdana Khmel'nitskago, 11.

53. A copy of the order was recorded in Pinsk in 1650 and has been translated by Mordekhai Nadav, The Jewish Community of Nemyriv in 1648: Their Massacre and Loyalty Oath to the Cossacks, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 8 (34) (December 1984): 39394.

54. See Nathan Kahana, *Sefer she'elot u-teshuvot divre renanah*, ed. I. HersHKovitz (Brooklyn, N.Y., 1984), no. 61. Needless to say, the behavior of soldiers does not always represent the ideals of a society. In discussing the Crusades, Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission* (Princeton, N.J., 1984), 6567, has noted that, by the mid-twelfth century, conversion of the Muslims was an obvious, if unarticulated goal of the Crusades. Nevertheless, not every Muslim who offered to convert on the battlefield was spared.

55. There were contemporary Poles who understood the war to be essentially a religious conflict but between Catholics and Orthodox, not Jews and Christians. See Frank Sysyn, Seventeenth-Century Views on the Causes of the Kmhel'nyts'kyi Uprising: An Examination of the Discourse on the Present Cossack or Peasant War, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 5 (1981): 444 Even Shmuel Ettinger, Jewish Participation in the Settlement of Ukraine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Howard Aster and Peter Potichnjy, 2d ed. (Edmonton, 1990), 2930, who argued rather dogmatically that the attacks against Jews in 1648 were motivated by Muscovite influence and its hatred of Jews, maintained that religious zeal was not a significant factor in the massacres. Religion was, however, intertwined with Ukrainian self-identity, and those of other religions were considered foreigners. See Jaroslaw Pelenski, The Cossack Insurrections in Jewish-Ukrainian Relations, in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, 38; George Williams, Protestants in the Ukraine during the Period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 2 (1978): 202; and particularly, Frank Sysyn, Ukrainian-Polish Relations in the Seventeenth Century: The Role of National Consciousness and National Conflict in the Khmelnytsky Movement, in *Poland and Ukraine Past and Present*, ed. Peter Potichnjy (Edmonton, 1980), 5882.

56. Approximately seventeen of the nineteen stanzas of Samuel ben Simeon's dirge for the victims of 1648 published in the Salonika (1652) edition of *Tsok ha-ittim*, ioa-iob, focused on the horrors of the events. Yet the opening lines and the two last stanzas spoke of the readiness of the victims to sanctify the great and feared Name and of how they helped strengthen each other to die as Jews rather than convert.

57. In 1652, Hanover published a homiletic work, *Sefer ta'ame sukkah* (Amsterdam), concerning the festival of Sukkot and its rituals based on a talk(s) that he had delivered in Cracow during Sukkot 1645. In his introduction, Hanover observed that there had recently been difficult times for the Jews of Poland. There had been terrible destruction and death from both war and the plagues that followed in the wake of the hostilities. Hanover mentioned that Polish Jews had had their assets stolen from them and had had to use whatever of their resources remained to hire mercenaries to protect them, and sometimes the towns in which they lived, day and night (1b).

Appendix

The Massacre of Jews in Tulczyn as Described in Four Hebrew Chronicles

Italics have been used to highlight text that appears in *Yeven metsulah* and any of the three Hebrew chronicles of 1648/1649 that predated Hanover's work, whether word for word or apparently paraphrased. Katz's story of Gomel has been included in the appendix because it served as a source for Hanover's reconstruction of events in Tulczyn. Parallel passages have been placed next to each other in order to ease comparison of the structures of the narratives. Passages that appear among Hanover's predecessors but do not appear in *Yeven metsulah* have not been noted. There has been no attempt to reproduce the poetic style of the authors nor to offer fully annotated translations. Biblical and talmudic sources have been provided when believed helpful for understanding the passage and to allow the reader to check the accuracy of the translation more easily. In following Mesch's translation, I have used the somewhat anachronistic term Ukrainians to designate Eastern Orthodox.

Nathan Hanover, *Yeven metsulah* (Venice, 1653)

Me'ir ben
Samuel of
Szczepreszyn,
Tsok ha-'ittim
(Cracow, 1650)

[p. 54] And it came to pass after they did their evil as they pleased in the holy community of Niemirów, that a band of about ten thousand men, scoundrels and hooligans, assembled together under the leadership of the oppressor of the Jews, [Maksym] Kryvonis, may his name and memory be blotted out. They proceeded from there to the holy community of Tulczyn, for there *in the fortress were assembled some six hundred troops from the Polish nobility and with them were gathered some two thousand Jews. Among the latter were also trained soldiers and seasoned warriors And the two made a covenant, the Jews and the nobles, to help each other in the struggle against their common enemy, and took an oath not to betray one another. They greatly reinforced the fort and the Children of Israel went up armed (Exod. 13.18) with all kinds of weapons. And the Jews and the nobles took their posts on the rampart. Each time the Greeks (=Ukrainians) drew near the fortress, the defenders standing on the wall shot at them with arrows and guns, and they killed many of the Ukrainians. They fled from the Children of Israel and the Children of Israel Summoned courage and pursued them, killing several hundred of their men.*

[p. 3b] I will tell and speak of the troubles of Tulczyn. *There were about six hundred soldiers, nobles, who were hiding in the fortress and gathered with them were about two thousand of the scattered sheep [Israel] (Jer. 50.17) who were slung out (Jer. 10.18) at its gates. And the nobles received them and they made an agreement with them and the two made a righteous*

The Ukrainians assembled again together with all the villagers and the inhabitants of the nearby towns, [p. 55] numbering in the thousands and tens of thousands. They brought iron battering rams to bring down the wall. With wild shouts and strange yelling, characteristic of the Cossacks, they made a sudden attack on the wall. When those stationed on the wall saw the multitude, their hearts trembled. Yet they continued to shoot from the wall and did not allow them to come near it. This time too they fled from the Children of Israel.

And as the days passed, the Ukrainians took counsel together and agreed to send a peace offer to the nobles in the fortress. They would conclude a truce on condition that the Jewish spoil be delivered to them as a ransom for their lives. This they did and a message of peace was sent to the nobles in the fortress. The nobles immediately

covenant to help each other.

The nobles were gathered in the fortress (to defend the fort) and around it the Jews stood on guard with bows and arrows between the pillars.

When the tails of firebrand (Isa. 7.4) came, they shot at them with arrows and torches (guns?) and the Greeks (=Ukrainians) ran in fear. And the nobles and the Jews chased after them and they smote the rebels a great blow.

In place of hundreds came tens of thousands

*swooping down
like a vulture
(Deut. 28.49);
they screamed
with great and
strange cries.
They did not
succeed in
reaching the
wall and the
archers
scattered
(fired?) and
they did not
flee. And those
in the fortress
saw this and
they were
astonished by
the multitude
and amazed and
their hearts
trembled greatly
and they were
afraid.*

*And as the days
passed, the
Ukrainians took
counsel with
their wise men.
Why should we
sit in the rain?*

*We will send a
peace offer to
the fortress, to
the high and
mighty nobles.
They will make
peace with us
(Gen. 34.21)
and the Jews
who are
scattered among
the nations will
redeem their
(i.e., the nobles)
souls from death
with their blood.*

1

The heads of the
nation took
counsel
together. Why
are we with the
Jews? How long
will we sit in
fear lest we
become poor
and we will
have to hide.
We will give the
money of the
Jews as a bribe.

We will call the
Jews and we
will not have to
hide. *And they
called the Jews
one by one and
they took their
weapons from
all of them.*

*The Jews
understood their
trickery, that
this was a plot
of the
Ukrainians to
take their
money and kill
them. The Jews
gathered and
discussed the
issue and
decided to kill
the nobles and
stand against
them and*

Shabbetai ben Me'ir Katz, *Selihot ve-kinot* (Amsterdam, 1651)

[p. 2b] Attention now turns to the holy community of Tulczyn. And they surrounded the fortress for eight days, and they encircled it until everyone who was in it was starved and parched. And there were many there of the Children of Israel and many princes from other nations and day and night they did not cease fighting against the empty ones [Ukrainians]. And afterwards, the empty ones spoke to the leaders, the princes: Why do you feel as a people and a nation? For the wretched Jews who are our enemies since early days? And they spoke to them sweet words and words of reproach as one whispers: Surely we do not desire you, great and friendly princes, only give us the Jews who deny our faith and we will drink over them the cup of consolation (Jer. 16.7) and we will do with them as we please and we will gore them as with the horns of a wild ox (see Ps. 22). And the princes fulfilled the words of the empty ones and they

Gabriel Shusburg, *Petah teshuvah* (Amsterdam, 1651)

[p. 7a] For these things I weep, my eye, my eye runs down with water (Lam. 1.16); we said assemble yourselves and let us go to the fortified town (Jer. 8.14) of Tulczyn, after two days He will revive us (Hos. 6.2); there we were cut off and twice given water of gall to drink (Jer. 8.14). We lifted up our hearts with our hands to God in the heavens (Lam. 3.41).³

. . . Four times as difficult as the killings in Niemirów. In addition, the tragic event in which our friends betrayed us, after we left without anything, dispossessed of everything, they left us hungry and parched *for about five days* and afterwards they killed us on the eve of the holy Sabbath. And there we lifted up our hearts with our hands . . . and our eyes and hearts were there everyday to our Father in heaven because of the remainder of our brethren in the Diaspora. *Since it was*

turned over to them the children of Judah, the nobility (see Dan. 1.3), and they killed there about 3,000 upright and innocent souls, some of whom they beat and others whom they wounded. They gave them to those who beat them and struck hard blows with all types of weapons, with plows, spades, and hatchets. And this was on the sixth day [Friday], And the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts (Gen. 2.1) were perfected. Four days in the month of Tammuz [24 June 1648] in which the [two] tablets were broken and the Urim and Tummim were hidden.

2

And at the very same time it appeared that there was a difficult decree aimed against us from the heavens, because on that very Friday it was decreed against us twice, because also then *they killed about 1,500 beloved and pleasant souls* in the town of Homel (Gomel') in the Russian area, far from Tulczyn, about 70 Persian miles which are 260 Sabbath limits, in the [weekly possible for us to take revenge and to attack those who made our suffering, worse, those very nobles who broke the covenant and who thought to appease [the Ukrainians] by using us as offering to the Greeks (=Ukrainians) to save their souls. However, on the orders of the scholars, the rabbis, there was an emergency ruling not to make ourselves hated among the inhabitants of the land, in the eyes of the king, and the ministers of the Kingdom of Poland and to give our souls for the holiness of His Name, may it be blessed, and not to attack the Polish nobles in order not to profane holy Judah, the remnant [of Israel]. And this is the meaning of we lifted up our hearts with our hands, to take our souls in our hands to God in the heavens, for His Name and holiness, may He be blessed, and His nation, *that there should be a remnant in the land*. And these words are as it was; we raised our souls and hearts in prayers and supplications before God, may He be exalted and blessed.

Sabbath Torah] portion of and they bit the people and many people of Israel died (Num. 21.6; the portion Huqqat), many and great [people]. And it is

We set out, army against opposing army (1 Sam. 17.21); we joined with the wicked nobles of Edom; I will render vengeance to my enemies (Deut. 32.41) according to what their hands deserve (Isa. 3.11); Give us

Nathan Hanover, *Yeven metsulah* (Venice, 1653)

Me'ir ben Samuel of
Szczepczeszyn, *Tsok
ha-'ittim* (Cracow,
1650)

agreed to accept the offer. *They sent for the Jews to disarm them one by one until all were disarmed. The Jews understood the trickery and wanted to lay hand upon the nobles first, and to stand against them,* since they were the first to betray the covenant. *But the head of the*

rabbinical academy of the holy community of Tulczyn, the scholar, our teacher and master, Rabbi Aaron, shouted in a great voice to the Jews: Hearken, my brethren and my people. We are in exile among the nations. If you will lay a hand upon the nobles and the Catholic kings will hear of it, they will wreak vengeance upon our brethren in exile, God forbid. Therefore, if it is a Divine decree, let us accept our sentence with rejoicing. We are not worthier than our brethren of the holy community of Niemirów. And may the [p. 56] Almighty be merciful unto us in the face of our enemies. *Perchance, they will accept our possessions as a ransom for our lives.*

And the Jews hearkened to him, and brought into the courtyard of the fortress all their valuables which they had acquired. The Ukrainians immediately entered and the leader of the nobles, Duke Czetwertyński, said

to take their revenge against them since they broke their covenant and took their bows and swords from them.

And the head of the rabbinic court of the community was angered and he replied wisely, saying in fear, If you destroy the nobles and also the Ukrainians in the hills and valleys, a bird will carry the word (Eccl. 10.20) and it will be heard in all of Poland. The leaders of Christendom will arise, God forbid, and they will kill all our brethren in the Diaspora.

to them: Behold, here is your request. And they took all the booty of the Jews. The Ukrainian oppressors then told the above mentioned duke *to imprison all the Jews so that their lives would hang in doubt, for they would not know what their judgment might be; whether they would keep their promise or not.* On the third day when they were in pain (Gen. 34.25), *the Ukrainians came to the nobles and asked that all the Jews be delivered to them.* Immediately the nobles shoved the Jews out of the fortress, so that the nobles might escape injury. Brokenhearted and downcast, all the Jews walked out. The Ukrainians imprisoned them in an enclosed garden so that they would not escape. They remained there for a long time (2 Kings 2.17, 8.11).

There were three other great scholars. His excellency, our teacher and master, Rabbi Eliezer; his excellency, our teacher and master, Rabbi Solomon, and his excel-

We will give up our lives for the holiness of our Master and we will give to the Ukrainians all our worldly goods as a redemption for our bodies, maybe they will be compassionate toward us, the women, the children, and the babies. And if our sins testify against us (Jer. 14.7) and we are deserving of death because of our sins, we will stretch out our necks and accept our sentence.

Immediately the Cossacks entered the fortress and everyone stood in a narrow place. And there stood the Christian defender, that is Duke Czetwertyński, the[ir] adversary. And the Jews [4a]

brought all their property to the courtyard and they gave their treasures with a heart broken and like earthen vessels (2 Sam. 17.28) and they cried to God in distress.

*The Jews were put into custody. And they all stood with very bitter hearts, sobbing and in bitter mourning (Ezek. 27.31). And their hearts trembled and was [sic] covered like a fruit being ripened in the earth (see J.T., Berakot 4b). And they called one to another and said: *Who knows whether our fate is sealed. If they will keep their promise or whether it will change. And their distress was [great as] a palm tree**

(Songs 7.8).

Then on the third day the wicked ones [came] and covered the face of the earth (Exod. 10.5) as clouds, with bows, swords, cudgels, and bayonets. With black flags and strange noises, they fell upon the Jews who were weak, exhausted, and powerless (Isa. 40.29). And they killed the Jews with sharpened swords; the young and the old, parents and children.

Shabbetai ben Me'ir Katz, *Selihot ve-kinot*
(Amsterdam, 1651)

Gabriel Shusburg,
Petah teshuvah
(Amsterdam, 1651)

very clearly, truly, and perfectly known that help against the foe for
those Jews who were trapped in the town of vain is the help of man
Gomel sanctified the Special Name more (Ps. 60.13).

than the other righteous and scholarly Jews
in that also there came the defiled empty
ones, like dumb dogs (Isa. 56.10), *in a pact*
with the other nobles, and they [the Polish
nobles] gave into their [the Ukrainians]
hands the Jews as peace offering from the
sheep and they forced the Jews out of the
town into the fields and vineyards (1 Sam.
22.7). And then the empty ones surrounded
them as in a courtroom (see Sanhedrin 4.3)
and they stripped them naked and sat them
on the ground and the Jews were
embarrassed and ashamed, [they were]
silent as a lamb led to the slaughter [and]
like a sheep that before its shearers (Isa.
53.7) [3a]. *And then the empty ones spoke*
to the Jews words of kindness and comfort:
Why should you be killed, strangled, and
slaughtered like a young bullock without a
blemish for the sake of your God who has
spilled his anger upon you without mercy?
Would it not be good for you to worship our
gods, the idols and icons, and we would be
one nation. Together we will be complete
and whole hearted (see Deut. 18.13). Then

C . . . The events that
happened took place
thus: *At the beginning*
we gathered an army to
fight against the
Ukrainian army. We
made a covenant to
join with the nobles
because I said, I will
render vengeance to
my enemies and to
those who hate me
according to what their
hands deserve. And I
said, Come let us act
wisely to be a help
against the foe. But the
help of man was vain
because *they betrayed*
us, they changed the
ordinance, broke the
covenant. And Because
you have joined with
the wicked the Lord

you will be free of us and you will live and all the property we will return to you and you will be very rich and powerful rulers. *And the holy seed* that is killed for God all the days *was faithful*. Disgusted with the life of this world, young men and women, the learned, the elderly and babes, gathered together. Young and old and children who had no [spiritual] blemishes, and they cried in a great and bitter cry to God who dwells in the heavens: *Hear Lord our God, the one God*, King of the worlds, Because for You we are killed all the day. (Ps. 44.23) Lord, the God of Israel, give a perfect lot (1 Sam. 14.41 with Rashi's comments), we will not sit with vain men nor will we join with scoundrels (see Ps. 26.4). And they admitted their sins and said, We are guilty. They submitted themselves to Divine punishment and said, The Lord's ways are perfect. And they chanted lamentations until their cry went up to the

will destroy what you have done (2 Chron. 20.37).

[p. 7b] Hear all the nations, the Lord is righteous (Lam. 1.18); a number of times I saw vengeance against my enemies (Ps. 58.11). With the nations doing great things, they sent a priest, with swearing and lying they broke all bounds and blood touched blood (Hos. 4.2).

The Lord is righteous, His judgment is true and fair and we justify Him over us since a number of times I have seen vengeance against my enemies. *At the beginning we succeeded and our hand prevailed once, twice, and three times. Also at the end I saw vengeance against those very nobles who breached the oath, to*

curse the holy covenant (Dan. 11.30), to turn us over to the wicked ones; and there was one fate for all, they like me. And when they saw that they could not overcome us since He made us strong, able to destroy nations, they took crafty counsel (Ps. 83.4). They sent a Greek Orthodox priest to enter into a curse and into an oath (Neh. 10.30) that they would not do anything to the nobles if only they would turn over the Jews to their hands in order that they not fight against them. And the oath was a lie and a deceit. They broke the rules of the oath until blood touched blood. Due to the great bloodshed the blood of the Jews touched the blood of the nobles since an hour or two after we were killed they also attacked the

nobles in the fortress.
And nothing remained
from the house of
Edom (see Obad. 18).

Nathan Hanover, *Yeven metsulah* (Venice, 1653)

Me'ir ben Samuel
of Szczebrzeszyn,
Tsok ha-'ittim
(Cracow, 1650)

lency, our teacher, Rabbi Chaim. They exhorted the holy people to sanctify the Name and not to change their faith. All of them replied: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. As there is but One in your hearts, so there is but One in our hearts.

After these things one of their intermediaries [p. 57] appeared, and planted a banner in the ground. He said to them in a loud voice.

Whoever wishes to change his faith and remain alive, let him sit under this banner. No one answered him. Thus he announced three times and *no one responded*. Immediately the gate of the garden opened and the infuriated mob rushed in and killed a large number of Jews.

Approximately fifteen hundred souls perished by all sorts of terrible deaths. The three scholars, mentioned above, fell by the sword, may God avenge their blood. Then the Ukrainians took ten rabbis and placed them in prison, in irons, to await their ransom for ten thousand gold pieces. Among them was the scholar, our teacher and master, Rabbi Aaron, the son of the scholar, our teacher and master Rabbi Me'ir; the merciful God keep him and redeem him. The latter was the president of the

The Jews fell on their faces in order that they not see the atrocities and the killing of their children. And the children cried out to the Lord their God. And they [the attackers] stood over them like army officers and asked them if they would convert to Greek Orthodoxy. *If so, they will live and if not they will die like their fathers and fall on the corpses of their dead.*

Immediately they stretched forth their necks to be slaughtered and they said, let our

rabbinical academy of the holy community of Lwów. And the Ukrainians knew that he was a very wealthy man and would ransom his son at any price.

After the slaughter of the Jews they proceeded to attack the fortress. And the nobles said to them: Behold, you made an agreement with us, why do you repudiate your pledge? And the Ukrainians replied: *As you did unto the Jews, breaking your covenant with them, so shall we do unto you: measure for measure. Those stationed on the wall began to shoot and the Ukrainians cunningly set the fortress afire burning it to the ground, killing all the nobles and countless others. They appropriated the spoil for a prey. The wife and the two daughters of the above mentioned Duke were raped before him prior to his death.*

⁴ He had been a very [p. 58] stout man. When he sat in a chair he was unable to

blood be accepted as a sacrifice. And they gave praise and glory to God.

And the cruel, wicked one remained steadfast in the slaughter, and he took the slaughtering knife to put them to the sword. The enemies shouted out this is how to [ritually] slaughter, and the evil one was happy and played and shouted that great is the day of slaughter.

By the decree of God who decrees and fulfills [his decree] they slaughtered hundreds of babies and nursing infants, young boys and girls who clung to the fear of Heaven in the streets and

marketplaces, *and*
one thousand five
hundred righteous
people who
observed the laws.
Their blood was
troubled like
strong waters (see
Isa. 57.20) for the
sake of the
holiness of the
Creator of lands.

And a small
number of them fell
under the bodies,
faint with hunger
(Lam. 2.19) and
thirst and stabbed;
only the breath of
life remained. And
the Ukrainians
went between
those torn into
pieces and said,
Arise those who
remain, go to the
town and go in; do
not remain hidden
in the fortress
because *the*
fortress has been
set ablaze.

*Devoid of strength,
the men arose and
a few women went
with them. They
were all exhausted,
wounded, and
weak and they
came to the city
hurting and
seriously wounded.
Poor and needy,
impoverished and
beggared. And the
nobles drank the
wine of the
condemned (Amos
2.8) with timbrels
and dances, happy
and joyous. They
were noisy and
they [i.e., the Jews]
were as if deaf.*

And the
Ukrainians went
out and sent
runners to the
fortress with
quarrelsome

Shabbetai ben Me'ir Katz, *Selihot ve-kinot*
(Amsterdam, 1651)

Gabriel Shusburg,
Petah teshuvah
(Amsterdam,
1651)

heavens. And when the empty ones saw that the Jews were steadfast in their faith, they answered them with impudence and they threatened them: How long will you stiffen your necks and destroy yourselves and be like murderers, for you yourselves are bringing about your murder and you are the cause of your killing and slaughter. And you will be sacrifices forever since you do not want to worship our gods on the high mountains. And the Jews said to them: Why do you delay killing us for we will not listen to your voices and we will not say to the work of our hands [i.e., the work of man's hands], you are our god, for our God is One on the earth and in heavens. The Lord our King will save us, and you today are messengers from Him, may He be blessed, to attack our souls, for doom is brought about by the doomed like you, our enemies whom are hated by us. And if you do not kill us, the Lord has many messengers regarding us. Our Master has many lions and bears. And you, those [who have been] prepared and readied for retribution, you will continue to vanquish us and to destroy us. And then the empty ones raised their hands against them and because of our sins killed them. And they killed many of our brothers, sons of the covenant, our

They called to the nobles, for in peace I had great bitterness (Isa. 38.17). I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil (Exod. 15.9), said the enemy.

My lust will be satisfied upon them, my hand will destroy them (Exod. 15.9), God had decided, therefore my taste did not remain in me and my scent was changed (see Jer. 48.11).

See O Lord for I am in distress (Lam. 1.20). They took my weapons from me, they

sons, our daughters, our youth and our elderly. And their property was their prey (Esther 3.13, 8.11)a very great booty. They threw our money into the streets for most of the wealthy [Jews] of the Ukraine had fled there to [be with] the rest of the Jews, for they said: They are our brothers, our flesh. And the Jews who were previously there were also annihilated because of our sins. expelled me from the fortress, they left my wealth for others (Ps. 49.11) and all the living substance that followed me (Deut. 11.6).

*. . . the nobles
took all the
weapons from me
and expelled me
from the fortress
with totally empty
hands. . . . to
leave us and
abandon us and
our money . . .*

They have heard that I sigh (Lam. 1.21); they left me hungry and thirsty (Ps. 107.5) from Monday to Friday and nevertheless their anger was not turned away from me (Isa. 5.25).

With my sighing
and my heart faint

since they left us
hungry and thirsty
from Monday to
Friday and even
though my
strength was
sapped due to
hunger and thirst,
his anger did not
turn away from
me.

Let all their
wickedness come
before you and
deal cruelly with
them (Lam. 1.22).
They said that
they would
compromise with
them at the cost of
our lives and they
took as a pawn ten
of their prominent
men. And on
Friday the Lord
prepared a festive
meal, He bid their
guests (Zeph. 1.7).

Let all their
wickedness come
before you since
we were already

suffering famine
and thirst and they
saw and knew that
we had nothing
but our bodies left
and nevertheless
they asked us to
redeem ourselves
from death. *And
we compromised
on 10,000 Polish
gold pieces and
they took as
collateral ten
leaders of the
community and a
number of rabbis
and pious men.*
And on the sixth
day He spent his
fury against us to
destroy many
people, a few
thousand. And no
doubt the Lord
prepared the
festive meal
(sacrifice), to call
the guests to meal
of the Sabbath
Queen to be a
sweet smelling
offering, a

reminder to God
in the

Nathan Hanover, *Yeven metsulah* (Venice, 1653)

Me'ir ben
Samuel of
Szczepreszyn,
Tsok ha-ittim
(Cracow,
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rise. One of the scoundrels, a former slave, who served in his flour mill approached him, and, removing his hat in mockery and jest, said: What does the master desire of his servant? Then he recalled to him the mistreatment of his serfs, the beatings, and the enslavement and he said to him: Stand up and I will sit in your chair and be your master. But the Duke was unable to rise. The slave then hurled him off the chair and on the threshold of the house *he brutally cut off his head with a saw*. As they did so did God repay them, *because they violated the pledge of the Jews*. When the nobles heard of this, they were stricken with remorse and henceforth supported the Jews and did not deliver them into the hands of the reprobates. And even though the Ukrainians repeatedly promised them that they would not do anything to them, only to the Jews, they no longer believed them. Were it not for this, there would have been no escape for the remnant of the Jews, God forbid. After three days of carnage the Ukrainians announced among the slain: He that is still alive may rise and need not fear, for the massacre is over. Some three hundred *individuals who had sought escape by mixing with the corpses, arose. They were starved and thirsty.*

and hawkish words. Send out to us the property of the nobles and if you do not want to, we will all come and enter armed with swords and cudgels, bows and arrows. We will judge you decisively and we will know you with briars and thorns.

Your deeds and your retribution we will return on your heads as

Some of them had many but not critical wounds. With but the breath of life in their aching and weak bodies, fatigued, barefoot, and naked, they walked to the above mentioned city. The Ukrainian inhabitants of the city dealt kindly with them and sent them away.

you did with Jacob your brother. They made a covenant with you and they guarded like you did and saved you a few times. And gall and wormwood (Deut. 29.17) was among you and you turned them over and we killed them before your eyes. Just as we killed them we will kill you.

Lords and nobles stood like a wall and they fought against them and they came with a mighty hand, with many people

and great
noise. And
they wisely
burned the
fortress and the
smoke of the
fire rose to
wards the
heavens. And
they totally
destroyed the
fortress. And
the nobles had
no strength to
stand (Lev.
26.37).

The Ukrainians
and all their
hosts captured
the nobles and
their
community and
they killed
them with their
bows and
swords. *Before*
they killed the
Duke and the
Duchess the
Ukrainians
punished them
according to

*their deeds and
they raped
their two
daughters
before them.*

And they raped
the Duchess
and they
brutally cut off
his head with a
saw.

Shabbetai Gabriel Shusburg, *Petah teshuvah* (Amsterdam, 1651)
 ben Me'ir
 Katz, *Selihot*
ve-kinot
 (Amsterdam,
 1651)

holy sanctuary.

5 And it is proper to learn from this difficult, terrible event that they endured. First, the attribute of poverty, that everyone should be completely devoid of their assets and everything that they have and be afflicted, sent out half starving and parched with thirst and no one gives food to them (Lam. 4.4), there is no supplier of bread and water; and those who are for captivity, to captivity (Jer. 15.2). And they gave the indemnity for their lives but it did not help and *they were all killed for the sanctification of His Name*, may He be blessed. *And in addition that they accepted the judgment with love of God, may He be blessed, to give their lives into their hands in order to preserve a remnant on the earth (Gen. 45.7) among the nations, in order not to make our smell odious (Gen. 34.30) if they were to have attacked those mentioned above who wanted to harm them.* [p. 8a] And they stood and were tested and tried in the great trial not to abandon our God, may He be blessed, during the days of affliction of hunger and thirst when they had nothing in the siege and in the distress *of the courtyard that is in front of the fortress. And they tempted them with words,*⁶ *with their nothingness (i.e., religious beliefs),*

with a number of enticements, inducements, threats, and terrible exaggerations every day. And no one will be saved by their lies. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord; I will set in safety we at whom they puff (Ps. 12.6) [and it pants towards] the end and does not lie (Hab. 2.3).

Notes

1. A play on words; the Hebrew *damim* also has the meaning of money.
2. The fourth of Tammuz fell on a Wednesday in 1648.
3. I have not included Shusburg's brief explanations of his use of biblical terms in the text but simply incorporated them into the translation of the stanzas. I have marked passages not included in the translation with an ellipsis.
4. Mesch's claim that Czetwertyński had no children and that Hanover was mistaken in this regard (*Abyss of Despair*, p. 9) is contradicted by Mielzyński's statement that one of Czetwertyński's daughters was said to have been killed. There were conflicting reports regarding the second daughter: one said that she had been taken by a Cossack to be his wife,

while a second reported her as also having been killed (Michalowski, *Jakuba Michalowskiego*, no. 61, p. 157).

5. The reference remains unclear. Dr. Haviva Pedaya has suggested to me that the mystical apocalyptic literature known in medieval Ashkenaz may be among the sources for this portrayal of the fate of the righteous. See, for example, *Bet ha-midrash*, ed. Adolph Jellinek (2d ed., Jerusalem, 1938), 137, that describes the sacrifice of the souls of the righteous in paradise on the Sabbath eve.

6. Shusburg makes a play on the Hebrew words that can also be translated as with bread in their mouths.

7

History as Homiletics: The Use of Historical Memory in the Sermons of Saul Levi Morteira

Marc Saperstein

In his chapter on the Middle Ages from *Zakhor*, Yosef Yerushalmi wrote: Interpretations of history, whether explicit or veiled, can be encountered in works of philosophy, homiletics, biblical exegesis, law, mysticism, most often without a single mention of actual historical events or personalities, and with no attempt to relate to them.

¹ A separate book, at least as long as *Zakhor*, would be needed to concretize this statement, even limiting the purview to works of homiletics. To be sure, one does not ordinarily turn to Jewish sermons for a record of past events. The preacher's task was understood to be the application of traditional texts to contemporary challenges, not the transmission of historical data. The sermon was expected to explore exegetical and conceptual problems, to provide encouragement or rebuke, not to probe the specificity of the past.² Nevertheless, sermons can serve as a resource for our efforts to understand Jewish historical memory and consciousness as mediated between an intellectual, spiritual leader and a community of listeners. Just as they provide crucial evidence for the way in which philosophical or kabbalistic ideas were transmitted to broader circles of Jewish society,³ so sermons reveal what from the past was deemed important to highlight and interpret.

I propose to illustrate these generalizations with reference to the

sermons of Saul Levi Morteira, leading rabbi of the Portuguese community in Amsterdam from the 1620s until his death in 1660. I have chosen Morteira for several reasons. The discovery of the manuscripts of some 550 of his sermons has uncovered the largest extant corpus of homiletical texts from any Jewish preacher before the nineteenth century. Second, the community to which he delivered these sermons represents another interest of the honoree in this volume. During the period of Morteira's rabbinate, Amsterdam became a new home for individuals who had been born and educated as New Christians in Portugal and who had made the decision to leave the land of their roots and to break with the religion of their upbringing. Their choice of Amsterdam indicates a desire to be Jews, but their knowledge about just what this entailed was limited, general, and sometimes incorrect. Morteira's sermons, delivered over a period of four decades,

were therefore an integral part of what Yerushalmi has called the re-education of the Marranos.

4

In a sermon on the pericope *Bo*, delivered in the mid-1640s,⁵ Morteira drew an important contrast:

The purpose of the historical narratives in our holy Torah is totally different from the purpose of the narratives that appear in the books of historical chronicles. The purpose of the chroniclers is to recount each matter just as it was. The only thing they look to or care about is providing information about the specific event that occurred. But the purpose of the divine Torah in its narratives is to recount only those matters from which we may derive some ethical lesson or benefit, for the ultimate purpose of the Torah is doctrine, not the recounting of historical events. That is why the Torah eliminated from its narratives some details that must have occurred, and would have pleased those who heard them, for its purpose is not the story but the doctrine.⁶

It is unclear from this passage whether Morteira was comparing the Torah to Jewish chroniclers such as Yosippon or to Gentile historians. As we shall see, his sermons contain references to both. The operative distinction here is between genres. History writing is granted the virtue of objectivity recounting each matter just as it was but deemed to be of secondary importance to the ethical lesson or the doctrine.⁷ History as it really was has little value in this schema. The divine revelation does indeed contain historical information, but its purpose is never simply to recount events of the past but rather to draw enduring lessons from them. This approach is particularly compatible with the role of the preacher. Morteira himself does not use historical material to provide information for antiquarian purposes. His references to the past illustrate a doctrinal point, teach a lesson, intensify a polemical argument, underscore a message of rebuke. We

shall concretize this with examples from the period of antiquity (based on sources other than the Bible) and from the more recent past.

Roman History

Morteira's sermons provide nothing like the detailed account of Roman history available in Jewish historians such as Yosippon or David Gans, or more schematically in Abraham ibn Daud, Abraham Zacut, and Gedaliah ibn Yahya.⁸ What we find, for the most part, is a number of brief references to Roman history, some of them quite general. A sermon printed in the 1645 edition of *Giv' at Sha' ul* begins with a discussion of permanence in this world. After discussing the natural antipathy toward death and the attempt to transcend it, Morteira turns to models from antiquity:

Leaders of the Gentiles tried three ways of attaining permanence and ensuring that their name would endure in subsequent generations. The first was by making monuments and statues of wood and stone, silver and gold, which represent their physical appearance, as the Roman Caesars did, and as Alexander wanted to do in the Temple.⁹ Second was by creating lofty, awe-inspiring buildings and palaces bearing their names Third was by

fixing a holiday each year on which all would play games and speak their praises; the months perpetuate the names of two Caesars, Julius and Augustus.

10

All of these techniques are said to be vain and futile efforts, as the only true permanence comes through association with God. The examples from Roman antiquity are presented as a foil to contrast the manner in which Moses attained permanence beyond his lifetime.

In a sermon on *Korah*, a different kind of use is made of a well-known activity in ancient Rome. The preacher maintains that God used the generation of the wilderness, people who had all been condemned to death for their sins with the golden calf and the spies, to demonstrate His method of judgment and punishment. As their lives were forfeit anyway, God brought about circumstances that publicly demonstrated they deserved to die so that they would serve as a lesson for others. Examples of this principle are drawn from common experience, and then from history: From those men already sentenced to death, the Roman emperors would select some to entertain the people with swords in their hands. That some died did not matter, as they were already deemed deserving of capital punishment.¹¹ Here too there is a contrast: in the Roman case the lives were sacrificed for frivolous entertainment; in the Bible, so that the people would learn important lessons about God's qualities. But the basic thrust of the example is to show an underlying similarity between apparently disparate realms.

Discussing in 1621 his scenario of events leading up to the messianic redemption, Morteira illustrates an aspect of military strategy by reference to the distant past: For the Christians, seeing the multitude of people coming against Rome, and the pope fleeing from Rome, will learn from the precedent of what Scipio did to Hannibal: by going to

Carthage, he forced Hannibal to abandon Rome. So the Christians, by means of a great army going against the Holy Land and Egypt, will draw out the many Muslim peoples to leave Rome and come to the aid of their lands.¹² The preacher is talking about something unfamiliarthe course of events in the future messianic warsand explaining by recourse to something familiar. As with the previous examples, knowledge of this material seems to be assumed in this audience. Important also is the implication that history follows a pattern. It is not just that military men will make similar decisions under similar circumstances. Patterns recur, especially with regard to the great protagonists of historyJews, Christians, and Rome. We shall return to this motif later.

In several passages from his sermons, Morteira refers to the writings of Roman historians, though never identifying a specific work. For example, We find this in the chronicles of Rome: when one of the Roman generals conquered a certain Gentile king, the king changed from his royal raiment and came before him in manifest submission. The general grew angry at him, saying that he had abased and diminished the general's glory in his victory.¹³ This is used to explain God's desire to build up Pharaoh's ego before bringing him to a humiliating downfall: Similarly, when God wanted to be glorified through

Pharaoh (as the verse says, *I will gain glory through Pharaoh* [Exod. 14:4]), Pharaoh had to see himself as exalted. The behavior of the Roman general serves as a model for God's own actions, thereby rationalizing a biblical passage. Discussing in 1624 the pressures brought to bear upon the Jews in the past to assimilate and the importance of language for national identity, Morteira provides another analogy with Roman policy of conquest based on Roman historians: Similarly, the chroniclers recount that when the Romans conquered Spain, they forced the inhabitants to speak the Roman language. For as it was a vast, strong people that rebelled against them more than once, in order to bind them to Rome, they compelled them to learn their language.

14 The resonance for a community of Jews clinging to their Portuguese tongue in the middle of Amsterdam can be imagined.¹⁵

In a passage that we shall analyze in greater depth below, Morteira refers to Roman historians account of the death of the emperor Titus to challenge the simple meaning of the talmudic aggadah that describes a very different form of death.¹⁶ Perhaps the most intriguing use of Roman historians pertains to the figure of the emperor Hadrian. At issue is a rabbinic interpretation of Genesis 25:23: *Two nations (goyim): two proud nations (ge'ei goyim)*, one who took pride in his world and one who took pride in his kingdom: Hadrian among the Gentile nations, and Solomon among the Israelites.¹⁷ The external material is used to explain the rabbinic choice of Hadrian as exemplar:

And one who took pride in the greatness of his kingdom in his kingdom alone, not in his world for Hadrian had no children and died without heirs, as the chronicles of the Roman Emperor wrote about him. . . . In this way the statement one who takes pride in his world was explained with regard to Hadrian, who ruled by force over all the emperors of Rome. . . . For Hadrian took greater pride in his wealth than all other Roman emperors.

The chroniclers who tell his story recounted that once he gave a gift to the people of ten million gold coins, and another time he gave an abundance of rare spices. And Solomon was similar. . . . They also took these two because they were at the pinnacle of their kingdoms glory, for after the time of Hadrian the Roman Empire began to decline, so that he was at its high point, as was Solomon in Israel.¹⁸

One would scarcely know from this passage that this was the emperor who presided over the downfall of Bar Kokhba, the devastation of Judea, the prohibition of the Jews from Jerusalem, the erection of a pagan temple on the Temple Mount. Other passages in rabbinic literature refer to him as Hadrian the wicked, and hold him accountable for a massacre of Jews in Alexandria as well as in Judea.¹⁹ Samuel Usque described his end with hatred and contempt: As for Hadrian, who was responsible for the extermination of the remnants of your people in the regions of Syria and Jerusalem, he was plagued by the Lord with a painful illness for your vengeance. In desperation, he killed himself by depriving himself of food and drink.²⁰ Yet Morteira overlooks all of this; in order to explicate a cryptic midrashic comment, he draws from Roman historical memories of Hadrian's beneficence. The homiletical purpose to which historical allusion is harnessed may sometimes seem quite narrow.

Jewish History

Needless to say, there are references to Jewish history of antiquity in the sermons as well. For our purposes, we shall deal not with the many references to biblical history but with the period of the Second Commonwealth.

One of the recurrent principles in Morteira's preaching is that the exile in Egypt was not merely an event of biblical history but a prefiguration or prototype for the subsequent exiles of the Jewish people. Morteira used this motif as a basis for a sermon on *Shemot* delivered in early 1611;

21 the following week he returned to the theme with more detailed historical exemplification. After discussing the exiles of Babylonia and Medea as prefigured by Egypt, he continues into the Hellenistic period: In the enslavement of Egypt there can also be found a prototype for the persecution of the exile of Greece. Their only concern was to make the Jews forget God's Torah, to make them transgress the commandments nothing else. The two commandments that became most problematic during the Hellenistic period, according to the preacher, were circumcision and the Sabbath, for the historical records reveal that Jews who tried to observe these were actually put to death. After showing how the Israelites were forced to abandon these commandments in Egypt, Morteira turns to the later historical period. The very same occurred in the Greek period, when the commandments were prohibited to them, especially the Sabbath for they put to death a thousand people in a cave who were observing the Sabbath and the commandment of circumcision for they hanged two women and their sons because they circumcised them. The Hasmoneans from the tribe of Levi remained firm and defeated them, restoring the crown to its original condition.²²

Can Morteira's source for this passage be determined? The First Book of Maccabees, Josephus, and Yosippon all report the incident of one thousand Jews killed in a cave because they refused to violate the Sabbath.²³ But Yosippon is the only one of these sources that specifies two women hanged with their sons whom they had circumcised. While we know that Morteira did use a Spanish translation of Josephus's *Antiquities* in his later work,²⁴ here his source appears to be Yosippon.²⁵ The general purpose of the passage is to substantiate an overarching conception of Jewish historical experience as patterned and providential, to emphasize the significance of Sabbath and circumcision, and to present a model of Jewish loyalty leading to martyrdom. The details one thousand Jews killed, two women hanged with their sons provide vivid historical information probably intended to have an emotional impact upon the listeners.

Other references to the Hasmoneans highlight negative models. It was a period of rampant assimilation. Morteira notes in a sermon from the early 1630s that during the Hasmonean period, many impudent Jews commingled with the gentiles and informed against us, causing great harm to the Jewish people.²⁶ In a different sermon, Morteira points to another problem: many Jews actually decided to abandon their Jewish identity and become part of the Gentile world.

During the Greek period, oppressed by persecution, [Jews] endeavored to cleave to and to marry with the Gentile nations, as occurred in the time of the Hasmoneans, when many of our people apostatized voluntarily and denied the Torah of the Eternal.

27 The resonance for the New Christian situation would not have been difficult to discern. Finally, the Maccabean revolt itself was problematic in that it could be taken to represent an activist challenge to authority incompatible with Morteira's understanding of appropriate Jewish behavior in exile. Therefore, he reviews the well-known background of the Hanukkah holiday with a clear distancing: In the Greek period, when they oppressed the Jews who were subservient to them, Mattathias, son of Johanan the High Priest, and his sons arose and rebelled against them. They defeated the Greeks and restored Jewish sovereignty and dedicated the Temple. But God made the Jews swear an oath not to act this way in the present exile, [not] to depart from it [by force], for it is not similar to the previous one. Despite the positive and inspiring achievements of the Maccabees, the preacher is careful to emphasize that theirs is not a model to be emulated.²⁸

Almost in passing is a reference to an episode of Second Commonwealth history that probably would not have been familiar to the listeners, as it was apparently not understood by the printers of *Giv'at Sha'ul*. In a discussion of miracles, Morteira draws on the distinction between open and hidden wonders, relating them to periods of time. During the biblical period, from the conquest of the land of Canaan through the Babylonian exile, God performed miracles that were blatantly opposed to nature, observable by all. And similarly during the second Temple period, with the miracles of Hanukkah and Heliodorus, as recounted by Yosippon. This is contrasted with the period of the long exile, when Jews were no longer worthy of public

miracles, yet God did not remove from us His great miracles; [they are] concealed from the sight of the masses but revealed to the sight of the wise. Here the listeners were expected to accept the reference to Heliodorus on faith, although the reference to the source in Yosippon provided an opportunity for further investigation. There is no attempt to defend the historicity of the miracles. Yosippon is cited as an authority; if he reports an event, that is enough.²⁹ We shall see that Morteira is not always so uncritical of his sources.

Discussing the shrines built by Jeroboam at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:29), Morteira draws a contrast by referring to another event of Second Commonwealth history. Thus Onias, during the Second Temple period, seeing thousands and tens of thousands of Jews in Egypt, where they remained from earlier exiles, built for them a Temple like that in Jerusalem, so that God's people would attain wisdom in their exile. This entailed no disparagement to the Temple in Jerusalem. This was in sharp contrast with Jeroboam, who built his competing shrines at a time when the entire people resided in the land of Israel. The message would seem to be that Diaspora Jews have legitimate religious needs that deserve to be met.³⁰ In a different context, the preacher's homiletical point about the dangers to Jews of internal conflict requires a more negative assessment of Onias's motivation: Similarly in the matter of Onias: when he quarreled with his

brother over the High Priesthood, he went away to Egypt, where he built an altar modeled after the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem, and he allied himself with the Egyptians.

³¹ Both references are brief, but they are self-sufficient, enabling listeners to learn about an event they probably did not otherwise know, although not providing full clarity on its significance.

Of greater consequence to the identity of his listeners is a reference, again based on Yosippon, to John Hyrcanus that comes in a discussion of agents of destruction. One of the greatest threats to the Jews was an influx of proselytes dating from the conquests of Hyrcanus: Many proselytes have become mixed in with them on their own land, as Joseph bin Gurion recounts that when Hyrcanus defeated Edom, he compelled them to be circumcised.³² As we shall see, Morteira maintains that this forced assimilation of non-Jews into the Jewish people would have disastrous consequences for Jewish history and implications for the experience of the *conversos*.

Herod, the powerful king who reigned at the end of the first century B.C.E., is said to have been foreshadowed by the story of the early years of Esau. Here is Morteira's typological interpretation³³ of verses in the pericope *Toledot*:

The children struggle in her womb (Gen. 25:22), alludes to the Samaritan wars.³⁴ After that it says, *Two nations are in your womb* (Gen. 25:23), alluding to the Hasmoneans, who were kings and priests. *The first one went out red (admoni)* (Gen. 25:25), namely, kingship departed from them [the Hasmoneans] and was transferred to Herod, who was an Edomite, *like a hairy mantle all over with intrigue. They called his name Esau*, means that an outsider, that is, the Romans, called his name and made him king. *After this his brother went out* (Gen. 25:26), namely priesthood [departed], because he held on to the heel of Esau, namely the ways of the Romans.³⁵

In this rather dense passage, based on wordplay that is not entirely clear even now and would hardly have been understood by most listeners, Herod is presented in a negative way, the vehicle for the loss of kingship and priesthood from authentic Jews, and the channel through which Roman influence came to prevail in Jewish history.³⁶

An example of Morteira's tendentious use of historical material and sources for a homiletical purpose can be seen in a reference to the origins of Jewish sectarianism. It is part of a sustained argument from the early 1640s, using historical examples, that truth wears the adornment of unity while its opponents are divided among themselves. When at the beginning of the Second Temple [period], certain Jews began to deny the validity of the authentic tradition, this opposition soon split into sects. It did not constitute a separate bloc of opposition to the truth; rather from this opposition came Sadducees, Boethusians, and Essenes. All of them were divided against themselves, as the author of *Me' or 'Einayim* wrote at length in his book, chapter 3. He also added to them the sect of Gaulanites.³⁷ Most listeners would not have had either the linguistic tools or the inclination to check the reference in Azariah de' Rossi's work. If they had, they would have discovered that de' Rossi, following Josephus, speaks of four sects, but includes the Pharisees as one. The discussion is about the diversity of

philosophical views within the Jewish people as a whole.

38 Morteira removes the Pharisees from the list, introduces the Boethusians as a separate sect (Azariah identified them with the Essenes), and recasts the entire passage as a description of disunity in the opposition to the authentic Jewish tradition.

Christian History

The passages cited to this point contain mentions of incidents or personalities that serve an illustrative homiletical purpose. Perhaps with the exception of the last, they are not crucial to a fundamental purpose of the preacher. Some of the references to Christian history, by contrast, are quite important to central issues of Morteira's agenda in communicating to his audience of former New Christians.

Above we noted his allusion to the campaign of forced proselytization by John Hyrcanus. Here is how he continues the passage about the Edomite converts:

They were like a boil for the Jewish people, like the proselytes in the rabbinic statement who were as a boil for Israel.³⁹ They were among those Jews who in their exile assimilated among the Gentiles and became lost among them. Nevertheless, even this agent of destruction was unable to destroy them. For God separated out all those who became assimilated among them during the Second Temple period, in that they were the Jews who accepted the new religion [Christianity] and were removed from the rest. Therefore, this is one of the reasons why this nation is called Edom, as R. Isaac Abravanel explained on chapter 34 of Isaiah. And those who were assimilated among the Gentiles in their exile became estranged from their brothers and alien to their mothers children, so that they were set aside for evil from all the tribes of Israel.⁴⁰

The first important point here relates to the origins of Christianity. Drawing from Abravanel,⁴¹ Morteira explains the willingness of

Jesus disciples to break away from the ancient Jewish tradition and sever their ties with the Jewish people. These early Jewish Christians were descendants of the Edomite proselytes. Never content to be Jews, they were therefore particularly susceptible to heretical doctrines. Where other Jewish polemical writers dismissed the disciples for their intellectual limitations,⁴² Morteira condemns their base lineage.

But this was not the only occasion in Jewish history where divine providence furnished a filtering mechanism to separate those Jews who did not really belong to the people. The pattern of antiquity, which occurred while the Jews were in their own land, was recapitulated during the long exile outside it. Once again, Jews were lost to their people through the adoption of Christianity, namely, those New Christians who seem content on assimilating with their Christian neighbors. By attributing this to Edomite origins, suggesting that they were never fully Jewish to begin with, Morteira reassures his listeners that their decision was the right one.

In the sermon discussed above, on the absence of unity in the opposition to truth, Morteira draws another historical example from the period of the early church. He asserts as well established that from the very beginning of its identity

as a separate religion, Christianity was riven by dissent. And this was an expression of divine providence: God did not allow them to adorn themselves with the ornament of truth or to dress in the raiment of unity. Immediately, at their beginning a matter that is well known about them they split into different groups and failed to agree. This was so that people would not stumble after them, thinking that they possessed the truth.

43 Those listeners who had been educated as Christians may well have been familiar with material in the Acts of the Apostles that would support this generalization. Having explained the fact that some Jews were indeed attracted to the new faith, Morteira explains here its limited impact within the Jewish people as another sign of God's providential care. Nor would that providence end even when Christianity emerged as the dominant world faith.

In order to see how motifs pertaining to Rome, Christianity, and the Jews are integrated on a larger canvas and related to events of more recent history, we shall look in greater detail at two sermons, delivered some twenty years apart. The first, entitled Despicable and Vile (Mal. 2:9), dates from 1623 in the early period of Morteira's tenure; it is on the verse Tomorrow I will bring the locusts on your territory (Exod. 10:4) from the lesson Bo. Morteira introduces his subject with a general proposition: If it is a severe punishment to be given over into the hands of a person who is vile and despicable, how much more severe it is to be given over into the power of the beasts of the field and disgusting worms. Illustrating this with a biblical verse (Isa. 14:11), he then turns to a highly problematic rabbinic aggadah (B. Git 56b) about the Emperor Titus. After an arrogant challenge to God, a gnat entered Titus's nose and pounded in his brain for seven years. The aggadah ends with accounts of Titus's death: R. Phineas

ben Aruba said, I was there with the notables of Rome. When he died, they split open his brain and found there something like a sparrow two selas in weight. A Tanna taught, Like a dove two pounds in weight. Abaye said, We have it on record that his beak was of brass and his claws of iron.

Morteira quotes the entire passage, then launches a critique. Formally, this follows a traditional pattern of late medieval Jewish homiletics, raising problems with a passage from the Bible or the aggadah, and then resolving them:⁴⁴

However, it is clear that all these words are filled with such startling assertions that they should not be understood according to their simple meaning. Rather, their words are intentionally enigmatic, following the practice of the sages in many places. First, how is it possible that for such a long period of time the bird was pounding in his brain without his having died? And if it did not perforate the membrane, as the Tosafists wrote⁴⁵ where is there enough space between the skull and the membrane for a creature of such size? Furthermore, its beak then became brass and its claws iron; but those metals are produced only in their proper place. Furthermore, all the historians who wrote about his death without any ax to grind mention nothing of this; they say that he died of ague. Most difficult of all, this same story is told in *Bereshit Rabbah*, chapter 10, and in *Va-Yiqra Rabbah* on the lesson Aharei Mot (chap. 20). Yet there is a significant divergence between them and what is told in the Talmud. But if this was an actual event, why did the sages not recount it consistently? . . . All these things teach us and inform us that these matters are not as they

seem, but that there is a deeper meaning. Yet I have not seen anyone discuss this problem and seek to solve it.

46

While most listeners would not have challenged Morteira's claim of originality, when he was writing this passage he must have had in front of him Azariah de Rossi's discussion of the aggadah in *Me'or Einayim*.⁴⁷ De Rossi brings the same three categories of problems with the passage that Morteira does: the conflict with the laws of nature, the conflict with ancient historical sources about Titus, and the contradictions within rabbinic sources. In the first two instances, he is more detailed than Morteira. With regard to the anatomy of the nasal canal and the brain, he cites the work of a French scholar; with regard to the outside historians, he mentions more than a dozen by name. De Rossi explained that, according to science, metals are produced only within the earth by an established process, a point not entirely clear in our preacher's abbreviated summary. Morteira, by contrast, is more detailed in outlining the differences between the versions in the Talmud and the Midrash, as this is relevant to the point he will make. Both share a critical approach to the rabbinic texts, which enable them, or require them, to repudiate the simple meaning where it is contradicted by abundant external evidence. Both use the same phrase to express a deeper, esoteric content: *devarim be-go*.

Where Morteira differs from Azariah is in providing an esoteric interpretation of the statement, and this is what is relevant to our purpose. The story of Titus becomes an allegorical representation of the punishment visited against Rome through the emergence of Christianity. The gnat that entered Titus's nose is the Christian faith, compared to a small gnat because of the lowliness of its beginnings:

It pounded in his brain for seven years, referring to its having addled the

brains of his people with its beliefs and its lies for a long time. His passing by a certain blacksmith and the gnat's growing silent because of the sound of the hammer is an allegory for those [Christians] who were killed by the Romans with swordsthe sound of the hammerto prevent the new faith from spreading. However, since God had decreed this in order to afflict the evil empire, the creature got used to it. They did not see it again until it became like a dove, meaning that it appeared to be pure and clean like a baby dove, similar to the pig which spreads its cloven hoofs.⁴⁸ However, its beak was of brass, as in the verse, a *mouth that spoke proud words* (Dan. 7:8),⁴⁹ and its claws were of iron, drawing everything to it. Finally, it brought about the death of Titus, referring to the Roman Empire, for He brought about the circumstances of Constantine, through whom He took Rome. Afterward he suppressed it under his feet; he divided the realm, giving it to a western emperor.⁵⁰ This is what the sages meant in their first enigmatic account in the Gemara.⁵¹

Several themes in Morteira's presentation of early Christian history are worth noting: the lowly beginnings of Christianity, the persecution and execution of Christians by Rome, the gradual spread of the heretical doctrine, the eventual prevalence of new faith. All of this is part of God's providential plan, punishing Rome for its crimes against the Jews. Christianity, represented by a gnat transformed into a dove with brass beak and iron claws, is used by God for a purpose

fundamentally different from the triumphalist interpretation of the Christian accession to power.

What makes this passage unusual is its exegetical setting. Rabbinic discourse shown to be highly problematic because of its inconsistency with the laws of nature and with unbiased independent historical authorities is transformed into a communication of historical information serving a Jewish polemical purpose. The rabbis are revealed to be not naive fools but experts with prophetic powers, capable of understanding events that would occur after their lifetime.

If the Christianization of the Roman Empire in late antiquity was the first great providential transformation avenging the defeat of the Jews and ultimately vindicating Jewish historical experience, the second was the Protestant Reformation. As Constantine's conversion led to the division of the Empire between east and west, here was another dramatic breakdown of Christian unity. Morteira insists that this too was foreseen by Daniel and the sages:

When [Daniel] envisioned [the empire] in the image of a beast, he first saw ten horns, which are the ten great emperors of Rome,

52 and he then saw a little horn sprouting up among them. Three of the older horns were uprooted to make room for it. There were eyes in this horn like those of a human being (cf. Dan. 7:78). These are the Lutherans and the Calvinists, who have repudiated the Pope. They have eyes like those of a human being, namely, Israel, meaning that they have come closer to the Jews and are no longer so similar to a beast. They have opened their eyes to flee from some of the rigidities that those who believe in the Pope still cling to. Yet they are *like* the eyes of a human being, not actually human eyes.⁵³

Morteira's presentation of the Protestant Reformation is not surprising. As a Jew in Protestant Amsterdam, he is constrained to walk a

delicate tightrope. He wants to present the Reformation as a negative event in Christian history, part of the divine process of vengeance against Rome, which now stands for Christianity. Yet prudence prevented him from speaking about the Protestants too harshly. As with some Jewish writers of the 1520s, he presents Luther and the movement he spearheaded as a return toward Judaism, repudiating Catholicism on issues in which the Protestants accepted the Jewish position.⁵⁴ Unlike the Jews writing a hundred years earlier, he knows that the Lutherans and Calvinists are not actually going to become Jews: their stance is similar, not identical, to the truth. Yet Catholicism, not Protestantism, represents the main target of attack, both for reasons of prudence and because the break from Catholicism was a decision made by his listeners that had to be reaffirmed.

Following the interpretation of the aggadah about Titus and the gnat as an allegory of the first death of Rome through the agency of Christianity, Morteira presents a second interpretation, based this time not on the text of the Babylonian Talmud but on the text of the Midrash:

Our sages in *Bereshit Rabbah* and *Va-Yiqra Rabbah* applied their enigmatic imagery to the second change, in which God exacted vengeance against them through the multiplicity of beliefs among them. The results were worse than anything before this: loss of honor, intense hatred, numerous wars. They too selected Titus as the emblem for this; because

he did such great evil to the Jews, they used his name to refer to the Pope, who took over in his place and does evil to us.

They said that while he was in the bathhouse, referring to his [?] and to pleasures alluded to by the bathhouse, they brought before him a cup of wine. This means that the gnat came from his attendants and servants, namely, from Calvin and Luther came the gnat. This refers to something that was small at the beginning, which entered his nose and pounded in his brain and destroyed his greatness, his prestige, and his faith, until he cried out that they should open up his head and see how the God of the Jews exacts payment from them.

The physicians came and split open his brain, meaning that they divided his realm into two, separating certain ones out from under their [his?] rule, and it [the new realm (of Protestantism)] grew and became enormous. Its beak was of brass and its claws of iron, to harm him and to destroy him. Nevertheless, Titus still remains alive, as the one changes, so does the other, for the same thing will happen to them both: the gnat flew away, and the soul of the wicked Titus flew away, meaning that payment is exacted by God from all of them, and both shall perish together, says the Lord (cf. Isa. 31:3).

55

Here too the barbs are directed against the Catholics, primarily the pope. He is a source of evil for the Jews, reflecting the experience from the middle of the sixteenth century; he indulges in vain pleasures represented by the bathhouse. Yet the description of the state of Christendom is one that involves Protestants as well as Catholics: intense hatred, numerous wars. According to the preacher, the history of the previous one hundred years reveals Christianity at the lowest state of fortune since the conversion of Constantine. The two versions of the story of Titus thus become two visions of a historical pattern manifest at different times. The sages foresaw events not only close to the time they lived but close to the time of the listeners as well.

The second sermon, delivered in the mid-1640s, is on the lesson *Tazri'a*. Morteira continues an account of the fate of the new Christian religion and its relationship to the Roman Empire. Here he is explicating the rabbinic statement The son of David will not come before the entire empire has turned into heresy (B. Sanh 97a):

In their days, when this new faith began in the midst of our people, they called them heretics (*minim*), to emphasize their total repudiation. When it began to spread among the Gentiles and the Romans, who became closer to them, the sages said that the Romans had turned to heresy, even though they had earlier referred to [Roman religion?] as idolatry. Now the holy spirit had sparked among our early sages. They saw that even though the [Christians] were persecuted by the empire namely the Romans, whom they referred to as the empire because all sovereignty was theirs and they ruled the entire world at that time and the Romans killed Christians by the thousands and tens of thousands, as is known from their books the sages prophesied that the son of David would not come before the entire empire would turn into heresy, and the Romans would be transformed into those whom they used to persecute. This dictum would have been amazing to these [Romans] because of the lowliness and humiliation of their [i.e., the Christians'] beginnings.⁵⁶

Morteira reminds his listeners of two stages in the relationship of early Christianity and the Jewish people: its beginnings as a sectarian movement within Judaism and then its turn to the Gentile world of the Roman Empire as the primary arena

for its initiative. He also reviews two stages in the relationship between early Christianity and the Romans empire: the Christians, first persecuted and killed by the Romans in large numbers, later transformed the empire in their own image. Finally, the preacher refers to two sources of historical knowledge. There are the books of non-Jewish historians, the source for Roman persecution and Christian martyrdom;

57 as in other sermons, these are accepted as reliable for the information they possess. The second is of a different order: the words of the sages recorded in the Talmud. As in the previous sermon, the sages are presented here less as historians than as prophets who spoke of events that would occur in the future. Their terminology requires explication: heresy refers to Christianity; the empire refers to Rome but then their perspicacity becomes clear. One final motif introduced at the end we have already seen in our discussion of the sermon *Despicable and Vile*: the humble beginnings of Christianity and the humiliation of Rome in eventually being conquered by a force for which it once had such great contempt.⁵⁸

What would be the valence of such a passage for its intended audience? It seems to be calculated not to provide the listener with substantial new information but rather to integrate and interpret what was already known. The emphasis on Christianity as originally a Jewish heresy and the reminder that the early Christians were despised by the Romans, might well have resonated with an audience that had chosen Judaism instead. The conversion of Constantine and the Christianization of the Roman empire become not the glorious flowering of Christian triumphalism but a part of the Jewish messianic scenario, known in advance; its function is not to prove the rejection of the Jews but to consummate the humiliation of ancient Rome.

Finally, there are themes that recur in many of the sermons: that history has a pattern and purpose and that the classic texts of the Jewish tradition Bible and Talmud are authoritative sources, not only for the details but, more important, for the broad patterns of historical events.

At this point in the sermon, one issue might well have bothered the alert listener. Morteira has interpreted the messianic prediction as referring to an event that occurred during the fourth century. But if the condition for the messianic advent was fulfilled so long ago, why the long delay? Morteira addresses this by turning once again to the period beginning with the Reformation. He begins with the theme verse from *Tazri'a*, If the priest sees that the eruption has covered the whole body, he shall pronounce the affected person clean; he is clean, for he has turned all white (Lev. 13:13). It is not improbable, he says, that in this promise there is a hint of what we have seen during recent generations of the wondrous change that has come about within the [Christian] Empire. . . . Within a few years, their bonds of unity have come undone, so that many faiths and beliefs quite distant from each other have emerged, producing great hatred and powerful enmity.⁵⁹

Morteira considers the loss of Christian unity, the plethora of different views on basic theological issues, to be a powerful argument against Christian claims of truth. The uniformity imposed by the Inquisitions of the Iberian peninsula is

not to be found in the present environment; Jews are no longer confronted with a clear and consistent alternative to Judaism but with a splintering Christianity like that in the period of its origins where little consensus remains. Morteira emphasized the point tellingly in a sermon on the same lesson delivered a few years earlier: This is what we say to our neighbors: Before you dispute against us, go and resolve among yourselves the multitude of different beliefs held by those who confess your religion.

60 But beyond the loss of unity there is another point about the content of the new doctrines. The theme mentioned in passing in the 1623 sermon that the Reformation brought many Christians closer to the truth of Judaism is here developed in greater detail, using a rhetoric of open opprobrium for traditional Catholic belief:

Many of them have abandoned the glaring errors their predecessors embraced. . . . They have abandoned the plurality that they introduced into the Godhead, they have restored the proper belief in the eternity of the Torah, they believe in the beneficence promised in the future to the Jewish people. They err only to some extent in the matter of the doctrine of the Messiah. In our time, these [Christians] have grown more numerous; every day truth points out the proper path, and their numbers increase. Books have already been written about this, public academic sessions have been devoted to this matter.⁶¹

This is not the occasion to evaluate the accuracy of this presentation of radical Judaizing in new Protestant denominations.⁶² Clearly, Morteira employs elements that are useful for his purpose and ignores others. What is important for our purposes is the conception of history being communicated to the listeners.

The preacher bestows the Reformation with eschatological significance for Jewish history: This is an unmistakable sign

indicating that the time of our redemption is drawing near. After applying to these changes a verse at the end of the book of Daniel Many will be purified and purged and refined; the wicked will act wickedly and none of the wicked will understand; but the knowledgeable will understand (Dan. 12:10) he returns to the statement that had earlier been interpreted to refer to the Christianization of the Roman Empire: The son of David will not come before the entire empire has been changed to heresy (Sanh. 97a): They spoke here as they usually do in such matters, referring to things not as they truly are but as they are generally purported to be. . . . Thus they call heresy not what is actually heretical, but what the Christians consider to be heretical, for throughout the empire, these [new Christian sects] and those similar to them are called heretics who have abandoned the faith.⁶³ The theme verse of the sermon (Lev. 13:13), which serves as the proof text for the talmudic statement in its original context, is then reiterated in its metaphorical interpretation, and the sermon ends with a messianic prayer.

In his sermons, Morteira does not reveal himself as a historian. The only Jewish historical works he cites are Yosippon and Azariah de Rossi. While he refers to texts of Roman history, he may well have derived this material at second hand. Major events of medieval Jewish history do not seem to be mentioned at all.⁶⁴ Even events directly relevant to the experience of the community are not recounted in detail. Instead, we have brief general references intended to drive

home a moral lesson: Let us learn from earlier history, from the greatness, the prestige, the wealth and wisdom that prevailed during earlier times in the kingdoms of Spain and France. Now all is destroyed and abandoned, without even a remnant.

65 This leads into a passage criticizing the failings of those communities as recorded in the responsa literature and applying the same critique to the community of Amsterdam. Or a calling up of shared memories to illustrate a biblical verse pointing to policy for intergroup relations: *Better is open reproof* (Prov. 27:5), of the kind revealed when the king of Spain expelled the Jews from his land unless they agreed to abandon their religion, than that which came at the hands of the king of Portugal, who forced and compelled them to apostatize, covering up his fury and his evil heart and concealing his reproof in lying love by saying that he truly loved them and was having compassion on their souls.⁶⁶

The preacher's point is that Gentiles always hate Jews and that their pretense of love, expressed in favorable treatment, may be more dangerous than open enmity in that it produces self-deception. For Morteira, history is subsumed to a homiletical or polemical purpose. Its importance is to provide lessons for conduct, and evidence for God's providential plan.

Notes

Ed. note: For technical reasons, many of the Hebrew texts could not be included here.

1. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Philadelphia, 1982), 31.
2. Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200-1800* (New Haven, Conn.,

1989), 8082.

3. Marc Saperstein, *Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn* (Cincinnati, 1996), chap. 7.

4. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, The Re-Education of Marranos in the Seventeenth Century (the Third Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies, Cincinnati, March 1980).

5. Some of the sermons were given a precise date by the author; in other cases their dating is approximate. On the problem of dating, see Marc Saperstein, Saul Levi Morteira's Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 25 (1991): 136

6. Budapest Rabbinical Seminary MS 12, 3:191r, Bo, Exod. 10:19.

7. This passage may be based on a statement by Abravanel, who wrote that the author of the books of Samuel did not intend to provide a narrative for its own sake, as with the histories produced by all of the nations regarding their affairs, but for the purpose of teaching about the service of God. Thus, there is a selective narration for didactic purposes, omitting many details (*Perush al Nevi'im Rishonim*, 164a). See Eric Lawee, On the Threshold of the Renaissance: New Methods and Sensibilities in the Biblical Commentaries of Isaac Abarbanel, *Viator* 26 (1995): 297. Cf. the rather different contrast drawn by Abravanel in his comment on Joshua 8, cited by Lawee, p. 295.

8. Cf. also the history of the Roman kingdom written in Portuguese, apparently in the 18th century, and preserved in the Ets Haim Library, described by Shlomo Berger, Remus, Romulus and Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 26 (1992): 3845.

9. On Alexander's desire to have a statue of himself, see *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. David Flusser, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1978) 1:56; David Gans, *Tsemah David: A Chronicle of Jewish and World History*, ed.

Mordecai Breuer (Jerusalem, 1983), 62. Gans, citing the German

historian Heinrich Beunting, reports that Hadrian also erected a statue of himself on the site of the Holy of Holies, adding that this was not for the sake of idolatry, but as a memorial (p. 221).

10. *Giv'at Sha'ul*, 1645, 33d34a; 1912, 13637, Mishpatim, Exod. 21:1, 1620. On the naming of the two summer months after Julius and Augustus Caesar, see *Plutarch's Lives*, Numa 19, 4, 11 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1932) 1:371; Gans, 207.

11. MS 2:53r, Korah, Num. 16:7. The example from common experience is rather revealing: a novice doctor will gain experience not by working on a king or noble but rather on a less important person, to whom harm will not be as serious. Some years later, Morteira made a similar point about the wilderness period but used an illustration from more recent history: Frequently a king will select from those men who have been sentenced to death, and use them for dangerous assignments in his service. For example, the king of Portugal, desirous of discovering places that were not yet settled, would send there such men, taking their lives in their hands, to scout out the unknown territory. If they died, they died. See *Giv'at Sha'ul*, 1645, 63a; 1912, 237.

12. MS 3:99r, Va-Yishlah, Gen. 32:6, 1621. See *Sefer Yosippon*, 1:9395.

13. *Giv'at Sha'ul*, 1645, 28ab; 1912, 125, Bo, Exod. 10:1, ca. 1620. This general type of reference to Roman historical works is characteristic of Abravanel, Gedaliah ibn Yahya, and others. Contrast Azariah de' Rossi's specification of the Roman historians whose work he consulted (n. 47, below).

14. MS 3:345v, Mishpatim, Exod. 21:6, 1624. Cf. Theodor Mommsen, *The Provinces of the Roman Empire*, 2 vols. (London, 1909), 1:7071: By ordinance of Vespasian [in 74 C.E.], the native language [in Spain]

was restricted *de jure* to private intercourse.

15. Note, however, the complexity of this implied message. Morteira cites here the rabbinic statement that the Israelites retained the Hebrew language while in Egypt (*Tanhuma Buber*, Balak 25); Morteira, preaching in Portuguese (from a sermon text written in Hebrew), might have been understood as emphasizing the importance of either learning Hebrew or of preserving Portuguese.

16. MS 4:65v, Bo, Exod. 10:4: All those historians who wrote about his death without any axe to grind mention nothing of this; they say that he died of ague. See n. 47, below.

17. Genesis Rabbah 63:7.

18. MS 3:247v, Toledot, Gen. 25:23:

ועדך קדשו שם הענין הזה באופן אחד ואמרו שני גוים שני נאים זה מתנאה בעולמו זה נחמא
במלכותו אדריאנוס באומות העולם ושלמה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל...
זה מתנאה בעולמו ובמלכותו לבד ולא בעולמו, כי לא היו לאדריאנוס בנים וסבא
יורשים כאשר כתבו ממנו ספרי רבדי הימים לקסרי דומי...
ובזה יפדיש גם כן זה מתנאה בעולמו על אדריאנוס שהיה מולר בכיפה בכל קסרי דומי...
כי אדריאנוס בקסרי דומי הנה היה גאה מעשיו מכולם. שכן ספרו המספרים ממנו שפעם נתן
מתנה לעם עשירה מלואני (?) של זהב ופעם אחת בשמים יקרים לרוב ושלמה כמו כן... וגם
כן לקחו שנים אלה בהיותם בחבליהם גבוהות מלכותם כי מאדריאנוס ואילר התחילה מלכות
דומי לידך והוא היה בחבליהם הגבוהה כמו שהיה שלמה בישראל

On Hadrian's lack of male offspring, see Dio Cassius, *Dio's Roman History*, 9 vols., trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 8:459. On his generosity, see Aelius Spartianus, *De Vita Hadriani*, in *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, 3 vols., trans. David Magie (Cambridge, Mass., 1922), 1:5253: omnes reges muneribus suis vicit. The reading ten million gold coins is not certain, and it seems extraordinarily large. But the editor of the above text gives the amount of Hadrian's debt remission as 900 million sesterces, with 100 sesterces equivalent to one *aureus*, thereby yielding 9 million gold coins (p. 22, nn. 2 and 5). On Hadrian's gift of spices to the people in honor of his mother-in-law, see pp. 5859. Cf. also Gans, 221: In the days of this emperor [Hadrian], the Roman Empire was at its pinnacle [*ba-ma'alah elyonah*].

19. Hadrian the wicked: Y. Ta'an 4.8 (24ab), Lam. Rab. 2,5 on Lam. 2:2; B. Git 57b: Hadrian Caesar who killed in Alexandria of Egypt sixty myriads, twice as many as went forth from Egypt. Cf. Abraham Zacuto, *Sefer yuhasin ha-shalem*, ed. H. Filipowski (London, 1857), 245b: Hadrian the wicked, the enemy of Israel . . . , who seized Jerusalem and destroyed it and decreed that no Jews should enter it; similarly Gedaliah ibn Yahya, *Shalsholet ha-qabbalah* (Warsaw, 1877) 146. For David Gans on Hadrian, see n. 9, above.

20. Samuel Usque, *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel*, trans. and ed. Martin A. Cohen (Philadelphia, 1965), 161. On Hadrian's final illness and desire to kill himself, see *Dio's Roman History*, 8:455,463.

21. This sermon on Shemot is translated in Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*, 27185. There the lesson is drawn from a verse about Egypt and applied to the recent and contemporary experience of his listeners.

22. MS 3:189v, Va-era, Exod. 6:6,1622. The verb חָנַק (hanged) might also be translated crucified, in accordance with Josephus (see n. 25 below).

23. 1 Mac. 2:3438; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12, 27677; *Sefer Yosippon*, p. 77.

24. Apparently the Antwerp 1554 edition, entitled *Los veynte libros de las antiquesdades Judaycas*. See Saul Levi Mortera, *Tratado da verdade de lei de Moisés*, ed. H. P. Salomon (Braga, 1988), 371, 38889,1218. Cf. Salomon, Menasseh ben Israel, Saul Levi Mortera et le Testimonium Flavianum, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 25 (1991): 3141.e

25. *Sefer Yosippon*, p. 18: At that time, two women were found who had circumcised their sons. They hanged the women by their breasts and they threw them and their children from the top of a tower. Cf. 1 Mac. 1:60 and Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12:256. Cf. also Usque,

Consolation, 119: two women were found who had secretly circumcised their sons. These Philip punished with barbarous cruelty; he had them hurled down from a tower with their children at their breasts. Usque reports the killing of 1,000 people in a cave on p. 124.

26. MS 2:200v, Mattot, Num. 30:10, early 1630s.

27. 1645 Ha'azinu, p. 86c.

28. MS 5:47v, Va-Yetse, Gen. 29:7, ca. 1645.

29. GS, 1645, p. 63b, 1912, p. 238, Balak, Num. 22:13, 1639. The manuscript (1:109r) has the correct reading. *Giv'at Sha'ul* 1645, p. 63b reads *ואלי נדרו*, a good indication that the printers did not understand the reference. Nor did the printers of *Giv'at Sha'ul*, 1902 and 1912 (p. 238), who indicated their confusion by writing *ואלי נדרו*. For Morteira's source on the miracles of Heliodorus, ca. 180 B.C.E., see *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Flusser, 1:6164, based on 2 Maccabees, chap. 3. Cf. Azariah de Rossi, *Me'or einayim* (Vilna, 1866), chap. 51, p. 431, who reveals the same uncritical approach to this miracle. Morteira also summarizes Yosippon's account of miraculous wonders that occurred in connection with the Temple during the year before Vespasian came. See MS 4:43r (a eulogy for Abraham Farar delivered in 1619), based on *Sefer Yosippon*, 1:41314.

30. MS 2:15v, Va-yeshev, Gen. 37:7, Hannukah 1627.

31. 3:345v, Mishpatim, Exod. 21:6, 1624. The quarrel and jealousy is based on the talmudic account in B. Men 109b. Cf. *Me'or einayim*, chap. 21, p. 340.

32. MS 3:162r: Shabbat Teshuvah, 1645. On the forced circumcisions, see *Sefer Yosippon*, 1:116.

33. On Morteira's use of typology and its background, see Saperstein, Jewish Typological Exegesis after RaMBaN, *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1 (1993/94): 16569, reprinted in Saperstein, *Your Voice Like*

a Ram's Horn. Typological interpretation is obviously important to Morteira's use of history and his messianic doctrine, as can be seen in the passages cited in the aforementioned study.

34. At the beginning of the Second Commonwealth period. The reference is clarified in a later sermon in which Morteira recapitulates this phrase with a little more specificity: *The children struggle in her womb* (Gen. 25:22), alludes to the time when Israel returned

to the land in the days of Ezra, and the children fought within her, as recorded in the relations between Nehemiah and Sanbalat (see Neh. 3:3335,4:117) (MS 3:174r, Gen. 25:22).

35. MS 3:7v, va-yetse, Gen. 28:11.

36. The connection between Esau the *admoni*, Herod the Edomite, and Rome, called Edom in late rabbinic and medieval literature, is not to be found in any early sources. See Gerson Cohen, Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought, in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 21, n. 7. In a different sermon, Morteira blames the strife among the heirs of the Hasmonean line for bringing Rome into the arena of Israel:

וכן בימי חשמונאים מפני מלחמותיהם נתחברו לדומיים באופן כי מסיבת הקטנות הפנימיות
יתחבר קצת העם אל עם אחד. (3:345v, Mishpatim, Exod. 21:6, 1624).

37. MS I:87v, Korah, Num. 16:17.

38. *Me'or einayim*, 9091; *Kitvei azariah min ha-adumim*, ed. Robert Bonfil (Jerusalem, 1991), 23435. The Gaulanites, adherents of Josephus's Fourth Philosophy, are followers of Judah the Galilean (or the Gaulanite). From Azariah's Hebrew phrase יְהוּדָה הַגַּלִּילִי כת Morteira makes בֵּית הַגַּלִּילִים .

39. B. Yeb 47b, Qid 70b, and parallels.

40. MS 3:162r, Shabbat Teshuvah, 1645.

41. Abravanel's short treatise on the validity of calling Rome and Christianity Edom comes in his commentary on Isaiah chap. 35, not 34; Abravanel, *Nevi'im aharonim*, 171a173a; Morteira provided a lengthy summary of Abravanel's arguments in an earlier sermon (2:9, Gen. 25:26). The assertion that the Edomites, who had been forcibly circumcised by Hyrcanus, became the first to accept the Christian faith is presented by Abravanel not as his own view but as that of

Nahmanides, which he endorses as probably based on an authentic tradition (173a). What Morteira adds to this is the suggestion that forced conversion produces a lack of loyalty to the new faith and that Christianity was God's providential way to purify the Jewish people. On the earlier background of the association between Esau-Edom and Rome-Christianity in the rabbinic literature and Yosippon, see Gerson Cohen, *Esau as Symbol*, 1948, with reference on p. 48 to Nahmanides.

42. See, for example, Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*, 177 and n. 29.

43. MS 1:87v Korah, Num. 16:17:

כי לא הספיק זה בידם שיתקששו בקשיט האמת ושיתלכשו בלבוש האחרות כי מיד בתחלתם
כמפידסט מענינם נתפחדו והיו לכמה ראשים ולא עמדו על ענן אי למען לא יכשלו אחדיהם
בחשבת כי האמת אחם

44. See Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*, index, s.v. *sefeqot*.

45. See Tosafot Gittin 56b, ve-niqer. The idea is that since a beast with a perforation in the membrane is deemed to have a fatal organic disease (*treifah*), it is impossible for any creature to live with such a condition; therefore no perforation could have been made.

46. MS 4:65v, Bo, Exod. 10:4,1623.

47. See Meor einayim, 21516; *Kitvei Azariah min ha-adumim*, 30818, from *Imreibinah*, chap. 16. As we have seen, Morteira does refer to de Rossi on other occasions (see nn. 37 and 38 above). The most charitable explanation for his statement that he has seen no one discuss this issue is that he is claiming originality here not with regard to the problems that preceded the statement but to the solution that follows: he has not seen anyone who both discussed the problem and presented a solution. One attempt to do this that Morteira could conceivably have seen but may not have was by Isaac Hayyot, *Pahad Yitshaq* (Lublin, 1573), secs. 6974. Hayyot provides an allegorical interpretation of the aggadah in philosophical style, totally dehistoricizing its content; it is therefore totally different from

Morteira's interpretation. Reference to this interpretation is made by Gans, *Tsemah David*, 218.

48. See Midrash Tehillim, 80:6.

49. In a passage from the sermon not cited here, Morteira interprets verses from Daniel as prophesying the divisions that he presents as the meaning of the rabbinic statement.

50. The referent of the pronoun *he* is ambiguous in this sentence. If it refers to Constantine, then it cannot actually be a western emperor (*qeisar maaravi*), as the division of the empire did not occur until the death of Theodosius I in 395 c.e. Cf. Gans, *Tsemah David*, 240: The Emperor [Constantine] gave to the aforementioned Pope Sylvester authority and sovereignty over Rome and over the lands of Italy, Germany, France and Spain, together with all other lands of the west to the ocean, to him and to all Roman popes that succeeded him to this day. If *he* refers to God, reference could be to the Holy Roman Emperor of a later period.

51. MS 4:66r, Exod. 10:4,1623:

מה עשה ה' הכנים ירדו בחותמי (כר) הוא אמנת הנצח אשר נמשלה ליתוש הקטן לשמלות
תחלתו... ונקרבמנו שבע שנים ד"ל בלבד מזה עמו באמתותיו וכיבויו זמן הרבה ומה שעבר
אצל פחמי א' וישחק מקול הקודש הוא משל לאוחם אשר נהרגו מרים בחיבות שהוא קול
הקודש כפי שלא תחפש, אולם בהיות שה' נוד זה ליסוד המלכות הרע "כיון דרש דש" ולא
ידא עך עך שנעשה כנזל ד"ל מחראה טהור ונקי כבת יונה ע"ך תוריד מורש טלפיו וכו'. אולם
פיו של נחשת כענין ופום ממלל רבובן וצפידני של ברזל שדכל משרי אליו. וכן הוא המית
את טיטוס ד"ל קיסרות רומי כי סיבב נסיבות קוסטוטין והסיג ממנו את דמי ואח"כ השפילו
תחת דגלי וחיילק את מלכותו ותנה לקיסר מערבי. וזה מה שרצו ד"ל בחידוש הראשונה לש
הגמרא

52. Morteira states this as if everyone would know the ten great emperors to whom he was referring. Most likely, he accepts Abravanel's suggestion that the ten horns allude to the ten emperors from Julius Caesar to Vespasian, that is, until the destruction of Jerusalem. See *Ma'aynei ha-yeshu'ah* in *Perush al nevi'im u-khetuvim*, 336; B. Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel* (Philadelphia, 1972), 214; Lawee (n. 7, above), 31718. In a sermon we have already discussed, Morteira provides a different interpretation of the ten horns as a symbol of the discord within the new Christian faith from its very

beginnings (MS 1:87v, Korah, Num. 16:17).

53. MS 4:65v, Exod. 10:4,1623:

וכמו כן כאשר ראה אותה כדמות חיה ראה תחלה עשרה הקדוה שיהם קסרי רומי הגדולים
ואחר כך קרן זעיר סלקא בעידתן אשר ב מהראשונים אחזקרו מן קדמיה ואלו עיניו בעיני אנשא
בקדנא דא שיהם הלוחמי והקלועי אשר כחשו באפיפוד. ולהם עינים בעיני אנשא דיל ישרלא
דיל שמתקרבם יותר אליהם ואינם דומים כיכ לחיות ופתחו יותר עיניהם לברוח מכמה
נקשות אשר יתדיקו בהם מאפיני האפיפוד. ועכ"ז בעיני אנשא ולא עיני אנשא ממש

The passage concludes, Thus we see that the two great changes which have befallen the Roman Empire were not concealed from the prophets. They occurred through God's decree, to take vengeance against them, until the third change, which will occur through the King Messiah.

54. See Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *The Reformation in Contemporary Jewish Eyes, Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, 4 (12) (1970): 239326.

55. MS 4:66r, Bo, Exod. 10:4,1623:

אלם רבותי כבד ומיקרא דבא עש דמיתם וחיתתם מענין זה על שני תנקה שנית אשר
עשה השירית מהם ברזי הקצות בעיהם אשר היה להם עד מכל אשר קרם על אבדת כסדרם
ונדל שנאתם ודיב מלחמותם ולקחו גיכ לנישא טיטוס כי בהיות שהוא הרע כיכ לישדאל
יקדאו לאפיפוד הנכנס במקומו ומדיע לנו בשמו
ואסרו כי בהיות בבית המרחץ. דיל ב[?] והענינו הרמזים במרחץ. הביא לפנו סס של
ין. דיל מא מעבריו ומשדותיו יצא יתוש. דיל מקלועי ולוחטיו יצא יתוש. דיל דבר קטן שהיה
בתחלתו תכנס בחוחמו (כר) תקד במחו ואיכד גדולתו וכסדרו ואמנתו עך שהיה ציעק
שיפתחו את דאשו וידאו במה אלקים של יהודים מתפרע מהם

באו ההופאי ופצעו את מוחו. דיל חלקו מלכותו לשנים והפרידו אלו מחמת ממשלתם והיה
 גדול ועצום. ופיו של נחשית וצפתיו של בדול לדרע לו ולהשזיתו. אולם ערין טיטוס
 נשאר בתים אמנם כל דהיה רין שני הזה דין שני כי מקרה אי יקרה. פרה יתשא פירא נשמתא
 קטיטוס. דיל מהפדע ה' מכולם רחוק יסופו נאם ה'.

56. MS 1:39r, Tazria, Lev. 13:13.

57. It is not entirely clear whether their books refers to the works of Roman or Christian historians, but it is probably the latter. For Jewish historians on persecution of Christians, see *Sefer yuhasin ha-shalem*, ed. Freimann, 1925, 245; Gans, *Tsemah David*, topical index, 477, s.v. *Notsrimnirdafim ve-neheragim*, esp. p. 237, on the persecution under Diocletian.

58. The humiliation of being conquered by what appears to be an unworthy foe is also emphasized by Morteira with regard to the experience of the Jews, in connection with Deuteronomy 32:21: I will incense them with a non-people, vex them with a nation of fools. His sermon on this verse is in 3:307r312v.

59. MS 1:40r, Tazria, Lev. 13:13.

60. MS 1:42r, Tazria, Lev. 13:10 (1640):

... מה שאנו אומרים לזולתנו: עך שאחם חולקים עלינו לכו ופשרו בניכם בוד הקעות אשר
 בין מקבלי החכם.

In a sermon delivered a few years after this, Morteira turns this formulation around in a striking manner. He argues that it was an act of Divine Providence to eliminate the ancient Jewish sects that challenged rabbinic Judaism before the long exile, for since it was God's purpose to scatter us among the nations in order to teach them the Torah, seeing the Jewish people divided among themselves over its content would have been an obstacle, for they would have said, Before you profess its truth to us, resolve the matter among yourselves (MS 5:47r, Va-Yetse, Gen. 29:7, ca. 1645). The open divisiveness within Christianity on fundamental theological issues was used by Jews as a polemical weapon both

before Morteira (see Abraham ibn Negas, *Kevod Elohim*, cited by Ralph Melnick, *From Polemics to Apologetics* [Assen, 1981], 11) and after him (e.g. Orobio de Castro, in Joseph Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism* [Oxford, 1989], p. 252).

61. MS 1:40a, Lev. 13:13.

62. In the background of this passage may be a conversation Morteira had with a learned Socinian approximately 12 or 13 years before this sermon was delivered. According to his later description, the Socinian told Morteira that he and his co-religionists did not believe in any manner in the Trinity, that they recognized only one God, Creator of everything, and that all except for Him were creatures (*Respondeomo que por ni hum caso cria elle terenidade, se nao que hauia hum so Deos, criador de todas as cosas, e que tudo fora dElle herao criaturas.*) See Morteiras *Tratado da verdad da lei de Moises*, ed. H. P. Salomon (Braga, 1988), 33637 and note pp. 121415; Henry Mechoulam, *Morteira et Spinoza au carrefour du Socianisme*, REJ 135 (1976): 5960. Cf. also *Tratado*, 149,491. On the activities of antitrinitarian Socinians in Holland from the late sixteenth through mid-seventeenth century, see Earl Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1946), 53570. See also Robert Dan and Antal Pernat, editors, *Antitrinitarianism in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden, 1982); G. H. Williams, *The Polish-Brethren: Documentation of the History and Thought of Unitarianism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in the Diaspora, 1601-1685*, 2 vols. (Missoula, Mont., 1980).

63. MS 1:40r, Tazria, Lev. 13:13:

זהו ממש מאמר דדיל אין בן דיד בא עד שתתחפר כל המלכות למינות כי בזה ידבר באופן
נכון בענינים אלו לא על צד האמת אלא על צד המוסכס והמסודס... יקרא מינות למה שהם
קוראים מינות לא למה שהוא מינות כי כן בכלל המלכות קודין לאלו ולכיוצא באלו מינים
היוצאים מן הכלל.

Indeed, the antitrinitarians were deemed heretics and not only by the Roman Catholic establishment. For an example of a Christian author explaining his use of the term heretics to refer to those whom the Catholic Church calls heretics without endorsing the validity of this appellation, see G. H. Williams, *The Polish Brethren*, 1:343 (from a work published in Amsterdam, 1637).

64. For example, I have found no reference to the Crusades in the sermons, although he does discuss the First Crusade in his *Tratado da verdade da lei de Moisés* as is recounted at length in the chronicles (ed. Salomon, 101).

65. MS 2:96r, Mishpatim, Exod. 21:8,1627:

תלפך מן הימים הראשנים מן הנזולות והכבדות העישר והתמכה אשר היה בימי קדם
במלכות ספרד וצרפת ויראה עתה הדוס תטוש בין שריך.

66. MS 4:16r, Exod. 1:13:

טובה תוכחת מנלה כסה שגדש מלך ספרד את היהודים מארצו אם לא ימידו רתם באיתה אשר
באה ע"י מלך פורטוגל אשר הכריחם ואנסם להסיר וכסה את זרועו ודוע לבו והסתייד את
תוכחתו באהבה כובנית לאמר כי אהבת נפשו אהבם וחם על נפשותם.

No such pretense of love or professed religious motivation is recorded in Usque's detailed account of the forced conversion (2024) or in Joseph ha-Kohen's *Emeq ha-bakhah* (Cracow, 1895), 105. Cf. Yosef Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shevet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976), 59.

8

The Yiddis'h Shevet Yehudah: A Study in the "Ashkenization" of a Spanish-Jewish Classic

Michael Stanislawski

In his masterful analysis of the accomplishments and limitations of sixteenth-century Jewish historiography, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi pointed out the paradoxical fate of Solomon Ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah*.

1 On the one hand, this precociously sociological history of Jewish suffering in general and the Spanish Expulsion in particular became the most popular and most often reprinted work of its kind. On the other hand, Ibn Verga's perspicacious and innovative sociopolitical analysis was seemingly ignored by his readers, who saw this book as merely one more diverting and morally uplifting chronicle of a divinely ordained *Leidensgeschichte*. This (mis)reading of *Shevet Yehudah*, Yerushalmi claimed, was already evident in the title page of the first edition of the book, published in Adrianople in 1553, and even more so [b]y the time we come to the third edition, a Yiddish translation printed in Krakow in 1591 for ordinary householders, men and women (*far gemayne baale-batim, man un vayber*) we can see from the title-page that the *Shebet Yehudah* has been transmuted perceptually into a standard piece of edifying folk-literature.²

This essay attempts to delve beneath the surface of this last comment by examining in depth the 1591 Yiddish translation of *Shevet Yehudah*, a fascinating work never before studied in the historical

literature.³ Indeed, even the usually precise and authoritative bibliographical surveys of early Yiddish books and of Jewish historiographical literature in any language have not sorted out the publication history of this and other Yiddish translations of Ibn Verga's classic work. The 1591 edition that I shall examine was the first translation into Yiddish of this book and was republished three more times in the next 130 years, in Amsterdam in 1648, in Sulzbach in 1700, and in Fürth in 1724. In addition, it served as the basis for the substantially different translations published in Amsterdam in 1700 and in Ostrog in 1810, versions that merit separate analyses.⁴

The central goal of this essay will not be bibliographic but will attempt to determine what exactly a standard piece of edifying folk literature might have been in the context of early modern Ashkenazic Jewry and how this particular work was so transformed. In the process, we shall be led directly into

unanticipated and uncharted byways of the thorny central problematic of this Festschrift, the tensions and contradictions of Jewish historiography and Jewish collective memory.

Before we begin, one short technical and one longer methodological observation seem in order. First, the following analysis assumes that the Hebrew text used as the source for the 1591 Yiddish translation of the *Shevet Yehudah* was either the 1553 first edition or the second edition, published in Sabbionetta in 1566⁶⁷ with the false imprint of Adrianople, and was not another, as yet unknown sixteenth-century printed edition or manuscript that might, in theory, have departed from the known text. As we shall see, our translation follows exactly the wording of the first edition, except for a large number of consistent and, I shall argue, highly significant omissions, emendations, and additions, which are not to be found in any of the extant Hebrew manuscripts, printed editions, or translations into Latin and Spanish that I have been able to examine.

⁵ It thus seems methodologically plausible to assume the originality of our translator's changes and then to proceed to an analysis of the methods and intentions that underlay these changes.

On a different plane, I am keenly conscious of the fact that we are dealing here with the *popularization* of a Jewish historical work, not with an unmediated expression of Jewish folk literature or popular culture, not to speak of a Jewish vox populi or collective memory. This distinction has often not been made in either the popular or the scholarly literature and certainly not in the scholarship on early modern Yiddish texts, which historically have been studied by two distinct and often mutually antagonistic camps: on the one hand, Yiddish (and usually Yiddishist) literary historians who sought to claim equal status and respect for Yiddish works aimed at the folk, as

opposed to Hebrew works meant for the elite,⁶ and on the other, students of the popular religion of Judaism, frequently motivated by the desire to historicize contemporary religious reforms, who mined the Yiddish materials for evidence of rituals and beliefs despised by the rabbis but foisted upon them from below customs such as *kapparot* or *tashlikh* or even the canonized version of the Kol Nidre prayer itself.⁷ The former line of analysis was continued along far more sophisticated and less ideological lines in Jerusalem by scholars of Old Yiddish literature such as Khone Shmeruk and Hava Turniansky, who have produced excellent indeed, sometimes dazzlingly erudite studies of premodern Yiddish materials, primarily from a literary and bibliographical point of view.⁸ The latter populist approach has most recently been revived in connection with the spread of feminist theory and women's history in Jewish Studies, as *tekhines* and other Yiddish liturgical and practical texts are analyzed to reveal a women's religion in early modern Ashkenazic Judaism radically different from the official, elite religion articulated by the obviously male rabbinate.⁹

Without in the least disparaging any of these attempts and approaches, it is crucial to note that they are all based on a rather thin layer of documentary evidence, compounded by truly formidable methodological quandaries. For it is no

exaggeration to state that the vast majority of premodern Yiddish texts have never been subjected to any serious scholarly examination. To cite only one, though crucial, example: due to Shmeruk's efforts in particular, we finally have a reliable bibliography of the various Eastern European editions of the *Tsena U-Rena* the famous women's gloss of the Bible, which must rank as the most influential and certainly the most widespread text in whatever it is that might be defined as Jewish popular culture or women's religion in the Ashkenazic realm. But we still lack a comprehensive study of the *contents* of this work what it can teach us about the spiritual and literary universe of its author and possibly its readers and thus about a vital part of the Ashkenazic *mentality* in the early modern era.

10

Beyond this bibliographical morass lies an analytic abyss: the basic terms of any possible analysis of the contours and parameters of a popular culture, popular religion, or folk memory in Jewish society have never, to my knowledge, been rigorously addressed. To oversimplify matters considerably, but I hope not unfairly, the model of popular or folk culture adopted if at times, unselfconsciously by most students of the Jews has been a variation on the standard understanding of Christian popular culture in the last half-century: a model that describes a minuscule clerical and aristocratic elite with its own high culture, religion, and textual tradition poised against the great mass of the peasant population, who lived in a folklore culture unaware of and uninterested in the debates and obsessions of the elite. In this view, a popular culture has been identified and heralded for the most part as the cultural or spiritual life of the dispossessed and downtrodden, the untutored and the unorthodox, and more recently, women as opposed to men.

Quite apart from the question of whether such a two-tiered approach is appropriate to the study of Christendom,¹¹ it is crucial to posit at the minimum that it is highly problematic in regard to the Jews. For despite the undeniably potent differences of wealth and status among them, the Jews lacked anything resembling either a peasantry, an aristocracy, or an ecclesiastical hierarchy.¹² Thus, the gap social, economic, intellectual, spiritual between the clergy and the laity and between the upper and lower classes is hardly self-evident and undoubtedly substantially narrower than that in any host Christian population. Further, the innate rabbinical distaste for discussions of dogmatic or doctrinal purity resulted in a line of demarcation between heterodox and canonized practice and beliefs that was, even at first glance, extraordinarily hazy and immensely complicated by the inexorably difficult and constantly shifting relations between *minhag*, *nohag*, and Halakhah (relations that, to say the least, have not yet been systematized by specialists in that subject). Finally, the search for a women's religion, culture, or spirituality imbedded within the extant Yiddish texts is now only beginning to grapple more substantively than has been done to date with the fact that the vast bulk of early modern Yiddish materials was written by men and intended both for women and for untutored men and sometimes primarily for the latter.¹³

In sum, it seems obvious that far more work has to be done both on the basic

texts themselves and on the methodological distinction between popularization and popular culture *à la juive* before we can engage in far-reaching generalizations about these texts, not to speak about an objectively defined collective memory implicit within them or discernible between their lines. In this light, the following analysis is based on no preconceptions about what constitutes folk versus elite Jewish culture, religion, memory, or mentality. It merely assumes that there was a difference deliberately left undefined between the Hebrew reading audience and the Yiddish and that our translator worked consciously and deliberately with this distinction in mind.

Unfortunately, we do not know who the translator of the 1591 Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah* was, and little can be discerned about him from the linguistic evidence of the translation itself. His Yiddish is simple and supple and utterly devoid of any Slavisms not one word in the 246 pages of the translation could not be understood (on dialect grounds) by readers west of the Oder or south of the Carpathians. Given his frequent use of the pronoun *ets* for the second person plural and its objective and genitive forms, *enk* and *enkir*, it is unlikely that he was of Lithuanian or northern Polish origin, but he could have stemmed from virtually anywhere else in the Central or Eastern European Yiddish-speaking world.

14 What is abundantly clear is that he had a firm and often subtle grasp of the Hebrew language (though he was forced to fudge some admittedly obscure passages in the original text.) At the same time and more remarkable perhaps, he understood the several Spanish terms retained in the Hebrew text, for example, rendering *brivia* as *esrim ve-arba* (i.e., the twenty-four, the colloquial Yiddish term for the Hebrew Bible) and *Allemagne* as *Ashkenaz*. On the other hand, he seemed not to understand the few hebraized Arabisms in the text, thus refraining from rendering into Yiddish the terms *Al-Koran* and *Al-*

Kahir.

It is tempting, therefore, to speculate that his background might have been similar to that of the publisher of the work, about whom we know a good deal: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz. One of the most important Hebrew and Yiddish printers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Prostitz was born in Prossnitz, Moravia, and from there moved to Venice, where he learned the art of Hebrew publishing. From there he went to Krakow, where in 1567 he was granted a privilege by King Sigismund Augustus II in which he is called an Italian Jew to remain in Poland for fifty years. Of the two hundred books published by Isaac Prostitz, his sons, and grandsons over the next sixty years, seventythree were in Yiddish and included both original works such as the *Krovets*, *Brantshpigel* and *Seyfer Mitsves Nashim* and many translations into the vernacular of liturgical works as well as the books of Samuel, Song of Songs, Psalms, Daniel, Esther, and Joshua, as well as the Ethics of the Fathers; Prostitz's Hebrew productions included the Talmuds, the Zohar, the *Turim* and *Shulhan Arukh*, and the works of the great luminaries of Polish Jewry, including Moses Isserles, Solomon Luria, and Mordecai Jaffe.¹⁵

As Yerushalmi already noted, the title page of the 1591 Yiddish edition of the *Shevet Yehudah* is itself fascinating; in a modernized transcription, it reads:

Sefer Shevet Yehudah, voyl far taytsht gor kurtslekh darinen tsu layen far gemeyne balebatim manen un vayber men vert darinen gefinden vunderberlikhe geshikhtnis di gesheyn zayn unzer eltern in der goles un vi fil mol daz zi hobn mekadesh sheym shomayim gevezn. Oykh vert dos bukh besheyden in velkhn tsaytn un in velkhe lender dos alz iz gesheyn iz domit der mentsh vert zayn hertz dervekn tsu gots varakht hashem yis berakhamov uvekhasodov hamerubim zol vaytr zayn folk bahitn fun ale pegoim roim un zol uns zendn den derloyzer moshiekh ben dovid bemeheyro beyameynu, akyr.

16

[*Shevet Yehudah*, translated well and in brief, so that it may be read by ordinary householders, men and women. One will find in it wonderful stories of what happened to our ancestors in Exile and how often they martyred themselves. The book also specifies in which times and in which countries this all happened, so that a man's heart will be roused to the fear of God. May the Blessed Lord in His infinite mercy and grace continue to shield His people from all evil calamities, and send us the redeemer, Messiah son of David, speedily and in our days. Amen, May it be His will.]¹⁷

We shall presently return in depth to what the translator meant by in brief, but first it is important to note that this title page was in large measure not original, but a paraphrase of the original (pseudepigraphical?) introduction to the first Hebrew edition, attributed to the by-then-deceased Solomon Ibn Verga, who claimed that he based his tale on the litany of Jewish catastrophes and persecutions found at the end of a book written by my wise master, Don Judah Ibn Verga, and he called on the Jews to repent to God, who would then forgive their sins and cause their sufferings to cease.¹⁸ The messianic ending of the Yiddish title page is not to be found in the Hebrew original indeed, as Yerushalmi noted, there is not a trace of messianism in the entire book.¹⁹

But as we proceed beyond the title page, we observe that the Yiddish translation has yet another, longer introduction, which itself is a telling reworking of the title page of the Hebrew first edition, written either by the editor, Joseph Ibn Verga, or by the printer. As Yerushalmi put it, this harbinger of the modern publisher's blurb described the book in a technically accurate but utterly misleading way as a chronicle of Jewish suffering and persecution but also as a work that includes details on the blood libel, religious disputations, the ceremony of installing the exilarchs, the structure of the Temple and its inner precincts, the service of the high priest in his chamber before the Day of Atonement, and the Passover sacrifice.²⁰

To all this, the Yiddish translator added three interesting twists. First, he felt it necessary to claim that this book includes many beautiful interpretations of difficult aggadot in the Talmud.²¹ Second, he instructed his audience: If you read this work, you will find in it very important things; therefore, everyone should buy it in order to read it with his wife and children.²² Finally, after repeating once more most of the information in the Yiddish title page, he explained: I have called this book *Shevet Yehudah*, awaiting that God, the Almighty will again establish the rule over us of the Kingdom of Judah via the Messiah, Son of David, who will be of the tribe of Judah.²³ The Hebrew original, however, explicitly explained the name of the book as alluding to the tribal origin of the ancient kings of Israel, as evidenced by the resonant proof text Isaiah 3:8: Ah, Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen.

Even before we turn to the first chapter of the text, then, we can discern in this maze of introductions and prologues a preliminary glimpse of two crucial aspects of our translator's method, beyond his clarification of his primarily male intended audience: his concern that this book be read as part of and in line with the authoritative high culture of Ashkenazic Judaism (i.e., the talmudic tradition) and his willingness to replace historical references in the original text with his own glosses, expressing piety and faith in Providence and in the seamlessness of Jewish historical destiny.

We shall soon see the overriding importance of the first point, but the centrality of the second is evidenced in a startling fashion at the very start of the translation of the text proper of the *Shevet Yehudah*. The original Hebrew work consists of sixty-four numbered chapters followed by four unnumbered concluding narratives, without any table of contents or separate introductions to the individual chapters. To aid his readers through these often very dense narratives, the Yiddish translator added a short preface to each chapter, summarizing its contents. For the most part, these summaries are quite accurate, if banal; but chapter 1, a fictionalized account of the story of Anthony and Cleopatra and the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, is introduced with the following words: *In dizn ershtn perek vert dertseylt di urzakh un urshprung fun den ershtn khurn beys-hamikdosh.*

24 (In this first chapter the cause and reason for the destruction of the First Temple are related.) Clearly, what seems to have happened is that the translator misapprehended the original Hebrew chapter heading, which read *hurban rishon*, the first catastrophe (i.e., the first catastrophe detailed in this book) to mean *hurban bayit rishon*, the destruction of the First Temple. More deeply, of course, this conflation of the events of 586 B.C.E. with those of the Roman conquest half a millennium later speaks volumes about the degree of the translator's

knowledge of (or possibly interest in) the precise rendering of the Jewish past. It is telling to note that this confusion of Babylonia and Rome, Nebuchadnezzar and Augustus Caesar, would be retained in Yiddish versions of the *Shevet Yehudah* well into the modern era, even in its more punctilious and historically accurate editions.²⁵

What emerges quite quickly is that our translator has little interest, in general, in many of the details that define the historian's craft. He is extraordinarily careless with dates and numbers, usually getting them wrong; he omits virtually any description found in the original about other chronicles or historiographic accounts of the stories he is telling; and he freely engages in anachronisms such as translating ancient and medieval weapons and armaments as *biksn* (guns or rifles).²⁶

In the same vein, he often departs from a literal rendition of the Hebrew original to give his narrative a looser and at the same time freer style, fleshing out the human dramas of the stories he is retelling and often humanizing events of the ancient Judean or early modern Iberian past into present-day Eastern or Central European reality. At times, these transpositions of the Spanish (or Roman or Persian) contexts of the stories into the cultural and political orbit of Ashkenazic Jews are dexterous and even charming. Two examples (still from the first chapter) will make this point clear. First, the Hebrew describes Cleopatra

agreeing to marry Antonius, but only on the condition that he divorce his first wife who was in Rome, and so he did (*be-tenai sheyigaresh ishto ha-rishonah asher be-Romi, ve-khen asah*). The Yiddish gives the melodrama a rather more homey touch: *aleyn mit dizer untersheyd, daz er zolt zayn ersht vayb fartraybn, daz er zol zi paterin mit ayn getwith the condition that he should send away his first wife who was in Rome, that he should get rid of her with a get*. Second, we learn from the original that after the conquest of Jerusalem, the Emperor appointed a great minister (*sar gadol*) to rule over the Jews, and returned to Rome in great glory, rendered in Yiddish as: *un hot der shtot Yerusholayim gelozn ayn groysn hern tsu shtathalter anshtot der keyser der zolt geveltiken un regininen oyf di yudn in nomen des keyzers un azoy tsukh der keyser Augustus op fun der shtot Yerusholayim*. Thus, in one fell stroke the Roman governor of Jerusalem is transformed into an early modern Central European *Stadthalter* and Caesar is deprived of the glory of his triumphant return to Rome.

27

But these examples may convey an incorrect impression that this Yiddish version of *Shevet Yehudah* is merely an early modern adumbration, as it were, of the late-nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century tradition of Yiddish improvements and embellishments of the classics, as in the infamous *Der meylekh Lir, farbesert un farshenert* (King Lear, Improved and Embellished). However, as I hope to demonstrate, this is not the case, for we are dealing here with a much more historically pregnant phenomenon, in that our translator slyly but substantially transformed a classic of Spanish-Jewish historiography and the Sephardic *weltanschauung* into a radically different sort of work, redolent of and appropriate to his time, place, and audience. He accomplished this by both omission and

commission, introducing into the text serious additions and elaborations as well as very tellingly omitting crucial and central chunks of the original narrative.

For the sake of clarity and brevity, I shall summarize these additions, emendations, and excisions under seven rubrics:

1. *Interjection of Divine Providence and retribution*: As has long been noted, one of the most important aspects of Ibn Verga's historiography was his analysis of the natural causes of anti-Semitism in general and the Spanish Expulsion in particular, his insistence on the economic and social rather than theological bases of Christians' hatred of the Jews. Whether or not one subscribes to Baer's characterization of Ibn Verga's views as radically secular, humanist or Averroist, his conscious avoidance of the traditional theological explanations of the fate of the Jews among the nations is striking.²⁸ As if to redress this problem, the Yiddish translator consistently interpolated phrases such as with God's help or by God's decree into the text, attempting thereby to restore the centrality of Providence and divine intent to the march of history in general and Jewish history in particular.²⁹ Frequently, this required more elaborate editorial intervention: for example, chapter 8 of *Shevet Yehudah* is the story of an apparently fictional blood libel in the town of Ecija in Andalucia, at the end of which the innocence of the accused Jew is revealed, the perpetrators are killed by the king, and the land returns to its former peace and quiet.³⁰ The Yiddish ending, however, adds: *un di*

yudn varn mit gots hilf beshirmt fun den zakhn (and the Jews were, with God's help, protected from such things).

31

More elaborate is the Yiddish translator's invention of punishments for those who attacked the Jews and their Law; witness the end of chapter 20, Ibn Verga's transposition to France of the background of the expulsion of the Jews from England, the conversion to Judaism of the confessor of the queen, a Dominican who had fallen in love with a Jewish maiden and therefore joined her faith. Ibn Verga's account ends with the (philosemitic) king finally acceding to the demands of his wife and squires, ordering the burning of those Jews responsible for the conversion of the priest and the expulsion from his realm of all Jews within three months, since they did not want to give them time to gather their money and their property.³² The Yiddish translator was reluctant to let matters rest with this lugubrious note and thus ends the chapter with the following addendum:

Der nokh vardn di eydim krank shverlekh un bekenten daz zi hetn falsh eydes gezagt un shtarbn un der kenig dershrok un shtarb (thereafter, the witnesses [i.e., those who testified against the Jews] became seriously ill, recognized that they had given false testimony, and died, and the king was shocked and died).³³

2. *Interjection of sins of the Jews*: Similarly, in order putatively to mute the book's theological heterodoxy, the translator frequently interpolated the traditional acronym *b ahrbeavonotenu harabim* (because of our sins) into contexts where he found it religiously necessary. At times, the addition of the acronym alone was not sufficient, and he was compelled quite literally to spell out the traditional, providential, interpretation of catastrophe occurring as punishment for the sins of the Jews. Thus, to cite for the last time an

example from the story of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in the first chapter of the book, the Hebrew original recounts Augustus's decision finally to attack and brutally sack Jerusalem, and his consequent self-justification to God that it was the Jews who brought this upon themselves meaning clearly in the original their rebellion against Rome and assassination of the imperial governor of Jerusalem.³⁴ For the Yiddish translator, however, the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple had to have been caused by the sins of the Jews, not their military obduracy, and so he added: ulivsof var zayn hant groyskraftik un bezvang di shtot Yerusholayim un brakht um beavoynes fun yehudim fil eyn folk az zand in mer, lesoyf daz dos beavoynes harabim geshokh (at the end, his hand became strong and he attacked the city Jerusalem and killed because of the sins of the Jews as many people as sand in the sea, in the end this happened because of [the Jews] many sins).³⁵

3. *Censorship of nontheologically prescribed sins of the Jews:* At the same time, however, our translator was acutely sensitive to the underbelly of any causal attribution of disaster to the Jews own misdeeds the charges against the Jews adduced by their mortal enemies, as opposed to God. Such claims are cited, analyzed, and most often disputed throughout *Shevet Yehudah*, usually by means of the literary device of the fictional dialogue, in which different characters evince different positions on the acts and faults of the Jews. Given the centrality of the discussion of these matters in the book, our translator could hardly have omitted

these charges entirely from his text. But wherever it seems that credence is given to these charges by the Jews themselves or by their defenders, or when the translator can do so without interrupting the narrative flow, he excises these allegations from his text. Three examples will demonstrate this important point:

(a) Chapter 7 of *Shevet Yehudah* is an extremely long fictional dispute between a philosemitic King Alfonso and a learned Christian sage named Thomas. Rather early on in this dialogue, the king cites an unnamed monk who preached that it is wrong to compare Jews to dogs rather than pigs, for when one dog is hit, all the other dogs rush to bite his attacker; whereas when one pig is smitten and cries out in pain, all the other pigs join in the wailing. And so it is if a Jew comes to a church and steals the chalice, immediately all the other Jews rush to save him.

³⁶ In the Yiddish version, the theft of the chaliceso close to the charge of desecration of the hostis pointedly omitted; we simply read: The Jews are like that too, when one Jews does something for which he is then blamed, all the other Jews rush to defend him.³⁷

(b) In the already cited Eciya blood-libel story in chapter 8, the accusers propose to the king that the Jew be tortured, since under duress he will confess and we will learn the truth, for the Jew will say that he killed [the Christian] and ate his blood.³⁸ Even though the king immediately rejects this proposal, since he had sworn never to use torture to extract any testimony from a Jew, the very notion that a Jew might confess to the blood libel was censored by our translator from his edition, simply by leaving out the words and ate his blood.³⁹

(c) Similarly, at the end of this story, the servant boy who reveals the plot against the Jews by his master testifies that he heard the latter

say: These Jews who did what they did to our Savior, their blood is upon them, and the kings who tolerate them do so only for their own benefit, because of the taxes.⁴⁰ The Yiddish simply excises the reference to the Crucifixion and leaves the master with the purely economic explanation that the kings tolerate the Jews because they hobn gelt fun dem yudn.⁴¹

4. *The problem of usury*: More germane to Ibn Verga and problematic for our translator is the issue of Jewish money-lending, interest rates, and the rabbinic justifications and injunctions in this regard. For throughout his work, Ibn Verga repeatedly has his characters again both philo- and antisemitic emphasize the crucial economic causes of Jew-hatred, including the Jews flaunting of their wealth, their elaborate clothes and feasts, and their lending money at high interest rates to Gentiles. In a typical passage, the scholar Thomas explains:

I have never seen a person of understanding who hates the Jews; it is only the common folk who hate them, and for this there is a reason. First since the Jew is haughty and always wishes to lord it over [the Gentiles] and they do not think of themselves as exiles and servants pushed from nation to nation but, on the contrary, always wish to appear as nobles and ministers, and therefore the common folk is jealous of them. . . . When the Jews came to Your Majesty's realm, they did so as slaves, as exiles dressed in rags, but it took only a few years for them to don expensive clothes. . . . Therefore they are attacked and there are those who call for their expulsion from the kingdom. . . . And a second cause of their hatred is that when the Jews came to Your Majesty's kingdom they were poor and the

Christians rich, and now it is the opposite, since the Jew is smart and full of guile to achieve his goal, and they became rich because of the interest they charge, and Your Majesty can see that three-quarters of the lands and properties in Spain are in the hands of the Jews, and all this because of the heavy interest they charge.

42

The Yiddish translator simply omits any mention of interest in this speech, retaining the charges of haughtiness and luxury but not that of usury.⁴³

But such minor snipping is not sufficient, for two pages later the king accedes to Thomas's advice that the Jews be compelled to return the lands they acquired through money-lending, that they be forbidden to wear silk, and that they be ordered to wear red badges marking them as Jews. All this the Yiddish translator retains, but he feels compelled to excise the more problematic next chunk of text, in which the king confesses that he is shocked that the Jews law permits them theft in the guise of usury.⁴⁴ Thomas assures him that the Bible permitted them no such thing, that this is a misreading of the Scriptures for the Jews own benefit. Deuteronomy 23:21 reads: You may deduct interest from loans to foreigners where foreigners means those who do not believe in any faith; and [y]ou may not deduct interest from loans to your brethren applies to Christians as well, since we and the Jews are brothers, as the Prophet says Are not Esau and Jacob brothers and they have acknowledged this fraternity by saying Thus say your brethren Israel. The king replies that this interpretation is very far from that which he heard from a sect of Egyptian Jews who interpret foreigner to mean Jews as well, and your brethren to mean literally your brothers by birth.

Exactly why this innovative exegesis on a crucial aspect of Christian-

Jewish tension is included by Ibn Verga is subject to debate, but our Yiddish translator cannot tolerate such a heterodox *derash* and omits this whole passage from his text.

5. *Defense of Talmud and rabbinic Judaism*: Far more broadly, any discussion in the Hebrew *Shevet Yehudah* that contains similar attacks on the rabbis and their interpretation of the Law is censored in the Yiddish translation, and more, is often completely turned on its head in inventive defense of the rabbis themselves. Thus, in between the above-cited discussions of usury, the king interjects that he has been outraged by the fact that Jews refuse to eat with Christians; and if a Jew finds an insect in his wine he will simply remove it and drink the wine, but if a Gentile touches the wine, the Jews will declare it unpotable, since they believe that we are an unclean nation. Thomas replies that the Jews are not to blame for this but the Talmudists, who misinterpreted the scriptural prohibition on drinking wine used in pagan religious rites before the coming of Jesus to apply to any wine touched by Gentiles at any time. To this the king replies: You say the blame is with the Talmudists, but I say that it is with those who heed their words. All this is rendered in the Yiddish as follows:

Di yehudim hobn keyn shuld derin den di Toyre zagt un farbot in zelkhn vayn . . . al di vayn di do verrn gotn zu velkhn dinst oyserhalbn iber irer heylikn shtot yerusholayim oyf di oyfir di zol un farbotn zayn tu trinken. . . . Zagt der meylekh: atsint iz mir visig daz di yehudim in zakhn des vayn nebn irer toyre kumen.⁴⁵

[The Jews are not to blame for this, since their Torah prohibits such wine. . . . All wines that were used as sacrifices to other gods in the holy Jerusalem are forbidden to them. . . . Says the King: now I understand that the Jews are following their Torah in regard to wine.]

Many more examples could be adduced to demonstrate this point, but a final one will suffice on another central node of Christian-Jewish tension over the millennia, the crucial issue of whether or not the Talmud contains overtly anti-Christian material. Thus, in Ibn Verga's version of the expulsion of Jews from France the king finally accedes to the demands of the queen and her advisers when the latter protest, How can Our Lord tolerate their contempt for Jesus? And this in your very own land and state! And it is written in their Talmudists book that Jesus was condemned, *etc.*

46 This citation of the Talmud the Yiddish translator simply omits.⁴⁷

6. *Omission of Christian miracles and claims of supersession:* It is fascinating to observe that our translator's defense of rabbinic Judaism does not require him to excise from his text references to any of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity such as the Virgin Birth, the Immaculate Conception, the Trinity, or the essential claim that Jesus was the Messiah. Nor is our translator troubled by the long discussions in our text about Plato and Aristotle and frequent citations from their philosophical works. But in addition to the omissions and additions already mentioned, the Yiddish translator does at times feel compelled to tamper with his text when it includes sensitive testimony of contemporary miracles in the Christian world or references to the doctrine of the supersession of Jewish Law by the coming of Christ.

Thus, chapter 6, the story of the Shepherds Massacres of 1321, begins in the original with two versions of a widely believed miracle: In the first, a boy has a vision of a dove who appears on his shoulder or

head, and when he reaches out for it, it turns into a beautiful young maiden, who anoints him a shepherd to lead a crusade against the Muslims; and as a sign her words are inscribed on his arms. In the second, the sign of the cross appears on his arm. In a subtle sleight of hand, our translator retains the first version of the miracle but omits the second.

A similar tiny but meaningful omission occurs near the start of the AlfonsoThomas dialogue in chapter 7, in which the friar is dismayed that the king is surprised by the Jews survival through the ages, since God has mercy on all His creatures and does not want any of them to perish, not even an ant or a fly, and all the more so the Jews, bearers of a faith even if superseded, whom God brought near to Him in days of yore, and today suffer a bitter exile in order to preserve what they think is the will of God.⁴⁸ The words even if superseded do not appear in the Yiddish translation, thus radically changing the whole point of the text.

7. Omission of tales of the conversion of the Jews: All the above-cited omissions, additions, and inventive transformations of the text of the *Shevet Yehudah* on the part of an Ashkenazic popularizer are revealing, but they pale in comparison to his most frequent, most daring, and most historically evocative editorial decision:

his censorship of virtually every reference in this long chronicle of Jewish suffering and persecution to the conversion of Jews to Christianity, either voluntarily or by force. Occasionally, he retained truncated tales of the forced conversion of Jews in antiquity or to Islam, but he strenuously and self-consciously attempted to expunge from his text every single reference to the central reality of early modern Sephardic Jewry as a whole and of Solomon Ibn Verga himself, the voluntary and involuntary baptism of large chunks of Iberian Jewry.

The first hint of this remarkable revision of Jewish history occurs in the second chapter of *Shevet Yehudah*, the fictional account of a mass conversion of the Jews in the time of Ben Sira in which 30,000 Jews left the faith of Moses, and those martyrs who resisted were burned.

49 The Yiddish translation retains the story but leaves out the figure 30,000, merely relating that *fil* (i.e., many) Jews were converted.⁵⁰ By the very next chapter, however, we are in Spain in 1146⁴⁷ and hence closer to home, and thus the sentence after much distress, many communities left the Law of Moses is completely excised, though the end of the story in which the Jews return to Judaism is quite illogically retained. Perhaps conscious of the need for greater care, two chapters later, the translator emends the tale of the Shepherds Massacre by omitting the baptism of the Jews of Toulouse, necessitating a wholesale reorganization of the subsequent text. Similarly, the end of chapter 9, the tale of the suffering of the Jews under the Visigoth King Sisibut in 613 is transformed by the censorship of the words the majority of the communities of Spain left their faith; instead, the leaders of the Jews are only imprisoned, *un helt zey gefangen lange tsayt, un dernokh daz der kenig shtarb das lis men zey eyn; got zol uns vayter helfn* (and they were held in prison for a long time, and then the king died and they were released, May

God spare us from now on).⁵¹

Very soon thereafter, however, the Yiddish translator encountered entire chapters devoted to tales of the mass conversion of the Jews, which could not be so conveniently edited down, and he therefore decided to omit them entirely. Thus, chapters 11, 15, 27, 33, 45, 46, 47, and 48 are totally excised from the Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah*, hiding from the Yiddish-reading Ashkenazic audience Ibn Verga's account of mass baptisms in (among others places) Savoy, Piedmont, Lombardy, and Monzon in Aragon and especially the detailed descriptions filling several chapters of the book relating to Spain in 1391 and 1412.

In the Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah* these events simply never happened; the Marrano problem never existed: Jews in Spain and Portugal did indeed suffer and die as a result of the hatred of their enemies, but they did so in God's name, as holy martyrs of His promise of the chosenness and ultimate redemption of His people. They thus acted just like their Ashkenazic brethren in the north, preferring *kiddush ha-shem* to the temporal solace of the baptismal font.

As if to hint at a more complex reality, our translator did retain one episode of recent conversion: chapter 56, the brief but chilling tale of a group of starving Spanish exiles arriving by boat on the shores of Italy, being refused entry to town after town, and finally disembarking at Genoa, where out of pure hunger and

desperation a group of Jewish youths took cover in a church and converted to Christianity in order to get some bread, as groups of Christians roamed through the streets with the Crucifix in one hand and a loaf of bread in the other, saying to the young Jews: If you bow down to the Cross, here is bread! and in this way many were converted and lost among the Gentiles.

⁵² It is impossible to know how readers of the Yiddish translation could understand this isolated story, in addition to the several unexplained and unglossed references to *anusim* (Marranos) in the last chapters of the book.

It is important and somewhat arresting to repeat, at the end, a bibliographic point mentioned at the start of this essay: that all of these excisions, emendations, and amendments found in the 1591 Krakow Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah* were retained in the republications of this translation in Amsterdam in 1648, Sulzbach in 1700, and Fürth in 1724. Well into the eighteenth century and possibly even beyond, Yiddish readers of this classic work of Spanish-Jewish historiography thus received a purified and expurgated version of Solomon Ibn Verga's work, in which any theological or exegetical heterodoxy was elided and Spanish Jewry was saved, if only retroactively, from the sin of apostasy.

Until the secrets of the dozens of as yet unstudied premodern Yiddish texts are revealed, it is impossible to know how typical this process, which I have here somewhat playfully termed Ashkenization, was in the annals of early modern Jewish folk literature. But to be sure, the 1591 Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah* remains a remarkable example of how, in the words of Yitzhak Baer, this book, in spite of its skepticism and bitterness, could become one of the most beautiful and widely read of folk books.⁵³

Notes

I am indebted to Rabbi Jerry Schwartzbart, Curator of Special Collections in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and to his staff, for their hospitality and assistance to me in the preparation of this essay.

1. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London, 1982), 57. As he indicates in the prologue to this book, the analysis of sixteenth-century Jewish historiography expands upon his earlier *Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century*, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Jubilee Volume, 4647 (1979/1980): 60738.

2. Ibid., 6869. In this essay, I use the standard transliterated form of the title of this book, *Shevet Yehudah*, rather than the version with a b used by Yerushalmi.

3. For valuable though incomplete bibliographical data, see Moritz Steinschneider, *Judisch-Deutsche Literatur*, *Serapeum* (Leipzig, 1848/1949), no. 281; idem, *Catalog Bodleiana*, 3:239396, no. 8; idem, *Die Geschichtsliteratur der Juden* (Frankfurt a.M., 1905), 79, no. 90; M. Wiener, *Das Buch Schevet Yehuda von R. Salomo Aben Verga* (Hannover, 1856; reprinted 1924), xv-xviii; Khone Shmeruk, *Reshimah bibliografit shel defusei Folin be-yidish ad gezerat Tah ve-Tat*, in his *Sifrut Yidish be-Folin* (Jerusalem, 1991), 91, no. 1591. In addition, Professors John Efron and Elisheva Carlebach have brought to my attention Johannes Buxtorfs use of the Yiddish translation of *Shevet Yehudah* in his

polemical/scholarly works; see Stephen G. Burnett, *Distorted Mirror: Antonius Margarita, Johann Buxdorf and Christian Ethnographies of Jews*, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 25 (2) (1994): 281, and idem., *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies* (Leiden, 1996), 120.

4. The 1648 Amsterdam, 1700 Sulzbach, and 1724 Fürth editions were reissues of the 1591 translation, with only very slight orthographic and lexical changes. In sharp contrast, the 1700 Amsterdam and 1810 Ostrog editions were independent works with different and differing treatments of the text, though they relied heavily on the 1591 translation. A totally different translation appeared in Hrubieszow in 1818, and the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed many different Yiddish translations and reworkings of *Shevet Yehudah*, often with the subtitle *Tsukhruts Yehudas* or under the title *Nidhei Yisrael*; I have thus far examined five separate editions published in Vilna alone (and extant at the YIVO Institute in New York) 1898, 1899, 1900, 1910, and 1913. Apart from incidental comments, this essay does not attempt an analysis of anything but the original 1591 edition; I hope to return to the later editions, and especially those published in tsarist Russia, in another context.

5. Beyond the first edition (Adrianople 1554) and the second edition (Sabionetta with the false imprint of Adrianople), both available in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York, I have examined the seminary's four manuscripts of *Shevet Yehudah* MSS 3542, 3577, 3579:1, and 9100; the undated Salonika edition catalogued as RB 140:9; the Amsterdam 1655 edition; the 1651 Amsterdam translation into Latin under the title *Historiia Judaica*; the 1680 Amsterdam Latin translation entitled *Tribus Judae Salominis fil. Virgae*; the 1744 Amsterdam Spanish translation entitled *Ca vara de juda*; and the Hebrew editions of Zolkiew (1802), Vilna (1815),

Warsaw (1841), Hannover (1855 and its reprint, 1924), Lemberg (1864) Lemberg (1874), Warsaw (1882), and Jerusalem (1928 and 1991), in addition to the scholarly version edited by Azriel Shochat with an introduction by Yitzhak Baer (Jerusalem, 1946).

6. See, e.g., Yisroel Zinberg, *Di geshikhte fun der literature bay yidn* (Buenos Aires, 1961), vol. 6; Sh. Niger, *Di yidishe literatur un di lezerin*, in his *Bleter geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur* (New York, 1959), 35107; and Max Erik, *Bletlekh tsu der geshikhte fun der eleterer yidisher literatur un kultur*, *Tsaytshrift* 1 (1926): 17377.

7. See, for example, Solomon Freehof, *Devotional Literature in the Vernacular*, *CCAR Yearbook* 3 (1923): 375415 and the literature cited in Herman Pollack, *Jewish Folkways in Germanic Lands*, 16481806 (Cambridge, 1981), and Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (Philadelphia, 1961).

8. Khone Shmeruk, *Sifrut Yiddish: Perakim le-toledoteha* (Tel Aviv, 1978); his *Sifrut Yiddish be-Folin* (Jerusalem, 1981); Hava Turniansky, *Ha-bentsheri ve-ha-zemirot beyidish*, *Alei Sefer* 10 (1982): 5192 and her *Sefer masah u-merivah* 387 (1627) (Jerusalem, 1985); Sarah Zfatman, *Ha-siporet beyidish me-reishitah ad Shivhei ha-Besht* (15041814) (Jerusalem, 1985), and her *Mekor u-mekoriut be-Mayse-Bikh ha-kadum beyidish Mayse Vestindie Prag 1665+mikreh mivhan*, in *Ke-minhag Ashkenaz u-Folin, Sefer yovel le-Hone Shmeruk*, ed. Y. Bartal, H. Turniansky, and E. Mendelson (Jerusalem, 1993).

9. Chava Weissler, *The Traditional Piety of Ashkenazic Women*, in *Jewish Spirituality from the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present*, ed. Arthur Green (New York, 1987), 24575; idem, *The Religion of Traditional Ashkenazic Women: Some Methodological Issues*, *A/S Review* 12 (1987): 7394; idem, *For Women and for Men Who Are Like Women*, *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (fall 1989): 724.

10. See his *Di mizrekh-eyropeishe nuskhoes fun der Tsenerene*, in *For Max Weinreich on His Seventieth Birthday* (The Hague, 1964), 32036; see the intriguing comments on this work by Julius Carlebach, *Family Structure and the Position of Jewish Women*, in *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, ed. Werner E. Mosse *et al.* (Tübingen, 1981), 15688.

11. On this enormous topic, see, *inter alia*, Rosalind Brooke and Christian Brooke,

Popular Religion in the Middle Ages (New York, 1983); Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1980); and perhaps most influential in America, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971). For a critique of their approach, see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1981), esp. 2123; John Van Engen, The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem, *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 519-52; and from yet another perspective, Thomas Kselman's introduction to his *Belief in History* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1991), and Natalie Zemon Davis, From Popular Religion to Religious Cultures, in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, ed. Stephen Ozment (St. Louis, 1982), 321-41.

12. This despite the success of Polish Jewry in creating the Vaad Arba Arazot, the Council of the Lands, the most extensive supracommunal agency in post-Gaonic Diaspora Jewish history. Yet the Vaad was essentially a lay organization without any halakhic authority. I am most indebted to my student, Professor Edward Fram, for his comments on this matter in an earlier discussion of this point.

13. See the revealing if problematic recent piece by Chava Weissler, Women's Studies and Women's Prayers: Reconstructing the Religious History of Ashkenazic Women, *Jewish Social Studies* (n.s.) 1 (Winter 1995): 28-47.

14. I am indebted to Professor Marvin Herzog for sharing this information with me.

15. See H. D. Friedberg, *Toledot ha-defus ha-ivri ve-Folanyah* (1950, pt. 2), 525, and Majer Balaban in *Soncino Blätter* 3 (1929/30): 911, 474-8. For the Yiddish works, see Khone Shmeruk, Reshimah bibliografit shel defusei Folin be-yiddish ad gezerat Tah ve-Tat, in his *Sifrut Yidish be-Folin* (Jerusalem, 1991), 75-116.

16. Shevet Yehudah (Krakow 1591), title page. Henceforth, all references to this translation will be abbreviated as Y, followed by the page number. All references to the Hebrew original will be to the scholarly edition, edited by Azriel Shochat with an introduction by Yitzhak Baer (Jerusalem, 1946), based on the first edition, and abbreviated below as S.

17. The English translation follows that of Yerushalmi (*Zakhor*, 69) with slight changes.

18. S:19.

19. *Zakhor*, 65.

20. Ibid., 68. The title page was not reproduced in S.

21. . . . shteyt in den sefer fil sheyne kavones oyf etikhe herbe agodes oyz dem talmud. Y:1b.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Y:2a.

25. See the retention of this introduction to chapter 1 in the Amsterdam 1700 edition; here the chapter headings are presented as a table of contents at the end of the volume.

26. See, e.g., Y:3b, 26a; 27b.

27. Y:2 a and b.

28. See Yitzhak Baer, *Hearot hadashot le-sefer Shevet Yehudah*, *Tarbiz* 10 (19345): 15279; Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 65, and his *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976). For the most recent study of Ibn Verga, see Marianne Awerbuch, *Zwischen Hoffnung und Vernunft* (Berlin, 1985).

29. See, for example, Y:3b and 6a.

30. S:4650.

31. Y:34a.

32. S:69.

33. Y:5ob.

34. S:20. This is, to be sure, a fictionalized account of the actual events, loosely based on chap. 15 of the *Yosippon*. See the notes by Azriel Shochat to this chapter in S:167.

35. Y:3a.

36. S:30.

37. Y:13a.

38. S:39.

39. Y:32b.

40. S:50.

41. Y:33b.

42. S:31.

43. Y: 15a.

44. S: 32 ekh hitir lahem toratam gezel ke-inyan ha-ribit.

45. Y:15a.

46. S: 68; see the note to this point on p. 186 of S, and the reference to *Gittin* 57a.

47. Y: 50a and b.

48. S:28.

49. S:20.

50. Y:3b.

51. Y:35b.

52. S: 123; Y:104 a and b.

53. Yitzhak F. Baer, *Galut* (New York, 1947), 82. Baer was, of course, referring here to the original Hebrew version.

II TIME AND HISTORY IN JEWISH THOUGHT

9

Some Concepts of Time and History in Kabbalah

Moshe Idel

Time and Religion:

Linear, Cyclical, or Complex?

Long after the establishment of the academic study of Judaism, and of Kabbalah in particular, the concepts of time and history in these fields still await comprehensive treatment. Although some important contributions toward a typology and phenomenology of time in Jewish mysticism are available,

¹ it may be a long time before kabbalistic views become part of the general studies of religion.² The belated discussion of the various types of time conception in Judaism may be one of the reasons for the fact that some scholars of comparative religion are still perpetuating the impression that Judaism exemplifies the linear type of historical understanding; an opinion that ignores most alternative views widespread in Kabbalah, such as those presented by the outstanding scholar, Mircea Eliade.³ And yet, even scholars critical of Eliade's treatment of this issue, like Paul Ricoeur, Arnaldo Momigliano, and Jonathan Smith,⁴ do not seem fully cognizant of these alternative perceptions. To them, Judaism has, as a whole, remained a static religion since the rejection of Jesus and thus an example of a linear type of religiosity that may be compared or contrasted to other types.⁵

In the following, the claim that Jewish texts express a much greater variety of concepts of time and, implicitly, of history will be advanced. At the same time I will emphasize the existence of different

combinations between these concepts of time in the same corpora. It should be stressed that an assumption of a variety of time concepts, especially in kabbalistic writings, is a matter not only of the coexistence of diverse systems but of a symbiotic relation between them.⁶

Let me first describe a threefold distinction between principal religious conceptions of time, or chronotypes,⁷ and then discuss the possible conceptual relations between them in some kabbalistic texts. These are presented in the following pages, for heuristic reasons, as separate categories, which have been understood by Eliade as representative of different phenomenological approaches. The ultimate aim of my discussion of these types of time, however, is to show that those views are rarely found alone or totally independent and that, at least in some examples to be found in kabbalistic texts, they often occur in different combinations.

The three categories are, first, the attitude of the mythical consciousness to history or time, as analyzed by Eliade. Meaningful time is created neither by the

contemplation of successive, profane events nor by the measurement of passing of units of time by various tools. Rather, it is created by the repetition of ritual that propels the religious man to another level, the sacred one, where real events take place.

⁸ Since the periods of time relevant for ritual performances are rather small days or years let me designate this concept of cyclical time as *microchronic*.

The second category is the linear or the rectilinear concept of time, which, in religious consciousness, commonly takes the form of *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history). Whereas the first category produces myths or mythologoumena as a major vehicle of its expression, the latter one generates religious history. This emphasizes the uniqueness of founding events; for example, the Sinaitic revelation in Judaism, the incarnation of Christ in Christianity or the advent of Muhammad in Islam. It is the assumption of the exceptional nature of such events or of the personality of the founder that ensures the stability of the respective religion.⁹ In comparison to the small size of the units of circular time as described above and the huge dimensions of the units of time attributed to time in the third category, linear time in religion can be designated by the term *mesochronos*.

The third type of understanding time found in a series of religions is the *cyclical cosmic concept*.¹⁰ This category is obviously different from the second one. Although it has some superficial resemblance to the microchronic concept, we may easily perceive its peculiar features. The mythic conception of microchronos often informs and is dependent upon ritual. Therefore, ritual man may be viewed as chiefly responsible for his entrance into this sacred time. Microchronic ritual consists of repetitious processes that take place several times during the lifetime of an individual. At the same time, the cosmic cycles, which

I designate *macrochronic*, are periods of time that surpass any imaginable span of human life, affecting primarily the pulse of the universe. Man is objectively thrown into a specific dimension of cosmic time, which is present and influential in his life, independent of any human deed. This approach may be seen as representing a cosmic type of religiosity evinced by many Greek sources.¹¹ Both the microchronic and the macrochronic cyclical theories should be understood as coloring moments of time with a particular feature, by resorting to a certain superstructure that helps distinguish unlike the linear time one moment from another.

Whereas the microchronic approach informs the life of the religious person in an immediate and often intense manner, the macrochronic view is more a matter of general speculations a worldview whose impact is much less direct for the immediate religious experience. It may be that deeply different attitudes to the cosmos informed the mythical microchronic perception in comparison to the macrochronic conception. Generally, myth and ritual dependent upon microchronos are important means for aiding one's integration into the positive rhythm of the universe and the infrastructure of society.¹² This is less true for the various versions of the cyclical macrochronism: the underlying and sometimes even explicit assumption of this conception is that our cycle is dominated by a

pernicious power. Far from helping man to escape the terror of history the cyclical macrochronic concepts add, as Eliade has recognized, fresh pessimistic dimensions to this terror, sometimes worse than the negative aspects of history.

13 Even more than the awareness of the latter, it is the cyclical conception of cosmic aeons that has contributed to the alienation of the religious man from his natural environment. Thus, the contribution of cosmic cycles to the understanding of history frequently consists in providing a metaphysical reason for the evil nature of reality. Such is the case in the Hindu view of the Kali Yuga,¹⁴ or the kabbalistic belief that the present *shemittah* is presided over by the *sefirah* of stern judgment.¹⁵ This can also be seen in the Zurvanic supposition that the first nine thousand years are under the aegis of Ahriman, and only then will Ohrmuzd become the ruler of the world.¹⁶ In addition, the Greek view of the ages of the world presupposes that the present era of iron is the worst, in comparison to prior ones. In general, it is a pessimistic approach,¹⁷ often related to astronomical patterns.¹⁸

Therefore, the introduction of a nonritualistic cosmic kind of order, the astral one, may be envisioned as contributing to the negative aspects of the cosmic macrochronos. This fact invites a certain qualification of Eliade's opinion that the emergence of cosmic cycles is an antidote to the terror of history, and therefore encourages an escapist mystical solution.¹⁹ It seems that his reduction of the emergence of cosmic cycles to one religious issue alone, in this case the question of escape from history, is a rather simplistic approach. I surmise that findings of astronomy and the systematization of these discoveries in a larger structure were crucial reasons for the inclusion of astronomical views in religious thought. Focusing on one explanation alone distorts a comprehensive understanding of the

significance of religious developments. The very fact that the regnant power of the present aeon is conceived as pernicious turns the religious system into a relative truth or at least into a lower truth in comparison to a possible higher system.

Notwithstanding the great differences between these three religious chronotypes and perhaps *because* of the existence of these differences, the same religious system may include two or even three conceptions concomitantly as complementary factors. The historical, linear understanding of time does not automatically exclude the ritualistic experience of time; they are indeed commonly combined. The salvation concept of history in some forms of Judaism does not exclude the daily transcendence of historical time by the mystical performance of the Commandments. Likewise, in Christianity, the annual repetition of the celebration of the Nativity, Passion, and Resurrection of Jesus is a periodic regeneration of history.²⁰ In contradiction to Eliade's assumption, I propose that in Judaism the ritual elements are not just traces that survive from ancient doctrine but an integral component of this religion, which, far from representing an attempt to escape the terror of history, was conceived as shaping the direction of the linear by means of the circular approach to time.

Is Eliade correct, then, that one of the major examples of *Heilsgeschichte*,

namely Judaism, includes major ritualistic elements in all of its classical forms, without ceasing, at the same time, to be, in part, a historically oriented religion in which the messianic element was active in shaping important forms of Jewish religiosity? Indeed, the question must be asked whether a serious study of a religious mentality can be conducted on the basis of such an assumption that important components of a religion (in our examples of Christian ritual or the Commandments in Judaism) are so easily relegated to meager vestiges of an ancient type of thought that merely survives. This conclusion can be reached only on the basis of strong presuppositions of the nature of a particular religion that is freely imposed on the hard facts. Eliade's strong phenomenological hypothesis that he can neatly differentiate between some types of religion impelled him to define as traces or vestiges what seem to me to be essential components of particular religions.

As we shall see below, the belief in the consummation of history in eschatological time does not prevent some kabbalists from believing that there are cosmic cycles that transcend even the remotest messianic events. At least in some kabbalistic trends, the three differing conceptions of time may occur together. I would like to emphasize that it is not only the coexistence of different forms of time in the same type of writings that is important; after all, in Eliade's view such a coexistence is also possible. We should ask, instead, whether such a coexistence does not also imply, at least in some cases, an organic link between them. Does the circular performance of the Commandments, according to some Jewish sources, reverberate alongside the linear history?

The emphasis on the microchronic units related to ritual, on the one hand, and the recourse to macrochronic concepts, on the other, implicitly minimize the importance of linear historical time, yet without obliterating it. These observations convincingly show that

sharp distinctions between various religions on the basis of their conception of time is rather superficial. Therefore, the classification of Judaism as a religion based solely on a salvation historical time is an oversimplification that takes into account a biblical conception of history. It ignores any later developments that occurred in both the talmudic and kabbalistic versions of Judaism. Rather than classifying or comparing religions as static essences, I propose to compare various stages of evolution of religious systems. Earlier stages of a certain religion may be dominated by the mythical-ritualistic approach, whereas a second phase, or another, sometimes contemporary school of thought will include the historical interest in time, and the cosmic cycles will appear in relatively late stages of religious evolution. Moreover, as I shall attempt to show, the three views occur in different amalgams in the same passage. If these proposals are correct, then the proper form of comparison is not a religion en bloc versus another religion but rather the pertinent stages of various religions in order to discover phenomenological similarities or affinities between the appropriate issues. Consequently, the differences between two various stages of forms of the same religion may be as great as those between two different religions.

Proper analysis, therefore, requires the particular blend of two or more different approaches in order to comprehend the peculiar nature of a particular

religion's attitude to time, rather than focusing on an essentialist conception of one religion or another that fails to take into account the whole range of developments within that religion. In fact, the penetration of the macrochronic visions of time and history in kabbalistic texts is one important example of the influence of astronomy, of Greek and ultimately Babylonian extraction, on Jewish views of history. In lieu of the dichotomy between archaic and modern, mythical and nonmythical, linear and circular, which may serve as the subject matter of strong phenomenologies, I propose weaker phenomenologies, which propound interactions, coexistences, symbioses, and frictions between types of thought that encounter and confront each other. It is this encounter between ritualistic religiosity, whose time concepts are related, as we shall see immediately below, to divine will on the one hand and the more scientific, cosmic, and speculative astral visions of time on the other.

On Time, History, and Ritual in Judaism

The Hebrew Bible can be described as consisting of two primary, different, yet intertwining topics: sacred history and the Commandments. Both reflect modes of relations between God and man, and both represent manifestations of the divine will. As one scholar has formulated it: Hebrew thought did not entirely overcome mythopoeic thought. It created, in fact, a new myth, the myth of the will of God.

21

Sacred history describes divine intervention in the course of events, commencing with the Creation and remaining important at the End of Days. This has often been understood as linear time, as it starts with creation and strives toward the final redemption. However, it seems

that this reading of the Bible is somewhat superficial. The progressive move, from creation to redemption, can also be seen from another perspective: the omnipotent deity that created the world by His fiat and exercises more universalistic concerns in the first parts of the Bible becomes increasingly preoccupied with limited parts of mankind. The experiments of God with the first generations of man show that it would have been wiser to destroy mankind and then re-create it, in hope of a better result. However, even when choosing one nation and concentrating His efforts to educate it, it seems that the success of the Divine was not much greater. In spite of the many efforts that the Divinity invested in the Chosen People, the results were quite often disastrous. The destruction of the Temple only exemplifies the educational failure of the omnipotent Creator of the universe. In order to make place for human choice, God had to restrict His free will. This scenario is hardly representative of an ordinary linear and progressive vision of history by the Bible; a line indeed there is, but it is one broken in many places, containing moments of regression and only rare expressions of continual progress. The narrative aspects of the Bible are, therefore, predisposed toward a linear, though not precisely progressive, concept of history.

The second main topic of the Bible consists of the divine demand for human response to His revelation, in the form of man's performing of the Commandments. By their nature, the Commandments are regulated by cyclical time, seemingly indifferent to the linearity of the narrative parts of the Bible. Therefore, I assume that these two major topics circle around different types of time: the biblical rituals gravitate around a more cyclical type of time, whose smaller unit is the day and largest one is the *yovel*, the jubilee of fifty years.

22 While Paul Ricoeur has succinctly pointed out the two forms of time in biblical Judaism, he emphasizes more the cyclical nature of the festivals, a feature better seen as part of the circular nature of the Commandments in general.²³ Interesting as the distinction between *historia sacra* and *acta sacra* may be, we should not ascribe equal importance to these categories. The course of history has often been subordinated by the Bible to the performance of the Commandments especially when it is viewed, as in the Jewish tradition, as one coherent book that integrates both priestly and prophetic writings. In some biblical passages, dependence upon the astronomical course of the astral bodies is evident.²⁴ To a certain extent, linear history was conceived of as externally mirroring the religious and moral deeds of the Jewish nation, performed on the bases of a circular concept of ritual and time. This dependence is paradigmatic for many of the classical forms of Judaism and should be seen as instrumental in the emergence of later theories of time that result from the combination of these two modalities of time.²⁵

In postbiblical Judaism, however, sacred history as presented in the Bible has been relegated to an archetypal status, while the Commandments moved to the forefront of rabbinic writings and, to a great extent, other forms of Jewish literature. Various parts of the

Holy Scripture for example, the seven days of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis, the Exodus from Egypt, the theory of *shemittah* and *yovel* in Leviticus, and the visions of Daniel served as explanatory patterns for postbiblical history. These prefigurative readings of the Bible served as important frameworks for understanding pre-messianic and messianic events. Thus, just as in the case of the biblical texts dealing with the Commandments, which served as starting points and sources of inspiration for generations of interpreters, the historical aspects of the Bible were understood as paradigmatic topics.²⁶

In some major forms of Kabbalah there were views that offered a clear nexus between the Commandments and the course of history, the latter being viewed as directly dependent upon a divine system affected by human deeds. In light of these observations, a central thesis of the following presentation will be that the major Jewish bodies of literature written in the postbiblical phase—the Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, Kabbalah, and medieval philosophy—were basically indifferent to history as the concatenation of profane events. One of the major reasons for this indifferent attitude, though not an exclusive one, is the rabbinic immersion in the building and elaboration of the legal system²⁷ and in a variety of theurgical and talismanic understandings of Jewish ritual, which motivated what seems to be the most formative of Jewish activity, the performance of the

Commandments. It is this emphasis on the circular structure of time, characteristic of many rituals in general and of Jewish performance of the Commandments in particular, that diminishes the importance of linear time.

28

Moving to the center of attention in rabbinic literature, the discussions about minutiae and also, although rarely, rationales of the Commandments accentuated the already existing cyclical vision of religious time and encouraged an otherworldly focus for the understanding of the Commandments. With the exception of Jewish philosophy, a variety of theurgical and talismanic explanations of the rationale of the Commandments were accepted as important motivations for the observance of Jewish rites in Kabbalah. This anchored the core of Jewish life not only in an obedient type of activity but also in a participatory mystique. Participation in the life of the Divine was acquired by a creative fidelity to the halakhic *modus vivendi*, which contributes to the inner life of the Divinity. This myth allows the Jew to cooperate in shaping a metahistory, structured by the realm of the Torah, with its cyclical ritual practices and speculative intricacies, rather than partake in the accidental events of profane history.²⁹

In other words, postbiblical forms of Judaism namely, those Jewish religious modalities that stress the primacy of rites could allow history only a limited space in their spiritual structure. Even then, the course of history is still related to the performance of the Commandments. The underestimation of the role of ritual in scholarly presentations, especially the assumption that the rabbinic conceptions of ritual are divorced from mythical elements, is a major reason for the widespread appreciation of Judaism as a historically oriented religion. This

underestimation yields the simplistic dichotomy between a history-bound rabbinism and an escapist, mythical kabbalistic Judaism, as advocated by Gershom Scholem³⁰ or Eliade's perception of Judaism as a historical religion par excellence, to be compared and contrasted to other types of religion.³¹ I would like to propose a more complex model, which allows for different types of combinations of the aforementioned types of religiosity, amalgamated in various ways during the different stages of the development of Judaism.

Last but not least, Eliade generally operates with strong phenomenologies, which are intended to cover extensive religious phenomena. In order to present his strong categories, he conceives of his literary corpora as homogeneous writings. This is also true of Scholem's juxtaposition of rabbinism and Kabbalah. The two characterizations are, however, quite simplistic. It can be shown that ecstatic Kabbalah evades mythical thought, whereas mythical thought is present in rabbinic writings.³² Both scholars postulated the existence of puristic types of literature and attempted to see in mythical consciousness a separate type of time awareness differing from rabbinic Judaism in the case of Scholem and from Judaism in general in Eliade's approach. In place of these oversimplified phenomenologies the academic approach to rich and complicated types of literature posits more complex conceptualizations concerning time. The combination of more than one model thus allows for a greater comprehension of the complexity of experiences and praxes of medieval and early modern Jewish mystics.

For the sake of better understanding the attitude to history, especially in the kabbalistic material, some reflections on the theories of time are in order. Just as the same event is understood differently when interpreted by a cyclical approach to time rather than by a linear one, the same event can be understood in different ways if it can be located concomitantly within different frames of time. Let me adduce one more general example of a kabbalist expressing in his various writings all the varieties of religious times mentioned above. Nahmanides, one of the most famous Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages, composed an eschatological book named *Sefer ha-ge'ulah*. In it he calculated the precise time of the arrival of the Messiah in 1358, thereby subscribing to a linear type of time. At the same time, he exposed a theory of cyclical macrochronos, known in Kabbalah as cosmic *shemittot* and *yovelim*, regarding them as pulses of the divine organism, similar to the rhythm of inspiration and expiration. Moreover, he supported the microchronic cycle related to ritual.

³³ All these views coexisted without creating tensions within his system. But beyond this general example, let me address some more concrete discussions, which combine different conceptions of time in other kabbalistic writings.

On Kabbalah and History

The Theosophical/Theurgical Kabbalah: Moshe Cordovero

Kabbalistic literature is a diversified corpus of writings in which different types of theologies, experiences, literary genres, conceptual models, and mystical personalities found their expression. It would be an error, therefore, to reduce those diverging voices to common denominators in a scholarly search for the answer to the question: what is the kabbalistic vision of history? Unlike the monochromatic

attempts to describe kabbalistic phenomena, proposed by some modern scholars,³⁴ I prefer, on the basis of my perusal of kabbalistic corpora, a more variegated picture of trends and models that existed separately, were combined with each other, coexisted in tension, and even competed with each other, sometimes generating bitter controversies.³⁵

Views on history that have sometimes been appropriated by kabbalists from nonkabbalistic sources, important as they may be, will not preoccupy us here³⁶ despite their wide influence. A discussion that would reflect a theosophicalkabbalistic view of history will have to deal with the divine processes that are connected to lower processes, whose temporal aspect is conspicuous. The divine autogenesis and the processes that take place after the completion of the autogenetic acts are crucial issues in important parts of the theosophicaltheurgical kabbalistic literature.³⁷ Changes that are assumed to take place within the divine sphere imply evolution in time, and despite the efforts of kabbalists to downplay the temporal aspect of their theosophy, they often resort to metaphors and images related to time. In other words, the kabbalistic myth of the divine means, at the same time, the introduction of time within the divine infrastruc-

ture. The deity of the theosophical kabbalists is conceived, in many cases, as an incomplete God who, powerful as He may be, still awaits His completion in some future time. As such, the theosophic structure of divinity, as found in Kabbalah, has a history that is still evolving.

One of the most illuminating scholarly discussions of the relationship between the structure of the deity, time, and myth is to be found in one of Ernst Cassirer's discussions; according to him, time is an essential dimension of myth:

Only where man ceases to content himself with a static contemplation of the divine, where the divine explicates its existence and nature in time, where the human consciousness takes the step forward from the figure of the gods to the history, the narrative, of the god—only then have we to do with myth in the restricted, specific meaning of the word. . . . Only by his history is the god constituted; only by his history is he singled out from all the innumerable impersonal powers of nature and set over against them as an independent being. Only when the world of the mythical begins as it were to flow, only when it becomes a world not of mere being but of action, can we distinguish individual, independent figures of it. Here it is the specific character of change, of acting and being acted upon, which creates a basis for delimitation and definition.

38

The difference between static contemplation on the one hand and the dynamic attitude that characterizes the world of myth on the other corresponds to the difference between Jewish philosophy and kabbalistic theosophy. The assumption that the divine realm can become the subject of a meaningful discourse that deals with a history of God, by using kataphatic statements, is a basic feature of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah. This is opposed to both medieval Jewish philosophy and ecstatic Kabbalah, the latter as represented in the works of Abraham Abulafia. Dynamism implies time, and

kabbalistic mythical consciousness is conditioned by the temporal dimension of the processes it describes. Union and separation in the divine realm are not only the results of positive and negative actions of the protagonists of Jewish *historia sacra* in the distant past; they occur, according to the kabbalists, even nowadays as natural results of the deeds of any Jew. A God without historynamely, the biblical view of Godis strongly involved in human affairs and creates, thereby, history. A God with history, as the Divinity is presented in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, retreats from history. Roughly speaking, Jewish philosophy and to a great extent ecstatic Kabbalah expose a God without a personal history, who, at the same time, does not create history.

The theosophical and dynamic structure of divinity, as envisioned by kabbalists is, as Cassirer points out in the above description of myth, in sharp contradistinction to the static essence of nature, whose independent existence is sometimes denied by the kabbalists.³⁹ The divine sphere is conceived not only in terms of a distinct, separated realm but, on the contrary, as a paradigmatic structure for the lower realms, as part of a continuum that has sometimes even pantheistic implications and, in addition, is responsive to the deeds of man directed to this realm. The archetype of the lower events is found in various aspects of the history of the deity as a dynamic Being.

The most important goal of the theosophical-theurgical brand of Kabbalah is not the personal salvation of the individual kabbalist. It is both the theurgical operations, whose aim is to affect the inner structure of the Divine, and talismanic acts, which are intended to draw divine power downward. The kabbalist is indifferent to history, not because he transcends it by his return to the source but mainly because he is able to activate, even manipulate the very source of history—namely, the intradivine system of the *sefirot*. Real history takes place not in the terrestrial realm but in the divine one; lower history was beyond the reach of the Jews either when they tried to understand it or when they endeavored to participate in it. It was precisely the supernal history and its implications that fascinated the kabbalists, at the expense of mundane history.

An illuminating example of the kabbalistic understanding of time, as subordinated to supernal entities and processes, is Rabbi Moshe Cordovero's explanation of sacred time. Following a variety of traditions, in particular the astrological one,

⁴⁰ this kabbalist envisions time, *zemanim*, as pointing simultaneously to theosophical powers and to their mundane, temporary manifestations. This hypostatical vision of the structure of time is reminiscent of a midrashic statement dealing with *seder zemanim*, the order of time as preexisting creation.⁴¹ However, while the astral aspects of time have been elevated by the kabbalist to a higher order of being, symbolizing *sefirotic* powers, the midrashic tradition apparently has been interpreted in a dynamic manner.⁴² Although Cordovero insists that there is no category of time within the divine realm,⁴³ time is a major symbol in other, apparently later, discussions of this kabbalist. So, for example, he writes elsewhere:

The matter of the changes of the times⁴⁴ depends upon the supernal *sefirot*

and the directive⁴⁵ that reaches us from them. We are the people of God, [therefore] all our behavior and the revolutions of our times⁴⁶ are counted by us exactly in accordance to the spheres of the *sefirot*,⁴⁷ since the secret of our souls, spirits and higher souls is that we are sparks hewn from the light of the *sefirot*⁴⁸ and all our intention is to imitate the supernal [entities] as far as possible, to link ourselves to the supernal roots, to cleave to our Creator, as far as possible . . . and he arranged the periods of the year⁴⁹ and the motions of the stars in such a way as to enable us to know, out of their signs,⁵⁰ the supernal directives just as they are in the Land of Israel.⁵¹

Therefore, the times of the children of Israel depend upon the structure of the divine world, while Jewish ritual and behavior in general taking place in those times are intended to achieve mystical goals; the upper worldthe divine and the astral oneserve implicitly as important sources for the knowledge of perfect behavior. From the above quote it can be extrapolated that the vicissitudes of history, which take place beyond the sacred space of the land of Israel, are irrelevant for the attainment of religious perfection. By knowing the supernal order out of the lower, astral one, which faithfully reflects the theosophical structure and changes, the kabbalist is able to behave mimetically and cleave to the higher *sefirot*. Thus, supernal time is less a clue for understanding the changes taking place in profane history as it is an invitation to imitate the supernal moves

and integrate into the divine world.

⁵² Divine times were perceived as proper moments for an ideal way of life as cairological moments, the performance of the Commandments,⁵³ and as an integration of the mystic into the divine rather than helpful in the hermeneutical processes of decoding mundane affairs.

Elsewhere, Cordovero offers an even stronger hypostatic understanding of times when he interprets the description of God in the daily liturgy as the changer of times: Times are the six changing extremities, namely the [*Sefirah* of] *Tiferet* that is the master of the time⁵⁴ which is changing from one aspect to another, according to the secret of three times during one year⁵⁵ the fact that the time changes from judgment to mercy and from mercy to judgment, depends upon *Tevunah*⁵⁶ which takes out the time, in [the proper] time.⁵⁷

This passage can be better understood if we employ a specific view of the seven lower *sefirot*. According to some kabbalistic treatments, six of them can be depicted as referring to six points on the circumference of a circle, whose center is the seventh *sefirah*.⁵⁸ Although the *sefirotic* identity of the center is not always the same, it is often, as in our case, the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*.⁵⁹ On the other hand, it seems that the third *sefirah*, *Binah*, may stand, in the last quote, for a power that moves the circles, corresponding to the soul of the sphere. The rotating circles, or spheres, of the seven *sefirot* preside, according to Cordovero, over annual time, informing the rhythm of the microchronos.⁶⁰ In fact, the same organon has been used to make sense of the relations between the supernal powers and the lower entities, on either the micro or the macro concept of time.⁶¹ God's will in history has been interpreted by Cordovero as a wheel within God.

The above passage is an explicit example of the theosophical understanding of changes in the mundane world, changes that depend upon intradivine processes and can be known by the kabbalist. Rather than trying to symbolically decode the significance of historical events, theosophically oriented kabbalists focused their intellectual efforts on a mystical way of life, one divinely construed and molded in such a manner that its intentional observance has important repercussions on the divine structure and then, indirectly, on mundane history.⁶² In a discussion by Cordovero, found in his *Sefer shiur komah*, the theurgical implication of the pattern described above was made quite explicit; the plural form of directives, found in one of the quotes above,⁶³ is explained as follows:

The secret of YHVH [is] the directive of *Ein Sof*, that emanates [downward] while *Adonai* is [the directive of] judgment. And when men, here below, will perform good deeds, they will draw down the supernal directive, which is the directive of the name of YHVH, and they will draw it down to them, and will draw down the light of the *Ein Sof*, and will undo the emanation of the [attribute of] judgment . . . the secret of the directive of lower entities by means of *Hesed, Din, Rahamim* they [the three *sefirot*] directing by means of commandments and revolutions of times.⁶⁴

Cordovero proposes here a type of dynamics quite similar to that found in the second quote from *Tefillah le-Moshe*, centering on the alternation of judgment and mercy. However, in the last quote, this alternation depends on human deeds, which are able to obliterate the pernicious impact of the attribute of

judgment. Similar to the rabbinic vision of the power of the prayers of the righteous, which can transform the attribute of judgment into that of mercy,

65 Cordovero assumes that the theurgical effects of the kabbalistic performance of the commandments can complement the effects generated by the revolutions of time. Events here below are not, therefore, following a deterministic path, mechanistically derived from the relations and constellations between *sefirot*, or more precisely, the spheres of the *sefirot*, but are partly decided by human acts, the Commandments.

Thus, the imitation mentioned in the first quote from *Tefillah le-Moshe* is best conceived of in talismanic terms. By means of some sort of operations here below, in this case the performance of the Commandments, a certain type of efflux is attracted downward.⁶⁶ The theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah was interested in a meta-history in which history has a lower, or at least derivative, status. This type of kabbalist disregarded mundane history not only because it was, in his eyes, a shadow of a higher transcendental order of existence but because he was convinced that he possessed clues to the processes that generate lower history, not only knowing their details but also able to intervene in their direction. Thus, this kabbalist, in contrast to the Platonist, who believed in a static ontology,⁶⁷ is to be seen more as continuing some midrashic-talmudic conceptions of Judaism as a religion whose ideal is theurgical acts.⁶⁸ In lieu of the Platonic approach to history as the reflection of the supernal archetypes on the mundane plane, as Scholem understood Kabbalah,⁶⁹ the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah regarded history as the result of the encounter between and blend of divine emanations and human acts, the latter being intentionally designed in a way that may be creative on a level

higher than the historical one.

The dynamic nature of the kabbalistic vision of the divine world strongly influenced its concept developments on the terrestrial plane, including historical events. The deep concern of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah with the human impact on the supernal divine attributes represents a stumbling stone vis-à-vis profane history. By its very nature, history is a past-oriented preoccupation; the theurgical activity of kabbalists, however, is mainly oriented toward the future, trying to improve the processes in the *sefirotic* realm. Or to formulate it differently, history is a reflective account of some past events and, in some cases, an attempt to look through those events for the intention of their heroes.⁷⁰ The kabbalist is less concerned with events as objective data to be known and/or communicated or even as a starting point for contemplation in order to discern the thought within them.⁷¹ As a kabbalist he believes that he already possesses the key to the meaning of historical or any other events: they all reflect the encounter between the divine descending energy, emanation, and the human ritualistic response. The symbolic, theurgical, theosophical, and sometimes astral components of the events are daunting because they reflect strongly patterned ways of thought so that the mundane, historical, particular result is conceived as negligible. On the other hand, the event that is conceived as significant, the fulfillment of the Commandments, is often a structured way of behavior, as pre-

scribed by the halakhic regulations. The kabbalist believes he knows the thought even prior to the event. Unlike the Platonic thinker, whose thought ascends from the material to the spiritual, thus advancing from dim perceptions to a much clearer cognition, the kabbalist, as we have seen in the above passages, may start with the divine structure, not as a terra incognita to be discovered but as an explanatory conceit that constitutes the thought within the event to use Collingwood's phrase or the meaning of history. For the kabbalist, the history of God, as understood by Cassirer in the passage quoted above, is a major factor in profane history; in fact, it is the thought within the event.

The astral construction of history, found in many astrological writings in the Middle Ages, including several Jewish treatises, depends upon a rigid reading of the dynamics of the celestial, mechanically functioning world.

⁷² In some forms of theosophical Kabbalah, however, the picture of the *sefirotic* world has been construed out of astral concepts, the revolution of times, and a syntax influenced by the text of a daily, and thus recurring, pattern of liturgy. This is an invisible map, whose components are linguistic to a great extent, having no referent in objective reality. The recurrence of the celestial moves, as implied by the use of the terms *galgalei ha-sefirot* and *gilgulei ha-zemanim*, is crucial for the understanding of the cyclical nature of the processes, both because they are generated by a revolving structure and because they interlace with ritual performance, which is cyclical too. Astral elements and liturgical performance conspire, in the above quotes, to create a cyclical concept of time that, cosmic as it is, deals much more with the microchronic order that regulates daily life.⁷³ In other words, the profane and structured time of astronomy has been absorbed into the theosophical system of some kabbalistic schools and become a manifestation of intradivine order and processes. Time is conceived to

be but another term for the *historia divina*. The expansion of the religious domain into profane time is quite clear; Cordovero extends the scope of the religious by offering a synthesis between the suprastral perception of circular time, as a manifestation of the theosophical processes, and the rhythm of Jewish ritual, which not only corresponds to the dynamics on the High but has the ability to alter the influences of that dynamics.

However, according to another lengthy discussion of Cordovero, where he again makes a connection between *sefirotic* terminology, directives, and times, the domineering scheme is not an astral one, based upon the imagery of the circle of seven *sefirot*, but an anthropomorphic, vertical vision of the ten *sefirot*.⁷⁴ According to this discussion, each major aspect of the relations in the *sefirotic* system, as well as in the relation between supra-*sefirotic* and *sefirotic* powers and *sefirotic* and hypo-*sefirotic* ones, is represented by a certain type of *hanhagah* (directive). The many directives mentioned in this treatment are conceived of as forms of emanations, which again are designated as times. The times refer to historical moments: paradisiacal time, the time of the forefathers, the destruction of the Temples, and contemporary exile. Thus, we have an interesting attempt to correlate historical events and the types of divine emanations that govern them.⁷⁵ These emanations are enumerated in accordance with a descending hierarchy,

which starts from the Infinite and reaches the realm of the shells, or demonic powers. Also explicit in this case is a theurgical component of the vision of history. Cordovero refers to the pious and meritorious behaviour brought above the successful directive,

⁷⁶ caused by the proper⁷⁷ deeds of the generations.⁷⁸ Again, it is not only the predestined emanation that descends from above, in accordance with the descending order of the divine structure, but also the nature of the deeds of the children of Israel that determine the nature of the directive. It is also in this context that a cosmic cycle is mentioned,⁷⁹ combining the linear with the cyclical.⁸⁰ However, the emphasis on the positive microchronos, evident in Cordovero, seems to have been instrumental in his rejection of the negative view of the macrochronos, as found in some of the kabbalistic writings.⁸¹

Cordovero has often, and properly, been described as a systematic exponent of Kabbalah, which means that he has been able to offer a comprehensive vision that takes into consideration many of the main trends of this lore.

In the above discussion an attempt has been made to point out one of the many synthetic achievements that characterizes the kabbalistic enterprise of Cordovero: his compilation of the astral understanding of the lower seven *sefirot* as the cause of the changes of times and liturgical time. Rabbi Yitzhak Luria Ashkenazi, the other genius of Safedian Kabbalah, has been described in quite different terms. The emergence of Lurianic Kabbalah has been explained, by Scholem and other scholars, less as a systemic development and more in terms of its relation to a specific historical event.⁸² Subsequently, his kabbalistic thought has often been conceived as innovative, radical, or/and revolutionary. This constitutes a gross exaggeration and has served to obfuscate a more systemic inspection of the origins of his

thought within extant kabbalistic sources.⁸³ However, a recent study of Yehuda Liebes on the messianic elements in the *Zohar*, puts in sharp focus those elements that were underestimated by Scholem's presentation of Lurianic Kabbalah.⁸⁴ This, combined with his overemphasis of the messianic elements, conspires to structure a deep gap that separates Lurianism from its kabbalistic sources, compelling the scholar to indulge in speculations on the origins and the motivation of Lurianic Kabbalah as a response to historical problems. Therefore, we remain in the domain of the imponderable. Any impressionistic theory is allowed, even when it cannot be supported, with the result that Lurianic Kabbalah has been explained as the presumptuous response of a Jerusalem-born kabbalist of Ashkenazi extraction⁸⁵ to what happened in Spain almost three generations earlier.

Some of the imagery used by Cordovero in the above quotes, like spheres of the *sefirot* and the explicit awareness of their similarity to the astronomical description, recur in Lurianic texts.⁸⁶ However, his major theosophical pattern was much more inclined to use the anthropomorphical-vertical picture of the revealed Divinity.⁸⁷ The human processes of impregnation, growth and decay have been translated into cyclical processes of divine anthropomorphic configurations. Liebes remarks that the common activity of the children of Israel as a collective should not be seen as principally having a historical and messianic aspect but instead is much more related to

another aspect of time in the Lurianic myth, namely the cyclical aspect, as expressed in *Shaar ha-kavvanot* where it is maintained that the myth is not completed in the course of history but once in a year. More than the continuous historical development is described, it is the periodical myth that is dealt with, similar to Tammuz's or Adonis's death each year, in the pagan religions. The acute Messianic element emerged in Luria's Kabbalah only in its final stages.

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The basis of Luria's Kabbalah is the cyclical ritualistic microchronos, which has been combined with the more linear messianic motif. The double vision of divine guidance in the worldthe grand course of history progressing, toward its perfection in the eschaton, and the providence within history, concerned with the deeds of men in a microchronic period of timebecome part of the development of Lurianic thought.⁸⁹

Let me compare briefly the phenomenological postulates of Scholem's thesis on the Expulsion and Lurianism, on the one hand, and Eliade's view of history and myth, on the other. Unable to cope with mundane history and under a stringent impulse toward theodicy, Scholem's Lurianism proposed a theosophical myth as an explanation that attempts to deal with the terrors of history, exile in general, and expulsion from Spain in particular, without referring even once to specific historical events. Here is not the place to enter the methodological intricacies of this amazing absence.⁹⁰ I would like only to consider the similarity, or perhaps affinity, between Scholem's explanation of the mythical response to the terror of history and Eliade's well-known thesis of myth as a creation that had enabled archaic man to escape the pressures generated by historical awareness. In both cases myth assists a certain type of society to cope with an unendurable situation created in history. In both explanations the

underlying assumption is the existence and depth of a certain awareness, envisioned by scholars as historical, whose pressure must be solved by escape into a mythical world. Thus, the evasion from historical pressures into the mythical realm as a pattern explaining the evolution in the domain of religion in general or in the realm of Judaism in particular is postulated as a basic factor in the writings of these two scholars, whose sympathies with the mythical consciousness are conspicuous. The existence of this affinity is not, I believe, a matter of coincidence. Scholem, and his younger contemporary, Eliade, began to articulate their theories of religion within an intellectual milieu where myths of various kinds made careers. Their impact was, unfortunately, as great in the domain of scholarship of myth as it was in the domain of modern history.

2. On Macrochronos in Kabbalah

We have dealt above with the absorption of the circular microchronos within the theosophical structure. However, interesting as the texts of Cordovero may be, they reflect only one of the major contributions of astral thought to the kabbalistic theosophy. The other one deals with the macrochronic cycles, known in kabbalistic literature as the cosmic *shemittah* and *yovel*. The penetration of the

astrological great times in Kabbalah had a tremendous influence which, though studied by several scholars, still awaits a more comprehensive treatment.

⁹¹ It seems that most of the early-thirteenth-century kabbalists did not commit themselves to the question of what is the presiding *sefirah* in their lifetime.⁹² The most important thirteenth-century kabbalistic book, the *Zohar*, as well as some of the kabbalistic writings in Cordovero's entourage, like those of Moshe de Leon and Joseph Gikatilla, did not accept the cosmic cycle theory, and as a result of this resistance, Yitzhak Luria, refused to accept this concept.⁹³ However, in the writings of two kabbalists at the end of the thirteenth century, Rabbi Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi⁹⁴ and a kabbalist profoundly influenced by him, Rabbi David ben Yehudah he-Hasid,⁹⁵ a particular form of cosmic cycles was explicitly mentioned. According to such a view, the present cycle is presided over by the *sefirah* of *Gevurah*, stern judgment. Consequently, the natural order of this era reflects the pernicious influence of this divine manifestation.⁹⁶

I regard this view, which has some antinomian repercussions, as a result of the absorption of an astrological stand. Following these views, an influential book, *Sefer ha-temunah* written, in my opinion, at the middle of the fourteenth century⁹⁷ expatiated about the nexus between the peculiar nature of the ruling *sefirah* and the particular formulations of the Commandments in the present Torah and the type of processes taking place in this period of seven thousand years.⁹⁸ Apparently en vogue in the Byzantine empire, this view remained influential there for the next generations, including the widespread *Sefer ha-kanah ve-hapeli'ah*.⁹⁹ This pessimistic vision of the present era demonstrates the permeation of the macrochronic cycle by a negative vision of the world. This kabbalistic school, belonging to the

theosophical Kabbalah, maintains the crucial influence of the peculiar type of cycle, under whose aegis they lived, without denying the messianic aspirations and including calculations of the advent of the Messiah. So, for example, we read in a gloss found in R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi's *Commentary on Sefer yetzirah*:

Each and every *sefirah* [of the seven lower *sefirot*] is working¹⁰⁰ for six millennia, and [then] the work turns to one of them for a millennium. Then the work turns to the following *sefirah*. And just as in the six millennia that we are in to-day in the year 5190 [*ha-ketz*.] from the time of creation, the *sefirah* of *Gevurah* is working, and this is the reason for the epidemics and wars and exiles.¹⁰¹

Therefore, two types of time did coexist, without any peculiar tension or friction, in the same kabbalistic system. I shall discuss this issue using an interesting example wherein these types indeed coexist in one text but are to be understood as constituting different levels of discourse: an exoterical versus an esoterical one. A sixteenth-century kabbalist wrote, in a rather neglected treatise, as follows:

The great purpose of the advent of the king Messiah and of the World to Come, [was not disclosed, as it is said]¹⁰² The heart did not disclose to the mouth, neither to the vulgus or to all of the elite but to the few ones who merit this [i.e., the knowledge of the secret]. It is forbidden to the recipient of this secret to disclose it even to the elite, except to a

friend exceptionally close to him. And in the year of Messiah, namely in the year whose secret is 358 of the sixth millennium, which is the year *Shanah*, then the Messiah will arrive. [However,] [i]n an occult manner he has already arrived during the several cycles of the worlds which have already passed before the present one, in which we are, since at the time when he has already arrived, then he will come again also in this time. And what it was said that and then he will come means that the Messiah will come in the future at the time he comes in our time namely in our world.

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The great secret revealed here concerns the advent of the Messiah at exactly the same time in each and every cycle; just as he came in the prior cycle in the year 358, he will do so in our cycle and again in the future. Therefore, the real secret is not the computation of the precise date of the coming of the Messiah but the fact that this date is the archetype of all the messianic dates, past and future. Before entering the conceptual implications of this passage, let us elaborate on some philological details: (a) The term translated as cycle is *Gilgul*, whose primary meaning is rotation but was adopted by the late-thirteenth-century kabbalists, becoming later on the major term for metempsychosis;¹⁰⁴ in this peculiar context, where it is employed together with the word worlds I believe that its rendering as cycle does justice to the general intention of the text;¹⁰⁵ (b) the advent of the Messiah is indicated in our passage by the verb *Ba*, meaning to come. However, in some kabbalistic texts, this verb is used in a peculiar way, suggesting the soul that undergoes a process of metempsychosis¹⁰⁶ and, at least in one instance, this soul is that of the Messiah.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, although the manifest meaning of the text deals with the recurring coming of the Messiah at the same date in each and every cosmic cycle, it seems that a more careful reading of the quotation may reveal also an additional aspect of the subject; the Messiah who returns from time to time is preserving his existence in

the interregnum by means of metempsychosis. Both the historical date within a cosmic cycle and the importance of the macrochronos are reduced to views of little historical importance. An omnipresent Messiah, whose soul peregrinates from one manifestation to another and even transcends the enormous cosmic cycles, diminishes and transcends history altogether.

In any case, a messianic linear vision, which culminates in a particular date, is combined here with a circular vision of the macrochronos. These two views do not coexist in different parts of one kabbalistic system or book, but they are part of one unified vision of time and history. The fact that these two approaches were presented as parts of one view, demands a much more complex phenomenology of religious time than that proposed by Eliade. It is perhaps the belatedness of the kabbalistic writings, representing combinations of a variety of models of time perception, that may account for their complexity, in comparison to more unified views found in the sources inspected and discussed by Eliade. It should be mentioned that the macrochronos presents a vision of time that does not involve, in a meaningful manner, the performance of ritual as a factor affecting the cosmic processes. Indeed, this view is rather the origin of an antinomian attitude, an important issue in itself, that cannot be dealt with here. It need only be remarked

that it is not Gnostic sources, whose influence cannot be, for the time being, ascertained, but the more available astrological views that, when absorbed within a religious system, may create antinomian tensions.

3. Ecstatic Kabbalah

The kabbalistic literary corpus as a whole should not be reduced to a variety of mythical texts. Indeed, myths seem to inspire the thought of many of the kabbalists, but it is not difficult to show that medieval Kabbalah also produced nonmythical trends, one of them being the prophetic or ecstatic Kabbalah founded by Rabbi Abraham Abulafia. One of his major sources was Neo-Aristotelian thought, as eminently represented by Maimonides but also by the writings of AlFarabi and Averroes.

108 From these scholars he inherited some intellectual features pertinent to our topic.

The indifference of Jewish medieval philosophy to profane history has an obvious epistemological reason; since the regnant kind of epistemology was the Aristotelian one, the status of the particular, idiosyncratic, or individual type of event was precarious. From the purely cognitive perspective the individual is valuable only to the extent that it helps human intellect reach the knowledge of the general, the species. The accidental and changing facets of any phenomenon are futile according to the conceptual framework of the most important process in medieval psychology, the abstraction of the form from its material substratum. Only the everlasting aspects of the universe are meaningful in this speculative approach, whereas the dynamics of mundane history include plenty of elements that are irrelevant for the philosopher. No wonder that Maimonides, the

paragon of Jewish medieval philosophers, considered the perusal of the history of the kings to be a barren activity.¹⁰⁹

The ecstatic Kabbalah, as represented in the writings of Abraham Abulafia, presents a similar spiritual physiognomy and thus a comparable appreciation of history.¹¹⁰ The religious ideal of this type of Kabbalah is unitive experiences, which include ecstatic states of consciousness, expressions of mystical union with higher entities, and visions of the higher nature of the mystic. As in the cases of other ecstatic types of mysticism, the major interest is focused in this kabbalistic school on the attainment of an atemporal experience that transcends history and time and culminates in the acquirement of the World to Come during the mystical experience.¹¹¹ Interestingly enough, Abulafia envisioned himself not only as a prophet but also as the Messiah. His messianic consciousness is the reason for some daring acts, the most striking one being an abortive attempt to meet the pope in order to discuss issues connected to Judaism, probably the content of Abulafia's own Kabbalah.¹¹² This attempt, coupled with an active dissemination of his ideas in oral and written forms, represents the first major effort of a kabbalist to engage in an activity having historical implications. However, this public activity of Abulafia seems to be marginal in comparison to the basic assumptions of his system, as presented in his numerous works. Rather than

copied with historical issues, the emphasis is placed upon the ideal of isolation as the conduit for ecstatic experiences.

113 It should be stressed that the eschatological vision of Abulafia includes two treatises that are rather surprising in the writings of someone who portrayed himself to be a Messiah, someone expected to represent a quintessential linear vision of history. According to a rather forgotten treatise of his composed in 1276, [w]hat is destined to be in the future, like the advent of the redeemer and the government of [the nation of] Israel¹¹⁴ [they too] are not negated by the intellect neither is it impossible. Similar things we see each and every day in the nations, that those rule over the other for some time. This is nothing that nature negates but [on the contrary] human nature decrees that it may be so.¹¹⁵

The recurrence of the term *nature* in an eschatological context is quite emblematic: redemption should not, according to Abulafia, be understood in supernatural terms, nor is it part of an extraordinary event. Instead, it should be extrapolated from the inspection of the ebbs and flows of other nations history. It is as a part of human nature that states emerge and decline; thus, the possibility of a Jewish state is plausible. This observation, related to the advent of the redeemer, comes from the pen of a kabbalist who will claim, a few years later, that he himself is the Messiah. Indeed, it may be that here we have an early remark concerning a topic that will preoccupy him later. I propose, however, a certain messianic awareness already in 1276, for Abulafia mentions a revelation he had had around 1270 concerning his future encounter with the pope.¹¹⁶ Elsewhere, Abulafia mentions again the political vicissitudes of the nations in a rather broader context: Behold, the renewal¹¹⁷ of the world will necessarily be in accordance with the attributes, and the attributes will, indubitably, be

in accordance with the [divine] names. And the names will be revealed and concealed,¹¹⁸ in accordance with the letters. And, from this renewal, the ascent of a nation or nations will take place, as well as the decline of another nation or nations.¹¹⁹

This is quite an obscure passage, to be understood as pointing to a correlation between the divine attributes^{*middot*}, which can also be understood as units of time and divine names and the ascent and decline of various nations. Here it is not human nature that serves as the rationale for the changes of power but some supernatural processes dependent upon the divine attributes. The nexus between attributes and divine names and the letters of these names is invoked in the context of political upheavals. However, supernatural as this explanation may seem to be, it is far from a free divine intervention in the course of history. As Abulafia remarked: the attributes are inverted at certain known [eschatological] dates, without any changes and alteration, because of the guidance¹²⁰ of the creatures. And the changes are in the created [entity] not in the creator.¹²¹

Thus, it seems that there is a rather automatic organon, which changes the influence of the attributes at given moments in time. These changes, however, do not affect the attributes themselves but rather the reception of the influence by the creature. It seems that, in a way reminiscent of Cordovero's views discussed

above, Abulafia has appropriated an astronomical way of thought and, at least allegorically, applied it to the divine attributes. The biblical free will of God has again been obliterated, in favor of a much more naturalistic process. Indeed, the nexus between attributes and astronomy can be easily exemplified by another text of Abulafia:

The end of the change of the times

122 has arrived, and so has the end of the order of the stars, in accordance with the attributes. And the attributes and names will change,¹²³ and the languages will be mixed,¹²⁴ and the nations and the beliefs will be distorted, and the diadem of the Israelite [nation] will return to its former state,¹²⁵ and the rank of Jews will be related to the name the essence [of God] not to the name of [His] attribute.¹²⁶ [Then] the revealed will become concealed, and the concealed will become revealed, and the rank of the gentlemen and women will be lowered and they will be vanquished, and the rank of the Jewsmen and women will ascend and rise.¹²⁷

Here, the nexus between the divine attributes and constellations is obvious. The changes in the divine names, mentioned also in one of the above quotes, is understood in a double sense: the secret divine name will be revealed in the eschaton¹²⁸ and, on the other hand, also attributed to the Jewish nation. The national upheaval is described here in terms of the recognition of the Tetragrammaton and of the return of the original language. These changes should be understood on the basis of the above quotes and especially on what we can find in a quote from a book from Abulafia's circle, as dealing actually with the revelation of the Kabbalah based on divine names:

During the time of the Exile, the activity of the names has been obliterated, and prophecy has been canceled from Israel, because of the hindrance of the attribute of judgment. This state will go on until the coming of that whom God has chosen, and his power will be great because of what has

been transmitted to him related to their power¹²⁹ and God will reveal the name to him, and transmit to him the supernal keys. Then he will stand against the attribute of judgment . . . and the attribute of mercy will guide him. The supernal [entity] will become lower, and the lower will become supernal, and the Tetragrammaton, which has been concealed will be revealed, and Adonai, which was revealed will be concealed. Then it will happen to us what has been written¹³⁰ For they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them. Then the natural, philosophical sciences will be canceled and concealed, because their supernal power was canceled, but the science of names and letters, which are by now unknown to us, will be revealed, because their [supernal] power is gradually enhancing. Then¹³¹ the Jews will have light and gladness, and sadness and worry will be [the part of] the deniers, and many of the people of the land become Jews¹³² and your sons and daughter will prophesy.¹³³

Elsewhere in the same book we read that the change of the attribute of judgment into one of mercy will culminate in the spread of the diadem of the kingdom of Israel in the world.¹³⁴ Thus, in addition to the revelation of the name that corresponds to the divine essence, as pointed out in Abulafia's quote, here it is the Kabbalah of names that is envisioned as revealed in the messianic era. The quotes from *Sefer sha arei tzedek* may be interpreted as pointing to a deep change in history, and this may indeed constitute a very plausible reading. A change in

time will be characterized by the coming of the Messiah, the revelation of the divine name, of the Kabbalah of names, and of the attribute of mercy. Such a view is corroborated by an important passage found in one of Abulafia's writings: Indeed in [the year of] five thousand and fifty

135 which is the end of the world and the time of the end, the paths of the revolutions¹³⁶ will be revealed and will be changed.¹³⁷

The astronomical implications of the end are quite interesting. I wonder, nevertheless, if the intention is a cosmic upheaval, a dramatic shift, or the result of a calculation that extracts from the letters that serve the various astronomical data the concept of the end, which means the actualization of the time that is *in potentia*.¹³⁸ However, plausible as such a reading indeed is, I assume that the above passages hint also at a more spiritual and individualistic level of existence. According to another passage, the study of Kabbalah, which is described as connected to the transmission of the divine name, should be started at the age of forty. This is spiritual lore as, beforehand, men are immersed in more corporeal occupations, which are none other than the natural sciences.¹³⁹ The age of forty stands here for the passage between natural science and spiritual lore, just as the messianic age will induce such a change. Are these two moments, the age of forty and the messianic era, related to each other? A definitive answer to this question cannot be found in this book. But an inspection of Abulafia's writings, as well as some books of his contemporaries, shows that the age of forty has indeed been interpreted, allegorically, as the age of the Messiah, understood as the human intellect *in actu*.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, individual time, reflecting the move from the study of philosophy to Kabbalah, which also means the redemption of the mystic, parallels the external redemption on the

public scene, which corresponds to the same shift in learning. Mystical ontogenesis and phylogenesis mirror each other according to these ecstatic kabbalists. While inner redemption can be achieved individually, it seems that the external one should be inspired by the action of an external Messiah, who will reveal to the entire Jewish nation the secrets of ecstatic Kabbalah so that all will become prophets. This was, indeed, the major enterprise of Abraham Abulafia. What seems to be significant for comprehending his activity is the fact that it was at the age of forty, namely in 1280, that Abulafia wrote some of his most important books and made the most important messianic effort: the attempt to meet the pope. Individual redemption and external messianism may sometimes coincide, at least insofar as their timing is concerned. This synchronicity may be more than mere coincidence; the Messiah, who has attained the sublime experience of personal salvation, is subsequently, according to Abulafia, accepted by the masses to act on the national plane.

Thus, the shift from one period of life that took place in the lifetime of one person from the aegis of the corporeal, allegorically represented by the attribute of judgment, to the spiritual one, characteristic of the attribute of mercy was paralleled by the national eschaton. Individuals comprising a certain nation, the Jews, will undergo a certain dramatic shift as a collective. In other words, just as

on the level of the individual, time is implied in the process of spiritualization, as the historical time will define the national spiritual development, understood as exchanging natural philosophy for Kabbalah. Does it mean that, on the cosmic level, there will also be a change in the rule of the divine attributes? Or to put it in other terms, do the divine attributes change their influence alongside the parameter of time in a way reminiscent of Cordovero's theory mentioned above? In some of the quotes above the answer seems to be positive; in one of them, however, the answer is different.

141 Is there a contradiction between two different approaches a more philosophical one represented by one passage alone and a more mythical one that would favor a greater importance to time and history? The answer seems to be difficult.

However, it appears that Abulafia had an esoteric opinion on this issue that it is worthwhile to quote. In the same *Sefer ha-malmed* we have quoted above, there is a passage, apparently written by Abulafia, where we learn the following:

It is known that these two attributes are changed always in accordance with the nature of creation, to each other. And the secret is that the attribute of mercy is always prevailing, because the numerical value of YHVH is 26 and that of the name Elohim is 86, namely when someone will add 86 to 26, and when someone will write 26 in its plain form, *kafvav*, the concealed [name of] 86 under the name of 26 will be found.¹⁴² This means that the attribute of judgment is concealed while that of mercy is revealed. Both are, however, 26 which means that these two attributes are but one attribute.¹⁴³

The formulation that the two attributes are one but that the concealed state of the attribute of mercy is the revealed one of the mercy of judgment, is demonstrated by the means of *gematria*. Nevertheless, it

still remains obvious that Abulafia was interested in identifying the two. The implication is that the change between attributes is not to be seen in terms of a shift between the influence of two different entities, namely, in an astral manner, but rather in terms of presence and absence, which should be understood as the actualization and potentiality of one and the same entity. If so, the more philosophical version seems to better represent Abulafia's discussions. The inference of this proposal is that in the supernal world there is no change and that the traditional rhetorics about the alternation between the two attributes should be understood metaphorically.

If this suggestion, based upon two passages that fostered it in an explicit manner, is correct, then Abulafia's view should be seen as including a vision of time that is not qualified by changes in the divine realm but rather developments taking place here and ascribed allegorically to the divine attributes. This concept of time, a rather homogeneous one from the point of view of the divine influence, opens the way to human activity one that is nonritualistic, or anomian, directed not to establishment of a higher harmony within the divine sphere but focused on the plane of the inner and outer human world. In the two cases, the mystic has to encounter hostile forces: the corporeality and imagination in the case of the inner experience and the exilic situation in the case of the national redemption.

Let me return to this later issue, as it informs and is informed by a certain view of history. An interesting parallel to Abulafia's view of recurrent eschaton occurs

in one of the books with which Abulafia had been acquainted, *Sefer midrash hokhmah* by the early-thirteenth-century Toledan thinker Rabbi Yehudah ben Salomon ha-Kohen.

144 He asserts that if things revolve in a cyclical manner¹⁴⁵ then [also] our kingdom [*malkhutenu*] will return. May this be the will [of God] soon in our days.¹⁴⁶

Like Abulafia later on, Yehudah ha-Kohen had already envisioned the return of the Jewish kingdom, not as the result of a divine plot or of a special intervention but as part of the way of the world, based as it is on the principle of recurrence. Although we can find, in Abulafia, some indications dealing with the concept of recurrence, it should be mentioned that these two authors do not subscribe to the macrochronic approach, which assumes recurrences after cosmic cycles, as in the case of the Messiah in the aforementioned quote from *Ginnat beitan*. It is important to emphasize the manner in which Yehudah ha-Kohen presented his view: like Abulafia, he infers from things what will possibly happen in the case of the Jewish eschatological kingdom. It seems that although both of them presuppose a certain uniformity in nature, which allows the deduction of the possibility of the eschaton from events related to nature in general, in Abulafia's passage from *Sefer ha-malmed* and later on in Joseph ibn Kaspi's writings, a certain uniformity of human nature underlies their inferences.

Abulafia and so, at least implicitly, Yehudah ha-Kohen scarcely view the messianic era as the definitive end of a geographical exile, when the Jews will forever leave the Diaspora to return to the Land of Israel. Instead, in the vein of some forms of astral explanations of events, the ascent and decline of nations should inspire Jewish understanding of the restoration of the Jewish government, *Memshelet Yisrael*. This government, interestingly enough, is described by

Abulafia as dealing with spiritual topics alone; he asserts:

When the special nation will govern, which is chosen by God from all the nations, who possesses the entire earth, as it is written¹⁴⁷ then you shall be my treasure from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine. This government necessitates the return of all the writings to its writing, so that they will become similar to it, because it is chosen from all the writings; and cause too the return of all the languages to its language, because it is superior to everything.¹⁴⁸

I propose that this text implies divine rule over the entire world, which is expressed by the domination of the Jewish nation. This should be understood in terms of cultural influence the reintroduction of Hebrew in the written and spoken forms, a reform that brings mankind to a pre-Babel situation.¹⁴⁹ This return to *illud tempus*, unlike the transcendental tendency of the theosophical Kabbalah, is immanent in the balance of powers of the mundane world at a given moment, while the divine intervention seems to be marginal. Thus, Abulafia proposes to learn from the vicissitudes of the *historia profana*, namely, from the rise and the decline of Gentile nations, as to the probability of an event that is part of what a traditional concept would designate as *historia sacra*: the rise of a Jewish state in the land of Israel. Unlike the general tendency in the theosophical theurgical Kabbalah to broaden the scope of the sacred time on the extent of the

profane one, the ecstatic kabbalist drastically restricts the range of sacred history and broadens the boundaries of the profane one as significant for the understanding of the eschatological event as conceived of in Jewish circles.

Like Ibn Kaspi and Spinoza later on,

¹⁵⁰ he envisions the establishment of a Jewish state in terms of a natural development, which, ruled as it is by the political forces, may also decline. Thus, in some circles of thirteenth-century Jewish thinkers in Spain and, as we shall see below, in Provence, a rather undulatory vision of history has been forged, dealing with an eschatological event in the framework of neither a regular cyclical nor a linear concept of time. The teleological approach to history, so closely related to messianic linear concepts, is therefore absent or at least strongly marginalized in the writings of an important messianic mystic.¹⁵¹ His special vision of time, like that of place,¹⁵² assumes that it is void of meaning for the attainment of the mystical experience, presupposing a twofold attitude: either someone is living in the regular, undulatory time of history or he transcends it by a mystical experience.

The above, rather secular, reading of the ascent and decline of the Jewish state in Abulafia's writings, is coupled with the absence of the restoration of the Temple as part of the eschaton. This double absence from the descriptions of the end of exile, that of the explicit role of the land of Israel and of the building of the Temple, implies a much more profane structure of thought, which may be described as anomian.¹⁵³ If the national eschatology moved to the center of his writings, this would allow for a more independent vision of history. However, absorbed as he was in the articulation of the apex of human experience in Aristotelian and Averroistic terms, namely, in

psychological concepts, the nature and details of the external redemption have been only poorly articulated.

It is perhaps significant to compare Abulafia's wording of the establishment of the government of the Jews to a similar view formulated by Ibn Kaspi. The latter, a Provençal philosopher known as one of the most extreme interpreters of Maimonides *Guide of the Perplexed*, wrote that our future redemption is something that is necessary, in accordance with reasonnamely God, by His willand just as His reason will decree that a nation will be subdued and another one elevated, one of these for a time, or times as decreed by his will.¹⁵⁴ The divine will is conceived as a metaphor for the necessary type of action, which can be explained according to reason. Again, history is conceived of as guided by natural, that is, intellectual, factors.

Some Concluding Remarks

The previous observations have some implications for the phenomenology of the conceptions of time in Jewish mysticism. Between the two classical descriptions of time as linear or cyclical, the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah seems to represent a rather synthetic approach. Notwithstanding its concern with intradivine processes that are presented as atemporal events, the emphasis on the impor-

tance of human activity for the welfare of the supernal structure leads to the inescapable conclusion that the theurgical nature of human religious activity culminates in the restoration of the lost primeval harmony in the *Endzeit*. In other words, this type of Kabbalah is not intended to escape history by a transcendent ecstatic experience but to indirectly restructure the course of history via repetitious religious ritual. The fulfillment of religious life, in this kind of Kabbalah, is the imitation of God, by bringing the Divine within this world cleaving to Him. It would be wise to allow circular time, with its ritualistic performance, an independent status, without attempting to impose the view that in Judaism the messianic idea has compelled a life lived in deferment in which nothing can be done definitively.

¹⁵⁵ This much quoted statement¹⁵⁶ implies a certain type of religious axiology that evaluates what is fulfillment and what is deferment, caused by the acceptance of the linear messianic time that compels itself upon something else, apparently circular time.¹⁵⁷

As opposed to the common conception of ritual as a return to an archetypal, primordial experience, espoused by Eliade, kabbalistic literature includes views of the rite not only as an imitation of a lost mythical state, the divine Sabbath for example, repeated within a cyclical type of time, but also as a contribution to an evolutionary process that will induce such a state in another time, probably in another place, for the welfare of another people. Far from being an attempt to escape history by the existential, individual return to the primordial state through ritual performance, the theurgical kabbalist envisions the impact of a cumulative activity that is focused upon the divine Other rather than on the psyche of the religious person, although there is no doubt as to the psychological impact of the kabbalistic performance of the rites on the kabbalist himself.

Kabbalah contributes, therefore, a very complex dimension to the concepts of time of this religion; the common scholarly perception of Judaism as the most important representative of the religious conception of linear time is, at best, an oversimplification. The microchronic approach to time can, instead, be described as looking to the social, or historical, time with the means of a microscope, a fact that dissolves the common perception of time. On the other hand, the macrochronic conceptions are comparable to looking at a small segment of linear time from a very great distance by means of a telescope. In both cases, linear, or mesochronic, time is losing its regular importance or common dimension.

An outstanding characteristic of many kabbalistic approaches to time is their growing efforts to fill each and every instant with particular deeds that strive to transform the profane time into a sacred one; the ostensive tendency to hallow time reduces the potential significance of profane time and profane history from a religious point of view.¹⁵⁸ Thus ordinary activities may remain beyond the frame of religious activity and maintain, thereby, their historical nature or be understood as *acta sacra* and transcend history, neutralizing their relationship to place, to community, or to economic activity. The very extension of the range of the religious, especially mystical, meaning of a certain type of act implicitly reduces the historicity and uniqueness of human deeds. Jewish mysticism is characterized by

a continuous effort to enhance the mystical cargo, not only of the biblical and talmudic discussion of the Commandments but of every kind of human act. The development of this mysticism, beginning with the *Heikhalot* literature and ending with the eighteenth-century Polish Hasidism, can be adequately conceived of as a reinterpretation of the Commandments and, afterward, of the other activities as *acta sacra*.

159 Mutatis mutandis, this change is a gradual reduction of the potential interest and involvement in history as a meaningful religious category. This move has been exposed, in a very sensitive manner, by Momigliano, in the context of a personal recollection: The whole development of Judaism led to something ahistorical, eternal, the Law, the Torah History had nothing to explain and little to reveal to the man who meditated the Law day and night.¹⁶⁰

What this passage really says is that history does not explain something valuable to those Jews who were immersed in the study process or in ritual, because it is not a message delivered in a direct manner, such as the canonic Scriptures were understood. The feeling was that the master key was already found in their comprehension of the content of the canonic writings. This does not necessarily mean that Jews, both great scholars or others, did not for the sake of their religious, economic, or political survival learn, understand, and accommodate their practices, religious and secular, or often misread the meaning of the historical circumstances of their lives. The question, as formulated by Momigliano, is to what extent the book of history was conceived, in the traditional forms of postbiblical Judaism, to be a meaningful text. For a kabbalist like Abulafia, and in a different manner for theosophical-theurgical kabbalists, we can learn from watching the upheavals of the nations about the possible

restoration of a Jewish dominion. But that does not mean that historical events, in their particular manifestations, reveal something. The view of time in ecstatic Kabbalah, as described above, assumes a dichotomy in the perception of time, which operates with two totally unrelated concepts: divine unchangeable time, an atemporal nunc confined to ecstatic moments, and mundane time devoid of religious significance. It may well be that, from the point of view of geography, time, and ritual, such a divorce between profane time and sacred time, which relegates the responsibility of the mystic to operate outside the framework of the sacred, may contribute to the emergence not only of a more naturalistic view of history but also to a more active involvement in shaping the course of external events. In any case, Abulafia, who regarded individual redemption in terms of ecstatic moments, assumed also the role of an historical Messiah and attempted to act accordingly, *inter alia*, by his effort to meet the pope.

On the other hand, the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah assumes a substantial nexus between the lower and the sublime types of time. This form of Kabbalah is, in general, much more integrative than is the ecstatic Kabbalah.¹⁶¹ In Abulafia's Kabbalah, the split between the profane and the divine realms opened the possibility of the mystic to return to mundane reality enriched by the ecstatic experience.¹⁶² Theosophical-theurgical kabbalists, however, gradually restricted the realm of the profane by absorbing it within a domain presided by the divine

power of the ways being the integration of astral and magical concepts within their theosophical and theurgical systems. Both types of Kabbalah built up an indifferent approach toward profane history because of the absorption by some kabbalists of patterns of thought that do not subscribe to linear time. These patterns have reinforced the biblical cyclic view of the performance of Commandments.

¹⁶³ The ordered way of life, as regulated by Halakhah, has been combined or perhaps recombined with astral rhythms.¹⁶⁴

Notes

1. See Shlomo Pines, Eschatology and the Concept of Time in the Slavonic Book of Enoch, in *Types of Redemption*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and C. Jouco Bleeker (Leiden, 1970), 7287; the important study of Shalom Rosenberg, The Return to the Garden of Eden: Remarks for the History of the Idea of the Restorative Redemption in the Medieval Jewish Philosophy, in *The Messianic Idea in Jewish Thought: A Study Conference in Honour of the Eightieth Birth Day of Gershom Scholem* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1990), 3786; Elliot K. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah* (Albany, N.Y., 1989); Israel Weinstock, *Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Mysticism* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1969), 151244; Martel Gavarin, The Conception of Time in the Works of Rabbi Azriel, in *The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Europe* (in Hebrew), ed. J. Dan (Jerusalem, 1987), 30936; and Werblowsky's study mentioned in n. 23 below. See, more recently, Robert Chazan, The Timebound and the Timeless: Medieval Jewish Narration of Events, *History and Memory*, 6 (1994): 534.

2. See, e.g., the absence of a separate discussion of time in Judaism in the collection of Eranos papers, *Man and Time*, ed. J. Campbell

(Princeton, N.J., 1983).

3. See, e.g., his *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York, 1959), 111, where he speaks about the acceptance and consecration of history by the Judaic elites; see also pp. vii, 1057, 16162, and idem., *A History of Religious Ideas*, trans. W. R. Task (Chicago, 1978) 1:35556. Compare also to his remark that for Judaism [*sic*] time has a beginning and will have an end. The idea of cyclic time was left behind, in *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York, 1961), 110. It should be noted that in his *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (Bollingen Series, Princeton, N.J., 1991), 15772, Eliade offers a rather fascinating interpretation of some themes, or what he calls archetypes, in Christianity, which transcend the time-bound, particularistic understanding of this religion by becoming a window to the atemporal. On Eliade's view of time and history in general, see Carl Olson, *The Theology and Philosophy of Eliade* (London, 1992), 13956. On cyclical time and history, see the important study of G. W. Trompf, *The Idea of Recurrence in Western Thought: From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, Calif., 1979), 11820; S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Oxford, 1959), 15152, as well as the many other references to scholarly views on the biblical linear theory collected by John Briggs Curtis, *A Suggested Interpretation of the Biblical Philosophy of History*, HUCA 34 (1963): 11517, Cornelius Loew, *Myth, Sacred History and Philosophy* (New York, 1967), 106, 146.

4. See his *The History of Religion and the Phenomenology of Time Consciousness*, in *History of Religions, Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. J. K. Kitagawa (New York, London, 1985), 1330; Arnaldo Momigliano, *Time in Ancient Historiography*, in *History and Theory: vol. 6: History and the Concept of Time* (1966): 123; and J. Smith, *A Slip in Time Saves Nine: Prestigious Origins Again*, in *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*, ed. John Bender and David E. Wellbery

(Stanford, Calif., 1991), 7376.

5. See, e.g, the writings of C. Jung, J. Campbell, R. Zaehner, and A. Toynbee. The descriptions of Judaism by some of modern scholars of religion should be analyzed in a separate study. See, for the time being, M. Idel, *The Contribution of Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah to the Understanding of Jewish Mysticism*, in *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: 50 Years After*, ed. P. Schaefer and J. Dan (Tübingen, 1993), 13335.
6. See also Ginsburg, *The Sabbath*, 9495.
7. Other threefold distinctions, interesting in themselves, but different from the following one, can be found in Rosenberg, *Return to the Garden of Eden*, 43, and Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual, Time, and Eternity*, *Zygon* 27 (1992): 530. On chronotypes, see *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time* (n. 4, above).
8. Eliade, *Cosmos and Time*, 5192.
9. Ibid., 10412; Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York, 1965), 19.
10. Eliade, *Cosmos and Time*, 11237, D. W. Bebbington, *Patterns in History* (Downers Grove, Ill., 1979), 2142. For an important caveat against attributing the cyclical time to Greek thought, see Momigliano, *Time in Ancient Historiography*, 1014. For a rich discussion of the macrocosmic cycles in Jewish thought, see Rosenberg, *Return to the Garden of Eden*, 4363.
11. See Henri-Charles Puech, *Gnosis and Time*, in *Man and Time*, ed. J. Campbell (Princeton, N.J., 1959), 4045 and Ch. Mugler, *Deux themes de la cosmologie greque: Devenir cyclique et pluralite des mondes* (Paris, 1953). See, however, a more nuanced view, which addresses also the emergence of the personal time in ancient Greece, in Jean Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* (London, Boston, 1983), 8990.

12. See Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, 5192; Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston, 1969), 5. See also Ricoeur's *History of Religion*, 22.

13. Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, 11230.

14. Ibid., 11314, *Sacred and the Profane*, 1079, and Time and Eternity in Indian Thought, in *Man and Time*, 17781.

15. See Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, trans. A. Arkush, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowski (Princeton, N.J., 1987), 46274; Weinstock, *Studies*, 75, 16465, 167, 208, 231, 233.

16. Cf. Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis* (London, 1983), 16.

17. See Puech, *Gnosis and Time*, 45; Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane*, 10910; Bebbington, *Patterns in History*, 42.

18. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 462; Rosenberg, *Return to the Garden of Eden*, 4363; S. Pines, Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 246. Puech, *Gnosis and Times*, 45; Trompf, *Idea of Recurrence*, 1011, 6162, 2017; R. van der Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix* (Leiden, 1972), 6776, 98106; I hope to elaborate elsewhere on the reverberations of the Phoenix myth in some kabbalistic views of cosmic macrochronism.

19. Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, 11220.

20. Ibid., 130.

21. H. Frankfort, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, ed. H. A. Frankfort (Chicago and London, 1977), 36970. See also, however, the link between the ancient concept of Halakhah and astronomy in I. Tzvi Abusch, *Alaktu and Halakhah: Oracular Decision, Divine Revelation*, *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987): 1542.

22. For more on the cyclical view of history in the Bible, see Trompf, *Idea of Recurrence*, 13839, 156ff; Curtis, *A Suggested Interpretation*, 11723, who, notwithstanding his interesting point, exaggerates when he attempts to overemphasize the cyclical concept of history by relegating the linear concept to the margin.

23. Compare Ricoeur, *History of Religions*, 2728, R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Messianism in Jewish History*, reprinted in Marc Saperstein, ed., *Essential Papers on Messianic*

Movements and Personalities in Jewish History (New York, 1992), 3637, and the important discussion of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York, 1989), 4142, 44, as well as the material mentioned in the following note.

24. See the important study by James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, rev. ed. (London, 1969), 14748. On the circular nature of the Jewish festivals in the context of the Eliadean narrative, see Moshe Greenberg, *On the Bible and Judaism* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1984), 16167 and Benjamin Uffenheimer, Myth and Reality in Ancient Israel, in *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilization*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (Albany, N.Y., 1986), 15256.

25. My assumption is that a sensitive reading of the Bible, envisioned by a traditional reader as one conceptual unit, could inform even medieval views of complex time, only on the basis of the Bible. However, in the following we are concerned with the influence of cosmic views of time, as formulated by astrology, on medieval Kabbalah.

26. See Jean Danielou, *Bible et Liturgie* (Paris, 1951), 910; Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 22. On biblical events as archetypal, see *ibid.*, 89, 36, 38, 120 n. 5, and see also T. Ludwig, Remember Not the Former Things, in *Transition and Transformation in the History of Religions: Essays in Honor of J. M. Kitagawa*, ed. F. Reynolds and T. Ludwig (Leiden, 1980), 50. Ludwig discusses the influence of the Pentateuchal historical events on some prophetic perceptions of present history. See also John J. Collins, Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews and the Genre of the Revelation of John, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977): 33738. On typological thought in Judaism, see Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 13, n. 3; Aage Bentzen, *King and Messiah* (London, 1955), 75; Marc Saperstein, Jewish Typological Exegesis after Nahmanides, *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1 (1993):

16768.

27. See Jacob Neusner's description of the mishnaic attitude toward eschatology, *Messiah in Context* (Lanham, 1988), 7478, and his Mishnah and Messiah, in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, ed. J. Neusner, W. S. Green, and E. S. Frerichs (Cambridge, 1987), 27577.

28. For the importance of the ritual in Judaism as an alternative to history, see Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 67, 52. Here I would like to focus on the time concepts that either enforced the ritualistic circularity or weakened the importance of linear time. On the circular view of salvation in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, which stem, according to most of the scholars, from Judaeo-Christian groups, see, e.g., Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. S. C. Guthrie and Ch. A. M. Hall (Philadelphia, 1959), 148. Cullman points out that this type of writing abandoned the biblical linear conception of time for the cyclical Greek scheme according to which all things recur and there is no real temporal progression. For his own vision of history in Christianity and Judaism, in both cases though, according to his view, in quite different ways-linear, see pp. 22425 and, in a more elaborated manner in his earlier *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia, 1949).

29. If this explanation, which should not be seen as exclusive, for the relative indifference to history is correct, then the views of two of the most important phenomenologists of religion in our century, Gershom Scholem and Mircea Eliade, who regarded important segments of Jewish religion as deeply rooted in an interest in history, seem, roughly speaking, to be incorrect as far as the post-biblical forms of Judaism are concerned.

30. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 121; idem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1967), 20: The cosmic and eschatological

trends in Kabbalistic speculation . . . are in the last resort ways of escaping from history rather than instruments of historical understanding; that is to say they do not help us to gauge the intrinsic meaning of history. See also the observation of Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 12930, n. 26.

31. See n. 3 above.

32. See n. 30 above and M. Idel, Rabbinism versus Kabbalism: On G. Scholem's Phenomenology of Judaism, *Modern Judaism* 11 (1991): 291-93.

33. On Nahmanides's macrochronic views, see the references in n. 36 and especially his discussion in the Commentary on *Sefer yetzirah*, printed by Scholem in *Qiriat sefer* 6 (1930): 402, in Hebrew.
34. Scholem, Defining Kabbalah: The Kabbalah of the Divine Names, in *Mystics of the Book*, ed. R. A. Herrera (New York, 1993), 9799.
35. See M. Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 45145.
36. See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 462, 471; idem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), 120; Rosenberg, Return to the Garden of Eden, 4346, where copious bibliography is supplied; Chaim Henoch, *Nachmanides, Philosopher and Mystic* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1938), 445, n. 851.
37. On this question in Kabbalah, see Gershom Scholem, Schoepfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschraenkung Gottes, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 25 (1956): 87119.
38. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (New Haven, Conn., 1971) 2:1045.
39. See M. Idel, *Maimonide et la mystique juive* (Paris, 1991), 10534.
40. For the infiltration of astronomy in early Jewish mysticism, see an important study of Ronald Kiener, Astrology in Jewish Mysticism from *Sefer yezira* to the Zohar, in *The Beginnings of the Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Europe*, ed. J. Dan (Jerusalem, 1987), 142; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 462.
41. *Bereshit rabba III*, 7, ed. Theodor-Albeck (Jerusalem, 1965), 23. This midrash, which had a long career in kabbalistic literature, has been treated rather critically by Maimonides in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, 2:30.

42. See Cordovero's *Pardes rimmonim*, XVIII, chap. 3 (ed. Muncaz, repr. Jerusalem, 1962) 1, fol. 84c.

43. Ibid. See also Joseph ben Shlomo, *The Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1965), 260,29294.

44. *Shinnuei ha-zemanim*.

45. *Ha-hanhagah*. This term, which is quite widespread in ancient and medieval Jewish literature, has been discussed by Ze'ev Gries, *Conduct Literature (Regimen Vitae)* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1989), 411. However, the use of this term in Cordovero, who is apparently very fond of it, still waits a detailed analysis. In general, it should be said that this kabbalist employs *hanhagah* to convey, in addition to the more commonplace meanings, the concept of divine providence and the divine emanation, which is related to a specific moment in time. The Divine Providence, in a rather naturalistic manner is found already in Maimonides. See especially the view of Rabbi Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi in M. Hallamish, *Kabbalistic Commentary of Rabbi Yoseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi on Genesis Rabbah* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1984), 15658. See also nn. 52, 121. A great influence of this term is evident in the kabbalistic writings of R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, who was presumably influenced by Cordovero's formulations of the nexus between the three sefirot, time and directives; see, e.g., his *Kelalei hokhmat ha-'emet*, in *Sha'arei Ramhal*, ed. Moshe Friedlander (Benei Berak, 1986), 34445. See also n. 64.

46. *Gilgulei zemanenu*. This is a pun on the term *galgalei* (spheres) that will occur immediately below. On the phrase *gilgulei ha-zemanim*, see also below, the quote from Cordovero's *Sefer shi'ur komah*.

47. *Galgalei ha-sefirot*. This phrase betrays the influence of the kabbalistic thought of Rabbi Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi; see his

Commentary on *Genesis rabbah*, 2426.

48. This view, regarding the souls as hewn from the divine light, has been accepted by Rabbi Hayyim Vital and thus disseminated in his *Sha'arei kedushah*.

49. See below on the three times in the year.

50. Note the explicit astral reference: the celestial world serves as a visible map that enables someone to read, symbolically, its invisible counterpart.

51. *Sefer tefillah le-Moshe* (Premislany, 1892), fol. 190a.

52. Compare the numerous occurrences of the term *hanhagah* in Cordovero's *Tomer Devorah*, where divine and human behavior are presented as complementing acts.

53. On the relation between commandments and astral views, see Kiener, *Astrology*, 1415, 2022, M. Idel, *The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of Kabbalah in the Renaissance*, in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. B. D. Cooperman (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 196, 2038.

54. *Ba'al ha-zeman*. This phrase occurs, in another context, in Abraham Abulafia's *Sitrei Torah*, MS, Paris BN, 774, fol. 148b.

55. The threefold categorization of the directives is related also to the ruling of the three *Sefirot* during one day. See *Sefer elimah rabbati* (Jerusalem, 1966), fol. 50a, where the astronomical background of this view is quite explicit.

56. This is the designation of the lower aspect of the third *sefirah*, *Binah*, which presides over the lower seven *sefirot*, namely, the six extremities and their center, *Tiferet*. *Tevunah* is mentioned in the same liturgical context commented on by Cordovero. See *Sefer tefillah le-Moshe*, fol. 181a.

57. *Ibid.*, fol. 181b.

58. Though the source of this type of terminology is *Sefer Yetzira*, I assume that there are also some astronomical underpinnings of this concept as used by the kabbalists, namely, that the seven *sefirot* correspond to the seven planets, with the sun, corresponding to the *sefirah* of *Tiferet*, in the middle.

59. The closest view to that of Cordovero is that of the thirteenth-century kabbalist, Rabbi Asher ben David. Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla has elaborated, especially in his manuscript commentary on the *Merkavah*, upon the view of the *Shabbat* as the middle point, or the center of six extremities, which correspond to the six days of the week and to the six *sefirot* that surround it. This view has been copied by R. Eliah de Vidas's *Reshit hokhmah* and has influenced also the

beginning of Hasidism; see Mordechai Pachter, *Traces of the Influence of R. Elijah de Vidas's Reshit hokhmah upon the Writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye*, in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical Literature Presented to Isaiah Tishby* (in Hebrew), ed. J. Dan and J. Hacker (Jerusalem, 1986), 58081. On the important role of a term that seems to be related to the medieval views of the *spheretiqla* in the zoharic theosophy, see Yehuda Liebes, *Sections of the Zohar Lexicon* (in Hebrew) (Ph.D. diss., Jerusalem, 1976), 32735.

60. However, in many other cases in Kabbalah it is the same structure of seven lower *sefirot* as a circle that informs the rhythm and nature of the macrochronic cycle, when each of the seven *sefirot* presides over a period of seven thousand years. See the view of R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi in Hallamish, *The Commentary on Genesis Rabba*, 2526, 17778.

61. The use of the seven days of creation as symbols for the seven lower *sefirot* and, at the same time, of the seven thousand years, or seven *shemittot*, but also as shaping the microchronic weekly cycle is found in several kabbalistic discussions, exemplifying the coexistence of microchronic and macrochronic patterns. See, e.g., R. Yitzhak of Acre, *Sefer meirat einaim* (in Hebrew), ed. Amos Goldreich (Jerusalem, 1984), 17374. The idea is, however, much older; see, e.g., Jean Danielou, *La Typologie millenariste de la semaine dans le Christianisme primitif*, *Vigiliae Christianae* 2 (1948): 10. It should be mentioned that though in early Christianity the cosmic vision of time cycles was more evident than in the Middle Ages, in Judaism the situation was quite the opposite: while in late antiquity, rabbis have only scant references to macrochronic cycles, these views of time were elaborated much more in medieval Kabbalah. The kabbalistic view on the advent of the Messiah in each and every *shemittah* (cosmic cycle) is to be compared, therefore, much more to the view of Origen of the recurrence of the Christ, which was considered to be

heretical, than to medieval parallels.

62. See the interesting description of contemporaneous time, namely, the special time within whose span all the events have some similar feature, in W. Brede Kristensen, *The Meaning of Religion*, trans. J. B. Carman (The Hague, Netherlands, 1971), 37879. For an interesting phenomenological approach to religious time, see also Michel Meslin,

L'experience humaine du divine (Paris, 1988), 13650. It should be mentioned that, according to some Hasidic sources, the recitation of the biblical texts that express a certain event in the *historia sacra* helps to recover the gist of that event in the present. See, e.g., R. Abraham of Turisk, *Magen Avraham* (Lublin; reprint, Brooklyn, 1985) 2, fol. 29cd; R. Meshullam Phoebus of Zbarazh, *Yosher divrei emet*, fol. 140b; and the view, attributed to the Besht, that the events dictate the combinations of letters that express them in the Bible. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 7677.

63. On the plural of directives, *hanhagot*, which assumes that there are three directives corresponding to the three *sefirot* mentioned in the quotation immediately below, see also in *Tefillah le-Moshe*, fol. 179ab, and in *Sefer elimah rabbati*, that will be dealt with below.

64. *Sefer shiur komah* (Warsaw, 1883), fol. 66c. A very interesting parallel is found also in Cordovero's *Commentary on the Zohar on the Song of Songs*, MS, Oxford, 1813, fol. 20a, where the assumption is that the relation between the operation *ha-peulah* and time should be understood in the framework of the view that time is divided in accordance to the aspects, the various *behinot*, of the *sefirot*. There is, according to this text, an hour and a time for the government of mercy, of judgment, and of grace, namely, the same three *sefirot* mentioned above; and the success of the operations depends upon doing them under the right moment, which implies also the rule of a certain *sefirah*. These three *sefirot* play a similar role in R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto's thought; see *Quntres kelali, Hatalat ha-hokhmah*, chap. 3 (Warsaw, 1893), fol. 6d and n. 45.

65. See *Sukkah*, fol. 14a, *Berakhot*, fol. 7a. On the biblical background of the powerful type of prayer, see Sheldon Blank, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 72 (1953): 114; for the talmudic literature, see Judah Goldin, *On Honi the Circle-Maker: A Demanding*

Prayer, *Harvard Theological Review*, 61 (1963): 23337.

66. For more on this view of the Commandments in Cordovero's thought, see M. Idel, Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism, in *Religion, Science, and Magic*, ed. J. Neusner et al (New York, Oxford, 1989), 9192.

67. See Kalman Bland, Neoplatonic and Gnostic Themes in R. Moses Cordovero's Doctrine of Evil, *Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies* 3 (1975): 10328; Joseph Dan, No Evil Descends from Heaven: Sixteenth-Century Jewish Concepts of Evil, in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. B. Cooperman (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 89104.

68. See M. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, Conn.; London, 1988), 15699; Charles Mopsik, *Les grands textes de la Cabale* (Lagrasse, 1993).

69. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 20, where he writes about Neoplatonism that precisely this is also the belief of the Kabbalist. By doing so, Scholem underestimates the paramount importance of theurgical and magic elements in the thought and praxis of many kabbalists. An explicit Platonic proclivity can be discerned, in similar contexts, also in Eliade's view of history and time; see, e.g., *Cosmos and History*, 3435.

70. See R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, ed. T. W. Knox (Oxford, 1946), 214.

71. Ibid.

72. See Rosenberg, Return to the Garden of Eden, 4363; Jacques Halbronn, *Le Monde juif et l'Astrologie* (Milano, 1985), 813, 13756. See also Y. Tzvi Langermann, Some Astrological Themes in the Thought of Abraham ibn Ezra, in *Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra: Studies in the Writings of a Twelfth-Century Jewish Polymath*, ed. I. Twersky

and J. M. Harris (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 2885.

73. However, the macrochronic visions of cycles had an even more important impact on Kabbalah.

74. See *Sefer elimah rabbati*, fols. 19b, 42d47c. The circular and vertical-anthropomorphic images, found also in many other sources before Cordovero, has been combined in the Lurianic Kabbalah, though this combination seems to occur, explicitly, in some designs of ten *sefirot*. On this issue I hope to elaborate elsewhere.

75. In one of these discussions, a rather astral vision of the relations between supernal powers and lower entities is conspicuous. Ibid., fol. 47b.

76. *hanhagah mutzlahat*.

77. Kosher. See also *Sefer elimah rabbati*, fol. 46b.

78. Ibid., fol. 45d, also, fols. 43c, 46b.

79. Ibid., fol. 46d.

80. On Cordovero's view of the macrochronic cycles, see Bracha Sack, On the Issue of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero's Attitude to Sefer ha-Temunah, in *Massuot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb* (in Hebrew), ed. Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich (Jerusalem, 1994), 18698, and her Three Dates for Redemption in Moshe Cordovero's Or Yaqar (in Hebrew) in *Messianism and Eschatology*, ed. Z. Baras (Jerusalem, 1984), 28192.

81. See following paragraph.

82. On this issue, see M. Idel On the Concept of Zimzum in Kabbalah and Its Research (in Hebrew), in *Lurianic Kabbalah*, ed. R. Elior and Y. Liebes (Jerusalem, 1992), 92100.

83. See, e.g., Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1972), 42-43; idem, *Major Trends*, 250, 286; idem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 44 and n. 90, below.

84. Cf. his studies in the *Zohar*, trans. A. Schwartz, S. Nakashe, and P. Peli (Albany, N.Y., 1993), 184, and see also his Trein Orzelin, in *The Lurianic Kabbalah*, 14864. On the affinities between Luria and Cordovero's Kabbalah, see Bracha Sack, Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria (in Hebrew) in *Massu'ot* (see n. 80), 31139.

85. My view of the Ashkenazi origin of Yitzhak Luria Ashkenazi as part of this line of argument (see my *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 265) has recently been questioned, in rather violent terms, by Isaiah Tishby; see his *Hadshanut medumma be-heker hakabbalah* (in Hebrew), *Zion*, 54 (1989): 490, where, relying on legendary material found in a hagiographical book, *Shivhei ha-Ari*, he creates a rather Sefardi image of this kabbalist. See, however, the documents recently printed and discussed by Abraham David, *Halakhah and Commerce in the Biography of Isaac Luria* (in Hebrew), in *Lurianic Kabbalah*, 28797, which corroborate my view of this figure. In fact, the Ashkenazi extraction of Luria has already been assumed as common sense in Scholem, *Major Trends*, 259, who describes him as an Ashkenazi Jew, but interestingly enough, Scholem's view as formulated in 1941 did not provoke the fury of Tishby. More material on this issue will be presented in a separate paper.

86. See R. Hayyim Vital's *Sefer etz hayyim* (Warsaw, 1891), fol. 12ab. Vital himself has been well acquainted with astronomy, as his astronomical and astrological writings abundantly show.

87. See, e.g., Mordekhai Pachter, *Katnut* (Smallness) and *Gadlut* (Greatness) in Lurianic Kabbalah (in Hebrew) in *Lurianic Kabbalah*, 171210.

88. *Trein orzelin de-oraita*, in *Lurianic Kabbalah*, 126.

89. Cf. Josef Avivi, *History as a Divine Prescription* (in Hebrew) in *Rabbi Mordechai Breuer Festschrift*, ed. Moshe bar Asher (Jerusalem, 1992), 2:71119.

90. This absence was not mentioned nor explained by Scholem and his followers, as they were convinced of the impact of historical event on the emergence of kabbalistic innovations. See my *Mystique juive et histoire juive*, *Annales HSS*, no. 5 (1994): 122340.

91. See Weinstock, *Studies*, 16263; Sarah Heller Willenski,

Messianism, Eschatology, and Utopia in the Philosophical-Mystical Trend of the 13th Century (in Hebrew) in *Messianism and Eschatology*, ed. Tzvi Baras (Jerusalem, 1984), 22138.

92. See, however, the view of R. Jacob ben Sheshet, dealt with in Weinstock, *Studies*, 16364. On the influence of astrology on this kabbalist, see Kiener, *Astrology*, 3536.

93. Weinstock, *Studies*, 22629.

94. *Commentary on Genesis Rabba*, 62, 103, 269.

95. R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, *The Book of Mirrors: Sefer marot ha-zoveot* (in Hebrew), ed. Daniel Ch. Matt (Atlanta, 1982), 102 and the English introduction of Matt. 3133.
96. Ibid., 32.
97. I hope to elaborate elsewhere on the various dates of *Sefer ha-temunah*.
98. On this issue, see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 11921; Ginsburg, *The Sabbath*, 9899.
99. See Michal Kushnir-Oron, *The Sefer ha-peliah and Sefer hakanah: Their Kabbalistic Principles, Social and Religious Criticism and Literary Composition* (in Hebrew) (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1980), 18793, 294300.
100. *Meshammeshet*. In fact, it means presiding over the world.
101. (Jerusalem, 1965), fol. 3b.
102. Sanhedrin, fol. 99a.
103. *Sefer ginnat beitan*, chap. 52, MS, Oxford 1578, fol. 63b. On this book, see Ephraim Gottlieb, *Studies in Kabbalah Literature* (in Hebrew), ed. J. Hacker (Tel Aviv, 1976), 477507, esp. 506, where part of the original Hebrew passage translated here has already been printed.
104. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 188, 467.
105. See Rosenberg, *Return to the Garden of Eden*, 57, n. 54, and also, above, Cordovero's use of the phrase *gilgulei ha-zemanim*.
106. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 113.
107. Ibid., p. 459. Compare, however, to p. 190.

108. See M. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, N.Y., 1988) and *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Albany, N.Y., 1989) index, under their names (Alfarabi, Averroes).
109. See his *Commentary on Mishnah, Sanhedrin, X; The Guide of the Perplexed*, 1:2.
110. See *Sefer hayyei ha-olam ha-ba*, MS, Oxford 1952, fol. 46b.
111. This seems to be the significance of the title *Hayyei ha-olam ha-ba* (the book on the life of the world to come), which does not deal with eschatology at all but with techniques to attain an ecstatic experience.
112. See Idel, *Chapters in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1990), 5174.
113. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 108111.
114. *Memshelet Yisrael*. The occurrence of this term problematizes Abraham Berger's strong description of Abulafia's messianism as totally devoid of a concern in both the land of Israel and the political state. Cf. his otherwise interesting analysis of Abulafia's messianism in his article The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia: A Tentative Evaluation, in Saperstein, *Essential Papers*, 253.
115. *Sefer ha-malmed*, MS, Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale 680, fol. 304a.
116. See n. 112, above.
117. *Hiddush*. This term should be understood in context, as in some of Abulafia's other writings, not as pointing to *creatio ex nihilo* but as periodical renewal, as is the case with the moon: *hiddush levanah*.
118. On this issue see below, in another quote from this book.
119. *Otzar eden ganuz*, MS, Oxford 1580, fol. 99b.

120. *hanhagat*. See, n. 45, above.

121. *Sheva netivot ha-Torah*, 25.

122. *Hilluf ha-zemanim*.

123. *Yishtannu ha-middot ve-ha-shemot*.

124. *Yevulbelu*. This term should be understood as pointing to the undoing of the Babel tower mixture of language. See also below, in another quote from this book.

125. See also below the quote from *Sefer shaarei tzedek*, 18.

126. *To'ar*.

127. *Otzar eden ganuz*, fol. 41a.

128. See also another text of Abulafia in this respect in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 50.

129. In the printed version, *Menahem* is written, which does not correspond to any of the manuscripts, nor does it make sense. In the manuscripts, *mi-koham* is written, and I have translated accordingly.

130. Jeremiah 31:33.

131. Esther 8:16.

132. Ibid.8:17.

133. Joel 3:1. See *Sefer sharei tzedek*, ed. J. E. Porush (Jerusalem, 1989), 17. Significant parallels to some aspects of this passage can be found also on pp. 16, 20. See more about the background of this passage in M. Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, N. Y., 1989), 1718.

134. Idel, *Language*, 18. See also above, in the quote from *Otzar eden ganuz*.

135. According to the Jewish calendar, this year is equivalent to 1290.

136. *Darkhei ha-tekufot*.

137. *Otzar eden ganuz*, MS, Oxford 1580, fol. 105b. This book was composed during late 1285 and early 1286.

138. Ibid., fol. 105a.

139. *Sefer shaarei tzedek*, 19. On this passage, see also my discussion in *Inquiries in the Doctrine of Sefer ha-meshiv* (in Hebrew), *Sefunot* (n.s.) 2 (1983): 23536, n. 250, and *The History of the Interdiction to Study Kabbalah before the Age of Forty* (in Hebrew), *AJS Review* 5 (1980): 89.

140. Idel, *Mystical Experience*, 127, 197201, and the pertinent footnotes; idem, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 1415.

141. See the quote from *Sheva netivot ha-Torah*, n. 122, above.

142. The letters K[a]F and V[a]V can be combined in another form to constitute KaV, whose numerical value is 26 (the *gematria* of the tetragrammaton), and pav, which is numerically equivalent to 86 (the *gematria* of Elohim). See also a similar discussion in Joseph Gikatilla's text adduced by Gottlieb, *Mehkarim*, 114, n. 41.

143. MS, Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale 680, fol. 308a.

144. See Abulafia's epistle *Matzref le-keseif*, MS, Sassoon 56, fol. 33b.

145. *Hozerim halilah*. It seems that this is the influence of a passage in *Sefer Yetzirah*, chap.2, where it is said that the sphere, or circle, *hozer halilah*. See also Abraham Abulafia's phrase in his *Sitrei Torah*, a commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, MS, Paris BN 774, fol. 148a, where the movement of the sphere is described as *hazarat hillelat* [!] *ha-galgal*. Similar phrases occur in *Otzar eden ganuz*, MS, Oxford 1580, fols. 106a107a.

146. Printed by Colette Sirat, Juda b. Salomon Ha-Kohen-philosophe, astronome et peut-etre Kabbaliste de la premiere moitie du XIIIe siecle, *Italia* 1 (1979): 48, n. 21.

147. Exod. 19:5.

148. *Otzar eden ganuz*, MS, Oxford 1580, fol. 99b.

149. See above another passage from this book, where the same idea is expressed.

150. On these two thinkers views of the natural rise of a Jewish state, see Shimo Pines, *Studies in the History of Jewish Philosophy* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1977), 277305. See also Rosenberg, *Return to the Garden of Eden*, 6378. For more on Spinoza's nonterritorial view, see Arnold N. Eisen, *Galut* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), 6162.

151. On Abulafia as a messianic mystic, see Berger, *Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia*, and Idel, *Contribution of*

Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah, 13841.

152. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 96, 100101.

153. See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 7475.

154. *Adnei kesef* (in Hebrew) (London, 1912), 2:15960; Pines, *Studies in the History of Jewish Philosophy*, 28687.

155. Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 35; see also p. 202, where the Hasidic intimacy with Godan example of nonlinear time concept similar to that of Abulafia's is described as paying dearly for its success, meaning that Hasidism had, as Scholem described it, neutralized or allegorized Lurianic or Sabbatean messianism.

156. See, e.g., Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 228; Yael Sagiv-Feldman, Living in Deferment: Maimonides vs. Nahmanides on the Messiah, Redemption and the World to Come, *Hebrew Studies*, 2021 (1979/1980): 107/16; Dov Schwartz, Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik on the Individualistic Redemption, in *Alei Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexander Safran* (in Hebrew), ed. M. Hallamish (Ramat Gan, 1990), 186. In more critical terms, see the references of William Scott Green, Introduction: Messiah in Judaism: Rethinking the Question, in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, ed. J. Neusner, W. S. Green, and E. S. Frerichs (Cambridge, 1987), 910; Eisen, *Galut*, 139; Baruch M. Bokser, Messianism, the Exodus Pattern, and Early Rabbinic Judaism, in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis, 1992), 258.

157. See a similar approach in R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, Messianism in Jewish History, in *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*, ed. M. Saperstein (New York, 1992), 373/8.

158. On this issue, see also Avivi, History as a Divine Prescription, 726.

159. Scholem *Messianic Idea*, 239, Pechter, Traces, 579/91, and Yoram Yacobson, The Holiness of the Profane in Gur Hasidism, in *Hasidism in Poland* (in Hebrew), ed. I. Bartal, R. Elijor, and Ch. Shmeruk (Jerusalem, 1994), 241/78.

160. Arnaldo Momigliano, Persian Historiography, Greek Historiography, and Jewish Historiography, in *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, Calif., 1990), 23. This passage has been adduced by Chazan in *Timebound and the*

Timeless, 3132, n. 24; he argues for a detached understanding of Jewish attitudes to history. In my opinion, there is no contradiction between Momigliano's and Chazan's views.

161. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 1820.

162. Ibid., 11920.

163. This conclusion seems to be pertinent, *mutatis mutandis*, not only for kabbalistic thought but also for philosophical Jewish writings, but this is an issue that does not concern as here. See, nevertheless, the view of Franz Rosenzweig, who emphasized the importance of the circular Jewish microchronos based on the calendar; cf. the analysis of Nathan Rotenstreich, *Jews and German Philosophy* (New York, 1984), 15157. Another interesting instance of circular vision of history, quite different from that of Rosenzweig's, is that of Nahman Krochmal, who has been influenced by G. Vico's view of what I would propose to call mesochronic time as cyclical. See Rotenstreich, 14351, and Jay M. Harris, *Nachman Krochmal: Guiding the Perplexed of the Modern Age* (New York, 1991), 10355. See also n. 25, above.

164. See n. 21, above.

10

Maimonides' View of Happiness: Philosophy, Myth, and the Transcendence of History

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson

In his much acclaimed *Zakhor*, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi to whom this article is dedicated with deep gratitude, esteem, and affection insightfully argued that neither the usual linear nor cyclical category alone will suffice to describe the [Jewish] experience.

¹ In a departure from the popular distinction between the Greco-Roman cyclical conception of time which was distrustful of change and saw events as circular, repetitive, and meaningless and the Judeo-Christian linear conception of time which affirmed both a beginning (Creation) and an end (Day of Judgment or Messianic Age) and highlighted the uniqueness and irreversibility of each event Yerushalmi convincingly argued that the historical events of the biblical period remain unique and irreversible. Psychologically, however, those events are *experienced* cyclically, repetitively, and to that extent at least atemporally. ² Thus, Yerushalmi disclosed the connection between memory and ritual in Jewish culture as well as the sharp difference between the ahistorical self-understanding of premodern Judaism and the historical awareness that marks modern Judaism. Yerushalmi, however, was rather cautious in applying the category of myth to the Jewish experience when he says, for example, that the traditional Jewish mentality was far from any notion of eternal return or mythic time. ³ I believe we can be more forthcoming in applying the category of myth to the Jewish tradition if we define *myth* in functionalist terms to mean a poetic narrative that constitutes social identity and legitimizes norms of conduct. ⁴

In this essay I wish to further explore Yerushalmi's insight by focusing on the interplay between myth, philosophy, and history in Maimonides' conception of happiness. Qualifying the prevailing notion that Maimonides demythologized Judaism, I suggest that Maimonides did not rid Judaism of myth but replaced it with a *logocentric myth*, the crux of which was that the Torah is a philosophic, esoteric text whose interpretation constitutes the happy life in this world and the bliss of immortality in the afterlife. Thus, even though Maimonides' conception of happiness was shaped by Aristotle and his Muslim interpreters, it remained profoundly Jewish. For Maimonides the happy life

consists of the most Jewish activity of all: hermeneutics of sacred texts that leads to proper action and true knowledge whose ultimate reward is personal immortality. Only life within the parameters of the Divine Law (i.e., the Torah of Moses) enables one to attain the happiness of which Aristotle spoke in the *Ethics*. Strictly speaking, then, only the Jews who live by the Torah are truly happy: they live in the most perfect social order that enables them to acquire moral goodness and engage in philosophy so as to transcend history. To understand what I mean by a logocentric myth we need to briefly explain the interplay between *logos* and *muthos* in Aristotle's philosophy and its relevance to the question of human happiness.

Logos, Muthos, and Human Happiness

For the ancient Greek philosophers, history did not present a philosophical problem because they did not link the idea of history with the idea of time.

⁵ Though time came under philosophical analysis, the Greek philosophers did not discuss time as a medium of history. They did not think about history as an entity or category and did not understand history to indicate the whole temporal process. Aristotle defined time as the number of motion with respect to before and after. ⁶ Avoiding the notion that time is an absolute, separate, and initial framework in which all events can be pinned down, Aristotle linked the idea of time to change and motion so that it is almost meaningless to talk about time without reference to specific changes. Precisely because change, or rather things changing, is the primary feature of the world, history did not present a philosophical problem for Aristotle. History and philosophy pertain to two distinct aspects of reality. Though Aristotle regarded factually accurate information about human affairs as useful for proper philosophical knowledge, he did not include historical accounts of changing particulars in the realm of philosophical

knowledge. Therefore, even though Aristotle assembled a large amount of empirical information about political affairs in his day and in the past, he stated that poetry is both more philosophical and more serious than history, since poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars.⁷ Because history consists of accounts of individual events and characters rather than *kinds* of speech and action or *types* of character, Aristotle considered it to be less philosophical, that is, less universal, than poetry.

Aristotle's famous comment sheds light on the relationship between *muthos* and *logos* in Greek culture. Greek philosophical reasoning (referred to here briefly as *logos*) grew out of religious myths that it attempted to displace, even though Greek philosophy could not fully extricate itself from myth.⁸ Like all religious myths, the Greek myths were not intended to explain the world but rather to disclose a sacred world. These myths expressed the culture of their believers by establishing social and educational values, prescribing daily tasks and ceremonial responses, inspiring culture, and giving meaning to life-cycle events.

As traditional narratives, the Greek myths comprised *telling* (which is one meaning of *logos*), but they told about that which is beyond telling. Instead of *explaining* reality, the myths *presented* the existential meaning of a lived world. Put differently, the myths were not intended as speculation, whose objective meaning could be translated into conceptual language, but as an expression of nonobjective, existential meaning.

With the emergence of Greek philosophy, *muthos* received a secondary, negative meaning when it was degraded to the status of fictional, or non-real tale, a mere appearance that contrasts with true reality. In contrast to *muthos*, *logos* was now understood to consist of abstraction, analysis, synthesis, and judgment that attempt to discover the permanent, unified, immovable, and unchanging principles that underlie all change.

9 The mental activities that characterize philosophy reflect the assumption that the human mind is separate from the world it perceives and seeks to know but that the human mind is (in principle) able to grasp the structure of reality, namely, classify empirical reality by means of abstract principles. With the rise of philosophy, the traditional myths were distrusted and even viewed as an obstacle to the knowledge of truth.

Plato captures the transition from myth to philosophy in Greek culture. Though Plato attempted to extricate philosophy from traditional myths, he repeatedly resorted to myths either to illustrate a philosophical doctrine or to point out the limits of human understanding. Platonic philosophizing was thus rich with myths, though the precise relationship between *muthos* and *logos* in the Platonic corpus is still a matter of scholarly debate. 10 Some hold that, in Plato, *muthos* is at odds with *logos*, while others understand the

myth as a necessary corollary of the pursuits evidenced by dialectical and logical reasoning. And still others insist that *muthos* reconciles the irrational and the rational aspects of man, in the process of which myth transcends knowledge. Be this as it may, Plato constructed likely stories, that is, narrative representations of aspects of the cosmos and the place of humans in it, in order to transform the culture and politics of his time. Plato criticized the poetic myths of his generation and banished their creators, the poets, from the ideal republic of the philosopher-king. He allowed only those stories that were carefully formulated and vigilantly regulated by the philosophers/guardians for the moral benefit of the common folk and for civil guidance.

In a departure from Plato, Aristotle attempted to omit the use of myth in his presentation of philosophy and is therefore considered the founder of scientific philosophy in the West. Aristotle, however, retained the Platonic criterion for knowability, according to which only universals are intelligible, even though he departed from Plato's transcendent philosophy by shifting the focus to the empirical study of nature. Criticizing Plato's theory of transcendent forms, Aristotle held that observation of things by the senses and the proper classification of their properties enables us to discover that which explains a thing, namely, its essence. Essences are not universals that exist beyond the realm of ordinary experience but the common classes, which disclose what things are and which must be gathered from experience. Since, for Aristotle, being is always a particular thing, an

instance of a universal form expressed in this particular way, he could not ignore history. History is the manifestation of change in human affairs. Yet even though change is a necessary feature of all existence, including human affairs, humans do have a hope of transcending history by contemplating necessary, immutable truths, that is, by philosophic contemplation (*theoria*).

In positing philosophy as the vehicle for the transcendence of change in human life (i.e., of history), Aristotle manifested his continued allegiance to Plato. But unlike Plato, who treated poetic *muthoi* pejoratively because they distort the truth, Aristotle regarded poetry as deriving from and satisfying the impulse to understand the world of human action by making and enjoying representations of it.

¹¹ Aristotle's theory of mimesis in general and of linguistic mimesis in particular reflects his view of humans as rational creatures rooted in the natural order. Thus, whereas for Plato mimesis was the attempt to mirror reality—that is, reproduce objects as faithfully as possible—for Aristotle mimesis reflects reality by embodying universals, but without necessarily mirroring the world accurately in all respects. ¹² With a more positive view of the mimetic arts, including poetry, Aristotle minimized the conflict between *poeisis* and philosophy and understood *muthos* to mean not a fictitious fable but a plot, or better still a plot-structure. ¹³ Accordingly, he held that the artist aspires to produce plot-structures, or images, or forms of some other kind, which are consistent with reality, above all with that level of reality perceived through universals, which are also the concern of the philosopher. ¹⁴ That Aristotle viewed poetry (and *poeisis* in general) as rooted in human nature (both the human need for pleasure and the propensity to take pleasure in the products of imitative activity) reflects his complex understanding of human nature and, in turn, of human happiness.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle proposed a teleological, naturalist, and objectivist conception of happiness (*eudaimonia*), that is, of well-being or flourishing.¹⁵ There is just one type of life that is best for humans because it springs from the objective facts of human nature. For Aristotle, happiness is not a feeling or a disposition of temperament but a certain quality of living, a life of well-being in accordance with human nature. To qualify as happiness, says Aristotle, a certain good must be desirable for its own sake, self-sufficient and lasting throughout a complete lifetime. But what constitutes happiness? Aristotle's teleology dictates the answer. To know what is the final end for humans, we must know what is the characteristic function of *man*. The word *man* denotes a universal that designates the human composition of body and soul, that is, of psychophysical functions. The soul is the organizational principle of the human composite, and it relates to the body as *form* relates to *matter*. The very nature of the human species, then, constrains what humans desire and aim at, the conditions that enable humans to flourish, and the institutions that best serve human needs. Accordingly, Aristotle defines human happiness as an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue in accordance with the most complete.¹⁶ Since Aristotle views thinking as the characteristic activity of humans,

he concludes that human happiness is the activity of the soul in accordance with the rational principle.

Precisely because human nature is a composite of a corporeal body and an incorporeal rational soul, Aristotle's analysis of happiness pulls in two directions.

17 As embodied beings, humans belong to the realm of particulars, the domain of change, generation, and corruption, whose human events are narrated by historical accounts and analyzed by the science of politics. But as rational animals, humans possess reason (*nous*) by virtue of which they can become godlike, that is, a mind engaged in eternal self-contemplation. Therefore, on the one hand, Aristotle claims that the best life for man is the theoretical life of contemplation by which humans become godlike and immortal. His teleology entails a theoretical life of contemplation that is a single, dominant end to which everything else must be subordinated. According to this so-called exclusive or intellectualist reading, Aristotle held that the best life for humans consists of one type of activity: the exercise of the theoretical part of reason. Every other good is desirable to the extent that it contributes to this activity. But on the other hand, Aristotle was fully cognizant of the difficulties of locating happiness in contemplation of the eternal. According to the second, inclusive reading of Aristotle, even though he regarded contemplation as the highest virtue, he did not propose it as the best life for man.

Contemplative life is beyond the reach of most people and beyond more than occasional reach even for those who are capable of it. Because Aristotle regarded humans as social animals who require association with other humans, not only for physical survival but also for faring well, human happiness cannot consist in just one activitycontemplationbut must include all excellences, both practical and theoretical. The happiest life is self-sufficient because it includes

all goods. The best life is a way of life that is entirely choiceworthy, in which basic needs are met and goals central to life can be pursued. Aristotle's ambiguity has given rise to an ongoing process of interpretation, of which Maimonides was but one example.

Judaism as a Logocentric Myth

Maimonides' conception of happiness is difficult to interpret for various reasons. ¹⁸ First, Maimonides inherited the ambiguity of Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* mentioned above, so his own teachings vacillated between the exclusive and inclusive interpretations of happiness. ¹⁹ Second, Maimonides incorporated the views of both Alfarabi (d. 950) and ibn Bajja (d. 1123) concerning human happiness. Whereas the former, by and large, endorsed the inclusivist interpretation of the good life, ²⁰ the latter favored the exclusivist interpretation. ²¹ Moreover, whereas Maimonides explicitly refers to these thinkers by names, in the *Guide* he never mentions the Muslim philosopher from whom he borrowed most ibn Sina. ²² In the famous letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon, Maimonides speaks somewhat dismissively about ibn Sina, thus further obscuring his indebtedness to the

Persian philosopher/physician/poet.

23 And third, Maimonides intentionally obfuscated his views, resorting to an esoteric mode of writing that conceals what it intends to reveal. 24 Any interpretation of Maimonides reflects the interpreter's view of Aristotle and his Muslim interpreters as well as the conscious and unconscious assumptions concerning the entire Maimonidean phenomenon, the nature of Judaism, and the problematics of interpretation. My interpretation of Maimonides is no exception to this rule.

Modern interpreters of Maimonides agree that he intellectualized Judaism. For example, Maimonides depersonalized the Jewish conception of God, rejecting anthropomorphic and anthropopathic God-language and positing instead a negative theology of divine attributes. He identified the will of God with God's wisdom, limiting the freedom of God to that which God knows. He interpreted creation in the image of God to mean that the intellect is the essence of man and that rationality is the foundation for divine-human relations. He insisted that the goal of Jewish worship is the knowledge of God and that the love of God is commensurate with such knowledge. He presented prophecy as the zenith of a natural process of cognizing intelligible forms and insisted that all true prophets are philosophers. He systematically explained the reasons of the commandments, highlighting their underlying rationality and accessibility to the human mind. And finally, he identified the perfection of the intellect with the ultimate end of human life and the sole cause of immortality.

Kenneth Seeskin sums up the Maimonidean enterprise when he states that Maimonides demythologized Judaism. 25 Though on previous occasions I have endorsed this formulation, I would now like to qualify Seeskin's statement by arguing that Maimonides produced a

new logocentric myth of Judaism. Like Plato, Maimonides did not extricate himself from the figurative language of myth, because he regarded *muthos* to be rooted in an aspect of reality, that is, corporeality. Maimonides retained the rabbinic myth of the Covenant the eternal love affair between God and Israel but reinterpreted it through a conscious choice of myth adopted or invented to teach certain philosophical truths. Maimonides believed that the Torah itself reflects the proper relationship between *logos* and *muthos*: the Torah conceals its philosophic teachings behind the linguistic veils of poetic speech, narratives, and laws so as to accommodate the temporal/corporeal modality of humans. Maimonides' philosophic retelling of the story of Judaism thus reflects his assumptions about the structure of reality, the nature of human beings, and the function of language and privileges the act of interpretation in the pursuit of truth. ²⁶ Let me briefly explain Maimonides' philosophical assumptions.

The Maimonidean enterprise is rooted in the ontological assumption characteristic of medieval Aristotelianism: all beings in the sublunar world are composed of *matter* and *form*, exhibiting the duality of essence and existence. ²⁷ In the translunar world there are pure forms, that is, incorporeal, disembodied intelligences, or intellects, that are in themselves separate from matter but that function as *form* to a specific celestial body, their corresponding *matter*. God transcends

both the sublunar and the translunar worlds and is, therefore, the only being whose essence is identical to its existence; the duality of *matter* and *form* does not apply to God. In the *Guide* 3:8, Maimonides articulates the hylomorphic principle as follows: All bodies subject to generation and corruption are attained by corruption only because of their matter; with regard to form and with respect to the latter's essence, they are not attained by corruption, but are permanent.

28 This is another way of restating Aristotle's view that universals do not exist *apart from* particulars (as do the Platonic forms) but *in* particulars. *Matter* is governed by form, or better still, as Lenn Goodman put it, matter becomes articulate to the extent that it is governed by form. 29

The detailed analysis of Maimonides' metaphysics goes beyond the scope of this essay. What is crucial for us is the application of the interdependence of matter and form to Maimonides' view of human nature. In the continuation of the passage cited above, Maimonides states:

Similarly every living being dies and becomes ill solely because of its matter and not because of its form. All man's acts of disobedience and sins are consequent upon his matter and not upon his form, whereas all his virtues are consequent upon his form. For example, man's apprehension of his Creator, his mental representation of every intelligible, his control of his desire and anger and all bad habits found in him, are all of them consequent upon his matter. In as much as it is so, and as according to what has been laid down by divine wisdom, it is impossible for matter to exist without form and for any of the forms in questions to exist without matter, and as consequently it was necessary that man's very noble form, which as we have explained is the *image of God and His likeness*, should be bound to earthy, turbid and dark matter, which calls down upon man every imperfection and corruption. 30

In other words, in humans the ontological interdependence of *matter* and *form* manifests itself in the composition of body and soul. ³¹ With Aristotle, Maimonides held that the soul is the organizational principle of the living body, the aspect of the human composite that accounts for various physiological and rational functions. Maimonides identified five such functions and arranged them in a hierarchical order, ranging from the most bodily dependent functions of nutrition, growth, and reproduction, through the functions of sensation, appetites, and imagination, which combine corporeal and noncorporeal elements, to the least physically dependent function of cognition. ³²

Maimonides' view of the human intellect is crucial to his analysis of human happiness. Though Maimonides followed ibn Sina very closely in regard to ontology and cosmology, he departed from him in regard to the nature of the intellect. Contrary to ibn Sina, who held that the human rational soul is an incorporeal substance, Maimonides endorsed the view of ibn Bajja when he defined the human rational faculty as a power in a body. ³³ Initially, the rational soul is but a disposition in the human organism, inseparable from its body, although, as H. Davidson put it, it is not inseparable in the sense of being distributed through the human body. ³⁴ Before the human intellect begins to think, it is considered by Maimonides as potential or material intellect. By cognizing

intelligible forms, the human intellect is transformed from potentiality to actuality, thus changing from a potential intellect to actual intellect. Following Ibn Sina, Maimonides held that man obtains intelligible thought through conjunction [*ittisal*; *hiddabeq*] with the divine [Active] Intellect, which emanates upon him and from which the form [the intelligible] thought comes into existence.

35 When the human intellect is engaged in the act of thinking, Maimonides defined it as acquired intellect.

Unlike the potential intellect, the acquired intellect is not a power in a body but rather is completely separate from the body and emanates upon it. It is related to the individual man as God is [related] to the world. 36 The acquired intellect is thus something substantial, incorporeal, that exists independently of the human body. In one place, Maimonides defines the acquired intellect as an intellectual virtue and contrasts it with human intellect when man possesses no more than the first principles of thought. In the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides equates that advanced stage of human intellection with the final perfection when he states: Of this form [the acquired intellect] it is said in the Law: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. That is to say, he should have a form which knows and apprehends the intellects devoid of matter, like the angels, which are form devoid of matter, and that he should come to resemble them. 37 The state of final perfection comes about when one knows everything a man can know about all existent things. Echoing Alfarabi's and ibn Sina's notion of intellectual prophecy, Maimonides understands this final perfection as a conjunction between the human intellect and the semidivine Active Intellect and describes the intellectually perfect man as follows:

[H]is mind is always faced upward, bound beneath the [celestial] throne, to

understand the holy pure forms and to behold the wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be he, in its entirety, from the first form until the center of the earth, and knowing from them His greatness; at once, the Holy Spirit rests upon him, and his soul commingles with the rank of the angels called *ishim* [i.e., the Active Intellect] and he is turned into another man [*ish aher*] and he understands in his mind that he is not as he was but that he has risen above the rank of the remainder of the wise man, as it is said of Soul, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man [1 Sam. 10:6]. 38

So far, Maimonides seems to have absorbed and endorsed the exclusive or intellectualist reading of Aristotle's conception of happiness. As much as Plato and Aristotle associated metaphysical knowledge with immortality, so did Maimonides state that knowledge of divine things (i.e., metaphysical knowledge) is in true reality the ultimate end; this is what gives the individual true perfection, a perfection belonging to him alone; and it gives him permanent perdurance, through it man is man. 39 The final perfection attained through intellectual activity is the sole . . . cause of human immortality. 40 To be fully perfect, the human intellect must transcend the features that makes it human, association with the body. By cognizing the intelligible order of reality, the human rational potential is both actualized and substantialized. The perfected intellect the acquired intellect is a substance separable from the body as Aristotle ambiguously hinted in *De Anima* 3:5.

Yet one crucial question still remains unanswered: Can humans in principle have metaphysical knowledge? Maimonides' answer appears to be ambiguous. Following ibn Sina, Maimonides is adamant that contingent human beings can never know the essence of the Necessary Being, God, whose essence is identical with His existence. The ontological gap between the created and the Creator can never be bridged. Not even the prophet Moses, whom Maimonides calls the master of all wise men, has achieved such knowledge.

41 Maimonides' negative theology dictates that the only positive knowledge temporal, contingent creatures can have of God is that God exists and that God governs the world. The mythical language of the Torah expresses this idea in Exodus 33:13 and 20 when it relates that God revealed to Moses his Ways (*derakhim*) but refuses to reveal His Face (*panim*). The Ways are the eternal forms of things, the patterns of all things, which God consulted when he created the universe through self-thinking. Unlike human thought, God's thoughts are productive by way of emanation, resulting in the existence of disembodied celestial intellects, the souls of the spheres, and the forces that govern all natural events. 42 Put differently, although humans cannot know God's essence, they can comprehend God's ways when their own intellect unites with the Active Intellect that governs the sublunar world.

As much as God's ways concern the governance of the universe (i.e., God's attributes of actions), so does human knowledge of these ways pertain to action in the sociopolitical sphere. 43 More specifically, such knowledge leads to the imitation of God's attributes of loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness as the Torah itself prescribes. 44 If so, Maimonides' endorsement of the exclusive reading of Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is less clear than we previously claimed. The emphasis on

altruistic action as the sphere for human flourishing (action that Maimonides analyses and codifies in his halakhic works), appears to support the inclusive reading of Aristotle's view on human happiness. Did Maimonides hopelessly contradict himself? I don't think so.

Though we may not know what Maimonides in fact had in mind, we can offer a reading that makes sense of what Maimonides actually said. Maimonides tells us that the tension between the philosophical/contemplative life and the moral/ political life is in fact resolved in one case only: the life according to the divinely revealed Torah. ⁴⁵ The Torah alone, according to Maimonides, mediates between the universal and the particular, between the necessary and the contingent, between philosophy and history, enabling human beings to flourish qua humans in this world as well as transcend corporeality and experience the blissful existence of an intelligible form. Why? Because the Torah alone is perfect *logos* expressed in the language of perfect *muthos*. ⁴⁶ All other laws, no matter how much they clamor for divine status, are of human origin; based on human conventions, these laws fail to ensure human happiness. The final perfection of man, therefore, can be attained only by those people who live by a divine law, namely, the Jews. Standing between philosophy and history, the Torah of Moses could be viewed as philosophical history. ⁴⁷

The structure of the *Guide*, as Leo Strauss taught us to see, imitates the structure of the Torah. As much as the words of the Torah reveal philosophic truths by

concealing them, so does Maimonides purposefully create a veil of ignorance that corresponds to the corporeality of created things and the embodiment of the human mind. To unlock the philosophic secrets of the Torah, one has first to decipher the secrets of the *Guide*. By writing a riddle or a mystery (i.e., the *Guide*) about another riddle or mystery (i.e., the Torah), Maimonides set up the context he thought necessary for the pursuit of truth and the attainment of human happiness. As a good teacher, Maimonides launched his readers-interpreters-students in the right direction on the search for truth and happiness that endows life with meaning. To be happy a Jew needs to decode the Torah of Moses with the help of Maimonides.

48 Maimonides thus provided Jews not only with a theory of human happiness but also with the path for the actual attainment of happiness. 49 Maimonides adopted the esoteric style of writing, then, not simply as a conspiracy or a ploy to hide philosophy from the ignorant masses, 50 and not just to situate himself in continuity with rabbinic esotericism, 51 but to express his most deeply held philosophical assumptions, which we have outlined above.

Maimonides was fully aware that his claims about the Torah as the ideal context for human happiness could not be proved philosophically. 52 Therefore, he attempted to substantiate them empirically, dogmatically, and rhetorically. Empirically, Maimonides wrote the *Mishneh Torah*, where he attempted to provide the factual evidence that the Torah of Moses, as a matter of fact, perfects the body and soul of those who adhere to it. 53 Dogmatically, Maimonides included the uniqueness of the Torah and of Mosaic prophecy among the Thirteen Principles of Judaism. 54 And rhetorically, Maimonides constructed elaborate myths (in the Aristotelian sense of plot-structures) to convey his conception of happiness. The structure of

these narratives reflects the very structure of the Torah, which, in turn, reflects the structure of reality. As much as the Torah speaks in the language of man when it reveals the golden apples of philosophy by concealing them behind the silver linings of figurative speech, so do the narratives constructed by Maimonides convey a philosophic *logos* wrapped in the language of *muthos*. Thus, notwithstanding Maimonides' own critique of the imagination, he himself was a creative philosopher/artist who invented myths or appropriated existing myths in order to convey philosophical truths.

The interplay of *logos* and *muthos* in Maimonides' conception of happiness reflects elements from both Plato and Aristotle. Like Plato, Maimonides wished to elevate his own culture from a naive, corporeal understanding of reality to a philosophically more accurate one. In the context of Judaism, that meant banishing the simplistic, corporeal, anthropomorphic, and anthropopathic conception of God. Yet Maimonides did not share Plato's understanding of mimesis and followed Aristotle's instead. When Maimonides gave the rabbinic myth of dual Torah a philosophic twist, he conveyed it by employing certain plot-structures, or myths, that are consistent with reality without necessarily mirroring it. In crucial parts of the *Guide*, Maimonides resorts to imaginative stories to make a certain philosophical point. In so doing, Maimonides joined the well-established practice among medieval Muslim Aristotelians, especially ibn Sina, who used

elaborate poetic narratives both to teach philosophy and to hide it from the naive reader.

⁵⁵ The success of the *Guide* as a book that teaches philosophy thus hinged not on the profundity of its teaching but on the rhetorical sophistication of its communication, namely, on Maimonides' esoteric method.

Philosophical History and Human Happiness

The systematic analysis of Maimonides' rhetoric is a desideratum that cannot be addressed here. I wish to illustrate how Maimonides conveyed his conception of happiness by utilizing certain myths, or plot-structures. I will focus on the myth of the Sabian religion, ⁵⁶ the myth of Moses the philosopher and his philosophic Torah, ⁵⁷ and the myth of the king's palace. ⁵⁸ All three myths, or plot-structures, illustrate how, on the one hand, philosophy is manifested in history and how, on the other hand, history can be transcended through philosophy. The myth of the Sabians presents the nation of Israel itself as the corporeal manifestation of philosophy or the historicization of philosophy. In the myth of Moses the philosopher, the ancient prophet is presented as a unique human being who stood at the liminal boundary between spirituality and corporeality so that his Torah mediates between philosophy and history. And the myth of the king's palace narrates the destiny of the individual soul that transcends history by means of philosophical wisdom. The three myths complement each other. The myth of the Sabians pertains to the remote past; the myth of Moses the philosopher discusses a past event that shapes Jewish life in the present (at least ideally), and the myth of the king's palace points to the ideal future of those individuals who live by the Torah, if properly interpreted.

1. The Myth of the Sabians: Philosophy Historicized

Maimonides constructed an elaborate historical fiction about the Sabians, according to which the history of Israel is part of cosmic history, which sees the gradual evolution from polytheism to monotheism, or from *muthos* to *logos*. The raw material for the narrative came from various literary Arabic sources, primarily, the Koran, Islamic heresiology, and universal histories that Maimonides creatively transformed in his retelling.⁵⁹ Maimonides depicts the Sabians as the dominant religion in the time of the biblical ancestors of Israel. They are portrayed as the archetypes of idolatry, engaged in magical conjuring of celestial bodies, astrology, orgiastic cults, reverence for blood, and the sacrifice of children. In addition to these pernicious practices, the Sabians are alleged to have endorsed a fundamental error about the structure of the universe: they believed in the eternity of the world, since in their opinion heaven is the deity.⁶⁰ Why did Maimonides choose the Sabians as an archetype of polytheism? Most likely as a veiled polemic against the Koran.⁶¹ In his attempt to sharply distinguish between Judaism and all other religions, Maimonides represents the Sabians in a very negative

light and insists that the religion of Israel was a rebellion against and a departure from Sabian practices and beliefs on behalf of monotheism, the belief in the existence of a transcendent God who willfully created the universe.

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The hero of Maimonides' plot-structure is Abraham, the pillar of the world, who marks the shift from polytheism to monotheism in human history, a shift that facilitates true human happiness. Abraham is portrayed as the pivotal figure in the fight against idolatry, both ritually and doctrinally.⁶³ The struggle against idolatry has shaped the history of the Jewish people, which Maimonides reconstructs for his readers on the basis of a creative misreading of biblical, aggadic, and Arabic sources. The purpose of Maimonides' own universal history is to show that the nation of Israel is a nation of philosophers, that philosophy is genuinely Jewish, and that the study of philosophy is the only path to human perfection. Reframing the myth of the Chosen People, Maimonides presents the Jewish people as a community that is full of knowledge and is perfect as He, may He be exalted, has made clear through the intermediary of the Master who made us perfect saying: *Surely, this great community is a wise and understanding people* [Deut. 4:6].⁶⁴ In other words, Maimonides insists that philosophy originated with the Jews and that it was taken over from them by other nations as a result of political decay, culminating in the exile from the Land of Israel and oppression by other nations. The poor material conditions of the Jewish people have made it difficult for Jews to cultivate philosophy, since *form* requires the presence of appropriate *matter* to be exhibited. Maimonides' literary endeavor was thus intended to improve these material conditions: by codifying Jewish Law, Maimonides attempted to create the ideal social order necessary for the cultivation of philosophy.

Concomitantly, Maimonides specified the philosophic meaning of the Law in his *Guide*, providing the knowledge he deemed necessary for the attainment of intellectual perfection.

Maimonides' reformulation of the Sabian myth resembles Plato's myth of the three metals in the *Republic*,⁶⁵ more than it anticipates the historical awareness of the seventeenth century, as Amos Funkenstein claims.⁶⁶ Like Plato, Maimonides constructed a story that posits a moral standard by which to evaluate the quality of individuals and societies rather than accurately depict events in the remote past. More specifically, the story of the Sabians contains an implicit claim about the nature of human happiness: the Sabian idolaters could not be said to have enjoyed human happiness because they did not cultivate the intellect, the divine spark whose actualization defines humanity. More advanced religions polities Christianity and Islam progressed further in the attainment of human happiness but failed to attain it because their beliefs and practices were still not fully free from idolatry.

Maimonides thus argues that only those who live in the ideal polity of Judaism can, in fact, attain human happiness. So why did Maimonides find it necessary to tell the story of the Sabians to the members of the perfect polity? Because he believed that interpreting the story would direct his audience toward the pursuit of the proper goal the cultivation of philosophy that culminates in the knowledge of God, to the extent that humans can know God.

In Maimonides' likely story all human affairs and especially the affairs of the Jewish people can be construed as acts in the dramatic progression from idolatry to monotheism, from corporeality to spirituality, from *muthos* to *logos*. Collectively and individually, Jews could assess their place in this process by comparing themselves to the negated Sabians.

2. *The Myth of Moses the Philosopher and His Philosophic Torah*

The qualitative difference between Israel and all other nations, according to Maimonides, is that Israel possesses a divinely revealed law—the Torah of Moses. Taking his cue from Alfarabi and Ibn Sina, Maimonides judaized the notion of the perfect philosopher-prophet-legislator who has attained intellectual prophecy so that his laws reflect the structure of reality. Maimonides imaginatively depicted Moses not only as the master of all prophets and the master of all wise men but also as a unique human being who was allegedly so perfect that he could cognize the intelligible principles of reality *almost* directly, with the least measure of corporeal mediation but without losing his humanity.

⁶⁷ In the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides dogmatically asserted the qualitative difference between Moses and all other prophets, and in the *Guide*, Maimonides took pains to differentiate between the intellectual prophecy of the Muslim philosophers and the uniqueness of Mosaic prophecy. These assertions are meant to single out the Torah of Moses as the one and only divine Law, whose cognitive content is identical with the structure of reality. ⁶⁸ Because Moses comprehended the pattern of the laws of nature, the Torah of Moses enters into what is natural, including human nature. Put differently, the esoteric content of the Torah is identical with the laws of nature; it manifests the order of things. ⁶⁹ The perfection of the Torah thus rests on the perfection of the agent who received the Torah—the prophet

Moses.

Moses' perfection includes as well the perfection of his imaginative faculty. Following Plato and Aristotle, Maimonides regarded the imagination with suspicion because the imagination could create a situation that has no objective correlative, thus leading the knower to commit errors about reality.⁷⁰ Therefore, Maimonides insisted that the imagination played no role whatsoever in the attainment of Moses' prophecy, which was strictly conceptual but only in the transmission of Moses' prophecy to the Israelites. Alfred Ivry, therefore, is correct to note that Maimonides believes that the Torah as we have it is the result of Moses' religious imagination.⁷¹ The perfect imagination of Moses entails that the Torah is the most perfect *poetic* text, one in which there is a perfect fit between the cognitive, esoteric core of philosophical truths and the figurative language of the Torah's narratives, a fit that justifies *allegoresis* (i.e., the hermeneutical act).⁷² The linguistic perfection of the Torah means that its narratives, poetic imagery, and laws function as *matter* to the cognitive truths that are their *form*. As a perfect artist, Moses produced his perfect knowledge of reality in the

language of men so that embodied, historically situated Israelites would have access to the truth, albeit through the veils of figurative speech. Moses' perfect prophecy thus resulted in the most perfect fit between *matter* and *form*, between the silver lining of figurative speech and the golden apples of cognitive, philosophic content. It is this perfect speech that facilitates, nay demands, interpretation, and it is this act of interpretation that constitutes human happiness. For Maimonides the pursuit of happiness consists of a hermeneutics of the Torah of Moses.

As a divine law, the Torah of Moses mediates between the historicity of corporeal creatures, who are subject to change, and the timelessness of philosophical truths. Whereas the exoteric, historically bound narratives and laws of the Torah facilitate the attainment of bodily and moral perfection, the esoteric, philosophical truths of the Torah perfect body and the soul by actualizing the human rational potential, the divine element in humans. Thus, only those human beings who live by the Torah of Moses—namely, the Jew—can transcend history and attain immortal life. To do so, the Jew who seeks happiness must strip the historical wrappings of the Torah in order to disclose its philosophical, ahistorical truths. By studying the Torah the seeker of perfection acquires first the moral virtues (through habitual practice of actions in the mean) and then the intellectual virtues (through cognizing true beliefs), culminating in the attainment of the ultimate end of human life—the intellectual love of God.

Aristotle sharply distinguished between *energia* and *kinesis*: happiness must be an activity rather than something that develops over time toward a stage of completion.

⁷³ Maimonides blurred this distinction: for him human happiness is both an activity—the act of interpreting divine law—and a process, the gradual attainment of perfection through the cultivation of moral and

intellectual virtues, culminating in the knowledge of God. For the Jews who live by the divine law, the ongoing process of self-perfection comprises the gradual removal of veils, be they veils of corporeality in the thing known, the veils of ignorance in the knowing subject, or the veils of language in the medium that communicates between them. The quest of perfection, happiness, and truth are thus one and the same. All require a disciplined regimen of habitual practice in the social-moral sphere, as both Aristotle and the rabbis understood.

To attain human perfection is to live under a perpetual diet, ⁷⁴ literally speaking in the case of the body and metaphorically speaking in the case of the soul. The diet specifies the proper rules for bodily conduct and internal emotions and thoughts whose practice leads to acquisition of excellence. The prescribed physical, emotional, and mental diet produces the well-balanced individual who curbs bodily desires, cultivates the mean between two extreme vices, and reaches wisdom by overcoming the errors produced by human imagination. But to properly understand the diet of the Torah one must study it and interpret it. In other words, one must strip away the linguistic veils of the Torah's narratives and laws (i.e., the material aspect of the Torah) to reach its philosophical, conceptual core. By interpreting the Torah with the help of Maimonides, the corporeal, figurative

veils of the Torah are gradually removed, and its incorporeal, philosophical core is exposed. Thus, hermeneutics makes known, or reveals, the necessary, immutable truths whose knowledge enables the knower to transcend history.

Maimonides' portrayal of the happy life resolves the apparent tension within the *Nicomachean Ethics* along the lines proposed by R. Kraut.

⁷⁵ The theoretical life and the practical life are not in necessary conflict with each other. Rather they are complementary components of one type of life that organizes all activities according to one *dominant* principle, the contemplation of God. The happy, or perfect, life consists of both *praxis* (*ma'aseh*) and *theoria* (*iyyun*), appropriately reflecting the duality of matter and form, of body and soul, respectively. For Jews, the practical life consists of imitating the ways by which God governs the universe: loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness, as the Torah prescribes and the rabbinic tradition elaborates. Maimonides' recognition of the importance of action in the social-political sphere rejects the tendency to withdraw from the world and cultivate *apathia* or *ataraxia*, which the Stoics counseled in the ancient past and the Sufis practiced (albeit in a different setting and under a different myth) during Maimonides' own time. ⁷⁶ In contrast to the Stoic virtue-ethics, which had pervaded rabbinic moral teachings, ⁷⁷ Maimonides returned to the Aristotelian political vision of happiness when he reinterpreted the rabbinic tradition. Proper *praxis*, according to Maimonides, does take place in the political realm and must lead to *theoria*, the contemplative life by which humans perfect the intellect, the divine image in which humans are created. The good life within the parameters of Torah results in the intellectual love of God.

3. *The Myth of the King's Palace: Philosophy Transcends History*

The quest for perfection takes place in history, but its ultimate end is the transcendence of history, albeit without its transformation.

Precisely because Maimonides regarded creation as a reflection of divine wisdom and providence, he believed that the world that God created is the best of all possible worlds; it does not need to be improved through apocalyptic upheaval in the Messianic Age. ⁷⁸

Hence, Maimonides interpreted the Messianic Age in naturalistic terms, insisting that it will not witness the transformation of nature but only a change in the realm of human history, namely, the liberation of Israel from foreign domination. Free from the control of foreign nations, the Jews will live in peace in their sovereign polity, governed by the Torah, which would enable them to attain the intellectual love of God, that is, attain the final perfection of human life. ⁷⁹

In the rabbinic tradition, the salvation of the individual soul is expressed mythically in the concept of the world-to-come (*olam ha-ba*). Subjecting the traditional concept to an Aristotelian reinterpretation, Maimonides holds that *olam ha-ba* is the ultimate end toward which all our efforts ought to be devoted, the ultimate and perfect reward, the final bliss which will suffer neither interruption nor diminution. ⁸⁰ Maimonides explicitly divorces *olam ha-ba* from its original

association with the apocalyptical and eschatological drama of the Messianic Age when he states: The sages and prophets did not long for the days of the Messiah . . . [but] that Israel be free to devote itself to the Law and its wisdom . . . and thus be worthy of life in the world to come.

⁸¹ The world-to-come, then, is not a specific phase in the posthistorical messianic drama but a distinct mode of existence by the perfected soul. The difference between the pre-Messianic and the Messianic Age lies in the attainability of that mode of existence. Whereas in the Messianic Age all of Israel will attain the ultimate of human life effortlessly, enjoying the bliss of immortal life, in the pre-Messianic, historical era only the select few will enjoy the bliss of immortality.

That at least some select Jews could and can transcend history by virtue of intellectual perfection is the message of the myth of the king's palace in the *Guide* 3:51. As an accomplished teller and inventor of *muthoi*, Maimonides employed his creative imagination to communicate what he thought was true, to the extent that the truth can be known to temporal/corporeal human beings. ⁸² To ensure that the reader approaches the myth of the king's palace correctly, Maimonides supplies the appropriate interpretation.

The parable divides human beings into classes arranged in a hierarchical order. Each class represents a certain phase in the perfection of knowledge, from utter ignorance (represented in the parable by those outside the gate of the city) through several rungs of intellectual perfection in an ascending order that corresponds to the hierarchy of the sciences. The ladder of perfection culminates in the knowledge of God by the prophets, who direct all the acts of their intellect toward an examination of the beings with a view to drawing

from them proofs with regard to him. ⁸³ In the language of the parable, the highest phase of the knower of God is the intimate presence of the knower in the inner chambers of the king's palace. The meaning of the parable is that those who live by the Torah can attain moral and intellectual perfections, culminating in the final perfection: the intellectual love of God.

Maimonides equates the highest stage of intellectual perfection with the love of God. He describes the true lover of God as one who has attained such apprehension of true realities and his joy in what he has apprehended, achieves a state in which he talks with people and is occupied with his bodily necessities while his intellect is wholly turned toward Him, may He be exalted so that in his heart he is always in His presence, May He be exalted, while outwardly he is with people. ⁸⁴ This lofty state is articulated in the Song of Songs 5:2 in a poetical parable, a parable that, according to Maimonides, describes the heroes of the monotheistic drama Abraham and Moses. In a language reminiscent of Plato's simile of the sun in the *Republic*, Maimonides describes the perfect lover of God: He who apprehends and advances with this whole being toward the object of his apprehension, is like one who is in the pure light of the sun. He who has had apprehension, but is occupied, is while he is occupied in this state like one who has a cloudy day in which the sun does not shine because of the clouds that separate it and him. ⁸⁵ This language is undoubtedly meant to return the reader

to the Introduction of the *Guide*, where Maimonides says: But sometimes truth flashes out to us so that we think that it is day, and then matter and habit in their various forms conceal it so that we find ourselves again in an obscure night, almost as we were at first. We are like someone in a very dark night over whom lighting flashes time and time again.

86 The perfect lover of God, then, is the one for whom the lightning flashes time and time again, so that he is always, as it were, in unceasing light.

At the conclusion of the *Guide*, Maimonides links the ultimate perfection to the hermeneutical process in a very personal way. Speaking in the first person, Maimonides interrupts the flow of his discussion to explain how he himself arrived at a profound insight about God's relationship to the world. The language suggests that the very act of interpreting the Torah in the process of composing the *Guide* has led Maimonides to the desired illumination described above. He states: A most extraordinary speculation has occurred to me just now through which doubts may be dispelled and divine secrets revealed. Maimonides likens the dispelling of doubts to the uplifting of the clouds that makes the sun (i.e., the truth) shine forth. The truth that was revealed to Maimonides in this moment of clarity, after he had succeeded in removing his own veils of ignorance and corporeality, was that providence watches over everyone endowed with intellect proportionately to the measure of his intellect. Thus providence always watches over an individual endowed with perfect apprehension whose intellect never ceases from being occupied with God. On the other hand, an individual endowed with perfect apprehension, whose thought sometimes for a certain time is emptied of God, is watched over by providence only during the time when he

thinks of God; providence withdraws from him during the time when he is occupied with something else. ⁸⁷ Put differently, Maimonides' illumination pertains to the impersonal nature of God's love for Israel.

Rabbinic Judaism is grounded in the myth of the eternal love affair between God and Israel. Maimonides reinterpreted this love in reference to both partners. God's love for Israel is manifested not in the passionate concern for Israel and periodic, miraculous interventions but in the regularity of nature's fixed laws and their accessibility to the human intellect. These are the ways of God (i.e., the attributes of God's action), which are knowable by the human mind through the study of physics and metaphysics. The better one understands the laws of nature, the more one avoids mishaps and error, thereby appearing to enjoy a special favor from God. Correspondingly, human love of God is manifested first in the imitations of God's ways by virtue of which humans can acquire the moral and intellectual virtues, and it culminates in the intellectual love of God. At its highest phase, the human love of God is not the gushing outburst of emotions and bodily affections but the serene, self-controlled, silent joy of contemplation that is commensurate with one's knowledge of God. ⁸⁸ Maimonides replaced the rabbinic understanding of eros with the philosophical conception of eros, the nonpersonal, intellectualist love of wisdom.

As human perfection is finally attained in the act of contemplation, not only

history is transcended but also language itself, since history and language befit the temporal/corporeal modality of creation. When perfection is attained, silence is the only appropriate response. In the *Guide* 1:50, Maimonides reminds us that the Torah itself understood the significance of silence in divine worship when it stated that silence is praise to you (Psalm 65:2). It is only fitting then that the myth of the king's palace was placed at the end of *Guide*, after which Maimonides and his readers are left with silence. When the human temporal/corporeal modality is transcended, words become redundant and inadequate, leaving us to contemplate the disclosure of *logos* through the linguistic veils of *muthos* in the attainment of human happiness.

Conclusion

Let me summarize Maimonides' notion that the life of Torah is the happy life by retelling it as a musical parable. The Torah is the most perfect score of human happiness ever composed, because its composer was the most perfect musician that ever lived and that ever will live. In order to reproduce the perfect score, the performer must be in perfect physical and mental shape. Body and soul must be well tuned and harmonically balanced so as to match the inner balance of the score. Since the excellence of the performer-interpreter determines the quality of the production, each individual performance reproduces the score to varying degrees of excellence. And precisely because it is only a reproduction of the ideal, the product (no matter how good) always falls short of the ideal. In the created world of time-space there is only relative happiness, never an absolute one. What is crucial, however, is that for those who live by the Torah and understand it correctly (as Maimonides claims to do), the pursuit of happiness is not in vain. In full accord with the rabbinic tradition, Maimonides holds that the pursuit of happiness within the parameters of Halakhah is the

most reasonable, joyful, and delightful activity available to humans. Those who live by the Torah are the happiest of all human beings, to the extent that humans can be happy. Maimonides' use of plot-structures (either invented or appropriated) did not demythologize Judaism but exchanged a logocentric myth for the rabbinic one. Maimonides seems to tell us that myth is inevitable in human life because humans are a composite of *matter* and *form*. Consequently, the process by which we come to know truth is necessarily hermeneutical. Hermeneutics is the essence of Judaism because it is also the essence of reality. In this conception of happiness, hermeneutics and happiness converge.

In light of this interpretation we can now return to Yerushalmi's insightful reflection about the primacy of myth in premodern Judaism, to which Maimonides was no exception. Jewish collective identity was indeed shaped by the sacred, normative, rabbinic narrative, that is, the myth of the dual Torahs that Maimonides endorsed but subjected to a thorough reinterpretation. Maimonides did not anticipate the modern historian, as Funkenstein argued, because

the historical context to which he presumably paid attention was itself a constructed, philosophical myth, a narrative that Maimonides intentionally employed to teach certain philosophical truths about the way things are. Maimonides could reinterpret the rabbinic myth because his philosophical assumptions facilitated the multiplicity of meanings, characteristic of a symbolic discourse that is at once transparent and opaque, to use Elliot Deutch's apt formulation.

89 These philosophical assumptions were undermined by the Enlightenment, leading to the radical distinction between *muthos* and *logos* that made a symbolic discourse impossible. As a result the rabbinic myth of Torah lost its ability to make the past present, to use Yerushalmi's phrase,⁹⁰ because it ceased to organize Jewish experience through the act of interpretation. The rabbinic myth that had endowed Jewish life with meaning has become merely a myth, that is, a non-real fiction to be treated with suspicion. Perhaps a return to Maimonides' logocentric myth of Judaism could enable contemporary Jews not only to reconnect with the rabbinic tradition but also to make their desperate pursuit of happiness both Jewishly and philosophically richer. Only time will tell.

Notes

1. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London, 1982), 41.
2. Ibid., 42.
3. Ibid. Since mythical time is qualitative rather than quantitative so that time is always time *for* something (e.g., time for worship), it is not clear to me that the Jewish conception of time is indeed not mythical.

4. According to this functionalist definition, a myth is neither true nor false. Rather it is a narrative that either has or does not have the power to evoke a meaningful response. See Elliot Deutch, Truth and Mythology, in *Myth and Fictions*, ed. Shlomo Biderman and Ben-Ami Scharfstein (Leiden, 1993), 4150. It is this understanding of myth that implicitly underlies Yerushalmi's discussion, though it is not explicitly spelled out.

5. See Gerald A. Press, History and the Development of the Idea of History in Antiquity, in *History and Theory* 23 (3) (1977): 28687.

6. *Physics* 4.2, 219b12.

7. *Poetics* 9.1451b6. I use the translation of Stephen Halliwell, *The Poetics of Aristotle: Translation and Commentary* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1987), 41.

8. For an excellent treatment of this point, see Lawrence J. Hatab, *Myth and Philosophy: A Contest of Truths* (La Salle, Ill., 1990). The discussion of the next three paragraphs is based on that book.

9. Since the Enlightenment, the *logos/muthos* dichotomy has been central to Western consciousness. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d rev. ed., rev. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York, 1989), 27374. Though the distinction originated with the ancient Greeks, the interplay between *logos* and *muthos* in Greek philosophy and its medieval successions is much more subtle than in modern philosophy.

10. For a review of the pertinent literature consult Kent F. Moors, *Platonic Myth: An Introductory Study* (Washington, D.C., 1981), 124.

11. Halliwell, *Poetics of Aristotle*, 79.

12. Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1986), 25.

13. The word *muthos* in Greek carries a range of meanings, including speech, story, report, narrative, myth, fable, and fiction. The translation of *muthos* as plot-structure was coined by Stephen Halliwell, *ibid.*, 24, and will be used herein for the same reasons he cites.

14. *Ibid.*, 25.

15. In the past two decades there has been a resurgence of philosophical interest in Aristotle's conception of happiness. The extensive relevant bibliography could not be cited here. The studies that influenced my presentation include the following: Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Happiness* (Berkeley, Calif., 1980); Richard Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton, N.J., 1989); Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (New York, 1991); Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York, 1993).

16. *Ethics* 1.7. 1098a1517.

17. For a discussion of these two interpretations of Aristotle and bibliographical references, see Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, Human Felicity: Fifteenth-Century Sephardic Perspectives on Happiness, in *In Iberia and Beyond: Hispanic Jews between Two Cultures*, ed. Bernard D. Cooperman and Adele Seefe (Newark, N.J., forthcoming).

18. There is an extensive literature on Maimonides' conception of human perfection. For an overview of the issue and the relevant literature, see Menachem Marc Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection* (Atlanta, 1990); Norman Roth, Attaining Happiness (*Eudaimonia*) in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Philosophy, *Centerpoint* 4 (1981): 2132.

19. The history of the discourse on happiness in medieval Jewish philosophy, which I am now writing, illustrates Maimonides'

vacillation between these two possible readings of Aristotle. Generally speaking, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the exclusive reading of Maimonides dominated the Maimonidean tradition, while in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the inclusive reading was more common. Whether a given thinker opposes or endorses Aristotle's moral philosophy and, in turn, that of Maimonides depends on (among other factors) which of these views of human happiness the thinker ascribes to his authoritative sources. The discourse on happiness is thus an ideal case for charting the reception of Aristotle and Maimonides in late medieval Jewish thought more than it helps define their true position.

20. See Miriam Galston, *Politics and Excellence: The Political Philosophy of Alfarabi* (Princeton, N.J., 1990), 5594.

21. See Alexander Altmann, Ibn Bajja on Man's Ultimate Felicity, in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1965), 1:4787; reprinted in idem, *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1969), 1524.

22. Maimonides' relationship to ibn Sina is a riddle not yet solved. Most recently, Alfred Ivry has suggested that Maimonides' ambiguous attitude toward ibn Sina reflects his uneasiness with Neoplatonism. On the one hand, Maimonides was attracted to Neoplatonism, but on the other hand, he thought it to be philosophically inadequate. See Alfred Ivry, Maimonides and Neoplatonism: Challenge and Response, in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany, N.Y., 1992), 13756. For a documentation of Maimonides' direct borrowing from ibn Sina, consult Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of the Human Intellect* (New York and Oxford, 1992), *passim*.

It seems to me fruitful to explore the following avenue: Maimonides' reticence to cite ibn Sina might lie in the fact that the Persian thinker

held a non-Orthodox position on the question of bodily resurrection. Ibn Sina's denial of bodily resurrection was attacked by Alghazali and was well known to Maimonides, who likewise held a non-Orthodox view on this matter. It stands to reason that Maimonides thought it prudent to minimize his overt reliance on ibn Sina in order to protect himself on a very sensitive issue, for which he was indeed attacked.

23. For a recent discussion of this letter, consult Steven Harvey, *Did Maimonides'*

Letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon Determine Which Philosophers Would Be Studied by Later Jewish Thinkers, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 83 (1992): 5170.

24. Maimonides' intentional obfuscation has been analyzed in great detail since the days of Leo Strauss. For a historical overview of the various attempts to read Maimonides, consult Aviezer Ravitzky, Sitrey Torah shel Moreh ha-Nevukhim: Ha-Parshanut beDorotav v-be-Doroteinu, in *Al Da'at ha-Maqom: Mehqarim ba-hagut ha-Yehudit v-ve-Toldoteha* (Jerusalem, 1991), 14281.

25. See Kenneth Seeskin, *Maimonides: A Guide for Today's Perplexed* (West Orange, N.J., 1991), 22.

26. This position is compatible, though not identical, with Howard Kreisel's argument that Maimonides' conception of *imitatio Dei* reflects his metaphysics. See Howard Kreisel, *Imitatio Dei* in Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed, *AJS Review* 19 (2) (1994):169211. Going beyond Kreisel, I wish to expose the close link between metaphysics, psychology, epistemology, ethics, and rhetoric in Maimonides' thought.

27. See Alexander Altmann, Essence and Existence in Maimonides, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 35 (1953): 294315; reprinted in his *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, 10827. For a critique of Altmann's analysis, see Alfred Ivry, n. 22, above.

28. All translations in this article are from *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, 1963). See 2:430. On Maimonides' conception of matter, consult, Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, Matter as Creature and Matter as the Source of Evil: Maimonides and Aquinas, in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany, N.Y., 1992), 21735.

29. Lenn E. Goodman, Maimonides Naturalism, in *Neoplatonism and*

Jewish Thought, 165.

30. *Guide*, 2:431.

31. This formulation is in direct conflict with Marvin Fox's view, according to which Maimonides held that [m]an *qua* man is incorporeal. See Marvin Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides: Studies in Methodology, Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy* (Chicago, 1990), 169. In the *Guide* 1:1, Maimonides indeed equated the image of God in which *man* was created with an incorporeal *form*. However, in the temporal/spatial order no such form does actually exist because human beings as we know them are a composite of *form* and *matter*.

32. Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Introduction to Tractate Avot (Eight Chapters), chap. 1. Modern scholars of Maimonides have tended to focus either on his theory of knowledge (i.e., the operation of the rational soul) or on his ethics (i.e., the acquisition of moral virtues and the formation of the good character), which correspond to theoretical life and practical life, respectively. Relatively little attention, however, has been given to the connection between these two aspects and Maimonides' rhetoric and hermeneutical theory, as this article attempts to do.

33. *Guide* 1:70; 72.

34. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna*, 200.

35. *Guide* 3:8. For a closer analysis of this citation and its relation to ibn Sina's philosophy, see Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna*, 201.

36. *Guide*, 1:71.

37. *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhoh Yesode ha-Torah 4:8.

38. *Ibid.*, 7:1.

39. *Guide* 3:54, p. 635. In *De Anima* 3:5, Aristotle was notoriously ambiguous about the connection between knowledge and immortality.

Since, in his theory of knowledge, cognized universals are *in* the mind that cognizes them, so that it is said to be identified with the content of one's mind, it follows that the mind can become immortal when it cognizes necessary, immutable truths.

40. *Guide* 3:27.

41. The limitations of even Moses' knowledge are reiterated in the *Guide* 1:72; 2:4; 3:9; *Mishneh Torah*, Hilklhot Yesode ha-Torah, 2:58.
42. Goodman, Maimonides Naturalism, 161. Maimonides' rather positive attitude toward mimesis, especially linguistic mimesis, is thus rooted in the productive nature of God's thoughts.
43. This is the basis for the so-called political interpretation of Maimonides' conception of happiness championed by Lawrence Berman and critiqued by Menachem Kellner. See Lawrence Berman, The Political Interpretation of the Maxim: The Purpose of Philosophy Is the Imitation of God, *Studia Islamica* 15 (1961): 5361.
44. *Guide* 3:53; 54. This reading is shared by Daniel H. Frank, The End of the Guide:Maimonides on the Best Life for Man, *Judaism* 34 (1985): 48595. For a full exposition of this point, see Howard Kreisel's article cited in n. 26, above.
45. For Maimonides the divinity of the Torah does not mean that the Torah comes from God but that the Torah can be shown to be that law that perfects the body and the soul and as such qualifies as divine law. See Warren Z. Harvey, Between Political Philosophy and Halakhah in Maimonides' Thought (in Hebrew), *Iyyun* 29 (1980): 198212.
46. Maimonides, of course, does not use this language, but I believe that it is implied in his close reading of the biblical text throughout the *Guide*. Not only does Maimonides pay close attention to the Torah's choice of words, he often marvels how the Torah's wording is the most appropriate linguistic rendering of a certain philosophical idea. It is this fit between the exoteric expression and the esoteric meaning that characterizes the parable (Arabic, *mathal*; Hebrew, *mashal*) that captures the structure of the Torah and the *Guide*. For Maimonides a parable is another word for a riddle, namely, a narrative in which the overt meaning reveals something about the covert meaning. The

parabolic speech of the *Guide* is thus quite different from the rabbinic *mashal*, a specific trope that was used, as David Stern put it, to persuade its audience of the truth of a specific message relating to an ad hoc situation. See David Stern, *Parables in Midrash* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 12. It seems to me that the parables in the *Guide* are closer to the original Greek meaning of the term, which Stern claims does *not* apply to rabbinic *mashal*. For an analysis of the *Guide's* biblical exegesis and the types of parables he employed, see Sara Klein-Braslavi, *Perush ha-Rambam le-Sippur Beriat ha-Olam* (Jerusalem, 1988), 1746.

47. I borrow this term from Adrian Kuzminski, The Paradox of Historical Knowledge, *History and Theory*, 12 (3) (1973): 26989. While this essay has nothing to do with Maimonides, it touches upon the issues of concern to our discussion.

48. Among contemporary readers of Maimonides the one who understood this principle best was the late Marvin Fox in his *Interpreting Maimonides*. Fox presents his commentary on the *Guide* 1:12 as a prolegomenon to the ideal commentary on the *Guide*, which should have Rashi as his model (p. 153). This, I believe, is precisely how Maimonides wished to have been read.

49. I would argue that Maimonides largely succeeded in so doing since, for the following four centuries, all philosophical attempts to reason about human happiness were in fact carried out as interpretation of the Maimonidean riddle.

50. Maimonides indeed was concerned that the misunderstanding of philosophy by the uneducated masses could be harmful and even lead to idolatry. See *Guide*, 1:17. The conspiratorial reading of the *Guide* was Leo Strauss's legacy to contemporary readings of Maimonides. Such reading, not unrelated to Strauss's own biography, may be called political esotericism, and it comes at the expense of the philosophical esotericism that this article wishes to highlight.

51. For Maimonides the rabbinic injunction against teaching *Ma'aseh Bereshit* and *Ma'aseh Merkabah* in public (Mishnah Hagiga 2:1) consists in the prohibition on the teaching of physics and metaphysics, respectively.

52. This point was already made by Warren Harvey in the article cited in n. 45, above.

53. Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* thus substantiates the claim he made in the *Guide* 3:27: the true Law then, which we have already made clear is unitenamely, the Law of Moses our Masterhas come to bring us both perfections, I mean the welfare of the states of people in their relations with one another through the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing and through the acquisition of a noble and excellent character.

54. For an analysis of the Thirteen Principles, consult Menachem Marc Kellner, *Dogmas in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel* (Oxford, 1986), 1065.

55. On the dynamics of *logos* and *muthos* in ibn Sina, see Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (ibn Sina)* (Philadelphia, 1992).

56. This narrative is most developed in the *Guide* 1:36; 2:13, 39; 3:29, 37,49. Cf., *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Avodah Zarah, chap. 1. For a discussion of the myth, consult Salo W. Baron, The Historical Outlook of Maimonides, in *History and Jewish Historians* comp. Arthur Hertzberg and Leon A. Feldman (Philadelphia, 1964), 109163, esp. 11420; Amos Funkenstein, The Historical and Messianic Conception of Maimonides, in *Perceptions of Jewish History: From Antiquity to the Present* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1991), 10356, esp. 2936; idem, Maimonides' Political Theory and Realistic Messianism, in *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley, Calif, 1993), 14143.

57. Three times in the *Guide*, Maimonides calls Moses the master of all wise men. The portrayal of Moses as a philosopher is most forceful in the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Sanhedrin X (Pereq Heleq). In *Guide* 2:3248, Maimonides discusses Moses' political actions as a communicator of God's message and a giver of the law. For a comprehensive discussion of this portrayal, consult Kalman Bland, Moses and the Law According to Maimonides, in *Mystics, Philosophers and Politicians*, ed. Y. Reinhartz (Durham, N.C., 1982),

4966.

58. *Guide* 3:51. For a close reading of this myth, consult Menachem Marc Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection*. Other partial discussions are offered by Aviezer Ravitzky, To the Utmost Human Capacity: Maimonides on the Days of the Messiah, in *Perspectives on Maimonides: Philosophical and Historical Studies*, ed. Joel L. Kraemer (Oxford, 1991), 22156, esp. 24550; Steven Harvey, Maimonides in the Sultan's Palace, in *Perspectives on Maimonides*, 4775; Ralph Lerner, Maimonides' Governance of the Solitary, in *Perspectives on Maimonides*, 3346.

59. The *Sabi'un* are mentioned in the Koran 2:62; 5:69; 22:17 in the company of Believers, the Jews, and the Christians with whom they share the title of people of the Book (*ahal al-Kitab*). Modern scholarship has exposed the ambiguity of the term. While the Sabians were a Gnostic sect, the term denotes both Christian and pagan groups. On the one hand, the term denotes a Judeo-Christian sect, akin to the Ebionites, the Eichasaïtes, and the Mandeans, who were known for their baptismal practices. On the other hand, the term refers to a pagan Greco-Roman sect from the region of Haran who had a developed astrological religion with strong Platonic tendencies. For the most comprehensive review of research on the Sabians, consult Sabia in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., ed. G. E. Bosworth *et al.* (Leiden, 1994) 8:67578, and the bibliography cited there. For an overview of Islamic historiography, see Claude Cahen, History and the Historians, in *Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period*, ed. M. J. L. Young *et al.* (Cambridge, 1990), 188233.

60. *Guide* 3:29, 515.

61. A different interpretation is offered by Alfred Ivry, Maimonides and Neoplatonism: Challenge and Response, in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, 140. According to Ivry, the Sabians of Maimonides were Aristotle and his ilk, Maimonides' closest allies philosophically. I

am not convinced by this reading.

62. It is safe to say that Maimonides believed that God created the universe, even though the precise meaning of the term *create* is still a matter of scholarly dispute. For an analysis of the current contemporary debate and an attempt to resolve it, see Norbert

Samuelson, Maimonides' Doctrine of Creation, *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (3) (1991): 24971.

Maimonides' puzzling views on the origins of the universe are not surprising; precisely because his point of departure is the historically located knower, he believed that the origins of the universe, in principle, cannot be demonstrated philosophically. The origin of the universe must remain a myth in the Platonic sense of a likely story. All one can do is provide rational arguments in support of the belief in creation, arguments that Maimonides thought superior to the counterarguments in favor of the eternity of the universe. Yet these arguments do not constitute demonstrative proofs.

63. *Guide* 1:36, 63; 1:39; 3:39. *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Avodah Zarah, 1:3.

64. *Guide* 2:11. For a detailed discussion, consult Lawrence Kaplan, Maimonides on the Singularity of the Jewish People, *Daat* 15 (1985): v-xxvii.

65. 3.412b4.421c.

66. Funkenstein, Historical and Messianic Conception of Maimonides, 131.

67. See Kalman P. Bland, *Moses and the Law*, 4966, esp. 53.

68. In the rungs of prophecy listed in *Guide* 2:45, Moses is mentioned on the lowest rung, along with judges, whereas Abraham is listed on the four highest rungs. By stating that Moses is both the master of all prophets and the lowest on the list, Maimonides did not simply contradict himself. Rather, he attempted to suggest that in a profound sense Moses was *not* a prophet because the imagination was not involved in the reception of divine emanation. I owe this point to

Aryeh L. Motzkin in an unpublished paper, Maimonides on the Imagination, delivered at Indiana University on March 25, 1993.

69. This premise undergirded the exegetical approach of the Maimonidean tradition. Funkenstein called it the maximalist interpretation of the principle *diberah Torah bileschon bene adam*, and its result was that the Torah was viewed as a scientific text that relates the way things are. To study nature one must interpret the Torah. The most consistent exponent of Maimonides' exegetical principle was Gersonides. See Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, N.J., 1986), 213-19; idem, *Historical and Messianic Conception of Maimonides*, 124-30.

70. This is the essence of Maimonides' critique of the Kalam theologians in the *Guide* 1:73. Maimonides argued that they do not distinguish between the intellect and the imagination and so blur the distinction between the way things are (i.e., nature), on the one hand, and fantasy or convention, on the other hand. Precisely because Maimonides presupposes the existence of immutable nature, including human nature, he must distinguish between what is real and what is imagined. Maimonides closely followed Aristotle's theory of the imagination. For a detailed analysis of it, consult Malcolm Schofield, *Aristotle on the Imagination*, in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, ed. Marsha C. Nussbaum and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford, 1992), 249-78.

71. Alfred Ivry, *Neoplatonic Currents in Maimonides Thought*, in *Perspectives on Maimonides*, 135.

72. On the basis of this principle, Maimonides can argue in the *Guide* 3:33 that even though the Torah speaks in the language of man, it contains mysteries and secrets that can be accessible to the intellect.

73. Aristotle, *Ethics* 10.4. 1174a14-b9; *Metaphysics* 9.6. 1048b18-36.

On the Aristotelian distinction between activity (*energia*) and process (*kinesis*), see Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good*, 68.

74. The English word diet comes from the Greek word *diatia*, meaning way of living or mode of life. Ancient and medieval philosophers took it for granted that to preserve health and prolong life required knowledge of how to regulate one's life so that one would remain in balance with nature. See Harold J. Cook, The New Philosophy and Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England, in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*,

ed. David C. Lindberg and Robert S. Westman (Cambridge, 1990), 407. Likewise Maimonides presupposed the causal connection between physical and mental well-being and argued that the Torah is the most perfect diet because it secures both.

75. See n. 15, above.

76. The Stoic resonance of Sufi material known to Maimonides was already noticed by Raymond L. Weiss, *Maimonides Ethics: The Encounter of Philosophic and Religious Morality* (Chicago, 1991), 4648.

77. While many scholars have noted the presence of Stoic themes in rabbinic anecdotal and gnomic literature, there is no systematic analysis of rabbinic ethics from this perspective. The most elaborate argument for the indebtedness of rabbinic thinkers to Stoic philosophy is advanced by Henry Fischel, *Story and History: Observations on GrecoRoman Rhetorical and Pharisaism*, in *Essays in GrecoRoman and Related Talmudic Literature*, ed. Henry A. Fischel (New York, 1977), 44372; idem, *The Transformation of Wisdom in the World of Midrash*, in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Wilken (Notre Dame, Ind., 1975), 67101.

78. Maimonides' antiapocalyptic posture is but another expression of his opposition to a supernatural interpretation of miracles. Miracles are not the disruption of nature by a supernatural intervention but, as Norbert Samuelson put it, an event that uniquely verifies that the laws of nature are expression of divine will. See Norbert Samuelson, *Maimonides' Doctrine of Creation*, *Harvard Theological Review* 83: (3) (1991), 265.

79. For an excellent analysis of Maimonides' messianic vision, consult Aviezer Ravitzky, *To the Utmost Human Capacity*, in *Perspectives on Maimonides*, 22156.

80. *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhhot Teshuvah 9:2.
81. Hilekhot Melakhim 12:4.
82. Ralph Lerner already noticed the significance of the fact that Maimonides invented the myth of the king's palace. See Lerner, *The Governance of the Solitary*, in *Perspectives on Maimonides*, 35.
83. *Guide* 3:51.
84. *Guide* 3:51, 623.; cf. *Mishneh Torah*, Hilekhot Teshuvah, 10: 3.
85. *Guide* 3:51, 625.
86. *Guide* 1. intro., 7.
87. *Guide* 3:51, 624.
88. *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhhot Teshuvah, 10:6.
89. Deutch, *Truth and Mythology*, 47.
90. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 94.

11

Re/membering the Covenant: Memory, Forgetfulness, and the Construction of History in the Zohar

Elliot R. Wolfson

The construction of history is dependent on the memory of the past but a memory that is always selective and malleable. Forgetfulness is thus itself an integral component of memory, for what is remembered is only remembered against the background of what is forgotten. Collective memory, no less than individual memory, is shaped as much by what is forgotten as by what is remembered. As Patrick Geary recently expressed it, All memory, whether individual, collective, or historical, is memory *for* something, and this political (in a broad sense) purpose cannot be ignored.

¹ This political dimension of memory points to the essential role played by forgetfulness as one of the conditions that determines the attainment of historical truth. ²

Historians who seek to write about cultural memory and the identity of the Jewish people in the Middle Ages must confront the fact that the principal (if not exclusive) ³ documents at our disposal were produced by elitist rabbinic groups that defined themselves in terms of particular interpretations of a given corpus of textual material. These rabbinic circles were, to borrow the technical term employed by Brian Stock, textual communities, for they demonstrated a parallel use of texts, both to structure the internal behaviour of the groups' members and to provide solidarity against the outside world. ⁴ The project of

the construction of identity carried out by these communities in the Middle Ages was compounded by the fact that they had to evaluate the existential condition of the Jew vis-à-vis the other, primarily the Christian or the Muslim.⁵ While one would be wise to avoid overemphasizing the anxiety of the other on the shaping of Jewish identity in medieval Europe, it is no exaggeration to say that the task of selfdefinition for the Jew in the Middle Ages (at least as articulated by the relatively small groups of literati) was carried out over and against another dominant religion. The theological, the social, and the political are inseparable aspects of a singular phenomenon. Moreover, within the eschatologically charged milieu of Christendom in the High Middle Ages, the shaping of identity could not be isolated from the issue of messianic redemptionthat is, a primary concern on the part of the religious leaders engaged in polemical confrontation with respect to

the identification of the devout Jew or faithful Christian had to do with the belief in who was the true Messiah and when the Messianic Age did or would arrive.

⁶ Holy crusades against infidels, forced conversions, willful acts of apostasy, and public disputations were different ways of expressing in the social sphere the eschatological zeal and theological intolerance that prevailed in medieval Christianity.

In this study I will focus on the role of memory and forgetfulness in the construction of historical time according to the complex symbolic hermeneutics of *Sefer ha-Zohar*, the Book of Splendor. The pervasive assumption in critical Jewish historiography that this pseudepigraphic work was composed by one individual, Moses ben Shem Tov de León, has recently been called into question, ⁷ but little evidence has been marshaled heretofore to doubt that most of the composition and redaction of this book took place in Castile in the second half of the thirteenth century. ⁸ Beyond the obvious importance of this text to the study of Jewish esotericism, the *Zohar* is a profoundly significant historical document, for, as Yitzhak Baer long ago commented, a real-life setting is clearly discernible through the mystic haze shrouding it. Baer thus concluded that the zoharic tales are not figments of the imagination, invented to provide a frame for the discussions and teachings of the ancient sages, but they are reflections of the contemporary scene. ⁹ Of the various examples adduced by Baer, perhaps the most intriguing is his analysis of the passage in the *Zohar* concerning the water clock that was used to awaken R. Abba and R. Jacob at midnight so that they could study Torah. ¹⁰ On the basis of the historical fact that Isaac of Toledo devised a water clock at the behest of Alfonso X, Baer conjectured that the narrative in the *Zohar* is not pure fiction and that the deeds ascribed to the mystical fraternity

(specifically rising at midnight to study) were part of a real Jewish experience in Spain. ¹¹

In a similar vein, but with a somewhat different emphasis, Scholem remarked that, in the *Zohar*, Moses de León reflects the actual religious situation, and expounds it through kabbalistic interpretation. ¹² What Scholem had in mind is that the social realia of thirteenth-century Spain are reflected in the *Zohar*, ¹³ but he did not address the possibility of an actual group of kabbalists whose mystical lifestyles are personified by the imaginary fellowship (*havrayya*) of the zoharic text, a position that I think is adumbrated in the remarks of Baer. ¹⁴ Thus, in the continuation of the aforesaid passage, Scholem concludes that Moses de León clothed his interpretation of Judaism in an archaic garb. The interpretation is attributed to the one individual, Moses de León, and no reference is made to a kabbalistic fraternity in the manner that the term is being used in contemporary scholarship. The current trend (of which I am an advocate) ¹⁵ to see in the fictional fellowship of the *Zohar* a reflection of an actual group of mystics involved in communal study, visual meditation, and contemplative worship, is a further elaboration of the earlier position rather than a radical and revolutionary break. With respect to this issue, as with respect to most scholarly issues, advancement in knowledge comes by way of a dialectical engagement with the

past: seeing beyond is not seeing against

16 but seeing further down a pathway of thought opened up by one's predecessor.

Samael, the Serpent, and the Mythic Grounding of the Jewish-Christian Polemic

Behind the fictional debates and discourses recorded in the *Zohar* can be discerned various kabbalistic positions that converged in this period and geographical region regarding the nature of the Jew and his relationship to God and to the world. Indeed, much of the exegesis of Scripture in *Zohar* revolves around the question of identity and self-definition vis-à-vis the other. The attitude toward Christianity and Islam that emerges from the *Zohar* has been examined by several scholars.¹⁷ The particular concerns of this study deal exclusively with the former.¹⁸ In great measure, my analysis of memory, forgetfulness, and the construction of history in the *Zohar* should be viewed as a chapter in medieval Jewish-Christian polemics, coming precisely at the time when the writing of polemical literature on the part of the Jews against Christians reached its peak in response to the intensive wave of Christian missionizing in the thirteenth century. The impetus for the writing of polemical treatises on the part of Jews was not to convert Christians but to retrieve former coreligionists who had abandoned the covenant and some of whom had themselves written disputations against the Jews.¹⁹ It has been noted in the scholarly literature that the zoharic authorship had a complex and ambiguous relationship to Christianity: conscious appropriation of principal theological and eschatological doctrines, on the one hand, and categorical rejection and demonization, on the other. Christianity is portrayed as the socially abhorrent political force that causes Israel to suffer and that incessantly attempts to lure her onto the path of heresy

and licentiousness. Indeed, according to the symbolism of the *Zohar*, Christians are the embodiment of demonic impurity in the world. ²⁰

The point is driven home succinctly in the zoharic exegesis of the words Your kinsmen who hate you, who spurn you because of Me (Isa. 66:5). The kinsmen are identified as the children of Esau (i.e., the Christians) ²¹ for there is no nation that mocks Israel to their face and who spit in their faces like the children of Edom, and it is said that they are all impure like a menstruous woman (*niddah*), and this is [the import of the expression] who spurn you (*menaddekhem*). ²² The metaphorical comparison of the children of Edom to a *niddah*, based on the biblical idiom *menaddekhem*, discloses an essential dimension of the zoharic understanding of the ontological impurity of Christianity. ²³ The spiritual attraction of the church is comparable to seduction of the woman during her menstrual period when intercourse is forbidden. Going beyond the normative halakhic restriction against having sexual relations with a menstruating woman, ²⁴ the author of the *Zohar*, in conformity with the symbology adopted by other kabbalistic authors of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, ²⁵ associated

the blood of menstruation with the demonic potency.

²⁶ In one particularly noteworthy passage, the *Zohar* delineates having intercourse with a menstruous woman as one of three acts that drive the *Shekhinah* away from the world, the other two being having intercourse with a Christian woman, literally, *the daughter of an alien god* (based on Mal. 2:11) that is, the god of estrangement or the demonic Other Side ²⁷ and killing one's own children by aborting a fetus in the womb. ²⁸ In this context, then, sexual intercourse with a menstruous woman is distinguished from sexual intercourse with a Christian woman, but the two are linked together because both acts involve the insertion of the holy covenant inscribed upon the circumcised penis into an unholy space. Introducing this passage, Baer remarked that the *Zohar* inveighs against lewd practices which were apparently common among the urbane aristocracy of its day. ²⁹

What is important from my perspective is the manner in which that social critique is expressed, for this alone allows one access to the life world constructed by the imagination of the kabbalists who belonged to the mystical brotherhood in Castile. Following the view of a number of medieval halakhic authorities, the zoharic authorship maintained that Christianity is idolatry. ³⁰ Thus, for example, in one context, it is deduced exegetically from the verse, For you must not worship any other god, because the Lord, whose name is Impassioned, is an impassioned God (Exod. 34:14), that he who worships Esau is as if he has worshiped the alien god. ³¹ Insofar as the mishnaic ruling (Shabbat 8:1) ascribed to idolatry the same status of impurity as menstruation, it was an easy step for the thirteenth-century kabbalists to equate Christianity and menstruation. Fornication with a Christian woman has the same effect as sexual intercourse with one's wife during her menstrual period: the holy covenant is defiled and the

offspring of such a union partakes ontologically of the impure spirit.
32 In gender terms this defilement can be seen as the feminization of the masculine Jew. Promiscuous sexual behavior and idolatrous religious practices were thus understood as forms of seduction by the serpentine force of feminine impurity. 33

The unholiness of the theological doctrine propounded by the church is akin to the blood of menstruation, that is, the impure and unmitigated force of judgment. The nexus between Christianity and menstrual impurity is deepened in another passage in the *Zohar*, according to which the menstruant is associated with magic.

According to that text, the rationale for the biblical injunction against having physical contact with a menstruant is that during this time the spirit of impurity is conjoined to her and she is prone to carry out acts of sorcery more than at other times.³⁴ In that context, moreover, mention is made of Balaam, the prototype of the Gentile prophet and sorcerer. It is likely that the figure of Balaam is employed by the author of the *Zohar* to represent Jesus, a point that is suggested by the comparison that is made (based on a midrashic reading of Deut.

34:10) ³⁵ between Moses and Balaam: just as no prophet exceeded the former with respect to the holy powers, so no prophet exceeded the latter with respect to the unholy powers. ³⁶ The linkage of Jesus (or Christianity more generally) and magical practices is a well-attested polemical motif, ³⁷ and it is clear that

the zoharic authorship is continuing this long-standing tradition in its representation of Jesus as the chief wizard of satanic power.

The spiritual force of the Christian faith, therefore, is magic, which is correlated with the impurity of menstruation. Thus, according to another zoharic passage, physical contact with the menstruant causes a blemish above, for by this action one arouses the potent serpent (*hivya' takkifa'*) that casts its filth upon the *Shekhinah* and thereby separates the masculine and feminine potencies in the Godhead. Sexual relations with a menstruant is a reenactment of the primordial sin in which the serpent inseminated Eve, which corresponds above to the defilement of the *Shekhinah* by the demonic power, a point related to the verse, for he has defiled the Lord's sanctuary (Num. 19:20).

³⁸ Underlying the symbolic discourse, however, is an important assumption on the part of the author of the *Zohar* regarding the historical process. Insofar as the image of the serpent is associated with Esau (a point to which I shall return momentarily), it follows that when a male Jew cohabits with a menstruating woman, he causes the supernal force of Esau to have dominion over the *Shekhinah*. This particular textual example illustrates a larger point: the polemic with Christianity in zoharic literature is cast specifically in terms of the issues of gender, sexuality, and embodiment. ³⁹

The demonic depiction of Christianity is reinforced by the zoharic appropriation of the aggadic motif that Samael is the guardian angel of Esau or Edom. ⁴⁰ A striking example of this orientation is found in the zoharic reflections on the description in Genesis 25:22-26 of the gestation and birth of Esau and Jacob. The prenatal struggle of the twins in the womb is explained ontologically: Esau is the aspect that rides the serpent, ⁴¹ an expression that calls to mind the aggadic image of Samael riding upon the serpent that appeared in the shape of

a camel, ⁴² and Jacob is the aspect that sits upon the holy and perfect throne in the aspect of the sun that cohabits with the moon. ⁴³ Esau is the male demonic power (Samael) united with the female serpent in a way that parallels Jacob's unification with the throne, which is the symbolic depiction of the unity of the masculine *Tiferet* and the feminine *Malkhut*, also represented by the sun and the moon. In the continuation of this passage, Esau is identified more specifically with the evil serpent (*hivya' bisha'*), who is the most cunning of all the beasts. ⁴⁴ The vexing exegetical problem of Jacob's apparent deceptiveness with respect to purchasing the birthright from Esau, a point exploited by Christian polemicists against the Jews, ⁴⁵ is explained by the *Zohar* in terms of these ontological correspondences: in order to keep the demonic power of the serpent apart from the side of holiness, it was necessary for Jacob to act deceptively. ⁴⁶ Thus, all the actions of Jacob, who is in the secret of faith, with respect to Esau were not to give a place to that serpent to desecrate the sanctuary, not to come close to it, and not to rule in the world. ⁴⁷

The cunningness of Jacob, therefore, is justified by its theological significance: to keep the realms of the demonic and the holy separate. From another passage in the *Zohar*, it is evident that this act has a redemptive quality; indeed,

Jacob is portrayed as rectifying the sin of Adam and Eve brought about through Samael and the serpent. Presented with two explanations of the serpent in the biblical narrative, the view of R. Isaac that the serpent refers symbolically to the evil inclination and the view of R. Judah that the serpent is literally a serpent, R. Simeon ben Yohai asserts that both explanations are correct. Appropriating the aggadic motif briefly mentioned above, the author of the *Zohar* claims that Samael appeared on the serpent, which is the image of Satan. Samael's destruction of the primordial tree that God created, which resulted in bringing death to the world, was not rectified until Jacob, identified symbolically as the holy tree ('*ilana' kadisha'*) and as the form of Adam (*dugma' de'adam*),

48 came and took the blessings from Esau so that neither Samael above nor his likeness below would be blessed. The soteriological justification for Jacob's action is thus based on the legal principle of measure for measure: just as Samael prevented the blessings from the primordial tree, so Jacob blocked the blessings from Esau. 49 In another passage, the *Zohar* again contextualizes the biblical narrative in terms of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, but in that setting there is an awareness of the historical situation of the Jew vis-à-vis the Christian in the Middle Ages. Jacob may have deceptively appropriated the blessings from Esau, but the descendants of the former were still subservient to the descendants of the latter. The author of the *Zohar* reassures the reader that the true consequence of Jacob's action will be disclosed only in the messianic future, when Israel will be a unified nation in the world and they will rule above and below. 50

The portrait of Jacob that may be drawn from this text is that of a second Adam who rectifies the sin of the first Adam brought about by

the seduction of Samael and the serpent. Although the zoharic author utilized earlier rabbinic sources to express this notion of Jacob as Adam redivivus, including the idea that the beauty of Jacob was like that of Adam, ⁵¹ the approach adopted by the *Zohar* is related more directly (albeit in a polemical way) to the Pauline typology of Adam and Jesus, which had a great impact on the history of Christian theology. ⁵² For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus brings salvation to the world, for through this act of divine grace the punishment of death incurred by humanity as a result of the fall is overcome. Jesus is thus the last Adam (ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ), who rectifies the sin of the first Adam (πρῶτος Ἀδὰμ): through the first Adam, the natural body (σῶμα φυσικόν) of creation, all humans are physically born and die, whereas through the final Adam, the spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν) of the eschaton, ⁵³ all humans are spiritually reborn and redeemed. ⁵⁴ Jesus, the eschatological Adam, is the father of a new humanity freed from the tyranny of sin and death, for in him the essential oneness of humankind is reconstituted as a spiritual community (i.e., the church), which is symbolically depicted as the body of Christ (το σῶμα του Χριστου). ⁵⁵

For the author of the *Zohar*, it is not Jesus but Jacob who restores the world to its original ontic condition. Moreover, the culpability for the sin is somewhat removed from Adam and placed more squarely on Samael. ⁵⁶ The positive valorization of Adam is upheld by the fact that Jacob is depicted as having the form and

beauty of Adam. Hence, what Jacob rectifies is not the fallen nature of Adam but the usurpation of Samael. This is the import of the zoharic statement that the act of destroying the primordial tree (*'ilana' kadma' ah*), that is, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, was hanging on Samael until another holy tree (*'ilana' 'ahra' kaddisha'*), that is, Jacob, came and took from him the blessings so that Samael above and Esau below would not be blessed. The seemingly deceitful ruse of Jacob is justified by the fact that it mends the rupture in the cosmic order created by the sinful act of Samael. By linking the satanic force and Esau, the zoharic authorship cleverly undermines the Pauline interpretation of the Genesis narrative: not only is Jesus not the second Adam who restores the pristine divine image to humanity, but the religion of Jesus is the earthly manifestation of the very force that desecrated that image. A further decoding of the kabbalistic symbolism underlying the designation of Jacob as another holy tree brings the antiChristological polemic into even sharper focus: Jacob symbolizes the attribute of *Tiferet*, which corresponds to the tree of life and the written Torah. The point of the passage, therefore, is that the way of the law, the Torah, is the antidote to counterbalance the satanic effect of the primordial serpent, identified as Esau, a cipher for Western Christendom.

Reversing the Christian myth, Jacob-Israel, not Jesus, is the tree of life that bears the fruit of salvation, which replaces the fruit of the tree of knowledge through which sin came into the world.

⁵⁷ The eschatological aspiration of the *Zohar*, therefore, can be seen in terms of the overcoming of Esau. ⁵⁸ This conception of salvation history is exemplified in the following description of the messianic era: The tree of life will emit the vital force that will never cease, for it has ceased now on account of the fact that the evil serpent rules and the moon is hidden At that time that evil inclination, which is the

evil spirit, will vanish from the world . . . and after it is removed from the world the moon is not hidden and the wellsprings of the river that flows and issues forth will not cease. ⁵⁹ In this context, attested in other passages as well, ⁶⁰ the tree of life symbolizes *Yesod*, which corresponds to the divine phallus, the center of the creative energy, also depicted by the symbol of the river. In the messianic age the vital force will flow incessantly from this source because the obstructing force of the evil serpent will be obliterated. ⁶¹ This phallic restitution also affects the feminine aspect of the divine, for in the condition of exile the domination of the serpent causes the *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the moon, to be concealed. According to another passage, the concealment of the moon is the symbolic import of the description of the emergence of Jacob from Rebekah's womb holding onto the heel of Esau (Gen. 25:26). ⁶² The (temporarily) subservient position of Jacob vis-à-vis Esau is also related to the scriptural claim that the kings of Edom reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites (Gen. 36:31). ⁶³ In the period of history before the advent of Messiah, the force of Esau, or Christendom, rules over Israel; and the moon, which is symbolic of the *Shekhinah*, or the power of Israel, is hidden. But when the efficacy of the demonic serpent is overcome by the rectification of the holy phallus, the river that flows and issues forth, the moon is no longer hidden. ⁶⁴

From the point of view of the zoharic authorship, the ontological opposition of the two faiths is alluded to in the very narrative of creation. The primordial darkness (*hoshekh*), associated with the chaos (*tohu*) and symbolized by the shell (*kelippah*) of the nut, is identified as the force whence Edom derives,

⁶⁵ whereas Jacob is rooted ontically in the spirit of God (*ruah 'elohim*), symbolized by the kernel (*moha'*) of the nut. ⁶⁶ According to another passage, Israel is identified as the supernal holy core and the idolatrous nations as the shell. ⁶⁷ The botanical image of the shell preceding the core is supported exegetically by the verse concerning the rule of the Edomite kings before the kings of Israel. ⁶⁸ The citation of this verse, moreover, makes it clear that idolatrous nations refers to the Christians. Precisely this symbolism underlies another image employed by Moses de León: the other god is the demonic foreskin that surrounds the holy corona of the phallus in the manner that the shell surrounds the core of the nut. ⁶⁹ All of these images allude to the mystery that the demonic powers emanate before the holy ones, even though the latter have ontological priority and in the end will prevail. ⁷⁰

The theological struggle with Christianity is treated in the *Zohar* in overtly erotic terms. The key to understanding the meshing of the spiritual and the sexual regarding this matter is the symbol of the serpent. There are passages in the *Zohar* wherein the serpent symbolizes the feminine dimension of the demonic, the seductive Lilith who tempts men and appears in the image of a whore. In other contexts the serpent mythically represents the demonic force in general without any gender specification, although in relation to the divine the demonic is gendered as feminine in kabbalistic ontology. In other zoharic texts, the serpent depicts the demonic male whose

phallic drive is directed toward penetrating the sacred space of the divine feminine, the *Shekhinah*, an idea that is expressed in terms of the aggadic motif ⁷¹ of the primordial serpent inseminating Eve. ⁷² It is evident, as Tishby has already noted, ⁷³ that the serpent, whether male or female, symbolizes the demonic sexual force. What Tishby neglected to mention is the obvious point that the mythical image of the serpent is symbolic of the phallus. But it is precisely this association that allows one to resolve the apparent contradictions in the *Zohar* with respect to the gender of the serpent. That is, both on the side of holiness and on the side of impurity the phallus, like the serpent, is androgynous. ⁷⁴ However, there is an essential difference between the androgyny of the holy phallus (manifest in the ninth and tenth gradations, *Yesod* and *Malkhut*) and that of the demonic phallus (represented by Samael and Lilith). In the case of the former, the female is ontically rooted in the male, whereas in the case of the latter, the male is an aspect of the female. The shift in the gender polarity is underscored in the following zoharic reflection on Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons:

He began to speak and he said: Who are these (*mi 'elleh*) (Gen. 48:8)? One may infer that he was speaking about worship from the side of idolatry [as it says] This is your god, O Israel (*'elleh 'elohekha yisra'el*) (Exod. 32:4). Rather it is a secret: When all the aspects of that evil serpent, the serpent that comes from the side of the impure spirit, and the one who rides upon it are united, they are called these (*'elleh*) The Holy Spirit is called

this (z'ot), and it is the secret of the holy, inscribed covenant that is always found on men.

75 And this [is the import of] This is my God and I will glorify Him (*zeh 'eli we'anvehu*) (ibid. 15:3), and This is the Lord (*zeh yhwh*) (Isa. 25:9). But these [demonic forces] are called '*elleh*', and thus it is written, This is your god, O Israel. And for this reason it is written, Though she might forget these (*gam 'elleh tishkahnah*), but I, the secret of '*anokhi*', never could forget you (*we'anokhi lo' 'eshkahekh*) (ibid. 49:15). 76

The androgyne on the demonic side, portrayed by Samael and the serpent upon whom he rides, is parallel to the androgyne on the holy side, symbolized by the holy covenant that is inscribed on the phallus. Thus, the plural '*elleh*' connotes the union in the unholy realm that is comparable to the conjunction of *zeh* and *z'ot*, which signifies the union in the holy realm. But there is a major difference between the two: The union of the male and the female in the demonic realm results in the manifestation of the latter in the guise of the former—that is, Samael riding upon the serpent is an actualization of the force of judgment—whereas the union in the divine realm is symbolized by the integration of the feminine *Shekhinah*, referred to as the Holy Spirit, into an aspect of the holy covenant. In his marginal notes to a parallel to this passage in another zoharic context, ⁷⁷ Hayyim Vital correctly explained that the statement that the Holy Spirit is in the mystery of the holy, inscribed covenant refers to '*atarah*' (i.e., the corona of the phallus). And indeed, how else could one interpret the zoharic claim? Note that the female aspect of the divine is not depicted here in terms that are generally associated with the feminine gender. On the contrary, the *Shekhinah* is identified specifically as part of the *membrum virile*, and precisely in that capacity does she correspond to the serpent upon whom Samael rides. The rectification of the sin of the serpent, *tikkun ha-nahash*, is through the sign of the covenant, '*ot*

berit, inscribed on the flesh of the male Jew. The exegesis of Isa. 49:15 at the conclusion of the passage is particularly important, for by means of it the zoharic author makes the point that forgetfulness is associated with the demonic powers and removed entirely from the *Shekhinah*, for she is the secret of the covenant of circumcision, the locus of corporeal memory.

The theme of circumcision thus plays a crucial part in the zoharic polemic with the Christian faith.⁷⁸ In clever exegetical fashion, the author of the *Zohar* turns the Pauline view regarding circumcision on its head.⁷⁹ Not only is the literal circumcision of the flesh not overcome by the spiritual circumcision of baptism, which is a reenactment of the crucifixion of Christ,⁸⁰ but through the physical rite the corporeal is spiritualized and the spiritual corporealized. In the final analysis, circumcision (*milah*) is the true incarnation of the divine word (*millah*) in the flesh. Hence, Abraham, not Jesus, is the creative potency of the divine manifest in the world. The point is disclosed in a reading of the verse The blossoms have appeared in the land, the time of pruning⁸¹ has come, the song of the turtledove is heard in our land (Song of Songs 2:12), which serves as the proem (*petihta'*) to the zoharic exegesis of the epiphany of the three angels to Abraham after his circumcision at the beginning of the section *Wayyera'* (Gen. 18).⁸² I translate the part of the text that is most pertinent to the Jewish-Christian polemic:

The song of the turtledove is heard in the land, this is the word of the Holy One, blessed be He, which did not exist in the world until Adam was created. When Adam came into being, everything existed. After Adam sinned, everything departed from the world and the earth was cursed, as it is written, Cursed be the earth because of you (Gen. 3:17), and it is written, If you till the soil, it shall no longer yield its strength to you (ibid. 4:12), and it is written, Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you (ibid. 3:18). Noah came and he crafted spades and hoes in the world,

83 and after that [it is written] He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within his tent (Gen. 9:21). People of the world came and sinned before the Holy One, blessed be He, and the forces of the earth vanished as it was in the beginning. They remained like this until Abraham came, for when Abraham came to the world, immediately the blossoms appeared in the land. All the forces of the earth were rectified and they were revealed. The time of pruning has come, [this refers to] the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, told him to circumcise himself, for the time had come when the covenant should be found in Abraham and he circumcised himself. Then this verse was fulfilled in him, the world was established, and the word of the Holy One, blessed be He, was revealed through him, as it is written, The Lord appeared to him (ibid. 18:1). 84

The key to understanding this passage is the manner in which one interprets the expression word of the Holy One, blessed be He, *millah dekudsha' berikh hu'*. I suggest that this is not simply a rhetorical trope to allude to the speech of God, but it is rather a technical reference to the hypostatic word of God. The divine word is first manifest in Adam, but it is fully revealed through Abraham after his circumcision. Implicit in this passage is a play on the words *millah*, speech, and *milah*, circumcision. The full disclosure of the former is only through the latter. By means of the bodily circumcision, moreover, reality is ontically grounded, and the rectification of the primordial sin of Adam and Eve is enacted. Although the word was first revealed through Adam, as a consequence of his sin there was a

disruption in the cosmic order, mythically portrayed as the cursing of the earth. To understand the nature of that curse, which in turn illuminates the metaphysical nature of sin, it is necessary to decode the remark that as a result of Adam's sin everything departed from the world (*kulla' istaiek me'alma*); but in order to comprehend that comment, it is necessary to ponder the preceding remark, When Adam came into being, everything existed (*keivvan de'ishtakakh 'adam 'ishtakakh kulla'*). In the above translation I rendered the word *kulla'* in these two statements as everything, but this fails to capture the allusion to the divine emanation that is the All (in Hebrew, *ha-kol*), a standard name in the theosophic kabbalistic symbolism (including that of the *Zohar*) for *Yesod*. It must also be stated that this particular designation has an obvious phallic connotation: *Yesod* is called *ha-kol* because it is the gradation that comprises all the other gradations in the same manner that the phallus was thought of as comprehending within itself all the other bodily parts. ⁸⁵

Following this line of interpretation, the consequence of the sin of Adam was the removal of the (phallic) All from the earth, which led to the devastation of the latter. Only when Abraham was circumcised and the word of God was fully manifest in the world through him did the earth again become productive. The concluding comment in this opening sermon of the *Zohar* on Gen. 18:1 reiterates

this very point in slightly different language: Come and see: When Adam sinned, he sinned with respect to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as it is written, but as for the tree of knowledge *etc.* (Gen. 2:17). He sinned with respect to it and he caused death for all human beings of the world. Thus it is written, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever! (ibid. 3:22). When Abraham came, he rectified the world through the other tree, which is the tree of life, and he made known the faith to all people of the world.

⁸⁶ Circumcision thus retains the theological and soteriological significance denied it by Paul; indeed, it is through circumcision of the flesh and not baptism or the belief in the resurrection that one truly attains the mystery of the faith (*sod ha-'emunah*). ⁸⁷ From that perspective it may be said that by means of circumcision Christianity itself is ultimately redeemed.

Memory, Masculinity, and the Secret of the Covenant

The zoharic reflections on memory and forgetfulness are based on the correlation of masculinity and memory related to the philological presumption regarding the link between *zakhar* and *zekher*. Reflecting on this etymological connection in its biblical roots, Amos Funkenstein remarked that one should expect that within a patriarchal society the male (*zakhar*) alone constitutes the memory (*zekher*) insofar as the idea of nation, assembly, or community is always exclusive of women. ⁸⁸ Funkenstein interprets the philological connection of *zakhar* and *zekher* in light of his understanding of the interplay and interconnectedness of collective and individual memory, that is, the individual's act of personal remembering is an instantiation of a system of linguistic signs and symbols shared by a cultural collectivity. In the case of Ancient Israel and much of Jewish history

that followed, that system was predominantly male. The particular gendering of memory as masculine is also related to the more specific correlation of remembrance and the covenant of circumcision. The covenant, biblically, is called a sign, for it functions as that which reminds one of the relationship between God and Israel. Memory is thus linked fundamenally to the masculine because the site of the covenantal incision is the phallus.⁸⁹ The more specific link between memory and the *membrum virile* is a bedrock of kabbalistic speculation. The correlation between *zakhar* and *zakhor*, first expressed in *Sefer ha-Bahir*,⁹⁰ is developed and applied to various exegetical contexts by the author of the *Zohar*.⁹¹ I begin by citing an interpretation of the verse, Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, *zakhor 'et yom ha-shabbat lekaddesho* (Exod. 20:8):

Remember (*zakhor*) refers to the secret of the masculine, the secret of the masculine that takes all the limbs of the supernal world; the Sabbath day (*'et yom ha-shabbat*) to include the eve of Sabbath, which is the [attribute of the] night, and this is [the import of] and keep it holy (*lekaddesho*), for it is in need of holiness from the holy nation, and it is crowned through them, as is appropriate. Remember (*zakhor*), the place in which there is no forgetfulness and no forgetfulness exists in it, for there is no forgetfulness in the place

of the supernal covenant, and all the more so above. There is forgetfulness below, the place that must be remembered, and concerning this it is written, May [God] be ever mindful of his father's iniquity (Ps. 109:14). There are angels appointed there who recall the merits and sins of people, and there is no forgetfulness before the holy throne, [with respect to] what is before [the throne]. And who is before? [The attribute called] *zakhor*, and all the more so above, for everything is the mystery of the masculine. The secret of the holy name, YHW, is inscribed there, and [that which is] below needs to be sanctified, and it is sanctified through *zakhor*, for from that it takes all holiness and all blessings. And this occurs when the eve of Sabbath is crowned upon the holy nation, as is appropriate, through prayers, supplications, and hymns of joy.

92

The biblical admonition to remember the Sabbath day serves as an exegetical springboard for the fertile imagination of the author of the *Zohar*. The word *zakhor* refers to the secret of the masculine, *raza' didekhura'*, the attribute *Yesod*. The phallic signification of this symbol is underscored by the description of the secret of the masculine as that which takes all the limbs of the supernal world, an idea that reflects the biological notion (which I mentioned above) that the penis gathers the energy of all the upper limbs of the body. Indeed, in the passage immediately preceding the one that I translated, the author of the *Zohar* makes the point explicitly: Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, this is the secret of the holy phallus, ⁹³ for in that phallus all the sources of the bodily limbs exist, and it is that which contains everything. ⁹⁴

In the place of the masculine, which is the supernal covenant or the phallus, there is no forgetfulness, for this gradation is the ontological locus of memory. Beneath this gradation, however, there is a place wherein forgetfulness is operative, and thus there must be angels to recall the good and the bad deeds of men. In this context the place

characterized by forgetfulness corresponds to the *Shekhinah*, or feminine presence, although in another zoharic passage the place of forgetfulness is associated with the extremity of the side of darkness (i.e., the demonic realm).⁹⁵ Prima facie, the view that forgetfulness is characteristic of the *Shekhinah* would seem to contradict the rabbinic teaching that there is no forgetfulness before the throne of glory.⁹⁶ The zoharic author, however, masterfully interprets this dictum to refer to that which is before the throne (i.e., the attribute *zakhor* or the masculine *Yesod*), not to the feminine throne itself. Interestingly, the lower grade, which is imaged as feminine, is said to be sanctified by the masculine, a process that unfolds when Sabbath eve, which symbolizes the *Shekhinah*, is crowned by the prayers of the Jewish people. From the end of the passage we learn that the process is reciprocal: in the moment that the *Shekhinah* is crowned by the people of Israel, the people of Israel are crowned by the *Shekhinah*.⁹⁷

The crowning represents the coronation of the Sabbath bride, or the *Shekhinah*, as she prepares to unite with the holy King.⁹⁸ On the most basic level, this reflects standard regal symbolism: the *Shekhinah* is, after all, the queen and thus the image of her being crowned makes perfectly good sense. This imagery is enhanced, moreover, by the symbol of the Sabbath bride, for within the Jewish tradition there is attested the actual practice of the bridegroom and the bride wearing crowns. But there is a deeper significance to this symbolism: the crowning

represents the assimilation of the *Shekhinah* into the phallic *Yesod*, a metamorphosis that is related in zoharic literature to the sacred union of male and female.

99 The phallicization of the feminine is also alluded to in comment that the *Shekhinah*, or that which is below, is sanctified through *zakhor*, for from that it takes all holiness and all blessings. By receiving the overflow from the attribute called *zakhor*, the forgetfulness, associated with the *Shekhinah*, is overcome. The act of remembering, therefore, has the role of uniting the female and the male, a union that results in the transformation of the female into an aspect of the male. Thus, the biblical verse that frames this whole discussion, *zakhor 'et yom ha-shabbat*, is related exegetically to the eve of Sabbath and to the day of Sabbath, the feminine and the masculine.

Re/membering the Covenant:

Messianic Overcoming of Binary Opposition

According to the predominant symbolism of the *Zohar*, an intrinsic link is forged between the phallus, memory, and history: The circumcised phallus, which bears the mark of the divine covenant in the flesh, is the locus of the collective memory that renders history meaningful. Rejecting the universalizing and spiritualizing tendencies of Christianity, the zoharic author insists that the site of salvation remains the embodied sign of circumcision. The identity of the Jew, even in the messianic age, is inextricably linked to the sign inscribed on the flesh. Circumcision, therefore, signifies the cultural difference between Jew and Christian but also the gender difference between male and female within the body politic of Israel. However, as I have already noted above, an essential element of the theosophic teaching proffered by the zoharic authorship is that the female itself is an

aspect of the male, a point underscored by the androgynous nature of covenant in general and that of circumcision in particular.

A particularly straightforward articulation of this idea is given by Moses de León: The secret of the covenant (*sod ha-berit*) is the corona ('*atarah*) in the secret of the glorious crown ('*ateret tif'eret*); and when a person is circumcised and he enters the secret of the holy covenant, he enters two gradations that are one unit, the corona ('*atarah*) and the Eternally Living One (*hei ha-'olamim*), the secret of the All (*kol*), and all is one unit.¹⁰⁰ By means of the rite of circumcision, therefore, one is conjoined to the ninth and the tenth *sefirot*, *Yesod* and *Malkhut*, referred to here as the Eternally Living One (or the All) and the corona, which constitute one entity. The female aspect is thus totally assimilated to the male. In a similar vein, one could argue that the Christian should find his restoration in the Jew, for the otherness of Edom is overcome in the reintegration of the demonic into the divine.¹⁰¹ It is important to note that in terms of medieval gender stereotypes another profound reversal is at work here: the Jew is associated with masculine virility (emblematic of divine grace) and the Christian with feminine constriction (symbolic of divine judgment),¹⁰² which is most fully expressed in

the monastic ideal of celibacy or sexual impotency.

103 The other god is thus portrayed as the castrated being (the emasculated male) who stands in antithetical opposition to the phallic potency of the divine. 104 But the cultural and gender boundaries are fluid, for the process of history, culminating with the coming of the Messiah, is perceived as the engenderment of memory by means of which the bifurcation of male and female, Jew and Christian, is overcome.

I have noted several times that the locus of memory in the divine realm is the attribute that corresponds to the phallus, the seat of the creative element of the Godhead. This is instantiated below in the body of the Jewish male: memory is incised upon the flesh. But as I have also indicated above, the phallus is androgynous. Thus, one finds a distinction in the *Zohar* between two kinds of memory, *pekidah* and *zekhirah*, correlated respectively with the feminine and the masculine. 105 The historical situation of exile entails the separation of male and female, a rupture induced by the forgetfulness of the covenant. This state of forgetfulness is not merely the result of poor attention or the inability to retain something that escapes the mind or even the psychopathological condition of amnesia. The forgetfulness of the covenant is more than a subjective lapse of memory; it is the ontological state of oblivion, the concealment of that which must be concealed from the one who must conceal. 106 An allusion to this veiled concealment, the doubling of forgetfulness, is found in the following zoharic exegesis of the verse, At the end of two years' time, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile (Gen. 41:1):

At the end of (*wayehi mikkets*). What is [the meaning of] *mikkets*? R. Simeon said: The place in which there is no memory (*zekhirah*), and this is the extremity of the left (*kets desemo'la'*). What is the reason? For it is

written, But remember me (*zekhartani*) when all is well with you again (Gen. 40:14). Was it appropriate for Joseph the Righteous to say, But remember me? Rather, when Joseph contemplated his dream he said: Certainly this is a dream of memory (*halma' dizekhirah*). But he erred with respect to this for everything is [dependent] on the Holy One, blessed be He. Therefore, the place in which there is forgetfulness (*nashyu*) rose before him. What is written? The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him (*ibid.*, 23). Since it is written the chief cupbearer did not remember (*welo' zakhar*), why does it say, he forgot him (*wayyishkahehu*)? Rather, [the word] *wayyishkahehu* [refers to] the place in which there is forgetfulness (*shikhehah*), and this is the extremity of the side of darkness (*kets desira' dehoshekh*). 107

Forgetfulness is linked to the demonic, for it is always oppositional and conflictual: strife is of the essence of this oblivion. The particular manifestation of that conflict is the veiling of the sign of the covenant. 108 Joseph, who is called righteous (*tsaddik*) because of his diligence with respect to sexual purity (*shemirat haberit*) and on account of his symbolic correspondence to *Yesod*, the divine phallus, 109 thought that it was appropriate to interpret the dream of the cupbearer (*sar ha-mashkim*) since he was of the opinion that it derived from the side of memory. Consequently, Joseph exposed that which should have been hidden, a disclosure that resulted in the domination of forgetfulness, the demonic force of darkness, over the power of remembrance. Oblivion is the absence of demarcation, the concealment of the sign that leads to a state of disorientation and exile, the separation

of the male and the female. Come and see: All the time that Joseph, who is the supernal covenant, exists, the covenant of the *Shekhinah* exists together with Israel in peace as is appropriate, but when Joseph, the supernal covenant, departs from the world, the covenant of the *Shekhinah* and Israel go into exile. Thus it has been established, as it is written, A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph (Exod. 1:8).

110 The departure of Joseph from the world the sundering of the male-female bond results in the exile of the *Shekhinah* and the Jewish people. That this state is characterized by oblivion is underscored by the biblical claim that the king of Egypt (the satanic power) has no recollection of Joseph (the phallic covenant).

The power of Christianity, according to the zoharic author, can also be understood as the lure of oblivion in which the covenant is forgotten, a withholding of the sign. Redemption, conversely, is the restoration of memory, the retrieval of the covenant in its twofold aspect as male and female, which is revealed in the unveiling of the hidden sign. The point is poignantly expressed in the zoharic interpretation of the sign of the covenant seen by Noah in the form of the rainbow:

It is written, [When the bow is in the clouds] I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant (Gen. 9:16), for the desire of the Holy One, blessed be He, is towards it 111 constantly and the one who is not worthy through it cannot enter before the Master. Thus it is written, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant. I will see it, what [is the meaning of] I will see it? This is a secret, as it is said, Put a mark on the foreheads etc. (Ezek. 9:4) to be manifest on them. Others say that this is the inscription of the holy sign on the flesh. R. Judah said: Certainly everything is this way, but the rainbow that is seen in the world exists in a supernal mystery. When Israel will go out from the exile, this rainbow will be adorned in the colors of the bride who is adorned for her husband. That Jew said to him:

Thus my father said to me when he departed from this world: Do not expect the feet of Messiah until that rainbow is seen in the world, adorned in the bright colors and illuminating the world. Then you can expect the Messiah. From where do you know? As it is written, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant. Now it is seen in darkened colors to be a reminder that a flood will not come. However, in that time it will be seen in bright colors and it will be adorned in the ornamentation of a bride who is adorned for her husband. Then [is it appropriate to say] and remember the everlasting covenant (*lizkor berit 'olam*). The Holy One, blessed be He, remembers that covenant that is in exile and He lifts her up from the dust, as it is written, they will seek the Lord their God and David their king (Hosea 3:5), and it is written, they shall serve the Lord their God and David, the king whom I will raise up for them (Jer. 30:9). I will raise up from the dust, as it says, I will raise up again the fallen booth of David (Amos 9:11). Thus [it is written] I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant, to raise her up from the dust. 112

The author of the *Zohar* utilizes the biblical narrative concerning Noah and the rainbow to characterize the arrival of the Messianic Age. The physical manifestation of the rainbow is symbolic of a process within the Godhead. From the beginning of this passage, it would appear that the rainbow corresponds to the phallic aspect of the *Shekhinah*, which is referred to on a number of occasions in the *Zohar* as the sign of the covenant,¹¹³ the very term that Scripture uses in this context to describe the rainbow. This symbolic usage of the word *keshet* is attested in other zoharic passages, of which I will here mention only two examples:

It is written, Like the appearance of the bow (*kemar'eh ha-keshet*) that shines in the clouds on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. That was the appearance of the semblance of the glory of the Lord (Ezek. 1:28), the appearance of all the colors, and thus [it is written] I have set My bow (*kashti*) in the clouds (Gen. 9:13). What is My bow? As it is said with respect to Joseph, Yet his bow (*kashto*) stayed taut (ibid. 49:24), for Joseph is called righteous (*tsaddik*). Therefore his bow is the covenant of the bow (*berit dekeshet*) that is contained in the righteous, for in the covenant the one is united with the other. Since Noah was righteous, his covenant was a bow.

114

The symbolic understanding of the rainbow is confirmed in another passage, wherein it is asserted (based on B. Hagigah 16a) that looking at the rainbow is prohibited because it is akin to looking at the *Shekhinah*, the same rationale that is used to explain the prohibition of looking at the fingers of the priests during the priestly blessing. In an effort to explain this dictum, the *Zohar* (through the persona of R. Abba) explains that there is a bow above and a bow below. With respect to the former, it is forbidden to look at its colors because he who looks at its colors it is as if he looked at the place above and it is forbidden to look at it in order not to cause shame for the *Shekhinah*. On the other hand, the bow below refers to that sign of the covenant inscribed on a person, for he who looks at it causes shame above. 115 The parallelism between the lower and the upper bow instructs about the nature of the latter: just as the *keshet* below is the sign of the covenant inscribed on the phallus, so the *keshet* above is related to that aspect of God that corresponds to this part of the anatomy, the place that must remain hidden in order not to cause shame to the *Shekhinah*. 116 The phallic understanding of the rainbow is verified by the view that the object of God's vision (according to Gen. 9:16) is the inscription of the covenant upon the flesh. When God sees the sign of

circumcision, He remembers the everlasting covenant.

The second part of the zoharic interpretation of Noah's rainbow cited above involves the complex gender symbolism, especially related to the transformation that is connected to the messianic redemption. From the claim that the rainbow will be adorned in the ornamentation of a bride, it would appear that this symbol corresponds to the feminine *Shekhinah*, not to the masculine *Yesod*.¹¹⁷ This is a reasonable deduction, but before one jumps to conclusions regarding the imaginary constructions of the divine female, it is necessary to situate this passage in the larger framework of the assumptions regarding gender that one finds in the *Zohar* and related theosophic literature. The rainbow is a liminal symbol, for it marks the transition from exile to redemption. In the exilic state, there is separation of male and female, and hence the rainbow appears in darkened colors; in the redemptive state, by contrast, there is a reunion of male and female, and the rainbow shines in bright colors like a bride adorned before the bridegroom. In the exile, moreover, the rainbow is depicted as the forsaken covenant buried in the dust, but in the time of redemption the covenant shall be uplifted and restored to the phallus as the sign of the covenant. The point is clarified in a second passage where the end of exile is described in the following way:

Then the rainbow will be seen in the cloud in bright colors like a wife that is adorned for her husband, as it is written, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant. . . . I

will see it, in the bright colors, as is appropriate, and then [I will] remember the everlasting covenant. What is the everlasting covenant (*berit 'olam*)? This is the Community of Israel, and the *vav* will be united with the *he'*, and she will be lifted from the dust, as it says, and God remembered His covenant (Exod. 2:24), this is the Community of Israel for she is the covenant, as it says, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant (Gen. 9:13). When the *vav* is aroused in relation to the *he'*, then supernal miracles will be aroused in the world . . . and He will lift the Community of Israel from the dust, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will remember her.

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At the beginning of the redemption, it is appropriate for the rainbow to appear in the form of the bride (or wife) so that the erotic yearning on the part of the male will be aroused and the union of the two consummated. ¹¹⁹ The attribute of the divine that corresponds to the rainbow at this moment of transition is configured as the feminine other of heterosexualized masculine desire. The conjugal relation of the male and the female, represented respectively by the letters *vav* and *he'* of the tetragrammaton, rectifies the ontological separation of exile. ¹²⁰ But the reunion of male and female is a process of reintegration of the female in the male or, to put the matter somewhat differently, insofar as the female provides the space to contain the male she is the extended phallus. ¹²¹ The othering of the feminine, which entails the psychic projection of the feminine as other, is to be evaluated strictly from the point of view of the male. ¹²²

The following account of Lacan's theory of signification given by Judith Butler is particularly helpful for an understanding of the phallogentric dimension of the zoharic imagery: This is an Other that constitutes, not the limit of masculinity in a feminine alterity, but the site of a masculine self-elaboration. For women to be the Phallus

means, then, to reflect the power of the Phallus, to signify that power, to embody the Phallus, to supply the site to which it penetrates, and to signify the Phallus through being its Other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation of its identity.¹²³ Bracketing the question of the constructivist legitimacy of the Lacanian position,¹²⁴ in my estimation the structuralist approach can be applied without distortion to the zoharic texts. The phallocentric morphology is expressed in the aforementioned passage from the *Zohar* in terms of the image of God's remembering the covenant, which must be construed as an act of re/membering, that is, of transforming the female into the sign of the covenant that is inscribed on the male organ.¹²⁵ From a passage in one of Moses de León's Hebrew writings it is clear that the memory elicited by God's looking at the rainbow as the sign of the covenant signifies the gender transformation of the *Shekhinah* into part of the phallic *Yesod*, which is expressed concomitantly as the amelioration of judgment by mercy:

Whenever the rainbow is seen in the cloud, then the sign of the covenant is within her and the judgment vanishes from the world The secret is I will remember My covenant (Gen. 9:15), for there is no memory (*zekhirah*) without the sign of the covenant ('*ot berit*). Therefore they established the blessing [on the rainbow], Blessed be the one who remembers the covenant (*zokher ha-berit*),¹²⁶ for then she contains all the colors that are seen within her from [the gradation that is called] the All. Thus, God, blessed be He, has mercy over the creatures and over the earth. Know that the secret of the matter of the

rainbow and [that of] the covenant are joined together. Therefore, they established that it is forbidden for a person to look at the rainbow in order not to cause shame to the *Shekhinah* and not to look within her. Thus the prophet said, Like the appearance of the bow (*kemar'eh ha-keshet*) that shines in the clouds on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. That was the appearance of the semblance of the glory of the Lord (Ezek. 1:28).

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From the vantage point of the zoharic symbolism, the reinscription of memory and the overcoming of oblivion that it entails is the secret that endows history with meaning and purpose. Judaism's spiritual struggle with Christianity plays a critical role in this drama. The seductive power of Christianity induces the forgetfulness of the covenant (manifest in both theological and sexual terms), which brings about the separation of male and female and the consequent dominance of the evil serpent. As a result of that domination, the virility of the Jew (located in the circumcised phallus) is compromised and the masculine is feminized. By contrast, redemption is the reunion of male and female such that the latter is restored to the former in the image of the sign of the covenant. In the messianic era the force of Edom is subjugated to that of Jacob, and the feminine potency is masculinized. 128

Notes

1. *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, N.J., 1994), 12.

2. Viewed from this perspective, the split between critical historical consciousness and collective memory may not be as sharp as it emerges from Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982), even if we readily grant that the

critical historian is not the custodian of the cultural memory that has been essential to the Jewish historical experience. To be sure, the traditional effort of remembering the past is a process that often entailed the conscious submersion of the past in the dark waters of oblivion, whereas the reflective scrutiny of the Jewish past on the part of the historian is predicated (at least ideally) on the assumption that forgetfulness is not the best handmaiden to memory. The historian's attempt to recollect the past indiscriminately entails a historicizing of Judaism rooted in the secularization of Jewish history, which does indeed represent a decisive break with traditional modes of remembrance and the imaginative consecration of the past (*Zakhor*, pp. 81, 91). It is nevertheless clear that the historian's vision of the past is itself colored by certain cultural presumptions (primarily of a linguistic and semiotic nature) imparted by collective memory, which inevitably involve a process of selectivity and forgetfulness in remembering the past. A similar position has been articulated in Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, N.H., 1993). For a challenge to Yerushalmi's thesis based on the idea that historical consciousness is not in antithetical opposition to collective memory, see Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993) 11, 1821, and the remarks on this debate by David M. Myers, *Remembering Zakhor: A Super-Commentary, History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past* 4 (1992): 12946 (I thank the author for calling my attention to his study, which helped me refine my own argument).

3. I do not subscribe to a monolithic representation of Judaism in the Middle Ages based on rabbinic documents; on the contrary, one must assume a plurality of interacting Judaisms in spite of the effort of some rabbis to present a uniform picture. Indeed, the

cultural pluralism of medieval Jewish societies embraced various forms of sectarianism as well as differing conceptions of Rabbanite Judaism itself. Even if we wish to consider rabbinic Judaism as the mainstream Jewish culture, it would be historically inaccurate to speak of a homogeneous rabbinism. Thus, one should not neglect other kinds of material available to the scholar studying the nature of Jewish identity in the Middle Ages, for example, Muslim heresiography of the Jews or Karaite historiography. For two recent works of scholarship dealing respectively with these corpora, see Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton, N.J., 1995) 1746, and Fred D. Astren, *History, Historicization, and Historical Claims in Karaite Jewish Literature* (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1993).

4. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J., 1983) 90. I have employed in a more elaborate fashion Stock's notion of the textual community in *Orality, Textuality, and Revelation as Modes of Education and Formation in Jewish Mystical Circles of the High Middle Ages*, a paper written for the conference *Forming and Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Christian and Jewish Communities*, sponsored by the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith and held at the University of Notre Dame, November 8-10, 1995. A revised version of the study will appear in the proceedings of the conference, to be edited by John Van Engen. Stock's model has been profitably applied to classical rabbinic Judaism by William S. Green, *Otherness Within: Towards a Theory of Difference in Rabbinic Judaism*, in *To See Ourselves As Others See Us: Christians, Jews, Others in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (Chico, Calif, 1985) 496-9, esp. 535-5. Green's comments regarding the

rabbinic circles in the classical period are, in my view, entirely applicable to the medieval rabbinic circles whence the pietists and mystics emerged.

5. For a recent study that reexamines this issue, see Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J., 1994).

6. On the role of the messianic question in Jewish-Christian polemics in the High Middle Ages, see Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval AntiJudaism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982); Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley, Calif., 1989); idem, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992).

7. Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, trans. Arnold Schwartz, Stephanie Nakache, and Penina Peli (Albany, N.Y., 1993) 85138.

8. Most recently, Israel Ta-Shma, *Ha-nigle she-ba-nistar: The Halachic Residue in the Zohar* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1995) emphasizes the impact of the religious customs and the method of study of Franco-German Jewish culture on the zoharic authorship, but he still maintains that the work is of Spanish origin. More specifically, Ta-Shma is of the opinion that the *Zohar* was composed in the 1260S or 1270S in Toledo or Guadalajara in the circle of Jonah ben Abraham Gerondi, where one finds a blend of the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi traditions.

9. Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, trans. Louis Schoffman, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1961), 1:267.

10. *Zohar*, 1:92b.

11. Baer, *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 1:268. Regrettably, in my study of the midnight study vigil in the *Zohar*, Forms of

Visionary Ascent as Ecstatic Experience in the Zoharic Literature, in *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan (Tübingen, 1993), 20935, I neglected to mention these important and pertinent remarks of Baer. Indeed, the position that I adopt in that study, that the references to the communal midnight study in the *Zohar* reflect actual practice and are not to be construed simply as imaginative constructions, basically concurs with

the view of Baer. Although Baer himself (*History of Jews in Christian Spain*, 1:437, n. 24) referred the reader to Scholem's work for an investigation of the real-life setting of the *Zohar*, it seems to me that Baer's own analysis was closer to the mark and in an essential way anticipated the socially oriented trend in current scholarship.

12. *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), 58.

13. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 225, where Scholem again remarks that the medieval environment can be recognized in many details of the *Zohar*. In that context he specifically mentions the work of Baer.

14. On the other hand, it must be noted that Scholem did entertain the possibility that the author of the *Zohar* whom he considered to be Moses de León, belonged to a group of Castilian mystics described as the representatives of the Gnostical reaction in the history of Spanish kabbalism, i.e., Isaac and Jacob ha-Kohen of Soria, Todros ben Joseph Abulafia of Toledo, and Moses ben Simeon of Burgos. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1956) 175, 187, 190.

15. See the study of Liebes, *New Directions in the Study of Kabbala* (in Hebrew); *Pe'amim* 50 (1992): 16061; *idem*, *Zohar and Eros* (in Hebrew), *Alpayyim* 9 (1994): 67119; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Forms of Visionary Ascent as Ecstatic Experience in the Zoharic Literature*; *idem*, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, N.J., 1994) 32692.

16. I owe this formulation to my colleague, David Leahy.

17. On the zoharic attitude to Christianity, see Adolf Jellinek, *Christlicher Einfluss auf die Kabbala*, *Der Orient* 12 (1851): 58083; Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1894), 4:23; Wilhelm Bacher, *Judaeo-Christian Polemics in the Zohar*, *Jewish*

Quarterly Review 3 (1891): 78184; Baer, *The Historical Background of the Ra'aya' Meheimna'* (in Hebrew), *Zion* 5 (1940): 144; idem, *The Kabbalistic Doctrine in the Christological Teaching of Abner of Burgos* (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 27 (1958): 281; idem, *History of Jews in Christian Spain*, 1:26677; Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, trans. David Goldstein (Oxford, 1989), 973; Scholem, *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 70; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 6568, 13961; Daniel C. Matt, *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (New York, 1983), 1522, 240. On the zoharic attitude toward Islam, see Ronald C. Kiener, *The Image of Islam in the Zohar*, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989): 4365 (English section).

18. In previous studies I have touched upon the polemical responses in the *Zohar* (and related kabbalistic literature), and my reflections here should be viewed as an expansion of my earlier thoughts. See *Mystical Rationalization of the Commandments in Sefer harimmon*, *Hebrew Union College Annual* 59 (1988): 24546, 24849; *Light through Darkness: The Ideal of Human Perfection in the Zohar*, *Harvard Theological Review* 81 (1988): 81, n. 29, 8283, n. 34, 86, n. 46; *Womanthe Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah: Some Philosophical Observations on the Divine Androgyne*, in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, ed. Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn (New York, 1994), 16869, 18990.

19. See *The Book of the Covenant of Joseph Kimhi*, trans. Frank Talmage (Toronto, 1972) 1920, and other references cited on p. 19, n. 50; David Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus, with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1979), 16; Cohen, *Friars and the Jews*; Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*.

20. Abraham Gross, *Satan and Christianity: The Demonization of Christianity in the Writings of Abraham Saba* (in Hebrew), *Zion* 58

(1993): 91105, notes that the portrayal of Christianity as the demonic religion and the view of Jesus as the incarnation of Samael, or the devil, that are found in Spanish kabbalistic works from the second half of the fifteenth century can be traced back to thirteenth-century sources composed by Haside Ashkenaz and the kabbalists in northern Spain, such as Nahmanides and Bahya ben Asher. He does

not deal explicitly with the *Zohar*, which probably had the greatest impact on subsequent kabbalists.

21. The author of the *Zohar* fits into what Gerson Cohen identified as the exegetical approach to the problem of Edom-Rome taken by Babylonian, Spanish, and Provençal Jewish scholars, as opposed to the orientation found in southern Italian sources. According to the former, the name of Edom was applied primarily to Christianity and only secondarily to Rome after the Roman Empire adopted that faith as the official state religion. See Gerson D. Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Culture* (Philadelphia, 1991), 24369, esp. 25960.

22. *Zohar* 2:188b; part of this text is cited (in a different translation) by Matt, *Zohar*, 17. On the zoharic representation of medieval Christianity as the demonic force in the world, see Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 4:17; Scholem, *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 40; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 6668, 244, n. 92. The association of the Other Side and the nations of the world (without specifying a specific link to Christianity) is noted by Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 451.

23. The contrast between the ontic grounding of the Jewish soul in the realm of holiness and that of the non-Jewish soul (especially the idolatrous nations, which is a code for Christians) is repeated on many occasions in the zoharic corpus and related kabbalistic literature. Cf. *Zohar* 1:47a, 131a, 220a; 2:21b; 3:25b, 37a, 104b, 105b, 119a, 259; and see Wolfson, *Mystical Rationalization*, 24244, 248. I note, parenthetically, that in *Shekel ha-kodesh*, ed. A. W. Greenup (London, 1911), p. 65, Moses de León has some negative comments about the Muslim woman during her menstrual period. The correlation of the blood of menstruation, particularly related to the birth of Jesus (as we find, for example, in the different recensions of the *Toledot Yeshu*), and Christianity is employed in Jewish polemical literature in the Middle Ages in an effort to discredit the doctrine of the virgin birth;

hence, the attribution of the title *ben niddah*, son of a menstruant, to Jesus. See Samuel Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach Jüdischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1902) 3841, 6468, 118, 139, 140; *Sefer Nestor ha-Komer*, ed. Abraham Berliner (Altona, 1874), 7; Berger, *Jewish Christian Debate*, 4344, 18384, 35054. This polemical trope is used as well by Abraham Abulafia, although he is mostly concerned with emphasizing the material nature of the blood in order to contrast the spirituality of the Jewish Messiah (the Sabbath) and the corporeality of Jesus (the sixth day). See Moshe Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Albany, N.Y., 1988) 5253.

24. See Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halakhic Sources* (New York, 1984) 14774; Shaye J. D. Cohen, Purity and Piety: The Separation of Menstruants from the Sancta, in *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*, ed. Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut (Philadelphia, 1992), 10315; idem, Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity, in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. S. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1991), 27399; David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York, 1992), 5557. I do not mean to suggest that in the classical rabbinic sources one cannot find negative depictions of menstruation, ultimately reflecting a misogynistic orientation. Consider, for example, *Bereshit Rabba* 17:8, ed. Julius Theodor and Chanoch Albeck (Jerusalem, 1965), p. 160, where the laws of menstruation are explained as a punishment for Eve's having brought about the death of Adam.

25. A fuller treatment of menstruation in the kabbalistic material is presently being prepared by Sharen Koren, *Mysticism and Menstruation: The Significance of Female Impurity to Medieval Jewish Spirituality* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University).

26. *The Book of the Pomegranate: Moses de Leon's Sefer ha-Rimmon*, ed. E. R. Wolfson (Atlanta, 1988), 34445; *Mishkan ha-'Edut*, MS,

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Or. Quat. 833, fols. 24a-b; and see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 135859. If we follow the suggestion of Baruch Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in*

Ancient Israel (Leiden, 1974), 75, that, according to the priestly conception, impurity was not only an offense against God but introduced a kind of demonic contagion into the community, then the biblical laws regarding menstruation (Lev. 15:19-33) already presuppose the idea that the blood of menstruation is the materialization of the antigodly force. For discussion of this position, see also Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden, 1973), 931. It goes without saying that the characterization of menstrual blood as the source of demonic impurity and the ensuing menstrual taboos are found in a variety of different cultures. For representative studies, see William N. Stephens, *A Cross-Cultural Study of Menstrual Taboos*, *Genetic Psychology Monographs* 64 (1961): 385-416; Paula Weideger, *Menstruation and Menopause: The Physiology and Psychology, the Myth and the Reality* (New York, 1976) 85-113; Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb, introduction to *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation* (Berkeley, Calif., 1988), 350; Chris Knight, *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture* (New Haven, Conn., 1991), 374-416; Mary Jane Lupton, *Menstruation and Psychoanalysis* (Urbana. Ill., 1993), 92-105.

In the Middle Ages this negative conception of the female body led to widely held superstitious beliefs (often presented as scientific in nature) regarding the detrimental effects of the blood of menstruation on a woman's offspring. See Claude Thomasset, *The Nature of Woman*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, in *A History of Women in the West: 2. Silence of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 545-8, 656-6; Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, N.J., 1993), 151, and reference cited in n. 62.

27. Cf. *Zohar* 1:204b, where the alien kingdom (*malkhuta' ahra'*) of the idolatrous nations is called the other one (*'aher*) based on the verse

For you must not worship any other god, because the Lord, whose name is Impassioned, is an impassioned God (Exod. 34:14). And cf. *Zohar* 2:61a, where the same verse is cited as a proof text to support the view that one should not have sexual intercourse with a Gentile woman, again referred to as the daughter of an alien god. Cf. *Zohar* 1:31b; *Zohar hadash*, ed. Reuven Margaliot (Jerusalem, 1978), 75a, 86b.

28. *Zohar* 2:3a-b, trans. in Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 12025.

29. *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 1:262.

30. See Matt, *Zohar*, 240; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 234, n. 47.

31. *Zohar* 1:171b. The passionate zeal (kin' ah) associated with the God of Israel in Scripture, is linked specifically to the phallus, or the divine attribute that corresponds to the phallus, in zoharic texts. Cf. *Zohar* 1:66b, 131b; 2:3b; 3:190a; *Book of the Pomegranate*, 230.

32. *Zohar* 1:131b; 2:87b; Moses de León, *Mishkan ha-'Edut*, MS, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Or. Quat. 833, fols. 26a27a; *Book of the Pomegranate*, 21213.

33. The *Zohar* repeatedly links sexual relations with Gentile women and idolatry (understood as the worship of the other god of the demonic realm). See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 1365, and other sources mentioned in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 140, n. 2. Cf. *Shekel ha-kodesh*, p. 63, and *Zohar* 1:214a, where sexual intercourse with a non-Jew is considered a world-destroying act. It is of interest to consider the linkage of the sign of circumcision and idolatry on the part of Gentile women according to the remark placed in the mouth of the Jew in Peter Abelard, *A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew, and a Christian*, trans. Pierre J. Payer (Toronto, 1979), p. 47. The correlation of idolatry and menstruation is found already in the pseudepigraphical *Letter of Jeremiah*, but in that

context the issue is a purely cultic one, i.e., since the pagan does not have to abide by the laws of menstruation, the likelihood that sacrifices to idols may have been touched by women during the menstrual period or at childbirth is great. See Neusner, *Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, 36.

34. *Zohar* 1:126b. Cf. *Zohar* 3:79a-b; *Zohar hadash*, 81b-c; *Book of the Pomegranate*, 27980.

35. *Sifre on Deuteronomy*, ed. Louis Finkelstein (New York, 1969), sec. 357, 430. Cf. *Bemidbar Rabbah* 20:1; *Midrash Tanhuma'*, Balak, 1.

36. Cf. *Zohar* 2:21b-22a, 69b; 3:192a, 193b-194a; *Zohar hadash*, 47c; *She'elot uteshuvot leRav Mosheh di Li'on be'inyene kabbalah*, in Isaiah Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah and Its Branches: Researches and Sources* (Jerusalem, 1982), 1:7475; *Shekel ha-kodesh*, 1619; see Matt, *Zohar*, 240. The association of Balaam's magical acts and the demonic is repeated on many occasions in zoharic literature; cf. *Zohar* 1:125b-126a; 3:113a, 200b, 206b-210b, 264a; *Zohar hadash*, 47c. In the first and last two of these references, Balaam is described as drawing down the force of impurity from the supernal serpent by committing sexual acts with his she-ass every night, an idea already expressed in rabbinic sources. Cf. B. Sanhedrin 105a-b (in that setting the view that Balaam had intercourse with his she-ass is juxtaposed to the idea that he performed sorcery with his penis) and 'Avodah Zarah 4b; see also *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch: Text and Concordance*, ed. E. G. Clarke, with collaboration by W. E. Aufrecht, J. C. Hurd, and F. Spitzer (Hoboken, N.J., 1984), and Num. 22:30, 18788. One wonders if implicit in this rabbinic tradition is a polemic against Christians who are depicted as a race of asses, an image that is especially related to the issue of sexual promiscuity. See Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. Felicia Pheasant (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1988), 11718. On the inherent impurity of Balaam, again linked to the image of the serpent, cf. *Zohar* 1:169b (in that passage Balaam is contrasted with Jacob). For discussion of Balaam's magical practices and the demonic realm in zoharic literature, see Dorit Cohen-Alloro, *The Secret of the Garment in the Zohar* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1987) 7581. On the

symbolic correspondence of the *hamor* and *'aton* to the masculine and the feminine potencies in the demonic realm, cf. *Zohar* 3:207a; *Zohar hadash*, 78c. See n. 61, below.⁶

37. See Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco, 1978); Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington, Ind., 1984) 10339; Francis C. R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen, 1984), 316448; Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986) 14346; Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, N.J., 1991).

38. *Zohar* 3:79a. The different symbolic connotations of the mythical image of the serpent inseminating Eve in zoharic texts have been duly noted by Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 461, 46770.

39. This is, of course, not exclusive to the *Zohar*. Consider, for example, the reference in medieval Jewish texts to the promiscuous nature of the mother of Jesus cited by Berger, *Jewish-Christian Debate*, 23. The discrediting of the sexual behavior of the father of Jesus figures prominently in the polemical *Toledot Yeshu*; see Bernhard Blumenkranz, *The Roman Church and the Jews*, in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York, 1991), 221. The assault on the parentage of Jesus may have been contemporary with his life. Cf. *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus*, critical edition of the Coptic text, translated and with introduction and notes by Marvin Meyer, with an interpretation by Harold Bloom (New York, 1992), sec. 105, 63: Jesus said, Whoever knows the father and the mother will be called the child of a whore. Consider also the claim of the Jew reported in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, translated and with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick (Cambridge, 1980), 28, 3132, that the mother of Jesus was convicted of adultery with a soldier named Panthera (the term used in

a derogatory sense to refer to the father of Jesus in rabbinic sources; idem, 31, n. 3; see also Smith, *Jesus the Magician* 4650).

This tradition may also underlie the response of the Jews to Jesus in John 8:41, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. These last two references

are noted by Meyer, *Gospel of Thomas*, 106. It is of relevance here to recall as well the argument of Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 26, that the reference to Jesus as the son of Mary in Mark 6:3 should be understood in a pejorative sense as a challenge to the father of Jesus. Smith supports his reading by noting that the genealogy of Jesus in Matt. 1:216 mentions only four women, all of whom gave birth as a result of illicit sexual relations. The claim that Christians were lax with regard to sexual prohibitions is a common motif in medieval Jewish polemical literature. See, for example, *Book of the Covenant*, 33, 35, 48; Berger, *Jewish-Christian Debate*, 224 (in that context the Gentile practice of having sexual relations with menstruant women is mentioned explicitly); and compare the passage from Meir ben Simeon's *Milhemet mitsvah*, cited by Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 63.

40. *Midrash Tanhuma'*, Vayyishlah, 8; *Zohar* 1:146a, 170a; 2:11a, 111a, 163b 3:124a (*Ra'aya' meheimna'*), 199b, 243a (*Ra'aya' meheimna'*), 246b (*Ra'aya' meheimna'*), 248a (*Ra'aya' meheimna'*); *Zohar hadash*, 23d (*Midrash ha-ne'elam*), 47a (*Midrash ha-ne'elam*); *Tikkunei Zohar*, ed. Reuven Margaliot (Jerusalem, 1978), 69, 105a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 464.

41. The expression *derakhiv nahash*, one who rides a serpent, is applied to Esau in *Zohar* 1:171a. In that context, the Aramaic equivalent, *derakhiv 'al hivya*, is also employed to describe Esau. Cf. *Zohar* 1:146a, 228a; 2:268b. It should be noted that in some passages of the *Ra'aya' meheimna'* stratum of the zoharic corpus, the serpent is associated with Ishmael and Samael with Edom (concerning the latter, see references in n. 19). Cf. *Zohar* 3:124a, 246b. (In other contexts, this kabbalist follows the main body of the *Zohar* and links Esau to the serpent; for example, cf. *Tikkunei Zohar* 59, 93a.) This may reflect a more negative stance vis-à-vis Islam on the part of this anonymous kabbalist. For the opposite view that this author was more conciliatory

toward Islam than Christianity, see Pinchas Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine: Symbolization and Theurgy in the Later Strata of the Zohar* (Albany, N.Y., 1993), 51, and other relevant references cited on p. 146, n. 114.

42. *Pirke Rabbi 'Eli'ezer* (Warsaw, 1852), chap. 13, 31b; *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Reuven Margalioth (Jerusalem, 1951), sec. 200; *Zohar* 1:35b, 55a, 263b; 2:236a-b, 243a, 243a, 243b-244a, 268b; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 467. The characterization of the primordial serpent in the form of a camel is made explicitly in a tradition attributed to Simeon ben Eleazar in *Bereshit Rabba* 19:1, 171.

43. *Zohar* 1:137b-138a; cf. 3:64a.

44. The identification of Esau, demonic impurity, and the serpent is implied as well in *Zohar* 1:171a.

45. See Berger, *Jewish-Christian Debate*, 56.

46. An entirely different approach is offered in *Zohar* 2:12b. Building on a view expressed in *Seder 'Eliyahu Rabbah*, ed. M. Friedmann (Vienna, 1904), chap. 19, 114, the author of the *Zohar* explains the domination of Edom in this exile over Israel as compensation for the tears that Esau shed when Jacob took the blessing of the firstborn away from him: The redemption of Israel only depends on weeping, when the tears that Esau wept before his father will be completed and consummated The weeping that Esau wept and the tears that he shed have brought Israel into exile. When these tears are annulled by the weeping of Israel, they will come out of exile. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 151415, and Scholem, *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 34. Cf. *Zohar hadash* 23b (*Midrash haNe'elam*): You should know that since Jacob took the blessings from Esau through deception, permission was not given to any nation in the world to subjugate Israel except for the nation of Esau.

47. *Zohar* 1:138b; cf. 143a, 145b-146a; and parallel in *She'elot u-*

teshuvot le-rav Mosheh di-Li'on, 4546. The zoharic view with respect to keeping the serpent outside the inner sanctum should be compared to the idea expressed by Joseph Gikatilla in his *Sod hanahash u-mishpato*, translated and analyzed by Gershom Scholem, in *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, ed.

Jonathan Chipman (New York, 1991), 7980; the relevant part of the Hebrew text is printed in Scholem, *Major Trends*, 4056, n. 113. According to that text as well, evil results from the disruption of proper boundaries when the serpent, which belongs on the outside, penetrates to the inside, which is the precinct of the holy. Cf. Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha'arei 'Orah*, ed. Joseph Ben-Shlomo, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1981), 1:1012, 135, 154, 21114; 2:25, 127. Although the language of the *Zohar* tends to be more dualistic (as Scholem himself notes [*On the Mystical Shape*, 81; *Major Trends*, 239]; see also the introduction of Ben-Shlomo to his edition of *Sha'arei 'Orah*, 3839), there is an important similarity between the zoharic treatment of Esau as the evil serpent and Gikatilla's depiction of the primordial serpent, which he identifies as Amalek. In this connection it is also of interest to consider the view of the author of *Tikkunei Zohar* regarding the proper boundary separating the holy and the demonic; see Elliot K. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah* (Albany, N.Y., 1989), 22223.

48. For a useful study to understand the range of philological meanings attached to this technical term in medieval biblical exegesis, see Sarah Kamin, '*Dugma*' in Rashi's Commentary on Song of Songs, in *Jews and Christians Interpret the Bible* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1991), 1330. On the use of the term in the *Zohar*, see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 38.

49. *Zohar* 1:35b. The transaction between Jacob and Esau is understood in the *Zohar* to be a particular illustration of the more general principle of the appeasement of the Other Side through the giving of gifts. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 45354.

50. *Zohar* 1:145b.

51. B. Baba Metsi'a 84a.

52. Paul's eschatological anthropology is related to his theology of the covenants: just as the pneumatic Adam fulfills or perfects the somatic Adam, so the new covenant of grace surpasses the old covenant of law. The Adam-Jesus typology thus serves a different theopolitical agenda from that of the equation between Jesus and Moses adopted by Jewish Christians such as the Ebionites. The belief in Jesus as the *novus Moses* was predicated on the recognition that both the church and the synagogue were legitimate paths and that certain aspects of Jewish ritual had to be upheld even by Christian believers insofar as Moses was a true and eternal prophet of God. See Hans J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia, 1961), 245-48. The Jewish Christian view contrasts sharply with the portrayal of Jesus as superior to Moses in Heb. 3:16, the position that became normative in the history of the church. Regarding this passage, see David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem, 1988), 261-68.

53. The notion of the pneumatic body of Christ, of which all believers are members, is the theological principle underlying the ethical mandate to glorify the body, which is described as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:15-20. On the transformation of the body of humiliation (to s wma tas tapeln'wsews) of sinful humanity into the glorious body (t w s'wmatl t hs d`oxhs) of Christ, cf. Phil. 3:21.

54. Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45-49; Col. 3:9-10; see Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia, 1966); William D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia, 1980), 365-7, 120, 268, 304; Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, Conn., 1990), 65-66. The relation of Jesus to Adam is also presumed in Luke 3:23-38, which traces the genealogical line from Jesus to Adam, who is identified as the son of God. See Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to*

Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus (New Haven, Conn., 1988), 29, 191.

55. William D. Davies, *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (Philadelphia, 1984), 2078, 301. On the image of the body of Christ related to the spiritual community of the Church, cf. 1 Cor. 6:15, 10:17, 12:12-13, 27; Rom. 7:4, 12:5; Col. 1:18, 24

56. One detects a similar homiletical strategy in *Book of the Pomegranate*, pp. 368-69. The attitude expressed in the *Zohar* should be viewed within the framework of other medieval Jewish sources that polemicize against the Christian doctrine of original sin. See Joel E. Rembaum, *Medieval Jewish Criticism of the Doctrine of Original Sin*, *AJS Review* 78 (1982-83): 353-82. See also Bezalel Safran, *Rabbi Azriel and Nahmanides: Two Views of the Fall of Man*, in *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, 1983), 75-106. In other zoharic texts, the blame for the sin is attributed to the female, who brought death to the world by cleaving to the place of death, i.e., the demonic realm. Cf. *Zohar* 1:36a.

57. See Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype* (Princeton, N.J., 1963), 253.

58. See Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 43.

59. *Zohar* 1:130b-131a.

60. In contexts where the symbol of the tree of life is used to refer to *Yesod*, the latter is often also depicted by the symbol of the incessantly flowing river. The convergence of these two images is obviously meant to underscore the phallic nature of this divine attribute. Cf. *Zohar* 1:35a; 3:239; *Shushan 'edut*, ed. Gershom Scholem, *Shene kuntresim leR. Mosheh di Li'on, Kovets 'alyad* 8 (1976): 361; *Sod 'eser sefirot belimah*, ed. Scholem in the same volume, 381; *Shekel ha-kodesh*, 69.

61. According to *Zohar* 1:238a, the eschatological promise of Zech. 9:9 indicates that the Messiah will subdue the masculine and feminine powers of the demonic realm, symbolized by the donkey and the she-ass (see n. 36, above). The citation of Isa. 63:1 in that context alludes to the fact that this process comes about through the execution of

divine judgment against the bloody force of Edom. Hence, the messianic king is associated symbolically with the *Shekhinah*, which is a manifestation of judgment.

62. Zohar 1:138a.

63. Ibid., 1:108b, 177ab; 2:108b, ma; 3:128a, 135a, 142a, 292a; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 6567.

64. The image of the eclipse of the moon, or the diminution of the light of the moon, for the exile of the *Shekhinah*, which reflects her separation from the masculine *Tiferet*, symbolically represented by the sun, is repeated quite often in kabbalistic literature, including the zoharic corpus. Conversely, the state of redemption is commonly depicted as the moon being illuminated by sun. For example, cf. *Zohar* 1:75b, 165a, 181a-b, 199a, 239b; 2:137a-b, 167b; *Shekel ha-kodesh*, 61, 8586; *Book of the Pomegranate*, 369. Interestingly enough, according to Zohar 1:20a, the separation of the moon from the sun is described as a diminution of the moon's light, which results in the creation of shells that protect the kernel, a process that is referred to as the rectification of the kernel, *tikkuna' demoha'*. In this context, then, a positive role is assigned to the notion of the shell as a material garment that covers and shields the light.

65. On the association of Esau and the primordial darkness, cf. *Zohar* 2:167a. As Liebes has argued. *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 14649, the correlation of *tohu* and barrenness in *Zohar* 1:3b, an ontic condition rectified by the appearance of Abraham, may signify Israel's exilic condition under the domination of Christianity.

66. *Zohar hadash*, 55b. On the use of the image of the shells to characterize the realm of demonic forces, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 46164.

67. As Liebes notes. *Studies in the Zohar*, 89, n. 188, the source for this image was probably Judah Halevi's *Sefer ha-Kuzari* 4.23. On the

image of Israel as the core, cf. *Zohar* 2:195a.

68. *Zohar* 2:108b. See Wolfson, *Light through Darkness*, 82, n. 34.

69. *Shekel ha-kodesh*, 6869.

70. Regarding the kabbalistic doctrine of the emergence of the demonic shell prior to the divine core, see Moshe Idel, The Evil Thought of the Deity (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 49 (1980): 35664.

71. For a list of relevant rabbinic sources, see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1968) 5:133, n. 3, and for the zoharic passages, see Reuven Margaliot, *Sha'arei Zohar* (Jerusalem, 1978), 69, s.v. Shabbat 146a. It is of interest to note that in several contexts [*Zohar* 2:52b, 219b; 3:249b), the bite of the great serpent functions in a positive way as the catalyst that opens the womb of the female (portrayed symbolically as a hind based on Ps. 42:2) to give birth. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 39596, 46869, 73840. In *Zohar* 3:67b (*Ra'aya' Meheimna'*) the image of the serpent opening the womb by biting is applied specifically to the birth of the Messiah. This enigmatic image of the *Zohar* was considered by later kabbalists to contain one of the most recondite secrets of the divine. Compare the discussion between Isaac Luria and Hayyim Vital regarding *Zohar* 2:52b in Meir Benayahu, *The Toledoth ha-Ari* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1967), 19798; and see Ronit Meroz, *Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching* (in Hebrew), (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1988), 30715; Yehuda Liebes, *Two Young Roes of a Doe': The Secret Sermon of Isaac Luria before His Death* (in Hebrew) *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10 (1992): 12830,13748. On the evolution of this secret in Sabbatean literature, see references in Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 128, n. 146.

72. See n. 38, above.

73. *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 468.

74. I have discussed the mythic symbol of the androgynous phallus in a number of my studies. See *Womanthe Feminine as Other*, 18688; *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 275, n. 14; 317; 342; 344; 35759; 371, n. 155; 38889; *Circle in the Square*, 4647, 8592, 11718, 14748, n. 42; 19899, n. 11; 201, n. 29; 202, n. 31; 224, n. 147; *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics* (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 84; 8788; 173, n. 319; 175, n. 376; 222, n. 172.

Neumann, *The Great Mother*, 49, refers to the uroboric nature of the phallus, a term that he employs to convey the idea that phallic images can be symbolic of both the masculine and the feminine. Particularly interesting is Neumann's reference (n. 18 *ad locum*) to the Indian sculpture of the phallus in which Shiva or Shakti is contained. And compare the description of the uroboric snake woman, i.e., a woman with a phallus, on p. 170. For a more extensive discussion of the mythological symbol of the uroboros, with special attention to its hermaphroditic character, see Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (Princeton, N.J., 1954), 538, 187, 414-18. The image of the uroboros is connected to the demonic power in *Zohar* 2:176b (*Sifra' diTseni'uta'*), as noted by Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 467. Moreover, in that context, the serpent, whose tail is said to be on its head rather than in its mouth, is associated with the symbol of the sea monster (*tanin*). It is also important to note that the particular act that is related to the image of the serpent is the engraving or inscribing of letters. The more conventional image of the uroboros, that is, the circular snake whose tail is in its mouth, appears in *Zohar* 2:179a and 3:205b. These zoharic references are cited by Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 236, n. 105. On the head and the tail of the evil serpent, cf. *Zohar* 2:268b; 3:119b. In the latter context, the *Shekhinah* in exile is described as executing providence over the nations of the world in the manner that the serpent crawls upon the earth, with its head bent to the dust and its tail extended in the air.^c

75. The expression that I have translated as men is *bar nash*, the Aramaic equivalent of *ben 'adam*. From the context it is evident that this term does not denote all of humanity but is limited to Jewish males, for the inscription of the sign of the covenant is exclusive to the latter. Cf. *Zohar* 1:94a, 162a. This usage is attested in other zoharic passages, although in some contexts a more exacting term, *bar nash yisra'el*, is used (*Zohar* 2:865a; 3:25b). To cite one striking example: Thus a person (*bar nash*) should not mix his image with the

image of an idolater because the one is holy and the other is impure (*Zohar* 1:219b-220a; cf. parallel in *Zohar* 3:104b). Obviously, in this context the word *bar nash* refers to the Jew who is contrasted with the idolater, i.e., the Christian. The masculine character of *bar nash* is underscored from the meaning of the passage, which is to prohibit sexual relations

between the Jewish male and the Christian female. For a similar contrast between *bar nash* and the idolatrous nations, cf. *Zohar* 1:131a, 205a; 2:88b.

According to the zoharic anthropology, the human being in the fullest sense is the circumcised Jew. The point is stated explicitly in the *sod milah* appended to Moses de Leon, *Nefesh ha-hakhmah*, critically edited by Jochanan H. A. Wijnhoven, *Sefer ha-mishkal: Text and Study* (Ph.D. diss. Brandeis University, 1964), 131: When one receives the holy covenant that is sealed and inscribed on his flesh, then he is included in the category of a human being (*nikhlal bikhelal 'adam*). This is expressed on occasion in the *Zohar* in terms of the rabbinic notion that Jews, in contrast to idolaters, are called by the name '*adam*'. Cf. B. Yevamot 61a; Baba Metsi'a 114b; Keritut 6b; *Zohar* 1:20b, 28b; 2:25b (*Pikkudin*), 86a, 275b; 3:125a (*Ra'aya' meheimna'*), 219a, 238b (*Ra'aya' meheimna'*); Wijnhoven, *Sefer ha-mishkal*, 130. The kabbalistic symbolism reinforces the androcentrism of the rabbinic conception of circumcision.

Regarding the rabbinic view, see the recent analysis of Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism* (Chicago, 1995). Hoffmann correctly notes that circumcision as a cultural symbol underscores the gender opposition in rabbinic Judaism (p. 24). In particular, Hoffman focuses on the binary opposition of men's blood drawn during circumcision and women's blood that flows during menstruation (p. 23); and see extended discussion on pp. 136-54.

76. *Zohar* 1:228a.

77. *Zohar* 2:236b.

78. The issue of circumcision is the subtext of the polemical zoharic passage cited and discussed by Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 146-52; and see the author's comments on p. 233, nn. 36 and 42. Kiener, *The*

Image of Islam, 48, 5460, notes the centrality of the ritual practice of circumcision in the polemic against the Muslim faith that one finds in zoharic literature. Regarding this point, see also Elliot R. Wolfson, Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of Esoteric Doctrine, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 78 (1987): 9899; idem. *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 366, n. 142.

79. Many scholars have written on Paul's treatment of circumcision, and here I mention only three relatively recent discussions: John J. Collins, A Symbol of Otherness: Circumcision and Salvation in the First Century, in *To See Ourselves As Others See Us: Christians, Jews, Others in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (Chico, Calif., 1985), pp. 16386; Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 187223, and Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1994), 2527, 3638, 10635.

80. Here I follow the suggestion of Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 27, who cites in support of his interpretation A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology against Its Graeco-Roman Background* (Tiibingen, 1987), 84.

81. The Hebrew *zamor* has a double connotation, singing and pruning. Both meanings are attested in the zoharic text. In this context the pruning is related more specifically to the rite of circumcision.

82. The contextualization of a polemic against Christianity in the zoharic exegesis of Genesis 18 is not accidental, for this verse was used in Christian polemics as a scriptural proof text to anchor the doctrine of the Trinity in Hebrew Scripture. For example, see *Book of the Covenant*, 6164. In the Eastern Orthodox iconographic tradition, especially prominent in Russian Orthodoxy, the appearance of the three angels to Abraham is assumed to be the sensory apparition of the three divine hypostases and is thus known as the Old Testament Trinity. See Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, trans. Anthony Gythiel (Crestwood, N.Y., 1992), 267, 276, 29496, 39899, 4012, 408.

83. The presumption of the *Zohar* is an aggadic elaboration of the verse, Noah, the tiller of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard (Gen. 9:20), which is followed by the narrative concerning Noah's drunkenness. The idea that Noah was responsible for the introduction of instruments in the world is suggested, no doubt, by the biblical description of

him as one who worked the land. The depiction of Noah as a drunkard is related more specifically to the fact that he is described as the first to plant a vineyard.

84. *Zohar* 1:97a-b. My reading of this passage confirms the interpretation of *Zohar* 1:3b proposed by Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 14650.

85. The point is made explicitly in many kabbalistic documents. Here I mention only a few representative examples from the oeuvre of Moses de Leon: *Shekel ha-kodesh*, 61; *Sod 'eser sefirot belimah*, 381; *Book of the Pomegranate*, 227.

86. *Zohar* 1:102b.

87. In several contexts, Moses de Leon describes the rite of circumcision as entering the mystery of faith. Cf. *Shekel ha-kodesh*, 67; *Sefer ha-mishkal*, 133.

88. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, 6.

89. The connection of memory and phallus, based on the Hebrew etymology, is noted by Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York, 1987), 87. This nexus also underlies Derrida's depiction of circumcision as the concise experience of the primordial cut on the flesh that occurs at the designated time, the signature of self, the scar that opens the way, the encircling of oneself by means of which one is named. See Jacques Derrida, *Shibboleth*, in *Midrash and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick (New Haven, Conn., 1986), 341; *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago, 1993), 5960, 6574, 8788 (I thank Laurence Silberstein for drawing my attention to this work).

90. *Sefer ha-bahir*, sec. 182: Why is it written [by Sabbath] remember (*zakhor*) [Exod. 20:8] and keep (*shamor*) [Deut. 5:12]? Remember is

for the male (*zakhor lezakhar*) and keep for the bride (*shamor lekhalah*). See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1223; Ginsburg, *Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, 1078. The impact of this text is discernible in a number of subsequent kabbalistic texts, as noted by Margaliot in his note *ad locum*. See also sources cited by Gershom Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir* (Leipzig, 1923), 134, and compare the analysis of this bahiric text in idem. *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, trans. Allan Arkush (Princeton, N.J., 1987) 14243, 15859.

91. Cf. *Zohar* 1:48b; 2:92a (*Pikkudin*), 118b (*Ra'aya' meheimna'*), 138a; 3:80b.

92. *Zohar* 2:92b.

93. *Berit kadisha*, which literally means the holy covenant. It is evident, however, that in this context, as in many other zoharic passages, the term *berit* is best translated as phallus, the site of the covenant of circumcision.

94. *Zohar* 2:92a.

95. *Zohar* 1:193b. According to another passage (1:160a), the twofold aspect of memory, signified by the words *zekhirah* and *pekidah*, is applied to the demonic realm.

96. B. Berakhot 32b; *Midrash Tehillim* 137:8, ed. Solomon Buber (Vilna, 1891), 526. Cf. *Book of the Pomegranate*, 160. This formulation is part of the *zikhronot* prayer included in the *musaf* for Rosh ha-Shanah: *ki'ein shikhehah lifne khisse' khevodekha we'ein nistar mineged 'einekha*. See *Mahzor la-yamim ha-nora'im*, 2 vols., ed. Daniel S. Goldschmidt (Jerusalem, 1970), 1:256. An alternative locution, *'ein shikhehah lifne ha-maqom*, there is no forgetfulness before God, is found in T. Yoma 2:7; P. Yoma 3:9 41b; *Shir ha-shirim rabbah* 3:8, ed. Shimshon Dunaski (Jerusalem, 1980), 89. A literal rendering of this expression in Aramaic is found in *Zohar* 1:199b,

deleit nashyu kameih kudsha' berikh hu.' Cf. *Pesikta' deRav Kahana'* 3:7, ed. Bernard Mandelbaum (New York, 1962), 46; *Midrash Tanhuma'*, Ki Tetse', 11, ed. Solomon Buber (Vilna, 1885) 40; *Eikhah rabbah* 5:1, ed. Solomon Buber (Vilna, 1899), 154.

97. The reciprocal coronation between the *Shekhinah* and the righteous comes about, according to the *Zohar*, through other ritual activities, notably study of Torah. See Wolfson, *Forms of Visionary Ascent*, 230. Cf. the formulation in *Zohar* 1:84a: Praiseworthy are the righteous who are crowned by the Holy One, blessed be He, and He is crowned by them.

98. For discussion of the motif of Sabbath as the *hieros gamos*, see Ginsburg, *Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, 10121. On a number of occasions in his analysis Ginsburg touches upon the image of coronation as it relates to the union of male and female.

99. For other examples of this symbolic understanding of crowning, see my discussion in *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 35768. Regarding the understanding of sexual union as the assimilation of the female into the male, see Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 9298.

100. Sefer ha-mishkal, 133. I have translated according to the version of this passage extant in MS, Florence, Bibliotheca Laurentiana Plut. 88.42, reconstructed from the editor's apparatus. This reading, more or less, conforms to that found in the printed edition of Basel, 1608. Cf. *Zohar* 1:13a; 3:91b-92a.

101. The kabbalistic characterization of redemption as the reintegration of the principle of evil into holiness was already made by Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* 77. In that context, however, Scholem left open the question of whether this reintegration implied the complete annihilation of the principle of evil or its suspension (i.e., termination and elevation) in the holy. Regarding this theme, see E. R. Wolfson, *Left Contained in the Right: A Study in Zoharic Hermeneutics*, *AJS Review* 11 (1986): 2752, esp. 3745.

102. I do not mean to suggest that for the zoharic authorship the attribute of judgment is purely passive. On the contrary, there are many descriptions of divine and even demonic judgment as an aggressive force. (A *locus classicus* to depict the active quality of judgment, related especially to avenging sexual sins connected to the male organ, is Lev 26:25; see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1365.) The issue is, rather, that the attribute of judgment in relation to the attribute of mercy or grace is the quality of limitation and restriction.

Absolute judgment, therefore, is characterized as impotency or celibacy, both associated with Christianity.

103. *Zohar* 2:112a: The one who does not attempt to produce offspring cleaves to the side of the evil man ('*adam bisha*') and enters beneath his wings On the ontological flaw of celibacy and the death of the Edomite kings, see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 68. Regarding the zoharic opposition to the Christian monastic ideal, see *ibid.*, 149 and 190, n. 201. On Jewish polemicizing against the Christian ideals of monasticism and celibacy, see *Book of the Covenant*, 35, n. 21.

104. *Zohar* 2:103a, 108b-109a (in that context the emasculated demonic force is associated with the rabbinic idea of the castration of the masculine Leviathan; cf. B. Baba Batra 74b; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 72). See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 517, 1362.

105. Cf. *Zohar* 1:115a, 159b-160a. In 119a it seems that the *pekidah* and *zekhirah* mark two stages in the process of redemption, a motif that became a central messianic teaching in later kabbalistic texts, for example, in the *Ma'amar ha-ge'ullah* of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto. On the possible Sabbatian background to Luzzatto's notion of two stages of redemption, see Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah and Its Branches*, 3:780808; Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, 319, n. 119.

106. My distinction between cognitive forgetting and ontological oblivion, and the characterization of the latter, is indebted to the analysis of Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. Andr Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, Ind., 1992), 7183.

107. *Zohar* 1:193b.

108. According to the zoharic symbolism, this is the mystical intent of the biblical injunction for Israel to wipe out the memory of Amalek (Exod. 17:14; Deut. 25:19). Insofar as Amalek is the personification of the demonic power, which is associated with oblivion, it follows that an appropriate means to control this force is the obliteration of its

memory from existence. Significantly, the *Zohar* adopts the aggadic view that Amaiek is associated with sins related specifically to the covenant of circumcision, the locus of memory on the flesh. Cf. *Zohar* 1:28b; 2:65a, 66a, 67a, 195a; 3:30b, 190a.

109. *Zohar* 1:59b, 71b, 153b, 184a, 189b, 197b, 229a, 251a, 257a; 2:23a; *Shekel ha-kodesh*, 62. Note that in *Zohar* 1:93b the birth of the messianic king from the seed of Boaz is explained in terms of his sexual purity with respect to the phallus.

110. *Zohar* 1:184a.

111. The word that I have translated as it is *bah*, which is in the feminine form. I have not rendered this as her because this gives the impression that the point of this passage is that desire of God is for the female persona of the *Shekhinah*. In fact, the issue here is the phallic covenant, which is related to the *Shekhinah* but not in the image of a female. The feminine grammatical form is used because it relates to the word *keshet*, the visible sign of the eternal covenant, but in terms of the theosophic symbolism the *keshet* corresponds to the female aspect of the Godhead that is localized in the phallus, the sign of the covenant ('ot berit).

112. *Zohar* 1:72b. Cf. *ibid.*, 2:11a; *Tikkunei Zohar* 18, 36b.

113. Cf. *Zohar* 1:65b, 93b; 2:57b, 66b, 87b, 180b, 195a; *Shushan 'edut*, 36364; *Sefer ha-mishkal*, 132. In some passages, by contrast, the sign of the covenant refers symbolically to *Yesod* rather than *Shekhinah*. Cf. *Zohar* 1:47b, 94a, 114b, 153b, 222b, 236b, 246a, 247b; 2:23a, 200a, 225a; 3:84a.

114. *Zohar* 1:71b. The view expressed by Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 617, n. 215, that in this passage the bow refers symbolically to *Malkhut* can be accepted only if it is understood that it is the aspect of *Malkhut* comprised within *Yesod*, which is precisely the point of the comment that the covenant of the bow is contained in the righteous. By contrast, cf. the interpretation of Gen. 49:24 in *Zohar* 1:247a, wherein *keshet* is said to refer to the female spouse of Joseph, presumably a reference to the feminine personification of *Shekhinah*.

On the phallic connotation of *keshet*, cf. *Zohar* 1:18a, 72b; 3:84a; and see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, 286; 334, n. 30; 33738, n. 40; 34041; 36869, n. 149; 38687.

115. *Zohar* 2:66b. I discussed this passage in *Through a Speculum That Shines*, p. 334, but I did not go far enough in my understanding of the phallic nature of the rainbow in this context.

116. Cf. *Zohar* 1:71b: Permission is not given to gaze with the eye upon the rainbow when it appears in the world so that no shame will appear before the *Shekhinah*. For a Hebrew parallel to this passage, cf. *Shushan 'edut*, 364. Interestingly enough, in his commentary on the liturgy, Eleazar of Worms remarks that the worshiper sees the *Shekhinah* only in the beginning of his prayers, for more than that would be a disgrace for the *Shekhinah*. See *Perushei siddur ha-tefillah la-Rokeah*, ed. Moshe Hershler and Yehudah A. Hershler (Jerusalem, 1992), 2. According to my analysis of this passage in *Sacred Space and Mental Iconography: Imago Templi and Contemplation in Rhineland Jewish Pietism* (to appear in the *Festschrift* in honor of Baruch Levine), the shamefulness described here is related to the phallic element of the *Shekhinah* in a manner that parallels the zoharic idea.

117. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, 15, asserts that in the *Zohar* the rainbow generally alludes to *Yesod*, but he acknowledges that in this context (the reference to *Zohar* 1:62b should be corrected to 72b; in the original Hebrew version the reference is correct) the rainbow appears to represent *Malkhut*, or the feminine *Shekhinah*. I have adopted a similar approach, but I have provided the ontological structure that resolves the tension between these two interpretations. That is, the rainbow, like the phallus, is an androgynous symbol, and thus it can represent both the male and the female. Indeed, in my opinion, the female is itself part of the male.

118. *Zohar* 1:117a.

119. On the liminality of the symbol of the bride applied to the *Shekhinah*, consider the following comment of Ezra of Gerona on the verse Your cheeks are comely with plaited wreaths (Song of Songs 1:10), in *Kitvei Ramban*, ed. Charles Chavel (Jerusalem, 1964),

2:487: The figurative language (*ha-mashal*) refers to the *Shekhinah* coming out from exile and she is like a bride that enters the nuptial chamber. Cf. *Tikkunei Zohar* 12, 27a:

The lilies refer to the children of Israel who shall be in exile amongst the mixed multitude who are the thorns. This is the secret of I will make an end (*khalah*) of all the nations among which I have banished you, but I will not make an end of you (Jer. 46:28). He showed him the reward of the general assembly of study (*agra dekhallah*), and it is the blazing fire (Exod. 3:2) amongst the thorns, which are the sinners when they oppress the *Shekhinah* and Israel. Their reward is the bride (*kallah*), for the *Shekhinah* goes from them as a bride and the groom comes on account of her. This is the meaning of the profit of the public lectures is the pushing (*agra dekhallah duhaka'*), that is, he will bring them out of exile on account of her.

For a different use of this talmudic dictum, '*agra*' *dekhallah duhaka'* (B. Berakhot 6b), cf. *Zohar* 3:239a (*Ra'aya*' *Meheimna*'). In that context, the dictum is interpreted as support for the idea that those who are engaged in the study Torah in the exile suffer on behalf of the *Shekhinah*.

120. Cf. *Zohar* 1:119a, 145b-46a. In the latter context it is stated explicitly that the rectification for the sin of the primordial serpent is through the union of male and female. On the use of this zoharic text by the Frankists, see Scholem, *Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 139.

121. See Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 9298. The reading of the zoharic passage that I have offered here confirms my remarks in *Through a Speculum That Shines*, pp. 27475, n. 14. That the nature of heterosexual eros is linked essentially to the construction of the feminine as the place to contain the masculine is stated explicitly in the exegesis of Song of Songs 7:11 in *Zohar* 1:88b: I am my

beloved's' is first and afterwards his desire is for me. I am my beloved's, to establish a place for him initially and afterwards his desire is for me. On the essential role of the female to contain the male, cf. the interpretation of the expression '*aron ha-berit*' in *Zohar* 2:214b as a reference to the *Shekhinah* that contains the holy body of the divine anthropos, which is also depicted as the secret of the Torah. In that context, moreover, this symbolic nexus is applied to the custom of placing the corpse of the righteous man in a coffin, for he alone is worthy of such an honor since he was careful with respect to the sign of the holy covenant. The biblical paradigm is Joseph, of whom it says that he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt (Gen. 50:26). Commenting on the double *yod* in the word *vayyisem*, the author of the *Zohar* writes: The covenant was joined to the covenant, the secret below in the secret above, and he entered the coffin.

122. Consider the account of the creation of Eve out of Adam given in *Zohar* 3:83b: The Holy One, blessed be He, took her from his side, shaped her, and brought her before him. Then Adam had sexual intercourse with his wife and she was a support to him. According to this passage, there is a transition from the original androgynous state (Gen. 1:26-28), in which the female was contained within the male, to a separation of the female from the male (*ibid.*, 2:18-24). What is significant is that even in the case of the second account of the creation of the woman, the female gender is described strictly from the point of view of the heterosexual desire and procreative mandate of the male. The zoharic author thus understands the biblical locution of God making a fitting helper for Adam in terms of separating the female from the male so that the male can have sexual relations with the female. Cf. *Zohar* 3:296a (*Idra' Zuta*), translated and discussed in Wolfson, *Woman the Feminine as Other*, 175-76. Given the repeated emphasis in the *Zohar* on coitus as the masculinization of the female (see reference at the end of n. 110), there is simply no textual

justification to interpret the second account of creation as more equalitarian than the first.

123. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990), 44.

124. A critique of Lacan's heterosexist structuralism is given by Butler, *Gender Trouble*,

4357; and idem, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York, 1993), 5791.

125. For further discussion of this understanding of the kabbalistic doctrine of redemption, see Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*, 11621. In part, the kabbalistic understanding of the act of remembering reflects the philological use of the root *pkd* in the talmudic expression (attributed to Joshua ben Levi) in B. Yevamot 62b, every man is obligated to have conjugal relations with [literally, to remember] his wife (*lifkod 'et 'ishto*) when he goes on a journey. Cf. *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Orah hayyim 240; Yoreh de'ah 184; 'Even ha'ezer 76. This euphemistic usage is biblical in origin; cf. Judges 15:1. One must also bear in mind those biblical passages where the root *pkd* is used in conjunction with God's visiting the barren woman, an act that results in the opening of the womb. Cf. Gen. 21:1; 2 Sam. 2:21.

126. T. Berakhot 6:5 (ed. Lieberman, p. 34); P. Berakhot 9:3 (ed. Venice, 12d); B. Berakhot 59a. Cf. *Book of the Pomegranate*, 161.

127. *Shushan 'edut*, 36364.

128. The occultation of the feminine in the messianic era is affirmed in a number of zoharic passages. In exile the *Shekhinah* is dispersed among the nations in order to protect her children, but in such a state she is exposed (on the description of the destruction of the Temple as the separation of the Matrona from the King, resulting in the exposure of the genitals, cf. *Zohar* 3:74b). In the redemption, however, the *Shekhinah* will be concealed within the rebuilt Temple like a woman who is compared metaphorically to the fruitful vine hidden within the house (on the basis on Ps. 128:3). The word *tsenu'ah* in these contexts has the double connotation of hidden and (sexually) modest. Cf. *Zohar* 1:115b-116a; *Zohar hadash*, 66a-b; *Shekel ha-kodesh*, 93. The language of the zoharic texts may be based on *Sefer ha-Bahir* sec. 156. The eschatological condition of the *Shekhinah* reflects and is

reinforced by the sexual modesty of Jewish women who are (ideally) to remain within the home so that the upper covenant is not forgotten or damaged. Cf. *Zohar* 3:125b; *Book of the Pomegranate*, 372.

In his commentary on Ezekiel's chariot vision, Moses de León connects this idea exegetically to the words the heavens opened and I saw visions of God, i.e., in the exilic state that which was concealed is disclosed, for there is no shelter or covering protecting the *Shekhinah*. This dispersion is the symbolic significance of the heavens opening up. Most interestingly, the visions of God are here related directly to this state of disclosure that is associated with exile (hence, the word for visions, *mar'ot*, is written in the defective form). In the state of exile the *Shekhinah* is in the form of the mirror (*mar'eh*) in which the image is seen, whereas in the state of redemption she is hidden. Cf. MS, Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 283, fol. 166a. On the concealment and internalization of the feminine, cf. fol. 167a. Finally, it should be noted that elsewhere in zoharic literature it is emphasized that during the week, when the *Shekhinah* is entrapped in the demonic shells (symbolic of exile), she is compared to a gate that is closed so that the unholy will not have intercourse with the holy; but when she is liberated on Sabbath and the day of new moon, the gate is opened, for then the holy has intercourse with the holy (symbolic of redemption), and the moon is illuminated by and united with the sun. Cf. *Zohar* 1:75a-b; *Tikkunei Zohar* 18, 34a; 21, 19, 38a; 21, 61a; 30, 73a-b; 36, 78a; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 43839, 122627; Ginsburg, *Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, 11516, 29293. Needless to say, this motif is another version of the standard kabbalistic understanding of exile as the separation of the masculine and feminine aspects of God.

III

THE RUPTURE OF MODERNITY

12

Exile, Assimilation, and Identity: From Moses to Joseph

Pierre Bimbaum

There have been no end of different metaphors devised to describe the ambiguities attendant on the Jewish entry into Western modernity. Isaiah Berlin offers us one more when he compares the effect of the Enlightenment on the Jewish masses of the last century to that of the sun on a glacier. The external surface was burnt off by evaporation; the depths of the glacier remained hard and frozen; but a large part of the mass melted and flowed outward in a turbulent stream, part of which flooded the valleys and joined up with the streams and rivers while the rest formed stagnant pools. The renowned Oxford philosopher adds that the recent history of this category of Jews who have neither managed to evaporate nor remain frozen has been an anxious and disturbing one.

1 In the same spirit, Emmanuel Levinas writes: To ask what Jewish identity is, is already to have lost it. But it is also still to hold onto it, otherwise we would not be asking. Between this already and still we can make out the limit, stretched out like a tightrope on which the Judaism of Western Jews ventures forth and takes its chances. 2 Only Kafka, who experienced this spiritual laceration with such intensity, was able to express the full violence of this in-betweenness, this constantly seesawing oscillation, this unbearable tension exerted by two worlds, each demanding a loyalty in contradiction with the other. In a letter to his friend Max Brod of June 1921, with his death already fast approaching, he wrote, Psychoanalysis lays stress on the father complex and many find the concept intellectually fruitful. In this case I prefer another version, where the issue revolves not around the

innocent father but around the father's Jewishness. Most young Jews who began to write German wanted to leave Jewishness behind them, and their fathers approved of this, but vaguely (this vagueness was what was outrageous to them). But with their posterior legs they were still glued to their fathers' Jewishness and with their waving anterior legs they found no new ground. The ensuing despair became their inspiration. A little farther on in the same letter he became one of the first to use the metaphor of the tightrope on which the Jew is forced to dance. ³ Many more examples could be given of images like these, telling of a tragic, broken life, of the shattered identity possessed by those who depart and break away without giving up the attempt to remain loyal to a once unified identity that has often become purely imaginary.

In another context, that of Spain during the Inquisition, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi has urged that there is one aspect of Marranism that seemed certain to arouse interest, existentially, as it were. This was the deep wound that rent their lives asunder and that, I persist in thinking, is still a contemporary phenomenon. The Marranos were perhaps the first Jews who had to live in two radically different universes at the same time, with all the resulting internal tensions and conflicts.

⁴ As he puts it even more forcefully elsewhere, it is impossible to write the history of Jewish hope without at the same time writing the history of Jewish despair Will we ever know how many Jews were lost over the years? Amongst the Jews who were lost must be counted not only those who were the victims of massacres and martyrdoms, but equally those who went over to the other side or converted. And these Jews were lost not because as the most simplistic explanation would have it they were seduced by purely secular ambitions or material benefits; they were conquered by a real, a genuine despair: they feared that the Jewish people had no future. ⁵

On the other hand, in a nation-state unified by a demanding form of citizenship, such as France, in which public and private spheres were carefully kept separate, this type of split ego remained less common because, with its dominant secularism emphasizing the fact that all citizens were equal whatever their religious denomination, devotion to the homogeneous national culture did not encroach on one's personal identity, safely ensconced in the private sphere. In this situation the Jews probably experienced less of a need for exit, conversion, name changes, and breaking off all ties and distancing themselves vis-à-vis their former selves. For much of the modern era they managed to preserve their Jewish identity in their private lives at the same time that, when they moved beyond the boundaries of personal belief, a

good number of them were enjoying a vigorous involvement in the life of public associations and embracing modern forms of contemporary sociability. It is true that some Jews ended up by totally abandoning their ancient traditions in the name of the universalistic ideals proclaimed by the republic, but even then this radical reform of their values did not plunge them into any existential crises or serious personality disorders. Is this the reason that the French Jews, so rarely driven to genuinely despair, were scarcely affected by what Kafka called inspiration in the above-mentioned quotation; why their significant contributions to the state and the arts and sciences have so little to do with negotiating the tightrope alluded to by Emmanuel Levinas; why, to varying degrees and each in their different ways, all of these state Jews devoted to knowledge and rationality became assimilated with almost complete success, a process that was only challenged by the enemies of the republic, thereby affirming it as the very regime the Jews could call their own? ⁶ Hence, if it is only recently that this image of the tightrope has begun to resonate with some of them, can this in turn be put down to the experience of Vichy and the present context of a legitimation crisis in the republican state that has made their once solid identities seem suddenly unstable?

Will they now find themselves more sensitive to the violent diatribes of an Ahad Ha'am, who at the turn of the last century targeted them with his charge that they in particular had consented to a form of assimilation inevitably entailing voluntary servitude or slavery in liberty? To his mind, the sort of emancipation offered by the French represented the paradigm par excellence of intellectual slavery that would lead to the death of the Jewish people. He went on to inveigh against Jewish Professors, Jewish Academicians, Jewish Army Officers, Jewish Civil Servants, ending with: Perhaps I am not emancipated but at least I haven't sold my soul . . . I can at least remember Jerusalem . . . I can at least know why I remain a Jew and why I find this question as meaningless as if someone had asked me why I am still the son of my father . . . I remain myself. He adds, We are like the Israelites before the Red Sea. In mounting this violent attack on the French form of emancipation, which remained an attractive ideal for so many Eastern European Jews, Ahad Ha'am, the apostle of returning to Jewish culture defined as the irreplaceable foundation of the collective identity of the Jewish people, immediately invoked the issue of staying faithful to the father and the problem of inheritance, just as Kafka had done. It is as if for him the only genuine result of the Jews' gaining access to the Enlightenment, symbolized here by revolutionary France, would be to lead them once more into slavery, into the same state of servitude they had known in ancient Egypt, where they had also taken their assimilation to the values of civilization to such extremes. In the same breath, republican France is lumped together with the Egypt of the pharaohs as evil incarnate. In his remarkable essay of 1904 on Moses, Ahad Ha'am writes:

[W]hen I read the Haggadah on the eve of Passover . . . I care not whether this man Moses really existed We have another Moses of our own, whose image has been enshrined in the hearts of the Jewish people for generations and whose influence on our national life has never ceased from ancient times till the present days Even if you succeeded in

demonstrating conclusively that the man Moses never existed, you would not thereby detract one jot from the historical reality of the ideal Moses the Moses who has been our leader not only for forty years in the wilderness of Sinai but for thousands of years in which we have wandered since the Exodus.

7

For Ahad Ha'am Moses is not a heroic warrior, statesman, or man of the Law but the incarnation of the prophet whose spirit will always make itself felt in each new generation as long as it proclaims that the Jews will once again live as a nation. According to such a view, Jewish identity can be embodied only in a nation and not in a state (whether it is Jewish or not); and equally, if the Jews are to preserve their identity intact, they would have to avoid becoming the servants of any state.⁸ They could consequently remain faithful to Moses' prophecy only by departing from the state, which would enable them to move toward creating the kind of national life that was based solely on a common cultural identity.

Some thirty years later, Freud undertook the project of his own Moses (just as he had done with psychoanalysis as a whole), with the intention of not making it into a Jewish national affair. Like Kafka and so many, even a majority of,

other Central European Jews and unlike French Jews, Freud was torn between different and contradictory sets of loyalties and appeared to be inextricably caught up in the interminable search for strategies to accommodate them. As Yosef Yerushalmi notes in his *Freud's Moses*, directly addressing the founder of psychoanalysis:

[T]here was, in short, an opportunity to finally lay to rest the false and insidious dichotomy between the parochial and the universal, that canard of the Enlightenment which became and remains a major neurosis of modern Jewish intellectuals. But you could not overcome your initial anxieties, and publicly you retained your inhibitions and your tactical restraints.

I repeat: I do not blame you. You acted as you did because you could not do otherwise. I have come to inform you that it was all in vain; it made no difference. History made psychoanalysis a Jewish science. . . . I have tried to understand your *Moses* within its stated framework of the history of religion, of Judaism and of Jewish identity without reading it as an allegory of psychoanalysis [I]n short, I think you believed that just as you are a godless Jew, psychoanalysis is a godless Judaism.

9

On the one hand consciously courting scandal with his assertion (made previously by several other commentators) that the man Moses was an Egyptian, not a Jew, Freud proved to be no less aware of the harm he was doing to Judaism by asserting that monotheism had been invented by Egyptian civilization. In making such claims, Freud was stripping Moses of his properly Jewish dimensions, thereby turning his back on the traditional rabbinical interpretations in the most radical fashion. But at the same time (despite his sympathies for it), he was depriving the Zionist movement of its foremost symbol, favored, for example, by Ahad Ha'am, the theoretician of cultural Zionism, but also implicitly by Theodore Herzl (whose father had the same first

name Jacob, too), the theoretician of political Zionism and the Jewish state, who made pointed allusions to the exile from Egypt and the Promised Land and whose contemporaries openly represented him as Moses. ¹⁰

Despite all this, in his *Moses*, Freud revealed, if not his Judaism, at the very least his Jewishness, the fact that his profoundest identity was still faithful to his heritage. As Yerushalmi observes, Freud is certainly Moses in *Moses and Monotheism*, not because he is an Egyptian and not a Jew but because just as Moses the Egyptian was a great stranger who brought monotheism to the Jews, so Freud the Jew is a great stranger bringing psychoanalysis to the world. He adds (still in reference to Freud): the blandly generic term secular Jew gives no indication of the richly nuanced variety within the species. ¹¹

Freud seemed to be almost tortured by his *Moses*, postponing its publication until his own departure for Great Britain. The fact that he identified himself with Jacob going down to Egypt expresses the fear (somewhat paradoxically, given the logic of his reasoning) that he might have to face another similar exile in the future. What is curious here is that by assimilating the Egypt of the pharaohs to the democratic Great Britain about to welcome him with open arms, Freud is indicating the presence of an avowed antisemitism in this open society.

From Vienna, where he was waiting for his visa, he wrote to his son Ernst, who was already living in London: I sometimes compare myself with the old Jacob whom in his old age his children brought to Egypt, as Thomas Mann will portray him in his next novel. It is to be hoped that the result will not be the same, an exodus from Egypt. It is time for Ahasverus to rest somewhere.

¹² This passage shows that the metaphor of exile, with full due given to its great variety of possible meanings, was constantly in his thoughts.

Torn between the profound Jewish culture he had acquired from his father as a youth (another Moses who had driven his people to embark on an exodus and led it from Egyptian Freiberg to the capital) ¹³ and his heartfelt desire (by now familiar to us) to reject and dethrone that same father so as to allow himself to be identified with a non-Jewish Moses bringing the truth to the world, ¹⁴ Freud hesitated, like all the Jews who have found themselves standing at the same sort of turning point in their destinies. Although he was moved by the pathetic letters sent to him by numerous Jews pressing him not to publish a book that so undermined the legitimacy of their people's history, he rejected any considerations that required him to respect a hypothetical national interest. ¹⁵ In precisely this context of absolute and constant flux, Freud too, just like Kafka and later on Levinas, had recourse to the dance metaphor to express this exercise in unstable equilibrium, the effort of keeping one's balance between two contradictory attractions. In the third introduction to his *Moses* he declared: My uncertainty begins only at the point when I ask myself whether I have succeeded in proving this for the example of Jewish monotheism chosen here. To my critical faculties this treatise, proceeding from a study of the man Moses, seems like a dancer balancing on one toe. ¹⁶

We can turn for confirmation of this dilemma to Moses himself, who owes his essential ambiguity to the fact that he is placed between two contrary worlds, two adversary cultures, and two rival histories, assimilated to a profound degree in one universe, Egypt, but also just as powerfully disposed to break away and play the decisive role that was his above all in the exile and the birth of a Jewish nation out of slavery. Was Moses' Jewish identity unconsciously preserved before he recovered it and became the prophet who proclaimed national liberation? If so, does this suggest that the most assimilated Jews remain potentially faithful to their identity even if they have reached the highest and most prestigious levels of the social hierarchy, be it that of ancient Egypt or modern Germany and Austria? The perennially tormenting question that inevitably follows is, what is the real significance of assimilation? It is one that recent historiography has looked at from a substantially renewed perspective by showing that Kafka's striking metaphor mentioned above can also be a valuable guide for directing our historical analysis. In our own day the opposition between belonging to a community and assimilation does not appear so unalterable; acculturation and a fortiori integration or even inclusion no longer necessarily entail assimilation-extinction.¹⁷ The less reductive perspective we are advocating pays more attention to specific values and strategies and deserves to be fleshed out with further empirical studies because,

irrespective of the reigning ideologies and even the apparatus of social control under which the Jews lived, they remained full-fledged agents in their private lives whatever their external circumstances might have been, and it is their most intimate behavior that so often tended to be hidden from view. In addition, the range of variations is probably altered by the historical context, in particular by the type of state and citizenship in the framework of which the Jews confronted the advantages as well as the risks of modernity.

18

From this point of view, the desperate situation of the Marranos in seventeenth-century Spain appears to be an extreme case. As Yosef Yerushalmi points out, it is relatively easy to perceive the Jewishness of those who had already emigrated, simply by considering their subsequent Jewish careers. But how would the rabbinical criteria avail us in assessing the life of the very same persons *prior* to their emigration. . . . How many other Da Costas or Cardosos were there who did not have the courage to leave? Surely this does not of itself prove anything as to their secret beliefs and hopes. ¹⁹ In spite of the fact that he was a doctor and scholar of great renown who had gained admittance to the world of the grandees at court, Isaac Cardoso was secretly teaching the Law of Moses. When he was questioned by the Inquisition, his friend Rodrigo M#accute;endez Silva repeatedly attested to the fact that Dr. Cardoso had told him that the Law of Moses was good, ²⁰ and a short time after his exile from Spain and his immersion in the ghetto of Verona, Cardoso was to recall that from Moses to Moses, there arose none like Moses ²¹ Like Moses, but unlike Freud, Cardoso truly believes . . . a total separation from the gentiles to be a blessing ²² and wrote: The Jews are not the serfs of the nations, but a Republic apart, which lives and governs itself by its laws and precepts which God gave them at Sinai, and which he

commanded them to keep forever in all their generations. ²³ This attitude explains why the sort of exile embarked upon by a Moses or a Cardoso leads to the birth or perhaps the re-creation (however limited it may be) of a homogeneous collective identity.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that from the time of Cardoso to that of Freud the salient issues seem so similar that their lives form an unbroken succession, ²⁴ the student of modern Jewry who turns to the history of Spanish New Christians will find an inverted sense of *déjà vu*. The ambiguity and insecurity of assimilated Jews, the anxiety of hovering between acceptance and rejection, integration and marginality, *jüdischer Selbsthass* are present there, albeit expressed in the vocabulary and under the conditions of another age and culture. ²⁵ In reality, Cardoso and Freud present a complete contrast to one another. Although in his correspondence and a number of statements elsewhere, Freud did not hesitate to count himself one of our people, the Jews, and even took care to keep up to date with all the accomplishments of the Zionist movement in Palestine, joining in the public celebrations of some of them, such as the inauguration of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the truth is that he had left the ghetto to reside in a great modern metropolis and never in all that time dreamed of going to live in Palestine. Moreover, when the time finally came that he was forced to

flee Nazi-occupied Austria in the most dramatic circumstances, he happily set course for England-Egypt.

26 In a period of history no less dramatic than Freud's, Isaac Cardoso decided to take the opposite route, leading from modernity to the ghetto, from the Spain of the Grandees, the equivalent of Freud's Austria, to the shtetl. Decidedly then, Cardoso's Moses is nothing like Freud's. Reflection on assimilation and identity can bring people to very different decisions, and here memory and history diverge radically.

If we want to seriously integrate the comparative dimension into our examination of assimilation, which should cover the multifarious strategies employed by the Jews to preserve all the various forms of their individual or collective identity, or, on the contrary, to abandon it, then we cannot leave out of consideration the politicohistorical context in whose framework their decisions had to be formulated. We can use the concepts elaborated by Albert Hirschman in a different theoretical framework to suggest that the Jews can choose to (following his categories) stay loyal to their faith, protest, or finally, leave, depart, exit. 27 Although this well-known trilogy was developed out of strategies taken from the world of economics and then applied to state formation or electoral strategies, perhaps it can take on new meaning when used to treat issues of identity, since one does not remain loyal, protest, or abandon a car or a political party in the same way as an identity, which is a whole system of values rooted in a history and cosmogony. This is especially true when one considers that decisions about identity are more dependent than the others on the collective dimension: the decision to remain (despite everything that speaks against it) and adopt the policy of burying one's head in the sand, giving one's loyalty while hoping to influence

favorably a most unfavorable situation against all the odds; the decision to protest, speak out from the platform of existing associations so as to contest hostile policies without running the risk of provoking a violent reaction from the government that might otherwise feel itself directly threatened; or finally and after having tried out these other strategies or immediately thereafter committing oneself to such a heartrending separation that it simultaneously risks breaking one's split identity in two the decision to leave, to depart in order to enter another history made from new emigrations, leading to new individual insertions, assimilations, acculturations, or, on the contrary, to being embraced this time by one's own local or even national collective identity.

In short, up to our own time or almost, the Jews of Spain still had not been emancipated, and even by the end of the nineteenth century those of Austria and Germany were so only to a limited degree. Indeed, even by the interwar period, out of the three strategies of loyalty, speaking out through associations, and finally of departure (whether it took the form of self-hatred, conversion, emigration, or membership in internationalist movements or the diverse Zionist organizations), none had proved itself to be clearly superior to the others. In France, while forced conversions remained quite rare, quite the opposite was true for coerced departures (exits), which were a constant feature of the dramatic years of the Middle Ages; whereas voluntary departures of individuals, often leading to conversion,

took place at this time without much hindrance, especially in the Southeast, where economic expansion was so rapid. After being emancipated by the powerful revolutionary state, the French Jews have always remained loyal to the state and have rarely spoken out to protest collectively except in the aftermath of the Vichy tragedy, and only in very few cases have they departed voluntarily, leaving the French nation as emigrants, entering into another history, and becoming members of internationalist or Zionist movements. But in no way can we assume that assimilation automatically entails the disappearance of their identities in their private lives, and given this, the questions we ask about identity must employ very different terms from those we might expect: are we right to claim that, because they were *heureux comme Dieu en France*, the Jews were almost never tempted by the ontological choices that were those of an Isaac Cardoso or that, before Vichy, few of them had experienced the difficulties of a Freud or the existential anguish of a Kafka?

Even at the height of the terrible crisis brought on by the Dreyfus Affair, French Jews never questioned assimilation itself, and only in a few instances did they doubt the legitimate place of their own identity within the larger French nation. Was it this accomplishment of the emancipatory republic that explains the absence of French figures comparable to Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, Gustav Mahler, Gershom Scholem, Walter Benjamin, Otto Weininger, Rosa Luxemburg, or Hannah Arendt, all obsessed by the question of identity and exile, with the resulting adoption of other identities of the most contradictory kinds?

28 Whereas so many state Jews in France pursued brilliant careers—admittedly not always without having to overcome enormous obstacles—in the heart of the republican government, becoming deputies or ministers, generals, judges or prefects while managing to reconcile

the preservation of their identities and service to the state without much trouble, for German and Austrian Jews this particular pathway to modernity through state service and public life remained virtually off-limits until the turn of the century and even beyond. Kafka's metaphors, cited above, which illustrate an impossible oscillation between two distinct worlds, did not seem to apply to them, no more than the question of language (Yiddish or Hebrew, neither of which they spoke anymore) nor the difficult relationship with the father, where the French sons often seemed to be simply carrying on the father's program of achieving a successful assimilation perfectly compatible with keeping an identity that they had reserved for private life.

However fragile the comparative framework we are relying on here might be, its utilization enables us to propose a different approach to Freud's *Moses* as well as to Yerushalmi's interpretation of it, which insists on seeing Freud's project in the light of the Spanish tragedy and Cardoso's radical decision. It is well understood that Freud implicitly assimilated himself to Moses the prophet and that he published his book in exile, but his vision of Moses as a high-ranking official has been pointed out less often. Freud, despite never having managed to obtain an academic position of any institutional importance in his own country, wrote on

more than one occasion that if [Moses] were governor of a border province he might well have come into touch with a certain Semitic tribe, and he sees in the figure of Moses a governor of a border province who held high rank.

29 Freud was certainly the great oracle announcing the advent of a new historicity, but in his guise as a prophet he remained merely one of a scattered and diminutive clan; whereas Moses, that other prophet, could rely on the power of the state to found his new religion. Freud's fascination with Moses was at least equaled by his fascination with Joseph, the son whom Jacob favored above all the older children he had sired in his successive marriages (a situation recalling that of his own father, Jacob Freud, and his ten, not twelve, children) to whom, we should remember, he compared himself on numerous occasions. Freud identified himself above all with Joseph the minister but also the foremost interpreter of dreams. Freud was the first one to recognize that [i]t will be noticed that the name Josef plays a great part in my dreams (cf. the dream about my uncle). My own ego finds it very easy to hide behind people of that name, since Josef was the name of a man famous in the Bible as an interpreter of dreams. 30 Freud, then, hides his ego behind the person who, after being forced into exile in Egypt, achieved success through his knowledge of dreams and also by virtue of his talents as an economist and statesman, becoming to an even greater extent than Moses the undisputed head of the Egyptian government. As Freud underscored once again: [I]n the dream of the uncle this exchange is placed at the dead center of the dream; I identify myself with the minister by treating and judging my colleagues no better than he.

Freud constantly returned to the figure of Joseph, and in *The Interpretation of Dreams* he related at some length the misfortunes of

his uncle Joseph, who was publicly condemned (according to the *Neue Freie Presse* of the day) for forgery and sentenced to ten years in prison. ³¹ Following Freud's account: My Uncle Josef represented my two colleagues who had not been appointed to professorship the one as a simpleton and the other as a criminal If the appointment of my friends R. and N. had been postponed for denominational reasons, my own appointment was also open to doubt. ³² Still in relation to the convicted uncle, Freud recalls:

At the time of my birth an old peasant-woman had prophesied to my proud mother that with her first-born child she had brought a great man into the world. Prophecies of this kind must be very common Could this have been the source of my thirst for grandeur? But that reminded me of another experience . . . which provided a still better explanation. My parents had been in the habit, when I was a boy of eleven or twelve, of taking me with them to the Prater. One evening, while we were sitting in a restaurant there, our attention had been attracted by a man who was . . . improvising a verse on any topic . . . he had been inspired to declare that I should probably grow up to be a Cabinet Minister. I still remembered quite well what an impression this second prophecy had made on me. Those were the days of the *Bürger* Ministry. Shortly before, my father had brought home portraits of these middle-class professional men Herbst, Giskra, Berger and the rest we had illuminated the house in their honour. There had even been some Jews among them. So henceforth every industrious Jewish schoolboy carried a Cabinet

Minister's portfolio in his satchel But now to return to my dream . . . I had put myself in the Minister's place. Turning the tables on his Excellency with a vengeance. He had refused to appoint me *professor extraordinarius* and I had retaliated in the dream by stepping into his shoes.

33

The meaning here is clear: Joseph symbolizes an impossible access to the state, the defeat of his own institutional ambitions, which struck him even more forcefully when it was compared to those other prophecies whose fulfillment had brought Joseph to the height of state power. Further on, Freud goes back to Pharaoh's dream about the ears of corn and the cows that Joseph's interpretation managed to clarify so well, a feat that elevated him to the summit of the state and put him in a position to give a national dimension to Jewish destiny, at whose head Freud's Egyptian Moses would then come and place himself as Joseph's successor. In this, the founding work of psychoanalysis, Freud carefully noted every Joseph who had ever been his friend or enemy, and in one of his dreams there had even appeared the far more strongly repressed reproach that I was unable to keep a secret, ³⁴ the very characteristic that had sealed the biblical Joseph's fate. When he comes to the subject of career rivalries, he recalls that [t]here had been a time when I had had to reproach my now deceased friend Josef for an attitude of the same kind [unscrupulous ambition]: *Ote-toi que je m'y mette!* (Get out of the way so I can take your place!) ³⁵ It has been remarked that throughout his life Freud was always surrounded by a large number of Josephs: the mayor of Freiberg, Uncle Joseph, Joseph Paneth, Joseph Breuer, Joseph Popper, Giuseppe (Joseph) Garibaldi, Emperor Franz-Joseph, Kaiser-Josef Street, and so on. ³⁶ If this is so, the question arises: Did not Freud distinguish himself from his brothers just as Joseph, the son of Rachel, the beloved second wife of Jacob the Patriarch, had done? Joseph, the man who rose until he sat

next to the throne, politician and provider, and above all interpreter of dreams, the talent that ultimately made him the savior of two nations.
37

Freud's veritable fascination with Joseph can be seen in a letter dating from the time of his *Moses* and addressed to Thomas Mann at the time when Mann was writing his trilogy on the saga of Joseph:

Is there a historical person for whom the life of Joseph was a mythical pattern, so that the phantasy of Joseph may be divined as the secret dynamic motor through his whole life? I think Napoleon was such a person His eldest brother was called Joseph To push Joseph aside, to take his place, to become Joseph himself, must have been the little Napoleon's strongest emotion a good deal could be said against her, but probably what was decisive for him was the fact that she was called Josephine The love for Josephine B. was an obsessive one on account of the name, but naturally it was not an identification with Joseph. This came to the strongest expression in his famous expedition to Egypt. Where else should one go if one is Joseph and wants to appear great in front of his brothers? 38

What rekindled Freud's fascination with Napoleon-Joseph was undoubtedly the statesman, the minister, the ruler of the French state or of an Egypt that he wanted to conquer so as to exercise supreme power in yet another state. Now,

Freud associated France with the Egypt, in which Joseph, who so fascinated him, became a minister just like Moses, the Egyptian-Jew, did soon after; and what is pertinent for us here is that it was with his speculations about these two figures that Freud was drawn into an exploration of all the infinite variations opened up by the question of personal and collective identity.

France represents virtually the sole example in the modern era of a nationstate that had offered the Jews such rapid emancipation that they quickly enjoyed access to the highest levels of the state. Moreover, it is precisely at the end of the nineteenth century that, once again in France (at that time newly returned to republican government) and in a virtual repetition of the story of Joseph in Egypt, Joseph Reinach was similarly to become *chef de cabinet* in the Gambetta ministry as well as one of the most powerful men in the prewar political scene. Although he was firmly opposed to Zionism, Reinach remained loyal to Judaism and never attempted to conceal the fact that he was actively involved at many different official levels in the world of French Jewry.

39 In this context of radical emancipation enacted by the republican state a good number of Jews attained politicoinstitutional power, just as they had in ancient Egypt or (in a different form) in premodern Catholic Spain. However, in the Spain of the Inquisition and even in pre-Inquisition Spain, which rejected the category of state Jew (with a few exceptions), 40 the Jews were able to practice their faith only in complete secrecy; whereas the French republic allowed them to preserve a Jewish identity more successfully just as, despite everything, Joseph's Jewish identity remained legitimate in the eyes of Joseph's pharaoh to such a degree that an Egyptianized Joseph was able to keep his faith in open view of the whole Egyptian world.

Yet Yosef Yerushalmi paradoxically says almost nothing about Joseph, who turns up so frequently in Freud's reveries and whose legend is referred to yet again in his *Moses and Monotheism*.⁴¹ And there is no doubt that one of the questions Freud asks is, is it possible to be a Jew like Joseph? In fact, Yosef Yerushalmi does bring Joseph up on two occasions. His superb monologue with Freud begins with this essential passage for anyone who wants to understand the general thesis of the work:

. . . the God worshipped by the patriarchs had not been entirely forgotten. In the narrative Moses thus appears both as an innovator and as an agent of anamnesis. You, of course, would have nothing whatever to do with the God of the Fathers, nor, as I have noted, did most biblical scholars at the time But I cannot resist telling you, mischievously and en passant, that in his fourth and final *Joseph* novel, which you did not have the chance to read, Thomas Mann, otherwise your great admirer (the admiration was mutual), committed a minor heresy. Although he was thoroughly familiar with *Moses and Monotheism*, here Ikhнатon is not the founder of monotheism. Rather, it is the Hebrew Joseph who, according to Mann, inducts Ikhнатon into the true and higher monotheistic belief which he had inherited from his fathers, the patriarchs. Mann, of course, was a novelist. You became a historian. What is of genuine moment is the fact that later, in the more decisive part of your *Moses*, you abandoned your clandestinely loyal Levitical transmitters in favor of the archaic heritage . . . and you added: When I spoke of the survival of a tradition

among a people or of the formation of a people's character, I had mostly in mind an inherited tradition of this kind and not transmitted by communication. It seems to me, however, that the potential value of psychoanalysis to the understanding of religious tradition does not reside in such precarious postulates. One cannot explain the transmission of a tradition at any time as a totally unconscious process The true challenge for psychoanalysis is not to plunge the entire history of tradition into a hypothetical group consciousness, but to help to clarify, in a nonreductive way, what unconscious needs are being satisfied at any given time by living within a given religious tradition, by believing its myths and performing its rites.

42

Yosef Yerushalmi encounters Joseph on only one more occasion in the rest of his work, and this occurs at a point in his analysis that is as decisive as the one just quoted: In *Zakhor*, after having indicated how far Maimonides thought profane history a waste of time, he stresses once more how historiography was never the main vehicle of Jewish memory in the Middle Ages . . . in the Middle Ages, Jewish memory went by non-historical paths, principally those of rites and the liturgy. Only a memory transfigured by rites and liturgies survived into modern times. To demonstrate the indifference of the Jews of the Middle Ages to history and thereby emphasize their attachment to the public reading of the Scriptures meant to impregnate the consciousness of their co-religionists with the biblical past, he chooses as his sole example the telling of the biblical history of Joseph. He writes: True, Joseph had lived many ages ago, but in the fixed rhythm of the synagogal recital, he is in prison this week, next week he will be released, next year in the very same season both events will be narrated once more, and so again in every year to come The historical events of the biblical period remained unique and irreversible. Psychologically however those events are *experienced*

cyclically, repetitively and to that extent at least atemporally. 43

We witness the same phenomenon in both texts: at the decisive moment when he anchors Jewish memory not only in the unconscious but also and above all in a distant history, one ritualized and transmitted by the liturgy, Yosef Yerushalmi invariably invokes the figure of Joseph, a Joseph who was loyal to the monotheism of the Patriarchs and kept its memory alive. Even if he seems to ignore Joseph in his *Freud's Moses*, despite the fact that it embraces the whole of the Freudian corpus, he cannot avoid him as soon as he treats the problem of the Jewish entry into history as something that was dependent on the continuous preservation of the faith. Once he set Joseph aside, the similarities and the differences between the destinies of Joseph and of Moses and Cardoso are neglected, that is to say, following the lucid understanding that Freud had of it himself, the question of power, the state, and even, implicitly, full and total citizenship in a word, the essentially political stakes involved, in every sense as a vital question in Jewish history. 44

In reality, the figure of Moses acquires its full meaning only in relation to that of Joseph. It has become common for certain modern commentators to compare them with the intention of valorizing Moses the prophet to the detriment of Joseph the administrator, since only the former represents a Jewish national

identity, which the latter effectively denied by his preference for complete assimilation in Egyptian society. Clearly, Freud does not share this point of view in any way, since he sees Moses as a noble of purely Egyptian extraction, while on the other hand he enthusiastically embraces Joseph the prophet, interpreter of the future. Conversely, a contemporary political scientist such as Aaron Wildavsky radicalizes this opposition when he vehemently states his preference for the prophet to the detriment of the administrator, a surprising choice for a specialist in public policy and the decision-making process. In his opinion, [t]he choice of Moses over Joseph tells us what was then decided: that the Jews should try to be loyal subjects, bringing good upon whoever rules over them but not at the price of altering their practices. The rejection of Joseph, that is, of assimilation as the price of survival, is a turning point in the development of Judaism Though political allegiance to foreigners is allowed, separation, not assimilation, is required.

45 To Wildavsky's mind, Joseph is utterly flawed: he completely assimilated the degenerate manners and morals of Egypt; his language, his costume, his cuisine, and his wife were Egyptian; he hated his brothers; and he oppressed the Egyptians mercilessly just as Stalin would do in our own time. 46

Pursuing his attack, Wildavsky stresses that

Moses takes his people out of Egypt; Joseph brings them back in. The parallels are constructed to highlight the differences between Moses, who serves God and Joseph who serves Pharaoh . . . the difference between Moses-the-egalitarian and Joseph-the-hierarch is at its greatest The apostle of pure administrative power, Joseph-the-assimilator gives way to Moses-the-lawbringer What should Joseph have done? He should not have contributed to Pharaoh's despotism: he should have tried to take his family, his people out of Egypt into the Promised Land In any event,

it is hard to imagine Joseph leading a revolt My interpretation is that the Joseph stories warn against the corrupting influence of power gained through assimilation into pagan ways. 47

Using an image favored by scholars of social mobility, Wildavsky adds that

the story of Joseph is a Horatio Alger tale, down to the fact that Joseph's ultimate advancement comes about through the help of a high-ranking patron . . . unlike Moses, Joseph leads his people into, rather than out of, slavery Joseph was an administrator among the Egyptians, not a revolutionary among the Hebrews. He did not (as Rousseau would repeatedly say of Moses) create a people Joseph is not an independent force, a creator, a first principle Moses was most fierce against other peoples; they entangled Israel in their customs, blurring the distinctiveness of Israelites' beliefs so as to weaken the Hebrews' special relationship to the Lord As the Passover celebrates the departure from Egypt, it also solemnifies the ritual differences between Israel and other nations. 48

As these statements clearly demonstrate, Wildavsky is unconsciously trading on arguments in favor of cultural Zionism that Ahad Ha'am had previously formulated as a criticism of the French Jews. Like Ahad Ha'am he brandishes the figure of Moses as the symbol of necessary separation being preferable to any sort of assimilation. It is true that French Jews integrated into the meritocratic republican state gave their consent to voluntary servitude, whereas the Hebrews, even if they did descend into Egypt voluntarily and hold high office there, as was

the case for Joseph, were forced into a servitude with nothing voluntary about it, which would subsequently degenerate into a tragic nightmare when a new pharaoh came to the throne who did not know Joseph.

49 Yet by focusing entirely on the idea of separation this interpretation does not do justice to the vicissitudes of Jewish destiny, to the efforts of so many generations of Jews to preserve their identity while also accepting assimilation. Faced with such peremptory judgments, what is left for us to say about Joseph and equally about Cardoso, Freud, Kafka, and so many other assimilated Jews? We can well understand the reader who objected to this simplistic vision and wrote to Aaron Wildavsky: I think one could make the case that Joseph represents the path taken by the mainstream of American Jewry and perhaps by other favored diasporas. Putting it another way, American Jews are a collective Joseph who have risen to a favored position in this favored land Thus Joseph is the model of the modern Jew who manages to have it both ways to remain Jewish while participating fully in the world of his place and time without abandoning his Jewishness Rather than an administrator, I see him as Weber's ethics of consequences politician. 50

Happily, the author of this letter is not the only one to see things this way, especially given that it would otherwise not be possible to grasp the better part of Jewish history. Could we not legitimately claim that Joseph's departure for Egypt enables and announces the exile of Jacob and his sons, that his loyalty to Potiphar as well as Pharaoh is not in contradiction with his loyalty to his God and his people, and that it is thanks to his public declarations, which decipher prophecies but also petition for his people to receive special favor later on when they have gone down into Egypt, that the subsequent national exit led by Moses

is made possible? Such an eminently reasonable conclusion can be derived from the texts themselves, which constantly insist on the fact that Joseph is obeying God every step of the way. When his father, the prophet Jacob, commands the son of his old age to join his brothers in Shechem, he begins the long process by which the Jews will enter history. As Munk says in his commentary on Rashi, Jacob acts in this way to follow the profound plan . . . announced to the righteous one who was buried in Hebron (Abraham) and to carry out what was said to him at the time of the Covenant Between the Parts: Your offspring shall be aliens in a land not their own (Gen 15:13). He adds in a note: And Jacob knew that the exile of Joseph was to be the beginning of the wanderings of Israel. ⁵¹ After this, Joseph had been brought down to Egypt . . . his master saw that the Lord was with him . . . the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had, in house and field; ⁵² then: the name of God was always on Joseph's lips. ⁵³ During the episode of the attempted seduction by Potiphar's wife, always the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him steadfast love, and gave him favor in the eyes of the keeper of the prison . . . the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper. ⁵⁴ When he performs the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams that so influenced Freud, Joseph says, It is not in me, God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer, ⁵⁵ following Rashi then, The wisdom is not from me; but God will put

in my mouth an answer of peace for Pharaoh;

56 abundance and famine will come about because the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. 57

After Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers, he says to them God sent me before you to preserve [your] life So it was not you who sent me here, but God. 58 And when finally Israel took his journey . . . God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said: Jacob! Jacob! And he said Here am I. Then he said: I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand will close your eyes. 59 Rashi seems to think that God assured him that he would be buried in Eretz Yisroel, 60 the same privilege that will also be accorded later on to the bones of Joseph, which are in the care of Moses during the exile from Egypt and will be buried by Joshua as soon as he enters the Promised Land. When Jacob dies, he says: Joseph is a fruitful bough, *a fruitful bough by a spring*; his branches run over the wall. *The archers fiercely attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him sorely; yet his bow remained unmoved . . . by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel . . .* The blessings of your father, are mighty beyond the blessings of the eternal mountains, *the bounties of the everlasting hills*; may they be on the head of Joseph, / and on the brow of him who was separate from his brothers! 61

Rashi's commentary on remained unmoved deserves our attention: Onkelos also translates Vatashev as follows: his prophecies returned to him, the dreams which he dreamt concerning them were confirmed, because Joseph kept the Law in secret these words of Onkelos are an addition and not contained in the Hebrew text. 62 Following the example of S. R. Hirsch, Rabbi Munk in his turn emphasizes the will

of Joseph to refuse assimilation to Egyptian culture and adds: Intimately involved in the destiny of the country, having risen to assume the highest duties of the State, Joseph . . . had remained loyal to the family traditions. There was no desire for rapid assimilation, no bowing down before the temporal rulers. Joseph had not committed himself to a culture but only to a Pharaoh, to whom he owed his freedom. Even in this foreign land, cut off from his kin for many years, he kept the integrity of his ideas and religious practices. ⁶³ The fact that we are able (extrapolating somewhat) to conclude that Joseph observed the Law in secret would make him a predecessor of Isaac Cardoso but of a Cardoso capable of saying to his master face-to-face and in public that through his mouth it is God who speaks.

It is quite understandable that Aaron Wildavsky would peremptorily reject as being too favorable to Joseph such commentaries as those offered by Rashi, S. R. Hirsch, or even Thomas Mann, ⁶⁴ Freud's friend, as well as those by so many other commentators both ancient and modern, from Maimonides ⁶⁵ to Salo W. Baron, the mentor of Yosef Yerushalmi. Baron writes in his renowned *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*: In the period of greatest friendship and conviviality under Joseph's regime, we are told, the Egyptians might eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians [Gen 43:32]. Indeed we

might ask ourselves whether from this time on this pre-Mosaic ghetto did not cast a shadow over the whole future history of the Jewish people. Whatever the case, it is certain that at Goshen as in the course of their migration through the desert, the Israelite tribes kept alive the memory of their previous home in Palestine and the blood-ties connecting them with the Palestinian Hebrews that they were soon going to meet up with again.

66 It is also understandable that such a favorable view of Joseph should be particularly well represented in France, where access to the state and assimilation did not inevitably lead to the end of any consciousness of identity.⁶⁷ Given this, could we not now embark on undertaking a sociology of knowledge to establish a relation between the type of knowledge given of the figure of Joseph and the type of state, assessing whether or not it was favorable to this mode of entry of the Other into the heart of its bureaucratic structures? 68

Aaron Wildavsky, for his part, is continuing a Jewish historiography that is violently hostile to the idea of any assimilation, which it ineluctably associates with the end of the Jewish people, an extremely reductive interpretation that H. Graetz heavily-handedly endorses in his *History of the Jews* ⁶⁹ and that still guides a good number of present-day judgments, which for all their suggestiveness must be accounted no less hasty. ⁷⁰ Thomas Mann, on the contrary, was filled with wonder by the figure of Joseph and said of him that although he had become Egyptian in appearance and manners, however much he exercised his energetic benevolence on the populace, and served the public weal with discernment, in secret his eyes remained fixed on a spiritual and private goal, both familiar and of universal importance. For him it was a matter of helping to accomplish plans and designs foreign to the prosperity or misfortune of Mitzraim Joseph

considered it his duty to serve heaven's intentions and to do what he could to fulfill them as far as he was able. And Mann adds: the son of Jacob, who had been wrapped for a long time in fleshly Egyptian vestments, had not at all forgotten, quite to the contrary had kept always present in his memory those things of which he pretended to have no memory. ⁷¹ In Mann's view, Joseph's resolve is clear: if one has taken all that trouble to go West, one might as well aim too for preeminence there, but despite his cosmopolitanism, there were many things in the country and its customs from which he turned aside when he thought of Jacob Joseph cared nothing for drinking and made a pure show of it in so far as worldly affairs and sociability required it. ⁷²

In this volume, which was published in Freud's lifetime, Thomas Mann insists on the fact that Joseph was going to conduct himself with such wisdom and manage his relations with the Lord so cleverly that he would become the foremost amongst those from the West and could remain sitting without looking either to his right or to his left. This was his future destiny. ⁷³ Joseph then departs for exile in the West where he finds himself transplanted, although for many Egyptians he remains, in spite of his glory, a young man from Asia, a Hebrew, a Hebrew monster. Despite the wild fantasies his presence is going to arouse there, he makes his way to a place where his cosmopolitanism easily reconciled

assimilation with reserve.

⁷⁴ In his great fresco, Thomas Mann is consciously describing the adventure of the Jews of his time who, unlike Isaac Cardoso, exit, abandoning their collective identity in order to leave, as lonely individuals, for the West and assimilate the values of the great metropolises where modernity is to be seen in all its brilliance but also where free rein is given to hatred for the Other; where, nevertheless, one can plan to try to preserve this inner reserve when one is inducted into the citizenship of the nation-states and yet keep alive the memory of another History.

Notes

1. Isaiah Berlin, *Trois essais sur la condition juive* (Paris, 1973), 117, 121. The English version can be found in Berlin's *Jewish Slavery and Emancipation* (New York, 1961).
2. Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficile Liberté* (Paris, 1984), 78; in English, *Difficult Freedom: Essays in Judaism*, trans. by Sean Hand (Baltimore, 1990).
3. Franz Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors* (New York, 1977), 28889.
4. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Entretien à Jérusalem, interview by Dominique Bourel, *Zakhor: Histoire juive et mémoire juive* (Paris, 1984), 151.
5. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Un champ à Anathoth: vers une histoire de l'espoir juif (A field at Anatoth: Towards a history of Jewish hope), in *Mémoire et Histoire* (Paris, 1986), 94.
6. Pierre Birnbaum, *The Jews of the Republic: A Political History of*

State Jews from Gambetta to Vichy (Stanford, Calif., 1996) and French Jewish Sociologists between Reason and Faith: The Impact of the Dreyfus Affair, *Jewish Social Studies* 2 (1995): 135.

7. *Selected Essays of Ahad Ha'am*, ed. Leon Simon (New York, 1981), 17794, 30911, 309, 329. On Ahad Ha'am's *Moses*, see Steven Zipperstein's commentary in *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origin of Zionism* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), 21316.

8. See *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Ha'am*, ed. Jacques Kornberg (Albany, N.Y., 1983).

9. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, Conn., 1991), 9799.

10. Theodore Herzl, *The Jewish State*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1970), 90, 109. Jacques Le Rider has clarified the relationship between Freud, Thomas Mann, and Herzl and analyzed their respective uses of the figure of Moses; see *Modernité viennoise et crises de l'identité* (Paris, 1990), chap. 11. English translation, *Modernity and the Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, by Rosemary Harris (New York, 1993).

11. *Freud's Moses*, 9, 76.

12. Cited in Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 3 vols. (New York, 1957), 3:225.

13. Marianne Krull, *Sigmund, fils de Jacob* (Paris, 1983). Krull adds: While the capital did not prove itself to be the Promised Land for the father, it was there that the son reached the heights of glory. In this sense Jacob-Moses had given a new religion to the young Sigmund-Israel: the ideas of the *Haskalah* which brought the Jews the new enlightened spirituality of science and led them out of the ghetto to make their way into bourgeois society (26768).

14. Marthe Robert has turned her attention to Freud's identification

with Moses. According to her, covered with the authority of Moses, he was irreproachable; now no one would dare to suspect him of wanting, even in vague daydreams, to deny or disavow his Jewishness. *From Oedipus to Moses: Freud's Jewish Identity*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New

York, 1976), 107. See the systematic presentation given by Raphaël Draï on the subject in *La communication prophétique* (Paris, 1993).

15. In a letter to Arnold Zweig of June 1938 he wrote, I am at present enjoying writing the third part of the Moses. Just half an hour ago the post brought me a letter from a young American Jew imploring me not to deprive our poor unhappy people of the only consolation remaining to them in their misery. Cited in Ernest Jones, *Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 3:234.

16. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York, 1967 [1939]), 71.

17. See, for example, Michael Marrus, *European Jewry and the Politics of Assimilation: Assessment and Reassessment in Jewish Assimilation in Modern Times*, ed. Bela Vago (Boulder, Colo., 1981), and especially Jonathan Frankel, *Assimilation and the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Towards a New Historiography?* in *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Jonathan Frankel and Steven Zipperstein (Cambridge, 1992). On the challenge to historians' unproductive reliance on oppositions and on the extreme diversity of Jewish values up into the modern age, see Arnold Eisen *Rethinking Jewish Modernity, Albert Bilgray Lecture* (Tucson, Ariz., 1992). It has even been possible to show that conversion was just as compatible with the preservation of a Jewish identity as acceptance of the process of secularization and since the nineteenth century has no longer entailed exclusion from the Jewish world. See the various articles in the *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (1995), particularly those of Todd Endelman, *Leaving the Jewish Fold in Germany* and David Sorkin, *Religious Reforms and Secular Trends in German-Jewish Life: An Agenda for Research*. It should be stressed that Todd Endelman has already made the observation that acculturation, integration and secularization reshaped

and attenuated Jewish identity but rarely did they extinguish it, in *The Chequered Career of Jew King*, in *From East and West: Jews in a Changing Europe, 1750-1870*, ed. Frances Malino and David Sorkin (Oxford, 1990), 175.

18. *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship*, ed. Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (Princeton, N.J., 1995).

19. Yosef Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* (Seattle, 1981), 2829.

20. Ibid., 181.

21. Ibid., 223.

22. Ibid., 388.

23. Ibid., 469.

24. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, xvi.

25. Yerushalmi, *Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models*, *Leo Baeck Institute* (1982): 26.

26. It should be noted that he did not set off for France-Egypt and thereby confirm Ahad Ha'am's symbolic portrayal of it. Was this because in 1898 at the time of the Dreyfus Affair he could write to his friend Fliess: Zola keeps us very much in suspense. A fine fellow, someone with whom one could communicate. The lousy behavior of the French . . . ? Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 9 February 1898, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess (1887-1904)*, trans. and ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 299.

27. Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (Cambridge, 1970).

28. On these divided passions felt deeply by so many Jewish intellectuals of this era, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity* (Detroit, 1991).

See also William O. McCagg Jr., *A History of Habsburg Jews: 1670-1918* (Bloomington, Ind., 1992); Jacques Le Rider, *Modernité viennoise et crises de l'identité*; Claude Klein, *Essai sur le sionisme*, accompanying text to Herzl, *L'Etat des Juifs* (Paris, 1989).

29. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 73-74. Freud compares Moses to Bismarck the leader in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (London, 1953), 415.

30. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 522, n.1.

31. For a complete presentation of this affair and an analysis of its repercussions on Freud's imagination, see Nicholas Rand and Maria Torok, *Questions à Freud* (Paris, 1995), chap 2. I would like to thank François Roustang for having referred me to this area of Freud's self-identification.

32. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 173.

33. Ibid., 22526.

34. Ibid., 520.

35. Ibid., 522.

36. Théo Pfrimmer, *Freud, lecteur de la Bible* (Paris, 1982), 106ff.; Nicholas Rand and Maria Torok, *Questions*, 234ff. In the latter the authors add: To take the place of his ignominious and imprisoned Uncle Josef, the adolescent Freud will invent another Joseph, that of the Bible, who was also imprisoned but innocent and was then gloriously liberated by the powerful Pharaoh, who made him his indispensable right-hand man. This idealized figure of a triumphant Joseph will carry on guiding the child even in his adult research work. In Freud's own account of the matter is not Joseph, the celebrated decipherer of Pharaoh's dream, the revered ancestor of the forty-year old author of *The Interpretation of Dreams*? (pp. 27374).

37. See the 1956 article by Eva Rosenfeld, Dream and Vision: Some remarks on Freud's Egyptian Bird Dream, cited by Théo Pfrimmer, *Freud, lecteur de la Bible*, 1516. We could also add briefly that for his part Kafka sets out to describe the terrors of Joseph K, who, far from dreaming of becoming a minister like Freud or the biblical Joseph, on the contrary fears above all the higher officials and all those who make a career in state service in the irrational world of *The Trial*, very

different that of Freud. *The Trial*, trans. W. and E. Muir, rev. E. M. Butler (New York, 1992). Joseph K attacks [t]he higher officials [who] keep themselves well hidden (p. 108) and declares I should never have mentioned their names. For in my view they are not guilty. The guilt lies with the organization. It is the high officials who are guilty (p. 86). And as K says later, Nothing was of any real value but respectable connections with the higher officials, that was to say higher officials of subordinate rank naturally . . . their remoteness kept the officials from being in touch with the populace (pp. 11718). In a remarkable note, Marthe Robert points out that Herman Kafka demonstrated his loyalty by calling his son Franz. And, not without irony, he embodied himself in heroes named Joseph (or Josephine), which enabled him to give himself both parts of the Emperor's name. *As Lonely as Franz Kafka* (New York, 1986), 206, n. 15.

38. Freud to Thomas Mann, 29 November 1936, cited in Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 3:52021. On Napoleon in Egypt, see Jean Tulard, *Napoléon ou le mythe du sauveur* (Paris, 1977), chap. 5 (English translation, *Napoleon: the Myth of the Saviour*, by Teresa Waugh (London, 1984). Taking precisely this letter to Mann as their starting point, Jacques Derogy and Hesi Carmel have analyzed the lure of the Orient for Napoleon and his brothers Lucien and Joseph and described their military campaigns in Egypt. In the course of their work they have also tried to get to the bottom of the extremely ambiguous relationship that grew up between Napoleon and the Jews of the region, some of whom saw him as a new Messiah, which in turn lent inspiration to the Frankist movement in Prague. Jacques Derogy and Hesi Carmel, *Bonaparte en Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1992).

39. See Pierre Birnbaum, *Jews of the Republic*, chap. 1.

40. We should note that it is Yosef Yerushalmi himself who observes: the Vizier of the Kingdom of Granada was a Jew, the great Hebrew poet, scholar, and statesman, Samuel Ibn Nagrela, the only instance in

the Middle Ages where a Jew occupied such a position of power. He had ample reason to fear that should Granada be defeated it would mean not only his personal downfall, but that of the entire Jewish community. Accordingly when his armies were victorious, he declared that a second Purim. *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982), 46. It can also be pointed out that in this book, just like

Freud with *his* Josephs, Yosef Yerushalmi comments on the work of a number of historians named Joseph whom he considers profoundly innovative, from Flavius Josephus to Joseph Ha-Kohen; see pp. 77ff. Similarly, in his *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, he shows how the teaching of Cardoso was unfailing in its insistence on the importance of Joseph, who transmitted his knowledge to the Egyptians, and in addition included an exposition of Flavius Josephus's historical inquiries; see pp. 22123.

41. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 135.

42. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*, 89.

43. Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 42.

44. In his all too brief Self-presentation while carefully avoiding questions of individual or collective identity in their properly political sense, questions of allegiance to the state or of the responsibilities incumbent on a citizen Yosef Yerushalmi writes:

[M]y problem is that I am often taken for a *yored*, an Israeli who has left Israel, because of my name as much as my Hebrew. In this way we learn that the place that one was physically born is not always the decisive factor existentially speaking. Given this, I can almost say that I am an Israeli. The question of knowing why I still live in the United States and not in Israel is not a matter of ideology for me. It is not for ideological reasons that I decided to stay in America. It was decided by circumstances Following the Russian Revolution my father left to go and live in Palestine as a *halutz*, a pioneer. He didn't need to change his name. Yerusalimsky automatically became Yerushalmi An American uncle, the American uncle, just like the cliché . . . invited him to come here for medical reasons. After which, once he had fully recovered, he could then go back to Palestine. So my father left for the United States. He met my mother there. I was

born Yerushalmi in New York. My father is eighty-three years old now. And it is a good fifty years since he returned. Entretien à Jérusalem, *Zakhor* (in French), 15556. (See n. 4, above).

45. Aaron Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1993), 2, 15.

46. Ibid., 76, 122, 142.

47. Ibid., 194, 198, 200, 205, 226.

48. Aaron Wildavsky, *The Nursing Father: Moses as a Political Leader* (Ala., 1984), 62, 64, 76, 78.

49. In a fine commentary that would easily fit right in with the logic of Yosef Yerushalmi's argument, Michael Walzer writes: As Pharaoh forgot Joseph, so now the Israelites have forgotten Egypt and to forget Egypt means to forget the God who delivered them out of Egypt, and to forget the divine deliverance is to return to Egyptian oppression. This is the prophetic version of Santayana's maxim that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. And if the oppression is repeated, so must the liberation be The Israelites will not be a holy nation until they are, all of them, participants in a world of ritual remembering This is God's kingdom and, in some ultimate sense, every place else is Egypt. *Exodus and Revolution* (New York, 1985), 115.

50. Letter of Marc Galanter, cited in A. Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation*, 151.

51. Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah: An Anthology of Interpretation and Commentary on the Five Books of Moses*, vol 1, *Bereishis*, trans. E. S. Mazer (New York, 1994), Genesis 37, 503.

52. Gen. 39:15. As Rabbi Elie Munk notes, Joseph had been brought down to Egypt. The passive form of the verb to go down is used here.

This suggests that this descent was the work of a higher will
God . . . wanted to carry out his promise to Abraham that his offspring
would be in a foreign land . . . if God was with Joseph, it could only
have been because Joseph was with God. *Call of the Torah*, Gen. 39,
52425.

53. *Rashi in the Pentateuch: Genesis*, trans. and notes James H. Lowe
(London, 1928), Gen. 39:3, 413; E. Munk, *Pentateuque: La Genèse*,
Gen. 39, 271.

54. Gen. 39:2123 (RSV).

55. Gen. 41:16.

56. Munk, *Call of the Torah*, 544.

57. Gen. 41:32.

58. Gen. 45: 58.

59. Gen. 46: 24.

60. *Rashi in the Pentateuch: Genesis*, trans. Lowe, 467; Munk, *Pentateuque: La Genèse*, 325. Gerhard von Rad insists on this divine logic presiding over the fate of Joseph, in *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (San Francisco, 1962), 1:17273.

61. Gen. 49:2226.

62. *Rashi in the Pentateuch: Genesis*, trans. Lowe, 507; Munk, *Pentateuque: La Genèse*, Gen. 49, 357.

63. Munk, *Call of the Torah*, 553, 575.

64. Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation*, 150.

65. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (New York, 1956), 240, 250.

66. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 12 vols. (New York, 1952), 1:41.

67. In France especially, Joseph appeared as a positive figure. See, for example, Gabriel Blokor, according to whom to ensure that the world is open to him, the Jew must be a Joseph, in *Joseph ou l'anti-ghetto*, *Nouveaux Cahiers* 8 (1966): 24; or Josy Eisenberg and Benno Gross, *Un Messie nommé Joseph* (Paris, 1983), who write: Without Joseph, the shape of history would have been different: the Hebrews would have become peaceful Canaanites tinged with monotheism. Jacob the

immigrant and Joseph the immigrant are the couple that the Bible presents to us . . . the exodus brought about by Joseph's actions and the reactions of his brothers are both part of a providential plan. It corresponds to an ineluctable historical necessity. In order to become the people of God, Israel had to endure slavery in Egypt. Joseph is therefore less the one through whom the scandal occurs than the one who ensures that the *rendez-vous* of history will come about as planned. He continues He is a statesman and an economist. It has often happened that Jews have said about men such as Léon Blum, Pierre Mendès-France or Kissinger that he is a new Joseph (p. 255). In our own day, after the death of President Mitterand, it could still be written (by Henri Hajdenberg, Mitterand, Israël et les Juifs, *Le Monde*, 17 January 1996) that the former Socialist president had surrounded himself with Jews who were advisers and confidants, Josephs to his Pharaoh. Raphaël Draï in turn also gives a most admiring interpretation of Joseph's activities in Egypt in *La sortie d'Egypte* (Paris, 1986), 54ff. In the same way, for Rabbi Gilles Bernheim, By virtue of his *zakhor* Joseph made possible all the various forms of association between the twelve sons of Jacob. He thereby made it possible for a family to make itself into a united people. Leçon biblique, *Mémoire et Histoire*, 26 (see n. 5, above). In a more distant past we can find assessments of Joseph that are equally favorable. See Alexandre Duval, *Joseph: Opéra biblique en 3 actes* (Paris, 1883), E. Durlacher, *Joseph et ses frères* (Paris, 1887), or Joseph Milhaud, *Etude historique, morale et religieuse du Pentateuque: La genèse et l'exode* (Aix, 1865).

The American tradition has often shown itself to be more hostile to Joseph, as if it had to take a radical stand against the temptation of assimilation-disappearance so especially threatening in its own envioning society. See Sol Schimmel, Joseph and his Brothers: A Paradigm for Repentance," *Judaism* 37 (winter 1988); Marc Shapiro, The Silence of Joseph, *Journal of Reform Judaism* (winter

1989); Berel Dov Lerner, Joseph the Unrighteous, *Judaism* 38 (summer 1989); James Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretative Life of Biblical Texts* (Cambridge, 1994), who also shows himself to be very hostile to any rehabilitation of Joseph; see, for instance, p. 18. Almost alone in this context of a general fear of assimilation understood in a reductive manner, Louis Ginzberg writes on the very first page of his great book *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1913): Jacob's blessing

in having his quiver full of children was due to the merits of Joseph, and likewise the dividing of the Red Sea of the Jordan for the Israelites was the reward for his son's piety (p. 3).

68. On such a relationship between representations of history and the types of state from which they emanate, see Pierre Birnbaum, *States and Collective Action: The European Experience* (Cambridge, 1988), chaps. 4, 9.

69. In this vein, Heinrich Graetz writes: No example is more contagious and seductive than folly and sin. The Israelites, especially those who were brought into closer contact with the Egyptians, gradually adopted idolatrous perversions and abandoned themselves to unbridled license Their love of imitation, sore oppression, and daily misery made them obtuse, and obscured the faint light of their hereditary law The Israelites would have succumbed to coarse sensual idolatry and to Egyptian vice . . . had not two brothers and their sister the instruments of a higher Spirit aroused them and drawn them out of their lethargy. These were Moses, Aaron and Miriam. *History of the Jews*, 5 vols., trans. Bella Löwy *et al.* (Philadelphia, 1891), 1:1112.

70. See, for example, the fascinating book by David Vital, *The Future of the Jews* (Cambridge, 1990).

71. Thomas Mann, *Joseph et ses frères: Joseph le nourricier* (Paris, 1980), 197, 226. English translation, *Joseph and His Brothers*, by H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York, 1963). It is interesting to note that, before his volumes on Joseph were even written, Mann had made a comparison between Egypt and Spain. See Hans Mayer, *Thomas Mann* (Paris, 1994), 220.

72. Thomas Mann, *Joseph et ses frères: Joseph en Egypte* (Paris, 1980), 28, 25455.

73. Ibid., 92. Thomas Mann designates Egypt as the West in various places. See, for example, 86, 88, 93, 99, 152, *etc.*

74. Ibid., 252, 463, 496. As soon as he arrives in Egypt, Joseph is included among the Asiatics (p. 108). Mann often insists on this reserve. In the same volume, he consequently writes that despite his complacent cosmopolitanism, innate in him, thanks to which he was assimilated to the children of the mud with whom he planned to make his career, he had always kept his distance and his inner reserve (p. 395).

Acknowledgment: This chapter was translated from the French by Mark Cohen.

13

The Rise and Fall of the Italian Jewish Model in Germany:

From Haskalah to Reform, 1780-1820

Lois C. Dubin

It is well known that Spanish Jewry held a special fascination for German Jewish modernizers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as they sought to cast a new cultural profile for their communities and to navigate the passage toward political emancipation and social acceptance. For the purposes of Ashkenazic cultural transformation they constructed an idealized model of Sephardim, especially in their pre-1492 glory, to admire and emulate. Spain represented to them dazzling cultural creativity, the marriage of Jewish learning and cosmopolitan rationalism, and worldly engagement with politics and affairs of state. Indeed the ideology [of emancipation] delineated positive (Sephardim) and negative (*Ostjuden*) stereotypes within European Jewry.

1

Less well known is the other Mediterranean fascination of German Jews, namely, Italy—a Jewish version of the German yearning for Italy as land of sun, art, and music, associated notably with Goethe and Winckelmann. Generally, scant attention has been paid to the German Jewish admiration of Italian Jews, or it has been subsumed under their romance with the Sephardim. In fact, the Italian model was both intertwined with and yet distinct from the Sephardic.

The purpose of this essay is to trace and analyze the rise and fall of

the Italian model especially its religious aspects in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I argue that the image of Italian Jews as cultural and religious progressives flourished particularly in the aftermath of the Italian rabbis' vigorous support of Wessely and Haskalah in 1782; that it reached its apex during the first controversies over Reformed worship services in Berlin and Hamburg from 1815 to 1820; and that as a result of the Italian role in those very controversies, the Italian model then fell. This essay is a sequel to my Trieste and Berlin: The Italian Role in the Cultural Politics of Haskalah, in which I dealt with the early phases of this development.²

Here I will focus primarily on the Italian role in the early Reform controversies, which perplexed both contemporary and later observers. While other scholars have touched on aspects of this theme, I attempt a more encompassing

approach.

3 What role or indeed roles did Italian Jews play in the early Reform controversies? How were they understood by their contemporaries? What effects did these realities and images have upon the self-perceptions of German modernizers and their related Italian and Sephardic models?

This essay thus contributes to clarifying an important episode in Jewish cultural and religious history, the beginnings of Reform Judaism and of Orthodoxy that is, organized reaction to it and in the process, it is hoped, provides a fresh perspective on the mutual relations and distinctive paths of Italian and German Jewries. In so doing, it addresses a central theme of Jewish historiography: the ongoing interaction of different Jewish communities and the applicability of categories drawn from one cultural tradition for another. Perhaps fortuitously, but certainly felicitously, the centers considered Spain, Italy, and Germany are ones illumined by the work of our teacher Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi.

The Italians as Enlightened and Progressive, 1780-1815

Haskalah publications such as Wessely's *Divre shalom ve-emet*, *Hame'assef*, and *Sulamith* portrayed Italian Jews in exemplary terms as acculturated, enlightened, politically adroit, and religiously progressive. Italian Jews appeared as the embodiment of the Haskalah's moral and cultural ideals, sometimes on their own, sometimes in tandem with Sephardim whom Ashkenazic educational reformers had long admired for their ordered and extensive curricula.

This image was given powerful impetus by the first culture war of the Haskalah, the controversy over Wessely's *Divre shalom ve-emet* (Words of peace and truth), 1782, which advocated the inclusion in

Ashkenazic education of the torah of man, a wide range of subjects other than Torah and Talmud. In sharp contrast to the many Central Europeans who charged Wessely with disdainful neglect of Torah, Italian rabbis vigorously defended him. Even before Trieste launched this campaign, Wessely praised Italian Jews, whom he saw as closely linked to Sephardim, for their wisdom, civility, and broad-mindedness:

My words are unnecessary for you, you who from your youth have learned to speak the Italian and Spanish languages correctly, whose teachers are undoubtedly eloquent And your customs have always been wise, in conformance with the norms of mutual tolerance and peaceful conduct among mankind. In addition, trade in your lands is with the large states of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and you get to hear of the customs of areas distant from you. All the communities of Israel in Italian lands have a similar advantage, and therefore many among you are experienced in civility, learned in rhetoric and poetry, and educated in ethical teachings Moreover, all these qualities are found among the Torah scholars in your midst.⁴

Confirming this image by their actions, Italians were thereafter praised repeatedly in Haskalah periodicals for their reasonable outlook and their zeal in rescuing Wessely.⁵

In fact, the Italian rabbis' views converged with Wessely's but were not identical to his, and their defense of his Haskalah program was spirited but qualified. For they supported only what seemed familiar to them (i.e., broadened cultural horizons, long a part of their own tradition) while rejecting what struck them as radically new (i.e., the possible evaluation of the torah of man over the divine Torah). That they were in effect merely restating the premises of their own tradition rather than approving innovation was not noticed. In the moment of battle and in its aftermath, the nuances of their position were lost. North of the Alps, the enduring image of Italian Jews was that of cultural and religious progressives, prepared to come to the rescue of German modernizers when needed.

Subsequently, readers of *Hame'assef* and *Sulamith* encountered Italian Jews as worldly and prosperous, civic-minded and open to governmental initiatives in education and military conscription, and appreciative of their rich tradition of Jewish learning and Hebrew literature.

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Wessely himself was said to have been ennobled by and imbued with the spirit of the excellent writings of the Spanish-Portuguese-Italian school, rich in ideas and full of truth.⁷ Euchel painted an admiring portrait of Livornese Jews in *Hame'assef* in the late 1780s:

The Jews in Leghorn live together in calm and security in fine homes amidst the nobles of the land Most of them shave their beards and style their hair, there is no difference between their dress and that of the [other] inhabitants. They speak the language of the people correctly and eloquently like one of their orators Most follow the Sephardic custom . . . and they have splendid synagogues. They dwell peacefully and quietly, and they pursue every occupation and business their hearts desire.

My heart gladdens and I am proud to see my brothers living securely amidst the Gentiles.⁸

A report on educational reforms in Mantua in the late 1780s explicitly invoked Italian Jews as a model: Would that Jews in their other lands of settlement would observe them and follow their example.⁹

A specifically religious dimension to this model developed. Soon the enlightened, progressive Italians became religious radicals as German *maskilim* imputed to them a critical approach to religious law and tradition. One example was Saul Berlin's claim of Italian provenance for his collection of lenient responsa, *Besamim Rosh* (1793). But most revealing were the rumors of rabbinically sanctioned religious reform in Italy that swirled in the European press in the spring of 1796. Several German newspapers carried startling reports of an eight-to-ten-day-long synod in Florence at which important rabbis were supposed to have given halakhic authority to radical changes concerning the Sabbath, dietary laws, and sexual relations. Moreover, they were said to have sought governmental backing for their decisions.¹⁰

Efforts to get to the bottom of this tale were quickly made by the traditionalist rabbi of Hamburg-Altona, Raphael Cohen, and the Prague *maskil*, Baruch Jeiteles. Only a year earlier, in his work *Ha-Orev*, Jeiteles had used a Sephardic Jew

from Mantua as the main character through which to voice his criticism of the increasingly radical Berlin Haskalah, for he had considered Italian Jews exemplary synthesizers of tradition and enlightenment.

11 Now he wondered whether he had been mistaken who were Italian Jews really? Vehement aggrieved denials from Italy soon arrived and were quickly published in *Hame'assef* and as separate pamphlets, first in Livorno in Hebrew and then in Hamburg in German and Hebrew.¹² Important rabbis such as Hayim Joseph David Azulai (Hida) and Jacob Nunes Vais of Livorno, Daniel Terni of Florence, and Ishmael Kohen of Modena all denied that Italian rabbis had ever approved, let alone discussed, such matters and in anguish asked how anyone could believe such stories about them. They charged that others had invented these lies for their own purposes. Thus, this episode was generally understood as a hoax perpetrated by German radicals, who invented legitimizing precedents in Italy to advance their own designs of religious reform. Yet at least one usually well informed source, the Tuscan bishop Scipione de Ricci, reported to the curious Abbé Gregoire that a meeting had taken place: The assembly of Italian rabbis occurred not exactly as you suppose. There were some questions about the matters which you discussed with me There were some meetings held here. But the rabbi of Livorno, who consulted that of Modena, gave his opinion to the contrary; and thus they restrained themselves to some small permissions, such as not forcing women to wear wigs, to cohabit with their husbands during certain prohibited times, *etc.*¹³ In fact, the rabbinic denials do not preclude the possibility that some Italian lay figures of radical bent, such as Moise Formiggini and Aron Fernando, did try to press discussion of such questions.¹⁴

Reform in Florence remains murky and requires further investigation, but even with the uncertainties, what is striking is the plausibility north of the Alps of this tale of religious radicalism among Italian rabbis. Would-be German reformers imagined that as Wessely's soul mates, Italian rabbis would surely promote the modern approach to religion that they themselves favored. Like an overture to a symphony, the 1796 Florence reform story sounded the themes of Italian permissiveness, forgery, and aggrieved denial that were reprised in the controversies over religious reform in Berlin and Hamburg some twenty years later.

In the meantime, in 1806/1807 the Napoleonic Assembly of Notables and Sanhedrin contributed somewhat differently to the religious image of Italian Jews. There they emerged as Jeiteles had imagined: as enlightened progressives who could mediate between radicals and traditionalists.

In those very years the full-blown model of Italian Jews as religious pacesetters appeared in *Sulamith*. Its editor, David Fränkel, supported Israel Jacobson's early attempts at synagogal reform in Westphalia and followed the Haskalah in invoking the Sephardic model of liturgical practice.¹⁵ But as these excerpts from his articles show, the model was really Italian as well as Sephardic.

In an 1806 article urging that Jews acquire better knowledge of their religion and of the social duties it enjoins, Fränkel highlighted the advanced state of Sephardic and Italian Jews:

If only we ourselves were to be at the point where our coreligionists the so-called Portuguese or Italian Jews stand, then such a reprimand would certainly be unnecessary . . . how so very different are these brothers from their Polish and German coreligionists! Their devotions in their temples are orderly, quiet, solemn and edifying; most of their rabbis are truly learned men, who have expertise and knowledge of the world, and are good preachers; their orators are excellent; their teachers of children are praiseworthy, indeed their educational institutions for example in Livorno and in other places deserve the highest praise. Their language is unadulterated and pure, and their conduct is not noticeably conspicuous. Who would not readily recognize the difference between these Israelites and their many German coreligionists? One should always judge Jewish worship services only according to their standards.

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Accordingly, Fränkel urged that Ashkenazic Jews adopt the religious customs of the Italians and Sephardim:

But in any case, at long last, all differences with respect to religious practices between the German, Polish, Italian, eastern and so-called Portuguese Jews [last two, Sephardim, L.D.] should cease; all of us should adopt for once and for all the customs of the last three groups, which are almost identical in their worship services. This would mean a great step forward towards our improvement. The advantage of those Jews over us is generally acknowledged. As a small proof of my claim, one might easily compare their synagogues, their communal arrangements, even their ritual law-book, which we also esteem highly, with our synagogues, arrangements, and ritual protocols; then, from the first glance, their advantage over us is indisputable. It is calm in their synagogues; they pray with true devotion and exaltation of the heart. The voices of the worshippers are rhythmical; no one outshouts the others; their Hebrew language is pure and melodious and their mother tongue [is] unadulterated, without being a miserable jargon, as is the case among many German Jews; their moral preachers are exemplary.¹⁷

For Fränkel, advantages in worship services and manners and customs translated directly into civic-mindedness the Italian subjects of the Jewish faith strive to make themselves useful to the state and an easier path toward integration.¹⁸

Another 1808 article in *Sulamith* aimed to awaken in our German fatherland some friends and followers of . . . Italian coreligionists through extensive praise of the Jews of Livorno and especially their educational and religious institutions. In direct contrast to German schools, their schools were reported to show no trace of obscuring and deadening rote but rather a free, liberal development and cultivation of the powers of mind and spirit and instruction in the original clarity and beauty of religion without prejudices and superstitions. Their synagogue, hailed as the most beautiful and its worship service . . . [as] perhaps the most splendid in all of Europe, was also contrasted to German ones: in the synagogue itself there always reigns a solemn seriousness, and one sees that the assembled are imbued with the worth and holiness of their activity something which one so often misses in our [German] synagogues.¹⁹

Thus, by 1815, Italian Jews were admired as vanguard pacesetters in religion. But from the Central European perspective, it was not clear which strand of the complex image was more correct: moderate modernizers or religious radicals?

Berlin 1816

When in 1815/1818 reformers in Berlin and Hamburg encountered opposition to their innovations such as organ and choir, German for sermons and some prayers, shortening the traditional liturgy it was natural that they, like Wessely before them, turn to Italy for support. They had admired vernacular sermons, Sephardic pronunciation, and occasional instrumental music in Italian synagogues; they now sought legitimation from those who had in part influenced them.

20

The prime documents of Italian involvement in these first Reform controversies are (1) the two responsa approving the organ, published by Eliezer Liebermann in the pro-Reform tract *Nogah ha-tsedek* (*The Radiance of Justice*, 1818), namely, *Derekh ha-kodesh* (*The Way of the Holy*) of Rabbi Shem Tov Samun of Livorno, with the apparent approval of the leading Livornese rabbis and visiting emissaries from Jerusalem, and *Ya'ir netiv* (*He Makes a Path to Shine*) of Rabbi Jacob Hai Recanati of Verona;²¹ and (2) the denunciations of the reformers by Italian rabbis from Livorno, Trieste, Padua, Modena, and Mantua in the traditionalists' counterattack, *Eleh divre ha-brit* (*These are the Words of the Covenant*, 1819).²² The writings of Rabbi Moses Sofer (Hatam Sofer) of Pressburg, who emerged as the archenemy of Reform and the first Orthodox ideologue, also contain relevant correspondence, including some specifically with and about Rabbi Abraham Eliezer Halevi of Trieste.²³

From the very beginning, the authenticity of the responsa published by Liebermann was questioned. Tales circulated of bribery, coercion, and fraud; after all, Liebermann did misrepresent Samun as head of the Livornese rabbinical court. Graetz continued the ad hominem

attacks, labeling Liebermann a gambler who later converted to Christianity and Samun and Recanati as would-be rabbis of low attainment who were not fully of sound mind.²⁴ In fact, while Liebermann exaggerated their importance, Samun and Recanati were hardly nobodies on the Italian scene. Recanati had studied with Ishmael Kohen of Modena, and Samun had earned praise from Azulai of Livorno both rabbinic luminaries. Recanati and Samun were published authors and had occupied important communal posts Recanati then as chief rabbi in Verona and Samun as an occasional member of the rabbinical court in Livorno.²⁵ Other scholars have cleared up some of the confusion and established that their responsa were genuine and originated in the events in Berlin in 1815/1816.²⁶ But a fuller picture of the extensive contact with Italy by reformers and traditionalists during both the Berlin and Hamburg stages emerges from a close rereading of the responsa themselves along with the other available sources.

When Liebermann published the responsa of Samun and Recanati in *Nogah ha-tsedek* without introduction or explanation, it appeared as if they were written to support the Hamburg Temple just opened in October 1818, but in fact they had been composed in 1816 in response to inquiries from Jacob Herz Beer, a

wealthy Berlin notable who hosted Reformed services in his home. In the face of suspicion from Jewish traditionalists and the Prussian government, Beer turned to Italy to gain rabbinic approval for the reformers' practices. He had contacts in Italy because of his extensive business interests and the musical studies of his son Jacob (later Meyerbeer) there that very year.

²⁷ By early 1817 the reformers claimed to have received the sanction of several God-fearing and learned rabbis.²⁸ These were undoubtedly the answers of Recanati and Samun written to Beer in November-December 1816. In *Nogah ha-tsedek*, Liebermann omitted what the manuscript of Recanati's *pesak* states clearly: the source of the inquiries was Jacob Herz Beer, communal leader in Berlin.²⁹ But these were not the only answers Beer received: the rabbis of Padua, Venice, Mantua, and Livorno also wrote to him in late 1816. The 1816 responses from Padua, Venice, and Livorno were mentioned in letters from those communities in 1819, and the text of the Mantua letter exists in manuscript.³⁰ It will become evident below why Liebermann published only those of Samun and Recanati in *Nogah ha-tsedek*.

In 1816, Beer asked the Italian rabbis questions about their own communities: the numbers of synagogues and Jews in each city; the recitation of prayers whether aloud by the entire congregation or by a cantor alone; and the language of sermons whether Hebrew or Italian. Diversity and decorum were clearly on his mind. He also asked their views about the permissibility of the organ as a musical enhancement of the synagogue service. It seems that he did mention the halakhic problems some saw with the organ, namely, the danger of idol worship involved in imitating Gentile custom and rejoicing with music after the destruction of the Temple. But it appears that he did not fully disclose the reformers' agenda in Berlin or their reasons for

interest in Italy.

Verona, Venice, and Mantua supplied straightforward answers to the first three questions. Each city had separate congregations, but their rites, Sephardic or Ashkenazic or Italian, did not differ on the essentials. Sermons were delivered in Italian, with the Bible quoted always in Hebrew, though sometimes translated into Italian, or Latin if need be for Christian visitors. Cantors usually recited the prayers aloud; the congregations, quietly with decorum.

Responses on the organ were more varied and complex. The most farreaching endorsement came from Recanati of Verona. He had seen a specific reference to the organ in Lampronti's halakhic encyclopedic *Pahad Yitshak* but failed to find it. From his own examination of the relevant halakhic issues, interruption of the words and devotion in prayer as well as the two mentioned above, he concluded that the organ could be used to enhance the worship service. He set only one condition: on Sabbaths and festivals it should not be played by a Jew, lest he violate them by repairing it, but instead by a Gentile, if requested beforehand. He provided examples of the rich Italian tradition of vocal and instrumental music in the synagogue, citing concrete examples from Venice, Corfu, and Modena, and the supporting halakhic opinions of distinguished rabbis in Italy, Salonika, and Palestine, including Ashkenazim as well as Italians and Sephardim.³¹

Samun of Livorno also enthusiastically endorsed the organ, along with all kinds of vocal and instrumental music in worship as a means of fulfilling the commandment to serve the Lord gladly. Reflecting the acculturated Livornese Jewish milieu, he dismissed the issue of imitating Gentile customs and claimed that the Torah prohibited only those that violated reason or modesty. He asked rhetorically, Are we forbidden to do anything that Gentiles do?

³² Taking a different tack, he rendered the entire question moot by stressing that praising God with music and singing was of Jewish origin anyway! He approved the organ in principle without specifying appropriate or inappropriate times. Though easily missed, this ambiguity was important and a key to the later retractions from Livorno. Yet ignoring the ambiguity, German reformers touted Samun's view as approval of the organ on the Sabbath.

Both Recanati and Samun stressed the validity of custom in halakhic argument. Though not universally accepted, instrumental music in the synagogue was known in Italy, and for these two it enjoyed the status of precedent and custom. Both seemed to approach the organ in a matter-of-fact way and to subsume it readily under the general category of music. Samun prefaced his responsum with the remark that he didn't know why this question is raised. It is clear that the matter is permissible and in no need of (elaborate) discussion.³³ Neither considered the prohibition against imitating Gentiles a compelling argument.

Samun claimed to have support for his view from the leading rabbis of Livorno. In *Nogah ha-tsedek* his responsum appeared with two approbations, one signed by two visiting Jerusalem emissaries, Hayyim Judah Ayyas and Judah Aron Cohen Tikli, and the second signed by Moses Hai Melul and Isaac Cardoso Trias as members of

the Livornese academy of sages. Both *haskamot* referred to the legal ruling of the Livornese rabbinical court in addition to Samun's. Since the text of this communal *pesak* was never published, its existence was often doubted. But in fact in 1819 the Livornese rabbis did acknowledge that they had previously written on the organ to another place and that this was indeed to Beer in December 1816.³⁴

Liebermann did not publish this Livornese *pesak* and the others from Mantua, Venice, and Padua in *Nogah ha-tsedek* for one simple reason: while permitting the organ, they all set too many conditions upon its use to suit the German reformers' needs. In their later letters of explanation in 1819, both Rabbi Jacob Emanuel Cracovia of Venice and Rabbi Emanuel Castelnuevo of Padua stressed that they had limited the organ in the synagogue to particular circumstances: on weekdays, never on Sabbaths or holidays; never during prayers but rather only for pre-Sabbath introductory hymns or for royal visits; and played only by Jews. They cited examples from Casalmongerato, Padua, Westphalia, and Paris that they believed conformed to these guidelines. Additionally, Castelnuevo emphasized the inappropriateness of the organ during prayer: [I]n my legal opinion signed in November 1816 to Sig. Jacob Leon Herz Beer of Berlin, in which it appears that I gave the opinion that it was permissible to play the organ in synagogues, I permitted it *only on weekdays, in accord with the question posed* . . . similarly that my

permission was not for the time of the prayers, for then there would arise a true confusion, it would disturb the true devotion, the order of the words and the true sense of the prayers

35 (emphasis added).

Can we consider these later statements reliable when we know that they were penned in the heat of controversy and scandal in 1819, when Italian rabbis were trying to defend their good name and distance themselves from the reformers? I think so. For the limitations claimed later explain why they were not included in *Nogah ha-tsedek*, and they are consistent with the Mantuan reply of November 1816, which does exist in manuscript. Rabbis Romanelli and Ariani and Dr. Cases informed Beer that in Mantua musical instruments though never the organ had sometimes been played in the synagogue to introduce songs or to honor a ruler. They were willing to countenance its use since we have heard that in some holy communities they play this instrument in the synagogue and from this it appears that there is no prohibition against it, since Israel is holy, as the excellent rabbis who sit on seats of judgment in the holy communities of Venice and Padua have written, and there is nothing to add to them.³⁶

Thus Beer received mixed answers from Italy: the rabbis of Venice, Padua, and Mantua hesitantly allowed the organ in limited circumstances never on Sabbaths or holidays and never during public worship. In contrast, Samun and Recanati enthusiastically endorsed it as an enhancement of services. None seemed overly concerned with the problems of imitating Gentile customs or of musical celebration after the destruction of the Temple. The issues for those who hesitated were Sabbath observance and disturbance of prayer. Fortright in his allowing the organ for Sabbath services, Recanati supplied precisely the kind of answer that the German reformers had expected from the

Italians. Samun was boundless in his enthusiasm for musical accompaniment but less explicit about the precise circumstances in which the organ could be played. But even with its ambiguities, Samun's answer was deemed useful by the German reformers and trumpeted along with Recanati's as endorsement of their cause.

The responsa of Recanati and Samun could be construed as favorable legal opinions on various innovations introduced in Berlin.³⁷ But how did the Italian rabbis themselves understand the queries from afar? We don't know precisely what Beer told them about the situation in Berlin for example, he may not have specified Sabbath or weekday use of the organ but my impression is that the Italians were not well informed about the context from which these questions sprang. Naïveté and lack of awareness on their part is conveyed by Samun's opening comment: I do not know why this question is asked by my Jewish brethren in a distant land.³⁸ The Italian rabbis did not knowingly support religious and ideological change in Berlin. Rather, they approached Beer's questions as inquiries about practices in their own Italian communities and about their views on specific halakhic issues. Both Samun and Recanati cited existing halakhic literature and, in matter-of-fact terms, precedents of instrumental music from their Mediterranean milieu. Thus, they spoke the language of precedents, custom, and tradition, not the language of innovation. Unaware of the ferment

in Berlin, they answered honestly but naively on the basis of their own traditions and halakhic arguments.

39 Unlike Wessely's Italian defenders, these Italian rabbis took up no cudgels in religious-ideological combat. They did not sign up for any casting role in the Reform drama being played out in Germany.

Hamburg 18181819

But in 1818 the Italians were thrust into the limelight and as public defenders of Reform when in response to renewed controversy in Berlin, Liebermann published the 1816 *pesakim* of Samun and Recanati that had lain dormant. In *Nogah ha-tsedek* he explained nothing about their genesis in Beer's earlier inquiries. (Also as Italian precedents for reform, Liebermann cited Leon Modena's *Ha-Boneh* and the Sephardic pronunciation of Italian Jews.)⁴⁰ Apparently without their permission or knowledge, the Italians' answers of 1816 were now used publicly to support one side in the bitter and distant controversy. Their notoriety was increased a few months later when *Nogah ha-tsedek* was mistakenly linked with the Hamburg Temple inaugurated in October 1818: its founders invoked *Nogah ha-tsedek*, and their traditionalist opponents assumed that indeed it had been written for them.⁴¹ Thus, the Italian *pesakim* of 1816 were now understood as weapons in the arsenal of the Hamburg reformers. These appeared as proof of the decades-old rumors that Italian rabbis were supporters of radical religious reform.

Hamburg reform appeared especially radical, for the service was further shortened and certain prayers about return to Zion omitted. The rabbinical judges of Hamburg (there was no official rabbi) strenuously opposed these changes as grave violations of rabbinic law and as heralding an alarming new stage in the steadily growing

challenge to traditional Judaism. Immediately, in November 1818, they launched an urgent appeal to rabbis throughout Europe, including important figures such as Hatam Sofer of Pressburg, Akiba Eiger of Posen, and Mordechai Banet of Nikolsburg, imploring them to join the fight against the *Tempel* and the pamphlets. No longer able to issue bans of excommunication, they collected rabbinic testimonies of denunciation to persuade the Gentile authorities to suppress the new religion⁴² and to sway Jewish public opinion. Their *pesak* stressed that the reformers had violated three important religious prohibitions by changing the text of the prayers, by praying in a language other than Hebrew, and by playing musical instruments in synagogue on Sabbaths and festivals. It was important to uphold the basic principles at stake: the authority of the rabbis and of time-honored laws and practices and to establish lines of demarcation between traditional Jews and the new group. In the summer of 1819 they issued the first collective Orthodox manifesto against reform, *Eleh divre habrit*, which contained twenty-two letters signed by forty rabbis from Germany, Habsburg lands, Alsace, Holland, and Italy. Halakhic arguments were largely overshadowed by personal invective, anguished hand-wringing, and ideological

politics. Its central polemical message was: it is forbidden to change anything; don't rebel; don't imitate the Gentiles.

My purpose now is to concentrate on the Italian role in this episode: once the battle between Reform and Orthodoxy was joined, what happened to the earlier Italian responses? Where did Italian rabbis now stand? How did this conflict affect the progressive image of Italian Jews?

An important objective of the traditionalists' campaign against the reformers was to discredit their claimed rabbinic support. Thus, with regard to the Italian *pesakim*, it was important to ascertain who exactly were these rabbis whose names appeared in *Nogah ha-tsedek*. Were the *pesakim* authentic? In letters written that winter and published in mid-1819 in *Eleh divre ha-brit*, various reactions to them were expressed: shock, suspicion that distance had caused deception and foul play, and some substantive halakhic disagreement.

43 By early December 1818 the Hamburg rabbis wrote directly to Livorno, Mantua, Padua, Modena, and Trieste to clarify the status of the earlier *pesakim*, to obtain denials or retractions of them, and to gain unequivocal support for their own position. Toward that end but perhaps also out of genuine understanding, they seem to have trod softly when approaching the Livornese rabbis, for they attributed their approval, if genuine, simply to ignorance of the situation in Germany.⁴⁴

The Italians did not disappoint the Orthodox in Hamburg. By mid-January 1819 the rabbis of the five communities responded with harsh denunciations of the reformers that were appropriate for *Eleh divre ha-brit*.⁴⁵ Like the Ashkenazic traditionalists, they spared no words in charging the reformers with rebellion, that is, inventing new religious

practices and promoting heresy, and sectarianism, that is, threatening a real schism within Judaism. They promised to sign the eagerly awaited Hamburg *pesak* and to mobilize others.

Of the five letters, only the letter from Livorno, signed by Rabbi Solomon Malah and ten members of the Livornese rabbinical court, including two whose names appeared on the approbation of Samun's *pesak* in *Nogah ha-tsedek*, referred to the earlier correspondence of 1816. To remove all sources of stumbling and confusion they assured everyone that the scholar who permitted the organ on Sabbaths and festivals was not from this area (meaning Recanati in Verona) and that indeed in their earlier *pesak* to another place they had forbidden its being played by Jew or Gentile on the Sabbath and festivals.⁴⁶ They thus closed the loophole left open in their original answer. In his separate statement, Shem Tov Samun agreed with everything written by Malah and his colleagues and condemned the reformers for changing received traditions. In quoting the Mishnaic statement that anyone who changes an agreement will end up at a disadvantage (Baba Metsia 6:2), he may have been indicting the reformers generally or hinting at foul play by Liebermann specifically. As far as the editors of *Eleh divre ha-brit* were concerned, the Livornese clarifications constituted retractions; furthermore, they were satisfied to learn that Samun was merely a private teacher, not the head of a rabbinical court or academy.⁴⁷ Scant reference was made to Recanati, though it was later claimed that he too retracted his 1816 *pesak*.⁴⁸ Overall,

the Italians' response to the Hamburg entreaties seemed to move them abruptly from the reform camp in 1818 to the Orthodox camp in 1819. Thus, finally, the kernel of Italian divergence from the German modernizers' agenda, so long ignored, burst forth for all to see.

A leading role in the Italian anti-Reform campaign was played by the distinguished Abraham Eliezer Halevi, a Sephardic emissary from Jerusalem of Italian origin, who was rabbi of Trieste from 1802. He maintained an active correspondence with leading Ashkenazic rabbis in Berlin, Hamburg, Prague, Vienna, Nikolsburg, and Mattersdorf and served as the main conduit between Central Europe and Italy for the exchange of news, plans of action, and statements of support. He worked not only on the Italian front to clarify the *Nogah ha-tsedek* mess. He also proffered strategies for the entire Orthodox campaign against the reformers, whom he believed should be crushed until they repented. Indeed, he spurred the Hatam Sofer to a more aggressive public stance than he had been inclined to take, and he tried to organize a behind-the-scenes appeal through wealthy, well-connected Jews to the emperor in Vienna. According to Samet, he was the most active in the Orthodox campaign after the Hatam Sofer himself.

49

In fact, Halevi's efforts went well beyond the five Italian responses secured for *Eleh divre ha-brit*. In late February 1819, Halevi galvanized the lay leaders of Trieste to pursue the fight against reform further. They were impelled by a sense of extreme urgency because his correspondence brought rumors of alarming developments closer to home: of Liebermann's travels through Prague and Vienna toward Italy in order to spread the Reform gospel and of reformers' efforts to get vernacular prayer imposed by sovereign fiat on all Habsburg Jews.

Concerned now with home as well as distant Germany, Triestine leaders decided, in emergency session, on speedy action. They pressed the local government for action against Liebermann should he get as far as Trieste. They warned fellow Jewish communities in Lombardy-Venetia (Gorizia, Padua, Mantua, Rovigo, Venice, Verona) of the spirit of religious revolt in German lands, which had led to the reformers' getting rid of many of the cardinal rites, with almost exiling even the sacred tongue from public synagogues and finally retaining the name of Israelite only for mere appearance.⁵⁰ Responses pledging cooperation quickly arrived. The elderly Halevi himself undertook a dual mission: to produce a version of the Hamburg *pesak* in the name of the ecclesiastical consistory of Trieste and to bring it personally and promptly to other Italian communities for their endorsement. He aimed to reveal with precision and truth who were those who had written in favor of the sectarians and what they had written, and also to obtain the retraction of those who by misunderstanding or by surprise had allowed themselves to be tricked.⁵¹

The Triestine *pesak* of March 10, 1819, issued for the salvation of their own conscience . . . and as a defense against the alluring seduction of the innovators, strengthened the language of the three theses of the Hamburg rabbinical court and added a fourth. To the first prohibition against changing the accepted liturgy or subtracting anything from it, the Triestine version added even the smallest

part. It also added a second point stressing the requirement of daily prayer and of the customary additional prayer (*musaf*) on festivals. Anticipating a future struggle with Habsburg authorities, Triestine leaders hammered home the vital necessity of prayer in Hebrew: of divine origin and sanctity, it was indispensable, they claimed, for understanding and fulfilling Jewish religious duties; moreover, it ensured uniformity of practice among Jews everywhere a point of concern in this immigrant crossroads community and prevented the inevitable variations and disagreements caused by translations. On instrumental music, the fourth Triestine point went beyond the prohibition of the Hamburg *pesak* concerning Sabbaths or festivals to state that Jewish law absolutely forbids the playing of musical instruments in public synagogues during the recitation of the prayers . . . and also during preceding or subsequent hymns of devotion . . . and how much more so . . . on the Sabbath or other festivals. This was the most stringent Italian position on music uttered during these controversies. The Triestine letter closed with the lay leaders' strong endorsement of the *pesak* and their forceful warnings against the very slightest innovation in matters of worship or any reform or change in the rites, dogmas and other customs inherited from our ancestors, for violating them could lead to dangerous discord, immorality, libertinism and perhaps also atheism.

52

Armed with this travel document, the aged Halevi immediately sallied forth and made the arduous journey down the Italian peninsula as far south as Livorno and along the Dalmatian coast. In one month, from mid-March to mid-April, he visited Gorizia, Venice, Padua, Rovigo, Ferrara, Livorno, Florence, Reggio, Guastalla, Mantua, Verona, Spalato, and Ragusa; from all these and Modena he obtained letters endorsing the Triestine *pesak*.⁵³ Many repeated the key phrases

decrying the harmful consequences of even the slightest innovation and reform in religion. Verona referred to the intangible integrity of our holy religion; others used the very terms orthodox and heterodox⁵⁴ Ferrara focused on authority: how could people dare to arrogate to themselves the authority to permit that which centuries of custom and rabbinical teachings had not allowed? Importantly, Halevi also succeeded in getting clarifications from Venice, Padua, and Livorno about their earlier correspondence. As discussed above, all explained that they had written to Beer in Berlin in 1816 but claimed that those earlier answers were limited in scope and indeed fully consistent with their current support for the Hamburg rabbinical court and Trieste!

How can these claims be understood? Is it possible to accept these affirmations of consistency, or were they simply self-serving protestations designed to cover up an embarrassing episode? In other words, did the Italians hold two different views in 1816 and 1819 but refuse to admit that? Or rather, did they hold similar views in 1816 and 1819, however difficult this was for others to understand, since their first view seemed somewhat supportive of reform and the second opposed to it?

Unfortunately, key documents are lacking: most of the texts of the original 1816 answers and Recanati's retraction in 1819, reported by Halevi. Recanati's 1816

pesak was the only one clearly at odds with the 1819 Hamburg-Trieste position; whether his retraction indicated a real change in thinking or a response to pressure is not known. But the situation of the other Italian rabbis was different: the views they supported in 1819 were not necessarily inconsistent with their earlier ones. The 1819 statements of the Venetian and Paduan rabbis may well have matched their earlier limited views of 1816, and the original *pesakim* of Samun and the Livornese rabbis had been ambiguous about the organ on the Sabbath. Remember the original *pesak* of the other Livornese rabbis must have set more limitations than did Samun's, for it was not published along with his in *Nogah ha-tsedek*.

And yet the Triestine *pesak* did toe a harsher line on music than the others; the general endorsement of it did signify that something *had* changed. Perhaps there wasn't a radical volte-face, but the gates of interpretation were closing. The answers had been given more naively in 1816, but both then and in 1819 they were apparently given sincerely and without coercion. Neither Beer nor Liebermann nor Halevi forced the answers they got. In 1819 the Italian rabbis responded so readily to Hamburg and Halevi not simply because of embarrassment or moral pressure but also for good reasons of their own. The situation of Judaism, especially north of the Alps, looked different to them than it had in 1816.

First, it was imperative to clear the Italian rabbinate, once and for all, of the charge that they were aiding and abetting religious radicals. They were sick and tired of this suspicion; their honor was at stake; the misrepresentation had gone on long enough. The answers of 1816, however innocent when written, had to be neutralized, and the impression that they constituted knowing rabbinic support for new German *Tempel* practices dispelled. The Italian rabbis reacted forcefully and castigated the reformers so harshly in 1819 not *despite* the fact that they had served as models for German modernizers, but

rather, precisely *because* they had been cast inappropriately in that role for too long.

55 The strength of their condemnation was in direct proportion to the swirling rumors. They were willing to be depicted as cultural progressives but not as religious radicals. At worst, they had acted naively and had possibly been tricked. It was time to restore their besmirched honor and reclaim their good name.

Second, they who had always spoken on behalf of custom, continuity, and tradition, however much they had been misunderstood by those whose traditions were different, now felt the urgent need to defend tradition when it was under attack in Germany. In 1819 they spoke plainly in terms of custom, continuity, and tradition. In 1816 they had as well, drawing upon Italian practice and halakhic arguments. As I argued above, though they were misconstrued as would-be reformers or supporters of reform innovations, they really did not favor the changing of customary practices. What confused German modernizers was that they failed to see that the Italians were speaking from a different context and a different tradition. What was customary in one locale was innovative in the other; what looked like radical innovation in one setting could in fact be defended on the basis of tradition in the other.

By 1819 the Italian rabbis shared the judgment of their Central European traditionalist colleagues that Judaism was imperiled by the reformers and that the threat of schism was real. They no longer saw separate theoretical halakhic questions but rather a religious-ideological-social crisis caused by a far-reaching challenge to the very authority of the rabbis to interpret and enforce the religious tradition. They had come to understand that traditionalists would have to mount a defense to preserve the status quo; in other words, they would have to develop an Orthodox stance. For the sake of that defensive struggle, they were willing to mute those aspects of their tradition such as greater latitude with regard to instrumental accompaniment to prayer and Gentile customs that had proved to be points of contention in Central Europe. Even those who had earlier not objected to the organ in certain circumstances were now willing to join in forbidding all instrumental adornment of public prayer. They would not use Italian synagogal choirs and musical societies to sanction organs for abbreviated Sabbath *Tempel* services, which the German rabbis opposed. Consciously facing ideological and institutional crisis, Italians would not let their musical precedents be used by German reformers as their educational ones had been used by Wessely. Less important than any particular issue was the whole noxious package that challenged rabbinic authority and traditional Judaism. Once the issue became tradition as such, it was clear that the Italian rabbis preferred to stand for its defense rather than its transformation, with the traditionalists rather than the reformers.

Third, in 1819 the Italian rabbis felt impelled to join the Orthodox fight for tradition, not only for the sake of their distant coreligionists but also for the sake of their own communities at home. Italy too had known a fair share of religious indifference and challenges to religious authority during the preceding tumultuous decades, though these had not coalesced into an institution or ideology, as in Germany. Feeling

vulnerable to dangers from within and without,

⁵⁶ especially because of the rumored alliance between reformers and the government, Italian rabbis believed they had a serious religious and political battle to wage against a possible Habsburg *Reform von oben*. In Trieste itself, Jewish leaders had already had bitter experience with alliances between the government and individuals who challenged Jewish marriage law in the late eighteenth century, and Halevi himself had sought after the fact to take preventive halakhic measures for the future.⁵⁷ Now their fears were not unfounded. Perhaps influenced by Liebermann, who spent a good part of 1819 in Vienna, both *maskilim* (Peter Beer and Herz Homberg) and communal leaders (Michael Lazar Biedermann and Salomon Breisach) submitted proposals about prayer reform to Habsburg officials in 1819/1820. They then decreed on January 20, 1820, that henceforth all Jews in the Monarchy pray publicly only in the vernacular. Concerted protest at that time by Trieste and other Jewish communities—one of the fruits of Halevi's efforts in 1818/1819—led eventually to modification of this provision, and prayer in Hebrew was still permitted, with a translation merely printed in the prayer book.⁵⁸

Unfortunately, Halevi's rich harvest of letters in support of the Hamburg Trieste *pesak* was not published as ammunition in the early Reform controversies. The German translation he sent to his contact in Vienna was lost, and it is not known if he sent a second copy as planned.

⁵⁹ Nonetheless, Halevi's campaign was not without results. He conveyed the key message beyond the Alps: the troublesome responsa in *Nogah ha-tsedek* were neutralized, and the Italian rabbis stood firmly with their traditionalist colleagues in Hamburg. Given my sense that the Italian rabbis' desire to support the Hamburg position was genuine, I do not view their request in early 1819 to see the Hamburg *pesak* before endorsing it as a delaying tactic, nor do I see Abraham Eliezer Halevi functioning as a mediator between hard-line Ashkenazic and lenient Italian positions.⁶⁰ Technically, he was an intermediary but certainly no mediator: he was a fierce partisan who allied himself unequivocally with the Hamburg traditionalists. While the Italians did have their own tradition, which might well have developed differently in other circumstances, in this particular conflict they were not trying to find middle ground. Once the issue was tradition as such, they upheld it, rather than the particular features of their own traditions that diverged from the Ashkenazic in Central Europe.

The anti-Reform campaign spearheaded by Halevi set the Italian pattern: formal adherence to the classical tradition and its defense by the leadership, and attachment to Hebrew as the language of prayer.⁶¹ This attachment reflected the rich Italian Jewish tradition of Hebrew composition and literature, the Italian sense born of its crossroads location of the unifying value of Hebrew, and perhaps the Catholic milieu in which Latin and not the vernacular reigned supreme in

worship. When later in the century, after the dust had settled, the earlier range of Italian Jewish views on musical accompaniment to the service resurfaced and some rabbis permitted a choir or organ, it was without reference to the German Reform ideology or movement.⁶²

Conclusions

From 1780 to 1820 and especially during the key moments of 1782, 1796, and 1816/1819, certain patterns persisted in the German modernizers' relation to Italian Jews: they misunderstood and misrepresented enlightened Italian traditionalists as both cultural progressives and religious radicals. Italian Jews were willing to don the first mantle but not the second. It did no harm when Wessely took the liberty of publicly invoking Triestine support in his second pamphlet without their prior permission.⁶³ But in 1818, when Liebermann dealt cavalierly with the earlier responses of Samun and Recanati to Beer and cast them as supporters of controversial reform in Germany, he was not simply being overhasty, like Wessely; he was misrepresenting and indeed misusing them. Like the Florence reform hoax of 1796, *Nogah ha-tsedek* led to shocking rumors of Italian rabbinic radicalism, anguished inquiries from Central Europe, suspicions of forgery, and

Italian denials of radicalism and vigorous restatement of their commitment to tradition and custom.

Throughout this period, the needs of German modernizers dictated how they saw and presented Italian Jews. Tending to misread the Italians, they failed to grasp the nuances of their support for Wessely and assumed that they were *maskilim* like themselves. They did not pay attention to the Italians' mediating role between Ashkenazic traditionalists and Sephardic radicals at the Napoleonic Sanhedrin. They were certain that the Italians' vernacular sermons, decorum, and occasional instrumental accompaniment of public worship meant that they would be eager standard-bearers for the new Reform *Tempels* in Berlin and Hamburg. The Germans did not perceive the gap between their perception of Italian Jews and the Italians' self-perception: in the Ashkenazic context, the Germans considered Italian Jews innovators and radicals, while in their own context, the Italians saw themselves as upholders of custom and tradition; they did not recognize themselves as promoters of novelty or radical change. The Italians could support the broader cultural horizons and utilitarian thrust of the Haskalah, but reform of worship and liturgy was something quite different. For a long time Germans partly understood that some of what was novel in Ashkenaz was already customary in Italy that, after all, was why they constructed and prized the Italian model but they did not fully grasp the implications of this fact. Thus, they were unpleasantly surprised when the Italians chose to defend tradition and eschew Berlin in favor of Pressburg.

The Germans were not simply blinded by their own needs. Certainly, from the Ashkenazic vantage point there was something elusive about Italian realities. Within a short period the Italians appeared to champion Wessely, the reformers in Berlin and Hamburg, and the Hatam Sofer. Within a couple of years they thus appeared as supporters of both nascent movements, Reform and Orthodoxy! The

categories then regnant in Germany and in much subsequent Jewish scholarship on Italy, which like all Jewish historiography has drawn substantially upon those categories

⁶⁴cannot account for these apparently incompatible stands. As my analysis demonstrates, I believe that there was considerable coherence and consistency to the Italian positions over the period in question, but they cannot be discerned if the labels from Central Europe are too hastily transposed.

The usual categories of Ashkenazic Jewish history Reform and Orthodox do not really fit very well the actual substance of the Italians' positions. Though enlisted by the reformers, Recanati and Samun were not reformers, nor did they endorse innovative change as such. Nor were Abraham Eliezer Halevi and the Italian leaders who upheld the Hamburg-Trieste *pesak* really Orthodox, despite the facts that they proclaimed solidarity with those who were fashioning the nascent Orthodox ideology in Central Europe, employed Orthodox-sounding slogans to decry even the slightest change in religion, and used the very terms orthodox and heterodox. They certainly displayed the need to articulate a defense of traditional Judaism in the face of Jewish attacks an indispensable feature of Orthodoxy⁶⁵ but the tradition they were defending and its social role and the

stance they took both toward its defense and its opponents differed from those of Central Europe. Halevi did not urge that the sinners be cut off, as the Hatam Sofer urged (if that were possible), but rather that they be dealt with forcefully so that they would ultimately repent. Halevi and subsequent Italian rabbis did not develop a separatist mentality vis-à-vis the less observant in the community or even against those who attacked Judaism from within. An article on Venice in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* in 1838 noted the attitude of religiously observant leaders: These are certainly adverse to all innovations, yet they are tolerant of those who think differently and there never arises disunity in the community on account of religion.

66 In Italy the guardians of tradition continued to place the nonobservant in the traditional category of sinners rather than the new one of schismatics. Because no Reform movement was generated in Italy, no Orthodox movement arose in response. Religious change did come in Italy in the nineteenth century, but it was more through indifference and laxity on the part of the laity than through ideological and institutional reformulations. Perhaps because of their small size and reflecting their Italian Catholic environment, Italian Jewish communities learned to live with a great discrepancy in practice between religious leaders and the general lay public. Their milieu also contributed a measurable tone of religious conservatism, a model of high ceremony and sacred language in worship, and a sense of the importance of formal adherence to tradition in its classical mode.⁶⁷

German modernizers saw Italians as closely akin to Sephardim, but they knew little about contemporary Sephardim in the Mediterranean and the Levant. Yet this world was as important a reference point for Italian Jews as was Ashkenaz, if not more so. The stance of the Italian rabbis and their defense of tradition must be seen not only in terms of

the partisan Ashkenazic debates in Central Europe of their day but also in terms of Sephardic religious responses to modernity, in both the West and the East. For example, Stillman has recently posited a tradition of tolerance and working for the preservation of communal unity among Middle Eastern Sephardic rabbis in the modern era, according to which they tried to bring those who strayed from the paths of observance into some degree of harmony with tradition rather than try to cut off or to restrain [them].⁶⁸ Also like the Italians, Sephardic traditionalists in mid-nineteenth-century Palestine in contrast to Ashkenazim were sometimes seen as more progressive and more open to modernity than was warranted.⁶⁹ More knowledge of Sephardic traditionalism will contribute to a broader and deeper understanding of Italian traditionalism. Specifically, let us remember that Abraham Eliezer Halevi was himself a proud Sephardi. Not well versed in European culture, according to the admiring S. D. Luzzatto, and wearing his Oriental robes throughout his twentyfive years in Trieste, Halevi was indeed a Sephardic traditionalist, a soul mate of the Hida at least as much as of the Hatam Sofer. He ought to be compared not only to contemporary Sephardic defenders of tradition but also to earlier figures such as David Nieto and Moses Hagiz.⁷⁰ In fighting the good fight for the defense of tradition, Halevi drew on the tried-and-true methods of collecting de-

nunciatory testimony, public shaming, and behind-the-scenes appeal to authorities; but he and the other opponents of Reform seemed not to realize that the rules had changed and that new forces had come to enjoy authority in the Jewish public sphere.

When in 1818/1819 the Italians unexpectedly made it clear that that they supported enlightened traditionalism and Haskalah but not religious reform, they had effectively broken ranks with German modernizers. The early Reform controversies marked the parting of the German and Italian ways and led to German disillusionment with the Italian model.

The Italians certainly shared with the Germans the goals of acculturation and modernization, but they considered German efforts flawed by excessive rationalism and radicalism. Before 1818 the young Samuel David Luzzatto had seen Berlin as a holy city . . . upon which the eyes of all Israel had gazed these forty years, but afterward he lamented it in biblical cadences as a harlot and a city gone astray.

⁷¹ Though they admired German cultural and scholarly creativity, Italian intellectuals in the nineteenth century came to articulate a distinctive Italian path. They felt that their traditions, their degree of civilization, however much ignored by the world and their temperament moderate and far from every exaggeration⁷² equipped them to play a moderating role vis-à-vis the Germans and to provide a balanced model of progress for the Mediterranean, Levantine, and North African Jewries with whom they had extensive contact.

For the Germans, the Italians had forever forfeited their role as a progressive model. This was reflected in the late 1830s in the important *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* and *Israelitische Annalen*. Unlike the earlier *Hame'assef* and *Sulamith*, they found in

Italy no religious model but rather a prevalent stagnation, backwardness, and indifference. For example, an article on Trieste in 1839 asserted that the usually favorable image of Italian Jews long held in Germany was in fact now proven at first hand to be completely false, since in religious matters, there was no sense of progress but only lethargy, laxity and negligence, and a gap between teaching and life. Regeneration of religious ways would be difficult, for Italian Jews with their warm hearts and appreciation for beautiful form lacked philosophy and an abstract rational religion.⁷³ To the German mind, these deficiencies were serious; emotion and aesthetics could not compensate for a lack of philosophy and ideology. The German observer saw nothing positive in the many differences in Italian customs and outlook he noted; condescendingly, he expected young Italians to blush with shame when hearing of German developments. Similarly, an article about Verona in 1840 stated: It cannot be denied that the striving for a religious regeneration among the Jews of Italy is also awakened here and there, but it is still neither as generally widespread nor accompanied with such a clear consciousness as in Germany.⁷⁴

And yet, as readers of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* were reminded around the same time, it was not so very long ago, indeed within living memory, that Italian Jews had led the way in religious life and progress: There were times that Italy had advanced further than other European lands in its religious life.

These times are not so distant and still live on in the memories of some oldtimers But now one can hardly take comfort in the idea that it is perhaps only a transitional period of decline in which we live.

75

It was the role played by Italian Jews in the Reform controversies that led to the eventual change in the German perception of Italian Jews. The Germans weaned themselves from the Italian model and declared their own independence, relegating the Italians to backward stagnation and occupying their former vanguard position. At midcentury, Jost saw a great distance between the German and Italian spirits; and looking back over the preceding century, he wrote with confidence and a sense of mission: only German Jews independently followed the course of history Only German Jews have a religious history, they acted not only for themselves, but they also exercised an unmistakable influence on the progress of their other coreligionists.⁷⁶

After the early Reform controversies, German modernizers stopped looking over the Alps for a contemporaneous progressive model. The Italian present was dead as a model, though the distant Italian past, in figures such as Leone Modena and Joseph Delmedigo, construed as freethinkers, might still be serviceable. Insofar as they sought support and legitimation beyond themselves, they turned mostly to their romances and dreams of the distant Sephardic past. German reformers no longer saw contemporary Italians as the latter-day incarnation of the Sephardic progressives. The Italian-Sephardic strands were disentangled, the Italian model jettisoned, and the Sephardic mystique let free to develop fully on its own.

Notes

It is my pleasure to thank Howard Adelman, Israel Bartal, Ernest Benz, Moshe Berger, Scott Bradbury, Benjamin Braude, Anna Foa, Klemens von Klemperer, Michael Meyer, Michael Silber, and Kenneth Stow for their assistance with this essay.

1. David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840* (New York and Oxford, 1987), 104. See especially Ismar Schorsch, The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy, in *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, N.H., and London, 1994), 71-92; originally published in *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 34 (1989): 47-66; and now also Shmuel Feiner, *Sefarad dans les représentations historiques de la Haskala* Entre modernisme et conservatisme, *Mémoires juives d'Espagne et du Portugal*, ed. Esther Benbassa (Paris, 1996), 239-51.

2. Lois C. Dubin, Trieste and Berlin: The Italian Role in the Cultural Politics of the Haskalah, in *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model*, ed. Jacob Katz (New Brunswick, N.J., and Oxford, 1987), 189-224, contains a detailed analysis of the *Divre shalom ve-emet* episode, and of Italian-German relations and perceptions in the late eighteenth century.

3. I. Zoller, *Gli inizi della riforma sinagogale e l'ebraismo italiano 1818-1820* (Trieste, 1919); I. Zoller, Die Anfänge der Reformbewegung und das Judentum in Italien, *Jeschurun* 7 (1920): 387-95; 8 (1921): 300-310; I Zoller, Il maestro di S.D. Luzatto R. Abram

Eliezer Levi e la questione della riforma del culto in Italia, *Rivista Israelitica* 9 (1912): 3748; A. M. Haberman, Be'ayat ha-'ugav bevate kenestet u-teshuvato shel ha-rav Ya'akov Hai Recanati le-Ya'akov Herz Beer aviv shel Giacomo Meyerbeer be-'inyan zeh, *Tatslil* 18 (1978): 2125; Meir Benayahu, Da'at hakhme Italyah 'al ha-neginah be'ugav betefilah, *Asufot* 1 (1987/88): 265318; Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York and Oxford, 1988), 78, 2861; Moshe Samet, Ha-Shinuyim be-sidre bet-ha-kenestet. 'Emdat ha-rabanim keneged ha-'mehadshim' ha-reformim, *Asufot* 5 (1990/91): 345404; and Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, Cenni storici per una ricostruzione del dibattito sulla riforma religiosa nell'Italia ebraica, *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 60 (1993): 4770. None of these previous works integrates all the available material from Central Europe and from Italy in Hebrew, German, and Italian. My analysis also offers some new manuscript material (see nn. 30 and 51, below).

4. Wessely, *Divre shalom ve-emet*, 2: Rav tuv le-vet Yisrael (1782; Vienna, 1826), 26, 55.
5. *Sulamith* 1.1 (1806), 412; also the sources cited in Dubin, Trieste 221, n. 76.
6. See the sources cited in Dubin, Trieste, 2048; also *Hame' assef* 8 (1808/90): 28687, on the advanced state of Jewish education in Italy.
7. M. Bondi, Beitrag zur Geschichte der Herkunft des Gelehrten Hartwig Wessely, *Sulamith* 5.1 (1817/1818): 9495.
8. Isaac Euchel, Igrot Meshulam ben-Uriyah ha-Eshtamoi, *Hame' assef* 6 (1789/90): 17374.
9. *Hame' assef* 5, (1788/89): 25556.

10. For the various sources, see Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1973), 136-37; and Shlomo Simonsohn, *Teguvot ahadot shel yehude Italyah 'al ha-Emantsipatsiyah ha-rishonah ve-'al ha-Haskalah, Italia Judaica, Gli ebrei in Italia dalla segregazione all prima emancipazione* (Rome, 1989), 3:58. A. Lewinsky, *Sulla storia degli ebrei in Italia*, *Rivista Israelitica* 5 (1908): 103, 211-12, mentions that the report appeared also in the *Privilegirte Hildesheimische Zeitung* (8 April and 8 June 1796).

11. Ruth Kestenbergl-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte der Juden in den böhmischen Ländern*, vol. 1, *Das Zeitalter der Aufklärung 1780-1830*, *Schriftenreihe Wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts* 18/1 (Tübingen, 1969), 135-38.

12. *HaMeasef* 7 (1794-97), 271-73; *Mikhteve Ha-rabanim ha-muvhakim . . . be' are Italyah* (Livorno, 1796), and *Getreue Uebersetzung . . . Briefe der Herren Ober-Rabbinen und Aeltesten* (Hamburg, 1796). The Hebrew text was republished by Abraham Meir Vaknin, *Mikhteve rabane Italyah neged reforme Germanyah be-shenat 5556*, *Tsefunot*, 5 (1992-93): 83-88.

13. Ricci letters, 16 April and 30 June 1796 in Maurice Vaussard, *Correspondance Scipione de' Ricci* Henri Grégoire (Florence and Paris, 1963), 15, 20.

14. Simonsohn, *Teguvot*, 616-3; Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy* (Philadelphia, 1946), 443.

15. Sorkin, 888-9. On Jacobson, see Jacob R. Marcus, *Israel Jacobson: The Founder of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Cincinnati, 1972), originally published in *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 38 (1928).

16. David Fränkel, *Ein Paar Worte uber Denkund Pressfreiheit, Sulamith* 1.1 (1806): 32-28.

17. Fränkel, Die Lage der Juden voriger und neuerer Zeiten, *Sulamith* 1.2 (1807): 380.
18. Fränkel, Lage, 372.
19. C. W. Sp[iekers] Ein Wort über die Juden zu Livorno, aus einem Schreiben an den Herausgeber, *Sulamith* 2.1 (1808): 14550.
20. Samet, 352; Meyer, *Response*, 78.
21. *Nogah ha-tsedek* (Dessau, 1818), 313; partial English translations in Alexander Guttmann, *The Struggle over Reform in Rabbinic Literature during the Last Century and a*

Half (New York, 1977), 17789. *Nogah ha-tsedek*, which also contained *pesakim* by Chorin and Kunitz of Hungary, was printed together with Liebermann's own views in *Or nogah* (Dessau, 1818). On Liebermann and the tracts, see Meyer, *Response*, 5051.

22. *Eleh divre ha-brit* (Altona, 1819; reprint Westmead, 1969), 26 (Abraham Eliezer Halevi of Trieste, 25 Tevet 5549), 4546 (Mazal Tov Modena of Modena, 6 Shevat), 4651 (Menahem Azariah Castelnovo, Jacob Luzzatto, Israel Cunian of Padua, 10 Shevat), 52 (Mazliah Moses Ariani of Mantua, 12 Shevat), 6369 (Solomon Malah and ten other rabbis of Livorno, 10 Shevat, and a separate letter from Shem Tov Samun); translated selections in Guttman, 21825. The Livornese letters were reprinted in Daniele Goldschmidt, *Il rabbinato livornese e la riforma del 1818, Scritti sull'ebraismo in memoria di Guido Bedarida* (Florence, 1966), 7786.

23. Moses Sofer, *Hatam Sofer* 6 (Vienna, 1864), nos. 8496, with nos. 88, 89, 91 between Sofer and Halevi in late December 1818mid-January 1819; translated selections in Guttmann, 24251. Also, Solomon Sofer, *Igrot sofrim* (Tel Aviv, 1970), nos. 5459, pp. 4554, including letters from Halevi to Sofer in spring 1820 and spring 1821. On Halevi (c. 17551825), see Benayahu, 300301; Zoller, Maestro and *Inizii*.

24. H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 2nd rev. ed., 11 (Leipzig, 1900), 38182; translation in Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 5 (Philadelphia, 1967), 569. Graetz confused Berlin with Hamburg, Jacobson with Liebermann. For tales of bribery, coercion, and fraud (fueled partially by one Livornese emissary's use of the word *obligated* in connection with his signing [*Nogah ha-tsedek* 7]), see *Eleh divre ha-brit*: introduction, xixii, 2225, 69, and *Hatam Sofer* 6, no. 87.

25. On Jacob Hai [Vita] Recanati (17631824), rabbi and educator in

several communities, see Benayahu, 278, 299300; in addition to his *Piske Recanati ha-ahronim* and many works in manuscript cited there, he also published *Dottrina israelitica esposto con dialogo fra maestro e scolaro* (Verona, 1813). On Shem Tov b. Joseph Hayim ibn Samun, see Benayahu, 278, 29899. Azulai wrote a *haskamah* to 'Edut be-Yehosef (Livorno, 1800), which contained Samun's father's responsa and his own, called Lekah tov. Shem Tov Samun served occasionally in communal judicial posts in Livorno, e.g., in 17971798, 18051806, and 18101811, though not, apparently, in 1816; see also Guido Sonnino, *Il Talmud Torà di Livorno, La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 10 (1935): 196.

26. Abraham Berliner, Be'ayat ha-'ugav be-vet ha-keneset, in *Ketavim nivharim* by Berliner, vol. 1 (original German, Berlin 1904; Jerusalem, 1945), 17576, followed Graetz; though Simon Bernfeld, *Toldot ha-Reformatsiyon ha-datit be-Yisrael* (Cracow, 1900), 7778, considered the responsa authentic, albeit naive, and placed them in the Berlin context. See also Moshe Pelli, From Theory to Practice: First Reform-Temple Controversy (18181819): Methodology Employed by the Hebrew Reformers, in *The Age of Haskalah: Studies in Hebrew Literature* (Leiden, 1979), 91, n. 1, and 9394, n. 14; Meyer, *Response*, 5051, esp. n. 151; Haberman, with text of Recanati's answer from MS, Montefiore (London), no. 483, and Benayahu, 27680, with photocopy of part of it; and Samet, 35155, 36669, esp. 366, n. 127, with explicit corrections of Graetz's errors.

27. *Sulamith* 8.1 (183538): 133, and 5.1 (181618): 6768.

28. Michael Meyer, The Religious Reform Controversy in the Berlin Jewish Community, 18141823, *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 24 (1979): 143.

29. Beginning of MS, Montefiore (London), no. 483, f. 26r (Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Jerusalem, no. 6109) in Benayahu, 279, and Haberman, 22. I read the attesting signature of

the chancellor of the Veronese community as Cuzzeri, not Cuzzien or Cuzzen.

30. Zoller published the 1819 letters from Padua, Venice, and Livorno in his *Inizii*, 2527, 31, and *Anfänge*, 3014, 308 (remainder of the Padua letter in Zoller, *Maestro*, 4546); no one has seen the texts of the 1816 letters themselves. Rabbi Jacob Emanuel Cracovia and other Venetian officials referred to their earlier letter of 1816; Rabbi Emanuel

Castelnuovo and other Paduan officials referred to their letter of 19 November 1816; and Rabbi Solomon Malah and other Livornese officials referred to their letter of 6 December 1816 (comparing the dates given in the various Zoller articles, I've discounted for typographical errors). The Mantuan response of 15 November 1816, which refers to the answers from Padua and Venice, exists as an unpublished manuscript; the late Prof. Steven Schwarzschild graciously alerted me to its existence in his private collection, and I have obtained a copy of it through the kind efforts of his wife. Lily Schwarzschild, and Prof. Marc Saperstein. Interestingly, the 1819 letters of the Mantuan and Veronan rabbis did not refer to their 1816 responses; Zoller, *Inizii*, 2930 and *Anfänge*, 307.

31. On earlier Italian musical traditions which included sometime instrumental accompaniment to the *Shema* and playing on festivals, notably Simhat Torah, and some positive views on the organ see Benayahu, 26571; Hayim Schirmann, *Ha-teatron vеха-musikah be-shekhunot ha-yehudim be-Italyah beyn ha-meah ha-16 le-meah ha-18, Letoldot ha-shirah ve-ha-dramah ha-'ivrit* (Jerusalem, 1979), especially 2:4965; S. Simonsohn, Some Disputes on Music in the Synagogue in Pre-Reform Days, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 34 (1966): 99110.

32. *Nogah ha-tsedek*, 4; Guttman, 179.

33. *Nogah ha-tsedek*, 3; Guttman, 177.

34. *Eleh divre ha-brit*, 67, and Zoller, *Inizii*, 3031 (*Anfänge*, 308).

35. Letters of Cracovia and Castelnuovo in Zoller, *Inizii*, 2527, and *Anfänge*, 3014. On the oft-cited organ in Prague played in similar circumstances, see David Ellenson, A Disputed Precedent. The Prague Organ in Nineteenth-century Central-European Legal Literature and Polemics, *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 40 (1995): 25164.

36. Schwarzschild MS.

37. Meyer, *Response*, 50.

38. *Nogah ha-tsedek*, 3; Guttman, 177.

39. My interpretation agrees partially with different points in Bernfeld, 7778; Benayahu, 27174, 278; Samet, 355; and Pelli, 94; but I differ in not seeing the Italians as defenders of innovation.

40. Samet, 365; Benayahu, 275; *Or Nogah*, pt. 1: 19, where he grouped Italians with Sephardim and Jews in Palestine.

41. On the link, Samet, 370, 372; *Hatam Sofer* 6, no. 84 (in Guttman, 24244). On the Hamburg Temple controversy generally, see Michael Meyer, *Hakamato shel ha-Hekhal be-Hamburg, Perakim be-toldot ha-hevrah ha-yehudit be-yeme ha-benayim uve-'et hahadashah mukdashim le-Professor Ya'akov Katz . . .*, ed. I. Etkes and Y. Salmon (Jerusalem, 1980), 21824, and *Response*, 5361; Samet, 36982.

42. *Eleh divre ha-brit*, title page. On strategy, see also Jacob Katz, *Pulmus ha-Hekhal be-Hamburg ve-asefat BrunschweigAvne derekh be-hithavot ha-Ortodoksiyah, HaHalakhah be-metzar* (Jerusalem, 1992), 4353, and his *The Changing Position and Outlook of Halakhists in Early Modernity*, in *Scholars and Scholarship: The Interaction between Judaism and Other Cultures*, ed. Leo Landman (New York, 1990), 100102.

43. *Eleh divre ha-brit*, 23, 39, on distance, and 1821 for Banet's respectful halakhic disagreement (in contrast to the invective he heaped upon the two Hungarian rabbis).

44. *Eleh divre ha-brit* and the other sources refer to these letters: Hamburg to Livorno, 17 Kislev 5579; Hamburg to Mantua, 25 Kislev; Hamburg to Padua, 1 Tevet; Hamburg to Trieste, 2 Tevet; Hamburg to Modena, date not supplied, but Modena answer 6 Shevat. Halevi was apparently in contact even earlier with a number of Central European

rabbis; *Hatam Sofer* 6, nos. 87, 91; and Samet, 367. On attitude to Livorno, see *Igrot Sofrim* no. 54, p.47.

45. See n. 22, above.

46. *Eleh divre ha-brit*, 6768. Contrary to the editors' assertion on p. xii, the Livornese did acknowledge their earlier *pesak*. The Paduan letter also spoke forcefully against the

organ on the Sabbath and added that instrumental accompaniment to prayer was very rare among Jews, yet noted in an otherwise obscure statement the importance of custom: Playing the organ on a Sabbath, even by a non-Jew, is prohibited in places where this was a previously prohibited practice; Guttman, 5051, *Eleh divre ha-brit*, 4651.

47. *Eleh divre ha-brit*, note on p. xii. They reported inaccurately that Samun had never belonged to the local [Livornese] Bet Din; see n. 25, above.

48. *Igrot Sofrim*, no. 58, pp. 5153, Halevi to Hatam Sofer, Shevat 1820, on Recanati, then in Venice, where he shortly thereafter became a communal rabbi.

49. Samet, 380; Benayahu, 28087; *Eleh divre ha-brit*, 26, 30 (Guttman, 21819); *Hatam Sofer*, 6, nos. 8890. Hatam Sofer himself acknowledged the key impetus provided by Halevi.

50. Letter of Jewish leaders of Trieste to Gorizia, 28 February 1819, in Giuseppe Bolaffio, *Sfogliando l'archivio della Comunità di Gorizia, La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 24 (195758): 6465.

51. Levi at emergency session of Triestine Jewish leaders, 2 March 1819, in Zoller, *Inizii*, 22; see pp. 2125 for the protocols of that session and the consistorial decision of 10 March 1819. Consistorial decision also in Zoller, *Anfänge*, 39395. The Archives of the Jewish Community of Trieste (N. 13, Ufficio Rabbinico) contain a manuscript copy of the consistorial decision (9 March), as well as responses to the initial Trieste warnings of late February from Padua (12 March), Mantua (17 March), and Rovigo (21 March). See Bolaffio, 65, and Zoller, *Inizii*, 1213, for Gorizian response (10 March).

52. Zoller, *Inizii*, 2325; Luzzatto Voghera, 5051.

53. Contrary to the interpretations of Benayahu, 288, and Samet, 380, it was *this* trip of Halevi in March-April 1819 that so impressed the young Shadal; 'Al he-'arim hanidahot, in Samuel David Luzzatto, *Kinor na'im*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1873): 296301, note on p. 296. Texts of letters in Zoller, *Inizii*, 911, 2532, Anfänge, and Maestro. In each community rabbis and lay leaders signed. Among the rabbis were Abram Reggio of Gorizia; Jacob Emanuel Cracovia of Venice; Emanuel Castelnuovo of Padua; Graziadio Neppi of Ferrara; Buona Ventura Modena of Modena; Eliachim Padovani, Anania Coen, and I. Carmi of Reggio; and Salamon Malah of Livorno.

54. Verona in Zoller, *Inizii*, 30. For orthodox and heterodox, see Zoller, *Inizii*, 21, 25, and Anfänge, 306; also Padua letter 12 March in Archives of the Jewish Community of Trieste. *Heterodox* was used with respect to the Berlin worship services; *orthodox* with respect to the Hamburg rabbis and to religion itself.

55. Here I disagree with the interpretation in Samet, 381.

56. Letter from Abraham Reggio of Gorizia to Trieste, in Zoller, *Inizii*, 1213, where he used the Hebrew phrase *mi-bayit u-mi-bahuts* in the middle of his Italian letter.

57. See Lois Dubin, *Les Liaisons dangereuses: Mariage juif et État moderne à Trieste au XVIIIe siècle*, *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 49 (1994): 113970, and forthcoming in English: *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, 1998), chap. 8.

58. On Liebermann and the Viennese leaders, see Michael Silber, *The Historical Experience of German Jewry and Its Impact on Haskalah and Reform in Hungary*, in *Toward Modernity*, ed. Katz, 122. On Beer and Homberg, see Reuven Fahn, *Kitve Reuven Fahn*, vol. 2, *Pirke Haskalah* (Stanislav, 1937): 153; and Frantisek Roubík, *Drei Beiträge zur Entwicklung der Judenemanzipation in Böhmen*, *Jahrbuch der*

Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Cechoslovakischen Republik 5 (1933): 31624 (I thank Michael Brenner and Hillel Kieval for sending me these materials). The 1820 decree was the specific context for Halevi's letters to Hatam Sofer in the spring of 1820 and 1822, *Igrot Sofrim*, nos. 5859, pp. 5154. For the 1820 decree and Jewish response to it, see Zoller, *Inizii*, 1317, 3233, and *Anfänge*, 39092, and Luzzatto Voghera, 5253, 6768. (Decree also in A. F. Pribram, *Urkunden und Akten zur Geschichte der Juden in Wien*, [Vienna and

Leipzig, 1918], 2:3056). Silber has stressed that at this time Habsburg officials were more sympathetic than Prussian ones to Jewish religious reform, and has urged reconsideration of the question of Protestant and Catholic contexts.

59. *Igrot sofrim*, no. 58, pp. 5152. In fact, these letters were not published until Zoller unearthed them in the Triestine archives a century later; he published the Italian originals in *Inizii* and the German translation in *Anfänge*. Subsequently they were cited only by Luzzatto Voghera, but until now not integrated with other sources on the controversies.

60. Here I disagree with Benayahu, 280, 285, and am closer to Luzzatto Voghera, 51.

61. See S. D. Luzzatto, 296301, on the importance of Hebrew in prayer and harsh criticism of Berlin reformers for their neglect of it.

62. Benayahu, 29297.

63. Dubin, Trieste, 195.

64. On the mismatch between scholarly views of Italy held by outsiders and Italian realities, well into the twentieth century, see Robert Bonfil, The Historian's Perception of the Jews in the Italian Renaissance. Towards a Reappraisal, *Revue des Études Juives* 143 (1984): 5982, and his *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Anthony Oldcorn (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1994).

65. Jacob Katz, Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 317, and Moshe Samet, The Beginnings of Orthodoxy, *Modern Judaism* 8 (1988): 24969.

66. *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 2 (11 October 1838): 494.

67. For a succinct statement on the absence of a Reform movement in

Italy, see Meyer, *Response*, 16364, and the works cited there. Also relevant are M. E. Artom, Tentativi di riforma in Italia nel secolo scorso e analisi del fenomeno nel presente, *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 42 (1976), 35566, Meir Benayahu, *Yom tov sheni shel galuyot* (Jerusalem, 1987), 3145, 5496, and Luzzatto Voghera.

68. Norman A. Stillman, *Sephardi Religious Responses to Modernity*, Sherman Lecture Series 1 (Luxembourg, 1995), 20, 47. Further material for comparison can be found in Marc D. Angel, *Voices in Exile: A Study in Sephardic Intellectual History*, The Library of Sephardic History and Thought (Hoboken, N.J., and New York, 1991), 15063, 17996; José Faur, Sephardim in the Nineteenth Century: New Directions and Old Values, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 44 (1977): 2952; and Zvi Zohar, Halakhic Responses of Syrian and Egyptian Rabbinical Authorities to Social and Technological Change, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 1851, and *Masoret u-temurah hitmodedut hakhme Yisrael be-Mitsrayim u-ve-Suryah 'im etgare ha-modernizatsya 18801920* (Jerusalem, 1993).

69. Israel Bartal, Berurim be-shule taskir kollel ha-Sephardim be-Yerushalayim mishenat 5615, *Zion* 43 (1978): 97118, esp. 11718, and Une aristocratie sur le déclin: les Sépharades de Palestine dans le regard ashkénaze, *Mémoires*, ed. Benbassa, 25359.

70. See Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies* (New York, 1990), esp. 27778 for links between the anti-Sabbatian and anti-Reform polemics.

71. S. D. Luzzatto, 296, drawing on Lamentations and Deut. 13.

72. Paolo Colbi, Gli Ebrei italiani alla vigilia del Risorgimento (leggendo la *Rivista Israelitica* annate 184547), *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 29 (1963): 441; see also Dubin, Trieste, 21011.

73. *Israelitische Annalen* 1 (8 March 1839): 79. Continuation of

article in 1:98, 15152, 157.

74. *Israelitische Annalen* 2 (24 April 1840): 150.

75. *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 3 (15 January 1839): 25.

76. I. M. Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Sekten*, vol. 3, pts. 68 (Leipzig, 1859), 28687. On distance, see his *Culturgeschichte der Israeliten der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Breslau, 1846), 63.

14

Interminably Maligned: The Conventional Lies about Jewish Doctors

John M. Efron

From his first book on Isaac Cardoso to his most recent on Sigmund Freud, Yosef Yerushalmi's work has demonstrated an abiding interest in the Jewish physician. He has, with great success, articulated the complex interrelationship of medicine and Jewish identity, demonstrating that the doctor was a crucial figure on the Jewish social landscape, not only in terms of his professional choice but of what that choice says about the cultural and social values of Judaism.

In particular, Yerushalmi has been especially astute in identifying the role of the doctor in the post-Expulsion project of Jewish self-definition and selfexamination. In writing of his choice of subject in *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, he noted: I became extremely curious to find out more about the two lives of Cardoso, that of the Spanish physician and that of the passionate Jewish apologist, and to seek out, if possible, some of the strands that united the two in the same person.

¹ As a physician and a modern Jew, Freud's contribution to the problem was mightily significant, prompting Yerushalmi to declare: My own preoccupation with *Moses and Monotheism* arises out of a profound interest in the various modalities of modern Jewish historicism, of that quest for the meaning of Judaism and Jewish identity.² Even in his influential *Zakhor*, which does not treat of doctors, the examination of the exponents of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and their larger social and cultural enterprise constitutes an

analysis of the links between Wissenschaft (in this case historical, not biological science) and Jewish identity and can thus be seen as a variation on a theme.³

Yerushalmi's research and teaching, though certainly not confined to the above problem, has both profoundly and elegantly demonstrated continuity and inner logic. Not just in terms of the broad, though intimately linked categories of medicine and Jewish identity can Yerushalmi's oeuvre be seen as of a stripe. The protagonists he has chosen to examine, Cardoso and Freud, share certain affinities that serve to make them compelling and comparable Jewish intellectuals. First, both were philosophically and humanistically inclined scientists who enjoyed stellar reputations both within and without Jewish society. (Freud, to be sure, was not without his critics.) Second, both hailed from environments that in their respective eras saw a genuine flowering of Jewish culture and life and the

emergence of a dominant Jewish social archetype the physician. Third, while the Iberian Peninsula of the pre-Expulsion era and Central Europe at the fin de siècle provided the setting for Jewish cultural and economic prosperity, they were also hostile places, riddled with antisemitism. Both Cardoso and Freud were deeply stung by it; and although it was certainly more overt in the case of the former, both were indefatigable defenders of their people. Whether in the form of published apologia, as with Cardoso, or comments made by Freud at the card table or addresses before an attentive audience at a B'nai B'rith lodge, both men displayed hurt and were repulsed by Jew hatred.

For both men, the church and its teachings were a source of evil. In muted, self-protective tones, Cardoso bitterly declared that human reason clearly proves that there cannot be many gods, *nor that God can be a man*.⁴ With no inhibition whatsoever, Freud declared in his work on the origins of Judaism, *Moses and Monotheism*: The Catholic Church . . . has so far been the implacable enemy of all freedom of thought and has resolutely opposed any idea of this world being governed by advance towards the recognition of truth!⁵ Allied to their anti-Christian views is the significant role that Italy played in the lives of the two men. For Cardoso, who arrived in Venice from Spain in 1648 in order to publicly profess Judaism, Italy was a place of physical refuge and spiritual liberation. For Freud, Italy played a more symbolic yet, in its own way, equally liberating role. It was principally the site of his fantasies about Jewish heroism. He said as much to his friend Wilhelm Fliess, to whom he confided: By the way, my longing for Rome is deeply neurotic. It is connected with my schoolboy enthusiasm for the Semitic hero Hannibal . . . Hannibal and Rome symbolized for the youth the contrast between the tenacity of Jewry and the organization of the Catholic Church.⁶

Despite the lengthy periods both spent in their respective countries of

birthFreud until the eleventh hourneither was a participant in that oft-mentioned unrequited love affair that entrapped so many of their fellow Jews in both lands. The cruel side of life for Jews in Spain and Austria was painfully apparent to both men. In fact, to a great extent, the intellectual *Lebenskampf* of these two Jewish doctors was impelled by the peculiar enmity to which their people were subjected in these two beneficent, seductive, yet dangerous environments.⁷

A final characteristic unites Cardoso and Freud with regard to antisemitism, and it is this: the medical antisemitism Freud both observed and experienced as a Jewish resident of the Habsburg capital in general and as a student at the University of Vienna in particular was, even taking into account obvious differences, almost identical to that addressed by Isaac Cardoso in his *Las Excelencias y Calunias de los Hebreos*.⁸ This is to say that antisemitism that took as its subject the Jewish physician and his supposed failings remained tenacious libels in Germany.

In fact, so deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness of German medical elites was Jewish medical malfeasance that what Freud and his fellow German and Austrian Jewish doctors experienced was not novel, and they knew it. For hundreds of years before them, Jewish doctors had had to cope with the

slanders. As Central European Jewish physicians at the turn of the century, what they experienced in terms of hostility struck them as a sort of discursive red thread that wound its way from the Middle Ages on, through the early modern period, and into the heated and tense atmosphere of late-nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century Germany and Austria.

It is my contention that from its medieval emergence to its decline with the defeat of the Third Reich, German medical antisemitism constitutes one of Europe's most enduring and least studied anti-Jewish discourses. Tracing the continuity of this language and imagery is one of the principal aims of this essay. Further, the remarkable longevity of this antisemitic trope serves to link the Cardoso-era polemics to those of Freud's day. Needless to say, in making this claim, I do not subscribe to a crudely simplistic Luther to Hitler argument. Rather, I would suggest that in this one are medical antisemitism German polemicists, as opposed to the Gentile patients who allowed themselves to be treated by Jewish doctors, displayed an obsessive, centuries-long fixation that has no European corollary.

Finally, while Spain may have been the first, Germany served as the final locus for a working out of some of the most important issues that can be said to link Cardoso and Freud antisemitism, the status of the Jewish doctor, and the role that both play in the larger quest of interpreting the meaning of Jewish identity.

The level of medical antisemitism in Germany in the early modern period proved exceptional. It was intense and constant and had institutional as well as cultural ramifications. While universities in Italy from the sixteenth century and those in Holland from the

seventeenth displayed tolerance in accepting Jewish medical students, some discrimination notwithstanding, Germany was home to an exclusivist admissions policy.¹⁰ It was 1678 before the first Jews, Tobias Cohen and Gabriel Felix of Poland, were admitted to study at a German medical school and they only because it was hoped that their exposure to Christian students would result in their own conversion.¹¹ While this scenario never came to fruition, the two, and others like them who gained admission to Protestant universities such as Halle (1695), Giessen (1697), Duisberg (1708), and Marburg (1710), took courses at these institutions but actually completed their degrees principally at either Padua or Leiden.¹² Progress was slow. The first Jew to formally graduate from a German medical school was Moses Salomon Gomperz, who took his medical degree at Frankfurt an der Oder in 1721.¹³

A number of factors account for the late appearance of German-trained Jewish doctors; they include the late centralization of the German state and its subsequent need for physicians, the rather backward state of medicine in German lands, and the fact that Jews were barred from Catholic universities until the last third of the eighteenth century.¹⁴ But in the main, Jews were prevented from pursuing medical studies in Germany for as long as they were because of the

lingering association of Jewish doctors with malpractice and a deep-seated belief in their concerted desire to bring harm to their Christian patients.

Between 1530 and 1700, that is, from the publication of Antonius Margaritha's *Der gantz jüdisch Glaub* to Johann Andreas Eisenmenger's notorious *Entdecktes Judentum*, a steady stream of medical antisemitica poured forth from the pens of German polemicists. The Aufklärung of the eighteenth century provided brief respite from the attacks, for they began again in the last third of the nineteenth century and reached their peak under the Nazis.

¹⁵ It is not known whether in exile and in his old age Freud read the following poem in Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer* as it appeared in 1938, but if he did not, he was certainly familiar with the sentiment and even the language. Because of their antiquity, prosaic quality, and commonplaceness, Freud had heard these notions previously, for they were standard weapons in the arsenal of antisemites. Moreover, such is the case that both the content and mode of expression of the charges made in the 1930s would have been entirely familiar to Isaac Cardoso and his contemporaries, especially in Germany, were they able to have read them:

Den Judenarzt im deutschen Land
 hat uns der Teufel hergesandt.
 Und wie der Teufel schändet er
 die deutsche Frau, die deutsche Ehr.
 Das deutsche Volk wird nicht gesunden,
 wenn es nicht bald den Weg gefunden
 zu deutscher Heilkunst, deutschem Sinn,
 zum deutschen Arzte fürderhin.¹⁶

This clear juxtaposition of German and Jewish physicians and the

claim that Jews possessed radically different agendas from non-Jews and mutually exclusive and incompatible Weltanschauungen was not, however, a Nazi invention. Nor was it even an innovation of the twentieth century. In the abovementioned *Der gantz jüdisch Glaub* (1530), the work of the Jewish convert Antonius Margaritha, grandson of Jacob Margoliot, the famed halakhist and rabbi of Regensburg, the Jewish doctor is depicted as a type whose poor training guaranteed his inferiority, making him qualitatively different from his Christian counterpart and an obvious danger to German patients. Deriding the poor Latin of Jewish doctors and their substandard education, Margaritha maintained that there has never been a German, Bohemian, or Hungarian Jewish doctor who even saw a Hebrew translation of Avicenna, Galen, and Hippocrates, let alone read one, and even less likely in Latin. Nor have they read any other medical books They have a few small [medical] books in German, written in Hebrew characters, and have some knowledge of roots and herbs, which they learned from their fathers and grandfathers.

And in what would become a mantra among such writers, Margaritha accused Jews of pretending to be doctors so as to enrich themselves at the expense of Christians.¹⁷ In fact, this very charge would be repeated constantly and verbatim. As an anonymous poet put it in 1573,

Wenn sie sich für Artzner aubgeben
 So lassen sie gwib kein Christen leben
 Nur dab
 sie uberkommen Gelt
 Das ist ihr Gott in dieser Welt.

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When intense economic competition erupted in Germany among physicians in the late nineteenth century, this was one of the most commonly heard accusations, becoming conflated with the broader discourse of economic antisemitism manufactured by both the political Right and the Left.¹⁹

The epistemological foundation of Jewish medical practice was ever under attack and a constant source of Christian complaint. Paracelsus, one of the sixteenth century's most distinguished physicians, decried the intellectual ability of Jewish doctors in his *Labyrinthus Medicorum* (1538), noting that they had no particular aptitude for medicine. He mocked them for claiming to be the foremost and most ancient medical practitioners among all peoples, when in fact they were merely the oldest rogues among all nations. Not to the Jews, he concludes, but to the Gentiles was medicine given. They are the most ancient doctors.²⁰ Exactly fifty years later, David de Pomis, the Italian Jewish physician would write in response to this very claim: Did not the art of medicine exist among the Jews nearly 1,500 years before the time of Apollo, Aesculapius and Hippocrates is clear to him who studies the Law of Moses . . . [M]edicine was discovered first among the Jews, only later among the other nations.²¹

One year after Paracelsus, in 1539, Martin Luther himself laid charges against the Jewish doctor: The Jews, who pass themselves off as doctors, kill Christians, who need to be healed by them, for they

believe they serve God when they severely injure them and secretly kill them. And we, crazy fools, in danger of our lives, take refuge among our enemies and hateful [opponents], and thus tempt God.²²

While the Reformation engendered intra-Christian disputatiousness and irreconcilable division, bitter enemies on both sides of the religious dispute were nevertheless able to agree on the supposed evil of the Jewish physician. Luther's charges, for example, were repeated by his archnemesis, Johannes Eck. In his *Ains Jüden büechelins verlegung* (1541), the author lambasted Christians who naively put their trust in poorly trained German Jewish physicians whose aim it was to murder them. In particular, he writes: I am speaking of disloyal German Jews, and not those [foreign Jews] who studied medicine in other countries. How can [an untrained German] Jew know anything more than an old woman herbalist [*ain jedes alts kreüterweyb*]. . . . How can they become good doctors if they are not scholars and do not know the art of the inherent quality of things and their effect.²³

With much of the early modern polemical literature written by physicians, an image was created of the Jewish doctor as a murderously evil charlatan, a professional incompetent, an introducer of the devil to Germany. He was a viceridden, depraved criminal, enmeshed in ruthless competition with German physicians.²⁴

Yet locked in dialectical tension with these views was the fact that, throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern period, Jews succeeded in building for themselves wonderful reputations as skilled physicians. This derived principally from their role as practitioners. What can explain this? First is the enormous number of Jewish physicians, perhaps as many as 50 percent of all doctors. With that many people engaged in patient observation and treatment, Jewish doctors rapidly developed a well-deserved reputation for their clinical talents. Their exposure to so many sick people provided them with invaluable experience and knowledge. A related point has to do with the peripatetic nature of medieval Jewish doctors. In their travels to other communities and correspondence with a wide array of medical and rabbinical personalities from all over Europe, Jewish physicians shared information with one another, thus bringing to each other's attention medical conditions the other had never seen and unfamiliar treatments, thus improving the overall level of medical care they could provide.

As a consequence, Jewish doctors enjoyed public recognition both within the narrow confines of Jewish society and far beyond its limits, serving kings, princes, members of the aristocracy, and even popes. In fact, the majority of late medieval and Renaissance popes had Jewish physicians in the medical retinues at their service.

²⁵ There is, of course, a paradoxical nature to medieval Jewish medical practice. While governmental and church officials employed Jewish physicians to care for them because of the widespread belief in their superiority, church councils simultaneously banned Christian commoners from being treated by Jewish doctors for fear that Christian patients might be tempted to convert and also because of their belief in the murderous intent of Jewish doctors.²⁶ As the Jewish convert Samuel Friedrich Brenz warned his readers in his *Jüdischer*

abgestreifter Schlangenbalg (1614), the more goyim the Jewish doctor kills the higher into Grace he comesthat is, in heaven or paradise And when the Jewish doctor kills as many Christians as corresponds to the numerical value of his Hebrew name, so does he receive a reward, just as does he who circumcises Jewish children.²⁷

Despite church sanctions, the intimate proximity to seats of power served to expand the role played by Jewish doctors. They were not only called upon to heal but soon became royal confidants, advisors, and even shapers of policy. The formation of these medical vertical alliances only exacerbated tensions and fostered the jealousy of Christian doctors. In addition, Jewish physicians were able to use their positions to intercede on behalf of the Jewish community when necessary. Consequently, during the High Middle Ages, there developed a mystique about the Jewish doctor, one expressed in the belief that they make the best physicians.

Ironically, the positive evaluation of the Jewish doctor emerges contemporaneously with the widespread distrust and hatred for him as expressed by antisemitic polemicists.²⁸ Both notions find their provenance in the Middle Ages, and aspects of each soon became firmly embedded into the historical consciousness and memory of Jews and Gentiles alike.²⁹

The roots of this sense that the Jewish doctor was somehow special have to do

with the Janus-faced representation of the Jewish physician in Gentile imagination. The mystique derives from the fact that, on the one hand, the Jewish doctor was clearly a respected individual. His above-listed employers are testament to that. Moreover, he was held in esteem because his knowledge of Hebrew and its purported esoteric properties gave him access to privileged information.

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In addition, the deep association of Jews with magic and sorcery made Jewish physicians, in Christian eyes, uniquely qualified to heal in a paranormal way.³¹ For example, it was said of Zedekiah, court physician to Emperor Charles the Bald at the end of the ninth century, that he could fly. His legend grew with time. In 1378, Johannes, abbot of Trittenheim, declared that Zedekiah once threw a man into the air, tore him there into pieces, piled his organs into a heap, and then joined them together again. All this was said to have occurred without the slightest harm having come to the man.³² Overall, the mystique that enveloped the Jewish doctor served to make him feared yet desirable at one and the same time.

But despite his curative talents, the negative image of the Jewish doctor was never far from the surface. With the claim that Jews were proficient demonologists and in league with the devil, they were said to have used their positions as doctors more often the literature accused them of being impostors to harm Christian patients. As the Protestant preacher Bernhard Waldschmidt said in his polemic against those who employed magic and incantations to heal (*Pythonissa Endorea . . . Hexen-und Gespenst-Predigten*, 1660): Among us [Christians] there are so many who . . . , in their illness seek the help and advice of Jewish doctors. . . . In case God, through his means, does not bring quick relief, or does not respond with real help when

they ask His advice, or use Christian doctors first, they give up on God and turn to the Devil and his tools, Jewish doctors.³³

Other polemicists introduced accusations of Jewish medical malpractice based on the association of Jews and Kabbalah. In 1634 and in a second edition that appeared as late as 1721, Ananias Horer in his *Artzney-Teuffel* told his readers that, without conscience, [Jews] slander and defame Christ on a daily basis, as they do all Christians, whom they also kill . . . primarily with medicine . . . , which they learn (along with philosophy), from their secret laws which are codified in books but have transmitted orally to their progeny. For that reason, to this day, they can bring forth none of these [murderous skills] without their Kabbalah and Talmud which is [*sic*] nothing more than a patchwork, beggar's-coat of lies.³⁴

In 1631 the lawyer and physician Ludwig von Hörnigk published his *Medicaster Apella oder Juden Artzt*, a diatribe against medical impostors and charlatans. In this tract the Jews occupied pride of place in his list of evildoers. A common expression says: Wherever Christ our Lord builds his church, next door does the devil build his chapel. The same can be said of the noble art of medicine. For alongside responsible medical practitioners, there are, according to von Hörnigk, a host of culprits practicing quackery for gain or even worse. Worst among them, he declares, are godless, accursed, Christian-hating Jews. While von Hörnigk sees all those he accuses as of a piece, he notes that Jewish doctors

in Germany (*Judenärzten in Teutschland*) are worse than the others and also represent a group that had degenerated from its excellent status as God-fearing and God-beloved during the time of the Old Testament, having become in the eyes of God and the whole world a maledicted and damnable people [*ein vermaledeytes und verfluchtes Voick*].³⁵

In the early modern period, economic motives emerge alongside older theological ones. In a second work on the evils of the Jewish doctor published in 1638, von Hörnigk noted that not only did Jews prescribe medications for Christians, they prepared them as well and thus took the opportunity to overcharge them two to three times the true value of the drugs. With arrogant confidence, von Hörnigk announced, that Jewish doctors do this almost everyday is so clear that it does not require proof.³⁶

Hamburg was the site of intense competition between Sephardic and Christian physicians. One of the latter, Jakob Martini, sought to demonstrate in his *Apella Medicaster Bullatus Oder Judenartzt* (1636, 2nd ed., 1733), the peculiar relationship between the Jews and medicine.³⁷ He noted that the profession provided the perfect opportunity for the Jews to give full expression to their inherently charlatan behavior. His allusion to disguise, true identity, and social status is a particular comment on his city's Iberian Jews: It is an avaricious, Jewish trick to pass oneself off as a doctor, and not as any other educated man, for the Jew knows that no other discipline will serve him as well in his greed as does medicine. In particular, continued Martini, Jews preferred to serve the upper classes and other prominent people, for it was among them that their greed could be most conveniently satisfied.³⁸

Doubtless, one of the most uncompromising diatribes against Jewish physicians was *Gewissen-loser Juden-Doctor* (1698), written under

the pseudonym Christian Treumundt. In the extremeness of its language and in the relentlessly vile images the author conjures up, it has few equals. Treumundt raised a number of themes that became future staples of all antisemitic discourse but particularly that aimed at Jewish doctors. The first is repulsiveness. He paints a disgusting picture of Jewish medical students, repeatedly referring to them as impudent, stinking, snotty-nosed Jews [*Rotz-Näsigte Jüden-Bub*].

In addition, he talks about the attraction of Jews to medicine. According to Treumundt, the first thing that motivates the Jewish medical student is the chance to clean out or hold the urine glass of an older accursed Jewish doctor, the one under whom the student passes his apprenticeship. This claim about the Jews' desire was part of a larger and older coprophilic iconography and discourse about the Jews, the most notorious example being the infamous *Judensau*, those vile images of Jews engaged in various acts of bestiality. Dating from the thirteenth century, pictorial representations of this were carved into church exteriors, on the undersides of wooden pews, on bridges and on town halls and distributed in the form of illustrations throughout Germany.³⁹ It was into this vein of representation that Treumundt tapped when making reference to the urophiliac proclivities of Jewish medical students.

For Treumundt, Jewish doctors and their families were implicated in a conspiracy of greed. It is for the mere sake of gain that Jewish parents encourage their children to enter this money-making profession Through unacceptable, yet transparent means, they devilishly suck money from Christians, writes Treumundt. Relying here on positively medieval imagery, the author portrays the Jewish doctor as vampire and usurer, bleeding Gentiles of their money. And finally, there is once again the supposed ignorance of Jews, manifest by their inability to speak and write Latin. Calling them donkeys, Treumundt complains that Jews *mauschel*, that is, they speak German with a Yiddish accent.

⁴⁰ Treumundt used the word to decry the orthographic and discursive Latin errors that Jewish doctors made and belittled their linguistic and medical skills when he unfavorably compared these with what he deemed to be the superior faculties of the Christian physician.⁴¹

Here Treumundt's accusation is reminiscent of that made by the Hamburg pastor, theologian, and school inspector Johann Müller in *Judaismus oder Judenthum* (1644). There, Müller concedes that it may be that a few of them [Jewish doctors] have studied well and thoroughly, and even written books on medicine, but that is extremely rare The majority are inexperienced asses who hardly know how to write and read a line of German, not to mention the simplest word in Latin and the other languages necessary for medicine.⁴²

The ideas expressed by these virulent critics of Jewish physicians were not the isolated opinions of a handful. There are scores of German texts written by physicians and laymen that refer unfavorably to the Jewish physician. What constituted concomitant popular opinion as manifest in folkloric song, verse, jokes, and remarks remain lost to history but surely were once extant.

There is no doubt that German polemicists harbored a deep-seated fear and loathing of the Jewish physician. The themes of animus were pervasive, the sentiments widely shared. The intention here has not been to isolate Germany as though it were the only country that expressed such misgivings about and hostility toward the Jewish physician. Sadly, such thoughts were almost universal. From Italy, for example, came one of the earliest Jewish responses to discrimination, *De Medico Hebraeo Enarratio Apologica* (Venice, 1588), by the abovementioned David de Pomis. Confidently, the author stated: No one has ever witnessed any crime by a Jewish physician. . . . It is only because of a common prejudice that we are accused and suffer injury. Later, he wryly asks, Why have princes and prelates sought Jewish physicians? Because of their crimes and wrongdoings or because of their ability and their good treatment?⁴³ In fact, although Cardoso's impassioned apologia, *Las excelencias de los Hebreos* (Amsterdam, 1679), clearly betrays a concern with Peninsula antisemitism, it also addresses, even if by default, many of the specific accusations made by the German polemicists, even though Cardoso was probably not familiar with the German material. Nevertheless, he was certainly aware of the principal themes and may even have been alerted to the tenor of the German argumentation, for it bore fundamental similarities to the charges found in the Iberian literature. The two

genres also share tonal qualities. In distinguishing between early modern Italian and Iberian antisemitism, the former with its decided emphasis on conversion, Yosef Yerushalmi has observed that *only* the German literature of the day approached the Hispano-Portuguese in its virulence.

44 Here is yet another curious link in the chain that distinguishes while simultaneously unites Spanish and German Jewry as well as Iberian and German antisemitism.⁴⁵

Of all the Jewish apologists with Peninsula origins only Benedict de Castro of Hamburg responded directly to a German detractor. De Castro's *Flagellum calumniatum* of 1631 was a rebuttal of Joachim Curtius's diatribe against Jewish physicians, *Exhortatio celeberr. et excellentis* (1631). Ludwig von Hörnigk's *Medicaster Apella oder Juden Artzt* was also published in 1631. De Castro's response may well have been prompted in part by the generally tense atmosphere that existed between German and Sephardic physicians in Hamburgone that prompted the appearance of Jakob Martini's hateful *Apella Medicaster Bullatus oder Juden Artzt* (1636).

What is most important is that, although other countries produced equally hostile discourse, it was in Germany that it enjoyed the greatest longevity. Nearly all the medieval and early modern ideas pertaining to Jewish medical wizardry, quackery, avariciousness, murderousness, and incompetence are repeated with striking faithfulness to the original charges well into the twentieth century.

Now, however, there were two principal differences: one intellectual and one structural. Largely gone from the modern variant was the charge of heresy and deicide. A secularized environment saw the curtailment of the theological grounds for dispute. But adding to the

potency of the new literature was the means by which it was disseminated. As opposed to the Middle Ages and early modern period, which saw the narrow distribution of small-run pamphlets in a largely preliterate society, the medical antisemitism of Freud's day appeared in mass-circulation newspapers, thus reaching a wider audience than ever before. The antisemitic press took up the cause of German doctors and waged a relentless campaign against Jewish physicians.

Ancient charges against Jews were resuscitated. For example, the cholera epidemics that struck Hamburg in 1892 and again in 1905 were blamed on Russian Jewish immigrants. Conservative agitators sought to have Germany's borders closed to incoming Jews. As one newspaper put it, Russia may wish to keep its infected Jews to itself, just as it may its infected pigs.⁴⁶ Not only were Jews accused of promoting the epidemics but of profiting from them as well. Not coincidentally, it was claimed, business activity increased for Jewish-owned pharmaceutical concerns that produced cholera vaccines.⁴⁷

The medieval charge of well poisoning was revived and given a modern guise in this age of germ and virus discovery. Freud's Vienna was the site of the exceptionally resilient and vitriolic charge that Jewish physicians were engaged in research designed to kill Christians. Jewish physicians were constantly singled out in the antisemitic press as bloodthirsty, cruel, greedy, hate-filled avengers, employing their expertise to exact retribution for Jewish suffering at the hands of

Christian Europe. Charges included patient neglect, the deliberate inoculation of Christians with doses of plague and other diseases, vivisection, and Jewish responsibility for the passage of legislation in 1884 requiring compulsory inoculation against smallpox. Antisemites believed the vaccination was actually a Jewish plot to infect the German race.

⁴⁸ Additionally, the storm over Jewish ritual slaughter of animals that erupted in the last third of the nineteenth century and came to involve government investigations and scientific committees was presented by opponents as a modern variant of the blood libel. Leading the crusade were animal protection societies charging that *shehita* was cruel and constituted animal torture. The discourse of the opponents was strikingly similar to that of the defamers of Jewish physicians. And the cries of Jewish bloodthirstiness and inhumanity were ironically met by Jewish defenders of *shehita* with claims that echoed the early modern language of the apologia written on behalf of Jewish doctors. In this case, the Jewish method of slaughter was touted as being of superior moral and humanitarian worth to the non-Jewish one.⁴⁹

In the age of mass movements, mass politics, and unionization of labor, old charges were accompanied by suggestions of new tactics advocating Christian solidarity and collective mobilization as a means of combating the presence of Jews in medicine. Specifically, the new literature offered instruction to German doctors on what to do about Jewish competition:

As a result of the overgrowth of the Jewish element, the reputation of doctors has sunk deeply. So long as Aryan doctors do not come to the complete conviction that there can be no alliance with Jewish powers, that with their [Jewish] collegiality, the Christian doctor will always be the sacrifice; in short, so long as Aryan doctors do not form a tight bond with one another in opposition to Jewish machinations and Jewish hypocrisy,

and so long as there are Jews in medicine, the poverty of the medical class will not disappear. Aryan doctors must unanimously rise up and expose the machinations of Jewish doctors to the public. They should then persuade the Volk to only use Aryan doctors.⁵⁰

As stated above, Jewish doctors of Isaac Cardoso's time would have, with few exceptions, been able to relate to most of the calumnies hurled at Jewish doctors in Sigmund Freud's day. The most common charges heard at the fin de siècle were ancient. We hear again the accusation that Jews took up medicine so as to enrich themselves; that they were technically incompetent; that their religion and even race made them unfit to treat Christian patients; that even conversion failed to make the Jewish physician qualified to occupy academic and hospital appointments; that, as with Spanish *colegios mayores*, German *Burschenschaften* likewise found Jewish students ineligible for membership; that the significant proportion of Jews in medical practice served only to bring the entire profession into disrepute; and that their lack of patriotism belied a secret and sinister agenda, made most manifest in their deliberately spreading infectious diseases.

The longevity and continuity in Germany of malevolent discourse about Jewish physicians is certainly due to concrete sociohistorical factors. These included mutual, medieval Christian and Jewish proscriptions against social intimacy between the two groups, deeply held Christian beliefs that associated Jews with

magic and devilry, economic competition, professional jealousy, and disproportionate Jewish participation in medicine. On this last point, it seems that the stunning tenacity of hatred toward Jewish doctors is matched only by the remarkably consistent numbers involved. As they did in certain medieval towns, so too did Jews in fin-de-siècle Berlin and Vienna comprise about 50 percent to 60 percent of all medical practitioners. Few other occupations that Jews have ever engaged in can claim such loyalty and steady popularity. But hatred for the Jewish doctor also had a mythic quality. In Germany the idea of Jewish medical criminality took on the form and aspect of a tradition. There was created a canon and a set of fundamental principles to which adherents subscribed in all their minute detail and transmitted over time from one generation to the next. Although deeply rooted, the perverted medieval and early modern ideas about Jewish doctors fell somewhat dormant in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, or, to use the language of psychoanalysis, were repressed. The general atmosphere of increased tolerance that accompanied the Enlightenment and Jewish emancipation saw the production of fewer works dedicated to defaming the Jewish physician. But toward the end of the nineteenth century, as Germany began to reject its Enlightenment tradition in favor of a deeply inward-looking nationalism and romanticism, the general tenor of *volkish* antisemitism increased, and with it, the attacks on the Jewish doctor began anew.

⁵¹ On the return of this all too briefly repressed tradition, we can turn to the words of Sigmund Freud. In his *Moses and Monotheism*, itself written under the shadow of the Third Reich, Freud wrote of the nature of religious tradition and the mechanism of its transmission. He observed that it must first have undergone the fate of being repressed, the condition of lingering in the unconscious, before it is able to display such powerful effects on its return and force the masses under

its spell.⁵² This judgment is also of value in trying to assess the long history of medical antisemitism in Germany. After emerging with a vengeance in the sixteenth century, it became a briefly repressed tradition in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, only to reemerge with vehemence at the fin de siècle and just beyond.

Notes

1. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso. A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (Seattle, 1981), xv.
2. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, Conn., 1991), 2.
3. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982).
4. Yerushalmi, *Spanish Court*, 411.
5. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (London, 1951), 90.
6. Quoted in Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York, 1988), 132.
7. As Dennis Klein has noted, Freud's Jewish consciousness in the 1880s laid the foundation for his positive psychoanalytic movement. See his *Jewish Origins of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (Chicago, 1985), 62.
8. Yerushalmi, *Spanish Court*, 41372. Yerushalmi has also suggested that while it

might not have occupied him constantly, Cardoso must have been aware of the virulent antisemitism of the fraternity-like organizations at Spanish universities called *colegios mayores*. Initially intended for the support of poor but promising students, the *colegios* had become, by the seventeenth century, the preserve of wealthy aristocrats. These organizations demanded the strictest adherence to the purity of blood laws, and as Yerushalmi correctly opines, it must have been impossible for Cardoso not to have been aware of their virulent hatred toward New Christians or to have heard vile things said about Jews while a student at the University of Valladolid (pp. 8688).

9. This is a theme I am working on more fully in my current project, *The History of an Intimate Relationship: Medicine and the Jews*.

10. On Padua, see David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven, Conn., 1995), 100117. Padua was not entirely free of antisemitism. Jewish students paid higher tuition, and upon graduation they were required to provide Christian students with 170 pounds of sweetmeats (110). See also Jacob Shatzky, On Jewish Medical Students of Padua, *Journal of the History of Medicine* 5 (1950): 44447; and on Holland, see S. Hes, *Jewish Physicians in the Netherlands 16001940* (Assen, 1980).

11. Louis Lewin, Die jüdischen Studenten an der Universität Frankfurt a.O., *Jahrbuch der jüdisch-literarischen Cesellschaft* 14 (1921): 232.

12. Monika Richarz, *Der Eintritt der Juden in die akademischen Berufe: Jüdische Studenten und Akademiker in Deutschland 16781848* (Tübingen, 1974), 29.

13. Born in Metz, Gomperz was the scion of a family who had been Court Jews and was the son of the doctor of the Prague Jewish

community, Salman Gomperz. Richarz, *Eintritt der Juden*, 4142.

14. Jewish medical students were only first accepted at Mainz (1770), Vienna (1782), Würzburg (1786), and Bonn (1786).

15. See, for example, the antisemitic diatribe against Jewish doctors by Johann Friderich Rübel, *Aufrichtige und unpartheyische Prüfung* (Frankfurt, 1746).

16. Cited in Peter A. Bochnik, *Die mächtigen Diener: Die Medizin und die Entwicklung von Frauenfeindlichkeit und Antisemitismus in der europäischen Geschichte* (Hamburg, 1985), 43.

17. Antonius Margaritha, *Der gantz judisch Glaub* (Augsburg, 1530), Giiij. On Jewish medical education in the Middle Ages, see Cecil Roth, *The Qualification of Jewish Physicians in the Middle Ages*, *Speculum* 28 (1953): 83443; and Luis Garcia-Ballester et al., *Jewish Appreciation of Fourteenth-Century Scholastic Medicine*, *Osiris* 6 (1990): 85117.

18. Anonymous, *Gründtlicher Bericht und Erklärung von der Juden Handlungen und Ceremonien* (Basel, 1573), xxxvi.

19. Werner Jochmann, *Cesellschaftskrise und Judenfeindschaft in Deutschland 1870/1945* (Hamburg, 1988), 3098.

20. Paracelsus, *Theophrastus Paracelsus Werke* (Basel, 1965), 2:44344; and Fridolf Kudlien, *Some Interpretative Remarks on the Antisemitism of Paracelsus in Science, Medicine, and Society in the Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Walter Pagel*, vol.1, ed. Allen C. Debus (New York, 1972), 12126.

21. David de Pomis, *De Medico Hebraeo Enarratio Apologica* (Venice, 1588). The quotation appears in Harry Friedenwald, *The Jews and Medicine: Essays* (Baltimore, 1944), 1:4849.

22. Martin Luther, *Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Tischrede*, vol. 4 (Graz, 1967), no. 4485, p. 338.

23. Johannes Eck, *Ains Jüden büechelins verlegung* (Ingolstadt), Fiiiij.

24. See Süßmann Muntner, *Alilot al rofim ha-yehudim be-aspaklariya shel toldot harefuah* (Jerusalem, 1953), and Nicoline Hartzitz, *Der Judenarzt: Historische und sprachliche*

Untersuchungen zur Diskriminierung eines Berufsstands in der frühen Neuzeit (Heidelberg, 1994), 3033.

25. See Edwin Mendelssohn, *The Popes' Jewish Doctors 4921655 C.E.* (Lauderhill, Fla., 1991); Isak Münz, *Die jüdischen Aerzte im Mittelalter: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte des Mittelalters* (Frankfurt a.M., 1922), 1012; Simon Scherbel, *Jüdische "Ärzte und ihr Einfluss auf das Judentum* (Berlin, 1905), 51; and Shatzmiller, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society*, 94.

26. *Jüdisches Lexikon*, vol. 4, (Berlin, 1930), 35.

27. Samuel Friedrich Brenz, *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlangenbalg* (Nuremberg, 1614), 22. Eisenmenger borrowed heavily from the accusations made about Jewish doctors by converts such as Margaritha, von Carben, and Brenz. Johann Andreas Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judentum*, pt. 2, (Königsberg, 1711), 22734. More generally on Eisenmenger, see Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (Cambridge, 1980), 1322.

28. I distinguish the elite agitators from the masses because the latter, despite ill-will toward Jews, patronized Jewish physicians. See Robert Jütte, *Contacts at the Bedside: Jewish Physicians and Their Christian Patients* in R. Po-Chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1995), 13750.

29. Joseph Shatzmiller, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society* (Berkeley, 1994).

30. Interestingly enough, medieval Jewish alchemists were also prized by their Christian counterparts because of their facility with the holy tongue and the perception of it as esoteric. See Rafael Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Sourcebook* (Princeton, N.J., 1994), 15556.

31. Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (Cleveland, 1961).
32. Quoted in Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (Philadelphia, 1983), 6566.
33. Hartzitz, *Der Judenarzt*, 9899.
34. Ibid., 74.
35. Ludwig von Hürnigk, *Medicaster Apella oder Juden Arzt* (Strasbourg, 1631), 7576.
36. Ludwig von Hürnigk, *Politika Medica* (Frankfurt a.M., 1638), 178.
37. Manfred Komorowski, *Bio-bibliographisches Verzeichnis jüdischer Doktoren im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1991), 112.
38. Hartzitz, *Der Judenarzt*, 7680.
39. Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and Its History* (London, 1974); Eduard Fuchs, *Die Juden in der Karikatur: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte* (Munich, n.d), 11423. In the medieval cathedral at Freising, the depiction of the *Judensau* was accompanied by the inscription: As surely as the mouse never eats the cat, so surely can the Jew never a true Christian become. See Trachtenberg, *Devil and the Jews*, 218.
40. On *Mauschein* and the metamorphosis of the term over time, see Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore, 1986), 13948.
41. Christian Treumundt, *Cewissen-loser Juden-Doctor* (Freyburg, 1698), 33.
42. Johann Miiller, *Judaismus oder Judenthum* (Hamburg, 1644). The

excerpted passage from the book appears in Hertzitz, *Der Judenarzt*, 87.

43. The text is partially reprinted in Harry Friedenwald, *The Jews and Medicine: Essays* (Baltimore, 1944), 1:3153. The quote appears on p. 47.

44. Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, 416.

45. On the connections between medieval Spanish and modern German antisemitism, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Assimilation and Racial Antisemitism: The Iberian*

and German Models, Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture no. 26, New York, 1982. On the intellectual links between the two communities, see Ismar Schorsch, The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 34 (1989): 4766; and John M. Efron, Scientific Racism and the Mystique of Sephardic Racial Superiority, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 38 (1993): 7596.

46. Thomas Rainer Ehrke, Antisemitismus in der Medizin im Spiegel der *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* (1891/1931) (inaugural diss., Johannes-Gutenberg University, Mainz, 1978), 85.

47. Anonymous, Die Cholera und die Juden, *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* 37 (2) (1892): 304.

48. Ueber antisemitische Skandale im niederösterreichischen Landtage, *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* 40 (2) (1892): 33031. On vivisection, see Die Vivisektionsdebatte im niederösterreichischen Landtage, *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* 13 (1903): 357; and on inoculation, see Das Impfgesetz ein jüdisches Produkt, *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* 25 (6) (1896): 19394.

49. See, for example, Hermann Engelbert, *1st das Schlachten der Tiere nach jüdischem Ritus wirklich Tierquälerei?* (St. Gallen, 1867); idem, *Das Schächten und die Bouterole* (St. Gallen, 1876); Philip B. Benny, *The Shechita: The Jewish Mode of Slaughtering Cattle, and Its Advantages* (Sheffield, 1875); Maurice Fluegel, *Die mosaische Diät und Hygiene: Vom physiologischen und ethischen Standpunkte, und deren Resultat auf Körper und Geist* (Cincinnati, 1881); A. Levin, *Kriegszug gegen das Schächten* (Sagan, 1889); Isaac A. Dembo, *The Jewish Method of Slaughter* (London, 1894); Hirsch Hildesheimer, *Das Schächten* (Berlin, 1905); Jeremiah J. Berman, *Shehitah: A Study*

in the Cultural and Social Life of the Jewish People (New York, 1941); Mordechai Breuer, *Tradition within Modernity: The Social History of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany* (New York, 1992), 34144; and Hillel J. Kieval, Representation and Knowledge in Medieval and Modern Accounts of Jewish Ritual Murder, *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (fall, 1994): 5272.

50. Josef Lewy, Antisemitismus und Medizin, *Im Deutschen Reich* 5 (1) (1899): 12.

51. On the abandonment of Enlightenment ideals in Germany, see George L. Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Bloomington, Ind., 1985), 7.

52. Yerushalmi, *Moses and Monotheism*, 30.

15

Memories of Jewishness: Jewish Converts and their Jewish Pasts

Todd M. Endelman

In Marcel Proust's epic, multivolume novel *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Charles Swann one of the most distinguished members of the Jockey Club, a particular friend of the Comte de Paris and of the Prince of Wales, and one of the men most sought after in the aristocratic world of the Faubourg Saint-Germain

is both Jewish and not-Jewish simultaneously. The narrator (Marcel) regards Swann as a Jew, as do other characters, even before the Dreyfus Affair erupts and heightens their Jew-consciousness. In addition to referring to him as a Jew, they attribute his politics (pro-Dreyfusism), appearance (red hair and large nose), and ailments (eczema and constipation) to his Jewish extraction.² Even Swann begins to identify himself as a Jew toward the end of his life. Mortally ill and under attack for his Dreyfusard views, he tells Marcel that at heart all these people [the *salonnards* of the Faubourg Saint-Germain] are anti-semites and that when all's said and done these people belong to a different race from the Jews, among whom he now counts himself. As Marcel observes, Swann had returned to the paths which his forebears had trodden and from which he had been deflected by his aristocratic associations.³

What is curious about these attributions of Jewishness to Swann is that he is not a Jew in any conventional sense of the term. He does not observe the Jewish (or any other) religion nor participate, even

marginally, in Jewish communal, social, or philanthropic activities. In fact, he moves in circles to which Jews, as a rule, are not admitted. A man of fashion, he leads a brilliant social life, frequenting aristocratic Parisian salons on whose like no stockbroker or associate of stockbrokers had ever set eyes.⁴ He is not a Jew according to Jewish law, both his parents having been Christians from birth. Indeed, to find unconverted Jews in the Swann family tree, one must return to the generation of his grandparents (one of whom was a French Protestant, in any case), in which the decision to abandon Judaism was made.⁵ Charles himself, like his father before him, was ostensibly born and raised in the Catholic faith. Viewed objectively, his Jewishness is no more than a matter of background, descent, extraction, several generations removed.

If so, why do Marcel and others in the aristocratic world of the Faubourg Saint-Germain regard Swann as a Jew? Indeed, why does Swann see himself in a

similar light, at least toward the end of his life? These questions transcend the fictional text that generates them and point to critical shifts in the ways in which Jewishness was perceived in the two centuries following the French Revolution, both in France and elsewhere in Europe. In broad terms, they ask why the lines demarcating Jews from Christians became blurred between the French Revolution and World War II and how this blurring affected Jews who had converted to Christianity and whose fate depended on the maintenance of clear distinctions between adherents of the two religions.

With the important exception of the Iberian *conversos*, whose unique historical experience Yosef Yerushalmi has chronicled, Jews in medieval and early modern Europe were not troubled by issues of collective identity. The lines between Jew and Christian were firm and well marked. The half-Jewish Proust (his mother was an unbaptized, nonobservant Jew) was, as a type, quintessentially modern, with few, if any, medieval or early modern analogues. Before the second half of the eighteenth century, Jews were Jews and Christians were Christians. Religious identity and social and political status were coextensive. When Jews rejected Judaism and became Christians, for whatever reason, they exchanged one well-defined legal and cultural status for another, moving juridically from one corporate community to another. This was true whether their motives were spiritual and intellectual, as was the case with noted medieval converts like Peter Alfonsi and Pablo Christiani, or were rooted in material and emotional distress, as was the case with otherwise unknown deserted wives (*agunot*) in early modern Poland.

⁶ To be sure, their transformation into Christians was not always effortless and troublefree.⁷ Some learned converts in early modern Germany, for example, felt that there was something about them that

the baptismal chrism could not reconfigure and emphasized their Jewish pasts as their most valuable commodity to advance their careers as teachers and scholars. But these converts, however strong their own sense that spiritually they straddled two worlds but fully inhabited neither, in fact ceased to move in a Jewish environment.⁸ Churchmen might question their motives, but they did not blur the distinction, as did Proust's narrator, between unconverted Jews and converted Jews and their descendants, indiscriminately lumping them together. In the eyes of the state and the church, they remained two distinct communities.

In the modern period, several hundred thousand Jews in Europe and North America (it is impossible to be more precise) left their ancestral community and became, at least in name, Christians.⁹ With a few notable exceptions, their motives were pragmatic rather than spiritual. They became Christians because religion (theology, worship, ritual) had ceased to matter to them and because they hoped that baptism would improve their chances in life and allow them to escape the stigma of Jewishness. In the Russian and Austrian empires an additional factor was at work: in the absence of civil marriage, Jews who wished to marry Christians had first to become Christians. At the same time, however opportunistic their aims, most converts also identified with the societies whose religion they embraced. In this sense their change of faith was driven by conviction as well,

that is, conviction that Judaism had become fossilized and irrelevant and that the future belonged to the Christian societies that had emancipated them. For them, conversion meant not so much a change of religion as cultural and social identification with the dominant society.

On the face of it, the transaction was simple and straightforward, one that the non-Jewish world appeared to desire and encourage. But as is often the case, theory and practice diverged. Conversion signaled neither full withdrawal from Jewish circles nor full integration into non-Jewish ones. Moreover, as we have seen in the case of Charles Swann, it did not prevent new Christians and their offspring from being labeled as Jews. A gap between what conversion promised and what it delivered opened because baptism was an inappropriate or unsuitable response to the Jewish predicament. It failed to address the Jewish problem, as non-Jews defined it in the age of emancipation. Put simply, conversion, a religious response to a religious problem, was anachronistic in an age in which material and racial concerns increasingly took precedence over spiritual and theological ones. It was an appropriate strategy for integration in those centuries in which the Jew's difference was defined in religious terms; but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nonreligious criteria became as important, if not more so, in defining Jews. From the viewpoint of the non-Jewish world, the problem with Jews was not their Judaism, which in the West was becoming weak and nominal in any case, but their Jewishness, that is, their race, ethnicity, nationality. There was, then, a gaping discrepancy between the classic solution for the integration of the Jew—their conversion—and the problem—their essential Jewishness, which was seen as rooted in their flesh and blood and in the innermost recesses of their mind and was, thus, impervious to baptism.

Persons on both sides of the Jewish-Christian divide were aware of

this tension (although this did little to stem the tide of conversion). In humorous stories and witticisms poking fun at converts and mocking Christian pieties, Jews voiced their belief that baptism was a superficial, meaningless gesture. In Alter Druyanov's classic three-volume collection of Jewish humor, which first appeared in 1922 but included material that had circulated in Eastern and Western Europe at the turn of the century (and undoubtedly earlier), conversion is seen to change nothing. For example, Druyanov tells the story of a Catholic priest who converted a Jew and the next day, a Friday, when Catholics are forbidden to eat meat, found him eating a roast goose. The convert looked at the priest and, seeing how furious he was, told him not to worry, that he was eating fish. This angered the priest even more, causing him to accuse the convert of being both a transgressor and a liar. The convert then explained: God forbid, dear priest, I am neither a transgressor nor a liar. I have simply done as you have done. You threw pure water on me and said, Until now, you were a Jew; from now on, you are a Catholic. I threw pure water on the goose and said to it, Until now, you were a goose; from now on, you are a fish.

¹⁰ The same point is made in a story about the banker Otto Kahn that the Viennese-born psychoanalyst Theodor Reik included in his study *Jewish Wit*. Kahn, the story goes, was strolling along Fifth

Avenue with the humorist Marshall Wilder, who was a hunchback. Pointing to a church, Kahn said, Marshall, that's the church I belong to. Did you know that I once was a Jew? Wilder answered, Yes, Otto, and once I was a hunchback.

11 Or in the words of one pithy witticism, In three places water is useless in the ocean, in wine, and in the baptism of Jews.¹²

Gentile critics and observers expressed the same sentiments but in a dead serious, not a humorous, way. Racial thinkers, of course, believed that Jewish social habits and mental structures persisted after baptism, since for them Jewishness was linked to blood, not belief. Theorists of racial antisemitism in imperial Germany Eugen Dühring, Wilhelm Marr, Otto Glagau, for example made no distinction between baptized and unbaptized Jews. [F]rom the baptized minister to the last Polish schnorrer, Glagau wrote in 1874, they constitute a united chain.¹³ But belief in the failure of baptism to change the Jew's essence predated this systematization of racial thinking by several decades. In the first half of the century, nationalist and romantic opponents of emancipation were already doubting the ability of conversion to change the Jew's character. In attacking Ludwig Börne in 1831, for example, the *Gymnasium* master Eduard Meyer remarked that the many hateful characteristics of these Asiatics . . . cannot be laid aside so easily through baptism the impudence and arrogance so frequent among them, the immorality and wantonness, their forward nature and their often mean disposition.¹⁴ In the heat of the 1848 revolution in Vienna, a journalist warned readers to beware above all of any *baptised* Jews unto the tenth generation. Another explained, That is how the Jews *were*, and that is how they *will be*, and neither will baptismal water cleanse them.¹⁵ By the 1860s, views such as these were widespread enough that Moses Hess noted that baptism

had ceased to protect Jews from the nightmare of German Jew-hatred. As he remarked in his early nationalist tract *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862), Jewish noses cannot be reformed and the black frizzy hair of Jews cannot be made blond through baptism or smooth through combing.¹⁶ His fellow exile in Paris, Heinrich Heine, came to the same conclusion. Jewishness, the worst of the three evil maladies that afflict poor, sick Jews, the thousand-year-old family affliction, was an incurable deep-seated hurt, impervious to treatment by vapor bath or douche (that is, baptism).¹⁷

This belief that there was little difference between converted and unconverted Jews eventually became a stumbling block to the successful integration of former Jews and their children into non-Jewish circles, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁸ Before the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when conversion and other forms of radical assimilation began to increase dramatically, baptized Jews did not find their access to Christian circles and institutions barred. Racial thinking was, in comparison to what it would become, weak, and the number of converts seeking admission was small, again relative to the number later on. However, from the last decades of the century, it became increasingly difficult for converted Jews to shake the taint of their origins, even when they were able to achieve limited integration, such as civil service and university

appointments. For example, in Germany, while converts were able to change their names with relative ease before 1900, from that date on it became almost impossible. The ministry of the interior denied most applications, tending to approve only those of applicants who were able to prove that they were Christians of long standing, that their friends and family members also were long-standing Christians, and that they had severed all social ties to Jews who remained unconverted.

19 In Russia the state had forbidden converts to change their names a half century earlier, in 1850. In the first decade of the twentieth century, when *racial* antisemitism gained a following for the first time, extreme nationalists began to call on the government to ban converts from voting, purchasing and leasing land, and holding positions in the civil service, the judiciary, and the armed forces. While tsarist officials refused to accede to these demands, they maintained the glass ceiling that prevented converted Jews in the civil service and army from rising.²⁰ In Central Europe, where conversion was a *de facto* (but not *de jure*) requirement for appointment to and/or advancement in the civil service, the academy, the military, the judiciary, and other elite enclaves, Jews who had taken this step, along with children of theirs who were Christian from birth, could still find their origins an impediment to promotion or a source of innuendo and intrigue. Paul Kayser, tutor to the children of Otto von Bismarck, came under vicious attack from antisemites. Karl Julius von Bitter, Regierungspräsident in Silesia, was rejected as minister of the interior in 1895 because of his still somewhat Semitic tendencies; a year later Chancellor Hohenlohe prevented his appointment as minister of trade because he was *ein jüdischer Streber*.²¹ The most notorious case of this sort occurred in the last year of the Weimar Republic, when the Nazis exposed the Jewish origins of Theodor Düsternberg, co-founder and vice president of the Stahlhelm and candidate of the German

National Party in the March 1932 presidential election, thus destroying his chances and forcing him to withdraw from the run-off election in April. (One grandparent was a baptized Jew).²²

On the social front, Jewish origins weighed more heavily. Whereas conversion was often an effective stratagem for career advancement, it was much less successful in gaining entrée to fashionable or upper-class circles, that is, spheres in which birth took precedence over merit as a matter of principle. In imperial Germany, converted Jews from even the wealthiest families often faced difficulties in finding marriage partners of Old Christian upper-middle-class birth, let alone aristocratic birth. The fruitless search of the second-generation banker Paul Wallich, described so poignantly by Werner Mosse, was not unusual. Baptized at birth in 1882, Wallich devoted himself to raising his social standing. In his youth this led him to pursue three goals: membership in a nationalist student corps at university, at which he failed; appointment as a reserve officer following military service, at which he succeeded; and marriage to a woman *von Familie*. As the converted son of a Jewish banker, the majority of the eligible young women whom he knew, women who were part of the Wallich family circle, were themselves Jewish or of Jewish extraction. His overtures to Gentile women from a

stratum equal to his own met with rejection. Some former Jews in his position solved their marriage problem by taking wives from abroad, but Wallich was too uncosmopolitan to take such a step. In the end, out of necessity, he married down, taking as his wife a woman whose father was an academic instructor in a military school.

²³ For women from Wallich's milieu, the prospects for successful integration were marginally better. Female converts who succeeded in finding husbands from Old Christian families and thus shed their Jewish names at marriage were in some cases able to see their children move freely in Gentile circles. Most converts and their children, however, remained in circles that were ethnically if not religiously Jewish, there being hardly any social relations between the Jewish *haute bourgeoisie* (in the ethnic sense) and the German *haute bourgeoisie* and aristocracy.²⁴

In Warsaw, where few wealthy Jewish families remained Jewish for more than two or three generations, complete absorption also became difficult in the late nineteenth century. Aristocrats rarely admitted converted Jews to their salons or, in turn, frequented Jewish salons, whose visitors were drawn from the worlds of government administration, commerce, science, and industry. The dynamic industrial and financial magnate Leopold Kronenberg, who became a Roman Catholic in 1846 but always was referred to as a Jew, was hard pressed to secure Polish husbands for his daughters, who were viewed as too Jewish.²⁵ Nationalists took steps to unmask families of Jewish origin, inaugurating what has become a tradition in Polish politics to this day. In 1904 the critic, editor, and novelist Teodor Jeske-Choinski published a book listing all Jews who had been baptized in Warsaw between 1800 and 1903. His motives were both ideological and mercenary: some wealthy converts and children of converts paid hush

money to have their names omitted, while others diligently bought up and destroyed copies.²⁶ Nonetheless, hundreds of Polish families suffered pain and embarrassment. In the late nineteenth century a new term of opprobrium *mekhes* entered the Polish language to brand converts from Judaism. The term, which came, it seems, from the Hebrew word *mekhes* (customs, tax, levy) and referred to the metaphorical levy (baptism) that Jews had to pay to enter Polish society, was used by both Jews and Poles as a term of opprobrium.²⁷

Throughout Europe, in both liberal and illiberal societies, converts and the children of converts who attracted public attention, whatever the reason, risked having their origin thrown in their face by critics and enemies. When Benjamin Disraeli, who joined the Church of England at age thirteen, first stood for election to Parliament in the 1830s that is, at a time in his career when he muted rather than trumpeted his Jewishness he encountered what was for him an unprecedented level of anti-Jewish hostility. On the hustings, rowdies taunted him with cries of Old clothes and Shylock, offered to sell him slippers and sealing wax (references to low-status street trades associated with poor Jews), and waved pieces of roast pork on sticks, crying, Bring a bit of pork for the Jew.²⁸ This was mild, to be sure, when compared to the abuse he suffered as prime minister between 1874 and 1880, but by that time he had become a full-blown racial

chauvinist and provided his enemies with rich material to damn him.

29 But even converts who were less ambitious and less in the limelight found that their descent was a source of potential reproach. After Samuel Phillips, literature critic for the *Times* at midcentury and, like Disraeli, a Christian since his youth, reviewed William Makepeace Thackeray's work unfavorably, the latter referred continually to the converted critic's origins in correspondence with friends.³⁰

If converts in Britain who were public figures risked being attacked for their Jewishness, how much more so their counterparts in Germany and the Habsburg lands, where racial antisemitism was a regular feature of politics and culture after 1880. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to name a well-known ex-Jewish, Central European politician, artist, musician, writer, intellectual, or academic who escaped being reminded that he or she used to be a Jew and having his or her activities and work attributed to that fact. The examples are endless. Bewilderment, frustration, and amazement were the reactions of two of the earliest German Jewish intellectuals to experience this. Six months after his baptism, Heinrich Heine wrote to his close friend Moses Moser, like himself a one-time member of the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden, that Christian and Jew alike now detested him and that he regretted his conversion. I do not see that things have gone any the better with me since: on the contrary, I have had nothing but misfortune. Is it not ridiculous? I am no sooner baptized than I am upbraided as a Jew. Ludwig Börne, writing from exile in Paris in the 1830s, was equally dumbfounded; despite his baptism in 1818, no one ever forgot he was a Jew. What a marvel! A thousand times I have experienced it, yet it seems eternally new to me. Some reproach me with being a Jew, others pardon me, still others praise me for it. But all are thinking about it. They are as though

spellbound in this magic Jewish circle and not one of them can escape from it.³¹ To their amazement and chagrin, Heine and Börne discovered, as did countless other German Jews in the decades that followed, that the rules of the game had changed without their being told.

It would seem that at some stage most converts, at least in Central and Eastern Europe, realized that their Jewish past was not irrelevant to their future and that it could continue to haunt them and possibly their children as well. Of course, given the nature of the evidence that survives and the fact that most persons do not record or reveal their most intimate feelings, we can do no more than speculate here. Most baptized Jews, after all, left no accounting of how they fared as Christians, preferring to draw as little attention to themselves as possible. Thus, what we know comes from the most articulate and ambitious converts who, their hopes deflated or crushed, vented their feelings about being unable to escape their Jewish descent.³² At first, this would seem to be an unrepresentative group. The Heines, Börnes, Disraelis, and Prousts of this world are an exceptional lot. But it should be remembered that however exceptional their creative achievements, their emotional experiences were not unusual but were shared by other former Jews. Where Heine *et al.* differed was in their ability to give voice to their feelings and, perhaps, in the ferocity of those feelings. Less accomplished

converts also ran into obstacles and insults and were no less disappointed, embarrassed, confused, frustrated, and angered. At times their voices can be heard, but in the nature of things their reactions, especially their inner turmoil and confusion, are less accessible than those of their better-known, more articulate fellow converts.

No simple formula can capture the complex of behavioral patterns and emotional states that the failure of integration generated. Nonetheless, one generalization is possible. Most converts who met with disappointment undertook, one way or another, to increase the distance between themselves and the group with which they remained identified. Baptism having failed to secure their escape from Jewishness, they undertook to convince doubters and detractors (and perhaps themselves as well) that indeed their loyalties, thoughts, and feelings were no longer Jewish. Their strategies for accomplishing this ranged from the subtle to the crude; at times they were the outcome of considered planning, while at other times they were the result of more or less unconscious thought processes, arrived at without careful reflection.

At its most extreme, distancing took the form of crude antisemitism. In these instances, which were a minority, converts and the children of converts embraced and propagated antisemitic critiques of Jews and Judaism. The logic underlying their behavior, even if unconscious, was that this, along with their prior baptism, would demonstrate how far they had traveled. What better way, in other words, to dispel doubts about their own allegiances than to damn the Jews, harping on their alienness, malevolence, and corruption. In general, this form of self-hatred was most common in historical settings in which converts faced the most obstacles to integration and social acceptance. In late-nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century Warsaw, for example, converts were notorious for their Jew-baiting. In his account of Warsaw society

in the late 1880s, Antoni Zaleski noted, It often happens that the main matadors of antisemitism are those *meches* who pretend not to know that they too are called Jews by the world and with their antisemitism naively seek to obliterate their own Semitic blood. In the interwar period, persons of Jewish descent were found among antisemitic nationalist agitators. When publicly reminded of their background, they naturally suffered acute distress, as they did later when the Nazis forced them into the Warsaw ghetto. Among them was Susanna Rabska, a writer and agitator for the National Democratic Party, the Endecja, whose father was the historian of Frankism Aleksander Kraushar.

33

Most converts, however, in responding to baptism's failure to solve their Jewish problem, employed less extreme measures to distance themselves from their background. The most common response was an exaggerated, compensatory enthusiasm for traditions and symbols of the dominant group, a strategy often termed being more Catholic than the pope. This assumed diverse, often remarkable forms. For the interwar English novelist Gilbert Frankau, who became an Anglican at age thirteen, it meant acting like a born aristocrat: learning to fish, fence, and hunt (despite being terrified of riding); cultivating a suave, insouciant

demeanor; and espousing right-wing, labor-bashing imperialist politics.

³⁴ For Aleksander Kraushar, it meant an identification with the most reactionary model of Polonism in the pre-World War I period—the Catholic aristocracy of old, feudal, pre-partition Poland. When his wife Jadwiga died in 1912, for example, he ordered one of the most elaborate Catholic funerals ever seen in Warsaw, with more than one hundred priests, a bishop at their head, participating in the funeral procession.³⁵ The sociologist Aleksander Hertz recalled that in interwar Poland this behavior often assumed grotesque forms: an exaggerated care in using perfect language, a pedantic observation of customs considered specifically Polish, a cult of Polish literature and art.³⁶ For Charles Swann it meant connoisseurship, exquisite aristocratic manners, and research into the coinage of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (the Templars). As the *duc de Guermantes* remarked, without a trace of irony, It's astonishing the passion people of one religion have for studying others.³⁷

A story that circulated at the turn of the century captures this linkage between an exaggerated devotion to art and antiquities and an uneasiness about being a convert, with Jewish family skeletons lurking in the closet. As told by Druyanov, a group of visitors came to see the newly built house of a rich Berlin convert. He ushered them into his salon and said, Here, gentlemen, everything is done in the style of the eighteenth century. He then took them into his study and said, Here is the style of the German renaissance of the sixteenth century. Finally, they reached a room at the far end of the house, but he did not take them in. One of them asked, What style is this room done in? The owner answered offhandedly, Oh, just some old things of my father, prompting the banker Carl Fürstenberg to quip: Ah, the

pre-Christian period.³⁸

The Lithuanian-born art critic and connoisseur Bernard Berenson, who became an Episcopalian at Harvard in 1885 and then a Roman Catholic near Siena in 1891, carried this kind of role playing to an extreme. Having assimilated the prejudices of Boston's fashionable Back Bay as a young man, he forged for himself an elegant, impeccably mannered persona, seeking to make his life itself a polished work of art. At his exquisite villa I Tatti in the Tuscan hills, he surrounded himself with Italian Renaissance paintings, old furniture and hangings, and a magnificent art library. There, from 1900 to his death in 1959, in the character of aesthete and arbiter of taste, he hosted streams of art-collecting socialites, writers, intellectuals, celebrities, and hangers-on, preaching the fin-de-siècle romantic doctrine of aesthetic experience as sacred reality and pretending to have no contact with the world of commerce. Until World War II forced him into hiding and induced a radical inner upheaval, he distanced himself from his impoverished, Eastern European immigrant background. In Gentile company he never talked about his early years or his origins, dropping his mask (his own metaphor) only when in the company of Jewish visitors like Israel Zangwill and Leo and Gertrude Stein. After the war, he recalled what an effort it had been, even if he had been unaware of it at the time, to act as if one were a mere Englishman or Frenchman or American. When he did mention Jews in conversation

or correspondence with Gentiles, he tried to disassociate himself from them. For example, after visiting a large reform synagogue in Berlin on an early trip to Europe, he wrote to his Boston patron Isabella Gardner about the beauty of the building, choir, and service but then added, in a characteristic gesture, that despite the attempt to create elegance the worshipers seemed to be selling old clothes.

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Yet however much Berenson expressed his disdain for commerce and nouveaux riches Jews and his preference for well-born thoroughbreds, he could not escape the fact that his own wealth (as well as the art it allowed him to purchase) derived from his long-standing but unpublicized art dealings, especially his thirty-year secret partnership with the London Jewish art dealer Joseph Duveen, who paid him a percentage on the sale of Old Master paintings that he attributed. The Paris art dealer Armand Lowengard commented on Berenson's hypocrisy to his fellow dealer René Gimpel (who was Duveen's brother-in-law): You've seen how the snob plays at being disinterested in the eyes of the world; well, you ought to see his letters asking for money, the baldness of it.⁴⁰ Berenson was not blind to his own hypocrisy. His dealings, by linking him to the world of Jewish trade, caused him much anguish and eventually led him to renounce dealing after the war and to make amends by leaving his villa and its collections to Harvard, his alma mater.

In the West, converts like Berenson who tried (unsuccessfully) to remake themselves tended to express ambivalence rather than undiluted scorn for Jews and things Jewish. To be sure, this ambivalence was in no sense balanced between affirmation and negation, with attraction and repulsion experienced in equal measure. The positive side of the equation often was no more than an

acknowledgment of Jewish suffering and steadfastness, with an occasional nod to Jewish wit, cooking, family life, or genius. Proust's treatment of Jews in *A la recherche du temps perdu* demonstrates how such ambivalence worked. On the one hand, Proust reproduced common antisemitic clichés about Jews, especially upwardly mobile, well acculturated Jewlike himself and his Jewish relatives and friends. Bloch is a hook-nosed, ill-bred, tactless social climber; his female relatives are clannish, overdressed, and oversexed; his father and great-uncle are alternately fawning and boastful in the presence of Christians. (In contrast, the ideal non-Jew, the young aristocrat Robert de Saint-Loup, is tall, slim, erect, elegant, and graceful, a young man with penetrating eyes whose skin was as fair and his hair as golden as if they had absorbed all the rays of the sun.)⁴¹

Jews, both men and women, are also linked to uninhibited, brazen sexuality. Bloch introduces the narrator, Marcel, to brothels, where the first girl he is offered is Rachel, whom the madam considers a special treat because she is Jewish.⁴² The young Jewish women vacationing at Balbec are a horde of ill-bred sluts who carried their zeal for seaside fashions so far as to be always apparently on their way home from shrimping or out to dance the tango, while Bloch's sisters in particular are at once overdressed and half naked, with their languid, brazen, ostentatious, slatternly air.⁴³ But above all, Proust equates Jewishness with

homosexuality, about which he, himself a homosexual, was decidedly ambivalent as well. In a much quoted passage in the *Sodom and Gomorrah* volume, he makes this explicit. Homosexuals, like Jews, constitute a cursed race afflicted with an incurable disease; their social position is unstable, forcing them, like Jews once again, to shun one another and seek out those who are most directly their opposite but who do not want their company and thus treat them with contempt and condescension. Like Jews, they form in every land an oriental colony, cultured, musical, malicious, which has charming qualities and intolerable defects. So close is this identification in Proust that he asks facetiously whether a Sodomist movement, similar to the Zionist movement, will arise to rebuild the biblical Sodom.

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Yet as Proust's comments about homosexuals suggest, he thought that Jews too had their charming qualities. Bloch senior is an affectionate father. Bloch junior has a pleasing face even Albertine agrees that he is not bad looking, though as a rule she does not like Yids and their creepy ways, and Bloch makes her feel quite sick. The unassimilated Jewish intellectuals and bohemians in a café at which Marcel and Saint-Loup dine repel Marcel: their hair was too long, their noses and eyes were too big, their gestures abrupt and theatrical. Still, despite these deformities, they had plenty of wit and good-heartedness, and were men to whom, in the long run, one could become closely attached. Indeed, in one respect, they outshine Marcel's new aristocratic friends: there were few whose parents and kinsfolk had not a warmth of heart, a breadth of mind, a sincerity, in comparison with which Saint-Loup's mother and the duc de Guermantes cut the poorest of moral figures by their aridity, their skin-deep religiosity.⁴⁵ More important, Proust endowed Jews with the capacity to change. Despite believing in racial inheritances and atavisms, in deep,

ineluctable forces that erupted from a nature anterior to the individual himself,⁴⁶ he also affirmed his belief in the assimilatory impact of sustained exposure to French manners and habits. Accordingly, his Jews represent various points on the spectrum of assimilationist behavior, with the refined, almost aristocratic Swann at one extreme and Bloch, in his worst moments, at the other. And even Bloch, who possesses all the faults that Marcel most dislikes, exhibits the capacity to grow over the course of the novel, at the end of which he has become a successful writer and *salonnard*. In fact, Swann himself, in the years before the novel's start, was more Bloch-like in character and behavior. In the course of his life, he contrived to illustrate in turn all the successive stages through which those of his race had passed, from the most naive snobbery and the crudest caddishness to the most exquisite good manners.⁴⁷

Emblematic of Proust's ambivalence is the fate of his Jews at the novel's end. Although Swann is dead, his daughter, Gilberte, has become successively the wife of Robert de Saint-Loup and the duc de Guermantes; Bloch, his name changed to Jacques du Rozier (an allusion to the rue des Rosiers in the heart of Paris's immigrant Jewish quarter), has become a successful, salon-going dramatist; the former whore and mistress of Saint-Loup, Rachel, has become a famous

actress; and Madame Verdurin, in whom Marcel's Jew-sniffing grandfather detects Jewish ancestors, has established an exclusive salon and become princesse de Guermantes. Their social ascent, however, has come at a price and here we see Proust's ambivalence the eradication of their Jewishness. They have ceased to be Jews in every sense of the term; their assimilation is radical and complete (with the exception of Bloch's ineptly chosen new name).

In the West, ambivalence was the hallmark of most converts unable to escape their Jewish pasts. There were a few exceptions, of course: a handful became Jew-baiters

⁴⁸ but none, to my knowledge, moved in the opposite direction, returning to their people as champions of Jewish causes, like Zionism, or defenders of Jewish rights. In Russia and Poland, however, where the Jewish Question was more acute (Russians Jews, for example, remained unemancipated until 1917), converts exhibited more extreme, highly charged attitudes toward their Jewish pasts. As we have seen, there were ex-Jews in Poland who strove to authenticate their Polishness by embracing radical nationalist antisemitism. In Russia, converts were prominent in the articulation and diffusion of antisemitism. The most notorious were Jacob Brafman, missionary, censor of Jewish books, and author of the infamous work *The Book of the Kahal* (1869), which launched the notion that clandestine communal bodies exercised absolute control over Russia's Jews and became the most successful antisemitic text in Russian history; and Ippolit Liutostanskii, author of several pseudoscholarly books publicizing the blood libel and attacking the Talmud as a font of anti-Christian hatred.⁴⁹ Others included Aleksander Alekseev (Wolf Nakhlas), a one-time missionary to Jewish cantonists and a crude publicist, whose hatred of Jews was said to be so fanatic that later in life he never looked a Jew in the face nor permitted one to enter his

house; Semen Efron-Litvinov, a writer for the right-wing St. Petersburg daily *Novoe Vremia*, whose specialty was discovering skullduggery in rabbinic literature; and Anatolii Grigor'evich Gassmann, a high-ranking official in St. Petersburg who repeatedly turned a deaf ear to Jewish requests for assistance.⁵⁰

The undiluted hatred that these and other Russian converts felt for their former people reflected, in part, the harsh nature of the tsarist regime and its treatment of Jews. That is, having cast their lot with the dominant society, they embraced its views heart and soul, including its views of Jews. But it also reflected a feature in Russian conversions that was absent or less prominent in the West. When Jews in Berlin or Paris or London left the communal fold, their departure marked the end of a process of disengagement from Jewish life that usually stretched over several generations. Most came from homes in which Jewish knowledge, observance, and attachments were already weak and vestigial, in which markers of Jewish distinctiveness (however defined) were disappearing. In contrast, converts in Russia tended to come from far more traditional backgrounds. Most had grown up in Yiddish-speaking, religiously observant homes in the Pale of Settlement, had attended *heder* and, in some cases, *yeshivah*, and had spent their formative years living entirely in the company of other traditional Jews. For them, to move from being a Jew to being a Christian was an enormous

jump. The distance between their present and past lives was almost as great as it had been in the case of medieval and early modern conversions, a testimony to the economic and political backwardness of Russian state and society in the nineteenth century. Because Russian converts were so close to the world of Jewish tradition, because they had known and absorbed its habits and outlook from their earliest days, it remained alive within them even after conversion. Their need to purge themselves of this past, to demonstrate that it had been left behind, was greater than that of most Western converts, whose memories of Jewish ritual, language, learning, worship, and social distinctiveness were, by comparison, fragmented and weak. Their need to distance themselves from their Jewish past was acute. And what better way to meet this need than by attacking, in public and with gusto, those still living in that past.

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This explanation also illuminates one other curious feature of the history of conversion in Eastern Europe. In Russia and Poland, there were converts whose outlook on Jewish matters swung to the opposite, philosemitic end of the spectrum. Instead of abusing Jews, they became their advocates in print, before government authorities, and in courtrooms using their influence or wealth, which rested on the fact of their having converted, to ease the impact of harsh decrees and popular prejudices. The archetype of this sort of ex-Jew is the semitics scholar Daniel Khvolson, who converted in 1855 to obtain an academic post in St. Petersburg. Khvolson became a legend in Russian Jewry for defending Judaism against the libel that its ritual requires Christian blood. He also helped to found the Society for the Diffusion of Enlightenment among the Jews in 1863 and served on its executive committee for a decade, although he eventually broke with its *maskilic* backers. Rabbis and other traditional Jews spoke warmly

of him and at his death eulogized him as a great Jew.⁵²

Khvolson was not the only prominent convert to campaign against the blood libel. In 1883 the St. Petersburg contractor Joseph Nikolaevich Sorkin translated Isaac Baer Levinsohn's *Efes damim* (1837), a Hebrew refutation of the blood libel, into Russian and wrote a bitter, no-holds-barred introduction to it in which he did not spare even the government for its support of antisemitism. He then used his own money to distribute the translation widely among provincial officials and St. Petersburg ministers and bureaucrats. The following year he published a Russian translation of a German-language anthology of anti-blood-libel testimonies from prominent Europeans; this, too, he distributed freely in Russian officialdom. Eventually, he withdrew completely from business and devoted all his time and energy to Jewish matters.⁵³ Other converts also supported the work of the Society for the Diffusion of Enlightenment, whose progressive, integrationist goals dovetailed with their own personal aspirations. The baptized physician Joseph Bartenson, who spent most of his life in government service in the field of public health and rose to the post of court physician, served alongside Khvolson on the society's executive committee.⁵⁴ The St. Petersburg censor of Jewish books Nikander Vassel'evich Susman, who had been, in succession, a yeshiva student, a *maskil*, and a freethinker before his conversion to the Orthodox

Church in the mid-1870s, used his position and friendship with the minister of education, Count Delianov, to improve conditions for Jews. He wrote reports defending Jewish legal literature, helped Jewish students gain admission to the university in St. Petersburg, and passed information about impending anti-Jewish measures to the capital's Jewish notables. All the time, in order to remain in favor with high bureaucratic figures, he kept up Russian Orthodox observances, attending church daily and celebrating its holy days.

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In Warsaw as well, there were influential ex-Jews who came from traditional homes and continued to feel the pull of Jewish attachments long after becoming Christians. The two best known nineteenth-century figures were the brothers-in-law Leopold Kronenberg and Jan Bloch. The former intervened on behalf of the Jewish community with government officials, with whom he was in close contact because of his economic activities; supported Jewish charities with anonymous contributions; and donated six thousand rubles toward the erection of the Great Synagogue, Warsaw's first modern, architect-designed, Western-style synagogue, which opened in 1878. Bloch, a financier and railway contractor who converted at age fifteen, was even more active in the Jewish world. He supported the productivization schemes of Baron de Hirsch, including Jewish agricultural settlements in Poland and Argentina; founded a private statistical bureau to conduct research on the economic condition of the Jews in Poland; befriended Theodor Herzl; and, like Khvolson and others, labored to counter the blood libel. In his personal life he surrounded himself with Jewish clerks and assistants (some of whom were baptized) and supported the only one of his brothers who did not convert, asking him specifically to remain Jewish. His will began with the words, All my life I have been a Jew and as a Jew I die.⁵⁶

Despite dissimilar reactions toward their former coreligionists, both kinds of East European convertsthose who embittered the lives of Jews and those who assisted themresembled each other in one critical sense: all were unable to escape their Jewish past. Long after having changed their religion, their origins and upbringing continued to weigh heavily on their consciousness, shaping their feelings and behavior. Powerful, highly charged memories tied them to a collective identity from which baptism was supposed to have severed them. Remorse, regret, and guilt about having betrayed parents, family, and friends were common. The converts whom Rabbi Max Lilienthal met in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1840 were enthusiastic about their freedom from discriminatory laws and their children's prospects for advancement, but they suffered inexpressible pangs and tortures of conscience. On Rosh Ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, he noted, remorse pursues them like an evil specter, and thus their life is one of uneasiness, repentance, luxury, and apprehension. In Warsaw it was said that Leopold Kronenberg used to visit the Jewish cemetery on the sabbath and festivals, when Jews would not be there, and kneel at the grave of his parents. In St. Petersburg, Russified former Jewish nationalists who had converted after the pogroms of 1881a group that included the historian of Russian literature Semyon Vengerov, the lawyer and publicist Leonid Slonimski, and the poet and essayist Nikolai

Minski (the latter two were married to sisters of Vengerov) gathered on Passover to celebrate the seder and attended synagogue on Yom Kippur to hear Kol Nidrei. One indication of the extent of remorse is that in the five years after the issuance of the ukase of 17 April 1905 permitting converts to the Orthodox Church to return to their original faiths, 476 Jews returned to Judaism. In 1917, after the fall of the tsarist regime, more than two hundred baptized Jews in St. Petersburg formally reconverted at the Choral Synagogue.

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In Western and Central Europe it is difficult to find analogues to this kind of behavior. Disraeli, with his unfettered Jewish chauvinism, might seem at first to fit the bill; after all, he outstripped most converts in touting Jewish genius and character. However, his return to Jewishness had no content other than an overblown romantic celebration of racial pride. He remained a churchgoing Anglican all his adult life, taking no particular interest in the fate and fortunes of flesh-and-blood Jews, in Britain or elsewhere. He never acted as *shtadlan*, or intercessor, for Anglo-Jewry; nor did communal leaders, who knew full well how limited his Jewish commitments were, turn to him for aid. In this sense his Jewishness was similar to that of Charles Swann and other converts in Western and Central Europe who returned to their Jewish origins when antisemitism raised its ugly head. For them, returning was a mental process, an adjustment more in attitude than behavior, a facing of facts undertaken to satisfy their honor and pride. These converts resembled those religiously indifferent, often self-hating Jews, like the young Theodor Herzl or Walther Rathenau, who refused to convert because it was a dishonorable, craven, opportunistic act, especially in a period of heightened antisemitism, not because they saw any positive value in Judaism or Jewish culture. Thus, for Disraeli, Swann, and other

converts, returning did not mean a return to ritual, worship, learning, or involvement in communal affairs. But then, how could it have been otherwise? Converts like these came from homes in which visible, distinctive marks of Jewishness had more or less disappeared. Their memories of Jewishness were less vivid and compelling than those of their East European counterparts. Often, there was no positive content to them at all. If conversion had worked as they had hoped it would, rewarding them with integration, acceptance, honor, and ethnic oblivion, it seems likely that they would have remembered little, if anything, about their Jewish pasts.

Notes

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1. Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, rev. D. J. Enright, Modern Library ed., 6 vols. (New York, 1992/1993), 1:19.
2. Swann suffered from ethnic eczema and from the constipation of the prophets. *Ibid.*, 1:571.

3. Ibid., 3:796, 797-98.

4. Ibid., 1:21.

5. Ibid., 1:476, 4:92.

6. Jeremy Cohen, The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate: Peter Alfonsi, Hermann of Cologne, and Pablo Christiani, in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, ed. Todd M. Endelman (New York, 1987), 2047; Jacob Goldberg, *Ha-mumarim bemamlekhet Polin-Lita* (Converts in the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom) (Jerusalem, 1985), 22.

7. See the examples cited in Hava Frankel-Goldschmidt, Be-shulei ha-hevrah hayehuditmumarim yehudim be-germanyah be-tekufat ha-reformatsiyah (On the margins of Jewish society: Jewish converts in Reformation Germany), in *Tarbut ve-hevrah betoldot yisrael bi-yemei-ha-beinayyim: kovets maamrim le-zikhro shel Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson* (Culture and society in Jewish history in the Middle Ages: Essays in memory of Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson), ed. Menahem Ben-Sasson *et al.* (Jerusalem, 1989), 623-54.

8. Elisheva Carlebach, Converts and Their Narratives in Early Modern Germany: The Case of Friedrich Albrecht Christiani, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 40 (1995): 68, 77.

9. There is a growing historical literature on the dimensions and motives of Jewish apostasy in the modern world. See, for example, Marsha L. Rosenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany, N.Y., 1983), chap. 6; Todd M. Endelman, ed., *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World* (New York, 1987); Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven, Conn., 1988), chap. 7; Jonathan I. Helfand, Passports and Piety: Apostasy in Nineteenth-Century France, *Jewish History* 3 (fall 1988): 59-83; Peter Honigsmann, *Die Austritte aus der Jüdischen Gemeinde Berlin, 1873-1941* (Frankfurt a. Main, 1988); idem, *Die Austritte aus dem*

Judentum in Wien, 1868/1944, *Zeitgeschichte* 15 (1988): 452-66; idem, Jewish Conversions: A Measure of Assimilation? A Discussion of the Berlin Secession Statistics of 1770/1941, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989): 339; Todd M. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656-1945* (Bloomington, Ind., 1990); idem, Antisemitism and Apostasy in Nineteenth-Century France: A Response to Jonathan Helfand, *Jewish History* 5 (fall 1991): 57-64; idem, The Frankau of London: A Study in Radical Assimilation, 1837/1967, *Jewish History* 8 (12) (1994): 117-54.

10. Abraham Alter Druyanov, *Sefer ha-bedihah ve-ha-hidud* (The book of jokes and wit), 3 vols. (Tel Aviv, 1980), 2:138.

11. Theodor Reik, *Jewish Wit* (New York, 1962), 90.

12. Salcia Landmann, *Der Jüdische Witz: Soziologie und Sammlung* (Olten and Freiburg im Breisgau, 1960), 439.

13. Quoted in Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700/1933* (Cambridge, 1980), 269.

14. Quoted in Jacob Katz, *The Darker Side of Genius: Richard Wagner's Anti-Semitism* (Hanover, N.H., 1986), 161-7.

15. Quoted in Reinhard Rürup, The European Revolutions of 1848 and Jewish Emancipation, in *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, ed. Werner E. Mosse et al. (Tübingen, 1981), 47.

16. Moses Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem, die letzte Nationalitätsfrage* (Leipzig, 1862), 14.

17. The New Israelite Hospital in Hamburg, in *The Complete Poems of Heinrich Heine: A Modern English Version*, trans. Hal Draper (Boston, 1982), 399.

18. In the liberal states of the West—Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the United States—baptism was far more effective. See, e.g.,

Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*.

19. Dietz Bering, *The Stigma of Names: Antisemitism in German Daily Life, 1812-1933*, trans. Neville Plaice (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1992).

20. Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825-1855* (Philadelphia, 1983), 148; Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, Calif., 1986), 353-6; Mikhail Beizer, *The*

Jews of St. Petersburg: Excursions through a Noble Past, trans. Michael Sherbourne, ed. Martin Gilbert (Philadelphia, 1989), 15; Eli Weinerman, Racism, Racial Prejudice, and Jews in Late Imperial Russia, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17 (1994): 44295; Andrew M. Verner, What's in a Name? Of Dog-Killers, Jews and Rasputin, *Slavic Review* 53 (1994): 105859. Stanislawski observes, In Russia alone in Christendom, the state required that the descendants of Jews bear their Jewish surnames as a mark of their tainted origin forever. As Bering's work on name changing in Germany shows, this is not entirely true. On the other hand, while the ban in Russia was, in theory, absolute, it was not enforced rigorously, as was true with much Russian legislation regarding Jews.

21. J. C. G. Röhl, Higher Civil Servants in Germany, 1890-1900, in *Education and Social Structure in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Walter Laqueur and George L. Mosse, Harper Torchbook ed. (New York, 1967), 111-112.

22. Erich Eyck, *A History of the Weimar Republic*, trans. Harlan P. Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1967), 2:356; Adolph Leschnitzer, *The Magic Background of Modern Anti-Semitism: An Analysis of the German-Jewish Relationship* (New York, 1956), 217-118.

23. Werner E. Mosse, Problems and Limits of Assimilation: Hermann and Paul Wallich, 1833-1938, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 33 (1988): 43-65.

24. All this is set out in admirable detail and clarity in Werner E. Mosse, *The German-Jewish Economic Elite, 1820-1935: A Socio-Cultural Profile* (Oxford, 1989).

25. Aleksander Guterman, Yahasam shel mitbolelei varshahdorot

rishonim veahronim (1820-1918) le-hamrat ha-dat (The relationship of first- and second-generation Warsaw assimilationists to conversion), *Gal-ed* 12 (1991): 68; Alina Cala, The Question of the Assimilation of Jews in the Polish Kingdom, 1864-1897: An Interpretive Essay, *Polin* 1 (1986): 135; Abraham Levinson, *Toldot yehudei varshah* (History of the Jews of Warsaw) (Tel Aviv, 1953), 139.

26. Teodor Jeske-Choinski, *Neofici polscy: Materialy historyczne* (Warsaw, 1904). On Jeske-Choinski and the reception of his book, see Aleksander Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, trans. Richard Lourie (Evanston, III, 1988), III, 128; Jacob Shatzky, Alexander Kraushar and His Road to Total Assimilation, *YIVO Annual* 7 (1952): 170, n. 38.

27. The novelist and journalist Antoni Zaleski used the term in his survey of Warsaw society in the late 1880s, adding that he did not know its origins. Baronowa X.Y.Z. [Antoni Zaleski], *Towarzystwo warszawskie: Listy do przyjaciółki*, 2 vols. in 1 (Cracow, 1888), 1:270. Marian Gawalewicz published a two-volume novel, *Mechesi* (Warsaw, 1894) about converts in fin-de-siècle Warsaw in which the main plot concerns the efforts of a convert to marry into a financially strapped aristocratic family; Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture*, 215. For a more fanciful etymology of *meches*, see Abraham G. Duker, Polish Frankism's Duration: From Cabbalistic Judaism to Roman Catholicism and from Jewishness to Polishness, *Jewish Social Studies* 25 (1963): 299, n. 49.

28. Todd M. Endelman, A Hebrew to the End: The Emergence of Disraeli's Jewishness, in *Disraeli: The Fashioning of the Self*, ed. Paul Smith and Charles Richmond (Cambridge, 1998).

29. Anthony S. Wohl, Dizzi-Ben-Dizzi: Disraeli as Alien, *Journal of British Studies* 34 (1995): 375-411.

30. S. S. Prawer, *Israel at Vanity Fair: Jews and Judaism in the*

Writings of W. M. Thackeray (Leiden, 1992), 34243.

31. Heinrich Heine to Moses Moser, 9 January 1826, in *Heinrich Heine's Memoirs: From His Works, Letters, and Conversations*, ed. Gustav Karpeles, trans. Gilbert Cannan, 2 vols. (New York, 1910), 1:172; Ludwig Börne, *Briefe aus Paris*, no. 74, in *Sämtliche Schriften*, 5 vols., ed. Inge Rippmann and Peter Rippmann (Dusseldorf, 1964/68), 3: 51011.

32. Less ambitious converts did not face slights and exclusions to the same extent, since they were content with a lower level of integration and social acceptance. Frequently,

their motives for becoming Christians in the first place were tied to immediate, short-term occupational goals rather than to burning psychological and social needs. That is, they were not fleeing their Jewishness as much as advancing their careers. Converts like these continued to mix socially with Jews converted, *Konfessionslos*, nonobservant, intermarried, and the like.

33. Zaleski, *Towarzystwo warszawskie*, 1:271; Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars* (New York, 1980), 200, 206, 320, n. 35; Hertz, *Jews in Polish Culture*, 128; Charles G. Roland, *Courage under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York, 1992), 31.

34. Endelman, Frankaus of London, 13942; Hugh Cecil, *The Flower of Battle: British Fiction Writers of the First World War* (London, 1995), chap. 8.

35. Shatzky, Alexander Kraushar, 17273.

36. Hertz, *Jews in Polish Culture*, 129.

37. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 3:787.

38. Druyanov, *Sefer ha-bedihah ve-ha-hidud*, 2:145.

39. Bernard Berenson, *Sunset and Twilight* (New York, 1963), 323; Michael Fixler, Bernard Berenson of Butremanz, *Commentary*, August 1963, 138.

40. Colin Simpson, *The Partnership: The Secret Association of Bernard Berenson and Joseph Duveen* (London, 1987); René Gimpel, *Diary of an Art Dealer*, trans. John Rosenberg (New York, 1966), 248.

41. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 2:421.

42. *Ibid.*, 2:205.

43. Ibid., 2:435, 660.

44. Ibid., 4:1922, 43.

45. Ibid., 2:629, 3:55960.

46. Ibid., 2:644.

47. Ibid., 2:2.

48. In his memoirs, Arthur Schnitzler described one such. When he was a medical student at the University of Vienna from 1879 to 1885, there was an organization that lent money to needy medical students. Antisemites agitated to bar Jews from receiving this aid. Among those who spoke in favor of the ban was a baptized Jew who had become a German nationalist. According to Schnitzler, he became the butt of a slogan that was popular at the time: Anti-Semitism did not succeed until the Jews began to sponsor it. *My Youth in Vienna*, trans. Catherine Hutter (New York, 1970), 130.

49. The most recent account of Brafman and Liutostanskii is in John Doyle Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855-1881* (Cambridge, 1995), 263-83, 423-27.

50. For biographical details and anecdotes about these figures, see Shmuel Leib Tsitron, *Me-ahorei ha-pargod: mumarim, bogdim, mitkhashim*, 2 vols. (Vilna, 1923-1925).

51. For some, there was one other, overlapping motive as well. Having suffered at the hands of communal authorities when they began to stray from the Jewish fold, their attacks on Judaism became an outlet for the bitterness they felt about the way they had been treated and a means of getting back at their former persecutors.

52. Tsitron, *Me-ahorei ha-pargod*, vol. 1, chap. 1.

53. Ibid., 1:5861.

54. Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia: The Struggle for*

Emancipation, 2 vols. in 1 (New York, 1976), 1:17677; Stephen M. Berk, *Year of Crisis, Year of Hope: Russian Jewry and the Pogroms of 1881-1882* (Westport, Conn., 1985), 31.

55. Tsitron, *Me-ahorei ha-pargod*, 1:7779. See also the remarkable story of the St. Petersburg photographer Constantine Shapira that the Zionist activist Meir Jacob Fine recounted in his memoirs, *Yamim ve-shanim: zikhronot ve-tsiyyurim mi-tekufah shel hamishim shanah* (Days and years: Memories and pictures of fifty years), 2 vols., trans. Avraham Zamir (Tel Aviv, 1938-1939), 2:20619.

56. Levenson, *Yehudei varshah*, 139; Aleksander Guterman, The Origins of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw on Tlomackie Street, in *The Jews of Warsaw: A History*, ed. Wladyslaw T. Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky (Oxford, 1991), 200; idem, *Yahasam shel mitbolelei varshah le-hamrat ha-dat*, 63.

57. Max Lilienthal, *Max Lilienthal: American Rabbi* *Life and Writings*, ed. David Philipson (New York, 1915), 175; Guterman, *Yahasam shel mitbolelei varshah le-hamrat ha-dat*, 63; Tsitron, *Me-ahorei ha-pargod*, 1:235, 2:174; *Jewish Chronicle* (London), 7 July 1911; Beizer, *The Jews of St. Petersburg*, 185.

16

Sanctifying Scopus: Locating the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus

Arthur A. Goren

If you will consider redeeming [lands in] Jerusalem that are not historical sites, I would recommend that you acquire all the lovely land on the Mount of Olives, that is Mount Scopus, which is north of the Mount of Olives.

David Yellin to Menahem Ussishkin, June 1913

1

Mount Scopus is the all-embracing eye of Eretz Israel. Upon this mountain, eighteen hundred and fifty-five years ago, the Roman General, Titus Vespasian, had plighted his tent the better to direct the attack of his cohorts upon Jerusalem. . . . Today, . . . in the sight of a wondering world, the Jewish people Judaea Victorious return to Mount Scopus [to] . . . dedicate the Hebrew National University, which is to assemble the nascent Jewish culture and ideals that have outlived all compromise, have outlived all the devious turns and twists which Exile has imposed upon us.

Louis Lipsky, *The New Palestine*, March 27, 1925

Few public events during the 1920s made a more powerful impression on the Zionist and Jewish worlds than the official opening of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. For four days, from March 31 to April 3, 1925, scores of political and academic dignitaries from abroad, including sixty-two representatives of universities and learned societies, hundreds of communal leaders from Europe and America, and thousands of Jewish settlers and tourists flocked to Jerusalem to participate in the academic exercises and festivities. (Eight thousand were present at the main convocation held in the afternoon of April 1 in the amphitheater built for the occasion.) A chartered ship, *The*

President Arthur, flying the Zionist flag, landed 500 prominent American Jews in Haifa in time for

the opening. The presence of Lord Arthur Balfour, who delivered the inaugural address, added a political dimension to the cultural and academic occasion. To many observers, the participation of the former foreign minister and signer of the Balfour Declaration was a political triumph for Zionism. It confirmed Britain's continued commitment to a Jewish National Home in Palestine. In New York, Warsaw, Kovno, Vienna, London, and dozens of other cities in Europe and the United States, tens of thousands participated in the parades, mass meetings, and academic convocations that were held simultaneously with the Jerusalem festivities.

3

Interestingly, until recently historians paid little attention to these and other celebratory events. Understandably, they have been drawn to a consideration of the development of Jewish studies at the university or to the dissenting political views of a group of its prominent professors.⁴ This essay considers the formative years of the university from a different perspective: the invention of a set of symbols, ceremonies and historical associations intended to present the university-tobe and then the fledgling university as nothing less than the living sign of the rebirth of the Jewish nation, as a popular slogan expressed it. Throughout these preparatory years, especially from the cornerstone-laying ceremony in July 1918 to the formal opening in 1925, the Zionist founders led by Chaim Weizmann gave careful thought to the public image of the university. Figuratively and topographically, they reconstructed a Zionist historical geography of Scopus. A leitmotif of this reconstruction was the actual view from Scopus which embraced the momentous sites of the Jewish past: on the east, the mountains of Moab and the Jordan, where Israel entered the Promised Land; nearby to the northeast, Anatot, the village of Jeremiah; in the west, Kiryat Ye-arim, from whence the ark was

brought to Jerusalem by David. Dominating this panorama of Israel's ancient history was the temple mount, Moriah, where the first and second temples once stood, and where, when the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., the last semblance of Jewish independence vanished and the long Exile began. Now, on the crest of Scopus, a university of the Jewish people would arise, a third temple, joining that past with the Zionist future.

For the Zionist orators, the founding of the university heralded the coming fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that once more the Torah would go forth from Zion. They portrayed the university as serving as the catalyst for the reviving national culture and the guardian of its spiritual heritage. The founders also committed their university to the universal advancement of the arts and sciences. As Weizmann said more than once, The University, as its name implies, is to teach everything the mind of man embraces. In this unprecedented academic enterprise Jewish scholars and scientists would at last be free to make their collective and their individual contribution to humanity as proud Jews. The university would be a blessing to two worlds. On the eve of the opening, Nahum Sokolow, echoing the sentiments of other Zionist leaders, declared the event a new epoch in Jewish history. The Hebrew University, he told his readers, has already gathered within itself the hopes of millions of Jews, has become the symbol

and the banner of their finest aspirations: once it has assumed that role as it has done the significance of it is independent of its actual size.

5 Symbol and banner rather than actual size is the question addressed here.

Remarkably, when the Scopus site was selected for the university in 1914, David Yellin, the Jerusalem-born educator and Zionist functionary, ascribed no historical importance to it. During the years prior to the outbreak of World War I, Yellin was one of several Jerusalemites who collaborated with the Hovevy Tzion's Odessa Committee, headed by Menahem Ussishkin, in its efforts to acquire land in Jerusalem and its vicinity for purposes of urban and rural settlement. Alongside the land acquisitions program, the committee organized an association for the purchase of Jewish historical places and monuments like the Western Wall, Absalom's Pillar, and Zechariah's Tomb. Yellin was active in both endeavors. In reporting on the various properties worthy of consideration for settlement, Yellin wrote about the lovely area on Mount Scopus, where there was much unoccupied land. One could create there, he concluded, a complete and beautiful Jewish city. Although the Scopus area met the criteria for expanding Jewish settlement in greater Jerusalem, it did not fit, he remarked, the category of a Jewish historical place. In fact, the geographic place-name Scopus was hardly known. Yellin found it necessary to explain to Ussishkin that Scopus was actually the northern part of the Mount of Olives.⁶ (As late as 1925, the university was frequently described as located on the Mount of Olives).

When Ussishkin joined with Weizmann following the Zionist Congress decision of September 1913 to take practical measures to establish the Hebrew University, Yellin's enthusiasm for Scopus and

that of his co-worker Menahem Sheinkin led to negotiations for the purchase of the Sir John Grey Hill estate located on the summit of Scopus. Illuminating are two other reasons they offered for their preference for Scopus over an alternative site under consideration, to the south, that possessed a commanding view of the city as well. From Scopus one could see Hebrew Jerusalem, that is, the newer neighborhoods to the north of the walls of the Old City, and be seen from all parts of Jerusalem; and the university would occupy the highest point on the Mount of OlivesMount Scopus ridge, higher than the German Augustus Victoria hospice and the Russian Orthodox Church of the Ascension (a-Tur), both of which dominated the eastern skyline of Jerusalem. Thus, the first public institution of the Zionist movement would occupy an auspicious place in the Jerusalem landscape. In fact, by the time the university opened, the British had taken over Augustus Victoria and turned it into Government House, the residence of the high commissioner and symbol of British power.⁷ On the eve of the opening of the university, to the gratification of the Zionists, Sir Herbert Samuel, the high commissioner, hosted a reception in honor of Balfour for representatives of foreign governments and universities, officials of the Zionist movement, and officers of the university. Barely a half mile separated the two public establishments, with the Hebrew

University (actually, a building and an amphitheater) on somewhat higher ground than Government House.

8

Historical geography was not all. Scopus, in fact, possessed a problematic historical identity which Yellin and Sheinkin muted in their descriptions. As recorded by Josephus in his *Wars of the Jews* and used so graphically by Heinrich Graetz in his *History of the Jews*, for example, Scopus had played an ignoble role in the fall of Jerusalem. It was to its heights that Titus deployed two of his legions and established a fortified camp in the spring of 70 C.E. Less than a mile from the city's walls and with an unobstructed field of vision, Scopus served as the advanced staging area for the final assault on Jerusalem. From its heights, one could imagine the Roman commanders following the course of the battle the destruction of the city's walls, then the city, the burning of the Temple, the terrible slaughter, and finally the expulsion and enslavement of the surviving remnant. For Jews who climbed Scopus to visit the site of the university, the view was awesome. The scene, so intimately associated with the liturgy and Jewish calendar, reminded the onlooker of the period of mourning and fasting *beyn hamezarim* from the lyth of Tammuz (the breaching of the walls of the city) to the 9th of Av (the destruction of the Temple).⁹ Thus, historically Scopus was associated with the extinction of the last relic of Jewish sovereignty. Not surprisingly, when Scopus appears in nineteenth-century travel guides and descriptions of Jerusalem like those of Pierotti, Baedeker, and Murray its sole identification is with Titus and the fall of Jerusalem. For these Christian authors, Scopus bore witness to the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple. It is interesting to compare the guides with ones published in Hebrew by the leading nineteenth-century Jewish scholar of Jerusalem's history and

geography, Abraham Moses Luncz.¹⁰

To be sure, Luncz also identified Scopus with Titus and the destruction of the Temple. In his *Ni'tivot tziyon v'yerushalyim*, which appeared in 1876, Luncz mentioned *givat scopus* as the place where Cestius Gallus and later Titus encamped. The use of Scopus is odd. One would have expected Luncz to use instead the Hebrew *tzofim* (lookout) rather than the Greek derivative, Scopus. Nearly twenty years later, in the first edition of *Luakh Erets Yisrael*, Luncz again repeated the usage. He described the steep walk up the slopes of the Mount of Olives, turning to the north along its ridge, and then, abruptly, here is the hill of Scopus (*hiney givat scopus*). From this hill, he notes, Titus launched his attack on Jerusalem. Is it possible that Luncz refrained from linking the Hebrew *tzofim* with the Scopus of Titus that was associated with the destruction and the beginning of the long age of Exile?¹¹

Noteworthy is the failure of the guidebooks to mention Jewish sources in their descriptions of Scopus. Tzofim appears in the Talmud as a marker for the city limits of Jerusalem. On reaching Tzofim certain ritual laws that pertained to residents of the city remained in force. There were also talmudic and midrashic sources that mention mourning customs related to the destroyed temple. On coming to Tzofim from the north and seeing the Temple ruins, one rent one's

clothes in grief. Rabbi Akiva and his disciples are specifically mentioned as following this tradition when they made their pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, at the 1925 festivities the emphasis was placed on the return to the Scopus of Titus. A New York Yiddish journalist stated the motif succinctly: Before my eyes, on the very spot where Titus had stood, there was being erected the Hebrew University.

12

Indeed, here was the ultimate instance of historic justice: where the archenemy of the Jews had gathered his legions to destroy the last vestige of Jewish independence, the Zionists planted their premier institution to guide the national revival. Balfour was praised for emphasizing this linkage in his keynote address, a masterful summation of the Zionist view of Jewish history:

From where you are sitting you can see the very spot where the children of Israel first entered the Promised Land. . . . It was from this hill that the Roman destroyer of Jerusalem conducted the siege which brought to an end that great chapter of the Jewish people. Could there be a more historic spot? From it you can see the beginning, from it you can see the end, or what appeared to be the end . . . of the connections of the Jewish community with the land which they have made illustrious. . . . Well, a new epoch has begun. The great cultural effort which came to an end so many hundreds of years ago is going to be resumed in the ancient home of your people.¹³

In an ardent editorial in the issue of the *New Palestine* commemorating the opening of the university, Louis Lipsky, the veteran American Zionist leader, elaborated on the theme. After the fall of the temple masses of the vanquished were . . . dragged to Rome and set in mortal combat with wild animals; their blood crimsoned the sand of the arenas. As a memorial of his victory, Titus erected an arch

and a coin was struck in his honor inscribed with the words, *Judaea Devicta*. Lipsky continued:

The Wandering Jew, bearing the stigma of national defeat, has traversed the world these eighteen hundred and fifty-five years, nursing the hope that in God's time he would return to the scene of his former glory The great Empire of Rome is today ashes The conqueror, Titus Vespasian, owes his place in history only to the act that sent the Jews once more out of their land The Arch of Titus crumbles. And on the mountain which saw Jerusalem in flame the descendants of *Judaea Devicta* gather in the year 1925 to dedicate an edifice which proclaims to the world the Return of the Exile.¹⁴

However, returning to Scopus as an act of redress and renewal was not enough. Lipsky expanded the Scopus symbol to include Jabneh where Johanan ben Zakkai and his disciples replaced the destroyed Temple and its priestly authority with a rabbinic Judaism that would guide the Jews in their dispersion. Taken together, Lipsky argued, Jabneh and Scopus explained the secret of Jewish survival. He retold the well-known legend of the defeated Johanan ben Zakkai [who had escaped from the besieged city] and petitioned the Roman usurper for permission to retain a Jewish school of learning in the Holy Land which Vespasian granted. (Most historians place the incident in 68 C.E. when Vespasian, soon to be recalled to Rome to become emperor, was directing the siege of Jerusalem. According to a talmudic source, Ben Zakkai prophesied the event. Vespasian appointed Titus,

his son, to complete the conquest of the city.) Within sight of the Hills that had been desecrated, Lipski wrote, Ben Zakkai gathered together the debris of defeat to preserve the learning of Jewish life, to husband it in order that life (quiescent, unoffending, unaggressive), might be retained. Jabneh was a seed planted deep into the ground. At the very moment of destruction, it was the beginning of the Return.

15

Others coupled Jabneh with Scopus with even greater specificity. Mordecai M. Kaplan, the influential Conservative rabbi, Zionist and member of the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary writing in the commemorative issue of the *New Palestine*, declared: How could he [Vespasian] conceive that when the Roman Empire would be but a pale memory, Zion's children would return to Mount Scopus, where he and Rabbi Jochanan met, and there lay the foundation of a new spiritual kingdom? Now, nearly two millennia later, like the Academy of Jabneh, the University in Jerusalem is bound to inaugurate a new era of spiritual productivity surpassing all Jewish achievement in the past.¹⁶

The Jabneh-Scopus connection was no mere construct of American Jewish thinkers like Lipsky and Kaplan for whom the opening of the University on Scopus was intended to prove the compatibility of Jabneh's religious heritage with the secularism of the Jewish national revival. *Haynt*, the important Yiddish daily published in Warsaw, carried essays on the same themes in its commemorative issue. The well-known Hebrew and Yiddish essayist, Gershon Lewin, described Jochanan ben Zakkai's escape from beleaguered Jerusalem and his finding favor with Vespasian. Instead of requesting that Jerusalem be spared, he asked for Jabneh and its disciples. For such publicists, the spirit of Jabneh with its academy and its intellectual renown, the first

of the succession of great Jewish academies, was incorporated into the Scopus symbol. The Scopus that witnessed the destruction of the temple, now heralded the national rebirth.¹⁷

The Jabneh analogue and the frequent reference to the university as the third temple suggested that the university on Scopus would be more than the premier center for Judaic studies.¹⁸ Joseph Reider, a biblical scholar at Dropsie College, wrote that since Jabneh, Sura, and Pumpeditha, the Jews had lacked a uniform spiritual authority which all of us . . . could obey. The Hebrew University, their successor, would become that much wanted authority. Going even further than Reider, Rabbi Yishiyahu Zlotnik, a Warsaw journalist and religious Zionist leader, declared that the university on Scopus was the most important spiritual and political undertaking . . . since the destruction of the first temple. Writing in the Warsaw Hebrew daily *Ha-yom*, he explained that only during the period of the first temple did a single spiritual authority exist. At long last, this vacuum would be filled.¹⁹

For the most part, secular-nationalist orators and publicists set the tone. They used the Jabneh and the third temple metaphors in a broadly inclusive manner. A Jerusalem journalist stressed that the Jabneh to be built on Scopus was in no way a partial compensation of our political freedom, as was the case with Jochanan ben Zakkai, nor was the university to be an academic substitution for the

Sanhedrin. Rather, it would be a place where Jews may study our national literature so marvelously preserved, so fully expounded but so inadequately propagated. *Ha-yom* portrayed the third temple as the fountainhead of Hebrew culture and humanistic studies that would link the dispersed Jewish communities of the world in an enduring bond.

20

Weizmann and his followers went further in secularizing and generalizing the Jabneh and third temple myths. These myths now represented a commitment to scholarship and intellectual excellence that included the full academic spectrum of the modern university. In his address at the opening exercises, Weizmann traced the spiritual and intellectual continuity of the Jewish people from ancient times to the present. The latest of Jewish academies, he declared, carries on a long tradition of Hebrew learning and of Hebrew striving with the mystery of the universe. That tradition went back to the schools of the Prophets and the sages and to the Academies of Yabneh, of Nehardea and of Pompaditeh . . . and the Yeshibahs and Colleges scattered throughout the Diaspora. Once the ghetto walls fell, Weizmann explained, the intellectual and spiritual energy stored up in that long line of academies blossomed forth for the benefit of mankind. The sages of Babylon and Jerusalem, Maimonides, the Gaon of Wilna, the lens polisher of Amsterdam [Baruch Spinoza], Karl Marx, Heinrich Heine, Paul Ehrlich and Albert Einstein were links in the long, unbroken chain of the Jewish search for truth. Thus, the Hebrew University, the heir of this inheritance, was committed to the advancement of science and art the world over. True to Jewish tradition it would be a house of study for all peoples and more especially for all the peoples of Palestine. *Ha-yom* expressed these sentiments as follows: The celebration of the opening of the Hebrew

University is not only a great national holiday. At the same time it is a great celebration of the victory of pure science and the [advancement of] human civilization in general, and of this we are justly proud.²¹

Weizmann orchestrated and popularized these themes. Beginning with his early initiatives in 1913 and 1914, he had advocated concentrating on the establishment of research institutes in the natural sciences that would form the basis of a medical school. He was well aware of the enormous interest in Jewish studies and readily acknowledged their pivotal place in the future university. (In fact, the opening of the Institute of Jewish Studies was celebrated in December 1924, three months prior to the official opening of the university.) However, for the present Weizmann feared that privileging Jewish studies would embroil the young university in religious and ideological controversies over questions of curriculum and faculty. He was intent on stressing the universal and humanitarian image of the Jewish national university. Furthermore, applying scientific research to the country's health and development needs was urgent. The fact that Hebrew would be the language of the University just as French is used at the Sorbonne, or English at Oxford assured its national cultural and spiritual integrity. In July 1918, as head of the Zionist Commission and with the approval of the British Home Office, Weizmann presided over the cornerstone-laying ceremony of the university on its newly acquired site on Scopus. In the presence of General

Edmund Allenby, the commanding general of the British forces in Palestine, and Jewish and non-Jewish notables, he gave public voice to his conception of the university. Within the year the Zionist organization, with Weizmann now its unchallenged leader, put in place the administrative and consultative committees to accelerate the opening of the university.

22

In two interesting ways, Weizmann sought to imprint this universal/national image upon the embryo institution, no doubt with the expectation of broader recognition and financial support. On his recommendation the Zionist executive commissioned Patrick Geddes, the famed city planner and sociologist, to draw up the plans for the university, and he persuaded Albert Einstein, the celebrated scientist, to become an advisor of and public advocate for the university. (Einstein was appointed to the first board of governors in April 1925 and in September was elected to head the university's Academic Advisory Council.)²³

In the summer of 1919, Geddes, about to take up a professorship in India, agreed to visit Jerusalem and prepare detailed plans for the university. Together with the Edinburgh architect Frank C. Mears, the two spent three months in Jerusalem. The detailed master plan and Mears's superb perspectives were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1920 and widely praised. Weizmann, who had visited Scopus with Geddes, was enthusiastic. Lewis Mumford, the American social critic, described and interpreted Geddes's conception of the university for the American readers of the *Menorah Journal*. The central dome of the University Hall dominates the composition, he wrote. Around the dome, Geddes placed an inner ring of buildings, the library and common dining hall on opposite sides, music, philosophy and

mathematics occupying the remaining three sides. From the entrance of University Hall, one had an unobstructed view of Jerusalem. Three wings of buildings, each accommodating related disciplines, extended outward from the central hall and its surrounding structures. The projected University of Jerusalem, Mumford concluded, with its domed central building . . . is an embodiment of that unity which Professor Geddes would restore to thought and social life. It represents the coming together of the two great traditions that have so long been dissevered—the humanist and the scientific—and it stands for the synthesis of these two necessary branches of endeavor in their common effort to transform the various civilizations.²⁴

For Geddes, the domed central building was the distillation of the philosophy of the university. (He variously referred to it as the Temple of Unity and the Temple of Truth.) The dome, placed upon a hexagonal base forming the star of David, expressed anew the ancient message of Israel, given of old upon the religious plane. Geddes pointed out the universal use of the dome as in the church and mosque of Santa Sophia in Constantinople, Rome's St. Peter's, and the Dome of the Rock and the synagogues of the Old City. In the Geddes-Mears perspectives, wide steps lead from the valley below to the Great Hall. As one scholar noted, Like the route for a procession a street wound towards the university. Halfway up the hill it entered through a gateway the walled university area similar to the entrance into a temple area.²⁵

The domed central building became the emblem of the university. As early as

1921, it appeared on postcards with small oval photographs of Weizmann and Einstein on the upper right and upper left corners of the card. The cards were distributed during the university's first fundraising campaign in America, which featured Weizmann and Einstein. One of the highlights of the campaign was Einstein's appearance before eight hundred physicians at New York's Waldorf Astoria on behalf of the future medical school. Behind the speaker's dias, hung a wall-length sketch of the Great Hall symbolizing the university.

26

The 1925 opening of the university transformed the sketch of the Great Hall into the icon of the university. In three-and four-column spreads, Jewish newspapers and journals in Europe and America reproduced the sketch, often with the caption From Zion will go forth the Law. In Poland the Tarbut organization, the society for Hebrew education and culture, distributed thousands of medallions bearing the outline of the building. Letters of congratulations from institutions in Europe used the sketch as a logo, and on an invitation to a convocation in Cleveland in honor of the university's opening, a sketch of the Great Hall adorned the cover page. In the eyes of the beholder, the domed edifice atop the summit of Scopus was the third temple.²⁷

The university promoters considered Einstein's endorsement of the university an invaluable asset. In November 1919, when British scientists announced that findings based on the eclipse of the sun confirmed Einstein's theory of relativity, he became a world celebrity overnight. The same issue of the *Times* that reported The Revolution in Science also carried a brief biographical sketch noting that Einstein was an ardent Zionist who was keenly interested in the proposed Hebrew University at Jerusalem, and has offered to cooperate in the

work there.²⁸ Einstein's subsequent participation in a Zionist fund-raising mission was nevertheless quite remarkable, given his research regimen and the demands on his time to appear at scientific meetings. In April 1921 he arrived in the United States as a member of a delegation of world Zionist leaders headed by Weizmann to launch the Keren Ha-Yesod, the Foundation Fund, the projected central fund for the financing of development work in Palestine. (A portion of the money raised was to be allotted to the Hebrew University.) Einstein's participation aroused enormous interest. The lead caption on the page-one *New York Times* story of the delegation's arrival read: Prof. Einstein Here, Explains Relativity; in the fourth paragraph the purpose of his visit was mentioned: [t]o get financial aid and encouragement for the rebuilding of Palestine and the founding of a Jewish university. The second half of the account quoted Weizmann at length on Zionism's goals and the Hebrew University project.

During the two-month tour of eastern and midwestern cities, Einstein shared the limelight with Weizmann. Einstein dutifully participated in the Zionistarranged street parades, mass rallies, subscription dinners, interviews, and ceremonial meetings with mayors, governors, and other notables. He also addressed academic audiences, received an honorary degree from Princeton, and was the featured speaker at the annual meeting of the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, where he met President Warren G. Harding. These activities only

enhanced his appeal in the eyes of the Jewish public. If journalists and newsreel cameras presented him as the charming luminary of the Western world, those reports, which also detailed his appearances on Jewish and Zionist platforms, transformed him into the idol of the Jewish world.

29

Einstein shared Weizmann's scientific ethos and his thoughts on the university: Begin with small but first-rate research institutes that would entice talented young Jewish scientists (hampered in Europe by antisemitism) and enable them to produce scientific work that would benefit the country and then redound to the reputation of the university and the Jewish people. Thus, it was not altogether unexpected when Einstein agreed to spend a week in Palestine en route to Germany from a visit to Japan and to deliver the first academic lecture to be given under the auspices of the Hebrew University. The lecture on the theory of relativity, delivered in French and German, took place on February 7, 1923, in the small hall of the one existing building on Scopus. Acquired with the purchase of the site, renovations were about to begin to convert it into the Institutes of Chemistry and Microbiology.

The event assumed the solemnity of a momentous happening in the history of the Jewish people. Present was the high commissioner, senior civil officers of the mandatory government, members of the consular corps, Zionist officials, and Arab and Jewish dignitaries. Zionist flags and the insignia of the twelve tribes draped the hall. A portrait of Theodore Herzl alongside the Union Jack and a banner inscribed with the words *Orav-tora* Light and Learning covered the wall behind the speaker's podium. Ussishkin, chairman of the Palestine Zionist Executive, presided. Introducing Einstein, he

declaimed on the historic meaning of the gathering. Two thousand years before, on the very place they had assembled for the lecture, Titus directed his Roman legions in the final onslaught on Jerusalem destroying the Temple and sending the nation into exile. Professor Einstein, Ussishkin continued, three thousand years ago on Mount Moriah opposite this site one of our great sons, King Solomon, built a temple to the Universal God and dedicated it as a house of prayer for all nations. We pray that this temple, the home of the Hebrew University, will be a temple of science to all nations. Turning to Einstein, he called upon him to mount the platform which has been waiting for you for 2,000 years.³⁰

The temple of science that Ussishkin proclaimed became in Judah Magnes's keynote address, delivered at the founding convocation of the Institute of Jewish Studies, a holy place, a sanctuary in which to learn and teach . . . all that Judaism has made and created. A Reformed rabbi, cultural Zionist, and popular American communal leader then living in Jerusalem, Magnes's mediation among contending groups was instrumental in launching the institute. (That role and his winning the financial support of the American banker Felix Warburg led to his appointment to head the institute.) In his address, Magnes stressed that in elucidating Judaism the scientific method would be followed and the free pursuit of knowledge assured. He also proclaimed a higher purpose. In its natural habitat, Jewish studies would not only flourish as nowhere

else, but they would embrace all of the humanities in a harmonious whole. We want the Jewish spiritual view of life to be deepened and broadened, so that it may help broaden the spiritual life of humanity. We want to help save humanity.

31

The inauguration of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus was presented by its planners and producers as a founding rite of national renewal. Whether expressed in the voices of Weizmann or Magnes or the designs of Geddes or the fame of Einstein (the main event of the second day of celebrations was the laying of the foundation stone of the Einstein Institute of Physics and Mathematics), the opening of the university was invested with a sense of transcendental purpose no less than national fulfillment. Secularists laced their speeches with religious motifs even when dedicating scientific facilities. The proceedings of the inaugural ceremonies began with choir and orchestra rendering Haydn's *The Heavens Declare the Glory of God* from *The Creation*, and *From Zion Shall Go Forth the Law*, composed by the famed Viennese cantor, Solomon Sulzer. It is difficult to imagine a space other than Scopus that could have evoked such soaring rhetoric of spiritual and national renewal, nor a more appropriate choice of speakers to bless the solemnities in the name of world Jewry and the Yishuv. Fittingly, Weizmann the scientist, statesman, and president of the World Zionist Organization officiated. Abraham Isaac Ha-Cohen Kook, the revered Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine, delivered the first of the formal speeches. The presence of the many who had come from the far corners of Erez Israel moved him to declare this ingathering of our scattered brethen, small as it was, to be a pledge that the time of Redemption has come. Chaim Nachamn Bialik, the embodiment of the Hebrew cultural renaissance,

spoke last. (In addition to Balfour and the representative Jewish speakers, Herbert Samuel brought the greetings of the British government, and Joseph H. Hertz, chief rabbi of England, concluded the exercises with a prayer.)³²

However, the aura of sanctity dissipated rapidly despite the auspicious setting. Why? Why did this remarkable attempt to build a new temple upon the most sacred site of Jewish history (to be sure, transferred from Moriah to Scopus) fail to win the public's devotion? Why did the notion of the Hebrew University as the symbol and beacon of the national revival resonate so poorly?

Before considering the political and cultural factors that contributed to the desanctification of Scopus, one should note that the more circumspect among the university's champions feared the corroding effect the rhetoric of extravagant expectations could have when offered as impending reality. Even in the midst of the ceremonial opening a tone of caution was sounded. Bialik warned: It is our duty to say openly and frankly that the institution which has now been inaugurated . . . is but a beginning, is an institution existing almost in name only. At the moment it is but an empty vessel which has yet to be filled; a child whose future has not yet unfolded. Several days before the opening, Magnes, chairman of the arrangements committee, noted in his diary: The falsehood of opening what

does not exist. Warburg, Ein judische bluff. On the eve of the opening, the *New York Times* reporter, writing as a sympathetic observer, stated that the inauguration would be important mainly as an appeal to the Jewish world to help this meagre beginning.

33

With the festival over, the founders faced the fundamental questions of every new institution: governance, academic policy, priorities, appointments, and funding. In the case of the Hebrew University, personal rivalries and Jewish politics exacerbated the complex deliberations. The very identity of the university was an issue. The Zionist movement's conception of the university as its instrument of nation building and its means of reaching out to world Jewry was questioned by a group of donors, mostly non-Zionist American Jews, who viewed the university as just another worthy enterprise deserving their support. However, they were apprehensive of what they termed Zionist chauvinism and insisted on insulating university management from politicization in the person of Weizmann. (In a letter to Weizmann, Louis Marshall, head of the American Jewish Committee, as well as Warburg's advisor and Magnes's brother-in-law, wrote caustically: Politically I am a Republican, but I should consider it a great misfortune if any of our universities in the United States was to be considered as an adjunct to the Republican Party.)

Ironically, Weizmann had courted the American men of wealth, hoping to gain sorely needed financial resources for the university and for other Zionist endeavors. The most influential donor, Felix Warburg, insisted that Magnes head the university and thereby assure its independence. Magnes, Weizmann's close collaborator in the early years of the revived interest in a Hebrew University, had withdrawn from Zionist politics during the First World War. He viewed the

Balfour Declaration and the ratification of the mandate by the League of Nations, Weizmann's greatest diplomatic triumphs, as the illegitimate offspring of British imperialism. At the time of the founding of the university, Magnes considered himself an apolitical Zionist. In this situation, the compromise that was hammered out between the Zionist Organization and the non-Zionists donors was bound to be a fragile one. Magnes was elected chancellor, directing university affairs from Jerusalem, and Weizmann was elected president of the board of governors, which met infrequently in Europe but held the ultimate authority. The long and bitter struggle that followed took its toll on the morale and the image of the young institution. Nevertheless, progress was made. The faculty grew, a vastly more modest program of construction replaced Geddes's grand design, and research retained its priority. Much of it in fact touched on the needs of the Yishuv, whether in the applied sciences or in Judaic studies. Gradually for Weizmann, grudgingly formal instruction and the granting of degrees were introduced.³⁴

Under these circumstances the chancellor of the university neither wished nor could have filled the symbolic role of chief spokesman for the institution so recently hailed as the intellectual and spiritual center of the Jewish people. The scene of thousands of Jews ascending to Jerusalem as in 1925 was not repeated. No third temple was built on Scopus, and Magnes was no high priest in any

event. The convocations opening the academic year, for example, which Magnes planned with great care, remained essentially internal affairs. They failed to attract the attention of world Jewry. When Magnes used the occasion to express his views on contemporary affairs following the 1929 Arab attacks on the Yishuv, his remarks were indeed carried around the world in a storm of controversy. His call for conciliation and his plea to forgo political aspirations in favor of the Ahad Ha-amist vision of a cultural center were considered blasphemous by the Zionist establishment. The activities of like-minded faculty in advocating a binational state and limitations on immigration tainted the university with the brush of apostasy.

35

In another way Scopus distanced itself from the Yishuv and world Jewry. Ironically, Weizmann's insistence, to which Magnes acquiesced, on concentrating its limited resources on research isolated Scopus. It is true that Weizmann himself acknowledged the problem. Once the university had won recognition for its scientific standards, he pledged, it would open its gates to the hundreds, even thousands, clamoring to come. He also paid obeisance to the populist, reach-out mission of a people's university. In his 1918 address at the stone-laying ceremony, Weizmann envisioned a university that would enable the Jewish workman and farm laborer . . . to find a possibility of continuing and completing their education in their free hours. But in truth, both Weizmann and Einstein wanted an elitist research institute, a Pasteur Institute, that would bring fame and honor to its faculty because of scientific merit.³⁶

By 1925 the Jewish workman and farm laborer Weizmann had patronized seven years earlier had created a labor movement, the most dynamic force in the country, whose pioneering ethos included the

imperative to become tillers of the soil in the service of the nation. The national myth of *halutzim* pioneers draining the swamps of the Emek (the Valley of Yizra'el), building roads in the Galilee and establishing collective settlements was complemented by the image of the worker-intellectual creating the new Hebrew culture. The labor movement's intellectual leadership addressed the workers through the movement's press, books, pamphlets, and lectures. (The labor movement's daily, *Davar*, began appearing two months after the opening of the university.) This self-contained cultural milieu was far removed from the academic pursuits of the scholars on Scopus.³⁷ Yet an awareness existed that the gap needed to be closed. Two of the contributors to the commemorative issue of the *New Palestine* resorted to the mountain and the valley metaphor *ha-har v'ha-emek* to express their concerns. Only if the professors on Mount Scopus, the culture-bearers of the university, drew sustenance from the *halutzim* working the lands of the valley would the university fulfill its historic task and give us once again a Hebrew culture with the pungent flavor of the Palestinian soil. Einstein himself, advocate of the research university, pleaded with a measure of incongruity: In Palestine . . . we aim at creating a people of workers . . . and we desire that the treasures of culture should be accessible to our laboring class It devolves upon the University to create something unique in order to serve the specific needs of the forms of life developed by our

people in Palestine.

38 There was contact between the mountain and the valley, but it was tenuous at best, despite the personal ties between distinguished members of the faculty and leaders of the labor movement.

The eclipse of the Scopus myth is not surprising. Those who would hallow it assumed that a university surely, a Hebrew University located on Mount Scopus could serve as a living national monument and symbol. But by definition universities abhor mythmaking or being monuments, albeit living ones. The academic persuasion, with all of its imperfections, cannot suffer sanctification.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to compare the attempt to sanctify Scopus with similar Zionist endeavors. Recently, a number of scholars have focused on the process by which national myths are invented and collective memory reshaped. Yael Zerubavel's work is especially relevant to our discussion. In *Recovered Roots, Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Zerubavel studied Masada (the last stronghold of Jewish resistance following the Roman conquest of Jerusalem), the Bar Kochba-led rebellion sixty years later, and the creation of the Tel Chai memorial celebrating the heroism of Joseph Trumpeldor and his comrades, who in 1920 fell in defense of the settlement. Common to all is the Zionist reading of history. The distant and recent past are glorified, the former as the age of Jewish independence and the latter as ushering in the period of self-redemption. The hallmark of both are the heroic fighters who fell defending the homeland and Jewish honor, leaving a legacy of dedication to the struggle for national independence. The centuries between the loss of independence and the period of Zionist return are discredited. Exile is a time of powerlessness and degradation and of bending the knee before one's oppressors. Masada is magnified and

Jabneh disparaged.³⁹

How interesting that the collective memory of some Zionist thinkers and activists during the 1920s linked Scopus with Jabneh, the two merging in no less a metaphor than the third temple. In doing so these Zionists sought to restore Ben-Zakkai and Jabneh representing the quiescent, unoffending, unaggressive way, to recall Lipsky's words to their exalted place in Jewish history. They tempered the alternate reading of the Zionist past and future taking shape in Palestine. The writers and ideologues of the pioneering movements settling the country, the men and women of the Second and Third Aliyot, never considered including the third temple metaphor in the master commemorative narrative, to use a crucial term in Zerubavel's analysis. The Hebrew press in Palestine celebrated the opening of the university but did not glorify it.⁴⁰

To a considerable degree, Scopus, with its Jabneh links, was the invention of Diaspora Zionism. It was more encompassing than the myths of Masada or Tel Chai, more spiritual than heroic. It reached out to embrace the Jewish people wherever they were, a beacon of light for the Diaspora as well as for the Yishuv. In contrast to the prevailing ideal of Zionism *halutzim* single-mindedly conquering the Land of Israel by their labor Scopus summoned a select number of scientists and scholars to build a great intellectual and scientific center.⁴¹ It would be, in Weizmann's words, a house of study for all peoples and more especially for

all the peoples of Palestine. Perhaps Scopus's inclusiveness in Einstein's words, the university would embrace the universality of the human spirit contributed to its desanctification. Where scholars pursued the truth no matter where it took them be it in physics, in philosophy, or in Judaic studies the expectations of the enthusiasts for something more went unfulfilled. A third temple did not arise on Scopus to unify, inspire, and direct the cultural and spiritual forces of the Jewish people, although the university contributed to these ends.

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Notes

1. Quoted in Yossie Katz, *Ha-mifne biyahsam shel usishkin vekhovevey tzion lipituakh yerushalyim vilihakamat ha-universita ha-ivrit lifney milkhemet ha-oilam ha-rishona*, in *Yerushalyim be-toda'a u-v-'ass'iya ha-tziyonit*, ed. Hagit Lavsky (Jerusalem, 1989), 131.
2. *New Palestine* 8 (March 27, 1925): 281.
3. Arthur A. Goren, The View from Scopus: Judah L. Magnes and the Early Years, *Judaism* 45 (spring 1996): 2035. For *The President Arthur*, see the *New York Times*, April 2, 1925. The opening ceremonies are reported extensively in the *New York Times*, March 31, 1925, April 1, 2, 3, 1925, and in *New Palestine* 8 (April 8, 1925): 45987. *The Hebrew University Jerusalem: Inauguration, April 1, 1925* includes the texts of the speeches and greetings and the lists of official guests. For celebrations held outside Jerusalem, see the *Jewish Chronicle*, April 3 and 10, 1925; *Haynt*, April 1, 1925; *Der Tog*, April 2, 1925; *New Palestine* (April 8, 1925): 48386.
4. David Biale, The Idea of a Jewish University, in *Like All the Nations? The Life and Legacy of Judah L. Magnes*, ed. William M.

Brinner and Moses Rischin (Albany, N.Y., 1987), 12737; Paul Mendes-Flohr, *The Appeal of the Incurable Idealist* in *ibid.*, 13953. See also the papers by William M. Brinner, George L. Mosse, David N. Myers, and Martin Jay presented at a conference, *The Origins of Modern Jewish Studies and the Founding of the Hebrew University*, *Judaism* 45 (spring 1996): 13163. For the outstanding study of the Hebrew University that focuses on Judaic studies, see David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past* (New York, 1995). *Toldot ha-universita ha-ivrit b'yerushalyim-shorashim ve-hatkhalot*, ed. Shaul Katz and Michael Heyd (Jerusalem, 1997). Because of its recent publication, the volume was not accessible to me.

5. Gedaliah Bublick (editor, *Yiddishe Tageblatt*), quoted in *New Palestine* 8 (March 27, 1925): 370; Chaim Weizmann, *The Jerusalem University*, in *Awakening Palestine*, ed. Leon Simon and Leonard Stein (London, 1923), 73; Nahum Sokolow, *A Blessing to Two Worlds*, *New Palestine* 8 (March 27, 1925): 325.

6. Margalit Shilo, *Mi-yafo l'yerushalyim: yakhsa shel ha-histadrut ha-tzionit l'yerushalyim bi'tkufat ha-aliya ha-shniya*, in Lavsky, *Yerushalyim*, 103. For Weizmann's dominant role during this period see, Jehuda Reinharz, *Laying the Foundation for a University in Jerusalem: Chaim Weizmann's Role, 1913-1914*, *Modern Judaism* 4 (February 1984), 138.

7. Katz, in Lavsky, *Yerushalyim*, 11923. There are several inaccuracies in Katz's quotation of Yellin's letter to Ussishkin (12 Sivan 5673); see file A24/68/21, Central Zionist Archives. For Yellin's later recollections of the purchase of land for the university, see *Hish'talshlut kivi'at ha-makom l'mikhlala ha-ivrit* (6 Adar 5694), in *Kitvey David Yellin*, Vol. 5, *Igrot bet* (Jerusalem, 1976), 34245. Sheinkin compared Scopus with another site, south of Jerusalem, the Hill of Evil Council (Har Mukabra). It would be close to the planned suburb of Talpiot, where one could also see the Old City, the temple

mount, the Dead Sea, and the Jordan but not Hebrew Jerusalem.
Sheinkin to Ussishkin, 29 Elul

5673 (file A24/51/2, Central Zionist Archives) also quoted in Katz, in Lavsky, *Yerushalyim*, 132. Katz concludes that to see and be seen by Hebrew Jerusalem was the determining factor in choosing Scopus.

8. *New York Times*, April 1, 1925.

9. There are a number of talmudic and midrashic references to the Roman assault on Jerusalem. But one may surmise that enlightened circles were drawing upon Josephus's detailed account in *The Wars* through one of its translations into German and English or through the medieval Hebrew adaptation, *The Book of Jossipon* (where, interestingly, the geographic site Scopus is not mentioned). The first volume of Heinrich Graetz's *History of the Jews*, which appeared in 1853, carried the most graphic account of the siege and fall of Jerusalem.

10. Ermeti Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored: Being a Description of the Ancient and Modern City* (London, 1864), 1:4. In an extended note citing Josephus, Pierotti explains that Scopus was the first place from which the Roman legions obtained a view of the city (p. 36). See also John Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Syria and Palestine* (John Murray, 1875), 50 (map opposite p. 116); *Jerusalem and Its Surroundings* (Baedeker, 1876), 10910.

11. Avraham Moshe Luncz, *Ntivot tziyon v'yirushalyim*, 1 (Jerusalem, 1876), 65, and *Lu-ach erets yisrael, shimushi v'sifrut* (1895), 1:66.

12. The talmudic references are conveniently summarized in Yehoshua Levinzon, *Har Hatzofim* (ZaHal, Hotza'ot Ma'arakhot) and in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*; Gedaliah Bublic, *New Palestine* (March 27, 1925): 370.

13. *The Hebrew University, Jerusalem: Inauguration, April 1 1925* (Jerusalem, 1925), 29.

14. *New Palestine* (March 27, 1925): 281.

15. Ibid., The events connected with Jochanan Ben Zakkai fleeing besieged Jerusalem and petitioning Vespasian for Jabneh are discussed by Gedaliahu Alon, *Studies in Jewish History* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1967), 21952; and Jacob Neusner, *Life of Yohanan Ben Zakkai* (Leiden, 1970), 15266.

16. *New Palestine* (March 27, 1925): 286. For the editor of the *Cleveland Yiddishe Velt*, Samuel Rocker, the only occasion in the history of the Jewish people the opening of the university could be compared to was when Ben Zakkai asked (and received) Jabneh and its sages from Vespasian (ibid., 370).

17. *Haynt*, April 1, 1925. See also, for example, A. S. Kamintzki, *Ha-yom*, April 1, 1925.

18. That Jabneh and third temple were common catchwords may be inferred from their use by Weizmann and Ahad Ha-am in their private correspondence. Weizmann wrote to his wife, Vera, in March 1913, reporting on plans to acquire a site for the university in Jerusalem, It is true that a Hebrew University and the Holy Sepulchre in one and the same place are quite incompatible, but we certainly can't give up Jerusalem. We have to take chances. To my way of thinking this is the one slogan that can evoke a response just now the Hebrew University. *Di Zionsuniversitaet auf dem Berge Zion, The Third Temple! (The Letters of Chaim Weizmann, Vol. 5, March 1913-July 1914, ed. Gedalia Yogev et al. [London, 1974], 13)*. Ahad Ha-am writing to the English Zionist Norman Bentwich, congratulating him on his appointment to a government post in Egypt, wrote: I hope that we will eventually see you occupy a chair in Jerusalem, when it [the Hebrew University] will be built, the third temple, which we look forward to. That day is still far in the future, but it will come. Ahad-Haam to Norman Bentwich, January 18, 1914, in *Igrot Ahad Ha-am*, 5:142.

19. Joseph Reider, Our University, *New Palestine* (March 27, 1925): 332; *Ha-yom*, April 1, 1925. See also, Yisrael Eitan, B'yimay bayit sheni, *Ha-doar* 5 (April 3, 1925): 11.

20. *New Palestine* (March 27, 1925): 367; *Ha-yom*, March 25, 1925.

21. *The Hebrew University, Jerusalem: Inauguration*, 25. The list of Jewish scholars appears in another version of Weizmann's inaugural address (*New Palestine* [March 27, 1925]: 283). *Haynt*, April 1, 1925. Curiously, Sigmund Freud, whose greetings to the university

were published in the proceedings of the inaugural festivities, is not included in Weizmann's list of Jewish scholars. I want to thank David Nasaw for calling this to my attention.

22. For Weizmann's initiatives on behalf of the university from 1912 to 1914, see Jehuda Reinharz, Laying the Foundation for a University in Jerusalem: Chaim Weizmann's Role, *Modern Judaism* 3 (February, 1984): 138. On the 1918 ceremony, see Goren, View from Scopus, 2057; see, in particular, Weizmann's Speech at Foundation-stone Laying of Hebrew University, July 24, 1918, in *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series B (Papers) 1:19195.

23. Montague David Eder, a British psychoanalyst and Weizmann's co-worker, suggested in May 1919 that Geddes be engaged to prepare a master plan for the university. As a resident member of the Zionist Commission in Palestine, he followed Geddes's work closely. Einstein became interested in Zionism in February 1919; see note 28.

24. Lewis Mumford, The Hebrew University: The Vision of the Architect, *Menorah Journal* 8 (February 1922): 33, 36.

25. Volker M. Welter, The Geddes Vision of the Region as City: Palestine as a Polis, *Social Utopias of the Twenties: Bauhaus, Kibbutz and the Dream of the New Man*, ed. Jeannine Fiedler (Wuppertal, Germany, 1995), 76.

26. For postcard representation, see David Kroyanker paper presented at the Conference on Jewish Art, Jerusalem, June 1996; for Einstein lecture, *New York Times*, May 22, 1921; *Morgen Zhurnal*, May 23, 1921; *American Hebrew*, May 27, 1921.

27. *Menorah Journal* 7 (1921): 40; *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem* (London, 1924), cover page, 5, 7. *New Palestine* (March 27, 1925): front and back cover; *Haynt*, April 1, 1925; *Jewish Criterion*, March 25, 1925; *Morgen Zhurnal*, April 1, 1925; *Forvertz*,

April 1, 1925; *Der Tog*, April 1, 1925; *Ha-doar* 5 (April 3,1925): 1. On the medallions see, *Ha-yom*, March 29, 1925. See also Invitation to attend Cleveland Celebration . . . to commemorate the Inauguration of the First Hebrew University, April 1, 1925 (Abba Hillel Silver Papers, Folder 106, Western Reserve Historical Society).

28. *Times* (London), November 8,1919. The German Jewish Zionist Kurt Blumenfeld won Einstein's support for Zionism in a number of conversations in February 1919. The interest in Hebrew University mentioned in the *Times* may have been the result of an invitation to convene a meeting of a number of Jewish scientists in January 1920. These first contacts with Einstein were made prior to the worldwide publicity that followed the confirmation of his theory of relativity.

29. *New York Times*, April 2, 3, 6, and 26; May 18 and 26,1921.

30. Goren's View from Scopus, 2078. For variation of the Ussishkin quotation not cited in Goren, see *Sefer Ussishkin l'yovel ha-shivim* (Jerusalem, 1934), 368.

31. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, 4041, 5154; Goren, View from Scopus, 20912.

32. For the Kook and Bialik speeches, see *The Hebrew University, Inauguration*, 1722, 3641.

33. *The Hebrew University, Jerusalem: Inaguration* (English translation) 356; for Hebrew, *kav-het* [28]; *New York Times*, April 1, 1925. Journal entry, March 23,1925, in Arthur A. Goren, *Dissenter in Zion: From the Writings of Judah L. Magnes* (Cambridge, 1982),231.

34. Goren, View from Scopus, 21217; for the Marshall quote, p. 215. The 1921 fundraising effort in the United States, when the university was included within the Keren Hayesod campaign, brought a poor yield for the university. Henceforth, university fundraising focused on small groups of wealthy Jews cutting off the university from the mass

propaganda intended for the broad middle-class.

35. Ibid., 21720; see Arnold Band's analysis of S. Y. Agnon's lampooning of Magnes in his novel *Shirah* (Gown and Town, *Like All the Nations?*, 15963). On Brith Shalom,

see Aharon Kedar, *Brith Shalom: The Early Period (1925-1928), Studies in the History of Zionism* (in Hebrew), ed. Yehuda Bauer *et al.* (Jerusalem, 1976), 224-85.

36. *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series B, 1:195.

37. Anita Shapira discusses this issue in *The Zionist Labor Movement and the Hebrew University*, *Judaism* 45 (spring 1996): 184-98. Her discussion of three issues: manual labor and intellect, national commitment and academic careers, academic freedom in a collectivist society is especially pertinent.

38. Eliezer Rieger, *Culture and Agriculture*, Mt. Scopus and the Valley of Jezreel, *ibid.*, 310; Morris Rothenberg, *The Mount and the Emek*, *ibid.*, 360; Einstein, *The Mission of Our University*, *ibid.*, 294. In Einstein's official greeting in German this paragraph does not appear (*The Hebrew University, Jerusalem: Inauguration*: 1089). Privately, Einstein stormed against the danger of creating a *Bauemuniversität* (a people's university).

39. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots, Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago, 1995). I am indebted to Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (*Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* [Seattle, 1982], 97-102) for his treatment of Zionism and historical memory.

40. Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 612, 313-6.

41. Arthur A. Goren, *Anu banu artza' in America: The Americanization of the Halutz Ideal*, in *Envisioning, Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*, ed. Allon Gall (Jerusalem, 1996), 81-113.

42. An afterword is in order: Throughout the pre-state era the Hebrew University appears frequently in Zionist rhetoric as the university of

the Jewish people and its spiritual center. In the 1930s, Ussishkin proposed that the first-century burial cave of the Alexandrian Jew, Nikanor, found on Scopus, become the site of the Pantheon of Zionist notables. In 1934 the bones of Leon Pinsker were reinterred in the cave, and in 1941, Ussishkin was buried there. See Ben-Zvi Mikhaeli, Pantheon sh-lo kam, *Et-mol* 15 (October 1989), 1415; Judah L. Magnes to Norman Bentwich, October 23, 1941, Magnes Papers, Central Archives for the Jewish People, Jerusalem. Neither the rhetoric nor Ussishkin's proposal seems to alter the thrust of my argument that the symbolic role assigned to the university failed to materialize.

17

Texts and Contest:

Myths of Origin and Myths of Belonging in Nineteenth-Century Bohemia

Hillel J. Kieval

Flattering historiography does more than assist a given group to survive by affecting the balance of power among warring peoples, for an appropriately idealized version of the past may also allow a group of human beings to come closer to living up to its noblest ideals. What is can move towards what ought to be, given collective commitment to a flattering self-image.

William H. McNeill, *Mythistory and Other Essays*

Myth, Ethnic Identity, and Discourses of the Nation

Anthropology, classical philology, and religious studies have brought distinct analytical traditions to bear on the study of myth in human culture. Through the implicit assumptions inherent in those traditions, they have argued for particular definitions of the term *myth* itself. Classicists have tended to view myth primarily as an epic literary genre, an account of the gods, that purports to transmit cultural information based on the preliterate, oral traditions of a people. As a literary style it is understood to represent a bridge between orally transmitted epic tales and sagas and the genres of history, philosophy, and rhetoric. Anthropologists of the early part of this century who did ethnographic field work among so-called preliterate populations understood myth to be a primary component of orally transmitted cultures. They looked to oral narratives about the gods that were transmitted in social settings or that accompanied the performance of public ritual, in order to reveal the conceptual but nonrational, underpinnings of the societies in question.

1 Comparative religionists, finally, appear to have been equally impressed by both classicism and anthropology. While acknowledging myth to be a fundamental form of religious expression, a sacred mapping of encounters between the human and the divine, they also have tended to share the assumption

that myth belongs to prehistoric time and that only echoes of this type of consciousness remain in the written texts of the major religions.

2

In their rough outlines all of these approaches involve significant modernist biases. The classicist perceives the mythic literary stratum to be both historically bounded and superseded by types of writing that accord more with our own sensibilities. The association between myth and primitive or between myth and preliterate in much of the ethnographic literature attests to a similar conceit concerning progress and the rationalization of culture. And both students of and apologists for religion in the nineteenth century have isolated the philosophical and ethical strands within religious traditions as representing higher or later stages of development. What is implied throughout is that myth, as a system of knowledge reflecting a particular type of cultural sensibility, is inaccessible; and when it is retrieved, it is done so as the result of an atavistic act, a retreat to the dark, the savage, and the irrational.

For the study of myth to be made relevant to questions of ethnicity and modern nationalism, it must first be removed from the classical paradigms within which it typically is viewed. Myth can neither be tied to a particular literary genre nor relegated to a single stage in an assumed evolution of human consciousness; it ought not to be contingent upon either form or time but rather content and function. Myth corresponds to a particular type of social knowledge, that is, to a system of meaning, constructed and transmitted in social settings, in which the realm of direct experience is related to, explained by, and patterned after a metaphysical, timeless, or sacred reality. Maurice Leenhardt has written that, in those cultures in which individuals actively participate in their myths, landscape, topography, and art

mediate between visible and invisible realities, between the individual and divinity. If one can generalize from this concept of participation, one could view myth phenomenologically as the production of a sacred geography of time and space, travel through which orients the individual (and the group) to realities and significances that are understood to lie beyond the bounds of both historically bounded time and locally marked space.³

Ethnie, to use the term that Anthony Smith employs, are nothing if not historical communities built up on shared memories. And of the complex of symbols and values that make up a group's identity, it is its myths of origin and descent that work best to orient it in its temporal and spatial environment.⁴ Ethnic groups, of course, also evolve various signs of cultural distinctiveness, such as language, religion, kinship systems, and the like. But in the last resort, it is the belief in the common and unique origins of the community, and in its liberation from all ills, past and present, that justifies and sustains the other cultural dimensions or signs of individuality.⁵

Smith makes the point that the transition from ethnic consciousness as such to modern nationalism is neither obvious nor straightforward. State formation, the creation of modern bureaucratic structures, scientific revolutions, new paradigms for the organization and evaluation of knowledge, and new methods for its

production and dissemination intervene in such ways as to militate against any simple extension of pre-Enlightenment ethnic solidarities to the arena of modern politics.

6 Nor, as Benedict Anderson points out, do all ethnic communities take the decisive step of imagining themselves as nations. But where such processes do take place, information that is transmitted through myth again serves as an important stimulus to group solidarity and self-knowledge. And because modern nationalism encompasses not only the imaginative construction of communities of affinity but also contests for political power involving other social groups as well as states, the myths that these communities cultivate and hold dear are also likely to convey critical pieces of information about the otherness of other groups.

It is also true that in the post-Enlightenment West the production and dissemination of myth was rendered problematic precisely because rationalism, the scientific method, and historical criticism seemed to offer stronger and more compelling paradigms for truth. If myth was not entirely pushed aside, it nevertheless did acquire a new epistemological status as the repository for subjective truths and values. In the process, mythic knowledge could occupy an almost sacred place by virtue of emotional attachment alone. A nation loved its myths because they were *its* myths.

In theory, myth and history should stand as competing, if not incompatible, sources of knowledge. Even in the mental universe of the ancient Greeks, as Paul Veyne explains, historical criticism and speculative science presented powerful challenges to mythic knowledge because, in contrast to myth, they operated on the assumption that truth and falsehood composed epistemological opposites.⁷ In reality, however, history as a discipline and historians

as professional experts have been deeply implicated in the production of myth for nationalist purposes. One reason for this mixing of genres lies in the issue of authority. Much of the power of myth, according to Veyne, derives from the unimpeachability of its source, not from its correspondence to daily experience. Similarly, people in modern societies display blind trust in statements of truth that they never could nor never would choose to verify in their own lives.⁸

By the early nineteenth century what Anthony Smith calls historicism—the conviction that all of reality, including sacred institutions, has an origin in time and that the nature and purpose of things are revealed in the record of their evolution—occupied the position of authority once reserved for divine inspiration. Historians, in uncovering the origins of societies and institutions and in documenting their careers over time, also assigned meaning, coherence, and moral value to what might otherwise so easily be seen as unrelated pieces of cultural information.⁹ Of those historians who appear to have been most invested in the modern nationalist quest for origins, then, it might be asked whether they were not engaging in public behavior that violated their own scientific ethos?

There are a variety of analytical models that can be applied to this phenomenon. Eric Hobsbawm views it as part of the general tendency of modern institutions and political movements to invent traditions, practices organized around

ritual or symbol that are designed to express a presumed continuity with the past. Invented traditions, however, almost always emerge in response to a sense of radical disjuncture with the past; the continuities that they reveal are themselves figments of the imagination.

10 For Ernest Gellner the imaginative virtuosity of nationalist intellectuals is of no intrinsic interest, as it simply lays bare the false consciousness that is inherent in all national ideology:

Its myths invert reality: it claims to defend folk culture while in fact it is forging a high culture; it claims to protect an old folk society while in fact helping to build up an anonymous mass society Nationalism tends to treat itself as a manifest and self-evident principle, accessible as such to all men, and violated only through some perverse blindness, when in fact it owes its plausibility and compelling nature only to a very special set of circumstances, which do indeed obtain now, but which were alien to most of humanity and history.¹¹

Finally, according to Hobsbawm, some political institutions or ideological movements are so novel and unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity either by semi-fiction . . . or by forgery.¹²

Both Gellner's and Hobsbawm's explanations of the cultural artifacts of modern national movements are remarkable in their dismissiveness. For Hobsbawm the modern nationalist's quest for origins falls under the category of invented tradition and is thus stigmatized with the badge of disingenuousness. Left unspoken, however, are a number of questionable assumptions: for example, that some cultural traditions are real while others are merely invented and that traditions that can be demonstrated to have an ancient pedigree are themselves not

subject to the same processes of invention as modern symbol and ritual. Gellner, on the other hand, is quick to accuse national myths of philosophical bad faith without considering whether or not all ideology, in fact, inverts reality or even whether philosophical categories are the most appropriate tool to use in analyzing such phenomena.

An approach that is more attuned to phenomenological issues might seek to uncover those features that ancient and modern mythmaking hold in common, particularly with regard to what I would call the implications of myth. What social functions do the production, dissemination, and learning of myth perform? What structures of meaning does this type of knowledge impose on groups and individuals? And is myth sometimes chosen over other types of knowledge because of the meanings that it (alone) is able to give to experience? William McNeill has suggested that all national historiography with its inevitable blending of ideology, truth, and fabrication comprises myth or, to use his coinage, mythistory. We are free with Herodotus, or saved with Augustine, or oppressed with Marx, as the case may be.¹³ Yet the role of historians in the production of myth is not simply to [portray] the people they write about as they wish to be. Rather, recalling Eliade and Veyne, we can see that the construction of mythistory also involves a compelling psychological contradiction. Having usurped the authority of priest and theologian as arbiter of truth, the modern national

educator employs the methods of historicism in a project that is profoundly ahistorical. For the narratives that he or she produces are intended to reveal essences and qualities whose origin in time is so remote as to defy precise location and that are not themselves subject to change and development. The nation and its heroes are imagined to reach beyond history to sacred time; and history itself, defined as a field of contest, failure, and struggle, is to be overcome even as it is fulfilled. The nation meets its destiny with the aid of a map provided by the historian.

This essay seeks to capture two moments in the modern historicist creation of myth. The first is an episode of historical fabrication that took place during the early decades of the Czech national movement, an example of the conflation of genre myth, history, ideology that appears to feature prominently in the cultural activity of modern nationalism. The second concerns the first modern effort on the part of Bohemian Jews to produce a history, as well as a historical mythology, that would be tied to place, delineate the connections between Jews and non-Jewish Bohemians, and serve as an ideological guide to political behavior in the present. The two moments connect on a number of levels: The earlier project, in orienting Czech intellectuals and middle-class professionals to a specific narrative of the past, directed their relations in the present with Germans and Jews. Jews, in turn, informed to a large extent by these same texts, responded to them in a variety of ways, depending on personal history, friendship circles, and political events. In the end, part of the Bohemian Jewish intelligentsia participated in the public subversion of Czech myth, even as a new effort to write its Jewish analog was beginning.

Documentary Forgery and the Delineation of Community

The themes of state building, the secularization of culture,

professional recruitment, and the construction of nationality began to take shape in the Czech provinces of the Habsburg monarchy during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Maria Theresa's somewhat tentative efforts at political centralization and educational reform during the 1770s, followed by Joseph II's self-conscious modernization from above, had the overall effect of liberalizing economic life, encouraging population movement from the countryside to the cities, and creating a multitiered school system based on the principle of universal education for boys and girls from which male graduates were recruited to fill places in an expanding state bureaucracy.

14 By the second and third decades of the nineteenth century the sons of wealthy, Czech-speaking peasants were filling the ranks of the secondary school teaching corps, editing newspapers and journals, practicing the professions, and climbing the ladder of state civil service.

It was this second generation of Czech-speaking intellectuals that first imagined the contours of what was to become the modern Czech nation. Josef Jungmann (1773-1847) gymnasium professor, linguist, and translator and after 1834

prefect of the Altstädter Gymnasium in Prague played a central part in elaborating what the boundaries of the national community were to be.

15 Up to this time, parts of the Bohemian nobility and urban population, as well as most of the peasantry, had been conscious of a premodern ethnicity of descent, the content and shape of which were not precise. It was not even clear whether or not one actually had to speak the Czech language in order to be included in this collection of individuals. In 1806, Jungmann sought to clarify the issue of membership in the nation with the publication of two programmatic articles in the periodical *Hlasatel cesky* (Czech speaker), edited by Jan Nejedly, which appeared under the general title Concerning the Czech Language (*O jazyku českém*). In these pieces, Jungmann divided the population of the Czech lands into two distinct groups on the basis of linguistic preference: Czechs and Germans. A Czech is only one who speaks and writes in Czech, not one who proclaims himself to be Czech but speaks German. At the same time he resuscitated an older theory of the fundamental unity of the Slavic languages and, by extension, of the national unity of Slavic speakers. The combination of these two prescriptions, which were not logically consistent, created a scenario of belonging that was both odd and compelling.¹⁶

On the one hand, inclusion in a national group resulted from linguistic choice. On the other, participation in a linguistic culture carried primordial implications: it cut one off from groups and individuals living in geographic, temporal, and social proximity; it conferred kinship to cross-national populations and their linguistic cultures; and it militated in general against an understanding of national affiliation as contingent. By insisting that not all Bohemians were Czechs but that all Czechs were related intimately to all Slavs, the Jungmannian

vision of national community asked one to believe that a Czech speaker from Prague had more in common with a Russian speaker from the Ural mountains, for example, than with a German speaker from Prague. Moreover, the linguists' proclamation that the territory of the Czech lands was divided between intrinsically different groups implied that the realization of the national aspirations of the Czechs could not be accomplished simply by fulfilling history, that is, ultimately by bestowing political power on the people resident in those lands. For it was historical change that had perverted the ancient and natural state of affairs in the first place. The key was to push beyond history to origins.

What Antonín Mestán calls the myth of linguistic affinity also colored Jungmann's major scholarly project, the five-volume Czech-German dictionary published between 1834 and 1839. Here he purposefully introduced numerous expressions from Polish, Russian, and Serbo-Croatian in order to prepare the ground for the expected emergence of a pan-Slavic language. It was also during this period of romantic activism on the part of linguists and literary scholars that the concept of Slavic literature gained currency. Individual literatures of Slavic peoples were understood to represent regional components of a unitary expression, a pan-national literature whose specific characteristics allegedly differentiated it from that of other European peoples.¹⁷

Slavic affinity and German difference, then, stood as the fundamental, binary truth of the national awakening. As I have mentioned, the insistence on a preferred language as the carrier of national identity necessarily excluded large numbers of Bohemian residents from the imagined community, even if those residents were related by demonstrable family ties to Czech speakers or possessed Czech surnames. Equally problematic to the educators and intellectuals, however, was the fact that, up to now, this work of separation had been carried out largely in the German language. Czech was rarely used as a scholarly vehicle before 1830; Josef Dobrovsky (17531829) published his pathbreaking *History of the Czech Language and Literature* in German in 1792; Pavel Josef Safarík (17951861) did the same when his *History of Slavic Language and Literature According to All Dialects* appeared in 1826. Even the monumental *History of the Czech Nation* by Frantisek Palacky (17981876) appeared first in German under the title *Geschichte von Böhmen* (18361845).

¹⁸ It was Jungmann who first broke with the convention of writing scholarly works in German when he published his *History of Czech Literature* in Czech in 1825.

To the extent that the Czech national vision was promoted by individuals whose own linguistic patterns were ambiguous, the enterprise encompassed from the start a degree of psychological tension. Not surprisingly, much of the early scholarship, as well as the modern mythmaking, of the Czech intellectuals undertook to sharpen the linguistic divide: promote Slavic culture, celebrate the national language, and highlight specific periods of the national past (especially pagan antiquity and the Hussite revolt) in which the lines of Czech language and culture appear to have been more clearly drawn. Scholarly activists of the post-Jungmann generation were

particularly eager to discover relics and monuments of a glorious Czech past. Most visible in this group were Václav Hanka (17911861), a student of Dobrovksy and librarian at the National Museum of the Kingdom of Bohemia, who affiliated with Jungmann after his arrival in Prague in 1814; the romantic poet and writer Josef Linda (17891834); and Václav Alois Svoboda (17911849), who taught from 1821 as a professor at the Malostránské Gymnasium in Prague.¹⁹

Between 1816 and 1830 members of this exclusive circle appeared to have made a number of spectacular archaeological discoveries in which previously unknown, medieval Czech manuscripts were unearthed. The Lay of Vysehrad (Písen Vysehradská), a Czech ballad said to date from the thirteenth century, constituted the first discovery, announced by Josef Linda in 1816. In September 1817, Hanka reported the discovery of another medieval manuscript, this one consisting of both fragmentary and complete poetic works, in the cellars of the cathedral of Dvur Králové in northeastern Bohemia (and thus named the Královédvorský, or Könighof, manuscript). In November of the same year the National Museum in Prague anonymously received a package of four manuscript pages that purported to date from an even earlier period than the first two discoveries (known subsequently as the Zelenohorsky manuscript). Finally, in 1828, Hanka claimed to have discovered an interlinear translation of the Gospel of

John dating back to the eleventh century. These discoveries generated great excitement, as well as debate, in Czech philological and historical circles. They managed to serve at the same time as sources of an ancient literary culture, objects of scholarly investigation, generators of national pride, and wellspring of myth, both ancient and modern.

20

The twentieth-century scholarly consensus concerning the Czech manuscripts holds that they are forgeries. Brilliantly devised and artfully constructed, they nevertheless represent an extreme form of invented tradition whose purpose was to secure the Czech national movement to an ancient foundation of literary culture and myth. In most cases the discoverers of the documents were also their authors. Hanka and Linda appear to have divided most of the labor between them, although there is some difference of opinion as to who was responsible for the lyrical sections, who for the epic, and who made sure that everything was transcribed into a plausible Old Czech.²¹ Some have suggested that one cannot rule out the possibility that the venerable Jungmann himself was involved. Significantly, it was the new, secular clergy of philologists and historians who established the truth of the manuscripts. They did so on the weight of their own authority and by appealing to the methods of discovery and critical analysis that were the hallmark of their fields of expertise.

As William Harkins has suggested, it appears that Hanka, Linda, and company were moved to fabricate early medieval literary sources in an attempt to give the Czechs their own mythology and antiquity.²² One Czech literary historian, speaking to a French audience in the early twentieth century, tried to capture the psychological underpinnings of the whole effort:

There was a great cry of joy among patriotic circles. The early Czechs were not after all rude barbarians, since they had a poetry that was so rich and varied. One could tell this from the scattered pieces that had been found, which made up only an insignificant fragment in comparison to what must have been lost! They thus possessed not only a poetry, but according to the Judgment of Libusa also a written legislation, a beautiful mythology, and sacred rites that were both very poetic and highly developed. And they had always been convinced patriots, for the hero of one of the poems expressly said: It is not good for us to look for truth among the Germans.²³

While the presumed need among romantic national awakeners to establish pride of place and antiquity of origins can easily be detected in the Czech manuscripts project, it also promoted a polemical definition of Czech national identity. The net effect of the manuscripts was to demonstrate that the Czechs were both different from and superior to their German-speaking neighbors. Unlike other forgeries, writes Milan Otáhal, the Czech manuscripts not only expressed the Romantic love of antiquity and folk poetry, but they were specifically designed to prove the superiority of Czechs to Germans, to prove their distinctiveness and maturity.²⁴

The epic poems of KM [Královédvorský MS] describe battles against foreigners and Germans; foster hatred against these groups; stress the antagonism said to exist between

Germans and Czechs. Though a German wail and plead, kill him still, reads one of the lines of ZM [Zelenohorsky MS] . . . [which] stresses the fully developed social order of the old Czechs, their mature judicial system and advanced culture. Its mood is again anti-German. When Chrudos appeals to the Germanic law of primogeniture, not valid in the Czech lands, others condemn him almost as a traitor.

25

James Macpherson, the eighteenth-century Scottish poet, had ushered in the modern era of historical fabrication with the publication in 1760 of his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (said to contain songs in Gaelic of the ancient bard Ossian, dating from the second or third century).²⁶ The Englishman Chatterton followed suit in 1768 when he published in a Bristol newspaper a medieval tale that he claimed to have discovered in a church. Remarkably, at least one antagonist in the Czech manuscript affair acknowledged his British precursors without apology. Václav Svoboda, in defending the manuscripts from scholarly criticism, went so far as to argue for the acceptability of forgery in the name of the nation: We would be happy if we had another Chatterton among us and, paying little heed to the historical accuracy of his work, we would beg him to compose as many such works as possible We are deeply convinced that an inspired Chatterton has far more to contribute to our culture than men who depopulate centuries of our history with excessive criticism.²⁷

Although no less an authority than the venerable Dobrovsky (the excessive critic referred to above) had raised doubts about the authenticity of the manuscripts as early as the 1820s, few among the Czech academic and literary elites wanted to hear them; the manuscripts, in the words of Otáhal, were becoming untouchable.²⁸ They went on to inform two generations and more of scholarly, literary, and artistic endeavor. Painters depicted scenes from the

manuscripts on their canvases; their motifs reverberated in the poetry of Neruda, Vrchlicky, and Zeyer. The historian Palacky greeted the appearance of the manuscripts, which he first read in 1819, with inexpressible joy.²⁹ Indeed, his magisterial *History of the Czech Nation* would have been inconceivable without its overall conception, borrowed wholesale from the manuscripts, of the eternal struggle between Germans and Czechs. Not surprisingly, Palacky's history closed with the capture of the Bohemian crown by the Habsburgs in 1526.³⁰

When new voices of skepticism concerning the manuscripts' provenance and antiquity began to be raised in the 1850s, they were met with an overwhelming chorus of disapproval and disbelief. As Otáhal reminds us, precisely because the Manuscripts had become sacrosanct, anyone who doubted their authenticity, though a good Czech, faced merciless persecution³¹ Only after 1886, when the historian Jan Gebauer published a reappraisal of the manuscripts in Tomáš Masaryk's periodical *Athenaeum*, did there emerge a progressive scholarly consensus that rejected them as authentic.³² In the interim the Czech manuscripts had narrated and reinforced a particular vision of the past: one of an independent Czech society, tied to nature and geography and based on a rich literary culture, in which individuals who were larger than life preserved the community while confronting hostile forces.

Writing the Jews In:

Politics, Historiography, and Communal Identity at Midcentury

One of the most prominent population groups implicitly to have been written out of the Jungmann-Palacky conception of community were the Jews. Though Jews had been permanent residents in the Czech lands since the tenth or eleventh century, they could not have shared many of the key, mythic experiences ascribed to the Czech nation: its pagan antiquity, the conversion to Christianity, the combined resistance to Catholic Rome and to German overlordship that was embodied in the Hussite revolt.

³³ Equally problematic was the linguistic commitment that Jungmann had insisted on. Urban Jews down to the nineteenth century were conversant in German, whereas their rural and small-town counterparts conducted many of their daily affairs in Czech; the principal language of both communities, however, was Yiddish.³⁴ Beginning in the 1780s the state-mandated secular school system educated the vast majority of Jewish children (girls as well as boys) in the German language, in accord with the centralist principles of the absolutist state, even in the predominantly Czech-speaking regions of Bohemia and Moravia.³⁵ As a result, even the most patriotically inclined Jews of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s that generation of secularized intellectuals that included Moritz Hartmann (1821-1872), Siegfried Kapper (1821-1879), Leopold Kompert (1822-1886), and David Kuh (1818-1879) with few exceptions, expressed their Bohemian loyalties in German.³⁶

If it did not occur to most Bohemian Jews that the history of the region was to be understood as an unremitting clash of two incompatible nations, they can perhaps be forgiven. Through most of the 1840s, Jewish students and professionals maintained the belief,

later than most Germans and Czechs, that attachment to Bohemia was compatible with loyalty to Habsburg Austria and that both could be expressed in the German idiom. For Jewish writers and artists of this generation, one way of expressing their attachment to place, their *Landespatriotismus*, was to act as linguistic and cultural mediators who would bring to Europe's attention both the artistic works and the political aspirations of the Czechs. In 1843¹⁸⁴⁴, Kuh and Kapper collaborated with the Czech poet Václav Bolemlr Nebesky in a bilingual newspaper campaign designed to create an alignment of Jewish and Czech identities and interests.³⁷ Echoes of this project can also be found in the German translations of the Czech epics produced by Moritz Hartmann in 1847 and by Siegfried Kapper in 1859.³⁸ For the most part, however, the pre-1848 experiment in Czech-Jewish rapprochement failed to produce a sympathetic response. What Jews had seen of Czech popular protest in 1844 and again in 1848 caused mainly shock and alarm (much of the violence had been directed against Jewish homes and property); it had the overall effect of tightening the Jewish embrace of the central state as the main promoter of acculturation, social mobility, and security.³⁹

In a series of dispatches from Prague published in the wake of the 1844 riots,

Kuh himself directed anger and sarcasm at the Czech-speaking, educated middle class, whom, he felt, tacitly had encouraged the antiJewish excesses. The blessed Libusa and yet another queen, he wrote, in an obvious allusion to the heroine of the Zelenohorsky manuscript, will be shedding tears of joy in their graves that their loyal subjects have maintained the ancient Jew-hatred down to the year 1844. If the wandering Jew [*der ewige Jude*] is a fable, eternal Jew-hatred is certainly no myth.

40 Interestingly, Kuh singled out for criticism Václav Svoboda, the associate of Hanka's who once had gone so far as to argue for the acceptability of documentary forgery in the name of national rebirth. Kuh accused Svoboda, a professor at Prague's Malá Strana Gymnasium, of fomenting antiJewish sentiment, humiliating Jewish students in front of their Christian colleagues, and finally, of preaching a Crusade against the Jews. Engaging in a little torment of his own, Kuh remarked, the creature Sva, by the way, is an expert in the Czech language. Perhaps he is preparing the Prague scene for a Bohemian epic, wherein he and his beloved Czechs can shine in glory.⁴¹

In the aftermath of the 1848 revolution, following a two-year stint in prison for having been active in the Hungarian revolt, Kuh edited what was to become one of the leading German newspapers in Prague, the *Tagesbote aus Böhmen*. It was in the pages of this newspaper that Kuh launched in 1858 what, for him, must have been sweet revenge. He arranged to have a series of unsigned articles published under the headline Handschriftliche Lügen oder Paleographische Wahrheiten (Handwritten lies or paleographic truths), which accused Hanka in no uncertain terms of being a forger. Not surprisingly, the articles provoked a storm of indignation from the Czech side. Palacky began

the counterattack by asking how it was that Kuh's Börsen-Blatt had suddenly discovered a taste for literary history and by emphasizing the anti-Czech motivation behind the *Tagesbote* initiative. He then went on to publish three studies that proved the authenticity of the manuscripts.⁴²

The Czech defenders of the manuscripts were not entirely wrong in questioning the motives of their detractors. It is now clear from the archival record that it was the head of the Prague police who first came up with the idea of issuing a public debunking of the manuscripts in the German press; his motive was to undermine the ideological foundations of Czech nationalism.⁴³ For his part, Kuh was an obvious conduit who required little cajoling. He viewed the antiJewish riots of the 1840s as a betrayal, one that was made all the more painful because of the apparent collusion of middle-class academics and professionals. As incubators of the middle-class nation, the gymnasium and the university constituted the places where Kuh and others of his generation had come to love the other language and culture of Bohemia; but they were also the site of twin conspiracies: the project to create a usable Czech past and the recent rhetorical campaign against Prague's Jews. To complete the circle of distrust, it seems that Kuh's Czech critics, ignorant of the role that the police had played in the affair, suspected that the author of the articles in the *Tagesbote* had been none other than the original promoter of Czech-Jewish cooperation, V. B. Nebesky.⁴⁴

Bohemian Jewish writers began to make their own contributions to the public contest over local history and memory in the wake of the political liberalization of 1860/1861. The Austrian government had responded to a serious financial crisis, as well as to humiliating military defeat at the hands of the Italians in 1859, by relaxing censorship, providing for much greater freedom of association, allowing for representative parliaments at the imperial and regional levels, and instituting locally elected city and town governments.

⁴⁵ And although formal Jewish emancipation was not enshrined constitutionally until 1867, specific legislation had already removed most remaining economic and civic disabilities between 1859 and 1861, and Jews both voted in local and parliamentary elections and ran for public office (often successfully).⁴⁶ During the municipal elections of 1861 and elections to the Bohemian Diet in 1863, the newspaper *Národní listy* and other organs of Czech national opinion openly criticized Jews for lending their support to German political domination as well as for harming the Czech nation socially and economically. Riots lasting several days broke out in Prague in August 1861. Ignored by the city council and its first Czech nationalist mayor, Václav Pstross, the disturbances were ultimately brought under control by the police (who answered to the imperial governor of Bohemia) but not before 1,312 window panes from Jewish homes and stores had been destroyed.⁴⁷

In the midst of the 1863 election campaign, a minor pamphlet war erupted that involved at least two opposing visions of Bohemian Jewish history and possibly as many as three points of view. The debate began with the anonymous publication of a small book entitled *Die Juden in Böhmen und ihre Stellung in der Gegenwart* (The Jews in Bohemia and their situation in the present). Authorship of the book

generally has been attributed to Markus Teller (1814-1875), a Prague Jewish physician, journalist, and political activist who served as Prague correspondent for the liberal Viennese press.⁴⁸ Two decades earlier, according to Christoph Stölzl, Teller had appealed to the Jews of Bohemia to produce a history of their own in which they might find a *Landesrecht* akin to that which was being promoted by both Germans and Czechs.⁴⁹ To the 1863 pamphlet he suggestively appended the motto: *Jede Zeit hat ihre eigene Geschichte* (Each age has its own history).

Die Juden in Böhmen displayed both in tone and in argument the strong influence of the Prague Haskalah. Rationalist and liberal, committed to ideas of progress and science and quoting frequently from Lessing, Schiller, the Bible, and Prague *maskil* Ignaz Jeitteles (1783-1843), the work sought to create an overall image of the Jews as improvers and developers, whose secular mission had been to be the carriers of knowledge and science (*Intelligenz und Wissenschaft*) to the civilized world.⁵⁰ The myth of origins that it invoked operated on two levels. First, it interpreted Jewish settlement patterns in the Diaspora in terms of the degree of civilization of potential host countries, explaining that thriving Jewish communities were to be found among peoples who were inclined toward advancement and knowledge (small wonder, then, that so few Jews had settled in early medieval Europe). It also tried to establish that Jewish settlement in Bohemia predated

that of the Czechs themselves. Thereafter, Jews rendered exemplary service to the Czechs favorite theme of Telleraiding them in the struggles with their pagan neighbors in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, participating in the advance of science during the Renaissance, and defending the country against the Swedes during the Thirty Years' War.

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Teller's account of Jewish origins in Bohemia laid the foundation for all subsequent arguments in the book. Most important, it oriented the Jews in their geographic and temporal milieux, found for them a place in the history of the region, and traced lines of connectedness both to the population of Bohemia and to the Austrian state. When the two strands of the story, antiquity and mission, were played off against each other, a tension resulted in the historical narrative that could only be resolved in the future. The Jewish fate was linked to that of Bohemia as a whole. But because Jewish identity and well-being depended also on a general commitment to rationality, progress, and scientific advancement, it was incumbent upon Jews to work to realize these goals in the Bohemian context, thereby linking home and mission.

On the basis of these twin themes Jews could assess what was right and what was wrong with their relationship to their Czech-and German-speaking neighbors. What was wrong was that the services of the Jews often went unappreciated, unrewarded, or worse. In the High and Late Middle Ages, when the Jews' work was done, so to speak, they were subjected to expulsions and periodic readmissions. In modern times, religious fanaticism and mob hysteria (*geistlicher Fanatismus und Pöbelwahn*) combined to wreak havoc on Jewish life and property. The Jewish attachment to place, however, remained

steadfast. Love for the native soil attached them to their new homeland (*Heimat*) and, despite struggles and cycles, despite all the injustice, which they experienced in huge measure, they remained true to their freely-chosen fatherland and contributed in not a few ways to its development.⁵²

The bulk of *Die Juden in Böhmen* focuses on the modern experience of Bohemian Jewry, their civic and moral improvement (to borrow the liberals' phrase that Teller also used) under the aegis of the tutelary state. From this point on in the historical narrative, the theme of Austrian benevolence assumes a preeminent position alongside those of place and progress. Teller judges contemporary political movements in terms of their accommodation to progress, rationality, and loyalty to the state, and implicitly obliges the Jewish reader to gauge his or her political involvement in the same way. In the last chapter he contemplates the predicament of Bohemian Jewry in the midst of the intensifying Czech-German ethnic conflict. How were the Jews to respond to calls from the Czech national camp to support its cause and its candidates? The National Party had even come out in favor of Jewish emancipation in 1861.

Through this paper promise (*dieser Versprechen auf dem Papiere*), they thought, the Jews would have to hurry over to their party, swear an oath on their flag. But the thoughtful Jews did not do this, above all because every Jew is mindful of the second verse of chapter 8 in Ecclesiastes (Keep the king's command, and that in regard to the oath of God). The

hard-tested Jews, who weigh on the past and the future, wanted first to become convinced that what was promised would also be realized.

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And so the Jews did not throw themselves completely into the arms of the nationalists. In response the Czech press launched a litany of complaints against them: Jews were characterized as ruinous to the nation, poisoning it with their brandy, demoralizing it with their peddling, ruining it with their money exchanges, and pulling it down with their rejection of nationalism.⁵⁴

What is striking about Teller's account is the reluctance with which it acknowledges the national question in Bohemia. He applies the term *die Nationalen* (literally, the nationals) to the Czech nationalists specifically, suggesting that, before the emergence of a Czech ethnic consciousness, there had been no nationalism in Bohemia. This picture of an ethnically indistinct homeland before the middle of the nineteenth century stood in sharp contrast to that which was being promoted in Czech history and myth. The latter held that the entire sweep of local history comprised a contest that pitted Czech against German and freedom against coercion. To be Czech, according to this view, corresponded to an existential reality; to side with the Czechs was to act with honor and integrity. In contrast, Teller's Austro-Jewish myth understands Czech ethnicity to be a modern choice, a divisive act of political will not necessarily demanding imitation. Jews in the end were to steer clear of both national extremes, to uphold the government, which stands above the parties, effects law and justice, and has, in fact, up to now been hindered by [political] parties from according the Jews their full rights, their unrestricted equality with the other inhabitants of Bohemia.⁵⁵

Die Juden in Böhmen engendered a swift response in the form of a

rival brochure, which offered a radically different vision of the Jewish past. *Die Juden und die Nationalen* promoted itself as a counterpart (*Gegenstück*) to *Die Juden in Böhmen* and, although also published anonymously, claimed to be written by a Jew.⁵⁶ Imitating the language of the first pamphlet, it drew attention to the ambiguous characterization of the Czechs as *die Nationalen* even as it set out to redefine and reimagine the Czech-Jewish relationship.

True to its billing as counterpart, *Die Juden und die Nationalen* accords neatly with the worldview of the Czech manuscripts and of Palacky's history, even to the point of expressing the same anachronisms. While *Die Juden in Böhmen* argued that Jewish settlement in Bohemia predated that of the Czechs, *Die Juden und die Nationalen* portrays a Bohemian antiquity in which Jews and Czechs coexisted prior to the entry of Germans, with their ubiquitous policy of cultural and linguistic coercion.⁵⁷ Jews, according to this story, coexisted in time with the Czechs and did so happily. Jews were subjected to the same policies of Germanization as the Czechs and, like the Czechs, had to endure periods of religious intolerance that were essentially alien to the region's traditions. German mores and language entered Bohemia together with the kings of the House of Luxembourg. Chivalry declined; both the nobility and the Germans devoted themselves to German culture (*Deutschtum*); the old Bohemian law gave way to bloody strife and horror; and the Jew felt (1389) that old Czech virtue had begun to disappear.⁵⁸

Though intolerance and religious fanaticism reached high levels during and after the Hussite wars of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the violence from these conflicts spilling over on to Jewish lives the struggles themselves, the reader is reminded, were precipitated by the oppressive policies of Rome and the empire. Periodic persecutions of Jews were to be viewed as the fruit of the times and of general savagery, but not of Jew-hatred. In this account, actual, systematic oppression of Jews (as well as real hatred toward them) first began with the humiliating and degrading Jewish laws that were issued during the regime of the *German* (i.e., Habsburg) emperor, Ferdinand I. Even during the time of general lawlessness and savagery, this author proclaims, the Czechs showed far more tolerance than the Germans.

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If myths of origin are designed to isolate the era of harmony and perfection that existed before history, that is, before human struggle and failure, the one offered by *Die Juden und die Nationalen* locates Eden in a Czech landscape. It establishes a mutual identity of Czechs and Jews and a common fate at the hands of a German pharaoh. In the distant past, the aspirations of most Bohemian Jews were Czech; the Jews themselves spoke Czech in their daily lives, and only in the aftermath of the Germanizing frenzy (*Germanisierungswut*) did Czech gradually disappear from mouth and memory.

Religious intolerance did not lie in the Czech character; it only entered their spirit when one tried to graft them on to a German shoot and, thus, make them into a hybrid; and when fanatical monks tried to fill the up-to-now humane and good-natured Slavs with bestial anger *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* [for the greater glory of God]. In the end, however, the Czech of this time did not entirely renounce his national character, but always treated the Jews more tolerantly and humanely than did the Germans.⁶⁰

In contrast to the general consensus concerning the authorship of *Die Juden in Böhmen*, historians up to now have not ventured to identify the anonymous writer of *Die Juden und die Nationalen*. The author presents him/herself simply as a Jew from the Czech-speaking countryside. This claim, however, cannot be accepted at face value. There were no prominent Jews in 1863, even in the provinces, who spoke in the idiom of this booklet. It would be another two decades, in fact, before a popular movement would begin to take root within Bohemian Jewish society that sought to align Jewish and Czech identities.⁶¹ Another curiosity, in my view, is the fact that the author of *Die Juden und die Nationalen* cites no Jewish sources; makes no reference to the liturgy, calendar, or sacred texts of Judaism; mentions none of the names of the leadership of Bohemian Jewry, past or present; and appears not to identify with any particular trend or movement within the community. All this, too, is in stark contrast to *Die Juden in Böhmen*. The author is conversant with and echoes the main outlines of Czech historiography. He/she identifies with the nationalist tendencies of the 1848 revolution, the unification of Italy, and the Polish uprising of 1863. As an apologia, in fact, *Die Juden und die Nationalen* justifies Czech political behavior and not the Jews. These observations lead me to conclude that *Die Juden und die Nationalen*

in all likelihood was written by a non-Jew possibly a patriotic Czech liberal, perhaps someone close to the circle of historians and ethnologists associated with Bohemian Museum in Prague. Neither documentary fabrication nor police plant, this text instead occupies the category of pseudography.

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If one accepts this conclusion, then *Die Juden und die Nationalen* should be reread as another Czech origin myth, albeit one about Jews, ascribed to them, and intended for a Jewish audience. The Czech author of this narrative has, in effect, written the Jews into the Jungmannian account of ethnic solidarity and linguistic differentiation. He/she has posited a Jewish antiquity in the Czech lands that is coterminous with that of the Czechs, identified the Jews as belonging to the Slavic linguistic family, and ascribed to them the same calamity of cultural and linguistic oppression at the hands of the Germans. However one reads the text, it is impossible to arrive at an unproblematic identification of Jew and Czech. Read as a Jewish piece, *Die Juden und die Nationalen* voices alienation from the Czechs to the degree that they have succumbed to religious intolerance and persecution, even though it is acknowledged that such behavior is ultimately foreign to the Czech character. As a Czech narrative, it targets the Jews of Bohemia for protection and criticism simultaneously, appearing to defend the Jews against the political charge of Germanization even as it chides them for behaving in such a way as to render the accusation believable. We know the Jews of the countryside well and can thus repeat with good conscience that *all of the demonstrations of the Jews in support of Czech culture (Cechentum) of which we spoke above represent the true and genuine expression of belonging and of sympathy for the nation in whose midst they live. Whoever claims otherwise be he Jew or Christian is an enemy*

of the Jews.⁶³

One cannot help but wonder whether, when the writer claims to know the Jews of the countryside, this is a knowledge of self or of other. In any event, the last sentence contains a clear warning for Jews as well as for Christians. It may be unreasonable to expect that the Jews simply throw off centuries of German acculturation like an old dress and acquire Czech as one would the multiplication tables.⁶⁴ On the other hand, their recent political behavior is indefensible.

It is unfortunately true that in no other large city (*grössern Orte*) in the world in recent times has the Jew been shown such crude enmity. But it is also true that nowhere else in the world has the Jew shown such little regard for the majority of his fellow citizens as in Prague. The Jews of Prague not only allow hollow ranters to deliver ruthless speeches against the Czechs but also to libel them. The Jews are German! call out Prague Jews from newspapers; the Jews are German and must remain so, resounds from speakers' podiums.

The political message here is ominous and potentially unfriendly. What started out as an enterprise in inclusion and imaginative sympathy has turned into rebuke. The underpinnings of myth-history have given way to straightforward ideological criticism. According to your own ideology of assimilation, the writer says to the Jews of Prague, you are members of that nation in whose midst you possess the right of settlement. Since the city of Prague is predominantly Czech, you must be as well.⁶⁵

The texts of the 1863 pamphlet war offered radically different prescriptions for Jewish political behavior based on divergent constructions of the Bohemian Jewish past. If *Die Juden in Böhmen* comprised the cultural and political credo of the Austro-Jewish consensus of the nineteenth century, *Die Juden und die Nationalen* articulated the counter position of the Czech-Jewish opposition. It is safe to conclude that, during the 1860s, the latter pamphlet made virtually no impression on its intended audience. Austrian centralism was too attractive a vehicle for integration and mobility and the memories of Czech popular violence toward Jews were still too vivid for the Jews to be budged very far from their accustomed linguistic, social, and political patterns. It seems to me, moreover, that *Die Juden in Böhmen* rang truer to the ear as a *Jewish* statement. Though utterly conventional and occasionally self-righteous in tone, it spoke from within the matrix of recognizable Jewish experience. Its historical sketches corresponded generally to group memories, and its public myth of Jewish service to the nations of Europe tied to notions of science, rationality, and progress accorded with the conceits of the time. *Die Juden und die Nationalen*, in contrast, offered a rival historical myth and a new measurement of identity that had no resonance in Bohemian Jewish culture. It represented a compelling way for Czech liberals and political activists to look upon themselves and, by extension, at Jews, but it did not yet have any correspondence in Jewish memory or experience.

By the 1880s, however, this pseudepigraphical history would be adopted by Czech-speaking students, professionals, and white-collar workers, the sons and daughters of small-town and rural Jews who had migrated to Prague and other larger cities in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. Its images of ancient Czech-Jewish coexistence and cultural reciprocity, of Czech tolerance, German-inspired religious persecution, and forced Germanization, would be reproduced in

Jewish manifestoes, works of fiction, and historical writing. The most visible repository of this reconstructed history are the volumes of the *Czech-Jewish Almanach* (*Kalendár cesko-zidovsky*), published by the Association of Czech Academic Jews (*Spolek českých akademiků-zidů*) from 1881 to 1939. August Stein's *Zidé v Čechách* (The Jews in the Czech lands), published in the *Almanach* in 1881& ndash;1882, visualized a fusion of Czech culture and Judaism (*cesství a zidovství*) that echoed nearly every sentiment of *Die Juden und die Nationalen*. The fiction of Vojtech Rakous (Adalbert Österreicher, 1862-1935) reproduced the experiences of village and small-town Jews whose universe was as quintessentially Czech as that of any Prague worker or National Liberal (Young Czech) journalist. At the turn of the century, Czech-Jewish lawyers, physicians, and academics would forge a political alliance with Tomáš Masaryk and the progressive wing of the Czech national movement that would last until the German occupation of Czechoslovakia.

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That an entire ethnic reorientationa dramatic accommodation to new linguistic, social, and political realitiesshould have been built at least partly on the cultural foundations of what amounted to a forgery is perhaps not surprising.

Mythical histories, invented traditions, and false attributions have been a common feature of the modern nationalist enterprise; and, ultimately, the influence of *Die Juden und die Nationalen* was much more modest than that of the Czech manuscripts. In the final analysis, one ought not to look too closely at the provenance of a sacred text. As William McNeill reminds us, the value of myth is not that it is true but that it is self-validating.

Notes

1. See, for example, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mythology: The Mythic World of the Australian and Papuan Natives* (St. Lucia, Queensland, 1983 [translation of 1935 original]); and Bronislaw Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (London, 1926; reprinted in *Magic, Science, and Religion* [Garden City, N.Y., 1954]). A good introduction to the comparative study of myth is to be found in Alan Dundes, ed., *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley, Calif., 1984).
2. The work of Mircea Eliade, in particular *Myth and Reality* (New York, 1963), is instructive in this regard: Myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the supernatural) into the World. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really *establishes* the World and makes it what it is today Because myth relates the *gesta* of Supernatural Beings and the manifestation of their sacred powers, it becomes the exemplary model for all significant human activities (p. 6).
3. On Leenhardt, see Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge, 1990), 1067. See also Maurice Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World* (Chicago, 1979), 17095.
4. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986),

25, 24.

5. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (Cambridge, 1981), 65.

6. Benedict Anderson also stresses the importance of the organization, production, and dissemination of knowledge in the creation of new, imagined communities of mutual interest and fate. The key development in his recovery of the origins of nationalism is print capitalism, the mass production of books and newspapers as commodities. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. rev. ed. (London and New York, 1991), 3746.

7. Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?* (Chicago, 1988), 24, 28.

8. Westerners, at least those among us who are not bacteriologists, believe in germs and increase the sanitary precautions we take for the same reason that the Azande believe in witches and multiply their magical precautions against them: their belief is based on trust Veyne, *Did the Greeks*, 28.

9. Smith, *Ethnic Revival*, 8990.

10. See Eric Hobsbawm, *Inventing Traditions*, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (Cambridge, 1983), 15.

11. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1983), 12425.

12. Hobsbawm, *Inventing Traditions*, 7.

13. William H. McNeill, *Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians*, in *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago, 1986), 12.

14. See Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918* (Berkeley, Calif., 1974), 17099; and C. A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918* (New York, 1969), 11046. On the

importance of political centralization and reform in the formation of modern nationalism, see Smith, *Ethnic Revival*, 87133; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1952; and Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3782.

15. On Jungmann, see: *Biographisches Lexikon zur Geschichte der böhmischen Länder*

(Munich, 1984), 2:72; *Cestí spisovatelé 19. a počátku 20. století* (Czech writers of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century) (Prague, 1973), 12730; and Jan V. Novák and Arne Novák, *Prehledné dejiny literatury české* (Historical survey of Czech literature), 4th rev. and exp. ed. (Olomouc, 1936), 27785.

16. Antonín Mestán, *Ceská literatura*, 17851985 (Toronto, 1986), 2627 [German edition: *Geschichte der tschechischen Literatur im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*] (Cologne and Vienna, 1984); Hugh LeCaine Agnew, *Origins of the Czech National Renaissance* (Pittsburgh, 1993), 6570; also *Cestí spisovatelé*, 12728, from which the quote is taken.

17. Mestán, *Ceská literatura*, 27.

18. On Dobrovsky, Safarík, and Palacký, see Josef Mühlberger, *Tschechische Literaturgeschichte* (Munich, 1970), 6567.

19. Novák and Novák, *Prehledné dejiny*, 294; Mühlberger, *Tschechische Literaturgeschichte*, 75.

20. On the Královédvorský and Zelenohorský manuscripts, see Milan Otáhal, *The Manuscript Controversy in the Czech National Revival*, *Cross Currents* 5 (1986); 24777; Novák and Novák, *Prehledné dejiny*, 291303; Mestán, *Ceská literatura*, 2532; J. Hanus, *Rukopisové Zeienohorský a Královédvorský* (Prague, 1911); and Josef Polák, *Ceská literatura 19. století* (Prague, 1990), 4955.

The Královédvorský manuscript comprised two parts. The first, fragments of eight epic poems, was said to date from the thirteenth century but included reworkings of material from as far back as the eleventh century. The second section was made up of six lyrical, love poems. The epic poems all dealt with events from the heroic and, in some instances, pre-Christian, past: the expulsion of the Poles from Bohemia in 1004; the battle of Benes Hermanuv against the Silesians, ca. 1203; the victory of the Christian Moravians, under the leadership

of Jaroslav, over the Tatars, ca. 1241, *etc.* Both Jungmann and Hanka subjected the Zeienohorsky manuscript to scientific analysis and concluded that they contained literary relics from the ninth century including an epic account of the Judgment of Libusa which attested to the rich legal traditions of the Czech people during pagan times (Novák and Novák, 29597; Polák, 50).

21. Jan and Arne Novák assign credit for the lyrical sections of the Královédvorský MS to Hanka; for the epic sections of the Královédvorský MS, as well as for all of the Zeienohorsky MS, to Linda. Meanwhile Hanka is said to have taken care to transcribe the entire project into Old Czech (Novák and Novák, 297). Antonín Mestan, on the other hand, feels that Hanka had no poetic ability and that the lyrical sections of both manuscripts had to have been written by Linda. Hanka was almost certainly the philological cosmetician who effected the scholarly *trompe-l'oeil* (Mestan, 30).

22. William E. Harkins, *The Periodization of Czech Literary History, 1774-1879*, in *The Czech Renaissance of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Peter Brock and H. Gordon Skilling (Toronto, 1970), 11.

23. H. Jelinek, *La Littérature tchnéque contemporaine: Cours professé á la Sorbonne en 1910* (Paris, 1912), 56.

24. Otáhal, *Manuscript Controversy*, 252.

25. *Ibid.*, 252.

26. A formidable scholarly literature has grown around James Macpherson and the Ossian controversy. Two bibliographic sources are George F. Black, *Macpherson's Ossian and the Ossianic Controversy*, *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 30 (1926), no. 1, 424-39; no. 2, 508-24; and John J. Dunn, *Macpherson's Ossian and the Ossianic Controversy: A Supplementary Bibliography*, *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 75 (1971): 465-73. Recent monographs include Paul J. deGatigno, *James Macpherson* (Boston, 1989); Ian

Haywood, *The Making of History: A Study of the Literary Forgeries of James Macpherson* (Rutherford, N.J., 1986); and Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh, 1988).

27. A.V. Svoboda, *Hommeyer Archive*(1824); cited in Otáhal, 253.
28. Otáhal, 253.
29. From a diary entry of 1819, quoted in Otáhal, 254.
30. On Palacky's historical writings, see Mühlberger, 6667; Polak, *Ceská literatura*, 3738; and Otáhal, 25459.
31. Otáhal, 253. For the circumstances surrounding the conflict over the manuscripts in the 1850s, see below.
32. The academic and political struggles over the Czech manuscripts are summarized in Novák and Novák, 300301.
33. On the history of the Jews in the Czech lands, see Hillel J. Kieval, *The Lands Between: The Jews of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia to 1918*, in *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, ed. Natalia Berger (Tel Aviv, 1990), 2351; Tomas Pekny, *Historie Zidu v Cechách a na Morave* (History of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia) (Prague, 1993); and *Die Juden in den böhmischen Ländern*, ed. Ferdinand Seibt (Munich and Vienna, 1983).
34. Guido Kisch, *Linguistic Conditions among Czechoslovak Jewry*, *Historia Judaica* 8 (1946): 1932; Ruth Kestenbergl-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte der Juden in den böhmischen Ländern: Das Zeitalter der Aufklärung, 17801830* (Tübingen, 1969), 2728,39.
35. On the German-Jewish *Normalschulen*, see Hillel J. Kieval, *Caution's Progress: The Modernization of Jewish Life in Prague, 17801830*, in *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model*, ed. Jacob Katz (New Brunswick and Oxford, 1987), 71105; also Johann Wannizcek, *Geschichte der Prager Haupt Trivial-und Mádchenschule der Israeliten* (Prague, 1832), and Herz Klaber, *Beschreibung der am 30. Mai gehaltenen funzigjähriqen Jubelfeyer der israel. deutschen Hauptschule in Prag, nebst einer Ceschichte dieser Schule* (Prague,

1833).

36. On Bohemian Jewish intellectuals during this period, see Hillel J. Kieval, *The Social Vision of Bohemian Jews: Intellectuals and Community in the 1840s*, in *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (Cambridge, 1992), 24683.

37. *Ibid.*, 25763.

38. Novák and Novák, 298.

39. Kieval, *Social Vision*, 26375; William O. McCagg, *A History of Habsburg Jews*, 16701918 (Bloomington, Ind., 1989), 7682, 22326; and Michael Riff, *Jüdische Schriftsteller und das Dilemma der Assimilation im böhmischen Vormärz*, in *Juden im Vormdärz und in der Revolution von 1848*, ed. Walter Grab and Julius H. Schoeps (Stuttgart and Bonn, 1983), 5882.

40. *Der Orient*, 9 July 1844. Dispatches dated 23 and 24 June appeared in the 9 July 1844 edition of *Der Orient*; the report dated 10 July appeared on 23 July 1844, and the 22 July report was published in the 30 July 1844 issue. All four, in my opinion, were written by Kuh, and at one point they carried the initials D.K. (See Kieval, *Social Vision*, 26467.)

41. *Der Orient*, 23 July 1844.

42. Christoph Stölzl, *Zur Geschichte der böhmischen Juden in der Epoche des modernen Nationalismus*, 2, *Bohemia* 15 (1974): 139; Otáhal, 258.

43. This conclusion seems to be indisputable and was originally put forward in a 1930 article by F. Roubík, *Ucast policie v útoku na Rukopisy rolu 1858*, in *Od praveku k nesku*, vol. 2 (Prague, 1930). Stölzl, in repeating the story, refers to the once secret files of the Prague Police Praesidium (PPT) now housed in the *Státní Ústřední*

Archiv.

44. Stölzl, *Zur Geschichte*, 2, p. 139.

45. On the reforms of 1860/1861, see Macartney, *History of the Habsburg Empire*, 495-516; and, particularly with a view to the ways in which political contest expressed itself in stridently ethnic terms, Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), 45-72.

46. See Gary B. Cohen, Jews in German Liberal Politics: Prague, 1860-1914, *Jewish History* 1 (1986): 5574; and Stölzl, *Zur Geschichte*, 14648.

47. Stölzl, *Zur Geschichte*, 2, pp. 14748.

48. *Die Juden in Böhmen und ihre Stellung in der Gegenwart* (Prague, 1863). Stölzl, Kestenberg-Gladstein, and Guido Kisch all attribute authorship to Teller, as does Otto Muneles's *Bibliographical Survey of Jewish Prague* (Prague, 1952), 221. According to Muneles (p. 182), Teller also wrote a number of articles for the Jewish democratic newspaper of the 1848 revolution, *Österreichisches Central-Organ für Glaubensfreiheit, Cultur, Geschichte und Literatur der Juden* (Vienna, 1848).

49. In the dim, distant past, shortly after the entry of the boyars into [Bohemia], many of the sons of Israel were to be found [there]. They themselves had looked for a resting place there, and this new homeland would from that time until the present be the Fatherland to millions (sic!) of Jews. It is unfortunate that so little from the history of the first entry of Jews to Bohemia has been preserved; otherwise one might be able to trace their striving for what is better and higher back to Bohemia's prehistory [*Urzeit*]. (Aus dem königgrätzer Kreise, *Der Orient*, 9 July 1842). Stölzl makes reference to this article in *Zur Geschichte*, i, p. 200.

50. *Doch findet man, daß die Juden in den alien Zeiten die Träger der Intelligent bei verschiedenen Völkern gewesen, daß sie ihnen bei verschiedenen Staatsactionen wichtige Dienste geleistet, und daß sie bestrebt waren, das Epitheton eines auserwählten Volkes in mannigfacher Beziehung ausgezeichnet findet.* (*Die Juden in Böhmen*, 1).

51. *Ibid.*, 12.

52. Ibid., 2.

53. Ibid., 87.

54. Ibid., 8788.

55. Ibid., 90.

56. *Die Juden und die Nationalen: Ein Gegenstück zur Broschüre: Die Juden in Bohmen. Von einem Juden.* (Prague, 1863).

57. Long ago, before the Germans had migrated to Bohemia and forced their language and culture upon the residents of this land, there wereas Virbig, the wife of Count Conrad wrote [in 1090]Jews here with much gold and silver. They must have been here much earlier as well, and as late as the fourteenth century still could possess landed property and even enjoyed a certain autonomy (*Die Juden und die Nationalen*, 10).

58. Ibid., 1112.

59. Ibid., 12.

60. Ibid., 13; this entire paragraph is emphasized in the original.

61. On the social and cultural origins of the Czech-Jewish movement, see Hillel J. Kieval, *The Making of Czech Jewry: National Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia, 1870-1918* (New York and Oxford, 1988), 1063.

62. I do not know of anyone else who has questioned the authorship of this pamphlet or who has arrived at a similar conclusion.

63. *Die Juden und die Nationalen*, 89; emphasis in the original.

64. Ibid., 9.

65. Ibid., 15.

66. These themes are all treated more fully in Kieval, *The Making of*

Czech Jewry.

18

Reflections on Jewish Modernization

Michael A. Meyer

It is hard to think of a better illustration of the fragmentation in contemporary intellectual discourse, which some characterize as typically postmodern, than the multiple ways in which we employ the concept modern and its derivatives modernization and modernity.

¹ A glance at the literature reveals the extent of the divergence. Once the fundamental decision is made that modern does not simply mean the most recent age regardless of content, but that the term has a substantive, rather than (or in addition to) a chronological meaning, the tendency is to define it within the discourse of a particular discipline. Since modernization first began to appear as a technical term in the 1950s, its meanings have continually expanded.² For economists it is the process whereby preindustrial economies become industrialized, and it is closely linked to the spread of capitalism. For sociologists and anthropologists it involves shifts in the web of relationships among the members of a society. Social psychologists explore individual modernization, concentrating on the transformation of dispositions and behavioral patterns.³ And for philosophers and social theorists the key element is the appearance of rationalization or subjectivity.⁴

Although historians endeavor to look more broadly at all these elements of change, they too are inclined toward one or another characteristic depending on their focus or approach to history. They may point to rapid technological advance, the rise of the centralized state,⁵ the emergence of individual freedom, urbanization,

secularization, or the idea of progress as essential to modernization. To such disciplinary distinctions the Israeli sociologist S. N. Eisenstadt, one of the pioneers of modernization theory, has added the elements of time and geography: modernization takes different forms in twentieth-century Asia and Africa from those of eighteenth-century Europe.⁶ As a result of this multivocality, general discussions of modernization become difficult, the more so when one considers the charged opinions held with regard to the relative value of modernization, which in a polemical context usually turn on the human price that is paid for industrialization, for the free exercise of instrumental reason, or for the religious void created by what Max Weber famously called the disenchantment of the world.

Such disagreements and debates have their counterparts in Jewish studies, where some theologians have made Jewish modernity their whipping boy, and some historians declared it an age gone by. It thus seems desirable, even urgent,

to reflect upon just what Jewish modernization means in the hope of thereby clarifying and particularizing its use. From the historian's perspective, it seems best not to begin with a definition but to work at the task inductively, first raising the issue of Jewish specificity in the process of modernization and then gathering evidence for such multifaceted change as we might term Jewish modernization.

While in some parts of the world and in certain strata of the Jewish population modernization has long been complete, in others it is still ongoing. As the beginning of the process cannot be precisely and uniformly located for all Jews, neither can its conclusion.

⁷ Here, however, point of origin or conclusion is not my subject but rather characteristics of form and matter. I shall endeavor to adduce them by focusing on the Jews of Germany, realizing that the characteristics and dynamics may differ for Jewish modernization elsewhere in Europe and in the Arab world.

In reflecting on the subject of Jewish modernization, I found myself repeatedly driven back to asking a very unsettling question: Does the quarry really exist? Perhaps there is no distinguishably Jewish modernization at all but only a process whereby Jews increasingly participate in the modernization of the societies in which they dwell. If this is so, then the object of study should be defined as a changing relationship rather than as an internal development. In other words, modernization becomes a concomitant or effect of integration, which is the more fundamental process, and the name we give it could just as well and perhaps better be westernization or Europeanization.

Understanding the phenomenon in this way would make the Jewish relation to modernity parallel to that of developing countries whose modernization consists in large measure of their adaptation to Western models in such diverse areas as political and social structure and the

arts and the sciences. The challenge of modernization, seen in this light, is essentially external and thus differs from the internal challenge that it raised for those nations that began the process. Unleashed by relatively sudden exposure rather than inner ferment, the shift is also likely to be more abrupt.⁸

Jewish modernization in this sense is strikingly characterized by Jürgen Habermas's phrase: a leap into a foreign history.⁹ The German Jews in the late eighteenth century (to focus now on them) perceived the environment as currently more friendly to their aspirations than ever before and attributed this change to cultural processes that had been at work for some time among the Western European nations. These processes had set non-Jews far ahead of Jews, who did not participate in them. But now a moment of opportunity had arrived and not only because enlightened circles began to welcome Jewish participation. In the words of the Berlin Jewish intellectual Saul Ascher: At present, since the nations have arrived at a firm point in their *Bildung* and for some time have, as it were, been standing still, they have left us time gradually to catch up with them.¹⁰ In other words, Ascher is suggesting here, in 1792, that the advancing locomotive of culture has halted for a short while, giving the Jews an opportunity to leap on board the train and join with non-Jews in the ride to the stations that lie ahead. About two decades later, the same image of an advancing and

more embracing culture, to which the Jews have yet to attach themselves, recurs with a note of greater urgency in Israel Jacobson's dedicatory address at the synagogue he founded in Seesen: All around us the Enlightenment is enlarging its scope, says Jacobson admiringly. Should we *alone* get left behind

11 Collective progress, traveling together in the direction of moral improvement and rational behavior, will, Jacobson is certain, have the added benefit of closer relations between Jew and Gentile.

These texts, then, would indicate that modernization for the Jews begins with the desire to join and ultimately become full partners in the endeavor to shape the new European culture. But this is Jewish modernization only in the sense of attachment by Jews to a modernization process that has neither its origins nor its end point in the Jewish sphere. Is this the whole story or only part of it? I would argue that it presents one of a number of perspectives, namely, the one that is located within the general culture and provides the view of Jews modernizing because the culture to which they are attaching themselves is in the process of transformation from medieval values and institutions to those different ones that characterize the eighteenth century, especially its enlightened elite. Modernization here implies a process whereby individual Jews leave the Jewish community and Jewish identity behind. But there are other relevant perspectives, as well, in which the adjective *Jewish* preceding *modernization* means more than that it is Jews who are running to catch the train.

Let us note first the lively sense among Jews that a break has occurred in their own history as a result of the shift in attitude toward them that has accompanied general enlightenment. Jewish existence is about to be transformed. A new chapter in the history of the Jews has begun, writes Joseph Wolf introducing the journal *Sulamith* in 1806. It is an

age that is beginning to tell of happy events and with every advance it becomes yet brighter, yet more delightful.¹² Wolf believes that for the individual Jew the new era is one in which Jews may enjoy greater self-esteem because, for the first time, they are esteemed by others as human beings. Even more ecstatic are the editors of the journal *Erbaungen*, which was published especially for Jewish youth. O glorious present! the editors exclaim in 1813. O still more glorious future!¹³

Such optimism is, of course, to be understood primarily as a hopeful response to the first indication of Jewish emancipation in France, Holland, and Germany. But it is more than this. It is also evidence of a shift in mentality that fits into the pattern of modernization in general: the sense of an epochal new beginning and of ongoing progress from the present into the future.¹⁴ Adoption of the idea of progress, of the concept that the new is likely to be better than the old, involved a revolution in European thinking. It began with the seventeenth-century *querelle des anciens et des modernes* over the relative value of ancient and modern writers and then spread to the more general question of intellectual progress. In Germany, Lessing acclaimed the advance of science, which explained the world and humanity more accurately and reliably than did the poets and philosophers of ancient times.¹⁵ As the dispute took its course in Germany, the old educational

establishment, the teachers of poetry and rhetoric, championed the ancients, while the proponents of the moderns were the physicians, natural scientists, and enlightened theologians.

16 Progress in the sciences, the latter group held, could also be the paradigm for progress in individual and social morality since the scientific worldview emancipated its adherents from superstition and prejudice.

It was this idea of progress that gave modernization its salvific, even messianic character. When Jewish writers at the end of the eighteenth century boast of the growing number of Jews who are physicians and scientists, they are not simply making an apologetic point but indicating to the world that Jews recognize the redemptive role of nontheological knowledge. Among Jews the traditional attitude that ascribed authority to religious texts in direct proportion to their antiquity (i.e. to their proximity to Sinai) gave way to the contradictory notion that intellectual advance made possible an ever closer approximation of the truth. In 1799, Mendelssohn's disciple David Friedländer confided to a more traditionally oriented relative: I value the Rambam where he philosophizes, I value Bachya, I value the Kuzari, but I also know that our newer writers have presented the matters that count more adequately, more thoroughly, and more clearly.¹⁷ The modernists among Jews (*die Neuen*, as they were called) accepted this progressivist view. They tailored it to the specifications suggested by their sense of having entered a new, more enlightened, and scientifically progressive age. The traditionalists (*die Alten*), by contrast, resisted it.

The scientific worldview was itself seen as the product of enlightenment (understood as a personal possession rather than as an age). From the perspective of individual orientation such

enlightenment was the principal characteristic of modernization. In a famous essay,¹⁸ Kant defined it by the imperative: *sapere aude!* Those who dared to gain wisdom on their own, Kant held, would free themselves from all tutelage and would refuse the imposition of every authority except that of the state within its proper sphere. Although Moses Mendelssohn defined *Aufklärung*, differently from Kant, he had already drawn out the implications of the Königsberg philosopher's personal autonomy principle. In his *Jerusalem* he argued for complete religious freedom within Judaism, thereby encouraging individual Jews to make their own decisions in regard to practice and belief without fear of rabbinical or communal censure. For his part, Friedländer could rejoice that the rabbis, who, he was certain, still lived in the twelfth century, were now thank God, bereft of all power.¹⁹ For him and others, modernization, understood as enlightenment in the Kantian sense, represented an emancipation from the tutelage of rabbis²⁰ and *parnasim*. Thus, modernization in the Jewish sphere, as in the non-Jewish, came to mean the religious autonomy of the individual.

There is also a sense in which modernization, for Jews as for Christians, meant secularization.²¹ The freedom from religious controls, which was the product of governments dismantling the old Jewish community structures, allowed individuals to expand the secular spheres of their existence: to devote less time and concentration to specifically religious matters. It also stimulated some to develop worldviews in which the Jewish religion played only a minor role or

no role whatever. But seen differently, modernization for Jews and non-Jews meant a displacement of the sacred rather than its abandonment. Human tasks performed under the paradigm of universal progress take on the mantle of sanctity. For Jews, Jewishly oriented activities that are understood to further that progress, whether in education or in religion, are similarly sacralized.

The application of the idea of Jewish modernization to the economic sphere raises its own paradoxes. Jews were encouraged to leave behind their ghetto occupations as peddlers and petty traders by training their children to become farmers and artisans. Governments and their spokesmen even at times made such a transformation prerequisite for emancipation. Yet if economic modernization is understood as the advance of industrial capitalism, then Jews were being asked to distance themselves from it. Here adaptation to the surrounding society was interpreted to mean normalizing or productivizing the Jews' current occupational structure, a process that, if it had in fact taken place, would have removed Jews from those areas of the economy that were the most progressive. But in general they stubbornly chose to go instead to the universities and to develop modern capitalistic enterprises, both of which enabled them to play a disproportionate role in reshaping the German economy. Jewish modernization, in this instance, was Jews, in refusing to adapt, positioning themselves to play an outsize role in the ongoing modernization of their environment.

The counterpart of Jewish modernization as individual participation in the modernizing general culture and society is the turn toward modernizing Jewish institutions. It is the importation of modernity into the Jewish realm. With regard to Germany one thinks first of the schools. The *maskilim* the Jewish enlighteners, recognized that enlightenment and general culture were more easily implanted at an early age. The educational institutions they created, patterned on non-

Jewish schools, were to serve as vehicles for the transformation of attitudes no longer deemed appropriate. The secularly trained teachers completely rejected the old paradigm of the traditional pedagogue, the *melamed*. Rather they saw themselves as incarnations of the enlightened Jew whose task it was to transmit a blend of Jewish and non-Jewish values to his pupils. Since these schools were permitted to enroll Christian children for a time, they also served to bring Jew and non-Jew closer together in childhood. But they were nonetheless Jewish institutions, supported and administered by Jews. As such, they constituted evidence of a modernization process within the Jewish sphere, not attachment to one outside of it. One can point similarly to the new voluntary organizations, from the Gesellschaft der Freunde of 1791 to the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden of 1819, that engaged in nontraditional activitieslate burial of the dead in the one case and critical scholarship in the otherbut did so within a Jewish social or intellectual milieu. The official Jewish community modernized as well in the sense that it adapted to the new situation in which it was no longer a legally recognized corporate entity, but only a *Gemeinde*. Like the Christian communities,

22 it moved in the direction of becoming a mere collectivity of individuals whose autonomous consciences served as the ultimate

source of religious authority. In this process ties within the Jewish community became less organic and more voluntary. Modernization transformed the community from *Cemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*.

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The official task of this *Gesellschaft* was understood to be that of a *Religions Gsellschaft*,²⁴ serving the religious needs of its members. However much Jews continued to be separated and to separate themselves for social purposes or for the task of extending their emancipation,²⁵ it was only the religious distinction that Jews and non-Jews alike recognized as permanent. Since there was no room here for a secular Judaism, it was religious modernization that became crucial in the German context.

As Mendelssohn was the great proponent of Jewish modernization through integration into a modernizing culture and society, so was he the most active propagator of the modernization of Judaism through its rationalization. That is not to say that Mendelssohn saw himself as a reformer of Judaism. Quite the contrary: Mendelssohn argued that Judaism had all along been a religion of reason and hence, one might say, modern before the modern age. But in interpreting Judaism in strictly rational terms he in fact placed before his contemporaries a view of it that differed from the common understanding among Gentiles and Jews alike. Especially non-Jews had great difficulty in accepting the idea that Judaism might be inherently more in consonance with the Enlightenment than was Christianity and hence better suited to the new age.

But of course, Mendelssohn's harmonization of Judaism with the Enlightenment extended only to its religious philosophy, not to its practice, which Mendelssohn did not attempt to rationalize. He thus formulated a Judaism that was modern in the universality and

rationality of its doctrines but disregarded modernity in its observances. It was this decision by Mendelssohn to leave the realm of greatest Jewish particularity untouched that proved most problematic for many among the enlightened Jews of the following generation.

The problem lay not only in the increasingly felt hindrance that observance of the law provided to the desire for social and political integration. It lay also in the notion that religious modernization was moving away from both particularity and ceremony. By the end of the eighteenth century, enlightened circles in Germany were speaking more of religion in generic terms than of particular religions, a mode adopted also by the modern Jewish educators in their catechisms. With respect to the diminished significance of ceremonial observance in religion, it was the voice of Kant that spoke the loudest. For Kant the new religious community was not the church but the amorphous collective of all those who regarded themselves as bound by moral obligation. Rational religion did not require priests or sacraments; it did not even require churches, except as instruments to inculcate virtue.²⁶ Among a growing number of enlightened German Jews, Kantianism was understood as modern religion. For some it became a rationale for leaving Judaism, but it also raised the question of whether Judaism could be moralized in practice as Mendelssohn had rationalized it in theory.

It is this association of religion with the inculcation of moral virtue and the

sense of moral obligation that helps to explain the rapid spread of edifying sermons, delivered in the vernacular (and hence comprehensible also to women), not only within a context of liturgical reform but in communities that otherwise remained orthodox. More broadly, rituals in general now had to be reinterpreted within the moral framework of religion. What set the early religious reformers apart from the traditionalists was their willingness to instrumentalize religious practice, to ask whether a particular ritual was *zweckmässig* in heightening religious consciousness.

27 They created a filter, as it were, through which only those practices passed that were religiously useful because they were effective means for what the reformers deemed to be the higher ends of religion. Whether or not a particular observance passed through the filter had also to do with its aesthetic attractiveness. This attention to internalized aesthetic criteria was more broadly represented among German Jews than was ideological reform and can be seen as a constituent element of a religious modernization that increasingly set Western Jews apart from fellow Jews in the East even before the emergence of an ideologically grounded movement for religious reform. An apt illustration is this passage from a conservative work, published in 1813, that advocates only formal changes:

Our coreligionists in Poland, Moravia, and other places may find our suggestions pointless and they are right because the main reason for the necessity of reform for us is the dissonance between our advanced culture and the religious service, which has remained behind. But this reason unfortunately does not yet exist for our coreligionists. We have attended the devotions held in large communities in Poland and found that they are completely appropriate for them. They are edified by a kind of speaker that we can't bear to hear and are moved to tears by singers who don't move us at all.²⁸

Thus, German Jewry, across a broad spectrum, became conscious of possessing sensibilities that set it apart from Jews to the east and that were increasingly reflected in the way it conducted its religious life. Modernization was coming to encompass not only the Jew but also Judaism. The impetus in each instance arose from the outside, from the larger society, itself engaged in the continuing process of modernization. But this drive toward modernization did not simply produce the desire of the individual to jump on board but also the wish to create a parallel modernization of the Jew as Jew and of Judaism as a religion that, in drawing on its own resources, had nothing to fear from modernity.

We may finally ask: Is Jewish modernization, seen from the perspective of the present, a process of Jews becoming what they are today or only what they were yesterday? Were its instigators blinded by the bright flame of the Enlightenment, which drew them toward it at their own peril? We live in an age that possesses both renewed respect for tradition and diversity and mistrust of universal claims, a time whose principal imperative Jean François Lyotard has called a war on totality.²⁹ It is therefore not surprising that Judaism and thought about Judaism should reflect these attitudes. Does that mean the process of modernization has ended and that of postmodernization begun? If so, then perhaps a new bandwagon is moving by, and it is time for Jewish thinkers to jump on board.³⁰ Yet it remains to be seen whether new ways will be found once more to domesticate

this new process within Judaism, alternatively, whether modernity in some chastened form remains viable and may yet survive both outside Judaism and within it.

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Notes

I would like to thank Barry Kogan, David Myers, and David Sorkin for the suggestions they gave me upon reading the manuscript. An earlier version of this essay was delivered as part of a panel, Modernization of the Jews, at the meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies in Boston in 1994. Especially in the last chapter of his *Zakhor*, where he deals with the impact of historical distance (clearly a product of modernization) upon Judaism, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi has provided new impetus for reflection on Jewish modernization. Thus, the subject presented here seems especially appropriate for a volume published in his honor.

1. If one adds the term modernism one hits upon the further paradox that this term is sometimes used to refer to a late-nineteenth-century movement in the arts, which some would understand as the emergence of postmodernity. See Barry Smart, Modernity, Postmodernity and the Present, in *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (London, 1990), 18.

2. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 2.

3. Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974); Alex Inkeles, *Exploring Individual Modernity* (New York, 1983). The

individual also serves as the focus in Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York, 1973).

4. See, for example, David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After* (Chicago, 1986); Lawrence E. Cahoon, *The Dilemma of Modernity: Philosophy, Culture, and Anti-Culture* (Albany, N.Y., 1988).

5. In choosing the process of political modernization to establish an interpretive framework, one historian explained his decision by remarking that intellectual developments are too amorphous to be amenable to comparable categorization. C. E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York, 1966), 90.

6. See the volume edited by Eisenstadt, *Patterns of Modernity, Vol. 1, The West* (New York, 1987).

7. See the introduction to my *Ideas of Jewish History* (New York, 1974), 142, and my Where Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin?, *Judaism* 24 (1975): 329-38.

8. Black, *Dynamics of Modernization*, 8; François Bourricaud, Modernity, 'Universal Reference' and the Process of Modernization, in Black, *Dynamics of Modernization*, 121-4.

9. Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick C. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 26.

10. Saul Ascher, *Leviathan oder Ueber Religion in Rücksicht des Judenthums* (Berlin, 1792), 11.

11. *Sulamith* 3: (1) (1810): 309.

12. *Ibid.*, 1: (1) (1806): 6.

13. *Erbauungen*, 1(1813): 7. For the heightened sense of the

significance of present and future in the Jewish Enlightenment, see Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah ve-historyah: toldoteha shel hakarat avar yehudit modernit* (Jerusalem, 1995), 5576.

14. Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 8.

15. See Lessing's Gedicht über die Vorzugsfrage, in Peter K. Kapitza, *Ein bürgerlicher Krieg in der gelehrten Welt: Zur Geschichte der Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes in Deutschland* (Munich, 1981), 207-10.
16. Ibid., 430.
17. Ludwig Geiger, Ein Brief Moses Mendelssohns und sechs Briefe David Friedländers, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland*, 1 (1887): 271.
18. Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? It originally appeared in 1784 and is conveniently reprinted along with Mendelssohn's essay and other relevant material in *Was ist Aufklärung? Beiträge aus der Berlinischen Monatsschrift*, ed. Norbert Hinske (Darmstadt, 1977), 45265.
19. Geiger, Ein Brief, 268.
20. A radical non-Jew, in reference to the tutelage of the rabbis, employed a metaphor of maturation: The child eventually becomes an adult and outgrows the rod. Why not the Jew? [Andreas Riem], *Leviathan oder Rabbinen und Juden* (Jerusalem [Leipzig], 1801), viii.
21. David Martin, Secularization: The Range of Meaning, in *The Religious and the Secular* (New York, 1969), 4857.
22. Reinhard Koselleck, Aufklärung und die Grenzen ihrer Toleranz, in *Claube und Toleranz: Das theologische Erbe der Aufklärung*, ed. Trutz Rendtorff (Gütersloh, 1982), 258.
23. On the restructuring of the Jewish community, see David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840* (New York, 1987), 10723.
24. *Zur Judenfrage in Deutschland*, 1(1843): 213.

25. Sorkin, The Ideology of Emancipation, in *The Transformation of German Jewry*, 13104.

26. Koselleck, *Aufklärung und die Grenzen ihrer Toleranz*, 27071. Even marriage as religious rite came under attack in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. Enlightened people don't require all those ceremonies, one writer declared. Cited in Hinske, *Was ist Aufklärung*, xxxvii.

27. Thus, Jacobson at the Seesen dedication complains that our religious service hitherto has ailed on account of numerous useless elements [*Zwecklosigkeiten*]. *Sulamith*, 3: (1) (1810): 309.

28. [Abraham Muhr], *Jerubaal oder über die religiöse Reform der Juden in preubischen Staaten* (Breslau, 1813), 27. Muhr's general attitude to reform is best expressed in this passage (p. 10): In our opinion, one may not tear down that which is old simply because it is old in order to build something new in its place even if in principle it seems better. We can't determine the consequences of our ideas in their execution and modern trumpery could easily displace the old but supportive columns that get torn down.

29. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained. Correspondence*, 19821985 (Minneapolis, 1993), 16.

30. For example, Arnold M. Eisen, *Rethinking Jewish Modernity* (Tucson, Ariz., 1992).

31. Perhaps in the form of a synthesis between premodern and modern elements. See David Ray Griffin, ed., *Sacred Interconnections: Postmodern Spirituality, Political Economy, and Art* (Albany, N.Y., 1990), xi. Among the latter would certainly be criticism, which, as Foucault notes, requires continuing faith in the Enlightenment. Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York, 1984), 50.

19

Auschwitz and Atlantis: Comments on a Story by Georges Perec

Pierre Vidal-Naquet

Life in a university is no different from life in democratic Athens in this respect: one day you are a judge; another, you are being judged yourself. No doubt, in the normal course of an academic career you are first examined at each of the various stages making up the *cursus honorum* and only then become examiner or judge of someone else's work. Yet the mere fact that you have attained the position of judge does not mean that you are now free from any future criticism.

However high up you may be in the university hierarchy, and even if to a large extent you do enjoy the power commonly allotted to a mandarin, the governing principle of scholarly publications is that they are always open to the unbridled criticism of the whole intellectual community. To take only the simplest case: when you agree to sit on a dissertation committee (which in France involves a rather complicated ritual), you are as a result inevitably condemned to being judged by the candidate, since by definition he or she knows the subject better than the examiner except in unfortunate cases. As a result, the committee members have to prove themselves to be the equals not only of the candidate but of the audience that has come to see this *disputatio* (a procedure that still preserves something of its medieval character).

My speciality is ancient Greek, not Jewish, history. But as soon as one goes beyond the internal history of Athens to examine the Hellenistic era, it is the mutual encounter and cultural confrontation of the Greeks and the Jews that immediately presents itself as a fruitful area for

further study. And if this is true of antiquity properly speaking, it is also true for all the cultural representations that have been produced since then. Our modern culture is both Greek and Jewish, and Jewish culture is both Greek and Jewish, despite certain attempts that have been made to suppress the Greek elements that are an integral part of Jewish tradition and as plainly visible in something like the Pesach ritual as they are in those ancient monuments in Jerusalem that have survived.

I have been fascinated by these encounters for some years now and they have led me to stray from my chosen speciality on quite a number of occasions, or, to be more specific, to sit on a number of dissertation committees, some on Greek and some on Jewish topics. I dedicate these pages, which first took shape as the result of a dissertation defense, to a distinguished academic to whom I am greatly indebted and for whom I have a deep admiration.

Georges Perec (1936-1982) was known in France and in the world at large as one of the most innovative writers of his generation, in short, a great novelist. He was also a Jew, and although in his youth his Jewish education had been minimal, his denominational particularity was very important to him. Although it is true that, for a considerable time after the war, for Perec as for most of the Jews of his generation, their Jewishness remained devoid of content, nevertheless, as he recounts it himself, it was only when he conceived the idea of telling the story of his childhood that he really began to feel Jewish. As Marcel Bénabou has put it, while he doesn't make any great display of his Jewishness, as so many others of his generation did, all the same there are times when he finds ways to express it.

2

Born in 1936, the son of Polish Jews living in France, Perec barely knew his father, who volunteered to serve in the Foreign Legion and was killed in June 1940, or, for very much longer, his mother, who was deported in one of the large round-ups of 1942-1943 and then murdered. *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* (*W or the Memory of Childhood*),³ the work in which he recalls those years of war and massacre, has a completely strange texture. It tells two different stories, side by side, that converge only at the very end of the book. One of these stories is autobiographical: an account of a childhood lived in hiding during the war and continuing up until the period immediately following the Liberation and the return to Paris of the orphan who can now be Georges Perec again (though naturally he was not aware of his true identity straightaway). This narrative is printed in roman type. The accompanying narrative is printed in italics and introduces us to a completely different universe. It is no longer narrated by Georges Perec but by a certain Gaspard Winckler, whose date of birth is not divulged to us except to say that it was some time

in this century. He tells of his initiation into a mysterious world, that of W, one of the islands in the Tierra del Fuego archipelago that is, in the farthest reaches of the Western Hemisphere.

W or the Memory of Childhood is the book in which Georges Perec expressed more of his thoughts and feelings on the Shoah than in any other of his works. In the final analysis, it is impossible to write about the Shoah because the victims, by definition, cannot speak for themselves. On the other hand, it is possible to write on the margins of the Shoah itself, on the camps that were located close to the area where the extermination took place. It is certainly difficult but by no means impossible *to write about the camps*,⁴ as is proved by the immense literature that has grown up on the subject since 1945. At the center of this literature is a camp that was both a site of extermination by gas and a work camp, about which certain prisoners have been able to give their eyewitness accounts: Auschwitz. In the case of Georges Perec and because his mother was among those exterminated, he can legitimately be considered a victim the way in which he decided to write on this theme is unique. On the one hand he tells the story of his childhood, at once tragic and commonplace, and on the other he describes a sporting Utopia located on an island where the sole activity is the Olympics and where power is in the hands of the organizers of the games or (to define them more accurately) sporting competitions.

We should let Perec speak for himself: W is no more like my Olympic fantasy than that Olympic fantasy was like my childhood. But in the crisscross web they weave as in my reading of them I know there is to be found the inscription and the description of the path I have taken, the passage of my history and the history of my passage (7/4). There can naturally be no doubt that W is to be identified with Auschwitz in the most precise manner. At the center of the island there is a fortress, and this is Perec's conclusion to the story: When someone gets in one day to the Fortress he will find first of all nothing but a sequence of dim, long, empty rooms. The sound of his footsteps echoing under the tall concrete roof supports will fill him with fear, but he must keep on going for a long time until he discovers, deep down in the depths of the earth, the subterranean remnants of a world he will think he had forgotten: piles of gold teeth, rings and spectacles, thousands and thousands of clothes in heaps, dusty card indexes, and stocks of poor quality soap (162/218). One does not need to visit the Auschwitz Museum next to the little Polish town of Oświecim to understand what Perec is referring to. What is remarkable, however, is that W is not so much Auschwitz than that what Perec accomplishes through his writing is that it gradually *becomes* Auschwitz as the book progresses.

In the beginning, then, it is not a book about death but, on the contrary, a book about life, about Utopian splendor. It is about an island watered by two warm-water rivers with Greek names, the Chald and the Omega (65/89); a dream climate and vegetation to match; four mutually associated and rival Olympic villages with monumental arches at the gates of each village bearing the motto *Fortius, altius, citius* (braver, higher, faster); and the splendid stadiums with their meticulously maintained cinder tracks, the gigantic wall sheets which publicize the results of sporting contests hour by hour, the celebrations held daily for the winners! (67/92)

Who founded W? Someone called Wilson, whose name begins with a

W, of course. But who is Wilson? Perec takes the liberty of proposing four hypotheses. Wilson was a lighthouse keeper whose negligence is supposed to have caused a frightful disaster or alternatively, the leader of a group of convicts who mutinied while being transported to Australia or more likely, a disenchanted Captain Nemo (the Jules Verne hero) who dreamt of building an ideal city or finally, Wilson was a champion (some say a trainer) . . . excited by the idea of the Olympics who became discouraged by the difficulties Pierre de Coubertin had run into at the end of the nineteenth century and so decided to set up a new Olympia far removed from nationalistic squabbles and ideological manoeuvres (66/90-91).

5 To these four hypotheses and the punning translation of the name that Perec gave himself I want to be a son we might be permitted to add a sixth that perhaps Perec kept to himself. Wilson was the name of the American president who tipped the balance of the First World War in favor of the Allies and dreamed of a splendid utopia the League of Nations, of which nothing remains today except the Palace of Geneva and who finally could not get his own country to join it. As new details are successively introduced to us, W appears

first as this dream world, then a place of nightmare and cruelty.

6 The second narrator, Gaspard Winckler, learns that the mother of the man whose name he has adopted, the singer Caecilia Winckler, suffered a particularly horrible death, locked in a cabin of a sinking ship: when the Chilean rescue team found her, her heart had only just stopped beating and her bleeding fingernails had made deep scratches in the oak door (58/80-81). It is Perec himself, speaking in his own name, who gives the key to this episode: I remember the photographs of the walls of the ovens showing scratch marks made by the victims' fingernails (58/213).⁷

In the process of reading the description of W itself we see the new Olympia gradually turning into Auschwitz. Olympic trials of a sort are certainly held, but they take derisory forms such as the 200-meter that has to be run hopping on one leg and other similar mock contests (85/116). It is no doubt true that in principle the norm is All hail to the victorious! Woe betide the vanquished (89/121), with the latter being deprived of their evening meal (90/121), but we learn later on that anyone accused of cowardice can be put to deathstoned and thrown to the dogs. The Law is implacable explains the narrator who goes on to give a minutely detailed description of a highly variegated selection of different rules, but the Law is unpredictable. The Law must be known by all, but the Law cannot be known (111/146). Pitched battles break out at night in the dormitories. Athletes are drowned in the sinks and lavatory pans (133/179). The judges are free to decree the winners losers and vice versa (117/155-56). In this world without pity the Athletes can be seen tearing each other to pieces for a scrap of salami, a drop of water, a puff at a cigarette (139/188). As he comes to the end of the story, the narrator speaks of a world entirely governed by a rigid hierarchy, where orders like these must be obeyed: Bend your knees,

up again. Up again, bend your knees. Do it very fast now, get the speed up. Run in a circle, lie down flat, crawl, get up, start running. Stand still, to attention, for hours, for days, for days and nights (159/215). This is a clear reference to the interminable roll calls so characteristic of the concentration camp universe. In a word, it is a world made up of masters and slaves, but in which (to parody George Orwell) some slaves are more slave than others.

As for the Athletes' performances, if you just look and see these Athletes of skin and bone, ashen-faced, their backs permanently bent, their skulls bald and shiny, their eyes full of panic, and their sores suppurating, if you see all these indelible marks of humiliation without end . . . With this description in mind we can well understand why these Athletes of the new Olympiad turn in such unimpressive performances: The 100 metres is run in 23.4, the 200 metres in 51; the best high jumper has never exceeded 1.30 metres (161/218).

And so the story advances implacably onward. Where did it come from? Georges Perec has pointed to one of its sources. After noting that in his childhood he used to do drawings of sportsmen with stiff bodies and inhuman facial features, he cites David Rousset's *Univers concentrationnaire*, published in 1946:⁸ the structure of the punishment camps is determined by two fundamental di-

rectives: no work but sport, and derisory feeding. . . . Even the least job has to be done at top speed (163/219). Seen from this perspective, the camps seem like a travesty of the Berlin Olympic Games (1936) and those gods of the stadium filmed by Leni Riefenstahl.

The reference to David Rousset is made explicitly in W, but this is not the case with regard to an allusion whose discovery we owe to Marcel Bénabou. Bénabou has shown the important role played in W's gestation by one of Perec's first texts (published in 1963 in a journal edited by François Maspero),

9 a commentary on one of the few works of concentration camp literature that can rightly be called a masterpiece, Robert Antelme's *L'Espèce humaine*:¹⁰ In other stories dealing with the concentration camps what is presented to us implicitly is the sheer existence of the camps, their horror, the existence of an absolute, hermetically sealed world that the writer recreates as a simple massive fact. But in *L'Espèce humaine* the camp is never just given to us as such. It forces itself on us, it emerges slowly. It is the mud, then the hunger, then the cold, then the blows, then hunger again and the fleas, then all of them together. As Bénabou puts it well, The slow emergence of the truth that the fundamental nature of W's society is that of a concentration camp is nothing but a masterly application of a literary strategy that Perec originally discovered in Antelme.

It remains for us to examine the properly Greek dimension of Georges Perec's utopian island. Nothing could be more common or more classic in recent history than the repeated synthesis of a Greek and a German world. Indeed, from the end of the eighteenth century on, the German intelligentsia was intent on making, in a manner of speaking, the skies of Greece their own. For its own part, Hitlerian ideology also adopted this mythology though not without some hesitation over

whether Sparta or ancient Germany should be their ultimate model.¹¹

Even if Perec had not stated openly in his text that W had borrowed a number of its characteristics from the ancient Olympics, his preparatory notes are there to tell us of the fact.¹² Perec was interested to see what was known about the ancient Olympics, although his research was limited to the *Blue Guide* for Greece.¹³ Perec copied down the names of a few sites and institutions of the sanctuary of Elis, such as the *Leonidaion* (a type of hostel that he notes down as housing the Athletes) and the Theokoles (*Theokoleon*), where the priests and soothsayers were lodged and where he places his timekeepers. He is familiar with the *Bouleuterion*, the place of the Olympic Senate, and of the Prytaneum. And finally, he knows that the judges were called the Hellanodicae (*Hellanodikoi*).¹⁴ His description of W's utopia does not simply repeat everything he found out down to the last detail; rather, he characteristically transforms what he had read. He has noted down the name of one of the two rivers of Olympia: the Cladeus, which he calls the Chald; and with its other river, the Alpheus, he has employed a characteristic play on the initial and final letters of the Greek alphabet to create the Omega.

Ultimately, everything concerning the education of children in the Youth Homes referred to by both the manuscript notes and the published book (117/155) is derived more or less directly from the traditional picture of Sparta that

the Hitlerians and the Platonic utopia held so dear. Boys and girls are educated together until they reach puberty, but in W only a fifth of the girls are allowed to live, whereas all of the boys are permitted to live unless they have some birth defect (125/166).

15 This last feature is clearly Lacedaemonian, but in comparison to Sparta the W society is undoubtedly male to an exaggerated degree.

There is nothing here that could not be found even if it was taken without attribution in a good undergraduate textbook. On the other hand though, there is one feature of George Perec's utopia that does not seem to have been noticed by the critics, doubtless because, like Poe's *Purloined Letter*, it had been there in plain sight all the time. There are three sets of games that are scheduled to recur at regular intervals on the island of W: the Olympiads, which are held every year (and not every four years like the Olympic games); the Spartakiads, which are open in exceptional case to unranked (*non classés*) (unselected) Athletes in their villages and which are held every three months; and finally the Atlantiads, which are held every month (74, 83, 130-33/101, 113, 175-80). The Olympiads do not present any special difficulties of interpretation. The meaning of the name Spartakiads is somewhat puzzling. Is it meant to be an allusion to the supposedly proletarian USSR in this competition specially reserved for those who have not done well under the existing system (i.e., the *non classés*)? I think that it is more likely to be a reference to the presence of socialism in Hitlerian ideology.

And the Atlantiads? How could one forget that of all the myths to have come down to us from antiquity, none has fired the imaginations of later generations more than that of Atlantis. It is Plato and he alone who created the myth, or rather what he thinks of as a fable, a flexible framework of meanings. In the Prologue to the *Timaeus* and in the

Critias, Plato writes a pastiche of Herodotus, the historian of the Persian wars, by imagining a war between two prehistoric states (prehistoric in the sense that they existed before the most recent example of those catastrophes that periodically ravage our sublunary world). One of these two states, Athens, is founded on the same principles as those of the Platonic utopia; the other, Atlantis, an island continent located far beyond the pillars of Hercules in the middle of the Atlantic, is, because it is human, all too human, given to decadence and imperialism, traits that will ultimately bring it into conflict with virtuous Athens. On one side, then, the city of the Good, the Same, and on the opposite side the city of the Other, headed for catastrophe. Whatever wealth there is all seems to be located in Atlantis: natural and mineral wealth, an abundance of fruits and men. But whereas Athens will survive, in ignorance of its past glory, Atlantis will end up being totally destroyed. We should add that Atlantis is nothing more than a satire on Athens, which was democratic, imperialist, and a maritime power like Atlantis.¹⁶ We could provide an even more radical analysis of the fable by going so far as to say that Atlantis *becomes* an evil empire.

The matter does not end there, for this fantastic historical novel was destined to have an extraordinary history of its own.¹⁷ Three revolutions were to undergo the same number of transformations. When the Mediterranean became Christian it had to assimilate the historical heritage of the Jews. It is therefore not surprising

that a Byzantine monk (?) of the sixth century, Cosmas Indicopleustes, who was a great traveler in the kingdom of the imaginary, attributed the story that Plato had placed in the mouth of Solon (the Athenian legislator of the sixth century B.C.E.) to Solomon. This Jewish interpretation will surface again on numerous occasions, most notably in the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. The second revolution was none other than the discovery of America, which opened the way to the rediscovery of the island continent described by Plato, where the ten lost tribes of Israel were now rediscovered alive. Finally, the third transformation came with the appearance of modern nationalism. Some astonishing interpretations saw the light of day. Surely, Atlantis was a far-flung region of the kingdom of Spain! Now, a Swedish scholar of the seventeenth century, Olof Rudbeck, thought that Atlantis was nothing but Sweden itself and that the Gothic family tree was therefore at least as noble as that of the Jewish-Christian line.

All of these interpretations were similar in that they chose to ignore the essentially pessimistic character of Plato's myth. In the vast majority of cases the Atlantomaniacs the breed is not entirely extinct even today were drunk with power and glory. So it should come as no surprise to find that the philosophers of Hitler's Germany, led by Himmler and Rosenberg, embraced the heritage of Atlantis for their own ends, seeing it as fundamentally Aryan and even Germanic.

18 To understand what is at stake in this form of identification, we need only reflect on the success that the strange theory that Athena (as is commonly known, mother of all the arts, sciences and laws) was *black* has met with recently on American campuses. The parallel that the name of the Atlantiads has led us to sketch out should now be clear: the island of W is located far off in the West, it has luxurious vegetation, it is a negative and regressive utopia, comparable to the island of Atlantis. It *becomes* Auschwitz just as Atlantis *becomes* the

world of the Other and of Dissimilarity.

But I still have something to add to my interpretation of Perec's text, never forgetting that he is a master in the art of investing words with multiple meanings. For although the Atlantiads are unmistakably linked to the *name* of Atlantis, the ritual that characterizes Atlantis itself does not come from Plato. When we look at the manuscript note that I have already cited,¹⁹ we find this strange word associated with the Youth Games: Atalanta. Who was Atalanta? Once again we are dealing with a story that has come down to us from the Greeks: Atalanta is a young huntress, raised in the mountains by a bear, whose great talent is longdistance running. She refuses all offers of marriage and is finally defeated in a race by the man who will marry her, Melanion, only because when the race was underway he had sufficient cunning to drop three apples given to him by Aphrodite that the young girl could not resist stopping to pick up.²⁰ Now, what are the Atlantiads, this monthly festival on the W island that is open to the top ranked Athletes? A race that ends in rape. Those young girls thought to be fertile are released on the Stadium's track, where they run until the Athletes catch and rape them. It is in this way that the children of W island are conceived (83, 124-277 113, 165-69). And the apple? It is also present in Perec's tale. The mysterious

character who initiates the second narrator into the mysteries of W island is called Apfelstahl, the apple of steel, or more precisely, the steel of apple. To get from *Atalante* to *Atlante* (as *Atalanta* and *Atlanta* are spelled in French), only one letter has to be removed. This is a play on words with which Perec is familiar

21 That is as far as I will go today.

Notes

1. The thesis in question is that of *Mme. Anny Dayan Rosenman*, defended at the University of Paris VII on 24 November 1995, subject and title *Deuil, identité, écriture. Les traces de la Shoah dans la mémoire juive en France*. This is an excellent piece of work and will soon, I hope, find a reputable university press. I should like to thank the author of the thesis and Marcel Bénabou for the help they have given me in preparing this essay.

2. All citations are from M. Bénabou, *Perec et la judéité* (Perec and Jewishness), in *Cahiers Georges Perec*, vol. i, *Colloque de Cerisy, July 1984*, (Paris, 1985), 15-30. This whole volume is a source of invaluable materials for all the problems dealtwith here. The second of these *cahiers*, published in 1988 as *Textuel* 21, is devoted to W, but the only parts that concern our topic have been integrated into his book by philippe Lejeune in the work cited in n. 12, below.

3. Georges Perece, *W or the Memory of Childhood*, trans. David Bellos (Boston: David R. Godine, 1988). This is a translation of *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* (Paris: Denoël, 1975). All text references in parentheses are to w unless otherwise stated. English edition page numbers will be given in the text folowed by French page numbers.

4. *ecrire sur les camps* is the title of a fine book by A. Parrau (Paris,

1995) that studies the Soviet camps as well as those of the Nazis.

5. In the *Quinzaine littéraire* (1 August 1981), Perec wrote a short piece entitled *De la difficulté qu'il y a à imaginer une Cité idéale* (On the difficulty of imagining an ideal city) that was reprinted in *Penser/Classer* (Paris, 1985), 129-31.

6. On the theme of cruelty in the work of Perec and in particular in *W*, See Claude Burgelin *Perec et la cruauté* (n.1, above), 31-52, esp. 37-39: *W* ou l'île sadienne.

7. Georges Perec makes the same mistake as others have frequently done since 1945 of confusing the gas chambers with the crematoria ovens, into which only corpses ever found their way.

8. English translation, *The Other Kingdom*, and introduction by Ramon Guthrie (New York: Fertig, 1982)

9. M. Bénabou, *Perec et la judéité*, 27-28 (see n. 2, above); G. Perec *Robert Antelme ou la vérité de la littérature*, *Partisans* 8 (1963): 121-34; reprinted in L.G. *Une aventure des années 60* (Paris, 1992), 87-114 (the quotation is from pp. 95-96).

10. *L'Espèce humaine* (Paris, 1957). English translation, *The Human Race*, by Jeffrey Haight and Annie Mahler, introduction by Edgar Morin (Marlboro, Vt., 1992). For more on this book, see A. Parra u, *écrire sur les camps*, 295-306 (see n.4, above).

11. The books on this topic are legion. There is a good bibliography for one in Beat Näf's *Von Perikles zu Hitler? Die athenische Demokratie und die deutsche Althistorie bis zur Mythologie* into consideration.

12. see Philippe Lejeune, *La mémoire et l'oblique: Georges Perec autobiographe* (Paris 1991), 108. I have corrected some of the glaring errors of Lejeune's reading of Perec's manuscript.

13. Marcel Bénabou has informed me that Perec also used the volume

edited by roger Caillois, *Jeux et Sports*, vol 15 of *Encyclopédie de La Pléiade* (Paris, 1967); in particular,

B. Gillet *Historique des Jeux Olympiques*, 1185-96. It was here that he found, for example, on 1190, a reference to the cook Coroebos, who was the first winner of the games, on which see *Lejeune la memoire et l'oblique* (n.12, above).

14. Not Hellanodeas (Lejeune).

15. For example, on the Spartan tradition one can refer to E. N. Tigerstadt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity*, vol. 1 (Stockholm, 1965).

16. The relevant texts by Plato have been edited with commentary in the following works: Christopher Cill, *Plato: The Atlantis Story; Timaeus, 12-27, Critias* with introduction, notes and vocabulary (Bristol, 1980); B. Pischel *Die Atlantische Lehre: Übersetzung und Interpretation des Platon-texte aus Timaios und Kritias* (Frankfurt and Berne, 1988); L. Brisson, *Timée Critias*, traduction inédite, introduction et notes (Paris, 1992); my interpretation of the Platonic text can be found in *Athènes et l'Atlantide; structure et signification d'un mythe platonicien*, *Revue des Etudes Grecques* (1964). It can also be found in *Le Chasseur noir*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1991), 335-60; English translation, *The BlackHunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World*, by A. Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore, 1986) 263-84.

17. For a survey, see *Atlantis: Fact or Fiction*, ed. E.S.Ramage (Bloomington, Ind., and London, 1978)

18. I am summarizing here two of my previous studies, *Herodote et l'Atlantide; entre les grecs et les Juifs, réflexions sur l'historiographie du siècle des Lumières* (Herodotus and Atlantis: Between the Jews and the Greeks, reflections on the historiography of the Enlightenment era), *Quaderni di Storia* 16(1982): 3-76; and *L'Atlantide et les nations* (Atlantis and the nations), in *La Democratie*

grecque vue d'ailleurs (Paris, 1990), 130-59, English translation in P. Vidal-Naquet, *politics Ancient and Modern*, by J. Lloyd (Cambridge, 1995), 38-65, also published with additional discussion with E. Helsinger in J. Chadler, A. I. Davidson, and H. Harootunian, *Questions of Evidence* (Chicago, 1994), 325-60.

19. *Lejeune, La memoire et l'oblique*, 108 (see. 12, above).

20. I have collected the texts and principal documents in *Le chasseur noir*, 172-73 (119-20 in the English translation [see n. 16, above]). The most complete study is that of G. Arrigoni, *Atalanta e il cinghiale bianco*, *Scripta Philologica* (1977): 9-42.

21. *See La disparition* (Paris, 1969), English translation, *A void*, by Gilbert Adair (London, 1994), a book in which it is the letter *e* that has disappeared.

Acknowledgment: This chapter was translated from the French by Mark Cohen.

IV

JEWISH MEMORY AND HISTORICAL WRITING IN THE MODERN AGE

20

Between Haskalah and Kabbalah: Peter Beer's History of Jewish Sects

Michael Brenner

When, one year after the death of the Bohemian *maskil* Peter Beer in 1838, his memoirs were published, the editor opened his preface with the following remark: Undoubtedly all intelligent and progressively educated Israelites consent that Peter Beer was . . . one of the brightest stars on our literary horizon.

¹ If Beer ever indeed enjoyed such splendor, he certainly lost it very soon afterward. Only fifteen years after his death, the historical works of Peter Beer were referred to as sunk into oblivion, and he himself was characterized as an ardent enemy of existing positive Judaism.² While this comment reflected the angry voice of one of his former students at the Prague Jewish *Normalschule*, more competent contemporaries shared such a view. Thus, Isaak Markus Jost, who began to write his *Geschichte der Israeliten* (History of the Israelites) at about the same time that Beer completed his *Geschichte, Lehren, und Meinungen aller bestandenen und noch bestehenden religiösen Sekten der Juden und der Geheimlehre oder Kabbalah* (History, Doctrine, and Beliefs of All Once-Existing and Still Existing Religious Sects of the Jews and of the Secret Teachings or Kabbalah [henceforth referred to as *Geschichte*]), describes his fellow historian in more polite words, as a writer of less outstanding success.³ Since Jost himself was soon overshadowed by his younger contemporary, Heinrich Graetz, Beer was quoted if at all as a third-ranking Jewish historian, a reputation he is still saddled with until this very day. When, in a more recent essay, Ismar Schorsch opened his list of

modern Jewish historians with Peter Beer, he immediately felt compelled to assure his readers that Beer hardly deserves inclusion in the history of *Wissenschaft*. Utterly missing from his work is any critical examination of his sources. His simplistic idea of a historian is that of a facilitator, an assembler of scattered and inaccessible sources for convenient perusal. Not without justification, Ismar Schorsch claimed that to move from Beer to Jost is to traverse the distance between Machiavelli and Niebuhr in a single generation.⁴

If there is such an overwhelming agreement on Beer's shortcomings as a historian, why, then, bother at all to resurrect his name and work?⁵ As the following pages intend to reveal, Beer's writings, although not serving as valid sources for earlier periods of Jewish history, are unique documents about his own time. Beer was part of the Bohemian Haskalah, and thus, both geographically and

ideologically, situated between the more radical Berlin *maskilim* and the more traditional East European Jewish enlighteners. The author of the first comprehensive historical study of the Jewish religion by a modern Jew, as Michael A. Meyer stated, Beer developed the concept of a history of Jewish sects that would become popular among other Jewish historians in the course of the nineteenth century.

⁶ His theory of the existence of a Jewish *Urreligion* (original religion) allowed Beer to propagate his own ideas of religious reform by means of scholarship. While Beer foreshadowed future Jewish historians with respect to those issues, the most significant aspect of his writing was truly exceptional among nineteenth-century German-Jewish scholars. This is the central role Beer granted Jewish mysticism in the development of Judaism. He entitled the second and last volume (consisting of 439 pages) of his two-volume work, *Kabbalah*. If Beer is remembered for any single achievement, it is his pioneering description of the Frankist movement. Graetz concentrated his attention on the section devoted to Frankism in Beer's writings and accused Beer unjustifiably, as we will see of having a kind of special liking for Frankism.⁷ In this century, Gershom Scholem rediscovered Beer's writings when he did his own research on Jakob Frank's followers.⁸ Indeed, Beer cannot be ignored as a source for the history of the Frankist movement. Not only was he one of the first scholars to write about this sect, he also was one of the last *maskilim* to be in close personal contact with some of the leading Frankist families, when the sect was still active in Bohemia.

As a Jewish historian, Beer was still an uncommon phenomenon in the Jewish society of post-Enlightenment Europe. The early Haskalah movement, represented by the circle around Moses Mendelssohn, planted the seeds for a new Jewish historical consciousness, but did

not create modern Jewish historiography. Neither Naftali Herz Wessely's (Weisel's) encouragement of the study of history nor the biographies of great Jews published in the *maskil* journal, *Hame'assef*, represented a decisive break with more traditional forms of the representation of Jewish history. Despite a recent trend among scholars to reevaluate the early *maskilim's* views on history, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's statement on the formative period of modern Jewish historiography remains unchallenged: From Weisel and the Me'assef to the famous manifesto published by Immanuel Wolf in 1822 and entitled *On the Concept of a Science of Judaism* is a span of forty years, a biblical generation. Yet it represents a drastic leap into a new kind of thinking.⁹

While scholars of Jewish history have thoroughly researched the ideology of Immanuel Wolf, Leopold Zunz, and the other founding fathers of modern *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the biblical generation that separated them from the earlier period of Mendelssohn and Wessely remains largely undiscovered. Writing in the last years of the eighteenth and first years of the nineteenth century, the still highly self-educated men of this generation helped to popularize ideas that were previously restricted to a numerically negligible elite. They did so as

teachers and preachers in newly created Jewish institutions, such as modern Jewish schools and synagogues, and in secular Jewish journals and textbooks.

¹⁰ As an influential teacher, the author of textbooks for Jewish students, and a frequent contributor to the most influential German-Jewish journal of his time, *Sulamith*, Peter Beer was one of the most prolific representatives of this transitional generation. His articles in *Sulamith* often served as the basis for later book publications, such as textbooks, catechisms, and comprehensive studies, most notable among them his *Geschichte*.

Peter Beer:

His Life and Work

Born in Bohemian Nový Bydzov* (Neubidschow) in the year 1758, Peter (Peretz) Beer received a traditional Jewish education. He began to study Talmud at the age of six. His Jewish schooling, which he described in his autobiography as totally senseless and meaningless for me, was complemented by a rather unusual education for a Jewish child in a small Bohemian town twenty years before Joseph II's *Toleranzpatente* and Wessely's *Divrei shalom ve'emet*.¹¹ Beer's father hired a Christian teacher to instruct his son in German, probably out of utilitarian motives, having experienced how his own knowledge of German had helped him in his career as a well-to-do tobacco agent. Through the German language, Peter Beer became acquainted with modern literature and philosophy. Against the initial resistance of his father, the tutor insisted on instructing young Peter in Latin as well. If we believe Beer's own account, he soon knew Latin better than Hebrew and German.

Although granting his son an unusual amount of secular knowledge,

Beer's father set clear priorities in favor of Peter's Jewish education. As he later remarked, I was intended to become a rabbi already at my birth. Thus, he was sent to two of the most prominent yeshivas in the Austrian lands. At the age of fourteen, Peter Beer arrived at the Prague Yeshiva and studied for four years under the auspices of Rabbi Yeheskel Landau. He continued his studies for another three years with Rabbi Meir Barby at the Pressburg Yeshiva.

The next major turning point in his life was the time he spent as a private tutor in a small Hungarian town. In the loft of the house where he lived and taught he found some old books, among them Maimonides' *More nevuḥim* (*Guide of the Perplexed*). Reading it, he discovered a Jewish world that was previously unknown to him: for the first time he found the combination of Judaism and philosophy that was to become so dear to him. The book impressed him, as it did many other *maskilim*, so much that he planned to translate it into German, a plan he never realized. When almost sixty years later he wrote a biography of Maimonides, it included, however, a translation of a few pages of the *More Nevukhim*.¹²

The transformation in Beer's personal outlook, caused by the reading of Maimonides, coincided with major changes affecting all Jews in the Habsburg

monarchy. In 1781, Emperor Joseph II issued the first of a series of *Toleranzfiatente* containing a whole package of social, economic, and cultural reforms for his non-Catholic subjects. Their main impact on Jewish life consisted of the weakening of communal autonomy, the prohibition of Hebrew and Yiddish in official documents, and the establishment of a modern Jewish school system in the German language. Although the *Toleranzpatente* by no means granted equal rights for Jews, they were enthusiastically welcomed by most of the *maskilim*. They caused Wessely to write his programmatic *Divre shalom ve-emet*, in which he supported fundamental changes in the Jewish educational system. Using the same words as had Wessely before him, Beer called Joseph II a second Cyrus. On the frontispiece of his book *Kos yeshuot oder Kelch des Heils* he published a picture of the emperor receiving representatives of the Jewish community, and in honor of the last Holy Roman Emperor, Beer named his son Franz.

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Beer, who had left Hungary for Vienna in 1780, was among the first Jews to profit from Joseph's reforms. Highly attracted by the Enlightenment ideals of education, he enrolled for courses in pedagogy at the University of Vienna, which was now possible without prior conversion. It was a converted Jew, however, who was to become the greatest influence on Beer during his years in Vienna: Joseph von Sonnenfels, the main representative of the ideology of enlightened despotism in Austria. Under his direction, Beer began to read contemporary philosophers and poets like Mendelssohn, Lessing, Kant, Wieland, Herder, and Goethe.¹⁴

Equipped with a broad background in Jewish learning as well as in secular studies, he served as a model for the new type of teacher

required at the modern Jewish schools the so-called *Normalschulen* and *Trivialschulen*, which had spread all over Bohemia at the turn of the century when he returned to his birth place of Nový Bydžov in 1785.¹⁵ During his twenty-six years as a teacher in Nový Bydžov Beer began to write on various aspects of Jewish history and religion. His first book, *Toldot Israel*, a history of the Jews from the beginnings until the time of the Second Temple written in Hebrew and German (in Hebrew letters) in 1796 became the blueprint of biblical history textbooks for *maskilim* in Jewish schools for many years. It was translated into French, Polish, and as late as 1870, into Russian.¹⁶

Toldot Israel was followed by *Kos yeshuot* (1802), a guide promoting religious reforms, and by *Dath Israel oder das Judenthum* (1809/1810), a summary of Jewish history and religion. While Beer was radical in his attacks against Rabbinic Judaism, especially as practiced in Eastern Europe, he was vigorous in his defense of all observances that could be directly derived from the Torah, *from Shatnez to Kashrut*. Even when he had to admit that there were no rational reasons for a certain commandment, he defended its existence. Referring to the dietary laws, he argued that God does not command anything without a beneficent purpose, and we therefore have to trust in his universal goodness and to be sure that the prohibition of eating these forbidden meals will be useful to us in a certain way which our shortsighted mind cannot comprehend.¹⁷

Beer left Nový Bydžov in 1811 to become a teacher of morals at the Prague

Normalschule. Like other modern German Jewish schools the *Normalschule* was a meeting place for *maskilim*, who had few other possibilities of employment. Most prominent among them was Herz Homberg, who arrived in Prague seven years after Beer. Just like Beer, Homberg had received his Jewish education at Yehekel Landau's Prague Yeshiva but subsequently turned even more radical than Beer. After serving as a tutor in the house of Moses Mendelssohn, collaborating on his Bible translation, and teaching in Jewish schools in Gorizia and Trieste, he was appointed supervisor of the German Jewish schools in Galicia. His German clothing and his reformist ideas clashed so with the traditional world of Galician Jewry that, almost seventy years old, he sought refuge in Prague in 1818.

During his Prague years, Beer was also active as a reformer in educational and liturgical matters. In 1820 he presented a memorandum to the emperor demanding reforms in the Jewish *Trivialschulen* of Bohemia. A year earlier he had anonymously applied to the emperor to modify the Jewish prayer service. The major targets of his criticism were traditional rabbis and teachers, whose concentration on the Talmud was, according to Beer, the main barrier to the integration of the Jews into society. Only lay teachers could at that time successfully undertake the necessary reforms, he argued. His proposition to found a Mosaic Theological Seminary was rejected by the government with the argument that the Jews were not yet mature enough for such a step.

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Beer was more successful in promoting moderate reforms in the synagogue service. He was one of the initiators of the Prague Society for the Improvement of Jewish Worship, which was permitted its own synagogue after a long struggle, in 1835.¹⁹ Besides his reform

activities and his occupation as a teacher, Beer continued his writings. His first book after he had moved to Prague was a prayer book for educated Jewish women (1815), followed by another prayer book and his *Handbuch der mosaischen Religion* in 1818. In 1822/1823 he published his two-volume *Geschichte*. Two years later he wrote another book on the Mosaic religion: *Über Verinnerlichung und Ceremonien in der rein mosaischen Religion*. In the last decade before his death his long-planned biography of Maimonides appeared (1834) and a report on his fight for religious reforms in Prague. His autobiography was published posthumously by Moritz Herrmann in 1839.

Jewish History as Church History

When Peter Beer's *Geschichte* appeared in the years 1822/1823, only part of it was printed for the first time. Beer had formulated the main ideas of these two volumes as early as 1806 in the Haskalah journal *Sulamith* in two articles under the title *Über einige bei der jüdischen Nation bestandene und zum Theile noch bestehende religiöse Sekten*.²⁰ Between the two publications central European Jewry underwent major intellectual and political changes. Religious reforms were introduced in Germany, first in the Napoleon-dominated states, later in

other parts. The first Reform temple was built in Seesen in 1810, preceded by the establishment of the Westphalian consistory in 1808 under the leadership of Israel Jacobson. Other temples followed in Berlin in 1815 and, most important, in Hamburg in 1818.

In political terms, the larger German states had granted favorable legislation, most notably, Prussia in 1812. But after the decade and a half that passed between the original publication of Beer's essays and that of his books, reaction was predominant, as reflected by the fruitless discussions at the Congress of Vienna to find a common line for emancipation. Political regress was accompanied by the Hep-Hep riots all over Germany in 1819, which uncovered the still existing violent antisemitism among the masses. One reaction to these riots was the foundation of the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden.

In the intellectual spirit of the times, German Idealism and Romanticism were now occupying the place of Enlightenment ideology. Characterizing the new development among Christian writers was Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Christlicher Glaube*, which appeared at the same time as Beer's *Geschichte*. The two works had, however, very little in common, as Beer in general was hardly influenced by the spiritual development of the preceding two decades. His *Geschichte* reflected much more the time of the essays' original publication in 1806 than that of the books' publication in 1822/1823.

Finally, the local context is also of utmost importance when considering Beer's work. Beer was a product of the Bohemian Haskalah, which had its own particular development and differed substantially from the earlier Berlin Haskalah. In the description of its historian, Ruth Kestenberg-Gladstein, their relationship sounds like a Freudian parent-child model. Kestenberg regards the beginnings of the Prague Haskalah in the 1780s as widely dependent on Berlin,

whereas the second phase in the 1790s was characterized by deep conflicts between the Prague and Berlin movements. Only during its third phase, in the early nineteenth century, could Prague find its own way, independent from the development in Berlin. The main characteristics of the Prague Haskalah, according to Kestenberg, were its conservatism and its positive identification with the concept of a Jewish nation.

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As recent scholarship reveals, both assumptions have to be qualified.²² While Prague was certainly no hotbed of the radical Reform movement, we find a flamboyant reformer like Herz Homberg as a teacher at Prague's German Jewish school. A century earlier, Prague had taken the lead in introducing modest reforms in synagogue decorum. Thus, by the 1720s, synagogue services on Friday night were introduced by organ pipes, cembali, and other instruments, an hour before the entry of Sabbath.²³ More significantly, as the center of the Frankist movement, a strong though not always visible antinormative tendency existed within some of the most respected Prague Jewish families. The circle of historians among the Prague *maskilim* displayed some of this questioning of normative traditions in their writings. Authors like Ignaz Jeiteles (1783-1843), Markus Fischer (1788-1858), and Salomon Löwisohn (1789-1821) were not among the towering historians of their time, but they produced an amount of Jewish history writings

unparalleled in other European centers in the early years of the nineteenth century. Their writings ranged from accounts of ancient Roman history to biographical sketches of Marranos and A History of the Jews under the Reign of Mohadi and Edris, Kings of Mauretania. In addition, to their rather unusual themes, those authors held quite unorthodox views of Jewish history. Thus, Fischer began his *Korot shenot kedem*, not with the traditional biblical account of Adam and Eve but rather with the description of primitive cavemen; and in the writings of both Fischer and Löwisohn, Uriel da Costa, the seventeenth-century Marrano who renounced the talmudic tradition and was consequently banned as a heretic by the Amsterdam Jewish community before ending his own life, drew considerable interest and sympathy.

Although Peter Beer was part of this circle of Bohemian Jewish historians, some of his main influences stemmed from outside Bohemia: from Vienna, where he met the main political thinker of enlightened Austria, Joseph von Sonnenfels, and from Berlin, where he was inspired by radical representatives of the Haskalah and early Reform movement. Thus, he dedicated two of his books to David Friedländer and Israel Jacobson, who both had enthusiastically welcomed the integration of Jews as citizens into the European nations, and propagated a new Jewish identity in purely religious terms. By pleading to dissolve a Jewish state within a state, they agreed to a confessionalization of the Jews, who, in their opinion, should differ from their Christian fellow citizens only by their personal religious beliefs.

Once Judaism was defined as a pure religion, its history could be reduced to a religious history, paralleling that of Christianity. As a consequence, terms formerly restricted to the latter were now used for the former. The term The Church was reflected in the equivalent The Synagogue or simply The Jewish Church. In the introduction to the

first volume of his *Geschichte*, Beer used the term *Jüdische Kirchengeschichte* (Jewish church history) (1:8). Among other terms he borrowed from church history were schism (the first of which occurred in Jewish history, according to Beer, between Hillel and Shammai) and reformation. This terminology became common also among later Jewish historians. Julius Fürst, for example, referred to Judaism as The Synagogue, analogous to The Church, and Isaak Markus Jost's work is full of such Christianisms.

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Since both Christians and Mohammedans were called after the founders of their religions, Beer rejected the terms Jews and Israelites at least for the period after the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth in favor of the term Mosaites.²⁵ And because Christianity consists of a variety of sects, the same had to be true with Judaism. The history of Judaism, therefore, becomes the history of its various religious sects.

The Sects of the Jewish Church:
The Case of Karaism

In the title of his work, *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Secten* (1857/1859), Isaak Markus Jost revealed a view of Jewish history that had become popular by

the mid-nineteenth century. Historians represented Judaism as a conglomerate of various religious sects, thus reducing rabbinical Judaism to one among many expressions of Jewish religion.

²⁶ While Jost was influenced by Beer's writings, this concept reached back much further and was first expressed by Christian Hebraists in the Renaissance. Discovering the Karaites, those Christian scholars believed they had found a Jewish sect that rejected the part of Judaism against which Christianity had polemicized for a long time, the Talmud. An antitalmudic Judaism seemed at least at first glance to be much closer to Christianity than was rabbinic Judaism. Karaism became an even more interesting object of research, when knowledge spread that its adherents still existed as a minority within Judaism. Thus, Christian scholars like Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609) found particular interest in the Karaites as a more favorable alternative of Judaism. The perspective of many of the early modern Christian writers who were drawn to the study of Judaism was also formed by their personal experiences within a divided Christian world. Another author of a Karaite study, Jacobus Trigland, was a Catholic who converted to Protestantism in 1603 and taught at the University of Leyden. Like Scaliger, Pierre Bayle and the first writer of a postbiblical Jewish history, Jacques Basnage, a century later, were French Huguenots, who lived as refugees in Holland.²⁷

Basnage strongly emphasized the sectarian character of Jewish history when he divided Judaism into various factions, stating that one of them, the Pharisees, is governing present Jewish life. It must be kept in mind that while Basnage and his predecessors might have condemned the Pharisaic-rabbinic tradition more than other Jewish sects, their ultimate goal was not to lead the Jews back to a pure Jewish *Urreligion* but rather to convert them to the Christian religion,

which in their view had superseded Judaism. The Christian interest in Karaism and a sectarian view of Jewish history was well preserved in Beer's time. A missionary review of Beer's *Geschichte* in the London *Quarterly Review* stated that if conversion as the ideal solution for the Jews could not be achieved, the next best option was the rabbi-trained Jew turning from his old guides to embrace a pure Judaism. That the Caraites practise a religion nearly such . . . we are willing to admit.²⁸

Beer deviated substantially from Christian writers of Jewish history who regarded conversion as their main goal.²⁹ Instead, he stressed the need to disprove the common belief among Jews and non-Jews about a monolithic and static Judaism. In his article of 1806, Beer stated the main purpose of his undertaking, which he repeated word for word in the introduction to his 1822 publication of the first volume of his *Geschichte*: It is the purpose of this essay to divest Jewish and Christian readers of *Sulamith* of the damaging delusion that the Jewish nation as a whole, its religion and its morality have always been at the same level as they are today, and that therefore all attempts at perfection from within and without are utterly in vain.³⁰

Beer adopted Mendelssohn's concept of an ideal natural religion of Adam and early mankind that became distorted by gross aberrations during the following generations and had to be restored through revelation. Mosaic law reflected this

Urreligion, which had been transmitted through generations by the Patriarchs and a small flock of righteous people. In post-Mosaic times the Jewish people again left the path of the natural *Urreligion* and became idolaters. Therefore, God punished them by the destruction of the Temple. After the return from Babylonian Exile the Jews repented of their sins and followed the Law of Moses. But now the leaders of the people saw the necessity to erect a fence around the Law and created, in Beer's words, aggravating additions, which actually did not belong to the Jewish religion(1:18). By this time the major schism in Judaism was already created. Those who accepted these additions and interpreted them as the Oral Law, given to Moses on Mount Sinai together with the Written Law, became known as the *Ba'ale kabala* (also called Pharisees, Talmudists or Rabbanites), whereas those who rejected these additions were called *Kara'im* (1:20).

According to this scheme, Beer divided all Jewish sects into two major streams: those who accepted the Oral Law and those who rejected it as later additions. He classified both streams further into a variety of subgroups. Whereas Pharisees (or Rabbanites), Hasidim, and Sabbatians derived from the stream Beer called *Ba'alei Kabalah*, the Kara'im were divided into Samaritans, Hellenites, Essenes, and Sadducees. Beer defined the two main streams in his sectarian concept, Pharisees (or Rabbanites) and Karaites, not in their historical context but as two different timeless ideas, which grew out of Judaism. For Beer, Karaism did not start with Anan ben David and his followers in eighth-century Babylonia but had its origins in Mosaic times: Although one does not find this sect in the Talmud or the New Testament under the name Karaites, its early existence can be proven by the very nature of Mosaism, the documents of which were transmitted from Moses in written form, which means Karaite (1:125).

According to Beer, the Karaites later referred to themselves as *Tsadikim* (righteous ones), which is similar to *Tsedukim* (Sadducees)

(1:126)! It should be noted that Beer himself constantly identified Sadducees with Karaites. When using the name *Zaducaeer*, he placed after it the term *Karaeer* in parentheses. (1:145, 168). The Karaites were, for Beer, *Textler*; Karaite means written, and Karaism therefore excluded the idea of a revealed Oral Law. After tracing Karaism back to ancient Jewish history and thus following his main Karaite sources it is not surprising that the actual founder of the Karaite sect, Anan ben David, became for Beer only one figure in the middle of a long Karaite chain of tradition. Beer faithfully accepted the Karaite notion that Anan and his followers would live according to a literal interpretation of the undistorted letter of Mosaic law, thereby disregarding the Karaites distinct text exegesis and legal system: Since they do not accept any orally transmitted Bible interpretation, their interpretation is defined by grammatical rules, by the spirit of the Hebrew language, and by reason (1:166).

Beer himself was not consistent in his negation of the divine revelation of the Oral Law. In his textbook *Dath Israel*, he stated: God has given to Moses on Mt. Sinai not only the Written Law, but also its oral explanations.

³¹ This, however, did not mean for him the recognition of the whole Talmud as divinely inspired, since even for the most zealous defender of the opinion that God gave Moses an

oral explanation of the Written Law it must be clear that by no means as some people argue erroneously the whole Talmud was revealed to Moses (1:231). According to Beer, God gave Moses only the key for the explanation of the Written Law through certain general rules.

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Throughout the two volumes of his *Geschichte*, Beer revealed abundantly both his sympathy and his contempt. Whereas the Karaites represented a purer form of the Jewish *Urreligion*, their counterpart the Rabbanites had distorted Judaism into a religion full of mystical and superstitious elements. Beer's accusation of rabbinic Judaism and its foolish customs (1:335) went so far that he accused it of providing the pretext for the Christian blood libel. In a petition to the Austrian emperor, he, like other early reformers, expressed his contempt for the term *rabbi* and suggested replacing it with another term: The title *rabbi* could be changed into preacher or pastor so that decent people can accept the office.³³ He denounced the *mahzor*, the Jewish prayer book for festivals, as a labyrinth of muddled thinking . . . , in which the reader stumbles over errors at every other word, and the *piyyutim* used during the prayer service: The rabble who does not understand a word of its contents, likes those poor rhymes so much that they would rather give up the Torah than this pseudo-poetry (1:347). A whole section of his textbook *Dath Israel* consists of vicious attacks on Polish rabbis. While more outspoken in his language, Beer shared his principal rejection of rabbinic Judaism with other radical reformers and was able to quote similar statements by Friedländer, Bendavid, and others.

Jewish Mysticism

In contrast to most other central European *maskilim* and reformers, Beer devoted much of his historical study to Jewish mysticism. To be sure, Beer, the *maskil* and antimystical reformer, revealed little sympathy for the Kabbalah. He quoted in length Herder's negative statements on the Kabbalah (2:188). It is no surprise that he also repudiated Hasidism whose representatives he called charlatans (2:209), relying heavily on the authority of an anti-Hasidic work that was written and circulated by the Galician *maskil* Joseph Perl.³⁴ But in spite of all his misgivings about Jewish mysticism, Beer was the first Jewish historian to recognize its significance for the development of Jewish religion.³⁵ No other historian in the early stages of modern Jewish historiography granted Jewish mysticism comparable prominence in a comprehensive history of Judaism.

Lengthy translations from the *Zohar*, the *Shivhei ha'Besht*, and other important texts by Jewish mystics provided the German reader for the first time with direct access to a variety of sources of Jewish mysticism. Beer's theories on the origin and development of Kabbalah, however, were not very original. Thus, for example, he uncritically accepted the medieval kabbalist view, which ascribed the authorship of the early mystical text, *Sefer yetsira*, to the talmudic sage Rabbi Akiba. In contrast to Graetz and other nineteenth-century historians, who viewed

the Kabbalah as a reaction against medieval rationalism, Beer traced its origins back to ancient times. He connected it with Philo of Alexandria and Neoplatonist philosophy in ancient Egypt. Such a view also can be found among Renaissance Jewish thinkers like Elijah del Medigo and Yehuda Messer Leon and more explicitly among seventeenth-century Italian-Jewish philosophers like Yehuda Aryeh of Modena and Simone Luzzatto. While granting the Kabbalah ancient origins, Beer denied it an originally Jewish character. Since Philo was influenced by Egyptian religion, the Kabbalah was Egyptian theology, fixed on the holy Scriptures and mixed with later ideas of Chaldeans, Persians and Greeks (2:188).

Beer was more original when it came to the description of modern messianic movements, such as the Sabbatians and the Frankists. Ever since Graetz accused Beer of sympathizing with Frankism, this statement has been widely believed and was quoted by other scholars. It is true that Beer's *Geschichte* was the first major attempt to describe the Frankist movement, which for a subsequent generation of scholars (especially Jost) served as the basis for their treatment of Frankism and which still constitutes an important source for the existence of the sect in early nineteenth-century Bohemia. It is also obvious that Beer did not share Graetz's and other historians' vehement anti-Frankist polemics. He himself stood in close personal contact with some Frankists in Prague and described them in a positive light: The author has only good and kind words . . . to say on the character of the adherents of this sect. However, it would be misleading to conclude that he identified or sympathized with Frankism. He occasionally calls Frank an actor and the story of his life a comedy, and he refers to the ideology of the sect as madness (2:340). Whatever his personal opinions, in most of his description of Frankism, Beer attempted to be a neutral observer who publishes whatever sources are available to him. It seems rather accidental that his description of the Sabbatians

relies heavily on Jacob Emden's anti-Sabbatian polemic, *Torat ha-kena'ot*, while in his treatment of the Frankists he filled over fifty pages with excerpts of Frankist epistles. What seemed to readers like Graetz a positive treatment of the Frankists was not the result of Beer's conscious attempt to present the sect in bright colors but of the rather accidental aspect of the sources available to him. In addition, Beer may have felt a stronger need to strike against mainstream rabbinic Judaism than against the Frankists.

³⁶ The reason was rather pragmatic, considering the numerical strength of what he called the Rabbanites and whom he held responsible for the deterioration of the Jewish religion, as compared to the negligible force of the Frankists.

The Pure Mosaic Religion

After rejecting all extant Jewish sects as deviations from the original idea of Judaism, Beer offered his own alternative the return to a pure Mosaic religion. Pure Mosaism was, in his view, the Jewish *Urreligion*, from which all present and

former Jewish sects derived, a notion that should be seen in the broader context of ideas to reform the Jewish religion in the nineteenth century.

It was one of the main tasks of the emerging Reform movement to disprove the common Christian belief that Judaism was a static phenomenon, long since dead, an anachronism in modern times a conception shared by such different German thinkers as Lessing, Kant, Hegel, and Schleiermacher.

37 Most representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* presented a different concept of Judaism; one that showed it as capable of gradual progress. Influenced more by the emerging historical thought among non-Jews than by the Haskalah movement, they regarded Judaism as steadily changing. The fathers of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* were the first to follow this course of historicization of Judaism. According to them, all Jewish sources, biblical as well as talmudic, could be understood only in their historical context. In one of their first manifestos, *Über den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judentums* (1822), Immanuel Wolf expressed this view of a progressive improvement of the grasp of the religious idea. Wolf and other scholars were followed by the early reformers, most notable among them Abraham Geiger with his concept of an evolving Judaism.

Another stream, represented by Samuel Holdheim, offered the more radical concept of restoration. For them the ideal content of Judaism was present from Mosaic times and had to serve as its basis beyond any historical considerations. The idea of Judaism, according to this school of thought, was fixed once and forever from the beginning. Its reinterpretation therefore did not mean gradual progress, built on historical precedents, but restoration of the original idea in new forms.³⁸ Beer was a forerunner of the second concept, propagating the

return to an ancient golden age (2:412). For him the Mosaic religion represented the original religion of the first man, which was mainly a religion of the mind and of the heart (1:211).

The combination of Beer's two main ideas, the concept of Jewish sects and the goal to return to an *Urreligion*, had no roots in Jewish historiography. Instead, one has to turn to church historiography and in particular to one of its major representatives, the German Pietist mystic and historian Gottfried Arnold, to find a model for such an approach. Arnold's four-volume *Unpartheiysche Kirchen-und Ketzerhistorie* (1699/1700),³⁹ one of the most important writings of early modern church history, is based on an ideal that its author had already expressed in his 1696 work *Die erste Liebe der Gemeinen Jesu Christi, das ist wahre Abbildung der ersten Christen*, namely, the spiritualized *Urkirche*, analogous to Beer's *Urreligion*, pure Mosaism. The first and unfailingly pure community, Arnold argued, could not only be traced back to the past, but must also be the ideal to be constructed in the future.⁴⁰

Although Friedrich Meinecke saw in Arnold one of the forerunners of historicism, he noted that the idea of historical development was still absent in Arnold's concept.⁴¹ This also holds true for Beer. And Arnold's biographer, Erich Seeberg, who primarily understood his subject as an unhistorical mystic, wrote: The church historian Arnold neglects history as well as the church.⁴² Arnold's work

was not characterized by a secular, scientific analysis but deeply rooted in his theological framework. He was the first historian to write a church history not from the perspective of one particular denomination. Always keeping his *Urkirche* ideal in mind, he described all of the Christian sects impartially by rejecting all of them as deviations from the right path. So did Beer one hundred years later with all Jewish sects. Arnold broke with the traditional description of church history while still identifying with a theological ideology. He could do so because he was ready to leave the identification with *one* of the various Christian sects and confessions. It makes no fundamental difference that the ground on which Arnold stood was a mystical Pietism, while Beer identified with the antimystical Reform movement. Both positions forced their representatives to argue against the then prevailing streams within their religions.

One significant difference remains, however, and this concerns the impact of both works. While Arnold's work played an influential role in the development of church historiography (and beyond it), Beer's *Geschichte* remained practically without any impact on Jewish historiography. Writing a hundred years after Arnold, his semisecular form of historiography had long since been superseded by new historical approaches, which directly influenced the fathers of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and modern Jewish historiography without the need of mediators such as Beer.

There can be little doubt that although Beer was the first Jew to write a comprehensive history of Judaism, he was not a modern historian with regard to his methodology. And yet, despite the obvious shortcomings of Beer's analysis of the past, which make him appear a rather pale precursor to the luminaries of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the very selection of his sources renders his work more relevant to the interests of modern readers than some of the more scholarly presentations of Jewish religion among his contemporaries and

successors.

What went on in the cellar was scrupulously avoided, Gershom Scholem remarked in his polemical résumé of nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. These scholars considered only the intellectual relations in the salon: the Bible and Luther, Hermann Cohen and Kant, Steinthal and Wilhelm von Humboldt. They took no notice of the fact that in the most diverse areas exactly the same relations existed in the basement.

⁴³ Scholem referred to the apologetic agenda of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholars, who, with Immanuel Wolf, hoped that scientific knowledge of Judaism must decide on the merits and demerits of the Jews, their fitness or unfitness to be given the same status and respect as other citizens.⁴⁴ The basement—the history of the lower classes and criminals, of false messiahs and charlatans—had to be excluded in such an approach. Peter Beer, who considered all postbiblical interpretations of Judaism as equally corrupt, dealt at length with some of those issues and characters and became the first modern chronicler of one of the greatest Jewish charlatans, Jacob Frank.

While we have to acknowledge that Beer was among the first Jewish scholars to enter the basement of the building of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, we also have to recognize the enormous gap that separated his approach from that of

Scholem in the twentieth century. Beer not only lacked a clearly developed concept and the tools of modern critical scholarship but also a particular motive that made him turn to the study of Kabbalah. In his attempt to reconstruct the whole building, he stumbled into the basement rather accidentally. Beer and his nineteenth-century successors, who wrote about Jewish mysticism, never intended to lift the basement out of the shadow of the salon. Only more than a century after Beer's writings, Scholem himself would be able to transform the basement into one of the building's major attractions.

Notes

My first encounter with Peter Beer was also my first encounter with Yosef Yerushalmi as a teacher and guide through and past my student years. It was in his graduate seminar on Karaism that Professor Yerushalmi suggested to me to write an essay on Beer's view of Jewish history. I still remember fondly the long and lively discussion in his home following my paper. His interest and encouragement have served as an inspiration for my scholarly work ever since, and I could think of nothing more appropriate for this Festschrift in honor of Professor Yerushalmi than to return to the topic of my first paper as a graduate student at Columbia University. I would like to express my gratitude to Michael A. Meyer, Lois Dubin, and Vera Leininger for their careful reading of earlier drafts of this article.

1. *Lebensgeschichte des Peter Beer*, ed. Moritz Herrmann (Prague, 1839), 1.
2. *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 2 (1853): 226. The author is anonymous, but his many remarks about Beer's manner of instruction make him sound like one of Beer's pupils.
3. Jost, *Ceschichte des Judenthums und seiner Sekten* (Leipzig, 1859)

3:365.

4. Ismar Schorsch, Scholarship in the Service of Reform, in *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, N.H., 1995), 304.

5. A full-length study of Peter Beer is still a desideratum. While there is no literature on Beer specifically in English, two essays in French and Hebrew are dedicated to his life and work: Vladimir Sadek and Jirina Sedinová, Peter Beer (1758-1838): Penseur éclairé de la vieille ville juive de Prague, *Judaica Bohemias*, 13 (1977): 728; and Reuven Michael, Peter Beer ba'al ha'monografia ha-rishona 'al ha-kitot be'am yisra'el, *Divre hakongres ha-olami ha-teshi'i le-mada'e ha-yahadut* (Jerusalem, 1986), 18, and most recently, Roland Goetschel, Peter Beers Blick auf die Kabbala, in *Kabbala und Romantik*, ed. Eveline Goodman-Thau et al. (Tübingen, 1994), 293-306. See also Michael's comprehensive study, *Haketiva ha-historit ha-yehudit me-ha-renesans 'ad ha-'et hahadasha* (Jerusalem, 1993), 155-67, and Reuven Fahn, *Kitve Reuven Fahn* (Stanislav, 1937) 2:148-53.

6. Michael A. Meyer, The Emergence of Modern Jewish Historiography: Motives and Motifs, *History and Theory*, 27 (1988): 165, n. 13.

7. Heinrich Graetz, Frank und die Frankisten. Eine Sekten-Geschichte aus der letzten Hälfte des vorigen Jahrhunderts (Breslau, 1868), 3.

8. See, for example, Gershom Scholem, Ein verschollener Mystiker der Aufklärungszeit: E. N. Hirschfeld, *Year Book of the Leo Baeck Institute* 7 (1962): 247-78.

9. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York, 1989), 83. For a recent perspective on Haskalah historiography, see Shmuel Feiner, *Haskala ve-historia: toldot ha-shel hakarat-avar yehudit modenit* (Jerusalem, 1995).

10. Reuven Michael, Trumat ketav ha-et 'Sulamith' la-historiografia ha-yehudit hahadasha, Zion 39 (1974): 86-113. See also David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1940* (New York, 1987), 79-104.

11. *Lebensgeschichte*, 8. There exists some confusion about the date of his birth. While most sources (including his *Lebensgeschichte*) mention 1758, he once gave the date 1764. See *Sulamith*, 3 (1810): 249.
12. *Leben und Wirken des Rabbi Moses ben Maimon* (Prague, 1834). For a critical review by Abraham Dernburg, see *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für Jüdische Theologie* (1835): 97-123, 210-24, 414-27.
13. The edition available to me lacks the frontispiece but contains a description of the picture. See also Sadek and Sedinová, Peter Beer, 16.
14. On Sonnenfels, who was baptized in his early childhood, see Robert A. Kann, *A Study in Austrian Intellectual History from late Baroque to Romanticism* (New York, 1960), 146-258.
15. Already by the year 1787 there existed 25 *Normalschulen* or *Trivialschulen* in Bohemia and 42 in Moravia. See Kestenberg-Gladstein, *Neuere Ceschichte der Juden in den büohmischen Lündern* (Tübingen, 1969), 1:50. The term *Normalschule* in the Habsburg Empire included all modern types of schools; *ibid.*, 39, n. 18.
16. The information in the *Jüdisches Lexikon*, 1:786, that Beer wrote *Toldot Israel* in the year 1785 for the instruction of his son is wrong. He did indeed write the book for the instruction of his son, but his son was not yet born in 1785, however. The publication date of 1810, mentioned by Hillel Kieval in connection with the introduction of Hebrew lessons at the Prague *Normalschule* in 1809, refers to the second edition of the work. See *Sulamith* 3 (1810): 250, and Hillel Kieval, Caution's Progress: The Modernization of Jewish Life in Prague, 1780-1830, in *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish*

Model, ed. Jacob Katz (New Brunswick, N.J., 1987), 97. The Russian translation of *Toldot Israel* appeared in the fifth edition in the year 1883. See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 3:1230.

17. Beer, *Dath Israel oder das Judenthum. Versuch einer Darstellung aller wesentlichen Glaubens-, Sitten-und Ceremoniallehren der jetzigen Juden* (Prague, 1810), 123.

18. Frantisek Roubík, Drei Beiträe zur Entwicklung der Judenemanzipation in Böhmen, *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der C.S.R.* 5 (1933): 316 f.

19. See Frantisek Roubík, Von den Anfängen des Vereins für Verbesserung des israelitischen Kultus in Böhmen, *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der C.S.R.* 9 (1938): 411-47. Among the various reform activities of Beer was the writing of a pamphlet in defense of the Hungarian reformer, Aaron Chorin. See Leopold Loew, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Szegedin, 1890; reprint, Hildesheim, 1979), 2:336.

20. *Sulamith* 1 (1806): 263-84, 352-72.

21. Kestenbergl-Gladstein, *Neuere Geschichte der Juden*, 200.

22. Both Jacob Katz and Hillel Kieval expressed legitimate reservations about the second assumption. See Katz, introduction to *Toward Modernity*, 6; Kieval, *Caution's Progress*, 88.

23. Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988), 153.

24. Julius Fürst, *Geschichte des Karäerthums bis 900 der gewöhnlichen Zeitrechnung* (Leipzig, 1862), 1:4.

25. So nennt man doch auch alle, die der Lehre Christi folgen, trotz ihrer Zerfallungen in Katholiken, Lutheraner etc. Christen, und jene, welche die Lehre Mohameds annehmen, abgesehen von ihrer Teilung in Sunnithen und Schyiten, mit dem gemeinschaftlichen Namen

Mohamedaner (1:9). The use of the terms Jews, Israelites, and Mosaites, among *maskilim*, early reformers, and representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, followed no general rules. Beer usually rejected the term Jew, but he used it in the title of his *Ceschichte*. In spite of his rejection of the term Israelite the journal *Sulamith* replaced the expression J¨:udische Nation in its subtitle to Israeliten after its 1810 edition.

26. One should note, however, the difference in Beer's and Jost's titles: while Beer spoke of a history of the religious sects of the Jews, Jost called his work a History of Judaism *and* Its Sects.

27. On Basnage, see Myriam Yardeni, *New Concepts of Post-Commonwealth Jewish History in the Early Enlightenment: Bayle and Basnage*, in *Anti-Jewish Mentalities in Early Modern Europe* (Lanham, Md., 1990), 211-23.

28. *Quarterly Review* 38 (1828): 140.

29. The question of whether the existence of an allegedly Judaizing sect in Beer's hometown, as reported by Jaroslav Prokes, *Das Ghetto zu Neu-Bidschow und die sog: Sekte der Bidschower Israeliten um die Mitte des XVIII. Jahrhunderts*, *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der C.S.R.* 8 (1936): 147-308, shaped Beer's own sectarian perspective is raised by Reuven Michael, Peter Beer, 2. While this story is an interesting episode, there is no evidence of direct influence on Beer.

30. Beer, *Geschichte*, 1:5; also *Sulamith* 1 (1806): 266.

31. Beer, *Dath Israel*, 68.

32. On the relationship between early *maskilim* and the Talmud, see Moshe Pelli, *The Attitude of the First Maskilim in Germany towards the Talmud*, *Year Book of the Leo Baeck Institute* 27 (1982): 243-60.

33. Gerson Wolf, *Die Versuche zur Errichtung einer Rabbinerschule in üsterreich*, *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 5 (1892): 41.

34. See Avraham Rubinstein, *K'tav ha'yad 'al mahut kat ha'hasidim*, *Kiryath Sefer* 38 (1962): 263-73; 39 (1963): 117-36.

35. In the light of Beer's extensive treatment of the Kabbalah, Moshe Idel's remark that Nachman Krochmal and Meyer Heinrich Hirsch Landauer were the first two scholars to be interested in the world of the Kabbalah in the early nineteenth century should be viewed with caution. See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, Conn.,

1988), 7.

36. Reuven Michael, *Trumat ketav ha-et 'Sulamith'*, 92, misunderstood Zázek's remark on Beer, whom he calls a *Frankistenfreund*. Zázek obviously meant that Beer had friends among the Frankists, not that he himself was a friend of Frankism. He clearly states: Beer macht aber nirgends den Versuch, Franks Lehre und dessen Anhang zu verteidigen. See Zázek, *Zwei Beiträge zur Geschichte des Frankismus in den böhmischen Ländern in Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der C.S.R* 9 (1938): 390.

37. For a general survey on the reformers' reaction to this attitude, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 64 ff.

38. Ibid., 83.

39. *Unparteyische Kirchen-und Ketzerhistorie von Anfang des Neuen Testaments bis auff das Jahr Christi 1688* (Frankfurt am Main, 1699-1700).

40. See Hermann Doerries, *Geist und Geschichte bei Gottfried Arnold* (Göttingen, 1963), 32.

41. Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Munich, 1946), 47.

42. Erich Seeberg, *Gottfried Arnold, die Wissenschaft und die Mystik seiner Zeit: Studien zur Historiographie und Mystik* (Meerane i. Sa., 1923), 178.

43. The Science of Judaism Then and Now, in Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York, 1971), 309.

44. Immanuel Wolf, *Über den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, quoted in Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 84.

21

Hasidic Hagiography and Jewish Modernity

Ira Robinson

Rabbinic Judaism as it has developed historically is predicated upon a reciprocity between oral and written Torah. For rabbinic Jews over the centuries, the written Torah retained pride of place but the major emphasis in Torah study fairly consistently remained the corpus of the oral Torah—the literature created by the rabbis of late antiquity. The paradox was, of course, that this oral Torah was itself studied in written form. For rabbinic Jews, the writing down of the oral Torah was understood as a response to a perceived crisis in which the very continuity of the tradition was felt to be in jeopardy. Thus, Maimonides, dealing with the redaction of the Mishna, informs us: Why did our teacher, [Rabbi Judah] the saint, act so and not leave things as they were? Because he observed that the number of disciples was diminishing, fresh calamities were continually happening, the wicked government was extending its domain and Israelites were wandering and emigrating to distant countries. He therefore composed a work to serve as a handbook for all, the contents of which could be rapidly studied and not be forgotten.

¹ For Maimonides, crisis was involved as well in the edition of the *Gemara* as well as in the composition of Maimonides' halakhic summa itself.² In other words, it is a perception of crisis that is said to have compelled the transformation of previously oral material into written form.

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi has shown that a similar Jewish perception of crisis has been one of the spurs to the production of historical

works by Jews in the early modern period.³ Admittedly, these works still encompassed only a small portion of Jewish literary output. However, Amos Funkenstein has extended Yerushalmi's insight by making the point that with or without historiography proper, creative thinking about history past and present never ceased. Jewish culture was and remained formed by an acute historical *consciousness*, albeit different at different periods. Put differently, Jewish culture never took itself for granted.⁴

Building on these foundations, this article will examine, in a preliminary way, the nature of the hagiographical literature of Hasidic Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to achieve a better understanding of the dynamics of Hasidism in the context of modern Jewish history and life. It will be seen that Hasidic hagiography, which originated as oral Torah, was transformed into written form in a specific context which is important for our understanding of Hasidism and the nature of its conversation with Jewish modernity. For the Hasidic

movement, while certainly drawing upon premodern ideas and symbols, nonetheless must be understood within the context of modern Judaism.

5

The literature produced by Hasidic Jews is largely divisible into two categories: homiletical and hagiographical. Each of these genres has found its scholarly champions. Martin Buber, among others, has adopted and adapted Hasidic hagiographical literature to suit his purposes in creating a modern Judaic mode of discourse while Gershom Scholem has argued that it is in fact the movement's homiletical literature which can tell us more concerning its inner dynamics.⁶ Whatever the merits of this scholarly dispute, there is no denying that the hagiographical tales of the movement's leaders, the *tsadikim*, have a great deal to tell us concerning the movement and its dynamics.

But what, exactly, do these tales tell us? Answering that question requires us to pay close attention to the ways in which the Hasidic hagiographies are presented to their audiences. The first differentiation one must make is between oral and written presentation. Clearly, the presentation of Hasidic tales orally in a gathering of Hasidim is different in kind than the experience of reading Hasidic tales from a book.⁷ Just as clearly, the publication of Hasidic tales in printed form needs to be understood in its own context.

The original publication of Hasidic hagiographical tales, entitled *Shivhey haBesht*, in 1815, has been demonstrated by Moshe Rosman to have been a response to a contemporary crisis of Hasidic leadership.⁸ Later Hasidic hagiographical literature, which flourished in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth

centuries, must equally be understood in terms of the social and cultural milieu in which it was produced.

From the study of the printed Hasidic hagiographical literature, it is clear that after the publication of *Shivhey haBesht*, fully half a century passed with no significant publication of Hasidic tales. Only in the last third of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century did the publication of these tales come into their own.⁹ The period in which we see the mass publication of Hasidic tales is thus the period which witnessed a major struggle for the very soul of Eastern European Jewry. By the latter third of the nineteenth century, traditional Eastern European Judaism had decisively lost its virtual monopoly of Judaic expression. The Jewish modernist movement, the Haskalah, emerged at this point both strengthened and radicalized.¹⁰ New ideologies, advocating the suppression of Jewish particularity for the sake of a greater good, such as socialism, beckoned invitingly. Demographically, the Jews of Eastern Europe were increasingly moving from the small towns and villages in which nearly all of them had lived at the beginning of the nineteenth century to larger towns and cities. Even prior to the destruction caused by the First World War, the shtetl, and the pattern of essentially premodern Judaism that it represented, had largely become an historical memory.¹¹

But it was a historical memory worth fighting for. In any analysis of this fight, we must bear in mind Eric Hobsbawm's insight that the conditions of the period 1870-1914, a time of the overthrow of so many premodern patterns of life through-

out Europe, also witnessed a widespread invention, even mass-production of traditions.

¹² One of the claimants to the inheritance of premodern Judaism was the nascent modern literature written by nineteenth-century Eastern European Jews in Yiddish and Hebrew. The goal of this literature was clear: to portray the traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe with its faults as well as its virtues as something in the past to which they, the modernists, possessed the keys. Dan Miron perceived that the reality projected by the *Kasrilvke* stories [of Sholom Aleikhem] was a poetic construct and differed in important ways from the historical reality.¹³ Despite this, contemporaries of the fathers of modern Yiddish literature nonetheless sought to assert that their works knew all that needed knowing with respect to the shtetl. They did this despite the fact that, as Miron observes:

The average reader could have known that these novels hardly touched upon some of the most significant phenomena and trends in nineteenth century Eastern European Jewish history. For instance, Abramovitsh's novels had almost nothing to say about Hasidism and the Hasidic way of life, in spite of the fact that the Ukrainian shtetl society upon which the writer focussed was largely dominated by Hasidism. The novels do not so much as mention either the Habad or the Musar movement. For that matter, the entire rabbinical tradition of learning and legal exegesis receives very little attention.

The reason for this lapse, as Miron posits, is that:

The critics, as well as the readers were ready to believe in an omniscient Mendele and in his allegedly exhaustive coverage of the historical shtetl not because they did not know better but because they shared a compelling cultural need for such a belief. They needed to think that their literary masters had immortalized that premodern, preurbanized Jewish way of life which they, as members of the modernized Jewish intelligentsia, had

abandoned. They wanted the works of the masters to preserve the world they had lost, but also to justify their betrayal.¹⁴

In the face of the challenge posed by representatives of Jewish modernism in its various guises, spokesmen for traditional Judaism had to counter in ways they had not had to previously. One of the ways in which the new conditions of modernity were recognized was adumbrated by Rabbi Israel Salanter in the creation of the Mussar movement among the *mitnagdim*.¹⁵ Yet another way this was done, within the Hasidic sphere of influence, involved the creation of the literary genre of the Hasidic tale. It is not happenstance that the Hasidic tale, speaking of the heroism and wondrous powers of the *tsaddikim*, shifted from a basically oral to a literary form at precisely the time and place in which the literary challenge to the prerogatives of traditional Jewish life had been raised. While, as Ruth Wisse states in her wonderful evocation of the work of I. L. Peretz, Hasidic tales were nothing new,¹⁶ as a genre of *printed* literature they were quite new as any of Peretz's Hasidic stories. They were being brought to the printing press at the very same time that Peretz's Hasidic sketches were appearing. Thus, both modern Hebrew/Yiddish literature and the Hasidic hagiographical literature were meant to strengthen the cases of the modernists and the traditionalists respectively to represent the authentic spokesmen for the Jewish past.

On the Hasidic side, there were those who were exquisitely aware of the challenges inherent in modernist literature. An example is Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg (1859-1935)

17 who, writing in Warsaw in 1905, stated: We see, on account of our many sins, that books of heresy are increasing in these times and their purchasers are many. They almost hunt for souls to their destruction in that they beautify their books with all sorts of loveliness. Especially these books are written in a clear and easy language while the holy books which are filled with the splendor of the light of the holy Torah are relegated to a corner¹⁸ He further saw that the times when traditional literary genres were adequate to the task had passed: The books of Hasidic doctrine [*hasidut*] speak only to the hasidim and books of morality [*mussar*] which speak of hellfire ... have none seeking them out.¹⁹ A Warsaw contemporary, Rabbi Shlomo Halpern (d. 1935) expressed himself similarly in 1902: The youth, members of the new generation, have thrown the Torah and the fire of religion in back of them. All things holy are a derision to them. They gaze only at the [literary] products of the gentiles.²⁰ There were certainly many within the Hasidic community, then and now, who worried lest the desire to combat the modernists' belles lettres might open the door to an Orthodox belles lettres, little different from that of the modernists. Thus, Mintz reports: Hasidim continue to regard printed stories as usually amended in some way according to the editor's personal whim. Some contemporary Rebbes caution their followers not to read any of the printed legends since they contain falsehoods and serve only to cause doubt and confuse the mind.²¹ Others felt the need for censorship of these tales on account of the freethinkers among the Jews [*perutsei 'amenu*].²² Still others asserted the need for a decisive literary counterblow,²³ or for the establishment of a Hasidic journalism,²⁴ or even something resembling a Hasidic historiography.²⁵

To describe this Hasidic counterblow in the detail it deserves would necessitate a study extending far beyond the scope of this article. However, three salient examples, taken from the printed Hasidic hagiographical literature, will serve to illustrate some of the major issues addressed by this literature. They will also, it is hoped, demonstrate that such a lengthy, detailed study is an important desideratum.

The first example is a prophecy attributed to R. Aryeh Leib, the grandfather (*zeide*) of Shpole.²⁶ It is taken from R. Yudel Rosenberg's book of tales about R. Aryeh Leib, entitled *Tiferet Maharel* mi-Shpole: What we do on earth is 'photographed' and preserved in heaven with live action [*hayyut utenua*]. Know that in the future on earth men will be able to make such a miracle to make photographs which have motion and sound and to record what happens at that time even after hundreds of years [have passed]. Men will also be able to hear each other thousands of miles apart.²⁷

The second is taken from a book published in the same year, 1912, and is placed in the mouth of R. Jacob Isaac of Pryszyca:

When a Jew innovates in the interpretation of the Torah in the fear of God, it is written in the Holy Zohar that of this [novel interpretation] new heavens are made. However if one innovates [in Torah] with an admixture of pride and other bad and impure traits, then a

vain firmament results, while the spiritual intellect in [these vain interpretations] wanders and goes to England. From this intellect is made wondrous engines, machines [mekhonos niflaos mashinen}. [Jacob Isaac] then said concerning one book written by a prominent scholar [gadol] of his generation that of the novel interpretations in the book, a wondrous machine in England would result.

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Finally, R. Menahem Mendel of Kotsk is said to have stated regarding the year 5600 (1840) as a messianic year: If [the Jews] repent, then it will certainly be [a messianic year]. If, however, they do not, then [in its place] the sciences of the nations will expand in medicine and natural science. So it was that the science of telegraphs and telephone and their like were discovered.²⁹

All three examples cited above deal with various aspects of the scientific and technological advances of nineteenth century Western civilization, relating them to the teaching of the Hasidic masters. For our purposes, it is not relevant to inquire whether the statements attributed to these Hasidic masters were actually said by them. This is as impossible to ascertain with absolute certainty as any attributed statement in traditional Jewish literature.³⁰ What is important from our perspective is that these three statements, and others like them that could be culled from the Hasidic hagiographical literature,³¹ respond to what must have been one of the most important arguments to have been hurled at adherents of traditional Judaism in Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—the argument that the enormous strides in science, technology, and industry that marked the nineteenth century in Europe proved the superiority of the modernists and their arguments. Progress was on the side of the modernists, while the traditionalists had been left behind by the march of civilization.

One of the Hasidic responses to this challenge took the form of these stories. Hasidic rebbes in these stories were not at all surprised by the development of the industrial revolution in England, or by the invention of the telegraph, the telephone, motion pictures, and sound recording. On the contrary, they knew all about it. They knew, moreover, that the ultimate source of the powerful new technologies that dazzled the late-nineteenth-century world were in fact the same forces that propelled the traditional Jewish world—the Torah forces that they claimed to control. Nineteenth-century technology may have been Torah gone astray, but at least it was nothing the rebbes had not heard of and could not ultimately control. They were thus very much in charge of things in the here and now.³²

It stands to reason, therefore, that the phenomenon we are observing constitutes a tremendously important Hasidic strategy. On the one hand, the corpus of hagiographical tales as a whole could be construed as an antidote to modernist literature, putting into the marketplace of ideas that was late-nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish street a truth claim to counter the truth claims of Hebrew/Yiddish modernist literature to constitute the last word on the reality of the shtetl's past. This truth claim, of course, sought to demonstrate the ongoing power of the *tsaddikim* as opposed to the modernists' view that they belonged to a past that had been left behind.³³ With a majority even of traditional Jews living no more in the shtetl but rather in large cities like Warsaw or Lodz, centers of

modern technology, or even in smaller towns that had been decisively touched by these new inventions, the assertion that science and traditional lore were not antithetical but actually came from the same traditional sources was a position that reflected the dynamics of the contemporary modernist-traditionalist debate among Eastern European Jews.

³⁴ Indeed, it can be demonstrated that this traditionalist Jewish response to the challenges of nineteenth-century science can be paralleled in responses of other contemporary religious traditions, such as Hinduism and Islam, to the very same sort of challenge.³⁵

Second, this literature could be construed as a form of testimonial literature that served to strengthen the adherence of members of the Hasidic group to their own group. As William Shaffir has observed concerning contemporary Hasidism, in a sociological sense, witnessing serves to reinforce the distinctive identity both at the individual and community levels.³⁶

Finally, it must be said that the Hasidic hagiographical literature speaks to us concerning the dialogue Hasidic Jews have engaged in with modernity. While undoubtedly Hasidim have overtly rejected much of what modernity has stood for; nonetheless, they remain in what has been for them a fruitful dialogue with the modern, urban world, which has enabled them to survive and even flourish as a community.³⁷

Notes

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of my student, Michael Samuel, in the gathering of material for this article and to the General Research Fund of Concordia University for providing a grant that aided research for this article.

1. Moses b. Maimon, introduction to *Mishneh Torah in A Maimonides Reader*, ed. Isadore Twersky (New York, 1972), 36.
2. Ibid., 37-39. Cf. Salo Baron, *The Historical Outlook of Maimonides*, in *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia, 1964), 109-63.
3. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982), 60.
4. Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), 1011.
5. Cf. Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1972), 231ff.
6. Michael Oppenheim, *The Meaning of Hasidut: Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 49 (1986): 411-23. Cf. Morris Faierstein, *Gershom Scholem and Hasidism*, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38 (1987): 221-33.
7. On orality among Hasidim, see Jerome Mintz, *Legends of the Hasidim: An Introduction to Hasidic Culture and Oral Tradition in the New World* (Chicago, 1968).
8. Moshe Rosman, *The History of a Historical Source: On the Editing of Shivhei haBesht* (in Hebrew), *Zion* 58 (1993): 175-214. Cf. Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov [Shivehi haBesht]: The Earliest Collection of Legends about the Founder of Hasidism* (Bloomington, Ind., 1970).
9. Yosef Dan, *Ha-sippur ha-hasidi* (Jerusalem, 1975); Gedaliah Nigal, *The Hasidic Tale: Its History and Topics* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1981); Khone Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature: Aspects of Its History* (in Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv, 1978), 198ff. Cf. Ira Robinson, *The*

Zaddik as Hero in Hasidic Historiography, in *Crisis and Reaction: The Hero in Jewish History*, ed. Menahem Mor (Omaha, Neb., 1995), 93-103.

10. Cf. Michael Stanislawsky, *For Whom Do I Toil?* Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry (New York, 1988).
11. Cf. David Roskies, S. Ansky and the Paradigm of Return, in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York, 1992).
12. Eric Hobsbawm, Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (Cambridge, 1983).
13. Dan Miron, The Literary Image of the Shtetl, *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (spring, 1995), 4.
14. Ibid., 78.
15. Cf. Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth* (Philadelphia, 1993).
16. Ruth Wisse, *The I. L. Peretz Reader* (New York, 1990), xxi.
17. On Rosenberg, see Eli Yassif, Yudel Rozenberg: Sofer 'Ammami,' in Yudel Rosenberg, *Ha-golem mi-Prag u-ma'asim nifla'im aherim* (Jerusalem, 1991); Ira Robinson, Literary Forgery and Hasidic Judaism: The Case of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg, *Judaism* 40 (1991): 61-78.
18. Yudel Rosenberg, *Zohar Torah* (New York, 1924), 1:9.
19. Yudel Rosenberg, *Derekh erets*, manuscript in the possession of Mrs. Abraham I. Rosenberg, Savannah, Georgia, 3.
20. Shlomo Halpern, *Homat ha-dat vеха-emuna* (Piotrkow, 1902; new

edition, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1962), 3. Cf. Tzvi Rabinowicz, *Chassidic Rebbes: From the Baal Shem Tov to Modern Times* (Southfield, Mich. and Spring Valley, N.Y., 1989), 238.

21. Mintz, *Legends of the Hasidim*, 6. For an example of this attitude, see Raphael Blum, *Mikhtav*, preface to Immanuel Hai Ricci, *Mishnat hasidim* (Brooklyn, N.Y., 1975). Cf. Jiri Langer, *Nine Gates to the Hasidic Mysteries* (New York, 1961), 23.

22. *Tiferet ha-yehudi*, 3a.

23. Mendel Piekartz, *Ideological Trends of Hasidism in Poland during the Interwar Period and the Holocaust* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1990), 104. Cf. Rabinowicz, *Chassidic Rebbes*, 195; Ada Rapoport-Albert, *Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism*, *History and Theory*, 27 (1988): 156.

24. Rabinowicz, *Chassidic Rebbes*, 163. Ehud Luz comments on the fact that apparently only one Hasidic rebbe subscribed to the periodical *ha-tsefira*, whereas many Lithuanian rabbis were readers of newspapers. *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement* (Philadelphia, 1988), 299, n. 33.

25. Rapoport-Albert *Hagiography*, 129.

26. On R. Aryeh Leib, known primarily for his steadfast opposition to Nahman of Bratslav, see Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (University, Alabama, 1979), 100-15.

27. Yudel Rosenberg, *Tiferet ha-Meharel mi-Shpola* (Piotrkow, 1912), 6l.

28. *Sefer Tiferet ha-yehudi* (Piotrkow, 1912), 1819.

29. *Sefer siah sarfei kodesh* (n.p, n.d.), 1:64.

30. On this question, particularly as applied to rabbinic literature, Jacob Neusner has commented at length. See, e.g., *Judaism and*

Scripture: The Evidence of Leviticus Rabba (Chicago, 1986), pt. 1.

31. Nahman of Bratslav was particularly conscious of the challenges of science and technology to traditional Judaism. See Aryeh Kaplan, *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* (New York, 1973), 154f, 361, 363.

32. Cf. Ira Robinson, The Uses of the Hasidic Story: Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg and His Tales of the Greiditzer Rebbe, *Journal of the Society of Rabbis in Academia* (nos. 1-2) (1990):17-25.

33. Ira Robinson, The Zaddik as Hero, 99-100.
34. Cf. Ira Robinson, Kabbala and Science in *Sefer ha-Berit, Modern Judaism* 9 (1989), 275-88. On some contemporary rabbinic reactions in the Sephardic world, cf. Zvi Zohar, Teguvot Hilkatiot le-Modernizatsia, 1882-1918, in Jacob Landau, ed., *Toledot yehudei mitsrayim be-tekufat ha-othmanit (1517-1914)* (Jerusalem, 1988), 577-608.
35. See Leslie MacGregor, A Critical Study of the Relationship between Science and Advaita Vedanta as Understood by Svami Vivekananda, master's thesis, Concordia University, 1995. Cf. Yakov Rabkin, Conceptual Issues in the History of Science in Nonwestern Societies, in *Transfer of Science and Technology to the Muslim World*, ed. E. Ihsanoglu (Istanbul, 1992), 59-66.
36. William Shaffir, Safeguarding a Distinctive Identity: Hasidic Jews in Montreal, in *Renewing Our Days: Montreal Jews in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Ira Robinson and Mervin Butovsky (Montreal, 1995), 88.
37. Menahem Friedman, Haredim Confront the Modern City, in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, ed. Peter Medding (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), 2:74-96.

22

Léon Halévy and Modern French Jewish Historiography

Aron Rodrigue

The Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs modernes by the young litterateur Léon Halévy in 1828 is the first general postbiblical history of the Jews written by a French Jew. This work has been noted only in passing by historians of French Jewry in the nineteenth century

¹ and has been absent in discussions of Jewish historical writing in the modern period. *The Résumé* is not scholarly and clearly lacks the Hebraic textual command of the works of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the movement for the scientific study of Judaism and the Jewish past that emerged in Germany at the same time.² Nevertheless, it is of great interest for the light it throws on the emergence and evolution of a modern French Jewish historical narrative, a narrative whose distinctiveness has been obscured by the hegemonic place of *Wissenschaft* in the studies on the emergence of modern Jewish historiography.

The pre-*Wissenschaft* *Résumé* reveals the historical vision that emerged out of the crucible of the French revolution and emancipation, and prefigures and indeed formulates for the very first time some of the fundamental themes of what was to become the standard Franco-Jewish historiosophy in the second half of the nineteenth century. While the wealth of data that was produced by *Wissenschaft* was marshaled in later histories by French Jewish scholars such as those of Moïse Schwab,³ Elie-Aristide Astruc,⁴ James Darmesteter,⁵ and Théodore Reinach,⁶ their configuration remained broadly within the paradigm elaborated by the approach of

Halévy, which was shaped by a universalist teleological perspective pointing to the centrality of emancipation and citizenship as granted to the Jews during the French Revolution.

Léon Halévy was the eldest son of the *maskil* Elie Halphen Halévy, who was born in Fürth in Germany, grew up in Würzburg, and emigrated to France shortly before 1789 and who was to become famous for his Hebrew hymn *HaShalom*, commemorating French victories under Napoleon and the treaty of Lunéville of 1801.⁷ Deeply involved in communal affairs, Elie Halévy was one of the founders in 1818 of the first Jewish newspaper in French, *L'Israélite français*, which, while short-lived, was influential in expressing the voice of *maskilic* Judaism in France. The newspaper appeared at the time of the debate over the renewal of the Infamous Decree instituted by Napoleon and folded within a year

once the decree had been allowed to lapse. Elie Halévy also wrote the first catechism for Jewish children in Hebrew and French, *Limudei Dat U-Musar* (1820), which was used by Jewish schools until the middle of the nineteenth century.

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Léon Halévy, like his brother Fromental, who was to have a spectacular career as a composer of operas,⁹ took his father's cultural and political stance much further, acculturating completely and reaching the very top of the Parisian scene as a translator of some of the major works of the classics, as a popularizer of French literature, and as the author of numerous pieces of drama and of librettos.¹⁰ However, this move toward the center of French intellectual life was by no means assured during Léon's youth. In spite of being educated at the prestigious Lycée Charlemagne and obtaining the first prize in rhetoric, Halévy could not gain admission to the Ecole Normale Supérieure because of antisemitism. Instead, he taught rhetoric as an auxiliary teacher in various lycées in the following years and published a five volume translation of the *Odes* by Horace in 1822. He was to obtain a variety of teaching, curatorship, and civil service jobs only after the establishment of the liberal July Monarchy in 1830.¹¹

The Restoration years that preceded the latter were difficult ones for an ambitious young Jew. While the Infamous Decree had been allowed to lapse, the Catholic revival, the political domination of the country by the reactionary Ultras, and the accession to the throne in 1824 of Charles X, who was closely associated to the latter camp, could not but put into question the newly acquired position of Jews as equal citizens.¹² Indeed, many of the questions about the regeneration of the Jews that had been aired in the 1780s resurfaced during those

years when the reactionary thought of De Maistre and De Bonald set much of the terms of debate about politics and culture in general. Several books hostile to the Jews appeared.¹³ Essay contests by learned societies about Jews and their culture became popular again. In 1821, the Académie Royale des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres held a contest for the best study on the history of Jews of France, Spain, and Italy in the Middle Ages, to be followed four years later by another essay contest held by the Société des Sciences, Agriculture et Arts of Strasbourg on the best means to enable the Jewish population of Alsace to enjoy the benefits of civilization and to investigate whether the causes that estrange the members that compose this population from society are at all the product of superstitious practices and of the obstinacy to persevere in the ancient customs that the times and changes in the political situation should have modified.¹⁴ Many of the participants in these contests defended the liberal cause by producing the sort of cautiously positive and yet critical studies on Jews, past and present, in the vein made famous by Abbé Grégoire prior to the revolution while others remained much more hostile.

In this climate which put upward mobility and acceptance for Jews into question, it is not surprising to find Léon Halévy gravitating to Saint-Simonian circles. Like other young acculturated Jews, such as Isaac Pereire, Eugène and Olinde Rodrigues, and Gustave d'Eichtal, Halévy was attracted by the emphasis on justice, reason, and science that was at the core of the thought of Saint-Simon,

promising a neutral society with the advent of a new universalism that would incorporate all that was lofty in the Jewish and Christian traditions.

¹⁵ Halévy met Saint-Simon in the last two years of the thinker's life and soon became very close to him, acting as his personal secretary and indeed giving the eulogy at his funeral in 1825. He also took over the editorship of the Saint-Simonian newspaper *Le Producteur*. The subsequent cultlike quasi-mystical religious turn given to Saint-Simonianism by Prosper Enfantin split the followers of the dead master, with many leaving the movement, a path taken by Halévy himself in 1826.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the Saint-Simonian episode appears as particularly significant for the brief but intense involvement with Jewish themes on the part of Léon Halévy. The Jewish followers all found validation in Saint-Simon's highlighting of the role played by biblical Jews in the introduction of the basic principles of law, government, justice, and rationality to humanity. While Saint-Simon appeared to highlight the universalization of these principles through the advent of Christianity, the Jewish Saint-Simonians continued to emphasize the early Jewish contribution while accepting primitive Christianity as incarnating the core of these very ideals, ideals that had been abandoned by the medieval and modern church.¹⁷

It was within this perspective that Halévy published his first book on a Jewish topic, the *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs anciens*, a history of the Jews until the destruction of the Second Temple, which appeared first in 1825. Halévy was not the first Jew to publish on biblical themes in French after the emancipation. Joseph Salvador had already done so in 1822, with his *Loi de Moïse ou système religieux et politique des Hébreux*, a work that had views about Judaism and

Christianity similar to those adopted by the Jewish Saint-Simonians.¹⁸ Halévy used Salvador's text extensively,¹⁹ and like him, Moses the perfect legislator, whose laws were eternal ones that ruled human conscience,²⁰ is at the center of his narrative. Moses represented the highest achievement of the genius of the Hebrews. While Halévy refers frequently to God, his text is stripped as much as possible of divine intervention and of miracles. In good Enlightenment fashion, Abraham divines the existence of a superior being.²¹ Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by a volcanic eruption, and Lot's wife was overcome by the sulphuric fumes that accompanied them.²² The parting of the Red Sea was in fact the result of a low tide²³ Similar rationalist scientific explanations for revelation and miracles abound throughout the book. This is not a sacred history but most empathically a secular one.

A republican thread runs through Halévy's book. According to him, [t]he government of Israel, as it was constituted by Moses, was a republic with a king; but this king was God.²⁴ No other legislation combined more judiciously than that of Moses the means to establish and assure the absolute equality of citizens.²⁵ The situation deteriorated with the emergence of royalty, which, in a pointed dig at reactionary French royalist thought, Halévy characterizes as having a tendency to degenerate into tyranny, and was actually the creation of the people rather than the emanation from divine grace.²⁶ The conjunctural context

of the accession to the throne of the reactionary Charles X is unmistakable in many of these formulations. Indeed, the Jewish Saint-Simonian emphasis on the centrality of the Hebrews in the march of humanity in the path of civilization is impossible to separate from a defense of the Jews in the face of the threat to emancipation and the possible erosion of their newly earned rights, as well as the unfinished nature of the process of social acceptance of Jews by non-Jews. Halévy's book on the Hebrews ends on this defensive note and introduces the themes he would study in his next project, the *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs modernes*:

. . . The Jews have survived the violence of greed and of fanaticism To research the causes of this powerful vitality, to explain with the light of the science of reason . . . nothing has definitely been more worthy to exercise the wisdom of history The historian should above all signal . . . the disposition of the Jews towards pacific sentiments and occupations, and their love of commerce which has long been an object of reproach, as if commerce, together with the sciences and the arts had not become the real power of modern times, as if the Jews had not rendered an invaluable service to civilization by inventing the institution of credit, this immense power which governs the world today.

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The stress on economic activities dear to the heart of the Saint-Simonians and much of mercantilist and Enlightenment thought becomes here another important quality to praise in the history of the Jews.

The long saga of persecutions was finally coming to an end with the onset of emancipation, which finally allowed the followers of Moses to partake all the benefits of civilization. As a result, the Jews were now beginning to be active in other domains, in the arts and the sciences, and to leave aside the profound emptiness of rabbinical

subtleties.²⁸ The emancipation/regeneration paradigm, which is of major importance in the *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs modernes*, makes its definitive appearance in this conclusion. The Jewish rite was full of superstitions, was not European, was indeed too Asiatic, and needed reforming because it prevented in its present form the full practice of civic rights and duties. This situation gave ammunition to some of the Christian opponents of the Jews. Nevertheless, these opponents should know that the religion of Moses, taken back to its principles and reformed into a new shape as required by the needs of the times would reproduce primitive Christianity which was so strangely disfigured by the Pharisees of Catholicism.²⁹

With this rhetorical turning of tables on traditional Christian attacks on Jews, Halévy ends his book on a Utopian note. The social movement would sweep away these enemies of the Jews. The latter still had an important role to play in the history of the world. This people, while the oldest of all peoples, is still full of youth, of vitality and of vigor, as it is the only one in which history has a future.³⁰ This lyrical, utopian, messianic tone is more muted in the *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs modernes*, written two years after Halévy abandoned the Saint-Simonian movement, though many of the themes that he treated followed naturally from his earlier work.

Halévy, in the preface of his new book, characterized it rather grandly as an excursion into the field of *histoire philosophique* in the tradition of Hume,

Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Guizot.

³¹ Indeed, he stated that a general history of the Jews did not exist and that he had to construct it from sparse material.³² What were the sources that he used? As Halévy himself mentions, he could not consult Hebrew works in the original because he did not know the language and had to rely on Hebraists and on Latin translations.³³ A close study of the text reveals that Halévy did not consult the volumes of the *Geschichte der Israeliten* by Isaac Markus Jost that had begun to appear in the years preceding the publication of his work.³⁴ His sources are mostly books produced by Christian authors, such as Jacques Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* (1716) and Arthur Beugnot's *Les Juifs d'Occident* (1824), as well as the articles on Jews in contemporary times that appeared in his father's *L'Israélite français*. Jacques Basnage, a Huguenot refugee from France, wrote a major, extensive, and on the whole sympathetic treatment of all of Jewish history.³⁵ Arthur Beugnot, the son of the liberal councilor Jacques-Claude Beugnot, who had opposed Napoleon's exceptional measures against the Jews during 1806-1808,³⁶ wrote his work for the 1821 contest mentioned above and received an honorable mention. His book relied extensively on Christian Hebraists and on Basnage and gave a liberal Enlightenment interpretation of medieval Jewish history, praising the contribution by Jews to civilization through their commercial activities and through their literature, and blaming Jewish excesses in financial dealings and rabbinical obscurantism mostly on Christian persecution.

This approach is adopted, extended, and amplified by Halévy to praise the Jews and was at the same time recast to emphasize the telos of emancipation/regeneration. Indeed, the preface includes the classic statement of the latter paradigm that seemed to merit restating in the

dark days of reaction under the Restoration: Perhaps I have written a useful book. It will most certainly be so if I have shown to fanatical Christians (if there still exist any) or to unenlightened Christians (which is more common) that the Jews are not only men, but useful men, active, with a distinguished organization, worthy of liberty and who have done much for it, and to Jews that if the time secures for them new rights, it also imposes on them new duties.³⁷

The *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs modernes* traces the history of the Jews since the destruction of the Temple to Halévy's own time in this light. The core of the book is the political treatment of Jews in their various lands of dispersion with the emphasis on persecution and the defense of the Jews against charges of financial improprieties. Christians, adherents of a religion that had sprung from Judaism, upon becoming powerful, soon forgot that they had been persecuted and became the persecutors. The clergy were the main culprits. The popes continued in this tradition of persecution³⁸ but sometimes protected the Jews for financial reasons.³⁹ While Basnage and Beugnot chided the Christian persecutors of the Jews rather gently, Halévy had no such compunction and was unsparing in his scorn for the church: Many bishops who during their lifetimes had persecuted the Jews performed great miracles after their deaths which produced new persecutions. Others found it simpler to perform miracles while they were alive. But

of all these miracles, none was greater and more real than the perseverance of the Jews, and the principle of force and life that was tested in the face of annihilation and destruction.

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For Halévy, the main protectors of the Jews were the princes, the secular power, which, while often arbitrary, appeared as the only source of security. Halévy's version of the royal alliance, the historic tradition of Jews to identify with the central power,⁴¹ goes back to Roman times, to the Emperor Honorius, who had reaffirmed Jewish privileges in the face of attacks and who in his edict had proved that the glory of a prince consists in leaving each religious community enjoy in peace the rights that it has acquired, and that even when a religion is not approved of in the conscience of a sovereign, lie should nevertheless leave intact its privileges.⁴² This statement is italicized by Halévy, no doubt for its contemporary significance. The tradition was continued by Germanic rulers such as Theodoric who defended the Jews against the outrages of the people and of the ecclesiastics.⁴³

Hence, during the Middle Ages, in spite of frequent arbitrary acts, the Jews found in princes the support against the fanaticism of the peoples, and the greed of Christian priests.⁴⁴ Still, for Halévy, what saved the Jews during the atrocious system of feudalism⁴⁵ was their commercial and financial power. In direct continuation with formulations found in his earlier work and following but also going further than Beugnot, who also stressed this point, Halevy is quick to highlight this aspect of the Jewish contribution to civilization. Italy, which until the tenth century was devoid of commerce, agriculture, and industry because of warfare and instability, saw the Jews appear in the midst of the first symptoms of civilization and industry with the love and instinct for pacific work that distinguishes them always.⁴⁶

The country owed all its commerce in the Middle Ages to the Jews.⁴⁷ The latter were accused of usury only after they followed in the footsteps of the Lombard merchants who invented this science. The Jews were obliged to engage in usury because they were no longer free to practice commerce due to persecution.⁴⁸

In France also, the Jews escaped the rigors of feudalism by their skill in commerce and, in spite of the destruction of the Crusades, flourished and became rich. In an insight that resembles that of Salo Baron exactly a century later⁴⁹ Halévy maintains that the Jews were in fact freer than the peoples among whom they lived since they were held outside the common law which was that of servitude and oppression, and which, combined with their international contacts due to their dispersion, made them commercially important.⁵⁰ This was encouraged by the rulers who did not fear the Jews as they might have another group that could amass wealth. As a result, the Jews became the masters of all commerce in France in the tenth and eleventh centuries and turned to usury only because of persecution, acquiring soon a well-merited reputation for wiliness and deceit for which, following Beugnot, Halévy blames the rulers and the peoples.⁵¹

In marked contrast, the Jews continued to flourish in Muslim Spain. Halévy, like many other historians, is categorical in stating that everything essential in

Islam as a religion came from Judaism and that Islam renewed Judaism for the Orient, just as Christianity had renewed it for the Occident,

52 spreading its core message. In spite of intolerance showed by Mohammedanism in certain periods of the Middle Ages, a certain affinity between the Jews and Muslims preserved Jewish life in the Orient,⁵³ which flourished also in Spain under the Moors. The contrast with Catholic and barbaric Europe is stark. As long as the Empire of the Moors lasted in Spain, the Jews enjoyed an unlimited freedom of conscience Under benevolent and protective rulers, they became famous for their knowledge, their enlightenment, their philosophy, and love of useful work.⁵⁴ Again, all internal commerce in the land was in the hands of the Jews.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in spite of his approval for commercial activity, Halévy here is quick to use the Spanish case to prove the general tactical point that the Jews flocked to the sciences and the arts when this road was open to them and that the mercantile spirit for which they were attacked in fact developed in the face of the impossibility of arriving at fame and fortune through other means.⁵⁶ And indeed, in Christian Spain the Jews were forced to become usurers. Here too, Christianity was disastrous for the Jews. A long mourning will expiate the centuries of prosperity and peace [under the Muslims]. Spain, civilized by the Moors, becomes Christian and barbaric again. Massacres, proscriptions, funeral pyres will reappear with intolerance and despotism,⁵⁷ leading to new persecutions, conversions, the Inquisition, and the Expulsion. The latter proved disastrous for Spain, with Morocco and Algeria inheriting its gold and its industry.⁵⁸

The discussion of Jewish literature in the Middle Ages provides Halévy with the opportunity to expound his critique of rabbinism.

Following Basnage and Beugnot, Halévy cites a long list of authors, frequently getting wrong some of the most basic facts about medieval Jewish thought. Still, his general outline is not unfamiliar to that of more scientific scholars who followed him. In a statement with echoes of the *maskilic* stress on Sephardi achievements, he maintained that the Moors, with their achievement in the sciences, poetry, and philosophy, stimulated the not less brilliant imagination of the Jews who until then had applied itself to the most subtle quibbles of theology,⁵⁹ with Jewish creativity flourishing in Muslim Spain. The twelfth century saw the high point of Jewish literature, with Maimonides as the greatest thinker of all. Maimonides' works, representing the core universal values of Judaism, breathe the purest deism and the most elevated morals [H]e coordinated the Talmud, and simplified and eliminated from the interpretation of the sacred books a host of errors which were the products of prejudice and of the rabbinical tradition.⁶⁰ Persecutions, however, engendered fanaticism among the Jews,⁶¹ terminating medieval rationalism, and foregrounding the useless works of dogma and the Kabbalah.

Along these lines, Halévy has sharp words to say about the fables and absurdities of the *Yosippon* of Ben Gurion⁶² and about the errors, extravagances, and lies of Benjamin of Tudela, whom, however, he accepts as occasionally conveying some useful information.⁶³ Rashi, whom Halévy, following Basnage and Beugnot, calls Jarchi,⁶⁴ does not remain unscathed, his prodigious Talmudic

erudition not succeeding in making him an enlightened man.

65 There was in fact an inverse relation between the success and spread of talmudic literature, the most astonishing example of immobility ever created by human intelligence, and the spread of social regeneration. The more the latter advanced, the less the former flourished. This literature was destined to lose its primitive character and indeed disappear totally with the improvement in institutions and customs.⁶⁶ For Halévy, rationalism in Jewish thought was the expression of all that was lofty in Judaism itself, while the rest appears as superstitious and obscurantist, a stance with strong echoes in many enlightened Jewish and non-Jewish approaches to the same topics throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

In a striking formulation that put the Jews at the heart of changes ushering in the modern era, Halévy maintained that it was the important role that the Jews played in commerce, in industry, and in the development of the peaceful forces of society that had prepared the way for the downfall of feudalism, the discovery of America, and the Protestant Reformation.⁶⁷ The last had been interpreted by the Saint-Simonians as a partial return to original primitive Christianity and was hence deemed positive. Halévy was no different in his evaluation. While aware of Luther's hostility to Jews, he still believed the Reformation to be an important turning point on the path to enlightened civilization by its indirect results of putting the theologians on the defensive, by lessening accusations against the Jews, and by giving rise to heretical half Jews among Christians who believed in the natural law.⁶⁸ Interestingly, Halévy is not particularly fond of a Jewish heretic, Spinoza, whom he characterized as a bizarre and ingenious man with a singular atheism.⁶⁹

Most of the modern section of Halévy's work has the theme of the

gradual improvement in the status of the Jews with the development of modern civilization and an emphasis on the progress they have made, with of view of defending them against their opponents. Joseph II, the philanthropic emperor, is praised for his regeneration efforts, while Frederick II of Prussia is castigated for his dislike of the Jews in spite of, or perhaps because he was the friend of Voltaire whose unjust accusations against the Jews are well-known.⁷⁰ Mendelssohn, the Jewish hero of the modern parts of the book, emerges in spite of the discriminations against the Jews of Prussia and honors modern Judaism and is one of the glories of the eighteenth century.⁷¹ Halévy devotes considerable space to an exposition of Mendelssohn's life, quotes in its entirety his letter to Lavater, and writes warmly about his attempts to enlighten his coreligionists as well as mentioning enlightened followers such as Wessely, Hertz, Eichel, and Friedländer.⁷² Herder and Dohm, cited in French translation, also obtain an honorable mention for their views that, with changes in their condition, distinctions between Jews and non-Jews would eventually disappear.⁷³ Halévy's approach here shows considerable familiarity with Enlightenment and *maskilic* thought on the Jews that was available in French translation or that had been reported in France.

Quite naturally and rather predictably, France and the French revolution occupy pride of place in the triumphant narrative of the march of progress.

However, it is interesting to note here that it is Louis XVI and his ministers who get the credit for the improvement in the status of the Jews, in an altogether naked attempt to demonstrate the precedent to the current Bourbon monarch. A great revolution took place among the minds, the customs, and soon in all the social body . . . [and] the religion of the monarch became enlightened.

⁷⁴ Grégoire's book and Furtado's response to the Malesherbes commission focusing on Jewish privileges and rights proved that the Jews would become productive and improve once discrimination against them ceased.⁷⁵ The voice of reason, of equity was finally heard. Louis XVI was going to issue an edict in favor of the Jews when the revolution intervened⁷⁶ and emancipated the Jews.

For Halévy, following the line taken by Jewish advocates of the cause of emancipation, such as Michel Berr and others who were lauding Jewish contributions to France after the Revolution,⁷⁷ the progress in civilization made by the Jews since then had been immense. Becoming landowners, artisans, manufacturers, soldiers, [the Jews] showed themselves worthy of their adoptive motherland, and the name of French was not a vain word for them.⁷⁸ Indeed, the spread of the French Revolution abroad would sooner or later assure the victory of intelligence over force, and create the foundations of a universal morality.⁷⁹ However, for a while, prejudices and divisions remained, especially in Alsace. Halévy has a rather positive view of Napoleon because of his calling for the Assembly of Notables and the Sanhedrin, which put an end to doubts about the religion of Moses and allowed the Jews to rehabilitate their faith, their beliefs, and their rite in the eyes of the world.⁸⁰ This pointed to the positive reform of the rite and to the clarification of the views about the core values of the religion. The discriminatory legislation of the Infamous Decrees of

1808 is explained away by a concession made by Napoleon to Alsatians, whom he needed for his armies.⁸¹

The discussion of the Sanhedrin, whose decisions are reproduced at the end of the book provide yet another opportunity for Halévy to address current concerns about reaction, this time with a none too subtle warning to the king. The Jews had no need to show ingratitude to Napoleon in order to demonstrate their appreciation for the charter that had guaranteed their liberties under the Restoration, the charter, which if applied with justice will suffice for the happiness of the country, and could alone preserve it from the storms of a new revolution.⁸² Yet the charter had been applied imperfectly, and discrimination against the Jews was still perpetrated by the party of priests, with attempts at conversion and exclusion from the civil service and the universities. All the Jews of France were constitutionalists and expected a just application of the charter. In a remarkable prefiguring of Jewish political alignments in the Third Republic,⁸³ Halévy maintains that should a Jew be elected to the Chamber, he would join forces with those defenders of liberties such as Benjamin Constant and other Protestants who fought for the freedom of religion so eloquently.⁸⁴

Halévy was aware that emancipation had still a long way to go in the rest of Europe. His treatment of the current state of the Jews resonates with the same defensive pleading for Jewish rights found throughout his book. The Jews merited

everywhere a better destiny and, wherever civilization allowed them to partake of its benefits and to strive toward the accomplishment of its goals, provided the country with distinguished men, with intrepid soldiers, with devoted and patriotic citizens.

⁸⁵ Surprisingly, he even defends Polish Jews in the face of some negative descriptions that had appeared in a few books published a few years before. Polish Jews are more sober, more industrious, less stupid, less foreign to civilization than the vulgar Christians who surround them.⁸⁶ Whatever they could be criticized for came from the discrimination that they had to endure. Indeed, the scholars of Berlin, Königsberg, and Breslau could attest to having seen many a Polish Jew dedicate himself with great skill to philosophy, medicine, and mathematics.⁸⁷ The message is clear. With equality would come the great contribution of the Jews to their respective countries.

Still, the Jews needed also to undertake reforms to fit better into the new world that had arrived. In continuity with his hostile remarks in the premodern sections of the book, Halévy's treatment of the modern period is peppered with comments hostile to the current rabbinate. In spite of the Sanhedrin's urging of rabbis to deliver sermons on morality, they had yet to do so or performed this task imperfectly due to their incapacity in general and also because of their lack of enlightenment and their custom of preaching in a barbaric jargon.⁸⁸ And yet the example of what judicious rabbis could do had been provided in Denmark, where the rabbis had encouraged the Jews to learn trades and where, as in Prussia, the prayers were now in the national language.⁸⁹ In spite of their achievements, much remained to be done for French Jews. Above all, the name *Jew* had to become the accessory and the name *French* the principal.⁹⁰ This early formulation of the basic tenet of Franco-Judaism, which would become the

dominant ideology of the community as the century progressed,⁹¹ is stated with the reiteration of the need for a reform of the rite, which is characterized again as in his book on the Hebrews as being too Asiatic. The most important move forward would be the adoption of French for prayers for a fusion of the Jews with the French: Prayer is agreeable to God in all forms . . . and if one language could claim the advantage of rising to the skies, perhaps it would be the language of Fénelon, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, the language of all those genius benefactors who have enlightened the world, and exercised, for the happiness of humanity, the sovereign empire of thought.⁹²

The conclusion ends on a note of universalism, one that had been sounded many times before in the text. The Jewish people was remarkable for its universality and for the spirit of the future that presided over its destiny, with its role intact. Halévy, unlike Salvador, did not believe that the Jews could one day return to Jerusalem. A utopian formulation concludes the book. One day there could be a moral, religious, institutional, and political harmony established among all peoples; and then the Jews, who were everywhere, could think of themselves as having finally arrived. This universal reform appeared distant. Still, nothing was impossible, as demonstrated by the time when the voice of a few ignored men proclaimed Christianity, this soon corrupted reform of the Jewish religion and the face of the world was changed.⁹³

In spite of the timing of its appearance, Halévy's *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs modernes* emerges as an Enlightenment document with its defense of the Jews, its critique of rabbinism, and its argument in favor of a fusion with compatriots once the path of regeneration was completed. This worthy follower of Zalkind Hourwitz, a generation later after the latter's essay for the Metz academy,

⁹⁴ offers a mixture of *maskilic* and emancipationist formulations as applied to all of Jewish history that elaborate upon all the classic themes of the Enlightenment Jewish question,⁹⁵ radicalizing them in places in the light of Saint-Simon's teachings. It is particularly striking that the historicization of these themes is not effected through research in Jewish sources but by the appropriation of Christian Hebraist and other liberal non-Jewish narratives on the Jewish past for the construction of a new historical discourse that places the emancipation of the Jews at the center. In this respect, Halévy's text was a transitional document, one of the last representations of Jewish history based almost entirely on the production of knowledge about Jews by Christian works; at the same time it was the first post Emancipation history by a French Jew gazing at all of Jewish history through the prism of the process of emancipation. It inaugurated a new French Jewish voice that spoke for Jews in a new historical language and within a new discursive universe, a voice that constituted a distinctively Franco-Jewish variant of the rapidly westernizing Jewish historical thinking that was at the heart of the process of the emergence of modern Jewish historiography.

The similarities between Halévy's major historiosophical premises and conceptions and those to be found in the major texts of general Jewish histories in French in the second half of the nineteenth century are striking. While there are major differences in the wealth and accuracy

of detail, as well as different emphases in nuance, the works of Moïse Schwab, Elie-Aristide Astruc, Théodore Reinach, and James Darmesteter, who all published global treatments of Jewish history in this period, remain firmly in the Enlightenment-based political emancipationist and universalist discourse whose contours were first delineated by Halévy.⁹⁶ All of these historians made use of *Wissenschaft* texts as well as Heinrich Graetz's history of the Jews. But this was mostly for the purposes of utilizing data. In modern French Jewish historiography, a more scientific approach did not alter the basics of the historical paradigm first constructed by Halévy. The Jews were the first people to have formulated the fundamental values of universal morality and justice that underpinned the very foundations of civilization. Surviving in the face of incessant persecution, they had played a decisive role in spreading these values to the rest of humanity. Slowly, civilization had evolved, with enlightened thought and action defeating the forces of bigotry and fanaticism. The latter, identified with the Catholic Church, persecuted the Jews incessantly, leading to a deterioration in the level of Jewish creativity without, however, succeeding in altering the core of the Jewish message. With the French Revolution and emancipation, civilization emerged as the ultimate victor, sweeping away fanaticism among non-Jews and Jews and demonstrating once and for all the identity between its universal truths and those of Judaism. Civilization was destined to spread throughout the globe, emancipating all peoples and allowing the Jews

to find themselves finally at home everywhere in the world. Political emancipation remained the prime actor.

There is much in this scenario that is identical to the strands of Jewish thought that developed in Germany and elsewhere, with the stress on the mission of the Jews in the unfolding of civilization.

97 Yet one significant difference remained. For French Jewish historians from Halévy onward, the transference between the ideals of the French revolution and those of civilization remained total. Whereas in Germany the messianic utopia of universal fraternity was yet to come, this had already begun to take shape in France. The universalism of the French Revolution was in the process of crystallizing, especially with the final victory of republicanism and the creation of the Third Republic. Franco-Jewish historiography was perfectly at home in the latter. The continuing problematic nature of Jewish emancipation in Germany, on the other hand, was not propitious for a lasting Jewish historiography based on the telos of political emancipation. The historian most imbued with the Enlightenment message and focused on the political, Isaak Markus Jost, could not establish a school of history.⁹⁸ Instead, a more religious, idealist writing of history emerged, which received an increasingly particularistic coloring with Graetz.

The universalism of the French Revolution, with the primacy of the political through which all humanity would be regenerated, emerged as the central constituent of the construction of a modern Jewish identity in France. While identity is often fluid and unstable, the range of options that is available in its construction are determined historically. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the very first generation of Jews after the revolution, a figure like Halévy could emerge who would configure all the Enlightenment, *maskilic*, and

emancipationist discourses on the Jews that were available to him for the creation of a usable past that is so crucial in identity formation. The extraordinary overdetermining turning point of universalist revolutionary emancipation became a fixture of modern Jewish identity and historiography in France. Halévy's history, while not professional or scientific, embarked modern French Jewish historiography on the path of universalism that was to be its distinctive hallmark well into the twentieth century.

Notes

I would like to thank Esther Benbassa and Steven Zipperstein for their comments and suggestions.

1. See Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford, 1971), 8990; Michael Graetz, *Les Juifs en France au XIXe siècle: De la Revolution française à l'Alliance israélite universelle* (Paris, 1989), 15758, 17879; Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of Jewish Identity in Nineteenth Century France* (Detroit, 1989), 114; Perrine Simon-Nahum, *La cité investie: La science du judaïsme français et la République* (Paris, 1991), 3337.

2. On Jewish historical thinking and writing in general, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982). On *Wissenschaft*, see the essays of Ismar Schorsch in his *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*

(Hanover, N.H., 1994). For a study of the impact of this movement on Jewish historical writing and its links with the emergence of nationalist historiography, see David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York, 1995).

3. Moï'se Schwab, *Histoire des Israélites depuis l'édification du second temple jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1866).

4. Elie-Aristide Astruc, *Histoire abrégée des Juifs et de leurs croyances* (Paris, 1869).

5. James Darmesteter, *Coup d'oeil sur l'histoire du peuple juif* (Paris, 1881).

6. Théodore Reinach, *Histoire des Israélites depuis l'époque de leur dispersion jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1884).

7. On this hymn, see Ronald B. Schechter, *Becoming French: Patriotic Liturgy and the Transformation of Jewish Identity in France* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1993), 12832.

8. On the Halévy family, see *Entre le théâtre et l'histoire: La Famille Halévy*, ed. Henri Loyrette (Paris, 1996). On Elie Halévy, see Moshe Katan, *La Famille Halévy, Evidences* 6 (March 1955): 713; *Dictionnaire de biographie française*, s.v. Elie Halévy ; Eric C. Hansen, *Ludovic Halévy: A Study in Frivolity and Fatalism in Nineteenth Century France* (Lanham, Md., 1987), 24.

9. The latest work on this composer is Ruth Jordan, *Fromental Halévy* (London, 1994).

10. Most notably, *Beaumarchais à Madrid* (Paris, 1831), *Indiana* (Paris, 1833), *Luther, poème dramatique en 5 parties* (Paris, 1834), *Le Château de Saint Germain* (Paris, 1839). He also wrote two very popular histories of French literature: *Histoire résumée de la*

littérature française (Paris, 1832) and *Histoire et modèles de la littérature française* (Paris, 1837).

11. *Dictionnaire de biographie française*, s.v. Léon Halévy; Hansen, *Ludovic Halévy*, 1718.

12. On the Restoration, see James Roberts, *The Counter-Revolution in France, 1787-1830* (Basingstoke, 1990). On the Jews during the Restoration period, see Graetz, *Les Juifs*, 16162; Berkovitz, *Shaping of Jewish Identity*, 4556.

13. Most notable among them were Charles Bail, *Des Juifs au dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris, 1816), Agricole Moureau, *De l'incompatibilité entre le judaïsme et l'exercice des droits de cité et des moyens de rendre les Juifs citoyens* (Paris, 1819); Betting de Lancastel, *Considérations sur l'état des Juifs dans la société chrétienne et particulièrement en Alsace* (Strasbourg, 1824).

14. Berkovitz, *Shaping of Jewish Identity*, 48.

15. The literature on Saint Simon's thought and his followers is enormous. Some important works in this literature are Frank E. Manuel, *The New World of Henri Saint-Simon* (Cambridge, 1956) and Françoise Fichet-Poitrey, *L'idée de religion chez Saint-Simon* (Paris, 1990). On Jewish Saint-Simonians, see Georges Weill, *Les Juifs et le Saint-Simonisme*, *Revue des Etudes Juives*, 31 (1895): 26173 and Graetz, *Les Juifs*, 15293.

16. Weill, *Les Juifs*, 26162; Hansen, *Ludovic Halévy*, 22.

17. Graetz, *Les Juifs*, 15660, 16784.

18. On Salvador, see Paula E. Hyman, Joseph Salvador: Proto-Zionist or Apologist for Assimilation, *Jewish Social Studies* 34 (1972): 122, and Graetz, *Les Juifs*, 22058.

19. He mentions Salvador's work in *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs anciens*, 65.

20. Ibid., 48.
21. Ibid., 1.
22. Ibid., 6.
23. Ibid., 2930.
24. Ibid., 50.
25. Ibid., 57.
26. Ibid., 93.
27. Ibid., 38184.
28. Ibid., 385.
29. Ibid., 386.

30. Ibid., 386.

31. Léon Halévy, *Résumé de l'histoire des Juifs modernes* (Paris, 1828), v-vi.

32. Ibid., vii. Halévy did not deign to call by the name of history the erudite but undigested work of Jacques Basnage. On the latter, see n. 35.

33. Ibid., vii-viii.

34. Halévy has been referred to as one of those influenced by the *Wissenschaft* movement. See *Jüdisches Lexicon*, s.v. *Geschichtschreibung*. There is no evidence that Halévy knew German. All German authors cited in the book are from translations into French. There are very few contemporary works of Jewish history written by Jews that could have been available to Halévy. The pre-*Wissenschaft* biographical sketches by Salomon Löwisohn, *Vorlesungen über die neure Geschichte der Juden* (Vienna, 1820) include many figures such as Amatus Lusitanus and Urielda Costa never mentioned by Halévy and do not conform to his depictions. The same is true for the material available in Peter Beer's *Geschichte, Lehren und Meinungen aller bestandenen und noch bestehenden religiösen Sekten der Juden* (Brünn, 1822/1823). Many volumes of Isaak Markus Jost's *Geschichte der Israeliten*, 9 vols. (Berlin, 1820/1828), had been published by the time Halévy wrote his work. Halévy states explicitly on p. 35 of his *Résumé . . . moderne* that he had followed Arthur Beugnot's *Les Juifs d'Occident* for the medieval period with no mention of Jost. Most of Jost's treatment of important episodes and figures in Jewish history are missing entirely in Halévy's text. For example, the latter has no mention of Hillel and Shammai, who figure prominently in vol. 3 (1822) by Jost (see pp. 111ff.). Jost's account of Rashi in vol. 5 (1826) (see pp. 243/45) is entirely different from that by Halévy, whom, following Basnage (see below), he calls

Jarchi (*Résumé . . . moderne*, 95). These kinds of discrepancies can be multiplied many times, leading to the conclusion that Halévy did not consult Jost.

35. On Basnage and the Jews, see Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 9798 and Myriam Yardeni, *Anti-Jewish Mentalities in Early Modern Europe* (Lanham, Md., 1990), 21123.

36. See the *Dictionnaire de biographie française*, s.v. Arthur Beugnot, and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. Arthur Beugnot.

37. Halévy, *Résumé . . . moderne*, vii.

38. Ibid., 3840,

39. Ibid., 49.

40. Ibid., 13.

41. For an illustration of the royal alliance, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976).

42. Ibid., 1314.

43. Halévy, *Résumé . . . moderne*, 14.

44. Ibid., 36.

45. Ibid., 56.

46. Ibid., 47.

47. Ibid., 54.

48. Ibid., 4851.

49. See the reprint of Baron's classic 1928 essay Ghetto and Emancipation in *The Menorah Treasury: Harvest of Half a Century*, ed. Leo Schwarz (Philadelphia, 1964).

50. Halévy, *Résumé . . . moderne*, 6768.

51. Ibid., 69.

52. Ibid., 20.

53. Ibid., 34.

54. Ibid., 75.

55. Ibid., 81.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., 76.

58. Ibid., 83.

59. Ibid., 84.
60. Ibid., 88.
61. Ibid., 115.
62. Ibid., 8687.
63. Ibid., 92.
64. Basnage, *Histoire*, 13:285; Beugnot, *Les Juifs d'Occident*, pt. 2, 11315.
65. Halévy, *Résumé . . . moderne*, 95.
66. Ibid., 26061.
67. Ibid., 65.
68. Ibid., 148.
69. Ibid., 215.
70. Ibid., 156.
71. Ibid., 157.
72. Ibid., 16074.
73. Ibid., 174.
74. Ibid., 29798.
75. Ibid., 298300.
76. Ibid., 300.
77. Michel Berr, *Appel à la justice des nations et des rois ou Adresse d'un citoyen français au Congrès qui devait avoir lieu à Lunéville, au nom de tous les habitants de l'Europe qui professent la Religion juive* (Strasbourg, 1801).

78. Halévy, *Résumé . . . moderne*, 301.
79. Ibid., 262.
80. Ibid., 30414.
81. Ibid., 310.
82. Ibid., 315.
83. See Pierre Birnbaum, *Les fous de la République: Histoire politique des Juifs d'Etat de Gambetta à Vichy* (Paris, 1992).
84. Halévy, *Résumé . . . moderne*, 31819.
85. Ibid., 265.
86. Ibid., 193.
87. Ibid., 194.
88. Ibid., 309.
89. Ibid., 2078.
90. Ibid., 325.
91. Franco-Judaism is studied in Marrus, *Politics of Assimilation*.
92. Halévy, *Résumé . . . moderne*, 327.
93. Ibid., 329.
94. For Zalkind Hourwitz., see Frances Malino, *A Jew in the French Revolution: The Life of Zalkind Hourwitz* (Oxford, 1996).
95. For a recent study of the emergence of historical thinking in the Jewish reactions to the Enlightenment in Germany, see Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah ve-historyah: Toldoteha shel hakarat-'avar Yehudit modernit* (Jerusalem, 1995), 21103.
96. For the historical worldviews of these figures, see Marrus, *Politics*

of Assimilation, 88116.

97. For a recent treatment of the idea of mission in Reform Judaism, see Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1988).

98. See the interpretation of Jost in Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 23354.

23

History and Memory of Self: The Autobiography of Rabbi Jacob Emden

Jacob J. Schacter

In the unfolding of the Jewish historical experience, the literary genre of autobiography is a relatively late arrival. While others in the societies within which Jews lived chose to express themselves in this manner, Jews opted for other forms of self-expression. Ancient and medieval Jewry could not boast of the equivalent of an Augustine, an Abelard, a Teresa of Avila, a Dante, or others whose literary oeuvre included a major work of this sort. It was not until early modern times that autobiography began to become a more accepted and popular form of Jewish discourse.

¹ In attempting to account for this phenomenon, a contemporary scholar has speculated that it reflects the centrality of the group over the individual in premodern Jewish life. He wrote: In the classical (Jewish) tradition the individual is so firmly embedded within communal, legal and historical structures that his or her separate inner drama is simply not viewed as a significant source of meaning for the tradition as a whole . . . Although the individual is responsible for his actions, the meaning of his life is absorbed in collective structures and collective myths.²

It seems to me, however, that the reason lies elsewhere, not in the individual communal dichotomy but rather in the acknowledged hierarchy of values within the individual himself or herself. What I believe we have here is an expression on the individual level of the

general phenomenon noted by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi on the national level. In his *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Yerushalmi pointed out that although Judaism throughout the ages was absorbed with the meaning of history, historiography itself played at best an ancillary role among the Jews, and often no role at all. Specific historical details paled into insignificance compared to what really mattered, the overarching patterns and archetypes of sin and punishment, exile and redemption. The unique specificity of particular historical events was blurred as they were simply assimilated into a search for the larger meaning and significance of history. The repetitive, cyclical, and a historical nature of liturgy and ritual overshadowed and ultimately marginalized the details of the historical realm. The larger issue of the Jewish people's relationship with God mattered; the smaller issue of the story of that people's history did not.

3

Writing the story of the group (history) is, in this regard, parallel to writing the

story of the individual (autobiography). Just as concern with the Jewish nation's relationship with God made historiography irrelevant for the people as a whole, so did the Jew's personal quest for that relationship make autobiography irrelevant for the individual. What was important for the premodern Jew was not the specific details of his or her personal life but rather the larger metaphysical issues of his or her relationship with God and with His divinely revealed Torah. It was the quest for spirituality rather than the daily mundane experiences of life that served as the ultimate focus of both national and personal Jewish endeavor. As a result, the most significant aspect of a life was not what made it different and distinct from other that is, the details of the particular events specific to that life but rather, on the contrary, what that life had or was expected to have in common with other lives. Hence, no story of one's own life was a story worth telling.

4

This state of affairs continued even into the seventeenth century, when there appeared two very important autobiographical works written by Glückel of Hameln and Leone da Modena.⁵

The confluence of these works, as well as a handful of other more minor ones from that century,⁶ does not yet represent a fundamental shift in the attitude of Jews toward such writing. Such a change does not occur, indeed, until the appearance of Solomon Maimon's *Lebensgeschichte* in 1772.⁷ Rather, they continue the tradition of isolated autobiographical writings being produced here and there throughout the Middle Ages⁸ and, like them, need to be examined not as necessarily heralding a new genre in Jewish literary writing but individually, unrelated to and independent of one another.

Nevertheless, scholars have pointed to two background factors that

both of these major seventeenth century works had in common. One, which they shared with Christian autobiography, was concern for one's family for recording its history, its triumphs and disasters, and its recipes for living, and for passing these on with the patrimony to the next generation.⁹ The other is the literary model of the *zava'ah*, or ethical will, which reflects a desire to bequeath to the next generation not only an economic inheritance but a spiritual one as well, with the life story serving moral and didactic purposes.¹⁰ Furthermore, in the case of Leone da Modena, Natalie Zemon Davis identifies three elements that combine to characterize that work: confession (Modena often referred to his sins in general, with specific focus on the terrible adverse effects and negative consequences of his inveterate gambling), lament for the calamities and miseries he suffered through life, and, finally, celebration of his accomplishments as a writer and preacher. She fits Modena's work into the category of the autobiographical strategy identified by William L. Howarth as autobiography as oratory (as opposed to autobiography as drama or as poetry).¹¹

The eighteenth century brought with it the autobiography of one of its most colorful and controversial figures, *Megillat sefer* by Rabbi Jacob Emden (1697-1776). Reared in a learned home, Emden was a preeminent scholar whose

achievement in the field of rabbinic literature was substantive and significant. He was a highly prolific author, whose literary oeuvre contains works on all genres of rabbinic creativity. In addition, Emden played a major role in the eighteenth-century battle against Sabbatianism and, in the last two and a half decades of his life, fully devoted himself to exposing and hounding all vestiges of the movement. Finally, Emden lived long enough to witness the emergence of the Haskalah. Unlike some of his more traditional colleagues, he was sensitive to the shifting nuances of thought represented by that movement and was aware of the changes in Jewish life that it potentially represented.

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Among the works produced by this unusually prolific writer was *Megillat sefer*, one of the most unusual, open, revealing, and unself-conscious autobiographies in Jewish and even general history.¹³ It is a multifaceted work and requires analysis on a number of different levels: (1) motivation or authorial intent what prompted Emden to write it? (2) structure, content, and even balance why did Emden highlight or stress some information and experiences over others? (3) value as an objective historical document simply speaking, how reliable is it? (4) window into the inner, intimate, private, and personal life of the author what does it tell us about Emden himself?

On the face of it, the book as a whole seems curiously unbalanced and the selectivity of its contents somewhat strange. Why is it, for example, that Emden devotes roughly the first fifty pages, fully one quarter of the entire book, to a biography of his father, the great rabbinic scholar, Hakham Tsevi Ashkenazi?¹⁴ True, Hakham Tsevi was a very important figure in his son's life, but the amount of attention devoted to him seems well out of proportion in a book

purported to be about Emden himself.

Second, how does one explain what appears to be a disproportionately large amount of space devoted to degrading, destroying, and vilifying Rabbi Ezekiel Katzenellenbogen, a recognized rabbinic and communal authority of the period who served as chief rabbi of Emden's Triple Community for over three and a half decades, from 1713 until his death on July 9, 1749?¹⁵ In a long and rambling tirade, Emden repeatedly poked fun at what he characterized as Katzenellenbogen's unintelligible speech and handwriting; accused him of greed, theft, perversion of justice, and other major violations of Jewish law; asserted that he lacked simple common sense; claimed that he unfairly took advantage of his position; and charged that he was abysmally ignorant of even basic, elementary features of Jewish law and tradition.¹⁶ Why this tremendous animus against Katzenellenbogen in the first place and, also, why is it here, expressed to such extremes in a book ostensibly devoted to the story of Emden's own life?

There are less significant apparent anomalies, nuances, and emphases that also call for comment. Why did Emden go out of his way to describe his experience as rabbi in the city of Emden (from 1729 to 1733) in a very positive light, and why was he so careful in delineating the circumstances under which he felt forced to leave there?¹⁷ Of course, it is natural for an author to present himself in as favorable a light as possible, but is there something else relevant here that could provide a different perspective for these as well as similar comments?

The key to all these enigmas lies in a correct appreciation of the precise purpose of this book. Emden had a specific goal in mind, and it was not at all to simply record his own life story for posterity. Once properly understood, it perfectly explains and clarifies all these otherwise inexplicable imbalances, emphases, and anomalies.

Emden offered the reader of *Megillat sefer* three different explanations to account for why he wrote it. First, he said, he wanted to remember and to publicize God's many kindnesses to him, which enabled him to overcome all the adversities and calamities that afflicted him through life:

To make known the lovingkindness of God to me from my youth, in spite of the fact that much afflicted me . . . I was (exposed) to almost all hardships, to difficult occurrences and mishaps without even a moment's surcease. The Lord, may He be blessed, rescued me from them all and aided me until now. He *has punished me severely, but did not hand me over to death* (Psalms 118:18) . . . I therefore said that I would tell of your Name, O Lord, to my brothers, my children and my descendants so that I will not forget His kindnesses and my soul not *forget all His bounties . . . That a future generation might know-children yet to be born-and in turn tell their children* (Psalms 78:6) and they should *praise the Lord for He is good, His steadfast love is eternal* (Psalms 118:1, 29) for he has saved *the soul of the needy from the hands of evildoers* (Jeremiah 20:13).

Second, he wrote, he said, to strengthen others who were similarly afflicted by providing them with faith to persevere in spite of all the difficulties they encounter, to strengthen weak hands, those broken of spirit and afflicted of heart . . . *May many see it and stand in awe, and trust in the Lord* (Psalms 40:4), *that they might put their confidence in God, and not forget God's great deeds* (Psalms 78:7).

And finally, he wrote, he said:

In order that the sun of my righteousness should shine forth . . . *because of*

the wicked that oppress me, my deadly enemies that encompass me about (Psalms 17:9). They have slandered me, *making, me odious among the inhabitants of the land* (Genesis 34:30), to destroy me by their hands with their insults, lies and recklessness which have spread to every side and corner. Their shame is throughout the land. Many of their libelous writings will certainly remain extant in the world for some time. Therefore, necessity has compelled me to clarify my case before God and man. My righteousness will go forth as the light. *He will deliver the guilty* (Job 22:30). Truth is my witness. Behold it will serve as a vindication for me, for my children and my descendants, may God protect them.

18

Who are these wicked . . . deadly enemies to whom Emden refers, whose slander and libel motivated him to take up his pen in self-defense?

On Thursday morning, February 4, 1751, Emden made an announcement in his private synagogue, located in his home in a suburb of Hamburg, asserting that the author of an amulet he had recently examined could not possibly be anything other than a follower of the false messiah Shabbetai Tsevi. Although Emden did not directly assert that Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz was responsible for the amulet, it was a well-known fact that it was prepared by none other than

Rabbi Eybeschutz, the recently elected chief rabbi of the greater Hamburg Jewish community. This accusation of Emden's, which charged someone who was probably the greatest rabbinic figure of his generation of being guilty of outright, blatant heresy, was a most serious one, and it gave rise to one of the most intense, explosive, bitter, nasty, and repercussive controversies in all of Jewish history.

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For some time prior to Eybeschutz's arrival, an unusually large number of women in the Jewish Triple Community of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbeck, then under unified jurisdiction, had died during childbirth. After becoming chief rabbi, Eybeschutz granted the request of some pregnant women to provide them with amulets, which, they believed, would protect them from death. Shortly thereafter, Eybeschutz was accused of including cryptic references to Shabbetai Tsevi in the amulets he issued, and the matter was brought to the attention of Emden. After first refusing to become involved, a claim he often repeated in the ensuing months and years,²⁰ Emden made that fateful announcement on that Thursday in February, initiating a battle to which he wholeheartedly dedicated himself with single-minded zeal and devotion until his own death twenty-five years later.

The Triple Community's lay leadership was extremely upset by this extraordinarily serious charge leveled against their newly elected chief rabbi. The very next day, on Friday, February 5, they made a public announcement in Altona's Great Synagogue rescinding Emden's right to hold religious services in his home, a special privilege he had been granted by the community when he had arrived in Altona eighteen years earlier, in 1733.²¹ The following week they decreed that no one could have any personal contact with Emden for four weeks, revoked

the privilege of operating a printing press that he had been granted by two successive Danish monarchs, and ordered him to leave the community within six months. Emden refused to leave and was placed under house arrest.²²

The controversy began to escalate as each side turned to others for support. Over the course of time, Emden won the assistance of R. Joshua Falk, chief rabbi of Frankfurt-am-Main, R. Samuel Hilman, chief rabbi of Metz, and his brother-in-law, R. Aryeh Leib, Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Amsterdam. In addition, R. Ezekiel Landau, then chief rabbi of Jampol, also became convinced of the correctness of Emden's position although he was more circumspect in expressing his opinion out of a desire to achieve some sort of compromise.²³ Eybeschütz too began to rally his supporters, drawn in large numbers from the many students he had taught over the years in Prague and Metz. Just a few weeks after the outbreak of the controversy, on February 21, the chief rabbi delivered a major sermon in Altona's Great Synagogue in which he sharply denied the charges leveled against him and strongly condemned, in the harshest of language, anyone associated with Sabbatianism.²⁴ Tensions did not abate, and sensing that he was in personal danger, Emden fled to his brother-in-law in Amsterdam some three months later, on Saturday night, May 22, 1751, leaving his wife and family behind. Unfettered now by any fears of personal safety or by any communal restraints, Emden intensified his struggle against Eybeschütz and sought further support for his position

from other religious as well as secular authorities. On June 30, 1752, the Danish authorities ruled that Emden had a right to return to Altona and to live there in peace. He left Amsterdam on July 26 and arrived back in his home nine days later.

The entire Triple Community was split into pro-Emden and pro-Eybeschütz factions. Personal insults, physical fights and even street brawls became common between members of the contending groups. Local secular authorities and the Danish monarch were drawn by both sides into the conflict, as were leading rabbis from other Jewish communities in Poland, Bohemia, Moravia, Italy, Hungary, Holland, Turkey, France, Lithuania, the Ukraine, and Palestine. Hamburg's police were summoned to quell disturbances, local newspapers carried accounts of what had become a major cause célèbre for Jews and non-Jews alike, and the violence spilled over into the marketplace, fairs, the cemetery, private homes, the synagogue, and even onto the floor of Hamburg's stock exchange (Bourse). Excommunications and counterexcommunications of people as well as books were traded across Europe. Proclamations, insults, threats, and denunciations were hurled by one faction against the other, and the tension and bitterness continued even after Eybeschütz died more than thirteen years after the controversy began, on September 18, 1764.

There is no question that in this *Megillat sefer* text Emden is referring to his controversy with Eybeschütz, raging with full force when these words were written in the 1750s.

²⁵ And although he refers to the first rationale as being the strongest, and while the first as well as second explanation he presents do play an important role in the work, as we shall see, in spite of their rather conventional nature (to publicize the great extent of God's kindnesses
²⁶ and to give his fellow Jews strength and faith to overcome

suffering), there is equally no question that the overriding primary impetus behind *Megillat sefer* was a desire on the part of Emden to clear his name and vindicate himself in his controversy with Eybeschutz. As it turns out, the bulk of the work is almost a point-by-point refutation of specific criticisms leveled against Emden by his opponents in the controversy. From this perspective, authorial intent, structure, content, balance, and emphasis become crystal clear. There is no doubt that it is the Emden-Eybeschutz controversy that serves as the center of gravity for this work, and the riddle of its meaning is solved.²⁷

From the very outset of this bitter conflict, Emden was accused by the pro-Eybeschutz forces of being grossly disrespectful to contemporary Torah scholars and to even more illustrious great rabbis of previous generations and of being simply an inveterate agitator and petty, jealous troublemaker with a long history of being rejected by all with whom he came into personal contact.²⁸ His reputation was being sullied and potentially ruined by these and other constant and relentless attacks upon him. He wrote this work, he claimed, with the explicit intention of defending himself from these charges by setting the record straight for

his contemporaries and for posterity. *Megillat sefer* is a carefully crafted attempt by Emden to defend himself in his controversy with Eybeschütz. Its major goal was nothing other than to present a judiciously formulated effort to salvage, in whatever way he could, an increasingly battered reputation.

Attempting to account for his extreme anti-Sabbatianism, manifested in his single-minded opposition to Eybeschütz, in sources other than a bitter, contentious, and cantankerous personality, as he was accused of having, Emden took the trouble to invoke, at great length, the image, model, and precedent of his revered father. Hakham Tsevi was himself involved in a bitter struggle against Nehemiah Hiyya Hayyun, whom he had accused of being a Sabbatian while serving as the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Amsterdam in 1713.

29 Emden invoked his father's struggle against Hayyun as a model and precedent for his own struggle against Eybeschütz some forty years later. Here were, in both cases, heroic figures possessed of great rabbinic learning, waging lonely and intense battles against the accursed Sabbatian heresy, at odds with the established communal leadership and at great personal risk. Emden repeatedly asserted, in *Megillat sefer* and elsewhere, that it was his revered father's experience that served as the paradigm after which he modeled his own behavior, referring to himself on a number of occasions as a zealot, the son of a zealot (*kanai ben kanai*)³⁰ and noting as often that whatever happened to the father happened to the son (*kol mah she-ira la-*).³¹ A fully positive and sympathetic treatment of Hakham Tsevi was, therefore, absolutely crucial and essential for his own defense. Although postponing the presentation of his own life story until the book was well underway helped account for a work that Israel Zinberg characterized as having a unique construction,³² it was vitally necessary and fit perfectly with his primary motive in composing the

work.³³ Furthermore, Hakham Tsevi's own reputation was under attack by Emden's opponents in the controversy. Not only did they assert that Emden was forced out of the town that bears that name against his will (see below), they also charged that Hakham Tsevi was expelled from Amsterdam in 1714 in the wake of the Hayyun controversy. Hence, an accurate presentation of his father's life story, setting the record straight, was crucial for Emden as well.³⁴

This interpretation similarly accounts for Emden's attacks on Katzenellenbogen and the rather intense bitterness with which he expressed them. Emden was depicted in general as a troublemaker and agitator but was also specifically accused of showing gross disrespect for Katzenellenbogen, the chief rabbi of his community, who had died prior to the outbreak of the controversy, in 1749. In a letter to Emden's brother-in-law, R. Aryeh Leib, then chief rabbi of Amsterdam, dated in the spring of 1752, the lay leadership of the Triple Community charged:

He led with madness, not listening to the voice of a teacher, leader or judge of his community. He attacked the holy ones on high, the sages of the city and its rabbis, particularly our master, the Gaon, R. Yehezkel (Katzenellenbogen), of blessed memory, in whose shadow we have lived for these thirty-six years. He (i.e., Emden) considered him as one of the boors and printed about him words which should be burned. The least (of

the calumnies) he wrote about him was that he did not read, nor study nor serve scholars. All his humbling of himself in the introduction to his book was not an expression of humility but he spoke the truth; he is not worthy to be depended upon for his rulings.

35

Emden was very sensitive to this charge and went to great lengths to defend himself in a number of works he wrote related to the controversy. It is possible to characterize Emden's response as taking three distinct forms. One approach was to take the offensive, turning the tables on Eybeschütz by accusing him of exhibiting much greater disrespect for the former chief rabbi than he, Emden, had ever shown. When Emden addressed himself to this letter in his point by point refutation of Eybeschütz's *Luhot 'Edut*, he turned the tables on his arch-opponent and charged that the latter's alleged respect for Katzenellenbogen was a fraud:

Now, please listen (to a story) about the piety of this tyrant and persecutor of Jews (i.e., Eybeschütz), about his deeds and his nature in honoring scholars and the To rah itself. Allow me to tell you something about him that will cause the hair on the flesh of the listener to bristle and his ears to tingle. It once happened that a young man, Zalman son of R. Abraham Fürth, travelled from here to Metz with the permission of the old head of the rabbinical court, R. Yehezkel (Katzenellenboge), may he rest in peace. The rabbi told him that when he arrives in Metz he should greet the head of the rabbinical court there (i.e., Eybeschütz), this evil heretic, and should relate to him on his (i.e., R. Yehezkel's) behalf that he asks of him to study his book, *Knesset Yehezkel*, which he will enjoy. When he came there, the young man fulfilled his mission. Behold he, the devil of the toilet, was coming out of the bathroom where he met his natural needs. The young visitor (who was related to the heretic's wife) related to him the words of R. Yehezkel in his name. Then this heretic answered and said, You spoke correctly. His book is very precious to me. I therefore keep it in the bathroom and, when necessary, take a page from it to wipe myself, as I just

did. When the aforementioned young man returned here, he related this story before all. . . . So does he hold the book of R. Yehezkel in precious honor!³⁶

Emden actually repeated this bizarre charge elsewhere in his writings where he stressed its authenticity. On another occasion he introduced this report with I will relate it as I heard it from a reliable, learned man and concluded it as follows: These were the words that I heard and that were related to me in truth. *An enduring witness in the heavens* (Psalms 89:38) (will testify) that I did not consciously change anything. I did not fabricate words from my heart.³⁷

Emden also responded to this charge by taking two apparently opposite positions. First, he claimed that, when warranted, he did come to the chief rabbi's defense. He made specific reference to a lengthy monograph he printed some sixteen years earlier, entitled *Iggeret bikkoret*, written in support of a position taken by Katzenellenbogen. In 1736 the question arose as to whether a person whose diseased right testicle had to be surgically removed fell into the category of a *patsu a dakah* who is prohibited by biblical law (Deut. 23:2) from having marital relations. Rabbi Katzenellenbogen's hesitation at that time in allowing this individual to remain married to his wife was strongly opposed by Rabbi Moses Hagiz, a leading contemporary scholar and polemicist, and Rabbi Samson Bloch, a local judge in Altona. Katzenellenbogen turned to Emden for support and was rewarded with a strong defense of his position.³⁸ Emden often pointed to

his *Iggeret bikkoret* as proof that he was not simply indiscriminately contrary and negative when it came to the chief rabbi and that, therefore, in those cases where he did think Katzenellenbogen was wrong and expressed himself accordingly, he was simply following hallowed rabbinic tradition and practice. Such has always been the way of Torah, he asserted, to argue and debate its laws and rulings whenever one felt compelled to do so. If Rav Yosef could wonder whether the great R. Abiathar is an authority who can be relied upon (*bar samkha*) even though the prophet Elijah appeared to him and God Himself confirmed his point of view (*Gittin 6b*), then certainly he could legitimately do the same with regard to Katzenellenbogen.

39

But in addition and at the same time, especially in *Megillat sefer*, Emden took an almost diametrically opposite position. He bitterly and repeatedly attacked Katzenellenbogen personally, implicitly arguing that such a wicked and unworthy individual eminently deserved whatever criticism and disrespect he had expressed against him. Among other charges, he belittled what he described as the chief rabbi's incredibly low level of Torah learning: What can we say about the study of his novellae, his interpretations and his sermons which literally led to farce and mockery. It is incredible to relate all the absurdities, nonsense, imaginations, hallucinations and foolishness. All who heard them were forced to burst forth in laughter. Any knowledgeable, understanding reader will be stunned by his decisions and rulings as I have demonstrated in writing.⁴⁰ Emden even went so far as to claim that, on a number of occasions, the chief rabbi publicly displayed such abysmal ignorance regarding the simple pronunciation of a biblical verse or the meaning of straightforward talmudic passages that he aroused the derision of all who heard him.⁴¹ He even recorded that someone allegedly said the following when

Katzenellenbogen first arrived in the Triple Community as chief rabbi: If R. Yehezkel would have come before me when I was the administrator of the elementary school for a license to be a teacher (*melamed*) in the Triple Community, I would not have given it to him.
42

He accused Katzenellenbogen of being overly servile to the local lay leadership⁴³ and charged that, due to the chief rabbi's well-known dishonesty, the local secular authorities barred him from exercising judicial authority in Hamburg.⁴⁴ In addition he mercilessly ridiculed Katzenellenbogen's behavior:

He was capable of sitting day and night drinking to inebriation. He ate excessively everywhere and with everyone, particularly at a circumcision or wedding feast, in the company of boors and ignoramuses to the point that he became a mockery in the eyes of all the masses. The dignitaries were ashamed that he so denigrated and profaned the honor of the Torah in public.⁴⁵

He made a farce and a mockery in the synagogue whenever he led the congregation in prayer. Whosoever did not see or hear the manner of his chanting and the sound of his chirping did not ever see mockery. It was a source of great scorn and derision to the point where the scoffers who frequented the drinking houses would play and sing the melodies of the aforementioned head of the rabbinical court, mimicking all his characteristics, movements and ways when they wanted to increase the laughter and to multiply the fun by entertaining the people who came there. All those who were present and gathered for this fun burst forth in laughter.⁴⁶

Faced with the obvious question as to how such an alleged total misfit was able to secure and maintain the position of chief rabbi of one of Europe's foremost Jewish communities for close to four decades, Emden claimed that he got the position only through great machinations and powerful cunning

⁴⁷ and kept it due to his extraordinary luck (which) helped him. ⁴⁸ In a word, the worse Katzenellenbogen was made to be, the better could Emden justify his disdain for him. Once again, the larger context of the Emden-Eybeschütz controversy is crucial for a proper understanding of this work. ⁴⁹

Putting *Megillat sefer* into this context goes a long way to explain not only Emden's wide-ranging excursus about Hakham Tsevi and his verbose diatribe against Katzenellenbogen, but it also provides a sharper perspective from which more clearly to understand and appreciate other parts of the work as well. For example, while it is perfectly natural to expect Emden to put as positive a spin as possible on his brief stint as a rabbi in the community by that name, certain specific details and subtle nuances of his presentation gain new clarity when seen from the perspective of the controversy. Two of his enemies' accusations are relevant here: (1) their assertion that he harbored an intense feeling of jealousy against Eybeschütz, who was elected to the prestigious position of rabbinical head of the Triple Community, an office that they claimed Emden desperately craved for himself;⁵⁰ (2) their description of him to the secular authorities as quarrelsome and cantankerous, unable to live anywhere in peace and, as proof, accused him of having been expelled from Emden rather than leaving from there on his own volition. ⁵¹

Acutely sensitive to both of these charges and very much aware of their negative implications in his battle against Eybeschütz, Emden

repeatedly asserted that he was courted by the community of Emden and forced to accept a position he never sought or wanted; that he was highly popular there, well respected by Jews and Gentiles alike; that the entire community benefited materially and spiritually from his presence; that the community constantly urged him to remain in their midst as spiritual leader despite his often-expressed desire to leave;

that the only reasons he eventually did leave were the sicknesses repeatedly suffered by him as well as by members of his household and his growing discomfort with the rabbinate; that the community honored him when he left and went so far as to delay appointing his successor for a number of years in the vain hope that he would return.⁵² While one would expect to find such assertions in any type of autobiography, acknowledging that they were specifically presented as part of Emden's defense of his position in his controversy with Eybeschütz lends them greater force, clarity, and significance.⁵³

To a lesser extent, this perspective also sheds light on another part of the autobiography, Emden's description of his early years in Altona. Once again, to counteract his enemies' assertions to the contrary, Emden stressed how he arrived in the community to an enthusiastic welcome from its inhabitants, who granted him the special privilege of holding private prayer services in his living quarters; that he retained their respect and high esteem for close to two decades; that he

repeatedly benefited the community in ways both financial and spiritual; that, until circumstances forced him against his will to assume a more active role, he consistently maintained a low profile, did not seek communal involvement, worked hard for a living while concentrating on his Torah studies, and, he added elsewhere, virtually did not even walk out of his house.

⁵⁴ Here too, with the controversy lurking directly in the background, these assertions take on a new urgency, clarity, and significance.⁵⁵

This analysis of *Megillat sefer* is also significant because it may provide yet another, hitherto underappreciated autobiographical strategy or motive in addition to those already described above, that of autobiography as polemic. Stung by criticism leveled against him by the followers of Rabbi Eybeschutz and desperate to vindicate himself of all the charges and keep his opponents on the defensive, Emden resorted to the best weapon at his disposal, his pen, and polemicized against his adversaries by means of this life story. In a classic article, Frances R. Hart characterized three formal principles in autobiography: confession, apology, and memoir. Apology is denned as personal history that seeks to demonstrate or realize the integrity of the self. Memoir is personal history that seeks to articulate or repossess the historicity of the self.⁵⁶ This characterizes *Megillat sefer*; it is both apology and memoir, realizing the integrity and repossessing the historicity of the self through the medium of polemic.

In an early work on the subject, Arthur M. Clark presents a four-fold classification of autobiography, suggesting that it reflects a kind of need . . . for either sympathy, or self-justification, or appreciation, or communication.⁵⁷ In Emden's case, the correct assessment is all of the above. Although written ostensibly for a close limited circle,⁵⁸ it is

clear that Emden's intended audience was the world at large.⁵⁹ True, Mortimer J. Cohen was surely guilty of gross overexaggeration when he wrote that, the chief purpose of Emden's existence was the destruction of the belief in Shabbetai Zevi or that the key to his life is to be found in his consuming hatred of the Sabbatian heresy.⁶⁰ This overly narrow and limited assessment of Emden fails to take into account a deep devotion to traditional Torah study and a prodigious (almost astounding) literary output on all genres of Jewish intellectual creativity. But at the same time, there is no question that, once the controversy with Eybeschütz began and Emden felt the need to write the story of his life, he interpreted everything he previously experienced from its perspective. He imposed his present reality onto the contours of his past life.⁶¹

While the analysis solves one series of problems (i.e., the question of motivation as well as selectivity or balance), it raises another crucially important one (i.e., the value of the text as an objective historical document). The question of the historical value of autobiography in general has received a great deal of attention in the scholarly literature of this field. Scholars have long noted the skepticism

that must be attendant upon utilizing autobiography as a source of biography or history. Clearly, there are many factors other than objective truth that determine how a person chooses to be remembered for posterity. At best, one's memory is selective, suppressing some experiences and highlighting others; at worst, the past can be consciously distorted and intentionally falsified. I have changed nothing to my knowledge, wrote Yeats, and yet it must be that I have changed many things without my knowledge.

62 In his novel *Nausea*, Jean-Paul Sartre noted that everything changes when you tell about life; it's a change no one notices: the proof is that people talk about true stories. As if there could possibly be true stories; things happen one way and we tell about them in the opposite sense.⁶³

Bruno Bettelheim wrote, As a Freudian, I believe what Freud said about biographies applies even more to autobiographies, namely that the person who undertakes such a task 'binds himself to lying, to concealment, to flummery.'⁶⁴ Bernard Shaw went so far as to write: All autobiographies are lies. I do not mean unconscious, unintentional lies; I mean deliberate lies.⁶⁵ And T.H. Huxley averred, Autobiographies are essentially works of fiction.⁶⁶ Herbert Leibowitz notes at the beginning of his work on American autobiography entitled *Fabricating Lives* that, because the autobiographer often dresses up in fictions and disguises himself in slanted fact, the reader must pass like a secret agent across the borders of actuality and myth.⁶⁷ In the first volume of her autobiography, Lillian Hellman wrote, Thirty years is a long time, I guess, and yet as I come now to write about them the memories skip about and make no pattern and I know only certain of them are to be trusted.⁶⁸ And the list of examples goes on and on. Autobiography is recognized to be a

mixture of design and truth, fact and fiction, Dichtung und Wahrheit.⁶⁹ Surely, autobiographies tell a great deal, but they do not necessarily tell the story of their author's life *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.⁷⁰

If such caution must be exercised in general, it must surely be used in the case of *Megillat sefer*, where it is clear that Emden's present agenda explicitly and consciously determined his description of the past. If autobiography in general is a combination of the past and the present presenting the past through the prism of the present how much more so is it in the case of *Megillat sefer*, where the crucial needs of the present directly shaped the presentation of the past and where Emden's memory spoke what was necessary in his self-defense.⁷¹ And if it determined and shaped that description, could it not also have colored or distorted it? To what lengths was Emden prepared to go to defend himself? Was he prepared even to ignore or distort the truth in order to fulfill his a priori explicitly stated objective?

There is no question that, on occasion, the answer is yes. Emden's outrageous treatment of Katzenellenbogen, discussed above in detail, is a good example of this. In fact, one wonders how Emden could not have realized that by leveling such highly unsubstantiated and wildly exaggerated charges against the learned chief rabbi he was only undermining his own credibility and, ultimately, the very

defense he sought to present. Furthermore, on another occasion, Emden wrongly projected his hatred of Eybeschutz back to a point some three decades before their controversy. In 1722, a full three years before the first time Eybeschutz was ever accused of Sabbatian sympathies, Emden saw him while on a visit to Prague. Although he then had no reason whatsoever to harbor any resentment against Eybeschutz, Emden described his encounter with him as follows:

They showed me, through the window of my uncle's house where I lodged, how he ran like a deer (*rats ka-tsevi*) through the streets and markets. I refused to look at him. He also sent (*a messenger*) to inform me that if I would agree to honor him by coming to his house, he would make an effort on my behalf to save the aforementioned books that were taken from me and return them to me for no payment. I did not want to see his countenance. I would rather have lost the books than greet his insolent face.

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Emden's description of this incident, written some three decades after it occurred while he was actively engaged in his heated controversy with Eybeschutz, clearly reflects the jaundiced eye of a bitter opponent whose present bias distorted his perception of the past. Not only is there no evidence of any animosity between these two men prior to the controversy, but Emden himself even noted on many occasions that when Eybeschutz first arrived in Hamburg to assume the position of chief rabbi of the Triple Community in September 1750 they enjoyed a cordial and mutually respectful relationship.⁷³ The subjectivity of this later reconstruction by Emden is obvious. Also significant is Emden's choice of the phrase *rats ka-tsevi* to describe Eybeschutz in this passage. The allusion to his association with Shabbetai Tsevi is subtle but telling and obviously anachronistic. Nevertheless, other than these examples and a few others,⁷⁴ as well as

those few occasions when his memory was innocently blurred by the passage of time, ⁷⁵ it is my distinct impression that Emden did not deliberately go out of his way to distort the truth in order to present himself in a more favorable light. Emden was very interested in history, and he possessed a keen historical sense, often citing several different sources, including Gentile ones, to prove the historical accuracy of his description of various events. His concern for providing an accurate historical record of the Sabbatian movement accounted for a number of his works, and on the whole, this concern was carried over as well into his version of the story of his own life.⁷⁶

Finally, Emden's version of his story is remarkable in the extent to which it provides an open window into the inner, personal, and private life of its author. This feature of *Megillat sefer* is so unusually remarkable and extraordinary that it has distracted readers of the work away from what I consider to have been its main purpose, its polemical intent.⁷⁷ Here too the general enterprise of autobiographical writing offers different and even conflicting models. Some autobiographies those of Albert Schweitzer, Freud, and Croce in modern times, for example provide only an objective, detached, and impersonal portrait, with the author

writing about himself as if he were another person. In effect, he is nothing more than his own biographer, presenting only information that would be equally available to anyone else interested enough in him to write his biography. Other autobiographies, by contrast those of Rousseau, Henry Miller, and Gandhi, for example are very private, with their authors sharing the most personal intimacies of their lives attitudes, impressions, and feelings that could be known only to them. In these cases, the author describes himself as only he himself can, providing information not possibly available to anyone else about the invisible circumstances or domestic privacies of his life and not just its public occurrences.

78 While both types of autobiography provide important biographical information for the historian, only the latter peels away the external layer and provides a direct unmediated glimpse into the inner life the fears, frustrations, and feelings of their author.⁷⁹

Emden's *Megillat sefer* is such an intensely personal, private, and intimate presentation. He described not only what happened to him but what it was like to be him, and the extent of the intensely personal and intimate details of his life that he shares with his readers is nothing less than absolutely astounding. He graphically described, sometimes in all their gory details, his various illnesses, failures, and manifold personal embarrassments. With rare frankness and unusual candor, he vividly and graphically described a rash on his private parts as a child and other bodily ailments; his impotence on his wedding night; the difficulty he had in forcibly removing a worm from his bowels; various urinary and penile ailments; occasional sexual feelings, frustrations, and needs; repeated marital conflicts; consistent mental depressions, and more.

Although *Megillat sefer* was carefully crafted by Emden as a defense

in his controversy with Eybeschütz, as noted above, the inner Emden repeatedly burst forth, naturally and spontaneously, without, it seems, any intentional forethought. In some of the other self-revelatory autobiographies Rousseau's, for example the author makes a considered programmatic statement, promising to reveal myself absolutely to the public, nothing about me must remain hidden or obscure. I have displayed myself as I was, writes Rousseau, as vile and despicable when my behaviour was such, as good, generous and noble when I was so.⁸⁰ Solomon Maimon, too, promised to tell the Truth, whether this shows me, my family, my people or others in a favorable light or no.⁸¹ But Emden never made such a statement; in his case, intimate disclosure was instinctive and uncontrived, not conscious, studied, or deliberate.

This unmediated impulse for self-revelation is not limited to *Megillat sefer* but is forthcoming in some of his other works as well. For example, in comparing his own religiously regulated sex life with the looseness of Sabbatian sexual mores, Emden had no compunctions about informing his reader that Behold it is now several weeks that I am separated from my wife. Because of her incessant menstrual flow, she could not achieve the [required state of] ritual cleanliness. I suffered pain due to the withholding of my desired function and natural need to discharge the surplus [semen] which is gathered. It is not possible for me to do

so for I have no other woman besides her to release me from my tension. It was not as if he lacked sexual desire, continued Emden. On the contrary, our inclination is greater than yours, as our rabbis wrote, The greater the man [the greater his Evil Inclination].

82 In discussing the permissibility of ingesting a liquid laxative on the fast of the Ninth of Av, Emden noted in a matter-of-fact way that he himself depended on it once to help his bodily function.⁸³ And in describing the physical effects of his examining a legal document for seven consecutive hours, he noted how he almost jeopardized his health by not doing my needs for such a long period of time.⁸⁴ Finally (and there are other examples as well), in the process of telling a story in *Megillat sefer*, Emden noted matter-offactly that since it never occurred [to me] that he would come so quickly, I first tasted something and also needed to 'cleanse' myself.⁸⁵ While the modern reader would consider such an unusually high degree of self-revelation as inappropriate and therefore at cross-purposes with Emden's desire to defend himself against attack in his controversy with Eybeschutz, this does not seem to have been the case for Emden at all. While all indications are that an eighteenthcentury reader would share the modern assessment of such revelations as inappropriate, this did not stop Emden from sharing them, as unconventional as such a presentation was for his time. It would appear that nothing for him was unseemly, unbecoming, or inappropriate.

Furthermore, in trying to understand these repeated unself-conscious and self-derogatory comments, one should not overlook the fact that a litany of Emden's multifaceted life's problems fits well with the other (first two) explanations he gave for writing this work to publicize the extent of God's kindnesses and to give his fellow Jews strength and faith to overcome suffering.⁸⁶ Although secondary in their

importance, as noted above, these two reasons do play an important role in helping to explain the significance and context of particularly this type of self-revelation by Emden. After all, the more Emden was able to overcome in life, the greater the level of God's kindness and the more significant role model he could be for other Jews who suffered in similar or other ways.

Totally unself-conscious about virtually every aspect of his life, Emden just wrote what he felt and, as a result, provided the careful and responsible psychobiographer with a mine full of important information. As befitting its author, *Megillat sefer* is an important work in its own right and as a link in the transition of Jewish autobiographical writing, to the extent to which it existed, from medieval to modern times.

Notes

1. My thinking about autobiography in general has greatly benefited from the work of Marcus Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe: The Pre-History of a Literary Genre* (Ph.. diss., Trinity College, Oxford, 1990), although I disagree with him regarding the specific focus of this article. See below.
2. Alan Mintz, *Banished from Their Father's House: Loss of Faith and Hebrew Auto-*

biography (Bloomington, Ind., 1989), 7, 206. For a previous example of this explanation, see Henrietta Szold, introduction to *My Portion by Rebekah Kohut* (New York, 1925), ix:

That Jewish literature should be deficient in personal material lay in the nature of Jewish life as it was perforce constituted. In the overwhelming sum of Jewish communal woe and communal aspiration, the individual sank out of sight. His personal desires, trials, and successes were frail straws rapidly swirled out of sight on the stream of community life. From the Jewish point of view the public weal was better served by reticence than by self-expression. In the moving Jewish drama, the chorus alone was vocal.

See too Richard L. Rubenstein, *The Promise and the Pitfalls of Autobiographical Theology*, *Art/Literature/Religion: Life on the Borders (Journal of the American Academy of Religion Thematic Studies)* 49: (2) (1982):125.

3. Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982), xiv. None of the printed critiques of this book affect this basic thesis. See, for example, Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), esp. 1-21; Ivan G. Marcus, *Beyond the Sephardic Mystique*, *Orim* (autumn 1985): 35-53; Abraham Melamed, *The Perception of Jewish History in Italian Jewish Thought of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Re-examination*, in *Italia Judaica: Gli ebrei in Italia tra Rinascimento ed Eta barocca* (Rome, 1986), 139-70; Robert Bonfil, *How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?* in *Essays in Jewish Historiography, History and Theory*, *Beiheft* 27 (1988): 78-102.

4. See Cecil Roth, *The Memoirs of a Siennese Jew (1625-1633)*, *Hebrew Union College Annual* 5 (1928): 353: In a people so predominantly intellectual, the vicissitudes of worldly existence were

of secondary importance by the side of the record of spiritual achievement. The Jew was interested in what a man thought and said, rather than in what he did; Bal-Makhshoves (Elyashav), *Geklibene Shriften* 3 (Warsaw, 1929), 61: The Jew is, however, by nature, in old as in middle age a type of Ecclesiastes who asserts: There is nothing new under the sun; he has little interest in the external forms of a life which change with the times. He is more interested in the core and, according to his philosophy, the core of a person's life does not change, only its outer forms (this passage is cited, in an abridged translation, in M. Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe*, 69); R. Rubenstein, *The Promise and the Pitfalls*, 126.

M. Moseley, pp. 69-70, also adds another consideration that should be kept in mind with regard to East European Jewry: the absence of any form of secular literary discourse in Hebrew or Yiddish before the end of the nineteenth century. See too David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, 1984), 134-35, and the treatment of his position by Moseley, pp. 92-100.

5. Glückel's work was first published by David Kaufmann, ed., *Die Memoiren der Glückel von Hameln 1645-1719* (Frankfurt am Main, 1896). German translations were published by Bertha Pappenheim (1910) and Alfred Feilchenfeld (1913; reprinted 1914, 1920, 1923, 1979, 1987). For the best, albeit flawed, English translation, see Beth-Zion Abraham, *The Life of Glückel of Hameln 1646-1724, Written by Herself* (London, 1962). The work has been most recently treated in N. Z. Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth Century Lives* (Cambridge, 1995), 5-62. In addition to the secondary literature cited in her extensive notes (pp. 220-59), see her *Riches and Dangers: Glikl bas Judah Leib on Court Jews*, in *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage and Power, 1600-1800*, ed. Vivian B. Mann and Richard I. Cohen (Munich and New York, 1996), 45-57; S. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 2nd series (Philadelphia, 1908), 126-47;

Hildegard Hummel, Dei Memoiren der Glückel von Hameln; das Schicksal einer jüdischen Frau um die Wende des 17. Jahrhunderts, *Archiv Bibliographia Judaica: Jahrbuch* 2-3 (1990): 7-26; Chava Turniansky, Ha-sippurim bi-yetsiratah shel Glikl Hamel umekorotchem, *Mehkarei Yerushalayim bi-folklor yehudi* 16 (1994): 41-65.

For Modena's autobiography, see Daniel Carpi, *Sefer hayyei Yehudah le-R. Yehudah Aryeh mi-Modena* (Tel Aviv, 1985); translated into English by Mark R. Cohen and published with a number of introductory essays and historical notes by other scholars. See Mark R. Cohen, trans. and ed., *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena's Life of Judah* (Princeton, N.J., 1988). See too M. Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe*, 114-91.

6. See, for example, C. Roth, n. 4, above; Alexander Marx, A Seventeenth-Century Autobiography, *JQR* 8 (1917-1918): 269-304; partially reprinted in idem, *Studies in Jewish History and Booklore* (New York, 1944), 178-97; Asher B. Eliezer Halevi, *Sefer zikhronot R. Asher ben Eliezer Halevi*, trans. M. Ginsburger as *Die Memoiren des Ascher Levy aus Reichshofen im Elsass (1598-1635)* (Berlin, 1913); Yitzak min ha-Nevi'im, *Medabber tahpukhot*, ed. Daniel Carpi (Tel Aviv, 1985). Most of these works, as well as R. Yom Tov Lipmann Heller's *Megillat evah* and the sixteenth-century Abraham b. Hananiah Yagel's *Gei hizzayon* and others, are all discussed by M. Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe*, 108-244. For Yagel, see *A Valley of Vision: The Heavenly Journey of Abraham ben Hananiah Yagel*, trans. and ed. David Ruderman (Philadelphia, 1990). On Heller, see Joseph M. Davis, R. Yom Tov Lipmann Heller, Joseph b. Isaac ha-Levi, and Rationalism in Ashkenazic Jewish Culture 1550-1650 (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1990), 475-500. Davis points out (pp. 482-83) that *Megillat evah* belongs to a special sub-genre of memoiristic writings that recount stories of deliverance from danger, including *Megillat R. Meir* by Meir ha-Kadosh, *Megillat purei ha-kela'im* by Hanokh b. Moses Altshuler, and Samuel Taussig's story in *Megillat Shmuel*. Also, Gershom Scholem refers to *Sefer hahezyonot* of R. Hayyim Vital as an autobiography. See his *Shir shel Yisrael Najar be-fi ha-shabbeta'im*, in *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, ed.

S. Löwinger and J. Somogyi (Budapest, 1948), 41, n. 2. Meir Benayahu refers to the diaries of R. Samuel Aboab. See his R. Shmuel Aboab's Letters to the Palestinian Captives in Malta and Messina, *Journal of Maltese Studies* 3 (1966): 68; idem, Iggerot R. Shmuel Aboab le-hakhmei erets Yisrael she-nishbu bi-Maltah u-be-Messinah, in *Sefer zikkaron le-Shlomoh S. Meir* (Jerusalem, 1956), 17.

There are also a number of eighteenth-century autobiographies that have not yet received scholarly attention. Among them are Korot Mosheh Vasertsug u-Nedivas Lev Aviv ha-Mano'ah R. Isser zl, *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 8 (1910): 87-114, and *Zikhronot R. Dov mi-Bolihov*, ed. M. Wischnitzer (Berlin, 1922). See also the work of Samuel Jacob Hayyim Falk, the Baal Shem of London, partially described by Hermann Adler, The Baal-Shem of London, in *Festschrift zum Siebzigsten Geburtstage A. Berliner's*, ed. A. Freimann and M. Hildesheimer (Frankfurt A.M., 1903), 1-9; idem, The Baal Shem of London, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 1902-1905 (London, 1908), 148-73, and utilized by Cecil Roth, The King and the Cabalist, in *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History* (Philadelphia, 1962), 143ff, and more fully by Michal Oron, Dr. Samuel Falk and the Eibeschuetz-Emden Controversy, in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism*, ed. K. E. Grözinger and J. Dan (Berlin and New York, 1995), 243-56; idem, Mistikah u-magiah bi-London be-me'ah hayod het Shmuel Falk ha-Ba'al Shem mi-London, *Sefer Yisrael Levin*, ed. R. Tsur and T. Rosen (Tel Aviv, 1995), 2:7-20. Both Di Zikhroynes fun Mozes Porges, *Historische Schriften* 1 (1929): 253-96, and Aaron Isaacs, *innen. En judisk Kulturbild fran Gustaviansk tid*, ed. A. Brody and H. Valentin (Stockholm, 1932), move into the nineteenth century as well. For various versions of the latter work, see J. Shatzky, *YIVO Bletter* 3 (1932): 268-70; 9 (1936): 284-87. R. Moses Hagiz also wrote an autobiography, but it is no longer extant. See Meir Benayahu,

Sefarim she-hibram Rabi Moshe Hagiz u-Sefarim she-hots'iam leOr, 'Alef sefer 4 (1977): 142, no. 9; Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies* (New York, 1990), 281, n. 2. His opponent Nehemiah Hayyun's *Moda'ah Rabah* (Amsterdam, 1714) might also fall into this category. See

also Levy Alexander, ed., *Memoirs of the Life and Commercial Connections . . . of the Late Benjamin Goldsmid, Esq., of Roehampton: Containing a cursory View of the Jewish Society and manners* (London, 1808).

The extremely significant *Sefer yesh manhilin* by R. Pinhas Katzenellenbogen (Jerusalem, 1986) has only recently begun to receive the attention it richly deserves. See Gershon D. Hundert, *Polish Jewish History, Modern Judaism* 10 (October 1990): 262; Emanuel Etkes, *Mekomam shel ha-magiah u-ba'alei ha-shem bi-hevrah ha-Ashkenazit bi-mifneh ha-me'ot ha-18*, *Zion* 60 (1) (1995): 77-104; Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley, Calif., 1996), 14, 20-25, 2932. For a study of autobiographical accounts by German Jews who converted to Christianity between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, see Elisheva Carlebach, *Converts and Their Narratives in Early Modern Germany: The Case of Friedrich Albrecht Christiani*, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 40 (1995): 65-83. For an opposite example, an autobiographical account of a Portuguese Christian who converted to Judaism in the first half of the seventeenth century, see B. N. Teensma, *De Levensgeschiedenis van Abraham Perengrino, Alias Manual Cardoso de Macedo*, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 10 (1) (1976): 1-36.

7. For a bibliography of editions of this work, see Noah Y. Jacobs, *Hasifrut 'al Shlomoh Maimon*, *Kiryat Sefer* 41 (2) (1966): 257-58. For more recent studies, see Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore, 1986), 124-32; Ritchie Robertson, *From the Ghetto to Modern Culture: The Autobiographies of Solomon Maimon and Jakob Fromer*, *Polin* 7 (1992): 1230; Adam Teller, *Sefer ha-zikhronot shel Shlomoh Maimon: Behinat Meheemanut*, *Cal-ed* 14 (1995): 13-22; M. Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe*, 75-83.

8. See, for example, Joshua Prawer, Ha-otobiografiah shel 'Ovadiyah ha-ger hanormani, *Tarbiz* 45 (3-4) (1976): 272-95; idem, The Autobiography of Obadyah the Norman, a Convert to Judaism at the Time of the First Crusade, in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, 1979), 1:110-34; Nahum Golb, Megillat 'Ovadiyah ha-ger, in *Mehkarei 'edot u-genizah*, ed. S. Morag and I. BenAmi (Jerusalem, 1981), 77-107; Yisrael Yuval, Otobiografiah ashkenazit me-ha-me'ah haarba-esreh, *Tarbiz* 55 (4) (1986): 541-66; translated and adapted into English by Zippora Brody as A German-Jewish Autobiography of the Fourteenth Century, *Binah* 3 (1994):79-99; Michal Oron, Autobiographical Elements in the Writings of Kabbalists from the Generation of the Expulsion, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 6 (2) (1991): 102-11; Mordecai Pachter, Yomano shel R. Elazar Azikri, in *Mi-tsefunot tsefat* (Jerusalem, 1994), 121-86. Arnaldo Momigliano, A Medieval Jewish Autobiography, in *History and Imagination: Essays in Honor of H. R. Trevor-Roper* (London, 1981), 30-37, and reprinted in idem, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middletown, Conn., 1987), 222-30, analyzes a work written by a Jew describing his conversion to Christianity.

In this connection, see also the journal of R. Joseph of Rosheim (1471-1547) in J. Kracauer, Rabbi Joselmann de Rosheim, *REJ* 16 (1888): 84-105.

9. See Natalie Z. Davis, Fame and Secrecy: Leon Modena's Life as an Early Modern Autobiography, in Mark R. Cohen (see n. 5, above), 51, 53-55. The article was reprinted in *Essays in Jewish Historiography, History and Theory*, Beiheft 27 (1988): 103-18. See too idem, *Women on the Margins*, 19-20. Alan Mintz, *Banished from Their Father's House*, 8, also draws attention to the family-centered motives for writing. Authors usually attempted to confirm the worthiness and antiquity of their genealogies and to establish their own place within

the cycle of family fortunes and misfortunes.

10. Davis, *Fame and Secrecy*, 56-57; idem, *Women on the Margins*, 20-21; A. Mintz, *Banished*; D. Bilik, *The Memoirs of Glikl of Hameln: The Archaeology of the Text*, *Yiddish* 8 (2) (1992): 17-20; M. Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe*, 210. R. Pinhas Katzenellenbogen's *Sefer yesh manhilin* (n. 6, above) also fits into this category.

Is it also possible to conjecture that Glikl was influenced by the early medieval *Yossipon*

and later *Shevet Yehudah* both historical chronicles of sorts which we know she read? See C. Turniansky, *Vegen di literatur-mekoyrim in Glikl Hamels Zikhroynes*, in *Keminhag, Ashkenaz u-Polin: Sefer yovel le-Chone Shmeruk* (Jerusalem, 1993), 170-72; Davis, *Women on the Margins*, 243-44, n. 130; 254, n. 193.

11. Davis, *Fame and Secrecy*, 58-61. For an example of a different sort of autobiography, as an act of therapy, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley, Calif., 1967), 165-66, 181. See too John Sturrock, *The New Model Autobiographer*, *New Literary History* 9 (autumn 1977): 581, where he characterizes Michel Leiris's autobiographical work as an exercise in self-therapy. A. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, 241, n. 25, describes Solomon Maimon's autobiography (n. 7, above) as a story of progressive personal enlightenment. William Bell Scott referred to his autobiographical effort as an attempt at self-improvement. These attempts on my part have had a self-educational excuse. I have thought to understand myself better by their means, he wrote. See W. B. Scott, *Autobiographical Notes* (New York, 1892), 1:2, cited in K. Rinehart (n. 70, below), 184.

12. For a full assessment of this fascinating and multifaceted individual, see my *Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1988).

13. Throughout this essay, I refer to the Warsaw, 1896, edition of *Megillat sefer* edited by David Kahane even though it is not a fully accurate transcription of the manuscript (which itself is only a copy of the original). Acknowledging and claiming to correct some of the mistakes in the Kahane edition, Abraham Bick-Shauli reprinted *Megillat sefer* in Jerusalem, 1979, but his version is much worse than Kahane's. He recklessly and irresponsibly added to or deleted from the text, switched its order, and was generally inexcusably sloppy. As

a result, his edition is absolutely and totally worthless. I am completing a new critical edition of *Megillat sefer*, with an introduction and extensive annotations, to be published by Mossad Bialik in Jerusalem. I am also preparing an English translation to be published by Yale University Press.

Kahane's edition of *Megillat sefer* has recently been translated into French, but since it is not based on the manuscript version of the work, the translation is incomplete and imprecise. See Maurice-Ruben Hayoun, *Mémoires de Jacob Emden ou l'anti-Sabbataï Zewi* (Paris, 1992).

14. *Megillat sefer*, 7-53. A full treatment of the life and intellectual profile of Hakham Tsevi remains to be written. The best study of him to date remains that of Judith Bleich, Hakam Zebi as Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazic Kehillah of Amsterdam (1710-1714)(master's thesis, Yeshiva University, 1965).

15. Katzenellenbogen, too, has not yet received the treatment he deserves. See, meanwhile, I. T. Eisenstadt, *Da at kedoshim* (St. Petersburg, 1897-1898), 103-4; E. Duckesz, *Ivah le-moshav* (Cracow, 1903), 21-29; N. Rosenstein, *The Unbroken Chain* (New York, 1976), 337-39.

16. *Megillat sefer*, 122-40.

17. *Ibid.*, 99-114.

18. *Ibid.*, 54-55, with slight corrections from the manuscript (A. Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* [Oxford, 1886], 590, no. 1723:2), 140b-142a (p. 141 precedes p. 140 in the manuscript).

19. The complete story of this extraordinary chapter in Jewish history remains a major historical desideratum. Primary literature includes about a dozen polemical tracts by Emden (see Y. Rafael, *Kitvei Rabi*

Ya'akov Emden, *Areshet* 3 [1961]: 252-61, 272-76); J. Eybeschütz, *Luhot 'edut* (Altona, 1755); I. Halperin, *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot* (Jerusalem, 1945), index, s.v. Yehonatan ben Nata Eybeschütz and Ya'akov ben Tsevi Emden (see I. Halperin, *Der Va'ad Arba Aratsot un zayne batsivngen mit oisland*, *Historishe Schriften* 2 [1937]: 77-78); I. Trunk, *Le-birur 'emdato shel Avraham ben Yoski, Parnas va'ad daled aratsot, bi-mahloket ben Yehonatan Eybeschütz ve-Ya'akov Emden*, *Zion* 38 (1973),

174-78; M. Rosman, Samkhuto shel va'ad arba aratsot mi-huts le-Polin, *Bar Ilan* 24-25 (1989): 25-27. Important material is still in manuscript, most notably, Gahalei esh by R. Joseph Prager, a leading member of the Emden faction, presently found in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. See A. Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, 755, no. 2189. For a preliminary description of the manuscript, see idem, MGWJ 36 (1887): 201-14, 257-68. Also, German documents relating to the controversy are found in the archives of the Hamburg City Council. Some were used by M. Grunwald (see below) in his reconstruction of its events.

Secondary literature on the controversy includes H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* 10 (1897): 347f, 495-508; Graetz-Shefer (S. P. Rabinowitz), *Divrei yemei yisrael* (Warsaw, 1893), 8:455-528, 614-36; M. Grunwald, *Hamburgs deutsche Juden* (Hamburg, 1904), 89-124; D. Kahana, *Toledot ha-mekkubbalim, ha-shabbeta'im ve-ha-hasidim* (Odessa, 1913), 2:20-64, 129-45; D. L. Zinz, *Sefer gedulat Yehonatan* (Pietrkov, 1930-34), 31; M. Balaban, *Le-toledot ha-tenu'ah ha-frankit* (Tel Aviv, 1934), 72-78; M. J. Cohen, *Jacob Emden: Man of Controversy* (Philadelphia, 1937), 118-257; M. A. Perlmutter, *R. Yehonatan Eybeschütz ve-yaaso el ha-shabbata'ut* (Jerusalem, 1947); B. Brillling, Das Erste Gedicht auf einen Deutschen Rabbiner aus dem Jahre 1752, *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 2 (1968): 38-47; idem, Der Hamburger Rabbinerstreit im 18. Jahrhundert, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 55 (1969): 219-44; M. Carmilly-Weinberger, *Censorship and Freedom of Expression* (New York, 1977), 8692; S. Leiman, The Baal Teshuvah and the Emden-Eibeschutz Controversy, *Judaic Studies*, vol. 1 (1985); idem, Mrs. Jonathan Eibeschutz's Epitaph: A Grave Matter Indeed, in *Scholars and Scholarship: The Interaction Between Judaism and*

Other Cultures (New York, 1990), 133-43; see n. 23, below.

20. See *'Edut bi-Ya'akov* (Altona, 1755), 4b-6b (see n. 30, below); *Sefer hit'avkut* (Lvov, 1877), 7b-9b; *Iggeret purim* (still in manuscript; see Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, 755, no. 2190:1; MS Mich. 618), 3a-13b.

21. See J. Emden, *Megillat sefer*, 115; *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 14a; *Shevirat luhat ha-aven* (Altona, 1756), 41b. Evidence is also forthcoming in the communal records of the Triple Community found in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem, AHW 17a, p. 47a.

22. For this very early stage of the controversy, see *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 6b-8b; *Sefer hit'avkut*, 9b-11b; *Iggeret purim*, 14a-18a.

On November 11, 1743, Emden received permission from the Danish king, Christian VI, to operate a Hebrew printing press in Altona. After the king's death, Emden reapplied for permission from his successor, Frederick V, and received it on February 20, 1747. For the text of the formal document of permission as well as the correspondence between Emden and the secular authorities that preceded it, see B. Brillling, *Zur Geschichte der Hebräischen Buchdruckereien in Altona*, *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 11 (1975-1976): 41-56. See also idem, *Die Privilegien der Hebräischen Buchdruckereien in Altona (1726-1836)*, *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 9 (4) (1971): 156-57, 160.

23. For Landau's complex position in the controversy, see S. Leiman, *When a Rabbi Is Accused of Heresy: R. Ezekiel Landau's Attitude toward R. Jonathan Eibeschuetz in the Emden-Eibeschuetz Controversy*, in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism, Intellect in Quest of Understanding: Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox* (Atlanta, 1989), 3:179-94.

24. Eybeschütz printed this sermon at the end of his *Luhot 'edut*, 72a-

78b.

25. See Megillat sefer, 11 (reference to 1752); 51 (to 1757). See too p. 33, where Emden clearly asserts that the Eybeschütz controversy was that which motivated me to construct this scroll as a book, to establish a memorial for the wonders of God, may He be blessed, and his kindnesses, new as well as old. See also pp. 89, 118.

26. See too Emden's postscript to the first volume of his Mor u-ketsiah (Altona, 1761), 103a (reprint, Jerusalem, 1996, p. 284), where he describes a miracle that occurred to him and concludes with praise and blessing for God.

27. For the phrase center of gravity, see Philippe Lejeune, *L'Autobiographie en France* (Paris, 1971), 60; cited by M. Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe*, 13. For riddle, see Robert J. O'Connell, *The Riddle of Augustine's 'Confessions': A Plotinian Key*, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 4 (1964): 327-72.

See also *Megillat sefer*, 118: It is not my desire to elaborate upon his shame . . . only that which is necessary for my defense I will not hide, to instruct my children and descendants to remove [the] grievance from upon me.

28. For references to this charge in the literature of the controversy, see *Sefer hit'avkut*, 12a; *Iggeret purim*, 9a, 30b, 33a (printed in my *Rabbi Jacob Emden's Iggeret Purim*, in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* [Cambridge, 1984], 2:445), 37b; *Shevirat luhat ha-aven*, 6ob; *Mitpahat sefarim* (Lvov, 1870), 3; *Megillat sefer*, 171. See also *She'ilat Yavets* 2:21; *Hatsa'ah le-sefer luah eresh*, printed at the end of *Sefer ets avot* (Amsterdam, 1751), 76a; *Luah eresh* (Altona, 1729), 77b, 78a-b (n. 55, below).

29. On the Hayyun controversy, see, most recently, E. Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*, 75-159.

30. The source of the phrase is *Sanhedrin* 81b, referring to Pinhas, son of Elazar the Priest. For examples of it in Emden's controversy-related writings, see *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 4b (he notes that others referred to him in this manner as a way of encouraging him to become involved against Eybeschütz but that he initially refused, citing his father's difficulties with Hayyun as a negative role model), 62b; *Meteg la-hamor*, *Sefer shimush* (Amsterdam, 1762), 21b; *Sefer hit'avkut*, 76a; *Petah 'enayim* (Altona, 1756), 3b; *'Akitsat 'akrav* (Amsterdam, 1752), title page, 14b; *Sefat emet u-leshon zehorit* (Altona, 1752), title page, 5, 36, 47 (reprinted in E. L. Landshuth, *Toledot anshei ha-shem u-pe'ulatam bi-'adat* Berlin [Berlin, 1884], 73).

31. The source of the phrase is Midrash Tanhuma, Lekh Lekha no. 9 (13), referring to Abraham and his descendants. For examples of it (in both singular and plural) in Emden's writings, see Megillat sefer, 33; 'Edut bi-Ya'akov, 23a, 30b, 32b; Sefat emet u-leshon zehorit, 37; Mor u-ketsiah (Altona, 1768), vol. 2, introduction, 2a. See also Torat ha-kena'ot (Amsterdam, 1752), 66a, and She'ilat Yavets 1:75, end.

32. I. Zinberg, *Di geshikhte fun der literatur bay yidn* (New York, 1943), 5:244. This is reminiscent of Stendahl's comment at the end of chap. 2 of his autobiography, *The Life of Henry Brulard* (New York, 1958), 17: After all these general reflections, I'll proceed to get born.

33. See Heinz Moshe Graupe, *The Rise of Modern Judaism: An Intellectual History of German Jewry, 1650-1942* (Huntington, N.Y., 1978), 61. Cf. M. Moseley, who characterizes the entire first part of Megillat sefer dealing with Hakham Tsevi as a genealogical preamble (p. 367) with lengthy digressions (p. 389). While I accept his assertion that such a preamble is characteristic of pre-modern autobiographical writing in general and of Jewish in particular, the two examples he cites, those of Glückel of Hameln's *Zikhroynes* and Leone da Modena's *Hayei Yehudah* (on both, see n. 5, above), provide no real precedent for the exceptionally large amount of space devoted to Hakham Tsevi in Megillat sefer. Clearly, the explanation for it must be sought elsewhere. Davis, *Women on the Margins*, 231, n. 53, also places Emden's description of his father's life at the beginning of Megillat sefer within the frame of family interest.

Moseley is correct, however, when he points out (p. 390) that this construction poses a structural problem for Emden because, having already mentioned some aspects of his own life in this first section, he is forced to repeat them when finally describing them in the context of his own life. However, this was a price that Emden was more than happy to pay for the polemical advantage he gained by his choice for the first section of his work.

34. See 'Edut bi-Ya'akov, 22b-23a; Torat ha-kena'ot, 33b; Sefer hit'avkut, 7b; Megillat sefer, 34.

It is also interesting to note that Emden does not feel the need to justify his writing this

work until *after* he presents the life story of his father. Only when he begins to focus on his own life, fully one quarter of the way through the book, does Emden feel compelled to offer those three reasons discussed above to justify it. Although, as indicated, the story of Emden's father's life was crucial for understanding his own, Emden apparently recognized the difference between biography and autobiography. A biography of his father needed no justification; an autobiography of his own life did need one. More work should be done on the medieval Jewish attitude toward and production of biography (even hagiography) in order to place Emden's work a mixture of biography and autobiography into a more sophisticated context. See, for example, Arthur M. Lesley, *Hebrew Humanism in Italy: The Case of Biography*, *Prooftexts* 2 (May 1982): 163-77.

35. J. Eybeschütz, *luhot 'edut*, 17b. All three of these characterizations of Katzenellenbogen by Emden can be found in *She ilat Yavets*, 1:164, end. That volume was printed shortly after the chief rabbi died and shortly before the controversy began. See *Megillat sefer*, 132; *Iggeret purim* 32b. Emden also repeated these claims in *Iggeret purim*, 31b-32a.

36. *Shevirat luhat ha-aven*, 42b.

37. *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 40b. See also *Bet Yehonatan ha-sofer* (Altona, 1763?), 12a-b; *Iggeret purim* 227a, 33a.

38. The first edition of the work was published in 1749. See *Megillat sefer*, 154.

For Moses Hagiz, see E. Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*. Bloch was the author of several rabbinic works on the Mishnah and Shulhan 'arukh. See E. Duckesz, *Hakhmei AHW* (Hamburg, 1908), 24-26 (Hebrew), 9-10 (German).

39. *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 40b. See also 41a; *Sefer hit'avkut*, 9a; *Iggeret purim*, 32b; *Shevirat luhat ha-aven*, 42.a.

40. *Megillat sefer*, 134; see also 122,135. *Iggeret purim*, 31b.

For examples of this, see *She'ilat Yavets* 2:9, 10, 3437, 3942, 58, 60, 99, 167; see esp. 1:164: He did not read or study. His teachers did not explain it to him or he did not sufficiently serve them;; 1:171: Whence does he derive his authority to uproot a *halakhah* which was established and agreed upon by all the earlier and later sages of Israel All this is without any rhyme or reason or any proof at all, only that he so dreamt a dream His method is unknown. Perhaps he forgot or perhaps he never learned or he wrote [it] while dozing and lying down.

Emden made general reference to these anti-Kazenellenbogen responsa as a group in *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 40b, and *Shevirat luhat ha-aven*, 23b. In *Iggeret purim*, 32a, Emden argued that he benefited the community by publicly opposing many of the chief rabbi's rulings, thereby saving many from error.

41. *Megillat sefer*, 135. See too *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 40b: He did not know an explicit verse.

42. *Megillat sefer*, 135.

43. Ibid., 41, 122, 12728, 13334, 136. See also *Sefer hit'avkut*, 1b, and *Iggeret purim*, 31b, 41b: He excessively demeaned himself before the wealthy and greatly flattered those with money; *Shevirat luhat ha-aven*, 25a. Emden also noted that Katzenellenbogen received presents from his rich constituents. See *Megillat sefer*, 123,128.

44. *Megillat sefer*, 41-42,134.

45. Ibid., 13637.

46. Ibid., 13839.

47. Ibid., 124.

48. Ibid., 122. See also 12324; *Iggeret purim*, 31b.

49. Others have long noted the extreme intensity of Emden's animus versus Katzenellenbogen and have suggested various explanations for it. See, for example, Graetz-Shefer, *Divrei yemei yisrael* 8: 493, n. 2; 494, n. 1; 523-24, n.1 (the desire for victory); S. Bernfeld, *Dor holekh ve-dor ba*, *Hashilo'ah* 2 (1897): 73,75 (Emden resented anyone who occupied the rabbinical position he considered as the inheritance of his ancestors); Ben-Zion Katz,

Rabi Ya'akov Emden u-tekhunato, *Hashilo'ah* 4 (1898): 34243 (he resented the fact that Katzenellenbogen pressured the community's lay leadership not to allow him to print a responsum critical of the chief rabbi). On this latter point, see D. Kahane, Emet leYa'akov, *Hashilo'ah* 5 (3) (1899): 25960. S. Chones, *Sefer toledot ha-posekim* (Warsaw, 1929), 561, even goes so far as to say that Emden opposed Katzenellenbogen because he supported Eybeschütz! As indicated, I believe that all these explanations miss the real point.

50. See J. Eybeschütz, *Luhot 'edut*, 43b; *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 16b, 29a; *Sefat emet*, 43; *Iggeret purim*, 4a; *Sefer hit'avkut*, 12a.

51. *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 10b, 29a.

52. In addition to *Megillat sefer*, 99114, see other controversy-related tracts: *'Edut biYa'akov*, 13b-14b, 29a; *Shevirat luhah ha-aven*, 41b; *Torat ha-kena'ot*, 55b. See also *She Hat Yavets*, 2:24.

53. See above at n. 34.

54. *Megillat sefer*, 115f. In addition, see *'Edut bi-Ya'akov*, 5b, 14a; *Shevirt luhah haaven*, 23b, 41b-42a.

55. Other passages in *Megillat sefer* assume a clearer focus as well. For example, in criticizing R. Moses Hagiz, an older contemporary, Emden wrote (p. 118): It is not my desire to elaborate upon his shame *only that which is necessary for my defense* will I not hide, to teach my children and descendants, to remove accusation from upon me (emphasis added).

A similar analysis Emden's need, beginning in 1751, to defend himself against opponents who accused him of being a troublemaker who evinced only disrespect for illustrious rabbinic predecessors-explains why Emden began publishing his attack on R. Shlomo Zalman Hanau's *Sefer sha'arei tefillah* (Jessnitz, 1725)

in 1751. Although he composed his *Luah eresh* in 1729, he was reluctant to publish it (for reasons explained in my forthcoming introduction to a new edition of this work [Bnai Brak, 1998] and began to do so only after the outbreak of the Emden-Eybeschutz controversy in an attempt, as he explicitly writes, to defend himself against this very attack. See Hatsa'ah le-sefer luah eresh (n. 28, above), 76a. See too D. Kahane, Emet le-Ya'akov (n. 49, above), 257-58.

56. F. Hart, Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography, *New Literary History* (spring 1970): 491.

57. Arthur M. Cark, *Autobiography: Its Genesis and Phases* (Edinburgh, 1935), 22.

58. See, for example, to my brothers, my children and my descendants (p. 431, above).

59. Indeed, at times Emden clearly indicates this. For example, after presenting a long story about how the lay leaders of the community of Emden were fooled by unscrupulous characters seeking charity, he writes: May the princes listen and take heed and not trust their wealth (Megillat sefer, 110). He also refers to this work in his other writings. See, for example, Moru-ketsiah (1761) 1:103b, 2:2a; (1996), 286, 289.

For additional examples of this phenomenon, see Louis A. Renza, The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography, in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Oiney (Princeton, N.J., 1980), 293.

60. M. J. Cohen, Jacob Emden: Man of *Controversy* (Philadelphia, 1937), 23.

61. In a footnote, M. Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe*, 395, n. 82, already noted the polemic purpose of this work

that, in my opinion, is its fundamental focus. E. Carlebach writes (Converts and Their Narratives, 74): The life story . . . is not told for its own sake; it is transcended by its larger inspirational meaning. Substitute polemical for inspirational, and one has a perfect description of Megillat sefer.

It is also interesting to note that once Emden reaches the point in his autobiography when he is describing current events (*Megillat sefer*, 177), the work changes from autobiography to diary, from reflecting on events of the past to recording events of the present. For a similar phenomenon in Leone da Modena's autobiography, see M. Moseley, 122-26.

Having suggested this type of autobiographical strategy, I have no doubt that a reanalysis of many such works (e.g., Yizhak min ha-Nevi'im's *Medabber tahpukhot* [n. 6, above] will lead to considering them as part of this category.

62. W. B. Yeats, Preface and Reveries over Childhood and Youth, in *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats* (New York, 1953), 2.

63. J. P. Sartre, *Nausea* (New York, 1964), 39.

64. B. Bettelheim, *Freud's Vienna and Other Essays* (New York, 1990), ix.

65. Cited in A. M. Clark (n. 57, above), 14.

66. Charles Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley, *Autobiographies*, ed. Gavin de Beer (London, 1974), 100.

67. H. Leibowitz, *Fabricating Lives: Explorations in American Autobiography* (New York, 1989), 3.

68. Lillian Hellman, An Unfinished Woman, in *Three* (Boston, 1979), 279. See Maurice F. Brown, Autobiography and Memory: The Case of Lillian Hellman, *Biography* 8 (winter 1985): 1.

69. See Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (Cambridge, 1960); Ross Miller, Autobiography as Fact and Fiction: Franklin, Adams, Malcolm X, *Centennial Review* 16 (summer 1972): 221-32; J. W. Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Leipzig, 1993).

What Emily Dickinson once wrote in one other poems is very relevant to the problematics of autobiography: Tell all the truth. But tell it slant. Success in circuit lies See Richard B. Sewall, In Search of Emily Dickinson, in *Extraordinary Lives: The Art and Craft of American Biography*, ed. William Zinsser (Boston, 1986), 73.

For recent studies on the cognitive approach to the problematics of

autobiography, seeing it within the framework of memory research, see Gillian Cohen, *Memory in the Real World* (London, 1989), 117-28.

70. In this context, I have found the following articles, in addition to those cited elsewhere in this article, particularly helpful: Keith Rinehart, The Victorian Approach to Autobiography, *Modern Philology* 51 (February 1954): 177-86; Stephen A. Shapiro, The Dark Continent of Literature: Autobiography, *Comparative Literature Studies* 5 (December 1968): 421-54; Karl J. Weintraub, Autobiography and Historical Consciousness, *Critical Inquiry* 1 (June 1975): 821-48; Lionel Gossman, The Innocent Art of Confession and Reverie, *Daedalus* 107 (summer 1978): 59-77.

71. The quote comes from the title of Vladimir Nabokov's autobiography, *Invitation of a Memory* (New York, 1966).

72. *Megillat sefer*, 82. See Megillah 28a: One is prohibited from looking at the face of a wicked man.

73. See, for example, *Sefer hit'avkut*, 10a: and behold I swear that I love the Rabbi;

Iggeret purim, 4b, 13a. and I swear to you that I love him as you do and more; *Shevirat luhat ha-aven*, 22b, 23b, 39b; 'Edut bi-Ya'akov, 7a., 17b. Cf. 'Edut bi-Ya'akov, 30a.

74. See, e.g., S. Leiman, Mrs. Jonathan Eibeschutz's Epitaph, n. 19, above.

75. Emden sometimes publicly acknowledged that he forgot various facts. See, for example, *Megillat sefer*, 54, 56, 85, 92.

76. For Emden's attitude to history, see my Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1988), 516-29. For an example of Emden's historical accuracy, see Meir Benayahu, Ha-'hevrah kedoshah' shel Rabi Yehudah Hasid ve-aliyatah le-erez

Yisrael, *Sefunot* 3-4 (1959-1960): 167-68.

77. See, for example, B. Z. Katz, *Rabbanut, hasidut, haskalah* (Tel Aviv, 1956), 2:149-50; A. Bick (Sha'uli), R. Ya'akov Emden-Ruso 'Ivri, *Moznayim* 33 (3-4) (1971):275-77; idem, introduction to *Megillat sefer* (Jerusalem, 1979), 9-13; M. Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe*, 365-82. See too Micha Yosef Berdichevsky, *Shetei nashim bi-hayei Ya'akov Emden, Ha-tekufah* 10 (1921): 515-16.

78. For these phrases, see Samuel Johnson in *The Rambler*, no. 60 (October 13, 1750), cited in *Biography as an Art: Selected Criticism*, 1560-1960, ed. James L. Clifford (New York, 1962), 42.

79. For these and other examples, see Stephen Spender, Confessions and Autobiography, in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. J. Olney (Princeton, N.J., 1980), 115-22.

80. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. J. M. Cohen (Harmondsworth, 1953), 65, 17. See too p. 169: I promised to depict myself as I am.

81. Solomon Maimon, *Hayyei Shiomoh Maimon*, trans. S. Perlman (Tel Aviv, 1942), 170, cited in M. Moseley, *Jewish Autobiography in Eastern Europe*, 75, n. 1.

82. Shevet le-gav kesilim, Sefer shimush, 47a. For other explicit statements about the physical dangers attendant upon irregular sexual intercourse, see the first volume of Emden's Siddur, *Bet El, 'Amudei shamayim* (Altona, 1746), 352a-57a. It is precisely in this context that Emden framed his support for the halakhic permissibility of a concubine (*pilegesh*); see She'ilat Yavets 2:15.

For another very personal statement in this connection, see *Iggeret purim*, 42b.

83. Sha'arei shamayim (Altona, 1747), 71b-72a.

84. Divrei emet u-mishpat shalom (Altona, 1776), 29a.

85. *Megillat sefer*, 193.

86. I plan to deal with other aspects of this work, e.g., the state of its only extant manuscript, its literary style, and later reactions to it in the introduction to my forthcoming critical edition (n. 13, above).

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi: The Teacher

John M. Efron

In his famous epistle *It Is Time*, Franz Rosenzweig declared, the teacher and scholar must become one and the same person. It is justifiable to claim that Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi utterly fulfills Rosenzweig's ideal. Just as his scholarship represents the highest levels of intellectual innovation and engagement, so too Yerushalmi's teaching exemplifies the noble act of pedagogy. For those who have had the honor of taking his classes, the experience has been an unforgettable one. Few students have left his classroom who did not wish to be able to teach in the fashion of Yosef Yerushalmi.

As David Myers notes in his essay, Professor Yerushalmi often speaks of the historian's olfactory senses. By this he means the ability to sniff out the subtleties of historical processes, to identify the deeply embedded, to isolate the individual ingredient, and then to determine the amount each one has contributed to the formation of history. Given the complexity of Jewish history, the sheer dimensions of its diversity, the olfactory senses of the Jewish historian have to be especially keen. In the classroom setting, Yerushalmi treats his students to an astonishing display of the historian's skills. His encyclopedic knowledge of the Jewish past from biblical times to the modern age entrances students, as he deftly draws connections and distinctions, his own olfactory senses working in the classroom as acutely as they do in the private confines of his study.

In the undergraduate lecture there is a performative dimension to Yerushalmi's activity. There is not, however, a contrived feel to his performance. He does not resort to theatrics. He enters class just after,

not before his students, waits patiently for them to settle down, and then begins to weave his historical narrative. I have deliberately avoided the use of the verb *lecture*. That is not what he does. The narrative weave starts out as a loose and open one. By the end, it is tight, the central point securely swaddled in a rich and colorful fabric of contextualization.

Yerushalmi speaks with the exquisite eloquence of an orator. Whether he is reciting Judah ha-Levi by heart, describing in gripping detail the intrigues of Shlomo Molkho and David Reubeni, or analyzing the heated epistolary exchange on the Jewish problem between Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky, Yerushalmi's prodigious knowledge and inimitable style leave a lasting impression upon the student, as few others can. Irrespective of the topic, the lectures are delivered without notes. The pacing is perfect. The words flow, and they are spellbinding.

The jewel in Yerushalmi's teaching crown is the graduate seminar. It is an atmosphere permeated by a sense of heightened expectations. The students demand much of themselves and their peers, and Yerushalmi imposes the most exacting standards upon them. Whether painstakingly correcting the Hebrew he insists his students read aloud or presiding over a free-flowing discussion, Yerushalmi's presence at the head of the table is a commanding one. Not only is it a privilege to be in that room, but there is delight to be taken in the experience.

The range of seminar topics taught and with the expertise of a specialist is stunning: messianic movements in Judaism from antiquity to the modern period, Jews in Muslim and Christian Spain, Jewish responses to historical catastrophe, Jews in the Italian Renaissance and in seventeenth-century Holland, the Berlin Haskalah and *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and modern Jewish historiography. Nothing is beyond Yerushalmi's intellectual reach.

Another component of Yerushalmi's teaching is his role as dissertation supervisor. There is no more apt term than *Doktorvater* to describe what he does, for his relationship to his Ph.D. candidates is characterized by the seamless combination of expert professional guidance and paternal caring that the German word connotes. Yerushalmi's ability to direct aspiring scholars in so many disparate fields of research is reminiscent of his own teacher, Salo Wittmayer Baron. It was, then, a revealing moment for me when I first discussed my own dissertation topic with Professor Yerushalmi. He listened closely and quietly. When I had finished talking, he leaned forward in his chair and said matter-of-factly: Make an appointment to see Professor Baron to talk about it. I did, and I shall never forget that meeting in Baron's Claremont Avenue apartment near the Columbia University campus.

I soon realized, after I reported back to Professor Yerushalmi, that he

had not sent me on my mission because he was unsure whether there was a real topic there or because he deemed himself incapable of directing my work. It was, rather, out of respect and out of a profound sense of indebtedness that he felt to his own teacher. Great teachers are, for Yerushalmi, an incomparable resource. His own, such as Baron, Saul Lieberman, and Shalom Spiegel, were giants and left an indelible impression upon him and his own teaching method and philosophy. Sending me to Baron was also Yerushalmi's way of saying, Go! Be in the presence of greatness. It is important for your own personal and professional development. The mere issuance of the directive itself was Yerushalmi teaching.

If Yosef Yerushalmi's scholarship is a vehicle for his own deeply personal exploration of the modern Jewish condition, a means to unearth and examine the ruptures and radical breaks with the past, then his teaching is, in some ways, a counterbalance to that exercise. For it is in the classroom that he steps into his most traditional Jewish role, that of teacher. There Yerushalmi's link with the Jewish past is forged in his demeanor, at once warm, nurturing, stern, and exacting. It is also apparent in the overall atmosphere that he generates, one in which scholarly investigation is inseparably linked with issues of personal identity.

While his scholarship has wrestled with the problems arising from the mod-

ern demand that Jews reconcile their own particularism with the universal, Yosef Yerushalmi's teaching also reflects the perfect harmonization of *Torat ha-adam* (secular knowledge) and *Torat adonai* (sacred knowledge). This is most manifest at Columbia University, where Yerushalmi has on more than one occasion expressed his joy in teaching the core curriculum course. In this setting he indulges his intense passion for Western civilization's great books. But with his variegated background, he sheds light on them from a host of personal and professional angles: a first-generation American Jew, a distinguished historian, a world-class intellectual. However, for the multitude of students who have known him, Professor Yerushalmi is, most simply yet profoundly, *morenu*, our teacher.

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