REPORT OF THE OXFORD CENTRE FOR HEBREW AND JEWISH STUDIES

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2008–2009

A RECOGNIZED
INDEPENDENT CENTRE OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

OXFORD CENTRE FOR
HEBREW AND JEWISH STUDIES

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Registered Charity No. 309720
IRS No. for the American Friends 13-2943469
Registered Company No. 1109384
ISSN *1368 9096*

Cover illustration: *A design based on Hebrew printers' motifs and the names of printing centres*

Designed by Pete Russell, Faringdon, Oxon
Typeset in 10/12pt Galliard by
John Saunders Design & Production, Abingdon, Oxfordshire
Printed in Great Britain by
Information Press, Eynsham, Oxfordshire

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Dr DAVID ARIEL
President

September 2009

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Case Statement of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies

The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies is a Recognized Independent Centre of the University of Oxford. Its mission is to provide an outstanding curriculum of Hebrew and Jewish studies at one of the world's leading universities and to promote knowledge and understanding about Jewish history, religion and culture, as well as about Jewish interactions with and contributions to other cultures.

The Centre was founded in 1972 to help restore Jewish studies in Europe in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Today it is the leading academic Jewish studies centre in Europe. Its 12 fellows and 9 lecturers provide courses in Hebrew and Jewish studies for undergraduates and postgraduates up to doctoral level in many faculties within the University. The Centre also promotes Jewish studies based on the Bodleian Library's Hebrew and Jewish collections, by supporting research, by development projects and by shared staffing with the Centre's Leopold Muller Memorial Library.

Yarnton Manor, a unique academic destination four miles from the centre of Oxford, is home to the Centre's international students, visiting fellows and Muller Library. The Muller Library includes several unique collections of materials relating to European Jewry. The Centre also hosts the European Association of Jewish Studies and the *Journal of Jewish Studies*.

The Centre has a significant academic impact on the University of Oxford. The Centre's fellows currently teach 30 undergraduates, 15 Master of Studies and MPhil students and 20 DPhil students. Several hundred other students attend lecture courses. Since 1985, Yarnton Manor has been home to 368 students and 450 visiting fellows.

Students taught by the Centre's fellows have gone on to academic positions in Hebrew and Jewish studies, or in related fields such as history, religious studies and cultural studies, at leading universities in the United Kingdom, North America, Europe and Asia. The Centre has thus influenced Jewish studies in many settings, including China,

Estonia, Germany, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Romania and Switzerland. Students come from a variety of backgrounds – Jewish, Christian, Muslim and other – and from more than 40 countries, including Israel, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and the former Soviet Union.

The University of Oxford can claim one of the longest institutional histories of teaching Hebrew studies in the world, since the establishment of the Regius Professorship of Hebrew in 1546. The Bodleian Library, whose Jewish collections were founded in 1600, is the world's richest treasury of manuscripts and books related to medieval European Jewish civilization. Its holdings include the entire canon of Hebrew and Aramaic literature; records of Jewish-Christian collaboration around biblical interpretation; documents of medieval Jewish and Muslim cooperation in science and philosophy; and the world's finest assemblage of early printed Yiddish books, showing – among other things – the unique role and literary activity of Jewish women in Eastern European society. The Muller Library is an incomparable scholarly resource for understanding modern European Jewish civilization. In other words, to know European Jewish civilization, one must go – actually or virtually – to Oxford.

The Centre's teaching and research efforts, based on the unique resources of the University of Oxford and the Bodleian Library, also serve to advance knowledge about the complex history of Jewish interaction with other religions and cultures, and help to provide an alternative narrative to the prevailing message of inter-religious conflict.

In order to fulfill the mission of providing an outstanding curriculum of Hebrew and Jewish studies at one of the world's leading universities, disseminating a more informed and nuanced narrative about European Jewish civilization and promoting greater understanding of Jewish, Christian and Muslim interaction, the Centre requires additional funding. The Centre's financial strategy is fully to fund the existing fellows' positions and also to fund new posts in core areas in Jewish studies and in areas unique to the Bodleian collection.

In Memoriam
DR SIDNEY BRICHTO
1936–2009

In his autobiographical book *Ritual Slaughter: Growing up Jewish in America* (2001) Sidney described his childhood as a series of tensions that shaped the rest of his life. Intellectually, he was pulled between his immersion in sacred Hebrew texts and his growing love of Western literature. Because he came from a line of hasidic rabbis and talmud scholars, he felt caught between his Orthodox upbringing and what he called his 'heresy' – his conviction that ideas mattered more than ritual behaviour. He also wrote about how he struggled with physical limitations caused by a congenital hernia and asthma.

Sidney wrote: 'Judaism is my only inheritance and I made the most of it'. From his grandfather, he learned that the intellect was the essence of human life. From his father, he learned a love of Judaism and Jewish books. From his brother, Chanan, he learned about the wider world of literature and culture.

Sidney's life is a testimony to the ways he overcame what he called 'the polarities and inconsistencies of his life'. He once once described how, 'Because I needed to survive by my wits and not by muscles, because excitement was only possible for me in the world of ideas, I have always enjoyed a good moral or intellectual battle. It makes me feel alive, no doubt in the same way a soccer player feels when his team's effort has led to a goal. But as soon as the game has been played, I seek a conclusion, reconciliation, peace, and a return to good fellowship. The achievement of a compromise is, in my view, a victory.'

Sidney was a man of passion and of peace. Many knew the Sidney who became righteously indignant when he saw an injustice to Israel or the Jewish people. In this, he was relentless. But the same man loved people, brought friends and colleagues together, reconciled disagreements, and multiplied friendships in the world. He was, indeed, the consummate networker.

Sidney expressed many of his lifelong principles through his work on behalf of the Centre. As the Centre's new president, I only worked with

Sidney for only a few months, but he quickly became more than a colleague: a friend and mentor.

Sidney was a passionate supporter of the Centre from its early days, becoming a governor and, more recently, its fundraiser. He threw himself wholeheartedly into helping the Centre because Judaism was his inheritance, because of his love of Jewish learning, and because of his passion for intellectual enterprise.

In Memoriam Dr Sidney Brichto

Sidney worked tirelessly to introduce his friends to the Centre and encouraged many to become involved. In this, as in all his pursuits, Sidney was determined and persistent. He worked hard for Jewish studies at Oxford University because he wanted to offer his friends the opportunity to do likewise. Learning had changed his world, and he wanted to help others to be similarly transformed. Sidney described his own graduate education in Jewish studies at Hebrew Union College in this way: 'I became proud not only of Judaism's history, but of its philosophy. My Jewishness did not deny me the best of life, but, on the contrary, gave me the means to enrich it.' He wanted to help others have that same experience.

Sidney embodied what the author of the Hebrew work, *Shenei Luhot Haberit*, 'Two Tablets of the Law', described as the Jewish ideal: 'A man who loves people and is loved by them, a person of peace, a complete person, one who strengthens the world in his words and daily conversations'. Sidney strengthened the world; the world needed him, and we will miss him.

Dr David Ariel

In Memoriam
SIDNEY COROB, CBE
1923–2009

Sidney Corob was a generous and committed philanthropist who supported a wide range of charitable causes in Britain and in Israel, particularly in the areas of education, academia, science, care of the sick and elderly, community support and interfaith relations. He passed away in February 2009 after a prolonged period of ill-health.

The Oxford Centre was one of many charitable institutions which benefited from his munificence. He provided for the establishment of the Woolf Corob Fellowship in Yiddish Studies, named after his father and reflecting his love for his Jewish heritage and his own student days at the

Etz Chaim Yeshivah in East London. His wife, Elizabeth, a long-standing and committed Governor of the Centre, continues to make her offices available for meetings of the Governors in London.

Sidney Corob had a successful career in property and real estate, in which he was supported by Elizabeth during their sixty years of marriage. Her devotion to him was particularly significant during his ill-health in recent years, during which Elizabeth conducted herself with great dignity.

Sidney Corob's generosity in supporting a wide spectrum of charitable causes was was recognized publicly in 1993 by his award of a CBE for services to charity and interfaith relations. Many recipients of his kindness – individuals and others – will have said 'Uncle Sidney, God Bless Him'.

Michael Garston, OBE

In Memoriam
DR NOAH LUCAS
1927–2008[1]

Noah Lucas, who died on 2 December 2008 aged 81, was an expert on the politics and history of the State of Israel and the pre-state Zionist movement. From 1988 until his retirement in 1996 he was the Centre's Fellow in Israeli Studies, as well as being a Senior Associate Fellow of the Middle East Centre at St Antony's College, Oxford. He was also the Centre's Librarian, in which capacity he oversaw a great expansion in the Library's holdings, readership and budget, especially the acquisition of the 17,000 volumes of the Elkoshi Collection and an endowment of £1 million from the estate of the late Leopold Muller.

Noah was born in Glasgow to immigrants from the Ukraine who were enthusiastic supporters of the Poalei Zion movement. He was influenced by them and by his maternal uncle in the direction of Labour Zionism, and was active in Habonim. After gaining a degree in political science from Glasgow University in 1951, he went with his family to Beit ha-Emek, the Habonim kibbutz in Israel. From 1953 to 1958 he served as head of the foreign relations department of the Histadrut, the Israeli trades union federation, and that organization gave him the subject – 'The Histadrut as a Nationalist and Socialist Movement, 1882–1948' – for the doctorate he subsequently gained at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri. From 1962 to 1966 Noah taught in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's department of political science. He then taught for a year at Glasgow University, and from 1967 until 1988 at Sheffield University's department of politics.

Noah was drawn to political science by curiosity about the ways in which power was acquired and exercised, and he tried to arouse the same curiosity in his students, sometimes by unorthodox means. At Sheffield, before beginning his first lecture to a new intake of students, he would sometimes choose two or three of them at random and tell them to move to seats in other parts of the hall, an instruction which the students

[1] A modified and expanded version of the obituary published in *The Guardian* on 6 March 2009.

obeyed with an air of puzzlement and irritation. Noah would then ask them why, since his orders had obviously annoyed them, they had obeyed him, and what they thought could have happened had they refused. This led naturally to a discussion of topics of the kind he had been due to lecture on.

Noah loathed artificial divisions between groups of people, especially if they seemed to imply any kind of superiority of one group over another. At Oxford he sometimes had to invigilate during university examinations, for which the regulations required him to wear the full academic regalia – known as subfusc – with robes or hoods. However, since he had no wish to walk through the streets of Oxford dressed in

this conspicuous and, in his eyes, elitist manner, he turned up wearing just a suit and gown, as required, and a bow tie, but not a white one, a patterned rather than a white shirt, and brown instead of black shoes. He got away with it, doubtless because the alternative would have meant disrupting the exam arrangements, but perhaps also because no one present had both the authority and the will to prevent him – as he probably guessed in advance would be the case. Any sense of ceremony or tradition in Noah was subordinated to his dislike of institutionalized divisions based in any way on class or status, and in keeping with this he preferred his students to call him by his first name.

Noah's views concerning Israel's policies towards the Arabs were doveish and sometimes controversial. He was generally in sympathy with the position of Moshe Sharett, Israel's first foreign minister, who argued, in opposition to the more activist views of David Ben-Gurion, that the conditions for long-term peace should be nurtured even at some cost to short-term security. Noah thought the post-1967 Land of Israel Movement, which advocated large-scale Jewish settlement in the newly conquered territories, was not in Israel's best interests, and he was a very active member of Peace Now. He was not surprised by the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war in October 1973, having argued for some time that the continued occupation of Arab lands was bound to lead to a new war that would be much harder for Israel than that of 1967 had been. His insistence during the war that the Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat's aim was not to destroy Israel but to regain territory, was not welcome to fundraisers for Israel, but later events suggest strongly that he was right.

Noah's best-known work was his book *The Modern History of Israel*, which came out in 1974 but was completed, apart from a postwar epilogue, before the 1973 war. Noah subsequently had the satisfaction of seeing his analysis in at least one very important area vindicated by the events that culminated in Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and the Camp David agreement the following year. However, his satisfaction was overshadowed by his regret about the war itself, which he thought could have been avoided had those in high places not misread Sadat's intentions. That has since become a widely held opinion, but Noah's views were not just the wisdom of hindsight.

Although Noah was accustomed to being attacked himself and was willing to risk unpopularity, he was reluctant to launch attacks on other people. I remember a conversation I had with him about a book review

he had written. The review had been polite rather than enthusiastic in tone and he told me that in fact there were several serious errors in the book, which he hadn't mentioned. He said that in a book covering as much ground as this one did, and going into such great detail, it was not surprising if the author made an occasional factual slip and wrote, for example, that a certain event took place in 1958 when in fact it had taken place in 1962. But if he then wrote that this event influenced discussions that took place later in 1958, you knew that he was simply inventing, and that was a serious matter. I asked Noah why he hadn't pointed the errors out, with the aim of preventing them, as far as possible, from becoming accepted truth. I think Noah did come to have some regrets that he hadn't been more outspoken, but on the whole he felt that criticisms of that kind should be made in private rather than in public.

He was also sometimes remarkably generous to his opponents. More than once I heard him praise the brilliance of a book or article written from a political viewpoint that was the diametrical opposite of his own. But there were things that made him angry, and they included deliberate or careless misrepresentation of his views. On one occasion he was asked by the literary editor of a newspaper to review a book and he duly, and on time, sent in a review of the requested length. The editor shortened the review considerably, and did so in such a clumsy way that one sentence actually expressed the opposite of what Noah believed and had said. As if that wasn't bad enough, the paper then printed a letter criticizing Noah sharply and in personal terms for what he had supposedly written. Noah of course agreed with the substance of the criticism, but was upset that it should be unjustly directed at him. He then wrote a letter himself in which he tried to set the record straight, and in which he referred with some acerbity to the fact that the editor had seen fit to publish what amounted to a review of his (Noah's) review for which he had allowed twice as much space as he had for the review itself. Some time went by and Noah's letter didn't appear in print, and it was only after he wrote a personal and quite angry letter to the editor of the paper and indicated that if his letter wasn't published he wouldn't write for that publication again, that it did eventually see the light of day.

Noah taught American as well as Middle Eastern politics. He was in demand as a reviewer and commentator, writing in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Independent* and *The Jewish Chronicle*, and also in US journals. He was an adviser to the Labour Friends of Israel and a member of

the parliamentary committee on the Middle East. In his retirement he took up painting, to which he devoted himself with great seriousness and enjoyment.

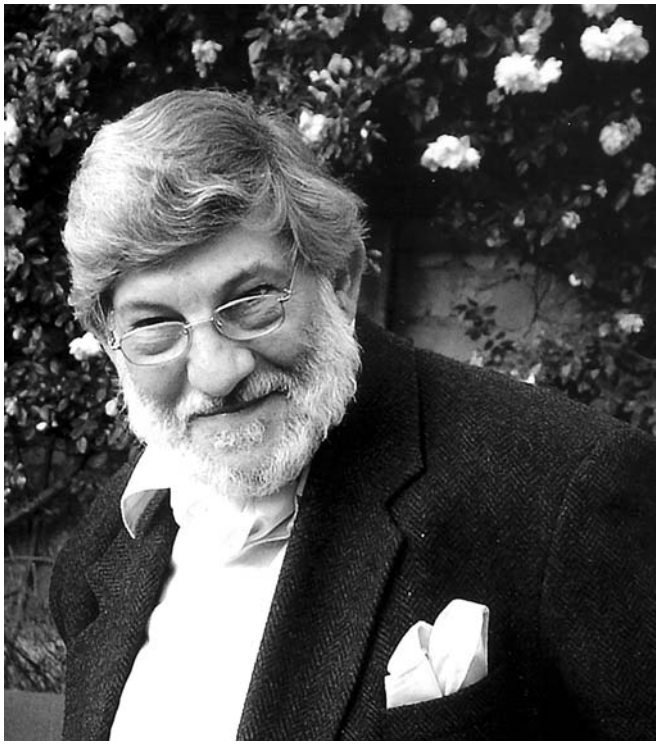
Thirteen years ago Noah was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, and his condition grew worse after he was struck by a car a few months before his death. He is survived by his wife Beatrice, whom he married in Jerusalem in 1965, and their daughters, Sonia and Tamara.

Dr George Mandel

In Memoriam
DR JOSEPH SHERMAN
1944–2009

Joseph Sherman's death has prematurely ended a prrolific and distinguished academic career that spanned continents and disciplines and drew attention to the work of writers hitherto absent from the translated canon of Yiddish literature. Born into a Yiddish-speaking family in Johannesburg, he was a nephew of the prominent South African Yiddish writer Jacob Mordecai Sherman, who provided lifelong inspiration and whose picture sat in Joseph's Oxford office. While Joseph's major research interest always lay in the field of Yiddish literature, he began his academic career as a teacher and researcher in English literature, holding the positions of Senior English Master at King Edward VII School in Johannesburg, of Vice Principal at King David High School, Victory Park (where he met his wife Karen-Anne), and later of Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand – a post he occupied until he was appointed Woolf Corob Fellow in Yiddish Studies at the Oxford Centre in 2001. Wherever he taught, whether at school or university, he made his mark as a popular and inspiring teacher, as attested by former students around the globe.

Throughout his academic career Joseph maintained an interest in literary translation, rendering into English a wide variety of authors, ranging from South African Yiddish writers to David Bergelson and Isaac Bashevis Singer (on whom he wrote his 1987 PhD dissertation, *'A Way of Dying': Problems of Jewish Identity and Jewish Survival in the Novels of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, at the University of the Witwatersrand). It was these last two authors on whom much of his recent work focused, and Joseph won the 2002 MLA Yakov and Fenia Levant Prize for Yiddish translation with his version of Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel *Shadows on the Hudson*. David Bergelson (whose stylistic modernism Joseph never tired of praising) held a particularly strong interest for him. He not only translated Bergelson's novels *Descent* (1999) and *When All Is Said and Done* (completed just before his death and to be published by Yale University Press), but co-edited a collection of essays on the writer



(*David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism*, edited by Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraikh, 2007), providing, in the words of one reviewer, a major source-work on this topic for years to come.

Joseph's interest in Bergelson led him to the work and reception of other Soviet Yiddish writers. An anthology of Soviet Yiddish writing, *From Pogrom to Purge: Soviet Yiddish writing, 1914–1947*, forthcoming in 2010, was completed just before his death, and he was also in the midst of editing – again, with Gennady Estraikh – a volume on Peretz Markish, *A Captive of the Dawn: The Life and Work of Peretz Markish, 1895–1952*, whose poem 'Fragments' was the topic of the conference paper that he gave just before falling ill.

The list of Joseph's finished and unfinished projects makes it clear that his contributions to the study of Yiddish literature will be sorely missed

and that his research, which spanned the areas of literary criticism, translation and cultural memory, will continue to play a role in Yiddish studies and benefit future generations of Yiddish scholars. Among the most recent of his many academic accolades was the Association of Jewish Libraries Judaica Reference Award for an encyclopedia of Yiddish writers that he edited (*Writers in Yiddish*, 2007). Joseph contributed to the intellectual and institutional development of Yiddish and Jewish studies at Oxford by restoring the annual A. N. Stencl Lecture in Yiddish Studies under the joint sponsorship of the Centre and the University's Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages. The series had been instituted in 1983, the year of Stencl's death, by the former Woolf Corob Fellow in Yiddish Studies, Dr Dovid Katz, but was suspended in 1994. From 2003 to 2006 he also served as Academic Director of the Centre, starting his tenure only a year after the Centre's one-year Diploma in Jewish Studies had been redesignated a Master's (MSt) degree.

Joseph will be remembered not only for his achievements, but for being a *mentsh* – for his humanity, humour and interest in all facets of life. Always dressed impeccably, with a fondness for bow-ties and matching kerchiefs, he enjoyed exchanging jokes and stories – which were lent gravitas by his sonorous voice – as much as 'talking shop', and would with equal vigour and enthusiasm share his excitement about an academic discovery, the pleasures of gardening, a good read or TV programme, or food that offered 'a taste of paradise'. Joseph gave credence to the adage that to be interesting you have to be interested. It was a privilege to have known and worked with him.

He is survived by his wife, Karen-Anne, and his three stepchildren.

Dr Kerstin Hoge

Objectivity and Engagement in Jewish Studies

DAVID ARIEL

Lateral Thinking

Rarely in life, at least, at my stage in life, do we experience the kind of intellectual provocation that shifts our fundamental perspective, causes us to rethink our deeply held assumptions, and leads us to generate alternative or parallel hypotheses. Joining a new community, however, such as I have done, can sometimes lead to taking a fresh look at assumptions that we normally take for granted. Since my arrival here, my perspective on Jewish studies has gone through a decisive shift. I would describe the shift as a lateral process where thinking jumps to a parallel track or moves sideways across the patterns instead of proceeding along a straight track. This kind of lateral thinking involves reexamining the available data, questioning our own assumptions, looking for alternative explanations, and extracting a new principle or usable idea that allows a new state of mind to be reached. In order to share with you the shift in my thinking about the nature of Jewish studies, I need to tell you a little bit about my deeply-held assumptions.

I am the product of two schools of thought within the field of Jewish studies. I was introduced to the first approach as an undergraduate in the Department of the History of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and, later, as a doctoral student in Jewish philosophy and Kabbalah at Brandeis University under the direction of Alexander Altmann – the founder of the Institute of Jewish Studies in Manchester which later moved to University College London. I was trained in a methodology that involved philological and philosophical analysis of medieval Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic manuscripts and books in order to reconstruct Jewish intellectual history. It was necessary first to master Jewish literature including Torah, Talmud, Midrash, commentaries, philosophy and Kabbalah – as well as Neo-Platonism, Kalam, Aristotelianism, Enlightenment and the modern philosophies that influenced Jewish thought. The underlying assumption of this approach is that Judaism is a

microcosm of the major Western intellectual traditions, the result of the confrontation between Jewish, Christian and Islamic thought, and the synthesis of Jewish and philosophical thought. According to this approach, Judaism travelled through every major Western intellectual tradition, absorbed the best of it, transmitted it to a neighbouring or successor culture, and preserved it after that successor culture had expired. However, this approach, which looked at the transmission of ideas among Judaism, Christianity and Islam, also viewed these three intellectual traditions, to borrow a phrase from David Ruderman, as 'separate trajectories'. My perspective as a Jewish intellectual historian required that I look at Christian and Islamic thought, but *always* from the perspective of Judaism.

The second formidable influence was Gershom Scholem, the founder of the academic study of the Jewish mystical tradition, and the leading figure in Jewish studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, whom I served as graduate teaching assistant. From Scholem I learned to understand that Judaism is the product of the dialectical relationship of 'constructive' forces – the innately conservative and communally determined religious traditions of Judaism – and powerful 'destructive' yet creative forces. These destructive forces, he argues, included the innately anarchistic power of mystical and messianic eruptions that brought the intensely personal and spiritual into the public sphere, rattled the status quo, reshaped Judaism, and produced new and unique religious developments. My perspective as a student of Kabbalah and Hasidism led me to appreciate the power of the personal and spiritual within institutional Judaism and to understand the role of the heart and the soul as a force in Jewish spirituality.

This brings me back to the lateral shift in my thinking since arriving at the Centre. The shift occurred as the result of three factors: the influence of new colleagues in the Centre who look at Judaism from the perspective of other traditions, the role that Christian Hebraism has played in the development of the Hebrew and Jewish collections of the Bodleian Library, and the history of the study of Hebrew and Judaism at the University of Oxford.

Two provocative insights have changed my thinking. First, while Jewish studies have often focused on the contributions of Judaism to world civilization and on what world civilization has contributed to Judaism, we have not sufficiently acknowledged that European

Christianity has helped to preserve Judaism even as other currents within Europe sought to destroy it. Secondly, it is necessary to approach the history of interaction between and among Judaism, Christianity and Islam not as 'separate trajectories', but from the point of view of 'intertwined trajectories', a tapestry of interwoven threads that are characterized as much by inter-religious pluralism and multiculturalism as by mutual competition and hostility.

Pluralism is the view that one's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth and that at least some truths and true values exist in other religions. Multiculturalism is the notion that a common society can encourage cultural diversity, celebrate difference and promote tolerance. The principle of interreligious pluralism and multiculturalism as an academic approach to Jewish studies might be a usable idea for the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. After all, doesn't the world need a template for ending the conflict between Muslims, Christians and Jews?

But we must first deal with two challenges. First, how can we reconcile this aim with the claim of pure academic objectivity? The academic study of Judaism aspires to objectivity and attempts to avoid theological, institutional and political biases. At the same time, the scholar's pursuit of knowledge is also a pursuit of truth, and that truth is often put in the service of what the historian holds dear. Secondly, the profession of Jewish studies must confront the challenge of how to reconcile objectivity and scholarly engagement with the claims of a living tradition. In order to evaluate the principle of interreligious pluralism as a form of scholarly engagement, we need to explore the various ways in which the Jewish studies profession has approached the issue of objectivity and engagement. I would like to do this by a brief excursion through the history of the academic study of Judaism, the role of the scholar as custodian of historical memory, and the unique context of Jewish studies at the University of Oxford.

The Academic Study of Judaism

Traditionally, the study of Judaism was restricted to the study of sacred texts, commentaries and Jewish law (*halakhah*). Despite the occasional appearance of works that chronicled Jewish suffering and the rabbinic tradition, the study of Jewish history gained little traction in Judaism until after the Expulsion from Spain in 1492. In the sixteenth century, however,

Renaissance Jewish scholars began to study Judaism more critically. The pioneer of Jewish historiography was Azariah de Rossi, author of *Me'or Einayyim* – the subject of Joanna Weinberg's magnificent study and translation. De Rossi criticized rabbinic legends for their lack of historicity, compared rabbinic knowledge unfavourably to Renaissance science, and used Jewish and Christian sources to attempt an objective chronology of Jewish history. Although he was condemned by some of his contemporaries, he introduced the use of comparative studies of Jewish sources, historical materials and non-Jewish literature. As Joanna Weinberg has said, 'De Rossi departed from previous Jewish modes of writing to produce a work which in structure and content was innovative'.[1]

It wasn't until 1819, however, that the academic study of Judaism began in earnest. In Berlin, a group of young, independent Jewish scholars – shaped by the Enlightenment – formed the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*. They identified their movement as *Wissenschaft des Judentums* – 'The Scientific Study of Judaism'. One of these young academic pioneers was Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), whose personal library and papers are preserved here in the Foyle-Montefiore Collection in the Muller Library. He proclaimed that objective Jewish scholarship is a weapon in the struggle for Jewish civil emancipation. If *Jewish* scholars become scholars *of* Judaism by showing the high level of past Jewish cultural, literary and intellectual achievements – he wrote – they will improve the political position of the Jews, persuade non-Jews that Judaism is no obstacle to social integration, and bring about the political emancipation of the Jews. In his view, when Jewish studies become recognized as an academic discipline, emancipation would necessarily follow.

He was followed by Abraham Geiger (1810–74), one of the founders of German Reform Judaism, who believed that the goal of assimilation could be achieved by identifying the Jewish contribution to European civilization. He argued that the study of Judaism is the examination of how the religious idea of ethical monotheism has been embraced by Enlightenment Christianity. This serves to justify the continued presence and, indeed, acceptance of Jews as bearers of this universal spiritual principle.

Moritz Steinschneider (1816-1907), the great bibliographer, laid the

[1] Joanna Weinberg, *The Light of the Eyes: Azariah De' Rossi* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2001) xxiii.

foundation for reconstructing the literary history of the Jewish people. In fact, he earned his scholarly reputation when he published the catalogue of Jewish books in the Bodleian Library, between 1852 and 1860. Steinschneider, however, believed that the period of Jewish creativity had ended; the period of Jewish integration into society had begun. He took this one step further when he declared in an unguarded moment: 'We have no other task than to conduct a proper funeral for Judaism'.

Gershom Scholem, himself a product of the *Wissenschaft* tradition, pointed out the contradiction between the movement's declaration of objective science and the political function of their scholarship. Scholarship was subsumed under the mission of supporting the struggle for Jewish rights by emphasizing Judaism as an Enlightenment Religion of Pure Reason, while obscuring those elements that did not support their emancipationist bias, such as nationalism, messianism and mysticism. Scholem, in characteristic style, criticized the contradiction and hypocrisy between their Enlightenment ideals and their romantic interest in creating a mythic Jewish past.

Other Jewish historians picked up where these Wissenschaft pioneers left off. Heinrich Graetz (1817-91) wrote the first comprehensive and popular history of the Jews, beginning in 1853, one of the most widely read Jewish books of the nineteenth century. Graetz returned to a more romantic and nationalist appraisal of Jewish history and stated that the history of the Jews was 'a history of suffering and scholarship'. Salo Baron, who was appointed to the first chair of Jewish studies in the United States at Columbia University in 1929, argued against Graetz's lachrymose view of Jewish history.

Here at Oxford, modern academic Jewish studies are relatively recent, although their roots go back much further. Hebrew has been studied at Oxford since the thirteenth century. Roger Bacon (1210-90) was an avid Oxonian student of Hebrew. In recent times, Cecil Roth received his doctorate in Renaissance history from Oxford in 1925, but wasn't employed as a Reader in Jewish History at Oxford until 1939. For Roth, Jewish history is the product of the interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish civilization. He highlighted the contribution of the Jews to the history of Western civilization. But, as an historian he opposed the hyper-objective tendency of academic historians who wrote for other academic historians. He thought historical work should *not* be coolly detached, but should be accessible to the public. Roth said, 'Complete objectivity

is impossible and not altogether desirable…. The ordinary Jew needed a history that would explain the facts of his own existence.' Because of this, he was often dismissed as a popularizer.

Roth has been succeeded by notable academic luminaries at Oxford. Geza Vermes, the leading authority on Jesus, the Jewish roots of early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls, was appointed the first professor of Jewish studies at Oxford after 1965. Dr David Patterson founded the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies in 1972. Martin Goodman joined the faculty in 1976. Hugh Williamson was appointed as the Regius Professor of Hebrew in 1972. The growth since then has been exceptional.

The Role of the Scholar as Custodian of Historical Memory

The modern profession of academic Jewish studies prides itself on having moved from parochial ethnocentrism to an objective academic discipline. But we continue to wrestle with the challenge of reconciling objectivity and engagement with a living tradition.

Paul Mendes-Flohr – following Max Weber – distinguishes between 'scholarship as a profession, bounded by all sorts of institutional constraints and considerations', and 'scholarship as a calling, a spiritual and even religious duty'.[2] Modern Jewish studies, in his view, are not pure detached scholarship. Even those who profess objectivity, he argues, have their own agenda. Scholem, for example, studied Kabbalah, the repressed mystical tradition of Judaism, not out of purely scientific detachment, but out of a desire to challenge the prevailing legalistic and rationalistic definitions of Judaism. He sought to 'stimulate a more vital, pluralistic definition of Jewish tradition' and 'bring about a spiritual renewal of Judaism.'[3] Scholem himself described his scholarly vocation as 'the (constructive) renewal of the nation … (through) discovery of the hidden life of the past by removing the masks and curtains which had hidden it'.[4] Mendes-Flohr argues that there is no such thing as value-free inquiry, although the scholar must try to filter out value judgments.

[2] Paul Mendes-Flohr, 'Jewish Scholarship as a Vocation', in Alfred Ivry, Eliot Wolfson and Allan Arkush (eds) *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism* (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association 1998) 33.

[3] Ibid. 41.

[4] Gershom Scholem, *On the Possiblity of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society 1997) 67.

Should Jewish studies have any impact on Jewish life? To paraphrase Hermann Cohen, 'Judaism is a living religion; it is not merely a field for antiquarian investigation'.[5] According to Alexander Altmann, 'Jewish studies could never be pursued in the utterly disinterested, existentially and spiritually detached manner attained by other historical disciplines. For even when enjoying the sponsorship of the university, Jewish studies will always stand in a peculiar relation to the Jewish community.'[6] For Altmann, Jewish studies scholars must be exemplars of intellectual integrity and rigorous argument while, at the same time, 'the scholar [should] help his student (and others) achieve clarity about historical truths in order to reach out for the eternal truths'.[7] Since Jewish studies scholars are the custodians of Jewish memory, they carry a responsibility to provide a 'sympathetic understanding of the past'.[8]

There is room to debate whether such personal engagement is an appropriate goal for an academic department of Jewish studies. History may be, as Yosef Yerushalmi calls it, 'the faith of fallen Jews' who turn to Jewish memory to construct a foundation for the Jewish future. The historical study of Judaism may be a substitute for the failure of Jewish education, a last chance to ignite adolescent and adult Jewish imagination. Or it may be an exposure to great ideas through the vernacular of Judaism, an opening to the wisdom of the world in order to create a 'romance of human possibilities'. But not all scholars of Judaism are Jewish or choose to have a personal engagement with Judaism. However, personal engagement with Judaism as a living tradition should not be excluded from the vocation of Jewish studies anymore than love of music can be excluded from a music department, devotion to French culture from a French department, or a passion for finding a medical cure from a medical sciences department. No matter where one draws the line on the limits of appropriate academic engagement, one thing is clear. In the words of Gershom Scholem, 'everyone cuts their own slice from the pie'.

[5] Mendes-Flohr (see n. 2) 42.

[6] 'Jewish Studies: Their Scope and Meaning Today', Hillel Foundation Annual Lecture, University College London, 1957, in Mendes-Flohr (see n. 2) 35.

[7] Mendes-Flohr (see n. 2) 43.

[8] Ibid. 46.

The Unique Context of Jewish Studies at Oxford

Although the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies is heir to the legacy of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the modern academic study of Judaism, it is also the product of a uniquely Oxonian legacy. That legacy is, in its simplest formulation, the world's best surviving example of intersecting religious trajectories – inter-religious pluralism among Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Medieval Christian interest in Judaism began with efforts to convert the Jews. Since the thirteenth century, Christian Orders such as the Dominicans and Franciscans sought the conversion of Jews through religious persuasion. This began as an attempt to show the Jews that the Hebrew Bible and the midrashic literature proved the truth of Christianity. Passages such as Isaiah's 'suffering servant' were quoted back to the Jews so that they should see the inherent Christological implications. In order to persuade the Jews of the truth of Christianity, Dominicans began to study rabbinic texts in their original Hebrew. They often relied on Jewish apostates, converts to Christianity, to teach them Hebrew, Talmud, midrashic writings and the commentaries.

Beginning in the late fifteenth century, Christian Hebraists in Florence, Venice and Padua began to study Hebrew for different reasons. First, they wanted to read the Bible in the original Hebrew. Secondly, they were drawn to the Kabbalah, the Jewish esoteric and mystical tradition. Thirdly, they wanted to learn the corpus of Arabic science, medicine and philosophy that survived primarily in Hebrew translation. Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) studied the range of rabbinic literature directly from Jewish teachers and Jewish converts to Christianity. Pico is perhaps best known for his study of the Spanish Kabbalah, on which he imposed a Trinitarian interpretation. Pico's leading student was Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), who turned not only to the Kabbalah, but also to rabbinic biblical commentaries in order to understand the original meaning of Hebrew Scripture.

The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation – what Matthew Arnold called 'the Hebraizing child of the Renaissance' – sought the *Hebraica Veritas*, the original Hebrew meaning of Scripture that was not conveyed accurately in Greek or Latin translation. Christian Hebraists wanted to uncover the true Hebrew meaning by going *ad fontes*, back to the source. Here at Oxford, Christian Hebraists sought to counter the

supposed excess and ignorance of the Catholic Church by going back to the true meaning of Hebrew Scripture that could be discovered only through philology – the study of texts – and knowledge of Hebrew. The study of Hebrew was soon well established at Oxford. William Tyndale (*c.* 1494–1536), a graduate of Magdalen College, published a new English translation of the Bible based on the original Hebrew. It became the basis of the 1611 King James ('Authorized') Version. In recognition of the royal view that proper education should include knowledge of Latin, Greek *and* Hebrew, the Regius professorship in Hebrew was established at Oxford in 1546. Once the principle of *Hebraica Veritas* had been established, interest in the history of the Jewish people as bearers of the Hebrew tradition followed. Christian Hebraists in England began to publish English translations of many Hebrew texts and books about Judaism.

The Puritans, who challenged the papal vestiges of the Church of England from the 1560s, came to dominate Oxford. The proper education of the clergy and gentry was to learn to emulate Jesus, a feat that required a return to a pure biblical model of living. This Biblicism too required knowledge of Hebrew. And while it also included admiration for post-biblical rabbinic commentaries, it did not include fondness for the Jewish people. In 1738, for example, D'Blossiers Tovey wrote: 'The Jews were once God's chosen people. Granted, they forfeited all this by their perverse, obstinate, and rebellious behaviour, but it is still the case that one day the Jews will be restored to greatness – that is, of course, when they do as Scriptures recommend and convert to the faith of Christ.'[9]

Because Jews were expelled from England in 1290 and not admitted back to England before 1656, English Hebraists often consulted rabbinic authorities in Europe on matters of Hebrew. However, according to David Ruderman, 'Christians often preferred to engage with Jewish ideas and texts rather than with actual Jews themselves.'[10] Meanwhile, apocalyptic millenarianists- those who actively prepared for the Second Coming- and followers of the occult during and after Elizabeth's reign

[9] D'Blossiers Tovey, *Anglia Judaica or A History of the Jews of England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1990) Introduction.

[10] David Ruderman, *Connecting the Covenants: Judaism and the Search for Christian Identity in Eighteenth Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2007) 2.

were drawn to Jewish texts and the Christian Kabbalah. The study of post-biblical Jewish texts- Midrash, Bible commentaries, Kabbalah- was common among various circles of Christian scholars throughout Europe, including England, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

By the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, Christian theologians in England sought to understand the origins of Christianity by studying early rabbinic texts in order to shed light on Judaism at the time of Jesus. They believed that the New Testament could best be read through Jewish eyes in order to understand the roots of Christianity. The Christian study of Judaism that began with the purpose of converting Jews, now came round to a deeper engagement with the study of Judaism for the sake of strengthening Christian faith. These English Hebraists, including the Dean of Norwich Humphrey Prideaux, the Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford Edward Pococke, and William Wotton and Simon Ockley at Cambridge, studied the entire body of Jewish literature. Not only that, but interest in how rabbinic Judaism had developed and was practised among Jews in the eighteenth century led Christian scholars to look at contemporary Judaism. So much so, that William Wotton, early in the eighteenth century, said: 'the education of the Christian cleric in Judaism consists of mastery of ancient literature along with a familiarity with contemporary Jewish life'.[11] These Christian Hebraists were as much the forerunners of the academic study of Judaism at the University of Oxford as were the nineteenth-century Jewish pioneers of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement.

The Hebrew and Jewish collections of the Bodleian Library are themselves the products of Christian Hebraism. In 1598 Thomas Bodley reestablished the library at the University of Oxford, the oldest university in the English-speaking world founded more than 400 years earlier. Bodley, a Christian Hebraist, amassed a collection of fifty-eight early Hebrew books, many of which had come from Venice, one of the earliest centres of Hebrew printing. Other Christian Hebraists at the University – including Archbishop Laud, Edward Pococke's mentor – recognized the importance of Hebrew and Jewish materials and continued to expand the Bodleian collection of Hebrew manuscripts and books.

In 1692 the Bodleian acquired the Huntington collection of manuscripts, which included an autographed copy of Maimonides' *Mishneh*

[11] Ibid. 91.

Torah. Soon after, Edward Pococke sold his collection to the Bodleian, including a manuscript of Maimonides' *Commentary on the Mishnah*, written entirely in Maimonides' own hand. In 1771 the Bodleian acquired the Kennicott Bible, one the finest illuminated Hebrew manuscripts in existence, a masterpiece of Sephardi culture.

The Bodleian acquired in 1829 the Oppenheimer collection, formed by a Chief Rabbi of Prague, regarded as the most important and magnificent Hebrew and Yiddish collection ever accumulated. This treasure-trove of 780 manuscripts and 4220 printed books includes many uniquely surviving copies of important Hebrew and Aramaic texts and the first printed Yiddish books from the 1530s including women's prayer books and Arthurian legends in Yiddish.

In the late nineteenth century the Bodleian acquired 5000 Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, including many of the most important records of Judeo-Islamic social history from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries.

It is difficult to overstate the significance and importance of the Bodleian collection and of the University of Oxford from the standpoint of Jewish studies. However, the following conclusions should be stated:

First, the most important repository of the material legacy of European Jewish civilization resides in Oxford. The Bodleian Library contains Hebrew, Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic and Aramaic manuscripts and books that are among the greatest surviving treasures of the last 2000 years of Jewish civilization. The reconstruction of the narrative of medieval European Jewish civilization is inconceivable without recourse to the Bodleian. If you want to know European Jewish civilization, you have to go to Oxford – actually or virtually.

Secondly, the history of Christian Hebraism and Jewish studies at Oxford – from Roger Bacon, the establishment of the Regius Professorship of Hebrew, the forming of the Bodleian Hebrew and Jewish collections, Cecil Roth, and the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies – is a chain of tradition that testifies to the fact that the University of Oxford has one of – if not *the* – longest continuous institutional histories of teaching Hebrew and Jewish studies in the world.

Thirdly, the preservation of the records of medieval European Jewish civilization was due to the actions of Christian Hebraists at Oxford who developed these collections because of their interest in Judaism. Equally important, the contents of the collections document a positive narrative

of Jewish civilization that counters the misconception that Jewish life in Christian Europe is characterized primarily by persecution, Antisemitism and suffering. The collection also includes some of the best records of medieval Jewish-Muslim collaboration and interaction around the common pursuit of science and philosophy. Taken together, the Bodleian collection is the world's best repository of materials related to Jewish engagement with and contribution to European civilization as intersecting, not separate, trajectories.

Inter-Religious Pluralism

As successors to the Christian Hebraist legacy and as custodians of the historical memory of medieval European Jewish civilization, we have the responsibility to cultivate knowledge of the Jewish past. Because memory allows us to transcend our experience, allows us to connect to that which is greater than ourselves – the stream of human experience – and places us in historical context, we have a moral responsibility to promote knowledge about the history of interaction among Judaism, Christianity and Islam, not as 'separate', but as 'intertwined trajectories'. Therefore, if the Centre's teaching efforts are directed, in some measure, towards the advancement of knowledge about this pluralistic and multicultural history of Jews, Christians and Muslims, we will contribute to the betterment of society by providing an alternative narrative to the prevailing message of conflict. And isn't contributing to a new state of mind what the university should be about?

We often underestimate the extent to which our predecessors might have been more pluralistic and multicultural than our contemporaries. There was a time when it wasn't unusual for a thirteenth-century Muslim like Abu Ali ibn Hud to have taught Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* to Jewish students. He was described as wearing an ill-concealed Jewish head-covering under his turban. When asked to give spiritual guidance to a seeker, he asked, 'Upon which road: the Jewish, Christian or Muslim?' While we should not pursue Jewish studies for our own theological, institutional and political biases, neither are we free from the prejudices that we bring to the work. If our bias is to contribute to an understanding of how society has struggled, succeeded, failed and tried again to learn from our predecessors, to seek ultimate truths, to create a more perfect world, it is nonetheless a noble bias.

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*Truth and Fiction in Hebrew Writing of the First World War**

GLENDA ABRAMSON

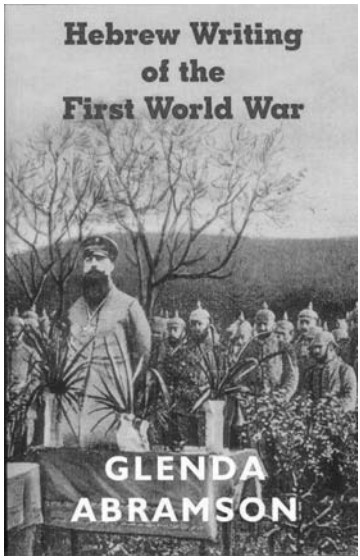
The First World War was an unprecedented disaster, a total war more violent than any previously seen. Almost nine million soldiers died, and it transformed the face of Europe, ending an order which, while not ideal, was no worse than that which would follow within a few decades. The Great War seemed also to shatter all illusions regarding individual heroism. Actions historically deemed heroic and inspiring of a sense of military duty, soldiers soon discovered, had become merely suicidal in the trenches of the Western and Eastern fronts.

The literature of the First World War, predominantly the works of soldier-authors writing during or soon after the war, stands midway between historical documentation and subjective responses to their virtually unbearable ordeals. A previously unacknowledged link emerged between war and literature, with thousands of established and potential writers engaged in fighting.[1] For the first time, literature about war was divorced from traditional structures as it reflected new kinds of experience. In his study of war-writings in English, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell comments that the writer trying to describe the Great War was faced with its utter incredibility and near incommunicability.[2] The situation challenged the imagination even of those who accepted war as an inevitable part of human life. It seemed to obliterate the sense of normality the soldier brought with him from peacetime, divorcing him from time and space, changing his identity

* This paper is an expanded version of a David Patterson Seminar, delivered at Yarnton Manor, to mark the launch of *Hebrew Writing of the First World War* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

[1] Holger Klein (ed.) *The First World War in Fiction* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1976) 2.

[2] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) 139.



and turning him into what Miron calls a *homo bellator*.[3] Writers attempting to represent such events used aspects of reality as the raw material for linguistic and stylistic experiments, some of which verged on the incomprehensible. For Hebrew writers, like many of the others caught up in the war, the preoccupations of the previous literary generation seemed irrelevant.

Comparatively little has been written about Jewish experience in the Great War. Even canonical Hebrew writers such as Uri Zevi Greenberg and Saul Tchernichowsky, both of whom served on the Front, are better known for works that served ideologies more pertinent to Jewish national history. But these early works of young authors who went on to achieve greater things do not deserve to be marginalized. Perhaps such writing was avoided because of the devastation the war had brought to East European Jewish communities, and victims did not want to be reminded of it so soon. In addition, during the period of the Hebrew cultural revival (1880–1920), which also saw the consolidation of the Zionist movement, authors and critics responsible for the formation of the Hebrew literary canon increasingly dealt with questions both of

[3] Dan Miron, *Mul Ha'ah hashotek. 'Iyunim bashirat milhemet ha'atsma'ut* (Jerusalem /Tel Aviv: Ha'universita hapetuhah / Keter, 1992).

national identity and ideology, of which Jewish service in a foreign war was not considered a fitting part.

As a result, the significant, but small, body of First World War writing in Hebrew is little known to this day. It includes fiction, poetry, memoirs, at least one play and volumes of diaries produced by Hebrew writers who served on the Eastern Front or with the Ottoman army in Palestine, as well as by civilians affected by the war. Some of the most powerful responses were written shortly after the events, or by writers, such as S. Y. Agnon, Y. H. Brenner, Yehuda Ya'ari and Aharon Reuveni, who had never seen active service.

Almost a million and a quarter Jews served on both sides of the conflict, their numbers more or less proportionate to the populations of the countries involved, and sometimes even greater. Within two months of the passage of the Selective Draft Act of May 1917, Jews made up 6 percent of the American armed forces, though they formed only 2 percent of the population.[4] Between 250,000 and 350,000 Russian Jews served in the Tsarist army. The proportion of officers and men was similar among Jews to the rest of the population. About 2 percent of the entire Jewish forces fell, about 170,825 men, and over 15,000 American Jews were killed or wounded. Roughly 100,000 German Jews served, some 70,000 in the front lines. Of these, 12,000 were killed, 30,000 were decorated, 19,000 were promoted and 2000 became officers. These statistics are proportionately similar throughout the armies in which Jews served. For Jews there was the additional tragedy of civilian deaths in Eastern Europe as a direct result of the war.

My book, *Hebrew Writing of the First World War*, is the first to look at the social, political, historical and intellectual aspects of Hebrew writers' war experience, and to trace these through their work. The writers examined include Micah Yosef Berdyczewsky, whose diary forms a daily chronicle of the war from the point of view of an enemy alien in Berlin, and the Russian-born poet and novelist David Vogel, who describes his imprisonment as an enemy alien in various locations in Austria. I had originally intended simply to tell their stories and to make this literature better known. But Agnon's *Ad Hena* (1956) (*Until Now*, 2008), for example, is already well known and has recently been translated, so it was a matter of shifting the emphasis from the narrator's experiences in

[4] Martin Gilbert, *First World War* (London: HarperCollins, 1995) 336.

Berlin, to the impact on him of the war. In the case of Saul Tchernichowsky, revered as a poet, I set out to discuss his autobiographical *fiction* about the war. But a number of other factors, practical and theoretical, emerged from my study of these texts.

The Jewish war experience reflected in Hebrew writing not only illustrates history, but contributes to Jewish historiography. If one considers these texts as quasi-historical documents, the problem of *Wahrheit* and *Dichtung*, the nature of their 'truth', invites certain theoretical reflection. How is the reader to decide what in such a text is 'fictitious'? How is the relationship between the categories of autobiography and autobiographical fiction to be disentangled? How in these texts are the blurred and oppositional categories of truth and reality, on the one hand and literary writing, on the other, articulated? Is the 'truth' of the literature distinct from the 'facts' of the war? Is there a *moral* aspect to writing about the war, that is, is it important for purposes of historical knowledge that these writings *should* be deemed autobiographical? Is the goal of war literature belief, as in Holocaust writing? To many of those writers involved in the war, it undoubtedly was. Borrowing Barbara Foley's characterization of the artist-hero of the life history as a 'creative historian',[5] it seems legitimate to ask to what extent the Hebrew authors' histories are 'creative'. In this paper I would like to examine the work of four Hebrew writers who were either combatants or seriously affected by the war, and to determine how they convey both the facts and the truths.

Avigdor Hameiri (Feuerstein) and Autofiction

Hameiri was born in Hungary in 1890 and served as an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army until he was captured by the Russians in 1917 and transported to Siberia. His two novels, *Hashiga'on hagadol* (The Great Madness) and *Bagehinom shel mata* (In the Lowest Hell),[6] which are, in effect, one continuous narrative, qualify for Aragon's definition of *mentir-vrai*,[7] the transposition of remembered events into an imaginative composition that conveys a truth closer to 'reality' than a more

[5] Barbara Foley, *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) 195.

[6] *Hashiga'on hagadol* (Tel Aviv: Joseph Sreberk, n.d.), trans. Jacob Freedman, as *The Great Madness* (New York: Vantage Press, 1952).

[7] Louis Aragon, *Le mentir-vrai. Nouvelles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980).

factual version might do.[8] They could also be classified as 'autofiction', a genre that distances the author from him- or herself in order to make a distance between what is real and what is fictional. There has rarely been consensus about the various permutations of the life-story genre. Autofiction (or 'autobiofiction') seems to lie somewhere between autobiography, fiction and memoir, being a combination of autobiography and the imaginative reconstruction of memory. Serge Doubrovsky's concept of 'autofiction' attempts to crystallize the grey area between autobiography and invention, real memories and creative art. Autobiographical truth is centrally important to autofiction, but the addition of fantasy permits an author to express a greater sense of *entirety*, comprising the truth and the fiction, the author as self and the writer of self.[9]

Avner Holzmann defines *Hashiga'on hagadol* and its sequel as a 'non-fiction novel' with two fields of reference: the internal world of the narrative, which enjoys the aesthetic control of literary art, and the outer world which possesses the 'authority of reality'. He sees a non-fiction novel as one that relies on the narrative technique and intuitive insight of the novelist to chronicle contemporary events.[10] 'Memoir' might be a more appropriate definition, since it covers simple chronicles as well as more elaborate, analytical or poetically structured accounts. Fiction is probably the most effective medium for evoking atmosphere, and some war-writers used it to describe life at the front more vividly and in greater detail.[11] Each Hebrew war-writer functions somewhere within the limits of these definitions, and what is significant in their work is not the presence or absence of fiction or non-fiction, but the balance between them.

Like Agnon, Brenner, Tchernichowsky (who wrote a series of war stories), and other war-writers, Hameiri provided his wartime novels with an autobiographical framework and historical context, as well as a literary structure and a first-person narrator. In *Hashiga'on hagadol*, Hameiri, or his narrator, reports that despite his education in a rabbinical seminary he was a sophisticated man-about-town, supplying details of life in Budapest

[8] See Dervila Cooke, 'Hollow Imprints: History, Literature, and the Biographical, in Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder*', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3:2 (July 2004) 133.

[9] See Simon Harel, 'A l'autofiction analytique: Emergence d'un paradigme contemporain', http://www.etatsgeneraux-psychanalyse.net/mag/archives/paris2000/texte47.html.

[10] Avner Holzmann, *Avigdor Hameiri vesifrut hamilhamah* (Jerusalem: Ma'arakhot, 1986) 55.

[11] See Brian Bond, 'British "Anti-war" Writers and Their Critics', in Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (eds) *Facing Armageddon* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996) 805, 819.

on the eve of the war, where he worked as a journalist on a Budapest daily.

The question is whether the subject of Hameiri's writing is himself. Some of this early material was added quite late in the process of writing, and a few of the dates he gives are questionable. He uses his own name, Avigdor Feuerstein, more than once in both works. These, for the sake of this discussion, I shall call 'novel-memoirs'. Like other war novelists he had an advantage over strict memoirists. Within the guise of fiction he could speak frankly about contemporaries, such as Ahad Ha'am, creating dialogue for his characters and utilizing interior monologues and digressions. At the end of the second volume, *Bagehinom shel mata*, all pretence at fiction is abandoned. The narrator, now freed from imprisonment, meets friends and acquaintances, many of them well-known figures of the time, describes situations in which these people take part and mentions Hameiri's future wife by name.

Hameiri writes in the preface to *Hashiga'on hagadol*: 'And so I remained for about three years at the front in the Great War: on the Austro-Hungarian-German front against the Russian front; and there, at the front, I wrote down what I had seen and felt as a living human being. I began my first note two days after meeting the first sergeant and completed the last chapter in Tchortokov, the first stop in my internment [as a prisoner-of-war] in Russia, thirteen years ago.

I haven't improved on the facts or made them uglier: I haven't added or subtracted anything from them. I made notes and waited for the end: for the great recovery to come.'[12]

Hameiri clearly intended to record his experiences accurately, but his statement, 'I haven't added or subtracted anything from them' does not prepare one for the detailed dialogues, characterization, discussions about contemporary literature and politics, structural sophistication reflected in alternating passages of powerful description, humour, anecdote, and frequent chronological confusion. The second novel, *Bagehinom shel mata*, which was published in 1932, well after the events

[12] The English writer and critic Herbert Read wrote: 'One thing I wished to avoid, and that was any personal interpretation of the events – any expatiation, that is to say, whether of the imagination or of the intellect. I wanted the events to speak for themselves – unaided by art.' See Paul Edwards, 'British War Memoirs', in Vincent Sherry (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 16.

it describes,[13] recounts long marches and railway journeys across Russia, through a physical and emotional landscape of torture and misery. The narrator and three companions trudge through the snows of Siberia, encountering brutality more often met in writing about the Holocaust. They are beaten, starved, frozen, physically and mentally abused and humiliated – the chronicle of horror leaves the reader numbed. 'I have slept in what must be 60 degrees of cold and if you do a calculation I have crossed about a third of the area of the world. And how? In filthy, cold animal cars. I have been beaten until my flesh is gashed, the fleas eat me but I no longer feel them. ...life has reached the point of desire for salvation in the hands of good death. Only one thing that hasn't happened to me so far: a sickness that will save me from this life. I don't have the strength in me to put an end to my life.' (335)

This detailed chronicle is interspersed with contemporary political analysis and discussions about the Russian Revolution, Zionism and literature. It reflects the chaotic quality of army life 'in all its naked, beastly disorganization',[14] but is rendered coherent by the skilful ordering of literary devices. The author clearly organized his notes and added a visionary, redemptive ending once he was safely in Odessa and before leaving for Palestine in 1921. According to Gershon Shaked, while the narrative consists of a series of random episodes, its importance lies in its *documentary* nature.[15] Its exact definition is further confused by its subtitle: 'Notes of a Jewish Officer in Russian Captivity', indicating a memoir based on a journal.[16] Yet both of Hameiri's works were published as *novels*, although this was perhaps only to ensure a wider readership.

One structural mechanism in *Bagehinom shel mata* which reinforces the autobiographical (or autofictive) quality of the writing is the narrator's inclusion of references to literary texts as meditations of his own experience. The work is interspersed with discussions about literature, some of which might have been added just prior to the book's publica-

[13] Hameiri writes in his introduction to the novel that he wrote the book in 1920, but that it remained in his desk for some years.

[14] Bond (see n. 11) 810.

[15] Holzmann (see n. 10) 82; see also Gershon Shaked, *Hasiporet ha'ivrit, 1880-1970* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1977-98) II:235-353; the italics are mine.

[16] Another example of such generic confusion is Siegfried Sassoon's *Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* which, putatively fiction, provides an account of Sassoon's own experience: it is to be read as a record of truth – as a shaped record, rather than as a novel (See Edwards [see n. 12] 23).

tion in 1932, because their scholarly organization interrupts his narrative. Whether or not they were added later, they serve the prisoner's need for the life-giving act of remembering art and, through it, to deny the ruins of the world.

Such passages also serve as an interpretive frame for clarifying the chaos of the narrator's imprisonment. References to works by Checkhov, Goncharov, Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Wilde and the brothers Grimm, as well as to Jewish authors such as Bialik, Berdyczewsky, Broides, Shalom Aleichem and Sholem Asch, illuminate his experience. As it does for Solzhenitsyn in *The First Circle*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* provides Hameiri with the existential, literary and structural framework of his novel, alluded to not only in its title, 'In the Lowest Hell', but in comments throughout the text.

Yet Hameiri states explicitly in his introduction that he did not mean his novels to be seen as literary works. His narrator describes the death of a comrade and, in a strange epitaph, asks: 'If I write this down – will it be literature?' (188), adding that 'even in these jottings I didn't mean to offer "literature"[*sifrut*]'. But it is not entirely clear what he means by the term. He has a paradoxical dissatisfaction with the ability of fiction and poetry to tell the truth, arguing that fiction is the antithesis of life, and complaining that authors are existentially and experientially removed from the reality of what they describe. 'Whoever wrote the Book of Job didn't really know about torture. What is the sickness of boils as opposed to the Spanish Inquisition or the German Inquisition? Oscar Wilde never tasted the taste of imprisonment in Russia. Knut Hamsun wrote his book on hunger. How ridiculous it is. Let Mr Hamsun come here for a month.' (380)

By contrast, Hameiri implies, his story, to which he denies the status of literature, is the truth. In his introduction he writes: 'Within the waning of strength and hope that afflicted us there and turned us into twitching dead men – a tiny spark of hope fluttered in me: perhaps after all I shall return to a clean bed and the arms of my sister and I'll tell her something of my suffering, *whose nightmare no writer's fantasy can ever achieve* [my italics, GA]. ...How ridiculous literature is generally. People sit and create theories about morality and suffering, joy and sorrow. They twist the screws of their minds and squeeze out fantasies of man's suffering.' (398)

It seems, however, that even in a defiantly 'non-literary novel' there is

no escape from literary strategies of analogy, allusion, metaphor, structure and the other accoutrements of an artistic work.

Paradoxically the narrator's forced sojourn in Russia was a salvific experience, since it presented to him his hope for the future. The assimilated Hungarian's encounter with Russian Jewish communities – to him 'authentic' Jews – during his wanderings was crucial to the formulation of his identity as a Zionist. The theoretical became concrete in a kind of epiphany of recognition. It was Russian Jews, the communities Hameiri encountered, rather than the standard texts of Zionist philosophy which he strongly denigrated, that reinforced his nationalist hopes and determined not only his own future, but the redemptive structure of the second novel.

Agnon, *Ad Hena*

The term autofiction may be less useful when the author or narrator ironically obscures the distinction between the real and the fictive. In Agnon's war novel, *Ad Hena*,[17] his protagonist, whose name is Shmuel Yosef, is not a combatant, but describes with historiographical precision the effects of the war on German society and individuals. The First World War had not previously appeared centrally in Agnon's work, although it is an historical determinant in works such as *Ore'ah natah lalun* (1939), which deals with the crumbling postwar world of the narrator's youth in Galicia. It reappeared in his posthumous *Bahanuto shel Mar Lublin* (1975), both as an event and as an element of human existence: 'War never leaves the world. All the nations are ready to make war. They always make war. And if you've ever seen a nation that has no war you can be sure that it is preparing itself for war.' (60)

There has been disagreement[18] about whether the war is central to *Ad Hena*, whether it serves as a backdrop to the narrator's tribulations, or stands as a metaphor for the chaotic advent of modernity. Nitza Ben Dov

[17] *Ad Hena* (Jerusalem: Schocken Books, 1953).

[18] Shaked (see n. 15) vol. III; Nitza Ben Dov, *Ahavot lo me'usharot: tiskul eroti, omanut umavet biyetsirat Agnon* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997); Baruch Kurzweill, *Masot 'al sipure Shai Agnon* (Jerusalem / Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1962); Baruch Hochman, *The Fiction of S. Y. Agnon* (Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1970). Arnold Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare. A Study in the Fiction of S. Y. Agnon* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1968).

insists that the novel describes the inner life of the narrator and particularly his striving for erotic fulfilment, which has nothing directly to do with the war.[19] The major characteristics of the Agnonic hero indeed remain comparatively consistent in war and peace, town and country, Israel and Europe, and reflect a search for transcendence in one form or another. In *Ad Hena* the war is the environment in which this hero is located and, assumes a greater significance, shifting to the centre and assuming a life of its own. It is the war that allows and even causes certain events to take place, relationships to be formed and erotic fulfilment to be sought and found.

Whether or not this is a 'war' novel, the war is intrinsically present ('war here and war there – everywhere you turn there is war' [39]). And whether it just happens to be the historical moment into which the narrator has been thrust, or forms an objective correlative of personal loss in the story, Agnon reproduces its atmosphere with the care of one who experienced it. It is foregrounded in the story in all its horror, as an inescapable part of the narrator's life. 'I arrived at the train station and I was pushed into the train. The coach was filled to the brim with men and women, traders of the war and manufacturers, compassionate nurses and the officers' tarts, apart from those returning from the war, walking on crutches or without an arm, men with empty sleeves and rubber hands, glass eyes and noses patched up by expert doctors who used the skin of the soldier's buttocks, frightening faces and horrifying faces, human beings whom the war had rejected because of their disfigurements, terrifying forms from which God's image has been withdrawn.' (12) While providing almost documentary descriptions of wartime Berlin, he uses the situation to meditate on the internal and external possibilities open to a man in a dislocated world, and the choices he makes.

Despite the authenticity of the historical frame the subject may transcend the real, so 'Shmuel Yosef' in *Ad Hena* is almost certainly not the author Shmuel Yosef Agnon. *Ad Hena* has been called autobiographical because it contains a multitude of autobiographical elements which help Agnon construct the biographies of his central characters. War indeed broke out while Agnon was in Berlin, and it prevented his return to Palestine. Like him, 'Shmuel Yosef' lives in Berlin and Leipzig between 1912–1924, and travels to several other cities. Yet despite this historical

[19] Ben-Dov (see n. 18) 16.

authenticity, the narrator's experiences in Berlin differ in detail from Agnon's own, despite the general similarity. It is the manipulation of detail that creates a kind of generic hybridity. In the knowing distortion, the fictive overcomes the autofictive.

The author's dual roles as self and writer of self in sections of Agnon's own life may be the reason for the unresolved dualities in the character of the hero. For example, the novel ends with the protagonist's happy return to *Erets Yisrael*. The rather pat nature of this solution to Shmuel Yosef's problems, together with the possibility that the ending was a late addition, confirms Agnon's implicit comment that he did not wholeheartedly wish to return to *Erets Yisrael*. When Brenner asked him about his return from Berlin, Agnon responded bluntly, 'You asked when shall I return to *Erets Yisrael*: Brenner, you'll see children and their children before I return to *Erets Yisrael*. The truth is that I have neither the need nor the will nor the desire.'[20] He remained in Germany for six years after the war had ended, which may account for the unpleasantness of 'Shmuel Yosef', a kind of negative alter ego who says, echoing his creator, 'Because I couldn't find a room abroad, I was compelled [*hukhrahti*] to return to *Erets Yisrael*'. (168) Throughout the novel, however, he speaks passionately of his yearning to return, and the matter is clarified for him in an ironic dream relating to Voltaire's *Candide*. This, rather than the search for erotic fulfilment, may be the central issue of the novel, with the war as the catalyst, and just one aspect of Agnon's life as its focus.

Aharon Reuveni and Documentary

The question of historical veracity relates also to Aharon Reuveni's romantic epic, the trilogy *Ad Yerushalayim* (As Far as Jerusalem).[21] If a novel describes events derived from documentation or that took place in living memory, it may be classifiable as documentary rather than as historical fiction. A documentary novel aspires to tell a certain verifiable historical or social truth. '[It] locates itself near the border between factual discourse and fictive discourse but it does not propose an eradi-

[20] Dan Laor, *Haye Agnon: biyografyah* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1998) 102. These terms occur in Agnon's story 'In kenissat hayom' in connection with the needs of the soul.

[21] *Ad Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuhad; Siman Keriyah; Keter 1987).

cation of that border. Rather, it purports to represent reality by means of agreed-upon conventions of fictionality while grafting onto its fictive pact some kind of additional claim to empirical validation.'[22]

In other words, within the factuality there exists a fictional world with its own characters, and archetypes that transcend the period portrayed. Even the identifiable historical characters are fictionalized according to the author's ideological purpose, which shapes the novel into an artistic structure. Because such selectivity is more likely to be subjective than objective, documentary fiction can never be fully authentic.[23] In keeping an artistic balance between fact and fiction, and between truth and imagination, the author gives no idea of where one ends and the other begins.

Reuveni's trilogy is based largely on experience and memory, but the fact that he does not include himself in the text renders it less a fiction memoir, similar to Hameiri's, than a documentary novel, whose mixture of imagination and fact is derived from contemporary documents. Yet *Ad Yerushalayim* exceeds the limits of fact for a documentary novel. For Reuveni, the fact of the war is the animating principle. *Ad Yerushalayim* is not simply a novel of character or social process in an historical setting: the history creates the novel.

The trilogy presents historical characters, including David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zevi (the author's brother), who are given fictitious names, yet remain identifiable by their personal histories and characterizations. Others, such as Ahmed Djemal Pasha, the military governor of Ottoman Syria and Palestine, retain their historical names and roles yet, in keeping with the principles of the documentary novel, function entirely within the fictional world. Similarly, Reuven's fictional Second *Aliyah* newspaper *Haderekh* resembles the actual Jerusalem newspaper entitled *Ha'ahdut*.

In the first complete edition of the novel published in 1954 Reuveni added the following oddly inconclusive declaration: 'The characters and events in this novel are all inventions. However, the invention is built up of bricks that were taken from the environment of those days. If there are lines of similarity, a little here and a little there, between what is told

[22] Barbara Foley, *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) 25.

[23] See Herbert Lindenberger, *Historical Drama* (University of Chicago Press, 1975) 10.

and the events that really happened, their source is in part by chance and in part from the material from which they were constructed.'[24]

Reuveni was conscripted into the Ottoman army, quickly ransomed himself out of it and returned to Jerusalem, and was active in running the *yishuv*, serving with Ben-Gurion, Brenner and others on the *Va'ad haganah shel po'ale tsiyon*, established to explore the establishment of a Jewish militia in Palestine. Reuveni was sufficiently close to actual events for his novel to be cited in an historical essay about education in the *yishuv* during the war, challenging the principle that the mixture of accuracy and invention in historical novels always renders them historically untrustworthy. However, the reader is sometimes justified in discounting an author's interpretation of events.

Ad Yerushalayim is an epic novel of history without actually being an historical novel. It comprises three self-contained sections, published only a few years after the events described. Reuveni cast the war as a menace lurking behind his characters' lives, determining their actions, decisions and responses. The Turks are its visible representation or metonym. On one level the war is supra-national and mythological, representing some dark force waiting to destroy mankind, a sense of apocalypse that was heightened when Palestine was devastated by locusts in 1915 (as described in the first novel). Apocalyptic elements constituting the deep structure of the text appear alongside the real war, with its practical, modern and technological details. The workings of the Ottoman administration are documented in detail, but at times the Turks are depicted in quasi-supernatural terms, a dark force filled with a thirst for blood, emerging from the depths of Asia, 'a murderous creature that can suck out the sap of a city like the spider sucks out the fly'. (100) The trilogy offers no romanticization of Jerusalem and none of its mythological attributes, however. Reuveni presents it as a small provincial town lacking innate transcendence: 'This is not the "generic" Jerusalem of above, but the brutal Jerusalem of below.'[25]

The action is set in Jerusalem, close to the start of the war, and describes a group of immigrants from Russian provinces working at a printing press that produces the *Haderekh* newspaper. They must decide whether to remain there despite the danger of forced military service, or

[24] Quoted in Yigal Schwarz, *Lihyot kide lihyot. Aharon Reuveni, Monografiyah* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zevi / Magnes, 1993) 202.

[25] Shaked (see n. 18) III:148.

to return to Russia where they will face pogroms and conscription in the Tsar's army. Some rush to become Ottoman citizens, others hesitate and a few decide to leave, reflecting historical facts. Reuveni explores the choices faced by Russian Jews in detail, from the discontent of maladjusted immigrants to the idealism of Zionist settlers based on the characters of Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zevi.

> 'To leave? What?' [Ram] cried angrily.'Where shall we go? To Russia – to fight for Russia? What does Russia mean to us? To escape to America? What does America mean to us?... Our place is here! We won't leave here! Our cities and our settlements are here, our four years of work are here!... Our last hope is here!... We won't move from this place!'

The historical elements documented in careful detail – the war, the locusts, the Turkish administration, the *yishuv* hierarchy, conscription, army service and Turkish labour camps in the desert – provide the trilogy's framework. Reuveni himself, or even a narrating 'I', is absent, although the main character of the second novel may be a self-representation. The first novel, *Bereshit hamevukhah*, describes the confusion and panic in Jerusalem at the outbreak of war; the second, *Ha'oniot ha'aharonot*, the difficulties of remaining in *Erets Yisrael*; while the third, *Shammot*, a tragic tale of *Bildung*, recounts the breakdown of a family during the social collapse resulting from the war. The hero who, uniquely in Hebrew fiction, is a man who sacrifices himself for high principles, embodies Reuveni's view of the *yishuv* during the Second *Aliyah*, with the war functioning as a bloody catalyst between the traditional Jewish home and family, on the one hand, and the advance of modernity, on the other hand: the division between the Old *Yishuv* and the New.

Yosef Hayim Brenner

Brenner wrote a series of short stories in which he depicted the dilemma of the Jews in Palestine caught between the warring sides. He highlighted the difficulties for people having been expelled by the Ottoman authorities from Tel Aviv and Jaffa and moved to the Lower Galilee where conditions were atrocious and the refugees died in their hundreds from disease, starvation and exposure. One of these stories, *Avlah* (Injustice), is an example of the manipulation of actual events to accord with a preconceived purpose. In this case the aim is to caution Jews that

the long-awaited British 'friend' may not be all he seems. It is set at the end of the war shortly before General Allenby's recapture of Jerusalem. At the time of writing, in 1920, Brenner was depressed about the recent murder of Joseph Trumpeldor and six of his comrades at Tel Hai, and worried by Arab disturbances in Jerusalem. He condemned the British authorities for failing to deal with them adequately, and wrote prophetically, 'Perhaps tomorrow the Jewish hand writing these words will be stabbed, some "sheikh" or "hadj" will stick his dagger into it under the gaze of the British ruler... and this, this hand will not be able to do anything to the sheikh or the hadj because it doesn't know how to hold a sword.'[26]

Avlah tells of the arrival at a small, isolated settlement, a *kevutsah*, of an officer initially thought to be German. Most members of the group greet the exhausted, rain-drenched man with awe and offer him their meagre hospitality. But once they have identified him as British and an escaped prisoner-of-war, some of them fear Turkish reprisals for hiding an enemy soldier. After sheltering him for a night, during which they debate the problem in a parody of the popular group-debate, or *sihah*, they eventually decide to hand him to the authorities. They then suffer agonies of remorse for their cowardice and betrayal. 'The rain stopped, the air was pure, but we didn't think about going out to work. We were grieving, in mourning. The noble face of the Englishman was like an hallucination to us. There was no fire in our house that day, food was an abomination to our souls. At noon one of us tried to chew on a piece of dry bread, but it stuck in his throat. A man came from the *moshavah* and told us that the *moshavah* is abuzz, everyone is blaming us for our treachery [*pahazut*], everyone is streaming to the commandant's house to see the English officer; that the prisoner spoke in French and no one protested; and mainly that he said to one of the people: "Now I know all about the Jews...". Yes, his verdict is true, we are the lowest! We deserve to be torn from life!'

They then learn that the officer has lost his watch, and suspect a Turkish soldier of having stolen it. When they are told that the officer has blamed them they are able to relinquish their guilt at having surrendered him. '"Antisemitic gentile like all the gentiles!" Our religious comrade opened his mouth for the first time in a day and night. "Good,

[26] In Adir Cohen, *Yetsirato hasifrutit shel Yosef Hayyim Brenner* (Tel Aviv: Guma, 1976) 80.

good." We all suddenly felt better. "Now – it's good…" As if a weight had been lifted from us.'

Brenner's tale is interesting for having been closely based on a true event. The officer involved, Major A. J. Evans, Commanding Officer of the 14th Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps in Palestine, described the events which Brenner later included in his story, as 'sheer comedy'.[27] After escaping from a Turkish prison camp and an arduous three-day walk from Caesarea, he reached a house where he decided to seek shelter.

> I banged on the door and after a minute or two it was opened by a small dark man in trousers and shirt and bare feet. He appeared rather frightened, and said some words which I did not understrand. I tried him in German, saying that I wanted shelter and food. As I had had practically nothing to eat for sixty hours, and was drenched to the skin, he had no difficulty in guessing what I wanted, if he did not understand. He went back into the room and put on some boots and a coat. The room seemed almost completely bare except for a number of people who were sleeping, rolled in blankets, on the floor or on very low beds.[28]

Evans persuaded the frightened group of Jewish settlers to shelter him by agreeing that they could send for the Turks in the morning. They gave him food and a bed. Evans remarked on their kindness, their food, which he found to be almost inedible, and their poverty. During the night he was arrested by the Turks. When he complained to the Arab guard that his feet and shoes were in no condition for walking, 'whether at his order or out of kindness – the latter, I think – one of the Jews brought me a pair of old boots…'.[29] He continues:

> Though the Jews had immediately sent word to the Turks, I feel no violent resentment towards them, as they were obviously frightened out of their skins at my presence in the house. In other ways I think they did their best for me, and were sorry for me; owing to their extreme poverty they could not do much. I suppose they just had licence to live from the Turks, and that's about all... Just before we marched off the Jews gave me some more of their disgusting meat and, when I reproached them for sending for the Turks so soon, they answered that they were terrified and could not help it. When we had gone a few hundred yards from the house I saw suddenly that my wrist-watch

[27] A. J. Evans, *The Escaping Club* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1921). Evans played cricket for England against Australia at Lords in 1921.

[28] Ibid. 227.

[29] Ibid. 228.

> was missing. I made the Arab [soldier guarding him] understand by signs, and let him know that I wanted to go back and fetch it. He refused, and when I showed signs of obstinacy, began to finger his revolver. So we continued the march. I made sure then that the brute had stolen it.[30]

Without knowing Evans's comment about 'sheer comedy' (his account was published in 1921), but with a startling fidelity to the historical details, Brenner gave *Avlah* a comic quality which contrasted strongly with the sombre tone of his other war stories. He added a female to the all-male group of settlers to provide a hint of romance and a dissident voice, and also the English officer's accusation of the Jews, the eponymous 'injustice' of the story, that does not appear in Evans's account.

The watch incident allows Brenner both to highlight the settlers' comic guilt at their betrayal and to resolve it in a feat of closure, mocking the diaspora Jews' negative self-image and their assumption of victimhood. More significantly, it allows him to reinforce the stereotype of British anti-Semitism. The English officer himself, Brenner suggests, despite his gentility and association with liberation, is not to be trusted. Brenner provides a negative assessment of the British, in the face of the *yishuv*'s expectations, and even a warning of what to expect of the Mandate.

Conclusion

As the war receded from memory the literary aspects of war-fiction assumed growing importance. Because of the need not to forget, in the interwar period all war books were primarily considered as documents,[31] regardless of their genre. The question is whether the debate about metahistory has given *belles lettres* a privileged place beside the historiographical narrative. Could fiction and poetry advance knowledge about the war, or should this be left to memoir and autobiography, even though these are, perhaps, just as untrustworthy? Many scholars use the terms 'autobiography' and 'memoir' synonymously. Yet most of the works written by Hebrew authors about the war are neither entirely one nor the other. They are not entirely fiction either, but fictionalized memoirs, or 'literary non-fiction',[32] that is, stories closely based on the author's experiences, and involving real persons. Avigdor Hameiri and

[30] Ibid. [31] Klein (see n. 1) 7.

[32] Annie Dillard, 'To Fashion a Text', in William Zinsser (ed.) *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987).

S. Y. Agnon use their own names, although 'Avigdor Feuerstein' in *Hashiga'on hagadol* is more true to Hameiri than 'Shmuel Yosef' is to Agnon. Agnon foregrounds one aspect of his autobiography, the search for lodgings in wartime Berlin, as a metaphor of dislocation and all its contradictions for his protagonist and for Europe in the throes of war. Other Hebrew war-writers, while remaining faithful to documented social and personal events, similarly configure the war as an analogy for – *inter alia* – social and psychological processes and historical truths. At the same time, the subject of the fiction is, in most cases, still the autobiographical subject.

For most of these writers the war was a major factor in their growing identification with Zionism. The period of the First World War was paradoxical for Jews. On the one hand it was a time of greatly heightened oppression – pogroms and expulsions. On the other hand it heralded the beginning of political change signalled by the Balfour Declaration, although this was hardly felt in the East. The war was a global tragedy in which Jews, willy-nilly, were involved and thousands destroyed, but Zionism benefited from news stories about anti-Jewish atrocities in Eastern Europe. Western Jews also saw Zionism as a possible solution to the problem of the *Ostjuden*. The war proved to these writers that the future for Jews in Europe was at best doubtful. U.Z.Greenberg determined without reserve that Europe – which he saw almost as Dante's vision of hell – was eternally inimical to Jews, and abandoned it for Palestine in a strangely negative *aliyah*. The novelist Lev Arieli-Orloff, writing about his service in an Ottoman army band unit in a novel etitled *Yeshimon* (Wilderness), embodies his pessimism about Jewish settlement and Zionism in a confused and often ridiculous protagonist. Brenner presents documented events in detail, but manipulates them to criticize the mentality of *yishuv* immigrants and to offer political warnings. Yehuda Ya'ari begins his novel, *Ke'or yahel* (1932) (*While the Candle was Burning,* 1947), with the story of a Jewish soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army, by blaming the failure of a social experiment in Palestine during the 1920s on the war. Much – although not all – the war literature written by Jews is shot through with musings on Jewish nationalism and the Jewish future. Some sought to transcend the nightmare by means of an ideological and political identification with the Jewish national future, if not specifically the Zionist movement. This was a time at which Jewish cultural values were being redefined.

In the first volume of his memoir, *The Great Madness*, Hameiri describes his emotional transition from assimilation and theoretical Zionism in youth movements and other organizations, to an assertion of his Jewishness and finally to active Zionism. While on the Eastern Front he hears about the Balfour Declaration and the possible foundation of a Jewish Legion, and realizes that a new era has arrived for the Jewish people. He and a Jewish comrade proclaim that they are giving their 'dear spouse, Madame Hungary, a bill of divorce'. By the same act they take 'Madame Pompadour' to wife. This is Hameiri's sly concealment of the name of Joseph Trumpeldor (the symbol of Jewish nationalism in Palestine). Trumpeldor's projected Jewish Legion seemed to Hameiri 'the harbinger of the Messiah'. The culmination of this 'divorce' is his decision to emigrate to Palestine. Yet his passion for Jewish nationalism and 'latent Jewish energy' cannot be unequivocal, because of his previous Hungarian patriotism. In the heat of battle he struggles with the idea of his potentially treacherous love of another land: 'To think of another country, even for a moment, of other possibilities – Granted, I was a Zionist; but *not in time of war*, [his emphasis] by heaven! In wartime, and there at the front, to think of another country – of – of another fatherland!... That night I did not sleep at all. I tossed on my bunk, from right to left, from left to my back to my belly, and so on, far into the night. Myriads of thoughts struggled within me. I began to curse the entire situation. "What bliss!" "How terrible it is!" "Palestine!" "Disloyalty!".'

Agnon, who wrote in Berlin with even greater devotion about Zion, *Erets Yisrael* and his longing for it, remained in Germany for six years after the war had ended, and left only because his house burnt down and he lost his entire library.

Most of the war-writers had set out with some Zionist credentials – their writing in Hebrew being one of them – and all but two of those included in my book ended their lives in Palestine or Israel. Emigration to the *yishuv* seemed to them the only certain deliverance after the violent and permanent setting of Europe's sun. Zionism or Jewish nationalism, whether negatively or positively perceived, was clearly a crucial element within the war experience.

Unlike many war-writers in the Western tradition, most of those working in Hebrew took historical conditions into account, together with the particular circumstances of East European Jewry. Their writing

transcended the singular experience of the war to incorporate – perhaps reluctantly in some cases – the solution for Jews having to fight in foreign wars for the benefit of those who were persecuting them. Writing about the war, John Stallworthy points to 'the tragedy of educating a generation to face not the future but the past'[33] – referring to the heroic models of warfare. In Hebrew writing one finds, together with descriptions of individual experience in wartime, a glance at once *backwards* to Jewish history and the collective experience, of which the Great War became one component, and *forwards* to finding a resolution for the collective fate. This literature reflects a further stage in the encounter with the eternal problems of Jewish history, the Great War being yet another event reinforcing the need to find a solution.

[33] Jon Stallworthy (ed.) *The Oxford Book of War Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) xxvii.

THE SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL
A. N. STENCL LECTURE IN YIDDISH STUDIES

Objects of Desire: On the Role of Non-Jewish Languages in Sholem Aleichem's Mayes far Yidishe Kinder

KERSTIN HOGE

On 20 October 1906, the Yiddish author Sholem Rabinowitz (1859–1916), better known under his pen name Sholem Aleichem, arrived to great acclaim in New York City, having decided to leave Kiev after the 1905 pogrom. Disembarking at New York Harbour, he was cheered by a crowd of more than four hundred people and, hardly off the boat, whisked from one reception to another. But it proved to be Sholem Aleichem's purported encounter with Mark Twain that entered popular memory as the ultimate milestone on this triumphant day for a Yiddish writer and Yiddish writing. For the story goes that on his introduction to Sholem Aleichem as the 'Jewish Mark Twain', Mark Twain replied that, conversely, it was he, Mark Twain, who was the American Sholem Aleichem.

Irrespective of whether the event reported did in fact take place or falls solidly in the domain of myth, the appellation supposedly used by Mark Twain surprises and charms us, just as it pleased and flattered Sholem Aleichem's contemporaries. Usually, the comparison of one writer to another seeks to exploit the cultural prestige of what is perceived to be a greater writer and/or literature. Calling Virgil the Roman Homer, or referring to the eighteenth-century poets Christoph Martin Wieland and Ignatius Krasicki as, respectively, the German and Polish Voltaire, superimposes one literary culture on another and hints at a society's cultural insecurity or perceived inferiority. The comparison with a literature, be it Greek or French, that is considered superior to the one in which the comparison is made bestows cultural legitimacy on the writer thus compared. It allows an insecure culture to claim a place closer to the constructed centre of literary prestige.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the time of Sholem Aleichem's arrival in New York, budding secular Yiddish culture most certainly lacked in confidence. It was characterized by feelings of considerable insecurity and inferiority both in relation to Hebrew as 'the' Jewish national language, and in relation to Western and Russian culture and literature. The popularity of epithets of the type 'the Jewish Mark Twain' attests to this. Sholem Aleichem alone was known as – in addition to the Jewish Mark Twain – the Jewish or Yiddish Balzac, Chaucer, Chekhov, Dickens and Gogol.

Against this background, the Mark Twain anecdote allows multiple readings. Its lasting success with Yiddish readers stems, on the one hand, from the fact that the act of labelling Mark Twain as the American Sholem Aleichem evidently grants one of the foremost writers in Yiddish a place in the canon of world literature, thereby elevating Yiddish literature beyond its parochial East European context. On the other hand, the very charm and humour of the anecdote derives from the realization that for a Yiddish writer to be unequivocally recognized as a standard of comparison by a representative of the non-Jewish majority culture was plainly unlikely. Thus, rather than asserting the attribution of cultural prestige, the anecdote in fact thematizes its absence. The audience that craves the recognition of Yiddish culture is charmed by a tale that would lose its myth-like quality if it truly demonstrated an acknowledgement of the cultural importance of Yiddish, rather than presenting a distortion of the existing power relations. Yet the anecdote also offers a challenge to these existing power relations, raising the possibility that one day, in a new world, Yiddish writing will be understood to have a place in the pantheon of world literature without any qualification. The tale of the encounter between Mark Twain and Sholem Aleichem, which allegedly took place at the Educational Alliance, a cultural organization founded to promote the *Americanisation* of Jewish immigrants, is simultaneously one of Yiddish self-aggrandisement, self-disparagement and self-preservation.

As such, it would not be out of place in Sholem Aleichem's own stories and novels. Tevye the Dairyman, one of Sholem Aleichem's most famous literary creations, is no stranger to self-aggrandisement, putting on learned airs by incessantly quoting and misquoting scriptural and rabbinic sources. He embeds these quotations in a monologue that is marked by ironic resignation vis-à-vis the mundane realities of life and the very real problems of generational conflict and social change. The

former are brought to Tevye's attention by his wife, who has little patience for his hypothetical arguments about hypothetical situations, while the latter are introduced into Tevye's life by his daughters, who aspire to self-determination and make their own love matches. To quote Ken Frieden, 'Tevye virtually becomes a symbol of Yiddish culture itself, entering the modern world laden with Scriptural associations and at the same time beleaguered by the contrary expectations of modernity' (178).

For Tevye's daughters, modernity is shaped by the encounter with a secular literature not only in Yiddish, but in a non-Jewish language. Hodl, Tevye's second daughter, who ends up marrying a revolutionary whom she joins in his Siberian exile, is an avid reader of both Yiddish and Russian books. And here, the intertwining and blurring of Sholem Aleichem's life and literature that has often been remarked on (e.g. Frieden 106, Schwarz 49) can once again be observed. What never fails to surprise Yiddish learners and enthusiasts who know of Sholem Aleichem only as the 'grandson' of Yiddish literature, is that he lived his life as much in Russian as he did in Yiddish, if not more so. The two portraits that hung in his Kiev study can be regarded as a visual representation of the two poles between which he moved in his literary and real-life existence. Not only did he have a picture of the Yiddish author Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh (1835–1917), again better known under his pen name Mendele Moykher Sforim, he also had a picture of Nikolai Gogol. For Sholem Aleichem, Mendele, who began to write in Yiddish at a time when Yiddish was by his own description 'an empty vessel containing little more than idle words destined for the uneducated' (see Frieden 27) or was begrudgingly used as a vehicle for Enlightenment propaganda, was the 'grandfather' of Yiddish literature (see Frieden 31), and Sholem Aleichem prided himself on having been the one who 'crowned' Mendele with this honorific.

While the name 'grandfather' affirms Sholem Aleichem's kinship and debt to the older writer, it also relegates Mendele to another generation. Grandfathers do not always speak the same language as their grandchildren. This was certainly true in Sholem Aleichem's household, where the family life was conducted in Russian. As Marie Waife Goldberg, Sholem Aleichems fifth child and youngest daughter, writes in her memoirs: 'Our language at home was Russian, our mother tongue; we were tutored by Russian tutors, although we later attended French universities; the literature closest to our father and to the older children was the literature of

Russia' (166). In his own home, the 'icon of Yiddishkeyt' (Yiddishness) appears to have turned his back on the Yiddish language in favour of Russian. Indeed, Sholem Aleichem later acknowledged in his will the likelihood that his work would be accessible to his own descendants only in translation: he asked that at his *yortsayt*, his stories should be read in whatever language was best understood by those present.

All this seems difficult to reconcile with the role and status that Sholem Aleichem had in the development of a modern Yiddish culture and the Yiddishist redefinition of Jewish collective identity. It leaves open the possibility that Sholem Aleichem was not wholly convinced that the Yiddishist project to create a Yiddish-language future for modern life in the Ashkenazi diaspora was going to be successful. For Sholem Aleichem, the Jewish narrative of modernity might not have exclusively and perhaps not even primarily involved Yiddish.

Evidence for this claim can also be found in three stories in the collection *Mayses far yidishe kinder* ('Stories for Jewish children'). All three stories thematize a child's desire for exploration and freedom, which is ultimately thwarted by the conventional societal norms and social structure of the shtetl. Before discussing the three stories, 'Dos meserl' ('The penknife'), 'Baym kenig akhashveres' ('At the king Ahasuerus's house) and 'Oyfn fidl' ('On the fiddle'), let me first make some brief bibliographical and historical remarks on the *Mayses far yidishe kinder*.

The label *Mayses far yidishe kinder* groups together a variable number of stories – more precisely, between six and twenty-four – the majority of which Sholem Aleichem wrote in the years 1900 to 1901. It first pops up as the title of the second volume in the four-volume set of Sholem Aleichem's collected works, published in Warsaw in 1903. In this second volume, we find six stories that had first appeared in the Yiddish weekly *Der yid*, all with the subtitle 'A mayse far yidishe kinder' ('A story for Jewish children). These stories are 'Di fon' (The flag), 'Khanike gelt' ('Hanukkah money'), 'Baym kenig akhashveres' ('At the king Ahasuerus's house), 'Rabtshik', 'A farshterter peysekh' ('A spoiled passover') and 'Leg Boymer' ('Lag BaOmer'). The volume contains two further stories, 'Mesushelekh' ('Methuselah') and 'Der zeyger' ('The watch'), which Sholem Aleichem did not give the subtitle 'A mayse far yidishe kinder' on their original publication in the Yiddish press.

In fact, the subtitle 'A mayse far yidishe kinder' is recorded only once more when Sholem Aleichem used it for his story 'Di erev-peysekhdike

emigratsye' ('The emigration on the eve of passover'), which first appeared in 1904 in the Yiddish newspaper *Der tog*. In its plural form, *Mayses far yidishe kinder*, we encounter the label one last time as the title of volumes 8 and 9 of the Folksfond edition of Sholem Aleichem's collected works, which was published in New York following the writer's death in 1916. The two volumes designated *Mayses far yidishe kinder* contain a total of twenty-four stories.

According to Chone Shmeruk, Sholem Aleichem wrote the six stories to which he originally gave the subtitle 'A mayse far yidishe kinder' for the specific purpose of reading them to the children in the Yiddish schools that he visited in Kiev and the surrounding areas at the turn of the twentieth century. The schools visited by Sholem Aleichem included traditional, community-sponsored *Talmud Toyres*, which served the poorest children in the community, as well as more progressive Jewish elementary schools of the so-called *Kheyder mesukn* or 'improved *kheyder*' type, which were created by Russian Zionists in the 1890s and formed the basis for the Hebrew-language schools of the Tarbut network. The *Kheyder mesukn* had as its goal to provide a national and universal education to boys and girls alike, combining religious and secular studies, with Hebrew serving as the language of instruction in classes of Hebrew language and literature, Jewish history and Bible (Fishman 1989).

The period of Sholem Aleichem's school visits coincided with his most successful years. For the first time in his life, Sholem Aleichem was able to support himself and his family from his writing, because there were now numerous Yiddish-language newspapers and journals that printed and paid for his works, and the Yiddish readership had developed a wellnigh insatiable appetite for Sholem Aleichem's writing. What had helped Sholem Aleichem in achieving his success was the endorsement by Simon Dubnov of what is perhaps Sholem Aleichem's most famous story for Jewish children early on in the writer's career. Dubnow, one of the most distinguished Russian-Jewish historians in his subsequent career, gave a favourable review to the story 'Dos meserl' in the Russian-Jewish journal, *Voskhod* ('The Dawn'), which profoundly encouraged Sholem Aleichem in his pursuit of becoming a Yiddish writer.

'Dos meserl' is the earliest published story later to be included in the cycle of stories known as *Mayses far yidishe kinder*. It exists in two published versions. The first appeared in 1887. Published at Sholem

Aleichem's own expense, the entire print run of 3000 copies sold out within four weeks. Sholem Aleichem began work on a second version of 'Dos meserl' when the Hebrew writer and editor Y. Kh. Ravnitsky suggested to him to publish the story in Hebrew translation in the 'Olam katan' series of children's language books. While a Hebrew translation of 'Dos meserl' never materialized, Sholem Aleichem did rework the Yiddish story both in terms of content and language. The second version of 'Dos meserl', which is the version commonly known today, first appeared in the aforementioned 1903 edition of Sholem Aleichem's collected works.

The two versions of 'Dos meserl' carry different subtitles. In 1887 Sholem Aleichem calls 'Dos meserl' 'a narishe nor troyerike geshikhte fun mayn kindheyt' ('a silly but sad story from my childhood'). The second version is given the subtitle 'a mayse far yidishe kinder', even though it is not included with the other stories for Jewish children, but is the only story thus labelled that appears in the first volume of the collected work.

The chronological order in which the three stories to be considered here were written is then as follows. First, we have the first version of 'Dos meserl', which was published in 1887. It is followed by the story 'Baym kenig akhashveres', which appeared in 1901 in the Yiddish newspaper *Der yid*. A year later, in 1902, Sholem Aleichem published 'Oyfn fidl' in the journal *Di yidishe familye*. Finally, the second version of 'Dos Meserl' appeared in the 1903 edition of Sholem Aleichem's collected Works.

Sixteen years thus lie between the first and second version of 'Dos meserl'. In that time, there is a noticeable change in both outlook and tenor of the stories. The first version of 'Dos meserl' and the story 'Baym kenig akhashveres' present an angry and yet fully resigned social critique of traditional Jewish society and education in Eastern Europe. In contrast, the later story 'Oyfn fidl' and the second version of 'Dos meserl' offer a vision of an alternative model of Jewish existence, which has left behind the traditional way of Jewish life and educational practice.

'Dos meserl', 'Baym kenig akhashveres' and 'Oyfn fidl' share a number of significant plot elements and motifs. In all three stories, the main character is a *kheyder yingl*, an elementary-school boy, from a well-to-do or at least moderately prosperous family. 'Ikh bin geven a gvirs a yingl', 'I was a rich man's son', states the narrator in 'Baym kenig akhashveres'. The

young boys' lives are dominated by school and learning; they spend their days in stuffy, airless rooms, and their world is ruled by teachers best described as *malekh-amoves*, 'angels of death', who are quick to hit and humiliate their charges. In their misery, the boys yearn for a moment of freedom and self-determination, a desire represented either by an object, such as a penknife in 'Dos meserl' and a fiddle in 'Oyfn fidl', or, in 'Baym kenig akhashveres', the wish to escape, to literally run away with purim-shpilers. It goes without saying that the boys' desire to have control of their own lives, to possess and pursue their own goals, cannot be tolerated in homes that are characterized by stale conformity and unquestioned obedience to authority. An inherent part of the three stories is the oedipal conflict that unfolds between the first-person narrator and his father. Although weakened by sickness or marginalized in their family, the fathers assert themselves against their sons, who seemingly have no choice but to give up their dreams. The children's desire for a penknife, a fiddle or a career as a travelling actor, may be nothing but a silly story ('a narishe geshikhte') for the adults within and outside the story worlds. For the children, it will inescapably remain a sad memory, 'a troyerike geshikhte'.

The subtitle appended to the first version of 'Dos meserl', 'A silly but sad story from my childhood', thus signals the dual narrative perspective in these three stories. On the one hand, the first-person narrator assumes the perspective of the child, who, wrapped up in his own story, voices his emotions without hesitation, as, for example, in 'Oyfn fidl', where the aspiring musician exclaims that the world may turn upside down but he simply must have a fiddle. On the other hand, the retrospective first-person narration allows the narrator to separate himself from the child, recounting and commenting on the events with critical distance and hindsight; so, for example, the narrator in 'Dos meserl', who remembers the father to have been almost always sick. The dual narrative perspective may be ideally suited for Sholem Aleichem the humorist, since, as Freud claims, 'the humorist treats himself like a child and is at the same time playing the part of the superior adult in relation to this child'. But Sholem Aleichem's choice of a retrospective first-person narrator in these three stories also allows him to convey his criticism of the existing social order and conditions.

In 'Dos meserl', the main character, Sholem, has a burning desire for a penknife, which leads him to steal from the family's lodger. Filled with

remorse and fear that he will be found out, Sholem witnesses another boy in school being brought to trial and punished for stealing money from a charity box. The experience sends Sholem into a delirium and fever from which his parents fear he may not recover. After two weeks, Sholem sneezes seven times and comes to, just like the child miraculously resuscitated by the prophet Elisha in the second book of Kings. Sholem's parents rejoice in the recovery. However, in the first version of 'Dos meserl' little changes follow the story's catharsis: Sholem is once again sent to *kheyder*, with little consideration as to whether this in the child's best interest. The story ends with the retrospective adult narrator addressing his readers:

> *mayne lezer, mayne brider, velkhe hobn kimat ale gehat punkt dos zelbe dertsiung vos ikh hob gehat, hobn ale farzukht dem tam fun kheyder un drum veln mir do lang vegn dem nit shmuesn un makhmes vegn dem iz do a sakh vos tsu redn un mit redn aleyn veln mir tsu der doziker make nisht helfn un nit do iz dos ort un nit yetst iz grade tsayt tu redn vegn dem un*
>
> my readers, my brothers who will almost all have had precisely the same education that I had, who have tasted the bitterness of *kheyder*. That's why we won't talk about this and also because there is a lot to say about it and with talk alone you can't cure this plague and here is neither the place nor the time to talk about this and

and he closes with a sentence in Russian, stating 'it's not worth talking about that which hurts'.

The Russian sentence in the text is by no means the only reference to non-Jewish languages in this first version of 'Dos Meserl'. The lodger whose penknife Sholem steals is a German Jew. Herr Herts Hertsnherts does speak Yiddish, Sholem informs us, but it's a strange kind of Yiddish with a lot of *pasekh a's*. In fact, the dialogue between the child and the lodger that Sholem Aleichem provides suggests that Sholem is mistaken in identifying Herrr Herts Hertsnherts's language as Yiddish. Instead, it appears to be unadulterated German. Sholem's object of desire, the lodger's penknife, is thus associated with a foreign language, a language other than Yiddish and a non-Jewish language to boot. If Sholem's hankering for a penknife symbolizes his desire to take a first step into adulthood, to set out on the path to liberation, this path will estrange him from Yiddish-language culture and society, leading him away from Yiddish to German, the language of the Jewish Enlightenment and carrier of superior cultural prestige.

In all three stories, a desired object is identified with a non-Jewish language. In 'Baym kenig Akhashveresh', the eight-year-old grandson of Reb Meyer, the richest man in town, decides to join the group of travelling actors who are performing at the family's Purim meal. However, his dream of freedom is short-lived, ending with the boy's father and tutor retrieving him from the house of the leader of the troupe of actors. The father orders the boy's tutor, another 'angel of death', to punish the child as he sees fit. All that remains of the boy's brief taste of liberty is his memory of 'dos zise rusishe lidl, 'the sweet little Russian song', which, together with a German-language song, makes up the song repertoire of the actors in the story. Once again, Sholem Aleichem firmly links the main character's desire for self-determination to a life that is led at least in part in languages other than Yiddish.

The recurring image of the weak, sick father in these stories contrasts starkly with the strength and respect commanded by the non-conformist outsiders in the shtetl. While Herr Herts Hertsnherts neither prays nor wears the traditional East European Jewish dress, he is nevertheless held in high esteem in the community. The *purim shpilers* confidently mock the representatives of the establishment, displaying great verbal dexterity. Conversely, the father in 'Dos meserl', a sick man with a yellow wizened face, cannot complete his sentences, in which he anyway uses the same phrases over and over, without collapsing into a coughing fit. The father of the boy in 'Baym kenig akhashveresh' has little to say in a household dominated by the grandfather, and he lacks the words to express his anger toward the *purim shpilers*, but feebly pushes away the actor who offers him brandy and a snack.

In these earlier two stories, the idea of a life outside the Yiddish language and the traditional Jewish community remains a childhood dream that cannot be realized by the first-person narrator. In 'Dos meserl', the adult Sholem does not call for change, but is resigned to the inevitable – in his own words, 'it is not worth talking about that which hurts'. There is no hope for any societal improvement, and the embittered narrator uses the Russian language without having made it his own, returning to Yiddish at the very end of the story with the words 'gey yingele in kheyder arayn, gey', 'Go to *kheyder*, little boy, go'. Like his father, Sholem now employs a set of stock phrases, such as 'in kheyder arayn, 'to school', the repetition of which shows him to have been stunted in both his personal and linguistic development.

As for the boy in 'Baym kenig akhashveresh', we can safely assume that the memory of the actors' sweet little Russian song will fade in time and that the grandchild of the richest man in town will assume his place in shtetl society. There is no indication that he turns or intends to turn his back on a life of social respectability, forsaking his family and social status for the companionship of actors.

At first sight, this also appears to be the fate that awaits the narrator in the later story 'Oyfn fidl'. Sholem Nokhem Veviks, the son of an innkeeper, has a passion for the fiddle and desires nothing more but to possess and play his own instrument. A first attempt to make himself a fiddle by carving one out of the wooden frame of the family sofa is foiled by Sholem's father, another member of the constantly sick and coughing brigade of fathers that populate Sholem Aleichem's stories. The boy then makes the acquaintance of a klezmer musician who agrees to give him violin lessons in secret. But before he even has his first lesson, Sholem falls sick and unconscious, and a visit to his house by one of the klezmer musician's children arouses the suspicion of his parents. Following his recovery and his engagement to Hershel the tax collector's daughter, Sholem reveals his love for the fiddle to Tchitchick, the bandmaster. He begins to visit Tchitchik regularly in his house on the outskirts of the shtetl. When Sholem's visits to Tchitchik become known to Hershel the tax collector, he cancels the engagement, resulting in Sholem's father's health deteriorating further.

There are clear intertextual links between 'Ofyn fidl' and 'Dos meserl'. In both stories we encounter a sick father, sudden illness and miraculous recovery by the child protagonist, as well as family and community members who act as self-appointed guardians of societal norms and order. Moreover, the boys in the two stories have the same name. Sholem Aleichem makes overt reference to 'Dos meserl' in 'Oyfn fidl' when the boy Sholem gives a piece of steel from an old crinoline to a friend so that the friend can make himself a penknife, which parallels a plot line in 'Dos meserl'.

And once again, Sholem Aleichem places the child's object of desire in a context that is removed from Sholem's Yiddish-language environment. The bandleader Tchitchick, who plays the fiddle for Sholem, is neither Jewish nor speaks Yiddish. Rather, Tchitchik's language is 'a curiously mixed-up jargon composed of several languages', and his animated way of speaking distinguishes him from the other adults in Sholem's life. As

in 'Dos meserl', the language used by Sholem's father in 'Oyfn fidl' has become fossilized. He no longer has full linguistic fluency and ease: either his words are brought to a halt by a cough or he repeats the same phrases endlessly. In fact, both stories contain more than one character who experiences speech and language difficulties. In 'Dos meserl', the *kheyder yingl* Topele Tutaritu has a speech defect that renders him incapable of pronouncing k-sounds, and in 'Oyfn fidl', Sholem's father-in-law-elect, as the boy refers to him, replaces all r-sounds with a 'h'.

The story 'Oyfn fidl' ends with what appears to be the child relinquishing his beloved fiddle. The father's illness demands that Sholem assumes responsibility for the family and abandons his own desires in order to follow the destined course of a Jewish child: 'I would never never anger my father again, and never never cause him any pain. No more fiddle!' But the validity of interpreting the story's last two sentences as the final outcome of Sholem's story is called into question by the very opening of 'Oyfn fidl', where we read 'haynt velk ikh aykh kinder spiln a bisn oyfn fidl', 'Children I will now play for you a little tune on the fiddle'. Notwithstanding the narrator's declaration at the end of the story that he will abandon all fiddle play, that he will sacrifice his personal happiness for the health of the father, the very beginning of the story reveals that the narrator has in fact mastered the fiddle and considers nothing more precious and rewarding than to play the instrument. Sholem Aleichem's dual narrative perspective, which presents both the child and the older wiser narrator, allows the reader to know the real outcome of the conflict between father and son right from the outset of the story. But if Sholem ultimately defies parental authority and enters into the musical world of Tchitchick the bandmaster, it is possible that he also crossed the threshold into the linguistic world of the non-Jew and no longer shares and inhabits the Yiddish-language world of his father. If so, it would appear that Sholem's self-determination and personal happiness can be realized only at the price of linguistic estrangement from the world of his fathers.

Finally, let me turn to the second version of 'Dos meserl', which, with its publication date of 1903, provides the chronological endpoint of the stories considered here. In his rewritten version of 'Dos meserl', Sholem Aleichem offers a happier ending than in his original story. While the two endings are similar in that in both stories Sholem returns to the *kheyder*, the second version of the story thematizes renewal and provides hope and the prospect of change in the form of a new teacher. Sholem goes

back to school 'vi a nay-geborener mit a reyn harts, a gring harts, mit a loytern, klorn kop, mit naye makhshoves, mit frishe, erlekhe, frume gedanken', 'like a newborn with a pure heart, a light heart, with an unburdened, clear mind, with new ideas, with fresh, sincere and pious thoughts'. The reference to new ideas may be read as applying not only to Sholem but also to new ideas in education. The *kheyder* that Sholem attends, following his recovery from his life-threatening illness, is indeed a changed and improved *kheyder*. The cheerful and expectant ending of the story's second version may suggest the impact of the *Kheyder mesukn*, scores of which functioned in Russia by the turn of the century, but which had not existed in the same number when Sholem Aleichem wrote the first version of 'Dos meserl'.

However, in this reading, one must not forget that the *kheyder mesukn* was a Hebraist-Zionist creation. In other words, the story's second version's hopeful ending, which ostensibly presents the reconciliation between Sholem and the adult world, once more involves and is made possible by a rejection of the traditional Yiddish-language model of Jewish education. Admittedly, the move away from Yiddish proceeds in a different direction here: rather than Westernization or Russification, it is a move towards the revival of Hebrew and the transmission of Jewish national-cultural content and educational values. Sholem's vow at the end of the second version of 'Dos meserl', that he will never ever be concerned with anything that isn't his, can be interpreted not only as a pledge that he will never commit another act of theft, but also as the narrator's assertion that modernization of Jewish culture and invention of a new Jewish tradition are possible only in a Jewish language or, in Hebraist-Zionist parlance, in *the* national language of the Jewish people. Irrespective of the direction chosen, the move towards alternative models of linguistic existence remains a move away from Yiddish.

To conclude, I have proposed in this paper that the three stories selected from Sholem Aleichems *Mayses far yidishe kinder* (that is, 'Dos meserl' which, not to forget, exists in two distinct versions, 'Baym kenig akhashveres' and 'Oyfn fidl'), can be read as charting a trajectory from an unfulfilled childhood longing that must be abandoned in the process of becoming an adult in traditional Yiddish society, to self-determination and fulfillment that involves and indeed is made possible by the rejection of Yiddish in favour of either a non-Jewish language or Hebrew. While I do not wish to suggest that Sholem Aleichem is to be reevaluated as

someone who shared the distaste of the *maskilim* for Yiddish or somebody who ought best be considered a radical Zionist in the closet, the contradictions in Sholem Aleichem's own biography neatly mirror the confused stance vis-à-vis the Yiddish language found in these three stories. Nor am I sure that I agree with Ruth Wisse, who provides a harsh assessment when she writes that weak and sick fathers suggest 'the fatal weakness in the culture and – more to the point – the narrator's sense of his own shared culpability in having brought it low'. However, what does seem to me to be a safe conclusion is that in the multifaceted world of Yiddish culture, it is not surprising that even icons are not mono-dimensional in nature.

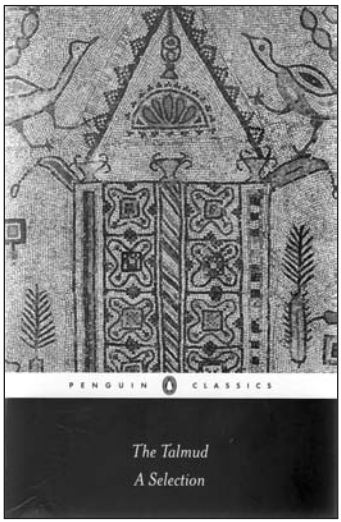
Making Talmud Intelligible

NORMAN SOLOMON

Shortly after the Second World War Penguin published E. V. Rieu's translation of Homer, and invited him to edit a new series of Classics, confident that an eager audience existed for new and accessible translations of the world's great literary treasures. The series was to include volumes 'covering a wide variety of literature ranging from ... Ancient Egypt to the closing years of the nineteenth century', and was to 'present the general reader with readable and attractive versions of the great writers books in modern English, shorn of the unnecessary difficulties and erudition, the archaic flavour and the foreign idiom that renders so many existing translations repellent to modern taste'. Rieu's assistant and successor, Betty Radice, grasped the educational potential of the series. There was, in her words, 'a great opportunity for the classics to meet new demands if new titles were provided with line references, notes, indexes, bibliographies and fuller introductions, designed for use in teaching courses'.

I suppose noone thought of including the Talmud in those early days, but things have moved on, and by the beginning of the current century it had evidently dawned on an enlightened commissioning editor at Penguin that there was a serious omission in the series, and that the Talmud was no less significant for world culture than many works that had already appeared. I was accordingly invited, in 2004, to outline a proposal for an English version of the Babylonian Talmud (familiarly known as the Bavli) to fit within the general format of the Penguin Classics. Five years later, with *The Talmud: A Selection* (London: Penguin Books, 2009) safely in print and on booksellers' shelves, I can look back with some satisfaction on a journey that, notwithstanding the numerous obstacles to be surmounted, gave me great pleasure.

The big question was this. Was it possible to make the Talmud, a seemingly obscure work of almost two million Hebrew and Aramaic words that was apparently addressed to an exclusive readership, intelligible within the covers of a single paperback to the intelligent English reader with no previous knowledge of Judaism and probably very little knowledge of the Bible? I determined to give it a try.



Choosing Passages to Translate

The most frequently asked question is, 'How did you choose which bits to include?' This never seemed to me a great problem. The publishers, fortunately, gave me a free hand. I knew from the beginning that I wanted to cover the full range of Talmud, so I decided that there should be at least one selection from each of the sixty-three tractates, including those for which we have Mishnah only and no direct comment in the Bavli. (The Talmud takes the form of a commentary, nowadays referred to as Gemara, on the Mishnah; the Mishnah was compiled in early third-century Palestine, the Gemara in Babylonia over the following three or four centuries.) Each extract would be self-contained: no 'bleeding chunks', and no unduly lengthy and complicated pieces. All should be placed clearly in context, and contain some distinctive law, element or thought. This still left a lot to choose from, but at this level I felt free to opt for my personal favourites, often pieces I had spent happy hours studying with students, many of them in my 'Introduction to Talmud' course at Yarnton, or with friends and teachers.

Since I was not writing a book of Jewish apologetics, I did not exclude passages that might show rabbinic Judaism in an unsympathetic light, so there is the occasional bit of discriminatory legislation, a hostile comment

on Jesus, or a fantasy of doubtful ethical calibre. Such items do not comprise a major part of Talmud, but they are there, and it was not for me to suppress them.

The Text

Any translator has to be sure that he is translating from a correct original. But is there such a thing as a 'correct original' of the Bavli? As Sherira Gaon (tenth century) and most modern scholars agree, Talmud is essentially oral, an activity rather than a book, and was never submitted to any definitive final editing. The way was left open to adjustments and interpolations in succeeding centuries. Copyists, moreover, often did not understand what they were copying and frequently 'corrected' the text to something they found more intelligible. Even when they did understand, the more learned 'corrected' for the sake of intellectual consistency.

The earliest known fragment of rabbinic writing is a mosiac inscription in the Rehov Synagogue (near Bet Shean, Israel), probably of the sixth century; and manuscript fragments of Talmud recovered from the Cairo Geniza have been dated by scholars to as early as the eighth. The oldest dated manuscript of any part of the Talmud is a section of tractate *Keritot*, housed in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, that carries a date equivalent to 1123. The earliest datable manuscript containing whole tractates is the Florence Codex of 1177, and the earliest nearly complete Talmud manuscript is the 1343 Munich Codex. There is still no definitive, critical edition of the whole Bavli, collating all known manuscripts and variants, although there are some excellent editions of individual chapters or tractates.

How was I to cut through the morass of textual confusion? I opted to focus on the Talmud as actually read by Jews, turning to manuscript evidence only in cases where there was obvious error, censorship or some otherwise intractable problem. The text 'as read by Jews' is the so-called 'Vilna Shass', the magnificent edition completed by the Widow and Brothers Romm in Vilnius, Lithuania (then a Russian governate) in 1886, and frequently reprinted. It carries a useful, if limited, critical apparatus. The Vilna Shass follows, at some remove, the textual tradition established by Rashi (1040-1105), whose commentary on the Bavli remains, after 900 years, the first port of call for any serious student of Talmud. Rashi drew heavily on the Babylonian scholarship mediated by Hananel ben Hushiel

and others. His deep concern with the unreliability of available manuscripts is shown by the fact that in at least 767 instances he states *hakhi garsinan*, 'This is the correct reading'. Rashi distinguished statements from questions (the question mark had not been invented in his time), explained the context of unattached statements, clarified whether a particular statement was a hypothesis to be rejected or the conclusion of an argument, clarified the reference of unattached pronouns, and solved innumerable syntactical and lexical problems. I came to agree wholeheartedly with the adage, 'without Rashi, the Talmud would have been forgotten in Israel', though I must leave it to scholars to assess how close Rashi's final text is to the words of the Babylonian scribes.

Problems of Translation

Though there are already several complete English translations of the Bavli in existence, and a substantial number of translations of extracts, my translation is entirely new. I aimed to make it not only readable and stylistically consistent, but as close in feeling as possible to the original. I wanted the book to *look* like a Talmud in miniature, to be an accurate representation, but to be easier to read.

Certain features of talmudic discourse threatened to make things specially difficult. One was that the text is heavily layered, operating on several levels, so that form critics, led by Jacob Neusner, have had a field day taking it apart. It contains quotes from the Bible, chunks of Mishnah and other contemporary material (all this in Hebrew), as well as carefully constructed discussions of these by the Amoraim (the rabbis of the Talmud, who mostly use Aramaic). But the text doesn't make clear where one layer ends and another begins. How could I indicate the different levels in translation? The solution was to use three different type formats, one for Bible, one for Mishnah and allied material, and one for the later, amoraic discussion.

The talmudic argument, as presented in the standard texts, can appear very convoluted. Often, a carefully constructed *sugya* (a focused discussion on a distinct topic) becomes confusing because at some point an editor or copyist has introduced a comment or digression, although there is nothing in the text to indicate that this is so. Here again, modern typography offers a solution. The comment or digression can be set in a separate paragraph and indented, so that a reader can skip over it and

follow the main argument, then come back to read the comment. Sometimes there is a digression from or comment on the comment or digression itself, in which case we can have a double indent. And then there may be a digression from a digression from a digression … But it seemed to me that more than two levels of indentation would simply confuse the reader even more. The publishers, I am happy to acknowledge, readily agreed to my typographic suggestions, despite the extra work and production costs this involved.

Once I had found a method to make the structure clear, I had to make sure I could translate the words correctly. Excellent dictionaries are now at hand to assist with this. Marcus Jastrow's *Dictionary of Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi, Midrashic Literature and Targumim* remains handy and comprehensive, but lexicography has moved on in the century since it was completed, and many of the developments are encapsulated in the volumes compiled by Michael Sokoloff. Specialized vocabularies have generated their own literature, such as Daniel Sperber's *A Dictionary of Greek and Latin Legal Terms in Rabbinic Literature*. Hundreds of Latin and Greek words occur in the Talmud, some as loanwords, some naturalized in Hebrew or Aramaic. I suspect there are also rather more Persian words than currently accounted for, although other languages are less common. My recommendation, by the way, to anyone other than a professional philologist, who wants a handy reference work for the language of the Bavli is to use *He-Arukh al ha-Shass*, by Meir Meisels.[1] This work, which disingenuously purports to be an 'edition' of the *Arukh* of the eleventh-century Nathan ben Yehiel of Rome, is conveniently arranged as a continuous commentary on the Talmud, lavishly illustrated, and replete with foreign words in their appropriate scripts. The author does not openly acknowledge the modern scholarship on which his work rests, presumably because he wanted it to be accepted in Orthodox *yeshivot*, where it is now commonly found.

Helpful as dictionaries are, what often proved more important was a knowledge of the subject treated – and Talmud treats of almost every topic known to the ancient world. What, one has to ask, is an appropriate vocabulary to use for animal husbandry, medical ethics, calendrical calculations, baking or building? Word-for-word translation isn't good enough. You have to know what you are talking about, and how people

[1] Published in three volumes in Bnei Braq, Israel, by Pardes, 1992.

talk about it nowadays. I found, for instance, that I could readily handle the horticultural discussions on the basis of my personal experience of gardening, but that obstetrics and money-lending, let alone magic, were more problematic, since I don't do any of them. But there are dangers, too, in using specialized terminology. If, for instance, you use English or Roman legal terminology to translate Hebrew legal terms, it may misleadingly suggest similarities that don't exist.

Modern English lacks a working vocabulary for topics such as tithes, purity laws or sacrifices. It might have been possible to borrow terms from anthropologists who are used to dealing with such matters, but apart from the inevitable bias of anthropologists' attitudes to religion, this would have replaced the common, everyday expressions used in the Talmud with a technical jargon unfamiliar to readers. I preferred to improvise, and to explain where necessary.

Rabbinic Aramaic and Hebrew have set formulae to handle halakhic argument and biblical exegesis. English needs to employ circumlocutions, and often the brevity of talmudic style means that words and even whole phrases must be inserted to make sense. I have put such insertions, which may be conjectural, in square brackets.

Constant repetitions of 'he said' are irritating, so I amended freely to 'he replied', 'he observed', 'he commented' and the like, without indicating the change. Very often a pronoun is not clearly determined, so it is difficult to know *who* said or did whatever it was. Where I could determine the subject I used the name rather than a pronoun.

Manuscripts and most printed copies use copious abbreviations, and these often create ambiguity. The letters R'I, for instance, might stand for Rabbi Yehudah (and there were many of that name), Rabbi Ishmael or Rabbi Isaac. Also, names such as Rava and Rabba are often confused. These and other ambiguities cannot be reproduced in translation. The translator has to opt for whichever alternative he thinks correct, and may well get it wrong.

Translating Biblical Quotations

The Greek translator of the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus wrote in his Prologue: 'For the same things uttered in Hebrew, and translated into another tongue, have not the same force in them'. Translating quotations from the Bible proved a more daunting a task than I had at first

imagined. Where it fitted the context, I used the Jewish Publication Society's translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (2nd edition, Philadelphia 1999, slightly modified to British usage), or occasionally the King James, or Authorised, Version (AV). Often, neither of these corresponded to the way the rabbis would have viewed the text. Familiar as they were with the Hebrew of the Bible, the sages of the Talmud did not always read it in the way the medieval Jewish commentators did or modern English translators do. They picked up different resonances, and often indulged in imaginative word play. For instance:

> *THESE ARE THE WORDS* (Deuteronomy 1:1). The Holy One, blessed be He, said, My children play a role in the world like bees, through their pious ones and their prophets. Alternatively, just as the bee's honey is sweet and its sting is bitter, so are the words of Torah [to those who obey or disobey]. (Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah 1:6).

This is incoherent in English, but in biblical Hebrew it is obvious and striking: *devarim* ('words') and *devorim* ('bees') are written in exactly the same way (in later Hebrew an extra *vav* is inserted in *devorim* to distinguish them).

In that example, the plain meaning of the Hebrew is clear. Frequently, the biblical text itself is obscure. One of the most extreme instances I came across involved Isaiah 22:5. JPS translates the latter half of the verse, 'KIR RAGED [IN THE VALLEY OF VISION], AND SHOA ON THE HILL'; AV has, '[A DAY OF] BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS, AND OF CRYING IN THE MOUNTAINS'. I have translated in the way I believe the rabbis (*Ta'anit* 31a) understood the verse, 'HE WAILED AND MOANED FOR THE MOUNTAIN'. However, despite the best efforts of commentators ancient and modern, I still have no idea what the verse really means. Indeed, one of the most humbling aspects of translating the Talmud was the discovery of how little of the Bible I really understood.

'Israel', 'Jew', 'Palestine'

How do you translate the word *Yisrael* when it occurs in the Mishnah or Talmud? Many translations say 'Jew', but I was not happy with this. The English word 'Jew' derives from Latin *Judaeus*, itself derived from Hebrew *yehudi*, from the proper name Yehudah (Judah). Mishnah, and rabbinic literature generally, do not use the term *yehudim* as a collective

for Jews, but *Israel*, the name given by God to Jacob, ancestor of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Genesis 32:29 and 35:10). There are several possible reasons for this. Since, strictly speaking, *yehudi* denoted a descendant of Judah, ancestor of only one of the twelve tribes of Israel, it could not be used for members of other tribes, so Israel was a more accurate, inclusive term. *Yehudi* might have been understood too narrowly as denoting inhabitants of Judea. There may also have been an element of polemic against Christian claims to be *verus Israel*, the 'true' Israel. Or the term *yehudi* may have acquired pejorative overtones, as 'Jew' eventually did in English.

The geographical area promised by God to the patriarchs is called by the rabbis *Erets Yisrael*, the Land of Israel, or simply The Land, never just *Israel*. The name Syria Palaestina (later simply Palaestina) from which 'Palestine' derives, was imposed by the Romans on the province of Judea after Julius Severus, under Hadrian, quelled the Bar Kokhba Revolt in 135 CE. The nearest Hebrew equivalent would be *Erets Pelishtim*, 'The Land of the Philistines', which occurs in the Bible (e.g. Exodus 13:17), but never in rabbinic literature. It seemed appropriate in some contexts to use 'Palestine' as the conventional name for the area in late antiquity, although needless to say, it carries no modern political connotation.

Humour

Talmud contains both *halakhah* (law) and *aggadah* (narrative, anecdotes, general information, reflections on life), and they often overlap, much as they might have done in the conversation of student and teacher. The fourth-century Babylonian teacher Rabbah, it is said, commenced his lectures with a joke to make the students laugh, before opening the topic in trepidation (*Shabbat* 30b). Neither the Bible nor the Talmud is anywhere near as solemn a compilation as the pious would like to think. But it is not always possible to know for sure just how seriously a statement is meant to be taken. Sometimes the humour is clearly intended, and easily preserved in translation, as with Joshua ben Hananiah's anecdote of the only people who ever outwitted him, a woman, a boy and a girl. Here is the story of the boy:

> And what happened with the boy? I was on my way when I saw a boy sitting at the crossroads. I asked, Which is the way into town? He said, This way is

> short but long, and that one is long but short. I followed the short but long [route], but when I arrived at the town I found that it was surrounded by gardens and orchards, and I had to retrace my steps. I said, My son, didn't you tell me that was the short [route]? He said to me, But didn't I tell you it was long! I kissed his head and said to him, Happy are you, Israel, for you are all astute, from the greatest to the smallest! (*Eruvin* 53b)

Sometimes the humour is more subtle, depending on a knowledge of *halakhah* and a feeling for master-pupil relationships in the Babylonian schools. This tale of an absent-minded student appears in the course of a complex discussion about what constitutes a Sabbath boundary. It depends on the assumption that if you accidentally wander beyond it you must remain in place and not return until after the Sabbath:

> Rav Ḥanilai's son, Nehemiah, was deeply engrossed in his studies and [absent-mindedly] walked beyond the [Sabbath] boundary. Rav Ḥisda said to Rav Nahman, Your disciple Nehemiah is in distress! [Rav Naḥman] replied, [Then] make a barrier with people so that he can come back in! (*Eruvin* 43b/44a)

The discussion is inconclusive, since we are (deliberately?) kept in ignorance of what happened to the student – was he left standing until after the Sabbath, perhaps in order to teach him not to be so absent-minded in future? The anecdote would certainly have raised a laugh in the *yeshivah* of Sura or Pumbedita, and at a superficial level it is easy to translate; getting the English reader to see the funny side is another matter.

There was a widespread superstition in the ancient world against even numbers, or 'doubles'. So how, asks an anonymous teacher, could the rabbis institute the dangerous practice of drinking an even number of cups of wine? (*Pesaḥim* 109b) It is hard to know whether the question was posed with tongue in cheek, since some of the lengthy discussion seems serious enough. But what are we to make of this anecdote?

> There was an incident with a man who divorced his wife. She went and married an innkeeper. [The ex-husband] used to go [there] every day to drink wine, but though she tried sorcery on him it didn't succeed as he always took care [to avoid] doubles. One day he drank a lot and lost count. Up to sixteen he kept a clear head, but after that he was confused and no longer careful. [The innkeeper] turned him out [when he reached] a double. On his way he met an Arab, who said to him, 'I see a dead man walking here'. As he continued on his way, he caught hold of a palm tree; the tree cried out and the man expired. *(Pesaḥim* 110b)

The discussion of doubles may be somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but a similarly inconclusive discussion on astrology (*Shabbat* 156) is harder to characterize. Clearly the rabbis were uncomfortable with Greek and Indian astrology, which arrived in Iran, including Babylonia, in the mid-third century. The astrologers' belief that people's lives were controlled by influences from the heavenly bodies, though widespread in the ancient world, conflicts with basic Jewish teaching on free will, reward and punishment. When Yohanan, Rav and Shemuel distance themselves from the belief that people's fate is determined by the position of the stars at the time of their birth and demonstrate that Israel stands directly under divine providence, immune from astrological influence so long as she is faithful to God's commandments, they are probably not so much poking fun at astrology (as the Bible did with earlier forms of astral divination, e.g. Isaiah 47:13) as exempting Israel from the constraints of what they believe is an otherwise valid science.

There is an exuberance in much halakhic discourse which, if not quite in the category of humour, lies at the heart of the rabbinic conception of the 'joy of Torah'. This can be confusing if you are not familiar with the way the rabbis thought, and the sheer enjoyment they had in pursuing the implications of a divine commandment. For instance, the Mishnah (*Qinnim* 2:3) asks how, in the following case, can a priest be sure (a) that he has not confused a purification-offering with an upward-offering, and (b) that he does not sacrifice a bird on behalf of anyone other than its rightful owner?

> There were seven women, one of whom had a pair of birds, the second had two pairs, the third had three, and so on to seven, and a bird flew from the first set to the second, from the second to the third, and so on to the seventh (though it was not certain that it was the same bird), and then back again.

Of course, no such thing ever took place nor was expected to, and there was not even a Temple when the question was formulated. The chapter in which the question is raised is simply a *jeux d'esprit* to train the minds of students in combinations and permutations, and to equip them to pursue a halakhic idea to its limits. But there is no mistaking the element of fun in the invention of improbable situations – Torah, with its infinite possibilities, is to be enjoyed!

Context

Traditional study, as found in *yeshivot*, tends to treat the Talmud as if it was produced in isolation from surrounding cultures, as a sort of self-contained Jewish science of revealing what was implicit in the original revelation at Sinai. This is insupportable. Talmud is very much a product of the interaction between biblical tradition and the Mediterranean and Near-Eastern cultures of late antiquity. Mishnah is firmly set within Graeco-Roman culture. The Bavli has not lost this connection, since borders were permeable, and Mesopotamia retained a significant Greek population. But the Jews of Babylonia were open to Iranian influence, too, for the period of formation of the Talmud almost exactly coincides with the rule of an Iranian dynasty, the Sassanians. The Sassanian Ardashir I defeated the last Parthian king in 224, when Rav and Shmuel were already active, and the Talmud was in essence complete by the time the Sassanian regime fell to the Arab conquests of the early seventh century.

The redactors of the Talmud were well aware of the rivalry between Rome and Iran, and neatly captured it in this *aggadah*:

> Caesar said to Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah, You [people] think you are very clever, so tell me what I will see in my dream! He replied, You will see the Persians impress you to the royal levy, seize you and make you tend pigs with a golden staff. [Caesar] mulled this over all day, and at night he saw it [in his dream].
>
> King Shapur said to Shemuel, You [people] think you are very clever, so tell me what I will see in my dream! He replied, You will see the Romans come and take you captive and make you crush datestones in a golden mill. [Shapur] mulled this over all day, and at night he saw it [in his dream]. (*Berakhot* 56a)

The ruling attributed to the Babylonian, Shemuel, that 'the law of the realm is law' (*Bava Qama* 113a) was to have momentous consequences for the relationships between Jews and governing authorities in later ages. It recognized the right of a legitimate government to control land tenure and raise reasonable taxes, and it acknowledged the legitimacy of the Sassanian government. Whether it was devised by Shmuel, imposed by Shapur or simply emerged out of common practice matters little. The ingenious compromise, while acknowledging Sassanian overlordship, left the Jewish authorities free to administer all religious matters including family law, as well as internal commercial dealings and criminal behaviour.

Jewish courts certainly administered punishments on miscreants, including flogging, though they did not impose fines or capital punishment.

In the course of the third century, Mazdean Zoroastrianism was consolidated as the Iranian state religion and mishnaic Judaism as the law code of the Jews of Babylonia. Christianity penetrated Mesopotamia via Edessa, while at the Indian end of the Empire were substantial Buddhist enclaves. The prophet Mani spent several years in a Christian-Jewish Elkasite monastery before proclaiming his brand of Gnostic syncretism, the highly successful Manichean religion, in Babylonia *c.* 250. There was also a general expansion of cults derived from Zoroastrianism, including the Mithraic cults popular in the Roman Empire. Religious leaders, not least the rabbis, poured scorn on one another's faith and did their best to 'protect' their own followers from being 'contaminated' by those of rival religions. But whatever was preached from the pulpit, economic interests brought people of different religious and ethnic communities together. Material culture, science, medicine and superstition crossed boundaries in the marketplace.

Roman Law

The extent to which Jewish law was influenced by Roman, Greek or Near Eastern legal systems and social mores is much debated. Some concepts, such as guardianship, have no biblical precedent, leading the rabbis to use Greek terms such as *epitropos* ('guardian'), *hypothēkē* ('deposit', 'pledge') or *diathēkē* ('disposition', 'contract') to articulate them. Even an institution of undoubted Israelite origin, such as the *Bet Din ha-gadol* (the High Court), acquired a Greek name, *synedrion* or *Sanhedrin*.

Two institutions attributed to Hillel, a teacher of the early first century, bear an uncanny resemblance to the Roman *depositio in aede*, under which a debtor who wanted to pay his debt and was unable to do so because the creditor was avoiding him could circumvent the creditor by depositing the sum with the court. The closest parallel is Hillel's ruling in *Arakhin* 9 in connection with the right of the original owner of property in a 'walled city' to buy back his property within twelve months of the sale (Leviticus 25:29-34). Should the purchaser avoid him, he may place his money in the treasury (the equivalent of the court) and repossess the house. The *prosbul* (Greek *prosbolē* or *pros boulēn*, 'before the council') attributed to Hillel [*Shevi'it* 10:3]), under the terms of which a debt might be placed in the hands of the court for collection, and would

then be exempt from release in the sabbatical year, depends on the same legal device.

Under Roman law, at least from 393, polygamy was a punishable offence, though the Roman authorities may have tolerated it among Jews in Palestine in the period of the Mishnah. In Iran, however, it was accepted. Isaiah Gafni has shown how differences in attitude to marriage between Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis reflect attitudes in the ambient societies. Slavery was normal in both societies, and practised by Jews. Gamaliel II's attempts to manumit a slave, a normal Roman procedure, were obstructed by the sages in the belief that the Torah forbade manumission of a non-Jewish slave other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Roman law distinguishes between intestate inheritance and inheritance where the deceased had made a will, but there is no indication of such a distinction in the Bible. The rabbis accepted the common practice of making wills, contrary to the provisions laid down in Scripture, by arguing that though a will could not take the form 'I appoint A or B as my heir' if A and B were not heirs designated by the Torah, the testator might allocate gifts from his estate to take effect during his life-time.

Jewish law was certainly open to a charge of being discriminatory, as the following indicates:

> The rabbis taught: The Roman government despatched two officials to the Sages. Teach us your Torah! [they requested]. They studied, revised and reviewed. When they left they said, We have examined your Torah carefully and it is all true except for this thing that you say: *If a Israelite's ox gored an idolater's ox, he is exempt [from payment of damages]; if an idolater's ox gored an Israelite's ox, he must pay full damages, whether or not the ox has been cautioned.* One way or the other! If *HIS NEIGHBOUR* is meant exclusively, an idolater whose ox gored an Israelite's ox should be exempt; if it is inclusive, an Israelite whose ox gored an idolater's ox should be liable! [However,] we will not inform the government of this. (*Bava Qama* 38a)

Other matters, such as the formulation of documents, have much in common with general practice in the ancient Near East, as confirmed by papyrological evidence. In general, talmudic *halakhah* in matters of civil and criminal law must be read in the context of other law systems of late antiquity. It has its distinctive features, deriving mainly from the attempt to harmonize the biblical text with actual practice, but at the same time shares much with the surrounding societies.

Interpreting Talmud

A book that has been ardently studied, cited as authority, defended and enjoyed for more than a thousand years has inevitably spawned a variety of interpreters. Nowadays there is an extensive secondary literature covering almost every aspect of talmudic interpretation, down to specialized studies of its language, geography, science, agriculture, law and social structures. There is also an extensive and growing traditional literature, developing *halakhah* for practice by the faithful, interpreting *aggadah* for contemporary Jewry and using it homiletically in accord with time-honoured tradition. In my editorial notes I have selected freely from both literatures and attempted to illustrate as wide a variety of approaches as I can. Among twentieth-century writers, for instance, I have ranged from the great Lithuanian halakhist Hayyim Soloveitchik (1843–1917) whose 'analytic' exposition of *halakhah* has strongly influenced the study of Talmud in *yeshivot*, to the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1905–95), whose 'Lectures Talmudiques' opened the eyes of French Jewish intellectuals to the treasures of Talmud. The academic study of Talmud is represented by leading scholars such as Saul Lieberman (1898–1983) and numerous others, often my teachers and colleagues, to whose researches I am indebted.

To help the reader negotiate the varied material and relate it to its social and historical context I have supplied a glossary, a table of coins, weights and measures, a time-line of events in the talmudic period, and a set of three maps: Palestine of the Mishnah, *c.* 200 CE; Babylonia of the Talmud, *c.* 400 CE; Roman and Sassanian Empires, *c.* 360 CE.

I very much hope the book will find its place as an educational tool to introduce a greater number of people to the Talmud, a work whose influence on the Christian and Muslim as well the Jewish world has generally been denied as well as overlooked, and that a new readership will be able to share some of the intellectual and spiritual delights previously available mainly to initiati. Perhaps it will also serve to introduce some of its more ardent traditional students to its broader context; at the very least, the *yeshivah bahur* can use its maps to trace the route from Sura to Pumbedita. Who knows, perhaps one day Iraq will again be at peace and Sura (near Al-Hillah) and Pumbedita (Al-Falujah) find themselves among the top ten unmissable tourist attractions

*The Origins of Violence: The Judaic in Walter Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence'**

ELIYAHU STERN

Perhaps no ideas animated young intellectuals of the German-Jewish Renaissance more than Judaism's ability to critique the nation state and call into question society's bourgeois-liberal underpinnings. Few issued this challenge more powerfully and radically than Walter Benjamin, and perhaps no piece of writing better expresses the complexities, contradictions and force of that approach than his essay 'Critique of Violence'.[1] This, published in 1921, has been related to the Marxist influences of Georges Sorel on Walter Benjamin. But while there is little doubting Sorel's impact on Benjamin, such a perspective fails to account for the place of Gershom Scholem and the role played by the Judaic tradition in the formation of Benjamin's thought. The Judaic tradition itself represented a radical form of critique of Law, the Modern State and Violence. This paper offers a corrective to overly Marxist readings of Benjamin, offering a richer and more nuanced historic and philosophic description of Benjamin's ideas and the various ways Zionism was understood by young German intellectuals in the early twentieth century.

The Violence of Positive and Natural Law

Benjamin, 'as if he were a lawyer or a legal philosopher', begins 'Critique of Violence' with an examination of natural and positive law.[2] He opens by exploring natural law's justifications for the use of violence. Benjamin

* I would like to thank Barry Whimpfheimer for his helpful comments and suggestions regarding this paper's content and form. I would also like to thank Professor Judith Butler. Much of this essay is drawn from ideas she raised in her lectures given on Benjamin at the University of California, Berkeley, in the fall semester of 2003.

1 W. Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', *Walter Benjamin: Reflections*, trans. E. Jephcott, (New York: Schocken Books, 1978) 299.

2 P. Demetz, 'Introduction', *Benjamin* (see n. 1) xxv.

quickly demonstrates what he sees as the futility of such an exploration. Natural law offers only 'a bottomless casuistry' for determining the validity of each action.[3] On rejecting natural law, Benjamin turns to the historic and philosophic underpinnings of positive law (to examine law's relationship to violence). He is attracted to positive law because, at least theoretically, it attempts to offer a normative argument for sanctioned and unsanctioned violence independent of any specific circumstances. Nonetheless, Benjamin argues that legal positivism is founded on an unjustifiable violence, one that divests the subject of its individuality and prevents it from seeking its natural ends. The law is created precisely to block the individual from living outside its confines, unfettered and free. Law is a self-referencing, self-serving system preventing the flourishing of the individual. As Benjamin argues: 'Law sees violence in the hands of individuals as a danger undermining the legal system… To counter it one might perhaps consider the surprising possibility that the law's interest in a monopoly of violence visa-a-vis [sic] individuals is not explained by the intention of preserving legal ends but rather by that of preserving the law itself.'[4]

For Benjamin, legal positivism's monopoly of violence is rooted in the death penalty. Law's right over life is the actualization of its power over humanity. Each time law exacts a death penalty it reaffirms its copyright over the use of violence (for in a legal positivist system the system itself becomes its own precedent). According to Benjamin, this reaffirmation blurs the parliamentarian lines drawn between law-making and law-preserving qualities of legal violence. Law, by taking a life, defends itself against its transgressor and reiterates the act on which it is founded.

Benjamin then turns his attention to the neo-Marxist thought of Georges Sorel, focusing on Sorel's distinction between the political strike and the proletarian strike. While the political strike is but another state-sanctioned 'acceptable' form of violence, the proletarian strike seeks a total destruction of the state, and for that matter all systems of violence. The political strike asks only for a modification in the system that controls the lives of its participants. The proletarian strike seeks to abolish the order itself without any other political end in sight.

Sorel's criticism of the political strike parallels Benjamin's criticism of positivist law. The political strike is only a manifestation of legal violence,

[3] Benjamin (see n. 1) 279

[4] Ibid. 280.

while the proletarian strike is a pure means. As explained by Benjamin: 'While the first form of interruption of work [the political strike] is violent since it causes only external modifications…, the second [the proletarian strike], as a pure means is nonviolent. For it takes place not in readiness to resume work following external conditions …, but in the determination to resume only a wholly transformed work, no longer enforced by the state, an upheaval that this kind of strike not so much causes as consummates.'[5] Both the state and legal positivism are totalizing systems that are self-referencing and self-maintaining.

The Sorelian overtones in 'Critique of Violence' can easily be mischaracterized as part of an all-embracing messianic Marxist literary and political trajectory (albeit an untraditional one). According to Anson Rabinbach, 'Critique of Violence' is only a step away from Benjamin's 'eventual embrace of [an untraditional] Marxism'.[6] Rabinbach understands 'Critique of Violence' as Benjamin's response to a conversation with and to a book – *Spirit of Utopia* – written by Ernst Bloch. Benjamin encountered Bloch in his Swiss period (1917–19) and immediately became preoccupied with Bloch's political agenda. '[I]t was Bloch who influenced Benjamin'[7] to pursue a more political line of thinking. Unlike Bloch's utopia that combines politics and messianism, Benjamin resisted such an amalgamation of orders. 'In the end, Benjamin affirms [a] rejection of the connection between history and the messianic impulse.'[8]

Rabinbach argues that Benjamin's two years in Switzerland revolved around the questions and issues posed by Bloch's ideas. This claim, however, rests on a de-contextualized misquotation of Gershom Scholem, Benjamin's closest confidant and someone whom Benjamin met with almost every day in Switzerland. Scholem's remark that 'Critique of Violence contains all of the motifs that moved [Benjamin] during his time in Switzerland' refers, for Rabinbach, not simply to the issues discussed by Benjamin and Scholem during these years, but to Benjamin's oppositional interest in Bloch's work.[9]

[5] Ibid. 291.

[6] A. Rabinbach, 'Introduction' in Gershom Scholem (ed.) *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem 1932–1940* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989) xviii.

[7] A. Rabinbach, 'Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern Jewish Messianism', *New German Critique* 34 (2007) 115.

[8] Ibid. 118.

[9] Ibid. 117.

In what must be seen as an exceptional instant, Rabinbach momentarily suggests that 'Critique of Violence' should not be understood in the context of a Marxist political trajectory. '[Critique of Violence] marks the beginning of his [Benjamin's] writings about politics – and not, as so often is claimed, his 1924 "conversion to Marxism".'[10] Despite this observation, the thrust of Rabinbach's references to Bloch and the conclusions he draws all point to the very argument he dismisses. For before Rabinbach's ink has dried, he tells us:

> By 1920 Bloch had turned the Messianic vision into a political identification with the revolutionary epoch, while Benjamin adopted a theocratic anarchism which distinguishes between pure 'violence' not directed at political ends, but rather at the destruction of all legal violence which is mythical and unjust. This is only one small step from embracing the sectarian Messianism of the revolution, which for Benjamin was taken by 1924… In the 1920s and 1930s Bloch and Benjamin represented the warm current in the cold sea of European Marxism. The 'anarchic breeze' of Jewish Messianism blew fresh air into the house that Stalin built. True to tradition, of course, they both ended up as Marxist heretics.[11]

Although messianic Marxist elements exist in Benjamin's work, they are only pieces of a far larger puzzle.

Recovering Scholem and Benjamin's Cultural Zionism

Not surprisingly, Rabinbach's Marxist reading of Benjamin takes issue with Martin Jay's contention that Benjamin's Swiss years signify a Zionist phase in the young thinker's life. According to Rabinbach, 'Martin Jay, in his history of the Frankfurt School, goes so far as to argue, incorrectly, that "Zionism became the dominant passion in his life", during the war "crowding out the Youth Movement."'[12] However, a close analysis of Benjamin's Swiss years supports Jay's claim and point to a more complex picture of what Zionism meant to young German Jewish intellectuals.[13]

[10] Ibid. 115.

[11] Ibid. 122 (emphasis added).

[12] Ibid. 91 n. 91.

[13] For a bibliographic summary of the different politically generated interpretations of Benjamin's work see M. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfort School and the Institute of Social Research*, 1923–1950 (London: Heinemann Education Books Ltd., 1973) 337 n.127.

Benjamin first addresses his relationship to Zionism in 1912. In a very detailed correspondence with Ludwig Strauss,[14] he identifies with a non-political notion of Zionism. Unfortunately, much of their correspondence is not published. From what we have access to, the issue seems to have been of great importance to Benjamin. In these letters Benjamin adopts an ambivalent relationship to Zionism. He identifies as 'a Zionist of a special order', contrasting himself with the political and cultural Zionism centred on Palestine. For Benjamin 'Zionism' becomes a general Judaic term not attached to a specific geographic locale.[15]

Benjamin's Zionism is not a Zionism of land per se, but of a world of Jewish ideas. It remains an abstract construct – conceptual messianism with all of its earth-changing apocalyptic potential. Zionism, for Benjamin, is too precious to be muddied in the violent realm of politics. Zionism is privileged in his outlook so long as it remains above or outside set political orders and movements.

Much of this conception of Zionism is the result of Benjamin's encounter with Gershom Scholem.[16] The Scholem-Benjamin relationship is one of the best-documented friendships of the century.[17] Although their lives and projects moved in different directions, their ideas' epistemological basis shares great intellectual affinities. Likewise, though they ultimately ended up on different sides of the Mediterranean, in the early 1900s they resided in close proximity to each other, spending large amounts of time together. While much has been written about the vague correlation between Scholem's mystical project and Benjamin's interest in German Romanticism, a more fruitful vista into the extent of

[14] Many of these letters still remain unpublished and exist only in manuscript form. Therefore, my discussion here relies greatly upon Paul Mendes Flohr's recent treatment and translation of many of these letters. Mendes-Flohr's discussion of these letters is the most extensive to date and appears in his work *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 48–59.

[15] Ibid. 53.

[16] On Scholem's life and his intellectual significance see the important work of D. Biale, *Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979). The profound influence Scholem exerted on Benjamin (and vice-versa) has been most recently and most elegantly documented by Eric Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003) 194–224.

[17] An excellent overview of the Scholem–Benjamin friendship is presented by R. Alter, in *Necessary Angels: Tradition and Modernity in Kafka, Benjamin and Scholem* (Cambridge: Harvard UP and HUC Press, 1991).

their intellectual friendship can be found between the lines of 'Critique of Violence'.[18] While 'Critique of Violence' was being written, both individuals were invested in a highly non-political culturally bent notion of Zionism. As Eric Jacobson has noted, much like Benjamin, Scholem argued for a Zionism as a 'religious mystical quest for the re-generation of Judaism'. Even as late as 1931 Scholem denied that 'Zionism…has a right to employ religious terminology for political goals'.[19] For Scholem, Zionism's primary function is as spiritual shock therapy for a deadened Judaism, numbed by the orders of legal formalism and the Modern State. While Scholem would eventually embrace, with some reservations, a land-based vision of Zionism, the philosophical vision it represented brought him and Benjamin together.

For Scholem, Judaism is misunderstood when conceived as a positivist system of law divorced from the attainment of justice and morality. Scholem's work moves Judaism beyond its modern positivist legalistic characterization – a characterization that emerged from the pen of Baruch Spinoza and became engraved into the German mind through the writings of Moses Mendelssohn. In later years, Scholem reflected on what he thought were Benjamin's and Kafka's projects (but also hinting to his own) by claiming, 'you [Benjamin] had the moral world of *halakhah* right before your eyes, complete with its abysses and dialectics'.[20] For Scholem,

[18] The correlation between Scholem's interest in Jewish mysticism and Benjamin's study of the Baroque has been documented most notably by H. Arendt in 'Introduction', *Walter Benjamin: Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968) 12.

[19] See G. Scholem to Benjamin 1 August 1931, in G. Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1981) 171. It should be noted that even during their most intimate intellectual moments there was a difference between Scholem's and Benjamin's relationship to Zionism and Israel. See Eric Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem* (New York: Columbia University, 2003) 56–61.

[20] This quote is taken from a letter sent by Scholem to Benjamin in 1931. It is recorded and translated by Scholem (see n. 19) 170–1. Though outside the purview of this study, if looked at closely, the letter touches on many of the philosophic issues discussed in 'Critique of Violence'. Specifically it deals with Kafka's work, but in the process it highlights Benjamin's and Scholem's shared intellectual projects. In the letter Scholem advises Benjamin: 'to begin any inquiry into Kafka with the book of Job, or at least with a discussion on *divine judgement*, which I regard as the sole subject of Kafka's production [worthy of] being treated in a work of literature. *These ideas I expressed many years ago in theses on justice (which you know)* would in their relationship to language serve me as a guide in my reflections on Kafka. It would be an enigma to me how you as a critic would go about saying something about this man's world without placing the *Lehre* [teaching], called *Gesetz*

Benjamin's critique of law mirrors his own critique of *halakhah* and vice-versa. While many have pointed out Scholem's counter-history of Judaism that privileges the kabbalistic over and against the halakhic, a less recognized aspect of Scholem's project that is highlighted in the above-mentioned Kafka quote (addressing Benjamin's ideas), is his critique of the 'positivization' of *halakhah.* Scholem not only reintroduced the irrational and the kabbalistic to Jewish life, but attempted to breathe life into *halakhah* by reconnecting it with a biblical worldview whose telos is the attainment of justice and morality.

Benjamin's Scholemian Mystical and Divine Violence

After discussing Sorel's ideas, Benjamin launches into a theological-political excursion, ending in his embracing 'divine violence' as a means for countering all forms of violence excreted by the State on the individual. Benjamin's employs the Judaic tradition, as understood by Scholem, to express what he means by this loaded phrase.

Benjamin contrasts 'divine violence' with what he calls, 'mythical violence'. Whereas the former finds its source in the Judaic tradition, the latter can be found in the Greek tradition of Fate. Fate, for Benjamin, divests the individual of its claim to justice. It is non-responsive to the needs and sufferings of humanity. Fate – understood as that which is not commensurate with reality and justice – is law. Benjamin explains this chain of reasoning in a 1920–1 essay entitled 'Fate and Character'. There he claims: 'The laws of fate – misfortune and guilt – are elevated by law to measures of the person… Mistakenly, through confusing [law] with the realm of Justice, the order of the law, which is only a residue of the demonic stage of human existence when legal statutes determined not only men's relationships but also their relation to the gods, has preserved itself long past the time of the victory over the demons.'[21]

For Benjamin, fate, and ergo law, stem from the world of myth. According to Scholem, Benjamin believed the demonic stage of human existence, an age where myth ruled absolutely, is the era that preceded revelation. As it will be discussed later on, revelation's purpose was to

[law] in Kafka's work, at the centre. *I suppose this is what the moral reflection – if it were possible…– of a halakhist who attempted a linguistic paraphrase of a divine judgement would have looked like.*' [emphasis added]

[21] Benjamin, 'Fate and Character', Benjamin (see n. 1) 307.

destroy this demonic/mythic stage of life along with the laws that it bore.[22] Unfortunately, revelation was never able to eradicate this diseased order, and therefore myth continued to preserve itself by infecting law and living within its midst.

Benjamin's example of mythic violence (reborn in legal positivism) is taken from the Greek legend of Niobe. She, one of the more tragic figures in Greek myth, together with her husband Amphion, had fourteen children. In a moment of arrogance, Niobe brags about her seven sons and seven daughters at a ceremony in honour of Leto, whom she mocks for having only two children. In retaliation for her words, Leto sends Apollo and Artemis to earth to kill Niobe's children.

For Benjamin this story vividly illustrates the capricious and unjust nature of the gods. 'True, it might appear that the action of Apollo and Artemis is only a punishment. But their violence establishes a law far more than it punishes for the infringement of one already existing.'[23] For Benjamin, power as an end is the defining principle of all mythical law-making and accounts for the unjust response on the part of the gods.

The ambiguous and inexplicable death of Niobe's children leaves her weeping and feeling guilty. In shock, she cradles her youngest daughter in her arms and flees to Mount. Siplyon. There she is eventually turned into stone. From the rock (known as the Achelous) that concretizes her pain, a stream of water flows symbolizing her ceaseless tears. In the Greek myths she is the symbol of eternal mourning. Benjamin interprets her tears as the guilt and the inexplicability of fate that answers to no one and no thing. 'Violence therefore bursts upon Niobe from the uncertain, ambiguous sphere of fate.... Although it brings a cruel death to Niobe's children, it stops short of the life of the mother, whom it leaves behind more guilty than before through the death of her children, both as an eternally mute bearer of guilt and as a boundary stone on the frontier between men and gods.'[24]

Arguing with Freud, Benjamin contends that guilt's primary home 'cannot be religious, no matter how misunderstood the concept of guilt appears to suggest to the contrary'.[25] Rather, guilt is principally produced through positive law. In a religious order the sacrifice is accepted

[22] Scholem (see n. 19) 61.
[23] Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', Benjamin (see n. 1) 294.
[24] Ibid. 295.
[25] Benjamin, 'Fate and Character', Benjamin (see n. 1) 307.

as a mode of expiation. Through the sacrifice one is absolutely forgiven and freed from the shackles of guilt. Law, by contrast, can never forgive. It can only punish. In a world of myth ruled by a positivist legal system, guilt has no expiatory valve.

Benjamin's interest in myth and law emerged around 1915 and crystallized during his Swiss years (1918–19). According to Scholem, already in 1916 Benjamin spoke of myth 'as the world'.[26] For Scholem, Benjamin's idea of myth critiqued mathematical and philosophical discourses to such an extent that already by 1918 Scholem began to see mathematics as a futile attempt to escape myth, and by 1921 he decided against pursuing graduate studies in mathematics altogether.[27]

However, Scholem did not merely share or adopt Benjamin's notion of myth. Rather he explicitly stated, 'that I [Scholem] frequently presented Benjamin with my ideas about Judaism's fight against myth'.[28] Accordingly, Scholem provided Benjamin with his definition of myth. Specifically, Scholem introduced Benjamin to the Niobe legend. In a letter written to Scholem on 23 July 1920, Benjamin acknowledges a beautiful gift his kabbalistic friend sent him: 'Now let me get around to thanking you for your absolutely beautiful gifts. I do not know which of them gave me more pleasure and, above all, which will give me more pleasure. *For I have not been able to read Niobe yet. But any mythological work from you fills me with the greatest sense of expectation. The subject is significant too.*'[29] Benjamin's letter testifies that he had never even read the Niobe myth until Scholem gave it to him a few months before 'Critique of Violence's' composition.

Benjamin's notion of 'mythical violence' is contrasted with what he terms 'divine violence'. Unlike the former, divine violence's essence is law-destroying. It seeks to put an end to all set political orders and annihilates all systems that stand before it. Only divine violence, a violence Benjamin associates with Judaism, can destroy mythical violence.

Benjamin contrasts the mythical violence embodied in the Niobe legend with divine violence as expressed in the biblical story of Korah.

[26] Scholem (see n. 19) 31.

[27] Ibid. 83.

[28] Ibid. 61.

[29] G. Scholem and T. Adorno (eds) *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), trans. M. Jacobson, letter 91, p.166 (emphasis added).

For Benjamin, Korah is the socialist politician. He argues against God's ordained leadership by claiming 'all the people of Israel are holy, and God is with them. Why are you [Moses and Aaron] setting yourselves apart from the congregation.'[30] Korah's egalitarianism is disingenuous and only a foil. His real purpose emerges two verses later when we are told of his true intent to replace Moses and Aaron and make himself a political leader who dominates all spheres of life.[31]

Korah's actions insert a politics into God's unalloyed rule over the Israelites. He contests God's unmediated and direct relationship with Israel by calling for a political restructuring of life. Korah's attempt to put an end to divine rule brings about divine violence. God annihilates Korah and his politicians. Unlike the imbalance and capricious response on the part of the gods in the Niobe myth, God's response to Korah is exact, just, and has a direct purpose of destroying the mediating, self-alienating and unjust sphere of politics. All those who oppose God's structuring of life are removed; all those who side with God are spared. This is accomplished without battle, war, pain, suffering or blood. God's punishment leaves all parties fully accounted for, thereby preventing guilt from emerging.

Benjamin's essay 'Theological-Political Fragment' identifies 'divine violence' with a messianic moment. Divine violence, and likewise the messianic, must first be preceded by myth. It is precisely the destruction and passing away of the mythical order (through divine violence) that signifies the messianic. 'This very task of destruction poses again, in the last resort, the question of a pure immediate violence that might be able to call a halt to mythical violence.'[32] Although the messianic is dependent on history (myth's attempt to use time as precedent), it can never be understood as part of an historic order. It exists outside of history's grasp, destroying history and ushering in something radically different.

Benjamin's use of the word messianic is interchangeable with what he terms revelation. The relationship between the demonic age of myth and the divine age of revelation parallels Benjamin's connection between history and the messianic. The former must always precede the latter. As pointed out above by Scholem, according to Benjamin, the demonic age chronologically preceded the age of revelation. It was the Judaic revelation

[30] Numbers 16:3.
[31] Numbers 16:10.
[32] Benjamin, 'Theological-Political Fragment', Benjamin (see n. 1) 312–13.

that ushered in a new era for humanity and was intended to destroy the demonic once and for all. Law is the reincarnation of the world of myth that from the time of the gods continues to infect humanity.

For Benjamin, mythical violence and divine violence are radically different. Where myth makes a misleading claim of *maintaining* justice, divine violence is an unmediated attempt to *attain* justice. There are no *a priori* principles on which divine violence rests. Similar to the commandment that emerges spontaneously and cancels out all prior writ, divine violence cannot be systematized or quantified. For although 'Though shalt not Kill'[33] is commanded, nonetheless, in many instances, that command is disregarded. According to Benjamin 'those who base a condemnation of all violent killing of one person by another on the commandment are therefore mistaken. It exists not as a criterion of judgement, but as a guideline for the actions of persons and communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude, and in exceptional cases, to take on themselves the responsibility of ignoring it.'[34]

In the Judaic tradition to which Benjamin refers there is no police force that stands between one's decision to embrace or disregard the commandment. As hinted at by Benjamin and as highlighted by the legal theorist Robert Cover, there is no mediating physical body that either coerces one to obey the commandment or encourages one to follow it. In a Kantian sense, the high degree of choice surrounding the observance or disobeying of the commandment, offers its followers or its objectors a unique claim of morality surrounding their decided action.

One hears the Jewish German philosopher Hermann Cohen whispering to Benjamin in the background that the commandment is an invitation for the individual to recognize their individuality and capacity to assume responsibility for their own non-coerced actions.[35] While commandment brings about an individual's self-awareness, the parliamentarian state's notion of law annihilates such awareness. The police force that guards, prescribes and promotes law never allows the individual to come

[33] It must be noted that the translation of this commandment is incorrect. More correctly, it should be translated as 'Though shall not Murder'. The difference between these two words is critical for understanding Benjamin's argument. As it is discussed later on in this essay, the fact that the commandment outlaws all forms of murder but not all forms of killing best explicates Benjamin's non-positivist understanding of the commandment.

[34] Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', Benjamin (see n. 1) 298.

[35] To be sure, Benjamin cites Cohen in 'Critique of Violence', ibid. 296.

to terms with their relationship to law. The mediating role of the police prevents one from having choice or even recognizing that one has the capacity to choose. In the face of a police force, to object or reevaluate law is intellectually and physically impossible.

The commandment, unlike positivist law, is free from itself in its ability to interact with the subjectivity of being. As mentioned above, for Benjamin, depending on the circumstances, the commandment can be disregarded or re-understood. Its ability to proceed as a guideline or as an immediate instruction, and not as a definitive objective principle, allows it to be broken and transgressed. When seen through such a light, the commandment becomes a type of deferred action. Practice is not predetermined, but rather negotiated in the context of specific cases. The individual is not negated in the face of a preconfigured legal system. The commandment's essence is never fully graspable. Its application is never fully calculated and its words are never emptied of their interpretative capacities. The meaning and application of the commandment waits to be revealed anew in each moment.

Benjamin's explication and intricate notion of the Jewish commandment, his reference to the Korah story and his use of the concept of revelation demonstrate an uncanny understanding of Jewish literature and the biblical tradition. One is made to wonder how this self-proclaimed *am ha'aretz*[36] ('Jewish novice') – someone who could not even read Hebrew – had the nerve and confidence to make his interpretation of the Judaic tradition the lynchpin of his philosophic argument? The answer to this riddle is found in Scholem's recollections from his and Benjamin's Swiss years (1918–19). 'Once the three of us [Walter, Dora and Gerhard] had a long conversation about the Ten Commandments – Dora asked if one might transgress them – and the significance of the precepts of the Torah. I read them notes on the concept of justice as action in deferment; these evoked a strong reaction by Benjamin.'[37]

Scholem's signature can be found throughout 'Critique of Violence'. However, it is highlighted in Benjamin's thesis that only divine violence can destroy mythical violence. Benjamin's formulation of the relationship between divine violence and mythical violence finds its source, almost verbatim, in comments made to Benjamin by Scholem. Already in 1916, we are informed that

[36] Ibid. letter 206, p. 382.
[37] Scholem (see n. 19) 72.

> Benjamin was not sure what the purpose of philosophy was, as there was no need to discover 'the meaning of the world': it was already present in myth. Myth was everything … all else was only an obscuration …. Philosophy, I said, was nothing independent, and only religion broke through this world of myth. Benjamin's decided turn to the philosophic penetration of myth, which occupied him for so many years … *was manifest here for the first time and left its mark on many of our conversations.* In this connection, at this early date Benjamin spoke of the difference between law and justice, calling law an order that could be established only in the world of myth. Four years later he elaborated on this idea in his essay 'Zur Kritik der Gewalt' ('Critique of Violence').[38]

Here, Scholem explicitly claims that this 1916 conversation was the first time Benjamin entertained the ideas that comprised 'Critique of Violence'.

Divine Power and the Educative Process

Benjamin's approach of contrasting mythic and divine violence leaves open the following questions: if mythic violence is the binary opposite of divine violence, what is the binary opposite of law? What established social form, if any, does divine violence take when actualized in daily life? Can law be counteracted? Are there any forms of governance that might not fall back into myth? In other words, is there any aspect or order within time worth preserving or living by? Unlike his later writings, here in this very Jewish/Zionist essay Benjamin offers humanity and history a ray of hope. In the process of explicating the differences between mythical and divine violence, Benjamin describes what could be termed a divine-human order, a counter-order to law. He mentions that 'Divine power is attested to not only by religious tradition, but is also found in present-day life in at least one sanctioned manifestation. The educative power, which in its perfected form stands outside the law, is one of its manifestations.'[39] These cryptic sentences – specifically the concepts 'educative process' and 'religious tradition' – cry out for interpretation.

In September 1917 Benjamin wrote to Scholem commenting on and critiqueing the latter's ideas on education:

[38] Ibid. 31 (emphasis my own).
[39] Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', Benjamin (see n. 1) 297.

> I received your [Scholem's] essay [on a critique of Jewish education]. Thank you. It is very good. I would like you to keep in mind the following observations for any further work you do on it … The teacher does not actually teach in that he 'learns before others', he learns in an exemplary way. Rather, his learning has evolved into teaching, in part gradually but wholly from within. Thus, when you [Scholem] say that the teacher sets the example, you conceal what is characteristic and autonomous in the concept of such a learning: that is to say teaching. At a certain stage, all things become exemplary in the right person, but they thereby metamorphose into themselves and are rejuvenated. Seeing this rejuvenated creative something as it unfolds in human life cycles provides insight into education … I am convinced that tradition is the medium in which the person who is learning *continually* transforms himself into the person who is teaching, and that this applies to the entire range of education. In the tradition everyone is an educator and everyone needs to be educated and everything is education. These relationships are symbolized and synthesized in the development of the theory. Anyone who has not learned cannot educate, for he does not recognize the point at which he is alone and where he thus encompasses the tradition in his own way and makes it communicable by teaching. Knowledge becomes transmittable only for the person who has understood his knowledge as something that has been transmitted. He becomes free in an unprecedented way.[40]

For Benjamin, to teach presupposes that one has learned. The teacher is not separated from the process of learning, but rather is an extension of this process. When one teaches, one is doing nothing more than reenacting one's own process of learning before others. Teaching evolves wholly within the self as a moment where one is communicating one's learning. It is then that the individual emerges. The freedom of the individual born out of the educative process emerges when the teacher realizes that he *alone* is the teacher of students and that he is being given such a task because of his *own* understanding of the tradition.

The educative process is realized in a religious context through the concept of 'tradition'. Tradition, as understood by Benjamin, is not a fixed body of knowledge. Rather, it is a mode of communication, where through a process of learning the student eventually becomes a teacher. This mode of communication is a direct unmediated form of instruction. The transmission itself separates the teacher from the learner. Recognizing that the individual (the teacher) alone is responsible for that

[40] Scholem and Adorno (see n. 29) letter 53, p. 92.

transmission is what allows for the rejuvenation and re-understanding of that which is being passed on.

Becoming a teacher for Benjamin also means recognizing that the knowledge they possess has been but transmitted and that now one, as teacher, is responsible for the transmission of that knowledge. This recognition allows one to reconsider, reject or accept what has been transmitted to one.[41]

Perhaps it is the recognition of the self as teacher (alone) and the full-awareness of the transmission of knowledge (tradition) that brings about the destruction of myth. Unlike myth, tradition is accountable for itself in its ability to be communicated, transmitted and most importantly freely accepted by a group of future teachers. For whereas myth is blindly accepted (even though it is obviously incommensurate with reality), tradition as borne out through the educative process forces the teacher to confront what has been imbibed and decide what to pass on to others. Each teacher realizes that their teaching will die if it does not appeal to their students. Likewise, tradition dies at the moment it does not respond or make sense to its targeted recipients. Similar to the commandment, the educative process and tradition are non-coercive modes of being. The educative process is the modern-day equivalent of the commandment, while tradition is the modern-day equivalent to revelation. It is this world-order that stands in opposition to myth and law.

The fruitful intellectual cross-fertilization between Scholem's ideas and Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence' did not go unrealized by Scholem. In *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship*, Scholem describes at great length the effects of the two years they spent together in Switzerland. Scholem explicitly states that 'Benjamin's essay "Critique of Violence" … strikes all the themes that had agitated him [Benjamin] in his Swiss period – his thoughts on myth, religion, law and politics'.[42] What Scholem is drawn to in Benjamin's early works is precisely its ability to see the Judaic as a counter-order to politics, myth and law.

[41] It is interesting to note the strong similarities between Benjamin's understanding of the teacher's relationship to the tradition and, as mentioned above, the individual's relationship to the commandment.

[42] Scholem (see n. 19) 93.

Tying Together the Rhetoric of Critique

Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence' is not generated from logical deduction per se, but rather through a pairing of corresponding conceptual affinities and differences located between each thread of his argument.[43] For Benjamin, the threads of myth, legal positivism and political strikes are not all the same colour, nor do they come together in a neat Marxist tapestry whose totalizing experience is accounted for in a shared superstructure. Rather, each appears differently and is tied into radically distinct and often conflicting spheres of life. Yet, when placed next to each other, the correspondences and similar composition of each creates the conditions of possibility for these threads to be woven together into a noose around the individual.[44] Although not directly stated by Benjamin, one can surmise that noose to be the ordering of myth and law whose violence takes the infinity of life out of the individual and on whose gallows justice is left hanging not in a state of suspense but rather in death. Benjamin's demonstration that each of these orders can be equally intertwined 'signifies, their boundaries have been displaced',[45] and likewise de-mythologized. In employing such a hermeneutic, Benjamin linguistically annihilates the very orders he critiques and calls on the world to destroy.

Benjamin's brand of Zionism points to a larger issue addressed by him, namely the relationship between ideas and the political sphere. 'Critique of Violence' attests to Benjamin's aspiration to locate an intellectual space outside of history and politics. In an age when Jews were torn between Marxism and Zionism, Benjamin refused such politics. He did

[43] It should be pointed out that such a reading slightly differs with Peter Demetz's understanding of Benjamin's rhetorical strategy. For Demetz, 'Critique of Violence' can be read linearly with 'the essay subver[ting] its own fundaments in order to enact something of the ontological "break" in which the old world is abruptly transformed into a new'. See P. Demetz, 'Introduction', Benjamin (see n. 1) xxvi-xxxvii. Demetz's reading fails to account for the multiplicity of orders being addressed by Benjamin, it does not account for the overlapping of those orders highlighted in the essay's final section.

[44] On Benjamin's ambivalence towards the Marxist concepts of substructure and metastructure see H. Arendt, 'Introduction' (see n. 18) 10–15. It would seem that Benjamin's comparisons are best understood through the use of his own language of 'correspondences' and 'affinities'.

[45] W. Benjamin, 'The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism', in H. Eiland (ed.) *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, trans. E. Jephcott *et. al.* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002) 1:117.

so by creating a divine intellectual framework that allowed for both forms of critique to act together not as a politics, but as divine violence destroying the very political orders established around him and those that would be established against him. 'Critique of Violence' offers almost no concrete historical antidotes to legal violence (with the exception of educative and traditional spheres), nor does it sufficiently grapple with the ethics of power. For Benjamin, the minute anything enters the realm of history, it becomes swallowed up by the world of myth. Because of history's far-reaching mythical tentacles and positivist legal venom, it captures and poisons anything within its reach. The messianic cannot exist by its side. Rather, it emerges exclusively as an apocalypse. Only by disengaging, fighting (Korah) or moving beyond the sphere of set political orders can the messianic take effect and destroy the monster of history.

In early-twentieth-century Germany, Zionism stood for a range of different and often conflicting ideologies and philosophies. However, what they shared was seeing Judaism as a source for critique against the prevailing orders of the nation-state and bourgeois life. Benjamin and others like him received their ideal combination through the Judaic: a critique of the political in its entirety, a messianic vision for a restructured life and a small but powerful hope in the possibility of an historical redemptive moment actualized in the sphere of the educative.

Zionism and the Judaic represented not only something critical, but a unique historical-redemptive worldview embodied in the educative process. Nonetheless, this aspect of Benjamin's thought would be downplayed as Zionism began to emerge politically. So long as Zionism stayed far away from a political reality, it could be embraced and philosophically culled. The closer Zionism came to be perceived as a movement, the more Benjamin resisted employing it or Judaism as a viable philosophic language. Likewise, with the passing of time, the friendship between Scholem and Benjamin seen on the pages of 'Critique of Violence' would become withered and worn by ideological differences (though always remaining intact). As Zionism shifted from being a wandering adjective to a homebound noun, it ceased to act as a uniting concept, and instead emerged as a source of tension and friction among those in the German-Jewish Renaissance.

Timing May Not be Everything . . . But it Helps: Some Historical Factors that Contributed to the Success of the Shulhan Arukh

EDWARD FRAM

Contemporary Judaism has no central legislative body, such as the papacy, to determine what is right or wrong for the entire correct ritual behaviour for Jewish people. Even in talmudic times, when various centres tried to assert their authority, the geographic dispersal of the Jews among different empires and kingdoms, and the difficulty of long-distance communication and travel, resulted in decentralized power. But in the realm of legal authority this began to change in the second half of the mid-sixteenth century, when a composite piece of single legal codification began to be established as *the* authority in much of the Jewish world.

Its acceptance as the normative formulation of Jewish law, or *halakhah*, did not go unchallenged. Yet it prevailed to such an extent that a rabbinic court in Frankfurt in the second half of the eighteenth century could describe it to the non-Jewish authorities as *the* universally accepted code of Jewish law.[1]

This work was Rabbi Joseph Caro's *Shulhan arukh* (literally, 'set table'), which first appeared in 1565 in Venice. Although the title page is dated 1564, but printing only began in that year and, like all printing in the age of movable type, it took some time months to complete. The work volume became available in 1565.

Caro's work was characterized by a topical organization of the various rules applicable to contemporary Jewish life in the Diaspora and the Land of Israel. It included laws such as those of the Sabbath, kashrut and tithes, but not those of sacrifice, the Temple and Jewish kingship. Caro's

[1] YIVO MS RG 128 (E 078) fol. 90a.

presentation was unusual in that he reduced the law to simple dicta about what one should do, and included no justifications for his statements. For example, regarding what time of the day one can perform ritual slaughter, Caro wrote: 'One can slaughter at any time, day or night, so long as there is light; but if there is no light or it is during the day and the place is dark, one should not slaughter; but if one did, the act is acceptable.'[2] On the face of it there is not much to think about, just a clear pronouncement of what to do.

Such a simple text seems hardly the stuff for jurists or students of the law. Other well-regarded codes of Jewish law existed, such as Moses Maimonides' twelfth-century *Code of Law* or *Mishneh Torah*, which had been available in print well before Caro's work appeared. Despite the advertising claims of printers that there was a need for a simplified version of the law, European Jewry seems to have been managing fairly well before Caro's *Shulhan arukh* appeared. The works of Maimonides were popular in the Sephardic or Spanish spheres, while German or Ashkenazic Jewry had a number of texts dating from the Middle Ages that had become available in print and continued to be useful.[3] In addition to the *Arba'ah turim* of Rabbi Jacob ben Asher (died *c.* 1340), German Jews used professional handbooks covering ritual slaughter, holiday observance and prayers, as well as manuals on how to write writs of divorce. The lack of a single all-encompassing and accepted book of Jewish law did not seem to pose a problem. Time had taught people where to look for what. Moreover, Ashkenazim, both in German lands and in eEastern Europe, attached particular importance to local custom as a source of authority.

Caro's *Shulhan arukh* was not meant to overturn this arrangement. CaroHe noted that he intended his book to be a pedagogic tool for young students (*talmidim ketanim*), to help them review the conclusions that heCaro had reached in his earlier work, the culmination of almost thirty years of research into Jewish law, his *Beit Yosef*. In that book Caro had offered extensive discussions that followed the law from its talmudic beginnings to his own day, and established the basis for the legal positions he took in *Shulhan arukh*. Publication of the tightly printed, multi-volume *Beyt Yosef* began in Venice in 1550 and took almost a decade to complete.

[2] *Shulhan arukh*, Yoreh de'ah 11:1.

[3] See Isaiah Sonne, '*Tiyyulim ba-maqom she-ha-mezi'ut ve-ha-sefer – historiyyah u-bibliyyografyah – noshqim zeh et zeh*', in Saul Lieberman (ed.) *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (New York 1950) 209–17.

Despite being a refugee from Toledo whose family had experienced expulsion both from Spain (in 1492) and Portugal (in 1497), and despite having started work on his *Beit Yosef* in Andrianople (today Edirne, Turkey) in 1522, continuing with it during journeys that ended when he settled in the Land of Israel by 1536, Caro had a substantial library at his disposal and used it.[4] He cited a host of sources from the period of the Talmud down to Maimonides, including rabbis of medieval Franco-Germany, and many of the leading authorities of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries. His citations reflected a wide geographical scope, covering the views of authorities from around the Mediterranean Basin, and up over the Alps into nNorthern France and the German lands. The *Beit Yosef* was a monumental work. But law is a conservative discipline and a new work, even a great one, by someone still relatively unknown as a legist, could hardly be guaranteed success. Yet Caro's *Beit Yosef* attained acceptance and was republished almost immediately.

What could have propelled such a work to the forefront of Jewish law so quickly that within a decade it had not only been reprinted several times, but had attained distribution as far east as Lithuania, helping to make Caro, for many, the last word in Jewish law?

Caro's brilliance is beyond question, but the meteoric success of his *Beit Yosef* should be considered within its historical context, since a confluence of factors pushed his work ahead of texts that had served communities for generations.

The appearance of *Beit Yosef* in the early 1550s, specifically in Italian lands, was particularly fortuitous and underscores the saying that 'everything is dependent on good fortune, even the Torah in the ark'.

It was in the summer of 1553, after the publication of the first sections of Caro's work, that an investigative committee of the Congregation of the Inquisition ordered the burning of both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, on the grounds that they contained blasphemies against Christianity. The Church conducted house-to-house searches to find the books, and Jews who not did turn over their copies were threatened with punishment. Beyond the pain of seeing their sacred texts used as kindling, Jews on the Italian peninsula faced a long-term cultural problem. The Talmud had enjoyed a central place in the curriculum of

[4] On the date of his move to the Land of Israel, see R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic* (2nd ed., Philadelphia 1977) 92, 121.

advanced study for centuries and was the main source for the development of Jewish law. As a foundation text of Jewish law it could not be replaced.

The situation was dire in 1553, but became worse in May 1554, when Pope Julius III issued a papal bull ordering the enforcement of the Inquisition's ruling, although it specifically permitted other Hebrew books that did not blasphemy the Church to remain in use.[5] Not every copy of the Talmud was turned over to the Church, and Jews did find ways of circumventing the ruling, but it became increasingly difficult for Jews to study their core legal text.[6]

One other approach to the problem, although not perfect, at least made it possible to continue to study in an informed fashion. Rabbi Joseph Caro's recently published *Beit Yosef* provided a summary of Jewish law and listed most of the fundamental views on almost every topic he dealt with. This was not the same as studying the Talmud, but since Caro generally quoted the talmudic texts on which the law was based, and provided an outline of the development of the *halakhah* since then, his text could become a means of studying when other avenues were closed. Moreover, Caro collected all these discussions into one book, not a trivial point when the classic works of Jewish culture were becoming scarcer.

Indeed, the editor of *Beit Yosef* in Venice in 1566 praised the way 'With pleasantness and wisdom he [that is, Caro] cleared the way of stones and obstacles and in his great knowledge he rolled back "the stone" from the mouth of the well and happily drew water and watered the flock from the spring of salvation and good will'. This plays on the biblical verse in Genesis 29 in which the patriarch Jacob left the Land of Israel to go eastward in search of a spouse. He came to a well covered with a stone and was told that in order to water their flocks, the shepherds would have to work together to roll the stone from the well. When Jacob saw Rachel approaching, he himself both rolled the stone off the well and watered the flocks of his kinsman. But the editor of the 1566 text misspelled the Hebrew word for 'stone', writing *eben* with a *vav* instead of a *beit*,

[5] See Kenneth Stow, 'The Burning of the Talmud in 1553 in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes toward the Talmud', in his *Jewish Life in Early Modern Rome* (Aldershot 2007) section I, 1–8.

[6] See Marvin Heller, 'The Bath-Sheba/Moses de Medina Salonika Edition of *Berakhot*: An Unknown Attempt to Circumvent the Inquisition's Ban on the Printing of the Talmud in 16th-Century Italy', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 87:1–2 (July–October 1996) 49.

changing the word into *aven*. The author clearly knew how to spell the Hebrew word for 'stone', since it appeared correctly in the previous line of this text. Yet this was no typographical error, because the word *aven* has dots above it., telling us so.

Points above the word or quotation marks within the word are by used authors to send a coded message that this word has an additional meaning beyond its simple reading. This convention survives in Modern Hebrew, where letters such as an *alef* or *beit* are used as numbers as well as phonetic symbols. An apostrophe or point above the letter tells the reader, 'don't read this in its simple form, or not only in its simple form, but rather as something else'. In our text, the author used the markings above the word to tell the reader not only to read this word as 'stone' (*eben*), but as *aven*.

The word *aven* most simply means 'wickedness' or 'evil', and appears as such tens of times in the Hebrew Bible. Only in Psalms 125:5 does it appear with the definite article as here in the Venice text: 'Those who turn upon their crooked ways, the Lord will lead away with *evil* doers! Peace be on Israel.'

If the author of the 1566 introduction to the *Beit Yosef* was referring to evil doers, one must ask to whom he might have been referring. Given the literary and historical context of the remarks, this was probably a veiled reference to the Christian community that had stolen the books of the Jews. It was they who set up the stones and obstacles to study, and Joseph Caro who came and rolled back the stone – the evil – to allow Jews access to the waters of Torah.

Caro's halakhic corpus was brilliant, but owed its success to numerous factors, and especially the hardships of the times. His work appeared in Italy at a time when Italian Jewry – Sephardic, Italian and Ashkenazic alike – was under great pressure. His *Beit Yosef* filled an immediate need, and quickly gave Caro a reputation as a jurist of the first rank.[7]

By the mid-1560s Caro had completed an abridgement of his *Beit Yosef*, his *Shulhan arukh*, which as mentioned earlier, appeared in Venice in 1565. Caro intended it as a review tool for students, who he suggested should study the work in their youth once every thirty days. The third edition of the work, published in Venice in 1567, was even divided into

[7] For another expression of this sentiment, see the material cited by Meir Benayahu, *Yosef bahiri: maran Rabbi Yosef Qaro* (Jerusalem 1991) 523–4, and Isaiah Sonne, *Mi-Pavvlo ha-rebi'i ad Pius ha-hamishi* (Jerusalem 1954) 170.

thirty sections to make it easier to do so. In his *Shulhan arukh* Caro extracted the legal conclusions drawn in his *Beit Yosef* and listed them in the simplest form, albeit in Hebrew. It amounts to a handbook, of sorts, of his more complex *Beit Yosef*.

The *Shulhan arukh* was, as its name reflects, a set table, in which everything was worked out and set before the reader, as though before a meal set out before a guest. The work caught on so quickly that it was published three times in three years by three different Venetian publishers between 1565 and 1567. In the 1570s the book was even reproduced in a smaller octavo format, as a pocket book, a physical form that sent a signal to readers that this, rather than a text for deep study, like most large-format works, was a handy little guide. We today receive a similar visual message when we look at a paperback.[8]

The *Shulhan arukh* was popular not only in the Italian peninsula, since a portion was published in Salonika in 1568 and it quickly moved beyond the northern shores of the Mediterranean. In eEastern Europe it seems to have gained almost immediate popularity, and already in 1569 elicited a response from a leading rabbi in Cracow, Rabbi Moses Isserles (d. 1572).

Isserles had great respect for Caro's *Beit Yosef*, with its presentation of each side of legal arguments, but little patience for the *Shulhan arukh*. He laid out three reasons for his disapproval in an introduction to his own commentary on *Shulhan arukh*. First, Caro had decided the law according to the views of three medieval authorities, Rabbi Isaac Alfasi (North Africa, Spain; d. 1103), Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides; Egypt, d. 1204), and Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel (Germany, Spain; d. 1328). When all agreed about a matter, even if every other rabbi disagreed with them, Caro he followed their opinion;. wWhen they disagreed on a point of law, as they often did, Caro ruled according to two out of three. In legal questions on which Asher ben Yehiel disagreed with Alfasi and Maimonides, Caro followed the majority.

Majority decisions were absolutely rejected as a means of deciding legal matters in the Ashkenazic tradition, however, which focused on the rationale behind the laws. For Ashkenazim a convincing argument generally outweighed any principle of voting for the law. The pros and cons of each argument had to be weighed before making a decision. Caro, Isserles argued, did not do this.

[8] In this regard, see Paul Grendler, 'Form and Function in Italian Renaissance Popular Books', *Renaissance Quarterly* 46:3 (1993) 451–84.

Secondly, these three outstanding jurists did not give sufficient weight to the host of Ashkenazic authorities who had guided Jews in German lands for centuries, and whose rulings Caro did not include in his system. Caro ignored cultural balance in his decision-making and favoured Sephardic authorities over Ashkenazic ones. Isserles could not accept this.

Finally, Isserles saw the *Shulhan arukh* as a crib sheet, which presented students with a final statement of the law without asking them to think about it other possibilities. Isserles was worried that students would read the *Shulhan arukh* and, in the absence of alternative views and customs, would accept Caro's word as final. He saw the failure to take Ashkenazic custom into account as a threat to traditional Ashkenazic forms of observance.

Isserles, faced with the popularity of Caro's code, felt obliged to respond to it, as was pointed out over a century ago by Louis Ginzberg,[9] and did so in a utilitarian and even angry way. 'I have seen fit to write the views of the later authorities on the side where Caro's views do not seem correct to me, in order to make students aware of every place that there is a disagreement. And every place that I knew that the custom is not as Caro has written I will write it and put a mark.' Isserles fell into his own trap, of course, by accusing Caro of over-simplifying the law, while adding notes that also failed to explore the rationale for each law. But he had little choice. Students would have ignored a long treatise and continued to use Caro's text, whose simplicity was one of its strongest characteristics. In writing his own independent legal work, Isserles was 's notes was merely true to his own beliefs. He used earlier Ashkenazic sources and cited local custom, rarely quoting Sephardic authorities other than Caro's *Beit Yosef*.[10] In responding to the *Shulhan arukh*, Isserles was not setting the agenda, but reacting to it.

By placing his notes on the same page as Caro's text, Isserles forced students to look at study them. He published a small section of his commentary on *Shulhan arukh* in an independent work in 1569 in Cracow. Plate 1 shows how, in this first version, his notes, like Caro's text, are in the so-called Rashi font, but a little smaller than Caro's. The comments are introduced by the abbreviation *hagaha"h*, standing for *haggahat ha-*

[9] Louis Ginzberg, 'Caro, Joseph', in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York 1901–06) 3: 583–8.

[10] See Isserles's *Torat ha-hata'at* (Cracow 1569).

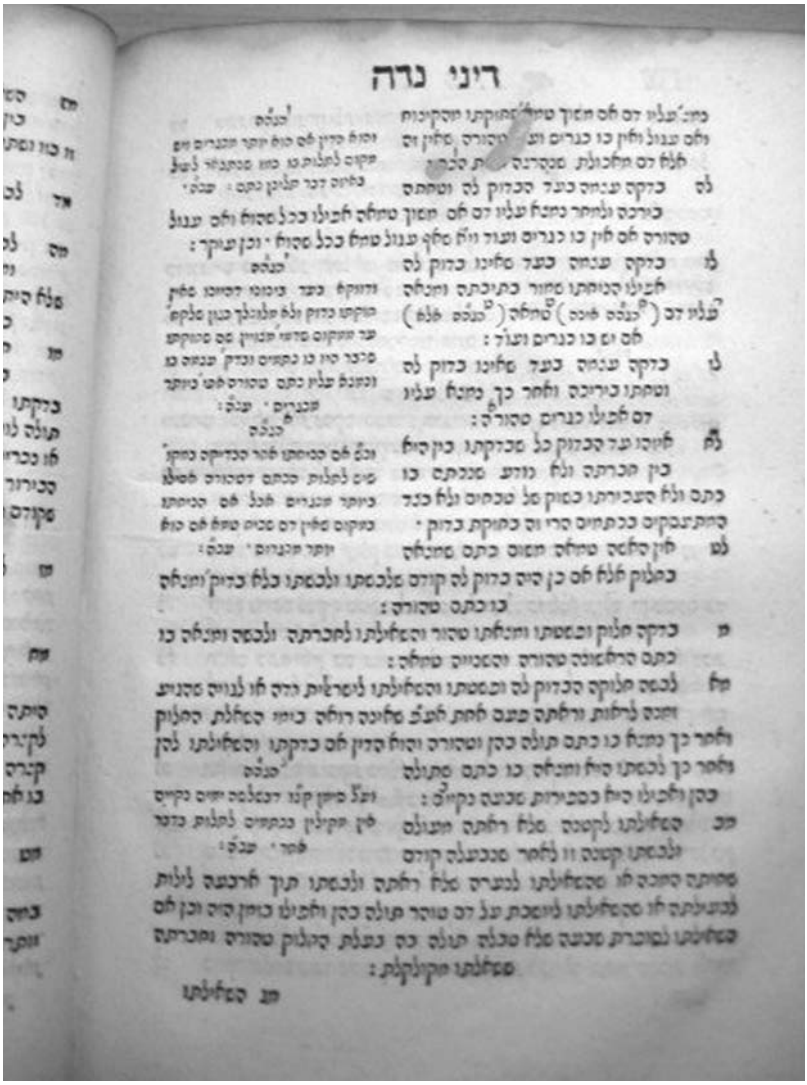


Plate 1 In the edition of 1569 Isserlis's marginal notes are clearly distinguished from Caro's text, and subsidiary to it. (*Yoreh de`ah* 190, Cracow, 1569, fol. 95b.)

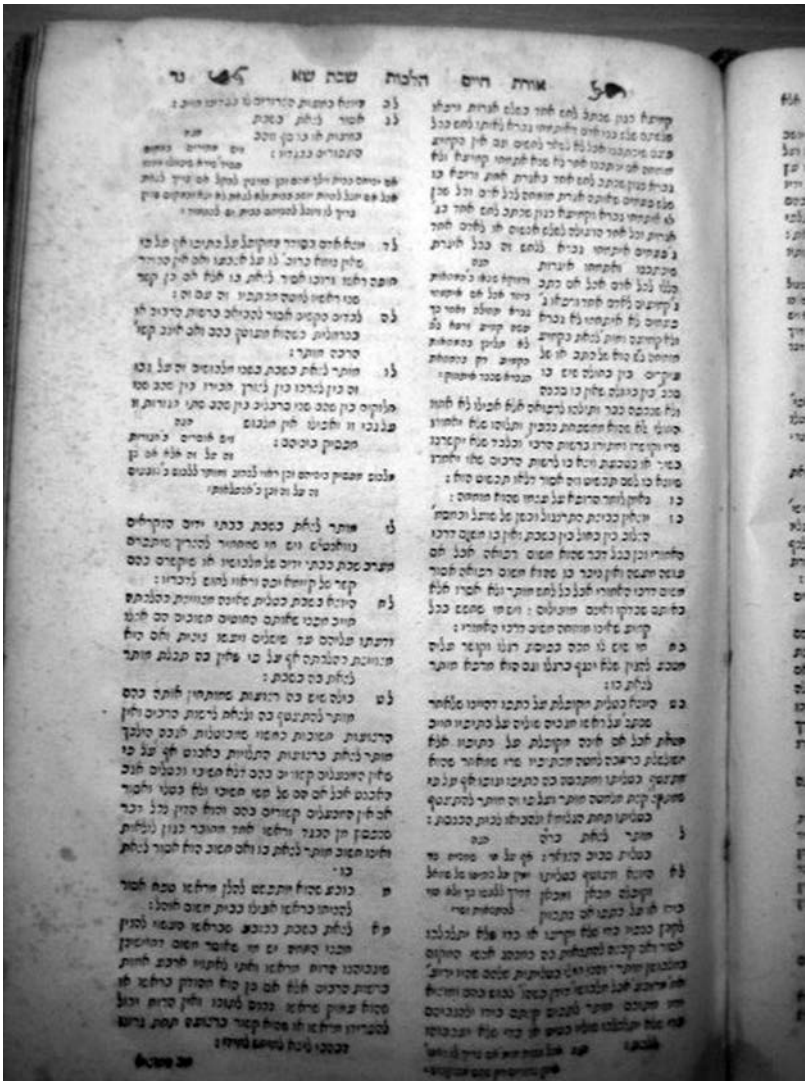


Plate 2 In this later edition, showing the same passage, Isserles's notes have been included as though they were part of the text itself. (*Yoreh de`ah* 190, Cracow, 1586, fol. 54a.)

mehaber, 'the author's emendation', and a small Hebrew letter is placed in Caro's text to refer the reader to Isserles's marginal gloss. Caro's text is clearly primary and Isserles's secondary.

The following year, in 1570, Isserles's glosses on the entire *Shulhan arukh* began to be published in Cracow. Plate 2 shows a page from an early edition of Isserles's work, in which there are subtle but important changes. Some of his notes appear in the margins and others in parentheses, and are no longer labelled as Isserles's glosses. Parts are placed in such a way that they seem to be a continuation of Caro's text rather than comments on it. Finally, and most importantly, there are no small letters in the body of Caro's text referring the reader to Isserles's remarks. Notes appearing in the margins, like footnotes for the modern reader, can be read or not. Isserles, or more likely his editor, Samuel Böhm (who had been active in printing Caro's work in Italy), here made the major decision to include Isserles's notes as part of the text itself. Embedded in the body of the text or just below it, the reader could still skip over Isserles's comments, but that required a choice. It became much more likely that students would become aware of conflicting Ashkenazic customs, and not blindly follow Caro.

Who precisely were these students? Caro and Isserles both wrote in Hebrew which, at least in Eastern Europe, was not understood by most Jews. Even in Cracow, where the community had instituted universal education for young boys by 1551, at least in theory, few had the opportunity or ability to master the language.[11] They learned Hebrew letters in order to read the prayers written on the walls of the synagogue, or in prayer books if they were lucky enough to have one. Understanding what the Hebrew meant was left for advanced students who had not yet been sent out to learn a trade or begin their business lives. A Hebrew-language text such as the *Shulhan arukh* was not addressed to the laity, therefore, who understood the vernacular, Yiddish. A Hebrew text designed for study, rather than recital, therefore had one potential audience: students engaged in advanced in a study hall – in a *beit midrash* or local yeshivah. These would be supported financially by parents or in-laws or, if they were thought talented, received communal funding. Since Hebrew was the language of the rabbinic elite, by virtuedint of its language alone, *Shulhan arukh* was aimed at them elite.

[11] See Simcha Assaf, *Meqorot le-toledot ha-hinukh be-Yisra'el*, ed. and annotated by Shmuel Glick (New York 2002) 1:636–9.

Why did Isserles therefore contribute to a book that seemed to discourage those capable of advanced study from examining the law in depth for themselves? He seems to have been encouraging students to follow Caro, rather than preventing them from doing so. The reason he did so, I propose, was as follows. The curriculum of Polish yeshivot was based on a casuistic methodology called *pilpul*. At its best, *pilpul* sought to raise questions on the talmudic text and then propose a solution, with the aim of helping students to understand the text better. But such casuistry could be abused by teachers and students alike, as they tried to show their intellectual acumen in a world that valued the intellect highly. Since *pilpul* was theoretical, students might excel at it without discovering at the end of the day what the law was. The advantage of *Shulhan arukh* was that an advanced student, probably still a teenager, could spend his day in theoretical study, yet appear to have mastered the law simply by reading Caro's straightforward and accessible handbook. I believe Isserles was addressing Yeshivah students who could read Hebrew. and had the financial means to purchase books.

Isserles's approach to Caro's code was more practical than that of some Polish rabbis. Isserles's relative and colleague in Lublin, Rabbi Solomon Luria (d. 1574), thought it ludicrous to try and reduce over a thousand years of Jewish legal development to a single book of dicta, and believed that students should examine each topic in depth, tracing its development from the Talmud to his own day, before coming to an independent conclusion. Luria practised what he preached, because his *Yam shel Shelomoh* examines the treatment of each legal section of the Talmud by various authorities. But his method demanded something that students were not generally trained to do, since the focus of study in most contemporary yeshivasot was *pilpul*, rather than legal research. This may explain is why although Luria's rabbinic responsa, glosses on the Talmud and commentaries on matters such as the laws of slaughtering, were published soon after his death, his magnum opus began to appear only in the early seventeenth-century and many sections saw the light of day only in the eighteenth. Luria's method fell by the wayside, and most of his work was ultimately lost.[12]

The advent of *Shulhan arukh* did not eclipse traditional methods of

[12] See Elchanan Reiner, 'Beyond the Realm of the Haskalah – Changing Learning Patterns in Jewish Traditional Society', *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 6 (2007) 123–33.

study among eEastern European Jews, although it quickly madke inroads. There were other attempts in the late sixteenth century to abbreviate the law both in Hebrew and in Yiddish. The Hebrew *Sefer mitsvot qatan* by Rabbi Isaac ben Joseph of Corbiel, a French rabbi of the later thirteenth century, was republished in Cracow in 1579, but the editor not only claimed that it was too long and needed to be abbreviated, but incorporated rulings of Caro and Isserles from the *Shulhan arukh*, to make it more useful for sixteenth-century users.[13] When the original *Sefer mitsvot qatan* was republished in Cracow in 1596, based on an earlier Cremona edition, whenever the ruling of Joseph of Corbeil contradicted that found in *Shulhan arukh*, the editor added the views of Caro and Isserles at also, leaving so as not to leave users confused about how the ritual should be observed.[14] The new code had already eclipsed the old.

In Yiddish too *Shulhan arukh* was quickly influential. In 1577 Rabbi Benjamin Slonik published a guide for women on menstruation, lighting Sabbath and festivals lights and taking *hallah*, a portion of bread that in Temple times was given to the priests and which continued to be removed even in post-Temple times. Slonik copied and translated whole sections from *Shulhan arukh* word for word for his readers – and also his listeners, since Yiddish books were also meant to be read aloud.[15]

Shulhan arukh continued to face opposition from some rabbis of the first rank. Rabbi Me'ir of Lublin (d. 1616) claimed 'it is not my custom and my way to deal with the *Shulhan arukh*', by which he meant to interpret or solve apparent contradictions in it. For him it was not the sustained intellectual effort of one thinker but a composite work, in which Caro followed various opinions rather than ascertaining his own position on each issue, and this invariably led to internal contradictions.[16] But this did not prevent the *Shulhan arukh* from catching on. The mere fact that rabbis writing to colleagues of the highest calibre with their questions were citing *Shulhan arukh* meant that the book was being used and no longer just by students.

[13] See Isaac ben Joseph of Corbeil, *Qitsur ammudey golah*, abridged and annotated by Yekutiel ben Moses of Pozna (Cracow 1579) fol. 1b.

[14] See the title page of Isaac ben Joseph, *Sefer ammudey golah* (Cracow 1596).

[15] See my, *My Dear Daughter: Rabbi Benjamin Slonik and the Education of Jewish Women in Sixteenth-Century Poland* (Cincinnati 2007) 105–28.

[16] Me'ir ben Gedaliah, *Sefer she'elot u-teshubot Mahara"m Lublin* (Venice 1618) no. 102.

In the 1620s or 1630s Rabbi Joel Sirkes, chief rabbi of Cracow from 1619 until his death in 1640, received a letter from a colleague who explained that there was now little reason to study Talmud, because one could discover the law simply by looking in the *Shulhan arukh*. Sirkes, who was dissatisfied with the current curriculum in Polish yeshivasot, responded that in most cases one can rule directly neither from the *Shulhan arukh* nor from Maimonides, since most of their rulings are without rationale, particularly in the case of laws concerning money matters. To understand law it was necessary to deal with its sources. Moreover, he wrote, there was growing uncertainty among scholars about Caro's rulings in many matters and many outstanding scholars disagreed with Caro's conclusions., since without a solid foundation in Talmud one cannot reach proper conclusions. Indeed, Sirkes claimed, while addressing a certain ritual matter sometime after 1629, those who followed *Shulhan arukh* were giving mistaken rulings because they did not understand the basis of the law. Just as the Ashkenazic tradition had responded to Maimonides in the Middle Ages, so it now responded to Caro's code. Unjustified law was unacceptable. and to understand law it was necessary to deal with its sources. Sirkes did not reject the *Shulhan arukh* per se, and he himself used it in dealing with questions addressed to him, although he at times disagreed with its conclusions. What he did rejected was the uncritical use of view that the *Shulhan arukh* was the final word in Jewish law without. One had first to checking what the basis of the law was.[17]

Sirkes was among the last of the old school. Instead of writing a commentary on the *Shulhan arukh* he prepared one on an older and much fuller code, the *Tur* of Rabbi Jacob ben Asher from the fourteenth century, the very work that had served as the basis for Joseph Caro's *Beit Yosef*.

Circumstances had given Caro a foothold in the world of Jewish law, and he followed this up with a successful summary of his opinions, the *Shulhan arukh*, whose ease of use made it a book of choice, first for students and later for rabbis. Rabbi Moses Isserles objected to Caro's work, but his glosses helped make Caro's code a universal one that altered the course of Jewish legal history.[18]

[17] See Joel Sirkes, *Sefer she'elot u-teshubot ha-bayit hadash ha-hadashot* (Jerusalem 1959) no. 42, as well as Pinhas Sirkis, *Sefer ha-Ba"h* (Tel Aviv [1984]) 275–86.

[18] See Isadore Twersky, 'The *Shulhan Arukh*: Enduring Code of Jewish Law', reprinted in Jacob Neusner (ed.) *An Introduction to Judaism: A Textbook and Reader* (Louisville 1991) 323–38.

THE ACADEMIC YEAR

Michaelmas Term 2008

Lectures, Seminars and Classes

Topics in Biblical History *Professor Hugh Williamson*

The Study of Ancient Israelite Religion *Madhavi Nevader*

Isaiah 6:1–9:6 *Professor Hugh Williamson*

Selected Psalms *Professor Hugh Williamson*

Intermediate Hebrew Language *Professor Hugh Williamson*

The Diaspora in the Roman Empire: Jews Pagans and Christians to 450 CE *Professor Fergus Millar*

The Dead Sea Scrolls Sixty Years On *Professor Geza Vermes*

Targum Texts: Genesis 18–19, Ezekiel 16 *Dr Alison Salvesen*

Introduction to Talmud *Dr Norman Solomon*

Syriac Texts: Aphrahat, Jacob of Serugh *Dr Alison Salvesen*

Jewish Liturgy *Dr Jeremy Schonfield*

Jewish and Christian Bible Translation and Interpretation in Antiquity *Dr Alison Salvesen*

Modern European Jewish History *Dr David Rechter*

European Jewry from the Spanish Expulsion to the Enlightenment *Dr Francesca Bregoli*

Israel: State, Society, Identity *Dr Raffaella Del Sarto*

Seminar in Jewish Studies
(*Convened by Dr Piet van Boxel*)

The Old Testament and the Comic *Benjamin Lazarus*

The Jewish Identity of Ecclesiastes: Collective Memory in Qohelet's Closing Poem *Jennifer Barbour*

Moses' Visions in Philo's 'De Vita Mosis' *Phoebe Makiello*

Language Class: Biblical Hebrew *Stephen Herring*

Language Class: Modern Hebrew *Dr Tali Argov*

Language Class: Yiddish *Dr Haike Beruriah Wiegand*

Yiddish Ulpan *Dr Haike Beruriah Wiegand*

The David Patterson Seminars

(*Convened by Dr Piet van Boxel*)

Moonlight on the Wire: Hebrew Writing of the First World War
Professor Glenda Abramson

Nineveh the Fallen: Reflections on Nahum the Prophet and Nahum the Book *Professor Peter Machinist*

Where Cultures Meet: The Bodleian Hebrew Manuscripts
Dr Piet van Boxel

Desired Bodies: Leni Riefenstahl, the 1936 Berlin Olympics and Aryan Masculinity *Dr Daniel Wildmann*

Who Needs Arab-Jewish Identity? Chronicle of a Cultural Extinction Foretold *Professor Reuven Snir*

One-day Conference

(*Convened by Dr Tsila Ratner and Dr Piet van Boxel*)

'Behind All This a Great Longing is Hiding?' Multiplicity and Fragmentation in Israeli Identity

Hilary Term 2009

Lectures, Seminars and Classes

Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Israel: The Iron Age (1200–332 BCE) *Dr Garth Gilmour*

Biblical Hebrew Prose Composition *Dr Alison Salvesen*

Septuagint *Dr Alison Salvesen*

Jewish History, 200 BCE to 70 CE *Professor Martin Goodman*

Varieties of Judaism in the Late Second Temple Period *Professor Martin Goodman*

Seminar on Jewish History and Literature in the Graeco-Roman Period
(*Convened by Professor Martin Goodman*)

- The Cemeteries at Qumran: A Re-evaluation of the Evidence *Dennis Mizzi*
- Rabbinic Perspectives on Pagan Ritual, Public Shows and Roman Civic Life: Some Fresh Evidence *Dr Sacha Stern*
- Sectarianism Before and After 70 CE *Professor Martin Goodman*
- Geographical Descriptions in Josephus: The Case of Jerusalem *Dr Gaia Lembi*
- Philo on the Extreme Allegorists *Dr Sarah Pearce*
- Locating Paradise *Professor Marcus Bockmuehl*
- Translation and Identity: The Language of the Greek Bible *Professor Tessa Rajak*

The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism *Dr Joanna Weinberg*

A Survey of Rabbinic Literature *Dr Joanna Weinberg*

Rabbinic Texts *Dr Joanna Weinberg*

Targum Texts *Dr Alison Salvesen*

Syriac Texts *Dr Alison Salvesen*

Jewish-Muslim Relations Through the Ages *Dr Adam Silverstein*

Hebrew Paleography in the Bodleian Collections
Professor Malachi Beit-Arié

The Jews of Europe from the Enlightenment to the Holocaust
Dr David Rechter

The Emergence of Modern Religious Movements in Judaism
Dr Miri Freud-Kandel

Modern Judaism *Dr Miri Freud-Kandel*

Is Modern Hebrew Literature Jewish? *Dr Jordan Finkin*

The Particularity of Modern Hebrew Literature *Dr Jordan Finkin*

Language Class: Biblical Hebrew *Stephen Herring*

Language Class: Modern Hebrew *Dr Tali Argov*

Modern Hebrew Ulpan *Gil Zahavi*

Language Class: Yiddish *Dr Haike Beruriah Wiegand*

Yiddish Ulpan *Dr Haike Beruriah Wiegand*

The David Patterson Seminars

(*Convened by Dr Piet van Boxel*)

Maimonides's Reflections on the Immortality of the Soul
Dr Dilwyn Knox

Language, Religion and Identity in Israel *Dr Ghil'ad Zuckermann*

Technical Terminology in Abraham Ibn Ezra's Biblical Excursuses: The Sciences of Stars *Dr Josefina Rodríguez Arribas*

Andalusian Exiles and Identities: The Experience of Jewish and Muslim Scholars in the Eastern Mediterranean, 12th and 13th Centuries *Dr Anna Akasoy*

Objectivity and Engagement: The Changing Agenda of Jewish Studies
Dr David Ariel

Martyrdom, *Kiddush Ha-shem* and Resistance: From Josephus to Akiva *Professor Tessa Rajak*

Are we Not Brothers? French and German Jews in the Franco-Prussian War, 1870–71 *Dr Christine Krüger*

Special Lecture

Hilary Term 2009

The Seventeenth Stencl Lecture in Yiddish Studies

Objects of Desire: On the Role of Non-Jewish Languages in Sholem Aleichem's *Mayses far Yidishe Kinder* *Dr Kerstin Hoge*

Trinity Term 2009

Lectures, Seminars and Classes

Hebrew Prose Composition *Dr Alison Salvesen*

Aramaic – Daniel 2:4–7:28 *Dr Alison Salvesen*

Seminar on Jewish History and Literature in the Graeco-Roman Period
(*Professor Martin Goodman*)

Hadrian in Jerusalem and Alexandria in 117 CE *Dr Livia Capponi*

'Tradunt Hebraei...': The Problem of the Origins and Function of Jewish Midrash in Jerome *Dr Alison Salvesen*

'Double Predestination' and the Pre-existence of Repentance: Qumran, Midrash and Piyyut *Dr Yehoshua Granat*

Correspondence Between Jewish Communities in Late Antiquity: On Patriarchal Epistles and Other Letters *Professor Isaiah Gafni*

Hebrew and Latin Manuscripts: Their Codicological Features
Professor Malachi Beit-Arié and Professor Peter Gumbert

Reading Renaissance Hebrew Texts *Dr Joanna Weinberg*

Seminar on Jews and Judaism in the Early Modern Period
(*Convened by Dr Joanna Weinberg*)

Problematics in the Use of Rabbinic Responsa from Early Modern Europe as a Source of History *Dr Edward Fram*

Beyond Sinai: Early Modern Approaches to a Diasporic History of the Hebrew Language *Dr Andrea Schatz*

The Early Modern Yiddish Memorist Glikel of Hamel – As a Widow *Dr Ada Rapoport-Albert*

Codes, Commentaries and 'The Community' in Early Modern Eastern European Jewry *Dr Eliyahu Stern*

Jewish and Medical Connotations of the Epithet *Lusitanus* up to 1640 *Professor Ian Maclean*

A Philosemitic Moment? Judaism and Republicanism in Seventeenth-century European Thought *Dr Adam Sutcliffe*

Seminar on East and East-Central Europe (Seventeenth to Twentieth Centuries)
(*Convened by Professor Robert Evans and Dr David Rechter*)

'Working Towards the Emperor': Political Culture, State Structure and the Beginnings of Austrian Parliamentarianism, 1861–7 *Dr Jonathan Kwan*

From Imperial to National Church: Karlovci Orthodox Metropolitanate *Dr Bojan Aleksov*

The Modern Polish State and the Privatization of Judaism in the Late Eighteenth Century *Dr Eliyahu Stern*

The Austrian Enlightenment the Orthodox Way – Serbian Church Hierarchy and the Josephinist Reforms *Marija Petrovic*

Lord and Peasant in the Last Years of Hungarian Seigneurialism *Rob Gray*

Time and the Self: Romanian Travellers and Personal Identity *Dr Alex Drace-Francis*

Restructuring Czech-German Space: The Ambiguities of Sudeten German Foreign Policy in the Mid-1930s *Professor Mark Cornwall*

Towards a Social History of Central and Southeastern European Eugenic *Dr Marius Turda*

Seminar in Jewish Studies
(*Convened by Dr Piet van Boxel*)

External Trouble: The First Jewish Revolt as Roman Foreign Campaign *Gil Gambash*

Hebrew Printing and Networks of Jewish Patronage in Eighteenth-century Livorno: The Cases of Judah Ayash and *HIDA* *Dr Francesca Bregoli*

Varieties of Triumphalism in Eusebian Historiography *Gavin McCormick*

A Journey to the End of the Millennium – Evidence About the Editing Time of Some of the Midrashim of Byzantium *Dr Amos Geula*

Topics in Modern Hebrew Literature *Dr Jordan Finkin*

Modern Hebrew Texts *Dr Jordan Finkin*

Language Class: Biblical Hebrew *Stephen Herring*

Language Class: Modern Hebrew *Daphna Witztum*

Language Class: Yiddish *Dr Haike Beruriah Wiegand*

Yiddish Ulpan *Dr Haike Beruriah Wiegand*

The David Patterson Seminars

(*Convened by Dr Piet van Boxel*)

The Bible, the Rabbis and the Founding Fathers of Modern Jewry
Dr Eliyahu Stern

Jerusalem in the Persian Period and the Wall of Nehemiah
Professor Israel Finkelstein

Finding the Jewish Shakespeare: The Life and Legacy of Jacob Gordin
Beth Kaplan

Wild Men, Musicians and Others: The Art and Iconography of Bodleian MS Opp. 776, a Fifteenth-century Hebrew Prayer Book
Dr Suzanne Wijsman

Reconsidering William of Norwich *Professor Miri Rubin*

Struggling Against the Tide: New Sources of Jewish Law and Rabbinic Resistance in Early Modern Poland *Dr Edward Fram*

The Biblical Story of Jonah in Medieval Hebrew and English Poems: Some Points of Comparison *Dr Yehoshua Granat*

Special Lecture

The Catherine Lewis Master Class

Fixing the Quire: A Book Technique as Mirror of Mediterranean and Western Culture *Professor Peter Gumbert*

MSt in Jewish Studies, University of Oxford

Ten students studied at the Centre this year, seven of whom graduated in July 2009.

The Faculty

Courses and languages presented in the MSt programme were taught by Fellows and Lectors of the Centre, and also by: Dr Garth Gilmour, Research Associate, Institute of Archaeology, Oxford University; Professor Fergus Millar, Emeritus Professor of Ancient History, Oxford University; Dr Madhavi Nevader, Oriel College; and Dr Norman Solomon, Senior Associate. Dr Jordan Finkin served as Course Coordinator, and Martine Smith-Huvers, Academic Registrar, administered the course with the assistance of Sue Forteath, Academic Administrator.

Courses

Students studied Biblical or Modern Hebrew or Yiddish. In addition, they selected four courses from the list below and submitted dissertations. The following courses were offered during the 2008–2009 academic year:

- A Survey of Rabbinic Literature *Dr Joanna Weinberg*
- European Jewry from the Spanish Expulsion to the Enlightenment *Dr Francesca Bregoli*
- Introduction to Talmud *Dr Norman Solomon*
- Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Israel: The Iron Age (1200–332 BCE) *Dr Garth Gilmour*
- Is Modern Hebrew Literature Jewish? *Dr Jordan Finkin*
- Israel: State, Society, Identity *Dr Raffaella Del Sarto*
- Jewish and Christian Bible Translation and Interpretation in Antiquity *Dr Alison Salvesen*
- Jewish History 200 BCE to 70 CE *Professor Martin Goodman*

- Jewish Liturgy *Dr Jeremy Schonfield*
- Jewish-Muslim Relations Through the Ages *Dr Adam Silverstein*
- Modern European Jewish History *Dr David Rechter*
- Questions of Jewish Identity in Modern Yiddish Fiction *Dr Joseph Sherman*
- Septuagint *Dr Alison Salvesen*
- The Diaspora in the Roman Empire: Jews, Pagans and Christians to 450 CE *Professor Fergus Millar*
- The Emergence of Modern Religious Movements in Judaism *Dr Miri Freud-Kandel*
- The Study of Ancient Israelite Religion *Dr Madhavi Nevader*

Languages:
- Biblical Hebrew (elementary, intermediate and advanced) *Steve Herring*
- Modern Hebrew (elementary) *Dr Tali Argov and Daphna Witztum*
- Yiddish (elementary) *Dr Haike Beruriah Wiegand*

The Students

This year students came from Canada, Ireland, Jordan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Michelle Emma Louise Brister (*b.* 1987), who graduated in Theology at Worcester College, Oxford, came to the Centre to expand her knowledge of biblical archaeology and ancient Israelite religion, as well as to learn Modern Hebrew, having already gained a grounding in Biblical Hebrew. Her aim is to read Modern Hebrew literature and to be involved in archaeological projects in Israel. She is particularly interested in Jewish understandings of the figure of Eve both in and outside the Genesis account, and her dissertation was entitled 'An Investigation of the Jewish Tradition Behind the Portrayal of the Serpent in the Byzantine Octateuch Miniatures'.

Chelica Lynn Hiltunen (*b.* 1982) completed a BS in Biblical Studies and Ancient Languages at Cornerstone University in 2005 and an MA in Biblical Studies at Trinity Western University in 2008. Her early interest

in the Bible developed into a fascination with the cultural world and literatures contemporaneous with the nascent Church, and with the Second Temple period and the formation and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, especially the Pentateuchal manuscripts from Qumran. Having previously studied ancient Judaism at Christian institutions, she found that the strong tradition of Jewish studies at Oxford allowed her to study the subject from a different perspective. She plans to move on to doctoral research. Her dissertation was entitled 'The Textual Growth of the Book of Lamentations as Examined in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Masoretic Text, and the Septuagint'.

Amy Elizabeth Icke (*b.* 1987) graduated in Theology at Mansfield College, Oxford, having received the Horton Davies Theology Prize for the best performance by a second-year theologian and been elected to a College Exhibition. Having acquired a strong foundation in biblical Judaism, she came to the Centre to explore the relationship between the three Abrahamic faiths from antiquity to the medieval period. She particularly appreciated the intensive teaching and small class sizes, and the opportunity to learn Biblical Hebrew and to read theological and historical sources in their original languages. Her dissertation was entitled 'The Figure of Rahab in the Book of Joshua'.

Tzipporah Sophie Angele Johnston (*b.* 1987) graduated from Balliol College, Oxford, with a First Class Honours degree in Modern History in 2008. Her interest in Jewish history was kindled by discovering the secondary literature about Glikl of Hameln, about whom she wrote a paper focusing on gender. She took steps to learn more about Jewish history outside her degree course, attending seminars and learning Hebrew, and plans to move on to a DPhil in early-modern Jewish History and eventually to teach at university level. Her main research interests are in gender aspects of seventeenth-century German Jewry, including how Jewish communities interacted with broader European religious and social trends to produce new attitudes towards marriage, sexuality and gender. Her dissertation was entitled 'Re-evaluating Early Modern Ashkenazi Masculinity'.

Cian Joseph Power (*b.* 1987) graduated in Philosophy and Theology at Oriel College, Oxford, in 2008. His course brought him into contact

with Deuteronomy, Isaiah and the Psalms, the history of worship in ancient Israel, the political history of the Near East and the emergence of monotheism, alerting him to the different types of interpretation that the biblical text has been thought to support. He came to the Centre to deepen his knowledge of Biblical Hebrew, Ancient Israelite Religion and Jewish and Christian Bible translation. His dissertation, entitled 'Northern Perspectives of Israelite Kingship. Royal Ideology in the Kingdom of Israel', was awarded the prize for the best dissertation.

Tyler James Smith (*b.* 1985) completed a BA in Theology at Briercrest College, Caronport, Saskatchewan in 2006 and an MA in Religious Studies at McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada, in 2008. He became interested during his MA studies in the contacts between early Christians and Jews reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in rabbinic views of 'the Other', and came to the Centre to master Biblical Hebrew and deepen his knowledge of Judaism in the late Second Temple period. He has applied for doctoral study with long-term aim of promoting Jewish-Christian dialogue within religious, secular, academic and popular institutions. His dissertation was entitled 'Josephus' Narrative Art and the Samson Episodes (Antiquities of the Jews 5.276–317)'.

Adrianne Lucinda Spunaugle (*b.* 1985) graduated in Theology and Religious Studies at Oral Roberts University, Oklahoma, in 2008. She focused on Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic and worked for the University as an adjunct language instructor towards the end of her course. Her studies kindled her interest in Judaism, and she came to the Centre to prepare for doctoral research in Classical Hebrew and to deepen her knowledge of Judaism in the Second Temple period, with the ultimate aim of teaching at university level. Her dissertation was entitled 'The Portrait of David: Comparing the Bible and Rabbinic Traditions'.

End-of-year Party

An end-of-year party was held at Yarnton Manor on Wednesday 24 June 2009. The President, Dr David Ariel, addressed the students and their guests, as well as the fellows, teachers, visiting fellows and scholars, staff and their partners. The Centre bade farewell to Dr Francesca Bregoli, who held the Albert and Rachel Lehmann Junior Research Fellowship

in Jewish Studies for two years. Dr Jordan Finkin presented Cian Power with the prize for the best dissertation.

Acknowledgements

The Centre would like to record its gratitude to the Skirball Foundation, New York, and to Mr Jochen Wermuth, who have assisted with scholarships this academic year.

MSt in Jewish Studies, 2008–2009

Front Row (left to right)

Dr Jordan Finkin (COURSE CORDINATOR), Dr Francesca Bregoli,
Dr Piet van Boxel (ACADEMIC DIRECTOR), Dr David Ariel (PRESIDENT),
Professor Fergus Millar, Dr Jeremy Schonfield, Dr David Rechter, Dr Alison Salvesen,
Stephen Herring

Second Row (left to right)

Chelica Hiltunen (USA), Amy Icke (UK), Michelle Brister (UK), Dr Joanna Weinberg,
Dr Norman Solomon, Dr Adam Silverstein

Third Row (left to right)

Tzipporah Johnston (UK), Dr César Merchán-Hamann, Dr Madhavi Nevader,
Angela Costley (UK), Professor Martin Goodman, Dr Raffaella Del Sarto,
Dr Haike Beruriah Wiegand

Back Row (left to right)

Edward Caffrey (Ireland), Tyler Smith (Canada), Islam Dayeh (UK/Jordan),
Cian Power (UK), Adrianne Spunaugle (USA),
Martine Smith-Huvers (ACADEMIC REGISTRAR)

The Qumran Forum

In Michaelmas Term 2008 Professor Geza Vermes FBA held four seminars at the Oriental Institute on the topic of 'The Dead Sea Scrolls Sixty Years On'.

In the first of these he discussed the significance of the non-sectarian texts, covering Qumran codicology, the nature of the biblical manuscripts, the significance of variant readings, and non-biblical documents attributable to mainstream Judaism.

The second seminar dealt with the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls, analysing the various rules of the Qumran community, the liturgical texts, the calendars, the exegetical writings and other miscellanea.

The third seminar was devoted to the scrolls' contribution to the study of late Second Temple Judaism, in particular to the nature of the biblical text, the canon of Scripture, the religious ideas and the evolution of *halakhah*.

The final seminar was concerned with the Scrolls' impact on nascent Christianity, in particular on Messianism, the eschatological world view and the possible organizational borrowing by the early Church from the Dead Sea sect.

The seminars were based on Professor Vermes's forthcoming book, *The Story of the Scrolls: The Miraculous Discovery and True Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, due to be published by Penguin in February 2010.

David Patterson Seminars

Moonlight on the Wire: Hebrew Writing of the First World War
Professor Glenda Abramson

Relatively little is known about Jewish experience in the First World War, which has understandably enough tended to be overshadowed by the Second. Yet a substantial body of fiction, poetry and life-writing about the Great War has survived in Hebrew and Yiddish, by those who served in the trenches on the Eastern Front or in Palestine with the Ottomans, or who spent the war on the home fronts. This writing has been almost completely ignored until now.

First World War literature stands midway between historical documentation and subjective record, yet because of the need not to forget, all war books were later considered documents, regardless of genre.

For most such Jewish writers the war was a major factor in their growing identification with Zionism. Much of what was written in the trenches or prison camps of Eastern Europe or in Palestine is rich in musings – not always positive – on Jewish nationalism and the Jewish future. Writers such as Greenberg, Agnon, Hameiri and Tchernichowsky sought to transcend the nightmare by identifying ideologically with the Jewish national future, if not specifically with Zionism. They tended to discuss their individual experience of war while glancing back into Jewish history and forward to a resolution of the collective fate. War literature therefore reflects a formative stage in the encounter with Jewish history, the war itself reinforcing the need to resolve its tensions.[1]

Andalusian Exiles and Identities: The Experience of Jewish and Muslim Scholars in the Eastern Mediterranean, 12th and 13th Centuries *Dr Anna Akasoy*

Ever since the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, Muslims travelled from there to the central lands of the Islamic world on pilgrimage or to pursue education, trade or politics. With the success of the *reconquista*, the flow of Andalusian Muslims increased, joined by Jews escaping

[1] An expanded version of this David Patterson Seminar appears on pages **00–00** of this *Report*

Almohad persecution (1147–1269). The Andalusian Jews and Muslims who found new homes in Syria and Egypt shared a cultural heritage and were distinguished by language, clothes, culinary habits, intellectual tendencies and by religious and cultural practices in which they expressed pride, commonly facing resistance from the local population. Personal testimonies show how this regional culture survived in exile and transcended religious boundaries.

Jews and Muslims expressed emotions resulting from their exile differently, reflecting their distinctive religious and literary paradigms. Defeat, life under foreign rule and forced exile were new for thirteenth-century Muslims, and exiles were celebrated for maintaining true religion under adverse circumstances. Many Andalusian Sufis who travelled to the Muslim East, at first voluntarily and later to escape oppression, were politically as well as religiously active. Jewish exiles had a different perspective on their persecution by Almohads and exile from the Muslim West due to their historical exile from the Holy Land.

Jerusalem in the Persian Period and the Wall of Nehemiah
Professor Israel Finkelstein

The rarity of archaeological finds and extra-biblical texts relating to Persian-period Yehud lead to circular reasoning in reconstructing its history. Archaeologists working in Jerusalem, and especially those searching for the wall Nehemiah is said to have built there, tend to resort to uncritical reading of the biblical text.

Excavations suggest that Jerusalem in the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods was a village of roughly 5 acres, with a population of only a few hundred, including some 100 adult men. These, and the depleted population of Yehud in general, could not have supported a major reconstruction of the ruined Iron II fortifications of the city, which may explain the absence of any evidence of such a reconstruction or renovation.

There are three possible ways of reading the report of the reconstruction in Nehemiah 3. First, it may be utopian; secondly, it may preserve a memory of an Iron Age construction or renovation; or thirdly, and least problematically, it may be influenced by the building of the First Wall in the Hasmonean period. Any future discussion should take the archaeology as its starting point.

In the meantime, evidence from Jerusalem casts doubt on the idea that

much of the biblical material was composed in the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods.

The Biblical Story of Jonah in Medieval Hebrew and English Poems:Some Points of Comparison ***Dr Yehoshua Granat***

It is instructive to compare the way biblical narratives were elaborated in differing religious and cultural milieux, such as in the 'Jonah *Piyyutim*' from the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry in Spain, and *Patience* by the anonymous Middle English *Gawain* Poet.

Both treat biblical prose narrative as a point of departure for novel, autonomous poetic compositions. But while Hebrew poets, using the language of Scripture, incorporated scriptural verses verbatim, those writing in Middle English had to translate or paraphrase the Latin Vulgate. Hebrew poets constructed intertextual fabrics of biblical verses, while English ones could be more lively and colloquial. Both have sometimes surprisingly similar strategies for filling the gaps in the tersely concentrated source-narrative. Biblical writers characteristically leave lacunae, such as causal links between events and actions (why did Jonah flee to Tarshish?), details of characters' emotions (how did he feel?), or items of description (what did the fish look like from the inside?). These are filled by medieval poets, who also add pointers to the story's relevance to the present.

Finding the Jewish Shakespeare: The Life and Legacy of Jacob Gordin ***Beth Kaplan***

The lecturer's great-grandfather, Jacob Gordin, a Yiddish playwright known in his time as 'the Jewish Shakespeare', was a writer, teacher and communal leader in Russia before fleeing to New York in 1891. There he quickly became a leading figure in the fledgling Yiddish theatre, and a well-known short-story writer, lecturer and founder of schools, newspapers and theatre clubs. By the turn of the century he was one of the most influential figures on the Jewish Lower East Side, and when he died in 1909, aged fifty-six, his plays were being performed around the world.

The lecturer, curious as to why Gordin's children and grandchildren expressed so little respect for him, discovered how a campaign to discredit him, instigated by Abraham Cahan, editor of the Yiddish newspaper *Forward*, as Gordin was dying of cancer, effectively destroyed his

reputation. The lecturer's own father, Jacob Gordin Kaplan, who was, like his grandfather, a volatile, outgoing, left-wing rabble-rouser and exile, helped her understand her own early ambition to be a writer and actress. This led her to a career which links her to her great-grandfather, and to write a book about him entitled *Finding the Jewish Shakespeare: The Life and Legacy of Jacob Gordin* (New York 2007).

Maimonides's Reflections on the Immortality of the Soul
Dr Dilwyn Knox

The soul's immortality was, together with the eternity of the world, one of the two great issues in Jewish, Christian and Islamic attempts to reconcile Greek philosophy with revelation. Philo followed a Platonic interpretation, Maimonides an Aristotelian one. Maimonides did not give a detailed proof, but his position, as Alexander Altmannn showed, can be reconstructed from various passages in *The Guide of the Perplexed*.[1] Maimonides followed the Greek notion of the soul as a purely intelligible principle, ignoring materialist descriptions in, say, Leviticus. The soul was, Aristotle had said, the 'form' of the body. It was like an impression on wax, an analogy suggesting that the soul was mortal. Aristotle had also identified an 'agent' and 'potential' intellect, calling the former 'separate' and 'eternal'. Alexander of Aphrodisias's interpretation of these puzzling remarks proved the most influential for Islamic thinkers and, directly or indirectly, for Maimonides. The agent intellect, said Alexander, was the 'prime mover', God. The passive intellect was, instead, a faculty of the soul and mortal. Islamic scholars adapted Alexander's doctrine. The agent intellect was distinct from the soul, but, rather than being God, it was the lowest intelligence, beneath those governing the celestial bodies. Maimonides agreed. The agent intellect, following Aristotelian precedent, actualized the material intellect. The latter was the soul's 'predisposition' (as Alexander had said) for intellection. It died with the body. The soul was, then, mortal. In the act of intellection, however, the material intellect became identical with the agent intellect. Intellect in act and its object, as Aristotle, Plotinus and others said, were identical. The acquisition of knowledge perfected the

[1] See Alexander Altmann, 'Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics', in Alexander Altmann, *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung. Studien zur jüdischen Geistesgeschichte* (Tübingen 1987) 60–129.

intellect, making it, Maimonides said, an 'acquired intellect'. The latter comprised objects of incorporeal intellection, rather than sense data. Hence it was immortal.

Maimonides's position, however, was and remains puzzling in several respects. Was the immortal acquired intellect personal? Gersonides would later insist unambiguously that it was; Maimonides's comments, by contrast, were inconsistent. Again, Maimonides's idea that immortality was acquired through intellectual endeavour led to accusations that he denied bodily resurrection. Finally, Maimonides was criticized for apparently denying that virtuous but uneducated people could attain immortality.

Are We Not brothers? French and German Jews in the Franco–Prussian War, 1870–1 ***Dr Christine G. Krüger***

The Franco-Prussian War tested the ideal of transnational Jewish solidarity. The nation, which became an ultimate value in the nineteenth century, did not tolerate the coexistence of other loyalties. For Jews, whose membership of the nation was repeatedly denied, this was particularly grave. Nevertheless, Jews in France and Germany initially maintained the ideal of Jewish solidarity, which in their eyes should serve as a guideline for relations between Jews of different nationalities. When this ideal failed to withstand the reality of a national war, Jews in both countries lamented that their relationship was overshadowed by hostilities.

There are striking differences between how French and German Jews defined the relationship between nation and religion. French Jews held their German co-religionists responsible for the inner-Jewish hostilities so tended to reject the claim for brotherhood. In addition, since France had pioneered Jewish emancipation, they could easily align their patriotism with their understanding of the ideals and aims of Judaism. Some even equated national and religious goals. The attitude of Franco-Jewish writers was congruent with the discourse that dominated the French public in general.

For German Jews self-definition was more problematic. The predominantly cultural understanding of nationhood in Germany offered them the possibility of claiming membership. But difficulties arose when they tried to harmonize this with the ideal of Jewish solidarity. Some German Jews tried to separate the national from the religious spheres, but many

publicists among them had recourse to an ideal of peace and international understanding based on Enlightenment values that differed from the generally prevailing discourse in Germany. These ideals had very few non-Jewish supporters, given the climate of heated nationalism at the beginning of the German *Reich.*

Nineveh the Fallen: Reflections on Nahum the Prophet and Nahum the Book ***Professor Peter Machinist***

The short book of Nahum is valuable for understanding biblical literary development and political and cultural interactions in the imperial Near East during the first millennium BCE. Nahum has tended to be marginalized in biblical scholarship because its savage denunciation of the Neo-Assyrian empire and of Nineveh, the last major capital, has been taken as evidence of a negative, violent and religiously coarse tone unworthy of biblical prophecy. It has more recently attracted attention from feminist scholars, however, because of the imagery used to denounce Nineveh, from historians for its possible witness to later Neo-Assyrian history, and from literary scholars for the quality of its poetry and its compositional structure.

Three significant questions are: 1) is the book a coherent literary composition or a group of fragments assembled in several stages? 2) What are the date(s) and setting(s) of the book, and its character and purpose, and are the denunciation and description of the downfall of Nineveh and Assyria a witness to past events, or a prediction of the future? 3) If it is a witness to the past (as it now seems), how did it come to be regarded as predictive?

The book's literary coherence is clear from the Tiberian Masoretic text we now have. The three chapters flow dramatically from a general statement of the Israelite God's power to punish the guilty and protect those loyal to him, through the enactment of this power in the destruction of Nineveh/Assyria, towards the exaltation of those who hear of the disaster, implicitly former subjects of Assyria. This flow is reflected in recurring words, phrases and images, even though the text became slightly confused in transmission: one verse seems not to fit its context (2:3), there are ambiguities in the antecedents of some verbs and nouns (especially 1:13–2:1), a few verses may be corrupt (e.g. 2:8), and occasional units appear to be separate (e.g. 1:2–3). But many or most such problems may

be resolved if it is argued that a single author used or adapted earlier traditions or literary units, such as 1:2–3. The text may also have suffered some corruption in the course of transmission.

Scholars tend to view it as a prediction of the downfall of Nineveh and to date it before the Babylonian conquest of Nineveh in 612 BCE. This would explain why the writer was familiar with some of the terminology, geography and practices of the Neo-Assyrian empire, and particularly with King Ashurbanipal's conquest of Thebes in Egypt in 667 BCE (3: 8–10), which furnishes a *terminus post quem* for its composition. But other features suggest it was written after the fall of Nineveh in 612. The description of the use of water in Nineveh's conquest in chapter 2 and elsewhere suggests historical events rather than a literary or theological motif. The conquest narrative is in the past tense, including the messenger who announces it as good news (2:1), the relief felt by who hear of it (3:18–19), and verbs in the past or historical present tense that describe the conquest and the downfall of Assyria (e.g. 3:17). Verbs that could be viewed as having a future meaning (e.g. 2:14) might reflect Assyria's weakened hold on its imperial conquests in Judah and other parts of the West in the decades before Nineveh's conquest.

This view that the book looks into the future would confirm A. George's proposal that Nahum reflects a developing hope, if not prediction, of the actual conquest of 612.[2] It appears to echo the First Isaiah and other biblical prophets a century earlier in the later eighth century BCE, or their tradition (e.g. 5:11–13 and Isaiah 5:29–30),[3] suggesting that Isaiah's promise of Assyria's eventual defeat (e.g. 10:12) was realized in Nahum's day.

The book's charged language, however, and use of literary/theological motifs from the Israelite/Judean tradition (e.g. 1:2–3; the tradition of Isaiah) and beyond, indicate that it offers not a report of, but a response to, the fall. It cannot have been composed long after the downfall in 612, because its knowledge of Assyria's history, terminology and geography is greater than what was known about Assyria in the Second Temple period, according to faulty Greek and Greek-Jewish depictions.

If Nahum witnesses the downfall of Nineveh, how did it come to be seen as predicting that fall? It was included among the Twelve Minor Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, and is referred to as a predictive prophecy

[2] A. George, in *Supplements au Dictionnaire de la Bible* 6 (1960) col. 297.
[3] Peter Machinist, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983) 735–6.

in Second Temple texts like Tobit (14:14, Sinaiticus version), the commentary (*pesher*) on Nahum from Qumran, and Josephus (*Antiquities* IX: 2, 3). This may be due to future-oriented elements in the text, and its association with another prophetic book, Habakkuk. While Nahum deals with the Neo-Assyrian empire, Habakkuk is its structural and thematic mirror in relation to the Neo-Babylonian (Chaldaean) empire, which is widely assumed in the Hebrew Bible to be its imperial successor.[4] Furthermore, although the order of the Twelve Minor Prophets varies in ancient manuscripts, Nahum is invariably followed by Habakkuk. The main difference is that if Nahum describes the downfall of the Neo-Assyrian as a past event, Habukkuk faces the Neo-Babylonian in its period of strength, wondering how long its imperial oppression will continue (e.g. 2:17) and hoping for its end (e.g. 2:1–5).

Nahum and Habakkuk seem to have been brought together in the Second Temple period or earlier, perhaps before the Twelve Minor Prophets section was arranged. Habakkuk may have been modelled in part on Nahum, the downfall of Nineveh and Assyria, which Nahum proclaimed, serving as a precedent for the hope that Chaldaean Babylonia would also fall, a mode of reasoning attested in the book of Jeremiah (50:17–18). The link with Habakkuk confirms that Nahum describes a predictive prophecy fulfilled, rather than a witness of the past.

Martyrdom, *Kiddush Ha-shem* and Resistance: From Josephus to Akiva ***Professor Tessa Rajak***

The relationship between Jewish resistance and martyrdom, characteristic of the three centuries between the Maccabaean and Bar Kokhba revolts, informs current thinking about the Shoah. Although some associate these two ideologies with the Land of Israel and the Diaspora respectively, armed opposition to oppressive rule and preparedness to face death in defence of Torah are linked in Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic writings associated with each of these revolts. Josephus's view that Jewish readiness to die for Torah as proof of the superiority of their beliefs, derives not from the author's apologetic needs, but from actual responses to the conflict.

Jewish martyrdom came into its own in the early second century, the

[4] Peter Machinist, in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983) 736–7.

probable period of the so-called Fourth Book of Maccabees, an expansion of the short martyrology embedded in the Second Book of Maccabees. This describes how the aged scribe Eleazar, a noble mother and her seven sons disobey the oppressive King Antiochus and die under torture, apparently the first martyr narrative in Jewish tradition and probably the last surviving work of the Greek-speaking Jewish Diaspora. It was produced at the time of the Diaspora Jewish revolt under Trajan and of Bar Kokhba's later unsuccessful uprising in the Land of Israel against Trajan's successor, Hadrian. The rabbinic accounts of Pappus and Julianus, as well as the martyrdoms of Akiva and Hanina ben Teradion, derive from the same period, although they are incorporated in later texts. Since Jewish accounts have marked affinities to early Christian constructions of martyrdom of the same era, we may envisage mutual influence, although at this stage it was Jewish experience which led the way.

Technical Terminology in Abraham Ibn Ezra's Biblical Excursuses: The Sciences of Stars *Dr Josefina Rodríguez-Arribas*

Shlomo Sela has argued that Ibn Ezra based his technical terminology mainly on biblical words because he believed Greek science to be derived from the Jews. But this view needs to be reconsidered for two reasons. First, Ibn Ezra's biblical commentaries seem to be his earliest writings apart from the poetry composed before he left Spain in 1140, and he coined the astronomical and astrological terminology while working on these, well before embarking on his astrological encyclopedia and other scientific writings in 1146. The biblical words and roots therefore first appear in exegetical contexts and were only later employed in his astrological and astronomical writings.

Secondly, someone deeply involved in the study of Hebrew language would naturally use biblical vocabulary for coining neologisms rather than resorting to Arabic, Greek or Latin. Ibn Ezra, like other Jewish grammarians, used biblical language but Arabic models in writing and translating material on the subject. In addition, some of the biblical terms that Sela believes were coined by Ibn Ezra appear earlier in the works of Ibn Gabirol, Bar Hiyya or others. Further work is needed on the origins of technical terminology in medieval Hebrew, the differences between common and technical terms, and the relevance of context to the emergence of neologisms.

Reconsidering William of Norwich ***Professor Miri Rubin***

Passio Willelmi Norwicensis, which survives in a sole manuscript of the late-twelfth century (Cambridge UL Add.3037), was written by Thomas of Monmouth, monk of the Cathedral Priory of Norwich. Thomas, on becoming a member of the Norwich community, engaged closely with the rumours that had circulated since 1144 about the death of a boy, William, an apprentice tanner, whose body had been found in Thorpe Wood during Easter Week. Members of the boy's family had claimed that marks and miraculous signs on and around the body indicated that he had been killed by Jews. Thomas became the self-appointed apologist for a cult of William of Norwich as a martyr. The *Passio*, of which the lecturer is preparing a new edition and translation, thus offers a 'reconstructed' narrative. The bulk of the text is a list of arguments against those who doubted or rejected the case for William's martyrdom at the hand of Jews, followed by accounts of miracles of healing which occurred when supplicants – local folk, but also pilgrims from further afield – approached William's tomb, or invoked him in their suffering. Thomas presents himself as the ever-vigilant keeper of the shrine.

The *Passio* is important as the first full narrative which ascribed to Jews the intent of 'crucifying' a child. The lecturer suggested how the emergence of this fantasy might be historicized in terms of the world of monastic learning and miracle tales, or the politics of twelfth-century Norwich. She pointed out the tension between local cults and ecclesiastical attempts to control the church calendar, and suggested how migration into a new community might have prompted Thomas' commitment and powered his imagination, leading to the creation of one of the most deadly narratives in medieval Europe.

Who Needs Arab-Jewish Identity? Chronicle of a Cultural Extinction Foretold ***Professor Reuven Snir***

An Arab-Jewish cultural identity existed before the rise of Islam, when Jewish communities throughout the Arabian Peninsula participated in the making of local Arab culture. Jews later became familiar with Greek works in Arabic translation, and often preferred to use Arabic even in dealing with sacred matters. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries in al-Andalus, as Arabic became the *lingua franca*, they developed new literary

forms. A Jewish élite emerged that was highly skilled in Arabic language and literature, and who wrote Hebrew poetry based on Arabic models.

In modern times, Jews in Arab lands increasingly adopted the ambient culture. According to a secular slogan of the 1920s in Baghdad: 'Religion is for God, the Fatherland is for everyone'. But by the 1930s Jews became targets of anti-Zionism, and over 150 were killed in the *Farhud* of June 1941. After 1948 most Arab Jews emigrated to Israel where they were exposed to a hegemonic Hebrew establishment which imposed Western cultural norms, feared the Orient and despised its culture. The struggle between Zionism and the national Arab movement led to an assumption that Arab-Muslim and Zionist-Jewish identities were separate. The exclusion of hybrid Arab-Jewish culture is causing the gradual extinction of an Arab-Jewish culture reaching back more than 1500 years.

Where Cultures Meet: The Bodleian Hebrew Manuscripts
Dr Piet van Boxel

Jewish history since the Middle Ages is commonly viewed as a litany of disasters – crusades, blood libels and expulsions – which impaired Jews' capacity to play any part in the non-Jewish world.

The Bodleian Library's Hebrew manuscripts in Oxford tell a different story. This rich collection reflects various degrees of coexistence, cultural affinity and practical cooperation between Jews, Muslims and Christian from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period. The textual, artistic and technical similarities between these manuscripts and their Arabic or Latin counterparts offer a valuable resource for a more nuanced Jewish historiography. They challenge the purely lachrymose version of Jewish history, and bear witness to the capacity of Jews to be part of, and to contribute to, the wider world.

Wild Men, Musicians and Others: The Art and Iconography of Bodleian MS Opp. 776, a Fifteenth-century Hebrew Prayer Book
Dr Suzanne Wijsman

The most highly illuminated and decorated of all user-produced Hebrew manuscripts, Bodleian MS Opp. 776, measuring only 90 x 80 mm, contains thirty-three pages bearing finely rendered illustrations showing musicians, groups of praying figures, women (some of whom are also musicians), hybrids, animals, beasts, wild men, grotesques, birds and

flowers. These are rendered in a wide variety of colours and substantial amounts of gold leaf.

The musical iconography is particularly significant since it contains the largest number of illustrations of performing musicians in any medieval Hebrew manuscript. Their accuracy suggests the artist had knowledge of musical practice, and provides circumstantial evidence for the activity of Ashkenazi Jewish musicians in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The manuscript suggests that they contributed to musical developments in Europe, especially to the development of the violin family in northern Italy in around 1500. Jews fled persecution or were expelled from Spain, Portugal and southern Italy in the fifteenth century, migrating to northern Italy, Germany and Ashkenaz. It therefore seems that Ashkenazi—as well as Sephardi musicians—influenced cultural activity in northern Italy at this time.

The juxtaposition of texts and images on some folia, including illustrations of musicians and wild men, raises questions about their symbolism, especially given the manuscript's user-produced origins. The lecturer discussed the implications of the iconography, as well as the relationship of specific texts to images.

Desired Bodies: Leni Riefenstahl, the 1936 Berlin Olympics and Aryan Masculinity ***Dr Daniel Wildmann***

Leni Riefenstahl, the Nazi film director, is particularly renowned for her propaganda films and for the much acclaimed *Olympia*, a documentary on the Berlin Olympics of 1936. Her filmic language in *Olympia* is National Socialist in argument and visual rhetoric, and shows how the National Socialist self-image was presented to the German public in 1936–8. The representation of the male 'Aryan' body in the film can be contrasted with the 'Jewish body' that, although invisible, is nevertheless present. Traits regarded as Aryan are attributed to the body visually, and then – by circular logic – justified by the suggestion of their superiority.

The film appeals to collective memory on two interacting levels: an older bourgeois iconographic canon, and a contemporary one established by the film. The prevailing conception of race enabled the German public to connect these levels, allowing the 'Aryan' body in the foreground to imply the existence of its Jewish opposite in the background. Just as the Third Reich excluded Jews from its community

(*Volksgemeinschaft*), so Riefenstahl showed none in her film, extending the ritualized staging of the Games into the cinema and presenting the public with a 'Jew-free' world.

Language, Religion and Identity in Israel ***Dr Ghil'ad Zuckermann***

Those who revived Hebrew as the national language of the emerging State of Israel initially attempted to fill lexical voids by using internal sources or, if there was no alternative, by secularizing religious terms to fit the modern world. 'The greatest virtue of a new word is that it is not new', as Yechiel Michal Pines could claim in 1893.

An example of politically neutral secularization is the way the English word 'cell', meaning a 'monk's living place', has been reapplied to mean 'autonomous self-replicating unit from which tissues of the body are formed'. But some such adoptions in Hebrew involve subversion, pejoration and trivialization, either conscious or subconscious.

Defiance of religion emerges from the reapplication of the Hebrew word *blorit*, which in mishnaic Hebrew means 'an upright strip of hair running over the crown of the head from forehead to nape', characteristic of pagans. Secular Socialist Zionists reapplied the word to mean 'forelock, hair above the forehead', which, as a defining characteristic of native Israelis, might imply that such people – nicknamed *Sabras* (meaning 'prickly pear', because they are allegedly thorny on the outside and sweet inside) – are in some way pagan. Denial of religion supports negating the Diaspora, since the Zionist expectation that a *Sabra* will have dishevelled hair contrasts with the orderly appearance of the diaspora Jew, viewed by Zionists as weak and persecuted.

Corresponding religious defiance of Zionism is exemplified by using the biblical word *mishkan*, meaning 'dwelling-place', most familiar as the 'Tabernacle' in which the Ark was housed in the wilderness, to refer to *mishkan haknesset*, 'the Knesset [Israeli Parliament] building'. Even though this might imply that Members of Knesset are angels or priests, the official Knesset website does not translate the term in a way that reflects this.

Gershom Scholem correctly predicted in a letter to Franz Rosenzweig (*Bekenntnis über unsere Sprache*, 1926) that some ultra-orthodox Jews would launch a 'lexical vendetta', and use secularized religious terms as

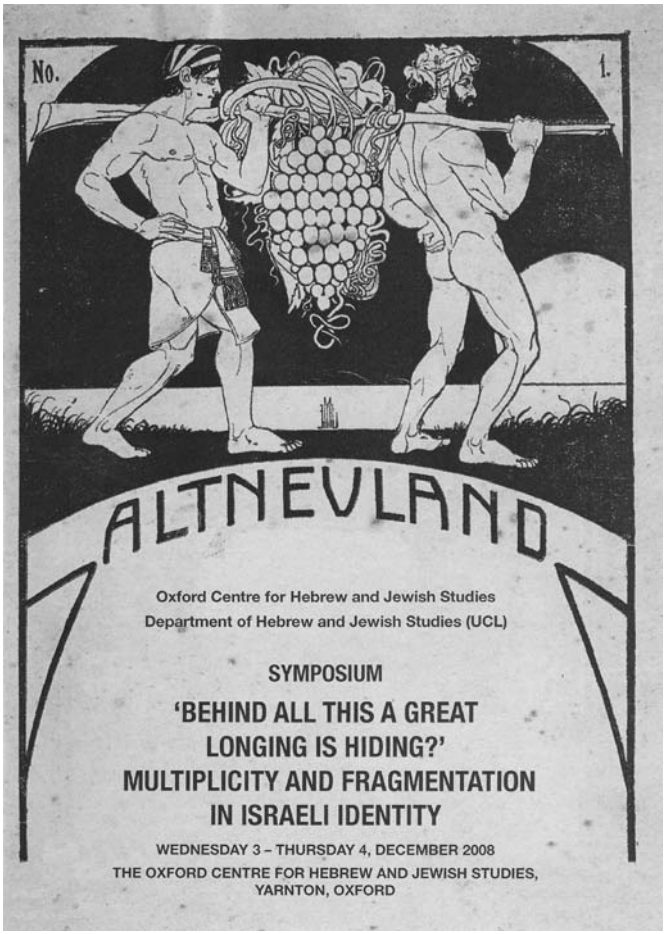
'sleeping agents' to help convince secular Jews to return to their religious roots. Cultural linguistics and socio-philology cast light on the dynamics between language, religion and identity in a land where war with external enemies is matched by internal *Kulturkämpfe*.

Symposium on Israeli Identity

The tradition of inviting Israeli writers as visiting Fellows goes back to the early days of the Centre. The first five holders of the post were Aaron Appelfeld, Amos Oz, Dalia Ravikovitch, Yehoshua Kenaz and A. B. Yehoshua, for whom David Patterson, the founding President, intended to create an environment conducive to producing new Hebrew literature. It is in this spirit that Itzhak Ben-Ner, Dr Yitzhak Laor and Sami Berdugo took up residence at Yarnton Manor in the first term of the past academic year. Profiting from their presence a symposium entitled '"Behind All This a Great Longing is Hiding?" Multiplicity and Fragmentation in Israeli Identity' was held on 4–5 December 2008. It was organized jointly by Dr Piet van Boxel, and by Dr Tsila Ratner of University College London.

The symposium focused on the debate about Israeli identity that has intensified over the past three decades. The question of multiplicity and/or fragmentation in Israeli identity has been raised repeatedly, in response to what may be perceived as an accelerating shift away from the centre towards the margins. But what does this preoccupation mean? How does literature construct and represent it? Does it reflect a confident defiance or a deep yearning for what seemed solid and secure?

The three visiting writers presented different experiences of Israeli identity in colourfully autobiographical ways. Itzhak Ben-Ner reflected in 'M'yan Itzhaki: An Anti-Autobiography' on his Eastern European roots. Sami Berdugo's 'I am an Immigration-Integration Product, or am I?' gave a poetic slant to insights on his North African origins. Yitzhak Laor approached the question of Israeli identity linguistically, by asking 'How Many Hebrews do Israelis Have?' The symposium was opened by Professor Reuven Snir, who reflected autobiographically on Arab-Jewish identity in a paper entitled 'Who Needs Arab-Jewish Identity? Chronicle of a Cultural Extinction Foretold'.



In addition to these personal statements, Dr Tamar Drukker spoke on 'Rabbi Akiva and Zev Bacher in the Trenches: Language, Identity and War in Avigdor Hameiri's "The Great Madness"', and Dr Tali Argov gave a paper on 'Identity as a Fantasy in the Writings of Lea Goldberg and Dalia Ravikovitch'. The well-attended symposium ended with Dr Aminadav Dykman's paper on 'Identity in Translation' and Professor Giulio Lepschy's survey of 'Language, Identity and Mother Tongue'.

CONTINUING ACTIVITIES

The Leopold Muller Memorial Library

Several major acquisitions over recent years, in particular the Foyle-Montefiore, Louis Jacobs and Coppenhagen collections, have transformed the Library from one covering all areas of Jewish Studies, into a research collection focusing on early-modern and modern Jewish history. As such it makes an important contribution to the library provisions of Oxford University. The past academic year has seen further progress in automating the library catalogue, ensuring that its holdings are completely accessible. We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing financial support of the Chairman of the Library Committee, David Lewis, and of the Dorset Foundation, for facilitating work on the online catalogue of the Coppenhagen Collection. That of the Louis Jacobs Collection will be completed by the end of next academic year.

Research projects

The Library's resources were an important factor in the Centre's successful application to host the European Seminar on Advanced Jewish Studies for the academic years 2009–2010 and 2010–2011. One of the projects for the coming year, in which eight scholars have been invited to participate, will focus on how the reading of Hebrew and Jewish texts in the early-modern period affected relations between Christian and Jewish scholars. Researchers will examine the phenomenon of Hebraism: the scientific study of Hebrew and Aramaic and methods of exegesis and legal discourse, as well as the examination of some central figures – particularly Maimonides and Abravanel – whose works were read and admired by diverse Christian scholars. Attention will also be paid to literary remains such as dedicatory poems, Hebrew diplomatic correspondence and *belles lettres*. Underlying this study will be the larger question of how such reading affected attitudes of Christians towards Jews and Judaism, and of Jews towards Christians and Christianity. The Centre's Library, together with the Bodleian Library, holds an outstanding collection of works by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christian Hebraists, constituting an unparalleled resource for the project.

Recent acquisitions have added to the Library's central role in this

Plate 1 Frontispiece portrait of Bryan Walton, from his polyglot *Old and New Testament and Apocrypha* (London, 1655–7). Walton's Polyglot is the outstanding work of its genre, still valuable as a scholarly production.

research project, and we are most grateful to David Lewis for depositing on long-term loan eight sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hebrew grammars, Walton's famous Polyglot Bible (London, 1657), containing the scriptural text in nine different languages, and three works by the renowned Jewish grammarian Elijah Levita (1469–1549). These long-term loans are listed on **page 00** of this *Report*.

Plate 2 Illustrated title-page of Bryan Walton's polyglot *Old and New Testament and Apocrypha* (London, 1655–7).

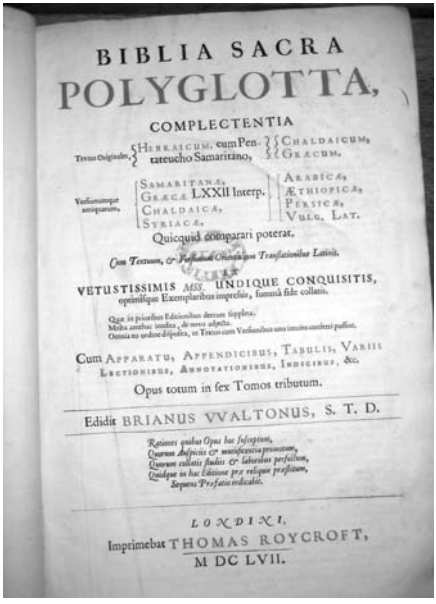

BIBLIA SACRA
POLYGLOTTA,
COMPLECTENTIA
Textus Originales, HEBRAICUM, cum Pentateucho Samaritano, CHALDAICUM, GRAECUM.
Versiones quæ antiquitus, SAMARITANA, GRAECA LXXII Interp., CHALDAICA, SYRIACA, ARABICA, ÆTHIOPICA, PERSICA, VULG. LAT.
Quicquid comparari poterat.
Cum Textuum, & Versionum Originalium Translationibus Latinis.
VETUSTISSIMIS MSS. UNDIQUE CONQUISITIS, optimisque Exemplaribus impressis, summâ fide collatis.
Quæ in prioribus Editionibus deerant supplevi.
Multa auctus inedita, de novo adjecta.
Omnia ita ordine disposita, ut Textus cum Versionibus uno intuitu conferri possint.
Cum APPARATU, APPENDICIBUS, TABULIS, VARIIS LECTIONIBUS, ANNOTATIONIBUS, INDICIBUS, &c.
Opus totum in sex Tomos tributum.
Edidit BRIANUS WALTONUS, S. T. D.
Rationes quibus Opus hoc Susceptum,
Quorum Auspicijs & munificentia promotum,
Quorum collatis studijs & laboribus perfectum,
Quidque in hac Editione præ reliquis præstitum,
Sequens Præfatio indicabit.
LONDINI,
Imprimebat THOMAS ROYCROFT,
M DC LVII.

Plate 3 The title-page of Walton's Polyglot, listing in red the translations it contains, several of which are printed in non-Latin characters.

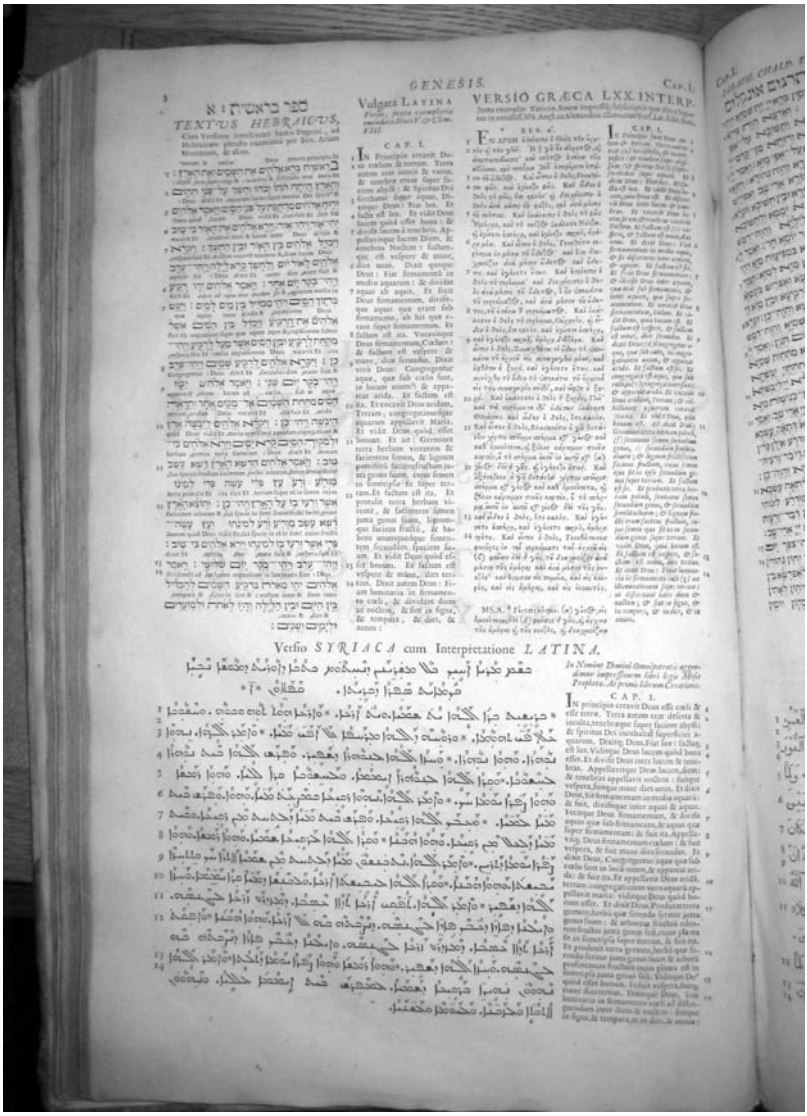
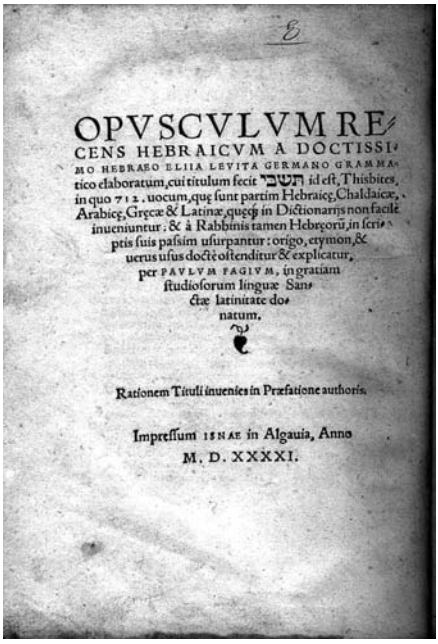


Plate 4 The opening page of Walton's Polyglot, showing the beginning of Genesis in the Hebrew Massorah, the Latin Vulgate, the Greek Septuagint and Syriac Peshitta, each in a different alphabet and with an accompanying Latin gloss.

Plate 5 The facing page of Walton's Polyglot, showing more of its typographic riches: the same verses in Aramaic, Samaritan and Arabic, each again with a Latin gloss.

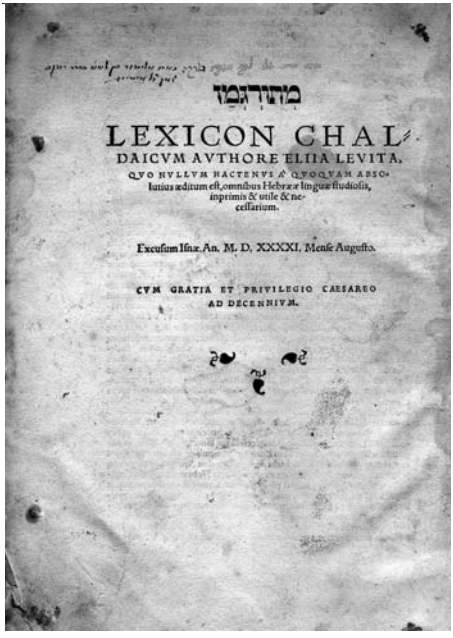


OPVSCVLVM RE-
CENS HEBRAICVM A DOCTISSI-
MO HEBRAEO ELIIA LEVITA GERMANO GRAMMA-
tico elaboratum, cui titulum fecit תשבי id est, Thisbites,
in quo 712. uocum, quę sunt partim Hebraicę, Chaldaicæ,
Arabicę, Græcæ & Latinæ, quęcp in Dictionariis non facile
inueniuntur: & à Rabbinis tamen Hebręorũ, in scri-
ptis suis passim usurpantur: origo, etymon, &
uerus usus docte ostenditur & explicatur,
per PAVLVM FAGIVM, in gratiam
studiosorum linguæ San-
ctæ latinitate do-
natum.

Rationem Tituli inuenies in Præfatione authoris.

Impressum ISNAE in Algauia, Anno
M. D. XXXXI.

Plate 6 Title-page of *Opusculum Recens Hebraicum ... Sefer haTishbi* (Isny, 1541) by Elijah Bachur Levita, whose pioneering role in transmitting Jewish insights on Hebrew grammar to Christian Hebraists, as well as his own contributions, make him arguably the greatest Hebraist of his age.



מתורגמן

LEXICON CHAL-
DAICVM AVTHORE ELIIA LEVITA,
QVO NVLLVM HACTENVS A QVOQVAM ABSO-
lutius aditum est, omnibus Hebraæ linguæ studiosis,
inprimis & utile & ne-
cessarium.

Excusum Isnæ An. M. D. XXXXI. Mense Augusto.

CVM GRATIA ET PRIVILEGIO CAESAREO
AD DECENNIVM.

Plate 7 Title-page of Elijah Bachur Levita's Aramaic dictionary, *Sefer Meturgamon. Lexicon Chaldaicum* (Isny, 1541).

Loewe pamphlet collection

In 2004 the Library acquired the Loewe pamphlet collection with the generous support of Peter and Catherine Oppenheimer and Judith and Peter Wegner. This collection comprises more than 5000 items on a wide range of subjects including Bible, archeology, rabbinic literature, liturgy, bibliography, poetry, kabbalah, Anglo-Jewry, Palestine, Zionism and Jewish-Christian relations, and was built up principally by Herbert Loewe (1882–1940), Reader in Rabbinics at Cambridge, and his elder son Raphael Loewe (b. 1919), Professor of Hebrew at University College London. It also includes items collected by Louis Loewe (1809–1880), Herbert Loewe's grandfather, whose competence in European and Semitic languages, as well as Turkish, led to him serving Sir Moses Montefiore as 'Oriental Secretary' and confidant. Louis Loewe was also the first Principal of the Judith, Lady Montefiore College at Ramsgate. The entire collection has been catalogued thanks to the devoted services of Dr Katarina Wiecha, and will shortly be searchable online.

Acquisitions

The Library is now the place in Oxford to look for Modern Hebrew books, and has also been keeping up to date in other fields. This follows the agreement for University departmental libraries to focus on specific acquisition areas in Jewish Studies according to the strength of their collections. Modern Hebrew literature acquisitions include the latest publications in fiction, poetry and drama, as well as scholarly editions of works from the first two thirds of the twentieth century and the collected works of writers who started their careers in the first two decades of the State of Israel.

The second major area of acquisition is the field of rabbinica, especially major scholarly publications from Israel and elsewhere. The Louis Jacobs Collection catalogue has been systematically updated, making it easier for users to find complete, modern, scholarly editions of classical rabbinic works. The Library now has the most comprehensive rabbinic collection on open-access shelves in the UK.

As part of its integration into the Oxford University Library services the Library is sharing the Bar-Ilan Responsa Project database on Rabbinic literature with the Bodleian Library. Two important databases

have also been acquired: the *Otzar ha-Chochmah*, a digitized and fully searchable version of 35,000 Hebrew books that is vital for scholars in the field of Jewish Studies; and the Index of Articles in Hebrew Periodicals developed by Haifa University (IHP). This significantly extends RAMBI – the index of articles on Jewish Studies – by including Modern Hebrew literature as well as Israeli politics, history and society.

Donations

The Library's holdings have been enriched by many valuable donations over the past academic year, which are hereby gratefully acknowledged (see the list of donors on **page 00**). The collections have been particularly enhanced by the donation of Yiddish books belonging to the late Dr Joseph Sherman, Fellow of the Centre, by his widow, Karin. Many of these were published in or deal with his native South Africa. Donations from Professor Yuval Dror and Professor Avi Shlaim, as well as from the late David Sweden and from Fred Worms, OBE, cover mainly the fields of modern Israeli history, Anglo-Jewish history and life and Jewish literature.

An endowment in memory of the late Sir Isaiah Berlin enabled the Library to purchase books on Jewish history that are listed on **page 00** of this *Report*.

The Hans and Rita Oppenheimer Fund – a permanent endowment of the Centre in memory of Hans and Rita Oppenheimer who perished in Bergen-Belsen and of their respective parents who died in Sobibor – is dedicated to acquiring books related to the Holocaust. Works purchased this year are likewise listed on **page 00** of this *Report*.

Thanks to the Catherine Lewis Foundation the Yizkor Book Collection has been enriched with two volumes, identified on **page 00** of this *Report*.

Additionally, the *Journal of Jewish Studies* has donated a substantial number of review copies, most of them in English.

Closer cooperation with other libraries of the Oxford University Library System led to our receiving large donations of periodicals in Hebrew and Jewish Studies from Christ Church and Harris Manchester College, as well as some duplicates from the Bodleian Library.

The Centre wishes to express its appreciation and gratitude for all the support the Library received during the past academic year.

Journal of Jewish Studies

During the academic year 2008–2009 the *Journal of Jewish Studies* has continued its regular publication under the editorship of Professor Geza Vermes FBA, FEA and Dr Sacha Stern of University College London. Dr Charlotte Hempel of Birmingham University is book-reviews editor.

Volume 59, no. 2 (Autumn 2008) offers a variety of studies devoted among other things to the issue of political and military defeat of the Jews according to Tannaitic literature (Adiel Schremer), the arch of Titus (Jodi Magness), the foundation of Bethsaida-Julias (Nikos Kokkinos), Qumran hymns and prayers (M. E. Gordley), peculiarities of Qumran Hebrew (Tamar Zewi) and medieval topics on Rashi (Lea Himmelfarb) and the Zohar (Daphneh Freedman).

Volume 60, no. 1 (Spring 2009) contains articles on the Bible (Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi by E. Vriezel, and Daniel by Phoebe Makiello), Philo's description of God (A. P. Bos), newly identified readings in the great Qumran Isaiah scroll (P. W. Flint, E. Ulrich and N. N. Dykstra) and a major archaeological study of a Jewish village, Horvat 'Ethri, with numerous illustrations (B. Zissu and A. Ganor).

Both issues include numerous book reviews.

The electronic keyword project covering all 970 articles that have appeared in the *Journal*, initiated by Margaret Vermes, has now been completed and is in operation. Two search mechanisms have been introduced. The first is a fast search method based on keywords, which provides with one click all the article references. The second is an advanced method entailing full search of articles and reviews under different categories (such as author, title, volume/page reference or keyword).

Further collaboration is taking place with Richard Buckner of the Oxford University Computing Services with a view of providing an online facility to download PDF files of single articles or reviews against online payment without the need to subscribe. This facility will give instantaneous, searchable access to 60 years of archives.

The European Association for Jewish Studies

The European Association for Jewish Studies is the sole umbrella organization representing the academic field of Jewish Studies in Europe. Its main aims are to promote and support teaching and research in Jewish studies at European universities and other institutions of higher education, and to further an understanding of the importance of Jewish culture and civilization and of the impact it has had on European cultures over many centuries.

The EAJS organizes annual Colloquia in Oxford and quadrennial Congresses in various European locations. These major academic events are attended by scholars from all over Europe as well as other parts of the world. Other ongoing projects include the *European Journal of Jewish Studies*, published by Brill, and a website (www.eurojewishstudies.org) incorporating a number of news features, a Directory of Jewish Studies in Europe, and the newly launched Database of Funders. The second stage of the Funding Information and Advisory Service project, of which the Database of Funders was the first stage, is currently under way.

The EAJS was founded as a voluntary academic association in 1981. The Secretariat of the European Association of Jewish Studies has been based at Yarnton Manor since 1995. It is currently administrated by Dr Garth Gilmour, and managed by the EAJS Secretary, Dr Sacha Stern (University College London).

Looted Art Research Unit

Forty-six governments convened in Prague in June 2009 under the Czech Presidency of the European Union to review progress since the Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets in 1998.

Anne Webber, Director of the Looted Art Unit, was a member of the working group which prepared the agenda and drafted recommendations for the final declaration. She also contributed to the keynote speech by Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, Honorary Chairman of the Unit, and former US Deputy Treasury Secretary and Under Secretary of State, Head of the US Delegation and host of the 1998 Conference.

Two significant developments have occurred this year. The first is the establishment of an international project to identify and extend access to records relating to cultural property looted in the Holocaust-era. Identifying archives and ensuring access to them are central to research in this field, and areis the second of the eleven Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art established at the Washington Conference in 1998. Project members are the US National Archives, the Bundesarchiv, the Archives Nationales, the Archives of the French Defence Ministry, the Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, and The National Archives in Britain.

The National Archives, recognizing the Unit's unique expertise, have invited the Unit to partner it in the project which will describe, digitize, index and make available online records and information in each member institution, and develop a website to facilitate federated searches of holdingsThe National Archives, recognizing the Unit's unique expertise, have invited it to partner it in the project which will join the project as a partner. The project is designed to describe, digitize, index and make available online records and information in each member institution, and to develop a website to facilitate federated searches of holdings. The website's working title is 'Records Relating to Holocaust-Era Looted Cultural Property: An Aid to Provenance Research'.

The Unit previously provided an online finding aid for many of the relevant materials in The National Archives, which will form the basis of the work of record selection. The Unit will also advise on metadata structure and search fields, and offer expert advice and information from other countries.

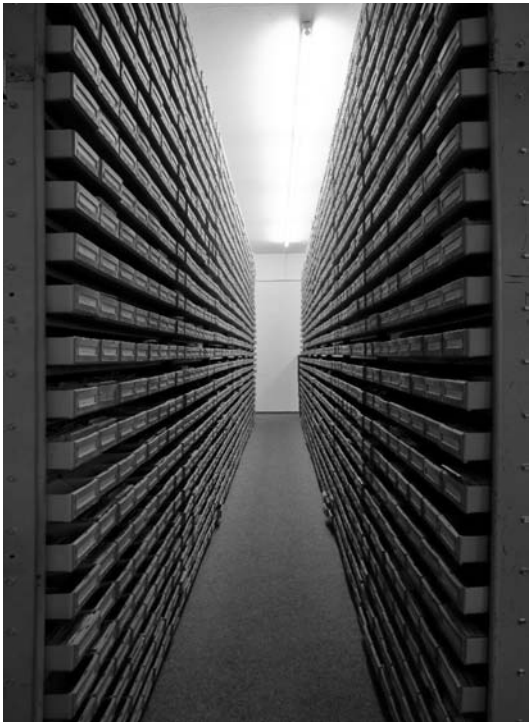


Plate 1 A view of the card index of 17.5 million names available to researchers for the first time.

Plate 2 Some of the 'Child Search' files. Search requests are still being received.

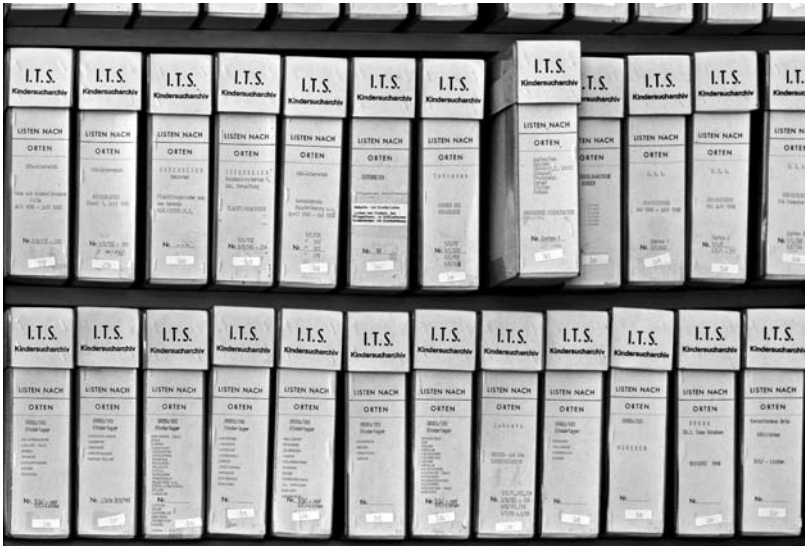


Plate 3 Records include *Totenbücher*, or 'Death Books', in which death camp inmates were forced to record the deaths of fellow prisoners, as well as camp records and other documentation.

Plate 4 The personal effects taken from prisoners included many photographs, and efforts are being made to return them to surviving relatives.

Plate 5 Objects and documents such as these are at last being examined for evidence of ownership.

Plate 6 These items of jewellery are itemized on the outside of the envelope in which they have been kept, which also bears the name of its owner. Surviving relatives will now be sought.

The second major development this year concerns the archives of the International Tracing Service (ITS) at Bad Arolsen, Germany. The ITS, set up to aid in postwar family reunification, and governed since 1955 by an International Commission of the International Red Cross, holds over 50 million documents in 19,000 separate collections on over 17.5 million individuals. For many years it was run secretively and its records remained closed, uncatalogued and unpreserved, although these form a unique potential resource for historians, survivors and their descendants.

The bulk of the documents fall into three main groups: those concerned with incarceration, covering concentration camps and prisons; wartime documents dealing with forced labour; and postwar material relating to displaced persons camps and emigration. The postwar materials are the least known, the DP camp records containing the first systematically collected postwar witness testimonies, as well as detailed documentations on the 9 million people who were accommodated in some the 2500 camps and their subsequent movements across Europe and beyond. These include, for example, the recruitment of some 90,000 Polish and Ukrainian workers to the UK between 1947 and 1950, and previously unavailable information on aspects of migration to Palestine. Information on war criminals and their postwar movements will shed light on how Bad Arolsen contributed to or hindered the effectiveness of war-crime investigations. These records will transform our understanding particularly of the aftermath to the Holocaust.

In 2006 the International Commission finally agreed to open the archive and provide digital copies to member countries, including the UK. Following delays, Anne Webber convened a stakeholder group to work with the Foreign Office to ensure that the material was copied and made available, and to help shape the future of the ITS and its records. The group includes over a dozen leading historians from universities including Cambridge, Edinburgh, Leicester, London and Sussex, as well as librarians, educational bodies, refugee and slave-labour groups, genealogical organizations and survivors.

In October 2008 Anne Webber visited the ITS with a senior Foreign Office officials to meet its Director, view the archive and discuss options. She noticed that some cabinets contained personal items such as photographs, watches and wedding rings, and discovered that the ITS had been holding hundreds of such objects belonging to identifiable inmates of Dachau and Neuengamme concentration camps. The ITS had not

considered it part of its remit to return them to the families. Anne Webber has initiated a plan to ensure their return, which is being put into effect by the ITS.

In June 2009 the annual plenary of the International Commission took place at Lancaster House under UK Presidency. As a result of the Unit's initiative, the International Commission agreed for the first time to allow stakeholder participation in its closed meeting. Anne Webber was invited to be a member of join the UK government delegation, and in her speech at the opening session focused on the special importance of the records to the UK and the urgency of making them accessible internationally. The FCO is conducting agreed to conduct a feasibility study.

Institute for Polish–Jewish Studies

The Institute for Polish–Jewish Studies, an associated institute of the Centre, this year published volume 21 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*. This volume, edited by Leszek Głuchowski and Antony Polonsky, focused on the fortieth anniversary of an important but relatively little-studied subject—the March 1968 'anti-Zionist' campaign in Poland and its significance for Polish–Jewish relations. In the mid-1960s an unpopular Polish government, seeking to gain public support and divert attention away from the real problems facing the country, adopted overtly anti-Semitic policies, as a result of which nearly 15,000 Jews left the country and Jewish life in the country came to a standstill for many years. This volume of *Polin* contains important new research on the subject. It contains twenty-four papers, focusing on the events that triggered the crisis, the crisis itself and its consequences. The 550-page volume also includes several papers on other subjects in Polish–Jewish studies as well as obituaries of three major scholars in the field.

In November a one-day international conference convened by Antony Polonsky and Lena Stanley-Clamp was held to launch the volume and to open up discussion on this difficult, controversial and complex subject. The conference, which was co-sponsored by the Polish Cultural Institute and held at the Polish Embassy in London, was formally opened by the Polish ambassador, H. E. Barbara Tuge-Ereci ska. The speakers at the conference, who came from Poland, Sweden, the UK and the USA, described and analysed the slanders, purges and the hate campaign of 1968 stimulated by the government and its secret police; the role of Jewish intellectuals and activists in opposing the communist regime; and the trauma for Jews of their emigration in 1968 as well as the challenge, for those left behind, of reinventing Jewish life in Poland. The conference benefited from the star appearance of Adam Michnik, currently editor-in-chief of the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, who from 1968 was one of the leading organizers of the underground democratic opposition to the communist regime in Poland, for which he was imprisoned on several occasions. The conference provoked spirited discussion; Michnik's speech featured in the press and on TV. The conference concluded with the screening of the Polish film 'Rachela at the Gda ski Train Station', a

documentary made in 2006 focusing on the experience of five Polish Jews during the events of March 1968 and following their emigration to Sweden. Given the importance and contemporary relevance of the subject, the conference was full to capacity, and attracted the participation of a number of Polish Jews who had themselves emigrated in 1968.

During the year the Institute facilitated sponsorship of the translation into Polish of a book on the mystical origins of hasidism by Professor Rachel Elior, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It was also involved in advising the Adam Mickiewicz Institute in Warsaw on preparations for 'Polska Year' in the UK – a nationwide season of Polish cultural events including lectures, conferences and concerts running from May 2009 to March 2010 – and in particular on possible Jewish elements of the programming.

Website of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies

The website, hosted by Eye Division, was visited between 3100 and 4500 times per month during the year. The Library pages continue to be very popular and were accessed consistently each month. January 2009 was the busiest overall, with the largest number of hits, largely because it carried the advertisement for the Albert and Rachel Lehmann Junior Research fellowship post. This position attracted over thirty applicants, most of whom applied on line.

The pages featuring the European Seminar on Advanced Jewish Studies likewise elicited considerable interest, visitors to the site being able to view an outline of each of the four projects due to take place at Yarnton between 2009 and 2011. The first two of these workshops, scheduled for Hilary Term 2010, are 'Greek Scripture and the Rabbis' and 'The Reading of Hebrew and Jewish Texts in the Early Modern Period'.

The Faculty and MSt sections showed frequent and regular access as usual, the former peaking in October at the start of the academic year, and the latter in the summer months when the new application form and supporting information for the MSt were published.

The Centre's web address is: http://www.ochjs.ac.uk

Fellows' Reports

Dr Francesca Bregoli

Dr Bregoli concluded her post-doctoral project on intellectual networks in the Mediterranean through the lens of the Hebrew printed book, based on her research at the Bodleian Library. She delivered a paper on this subject entitled 'Livornese Hebrew Printing and Networks of Jewish Patronage in the 18th Century' at the annual meeting of the Association of Jewish Studies in Washington in December, and a revised version entitled 'Hebrew Printing and Networks of Jewish Patronage in Eighteenth-century Livorno: The Cases of Judah Ayash and HIDA', at the Seminar on Jewish Studies convened by Dr Piet van Boxel at the Oriental Institute in May. She also participated in a roundtable discussion entitled 'Outside the Ashkenazi/Sephardic Divide: Italian Jewish Studies in Italy and Beyond', organized by Francesco Spagnolo and Natalia Indrimi at the Association of Jewish Studies meeting. She lectured on decorated Hebrew wedding poems at the Society for Jewish Studies in London in June.

In Michaelmas Term Dr Bregoli taught a course entitled 'European Jewry from the Spanish Expulsion to the Enlightenment' for the MSt programme. She supervised two dissertations througout the academic year. In Hilary Term she wrote an article on 'Italian Jews, 1650–1815', to be published in the *Cambridge History of Judaism* (VII), and organized a panel on 'Explorations of Jewish Sociability in Italy Before and After Emancipation' for the 2009 Association of Jewish Studies meeting in Los Angeles. She co-edited (with Federica Francesconi) a special volume of the journal *Jewish History* entitled *Integration Processes in Comparative Perspective in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, that appeared in late 2009, and continued work on a monograph about processes of Jewish integration, concentrating on the eighteenth-century port city of Livorno.

Dr Bregoli completed her second and final year as the Lehmann Junior Research Fellow in Jewish Studies, and is grateful for the productive time that she has spent in Oxford. She looks forward to maintaining an academic conversation with her colleagues and friends at the Centre from her new position as assistant professor of Sephardi Jewish History at Queens College (City University of New York).

Dr Raffaella Del Sarto

Dr Raffaella Del Sarto continued to lecture on Israeli politics and society to graduates and undergraduates and to superviseing theses related to Israel, besides carrying out research on the contribution – or failure – of International Relations theory to explain the persistence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Her preliminary findings, entitled 'Paradigms and Predictions: Can International Relations Theory Explain the Persistence of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?', were presented to the International Relations Faculty Seminar in February.

She was a discussant at the conference entitled '"Behind all this A Great Longing is Hiding?" Multiplicity and Fragmentation in Israeli Identity', held at the Centre in December. For Israel's parliamentary elections in February, Dr Del Sarto organized a panel discussion and was one of three panellists at the Middle East Centre of of St Antony's College. In March she delivered a talk entitled 'Israel: Divided Societies and Peace-Making' at the Centre for Jewish Studies at Manchester University, and another on 'Domestic Cleavages and Political Mandates: Israel after the Elections' at the Institute for Jewish Studies at University College London.

Dr Del Sarto also worked on completed a paper on Europe's relations with Israel. She and the Middle East, and participated at the Annual EuroMeSCo (Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission Research Centers) conference in Amman on 'Euro-Mediterranean Relations between Continuity and Reinforced Cooperation' in October, where she was working-group rapporteur. She was a panellist at the St Atnony's the European Studies Centre's core seminar on 'Security, Conflicts, and Borders in the New Euro-Med Agenda, from Morocco to Cyprus' at St Antony's College in December, and gave a paper on the failures of the European Union's democratization policy in the Middle East and North Africa at a workshop at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zurich, in June. She was a co-convenor helped convene of the 'Agent of Change in the Mediterranean' conference in June (hosted by the European Studies Centre and the Middle East Centre of St Antony's College). A paper entitled 'Borderlands: The Middle East and North Africa as the EU's Southern Buffer Zone' will appear in *Mediterranean Frontiers: Borders, Conflicts and Memory in a Transnational World*, edited by Dimitar Bechev and Kalypso Nicolaidis.

Dr Jordan Finkin

Dr Finkin offered several lecture courses in aspects of modern Hebrew literature for undergraduates this year, in addition to continuing to serve as course coordinator for the MSt programme.

He was on sabbatical during Michaelmas Term, but delivered three conference papers in December. He lectured on 'Time and Space as Revolutionary Principles in Interwar Soviet Yiddish Poetry' at the First Heidelberg International Conference in Modern Yiddish Studies (on 'Yiddish Poets and the Soviet Union, 1917–1948') in early December. Later in the month he presented a paper entitled 'Yiddish Storytelling and the Jewish Joke: A Discursive Study' at the annual Amsterdam Yiddish Symposium, in a programme devoted to 'The Art of Yiddish Storytelling'. In late December he spoke about 'Poetry of the Incomprehensible: N. B. Minkov's *At the Edge*' at the annual Association for Jewish Studies conference in Washington, DC. In addition he offered a paper entitled ' "Like Fires in Overgrown Forests": Moyshe Kulbak's Berlin Poetics' at the Second Interdisciplinary International Symposium on Russian Jewish Cultural Continuity in the Diaspora ('Between Metropolis and Diaspora: Berlin in 1917–1937') at the University of Portsmouth in February.

Dr Finkin continues to work on several projects, including a monograph devoted to the uses of time and space in modernist Jewish poetry.

Dr Miri Freud-Kandel

Dr Freud-Kandel returned from maternity leave in January 2009 and delivered a lecture series on 'Modern Judaism' for undergraduate and MSt students in the Theology Faculty and Oriental Institute during Hilary Term. She also taught a course entitled 'The Emergence of Modern Religious Movements in Judaism' for students taking the MSt in Hebrew and Jewish Studies, provided tutorials to undergraduate and graduate students, and presented a seminar in the Theology Faculty's series of Interdisciplinary Seminars in the Study of Religions.

She completed a research project on Zionism in the theology of Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits, and commenced an in-depth study of the theology of Louis Jacobs, focusing in particular on his role in efforts to construct a modern Orthodox theology for Judaism.

Professor Martin Goodman

Professor Goodman was on sabbatical research leave in Michaelmas Term, enabling him to complete drafting the detailed plan of a new book on tolerance of variety within Judaism. He also successfully applied to the Leverhulme Foundation for research assistance on the book, making it possible to appoint three research fellows in June 2009 to commence work on the project in October 2009.

Besides spending much of the year editing a volume on 'Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine' for the British Academy, he completed a number of new studies. These included a paper entitled 'Josephus on Abraham and the Nations', for publication in a volume on *Abraham and the Nations*; a paper on 'Memory and its Uses in Judaism and Christianity in the Early Roman Empire', for a volume on memory to be published by Oxford University Press; a chapter on the historical significance of the Dead Sea scrolls, for the *Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*; an article on 'Religious Variety and the Temple in the Late Second Temple Period and its Aftermath', for the *Journal of Jewish Studies*; an article on 'Judaism and Hellenism in the Roman Period', for the *Biblical Archaeology Review*; a number of articles for the fourth edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*; a contribution on Judaism to a book edited by John Julius Norwich entitled *Seventy Great Cities*; and an article on 'The Significance of 70: The Limitations of the Evidence', for a book to be published by Brill.

During his research leave he gave papers during September at conferences in Groningen (on 'Abraham and the Nations') and Oxford (on 'Memory and its Uses'), and in November responded to a panel discussion of *Rome and Jerusalem* at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Boston. Also in November he give a series of lectures in São Paulo and Brasilia, and gave talks on *Rome and Jerusalem* to general audiences in Newcastle, Chichester and London. In December he delivered the Michael Weitzman Memorial Lecture in Stanmore (on 'Varieties of Judaism') and a public lecture on 'Sectarianism' at the Polish Academy of the Arts in Kraków.

During Hilary and Trinity terms he convened the weekly graduate seminar on Jewish History and Literature in the Graeco-Roman Period, and presented a paper to the seminar in Hilary Term on 'Sectarianism Before and After 70 CE'.

In January he presented a paper on 'Religious Reactions to 70: The Limitations of the Evidence', to a conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and one on 'Sectarianism, Heresy and Proselytizing in Judaism and Other Religions in Late Antiquity' in Leiden. In February he presented a paper on 'The Culture of the Jews of Syria Palaestina after AD 135' at the Oxford Ancient History research seminar, and another, on 'Jewish Sectarianism Before and After 70 CE', in Durham. In March he gave a paper on 'Jewish Leadership in the 50s' at a conference on II Corinthians in Leuven. In April he spoke on 'Rome and Jews' to pupils at the Cornwallis Academy in Maidstone, and in May gave the first Lionel Kochan Memorial Lecture to the Society for Jewish Study in London, entitled 'Pharisees and Sadducees in the Late Second Temple Period'. In the same month he presented a paper on 'Roman Perceptions of the Jews' to the Oxford Ancient History research seminar, and gave a lecture on 'Holy Land and Holy People: Problems in the Construction of Jewish Identity After 70 CE' in Aarhus. In June he gave a lecture on 'Ideas about Sacrifice in Early Rabbinic Judaism' to the Centre for Theology and Modern European Thought in Oxford; gave a paper entitled 'The Story of Izates' to the Corpus Christi College, Oxford, workshop on 'The Romance Between Greece and the East' about the ancient novel; and a paper on 'Tolerance of Variety Within Judaism in the Early Roman Empire: Pharisees and Sadducees in Josephus', at a conference on 'Jews, Christians, Greeks, Romans: Cultural and Religious Interactions', at Reading.

Dr David Rechter

Dr Rechter served as Chair of the Sub-Faculty of Near and Middle East Studies in the Faculty of Oriental Studies and also continued as Tutorial Secretary for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. In Trinity Term he convened a History Faculty seminar on East and East-Central Europe (Seventeenth to Twentieth Centuries) with Professor Robert Evans. He was appointed Contributing Editor of the Leo Baeck InstituteYear Book. As part of his work on the history of Bukovina Jewry in the Habsburg empire, he completed three articles for publication.

Dr Alison Salvesen

Dr Salvesen taught courses for the MSt in Jewish Studies at Yarnton this year on 'Jewish and Christian Bible Intepretation' and 'Septuagint', as

well as giving classes on 'Biblical Hebrew Prose Composition', 'The Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran', 'Aramaic Daniel', 'Targum Texts from Genesis and Ezekiel' and 'Syriac Texts: Aphrahat and Jacob of Serugh' at the Oriental Institute. She also served as Chairman of Final Honour Schools Examinations in Oriental Studies.

In September Dr Salvesen gave a paper on the 'daughter' versions of the Septuagint, at a Septuagint (Greek Bible) conference in Trinity Western University, British Columbia, and one on the Syriac biblical citations in Jacob of Edessa's work on the Six Days of Creation, at the Symposium Syriacum held in Granada, Spain. In November she presented a paper on attitudes to the Ten Commandments in early Christian sources at a conference on the Decalogue at Wheaton College, Illinois. Later the same month she spoke on the later Jewish Greek renderings of items in the Tabernacle in Exodus, at the Society for Biblical Literature meeting in Boston. In December she gave a talk on the Syriac Bible at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. In April she travelled to Göttingen in Germany as part of a team evaluating the Septuaginta-Unternehmen, the longstanding project engaged in producing critical editions of each of the books of the Septuagint. In May she examined a doctorate on the Hexaplaric renderings of the Song of Songs in Leuven, Belgium. In the same month she gave a paper on St Jerome's use of Midrash in Professor Martin Goodman's Seminar on Jewish History and Literature in the Graeco-Roman Period, and an update on the work of the Hexapla Project to the final seminar of the Cambridge project on the Greek Bible in Byzantine Judaism. At the end of June she spoke on 'Jewish-Christian Relations and Bible Translation in Antiquity' to a group of international research students at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.

Dr Adam Silverstein

Dr Silverstein taught courses including 'Jewish-Muslim Relations Through the Ages', 'A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations' and 'Jewish-Muslim Relations in the Modern Period' throughout the year to undergraduates in Hebrew and Jewish, and Arabic and Islamic studies. He also taught graduates on the MSt programme and at the Oriental Institute and the Theology Faculty, contributing to the teaching of Islamic history at the Oriental Institute and supervising undergraduate and doctoral dissertations on related subjects.

He gave several academic papers and presentations, including one on 'The Book of Job and the Qur'anic Satan' at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in June, and 'The Judeo-Christian context of a the Qur'anic phrase *al-shaytan al-rajim*' at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem. He delivered several public lectures to non-academic audiences in Oxford and London.

Dr Silverstein submitted for publication by Oxford University Press a book to appear in January 2010, an article for the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, and the entry on 'Barid' to the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. His first book, entitled *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) was translated into Turkish. In April Dr Silverstein was elected to a full fellowship of The Queen's College.

Dr Eliyahu Stern

Dr Stern joined the Centre as Junior Research Fellow in Modern Eastern European Jewish History after submitting his doctoral thesis at the University of California, Berkeley, in December 2008. His research focuses on the emergence of traditional worldviews in modern Western life, and particularly the privatization of religion. He delivered five lectures in various seminars during Trinity Term, including 'Reassessing Traditionalism: The Case of Rabbinic Judaism in Modernity', and 'The Privatization of Religion and the Emergence of Traditionalism in Nineteenth-century European Jewry'. He also delivered a David Patterson Seminar on 'The Bible, the Rabbis and the Founding Fathers of Modern Jewry'.

In January he appeared on a panel discussing religious freedom, at the United States Department of State, and presented a paper at the Association of Jewish Studies Conference in Washington DC. In March he spoke on 'Formations of the Traditional' at Yale University. He also carried out research in Oxford, especially in the Centre's Foyle-Montefiore Collection, tutored undergraduates in Jewish history, and assisted Dr Piet van Boxel in editing materials for the forthcoming Bodleian Library exhibition on the Jewish Enlightenment. In Trinity Term he was awarded the Junior William Golding Fellowship at Brasenose College for the forthcoming academic year. A paper reflecting some of his recent work appears on pages **00–00** of this *Report*.

Dr Joanna Weinberg

Dr Weinberg was on sabbatical leave in Michaelmas Term, preparing the Carl Newell Jackson Classical Lectures on 'Isaac Casaubon: A Renaissance Hellenist Meets the Jews', which she delivered together with Anthony Grafton at Harvard University in December. The lectures will be published by Harvard University Press in 2010.

In September she gave a paper on 'Abraham, Exile and Midrashic Tradition' at a conference held at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies in Groningen, and in October a paper at a conference on 'Renaissance Visions of Christian Origins' in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In March she gave the Alexander Altmann lecture at the Insitute of Jewish Studies at University College London, entitled 'Tell Me What You Read and I Will Tell You Who You Are – Italian Jews and Their Books in the Sixteenth Century'. In May she gave the keynote lecture 'Jewish Wisdom and the Limits of Christian Hebraism' at a conference on Hebraic aspects of the Renaissance held in Haifa, and in July she gave a paper at a conference on Judah Moscato in Mantua, Italy.

She resumed teaching in Hilary and Trinity terms, presenting a 'Survey of Rabbinic Literature' for the MSt in Jewish Studies, and an undergraduate course on rabbinic literature. She also taught a supervised a course on reading Renaissance Hebrew texts for graduate students, and delivered lectures on 'The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism' for the Faculty of Theology.

She continued to serve as Chair of the Hebrew and Jewish Studies Unit of the Oriental Faculty and served as external examiner for the Master's degree in Jewish Studies at University College London.

Professor Hugh Williamson

Professor Williamson co-organized and spoke at a conference of the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research in Cambridge in July, devoted to recent developments in the study of the book of Isaiah. The proceedings will be published in a volume he has edited. During November he read a paper on '1 Esdras as Rewritten Bible' at a meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Boston, USA, and also spoke in response at a session devoted to a retrospective evaluation of his 1994 monograph *The Book Called Isaiah.*

He was on sabbatical leave in Hilary and Trinity terms, and visited

Singapore for a week in January where he lectured and led a seminar, and took part in the inauguration of a former graduate student to an endowed chair at Trinity Theological Seminary. He spent February and March as the Joseph Gregory McCarthy Professor to the Pontifical Biblical Institute at Rome, where the magnificent library afforded much scope for continuing research. He also taught two afternoons each week and delivered a public lecture (to be published) offering critical reflections on the proposed 'Oxford Hebrew Bible'.

Besides a full teaching schedule in Michaelmas Term, he continued to serve as chair of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society and of the Humanities Group at the British Academy, as secretary of the international Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Database project, and on the editorial boards of *Vetus Testamentum* and *Oudtestamentische Studiën*.

Visiting Scholars' Reports

Professor Malachi Beit-Arié

Professor Malachi Beit-Arié, Ludwig Jesselson Professor Emeritus of Codicology and Palaeography at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, held a Catherine Lewis Master Class Fellowship from 21 January to 22 February, and was a Kennedy Leigh Scholar between 14 April and 10 July 2009. In Trinity Term he delivered a course on Hebrew codicology at the Bodleian Library on behalf of the Hebrew and Jewish Studies Unit of the University of Oxford. In the first part of the course he focused on issues such as discarded and recycled Hebrew fragments, similarities between early Hebrew printed and hand-produced books, relationships between text and images, manuscripts produced by multiple scribes, and ways of distinguishing between different hands and of identifying separate fragments from the same codex. The second part of the course, featuring a pioneering comparison of codicological features of Latin and Hebrew codices, was presented jointly with Professor J. Peter Gumbert of Leiden University.

Itzhak Ben-Ner

Itzhak Ben-Ner stayed at Yarnton Manor as a Kennedy Leigh Fellow from 15 September to 15 December. He continued to work on an autobiography, or 'perhaps an "anti-biography" because the central figure bears my name, but is described in the third person rather than as "I". In this personal testimony of my country over the past seventy years I attempt to objectify my subjectivity and to provide a biography of an "alter ego". As one of the first generation of Israeli Jews, my literary character is based on personal reality and existence, allowing me to criticize, mock, judge and either understand or not understand motives and actions. I can transform conventional life, making it more interesting, operating throughout from a remote point of view. These three months have enabled me to advance with my project in a wonderfully stimulating environment.'

Sami Berdugo

Sami Berdugo stayed at Yarnton Manor as a Kennedy Leigh Fellow from 15 September to 15 December. In both his main projects he examines 'how the Hebrew language can be broken, say things and be written in

different ways, and how protagonists can speak in the first person and be conscious of their feelings'. He describes his work as 'an attempt to stretch the boundaries of Hebrew usage, recording its transformation from a spoken to a written language'.

One project is a novel in which 'two plots are held within a frame-like narrative. One narrator recalls events in Morocco in stuttering blend of French, Moroccan Arabic and broken Hebrew that defies grammar and syntax. The other employs a more standard Hebrew and is more clearly located in an Israeli reality. The tension between these reflects a search for identity based on language – or maybe a collapse of identity due to language.'

His second project comprises two short stories and a novella in the voice of 'characters on the margins of Israeli society, who are trying to understand their relationship with the world around them by contemplating their past and present. "Swimming Pool Tale" is narrated by a child waiting with classmates to be driven to his first swimming lesson. The description implies that some of the events have already taken place, showing how the speaker drifts between past and future and reflects on the tragedy of growing up. A mixture of childish speech and adult awareness underlines the child's efforts to retrieve and repair lost time.'

His writing, he says, 'emerges from my own childhood speech, blending the ugly with the beautiful, low with high and Hebrew with non-Hebrew. I became angry with the conflict between the biblical-sacred and the modern-secular, and as soon as I understood the language, I felt I had to add colours it lacked. I did this partly as an act of revenge, and partly in response to a sense of what was missing from most current writing, in terms of vocabulary, plot, character, narrative voice and structure.'[1]

Professor Yuval Dror

Professor Yuval Dror, Head of the Tel-Aviv University School of Education, who stayed at the Centre from 30 July to 5 September, continued his research into the history of Zionist education in Mandatory Palestine and later the State of Israel, including kibbutz education and various types of new or progressive and non-formal education. He completed several historical articles based on sources collected in Israel and

[1] From a presentation in the symposium entitled '"Behind all this a Great Longing is Hiding?" Multiplicity and Fragmentation in Israeli Identity', held at Yarnton Manor on 4 December 2008.

supplemented by the Kressel Archive at the Centre's Library. These papers were entitled: 'The History of Zionist Innovative Schooling: Representative Cases', 'The History of Privatization in the State of Israel', 'Textbook Images as a Means of Nation/State Building (Zionist Geographical Texts 1918 to 1948)', and 'The History of Jewish-Israeli Non-formal Education (1919 to Present) as Reflected in the Historical-Sociological Models of its Main Scholars'.

Professor Edward Fram

Professor Edward Fram of the Department of Jewish History at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev was in residence at the Centre from 22 April until 19 July as a Kennedy Leigh Fellow. During his stay he examined early printed books and manuscripts in the David Oppenheim collection at the Bodleian Library, as well as material from the Centre's Louis Jacobs Collection, in order to define the different methods of legal study used by Polish rabbis in the late sixteenth century. He also delivered a David Patterson Seminar on how the now standard text of Jewish law, *Shulhan Arukh*, came to be accepted as early as the late sixteenth century. He led a seminar on some of the problematics of the use of rabbinic responsa (the answers of rabbis to inquiries about specific legal problems) as historical sources, at Exeter College during May 2009.

A version of the David Patterson Seminar he presented appears on **pages 00–00** of this *Report*.

Dr Hanna Herzig

Dr Hanna Herzig of the Open University of Israel, who stayed at the Centre between 11 June and 1 July 2009, continued her research into Israeli writers whose work began to be published in the past decade. Contemporary literature is commonly assumed to be pluralistic and oriented towards the individual, but she has identified collective Israeli as well as Western values. The first take the form of nostalgia for an Israeli 'golden age'. The second are manifested in writing about capitalism, globalization and virtual reality in the postmodern condition, and in the way the real gives way to images and citations. Both approaches depict a society in which the personal and the individual are replaced by uniformity and imitation. Her research suggests that poetic patterns of contemporary literature mirror the reality they represent, confirming Fredric Jameson's

findings in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* as well as Zali Gurevitch's 'On Israeli and Jewish Place', highlighting the limited dimensions of time and space in Israeli self-conceptions.

Professor Yaacov Iram

Professor Yaacov Iram of Bar-Ilan University, who stayed at the Centre from 20 August to 20 September 2008, continued his research project entitled 'Religious Universities: International and Comparative Perspectives', in which he is exploring the development, status and role of religiously oriented Christian, Moslem and Jewish institutions of higher learning, primarily colleges and universities. The main points of focus are the nature and future of religiously informed scholarship, trends of disengagement from distinctive religious identity, and whether and how to sustain diverse educational missions of religious institutions of higher learning.

Professor Iram also presented a paper entitled 'Changing Conceptions of State-University Relationships' at the History of Education Society UK Annual Conference, held at the University of Cambridge from 5 to 7 September 2008. The theme of the conference was 'Universities and Community Engagement from the Middle Ages to the Present Day'.

He benefited in particular from access to the Bodleian and Educational Studies libraries, and found valuable material in the Centre's Library for his research into the status of rabbinic literature in modern Jewish education.

Professor Jonathan Jacobs

Professor Jonathan Jacobs of the Department of Philosophy, Colgate University, New York, who stayed at the Centre from 19 May until 3 August 2008, worked on a book entitled *Law, Reason, and Morality in Medieval Jewish Thought*, to be published by Oxford University Press in 2010. The Centre's Library contains material that is unavailable elsewhere and was particularly helpful for his research.

He also wrote an article examining affinities between elements of Western and Jewish thought. In this he concluded that contrasts between 'reason' and 'revelation' or 'faith' and 'theorizing' are often overdrawn, and that Jewish theological thought and Western philosophy share key aspirations. He presented a version at an international conference on 'Political Hebraism' at Princeton in September 2008, and also the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, which will be publishing it in a collection of papers.

Another paper, written at the Centre and similarly presented at the Shalem Center, was entitled 'Maimonides' Relevance to Contemporary Virtue-Centered Moral Theory'. It was submitted to the journal *AZURE*.

Professor Jacobs drafted an essay on 'Forgiveness in Maimonides and Aquinas', highlighting ways in which Maimonides and Aquinas use Aristotelian philosophical resources and idiom to reach un-Aristotelian conclusions, and showing how their understandings of forgiveness in human perfection differ from Aristotle and each other. It will be included in a volume contrasting ancient with medieval and early-modern conceptions of forgiveness.

He also wrote a paper entitled 'Athens, Jerusalem, and Oxford', discussing recent developments in Jewish philosophy and their place in Jewish Studies, which appeared in the Centre's *Annual Report* for 2008 (pp. 41–50).

Lastly he discussed with Oxford University Press the publication of a proposed volume of essays by various scholars on 'Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome', highlighting Hebraic contributions to Western moral and political thought.

Dr Yitzhak Laor

Yitzhak Laor, who stayed at the Centre as a Kennedy Leigh Fellow from 15 September to 15 December, wrote a sixteen-chapter book on the comedies of the Israeli dramatist and writer Hanoch Levin (1943–99) while at Yarnton. Levin, who was first noticed for his satirical reviews after the 1967 war, soon became a successful comedy writer and stage director. From the 1980s he wrote and directed 'myth-plays'. These, on themes of his own making, were prompted by the view that Jews needed to create their own theatrical mythology. Levin published some sixty plays, three volumes of prose and short plays and one of poetry. His dramatic work, which is occasionally staged in translation in France, is far more popular in Israel.

The Kressel Archive in the Centre's library was an invaluable resource since it contains interviews with Levin that are unavailable elsewhere.

Professor Peter Machinist

Professor Peter Machinist of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the Divinity School, Harvard University, was a Victor and Sylvia Blank Fellow and Visiting Scholar at the Centre from

4 September to 26 June. He focused mainly on writing a commentary on the biblical book of Nahum for the Hermeneia Commentary Series, on which he gave a David Patterson Seminar at the Centre. But he also completed two articles, together approaching the length of a monograph, on Psalm 82 and the death of the gods, and on the biblical scholar Julius Wellhausen and his relationship to Assyriology.

He drafted four other articles, the first examining a passage from Isaiah on Assyria (10:5–15), the second studying the city of Assur and the politics of the ruling elites of the Assyrian empire, the third looking at the implications of the work of Benno Landsberger for relations between Biblical Studies and Assyriology, and the fourth on anthropomorphism in Mesopotamian religion. Most were first presented as lectures at the Universities of Aberdeen, Cambridge, Manchester and Oxford, and at University College London and Leo Baeck College, London. He also lectured at the universities of Munich and Tübingen, and delivered one paper at a conference in Rome to honour Mario Liverani, the Italian historian of Near Eastern antiquity, and another at a conference entitled 'Göttliche Körper – Göttliche Gefühle' in Darmstadt, Germany. He benefited from contact with colleagues and students at the Centre, and particularly appreciated the seminar on Hebrew and Latin codicology given by Professor Malachi Beit-Arié, also a visitor at the Centre, and Professor J. P. Gumbert at the Bodleian Library in May 2009. He received an honorary doctorate by the University of Zurich, Switzerland, in April.

A summary of the David Patterson Seminar he delivered whle at Yarnton appears on **pages 00–00** of this *Report.*

Professor Henrietta Mondry

Professor Henrietta Mondry of the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, stayed at the Centre from 15 October 2008 until 5 January 2009, as a Canterbury/Oxford University Exchange Fellow. During this time she continued work on aspects of Russian nationalism and anti-Semitic stereotypes in contemporary Russian cultural discourse. She focused on the construction and recycling of these stereotypes in literary texts and cultural periodicals, with special attention to the newspaper *Zavtra* and its literary weekly supplement, as well as journals such as *Molodaya Gvardiya* and *Nash Sovremennik*. She gave a research seminar in the Russian Department at Oxford University on 'Vasily Rozanov and his Body Politics of Russian Literature'. In this she looked at the sources of

Russian intellectual anti-Semitism, formulated early in the twentieth century, on which the Russian intelligentsia continues to base their politics of Russian self-assertiveness.

Dr Josefina Rodríguez-Arribas

Dr Josefina Rodríguez-Arribas, who stayed at the Centre as a Victor and Sylvia Blank Fellow between 5 January and 5 June, worked on a book about the emergence of astronomical terminology in medieval Hebrew. Her research encompasses primary and secondary sources in Greek, Latin, Arabic and Hebrew and was much helped by access in Oxford to libraries with rich holdings of manuscripts and printed books on the history of science, classical languages, and Hebrew and Jewish studies.

She delivered a David Patterson Seminar on technical terminology in medieval Hebrew and took part in workshops at University College London and the Warburg Institute, in the context of a project on Jewish calendars to which she contributed a paper on medieval astronomy. She benefited from attending lectures on Hebrew paleography and Hebrew and Latin codicology in the Bodleian Library by Professor Malachi Beit-Arié and Professor Peter Gumbert, as well as courses on Latin paleography and text and images in Latin manuscripts at the School of Advanced Studies, University of London.

A summary of the David Patterson Seminar she delivered in Yarnton appears on **pages 00** of this *Report*.

Professor Reuven Snir

Professor Reuven Snir of the University of Haifa, who stayed at the Centre as a Kennedy Leigh Fellow from 12 August until 28 October, and from 2 December until 16 December 2008, worked on the historical, social and poetic aspects of the participation of Jews in modern Arab culture. In the first half of the twentieth century in Iraq Jews produced work that quickly became part of mainstream Arabic literature, but since the war in Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel, the Arab-Jewish cultural tradition born more than 1500 years ago has been vanishing. Arabic, the mother-tongue of most Jews under Islam until the late 1940s, is disappearing as a Jewish language. Professor Snir also examined the cultural preferences of Israeli society after 1948 and how some immigrant Arab Jews coped with these by deserting Arabic for Hebrew. He delivered the keynote lecture, entitled 'Who Needs Arab-Jewish Identity?

Chronicle of a Cultural Extinction Foretold', in the conference on ' "Behind all this a Great Longing is Hiding?" Multiplicity and Fragmentation in Israeli Identity', held in Yarnton in December 2008.

A summary of the David Patterson Seminar he delivered at Yarnton appears on **pages 00** of this *Report*.

Dr Haim Sperber

Dr Haim Sperber of Western Galilee College stayed at the Centre from 7 November 2008 to 25 June 2009, working on the first-ever survey of nineteenth-century *Agunot*, so-called 'chained women' who have been deserted by their husbands, and are unable to remarry since they have not been formally divorced. His database so far contains some 3290 *Agunot*, and he is examining how this problem relates to immigration and the modernization of the Jewish family in Eastern Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. During his stay at the Centre he was able to examine Jewish newspapers and rabbinic responsa besides other archival material. He planned to move on next to American and Russian sources, including Yiddish newspapers.

He completed four papers during his stay. The first, in which he examined the treatment of the *Agunot* issue in the Jewish press during 1857–96, was presented at the Fifteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. In the second paper he compared eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century *Agunot* cases with those reported in mid-nineteenth-century rabbinical responsa. The third paper, which examines how this problem relates to immigration and the modernization of nineteenth-century European Jewish society, was presented at the forty-first conference of the Association for Jewish Studies in Los Angeles. The fourth article discusses how Sir Moses Montefiore and Baron Lionel de Rothschild served as models of leadership in nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewry. Both employed philanthropy as a way of controlling the community and determining its social and economic structure, ensuring that they would be portrayed in the Jewish press as benefactors and guardians of Jewish interests in world politics.

Dr Suzanne Wijsman

Dr Wijsman of the University of Western Australia stayed at the Centre from 5 May until 24 June 2009 and made significant progress with her research into the finest known example of a user-produced, illuminated

and decorated medieval Hebrew manuscript, a fifteenth-century prayer book held in the Bodleian Library (MS Opp. 776). Her detailed examination of its scribal work and illuminations suggests that the scribe was also the artist. It is the first time that the pigments used in a Hebrew illuminated manuscript have been studied to discover more about its methods of production. Her work on this manuscript was the subject of a David Patterson Seminar entitled 'Wild Men, Musicians and Others: The Art and Iconography of Bodleian MS Opp. 776, a Fifteenth-century Hebrew Prayer Book'.

She delivered a seminar for the Hebrew Codicology class at the invitation of Professor Malachi Beit-Arié, which was attended not only by scholars and students, but by Linda and Michael Falter, publishers of Facsimile Editions, London, who are considering reproducing the manuscript.

Dr Wijsman advised on the Bodleian Library's exhibition of Hebrew manuscripts, and was invited by Dr Piet van Boxel to describe her research on Opp. 776 in an article—the first on this manuscript—that was published in association with the exhibition.

She attended the BookNet Study Day at the Rothermere American Institute, a one-day conference focusing on the use of scientific techniques for manuscript studies and conservation, and completed two papers based on earlier research that have since been published.

A summary of the David Patterson Seminar she delivered in Yarnton appears on **pages 00–00** of this *Report*.

Dr Anat Zanger

Dr Anat Zanger of the Film and Television Department at Tel-Aviv University, who stayed at the Centre from 15 September to 15 December 2008, began carrying out research into the place of the garden and the desert in Jewish and Western cultures. Her investigation into landscape and space in Israeli culture and cinema will cover various aspect of 'place' in Jewish tradition and Israeli culture. She benefited from access to the Bodleian and Muller libraries in Oxford, and to the British and British Film Institute libraries in London. She completed a paper for an anthology to be published by Texas University Press on the Binding of Isaac in contemporary Israeli cinema. In September delivered a lecture at an international conference at Kent University entitled 'Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget', on the French-Jewish artist and filmmaker Chantal Akerman and the Holocaust.

Publications

Centre Publications

Journal of Jewish Studies, edited by Professor Geza Vermes and Dr Sacha Stern, volume 59:2 (2008)

Journal of Jewish Studies, edited by Professor Geza Vermes and Dr Sacha Stern, volume 60:1 (2009)

Report of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 2007–2008, edited by Dr Jeremy Schonfield (2008)

Fellows' Publications

BREGOLI, FRANCESCA, 'Biblical Poetry, Spinozist Hermeneutics, and Critical Scholarship: The Polemical Activities of Raffaele Rabeni in Early Eighteenth-Century Italy', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8 (2009) 173–98

—— 'Privilegi di stampa e acculturazione: editoria ebraica nella Livorno del '700', *Atti del Convegno Livorno 1606–1806: luogo di incontro tra popoli e culture* (Turin 2009)

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—— review of Joseph Sherman and Gennady Estraikh (eds) *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism*, London: Legenda (2007), in *AJS Review* 32:2 (2008) 469–71

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—— 'Geography is Destiny: Region, Nation and Empire in Habsburg Jewish Bukovina', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7:3 (2008) 325–37

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—— 'The Judaization of Christian Scripture', in M. Avrum Ehrlich (ed.) *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experience, and Culture.* Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO (2009)

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—— 'La version de Jacques d'Édesse', in F. Briquel-Chatonnet and Ph. Le Moigne (eds) *L'Ancien Testament en syriaque.* Etudes Syriaques 5. Paris (2008) 121–40

—— 'The Authorial Spirit? Biblical Citations in Jacob of Edessa's *Hexaemeron*', *Aramaic Studies* 6:2 (2008) 207–25

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WILLIAMSON, HUGH, *Holy, Holy, Holy: The Story of a Liturgical Formula*, Julius-Wellhausen-Vorlesung 1. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter (2008)

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—— 'More Unity than Diversity', in M. J. Boda and P. L. Redditt (eds) *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric, and Reader*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press (2008) 329–43

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—— 'How Did the Deuteronomists Envisage the Past?', in H. M. Barstad and P. Briant (eds) *The Past in the Past: Concepts of Past Reality in Ancient Near Eastern and Early Greek Thought*. Oslo: Novus Press (2009) 133–52

*Dissertations Submitted at the Centre, 2009**

Compiled by

MARTINE SMITH-HUVERS

BRISTER, MICHELLE. *An Investigation of the Jewish Tradition Behind the Portrayal of the Serpent in the Byzantine Octateuch Miniatures.* 44 pp.

HILTUNEN, CHELICAL. *The Textual Growth of the Book of Lamentations as Examined in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Masoretic Text, and the Septuagint.* 55 pp.

ICKE, AMY. *The Figure of Rahab in the Book of Joshua.* 55 pp.

JOHNSTON, TZIPPORAH. *Re-evaluating Early Modern Ashkenazi Masculinity.* 72 pp.

POWER, CIAN JOSEPH. *Northern Perspectives on Kingship. Royal Ideology in the Kingdom of Israel.* 58 pp.

SMITH, TYLER. *Josephus' Narrative Art and the Samson Episodes (Antiquities of the Jews 5.276–317).* 55 pp.

SPUNAUGLE, ADRIANNE. *The Portrait of David: Comparing the Bible and Rabbinic Traditions.* 50 pp.

* All dissertations recorded here are available for consultation in the Leopold Muller Memorial Library.

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Books Acquired for the Library Through Special Funds and Endowments

Isaiah Berlin Fund

Feiner, Shmuel, *Moses Mendelssohn. The Great Thinkers and Creators of the Jewish People* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 2006)

Visi, Tamás, *The Existence of God. Maimonides' Intricate Argument* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008)

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