

The Secular Issue

The Latest:

Deb Margolin's *Imagining Madoff*

Yael Bartana's *Mary Koszmary* and Galut Melancholy

The Questionnaire:

Directors of Jewish Studies programs write in about their biggest challenges

AJS Perspectives

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES



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Front and Back Covers: "Jewish Girl and Her Dog." We are thrilled about this issue's cover art, devised for the occasion by New Catalogue. Behind that moniker are photographers Luke Batten and Jonathan Sadler, who, for several years now, have organized their practice around the interrogation of stock photo agencies. At times, this practice has resulted in the production of absurdist series for imaginary clients; at others, they have acted much like a "real" agency, addressing visual problems in the world around them. As the Secular Issue took shape, we approached New Catalogue about possibilities for visualization; and inspired by Susan Kahn's piece in this issue, they created the series "Jewish Girl and Her Dog." We are tremendously grateful to New Catalogue for accepting this challenge and invite you to learn more about their work at: <http://newcatalogue.net>.

From the Editors

Dear Colleagues,

We conceive of our 2011 issues as a pair: secularism and religion or, as we phrase it, the secular and religious issues. Usually considered antagonists, we find the pair to be symbiotic, even co-dependant. While the secular articles confront issues as varied as Spinoza and secular sex, Walter Benjamin's Kabbalah and Jews and dogs, all conclude—or at least confess—that secularism can never be fully disentangled from religion. This is not to claim that Jewish cultural practices are shadow plays approximating or imitating religious ritual, but rather that the articulation of one term relies on the other. The secular and the religious come out of the same thought world; modernity creates the two by splitting them from a single flesh.

Hardly antagonists, secularism and religion are not equivalents either. Their imbrication makes the individual terms difficult to distinguish and even harder to define. Is one the absence of the other? Is the other compensation for the absence? Rather than walk down the hall of mirrors required to define these terms, let us share an editorial anecdote. In soliciting articles for the secular issue, we asked scholars to write about secularism. To our delight, everyone whom we approached agreed, informing us of the specific topics that they intended to explore. No one inquired what we meant by secularism or protested that their research fell outside its parameters. As we finished work on this issue, we began planning the religious issue. Again we turned to scholars in the field and asked them to contribute. This time the “yeses” came more haltingly. Several potential contributors asked us what we intended for an issue devoted to religion. Writers wanted to know about definition, concept, and if their scholarship truly fit the bill. Scholars of the Bible let us know that religion falls outside of their research programs. Certainly, factors like time of year and number of commitments played a role in these responses, but we suspect that something more may lie behind the certainty about secularism and the bafflement about religion.

From the President

Dear Colleagues,

The Jewish Studies program at the University of Maryland, my academic home, is hiring an assistant professor of Bible this year. Many extraordinary candidates have applied for the position, which was left vacant two years ago by the retirement of our great Bible scholar, Adele Berlin. The short-listed candidates have already visited campus, and they all gave deeply learned and intellectually exciting talks. At the moment I write, our search committee has not yet announced whom it will recommend for the position. This is therefore a good time for me to write about the place of the Bible in Jewish Studies. I have been thinking about the issue for a long time, and seeing the current crop of Bible scholars has only confirmed many of my long-held views about the field.

Let me begin by saying that I have always thought that the Bible was central to Jewish Studies. It seems absurd even to have to say what should be self-evident: The Bible is the creative expression of the ancient Israelites, from whom the Jews and Judaism descend. I know that some recent scholars have questioned that connection, and I

Some have argued that the very notion of religion is alien to Judaism, an always shifting intersection of ethnicity, philosophy, culture, and national aspiration. Did Judaism have to become a religion in order to be translated into a Christian and later an Islamic milieu? Is something like secularism, in fact, closer to what the Jews were before the institutionalization of Christianity? Or, is the very question of how religion emerges from Jewish texts and history problematic and paradoxical?

Perhaps the very name of the guild—Jewish Studies—renders the place of Judaism uncertain. Many a topic can be recognized as Jewish while the question of its religiousness remains open. Funding structures may also influence our comfort with secularism. The Posen Foundation has sponsored conferences, summer seminars, and the development of new courses exploring Jewish secularism. The very idea of funding similar events devoted to the study of religion is more complex. Who would put up the money? With what goals in mind? What historical periods and what kinds of Judaism would count as religious? On many North American campuses, we often leave questions of religion to Hillel as we conduct our courses on the safer terrain of Jewish Studies.

It seems that as our sense of what constitutes a religious Jew narrows, our discomfort with religion increases. Or maybe the difference between Jewishness and Judaism widens. Whatever the case may be, we are pleased to present you the “Secular Issue” and look forward to continuing the conversation with the “Religious Issue” in the fall.

Matti Bunzl

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Rachel Havrelock

University of Illinois at Chicago

respect their erudition, but I nevertheless have no doubt that the Bible and the history of the ancient Israelites is important for understanding all later Jewish experience. At least, later Jews have always thought so. I am delighted that learning about the Bible was part of my graduate training at Columbia. As graduate students in Jewish history, from ancient to modern, we all had to study Ancient Israel and include it as a field on our comprehensive exams. We weren't allowed to say the “biblical period” because you weren't supposed to name historical eras after books, but we were certainly responsible for knowing that period of Jewish history (even if it wasn't technically Jewish). I loved reading the works of the most important Bible scholars, and I am very glad that I mastered that field. It has served me well in my teaching, and it makes me a better scholar, even though my field is nineteenth-century, central European Jewish history.

I have also been long sharply critical of Jewish Studies programs that do not include the Bible as part of their curricula. Several years ago, I was an external reviewer for a very good Jewish Studies program,

but I was horrified to see that this program offered no Bible and no rabbinics, or frankly, anything before the modern period. I complained forcefully in my report, telling the university that it must hire a Bible scholar. No respectable program in Jewish Studies could function without a person in that field, I insisted. Similarly at my own university, when Adele Berlin retired, I was afraid that the dean would delay replacing her in order to save money, and that we would go years without a Bible scholar. My colleagues and I protested loudly, and thankfully, the dean acquiesced, despite these economically stressful times. Let me note that in addition to all the other obvious benefits of teaching the Bible, courses in the Bible attract many students from diverse backgrounds, to the benefit of Jewish Studies as a whole.

Given my point of view, I was taken aback several years ago when I was AJS's vice president for program to learn that many Bible scholars think that the AJS conference is not hospitable to them. They worry that the conference is mostly for modernists—historians, literary critics, social scientists, scholars of Jewish thought and philosophy—and few people would even attend sessions on the Bible. Their worries become a self-fulfilling prophesy. Fearing lack of interest in Bible, few Bible scholars propose papers or sessions. As a result, there are only a few sessions devoted to the Bible at the annual meetings. Of course, Bible scholars have a conference of their own sponsored by the Society for Biblical Literature, and many prefer to give papers there rather than at the more general AJS conference. Still, as vice president for program, and now as president of AJS, I want the Bible to be an essential part of our annual conference. I urge Bible scholars to give papers at the AJS conference as well as the SBL. To be sure, Bible scholarship is not just a field within Jewish Studies. It is its own very worthwhile field, and

part of the study of the ancient Near East, the history of Christianity, and religion generally. Still, it must remain part of Jewish Studies for its own well-being as well as for the benefit of Jewish Studies.

Recently I learned that the Jewish Studies program at the University of Oregon had decided to require its majors to study biblical Hebrew instead of modern Hebrew. The faculty had decided that biblical Hebrew was superior to modern Hebrew as a method of training students in the fundamentals of the Hebrew language. At first I was taken aback. My own Jewish Studies program requires our majors to take three years of modern Hebrew, and I firmly believe that it is essential for anyone in Jewish Studies to know modern Israeli Hebrew. Yet, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that requiring biblical Hebrew (although perhaps not in lieu of modern Hebrew) made sense. After all, such training would provide an excellent foundation for any other kind of Hebrew, and it would also enable students to read Jewish texts.

As I anxiously await the report of the subcommittee in our Bible search, one more issue comes to mind. Bible scholars demonstrate the way scholarship works. All of the job talks at Maryland were models of scholarly rigor and ingenuity. They revealed how patient philological analysis, careful attention to the structure and content of the text, and application of insights from other fields help us understand what a text means. Students who take Bible courses will learn how to read in a critical manner. Isn't that what a liberal education is all about?

Marsha Rozenblit

University of Maryland

From the Executive Director

Dear Colleagues,

Anyone who is a member of a large, disciplinary society has undoubtedly seen reports over the past few years regarding the decline in job opportunities across the liberal arts, and the simultaneous rise in the proportion of contingent faculty making up university departments. Jewish Studies is of course not immune to these developments, but a preliminary review of AJS's position listings over the past several years suggests that job opportunities have held up relatively well, especially when compared to other fields' double-digit annual drops in job postings. Certainly, job boards do not represent all employment opportunities in a given field, and a job advertisement does not necessarily mean an appointment was ultimately made. But, job boards are a good indicator of what sort and how many job options a scholar may seek, and learned societies use them to track overall developments in their field.

An initial survey of the AJS position listings since the mid-2000s conducted by Karen Terry, AJS program and membership coordinator, bears some interesting insights. For instance, from 2006 to 2010, the total number of positions advertised on the AJS website, which includes academic and non-academic positions, held relatively steady (89 in 2006; a peak of 95 positions in 2007; and 90 in 2010). Among the academic positions advertised from 2006 to 2010, anywhere from 25 to 28 were named appointments or fellowships. From 2006 to 2008, the ratio of permanent to temporary positions advertised was close to 50:50, with some minor variations from year to year. A more

significant gap had emerged by 2010, when institutions advertised 51 temporary academic positions and 32 permanent positions. It should be noted, though, that 10 of the 51 temporary positions advertised in 2010 were fellowships in Israel for American scholars, sponsored by the US-Israel Educational Foundation.

Comparing the content of advertisements posted in 2006, 2008, and 2010, we get a snapshot of subfields of Jewish Studies over a five-year span. In 2006, the largest number of permanent (i.e., tenure-track or tenured) positions advertised were with the field of specialization open (9), followed by: Rabbinics/antiquity (7); Hebrew literature and language, Jewish thought/philosophy, and history (3 each); Yiddish literature and language, Jewish education, Holocaust Studies, and Bible (2 each); and the social sciences, gender studies, and Sephardic Studies (1 each). Of the permanent positions in 2006, 27 were at the assistant-professor/tenure-track level, 9 at the associate- or full-professor level, and 4 were for center/institute directors with part-time teaching. Also in 2006, 13 temporary (i.e. adjunct, lecturer, visiting) positions were advertised with the field of specialization open, followed by: 9 temporary positions in Hebrew; 8 in history; 2 each in Israel Studies, literature, and modern Jewish thought; and 1 each in gender studies, Bible, Yiddish, and Rabbinics.

(continued on pg 56)

The Secular Issue

Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Secular Jewish Thought

David Biale

One of my father's favorite memories of his mother—my grandmother—was that she was the first Jewish woman in her town to grow her own hair. A small, but significant rebellion. Since ancient times, the Jewish code of female modesty required married women to cover their hair either with a scarf or, following the nineteenth-century fashion, with what was known as “Gentile wigs.” By taking off this *sheitel*, my grandmother declared her independence from a long-standing custom and thus, by a female gesture, heralded the beginnings of secularism.

Her declaration was hardly born of a well-conceived ideology or of conscious intent to overthrow the religion of her ancestors. She, like my grandfather, was in most respects a thoroughly Orthodox Jew, nominal follower of a pietistic Hasidic sect. Yet, in the first decades of the twentieth century, the winds of radical change began to blow through the 10,000-strong Jewish community of Włocławek, some 200 kilometers northwest of Warsaw. Despite his Hasidic leanings, my grandfather joined the Mizrahi, the party of religious Jews who supported the Zionist movement. He was also instrumental in creating a Hebrew gymnasium in the town. The renaissance of the Hebrew language, so often associated with secular Zionism, did not seem to him to contradict the dictates of the Jewish religion.

These halting gestures toward modernity left a deep impression on my father. In the interwar period, when Polish Jews embraced a host of conflicting ideologies he and his sister joined Hashomer Hatzair, the Zionist youth movement that espoused socialism and a romantic return to nature. His younger brother gravitated in the opposite direction, also to Zionism but instead to the Revisionist Betar, the hard-line nationalists who wore military uniforms and rejected social revolution. Both movements, despite their differences, were staunchly secular, viewing the Jewish religion as complicitous in the sufferings of the Jews.



The author's grandmother, Poland, circa early 1900s. Photo courtesy of the author.

This admittedly anecdotal and personal account of one family's journey provides the thematic backdrop for my recent book, *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought* (Princeton, 2010). For many, rejection of religion in favor of a secular life was not the result of ideology but instead a response to the dislocations of modernity: secular education, urbanization, migration, and the breakup of traditional society. Thus, my maternal grandparents abandoned traditional Judaism almost without reflection when they immigrated to America in 1912. It was not so much a revolution of ideas as it was the flight from traditional communities, rabbinic authority, and the daily routine prescribed by Jewish law.

For others, such as my father and his siblings, however, the secular revolt was deeply ideological, driven by new cultural ideals and political programs. They wanted to escape from what they considered the oppression of an obscurantist, medieval religion in order to

create a new Jew and a new society. A world without religion promised liberation from their disabilities as Jews. Secularism became a way of resisting their minority status, something that they shared with other minorities in multiethnic states and empires. Their ideologies ranged from Communist to Zionist, from Yiddishism to assimilation. But one thing characterized all of them: a generational revolt against a world in which the Jewish religion, economic plight, political impotence, and cultural backwardness seemed wrapped up together in one unsavory package.

It is the intellectual history of Jewish secularism that forms the subject of my study. While the ideas of Jewish secularism did not create this revolt, they gave it its characteristic expression. For, although Jewish secularization was but one chapter in the broader story of modern secularism, it had its own features that it owed, at least in part, to the Jewish tradition that it sought to overcome. The dialectical relationship between the Jewish religion and the tradition of Jewish secularism mirrors what has happened to secularization theory in general. The old secularization theory that argued for a complete rupture between modernity and premodern tradition has come under serious challenge. It is now evident that the secular incubated in the world of religion, much as the word “secular” itself was a product of the medieval Christian Church.

In the Jewish context, one can argue that this process owed much to textuality: those educated in the four walls of the yeshiva might turn the texts of tradition against the tradition. Such was the case with Moses Maimonides who became, for many secularists, the precursor of a rationalist approach to nature and religion, an argument that necessarily took Maimonides out of his medieval context. Such was also the case with the texts of those who rebelled against tradition, most notably Baruch Spinoza, whom Jewish secularists turned into “the first secular Jew.” With Maimonides and Spinoza, such secularists could build an intellectual



The author's grandparents and their children, Poland, circa early 1900s. Photo courtesy of the author.

Secular readings of the Torah—starting with Spinoza—stripped scripture of its status as revelation and turned the Bible into a historical, cultural, or nationalist text. And secular political thinkers, led once again by Spinoza, redefined “Israel,” rooted though it was in old notions of the Jews as a nation, in the context of modern, political ideas about race, nationality, and the state. Other secularists preferred to see Israel in cultural terms, focusing on history and language. As a modern concept, “culture” came to take the place of religion. In all of these ways, secular Jewish thinkers sought to bury the religious tradition with the very tools of the tradition.

While it may sometimes seem as if the story of secularization is a narrative of the world we have lost, secularism is not only a negative—it is also an effort to fashion a new identity out of the shards of the past. The secular tradition I have tried to describe differs in some measure from Deutscher’s “Non-Jewish Jews” since it rests only on those whose writings engaged substantively with the metaphysical, textual, political, and cultural dimensions of the Jewish experience. Many of these authors may not have consciously regarded themselves as contributing to such a tradition, although some surely did, but taken collectively, they created an intellectual lineage counter to the religious tradition called “Judaism.” And while my grandmother would have surely found most of these ideas profoundly alien, they nevertheless gave expression to the new reality that her own small but significant gesture of rebellion helped to create.

David Biale is Emanuel Ringelblum Professor of Jewish History and Chair of the Department of History at the University of California, Davis. His most recent book is Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought (Princeton University Press, 2011).

lineage, a counter-tradition of their own. Or, as Isaac Deutscher put it in his famous essay, “The Non-Jewish Jew,” “The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition.”

This counter-tradition of Jewish secularism must therefore be seen as joined at the hip with the religious tradition it rejected. One way to describe this dialectic is by showing

how secular thinkers appropriated the three traditional categories of God, Torah, and Israel and filled them with new meaning. The God of the Bible, who already lost his personality in the medieval philosophy of Moses Maimonides, became nature in the renderings of Spinoza and his disciples. The medieval Kabbalah provided the source for another modern vision of God, as “nothingness” or “void.”

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Secularizing (Jewish) Sex

Naomi Seidman

In the Yiddish (or Yinglish) idiom of the Orthodox Jews among whom I was raised, a secular Jew was *frei*—free. What such a Jew had been “freed” *from* was clear enough on both sides of that cultural and religious divide: rules about what to eat and how to dress and when a husband and wife might have sex, all the details that comprised halakhah, the “yoke of the kingdom of Heaven.” In Orthodox usage, it is the confining yoke that has a positive charge, and “freedom” a negative one. This freedom is linked not with the ringing tones of liberty, autonomy, and the lifting of oppressive burdens but rather with appetite, impulse, transgression, license, and above all practices of the body.

The discourse of Orthodoxy is not, after all, so unfamiliar; it confirms the general sense—on the “secular” side—that secularization, maybe for Jews above all, *liberated* those

who “cast off the yoke” of religion. Traditional religious practices dictated acts of the body; secularity set them free. Where tradition had married sex, within prescribed limits, secularism opened the door on other varieties, other pleasures. If this is so evident even today, long after a great-grandmother refused to cover her hair or a great-grandfather took the shears to his side locks, it is because the dramatic clash of tradition and modernity (though, of course, both of these are “modern” phenomena) is playing itself out before our eyes once again—with sex, women, and bodies (as before)—serving as the contested battleground.

In this new arena, though, the struggle between those who view religion as sexually oppressive and those who diagnose secularism as sexual license runs up against contradictory claims and phenomena: educated women proudly reject the miniskirt and “reclaim” the

veil in the name of self-expression or even feminism; a variety of cultural contexts have seen the resurgence of “backward” practices under the banner of a difference sort of liberation—the resistance to globalism and the self-righteousness of modernizers. The secularist response has been predictable: a muting of “rationalist” and feminist critique under the dictates of cultural sensitivity and in recognition of the claims of minority self-determination. But it is not only postcolonialism and postsecularism that has softened secularist critique: after Foucault, do we know any more what it means to be “free”?

Foucault’s deflation of the “Victorian hypothesis,” of the self-satisfied sense that moderns had liberated themselves from a previous era’s sexual repressiveness, found specifically Jewish expression in the work of such theorists as Paula Hyman, David Biale,



Synagogue Paris, 2007. Photo by Myriam Tangi.

and Daniel Boyarin, who have argued strongly against viewing Jewish secularization as a form of liberation. However it may appear to traditionalists, Jewish secularism only rarely carried the banner of sexual liberty or gender equality. Jewish modernization, aside from some short-lived (if much cherished) pockets of political, cultural, and sexual radicalism, aspired not to freedom but to integration and Europeanization; modernization, then, introduced Jews to a bourgeois sexual order, which domesticated and spiritualized women and maintained even as it reshaped Jewish patriarchy.

The new secular literature of the nineteenth century ridicules every detail of the traditional marriage system, from the negotiations that preceded marriage to the hyperemotional entertainment at traditional weddings, where *badkhnim* performed to the copious weeping of the female guests. But sexual modernity was just as—if not more—choreographed, with carefully prescribed gender roles, rules of courtship, and models for marriage. Among the most telling literary products of the eastern European Jewish Enlightenment are the epistolary formularies by which young men and women were invited to learn the unfamiliar language of Jewish romance in the love letter, with its pre-packaged sighs bemoaning the separation from the beloved fiancée and the eager but modest protestations of erotic longing. As Foucault has argued about non-Jewish modernity, Jewish sexuality was not *unleashed* with secularization but rather taught a different set of tricks.

The problem, in the view of the Jewish Enlightenmenters, wasn't that traditional practices were sexually repressive but rather that they were *hypersexual*, coarse, and unnatural. For the traditional learned Jew, sex was part of the larger regulation of the body through a spectrum of laws that governed not only menstrual purity but also eating and defecation. Such matter-of-fact—and public—attention to bloodstains or positions of sexual intercourse overflowed the borders of halakhic discourse and permeated traditional Ashkenazic culture. Maskilim hoped to draw Jews away from this thinking, bringing them closer to the spiritual, restrained, and “purer” ideals of love, femininity, companionship, and marriage. Erotic freedom was thus foreign to *both* the traditional and bourgeois discourses that accompanied Jewish secularization. Officially, what was called for was orderly romantic, monogamous, bourgeois marriage, even if—outside the control of this elite discourse—young Jews in

urban centers were falling under the sway of different ideologies or sexual ways.

If the opposition between a repressive traditional order and liberatory secularization no longer illuminates, how then do we describe what happens to Jewish sex (and gender and bodies) in secularization? On the one hand, traditional sexual practices cannot now be conceptualized through a simple model of suppression and communal control. What the maskilim characterized as the deformation of natural Eros through early arranged marriages focused only on the most visible aspect of the system—one that was also personally painful to most maskilim, who often came from the very circles in which talented young boys (as they all had been) were married off particularly young, thus rendering their late adolescent rejection of tradition a family as well as theological drama. From a Foucauldian perspective, the traditional world multiplied rather than constraining sexual relations, embedding its marriages within a dense web of religious, social, and kinship networks. By contrast, the European model bathed the heterosexual couple in an aura of spiritual romance and erotic choice, while disembedding marriage from the networks in which it had taken shape and found support. The break with religion brought not its absence but rather new forms of religion, for which sex provided both the engine and an object of veneration.

Modern Jewish literature, read so consistently as the site of Jewish Europeanization and modernization, was also the arena for the construction and inevitably the celebration of Jewish tradition. The romance so central to European culture, and the romantic attractions of Europe itself, was tempered by the internal critique and dissent indigenous to the European literary tradition, a critical tradition that was enriched by Jewish writers. Nor had the traditional world sustained a uniform approach to sex. The Bible already contained multiple sexual truths, insisting that sex was a form of knowledge, and that sex often proceeded through mistaken knowledge. The Bible tells the grandly romantic story of a man who worked seven years for the chance to marry his beloved, but doesn't fail to mention that when that wedding night finally came, he mistook her older sister for his irreplaceable love—in the dark all cats are the same, or, as Genesis 29:25 has it, “When morning came, there was Leah!” Such double wisdom emerges again in the peculiar hybridity of modern Jewish culture: Sex is the most exalted

of human emotions; sex is an operation of the body, not so different from others. The greatest form of love fights against the strictures of family and society; the greatest form of love is that which holds ancestors and the Jewish people in its capacious embrace; and yet again, the greatest form of love is that which resists that suffocating story, breaking open the constraints of Jewish peoplehood through the power of erotic choice. And so on, and so forth. It was from this distinctly Jewish, impossible space that modern Jewish literature, and modern Jewish lovers, were born.

In the generations that followed the first moves toward modernization, modernist writers openly turned back to the tradition maskilim had deemed a sexual wasteland, discovering there, among other treasures, an erotics of community beyond the heterosexual couple. In Vienna, a new tractate on sexuality emerged from Freud's post-halakhic project of romantic demystification. And in America, Jewish writers directed their focus back to the body in sex, challenging the obfuscations and self-delusions of the old European romantic discourse. What had begun as the aesthetic and erotic Europeanization and Westernization of the Jews reached a very different cultural climax: the sexual thought and literary tastes of the West can hardly be conceived apart from the Jews.

As for contemporary Orthodoxy, it, too, shares in the story of modernity, arguing on modern grounds for the superiority of its sexual arrangements and the fairness of its gender roles. In Orthodox discourse, bourgeois (rather than strictly “halakhic”) sexual ideologies underline the efficacy of “family purity” laws. Perhaps a line cannot so easily be drawn, then, between the neighborhood of the *frum* and the land of the free. The world we inhabit, whatever we wear, tells a common history, whether as “traditionalizing” resistance or already appropriated liberation.

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Resisting Secularism? Grace Aguilar and Isaac Leeser on English Bibles

Andrea Schatz

Early in the history of secularism we encounter a scene that seems to encapsulate the surprising and paradoxical nature of the new project. In the print shop, a text is made accessible to Jews and Christians alike by the printer who publishes it and by the editor or censor who prevents it from being published in full. This scene and its implications have been described vividly by Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin: the printed text could become common ground for Christians and Jews because of the publisher's insistence on dissemination and the censor's practice of differentiation. The *Miqra'ot gedolot*, for instance, the Hebrew Bible with translations and commentaries, was printed in Daniel Bomberg's Venetian publishing house, but without David Kimchi's polemics against Christians in his commentary on the Psalms. What was publicly acceptable was identified and isolated from what was unacceptable, in particular for Christians. Obviously, the complexities, for which early modern printing offers just one example, have not

prevented secularism from becoming a powerful and productive project. And yet, a project it remained: never complete and never identical with itself, evolving, failing, and returning in many competing versions.

From the start, the Bible was a major focus of secularizing efforts and a site where their paradoxical character became quite apparent. Critical study of the text intended to liberate the original from unintelligible layers of tradition while creating new authorities and rules that would control the interpretation of the text. Translations aimed to make the Bible universally accessible also led to new divisions between experts and those who were expected to look for the experts' guidance. In Jewish contexts, too, we find vivid debates about the critical study of the Bible and its translation into the vernaculars but they unfold as extended commentaries on the implications of secularism rather than as secularizing trends in themselves. Here, I would like to reflect on the Bible as a "readable" text as published in 1842 by Grace Aguilar, Anglo-Jewish novelist and essayist, in her *Spirit of Judaism*. Her work was published by Isaac Leeser, a German-born community leader, scholar, Bible translator, and editor of *The Occident* in Philadelphia, who, in this case, was so worried by some of her remarks that he added annotations in which he expressed his strong reservations.

Aguilar's starting point is a fixture of maskilic discourse—the Bible is virtually unknown among Jews and needs to be made readable again:

We are in general perfectly satisfied with reading the *Parasas* and *Haftorahs* marked out as our Sabbath portions. The other parts of the Bible rest utterly unknown. Brought out on the Sabbath for the brief space of half an hour, the portions are read, and hastily dismissed, as a completed task, bringing with it no pleasure and little profit. Even this is but too often neglected, and we adhere to the forms and ceremonies of our ancestors, scarcely knowing wherefore; and we permit our Bibles to rest undisturbed on their shelves not even seeking them, to know the meaning of what we do. (51–52)

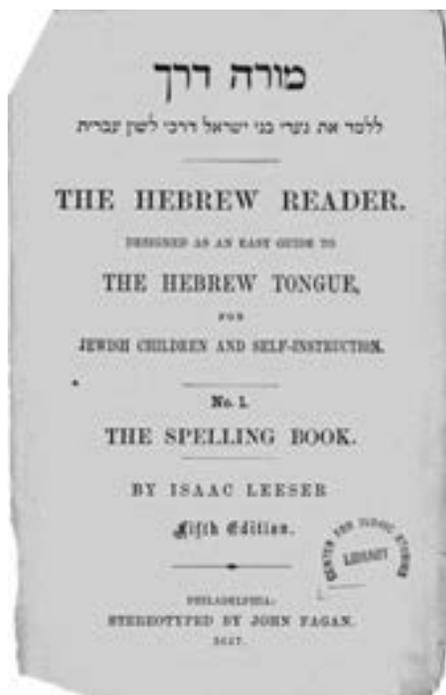


Portrait of Grace Aguilar. Courtesy of The New York Public Library.

These remarks echo concerns that Moses Mendelssohn had expressed decades earlier in a casual but now quite famous remark about the necessity "to support the ceremonies with authentic, solid meaning, to make Scripture readable and understandable again" (Letter to Herz Homberg, September 22, 1783). The emphasis on the Bible as a legible, intelligible, accessible text raises several questions: What is a readable text? How does a text become readable? For whom does it become readable "again"?

Mendelssohn adopted the early modern model of the *Miqra'ot gedolot* with its translations and Hebrew commentaries, while he rejected the *Zene rene*, the early modern Yiddish paraphrase of the Pentateuch, which offered interwoven portions of Biblical texts and exegesis. As a result, his edition tended to exclude, rather than include, women, men, and children who were not fluent in Hebrew or modern German: they were cut off from Biblical texts and traditions they had enjoyed previously when studying the *Zene rene*.

In a radical departure from Mendelssohn's method and his silence about gender, age, and education, Aguilar demands that "the Jewish religion" should be studied "by its professors



Title page of Isaac Leeser, *Hebrew Reader*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: John Fagan, 1866). Courtesy of the Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania.

of every age and sex” and that “the Bible, not *tradition*” should be regarded as “its foundation and defence” (20–21). According to Aguilar, the Bible can be transformed into a text that will be accessible to all, if text and tradition are dissociated from each other, and if tradition is rejected. Isaac Leiser, quite predictably, finds Aguilar’s proposal unacceptable. But the argument he offers in favor of “tradition” is remarkable: “It is useless to say, that the Scriptures speak for themselves; they assuredly do so to the person who has received instruction; but it requires no argument to prove that difference of education makes people take different views of the sacred Text” (21). Leiser highlights a concept that is familiar to us because of the work of Talal Asad and others who have drawn our attention to the “dispositions” that are created by families, communities, and institutions of learning: these communities introduce us to frameworks of thinking and acting that profoundly inform our attitudes, perspectives, and sensibilities. According to Leiser, reading is shaped by such dispositions. It is not an activity that unfolds in an unmediated way, governed solely by reason and text; on the contrary, it is always already mediated by institutions and traditions of “instruction,” whether they are of Christian, Jewish, or, we might add, of secular origin.

It almost seems as if Aguilar had known Leiser’s arguments and is responding to them when she indicates in a later chapter of her book that the existing frameworks of teaching and learning need to be reformed. The “Hebrew poor” should receive “instruction in their religion,” the “trammels of tradition” and their “incomprehensible obscurity” should be ignored, and instead they should be taught “their English Bibles” (102). Here, we can clearly perceive Aguilar’s educational agenda. She proposes a project of differentiation: those aspects of religion that can be illuminated by reason need to be distinguished from those that are unintelligible; and she promotes a project of dissemination: knowledge of the text should be made accessible to the entire “Hebrew nation,” including women and “the poor.” Both aspects—differentiation and dissemination of knowledge—are recognizable as universalizing movements. A third aspect is revealed when Aguilar emphasizes the intimacy of religious commitments: religion is a matter of the “inmost heart” (21), a private, not a public, affair.

Secularization has often been described as a movement of translation but here it is translation—the English Bible—that invites reflections on secularization. Aguilar is clearly

attracted to Protestant, even evangelical, interpretations of religion, and this fascination with Protestantism turns into an acceptance of core elements of secularism: differentiation, dissemination, and internalization.

Leiser’s response to Aguilar’s irreverent remark about the “trammels of tradition” is sharp and passionate: “I am not permitted to alter the text so as to destroy the meaning; or else I should certainly have altered this sentence; for without claiming for tradition all that some assert for it, there is doubtlessly found laid down therein nearly the whole of our own manner of interpretation and mode of life. How else are we to read Scripture, unless it be in accordance with the views of our predecessors? What else forms the distinction between us and Christians?” (100). According to Leiser, the universalizing and secularizing tendencies in Aguilar’s text blur the boundaries between Jewish and Christian commitments and open the door to the Christianization of Judaism and Jews.

And yet, Aguilar and Leiser eventually move toward each other. Leiser shows that the transformation of Scripture into a “readable” text does not depend on the rejection of tradition but on “instruction” that will make Hebrew texts and traditions accessible to all: he supports Rebecca Gratz and the Hebrew Sunday schools, where girls and boys are

introduced to the Hebrew language. At the same time, Aguilar acknowledges the role of the Hebrew sources when she reflects on the meanings of the *Shma*’ by referring to the words and letters of the Hebrew text. What is more, in her *Women of Israel* and her *History of the Jews of England*, she sets out to establish alternative traditions that can explicate and illuminate the Biblical concept of a “Hebrew nation.” These movements toward each other signal the authors’ shared resistance to the slippages between Protestantism and secularism: the Bible is reclaimed as the source of Jewish religious as well as national self-assertion.

Spirit of Judaism presents contrasting voices; inscribes gender and class into debates on the accessibility of Scripture; and attests to early concerns about the uncanny proximity of universalizing, secularizing, and Christianizing trends. Perhaps the preservation and publication of an ongoing argument leave the deepest impression: as long as Aguilar and Leiser continue to argue about these trends, they haven’t accepted them just yet.

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An Icon for Iconoclasts: Spinoza and the Faith of Jewish Secularism

Daniel B. Schwartz

In late 1953, David Ben-Gurion, then in between stints as Israel's prime minister, published an article in the main labor union daily *Davar*, entitled "Let Us Amend the Injustice." The specific "injustice" that moved the "Old Man" of Israeli politics to speak out from his Negev retreat involved none of the most obvious controversies of the day besetting the five-year-old Jewish state: the fallout from Israel's bloody raid two months earlier on the West Bank village of Qibya, the continued housing of tens of thousands of Jewish immigrants from the Middle East in shantytowns, nor the Palestinian refugee crisis. Rather, Ben-Gurion entered the fray to plead for a philosopher who had been dead for close to three hundred years: Benedict, or (for Ben-Gurion certainly) Baruch Spinoza.

The seventeenth-century Spinoza was one of the pioneers of modern philosophy and biblical criticism. He was also arguably the most notorious heretic in Jewish history. In 1656, the Sephardic community of Amsterdam had excommunicated Spinoza, then twenty-three, for his "horrible heresies" and "monstrous deeds," explicitly barring the faithful "read[ing] anything composed or written by him." Now, just three years shy of the tercentenary of the rabbinic ban, Ben-Gurion called for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem—the crown jewel of Israel's higher education—to publish a Hebrew translation of the collected works of "the deepest, most original thinker to emerge from [our people] from the end of the Bible to the birth of Einstein." Moreover, though he never explicitly petitioned for the excommunication to be formally lifted, it was (and, to a striking degree, still is) widely believed that he had done just that, conjuring echoes of the Hebrew literature scholar Yosef Klausner's use of the phrase traditionally used to repeal the rabbinic ban ("Our brother are you!") at a Hebrew University commemoration of the two-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of Spinoza's death in 1927. In the wake of Ben-Gurion's article, debate raged from the halls of the Knesset to the pages of the international Jewish press over the prospect of a full pardon for the philosopher. Opinions were sought from both the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel and the head rabbi of the Spanish

and Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam as to whether, from a halakhic perspective, the *herem* could in fact be annulled. For a time, admirers of Spinoza, his detractors, and the ambivalent Jewish majority were abuzz over the rescinding of a judgment the heretic himself had never recognized as authoritative to begin with.

Ben-Gurion had a preoccupation with the author of the *Ethics* and the *Theological-Political Treatise* dating back to his east European youth. He was far from alone. In seeking to reclaim Spinoza in 1953, Ben-Gurion was heir to a long and remarkably diverse history of vindications, canonizations, and repudiations of Spinoza in Jewish culture. This had led, by 1953, to a view of the Dutch Jewish freethinker as a pioneer of secular Jewish identity and as *primus inter pares* in the camp of Jewish historical heretics turned hero.

Spinoza's heresy was revolutionary and far-reaching. It was founded on his conflation of God and Nature and resulting rejection of the reality of the supernatural, which did away with belief in a personal and transcendent deity, free will, miracles, the revealed character of the Bible, the eternal "chosenness" of any people or religion by God, and—most problematically from a traditional Jewish perspective—the notion of a divine ceremonial law distinct from the universal laws of nature. The scandal of his ideas met its match in the radicalness of his personal example. After his excommunication, Spinoza made no effort to reconcile with Amsterdam Jewry; nor did he embrace some form of Christianity. He simply went without membership in a religious community in an age when confessional status remained a primary criterion of identity. Swept under the rug by Jews in his own time and for decades thereafter, the Spinozan rupture re-emerged in Jewish historical consciousness as a milestone—a perceived turning point between the medieval and the modern and breakthrough of the secular—in the nineteenth century. For a growing number of Jews and particularly intellectuals, the fiercely independent Spinoza became a model to be emulated; for others, he remained a corrosive threat to Jewish continuity that now had to be met head-on; for still others, he appeared



Portrait of Baruch Spinoza. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: B 117.

in a decidedly ambiguous light, both heroic and troubling at once. Those who heralded the Amsterdam philosopher as a prototype of the modern, secular Jew disagreed over the proper interpretation of this identity. Some saw Spinoza as a founding father of the Jewish cosmopolitan committed to reason and freedom over any ethnic loyalties, a type famously labeled the "non-Jewish Jew" by the Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher. Others—like Ben-Gurion—regarded Spinoza as "the first Zionist of the last three hundred years." A precursor of Jewish liberalism, nationalism, socialism, and various cross-pollinations of these and others isms, Spinoza became, to a degree matched only by the eighteenth-century German and Jewish Enlightenment thinker Moses Mendelssohn (the other most oft-mentioned candidate for "first modern Jew"), a perennial landmark and point of reference for constructions of modern Jewish identity.

Whether Spinoza *should* be viewed as the first modern or secular Jew is questionable. Certainly, as a descriptive label for the philosopher of history it is anachronistic, a claim Spinoza himself would have probably found unintelligible. Steven Nadler, the author of the definitive biography of Spinoza in English,

argues that while Spinoza never converted to Christianity in the wake of his break with Judaism he did not continue to identify as Jewish either; at most, then, he should be considered the first secular person but not the first secular Jew.

Regardless of whether Spinoza would have recognized himself in titles such as the first modern Jew or the founder of Jewish secularism, the connection between his Jewish reception and the secularization of Jewish thought, culture, and identity is irrefutable. From Berthold Auerbach in the nineteenth century to Rebecca Goldstein today, countless seminary students turned secular intellectuals have testified to the seminal impact that reading Spinoza (or simply reading about Spinoza) had in stripping them of belief in *Torah min ha-Shamayim* (“Torah from Heaven”), the divine authority of Jewish law, and the existence of an immortal soul separate from the body. Spinoza became “the first great culture-hero of modern secular Jews,” in the words of the late Yosef Yerushalmi, through

both the secularizing of Jewishness—by redrawing the boundaries of Jewishness to not only accommodate but venerate a notorious enemy of rabbinic religion—and the Judaizing of secularity—by defining values such as “the freedom to philosophize,” the questioning of authority, the embrace of reason, science, and even universalism itself as quintessentially “Jewish.” All told, Spinoza’s posthumous course from heretic to celebrated, if still controversial, hero in Jewish consciousness is a case study par excellence of both the process and project of intellectual secularization in modern Jewish history.

Yet secularization, as sociologists and historians have increasingly come to realize, is not a one-way street from the religious to the profane, and the rehabilitation of Spinoza in Jewish culture is perceived in only partial light if seen as a history of desacralization exclusively. When we turn to the actual rhetoric of this recuperation we find a striking persistence of sacral metaphors and motifs, of frames, languages, even modes of

interpretation with a traditional pedigree. This is especially glaring in descriptions of the first formative engagement with the life and thought of the Amsterdam heretic, which frequently echo narratives of conversion or calls to prophecy. No less a religious insurgent than Micah J. Berdichevsky, the militantly secular fin-de-siècle Hebrew writer who sought a radical break with Jewish tradition, recalls in a diary entry from 1900 rich with theological imagery his discovery of Spinoza ten years earlier. He refers to the *Ethics* as “the Tablets of the Covenant,” and recounts how, having picked up a copy of the first Hebrew translation of Spinoza’s magnum opus, the earth trembled, the philosopher appeared before him in a vision, and a voice cried out, “The book in your hands is the answer to the mystery of the universe!” There is, no doubt, embellishment in this account, but not a whit of irony. Berdichevsky’s professed experience of ecstasy on encountering Spinoza has several equivalents in modern Jewish literature, including in the writing of I. B. Singer.

All this suggests that a process of sacralization, as well as secularization, has taken place in the course of the transformation of Spinoza into an icon for iconoclasts. And this, in turn, may offer insight into why at least some devout Jewish secularists would find the idea of rescinding the ban on Spinoza attractive in principle. An amnesty, even if only figurative, was a gesture that contained hints of both secularization and sacralization, the former by implying a total “ingathering” of the prototype of the modern secular heretic in Jewish culture, the latter by investing this ingathering with an authority drawn from the appropriation of a religious idiom and symbol. This constant oscillation between the secular and the sacred is at the very heart of the history of the Jewish reclamation of Spinoza, and indeed, of the history of the secularization of Jewish culture more broadly.

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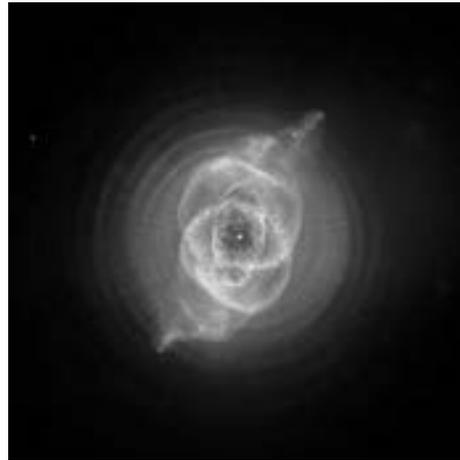
Walter Benjamin, the Kabbalah, and Secularism

Kam Shapiro

Where do we look in this world for signs of the next? What do they tell us of what is to come, and of our part in our own transformation? These were acute questions in the chaotic interwar period during which the German Jewish critic Walter Benjamin came of age, when modern confidence in human rationality and faith in historical progress had been shattered by mass culture, global economic crises, and world war. In the course of an unfolding political and personal catastrophe—ending with his likely choice of suicide as an alternative to capture by the Gestapo—Benjamin sought redemptive potentials among the ruins of modernity. In formulating what he once called a “weak messianism,” he drew on both Marxism and Jewish theology, especially the mystical tradition of the Kabbalah, with which he became familiar through his friend Gershom Scholem. His peculiar blend of materialist and theological criticism, along with his famously hermetic style, have puzzled many readers and licensed diverse interpretations. Benjamin’s appeal to messianism has been identified alternately with the triumph of the proletariat and the restoration of divine language. It has also illustrated certain affinities, however, between secular and theological visions, including especially their potential for mutual entanglement.

To get a sense of how Jewish mysticism might lend itself to appropriations of the sort Benjamin performed, one can look to the creation story central to Lurianic Kabbalah. As summarized by Scholem, and drastically simplified here, the story comprises four moments, namely: contraction (*tsimtsum*), emanation (*atsilut*), shattering of the vessels (*shevirat ha-kelim*), and repair (*tikkun*). In the first stage, Luria’s major innovation, God

contracts into a part of himself to make space for the creation of something other. Following the contraction come the first emanations of divine light, the lights or sparks known as the *sefirot* that in turn compose the material universe. These emanations combine organizing principles with residual spiritual elements in the space from which God withdrew. Some also take the form of language and letters, which would seem to promise a metaphysical correspondence of word and being. But here



The Cat’s Eye Nebula: Dying Star Creates Fantasy-like Sculpture of Gas and Dust. Credit: NASA, ESA, HEIC, and The Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA). Acknowledgment: R. Corradi (Isaac Newton Group of Telescopes, Spain) and Z. Tsvetanov (NASA).

the story takes another striking turn. Rather than flowing into discrete forms, the creative emanations from the original figure explode some of the vessels meant to receive them, resulting in a dispersion of fragments from the vessels and sparks of the light within. The universe we inhabit is therefore composed of both shattered forms and residues of creative forces.

Throughout subsequent history, the cosmos is engaged in a period of repair or *tikkun*, where new *parzufim*, faces or configurations (sometimes translated as “constellations”) of *sefirot* are formed.

It is not hard to see how these images might appeal to someone contemplating a rapid social and cultural disintegration. Benjamin’s writings are replete with figures of fragmentation and rearrangement, whether he is discussing baroque theater in the aftermath of the Thirty Years’ War, the commodity culture of advanced capitalism, or new cinematic forms of representation. Furthermore, the promise of an imminent redemption of a shattered world resonated with the Marxist expectation that capitalist crisis would bring about the material and intellectual basis for communism. Thus, one can argue that Benjamin adopted an allegorical approach to the Kabbalah, secularizing its vision of destruction and redemption.

While this means of reconciling theological and secular visions might seem superficial, it takes on depth as soon as we ask just how faithful or unfaithful it is to the Kabbalah, a tradition that both lends itself to secular politics and licenses creative interpretations. First of all, unlike neo-Platonism and its theistic inheritors, the Kabbalah does not necessarily oppose the intellectual and the material since the emanations share in God’s substance and power. Thus, while it posits a divine source for the material universe, Kabbalah shares Marxism’s reconciliation of matter and spirit. Second, and by the same token, it situates redemption in this world, and ascribes to human beings a special responsibility for its achievement. Third, the Kabbalah approaches divine texts not as an intact code but rather as a set of encrypted puzzle pieces. Like other



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mystical traditions, it therefore lends itself to both critical and supplementary approaches to orthodoxy, whether an elaboration of halakhic laws or even a conversion to Islam (in the famous case of Shabbetai Zevi). Indeed, whether Divinity can be distinguished from the cosmos itself is a subject of disagreement within Kabbalist interpretive traditions, some of which align it with the pantheism of Spinoza. Today, some even interpret the Lurianic creation story as a Jewish prefigure for the “big bang.”

Given this history, Benjamin’s appropriation of the Kabbalah can be seen simultaneously as unfaithful to its traditional meaning and faithful to its vision, understood less as a given set of beliefs than as a model of exposition. That is, one can see the Kabbalah as an inspiration for Benjamin’s approach to both Jewish theology and Marxism, and a model for critical scholarship more generally. Benjamin provides support for this approach in his scattered discussions of his philosophical method, which he links quite explicitly to the Kabbalah in the preface to his study of the baroque. As Susan Buck-Morss has argued in her monumental study, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, Kabbalist interpretive strategies make an apt precedent for the collage method Benjamin adopted in his later study of the Parisian Arcades, which juxtaposes passages from a wide range of

sources without incorporating them in a continuous argument or narrative, though as she points out it was also clearly inspired by the similar techniques of the surrealists.

Of course, none of this tells us how to arrange the fragments of tradition in the present or what new picture will emerge. Yet here again we find affinities with Marxism. Prophecy posed problems for Marx, after all, since he presumed human consciousness to be shaped by the same historical forces it contemplates. Hence, Marx sought clues to the future through an exhaustive reconstruction of the past, saying little about communism. Similarly, Kabbalah contemplates a set of traditions whose repair composes an order as yet unrealized. Thus, both Kabbalah and Marxism heighten messianic anticipation without positing a legible roadmap to salvation. It is therefore commonplace to emphasize the “negative” messianic themes in Benjamin’s work, an emphasis encouraged by the sad arc of his biography. Anticipation, however, also has the positive effect of driving a search for emergent patterns. It lends urgency to critical powers of analysis and productive associations. Benjamin not only contemplated the dissolution of cultural traditions but also undertook to reassemble their fragments in new configurations. He also suggested that modern subjects might learn to take part in collective acts of assembly,

generating new habits and meanings. He explicitly set this task against the cultural restoration promised by the Nazis.

Marx famously wrote that the point is not merely to interpret the world but to change it. However, only crude readings of Marx treat language as the mere expression of basic structures rather than a material phenomenon dialectically linked with the whole of human practice and the forces in which it is embedded. As the creation story of the Kabbalah suggests, language is not merely a means of representation but a source of revelation, that is, a repository of creative forces capable of bringing about a new order. For both Kabbalah and the version of Marxism to which Benjamin subscribed, messianic speculations are not merely representations but also acts that transform the present. Theirs is a “weak” messianic power, however, one we can only come to know through its earthly effects. The stakes of Benjamin’s combination or even confusion of secular and theological traditions can be seen in this same light.

Kam Shapiro is associate professor of politics and government at Illinois State University. He is the author of Sovereign Nations, Carnal States (Cornell University Press, 2003) and Carl Schmitt and the Intensification of Politics (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

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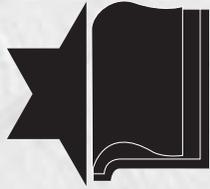
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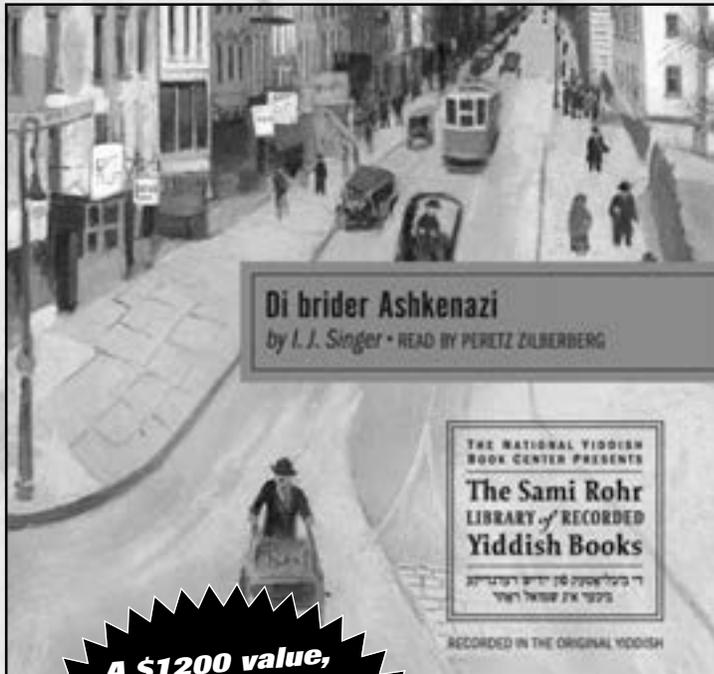
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Jewish Secularism and the Campaigns against Political Catholicism and Islam

Ari Joskowitz

The current interest in Jews and secularism appears to be driven by the feeling that secular arrangements in many countries are under pressure. Against the liberal model that treats religion as a private issue, certain religious movements within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are seeking to influence politics in a new way. As José Casanova put it, “Religions in the 1980s ‘went public’”—and thus seemed to contradict some of the fundamental predictions of secularization theories. Rather than demonstrate an increasing separation of religious and political spheres, national religious groups in Israel and certain evangelical communities in the United States, among others, seem rather to be collapsing these spheres.

No phenomenon has influenced the recent interest in secularism as much as the idea of political Islam. The very notion of a common tradition of European secularism seems to be reinvented against the foil of an Islamic, non-European tradition said to lack an adequate understanding of secularity. Jewish intellectuals who research and comment upon secularism are by necessity affected by these debates. Indeed, for many American and European Jews, the question of secularism is raised less by the challenges to institutional Judaism than by controversial issues such as the construction of a mosque in the neighborhood of the destroyed World Trade Center or the referendum in Switzerland that led to a constitutional ban on the constructions of minarets in the country. If we want to understand the competing concepts of secularism that circulate today among Jews and non-Jews alike, we would be well served to look at the way Jews speak about Islam as well as the various other foils that figure in current debates on secularism.

A focus on these constellations will also help us understand Jewish secularism in its historical context. Even though today's debates are new in many respects, understanding the continuities that emerge in the polemics against secularism's Others can serve as a useful guide to secularist politics. Since the eighteenth century, enlighteners and liberals have depicted secularism as under attack by

individuals trapped within the narrow confines of tradition or unable “to dare to think for themselves” (to use Kant's famous dictum). In this sense, secularism has always been in crisis. In the view of secularists who endorsed a strong civic or national ethos as the remedy for religious divisions since the eighteenth century, Jews were a prime example of a collective unable to modernize. For most of the nineteenth century, however, the foil of liberal secularists was not Judaism but Catholicism. In political pamphlets, parliamentary speeches, and novels about Jesuit conspiracies, liberals in Europe and the Americas explained by way of a negative example their ideal of a privatized religion compatible with a neutral state.

Jews were part of these conversations about Catholicism starting with some of their earliest contributions to public debates on politics and religion in Europe. The most prominent early Jewish intellectual to participate in these discussions was Moses Mendelssohn, who opened his *Jerusalem* (1783) with remarks on Catholic despotism. In a number of cases, Jews not only joined these discussions but also shaped them in notable ways: some of the most important anticlerical and anti-Catholic tropes—most revolving around the Catholic and reactionary nature of Romanticism—were invented by Heinrich Heine, an author who was often attacked for his Jewish origins. Even Jewish politicians not generally known as anticlericals frequently reflected on secularism through the foil of Catholicism. The positions of important Jewish parliamentarians and liberal leaders such as Eduard Lasker in Prussia and Germany or Adolphe Crémieux in France on the issue of secularism emerge not so much in their statements on Jewish equality as in their remarks on laws affecting the Catholic Church and its clergy. I refer to these cases not in order to prove that Jews were by nature great enemies of the Church (as many Catholic anti-Semites claimed) but rather because it was difficult to avoid speaking about Catholicism in nineteenth-century Europe if one cared about issues of church-state relations, modern forms of religiosity, or even if one simply wanted to address the central issues of political debate.

Turning again to today's debates can help put some of the difficult choices Jews made during nineteenth-century debates into perspective. In current discussions about Islam, many Jews find themselves torn between two poles: they can either embrace the idea that a Judeo-Christian West is pitted against Islamism and thus create an alliance with liberal secularists to combat purportedly antimodern forms of religious politics, or they can reject polemics against Islam as a form of discrimination uncomfortably close to their own historical experiences of anti-Semitism. Many attempt to straddle these positions, vacillating between them or believing they can find some kind of middle ground, while others retreat to a meta-level to avoid implication in a pervasive debate that offers only uncomfortable paradoxes.

West and Central European Jews who entered public debates on the Catholic Church beginning in the late eighteenth century faced similar choices. A powerful institution in countries and regions with a Catholic majority, the Catholic Church was also an outspoken enemy of Jewish citizenship and religious pluralism—especially between 1848 and the 1880s. The campaign of liberal Catholics and Protestants against an outspoken opponent of secular equality thus appeared to many Jews to offer an opportunity for a productive alliance. At the same time, it was difficult for them to ignore the fact that Jews and Catholic clergy were sometimes accused of similar sins by secularists, including fostering a form of transnational group solidarity that trumped their national loyalties. Throughout Europe's long nineteenth century, Jewish men and priests were also frequently depicted as lacking masculinity and as possessing a deviant sexual appetite. Moreover, many German Jewish intellectuals were keenly aware that the notion of a Judeo-Protestant alliance was illusionary in the face of the increasing anti-Semitism espoused by former Protestant liberals beginning in the 1870s. Jews thus oscillated between the politics of anticlerical alliance building and, less frequently, condemning anti-Catholicism in an effort to oppose secularist pressures on both Jews and Catholics.

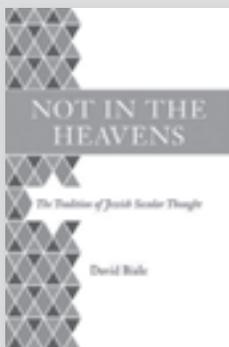
The sometimes reluctant anticlericalism of Jewish public figures throughout the nineteenth century was one important aspect of their well-articulated ambiguity toward an ever-polemical secularism. Even Jews who militantly denounced the antimodernism of the Church in the nineteenth century were nevertheless hard pressed to forget that numerous enlighteners had previously depicted Jews as backwards in similar ways. The position of Ludwig Philippson, the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*—Germany’s most venerated Jewish periodical—was typical in this regard. Responding in 1868 to the accusation that Catholics lacked loyalty to the government, he wrote “The tables have been turned, and what was an unfounded accusation against us, is an undeniable reality with the other side.” Philippson—like many other liberal Jews—supported the campaigns

against the Catholic Church but retained an awareness of the similarities of anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic polemics even as he dismissed these as false.

As much as current debates can refocus our sensibility toward the challenges that European Jews faced with the polemical elements of secularism in the past, Jewish anticlericalism can help illuminate some of the tensions embedded in recent campaigns against Islam. Ironically, one of the best current examples of a similarly fraught form of secularism can be found in the case of the Catholic Church in Europe. Officials of the Catholic Church in countries like France or Germany have been torn between new opportunities to promote visions of a Christian Europe and an awareness of the parallels between their own anti-Islamist rhetoric and the anticlerical battles waged against

the Catholic Church during the nineteenth century. Jews who reflect critically on the way they articulate their commitment or opposition to secularism in debates on Islam will thus find many others who have similar doubts. In this sense, the complicated history of Jewish anticlericalism and secularism in the nineteenth century speaks to the paradoxes many Jews and others face today.

Ari Joskowitz is assistant professor of Jewish Studies and European Studies and affiliated assistant professor of history at Vanderbilt University.



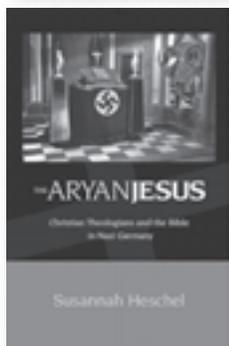
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Laïcité, Fraternité, and Nationalité: Discontinuities in French Jewish Discourse

Kimberly Arkin

In general, French Jews have always supported *laïcité*, a term that is usually translated as secularism. At the beginning of the century, Jews supported the Republican government's attempts to contain the power of the Catholic Church in the name of *laïcité*. After World War II, many surviving French Jews welcomed a return to *laïcité* after Vichy's deadly foregrounding and essentialization of religious identities. Today, many French Jews, and almost all institutional elites, approve of legislation designed to "reinforce" *laïcité*, including the 2004 decision to outlaw "ostentatious" religious symbols in public schools and the 2010 ban of the burqa in public spaces. Articulating a widely held position, Richard Prasquier, the president of one of the largest Jewish organizations in France, noted that the burqa "humiliates women" and undermines the face-to-face relations that form the foundation of social life in France. But this continuous support for *laïcité* hides a fundamental shift in many French Jews' attitudes toward religious pluralism and minority rights. This shift, in turn, highlights a potentially dangerous new trend in French Jewish negotiations of national identity, one that depends on distinguishing between and among religious minorities in order to claim Jewish Frenchness.

Despite widespread rhetoric about continuity, contemporary invocations of *laïcité* are quite *unlike* the principle of religious neutrality that animated the 1905 legislation establishing the separation of church and state in France. That older understanding created new possibilities for minority religious expression, in part because it removed Catholic influence from classrooms and curricula. In other words, the 1905 version of *laïcité* simultaneously guaranteed freedom of religion for those who chose to observe AND freedom from religion for those who did not. Today, *laïcité* is premised almost exclusively on freedom from religion, and particularly freedom from religions that are seen as grounded in corporeality (dietary restrictions, dress codes, organized daily prayers) and hierarchy (between believers and nonbelievers, the pious and the impious, men and women, etc.). Where the old version of *laïcité* targeted an established,

majority religion—Catholicism—the new version is being used to restrict the practices of a religious minority—Muslims.

Islam is not new to France; it dates back at least to the beginning of French colonization in the early nineteenth century. But Islamic practice in metropolitan France (and Europe more generally) has changed over the last few decades. The children and grandchildren of secularized immigrant families are returning to religious practices rooted in text-based orthopraxy. From the perspective of the new *laïcité*, these forms of religiosity are inherently problematic. One cannot be loyal to the French nation-state and be part of an ascriptive religious community that regulates a whole range of daily actions. In addition, deeply corporeal religions are thought to be "racist," thus fueling intolerance within and across social groups. Islam is thus accused of producing misogynists, anti-Semites, and jihadis—all of whom threaten the stability and values of the Republic.

Although the recent call to arms over *laïcité* focuses on Muslims, it could very easily begin to implicate Jews. Over the last forty years, changes in French Judaism have paralleled the shifts in French Islam. Between the 1950s and the 1980s, approximately 250,000 North African Jews immigrated to France. This wave of immigration transformed French Jewish practice. The postwar French Jewish population, which was overwhelmingly Ashkenazi, was relatively assimilated and bourgeois. Sephardi immigrants, however, were not. They reestablished visible ethnic and religious difference by building day schools, community centers, synagogues, and kosher butchers. They also turned in large numbers to Eastern European forms of ultra-Orthodoxy that had long been marginal in France. By the 1980s, as North African Jews were making inroads into establishment Jewish institutions, some Ashkenazim even accused new Sephardi leaders of promoting "fundamentalism," a word not accidentally associated with Iran and Muslim extremism.

Both the influx of Arab Jews and the turn to visible, corporeal forms of Judaism left all French Jews at a crossroads. Some continued to support minority religious rights

and therefore opposed legislation enacted in the name of *laïcité*. This was the case for the French Chief Rabbi during the first "headscarf affair" in the late 1980s. Tunisian-born Joseph Sitruk argued that governmental attempts to restrict Muslim religious practice, including veiling, would negatively impact religious Jews, particularly *kippot*-wearing boys. In other words, although the national hysteria over *laïcité* had generally targeted Muslims, Sitruk feared it could negatively impact Jews. And he was right. In 2004, the French equivalent of the FBI warned that 300 neighborhoods were exhibiting a dangerous tendency toward "ethnic withdrawal," noting that the signs of such a threat were women with covered heads and bodies, butchers certified in ritual slaughter, shops selling religious objects, and well-attended houses of worship. All of these signs could be found in a range of Jewish neighborhoods and were encouraged by the French rabbinate and day schools. The 2004 published report of the Stasi Commission, the deliberative body created to advise the government on secularism, also highlighted breaches in *laïcité* that applied better to Jewish groups than to Muslims. For example, the Commission noted that, contrary to Republican law, "certain private schools under contract accept only students who can prove that they belong to the same religion as the establishment." At the time, there were no Muslim schools under contract, and anyone involved in Jewish schooling knew that admission required the presentation of an Orthodox *ketubbah*.

Sitruk's reluctance to support banning the veil was consistent with twentieth-century French Jewish discourse about minority rights. But the reaction to Sitruk's comments revealed the second possible path at this crossroads in French Jewish history. The religious newspaper that interviewed Sitruk in 1989 asked three times why he could not condemn veiling and yet support the wearing of *kippot*. This question was an attempt to divorce the concerns of practicing Jews and Muslims by insisting that two manifestations of religious obligation—the *kippa* and the headscarf—were incommensurable. In other words, a religious newspaper used the concept of *laïcité* not to argue for minority inclusion but to

highlight the impossibility of Muslim Frenchness while insisting that, whatever Jews might do, they were always already French.

This second path has been the one most (visibly) taken. The attempt to divide Jews from Muslims with the language of *laïcité* has become increasingly common, even among religious Jews. Shmuel Trigano, an observant, Algerian-born philosopher, argues Jews and Muslims in France have nothing in common. While he thinks Jews are indelibly French, the same cannot be said of Muslims:

[Arab Muslims] belong to a religion that has not modernized and has not been part of the Republican pact. Its members are former or current nationals of foreign countries that, although very close to France geographically, have historically been competitors with the West and Christianity in general . . . Entering this identity that I call "France" . . . would require that Arab Muslims completely reform their identity, their religion, and even their psychology.

Georges Bensoussan, a Jewish historian and public intellectual often cited in discussions of

laïcité, has denounced comparing Jewish and Muslim religious practices as a kind of false consciousness.

In the face of [the] disintegration of the social fabric, many figures of authority . . . tend to deny, ignore, and conceal recognized facts which are splitting French society in two . . . Rare cases of Jewish children refusing to go to school on Saturdays are blown up out of all proportion; such cases are all the rarer . . . People talk of students refusing to eat meat which [*sic*] has not been slaughtered in accordance with religious law, while intimating that this refers to Muslim students as well as their Jewish fellows. The latter, however, are at least ten times more numerous than the former . . . Roger Cukierman, the former president of one of the largest Jewish organizations in France, noted in a publicly recorded radio interview in 2004: "I dare to hope that a sincere government will help them [Muslims] with their social integration . . . We [Jews] have no problem with integration. Jews have lived in France for hundreds of years; we are an integral part of French society . . ."

So what appears to be a sign of continuity—Jewish support for laws associated with *laïcité*—actually marks a profound rupture. Like the French (post)Catholic majority, French Jews are using *laïcité* as a way of permanently Othering Muslims. Why? There is no simple answer to this question. But postcolonial paradoxes in French ideologies of national belonging may be driving this seemingly dangerous Jewish move. To some extent, the inclusion of Arab Jews in postcolonial France depends on distinction from and disavowal of Arabness, which is almost always conflated with Muslimness. This may be fueling increasing Jewish religiosity and the imperative to establish ontological difference between and among French minorities. Perhaps for the first time since World War II, Jewish Frenchness thus depends on supporting exclusive and exclusionary visions of the nation. For Jews, as for the French mainstream, *laïcité* has become a weapon in this battle.

Kimberly Arkin will be assistant professor of anthropology at Boston University as of July 2011.

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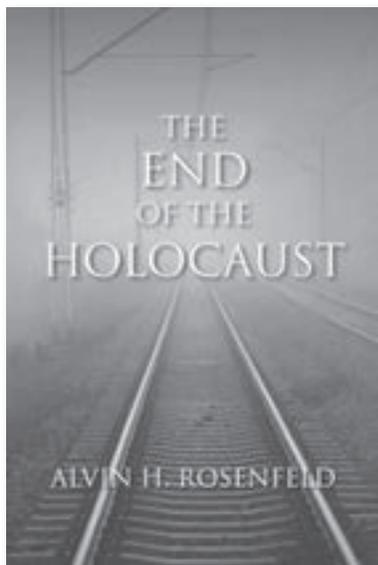
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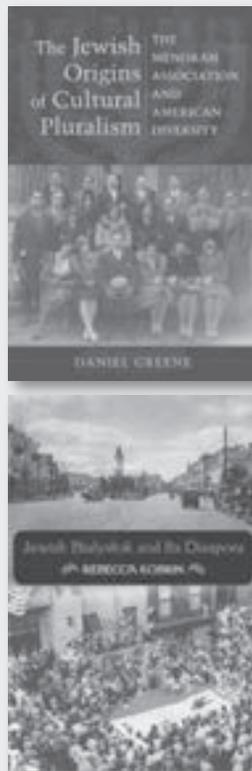
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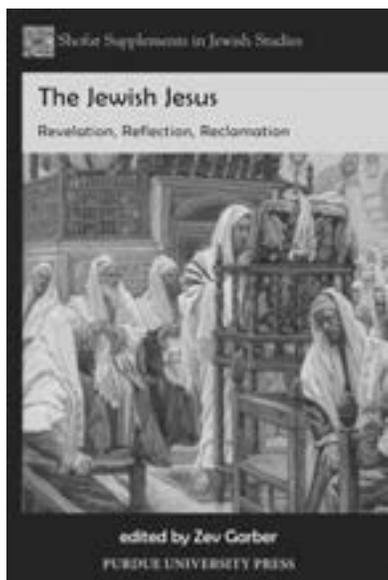
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Academic research on Jewish secularization offers profound insight into the transformation of Jewish life in the aftermath of the historical encounter with modernity. Such studies often examine ideological ruptures, philosophical crises, and social upheaval created by the rejection of Jewish religious tradition and the ensuing interplay of secular Jews with the non-Jewish world and its challenging ideas, beliefs, and practices. The revolution in traditional Jewish attitudes toward animals, particularly dogs, is a compelling, though understudied, by-product of this encounter. While a causal relationship between secularism and dog-loving may be farfetched, a strong correlation between the two seems unavoidable. For most Jews today,

both in Israel and around the world, dogs have become cherished companions, reliable workers, and in many cases, genuine family members whose life passages are celebrated, marked, and mourned like any other relative. I suggest, therefore, that the revolution in the relationship between Jews and dogs offers wonderful opportunities for new insights into the Jewish encounter with modernity.

In order to appreciate the dimensions of the contemporary Jewish embrace of dogs, we must consider the roots of the traditional antipathy toward them. According to religious historian Sophia Menache, monotheism in general was bad for dogs. She argues that “warm ties between humans and canines have been seen as a threat to the authority of the

clergy and indeed, of God.” Human attachment to dogs, she explains, “bestows a sense of complete mastery, and in consequence, may bring about higher self-esteem” that threatens the submission of the faithful to God. With regard to the Jewish tradition, Menache points out that the Hebrew Bible’s antipathy toward dogs is evidence of anxiety about the remnants of polytheism, particularly the animal-worshipping, dog-loving cults of the ancient Egyptians. The Hebrew Bible mentions dogs thirty-two times, mostly referencing them as filthy, despicable, dangerous creatures to be shunned and avoided. In Rabbinic literature, the Biblical stance toward dogs softens somewhat, and dogs are differentiated into “good and evil,” though even good dogs should be



Yehoshua Gardens Dog Park, Tel Aviv, Israel. Photo by the author.

“chained during the day and freed only at night when suspicious people walked the streets.” Interestingly, the rabbis advised that widows particularly should be urged not to keep dogs in order to prevent the possibility of bestiality. Gradually, Menache observes, keeping dogs not only became identified with the “reprehensible behavior” of the Gentiles, it “alienates Jews from the love of God, an absolute verdict that left no room for further considerations.” This traditional revulsion toward dogs remains strong amongst many religious Jews today, whose cultural practices continue not only to maintain it, but perhaps intensify it, particularly as dog-loving becomes more widespread and prevalent amongst secular Jews.

Of the new possibilities created by the transformation of the Jewish relationship to dogs, consider how life in prestate Palestine would have been different had not secular Jews overcome their traditional fear of them. During the Mandate period, dogs served Jews as guardians, watchdogs, and police dogs, performing crucial functions in tracking intruders, finding explosives, and protecting settlements and individuals. In order to perform these functions, dogs had to be trained, tolerated, and taken care of by Jews, many of whom had no positive or direct experience with dogs. (Of course, divisions between Western and Eastern European Jews were reproduced in dog-keeping practices at the time, with bourgeois Western Europeans being significantly more accustomed to living and working with dogs than their Eastern counterparts). The Jewish use of dogs at this time mirrored those of the British, who used dogs extensively as part of their overall efforts to control and terrorize the Palestinian population. Not only did this common canine culture form a bridge between the British and Jews, it provided a technological advantage against the Palestinians who, of course, possessed deep cultural aversions to dogs that prohibited their use and added to their fearsomeness. It is difficult to know exactly what the local Arab population thought about the new canine cultures and Western, dog-keeping habits that emerged in Palestine with the arrival of the British and the Zionists, but it is not difficult to speculate. Dogs were an essential part of the colonial strategy to terrorize and control the local population. Since they were often the explicit object of canine pursuit and aggression, local Palestinian perceptions of colonial dogs and dog-keeping were undoubtedly negative in the extreme. More so, since we



Set of Israeli stamps from 1987. Courtesy of The Israel Philatelic Service.

know that dogs are understood as sources of impurity in Islam and are stigmatized by Islamicate cultural traditions that have developed deep aversions to them based on interpretations of Quranic verses that designate dogs as unclean animals.

The new, positive relationship between Jews and dogs not only created military advantage in pre-state Palestine, it continues to shape social life in Israel in ways that are largely taken for granted. While the traditional Jewish religious antipathy toward dogs remains steadfast, the secular Jewish embrace of dogs, a very recent phenomenon in Jewish history, has arguably safeguarded—and transformed—Jewish life in Israel. Indeed, dogs are ubiquitous in contemporary Israel, be they pets, service dogs, police dogs, army dogs, show dogs, or stray dogs. There is a well-developed canine infrastructure in Israel, with codified dog laws regulating dog behavior and ownership. There is an active humane society and a state-sponsored network of animal shelters in every major city. Israel boasts a well-developed organization of pedigree dog clubs, managed by an active Israel Kennel Club. The K9 unit of the Israeli army, *Oketz*, is an internationally recognized, top-secret military powerhouse; it continues the work that began in the prestate period to use dogs to find explosives, patrol territories, and perform other nefarious military tasks essential to the security of the state. Israelis are at the

international cutting-edge of service-dog training, in which dogs perform a variety of life-maintenance functions for the blind, disabled, and wounded. Moreover, therapy dogs provide immeasurable solace to the infirm and elderly. In contemporary Tel Aviv, the social activities of dog walking, sitting in dog parks, and otherwise tending to the needs of one’s pet dog are a constant assertion of *normaliyut* (normalcy) in an otherwise tense society. This mundane sense of well-being, elusive in the best of times, would have been even more out of reach for many contemporary Israelis had Jews not transformed their relationship to dogs.

Thanks to Levi-Strauss, it is an anthropological axiom that “Animals are good to think with.” The emerging interdisciplinary field of anthrozoology, or human-animal studies, extends Levi-Strauss’s insight to open up entirely new ways of considering how the bonds between humans and animals are culturally transformative. Certainly the cultural manifestations of the new Jewish kinship with dogs offer myriad possibilities for further study.

Susan Kahn is lecturer on Near Eastern languages and civilizations at Harvard University. She is author of Reproducing Jews: A Cultural Account of Assisted Conception in Israel (Duke University Press, 2000).



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A Secular Return to the Bible? Reflections on Israeli Society, National Memory, and the Politics of the Past

Yael Zerubavel

The significance of the Hebrew Bible for the Zionist *Yishuv* and for Israeli society in its early post-independence years is well known. Hebrew, the language of the Bible, emerged as the national tongue, and biblical themes and images inspired poetry and fiction, songs, plays, and visual arts. Schools emphasized the attachment to the Bible as a means of bolstering students' Hebrew identity and their bond with the land. For the largely secular, Zionist immigrants that established the foundations of the national Hebrew culture, the significance of the Bible was defined primarily in national terms as the cherished repository of Jews' historical roots and ancient heritage. During the 1950s and 1960s, the grassroots appeal of archaeology and the Bible was among the salient features of Israeli national culture, promoted by leading public figures and reinforced by the state's iconic and symbolic forms.

Since the 1970s, however, the special status of the Bible has weakened considerably in Israeli culture. Biblical scholars Uriel Simon and Yair Zakovitch and historian Anita Shapira addressed this phenomenon, pointing out that the once-sacred book that served as a unifying symbolic text has become politicized, marginalized, less familiar to secular Israelis, and progressively less accessible to the youth. The changing status of the Bible may be in part an expression of a post-nationalist phase of a society that is more strongly rooted in its land and no longer feels the urgent need to rely on the ancient past to forge its national identity and culture. Yet the decline of the Bible is to a large extent linked to its politicization in conflicts that continue to divide Israeli society and that impact Israelis' perceptions not only of the present and the future but also of the past.

In the post-1967 era, the Bible and the biblical Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*) have been central to the Jewish settlers' expansionist agenda beyond the 1967 borders and often appear in the Israeli Right's political discourse. The renaming of the West Bank with the biblical terms "Judea" and "Samaria" and the pervasive references to biblical sites and the biblical forefathers attest to the centrality of the Bible for the Jewish settlers in this area as well as to its mobilization in support of political ends.



An advertisement for "Songs of the Bible" in a music store at Ben Gurion International Airport, Tel Aviv, August 2009. Photo by the author.

Conversely, for those who see the Jewish settlements as a major obstacle for the peace agenda, the association of the Bible with these highly controversial positions, which they reject, has undermined their own identification with it.

In addition, the growing political power of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox (*haredi*) Jews since the 1980s has intensified the struggles over the role of religion in Israeli life, the tensions between civic and religious law, and the Orthodox entitlement to the interpretation of Jewish law. The politics of religion has thus contributed to the perception of the Bible as a religious text that is identified with Orthodox and *haredi* life and is therefore less relevant to secular Israelis. These deep divisions have inevitably diminished the status of the Bible as a unifying national text.

During the last few years, I have been working on a book that examines the changing cultural representations of the Bible in contemporary Israeli culture. In pursuing this topic, I have become intrigued by the recent surge in various cultural forms relating to

the Bible and the growing realization that we may be facing a new cultural shift indicating a secular return to the Bible. The revived interest suggests that although the status of the Bible has changed, it may have not lost its cultural capital. This interest may occur despite the current political divisions and, in part, as a reaction to them. Yet it appears that this cultural process is neither linear nor uniform.

The recent surge of works and activities related to the Bible is evident most clearly at the level of popular culture, but resonates beyond it. Literary and cultural critics may dismiss the popular expressions as "Bible-lite" and see them as a passing cultural fad, yet their growing visibility suggests that this is an important topic of inquiry.

Meir Shalev's *Bible Now*, published in 1985, has been credited as an early sign of the new wave of popular reinterpretations of the Bible. Shalev presents his own musings about select biblical narratives that he reinterprets from a contemporary, secular perspective as he points out analogies (or contrasts) with Israeli society today. *Bible Now* thus presents a double critique of religious interpretations of the Bible and of Israeli society and political culture in the 1980s. The juxtaposition of the original biblical texts—which Shalev assumes his readers know—and the contemporary text of *Bible Now*—with its modern, journalistic-style Hebrew and colloquial idioms, unabashed secularist stance, direct criticism of religious commentaries, and allusions to present-day politics—creates a humorous framework with evocative and provocative satirical elements.

The proliferation and diversity of publications related to the Bible in recent years is one of the most salient features of this new wave. A host of books by expert scholars present discussions about the Bible that are directed to the general public. An even larger number of books on the Bible are written by the non-experts, including journalists, writers, academics outside the field of biblical scholarship, and public intellectuals. Some of these publications address specific books of the Bible or biblical themes, while others focus on the interpretation of biblical narratives within the framework of the weekly Torah portions. These works vary considerably in

their scholarly level, literary quality, and intellectual rigor. Nonetheless, some of these books reached the bestsellers list even when faced with critical or negative reviews. In the introduction to his book, *My Heroes: Four Biblical Journeys* (2008), the 45-year old journalist and television host Yair Lapid describes his recent discovery of the Bible: "In the last ten years I've dedicated a great deal of my free time to the Bible. . . . I plunged into the text with great enthusiasm and passion, tinged with a sense of a loss. I wish I could get back all those years I ignored it." Lapid gives voice to secular Israelis' desire to reclaim the Bible as part of their living culture. Recent biblical fiction represents another, if more limited, literary trend that has met with noticeable success, perhaps following a global trend exemplified by the reception of Anita Diamant's *The Red Tent* (1997). Other works pursue the satirical path, offering subversive and irreverent versions of biblical stories to target contemporary Israeli issues through various genres and media. The full-feature film entitled *This is Sodom*, created by the cast of the popular satirical television show *Eretz Nehederet* (Wonderful Country), was an instant hit in Israeli theaters.

Public programs and performances on biblical themes and commentaries on the weekly Torah portions are sponsored by educational organizations, cultural centers, and public institutions and are regularly broadcast in the radio and the television. These programs, which usually host a wide variety of speakers, are clearly directed at the non-specialist consumer. Entertainment and educational activities are offered in archeological parks and tourist sites as well, most notably around holidays and during the summer vacation. These enterprises suggest various degrees of commercialization, a trend that is more clearly manifested in the tourist industry. The development of biblical tourism, once associated primarily with Christian pilgrims and Jewish tourists, is now also aimed at Israeli visitors. Ironically, such touristic representations that wish to present a distinct Hebrew national past are often shaped by conventions borrowed from global heritage and religious tourism even when they are transmitted to native Hebrew speakers.

My study of the recent return to the Bible suggests that this cultural shift stems from diverse, and at times contradictory, orientations. To a certain extent this secular return has developed out of a nostalgic yearning for the prestate era that now appears as representing a more "authentic" Hebrew culture and is characterized, among other things, by

the attachment to the Bible. Such nostalgic sentiments are often used by commercial entrepreneurs as well as political strategists. The recent repackaging of historical and contemporary Israeli songs under the label "Songs of the Bible" has given them a new life. The set has been prominently displayed in the music store *Tav Shmini* at the Ben Gurion airport (see photo). The recent tourism campaign launched by *Yesha*, the Council of the Jewish settlements in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, acknowledged the targeting of secular Israelis' nostalgic connection to biblical stories, with the goal of bringing them over, physically and metaphorically, to that region and win their support for the settlements.

The secular return to the Bible is also linked to a different trend that represents a broader secular interest in Jewish tradition. Of late, a growing sense of loss among secular Israelis has led them to look for ways to reconnect with Jewish tradition as part of a cultural, rather than religious, heritage. Departing from the earlier view that saw the Bible as a sacred national canon associated with antiquity and regarded the Talmud as a religious text associated with Jewish life in exile, the current trend articulates secular Israelis' desire to get reacquainted with both canonic texts without such distinctions. A wide variety of secular

organizations and teaching institutions provide classes on the Bible and the Talmud that are taught from a secularist-culturalist perspectives, even while employing traditional religious concepts such as *bet midrash*, *yeshiva*, or *havruta*.

Secular Israelis' search for spirituality and for their pre-Israeli roots is a critical factor in their heightened engagement with tradition. Their ideological positions, however, may vary greatly between those who see it as way to bridge cultural gaps with religious and traditional Jews, and those who maintain a more militant secularist approach and consider their study as a means to strengthen their opposition to the Orthodox establishment and its claim over the interpretation of these texts. The renewed interest in the Bible has thus led to the emergence of a wide variety of cultural forms and practices that provide a fascinating arena for the study of Israelis' transforming attitudes toward the past and complex understanding of their contemporary identities.

Yael Zerubavel is professor of Jewish Studies and history at Rutgers University. She is the author of Desert in the Promised Land: Nationalism, Politics, and Symbolic Landscapes (University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

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An Evolving Secularism: Yom Kippur Streets in Israel

Yehuda C. Goodman



Yom Kippur, Herzliya, 2007, by Ron Almog, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

5771 September 17, 2010

After finishing the late evening Yom Kippur prayer in the nearby Great Synagogue, a group of male and female college students from the United States and Canada belonging to the Nativ youth movement were hugging each other and devoutly singing Jewish religious songs from some photocopies entitled “The Nativ-a-Tish.” They were sitting on the ground in the middle of one of Jerusalem’s main inter-sections, not far from the prime minister’s residence. “I’m from Vancouver,” one of the singers told me enthusiastically, “I came over here for a year to study at the Hebrew University. Back home this is a regular day with cars driving around. Can you imagine? Here it is the holiest day. No one drives, the roads are empty, and we’re here to celebrate this.” A small crowd was watching the scene. Some, dressed in white and other holiday clothes, were singing along. Tourists were taking pictures (not too many ultra-Orthodox or *haredim* were around to stop them). Children on bicycles encircled the group before continuing their adventure in nearby neighborhoods; a few non-observant Jews, secular Israelis (*hilonim*), were taking a walk in the quiet streets, stopping for a moment to curiously watch the young group singing.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is celebrated in Israel as a complete sabbatical. All business and entertainment shuts down,

no radio or TV is broadcast (the Internet is an exception), shops are closed, no one works, the occupied territories are under curfew, and, although not forced by law, no one drives, except emergency vehicles. Observant Jews spend the entire day fasting and praying in synagogues. Many seculars fast, some spend some time in the synagogues, some stay at home with their families, some rent lots of DVDs in advance in order to spend the day watching movies, and others prepare to wander around on bicycles.

Yom Kippur scenes offer yet another opportunity to rethink *secularism* in the Jewish-Israeli context and perhaps in other modern nation-states as well. In particular, the above scene—the transformation of the streets into a semi-religious space with a complete (religious) sabbatical, where singing and praying continues amidst the (secular) mixing of the genders by a religious group (right after praying in a strictly Orthodox setting of gender separation) while the secular crowd walks and cycles around—demonstrates how secularism is part of religion and vice versa. The famous “secularism thesis” according to which religious institutions are declining in modernity, especially in the public sphere, is still debated among scholars. As my colleague, Yossi Yonah, and I argued in *Maelstrom of Identities* (2004, in Hebrew), secularism in modern nation-states, including Israel, has never been

complete. It is a hybrid process that has always been intermingled with religion. Furthermore, secularism is different for different countries, both in its politics and in its historical trajectories.

When inquiring into secularism(s) scholars should try to combine the ethnographic details, the nuanced meaning of non-religious realities, with the broader political milieu in which these are worked out. Secularism, however, is not an empirical question alone. It is also a moral question insofar as it is tied up with political ideologies about the nature, structure, and values that should govern the public sphere. Lay persons and scholars alike evaluate secularism not only in relation to objective, value-free understanding of its meaning but also in relation to what they consider the (ideal) prototype of a modern public sphere. When scholars argue that because religion plays such a major role in defining Israel’s politics, the observance of Yom Kippur is merely an example of how Israel is not a “true” liberal state—they implicitly have in mind an ideal Protestant state (like the United States.).

Furthermore, these moral questions are ever changing together with the slow political and ideological transformations in Israel and elsewhere. Secularism and religiosity in the Israeli public sphere on Yom Kippur makes the issue of such *evolving moralities* stand out

most powerfully because religion and secularism are worked out in new non-institutionalized ways. Religious and secular forms are retranslated. The empty streets open up a space for action and thought that is not easily bent into known forms and meanings. The new possibilities to celebrate the day create deep moral deliberations about life, rights, values, and tradition. Thus, the very decision to sit on the ground and sing together, to ride bicycles, talk quietly, and watch what others are doing in these urban spaces are all moral acts that are constantly problematized in Israel. Indeed, the Yom Kippur happenings in the streets and homes of Israelis are worked out in light of, and in the shadow of, public contestations about the legitimate and appropriate celebration of the most sacred day in Jewish tradition.

A recent public debate about the ideal Yom Kippur in Israel, published on the website of Israel's most popular daily newspaper (www.ynet.co.il), exemplifies this evolving process. The two main voices base their proposals on the mundane realities in Israel, although each sees and evaluates them differently. The first is Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel. He criticizes seculars who rent video cassettes(!) or spend the day riding their bicycles. These Jews, he argues, are missing a golden opportunity. He then writes (my translation):

The most enchanting hour is approaching. This is the twilight hour in which a multitude of people—men, women and small children—are marching to thousands of synagogues spread all around the country for the Kol Nidre prayer. Most are dressed in white, the men with white yarmulkes on their heads and prayer shawls on their shoulders or under their arms, men and women with white canvas shoes. All are flowing throughout the cities' streets in this unique hour, when the road and sidewalk are the same. "May you be inscribed in the book of life," "Have a good year," "All the best," are the expressions heard; no disgraceful, defamatory, or reviling shouting is heard. In the air, one feels the saying "All Jews are responsible to one another." Indeed this is an enchanting hour that heralds the sanctification of Yom Kippur governing merely twenty-five hours each year. In respect to our tradition and appreciation of our fathers' and grandfathers' inheritance and in the name of solidarity, so often talked about and so

seldom acted upon, I approach you with fondness, calling you to pick up yourselves and your children and come to the synagogues that are widely open for Kol Nidre and for other prayers of the day, including the spirits-memorial-service (*azkarat neshamot*) and the closing prayer (*neilah*), which are all so unique in their ability to unite all parts of our nation. Your children should know that Kol Nidre's melody was tailored for the Marranos of Spain who were forced for the fear of the Inquisition to live as converts on the outside and in the evenings of Yom Kippur used to descend to cellars and there cancel their year's vows, because they knew that this day can expunge misdeeds, atone for sins, and open up a new clean and pure page for next year.

Rabbi Lau moves from the ethnographic account of the quiet streets (underscoring the religious people approaching the synagogues) to a moral call to the nonobservant. He assumes a necessary continuity between the religious and the seculars in Israel along the lines of Jewish halakhic law. He even hints that the seculars in Israel are like the Marranos in Spain. In particular, he assumes that there is only one acceptable way to celebrate Yom Kippur—the Orthodox way.

An alternative call is made by Itamar Bar Tor, a secularist. Bar Tor first refers to the way Tel Aviv, the largest urban center in Israel, turns for one day into what looks like a quiet village reminiscent of the city his parents told him about, a city in which neighbors used to go outside with their chairs to sit together and talk. He then writes:

Some complain that "Yom Kippur has turned into the bicycle-holiday, and that the prayer book (*mahzor*) has been replaced by the skateboard." A deeper contemplation would allow us, however, to see that the secular holiday, whether intended or not, holds an intrinsic content of its own. This is a day in which we return to the slow, nondigital world of the past. This is a day in which we discover anew the community, when people and groups of neighbors, converse with one another into the night. This is also a day of return to the family. Without the mediation of TV and without the need to spend time in yet another attraction, the bicycle journeys are turning into a renewed family journey. And, of course, within the general atmosphere of self-examination, this is a day that everyone looks deeply into themselves, in the spirit of "You should know where you came from and where you are heading." Simply put, the secular Yom Kippur is the day of return to ourselves. Or, if you may, using the terms of religious people (*dossim*), it is the Day of Return.

Bar Tor holds that a secular holiday should be framed in terms of an explicit morality. Merely wandering about on bicycles cannot count as a holiday that is worth the name. His morality is not supported by old Jewish traditions and history (which he mentions with an ironic twist) but in the name of the recent, early modern, reality of local intimate urban communities and family life. With the evolving secular realities of the day, he combines past Israeli urban ways of life, values of individuality,



Yom Kippur on Highway 20 (*Netivey Ayalon*), Tel-Aviv - Ramat-Gan, 2004, by Roy Boshi, licensed under Free Art License.

introspection, small communities' sense of togetherness, and some Jewish notion of "return"—turning them all into a moral call for a new, secular Yom Kippur.

These columns were followed by hundreds of responses. While many readers supported Rabbi's Lau message, many criticized it. They expressed a secular ideological rejection of Jewish tradition, especially the way it is politically forced upon seculars in Israel. Others were happy to discover new meanings in their Yom Kippur celebrations through Bar Tor's reading of their experience.

Such debates suggest that although secularism and religion are hybrid categories, they are not completely fluid and interchangeable (not "everything goes"). Ideologies, structures, definitions, and discourse do matter. Still, debates between religious people and seculars

and among each group are interesting and cannot be taken for granted. They are full of surprises because participants need to rethink their morality and identity in new and elusive situations. Both Rabbi Lau and Bar Tor observe the new Jewish-Israeli urban spaces, which are filled with a mixture of religious and secular actions. In response, both offer creative, yet diverse, interpretations based on current scenes, past memories and sentiments, and all these are tied up with their evolving moralities around issues of Judaism and Zionism.

Secularism and religion are intertwined—both empirically and analytically—through complicated political, historical, social, and moral processes. As my opening ethnographic vignette and the debates on the "right" Yom Kippur demonstrate, religion and secularism constantly inform each other, like

self and its Other, or object and its background. Still, scholars should, I suggest, pay more attention to secularism as the object of their anthropological inquiry. Secularism is worked out in Israel in the face of a multitude of possibilities and traditions and in the face of a powerful Jewish Orthodox milieu. Furthermore, its understanding is worked out in the face of a still-dominant protestant (moral) assumption about the modern public sphere. New inquiries into secularism will thus shed much needed light on the meaning of the modern public sphere and its evolving morality.

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Rethinking Secularization Theory: The Case of the Hasidic Public Square

David N. Myers and Nomi M. Stolzenberg

For the past seven years, we have been exploring the community of Kiryas Joel through the combined lenses of Jewish history, legal theory, and American law. Kiryas Joel is a legally recognized municipality about fifty miles northwest of New York City composed almost entirely of Satmar Hasidic Jews—22,000 at present, though doubling in population every decade or so. The community operates according to a strict code of halakhic observance and modesty norms. Its residents conduct their entire lives, from cradle to grave, in Yiddish. And total social segregation from the surrounding towns and villages of Orange County is considered essential to the preservation of the community. In these regards, Kiryas Joel comes close to embodying the mythic shtetl of Sholem Aleichem's vivid imagination (though the actual eastern European shtetl, we know, was far different from the idealized literary image).

How and why did this community, whose founders referred to it repeatedly as a shtetl, take rise on American soil? Religious subcommunities have had a long history of successfully carving out terrain for themselves on the American landscape. From the arrival of the first European religious dissenters to this country in the seventeenth century, America has permitted a diverse array of groups with strong claims to religious truth and distinctive ways of life to live in relative isolation and autonomy. Contradicting the communitarian critique, which maintains that liberal tolerance is paradoxically intolerant of "illiberal" communities, in practice, the principle of tolerance enshrined in the First Amendment right to freedom of religion has often extended to groups for whom tolerance and individual freedom are not supreme values. Inasmuch as Kiryas Joel is a community that brooks little dissent or deviation from the norms enunciated by its religious leaders, it fits into this tradition of illiberal religious groups in the history of American religious sectarianism. Residents of Kiryas

Joel are expected to heed the social code of the community; when they violate it, as resident Toby Greenberg allegedly did in 2007 by wearing denim skirts, they risk ostracization and even physical threats. Members are also expected to heed the absolute authority of the rabbi, which has been a cardinal tenet of

were enough Satmar adults residing in an unincorporated section of Monroe Township (500) to approve a petition for recognition as a self-standing village in accordance with the democratic procedures prescribed by state law; in March of the following year, the Village of Kiryas Joel was formally established.

Almost overnight, a loose collection of private property owners became a legally recognized municipality—and a Hasidic public square at that.

It was thus the most basic of liberal tenets, the quintessential individual right to acquire private property, that directly enabled the rise of Kiryas Joel. Likewise, it was the Satmars' subsequent deployment of the democratic procedures prescribed by state and local law that enabled the community to convert its private existence as a religious association and as residents of neighboring properties into political power, beginning with the establishment of officially recognized municipal institutions (i.e., the Village and the public school district of Kiryas Joel), and continuing with the community's astonishing record of success in securing state aid and legislative favors. Kiryas Joel's stunning growth over the past thirty-

five years is thus seen to have been achieved not despite but, rather, as the direct result of the Satmars' canny deployment of America's liberal and democratic norms. Notwithstanding its proud insularity, Kiryas Joel has repeatedly engaged the non-Jewish political world to achieve its ends, regularly hosting and lobbying politicians, and parlaying its capacity to deliver a bloc vote into a singularly successful exertion of American interest group politics.

What does this tell us about the secular? At first glance, Kiryas Joel might seem to bear a simple lesson about the conceptual and empirical weakness of classic secularization theory. After all, Kiryas Joel appears to be a daily demonstration of the ascendancy of the religious over the secular, and the blurring of the boundary between the two, challenging Weber's famous notion of the "disenchantment of the world" (*Entzauberung*) that



Entrance to Kiryas Joel. Photo by Karin Kugel.

the Satmar movement from the time of the group's charismatic founder, R. Joel Teitelbaum (1887–1979).

If Kiryas Joel's illiberalism is, in an ironic way, characteristically American, so too is the way in which the community arose. The tattered fragments of the Satmar community originated in Satu Mare, Romania (previously Szatmár, Hungary) and were transported after the devastation of the Holocaust to the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn in 1946. By the early 1950s, Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum commenced a decades-long quest to find a place outside of the city with adequate housing for his ever-growing followers—and at a remove from the temptations of a teeming, multiethnic urban environment. By the early 1970s, Satmar Hasidim were buying property in Orange County, New York, and the first families settled there in 1974. By 1976, there

reached full form in the secularization thesis formulated by Peter Berger.

And yet, the relationship between the secular and the religious is not so simple. Berger himself has reconsidered his earlier views about the collapse of traditional religion in the face of secularization (*The Desecularization of the World*, 1999). As a result of generations of debate, we now have a more nuanced and dialectical view of the relationship between the religious and the secular. Talal Asad, a leading contributor to debate in recent decades, has argued persuasively against delineating distinct genealogies of the religious and the secular, averring that “the concept of the secular cannot do without the idea of religion.” (*Formations of the Secular*, 2003) The sociologist José Casanova pushes back against this entwined genealogy by insisting on the continued differentiation of spheres—religious and secular or public and private—in the modern West. But significantly, Casanova modifies the familiar account of secularism’s ascent and religion’s demise by advancing the idea of “deprivatized religion” that emerges from the shadows of its post-Enlightenment marginality to enter the public sphere (*Public Religions in the Modern World*, 1994). Asad then glosses this assertion by arguing that deprivatized religions don’t merely appear in the public sphere, but often alter and disrupt it.

The theoretical abstractions posited by Asad and Casanova might seem detached from the daily life of Kiryas Joel, New York. But our analysis of the interplay between private rights and public power in Kiryas Joel speaks to a number of the key points affirmed in their exchange. The village clearly exemplifies the kind of deprivatized religion that is no longer content to absent itself from the public square and is prepared to use the instrumentalities of public power to achieve its ends. Indeed, there has been a clear willingness in the Satmar movement—alongside its commitment to radical segregation—to engage secular political authorities in order to secure desired ends. While evident already in Europe, this tendency has been especially pronounced in the

United States, where emboldened Satmar officials have developed close and effective ties to politicians in New York City, Orange County, Albany, and even Washington. Kiryas Joel has become a powerful force in local and state affairs, utilizing its heft to garner resources (e.g., housing, sewage, water, social services) that fuel its rapid growth—a record of success in the public square that has confounded, rankled, and often enraged its neighbors and other onlookers.

The open door that allows for daily interaction with the outside political world has also led to the importation of values foreign to the community. One obvious example is the use of the Internet in contravention of rabbinic bans on modern technology. Still another is the declaration made by some community members that “We have become a two-party system.” Nothing, it would seem, could be more antithetical to the nature of authority in the Satmar universe than the idea of a two-party system. But in fact, in the wake of the founding Rebbe’s death, there are now two main factions in the town, closely aligned with the two main contenders for ultimate authority in the “kingdom of Satmar,” Rabbi Aron Teitelbaum and his Williamsburg-based brother Rabbi Zalman Leib Teitelbaum. The rhetoric used by the two sides, and their frequent resort to the civil courts to try to vindicate their competing claims, reflect the incorporation of mainstream American cultural norms, as well as the erosion of certain traditional Jewish norms, such as the longstanding injunction against seeking recourse in Gentile legal jurisdictions (*arkha’ot shel ha-goyim*).

But it is not only such obviously American values as “the two-party system” or resort to secular courts that point to the “Americanization” of Satmar. As we have seen, “American” norms of private property and local democracy have also been effectively deployed by the Satmars in furtherance of their goals. One key consequence is the blurring of the boundary between private and public spheres. The Village of Kiryas Joel does not merely confirm

the deprivatization thesis; it explains the mechanisms (i.e., private property and minority bloc voting) whereby deprivatization and the return of religion to the public square are achieved. It shows how the American liberal system allows private rights to be converted into public power, and thereby permits religion to penetrate the public square. The ability of the Satmars of Kiryas Joel to capture political power was directly dependent on their ability to constitute themselves as a geographically concentrated and demographically unified group; that in turn was directly dependent on their ability to amass and settle private property. One of the ironic lessons of this series of developments is that Kiryas Joel’s striking insularity and homogeneity, which far surpass the European shtetl, are supported and enabled by America’s liberal laws.

And yet, while the American legal order has paradoxically allowed for the creation of illiberal religious political enclaves such as Kiryas Joel, that very achievement may contain the seeds of its own demise. Intimate familiarity with the American political system has led some within Kiryas Joel, in the midst of a pitched struggle for power, to question the thin boundary between religious and secular authority in the community, echoing the vaunted constitutional separation of church and state. One resident has even appealed repeatedly to the courts to dissolve the Village on these grounds. Has the door to the outside world been opened too far to be closed? The question cannot yet be answered conclusively but our study of Kiryas Joel does suggest the inadequacy of any dichotomous treatment of the religious and the secular—and the inextricability of the two in modern life.

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Jewish Studies “Born Digital”

Heidi Lerner



Introduction

On May 19, 2010, a headline in the *San Jose Mercury News* announced “Stanford University prepares for an amazing bookless library.” Beneath these words one could read the specifics. It did not mean “no” books, it meant “less” books. And what it demonstrated is that Stanford University libraries are adding more digital content to their holdings at a very rapid rate as well as the technology to access and use it. This phenomenon reflects a revolution in scholarly communications and learning, a massive migration to a digital and virtually connected world. Within the cross-disciplinary arena of Jewish Studies, alongside the traditional print journals, conference proceedings, and academic presses new forms of digital scholarship, discourse, and output that challenge scholars to reorient the way they think about and conduct their work are appearing. This includes work and methods of communication that have been entirely “digitally born,” in other words, scholarly and creative output that do not or cannot have a print or analog version. Some of these digitally born works and methods may even have been initiated outside of the academy or by students.

Born-Digital E-books

Among the spate of e-book offerings available via commercial publishers, university and academic presses, scholarly societies, or aggregators that package e-book content from different publishers is a relatively new phenomenon, one in which a title comes first in digital form and then—if at all—in physical form. One of the early experiments was the ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) History E-Book Project (now known as the ACLS Humanities E-Book project), which

began in 1999 with the aim of publishing a combination of classic history texts and new, more experimental titles via digital platforms that can go beyond the boundaries of print and offer scholars cutting-edge technology with which to present their scholarship (www.humanitiesebook.org). These can include audio and video files, interactive maps, and links to databases, related scholarship, and archival materials, and 24-hour accessibility from a computer or e-book reader.

A search via Library of Congress subject headings within the collection did not reveal any born-digital titles that fall within the scope of Jewish Studies but as this project moves into its second decade, new titles and areas of study are entering the collection. Fortified with this knowledge, the Association for Jewish Studies (a member of ACLS since 1985) along with librarians responsible for Jewish Studies collections in academic libraries can encourage Jewish Studies scholars to explore this viable alternative to more traditional and static methods of scholarly monographic publishing.

Online Journals

Online journals in Jewish Studies generally follow the same types of editorial principles that ensure compliance with scholarly standards of other academic journals that have either moved to digital platforms, simultaneously publish in print and digital formats, or were born digital. Some of these journals are embracing new technologies and publishing paradigms: adhering to the open access model, providing quicker access to new work, being easily searchable, providing multimedia features, promoting interactive participation such as online and community discussions, and options to comment on articles.

Among the most recent born-digital scholarly journals in Jewish Studies are *Quntres: An Online Journal for the History, Culture, and Art of the Jewish Book*; *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*; *Perush*; and *The Journal of Inter-religious Dialogue*. These journals were conceived with the vision that the future is digital, and with a desire to stimulate and encourage dialogue and debate among researchers, academics, as well as the general public. These last three provide opportunities at their websites for reader comments, input, and feedback.

Geographic Tools

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are computer-based tools that allow mapping and spatial analysis of the earth's features and events. Scholars in humanities and social sciences are collaborating with experts in GIS and using a spate of freely available tools such as Google Maps and Google Earth to create resources that bring together maps, photographs, and artifacts.

HyperCities is a collaborative project and website (<http://hypercities.com/>), developed by UCLA, USC, and CUNY. This work in progress takes a spatial approach to history and uses the Google Earth platform to explore the historical layers of urban spaces such as Tel Aviv in an interactive, hypermedia environment. What is interesting about the project is that it enables researchers to study the history of city spaces, urban planning, neighborhood composition, and demographics in new and innovative ways.

An innovative artistic experiment that uses GIS to codify Jewish spatial practices was undertaken in 2005 with *eRuv: A Street History in Semacode* (www.dziga.com/eruv), a digital graffiti project installed along the route of the former Third Avenue elevated train line in lower Manhattan. Lodged in the heart of the urban New York space, the train line historically had served as part of an *eruv* for a Hasidic community on the old Lower East Side. The community is now gone, but using camera phones with a protocol that brings together the Internet and physical space, interested parties can access this piece of history.

Born-Digital Literature and the Arts

The Internet has encouraged the development of new modalities of literary and artistic expression. The examination and study of these phenomena has already well made its way into the academy with many universities housing or offering programs for the study of digital media.

Born-digital poetry on the Internet consists of literary works that have been created and disseminated on the Web. Publication of poetry in print has been moved more and more into small-run and boutique journals and monographs. As a platform, the Web has enabled the publishing of poetry to move

from high cultural echelons into a popular creative realm. In Israel, poets have been using the Internet for years. Bama Hadasah (<http://stage.co.il/>) began under the initiative of Boaz Rimmer in 1998 as a free online archive of original Israeli prose, poetry, music, and art. The site includes more than 200,000 poetic works, and hundreds of thousands of works of art. While the site does not have a formal literary editor, the editors maintain some editorial control.

The Israeli Center for Digital Art in Holon (www.digitalartlab.org.il/) supports an archive for video and digital art. The site contains more than 1,750 works. The archive is intended primarily to represent local contemporary artistic practice and includes video art, sound art, film, and documentation of performances and installations that have been exhibited at the center, as well as other works by leading Israeli artists in the field of media art. There is thematic commonality among many of the works, which reflect questions of identity, nationalism, reactions to militarism, and other social and political issues facing the country.

Web2

Although academics are just touching the surface of social media use, a recent report in *Wired Campus* (blog of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*) noted that 80 percent of professors use some sort of social media such as blogs, wikis, Twitter, and social networks like Facebook as venues for discourse and

discussions, teaching, and learning (<http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/most-professors-use-social-media/>). Publishers and hosts of more traditional discussion forums such as listservs and e-mail lists are taking note that the content of these services are more and more becoming limited to job announcements, conference announcements, and book reviews because they lack the dynamic nature and immediacy of these other newer platforms. Significant to note is that the H-Judaic and Hasafran listservs still serve as primary focal points for research queries in Jewish Studies.

In the early days of blogs, many scholars were hesitant to post for fear that these informal musings and comments would be mistaken for formal scholarly discourse and output. Today however, scholars and academics understand that, while blogs are not the final word or product, they offer a viable (and citable) record of scholarly thought.

Blogs by their nature can engage a much wider community in the discursive process. Jewish Studies is a discipline for which there is much expertise outside the academy. As more and more scholars within Jewish Studies post to blogs of Jewish content, their comments, reviews, and arguments mingle with those of graduate students, rabbis, and knowledgeable people outside of the academy and seminary.

Many online book reviews can be found in blogs. At the *Seforim* blog (<http://seforim.blogspot.com/>), ninety-five posts were recently listed under the label “book reviews.”

These open reviews are often provocative and can take the form of essays, and evoke responses and comments from within and beyond the academy.

Some people find the amount of time it takes to post to blogs cumbersome. Organizations such as the Association for Jewish Studies, several Jewish Studies departments, and some academics take advantage of the immediacy and brevity of Twitter, a sort of mini-blogging service to send out announcements, disseminate information on a variety of topics, or track a conference.

Academia.edu is a fairly new social networking tool (www.academia.edu) similar in format to Facebook that helps people in the academic world to locate academic departments, universities, journals, and individuals with similar research interests, keep up to date with their work, read their papers and blog posts, and be notified of their talks. A recent search under Jewish Studies brought up ninety-nine people, one hundred papers, seventy research interests, fifty-one departments, and nineteen journals.

Although still open to controversy in some circles, Wikipedia has become a first stopping point for many across the academic landscape as well as the general populace. Encyclopedias are never scholarly resources in and of themselves, but for research in Jewish Studies they are useful repositories of information. Wikipedia and its Hebrew language sibling Vikipedyah are some of the most complete and useful sources of contemporary



Semacode eruv markers/NYC, 2005; www.dziga.com/eruv. Photo credit: Elliott Malkin.

information. The Library of Congress authority file, one of the most widely used thesauri for providing standardized forms of names and headings for catalogs and databases of all types of media, is expanding their list of authorized resources to be consulted when considering forms of Hebraica names to include “modern references sources . . . (e.g., Wikipedia, Facebook, LinkedIn).”

Born-Digital Information Management

Research organizations, museums, archives, and libraries are digitizing millions of cultural objects and information and publishing them on the Web. This has usually been done independently and without synchrony, forcing researchers to try numerous manual search strategies to get to what they are looking for. Right now both computer scientists and scholars are conducting a great deal of research on how this information can be made more accessible for the end-user and help researchers to locate as precisely as possible the relevant materials that they are seeking.

Using new information technologies such as “linked data” and “structured data” as a way of publishing information so that it can be easily and automatically linked to other similar data on the Web, information becomes connected or “linked” so that users can more easily access what they are looking for as well as explore related topics and subjects.

Frank Schloeffel, a scholar affiliated with the “Ismar Elbogen Netzwerk für jüdische Kulturgeschichte e.V.” (<http://elbogen.org/>) and a group of colleagues have gotten together to develop a prototype of a virtual space “JewLib. Digital Archive-Library” (<http://jewlib.freebase.com/>) utilizing these technologies. Their goal is to provide researchers with an online source of facts and information on primary research resources for the study of Jewish history and cultures. Similar in concept to Wikipedia, the responsibility for adding or modifying information relies on the community with the ability to work in the database open to anyone after registering. What is truly exciting about this project is that a new, young generation of Jewish Studies scholars with an

understanding of the vitality of community-driven endeavors is becoming familiar enough with digital tools and practices to develop resources useful for scholarly pursuits.

Conclusion

The ways of teaching, learning, and scholarship are radically changing and the Internet is becoming the primary medium for publishing and creating new content. The Web is breaking down geographic and social barriers as scholars discover and forge new relationships and new ways of thinking and communicating. Just as they maneuvered in a print and analog world, Jewish Studies scholars—like all academics—need to be familiar and conversant with the tools and structure of this digital environment.

Heidi Lerner is the Hebrew/Judaica cataloguer at Stanford University Libraries. See www.ajsnet.org for this article and others by Heidi Lerner, with links to all resources discussed.

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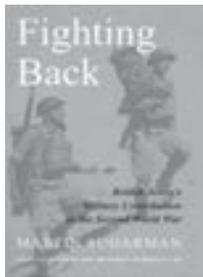
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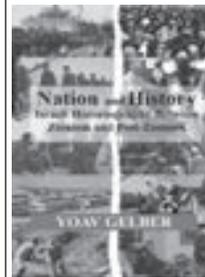
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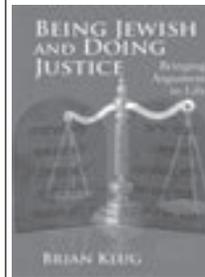
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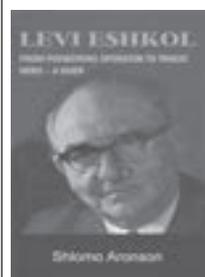
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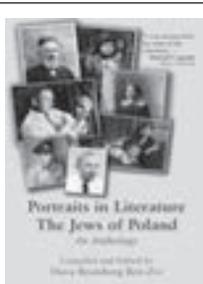
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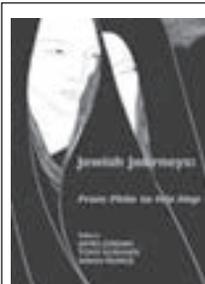
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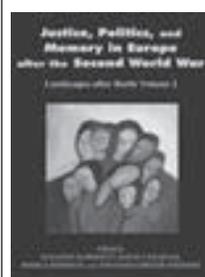
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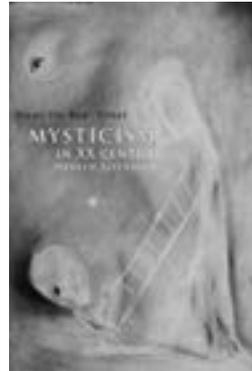
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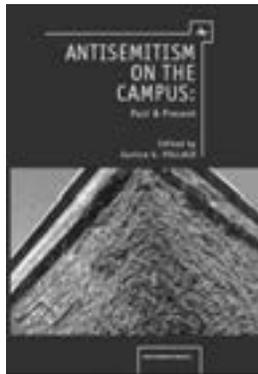
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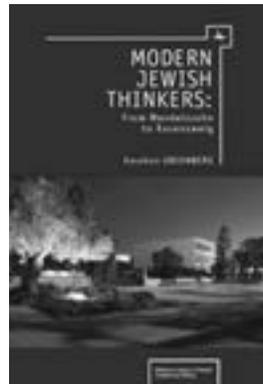
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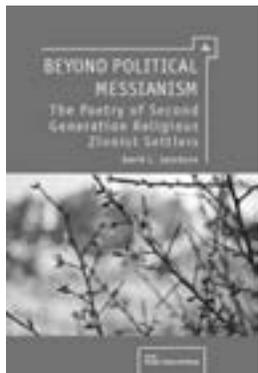
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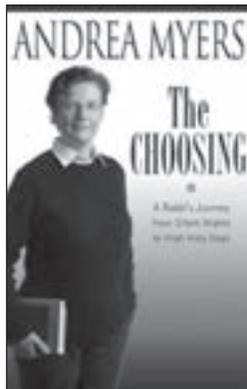
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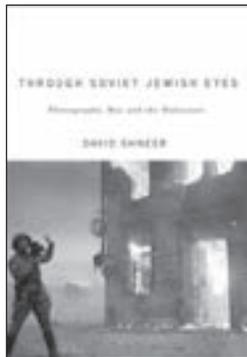
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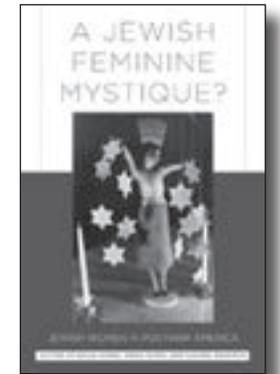
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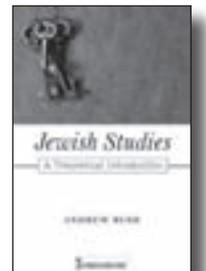
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The Latest

Deb Margolin's *Imagining Madoff*

Henry Bial

What might one of the world's most respected Jews have to say to one of its most despised? That is just one of the questions explored by Deb Margolin's new play *Imagining Madoff*, which premiered last summer at Stageworks/Hudson in Hudson, New York, following a wave of controversy that brought the work to national attention. Inspired by the Bernard Madoff financial scandal, and particularly by the revelation that Elie Wiesel was one of the victims of Madoff's ponzi scheme, Margolin crafted a play built around a fictional, private conversation between the two men.

Before *Imagining Madoff* reached the stage, however, Wiesel threatened legal action against its production, feeling that the play was "defamatory" and "obscene." Wiesel's reaction prompted Washington DC's Theater J, which had been scheduled to premier the play as the opening production of its 2010–2011 season, to ask Margolin for a rewrite that would replace Wiesel with another, fictional character. While Margolin readily agreed to revise the play, Theater J took the additional (and, to the playwright, inappropriate) step of offering to submit the revised script to the Wiesel Foundation to assure that it contained nothing actionable. Feeling that this offer amounted to giving Wiesel the power to censor her creative expression, Margolin asked her agent to withdraw the play from Theater J. As she commented on the culture blog *Parabasis*, "I was not averse to editing the play, to removing references to Wiesel's fictionalized character; I could not, however, bring myself to submit a play for approval to a man who has for years stood for the struggle for human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of speech."

Though a revised version, in which the Wiesel character was replaced by a fictional character named Solomon Galkin, would eventually make it to Stageworks/Hudson, the decision to cancel the Theater J production set off a media buzz that started with local DC press and blog posts and reached its apotheosis in a story on NPR's *All Things Considered* in May. While media coverage of these events focused on Wiesel (was he overreacting?) and issues of artistic freedom (aren't playwrights

free to write about public figures?), we might more properly ask what the incident and the attendant media fracas reflects about the role of Jewish theater in the promotion of Jewish identity and community.

Margolin is arguably the most important Jewish voice in America's current "alternative" theater scene. Though she has never had the crossover commercial hit that would bring her the name recognition of contemporaries like Tony Kushner and Lisa Kron, she has been widely lauded by her peers, including an OBIE Award for Sustained Excellence in Performance, the Helen Merrill Distinguished Playwright Award, and the Joseph Kesselring Prize for her 2005 play *Three Seconds in the Key*. Her works have been commissioned by the Jewish Museum, the Public Theater, and other theaters around the country, and she has lectured or taught at many colleges and universities, most notably Yale, where she has been adjunct associate professor for the past several years. Though only a handful of her works are explicitly about what it means to be Jewish, most of her creative output is autobiographical. And because Margolin proudly self-identifies as a "nerdy Jew," it is not difficult to read her entire corpus as a sustained investigation of Jewish identity, one driven by a passion for Judaism that is unapologetically quirky; in her 1996 solo piece *O Wholly Night & Other Jewish Solecisms*, for example, she compared the messiah to Gold Bond Medicated Powder, in that both promise exquisite relief of suffering. Yet as the *New York Times* noted of



Howard Green, Mark Margolis, and Robin Leslie Brown in Stageworks/Hudson's production of *IMAGINING MADOFF* by Deborah Margolin, directed by Laura Margolis. Photo: Rob Shannon. Courtesy of Stageworks/Hudson.



Howard Green and Mark Margolis in Stageworks/Hudson's production of *IMAGINING MADOFF* by Deborah Margolin, directed by Laura Margolis. Photo: Rob Shannon. Courtesy of Stageworks/Hudson.

the performance, "For all her humor, Ms. Margolin has some serious reflections on the cost of being different from the majority, but she makes them deftly, sometimes silently; they linger long after the hour of smiles has ended."

Theater J, meanwhile, is one of the leading Jewish theaters in North America. Operating under the umbrella of the Washington DC Jewish Community Center with a mission to produce "thought-provoking, publicly engaged, personal, passionate and entertaining plays and musicals that celebrate the distinctive urban voice and social vision that are part of the Jewish cultural legacy," the company has developed a reputation for incubating new work by well-known playwrights such as Wendy Wasserstein and Richard Greenberg, and reviving classic plays of the Jewish American canon. So it was with no small anticipation that Jewish theater aficionados looked forward to Theater J's 2010–2011 season, which was scheduled to kick off with *Imagining Madoff*. When the production was nixed, some insiders wondered whether the theater had "lost its edge" by capitulating to pressure from a Jewish "establishment" fearful of offending those who regard Wiesel as a quasi-sacred figure. Others asked if Margolin had crossed the boundaries of good taste in her depiction of the man, quite literally adding insult to the injury he had already suffered from Madoff's crimes.

Margolin has repeatedly said that she meant no disrespect to Wiesel in her portrayal

of the character of “Elie.” She told the *Washington Post* that she chose Wiesel as a natural foil to Madoff because, “his name is synonymous with decency, morality, the struggle for human dignity and kindness, and in contrast to the most notorious financial criminal in the past 200 years. That’s why he was there, and I felt I had treated his character with great respect—the respect that I genuinely have felt for him.” Ironically, it was because of the playwright’s respect for Wiesel that she had sent him an advance copy of the script, never imagining his negative reaction. Reading this original script, it is clear that the Wiesel character is not just a sympathetic figure, but one who clearly represents an ideal of Jewish ethics, an ideal that Madoff just as clearly fails to meet. This ideal is at once traditional and humanizing: Elie reads to Madoff from the Talmud and teaches him to lay tefillin, but he also likes scotch, baseball, and the occasional mild profanity. He repeatedly denies the saintly status that Madoff tries to ascribe to him, confessing moments of fear, lust, and other human frailties. Jewish morality, Margolin seems to

suggest, is enhanced rather than diminished by the struggle to maintain it. By contrast, it is Madoff’s desire for a clear and easy answer that has led him astray. In this sense, *Imagining Madoff* is less about What Elie Would Say to Bernie than about whether thinking critically about Jewishness can be understood as a demonstration of one’s commitment to it.

How we answer this question is of crucial importance to all Jewish theaters, not just Theater J. The organizations and donors that support such theaters tend to do so out of a desire to promote Jewish identity. In its simplest form, this means producing works that depict and even celebrate Jewish culture: a new translation of *The Dybbuk*, for example, or Theodore Bikel’s *Sholem Aleichem: Laughter Through Tears*. But Jewish theaters also promote yiddishkeit on the audience side, offering a communal space in which we can gather to consider and debate more challenging questions of Jewish identity. In this sense, the Jewish theater serves as a kind of secular yeshiva, a place of learned disagreement, in which our very disagreements are what unite us. The controversy

surrounding *Imagining Madoff* simply calls our attention to this fact.

In the many public conversations about Margolin’s play, the artistic merit of the piece was never in question. When the revised version premiered sans Elie, it received rave reviews. Laurence Klavan, writing in the *Forward*, called *Imagining Madoff* “provocative and compelling . . . the meeting of two abiding and opposing Jewish prototypes: the scholar and the street tough; philanthropist and ganef; those who respond to hardship by learning and giving, and those who bitterly take.” But it is the character of Solomon Galkin himself who reminds us that whatever one thinks of the actions taken by Wiesel, Margolin, or Theater J, Jewish morality is rarely so clear-cut. “I am a Jew,” he says, “And Jews only ask questions; they don’t provide answers.”

Henry Bial is associate professor of theater at the University of Kansas. He is the author of Acting Jewish: Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen (University of Michigan Press, 2005).

Yael Bartana’s *Mary Koszmary* and *Galut Melancholy* Carol Zemel

Mary Koszmary means nightmares in Polish, and as the title of Yael Bartana’s ten-and-a-half minute video/film, it heralds the fears and fascinations such dreams inspire. As enacted here, these dimensions are deeply social and multicultural—calling up issues of pain, pleasure, and ambivalence for Poles, Jews, Israelis, and uprooted people everywhere. I find the video especially timely in its exploration of a current urgency in Israeli art, as well as a signal of a larger tension in diasporic Jewish consciousness.

Recognized in her native country, where she won the Gottesdiener Foundation Prize in 2007, 40-year-old Bartana is part of a generation of Israeli artists, including Boaz Arad, Miki Kratsman, Adi Nes, and others, whose work is often labeled “post-Zionist” in its critical representations of the Jewish state. In 2010, Bartana received the prestigious Artes Mundi 4 Prize (UK) for work that “stimulated thinking about the human condition and added to understanding of humanity.” This success at home and abroad is politically significant. Israeli cultural institutions are uncensored; anyone who follows the art scene there can see a constant showcase of controversial and



Still from *Mary Koszmary* (2009), © Yael Bartana.

provocative work. This is less the case for far more cautious support of culture by the Jewish community in diaspora. New York’s Jewish Museum, which has repeatedly exhibited Bartana’s art, as well as critical work by Jewish Israeli and Palestinian Israeli artists, is an important exception. Whether due to timidity or conservatism, work that is critical of Israel has a hard time. On the other hand, pro-Israel art is now scarcely seen in the artistic venues of the international mainstream.

While Bartana’s professional life has been peripatetic—she has lived in the Netherlands and the United States, as well as Israel—her work has always addressed the emotional tensions of her homeland’s peoples and geography. Indeed, as the symbol of Zionist return and reclamation, and the mainstay of modern nationalism, land in her videos figures as a site of beauty, conflict, and ambivalence. In *Kings of the Hill* (2003), for example, we watch a regular weekend pastime of men gunning their



Still from *Mary Koszmary* (2009), © Yael Bartana.

all-terrain vehicles up the sandy hills south of Tel Aviv. Dazzling in its scenic beauty, the seaside dunes landscape both entices and resists these macho conquerors, who in the end, battle for something won, stand as anonymous male silhouettes against the sky.

But Israeli as its focus has been, Bartana's work in recent years evokes a sort of "diasporism," to use the term of artist R. B. Kitaj's *First Diasporist Manifesto* (1989). In Kitaj's view, the unmoored condition of many modern artists (not only Jews), set adrift from the privileges of homeland made Diaspora "another theater in which human, artistic instinct comes into play." In this sense, Bartana's *Mary Koszmary* and its companion piece *Wall and Tower* (2009)—two parts of a planned *Polish Trilogy*—expand on the conflicts of Jewish geography. Though translated as nightmare, to English speaking viewers *Mary Koszmary* suggests a Polish Christian name, and the ambiguity enhances the layered ambivalence of the piece. Set in a run-down public stadium, its banks green and overgrown, the site is a bucolic ruin that not only evokes its ghosts, as all ruins do, but in this instance, an uncanny sense of disappearance, and unsettled memory. With its text subtitled in English, the film features Slawomir Sierakowski, a well-known journalist and leader of the Polish New Left—and a man too young to have experienced either World War II or the Communist period—who exhorts Jews to return and his fellow Poles to welcome them back. "Jews! Fellow countrymen! People! Peeeeeepeople!" Sierakowski's call begins:

You think the old woman who still sleeps under Rifke's quilt doesn't want to see you? Has forgotten about you? You're wrong. She dreams about you every night. Dreams and trembles with fear. . . . Return to Poland. . . . What do we want it [this quilt] for? There's no longer any down in it, only pain. Heal our wounds, and you'll heal yours. And we'll be together again.

The poignancy and unimaginability of Jewish return to Poland is not, of course, Bartana's invention. It was cynically imagined by Philip Roth's Diasporist alter-ego in *Operation Shylock* (1993), where the idea of ending a *judenrein* Poland is met with the narrator's sarcasm:

You know what will happen in Warsaw, at the railway station, when the first trainload of Jews returns? There will be crowds to welcome them. People will be jubilant. People will be in tears. They will be shouting: "Our Jews are back! Our Jews are back!"

Mary Koszmary, however, modulates the cynicism of the invitation. Protracted beyond a simple mordant exchange, the polemic of the film coaxes both Jew and Poles to form an interdependent community again. Sierakowski and co-worker Kinga Dunin wrote the text, and the Polish voice is crucial. Indeed, Polish attention to the destruction and absence of their Jewish population has deepened considerably, at least on a scholarly level, though not without gaps and strange emphases, and these, in fact, are signs of a traumatic wound. But if Poland is a haunted space—for Poles haunted by Jews who appear nostalgically in souvenir dolls, music festivals, and museological display; for Jews haunted by the mixed memory of familiarity and alienation—so, too, may modern Israel, in its silences and its history be haunted by its Arab population and the traces of their past. If *Mary Koszmary's* call for Jewish return and Polish welcome asks Jews to imagine a Polish recognition of Shoah history and Polish anti-Semitism, it should seem no less imaginable than the same call to Palestinians, as Israeli scholar and curator Ariella Azoulay eloquently interprets Bartana's work. Invoking the film's call, "Come back! We need you!" Azoulay reinforces the post-Zionist politics of Bartana's metaphor.

Of course, we have certainly heard this positional shift before—the notion of Shoah victims becoming Israeli oppressors—and usually with more inflammatory framing. It resonates stylistically in Bartana's work, where close-ups of the leather-cloaked Sierakowski, his fatherly attentions to a group of Polish boy scouts, and the camera pans across the empty stadium recall Leni Reifensthal's 1935 *Triumph of the Will*, the classic film of invocation and rant, with its close-ups of Hitler, marching Hitler Youth, and sweeping panoramas of Nuremberg's packed stadium. The analogy of Poles/Jews and Zionists/Palestinians, and the

tacit connection of both Poles and Zionists to Nazis, may be too facile for some, even if the political appeal is urgent and the politics compelling. But in carrying the fascinations of the excessive and unimaginable, *Mary Koszmary* opens up the associations of this analogy. If the call to "come back" implies a return "home," then for both European and Middle Eastern contexts, the meaning of home must be modified to mean geography and consciousness rather than property or entitlement. We must recognize that the stolen comfort of "Rifke's quilt," so eloquently invoked by Sierakowski, is by now flattened and featherless, an icon of maternal plenitude never to be regained. So too, we may recognize a simple return-to-the-ruin—like Holocaust tourism in its various forms—as itself a traumatic symptom, a melancholic repetition of what is lost and cannot be retrieved.

There is more, I believe, in the appeal of *Mary Koszmary's* polemic. Bartana's allegory announces a new diasporic voice, a call to rethink history and put to rest worn out ghosts. If dreams—even *koszmary* or nightmares—are the locus of unconscious desire, then here too we may locate the ambivalent force of melancholy. Diaspora Jewry may be haunted by the Holocaust, but those ghosts have been partnered by a fiercely recuperative attachment to Zionism as a utopian ideal. As generations pass, the pain of Shoah history and trauma must also subside and change; mourning must reconfigure into commemorative ritual if it is not to lapse into endless melancholy. That notion of a utopian Israel as an alternative or substitutive love object—the Manic Defense in Freud's model of melancholia—must also change, partly because time passes and new generations arrive, but also because utopias are fixed and imaginary constructs hardly suited to the inevitable flux of world politics and events. Must the frozen Galut model of Zion, or for that matter the Zionist one of Galut—both reinforced by Shoah history—persist as a recuperative icon, permanently fixed to this particular incarnation of the state? Or, as *Mary Koszmary* invites us, can we relinquish the nightmare of that fierce attachment, and allow the ambivalences that a dream and new return demand?

Carol Zemel is professor of art history at York University, Toronto. Her book Jewish Visual Culture and Modern Diaspora is forthcoming from Indiana University Press.

The Questionnaire

What are the three biggest challenges you face as director of a Jewish Studies program?

Robert H. Abzug

Director, Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies, University of Texas at Austin

Defining a Shape and Mission

The Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies was founded in September 2007, intent on building a community that reflects the strengths and unique possibilities of the University of Texas and its broader public. We envisioned expanding an already existing Jewish Studies curriculum but also moving Jewish Studies from a marginal existence into an active and innovative contributor to university life through new hires, public programming, and community outreach. In practice, that has meant a wide range of collaborations—internal and new faculty recruitment, course development, and alliances with departments, archives, and nonacademic units such as Texas Performing Arts and the Austin Jewish Film Festival. And, we have made it a long-term mission to become (among other things) a crossroads for the study of Jewish history and culture in the Western Hemisphere by expanding the university's well-established Latin American interests and pioneering in the integration of Canadian Jewish Studies. We are in the beginning stages of this latter project.

Making the Center Visible to the Jewish Studies World

Texas, despite a fine faculty, extraordinary research facilities, as well as a vigorous and unique statewide Jewish community, does not generally come to mind as an important locus for Jewish Studies. We hope that perception will change as we make more visible our work as scholars and academic citizens and the special resources and opportunities of the university. We immediately joined AJS as institutional sponsors, took over hosting of the Latin American Jewish Studies website, will host the next meeting of the Early Modern Workshop in August 2011, and will hold a research conference on comparative study of Jews in the Americas in 2012. In addition, we

endow a research fellowship for use of the incomparable modern Jewish literary, photographic, and theater arts holdings of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, and will soon establish similar fellowship support for the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History.

Fundraising

All we have done has been made possible by a bountiful challenge grant provided by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and generous grants of the Gale Foundation of Beaumont, Texas. Matching the Schusterman grant has truly been a challenge in the last three years, especially for a new center, but we have made great progress. The faith and appreciation of our efforts by both foundations and by the College of Liberal Arts has been of immeasurable aid in trying financial times.

Jean Axelrad Cahan

Director, Norman and Bernice Harris Center for Judaic Studies, University of Nebraska at Lincoln

The challenges faced by a Jewish Studies program director no doubt vary greatly according to geographical location, surrounding university culture, available funds, and so on. In the case of my own program, the challenges are not what might seem to the outsider as the most obvious. The Great Plains, with a relatively small Jewish population and distance from large urban cultural centers, might seem to be on the fringes of Jewish life, but in fact the Jewish communities are vibrant and in some cases growing, have no difficulty attracting significant cultural and political figures as interesting speakers, and are very supportive of academic Jewish Studies programs. Political tensions are minimal, compared to other parts of the country; there are various reasons for this, but the general level of civility and non-confrontational patterns of behavior are not to be discounted. It is rare to encounter open, unrestrained prejudice or hostility to ethnic and religious difference.

The biggest challenge for me has been to decide which approach to take in seeking to recruit faculty. Since the Center for Judaic Studies by itself cannot serve as a tenure home for a faculty member (only departments can do that here) we can seek to have FTE (full-time equivalent status) assigned to our center, and with that to pursue joint appointments with other units; or we can let the FTE remain fully in other units, and negotiate with chairs of other units/departments for teaching, research, and service contributions to the center. The advantage of the first approach might be that we would have better control over our curriculum. The disadvantage is that joint appointments tend to become problematic during the tenure process and later during discussions over merit pay increases. So we have opted for the second approach and have generally had little difficulty in obtaining the agreement of other departments to “give up” courses so that a faculty member can teach something for us.

A second challenge involves recruiting Jewish students. Though our classes are filled with non-Jewish students, these students usually lack even the most elementary acquaintance with Jewish religion, history, or culture. This means that time has to be spent in each course providing some background. It also means that our Jewish student organization, though very active, has limited possibilities for growth. With UNL's acceptance into the Big Ten conference, we hope to find connections to larger Jewish communities in the Midwest and enjoy exchanges among both faculty and students in the future.

The third main challenge that I face is staying informed about interfaith as well as current political questions. Although I would like to bury myself in my own teaching and research in philosophy, the somewhat public nature of my position makes it important to remain aware of current events and be able to respond to questions from the community media, the student newspaper, and colleagues on campus.

Samuel Fleischacker

*Director, Jewish Studies Program,
University of Illinois at Chicago*

My three greatest challenges are all versions of one challenge: answering the question, “Why does a secular state university with relatively few Jewish students, like the University of Illinois at Chicago, need a Jewish Studies program at all?” We’ve been around in some form for many years, but always on a rather low level, with little outside funding, a modest profile among other Jewish Studies programs in our area, and an even more modest profile among our own students. I think our main task, if we want a secure place at UIC and especially if we want to grow, is to justify our existence to our various constituencies. Those constituencies can be divided into three, which yields three challenges for me: the administration and students at UIC, the Jewish community in Chicago, and the international community of Jewish Studies scholars. And the answer I would give to all three communities is roughly the same: We can earn our place by providing a Jewish Studies program that has an outward-looking rather than inward-looking focus, that seeks to show what is interesting and distinctive about Jews and Judaism—as well as what represents the universally human—in relationship to Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, and other cultural and religious groups. That would enable us to contribute to the other communities on our very diverse campus, to bring out aspects of Jews and Judaism in the Chicago community that are not much discussed, and to contribute something to Jewish Studies scholarship that has not, as yet, received quite the attention it deserves. But there are a number of political and financial obstacles in our way, and it will be a while before we will have any idea whether we are making headway.

Matt Goldish

*Director, Melton Center for Jewish Studies,
The Ohio State University*

Maintaining a Research Program

I have a lot of material that I want to read and projects I want to carry out, but I do not have time. The job of director involves handling a constant influx of communications about various matters. It also requires planning programs, raising money, keeping various parties informed about our work, meeting with students, and other administrative activities.

A director must constantly weigh how much time and energy to invest in innovative and exciting new programs, and how much of this time and energy he or she should hold back to invest in research and writing. While administration has its rewards, I often feel as if I have changed professions.

Balancing Academic Method with Issues of Jewish Identity

I recognize in myself, many faculty members, and most donors a passion for Jewish Studies that is based largely in Jewish identity values. Many academics in this field entered it at least partly because of these feelings. Most donors who give to Jewish Studies—and even more to Israel Studies—are motivated by identity. How do we maintain an academic approach without losing this passion? How do we explain to donors that many students winning the awards and fellowships they have donated to us are non-Jews? How do we raise money without compromising our mandate?

Creating an Appropriate Niche

Each director must struggle with the question of needs and niche. The Ohio State University is the largest university in the United States. Our Melton Center for Jewish Studies was the first such center at an American public university. We currently boast thirty-two faculty members from a dozen different departments. Despite all this, I had to be realistic about Ohio State’s niche in the world of Jewish Studies when I took on the directorship. Columbus is not a high-draw city for hip, young students. Other schools have more star power among their faculty, more dollars for recruiting undergraduates, and better networks of support. While we actively work on improving these areas, I needed a strategy for making Ohio State special. We have concentrated on specialized academic conferences, which have become less common in recent years, and community programs, in which we have excelled.

Jack Kugelmass

*Director, Center for Jewish Studies,
University of Florida*

Structure

Most faculty in Jewish Studies are organized as programs or centers rather than departments. In theory, the advantage to having faculty distributed throughout a college or colleges, is to maximize impact and prevent insularity. This makes sense, since I believe

that Jewish Studies is not designed to make Jews more Jewish but to make non-Jews less non-Jewish. (I would make the same argument for all ethnic and gender studies.) Distributing faculty through joint appointments, however, creates dual loyalties, not to mention extra service obligations, and, often enough, the primary loyalty and responsibility rests with the tenure home. Furthermore, the need to find suitable tenure homes sometimes prevents programs from hiring according to their own needs. Departments sometimes balk at accepting new lines believing that doing so would come at the expense of their own priorities. The critical role played by departments in hiring and job satisfaction also means that retaining faculty depends very much on the strength of the tenure home. At first-tier institutions, retention and job satisfaction may not be much of a problem but just a bit down the rung, it is. A strong program cannot offset weak departments.

Coherence

Programs typically come about through happenstance. How does one create a program in which fundamentals of religion, history, and language are covered? And what are those fundamentals? What aspect(s) of Judaism? Where? When? And what period(s) in history? In regard to language, most programs privilege Hebrew over Yiddish, but I sometimes suspect the latter might have more success in attracting students whose afternoon school experience with the Hebrew language still makes them shudder. And then there’s the fact that hiring priorities nowadays are set as much by donors’ passion as they are by program needs.

Relevance

There is an increasing need to justify new or replacement lines in accordance with newly emerging critical areas, some of which are determined through centers of excellence within otherwise uneven institutions. For instance, peace studies or creative writing are two areas that come to mind, as well as areas that could be defined regionally such as Latin America for border states, arid and ecological studies in the Southwest. Still other areas may be defined nationally in terms of critical languages and areas of strategic interest. Hebrew has some relevance here, but what is the future of Yiddish in higher education when German and Slavic Studies are almost everywhere in decline and Mandarin and Arabic are in ascendance?

But all this sounds much too negative. The fact is that the most difficult challenge one faces as director of a center of Jewish Studies is pretty much what every administrator now faces: a decline in state revenues, increasing stress on career and outcome, and insufficient funding for higher education to properly support research and libraries as well as a broad curriculum that cannot be justified in practical terms. Fortunately, we have a continuing partnership with the community which sees its own future very much tied with the well-being of our programs. For that reason alone, I wouldn't exchange my directorship for chairing any other unit in the college.

Leah S. Marcus

*Director, Program in Jewish Studies,
Vanderbilt University*

The Program in Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt is young, having been founded seven years ago by Jack M. Sasson, the Mary Jane Werthan Professor of Jewish Studies and Hebrew Bible, and then-Provost Nicholas Zeppos, along with an enthusiastic cohort of advisory faculty. We were fortunate to come into the world with adequate funding and ample administrative support. There have been challenges, however:

(1) Before the creation of the Jewish Studies program, there was very little history of institutional involvement in Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt. The undergraduate population has grown from 2 percent Jewish in the 1990s to 16–18 percent today. But we are a relatively small university and can't depend on "heritage" students to fill our full range of courses—not only those labeled Holocaust, which are perennially oversubscribed. We also need to ensure that all of our courses appeal to a mixed population of Jewish Studies majors and minors and interested students from outside the Jewish Studies umbrella. I would not describe these as problems because we seem to be successful in addressing them: enrollments are steady and climbing, which is what one hopes for in a young, expanding program.

(2) A major challenge at the moment is to convince the administration that Jewish Studies is an area studies field that draws on many disciplines but is nevertheless deserving of the same respect and autonomy granted other, less diverse, academic fields. This is not a problem for our faculty when working with each other. They share a deep knowledge of

Hebrew language and Jewish culture, and tend to adopt critical approaches that fall under the broad rubric of cultural studies; they have several methodologies in common, such as an interest in manuscript work and expertise in the close reading of texts. Yet the administration wants its Jewish Studies faculty to publish in discipline-focused journals—literature or history or sociology or religious studies—in order to ratify their competence as scholars. Undervaluation from the perspective of more established disciplines is a problem that is to some extent inherent in all interdisciplinary work, and it will exist for us for some time.

(3) A major challenge for the immediate future is to create a successful doctoral program that allows students the flexibility to work across departments to pursue their areas of interest. We currently offer an MA degree, but students wishing to go further must either move to another university or enroll in an existing Vanderbilt PhD program and an additional certificate in Jewish Studies. Our initial goal is to fund fellowships for doctoral candidates so that we can grant our own free-standing PhD in cooperation with other departments at Vanderbilt.

Gilya Gerda Schmidt

*Director, Fern and Manfred Steinfeld Program in
Judaic Studies, University of Tennessee
at Knoxville*

The Fern and Manfred Steinfeld Program in Judaic Studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville has been in existence for seventeen years, since 1993. Tremendous efforts under difficult conditions by courageous and dedicated individuals, primarily the late Arts and Sciences Dean Larry Ratner and Religious Studies Department Head Professor Charles H. Reynolds, in cooperation with the Knoxville Jewish community, made this dream a reality. On the whole, we have experienced support, appreciation, and growth over the years, but there are also some serious challenges.

Perception is Everything

There are twelve Interdisciplinary Programs (IDPs) in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville (UT); the Fern and Manfred Steinfeld Program in Judaic Studies is one of them. Since UT is a state institution, the measure of success for the accrediting body, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, is the number of majors in

a given academic program. In terms of majors, Judaic Studies is a fairly small program (in 2009–2010 we had four majors). Compared to some other IDPs that have large numbers of majors, we suffer from the perception that our program is insignificant to the education of our students. Our challenge therefore is to demonstrate constantly the strength of our program to the administration. With a small Jewish population, our full classes clearly include many interested students who are not Jewish. Among them are a few students who take a Jewish Studies class out of curiosity, but most of our students take our courses because they satisfy college requirements (distribution for non-Western foreign culture). Judaic Studies thus provides a service to the college as well as the student population, but this factor is not part of the assessment that matters for state funding support.

The Issue of Identity

The Fern and Manfred Steinfeld Program in Judaic Studies is housed in the Department of Religious Studies. During the founding days of the program, Judaic Studies fared very well. Over time, however, it became clear that IDPs are programs without teeth. Located in academic departments, most of the IDPs own no faculty and are strapped for space and resources. In some ways, Judaic Studies is more fortunate than others. We have solved the problem of programming resources by establishing a number of endowments that allow us to support public lectures, film festivals, Holocaust conferences, and faculty research. Teaching is, however, most sensitive. Most faculty who teach cross-listed courses are paid by their respective departments. Occasionally there may be a faculty member who is paid by an IDP, but that is the exception. Judaic Studies, therefore, is at the mercy of departments who allow their faculty to participate in this program. I am happy to say that we have excellent relations with relevant departments and faculty are willing to teach cross-listed courses and serve on our faculty advisory committee. There is, however, an issue of visibility for participating faculty, because they get little recognition by their home departments for the work they do for Judaic Studies, and the credit for teaching goes to the department, not to the program.

Related to teaching is the issue of recruitment. The primary advocate for an IDP is supposed to be the program director's department. However, in these harsh economic times, departments are fighting for their own

existence. Last year, religious studies at UT was nearly merged or terminated solely on the basis of its own low number of majors. Under such circumstances recruiting for Judaic Studies majors among religious studies students seems suicidal. While there is a link on the religious studies website to the Judaic Studies program and a bulletin board by the department office for Judaic Studies information, it is solely up to the director of Judaic Studies to get out the word—to advertise our major and minor, our courses, our scholarships, our lectures, and other programs through any imaginable venue—the College Advising Center, our colleagues in religious studies and associated departments, and our website (<http://web.utk.edu-judaic>). Still, students regularly complain that they only find out about Judaic Studies by accident and when they have already decided on a major. Thus, being an entity other than a department is tricky. Some students are unsure as to the nature of an IDP.

Funding for Necessary Language Training

At many universities it is a challenge to find funding for basic language training. Challenges, however, are also opportunities. For a very long time, Modern Hebrew at the University of Tennessee was only offered as a taped program in Asian Studies with a tutor in the classroom. Biblical Hebrew was taught in religious studies as an overload until the retirement of Professor Lee Humphreys. Since then it has been taught only once. We pleaded with the administration that an area program without a basis in the relevant language was unthinkable. But since the administration considers our student demand for Modern Hebrew to be too low, our request for an instructor in Hebrew was repeatedly turned down. For several years now we have waged a campaign to raise private funds in order to hire a Hebrew teacher. This initiative was successful and last year we hired a scholar with a PhD in Linguistics in religious studies to teach our beginning and intermediate classes in Modern Hebrew. Last fall, sixteen students completed first-year Hebrew, and the number compares favorably to other Judaic Studies programs. The instructor also maintained a Hebrew conversation table. While the funding is not indefinite, the commitment of the donors will suffice for several years. Complemented by three successive years of a Schusterman Visiting Israel Professor, supported by American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), UT's College of Arts and Sciences, and the Jewish community, Judaic Studies offerings to students—majors

as well as all those who take our classes to fulfill college requirements—are currently well rounded. However, continuing quality instruction in Modern Hebrew and Israel Studies will remain a challenge. It is, of course, our fervent wish that we might be able to add Biblical Hebrew as a regular course offering in the future as well.

With the uncertainty about the future of government stimulus funds, it is difficult to say what the future holds. We have flourished in large part due to a few large and committed donors and the many collaborations with the College of Arts and Sciences, other departments, colleges, and community organizations and individuals that have cosponsored and supported our programming over the years. We hope that the spirit of cooperation will survive even in difficult economic times and are optimistic for the future.

David Shneer and Jamie Polliard

Director and Assistant Director, Program in Jewish Studies, University of Colorado at Boulder

David Shneer: My biggest challenge is convincing people that Jewish Studies is not only for Jews nor is just about the study of Judaism. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that every faculty member hears from a student: "I'm not Jewish. Can I be in this class?" I hear around campus the presumption that Jewish Studies is an advocacy unit, not an academic unit, and I hear this as often from Jews as from non-Jews. As director, I try to communicate to everyone that Jewish Studies is about the study of Jewish culture, society, life, and religion and is open to everyone.

Jamie Polliard: Our communication is clearly successful, since about 50 percent of the students in our courses are not Jewish. But we're missing something, because nearly all of the students pursuing the certificate in Jewish Studies are Jewish.

David: I also hear frequently that I should be an advocate for all things Jewish. Of course, the assumption is that I, as director, *am* Jewish, a bold assumption, one that I hope is true less often.

Jamie: I have spent the last nine years of my career working in the Jewish community, and I am not Jewish. People are often surprised that a non-Jew would be running a Jewish Studies program. I think this speaks to a subliminal

message that if you aren't Jewish, why would you be interested in this subject matter. We are very deliberate to make sure our communications do not include what we refer to as "we Jews" talk. This can often be alienating, especially when you are working with a student population.

David: A final challenge, but one that I think I'm quite good at navigating, is negotiating the boundaries between the Jewish community, who are usually the financial supporters of Jewish Studies, and the intellectual needs of the campus. Sometimes this comes up around issues related to Israel, although most recently, I had a major issue connected to a program on Jesus as a Jew.

Jamie: This negotiation is very challenging especially working on a campus where issues around Israel have been very divisive in the university and surrounding community and when we are working to communicate a message of inclusiveness and openness and a yearning for a global approach to Jewish Studies.

Laurence J. Silberstein

Director, Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies, Lehigh University

The first challenge that confronted me upon my arrival at Lehigh in 1984 was to establish a serious center for Jewish Studies in an environment that provided very limited resources. Connected to this challenge was a second and unexpected one, the continuing presence of two donors who did not believe in supporting programs from a distance. In the beginning, Phil and Muriel Berman's regular attendance at all center events and programs left some of my colleagues somewhat nervous, and I must admit to my own initial uncertainty. As it turned out, to paraphrase Mark Twain, this was one of the many problems that never happened. Phil and Muriel were exceptional benefactors who believed that academic matters, including speakers and programs, were best left to the judgment of the academicians. Although we had different perspectives on a number of issues, particularly concerning Israel, I cannot recall any instance in which they voiced criticism of a speaker or program along ideological lines.

A serious challenge was the need for additional faculty. The interdisciplinary character of our program and competing demands upon

individual departments resulted in the loss of a number of courses offered by associated faculty over the years. Thanks to the generosity of the Bermans and other donors, we have succeeded in building a group of five full-time Jewish Studies faculty (four tenure track and one professor of practice), with three of the positions fully endowed.

To render a serious contribution of research and publications apart from the writings of our faculty, we initiated a regular series of academic conferences. We also entered into an agreement with a well-known academic press to publish all of the proceedings. In the years between conferences, we convened a series of informal colloquia which created space for colleagues from the United States and Israel to share their work in progress and experiment with new ideas. Unfortunately, the growing reluctance of academic presses to publish multi-author volumes led to the cessation of our publishing series. Our final conference volume, published in 2001, only appeared as a result of a full subvention from a generous donor.

Finally, the overall anti-intellectual climate on campus along with students' reluctance to attend extracurricular lectures and programs presented another challenge. In response, we decided to link all of our lectures and programs to existing courses and require students to attend. Coupled with a core of interested faculty and members of the general community, we have managed to maintain strong attendance at our programs. As to the future, changes on university campuses are already creating new challenges that will require new and different solutions.

Deborah Starr

*Director, Program of Jewish Studies,
Cornell University*

Jewish Studies, like other ethnic, religious, and area studies programs and departments, benefits from the richness afforded by interdisciplinarity. Yet, with interdisciplinarity also come challenges in finding common ground among scholars with diverse interests and scholarly orientations. At Cornell University, the Jewish Studies program grew out of the Department of Near Eastern Studies (formerly the Department of Semitic Languages and Literatures), which continues to serve as the center at Cornell of faculty teaching and research in Judaica and Hebraica. Near

Eastern Studies is also where a core group of the program's faculty hold appointments. Yet, other members of the Jewish Studies faculty are spread over many departments including American Studies, animal science, Classics, comparative literature, English, German, history, linguistics, Romance Studies, and Russian literature. The faculty's research and teaching interests represent a broad array of disciplines and historical periods. One challenge has been to forge a shared sense of an intellectual community that cuts across this diversity of academic interests. Since faculty affiliated with the program are physically spread out across the campus, we have had to work to create venues where we can interact, share ideas, and learn from one another.

The Program of Jewish Studies offers an undergraduate minor. Despite its relatively modest requirements, the minor attracts a small number of students. At the same time, Cornell University has a large and active Jewish student population, supporting dozens of Jewish student organizations. This population of Jewish students represents a significant possible constituency for our academic mission. One ongoing challenge for Jewish Studies has been to translate student energy and interest in Jewish life on campus into an interest in Jewish Studies as an academic field—both by encouraging enrollment in Jewish Studies classes in the minor in Jewish Studies.

Josef Stern

*Director, Chicago Center for Jewish Studies,
University of Chicago*

The challenges of directing a Jewish Studies program range from the sublime to the banal:

- (1) Finding the right questions that will draw faculty and students out of their own research to engage in interactive and collaborative dialogue in workshops and conferences that will intellectually excite them.
- (2) Competing with all the other demands on faculty time and energy to garner active participation in the center.
- (3) Predicting attendance at lectures and events and knowing how much to order for receptions. This challenge has a subsidiary one: how to finish all the leftovers and excess food when you have overestimated the number in attendance.

Jeffrey Veidlinger

*Director, Robert A. and Sandra S. Borns Jewish
Studies Program, Indiana University*

As director of the Robert A. and Sandra S. Borns Jewish Studies Program, I regularly struggle with maintaining a balance between the different ideas of what a Jewish Studies program should be. The three biggest challenges are:

(1) Church/State

As part of a public university, we must always retain a wall of separation between church and state, but we are also obliged to educate our students and our community about Judaism. In reaching this goal, then, is it appropriate for us to conduct outreach activities at a local synagogue? Or participate in a multi-faith educational symposium held at a local church? Should we co-sponsor a conference that holds sessions on Saturday?

(2) Jewish Studies/Israel Studies

As the Jewish state, Israel is obviously of integral importance to Jewish Studies, but is all of Israel Studies relevant to us? Should we cross-list a course taught by a geographer on water management in Israel? What role does the Jewish Studies program play in Middle East Studies on campus? What is our role in monitoring and promoting overseas study programs in Israel that are not directly related to Jewish Studies?

(3) Jewish Studies/Judaic Studies

I believe that no student should be able to complete the Jewish Studies major without having seen a page of Talmud. But how much emphasis should be placed on rabbinic literature in the degree? In many universities today, including my own, Jewish Studies is understood as a study of Jewish society and civilization. The seminal texts of Judaism are an important part of that civilization, but for many Jews in the world today—and for many students in our classrooms—these texts seem less relevant than other aspects of Jewish civilization. Can we truly educate students about Jewish civilization without in-depth study of these texts? Or do we risk providing a distorted picture of the diversity of Jewish life today by overemphasizing the textual tradition?

Beth Wenger

Director, Jewish Studies Program,
University of Pennsylvania

Building Coherence within the Program

By its very nature, Penn's interdisciplinary Jewish Studies program brings together faculty, undergraduates, and graduate students with diverse interests and specialties. While we regard diversity as one of the vital strengths of our program, it also presents a series of challenges. On an administrative level, crafting the Jewish Studies curriculum requires balancing our program's needs with the teaching commitments of faculty members to their home departments. Moreover, faculty often prioritize service to their own departments. In intellectual terms, we must find ways to bring together students and faculty working in disparate fields, encouraging dialogue across disciplines. Through faculty works-in-progress seminars, a graduate student colloquium in Jewish Studies, and regular presentations of undergraduate research, we endeavor to strengthen the sense of cohesion within our program and create a genuine intellectual community.

Penn also houses the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies. While the Katz

Center and the Jewish Studies program work together to create a community for Jewish Studies at Penn, they are separate institutions, with distinct missions, though students, faculty, and the wider community do not always grasp the distinctions between the two. Communication and coordination between the directors of the center and the program are essential to creating a successful intellectual community for Jewish Studies at Penn.

Overcoming Student Misperceptions

Students arrive at Penn with a range of misconceptions about the nature and purpose of Jewish Studies in a university. Some students mistakenly believe that Jewish Studies courses represent simply a continuation of the (often) unsatisfying experience that they left behind in Hebrew or Sunday school. Other students, many of them graduates of day schools or yeshivot, sometimes suspect that Jewish Studies courses on the university level invoke heretical approaches or are taught by professors hostile to Judaism, thus potentially undermining traditional beliefs and practices. Some non-Jewish students worry that they might not be sufficiently knowledgeable or might be regarded as outsiders when they enroll in Jewish Studies courses. While these

misconceptions are by no means universal, they do affect at least a portion of students who might otherwise consider exploring Jewish Studies during their college careers.

Fostering an Intellectual Culture for Jewish Studies on Campus

Like most Jewish Studies programs, Penn regularly sponsors an array of lectures, programs, and conferences. We consider such events part of our mandate for creating a culture of engagement with Jewish subjects outside of the classroom. At times, we struggle to attract students to these events without requiring them for our courses, as we compete with Hillel and a range of other student programs. At the same time, we almost always welcome members of the larger community to attend these events, believing that our academic mission includes the broader public. Still, a delicate balancing act is often required to engage student needs and serve community interests at the same time.

Do you have an answer to this question? E-mail it to ajs@ajs.cjh.org with The Questionnaire in the subject line. The AJS will continue this discussion on its website.

From the Executive Director

(continued from pg 4)

In 2008, the largest number of permanent (i.e., tenure-track or tenured) positions advertised was in history (19). This was followed by: field of specialization open (5); Israel Studies (4); Bible (3); Hebrew (3); Holocaust Studies (2); and Jewish education, literature, and Sephardi/Mizrahi Studies (1 each). Of the permanent positions in 2008, 30 were at the assistant-professor/tenure-track level, and 10 were at the associate- or full-professor level. Also in 2008, 12 temporary (i.e. adjunct, lecturer, visiting) positions were advertised with the field of specialization open, as well as another 11 positions in Hebrew. Other temporary positions were in history (6); antisemitism, comparative/interfaith relations, Bible, and Rabbinics (2 each); and Holocaust Studies, gender studies, Israel Studies, sociology, and modern Jewish thought (1 each).

By 2010, the largest number of permanent (i.e. tenure-track or tenured) positions advertised were in history (10), followed by: field of specialization open (7), Bible (5), and Israel Studies (5). One position was advertised in each of the following fields: modern Jewish thought,

the arts, education, interfaith/multicultural studies, and Holocaust Studies. Of the permanent positions, 25 were at the assistant-professor/tenure-track level, and 7 at the associate- or full-professor level. Twenty-nine temporary (i.e. adjunct, lecturer, visiting) positions were advertised with the field of specialization open (including 10 postdoctoral fellowships for American scholars to teach in Israel), followed by 9 temporary positions in Hebrew, 8 in history, and 1 each in comparative/interfaith relations, gender studies, Israel Studies, Bible, and education.

Again, these are preliminary figures, and the AJS will continue to analyze the data and post more formal findings on its website in the coming months. We know such information is important to members and hope to expand our work collecting data on all aspects of the field.

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