

Dorot: The McGill Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies



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D O R O T:

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Preface:

It gives me pride and pleasure to introduce the new issue of *Dorot*, the undergraduate journal of McGill's Department of Jewish Studies.

The five essays presented in this issue bear witness to how talented and curious our undergrads are and offer a taste of the wide range of fascinating issues Jewish Studies scholars are tackling these days--from the ideal of masculinity in rabbinic literature to the challenges faced by Soviet-Jewish immigrants in North America. They also provide a glimpse into the many disciplines and methods that make up Jewish Studies--from history and Yiddish to Jewish thought and literature.

Aden Benarroch highlights the tolerant and cooperative attitude that Rav Avraham Yitzhak Kook (1865-1935), the leader of religious Zionism and first chief rabbi of Palestine during the British Mandate, showed towards secular Zionists. He considered them "the donkey of the Messiah" and even gave a controversial eulogy after Theodor Herzl died.

Joanna-Rose Schacter is also interested in Zionism, in particular in the radical change it brought about in the ideal of Jewish masculinity--from *Talmid-Chakham*, the pious master of Talmudic argument, to *Sabra*, the "New Jew" in Israel who settles and defends his country.

Matthew Miller examines a different kind of transformation: that of an erstwhile orthodox rabbi into a heretic (*epikoros*)--propelled by growing doubts about the God of the

Jewish tradition in the wake of reading Spinoza (who demonstrates with mathematical stringency that God and Nature are one and the same) and after reflecting on the Holocaust (how can God allow such evil?). This modern-day heretic is none other than our esteemed former colleague, Rabbi Dr. Allan Nadler!

Two fine essays deal with literature. Lily Chapnik looks at the founders of Yiddish literature in the 19th century who wanted to prove that this often despised “Jewish” language can express ideas and emotions just as well as German, French, or Russian. She is particularly interested in the different stances on the place of religious tradition in the modern Jewish identity that the Yiddish authors she considers were trying to forge.

Rayna Lew, finally, offers an analysis of a work that is quite literally hot off the press: Gary Shteyngart’s much acclaimed memoir, *Little Failure* (titled after the nickname his mother gave him) which was published last year. It chronicles the author’s experience as a second-generation Soviet Jew in North America, a story which in Shteyngart’s telling has more downs than ups.

I’ve genuinely enjoyed following the lead of these five young student-scholars into the vibrant research that is going on in the many fields of Jewish Studies. I hope that you enjoy their essays just as much!

Carlos Fraenkel
Chair, Department of Jewish Studies
McGill University

Introduction:

Matthew Miller

Editor-in-Chief

“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; and the earth abideth for ever” (Ecclesiastes 1:4)

It is an honour and a privilege to present to the reader the 2015 edition of Dorot, the Undergraduate Journal of the Jewish Studies Students’ Association of McGill.

The editing process of this journal afforded me, as well as my editorial staff, the opportunity to see how learned and insightful students from our department truly are. Their insights extend into various areas of the field of Jewish studies, using different perspectives in order to illuminate the lives and works of important Jewish figures and universal concepts. The essays contained herein provide the reader with an opportunity to both engage seriously with the state of the field of Jewish Studies at the undergraduate level, as well as the ability to learn a great deal from budding scholars.

The very title of the journal, *Dorot*, which means ‘generations’ in Hebrew, speaks volumes about the content of this edition. Each author, in their own way, tackles the difficult problem or conundrum of how one generation passes on its legacy to the next or the struggles and strife contained within one generation. Every essay provides a unique answer to these issues.

Aden Benarroch, in his Rav Kook and Secular Zionism, tackles the generations-question by analyzing R. Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook’s approach to secular Zionism through his letters

and halachic writings. R. Kook's struggle with and reluctant acceptance of secular Zionists brings the question of "modernism versus traditionalism" to the forefront. How can an Orthodox rabbi, one who holds onto the traditions of the generations of yesteryears, come to terms with the new generation that rejects his cherished beliefs? By reading Benarroch's essay, one can begin to sketch an answer to this question.

Zero to Hero: Shifting Ideals in Jewish Masculinity Through History, by Joanna-Rose Schachter, addresses the issue of generations through a thorough analysis of Jewish conceptions of masculinity throughout the generations, as well as the manners in which scholars in our generation have divergent views on how to understand the aforementioned history. Each generation of Jews analyzed key concepts of Judaism in relation to masculinity in various interesting ways. This shifting conception had tremendous implications in the spheres of religion and politics.

Matthew Miller looks at two particular figures, one literary (Aḥer) and the other contemporary (Allan Nadler) and seeks to explore their relation to their generation and well as previous generations. These figures both broke free from the holds of religious strictures and made the move toward heresy. Each in their own way paved a path toward freedom, struggling with their connection to the past and their direction toward the future.

Lily Chapnik, through a careful study of the writings of the Yiddish literary giants, discusses these authors' stance toward tradition, the sacred beliefs and practices of former generations. Although each of these authors had left the practice of traditional Judaism behind, they found their own unique ways to relate to the vastness of Jewish tradition and selectively passed on key features of this religion to future generations. This engagement with Judaism was presented in a pristine literary form, paralleling and competing with European literature.

Finally, Rayna Lew analyzes Shteyngart's memoir, a touching story of a man's physical journey from Russia to the United States, as well as the psychological and spiritual journey that concurrently transpired. The generational struggle that he describes and which Lew studies are multiplex: his relation to his contemporary Russians, his relation to his contemporaries in America, as well as his connection to the Jewish past. This essay speaks to the fact that the connection between one generation and the next is never simple.

This work could not have been completed without the help and support of countless individuals:

Thank you to Lily Chapnik, assistant editor, who assisted at every stage of the journey. In addition, I would like to thank the copy editors, Rayna Lew and Caroline Bedard who ensured that no errors cropped up in the final production of this journal. This edition could not have been completed without their stellar support and work.

After a short hiatus of this journal, Professor Yael Halevi-Wise, the interim chair of the department, was adamant that this hiatus would cease. She wanted to ensure that the undergraduate students of the Jewish Studies department would be able to display their work in a serious, academic setting. Thank you to her for making sure this journal would not sink into oblivion.

Professor Carlos Fraenkel deserves thanks as well for his insightful preface and for his desire and excitement for this journal to be published.

Finally, we thank all the students in the department who showed enthusiasm for the journal, even if their work did not make it into this edition.

This edition is dedicated to the memory of my late grandmother, Marcia Miller, who passed away during the editing stage of this journal. Although is it inevitable that "one

generation passeth away, and another generation cometh”, its effect can still take its toll. May many more generations continue to engage seriously with Jewish Studies as these students have.

Rav Kook and Secular Zionism

Aden Benarroch

The struggle to establish a Jewish home in Palestine was an undertaking adopted by Jews from many different religious backgrounds. Both Orthodox and secular Jews recognized the need for a Jewish homeland. The specific ideologies behind this need, however, often caused major disagreements between religious and secular Zionists. Within religious Zionism, a compelling discussion emerged as to how to relate to secular Zionists. One of the most unique approaches to this issue was developed by R. Avraham Yitzchak Kook. Kook was born in Latvia in 1865.¹

Kook later moved to Palestine and became the Chief Rabbi of Jaffa in 1904.² After leaving Palestine during World War I, Kook returned in 1919 and was appointed Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem.³ By 1921, Kook had emerged as a leading rabbinic figure in Palestine and was therefore appointed Chief Rabbi of Palestine.⁴

Kook became one of the most significant figures for the religious Zionist movement and he developed a unique ideology regarding the relationship between religious and secular Zionists. R. Kook embraced an ideology of tolerance and cooperation between religious Zionists and their secular counterparts. This essay will examine the writings of Kook in Ottoman Palestine in order to determine the details of his ideology concerning the status of secular Jews in a Jewish homeland. It will also examine how Kook put his opinions into action through his legal

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Abraham Isaac Kook".

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

rulings. These rulings were important in showing the tolerance and cooperation with secular Zionists that Kook infused into his unique Zionist ideology.

In the early 20th century, secular Zionism was the dominant Zionist ideology amongst European settlers in Palestine. They wished to create a Jewish homeland that was not grounded in Jewish law or tradition. There were Orthodox Jews who were also involved in creating a Jewish homeland, and they developed two main ideologies regarding how they should interact with secular Zionists.

The first ideology was a rejection of secular Zionism as a movement and a refusal to cooperate with them in building a Jewish homeland. This was for two main reasons. The first was due to the perception that secular Zionists were working to hasten the redemption. Some Orthodox Jews believed that the redemption was to be caused only through divine will and miraculous means.⁵ It was, therefore, a sin to make any attempts to hasten the redemption.⁶ Second, they believed that Jewish law forbade cooperating with secular Jews since they were transgressors.⁷ The Jewish homeland could therefore not be built through cooperation with Jews who did not follow Jewish law.

The second ideology developed by Orthodox Jews with regards to secular Zionism was formed by R. Yitzchak Reines in the early 1900s. Reines formed a more moderate religious Zionist party called Mizrachi. This party believed that cooperation with secular Zionists was necessary in order to save diasporic Jews from anti-Semitism.⁸ Zionism, according to this view,

⁵ Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism: History and Ideology* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008), 11.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. 12.

was not related to the redemption per se, rather it was a means to an end that would create a safe haven for Jews.⁹

Kook adopted an approach to secular Zionism that deviated from both of the aforementioned approaches. There was a precedent set by Mizrachi toward cooperation with secular Zionists but Kook pushed the boundaries of the amount of cooperation suggested by the Mizrachi. He argued that Orthodox Jews should both fully cooperate with secular Zionists in order to build a Jewish homeland, and that they should embrace secular Zionism as being an essential element in the Messianic redemption, a notion that was absent from the Mizrachi's approach.

Before examining Kook's ideology toward secular Zionists, it is first important to understand Kook's basic views of secular Jews on an individual level. Kook, prior to arriving in Palestine, was already an important rabbinic figure in Eastern Europe and was in correspondence with other European rabbis. Kook's letters to other rabbis provide insight into his opinions on secular Jews on an individual level before he moved to Palestine. In a letter he wrote to Duber Milstein in 1902, Kook indicated that he was willing to embrace secular Jews. This was not a letter that addressed Zionism as a movement. It simply referred to secular Jews in the Diaspora who had become secular. Milstein had written to Kook asking for advice because Milstein was distraught that his children had become secular.¹⁰ In his response, Kook expressed the belief that secular Jews should not be abandoned or alienated by Orthodox Jews. Kook wrote that "the light of God rests on each and every Jew."¹¹ Furthermore, Kook reassured Milstein that his children were not breaking Jewish commandments because they were inherently immoral. Rather, they

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰ Tzvi Feldman, Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters (New York: Ma'alliot Publications, 1986), p. 40.

¹¹ Avraham Kook to Duber Milstein, February 13, 1902, in Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters, trans. Tzvi Feldman (New York: Ma'alliot Publications, 1986), 42.

were distancing themselves from Jewish tradition because they were making “unintentional mistakes.”¹² Milstein’s children still had a “desire for universal righteousness and the pursuit of justice.”¹³ Kook thus articulated a basic ideology regarding secular Jews on a personal level. He believed that although Milstein’s children were becoming secular and embracing ideologies and practices associated with non-Jewish culture, they were doing so in order to further morality and create a society based on justice.

The opinion articulated by Kook in his letter to Milstein clearly shows that Kook wished to embrace secular Jews on an individual basis and it was an early indication of the stance Kook would later take with regards to secular Jews on a communal level. His letter to Milstein revealed his tolerance for Milstein’s children and secular Jews in general. Kook’s tolerance towards secular Jews on an individual level eventually translated into his principles of tolerance towards the secular Zionist movement. In the years after moving to Palestine, Kook displayed an incredible tolerance for secular Jews who were living in Palestine and working to establish a Jewish homeland. From his experiences as a young man in Europe until his death in Palestine in 1935, Kook maintained this tolerance and it was essential in forming his unique philosophy regarding the secular Zionist movement.

After moving to Israel, Kook began to address the problem that had developed within Orthodox Judaism regarding secular Jews. As discussed above, Orthodox Jews had decided to either reject secular Zionism or begrudgingly cooperate with them to create a safe haven for Jews. Kook worked to reform these very notions. In doing so, Kook developed a basic ideology

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

grounded in Scripture that supported his philosophy on the place of secular Zionism in building a Jewish state.

Kook often compared his basic ideology regarding secular Jews to the law of redeeming a firstborn donkey.¹⁴ During the Jewish Exodus from Egypt, God struck the Egyptians with a plague that killed every Egyptian firstborn. Since God had killed all the Egyptian firstborn males, God required that the Jews redeem their firstborn sons. This was due to the fact that their sons belonged to God, which required them to buy back their sons from the priest. The commandment in the Torah specified that the Jewish people were also required to redeem firstborn donkeys by giving the priest a lamb.¹⁵

Kook questioned why the donkey was included in the commandment meant to spiritually elevate firstborn children.¹⁶ Kook argued that donkeys were included in the commandment because they played an essential role in the redemption from Egypt, and they would play a role in the future redemption of the Jewish people at the end of time.¹⁷ In order to fully understand how the donkey related to Kook's acceptance of secular Jews, he pointed to a discussion in the Talmud on the redemption and the arrival of the Messiah. Kook believed that there were two ways to hasten the arrival of the Messiah. The first was by having Jews attain a high level of spirituality so that they would merit a supernatural arrival of the Messiah with miracles and "on heavenly clouds."¹⁸ If the Jews did not reach this high spiritual level, the Messiah would arrive only at the end of time.¹⁹ In this case, the Messiah would come riding on a donkey.²⁰ Kook

¹⁴ Naomi Pasachoff, *Great Jewish Thinkers* (Springfield: Behrman House Inc. 1992), p. 168.

¹⁵ Ex. 13:13.

¹⁶ Daniel Cahane and Ann Helen Vainer, *The Kabbalah of Time* (Bloomington: iUniverse LLC, 2013), 157.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ronald Eisenberg, *What the Rabbis Said* (Santa Barbara: Greensboro Publishing Group, 2010), 196.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

mentioned that if the Messiah would come through these natural means, on the donkey, it would mean that the Jewish people would be in an era characterized by materialism.²¹

Influenced by the Talmudic rabbis' interpretation, Kook believed that the generation of secular Jews in the early 20th century were the generation that would be responsible for the coming of the Messiah on a donkey.²² Though they had sunk to a low level of spirituality, Kook believed that secular Jews were still going to play an important part in the coming of the Messiah and that they were part of God's plan. They were the "material foundations of the spiritual redemption."²³ As such, they had to be embraced rather than rejected. This insight significantly influenced Kook's basic ideology regarding the place of secular Jews in the creation of a Jewish homeland in the early 20th century.

Kook put this ideology into practice in a letter to R. Y.D. Wilovsky in 1913. Kook indicated that Wilovsky had expressed "bewilderment over [his] befriending everyone, even the transgressors of Israel."²⁴ Kook was clearly addressing a rabbinic figure who believed that religious Jews should completely reject secular Zionism because they were "transgressors of Israel." In order to justify his stance toward secularism to Wilovsky, Kook appealed to what he considered to be "the words of the living God."²⁵

Kook attempted to provide religious reasoning for embracing secular Zionism as an integral part of the redemption. Kook argued that from a religious perspective, secular Zionists were far from lost. Kook's reasoning for embracing secular Zionists was related to *segula*, the notion that the Jewish people are a treasure to God no matter what their affiliation with religion

²¹ Yehuda Mirsky, *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 76.

²² Alain Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 163.

²³ Mirsky, p. 76.

²⁴ Avraham Yitzchak Kook to Y.D. Wilovsky, June 29, 1913, in *Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters*, trans. Tzvi Feldman (New York: Ma'alliot Publications, 1986).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

is.²⁶ The only time the notion of *segula* ceases to be operative is when a Jew reaches the point of being a “hater of Israel.”²⁷

The members of the secular Zionist community, however, had not, in Kook’s view, reached the point of hating the Jewish people. On the contrary, Kook recognized that although secular Zionists did not believe that the Jewish homeland needed to be infused with Jewish law and tradition, they still “deeply love[d] the community of Israel and [had] a passion for the land of Israel.”²⁸ Kook believed that secular Jews were special because, even though they did not follow Jewish religious law, they maintained their love for the people and the land of Israel. For Kook, this was an essential component of the secular Zionist ideology. He saw secular Zionists as part of the generation that would precede the coming of the Messiah by natural means. They were “good inside and bad on the outside.”²⁹ The popularity, strength, and will to create a Jewish homeland, while remaining secular, indicated that the secular Zionists were the “donkey of Messiah.”³⁰

Kook’s views of secular Zionists should not be read as a complete approval of their way of life. He still believed that Orthodox Jews needed to be wary of being influenced by secular Zionists. He warned that Orthodox Jews that did not “distinguish between the side of the holy *segula* quality in them and the side of malfunctioning free choice in them... may become corrupted, might learn from their deeds, and become attached to the evil side in them.”³¹ He saw secular nationalism as a dangerous road toward selfishness, xenophobia, and economic

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

injustice.³² Kook did not provide a blanket acceptance of secular Zionism. The approach of secular Zionists to creating a Jewish home was still decidedly flawed, since their ideologies were influenced by secular philosophies.

Despite the differences between his religious beliefs and secular Zionism's basic secular ideology, Kook still fundamentally redefined the relationship between Orthodox Jews and secular Zionists.³³ Kook believed that although secular Zionists did not have a perfect ideology, they provided important concepts to the formation of a Jewish homeland. The two groups, secular and religious, made up a Jewish nation that was focused on the correct ways of living.³⁴ Kook's letter to Milstein confirmed that he believed secular Zionists were virtuous in their commitment to social justice. His letter to Wilovsky expressed the importance of the secular Jewish movement through its connection to the Jewish people and the land of Israel. Orthodox Jews largely lacked the commitment to these important aspects of Jewish life, but they were committed to Jewish spirituality, tradition, and law.³⁵

In his biography of Kook, Yehuda Mirsky argues that Kook believed that in the Messianic era the two groups would "heal each other."³⁶ Kook believed that both religious piety and secular nationalism on their own had strayed too far from concepts of natural morality.³⁷ A Jewish nationalism had the ability to combine Jewish ethics with social justice.³⁸ Orthodox Jews could provide ethics through a will to strive for a connection with the divine, while secular

³² Mirsky, 108.

³³ Ibid., 98.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 98.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 109.

³⁸ Ibid.

Zionists contributed a strong sense of social justice.³⁹ In the Jewish homeland, each group would influence the other. This unity, according to Kook, was an integral aspect of ushering in the Messianic era. Secular and religious Zionism together could build a complete, unified Jewish homeland.

A final important ideology Kook held was that in order to reach the status of a *tzaddik*, a righteous person, people needed to strive to “bring things together.”⁴⁰ *Tzaddikim* have the ability to put together both their thoughts and their actions.⁴¹ Mirsky argues that Kook saw himself as a *tzaddik*.⁴² His idea of true righteousness was working to bring together “all the good scattered in the world.”⁴³ This belief provides insight into why he worked tirelessly to bring unity between secular and religious Zionists. In his writing, Kook defended secular Zionism and urged Orthodox Jews to embrace their attempts to create a Jewish homeland even though, at the time, it was not a homeland grounded in Jewish tradition.

In practice, as will be discussed below, Kook worked to adapt Jewish law to the realities of the modern world so that religion would not be rejected by secular Zionists. Kook believed that this would allow secular and religious Zionists to bring their best ideas together in order to build a Jewish homeland that combined modern social justice and Jewish religious life. Kook saw unity as the most important part of building a Jewish homeland. He therefore developed an ideology that worked to create unity between Jews from all walks of life.

In addition to his writings regarding the relationship between secular and religious Zionists, Kook provided many *halachic* rulings that would promote cooperation between the two

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Mirsky, 104.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. 105.

⁴³ Ibid.

groups in Palestine. Through his *halachic* rulings, Kook showed sensitivity toward the relation between secular and religious Zionists. His rulings remained consistent with the philosophies that he presented in his letters. They maintained that cooperation between religious and secular Zionists is an instrumental component of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

One of the earliest ways that Kook put his ideas of unity between the secular and religious was expressed through what he saw as the ideal education system in Palestine. Most Orthodox authorities were opposed to the idea of combining secular and religious studies.⁴⁴ In a letter written in 1905 to Yeshayahu Orenstein, Kook argued in favour of the implementation of an educational system that included both religious and secular aspects. Kook's main goal was always to "awaken the hearts of Torah scholars, old and young, to diligence in the careful study of the inner Torah."⁴⁵ Kook was always interested in persuading Jews to study Jewish legal sources, Kabbalah, and the Talmud.⁴⁶ Kook also recognized that with the agricultural developments of the *yishuv* in Palestine, a complete commitment to the traditional education system from the Eastern European *shtetl* that concentrated only on religious studies was impractical.⁴⁷

Kook believed that the correct approach to secular education allowed for the study of secular subjects.⁴⁸ Kook wrote that "one cannot be harmed, heaven forbid, from the knowledge of secular wisdom, if taken in measure and with the earnest goal of honouring God."⁴⁹ In another letter to the *Hachavatzelet* newspaper in 1908, Kook addressed the fact that he was concerned

⁴⁴ Feldman, 216.

⁴⁵ Avraham Yitzchak Kook to Yeshayahu Orenstein, December 10, 1905, in Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters, trans. Tzvi Feldman (New York: Ma'alliot Publications, 1986), 211.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Mirsky, 62.

⁴⁸ Kook to Orenstein.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

that secular Zionists were forgetting religious education in their schools.⁵⁰ He warned that religious education should always be the primary form of learning in the Jewish community. He conceded, however, that secular education teaches “the struggle for existence.”⁵¹ Kook knew that in Palestine, as well as in the diaspora, “life [had] become burdensome.”⁵² There were therefore people who “allowed themselves to add the secular to the holy in their children’s education.”⁵³ Kook argued that while this addition may have been necessary, it should not have led to a “general falsification” of religious education.⁵⁴

Kook’s opinions on education in Palestine at the beginning of the 20th century reflect clear parallels to his overall ideology promoting cooperation between secular and religious Jews. His basic ideology stressed the importance of secular contributions to a Jewish homeland. From a practical perspective, secular education contributed a much needed focus on survival in Palestine. The unification of secular and religious studies, according to Kook, also would further Jewish spiritual understanding. Secular education, if undertaken with the correct intentions, could “add to one’s strength great happiness and broadness of mind in the service of the Lord.”⁵⁵

Kook believed that the combination of religious and secular education would allow Jews in Palestine to “fear no adversity.”⁵⁶ He stressed that religious education was the most essential form of education for Jews but he also recognized that it left them unprepared for life in the secular world.⁵⁷ Kook eventually opened a school that taught both secular and religious

⁵⁰ Avraham Yitzchak Kook to Hachavatzelet, November 8, 1908, in Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters, trans. Tzvi Feldman (New York: Ma’alliot Publications, 1986), 217.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Kook to Orenstein.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Mirsky, 63.

studies.⁵⁸ Although the school never grew into a large institution due to lack of funding, Kook demonstrated his commitment to integrating both secular and religious aspects into his vision of a Jewish homeland.⁵⁹ Secular education along with Jewish religion had the ability to create a strong and stable Jewish homeland.

One of Kook's most significant *halachic* rulings that demonstrated his will to embrace cooperation between secular and religious Zionists pertained to the laws of the Sabbatical year in Palestine. In the Torah, there is a commandment that states:

You may sow your field for six years, and for six years you may prune your vineyard, and gather in its produce, but in the seventh year, the land shall have a complete rest a Sabbath to the Lord; you shall not sow your field, nor shall you prune your vineyard.⁶⁰

This verse presented a problem for a Jewish state in Palestine because Jews were required by religious law to not plant anything every seventh year. Naturally, not growing any produce every seventh year created a problem in the modern world as it could have caused the financial downfall of the agriculturally-based economy of Palestine.⁶¹ Many religious Jews, such as Wilovsky, were firm proponents of the strict observance of the Sabbatical year regardless of the financial costs.⁶²

Kook, on the other hand, ruled that there was a way to both observe the Sabbatical year and allow for Jewish farmers to grow crops during the year, ensuring the financial success of Jewish farmers in Palestine. In order to satisfy both secular and religious Zionists, Kook ruled that crops could be grown in the Sabbatical year through a sale of land in Palestine to non-

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Lev. 25: 3-4.

⁶¹ Mirsky, 72.

⁶² Feldman, 64.

Jews.⁶³ Kook's ruling was based on the fact that the Biblical law of the Sabbatical year only fully applies when all Jews are living in the Land of Israel.⁶⁴ In the early 20th century, most Jews were still living in the Diaspora. This meant that the Sabbatical law was a rabbinic rather than Biblical law, providing room for leniency.⁶⁵ Kook ruled that this leniency allowed for the sale of Jewish owned land to non-Jews on a temporary basis in order to free Jews from the prohibition of planting during the Sabbatical year.

There were a number of reasons Kook was willing to provide leniency in allowing the sale of land during the Sabbatical year. These reasons primarily relate to Kook's commitment to the economic and religious success of Jewish life in Palestine. The first reason for Kook's ruling was that he recognized that the Sabbatical year would severely harm the economic success of Jewish farmers. In an ideal situation, Kook believed that the Sabbatical year needed to be observed but in reality this was implausible. In 1910, Kook wrote *Shabbat Ha'aretz*, a work that described in detail his halachic view on the Sabbatical year.⁶⁶ He argued that "the basis of the *yishuv* is commercial agriculture, and preventing commerce would destroy all its livelihood."⁶⁷ Agriculture was the central form of income for the *yishuv* and so Kook ruled that "it is downright obligatory to maintain the permissive annulment through sale."⁶⁸ This aspect of Kook's decision reveals his awareness of the practical problems of the Sabbatical year and this played an important role in his decision to allow for land sales in order to plant during the year.

The second major focus of Kook's ruling related to the relationship between secular Zionists and religion. The intention behind the law was not only to create a practical solution but

⁶³ Mirsky, 73.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 74.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

also to defend the legitimacy of the role religious Zionism and Jewish religious law could play in building a Jewish homeland. Kook was worried that if religious Zionists imposed religious rules that were overly rigid, secular Zionists would completely reject the notion that religious Zionists could ever have a say in the law of the land. He was worried that stringent laws would create a large divide and a “widespread rejection of Torah observance.”⁶⁹ Forbidding planting during the Sabbatical year would prove to secular Zionists that “by listening to the rabbis, the land will be laid waste, the fields and vineyards will become desolate, and all commercial ties... will be broken.”⁷⁰

Kook’s leniency regarding the Sabbatical year offered a balance between Orthodox Jews’ insistence that the Sabbatical year be kept and the secular Jews’ resolve that it was an implausible, outdated law. Kook was afraid that if religious laws were too rigid they would cause secular Zionists to break away from any religious policies in the Jewish homeland. The new Jewish state would simply be a national home not tied to Jewish tradition.⁷¹ He realized that if no leniency was allowed, “many will transgress all the Sabbatical prohibitions.”⁷² There would be “sheer destruction of the sacred Torah.”⁷³ Secular Zionists would rebel against Torah law if it was seen as impractical and did not fit into their vision of the perfect agricultural Jewish state. Kook decided that he would rather have Jews work “peacefully, respectfully, and lovingly for His blessed name” even if this meant creating leniencies within the parameters of the law.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Avraham Kook, *Igrot Ha-Rei’ah*, 258.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Benjamin Ish-Shalom, *Rav Avraham Itzhak Hacohen Kook: Between Rationalism and Mysticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 170.

⁷² Kook, *Igrot*, 255.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

From his early writings, Rav Kook expressed a tendency to embrace and accept those who held different religious beliefs than traditional Orthodoxy. He first did this through his writings on various Torah portions and through his correspondence with Milstein. On a personal level, Kook believed that every person had something to contribute to create a better society, even if what they were contributing deviated from traditional Jewish practice.

The fact that people were not Orthodox meant that they believed in a different moral code but were, at their core, still good people. Kook applied this philosophy not only to individuals but also to the secular Zionist movement as a whole. He saw them as an integral part of the redemption and therefore worked to create unity between secular and religious Zionists. He expressed this both in his letters and in his halachic rulings regarding Jewish life in Palestine. He strongly believed that unity would usher in the era of the Messiah.

According to Kook, secular Zionists should not be alienated by religious Zionists, since they were the “donkey of the Messiah,” integral to ushering in the Messianic era. Kook ultimately believed that both religious and secular Zionists had the ability to create the perfect state based on social justice and Jewish religious practices. It was these ideologies that made Kook into the Jewish religious figure that redefined the relationship between secular and religious Zionists in the years leading up to the formation of the Jewish state.

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Zero to Hero:

Shifting Ideals in Jewish Masculinity Through History

Joanna-Rose Schachter

The question of what it means to be biologically male is straightforward in most societies.⁷⁵ However, determining the cultural constructions of “manhood” is not quite as simple, and conceptions of masculinity are varied and dependent upon culture.⁷⁶ Just as female gender roles have changed over time, so too have conceptions of what it means to be a man. Christian-European ideals of masculinity, for a long time rooted in chivalry, underwent major changes in the nationalist build-up to World War I. European men, caught up in fierce competition and patriotism, found themselves demonstrating perceived superiority through a newfound focus on sports and a return to the Greek ideal of the perfect male form.

Since Christian-European views of what constitutes the perfect man have evolved, it is unlikely that Jewish conceptions of masculinity have remained static, particularly given Judaism’s own nationalist movements and such pivotal events as the creation of the State of Israel. While the traditional rabbinic, if not somewhat stereotypical, ideal among Jews is that of the studious, pious, and subdued male, in a similar vein as European nationalism, Jewish nationalism also enacted changes upon the ideal of the Jewish man.⁷⁷ Michael Satlow, Stephen Moore, and Andreas Gotzmann deliver similar but differing views on what a traditional Jewish

⁷⁵ Michael L. Satlow, “‘Try to Be a Man’: The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 19.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Tamar Mayer, ed., *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* (London, UK: Routledge, 2000) 301.

man is supposed to aim to be, while Lerner, Mayer, Boyarin, Davidson, and Katz do the same for Zionist conceptions of masculinity.

Historical Ideals of Masculinity

Rabbinic literature, written and compiled over the course of many centuries, often tackled the question of masculinity.⁷⁸ Satlow argues that rabbinic evidence repeatedly returns to a consistent opinion on manhood.⁷⁹ To the rabbis, manhood relied upon a uniquely male trait; that of self-restraint, in the goal of Torah study, and in the pursuit of the divine through it.⁸⁰ Their views were in accordance with themes present in pre-rabbinic traditions and non-Jewish philosophy, as a great deal of importance was placed upon self-mastery by classical authors of the Greco-Roman Antiquity.⁸¹ For the most part, these themes included the idea that self-mastery, gendered as a male characteristic, is a prerequisite for a “life of the mind” (either the general pursuit of wisdom, or Torah study), which is also gendered as a masculine activity.⁸² In fact, although the word “warrior” in the Hebrew Bible signifies a man of war, to the rabbis, a warrior is in fact a man who exercises self-restraint,⁸³ and it is said in Proverbs 16:32: “Better to be forbearing than mighty, to have self-control than to conquer a city.”⁸⁴

In brief, self-control in all things, like war, is a masculine trait. Moreover, Satlow asserts that Torah is never represented in rabbinic literature as “male,” so to pursue Torah is an

⁷⁸ Satlow, 20.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 21.

⁸¹ Ibid. 21.

⁸² Ibid. 22.

⁸³ Ibid. 27.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 27.

unquestionably masculine (and, by definition, heterosexual) activity.⁸⁵ Moore offers a similar take on these same rabbinic ideals. He explains that mastery of others or of oneself is the defining masculine trait conveyed in most Greco-Roman texts.⁸⁶ Moore goes on to explore 4 Maccabees, which recounts how an elderly Jewish philosopher and seven Jewish boys defeat the tyrant Antiochus by being more manly than he, even though he has the power to torture them all to death. 4 Maccabees is about what it means to be a true man, and the main trait displayed by the heroes of the tale is courage (again, a form of self-control), conceived herein as an essentially masculine virtue. The ordeal of torture is interpreted as a trial of manliness, and the elder tells king Antiochus that the Mosaic law “teaches us temperance so that we are in control of all our pleasures and desires, and it also trains us in manliness, so that we endure all suffering willingly...”⁸⁷ Concerning the martyrdom of younger boys, the message is clear: true masculinity lies in rational self-mastery rather than in a masculine physique.⁸⁸ **According to Moore,** it is also interesting to note that theirs are the affirmations of the enduring worth, even superiority, of people who have lost political power.⁸⁹ External control exercised over others does not make a man; instead, a person reaches manhood through internal control exercised over himself.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Ibid. 32.

⁸⁶ Stephen D. Moore and Janice C. Anderson, “Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 249.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 255.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 256.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 258.

However, there is evidence that Jewish men in late antiquity wanted to be remembered for the same things as their non-Jewish contemporaries: namely money, piety, and office.⁹¹ Satlow contends that, for the most part, rabbinic constructions of manhood were then neither designed for nor adopted by the Jewish community.⁹² However, this is not a change from one construction of manhood, a result of transformation brought on by culture, to another, but rather an expression of the conflict existing between the two.⁹³ Gotzmann explains that in the seventeenth century, the proper Jewish man was supposed to be honorable, faultless, and religious.⁹⁴ A man's manners and clothing was to reflect all of these virtues.⁹⁵ His reputation was also very important.⁹⁶ When it came to honor, male Christians and Jews alike had the obligation to publicly reinstate their honor should it be questioned.⁹⁷ According to Gotzmann, the stereotype of the cowardly and submissive Jew was widespread among Christians and was particularly prevalent among the lower strata of society.⁹⁸ In defiance of this perception, Jews eagerly defended themselves verbally and physically.⁹⁹ For instance, Jewish travelers frequently carried weapons, which were tolerated by the authorities even though by law Jews were not

⁹¹ Satlow, 39.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid. 40.

⁹⁴ Andreas Gotzmann, "Respectability Tested," *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History*, eds. B. M. Baader, S. Gillerman and P. Lerner, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 23.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 27.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 29.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 32.

permitted to do so.¹⁰⁰ Gotzmann says that in contrast with the current and often discussed ideas of a Jewish “soft masculinity,” which is rooted in the anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jewish man as being not truly male, the Jewish man of this time period was far from passive or soft.¹⁰¹ Evidence from many sources suggests that Jewish men acted “manly” and often displayed openly aggressive conduct, even when they found themselves in dangerous situations with little chance of self-defense.¹⁰² Jewish men tended to scoff at shy or cautious behavior that might have been a safer course of action.¹⁰³ Of course, Jewish men of some standing did not engage in the “coarse, belligerent male behavior that was characteristic of peasants and men from the lower classes of the urban population”, who Jews regarded as dangerous, rude, and uncultured.¹⁰⁴ Rather, Jewish ideals and social practices can be likened to those of Christian merchants and patricians.¹⁰⁵

Nationalism and Shifting Ideals of Masculinity

According to Lerner, the idea that Jewish men differ from non-Jewish men by being effeminate has far-reaching roots in European history. In the thirteenth century, many gentiles believed Jewish men menstruated and had become “unwarlike and weak even as women”.¹⁰⁶ By

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 35.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 28.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 28.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Lerner, Benjamin M. Baader, and Sharon Gillerman, "German Jews, Gender, and History," in *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History*, eds. B. M. Baader, S. Gillerman, & P. Lerner, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 1.

the sixteenth century, there existed a common belief that Jewish men were deficient in comparison to Christians and possessed female characteristics.¹⁰⁷ Yet, some non-Jews considered Jewish populations to be well prepared and well suited to civil society, and significant numbers of Western Europeans believed that Jews enjoyed an exemplary family life due to faithful, devoted husbands and obedient children.¹⁰⁸

Nevertheless, toward the end of the nineteenth century, as anti-Semitism spread in Europe, the stereotype of the effeminate Jewish man became the focus of anti-Semitism.¹⁰⁹ Lerner quotes Gilman and other scholars who have explored the impact of these developments on Jewish men's self-identities, and calls to attention the self-hatred with which some men reacted to the pressures of exclusive nationalism and anti-Semitism.¹¹⁰ An alternative response occurred among Zionists and other proponents of a new *Muscle Jew*, in the early twentieth century.¹¹¹ New Jewish heroes, such as the Jewish bodybuilder Siegmund Breitbart, and increasingly popular movements, like gymnastics and physical culture, spread "images of healthy, strapping Jewish men and a regenerated, muscular Jewry".¹¹²

Katz suggests that three major developments helped shape twentieth century Jewish masculinity, even outside of Europe and/or Israel: the development of Zionism as a nationalist

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

ideology in the nineteenth century, the Holocaust, and the Six-Day War.¹¹³ Violence is a central theme in these developments, and Katz suggests that hypermasculinity may have been a response to historical victimization, especially that experienced during the Holocaust.¹¹⁴ He quotes Boyarin's research, which argues that the westernization process for European Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was one in which the idea of the *mensch* was abandoned for that of the *New Jew*, the *Muscle Jew*, which developed at about the same time as the Aryan ideal of the muscular Christian.¹¹⁵

While for thousands of years rabbinic tradition praised humility before adversity, in the nineteenth century, more and more Jewish men wished to become "real" men as defined in physical terms by Gentiles.¹¹⁶ Katz also suggests that Israel is important to Jews in the United States and around the world, as it played a role in how these men saw themselves.¹¹⁷ After Israel's victory in the Six Day War in 1967, Jewish men around the world were "remasculinized" by proxy and switched from being the victim to the victor.¹¹⁸ He admits that some writers like Selzer believe that militaristic enthusiasm was a sign of insecurity more than anything and a rejection of the "true self," since true Jewish identity is rooted in Eastern and

¹¹³ Harry Brod and Rabbi Shawn I. Zevit, eds. *Brother Keepers: New Perspectives on Jewish Masculinity* (Harriman, TN: Men's Studies Press, LLC, 2010) 58.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 59.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 60.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 68.

European tradition and embodies the timid and gentle Jew.¹¹⁹ However, Katz rejects the idea of a “true self” in favor of a “configured self” dependent on context and history.¹²⁰

Meyer explains that Theodor Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, complained in 1895 that his Jewish friends were “[g]hetto creatures, quiet, decent, timorous. Most of our people are like that. Will they understand the call to freedom and manliness?”¹²¹ For Herzl, manliness and freedom were connected, and the militarism and patriotism he spoke of was similar to that of the legendary Maccabee fighters. He believed that the Diaspora had made Jewish men feminine and easy targets for anti-Semitism, but having a homeland would change this effeminacy and victimization.¹²² As he wished, the Zionist national project did in fact create a *New Jew*, the antithesis of the “Ghetto Jew” in need of transformation.¹²³

Nordeau, a doctor associated with Herzl, called for Jews to become “deep-chested, strong limbed, and fierce looking,” in order to mimic the physical features of gentiles, and to become in a sense the *Übermensch* who could stand up to anti-Semitism.¹²⁴ He believed that this transformation would be accomplished through gymnastics and the attainment of a physically fit body.¹²⁵ Mayer points out that it is ironic that much of the Zionist ideology of nation and masculinity would come from the German nationalist experience, since gymnastics’ supposed

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Mayer 285.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid. 286.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 287.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

relation to masculinity and to national ideology was a nineteenth and twentieth century German, but also European, philosophy.¹²⁶

“We used to be men, now we are zero” was the title of a 1994 article in one of Israel’s most important newspapers.¹²⁷ Many Israeli soldiers were leaving military service since they were no longer needed to be, in their own words, “killers” who enforced military rule among Palestinians; instead they were to guard settlements and daycare centres.¹²⁸ One soldier commented that what had started as “an attempt to be a man turned in to an addiction for action”.¹²⁹ The problem was that peace missions have no action, glory, or rush.¹³⁰ Mayer posits that the relationship between masculinity, militarism and Jewish nationalism articulated by these men has its origins in the early days of Zionism when Jews had the need to defend themselves against the “Other”— typically meaning anti-Semitic Europeans or indigenous Arab populations.¹³¹ Since in the twentieth century the constant impression of threat made Israeli Jews rely on strength, militarism became tied to nationalism and masculinity.¹³² Nationalist celebrations and Jewish youth groups revived old Jewish heroes, in particular the Maccabees, creating a cult devoted to the image of athletic, masculine toughness.¹³³ Elite units of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) who participated in covert and dangerous missions lived the “ultimate tests

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 283.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid. 284.

¹³³ Ibid. 291.

of bravery”, and as the bar of bravery rose, so did the bar of masculinity that mirrored it.¹³⁴ Men who proved their courage on the battlefield and who were willing to give their life for the nation became legends in Israel, and over the years more than 20 000 Israeli soldiers have died.¹³⁵ In Zionism, as in other nationalisms, myth and memory have been crucial to the construction of the nation.¹³⁶ Posters representing the masculine *New Jew* who was there to help his people, defend the land, and build on it, became a blueprint for the construction of Israeli men, perpetuating the tie between nation and male and masculinity and nationalism (one such poster proclaims “While one hand works the other holds a weapon”).¹³⁷ In the Jewish case, especially after statehood, masculinity has been construction in opposition to the *Ghetto Jew*.¹³⁸ The *New Jew*’s gender identity as well as the arena for perfecting his manliness has been constructed by Zionism; however, Mayer asserts that Jewish-Israeli nationalism and gender identity will change again now that the Israeli military needs men less as elite fighters.¹³⁹

According to Nye, who reviewed research by Davidson, Neil Davison’s study chiefly concerns the way the image of an ‘effeminate’ male ghetto Jew was deployed in contemporary anti-Semitic stereotypes and how it also figured in the discourses of Zionist and philo-Semitic writers. However, he wants to undermine the notion that writers who have wrestled with the ideological program of Zionism have simply adopted for Jewish men the aggressive and

¹³⁴ Ibid. 294.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 295.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 299, 301.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 301.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

domineering masculinity of their gentile oppressors by considering how these same writers have appreciated the influence on Jewish masculinity of Jewish history and culture, which informed even secular and assimilated Jews.¹⁴⁰ Kaplan also reviewed Davison, and finds that he explores the ‘feminized Jew’ and how this figure haunts attempts to construct Jewish masculinities that depart from this stereotype.¹⁴¹ Davison traces the shifts in stereotypes and actualities of Jewish manhood. Davison thus usefully connects these gender troubles to the political context of emergent Zionism.¹⁴² Continuing in this vein he notes that, “[b]ecause the muscle-Jew appears to suggest an idealized virility similar to that which became the basis of fascist masculinity, Zionism is often fixed as an imitation of European colonialism”.¹⁴³ And further that, “Nordau and Herzl [two fathers of Zionism] alike meant the new Jew to resemble an imperialist patriarch to whom violence is the tool of a racially predisposed right to conquer” the political intersects most clearly with theoretical questions of Jewish masculinity.¹⁴⁴ The hypermasculinized mass media image of the IDF soldier or Mossad agent offers an obvious counter-image to the “feminized Jew”.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Robert A. Nye, rev. of *Jewishness and Masculinity from the Modern to the Postmodern*, by Neil R. Davison, *Gender & History Reviews* 25 (2013): 204.

¹⁴¹ Brett A. Kaplan, rev. of *Jewishness and Masculinity from the Modern to the Postmodern*, by Neil R. Davison, *Textual Practice* 26 (2012): 978.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 979.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 980.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Boyarin's argument begins with what he believes to be a widespread idea that being Jewish renders a boy effeminate.¹⁴⁶ He asserts that both the adoption of European gender ideologies in the goal of liberation and the modern Jewish abandonment of "sissy" heritage have been noxious forces in Jewish culture.¹⁴⁷ The cult of the tough Jew as an alternative to Jewish timidity and gentleness rests on ideals of masculine beauty, health, and normalcy, all of which are conceived as obvious and natural.¹⁴⁸ In fact, far from being universal, these ideals were created in a culture of exclusion of women, pacifism, gentleness, and Jews.¹⁴⁹ Traditional Ashkenazi Jewish culture produced a sort of masculinity that was the opposite of European manliness; this alternative Jewish form of maleness was called *edelkayt*, which means nobility as well as gentleness.¹⁵⁰ According to Boyarin, this was not an inferior alternative, but rather an ideal, and while it is based in traditional Talmud there is also a modern word for it: *mensch*.¹⁵¹ Boyarin makes a point to refute claims, like those of Lerner, that the feminization of Jewish men is rooted simply in anti-Semitism, and also to refute the idea that such traits were not desired by women.¹⁵² However, the Westernization of Jews led to a modernization in which that Jewish male ideal became abandoned in favor of the "Muscle Jew" who Boyarin believes confreres with the "Muscular Christian" and the "Aryan" who were born at the same time as both European and

¹⁴⁶ Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997) xx.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. xxi.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. xxi.

¹⁵⁰ Boyarin 23.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid. 81.

Jewish nationalism.¹⁵³ Katz concludes in his research that Boyarin makes a powerful point that a Jewish capitulation to gentile notions of masculinity is a tragic development in Jewish history.¹⁵⁴ However, Gillerman critiques Boyarin and insists that: “Displaying little originality or agency, [Boyarin] offers a whole-sale capitulation to the ideal of an exclusionary nationalism and an embrace of the dominant (non-Jewish) form of masculinity. [A] dichotomized view of a gentle (“traditional”) Jewish masculinity, on the one hand, and a (“modern”) capitulation to gentile culture, on the other, does not do justice to the range of conceptions of Jewish masculinity available to Jews at the time.”¹⁵⁵ According to McKinley, who reviewed research by Davison, Davison believes that Boyarin’s focus on Rabbinic masculinity only functions well as a theory of male Jewishness unaltered by the effects of modern movements, and argues instead that modern and postmodern representations of manhood are, in fact, greatly influenced by Reform and Zionist revisions of Talmudic codes of Jewish masculinity.¹⁵⁶

Conclusion: The New Jewish Man

While the Talmudic view of the studious man in control of himself remains an ideal, it is no longer one that is readily accepted, and some research shows that even in the antiquity from which these ideals originated, as well as in the seventeenth century, tension between ideal and reality existed. Nevertheless, Jewish conceptions of ideal masculinity have indeed changed and

¹⁵³ Ibid. 37.

¹⁵⁴ Brod and Zevit 72.

¹⁵⁵ Sharon Gillerman, “A Kinder Gentler Strongman?” *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History*, eds. B. M. Baader, S. Gillerman and P. Lerner (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012) 199.

¹⁵⁶ Maggie McKinley, rev. of *Jewishness and Masculinity from the Modern to the Postmodern*, by Neil R. Davison, *Philip Roth Studies* (2012): 218.

become more aligned with European ideals through events in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and through Zionism, similar to the transformation that Europe underwent through nationalism. However, Katz asserts that while Jews have born the brunt of much violence through history, and Jews have a right to defend themselves as do all people, there exists the responsibility not to disguise aggressio, and a legacy of rage as self-defense.¹⁵⁷ He concludes then that there are as many men as ever dedicated to social justice and to nonviolent social change.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Brod and Zevit 73.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

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Making of a Heretic:

The Seeds, Growth, and Sprouting of Allan Nadler

Matthew Miller

An authentic Jewish heretic is not spontaneously born. He is made. He is the sum total of his traditional education and upbringing, formative influences, and subversive seeds of heresy. They are planted slowly along the way until his final break from the established doctrinal and behavioural norms of the Orthodox community. The heretic worthy of the name *apikores*¹⁵⁹, unlike other deviants, such as the sectarian (*min*) is still very much a part of the Jewish community. He still feels himself to be part of the greater Jewish people, tied up in their joys and sorrows, even though he has now become disillusioned by the Orthodox world that he had once cherished. His break, while at first tragic, must turn into a looking towards the future in hope of recovering or replacing that which has been lost, while still holding on to what can be held on to.

The vast sea of the Talmud is full of heretics, sectarians, apostates, rabble-rousers, and the like. Rarely, however, is a picture painted of these figures, more often than not, their faces and characters are obscured with only a generic title of *mumar*, *meshumad*, *apikores*, *min* etc. There is not even a whisper about their paths towards deviancy. The Rabbis were more interested in outlining how one should interact with these people and how one would suffer

¹⁵⁹ The term *apikores* most probably deriving from the Greek philosopher Epicurus has an interesting history in regards to its usage in Rabbinic literature (for this history see “‘Know What to Answer the Epicurean’: A Diachronic Study of the *Apiqorus* in Rabbinic Literature,” Hebrew Union College Annual 74 (2003), 175-214) as well as an in Maimonidean usage (see esp. Hilchot Teshuvah 3:1,8). I am using the term as it is used in common parlance (i.e. by the Orthodox establishment against one who has rejected the tenets and strictures of Orthodoxy).

eternally for joining their ranks more than profiling them systematically. One profile, however, presented piecemeal¹⁶⁰ in the two Talmudim and Midrashim is that of Elisha ben Abuya, who was given the not so endearing sobriquet Aher. Various explanations are given for both his heresy and, in turn, his sobriquet, and they need not be mutually exclusive¹⁶¹. The genuine heretic's turn towards heresy is manifold and recurring, not a one-time event.

There are many Jews in the Orthodox community who look up to the great Rabbis of the Talmud for inspiration. They admire R. Akiva's turn to the study of Torah at such a late age and Reish Lakish's submission to Torah study along with his subsequent loss of superhuman powers. Few, however, look towards the quintessential rabbinic pariah, the "Sinning Sage", for inspiration and as a mirror unto their own lives. One such man, Rabbi Dr. Allan Nadler, a self-described איפיקורוס (a title he flaunts with pride), sees part of himself in Aher and has become particularly enthralled with him as he decided to delve deeper into this complex figure.

This man, much like Aher, grew up among sages and scholars, imbibing words of Torah from his youth, always with a passion to learn and teach others. Torah was of paramount importance to him. His father, Joseph Nadler, especially, instilled this value within him. His father's ultimate insult against people with low-moral character was to call them an *am ha'aretz* (an ignoramus). Nadler learned passionately throughout his university years in McGill, attended Jew's College for a year and a half, and subsequently returned to Montreal to complete a private rabbinic ordination with Rabbi Aryeh-Leib Baron. His rabbinic training allowed him to obtain a

¹⁶⁰ Alon Goshen-Gottstein in his penetrating study of the Elisha stories (The Sinner and the Amnesiac: The Rabbinic Invention of Elisha ben Abuya and Eleazar ben Arach) points out time and again that the depictions of Aher are not to be read as a running historical account of his life; rather, they should be understood as various exegetical attempts to understand the enigmatic Pardes Episode (Tosefta Hagigah 2:3-4); however, for our didactic purposes we will treat the various stories as an account of his career as a heretic with all of its ups and downs.

¹⁶¹ Again, even if they are separate attempts to determine Aher's heresy, each can give insight into the rabbinic depiction of heresy and otherness

pulpit at Charles River Park Synagogue in Boston as he pursued his PHD at Harvard under Dr. Isadore Twersky, a teacher he greatly revered. He subsequently went on to be an assistant rabbi of the famous Shaar HaShomayim Synagogue, in his hometown of Montreal. His behavior was wholly in line with Orthodoxy, from his black velvet yarmulke to his insistence on wearing a jacket during his recital of the *birkat hamazon*¹⁶².

That is, he was a *frumer yid* (a religious Jew), or so he thought. Ultimately, there were subversive seeds of heresy planted within his soul throughout his life, that when he looks back on his over 50 years on this earth he nods, smiles, and points to those subtle influences, that contributed to his present day heresy. Elisha ben Abuya, too, was led to heresy, ultimately through deep-rooted influences that permeated his bloodstream, influences that he would only, and could only acknowledge later in his life.

In a short line of the Jerusalem Talmud (Hagigah 2:1), amidst manifold attempts at pinpointing his heresy, a great deal of insight and wisdom is contained. In this seemingly foolish and folklorist account, Elisha's turn towards heresy is said to have been initiated while in his mother's womb. The Talmud states:

there are those that say that when his mother was pregnant with him, she used to pass pagan temples and smell the sacrifices. And the smell permeated her body like the poison of a snake.

Now, a literal reading of this story cannot be sustained, from both a rational and scientific perspective. However, if one reads this story with the understanding that it is not meant to be taken literally¹⁶³, a profound insight from the minds of Rabbis can be culled from these few

¹⁶² "Unorthodox Rabbi: Allan Nadler Defends the Doubters," Forward, 25 July 1997.

¹⁶³ Perhaps, the Rabbis meant this to be taken literally; I do not deny them this possibility. However, I detect aggadic playfulness in this account which screams out for interpretation (cf. Rashi to Genesis 25:22).

precious words. The Rabbis understood that Aher was bound to be a heretic from his earliest years, as he did in fact become. This is not a rabbinic form of determinism, but a tacit acknowledgement that the seeds of heresy are planted from youth, being watered and nurtured in the most unexpected ways.

Nadler entertains the possibility that his mother, like Aher's, planted the seeds of his heresy. Nadler's mother, although rearing a religious family, was not a particularly religious woman herself. Nadler recounts that he cannot remember his mother ever attending synagogue services, even on the High Holidays. He and his siblings later discovered that their mother, when everyone else was at synagogue, would go shopping, stashing the bags out of plain sight so that the young Nadler children would not see them. Although Nadler did not make much of the tension between his religiously-committed Mizrahi father and atheistic mother, the internal tension caused by this pairing of two opposites had an internal effect on Nadler, only to be exacerbated by the famous Yiddish poet, Chaim Grade.

Grade had become an influence on Nadler life when he was a student at Harvard in "Twersky's pogrom"¹⁶⁴, a rigorous, gruelling program. Grade came to Harvard on a number of occasions to give lectures to a small group of students pursuing advanced degrees in intellectual Jewish history, under the tutelage of Professor Twersky. This small group, including Nadler, Jeffrey Woolf, David Fishman, and others, attended Grade's Yiddish lectures and noted the marked contrast between his exuberance and outgoing nature in comparison to Professor Twersky's austere, quiet demeanor. Nadler took a sort of curious liking to Grade, as did Grade to Nadler.

Grade went from being a star-student learning under the tutelage of one of the last

¹⁶⁴ "Paying Tribute to a Terrifying Teacher's Legacy: Isadore Twersky Combined Chasidic Orthodoxy and Ivy League Scholarship," *Forward*, 26 December 1997, 11.

century's greatest rabbis, Rabbi Abraham Isaiah Karelitz (Hazon Ish) to become a secular Yiddish poet. This poet showed a particular liking towards Nadler, perhaps initially due to the latter's possession of an automobile (for he was also a practicing rabbi at the time). Because of this, he was given the task of driving Grade from place to place, eventually getting the privilege to pick him up from the airport when he arrived. It was not difficult for Nadler to develop the relationship, for, unlike Twersky, Grade took a personal interest in all of those in his seminar, with a particular interest in the young Rabbi Nadler "whose red mane and beard [were] shot through with silver"¹⁶⁵.

Grade opened up Nadler's eyes to who he really was. He constantly poked fun at Nadler's *frumkeit* (religiosity), trying to get him to break from his religious behaviorism. He, jokingly remarked to Nadler, with his twisted smile and a hint of prophecy: "*du bist nit keyn frumer yid*" ("you are not a religious Jew") and insisted on calling him the *royter rov* ("Red Rabbi"), on account of his fiery beard and the latent fire that was burning deep within the recesses of his soul. Despite all of his coaxing and cajoling, Grade could not get this young rabbi to take up a relationship with a gentile or eat a McDonalds Big Mac (even after Grade insistence that it was 100% kosher). He opened up his eyes to the world of Jewish secular poetry, both his own and that of the Hebrew poet, Hayyim Nahman Bialik, as well as peaked his interest in Benedict Spinoza's philosophy, watering the seeds of his heresy.

Nadler, began to read¹⁶⁶ Spinoza and Bialik and started to look at the world around him and within himself. As he began to read, ponder, and reflect, he slowly became disillusioned by what he saw. He realized that the secular poet-prophet Grade had been right. He was not really

¹⁶⁵ "Unorthodox Rabbi: Allan Nadler Defends the Doubters," Forward, 1997.

¹⁶⁶ Aher, too, was said to have been a reader of heretical works (ספרי מניין), but their exact nature is not certain (BT Hagigah 15b).

a *frumer yid*, after all. There was no real substance to his religious behavioralism, no true belief behind the fervent actions. No matter how many times he would sing *yigdal* (a poetic rendition of Maimonides 13 principles of faith), he could not make any real meaningful affirmation of many of the principles.

The post-Holocaust world made him question the providence of God, his engaging in critical Biblical studies cast serious doubts for him on the inviolability and immaculate nature of the Torah, and the list goes on. He did not despair, but rather, took what he could salvage and realized that he identified greatly with Spinoza, both theologically and philosophically (i.e. his naturalistic conception of God, beliefs about the composite nature of the Bible, etc.)¹⁶⁷.

Although his turn away from the Orthodox community caused some struggle and strife (e.g. when his cherished rabbi, R. Baron, stopped speaking to him after he took up a job of officiating at a mixed-pews synagogue for the High Holidays), he knew that it was necessary. To be honest with himself, he broke from the Orthodox community, while still, to this day, having great respect for that community, one which he feels he can no longer honestly be a part of.

Although Aher's break from "Orthodoxy" was triggered by, in part, different factors than Nadler¹⁶⁸, their reactions to this break are the same and instructive. One depiction of Aher's turn towards heresy is that which is presented in BT Hagigah (15a-15b), in which the Talmud describes a mystical ascent of some of the Mishnaic Rabbis. One of these ascenders was the Talmudic arch-heretic, Aher. Before his mystical journey, he was simply Rabbi Elisha the son of Abuya, a Sage who disseminated Torah to the masses. However, when he got to on high and

¹⁶⁷ However, Nadler emphasized in an e-mail correspondence that he does not identify with Spinoza's nasty, vilifying attitude towards the Jews as a people saying: "As a Jew, however, committed to the furtherance of Judaism and as a Zionist, however, I find much in the Theological Political Treatise, especially chapter 3 of the TTP to be abhorrent" (29 April 2013).

¹⁶⁸ Some were certainly the same, as we saw above. In addition, Nadler identifies with Aher's doubts about divine providence (*leit din v'leit dayyan*) in Kiddushin 39b.

witnessed Metatron (the archangel) recording the merits of Israel, he was utterly baffled, perplexed at the state of this heavenly being. He proclaimed:

It is taught as a tradition that on high there is no sitting and no emulation, and no back, and no weariness. Perhaps, **God forbend! (*shema, ḥas v'shalom*)** — there are two divinities!

These simple words of heresy, sparked by an innocuous teaching that he had learned in the *bet midrash* sent him tumbling down the wellsprings of heresy the rest of his life.

These three simple, yet profound words that Aḥer uttered “*shema, ḥas v'shalom*” are essential to the journey of all “genuine dissenters”¹⁶⁹, those who, after deeply pondering religious teachings, come to struggle, question, and redefine their beliefs about the fundamentals of religion. Those who put up the struggle, who are perturbed by their questioning of religious teachings, but embark on the quest nonetheless are noble indeed. They are willing to stand by their newly formed doctrines, knowing full well the consequences. As Professor Allan Nadler quipped: “[Spinoza] certainly didn’t expect anyone in Amsterdam’s Shearith Israel Synagogue to sponsor a Kiddush to celebrate the publication of the “Theological-Political Treatise”¹⁷⁰.

What, then, can be said about Nadler’s heresy? Was it as a result of his mother’s silent Saturday strolls to the Eaton’s Centre? Was it due to Grade’s coaxing or his reading of Spinoza and Bialik? Finally, was it at a result of his questioning of divine justice (like Aḥer) “which emerged out of [his] immersion in the horrific end of Yiddish civilization”¹⁷¹ or any of the other heretical thoughts that entered his mind, that he initially pushed out with a pietist “*shema, ḥas v'shalom*” but allowed to percolate “into [his] untraditional mind; into a mordant, skeptical,

¹⁶⁹ see Allan Nadler’s “The Death of Genuine Dissent,” Forward, 3 August 2007.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ From an e-mail correspondence with Nadler (29 April 2013).

ribald mind”¹⁷²?

Undoubtedly, the answer to both of these questions is a resounding *yes* and *no*. Nadler became the man he is today as a result of all these factors and more. He, sticking true to the etymological origin of the word “heretic” chose his path and knows where he stands. He knows that because of his views and actions he is and was denounced as an אפיקורוס, a title he accepts with pride (but with an acknowledgment that his decisions in life have real consequences). That which began as mere seeds of heresy sprouted and grew and became the Rabbi Dr. Allan Nadler of today.

¹⁷² Allan Nadler, *Rationalism, Romanticism, Rabbis and Rebbes* (New York: YIVO, 1992), IV.

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Battling Tradition:

Evolving Jewish Identity in Early Yiddish Literature

Lily Chapnik

Modern Yiddish literature is unique among other art forms, in that it was consciously created by a small group of authors in order to fulfill a culture-specific intention. The pioneers of the Yiddish literary tradition wished that a “higher culture” of art, written using the European vernacular Jewish language, could materialize even though Yiddish had always been synonymous with lower culture in popular perception. These innovators envisioned a new legacy for the Yiddish language, with a literary tradition that could even attempt to match the creative output of the classical European artists. The three authors that are considered the most important members of the first wave of Yiddish Literature are Sholem Abramovitch (1835-1917), who wrote under the pen name of “Mendele Mocher Sforim”; Sholem Rabinovitch (1859-1916), better known by his pseudonym “Sholem Aleichem”; and Yitzhik Lieb Peretz (1852-1915). These three ‘Classical’ Yiddish authors, as they came to be known, undertook the challenge of developing the literary paradigms that would shape the fundamental base of the craft.

Within their work, each of the authors address the status of Jewish religious ritual and custom in the modern world. All three had grown up in observant Jewish homes, and were well versed in Jewish law and tradition, although none of them lived traditionally Jewish lives by the time they were writing their famous works in Yiddish. They therefore chose to confront a question in their work that was personally close to each of them – is Jewish traditionalism a positive method of expressing identity that should be respected and nourished, or a negative influence on the growing minds and sensibilities of the emancipated Jew? The three authors all

wrestle with this question, and come out with very different answers. Mendele is highly reproachful of Jewish religiosity, as he exhibits a sarcastic, satirical tone towards it within his writing. Sholom Aleichem is more ambivalent, with examples within his work of what appears to be both support and critical commentary upon the role of Jewish religious custom in day-to-day life. Peretz, who is considered the most modern of the three in his sensibilities, is the most accepting of Jewish tradition, as it is shown in a mostly positive light in his work, especially via his depictions of Hasidism. The fundamental difference in attitude among these three authors is reflected in the depictions of their characters within their respective oeuvres.

Within his satirical novella “The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third”, Mendele illustrates his religiously observant characters with features that are highly unattractive, which serves the purpose of casting a critical eye over traditional Judaism as a whole. The story centers around a foolish man named Benjamin, who with his limited knowledge of geography and history sets out from his home *shtetl*, or ‘little town’, of Tuneyadevka with his emasculated and shy friend Sendrel in tow, in an attempt to fulfill his vague ambition of discovering the ten lost tribes of Israel. Within the narrative of this story, Mendele criticizes the ridiculous actions and motives of his characters, and then uses these judgments to question many religious paradigms surrounding the traditional *shtetl* life that Mendele had left behind years before. The first religiously based social more which Mendele scorns is the ignorance of those living in the *shtetl* concerning the world at large, which he sees as a product of their lack of a secular education at the expense of solely a religious one. The *shtetl* dwellers seem to have no knowledge of, and therefore lend no value to, the post-Enlightenment value of empiricism, and indeed depend on the unseen forces that they attribute to God to govern their lives, as is illustrated by the assertion of an anonymous townspeople that “there’s a God above and He doesn’t forget us down below.

He's provided until now and He won't stop now" (Abramovitch 1996, 306). This utter dependence on invisible celestial forces is soon shown to be contrary to the Tuneyadevkans' best interests, when it becomes apparent that this worldview is preventing them from striving for a better life. For example, the townspeople seem to have no perspective concerning their own poverty, as "the inhabitants of Tuneyadevka are content with what they have and not choosy about their garments or their food...[even though] their Sabbath caftans are ripped or torn...[and] a bit of soup and bread, if it's available, is a meal" (Abramovitch 1996, 306-7). Mendelevitch therefore makes the satirizing comment, through his disdainful characterization of the townspeople, that they are far too dependent on the invisible construct of God for their basic human needs, and that their excessive faith is a negative influence on their development as meaningful members of society.

Mendelevitch's main character, Benjamin, is also made a mockery of through his over-dependence on tradition, especially concerning his insistence on utilizing ritual symbols that are rendered meaningless in the context in which he employs their use. This caricature is introduced as soon as the story begins, as Benjamin is introduced by the narrator as "a Jew, an unarmed Jew on foot, with but a knapsack on his back and a prayer shawl bag beneath his arm", who is jokingly characterized to have "ventured into climes beyond the ken of the most famous British explorers" (Abramovitch 1996, 302). This description displays a humorous contradiction – although it sets out to make him out as a hero with a comparison to famous explorers, the fact remains that with only a prayer shawl as a weapon, Benjamin is neither significantly threatening nor awe-inspiring. The presence of the prayer shawl on the journey is seen in an even more ridiculous light when it is revealed that Benjamin "had not brought with him a single piece of bread, not even a thumbkin's worth" (Abramovitch 1996, 331), showing Benjamin's sense of

priorities to be entirely out of order – he had not even brought along the necessary provisions to sustain himself in favour of religious paraphernalia. Benjamin also bemoans the fact that he forgot “a spell from a manuscript” back at home, which he believed would be a “sure protection against all accidents and dangers” (Abramovitch 1996, 340), which displays his perception of the power of talismans in reality as being completely fictionalized. Benjamin’s characterization as a gullible Jewish man who is overly dependent upon religious symbols for comfort at inappropriate times is a further example of Mendele’s use of character portrayal as a tool for conveying his opinion that traditionalism is not an ideal way to express one’s Jewish identity.

Mendele is also highly critical of the religiously inspired social constructs that dictated gender roles within *shtetl* life, and he displays this judgment through characterizing literary figures in an unattractive manner within his work. In the Eastern European *shtetl* society, the men were expected to devote the majority of their time to religious study, while the women were supposed to take after the mundane affairs of the household. The literary treatment of the unproductive relationship between Benjamin and his wife Zelda is a prime example of how Mendele expressed his opinion that such gender role assignments are counterproductive. When Benjamin wishes to leave on his fruitless journey, he finds himself handicapped by the fact that “he didn’t have a farthing to his name, having spent all his days in the study house while his wife struggled to make a living” (Abramovitch 1996, 318). This portrayal of Benjamin as being financially useless, as well as dependent on his wife, would have been considered at best unorthodox, and at worst humiliating, by the Western standards that Mendele was familiar with, which operated on a patriarchal system consisting of men exerting their financial and social power in order to prove their worth. Being outshined by one’s wife in the economic sector, as

was the case in traditional *shtetl* society, would have been seen as a highly emasculating experience in Mendele's emancipated world.

Mendele continues his polemic against these supposedly destructive traditional gender roles with his characterization of the relationship between Benjamin's travel mate, Sendrel, and his aggressive wife. Sendrel's character is completely dominated by fear of his wife, as within their relationship "his wife wore the pants and let him know it, and his fate at her hands was a bitter one" (Abramovitch 1996, 321), involving corporeal punishments and degradation, including being forced to perform all the housework that is usually delegated to the female of the house. Sendrel is described as "the butt of every joke" and "meek as a brindled cow" (Abramovitch 1996, 320), displaying that both his personal autonomy and self esteem are sacrificed by his ascribing to the traditional gender roles that force him into subservience. He is even referred to as "Dame Sendrel", and is described as "wearing a calico dress and having a kerchief on [his] head" (Abramovitch 1996, 323) on the day that he and Benjamin set out for their journey, which serves to completely strip Sendrel of his manhood and replace it with femininity. Mendele's cartoonish and somewhat repulsive characterizations of both Sendrel and his wife, and the toxicity of their relationship within the context of Jewish religious gender roles, is a prime example of his campaign against traditional Jewish life, which he did not see as a realistic or productive means for Jews to grow and express themselves within the modern world.

If Mendele's relationship to Jewish tradition within his literature can be considered polemic, the appropriate label for Sholem Aleichem's attitude towards Jewish ritual observance in his work is of ambivalence. In his serialized collection of short stories entitled "Tevye the Dairyman", he creates characters with many diverse relationships to Jewish observance, and does not seem to form a single final judgment in regards to the benefit or the detriment of the role of

religious tradition towards the collective Jewish interest. The main character, Tevye himself, is a pious man, and one of his key characteristics is his affinity for quoting Scripture to support his arguments in conversation. Although he often annoys whoever happens to be his conversation partner with these Biblical tidbits, prompting such responses as “spare us your Bible!” (Rabinovitch 1996, 42) from his wife Golde, this habit is seen, at least in the initial chapters, as more as an adorable quirk than something harmful. Tevye also chooses to use his religious knowledge as a basis for compassion, which portrays his piety in a positive light. An example of this is when he reasons to himself that since his daughter Tzaytl is averse to marrying the butcher Layzer Wolf, to whom she was arranged to be betrothed, “it simply wasn’t meant to be in the first place...[and] if it didn’t work out, God must not have wanted it to” (Rabinovitch 1996, 45), and he does not force her to marry the butcher like another, less benevolent father might have done. However, this positive view of Tevye’s religious reverence does not remain uniform throughout the series, as his religiosity appears at times to be more of a detriment than a virtue. His reliance on Scripture as a guide to all aspects of his life, for example, is seen as a restrictive barrier between his perceptions, which are limited to the world of Jewish tradition and law, and reality, which very often requires a perspective independent of religious thought. For example, when his daughter Chava left the Jewish faith to marry a non-Jew, Tevye was completely oblivious to the situation until it was too late and she had already deserted the family. When Tevye asks his wife why he wasn’t made aware of the quandary earlier, she asks him accusingly in return: “even if I had said it, would you have heard it?” She then asserts to her husband: “all you ever do when you’re told anything is spout some verse from the Bible. You Bible a person half to death and think you’ve solved the problem” (Rabinovitch, 76). This sheds light upon a negative aspect of Tevye’s reliance upon religiosity – that his musings hold little to no

significance when it comes to the issue of solving many problems that exist in the real world. In the final chapter of the series, however, the practice of Jewish tradition is again seen as a favourable attribute. When Tevye and the rest of the Jews in his neighborhood are expelled from their area of the Pale of Settlement, Tevye's religion is seen as a great comfort to him in this time of crisis and change. As he is about to leave his town of Boiberik for the last time, he asserts to the reader that "I'm still Tevye...I'm just a plain everyday Jew" (Rabinovitch 1996, 117), confirming to himself and to his audience that his Jewish identity will always follow him loyally, no matter what the future may hold. Sholem Aleichem therefore ascribes both positive and unfavourable aspects to the observance of Jewish tradition as examined through the characterization of Tevye, with no overarching judgment as to its benefit or lack thereof.

Tevye's daughter Chava chooses to leave her Jewish background behind entirely in order to marry her non-Jewish sweetheart. Although one would expect that such a dramatic act should shed some light on Sholem Aleichem's opinions concerning the merits, or lack thereof, of preserving Jewish tradition, the reader is still left unsure of the literary status that religious observance holds in the work by the end of Chava's literary characterization. On one hand, Chava's conversion to Christianity is portrayed as having a devastating effect upon her family – they were forced to pretend she was dead, as per Jewish law, and "pretend there never was any Chava to begin with" (Rabinovitch 1996, 78) as they sat through the seven days of mourning. However, Chava's disastrous choice does not label her character as an adverse one for the rest of the work. To the contrary, the loss of Chava inspires her father to share even more positive memories of her with the reader, such as a touching description of her childhood illnesses, and an account of her "having been such a good, dependable child who loved her parents body and soul" (Rabinovitch 1996, 78), which inspires pity upon her in the reader, rather than

disappointment or anger. Additionally, even Tevye begins to question his strict interpretation of Jewish identity as being strictly separate from non-Jewish influence in light of Chava's desertion of Judaism, musing that "what did being a Jew or not a Jew matter?...Why put such walls between them, so that neither would look at the other?" (Rabinovitch 1996, 81) At the end of the series, Chava returns to her family and to her faith, right as they are about to leave after being expelled from the Pale of Settlement. The complicated nature of Chava's journey concerning her Jewish identity remains consistent with Sholem Aleichem's reluctance to provide a specific opinion concerning which role Jewish tradition should play in the modern world of Yiddish literature.

Yitzhik Lieb Peretz exhibits his affinity for Jewish tradition, and his distrust of modernity, through characterization of several literary figures within his work. One of Peretz's most striking examples of exalting Jewish tradition as a form of beauty, while warning of the potential dangers that can come with modern sensibility, is in his epic ballad called 'Monish'. This poem details the story of a prodigious young Torah scholar who falls prey to the devil Lilith, who appears to him in the form of a woman. Lilith tricks him into succumbing to the wiles of innovation by giving up his Jewish traditional lifestyle, and Monish is trapped in a modernized mentality, without rest or respite. Before his 'enlightenment', he lives a comfortable and happy life as a bright and revered young religious scholar. He is described before his first exposure to enlightened thought: "He laps up Torah like a sponge. /His mind is lightning...and he's beautiful, /black as night, his locks;/ his lips are roses;/ black arching eyebrows/ and sky-blue eyes,/ fire-bright" (Peretz 1990, 5). In this poem, Peretz associates Monish's piety with good looks and intelligence, which are much more positive affiliations with Jewish tradition than what can be found in the works of Mendele or Sholom Aleichem. When he gives up his piety for the

sake of Lilith, he swears his love for her by all of the ritual paraphernalia that had never been ascribed such reverence before in secular Yiddish literature: “he swears by his earlocks,/ his fringes, his *tfiln*...he swears by the curtain of the ark / that holds the Torah...he barely stops to reason, / he swears by the Messiah / and his *shoyfer*...he sinfully speaks the name of God / and is struck by the thunder of his rod” (Peretz 1990, 14). It is apparent that Peretz assigns some innate religiosity to these items in the context of this poem, as Monish is sent to Gehanna, the Jewish conception of hell, for his blasphemy. After Monish gives up his religiosity for the sake of his immersion in modernity, he is described as being “nailed by his earlobe /to the doorway of the ark” (Peretz 1990, 15), which is significant symbolically, as being attached to an object by one’s earlobe is an ancient sign of slavery. This description signifies that Monish voluntarily became a slave to the demands of modernity when he gave up his traditional Judaism. This may display Peretz’s jaded view of the trials and tribulations of living a life as an artist in the early modern world, as Peretz did not necessarily view that lifestyle as a liberating experience, but rather an unfulfilling one.

Peretz’s characterizations of Hasidic figures in his short stories, who often appear as protagonists, are also representative of his respect for Jewish tradition. A famous example of this is within Peretz’s short story “If Not Higher”. In this tale, the Hasidic Rabbi of Nemirov disappears every Friday before the Penitential prayers. While his Chasidim are in awe of him and are convinced that he is doing good work, a Litvak who is an opponent of Hasidism, who is criticized as “think[ing] little of holy books but stuff[ing] himself with Talmud and Law” (Peretz 1990, 178), becomes convinced that he must spy on the rabbi and see for himself what he is doing. He follows this rabbi and sees that he is anonymously performing good deeds while dressed as a non-Jew. After the Litvak is thus proved wrong by the righteousness of the Chasidic

rabbi, his constant need for proof has abated. He becomes a disciple of the rebbe himself, and “when another disciple tells how the rabbi of Nemirov ascends to heaven at the time of Penitential prayers, the Litvak does not laugh. He only adds quietly, ‘If not higher’” (Peretz 1990, 180-1). This is a clear example of the Litvak surrendering his need for empiricism in favour of blind faith, as he does not know what is above heaven, but he is placing his trust in the perceived holiness of the Chasidic rebbe.

The three Classical Yiddish writers, from Mendele to Sholem Aleichem to Peretz, consecutively grew more comfortable with celebrating the legacy of Jewish tradition as a legitimate and desirable means of expressing one’s cultural identity, as expressed through characterizations within their works. As Ruth Wisse notes in her introduction to ‘The I. L. Peretz Reader’, “Peretz was among the first to recognize in the ideals of the early Hasidic masters...models of spiritual dependence that the Jews of his time were otherwise lacking” (Wisse 1990, xxi). Perhaps this is part of the reason why, in comparison to Peretz’s work, Mendele literary tone against observant Jewry appears to be disparaging, while Sholem Aleichem’s attitude seems uncommitted towards the issue – neither of them had found religious role models on which to base their notions of Jewish expression like Peretz. If they had found a similar influence, it is possible that their relationships towards religious expressions of Judaism could have appeared quite differently within their literary creations.

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Memoir Analysis:

Gary Shteyngart's *Little Failure*

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The tale of the immigrant is often a sombre tale of a hard readjustment to a new life. There are many themes that are recurrent among immigrant's stories; they are often peppered with conflicts, conflicts between different worlds, different generations, and different cultures. These conflicts give rise to themes that are familiar between many of the stories; themes of ambivalence between identities or generations. This paper studies the tension and ambivalence many Russian Jewish immigrants to the United States felt as a result of their vast differences to the residents of their new country. These immigrants found themselves in a foreign land burdened with different language, an accent, and many cultural and political practices that contrasted harshly with those of their new home. The second generation, or the children of these immigrants, felt this tension particularly strongly. This strain is exemplified in Gary Shteyngart's memoir *Little Failure*, which depicts his transformation from a child growing up in Leningrad, to a seven year old moving to New York, to an Americanized rebellious teenager.¹⁷³ In New York, the author struggled through many normal trials and tribulations of a growing young adult, but had a distinct twist on these experiences as a result of his background. During Shteyngart's early childhood in Soviet Russia, Jews were not allowed to assimilate or live a fully Jewish life,¹⁷⁴ they often found themselves caught in a trap, unable to practice their own religion while

¹⁷³ Shteyngart, Gary. "Gary." Web. 27 Nov. 2014.

¹⁷⁴ "The Status of the Jews in the Soviet Union." Foreign Affairs. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.

simultaneously remaining labelled as Jews and unable to fully integrate into Russian society. This clashing of identities was carried over with them to their new home, contributing to the reluctant ambivalence Shteyngart expresses in his memoir. As the mass emigration of Jews from Soviet Russia ensued, those Jews who were left behind were shut out of society, many were barred from joining universities or lost their jobs as the system alienated its own people.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, many were clinging onto whatever form of Judaism they knew, whether that be increasing their feeling of belonging by learning Hebrew or participating in the widely celebrated *Simchat Torah*, the one day when masses of Soviet Jews came out to celebrate their identity as Jews.¹⁷⁶ Shteyngart's touching memoir also poignantly details the differences between a Jewish Russian immigrant's upbringing contrasted against that of an American-born Jew, and ultimately how the two coalesce on American soil. In Gary Shteyngart's memoir *Little Failure*, the reader observes the ambivalence of Jewish emigres from Soviet Russia at the end of the 1970's, played out in the author's internal dichotomy between being Soviet and being American, the external conflict between the generations, displayed as one between him and his slow adapting parents; and the overarching societal conflict between Soviet and American Jews.

The contrast that is first overtly noticeable in the book is between being Russian and being American. While one could argue that this is a feature of many immigrant's stories, *Little Failure* gives the reader insight into a nuanced conflict that was experienced by the Russian Jewish immigrant to the United States. Shteyngart originally viewed immigrating

¹⁷⁵ Gitelman, Zvi Y. *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*. Schocken, 1988. Print.

¹⁷⁶ Pullin, Inna. "A Soviet Simchat Torah." Aish.com. Web. 29 Nov. 2014.

to the United States as “...going to the enemy”.¹⁷⁷ He possessed a contempt for American culture, for the uncultured, anti-intelligence breeding society; and believed Soviet culture to be superior. As part of the Soviet agenda was to ensure the masses received a basic education,¹⁷⁸ this was a sentiment held by many Russians, including many Russian Jews. This love of culture is detected in Shteyngart early on as he, a child, made himself a “Culture Couch” because “culture is very important.”¹⁷⁹ Beyond this, Shteyngart desired to be American in the same way many immigrants feel a hunger to be a part of something new and better than what they left behind. One substantial psychological hurdle to his American dream arose from the geo-political conditions under which Soviet Russia was coaxed to permit emigration of Jewish citizens. At the time, Soviet Russia was suffering from grain shortages and so “in exchange for tons of grain and some high technology...the USSR allow[ed] many of its Jews to leave”.¹⁸⁰ Shteyngart viewed this as a straight commodity exchange and felt that he and his fellow Russian Jews had been bartered off for some grain. The Jews who were a part of this scheme he coined the “Grain Jews”.¹⁸¹ As Shteyngart slowly shed his contempt for his new home, his feelings transformed into a strong desire to be accepted as an American Republican who, like his parents, hated the Soviet Union and socialism and loved Ronald Reagan and open market capitalism.¹⁸² Although Shteyngart began to idolize the American lifestyle and longed to shed his

¹⁷⁷ Shteyngart, Gary. "My Maddonachka." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 83. Print.

¹⁷⁸ Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979. Print.

¹⁷⁹ Shteyngart, Gary. "Moscow Square." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 56. Print.

¹⁸⁰ Shteyngart, Gary. "Moscow Square." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 62. Print.

¹⁸¹ Shteyngart, Gary. "The Solomon Schechter School of Queens." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 104. Print.

¹⁸² Shteyngart, Gary. "Gary Shteyngart: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Mensch." *The Guardian*. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.

embarrassing Russian-ness, the ambivalence in his identity was not something he could simply wash off. His difference is felt by the reader often throughout the memoir; in the cruel nicknames “Stinky Russian Bear” and “Red Gerbil” he is given at school, in the backwardness of the “cupping” which he receives to help combat his sickliness,¹⁸³ and in the daily embarrassment he receives thanks to his parents. The author details a story in which he was returning from a vacation with his parents and they stopped at a McDonald's for lunch. They then pulled out a cooler with a “full Russian lunch”.¹⁸⁴ The reader feels the young child's despair, the difficulty he had walking away from the quintessentially American McDonald's to the Russian feast that his parents were providing, affording him a cruel reminder of his unwanted identity as a Russian *within* America. He removed himself from the situation to watch the “resident aliens”¹⁸⁵ continue their meal, willing a rift to form between these two integral yet conflicting parts of his young-adult identity. Through many of these interactions, the author paints a picture for the reader of the pronounced ambivalence the author experienced between his original Russian identity versus his shiny, new, American identity. Shteyngart sheds light on the internal ambivalence many Russian Jewish immigrants in his position felt, he connected strongly with the Russian cultural belief in the significance of education and appreciation for culture, reading, music, and art, while also feeling a strong pull towards the lustrous United States, where “the distance between wanting something and having it delivered to your living room [was] not terribly great.”¹⁸⁶

The second point of ambivalence that becomes apparent as the reader delves further into the memoir is the contrast between Shteyngart, the second generation, and his parents. This

¹⁸³ Shteyngart, Gary. “Moscow Square.” *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 51. Print.

¹⁸⁴ Shteyngart, Gary. “Sixty-Nine Cents.” *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 181. Print.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Shteyngart, Gary. “We Are the Enemy.” *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 100. Print.

contrast is one of the classic dichotomies in immigrant stories, as children tend to better adapt to their surroundings than their older, more well-established parents. Within this dynamic, there are two conflicts within the memoir: the generational gap and children's competence in adapting to their new surroundings, and Shteyngart's relationship with his father, as a friend and as a child who is exposed to his father's version of tough love, which was arguably abuse. While his parents dreamed of him becoming a lawyer, Shteyngart was content with being a “failure” and spent his time desperately trying to make friends and getting into common teenage trouble. After the aforementioned McDonald's incident, the author realized that he had become “so unlike them [his parents],”¹⁸⁷ the generational gap that had formed between him and his parents had become more obvious with time. Shteyngart believed that his parents “never really left Russia,” and that “the softness of this country [the United States] had not softened [them]”.¹⁸⁸ While Shteyngart's parents remained Russian, he was attempting to overcome his Russian-ness and become American. His parents' attachment to their Russian roots was also evident in their Judaism. While Shteyngart's father had a vested interest in gaining attachment to the Jewish community, the author seemed rather uninterested. He satirized his religious education by writing the *Gnora*, a “Torah” that he then showed to his classmates that mocked the Solomon Schechter School of Queens, the Jewish day school he attended; and everything he had learned there. Although Shteyngart seemed impartial to religion, he was also the only member of his family who received any formal religious education, which was the cause for another divide between him and his parents. At the book's close, when his father asks his son to “please read a prayer

¹⁸⁷ Shteyngart, Gary. “Sixty-Nine Cents.” *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 182. Print.

¹⁸⁸ Shteyngart, Gary. “Razvod.” *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 307. Print.

for me”¹⁸⁹, the reader gets a sense of this divide. The author's father is established early on in the memoir as Shteyngart's “real best friend”.¹⁹⁰ Although this title does not change, the reader senses a dichotomy between this love and admiration and the continuous emotional, verbal, and physical abuse that the author endured at the hand of his father. Shteyngart attempted to pass it off as a cultural difference, but it is clear that this deep love-hate relationship is not characteristic of all families. The ambivalence between his father's love and abuse is demonstrated in Shteyngart's depiction of his playing with the pen that “you can click open and shut...”, which is then interrupted by “the sound of open palm hitting adolescent neck”.¹⁹¹ The child's fascination with the mechanical pen, a natural metaphor to characterize his fascination with American life and culture, is contrasted starkly in the moment with his father's hand coming down on him, the violence a representation not only of the Russian culture his parents are clinging to, but also of the other side to his father, the side of the abusive “best friend”.

The third point of ambivalence in the memoir is the author's struggle between being a Russian Jew and being an American Jew, and of discerning which community he belonged to. The American Jews viewed Russian Jews as being uneducated in proper religious practices, a sentiment that is still held by many North American Jews today. As he came from a Jewish community that recognized Israel as the place where they could “have fatless ham”¹⁹², from the American Jews' perspective Shteyngart was of no comparable religion to the Jews at Solomon Schechter School of Queens. To these American Jews, Shteyngart, like many other Russian

¹⁸⁹ Shteyngart, Gary. “The Church and the Helicopter.” *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 348. Print.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 11.

¹⁹¹ Shteyngart, Gary. “We Are the Enemy.” *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 97. Print.

¹⁹² Shteyngart, Gary. “Moscow Square.” *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 49. Print.

Jews at the time, was a Jew who ate “dangerously chewy cold baked pork”¹⁹³ and “turkey [with] cream”¹⁹⁴, who clearly disobeyed *kashrut* (Jewish dietary laws) and everything which they represent to the Jewish people. Shteyngart's father is a fantastic literary example of this since he does not know any Hebrew and does not own a “proper yarmulke”¹⁹⁵. In this, he represents a majority of Russian Jews. Beyond the general community dynamics, the beliefs and Jewish education are fundamentally different between the Russian Jews and the American Jews. For example, Shteyngart was not circumcised when he moved to the United States, one of the most crucial *mitzvot* (commandments) in Jewish tradition¹⁹⁶, characterizing the Russian Jews' detachment with the religion. He was later “[given] the present every boy wants. A circumcision,”¹⁹⁷ which done later on in a boy's life constitutes a much more serious procedure than one performed ritually eight days after birth. This, in his and his parents' minds, officially made him a Jew. They were willing to take considerable actions to become a part of the community, emblematic of their strong desires to be accepted as American Jews. Although Shteyngart's father desired to be Jewish, his mother was less certain. His father “want[ed] very much to be a practicing Jew” while his mother “sometimes pray[ed] in the Christian manner”¹⁹⁸. Shteyngart's father's aspiration to be a part of the larger American Jewish community collective is reminiscent of David Bezmozgis' *Roman Berman, Massage Therapist* from *Natasha*. In the short story, the young family desperately wanted to be a part of the Jewish community, seemingly so that they could take advantage of it and use its resources for their gain. Although

¹⁹³ Shteyngart, Gary. "Enter the Snotty." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 23. Print.

¹⁹⁴ Shteyngart, Gary. "I Am Still the Big One." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 27. Print.

¹⁹⁵ Shteyngart, Gary. "The Solomon Schechter School of Queens." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 108. Print.

¹⁹⁶ Zaklikowski, Dovid. "Why Circumcise? The Importance of the Brit Milah." Chabad.org. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.

¹⁹⁷ Shteyngart, Gary. "Agoof." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 117. Print.

¹⁹⁸ Shteyngart, Gary. "The Solomon Schechter School of Queens." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 109. Print.

on the surface, this story is unlike *Little Failure*, if the reader delves a little bit deeper they will find that the child in *Roman Berman, Massage Therapist* talks about how “before Stalin, [his] great-grandmother lit the candles and made an apple cake every Friday night.”¹⁹⁹ Although this was a tradition that had died off, the young boys' mother still baked the apple cake and brought it to present at their dinner at the Kornblum's, the wealthy American family they were seeking help from. There was still some connection to and some ambition to be a part of the community, for more than just the monetary gain it may have brought them. That being said, the cake was not served at the Kornblum's because it was not up to the family's standard of *kashrut*, it was not baked in a kosher kitchen. This scene constructs a picture in the reader's mind with an evident power dynamic: that the American family has superiority over the Russian one. There emerges this dichotomy of the immigrants wishing to be a part of something that does not truly want them back, akin to the situation with the Shteyngarts.

As with using any historical source, using a memoir or first hand source as a window to the past has its limitations. Firstly, the memoir is written in a certain time frame, representing specific feelings at that time. While these feelings can be interpreted and extrapolated to apply to the larger Russian Jewish immigrant community, a memoir is effectively just a diary of one individual. Shteyngart's work may have been affected by his adult interpretation of past events or even potentially his time spent in psychoanalysis. His life experiences are certainly a factor in how his memoir was written, from his fondness for self-deprecating humour to his tumultuous relationships with everyone in his life. While the memoir allows the author's emotions to prevail, the authors' feelings regularly become

¹⁹⁹ Bezmozgis, David. "Roman Berman, Massage Therapist." *Natasha and Other Stories*. HarperCollins Canada, 2011. 30. Print

entangled with the actual history, guiding the reader instead towards a certain individual's truth, and potentially misleading the reader from the objective historical facts²⁰⁰. Secondly, as the memoir is not an encyclopedia or other academic text, it leaves meanings very much up to interpretation. Readers are not always certain to divine the author's actual meaning, although they may assume that they have understood it. The analysis can differ immensely person to person, as each individual may connect to something different within Shteyngart's story. Third, one individual's experiences may not be representative of prevailing social trends, but instead may be characterized by unique random experiences. For example, there is no research that would suggest that all Jewish Russian immigrant children to the United States circa 1979 experienced a love-hate relationship with their borderline abusive father. While it may very well be applicable to others, this experience is uniquely Shteyngart's. Lastly, memoirs represent the viewpoints of a snapshot in time. The author may change his opinion, such as the change that can be detected within Shteyngart, who develops from being a "militant worshipper of the Red Army"²⁰¹, to being a staunch Republican. Overall, memoirs are an excellent source for assisting a researcher in his or her quest to paint an historical picture, but there are many constraints that can

²⁰⁰"Primary Sources: Strengths/Weakness." UTS Library. Web. 27 Nov. 2014.

²⁰¹Shteyngart, Gary. "The Church and the Helicopter." *Little Failure: A Memoir*. Random House Group, 2014. 14. Print.

negatively affect one's overall analysis of the information provided. Incorporating other sources is always a wise idea and will generally give the researcher a much bigger picture. Documents, such as those from governments or flyers, oral histories, and textbooks are other excellent sources of historical information that will help a researcher better understand and formulate a story about the time frame they are researching.

Immigrant stories are always steeped in difficulty, harsh realities, and overcoming mounting challenges. There are many common themes that are frequently present within these stories. Conflict arises in many forms, and is easily one of the most identifiably overarching themes within them. There are many forms this conflict takes, but it is often observed as a type of ambivalence that develops in these immigrants' identities. This paper analyzed Gary Shteyngart's memoir *Little Failure* and attempted to shed light on what his memoir could tell a reader about Russian Jewish immigrants' experiences in the United States near the close of the 1970s. While it is clear that Shteyngart's experiences are not to be taken as a representation of all other Russian Jewish immigrants' at the time, there are three clear points of ambivalence within his identity that can be extrapolated, adjusted, and applied to the greater population. Those three points are Russian versus American, the generational conflict of him versus his parents, and the societal conflict of American versus Russian Jews. These three conflicts can be used to hypothesize others' parallel experiences at the time and can certainly provide insight as to the issues other Russian Jewish immigrants experienced alongside the author. These three conflicts, of being Russian or American, that between the author and his parents, and the overarching conflict between

the two Jewish communities, come together to create the overall ambivalent identity that is characterized by the young Gary Shteyngart in his memoir, *Little Failure*.

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