

Dorot: The McGill Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies



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D O R O T:

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Preface:

Dr. Eric Caplan

Department Head, Jewish Studies

There are so many journals in the academic world that we often take them for granted. But *Dorot* is not your average journal. It is written and edited by students with no faculty involvement. And because the students who create *Dorot* are often in their final year at McGill, each year a new group of students must take on the difficult task of putting the journal together. *Dorot* exists because the Department of Jewish Studies is continuously blessed with a cadre of gifted majors and minors who are committed to publicizing their research and who have the talent required to get this done.

Congratulations to all of the students whose work is published here. My colleagues and I reap great pleasure from your work and are grateful to work in an environment where undergraduates produce high quality research. I have no doubt that all of you will continue to enjoy much success in the coming years.

Special thanks to Ricky Kreitner for getting this year's journal going and to Mikie Schwartz for overseeing the final stages of its design and production.

Eric Caplan

Chair, Department of Jewish Studies

Introduction:

Ricky Kreitner and Michael A. Schwartz

Editors-in-Chief

We are delighted and honoured to present to you the 2012 Edition of *Dorot*, the Undergraduate Journal of the Jewish Studies Students Association of McGill.

It is always exciting to afford promising students an opportunity to share their new knowledge with others. *Dorot* is one such opportunity, and its existence and continued vitality are a testament to the dynamism of the Jewish Studies program at McGill University and its students and faculty. The sheer range and diversity of topics *Dorot* addresses similarly showcases the multi-disciplinary nature of the Jewish Studies field – encompassing topics as varied as history, literature, and religion to name but three aspects of Jewish Studies.

Justin Joseph Herzig Cuperfain's Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera: A Man After The Truth is an engaging profile of the aforementioned Iberian Jewish thinker and attempt to understand this individual and his positive attitude towards Jewish study of philosophy as a reflection of the environment in which he lived.

Ricky Kreitner's Deafening Silence: Walter Lippmann, Judaism, and the Jews is a lucid treatment of the ambiguous and controversial relationship between this American intellectual and the German-Jewish and broader American-Jewish communities from which he sprang.

Jennifer Leibovitch's Images of Nature in the Two Stories, "The Calf" and "Tevye Strikes it Rich," and an Analysis of Their Effect on the Overall Meanings of Each Story is an

engrossing exploration of the multivalent and powerful effects of nature imagery in the works of two of Yiddish literature's most beloved authors.

Michael A. Schwartz's The People of the Book in the Bedroom: Perceptions and Realities in Contemporary American Jewish Sexuality explores the many elements, academic and popular, of American Jewish Sexuality is an absorbing overview of American Jewish sexual ethos and practice, as reflected in both formal study and popular culture.

And Martina Vidlakova's The Voices from Within: Exploring the Implications and Prospects of Haredi Military Service Exemption provides a comprehensive examination and analysis of the origin, realities, and possible future prospects of the controversial exemption of Israeli Ultra-Orthodox men from IDF service.

It is our happy task to thank several individuals and organizations without support this edition could not have come to fruition:

Lauren Silver and Ellie Wall ably edited several of the papers contained in this journal. The Jewish Studies Students' Association (JSSA) as a whole has been of considerable assistance to us, as has Rebekah M. Hartz.

The Basha Art Gallery of Jerusalem, its owner Avinoam Cohen, and artist Eduard Grossman graciously granted us permission to use Mr. Grossman's stunning artwork for our cover.

We also wish to thank members of our fellow McGill undergraduate student associations, specifically Alex Wapia and the staff of the *History Students Association Journal* and Sarah Binns and the other staff of *Hirundo*, the Classics Department Journal, for their kind assistance.

Many thanks are also due to Prof. Eric Caplan, Jewish Studies Department Head, for his encouragement and support of *Dorot* as well as the entire Jewish Studies faculty and Ms. Stefka Iorgova for their dedication, enthusiasm, and guidance.

Finally, we thank all the Jewish Studies students for their involvement, both all those who submitted papers and those whose papers appear before you.

The name of this journal, *Dorot*, means generations in Hebrew. We are proud to be links in a long chain of learners of Jewish Studies, including those who have come before us, and those who will come after us.

In Pirke Avot (Ethics of the Fathers), a Mishnaic compilation of teachings and maxims of the early Rabbis, Rabbi Tarfon is quoted as saying, “It is not incumbent upon you to complete the work, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it¹.”

We hope you find *Dorot* to be an edifying and enjoyable read.

¹ Pirke Avot, 2:21

Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera:

A Man After The Truth

Justin Joseph Herzig Cuperfain

It is fitting that the question of whether one should study philosophy in addition to Jewish law is a philosophical question in its own right. Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera chooses to undertake this task in his work, *The Epistle of the Debate*. The subtitle of his aforementioned work is “In Explanation of the Agreement that Exists Between The Law and Wisdom” which summarizes his belief that Jewish studies and philosophy exist in harmony. Falaquera argues that for those versed in Jewish learning, there is a necessity to study philosophy with the purpose of acquiring a deeper understanding of Judaism, which in turn will allow them to become closer to G-d.

When studying any text, philosophical or otherwise, it is important to know who the author is, the context of the time in which he/she wrote the work, and who his/her influences were in order to gain added depth and scope to the work. Falaquera was one of the preeminent, yet somewhat disregarded, Jewish philosophers of the thirteenth century. Falaquera lived circa 1225-1295 in either Northern Spain or Provence (Hughes 55). It is thought by some historians that he was a physician but there is no actual evidence for how he supported himself (Jospe 10). It is known that he was an author and wrote extensive amounts of poetry and philosophy and was clearly well versed in Greek, Arabic, and Jewish philosophy, as well as Jewish Law (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Falaquera lived in a time of uncertainty and turmoil for the Jewish people. He wrote on two different occasions that “it is an hour of hardship and oppression; the hand of the nations is

strong against us” and “How can the miserable Jew be happy?” (Jospe 4) He also grew up during the Maimonides controversies of the 1230s (referring to whether Maimonides’ philosophical works should be banned or not), which significantly influenced him. The epicenter of the Maimonides debate was in Northern Spain and Provence, with radicals on either side. Falaquera witnessed this and chose to become the bridge between the two opposing voices (Hughes 51-52). *The Epistle of the Debate* reflects these tensions.

By acting as a bridge, Falaquera is often criticized for lacking originality. However, Falaquera was not trying to be original. He said himself that “Know that these words which I say in the these chapters... are not matters which I invented on my own, nor interpretations which I innovated, but rather I gleaned them from the sayings of the sages... and from the words of the philosophers” (Jospe 6). This perceived lack of novel thinking resulted in Falaquera being pushed to the side in philosophical discourse. It is ironic that many philosophers choose to ignore him because of his supposed lack of originality, yet these same individuals who make their careers learning and teaching others’ philosophies are not original either (Harvey xiv). Lawrence Berman, the Jewish academic, sees Falaquera not as a philosopher but rather as an “excellent historian of philosophy” (Jospe 9). Steven Harvey, an authority on Falaquera, takes this point one step further by stating that no one can learn more about medieval philosophy than from Falaquera (Harvey xiv).

People who simply label Falaquera as an unoriginal thinker completely misunderstand the purpose of *The Epistle of the Debate*. As mentioned earlier, he is writing this at a time of real inquiry in the Jewish world (and for that matter in all religions), on whether studying philosophy should be permitted and accepted. Both Islam and Judaism feared philosophy would lead to heresy (Harvey x). Falaquera asserts that “Fools think that between the Law/ and Thought there

is at all times war/... [but] They do not understand that wisdom/ Is a twin sister of the law” (Falaquera 13-14). He supports his thesis by referencing how throughout Jewish history, philosophy and Judaism have been intertwined. Falaquera’s concern is that as of the thirteenth century, mainstream Judaism has forgotten how this interdependence could and should co-exist.

Falaquera builds his case by showing specific incidents where the acquisition of interdisciplinary studies and knowledge from other groups had been an accepted norm. Jewish sages used to study math, astronomy, and the sciences. Solomon’s wisdom exceeded the science of the law (Falaquera 44). David’s books (Falaquera 36-37) and the lost books of the sages were full of the study of demonstrative science and philosophy (Falaquera 38). These scientific and philosophical pursuits were driven by the desire to become better Jews and become closer to G-d (Falaquera 40). However, these pursuits remained hidden, as philosophy was not intended for the masses. That is why there is no demonstrative speculation in the Scripture itself (Harvey 90). To Falaquera, studying philosophy leads one closer to the truth, which is equitable to likening oneself to G-d. This exemplifies the Biblical notion of “to cleave onto him”. Falaquera is not only saying philosophy and Judaism should be studied together, but that it is mandated. Abraham, the first Jew, the first Monotheist, found G-d and truth through intellect as there was no tradition on which to base his beliefs. It was Abraham’s ability to use proofs as a means for sharing his understanding of the universe and monotheism that gained him a following in a Pagan world (Falaquera 32-33).

Falaquera frames his work by creating a hypothetical debate between two observant Jews. One man, referred to as the pietist, devotes his time to studying Jewish laws and rejects the notion that Jews should study philosophy. The second man, the scholar (possibly Falaquera himself), immerses himself in both the study of Jewish law and philosophy. Both men are

seeking the truth. The scholar urges the pietist and the reader not to rely on rumours about what philosophy is. One cannot be against what he/she does not know (Falaquera 20-21). Both characters are depicted as learned Jews because that is the audience Falaquera writes this for, and he has the scholar bring in proofs from the Tanach to be more relatable. He acknowledges that the study of philosophy is a difficult endeavor; as such, he promotes the idea that this pursuit of knowledge should be reserved for the educated and devout Jew who can develop a grounding in logic in order to better refute what is not true. For the multitude tradition is sufficient, but they will not achieve perfection (Harvey 91). However, he is not as strict as Maimonides regarding who should be allowed to study philosophy. In The Guide of the Perplexed, Maimonides jumps between ideas and makes certain parts unnecessarily confusing to dissuade most people from reading it (Harvey ix). Maimonides and Abraham Ibn Daud actually direct the reader in the beginning of their books to stop reading. Acting as a contrarian, Falaquera encourages one to continue reading (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). He does not speak like an obtuse philosopher (Harvey 94). Falaquera purposely writes in simple Hebrew, mainly rhyming prose, that is not technical in order for it to be easily understood (Hughes 58), and in the form of engaging dialogue so as to attract the largest audience (Hughes 74).

This philosophy is not just for the serious philosophers who read The Guide of the Perplexed, but for learned Jews whom he believed would also benefit from philosophy. This text is philosophy for beginners: a starter text (Harvey ix). Falaquera's intent is merely to open the door to the field of study. He makes the case for philosophy without philosophizing. He is a philosophic populizer (Hughes 50). He reveals no profound truths in this text, but in fact ends the dialogue by having the scholar agree to write the pietest three books of philosophy, which will lead the pietest to the truth. His later philosophical writings are based on the texts the scholar

agrees to write. Whereas, some individuals in his community wanted everyone to learn philosophy, he chooses to be more discriminate. This text is a bridge between philosophy and Judaism, which funnels only selected people to venture down the bridge. He is taking the middle ground between inviting everyone to study philosophy and only the select few (Hughes 64).

Arguably his biggest problem in writing *The Epistle of the Debate* was that at that time, many Jews were not interested in learning philosophy; they believed the Torah provided them everything they needed: truth, a way of life, and meaning (what Maimonides and Falaquera would call a “simple faith”). They saw the pursuit of philosophy leading to heresy. The Talmudic story of the four great Rabbis who entered the Pardes (garden of metaphysical thought) where only Rabbi Akiva emerged unscathed is a cautionary tale of the risk of combining the study of philosophy and Jewish Law. In what was a dire time for the Jewish people, philosophy seemed like an unnecessary and scary addition to the learning curriculum. Falaquera has to convince the pietist and the Jews by defending and explaining the merits of philosophy (Harvey xi).

By most accounts it appears that the two major influences on Falaquera’s work were Averroes (Ibn Rushd) and Maimonides (Harvey 84). Around 1179, the Muslim philosopher, Averroes, wrote a short work entitled “*The Decisive Treatise, Determining What Connection There is Between Law and Wisdom.*” Falaquera’s *Epistle* is subtitled with the very similar, “In Explanation of the Agreement that Exists Between The Law and Wisdom” They both discuss the theme of philosophy and religious law, and it is known that Falaquera had quoted many works by Averroes. M.D. Geffen, a Jewish academic, says that Falaquera’s work is based on Averroes (Harvey 83-84) and there is strong support for this. Both Averroes’ and Falaquera’s works are divided into three parts, on two of which they concur. The two authors both have a section on how philosophy does not contradict their respective religions and a section on how their religion

encourages the pursuit of philosophy. However, Falaquera does not talk about philosophical interpretation of Scripture like the *Decisive Treatise* does (Harvey 86) because that is not purpose of his book. He chooses to stay clear of this topic. By not adding that part to his work, he adds integrity to the message that he is trying to convey and he is able to attract a wider and more open audience. In addition, Averroes is much more strict about who should learn philosophy because he sees a danger in it (Harvey 87). From this perspective, Averroes is closer to Maimonides and Ibn Daud.

Both authors had a similar purpose in their writings but their intentions differed. Averroes was trying to justify the role of the philosopher and cancel the charges of infidelity to Islam from the Al-Ghazali (who were against the study of Greek philosophy) and show why the Almohad princes treated these philosophers well (Harvey 93). As mentioned earlier, Falaquera wrote in the wake of the Maimonides controversies, with the purpose of showing learned Jews that there is a harmony between philosophy and Jewish Law (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). His writings also served as a tool to help defend Judaism from internal and external attacks regarding fundamental principles and beliefs. The implicit message from these authors is that while Islam needs philosophers, Judaism needs philosophy (Harvey 96).

Judaism needs philosophy because, as Falaquera explains, if one sees something with his/her own eyes, he/she will believe it more than if someone else merely says it to be so. One cannot claim something does not exist to someone who experienced it as truth. One can say G-d exists and revelation is passed down from generation to generation because of tradition, but “your faith will be stronger if you attain it through your intellect than it is [when you attain it] through tradition” (Falaquera 23). Falaquera believes that while gaining a higher truth,

understanding philosophy puts the leaders of Judaism in a better position to ward off ideological threats through an enhanced understanding of logic and demonstrative proofs and syllogisms.

The other major influence on Falaquera was Maimonides, the greatest Jewish philosopher of the Medieval Ages (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). No Jewish philosopher who comes after Maimonides can ignore him. Falaquera does not mention Maimonides once in the text (Hughes 59), as it would have detracted from his message. He did not want to explicitly bring Maimonides into the conversation at this point, even though his work was trying to prove that works such as the The Guide of the Perplexed should be studied. In fact, later in his philosophic career, Falaquera wrote a book, The Guide of the Guide (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) as a commentary and analysis of The Guide of the Perplexed. At times he disagrees with Maimonides and even says that sometimes Maimonides misinterprets Aristotle (Jospe 29). Some of the general philosophy that Falaquera touches on in his *Epistle*, for example G-d being the first cause is a Maimonidean/ Aristotelian/Al-Farabian approach. Like Maimonides, Falaquera says that not every philosopher is a prophet but that every prophet is a philosopher. Maimonides and Falaquera both agree that a prophet needs ethical virtues and intellect, but Maimonides discusses the imagination of prophets while the *Epistle* does not touch on it (gleaned from reading the *Epistle of Debate* and The Guide of the Perplexed). Falaquera's text urges the study of philosophy and the law. Maimonides' Guide preaches the same, but only to the "perplexed".

When living as a Jew in a secular world it is inevitable that one will be exposed to secular pursuits. Falaquera understands this and uses a common metaphor of his time to say that studying philosophy should be equitable to eating pomegranate seeds and throwing away the peel (Falaquera 18). His message is to be discriminate in what information is absorbed and

applied; there is a need to create a filter which ensures that only the aspects of philosophy that deepen Jewish learning are internalized. That is one of the reasons why only the learned should be able to study philosophy because it is a very hard thing to do. Jethro, an idol worshipper, helped Moses revamp the court systems (Falaquera 18-19). If Moses was able to learn from idolaters, then other Jews should be able to as well. It is saddening that soon after Falaquera's death, Solomon Ibn Adret (Rashba), a Jewish leader of Spain, banned anyone under the age of twenty-five from studying Greek works (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Harvey says that for committed Jews, philosophy helps "clarify the meaning of the fundamentals of our religion" (Harvey 126) and it creates a quest for the truth, even if it is unattainable (Harvey 126). Sadly, Falaquera did not accomplish the purpose of his work. His ideas were neither valued nor recognized; as such, Falaquera remains a relatively unknown, often forgotten authority in the combining of Jewish studies and philosophy debate.

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Deafening Silence:

Walter Lippmann, Judaism, and the Jews

Ricky Kreitner

“If Walter lived in a Jewish world, he was never fully of it. He was a young man whose interests knew no ethnic boundaries, and whose ambitions would not be limited by them. He had no intention of being confined to a gilded ghetto, to its materialism, its political conservatism, its narrowness, and its exclusive Jewishness... He had every reason to believe that he could be whatever he wanted.”

– Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*

“Thus it seems to him that he makes himself a Jew at the very moment he forces himself to flee the Jewish reality; that he is engaged in a struggle in which he is always vanquished and in which he becomes his own enemy.”

– Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*

Late 19th century New York City was marked by heightened tension within the American Jewish community, with the uptown, aristocratic German “Yahudim” asserting their superiority over the recent arrivals from Eastern Europe – the unrefined, unclean, medieval “ostjuden.” These protestations were intended mostly for Gentile consumption, as a plea for them to not judge all Jews in general by this new influx of supposedly backward immigrants. Those Jews of German origin considered themselves more American, more assimilated, and more civilized than the Eastern Europeans; they resented this new wave of immigration as an unhelpful burden and a disruption. They had been making great advances within American society, and expected – rather correctly, as it turned out – that this new wave of immigration would complicate and jeopardize what had theretofore been a very successful process of

Americanization. This culture of uptown German-Jewish exceptionalism was the milieu into which was born one Walter Lippmann on September 23, 1889.

The young Lippmann had minimal contact with Judaism as anything more substantive than one other small part of who he and those around him were. The emphasis for German Jews in those years of heavy Russian immigration was on limiting the extent to which Judaism defined one as a person and as an American. Lippmann biographer Ronald Steel described in his book *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* the situation of the German Jew in America in the late 19th century:

Unlike the immigrant Jews on the Lower East Side, they did not feel cut off from the mainstream of American culture. Indeed, they were eager to be a part of it, and believed the path lay through assimilation. This meant submerging rather than affirming their Jewishness, relegating it to a small and unimportant part of their identity. For them Judaism was not a matter of pride or a question to be discussed, but an infirmity that could be rendered innocuous, perhaps unnoticeable, by being ignored... Theirs was a time when young intellectuals were inspired by a cultural cosmopolitanism that ignored or actively tried to eliminate ethnic differences. If assimilation was not the highest goal, it was at least a necessary way station on the road to a universal society.²

This seems only a partial answer. While a cosmopolitan wish for the erasure of ethnic differences certainly accounts somewhat for Lippmann's distancing himself from Judaism, it does not tell the whole story. There are also deeply personal and psychological causes. By ignoring and in some ways denying his Jewish origins, Lippmann was denying a part of himself. With only a few exceptions, Lippmann did not write about Judaism, either personally or generally, throughout his entire career, a rather remarkable, and obviously intentional, achievement considering that that career spanned the better part of a century. That silence, as well as the few dramatic exceptions to it, demonstrates the sensitivity Lippmann felt regarding Judaism. He was deeply insecure, and the host to what can be called with only moderate hyperbole an internal civil war. We can best understand Lippmann's choice to ignore his Jewish identity in the context of the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's profile of the "inauthentic Jew," who

². Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 9.

desperately, and, in the end, unsuccessfully, attempts to escape from his Jewish identity. Ultimately, however, we must consider Walter Lippmann as the product of a very unique sociocultural situation for the Jew in the United States, and moral judgment of him is difficult to fairly and simply render.

* * *

When he was neither being shown by his affluent parents the citadels of European Gentile achievement nor “taking the waters” with his family in that paragon of Yahudim privilege, Saratoga Springs, the young Walter Lippmann studied his Latin, Greek, and other secular subjects at an eminent uptown Reform institution, the Sachs School for Boys. Ronald Steel describes the Sachs School as “designed to produce cultivated young gentlemen who at the age of sixteen would be ready to enter either business or Harvard,” and enter Harvard Lippmann soon did.³

Lippmann’s years at Harvard represent the beginning of his intimate relationship with the largely Gentile American establishment into which he spent his entire life attempting to enter. Steel writes of Lippmann and his group of intellectually-minded acquaintances:

They wrote plays and poems, edited the literary and political magazines, and argued long into the night. Lippmann’s room at Weld hall became a place for them to sit around the fire while drinking beer, reading poetry, and speculating on their professors and the meaning of life. “it has been such a wild time,” Walter wrote Lucile [Elsas, “a New York girl with whom he was conducting a shy romance”⁴] after one of these sessions; “metaphysics, Socialism, art theories, Schopenhauer, a vitality in religion – every night till late in the morning and then dissatisfaction and bed.”⁵

It is interesting that Lippmann should mention “a vitality in religion” as one of the topics of discussion among these largely Jewish, largely ostracized friends. There is no evidence Lippmann was then much interested in Judaism as a specific or in any way credible version of the religious vitality so exalted. Indeed, it seems more that the “vitality in religion” discussed around Lippmann’s fire were influenced

³. Steel, 6.

⁴. Ibid., 14.

⁵. Ibid., 15-6.

by the writings of the Harvard philosophers William James, author of 1902's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, with whom Lippmann was having tea every week beginning in the autumn of 1908, and George Santayana, whom Ronald Steel describes as having "valued religion aesthetically rather than as a guide to morality."⁶ Regardless, though we are not privy to the contents of these late-night discussions, it is clear Lippmann was interested in cultivating himself in every way and in exploring every facet of himself except his Jewishness. However, we can hardly assume that this means the issue was never raised.

Despite the Sachs School for Boys' tendency to send graduates to Harvard, anti-Jewish bigotry was prominent and even explicit during this period at America's oldest and most distinguished institution of higher education. The pinnacle of social life at Harvard was the "final clubs," similar to Princeton's famous eating clubs as the home of the well-off undergraduates fortunate and respected enough to be accepted. Naturally, Lippmann saw these clubs as his opportunity to gain a foothold in the collegiate elite, a position from which he could move on to even more illustrious things. He set out specifically to earn himself an invitation from one of the clubs, usually extended in sophomore year to "athletes, men of social distinction, hard workers, such as editors of the *Crimson* and the *Lampoon*, and the managers of the major athletic teams."⁷ Eagerly, Lippmann campaigned for manager of the freshman track team; he instead won second assistant manager. In any case, the Harvard clubs did not even consider Jews for acceptance.

When Lippmann realized he was not going to be invited to join some of Harvard's most prestigious clubs, he formed his own: the Socialist Club. As Ronald Steel writes, "Since he could not be

⁶. Ibid., 19.

⁷. Steel, 14.

an insider at Harvard, he would become a brilliant outsider.”⁸ Lippmann adopted personally the cause of the less-privileged undergraduates still living in the Harvard Yard campus dormitories against the more deeply entrenched aristocratic students living in private dormitories off-campus. Scheduling through the Debating Club a public meeting on the rising tensions between the two undergraduate groups, Lippmann delivered a forceful tirade on the evils of faction and “social snobbery” on the campus. His audience was astonished, “as if a sacrilege had been spoken,” in words of his friend, the journalist and poet John Reed.⁹ But if Lippmann adopted the cause of the ostracized undergraduates as his own, as Steel notes,

Lippmann never wrote about the incident, nor did he ever again seriously challenge a system of discrimination that excluded people on the grounds of race or religion. Whatever pain his exclusion from the clubman’s Harvard gave him, it was buried too deep for him to speak of it openly...But the memory of a hurt was there. At his twenty-fifth class reunion he told the widow of a classmate that her husband was one of the first Gentiles who had been kind to him.¹⁰

Again, as with his private conversations about “vitality in religion,” the most minor exceptions to Lippmann’s lifelong silence on religion and Judaism are all the more instructive for their being minor exceptions. We see in this later conversation with the widow, the only documented evidence of Lippmann talking about his being ostracized at Harvard because he was a Jew, that Lippmann only considered himself a Jew only to the extent that the Gentiles surrounding him considered him a Jew. This is a remarkable and interesting phenomenon for the modern Jew in America. After he has shed nearly every facet of what it has meant for millennia to be a Jew – the religious beliefs, the way of life, the self-identification – the world still refuses to accept him as anything else but a Jew. It is only in the world’s refusal to accept the Jew as a man rather than as a Jew that he continues to consider himself Jewish at all. This means that the Gentile world will resist the Jew’s attempts to force that world to

⁸. Ibid., 28.

⁹. Ibid., 29.

¹⁰. Steel, 29.

consider him on his own terms. As will be shown elsewhere in this essay, the assimilative quest can often be ultimately futile, and in some ways for Lippmann actually was.

Upon graduation from Harvard, Lippmann gradually formed himself into the public intellectual he had always wanted to be. His 1913 book, *A Preface to Politics*, was widely influential and praised. He then founded the *New Republic* magazine with several other Progressive reformers. It became almost immediately successful as the most prominent literary and political journal for the educated reformists, favoured by the likes of Teddy Roosevelt and many others. Lippmann's career as the most famous American political thinker had truly begun. Although Lippmann had abandoned his earlier flirtations with socialism, he had become a pre-eminent figure in the Progressive movement, his editorials frequently cited and respected by influential Americans all the way up to President Woodrow Wilson, who befriended and consulted the remarkably young Lippmann. Lippmann had been largely accepted by the wider Protestant culture in America. Many otherwise restrictive social clubs in New York and Washington permitted Lippmann to join as their "token Jew"; others refused him even that honour. But he never complained or publicly voiced his disappointment. Lippmann's silence, though rarely broken, was fraught with tension and with meaning.

It is noteworthy that a study of Walter Lippmann's relationship to Judaism need not examine in any depth any other part of his six-decade career but the period between 1915 and 1922. It is only between these dates that he writes at all about what it means to be Jewish in America. Only by examining his few Jewish-related writings from this date can one attempt to understand what Lippmann thought of Judaism and of himself as a Jew, and why.

In the first decade of Lippmann's writing career, Jewish nationalism in the United States was finally beginning to gain some traction. The conversion of Louis D. Brandeis to Zionism, and his adamant rejection of the accusation that "dual loyalty" for the Jew would be un-American, was an

important event in the history of Zionism in America. Brandeis was the first prominent member of the German-Jewish establishment to accept what had until then been almost entirely an Eastern European immigrant phenomenon; afterward, many prominent German-Jewish figures followed Brandeis into the Zionist movement, with varying degrees of intensity of feeling.

Lippmann remained unmoved. Henry Hurwitz, a Harvard classmate of Lippmann's and then the editor of the *Menorah Journal* (published by the Menorah Society, which was founded at Harvard while Lippmann was there, explicitly dedicated to protecting Jews in the university's largely unfriendly atmosphere¹¹), was disturbed to read in Lippmann's 1915 book, *The Stakes of Diplomacy*: "Jew-baiting produced the ghetto and is compelling Zionism, the bad economic habits of the Jew, his exploiting of simple people, has caused his victims to assert their own nationality."¹² Not only is this interesting for Lippmann's reference to Jews only in the third person – as if begging Gentile readers not to mistake *him* for one of *them* – but also because Lippmann blames the Jews themselves for the persecution they have so long endured. Hurwitz complained to Lippmann in a letter: "Here is a Jew who unqualifiedly repeats the false allegations of anti-Semitism."¹³ Again, Lippmann was unmoved, responding to Hurwitz:

Nothing is more disheartening to me than the kind of tribal loyalty which you ask of me. You need not expect it from me. You need not expect me to subscribe to the myth of an innocent Jewish people unreasonably persecuted the world over. The guilt is not as one-sided as most Jews would like to believe.¹⁴

Afraid perhaps of sounding indirect, Lippmann offered: "My personal attitude is to be far severer upon the faults of Jews than upon those of other people."¹⁵ Evidently so. The next year, Lippmann was invited by the *Menorah Journal* to respond to an article by the non-Jewish intellectual Randolph Bourne

¹¹. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 30.

¹². Steel, 189.

¹³. Ibid.

¹⁴. Ibid.

¹⁵. Ibid.

praising Zionism as a positive development for America, Judaism, and American Jewry. Lippmann was occupied at the time with his *New Republic* responsibilities – transitioning at the time from pacifism to advocating American entry into the war in Europe – and could only muster a short personal response. Of Judaism, Lippmann wrote to Henry Hurwitz: “If you get rid of the theory and the biological mysticism and treat the literature as secular, just what elements of a living culture are left? Of a culture that is distinct and especially worth cultivating?”¹⁶ Lippmann thought there was nothing left, nothing worth cultivating.

Throughout the war and the peace conference to Versailles – where he acted as the unofficial secretary for the American delegation – Lippmann was silent on Jewish identity and Jewish issues. Upon return to the United States in 1921, however, Hurwitz again asked Lippmann to comment on Judaism and Jewish identity in the modern age. Leon Simon had just published a short book called *Studies in Nationalism*, which praised Zionism as the proper ideology for the modern American Jew; Hurwitz persuaded Lippmann to write a review of Simon’s book for the *Menorah Journal*. Lippmann consented, and forwarded his article with instructions that nobody but the editor should see it. Shortly thereafter, Lippmann abruptly changed his mind, asking Hurwitz to return the draft of the book review. Frustrated, Hurwitz consented and sent it back only after making a copy, unbeknownst to the author. The copy Hurwitz made is the only reason we are now privy to some of Lippmann’s more vitriolic thoughts regarding Judaism and the Jews. Lippman calls himself

one of those assimilated creatures to whom the Jewish past has no very peculiar intimate appeal, who find their cultural roots where they can, have no sense of belonging to the Chosen People, and tremble at the suggestion that God has imprudently put all his best eggs in one tribal basket.¹⁷

¹⁶. Ibid., 188.

¹⁷. Steel, 190.

Clearly, Lippmann appropriated wholesale from the worst anti-Semites their judgment of the Jewish people by patently false stereotypes. With unbelievable myopia, Lippmann tells Hurwitz: “People who are tremendously concerned about their identification, their individuality, their self-expression, or their sense of humour always seem to be missing the very things they pursue.”¹⁸ It must have been quite evident to Hurwitz – especially in the context of Lippmann’s request for the return of the manuscript – that the writer himself was one of those “people who are tremendously concerned about their identification.”

In 1922, Lippmann finally made public his opinions on the situation of the American Jew. The *American Hebrew* invited Lippmann, as well as other, both Jewish and non-Jewish, intellectuals, to contribute on the topic, “The Better Understanding Between Jew and Non-Jew in America.” Lippmann submitted an article called “Public Opinion and the American Jew,” which left little to the imagination regarding his own thoughts about Judaism. Lippmann noted famously that the main reason Jews provoked so much hatred from non-Jews was their conspicuousness; they brought their own troubles upon themselves. It was the classic uptown German-Jewish response to the perceived sloth and filth among their Lower East Side co-religionists. For a writer known for his depth and critical abilities, Lippmann demonstrated remarkable reliance on classic stereotypical ideas about Jews:

I worry about upper Broadway on a Sunday afternoon where everything that is feverish and unventilated in the congestion of a city rises up as a warning that you cannot build up a decent civilization among people who, when are at last, after centuries of denial, free to go to the land and cleanse their bodies, now huddle together in a steam-heated slum.¹⁹

It was a fascinatingly simplistic outburst, all the more so for its singularity among Lippmann’s literary output. Essentially the issue was conspicuousness, Lippmann’s justification for his argument that the Jew could not afford to make as many mistakes as Gentiles. But one only finds conspicuously Jewish

¹⁸. Ibid.

¹⁹. Steel, 192.

faults if one is looking for them, and in the right places. Ronald Steel comments, “That newly rich Gentiles might be equally conspicuous was irrelevant, for they were judged by different standards.”²⁰ Importantly, Steel places the emphasis on human judgment. Lippmann posited an entirely different view, that it was something inherent about the Jew which made him more conspicuous, and therefore targeted. The solution was clear: the inconspicuousness of silence, which Lippmann himself had, but for this one outburst, perfected.

On only one other occasion did Lippmann publicly confront the situation of Judaism and the Jews in the 20th century America. The President of Harvard University, A. Lawrence Lowell, insisted that the number of Jews at the university must somehow be reduced. A committee was set up to examine the “problem” and possible solutions to it. When asked his opinion on the issue, Lippmann agreed that the percentage of Jews on campus was inappropriately disproportionate to their number in the wider population, and that something should be done to lessen it. He did not think – or at least claimed to not think – that exact quotas were necessarily the proper solution to the problem; in classic Lippmann hyperbole, he called their potential adoption by Harvard “an abandonment of its best tradition.”²¹ Curiously, he did not think it an abandonment of anything important for him to write to the committee: “[The Jews] hand on unconsciously and uncritically from one generation to another many distressing personal and social habits, which were selected by a bitter history and intensified by a pharasaical theology.”²² Though this statement is perhaps too egregious for comment, the use of the morally neutral “bitter” to describe the history of the Jews is quite a good starting-point for someone trying to understand Lippmann’s state of mind regarding Judaism and the Jews. When Jews and Gentiles clash at Harvard, Lippmann wrote, “my sympathies are with the non-Jew...His personal manners and physical

²⁰. Ibid.

²¹. Steel, 192.

²². Ibid., 194.

habits are, I believe, distinctly superior to the prevailing manners and habits of the Jews.”²³ He preferred less explicit tactics for Harvard to limit the number of Jews in attendance; such as raising the scores necessary for an applicant to be admitted, and widening the geographical area from which admitted students would be selected. When President Lowell decided to go ahead with the quota system anyway, Lippmann attacked him rather viciously in the press as “a man who has lost his grip on the great tradition which made Harvard one of the true spiritual centres of American life.”²⁴ This can be easily dismissed as typical Lippmann rhetoric. Ronald Steel writes:

Though Lippmann was offended by the quota system, he accepted the mentality behind it: that Jews were conspicuously different from the white Gentile majority and should be treated differently. Once these differences were eliminated, he believed, there would no longer be grounds for rejection. The assimilated Jew could be granted a passport for full acceptance into American life. He himself, after all, had made the leap. Not completely, of course. There were still clubs he could not join, homes in which he would not be welcome. But for the most part Lippmann had crossed the Great Divide; others had only to do as he had done for the Jewish “problem” to be resolved.²⁵

As has been said, Lippmann was a deeply insecure person. Steel reports that one friend of Lippmann’s “avoided even using ‘Jew’ in the word game Scrabble for fear it might upset him.”²⁶ This was no ordinary cosmopolitan anti-sectarianism. There were much deeper psychological factors at work in Lippmann’s rejection of Judaism and the Jewish people.

* * *

It is perhaps not easy to understand why Lippmann rejected Judaism as even a minor characteristic of his identity. To what extent should we consider Lippmann a man determined by the world in which he was raised – as the logical result of a long process of Americanization and assimilation? Or are we to understand Lippmann as a singularly troubled man engaged in a lifelong effort of self-defeat and self-

²³. Ibid.

²⁴. Ibid., 195.

²⁵. Steel, 195.

²⁶. Ibid., 196.

rejection – a man whose ambition to be accepted by the non-Jewish world led him on a quixotic quest for a sense of security he in the end never found? An examination of what some biographers have concluded, as well as an examination of Jean-Paul Sartre’s 1946 discussion of the “inauthentic Jew,” will help clarify these questions and help place Walter Lippmann in the proper social and psychological context.

Lippmann biographer Ronald Steel contends that Lippmann’s contempt for Judaism was the result of both deep psychological insecurities and of his cosmopolitan ideas. Of course, the development of the human personality and the process of identity formulation do not occur in such rational, linear fashions as to permit clear cause-effect analyses. We must understand Lippmann’s early commitment to cosmopolitanism as the effect of the German Reform community in which he was raised. If later in his life that cosmopolitan commitment “circled back” in a way and influenced Lippmann to proceed even further down the road of Americanization and assimilation than his Reform upbringing had required, we must accept this as natural in the confusing, irrational process of identity formation.

What we need not accept as natural, however, is Lippmann’s obvious insecurity regarding his Jewish identity, which extended, as has been shown, quite late into his adult life, if not until the day he died in 1974. Lippmann seems to have inordinately obsessed over his Jewish identity. It was all the worse for him that the conclusion he came to about it – that it should under all circumstances be understated and ignored – was not one he could work through in the way he dealt with so many of his other concerns, by writing. Lippmann condemned himself to a deafening and nearly impossible silence. If he did not, except in the years from 1915-1922, rethink this decision to remain silent on his Jewish identity, he at least clearly struggled under the surface with the process that led him to choose that silence in the first place. What Lippmann did not realize was that silence, too, depending on the context, could be considered conspicuous.

Heinz Eulau, author of the article on Lippmann, “From Public Opinion to Public Philosophy,” in a 1956 volume of the *American Journal of Economics and Sociolog*, believed Lippmann was essentially a man at war with himself:

If a man as sensible as Lippmann obviously was, if a sensitive man is a Jew as Lippmann was by birth, and if a sensitive man who is a Jew, in the most crucial period of his emotional and intellectual growth, does not find it feasible to examine his Jewishness as a possible parameter of his sensitivity, there is some reason to believe that avoidance of a personal response pattern that seeks to escape from reality by rejecting reality – and in rejecting reality by rejecting itself.²⁷

Indeed, there is something both fascinating and tragic in the Lippmann story. Compared to the eloquence and brilliance of his other writings, the article he wrote in 1922 for the *American Hebrew* reads like something little more refined than a child’s temper-tantrum, a bizarrely emotional outburst for an otherwise rational, calculating, and highly perceptive writer. The article was hardly the type of aberration that would permit the impartial observer a suspension of judgment. The reality is quite to the contrary. Eulau notes that Lippmann’s consistency on the Jewish question is all the more surprising given that his career was long enough for both the acceptance and later rejection of “Socialism, Rooseveltian Progressivism, and Wilsonian Idealism.”²⁸ Eulau takes issue as well with Lippmann’s hateful depiction of his fellow Jews as conspicuous, uncivilized, and unclean:

Above all, however, Lippmann’s picture of the American Jew is stereotypical. But why the stereotype? Why the failure to recognize that Jews are people and as people can only be judged as individuals rather than as members of a category? Lippmann could not possibly judge Jews as individuals precisely because such individual judgment would have necessitated self-judgment, something he was unwilling and unable to do. For such self-judgment might have been too deprivational, too hard to bear. Instead, projection of his own inner weaknesses, their displacement on his fellow Jews, and their rationalization in terms of a warning against the alleged basis of anti-Semitism in “Jewish conspicuousness,” served Lippmann as a crutch in his capacity to live with himself, including his Jewish self.²⁹

²⁷. Heinz Eulau, “From Public Opinion to Public Philosophy,” 443.

²⁸. Eulau, 442.

²⁹. *Ibid.*, 445-6.

It does not seem a better interpretation of Lippmann's rejection of Judaism is possible, at least not with the evidence presently available. Ultimately, we must understand Lippmann as the unique product of his social situation as German-American Jew in the early 20th century, as well as an ambitious, incredibly complex individuality who faced a world hostile to only a part of who he was. He saw the opportunity to get what and where he wanted, and seized it. If he did not live happily or securely with his decision to abandon Judaism and the Jews, he did live with it.

Jean-Paul Sartre, while not specifically discussing Lippmann, included a fascinating account of what he called the "inauthentic Jew," in his 1946 book, *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Sartre wrote: "[The Jews] do not have the same fatherland; they have no history. The sole tie that binds them is the hostility and disdain of the societies which surround them. Thus the authentic Jew is the one who asserts his claim in the face of the disdain shown toward him."³⁰ We can most recognize the authentic Jew by the degree to which he is exactly the opposite of Walter Lippmann. Lippmann attempted to flee his Judaism, believed that the best response for the Jew to anti-Semitism was to fulfill the goals of the anti-Semite – to, as a Jew, disappear. While Sartre never mentions Lippmann, he does specifically mention the assimilationist Jews in the United States as prime examples of the inauthentic Jew:

He tries to lose himself in the crowd of Christians. We have seen that the latter have the art and the audacity to pretend before the Jew that they are not *another race*, but purely and simply *men*; if the Jew is fascinated by Christians it is not because of their virtues, which he values little, but because they represent anonymity, humanity without race. If he tries to penetrate the most exclusive circles, it is not because of that boundless ambition with which he is reproached so often – or, rather, that ambition has only one meaning: the Jew seeks to be recognized as a man by other men.³¹

Sartre would suggest that Lippmann did not shed his Jewishness when he decided his ambition was too large for its provincial limits, but that his large ambitions derived from the same source as did his decision to shed that Jewishness: from a desire for anonymity, for ordinariness, whatever he took that to

³⁰. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 91.

³¹. *Ibid.*, 98.

mean. Lippmann's desire to assimilate into Protestant aristocratic culture during and after his time at Harvard has already been documented. In an interesting chapter of his book on Lippmann, *Twentieth Century Pilgrimage*, Charles Wellborn concludes that, especially later in his life, Walter Lippmann was not entirely without religious ideas:

Lippmann sees the certainty of an objective, abiding essence of reality beyond the reach of man's manipulation...as the central core of the Western heritage. To this conviction Lippmann himself subscribes, and it does not disturb him to apply the tradition title, *God*, to this objective structure of truth.³²

Wellborn discerns in Lippmann's varied writings and religious allusions "a type of theistic humanism, but one which carries with it discernible undertones of eighteenth century deism"³³ – none of which, of course, is entirely incompatible with the vast diversity offered by the Jewish religious tradition. Lippmann could have found a theological home in the faith of his birth should he have cared to look. He did not. Wellborn concludes, rather hagiographically: "Perhaps it is fair to say that it is not only Lippmann's political philosophy but also his religion which show vital similarities to that of the American Founding Fathers."³⁴ Perhaps. Perhaps, too, such a comparison is all Walter Lippmann ever wanted in the first place.

* * *

There was nothing pre-determined about the choices Walter Lippmann made regarding his identity as a Jew in twentieth-century America. With more courage, he could have chosen otherwise. The fact he did not is evidence of the inauthenticity described by Jean-Paul Sartre. But can we fairly express moral disapproval of Lippmann's choices? Such a judgment seems fair in some contexts, but not in others. There is no reason to remain impartial to Lippmann's post-war outbursts against Jews and Judaism. This

³². Charles Wellborn, *Twentieth-Century Pilgrimage*, 133.

³³. Wellborn, 133.

³⁴. *Ibid.*, 136.

was merely the verbose ranting of a man eager to be accepted by the Protestant majority in the United States. Sartre described perfectly this phenomenon: “This anti-Semitism of the Jew is an effort to make himself an objective witness and judge, and thus escape liability for the faults ascribed to his race.”³⁵ The question becomes more complex, however, when we consider Lippmann’s original Harvard-era decision, either conscious or unconscious, to dismiss his Jewish identity as a useless relic and wholly useless in modern America. This seems somehow less blameworthy. Lippmann’s formative years were before the influx of Eastern European Jews into American universities made identifying oneself as a Jewish writer acceptable or even to be expected. Lippmann did what was expected of him at the time in which he had to live. If he lacked courage, it is difficult to assert that one would have acted differently in his place.

The story of the American Jew is that of the attempt to harmonize two components of one’s identity which, given the historical context of the individual life, may appear to be in utter and irreconcilable conflict. The important thing is to accept and live with that irreconcilability, rather than attempt to overcome it, as Walter Lippmann unsuccessfully tried to do. Walter Lippmann’s life was characterized by a sense of insecurity undoubtedly caused by isolation, imposed both by himself and by the hostile world in which he found himself mysteriously alive, but alone.

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Images of Nature in the Two Stories, “The Calf” and “Tevye Strikes it Rich,”
and an Analysis of Their Effect on the Overall Meanings of Each Story

Jennifer Leibovitch

The natural world has a surprisingly overpowering presence in a variety of various old Yiddish texts. Included in this category are Sholem Yankev Abramovitch’s “The Calf”, a tale about a young boy whose love for a young cow and nature detracts from his connection to the Jewish world, and Sholem Rabinovitch’s “Tevye Strikes it Rich,” in which Tevye encounters two rich Jewish women in the woods and is obligated to drive them home to Boyberik - a series of travels along which he learns quite a bit about his own relationship with nature. Throughout “The Calf,” the young boy’s conflicts with nature are mainly identified as his inability to interconnect nature and religion, the judgment of others on his desires to understand his environment, and the portrayal of his natural human instincts in his pursuit of his every immediate desire. Contrarily, Tevye sees nature as a conflict between luxury and hostility, and examines the nature of the relationship between man and God. In this essay, I hope to trace the images of nature in both “The Calf” and “Tevye Strikes it Rich,” and analyze their clearly profound effects on the overall meanings of each of the aforementioned stories.

Throughout Abramovitch’s acclaimed short story “The Calf,” the main character is described as a young boy whose affection towards a calf complicates his connection with both nature and religion. In this tale, nature primarily symbolizes the personal conflict between what is expected of you and what you want for yourself. The love between the boy and the calf is evidently forbidden, and the boy is looked down upon for his love of the calf, which he adopts in

place of his love of religion. “Once a lad steps outside the synagogue walls, once he sees what God’s fine world looks like, it is almost impossible to bring him back,” (104) and this fact causes the boy a multitude of conflicting emotions. Although both the boy’s mother and his companions in Yeshiva ridicule him for his attachment to the beauty of God’s creation, the boy decides that he does not care about the opinions of others regarding his love of nature, and disregards their comments. Clearly, the natural world is seen as taboo, and following one’s heart rather than going down the typical path of righteousness, namely, studying Torah, is not seen as advisable. The boy says, “I was badly tormented by the Evil Spirit, which assumed the shape of a calf and of grass and of trees. It was they who had spoiled me, who had turned my head, and now kept me from becoming the model of a ‘perfect vessel.’” (106) Nature, throughout this story, is seen as both an aspect of the world that God has created for us, as well as in the wild, natural and emotional side of man. Nature similarly describes the ups and downs of the boy’s emotions. At times, he is happy with his life and his devotion to the cow, but at others, he’s upset and uses nature as an outlet for describing this depression. The natural world, therefore, does present as quite a conflict in both the boy’s mind and in the way in which he leads his everyday life.

Nature is portrayed, as well, as evil by the religious institutions mentioned in this story. In the Jewish culture it seems that it is commonplace that the study-house and nature oppose one another. In the minds of those associated with the Yeshiva, religion should take precedence over nature and basic instinctual desires. We are told that we should not be searching for our hearts desire elsewhere while we’re in prayer, but the boy does so nonetheless. The boy is clearly pursuing his natural, basic human desires in his love for the calf. He describes his distraught sentiments over the matter accordingly: “The Talmud lay open before me, but all I could see was the calf: small chin, tiny, perked-up ears, delicate neck.” (99) In this case, therefore, nature is

seen as representing the inherently natural inclinations of man. It is definitely more likely that any boy would be inclined to frolic in the sun rather than study Torah. Everything is pleasureable to the boy in the natural world, where he is able to achieve both physical and sensual pleasure. He epitomizes his feelings as "...indescribable: it was though the world were now entirely mine and everything in it shared my jubilation. The sun shone more brightly, the dawn was less chilly, the air filled with a holiday spirit." (98) This is why the boy is seen as being spiritually deprived when he is in *Cheder*, although the sole reason for this deprivation is his deeper spiritual connection to his calf and to the environment than to the study of Torah. The boy's connection with nature may be frowned upon, as well, because of his relationship to a calf, in particular. The calf, like the "golden calf" epitomized in the Old Testament, tends to be looked upon as an idol, and is therefore very strongly disliked by Jewish communities in general. Although I do not, by any means, equate the boy's affection with idol worship, this theory may help in explaining the Yeshiva's hatred towards the boy's natural inclinations. Although nature may be associated with God's creation and the spiritual side of religion to the boy, the religious institutions and the boy's mother clearly do not share the same views.

An entirely different perspective on nature is portrayed throughout Rabinovitch's "Tevye Strikes it Rich." Nature is seen as both a luxurious item that is to be revered and respected, and is also seen as an incredibly hostile and threatening entity. As Tevye is traveling through the forest to bring the two women he encounters back to their home in Boyberik, nature is portrayed as being luxurious. Tevye describes the lifestyle of a wealthy man in terms of rainfall in the following quote. "Suddenly, don't ask me how or why, it rains gold on him from all sides." (3) Similarly, when Tevye brings the immense amount of food that he acquires from the wealthy Orthodox Jews in Boyberik, his family's reaction to the feast is incredibly animalistic, thus

portraying their nature as hungry, almost beast-like humans. “When that gang of mine saw those rolls and smelled that meat, they fell on it like a pack of wolves. Their hands shook so that they could hardly get a grip on it. I stood there with tears in my eyes, listening to their jaws work away like a plague of starving locusts.” (17) Nature is used, in this quotation, as a form of personification of people and animals. Contrarily, an entirely different view of nature as a threat throughout the story is exemplified very strongly. The nature seems to refer to dark times in Jewish history, including the Jewish exile. The natural world is therefore seen as a threat to Tevye’s religious status. Tevye loves nature, but it’s also problematic for him in that it is too tempting and exciting, and takes him away from his prayer. Whereas many look at nature as a life form that can impart knowledge in those lucky enough to experience it, this world is too much of an unknown to our innocent character. He’s not described as being in tune with what’s going on outside of his own world, which is why he treats the natural world as he does.

Similarly, storytelling is used, throughout many of Rabinovitch’s tales regarding Tevye, as a means of finding natural meaning in the modern Jewish world. Not only does nature refer to our typical environment of flowers, trees and animals, like in “The Calf,” nature can also imply a more literal sense. This story has the tendency to examine human nature in a much more objective sense of the term at hand. It harps on the relationship between man and God, and more specifically, Tevye’s relationship with God. It seems that Tevye is a lost soul, and although he does communicate with God, he does not seem to be sure of God’s intentions in the seemingly skewed and strange world that he lives in. Throughout this story, Tevye portrays his inability to understand why the world treats him in the incredibly random way that it does, especially through the following quote taken from the story. “They say You’re a long suffering God, a good God, a great God, they say You’re merciful and fair; perhaps then You can explain to me why

some folk have everything while others have nothing twice over? Why does one Jew get to eat butter rolls while another gets to eat dirt?” (13) Tevye seems to be attempting to examine and analyze the natural state, as strange as it may be, of the world.

In tracing the images of nature throughout these two stories, the various depictions clearly work in a wide variety of manners. In “The Calf,” the boy and his conflict with the natural world causes much frustration for him and his mother. He has trouble disconnecting from his strong feelings towards nature while in the *Cheder*, which seems to cause him a variety of problems throughout his young life. Contrarily, Tevye is unable to take knowledge from the natural world because it is too much of an unknown for him, and therefore questions the nature of his relationship with God. However, the ways in which the authors use storytelling as a method of finding natural meaning in the modern Jewish world have clearly been hugely successful and extremely thought provoking. They have provided for an incredibly interesting analysis of what is sure to be a continuously evolving topic over the further development of this course.

The People of the Book in the Bedroom: Perceptions and Realities in American Jewish Sexuality:

Michael A. Schwartz

How do contemporary American Jews perceive and practice their sexuality? What bearing, if any, does their Jewish religion and identity have on their sexual mores and expressions? Can we speak of one or multiple distinctively Jewish American sexual ethos and praxes? Or of none? How do others perceive American Jews' sexually? What are the implications, current and future, of the current sexual attitudes and behaviours of American Jews?

While providing an exhaustive treatment of American Jewish sexuality is impossible in a short journal article, we will endeavor to raise and explore several issues and ideas that will help to reach some kind of understanding.

Why an exploration of this topic? As sexuality manifests itself in the life of virtually every American Jew, an examination of American Jewish sexuality can serve as a valuable tool for understanding how American Jews respond (and will respond in the future) in general to the opportunities and challenges that their American and Jewish identities pose in contemporary America.

We shall first provide a brief overview of traditional Jewish attitudes towards sexuality, followed by discussions and analyses of contemporary Ultra-Orthodox, liberal, and finally Modern Orthodox Jewish models and praxes of sexuality. We will then examine several sexual issues, perceptions and findings which we feel are best explored in the context of American Jewry as a whole. Finally, we will attempt to answer our initial questions.

Traditional Judaism, as articulated in the Torah, Talmud, and law codes, and as interpreted by the Rabbis, has never shied away from addressing sexual matters. And indeed, the Jewish tradition not only affirms, but celebrates and commands, both sexual relations and sexual pleasure between husband and wife (Solomon, 2002). This fact should not, however, be taken to mean that traditional Judaism endorses or permits all forms of sexuality; indeed the tradition advocates heterosexual sexual activity within marriage as the only appropriate vehicle for sexual expression. Non-marital, extra-marital (adulterous), homosexual, and solitary sexual acts are thus all forbidden (Epstein, 1948). Traditional Judaism also demands of its adherents observance of the laws of *taharat hamishpacha*, or family purity; these laws command that couples abstain from any physical contact during the woman's "unclean period." (The unclean period lasts during and for approximately one week after the woman's menses and ends following the woman's immersion in the *mikvah*, or the ritual bath). The value of sexual expression itself is seen mainly, although not exclusively, as the means of procreation; intercourse is the clearly preferred form of sexual expression, although the tradition discusses other forms of marital sexual intimacy and permits their practice on an occasional basis. Publically, the sexes are strictly segregated and separate gender roles are clearly defined and mandated. *Tzniut*, or modesty, of both a physical and personal nature (particularly amongst women) is also emphasized, resulting in prohibitions on both revealing dress and touching members of the opposite sex to whom one is not related; one who observes the latter prohibition is termed "*shomer negiah*" In short, traditional Judaism presents a model of sexuality markedly different from what can be considered the two historical poles of American sexuality; traditional Jewish sexuality mandates neither celibacy nor asceticism as do various forms of Christianity (Gold, 1992), yet neither does it equate with or support the modern liberal American sexual ethic (Liebman & Cohen, 1996).

The Ultra-Orthodox (Hasidic and Mitnagdic, or Lithuanian) Jews, as the term suggests, practice the most traditional and distinctive form of American Judaism; their religious conservatism and separatism extends to all aspects of life, including, naturally, sexuality. As the plethora of Ultra-Orthodox laws and manifestos on sex and astronomically high fertility rates of Ultra-Orthodox Jews testify, Ultra-Orthodox Jews appear no less averse to sex per se than their more religiously liberal contemporaries; however the sexuality of Ultra-Orthodox Jews is strictly defined and controlled by these peoples' religious beliefs, which the community upholds and reinforces. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish males and females clearly have different roles and statuses. Pre-marital sex, particularly on the part of females (due to the traditional Jewish emphasis on pre-marital female virginity), is strictly forbidden. Sexual activity within marriage is tightly regulated in terms of permitted and non-permitted times and practices; birth control and abortion are strictly prohibited save for cases of extreme physical or mental distress to the mother, thus yielding the aforementioned large fertility rates. The Ultra-Orthodox world, as were the Biblical and Talmudic milieus, is cognizant of the sexual capabilities and desires of its members from adolescence on; hence, early marriage, in the late teen or early twenty years, is the norm. (Heilman, 1992) Courtship is typically brief and arranged by a matchmaker; the decision to marry is based essentially not on romantic or sexual interest and compatibility but rather on individual and family background, status, and outlook. Divorce is frowned upon but not unheard of; both the divorced and the widowed are urged to remarry. Thus, we can conclude that Ultra-Orthodox Jews recognize, affirm and carefully regulate their sexuality through their Jewish traditions.

It should also be noted that while many no doubt find the ultra-Orthodox Jewish attitude to sex disenchanting, the opposite is true as well. Indeed, the distinctive, traditional Jewish

attitude to sex has even been a catalyst in part for the Ba'alei Teshuva (returnees to Jewish observance) phenomenon among women. Sylvia Barack-Fishman explains: “disillusionment with sexual freedom can lead some women to seek out the definitive, structured gender role construction of Orthodox society... the seemingly restrictive constellation of laws surrounding *niddah* and Jewish family values ... are viewed as liberating.” (Barack Fishman, 2000). Similarly, Rebecca Alpert observes instances in which women return to strict observance of the Jewish tradition to “remove themselves from pressure to be sexual before marriage”. (Alpert, 2003)

Although statistics on this particular segment of the Jewish population are virtually non-existent, a consensus exists that liberal Jews, have by and large adopted liberal sexual mores and praxes, gradually and in consonance with members of broader liberal American society (Geller, 2005). But this fact should not be taken to mean that liberal forms of Judaism (for our purposes, the non-Orthodox movements) have simply abandoned the notion of offering a specifically Jewish sexual ethic. Indeed, much of the most creative work in Jewish sexual ethics has been and is being performed in the liberal movements of Judaism. Examples include Rachel Adler’s book *Engendering Judaism*, Arthur Waskow’s essay “Eden for Grown-ups” and the recent anthology *The Passionate Torah: Sex and Judaism*. These and other similar works generally seek to explore changing sexual mores and practices among liberal Jews and the opportunities and challenges of endowing such mores and practices with Jewish identity. The general thrust of these works is that while marriage is still the preferred form of meaningful coupling both, ethical and loving non-marital relationships and non-conventional sexual expressions may be a viable and holy alternative for some Jews. (Wertheimer, 2005) It is clear that these works are in response to changing sexual practices on the parts of American Jews and have found a

readership; unfortunately the extent to which such works and the views they espouse actually influence liberal American Jews' sexual practices is unknown.

Modern Orthodox Jews, due to their commitment to both an Orthodox Halachic lifestyle and to engagement with modern society and culture, perhaps best illustrate the tension between traditional and contemporary sexual mores and between older rabbis and younger Jews (Waxman, 1983). The normative Orthodox attitude towards pre-marital sexuality is clear – negative. Yet, some scholars argue that “liberal Orthodoxy has come to terms with pre-marital sexuality.” (Alpert, 2003) However, no official dispensation for any kind such kind of behavior has thus far been granted by any major Modern Orthodox authority, and relevant statistics are very difficult to obtain. We can look to recent phenomena as clues, however. Perhaps best exemplifying Modern Orthodox Jews mixing their Jewish commitment with their liberalized sexual ethics, is the common phenomenon of the so-called “*tefillin* date,” in which a young male will carry his phylacteries with him on his date-night in the expectation that he may spend the night with his date. (Yet, perhaps precisely because of the perceived acceptance of pre-marital sex in the Modern Orthodox world, the OU (Orthodox Union), which is the main organization of Modern Orthodox congregations in America and Canada, in conjunction with its youth wing, has recently developed what it proudly proclaims to be the first Jewish pro-abstinence website, negiah.org (Labovitz, 2009). As Modern Orthodox Jews appear to be gradually embracing a more liberal sexual ethos and praxes, Modern Orthodox doctrine and law seems to turning to a stricter strict interpretation and praxis; it appears the tension between modern Orthodoxy Jewry's official positions and actual practices will only grow in the future. Indeed, this tension and the response engendered as a result may be indicative of larger tensions in the American modern Orthodox community.

Beyond the religious guidelines and practices, let us now explore the sexual perceptions of American Jews both in Jewish and non-Jewish American society.

Jewish women have, long suffered from negative sexual stereotypes. While a traditional notion of the erotic Jewish temptress had a long history, others, particularly American Jewish men, it would seem, typically perceived American Jewish women as being sexually uninterested, inexperienced and undesirable; (Biale, 1992); the infamous JAP stereotype and associated jokes are a case in point. And non-Jews themselves have always been more likely to take Jewish husbands than Jewish wives for themselves; although the choices of Jewish men and women no doubt play a role in this phenomenon, we should not ignore this fact. (Space constraints prevent us from further discussing sexual relationships and marriages between Jews and non-Jews, but the topic is fascinating and of interest and concern to much of the organized Jewish community and denominations).

Yet, recently, not only have several American Jewish women turned the stereotype of the unattractive, frigid American Jewish female on its shoulders, but they have done as proud members of the Jewish people. The exact extent of this phenomenon is unknown but the sheer boldness of these women and the attention they have attracted are testament to...

Lindsey Vuolo, also known as *Playboy's* Miss November 2001 or "the Kosher Bunny," may be the most noted example of such a trend. The product of the marriage of a daughter of Holocaust survivors to an Italian-American man who converted to Judaism, Vuolo was a college student at the time of her appearance in the magazine. In her feature, she made explicitly clear her open and proud identification as a Jew and attachment to the Jewish people, religion, and state. The magazine-profile quoted Vuolo discussing her pride in her Jewish heritage, her Jewish observances, and her moving and spiritual trip to Israel. Indeed, a photo from Vuolo's Bat

Mitzvah was even included in her pictorial. While Vuolo was not the first Jewish Playmate, she was the first to affirm her Jewish identity in such a clear and proud way, continuing to do so even after her (initial) appearance; she has spoken of her desire to marry a Jewish husband and her continuing engagement with Judaism and Israel. Understandably, then, Vuolo was the subject of intense interest and reflection (positive and negative, academic and non-academic) on the part of the American Jewish community. Many celebrated the undeniable selection of Vuolo as a “sex symbol” and Vuolo’s proud affirmation of her Jewish identity as positive milestones in the annals of American Jewish development history. Others were highly critical of Vuolo’s appearance and comments, seeing her being selected as a dubious distinction at best and a degradation of Jewish women at worst and her celebration of her Jewish identity as completely inappropriate in the context of work (nude modeling) that these people perceived as patently antithetical to the Jewish tradition.

An example of those who took the former approach was Brad Hirschfield, an Orthodox Rabbi and Vice-President of CLAL (the Centre for Jewish Learning and Leadership), who, though he did not explicitly condone Vuolo’s actions per se, described Vuolo’s appearance as a “true watershed moment for American Judaism,” and a “full corrective” to “the whole Phillip Roth-Woody Allen syndrome ... about Jewish boys who couldn’t imagine Jewish girls who were so beautiful that they wanted to go to bed with them.” He bluntly stated that “by 2001 you finally have it set up -- it’s a full corrective: you have Jewish men who will go home and they’ll masturbate to a Jewish girl for a change.” Clearly impressed with Vuolo’s identification as proud Jew, Hirschfield further remarked on the marvel of a Jewish sex-symbol trailblazer who was “traditionally grounded ... woman who talks about going to synagogue and wanting to read

Hebrew and being very concerned about marrying a Jewish guy,” (Hirschfield, 2001) and spoke about the possible implications of such a proud and clear mixing of sexuality and Jewish identity.

Shmuley Boteach, a Rabbi ordained by, and formerly affiliated with, the Ultra-Orthodox Chabad-Lubavitch movement and author of *Kosher Sex* took the latter view, that Vuolo’s actions were at best of dubious value and at worst an affront to Judaism and Jewish values. Indeed, Boteach actually met with, and articulated these criticisms to Vuolo herself when he interviewed her in December 2001 in New York City. The interview was varied, ranging from discussions of Vuolo’s personal religious observance and beliefs, to notions of female objectification or empowerment to Jewish attitudes towards sexuality; it was also often heated, with Boteach comparing pornography to slavery and emphasizing what he perceived to be the essentially dehumanizing aspects of Vuolo’s Playboy appearance, telling Vuolo, “the men who look at this ... they couldn't care less about your bat mitzvah or your trip to Israel. What they care about is, she excites me. That's it. You're there for them; you're not a person anymore.” (Boteach, 2001).

Another example of a Jewish woman who celebrated her sexuality as a Jew – perhaps even more blatantly than did Vuolo, is Jamie Sneider. A comedy writer and performer by profession, Sneider chose to celebrate her Jewish sexuality by creating a risqué Jewishly-themed calendar for 2009 entitled “The Year of the Jewish Woman”. In addition to Hebrew dates and holidays, the calendar featured Sneider in a variety of revealing, erotic poses reflecting various Jewish themes. Examples included photos of Sneider posing as Queen Esther, as a bikini-clad Jewish drum majorette and in one instance with a “strategically placed lulav and Etrog” (and little else) for the Jewish holiday of *Sukkot*. Sneider herself described her calendar as an “ode to my religion [that] completely expresses my love of Judaism.” (Firestone, 2008)

Then there was Heeb magazine's own Jewish calendar; a swimsuit edition, it was entitled the "Girls of '69" in honour of what was the then-upcoming Jewish Year of 5769 (2008-9) and starred a variety of famous Jewish models (American and Israeli). The significance of this calendar as a refutation to previous stereotypes of Jewish woman as sexually uninterested and undesirable was struck home by the infamous picture of the voluptuous Israeli-American model Donna Feldman in her bikini reading none other than the infamous *Portnoy's Complaint* (a 1969 novel key in reflecting the perceived undesirability of Jewish women to Jewish men).

And of course there was Monica Lewinsky, the young identifiably Jewish American woman whose "inappropriate relationship" with President Clinton, recounted in graphic, almost pornographic detail in the *Starr Report*, earned her an infamous place in not only American Jewish but general American sexual history.

American Jewish men, have like their female peers, long suffered from negative sexual portrayals. Traditionally portrayed (paradoxically) as either as being sexually ravenous and perverse, or as sexually effeminate and inept (Biale, 1992), they appear to have been enjoying more positive perception of their sexuality amongst both Jews and the general American community. Two of the four males in the most recent Gentlemen's Quarterly magazine's list of "Men of the Year" are of Jewish heritage; (the fifth person on the list is Scarlett Johansson, who is also Jewish). Jewish men have also recently been the subject of a calendar of their own, the "Nice Jewish Guys Calendar" of 2010. Its creator Adam Cohen remarks, "The generalization of Jewish men is that they're trustworthy and a good catch." (Marcus, 2009). Indeed, Ernest Van Den Haag, in *The Jewish Mystique*, made a similar argument for the popularity of non-Jewish men as partners a generation earlier, as did many others. There exists an entire corpus of literature written for, by, and about *shiksas* (a derogatory Yiddish term for non-Jewish women)

who establish sexual and marital relationships with Jewish men, often-times with these men specifically because they are Jewish! However, perhaps because men in general have historically been less sexually objectified than woman in American society, information on phenomena comparable to those we discussed vis-à-vis American Jewish women is simply not available.

While we focus in this article on the majority sexual orientation and expression of American Jews – heterosexuality, we make mention at this point of American Jewish homosexuality in light of the tremendous, relatively recent developments and upheavals in terms of the relation of American Jews to homosexuality. While the Biblical verse from which the prohibition on homosexuality is typically derived is arguably cryptic, normative Jewish tradition and law is unequivocally opposed to homosexual activity on the part of either sex; lesbian activity, due to the lack of explicit condemnation thereof in the Bible, is generally viewed as a less severe than male homosexuality, but as a serious transgression nonetheless. The American Jewish community has no doubt had homosexual members since the community's inception; yet, no elements of the religious community, not even the most liberal, made any changes in this attitude until the advent of the Sexual Revolution in the 1960s. Since then, however a kind of homosexual Jewish awakening has occurred, whose reverberations have been felt in the liberal, Modern Orthodox and even (though to a lesser extent) in Ultra-Orthodox American Jewish communities. In general, and as would be expected, the more liberal religiously (and politically) a Jewish community is, the more likely the community will have taken a more liberal attitude towards homosexuality in the past generation. For example, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Humanist Judaisms all have accorded homosexual couples and marriages equal recognition and rights as heterosexual couples and marriages; homosexuals are also entitled to serve as Rabbis and other religious leaders in these communities. Conservative Judaism has struggled heavily

and publically with the issue of homosexuality. (We should note that certain Conservative Jewish mores on heterosexual activity, such as the family purity laws and an emphasis on sex *within* marriage, also seem to ignore or even contradict with the relationships and practices of many Conservative Jews; but, the fact that these heterosexual relationships and practices are generally considered a private matter by all involved and that their practitioners apparently suffer neither public sanction, nor seek any religious authorization for these actions apparently makes them a much less controversial matter than their homosexual counterparts). The Conservative movement had affirmed its blanket prohibition on homosexuality and homosexuals as rabbinical students in 1992. However agitation since then prompted the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS), the rabbinical group which makes Conservative Jewish Halachic policy, to-reexamine the issue, which the CJLS did in 2006. Three resolutions were accepted; one considered liberal, permitted many forms of heretofore prohibited homosexual conduct (but not male-male sex), called for the celebration of homosexual unions (but not marriage), and also allowed for rabbinical ordination for homosexuals; two opinions considered conservative affirmed the dignity of Jewish homosexuals but called for the retention of the bans on practice, celebration and ordination. In 2007, JTS, the flagship Conservative Jewish Rabbinical centre and school, began accepting openly gay individuals (men and women for ordination). Tensions remained, however; many rabbis and laypeople felt the CJLS and JTS had deviated both unjustifiably and too far from Jewish tradition and law in their actions. Indeed, several prominent Rabbis left the CJLS as a result. Some have even argued whether the recent decision affirms the CJLS's and Conservative Jewish movement's effective abandonment of *Halacha* (Jewish law). Modern Orthodoxy as an institution does not appear to have struggled with homosexuality to quite the same degree; but the case with individual Modern Orthodox homosexuals is markedly different.

One example is that of Rabbi Steven Greenberg, who after receiving Orthodox Rabbinical ordination “came out” as a homosexual, and yet maintained his Orthodox and homosexual identities; his attempts to reconcile the two are detailed in book *Wrestling with God and Men*. Greenberg, along with many other Orthodox homosexuals (male and female) allowed himself and his struggle to be profiled in the celebrated 2001 documentary *Trembling Before G-d* (Dorff, 2005). Indeed, even despite Ultra-Orthodoxy’s strident maintenance of its taboo on homosexuality, it is worth noting that several homosexual Ultra-Orthodox Jews appeared in the film as well.

But what do the very few statistics we have about Jewish sexuality say? Let us look first to attitudes and beliefs, as did Liebman and Cohen; in their study, they found that even when compared to non-Jews of similar ages, levels of educational attainment, incomes, and residential patterns, American Jews still maintained “decidedly more liberal positions on sexual morality” than American non-Jews. Indeed, even adjusting for all socio-economic factors that might have affected the Jews’ responses, the study concluded that, “7% more [American Jews than non-Jews] assert that pre-marital sex is not wrong at all ... 15% more that extramarital sex is not always wrong ... and “26% that gay sex is not wrong at all.” A fear of and desire to combat conservative Christian sexual mores, and in particular to prevent them from influencing public policy, may explain this higher “sexual permissiveness” of American Jews (Liebman & Cohen, 1996).

As for statistics on Jewish sexual practice, Morton Weinfeld, in his acclaimed work of Canadian Jewish sociology, *Like Everyone Else... But Different* cites three studies that may shed some light. The first study contained only 54 Jews, but discovered that 33% of these Jews claimed to have had eleven or more sexual sex partners, a percentage more than ten percent

higher than that of liberal Protestants and nearly double those of both fundamentalist Protestants and Catholics. “While certainly not definitive, this study at least suggests that Jews are sexually curious,” concludes Weinfeld (2001). The second study, drawn from 1968, revealed that unmarried Jewish men much more likely to engage in frequent sex than their unmarried non-Jewish peers; interestingly the same study also found that Jewish females had a higher rate of virginity than their non-Jewish peers! The third study Weinfeld cites is a sex survey of CEGEP students in which both anglophone and francophone Jews were included, and which asked students about a wide variety of sexual activities. The average “scores” (out of 9) on the survey ranged from 7.2 for French-Canadians to 3.5 for Greek-Canadians; those of the francophone Jews and Anglophone Jews were 6.2 and 5.4, respectively. (Weinfeld, 2001). The sociologist cautions that it is “hard to know how to interpret these findings, other than to assume that young Jewish men and women are at least normally adventuresome. Neither oversexed, nor undersexed.” (Weinfeld, 2001) Although the latter two studies Weinfeld cites are Canadian, but it seems safe to assume that their results would reflect American practice as well.

Despite the lack of hard statistics, it appears there has been a growing and sincere academic interest in objectively observing and understanding contemporary Jewish sexual practice. This work has included historical, sociological, theological and other studies examining virtually every manifestation of Jewish sexuality that exists. University courses on the topic proliferate, one is co-taught by the Yale Hillel Rabbi and Dr. Ruth Westheimer; scholarly publications also abound. Indeed, not even Jewish participation in the pornographic industry has been off-limits to serious study; Nathan Abrams, of Bangor University, has written an essay entitled “Kosher Beefcakes and Kosher Cheesecakes: Jews in Porn – An Overview,” which attempts to objectively measure and understand the participation of Jews, whether as Jews or not,

in the pornographic industry (Abrams, 2008). The broad popularity of, and reception to works such as *Kosher Sex* also testifies to the interest of the general American community in Jewish sexuality.

Thus, while information on American Jewish sexuality is scant, we have demonstrated that in general, American Jews advocate and practice a liberal sexuality, but the extent to which this sexuality is both Jewishly practiced and informed remains to be seen. This said, it is clear that many American Jews, both traditional and not, do indeed espouse and practice in varying degree some form of Jewishly-informed sexuality. While positive perceptions and affirmations of Jewish sexuality appear to be increasing, tensions remain in areas such as pre-marital intercourse and homosexuality; these tensions are particularly manifest in those communities that try to meld traditional Halacha and modernity, such as Modern Orthodoxy and the right-wing of the Conservative movement. It also seems reasonable to believe that a Jewishly-informed sexuality will continue to be a source of inspiration, guidance, and tension in the future, particularly as Orthodoxy continues its ascent in numbers and power. How the celebrations, laws, and tensions of such a Jewishly-informed sexuality will manifest themselves remains to be seen.

To conclude, we have seen that exploring the different ethos, praxes, and perceptions of Jewish sexuality helps us better understand the present and future of these American Jews. The most intimate of behaviours provides perhaps the most intimate method of observing and understanding American Jews and Judaism.

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The Voices from Within:

Exploring the Implications and Prospects of *Haredi* Military Service Exemption

Martina Vidlakova

The *haredim* in Israel constitute a segment in many ways distinct from the majority of Israeli society. Their proportion in the population has reached 7.5%.³⁶ Not only are they considered ultra-Orthodox in their religious outlook and practice, they also tend to marry young, seldom divorce, and have many more children than other Israelis. Most of them rely on state support and poverty rates as well as unemployment are on the rise among the *haredim*. In economic terms, the percentage of *haredi* men of productive age who do not engage in an economic activity but attend the *yeshivot* rose from 41% in 1980 to 60% in 1996.³⁷ These distinct sociological and economic factors translate into political implications, because they give rise to the need for more influx of state resources and lead to greater political involvement and leverage of the *haredim*. In 2009, Shas won eleven seats and United Torah Judaism received five mandates, which makes them crucial coalition partners.³⁸ If they both withdrew from the coalition, the government would lose the majority in the Knesset.

Their numbers and substantial political power makes the fact that the vast majority of the *haredim* do not serve in the army an issue of great contention. Cohen quantifies that over 80% of young *haredi* males annually have taken advantage of the provision for deferment and eventual

³⁶ Tamir Sorek and Alin M. Ceobanu, "Religiosity, National Identity, and Legitimacy: Israel as an Extreme Case," *Sociology* 43, No. 3 (June 2009): 481-82.

³⁷ Nurit Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism: Piety, Gender, and Resistance in the Ultra-Orthodox World* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 37.

³⁸ "Knesset Election Results."

avoidance of army service since the 1980s.³⁹ Most of Israel's public actively opposes their exemption and its institutionalization, yet no change in legislature that was enacted on the basis of a compromise between Ben Gurion and the *haredim* has taken place.⁴⁰ This paper argues that the military exemption has had significant political and social implications on Israeli society, which makes it a pressing issue requiring a reform in practice as well as legislation. While such change seems to be highly unlikely to happen at present due to political pressures and the supreme authority of the rabbis over the *yeshiva* students, a shift of attitudes can be observed within the *haredi* communities. The military-based culture and male identity has had an impact on the *yeshiva* students who seem to be increasingly willing to take part in army service. Therefore, it will be argued that while the current political dynamics prevent enactment of new legislation on this issue, a change in practice might emerge from within the *haredi* community.

The exemption from army service for the *haredim* has significantly influenced the position of the *haredim* in Israeli society. Participation in the military and the defense of the state has been regarded as a part of the citizen's political responsibility and as a measure for inclusion in the society and for political representation. The shared experience of military service strengthens national solidarity and expresses commitment to the common goal of maintaining the state.⁴¹ By not serving in the army, the *haredim* came to be seen by the rest of the society as not fulfilling a part of their duty as Israeli citizens and as not contributing to the common cause as

³⁹ Stuart Cohen, "The Re-Discovery of Orthodox Jewish Laws Relating to the Military and War (Hilkhot Tzavah U-Milchamah) in Contemporary Israel: Trends and Implications," *Israel Studies* 12, No. 2 (Summer 2007): 4.

⁴⁰ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 98.

⁴¹ Sara Helman, "Militarism and the Construction of the Life-World of Israeli Males: The Case of the Reserves System," in *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, ed. Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben-Ari (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999), 191-92.

fully as the serving Israelis do.⁴² Moreover, military service has also had the function of facilitating state control over segments of the society in terms of shaping their values, beliefs and norms.⁴³ Yet, the *haredim* remain outside of state management in this sense and they do not have the opportunity to absorb the sentiments nurtured within the army.

Another point is that in addition to the compulsory three-year military service for males, the reserve system has played a role in Israeli political culture. Helman sees the reserves as an exclusive community and membership in it becomes a criterion for “normalcy” for the Israelis as well as a precondition for participation in civil society.⁴⁴ She claims that the reserve service is considered a “central experience” for male Israelis that defines their self-perception of their relevance to the state.⁴⁵ However, the *haredim* do not have access to this exclusive community and lack the military experience so crucial for Israeli male identity in relation to the others and to the state. Cohen summarizes some of the social and political implications of the army service exemption for the *haredim* by stating that it reinforces their marginalization and leads to resentment by the rest of Israelis.⁴⁶

Kimmerling speaks of the military-security complex that is present in Israeli thinking and expressed through various institutional arrangements, including education and the economy.⁴⁷ State-controlled education curricula are one of the major channels of socialization into the militaristic worldview centered on survival and constant threat.⁴⁸ As the *haredim* are exempt

⁴² Susie Navot, “Exemption from Military Service Granted to Orthodox Students in Israel: A Case Study on Justiciability, Equality and Judicial Review,” *European Public Law* 6, No. 1 (2000): 13.

⁴³ Helman, “Militarism,” 192.

⁴⁴ Helman, “Militarism,” 193-94.

⁴⁵ Helman, “Militarism,” 193-197.

⁴⁶ Stuart Cohen, *The Scroll or the Sword?* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 68.

⁴⁷ Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society and the Military* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 209.

⁴⁸ Kimmerling, *The Invention*, 210-11.

from the army and have their own *yeshiva* education system, they do not become a part of the military-security complex that largely defines the prevalent Israeli worldview. To add to the argument, Azaryahu assesses military parades as public rituals that not only demonstrate Israel's military power, but also are intended to foster national unity and loyalty.⁴⁹ Yet again, this public ritual has little relevance for the *haredim*, because they do not actively participate in the army and their value system remains largely outside of state control due to the separate education system. Stadler and Ben-Ari suggest there is a link between not serving in the army and the role of the *yeshivot* as a tool of socialization into the *haredi* community.⁵⁰

To summarize the political implications of the army service exemption for the *haredim*, the examined notions indicate that while living in the State of Israel, the *haredi* community remains largely untouched by the state's socialization mechanisms and maintains its own value system. Furthermore, since the entrance of the ultra-Orthodox parties into coalition politics after 1977, there has been a perceived contradiction between the *haredi* non-participation in the defense of the state, but claiming the right to interfere in all state affairs.⁵¹ Some therefore argue that the *haredim* do not fulfill all their citizen duties, which adds to mounting tensions between the *haredim* and the rest of the population. It must be noted that although on one hand the *haredim* are largely seen as marginal citizens, on the other their political parties exercise considerable power and leverage in coalition politics, which is precisely what enables them to lead a life rather autonomous from the state.

⁴⁹ Maoz Azaryahu, "The Independence Day Military Parade: A Political History of Patriotic Ritual," in *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, eds. Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben-Ari (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999), 91.

⁵⁰ Nurit Stadler and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers? Ultra-Orthodox Views of Military Service in Contemporary Israel," *Israel Affairs* 9, No. 4 (2003): 21.

⁵¹ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 99.

To fully understand the implications of the exemption, it is necessary to trace the history of this provision. Military service in Israel is mandatory for both males and females. Men serve for three years, unmarried women for twenty months. In addition, the males continue to undergo annual training in the reserves until their forties. Yet, as a result of the compromise Ben Gurion made with the ultra-Orthodox rabbinical authorities in 1947, the Minister of Defense has the power to grant exemptions from military service.⁵² The Defense Service Law of 1949 stipulated that the Minister can defer military service for individuals devoted to full-time study at the *yeshivot*.⁵³ All males “to whom the study of Torah is their profession” are therefore entitled to postponement of their service and because by the time the deferment is over most *haredi* men have large families, they generally become exempt altogether and do not serve at all.⁵⁴ All women that claim that military service would interfere with their traditional lifestyle get an exemption as well.⁵⁵ Cohen notes that while this provision was claimed to be introduced to save the traditional lifestyle that had almost been destroyed by the Holocaust, it most likely served Ben Gurion to appease the religious segments in the new state and emerging coalition politics.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the issue has risen in significance since 1949 due to the growing numbers of the *haredim*. In 1949, the provision applied to only about 400 *haredi yeshiva* students.⁵⁷ By 1997, the number of young men exempted on the grounds of full-time religious study reached almost 29,000 annually, which is nearly 8% of enlisted men.⁵⁸ However, until recently, the issue has been ideological rather than practical. As Cohen remarked, the primary importance of the

⁵² Navot, “Exemption,” 13.

⁵³ Navot, “Exemption,” 13-14.

⁵⁴ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 67.

⁵⁵ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 66.

⁵⁶ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 86.

⁵⁷ Navot, “Exemption,” 15.

⁵⁸ Navot, “Exemption,” 19.

exemption has been symbolic because the army ranks were filled by the baby-boomers born in the 1970s and the immigrants of the 1990s.⁵⁹ Although there is today a greater shortage of recruits than at the time of his writing, the issue retains a significant symbolic dimension.⁶⁰ Notably, it can be said that the ultra-Orthodox notion of citizenship not based on military service has confronted the widely accepted military-based notion and the very concept of Israelihood.⁶¹

This emergent challenge has roots in the statist period. Essentially Ben Gurion's creation, the army's domestic purpose was aimed at nation building and societal homogenization to fit the idea of the New Jew.⁶² The image of the New Jew sharply contrasted with the Old Diaspora Jew that is pious, helpless, and physically weak. Due to the fact that the *haredim* took it as the purpose of their existence to ensure the continuity of traditional Jewish learning that had been maintained in the Diaspora, they fit into the category of the Old Jew.⁶³ In addition, their exemption from the army service along with the provision for a separate *yeshiva* education system made it impossible for the state to assimilate them into the New Jewish political culture. With the increasing influence of the ultra-Orthodox political parties, the distinct community of *haredi* Jews that have never become a full part of Israeli political culture and have been rapidly growing in number, army service exemption is a much more pressing issue today than it was at the time of the establishment of the state, as was noted earlier. During the last decades the exemption was challenged several times, but the decision was never taken to dismantle it.

Navot demonstrates the general unwillingness of Israeli political and judicial institutions to address the 1949 provision of military exemption from the military for individuals devoted to

⁵⁹ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 18.

⁶⁰ Harold M. Waller, lecture on national security in Israel (course on Politics in Israel, McGill University, Montreal, November 23, 2010).

⁶¹ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 20.

⁶² Cohen, *The Scroll*, 41.

⁶³ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 39.

full-time *yeshiva* study. The 1970 appeal to the High Court of Justice pertaining the unfairness of the exemption was rejected on the grounds that it did not have a “standing”, therefore was not of personal concern to the petitioner, and for the court’s unwillingness to get involved in public debate on collective issues. When a petition was filed again in 1981 claiming that enlisting *yeshiva* students would lift the burden on the reserve forces, “standing” was recognized because Ressler, the petitioner, was himself subject to reserve service. However, the court maintained that it was not its role to rule on issues of public debate.⁶⁴ By the time of the third appeal in 1986, these barriers were somewhat lifted and “the seeds of judicial review on military exemptions were planted”, although no change in the law was brought about at that time.⁶⁵

Another petition was filed in 1998, after the *Mizrachi Bank vs. Migdal* case that introduced judicial review power of the Supreme Court. This time, the Supreme Court went as far as declaring the provision for Minister of Defense’s discretion on military exemptions unconstitutional and ordered the Knesset to enact legislation specifying grounds for exemptions.⁶⁶ The Supreme Court virtually passed “the hot potato” to the Knesset.⁶⁷ Subsequently in 1999, the Tal Committee was established to reconsider the existing practice of military exemptions.⁶⁸ The committee ruled that *yeshiva* students must decide at the age of twenty-four whether they want to continue full-time studies at the *yeshiva* or undergo a military or civil service and seek employment.⁶⁹ However, the proposition has had little success because it upheld the exemption on the grounds of full-time Torah study and in fact only shifted the discretion from the Minister of Defense to the *haredi* communities themselves. The ultra-

⁶⁴ Navot, “Exemption,” 15.

⁶⁵ Navot, “Exemption,” 18.

⁶⁶ Navot, “Exemption,” 19-20.

⁶⁷ Navot, “Exemption,” 20.

⁶⁸ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 99.

⁶⁹ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 100.

Orthodox rabbinical authorities launched a vigorous campaign in 2000 to discourage *haredi* youth from enlisting, notably by drawing parallels between army service and the Holocaust of Jewish souls.⁷⁰ All in all, the practice of army service exemptions remained unchanged. Another attempt was made by Shinui in 2003 when the party won a significant number of seats in the Knesset with the platform of restricting preferential treatment of the *haredim*. Nevertheless, given the presence of ultra-Orthodox parties in the governing coalition, Shinui had little chance to succeed in the pursuit of such policy and vanished before the next election.⁷¹

The significance of this account lies in the portrayal of the hesitance of state institutions to take decisive action on restricting military exemptions for the *haredim*, which can be attributed to Israeli political structure in which the governing coalitions have been dependent on the religious parties.⁷² Moreover, in order for the governing coalition to pass new legislation on this issue, the new law would have to satisfy not only the religious parties, but also the Israeli public and the Supreme Court in terms of the recognized equality principle.⁷³ Another illustration of the policy deadlock is the fact that the IDF has not enforced any sanctions against those who claim to study full-time while they actually work.⁷⁴ In short, coalition politics and the interest of the ruling party in appeasing the religious parties have prevented successful attempts at changing the practice of granting army service exemptions to the *haredim* on a large scale.

So far the outlook of the majority Israeli society has been examined, but it is important to account for the *haredi* point of view on the issue of military exemptions and the role of the army service in their society. Cohen points out that the frequent perception of the *haredim* simply as

⁷⁰ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 101.

⁷¹ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 100.

⁷² Navot, "Exemption," 13.

⁷³ Navot, "Exemption," 20.

⁷⁴ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 18.

“parasites” that enjoy the benefits provided by the state and do not commit to it or participate in the national effort is problematic because it fails to account for the practical and ideological limitations to the *yeshiva* students’ ability to enlist.⁷⁵ The implications that army service would impose on *haredi* youth and that prevent them from serving are social and economic. According to Cohen, there is a great social stigma and ostracism attached to serving in the army in *haredi* communities. Women get labeled at the least, while men also lose their stipends from the *yeshivot*.⁷⁶ Since the *yeshivot* themselves are financed by the state, it is highly paradoxical that its very own resources end up being used to prevent potential recruits from serving in its military force. Stadler adds to the practical reasons for not serving in the army the fact that the young *haredi* males are concerned with a good match for marriage.⁷⁷ The stigma of having served in the army would significantly lower their chances at finding one, because the girls seem to be interested foremost in marrying “a smart *yeshiva* boy”, coming from a renowned *yeshiva*.⁷⁸

The theological reasons why the *haredi* authorities refuse participation of the community in the military are deeply embedded in traditional Judaism.⁷⁹ The female exemption is justified on the grounds that the female belongs to the domestic environment where she is to maintain and pass on the traditional Jewish life-style and this role prevents her from doing any kind of national service.⁸⁰ For the males, it is claimed that they ensure the survival of the entire Jewish nation by studying the Torah.⁸¹ Taking worldly action prior to the signs of the coming of divine

⁷⁵ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 87.

⁷⁶ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 88.

⁷⁷ Stadler and Ben-Ari, “Other-Worldly Soldiers,” 43.

⁷⁸ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 45.

⁷⁹ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 88.

⁸⁰ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 93.

⁸¹ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 95-99.

redemption is seen as rebellion against the God's will.⁸² Therefore, the exemption is reasoned by pursuing another kind of communal obligation.⁸³

Stadler and Ben-Ari refer to the notion of soldierness of *yeshiva* study embodied in the rabbinical stance towards army service.⁸⁴ The authors examined instruction books for *yeshiva* students, rabbinical sermons, *haredi* newspaper articles, and external newspapers and conducted interviews with *yeshiva* students between 1996 and 1999. Among their findings was a recent shift to portraying *yeshiva* study as complementary to the role of the IDF through division of soldierly labor.⁸⁵ With respect to the notion of the masculine military soldier's body, the *yeshiva* students are perceived as having the strength of the body and soul to carry out their studies and thus allow the existence of the State of Israel.⁸⁶ To set these views in a broader framework of Israeli political culture, Stadler and Ben-Ari point out that such justification of "other worldly soldiering" might be interpreted as a reaction to the condemnation of the Old Diaspora Jew by the state.⁸⁷ According to the official *haredi* view, participation in military service poses a threat to *yeshiva* learning because continuous learning has had a supreme value for maintenance of Jewish tradition and is crucial for the pious individual during his formative years.⁸⁸ Finally, military service is claimed to have a corrupting impact on the moral and spiritual order of the *haredim* through encounter with the non-ultra-Orthodox world.⁸⁹ To summarize, the official rabbinical outlook can be said to equate the *yeshiva* students' contribution to the survival of the Jewish people and tradition to the army recruits' role. Moreover, the accounts point to the notion

⁸² Cohen, "The Re-Discovery," 4-5.

⁸³ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 101.

⁸⁴ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 24.

⁸⁵ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 26.

⁸⁶ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 28-29.

⁸⁷ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 29.

⁸⁸ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 29-30.

⁸⁹ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 30-31.

that there is a clear division of tasks and the *haredi*'s place is in the non-corrupted *yeshivot* where he can pursue what he is suited for the best. This view can be considered a breakthrough compared to the anti-Zionist attitude that the ultra-Orthodox Jews held at the time of the establishment of statehood.

Several ways can be suggested to deal with the political and social implications that the military exemption of the *haredim* has on Israeli polity. One of these potential solutions could entail enlisting the *haredim* not to the military, but to civil service. It can be argued that civil service would ensure their contribution to the common good and at the same time would have milder requirements on the change of their lifestyle than army service. Civil service has been seen as a legitimate way of participating in the national cause for Orthodox women that claim exemption from the army on the grounds that such service is not compatible with their traditional way of life.⁹⁰ Therefore, if the practice of enlisting to civil service was extended to the *haredim*, it could at least partially legitimize their position as Israeli citizens claiming political say and a share of state resources.

However, there are several problems with this proposition. Firstly, the justification for not serving recently used by the rabbinical authorities entails the necessity for the *haredi* segment of the population to pursue continuous studies of the Torah. They present *yeshiva* studies as the *haredi* share of ensuring the survival of the Jewish people. In this sense, civil service, like military service, would still prevent the *haredim* from continuous study of the Torah and would not hold against the argument that learning is the central precondition to Jewish survival. Secondly, civil service would hardly make a difference for *haredi* women whose inability to serve in the army has been reasoned by the restriction of their activity to the domestic

⁹⁰ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 66-67.

sphere and the household. For this reason, they would continue to claim to be unable to perform any kind of national service. The third problem with civil service is that the religious parties in the government coalitions can be expected to stand up against a requirement for the *haredim* to engage in civil service for the reasons outlined earlier. Therefore, such legislation is unlikely to even pass, at least not at present when the political situation and party system give great leverage to smaller parties. As attractive a solution it is, civil service poses ideological as well as practical problems that prevent its implementation at this time.

Stadler examines the voices from within the *haredi* community and presents noteworthy findings that suggest another way out of the deadlock on the army exemption issue. Based on the interviews with *yeshiva* students, she argues they generally have a positive attitude towards the military and some willingness to take part in it.⁹¹ The interviewees expressed the view that the *haredi* youth is often not suited for *yeshiva* studies and that one should have a choice. They perceive the army as something that goes against the traditional model of life in their community, but that would enable them to participate more fully in various aspects of social life. The students tend to feel that the *yeshiva* model is the right one to follow but at the same time it is not entirely realistic today.⁹² As Stadler states, *yeshiva* students' fantasies about the army are manifested in its glorification and idealization.⁹³ The author maintains that *haredi* piety is a fluid, shifting concept that today's *yeshiva* students desire to be "more inclusive, heroic, profane and militaristic."⁹⁴ Accordingly, *haredi* videos and films have shown powerful images of successful

⁹¹ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 32.

⁹² Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 108.

⁹³ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 111.

⁹⁴ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 158-59.

combat soldiers that remained pious.⁹⁵ This attitude leads the *yeshiva* students to not oppose the concept of the military and even express some willingness to serve in the army.

Addressing the disparity in the views of the interviewed *yeshiva* students and the official authorities, Stadler and Ben-Ari note that the official outlook expresses concern for the survival of the *haredi* community, while the youth finds itself pressed between this rhetoric and a more complicated viewpoint.⁹⁶ The authors attribute the generational divergence to the fact that while the generation of the authorities has been largely anti-Zionist and anti-state, for the young generation the state is a fact and a lived reality. In this sense, the youth faces dual pressures from the ideology that they are subjected to by the rabbis and the modern world and statehood that they are aware of.⁹⁷ From their recognition of the state results the recognition of the armed forces and their significance to the state, and thus the consideration of participating in it.⁹⁸

Stadler identifies the processes that the *haredim* have been undergoing and that led to the expressed positive attitude towards army service as redefinition of relationships between the state and the civil society.⁹⁹ The Israeli male identity is formed by their service in the army and the young *haredi* males feel the need to participate in the process as well.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, the official authorities have pressed forward their viewpoint because they see the rejection of military service as a way to maintain a distinct ideology, the core of which is separation from the state.¹⁰¹ Given these conflicting notions, young *haredim* have started to develop new models that idealize soldierhood, combine piety and manhood and reflect their desire to become fuller

⁹⁵ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 112.

⁹⁶ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 30.

⁹⁷ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 41.

⁹⁸ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 42.

⁹⁹ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 50.

¹⁰⁰ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 97.

¹⁰¹ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 96.

participants in the society.¹⁰² Their stance can be seen as an attempt to break from the established system where the Israeli males are socialized and disciplined by the army, while the *haredim* develop their body discipline through learning and socialize in the *yeshivot*.¹⁰³ Rather than maintaining the two processes parallel, the young *yeshiva* students have set off on a search for a way to reconcile the inner and outer pressures and redefine their relationship to the state and Israeli society.

Setting Stadler and Ben-Ari's empirical findings into a theoretical framework, Kimmerling speaks of the recent "nationalization" of the *haredi* social segments towards more compliance with the state and the society. Although he does not mention attitude towards the military when listing the ways in which nationalization has manifested itself, the fact that he accounts for the trend of nationalization of the segment traditionally skeptical of or even resistant to the state lends support to Stadler and Ben-Ari's arguments.¹⁰⁴ Liebman and Cohen point to convergence of Israeli society in relation to the state establishment. They observe nationalization of the *haredim* that has created a distinct group calling itself *haredi-leumi* and a certain "haredization" of the religious Zionists.¹⁰⁵ Their account sheds some light onto the societal processes that are reflected in the *yeshiva* students' changing perception of army service.

Yet, as Stadler and Ben-Ari point out, the positive attitude towards army service has not translated into action. The vast majority of *yeshiva* students continue to take advantage of the deferment and eventually never serve.¹⁰⁶ The powerful mechanisms employed by the rabbis to

¹⁰² Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 98.

¹⁰³ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 96.

¹⁰⁴ Kimmerling, *The Invention*, 217.

¹⁰⁵ Charles S. Liebman and Asher Cohen, "A Case of Fundamentalism in Contemporary Israel," in *Religion, Democracy and Israeli Society*, ed. Charles S. Liebman (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 57-59.

¹⁰⁶ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 18.

discourage the youth from enlisting and the decisive authority they possess within the *haredi* community have already been accounted for. Therefore, the suggested shift in attitudes towards the state and its institutional structures including the military can only manifest itself politically over time once the young generation that has grown up seeing the state as a given reality and desires to participate in its society resumes authority in the community. A change in the exemption practice brought about by moderation of official attitudes can be expected to come before a policy change that will inevitably involve coalition politics and contestation of various political interests.

Yet, the IDF seems to already provide some conditions for integration of the ultra-Orthodox. Liebman asserts that religion is largely incorporated into the army. On the official level, attempts have been made to conduct the army in accordance with Jewish law and on the lower level structures have been developed to enable the religious soldiers to practice their religion and maintain the *halakhic* way of life.¹⁰⁷ Cohen goes into more detail outlining the various provisions for religious recruits. The IDF has its own rabbinate that serves to provide spiritual guidance and counsel on practical matters to the soldiers. A synagogue has been maintained at every permanent military installation and the equipment of daily religious practice is supplied for free by the army.¹⁰⁸ Both the kitchens that are supposed to prepare kosher food and the provisions for keeping the Sabbath fall under special supervision of the rabbinate rather than the local commanders.¹⁰⁹ Religious symbols are incorporated into the very essence of the army. For example, each recruit receives a copy of the Bible. Moreover, important ceremonies for the recruits are held at the Western Wall and burials of soldiers take place according to

¹⁰⁷ Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yihya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 179-80.

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 47-48.

¹⁰⁹ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 49-50.

Jewish law.¹¹⁰ Although Cohen acknowledges the various obstacles a religious soldier faces in the army, he considers religion one of IDF's central components.¹¹¹

Another factor of the IDF that might facilitate incorporation of ultra-Orthodox soldiers is the "missions other than war". Cohen explains that the functions of the army have not been restricted to combat; on the contrary, in the past, the army has performed public service, assisted at setting up the development towns, provided supplementary education, and facilitated immigrant absorption.¹¹² The *haredi* recruits would therefore not inevitably have to engage in combat, but instead could be assigned functions of public service character. Such provision might help moderate the rabbinical arguments about moral and spiritual corruption that army service would bring upon the *yeshiva* students. Furthermore, it would ease the adaptation to the conditions in the army for *yeshiva* students who had not been physically trained before enlisting and had known little of the world outside the *yeshivot*.

In Stadler and Ben-Ari's account, *yeshiva* students have started to act as agents of reform in their communities and have shown increasing willingness to participate in the state and social affairs, including army service.¹¹³ Interestingly, according to their findings military service seems to be the only realm the youth is willing to take part in, unlike, for example, the state education system.¹¹⁴ While it is unlikely that the present rabbinical authorities would give consent to *yeshiva* students to enlist in the army or that the ultra-Orthodox parties in the Knesset would enable legislation dismantling the exemption to pass, it is precisely this positive attitude of *yeshiva* students that has potential to bring about a change in the practice of not serving in the

¹¹⁰ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 54.

¹¹¹ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 46.

¹¹² Cohen, *The Scroll*, 38-39.

¹¹³ Stadler, *Yeshiva Fundamentalism*, 160.

¹¹⁴ Stadler and Ben-Ari, "Other-Worldly Soldiers," 40.

army. Having grown up in the well established state, the *haredi* youth exhibits a higher degree of recognition of the state and of the role the army plays than did the old generations. Moreover, the youth desires to participate more fully in Israeli society and sees military service as a way to achieve greater inclusion. For this reason, the images of the army and the soldier are idealized by the *yeshiva* students. If this trend continues and when the generation with more progressive attitudes assumes authority in the *haredi* communities, the *haredim* might start to enlist in the army in substantial numbers even before legislation is passed compelling them to. This way, they would consolidate their position as participating Israeli citizens in the eyes of the non-ultra-Orthodox population, which might help moderate the religious-secular tensions. Furthermore, the IDF would come closer to its intended image of a “people’s army”, serving the entire nation and incorporating the vast majority of the nation.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Cohen, *The Scroll*, 40-41.

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