# D O R O T :

## The McGill Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies

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The cover image, "Alef-Bet," was painted by and is the property of Shoshanna Bauer. The artist and copyright holder has granted the Jewish Studies Students' Association and its academic journal, *Dorot*, license to use the image on the cover of the 2007 edition of the journal.

The cover illustration is entitled "Alef-Bet," and is based on the concept of God creating the Universe with words. The Midrash tells of how the letters of the Hebrew alphabet each asked to be the first letter when God created the Torah. It was this idea of the Universe being made of Hebrew letters, flowing together in a Milky Way of light and stars, that underlies the illustration. Seeking to apply some semblance of order and meaning to the image, the artist included the words she found upon opening her prayer book, and, to her, they described God so perfectly: "Living and Enduring One, Awesome, Exalted and Holy." "Alef-Bet" was not created by the artist but through her. As she put it, "I am but the brush that the Great Artist uses to paint."

Shoshanna Bauer is the child of Holocaust survivors and her work is both a spiritual expression of her own journey through life as well as a means of allowing the Universe to touch others. 2006 marked the rebirth of her creative soul and the creation of "Alef-Bet." She has a B.A. in Studio Art from Eastern Illinois University and currently lives in Champaign, Illinois. Her work can be seen on the internet at www.shoshannabauer.com.

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# Preface

On behalf of the Department of Jewish Studies, I am delighted to join the editors and contributors in celebrating the appearance of a new volume of the McGill Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies. The first volume of this journal appeared in 1993. Since then, it has been produced (almost annually) by undergraduate students in the Department of Jewish Studies without the interference of faculty members. I hope that all readers will take as much satisfaction as I and my colleagues do from the perspicacity and learning represented in the articles collected here. The contents of this volume represent some of the fields in which Jewish Studies is offered at McGill and convey a good sense of just how bright, imaginative, curious, and creative our students are.

The student editors and contributors have labored mightily to produce this finished product, learning along the way just how much effort is involved in the publication of a scholarly journal. The research represented in the articles here, like all published research, will undoubtedly serve as a stimulus to more thought and more study. It is all part of the continuous conversation that characterizes centers of learning. It is particularly pleasing to have new voices make themselves heard.

I have no doubt that the authors, whose work appears here, will continue to look back in pride at their first publications. Congratulations and best wishes to all!

Gershon Hundert
*Chair, Department of Jewish Studies*

# Introduction

It is with a true sense of accomplishment that I write this introduction, finally being able to place this book into your hands. This feeling of accomplishment comes from having wiped away three years of dust and cobwebs from the *McGill Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies* to produce the ninth volume of this publication under a new title — *Dorot: The McGill Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies*. Yes, there were lapses in the past, years where no journal was published, but through the persistence of Corey Shefman and the JSSA executive, this volume has renewed the life of the journal. With this new life has come a new title and an ISSN number, as we hope to establish this journal as a truly serial publication, one issuing successive parts on a regular basis and with the intention of doing so indefinitely.

The new title, *Dorot*, holds particular significance given the word's Hebrew context, its use in the Yiddish language (*doyres*), and the meaning of its English translation: generations. The literature of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion builds upon the thoughts and writings that have come before, contributing to the perpetuity of its people and religion. They are a response to the past, an investment in the future. So, too, are the entries of this journal.

A friend asked me while I was in the heat of editing and proofreading why I had chosen to edit this journal. The answer came out effortlessly and simply: I am doing this to ensure that a physical entity remains to give voice to the ideas of today's students. So it remains. The hours have passed and the effort has been spent, but *we* — the writers and editors — have achieved what we set out to do. We have produced a material representation of the immense work and care of the individuals involved in its creation, a testament to the past and a foundation for the future.

For the present, I must thank Adam and Abby for their enthusiasm and willingness to share the work and responsibility. Words will not express my appreciation for Katie. Her diligence, precision, and willingness to dive with immense passion, head-first into a new genre of literature has been reassuring and has taught me much. Thank you to Professor Hundert and *lererin* Gonshor for their patience and guidance.

We have done this as a gesture in perpetuity, for posterity, for generations.

Enjoy,

Jeremy H. Pertman
*Editor in Chief*

# Jewish Bible Interpretation and the War on Amalek: A Discourse of the Evolution of the Interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:19[1]
*Hannah White*

Amalek is a name embedded in Jewish memory as a result of the biblical recounting of several episodes of encounter with the nation of Amalek. In Exodus 17, Amalek becomes the first nation to attack the Israelites, and after Moses' triumphant battle, the section concludes with God's promise to eradicate Amalek in an ongoing war throughout the generations. Deuteronomy 25 is a section of Moses' speech to the Israelites, where he continues his recap of the commandments, reviewing God's laws in order to prepare the Israelites to enter the Promised Land.

> Therefore, when the Lord your God grants you safety from all your enemies around you, in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a hereditary portion, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget![2]

Here, God's promise to exterminate Amalek becomes a commandment incumbent on Israel; Israel must now blot out the memory of Amalek. Later, the consequences of this commandment are played out in 1 Samuel, when Saul is expected to fulfill the commandment of utterly destroying Amalek, but does not obey. Further, in the Book of Esther, we find that the genealogy of Haman, the villain of the story, can be traced to Agog, a king of the Amalekites. Within the biblical texts alone, the beginnings of a tradition regarding Amalekites can be observed. Further, I would posit that Deuteronomy 25:19, where Israel is commanded to blot out the memory of Amalek, can be understood as a pivotal moment in the history of Israel's relationship with Amalek, as the duty to destroy the nation is brought down from a divine realm into human hands.

Jewish interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:19 has changed considerably over time, as evolving historical situations and developments in methodology necessarily influence the understanding of any given text. This paper will attempt to trace a part of the history of the interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:19, examining numerous discussions of the verse that have taken place, starting with the influences of Hellenism. This paper will examine rewritten versions of the story, commentaries, histories, some early Christian interpretation, halakhic and aggadic Midrash, and Tannaitic and Talmudic traditions and translation. Before embarking on this project, it is important to note that because Amalek appears in several different places in the Bible, some of the commentary utilized by this paper is necessarily linked with the interpretation of Exodus 17, I Samuel 15 and 28, and Esther 3. I will point out a trend of ancient technique; many of the texts I will highlight are interested in harmonizing the different biblical traditions about Amalek, and therefore attempt to use the various scriptural references to Amalek as commentary for each other; thus, what appears to be a commentary on I Samuel 15 is also by its nature necessarily an interpretation of the other scriptural references. Although this paper is intended to be a discussion of a single verse, some cross-over in the literature is required by the nature of the verse chosen; as well, some of the commentary that will be examined is commentary on a combination of the sources about Amalek.

*Hellenism*

Jewish Bible interpretation was shaped as a result of contact with Hellenistic cultural and intellectual endeavors. In many works, we can see interpretive methodologies arise and evolve in relation to Hellenistic standards. Some of this can be understood in light of Greek notions of Jews and Judaism. Folker Siegert reports that Jews in antiquity were often accused of keeping themselves separate,[3] and in attempt to maintain their cultic practices while simultaneously seeking acceptance within their cultural, political, social, and intellectual context, Jewish interpretation at this time takes on many elements of Greek interpretation. Siegert claims that "the necessity of coming to a practical arrangement with Hellenistic culture set the framework for theoretical compromises, one of which is the art of interpreting scripture."[4] Interpretations at this time are written in Greek, and in many instances, cite Greek philosophers and writers. As well, exegesis often utilizes the Septuagint (LXX) version of the Pentateuch. It will be helpful now to provide a discussion of the works of Philo, Pseudo-

Philo, and Josephus's work in relation to Deuteronomy 25:19.

Philo's work might have been lost if it had not become a classic for the Christian Church, which subsequently preserved it. Not many details are known about his life, except that he was a prominent member of the Jewish community in Alexandria. His family was one of the wealthiest families in Alexandria,[5] and they probably held Roman citizenship. His family's stature provided for his education, which was vast as "he knows Plato as thoroughly as the Mosaic laws"[6] and he writes in eloquent Greek style. Philo engages often in allegorical commentary, where his main effort is "devoted to revealing the essential, 'spiritual' meaning behind the 'sensible.'"[7] However, Philo never disregards literal understandings of the observance of the biblical Law.

Philo has much to say about Amalek and Amalekites in general. However, he does not mention in his works the divine command to blot out the memory of Amalek. Even in his rewritten version of the events recorded in Exodus, Philo avoids this issue. With regards to the passage in Exodus, Philo writes,

> After traversing a long and pathless expanse, they came within sight of the confines of habitable land, and the outlying districts of the country in which they proposed to settle. This country was occupied by Phoenicians. Here they had thought to find a life of peace and quiet, but their hopes were disappointed. For the king who ruled there, fearing pillage and ripine, called up the youth of his cities and came to meet them, hoping to bar their way, or, if that were not feasible and they attempted violence, to discomfit them by force of arms, seeing that his men were unwearied and fresh for the contest, while the others were exhausted with much journeying and by the famine and drought which had alternately attacked them. Moses, learning from his scouts that the enemy was not far distant, mustered his men of military age, and, choosing as their general one of his lieutenants named Joshua, hastened himself to take a more important part in the fights. Having purified himself according to the customary ritual, he ran without delay to the neighbouring hill and besought God to shield the Hebrews and give a triumphant victory to the people whom He had saved from wars and other

> troubles still more grievous than this, dispersing not only the misfortunes with which men had menaced them but also those so miraculously brought about in Egypt by the upheaval of the elements and by the continual dearth which beset them in their journeying. But, when they were about to engage in the fight, his hands were affected in the most marvelous way. They became very light and very heavy in turn, and, whenever they were in the former condition and rose aloft, his side of the combatants was strong and distinguished itself the more by its valour, but whenever his hands were weighed down the enemy prevailed. Thus, by symbols, God showed that earth and the lowest regions of the universe were the portion assigned as their own to the one party, and the ethereal, the holiest region, to the other; and that, just as heaven holds kingship in the universe and is superior to earth, so this nation should be victorious over its opponents in war.[8]

This passage helps to illuminate some of Philo's worldviews and understandings of the narrative at hand. Firstly, the genre of this text should be noted — we have here not allegory, but a retelling of the Bible story as an historical account. Philo wrote *De Vita Mosis* as a kind of biography of Moses, and it exceptionally avoids allegorizing Moses' life. According to Feldman, this work seeks to correct Greek judgment about Moses by enlightening them of the reality of Moses' greatness in a factual manner.[9] Here, we see Philo attempting to justify the behavior of the Israelites, who merely "thought to find a life of peace and quiet," when they were suddenly attacked. The Israelites battled against their enemies out of a need for defense. Also, the fact that in this work addressed to a Greek audience, Philo avoids calling the Israelite enemy "Amalek" but instead refers to them as Phoenicians. Philo, apologetically rewriting the Exodus account, purposely omits God's insistence on blotting out Amalek, attempting to evade accusations of genocide.[10] It is with similar intentions that Philo pursues this avoidance even in his allegorical work. In *Legum Allegoriae,* although he does, indeed, refer to God's command to blot out Amalek, Philo has determined that Amalek is a kind of spiritual enemy. Here, blotting out Amalek does not mean to destroy a physical people, but

rather a spiritual malady;

> When the mind lifts itself up away from mortal things and is borne aloft, that which sees God, which is Israel, gains strength, but when it has lowered its special powers and grown weak, immediately passion, named 'Amalek' which means 'a people licking out,' will become strong: for in very deed it eats up the whole soul and licks it out, leaving behind in it no seed or spark of virtue. In keeping with this are the words 'Amalek the first of the nations' (Numbers 14:20), because passion rules and lords it over promiscuous hordes that have drifted together without purpose or meaning. Through passion all the war of the soul is fanned into flame.[11]

It is for this reason that God promises, and commands, the blotting out of Amalek. In this passage, as well, it is important to observe Philo's very careful position. In his allegory, he does not avoid using the terms of extermination, and he names Amalek by its biblical name. However, it is only by allegorizing Amalek that Philo can talk about the divinely ordained extermination of an entire people.

Pseudo-Philo is not so careful as Philo. His work aims at rewriting the passage about Amalek found in 1 Samuel 15. However, his rewritten version draws from several phrases that appear in the biblical accounts that deal with Amalek. He quotes from Deuteronomy 25, Exodus 17, and uses 1 Samuel 15 as a general structure (the editor and translator has italicized the phrases that refer to biblical passages):

> And in that time the Lord said to Samuel, 'Go and say to Saul, "You have been sent to destroy Amalek in order that the words that Moses my servant spoke may be fulfilled: 'I will destroy the name of Amalek from the earth.' I have spoken in my anger. And do not forget to destroy everyone of them as has been commanded to you."' And *Saul* went off and *attacked Amalek and he let Agag, the king of Amalek, live,* because he said to him, 'I will show you hidden treasures.' And on account of this *he spared him and let him live* and brought him to Ramathaim. And God

> said to Samuel, 'You have seen how in a short time the
> king has been corrupted with silver, and he has let the
> king of Amalek and his wife live. And now let them be,
> so that Agag may come together with his wife tonight;
> and you will kill him tomorrow. But his wife they will
> keep safe until she bears a male child, and then she also
> will die. And he who will be born from her will become a
> stumbling block for Saul. Now may you rise up tomorrow
> and kill Agag, because Saul's sin is written before me all
> the days.'[12]

Within the general framework of events as outlined in 1 Samuel 15, we see how Pseudo-Philo has drawn on excerpts. 1 Samuel 15 includes God's command to destroy all of the Amalekites, however, it does not say to "destroy the name" nor does it enjoin Saul "do not forget." Interestingly, Pseudo-Philo also includes some material not part of the biblical versions, and provides a sort of prophecy about the future of Amalek. To Pseudo-Philo, God commands the Israelites, "Do not forget!" but because they do, Amalek will continue to be a threat and a terror to them. God will allow the offspring of Agag to survive and be a stumbling block for Saul — and presumably this offspring will function as a stumbling block for all of Israel, because Saul did not heed the word of God. Furthermore, this example from Pseudo-Philo sheds some light on his exegetical methodology. He writes, "I will destroy the name of Amalek from the earth." This sentence provides a good illustration of the commentator's habit of "unconsciously deviating from the biblical text he is explicitly quoting, under the influence of more commonplace biblical idiom."[13] Pseudo-Philo is explicitly quoting Deuteronomy 25:19, but instead utilizes the more common biblical expression of "I will wipe out [destroy] from off the earth" (e.g. Gen. 6:7), as opposed to Deuteronomy's "from beneath the heavens."

Josephus is a first-century historian and apologist of priestly and royal descent; his histories provide an important account of the destruction of Jerusalem. His major work, *Judean Antiquities,* is his version of the history of the Jewish people from their beginnings up to his own time. In his work, Josephus states that he has undertaken the task of presenting the history of the Jews so that "it will appear to all the Greeks deserving of studious attention," and that this history shall be "translated

from the Hebrew writings."[14] As well, he promises to "set forth the precise details of what is in the Scripture according to its proper order … neither adding nor omitting anything."[15] Josephus's statements about his goals for this work are significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, the first half of the *Judean Antiquities* does indeed retell the beginnings of the Jewish story; however, this is done not through translation, but through paraphrase. Secondly, despite his promise to neither add nor omit any details, Josephus's paraphrase does exactly the opposite; he leaves out whole narrative sections in some instances, and in other places he expands on and elaborates the text he claims to be translating. Josephus replicates the biblical narrative by "arranging and supplementing it, by explaining difficult passages, and by defending the Jews against charges that had been made against them on the basis of the biblical text."[16] Finally, because of his paraphrasing style, it becomes difficult to determine whether or not Josephus is working from Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic versions of the text. His history shows developments within the world of Jewish Bible interpretation.

Josephus talks about Amalek several times throughout his *Judean Antiquities*; for the sake of brevity, I will not discuss each occurrence here, as some of his references pertain to other biblical passages. Josephus's paraphrase is a blend of several elements that occur in Deuteronomy. He writes,

> Therefore, he handed over to the priests these books, as well as the ark, in which he also deposited the ten statements that had been written in two tablets, and the Tent. And he exhorted the people, after conquering the land and settling there, not to forget the insolence of the Amalekites, but to undertake a military expedition against them and to avenge themselves for the wrong they did to them when they happened to be in the desert.[17]

The first part of this statement is thoroughly composite: "these books" refers to Deuteronomy 31:9, "and Moses wrote this law, and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord;" "the ark" is included because of Deuteronomy 31:26, "take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you;" "the two tablets" refer to I Kings 8:9, "there was nothing in the ark except the two tables of stone that

Moses put there at Horeb."[18] Included here is the exhortation not to forget the Amalekites. It is evident that Josephus' version is reworked, and does not follow Deuteronomy 25:19 verbatim. He clarifies how to blot out the memory of Amalek — through a military campaign — and explains that the "insolence" of the Amalekites should be "avenged" by the Israelites. In re-writing Deuteronomy 25:19, Josephus has explained and clarified some of the questions that a reading of the verse often raises.

In examining these works, I have intended to demonstrate how historical circumstances come to shape the direction of interpretation. Because of the huge influence of the Hellenistic world, much of Jewish Bible interpretation is based in and related to Greek exegetical and hermeneutical modes. Particularly, some Jewish interpretation occurs as a response to Greek ideas about Jews and Judaism, and can be seen in an apologetic light.

*Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*

There exists an abundance of biblical literature that has not been included in the canonized Hebrew Bible. Some of this literature nonetheless claims for itself a certain biblical authority in that they are attributed to ideal figures in the Hebrew Bible; these extra-biblical texts were produced by Jews from approximately 200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. Such works are significant in the evolution of Jewish Bible interpretation in that they demonstrate "the pervasive influence of the Old Testament books upon Early Judaism."[19] As well, the Pseudepigraphic texts point to the divisions and sects that characterized early post-exilic Judaism, and are an important source for understanding social realities in this time frame. The Pseudepigrapha attempt to deal with a number of theological issues, particularly with the problem of theodicy, the meaning of sin, and origins of evil.[20] Apocryphal literature deals with the text of the Hebrew Bible in a number of ways — some texts exhibit a clear awareness of what has come to be known as scripture, some provide no evidence of such knowledge, some are conscious of authoritative books that are not currently included in the canon, and others bear witness to the content of scripture.[21] The interpretation that is provided within these works, then, attests to the multiplicities of understandings of what the 'scripture' is, conceptions of how to understand scripture and where it fits in with other writings, as well as to Jewish social divisions.

*The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is a text that professes to be the final words of Jacob's twelve sons in Genesis 49. The text depicts each

of the sons just before his death, where they gather their families around their deathbeds and reflect upon their lives, confess their sins, and entreat their families to follow their ethical advice, which they utter before dying. Simeon's account is largely an exhortation against envy. Before dying, Simeon says to his family,

> If you divest yourselves of envy and every hardness of heart, my bones will flourish as a rose in Israel and my flesh as a lily in Jacob. My odor shall be like the odor of Lebanon. Holy ones shall be multiplied from me forever and ever, and their branches shall extend to a great distance. Then the seed of Canaan will be destroyed, and there will be no posterity of Amalek … Then the whole earth shall be at rest from trouble, and everything under heaven shall be free from war.[22]

This passage provides an illustration of the author's method of interpretation. In his attack on envy, he connects the concept of Amalek to the qualities of envy and hardness of heart. It is only through purging oneself of envy that the seed of Amalek can be destroyed. Although this text does not contain an explicit reference to Deuteronomy 25:19, it does hark back to the verse in claiming that everything "under heaven" will be peaceful with the eventual destruction and obliteration of envy/Amalek. As well, it also seems to recall the verse from Numbers, particularly relating to the posterity of Amalek at a future end time.

Although the apocryphal works were not ultimately included in the formalized Hebrew Bible canon, they represent a tradition of thinking about the Hebrew Bible text that was not uncommon. Indeed, in relation to Deuteronomy 25:19, mainstream interpretations are included — the concept of the destruction of Amalek occurring at the end of time is not exclusive to this tradition.

### Early Christian and Patristic Interpretation

Early Judaism was segmented into a number of sects, including the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Christians. Later Christian interpretation, then, has its roots in Jewish Bible interpretation. The exegesis done by Christian Bible interpreters was "a direct and unselfconscious continuation of the type of exegesis practiced by ancient Judaism in its later period."[23] Indeed, the New Testament itself demonstrates a number

of such Jewish exegetical methodological traditions, and other early Christian writings follow along similar cultural traditional guidelines. Because this stage of Christianity is still to be considered a type of Judaism, early Christian interpretations illustrate another aspect of literary and exegetical activity for this time period.

The early Church utilized existing interpretation traditions in accord with their beliefs; because their religious beliefs and traditions varied from other Jewish beliefs, the interpretive works produced are necessarily of a different type. The Hebrew Bible represented authority for such beliefs and practices, "but at the same time the religious convictions of the community unveiled the true meaning of Scripture."[24] This means that Christians understood the Hebrew Bible in a Christian sense, citing it to explain the theological significance of Jesus; the Hebrew Bible is sourced as proof-texts to validate Christian moral instructions and to verify Jesus as the Messiah.[25]

One category of Christian interpretation is classed as apologetics, where the writer is concerned with proving certain tenets of the Christian faith system. The work of Justin Martyr is considered apologetic, as his main concern interest is to prove from Hebrew scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah and that the Law has a different position since the events of Jesus' life.[26] Although the details of Justin's life are scant, scholars generally accept a time frame of between the end of the first century and the beginning of the second. Justin claims that he is a Gentile convert to Christianity, and that his lifestyle was that of an educated pagan and philosopher before his conversion.[27]

Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* is his report of a discussion between himself and Trypho. This dialogue took place at Ephesus after the end of the Bar Kochba Revolt, and it is possible that Trypho was a Jewish refugee who fled to Ephesus during the uprising.[28] Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* functions as a polemical interpretation of the Hebrew Bible; he utilizes interpretational methods in order to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over Judaism.

Justin's treatment of Deuteronomy 25:19 occurs within his interpretation of the Exodus account of Amalek. Justin describes the phenomenon of Moses' upward hands in correlation with the success of the Israelites, and claims that the Israelites were able to advance because Moses' uplifted hands were the sign of the cross. He writes,

And a sign of him who was destined to be crucified was

given to you, both in the case of the serpents that bit you, as I have already said (thus before all these mysteries were fulfilled they were given to you by a benevolent God, toward whom you are convicted of being always ungrateful), and, by the sign of Moses' outstretched arms and the renaming of Jesus when they were waging war against Amalek, which fact God commanded to be recorded, having admonished you not to forget the name of Jesus, who was going to erase the memory of Amalek from the face of the earth.[29]

It is interesting to note that Justin reworks the structure of Deuteronomy 25:19 to fit more closely with his Christology. Here, God does not command the Israelites to wipe out the name of Amalek, but rather, not to forget the name of Jesus. The phrase "do not forget" from the end of the verse is turned on its head—it is not that the Israelites are being commanded to obliterate Amalek, but rather that they are being commanded not to forget Jesus. We see here, too, that Justin has combined two occurrences of the biblical account regarding Amalek; in his comments on Exodus 17, we find the interpretation that Moses' arms make the shape of the cross, and in regards to Deuteronomy 25, we see that Justin has made a kind of Pauline-type inversion, where Jesus is put in the place the biblical text has reserved for the Amalekites.

Origen's work, as well, has been extremely influential in the development of Bible interpretation. Origen lived in the early third century in Alexandria; he used the Hebrew Bible as his primary tool in the fields of preaching, apology, commentary, and philosophy.[30] One of his main contributions to the field of biblical interpretation was his consideration of canon and textual issues. In compiling his *Hexapla,* Origen attempted to establish an authoritative, accurate text of the LXX, and in doing so referred to a number of manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible. Alongside this technical commitment to establishing an accurate text, Origen also propounded more "spiritual" readings in exegesis, and he "endorses an essentially philosophical hermeneutic."[31] Besides his own exegetical work, Origen preserves the texts of other Ancient Greek writers which are not otherwise extant.

In his work *Contra Celsum*, Origen preserves Celsus's polemical attack of Christianity. In relation to our verse, Origen quotes a line of Celsus' attack, where he uses God's command to obliterate Amalek as

evidence of contradiction between the spiritual background of the Hebrew Bible and the words of Jesus:

> If the prophets of the God of the Jews foretold that Jesus would be his son, why did he give them laws by Moses that they were to become rich and powerful and to fill the earth and to massacre their enemies, children and all, and slaughter their entire race, which he himself did, so Moses says, before the eyes of the Jews? And besides this, if they were not obedient, why does he expressly threaten to do to them what he did to their enemies? Yet his son, the man of Nazareth, gives contradictory laws, saying that a man cannot come toward the Father if he is rich or loves power or lays claim to any intelligence or reputation, and that he must not pay attention to food or to his storehouse any more than the ravens, or to clothing any more than the lilies, and that to a man who has struck him once he should offer himself to be struck once again. Who is wrong? Moses or Jesus? Or when the Father sent Jesus had he forgotten what commands he gave to Moses? or did he condemn his own laws and change his mind, and send his messenger for quite the opposite purpose?[32]

Celsus is here using the Hebrew Bible as his source of evidence against the authority of Christianity. He points out that there is a discrepancy between Jesus' message and the content of the commandments given through Moses, and argues that the viewpoints of both cannot exist in harmony at the same time. Although he does not name the enemies of the Jews as "Amalekites," it is clear that he is indeed referring to the account of Amalek. Celsus is not citing a particular verse, and it seems that his understanding of the biblical narratives regarding Amalek is a conflation of sources — he mentions Moses, which refers to the accounts in Exodus and Deuteronomy, but the particular allusion to killing the children of their enemies derives from I Samuel 15.

Origen does not leave Celsus' attack at that, but refutes him with his own theological propositions and exegesis of the events. We will see from his response not a literal interpretation of the command to kill Amalek, but a more "spiritual" approach as mentioned above. He counters,

Thus also we understand the saying in the 136th psalm which reads as follows: 'O daughter of Babylon, thou wretched one, blessed is he who shall repay thee thy reward which thou didst repay to us; blessed is he who shall take hold of thy infants and dash them against the rock.' The infants of Babylon, which means confusion, are the confused thoughts caused by the evil which have just been implanted and are growing up in the soul. The man who takes hold of them, so that he breaks their heads by the firmness and solidity of the Word, is dashing the infants of Babylon against the rock; and on this account he becomes blessed. Supposing then, that God does command men to kill the works of iniquity, *children and all*, and *to slaughter their entire race*, His teaching in no way contradicts the proclamation of Jesus. And we may also grant that *before the eyes of* those who are *Jews* in secret God brings about the destruction of their enemies and of all the works caused by evil. And we may take it that this is the meaning when those who are disobedient to God's law and word are compared to enemies; for their characters are moulded by evil so that they suffer the penalties which are deserved by people who forsake God's words.[33]

Origen's response to Celsus clearly illustrates an aspect of his exegetical method. Here, Origen's main tool is proof-texting; he draws particularly from the Psalms to support his argument in this instance. In his defense of the Hebrew Bible and its relationship with Jesus and the New Testament, Origen treats the text allegorically. Amalek is not to be understood as a literal enemy of the Israelites; Amalek is taken to represent all within the human soul that should be destroyed and that Jesus has come to forgive, thereby reconciling the apparent discrepancy.

Early Christian Bible interpretation represents a significant development in the world of Bible interpretation. At a certain point in history, it is to be considered a sub-category of Jewish Bible interpretation, before the gulf between Christianity and Judaism is widened and the two formally split apart. In the instances above, however, we see how some of the exegetical and hermeneutic methods of the Jewish tradition of Bible interpretation are utilized in another context, that of Christianity.

*Aramaic Translations*

Aramaic translations, *targumim*, developed primarily in synagogues. At the beginning of the common era, the public reading and exposition of scripture was normative practice. However, Hebrew began to decline as the lingua franca among Jews, resulting in the translation of the text into Aramaic as the primary language of daily use. These translations were originally oral, and formed part of the practice of the public readings of the Torah. The translator would stand next to the person reading the scripture, and he would be expected to produce his translation as the reading occurred. The *targum* was not meant to take the place of scripture, but was to be read alongside scripture. *Targum* was utilized not only as translation of the scripture, but also provided exegetical traditions. Indeed, the word "*targum*" itself denotes "both *translation* from one language into another, and *explanation* of a text in the same language."[34] Over time, these translations became fixed and were eventually written down; however, among the different versions of *targum* there exist wide divergences, indicating that they were never fixed. A number of different *targum* traditions survive today; they preserve different degrees of literal translation, some reflect a highly interpretive quality. This interpretive aspect of *targum* functioned to settle textual difficulties by explaining words or clarifying syntax, to reconcile conflicting textual traditions, to harmonize the biblical text with traditions about it, and to provide historical information.[35] By examining several different targumic traditions about Deuteronomy 25:19, we shall see a spectrum of literalness and interpretive interpolations.

Targum Onkelos is often regarded as being the most literal of the *targumim*. It was the official *targum* of Babylonia; in fact, the Babylonian Talmud refers to it as "our *targum*."[36] Onkelos has been transmitted as a stable tradition; it occasionally contains major variations from the Hebrew text, however, in most circumstances it closely follows the structure of the Hebrew. The Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy 25:19 exemplifies the literal caliber of the tradition. "Therefore, when the Lord your God grants you rest from all our enemies around you, in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a hereditary portion, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!"[37] It should be clear from this excerpt that Onkelos does indeed follow a literal translation method.

Targum Neofiti was discovered in the Vatican Library in 1956, were it had been stored unnoticed because of an error in cataloguing. The work of three distinct scribes are said to be discerned in the text,

and annotations and glosses written in approximately ten hands can be seen in the margins and interlinearly. Philip Alexander describes the translation style of the *targum* as "restrained and sober."[38] The translation of Deuteronomy 25:19 contains a few textual additions; however, for the sake of example I will here include the translation of verses 17-19.

> 17. *My people, children of Israel*, be mindful of what *those of the house of* Amalek did to *you* on the way, at the time when you were brought out *redeemed* from Egypt.

> 18. That they came upon *you* on the way and *killed* everyone among *you whose heart entertained doubts concerning my Memra; the cloud detached him and those of the house of Amalek killed him*. And *you, my people, children of Israel,* were tired and weary; *and those of the house of Amalek* did not fear *before the Lord.*

> 19. And when the Lord *your* God has given *you* rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance to possess it, you shall blot out the memories of Amalek from under heaven. *My people, children of Israel,* you shall not forget; *be mindful.*[39]

The translation of verse 19 contains the addition, "my people, children of Israel," which I would posit served as a reinforcement for the direction and force of the command to blot out the memory of Amalek. Interestingly, it is not the "memory" of Amalek as in the Hebrew text, but the "memories." The interpretive value of the change from singular to plural in this instance is great — perhaps the command is not to literally obliterate, that is murder, all the Amalekites, but rather to wipe out the memory of the experiences with Amalek. As well, the *targum* adds, "be mindful" as concluding hortatory advice, and serves again as added force. However, the differences from the Hebrew text and verse 18 of Neofiti are particularly striking; here, the *targum* adds in a whole explanatory section. This interpolation seeks to explain why it was that Amalek attacked. According to Neofiti, it is that those who were killed by Amalekites on the way doubted God's *Memra*, and therefore merited punishment. In order for the doubting individual to receive punishment, the protective cloud

of God lifted away, exposing the perpetrator to the oncoming attacks of Amalek.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, whose name originates as a misnomer from understanding the abbreviation T"Y as Targum Yonatan instead of Targum Yerushalmi, is thought to be the most paraphrastic Pentateuchal *targum*; its length is approximately twice as long as the Hebrew text.[40] It is often understood as an amalgam of interpretations from very different time periods, and many scholars suggest that it contains some of the earliest and latest targumic material.[41] Again, for the sake of providing a very clear cut example of this phenomenon, I will include verses 17-19.

> 17. Remember what *those of the house of* Amalek did to you on the way during your Exodus from Egypt.

> 18. That they armed you on the way *and everyone who thought to stray from my Memra* was slain among you: *the men of the tribe of the house of Dan, in whose hand was a strange worship. The clouds rejected them, and those of the house of Amalek entrapped them and mutilated their genitals which they cast up on high. Then you, House of Israel, were wronged and weary from great enslavement by the Egyptians and from the fear of the sea waves that you crossed in their midst, but the house of Amalek was not afraid before the Lord.*

> 19. And it shall be when the Lord your God gives you rest from all your enemies around you, in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens: *even to the days of the King Messiah* you shall not forget.[42]

For a large part, the interpretation of verse 19 is literal and accurate; it is only with the insertion of "even to the days of the King Messiah" that we see a difference from the Hebrew text. I would suggest here that the understanding that Amalek will be blotted out from under the heavens with the coming of the Messiah harks back to an earlier tradition of including the relevant text about Amalek from Numbers. Perhaps the tradition visible in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan recalls, "Amalek was the first of the nations; but his Neofiti shall come to destruction," understanding his end

as the end when the Messiah comes. The translation and expansion of verse 18 particularly serves to demonstrate the wide scope of the *targum*. Verse 18 provides a very detailed explanation for the whole ordeal with the Amalekites, including a tradition which states that the Amalekites mutilated the genitals of the Israelites, who were susceptible to such punishment because the men of Dan committed some kind of idolatry.

By examining these three targumic examples, I have shown the wide range of tradition within Aramaic Bible translations. Sometimes, these translations are quite literal, as the example from Onkelos has shown; other times, the translations expand upon the text to such a degree that new traditions are introduced to the text, as in Pseudo-Jonathan.

*Conclusion*

Throughout this paper, I have attempted to provide a brief glimpse into the long and vast tradition of Jewish Bible interpretation, starting with Hellenism, and working through history to Aramaic translations. Through the aid of Deuteronomy 25:19, I have shown how the traditions of interpretation of this verse have evolved, examining the historical context and basic structure of a number of styles and particular interpretive documents. A number of traditions of interpretation have occurred in the literature that arose in a variety of places and times. Particularly, I have demonstrated a pattern of examining Deuteronomy 25:19 in relation to the other biblical episodes that deal with Amalek; we have seen how the different verses are brought to bear evidence of particular traditions regarding Amalek. A very old connection between Amalek and Haman arises and is referred to again and again throughout the literature, as well as an equation of Amalek and Esau. As well, many of the interpretations we have examined connect the destruction of Amalek as occurring at a particular end time. In this way, the interpreters of antiquity have grappled with the questions of "who is Amalek" and "when will Amalek be destroyed." Each new stage of interpretation is to a degree innovative, although each subsequent stratum is also necessarily conservative, holding onto and preserving past traditions and methods while at once building on these very traditions.

**End Notes**

**1** This essay is an excerpt from the author's larger work of the same title.

**2** Deut. 25:19

**3** Folker Siegert, "Early Jewish Interpretation in a Hellenistic Style," *The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Saebo (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), p. 142.

**4** *Ibid.*, p. 143.

**5** Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for his Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 14-15.

**6** Siegert, p. 164.

**7** Yehoshua Amir, "Authority and Interpretation of Scripture in the Writings of Philo," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity,* ed. Martin Jan Mulder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 426.

**8** Philo, *De Vita Mosis,* I.214, in *Philo: With an English Translation*, trans. F.H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966).

**9** Louis Feldman, *"Remember Amalek!" Vengeance, Zealotry, and Group Destruction in the Bible According to Philo, Pseudo-Philo, and Josephus* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2004), p. 13.

**10** *Ibid.*, p. 22.

**11** Philo, *Legum Allegoriae*, 3.186-187, in *Philo: With an English Translation*, trans. F.H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966).

**12** Pseudo-Philo, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* vol. 2, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1985), p. 371.

**13** Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 1161.

**14** Flavius Josephus, *Judean Antiquities,* I.5, in *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary,* vol. 3, trans. Louis Feldman (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

**15** *Ibid.*, I. 17.

**16** Louis Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 16.

**17** Josephus, IV. 304.

**18** Feldman, *Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 465.

**19** James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* vol. 1 (New York: Double Day & Company Inc., 1983), p. xxviii.

**20** *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

**21** Robert A. Kraft, "Scripture and Canon in Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in Saebo, p. 204.

**22** *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,* Simeon 6, in Charlesworth, p. 787.

**23** R.P.C. Hanson, "Biblical Exegesis in the Early Church," *The Cambridge*

*History of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 412.
**24** James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), p. 126.
**25** *Ibid.*, p. 127.
**26** Oskar Skarsaune, "Scriptural Interpretation in the Second and Third Centuries," in Saebo, p. 389.
**27** Craig D. Allert, *Revelation, Truth, Canon, and Interpretation: Studies in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 28-29. See chapters 1-9 of the *Dialogue with Trypho* for Justin's description of his life.
**28** Thomas B. Falls, trans., *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), p. 29.
**29** *Ibid.*, 131:4, p. 198
**30** Hanson, p. 454.
**31** J.N.B. Charleton Paget, "Christian Exegesis in the Alexandrian Tradition," in Saebo, p. 532.
**32** Henry Chadwick, trans., *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), VII:18, p. 409.
**33** *Ibid.,* VII:22, p. 413.
**34** Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures," in *Mikra,* p. 239.
**35** Etan Levine, "The Targums," in Saebo, p. 326.
**36** B.T. Kiddhushin 49a. as cited by Philip Alexander in *Mikra,* p. 217.
**37** Israel Drazin, *FF Onkelos to Deuteronomy: An English Translation of the Text with Analysis and Commentary based on A. Sperber's Edition* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1982), p. 226.
**38** Alexander, p. 218.
**39** Martin McNamara, trans., *Targum Neofiti 1: Deuteronomy. Translated with Apparatus and Notes* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), p. 118.
**40** Alexander, p. 219.
**41** *Ibid.*
**42** Ernest G. Clarke, trans., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Deuteronomy* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgial Press, 1998), p. 69.

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# From Athens to Egypt: Examining the Concepts of Rulership and Law Across Plato, Aristotle, Al-Farabi, and Maimonides
*Daniel Garwood*

The philosophy of Moses Maimonides found in *The Guide of the Perplexed* includes a rich discussion on rulership and divine law. Maimonides' discourse was a result of a philosophical tradition regarding rulership and law beginning with Plato and recurring through the teachings of Aristotle, Al-Farabi, and finally of Maimonides. Each of these philosophers left a distinct mark on the related discourse and provided a foundation for the subsequent philosophers' ideas. One is able to trace the concepts of rulership and law across the writings of these four important philosophers.

Plato and Aristotle, in laying the foundations of Greek philosophy, explored the concepts of ideal rulers and laws. In *Republic*, Plato's work regarding the proper method of ordering a city, he famously stated, "Until philosophers rule as kings or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophize, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide … cities will have no rest from evils, Glaucon, nor, I think, will the human race."[1] For Plato, it was clear that the highest order of political science is grounded in philosophy. His argument follows from the definition of the philosopher as one who desires the whole of wisdom.[2] If this is so, the philosopher necessarily loves and seeks the wisdom required to govern a city virtuously. Therefore, the philosopher who is compelled to rule a city — and he must be compelled, since he would rather spend his time in contemplation — possesses the wisdom of political science, so he rules virtuously. The fundamental concept is that of wisdom, or knowledge, and that the philosopher-king possesses the entirety of that knowledge. It will be shown later that knowledge and intellect figure significantly in the ideas presented by the later philosophers about rulership.

Aristotle expands upon Plato's foundation in *Nicomachean Ethics*. Plato's philosopher-king is a good ruler because he possesses the knowledge of political science. Aristotle explains that the aim of political science is the happiness of the citizens under its jurisdiction. He writes, "As far as its [the good of political science's] name goes, most people virtually agree about what the good is, since both the many and the cultivated call it happiness, and suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy."[3] Despite the disagreement as to what happiness definitively is, Aristotle here makes the claim that the correct goal of political science is happiness. This leads to two discussions: one of which is on the nature of true happiness, and the other on how to achieve this happiness.

Regarding the first conversation, Aristotle points to three types of lives, and suggests, "people quite reasonably reach their conception of the good, i.e., of happiness, from the lives they lead …"[4] The first life is that of pleasure, which Aristotle attributes to "the many, the most vulgar," and calls the final aim of pleasure "a life for grazing animals."[5] The second life belongs to the politicians, and its aim is honor. Aristotle rejects honor as independent happiness because honor is only bestowed on one by others; as he says, "we intuitively believe that the good is something of our own and hard to take from us."[6] Finally, Aristotle mentions the life of study, and, in the subsequent discourse, determines that this life leads to happiness. His proof comes from understanding the human function, reason, and that the virtue of the human function is to reason well.[7] Since this is the case, the life of study is the only of the three that utilizes and perfects the human function.

The second question raised, that is, how to achieve the happiness of the citizens, is answered by examining the actions of the rulers: " … we took the goal of political science to be the best good; and most of its attention is devoted to the character of the citizens, to make them good people who do fine actions, which is reasonable if happiness depends on virtue, not on fortune."[8] Thus, the good political science dictates the actions of the citizens such that it promotes building the character of doing fine, virtuous actions in them. A corresponding truth applies to politicians: " … the true politician seems to have spent more effort on virtue than on anything else, since he wants to make the citizens good and law-abiding."[9] Quite obviously, the good politician enacts laws which engender the goals of political science in the citizens, that is, the character which performs virtuous actions. In discussing virtue, Aristotle suggests that states of character, including virtues, arise in a person as the result of repetitions of

activities in accordance with those states.[10] This being the case, a lawmaker concerned with promoting happiness in his citizens should enact laws which prompt repetition of virtuous actions: " … someone who is to be good must be finely brought up and habituated, and then must live in decent practices, doing nothing base either willingly or unwillingly. And this will be true if his life follows some sort of understanding and correct order that has influence over him."[11] With this statement, Aristotle lays the responsibility of the proper upbringing of the youth on the "correct order," and, therefore, the politician who develops this civil order.

The result of this discussion is a compelling parallel to Plato's *Laws*, in which Plato, through the voice of the Athenian Stranger, develops the proper ideas and concepts of rulership and laws. Specifically, Plato concerns himself with divine laws, which, as will be demonstrated, bear a significant resemblance to Aristotle's excellence in political science. "The Cretan laws are with reason famous among the Hellenes; for they fulfill the object of laws, which is to make those who use them happy; and they confer every sort of good."[12] Examining Plato, one finds consensus among these two ancient philosophers regarding the purpose of political leadership. Furthermore, Plato writes, "I maintain that the divine legislator of Crete, like any other who is worthy of consideration, will always and above all things in making laws have regard to the highest virtue … "[13] So, like Aristotle, Plato argues that a good or divine law must be concerned with instilling virtue in the citizens. In *Laws*, Plato distinguishes and addresses divine law, but Maimonides will ultimately relate divine law to the philosophically-based political science of Aristotle, which makes the parallels, with regard to rulership and laws, between Plato's *Laws* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, even clearer.

Before discussing Maimonides, however, Al-Farabi must be examined. Al-Farabi's relevance to the discussion is great, for he is an Aristotelian, and one of a small number of philosophers whose writings Maimonides recommends to his most notable student, Samuel ibn Tibbon. With regard to political philosophy, Al-Farabi is very much a proponent of Aristotle's teachings, though he also accepts Platonic philosophy. Since Aristotle calls virtue the mean between two extremes, Al-Farabi refers to this in his claim that the virtue of a city is resultant from the moral dispositions of its citizens: " … the health of the city and its uprightness [is] an equilibrium of the moral habits of its inhabitants and its sickness a disparity found in their moral habits."[14] Subsequently, Al-Farabi explores the situations which affect the health or sickness of a city. In terms of the

citizens of the city, the virtues must be impressed upon them. "Some natural traits and dispositions for virtue or vice may be completely removed or altered by custom so that contrary traits are established in the soul in their stead."[15] Also, "Evils are made to cease in cities either by virtues that are established in the souls of the people or by their becoming self-restrained."[16] Thus, there is a method by which the city and its people become virtuous. Al-Farabi notes that the political leaders are responsible for impressing the necessary alterations, writing," The one who infers what is intermediate and equilibrated with respect to moral habits and actions is the governor of cities and the king. The art by which he extrapolates that is the political art and the kingly craft."[17] Of course, Al-Farabi's philosophy has its roots in the Athenian schools. In somewhat of an amalgamation between the philosopher-king doctrine and Aristotle's pursuit of the purpose of laws, Al-Farabi asserts, "the king in truth is the one whose purpose and intention concerning the art by which he governs cities are to provide himself and the rest of the inhabitants of the city true happiness."[18]

Al-Farabi's discussion of the "king in truth" begins the Islamic philosopher's exploration of prophecy and divine law. Of great importance is the concept that the king in truth is the most perfect person in the city. "It necessarily follows that the king of the virtuous city be the most perfect among the inhabitants of the city in happiness since he is the reason for their being happy."[19] Moving to Al-Farabi's *On the Perfect State*, one discovers the correlation to the king in truth found in *Selected Aphorisms*. He writes, "The ruler of the excellent city cannot just be any man, because rulership requires two conditions: (a) he should be predisposed for it by his inborn nature; (b) he should have acquired the attitude and habit of will for rulership which will develop in a man whose inborn nature is predisposed for it."[20] Here, Al-Farabi begins to analyze the perfection of the excellent ruler and continues with this discourse:

> He is a man who has reached his perfection and has become actually intellect and actually being thought (intelligized), his representative faculty having by nature reached its utmost perfection in the way stated by us; this faculty of his is predisposed by nature to receive, either in waking life or in sleep, from the Active Intellect the particulars, either as they are or by imitating them, and also the intelligibles, by imitating them. His Passive Intellect

> will have reached its perfection by [having apprehended] all the intelligibles, so that none of them is kept back from it, and it will have become actually intellect and actually being thought.[21]

This passage is significant because it lays out the order by which one perfects his intellect. From this understanding of intellect, Al-Farabi derives his conception of prophecy.

> When this occurs in both parts of his rational faculty, namely the theoretical and practical faculties, and also in his representative faculty, then it is this man who receives Divine Revelation, and God Almighty grants him Revelation through the mediation of the Active Intellect, so that the emanation from God Almighty to the Active Intellect is passed on to his Passive Intellect through the mediation of the Acquired Intellect, and then to the faculty of representation. Thus he is, through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his Passive Intellect, a wise man and a philosopher and an accomplished thinker who employs an intellect of divine quality, and through the emanation from the Active Intellect to his faculty of representation a visionary prophet: who warns of things to come and tells of particular things which exist at present.[22]

Al-Farabi distinguishes between two mental faculties, which he labels the "rational faculty" and the "representative faculty." He then indicates the path by which knowledge proceeds from God to those two faculties in man, and what each faculty does with it. The rational faculty, when perfected, allows one to perform the function of the philosopher, and when both faculties are perfect, this person is able to receive prophetic vision. This is Al-Farabi's version of divine revelation, and he understands the first ruler, that is, the giver of the laws, to have received his inspiration in this manner.

In coming to Maimonides, one notes the influence of Al-Farabi's philosophy on Maimonides' concepts of rulership, prophecy, and divine law. Just as Al-Farabi notes a certain perfection in the king in truth and the prophet, Maimonides remarks, "prophecy is a certain perfection in the nature of man."[23] Beyond this, Maimonides makes almost the same claims

as Al-Farabi, explaining,

> Know that the true reality and quiddity of prophecy consist in its being an overflow overflowing from God, may he be cherished an honored, through the intermediation of the Active Intellect, toward the rational faculty in the first place and thereafter toward the imaginative faculty. This is the highest degree of man and the ultimate term of perfection that can exist for his species; and this state is the ultimate term of perfection for the imaginative faculty.[24]

Thus, Maimonides agrees both that prophecy occurs due to the perfection of the rational and imaginative faculties, and that this state is the greatest perfection a human being is able to achieve. Furthermore, he agrees with the divinity of this state. "Now there is no doubt that whenever — in an individual of this description — his imaginative faculty, which is as perfect as possible, acts and receives from the intellect an overflow corresponding to his speculative perfection, this individual will only apprehend divine and most extraordinary matters … "[25] The importance Maimonides attributes to prophecy is that from it the prophet gains knowledge of true opinions and the proper manner of action between people.[26]

With regard to the overflow onto the rational and imaginative faculties, Maimonides distinguishes between the prophets and those who have only perfected one of the faculties: " … you should know that the case in which the intellectual overflow overflows only toward the rational faculty and does not overflow at all toward the imaginative faculty … is characteristic of the class of men of science engaged in speculation."[27] The men of science, including philosophers, develop the knowledge that occurs from the use of rational thought, but have no means of conveying knowledge to non-philosophers. On the other hand, "if … the overflow only reaches the imaginative faculty … this is characteristic of the class of those who govern cities … "[28] The governors of cities have developed their imaginative faculties such that they are able to create laws and lead others, but have no scientific knowledge in which to base their decisions. In a departure from Plato's philosopher-king doctrine, which asserts that the philosopher's knowledge includes the practical knowledge of rulership, Maimonides insinuates that the pure philosopher is unfit to rule. Only he who receives the overflow of God onto both his rational and imaginative

faculties is able to provide practical use for his scientific knowledge, or, alternately, to ground his political leadership in philosophy.

Having built his foundation upon the philosophy of those who came before, Maimonides explores prophecy in the context of Jewish scripture. Specifically, he discusses the uniqueness of Mosaic prophecy. "After we have spoken of the quiddity of prophecy, have made known its true reality, and have made it clear that the prophecy of Moses our Master is different from that of the others, we shall say that the call to the Law followed necessarily from that apprehension alone."[29] Alternative to Mosaic prophecy is that of all the other prophets, for whom prophecy occurred as a moment of prophecy bestowed upon them by God. It is important to note that these prophets necessarily possessed the requisite perfection of their faculties. Maimonides notes, "for all of them, peace be upon them, were prophets who taught the people through being instructors, teacher, and guides, but did not say: *The Lord said to me: Speak to the sons of so and so.*"[30] Particularly Abraham, who, Maimonides asserts, received a great overflow from God, taught the people by means of philosophical proofs, but did not assign laws to his household. Maimonides explains that this is as it should be, for only one thing of any type can be perfect. "And that is as it ought to be; for when a thing is as perfect as it is possible to be within its species, it is impossible that within that species there should be found another thing that does not fall short of that perfection either because of excess or deficiency."[31] Thus, it is clear that Moses was the only prophet to bring a divine law. Furthermore, Maimonides claims that the Law, that is, Torah, is in equilibrium and is perfect.[32]

The Law, being divine, is comprehensive; it addresses the diverse needs found in a society.

> Now as the nature of the human species requires that there be those differences among the individuals belonging to it and as in addition society is a necessity for this nature, it is by no means possible that his society should be perfected except — and this is necessarily so — through a ruler who gauges the actions of the individuals, perfecting that which is deficient and reducing that which is excessive, and who prescribes actions and moral habits that all of them must always practice in the same way, so that the natural diversity is hidden through the multiple points of conventional accord and so that the community becomes

> well ordered.  Therefore I say that the Law, although it is
> not natural, enters into what is natural.[33]

The ruler in this passage is Moses, and therefore, his Law, since Moses himself does not remain to administer the Law.  The Law is comprehensive because it is the correct law to bring any person to the mean, and therefore to virtue.  Furthermore, Maimonides distinguishes the *nomos* from divine law.  Having already laid out his description of divine law, Maimonides presents the *nomos*.  "Concerning the nomoi with respect to which those who have laid them down have stated clearly that these are nomoi that they have laid down by following their own thoughts, there is no need to adduce proofs for this … "[34] Essentially, the *nomos* is a law coming solely from the imagination of the lawgiver, rather than from the prophetic combination of the imaginative and rational faculties.  Since the *nomos* does not come from a philosopher, who lives the life of study, it almost certainly derives from the mind which esteems one of the other two lives.  Since the aim of the *nomos*, then, will be either pleasure or honor, the *nomos* is not a law that will achieve the proper end of laws, namely happiness for the citizens.  Al-Farabi concurs, writing, "it is difficult and improbable that pure sort of the ignorant regimes not sullied by anything else would follow from the actions of one of the ignorant rulers.  For the actions of each one of them stem from his opinion, presumptions, and the exigencies of his soul, not from knowledge or an acquired art."[35] In order to avoid this danger, Maimonides concludes this particular discussion by explaining how to determine the difference between a *nomos* and a divine law.  He suggests that the difference lies in the intent of the laws; a divine law will concern itself with the ordering of the city and the beliefs of its citizens, while a *nomos* only discourses on order.[36]  Finally, he acknowledges one more danger with regard to these laws, which is that of plagiarism.  Maimonides asserts that one can determine whether a divine law is authentic or plagiarized through observation of the actions of the lawgiver.  The plagiarist will live a base lifestyle, while the divine lawgiver will live the life of a prophet.[37]

The natural progression now is toward detailed discussion of a law which Maimonides considers to be a true divine law: the Law of Moses.  "The Law as a whole aims at two things: the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body."[38] For Maimonides, welfare is a necessary precondition for perfection, and each of these welfares is obtained differently.  That of the soul results from education in correct philosophical

opinions, while that of the body occurs when people live well with each other.[39] Specifically, the welfare of the body is obtained in two ways, "one of them is the abolition of their wronging each other … the second thing consists in the acquisition by every human individual of moral qualities that are useful for life in society so that the affairs of the city may be ordered."[40] The first is understandable in that it allows each person to live without interference from others, who if they were interfering, might do so in a manner which compromised the health of the body. The second also makes sense, for the aim of the virtuously ruled city is to order the city such that it promotes the happiness of its citizens. Each of the welfares permits and leads to the corresponding perfections, that is, the perfection of the body and the ultimate perfection of the soul. The Law, according to Maimonides, promotes the welfares and perfections of the body and of the soul, according to the definitions laid out above. "The true Law then, which as we have already made clear is unique – namely, the Law of *Moses our Master* — has come to bring us both perfections … "[41] Like the general divine law Maimonides describes earlier, Mosaic Law both orders the city, which leads to bodily welfare, and inculcates correct beliefs, causing welfare of the soul. This is the result of just the external meaning of the law; the internal meaning actually leads one beyond welfare to the two perfections. In determining this, Maimonides achieves a culmination of the disciplines regarding rulership and law, building atop the foundations of the earlier philosophers the place of Mosaic Law in the philosophical system.

In examining the philosophical discourse of Plato, Aristotle, Al-Farabi, and Maimonides, a clear development can be traced across the works of these philosophers in relation to rulership and law. Beginning with the Athenian discussion of these concepts, the discourse is transmitted across Al-Farabi, where it begins to merge with religious concepts. Finally, the discourse makes its way to Maimonides, who, using the work of his predecessors as a foundation, explores the relation of Jewish scripture and belief to the original concepts, ultimately determining a model for the Jewish ideas to work within the structure of philosophy. The final result is an intriguing arc across centuries of philosophical tradition.

**End Notes**

**1** Plato, "Republic," *Compleat Works,* trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C.

Reeve. ed. John M. Copper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1997), p. 473c-d.

**2** *Ibid.*, p. 475.

**3** Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," *Selection*, trans. Terence Irwin and Gail Fine (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1995), p. 1095a.

**4** *Ibid.*, p. 1095b.

**5** *Ibid.*

**6** *Ibid.*

**7** *Ibid.*, p. 1098a.

**8** *Ibid.*, p. 1099b.

**9** *Ibid.*, p. 1102a.

**10** *Ibid.*, p. 1103b.

**11** *Ibid.*, p. 1180a.

**12** Plato, *Laws*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (17 Nov. 2006): p.6 <http://etext. library.adelaide.edu.au/p/plato/p71l/complete.html >

**13** *Ibid.*, p. 5.

**14** Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, "Selected Aphorisms," *The Political Writings*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 12.

**15** *Ibid.*, p. 18.

**16** *Ibid.*, p. 19.

**17** *Ibid.*, p. 22.

**18** *Ibid.*, p. 27.

**19** *Ibid.*

**20** Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, *On the Perfect State*, trans. Richard Walzer. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 239.

**21** *Ibid.*, p. 241.

**22** *Ibid.*, p. 245.

**23** Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 361.

**24** *Ibid.*, p. 369.

**25** *Ibid.*, p. 372.

**26** *Ibid.*

**27** *Ibid.*, p. 374.

**28** *Ibid.*

**29** *Ibid.*, p. 378.

**30** *Ibid.*, p. 380.

**31** *Ibid.*

**32** *Ibid.*

**33** *Ibid.*, p. 382.

**34** *Ibid.*, p. 383.
**35** Al-Farabi, "Selected Aphorisims," p. 58.
**36** Maimonides, pp. 383-384.
**37** *Ibid.*, p. 384.
**38** *Ibid.*, p. 510.
**39** *Ibid.*
**40** *Ibid.*
**41** *Ibid.*, p. 511.

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# Judaism at War: Innovation and Tradition in the *Hebrew Crusade Chronicles*
## *Adam Blander*

*"Will You not punish them for these deeds? How long will You look and remain silent while the wicked consume? 'See, O Lord, and behold, how abject I am become.'"[1]*

In the spring of 1096, a popular band of German Crusaders, inspired with religious zeal and fealty towards their Christian faith, attacked several Jewish communities in the Rhine Valley. Thousands of Jews were slaughtered, either by the hands of Crusaders or through mass suicides. Many Jews survived by converting to Christianity. Ultimately, most of these "apostates" returned to Judaism, but many others did not.[2] Aside from the tremendous loss of life suffered by Ashkenazic Jewry at the time, the catastrophe of 1096 left a legacy of serious emotional, theological, and communal trauma.

The *Hebrew Crusade Chronicles*, written roughly a generation following the First Crusade, are several historical accounts of the calamities of 1096 that provide a glimpse into the struggles that Ashkenazic Jewry was coping with at the time.[3] Unlike many other Jewish massacres throughout history, the impetus for the Crusades was viewed by the Jewish community as purely religious. The Crusaders represented an ideology not motivated by economics, nationalism, or other earthly matters, but a distinctly Christian mission. Therefore, the Jewish victims not only viewed the Crusades as a physical assault on their persons and properties, but also as an intellectual assault (albeit, manifested through the sword) on Judaism as a whole. This religious struggle between the two faiths is glaringly apparent in the *Crusade Chronicles*.

The goal of this paper is to analyze the various religious themes and archetypes (whether represented through symbolism, allusion, or explicit reference) which are evident in the *Crusade Chronicles*. A special

emphasis will be placed on the precedents that these ideas had, if any. By precedent, I mean any parallels to be found in Jewish history or its plethora of religious sources (whether they be biblical, Talmudic, or Midrashic) with the horrible atrocities inflicted upon the Jews in 1096, the equally violent response that followed, as well as the corresponding religious issues which manifested themselves throughout the endeavor. I will also examine whether the authors of the *Crusade Chronicles* borrowed any ideas outside of Judaism, such as those found in the Christian and Medieval tradition. I shall assess the extent to which these actions or themes are truly innovative, and without precedent in Jewish tradition.

I argue that regardless of the reality of the situation — whether the actions described by the authors were truly innovative (or even radical) or not — certainly the authors *themselves* felt that the events of 1096 fit in perfectly with their conception of Jewish sources, Jewish values, and Jewish history. In the words of Shmuel Shepkaru, "both actors and authors referred to their models for the same purpose: presenting innovative forms of martyrdom as an imitation of their old heroes."[4] Therefore, while the *Crusade Chronicles* might very well be an accurate historical account of what transpired,[5] the historical content of the *Chronicles* is more relevant to the authors as a vehicle to promote a much broader and controversial thesis. The *Chronicles* are above all, a Jewish and anti-Christian polemic.

*Martyrdom-Contributing Factors*

There is perhaps no theme more explicitly apparent to the reader throughout the *Crusade Chronicles* than that of Jewish martyrdom. Still, what is truly astounding is the fact that the authors of the narratives have nothing but admiration for this 'sanctification of the divine name,' no matter how graphic or inhumane such sanctification seems to manifest itself. The fact that the narrator describes in graphic detail how parents slaughtered their children in a ritualistic fashion, and *extols such behavior*, most certainly will disturb and confuse any modern reader. Two points in particular should bother an alert reader. Firstly, what motivated these Jews to commit such horrible and gruesome acts? Secondly, the virtue of martyrdom, at least on the face of it, would seem fairly divorced from what is commonly understood as Jewish values, and more closely linked with that of other faiths throughout history; Medieval Christianity or today's militant Islam are just two which come to mind immediately.

To answer the first question, the impetus for the bold actions of these Rhinish Jews (and the praise that the *Chronicles* reserves for them)

was almost identical to that of the Crusaders themselves: to glorify their own religion. The overzealous and fearless Crusaders, in an attempt to convert the 'nonbelievers' into Christians, were met with an equally overzealous and fearless Jewish enemy, on a passionate 'crusade' of their own. If one keeps in mind these religious motivations of the actual events, as well as the polemical nature of the *Crusade Chronicles*, martyrdom makes much more sense. In other words, the uncompromising nature of religion guaranteed a bloody ending to this religious clash, and the fact that a polemic, by virtue of it being a polemic, cannot ever claim that its side actually lost, required that the literary frame be altered a little, in light of a very obvious and very real loss on the ground suffered by the Jews.

*The Esther and Temple Paradigms*

Such an alteration of the literary frame is the basis for Ivan Marcus's article "From Politics to Martyrdom: Shifting Paradigms in the Hebrew Narratives of the 1096 Crusade Riots."[6] While he would not completely reject the "historicity" of the *Crusade Chronicles*, they are, like most Medieval chronicles, "imaginative reorderings of experience within a cultural framework."[7] Marcus claims that the manner in which the *Crusade Chronicles* are structured reveals that

> the narrator affirms that a fundamental shift took place in the world-view of the Jew he is describing: a shift from politics to martyrdom. The narrator's plan is to justify the martyrs' behavior by describing how they resorted to killing only after exhausting all conventional religious and political alternatives.[8]

When news approached the town that the Crusaders were planning on attacking the community of Mainz, the Jews attempted to remedy the situation in the classic political fashion and "they behaved like medieval Jews and sought protection from their political rulers."[9] For example, upon hearing about the earlier attacks on the Jewish communities of Speyer and Worms, the community of Mainz organizes a special council of elders, which bribes the local bishop in return for promises of protection. Rabbi Kalonimos ben Meshullam, the *parnas* (leader) of the community, sends out an urgent letter to King Henry IV in the Kingdom of Apulia.[10]

Marcus claims that this section of the *Chronicles* is modeled after the Book of Esther. For example, the preliminary response of the Mainz

community is to refrain "from food and drink for three consecutive days and nights."[11] This is an explicit biblical allusion to Esther; in other words, the author of the *Mainz Anonymous* does not allow the reader to make this link himself, he spells it out precisely by quoting, word for word, the actual verse. If Marcus's reading is correct, then it would seem to imply that the Jewish community genuinely felt that tragedy could have been avoided through divine or human intervention, and that "the martyrs' acts of cultic homicide and suicide are radically unanticipated."[12,13]

But sadly, as the Crusade story unfolds, it becomes clear that the political attempts to save the day have failed. At first, many Jews, led by Rabbi Kalonimos, take up arms and attempt to defend the community, but this attempt is even more dismal: the Jews, already weakened from a three-day fast, are greatly outnumbered by the Crusaders. One should remember that losing is not an option for the Jews, who are engaged in a religious war. Hence, the *Chronicles*, by virtue of being a polemic, will not allow the Christians to have even an ounce of victory. Therefore, since it is obvious that the Jews have lost the political and military battle against Christianity, the 'battlefield' must be altered in order to assure a 'Jewish victory.'

It is at this point that one can see a complete thematic paradigm shift in the *Crusade Chronicles*. The emphasis on the community as a whole turns to an emphasis on the individual. The political actor now transforms into a spiritual one. Piety will no longer be defined by tangible accomplishments, but rather by religious fealty. Politics shift to martyrdom. When the Jews realize that "there will be no Purim in Germany, the Temple Paradigm takes over."[14]

The authors of the *Crusade Chronicles* had the difficult task of trying to rationalize the violent and seemingly unprecedented behavior carried out by their communities. If these authors truly believed that martyrdom was the correct course of action, or that those who martyred themselves did so for only the purest of purposes, is irrelevant.[15] In the interest of Judaism, the *Chronicles* had an obligation to make heroes out of these martyrs and underscore their motivation as anchored in the Jewish tradition. Consequently, every event, along with every source, would be maneuvered accordingly.

The authors concluded that the most appropriate way to rationalize this otherwise detestable behavior was to compare it to the sacrificial offerings in the Temple in Jerusalem.[16] The ritual murder was therefore analogous to the holy act of offering a sacrifice. In fact, Mainz is

often compared to Jerusalem, which was the site of the Temple. Alluding to the Temple conjures up images of who is holy and who is profane.

> Only the members of the Holy Community (*Kehillah Kedosha*) can be permitted to touch, i.e. sacrifice, the Holy Things. Hence, it is justifiable for the Jews to try and kill themselves and thereby avoid any physical contact with the Crusader pollutants.[17]

This is in sharp contrast to the 'Esther paradigm' in which gentiles (even the clergy) are regarded sometimes in positive and respectful terms. In the 'Temple paradigm,' the distinction is clearly defined: the Jews are the pure and holy ones, while the "uncircumcised" Christians are the impure ones who "put their trust in a putrid corpse."[18]

In several ways the 'Temple paradigm' deals an intellectual blow against the Crusaders. Firstly, the Crusaders "who had … set out for Jerusalem never got there," while the Jews "were even capable of rebuilding the Temple in Mainz — their own Jerusalem!"[19] The rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem is a theme that is central in every Jewish prayer. Indeed, the Temple's rebuilding, with all of the ritual and sacrifice that resumes along with it, is the physical manifestation of redemption in the Jewish tradition. A common Christian argument at the time was that the destruction of the Temple, along with the lowly social status of the Jews in the Diaspora, was evidence enough that God had deserted them, and their only hope of redemption was through accepting Jesus. Through reenacting the sacrifices in the Temple, the Jews were stating that redemption was nearing, precisely because they held dear these ancient rituals.

It is worthwhile to note at this time the prominent role that women played in martyrdom.[20] On many levels, martyrdom was a truly egalitarian action. One's 'lowly' status (woman, children, converts, etc.) was not an obstacle at all in sanctifying the Divine Name. This is surely an example of the 'paradigm shift' from the community towards the individual. This is in sharp contrast to the political aspect of the *Chronicles*, in which all the political actions are attempted by either a particular community leader, like Rabbi Kalonimos, or by the town's elders (all men, presumably).[21] In fact, the chroniclers have no problem attaching traditional male archetypes to women: they are likened to Abraham, whose faith was tested at the *Akedah*, and they carry out the 'Temple sacrifices,' a ritual which historically was reserved for priests, who were only men.

It is peculiar that the chroniclers did not highlight these bold comparisons, which would have only emphasized the heroic acts of these women. Therefore, it *could* be argued that these 'modern' or seemingly 'egalitarian' interpretations of women's roles are not a result of the high esteem, or even a sense of equality, that the chroniclers had for women; rather it is that the chroniclers felt that the traditional allusions were so abstract and 'gender-neutral' that they could be applied *even* to women.

*Christian Parallels*

Stripped of all the archetypal imagery, the notion of martyrdom (or *kiddush ha-Shem*, as the authors of the *Chronicles* put it, which means "sanctifying God's name") is still a bold attack against Christianity and the Crusaders, and consequently, an exaltation of Judaism. Jeremy Cohen sums it up well:

> Our martyrdom, the atonement it affected, and the salvation it secured were genuine; yours were not. Our martyrs surpass your martyrs, and even your Martyr par excellence. Our holy war, in which we died readily as martyrs, was greater, more meritorious than yours.[22]

This could possibly explain why all the stories of martyrdom in the *Chronicles* are described in such graphic and violent detail; the Jews are constantly trying to 'out-suffer' their Christian adversaries, a distasteful religious rendition of 'one-upmanship.' They are taking the seemingly Christian virtue of suffering and turning it on its head by making it 'Jewish.' Therefore, the classic theme of *kiddush ha-Shem* acquires new meaning, and in this sense, it is truly innovative. This martyrdom, it could therefore be argued, is even a bit ambiguous: its style is rooted deeply in the highly extolled martyrdom of Christian theology, yet its goal is intensely anti-Christian.

Gerson D. Cohen suggests that the *Crusade Chronicles* are closely related to the "martryologic" and "hagiographic" (depictions of saints) literature of Medieval Christian Europe.[23] According to Cohen, this type of literature has four defining characteristics, all of which are evident in the *Chronicles*:

> (1) the calendar, that is the dates of trial tribulation and sanctification of the Divine Name; (2) the martyrs and

their deeds; (3) the place where the martyrdom occurred; (4) the glories of the martyrs.[24]

These four "pillars" as Cohen calls them, were expressed often in an "annual liturgical celebration of the saint."[25] Many sections of the *Chronicles* are arranged in a liturgical style as well. The *Chronicles* are constantly interrupted by poetic dirges and soliloquies. Cohen continues,

> While the Jewish martyrs did not become subjects of a cult quite in the Christian sense of the term, their role as sacrifices puts them in as close to the category of saint as a Jewish pattern of mind would permit its adherents to conceive of.[26]

I would take Cohen's argument one step further. Not only are the *Chronicles* a reaction to the veneration of Christian saints and martyrs, but it is a reaction to Christianity's saint and martyr *par excellence*. The *Chronicles* paint a graphically gory and horrific picture of the Jewish martyrs' suffering in order to inspire the reader to act in those martyrs' footsteps; the *Chronicles,* to some degree, are the Jewish parallels to the Medieval Passion plays.

In *To Die for God: Martyrs' Heaven in Hebrew and Latin Crusade Narratives*,[27] Shmuel Shepkaru argues, like Cohen, that the chroniclers were well aware of contemporary Christian literature, although he proves his point differently. He notices that a lot of the particular theological ideas surrounding martyrdom in the *Chronicles* contain an uncanny resemblance to those found in the Christian narratives, Church councils, and speeches at the time (most notably Pope Urban II's Council of Clermont in 1095 which called for the Crusades). He is particularly interested in the ideas regarding a martyrs' reward. "The authors of the Hebrew sources could not let Christian polemics monopolize heaven and exclude the Jews killed by those who believed that they alone would reach it."[28] Nevertheless, "open admissions of borrowing 'positive' images from the 'erroneous others,' are, at best, rare."[29] Therefore, like every other instance we have already seen, the chroniclers took great efforts in concealing Christian concepts in Jewish imagery and archetype, which would be infinitely more palatable to a Medieval Jewish audience.

Shepkaru claims that the Jewish notion of the afterlife was altered significantly during the Crusade era. In the traditional Jewish

understanding, "rather than strictly indicating a place, the world to come (Olam ha-ba) … denotes a future time in which the righteous of Israel reigns supreme."[30] Shepkaru then cites many Talmudic passages which seem to indicate that the world to come occupies a "terrestrial realm" and seems to allude to a new "earthly social order."[31] Even later works during the early Medieval period, such as *Tanhuma* and *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* "still viewed the world to come as a post-historic phase in the eschatological worldly drama."[32] Additionally, Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden) in Talmudic discussions seems to be regarded as a geographic location, not some higher realm. One Talmudic reference to a higher realm seems to be the Academy on High (*Yeshivah shel Ma'lah*); indeed it is discussed in reference to the "Ten Martyred Rabbis" (a theme which the chroniclers obviously capitalize on throughout the narratives). But the prerequisite for entering such a place is being a Torah scholar, not martyrdom. Additionally, certainty in some type of reward for martyrdom is completely absent from these accounts. In a rather haunting passage, the Holy R. Hanina exclaims that he does not know "in which way" he is "about to walk" following his execution.[33]

The imagery of martyrdom in the *Chronicles* could not be any different. Pious Jews confidently carry out the most horrific acts of martyrdom with complete self-assurance that they will enter heaven immediately. "No more an obscure Talmudic phrase, the martyrs' world to come represents a vibrant heavenly dwelling place, which martyrdom alone could unblock."[34] The notion of heaven is also quite altered. It is no longer a "terrestrial"[35] world to come; rather it is an alternative "life,"[36] existing at the same time as this "earthly"[37] world. That is not to say that heaven is purely a spiritual existence, no longer having any material characteristics; in fact it is quite the opposite. The Jewish martyrs await an afterlife, as Shepkaru puts it, "with luxury suitable for Europe's monarchs."[38] Each martyr awaits a "golden throne" and is "crowned with two crowns, one of precious stones and pearls and one of fine gold,"[39] a destiny not too different from the one Pope Urban II promised his followers at Clermont, and from various epistles at the time discussing martyrdom.[40]

Heaven also promised all Jewish martyrs the chance of being reunited with deceased loved ones and family, but the individuals upon whom the most emphasis is placed are classic Jewish figures. For example, martyrs will "sit in the circle of the righteous, Rabbi Akiva and His associates, 'the pillars of the universe,' who were killed by the Romans

for His name."[41] Not surprisingly, in Christian thought, a pious Christian in death would "sit at the right hand of God," which during the Crusade, was extended to sitting next to Jesus Christ himself.[42]

Once sitting across Jesus, a Christian martyr's heavenly experience reaches its pinnacle — the capability of actually *seeing God* (*visio Dei*) and basking in the light of His glory. This theme was obviously not lost on the Jewish chroniclers either: "We shall exist in a world that is entirely light, in *Gan Eden*, in the shining speculum, and we shall see Him eye to eye in his actual Glory and Greatness."[43]

Perhaps the most blatant and undisguised application of Christian terminology, which appears several times in the *Chronicles*, is the notion that a Jewish martyr will sit "in the bosom of Abraham."[44] Like all the other examples, Shepkaru notes how this phrase was used extensively in Medieval Latin literature with reference to martyrdom. But any attentive reader of the New Testament will recall that the source of the phrase is from Luke 16:22.

*Conflict in the* Chronicles

If it is accepted that the *Chronicles* are essentially a polemic and are serving to promote a particular historical viewpoint, rather than accurately portray historical events in an unbiased and objective manner, one runs into a problem: how should the reader account for content which seems to clearly undercut the author's intended goal?

This is the question that David Malkiel addresses at length in his article "Vestiges of Conflict in the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles."[45] The common theme in the *Chronicles* is the glorification of martyrdom *al kiddush ha-Shem*. Still, there are numerous instances mentioned of when Jews clearly did *not* live up to the standards set out by the *Chronicles*. For example, a Mainz Jew by the name of Judah falls upon his sword after he witnesses the death of his four sons. He has not committed suicide *al kiddush ha-Shem*; rather it is a "non-ideological act," seemingly motivated out of human instinct and desperation.[46] In another case, Zipporah of Worms begs her husband Meshullam not to slay their son. Meshullam ignores his wife's requests, but proves incapable of killing Zipporah or himself. They both walk outside and are killed by the enemy. Most striking is the case of Abraham ben Yom Tov: "Not only does the chronicler note Abraham's reluctance for martyrdom; he even records his sorrowful soliloquy."[47]

Another thematic inconvenience (which Malkiel does not mention) is the praise that the chroniclers have towards "those that were

forcibly converted."[48] "He who speaks evil of them," warns the narrator, "it is as though he spoke thus of the divine countenance."[49] Here again, the chroniclers are extolling the very people who failed the task of *al kiddush ha-Shem*.

Malkiel explains the inclusion of these inconveniences as follows: firstly, "it may reflect a desire on the part of the chronicler to relate as complete an account as possible," which would support Robert Chazan's view that the *Chronicles* are "basically factual."[50] Secondly (and more in line with my thesis),

> the chronicler may be signaling that martyrdom is applicable to anyone who is deprived of life on account of his Jewish identity, regardless of his or her level of personal bravery. This approach would enable his audience to empathize with the protagonists, rather than merely idolize them, which would increase the didactic power of the narrative.[51]

With regards to "those who were forcibly converted,"[52] it seems that the chroniclers were simply addressing the reality of the times, a reality in which many of the Jews who survived (and the chroniclers' intended audience) did so by converting to Christianity. Therefore, in a very practical sense, some type of self-vindication was needed in order to offset the tremendous amount of guilt felt by the Ashkenazic community by and large.[53] Therefore, this passage reflects a very real inconsistency that existed among Ashkenazic Jewry as a community, rather than an inconsistency in rhetoric or ideology.

*Conclusion*

The horrific events of 1096 in the Rhine Valley were certainly without precedent, but in some ways, could be looked at as the logical fulfillment of two entirely irreconcilable theologies constantly aware (and annoyed) of the other one's existence. Jews in Europe represented the abominable antithesis of everything Christian, yet they were for the most part tolerated by their Christian sovereigns throughout the first millennia. The daily religious tensions that existed between Jews and Christians did not really manifest itself in a violent manner. Still, the Jewish-Christian relationship in Europe was, in many ways, a tinderbox waiting to explode. It is therefore somewhat ironic that the impetus for the Crusades, along

with all the horrors it inflicted upon the Jews, was a *Muslim* assault in a land so distanced from Jewish life in Ashkenaz. Regardless, simply because of the enormous level of destruction, the Crusades forced Jews to rethink issues of faith in a profoundly different light, possibly for the first time since the destruction of the Temple and the mass emigration from their homeland a thousand years earlier.

It was clear that the horrific actions committed by *both* sides needed a religious explanation. The Jewish apologists could not accept only a Christian narrative to these events. It was necessary that the Jews be painted as the ultimate victors, even though the destruction they endured was clearly evident of a terrible loss. To do this, it was necessary to reframe the entire setting. Victory was determined not in political or military terms, but rather in Christian terms of martyrdom and suffering. Jeremy Cohen provides a very telling quote: "martyrdom is essentially a story, a structured transmission of happenings within a body of oral and written traditions. Ultimately, the text is the most important factor in martyrdom."[54]

It was imperative that the events of 1096 fit in perfectly with the Jewish tradition. That is why every event, act, or tale of heroism is linked to something Jewish. While it is clear that Jews were well aware of (and even internalized to a degree) Christian and Medieval values, such as martyrdom and aspects of the afterlife, the authors of the *Hebrew Crusade Chronicles* were careful to link this to a Jewish aspect, however weak that link might have been. Do the *Crusade Chronicles* incorporate non-Jewish themes and values into their narrative, even if it seems to be in direct disagreement with a traditional reading of Jewish sources and values? Of course, but that is for the most part irrelevant. By constantly alluding to biblical, Talmudic, and Midrashic sources, the *Chronicles* drive home the argument that regardless of the new challenges that arose, all of these 'trials' and subsequent responses were completely and consistently rooted in the Jewish faith and the Jewish tradition. This is the single most important argument that the authors tried to instill in their readers: the *Chronicles*, along with their stories of heroism and tragedy, are 100 percent Jewish.

## End Notes

**1** Lamentations 1:11 in Shlomo Eidelberg, ed. and trans., *The Jews and the*

*Crusaders* (Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1977), p. 50.

**2** Jeremy Cohen, "Between Martyrdom and Apostasy: Doubt and Self-Definition in Twelfth-Century Ashkenaz," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29.3 (Fall, 1999): p. 434.

**3** The similarities and differences between the various sources that make up what is known today as *The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles* are certainly beyond the scope of this essay. For all practical purposes, these various sources will be examined as one thematic unit. Indeed, such an analysis provides a broader insight into what issues Ashkenazic Jewry as a whole faced. For a comparison of the various sources, see Robert Chazan, "The Hebrew First-Crusade Chronicles," *Revue de Etudes Juives* 133 (1974): pp. 235-254; Robert Chazan, "The Hebrew First Crusade Chronicles: Further Reflections," *AJS Review* 3 (1978): pp. 79-98; and Anna Sapir Abulafia, "The Interrelationship Between the Hebrew Chronicles on the First Crusade," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 27 (1982): pp. 221-239.

**4** Shmuel Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 167.

**5** It is Chazan's view that the *Chronicles* "do indeed provide a relatively trustworthy foundation for reconstructing significant aspects … of the First Crusade." Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 40-49.

**6** Ivan Marcus, "From Politics to Martyrdom: Shifting Paradigms in the Hebrew Narratives of the 1096 Crusade Riots," *Prooftexts* 2 (1982): pp. 40-52.

**7** *Ibid.*, p. 42.

**8** *Ibid.*, p. 43.

**9** *Ibid.*, p. 46.

**10** *Ibid.*, p. 44.

**11** Esther 4:16.

**12** Marcus, p. 44.

**13** In Esther, the Jewish people are saved from complete destruction due to the shrewd political maneuvering of its heroine and hero, Esther and Mordechai.

**14** *Marcus,* p. 46.

**15** In fact, it is quite likely that the authors of the *Chronicles* survived by being forcefully baptized — actions which are the complete opposite of the martyrdom which they themselves praise. See Cohen, "Between Martyrdom and Apostasy," pp. 435-436.

**16** Obviously, they used many other archetypes, which will be dealt with in detail later.

**17** Marcus, p. 43.

**18**  This clearly refers to Jesus, and again, conjures up images of uncleanliness. This image is not simply unattractive, but an ideological attack on Christianity, which would evoke a visceral reaction from a Medieval Jewish reader: how could a corpse (which has the highest level of impurity in Judaism) be their Savior, their Holy of Holies? The denigration of Christian icons, most notably Jesus himself, and the 'mocking' of Christian theology is an exceptionally important and recurring theme in the *Chronicles*, but certainly beyond the scope of this essay. See Anna Sapir Abulafia, "Invectives Against Christianity in the Hebrew Chronicles on the First Crusade," *Crusade and Settlement* (1985): pp. 66-72. Abulafia argues that the *Chronicles* are heavily based on *Toledot Yeshu*, a Jewish (and unflattering) account of the life of Jesus, which dates back, at the latest, to the third century and is a kind of Anti-Jesus version of the Gospels.

**19** Marcus, p. 53.  According to Chazzan, the notion that the Crusaders never reached Jerusalem might be an inaccurate claim made by the chroniclers, which is based on bias rather than empirical knowledge of what actually occurred. See Chazzan, "Further Reflections," p. 88.

**20** See Shoshanna Gershenzon and Jane Litman, "'The Bloody Hands of Compassionate Women': Portrayals of Heroic Women in the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles," *Studies in Jewish Civilization* 6 (1995): pp. 73-91.

**21** If one considers prayer for divine intervention part of the political paradigm, then women certainly *do* play a significant, if not an equal role: "They entered the courtyard and all cried out together — the elders, young men and young woman, children, manservants and maidservants" (Chazzan, p. 252). It seems from the text itself that men and woman were praying side by side, which would be truly extraordinary in any Ashkenazic historical context.

**22** Jeremy Cohen, "The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles in their Christian Cultural Context," *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzuge* (1999): p. 28.

**23** Gerson David Cohen, "The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles and the Ashkenazic Tradition," *Minhah le-Nahum: Biblical and Other Studies Presented to Nahum M. Sarna in Honour of His 70th Birthday*, ed. M. Brettler and M. Fishbane (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1993): pp. 36-53.

**24** *Ibid.*, p. 53.

**25** Cohen, "Hebrew Crusade Chronicles," p. 53.

**26** *Ibid.*  Indeed, *Av Harachamim*, a short dirge regarding the Crusades

which heavily borrows from the *Chronicles*, has been enshrined in the *Mussaf* prayer service until today.

**27** Shmuel Shepkaru, "To Die For God: Martyr's Heaven in Hebrew and Latin Crusade Narratives," *Speculum* 77.2 (2002): pp. 311-341.
**28** *Ibid.*, p. 338.
**29** *Ibid.*, p. 312.
**30** *Ibid.*, pp. 323-324.
**31** *Ibid.*, p. 324.
**32** *Ibid.*
**33** *Ibid.*, p. 325.
**34** *Ibid.*
**35** *Ibid.*, p. 324.
**36** *Ibid.*, p. 327.
**37** *Ibid.*, p. 325.
**38** *Ibid.*, p. 327.
**39** Eidelberg, p. 82.
**40** Shepkaru, p. 315.
**41** *Ibid.*, p. 328.
**42** *Ibid.*, p. 314.
**43** *Ibid.*, p. 331.
**44** Eidelberg, p. 54, p. 104.
**45** David J. Malkiel, "Vestiges of Conflict in the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 52.2 (2001): pp. 323-340.
**46** *Ibid.*, p. 328.
**47** *Ibid.*, p. 340.
**48** Eidelberg, p. 68.
**49** *Ibid.*
**50** Malkiel, p. 340. See note 5.
**51** *Ibid.*
**52** Eidelberg, p. 68.
**53** Cohen, "Between Martyrdom and Apostasy," p. 435.
**54** Eugene and Anita Weiner in Jeremy Cohen, "The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles in their Christian Cultural Context," *The Martyr's Conviction: A Sociological Analysis* (1990): p. 15.

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# Her Hidden Presence: The Sacred Portrayal and Influence of Women through the Mystical Frameworks of Judaism and Islam
*Tamar Gefen*

> *"The glory of the king's daughter is within."*
> *- The Zohar on Psalm 45:14*

> *"God's beauty dwells within her."*
> *- Ibn 'Arabi, poem CLIV 2, XXXI 1*

Subjected to centuries of scrupulous exploration, the essential character of mysticism has nevertheless been described as inner and esoteric. As the purely spiritual dimension of the applicable religion, mysticism provides profound insight into those sacred matters that are considered worthy of intense examination. Specifically, in both Jewish Kabbalism and Islamic Sufism, the power of women's loving character and unsurpassed spiritual appeal is largely emphasized. Nevertheless, while most female reference within Jewish Mysticism is heavily expressed through explicit descriptions of feminine imagery and allusion, the Islamic Sufi tradition openly celebrates the achievements and teachings of female mystics. This is partly due to a disparity in the fundamental underpinnings of both religions' stance on mysticism, and as a result, the female influence on the mystic works of Judaism and Islam are largely dissimilar. Nonetheless, it is the powerful approaches of both Islam and Judaism toward the character of the 'divine female essence' that are bridged together by the universal notion of unity, and the ultimate goal of nature to balance opposing forces.

Before embarking on a brief historical journey through the foundations of Jewish and Islamic Mysticism, it should be clear that the outward forms of mystical religion within the orbit of a given religion are to a large extent shaped by the positive content and values recognized and

glorified in that religion. "We cannot, therefore, expect the physiognomy of Jewish Mysticism to be the same as that of … Moslem Sufism."[1] In fact, although both Kabbalism and Sufism are contained under the category of mysticism, their ideological frameworks differ to a distinguishable extent. Jewish Mysticism, in its various forms, represents an attempt to interpret the religious values of Judaism in terms of mystical values, while concentrating upon the notion of a living God who manifests Himself in the acts of creation, revelation, and redemption.[2] Within Jewish Mysticism, it is only through the divine *knowledge* of God's transcendence that humans can embrace the secrecy of God's prevailing attributes.

Most mystical thought was compiled into a canon, namely, the Zohar, a mystical book first published in Spain near the end of the thirteenth century, which presents the root teaching of the Jewish mystical tradition known as the Kabbalah. Among its many profound doctrines, *Sefer ha-Zohar*, translated into "The Book of Radiance," reveals the essential role of human activity and psychical consciousness in sustaining the inner life of a deity. Despite its purpose to disclose the divine relationship between God and the human form, the general character of Kabbalism, as distinct from other non-Jewish forms of mysticism, is that both historically and metaphysically it is a masculine doctrine.[3] In short, the long history of Jewish Mysticism shows no trace of feminine influence. Gershom Scholem, in his book *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, explains that unlike Islamic Mysticism, Kabbalism has no feminine representative, and as a result, it lacks the element of feminine emotion which has played so large a part in the development of Sufi thought.

Nevertheless, this exclusively masculine character of Kabbalism was by no means the result of the social position of Jewish women or their exclusion from Talmudic learning.[4] Rather, as explains Scholem, "the exclusive masculinity for which Kabbalism has paid a high price, appears to be connected with an inherent tendency to lay stress on the demonic nature of women and the destructive, yet feminine, element of the cosmos."[5,6] Based on Scholem's rationalization for women's isolated role in developing Jewish Mysticism, it is evident that it is of the essence of kabbalistic symbolism that woman represents not, as one might be tempted to expect, the quality of tenderness and sympathy, but that of powerful judgment.[7] While this view does entail a strong repudiation of womanhood's sensitive nature, it nevertheless describes the intrinsic character of the feminine element in God Himself, which kabbalists have named *Shekhinah*.

This force, which dwells within the confines of the corporal world, is not only comprised of intrinsic attributes of the female, but she, *Shekhinah*, is colored by many depictions of reputable female roles. For example, *Shekhinah* has been described not only as queen, bride, and daughter of God, but also as the mother of every individual in the community of Israel.[8] In the metaphorical world of the Zohar, this conception of the *Shekhinah* as a symbol for the "eternal womanhood" occupies a place of immense importance and appears under an endless variety of names and images.[9]

The most explicit description of *Shekhinah* in terms of her proactive role is manifested in her presence during the Sabbath. Various Sabbath blessings have alluded to the feminine sacred, such as "*Lekha Dodi*," an inspiring poem composed by the sixteenth-century kabbalist Rabbi Shlomo HaLevi Alkebez, which is sung in order to escort the *Shekhinah*, referred to as the "Sabbath Queen" in this case, into the presence of God's sanctification of time. As the kabbalists imagined her, the *Shekhinah* enters the ritual spaces of the Sabbath and transforms them. Not only does her presence serve as a catalyst in the community, but it enlivens that which was once mundane space, matter, and time. Chana Weisberg further emphasizes the *Shekhinah's* dwelling within the Sabbath by engendering the attributes of the work week and the Sabbath. She states,

> Woman's purpose is to bring holiness into creation, while man's purpose is to send holiness outward to God. The male role is fighting negativity, whereas women's role is finding the godliness already impregnated in creation and making it shine. Shabbat, for instance, is feminine, while the work week is masculine. All week long we fight nature and conquer nature by doing and creating. On Shabbat, it is time to absorb the blessings that have collected all week long.[10]

It is clear from Chana Weisberg's explanation regarding *Shekhinah* in light of the Sabbath, that discrete differences can be drawn between the intrinsic characteristics of both feminine and masculine forms. Consequently, God's manifestations, termed by the kabbalists as *Sefirot*, are all engendered, giving male and female identities to all divine characters God encompasses. Although this notion is quite difficult to expound upon in brief, it should be mentioned that the kabbalists utilized

these complementary manifestations of God in order to further illuminate His Absolute nature. More importantly, however, the kabbalists hoped to reveal the notion that a human can mimic the perfection of God only if he is complete, whole, and embraced by all attributes, female and male. While this interpretation empowers the female gender, it sheds minimal insight onto the actual implementation of such an ideal expectation. It can, however, be suggested that a primary goal of Jewish Mysticism, is to reunite the two halves of God through the embrace of *Shekhinah*, whose role as the animating life force of the earth is to balance the transcendent deity.

While the roots of Islamic Mysticism, or Sufism, are entwined with many foundations of Jewish Mysticism, it still incorporates into its own conceptions a myriad of different ideals. Firstly, it is important to note that Sufism is associated with an ascetic impulse of the second century of Islam, carried out by those who yearned to integrate the practice of asceticism with spiritual submission, namely Sufis.[11] Therefore, in the broadest sense, Sufism stresses the individual rather than society, the eternal rather than the historical, God's love rather than His power, and the state of man's heart rather than behavior.[12]

As a result of this definition, which will soon be further explored, the realm of mysticism within Islamic tradition is one area in which the woman does enjoy full equal rights. Everyone is expected to establish his or her own direct connection with the divine, and women are no different from men in this capacity.[13] To emphasize this point in a stronger sense, Annemarie Schimmel, in her book, *My Soul is a Woman*, asserts that "the admiration for pious and learned, God fearing woman is a familiar component throughout the entire history of Islam, be it to women in the form of actual historical figures or as symbols of the human soul yearning for God."[14]

In contrast to Jewish Mysticism, which is based heavily upon an organized canon of spiritual teachings, the cultures in which Sufism existed tended to convey more material orally than in written form. Nevertheless, Sufis, mostly women, would still write their mystical experiences in songs, in journals, and in critical exposition.[15,16] In addition, it was the kabbalists' preference to not objectify the personal experiences of the individual who was spiritually inspired.[17] On the contrary, Sufism, as mentioned before, stresses the power of personal revelation and insight while placing intense emphasis on expressions of fervent, prevailing love for God. It is precisely for these reasons that Sufism embraces the

influence of female mystics.  Not only were they fully permitted to record their journeys through their spiritual and conceptual worlds, but they were, and are, intrinsically prepared to reach God in a manner that seems unnatural for men. While the male spirit might have to exert much effort in order to reach this level of attainable love for God, the female spirit, naturally, is enveloped by an innate tendency to love, care, and nurture. This can fulfill the Sufi expectation, which is very reputable, with much ease.  Annemarie Schimmel expresses her belief that the Islamic image of female mystics is a colorful one, drenched in love and worthy of much respect,

> for [Sufism] includes strict ascetics as well as women scholars, noblewomen who maintained an interest in religious works even in the midst of the duties courtly life placed on them, simple girls or old women whose names only vaguely hint at their mystical experiences … but who comforted thousands of women … with their loving tendencies … and through their power of sanctity.[18]

From the earliest time of the Islamic calendar, women saints and mystics, such as Umm Haram, Rabi'a of Syria, Rabi'a of Basra, and Mu'adha al-'Adawiyya[19] exemplified this exact role, thereby gaining a position of respectable status among their contemporaries.  On a similar note, there is no question that the imagery employed primarily by the early Arabian Sufis is patterned after the classical model on the love for a pious woman.[20]  For example, the Sufis see one of the most striking expressions of the inherent presence of love in the divine realm in the mystical saying, "Three things of this world of yours were made lovable to me ... women, perfume, and the coolness of my eye that was placed in ritual prayer."[21]  Furthermore, Sufi biographies have shed light onto the fact that most of the Sufi spiritual leaders received their first religious inspiration from their pious mothers.  This is evident in the fact that, according to the mystics of Islam, "paradise lies at the feet of the mothers."[22]

There are, of course, many instances where the reputation of women within Islamic Mysticism is scorned by images of deceit and seductiveness. Such negative images of the feminine are a familiar aspect of all religious movements marked by "an ascetic strain,"[23] which underscored the fear of lust or desire, giving rise to the idea that "woman's companionship gnaws away at the roots of life."[24]  Similarly, many of the disrespectful sayings

about women originate from the fact that the Arabic word for soul, *nafs*, is a feminine noun, and is often understood in a negative connotation as "the soul that incites evil."[25] Consequently, both these paradigms of cutting imagery could easily have provoked Annemarie Schimmel to deduce that, "for many Sufis, marriage could actually serve as a foretaste of hell."[26]

It was Sufi Andalusian Ibn ʿArabi (1165-1240), however, who played the major role in not only describing, but *explaining* the significance of the feminine element that "plumbed ever-deeper depths."[27] He drew attention to the fact that not only was a negative word like *nafs* in feminine form, but so was the word *dhat*, Arabic for "essence" or "nature."[28] Additionally, by referring to women as "the brides of God," "the beloved," and "the divine queen,"[29] Ibn ʿArabi believed that,

> the woman becomes the highest, sublime object of
> masculine yearning in his conceptual world; she becomes
> the personified of the divine, which encompasses within
> Itself active and passive, masculine and feminine traits.[30]

According to this assertion made by Ibn ʿArabi, it can therefore be concluded that Islam recognizes that a life devoted to God cannot exist without the polarity and the resulting convergence of male and female attributes. The fundamental nature of his explanation is that by witnessing God in woman, a man sees Him as embracing majesty and beauty, distance and nearness, activity and receptivity — all in a complete, whole, and divine manner.[31] Annemarie Schimmel, in her foreword to Sachiko Murata's *The Tao of Islam*, expands on this notion by stating, "Dr. Murata rightly points out that in Islam, as in *every* religion, the principle of unity is essential … especially in the realm of mystical thought."[32]

With this principle notion regarding mysticism in mind, the mere differences between the descriptions of the "female essence of divine" as described by Ibn ʿArabi, and the kabbalist concept of *Shekhinah* seem reconcilable. While most of Jewish mystical thought and revelation relies heavily on the *logical* awareness of God's presence, Islamic Mysticism utilizes the power of *emotional* unity with God and His will. Although there are other historical and religious motives, as briefly aforementioned, the disparity between each religion's portrayal of woman within a mystical framework depends upon both Islam's and Judaism's fundamental approach of how to reach a level of God-like stature: through logic in Judaism, and through love in Islam. Threaded

through this diverging notion, however, are vivid images such as "bride," "queen," and "daughter." Not only do they pervade the mystical works of both religions, but they serve to indicate the hidden, and thus perpetual, relationship between woman and her sacred creator. Maulana Jalauddin Rumi (1207-1273), an early mystic, expresses this concept best, as he states, "Woman is a ray of God. She is not just the earthly beloved; she is not only created — but creative — like God."[33] Thus, in both Islamic and Jewish Mysticism, the female image and her pervading essence becomes a universal symbol of spiritual entirety — invincible, undefeatable, and purely divine.

## End Notes

**1** Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Shocken Books, 1995), p. 10.
**2** *Ibid*.
**3** *Ibid*., p. 37.
**4** *Ibid.*
**5** *Ibid*.
**6** It is interesting to note that evidently Maimonides, renowned Jewish scholar and philosopher of twelfth-century Spain, believed it beneficial for women to acquire knowledge "not only of physics and metaphysics, but also of what is forbidden, permitted, and the like, with regard to the mystical character of the commandments" (Yesod Ha-Torah, 4:13). Maimonides' view on women's Judaic education is further discussed in *Women and the Study of Torah*, pp. 35-48.
**7** Scholem, p. 37.
**8** Zohar I, p. 34B.
**9** Scholem, p. 230.
**10** Julie Gruenbaum Fax, "Beyond the Hype," The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles 4 (2000): p. 3, <http://www.jewishjournal.com/archive>
**11** Michael Sells, ed. and trans., *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Quran, Miraj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), p. 20.
**12** Phil Parshall, *Bridges to Islam: A Christian Perspective on Folk Islam* (Michigan: Baker Book House Inc., 1983), p. 50.
**13** Camille Adams Helminski, comp., *Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure: Writings and Stories of Mystic Poets, Scholars & Saints* (Boston: Shambala Press, 2003), p. 4.

**14** Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam,*
trans. Susan H. Ray (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company,
1999), p. 15.
**15** Helminski, p. 4.
**16** Schimmel explains that this positive stance on Islamic women's
education rights should not denigrate the Quranic assertion that "men
are above women," which has been interpreted in an increasingly
degrading direction over the years, with the result that many of women's
vested rights have been curtailed (Schimmel, p. 14).
**17** Scholem, p. 16.
**18** Schimmel, p. 53.
**19** For a further discussion of the lives and thoughts of these prominent
female mystics, see Margaret Smith, *Rabi'a: The Life and Work of Rabi'a and
Other Women Mystics in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1994), pp. 50-60.
**20** Schimmel, p. 18.
**21** Sachito Murata, *The Tao of Islam* (New York: State University of New
York Press, 1992), p. 183.
**22** *Ibid.*, p. ix.
**23** Schimmel, p. 73.
**24** *Ibid.*
**25** Murata, p. ix.
**26** Schimmel, p. 74.
**27** *Ibid.*, p. 102.
**28** *Ibid.*, p. 23.
**29** See Schimmel, pp. 107-115.
**30** Schimmel, p. 107.
**31** Murata, p. viii.
**32** *Ibid.*
**33** *Ibid.*, p. 183.

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# Musorgsky's Compositional Choices in "Hebrew Song"
*Melodie Adler*

In Alexander Pushkin's *The Miserly Knight*, the knight confers the following greeting upon the usurer: "Accursed Jew, Honorable Solomon."[1] This succinct statement pinpoints the duality inherent in the attitude towards Jews in the late nineteenth century. On the one hand, anti-Semitism plagued their existence as a modern day community. As a people of the Biblical era, however, their ancestry was celebrated as a symbol of powerful nationhood, and at its most extreme, as the origin of Western civilization.[2] This distinction between the perception of them as a suspicious ethnic minority versus the idealized nation of a distant past, informed the consciousness of many composers of the time in their portrayal of Jews in their works. Camille Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*, for one, exemplifies the depiction of the Jewish people in this latter category. In his quest to define his Jewish identity, Ernest Bloch draws on both perceptions outlined above, most notably in *Schelomo* and *Jézabel* respectively.[3]

Modest Musorgsky, therefore, is no exception in his compositional approach in Jewish themed works. Both the modern day Jewish community and its biblical heritage serve as inspiration to him, as exemplified by "Rich and Poor" from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and "King Saul." Written in 1867, however, "Hebrew Song" is unusual in that it fuses both views of the Jewish people in one work. While "Hebrew Song" is infused with klezmer music references in its harmonic construction, they are cloaked on the surface by overt inspiration from the Old Testament. I argue, therefore, that the work's powerful biblical allusions serve as a blanket under which Musorgsky can freely explore aspects of musical traditions of the Jewish community in late nineteenth-century Russia.

When Musorgsky wrote "Hebrew Song," Jews were facing a

grueling period living in Russia. Under the reign of Alexander II in the 1860s, Jews were deemed a people who were "both foreign and of dubious honesty,"[4] and laws were created to govern them accordingly. Chaired by Russian authorities, a Jewish Committee was established whose sole purpose was to legislate every aspect of Jewish life. Through this body, countless attempts were made to weaken Jews' religious practice, in hopes of turning them into more "useful, hardworking citizens."[5] While the Russian authorities presented their efforts to minimize religious adherence as an opportunity for Jews to emancipate fully into Russian society, the Jewish community understood this gesture as a means to limit their religious freedom as well as their traditional livelihoods.[6] In fact, musicologist Peter Gradenwitz emphasizes that "emancipation was regarded by eastern Jewry as a betrayal of the spirit of Judaism."[7] More than a strain on their religious beliefs, however, Léon Poliakov discusses the dire threat of emancipation in terms of forced military conscription for Jewish children. Where Jews had previously been exempt from the military by paying large sums of money in exchange, the overwhelming reality of emancipation was that rather than affording them more opportunities as Russian authorities liked to suggest, it was simply a code word for mandatory military service. The result of emancipation was that Jewish *khappers*, or kidnappers, had to pluck children as young as seven years old from their families, who were then drafted into the army for twenty-five years.[8] Furthermore, legislation was created by Russian authorities which severely limited the amount of Jews who were permitted to exercise political influence, so they had little way to intervene in the creation of such laws and circumstances governing their community. Because Jews were so heavily policed, the fact that Musorgsky wrote a work like "Hebrew Song" with such an obvious reference to the Jewish people in the title places it in the foreground of a highly contentious political and sociological landscape.

It is no surprise to learn that Musorgsky harbored anti-Semitic sentiments. Indeed, Musorgsky came from a wealthy family, and Richard Taruskin discusses the correlation between his social ranking and his views of the Jewish community at the time. Like the knight in Pushkin's novel, Musorgsky upheld the views of the aristocracy of Jews at the time, namely, supporting above-mentioned anti-Jewish governance. Similarly to Glinka, there is significant documentation illustrating that both Musorgsky and Balakirev shared ardent anti-Semitic views.[9] Musorgsky often referred to Jews as *zhidy* in his letters, a highly derogatory label in Russian for them.[10]

For example, in a letter to Balakirev, Musorgsky stated, "I am seized with the impulse to bar … our own Russian *zhidy* from coming to swindle good-natured Russians."[11] With this evidence from primary sources available, the fact that Musorgsky ascribed to the Russian authorities' view of the Jewish community at the time is clear.

It is difficult, however, to reconcile Musorgsky's previous statements with the motivation and circumstances surrounding his decision to write "Hebrew Song." Musorgsky dedicated this work to his brother and sister-in-law.[12] The text of "Hebrew Song" is a poem about love based on a psalm from the Song of Songs. Musorgsky was very close to his brother and sister-in-law,[13] and surely he wanted to offer them a gift which would reflect the couple's relationship in a positive light. Knowing Musorgsky's anti-Semitic views, the decision to dedicate a work based on a Jewish text to this couple seems like a horrifying way to honor them, unless understood in light of the view of the Jews as a biblical people representing favorable characteristics of power and strength. On the other hand, at the time that "Hebrew Song" was written, Musorgsky was living next to a Jewish family. He enjoyed their company very much, and it is believed that the main theme of "Hebrew Song" is based on a tune which he heard this family sing.[14] In fact, Musorgsky seemed to seek out opportunities to experience Jewish culture. For example, on a trip to Odessa, Musorgsky wrote,

> I went to the [prayer] service at two synagogues and enjoyed it greatly. I have got two Israelite themes, one delivered by the cantor, the other by the choir in the gallery, in unison; I shall never forget these two melodies as long as I live.[15]

Despite the allusions to Jews as a people of the ancient past (i.e. "Israelite themes"), Musorgsky still would have been sitting amongst modern day Jews, the so-called *zhidy,* in the synagogue. As such, it is difficult to reconcile the dedication of "Hebrew Song," its original inspiration from the Bible, and biographical accounts of Musorgsky interaction with the Jewish community with his anti-Semitic attitudes evidenced through his social ranking.

Ultimately, it was Musorgsky's very membership in the aristocracy which required him to find a unique way of expressing his interest in Jewish culture in his music, and explains the often conflicting statements

which surround his relationship to the Jewish community. In order to maintain his membership with the social elite, Musorgsky ascribed to its particular social and political views, namely, its anti-Semitic stance, as exemplified by the legislation created by Russian authorities at the time.[16] Musorgsky, however, was still interested in incorporating aspects of the musical traditions of the modern day Jewish community into his compositional material, as I will argue was the case with "Hebrew Song." In this light, as typical of the aristocracy of his time, Musorgsky made a clear separation between two kinds of Jews in the following manner:

> Musorgsky drew a fundamental distinction between the *yevrei*, the Biblical Hebrews or Israelites, who symbolized proud archaic manliness and nationhood, and the *zhid*, the … diaspora Jew encountered in everyday life, who embodied nothing more than petulance, rootlessness, and greed [in his social circle].[17]

This distinction, therefore, explains why Musorgsky was careful to call his work *Yevreyskaya Pesnya*, "Hebrew Song," avoiding any mention of the *zhidy* in the title whatsoever. By approaching the Jews as *yevrei*, a historical people which was completely independent of their presence as *zhidy* in contemporary Russian life, Musorgsky sanitized his relationship to them in a way which freed him to draw on their musical traditions as meaningful inspiration for "Hebrew Song." Insofar as he looked to their biblical past rather than their social presence in Russia, Musorgsky could write works based on Jewish references which would not be irreconcilable in a social climate rife with anti-Semitism. In her article, Klára Móricz notes that Jews themselves would make this distinction between their present social status and biblical past. She explains that

> the attempt by Jews to separate stereotyped images from the ideal [i.e. biblical] Jew in order to free their image from the charge of 'otherness' has been described in psychological terms as Jewish self-hatred.[18]

Therefore, the distinction between these two identities became standard practice by both non-Jews and Jews alike, as exemplified by Musorgsky.

It is important to note, however, that the interest in Jews as an idealized biblical people was not a form of reverence to them. Instead, it

had its roots firmly in evolving anti-Semitic attitudes, or more specifically, the development of the concept of an Aryan nation. In its quest to define its superiority, the shapers of Aryan thinking believed that Aryans were the master race, and in so doing, traced their ancestry back to Indo-Persian territories, or the Middle East of the Biblical period. As a result, Hebrews, or Israelites of the Old Testament, were understood as the predecessors of "Western-Christian identity."[19] The portrayal, therefore, of Jews as a biblical people in concert music of the time is no less idealized than it is colored with growing anti-Semitic sentiment.

Written in 1868, Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* epitomizes the portrayal of Jews as a people from the idealized past in the same vein as Musorgsky. Indeed, the opera pits Hebrews against Philistines in Delilah's seduction of Samson, drawing on a well-known story from the Book of Judges in the Old Testament. The Hebrews[20] are characterized as a righteous, God-fearing people. In his article, Ralph Locke argues that in comparison to the Philistines who are presented as the Other in their sensuality and pagan rituals, audiences would have identified with the Hebrews. [20] In particular, he contends that Samson would have been understood as a "proto-European." [21] Due to the social climate of the late nineteenth century, influenced by evolving Aryan undertones as outlined above, Locke emphasizes that the audience members would further have identified Samson "as a prefiguration of Christ and thus of Western civilization."[22] According to Locke, because of the growing anti-Semitism in Europe, "it may be that an Old Testament story could *only* be acceptable if presented in a Christian i.e., 'universal', light."[23] As representatives of the predecessors of Christ, and by extension, European civilization, the Hebrews are depicted musically by references to Gregorian chant and Western classical music techniques, such as fugue.[24] The Philistines, on the other hand, such as in the "Dance of the Priestess of Dagon," are characterized by music which strays from non-Western harmony, i.e. a plethora of augmented seconds and lowered sevenths; the orchestration is also meant to convey an exotic flavor in its use of the oboe and castinettes.[25] In the opera's libretto and score, therefore, the Jews are a people of the biblical past, their ancestry associated with the underpinnings of pre-Christianity, or the Western world.

On the other hand, Móricz presents the case of Ernest Bloch, who in his own quest to infuse his work with a sense of Jewish identity, drew on stereotypes of Jews as both a biblical people and a modern day community. Similar to Saint-Saëns, in his opera *Jézabel*, Bloch draws on a story from

the Old Testament about the Hebrews for inspiration. They are depicted musically by the use of clear diatonicism and unadorned melodies, where Jezabel is characterized by augmented seconds and tritones.[26] Móricz notes that like Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*, while augmented seconds and the like are normally used to depict Jews in concert music, here they are used to characterize the exotic, pagan world of Jezabel instead. Like Locke, Móricz argues that in this opera, Jews are viewed not as an ethnic group, but rather come to represent an ideal, pure past of the Old Testament.[27] Contrasting this work is Bloch's rhapsody for cello and orchestra, *Schelomo*. Here, Móricz demonstrates that Bloch defers to stock techniques used to depict the modern day Jewish community in art music at the time, namely, chromaticism and augmented seconds.[28] Móricz notes, however, that Bloch also develops barbaric and primitive qualities in the music through brash orchestration and aggressive interruptions of the musical line more associated with the power of the ancient Hebrews.[29] She concludes, therefore, that the composer "succeeded in uniting two Jewish stereotypes [in this work]: that of the strong, 'barbarous' ancient Hebrews of the Bible, and that of the orientally colored, weak, and victimized Jews of the Diaspora."[30] "Hebrew Song," I argue, also mediates between these two stereotypes, albeit in a different approach, in its explicit Biblical references and carefully crafted modal language based on klezmer music. Before examining the amalgamation of both in this work, however, I would like to illustrate how Musorgsky deals with each one separately, in "King Saul" and *Pictures at an Exhibition* respectively.

In context to Saint-Saëns and Bloch, "King Saul" offers an example of Musorgsky's musical depiction of Jews purely as *yevrei*, or the people of the Biblical period. Written in 1863 (four years before "Hebrew Song"), the work is based on King Saul's final battle in the Old Testament. In light of the fact that Musorgsky approached the Jews as *yevrei* in this work, the music does not contain any allusion to contemporary Jewish musical traditions. In fact,

> the heroic monologue of the king shows no trace of a Hebrew or Eastern intonation … The idiom is Russian to the core, and King Saul has a startling resemblance to Tsar Boris when he addresses his heir.[31]

Since characterizing the Jews as *yevrei* was alluding to an idealized past, so too is the music in this work completely 'pure,' that is to say, there are no

obvious Jewish musical references in it. Indeed, because Musorgsky was approaching the question of Jewish influence as a historical rather than cultural reference, there is little evidence of any musical material which would suggest contemporary Jewish musical traditions, either sacred or secular.

On the other hand, "Rich and Poor" from *Pictures at an Exhibition* provides insight into Musorgsky's musical portrayal of Jews as *zhidy*. By the 1880s, Jews were suffering even harsher repercussions of anti-Semitism (far worse than in the 1860s when "King Saul" was written),[32] and it is interesting to note that Musorgsky shifted from exploring Jews as *yevrei* to Jews as *zhidy* in this context. Recent scholarship suggests that "Rich and Poor" is rife with anti-Semitic undertones, presenting not two different people, but one. Here, it is believed that Musorgsky referred to the same Jew as Samuel and Schmülye, a European and Yiddish name respectively, whereby he offered a musical characterization of both in this work. On the exterior, the Jew appears dignified and respectable, as denoted by his secular name, and presented musically by the resolute opening. In light of the use of the name Samuel, the Yiddish name Schmülye becomes all the more significant, with the language suggesting qualities of "Otherness", but more importantly, inferiority.[33] In the music, this duality is

> reflecting, on the one hand, the respectable outward behavior of the character and, on the other, his contemptible inner nature. In other words, no matter how civilized, how European, he may seem to be, he remains an inferior Jew under the skin.[34]

In *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Musorgsky was portraying not the *yevrei*, but the *zhidy*. As a means of creating a caricature of the *zhidy*, Taruskin notes that augmented seconds occur almost with "cartoonish abundance."[35] Indeed, this particular interval was an effective means with which to create a musical statement couched in anti-Semitism, since while it was associated with many types of non-Western music, the augmented second was always a particular stereotypical characteristic of Jewish music throughout its evolution, both sacred and secular.

"Hebrew Song" is unusual in that Musorgsky draws at once on both biblical and contemporary inspiration of Jews in this work. Biblical influence is evident immediately in the text he chose to set, a poem by Lev Mey directly inspired by the Song of Songs from the Old Testament. In

addition, "the simplicity and repose expressed by melody and harmony alike create an almost biblical atmosphere."[36]  Indeed, the tempo of the song is slow, as is its harmonic rhythm, creating a serene expansive effect, suggestive of another era.  As well, the vocal line is mainly conjunct, with all ornamentations carefully placed, lending the work a sense of seriousness and deliberateness normally associated with biblical settings. Furthermore, the rolled chords in the piano accompaniment are reminiscent of a lyre, an instrument used during the Biblical period.  Through these devices, Musorgsky clearly states his references to the *yevrei* on the surface of "Hebrew Song."

While Musorgsky draws on biblical influences for this work in obvious ways, the remainder of his musical material is reflective of secular Jewish music of the Russian Jewish community, in particular, that of the klezmer music tradition.  In the opening melody, the D#-F#-E# motif that occurs is reminiscent of a *krekhts*, a popular technique used on solo instruments in the klezmer tradition which lends two conjunct notes a crying or moaning quality by interspersing a ghosted grace note a third or fourth above the first one in between them.[37]  While this is not possible on the piano, Musorgsky approximated this technique with the D#-F#-E# figure, the F# acting as the *krekhts* between the D# and the E#, sounding only for the length of a sixteenth note.  As such, while the work is heavily focused on biblical references, Musorgsky makes immediate, albeit subtle, reference to the klezmer music tradition.

From a harmonic perspective, Musorgsky conceals his references to Jewish secular music at the beginning very carefully, slowly opening them up to full view by the end of the work.  The first two beats of the work announce the mode of G# *Mi Sheberach* (as confirmed by the C^X and E#), one of the main modes in klezmer music.[38]

G# *Mi Sheberach* mode:



Measure 1 of "Hebrew Song"[39]:

However, Musorgsky hides his reference to Jewish modality very carefully. First, he sounds the two notes in question which make clear reference to the *Mi Sheberach* mode, not consecutively as part of a melody, but rather together on the second beat so that the reference is obscured, sounding them as a vertical simultaneity. Also, because they sound on the weak beat, the listener is less aware of them. Furthermore, Musorgsky couches his reference to Jewish modality completely in his harmonic structure, since both the $C^X$ and the $E^\#$ are chord tones in the common tone chord which is used to color the tonic chord on either side of it.



The D natural is spelled enharmonically as $C^X$ and the F is spelled as $E^\#$ since they are functioning as lower and upper neighbors to $D^\#$ respectively. As such, by placing the two notes characterizing the *Mi Sheberach* mode on a weak beat, and concealing them in the common tone chord, the listener is barely aware of the *Mi Sheberach* reference. Musorgsky is also quick to correct the two 'Jewish' pitches immediately on the last beat of the bar, concealing the *Mi Sheberach* mode reference, changing the $E^\#$ to an E natural, and the $C^X$ to a $C^\#$ in the grace note figure in order to place the song more properly in the key of $G^\#$ minor.

$G^\#$ *Mi Sheberach*:
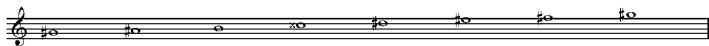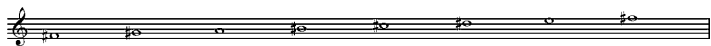


$G^\#$ minor:



Musorgsky only sounds the $C^X$ and the $E^\#$ consecutively as a melody (and thereby clearly revealing his reference to Jewish modality) at measure 10, but then mirrors it quickly with a minor third of $F^X$-$A^\#$, from the key of $G^\#$ minor, forming a dominant chord. The juxtaposition of both of these

aforementioned minor thirds creates a G# *Mi Sheberach*-G# minor axis, which assumes importance later in the work. Furthermore, when the E#-C^X figuration occurs in the melody at this point, Musorgsky is careful to harmonize it with the ii chord on the second beat moving to a V chord on the third beat, creating a logical i-ii-V-i progression in G# minor in measure 10, once again concealing his reference to the klezmer mode in his harmonic paradigm. Even the E# occurring as a dissonant note on the downbeat can be explained as 6-5 motion over the tonic chord, so that it does not reveal the Jewish modal reference either. Given the way in which the E#-C^X figure is woven through the first verse, it seems that Musorgsky went to great lengths to conceal his use of the *Mi Sheberach* mode, on the one hand suggestive of an apology for such a beautiful reference to the *zhidy*, on the other hand, showing utmost respect to the klezmer music tradition in the intricate way that the mode is infused through his musical material.

At measure 14, the second verse begins where the references to Jewish modality from klezmer music are much more explicit. In measure 16, Musorgsky effects a modulation to the key of F# minor through the C# pivot chord (i.e. IV# in G#- = V in F#-), just as he does in the first stanza (measure 7) to F# major. Unlike the first verse, however, Musorgsky follows this modulation with an elaborate passage in F# *Mi Sheberach* in measures 17-18.

F# *Mi Sheberach*:



Measures 17-18 (vocal line only) from "Hebrew Song"[40]:
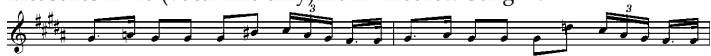


While Musorgsky returns to the key of G# minor through the B major pivot chord in the first verse (measure 9), he effects a modal modulation from F# *Mi Sheberach* back to G# *Mi Sheberach* (and not the key of G# minor as in the first verse). This modulation occurs through the common tone of F# between both modes, emphasized by the F# pedal in the bass. F# is the seventh note of G# *Mi Sheberach*, and in tonal music, the seventh note cannot normally be used to modulate to a new key. However, in Jewish music, modulations through the fourth and seventh notes (sub-dominant

and leading tone respectively) are common practice.[41]  At measure 19, the material from measures 11-12 in G# *Mi Sheberach* returns.  Unlike the first verse, however, this material ends on F$^x$ at measure 20.  Like the previous modulation from F# to G# *Mi Sheberach* through the common tone use of the seventh note of the mode, a modulation from G# *Mi Sheberach* to D# *Freygish* is effected through the F$^x$ which is the seventh note of G# *Mi Sheberach*.  Like *Mi Sheberach*, *Freygish* is a mode found throughout klezmer repertoire.

G# *Mi Sheberach*:



D# *Freygish*:



Measures 19-20 (vocal line only) from "Hebrew Song"[42]:



As such, the second verse is framed by a chain of modulations on the seventh scale degree to move from mode to mode throughout in typical klezmer fashion.  While Musorgsky's references to Jewish secular music are well concealed in the first verse, his use of Jewish modality and modulation in the second stanza are far more evident.  It is interesting to note that no augmented seconds occur throughout "Hebrew Song" whatsoever.  While the work is infused with klezmer music references, Musorgsky is free to use them expressively rather than in a derogatory fashion since they are protected under the guise of the *yevrei* allusions which attract the attention of the listener far more explicitly than the subtle and intricate modal considerations included throughout.

As typical of his social climate characterized by rampant anti-Semitism, Musorgsky creates a clear distinction between the Jewish people as a historical object exemplifying national pride, and as an ethnic minority struggling to survive in Russia, that is to say, the *yevrei* and the *zhidy*.  Both Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* and Bloch's *Jézabel* epitomize musical portrayals of the former in concert music, while ultimately, *Schelomo* draws its inspiration from the latter.  "King Saul" and "Rich

and Poor" from *Pictures at an Exhibition* provide a context in which to understand how Musorgsky dealt with the question of Jewish inspiration in his work, portraying the *yevrei* and the *zhidy* respectively in their purest form. "Hebrew Song" is unusual in that it offers a possible reconciliation between both his views of Jews in one work. In fact, the blend that Musorgsky made in his musical material between both perspectives of Jews in "Hebrew Song" foreshadowed many questions of identity that the Russian Jewish community faced later on in the 1880s. As the Zionist movement gained popularity, Jews began to consider their birthright to the land of Israel while reconciling this with their current life in the Diaspora. As Musorgsky illustrated in his setting of "Hebrew Song," being Jewish is a bittersweet dance between both realms of identity, never comfortably excluding one at the expense of the other. But from the struggle comes celebration, and here lies the most fundamental aspect of Jewish identity, where tears of joy and sadness always meet.

## End Notes

**1** Léon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, trans. Miriam Kochan, vol. 4 (New York: The Vanguard Press Inc., 1985), p.75.
**2** The connection between the conception of an Aryan master race and its roots in the Hebrew of the Old Testament is discussed in Poliakov's *The History of Anti-Semitism*, vol. 3, p. 183, p. 310, pp.314-315.
**3** Klára Móricz, "Sensuous Pagans and Righteous Jews: Changing Concepts of Jewish Identity in Ernest Bloch's Jézabel and Schelomo," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54.3 (2001): pp. 439-491.
**4** Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 20.
**5** *Ibid.*
**6** *Ibid.*
**7** Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel: Its Rise and Growth through 5000 Years* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1949), p. 224.
**8** Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, vol. 4, pp. 72-23.
**9** Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar,* trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 39.
**10** Richard Taruskin, *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 379.

**11** *Ibid.*
**12** Oskar Von Riesemann, *Moussorgsky*, trans. Paul England (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1929), p. 141.
**13** David Brown, *Musorgsky: His Life and Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 94-95.
**14** Von Riesemann, p. 141.
**15** *Ibid.*, p. 339.
**16** Michael Russ, *Musorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 43.
**17** Taruskin, p. 380.
**18** Móricz, p. 462.
**19** Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, vol. 3, p. 310.
**20** Ralph Locke, "Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3 (1991): p. 271.
**21** *Ibid.*
**22** *Ibid.*, p. 274.
**23** *Ibid.* In Europe, while the idea of an Aryan race was developing, it became evident that such a conception was irreconcilable with the fact that Christians were indeed not the original heirs to the Old Testament. European thinkers in the nineteenth century argued that while Jews were the initial Chosen People by God, because they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, they were destined to strife, Christians becoming the true inheritors of the Bible. In this respect, Europeans overcame their reticence to the Jews as the Chosen Nation, because the Old Testament was now legitimized as the property of Christianity. Poliakov offers a complete discussion of this issue in volume 3 of *The History of Anti-Semitism*.
**24** *Ibid.*
**25** *Ibid.*, pp. 267-269.
**26** Móricz, p. 463.
**27** *Ibid.*
**28** *Ibid.*, p. 477.
**29** *Ibid.*, p. 482.
**30** *Ibid.*, p. 488.
**31** Boris Schwarz, "Musorgsky's Interest in Judaica" in *Musorgsky in Memoriam 1881-1981*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), p. 85.
**32** Pinkus, p. 22.
**33** In her discussion of Schumann's *Album for the Young* op. 68, Roe-Min Kok (2006) argues that German national identity is emphasized in the

work when contrasted with music that characterizes foreign countries, as exemplified in her discussion of "The War Song" and "The Stranger/ Foreigner," as well as that of "The Sailor's Song" and "The Italian Sailor's Song." She demonstrates that the music of the foreign countries emphasizes their volatility, while against this background, the music representing the Germans exudes power and strength. The pairing of Samuel and Schmülye seems like an analogous situation.

**34** Maes, pp. 86-87.
**35** Taruskin, p. 382.
**36** Von Riesemann, p. 141.
**37** Bob Cohen, "Jewish Fiddle," *Jewish Music in Romania* <http://www. dinayekapelye.com/jmfiddle.htm> (11 Dec. 2005).
**38** Josh Horowitz, *The Main Klezmer Modes* <http://www.klezmershack. com/articles/horowitz/horowitz.klezmodes.html> (11 Dec. 2005).
**39** Modest Musorgsky, "Jewish Song" in *Complete Songs for Voice and Piano*, trans. Harlow Robinson (New York: G. Schirmer, 1995), p. 169.
**40** *Ibid.*, p. 170.
**41** Horowitz.
**42** Musorgsky, p. 170.

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Sympathy for the Workers: The *Jewish Daily Forward*, the Arbeiter Ring, and the Early Adaptation Process of Eastern European Immigrant Jews in America
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*Introduction*

The paradoxical journey of the Jewish labor movement within the immigrant experience of American Jews is one of mutual accommodation coupled with divergent intentions. The vast majority of Jewish Eastern European immigrants to the United States — those who came between the 1880s and the First World War — held aspirations of moving upward in society. In this regard, they were at the same time encouraged by the promises of the American dream and confronted by the harsh reality of the immigrant experience. These two conditions allowed Jewish radicalism, which had occupied a marginal place in the life of the Old World, to rise to a new position of leadership and dominance within American Jewish culture. The labor movement it created became a world unto itself, encompassing pragmatic efforts to represent the interests of working Jews, as well as social and literary institutions like fraternal organizations and newspapers that allowed them to continue living within a Jewish cultural milieu.

What made the Jewish labor movement unique was the way in which it managed to bridge the disparate ideologies of the American Jewish community in a way that was productive to all involved. The Jewish mainstream and the Jewish radicals had little in common as far as their ideals were concerned, but both found accommodation within the structures and institutions that made up the labor movement as a whole. Two of the most important institutions within the Jewish labor movement provide valuable case studies illustrating how this was accomplished. The *Jewish Daily Forward*, once the preeminent Yiddish-language daily in the United States, balanced socialist leanings with a populist execution, and so retained its mandate while satisfying the wishes of its readers.

The Workmen's Circle, the fraternal arm of the Jewish labor movement, was similarly socialist, but allowed its membership a form of radicalism that strongly emphasized Jewish traditions and culture. In each case, the membership and the institution engaged in a process of dialogue, wherein the values and requirements of each were accommodated in the other.

*The Jewish Labor Movement: An Overview*

> At the meeting's end a green young immigrant named Abraham Cahan rose to make a few impassioned, if stray, remarks, in Russian too, that brought him to the notice of the leaders of the association. Intoxicated by this success, Cahan challenged them by saying that if they wanted to reach Jewish workers they would have to provide Yiddish speakers. 'What Jew doesn't know Russian?' snapped Mirovich, one of the leaders. Cahan's answer was decisive: 'My father.'[1]

The Jewish labor movement has its roots in the culture of isolation brought on by the great waves of European immigration to America. Between 1880 and 1925, 3.5 million Eastern European Jews arrived in the United States,[2] found work, established communities, and raised children. To be a new immigrant during that period meant being unmoored, profoundly adrift in a society that was unwelcoming, often hostile, and all too willing to take advantage of the lowest rungs on a ladder of exploitation. The eponymous protagonist of Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*, one of the most important contemporary fictional narratives of the immigrant experience, recalls,

> my work proved to be much harder and the hours very much longer than I had anticipated. I had to toil from six in the morning to nine in the evening. … not being accustomed to physical exertion of any kind, I felt like an innocent man suddenly thrown into prison and put at hard labor. I was shocked.[3]

It was in this context that left-wing sentiment, the necessary precondition for a cohesive labor movement, was able to find root.

Along with the immigrant waves of the 1880s came Jewish

radicalism, brought to the United States by Eastern European Jews affected by Russian revolutionary zeal. Points of collision between the nascent labor movement and the Jewish mainstream began to develop almost immediately. A recurrent problem — one that would last as long as radical Jewish thought — was that most Jews simply were not prepared to give up their ties to religion in the way these new movements demanded. Instead, those outside the culture of radicalism tended to navigate some kind of middle path between assimilation and religious observance. Abraham Cahan's David Levinsky, though otherwise disconnected from his Judaism, makes a point to light a candle on the anniversary of his mother's death: "Forgetful of my atheism, I would place a huge candle for her soul, attend all the three services, without omitting a line, and recite the prayer for the dead with sobs in my heart."[4] In contrast, most brands of Jewish radicalism found it inconceivable that religious practice should be associated at all with Jewish identity, since, as an opiate of the people, it could prevent them from reaching true national solidarity. According to Chaim Zhitlovsky, one of the founding intellectuals in the Yiddishist movement, religion "tends to isolate a nation and doom it to stagnation ... because constricted religious teaching is no safeguard against language assimilation, the most dangerous foe of our normal existence ..."[5]

Thus, as far as culture was concerned, two winnowing processes occurred between the 1880s and the first decade of the twentieth century dealing with language and culture, as radical groups that could not find a following within the general Jewish population began to disappear. The Jewish revolutionaries who had arrived in the United States during the first immigrant wave came speaking Russian as their means of refined discourse. It had historically been the language of opposition to the narrowness of the shtetl, to say nothing of its role within the high culture and intellectual thought of the old country. In America, though, speaking only Russian was self-defeating in an environment where the vernacular was overwhelmingly dominated by Yiddish. The issue became particularly pressing as radical ideologies coalesced enough to advocate real action. During the 1882 New York longshoremen strike, for example, newly-arrived Jews were recruited as scabs to replace the strikers. Many radicals believed this setback had been allowed to occur because those immigrant Jews had no access to progressive literature; they undermined workers' solidarity largely because nobody spoke their language in order to educate them not to do so.[6]

Language choice and usage was part of the adaptation process, but

so too were religious attitudes. It was the nature of politically progressive parties to deride religion, but the still-traditional character of the Jewish mainstream could accept only a certain amount of this sort of outlook. The Grand Yom Kippur Ball of 1890 that advertised *Kol Nidrei* entertainment featuring "music, dancing, buffet, 'Marseillaise,' and other hymns against Satan" was clearly trying to make a point — but such broad-stroked satires tended to alienate the very population they were attempting to influence.[7]

Religious and linguistic accommodation played significant roles in the American Jewish labor's cultural development, but these imperatives still sat alongside more traditional factors like socialism and unionism. A major element in this regard was the development of a Jewish proletariat. The initially undeveloped character of immigrant radicalism in America lessened its appeal among workers, but a simple lack of workers to appeal to was an equal part of the problem. The eventual rise of viable unionist and socialist movements therefore corresponded directly to the point where the immigrant Jewish population reached a critical mass large enough to support such groups. In 1888, the year that the United Hebrew Trades labor organization was founded, 28,881 Jews arrived in the United States, bringing the total Jewish population in the country to nearly 140,000 individuals.[8] Nearly sixty percent of immigrants able to find work were engaged in the clothing industry as tailors, dressmakers, seamstresses, and the like; just over two percent were professionals.[9] Even discounting the fact that at least some of these garment workers were bosses or otherwise not working directly in sweated labor, it was clear that a Jewish working constituency for socialism and unionism had emerged.

The United Hebrew Trades organization was the culmination of almost ten years of intermittent and mostly unsuccessful attempts to organize a system of collective bargaining. It was notable in this context not only because of its emphatically Jewish character, but because of the way its navigation between an ideological socialism and the practical goals of unionism paralleled the character of later movements within Jewish labor. The UHT set an ideological precedent. It was directly affiliated with the Socialist Party, having been granted its charter from the International Workingmen's Congress in Paris,[10] but made very little in the way of revolutionary demands. Its declaration of principles affirmed that "the foundation of every country is the communal welfare of the entire people … There can be no peace between capital and labor within the present social order,"[11] but its subsequent list of ten demands called for no

practical implementation of this particular attitude. Its top three demands were, in order, that existing labor laws be enforced, that an eight-hour day be established, and that child labor be prohibited.[12] It therefore achieved a balance between revolutionary rhetoric and prosaic goals that would become a hallmark both of functioning labor unions, which required results in order to keep its members, as well as the ideological character of the Yiddish cultural renaissance.

*The Yiddish Press and the* Forward

> On *Yom Kippur*, a freethinker can spend his time in a library or with friends. On this day he should not flaunt himself in the eyes of the religious people. There is no sense in arousing their feelings. Every man has a right to live according to his beliefs. The pious man has as much right to his religion as the freethinker to his atheism. To parade one's acts that insult the religious feeling of the pious, especially on *Yom Kippur*, the day they hold most holy, is simply inhuman.
> –Response in the *Bintel Brief*, published in the *Forward*, 1909.[13]

Another consequence of the rapport between unionism and socialism was the chain of ideology and events which led to the rise of a Yiddish press. Between 1890 and 1892 four Yiddish-language newspapers published in New York were founded. Three of these, *Arbeter Tsaytung* ("Workers Paper"), *Zukunft* ("Future"), and *Abendblat* ("Evening Paper"), were affiliated with the Socialist Labor Party; the last, *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* ("Free Workers Voice") was anarchist.[14] These were not the first specifically Jewish periodicals to appear in the United States, but their predecessors had been limited to transient weeklies and dailies whose circulation was quite limited. The newspapers that began to be published in the last decade of the nineteenth century marked a turning point in the cultural life of Jews, both affiliated with the labor movement and otherwise, because they provided a means of public discourse that was a necessary component in the development of community. Moreover, the leadership behind this public sphere was directly connected to radicalism, with the result being that the public tone of the entire Jewish community who made up its readership came to be identified by its use of and affiliation to

revolutionary sentiment.

Yiddish literature and journalism in the United States, as opposed to the purely spoken language dating back centuries, was largely an innovation of the 1880s' immigrant wave. Yiddishists and Bundists alike had tried to speak and write the language of the masses in the Old World, but their efforts had been limited by a preexisting social and cultural life with no place for their innovations.[15] What America offered to the purveyors of the Jewish written word was a highly literate population in a new environment, where, in this new context, it was now acceptable to expand the scope of one's reading beyond the holy books. Moreover, participation in Jewish literary life was also a means of acculturating to life in the United States — the habit of reading a daily newspaper was an innovation to many immigrants, but once acquired, created a link to both the common language as well as the outside world. "Not to take a paper was to confess you were a barbarian," writes Irving Howe. "For ordinary Jews who worked in the shops or ran little stores, the Yiddish paper was their main, perhaps their only, tie with the outside world."[16]

The radical press was preceded by a first wave of newspapers and newsletters that were predominantly community-oriented, gossipy, and irregular. *Yiddishe Tseitung* and the *Yiddishe Post*, two such community papers, appeared in 1870 but failed to take root. In contrast, the *Yiddishe Gazetn*, a religiously and politically conservative weekly founded in 1874, became established enough by 1885 to publish a daily called *Tageblatt*.[17] It was partially in response to this initial conservative dominance, as well as to these papers' lack of timely response to world events, that prompted Jewish radicals to create their own organs. Despite this apparent diversity of perspective in the written word, American Yiddish journalism during its early phases was characterized by at least two qualities: a sense of 'internalism' that came from each publication addressing its own constituency exclusively, and a trend toward didacticism that came from speaking directly to that community's sensibilities.

> Those who read the Orthodox press took comfort from encountering familiar homilies, those who read the radical press found excitement in the novelties of secular agitation. Both wings of the Yiddish press served most of all to persuade the immigrants that, even in the land of Columbus, they were not wholly lost.[18]

The trend in the newer Yiddish labor newspapers that began to form in the 1890s was to try and move beyond these limiting qualities. 'Internalism' and being overly didactic were not problems unique to the radical press, but it was particularly susceptible to them for two reasons: the constituency it spoke to was notably smaller and more exclusive than that of other papers, and the radical community's ideology was not as accessible to the general community. One way of getting around these particular issues was to broaden their appeal by introducing traditional Jewish themes adapted to illustrate socialist concepts.

> Today our Biblical portion is about strikes … *Va'yak'hel Moishe*, Moses gathered the children of Israel and said to them: *Sheyshes yommim te'asseh m'lokhoh*, more than six days you shouldn't work for the bosses, the seventh day you shall rest.[19]

A passage like this combined several elements a typical immigrant would likely be familiar with: the injunction against labor on the Sabbath taken from the biblical account in Deuteronomy is juxtaposed with a recognizable grievance against the common worker's difficulties, as Moses fills in as the workers' savior. Other ways the radical Yiddish press evolved included branching out from printing only articles relating directly to theory. *Zukunft*, which began publishing in late 1891, was conceived as a serious socialist monthly with a broad interest. It printed poetry, short stories, and literary criticism, including Abraham Cahan's "Poetry: How It Is Written," and K. Paulding's "A Few Words about the Development of Belles-Lettres."[20] Other radical papers published Yiddish translations of famous literary works by Emile Zola, Victor Hugo, and Tolstoy.[21] Again, the goal was to broaden these papers' appeal by attracting a wider audience with more diverse interests.

Abraham Cahan would perfect this process of joining a socialist outlook with popular appeal. He was born in Eastern Europe in 1860, arriving in Philadelphia in 1882 and quickly moving to New York. Always part of radical movements, in the Old World as well as the New, Cahan found himself drawn away from anarchism after being unable to reconcile its demands with American freedoms.[22] He was also literarily inclined — he had dreamed of being a journalist and published his first articles, about life in the city's Jewish quarter, in the *New York Sun* in 1887. It was the socialist movement that inspired him, however, and he turned his

attention to publishing his articles in the radical newspapers that were beginning to appear.[23] As a journalist, he held an editorship at the *Arbeiter Tsaytung*, where he authored a column that joined socialist concepts with the weekly Torah portion and wrote about scientific, socialist, and humanistic concepts. As a writer, he wrote several novels and collections of short stories, including the definitive contemporary literary description of the Jewish immigrant experience, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917).

Cahan was an uneasy populist. His way of thought was distinguished throughout his life by a tension between his desire to educate his fellow immigrants in their culture and to tear them away from it toward greater integration.

> I often argued that the revolution would not be made in America by our immigrants. There were personal reasons for this. Newcomers are anxious to become Americanized and to participate in American life. Our main purpose as socialists should be to win the native workers to our principles. There was great satisfaction in speaking and writing for an American audience and for this reason I confined almost all my activity to the English-speaking section of our movement.[24]

At the same time, he was deeply concerned with the state of Yiddish as a literary medium. During the 1880s and 1890s the language was undergoing a process of refinement, as writers and editors sought to eliminate the foreign words from its vocabulary that kept it from being 'pure.' An editorial in the *Nu Yorker Yiddishe Folktsaytung* described Yiddish as being "without rules or grammar."[25] Nevertheless, it assured its readers that the language found within its pages would be "in different sorts of Yiddish. We only believe it important to eliminate all Russian words from our periodical."[26] Cahan, whose literary tastes were never as lofty as the aspirations of his colleagues, found the Yiddish in most newspapers dry and uninteresting, disconnected from the language of the immigrant masses.[27] As conflicts continued to fester at the *Arbeiter Tsaytung*, Cahan left to start the *Jewish Daily Forward (Forverts)* in 1897. His attitudes toward his party comrades, language, and politics soon alienated him, though, and he left the paper eight months after it was founded. He rejoined it in 1902 and edited it until his death in 1951.

The *Forward*, when it ultimately emerged under Cahan's

undisputed control, became arguably the single most important factor in the creation of a sense of communal identity. From the outset, Cahan directed his paper at an audience he understood to be less ideologically literate than progressive journalism's traditional readership. He recognized that radical propaganda rarely differentiated between writings *about* the workers and writings directed *to* the workers, and that the most effective way of appealing to a broad audience would be by using articles of broader interest.[28] The first issue of the *Forward* edited by Cahan in 1902 featured a typical mix of 'human interest' stories and diluted socialist ideas. "In Love with *Yiddishe Kinder*" was a collection of anecdotes about gentile youths who had fallen in love with Jewish immigrant children, a topic with appeal for Jewish mothers, while "Protzentniks in Sweatshops" was a similarly anecdotal treatment of untrustworthy bosses.[29] The common denominator was a conscious attempt to mimic the presentation of the mainstream press in a way that related to the Jewish community as a whole, instead of to its subcultures. As Cahan described it, "the news and all the articles will be written in pure, plain, *Yiddishe Yiddish*, and we hope that every line will be interesting to all Yiddish-speaking people, big and little."[30]

The result was the creation of a paper both that appealed to and reflected the sentiment of the community as a whole. Cahan made a point of integrating the higher language of literary criticism with the common speech of the average Jewish immigrant to inflect the tone of his paper, understanding that it was usually better to choose a word more people understood over a word with a more distinguished pedigree. He instructed his news writers to summarize items that came over the wire dispatch rather than translate them directly, realizing that terms and concepts native-born Americans took for granted would still be unfamiliar to those still newly arrived. Adolph Held, a writer at the *Forward* during the First World War, recalled being chastised by Cahan over his use of kilometers for describing the movement of the front:

> Cahan came in and said to me, 'Held, does your mother know what kilometers are?' I answered, 'I doubt it, my father has to read the paper aloud to her.' 'All right,' he said, 'so when you write about kilometers and they come to that line, she can't go on any further … From now on I'll come in every day and write a column of war news without all those hard words, so your mother can understand what is happening in the world.'[31]

As it satisfied the needs of the mainstream, the *Forward* played to the notion of socialism as a "moral cement," an idea that unified people through an invocation of a common cause.[32] This is not to say that the *Forward* was universally accepted — it was continually being derided by doctrinaire Socialists who resented its equivocating tone[33] — but rather that it was an accurate barometer of the spirit of the times. The socialist sentiment that the *Forward* encouraged and to which the mainstream community was receptive was no affectation. Many Jews, having been in the sweatshops and having suffered through the immigrant experience, felt a solid connection to the elements of radical thought, even as their dreams of upward mobility estranged them from it. Socialism in effect meant something profoundly different to mainstream Jews; it was a democratic balm to their wounds, encouraging their hopes but not requiring much in the way of conscious activity.

This aesthetic was aptly revealed in the *Bintel Brief*, an advice column that appeared regularly in the *Forward* starting in 1906. Cahan, who more often than not authored both the letters and their answers, wrote in his memoirs that

> people often need the opportunity to be able to pour out their heavy-laden hearts. Among our immigrant masses … torn from their homes and their dear ones, were lonely souls who thirsted for expression … The *Bintel Brief* created just this opportunity for them.[34]

More than this, the *Bintel Brief* illustrated just how intertwined were socialism and sympathy in Abraham Cahan's newspaper. Religious dilemmas were placed alongside complaints about family life and work problems, while the answers sought a middle ground of accommodation in each case.

They also made excellent reading. In Abraham Cahan's characteristic mix of the high- and lowbrow, they were often dramatic and moralistic, intended to draw attention and spark controversy while allowing him to interject his own points when he wanted to. A letter in which a newly widowed woman describes the advances made by her late husband's best friend brings the admonition, "the woman's excuse that she was unable to protest against the passionate advances of her husband's friend is a weak one. Better if she had opened the carriage door and asked him to get out."[35] A letter in which two brothers contemplate moving to

Panama is met with a harsh response that speaks to Cahan's own feeling about the United States: "There are no honeypots in Panama. The climate is unhealthy, the work is hard, and one lives among all kinds of people, some of them half savage. It's hard to get away from there if one has no money."[36]

What these letters indicate is both the degree of regard held for the *Forward*, and its role as a public square where readers could freely voice their concerns and complaints in the knowledge that those reading them no doubt shared similar experiences. It was in this regard that the Yiddish press was both the chronicler and the manipulator of the Yiddish cultural renaissance. The *Forward* and the culture it represented play a persistent counterpoint to the tales of upward mobility that inflect the memoirs of immigrants and their children. Alfred Kazin, in *A Walker in the City*, recalls the uneasy conflict he experienced in his childhood between his mother's sentimentality toward religion and his painter father's allegiance to the unions. Socialism was a presence in his house, but so too was envy toward the *alrightniks*, the ones who had transcended their immigrant status and moved onward and upward. Here, the *Forward*'s brand of ideological equivocation played the role of mediator, allowing both mindsets a measure of coexistence in its binding nature: "So it was: we had always to be together: believers and non-believers, we were a people; I was of that people. Unthinkable to go one's own way."[37]

*The Workmen's Circle*

> We contend that our national cultural existence [in America] will be built on the foundation of the Yiddish language. Through Yiddish we will preserve all the significant treasures of universal culture as well as our own rich Hebrew language. We will educate our own children in this language. We will establish our own educational institutions, from elementary schools to universities … These institutions will be the crown of Yiddish culture.
> –Chaim Zhitlovsky, 1915.[38]

By around 1905, the essential foundations for the rise of the Yiddish cultural renaissance had come into existence: the American Jewish immigrant culture that demanded to be spoken to in a language it

understood had led to the primacy of Yiddish as the universal vernacular, spoken by intellectuals and the masses alike; socialist theory had accommodated a viable union structure that was able to make tangible gains; and the emergence of a viable public sphere driven by Yiddish journalism was pushing the community as a whole toward a sense of solidarity. It was also at this point that the formative period of the Jewish labor movement came to an end, via the creation of its fraternal arm, the Arbeiter Ring (Workmen's Circle), and with the arrival of a second wave of immigrants who were more culturally Yiddish and more ideologically aware than the first.

The Workmen's Circle, though existing in idea form since 1892, was formed in 1901 and gained its charter from the State of New York as a mutual aid society in 1905. It was the wing of the labor movement that related most directly to the practical issues of the immigrant community. It thus provided, among other things, for funeral costs and medical treatment, but its success as a mutual aid society was dependent on several factors. The Workmen's Circle was the first radical benefits organization to offer religious funeral services for its members. No other party or sympathizer in the Jewish labor movement would do so, due to the prevailing secularism of the times.[39] It also provided much-needed opportunities to socialize. The immigrant lifestyle provided few opportunities to make friends; neither working in a sweatshop nor with a party comrade was guaranteed to produce relationships that lasted after hours.[40]

Most importantly, the Workmen's Circle — like the *Forward* — was an organization concentrated around the notion of socialism as moral cement. It set up radical ideology as a core around which a cohesive social network was established. In the early years, the Workmen's Circle codified the preexisting system of *landsmanshaftn*, in which residents of the same town looked out for each other's needs in the New World, and extended it into a 'lodge-system' which anyone could join. *Landsmanshaftn* had serious drawbacks: their ability to provide for their members depended directly on the size of the town in the Old Country and the wealth of the present members in the New; needless to say, it was impossible for someone from a poor community to switch to a wealthier one. These organizations also rarely offered the types of cultural activities that immigrants in the new spirit of the times were demanding.[41] The Workmen's Circle, however, offered all these things. "The member of the Workmen's Circle," said a circular advocating it, "spends his time in scientific discussions, listens to a scientific lecture, which develops his morals and clears his mind of

the dust of the factory; it encourages him to think and to open his eyes to the fact that he is a human being with energy, courage, and spirit."[42] In this way, the Workmen's Circle managed to be both devoutly socialist in outlook (initially forbidding its members by charter from advocating the existing economic situation) while at the same time offering a set of pragmatic services that would not or could not be directly provided by socialism or the unions.[43]

Another critical component in the Workmen's Circle's success was the arrival of the second wave of Eastern European Jewish immigration. Fleeing the Kishinev riots of 1903, the nearly one million new arrivals were substantially different in demographic composition than those of the 1880s' wave. They tended to be younger and more intellectual; many had participated in organized radical activity through the Bund (the General Jewish Workers Union) in Russia, but had fled dampened revolutionary hopes in the wake of Czar-initiated violence and warfare.[44] I. Kopelov, a leading anarchist at the time, wrote that "the Kishinev pogrom upset me to some degree ... My previous cosmopolitanism, internationalism, and similar views vanished at one blow, like the contents of a barrel with the bottom knocked out."[45]

This post-Kishinev ethic served to reverse the internationalist mindset that had dominated the ideology of early twentieth-century Jewish radical thought. As Jews became disaffected with the cosmopolitanism directives of traditional socialism, they turned to find new value in their own cultural identity. A small number turned to Zionism, which usually rejected religion in favor of literal ethnic nationalism, but the majority looked toward Yiddishism, which saw in the language the salvation of the Jewish people through the promotion of a distinctly and uniquely Jewish culture.[46] Chaim Zhitlovsky, mentioned previously, was one of the major thinkers behind this movement. To him, the cultivation of Yiddish would ideally serve as the basis for future Jewish life; anything else was a form of assimilation. "We need a power capable of binding all Jews into one entity," he wrote, "while allowing each the freedom of decisions, beliefs, hopes and actions … Such a spiritual power can only be the Yiddish language."[47]

The effect of this trend was an arrival of young, driven, and ideologically sophisticated individuals who lent their own character to the already developed Jewish labor and cultural movements in the United States. These Yiddishist immigrants arrived often disappointed in the character of Jewish life in America, and were ready to go about replacing

traditional religious ties with cultural ones. Moreover, having already participated in their own Russian Jewish cultural revival, they had both a stronger basis of comparison for what life ought to be like in the New World, as well as the organizational experience in changing it.[48] A major example of this trend was the promotion of a separate elementary school system by the Workmen's Circle under the influence of cultural Judaism. One point of contention between the two generations of radicals dealt with the question of children's education within the context of a progressive lifestyle. Since older immigrants had been excluded from the Czar's educational system, they were accustomed to creating wholly internal systems of general education for their children in Russia. America, with its promise of universal primary education, made this need obsolete, and so first-wave members of the Worker's Circle tended to feel that a separate Jewish school system would be unnecessary and exclusivist.[49] If they did agree, it was generally to Sunday schools that educated children in only a limited way.

Younger immigrants regarded this position as assimilationist. For Yiddishists, it was of utmost importance that Jewish children be educated as thoroughly as possible about their cultural heritage. When the issue finally came to a head in 1916, the motion brought in favor of establishing separate schools pointed out that the value of such a system was found not only in terms of knowledge gained, but also in terms of exposure to the movement's ideology: "We … wish the children to learn in the Jewish school … to sympathize with the oppressed, the persecuted, those who have been robbed of their rights."[50] By 1920, the issue was decided in favor of the younger generation. Stated aims for Jewish schools run by the Workmen's Circle included pledges "to bind the Jewish worker's child to the Jewish working class, and to prepare him to carry on the struggle of his parents for a better world."[51]

Just as important as the innovation of a separate school system was the emergence of a concerted effort to keep the children of the first generation of Jews involved in the movement. By the 1920s, the leadership of the Workmen's Circle became increasingly concerned that their membership's youth was losing its affiliation to the values of their parents. The end of the immigration waves some years before meant that the time was coming when the majority of Jewish children in the United States were native born;[52] the true second-generation youth was acculturating to American values that were being dramatically reinterpreted in the wake of the new conservatism of the 1920s.[53] In response, the Workmen's Circle

created programs specifically targeting Jewish youth. In 1925, a decision was made at the Circle's annual convention to form clubs for young people fifteen and over. Phillip Geliebter, the Educational Director for the Workmen's Circle, justified the Younger Circle Club, as it was known, by writing, "it is a fact that the children of radical parents are leaving us and are being drawn into conservative circles which influence them against us … If we want Jewish children in America to come to us in large numbers, we must provide for them the social activities and entertainments which they find in the conservative centers."[54]

The Workmen's Circle's move to provide these services had several implications. The shift from abstract ideals regarding the destiny of the Jewish people in the United States toward a practical notion that such a destiny be shaped by these types of youth-directed movements was one that had a significant effect on the way in which the Workmen's Circle was perceived in the mainstream. It reflected the beginnings of a trend away from playing a role as an organization toward assuming the status of a social movement.[55]

It would be unfair to characterize the membership of the Workmen's Circle as having joined first for the benefits and only second for the ideology. The organization was founded and run, by and large, by dedicated and idealistic leaders who believed in the justice of their cause. Nevertheless, with the changing demographics of Jews in America the number of proletarian Jewish workers decreased, and so the available membership pool of the Workmen's Circle began to reflect a much more bourgeois character — something the founders of the Circle were deeply uncomfortable with. B. Vladek Charney, one of the founders, noted as early as 1910 that "as long as the Worker's Circle was not very strong, people joined not only for the benefits but for the higher purposes as well. Now, however, the Workmen's Circle is a secure place for insurance and other practical services, with the result that there gravitates to it a mass of people remote from radical and social purposes."[56]

The Workmen's Circle therefore began to evolve in order to balance the internal contradictions of upwardly mobile Jews. In a process Irving Howe described as moving "from politics to sentiment,"[57] many American Jews retained mixed socialist feelings despite having moved up in the world. They often still wished to retain some vestige of a connection to socialism, or at least social justice, and so the Workmen's Circle rose to meet this need by providing a continuing incentive to participate in a still nominally left-wing environment. In contrast to its organizational

contemporaries, the Workmen's Circle's adult educational programs were not strictly doctrinaire. The Educational Committees of the various Workmen's Circle branches brought qualified speakers to lecture on matters of genuine public interest. In New York, lecture subjects included "How the City of New York is Governed," "Benjamin Franklin," "Care of the Eyes," and "The Present Yiddish Press."[58]

The Workmen's Circle shared with the *Forward* an understanding that its service to mainstream American Jews was based on its ability to connect them with their culture in an assimilationist environment. In that regard, the Workmen's Circle produced an unselfconscious union of social radicalism and cultural self-improvement that engaged its members on whichever level they were comfortable with. Contrasting with the Yom Kippur balls of the anarchists, the Workmen's Circle continued to embrace a traditionalist sensibility. If overt religiosity lost appeal for mainstream Jews in their new cultural environs, the Workmen's Circle provided them with acceptably secularized alternatives. Thus, the "third Passover Seder" became a Workmen's Circle institution that not only reinterpreted a holiday ritual in political-cultural terms, but also provided an opportunity for people to eat a meal together with their friends.[59] Similarly, the 'lodge system' of small autonomous clubs that the Workmen's Circle adopted meant that their environments were invariably intimate. The local Workmen's Circle was a place where Jewish workers "could sit down to a glass of tea and exchange small talk and large ideas."[60]

It was in this way that the fraternal arm of labor found common cause with mainstream Judaism by mixing leftist ideology with practical benefits; advocacy of social justice by way of its connection to the labor and radical movements; services for its members through a mutual aid system that provided unemployment, sickness, and death benefits; emphasis on preservation of cultural heritage by affiliating with a consciously and emphatically Jewish ideology; and the ability to provide successful avenues for social interaction by creating an environment that managed to be light on dogma and heavy on friendly group activity.

*Conclusion*

The Workmen's Circle and the *Forward* shared between them a directive to preserve the affiliations of Jews in a culture that emphasized assimilation. At the same time, the essential ideologies of both were never quite so blunt or so focused to be concerned with this one goal alone. Rather, they were complex organizations that sent complicated and

often contradictory messages. Throughout his life, Abraham Cahan was ambivalent about the degree to which cultural preservation should be emphasized for the new American Jew; he never came to a conclusion whether being Jewish, whatever the definition or practice, was a fulfillment or rejection of what it meant to be American.[61] His newspapers as well as his fiction reflected this dilemma. The conclusion to *The Rise of David Levinsky,* a quintessential rags-to-riches immigration tale, still has the protagonist doubting how far he has really come in his quest for success.

> I can never forget the days of my misery. I cannot escape from my poor old self. My past and my present do not comport well. David, the poor lad swinging over a Talmud volume at the Preacher's Synagogue, seems to have more in common with my inner identity than David Levinsky, the well-known cloak manufacturer.[62]

Similarly, there always existed within the Workmen's Circle an institutional divide between the organization's membership and its ideology. The Circle was conceived of and functioned as a socialist organization in nearly every way. It was concerned with social justice in the form of both labor agitation and solidarity with other ethnic minorities, it promoted equality among its members, and it advocated, at least to some degree, an eventual restructuring of society in which socialist values would prevail. Yet its membership rolls were so large — 85,791 dues-paying members in 1925[63] — and socialism as a defined movement so small in number, that it simply was not possible that all people attending Workmen's Circle meetings, lectures, and social events were all completely radical in outlook. It was far more likely that some parts of the Workmen's Circle message appealed to them and some parts did not, but on the whole the advantages and benefits of attending far outweighed the negatives. In this regard the Workmen's Circle might be seen as having been successful *despite* its message. Both cases show that while these organizations preserved the traditional affiliations of American Jews, to say that this was their original and sole intention would be incorrect.

This therefore begs the question: given that the goals of the *Forward* and the Workmen's Circle were so ambiguous, to what extent might they be considered successes? One perspective holds that Jewish radicalism needs to be viewed in the context of how it functioned for immigrants in relation to everyday life. In this rendering, the important part of radicalism

was not the ideology, per se, but rather the skills its employment gave its practitioners. According to Will Herberg, one of the key proponents of this view, the Jewish labor movement in general acted as a great "civics class" that educated the new immigrants in Americanization:

> The unions, the Workmen's Circle, and the Socialist Party were also a laboratory and training ground in the practice of collective self-government through the democratic process. Unions' meetings, debates, conventions, and elections taught the politically inexperienced Jewish immigrants how public affairs could be run by free discussion, the ballot, and mutual tolerance.[64]

Herberg finds vindication in the success of the New Deal, given that it was a government-initiated policy that co-opted many innovations of the Jewish labor movement, including the right to collective bargaining and social security. As such, according to this perspective, the Workmen's Circle and the *Forward* were successes insofar as they promoted social education and acculturation within the mainstream.

Irving Howe, in contrast, argues that on the merits of its stated goals alone, the Jewish labor movement was a failure. Having never managed to create a new, free society without want, Jewish radicalism was by its own terms unsuccessful. The fact that socialism changed the consciousness of some Jews by informing them of social values, or preserved the traditions of others by giving them a reason to remain affiliated with Judaism, has no bearing on the problem that "[i]n yielding to American ways, [socialism] … lost some essential strength of vision."[65] Given that the Workmen's Circle and the *Forward* shared the failed dreams of the greater movement to which they belonged, it would be disingenuous to consider them successes without regard to their surroundings.

A major problem with these perspectives is that they tend to ignore the reciprocal relationship between the Jewish labor movement and its constituency. Morris Hillquit's recollection that the creation of the United Hebrew Trades occurred from the "top down" is frequently seized upon as proof that the institutions of the Jewish labor movement operated exclusively in a leadership role, and that the Jewish community at large passively accepted their direction.[66] This drastically misstates the case, however, as the case studies of the Workmen's Circle and the *Forward* indicate. A fundamental commonality between the two was an

understanding that what was necessary was some way of speaking *to* the Jewish community, instead of *at* it. Seen in this way, the connection between the institutions of the Jewish labor movement and their membership takes on more of the qualities of a dialogue, with all the implications thereof.

Neither the Workmen's Circle nor the *Forward* arose in isolation; they were products of a culture that initially nurtured them and provided the conditions in which they could grow. A literate and transplanted Jewish culture had a desire to read, to which a socialist Yiddish newspaper, the *Forward,* responded by printing articles that were at the same time both popular and radical. Those same transplanted Jews felt lonely and alienated from traditional patterns of social interaction; the Workmen's Circle responded by creating a socialist milieu that satisfied these desires. The Jews that made up the readership and membership for these organizations adapted and acculturated to their new climate, and so, drawn into a symbiotic relationship, the *Forward* and the Workmen's Circle changed with them. 'Success' is an imprecise measure by which to evaluate the roles of the Circle and the *Forward* in Jewish life given how far the two were intertwined.

The next phase in the complex relationship between the Jewish mainstream and the institutions of the Jewish labor movement would begin in the early 1930s as two key processes occurred. The ideology of Jewish radicalism would be co-opted into the mainstream through the New Deal, and at the same time, a new generation of American-born Jews would reevaluate how they approached their tradition and culture in light of new ways of adapting into general society. The period between 1880 and 1925, which saw the rise of a popular Yiddish press and the evolution of a unifying Jewish fraternal society, was therefore critical in providing a basis upon which Jews could begin the long process of American acculturation.

## End Notes

**1** Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 103.
**2** Bernard Weinryb, "The Adaptation of Jewish Labor Groups to American Life," *Jewish Social Studies* 8.4 (October 1946): p. 221.
**3** Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1969), pp. 103-104.

**4** *Ibid.*, p. 165.
**5** Irving Howe and Kenneth Libo, *How We Lived: A Documentary History of Immigrant Jews in America* (New York: Plume, 1979), p. 113.
**6** Abraham Cahan, "The Russian Jew in America," *The Atlantic Monthly* 82 (July 1898): pp. 183-184. Cahan, in his article, argued that the labor movement rhetoric essential to mobilizing Jewish workers against their bosses, had been delivered in Russian, and so passed over the heads of its intended targets.
**7** Elias Tcherikower, *The Early Jewish Labor Movement in the United States,* trans. Aaron Antonovsky (New York: Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 1961), p. 261.
**8** Tcherikower, p. 353, table 5.
**9** Tcherikower, p. 357, table 10.
**10** Tcherikower, p. 324.
**11** Tcherikower, p. 327.
**12** Tcherikower, p. 328.
**13** Issac Metzker, ed., *A Bintel Brief: Sixty Years of Letters from the Lower East Side to the* Jewish Daily Forward (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 102.
**14** Will Herberg, "Jewish Labor Movements in the United States: Early Years to World War I," *Industrial Labor Relations Review* 5.4 (July 1952): p. 510.
**15** Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration 1880-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992), p. 102.
**16** Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, pp. 518-519.
**17** Ronald Sanders, *The Downtown Jews: Portraits of an Immigrant Generation* (New York: Signet, 1977), p. 77.
**18** Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, pp. 519-520.
**19** Sanders, p. 77.
**20** Nora Levin, *While Messiah Tarried: Jewish Socialist Movements, 1871-1917* (New York: Schocken, 1977), p. 137.
**21** Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the U.S.A.: An Industrial, Political and Cultural History of the Jewish Labor Movement*, vol. 1 (New York: Ktav, 1969), p. 274.
**22** Abraham Cahan, *The Education of Abraham Cahan [Bleter Fun Mein Leben]* vol. 1 and 2, trans. Leon Stein et al. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1969), p. 330.
**23** *Ibid.*, p. 360.
**24** *Ibid.*, p. 412.
**25** Levin, p. 135.
**26** *Ibid*.
**27** Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 524.

**28** Sanders, p. 210.
**29** *Ibid.*
**30** Sanders, p. 209.
**31** Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 531.
**32** Herberg, "Jewish Labor Movements in the United States: Early Years to World War I," p. 510.
**33** Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 529.
**34** Metzker, *Bintel Brief*, p. 13.
**35** *Ibid.*, p. 46.
**36** *Ibid.*, p. 80.
**37** Alfred Kazin, *A Walker in the City* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1951), p. 60.
**38** Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980), p. 389.
**39** Weinryb, p. 229.
**40** Epstein, p. 298.
**41** Judah Shapiro, *The Friendly Society: A History of the Workmen's Circle* (New York: Doron, 1970), p. 30.
**42** Shapiro, p. 33.
**43** Levin, p. 168.
**44** Epstein, p. 304.
**45** Levin, p. 172.
**46** Levin, p. 175; Epstein pp. 305-306.
**47** Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, p. 389.
**48** Epstein, p. 350.
**49** Shapiro, p. 104.
**50** Weinryb, p. 232.
**51** *Ibid.*
**52** Sidney Goldstein and Calvin Goldschnieder, *Jewish Americans: Three Generations in a Jewish Community* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 235.
**53** Shapiro, p. 88.
**54** Shapiro, p. 92.
**55** Shapiro, p. 103.
**56** Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 357.
**57** *Ibid.*
**58** Shapiro, p. 122.
**59** David P. Shuldiner, *Of Moses and Marx: Folk Ideology and Folk History in the Jewish Labor Movement* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 1999), p. 123.
**60** Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 358.

**61** *Ibid.*, p. 525.
**62** Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky*, p. 372.
**63** Shapiro, p. 85.
**64** Will Herberg, "Jewish Labor Movement in the United States: World War I to the Present," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 6.1 (October 1952): p. 63.
**65** Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 323.
**66** Jacob Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776-1985: The Germanic Period* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), p. 237.


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# The Impact of Self-Definition on Character Development in the Writings of Cahan and Antin
*Kira Gregson*

Defining the self is integral to the development of a character, as it ultimately determines an individual's behavior, perceptions, feelings, and beliefs. The concept of the self plays an important role in the autobiographical texts *The Rise of David Levinksy* by Abraham Cahan and *The Promised Land* by Mary Antin; the novels tell the story of a Jewish male and female, respectively, that undergo a physical translocation to a new environment and community at the turn of the twentieth century. Over the course of this transformation, the characters consider various ways in which to combine their Jewish heritage with the new, American, middle-class ideals presented to them. In doing so, they begin their journey towards self-actualization. Both Cahan and Antin present the difficulties that Jewish immigrants face in trying to emerge as a 'self,' independent of the social world. The authors create protagonists who are unable to exist in the American setting without some connection to their cultural community and, as a result, there is a constant feeling of being burdened by the Old World. Mary Antin is able to take the lessons and experiences of her past, apply them to a new setting, and develop into an improved, acculturated self. Abraham Cahan, however, presents the opposite fate of an immigrant in the development of his character, David Levinsky. For David, the Old World values serve as a barrier to his growth and contradict the new social norms he is trying to accept. In order to understand the self in an American context, both characters inherently put the Old and New Worlds into opposition for comparison. This presents a constant theme of duality and serves as a major source of conflict in the characters' attempt to deconstruct the two entities in order to create a setting in which they can be successful. The extent to which the characters are able to reconcile the place from which they came with the place to

which they now belong determines their ultimate success as immigrants. By focusing on the dichotomy of the Old and New Worlds, this paper will explore how the authors use religion, secularity, and gender to contribute to the development of the self.

An interesting aspect to the process of translocation is the extent to which religious values, established within the Jewish community of Eastern Europe, work for and against the ability of the protagonists to acculturate in America. Religion provides an important basis for both Antin and Levinsky, in terms of their perceptions, beliefs, and values. As Mary Antin attempts to "string together those glimpses of [her] earliest days,"[1] she presents the reader with the fear of apostasy that was prevalent in the oppressed Jewish community; "there was no pain that I would not bear — no, none — rather than submit to baptism. Every Jewish child had that feeling."[2] The fact that "the world was divided into Jews and Gentiles,"[3] and that Jews were forced to live within the "Pale of Settlement," establishes boundaries on Mary's life; it limits her as a Jew to whom she can associate with and where she can go.[4] According to Mary, there are only two possibilities: "one was a Jew, leading a righteous life; or one was a Gentile; existing to harass the Jews."[5] Because of this persecution "the Russian Jew fell back upon the only thing that never failed him — his hereditary faith in God" and this places pressure upon members of the closely knit society to be observant in order to preserve what was left of the culture.[6] She describes how the Jews themselves "shut themselves up in their synagogues, and raise the wall of extreme separateness" for the purpose of maintaining the strength and continuity of the community, but this results in isolation.[7] Mary's Jewish world in Polotzk was enclosed within itself, it was self-defined and imposed restrictive regulations "to the minutest details of social conduct."[8] All of these factors result in the protagonist adopting the idea that "there could be no question of personal convictions in religion."[9] This is a strong conclusion for Mary to have come to at such a young age and, because her impression of religion is dominated by claustrophobic feelings of restriction, she begins to test the boundaries of her faith.

The act of transgression is first introduced through Mary's description of her Great Aunt Hode, who was religious in some aspects of her life but "her conduct in other respects was not strictly orthodox."[10] The fact that Hode was unable to bare children makes her an outcast among the rest of the Jewish women in society. She no longer has a purpose in life if she cannot procreate. Mary describes Hode's childlessness as "no more

than a due punishment" because she would voluntarily travel outside the Pale and "copy the bold ways of Gentile women."[11] This shows the prevailing role of superstition within the Jewish community. Mary is given the impression that any conduct that deviates from Jewish principles will be punished and that even though alternatives of being a "freethinker and apostate" did exist, men (and women) who took on those ideals were evil.[12] As Mary gets older, however, she changes her method of moral reasoning; instead of defining her behavior as right or wrong based on the fear of punishment, she begins to test "everything that could be tested."[13] It is no longer her way to "accept unchallenged every superstition that came to [her] ears," and as a result she separates herself from her religion through experience.[14]

A critical point in Mary's development is when she finally constructs an "impious plan to put God Himself to the proof" after feeling dissatisfied with the answers her religious teacher was providing about existence and creation.[15] She knew, "as she knew that she was alive,"[16] that it was wrong to carry her handkerchief out of the house on the Sabbath, yet she committed the sin anyways and found that "God had not punished her."[17] Antin exposes her religious superstitions as false, and internalizes these findings. Through her acts of transgression she begins to de-familiarize her surroundings, commenting on the fact that she now "gazed with a new curiosity at her mother, at her grandmother … they looked *different* … they looked *very* strange."[18] The role of Antin's father allows Mary to authorize her doubt in Judaism. She no longer needs to feel like a sinner because she discovers that she "was not the only doubter in Polotzk"[19] when her father had "deliberately violated the Sabbath" by turning off the flame of the lamp.[20] Although she is able to distinguish that the "motives were different," she becomes aware of the fact that God did not punish either sinner in the act of transgression and, as a result, she is able to identify with her father on a completely new level.[21]

By questioning the integrity of her Judaism, Mary's "religion depended on [her] mood" and became a less structured aspect of her life.[22] Antin felt the freedom associated with being able to "believe anything that [she] wanted to believe," and in this respect, lost a sense of obligation to her piety.[23] Mary makes the claim that "knowledge was for the few, and wisdom was sometimes a capital offence," which reflects her newfound awareness for what was considered taboo within the "secretive atmosphere" of her culture.[24] Her strong desire to learn things for herself and to find answers based on reason, not superstition, was suppressed by

the religious restrictions of the Old World. This becomes obvious to her when she visits her family in Vitebsk and realizes that "new impressions and experiences affect [her] so much."[25] After returning to her native town, she sees "the stifling narrowness of life in Polotzk" and feels that "the boundaries of life had stretched" as she has gained a broader perspective of the world around her.[26] The fact that Antin can legitimize her doubts in religion allows her to more willingly accept the secular ideals America presents. The New World provides Mary with possibilities and answers to questions she could not find resolvable in the Old World where there was "no chance to progress."[27] She has made herself distinct from her Jewishness and no longer needs spiritual compensation. Instead, she begins to view her religion as a burden, as it only seems to impose restrictions on her.

Abraham Cahan presents an alternate role of religion for the Jewish immigrant. Unlike Antin, David Levinsky is committed to his religion and develops an intense relationship with the Torah. His devotion stems from the role of his mother who he describes as being "passionately devout," as she would practice her prayers with "absolute earnestness and fervor."[28] This did not distinguish his upbringing from any other Jewish boy "for there were hundreds of other poor families … who would starve themselves to keep their sons studying the Word of God."[29] It is through the *heder* that David develops a strong relationship with Reb Sender, "one of the most quick-witted, nimble-minded scholars in town."[30] Reb Sender is a major force behind instilling important pious principles into David's being, such as "only good deeds and holy learning have tangible worth" and that wealth is merely "a dream of fools."[31] Instead of questioning his teachers, as Antin does, David obediently listens and makes "a silent vow to be good and dedicate [his] life to the service of God."[32] At a young age, David learns that "one did not ask why it was a sin to do this or not to do that," he accepts the rules and restrictions imposed on him and admits that his "curiosity was silenced."[33]

Naphtali, David's good friend from *heder*, presents the idea of apostasy. Naphtali's question as to whether there really is a God perturbs David and, in his attempt to disprove this atheist belief, he realizes that he "had nothing clear or definite to put forth."[34] Despite this, David lacks the intuition to further question his beliefs, a potential result of his childhood repression of curiosity, and instead "free thought … began to bore [him]."[35] When David attempts to experiment by "casting furtive glances" at a pretty girl in synagogue, Reb Sender reminds him that he is

"yielding to Satan" and that David should continue to "fight [Satan] with might and main."[36]  The role of Satan serves as a guide for what David knows as right and wrong; thus, the protagonist is unable to moralize his actions independent of religion.

David establishes a connection with God "of a personal and of a rather familiar character," which becomes so intense in nature that David even admits that he "loved Him as one does a woman."[37]  In this way, Cahan implies the eroticised relationship between the male and the study of Torah.  It is through this devotion that David fills his need for a sense of bonding and feels that his study serves as a replacement for the formation of relationships with women.  His intense and passionate association with religion was the cultural norm of Jewish males in Eastern Europe which was not transportable to the New World. The values and knowledge that he had accumulated took place in the Old World throughout the critical years of his puberty, and through the process of immigration he loses the appropriate environment for his preferred way of life.

The reoccurring image of the Atlantic Ocean serves as a metaphor for the obstacle, both externally and internally, that must be crossed by a Jewish immigrant when coming to America.  The fact that Mary has been able to identify the ocean as being integral to her being, and that her "idea of the earth had expanded with every day at sea," proves that she has internalized the crossing and has transcended the barrier.[38]  This can be contrasted to the turbulent journey of "homesickness, uncertainty and anxiety" that David Levinsky experiences as he admits that "the sea frightened me."[39]  Mary celebrates America as the Promised Land in an unambiguous way and is quick to venture out of her boundaries and look "eagerly about the brilliant universe."[40]  This is the polar opposite of David, who wishes that his journey on the ship "could be prolonged indefinitely."[41]  Because each character possesses such a different view towards their upbringing and lifestyle in Eastern Europe, their views of what America can offer them are also polarized.

Mary Antin describes her new life in America as her "second infancy,"[42] and the fact that it was "delightfully unexplored" gives her a sense of hope and promise.[43]  Even though she moves from her "days of affluence in Russia" to a small apartment with only limited necessities, she is amazed by everything around her "chiefly because these wooden chairs and tin pans were American … they shone glorious in our eyes."[44] In this way, we see that the protagonist is not discouraged by her family's decreased economic status.  She does not miss the material items she

once had in her old life because they did not provide her with a sense of satisfaction. Antin describes the removal of her family's "hateful homemade European costumes" along with "[their] impossible Hebrew names" in a way that implies a feeling of resentment.[45] In this statement, Mary makes a direct link between her external being, in terms of her dress, and her inner Jewish identity, in relation to her Hebrew name. The fear that one could be physically identified as non-American is a more daunting thought to her than the risk of losing remnants of her past. Thus, Mary makes an effort to "conduct [herself] as befitted a Fellow Citizen" and commits most of her time to learning the English language and adopting secular thoughts.[46]

For Antin's character, it is most important that America opened up the opportunity of "intellectual freedom."[47] She reflects how the "apex of [her] civil pride and personal contentment" came on the first day that she attended American public school.[48] The option of education without restrictions was so unlike the "special examination for the Jewish candidates"[49] that had to be passed in order to study in Polotzk; in America, education was a "treasure that no thief could touch, not even misfortune or poverty."[50] It is interesting how, although America presents the male an opportunity of economic success (as exhibited by David Levinsky), it is really the female that feels a sense of accomplishment in translocation. Education provided women with recourse: the ability to verify their position in society and offer them a voice. Mary takes advantage of this voice through her writing. She validates herself by claiming that, although she used to envy her cousin, Hirshel, who had the ability to attend school in Polotzk, she was now "greater than he; for [she] knew English, and [she] could write poetry."[51]

"In America, then, everything was free," and this promise of freedom is a complete contrast to the feelings of confinement she experienced in Eastern Europe.[52] The importance of discovery and experimentation in her life are now permitted in the New World environment and Mary relishes in the fact that the "doors stood open for every one of us."[53] In Polotzk, Mary was stigmatized as a Jew and felt the suppressive effects of needing to preserve the continuation and survival of the faith. It is easier for her to move away from the Old World norms and develop a sense of patriotism to America "because [she] had been so cramped before."[54] As well, Mary "was used to living in two worlds"[55] and in this way has the advantage of being able to "make [herself] at home in an alien world."[56] As she is consciously aware of the contrast between her

Old and New Worlds, Mary is able to internalize the "precious rights of an American woman" as being novel and more fitting to the independent self she wants to become.[57] Thus, Antin develops a strong sense of patriotism and dedication that was absent in her old life. She has the ability to "say 'my country' and *feel* it, as one felt 'God.'"[58] In doing so, Antin admits to the reader that she has put her religious beliefs and American devotion on the same level. America gave its immigrants the ability to develop a sense of social belonging to a greater society; they no longer needed to feel dependent on the Jewish sector. For Mary, "the story of Exodus was not history to [her] in the sense that the story of the American Revolution was," and this is a result of her ability to find answers that were not based on superstition.[59]

The distinction between her past and present is made even more clear by her "father's saying 'America is not Polotzk.'"[60] In order for Mary to move into the new realm that she desires, she develops a strong bond with her father because his actions and beliefs make the protagonist able to validate her adaptation of New World values. Mary is able to make the link that life in Eastern Europe had stunted her growth in the observation of "the freedom of expression [her father] was so eager to practise, after his life of enforced hypocrisy."[61] Antin regards her father as unique from all the other American fathers, in the way that he "brought his children to school as if it were an act of consecration" and that in this simple act "he took possession of America."[62] Mr. Antin feels that he is able to become cultured and reach a higher life vicariously through the educational opportunity presented to his children, as "he knew no surer way to their advancement and happiness."[63] The enthusiasm and intensity the father feels towards secular knowledge is absorbed by Mary and in this way strengthens their connection. Therefore, a truly symbiotic relationship is established; Mr. Antin is able to feel a sense of Americanization through Mary's ability to acculturate, while Mary develops a heightened sense of patriotism from her father's values.

Mrs. Antin, however, maintains an internal religiosity as "the Jewish faith in her was deeply rooted."[64] This is the reason behind why she "conducted herself … as if she were back in her old store in Polotzk."[65] If Mary wants to authorize herself as an American, her mother's actions do not provide for that. As well, the trajectory that Mary follows as a result of gaining an education is completely opposite to her sister, Frieda. Mary takes note of the distinction and attributes it to Frieda's "good health and domestic instincts."[66] These are characteristics which made the older

sister an obvious choice to be sent to work to support the family; thus inevitably enabling Mary's success. In this way, the Old World causes the two sisters' fates to be sealed. Maybe if Mary had not "failed as a milliner's apprentice, while Frieda made excellent progress at the dressmaker's" their Americanization processes may have been more alike.[67] Mary admits to thinking "it doubtful if the conversion of the Jew to any alien belief or disbelief is ever thoroughly accomplished" and in this way can sympathize with her mother and sister's conservative ways.[68] For Mary, her attempt at a full retreat from her Judaism is slightly hindered by the presence of these figures that represent the "Old-World fate."[69] Even though she believes that "there was no God, and there was no sin"[70] she does make note of the "Jew in [her], the European Jew," which represents the past she evaded but which still lingers in her being.[71]

Unlike Mary Antin, David turns to his strong religious background for guidance, "praying God not to hide His face from [him]."[72] It is clear that the values *heder* and Talmudic study instilled in him throughout his critical years of maturity in Europe have been transported into this new society; he literally carries them with him when crossing the ocean. When he reaches the mainland, his "sense of loneliness and dread of the New World" is escalated by the fact that he had made the journey alone and has no family on which to diffuse the pressure of acculturation.[73] Mary, however, has the complete support system of her parents and sister who collectively facilitate her adaptability into the new society. Another barrier for David is that he only understands how to form relationships through the intenseness of his piety. Because "Judaism has not much of a chance"[74] and Talmud is "no business in America," Levinsky is left with little resources on which to forge his existence.[75] The "topsy-turvy country" seems to reject the norms David has developed.[76] When David immigrates to America his Old World ideals serve as a barrier to his acculturation.

It is interesting that David distinguishes himself from all the other immigrants in that he is "at a loss to convey the peculiar state of mind that the experience created in [him]."[77] The suppressive nature of his upbringing causes him to lack the level of consciousness required to really examine and reflect on the implications of his surroundings. Antin, however, practically overwhelms her audience with the details of her "tangle of events, outer and inner" that are experienced in America.[78] Cahan distances the reader from being able to understand the effects that such a monumental passage has on his protagonist because even David is not able to address these issues for himself. On his arrival to America,

the protagonist traces his life in a double narrative describing his external transformation, while implying his internal stagnancy. He is able to make direct links between his Old and New Worlds in terms of the visual and material differences, yet lacks the ability to portray how the changing values have stunted his internal development. This serves to emphasize the disparity that develops between his inner and outer being. The reader is aware of this discrepancy from the very start of the story when David reflects on the fact that his inner self is "precisely the same as it was thirty or forty years ago" and that all the wealth and status he has achieved "seem to be devoid of significance."[79]

On immigration, Jewish men were given the opportunity to become more socially mobile by working to make money in a capitalist economy; there was a strong emphasis on material wealth. Levinsky finds it hard to accept that a "former man of leisure was forced to work in a factory" and immediately comes to the conclusion that America is "the most cruel place on earth."[80] Because Talmudic study in an American context has less prestige, David is forced to decentralize the role that religion played in his life in order to adapt. This transformation, however, is only made externally. David still maintains fundamental Old World values, such as the intellectual wealth associated with learning and teaching. He joyfully reflects that if he was forced to decide between earning a small wage through teaching or become rich through business, he would "without slightest hesitation, have decided in favor of the ten dollars."[81]

The New World environment modifies the religious interpretation of love and marriage. In his immigration to America, David is immediately introduced to women as sexual beings, which defies his preconceived, Judaic notion that heterosexual relationships are only tied to the need to procreate. Instead, they could be about passion and sexual fulfillment; while passion in the Old World is associated with Torah study. David becomes "intoxicated by the novelty of yielding to Satan" in the ways in which he is affiliated with the underworld women (prostitutes).[82] He is finally able to commit such abominations without being scolded by Reb Sender, but his motives are instead due to his "failure as a business man, by [his] homesickness and passion for Matilda."[83] Levinsky reflects on the anomaly of his actions: at times he would "plunge into a page of Talmud," while at other moments he "would lay down the holy book … and betake [himself] to the residence of some fallen woman."[84] In this way, it is clear that he is unable to resolve his cultural beliefs from Antomir with the new modes of behavior presented in America. As a result, David becomes

driven to recreate his old life in the external environment of America, for his motives and values still remain to be driven by what was engrained in him as an Eastern European Jew.

The protagonist begins to look for anything that reminds him of the place from which he came. There is a void in David's present American self that he cannot seem to fill, but attempts to do so by reminiscing on the past: "whatever enthusiasm there was in me found vent in religion … this would bring my heart in touch with my old home."[85] When David becomes engaged to Fanny Kaplan, the author poses the possibility that his protagonist might have finally attained self-fulfillment. David reflects on himself in terms of what he possesses: "I own a large factory. I am a rich man and I am going to be married to the daughter of a fine Jew."[86] These statements, however, are just David's attempt at combining both his worlds into one being; the American prestige associated with capital, and the Old World prestige that accompanies marrying into a good Jewish family. Levinsky still doubts the fact that this may be an effective combination and appeals to his "Mother dear!" for affirmation that he can make it as a good Jew in America.[87] When David breaks off his engagement with Fanny, in the vain attempt of being able to win over Miss Anna Tevkin, which also fails, it is apparent that he is unable to maintain any sort of consistency. He claims that "his feeling for Anna was stronger, deeper, more tender" than what he felt for any other woman in his life, but yet refers to his previous loves as infatuations. [88] David is unable to identify what love is and because he is still internally torn between two ways of life (the old and the new) it makes it difficult to be involved in interpersonal relationships. Therefore, even though David has a "fine business and plenty of money and all sorts of nice times,"[89] he still admits that "at the bottom of [his] consciousness [he] was always lonely."[90]

The alternate perceptions Mary Antin and David Levinsky have of the immigrant experience are a result of their different views towards their Eastern European lives. Mary associates her Jewish past with a feeling of confinement, which makes it easier for her to suppress her Judaism and transcend the barriers within the immigrant community. In doing so, she is able to distinguish herself as an American and is proud of her ability to adapt and acculturate to the new secular society. Levinsky, on the other hand, feels a strong sense of dedication to the Torah culture of Eastern European Jewry, and easily identifies himself as a man of piety. The translocation to a completely new environment contradicts the values his life has been structured around and thus proves to be very destructive.

For David, the gain of material wealth and success do not translate into self approval and satisfaction. While he lives the 'American dream' from an external perspective, his inner self is ruptured and he cannot find a meaningful place within the New World. For the religious male, a great struggle is associated with the shift from the *heder* to the workplace, even though it did propose vast possibility. In this way, Cahan and Antin have demonstrated that the definition and development of the self is a dynamic process and is, to a great extent, affected by norms instilled by the greater cultural community.

**End Notes**

**1** Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (New York: Penguin Group, 1997), p. 65.
**2** *Ibid.*, p. 11.
**3** *Ibid.*, p. 8.
**4** *Ibid.*, p. 7.
**5** *Ibid.*, p. 98.
**6** *Ibid.*, p. 26.
**7** *Ibid.*, p. 90.
**8** *Ibid.*, p. 98.
**9** *Ibid.*
**10** *Ibid.*, p. 45.
**11** *Ibid.*
**12** *Ibid.*, p. 98.
**13** *Ibid.*, p. 99.
**14** *Ibid.*, p. 68.
**15** *Ibid.*, p. 99.
**16** *Ibid.*
**17** *Ibid.*, p. 101.
**18** *Ibid.*
**19** *Ibid.*, p. 103.
**20** *Ibid.*, p. 105.
**21** *Ibid.*
**22** *Ibid.*, p. 101.
**23** *Ibid.*
**24** *Ibid.*, p. 68.
**25** *Ibid.*, p. 123.
**26** *Ibid.*, p. 128.

**27** *Ibid.*, p. 25.
**28** Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (New York: Random House Inc., 2001), p. 11.
**29** *Ibid.*, p. 23.
**30** *Ibid.*, p. 31.
**31** *Ibid.*
**32** *Ibid.*
**33** *Ibid.*, p. 13.
**34** *Ibid.*, p. 55.
**35** *Ibid.*, p. 56.
**36** *Ibid.*, p. 37.
**37** *Ibid.*
**38** Antin, p. 150.
**39** Cahan, p. 85.
**40** Antin, p. 143.
**41** Cahan, p. 87.
**42** Antin, p. 144.
**43** *Ibid.*, p. 143.
**44** *Ibid.*, p. 146.
**45** *Ibid.*, p. 149.
**46** *Ibid.*, p. 177.
**47** *Ibid.*, p. 161.
**48** *Ibid.*, p. 157.
**49** *Ibid.*, p. 24.
**50** *Ibid.*, p. 148.
**51** *Ibid.*, p. 171.
**52** *Ibid.*, p. 148.
**53** *Ibid.*
**54** *Ibid.*, p. 151.
**55** *Ibid.*, p. 106.
**56** *Ibid.*, p. 230.
**57** *Ibid.*, p. 218.
**58** *Ibid.*, p. 177.
**59** *Ibid.*, p. 178.
**60** *Ibid.*, p. 154.
**61** *Ibid.*, p. 194.
**62** *Ibid.*, p. 162.
**63** *Ibid.*
**64** *Ibid.*, p. 193.

**65** *Ibid.*, p. 155.
**66** *Ibid.*, p. 158.
**67** *Ibid.*
**68** *Ibid.*, p. 195.
**69** *Ibid.*, p. 218.
**70** *Ibid.*, p. 190.
**71** *Ibid.*, p. 211.
**72** Cahan, p. 87.
**73** *Ibid.*, p. 89.
**74** *Ibid.*, p. 95.
**75** *Ibid.*, p. 91.
**76** *Ibid.*, p. 96.
**77** *Ibid.*, p. 86.
**78** Antin, p. 144.
**79** Cahan, p. 3.
**80** *Ibid.*, p. 96.
**81** *Ibid.*, p. 177.
**82** *Ibid.*, p. 121.
**83** *Ibid.*, p. 122.
**84** *Ibid.*
**85** *Ibid.*, p. 107.
**86** *Ibid.*, p. 379.
**87** *Ibid.*
**88** *Ibid.*, p. 471.
**89** *Ibid.*, p. 348.
**90** *Ibid.*, p. 347.

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# Constructing a Jewish Legion for Canadians
*Jonathan Katz*

As Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914, Canadians were called upon to defend British honor and like other young Canadians, many of the country's 25,000 Jews of military age responded gallantly.[1] Although many Canadian Jews died on the battlefields of Europe alongside their non-Jewish countrymen, this study seeks to uncover the history of the distinctly Jewish units of Canadians which participated in the Great War, most notably, a group of approximately 500 men who fought in the deserts of Palestine as part of Britain's Jewish Legion, soldiers who have largely been overlooked by the Canadian history books.[2] The Jewish Legion consisted of three battalions from the City of London Regiment: the 38th, 39th, and 40th Battalions of the Royal Fusiliers. The battalions were almost entirely composed of Jewish men who would serve in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force's final campaign in Palestine as of late 1918.[3] The 39th Battalion was composed of American and Canadian men and represented the culmination of several attempts throughout the war to mount a Jewish fighting force in North America.[4] This study will first investigate the reasons underlying the Canadian quest for a Jewish fighting force and will subsequently discuss attempts to establish a Jewish force before Canadian involvement in the 39th Royal Fusiliers, notably Captain Isidore Freedman's Infantry Reinforcement Draft Company. The paper will conclude with an investigation of the Canadian contribution to the Jewish Legion in the final days of the Great War.

A preliminary overview of the role of Diaspora Jewry in fighting to liberate Palestine from the Turks might prompt an observer to conclude that the will to establish a Jewish fighting force was strictly motivated by Zionist ideology. A more careful evaluation of Jewish military contributions illustrates a commitment to the war which reflected the

multiple interests and concerns of Diaspora Jewry, concerns that were accentuated in the unique social climate of wartime Canada. Canadian Jews sought to mount an exclusive fighting force as a means of giving prominence to Jewish support for Britain in the war, in order to quell anti-Semitic claims that branded the Jew as disloyal.[5] If a Jewish force was not established and promoted, the contributions of Jews dispersed within the Canadian Expeditionary Force might be overlooked, as many people "brand[ed] the Jews as cowards, regardless of their service in the Canadian army, their battle casualties, and their decorations of valor."[6] The conception of the Jew as disloyal was fuelled further by the influx of Russian immigrants who, fleeing persecution at the hands of the Tsar, had supported Germany in the early stages of war. This position was justified by one community leader, who explained, "they had come to Canada to escape the most rigorous persecution and could hardly be blamed for not wanting to fight alongside Russia."[7] Beyond their need to demonstrate loyalty to the Empire, a Jewish contingent would relieve Jews of the anti-Semitic profiling that they encountered when volunteering with non-Jewish battalions. Samuel Kernerman, for example, recalled "being confronted by an examiner who said that he had varicose veins and flat feet" when he enlisted with the Royal Engineers in Britain.[8] An emphatic military mobilization, however, would serve to heighten the anti-Semitic sentiment which existed among Quebec's French Canadian majority which opposed involvement in the war.[9] Thus, while the need to promote loyalty to Britain was an important reason for unified Jewish mobilization, it did have adverse consequences for Quebec's Jews.

Another important determinant of the Jewish community's quest for a Jewish military contingent is related to Jewish cultural and religious practices. Traditional Jews seeking to be a part of the war effort could not enter non-Jewish fighting units because of religious restrictions, including their need to eat kosher food and be among other Jews for prayer. A statement released by the British War Office on March 1 and 8, 1918, served to satisfy many Orthodox recruits by guaranteeing the "availability of kosher food and Jewish surroundings" for young men who joined the Jewish Legions of the City of London Regiment, Royal Fusiliers.[10] The war office had released a previous statement on Feb 14, 1918 citing that "it [could] be guaranteed that men of Jewish faith [would] be employed in special Jewish Battalions."[11] The theater of war in which these battalions were to serve was not specified in the February 14 statement, implying that the chance to serve among other Jews was in and of itself an important

consideration for potential volunteers who were not strictly drawn to a Jewish legion by Zionist inclinations to serve in Palestine.[12]  The ability to serve alongside peers was appealing to many Canadians who, as of 1915, were permitted to form ethnically composed battalions; Scottish, Irish, and American battalions soon proliferated.[13] Recognizing that Jews might be similarly enthused about serving with their co-religionists, Sir Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia, called for the establishment of a Jewish battalion.[14] The result was the eventual creation of a Jewish Draft Reinforcement Company.

It must be noted that attempts to unify Canadian Jews in European fighting units did precede Canadian involvement in the 39th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, including the aforementioned Jewish Infantry Draft Reinforcement Company.  The mobilization of the 39th Battalion, however, was undoubtedly largely motivated by Zionist ideology, as illustrated by the fact that most of its recruits were ardent Zionists.[15] Recruitment in England for the Jewish Legion exploded following British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour's November 2, 1917 declaration of support for a national Jewish home in Palestine.  In Canada and the United States, the Balfour Declaration prompted a Jewish movement to emerge, which encouraged people to join the fight to liberate Palestine.[16] When Canadians were eventually recruited into the legion, the majority of volunteers came from the ranks of the Zionist youth group Hechalutz and the Agudat B'nei Eretz Yisroel, a group of Palestinian ex-patriots living in Canada.[17,18] The importance of the Zionist motivation to Canadian involvement in the Jewish Legion is demonstrated by one Canadian recruit, Leon Cheifetz, who had to run away from his disapproving parents' home in order to "participate in the liberation of the land of our forefathers."[19] It should also be noted that Canadians who enlisted to serve in the 39th Royal Fusiliers, a British battalion, were subject to the marginal British wage of two shillings and sixpence a day as opposed to service in the Canadian military where they could earn more than a dollar a day.[20] The significant wage cuts that Canadian legionnaires were willing to take illustrate the importance of the Zionist ideal to their involvement in the Jewish Legion.  Canadian involvement in the legion was especially important to the leadership of the Zionist Organizations of Canada.  The assembly saw its support decline significantly at the outset of the war as Canadian nationalism proliferated among Jews who increased their contributions to national relief campaigns and in the process reduced their funding of Zionist organizations by fifty percent from 1913 to 1914.[21] The Zionist

Organizations were also concerned that in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution many Canadian Jewish immigrants would begin to see Russia as "a haven of refuge for Jews," thereby undermining the progress of their movement.[22] The mobilization of a Jewish legion to serve in Palestine could therefore galvanize the waning Canadian Zionist movement. Finally, the interest of Canadians in the Jewish Legion had much to do with the sheer adventure that a campaign in the Middle East represented, as opposed to a more conventional term of service in Europe.[23] Sam Kernerman, for one, recalls hiding a camera in his pants in order to capture the exotic spots that he planned to see during his tour of duty.[24] Several important reasons therefore underscored the interest of Canadian Jews in having their own military contingent during the Great War and two significant military mobilizations were aimed at satisfying the community's interests in such a force.

It was as early as September 14, 1914 that the crisis in Europe permeated the Jewish community's agenda as a prominent Montreal Jewish newspaper editor, Reuven Brainin, traveled to a New York meeting with other North American Jewish leaders to discuss responses to the emerging war.[25,26] It took until early 1916, however, for the idea of a "Jewish legion fighting wherever directed by Canada" to be promoted in Montreal and Toronto.[27] The precedent for a Jewish military contingent had been set during the war as Jewish troops made up a section of the 3rd Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF).[28] The section, which was presumably an informal grouping of the battalion's Jewish troops, took many casualties on the Western front.[29] In spite of the fact that a Jewish section within the CEF did exist, Sir Sam Hughes's vision of a full battalion of Jewish troops prompted him to approach Isidore Freedman in 1916 requesting that the Jewish Captain of the Canadian Hussars recruit a labor battalion to serve in Europe.[30,31] Freedman declined Hughes's offer to mobilize a full battalion but did agree to raise an Infantry Reserve Draft Company (IRDC).[32] Any skepticism about the undertaking on Freedman's part would be wholly understandable as two previous attempts to create a Jewish legion had failed.[33] Recruiting for the IRDC, which began on July 28, 1916, was funded by leading Jewish Montrealers who established a recruiting headquarters at 786 boulevard St-Laurent, in the heart of Montreal's Jewish neighborhood.[34,35] Captain Freedman's attempt to raise a Jewish company may have succeeded where previous attempts failed because of the effective propaganda campaign employed in his recruiting efforts. Propaganda posters were displayed in Jewish areas and featured

pictures of prominent Jewish British cabinet ministers Herbert Samuel (Home Secretary), Viscount Rufus Daniel Isaac Reading, and Minister of Munitions Edwin Montagu (who was an ardent anti-Zionist) in order to inspire a sense of Jewish loyalty to the British cause.[36,37] The attempt to elicit Jewish support for Britain was further demonstrated by the fact that the posters, which were printed in Yiddish, the maiden language of Jews of Eastern European origin, proclaimed that "The Jews the world over love liberty — have fought for it and will fight for it."[38] The quote, a near exact repetition of Nelson's speech to his troops at the Battle of Trafalgar, aimed to connect the Jewish community to the British historical experience.[39] Recruitment posters also highlighted that the IRDC would be "Under the command of Captain Freedman," an important motivation for Jews who were drawn to a company which would be led by a co-religionist.[40] Propaganda posters were likely the main reason that Freedman was able to recruit a full company of men.[41] While there is contention over the size of the company, one source argued that it had 400 men in its ranks.[42] Captain Freedman originally sought for his unit to be absorbed into either the 256th or 257th Railway Construction Battalions because many of his recruits were new immigrants who were both accustomed to hard labor and did not speak enough English to serve in a fighting battalion.[43] Upon its arrival in England in March of 1917, however, the company was absorbed into the 23rd Reserve Battalion, where it was quickly broken up as its members were sent to various Montreal units as reinforcements; therefore, for all of his success, Freedman was unable to hold together a Jewish fighting legion.[44,45]

As was previously cited, talk of a Jewish legion re-emerged in 1917, this time articulated by Zionists reacting to Arthur Balfour's declaration of support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The Empire's first Jewish legion, however, emerged in 1915, well before the Balfour Declaration; they were the Zion Mule Corps, a transport battalion of 600 British men "who became indispensable in Gallipoli," fighting the Turks.[46] The importance of the Mule Corps to a study of Canada's Jewish Legion lies in its role as a precedent for the mobilization of the 39th Royal Fusiliers, by legitimating the notion of a Jewish fighting force among statesmen and newspaper editors throughout the British Empire.[47] Benefiting from the support of the press, notably the *London Times*, as well as prominent British politicians like Cabinet Minister Leopold Amery and the successful precedence of the Zion Mule Corps, a Jewish legion was created to engage in Britain's emerging Palestine campaign in 1917.[48] Zionists in the United States soon

began urging the British to allow for the establishment of an American contingent in the legion and the British soon established recruiting missions in New York, Cleveland, Chicago, and other cities under the auspices of a Canadian liaison officer Major White.[49] Small groups of Zionists quickly mobilized in Montreal and Toronto in March and April of 1918 calling for the establishment of a Canadian contingent to join the Royal Fusiliers in Palestine; a few Canadian men successfully joined the American unit which was training in Windsor, Nova Scotia.[50] It was on April 5, 1918, that the Zionist Community made its first official appeal to Ottawa for permission to join the British Jewish Legion.[51] In a communiqué with the Minister of Militia and Defense, Sidney Chilton Mewburn, the President of the Zionist Organizations of Canada, Clarence de Sola, explained that separate Jewish military units had been established in Britain and the United States designated for service in Palestine and that the idea had spread to Canada.

> There are many Canadian Jews of military age who would like to serve in a similar regiment, and I have been receiving communications from numbers of Jews from all parts of Canada asking me what can be done to organize them into a military unit.[52]

The primary question posed by de Sola in his communiqué was "whether the Canadian government favored the establishment of a separate Jewish unit," and on April 15, an anxious Zionist community received a response: the minister had rejected de Sola's appeal but "did not oppose British subjects residing in Canada, friendly aliens, and Canadians not subject to the draft to enlist through the British-Canadian mission in New York."[53] For his part, Prime Minister Borden, who was concerned that Mewburn's partial rejection of de Sola's request might undermine his popularity, expressed "sympathy with the purpose for which the legion is to fight."[54] An aggressive Canadian propaganda campaign was soon launched, as American and British legionnaires received leaves of absence to address recruiting rallies in Canada.[55] A Montreal recruiting office was quickly established under the auspices of future Israeli Cabinet Minister Bernard Joseph.[56] It is unclear how many Canadian men volunteered with the legion but some historians say that up to 500 of the 6,000 North American volunteers were Canadian; others have argued that Canadians were only about six percent of a Jewish legion that never exceeded a total

of 5,000 troops in the Middle East.[57,58]

The Canadian volunteers excitedly departed for Camp Fort Edward in Windsor, where they would join British and American volunteers who made up the 38th and 39th Battalions of the City of London Royal Fusiliers. The two battalions (which would later be joined by a battalion from Palestine, the 40th Royal Fusiliers) were a mixed group of British volunteers and conscripts, transfers from other units, and North American volunteers, including many foreign nationals, most notably Russians.[59,60] At Camp Fort Edward, the Canadians would be incorporated into Colonel Margolin's predominantly American 39th Battalion.[61] Legionnaire Ittzhak Ben Tzvi, in a letter to his wife, describes the troops' impatient wait to arrive in Palestine, venturing from Nova Scotia to London and then to the Middle East.[62] Once the long wait had ended, the 39th Battalion, including its few hundred Canadian fighters, would soon be thrust into combat and would play an important role in the Palestine campaign.

The 39th Royal Fusiliers, explains Jewish Legion colonel Zeev Jabotinsky, "arrived in the nick of time," as a significant mutiny broke out in Egypt not long after their arrival in the region in late 1918.[63] Most of Britain's regular troops were dispatched to Egypt to crush the mutiny and the 39th Battalion would therefore become "the mainstay of the British authorities in Palestine."[64] To play the significant role expected of them in the Palestine campaign, the battalion would need to be guided by a strong leader; Colonel Margolin, the battalion's Russian-born Australian commander, met this requirement.[65] Margolin's camps were considered exemplary, and he was reputed for his enforcement of strict discipline upon his troops.[66] Discipline and determination would need to compensate for the limited fire power of the 39th Fusiliers who marched east from their camp at Rafah on the Palestine-Egyptian border through the Judean hills towards the Jordan Valley where they would form the front line of an attack aimed at conquering an important ford.[67,68] The battalion was split into four companies, of which the two better trained, under Margolin, would move to the front lines in the Jordan Valley, while two weaker companies led by Major Hopkin, trailed behind as reinforcements.[69] One of the 39th Battalion's companies would proceed to Jericho where it guarded a major supply depot.[70] The journey through the Judean desert would see the 39th Battalion reach the front at Umm Esh Shert, where it would be joined by the 38th Battalion on Sept 15, 1918, the eve of the holy day of repentance, Yom Kippur.[71] Umm Esh Shert, a ford, was a crucial strategic position in the Middle East; a window of entry into Transjordan,

its conquest would enhance British regional control.[72] Fighting at Umm Esh Shert was fierce and persisted from September 19 to 23, during which the 39th Battalion faced resistance from the Turks who employed a large cannon nicknamed "Jericho Jane" against them.[73] The 39th Battalion was also vulnerable to German air raids during the battle, as the battalion had no anti-aircraft guns.[74] Fortunately for the legion, the air raids were imprecise and ineffective.[75] Companies of the 39th Battalion, successful in the battle at Umm Esh Shert, moved further eastward to conquer the strategic positions of Makattat el Mellaha and Es Salt; they were among the first British infantry troops to enter Transjordan.[76,77]

The journey into Transjordan, characterized by "torturous climbs up cliffs and through the desert," was suspected by some in the legion to be a ploy by General Headquarters to destroy the battalion's morale.[78] Gilner, for one, pointed to headquarters' previous unsuccessful quest to transform the Jewish Legion into a construction battalion as a reason to "eliminate it as a fighting unit by creating conditions bad enough to cause disease and mutiny."[79] Heavy casualties, therefore, marked the Jewish Legion's campaign in the Jordan Valley as malaria and inadequate facilities wore away at the troops.[80] The 39th Battalion, recalls Colonel Patterson, nonetheless "carried out their arduous duties most admirably," in spite of the great challenges which they confronted.[81] Because Canadians were integrated into a largely American battalion which was then subdivided into four companies, it is unclear what the roles of individual Canadian fighters were in the achievements of the 39th Battalion. More study of the battalion might one day find that the bravest of fighters at Umm Esh Shert were Canadians. It is also possible that Major Hopkin's weaker battalions were dominated by Canadians, many of whom were under the minimum Canadian military age of eighteen and had to plead to join the legion.[82] Regardless, the 39th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers finally gave Canadian Jews a fighting force over which they could proudly claim at least partial ownership.

The study of the Jewish community's quest to mobilize its own legion during the First World War could serve as a case study for the strong ethnic identities that prevailed in a young Canadian Dominion still defining itself during the Great War. This paper aimed to underline the interplay between ethnic and national identities in early twentieth-century Canada as demonstrated by the Jewish community's motivations for creating its own military force. It also sought to shed light on the scarcely researched contributions of Canadian Jews who served with the

Infantry Reinforcement Draft Company and the 39th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers.  Little attention has been given to Canada's Jewish Legion and its impact on the allied war effort, and I can only hope that this study will serve as a precedent for future research on the mobilization of Jewish Canadian forces during the First World War.

**End Notes**

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**18** Gilner, p. 184.
**19** Freulich, p. 38.
**20** Jabotinsky, p. 80.
**21** Hart, p. 300.
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**29** *Ibid.*
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**31** Gilner, p. 183.
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**33** Gilner, p. 183.
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**35** "The Jews the World Over Love Liberty" (poster), Curatorial Remarks, McCord Museum of Canadian History, February 28, 2006.
**36** *Ibid.*
**37** Freulich, p. 29.
**38** McCord Museum.
**39** *Ibid.*
**40** *Ibid.*
**41** *Ibid.*
**42** Hart, p. 506.
**43** Gilner, p. 184.
**44** *Ibid.*
**45** Hart, p. 506.
**46** Jabotinsky, p. 19, p. 43.
**47** *Ibid.*, p. 43.
**48** *Ibid.*, p. 70, pp. 78-79.
**49** Freulich, p. 30.
**50** Gilner, p. 184.
**51** *Ibid.*, p. 185.
**52** *Ibid.*
**53** *Ibid.*
**54** *Ibid.*, p. 186.
**55** *Ibid.*
**56** *Ibid.*
**57** Jabotinsky, p. 21.
**58** Watts, p. 154.

**59** Jabotinsky, p. 151.
**60** Watts, p. 154.
**61** Jabotinsky, p. 21.
**62** Itzhak Ben-Tzvi, *The Hebrew Battalions, Letters,* trans. Taffi Baker and Margalit Benaya (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Post Press, 1969), p. 59.
**63** Jabotinsky, p. 21.
**64** *Ibid.*
**65** Gilner, p. 240.
**66** Jabotinsky, pp. 152-153.
**67** *Ibid.*, p. 21, p. 138.
**68** Gilner, p. 253.
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**71** *Ibid.*, pp. 254-255.
**72** Jabotinsky, p. 135, p. 138.
**73** *Ibid.*, p. 132.
**74** Gilner, p. 254.
**75** *Ibid.*
**76** *Ibid.*, p. 255.
**77** Jabotinsky, p. 98, p. 138.
**78** Gilner, p. 259.
**79** *Ibid.*
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# Orthodox Jewish Feminism in North America
*Abby Weintraub*

*Introduction*

Sixty years ago, one would have been hard pressed to find a social scientist who would claim with conviction that *the* vibrant, cohesive, and passionate sector within many religions would be the most traditional. Devout religion and overt religious practices were not predicted to be able to withstand the pressures of modernity to acculturate. Due to the dominance of science and an increasingly secularized culture, religious faith was expected to die out with the older, less scientifically evolved generation. Within the prominent religions today, however, orthodoxy is being embraced and strengthened with each new generation. Orthodox Judaism, Evangelical Christianity, and fundamental Islam have some of its most staunch supporters barely out of high school. Contrary to what most sociologists (even the most trailblazing sociologists, such as Louis Wirth) may have predicted five or six decades ago, religion has not passively died out in the face of modernity.[1]

Today, some of the most prominent doctors, academics, lawyers, scientists, and politicians have very strong connections with their personal religiosity. It is not seen as hypocritical or oxymoronic for a religious scientist to have a deep-seated belief in Creationism, yet publish papers and dissertations on evolution. There appears to be a 'pick and choose' mentality, or perhaps what should be considered a mentality of compartmentalization; a profoundly religious person is able to be religious in the home, or on their lunch hour, but not in the laboratory. Wendy Wolfe further examines the case of Orthodox American Jews:

> Modern Orthodox Jews are attached to contemporary
> life and culture with its future orientation and focus on

> change. They are also, however, bonded by the traditional past. They exist simultaneously in the parochial world of Orthodox and the cosmopolitan world of America, and they tend to achieve coexistence by synthesizing or compartmentalizing their lives.[2]

Simultaneously, however, with this move to traditionalism there has been a counter movement of liberal thinking which concurrently has had tremendous impact on the major faiths.

All three great Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) share substantial history and ideology. One of the most notable commonalities is that the sacred texts for all three religions have been mediated and interpreted by men, creating male-centered and dominated ideologies and practices. As a result "the image of women has been as shaped by patriarchy as much as by revelation."[3] All three faiths are increasingly impacted by the Women's Liberation Movement and feminist dialogue in secular society. Inclusion of women into ritual and the more traditional aspects of each faith have proven to be an extremely important issue for many adherents.

Of these three faiths, I will be examining feminism and the role of women in Orthodox Judaism. In North America, Orthodox Judaism has shown itself to be very resilient. For Orthodox Jews, the question of how to reconcile being a liberal, democratic, and patriotic citizen with being a halakhically aware, Torah abiding Jew is a constantly relevant one. Can the Orthodox Jew merge modernity with tradition? To find a 'single face' of Orthodoxy would be a challenge; the movement is extremely diverse and varied. As different issues confront different streams, choosing one modern-day 'Orthodox concern' would be nearly impossible. The changing role of women, however, is a prevalent issue within every denomination of Judaism, and within Orthodoxy the role of women is being considered and debated at great length.

*Social and Historical Context of Orthodox Jewish Feminism*

When examining the feminist movement from its inception in the eighteenth century, a single 'feminism' does not emerge; instead, complex, diverse and multifaceted 'feminisms' materialize. Specifically, "liberal feminism and radical feminism are two of the major theoretical and practical branches of the women's movement."[4] A core principal in liberal feminism is that the subordination of women is "rooted in a legal

system that blocks women's entrance into the public domain."[5] Liberal feminists believe that a woman is just as capable as a man, and therefore should have equal opportunity in the public sphere. Radical feminists completely reject that biological difference should equate inequality. They believe that there is something inherently anti-female about accepted gender roles; socialization, which begins at a young age, precipitates the notion that men are the most powerful and dominant within a society.

All feminisms are concerned with inclusion and visibility. "All feminisms, including modern Orthodox feminism, claim that what 'is' does not serve as a justification for continuing the status quo and certainly is not necessarily what 'ought to be.'"[6] There have been several extremely important events within the Orthodox movement where women challenged the norms that were imposed upon them and engaged in dialogue and action with other women and men who shared the same concerns.

In 1971, a study group called Ezrat Nashim (the Hebrew name for the women's court in the time of the ancient Temple) was founded by a group of thirteen young women from Orthodox and Conservative backgrounds. Ezrat Nashim was determined to "press for change within the traditional framework of religious practice. In March of 1972, the women presented their manifesto to the Rabbinical Assembly, calling for an end to the second-class status of women in Jewish life."[7] In 1973, the first National Conference of Jewish Women convened with over 500 women in attendance. It was at this conference where many Orthodox women were introduced to the concept of women's *minyanim* or prayer groups. For most of the women who were there, it was the first time they read from the Torah or lead a congregation in prayer. In 1981, one of the most dynamic Modern Orthodox Jewish leaders, Blu Greenberg, published her somewhat controversial book, *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition*, to wonderful acclaim and popularity.[8] These are just a few of the important events that occurred to shape the Feminist Orthodox movement.

*Fundamental Orthodox Feminist Ideology*

In Orthodox Judaism, the most relevant question is: "is an inherently patriarchal system God-given or is it simply a societal construction?" If the latter is true, then for Orthodox feminists there is a great opportunity for the transformation of a societally created patriarchy into a more equal religious structure.

The typical Orthodox feminist claim is that women are 'separate

but equal.' In Orthodox Judaism, gender roles are still extremely well-defined. Men and women have, in certain important respects, separate and very specific religious obligations. Men, however, are obligated to fulfill *mitzvot* (commandments) within a very public sphere, whereas women's religious obligations are mostly contained within the domestic sphere. Men are obligated to many time-bound *mitzvot* which require a *minyan* (a quorum of ten men) such that they are unable to execute alone. Women's *mitzvot* are generally not time-bound, and while prayer is obligated twice daily for women, she may fulfill her obligation by herself and in her home.

A principal Orthodox view is that one who is not obligated in the *mitzvah* (male or female) is still able to perform that *mitzvah*, but the reward for it is not as great as for one who is obligated.[9] Moreover, if one who is not obligated wishes to participate in a *mitzvah*, allowance for the non-obligated person must be rooted within a halakhic context, and usually there must be a historical precedent to draw upon as a model. Such allowance for participation has been historically challenging for women. Blu Greenberg believes that while in the past rabbinic authorities have not granted women equal opportunity in participation, she feels the task of changing the future is not impossible.

For Greenberg, "where there is a rabbinic will, there is a halakhic way,"[10] and that dogma is often used by her when discussing the contemporary demand for the reinterpretation of certain halakhot. Greenberg believes that intellectually and spiritually, women are as able to serve God as men are, and any halakhot that imbues a different notion, should be considered not as God's ultimate will, but rather a product of a patriarchal system, which she thinks has no place in a contemporary society.[11]

When equality for Orthodox women was first pursued seriously in the 1970s, many rabbinic leaders felt uneasy about the motivation behind Jewish feminism. For many rabbis, feminism was a secular pursuit, and those women who were 'feminists' were just trying to make a political statement instead of attempting to engage in more meaningful and pious expressions for their Judaism. Some of the most powerful and well respected rabbis within the Orthodox movement were threatened and unsettled by the core principles of feminism: Rav Kook perceived feminism as a secular movement by and for the '*goyim*,' Rabbi Meir Twersky called feminism "ideational assimilation,"[12] and in 1979, Rabbi Moishe Feinstein deemed feminism a new movement for smug women,

who he labeled *kofim*. Rabbi Feinstein ruled that feminism manifested in Judaism would be "categorically forbidden because the desire comes out of a rebellion against G-d and Torah."[13] However, the women in the Orthodox movement who do pursue feminist ideals are definitionally respectful of the halakhic boundaries and various *minhagim* (customs). Their sincerity can hardly be doubted. As Sylvia Fishman comments, "Orthodox feminists believe deeply both in the authority of Jewish law and in expanding and enhancing opportunities for spiritual expression for women."[14] For most, the values that they are pursuing are not considered feminist; they are simply considered basic American ideals that are deeply embedded in a modern, democratic society. Fishman further explains,

> American Jews are affected by traditional guidelines of halakhah and also American principles and traditions. Egalitarianism is an important value. For many, egalitarianism is a sacred principle and for some it has greater spiritual relevance and power than does rabbinic law.[15]

However, there is recognition by Fishman that "for those who acknowledge the authority of rabbinic law, then all religious change must take place within halakhic parameters."[16] For most, egalitarianism and religiosity need not be mutually exclusive.

Today, there are a variety of ways to see Torah laws and values through a feminist lens. Rejectionists (non-Orthodox Jewish feminists such as Naomi Goldenberg) repudiate Torah outright, claiming that there is no hope for female emancipation within the text. Inventive Feminists, like Rachel Adler, are authors of the Midrash: they "reappropriate the rabbinic use of parable, story, or metaphor" to find positive female voices and experiences.[17] Revisionist Feminists

> believe that Torah is still at its core a powerful and even liberating document; within Torah there is still evidence of women who are valued for their personhood, their spirituality and who are central players in Jewish history. They recognize patriarchy in the Torah, but invite women to read the Torah in non-patriarchal ways.[18]

Most Orthodox Jewish feminists would fit into the latter category: the

Revisionist Feminist. They see the Torah as a living document which facilitates and nurtures lifelong individual growth for both males and females. Within certain rituals, however, women are set apart as distinctly separate. For most, the separateness of a woman from a man is a source of pride and privilege; women are often discussed in Orthodox terms as being more spiritually open and as being the souls of the movement.[19] Ironically, the mainstream woman actually supports the Orthodox feminist critique; women are so spiritually capable that they should have as much opportunity as men to express their spirituality and connection with God through traditional ritual.

*Issues of Separateness*

There are many traditions and *mitzvot* which physically and spiritually separate women from men. Separation can have varied significance for different people. As mentioned previously, separation can be a positive affirmation of female individuality and strength. For others, separating male from female can translate into inequality, and the disparagement of womanhood. While most Orthodox women do not associate separation with injustice, there is a desire to (halakhically) modify some rituals to ensure that 'separate' really does mean 'equal.'

*i. Prayer and* Mehitzah

Blu Greenberg, a formidable authority on the issue, comments extensively on the concept of women's prayer (public and private) and a *mehitzah* (the separation of women from men in a synagogue). Separated public prayer for Blu Greenberg is a positive value. Notwithstanding its patriarchal origins, she emphasizes the value of communal prayer and that nonetheless, there is female inclusion. Blu Greenberg recognizes that to pray in a group not only strengthens the sense of kinship in a community, but as religious anthropologist Clifford Geertz observes, "ritual, as well as the act of communal praying with people who have similar moods and motivations, strengthens the authority of religion."[20] Greenberg contends that if women are excluded from communal prayer, they do not participate in an important religious and community strengthening process. The problem that Blu Greenberg identifies is that while the institution of female prayer exists, there is no halakhic requirement demanding women's attendance. Because women are not held accountable for their public prayer, female synagogue attendance becomes intermittent, and

women end up on the periphery of synagogue life both spiritually and physically.[21]

Greenberg believes that the concept of *mehitzah* is a good one: she considers its ideal function as generating "an environment of aloneness with God, as an individual apart from the family."[22] Greenberg also insists that a *mehitzah* serves an integral role in community cohesiveness, adding a dimension of male and female bonding. She believes that a *mehitzah* does not inherently demean women because, as mentioned before, separate does not necessarily mean unequal.[23]

For other Orthodox feminists, public prayer cannot only be restricted to an environment where they may be physically on the periphery. By reason of these feminists' successful advocacy, women's only prayer groups have gained great popularity. Further, there have developed many organizations which promote learning and communal prayer over the internet and through newsletters, such as the Women's Tefilah Network, founded in 1982. These developments have clearly bonded religious women internationally and represent an authentic advancement for Orthodox feminism.[24]

## ii. Divorce and the Agunah

One of the most controversial and problematic aspects with traditional Judaism is found within the content of the marriage *ketubah* or contract: a woman must receive a bill of divorce (*get*) from her husband. In other words, the male is able to determine whether there will be a divorce. Many people would argue that the *get* is inherently anti-female, as the wife has little or no control over terminating the marriage if she so wants. Although some aspects of the *ketubah* are extremely female-sensitive,[25] there has been documented historical injustice because a husband may refuse to grant a *get*. This situation has carried on today in contemporary Orthodox society.

If a husband refuses to divorce his wife, or he disappears or dies under certain circumstances, the woman becomes an *agunah* or literally, a chained woman. She is unable to remarry and if she does and she bears children in her second marriage as an *agunah*, her children are illegitimate (*mamzerim*). The stigma of a *mamzer* can be extremely damaging in the Orthodox community as one can never be freed of the title, and one's *mamzer* status is hereditary.[26]

Other denominations, such as the Conservative movement, have altered the form of the *ketubah* to ensure the protection of the woman

in the case of divorce. The Lieberman Clause, created in 1953, modifies the *ketubah* by granting an automatic *get* in the case of a civil divorce.[27] According to Blu Greenberg, the refusal of Orthodox rabbinic authority to change the terms of the *ketubah* reveals "a lack of rabbinic will to find a halakhic way."[28]

However, generally, it is not simply the case that Orthodox rabbis do not care, or there is not an awareness of this particular injustice; there are many organizations that support and help *agunot,* such as Get Equal Treatment (GET) and Agunah Inc. Rabbis and the community have been known to put tremendous pressure on the recalcitrant husband. He can be both condemned within the community and other social influences can be exerted to compel him to grant the *get.*[29] Notwithstanding these non-legal pressures, the problem of *agunot* is a relevant and serious one that Orthodox feminists cannot accept passively.

*Orthodox Jewish Women in the Private and Public Sphere*

There is a common saying in Orthodox Judaism that "the woman keeps the home;" the woman as wife and mother sets the precedent for how observant a home will be. While this principle is treasured by many women, it does not translate to mean that women are, or should be, contained within the domestic sphere.

According to the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), in 1990, the majority of American Jewish women continue to work for pay outside the home throughout their childbearing and childrearing years. Among American Jewish women age 44 and under, only seventeen percent are homemakers, eleven percent are students, seventy percent work for pay (fifty-nine percent full time, eleven percent part time), and four percent are unemployed. These changes in patterns of employment have affected women across the religious spectrum.[30]

Sociologists "have recognized that women's life cycle experiences may differ from normative models, depending on their place in the larger sociopolitical structure."[31] However, even in ultra-Orthodox households, in the first years of marriage the wife can be responsible for economically supporting her husband and children as her husband learns in an institute of Torah study, called a *kolel*. Kolels do pay small stipends to help newly married men support their families, but since full-time learning can sometimes last for three to eight years, the financial burden usually falls on the woman. About 360,000 American ultra-Orthodox Jewish men delay their entry into the job market, as their wives support their Torah study.[32]

There is a widespread misconception held by those of more secular communities that the majority of Orthodox women spend most of their time having children, raising children, and taking care of their husbands and houses. However, data from the 1990 NJPS demonstrates that American Orthodox women aged 25 to 44 have educational and occupational achievements virtually identical to other American Jewish women in their age group.[33] This finding shocked some observers who perceived Orthodox women's occupational and educational accomplishments as falling behind more secular women.

Perhaps a more surprising result of the 1990 NJPS was that Modern Orthodox couples have more spousal parity than other American Jewish couples (NJPS).

> Younger Modern Orthodox husbands and wives are more likely than other groups to be a 'matched set,' with both sexes having roughly the same educational and occupational status. The spousal parity of Modern Orthodox couples is a clear reflection of — and an interesting symbol of — the changed family dynamics of Modern Orthodox households, which have been transformed by economic realities, as well as by social trends including feminism.[34]

With these findings drawn from data in the 1980s, it is likely, although admittedly speculative, that subsequently, many more Modern Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox women have entered the workplace.

*Innovations within the Movement*

There have been several innovations created within Orthodoxy to increasingly integrate individual women, address female issues, and strengthen Jewish female identity. The rituals that tend to have the most significance are usually connected to life cycle events. These events affirm for the person that their milestone is important, as well as enhancing community solidarity and promoting "tribal sentiments" by establishing a generational chain in the community.[35] Many Orthodox feminists have created life-cycle rituals for themselves and their daughters where there seems to be an absence of recognition for female rites of passage. Although creating new rituals within such a deeply traditional religion can be a very sensitive and potentially dangerous task for both genders,

most innovations are supported by a halakhic precedent.

*i. Baby Naming*

The ceremony of welcoming a baby girl into the world crosses denominational lines. In the Orthodox community, aside from announcing the baby's name in synagogue and receiving honors during the prayer service, ceremonies are also held in the parents' home in recognition of their daughter. Specifically, the "Sephardic custom 'seder zeved habat' is celebrating the gift of a daughter. This ritual is adapted and known commonly as simchat bat or shalom bat."[36]

*ii. Bat Mitzvah*

Many Orthodox families do celebrate their daughter coming of age into Jewish adulthood. Some families host a *se'udah shelishit* (a third meal) on the Sabbath where the daughter gives a *devar Torah* (prepared speech about the Torah, usually relating to the weekly portion) and leads a concluding service (*Havdalah*).[37] Other Orthodox families have a woman's only bat mitzvah service, so their daughter can learn to read Torah and lead other women in prayer. Although this issue is a contentious one for less religious Jews, because they see the bar and bat mitzvah as the central affirmation of Jewish identity, it would appear that many Orthodox girls do not feel deprived if their ceremony is not identical to a boy's bar mitzvah. Sylvia Fishman interviewed adolescent Orthodox girls who commonly had a response along these lines: "To become Bat Mitzvah in a way that is not approved by the Torah defeats the whole purpose."[38]

*iii.* Rosh Hodesh *Groups and Torah Study*

*Rosh Hodesh* (the beginning of each new Hebrew month) has become a very symbolic time for many Jewish women. The new moon is significant to women in many ways. Firstly, the cycle of the moon's waxing and waning is seen as being similar to the female reproductive cycles. Secondly, some traditional texts (midrashic) explain that the celebration of *Rosh Hodesh* was a special reward from God to women for their refusal to donate jewelry to build the biblical, idolatrous golden calf. Lastly, "the implicit comparison of the status of the moon (in relation to the sun) and the status of women (in relation to men) speaks well to a feminist point of view."[39] There has been a plethora of women's study groups that coincide with *Rosh Hodesh*, and many women consider the

new month as an opportunity to convene, learn, and engage in quality female bonding.

Jewish education for girls, starting from the Bais Yakov movement (founded by Sarah Schnirer in Eastern Europe in 1917), is taken for granted within the Orthodox community. According to Sylvia Fishman,

> Orthodox Jews are more likely to provide their daughters with a rigorous Jewish education than any other wing of Judaism. Half of all born-Jewish respondents aged 18-44 who were raised Orthodox Jews received day school education … among those Jews percentages of boys and girls were virtually identical.[40]

However, a woman studying the Talmud is a very contentious issue. There are many rulings by ancient rabbis and leaders which imply, or specifically rule, that women should not learn Talmud. Nevertheless, there are modern-Orthodox *yeshivot* for women and girls where Talmud study is encouraged and taught, such as Drisha in the United States and Midreshet Lindenbaum in Israel. There are even female *posekim*, who are women learned in all aspects of Talmudic law and can make important rulings for other individuals.

### iv. Reclaiming *Mikveh*

For many Orthodox women, the *mikveh* is a wonderful ritual and the commandment of *taharat ha-mishpachah* (the cessation of marital relations, or from any physical touch during the menstrual period and for seven days after it) promotes friendship and respect between husband and wife.[41] Blu Greenberg encourages women of any denomination to accept this *mitzvah* as a beautiful commandment that is unique to women and whose function is to celebrate femininity.[42] For many women, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, there has been a 'reclaiming of the *mikveh*'. The *mikveh* is seen as a ritual to spiritually and psychically cleanse. There have been new rituals created to heal and help women through some painful (and specifically female) instances such as miscarriage, abortion, and rape.

### Conclusion: The Challenge for Orthodox Feminists

There is still a constant struggle for Orthodox Feminists to prove that their true motivation is fueled by a love and passion for Judaism

and that it stems solely from respect for the Torah and from devotion to God. Almost thirty years have passed since feminism was thrust into the Orthodox agenda, and still critics of the movement misunderstand that the impetus for female advocacy comes precisely from a steadfast Jewish commitment. As Hartman and Halbertal observe,

> we are accused of betraying Jewish tradition by introducing alien notions into it. We are challenged to forever demonstrate our religious commitment and obedience. We are constantly proving that we are *frum* enough, motherly enough, and that we also never burn the *chulent*.[43]

There is a great challenge for Orthodox feminists to reconcile the traditional aspects of their Judaism with the fundamentally North American values of gender equality which they value strongly. Because most women within the movement do believe that Orthodoxy can provide a very blessed and richly textured life, the pursuit to live both as a halakhically committed Jew and as a proud and distinctly female equal participant in Judaism will continue to evolve.

## End Notes

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**3** John L. Esposito, "Introduction: Women, Religion, and Empowerment," *Daughters of Abraham: Feminist Thought in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Florida: UP of Florida, 2001), p. 1.
**4** Tova Hartman and Tamar H. Miller Halbertal, "Our Tradition Ourselves," *JOFA Journal* (2001) <http://www.jofa.org/social_htm.php?bib_id=790> (20 Nov. 2006).
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**7** Kevin T. Jones and Rebecca Mills, "The Rhetoric of Heteroglossia of

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**8** Alice Shalit, "The Geopolitics of Jewish Feminism," *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition* (New York: New York UP, 1995), p. 232.

**9** Yehuda Henkin, *Responsa on Contemporary Jewish Women's Issues* (New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House Inc., 2003), p. 4.

**10** Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981), p. 44.

**11** Greenberg, p. 39.

**12** Hartman and Halbertal.

**13** Henkin, p. 3.

**14** Wolfe.

**15** Sylvia Barack Fishman, "Negotiating Egalitarianism and Judaism," *Jews in America* (Hanover: Brandeis UP, 1999), p. 142.

**16** *Ibid.*

**17** Elyse M. Goldstein, *Seek Her Out: A Textual Approach to the Study of Women and Judaism* (New York: UAHC Press, 2003), p. 8.

**18** *Ibid.*, p. 9.

**19** The word for soul in Hebrew, *neshama*, is grammatically feminine, whereas the word for body, *gûf*, is grammatically masculine.

**20** Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," *Reader in Comparative Religions*, ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 83.

**21** Greenberg, p. 86.

**22** Greenberg, p. 88.

**23** Greenberg, p. 94.

**24** Fishman, "Negotiating Egalitarianism and Judaism," p. 145.

**25** A husband is required to provide for his wife's basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and sexual pleasure.

**26** John D. Rayner, "The Gender Issue in Jewish Divorce," *Gender Issues in Jewish Law: Essays and Responsa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), p. 43.

**27** Fishman, "Negotiating Egalitarianism and Judaism," p. 182.

**28** Greenberg, p. 37.

**29** Jan Feldman, *Lubavitchers as Citizens: A Paradox of Liberal Democracy* (New York: Cornell UP, 2003), p. 160.

**30** "National Jewish Population Survey," *United Jewish Communities* (2001) <http://www.ujc.org/content_display.html?ArticleID= 94869> (20 Nov. 2006).

**31** Donna Shai, "Working Women/Cloistered Men: A Family

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**32** *Ibid.*
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**34** Sylvia Barack Fishman, "Comparative Reflections on Modern Orthodoxy and Women's Issues," *The Edah Journal* 1.2 (2001) <http://www.edah.org/backend/JournalArticle/1_2_fishman.pdf> (22 Nov. 2006).
**35** Weinfeld, pp. 304-305.
**36** Fishman, "Negotiating Egalitarianism and Judaism," p. 147.
**37** *Ibid.*
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**41** Feldman, p. 155.
**42** Greenberg, p. 120.
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דער באַדײַט פֿון ,,שווײַגן'' אין שלום אַשעס ,,אַ ייִדיש קינד''
און אברהם רייזענס ,,אָן ליבע'' און ,,ווײַבערשע שרעק''
רחל נאָבעל

אין אַ קורצער דערצײילונג, וווּ מען האָט נאָר געצײילטע זײַטלעך
פֿאַרצושטעלן אַ טעמע, איז אָפֿט דאָס שווײַגן פֿונקט אַזוי וויכטיק ווי דאָס וואָס
ווערט אַרויסגעזאָגט.    דאָס איז אמת אין די דערצײילונגען ,,אַ ייִדיש קינד,''
,,ווײַבערשע שרעק'' און ,,אָן ליבע''.   אין יעדערער פֿון די דערצײילונגען, האָט די
פֿרוי אַ פּראָבלעם וואָס וועט שפּעטער האָבן געוואַלדיק גרויסע אימפּליקאַציעס
אין איר לעבן. כאָטש זיי האָבן געוווּסט אַז אַלץ אין זייערע לעבנס איז נישט ווי זיי
וואָלטן זיך געוווּנטשן, האָבן די פֿרויען נישט געקענט אויסדריקן זייער
פֿאַרזאָרגטקײט.   וווײַל זיי האָבן ניט געקענט אידענטיפֿיצירן זייערע פּראָבלעמען
אָדער זאָרגן, האָבן זיי וועגן דעם ניט געקענט רעדן און אַזוי אַרום אויך ניט
געקענט זוכן און געפֿינען ענטפֿערס אויף ווי צו פֿאַרבעסערן זייערע לעבנס.

לכתחילה, האָבן די דרײַ פֿרויען פּראָבלעמען וואָס האָבן צו טאָן מיט
זייער אויסזען.   חנהלע, אין אַשעס ,,אַ ייִדיש קינד,'' האָט ניט געוואָלט אַז מען זאָל
איר, נאָך דער חתונה, אָפּשערן די שיינע האָר אירע.   באַשיקע, אין רייזענס ,,אָן
ליבע,'' האָט זיך געזאָרגט וועגן דעם פּנים אירן וואָס ,,ווערט ניט יִנגער, ניט
פֿרישער, ניט גלאַטער.''   קיינע, אין רייזענס דערצײילונג ,,ווײַבערשע שרעק,''
האָט ניט געוואָלט אָנטאָן ברילין כדי זי זאָל קענען זען, ווײַל זי האָט מורא געהאַט
אויסצוזען ,,געעלטערט פֿאַר דער צײַט.''   זײַנען די פֿרויען געווען אַזוי פּוסט און
גדלותדיק? האָבן זיי דען ניט געהאַט קיין גרעסערע פּראָבלעמען?   די פֿרויען האָבן
דווקא יאָ געהאַט גרעסערע פּראָבלעמען, אָבער אַלע האָבן געשטאַמט פֿון זייער
,,אויסזען.''

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חנהלעס באַשלוס זיך ניט צו לאָזן אָפּשערן און ניט אָנצוטאָן קיין שייטל,
האָט געשאַפֿן גרויסע און ערנסטע צרות פֿאַר איר, ווי אויך פֿאַר אַנדערע. זי האָט
למשל פֿאַרשעמט די גאַנצע משפחה און האָט פֿאַרשעמט איר מאַן. אין דער ישיבה
האָט מען אים אויסגעזידלט און אויסגעלאָכט. חדשים לאַנג האָט מען אים קיין
עליה ניט געגעבן, אַלץ צוליב איר באַשלוס וועגן איר *אויסזען*. אין ,,אָן ליבע''
האָט באַשקעס באַיאָרנט פנים באַדייט אַז זי וועט שוין ניט האָבן קיין סך
געלעגנהייטן צו האָבן אַ בעסער, גרינגער לעבן, ווייל ווער וועט זי וועלן נעמען?
קיינע אין ,,וויבערשע שרעק'' האָט יאָ געהאַט אַ מאָן, אָבער האָט שרעקלעך
מורא געהאַט אַז ער וועט זי אָפּגעטן טאָמער טוט זי אָן ברילן און וועט אויסזען אַלט.

אין אַלע דריי דערציילונגען איז דאָס ,,אויסזען'' דער הויפּט ענין, און די
פּראָבלעמען וואָס די פֿרויען האָבן פֿון דעם זיינען ניט קיין פֿראַגע פֿון פּאָסטקביט
אָדער גדלות, נאָר פֿון וויסן און פֿאַרשטיין די פֿאָדערונגען און באַגרענעצטקייטן
פֿון זייערע לעבנס. כאָטש די פּראָבלעמען זיינען געוווען לעגיטים, דריקן די דריי
פֿרויען ניט אויס זייער אייגן פערספּעקטיוו. אפֿילו ווען זיי זיינען אַליין מיט
אַנדערע פֿרויען הערט מען ניט ווי זיי רעדן וועגן די פּראָבלעמען, אחוץ קיינע,
וואָס רעדט מיט דער רביצין און איז זיך מודה פֿאַר דער טאָקטער. חנהלה, אין
אַשמאַ ,,אַ ייִדיש קינד,'' האָט, למשל, ניט געקענט אויסדריקן איר מיגל פֿאַרן
שייטל. זיעינדיק אַליין מיט איר מאַמען און שוויגער האָט זי נאָר געקענט זאָגן,
,,איך קאָן נישט, מאַמע לעבן! דאָס האַרץ לאָזט מיך נישט, מאַמע קרוין!'' אין
רייזענס ,,אָן ליבע,'' געפֿינט מען אַ קורצן געשפּרעך צווישן די צוויי חברטעס. עס
איז, אָבער, בלויז וועגן קלייניקייטן ווי אין וועלכן פֿאַרק צו גיין שפּאַצירן און
אויף וועלכער באַנק זיך צוזעצן בכדי מען זאָל זיי אָנזאָן. זיי זיינען געוווען
אויסגעהונגערט נאָך אַ ביסעלע ליבע, מיט צעברשעכענע הערצער, אָבער אפֿילו מיט
איר נאַענטסטער חברטע, האָט באַשקע ניט געקענט געפֿינען די ווערטער
אויסצודריקן איר צער. אפֿילו קיינע, אין ,,וויבערשע שרעק,'' וואָס האָט
געקענט רעדן פֿרי מיט דער טאָקטער, האָט אָבער, מיט דער רביצין ניט געקענט
געפֿינען די ריכטיקע ווערטער איר צו דערקלערן פֿאַרוואָס זי האָט מורא אָנצוטאָן
ברילן, ,,שפּאַקולן.'' קיינע האָט בלויז שוואַכערהייט געקענט אַרויסזאָגן, ,,עס
וויל זיך, טייערע רביצין, ניט ווערן יונגערהייט קיין בלינד בעבע.'' דערפֿאַר האָט די
רביצין ניט פֿאַרשטאַנען קיינעס אמתן פּראָבלעם און איר געהאַלטן פֿאַר אַ
נאַרישער, פּוסטער פֿרוי. ,,זינדיקע וויבער'' האָט די רביצין אָנגערופֿן קיענען און

איר מיָן פֿרױ.    די דרײַ פֿרױען האָבן אױסגעפֿעלט די װערטער, ממש דער װאָקאַבולאַר נײטיק אױסצודרײקן זײער עקל, צער און מורא.

אין אלגעמײן האָבן די פֿרױען װיِיניק גערעדט מיט די װעלכע זײנען געװען מער בכוח זײ צו העלפֿן.  װען חנהלע האָט גערעדט ,,אַזוי טיף" מיט איר מאַן, האָט זי קײַן װאָרט ניט געזאָגט. בעת ער האָט אױסגעדריקט זײנע געפֿילן און געדאַנקען, איז זי געבליבן שטיל. און זי איז געבליבן ליגן שטיל װען ער האָט אָפֿגעעשאָרן אירע האָר.    אין ,,אַן ליבע," װען באַשקע און קײלע האָבן זיך אָװעקגעזעצט אין פֿאַרק אױף אַ באַנק װאָ עס איז געגעסן אַ יונגער מאַן, האָבן זײ אױך געשװיגן.  קײנע האָט, אין ,,װײבערשע שרעק," אױך געשװיגן פֿאַרן מאַן איר, װײל זי האָט פֿאַר אים מורא געהאַט.    די פֿרױען אין די דרײַ קורצע דערצײלונגען האָבן ניט געהאַט דעם כוח צו בײַטן אָדער ענדערן זײערע סיטואַציעס און האָבן אױך ניט געהאַט די װערטער אױסצודרײקן זײער פֿײַן צו זײערע נאָענטע.

אײדער מען קען ענדערן אַ לאַגע, דאַרף מען האָבן אַ װאָקאַבולאַר מיט װעלכן צו קענען רעדן װעגן דעם.  אױב ניט, קען מען טאַקע מײנען אַז די שװעריקײטן און לײדן פֿון אַ צװײטן זײנען מער נישטאָ װי גדלות, אַזױ װי עס האָט געטראַכט די רבִיצין אין ,,װײבערשע שרעק."  װײל די פֿרױען אין די דרײַ דערצײלונגען האָט געפֿעלט דער װאָקאַבולאַר פֿון פֿערזענלעכע טרױמען, פֿערזענלעכע געפֿילן און באַדערפֿענישן, האָבן זײ ניט געקענט אַרױסברענגען אױף דער עפֿנטלעכקײט און אָנהײבן צו לײזן זײערע פּראָבלעמען.  צום סוף, האָבן די דרײַ פֿרױען ניט פֿאַרבעסערט זײערע סיטואַציעס. זײ האָבן ניט געקענט.  עס איז נישטאָ קײן אײן פֿרײלעכער סוף.

# Author Profiles

Melodie Adler will be graduating from McGill University this spring with a Bachelor of Music, Honors Composition and Honors Music History. She has been accepted into the MA/PhD program in musicology at the University of Chicago. Having attended KlezKanada on scholarship the past three summers, her interest in Jewish music motivated her to take a leadership role in the Jewish community: she both founded and directed Hillel Montreal's a cappella group, Shilshom, from 2003-2005.

Adam Blander is a native of Brooklyn, New York and is currently a History Major and Jewish Studies Minor. Before coming to McGill, Adam spent a year in a yeshivah in Jerusalem, where he studied traditional Jewish texts. Aside from his academic endeavors, Adam is also a passionate musician and has performed extensively in Montreal and abroad.

Daniel Garwood is currently in his second year of a four year Joint Honours major in Jewish Studies and Philosophy. He hopes to attend Hebrew Union College's rabbinic program after completing his undergraduate studies, and would like to utilize his rabbinic degree to work in youth and young adult Jewish informal education. Daniel is one of the founding members of McGill's Kesher branch, which seeks to promote Reform Jewish life among college communities.

Tamar Gefen graduated McGill in February 2007 with a major in World Religions and a minor in Psychology. She currently lives in New York where she is working at a laboratory for forensic neuropsychology, and is also planning her upcoming wedding. She hopes to pursue a graduate degree in clinical neuropsychology in the near future.

Kira Gregson is completing her third year at McGill with a major in Biochemistry and minor in Management. Upon graduation, she plans to return to her hometown of Edmonton, Alberta and pursue a career in business. Kira enjoyed learning about the Jewish immigrant experience in writing this paper, and hopes it will not be her last.

Jonathan Katz is in his final year of studies in the Faculty of Arts at McGill. He is pursuing a major concentration in Political Science and minor concentrations in Economics and North American History. Jonathan has a keen interest in Canadian Jewish history. He looks forward to continuing his studies in the McGill Faculty of Law this fall.

Robin Nobel's love affair with Yiddish began only recently. Though a graduate student of English Literature, she started studing the language last September. Over the summer, Robin completed the YIVO Zumer-Program in conjunction with NYU and, happily, was able to study Yiddish at the advanced level this past year. Next year, Robin will be headed to Oxford University in pursuit of an MSt in Jewish Studies and, from there, who knows.

Abby Weintraub hails from Vancouver, British Columbia and is currently an English Literature Major and Jewish Studies Minor at McGill University. She is passionate about her Judaism, literature, and creative writing, and hopes to pursue a career that would involve all three. Abby is thrilled to be a part of such a wonderful publication.

Aaron Wenner completed a Joint Honors degree in History and Middle Eastern Studies at McGill University in the spring of 2006. He has worked for the *Jerusalem Post* and freelanced for other newspapers, and is currently working on his Master's degree in Middle East Studies at Harvard University.

Hannah White is currently a fourth year student at McGill, working to complete an Honors Major in Religious Studies with a Minor in Jewish Studies. She is extremely proud that her work has been included in this volume of *Dorot*. She would like to dedicate her first publication in loving memory of her mother, who always wanted to be a writer.