



AJS PERSPECTIVES

The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies

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**Orthodoxy
Then and Now**

SPRING 2008

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Colleagues,

As is well known, the English word *synagogue* echoes the translation into ancient Greek of the Hebrew *beit kneset*. Another Greek-derived term that is just as much a part of our everyday vocabulary about Judaism has no such history. The word *Orthodox* has in fact moved—and only rather recently—in the opposite direction, from Greek through German and English into modern Hebrew. How did a word that stems not only from a non-Jewish language but from Christian religious discourse become the standard term for designating the most tradition-minded Jews? Jeffrey Blutinger, who has written on this subject elsewhere in greater detail, starts off our issue devoted to Orthodoxy with a brief recapitulation of some of his main findings.

Whether Orthodox Judaism is simply a new term for something very old or whether it is itself basically a product of modernity is a question that has generated a considerable amount of scholarly discussion in recent decades. Jay Berkovitz presents an overview of this issue, appreciatively assessing the work of Jacob Katz and others

who have tended to accentuate the innovative character of Orthodox Judaism but also indicating some of the ways in which he believes their conclusions need to be modified.

Samuel Heilman casts a look backward not at the origins of Orthodoxy but at what he now takes to be its general trajectory over the decades he has devoted to the study of its contemporary manifestations. He relates how his own work as well as that of some other scholars has come to focus on the ultra-Orthodox world, where, in their opinion, the “action” has increasingly tended to be, but he concludes by observing new signs of vitality in the modern Orthodox community. Irit Koren, a scholar who is herself a product of the Israeli branch of that community, describes an ongoing “feminist ritual revolution” that has been taking place in its midst but also in kindred Diaspora settings.

We turn from this turbulent sector of modern Orthodoxy to the precincts of ultra-Orthodoxy. Nahum Karlinsky provides a brief overview of the existing scholarship by ultra-Orthodox historians of their own society and examines some of the ways in which such scholars have selectively utilized modern research methodologies “to beat modernity on its own turf.” Kimmy Caplan and Nurit Stadler report on a very recent conference in Jerusalem devoted to surveying ultra-Orthodoxy from a variety of different vantage points.

The first six articles in this issue trace the lineaments of quite a few of what Samuel Heilman has called “the many faces of Orthodoxy,” but far from all of them. There is a limit, I am afraid, to what we can do in a single issue of a fairly small magazine. To help readers take a closer look for themselves at some of the missing visages, Heidi Lerner has supplied an up-to-date and highly informative guide to Orthodox resources on the Internet.

The final two articles in this issue are concerned with entirely different matters. Marcy Brink-Danan provides a lively and revealing report on the first American Academy for Jewish Research (AAJR) Workshop for Early Career Faculty in Jewish Studies at the University of Michigan’s Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies. Howard Adelman reconsiders a piece about Jewish studies that he wrote for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* twenty years ago in the light of his subsequent experiences. What he has to say touches on a number of vitally important questions concerning the relationship between the Jewish community and Jewish studies, questions that we plan to address in our next issue. Readers are invited to submit their responses to Adelman’s article for inclusion in the fall issue.

Allan Arkush
Binghamton University

The Association for Jewish Studies wishes to thank the Center for Jewish History and its constituent organizations—the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, the Yeshiva University Museum, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research—for providing the AJS with office space at the Center for Jewish History.

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The Association for Jewish Studies is pleased to announce the following Institutional Members for the 2007-08 membership year:

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- The **web sites** of the partners and of the Center, linked to one another, offer digitized images of a growing number of collections to a world wide audience.
- Most of all, the **proximity** of the partner organizations to each other is unique in Jewish history and the most exciting aspect of the Center. Eastern European Jewry, Sephardic, German-speaking Jewry, and the American experience coexist to provide a synergy that was almost unimaginable until now.



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

In a recent email exchange with the leadership of several other learned societies and academic institutions, a number of my correspondents made a similar observation: it frequently falls to a small number of people to shape the mandate and priorities of an organization.

Many of us have encountered this phenomenon in the universities at which we work. Often a few people, driven by altruism, a cause, an agenda, shape an institution or a society such as ours, largely because most members remain relatively unengaged. And indeed, one wonders how it could be otherwise. Most of us already have so much on our plate: writing, teaching, program building, administration, supervision, the myriad other activities that shape our academic lives. What time and energy remains we devote to our personal lives. Yet this state of affairs may leave us unsatisfied. As my email correspondents noted, learned societies follow democratic procedures, but those procedures cannot by themselves guarantee a member-driven organization that reflects and builds consensus. And the more smoothly run the organization, the more inclined many of us may be simply to let things run their course. We allow our organizations to serve us, as they are intended, so that we may turn our focus elsewhere.

In the course of the email exchange it became clear to me that the Association for Jewish Studies has been an exception to this state of

affairs. We have an engaged membership that is largely involved with what AJS does. This has been my strong impression for some time now, one built on my experiences on various AJS publications, the program committee, as program chair, and as the current president. Now this impression has been confirmed by the recent survey of members. While we have not yet fully analyzed the responses, the high rate of response—more than 30 percent—in and of itself indicates an engaged and active membership that wants a voice in molding the direction of the organization. While the survey shows that many of us are also members of at least one other learned society, members invest energy in AJS, bringing the fruits of their research to our annual conference, and bringing their creativity and intelligence to AJS publications and committees.

AJS has strongly invested in keeping our practices transparent and participatory, and our activities open to our members. Relative to the size of our membership, AJS boasts the largest board, drawing our directors from a diversity of academic fields, institutional affiliations, and geographic locales. Much of what AJS does well reflects the initiative and creativity of its members. One need only look to the pages of this publication, reinvented under the editorship of Riv Ellen Prell as a magazine keenly attuned to cutting edge scholarship and emerging new perspectives. Now honed by its current editor Allan Arkush and nourished by the ideas of its editorial board and contributors, *Perspectives* is a keeper with a long shelf-life.

AJS Review, a fine interdisciplinary journal, provides a vehicle for the dissemination of research to a broad-based interdisciplinary readership. Given the range of methodologies and fields of our

membership, it is no small feat to produce a journal that makes work across disciplines accessible to its readers. It has long been a labor of love for its editors and editorial board—and I would emphasize both terms in that formula, *love* and *labor*. As Hillel J. Kieval and Martin Jaffee complete their term as co-editors of the *Review*, I would like to thank them for the conceptual vision and attention to detail that they brought to their editorial collaboration, which has ensured the high caliber of the journal. Needless to say, the *Review* bears the fingerprints of countless other AJS members who contribute their work, review books, and evaluate submissions. I am delighted that Bob Goldenberg and Elisheva Carlebach have agreed to serve as co-editors of the journal. They bring experience, depth, and intelligence, and, as a team, will maintain the excellence of the publication and keep it evolving.

Our 2007 conference—climatic challenge notwithstanding—was broadly attended, and, by all accounts, sessions were superb. Indeed, the conference is our best indicator of the engagement of our members. The vast majority of AJS members participate each year, bringing the best of our work to a place that challenges us to open our thinking to the insights that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries and cross-fertilize our scholarship. In contrast to at least some other learned societies, our members participate in our annual meeting to engage in the scholarly exchanges so vital to our work, even when we are not seeking to obtain positions or to fill them on behalf of our institutions. The success of our conference—measured not only in numbers of presentations and sessions but by the general excellence of work—is largely due to the fact that a cadre of our colleagues take on the enormous task of conceptualizing and

planning the program. The division heads carefully read and evaluate a large number of proposals, often advising submitters on building panels and framing abstracts. Most take an activist role, not only soliciting papers and panelists, but offering thoughtful ideas for future conferences, and advocating on behalf of their discipline or area. The program committee looks at the shape of the conference as a whole, meeting for several days of intensive work under the guidance of Marsha Rozenblit, the program chair who masterminds the conference.

Together with the annual conference, the publications—and the people who work in various facets on all of these—determine the shape of AJS today and tomorrow.

In other ways, as well, individual members have pushed the organization to expand its mandate and its reach. To cite but a few examples: The Committee on International Cooperation, created at the initiative of its outgoing chair, Berel Lang, has focused on expanding the international reach of

AJS, looking for ways we can support and also learn from colleagues in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. We will continue to seek ways to support Eastern European scholars and to reach out to scholars in other parts of the world, but look to our members for building on the work of this important initiative. Similarly, the AJS Women's Caucus, founded over two decades ago by a small group of women, has nurtured scholarship on women and attended to the status of women in the field. By its presence and programs, it has helped bring about a sea change in the composition of AJS, and enriched the methodological approaches of Jewish studies. Needless to say, this is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the important work of our members, but just some examples of the possible, the attainable. In these and other initiatives, excellence happens because of the energy and creativity of individual members who bring vision to our society.

The recent membership survey is one instrument to help gauge the will of AJS members. But successful innovation and development will

come, as it always has, through your creative vision and energy. We are fortunate in our executive director, Rona Sheramy, whose good judgment, intelligence, and focus helps us turn our ideas into actualities—concrete programs and activities, buttressed whenever possible by grants and other resources. With the assistance of the fine staff she has put together—Kristen Loveland, Aviva Androphy, Karin Kugel—Rona is a partner to all of us in our endeavors for AJS, facilitating the work of each of our committees, encouraging the development of new ideas. Our capable staff is small, however, and we rely on the generous volunteerism of all of you to accomplish what we wish.

More than ever, AJS is poised to embrace member initiative—to continue doing what we do well as our organization grows, and to develop new ways to serve our members, the field, and the profession. More than ever, we invite your vision, your energy, your initiative.

Sara R. Horowitz
York University

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

CAHNMAN PUBLICATION SUBVENTION GRANTS

The Association for Jewish Studies is now accepting applications for the Cahnman Publication Subvention Grants, a program underwritten by a grant from The Cahnman Foundation of New York. Cahnman Publication Subventions will help subsidize costs associated with the preparation of first books for publication. Scholarly manuscripts that explore Diaspora Jewry's engagement with and impact on artistic, intellectual, and cultural life in Europe and North Africa, e.g., through the visual or performing arts, literature, film, architecture, philosophy, science, or politics, will be eligible for consideration. Applicants must be AJS members, have completed their Ph.D. degrees within six years of the deadline, and have a commitment for publication in English from an academic or university press. Submission deadline: June 18, 2008.

Please visit the AJS website at www.ajsnet.org/cahnman.htm for application requirements and cover sheet.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

In the coming months, the AJS Board of Directors and a designated committee will be involved in a strategic plan to consider AJS's goals and plans for the next several years. This effort comes at a very positive time in AJS history: as the organization approaches its fortieth annual conference, AJS's membership is growing at a healthy annual rate (more than 1,700 individual and forty institutional members strong); its annual meeting continues to flourish, each year bringing even more outstanding applicants and presentations than the year before (more than 150 sessions at the Toronto meeting); its finances and operations are stable; and its list of programs, awards, and initiatives continues to expand. Such a time of stability—and of reflection, given the forty years of the organization's existence—presents an ideal opportunity for AJS to evaluate its current programs and consider how the organization should go forward.

The academic landscape is obviously very different from that of ten years ago, let alone of the late 1960s, when the organization was founded.

Responsive to these changes, AJS has ventured in new directions—moving its conference across North America to reflect the geographical diversity of Jewish studies scholars and programs; transforming *AJS Perspectives* into a magazine that addresses critical, of-the-moment debates in Jewish studies pedagogy and methodology; hosting twenty subject areas and multiple formats at its conference, indicative of the growth and methodological variety of the field; and moving much of its operations online to take advantage of the speed and accessibility of Web-based services (e.g. online submission, evaluation, and scheduling). More recently, AJS has increased its grants and awards program in order to recognize the excellence of new scholarship coming out of the field, as well as to support members who must contend with an increasingly competitive and economically tight academic publishing market.

But, as the recent survey of AJS members clearly indicates (thanks to a survey response rate of greater than 30 percent), scholars would like to see AJS continue to expand its services, particularly in the areas of fellowships, grants, and publication subventions; more online resources for program development, expansion, and evaluation; and more support for international scholars. Other possible areas of development include expanding the AJS website to facilitate communication among scholars (e.g., through discussion forums); supporting the electronic

dissemination of scholarship through participation in electronic book programs (e.g., the ACLS Humanities E-Book Project); and experimenting with new formats at the AJS conference to further promote discussion, collaboration, and the opportunity for exchanges that cannot happen by email.

Thus, AJS will turn again to its members in the coming months to solicit their opinion and expertise. Using the recent survey as a baseline for discussion, we will more specifically explore possible areas of expansion and programming, asking for more detailed feedback about the programs you would like to see AJS launch, the projects you would like to make sure AJS maintains, and the innovations you would like to see it take on. We will ask you to draw from your involvement in other learned societies to share ideas that you think useful for Jewish studies; we will also be targeting subgroups among AJS members—graduate students, tenure-track faculty, recently tenured faculty, full professors, adjunct faculty, independent scholars—to understand how the organization can better support scholars at particular stages of their academic careers. In the meanwhile, I encourage members to write to AJS at ajs@ajs.cjh.org to submit feedback and ideas.

Rona Sheramy
Association for Jewish Studies

AJS 40th Annual Conference

December 21–23, 2008 • Grand Hyatt Washington • Washington, DC

**Deadline for meal reservations, pre-conference reduced registration fee,
and hotel reservations: November 14, 2008.**

See page 11 for further details.

Orthodoxy

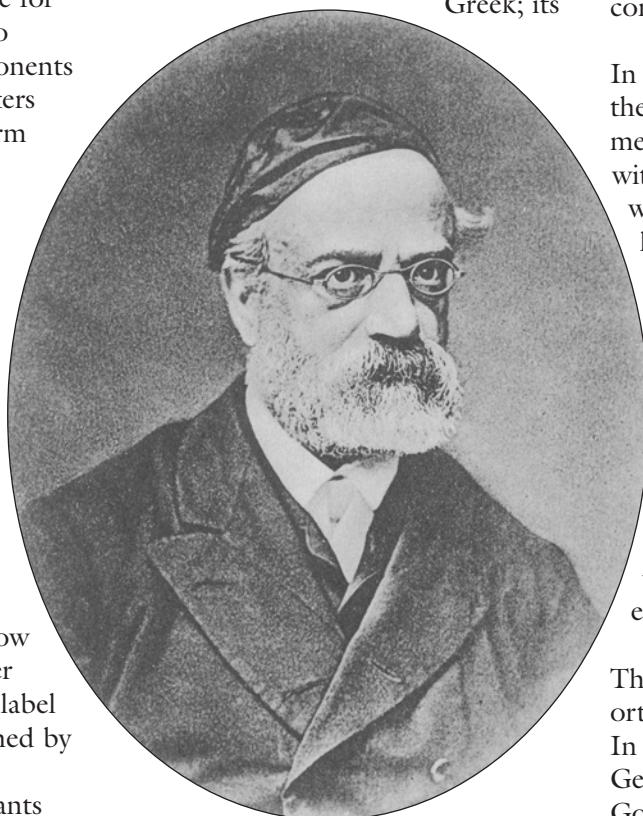
Then and Now

BECOMING ORTHODOX: THE STORY OF A DENOMINATIONAL LABEL

Jeffrey C. Blutinger

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a strange debate broke out over who was to blame for the use of the label *orthodox* to describe the traditionalist opponents of Reform. Liberal Jewish writers would generally qualify the term with words such as “*die sogenannte*,” or “*die heisige Orthodoxen*”—i.e. the “so-called orthodox”—as a condescending way of calling into question the idea that their opponents were actually “right-believing.” At the same time, leading opponents of the reformers, such as S. R. Hirsch, noted that the traditionalists resented the use of the term *orthodox*, and rightly so. So how did this come to pass? How did a term that refers to proper belief come to be applied as a label for a denomination distinguished by practice? How did a concept developed by German Protestants come to be used as a way of differentiating German Jews?

As with most of the rhetoric used by German Jews, the term *orthodox* originated with German Christians. The word entered German from the Greek; its



Portrait of Samson Raphael Hirsch. Reprinted from S. A. Hirsch, *A Book of Essays* (London: Macmillan & Co., Limited, 1905).

German-root equivalent, *rechtgläubig* (true or correct belief), was used by German Protestants to refer to those who held to the canonical works and doctrines. Those who departed from conformity with the teachings of the church were called *heterodox*, whose German-root equivalent was “*irrgläubig*” (erroneous belief or heresy). By the seventeenth century, the label “Lutheran orthodoxy” had come to mean a dogmatic biblicism.

In the eighteenth century, however, these terms underwent a shift in meaning. Enlightenment thinkers, with their new ideas and new writings, were quickly labeled *heterodox*, while those opposed to them remained *orthodox*. Although Enlightenment thinkers accepted these labels, they shifted the valence of the words: *heterodox* took on a positive connotation, while *orthodox* took on a negative one. It was in this new sense that these words entered into the vocabulary of Jewish enlightenment figures in Germany.

The first Jew to use the term *orthodox* was Moses Mendelssohn. In 1755, he wrote a letter to the German Enlightenment writer, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, asking if a Dr. Baumgarten—who was “a strong metaphysicist” yet had

“greatly praised” Lessing—“was really orthodox, or does he just pretend so.” Baumgarten’s enthusiasm for Lessing, and therefore by implication for the Enlightenment, was difficult to square with his apparent orthodoxy.

When Mendelssohn published *Jerusalem* in 1783, he told Herz Homberg that the book’s “character is of such a sort which neither orthodox nor heterodox people of either nation expect.” Thus, what he was saying was that Jews and non-Jews, both those opposed to the Enlightenment and those who supported it, would be surprised by his book. The following year, Mendelssohn expanded on this theme when he wrote that his “ideas of Judaism cannot, in actuality, satisfy either the orthodox or the heterodox.” Again, the key element here is that the terms orthodoxy and heterodoxy refer to one’s intellectual world, not the world of practice.

Jewish opponents of Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment were referred to by both Jewish and non-Jewish Enlightenment thinkers as orthodox. In 1784, for example, Karl Gotthelf Lessing wrote to Mendelssohn concerning community opposition to *Jerusalem*, which he described as consisting of “a few orthodox Jewish elders” who were “pushing the matter.” Following Mendelssohn’s death, there were frequent references to “orthodox Jews” in his obituaries, including a description of Mendelssohn’s opponents as “orthodox Talmudists,” and a note that his translation of the Psalms “found no reception among the orthodox.” In each case, the term was used to refer to Jews who

opposed Enlightenment thought, not a separate denomination.

One of the most striking uses of this meaning of the word orthodox is in Solomon Maimon’s autobiography. Published in 1792, it describes the

AS THE NATURE OF JEWISH DEBATE CHANGED IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, THE MEANING OF THE TERMS SIMILARLY BEGAN TO SHIFT. . . . IT IS AT THIS POINT THAT ORTHODOX BEGAN TO LOSE ITS PRIMARY MEANING OF ONE OPPOSED TO THE IDEAS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND TAKE ON ITS MODERN MEANING OF ONE OPPOSED TO CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICE.

ignorance of Polish Jews, yet it is only in his account of his life in Germany that Maimon used the term orthodox. The word appears in two separate incidents. The first was when Maimon, attempting to enter Berlin, was stopped at the gate. He spoke of his intention to study medicine, and during the conversation showed the Jewish representative his copy of Maimonides’s *Guide for the Perplexed*. The representative, whom Maimon described as “a zealot in his orthodoxy,” rushed to inform the town elders of Maimon’s “heretical mode of thinking.” These leaders suspected that Maimon intended to devote himself “to the sciences in general” and that “the orthodox Jews looked upon [this] as something dangerous to religion and good morals,” and so he was turned away. The second incident occurred when Maimon’s wife, along with her son, arrived in Germany seeking a divorce. Maimon took the opportunity to try to enlighten his son, but Maimon’s wife went to “consult some orthodox Jews,” who advised her to proceed with her divorce and to shield her son from Maimon’s influence.

In both these cases, the word orthodox is only used in a *German* context. The only orthodox Jews that Maimon describes are in Germany, and in each case, what makes them orthodox is their opposition to Enlightenment thought. That Maimon did not view orthodoxy as a denominational label can be seen from the striking fact that Maimon only uses the term in a *German* context, never a Polish one. This eighteenth-century German-Jewish use of orthodoxy

paralleled the contemporaneous usage of “*mitnagdim*” in Poland. Both terms derived their meaning from their opposition to another group, whether to the Enlightenment in Germany or to the Hasidic movement in eastern Europe. As there was no Hasidic movement in Germany, there were no *mitnagdim* there to oppose it; in the same way, since there was no Enlightenment in Poland (in Maimon’s opinion), there were no and *could be no* orthodox Jews there to oppose it. Only in Germany, the center of the Enlightenment, could there be found orthodox Jewish opponents.

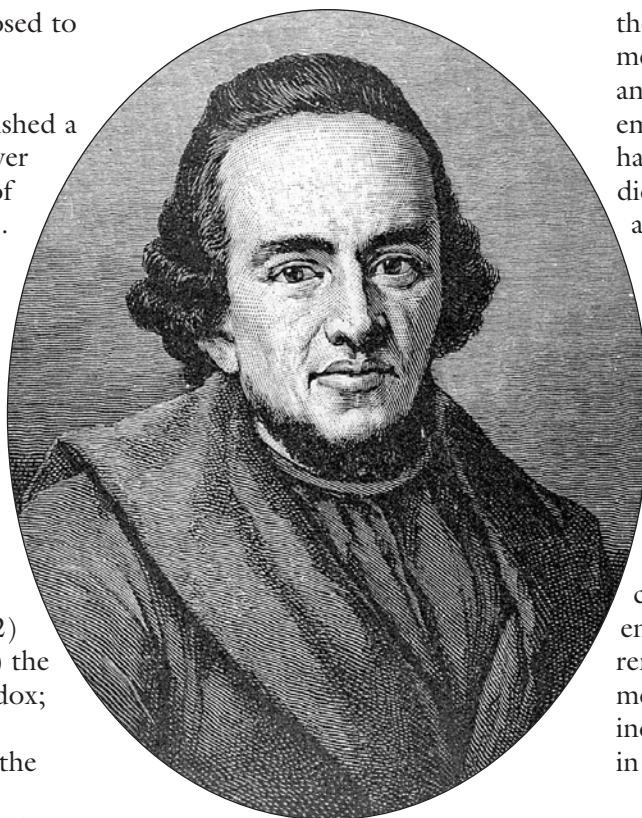
As the nature of Jewish debate changed in the nineteenth century, the meaning of the terms similarly began to shift. In the early 1800s, some Jewish Enlightenment figures began to advocate changes in religious practices. The term “heterodox” was expanded at this time to cover these developments, while its opposite, “orthodox,” was similarly modified to emphasize the opposition to these changes. It is at this point that orthodox began to lose its primary meaning of one opposed to the ideas of the Enlightenment and take on its

modern meaning of one opposed to change in religious practice.

A remarkable document published a few years ago by Michael Meyer nicely captures this moment of terminological transformation. This previously unpublished manuscript was written in the 1810s and was sent to the Prussian minister of religion, apparently as part of an effort to influence the government's Jewish policy. The author divided the German-Jewish community into four groups—two orthodox and two heterodox: (1) the educated orthodox; (2) the uneducated orthodox; (3) the educated, enlightened heterodox; and (4) the uneducated, enlightened heterodox. Both the author's distinctions between orthodox and heterodox, as well as the differences among them, point to significant shifts in the terms' meanings.

The first term, educated orthodox, would have been oxymoronic a generation earlier, while the second term, uneducated orthodox, would have been seen as redundant. Here, however, the author treated the former (by whom he meant Talmud specialists) rather sympathetically, reserving his scorn for the latter, who had "marred the religion with an unfounded outward devoutness and pseudo-piety."

In contrast to these two groups of orthodox Jews were the heterodox Jews. The educated, enlightened heterodox were the smallest of these



Portrait of Moses Mendelssohn.
© Beth Hatefutsoth Photo Archive.

four groups and were those who, through the study of good writings and real contemplation, had become truly enlightened. Here again, the term would not have been intelligible to an eighteenth-century

HERE, THE TERM ORTHODOX HAS ENTIRELY LOST ITS ORIGINAL MEANING OF OPPOSITION TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT, AND ONLY DENOTED OPPOSITION TO CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICE. AS A RESULT, THERE WAS NOW A CLEAR DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE MEANING OF THE TERM, "RIGHT BELIEF," AND THE GROUP TO WHICH IT WAS APPLIED, DISTINGUISHED BY A CLAIM OF RIGHT PRACTICE, WHICH IS WHY IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR ZUNZ TO CALL THEM "SO-CALLED ORTHODOX."

reader. These are people, he wrote, who tried to imitate the truly enlightened, but only read modern works in order to lead themselves to impiety.

What is striking about this text is

the way it contains both the older meanings of the terms heterodox and orthodox, as well as the emerging new ones. So on the one hand, the author continued the dichotomy between enlightenment and orthodoxy, yet on the other hand, orthodox Jews are characterized not so much by their opposition to enlightenment thought but by their traditional forms of religious practice. So, too, what is distinctive about heterodox Jews is not so much their enlightenment, but their lax religious practice. Finally, the category of uneducated, enlightened heterodox was only rendered possible by expanding the meaning of the word heterodox to include those who did not engage in traditional religious practices.

By the 1830s, the older meanings of heterodox and orthodox had all but disappeared; heterodox now referred to those who advocated religious reform, while orthodox referred to those who opposed it. Leopold Zunz, for example, in his 1832 survey of the history of the synagogue service, only used the

term orthodox after describing the establishment of the Seesen, Berlin, and Hamburg Temples. "These early reform temples," Zunz wrote, "were opposed by the so-called orthodox portion of the community." Here, the term orthodox has entirely lost its original meaning of opposition to the Enlightenment, and only denoted opposition to changes in religious practice. As a result, there was now a clear disconnect between

the meaning of the term, “right belief,” and the group to which it was applied, distinguished by a claim of right practice, which is why it was possible for Zunz to call them “so-called orthodox.”

By the 1840s, this terminology had acquired its current connotations. Jewish reformers attacked traditionalists for ascribing to themselves the claim of “right believing,” while traditionalists rebutted the aspersions. In fact, however, traditionalists also adopted this label for themselves so that the newspaper *Der Treu Zions-Wächter* described itself as “the organ for the defense of the interests of orthodox Jewry,” and even Hirsch himself

used the term on occasion.

In this way, a term first used by German Lutherans to refer to those who held firm to church dogmas came to be used by German Jews as a label for those who opposed changes to traditional Jewish practice. When Jewish Enlightenment thinkers first adopted the term from the German Enlightenment, they had no problem applying it to Jews who opposed Enlightenment thought. But as the nature of the debate among German Jews changed from one about new ideas to one about new practices, the word continued to be used, even though neither side felt comfortable with it. Both

reformers and the orthodox were aware that the word referred to proper belief, but they had become trapped by nearly a century of prior use and were unable to break free.

Thank you to the editors and publisher of Modern Judaism for allowing Perspectives to publish this piece based on the previously published article by Jeffrey C. Blutinger, “So-Called Orthodoxy: The History of an Unwanted Label.” Modern Judaism 27:3 (October 2007), 310–328.

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HISTORICIZING ORTHODOXY

Jay Berkovitz

Over the past two centuries Orthodox Judaism has emerged as the self-avowed standard-bearer of the Jewish religious heritage. It alone, its leaders have claimed, has remained faithful to the religious values and doctrines of the Jewish tradition, and for this reason, they assert, Orthodox institutions exclusively possess religious legitimacy. In the eyes of contemporary scholars, however, the relationship between tradition and Orthodoxy is considerably more complicated than most Orthodox Jews believe it to be. Following in the footsteps of Jacob Katz, scholars have ceased to depict Orthodoxy as the unaltered heir of traditional Judaism and has treated it as a product of the severe crisis that enveloped modern Jewry in the emancipation era. Moreover, Orthodoxy's claim to be the defender of historical Judaism is regarded by many people today as purely subjective, even fictitious.

Although the conflict between conservative and liberal interpreters of the Jewish tradition in recent centuries has often been quite fierce, it is now generally agreed that the common ground they have shared is far more extensive than is normally assumed. The social, cultural, and philosophical forces of modernity have affected all sectors of the Jewish community, leading to

an attenuation of Jewish loyalties as well as significant shifts in consciousness across the spectrum of belief and practice. Like proponents of

religious reform, traditionalists have struggled with the stark challenges of modernity, and although the two movements disagreed fundamentally on how these issues ought to be approached, they have both been confronted by similar hurdles: rampant assimilation, religious apathy, a sharp decline in ritual observance, and the erosion of rabbinic authority.

For scholars today, the question of the degree to which Orthodoxy embodied tradition or innovation has broad implications that rise above narrow disciplinary concerns

LIKE PROPONENTS OF RELIGIOUS REFORM, TRADITIONALISTS HAVE STRUGGLED WITH THE STARK CHALLENGES OF MODERNITY, AND ALTHOUGH THE TWO MOVEMENTS DISAGREED FUNDAMENTALLY ON HOW THESE ISSUES OUGHT TO BE APPROACHED, THEY HAVE BOTH BEEN CONFRONTED BY SIMILAR HURDLES: RAMPANT ASSIMILATION, RELIGIOUS APATHY, A SHARP DECLINE IN RITUAL OBSERVANCE, AND THE EROSION OF RABBINIC AUTHORITY.

and denominational interests. How one assesses the distinctiveness of Orthodoxy and Reform as well as the historical role of Orthodoxy relates to larger issues concerning continuity and change, religious and halakic diversity, rabbinic authority, and the thorny question of essentialism as it applies to the Jewish tradition. I trust that the following remarks, which are historical in nature, will have some bearing on the broader questions raised here.

Perhaps the most significant

characteristic of Orthodoxy was the application of political considerations in the realm of halakic decision making. Beginning in the second decade of the nineteenth century, opponents of religious reform developed strategies that aggressively rejected relatively modest synagogue reforms of the sort that might have been overlooked several decades earlier. Moshe Samet argued in an influential 1988 *Modern Judaism* article that, in the face of these new challenges, Orthodoxy assumed a combative posture, which differed sharply from that of traditional Judaism in several respects: Orthodoxy represented a departure from the principle of a unified Jewish community; it exhibited mistrust toward modern culture; and it adopted an ultrastrict standard of ritual observance and interpretation of halakah. In this reading, pre-emancipation traditionalism was less militant and certainly less political than nineteenth-century Orthodoxy.

Rabbi Ezekiel Landau (1713–1793) is one figure who

may be taken to epitomize the old-style traditionalist. He permitted himself to read Talmudic and halakic sources without concern for the sectarian politics that would become paramount in the responsa of later Orthodox rabbis. For example, in a responsum on the kashrut of sterlet, one of the smaller species of sturgeon, Landau distinguished sharply between the basic requirements set forth in the Talmud, on the one hand, and stringencies added during the Middle Ages, on the other. The latter, he insisted, do not carry the

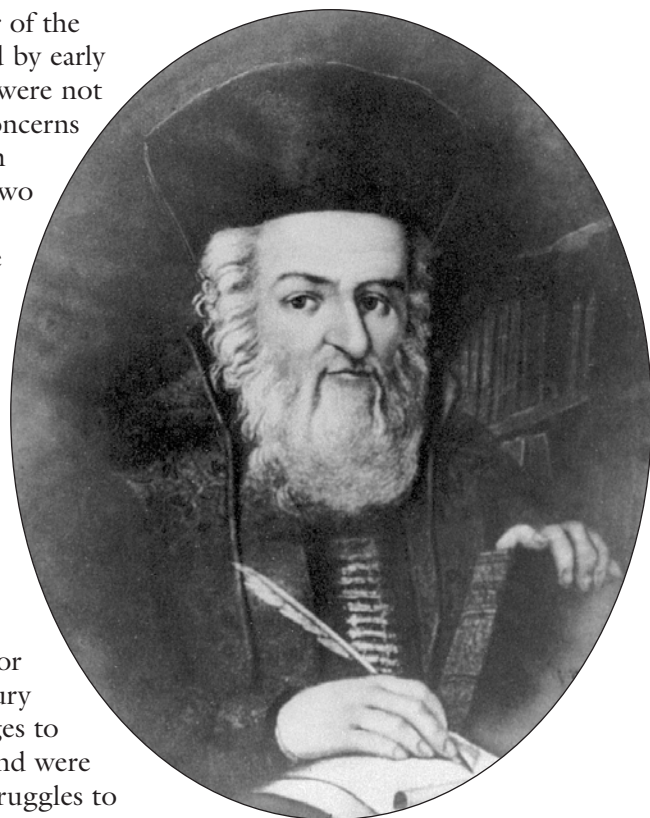
same authority as the former, and he therefore felt free to rule the sterlet kosher. Ascribing little importance to *hilkheta ke-batrai* (the law is like the later authorities), a principle that had guided the development of halakah in Ashkenaz throughout much of the medieval period, Landau ruled leniently in this particular case and with regard to other matters by privileging the earlier Talmudic sources, much as Rabbi Elijah b. Solomon Zalman (1720–1797), the Gaon of Vilna, did in his own halakic writings.

The transition to a more rigid, politicized Orthodoxy in the nineteenth century was embodied in the persona of Hungarian rabbi Moses Sofer (1762–1839). In 1810, for example, Sofer rejected the decision of the rabbinical council of the Westphalian Consistory to abrogate the custom prohibiting *kitniyot* (legumes) on Passover. The leniency rested on the claim that the years of war constituted a *she'at ha-dehak* (a time of crisis) that made it difficult for Jewish soldiers to find kosher food for the holiday. Although this argument had been adduced periodically in the halakic literature, as in a responsum of Rabbi Jacob Emden (1697–1776), Sofer firmly opposed it on the grounds that it was expressly forbidden to uproot customs that had been accepted by earlier generations. This and numerous other rulings of similar ilk exemplified the growing tendency to defend the walls of tradition against breaches of any sort.

Without intending to jettison the argument that Orthodoxy is a product of modernity, I would nonetheless propose that the claim concerning the exceptionality of the social and religious crisis in the early nineteenth century and of the innovative character of the Orthodox response has been overstated. A close reading of the pre-emancipation halakic literature

suggests that a number of the conceptual issues raised by early reformers in Germany were not entirely dissimilar to concerns that had been voiced in rabbinic circles in the two previous centuries. In the area of ritual, as we have seen, Ezekiel Landau and the Gaon of Vilna, as well as others, vigorously disapproved of the multiple layers of halakic accretion that had gained acceptance in standard practice over the centuries. As communal leaders, rabbinic authorities prior to the nineteenth century faced frequent challenges to community cohesion and were regularly involved in struggles to avert social and religious fragmentation. Furthermore, debates concerning the religious implications of scientific discoveries, gender, and the status of philosophy and mysticism were not unusual among halakists in the early modern period. These ideological disputes anticipated the better-known controversies of the nineteenth century.

It is certainly true that many among the nineteenth-century halakic authorities viewed modernity with great suspicion, denied it a positive value, and erected rigorous halakic safeguards to protect their flocks. But the fact that these efforts were more pronounced and better organized than any that preceded the nineteenth century should not imply that the latter were unprecedented. The privileging of *minhag* over halakah was emblematic of medieval Judaism, as in the case of the dietary laws and regulations denying menstruant women authorization to attend synagogue. On the latter issue, the strident criticism that this encountered in the works of Rabbi



Portrait of the Gaon of Vilna.
© Beth Hatefutsoth Photo Archive.

Ya'ir Hayyim Bacharach (1638–1702) and Landau illustrates the sort of dynamic that was in place well before the Orthodox-Reform controversies that surfaced in the nineteenth century. Similarly, the longstanding debate concerning the relative authority of mimetic versus text-centered traditions, also with roots well into the Middle Ages, suggests as well that the Orthodox-Reform discourse was less exceptional than has been assumed.

Orthodoxy, in short, has by no means been as monochromatic as the Katz-inspired model might seem to suggest. Nowhere is this clearer than in the recently published, monumental collection, *Orthodox Judaism: New Perspectives*, edited by Y. Salmon, A. Ravitzky, and A. Ferziger [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2006). This volume provides us with a more variegated portrayal of Orthodoxy than any previously published work. The wide array of historical contexts

included reveals an impressive spectrum of practices and ideologies, as well as greater complexity in the relationship between Orthodox and Reform, ranging far beyond what we know from the German model alone. Germany Orthodoxy, we can see, was but one expression of resistance to the challenges of heterodoxy. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), insisted that complete separation from Liberal Judaism was essential for the preservation of traditional beliefs, and it was this view that induced the Orthodox secession from the general Jewish community in Germany in 1876. However, the scope of the separatist doctrine was not a matter of consensus among German Orthodox rabbis, particularly with respect to the question of whether there were any areas where Orthodox Jews could engage in joint endeavors with the non-Orthodox.

In neighboring France, for instance,

the idea of separation was entirely foreign to the social and political reality in which most Jews lived. In response to the challenges of religious indifference that threatened to weaken Jewish identity and affiliation in urban areas, Rabbi Salomon Ulmann (1806–1865) of the Central Consistory extended the boundary of Orthodox practice considerably by initiating a program of modest liturgical and synagogue reforms that included an halakic argument justifying the use of the organ on the Sabbath. The structural relationship between the Jews and the state, the authority vested in central institutions, and the abiding fear of replicating the profound divisions within German Jewry far outweighed the deep differences between the progressive and traditionalist Orthodox camps in France. The case of France exemplified a model of Orthodoxy in a non-German setting that was distinguished by a preference—driven both by pragmatism and

idealism—for pluralism over schism.

The pioneering scholarship of Jacob Katz and the many whose work he influenced has left a lasting imprint on our understanding of the foundations of Orthodox Judaism and its history during the past two centuries. Greater awareness of the varieties of Orthodoxy will at once enhance and challenge that understanding. And further attention to the nexus between tradition and innovation in the early modern era will doubtless reveal more evidence of continuity between Orthodoxy and its dynamic prehistory.

Jay Berkovitz is professor of Judaic and Near Eastern studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His most recent book is Tradition and Revolution: Jewish Culture in Early Modern France [Hebrew] (Mercaz Zalman Shazar, 2007).

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THOUGHTS ON THE STUDY OF THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY: AFTER THIRTY-FIVE YEARS

Samuel Heilman

For the last thirty-five years I have been researching and writing about Orthodox Jews. I began by looking at what was then called “modern Orthodoxy,” and in particular its synagogue life, which I found reflective of what I then called “shifting involvements.” I suggested that the various levels of interaction that I found in the synagogue were symbolic of these Jews’ multiple concerns, their engagement in

what Peter Berger has called “plural life-worlds.” These were Jews not unlike those I had grown up among during the 1950s and 1960s. But when I published a book on this subject, in the mid-1970s, I did not realize that what I had observed was the beginning of the decline of this style of

Orthodoxy. Indeed, the very synagogue on which my study was based, lacking a pulpit rabbi and torn by conflict over who and what was properly Orthodox, represented in some ways a microcosm of what was happening to Orthodoxy in general.

Twenty-five years ago I dealt with these broader trends in a piece I

wrote for *Modern Judaism* in which I tried to analyze and characterize what I called “The Many Faces of Orthodoxy.” I did so by means of a consideration of rabbis (most of them from nineteenth-century Europe) who served for me as iconic representations of these various perspectives. In the article, I made reference to the desires of some of them to “bring the present and past together in a *dynamic synthesis*.” These people were, I argued, in some sense the models

also argued that in their efforts to deal with plural life-worlds and their contrapuntal demands, today’s modern Orthodox Jews often discover that existing syntheses, often created in ad hoc ways, are highly complex, not always fully consistent, and perhaps not even synthetic. Since the rabbis whom they might once have seen as role models or from whom they might have sought guidance about how to live contrapuntally have largely turned away from dynamic

synthesis, those who want to live in plural life-worlds find themselves compelled to make autonomous choices about how to do that.

The contemporary Orthodox rabbinate has been increasingly inclined to curb, control, and deny the legitimacy of change that

embraces the complex realities of contemporary culture. I have traced this tendency to the yeshiva training, both in Israel and the Diaspora, which strives to deny the significance or value of change and chooses to see Judaism as something carved in stone and difficult or impossible to still reinterpret in light of changing



Oil painting © Max Ferguson.

for what would come to be called “modern Orthodoxy.” (Marc Shapiro’s subsequent study of Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg accomplished this far more fluently.)

Two years ago, in my book *Sliding to the Right*, I suggested that the modern Orthodox dynamic represented an ability not only to

conditions. In the Orthodox rabbinate that has emerged over the last two decades, the assumption appears to be that all the legitimate interpretations have already been formulated by the immortals of the past, and there is nothing significantly new under the sun that requires new answers. Anyone who wants to countermand or challenge these interpretations of what Jewish law and tradition demand does so, they imply, at his or her spiritual and religious peril. Those who try to create new syntheses and embrace change, particularly when it includes a valuation of the culture outside the boundaries of the Jewish enclave, are accused of doing so out of ignorance of halakah.

The model of the rabbi who also has advanced university degrees has been in decline. It is perhaps for this reason that the late Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik continues to be treated as a living model in the community of the contrapuntalists seeking dynamic synthesis. His works and ideas are plumbed for ongoing guidance almost as much as the writings of the late Menachem Mendel Schneerson are consulted by *his* followers, who also feel a need for a Rebbe's guidance in the complex present and lack a living rabbinic authority with sufficient stature to guide them through their plural life-worlds.

Unlike those who tried to fit plural life-worlds together, many of today's Orthodox rabbis celebrate their parochialism and ability to remain within Jewish enclaves where the tradition is narrowly defined and the halakah is strictly interpreted. They are proud that they are able to turn away voluntarily from what are perceived as the unhealthy seductions of contemporary society and therefore need not reinterpret tradition and halakah to meet its requirements.

They celebrate their literacy and expertise in internal Jewish texts; their ability to navigate even the most recondite Talmudic, rabbinic, and similarly parochial literature is the source of their prestige. Almost vanished is the rabbi/doctor who wore his secular learning as badge of pride and a source of his *rabbinic* authority, who leavened his Torah with the insights that came from what many rabbis today would dismiss as *chochmat hagoyim*. Lay Jews who choose to remain in touch with contemporary culture thus find themselves stymied or

UNLIKE THOSE WHO TRIED TO FIT PLURAL LIFE-WORLDS TOGETHER, MANY OF TODAY'S ORTHODOX RABBIS CELEBRATE THEIR PAROCHIALISM AND ABILITY TO REMAIN WITHIN JEWISH ENCLAVES WHERE THE TRADITION IS NARROWLY DEFINED AND THE HALAKAH IS STRICTLY INTERPRETED.

forced to improvise, basing themselves on their own abilities to interpret halakah and to apply it to the needs of their plural life-worlds.

Today, when I reread my early work, I see that the efforts of those who were trying in the 1970s dialectically to merge the modern and the orthodox were already marked by signs of desperation. As Orthodoxy became more self-assured in America (and in Israel), and as modern western society went through its antinomian stage of the 1960s and 1970s, the sociological center of gravity was shifting. The Orthodox elements in the dynamic synthesis were increasingly overshadowing the elements and attractions of modernity. Not surprisingly, my continuing research into Orthodoxy therefore took me increasingly into the inner enclaves of Orthodoxy and away from the margins where I had found the modernists. I looked at the intensely closed enclave of Talmud study groups—most of which were

proudly parochial in their interests. I found the makeshift language of “Yinglish” overtaking the more cosmopolitan university English and all that it symbolized. Finally, I found myself drawn to the Haredi world, which had awakened from its post-Holocaust catatonic survivor guilt and rebuilt itself in the new worlds of America and Israel with a vigor rivaling anything it had ever displayed in the past.

As a university-trained social anthropologist, I had access into that world of Jews who saw

themselves as “defenders of the faith,” despite many of its inhabitants' explicit or implicit denial of the legitimacy of my profession. This access was in part facilitated by this world's inhabitants' and leaders' growing conviction that they represented the future of Judaism and that I could be used to document their success and contributions. Behind every bit of information provided to me by what was now being called “Haredi Jewry” was the assumption that I myself, as a modern Orthodox Jew, was learning how much better and culturally richer this variant of Orthodoxy was than my own, or any other version of the religion.

I was, I must admit, fascinated by the vitality, the commitment, and in many cases the attractiveness of this world, especially in the eyes of the young Orthodox, who were more and more convinced that the previous generation's effort to live in plural life-worlds was based on ignorance, duplicity, and

convenience. The commitments here were powerful, deeply felt, and enthusiastic. The inspiring rabbis were Haredi ones. Except for those caught up in Israeli religious Zionist settlement politics, everyone else was looking toward rabbis who made Eastern Europe and yesterday more appealing than modern civilization and today. As a social anthropologist and student of Orthodoxy, I could not help but be drawn to documenting their efforts to recreate the past.

I was not alone. William Helmreich described the world of the contemporary yeshiva. Solomon Poll, Jerome Mintz, and others produced studies of the Hasidim, and of course Menachem Friedman analyzed Haredi life in Israel. These writers have been followed by an array of younger scholars, like Tamar El-Or, Kimmy Caplan, Maya Katz, and others too numerous to mention, whose work on these Orthodox Jews has been remarkable both in its intelligence and detail. While all these scholars' aims were ethnographic, analytic, and documentary, an unintended consequence, perhaps, of their approach was to enhance the sense that these Jews increasingly defined contemporary Orthodoxy. The modern Orthodox were simply no longer where the action was.

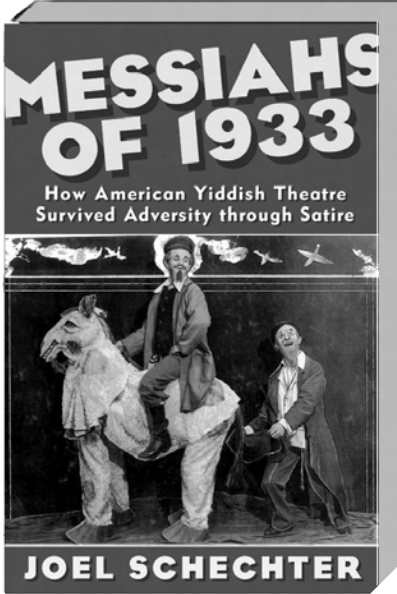
To be sure, there has of late been a new flurry of activity among the latter. Worthy of note is the emergence of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah in New York, a new rabbinical school seeking to produce a new kind of rabbi who does represent the model of one who embraces the idea of dynamic synthesis and plural life-worlds. A number of these rabbis have again embraced the idea of obtaining doctorates in addition to their rabbinical ordination. At Yeshiva University, through the work of its new president (the first non-rabbi to head the institution), and rabbis

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in its Center for the Jewish Future and its rabbinic enrichment initiative, there are efforts to resurrect the Torah and Maddah (science) ideal whose combination was once the university's symbolic goal. The many initiatives of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance to embrace a dynamic synthesis that recognizes the growing role of women in Judaism also suggest that there may be action in the non-Haredi world that will draw scholars once again to study it. *You Are Hereby Renewed Unto Me: Orthodox Women Challenge the Wedding Ritual*, a forthcoming book by Irit Koren that explores the efforts of young Orthodox women who want to reinterpret Jewish marriage law in light of changing gender roles and marital behavior, indicates that there is a renewed interest in the contrapuntalist elements of Orthodoxy. In the years ahead, perhaps, these sorts of analyses and ethnographies may show us whether Orthodoxy will sustain its dynamic synthesis or whether it will continue its slide

toward the parochial confines of its heavily traditionalist enclaves where change is kept at bay.

Samuel Heilman is the Harold Proshansky Chair in Jewish Studies at the Graduate Center and is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Queens College of the City University of New York, and author of Sliding to the Right: The Contest for the Future of American Jewish Orthodoxy (University of California Press, 2006).



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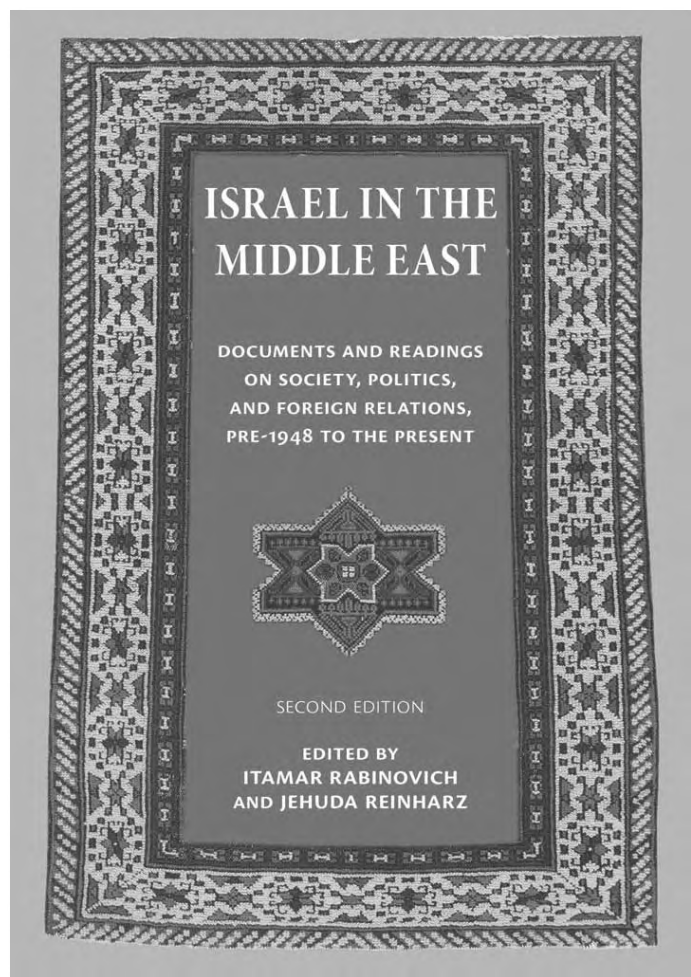
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RELIGIOUS FEMINISM IN ISRAEL: A REVOLUTION IN PROCESS

Irit Koren

For the last few years my research has focused on the ways in which a small, yet growing, number of modern Orthodox women living primarily in Israel have endeavored to challenge, resist, or adapt the Orthodox wedding ritual and, in so doing, transform it so that it would serve as an expression of their own identity, values, and ideals. The women whom I interviewed identified themselves not only as Orthodox but also as feminists, or at least as having feminist consciousness and knowledge. Some of these women found themselves confronted with a tension between these two aspects of their identities, as the values embraced by feminism and Orthodoxy are often at odds. Among other things, feminism stands for equality between the genders, while promoting the freedom of spiritual and sexual expression and autonomous self-definition. Orthodoxy, generally speaking, distinguishes between the two genders, viewing them as two essentially different entities with different statuses and degrees of freedom, and, ultimately, bestowing more power and control upon men. Only some of the women I interviewed, however, experienced this tension; others, who espoused both feminism and Orthodoxy, found these two outlooks more easily compatible, since they viewed these two aspects of their identity as mutually enriching. Regardless of the existence or degree of tension, all of the Orthodox feminists in my study devoted conscious thought and effort to reconciling their Orthodoxy with their feminism.

I view this phenomenon of religious women grappling with wedding

ritual as one dimension of a larger trend that I would designate as the “Jewish feminist ritual revolution.” This revolution is itself part of a more far-reaching transformation that has been underway in the modern Orthodox world in Israel for the last three decades, with parallels in modern Orthodox communities in the United States. In Israel, in particular, there are four main areas in which the feminist ritual revolution has had a significant impact: increased Jewish literacy for women, ritual, the female body and sexuality, and religious leadership. I will discuss each of these arenas, focusing mostly on developments in Israel. I will begin with the arena in which there has been the most change and proceed to others in which the process is less advanced and still regarded with considerable suspicion.

Increased Jewish Literacy for Women

The religious literacy locus of power was the first realm into which Jewish feminists in general and Orthodox feminists in particular managed to

enter. Although the roots of this phenomenon can be traced to the beginning of the twentieth century in Krakow

when Sara Shneier opened the Bais Yacov school for girls, it has acquired social power and influence mainly in the last three decades, both in the United States and in Israel.

In Israel things began, in my opinion, with the establishment by Professor Alice Shalvi in 1975 of Pelech’s high school for religious girls, the first school in Israel in which girls were taught Talmud as boys are. Many of the leading figures of the Orthodox feminist movement in Israel today are graduates of this institution. Tamar El-Or, on the



Photo courtesy of Irit Koren.

other hand, in her book about this phenomenon, *Next Year I Will Know More*, identifies its beginnings in Israel with the opening of the women's seminary Michlelet Bruria in Jerusalem in 1977. This trend continued with the establishment of many other *batei midrash* (houses of study) for

women such as: Kibbutz Ein Hanatziv, Matan, Nishmat, Pardes and many more. In these *batei midrash* women were allowed to enter a world that until not too long ago was forbidden to them and to participate in it in a way that bridged the gap between the modern and the religious worlds in which they live.

Orthodox feminism thus started with the sense of triumph felt by those who had the same religious Jewish literacy and skills as men, a feeling that gave rise to a social revolution. The first zone in which Orthodox women sought to assert themselves, the realm of education, is the core from which other social changes have emanated. Knowledge was expected to bring social power and indeed has done so. Only now can these women move on to take control of new practices and religious domains.

The Ritual Domain

Transforming the ritual domain is perhaps at the heart of the feminist Orthodox revolution today. One tendency is the creation of rituals aimed at mirroring traditional male rituals, such as the creation of celebrations for baby girls known as *simchat bat* rituals as a parallel to the celebration for the baby male's *brit milah*. Another innovation is the creation of different variations on those traditional rituals that mainly focus on male experiences. Women

are now inserting female experiences, performances, and voices into these traditional rituals. For example, they transfer practices normally associated with males to women participating in the wedding ritual, such as having a woman read the *ketubah*, or having both the bride and the groom circle

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each other under the *huppah*, instead of having only the bride circle the groom.

Finally, we find that in the synagogue, women have taken on more roles that have hitherto been the exclusive domain of men. Examples are found in congregations like Shira Chadasha in Jerusalem, Darchey Noam in New York City and similar groups elsewhere. These congregations identify themselves as both halakic and egalitarian. Women are allowed and encouraged to lead certain parts of the service, chant the Torah, and participate in other roles which were traditionally given to men only, such as being the *gabbai* (manager of synagogue affairs) of the congregation and giving a *dvar torah* (teaching a Jewish text) at the end of the service.

Female Body and Sexuality

The third arena in which changes are emerging has to do with sexuality and the female body. Dealing with these issues is a radical step in modern Orthodox society since it undermines the foundations of gender relations and separation in Jewish tradition. Nevertheless,

women have been voicing questions and criticism in different forums regarding the laws of female modesty, which require them to cover much of their bodies in public, and the act of ritual bathing in connection with menstruation. Many religious scholars and activists, writing from a critical feminist point of view, have published books and articles describing these traditional attitudes as expressions of a hegemonic and dominant, traditional male discourse. These alternative discourses are not always textual; the

movie titled *Teborah* (Pure), which led to much debate in different forums, tells the story of three Orthodox women who engage in the act of ritual bathing but do not refrain from expressing their criticisms of it.

Another matter of concern to feminists is the code of silence regarding violence and sexual harassment within religious institutions and families. In the past few years there have been several high profile scandals involving prominent Orthodox rabbis and sexual harassment. Extensive coverage of one of these scandals in *Ma'ariv* and *Ha'aretz* led a group of important rabbis to denounce the women who had filed the accusations. Under the leadership of Chana Kehat, the religious feminist forum "Kolech" rose to the defense of these women and voiced its disappointment with the public's reaction to what had happened.

In recent years the Internet has emerged as a site for people to ask rabbis questions concerning sexual interaction between single men and women, including the question of

whether women engaged in such activity should participate in ritual bathing even though they are unmarried. In view of the traditional assumption that only married women have sexual interactions and that the act of ritual bathing after menstruation is a matter of concern to married women only, it is not surprising that such issues were initially channeled into the anonymous setting provided by the Internet. What might perhaps be more surprising is that matters did not stop there. These issues were publicly thrashed out at a large gathering organized by Neemani Torah Veavodah in the Ohel Nehama synagogue in Jerusalem in 2005 and presided over by three rabbis.

Public Leadership

The fourth realm, in which Orthodox feminism is just beginning to make an appearance, is that of religious leadership. A few recent developments may prove to have set the stage for the rabbinical ordination of women. One of the breakthroughs was the legal ruling of 1988 that enabled Leah Shakdiel, a well-known Orthodox feminist activist, to become a member of the religious council of her home town of Yerucham; in 1990 women received permission to function as

religious lawyers (*toanot rabaniyot*) in the religious courts; in the late 1990s, a program opened in Nishmat's beit midrash to train women to become halakic advisors for women who have questions and concerns about the laws of menstruation. I believe that the next front is inevitably going to be the rabbinic ordination of Orthodox women. While one Orthodox woman has already been ordained by an Orthodox rabbi in Jerusalem, the path to full recognition is still strewn with obstacles.

All of these developments have combined to create a sense that Orthodox women are not satisfied with the status quo. The realization that religious knowledge is the primary locus of power in an Orthodox community has propelled women to seek it, and the possession of such knowledge has inspired them to make other changes. Once women mastered religious texts, the religious authorities functioning in the modern Orthodox world could not continue to exclude them from power. Making use of their ability to approach the canonical sacred texts, analyze them, and criticize the tacit assumptions of the tradition and hoary custom, women identified in the sources a variety of voices, some of which

support the acquisition of more power and freedom by women. More and more women feel now that they "own" the texts and thus deserve to play a greater part in the ongoing process of shaping Jewish tradition. Perhaps it is this feeling of ownership that enables and encourages them to persist in their efforts to take control of new domains.

Will these accomplishments strengthen or weaken modern Orthodoxy in the long run? Some will regard them as proof of the wisdom of those who always resisted teaching women Torah out of fear that it would lead to the slippery slope of revolutionary change. Others will believe, as I have learned to, that enabling the hitherto silent half of the Orthodox community to voice its creativity, its intelligence, its engagement, its spirituality, its values, and its unique understanding of Jewish texts can only enrich and strengthen the Jewish world and religion.

Irit Koren is a post-doctoral fellow at the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies at Columbia University, and author of You Are Hereby Renewed Unto Me: Orthodox Women Challenge the Wedding Ritual (forthcoming, 2008).

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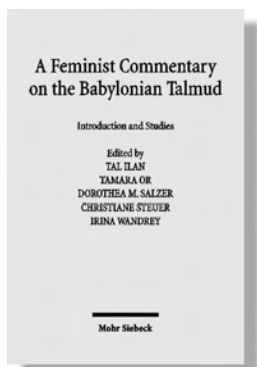
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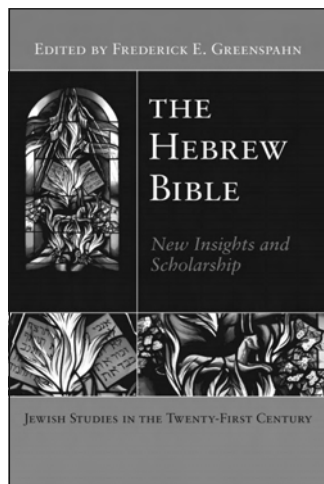
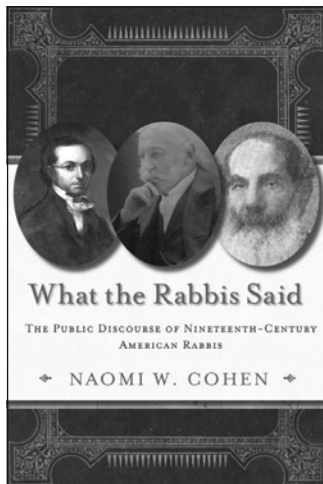
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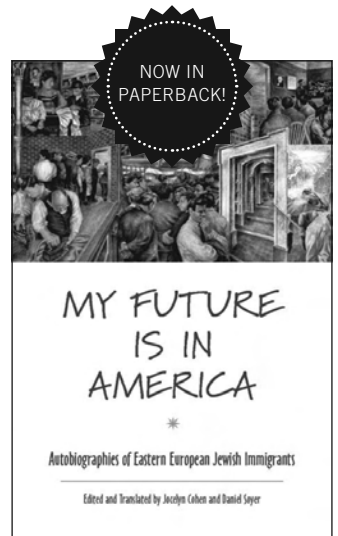
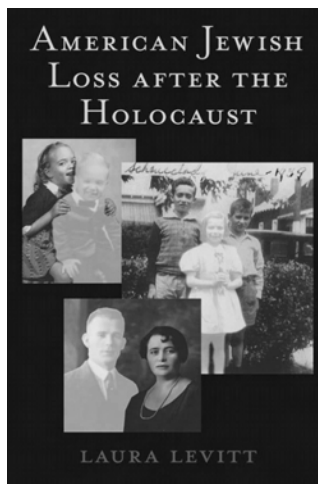
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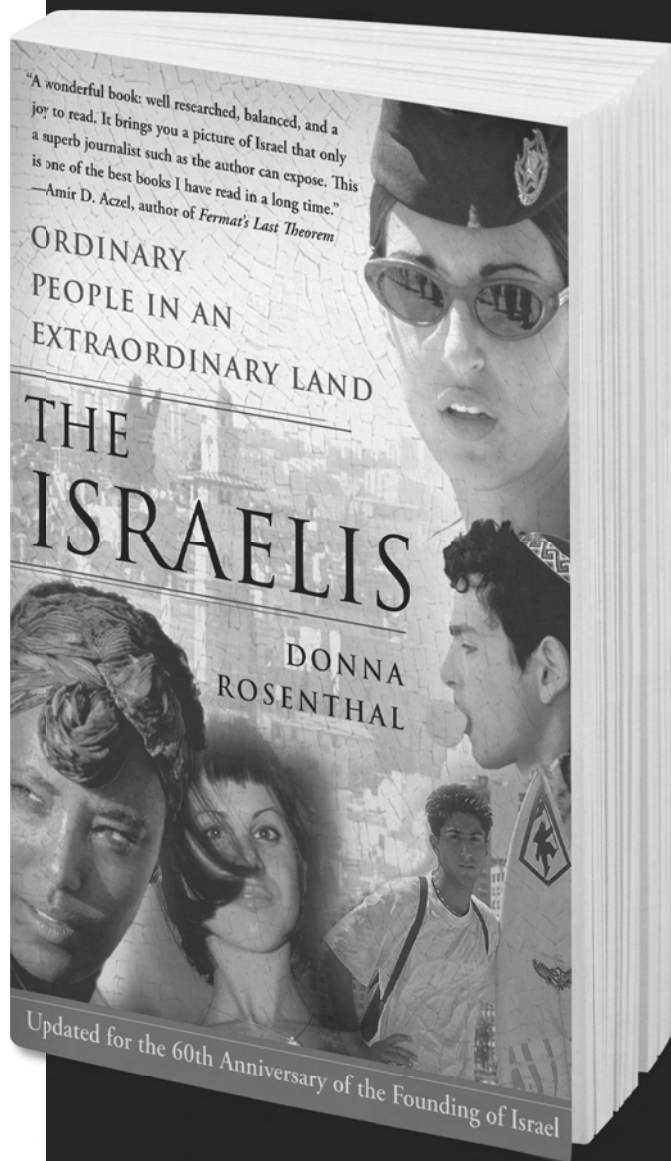
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HAREDI COUNTER HISTORY: SOME THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Nahum Karlinsky

Haredi (so-called ultra-Orthodox Jewish) society and culture, despite the wealth of important scholarly works devoted to it, still poses a conundrum for many. An important component of Haredi culture and society that contributes to this society's enigmatic nature is its dynamic transformative character, comprised of a unique blend of strictly traditional tenets on the one hand and manifestly modern elements on the other.

Haredi historiography—a distinct literary genre that sets out to record the history of this society—may serve as a fascinating and useful analytical tool for a better understanding of the Haredi phenomenon. Furthermore, by examining the origins of Haredi historiography, we may be able to identify some basic components of this unique manifestation of Haredi life and, consequently, isolate essential elements of the Haredi enigma.

The State of Research

The term *Orthodox historiography* (read: Haredi historiography) was first coined by Israel Bartal more than twenty years ago. Reviewing the three-volume memoir and history of nineteenth-century non-Hasidic Haredi society, *Zikhron Ya'akov*, written by the Haredi activist and journalist Jacob Ha-Levi Lipschitz, a disciple and personal secretary to the eminent rabbinical

scholar and Haredi leader, R. Isaac Elhanan of Kovno, published posthumously in 1923–1930, Bartal defined this work as “Orthodox historiography.” Bartal’s main thesis is that in their efforts to stanch the infiltration of modernity in Orthodox society, Haredi historians adopted modern methods of historical writing in the hope that by so doing they could beat

LABELING THESE MAINLY HAGIOGRAPHICAL WORKS AS ORTHODOX HISTORIOGRAPHY, ASSAF DEFINED THE GENRE OF THESE WRITERS AS A “RECRUITED LITERATURE,” I.E., A “LITERATURE THAT IS DELIBERATELY COMMITTED TO SERVE CERTAIN INTERESTS, OVERT OR COVERT.”

modernity on its own turf. Bartal also showed that Lipschitz’s strategy was not an isolated case and that Haredi society employs the same approach in regard to other cultural spheres as well. At the same time, a common assumption is that this has been a split-level adoption, in which only the “shell”—the “instrumental” or “value-free” aspects of these institutions and concepts—was embraced. The content, i.e., the ideological or philosophical underpinnings of the adopted customs, it is claimed, have been discarded.

Subsequent to Bartal’s study of the Lipschitz memoir, other scholars devoted important studies to Orthodox historiography. Immanuel Etkes described and analyzed the beginnings of historical writings in the Vilna Gaon’s circles and later on dealt with the attitude of Haredi

writers towards the Gaon and his role in the struggle of the *mitnagdim* against Hasidism. Ada Rapoport-Albert studied the historically oriented writings of the Chabad leader R. Joseph Isaac Schneerson (1880–1950), and concluded that they were “hagiography with footnotes.”

Zeev Gries maintains that for Chabad, historical writing has been a recurring phenomenon of this movement’s literary output. David Assaf showed that other Hasidic dynasties were engaged in historical writing as well. Assaf listed various literary strategies that were employed by the wide range of writers who retold the stories of the

famous nineteenth-century Hasidic rebbe, R. Israel of Ruzhin. Labeling these mainly hagiographical works as Orthodox historiography, Assaf defined the genre of these writers as a “recruited literature,” i.e., a

“literature that is deliberately committed to serve certain interests, overt or covert.” Recently, Haim Gertner has suggested that under the rubric of Orthodox historiography, traditionalist researchers, who in the course of mid-nineteenth-century Europe were engaged in the writings of the traditional historical genre of chronography, should also be included.

Thus, it is clear from the above short appraisal that the study of Haredi historiography is still young; we still lack a comprehensive survey and analysis of this phenomenon. In addition, and this would be the focus of this article, it is apparent that a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of Haredi historiography requires a clearer definition of the terms employed in this discussion, especially Haredi,

Orthodox, and historiography, in addition to some clarification of the relations among them. Thus, I maintain that in discussing Haredi historiography, in contrast to discussing the variegated ways Haredi society narrates its past, the term historiography should be limited to its accepted use in any other historical field, namely to the notion of modern, secularist-oriented form of telling the story of the past. Following to some extent Samuel Heilman's and Menachem Friedman's characterization of Orthodoxy as a contra-acculturation movement, we may characterize Orthodoxy as a modern Jewish movement that has struggled, in the face of the secularist threat of the modern world, to sustain Judaism in its traditional form. Haredi society will be defined here as the most conservative branch of Orthodox Judaism, one that refuses to consciously adopt any form, and especially any value, from the modern world.

What will follow would be a brief discussion and characterization of one example of Haredi historiography—the first Haredi-Hasidic history book, *Beit Rabbi*. In light of this discussion I hope to be able to add another ingredient to the above definition of the Haredi phenomenon, one that would address this society's dynamic—and hence most enigmatic—character.

Beit Rabbi

Published in Berdichev in 1902, this book, written by a Chabad Hasid named Hayyim Meir Heilman, intended to present an official,

authoritative and up-to-date biography of the Schneerson family from the time of its founder R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi onward. The author's effort to make *Beit Rabbi* look like a modern, contemporary history is evident both in content and form. *Beit Rabbi*, like a modern, secular history book, attempts to present facts and dates accurately, to provide reliable—and, preferably, new—

Notwithstanding these elements, *Beit Rabbi* is not a history book in the modern, secular sense of the term. What distinguishes it from modern historiography, and gives it its Haredi flavor, is the inclusion of hagiographical tales of zaddikim as an integral part of the book's "historical" narrative. How can one explain this inclusion? I suggest that the hagiography in *Beit Rabbi* serves as a fundamentalist barrier against modernity.

The Belief in the Zaddik as Fundamentalist Tenet in Hasidism

Contrary to many other researchers, I find the comparison of the Haredi phenomenon with religious fundamentalism very fruitful. Three aspects of the typological similarity between Haredism and religious fundamentalism should be emphasized here. First, the consciousness of danger emanating from the modern world and its values provides both Haredi society and religious fundamentalism with a major stimulus in the crystallization of their institutional array and values. Second, both phenomena, the Haredi and the fundamentalist, have adopted the typical form of counter-societies vis-à-vis modern society. Third, both phenomena have installed a new value system that, while drawing on and perpetuating the world of tradition, has revised the prior scale of values and social order,

establishing in their stead a new order that entails the construction of a barrier against the penetration of modernity into tradition. In nineteenth-century east European Hasidic society, it seems to me, one may identify a process in which belief in the zaddik became a fundamentalist value. Regarding the



Title page of Hayim Heilman, *Sefer Bet Rabi* (Berditshov: Ba-defus shel H.Y. Sheftil, 1902).

sources, and to anchor the historical reconstruction in the familiar soil of the "corporeal" world. The author's extensive use of footnotes and his critical survey of the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* and Jewish national historical literature are other clear indications of his adoption of some forms of modern historiography.

non-Hasidic sector of the Haredi society, it seems that the study of the halakah, the renascent world of the yeshivot, and the emergence of the *Gadol* as the epitome of this world, served as a similar buffer against the values of modernity.

The Hagiography in *Beit Rabbi*

Hence, Heilman's book contains not only many "historical" documents but also rich layers of hagiographical tales. The praises in Heilman's book were placed there neither by coincidence nor to embellish the dry historical account with colorful folk illustrations. The intent in all the hagiographical stories in Heilman's book is the same: to present, alongside a formally and methodically corporeal account, the history of the founders and dynasty of Chabad as a sacred history. In other words, the main significance of Heilman's hagiographic account is its posture as the true explanation of history. I argue that the hagiographical dimension of *Beit Rabbi* is an inseparable part of Heilman's religious mindset and serves as an obstacle to historical and rational criticism of Hasidism and its worldview, that is, as a fundamentalist tenet.

A Trojan Horse

Heilman's solution has been to make a conscious effort to adopt some of the modus operandi of modernity in the service of interests and goals of tradition, while rejecting the value system that informed it. This adoption creates constant tension in *Beit Rabbi* since Heilman has to cope at all times with the risks of rational historical argumentation that uses "human" explanation and reasoning to judge a sacred realm.

Furthermore, I do not think it far off the mark to state that in *Beit Rabbi* Heilman established a historiographic model that has left visible traces in Haredi and Hasidic

historical writings to the present day. Neither in *Beit Rabbi* nor in the Hasidic historiography that follows it does this posture create a harmonic synthesis of scholarly research and faith. On the contrary: it dichotomizes the two worldviews and renders them mutually estranged. It is this very dialectic and dichotomous tension that, I believe, lend *Beit Rabbi* and the historiography that follows it their special Haredi-fundamentalist complexion.

However, the conscious rejection of the secularist value system could not prevent the Haredi historians, once they decided to adopt some devices of modern historiography, from judging the past from the perspective of a more anthropocentric *Weltanschauung*.

Thus, human reasoning and explanation took hold in areas where a theocentric *Weltanschauung* once reigned. This tendency is not confined to the field of writing history alone. A mere glance at today's Haredi society reveals its adoption of a rich variety of value-free or instrumental components of the modern and postmodern worlds—such as satellite broadcasting, juvenile literature, use of the Internet, and much more. This has occurred even as the leaders and followers of the Haredi way continue to cling to the golden days of the past—in

their dress codes, yeshiva studies, independent educational and judicial systems, etc. One must conclude that the partial adoption of modernity served, and continues to function, as a Trojan Horse inside the citadel of Haredi society. I believe that in many respects this "forked path" toward modernity—conscious rejection of modern values and "instrumental" adoption of modernity's modus operandi—can explain much of the constant change within, and the enigmatic character of, Haredi society.

Nahum Karlinsky is senior lecturer at the Ben Gurion Research Institute, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and author of Counter History: the Hasidic Epistles from Eretz-Israel—Text and Context (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1998).

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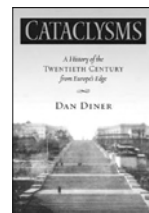
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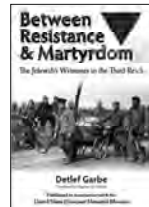
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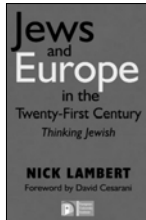
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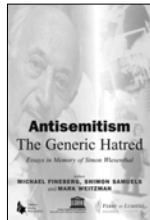
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HAREDIM AND THE STUDY OF HAREDIM IN ISRAEL: REFLECTIONS ON A RECENT CONFERENCE

Kimmy Caplan and Nurit Stadler

The scholarly study of Orthodoxy by Israeli academics began in the 1960s with a few students of Jacob Katz, among whom Moshe Samet deserves pride of place. In 1967 Samet completed his PhD thesis, devoted primarily to the halakic responsa of Rabbi Moses Sofer (1762–1839). Shortly afterwards he published a few articles that outlined the historical context within which, he argued, Orthodoxy ought to be situated as a modern phenomenon. This conclusion stands in sharp contrast to the common perception of many Orthodox believers that Orthodoxy is the only authentic and direct continuation of traditional Judaism. Samet went on to indicate the main trends within Orthodoxy, elucidating the differences between them. Samet’s overall conclusions have generated a great deal of scholarly discussion among students of Orthodoxy in both Israel and other countries.

A few years later, another student of Katz, Menahem Friedman, embarked upon a pathbreaking study of the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) community in Mandate Palestine. As Friedman himself has observed on more than one occasion, several leading scholars of Jewish history looked askance at his choice of topics, wondering why he would devote so much attention to a marginal and in all likelihood doomed community. But when Friedman’s book, entitled *Society and Religion (Hevrah Vedayat)*, appeared

toward the end of 1977, it was clear that it would have a strong impact on the existing scholarship on the Yishuv in general during the period of the British Mandate. To be sure, Friedman was by no means the first scholar to address the history of the “Old Yishuv” in Palestine. More than his colleagues, however, he placed and categorized the “Old Yishuv” within a scholarly context of Haredi society and Haredism.

Friedman’s book appeared only a few months after the occurrence of a momentous development on the political plane: Following the victory of the Likud party in the elections in May 1977, Menahem Begin formed a coalition that brought the Haredi party, Agudat Israel, into the government for the first time in twenty-five years. This led many

Israelis to the sudden recognition that Haredi society had not disappeared after all and had in fact re-established itself in Israel. The revitalization of this society was evident in the growth and expansion of its educational and communal institutions, and primarily in its self-confidence.

The strength of Haredi society as well as the appearance of additional Haredi political parties (Shas in 1982, representing Sephardi Haredim, and Degel Hatorah in the mid-1980s) gradually drew the attention of students in the fields of anthropology, Jewish thought, political science, and sociology. Thus, for example, following Shas’s rise, political scientists and political sociologists analyzed this party’s performance since 1984, and tried time and again to explain its unprecedented and ongoing success.

This mounting scholarly interest did not remain limited to the aforementioned fields but soon spread to other disciplines, including communications studies, geography, medicine, psychiatry, and psychology. A recent, partial bibliographical essay on the study of



Panel at Van Leer Jerusalem Institute’s conference on Israeli Haredi society, November 2007. Reprinted with permission of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

Israeli Haredim since 1970 lists nearly six hundred scholarly theses and publications. Unfortunately, however, there is very limited cross-disciplinary discourse among scholars studying Haredi society. Most of them are largely unaware of the wide range of studies of Haredim in disciplines other than their own.

Remedying this situation has been one of the main goals of a working group on Haredi society that has been active now for approximately seven years at The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. The group's most recent step in this direction consisted of a two-day scholarly conference devoted to Israeli Haredi society that took place at the institute in November 2007. Among the topics addressed during this conference were recent trends in the occupational arena and Haredim in the workforce, identity, and citizenship—discourse and reality, linguistic changes and developments, ethnicity and Israelization, geographical developments and patterns of consumption, voluntary action and medical care, communication and education, halakah and theology.

The conference was well attended. In almost all of the sessions there were between one hundred and one hundred and fifty men and women in the audience, including students, scholars, senior citizens, religious Jews representing different camps, secular Israelis, and government employees. In each and every session at least a few and sometimes as many ten to fifteen Haredi men and/or women were present in the audience. Judging by their garb, these Haredim represented almost every Haredi subgroup. In certain sessions Haredi listeners did not hesitate to take part in the discussions following the lectures.

The conference was broadcast live through the Internet, and close to

WHAT WAS PARTICULARLY STRIKING WAS THAT SO MANY SCHOLARS SUCCEEDED IN GATHERING INTERNAL INFORMATION AND DATA FROM HAREDI SOCIETY AND DEVELOPING TIES WITH SPECIFIC GROUPS. THIS EXPERIENCE CONTRASTED SHARPLY WITH POPULAR IMAGES OF THE HAREDI “ENCLAVE CULTURE” AS BEING VIRTUALLY UNAPPROACHABLE BY ACADEMIC OBSERVERS AND CAST DOUBT ON CERTAIN SCHOLARLY REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE DIFFICULTIES OF STUDYING THIS SOCIETY.

1,400 entries were recorded during the two days. The average observing time was more than one hour (although this figure is somewhat misleading, since there were very short entries of a few minutes alongside others that were several hours in length). Even though the identity of Internet observers remains unknown, it is clear that some of them were Haredim, as we learn from Haredi Internet sites, such as “In Haredi Rooms” (*Behadrei Haredim*), in which observers commented even as the lectures were in progress.

Rather than entering into specifics, we would like to reflect on the conference and its contribution to contemporary scholarship on Israeli Haredi society. Close to half of the presentations were based upon quantitative data, such as national statistics, or data that was processed into quantitative terms, such as interviews and questionnaires. Certain speakers tended toward descriptive presentations, focusing on data relating to such matters as the changing attitudes toward Yiddish and shifting patterns of using this language in various Israeli Haredi groups, as well as recent trends surrounding Haredi participation in the workforce and attitudes toward secular studies. Other presentations were based upon qualitative approaches, such as

participant observation, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis—be it movies, halakic responsa, or popular theology. What was particularly striking was that so many scholars succeeded in gathering internal information and data from Haredi society and developing ties with specific groups. This experience contrasted sharply with popular images of the Haredi “enclave culture” as being virtually unapproachable by academic observers and cast doubt on certain scholarly reflections about the difficulties of studying this society.

Unlike the work of earlier scholars, such as Friedman, Samet, Yosef Salmon, and others, who related to the “Old Yishuv” Haredim and their society in historical terms and based their studies primarily upon archives and other documents, contemporary research on Haredim is characterized by a wide variety of methodological tools and concepts. This has shed much new light upon various aspects of Haredi religiosity, norms, and values. Consequently, several new themes in the study of Haredi society emerged throughout the conference, of which we will mention three:

- (1) The centrality of gender and the role of women as agents of change and transformation within almost all the subgroups of this society.
- (2) The importance of newly

affiliated and “converted” groups and their fusion into Haredi society, such as newly religious or national-religious Haredim (*Hardal'im—Haredim leumi'im*).

(3) Changing approaches toward the state, citizenship, and civil society, especially evident through voluntary work, various new institutions, social aid, and education.

It should be noted, too, that all of the speakers emphasized the fact that Haredi society is composed of numerous groups and subgroups, and therefore cannot be treated as an undivided whole. Most presentations were devoted to specific case studies and dimensions of Haredi life, and consequently included important observations and conclusions regarding distinctions between various groups as well as within them.

With very few exceptions, all speakers were either junior scholars or graduate students. Approximately half of them were male and half female (but not as the result of any intentional pursuit of gender parity on the part of the conference's academic committee). The criteria for participation were strictly scholarly, and the conference was open to studies from all disciplines. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the fact that two or three lecturers identified themselves after the selection of their papers as Haredim, several Haredi individuals protested the fact that a conference on Haredim did not include Haredim as speakers—that is, as exemplars of Haredi life and not as Haredim who happen to study Haredi society from a scholarly point of view. Such a complaint is highly interesting, both because it coincides with other recent developments within mainstream Israeli Haredi society and because it exposes a lack of basic understanding of the nature of an academic conference and academic scholarship.

The fact that our conference was made up primarily of junior scholars has enabled us to identify certain

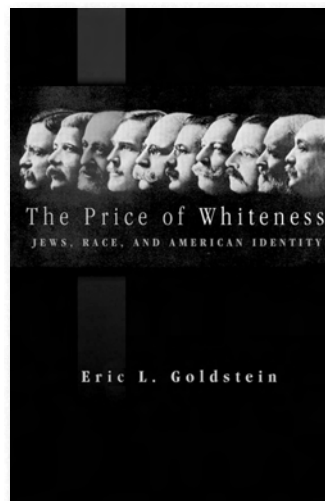
scholarly trends that have developed since the 1970s as well as a number of gaps that need to be filled. For example, there was a noticeable shortage (although not an absence) of younger participants carrying on the older tradition of historical or historically oriented study of Haredi society. As a result, a host of historical aspects of the subject remain unexamined. For example, we still await a critical history of any Hasidic court in Israel or of a significant Haredi educational institution, or a full-scale critical biography of a Haredi leader (though one should not leave unmentioned the recent, valuable analyses of the writings of such figures as Avraham Y. Karelitz, Yoel Teitelbaum, and Ovadia Yosef).

Since the late 1960s, American and Canadian sociologists and anthropologists, including George (Gershon) Kranzler, Israel Rubin, and William Shaffir, have studied specific Haredi communities, primarily Hasidic ones. Some of them returned to the communities they studied twenty or thirty years later in order to re-examine their earlier findings. This type of work is similar in general to several communal studies of various Christian fundamentalist and other religious communities during the same period. Unfortunately, to the best of our knowledge, there exists no such study of any similar Haredi group in Israel.

Notwithstanding these omissions, the overall situation is quite promising. Among

students and scholars of Israeli Haredi society, we see growing evidence of a new cross-disciplinary dialogue that will enable all of the scholars involved in it to gain a better understanding of the multiple, inter-related dimensions of their studies and the extent to which they complement and/or contrast with one another. In this sense, our November 2007 conference offers additional proof of the advantages of multidisciplinary scholarly discourse with regard to contemporary religious societies and movements.

Kimmy Caplan is senior lecturer in the Department of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan University. Nurit Stadler is assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. They are co-editors of Leadership and Authority in Israeli Haredi Society: New Perspectives (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad and the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute [forthcoming, 2008, in Hebrew]).



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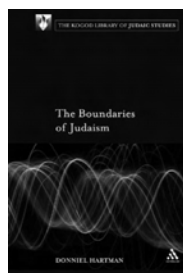
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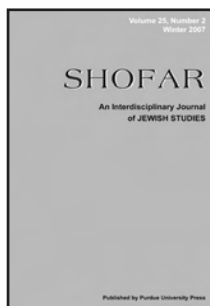


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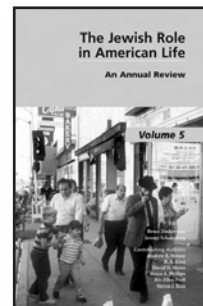
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RESEARCHING ORTHODOX JUDAISM ONLINE

Heidi Lerner

For people interested in researching the many strains of Orthodox Judaism in all their diversity, there is a variety of primary and secondary sources to consult online. Books and journals are available digitally. Websites emanating from institutions, organizations, and individuals document highly distinctive ideological and political perspectives. There is increasing use of the Internet by Orthodox and Haredi Jews for multiple religious, communal, personal, and educational purposes, despite some well-publicized opposition among the Haredim. Religious Jewish residents of the West Bank maintain websites that provide historical, theological, and institutional information. The following and by no means exhaustive list includes some of the Web-based resources and tools that reflect the wide range of Orthodox thought, activity, and practices.

Orthodox Judaism and the Media

For approximately two hundred years a wide range of journals devoted to Talmudic commentary, Jewish law, homiletics, and biblical exegesis have been published in Europe, the Americas, and Israel. By the middle of the nineteenth century, an Orthodox press emerged in Germany and continued up until the 1930s. It included such titles as *Der treue Zionswächter*, *Jeschurun*, *Jüdische Korrespondenz*, *Jüdische Presse*, *Der Morgen*, *Nachalath Zwei* and *Der Israelit*. The Compact Memory project, based at universities in Aachen, Frankfurt, and Cologne, Germany,

provides free, full-text access to these and other German Jewish periodicals (www.compactmemory.de).

HebrewBooks.org, a nonprofit organization founded “to preserve old American Hebrew books that are out of print and/or circulation,” has mounted on the Web approximately one hundred American Orthodox Jewish periodicals online that are out of print or circulation (www.hebrewbooks.org). Reflecting

THERE IS INCREASING USE OF THE INTERNET BY ORTHODOX AND HAREDI JEWS FOR MULTIPLE RELIGIOUS, COMMUNAL, PERSONAL, AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES, DESPITE SOME WELL-PUBLICIZED OPPOSITION AMONG THE HAREDIM.

a recent trend in modern American Orthodox thought, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah issues *Meorot: A Forum of Modern Orthodox Discourse* online (www.yctorah.org/content/view/331/78).

Among the electronically available newspapers and journals that serve the Orthodox and Haredi communities in Israel, the daily *ha-Tsofeh* (www.hazofe.co.il) is affiliated with the National Religious Party. The weeklies *Mispacha* (www.mishpacha.com) and *Ba-Kehilah* (www.bakehila.com) pride themselves on being unaffiliated with any of the authorities within the Haredi establishment. Scholars interested in the changing demographics of Orthodox and Haredi society and its increasing involvement with the outside world will find a good deal

of raw material in these journals.

Also within Israel, the organization Ne’emanei Torah vaAvodah aims to preserve “the original values of traditional Zionism” and offers current and back issues of its influential journal *Deot* online (www.toravoda.org.il/deot.html). The *Arutz Sheva Israel National News* site (www.israelnationalnews.com) emanates from the religious Zionist community and offers news and analysis in several formats (text, visual, and audio) and also *shiurim* from leading rabbis in English and Hebrew.

There are a number of radio stations broadcasting on the

Internet that are directed to Orthodox audiences. *Kol Hai* is a licensed Haredi radio station in Israel (www.93fm.co.il). Other programs on the Internet aimed at the Orthodox communities are *Kol ha-Neshama*, *Kol ha-Emet*, and *Radio Breslev*.

Organizational Websites

The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (www.ou.org), often known as the OU, is one of the largest Jewish organizations in the United States. Its website provides links on community services, events, family life, holidays, a job board, and much more. The Rabbinical Council of America is closely aligned with many mainstream Orthodox institutions. Its website (www.rabbis.org) includes a link to the online version of *Tradition: A*

Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought, and a host of other resources. Daat (www.daat.ac.il) is a site devoted to medical ethics and halakah. Its site contains a number of position papers and also articles from the journal *Assia*. Yeshiva University has created YU Torah Online (www.yutorah.org), which provides online access to a wide range of internal textual, video, and audio publications.

Several organizations founded by and directed toward Orthodox Jewish women have websites, including Kolech—Religious Women’s Forum (www.kolech.org) and the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) (www.jofa.org).

A number of organizations reach out to affiliated and unaffiliated Jews in the hopes that they will become more observant. Tzohar is an organization of Religious Zionist Israeli rabbis who aim to connect with secular Israelis and strengthen their religious life. Its website (www.tzohar.org.il) provides information on the organization’s activities and includes articles from *Tsohar*, a journal that provides a forum for discussion for the religious Zionist community in Israel. One of the site’s innovations is a system which allows people to ask Tsohar’s rabbis questions on any halakic subject, and to receive a thorough and clear reply by email. The website of Aish ha-Torah (www.aish.com), affiliated with the Lithuanian Haredi tradition, includes texts and audio files on a wide range of relevant topics, and an “Ask the Rabbi” function. Chabad.org, the main website (www.chabad.org) for Chabad-Lubavitch, contains more than 100,000 articles, ranging from history to science to basic Judaism to Hasidut. It also allows users to “Ask the Rabbi.” Also directed toward secular Jewish audiences is the Shofar website (www.shofar.net) under the leadership of Rabbi

Amnon Yitzchak. At the Keren Yishai website, Rav Mordechai Elon delivers a weekly *shiur* on *parashat hashavua* that is broadcast on the radio (<http://elon.org>).

The Machon Meir Institute of Jewish Studies, affiliated with the teachings of Rav Kook, maintains a website

(www.machonmeir.net) that offers a digital version of the weekly Torah commentary presented in its synagogue along *Edt Houston* with a trove of audio and digital files. Yeshivat Har Etzion, a *hesder* yeshiva, offers the Virtual Beit Midrash, which presents Web-based, yeshiva-style teaching on Torah and Judaism (www.vbm-torah.org).

Communication within Orthodox and Haredi Communities

The internal official and unofficial communications of different groups present a vivid picture of the inner dynamics of the various segments and streams within Orthodox Judaism. Issues of *Shabat be-shabato* from 1999 to present are available online at the Moreshet website (<http://moreshet.co.il>). From Chabad, a weekly publication entitled *Sikhat ha-shavu‘a* can be found at the Tseire Chabad website (www.chabad.org.il/Magazines/Articles.asp?CategoryID=30). Also from Chabad and available online is *Sikhat ha-ge‘ulah* (www.hageula.com/?CTopic=1). Machon Meir issues *Be-ahavah u’be-emunah* at its website (www.machonmeir.org.il/hebrew/main.asp?cat_id=11). The nationalist religious Sephardi

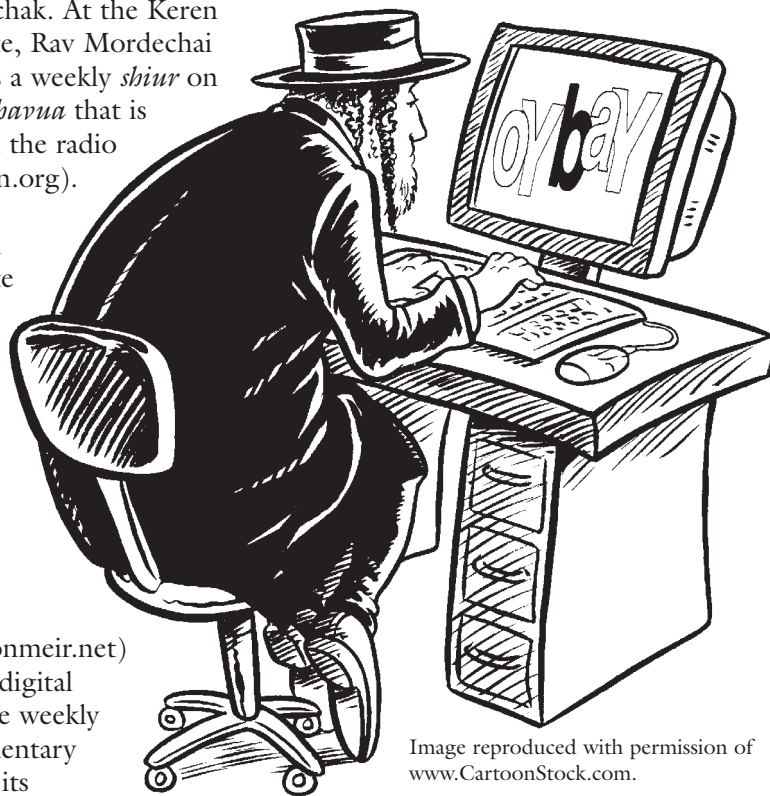


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community produces *Kol tsofayikh*, which contains the teachings of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu (www.harav.org). The Kollel Iyun Hadaf offers online free resources for *daf yomi* learners around the world (www.dafyomi.co.il).

As Dr. Kimmy Caplan of Bar-Ilan University has observed, an explosion of circulating audio-based and video-based sermons has taken place in Haredi society during the past twenty years. These are mostly issued on cassettes and CDs. Inevitably, despite rabbinic injunctions against the use of the Internet, the mode of dissemination of these materials has been almost entirely Web-based. Even now there are websites that have downloadable sermons. The words of Rabbi Shalom Arush, spiritual leader of the Sephardic followers of Bratslav Hasidism can be found on the Web (<http://behappy.web-site.co.il>). Another site that offers audio and downloadable sermons belongs to R. Daniel Zer (<http://rabenu.co.il>). The Maran website (<http://maran1.com>) includes video and audio sermons from Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

If critically used, the Internet can serve as a kind of barometer of popular sentiment. Tamar Rotem described in *Haaretz* (December 25, 2002) how Haredi users communicate with each other on B'Hadrei Haredim, a popular forum on the Hyde Park website. The Modiya website includes links to several directories of Haredi forums (<http://modiya.nyu.edu/handle/1964/1003>). The JOFA site has a list of blogs that are relevant to Orthodox Jewish feminists (www.jofa.org/about.php/resources/blogs).

Much research has been done on the Gush Emunim movement, but as Avishai Margalit has pointed out in the *New York Review of Books*, "Most of what is written on the ideologically motivated settlers deals with the founding generation." Hagit Ofra of Peace Now says that a look at the use of the Internet by the second generation of West Bank settlers could be the "basis for a whole research [project] . . . since there is a lot of use of the Internet by those groups." Sites such as the ones from Beit El Yeshiva (www.yeshiva.org.il), the Birkat Yosef Hesder Yeshiva at Elon Moreh (www.yeshivat-elon-moreh.com), and the Hebron Jewish community (www.hebron.co.il) contain a range of *shiurim* and articles, and community information. Sharei Schechem (<http://shechem.org/neindex.html>) functions as an introduction to the settlements that are being erected in the Shomron. The Yesha Rabbinical Council (Va'ad Rabane Yesha, www.rabbaneyesha.com), headed by Rabbis Dov Lior and Elyakim Levanon, maintain a small website as well.

Conclusion

The transient nature of these online sources and the difficulties in finding them are ongoing areas of concern that researchers and scholars need to address. There

have been many third-party attempts to organize them on portals, individuals' collections of links, scholars' Web pages, etc. However, these do not provide systematic indexing or archiving, or any guarantee of longevity.

The research value of these materials to the study of Orthodox Judaism is quite considerable. Scholars have acknowledged the importance of institutional collections of physical ephemera, notably the National Library of Israel (the new official name of the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem); the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary's broadside, poster, and "pashkevlim" (public wall posters used for communication in Haredi society) collections; and Harvard College Library Judaica Division's collection of audio and videotaped sermons. The increasing concentration of such materials on the Web will necessitate new efforts at preservation.

Unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge, up until now no institution has taken up the task of systematically collecting these "born digital" materials. The National Library of Israel has the mandate to preserve Israeli websites. Services such as the Internet Archive's Archive-It (www.archive-it.org) exist to help organizations find a way to archive valuable Web content. The importance of curatorial and scholarly

intervention in determining their sustainability and their research value is obvious. A coordinated effort to preserve, catalogue, and index these materials is urgently needed.

Heidi Lerner is the Hebraica/Judaica cataloguer at Stanford University Libraries.

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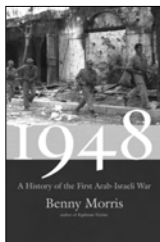
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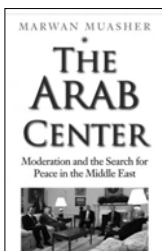
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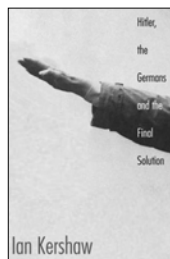


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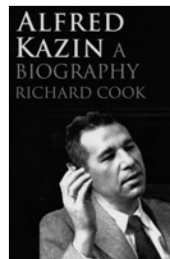
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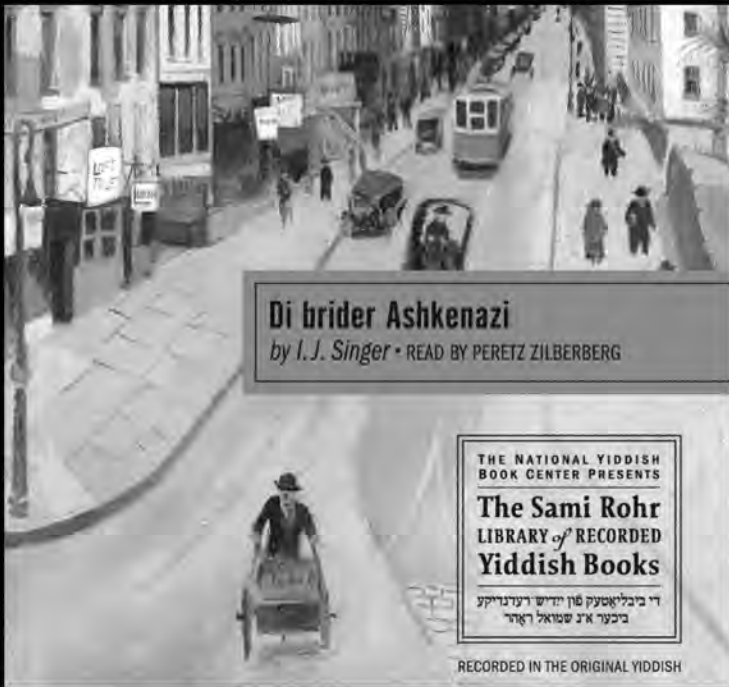
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ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCHES FROM THE FUTURE OF JEWISH STUDIES

Marcy Brink-Danan

Fourteen untenured Jewish studies scholars from institutions across the country sat together in high-end office chairs in the glassy conference room. Everything was new: the ultramodern space, the participants' acquisition of their academic positions, and, of course, the concept of bringing us together at the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan for the first American Academy for Jewish Research (AAJR) Workshop for Early Career Faculty in Jewish Studies.

With one hundred exams still ungraded, I joined the workshop on the tail of my first year in a tenure-track position in Judaic studies and anthropology at Brown University. I soon realized that grading would have to wait; Deborah Dash Moore (University of Michigan) and David Stern (University of Pennsylvania) guided and mentored the participants over the four-day workshop (May 13–16, 2007), whose intensive schedule included the sharing of intellectual biographies, presentation of academic papers, and brainstorming about pedagogy.

Over the course of the workshop, we managed to address three questions pertinent to all scholars in Judaic studies: How did we get here? What do we have in common? And, where are we going? These questions must not have come as a surprise to participant Shaul Kelner, who researches the sociology of American Jewish communal organizations. Nonetheless, when asking them with respect to an academic field, interesting patterns form.

How Did We Get Here?

Each participant was allotted fifteen minutes to share his or her intellectual genealogy. Many



AAJR Workshop for Early Career Faculty in Jewish Studies, May 2007. Photo courtesy of Matt Weingarten.

narratives centered on a formative Israel experience. For some, learning Hebrew (and, sometimes, other Jewish languages) opened doors to formerly forbidding texts and cultures. Multilingual competency is a prerequisite for much of the work we do in Jewish studies.

Some credited their teachers for having guided them, such as participant Rachel Havrelock, whose encounter with Yehuda Amichai led her to realize that her future would be in Bible studies and not, as she expected, poetry. Participants noted the critical role of modeling and mentoring in Jewish studies; Dash Moore reminded us that our cohort benefited from previous generations that struggled to establish Jewish studies as a legitimate academic field.

What Do We Share?

Immediately before joining the workshop, I served on a committee in Brown's Judaic studies program for selecting the best student essay, judging submissions from history, literature, and rabbinics. I was forced to read with interdisciplinary eyes, a technique honed in Ann Arbor. A central feature of the meeting included the scholarly presentation and discussion of a sample of each participant's work.

Workshop organizers paired presenters with discussants from obviously disparate disciplinary backgrounds: philosophers critiqued anthropologists, sociologists challenged historians, and linguists provoked literary critics.

Discussants uniformly opened their remarks with a sheepish disclaimer: "This isn't my field; please accept my humble attempts to think like you." If I work on contemporary Turkish Jewry, how thoughtfully should I be able to discuss the landscape of Yiddish modernism, Maimonides' response to Saadiah, or

Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*? In a profession where we are judged on our ability to become experts, anxiety about not knowing enough is especially acute in an interdisciplinary field like Jewish studies, as Arnold Eisen has noted.

I responded to Indiana University professor Chaya Halberstam's apparently brilliant paper about rabbinic law. I say "apparently" because, by engaging with the essay, I swam into uncharted waters. Luckily, Halberstam's use of critical theory, a sort of intellectual Esperanto, offered me a lifesaver. When workshop participants brought different methods and sources to the table, critical theory offered us a common tongue.

As a collective, we agreed that, despite the commonality of something "Jewish" about all our subjects of research, the challenge of talking across disciplines was daunting but also refreshing. Not only do we use different methods to order our kaleidoscope of possible primary source material (ethnographic data, survey statistics, fiction, archival documents, classical and philosophical texts), we also come to our subjects with varying opinions about what is Jewish about them. What counts as a source-text (or, perhaps, source *material*) in Jewish studies?

Every good workshop produces a term that, at sessions' close, participants promise never again to utter. For our group, this term was *boundaries*. As we attempted to rethink the boundaries of the field, the issue of boundaries concurrently emerged in our respective research projects. Legal, rabbinic, spatial, literary, social, and linguistic "boundary work" characterize many participants' intellectual concerns.

Are boundaries what constitute Jewish thought, culture, and practice? Are boundaries what preoccupy us as scholars?

If every meeting of scholars has a stated goal, what participants discuss *outside* of the official forum also reflects their mutual concerns. Over drinks at a local bar, lovers of Zion and supporters of Palestinian

AS A COLLECTIVE, WE AGREED THAT, DESPITE THE COMMONALITY OF SOMETHING "JEWISH" ABOUT ALL OUR SUBJECTS OF RESEARCH, THE CHALLENGE OF TALKING ACROSS DISCIPLINES WAS DAUNTING BUT ALSO REFRESHING.

statehood (and, of course, those who are both) expressed concern about how to discuss Israel in the academy. When we brought this issue back to the conference room, participants bemoaned the fact that sensitivity about the "Israel problem" led to mutual silences on the campus. At a time when the campus might be a place for people with differing views to discuss Israel productively, fear of negative judgments on the part of senior colleagues or bad teaching reviews as a result of our political support of or opposition to Israel kept many participants from taking a public stance. This concern seemed particularly acute because of our delicate status as untenured faculty.

An arranged meeting between workshop participants and a major donor to Jewish studies opened our early career eyes to the process of funding university research, department chairs, and individual research. Although we tend to imagine our relationship to funders as innocent, donors' charitable goals do not always neatly map onto researchers' intellectual goals. Participants discussed their sometimes uneasy relationship with

colleagues envious of money poured into Jewish studies departments (including Israel studies programs) when so many other ethnic studies programs go underfunded.

Ongoing Professionalization of Jewish Studies: Where Are We Going?

A number of workshop participants questioned whether or not they were Jewish studies scholars, preferring to identify with the discipline in which they trained. This rejection of affiliation raises a troubling question: Who, among today's Jewish studies scholars, is comfortable with the title itself (and why)?

Despite these doubts, most workshop participants had an official Jewish studies position or taught at an institution dedicated to Jewish learning, testifying to the relationship between institutional support, research produced, and positions created. This support remains important as a number of participants recalled their initial job searches as frustrating attempts to prove to their home discipline that Jews are, in anthropologist Levi-Strauss's terms, "good to think with." Some mentioned the de-Judaification of curriculum vitae, syllabi, or affiliations in order to make themselves competitive on the non-Jewish studies academic job market.

Recognizing that our disciplinary training influences not only our scholarly research but also our teaching methods, the last part of the workshop involved group discussion of pedagogy in which we reworked syllabi with participants in similar fields. This session enabled us to share knowledge about what worked in the classroom and specifically focused on how we teach Judaism to diverse student populations.

The group size allowed for intimacy and frank conversation about the goals, challenges, and visions for Judaic studies. Our time in Michigan created a camaraderie with colleagues who, by virtue of the workshop, became future allies. While many of us balked at the packed schedule, this intensity created an atmosphere of “communitas” in which ideas flowed freely and social barriers came down. As participant Beth Berkowitz (Talmud and Rabbinics, Jewish Theological Seminary) put it, “Sometimes it seems to me that my scholarship represents my own idiosyncratic brand of concerns, but interdisciplinary workshops make it clear that there’s actually something bigger going on . . . a zeitgeist that I am unconsciously participating in. I imagine when future scholars look at what we write it will be clear as day, in the way that when you read

scholarship from the past you can see the sociology of the scholarship. But I think interdisciplinary settings are helpful in that they make it easier to see our work with this kind of perspective.”

The workshop provided a space in which untenured Jewish studies scholars could strategize about the years ahead. Since the workshop ended, organizers have created a listserv enabling participants to communicate about conferences, publishing, and pedagogy. Informally, contacts made during the workshop have led to peer editing of works-in-progress and commissioned articles. This model could be adopted and extended to offer more early career scholars in Jewish studies the institutional and social support needed to propel the field in creative directions.

Our workshop’s final academic presentation, given by Oren Kosansky, focused on the role of *mahia*, a beverage consumed in Morocco, as a link between Jewish and Berber identities. This talk exemplified core concerns of the workshop: the question of boundaries, methods, and, of course, what is “Jewish.” Following Joshua Shanes’ historical review of early Ukrainian-Jewish rapprochement, Kosansky’s presentation highlighted the methodological breadth that Jewish studies scholars bring to the table by serving the beverage to participants, who enjoyed a taste of ethnographic fieldwork and toasted “*V’chaim*” to long careers.

Marcy Brink-Danan is Dorot Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies and assistant professor of anthropology at Brown University.



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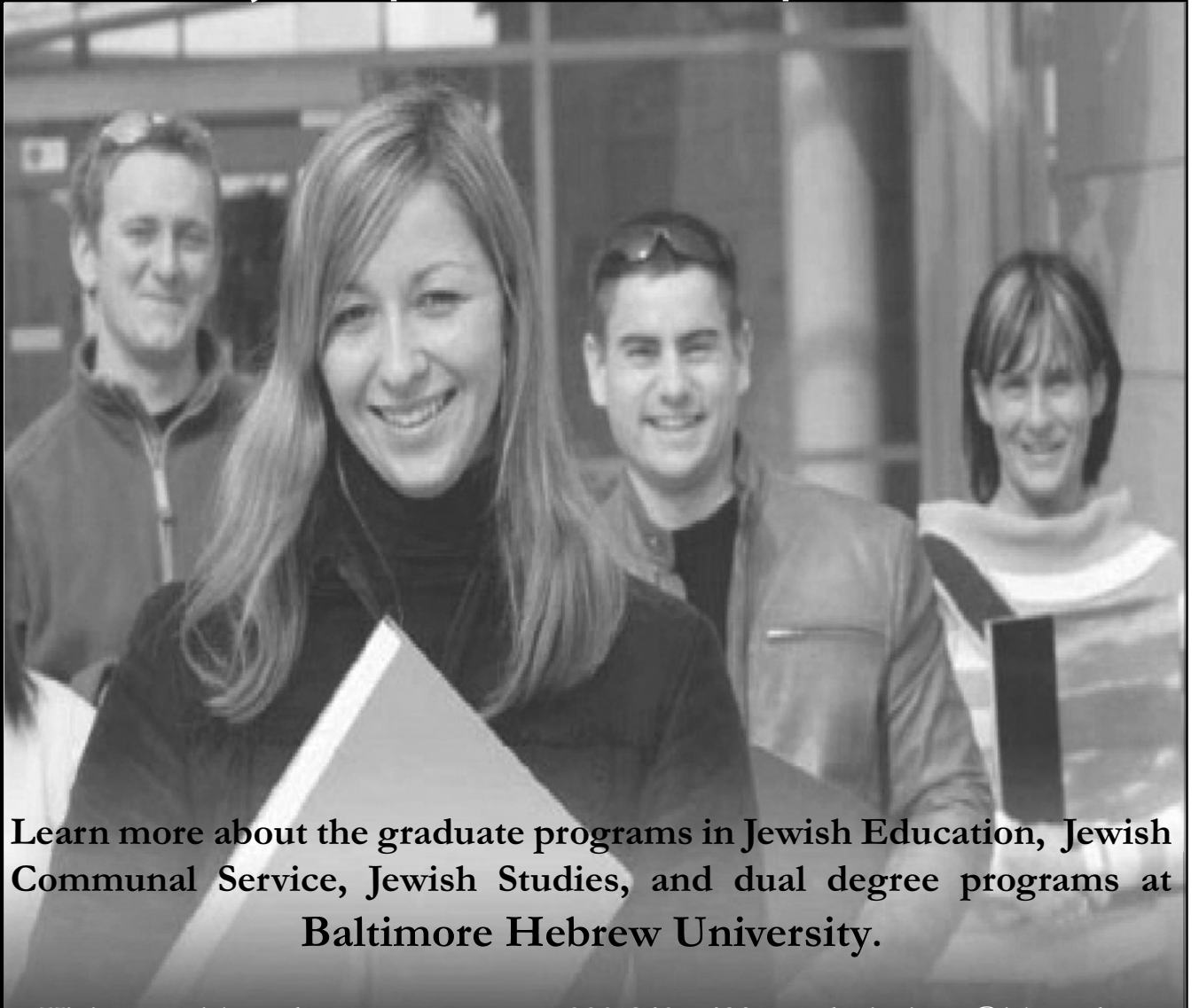
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REFLECTIONS ON JEWISH STUDIES, TWENTY YEARS LATER

Howard Tzvi Adelman

In 1988, as a newly minted PhD, tenure-track assistant professor, and first director of the Jewish studies program at Smith College, I received an invitation to submit an opinion piece about the history and nature of Jewish studies to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. In my brief essay, I took note of two competing theories about the origin of the field, one tracing its roots through the centuries-long history of Hebraic and Judaic studies in universities and seminaries and the other focusing on more immediate stimuli, such as heightened awareness of ethnicity in post-1960s America and Israel's victory in the Six Day War. I also reflected on the tension between our colleagues' goals of achieving acceptance within the academy and aiding Jewish continuity.

"Jewish-studies scholars," I wrote, "often try to distance themselves from the label 'ethnic,' while at the same time listing all the benefits the Jewish community derives from the academic study of Judaism. They argue that Jewish studies should not be a partisan enterprise, but they overlook the fact that, like other fields, it has always been committed to fostering particular values." I went on to say that the "ultimate defense against ideological forays

into the classroom is the academic process, which is based on rigorous questioning of all disciplinary and methodological assumptions and conclusions. If such tests are not applied to new fields—and, even before the development of ethnic studies, they have not always been—the fault lies not with a particular field but with the academic process itself."



Reprinted from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 3, 1988. Courtesy of Howard Tzvi Adelman.

A decade after writing these words, and after having received tenure at Smith, I spent a sabbatical in Israel, where my family and I decided to settle. In the course of my work at one of Israel's new regional colleges, I became involved in the implementation of the Shenhar Report, which urged the strengthening of core curriculum in Jewish studies in Israeli schools. Since the program also stimulated similar courses in Islamic culture, I found myself co-teaching dialogue

courses for Jews and Muslims with one of two colleagues, Muhammed Abu Samra from Jerusalem and Muhammad Hussein from Ramallah.

Muhammed Abu Samra and I also taught together in the U.S. as visiting Israeli scholars at Knox College in Illinois, conducting classes with Jews, Christians, and Muslims, many of whom came from Middle Eastern countries. Discussion, based on radically different positions, was intense, productive, and not confined to the classroom. On one occasion, for instance, we spoke at a joint meeting of the campus Jewish and Muslim students groups.

But things did not always go smoothly when we traveled and lectured together. In my public presentations I spoke freely and openly of my experiences as a new Israeli citizen over a period of five years, basing myself on my daily life, what I read in the papers, heard on the radio, saw on television, studied in books, and garnered

from friends, students, and colleagues of all persuasions. To my dismay, what I said often elicited hostility and stony silence, all from American Jews—my people. I thought that I had made a great leap and given up a good position and a comfortable career in order to serve Israel, that I was using my academic skills to help build a country and bridge its internal gaps, and had valuable insight to share. But there was a disconnect that I struggled to fathom.

I began to see that at our talks, not

only did people from the Jewish community arrive with very strong preconceived notions, but they brought specific, often written, talking points. At the end of one talk, for instance, a man stood up and said: “I am sorry that I missed your talk, but there were a few points in it with which I want to disagree strongly.”

Three years later, when the Shenhar program was discontinued, I was no longer able to make ends meet in Israel and soon found myself once again on the North American job market. Here, I had a number of experiences that were reminiscent of what I had experienced on my earlier tours. To my surprise, on my visits to several college campuses, I saw that both donors and members of the local Jewish community participated actively in the search process. In addition to giving an academic “job talk,” I had to make presentations before panels from the Jewish community and submit to interviews by them. These community interviews revolved mostly around questions pertaining to fundraising and political litmus test questions about my views on Israel.

What I did not understand, the head of a major Jewish organization in one town informed me, was that Israel is in a position of existential danger from her enemies. This, I must say, was news to me, after having lived there for almost a decade. I tried to explain that I did not perceive such a danger, but experienced instead an excitement, at times frustrating and overwhelming, that I wanted to convey to my students in all its complexity. The head of the search committee then responded by arguing that as a Jewish professor I had to be a completely uncritical vocal advocate for Israel in my classes. Nuance is fine among ourselves, he seemed to be saying, but certainly not in front of them.

WHAT I DID NOT UNDERSTAND, THE HEAD OF A MAJOR JEWISH ORGANIZATION IN ONE TOWN INFORMED ME, WAS THAT ISRAEL IS IN A POSITION OF EXISTENTIAL DANGER FROM HER ENEMIES. THIS, I MUST SAY, WAS NEWS TO ME, AFTER HAVING LIVED THERE FOR ALMOST A DECADE. I TRIED TO EXPLAIN THAT I DID NOT PERCEIVE SUCH A DANGER, BUT EXPERIENCED INSTEAD AN EXCITEMENT, AT TIMES FRUSTRATING AND OVERWHELMING, THAT I WANTED TO CONVEY TO MY STUDENTS IN ALL ITS COMPLEXITY.

Throwing caution to the winds, I suggested that here as in all other academic discourse, nuance is necessary, especially for a director of Jewish studies, who must above all maintain academic integrity. I now understood that on our lecture tour, my attempt to offer nuance, critical in an analytical sense, had been perceived as hostile and destructive.

I realized that I was out of sync with American Jewry not only because of my academic inclinations but precisely because I was Israeli. There is now a “pro-Israel” advocacy position that is not rooted in Zionism or in the reality of Israeli life. Indeed, the nuances of Zionism and Israeli history and life consistently put me at a distinct disadvantage when talking about Israel with American Jews. For example, in a course I taught for a local Jewish college program, one student expressed her distaste for Ahad Ha’am, one of the seminal figures in early Zionist history. She wanted to know why we had to read him. He was so negative, she complained, and surely not representative of the Zionist movement and those who lived in Palestine in his day. He was really anti-Israel and my assigning him reflected my anti-Israel tendencies. This student, like so many Diaspora

Jews, was not willing to accept the premise that Zionism involves a critique both of Jewish life in the Diaspora and of developments in Israel.

Nuances of this kind do seem to be what interest my academic colleagues in other departments who are struggling to understand Israel in a global or even a personal context. Pro-Israel advocacy, especially on campus, isolates many people from the intellectual complexities of Zionism and the real struggles of Israel, most of which have little to do with campus discussions that are often subsumed under the rubric of “anti-Israel.”

What I experienced in Israel and what I would like to bring to academic life now that I am working outside of Israel is some of the excitement of Zionist thought and Israeli history and life. In particular, I would like to try to reproduce the teaching I did with my colleagues and students in Israel and the U.S. That is, I would like to create a safe space in the classroom to explore each other’s narrative. In Israel, the Ministry of Education, certainly not without resistance on both sides, is developing a curriculum in which Jews and Palestinians, living in both Israel and under the Palestinian

Authority, explore their dual narratives together. I see here the potential for Jewish studies as an academic field to build bridges between Jews and Muslims, as it has between Jews and Christians. At Queen's University—where the local Jewish community cooperates extensively with the Jewish studies program but plays no part in the selection of its faculty—I hope to work closely with the new program in Islamic studies and to implement co-taught dialogue courses.

In my 1988 essay I observed that Jews supported Jewish studies in part because they wanted it recognized and legitimized as a vital part of the academy, an enterprise

that involves critical questioning. Now, however, many people regard such questioning directed at Israel as seditious and destructive. In turn, the involvement of pro-Israel advocacy in the activities of Jewish studies programs jeopardizes both our positions as serious scholars and the academic legitimacy of Jewish studies.

I would like to conclude by reiterating, especially on the basis of my recent experience, something that I wrote twenty years ago: The task before Jewish and ethnic studies scholars, therefore, is not to repress their own social and individual concerns but to create a methodology that will enable those

concerns to find interdisciplinary expression. Jewish and ethnic studies provide a unique way to invigorate cultural creativity and to stimulate critical thinking in their communities. However, they will succeed not because they serve the needs of a particular constituency but because they contribute to the advancement of larger disciplines, offer a methodologically sound perspective, and aid the intellectual development of all students.

Howard Tzvi Adelman is director of the Jewish Studies Program at Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario and is finishing a book on the history of Jewish women in Italy.



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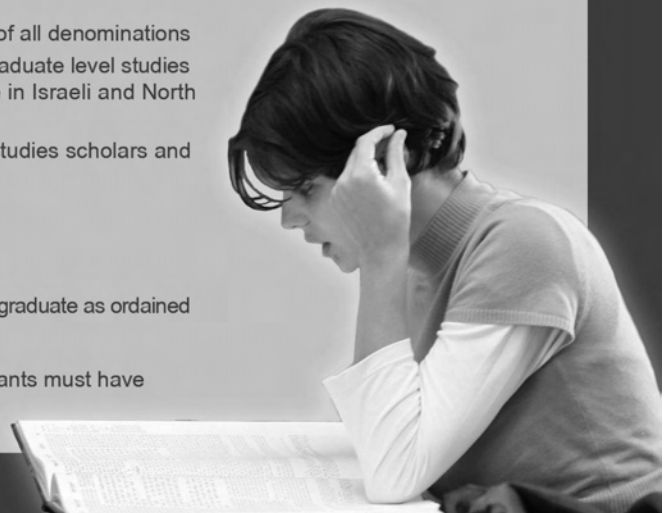
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